

NEW YORK CITY HOMELESSNESS The Basic Facts

- In recent years, homelessness in New York City has reached **the highest levels since the Great Depression of the 1930s**. [1] [2]
- In February 2021, there were **55,501 homeless people**, including **17,375 homeless children**, sleeping each night in the New York City municipal shelter system. A record **20,822 single adults** slept in shelters in February 2021.
- Over the course of City fiscal year 2020, **122,926 different homeless men, women, and children** slept in the New York City municipal shelter system. This includes **more than 39,300 homeless children**.
- In 2015, families entering shelters predominantly came from a few clustered zip codes in the poorest neighborhoods in New York City. [3] However, homeless families and single adults come from every zip code in NYC prior to entering shelters.
- The number of homeless New Yorkers sleeping each night in municipal shelters is now **40 percent higher** than it was ten years ago. The number of homeless single adults is **109 percent higher** than it was ten years ago.
- Research shows that the **primary cause of homelessness, particularly among families, is lack of affordable housing**. Surveys of homeless families have identified the following major immediate, triggering causes of homelessness: **eviction; doubled-up or severely overcrowded housing; domestic violence; job loss; and hazardous housing conditions**. [4] [5] [6]
- Research shows that, compared to homeless families, homeless single adults have much **higher rates of serious mental illness, addiction disorders, and other severe health problems**. [7]
- Each night **thousands of unsheltered homeless people** sleep on New York City streets, in the subway system, and in other public spaces. There is no accurate measurement of New York City's unsheltered homeless population, and recent **City surveys significantly underestimate the number of unsheltered homeless New Yorkers**.
- Studies show that the **large majority of unsheltered homeless New Yorkers are people living with mental illness or other severe health problems**. [8] [9]
- **Black and Hispanic/Latinx New Yorkers are disproportionately affected by homelessness**. Approximately 57 percent of heads of household in shelters are Black, 32 percent are Hispanic/Latinx, 7 percent are White, less than 1 percent are Asian-American or Native American, and 3 percent are of unknown race/ethnicity.

References

- [1] J. Crouse, *The Homeless Transient in the Great Depression: New York State, 1929-1941*, SUNY Press, 1986.
- [2] P. Rossi, "The Old Homeless and the New Homelessness in Historical Perspective," *American Psychologist*, vol. 45, no. 8, pp. 954-959, 1990.
- [3] G. Routhier, "Family Shelter Entrants Come Predominantly From a Few Clustered Neighborhoods," 2016. [Online]. Available: <http://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/family-shelter-entrants-come-predominantly-clustered-neighborhoods/>.
- [4] NYC Independent Budget Office, "The Rising Number of Homeless Families in NYC, 2002-2012," New York, NY, 2014.
- [5] M. Shinn, B. Weitzman, D. Stojanovic, J. Knickman, L. Jimenez, L. Duchon, S. James and D. Krantz, "Predictors of Homelessness Among Families in New York City: From Shelter Request to Housing Stability," *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 88, no. 11, pp. 1651-1657, 1998.
- [6] J. M. Quigley and S. Raphael, "The Economics of Homelessness: The Evidence from North America," *European Journal of Housing Policy*, vol. 1, no. 3, pp. 323-336, 2001.
- [7] M. Burt and B. Cohen, "Differences among Homeless Single Women, Women with Children, and Single Men," *Social Problems*, vol. 36, no. 5, pp. 508-524, 1989.
- [8] R. Kuhn and D. Culhane, "Applying Cluster Analysis to Test a Typology of Homelessness by Pattern of Shelter Utilization," *American Journal of Community Psychology*, vol. 26, no. 2, 1998.
- [9] A. Levitt, D. Culhane, J. DeGenova, P. O'Quinn and J. Bainbridge, "Health and Social Characteristics of Homeless Adults in Manhattan Who Were Chronically or Not Chronically Unsheltered," *Psychiatric Services*, vol. 60, no. 7, 2009.

Updated April 2021

For more information, please visit www.coalitionforthehomeless.org.