

INEQUALITY IN A GLOBAL CRISIS:

Homeless and Economically Insecure Populations



Nonprofit organizations, which depend on philanthropic support from the community to carry out their critical missions, will continue to be affected by the short- and long-term impacts of COVID-19. The constituencies they assist will be impacted differently based on race, class, gender, disability and a multitude of other descriptors.

The implications of COVID-19 cannot be generically applied to all constituencies. Some constituencies are suffering at a far higher rate than others and philanthropists are looking for more than a “one-size fits all” solution.

While recognizing that homelessness and economic insecurity existed long before the coronavirus pandemic, this document provides an overview of how its effects are compounded by the current crisis and what solutions are being suggested.

KEY STATISTICS

38.1 million people live in poverty in the U.S.

- 27.5 million lack access to health insurance
- 6.5 million have housing cost burdens of over 50% of their income

567,715 people experience homelessness in the U.S.

- 200,000 live unsheltered (open to the elements)
- 70% are individuals and 30% are families
- 70% are male, 29% are female, and 1% are transgender or gender non-conforming
- 17% are chronically homeless, 7% are veterans, and 6% are under 25 years old
- People of color experience higher rate of homelessness than white Americans and their average representation in the national population

400,000

- The number of new housing units needed to prevent the spread of the virus and care for the sick

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM EXISTING DATA

Homeless and economically insecure populations, with limited access to safe and stable shelter, healthcare, or resources like the internet, bear the brunt of societal crises. During COVID-19, many human services organizations are working around the clock to address the many immediate needs of these most vulnerable populations. A long term recovery solution is necessary and should address systemic issues creating inequalities faced by both groups. Philanthropists can help address these issues in the following ways:

- **Gap Funding:** Human service organizations are forced to reduce shelter capacity to maintain social distancing and come up with clever solutions to prevent the spread of the disease. This is creating additional, more complex operations for these organizations, requiring additional funding. While the CARES Act and FEMA made more funds available for human service organizations to assist the homeless during the pandemic and eased the process for obtaining government grants, homeless services systems do not have enough resources to fully meet the needs of everyone experiencing homelessness. Philanthropic dollars can help organizations fill the current operating budget gap.
- **Long-term Funding:** Over 38 million Americans are unemployed due to the pandemic. Families that are economically insecure feel the worst impacts of the crisis. While the CARES Act sent a stimulus check to every taxpaying family and many states placed a moratorium on evictions, these measures are temporary. In addition, human services organizations that often address these at-risk populations are not fully incorporated into local, long-term economic recovery plans. Philanthropists can help address these needs by funding human services organizations’ long-term recovery efforts.
- **Advocacy:** The COVID-19 pandemic highlights the gravity of the homelessness problem in the United States. As we think about how to handle pandemics in the future, reducing homelessness must be part of that plan. This will be critical in protecting the most vulnerable from infection and will prevent homeless members of our society from being in situations where they are more likely to be exposed to viruses. Additionally, we must work toward addressing the economic insecurity faced by many families in the United States every day, which put them at greater risk of homelessness during societal crises. Philanthropists can help by advocating for long-term policy solutions and by supporting organizations that address these inequalities head on.

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COMMIT TO STOPPING STIGMA AND BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCY BY:



1. Sharing the need for social and financial support for marginalized groups.



2. Maintaining privacy and confidentiality of those seeking healthcare.



3. Quickly communicating the risk or lack of risk associated with products, people, and places.



4. Raising awareness about COVID-19 without increasing fear.



5. Sharing accurate and accessible information about how the virus spreads.



6. Speaking out against negative behaviors and the exclusion of marginalized groups.



7. Being cautious about the images that are shared to avoid reinforcing stereotypes.



8. Engaging with marginalized groups in person and through social media.



9. Thanking healthcare workers, responders, and those providing essential services.

RESOURCES

- [The Atlantic](#)
- [The New York Times](#)
- [National Alliance to End Homelessness](#)
- [National Alliance to End Homelessness](#)
- [National Alliance to End Homelessness](#)
- [Cal Policy Lab](#)
- [National Alliance to End Homelessness](#)
- [Nonprofit Quarterly](#)

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