A great number of factors contribute to someone becoming homeless. And while the vast majority of people who become homeless do so for a short time, the number of people experiencing episodes of homelessness continues to rise.

Here are some of the factors that contribute to a person experiencing homelessness:

**Job Loss** – A job loss leads to a loss of income, which can lead someone on a downward spiral.

**Substance Abuse** – Addiction to drugs and alcohol are on the rise. The rates are disproportionately high among the population without homes.

- According to the Tennessee Department of Health, drug overdose deaths increased from 1,451 in 2015 to 1,631 in 2016. This is a 12 percent increase from 2015-2016 compared to a 14 percent increase the previous year. The most dramatic increase in drug overdose deaths was among young people: In 2015 there were 87 drug overdose deaths in the 15 to 24 year age group, compared to 116 in 2016.

**Jail or Incarceration** – Many of those released from jails or prisons leave with just the clothes on their back. Without family intervention, many have no other safety net to help them get back on their feet.

**Illness / Physical Disabilities** – For families and individuals struggling to pay the rent, a serious illness or disability can start a downward spiral into homelessness, beginning with a lost job, depletion of savings to pay for care, and eventual eviction. For those receiving SSI (Social Security Income), they often struggle to obtain and maintain stable housing.

**Mental Illness** – Approximately 20-25 percent of single adult people experiencing homelessness suffer from some form of severe and persistent mental illness. According to the Treatment Advocacy Center (a nonprofit dedicated to eliminating barriers to the timely and effective treatment of severe mental illness), “People with untreated serious mental illness comprise an estimated one-third of the total homeless population in the United States and an even higher percentage of women and individuals who are chronically homeless.”
The area described as Middle Tennessee is made up of 41 counties in the middle of the state. The principal city of Nashville, located in Davidson County, sits in the middle and is the state’s capital. Other major sizable cities in Middle Tennessee include Clarksville and Murfreesboro. The rural nature of the majority of the counties surrounding Davidson County do not have adequate resources to care for those who may become homeless in their communities. This leads most of those seeking emergency shelter to Nashville, where there are a number of resources available to assist the homeless.

According to the U.S. Conference of Mayor’s Report on Housing and Homelessness in 2016, the rate of homeless in Nashville rose 9.8 percent from 2015 to 2016, which was the sixth-largest leap among major U.S. cities. The report goes on to say that two out of five homeless people in Nashville, or 40.3 percent, are experiencing chronic homelessness—defined as lacking shelter while also having repeated medical issues, mental illness, substance abuse disorders, or remaining homeless for long stretches. That percentage tops all cities.

Here’s a snapshot of those living in Davidson County according to the city’s 2016 Community Needs Assessment:

- Population .................................................... 668,347
- High School Graduate .......................... 87.7%
- Bachelor’s Degree or Higher .............. 37.3%
- Median Age .................................................. 34.4 years
- Age 65 and Over ......................................... 11.1%
- Median Earnings for All Workers .......... $28,296
- Living in Poverty ................................. 19.9% or 129,057
- Population with Low Food Access ......... 26.2%

It is also worth mentioning that a lack of affordable housing may also lead to homelessness.
- As the economy in the mid-state has been on the rise, according to the Tennessean, an analysis in 2015, reported a shortage of 17,754 affordable rental housing units to meet the demand for households that earn 60 percent or below of the median household income, which is currently $52,026. With a low unemployment rate, and a record number of 80 to 100 new people moving to Nashville each day, this number will most certainly continue to rise.

**HOMELESSNESS IN MIDDLE TENNESSEE**

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder/Severe Depression/Tragedy – A person experiencing PTSD, severe depression, or other illnesses stemming from a tragic event may find themselves unable to function and care for themselves.

Domestic Violence – Battered women who live in poverty are often forced to choose between abusive relationships and homelessness.

Other things such as low wages, poverty, natural disasters, (e.g., fire, tornado, or flood), which renders housing inhabitable, may also contribute to a person experiencing homelessness.
The majority of organizations and agencies serving the homeless population in Middle Tennessee in the areas of food, clothing, and shelter operate using the HUD definition of homelessness. This is particularly important when the annual Point In Time (PIT) count takes place.

The Metropolitan Housing and Development Agency (MDHA) provides coordination assistance to the local agencies that collectively are Nashville’s homeless-services Continuum of Care (COC), including helping coordinate the annual HUD Point-In-Time (PIT) count. The HUD 2017 PIT count as reported by the Nashville/Davidson (COC) gives the following statistics about people experiencing homelessness in Davidson County:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Homeless People</td>
<td>2,337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheltered</td>
<td>1,682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsheltered</td>
<td>655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Chronic Population</td>
<td>601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheltered Singles</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsheltered Singles</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheltered Families</td>
<td>1 w/ 9 members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Families Population</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheltered Families</td>
<td>80 families w/ 296 members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsheltered Families</td>
<td>2 families w/ 10 members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Veteran Population</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheltered Veterans</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsheltered Veterans</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsheltered Veterans Families</td>
<td>2 w/ 10 members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheltered Chronic Veterans</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheltered Families</td>
<td>1 w/ 9 members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaccompanied Youth (&lt;25)</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The PIT count is usually taken on one of the coldest days in January. It provides a fairly accurate count of those who are staying in shelters. The city saw roughly an increase of 10 percent in 2016 over 2015. This year that dropped a little more than 1 percent. However, 2017 saw the second highest number of homeless counted during the annual PIT since reporting in 2010.

