

# **I'm Sick, and There's No Place to Call Home**

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As of 2019, nearly 1% of the American population is homeless. That is a total of five hundred fifty-three thousand people with nowhere to go, and likely nothing to eat. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development found that over five hundred thousand people are homeless on any given night. Employment that would lead to a permanent housing situation is extremely difficult to come by for these individuals as twenty-five percent of them are mentally ill.

Mental illness is, and has been, a major cause of homelessness. Among its effects are irrational actions, which would lead to strained relationships, which will affect the individual's performance in a professional workspace. Considering these factors, it is extremely challenging to get employed, which leaves these five hundred thousand people with no stable income—or no income at all. Their irrational actions can push away family and friends who could house them, leaving these mentally ill individuals to fend for themselves on the streets.

With no income and no one to rely on, these people have no way to care for their basic needs, such as medicine and food. With no money to do anything, they are left in poor physical

health. This usually leads these people to take whatever drugs they can find, eventually leading to substance abuse. What started as attempted self-care can cause infection from sharing needles and addiction to the substance itself. Combining poor physical health with substance abuse, both of which are caused by the person's mental illness, nearly eliminates all chance of possible employment.

Being that substance abuse is illegal, the police who discover these individuals are actually more likely to arrest them than escort them to a proper mental health institution. After they serve their sentence and are released, they have nowhere to go, leaving them back on the streets. This perpetuating cycle will harm the people affected by it more than help them, only leaving a dark future for them.

In addition to all these previous harmful factors, the average working person is uninformed about the average homeless person. There are also many, many homeless everywhere we go. This causes the working person to simply ignore the homeless they see on the streets and continue their way without offering some help, or even giving them a second glance. The average person simply doesn't care about the homeless people they encounter every day. They treat the homeless as if they are invisible. This contributes to the loneliness and dehumanization that they feel every day.

The government has put measures in place in an attempt to aid the homeless. One these aforementioned measures has been to construct homeless shelters, but simply having a place to defend themselves from the elements isn't enough. They also need treatment, and programs that offer treatment often do not offer shelter. A government-funded program that would address both of these concerns would finally be able to cut down on the amount of people suffering in the streets due to circumstances they can't control.

## References

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