



**The Revolving Door That Never Stops:  
The Repetition of Incarceration and Homelessness**  
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Homelessness can happen to anyone if particularly bad life choices are made or unfortunate circumstances arise. The 2020 HUD Annual Homeless Assessment Report Data states that there are 580,446 people currently homeless in the United States. Although there are various reasons for these people to be in the state that they're in, having been formerly incarcerated is a big one.

It is ten times more likely for someone to end up homeless after incarceration than it is for someone in the general public, having never been incarcerated, to end up homeless. Among this population are mostly men and women of color who already face discrimination in other forms in their daily lives.

Once incarcerated, the entirety of someone's life changes. They are stripped of everything they once had and are left to the harshness of prison. Eventually, those that are released from prison are faced with common trials such as criminal record screenings for necessities such as getting a

job or renting a place to call home. Affordable and safe housing options are lacking in the United States making it difficult for people to access living arrangements whether they have a criminal background or not.

Statistics show that formerly incarcerated women, specifically women of color, are more likely to become homeless after incarceration than men, but women in general are more likely to be offered place in homeless shelters than men. There are few opportunities that help the previously incarcerated understand their future housing and employment options.

Over half of the people that have made use of homeless shelters were previously incarcerated. It is difficult for the homeless to find a place to rent or live due to lack of funding or lack of employment, but it is even more difficult when they have a history of incarceration.

Many people refer to a “revolving door” when it comes to the incarcerated and homeless. The previously stated number of a person being 10 times more likely to become homeless once they have been in prison continues to rise as the same person is incarcerated again, and therefore likely to be homeless again. This cycle is the reasoning behind the phrase of a “revolving door”, the circumstance of prison and homelessness opening and closing and opening again on repeat for one’s entire life. This cycle needs to be broken.

The life of an incarcerated person leads to many suffering from mental disorders like major depressive disorder and bipolar disorder, but furthermore the prevalence of rape within prison leads to post-traumatic stress disorder as well. Adding mental health problems into the mix of the strife faced by formerly incarcerated people only lessens their opportunity to recover to a place of consistent safety and shelter.

Many incarcerated people are imprisoned multiple times. There are some repeat offenders that are ill and therefore commit malicious and violent crimes more than once for their own inexplicable reasons. There are also good people that do illegal things on the basis of what they consider necessity, such as stealing food or medication. To those that end up homeless post-incarceration, some say that their life is easier behind bars. At least there they are sheltered and

fed. The real-world offers very few chances for people to release themselves from the apparatus of the revolving door. There must be implementation of a metaphorical door stop to terminate the cycle of people having already done their time and are ready to properly become a part of the community instead of being locked in this place of persistent ruination.

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