

Macro Roundup Article

Headline: Homelessness and the Persistence of Deprivation: Income, Employment, and Safety Net Participation

Article Link: <https://www.nber.org/papers/w32323>

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Publication	National Bureau of Economic Research
Publication Date	April 15, 2024

Tweet: In a sample of ~140k homeless people, Meyer et al found that 40-50% aged 25-59 had earnings of \$12-14k in 2018 dollars and 80%+ had benefits from SSI and related programs. For those with low permanent income, even modest events trigger homelessness.

Summary: Starting from the first large and nationally representative sample of adults recorded as sheltered and unsheltered homeless taken from the 2010 Census, we link restricted-use longitudinal tax records and administrative data on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicare, Medicaid, Disability Insurance (DI), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), veterans' benefits, housing assistance, and mortality. Nearly half of these adults had formal employment in the year they were observed as homeless, and nearly all either worked or were reached by at least one safety net program. Nevertheless, their incomes remained low for the decade surrounding an observed period of homelessness, suggesting that homelessness tends to arise in the context of long-term, severe deprivation rather than large and sudden losses of income. People appear to experience homelessness because they are very poor despite being connected to the labor market and safety net, with low permanent incomes leaving them vulnerable to the loss of housing when met with even modest disruptions to life circumstances.

Related Articles: Evaluating the Success of the War on Poverty since 1963 Using an Absolute Full-Income Poverty Measure and More Americans Are Ending Up Homeless—at a Record Rate

Primary Topic: Poverty/Crime

Topics: Academic paper, Database, Poverty/Crime, Workforce

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