



The Link Unbroken Between Autism and Homelessness

Autistic people face a high risk of homelessness. While more information is needed, some [autism studies](#) show that many homeless people meet the criteria for an autism diagnosis. The same research shows that among homeless adults who do not meet the criteria, many demonstrate high levels of autistic traits.

Researchers don't fully understand the link between autism and homelessness. However, there are likely several links that need to be addressed, including the [link between autism and addiction](#).

Autism and Addiction

People with addictions experience high rates of homelessness, and these concerns may overlap with the autistic experience.

Research in this area has shown mixed results. While some research indicates that autistic people are less likely than others to develop an addiction, other sources indicate the opposite.

However, when autistic people do develop addictions, social and sensory stressors may play a role, according to the [National Autistic Society](#) in the United Kingdom.

Employment Struggles

Unemployment can certainly lead to homelessness, especially when an unemployed person does not have access to the right resources.

Autistic people face high rates of unemployment and underemployment, according to [autism employment research](#).

For autistic people who struggled with education, that lack of education may prevent them from qualifying for jobs that pay more than minimum wage.

For others, unemployment may come from specific autism-related difficulties. For example, an autistic person may not be able to remain in a workplace with bright lights and loud noises. Social difficulties may cause an autistic person to limit their interactions with customers.

Lack of Understanding and Resources

In the above-cited study, researchers found that autistic people who disclosed their diagnosis to their employers were more likely to remain employed. This may be because these individuals received accommodations as a result of their disclosure.

However, not every autistic person is comfortable sharing their diagnosis. Furthermore, some autistic people are undiagnosed. They may have some traits that require accommodations, but if they aren't aware that accommodations are possible, they may struggle in the workplace.

Autistic people also face a lack of understanding, which can impact the resources that they are able to access. Many people see autism in terms of severity, from less severe autism to more severe autism. This view can be used to deny the needs of autistic people.

For instance, in an article on [autism and homelessness](#), an autistic author describes getting turned away from agencies, both for being “too high functioning” and “too low functioning.”

Understanding the Needs of Autistic Homeless Individuals

Autistic people and homeless people often need resources, but when autism and homelessness overlap, people don't always get the assistance that they need. For organizations that focus on homelessness, it is vital to learn what their autistic clients need. They can learn about these needs in several ways.

First, they can learn from autistic-led organizations. Some resources center themselves around the friends and family members of autistic people, but they do not address or listen to autistic people themselves. Autistic-led groups are more equipped to explain specific autistic needs.

Second, they can provide autism-specific support. For instance, a client may need to meet in a low-noise environment.

Organization leaders should also understand that autistic people have a range of needs, no matter the perceived “severity” of their disability. If a client has few communication struggles, that does not mean that they won't need support in another area. Likewise, if a client is nonverbal or struggles with social cues, that does not mean that they can't succeed in other areas.