

Gimme Shelter

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Christopher Glynn, assistant professor of decision sciences at UNH's Paul College of Business and Economics, is addressing the complex issue of homelessness with a surprising tool: Data.

Glynn, with funding from the online real estate and rental marketplace Zillow, studied 25 major metropolitan areas and found that when rents reached 32% of the local median income, expected homelessness rates rose sharply. Los Angeles, for instance, where rents are 49% of the median income, is ground zero for the homelessness crisis; Glynn's research forecast that if New York City rents increased an average of 5% in the coming year, 3,000 more people would fall into homelessness.

The study, considered a landmark, exemplifies how data can drive policy, he says. “Making an explicit connection between affordable housing and homelessness is the first, critical step to helping cities budget to provide affordable housing to more people.”

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