MDHA also helps manage the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), a database into which agencies enter services data. Chart H-23 shows the percentage of these individuals served by Nashville COC agencies by race. American Community Survey 1-year estimates of the 2015 total population in Davidson County are shown for comparison.
For additional insight, here is the demographical breakdown of the individuals experiencing homelessness in 2017 served by Nashville Rescue Mission:

**SERVICES AVAILABLE TO THE HOMELESS IN MIDDLE TENNESSEE**

**Free Emergency Shelter and Services:**

There are only a few organizations providing free emergency shelter and services to the majority of the homeless in Middle Tennessee:

**NASHVILLE RESCUE MISSION**

- One of only a few true emergency shelters in Nashville.
- Over 1,000 bedding surfaces available for men, women, and children in the emergency shelter.
- Services include case management; life recovery programs for those in addiction; access to medical, dental, veterans, legal, and mental health assistance; educational advancement opportunities through tutoring, HSE test preparation, and mentoring, etc.
- In 2017, the Mission served over 7,842 unique individuals, providing over 591,335 meals, and 270,957 nights of safe shelter.

**UNDUPLICATED INDIVIDUALS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Unduplicated Men Served</td>
<td>5,325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Unduplicated Women Served</td>
<td>1,948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Unduplicated People Served Gender Unknown</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Unduplicated Children Served</td>
<td>569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total of Unduplicated Individuals Served</td>
<td>7,842</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**AGE GROUPS SERVED**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-12</td>
<td>483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-18</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-24</td>
<td>512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-55</td>
<td>5,148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56+</td>
<td>1,510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**GENDER SERVED**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2,218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5,623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ETHNICITY SERVED**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>3,446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian/White</td>
<td>3,588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific American Islander</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American/Alaskan Native</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-ethnic</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown/Unreported</td>
<td>381</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SPECIAL POPULATION SERVED**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special Population</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formerly Incarcerated (self-reporting from jail)</td>
<td>379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled</td>
<td>1,115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterans</td>
<td>494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ROOM IN THE INN

- Limited emergency shelter in Nashville in partnership with local congregations from November 1 – March 31 working with 185 local congregations.
- Sheltered 1,200 individual guests last year providing nearly 32,000 beds, approximately 25,000 showers, and more than 62,000 meals to their homeless guests.
- Guest House, in partnership with the Metro Police Department, provides a safe alternative to jail for the publicly intoxicated and shelter for those seeking to recover from addiction. Almost 37,000 beds were provided last year for those in various stages of recovery.
- Recuperative Care provides medically fragile homeless individuals a safe place to recover from illness or hospitalization. Shelter, meals, and medications are provided. Around 400 individuals were offered an opportunity to recuperate and connect with vital social services last year, with an average length of stay of 25 days.
- Veterans Program, in partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs, provides 32 beds to those who have served our country.
- Downtown Comprehensive Center includes 38 efficiency apartments and ongoing case management for residents.

Outside of Nashville:

There are only a few mission-type facilities near Nashville. They are limited in size, scope, and resources but can provide some assistance to those with immediate needs.

MURFREESBORO RESCUE MISSION
35 miles outside of Nashville

- Upstart.
- No permanent facility.
- Currently provides limited winter care through partnership with local churches.

RADICAL MISSION IN CLARKSVILLE
50 miles outside of Nashville

- Offers a variety of services including a food pantry, clothing room, emergency housing, shelter, and meal for up to 20 men, women, and children during winter months, Celebrate Recovery, community garden, furniture, food supplements for 30 middle school children, employment readiness program, and income-based counseling.

COOKEVILLE RESCUE MISSION
80 miles outside of Nashville

- Established in 1976.
- Provides emergency, temporary shelter for the homeless.
- Offers two residential buildings plus a chapel, general store, salon, and dental clinic.
- Offers assistance lasting from three to 30 days for men, women, and families in need.
- Also operates Step Upward Farm, a seven-acre working farm that offers a three- to nine-month program designed to help young, troubled fathers turn their lives around.

Free Family Shelter and Services:

When seeking emergency shelter specifically for mothers with children, or intact families, the options in Davidson County diminish.

SAFE HAVEN

- Safe Haven has 10 spaces for families with children.
- In 2016, Safe Haven served 20 couples, 56 single mothers, 11 single fathers, and one multi-generational family.
- Historically housed an average of 38 families, including 57 children, each year.
- Following their recent renovation, they anticipate serving at least 100 families, including more than 150 children, annually.

