

Addressing the Global Crisis of Homeless Men: Causes and Solutions

International Council for Men and Boys

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Homelessness is a ubiquitous problem that transcends borders, with estimates of total homelessness reaching 150 million people worldwide.¹ Despite concerted efforts to mitigate this issue, it persists in various forms and magnitudes across different nations. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing recognizes the need to address family homelessness through gender-sensitive positive measures to prevent and eliminate homeless.²

Accordingly, in this summary, we scrutinize global homelessness statistics, shed light on the vast disparity affecting men, and delve into the multifaceted factors contributing to this problem.

Country-Level Data

Statistics paint a disturbing picture: Based on data from 45 countries around the world, 76% of the homeless population consists of males. (see Appendix A) Taiwan, China, Japan, Brazil, and India reveal particularly pronounced discrepancies, with males comprising over 80% of the homeless population in these countries.

These major sex disparities highlight the intricate nature of homelessness, warranting tailored approaches to aid vulnerable demographic groups.

Factors Contributing to Homelessness

A wide range of factors contribute to the high rates of homelessness among men:

1. *Economic Instability*: Men are more likely to be employed in industries that are highly susceptible to economic downturns and have higher rates of job loss.³ This instability can lead to homelessness when men are unable to secure new employment quickly enough to maintain housing.

Economic downturns and widening income disparities significantly contribute to homelessness. Marginalized individuals, particularly men, struggle to afford housing and basic necessities, especially in countries like Brazil⁴ and India⁵ where wealth gaps are

¹ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/10/innovative-projects-tackling-homelessness-around-the-world/>

² <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-housing/homelessness-and-human-rights>

³ <https://www.epi.org/blog/job-growth-great-recession-equal-men-women/>

⁴ <https://efe.com/en/economy/2024-01-20/inequality-worsens-in-brazil-as-elites-concentrate-more-and-more-wealth/>

⁵ <https://www.southasiamonitor.org/spotlight/growing-income-disparities-india-can-upset-social-equilibrium>

escalating.

2. *Social Policies*: Inadequate social safety nets disproportionately impact men. For instance, men are less likely to receive social welfare benefits, housing support, or other forms of assistance that can prevent homelessness. This is often due to policies that prioritize women and children.

For example, while there are thousands of domestic violence shelters exclusively for women, only a few cater specifically to men, further exacerbating their homelessness situation.⁶ Women are equally likely to commit abuse,⁷ yet they have more access to domestic violence shelters, which often accept women who are homeless but not necessarily abused.⁸ Men, on the other hand, face a significant lack of resources and shelters dedicated to them, leaving them more vulnerable to prolonged homelessness.⁹

3. *Sex Discrimination and Marginalization*: Discriminatory practices based on sex, ethnicity, and disability amplify homelessness. Marginalized groups, including men, encounter systemic barriers to housing, heightening their vulnerability. Although seventy percent of the homeless population is men,¹⁰ New York recently approved a homeless shelter for women only, demonstrating the sex discrimination against homeless men.¹¹
4. *Restraining Orders*: Restraining orders without sufficient supporting evidence wrongfully cause men to be removed from their residence, which can result in legal and financial troubles that lead to homelessness.¹² Additionally, the legal system often treats men more harshly, exacerbating their vulnerability to homelessness.¹³

Solutions

To combat homelessness effectively, several concrete solutions, action steps, and best practices have been proposed by non-profits, governments, and other anti-homelessness advocates. These approaches are multifaceted and involve various stakeholders working collaboratively. Here are some of the most current and impactful strategies:

⁶ <https://nypost.com/2017/10/29/these-shelters-help-male-victims-of-domestic-violence/>

⁷ <https://endtodv.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Thirty-Years-of-DV-Half-Truths-Falsehoods-and-Lies.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.thehotline.org/resources/emergency-housing-for-domestic-violence-victims/>,

<https://www.salvationarmyusa.org/usn/womens-shelters/>

⁹ https://medium.com/@info_6724/dv-shelters-exclusively-for-men-fathers-and-their-children-2024-ce1e916ab8ce

¹⁰ <https://endhomelessness.org/demographic-data-project-gender-and-individual-homelessness/>

¹¹ <https://www.amny.com/news/group-upper-west-side-homeless-shelter/>

¹² <https://endtodv.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Restraining-Orders.pdf>

¹³ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/256027303_Estimating_Gender_Disparities_in_Federal_Criminal_Cases

Affordable Housing Development

Developing affordable housing units is critical in addressing homelessness. Governments and non-profits are investing in building and preserving affordable housing.¹⁴

• *Strategies:*

- Utilizing public land for affordable housing projects.
- Providing tax incentives to developers.
- Increasing funding for low-income housing tax credits.

