

Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative



University of California
San Francisco

Aging Among the Homeless: Causes, Consequences and Solutions

Margot Kushel, MD
Professor of Medicine, UCSF
Director, Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative



The homeless population is aging

Proportion of single homeless adults who are ≥ 50



Hahn JA, Kushel MB, Bangsberg DR, Riley E, Moss AR. BRIEF REPORT: the aging of the homeless population: fourteen-year trends in San Francisco. *J Gen Intern Med.* 2006 Jul;21(7):775-8. doi: 10.1111/j.1525-1497.2006.00493.x. PMID: 16808781; PMCID: PMC1924700.

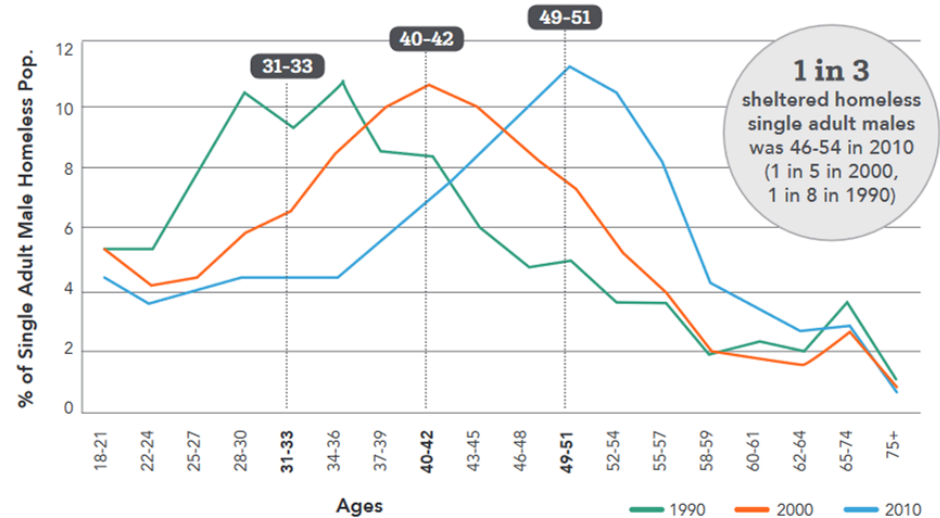
Kushel, M., Moore, T., et al. (2023). *Toward a New Understanding: The California Statewide Study of People Experiencing Homelessness.* UCSF Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative.

Generational Effect

Americans born in the second half of the baby boom (1955-1965) have had **elevated risk of homelessness** throughout their lifetime.

Figure 1: Age Distribution of Adult Male Shelter Users in the United States

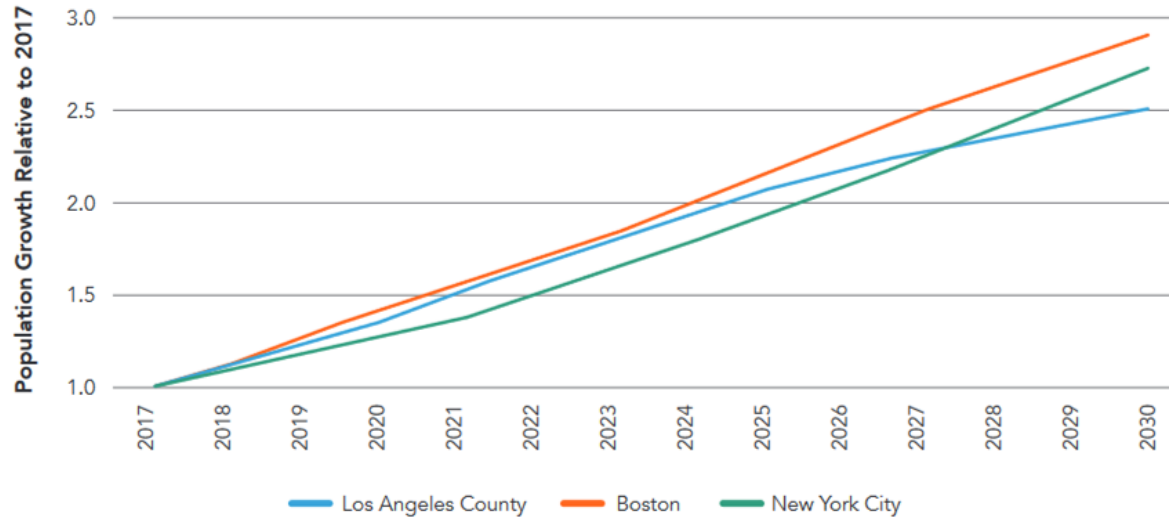
Source: Culhane et al. (2013)/ U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census Special Tabulation