SOPHIA’S HEART (now closed)

- In 2010, Sophia’s Heart was established in Antioch to provide flood relief for victims of the historical May flood. Following flood relief efforts, the organization attempted to provide services to homeless families in the Middle Tennessee area. At one time caring for 25 to 30 families and at full capacity could have housed 100 to 150 individuals per year. Unfortunately, Sophia’s Heart closed in 2017, leaving a gaping hole in the area of emergency services to homeless families in the Nashville area.
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Within Davidson County, women who are escaping domestic violence have a handful of shelters to choose from, assuming they meet each organization’s criteria. **YWCA Domestic Violence Shelter** can accommodate up to 50 women and children. Additional shelters for domestic violence include **The Mary Parrish Center** and **Morning Star Sanctuary**.

Outside of the Nashville area, there are a few additional beds available for mothers with children suffering from domestic violence, and they include **Bridges Domestic Violence Center** in Franklin; **Home Safe** in Hendersonville; **Urban Ministries** in Clarksville; and **Domestic Violence Emergency Shelter** in Murfreesboro.

Free Subset Shelters with Criteria:

Over and above organizations providing general emergency services to homeless women, and moms with children, there are a few subsets with very limited capacity. The largest subset is for women seeking shelter as a result of domestic violence issues.

INCARCERATION

Within Davidson County, there are a handful of shelters and/or programs specifically available to those who were formerly incarcerated, assuming they meet each organization’s criteria. These include **Dismas House** (men), **The Next Door** (women), and **Center House** (men).

HUD Housing Options:

In addition to shelter facilities, Nashville has access to a variety of low-cost, HUD-approved housing units.

**Urban Housing Solutions** is Nashville’s largest nonprofit provider of affordable housing. Urban Housing Solutions owns and operates 30 properties—with over 900 apartments in Nashville.

MDHA operates 56,399 units in 20 public housing properties. Also, MDHA manages Housing Choice (Section 8) Vouchers that are a form of HUD housing subsidy that residents may use to find apartments of their choice.

Here is a list of additional HUD-approved housing developments, of which only eight are for families.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF PUBLIC HOUSING</th>
<th>APARTMENT NAME</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>UNITS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Cayce Place</td>
<td>701 South 7th Street, 37206</td>
<td>710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Napier Place</td>
<td>648 Claiborne Street, 37210</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Edgehill Homes</td>
<td>1277 12th Avenue North, 37203</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Sudekum Apartments</td>
<td>101 University Court, 37210</td>
<td>443</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(list continued)
### Type of Public Housing | Apartment Name | Location | Units
--- | --- | --- | ---
Family | Cheatham Place | 1564 9th Avenue North, 37208 | 314
Family | Andrew Jackson Courts | 1457 Jackson Street, 37208 | 374
Family | Cumberland View | 2316 25th Avenue North, 37208 | 226
Family | Neighborhood Housing | (Scattered sites) | 368
Contemporary/Market | Vine Hill | 601 Benton Avenue, 37204 | 152
Contemporary/Market | Preston Taylor | 3900 Clifton Road, 37209 | 338
Contemporary/Market | Levy Place | 303 Foster Street, 37207 | 226
Contemporary/Market | J. Henry Hale | 1433 Jo Johnson Avenue, 37203 | 228
Contemporary | Parkway Terrace | 196 North 7th Street, 37206 | 125
Elderly Only | Edgefield Manor | 525 Shelby Avenue, 37206 | 220
Elderly Only | Carleen Batson Waller Manor | 106 31st Avenue South, 37212 | 53
Elderly Only | Gernert Studio | 1101 Edgehill Avenue, 37203 | 176
Elderly and Disabled | Hadley Park Towers | 2901 John Merritt Blvd. 37209 | 154
Elderly and Disabled | Madison Towers | 591 North Dupont Avenue, 37115 | 211
Elderly and Disabled | Parthenon Towers | 301 28th Avenue North, 37203 | 295
Elderly and Disabled | Vine Hill Studio | 625 Benton Avenue, 37206 | 147

**Low-Cost Shelter Options:**

Nashville is home to a number of Pay Per Night and/or Pay Per Week Motels that come as a very last resort.

Pay Per Night Motels in the area include America’s Best Value Inn, Cumberland Inn, Days Inn Hotel, The Drake Motel, Knight’s Inn, Stadium Inn, and Twelve Oaks.

**Conclusion:**

Just as there are numerous reasons for homelessness, the options for solving this crisis are just a varied. As the largest service provider to the homeless, Nashville Rescue Mission exists to provide those who are hungry, homeless, and hurting with hope for today, hope for tomorrow, and hope for eternity. The Mission is always evaluating its services and making adjustments accordingly to meet the ever-changing needs of the homeless community and the people it serves.