

POPULAR CULTURE AS SEEN THROUGH AN AMERICAN LENS



How American Social Systems respond **2** to Homelessness





Definition of Homeless

The government definition of homeless is:
- A person that has no residence.

However several writers have sought fit to divide this broad group of people characterized as homeless into 3 different groups

- 1) People without a place
- 2) People in constant poverty forced to move constantly and are homeless for brief periods of time.
- 3) People who have lost their housing due to sudden circumstances

National Homelessness Data

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- There are 3.5 Million Homeless people in America, 1.35 million of them are children.
- 30% of the homeless have been on the street for more than two years
- 25% of the homeless are employed.



Types of Poverty

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- Biological Poverty
- Relative Poverty
- Official Poverty and the Poverty line.
- Starving and malnutrition, Inadequate housing or clothing.
- Living below the standard of living for their society.
- Income level below which people are eligible for government support.

2015 Poverty Line

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Persons in household	2015 Federal Poverty Level threshold 100% FPL
1	\$11,770
2	15,930
3	20,090
4	24,250
5	28,410
6	32,570
7	36,730
8	40,890



Homeless Demographics

- Age
 - Youth under 18 make up 39% of the urban homeless population
 - Unaccompanied minors make up 4% of the homeless
 - 51% of homeless are between the age of 31-50 years old
 - 55-60 year olds make up 8% of the homeless population.



Homeless Demographics

- Gender
 - Single homeless adults are more likely to be male than female
 - Single men comprise 40% of the homeless
 - Single women comprise 14% of the homeless

The Racial Breakdown for 2015 remains unchanged according to recent statistics. 9

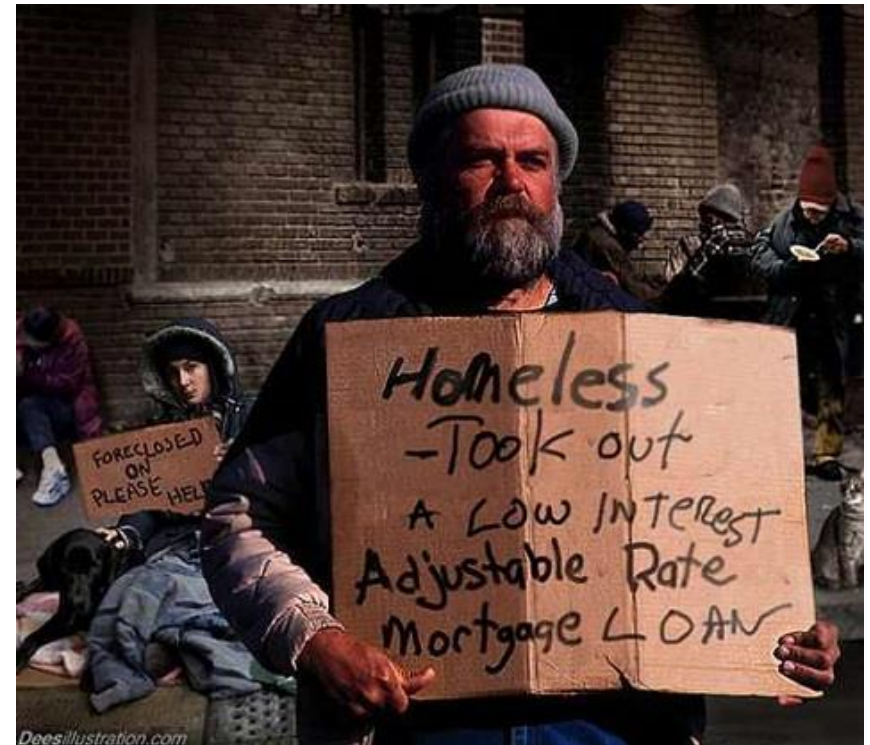


Homeless Demographics

- Ethnicity
 - In its 2001 survey of 27 cities, the U.S. Conference of Mayor found that the homeless population was
 - 50% African-American
 - 35% Caucasian
 - 12% Hispanic
 - 2% Native American
 - 1% Asian
- (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2001)

Structural Factors for Homelessness 10

- 1. Changes in housing Market
- 2. Unemployment levels
- 3. Minimum wage (see next slide)
- 4. Birth rate in low income families
- 5. Policies for state run mental institutions
- 6. Changes in employment opportunities for people with a high school diploma or less



