



NATIONAL COALITION *for* HOMELESS VETERANS

“Older Adults Facing Worst Case Housing Needs and Homelessness: Recent Trends and Policy Implications” Thomas Byrne [Full Report](#)

Quick Takeaways:

- The number of older individuals who have worst case housing needs and who are homeless continues to grow, emphasizing the need for targeted housing interventions.
- Meeting the needs of an aging homeless cohort will require development and expansion of targeted, specialized permanent and affordable housing programs.

Study:

This paper looked at the housing situation and forecasts for two populations: aging Americans with “worst case housing needs” and aging individuals who are homeless. While not specific to veterans, the trends found in this report allude to the pending national need for more housing resources. The authors pulled together existing research on worst case housing needs and homelessness for aging adults, offering policy suggestions to alleviate homelessness risk and housing instability.

Findings:

For those individuals who are homeless, a cohort effect shows that individuals born between 1955 and 1964 have a disproportionately large risk of experiencing homelessness. Recent AHAR report data shows that the proportion of single adults who are homeless and over 51 years of age has increased to over 30 percent as of 2013.

This survey of the existing research found that for a decade after 2003, the number of 62 years old and older households reporting worst case housing needs households grew by one third. This trend appears to be immune to economic prosperity, as the number of older low-income households that have worst case housing needs has continued to rise as the overall number of worst case housing needs cases has dropped in recent years. As of 2011, less than half of these low-income, aging households with worst case housing needs received rental assistance.

Conclusion:

The authors of this review outline the pending policy implications of these two trends on health care services. Higher rent burdens lead to decreased income and attention paid to preventive medicine, negatively impacting long-term health. The high incidence of aging-related health issues within the aging homeless cohort will also severely impact health services usage. The authors suggest a robust expansion of supportive and affordable housing resources and programs, with a focus on those individuals with the highest needs, including chronically homeless individuals.