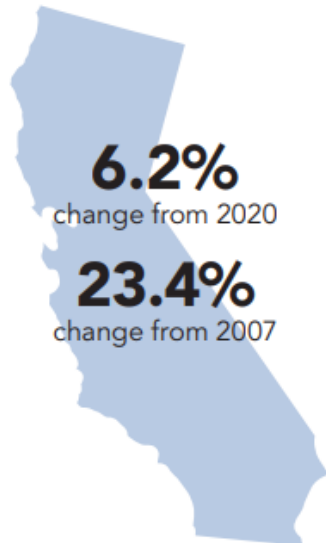# Seeking Solutions to Chronic Homelessness

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Director, UCSF Center for Vulnerable Populations
Director, UCSF Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative
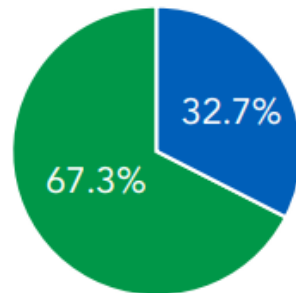
@mkushel
@ucsfbhhi

2/17/2023

Homelessness is common in California

CALIFORNIA

6.2% change from 2020

23.4% change from 2007

Total Homeless, 2022
171,521

43.7 in every **10,000** people were experiencing homelessness

32.7%

67.3%

■ Sheltered (56,030)
■ Unsheltered (115,491)

Estimates of Homelessness

145,983 individuals

25,538 people in families with children

9,590 unaccompanied homeless youth

10,395 veterans

57,760 chronically homeless individuals

De Sousa, T., Andrichik, A., de Sousa, T., Cuellar, M., Marson, J., Prestera, E., Rush, K., & Abt Associates. (2022). *The 2022 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to congress*. https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2022-AHAR-Part-1.pdf

Why are people homeless?

1. Why are there so many people in a region that are homeless?

2. Why is this particular person homeless?
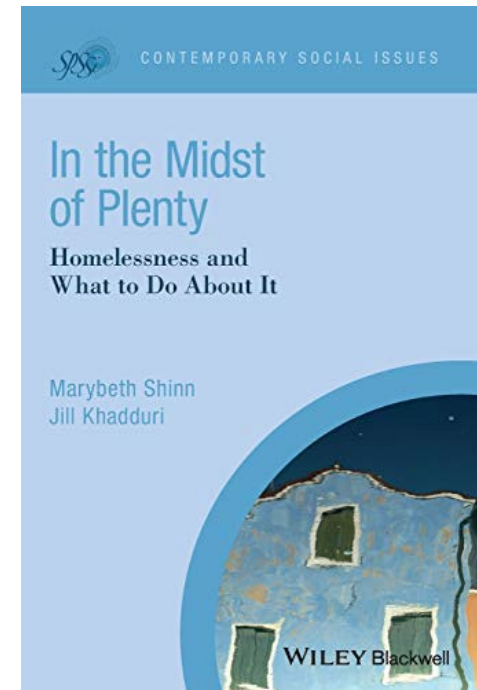
Why are people homeless?

Homelessness is an interaction between:

- **Structural Factors** (e.g., affordable housing, stagnated wages, income inequality, racism)

- **Individual vulnerabilities** (e.g,. mental health disabilities, substance use disorders, adverse childhood experiences)

And the **presence or absence of a safety net** (e.g., income support, safety-net healthcare, subsidized housing).

The less favorable the structural factors and availability of safety net is, the fewer individual vulnerabilities one needs to become homeless
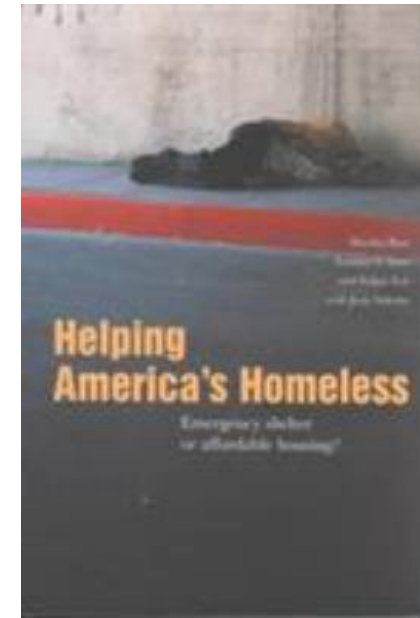
Laudan Aron and Martha Burt. 2001. Helping America's Homeless: Emergency Shelter or Affordable Housing. Urban Institute ISBN:0877667012 ISBN13:9780877667018