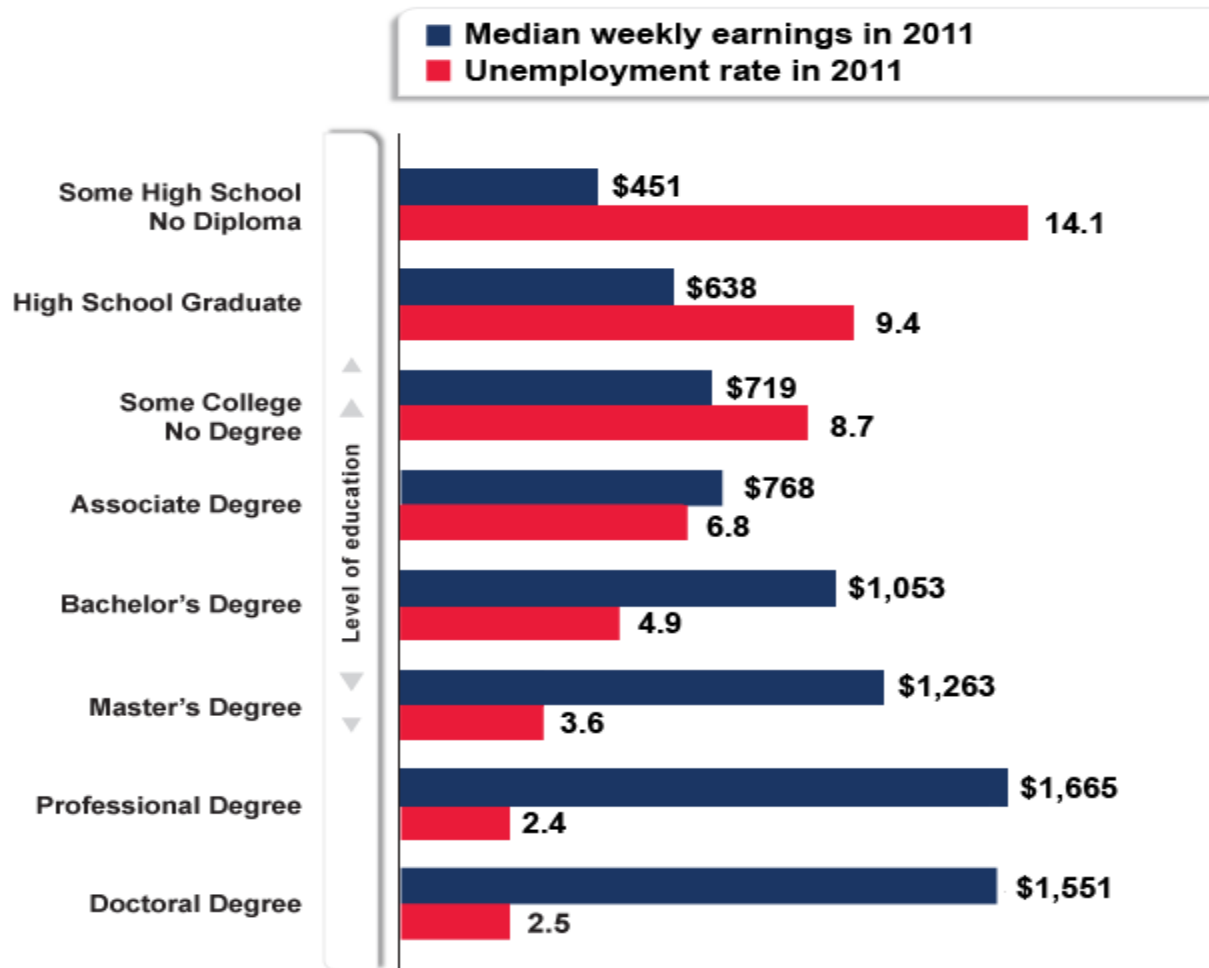
Federal minimum wage	Effective date
\$2.90	January 1, 1979
\$3.10	January 1, 1980
\$3.35	January 1, 1981
\$3.80	April 1, 1990
\$4.25	April 1, 1991
\$4.75	October 1, 1996
\$5.15	September 1, 1997
\$5.85	July 24, 2007
\$6.55	July 24, 2008
\$7.25	July 24, 2009

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In 2015 the minimum wage remains at
\$7.25

Changes in Employment Opportunities

12



Personal Problems as factors for Homelessness

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- Adult and Childhood Victimization
- Mental Illness
- Alcohol/drug abuse
- Low level of education
- Poor or no work history
- Too early childbearing



Other Factors related to the Homeless

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- Mental Illness: Approximately 22% of the single adult homeless population suffers from some form of mental illness.
- Domestic Violence: 34% of cities surveyed identified domestic violence as a primary cause of homelessness
- Addiction: Drugs and Alcohol are disproportionately high among the homeless.

Where do they live?

15



Creative Places

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Some you see

17



Some you don't.

It is estimated that there are 10,000 to 20,000 people living 18 in the New York subway system on any given night.



