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**UCSF Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative Releases
Findings on Aging and Homelessness**

Nearly one-half of single homeless adults are age 50 and older

SAN FRANCISCO (May 23, 2024) – The University of California, San Francisco [Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative](#) (BHHI) today released a special report on older adults' experiences of homelessness. The analysis is based on survey data and in-depth interviews from the [California Statewide Study of People Experiencing Homelessness](#) (CASPEH), the largest representative study of homelessness in the United States since the mid-1990s.

[Toward Dignity: Understanding Older Adult Homelessness in the California Statewide Study of People Experiencing Homelessness](#) explores who in the older adult community experiences homelessness, how they lost their housing, their experiences while homeless, and the barriers they face to regaining housing. The goal of the report is to inform evidence-based solutions for preventing and ending homelessness for older adults.

“We are failing our older adults by allowing them to spend their last years on our streets and in our shelters,” **said Margot Kushel, MD, BHHI Director and lead author of the report.** “The dramatic rise in homelessness among older adults has severe consequences for the health and safety of those who experience it, and for our society at large. Now is the time for investments in real solutions to prevent and end homelessness among this vulnerable population.”

Nearly half (48%) of all single homeless adults in California are age 50 and older. This trend is expected to continue; the proportion of people experiencing homelessness age 65 and older in the United States is projected to triple between 2017 and 2030. Adults experiencing homelessness in their 50s and 60s have similar health status to people 20 years older in the general population.

Consistent with the state's overall homeless population, most (91%) older adults experiencing homelessness in California lost their housing in California. They experienced severe poverty prior to homelessness: the median monthly household income in the six months prior to homelessness was \$920 a month. Nearly half (46%) entered homelessness from a housing situation without the protection of a lease.

The report's other key findings include:

- Forty-one percent of older homeless adults had their first episode of homelessness after age 50.

- Older adults experienced prolonged episodes of homelessness. Among older adults, the median length of the current episode was 25 months.
- Black Californians are overrepresented in older homeless adult populations. Thirty-one percent of older adults experiencing homelessness identified as Black, compared to 6% of all Californians age 50 or older.
- Older adults were optimistic that well-timed financial support would have staved off homelessness. Two-thirds (66%) believed receiving \$300-\$500 monthly would have prevented their homelessness; 83% believed a one-time payment of \$5,000-\$10,000 would have; and 89% believed a permanent rental subsidy, equivalent to a Housing Choice Voucher, would have done so.
- Among older adults, over half (53%) reported their health as fair or poor and 43% reported having at least one activity of daily living (ADL) limitation.
- Many older adults (43%) reported a complex behavioral health need (i.e., a recent psychiatric hospitalization; recent hallucinations; current, regular illicit drug use; or weekly heavy episodic alcohol use).

Despite these challenges, most older adults experiencing homelessness remained optimistic that modest financial interventions, such as a shallow subsidy, one-time lump sum payment, or Housing Choice Voucher, could help them exit homelessness (82%, 95%, and 95%, respectively).

Based on the report findings, **BHHI endorses policy recommendations in six key areas:** Increase access to affordable housing; increase homelessness prevention strategies targeted for older adults; strengthen services and supports and expand access to meet the needs of older adults, many of whom have behavioral health challenges and the early onset of geriatric conditions; increase incomes among extremely low-income older adults; expand outreach to older adults experiencing homelessness; and center racial equity in homelessness response systems.

[Toward Dignity: Understanding Older Adult Homelessness in the California Statewide Study of People Experiencing Homelessness](#) is the third in a series of deep dives into CASPEH data released by BHHI. Additional reports include [Intimate Partner Violence](#) and [Black Californians](#). BHHI also recently released [Creating Authentic, Effective Partnerships between Organizations and People with Lived Experiences: A Toolkit](#). CASPEH was funded by BHHI, the California Health Care Foundation (CHCF), and Blue Shield of California Foundation; the older adults' report received additional funding from CHCF.

Forthcoming reports include Behavioral Health and Homelessness and Latino/x Experiences of Homelessness.

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About UCSF BHHI

[The UCSF Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative](#) provides accurate, timely policy-oriented research about homelessness for local, state, and national policymakers and practitioners. Funded by a generous gift from Marc and Lynne Benioff and based at the UCSF Center for Vulnerable Populations, UCSF BHHI is a trusted source for evidence-based practice, policy, and scalable solutions—turning evidence into action to prevent and end homelessness.