

Substance Abuse, Mental Illness, and Homelessness: Some Basic Facts

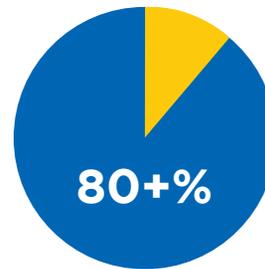
Mental Illness Among the Homeless

The closing of long-term psychiatric programs and the decrease of inpatient psychiatric beds has been correlated with the rise of mentally ill adults who are homeless.

Estimates on the prevalence of mental illness among homeless adults vary:



Trauma and Homelessness



Over **80%** of homeless people have experienced a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) (Gordon, 2008)

- TBI is often undiagnosed and untreated
- Cognitive Issues affect coping and functional skills
- TBI may affect a person's ability to learn and adapt

Nearly all homeless adults have experienced significant traumas at some point in their lives.

- Early, on-going childhood traumas are correlated with homelessness
- Homelessness itself is traumatic, involving violence, threats of violence, experiences of helplessness and public humiliation.

Addiction Among the Homeless

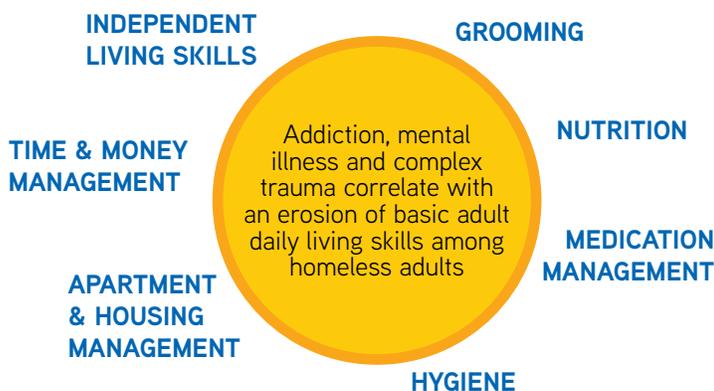
84%
of chronically homeless men have histories of substance abuse disorders (North, 2004)

58%
chronically homeless women have histories of addiction (North, 2004)

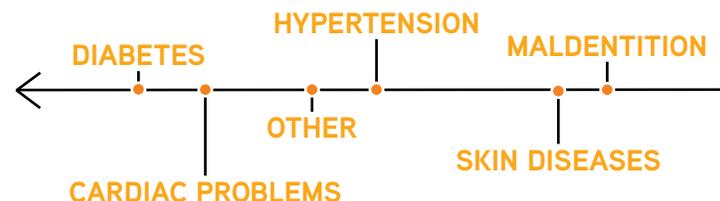
Drugs of choice often reflect attempts to self-medicate **underlying mental illnesses.**

Velasquez (2000) estimates that the homeless population has an addiction rate **6-7 times** higher than the general population

Related Problems

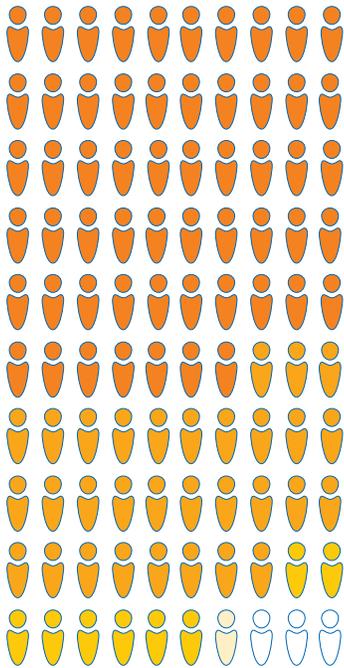


Both addiction and mental illness correlate with serious physical problems:



Breakout Session: Racism & Homelessness

Today we will discuss institutional racism and its effect on homelessness. We will explore how race and factors surrounding race have impacted certain communities disproportionately and how these factors have led to an overrepresentation of people of color trapped in the cycle of homelessness. We look forward to a great discussion.



