

Coalition on Homelessness, San Francisco

Fact Sheet on Homelessness

Homelessness is not a lifestyle choice—it is the result of extreme poverty.

- Between 1976 and 2001, the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) department's total budget has dropped by more than \$45 billion per year, with the biggest drop occurring between 1980 and 1983 (*National Low- Income Housing Coalition, 2001*).
- HUD funding stayed flat from 2001 until 2017, when President Trump enacted a budget cut of approximately 13.2% for the next fiscal year (*Office of Management and Budget, 2019*).
- Funding has continued to decrease since, with a notable drop of 18.3% between the enacted 2019 budget and the proposed 2020 budget (*Office of Management and Budget, 2019*).
- The average rent in San Francisco for a studio apartment has now reached \$2,500, far exceeding a service sector employee's paycheck and more than 3 times a monthly public assistance check.
- People who cannot afford market rents turn to subsidized housing for help. In San Francisco, there are 8,000 homeless households on the waitlist for public housing.

How many people are homeless and who are they?

- The January 2019 San Francisco Point-In-Time count found 9,784 homeless people, a 30% increase since 2017. (*2019 San Francisco Homeless Count and Survey*).
- This is considered an undercount, as families and youth are underrepresented. (*2019 San Francisco Homeless Count and Survey*). The San Francisco Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing estimates that the number of people who experience homelessness over the course of a year is 2.9 times that or 21,315.
- 31% of survey respondents were experiencing homelessness for the first time, an increase of 24% since 2017. The overwhelming majority became homeless as San Franciscans (70%) with 55% having lived in San Francisco for 10 or more years (*2019 San Francisco Homeless Count and Survey*).
- More than two-thirds (69%) of all survey respondents said they had a disabling health condition in 2019, compared to 53% in 2017. (*2019 San Francisco Homeless Count and Survey*).
- 40% of children living below the poverty line in San Francisco are homeless. There are currently over 2,980 homeless children living in intact families in SF, this includes 2,293 homeless students enrolled in San Francisco Unified School District.
- The majority of the homeless population are African American (37%), while African Americans make up 6% of the city population. (*2019 San Francisco Homeless Count and Survey*).
- 27% of the general homeless population identify as LGBTQ while 46% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ+ (*2019 San Francisco Homeless Count and Survey*).
- 2,534 homeless youth were served at one youth program in San Francisco in 2016. (*Larkin Street Annual Report 2016*)

How is Homeless People's Health Affected?

- The average life expectancy for individuals experiencing homelessness is up to 36 years shorter than that of the general population (*Koachanek et al. 2017*).
- A recent study by UCSF found that homeless people are a full 25 years older than their calendar age in all areas of health and regularly experience geriatric symptoms at anomalously early ages (*Brown et al. 2016*).
- Homelessness is an independent risk factor for a number of illnesses, and homeless people themselves are susceptible to increased health problems due to high stress, sleep deprivation, unsanitary

This fact sheet brought to you by the Coalition on Homelessness, San Francisco
The Coalition on Homelessness is committed to ending homelessness through organizing homeless people, front line service providers and allies while protecting the human rights of those forced to remain on the streets.
415-346-3740 • 468 Turk Street, SF, CA 94102 • www.cohsf.org

surroundings, lack of access to hygiene facilities and a myriad of other symptoms inherent to living without stable housing.

- Sleep deprivation impairs cognitive processes and puts one at risk for heart disease, heart attack, heart failure, irregular heartbeat, high blood pressure, strokes and diabetes.
- Homeless people disproportionately suffer from sleep deprivation due to legal prohibitions on their rest; they are woken frequently by police and security.

How does mental illness and/or addiction factor in?

- Individuals suffering from mental illness and addiction disorders are the most visible portion of the population. However, these individuals make up a minority of the population: 39% individuals experiencing homelessness in San Francisco have a psychiatric or emotional condition and 41% have a substance use problem. (*2019 San Francisco Homeless Count and Survey*).
- Homelessness leads to and exacerbates substance use problems, not the other way around. Many individuals living with mental illness self-medicate with drugs and alcohol as a result of the trauma of being without a home.
- San Francisco once had a robust mental health system, but realignment, recession era cuts and huge losses to board and care facilities have left our mental health system nowhere near the capacity that is needed to serve the population.

Human rights and homelessness

- According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has a right to an adequate standard of living, including housing. While the United States touts human rights at other countries, in the U.S, 3.5 million people experience the trauma of homelessness each year.
- In 2017, San Francisco cited homeless people for sleeping or resting in public 40% more often than the year prior (*Punishing the Poorest, 2017*). SFPD issued over 10,000 Quality of Life Citations. Each citation carries a fine of more than \$76. An unpaid or unresolved ticket goes to warrant in 21 days, and then the fine doubles. Accumulated warrants can result in incarceration, destroyed credit, and denial of affordable housing.
- According to the Budget Legislative Analyst Office, we are spending \$20.7 million on criminalizing homeless people without any positive outcomes. That money is equivalent to the cost of 1,300 housing subsidies.

What about San Francisco's shelter system?

- There are over 1,000 people on the waitlist for single adult shelter every night in SF (311) and families wait more than 300 days for shelter.
- 65% of our homeless population is on the streets, the highest unsheltered population of any major city in the United States (*2019 San Francisco Homeless Count and Survey*).

What Resources Are Allocated to Homeless San Franciscans?

- The city spends less than 3% of its budget on homelessness, and over half of that goes to people who are already housed (*DHSH, 2017*).
- San Francisco has about 7,000 units of housing available for homeless people. About 800 of those units turnover each year (*DHSH, 2017*).