

Reading

HOMELESSNESS

Addressing a crisis

1. Homelessness is a worldwide crisis. An estimated 100 million people around the world do not have a place to call home. While there is often strong community support for the homeless over the holidays, homelessness is a year-round **plight**.
2. What does homelessness look like in your community? You can't answer this by looking at your city's parks and sidewalks. Only a **fraction** of the homeless actually live and sleep on the streets. The majority move around from place to place, never knowing where they'll be next week. Homeless individuals and families sleep in cars, motels, **shelters**, and on any couch they can find. **Instability** is their shared reality.
3. In developed nations, the most common causes of homelessness are **insufficient** income and a lack of affordable housing. Other causes include **domestic violence**, **substance abuse**, and mental or physical illness. All of these problems are more difficult to address when a person is homeless. Many programs **insist** on putting a roof over someone's head before addressing other social concerns.
4. Homelessness and loneliness usually **go hand in hand**. The homeless often have little or no support from family and friends. A lack of conversation, touch, and even eye contact can greatly affect a person's well-being. In addition to the **isolation**, many homeless people feel hopeless. They feel they are stuck in a **vicious cycle**. Without an address, they can't get a job. Without a job, they can't pay rent.
5. Can homelessness be **eradicated**? What is one simple thing you can do to help? A single act of kindness is sometimes all it takes to turn a homeless person's day or life around.

"We have come dangerously close to accepting the homeless situation as a problem we just can't solve."

—Linda Lingle,
former governor of Hawaii