Drivers vs. Precipitants of Homelessness

- Drivers – Systemic factors that create overall homelessness rates and explain the difference in homelessness rates between communities

  - Lack of affordable housing

  - Income inequality

  - Structural racism

- Precipitants – Individual risk factors that increase the chance that any individual within a community becomes homeless

  - Substance use disorders

  - Mental health problems
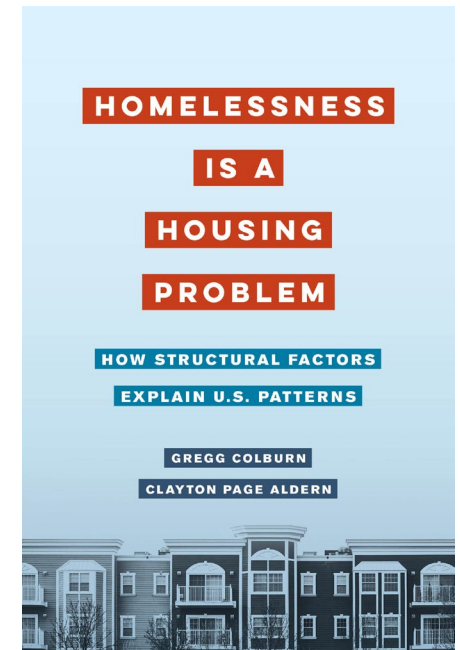
Clayton Page Aldern and Gregg Colburn. 2022. Homelessness is a Housing Problem: How Structural Factors Explain U.S. Patterns. UC Press. https://homelessnesshousingproblem.com/

It's a little like musical chairs…

Case study

W. Virginia

Drug overdose deaths:
57.8 per 100,000
Homelessness:
7.7 per 10,000

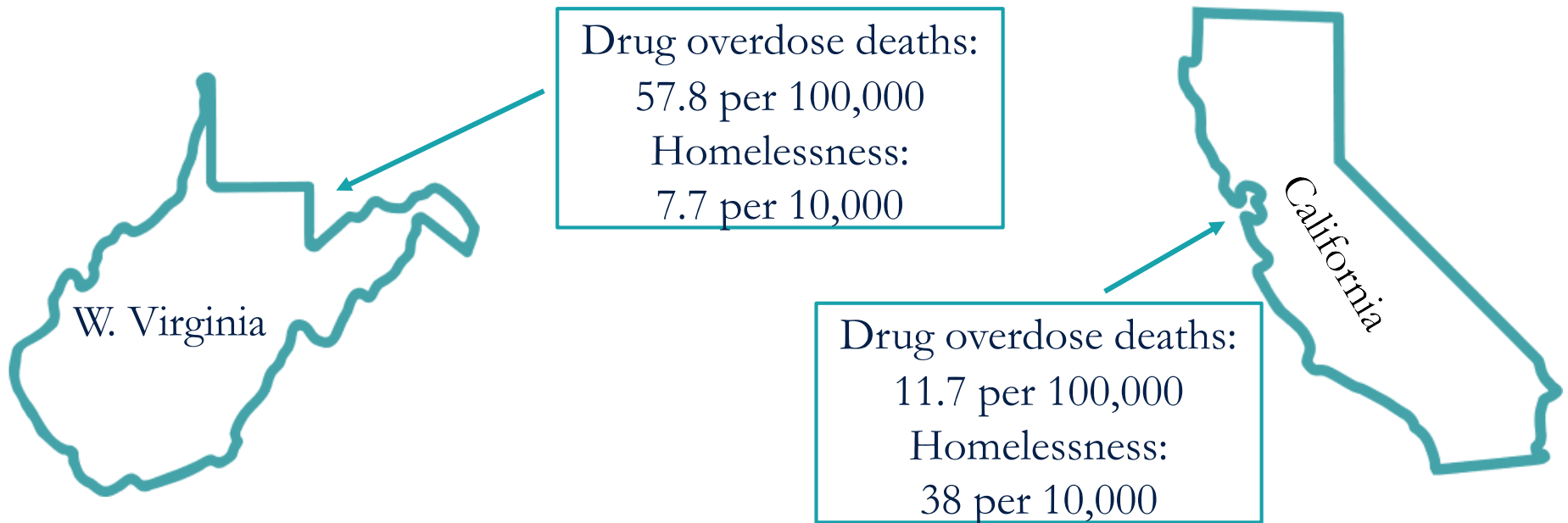Drug overdose deaths:
11.7 per 100,000
Homelessness:
38 per 10,000

California

Clayton Page Aldern and Gregg Colburn. 2022. Homelessness is a Housing Problem: How Structural Factors Explain U.S. Patterns. UC Press. https://homelessnesshousingproblem.com/