"The Emerging Crisis of Aged Homelessness" Culhane, Treglia, Byrne, Metraux, Kuhn, Doran, Johns, Schretzman <https://www.aisp.upenn.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Emerging-Crisis-of-Aged-Homelessness.pdf>

This trend will continue...

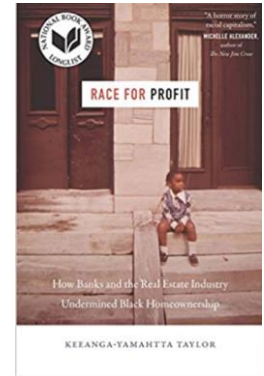
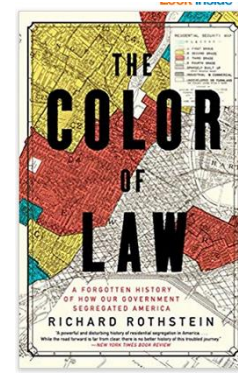
Figure 2: Forecasted Relative Change in the 65 and Older Homeless Population Compared to 2017



Culhane, Treglia, Byrne, Metraux, Kuhn, Doran, Johns, & Schretzman. 2019. "The Emerging Crisis of Aged Homelessness: Could Housing Solutions Be Funded by Avoidance of Excess Shelter, Hospital, and Nursing Home Costs?". <https://www.aisp.upenn.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Emerging-Crisis-of-Aged-Homelessness.pdf>

Homelessness is a racial (in)justice issue

- Home ownership primary means of wealth-building
- Legal discrimination in home ownership
 - Racial Covenants - segregated neighborhoods
 - Redlining - restricted access to mortgages in segregated neighborhoods
- Predatory lending
- Ongoing discrimination in rental market
- Criminal justice, employment and educational discrimination
- **Black Americans at 3 to 4 times increased risk of homelessness**



Toward a New Understanding

The California Statewide Study of
People Experiencing Homelessness

June 2023

Benioff Homelessness
and Housing Initiative

UCSF

University of California
San Francisco



UNDERSTANDING OLDER ADULT HOMELESSNESS

Toward Dignity

Understanding Older Adult Homelessness

Findings from the California Statewide Study
of People Experiencing Homelessness

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Who Experiences Older Adult Homelessness in California

Median Age: 47

(range 18-89)

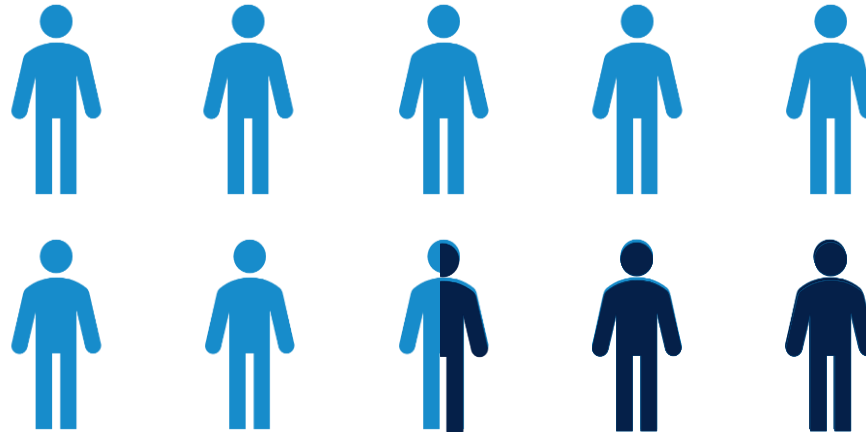
48% of single adults
were 50+

41% of those 50+
first became homeless
at 50 or older



Older people experiencing homelessness in CA are Californians

- 91% were last housed in California
- 77% were last housed in their current county