Abandoned Houses

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simplyROBIN

Great Danger

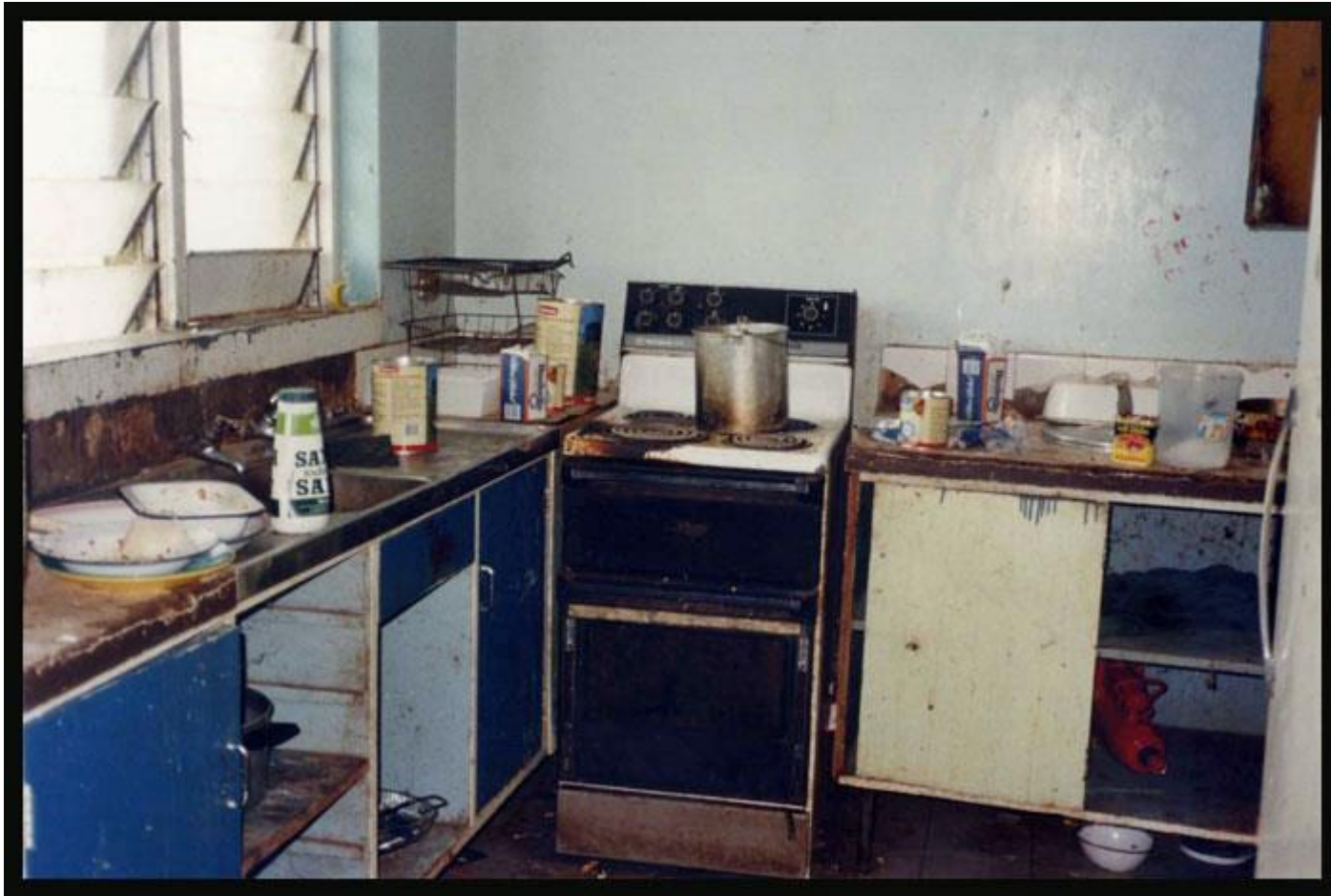
Six died

20



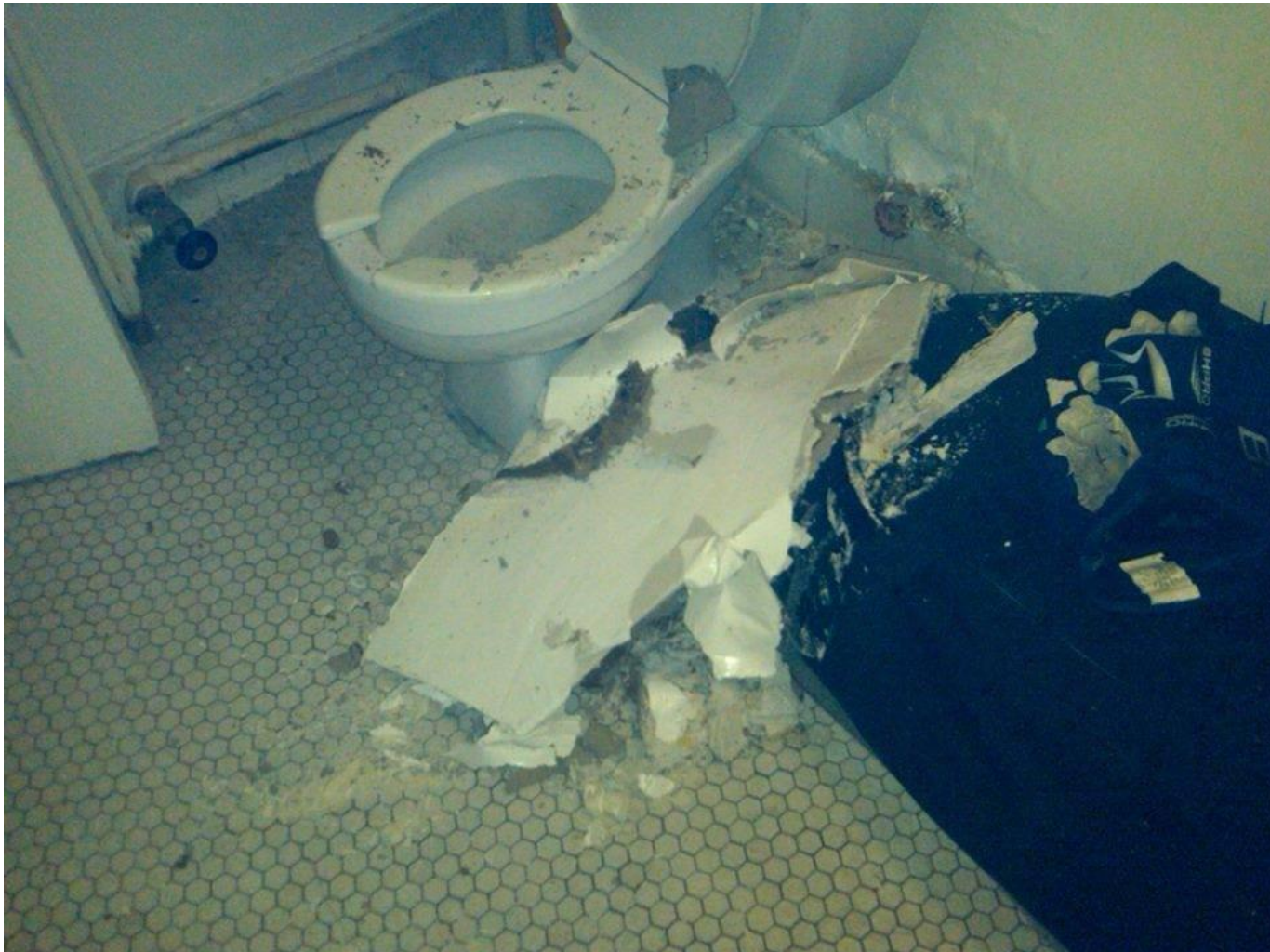
