



Fact Sheet Myths About Homelessness

How much do you know about homelessness?

Myth: All people who are homeless live on the street.

False – People who are visibly homeless (the people we see on the street) are just part of the total homeless population.

Researchers estimate that three out of four people who are homeless don't sleep on the street, but use shelters, sleep in their cars, or on someone's couch.

Myth: People who are homeless are lazy and don't want to get a job.

False – People who are homeless face many challenges in getting and keeping a job. Without an address or phone it is very hard to apply for work and receive calls from possible employers.

In addition, many employers require certain equipment or clothing, e.g., work boots, hard hats, etc. Things that working people need to do like take a shower, wear clean clothes and pay for transportation are all really hard for a person who is homeless.

Myth: People who are homeless often have pets to make others feel sorry for them.

False – Pets provide people who are homeless with friendship, comfort and loyalty.

Myth: People who are homeless sleep during the day in public places (like sidewalks and parks) because they are always drunk or on drugs.

False – Members of the public mistakenly think that people sleep in public places because they are intoxicated. Mostly, people sleep during the day because it is not safe to sleep at night.

People who are homeless are targets for violence and theft.

Myth: If you were homeless you could go anywhere you want.

False – People who are homeless are often not welcome in stores and restaurants. People who are homeless are often not able to access washrooms or use phones.

People who are homeless often cannot pay for bus fare and must walk long distances to get from place to place.



Susan's Story

When Susan's hours were cut back at work she got behind on her rent and was evicted.

Unable to find a place she can afford, Susan and her two teenagers have been staying at a shelter in New Westminster.



Myth: All people who are homeless are addicted to drugs or alcohol.

False – Some people who are homeless do have addiction problems but studies show that less than half suffer from addictions.

Myth: Mental illness is the main reason people are homeless.

False – While some people who are homeless do suffer from mental illness, a recent study of homelessness in Canada has found the main reason for homelessness is poverty.

Myth: There are no homeless children in Greater Vancouver and BC.

False – The 2005 count of homeless people in the Greater Vancouver area found there were 40 families with children who were homeless.

Myth: All panhandlers (people who ask for money) are homeless.

False – some panhandlers are homeless but some have housing and panhandle to supplement their income.

Myth: People who are homeless are all in big cities.

False – Homelessness is not just a big city issue. For many years now, homelessness has been an increasingly visible part of life in suburban areas and in smaller communities.

Myth: Homelessness is just a fact of life; there is nothing we can do about it.

False – It takes three things to end homelessness:

- 1) an adequate income
- 2) affordable housing
- 3) support services for those who need them

The Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness has an action plan entitled - Three Ways to Home Please take a few minutes to learn about Three Ways to Home and what you can do to help solve homelessness at stophomelessness.ca

We all have a role to play in solving homelessness.
Take the **A Dozen Ways, A Dozen Days Community Challenge** at www.stophomelessness.ca

John's Story

At 19, John was homeless and living in a tent.

An outreach worker connected him to a job program.

There, John found a place to live and received training, life skills counseling and work boots donated by a local employer.

Now working, John has enough income to rent an apartment.



The Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness