

# One-third of San Diego residents without basic needs

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A recent poverty report found that one-third of working families in San Diego, California, more than 1 million individuals, live with incomes too low to cover their basic needs. These stark figures are reflected in the city's skyrocketing homeless population, which has risen nationally from the twelfth largest in 2007 to third in 2016, according to US Department of Housing and Urban Development.

A report published in January by the Center on Policy Initiatives (CPI), *Making Ends Meet*, highlights the constant and worrying reality for working class San Diegans that employment "does not guarantee enough income to make ends meet."

The report found that the average hourly wage needed to meet basic needs for a family with two working adults and two young children is \$20.98 per adult working 40 hours a week; for a single parent with two children, \$31.32 and one child, \$22.45. This is the minimum required only to access the most basic needs, such as housing, food, transportation, child care, health care, and taxes. Other vital expenses such as cell phone and internet bills, emergency car repairs, a visit to the doctor, medication, or a family outing, are not accounted for and would require a significant increase of these figures.

Full time jobs that pay such a wage are not to be found for the vast majority of working class San Diegans.

Additionally these figures are adjusted for full time employment and do not account for the chronic underemployment faced by millions. The Government Accountability Office reported statistic which reveal that 95 percent of all new jobs created in the US under Obama have been part-time and temporary.

The number of working poor thrown into homelessness are growing despite being employed or

even having a college degree. The National Coalition on the Homeless reports that nationwide nearly 44 percent of the homeless are employed and the Institute for the Study of Homelessness and Poverty at the Weingart Center, reported that in Los Angeles, nearly 48 percent were high school graduates and 32 percent of the homeless had a bachelor's degree or higher. Similar statistics were not available to San Diego, but there is every reason to believe these numbers are reflected throughout California's major cities.

WSWS reporters recently spoke with homeless residents in the East Village neighborhood in Downtown San Diego, fifteen miles from the US-Mexico Border on the difficulties of getting by in one of the nation's most expensive cities.

Clarence said that while he was at a shelter initially, "I've been staying outside, so I can save enough to get my own place." He explained that the St. Vincent de Paul offers some emergency relief but a rent is charged for "transitional housing" and he would rather save for his own independent housing.

Randal explained that in his youth he had been a construction worker and lost his leg on the job when he was 17. "The first time I ever became homeless was in Dayton, Ohio at a St. Vincent's shelter. Each one's run differently and they're all allowed to do that. I've tried to get help so many times. I suffer from depression, attention deficit disorder, all of these things inhibited me a lot. I never even got to talk to any employers about that, it would have been nice if I could. They'd always let me go, and say "well you're not catching on" or something like that."

"They don't have to tell you why they let you go. You could have been the best worker, but they'll say, 'Well, we're done with you and we don't have to tell you why.' I don't think it's fair for people's rights."

Alex, originally from Seattle, was a truck driver for over 15 years and expressed that she lost her job due to budget cuts. She has been sleeping outside due to the lack of available beds in any of the nearby shelters. Her boyfriend of 8 years was recently deported to Jalisco, Mexico, even though he's resided in the US for 21 years. "They sent him to a place where he knows no one, it's dangerous, and they dropped him there with nothing."

Commenting on the rising cost of living on both sides of the border Alex mentioned the recent protests in Mexico against the Gasolinazo, the end to federal subsidies of gasoline prices by the Pena Nieto administration. "It's a good thing people are fighting back, there's so much desperation there," she said. "People can't afford to live. The same thing the people are facing in Mexico, we're facing here. People aren't going to put up with it."



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