Sometimes they pay rent

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Bathroom not working

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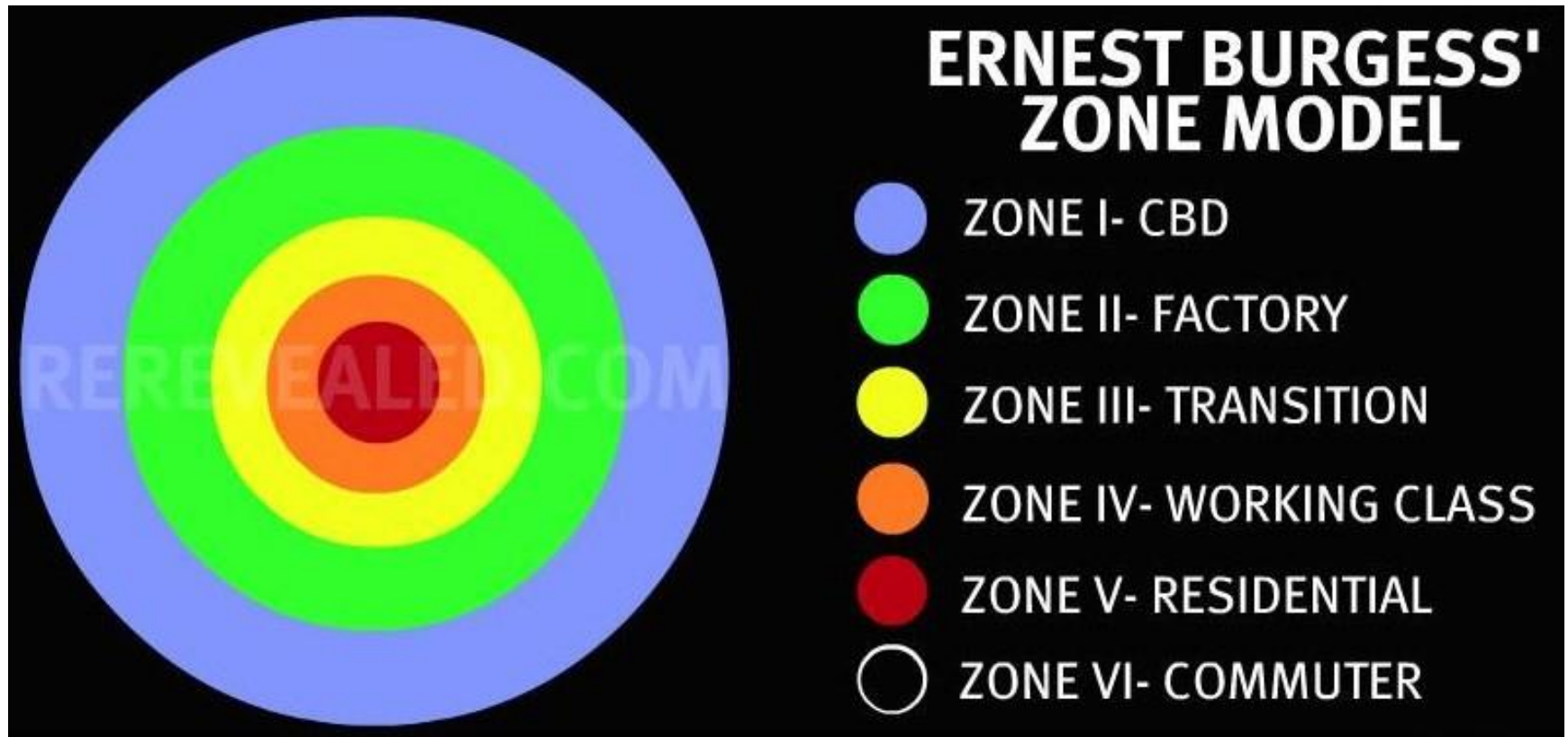


