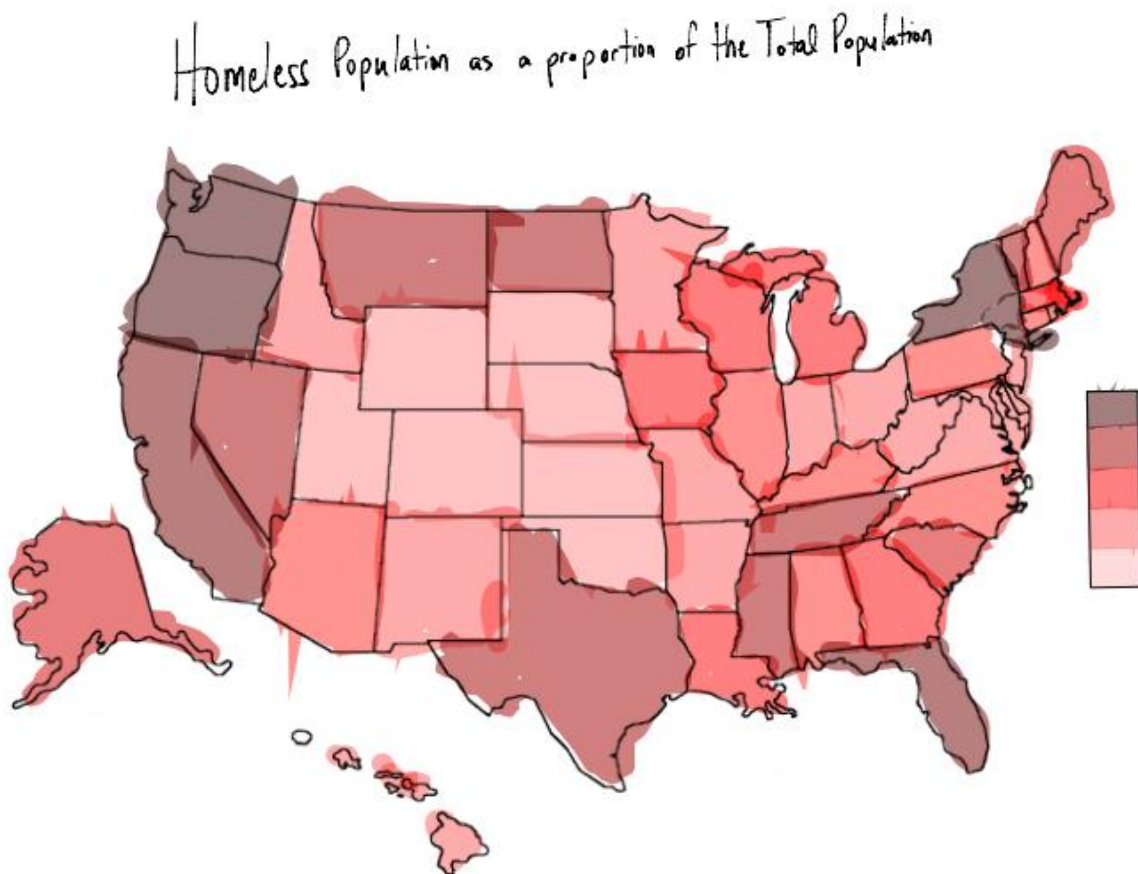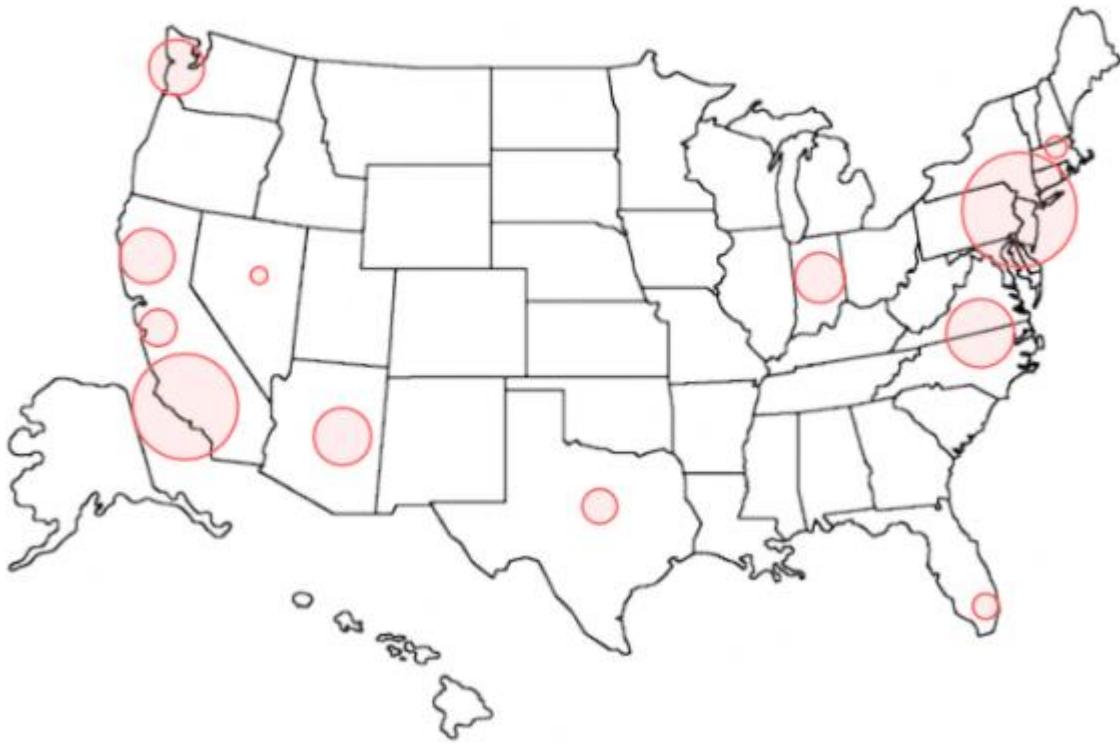# Homelessness in America

