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The Hardships of Homelessness

Linsey Newcomb

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Introduction

- Homelessness is not only lacking a home, but also not having a place to belong
- Homelessness is heavily populated in the D.C. area since they are the only jurisdiction in the area that guarantees shelter to the homeless during the winter and to families' year round (Austermuhle, 2019)
- Homelessness is not a choice, it is in fact social exclusion causing disadvantages within the community (Healey, 2014).
- 4 types of homelessness:
 - Chronic: being homeless for longer than a year
 - Episodic: has experienced 3 or more episodes of homelessness within a year
 - Transitional: a person that is going through a major life change or catastrophic event
 - Hidden: individuals that are couch-surfing and do not have immediate plans for permanent housing

A homeless man was asked "how long have you gone without a shower" and he answered "it depends how long it has been between each time it rains" (Kanopy, 2018).



Figure 2. A homeless man on the street of Seattle (Helping the homeless is an art, 2020).

Misperceptions of homelessness

- The homeless are lazy
- The homeless chose to be homeless
- There are plenty of services for those experiencing homelessness
- All people experiencing homelessness are addicts
- It is not that hard for the homeless to find a job

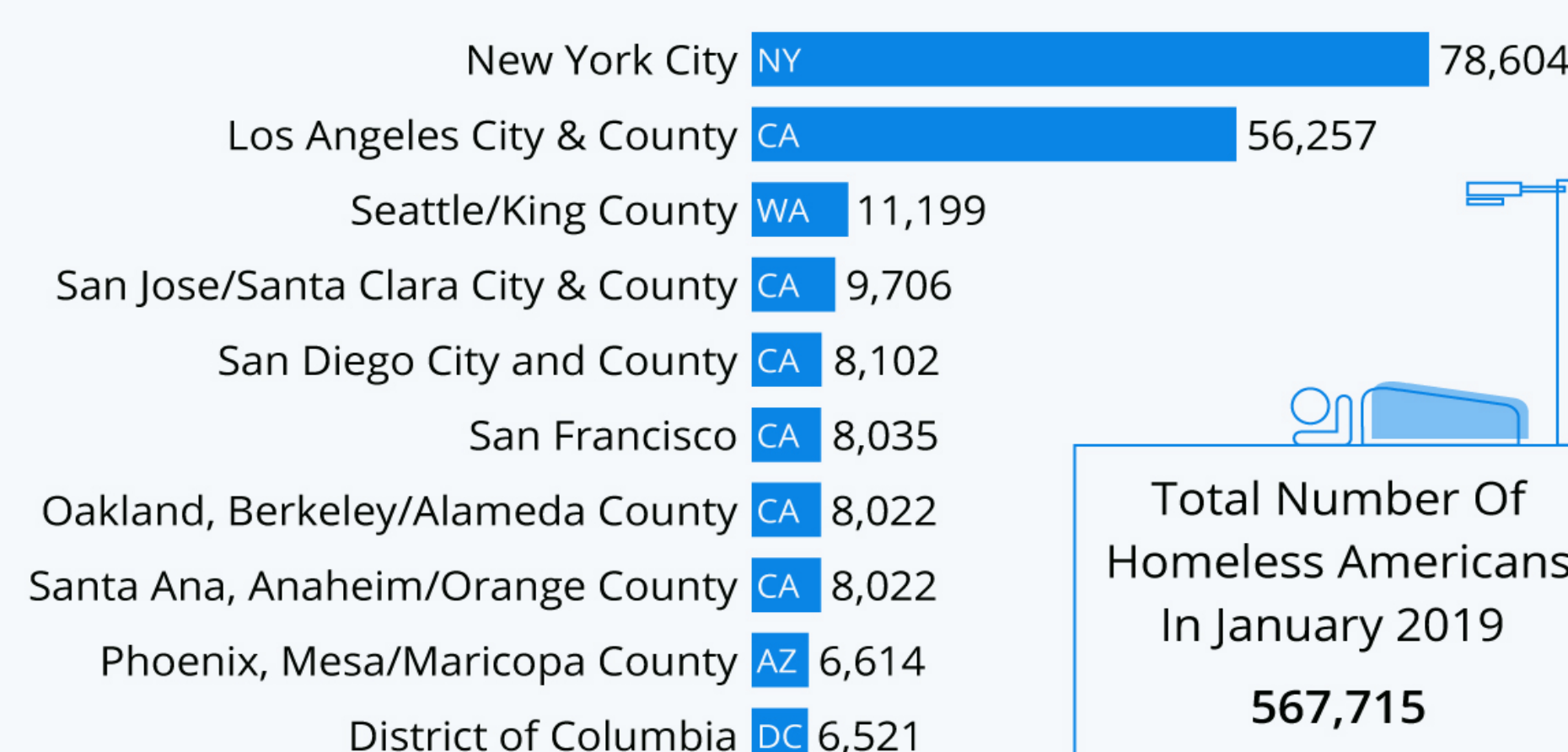
The facts behind these misperceptions

- The homeless are constantly looking for food, shelter, and a way to make income due to this constant moving it is impossible for them to be "lazy"
- People do not choose to be homeless, they are either evicted, cannot afford housing, or have serious mental illness
- The majority of services are primarily emergency –such as food banks
- Only a percentage of people who are homeless deal with addiction, and some people's addiction derives from homelessness (Myths and questions about homelessness, 2020).
- It is so difficult for a homeless person to find a job without a permanent address, lack of phone/contact, barriers to transportation, etc.

Homelessness is not just a loss of shelter, it can be a loss of family, community, or purpose.

The U.S. Cities With The Most Homeless People

CoCs with the largest numbers of people experiencing homelessness in 2019*



* CoC - Continuums of Care that are local planning bodies who coordinate homelessness services in certain areas
Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development



statista

Figure 1. 2019 graph showing the U.S. cities most populated with the homeless (McCarthy, Richter, 2020)

Common factors that cause homelessness

- Mental illness
- Trauma
- Lack of affordable housing
- Abuse
- Family issues/violence
- Addiction

Conclusion

The homeless do not chose to be homeless, they have experienced obstacles that have led them to unfortunate circumstances.

Ideas to help solve homelessness:

- More affordable housing
- Free treatment facilities for mental health and addiction
- Year round shelters
- Increasing access to job training and treatment
- Free housing services to achieve stability

Contact

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