



# Overview of Homelessness in Las Vegas, Nevada, Nevada Statewide, and California

Homelessness remains a significant social challenge in Las Vegas, across Nevada, and in neighboring California. This outline provides an overview of the current situation, focusing particularly on the subset of the homeless population who are employed yet still lack stable housing. It includes available statistics, financial investments made to address homelessness, and an evaluation of the effectiveness of related programs based on the latest available data as of October 2023.

## 1. Homelessness in Las Vegas, Nevada

### Current Statistics:

- Total Homeless Population: As of the latest Point-In-Time (PIT) Count in January 2023, Las Vegas Metro Area reported approximately 7,900 individuals experiencing homelessness.
- Unsheltered Individuals: Over 50% of the homeless population in Las Vegas resides in unsheltered settings, such as cars, RVs, tents, or other makeshift shelters.
- Working Homeless: Estimates suggest that around 30% of the homeless population in Las Vegas holds some form of employment. These individuals often work in the service and hospitality industries but struggle with rising living costs and insufficient wages to secure stable housing.

### Living Situations:

- Cars and RVs: A significant portion of the working homeless opts to live in vehicles due to the flexibility it offers in maintaining employment. Approximately 2,500 individuals use cars or RVs as their primary shelter.
- Tents and Makeshift Shelters: Around 2,400 people live in tents or other temporary structures, often in parks or under freeway overpasses.

## 2. Statewide Homelessness in Nevada

### Current Statistics:

- Total Homeless Population: Nevada has an estimated 8,700 individuals experiencing homelessness on any given night, based on the 2023 HUD Point-In-Time Count.
- Demographics:
  - Veterans: Approximately 10% of the homeless population are veterans.
  - Families with Children: Around 20% consist of families with children.
  - Chronic Homelessness: About 28% are considered chronically homeless, facing long-term or repeated episodes of homelessness.

### Working Homeless:

- Employment Status: Similar to Las Vegas, an estimated 25-35% of Nevada's homeless population is employed. These individuals often face challenges such as low-wage jobs, lack of affordable housing, and limited access to mental health services.

### Living Situations:

- Vehicle Living: Approximately 2,800 Nevadan homeless individuals live in vehicles.
- Unsheltered Living: Around 4,900 reside in unsheltered conditions statewide.

## 3. Homelessness in California

### Current Statistics:

- Total Homeless Population: California accounts for approximately 181,000 people experiencing homelessness, representing about 28% of the national total.
- Unsheltered Homelessness: A significant 68% of California's homeless population lives unsheltered.
- Working Homeless: Estimates indicate that 25-30% of California's homeless individuals are employed. High living costs, especially in urban centers like Los Angeles and San Francisco, contribute to the difficulty in maintaining stable housing despite employment.

## **Living Situations:**

- Cars and RVs: Roughly 45,000 individuals live in vehicles across California.
- Tents and Temporary Shelters: Approximately 80,000 reside in tents, encampments, or other temporary shelters.

## **4. Financial Investments to Address Homelessness**

### **Las Vegas and Nevada:**

- State and Local Funding: Nevada has allocated over \$200 million in the past few years toward homelessness initiatives, including affordable housing projects, mental health services, and employment programs.
- Federal Assistance: Additional federal funds, estimated at \$150 million, have been directed toward Nevada's homelessness efforts through HUD and other federal programs.

### **California:**

- State Funding: California has invested more than \$5 billion annually in homelessness services, including emergency shelters, permanent supportive housing, and preventive measures.
- Local Initiatives: Major cities like Los Angeles, San Francisco, and San Diego contribute significant portions of their budgets, collectively investing upwards of \$3 billion annually.
- Federal Grants: California receives substantial federal funding, approximately \$1 billion per year, to support various homelessness programs.

## **5. Successes and Failures of Homelessness Programs**

### **Successes:**

- Housing First Initiatives: Both Nevada and California have implemented Housing First programs, which prioritize providing permanent housing to homeless individuals without preconditions. These programs have shown success in reducing chronic homelessness and improving stability for participants.
- Supportive Services: Investments in mental health services, substance abuse treatment, and job training have helped some individuals transition out of homelessness.

## Failures and Ongoing Challenges:

- Insufficient Affordable Housing: Despite significant investments, the supply of affordable housing remains critically low in both Nevada and California, particularly in high-demand areas like Las Vegas and Los Angeles.
- High Cost of Living: Rapid increases in housing costs outpace wage growth, making it difficult for even employed individuals to afford stable housing.
- Program Capacity and Accessibility: Many programs face long waiting lists and limited capacity, preventing timely assistance for those in need.
- Vulnerable Subpopulations: Specific groups, such as veterans, unaccompanied youth, and individuals with severe mental health issues, continue to face disproportionate challenges in accessing effective support.
- Sustainability of Funding: Ongoing economic pressures and political shifts can impact the sustainability and expansion of homelessness programs, leading to gaps in services.

## Case Studies:

- Nevada's Affordable Housing Projects: While new affordable housing units have been constructed, the rate of development is insufficient to meet the growing demand, particularly for low-income workers.
- California's Project Roomkey and Homekey: These initiatives aimed to provide emergency and permanent housing solutions have had mixed results. While they successfully housed thousands of individuals, the sheer scale of homelessness in California has made it difficult to achieve substantial reductions in overall numbers.

## **6. The Working Homeless: Specific Insights**

### Characteristics:

- Employment Sectors: The majority of working homeless individuals are employed in low-wage sectors such as hospitality, retail, and service industries.
- Income Levels: Despite holding jobs, many working homeless earn incomes below the living wage necessary to afford housing in high-cost areas.
- Living Arrangements: To bridge the gap between income and housing costs, these individuals often resort to living in vehicles, RVs, or temporary shelters, which provide mobility and flexibility but lack stability and safety.

## **Challenges Faced:**

- **Lack of Affordable Housing:** The primary barrier remains the scarcity of affordable housing options that align with the wages earned by working homeless individuals.
- **Access to Support Services:** Limited access to mental health care, substance abuse treatment, and financial counseling exacerbates the difficulties in maintaining stable housing.
- **Stigma and Barriers to Assistance:** Working homeless individuals may face stigma that hinders their ability to seek and receive help, as well as bureaucratic hurdles in accessing available services.

## **Program Responses:**

- **Job Training and Education Programs:** Efforts to enhance skills and education aim to help working homeless individuals secure higher-paying jobs. However, the impact is limited without concurrent increases in affordable housing.
- **Transportation Solutions:** Providing reliable transportation can help working homeless maintain employment, but without stable housing, or adequate living support facilities, these solutions offer only temporary relief.

## **Conclusion**

Addressing homelessness, particularly among the working homeless population, will require a multifaceted approach that combines increasing the availability of housing with enhancing support services that align with transitional and long-term living costs. While significant financial investments have been made in Nevada, and California, the persistence of high housing costs and other socio-economic factors continues to challenge the effectiveness of homeless programs. Long-term efforts must focus on sustainable housing solutions, and policies that address the causes of homelessness to achieve meaningful and lasting progress. Comprehensive transitional living support services are equally necessary. The proposed network of **GridZero CommunityHUBS** will provide a safe and secure transitional housing and support facilities for the working homeless population. Individuals and families forced out of their homes due to rising living costs, or economic pressures forcing them to live in their cars, RV's, trailers or tents. Initially within Las Vegas, then Northern Nevada and select California cities.