



Cause Kit

Shelter by Sean Ng

What do you need to know?

Given Singapore's economic prosperity and high home ownership rate, homelessness might not seem like a crucial issue.¹

Yet, between 2005 to 2015, the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) provided shelter and support to an average of 300 individuals or families a year.² From 2016 to 2018, this number remained fairly consistent: an average of 295 cases were helped annually.³

In 2017, a survey conducted by volunteer group SW101 found over 180 people sleeping outdoors in 25 locations across Singapore over a five-hour stretch.⁴ Half of them had been sleeping in public for at least a year.⁵

Not all who sleep in public are homeless, and some with registered addresses may choose to sleep outside due to cramped living conditions or poor relations with those whom they lived with.⁶ However, the discomfort associated with rough sleeping implies that it is a decision made due to a lack of practical alternatives.⁷

Why should you care?

Homelessness usually results from a combination of structural and individual factors. Homelessness is often preceded by a breakdown in family ties, with many homeless individuals estranged from family members and friends. Although most of them are employed, they typically hold low-paying or unstable jobs, which make them ineligible for public rental schemes, and at the same time, unable to afford a house.⁸

Data from MSF revealed that three out of four who sleep outdoors were once flat owners but sold their homes to settle debts or divorce, and were unable to finance the cost of buying or renting another flat.⁹

¹ Department of Statistics, Singapore. (2018)

² Tai Janice, Seow Bei Yi (2017, Feb 5) [Where the displaced seek refuge](#)

³ Channel News Asia, (2019, May 9) [About 290 homeless, destitute people in Singapore given help each year over last 3 years](#)

⁴ Kok, Xing Hui (2017, Oct 7) [180 found sleeping on streets](#)

⁵ Kok, Xing Hui. Ibid.

⁶ Channel News Asia. Ibid.

⁷ Neo Yu Wei, Ng Kok Hoe (2017, Oct 18) [Getting to the nub of homelessness](#)

⁸ Derrick A Paulo, Goh Chiew Tong (2017, Oct 7) [Homeless stereotypes busted: Most hold jobs, have been destitute for over a year](#)

⁹ Tai Janice, Seow Bei Yi. Ibid.

Where is help available?

New Hope Community Services provides temporary shelter for displaced families and individuals. Their shelter helps displaced families regain their footing in society without breaking up the family structure. They provide skill training, basic counselling, job placement assistance, and monthly food ration.

Homeless Hearts of Singapore seeks to befriend the homeless through regular outreach efforts and fully reintegrate them back to society through community-building, temporary aid, advocacy, and local partnerships.

How can you help?

Be a Friend

Homeless people are humans too. Instead of shunning them, respect, listen and understand their stories.

Be a Donor

Support the meaningful work of New Hope Community Services to help displaced people find independence and hope again [here](#).

Be a Volunteer

Follow Homeless Hearts on one of their outreaches, and keep in the loop with their volunteering opportunities [here](#).

Be an Advocate

Reduce stigma about homelessness in Singapore. Host a screening of Shelter with your friends, colleagues, and families.

To be a 15 Shorts ambassador, use our screening kit on www.15shorts.com/learn.