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STRATEGY NETWORK

## Homelessness is Especially Deadly in the Winter

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On the longest night of the year (known as the winter solstice), hundreds of communities in the United States honor people who died while affected by homelessness over the past year. And although the winter solstice is often cold, deaths from exposure happen year-round — in the heat, and particularly when temperatures fluctuate from warm to cold in the course of a day or a few days. To put it simply: experiencing homelessness can be deadly.

Studying trends in death is **important** in order to improve public health. Over the past several years, I've researched these trends among people affected by homelessness in Albuquerque, N.M. Along the way, I became aware of the vital need to document housing instability and homelessness more systematically. The data makes it clear that we need to prioritize affordable housing initiatives, at both the state and federal levels. For our most vulnerable neighbors and communities, it can literally mean the difference between life or death.