

Experiencing Homelessness in Later Life

Alarming trends and what is causing this crisis



A RAPIDLY GROWING ISSUE

Older adults are the fastest-growing group of those experiencing homelessness, composing nearly half of the homeless population (Kushel, 2022) and their numbers are estimated to triple by 2030 (Culhane et al., 2019).

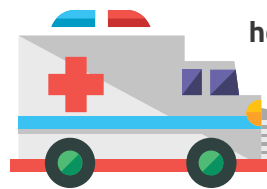
EVERYONE DESERVES A SAFE PLACE TO LIVE

Experiencing homelessness exacerbates existing health conditions and increases the risk of developing new ones. Providing stable housing and supportive services improves health outcomes and quality of life.



Older adults compose nearly half of the homeless population and numbers are estimated to triple by 2030.

Addressing homelessness among older adults is a matter of basic human dignity.



Emergency room visits, hospitalizations, and interactions with law enforcement are more common among older adults experiencing homelessness, leading to increased costs.

Older adults at risk of or who are experiencing homelessness have unique needs compared to other populations experiencing homelessness. Older adults experiencing homelessness often face intersecting forms of discrimination and marginalization, including ageism, racism, and sexism.

WHY IS THIS HAPPENING?

The number of older adults living in poverty is increasing (Li & Dalaker, 2021) due in part to the aging of the United States population overall, coupled with the growing affordable housing crisis (Aurand et al., 2021).

Older adults are increasingly likely to be housing cost-burdened (i.e., housing costs require more than 30 percent of household income) and severely housing cost-burdened (i.e., housing costs require more than 50 percent of household income).

Fixed incomes are often insufficient to cover all of an older adult's expenses, especially housing expenses. This leaves many older adults especially vulnerable to homelessness (Sermons & Henry, 2010).

Many individuals have had an elevated risk of homelessness throughout their lives due to limited employment opportunities, coupled with mental health and substance use disorders.

Increasingly, people are experiencing homelessness for the first time after age 50 after having lived relatively stable lives including long periods of employment and residential stability. For this group, homelessness is often preceded by life events that impact wealth, such as the death of a spouse or partner, divorce, loss of work, eviction, or the onset of health problems, coupled with limited or fixed incomes (Cohen, 2004; Crane et al., 2005).