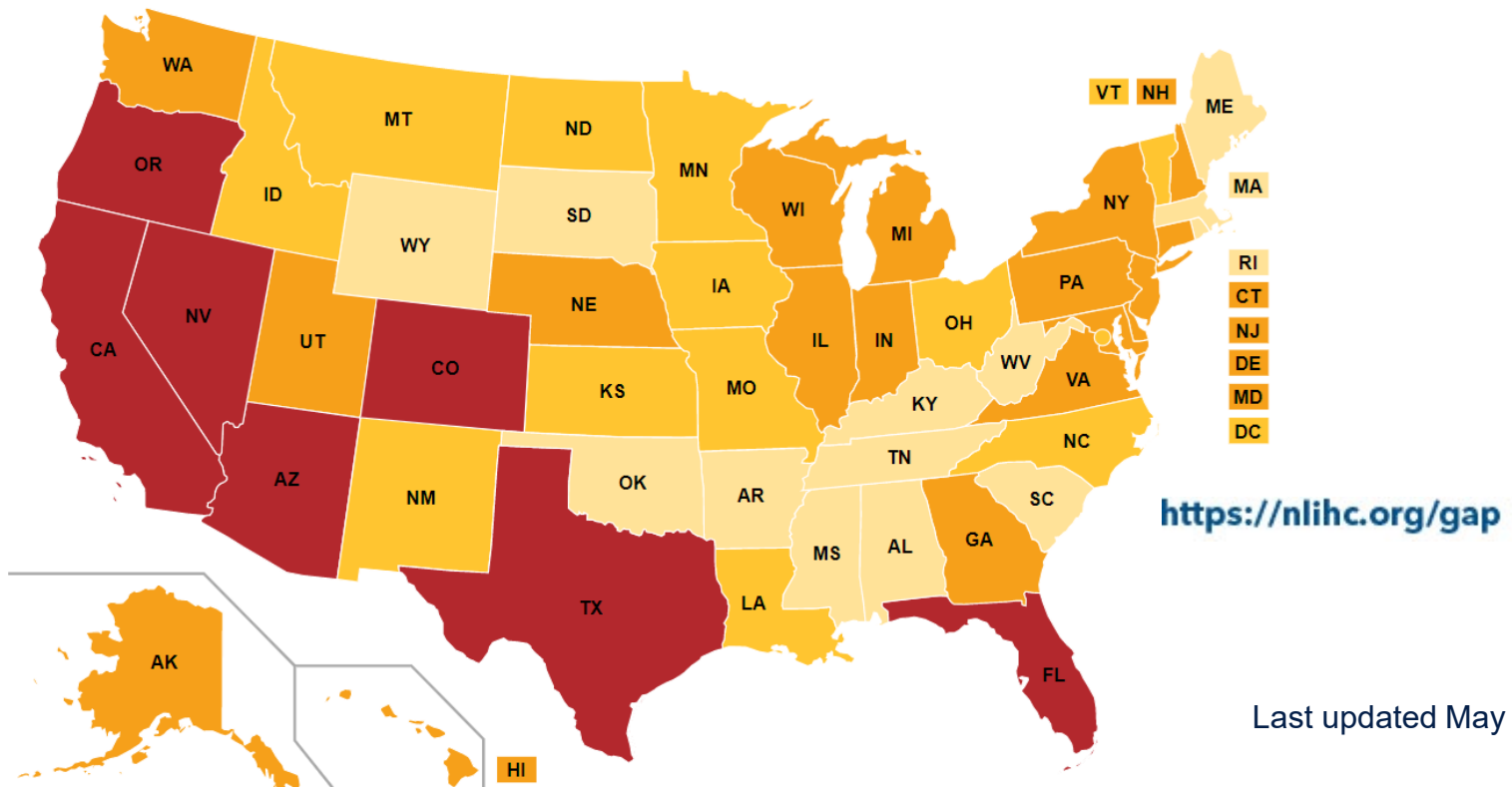UCSF

23 units available and affordable for every 100 extremely-low-income households in CA

No State Has an Adequate Supply of Affordable Rental Housing for the Lowest Income Renters

Affordable and Available Rental Homes per 100 Extremely Low Income Renter Households

