

STATISTICS ABOUT HOMELESSNESS



Fighting for hope for homeless people

Numbers

Rough sleepers

- About 504 people sleep outside around England *on any one night*, 267 of whom are in Greater London (against 596 and 321 respectively in June 2002) (ODPM, July 2003)
- Outside London, the largest concentrations of rough sleepers in England are found in Leeds, Liverpool, Exeter and Birmingham (ODPM, July 2003).

Hidden homeless people

- There are around 380,000 single homeless people in Great Britain. This includes those staying in hostels, B&Bs, squats, on friends' floors and in overcrowded accommodation (Crisis, *How Many, How Much?*, 2003)

Becoming homeless

- The average time between the triggers that lead to homelessness and when homelessness finally occurs is nine years (Centre for the Analysis of Social Exclusion, *Routes into Homelessness*, 2000)
- The four-week rule is the process by which newly homeless people become acclimatised to life on the street. After that they become entrenched and it becomes more difficult for them to move back into mainstream society (Crisis, *Homelessness Factfile*, 1998).

Profile and background

Age

- Around 25 per cent of rough sleepers are aged between 18 and 25 (SEU, July 1998)
- Six per cent are over 60 (SEU, July 1998)

Gender

- Around 90 per cent of rough sleepers are male (SEU, July 1998)

Ethnic origin

- BME groups are more likely to sleep on friends and family's floors (Crisis, *Homelessness Factfile*, 2003)
- Only a quarter of young black Africans and a third of young Afro-Caribbeans reported sleeping rough in 1997/8 – compared to over half of young white people (Centrepoin, *Hidden Statistics*, 2000)
- Black and minority ethnic households represent 22 per cent of those accepted by local authorities as homelessness in England, but only eight per cent of the general population of England (ODPM, 2002)
- 31,620 households were accepted as homeless in London Jan-Dec 2001; their ethnic origin was as follows:
 - 10,435 white
 - 7,905 Afro-Caribbeans
 - 3,162 Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi
 - 5,375 other non-white
 - 4,743 not known (ODPM, *PIE Returns*, 2002)

Local Authority care

- Between a quarter and a third of rough sleepers have been looked after by local authorities as children. This compares to national figures which show that only one per cent of all those under 18 have been in care (SEU, July 1998)

Young people

- Family conflict is the main immediate cause of homelessness amongst at least two thirds of homeless young people (*Crisis, Trouble at Home*, 2001)
- 86 per cent of young homeless people are forced to leave home rather than choose to (SEU, July 1998)
- Two-thirds of young homeless people leave school with no qualifications (*Mental Health Foundation, Off to a Bad Start*, 1996)
- Young people who become homeless are more likely to have lived with step-parents, foster parents or relatives by the age of 12 than those who do not become homeless (*Safe in the City, Taking Risks*, 1999)
- 45 per cent of young homeless people have experienced violence in the family home on more than one occasion (*Safe in the City, Taking Risks*, 1999)
- One third of young homeless people have attempted suicide – a fifth within the past year (Craig T. et al, *Off to a Bad Start*, 1996)

Prison

- Around half of rough sleepers have been in prison or a remand centre at some time (SEU, July 1998)
- 40 per cent of prisoners are homeless on release (SEU, July 1998)

Women

- 63 per cent of women aged 30-49 cite domestic violence as the key reason for their homelessness (*Crisis, Out of Sight, Out of Mind? – The Experience of Homeless Women*, 1999)
- 40 per cent of young women who become homeless have experienced sexual abuse in childhood or adolescence (SEU, 1998)
- Homeless women are twice as likely as men to have lived with foster parents (Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, *Single Homeless People*, 1993)
- One in four young female hostel residents are pregnant in any given year (*Crisis, Homeless Young Women and Pregnancy*, 2000)
- The low profile of women in homelessness statistics can probably be accounted for by the fact that women – and people from ethnic minorities – make better use of their social networks than white males to find alternative solutions to their housing problems (such as staying with family or friends) (*Crisis, Out of Sight, Out of Mind?*, 1999)

Relationship breakdown

- In England around 1/3 – the percentage has been slowly increasing – are homeless because relatives or friends are no longer willing to provide accommodation and another ¼ are associated with the breakdown of a relationship (16% is due to domestic violence) (*Crisis, Homelessness Factfile*, 2003)
- Around one in four hostel residents left their last permanent home because of family or relationship breakdown (*Crisis, Trouble at Home*, 2001)
- Surveys routinely show that around half of homeless people ascribe their homelessness to relationship breakdown (*Crisis, A Future Foretold*, 1999)
- Older homeless people are five times more likely to be divorced than those who are not homeless (*Crisis, Homeless Truths*, 1997)

Education & employment

- 85% of homeless people (in a survey of 150 interviews across the UK) have been in paid employment in the past. 47% possess qualifications; of those 48% have GCSEs, 16% have A levels, 15% have a degree and 13% have professional qualifications (*Crisis*, 2002)

