

Homelessness Is a Housing Problem: How Structural Factors Explain U.S. Patterns

by Gregg Colburn and Clayton Page Aldern

Per capita rates of homelessness in select U.S. regions, 2019

Dashed lines indicate city and county averages of per capita PIT counts

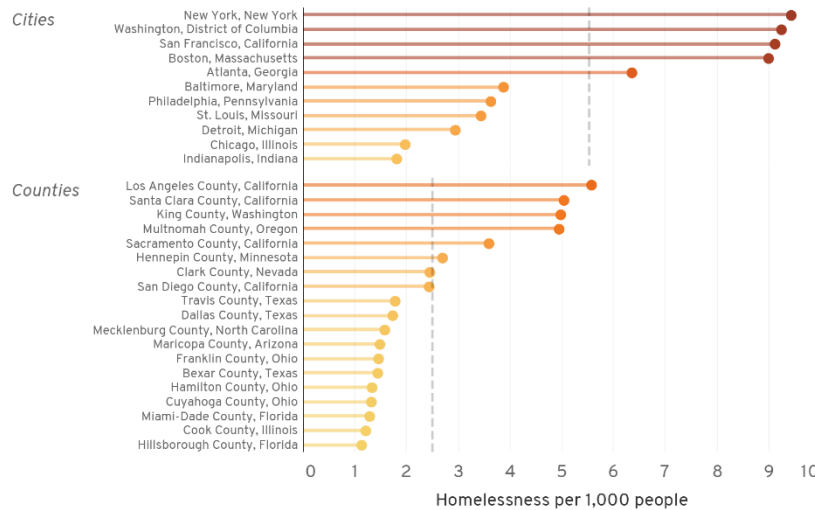


Figure forthcoming in Colburn & Aldern (2022).

RATES OF HOMELESSNESS VARY WIDELY ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Homelessness is a Housing Problem seeks to explain this variance and offer policy solutions for different regional contexts.

INDIVIDUAL VULNERABILITIES LIKE POVERTY DON'T EXPLAIN REGIONAL VARIATION

Contrary to expectations, rates of homelessness tend to be lower where poverty rates are higher.

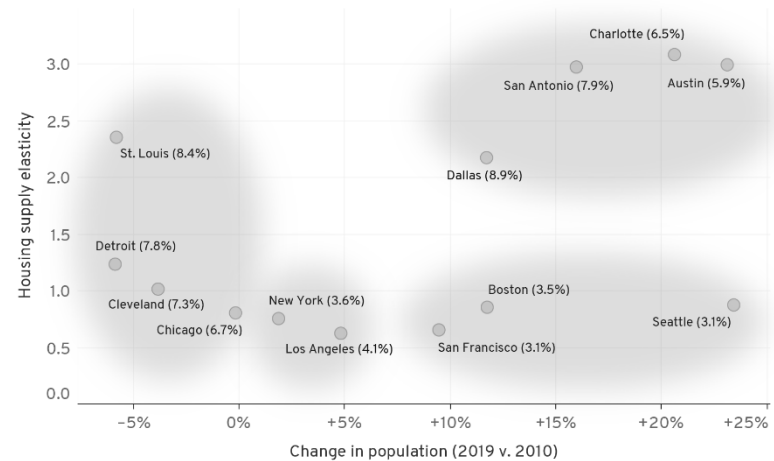
HOUSING-RELATED FACTORS PREDICT RATES OF HOMELESSNESS

Absolute rent levels and rental vacancy rates are associated with regional rates of homelessness. Many other common explanations—drug use, mental illness, poverty, or local political context—fail to account for regional variation.

Cities can be grouped by population growth and the way in which their housing supplies respond to increases in demand.

Population growth versus housing supply elasticity

Dots indicate U.S. cities; parentheses indicate 2010–2019 rental vacancy rates.



Supply elasticity estimates follow Saiz (2010). Figure forthcoming in Colburn & Aldern (2022).

Columbia, MO 2021 Rental Vacancy Rate 6.3%

	Fair Market Rent	Housing Wage	Annual Income Needed
2 Bedroom	\$878.00	\$16.88	\$35,120
3 Bedroom	\$1,177.00	\$22.63	\$47,080
4 Bedroom	\$1,392.00	\$26.77	\$55,680

<https://homelessnesshousingproblem.com/>
<https://nlhc.org/oor/state/mo>
<https://data.census.gov/>