

# HOMEWALK

## The Walk to End Homelessness

### Homelessness: Fact or Fiction?

**FICTION:** People are homeless because they choose to be.

**FACT:** People are homeless for a variety of reasons and choice is rarely one of them. According to the 2007 Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority Homeless Count, the most cited cause of becoming homeless was the loss of a job followed by eviction from their home (It takes a wage of over \$21 an hour to afford the average apartment in Los Angeles County).



**FICTION:** People are homeless because they're lazy and they don't want to work.

**FACT:** About 7% of the homeless work either part or full time. The most common reason the homeless do not work is a disabling condition. About three-quarters of the homeless have some sort of disability, and about 9 in 10 of those have a disability that prevents them from working.

**FICTION:** If people didn't want to be homeless, they could stay in a shelter.

**FACT:** There are 3.6 homeless individuals for every shelter or housing bed in Los Angeles County. Only 17% of the homeless population in Los Angeles County is sheltered, compared to 57% in San Francisco, and more than 90% in Philadelphia, Denver, and New York City and 54.8% nationwide. There are only enough family shelter beds for just a quarter of the family homeless population in L.A. County.

**FICTION:** Los Angeles has a huge homeless population because the good weather attracts homeless people from other states.

**FACT:** About 8 in 10 homeless persons were living in Los Angeles County before they became homeless. An additional 1 in 10 were living elsewhere in California, and just 1 in 10 came from outside the state.

**FICTION:** Anywhere as big as Los Angeles County will have a problem with homelessness.

**FACT:** New York City has about 80% the population of Los Angeles County, but has half the number of homeless people. They have dramatically reduced the number of homeless individuals in their city by focusing on permanent solutions.

**FICTION:** Homelessness exists in Skid Row. I live in the Valley so this doesn't affect my community.

**FACT:** While the highest proportion of homeless people is in the metro L.A. area, the problem exists throughout Los Angeles County. The numbers below shows the percentage of homeless people in each county region.

Antelope Valley 3%  
 San Fernando Valley 9%  
 San Gabriel Valley 14%  
 Metro Los Angeles 32%

West Los Angeles 10%  
 South Los Angeles 17%  
 East Los Angeles 8%  
 South Bay/Harbor 6%