For my final project I chose to focus on homelessness in the United States. Between 550,000 – 744,000 people are homeless on any given day. That correlates to about 1 In every 2,000 people. At its higher estimate there are more homeless people than there are residents of Washington D.C. Despite the size and scope of this epidemic many Americans are unaware of how widespread this problem is or what causes it. Perceptions around homelessness often hinge around personal responsibility but the data does not support those conclusions. Analysis from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, The Economic Research Council, MentalIllnessPolicy.Org, and the Coalition for the Homeless have found the causes of homelessness are varied and complex but most often are due to drug addiction, mental health, and housing insecurity.
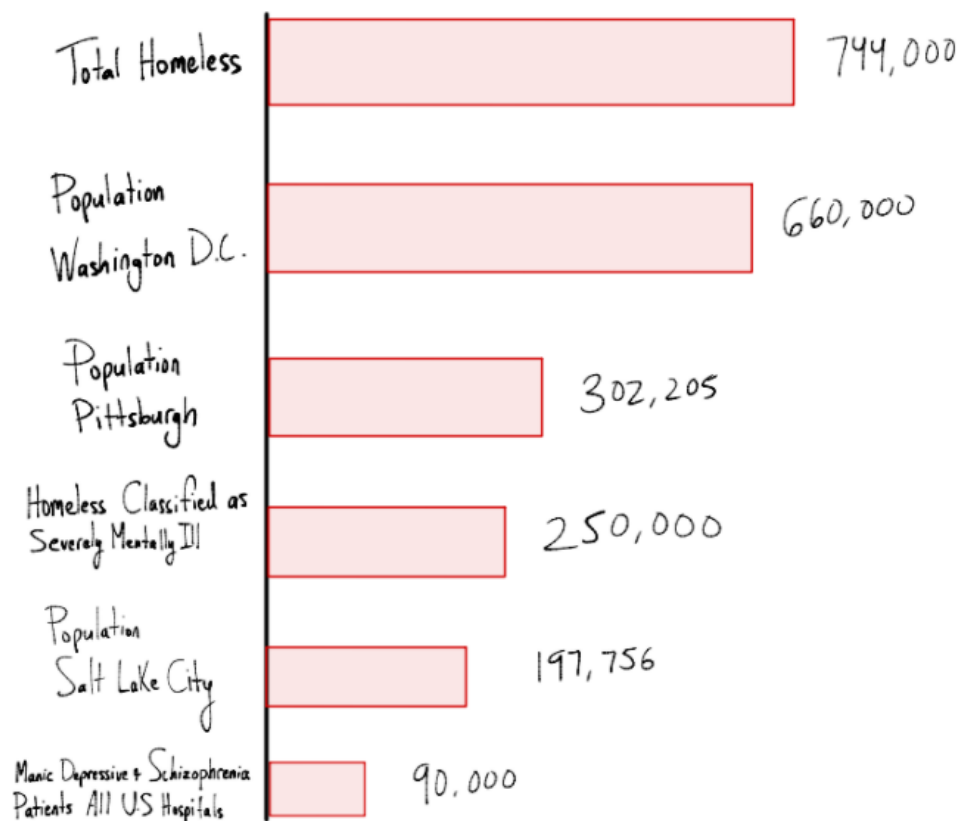

Homeless Population as a proportion of the Total Population

Cities with Highest Number of Homeless

Homelessness and Public Health

The harsh conditions homeless individuals live under has deleterious effects on both individual and public health. The average life expectancy of homeless men is approximately 56 years of age and women approximately 52 years of age. This is a 20 year (men) and 29 year (women) differential from typical American life expectancy. Homeless individuals are more likely to die of preventable disease, drug overdose, parasitic infection, suicide, and homicide than the general population. This is equivalent to millions of years of lost life. This has ripple effects across public health and crowds the hospital system as well as driving up the cost of healthcare.

