

Issues in Homelessness*

Here are some key issues and potential solutional solutions. When available, San Diego-specific examples and references are supplied.

Lack of affordable housing: Rising housing costs, coupled with stagnant wages, make it difficult for individuals and families with low incomes to secure and maintain housing. The biggest factor in homelessness rates is availability of affordable housing ([LA Times](#), 2022; [“Homelessness is a housing problem”](#), 2022).

- [“Opinion: I have slept on sidewalks so I know what might help end homelessness. A home”](#). San Diego Union Tribune, 2/23

Poverty and unemployment: Poverty, inadequate wages, and lack of job opportunities contribute to homelessness. People who are unable to afford basic necessities like food and healthcare are at a higher risk of losing their homes.

Criminalization of homelessness: Policing doesn’t end homelessness, but can often exacerbate the problem when people are incarcerated, fined, and have their belongings taken away.

- [“Studies show policing doesn’t end homelessness”](#). Inewssource, 3/23.
- [“Impact of encampment sweeps on people experiencing homelessness”](#). National Health Care for the Homeless Council, 12/22.

Mental illness and substance abuse: Many individuals experiencing homelessness also suffer from mental health issues and substance abuse disorders. The lack of accessible and affordable mental health services, coupled with societal stigma, can make it challenging for them to access proper treatment and support.

Social and systemic factors: Homelessness can be influenced by systemic issues such as discrimination, racial disparities, and social exclusion. Certain populations, including veterans, LGBTQ+ youth, and individuals with criminal records, face specific challenges that contribute to their homelessness.

SOLUTIONS

Housing First: Governments can invest in the construction and preservation of affordable housing units, increase rent subsidies, and implement policies to protect tenants' rights. Public-private partnerships can also be established to create more affordable housing options.

- [“Homelessness is a Housing Problem”](#). University of California Press, 2022.
- [“How Houston’s homelessness breakthrough could be a national game changer”](#). CNN, 6/23

Employment and income support: Efforts should focus on providing job training, education, and employment opportunities to homeless individuals. Expanding social welfare programs,

*How to use this document:

- Feel free to use some or all of the text above when writing your letter
- For location-specific data, internet searches using each of the issues and bullet points above, followed by the name of your location should be useful.

such as unemployment benefits and living wage policies, can help prevent homelessness and provide a safety net for those at risk.

Supportive services: Comprehensive support services are crucial to address the underlying issues faced by individuals experiencing homelessness. This includes mental health and substance abuse treatment, healthcare services, case management, economic assistance and access to social support networks.

Prevention strategies: Implementing homelessness prevention programs, such as eviction prevention assistance, rent subsidies, affordable housing, and financial counseling, can help individuals and families avoid homelessness in the first place.

- [“Shallow Subsidies: A golden opportunity to address older adult homelessness in San Diego”](#). Voice of San Diego, 4/22.

Streamline the bureaucracy around treatment and housing

- [“Grand jury suggests improvements to housing homeless people quicker, and to retain and train staff”](#). San Diego Union Tribune, 5/23
- [“How Houston’s homelessness breakthrough could be a national game changer”](#). CNN, 6/23

Addressing systemic issues: Tackling homelessness requires addressing larger systemic issues, such as poverty, inequality, and discrimination. This involves advocating for equitable policies, combating social stigma, and promoting inclusivity in housing, employment, and social services.

Other References:

San Diego’s June, 2023 encampment ban:

- June, 2023: [“Proposed camping ban aims to transform San Diego’s homelessness epicenter”](#). Voice of San Diego.
- June, 2023: [“What a crackdown on homeless camps could mean for neighborhoods”](#). Voice of San Diego

Data on homelessness:

- June, 2023: [“Schools continue to struggle with student homelessness”](#). Voice of San Diego.
- June, 2023: [“Homelessness in San Diego County rose 22 percent last year”](#). San Diego Union Tribune
- June, 2023: [“San Diego far short of beds for homeless people”](#). San Diego Union Tribune.

Organizations:

- [San Diego Regional Task Force on Homelessness](#)
- [Voices of Our City Choir](#)
- [Serving Seniors](#)
- [Shoreline Community Services](#)

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