

# Research paper on homelessness in america

[Sociology](#), [Population](#)



There are numerous misconceptions in American society that pertain to the issue of homelessness. For example, many people wrongly believe that most homeless people are individuals who have problems with alcoholism, drug addiction or mental illness that eventually led them to their homeless state. This belief is not only wrong, but it overlooks an emerging phenomenon, which is the fact that many of the homeless are families, and their situation derives largely from the effects of a failing economy and making poor financial decisions. The following examination of this issue focuses on the research question of the extensiveness of this segment of the homeless population and how this issue may be addressed by public policy. This examination reveals that this homeless population is extensive and that the needs of this population have not been addressed sufficiently by public policy.

In addition to the misconception that the homeless population is primarily made up of individuals, it is also a misconception that they are universally unemployed. U. S. Census Bureau figures show that 21 million Americans are classified as employed (America, 2010).

Furthermore, statistics show that families comprise 41 per cent of this population (Shinn, 2009). This means that approximately 46 million people, who are employed, do not have sufficient savings or other liquid assets to survive a financial crisis, such as losing their employment or facing a medical emergency, without slipping into debt, which can lead quickly to living below the poverty line (Eichler, 2012).

Scholarly literature on this subject abounds with examples of families that have had this experience. For example, the family of Contina Wright and her husband lived a comfortable, middle-class life in New Jersey until the slump in the housing market meant that work for Mr Wright became scarce (Juri, 2010). Mrs Wright's modest earnings, at this point, became their major form of support and, consequently, the family hit "rock bottom" and had to live in a homeless shelter for several months (Juri, 2010).

While the Wright family was able to avail themselves of services for the homeless, many families in the same situation have a problem accessing these services as many homeless shelters only aid individuals on welfare (Juri, 2010). According to The National Coalition for the Homeless (2009), "Poverty and the lack of affordable housing are the principal causes of family homelessness." This means that many people, such as the Wright family, seek help in the form of shelters for the homeless. However, such shelters also have their share of problems.

The funding needed to run the shelters results from federal welfare programs, and these families may not fall within the strict parameters needed to qualify for assistance. As this indicates, there is dichotomy between the conventional conceptualization of the homeless and the reality that there is a sizeable population of people who can best be described as the working poor. Statistics from the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) indicate that among individuals in the labor force for "27 weeks or more in 2008, 3.9 per cent" of this number were "usually employed full time" and

could be classified as " working poor" and 13. 7 per cent of part-time workers could also be included in this category (BLS, 2010).

When reform legislation is introduced in legislative bodies, there will undoubtedly be those who argue that addressing this segment of the homeless population is too expensive at this time. However, this argument overlooks the fact that logical, practical and financially feasible interventional programs have been proposed. For instance, the use of decommissioned military bases as homeless shelters as outlined by Morgan (2010) constitutes such a solution. Furthermore, officials at several non-profit organizations have proposed ideas concerning financial reform proposals that could have tremendously beneficial effects on this issue.

In conclusion, statistics indicate that the problem of working families, which have fallen below the poverty line and in either are experiencing homelessness or are in danger of doing so, has become extensive. This issue, therefore, greatly needs the attention of policymakers and the creation of reform legislation and program initiatives that are designed to address the needs of this segment of the homeless population. The problem is complex, with multifaceted causal factors. However, to do nothing, condemns millions of Americans to financial hardship and suffering as they increase the homeless population.

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