Peeling Paint

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Burgess Concentric Zone Theory 24

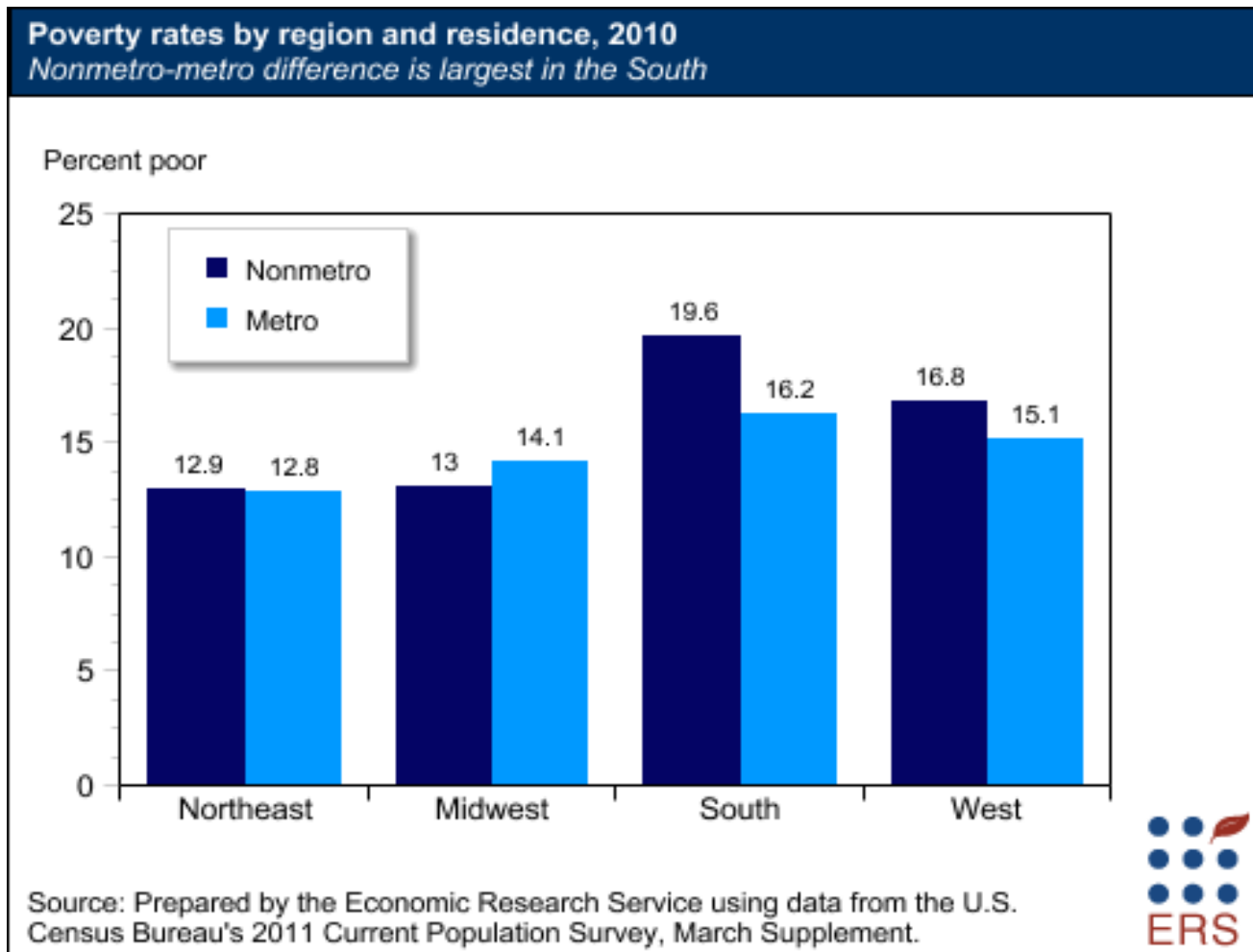


Also have Rural Homelessness and Poverty Issues

25



Poverty Rates in All regions increase with loss of economy 26





In the southern tip of Oregon's Willamette Valley lie many once booming lumber towns. In their heyday people without a high school degree could work at the mills earning more than the high school principal.