● 30 or fewer ● 31 to 40 ● 41 to 45 ● 46 or greater

View Data as Table ↓

https://nlihc.org/gap

Last updated May 2022

Homelessness is a racial (in)justice issue

- Home ownership primary means of wealth-building

- Legal discrimination in home ownership

  - Racial covenants - Segregated neighborhoods

  - Redlining - Restricted access to mortgages in segregated neighborhoods

  - Predatory lending

- Ongoing discrimination in rental market

- Criminal justice, employment and educational

  discrimination

- Black Americans at 3 to 4 times increased risk of homelessness
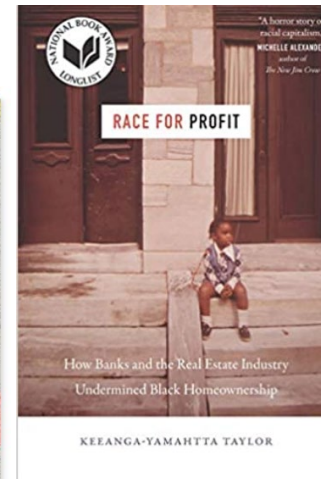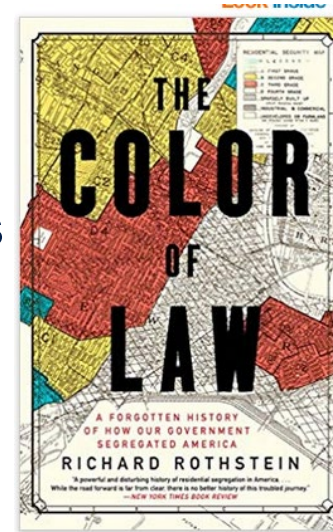
Henry, M., Watt, R., Rosenthal, L., & Shivji, A. Abt Associates. (2017). *The 2017 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to congress*. Retrieved from https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2017-AHAR-Part-1.pdf

So what do we do?

Criminalizing homelessness does not solve homelessness

- Does NOT improve safety

- Diverts scarce resources from housing to policing

- Dehumanizes people experiencing homelessness

- Worsens impoverishment

- Increases incarceration

- Poses barriers to exiting homelessness

- Makes it hard for PEH to report threats or protect themselves

Kushel M. Violence against people who are homeless: The Hidden Epidemic. https://homelessness.ucsf.edu/blog/violence-against-people-homeless-hidden-epidemic.

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While shelters play an important role, they can't solve homelessness

PEH

Shelter beds
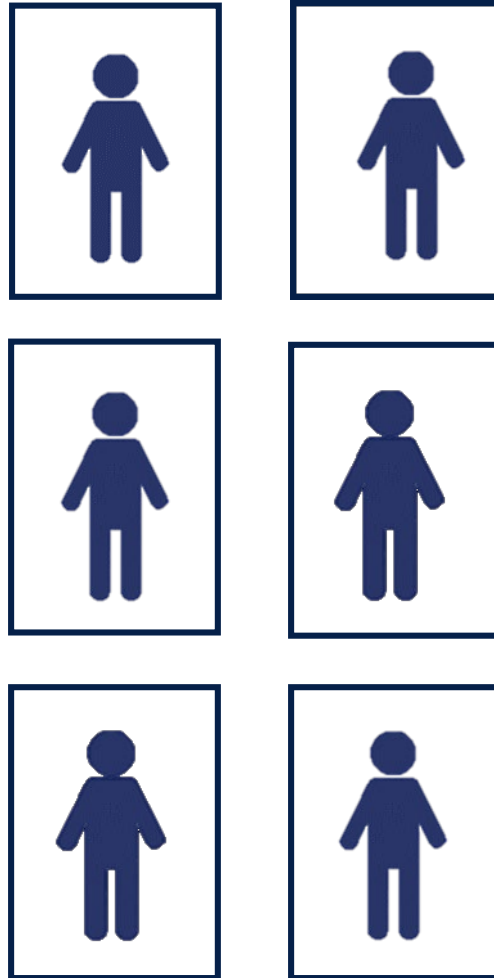
Housing

Housing

- Everyone needs housing

  - Some people require services, some don't

  - Some who require services require A LOT of services, some a little

- Housing must be affordable (30% income)

- Offer on Housing First basis

Expand Extremely Low Income (ELI) Housing

- ELI housing: affordable for those who make <30% AMI

KEY FACTS

1,308,774 OR **22%**
Renter households that are extremely low income

-1,003,595
Shortage of rental homes affordable and available for extremely low income renters

$26,740
Maximum income for 4-person extremely low income household (state level)

$81,191
Annual household income needed to afford a two-bedroom rental home at HUD's Fair Market Rent.

