

Types of Homelessness

Alcoholics: The old-fashioned skid-row wino is still out there.

Demoralized: After suffering some personal tragedy, these people have given up and retreated into despair. The most common catalyst to their demoralization is divorce.

Ease addicts: These people actually choose to be homeless. For them, homelessness is a form of “early retirement.” They reject responsibilities to others, and they come and go as they please. Some, in their 20’s, spend their days playing chess in the parks of San Francisco.

Elderly: These people have neither savings nor family support; they are old, unemployable, and discarded.

Excitement addicts: Among the younger of the homeless, these people enjoy the thrill of danger. They like the excitement that comes from “living on the edge.” Being on the streets offers many “edge” opportunities.

Mentally ill: These people have been discharged from mental hospitals. Although unable to care for themselves, they receive little or no treatment for their problems. Like teenagers, they are easy victims of the predators who prowl our city streets.

New poor: This group consists of unemployed workers whose work skills have become outdated because of technological change.

Push-outs: These people have been pushed out of their homes. Two common types of “push-outs” are teenagers kicked out by their parents and adults evicted by landlords.

Runaways: After fleeing intolerable situations, these boys and girls wander our streets.

Technologically unqualified: Unlike the new poor, these unemployed workers never possessed technological qualifications.

Travel addicts: These people also choose to be homeless. Addicted to wanderlust, they travel continuously. They call themselves “road dogs.”

Victims of environmental disaster: This type really surprised me, but they, too, live on our streets. The disasters I came across ranged from fires to dioxin contamination.