Now minimum wage jobs or unemployment are the norm and many families survive on food stamps and food banks.



Nancy Murray gets a food box from the Community Sharing Program at Cottage Grove

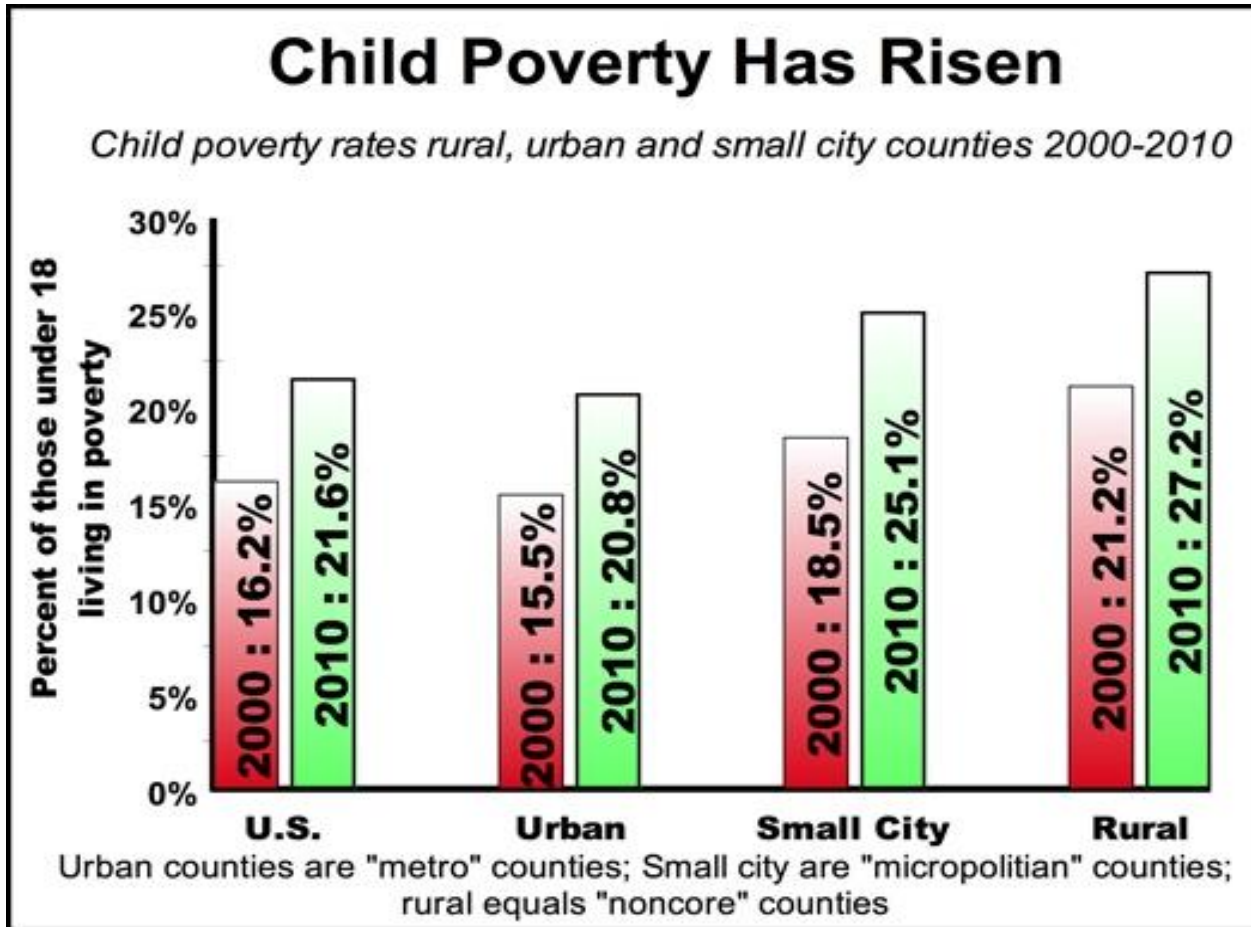


These towns are examples of a national trend, the widening gap in pay between workers in urban areas and those in rural locales 30