Mental Illness and the Homeless Population

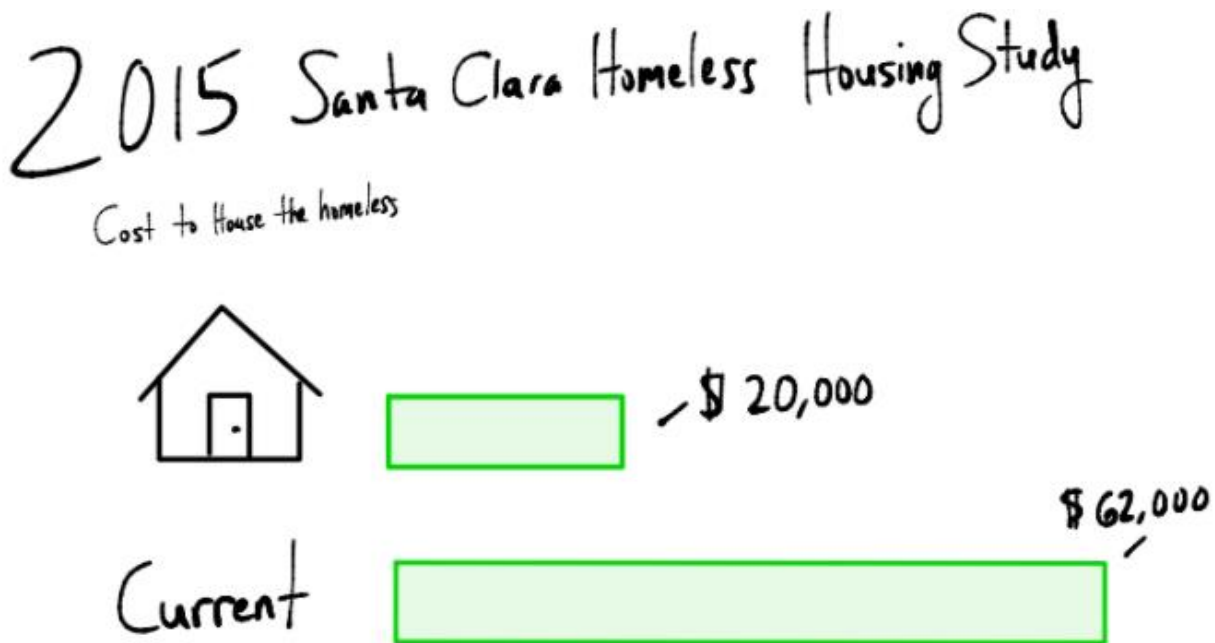| Category	Value
Total Homeless	744,000
Population Washington D.C.	660,000
Population Pittsburgh	302,205
Homeless Classified as Severely Mentally Ill	250,000
Population Salt Lake City	197,756
Manic Depressive + Schizophrenia Patients All US Hospitals	90,000

Homelessness and Housing Insecurity

One of the top 3 reasons for homelessness is housing insecurity and rent cost burden. Analysis by Zillow Economic Research found a direct correlation between rent burden and homelessness with rent burden exceeding 32% being a strong predictor of increasing homelessness. 46% of American renters would be at risk based on this rent burden analysis. The economic losses from COVID-19 are estimated to drive 600,000 more people into homelessness by 2023, numbering the American homeless at over 1.1 million.

Average Rent Burden by State

Legend:
- 15%-20%
- 20%-25%
- 25%-30%
- 30%+

Homelessness and Cost

Homelessness is extremely expensive costing American taxpayers on average between $42,000 and $62,000 per homeless person per year. This places estimates of cost annually at a low of $31 billion. Numerous studies have found the cost of housing the homeless is significantly lower. A landmark study in Santa Clara county found that housing the homeless cost on average approximately $20,000 per person and saved $42,000 per person. Housing was also associated with improved health outcomes and better long term prospects.

Method and Medium

To complete this project I am considering a number of technologies. One potential option is shorthand, but I'm unsure if I will use this method as I'm less familiar with the technology. I'm strongly considering GIS Story Maps in conjunction with Tableau dashboards. As I will be using a number of choropleth maps to tell my story this may be the most interactive method to complete the project. I've also considered using AR technologies for part of story but am unsure if that is feasible in the timeframe. As I find more information the specific data visualizations I'm using change, but I believe many of them will be location based. As much of the homeless population is transient collecting data can be difficult and much of the data is based on limited studies, slightly older, or based on predictive modeling.

Data

I will be using data from a combination of HUD, LA county, King County, NYC Department of Housing, the CDC, the Census Bureau, and independent research by Zillow, MentalHealthPolicy.Org, and a few publicly available scientific studies. Enclosed is a folder with a number of the datasets being used, but more will be added.