



Health x Housing Lab Research Summary

Homelessness and Mental Health

November 2022

Many studies have examined mental health outcomes among people experiencing homelessness. Here, we summarize three recent studies.

THE FIRST STUDY, [Long-Term Effects of Rent Supplements and Mental Health Support Services on Housing and Health Outcomes of Homeless Adults with Mental Illness: Extension Study of the At Home/Chez Soi Randomized Controlled Trial](#), examined the effectiveness of a Housing First program in Toronto on housing stability for homeless adults with mental illness. 414 study participants were followed over 6 years after the intervention started.

- The number of days spent stably housed in each of the six years was **significantly higher** for participants randomly assigned to Housing First than those who had not been assigned to Housing First (aka “treatment as usual”).
- In year six, homeless adults with high mental health support needs **were stably housed for 86%** of the study time period with Housing First, compared to 60% without the intervention. Participants with moderate health support needs **were stably housed for 88%** of days in Housing First, compared to 78% without the intervention.

THE SECOND STUDY, [The Physical and Mental Health Effects of Housing Homeless People: A Systematic Review](#), was a

systematic review of more than 20 studies of housing interventions and their impact on mental health in multiple countries from 1999 to 2020.

THE THIRD STUDY, [Mental Health and Substance Use Among Homeless Adolescents in the US](#),

assessed mental health and substance use among 4,523 homeless and 105,864 non-homeless high school students in 22 states in 2019, using data from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

- Overall, permanent supportive housing was associated with **decreased anxiety and depression**.
- In one study, older people experiencing homelessness who received permanent supportive housing had **significant decreases in reports of depression and use of acute care facilities**.
- In another study in this systematic review, **suicidal ideation decreased by about 50%** for homeless adults with alcohol use difficulties after being given housing interventions.
- 53% of homeless adolescents **reported persistent sadness or hopelessness**, compared to 37% of non-homeless adolescents.
- 28% of homeless adolescents **reported attempting suicide**, compared to 8% of non-homeless adolescents.

Onapa, H., Sharpley, C. F., Bitsika, V., McMillan, M. E., MacLure, K., Smith, L., & Agnew, L. L. (2022). The physical and mental health effects of housing homeless people: A systematic review. *Health & Social Care in the Community*, 30(2), 448-468. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/hsc.13486>

Liu, M., Koh, K. A., Hwang, S. W., & Wadhera, R. K. (2022). Mental health and substance use among homeless adolescents in the US. *JAMA*, 327(18), 1820-1822. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2022.4422>

