



The Global Statistics of Homelessness

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It should come as no surprise that homelessness is an ever-growing problem in our country. In fact, in some cities the percentage of homeless is increasing so rapidly that mayors have begun declaring states of emergency. The overall number of homeless in America in 2017 is 553,742 people with 76,501 homeless in New York City. How is our homeless population in comparison with other cities in the world? What are some cities in the world that have the highest homeless population?

The last time there was a global survey on homelessness was in 2005. The survey found that 1.6 billion people globally lacked adequate housing, and that there were 100 million homeless. But getting an accurate count on the homeless population can be quite challenging as the definition of homelessness varies by country. Also, most census data takes into account those living in shelters and receiving government aid. They don't normally take into account those living in inadequate housing such as slums, squatting in structures, couch surfing with friends and family, and those who move often.

In Manila, Philippines it is estimated that 44% of the entire country is living below the poverty line. 22.8 million people are living in slums in the Philippines according to the UN habit report. 3.1 million people living in the capital city of Manila are homeless, including about 700 thousand children, making it the highest homeless population in a single city.

Mumbai, India has the third highest population of homelessness, after New York City. A 2011 census found that there are a little more than 57 thousand homeless, which is a 20% increase in ten years. A study shows that nearly 96% of the homeless have been so for over 5 years, and 60% have been homeless for over 20 years.

Studies have shown that there are almost 100,000 people living on the streets in Moscow, Russia, one of the coldest places on Earth. With the falling price of oil more than two million people have fallen into poverty. Many homeless are unable to withstand the harsh elements and freeze to death, leaving many to seek shelter in the sewers to get out of the harsh winters.

In Mexico City it is estimated that 50% of the city has no adequate housing, with between 15,000-30,000 people sleeping on the streets. This number has increased due to serious

damages to infrastructure caused by earthquakes. Many houses are either too damaged to stay in or have collapsed entirely.

In Budapest, Hungary there are roughly 10,000 people living on the streets, which is about 1/3 of the entire homeless population of Hungary. Unfortunately, the Hungarian government wants to amend the constitution to make homelessness unconstitutional. Meaning that they want to make it illegal for people to sleep on the streets. The Hungarian prime minister states that, "Hungary has adequate day programs and homeless shelters." He justifies saying this because with Budapest, being the tourism center of the country, seeing homeless people is "an inconvenience." We should not criminalize homelessness as the means of ending it, criminalizing it will do nothing to end it. Instead there should be a focus on what is the root cause and go from there.

One thing that I found while researching this article is that it is extremely difficult to find current statistics from these countries. Governments around the world should address these statistics and try to get more accurate information so that we can fully grasp the problem that is global homelessness. More resources need to be put into tracking the problem to get the full scope and to solve it.

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