Humboldt County, California

Child Poverty



Homeless Shelters

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- 37% of requests are unmet due to a lack of resources
- 52% of requests by families were denied
- Rural areas of the United States have homeless but even more inadequate shelters.
- Predicted homeless exceeds shelter space in every major city. (184,000 more homeless than available beds)



Shelter: Dormitory Style

34



Shelters with Individual rooms

35



Youth and Runaways

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- Between 1.6 and 2.6 million youth runaway in any year
- 12% of runaways have spent at least one night outside in a park, under a bridge, on the street, etc.
- 32% have attempted suicide at some point in their lives
- 50% report having dropped out of school
- 48% of girls living on the street and 33% living in shelters report being pregnant.



National Runaway statistics. 2014

Motivations for Running Away 37

- 24% of runaways report sexual abuse in the home
- 80% of runaway and homeless girls report sexual abuse
- 47% indicate conflict between them and the parent or guardian
- Over 50% said their parents told them to leave, or just didn't care.
- Story of Nikkie





The Hidden Homeless

- The Hidden Homeless are people that are homeless but live in places that make it impossible for researchers to quantify.

- The most common places people who had been literally homeless stayed were vehicles (59.2%)
- Makeshift housing, such as tents, boxes, caves, or boxcars (24.6%)



Use of Abandoned Housing

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No heat, no running water, no electricity



Health care and Homelessness

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- **For struggling families, a serious illness or disability can start a downward spiral into homelessness**
- **Approximately 38.7 Americans prior to Obama care had no health insurance.**
- **For many, even with some form of health insurance, a catastrophic illness could ruin them.**



Who is on Food Stamps

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- About 18%, that is one in five Americans have participated in the program. (15.7 million households.
- 15% White
- 31% Black
- 22% Hispanic
- 18% other

Government data SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) 2014



Soup Kitchens

42



Faces of those at a soup kitchen 43



Statistics on who is there

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Group	Percent
Children and no Seniors	32%
Seniors and no Children	27%
At least one child and one senior	6%
No children or seniors	35%

The Story of Tomas

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55% OF HOUSEHOLDS REPORTED USING 3 OR MORE COPING STRATEGIES IN THE PAST YEAR

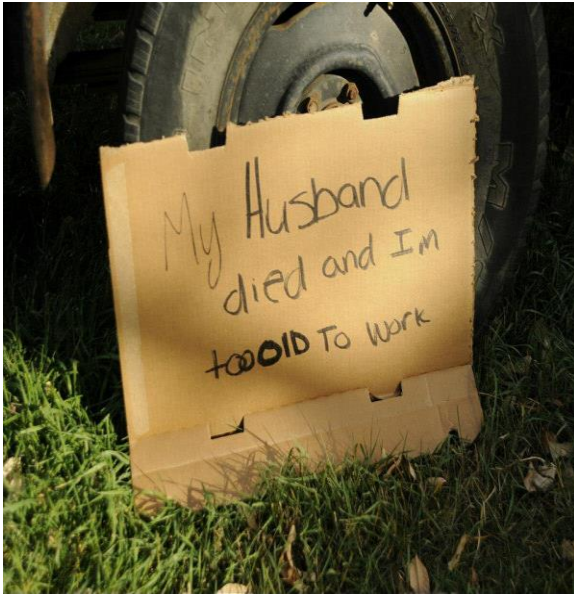
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- Sell or Pawn personal property
- Water down food or drinks
- Grow food in a garden
- Receive help from friends or family
- Purchase inexpensive food
- Commit an illegal act



Creative Signage

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Will work for food



America Could End Homelessness in One Year by Doing This

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- To build a two bedroom, 1200 square foot home, it takes about 14,000 bottles.
- The United States throws away enough plastic bottles to build 9257 of these 2 bedroom houses per day! That's just over 3.35 million homes, the same number of homeless people in America.



The Government can solve the Problem

Steve Berg, vice president for programs and policy at the [National Alliance to End Homelessness](#), suggests ways that all of us can help. “Pay your taxes and don’t complain,” he said in an interview. The money is going to programs that work.

