

People who become homeless do not fit one general description. However, people experiencing homelessness do have certain shared basic needs, including affordable housing, adequate incomes, and health care. Some homeless people may need additional services such as mental health or drug treatment in order to remain securely housed. *-National Coalition for the Homeless*

## Who are the Homeless?

Most studies show that single homeless adults are more likely to be male than female. In 2007, a survey by the U.S. Conference of Mayors found that 35% of the homeless people who are members of households with children were male and 65% were female. However, 67.5% of the single homeless population is male, and it is this single population that makes up 76% of the homeless populations surveyed.

About 40% of homeless men are veterans, although veterans comprise only 34% of the general adult male population. Families account for 40% of the population who become homeless each year. 43% of children living with homeless parents are under the age of six. Domestic violence is the immediate cause of homelessness for 50% of homeless women and children.

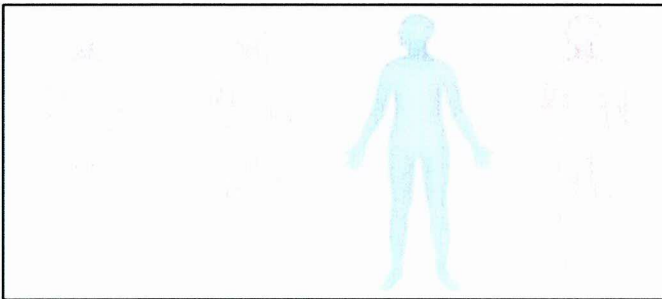


Figure 1: Scientists estimate that one of every four people is affected by mental illness either directly or indirectly.

**"Mental illness is an equal opportunity illness – it strikes across all barriers of race and class. Yet the public perception is still the disheveled person on the street."**

*-Michael Allen, senior staff attorney at the Judge David L. Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, Washington, DC*

Of the single adult homeless population, 20-25% have some form of mental illness. About 60 million Americans experience mental health problems in any given year. Between 28 and 30% of the U.S. population has a mental health disorder, substance abuse disorder, or both. Homeless people typically do not have health insurance, including Medicaid.

Homelessness and poverty are inextricably linked. Poor people are frequently unable to pay for housing, food, child care, health care, and education. Difficult choices must be made when limited resources cover only some of these necessities. Often it is housing, which absorbs a high proportion of income that must be dropped. Being poor means being an illness, an accident, or a paycheck away from living on the streets.

### INTER-FAITH COUNCIL

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