

How many people are homeless in Ireland

Date: Sept 2012

It is well documented that there is difficulty in attaining an accurate figure for people who are homeless in Ireland. There are two main sources of obtaining data on people who are homeless in Ireland, which to date have been carried out every three years¹. The **Housing Needs Assessment**² and **Counted In**³.

These are snapshot figures, meaning data is collecting at a point in time. For the first time the **CSO** counted the number of people who were homeless on Census night 2011.

All of these sets of figures are limited. They tell us nothing about the experience of actually being homeless e.g. impact on health and general well being, the challenges living in emergency accommodation (B&B) etc. Only a state-wide *Counted In*, using the same methodology in every city and county conducted within the same timeframe can provide a relatively accurate 'point in time' picture of the number of people homelessness in the State.

Housing Needs Assessments (assessment undertaken every 3 years)

<i>Housing Needs Assessment</i>	Household Homeless	Living in unfit accommodation	Living in overcrowded accommodation	Involuntarily sharing	Not reasonably able to meet the cost of accommodation	Total net need
2011	2,348	1,708	4,594	8,534	65, 643	98,318
2008	1,394	1,757	4,805	4,965	29,583	56, 249
2005	2,399	1,725	4,112	3,375	25,045	43,684

Counted In 2008 (different methodology)

Dublin Region (these figures can be compared with previous figures as Counted In was undertaken in the Dublin region for the first time in 2002 and repeated in 2005 and 2008)

- 2144 households experiencing homelessness – 2, 366 persons.
- It is noted in this report that that Dublin's population has increased by 5% since 2005 suggesting that this figure represents a decrease of 1% relative to population growth.
- It is important to note that this decrease of only 1% occurred during a period of unprecedented economic growth and there are very real concerns about the impact of the current recession on the numbers.

Counted In in Cities outside Dublin

City	Households	Individuals
Cork	369	411
Galway	157	160
Limerick	214	220

¹ The is a statutory obligation (1988 Housing Act) for all Local Authorities to count the number of people who are homeless in their area every three years

² The Housing Needs Assessment includes people who are deemed to be in need of local authority housing at the exact time the survey is conducted. Therefore, it excludes those not on the local authority lists and people in transitional housing, residential supported units etc

³ Counted In robustly counts the number of persons using homeless services at a particular time in a particular place.

CSO Census 2011⁴

In September 2012, the CSO released 'Homeless Persons in Ireland – Special Census Report' which counted the number of people in accommodation providing shelter for people who are homeless or sleeping rough on Census Night. A breakdown of the numbers in different accommodation types were given along with education attainment, economic status, general health of people who are homeless and disabilities they may have. 3,808 people were counted in accommodation providing shelter for people who are homeless or were identified as sleeping rough on Census Night 2011. Of the 3,808 people who were counted as homeless, 2,539 or two-thirds were male. The table below shows the breakdown of the number of people who were homeless on Census Night by accommodation type and gender.

Number of People who are Homeless by Accommodation Type

	Emergency	Transitional	Long-Term	Mixed	Unknown	Rough Sleeper	Total
Males	1,117	397	578	250	139	58	2,539
Females	531	158	414	94	66	6	1,269
Total	1,648	555	992	344	206	64	3,808

Source: *Homeless Persons in Ireland: A special Census Report*, CSO. www.cso.ie

Education

People who were homeless had lower levels of educational attainment. 49% or 1,439 people aged between 15 and 59 had only education to lower secondary level this compares to 25% of general population. 22% were educated to primary level compared to only 8% of general population.

General Health

There was a lower level of good general health reported by people who were homeless. Just over 60% indicated that their health was 'Very Good' or 'Good' compared to 89% for general population. One-third of those who were homeless reported that their health was 'Fair', 'Bad' or 'Very Bad' compared to just 10% for general population. The older the person was, the worse their health.

Disability

People who were counted as homeless on Census night had higher incidence of disability. 42% or 1,581 people who were homeless had a disability compared to 13% of general population. The most common type of disability among people who were homeless was a psychological or emotional condition, with 740 people (almost 20%) indicating that they had one or more such condition. 697 people had difficulty with pain, breathing or chronic illness.

⁴ About CSO Special Report on Homelessness

- There was no self-identification question on homelessness on the Census form. In the methodology used by the CSO persons were classified as being homeless on the basis of where they spent Census Night.
- Rough sleepers and squatters not known to services, Gardai and local authority staff especially outside the Dublin region may not have been included.
- People staying with friends and relatives (couch/sofa surfers) with no other options are not included. They would have just appeared in private household census forms as a guest on the night in question.
- How each accommodation type is classified is open to debate.
- Anyone staying in an establishment/housing scheme that was not been identified as a provider of homeless shelter/homeless accommodation will not have been identified as homeless. Examples could include private emergency accommodation, people staying with friends and relatives (couch surfers), Communal Establishments where only a minority of people staying were homeless on the night in question.
- There may be people in transitional accommodation and long term accommodation who were actually not considered 'homeless' by the service provider but their accommodation was considered 'homeless accommodation' for this exercise or vice versa and thus the individual/s included or excluded.