

NAME:

Myths / Facts

Read the homelessness fact book and then read each statement below and circle whether you think it is a myth or a fact. Under each statement, explain why you think it is a myth or a fact.

People choose not to have a home. They could get a home if they wanted to.
MYTH or FACT

Most people experiencing homelessness are middle aged men.
MYTH or FACT

People are experiencing homelessness because they have made bad decisions in life.
MYTH or FACT

Many people experiencing homelessness have an education.
MYTH or FACT

People experiencing homelessness have a higher rate of mental health issues than the general population.
MYTH or FACT

All people without a home sleep on the street.
MYTH or FACT

NAME:

Myths / Facts

Some people who are experiencing homelessness are employed.

MYTH or FACT

It would be cool to have no home because you can go anywhere and do anything you that you want.

MYTH or FACT

Not all people experiencing homelessness are addicted to drugs or alcohol.

MYTH or FACT

Homelessness happens in all kinds of areas, including big cities and remote locations.

MYTH or FACT

If we had more homes there would be no homelessness.

MYTH or FACT

There is nothing we can do about homelessness.

MYTH or FACT

Teacher Guide – Myths / Facts

Below are the answers to the myth/fact activity. Each answer is also accompanied by a brief explanation, which you may wish to share with your students so they can get a deeper understanding of the issue of homelessness.

People choose not to have a home. They could get a home if they wanted to.

MYTH No one chooses to be homeless. Most people who don't have a home want one. However, a big issue facing many Australians is housing affordability. Many people struggle to meet their basic needs (food etc.) as well as housing.

Most people experiencing homelessness are middle aged men.

MYTH Homelessness in Australia is experienced by all population groups.

The percentage is slightly higher for men than women – but not much. It is also experienced by a wide range of age groups, from young children to the elderly.

People are experiencing homelessness because they have made bad decisions in life.

MYTH Most people experiencing homelessness are doing so through no fault of their own. There are many different causes of homelessness ranging from unemployment and disability through to domestic and family violence.

Many people experiencing homelessness have an education.

FACT Many homeless have or are receiving an education, however they face significant barriers due to their living circumstances.

People experiencing homelessness have a higher rate of mental health issues than the general population.

FACT A Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing review noted in 2005 that it appeared that the homeless had a higher prevalence of severe mental disorders than the rest of the population. Recent ABS data shows that of those who had reported being homeless at least once in their lives, more than half had experienced a mental disorder in the previous 12 months, 3 times higher than among those who had never been homeless.

All people without a home sleep on the street.

MYTH People who sleep rough are only a small percentage (7%) of the total homeless population. This is called primary homelessness. Many people experiencing homelessness couch surf, stay in emergency accommodation or in substandard dwellings.

Teacher Guide – Myths / Facts

Some people who are experiencing homelessness are employed.

FACT People experiencing homeless may be employed but not earning enough to meet their living costs. They may also be underemployed or unemployed and looking for work. However, it can be very difficult for people experiencing homelessness to find a job for a number of reasons.

It would be cool to have no home because you can go anywhere and do anything you that you want.

MYTH When you have no home it is very hard to find places to eat, sleep, and shower. It is also hard to find transportation. People who don't have a home also have to think about their safety.

Not all people experiencing homelessness are addicted to drugs or alcohol.

FACT Some people who don't have a home use substances like drugs or alcohol. Many other people without a home do not use substances like drugs or alcohol.

Homelessness happens in all kinds of areas, including big cities and remote locations.

FACT There are people who have no home everywhere. In remote locations, there are fewer support services and programs like shelters to help people who don't have a home. In these areas, people might experience "hidden homelessness".

If we had more homes there would be no homelessness.

MYTH To end homelessness, people need more than just stable homes. They also need income and supports. People need a safe and secure home that they think is right for them. They also need enough income to meet their basic needs, such as shelter, food, clothing, and transportation. People also need different types of support, from friends and family and other people in the community to keep their homes for a long time. Homelessness can be ended with these three things—housing, income, and supports.

There is nothing we can do about homelessness.

MYTH Everyone has a part to play in ending homelessness. Students can help by writing letters to leaders asking them to end homelessness. You can also donate your time to an organisation working to support people who don't have a home. Lots of these organisations also need donations of supplies like shampoo and socks to give to people who don't have a home.

Some information used from:

Cambridge Action on Homelessness Group. (2009) in Teacher Toolkit. (2009). Homelessness and Housing Umbrella Group. Retrieved from

<http://homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/q2ebqbz3.pdf>