

Video of the Week - N°9

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UgptjJbESn8>

Homelessness in the United States is an area of concern for social service providers, government officials, policy professionals, and humanity. The number of homeless people grew in the 1980s, as housing and social service cuts increased and the economy deteriorated. The United States government determined that somewhere between 200,000 and 500,000 Americans were then homeless. Now, this number is somewhat higher. There are some U.S. federal programs that designed to help end and prevent homelessness, although there are no homeless-related programs in the Office of Management and Budget.

Facts and Figures: The Homeless

What is the definition of homelessness?

Different definitions of homelessness are used in different contexts. Generally, homelessness is defined as a person who "lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate night-time residence."

How is the recession affecting homelessness?

The recession will force 1.5 million more people into homelessness over the next two years, according to estimates by The National Alliance to End Homelessness. In a 2008 report, the U.S. Conference of Mayors cited a major increase in the number of homeless in 19 out of the 25 cities surveyed. On average, cities reported a 12 percent increase of homelessness since 2007.

Although homelessness is a difficult number to measure definitively, it appears that more people—especially families—are sleeping in shelters, living in their cars, and taking up residence in tent communities.

How many people are homeless?

The number of homeless is difficult to ascertain because estimates vary depending on the methodology used. Numbers also vary substantially depending on whether a measurement is taken on a single night or is extrapolated to a given year.

One approximation of the annual number of homeless in America is from a study by the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, which estimates between 2.3 and 3.5 million people experience homelessness. According to a 2008 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) report an estimated 671,888 people experienced homelessness in one night in January 2007. Some 58 percent of them were living in shelters and transitional housing and, 42 percent were unsheltered.

Which states have the highest rates of homelessness?

Alaska, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Rhode Island, Washington State, and Washington, D.C. have the highest rates of homelessness, according to a study released in 2007 by The National Alliance to End Homelessness.

How many of the homeless are children?

One out of 50—or about 1.5 million—American children are homeless each year, according to a 2009 study by the National Center on Family Homelessness.

What is chronic homelessness?

According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, 23 percent of homeless people are reported as chronically homeless. According to HUD's definition, a person who is "chronically homeless" is an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition (e.g., substance abuse, serious mental illness, developmental disability, or chronic physical illness) who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more, or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years. In order to be considered chronically homeless, a person must have been sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation and/or in an emergency homeless shelter.

What are the greatest causes of homelessness?

For persons in families, the three most commonly cited causes are:

- Lack of affordable housing
- Poverty
- Unemployment

For singles, the three most commonly cited causes of homelessness are:

- Substance abuse
- Lack of affordable housing
- Mental illness

Are veterans more likely than other populations to be homeless?

Yes. About 40% of homeless men are veterans, although veterans comprise only 34 percent of the general adult male population, according to research on veterans by the National Coalition for Homeless. On any given night, 200,000 veterans are homeless.

What are some other demographics of homeless people?

Racial and ethnic minorities, particularly African-Americans, are overrepresented.

- 39% are non-Hispanic whites (compared to 76% of the general population)
- 42% are African-Americans (compared to 11% of the general population)
- 13% are Hispanic (compared to 9% of the general population)
- 4% are Native-American (compared to 1% of the general population)
- 2% were Asian

Homelessness continues to be a largely urban phenomenon.

- 71% are in central cities
- 21% are in suburbs
- 9% are in rural areas

People who are homeless frequently report health problems.

- 38% report alcohol use problems
- 26% report other drug use problems
- 39% report some form of mental health problems (20-25% meet criteria for serious mental illness)
- 66% report either substance use and/or mental health problems
- 3% report having HIV/AIDS
- 26% report acute health problems other than HIV/AIDS such as tuberculosis, pneumonia, or sexually transmitted diseases
- 46% report chronic health conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, or cancer

How do you measure homelessness?

Measuring homelessness is difficult because of the fluidity of the homeless population. Part of the difficulty stems from varying methodologies used to measure homelessness. Some researchers attempt to count all the people who are literally homeless on a given day or during a given week, called a "point-in-time" count. Critics say this method is likely to overestimate the number of chronically homeless and underestimate the number of people who experience temporary homelessness.

Task

- a) write a transcript of the first **62 seconds** of the video
- b) write three things about the video which **struck you** the most

THE TRANSCRIPT IS ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE. **DO NOT LOOK** AT IT UNTIL YOU HAVE TRIED TO WRITE IT YOURSELF.

The transcript is below. Make your own comparison

There are those among us with the least; almost half a million people who call the streets "home"! Their meals? Whatever they can find, whatever they are given.

"Would you help me out with something to eat?"

What would you do if you saw a good Samaritan give a homeless man twenty dollars for a bite to eat?

"Take whatever you want, ok?"

Only to see him tossed back to the curve the second she leaves.

"Just it's bad for business "———"I can't let you sit in here"

A man denied service simply because he's homeless. Today we brought our hidden cameras to the streets of Lind Brooke, New York, at McQuade's restaurant. Of course, both Tracy and Kevin are actors and the bartender Jeremy...

"It's not your money, get out of here!" ...he's definitely an actor!

Everyone at this bar knows except this man and our hidden cameras are rolling