

# NATIONAL LAW CENTER

## ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY

### FACTS ON HOMELESSNESS, HOUSING, & VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence against women is a leading cause of homelessness. Some domestic violence survivors, particularly those with limited resources, become homeless after fleeing an abusive relationship or after being evicted for reasons related to the abuse, such as police involvement or property damage.

Statistics show that domestic violence survivors are routinely discriminated against when finding new housing. A lack of affordable housing and housing assistance further limits the options available to these women.

#### *Violence against women is a primary cause of homelessness.*

- Domestic violence was the most common reason women gave for their homelessness in 2007.<sup>1</sup> A comprehensive 2005 study found that one in four homeless women became homeless after experiencing violence.<sup>2</sup>
- In 2012, 28 percent of cities cited domestic violence as a leading cause of homelessness among families with children.<sup>3</sup>
- Half of all homeless women and children reported experiencing physical violence, and 92% of homeless mothers reported experiencing physical or sexual assault.<sup>4</sup>
- 44% of homeless women in a 2006 Minnesota study reported being physically abused as children; 40% reported sexual abuse as children.<sup>5</sup>
- 70% of Los Angeles homeless women in 2007 experienced domestic violence, sexual assault and/or child abuse during their lifetimes.<sup>6</sup>
- Nearly half of domestic violence survivors in a Florida housing survey reported becoming homeless because they could not find suitable or affordable housing away from the abuser.<sup>7</sup>
- In California, women who experienced domestic violence in the past year were four times more likely to face housing instability than those who did not experience domestic violence.<sup>8</sup>

#### IN ONE DAY IN 2012

- 64,324 people received services from domestic violence programs.
- Survivors of domestic violence made 10,471 unmet requests for services including emergency shelter, housing, and legal representation.
- 65% of these unmet requests were for housing. Emergency shelter and transitional housing remain survivors' most urgent unmet needs, with 6,818 requests unmet in a single day.
- 42% of programs reported that they lacked the funding to provide necessary services, including beds or hotel rooms to house survivors of domestic violence.

Nat'l Network to End Dom. Violence, *Domestic Violence Counts 2012* (2012), [www.nnedv.org/resources/census/2012-report.html](http://www.nnedv.org/resources/census/2012-report.html).

<sup>1</sup> Tischler, et al., *Mothers experiencing homelessness: mental health, support and social care needs*, 15 Health Soc. Care Cmty. 3, 246-253 (May 2007); see also Ellen Shelton, et al., *Homeless Study Fact Sheet: Long-Term Homelessness*, Wilder Res. Ctr. (Apr. 2013) (finding that at least 32% of homeless Minnesota women reported becoming homeless due to domestic violence).

<sup>2</sup> Jana L. Jasinski et al., *The Experience of Violence in the Lives of Homeless Women: A Research Report 2*, 65 (2005).

<sup>3</sup> *The U.S. Conference of Mayors 2012 Status Report on Hunger & Homelessness*, at 26 (Dec. 2012), <http://usmayors.org/pressreleases/uploads/2012/1219-report-HH.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Ellen Bassuk, M.D. & Nat'l Ctr. on Fam. Homelessness, *Written Submission to the U.N. Regional Consultation on Women and the Right to Adequate Housing in North America 2* (Oct. 2005).

<sup>5</sup> Wilder Res. Ctr., *Overview of Homelessness in Minnesota 17* (2007), [http://www.wilder.org/reports.0.html?&no\\_cache=1](http://www.wilder.org/reports.0.html?&no_cache=1).

<sup>6</sup> Downtown Women's Action Coal., *Growing Need & Shrinking Opportunities: Findings and Recommendations from the 2007 Downtown Women's Needs Assessment 2* (2008), available at <http://www.dwcweb.org/womenhomeless/dwac.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> *Intimate Partner Violence in the United States*, U.S. Dep't Just. Bureau of Just. Stat. (2006).

<sup>8</sup> Joanne Pavao, et al., *Intimate Partner Violence and Housing Instability*, 32 Am. J. Prev. Med. 2, 143-146 (2007).

