

A map of America's homeless problem reveals the best and worst states for affordable housing

Business Insider, by Leanna Garfield, March 22, 2018

- An analysis maps the number of homeless people per 100,000 residents in every US state plus Washington, DC.
- According to the researchers, the number of unsheltered homeless people is on the rise nationwide.
- The data suggests that states with higher housing prices have higher rates of homeless people. DC — a city in the middle of an affordable housing crisis — has the highest number of homeless people per capita in the US. It's a similar story for Hawaii, California, and New York.
- Iowa and Nebraska have the fewest number of homeless Americans per capita, and housing prices are relatively low.

For decades, the US has suffered a homelessness problem with monumental economic and human costs. At the same time, the country has also been caught in an affordable housing crisis.

A new analysis suggests a correlation between the two epidemics exists. Looking at 2017 data from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the San Francisco-based data agency DataFace mapped the number of homeless people per 100,000 residents in every state plus Washington, DC.

As you can see below, the nation's capital has the highest number of homeless per capita at about 110.



A map that estimates America's homeless problem. DataFace

The researchers note that there may be a connection between high housing prices and high rates of homelessness. As of 2017, eight of the ten states with the highest rates of homelessness (which includes Washington, DC) are among the ten most expensive places to live. Affordable housing in many DC neighborhoods, for example, has been scarce in recent years. Zillow estimates that the median home value in Washington is \$553,600, and the median rent price is \$2,500 per month as of February 2018.

It's a similar story in Hawaii, where there are approximately 51 homeless people per 100,000 residents, and home values have increased about 6.6% over the past year. The median home value in Hawaii is around \$628,600, and the monthly median rent price is \$2,300.

Meanwhile, Iowa and Nebraska have the fewest number of homeless Americans per capita, according to the analysis. These states also have relatively low housing prices: about \$132,600 and \$157,800 respectively.

There is one major caveat to this study. Even when relying on government data, it can be hard to find the true number of people living on the streets, especially if they move locations or reside in hidden places. In addition, HUD makes the tallies in January, when many homeless take refuge with family or friends during the cold weather. These numbers are then combined with a count of occupied shelter beds to gauge the success of the previous year's service efforts.

In 2017, the total number of homeless Americans increased by 0.7% year-over-year. The number of unsheltered homeless grew even more with a jump of 9% from 2016. The affordable housing crisis is likely to endure as well. The White House's Fiscal Year 2019 budget proposal, released in February, calls for work requirements for those who receive public housing subsidies. It would also cut funding for HUD by \$8.8 billion.