Growing homelessness in California:
The role of affordable housing

California State University, Sacramento
Division of Social Work
Institute for Social Research

Arturo Baiocchi, PhD
2017 Sacramento Point in time count

- On a single night in January 2017 ...
  - 3,365 individuals experienced homelessness in Sacramento Co,
  - 1,613 individuals were in shelters (44%)
  - 2,052 individuals were found sleeping outdoors (56%)

![Figure 1: 2017 PIT Estimates of Total Homeless](chart.png)
Changes Over Time

- Overall, 38% increase compared to 2015 PIT
- Large change in unsheltered homelessness (110%)
3 points about homelessness

1. CA has largest homeless population in the US and it is growing

2. Complex drivers of homelessness: individual + community

3. Affordable housing is the strongest predictor of homeless rates across communities
CA has largest homeless population in the US and it is growing

• 118K homeless in one night in 2016
  • ¼ of all homeless in the US
  • ½ of all unsheltered homeless in the US

• Largest % of unsheltered population in US (66%)

• Largest % of chronic homeless in US (25%)
Gradual decrease between 2007-2015; however, more recent trends suggest a reverse

- HUD has not published most recent 2017 estimates for CA
- Compiling findings across CA suggests HUD will report a significant rise
  - I estimate a rise of approximately 13%-16% since 2015
Complex drivers of homelessness: individual + community

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual risk-factors:</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Poverty</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Substance use</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Health and Disability</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Lack of social and family support</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Mental Health</td>
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<td>- Time in foster care</td>
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<th>Community risk factors:</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Poverty &amp; Inequality</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Housing market conditions</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Employment Rates</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Welfare supports and programs</td>
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<td>- Crime rates</td>
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But pathways to homelessness are diverse and complex; risk factors affect different people differently.

There is no single profile of a homeless person.

Homelessness is less an individual attribute, but more of a situation.
Complex drivers of homelessness: individual + community

Homeless Situations:

- Chronic Homeless (20%)
  - Episode longer than a year
  - 4+ Episodes in past three years
  - More challenges

- Episodic Homelessness (35%)
  - 2-3 periods of housing instability
  - May transition to chronic homelessness

- Single Event Homelessness (45)
  - Lost housing once but quickly transition toward a permanent residence

(Gould & Williams, 2010)

Are housing costs irrelevant to chronic homeless? Maybe, but not to the 80% of individuals that experience other forms of homelessness.
Affordable housing is the strongest predictor of homeless rates across communities

Research exploring community-level factors and varying rates of homelessness (Quigley & Raphael, 2001; Lee et al 2003; Byrne et. al 2012; Fargo et al. 2013)

- Weather
- Poverty & Inequality
- Housing market
- Employment Rates
- Welfare supports and programs
- Crime rates
- Community-Level Drug Use

• These factors explain between 30%-60% of homelessness

• Housing market conditions consistently predicts various types of homelessness
  • Median rent strong predictor
  • % of “burdened renters” in a community r
Affordable housing is the strongest predictor of homeless rates across communities

Cost of Living
- 44% of Sacramento residents spend over 50% of their income on rent (Sacramento Housing Alliance, 2016)

Poverty & Inequality
- Strong effect of poverty rate/low-wage work (Lee et al. 2003; Byrne et al. 2013)
- CA Poverty rate of 16.7% (nationally 14.8%) (US Census, 2016)
- 4 out of 10 Californians live in or near poverty (PPIC, 2016)
Conclusion

- Homelessness is a localized and community issue but nonetheless affected by statewide trends.

- While individual programs and communities are addressing the challenges of chronic homelessness, the sheer number of new individuals experiencing homeless is likely exceeding capacity.

- There is considerable evidence that affordable housing could reduce the number of new homeless; an upstream solution to many forms of homelessness.
Thank you,

Arturo Baiocchi, PhD
arturo.baiocchi@csus.edu

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references


- 15% decline in nightly homeless in US
- 15% decline in nightly homeless in CA