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64% of 25 cities surveyed in 2012 reported turning away homeless families with children from shelters due to lack of resources.<sup>9</sup> 72% cited lack of affordable housing as a primary cause of family homelessness.<sup>10</sup>

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***Poor women and single mothers are at particularly high risk for domestic violence.***

- Women in socio-economically disadvantaged neighborhoods are twice as likely to experience domestic violence, and are more likely to be repeatedly abused or to experience severe violence, than women in more advantaged neighborhoods.<sup>11</sup>
- Single women with children are thirteen times more likely to experience domestic violence than married women with children, and seven times more likely than single women without children.<sup>12</sup>
- Over 75% of homeless families in the U.S. were headed by single women with children in 2010.<sup>13</sup>

***Shortages in affordable housing and housing assistance, as well as discriminatory housing practices, limit domestic violence survivors' housing options and increase their risk of becoming homeless.***

- The U.S. has a shortage of affordable housing, meaning housing that costs no more than 30% of the household annual income.<sup>14</sup> In 2012, demand for affordable housing exceeded supply by an estimated 4.6 million homes.<sup>15</sup> In 2011, 8.48 million families paid more than half their income for rent.<sup>16</sup>
- In a 2012 Minnesota survey, 48% of homeless women and 28% of unaccompanied young women reported that they had remained in abusive situations or returned to their abusers because they had no affordable housing options.<sup>17</sup>
- A 2001 study found that 70% of tenants facing eviction in Philadelphia were women of color.<sup>18</sup> In Los Angeles, households headed by African-American women with children face higher eviction rates than other households.<sup>19</sup>
- 65% of Washington, DC housing providers tested in 2008 illegally denied housing to a domestic violence survivor by refusing to rent, refusing appointments or offering inferior terms and conditions compared with other prospective tenants.<sup>20</sup>
- Receiving domestic violence services from a shelter and working with shelter advocates continued to positively impact women's quality of life and level of social support three years later.<sup>21</sup> After receiving services, Oregon women moved 80% less frequently, stayed 78% less often in emergency housing, and had a 52% increase in housing stability.<sup>22</sup> At 18 months, 82% were living in safe, stable housing.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> U.S. Conference of Mayors 2012 Status Report, *supra* note 3, at 79.

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> Michael L. Benson & Greer Litton Fox, *When Violence Hits Home: How Economics and Neighborhood Play a Role* 1-3 (2004), available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/pubs-sum/205004.htm>.

<sup>12</sup> Shannon Catalano, *Intimate Partner Violence 1993–2010*, 2 (Nov. 2012), <http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/ipv9310.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Dep't Hous. & Urb. Dev., *2010 Annual Homeless Assessment*, Report to Congress (2010), available at <http://www.hudhre.info/documents/2010HomelessAssessmentReport.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> Nat'l Low Income Hous. Coal., *Housing Spotlight: America's Affordable Housing Shortage* (2013), [http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/HS\\_3-1.pdf](http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/HS_3-1.pdf); see also U.S. Dep't Hous. & Urb. Dev., *Affordable Housing* (2008), available at <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/affordablehousing/index.cfm>.

<sup>15</sup> See Nat'l Low Income Hous. Coal., *supra* note 14.

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Dep't Hous. & Urb. Dev., *Worst Case Housing Needs 2011* (2011), [http://huduser.org/Publications/pdf/HUD-506\\_WorstCase2011.pdf](http://huduser.org/Publications/pdf/HUD-506_WorstCase2011.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> Michelle Gerrard, et al., *Homeless Study Fact Sheet: Initial Findings: Characteristics and Trends*, Wilder Research (Apr. 2013).

<sup>18</sup> Chester Hartman & David Robinson, *Evictions: The Hidden Housing Problem*, 14 Hous. Pol'y Deb. 461 (2003).

<sup>19</sup> Matthew Desmond, *Eviction and the Reproduction of Urban Poverty*, 118 Am. J. Soc. 1, 88 (July 2012), <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>; see also Chester Hartman & David Robinson, *Evictions: The Hidden Housing Problem*, 14 Hous. Pol'y Deb. 461, 467 (2003), available at <http://www.saje.net>.

<sup>20</sup> Equal Rts. Ctr., *No Vacancy: Housing Discrimination against Survivors of Domestic Violence in the District of Columbia* (2008), <http://www.equalrightscenter.org/publications/novacancy.php>.

<sup>21</sup> Deborah Bybee & Cris Sullivan, *Predicting Re-Victimization of Battered Women 3 Years After Exiting a Shelter Program*, 36 Am. J. Cmty Psychol. 92 (2005).

<sup>22</sup> Chiquita Rollins, et al., *The SHARE Study* (2010), [http://www.legis.iowa.gov/DOCS/LSA/SC\\_MaterialsDist/2013/SDBAL030.PDF](http://www.legis.iowa.gov/DOCS/LSA/SC_MaterialsDist/2013/SDBAL030.PDF).

<sup>23</sup> *Id.*