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- **31%** reported a Black racial identity (vs. **6%** older adults statewide)
- **3%** reported Native American/Indigenous (vs. **0.3%** statewide)
- **18%** reported Latina/o/x (vs. **28%** statewide)

Pathways to Homelessness

- Institutional settings: **19%**
- Non-leaseholding arrangements: **46%**
- Leaseholding arrangements: **35%**



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- Among homeless Californians 50+
 - Median monthly household income: **\$920**

- Non-Leaseholders
 - Median monthly household income: **\$996**
 - Proportion who didn't pay rent **42%**
 - Median rent of those who pay rent: **\$412**

- Leaseholders
 - Median monthly household income: **\$1100**
 - Median monthly rent: **\$659**

Experiences During Homelessness



Places slept most in past 6 months

79% Unsheltered

- 21% Vehicle
- 56% Non-vehicle

21% Sheltered



*“Most of the time we're ...running around, **trying to figure out where we're going to sleep at night** ... We're not worried about going to the doctors or going to see somebody or going to get help with our mental state.”*

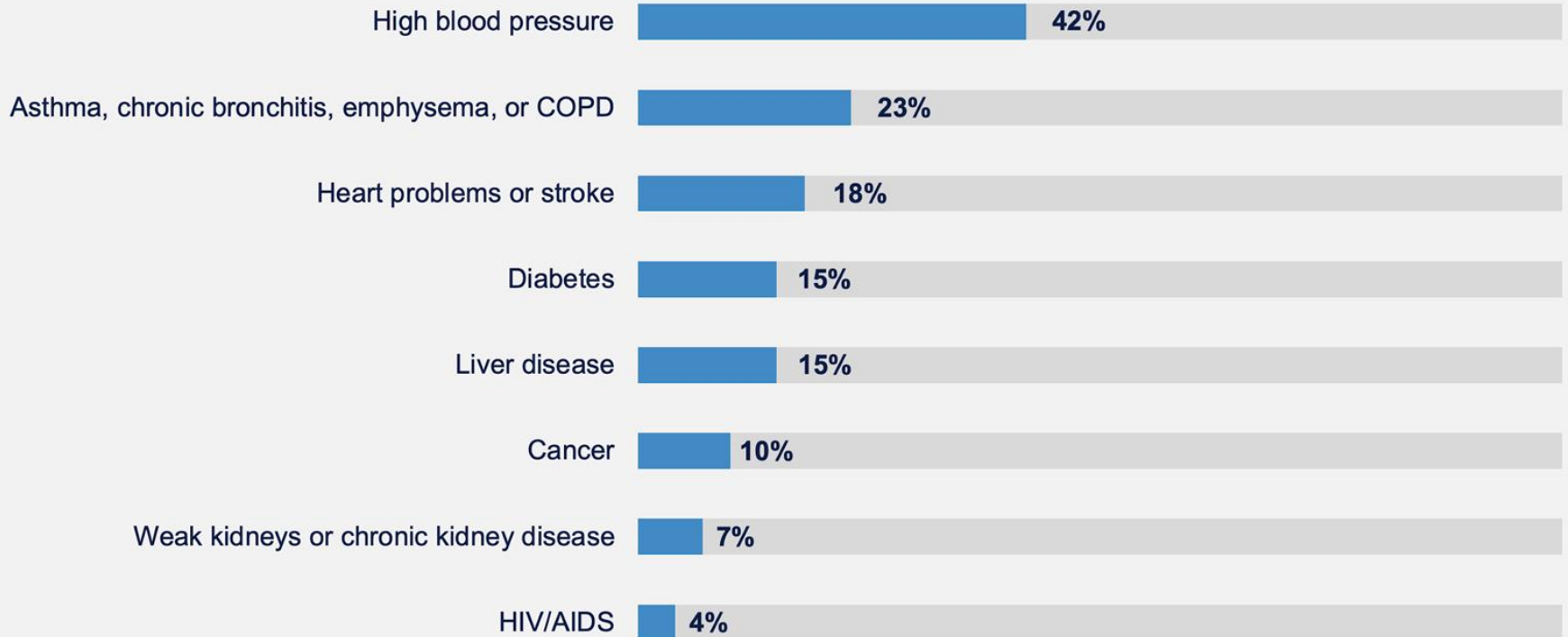
- CASPEH Participant

Among older adults

- **53%** reported having fair/poor health
- **68%** reported at least one chronic health condition
 - **35%** reported at least two chronic health conditions

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Self-Reported Chronic Diseases Among Older Homeless Adults



43% reported difficulty with one or more activities of daily living

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23% 3 or more limitations

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32% reported difficulty with mobility



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38% wanted shelter but were unable to access it

Among those with 3 or more ADL limitations,

53% wanted shelter but were unable to access it

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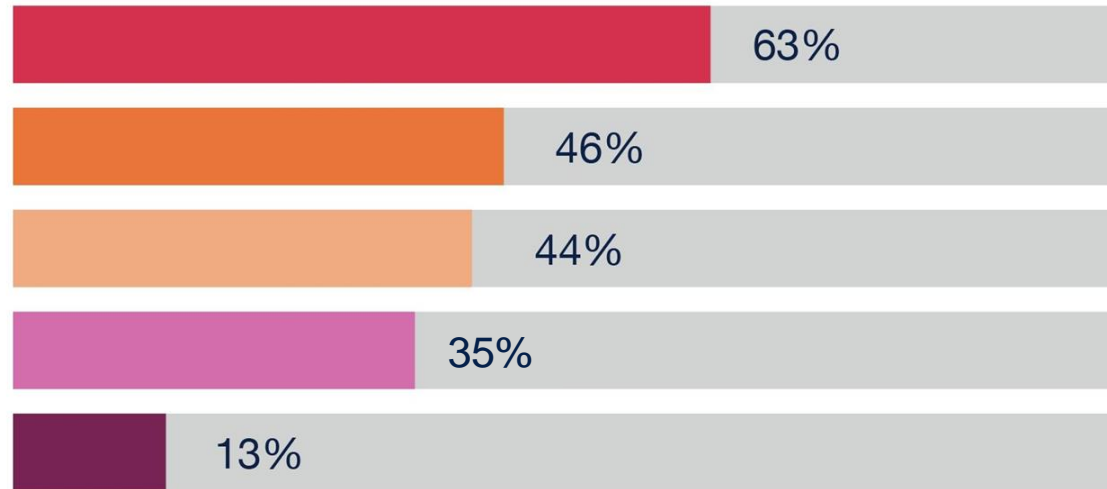


*“A lot of shelters, they don't have – **they're not equipped for disabilities, for handicapped, disabled.** You know? They don't have handrails in the showers. They don't have a ramp, you know... the disability can be a problem. **They don't accept us in a lot of shelters.**”*

