

## Focus

1 In the USA, the number of people with no home – the homeless – has increased a lot in the last few years. Is homelessness a problem in your country?

## Read about it

# Homeless are run out of town

Every night an army of invisible people disappear into the alleys and abandoned buildings of Austin, Texas. They are the city's homeless.

But here and in more than 40 cities across the United States, the homeless are facing new laws banishing them from the streets. Critics see the movement as proof of the growing hardheartedness of America. There are about 700,000 homeless people in the United States.

In Austin the city council is nearing final approval of a law to ban camping in any public place.

In New Orleans, an anti-camping law has just been proposed, to control the homeless youths who swarm the French Quarter. "The general public is fed up," said New Orleans city council president Peggy Wilson. "People should be able to use public spaces. When other people come in and build cardboard tents and so on, the area becomes inaccessible for everyone else. Particularly in Lafayette Square, there's a group that feeds people on weekends, and they make no effort to clean up; they dump the garbage, and there's the presence of enormous rats."



In Austin, the city's estimated 6,000 homeless can be found near the drinking clubs of Sixth Street, near the University of Texas campus and in tents in corners of the city parks.

It is the business community who wants rid of them most. "Austin is known as an easy city. It provides a lot for the homeless," said Jose Martinez of the Downtown Austin Alliance, which favors the anti-camping bill.

The city's new anti-camping law is expected to carry fines as high as \$500. At the same time, the council's homeless task force, is proposing a \$3.5 million "campus" for the homeless. Task force member Tom Hatch, an architect, said: "It's insane to make not having a home a crime."

*The Guardian/Washington Post*

2 "Camping" is usually something you do on holiday. What does it mean in this article?

3 Is it true to say that there are almost three-quarters of a million homeless people in the USA?

4 Which of these are generally "for" (F) or "against" (A) the homeless?

critics (paragraph 2)

the Austin city council (3)

the general public (4)

Peggy Wilson (4)

the group that feeds people (4)

the Downtown Austin Alliance (6)

the homeless task force (7)

Tom Hatch (7)

**banishing them from** not allowing them on  
**critics** people who don't agree (with the new law)  
**hardheartedness** being unkind, cruel  
**is nearing final approval of** has almost agreed to  
**ban** prohibit, not allow  
**swarm** occupy in large numbers (like a "swarm" of bees)  
**fed up** unhappy  
**inaccessible** people can't get into, or use, the area  
**dump** throw away (rubbish)  
**garbage** (AmE) rubbish  
**wants rid of them** wants them to go away  
**downtown** (AmE) city centre  
**task force** action group (to help the homeless)  
**campus** university buildings, car parks etc.  
 (In paragraph 7, it means a centre built for the homeless)  
**insane** mad, crazy

## Key Language

"Homelessness" is an **abstract noun**. It means "being homeless" or "the idea of being homeless". We can say, for example:

*Homelessness is especially bad for children.*

*Something must be done about homelessness.*

You can make many abstract nouns by adding *-ness* to adjectives: *good* → *goodness*

*dark* → *darkness*

*thoughtful* → *thoughtfulness*

Be careful! Not all abstract nouns are made in the same way:

*stupid* → *stupidity*

*intelligent* → *intelligence*

*cruel* → *cruelty*

5 Can you find an abstract noun which ends in *-ness* in the article?

6 Make abstract nouns from the adjectives below (all except one with *-ness*). Then write a short sentence using the noun.

a She is deaf...

... but her deafness doesn't stop her working.

b Babies are helpless...

c My father is very mean...

d Don't drive when you're tired...

e These people are poor...

f They were very kind to me...

g Never be late for school...

Now turn to page 114 for more practice!

## Talk about it

7 Try to imagine being homeless. How would you feel? What sort of problems would you have? What would you miss most from your present life?

8 In some countries asking for money on the street – "begging" – is illegal. Do you think it should be allowed? Do you ever give money to beggars?

9 Young people can't get a job if they are homeless – and they can't afford a home if they haven't got a job. How can they get out of this dilemma? Should the government or city council do something to help?

10 In Britain some homeless people make money by selling a magazine called *The Big Issue*. Would you buy the magazine? Do you think it's a good idea?



A Big Issue seller