Homelessness in the EU
Exploring data and policy needs

Thursday 6 June 2024
Previous work inspired by the Leave-No-One-Behind principle
The different faces of homelessness: exploring specific data and policy needs

Introduction

The 8th overview of housing exclusion in Europe in 2023 (Fondation Abbé Pierre – FEANSTA) estimated that around 895,000 people sleep rough or stay in night shelters and temporary accommodation in Europe every night. This equals a population comparable to that of a city like Marseille or Turin. The escalating numbers of individuals experiencing homelessness across the continent signal an urgent need for action, as homelessness not only poses a severe risk to the well-being of those affected but also impedes social cohesion.

Furthermore, homelessness is increasing in the majority of EU Member States, while current numbers are likely to underrepresent populations such as migrants, women and youth, who often seek particular forms of shelter, and fly under the radar of common data collection forms, due to fragmented methodologies and the absence of a universally accepted definition of homelessness. This underestimation hinders the ability to respond effectively and necessitates an urgent review and enhancement of how this social issue is monitored.

The purpose of this brief is to delineate the complexities of monitoring and measuring homelessness, a critical step towards formulating evidence-based policies. It highlights the need for appropriate policy intervention and considers how different measurement techniques are likely to under- or over-represent various subgroups experiencing homelessness (e.g., women, youth or migrants).

Support to tackle youth homelessness should take into account their specific needs, offer education and training opportunities, and focus on emotional development.

Housing First works under a person-centred approach and gives individuals a high degree of choice and control. It provides tailored support that addresses not only housing stability, but also other areas of life that may need attention.

Monitoring homelessness provides a basis for effective policy intervention. It is important to consider how different measurement techniques are likely to under- or over-represent various subgroups experiencing homelessness (e.g., women, youth or migrants).

The smaller share of women in official homelessness statistics can be partly explained by differences in how homelessness is experienced by women, relative to men, how it is defined in official statistics, and how it is measured.

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Homelessness threatens the well-being of those affected with consequences also for social cohesion

Despite an increased commitment in recent years, long-term initiatives and dedicated resources are still needed to improve impact.

In Europe, in 2023 around 895 000 people slept rough or stayed in night shelters and temporary accommodation every night vs 700 000 in 2019.

Source: Feantsa and the Abbé Pierre Fondation

These are likely underestimations
Within Europe, many countries rely on the ETHOS definition and the ETHOS Light framework

**ETHOS definition**

- Rooflessness
- Houselessness
- Living in insecure housing
- Living in inadequate housing

Source: FEANTSA – Ethos Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion

**ETHOS Light framework**

1. People living/sleeping rough
2. People in emergency accommodation
3. People living in accommodation for the homeless
4. People leaving institutions
5. People living in non-conventional dwellings
6. People living temporarily with family and friends

Measurements can differ considerably depending on the coverage of the living conditions included in the ETHOS Light framework
There are other two reasons why homeless people are undercounted

The type of measurement

Geographical coverage
The measurement of homelessness

- **Point-in-time counts:** counting and surveying people sleeping rough and/or in shelters *in a single point in time.*
  - Paris, Rome, Milan and Madrid

- **Time-location sampling:** a census of the facilities used by the people experiencing homelessness is followed by a survey of a random sample of users.
  - France, Spain and Italy

  Time-location sampling and point-in-time methods can be combined.

- **Capture-recapture:** identifying people experiencing homelessness ‘captured’ in different data sources, typically administrative data.
  - The Netherlands
The consequences of underestimation: leaving **women** behind

The share of women experiencing homelessness changes substantially across countries (Source: **OECD Questionnaire on Affordable and Social Housing, 2023**).

How is this linked with homelessness’ definition and measurement methods?

- Women tend to rely more on **informal support** to find accommodation
- Women experiencing living rough make serious efforts to **conceal** their gender and location
- Women in **shelters for victims of domestic violence** are not included in official homelessness statistics in more than half of OECD countries

*Motivations related with homelessness among women are peculiar therefore support services and protection measures should be designed to address their specific needs.*
The consequences of underestimation: leaving young people behind

People who experience homelessness at a young age:

- Tend to live temporarily with family or friends, or in youth hostels: not always monitored
- Face long-term consequences

Source: Eurocities (2023) Ending Youth Homelessness in Cities
How can we alleviate youth homelessness?

According to EUROCITIES:

- Recognising its specific drivers
- Preventing
- Reaching out or missing out
- Addressing the interconnected nature of homelessness
- Improving housing access

Source: Eurocities (2023) Ending Youth Homelessness in Cities
Pathways for continued improvement

• A human rights-based approach

• Upscaling what has proven to work:
  • Universal and specific, upstream prevention
  • **Housing-first model**: providing stable, permanent housing for individuals with complex needs experiencing homelessness as a priority, regardless of their history. [https://housingfirsteurope.eu](https://housingfirsteurope.eu)
  • Integrated and personalised services and collaboration between multiple stakeholders
  • Longitudunal and impact analysis
Pathways for continued improvement also require:

- Breaking the stereotype
- Recognize and address the intersectionality of homelessness
- Avoid misuse of data
- Capacity-building among public personnel
- Meaningful participation of people with lived experience
- Support policy measures with adequate funding
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AUTHORS:

Other research on homelessness recently published

The paper proposes new urban metrics for inequality in income & working conditions accounting for the geography of homeless & irregular migrants
Thank you