- CASPEH Participant

Mental health symptoms in the past 30 days among older adults

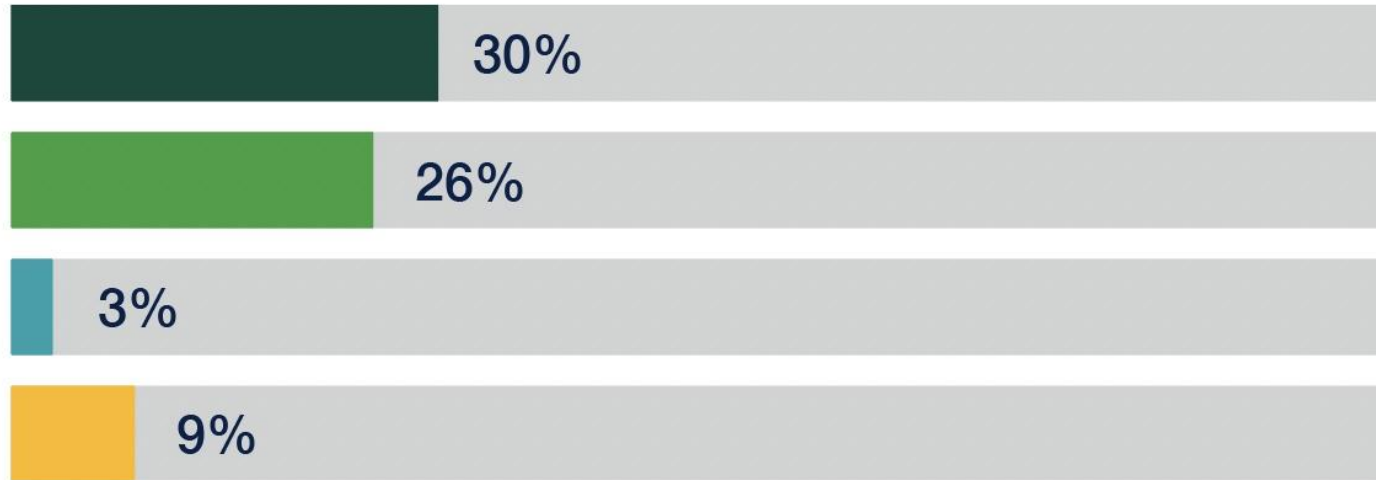
- Any mental health condition
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Trouble remembering, concentrating, or understanding
- Hallucinations



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Current, regular substance use among older adults

- Any substance 3+ a week
- Amphetamines 3+ times a week
- Cocaine 3+ times a week
- Opioids 3+ times a week



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43% reported a complex behavioral need **EITHER**

- Current regular illicit drug use (30%)
- Heavy episodic alcohol use (weekly) (8%)
- Current hallucinations (13%) OR
- Recent mental health hospitalization (5%)

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Among older adults

22% had a complex behavioral health need & 1 or more ADL need

14% had complex behavioral health need and 3 more ADL needs

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In the prior **six** months,

37% of older adults reported an ED visit

25% of older adults reported a physical health care hospitalization

5% of older adults reported a mental health hospitalization

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Barriers and Facilitators of Returns to Housing

I can't afford housing



Impacts ability to obtain housing

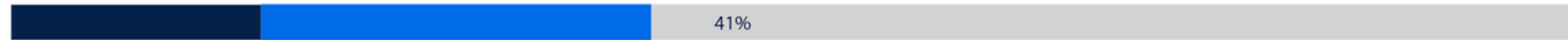
● A little ● A lot

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Barriers in housing among older adults

Impacts ability to obtain housing ● A little ● A lot

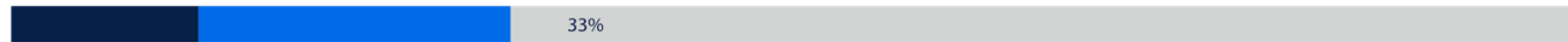
I experience discrimination when I try to rent a place



I do not have the necessary documents



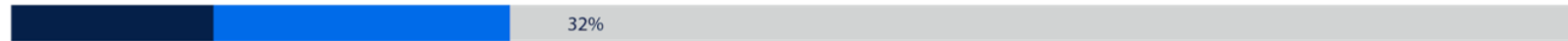
I have a record with the criminal justice system



I have problems with my credit history or past evictions



I can't find a place that meets my needs due to physical disability



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Policy Recommendations

Policy Recommendations

- Increase access to affordable housing
- Increase homelessness prevention among older adults
- Increase services and supports to meet the needs of older adults
- Increase incomes among extremely low-income adults
- Increase outreach and service delivery
- Embed racial equity in all aspects of the response



@UCSFBHHI | @MKushel | @Margot Kushel

Email

margot.kushel@ucsf.edu

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