- **Homeless shelter to drop government-funded programs Union Rescue Mission, faced with a \$1.3-million shortfall, says the government doesn't cover all the programs' costs or is slow to pay.**
- The Federal Government has cut funding to housing programs as it looks to make more budget savings before Christmas, leaving several peak housing bodies shocked by the timing of the announcement. (12/14,ABC news)
- The across-the-board cuts to federal programs that took effect last spring receded from the headlines after Republicans were shamed into allowing the government to pay its bills. But the cuts, known as the sequester, continue to take a toll on crucial housing programs that are intended to shield the elderly, the disabled and impoverished families with children from homelessness. These cuts arrived in the midst of an affordable housing crisis, at a time when only one in four families who would qualify for federal rental assistance actually get it. (N.Y. Times 3/22/14)
- **US budget cuts devastate shelters for victims of domestic violence**
By E. Galen (25 January 2012, ICFI)
- **House HUD Bill Would Cut Assistance to Low-Income Renters**
- Would Stall Recent Progress in Reducing Homelessness
- May 22, 2014
- **by**
- [Douglas Rice](#)
- The House Appropriations Committee this week approved a fiscal year 2015 funding bill covering the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that makes disproportionately deep cuts in housing assistance for low-income families.

We can end the homelessness crisis.

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By stabilizing people through shelter, moving them into permanent housing, and implementing assistance programs to keep them in their housing, we can not only reduce, but eliminate, homelessness in New York City.

- Right To Shelter Regulations
- Housing-Based Solutions
- Prevention & Stability

Right to Shelter

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- For homeless people, shelter from the elements can be a matter of life and death. The right to shelter is a vital legal protection for homeless individuals, families and children. Without this crucial safeguard, vulnerable homeless people would be at severe risk of death or injury on the streets and in other public spaces.
- More than three decades ago, Coalition for the Homeless won a landmark legal victory that established the right to shelter for homeless people in New York City.

Federal Housing Assistance

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- Federal housing programs are one of the most successful housing-based solutions to reduce homelessness. The two largest federal housing programs are public housing and federal housing vouchers, known as Housing Choice Vouchers or Section 8 vouchers. Housing vouchers allow low-income households to rent modest market-rate housing of their choice and provide a flexible subsidy that adjusts with the family's income over time. Studies show that public housing and federal housing vouchers are highly successful at reducing family homelessness and in ensuring that these families remain stably housed out of the shelter system.



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Permanent supportive housing: 54

- Pioneered in New York City in the 1980s, permanent supportive housing has now proven to be a successful and cost-effective solution to the homelessness crisis. The supportive housing model combines affordable housing assistance with vital support services for individuals living with mental illness, HIV/AIDS or other serious health problems. Moreover, numerous research studies have shown that permanent supportive housing costs less than other forms of emergency and institutional care. The landmark 1990 City-State “New York/New York Agreement,” which has been renewed twice, is the premier example of a permanent supportive housing initiative that successfully reduced homelessness in New York City and saved taxpayer dollars that would otherwise have been spent on costly shelters and hospitalizations.

Prevention & Stability

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- One successful approach involves eviction-prevention grants to help tenants at risk of becoming homeless pay back rent and remain in their apartments.
- Another successful approach to homelessness prevention involves legal services for low-income tenants in housing court.
- many formerly homeless families and individuals can benefit from support services to help maintain housing stability. This can include services like job training, child care and community-based counseling services. More fundamentally, enhancing housing stability for poor and low-income renters involves broader policy changes including living-wage jobs; access to affordable health care; and adequate public benefits for people living with disabilities.
- By stabilizing people through shelter, moving them into permanent housing, and implementing assistance programs to keep them in their housing, we can not only reduce, but eliminate, homelessness.

“Housing First”

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- Another proven solution developed in New York City and replicated nationwide is the “housing first” approach to street homelessness, which builds on the success of permanent supportive housing. The “housing first” approach involves moving long-term street homeless individuals — the majority of whom are living with mental illness, substance abuse disorders and other serious health problems — directly into subsidized housing and then ***linking them to support services***, either on-site or in the community. Research studies have found that the majority of long-term street homeless people moved into “housing first” apartments remain stably housed and experience significant improvements in their health problems. Much like permanent supportive housing, the “housing first” approach is far less costly than emergency and institutional care, such as shelters, hospitals and correctional facilities.

The Future of the Homeless

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- The homeless will continue to live on our city streets, but they will be persecuted by city officials. To foster tourism and profits, politicians will disperse the homeless. This will create an outcry—there will be calls to remove the homeless from sight, to put them in “asylums” somewhere, as though hiding them might solve the problem. (James M. Henslin and Lori Ann Fowler, Social Problems: A Down to Earth Approach)

Facts

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- There is no single route to homelessness and no single route to its solutions.
- Addiction, mental illness, runaways, victims of environmental catastrophe, the demoralized, mentally ill, and the technologically unqualified are homeless for a variety of reasons. Thus, answers must be as varied as the causes.

A Thought

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- Perhaps the solutions lie not in sweeping legislation, but in customized individual attention to each case.
- We need good social workers to analyze the problem and provide solutions based on the programs available and the needs of the client.



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