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Chronically Homeless



Chronic homelessness is used to describe people who have experienced homelessness for at least a year — or repeatedly — while struggling with a disabling condition such as a serious mental illness, substance use disorder, or physical disability.

How Many People Experience Chronic Homelessness?

- There were 110,528 homeless individuals with chronic patterns of homelessness. That is 27 percent of the total population of homeless individuals.
- 66 percent of chronically homeless individuals were living on the street, in a car, park, or other location not meant for human habitation.
- Since 2007, the number of individuals with patterns of chronic homelessness has declined 8 percent. However, between 2019 and 2020 this number increased by 15 percent.

What Causes Chronic Homelessness?

People experiencing chronic homelessness typically have complex and long-term health conditions, such as mental illness, substance use disorders, physical disabilities, or other medical conditions. Once they become homeless — regardless of what immediately caused them to lose their housing — it is difficult for them to get back into housing and they can face long or repeated episodes of homelessness.

Ending Chronic Homelessness

Permanent supportive housing, which pairs a housing subsidy with case management and supportive services, is a proven solution to chronic homelessness. It has been shown to not only help people experiencing chronic homelessness achieve long-term housing stability, but also improve their health and well-being. Investments in permanent supportive housing have helped decrease the number of chronically homeless individuals by 8 percent since [2007](#). Permanent supportive housing has also been shown to lower public costs associated with the use of crisis services such as shelters, hospitals, jails, and prisons.

People experiencing chronic homelessness are particularly vulnerable because they disproportionately live in unsheltered locations and have one or more disabilities. Outreach and engagement to help this population enter low-barrier shelters — and connect to housing — are important for safety and health.

People who are chronically homeless have experienced homelessness for at least a year, or repeatedly, while struggling with a disabling condition such as a serious

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How to Get Help If You Are Experiencing Homelessness

The National Alliance to End Homelessness does not provide direct services such as housing or case management. If you are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, please [contact your local 2-1-1 hotline](#) or learn about other resources on our [How to Get Help page](#).