How do these numbers relate?
Chris Boyer

700,000 to 2 million people are homeless in the US
Vs.
650,000 people released from US prisons
7 million people released from US jails
10 % become homeless in the months following

Source: www.endhomelessness.org; www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/prisons.htm; www.vera.org

Two numbers that should be looked at in relation to one another is the number of homeless people in the United States, 700,000 to 2 million, and the number of people released from United States prisons and jails, 650,000 and 7 million. These numbers are important because more than 10 percent of the second numbers end up like the first. Meaning that 10 percent of the 7,650,000 people who are released from prisons and jails in the United States become homeless in the months following. Prisoners who are released back into society leave their own society, a controlled society, where they abide by different rules, in order to come to our society. It is important because we must now live and interact with these people and if they become homeless they are more likely to turn to crime again.

Homelessness in many cases can lead to crime and imprisonment. People are tired of being stuck in the lowest of classes and look for an alternative way out. Robbery and
drugs can act as an escape, either economically or mentally and sadly many of the times this lands people in jail. Also people who are homeless tend to not live in the best of neighborhoods. Their own environment can lead to their demise as they get caught up in drugs or gangs, which in return leads them to crime.

On the same token, people who were not homeless before entering prison more often than not did not live in high-income housing and while in jail could not support the house. Then when they are released they come back to nothing. At the same time they are returning into neighborhoods with bad influences or enticed by old addictions which sometimes causes them to be more desperate than when they committed the crime in the first place. What we see are criminals who were part of their own society where they were sheltered with food and a bed, thrown back into a harsh world sometimes with total freedom. This can be hard to handle and scary which can be the reason many go back to their old life of drugs, gangs, and hardships.

Much of the time we like to think of people being released from jail as receiving a fresh start. They get a clean slate and now can become honest working members of society, but this really is only a mirage. Once exiting jail former prisoners are at the bottom of the totem pole and it is extremely difficult to work up from the bottom. We learned from Barbara Ehrenreich in “Nickel-and-Dimed” that housing was the hardest part of living with on a low-wage job. Now imagine having a criminal record and trying to find a job to support rent. Also sense they are an ex-prisoner and had to resort to crime, they are probably not used to working anyway. With no job, ex-prisoners have no money and with no money they have no house, so they must resort back to crime, thus starting the cycle over.
Now why is the relationship of these numbers important? First, as I spoke about earlier, homelessness can push someone to crime. A home can serve as someone’s rock, without it their life is not steady. They have no shelter to depend on. If prisoners come out of jail without something solid to hold on too, it is a lot easier for them to fall back into old habits. It is like they get out of prison only to be thrown into a pile of quick sand. A home can serve as that stick to save their lives, but without it they are going to sink deeper. Even though there are programs and half-way houses aimed to help with the reentry process it is still an issue. Sometimes ex-prisoners can be left with restrictions on housing which makes it difficult to find a home. Once again this affects everyone else in the society as many times we are the victims of crime. If many people return from jail to a life of homelessness then the chances of a repeat offender are greater. This means we are more likely to be robbed again and also have to pay more to build more jails to hold the increased number of criminals. All in all it makes it unsafe for society and individuals.