REPAIR THE WORLD

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GUIDE NO / 03

IMPORTANT FACTS TO KNOW ABOUT HOUSELESSNESS IN AMERICA TODAY



SUKKOT CAMPAIGN 2021/ 5782

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IMPORTANT FACTS TO KNOW ABOUT HOUSELESSNESS IN AMERICA TODAY



The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's 2020 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress shows that 580,466 people were counted as homeless during the 2020 Point-in-Time count, representing a 2.2% increase over 2019.

01. Six in ten (61%) were staying in sheltered locations—emergency shelters or transitional housing programs.

02. Nearly four in ten (39%) were in unsheltered locations such as on the street, in abandoned buildings, or in other places not suitable for human habitation.

03. On a single night in 2020, 34,000 people under the age of 25 experienced houselessness on their own as "unaccompanied youth."

04. People identifying as black or African American accounted for 39 percent of all people experiencing houselessness and 53 percent of people experiencing houselessness as members of families with children.

05. Together, American Indian, Alaska Native, Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian populations account for five percent of the houseless population and seven percent of the unsheltered population.

06. 48 percent of all people experiencing houselessness were white.

07. People identifying as Latinx (who can be of any race) are about 23 percent of the houseless population.

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Over the next four years the current Pandemic Recession is projected to cause chronic houselessness to increase 49 percent in the United States. Houselessness among working-age adults caused by the current recession is projected to peak in 2023, adding 603,000 working-age adults to those already without a place of their own to sleep in the United States.

01. One-fifth of American workers earn below the poverty line. Those Americans are at the highest risk of long-term unemployment and houselessness.

02. Workers with the greatest risk of long-term unemployment and houselessness include African Americans, Latinx, young adults 18 to 24 years of age, women, and those with less than a four-year college degree.

03. The odds of houselessness at any income level are twice as high for Latinx people as they are for European Americans, and three times higher for African Americans.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Judaism teaches us to value the preciousness of each human *(kavod ha'briyot)* and to put the safety of life above all other religious obligations. In the Jewish calendar, this year is a Sabbatical year (known as *shmita*), the seventh year in a seven-year agricultural cycle. Traditionally during the *shmita*, all debts are forgiven, agricultural lands lie fallow, private land holdings become open to the commons, and staples such as food storage and perennial harvests are redistributed and accessible to all. Just as Sukkot invites us to welcome in guests, the *shmita* invites us to hold ourselves accountable for the needs of our community. The first step to combating systemic injustice is to recognize that it is occurring, and take strides to reduce the immediate impact. This is both a communal and individual responsibility and each person in a community has a role to play in addressing it. Below is a non-exhaustive list of next steps you can take to start combating housing injustice in your community.

01. **Create care kits to donate to a local organization or to distribute to your unhoused neighbors.**

02. **Donate water bottles and can openers to your mutual aid groups and local food pantries.**

03. **Donate your time through volunteering in the housing justice sphere; check out what's happening in our Repair the World cities**

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04. Make eye contact with and/or say hello to your unhoused neighbors. Whether or not you have something tangible to give, each of us can recognize the preciousness of every human being.

05. Ask your unhoused neighbors what they want when you offer to buy them something to eat. This could also include cash or a gift card to a local food establishment so they maintain the dignity of choice in the process of receiving.

06. Commit to/register for your local Point in Time Count, the annual survey of houseless individuals in the United States. NOTE: In most cities, these take place in January.

01/ BUILDING CONNECTION

Unhoused members of our community deserve respect. Here are ways to empathetically engage and build connections with houseless community members.

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01. **Don't make assumptions.** It's hard to discern if someone is houseless by looking at them. Respectfully: say 'hi,' make eye contact, or send well wishes to people you meet regardless of their situation.

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02. **Respect their privacy.** People who live on the street may have limited privacy. Be mindful not to interrupt them, as they may not want to interact.

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03. **Ask them what they need.** People with unstable housing may not have access to storage for non-essentials. Ask what they need and then do your best to provide those supplies.

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04. **Seek a point of connection.** This can be as simple as a shared smile and eye contact, or a full conversation.

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05. **Work with a local organization.** Research which organizations are doing work in your community and support them

02/ DISTRIBUTE ESSENTIAL ITEMS AND ASSEMBLE CARE KITS

Distributing essential supplies (such as food and hygiene items) is one way to offer support to your unhoused neighbors. We recommend that you find a local organization serving the unhoused. They will know what items are the most requested in your area, and may have access to distribute the supplies directly.

Here are a list of items that may be useful for you to carry around to distribute to unhoused individuals requesting support:

- Cash (preferred) or debit-card style gift card
- Masks and hand sanitizer
- Hygiene items: toothbrush, toothpaste, bar soap, shampoo, conditioner, body lotion, shave gel, deodorant, comb, razor, lip balm, facecloth, bandages, tissues, nail clippers, hair ties, baby wipes, and menstrual care products (tampons and pads)
- A pair of new socks
- Bottle of water
- Non-perishable snacks with high nutritional value. High-protein options such as: beef jerky, tuna salad and cracker packs, peanut butter cracker packs, breakfast/protein/granola bars that won't melt, raisins, craisins, and other dried or fresh fruit.