African-American and Latino New Yorkers are disproportionately affected by homelessness. (Coalition for the Homeless)

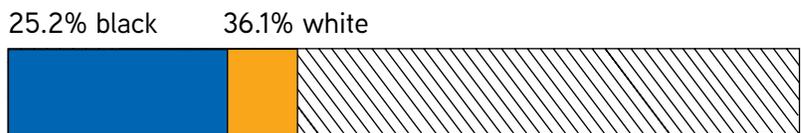
New York City homeless shelter residents are approximately:



Homelessness: Its About Race Not Just Poverty



Out of families found in New York shelters



Out of general population of New York

In New York City and St. Louis in 2009, the most recent data available, twice as many black families were found in shelters (**55.9% and 95%**, respectively) compared to their share of the general city population (**25.2% versus 49.5%**). The opposite held true for white families who were vastly underrepresented in local shelters (**1.9% and 3%**, respectively), given the percentages of white families in New York City and St. Louis overall (**36.1% versus 44.7%**). (Homelessness: Its About Race Not Just Poverty)

Nearly
1 in 4
individuals experiencing
homelessness (23%) in this
county is a child under age
18 who is black or African
American.

Including children of all races elevates the ratio to about one in three (33%). (THE POVERTY DEFENSE: HOW POVERTY IS NOT SUFFICIENT TO EXPLAIN RACIAL DISPARITIES IN HOMELESS POPULATIONS)



Breakout Session: Incarceration & Homelessness

In this report, we provide the first estimate of homelessness among the 5 million formerly incarcerated people living in the United States, finding that formerly incarcerated people are almost

10 times

more likely to be homeless than the general public.

We break down this data by race, gender, age and other demographics; we also show how many formerly incarcerated people are forced to live in places like hotels or motels, just one step from homelessness itself.

**It's hard
to imagine
building a
successful
life without a
place to call
HOME**

but this basic necessity is often out of reach for formerly incarcerated people. Barriers to [employment](#), combined with explicit discrimination, have created a little-discussed housing crisis.

Formerly incarcerated people face multiple barriers to securing housing (including [public housing](#)) and [employment](#), which can lead to homelessness.

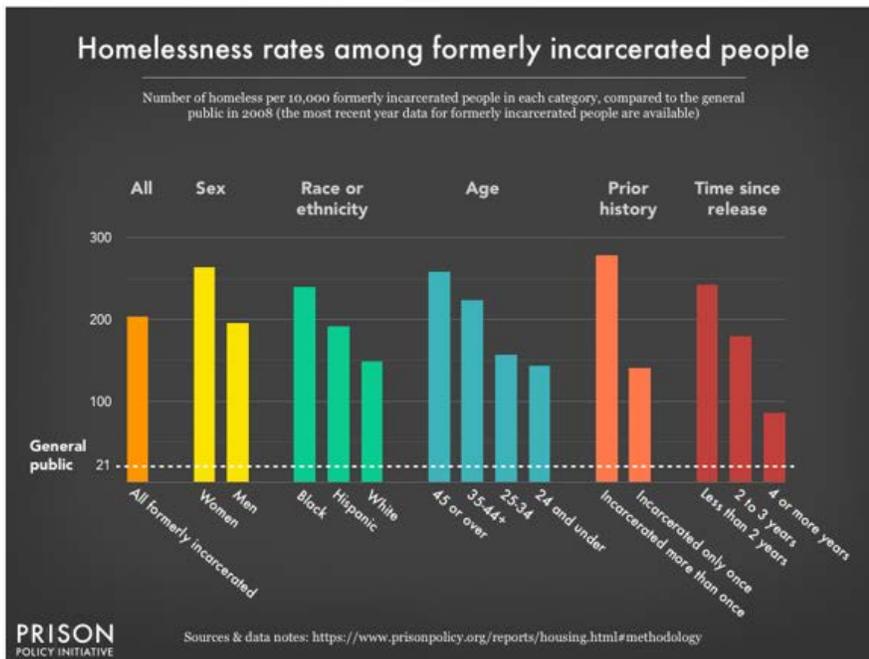


Figure 1. 2% of formerly incarcerated people were homeless in 2008 (the most recent year for which data are available), a rate nearly 10 times higher than among the general public.

The punishment for a crime doesn't necessarily end when the person has been released from prison.

