

How Norway Is Proving That Homelessness Is a Solvable Problem

The Scandinavian nation has significantly reduced the number of people experiencing homelessness. What could other countries learn from its example?

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Strolling around the major sites in Oslo, from the strikingly modernist opera house along the harbor to the 17th century *Domkirke* cathedral, there's something notably absent from the streets of the Norwegian capital.

Compared to major hubs like Paris, London and New York — and indeed almost every other city in the world — there are barely any people living and sleeping on the streets. This is because Norway, a country of 5.6 million people, is making homelessness history.

“Zero homelessness is our main common goal,” says Hermund Urstad, senior adviser at Husbanken, the government agency charged with managing Norway's housing policy. “We believe nobody should be homeless. Everyone has the right to a home.”

The Scandinavian nation has significantly reduced the number of homeless people in recent decades thanks to both sustained political backing and long-term, housing-led initiatives that have been implemented by the government at a national scale.

Norway's example has shown that homelessness, despite its enormous magnitude and prevalence across the planet, is not an unsolvable problem.

In 1996, 6,200 people were homeless in Norway, according to official statistics, the equivalent of 1.5 people per 1,000 residents on average. By 2020, thanks to the government's efforts, the number had fallen to nearly half of that total (even as the population increased), dropping the rate to just 0.62 people per 1,000.

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