Housing First Approach

The Housing First model prioritizes providing permanent housing to homeless individuals without preconditions such as sobriety or employment. This approach has been widely adopted and proven effective in various regions.

• *Implementation:* Cities like Helsinki, Finland¹⁵ and Salt Lake City,¹⁶ Utah, have successfully reduced homelessness through Housing First initiatives.

• *Key Components:*

- Immediate access to housing.
- Supportive services tailored to individual needs.
- Focus on long-term stability rather than temporary solutions.
- Elimination of sex discriminatory policies and practices.

Expanding Support Services

Providing support services, including healthcare, mental health services, and employment assistance is essential for helping individuals maintain stable housing, paying particular attention to ensure that males are equally served.¹⁷

• *Components:*

- Health care and mental health support.
- Job training and employment services.
- Substance abuse treatment.

¹⁴ National Low Income Housing Coalition: <https://nlihc.org>

¹⁵ <https://housingfirsteurope.eu/country/finland/>

¹⁶ <https://thebetter.news/utah-housing-first-homeless/>

¹⁷ National Alliance to End Homelessness: <https://endhomelessness.org>

Preventive Measures

Preventing homelessness before it starts through various programs aimed at vulnerable populations.¹⁸

• *Initiatives:*

- Eviction prevention programs.
- Rental assistance and subsidies.
- Support for at-risk youth and families.
- Require sufficient supporting evidence for issuance of restraining orders.

Collaboration and Advocacy

Effective solutions for homelessness require collaboration between government agencies, non-profits, and community organizations, as well as advocacy to influence policy changes.¹⁹ For instance, in Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Bar Foundation established the Equal Justice Center to serve as a centralized hub for legal aid services. This initiative aims to foster, promote, and facilitate collaboration among all legal aid programs, just as homeless advocates should collaborate and coordinate their efforts.²⁰

• *Collaborative Models:*

- Community action agencies.
- Public-private partnerships.
- Grassroots advocacy and education campaigns.

Technological Innovations

Using technology to better track and manage homelessness services and provide real-time data to improve resource allocation.²¹

• *Examples:*

- Coordinated entry systems.²²
- Data sharing platforms among service providers.²³

¹⁸ Corporation for Supportive Housing: Prevention: <https://www.csh.org/about-csh/>

¹⁹ United Way: Advocacy and Policy: <https://www.unitedway.org/search-results?q=homelessness#>

²⁰ <https://www.philabarfoundation.org>

²¹ National Alliance to End Homelessness: Using Technology to End Homelessness: <https://endhomelessness.org/?s=using+technology+to+end+homelessness>

²² <https://hsh.sfgov.org/services/the-homelessness-response-system/coordinated-entry/>

²³ <https://www.thn.org/thdsn/>

- Mobile apps for homeless individuals to access services.²⁴

Conclusion

Homelessness is a complex societal issue requiring urgent attention and concerted efforts on local, national, and global fronts. By comprehending the underlying factors contributing to homelessness and implementing targeted interventions, we can strive toward building equitable societies where everyone has access to safe and stable housing, with the goal of eliminating sex disparities.

²⁴ <https://www.shelterapp.org>

Appendix:

Sex Specific Homelessness Rates in 45 Countries²⁵

COUNTRY	Males	Females
Taiwan	94%	6%
China	92%	7%
Japan	91%	9%
Brazil	91%	9%
India - Delhi	90%	10%
Hungary	86%	14%
Italy	86%	14%
Russia	85%	15%
South Africa	85%	15%
Chile	84%	16%
Netherlands	84%	16%
Slovenia	83%	17%
Poland	82%	18%
Romania	76%	14%
Croatia	81%	19%
Spain	80%	20%
Greece	80%	20%
Latvia	80%	20%
Lithuania	77%	23%
Finland	77%	23%
Portugal	76%	24%
Czech Republic	74%	24%
Bangladesh	75%	25%
Denmark	75%	25%
Norway	73%	27%
South Korea	72%	28%

²⁵<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1hf1zRYHNDJvunWWeoOI33VTVmPADtjzMniAmxBPRE/edit#gid=1526345150>

Luxembourg	72%	28%
United States	70%	29%
Dubai	70%	30%
Canada	62%	24%
Austria: County of Salzburg	59%	25%
Bulgaria - Sofia	66%	34%
Cyprus	66%	34%
Bucharest - Rumania	65%	35%
Slovakia	65%	35%
Cambodia	64%	36%
Germany	62%	37%
France	62%	38%
Sweden	62%	38%
Belgium	61%	39%
Palau	60%	40%
Ireland	58%	42%
Scotland	58%	42%
Australia	58%	42%
Nigeria -- Lagos	51%	49%
Average (mean)	76%	23%