

Pine Street Inn Logo <<https://www.pinestreetinn.org/home>>

Facts About Homeless Veterans

This FAQ was compiled from information from the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans <<http://www.nchv.org/>>.

Why are veterans homeless?

In addition to the complex set of factors that affect most homeless individuals lack of affordable housing, poverty, job or income loss, mental illness, substance abuse, health problems, etc. many veterans live with the lingering effect of PTSD, often compounded by a lack of family and social support networks. Military occupations and training are not always transferable to the civilian workforce, placing some veterans at a disadvantage when competing for employment.

Who are homeless veterans?

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) states the nation's homeless veterans are predominantly male, with roughly five percent being female. The majority of them are single; come from urban areas; and suffer from mental illness, alcohol and/or substance abuse, or co-occurring disorders. About one-third of the adult homeless population are veterans.

America's homeless veterans have served in World War II, the Korean War, Cold War, Vietnam War, Grenada, Panama, Lebanon, Afghanistan and Iraq (OEF/OIF), the military's anti-drug cultivation efforts in South America, and elsewhere. Nearly half of homeless veterans served during the Vietnam era. Two-thirds served our country for at least three years, and one-third were stationed in a war zone.

Roughly 56 percent of all homeless veterans are African American or Hispanic, despite only accounting for 12.8 percent and 15.4 percent of the U.S. population respectively.

About 1.5 million other veterans, meanwhile, are considered at-risk of homelessness due to poverty, lack of support networks, and dismal living conditions in overcrowded or substandard housing.

How many homeless veterans are there?

Although flawless counts are impossible to come by the transient nature of homeless populations presents a major difficulty ? the Department of Veterans Affairs estimates that 107,000 veterans are homeless on any given night.

The Urban Institute, in conjunction with the National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients (NSHAPC), projected in 1996 that each year, 2.3 million to 3.5 million people experience homelessness in America. The survey found that 23 percent of all homeless persons ? and 33 percent of all homeless men ? are veterans. By taking 23 percent of the total range, that would indicate there are between 529,000 and 840,000 veterans who are homeless at some time during the year.

Does not THE VA take care of homeless veterans?

To a certain extent, yes. The VA's specialized homeless programs served more than 92,000 veterans in 2009, which is highly commendable. This still leaves well over 100,000 more veterans, however, who must seek assistance from local government agencies and community- and faith-based service organizations.

Since 1987, VA's programs for homeless veterans have emphasized collaboration with such community service providers to help expand services to more veterans in crisis. These partnerships are credited with reducing the number of homeless veterans by more than half over the past six years.

What services do veterans need?

Veterans need a coordinated effort that provides secure housing, nutritional meals, basic physical health care, substance abuse care and aftercare, mental health counseling, personal development and empowerment. Additionally, veterans need job assessment, training and placement assistance.

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