76%
Percent of extremely low income renter households with severe cost burden

National Low Income Housing Coalition

https://nlihc.org/

https://nlihc.org/gap/state/ca

Updated 04/28/22

Expand rental subsidies—only ¼ who qualify currently receive

All at-risk renters

Assisted: 23%

Unassisted: 77%
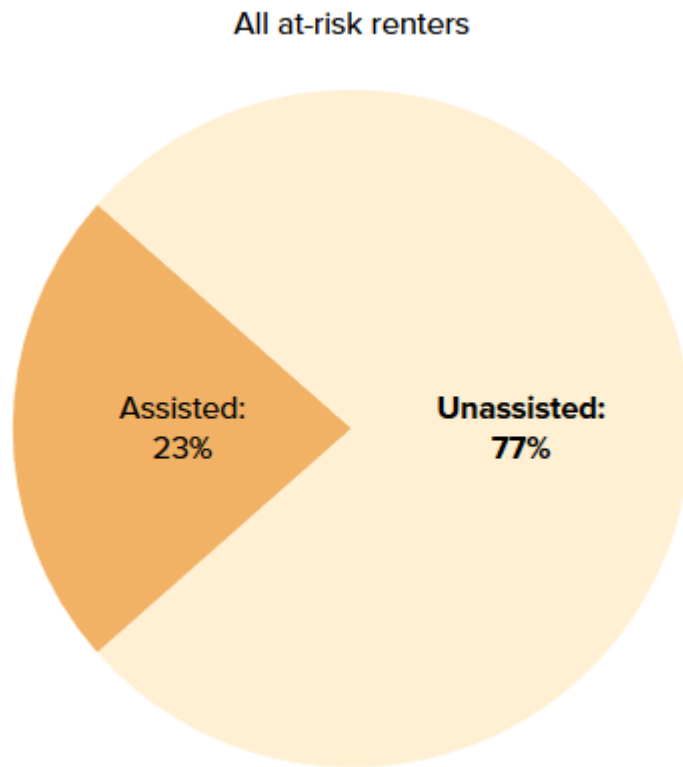
- Rental subsidies (e.g. HCV) are necessary but not sufficient

- Housing needs to be available

- Laws/enforcement to deter discrimination

- Housing navigation services

Sources: Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) custom tabulations of the 2015 American Housing Survey; 2016 HUD administrative data; FY2016 McKinney-Vento Permanent Supportive Housing bed counts; 2015-2016 Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS grantee performance profiles; and the USDA FY2016 Multi-Family Fair Housing Occupancy Report.

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Housing First

- Housing First is THE evidence-based approach to serving homeless individuals

    - NOT a specific program

    - NOT "Housing Only"

    - An evidence-based approach:

        – Prioritizes safe, permanent, affordable housing as the foundation

        – Engagement in services (or other pre-requisites) not required

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Extensive evidence base and real world experience support Housing First

- VA has relied on Housing First

- Dramatic reductions >>50% in veteran homelessness, while homelessness increases

What about those with severe behavioral disability?

- Permanent supportive housing

  - Subsidized housing

  - Linked supportive services that are voluntary

  - **Housing First** model – start with the housing

    - No requirement of sobriety or treatment

  - Shown to be highly effective at keeping people housed

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Project Welcome Home: Evidence for PSH

- Randomized controlled trial of Permanent Supportive Housing program (Santa Clara County)

- Target population: chronically homeless, highest users of services

- Intervention included:

  - Permanently subsidized housing

  - Intensive case management

  - Skilled staff

  - Voluntary services

  - Medical care

Raven, Niedzwiecki, & Kushel. (2020) A randomized trial of permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless persons with high use of publically funded services. *Health Services Research.* https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6773.13553

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Successful at keeping people housed!

- 86% housed (at recent follow-up, 91%)

  - Compared to 20.1% in control group

- Housed for 93% of 4 year follow-up

- Avg. 2.5 months for participants in the intervention to find housing

- 70% moved

  - Average 2x

Raven, Niedzwiecki, & Kushel. (2020) A randomized trial of permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless persons with high use of publically funded services. *Health Services Research.* https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6773.13553

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Cal AIM

- Many new opportunities to fund key supportive services, housing navigation, first month rent etc.

- Need collaboration between Health Plans, Health Delivery Systems and Housing providers

Seeking Solutions to Chronic Homelessness   @mkushel   @ucsfbhhi   2/17/2023   **UCSF**

Where do we go from here

- Understand the underlying structural factors that create and sustain homelessness

- The "homelessness" system cannot solve homelessness without structural changes

  - Increase ELI housing

  - Provide services matched to individual needs

  - Shelters play key role---but do not solve homelessness (and will fill up if no place to exit to!)

  - Housing First is the evidence-based method---people remain homeless because we don't have the housing (or have failed to provide right service mix)

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