Problems facing homeless people

Health

- Nearly one in 50 homeless people suffers from TB (Crisis, *Tackling TB*, 1997)
- Homeless people are 40 times more likely not to be registered with a GP than the general public – based on interviews with 100 hidden homeless people in London, (Crisis, *Critical Condition*, 2002)
- 55 per cent had no contact with a GP in the previous year (Crisis, *Critical Condition*, 2002)
- Compared to the general population, people in hostels and B&Bs are twice and rough sleepers three times, as likely to have chronic chest and breathing problems (Crisis, *Homelessness Factfile*, 2003)

Addictions

- 81% of homeless people are addicted to either drugs or drink. Heroin comes top of the league, followed by alcohol (Crisis, *Home and Dry?*, 2002)
- 2/3 of homeless people cite drug or alcohol use as a reason for first becoming homeless. (Crisis, *Home and Dry?*, 2002)
- Four in five have started using at least one new drug while homeless (Crisis, *Home and Dry?*, 2002)
- People who are dependent on drugs or alcohol are almost twice as likely as non-dependent users to be banned from homelessness services (Crisis, *Home and Dry?*, 2002).

Mental health

- Women have a higher percentage of mental health problems than men (Crisis, *Homelessness Factfile*, 2003)
- Mental health problems are up to eight times more common in the homeless population. (*The Health of Single Homeless People*, Centre for Housing Policy University of York, 1994)
- Mental health problems are nearly four times as common among hostel residents as in the general population. At least one in five homeless people have severe mental health problems; these problems are likely to have played a significant part in the circumstances which have caused that person to become homeless. (Crisis, *Pressure Points*, 1999)
- Nearly two in three (60 per cent) of people sleeping rough have mental health problems (OPCS, *The Prevalence of Psychiatric Morbidity among Homeless Adults*, 1996)

Victimisation and crime

- Nearly every other rough sleeper (45%) has been assaulted at least once. Over half of these assaults (53%) are committed by members of the public (IPPR/Crisis, *Unsafe Streets*, 1999)
- More than one in three (35%) have been wounded at least once. Nearly two in three of these woundings (63%) are committed by members of the public (IPPR/Crisis, *Unsafe Streets*, 1999)
- Overall, rough sleepers appear to be up to 15 times more likely to experience assault than the general population and 35 times more likely to be a victim of wounding (IPPR/Crisis, *Unsafe Streets*, 1999)
- 78 per cent of rough sleepers have been victims of crime at least once during their last period of sleeping rough (IPPR/Crisis, *Unsafe Streets*, 1999).

Mortality

- People who sleep rough are 35 times more likely to commit suicide than the general population (Crisis, *Still Dying for a Home*, 1996)
- Rough sleepers have an average life expectancy of 42 years, compared with the national average of 74 for men and 79 for women (Crisis, *Still Dying for a Home*, 1996).

Loneliness

- One in four ex-homeless people find themselves unable to sustain a tenancy. Loneliness and isolation are the main causes of this (*Crisis, Homelessness and Loneliness, 2000*)
- Among 150 people interviewed in 2002 in locations across the country, only 30% said that they spent their day with people who were not homeless and 38% spent their day alone (*Crisis, Homelessness Factfile, 2003*)

Begging

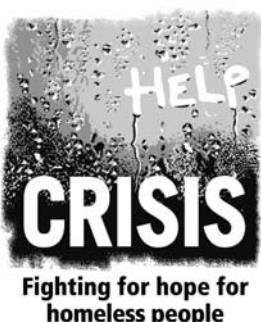
- Over two in five beggars say they started begging to get money for drink or drugs (*Crisis, Walk on By, 2000*)
- 45 per cent of beggars and street drinkers say they have a dependency problem (*Crisis, Walk on By, 2000*)

Staying in hostels

- Hostel residents who were interviewed have been homeless for an average of nearly 7.5 years so far. Out of that time, 24 months have been spent in hostels, 22 months on the streets and another 22 months in squats; the rest has been spent on friends' floors (17 months) or night shelters (4 months) (*Crisis, Hidden but not Forgotten, 2001*).
- Two in five (37%) of those interviewed had gone straight to the streets after leaving a hostel in their homelessness career (*Crisis, Hidden but not Forgotten, 2001*).
- One in five of those hostel residents interviewed had first set foot in a hostel over a decade ago (*Crisis, Hidden but not Forgotten, 2001*).

Housing in London

- There were 29,630 homeless households in priority need accepted by local authorities in London in 2000/01, an increase of 4.2% (*ODPM, Homelessness Statistics, 2002*)
- In March 2001 homeless households were placed in temporary accommodation by local authority housing departments in London as follows:
 - 7,570 in bed and breakfast hostels
 - 4,710 in hostels
 - 17,970 in private sector leasing schemes
 - 3,430 in other forms of temporary accommodationA further 6,700 households were registered as being 'homeless at home' (*ODPM, Homelessness Statistics*).



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