

Throughout history, the response to homelessness has been generally negative. By making activities such as sleeping in certain areas illegal, communities have created laws that disproportionately target unhoused individuals, making their daily lifestyles illegal. Although the negative response to activities associated with homelessness can be observed in both the past and present, as time has gone on, the physical and mental needs of individuals have been increasingly neglected due to a rise in the homeless population and a growing disconnect between community members.

In Josephine Ensign's book *Skid Road*, she chronicles the story of Edward Moore, Seattle's first-person record to have experienced homelessness. Ensign narrates that Moore was discovered drunk in a shelter on the beach. When Moore was found to have extreme frostbite in his toes, one of Seattle's first doctors "promptly amputated Moore's toes with an ax," saving his life but leaving him permanently disabled (Ensign 13). The doctor went on to care for Moore for another four months, "helping restore his physical health to a large extent, but not his mental health," before he was sent away to be cared for by his family (Ensign 15). During this time, Seattle's population of white settlers was no more than one hundred. Thus, the economic strain on citizens was much lower, and the general community was much closer. Not only did this lower the overall population of unhoused individuals, but it also allowed for cases such as Edward Moore being personally rehabilitated by a doctor to happen more frequently. Additionally, a more condensed community made it more difficult for housed citizens to cast those experiencing hard times out of sight and mind.

Beyond the scope of community size, a decrease in overall resource availability also led to neglecting individual health for unhoused people. According to Ensign, "The King County Point-In-Time count on January 26, 2018," found "a total of 12,112 people experiencing homelessness in all of King County". Ensign claims that the best way to solve this growing issue "continues to confound the residents of King County" (Ensign 9). Since the discovery of Edward Moore in 1854, the unhoused population of King County has grown enormously. This is due to

many factors, including growing economic strain on King County residents. As a result, the housing crisis has become a significantly more complex and resource-demanding problem. Thus, city officials, Seattle residents, and lawmakers are increasingly unlikely to go through the immense efforts to ensure each unhoused person's physical and mental well-being. By contrast, people like Edward Moore, who were unhoused in Seattle's early days, were part of a smaller, closer-knit community who were able to rehabilitate/save the man from his dire situation somewhat successfully.

In the Documentary *Seattle is Dying*, produced by KOMO News, a shopowner describes his frustration with local law enforcement and government officials. He goes on to make very generalized statements about police not having enough "power" and homeless people "running around" and "running the city." His generalized opinions and harsh choice of words make it clear that his life is very disconnected from the individuals experiencing homelessness that he is so frustrated with. He is not alone, however; as Seattle's population grows, the social gap between people from different economic backgrounds widens, leaving little room for empathy. This response extends beyond a community level. The criminalization of unhoused individuals leaves people in terrible situations in an even worse place. In an interview with KOMO News, one woman explained how she had amassed thousands of dollars in tickets just from sleeping outside. Already in a bad financial situation, the woman can not pay off the ticket or find somewhere to live, leaving her in an even worse financial situation.

Overall, while Seattle's response to homelessness has always been somewhat negative, a growing population has made the response worse since the city's founding. A growing community size means that people are more disconnected from each other and are more inclined to help people in need, aside from somebody else's problem. Additionally, the growing number of homeless individuals has made the issue much more complex and resource-demanding, leading those in charge of fixing it to discount the physical and mental needs of those they are supposed to be helping.