DAILY FACT #1

For a city supporting a homeless person experiencing mental illness, the costs of shelter use, hospitalizations and time spent in jail can total $40,000 per year.

It would only cost $17,000 to provide stable housing for a year.

To learn more about WE Won't Rest, visit WE.org/wewontrest.
#WEWontRest
The cost of homelessness is high. Cities feel the social pressure and economic stress of homelessness due to the daily use of social services such as hospitals, emergency shelters and police officers. In the United States, one third of the homeless population suffers from a serious mental illness*. Unfortunately, these people often get stuck in a negative cycle, where their mental health issues lead to homelessness, and their state of being homeless worsens their poor mental health. The stress of being homeless can amplify anxiety, fear, depression and substance use, making it harder for people to improve their circumstances.

By providing stable housing for homeless individuals with mental illness, the costs of shelter, hospitalization and jail time decrease. By removing the barrier of homelessness, individuals in a community gain a sense of security and stability, and become better prepared to face other obstacles in life.

* The National Institute of Mental Health defines serious mental illness as a mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder that results in serious functional impairment, which substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities.

Further Reading
- National Institute of Mental Health, “Serious Mental Illness (SMI) Among U.S. Adults.”
- The Homeless Hub, “Mental Health.”
  www.homelesshub.ca/about-homelessness/topics/mental-health.
- United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, “People Experiencing Chronic Homelessness.”
  www.usich.gov/goals/chronic.

Discussion Questions

1. How do you think states can better allocate funds to tackle the issue of homelessness in their communities?

2. What are some ways to help reduce the number of homeless people with mental illnesses?
The number of homelessness veterans has declined by 1/3rd since 2009.
While the number of homeless veterans has continued to steadily decrease, some of the statistics remain unsettling. Currently 11 percent of homeless adults are veterans, and almost 10 percent of these veterans are women. Women are another vulnerable group who face a unique set of challenges living without a home, including increased risk of violence, fewer opportunities to find well-paying jobs and greater likelihood of supporting children as a single parent.

Among the many difficulties homeless veterans face, many face them alone. In 2014, 96 percent of veterans experienced homelessness as individuals, as opposed to being homeless as members of families with children.

Across the country, the rates of homelessness among veterans vary widely. California represents almost a quarter of the national homeless veteran population, with New York following closely behind. Between 2009 and 2014, the veteran homelessness population fell by 33 percent, with 24,117 fewer homeless veterans.

Further Reading

- National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, “Background & Statistics.”
- National Alliance to End Homelessness, “Fact Sheet: Veteran Homelessness.”

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think leads to homelessness among the veteran population?

2. What are some services or programs that could help reduce the number of homeless veterans?
DAILY FACT #3

23% OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS ARE UNDER 18.

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Dealing with homelessness can be scary at any age. But for the thousands of American youth living without a home, reality can be especially frightening. Children are forced to grow up quickly when they have to worry about where their next meal will come from or if they’ll have a roof over their head on a given night.

A few of the main causes of youth homelessness include physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse, involvement with the child welfare system, discrimination, homophobia and poverty. The reasons for youth homelessness remain complex, and any combination of factors can contribute to issues at school, with crime or with addictions, which can all perpetuate the cycle of homelessness.

While the United States has a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of $17.9 trillion—the largest in the world—it has the second highest rate of child poverty among the world’s developed countries.

**Further Reading**

- The Homeless Hub, “Why Do Young People Become Homeless?”
- National Conference of State Legislatures, “Homeless and Runaway Youth.”
- National Coalition for the Homeless, “Homeless Youth.”
  [www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/youth.html](http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/youth.html).

**Discussion Questions**

1. What kinds of opportunities do you think homeless youth miss out on?

2. How do you think it’s possible that the United States has the second highest rate of child poverty of all developed countries?
DAILY FACT #4

THERE IS NO U.S. STATE WHERE A PERSON EARNING MINIMUM WAGE CAN AFFORD AN APARTMENT AT FAIR MARKET RENT.

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Millions of Americans are struggling to afford rent. Without an increase in wages, and low-income jobs becoming limited, the gap continues to grow between what people earn and the cost of their housing. A renter earning the federal minimum wage of $7.25 per hour would need to work 90 hours per week to afford a one-bedroom rental home at fair market rent. This is the amount of money a property would rent for if it was available right now.

One of the root causes of the housing crisis in the United States is a lack of investment in affordable housing development. Across the country, only 28 adequate and affordable units are available for every 100 renter households with extremely low incomes. Not a single area in the United States has enough affordable housing for all of its extremely low-income renters, which are considered families with incomes at or below 30 percent of the median income in the area.*

Many low-income renters are forced to spend more than half of their income on rent and utilities. This contributes to the cycle of poverty and makes it difficult for families to make ends meet. The effects associated with the lack of affordable housing are continuing to be felt throughout the country.

* Median income is the income level earned by a household where half of the homes in the area earn more and half earn less. It is the middle of everyone's earnings.

Further Reading

- National Low Income Housing Coalition, “Out of Reach 2016.”
  [www.nlihc.org/oor](http://www.nlihc.org/oor).
- Attn,”America Has An Affordable Housing Crisis.”

Discussion Questions

1. What are some of the long-term effects of being unable to afford housing?

2. What do you think can be done to make housing more affordable in the U.S.?
9 in 10 homeless women report having experienced severe abuse.

To learn more about WE Won't Rest, visit WE.org/wewontrest.
#WEWontRest
Abuse, in all of its forms, is a severe issue for many homeless women. Whether abuse is what led them to being in a state of homelessness, or they experience abuse while on the streets, the issue remains prevalent in many realms. There is a strong correlation between domestic violence and homelessness. Research shows that domestic violence is the third leading cause of homelessness among families in the United States.

Many victims of abuse become homeless after escaping violence because adequate housing is not available. This lack of affordable housing creates a difficult situation for women in abusive relationships because they are often left with the decision between enduring abuse at home or leaving with the possibility of becoming homeless.

A lack of alternative housing also leads women to return to these violent relationships. When women lack the resources to empower themselves against abuse, homelessness becomes a reality for many.

Further Reading

- American Civil Liberties Union, “Domestic Violence and Homelessness.”

Discussion Questions

1. How can governments ensure more resources are available to victims of abuse?

2. What are some of the ways we could reduce the number of homeless victims of abuse?