

Left out in the Cold: Homicide Among Persons Experiencing Homelessness

Background: This study aims to characterize homicides and associated disparities among persons experiencing homelessness (PEH).

Methods: We reviewed homicide victims in the National Violent Death Reporting System, the Point-in-Time survey results, and census population projections to identify unique circumstances surrounding homicides against PEH.

Results: In 2018, the estimated rate of homicide against PEH was more than 12-fold that of the general population. PEH were more likely to die through random violence at the hand of a stranger and were half as likely to die via firearm. PEH were more likely to be male, older, White, and to have identified mental health, alcohol, and substance abuse problems.

Conclusions: PEH are overrepresented as victims of homicide. The circumstances surrounding the deaths of PEH, and the demographics of those most at risk, differ between the homeless and housed populations, meriting targeted interventions.