



Myths and Facts on Homelessness¹

Homeless people suffer from the hardship of their condition, but also face alienation and discrimination fueled by stereotypes. Here are some of myths and realities of homelessness.

MYTH: People who are homeless stay homeless for a long time.

FACT: The vast majority of Utahns - 67 percent - are homeless for less than six weeks. They stay in shelters for brief periods and often do not return.

MYTH: Most are single men.

FACT: Persons in families are the fastest growing, comprising 46 percent of Utah's homeless population.

MYTH: The homeless population is transient, migrating to cities with the best services.

FACT: The vast majority of homeless Utahns lived in Utah when they became homeless—77% of homeless individuals and 88% of homeless families. They hail from urban and rural areas, small towns and affluent suburbs.

MYTH: Homeless people are dangerous.

FACT: The homeless are more likely to be victims of crime. Though prone to commit non-violent, petty crimes like loitering and trespassing (mostly due to the conditions of being homeless), they are less likely to commit crimes against a person or property.

MYTH: They are to blame for their situation.

FACT: Many are victims of circumstance: illness and trauma from violence or abuse. About 26 percent are children.

¹ 2008 Utah Homeless Count and The Development and the National Law Center of Homelessness and Poverty