

FAS and UNICEF Barometer Exposes France's Failure to Tackle Child Homelessness



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The latest FAS and UNICEF barometer reveals that at least 2,355 children in France were left without accommodation just days before the start of the 2026 school year, a 42% increase since 2022. Chronic shortages of accommodation, increasingly inaccessible housing and cuts to social housing provision are exacerbating child homelessness. FAS calls for an ambitious, multi-year strategy to tackle homelessness, strengthen support services and ensure every child has access to safe and stable housing.

In France, more than 2,300 children were homeless just days before the start of the school year

This year, the French Federation of Solidarity Actors (FAS) and UNICEF published the eighth edition of their barometer on children experiencing homelessness. Once again, despite repeated warnings, documented evidence and political commitments made over the past ten years, the situation continues to deteriorate.

Child homelessness is increasing sharply, and the figures in this latest barometer merely confirm this trend. On the night of 18–19 August 2026, just two weeks before the start of the school year, at least 2,355 children – **including 514 under the age of three** – were left without accommodation after their parents called 115. This represents a 9% increase on the previous school year and a 42% increase compared with 2022.

These figures continue to rise, highlighting the failure of successive governments to honour their commitment that ‘no child should ever have to sleep rough’.

These deeply alarming figures on unmet requests for accommodation reflect only part of the reality of child homelessness. They do not include people whose calls to 115 – France’s emergency number for people experiencing homelessness – went unanswered, or those who no longer call the emergency number. Nor do they shed light on the situation of unaccompanied minors. In June 2025, the National Coordination Network for Young Exiles at Risk recorded **at least 1,087 unaccompanied minors awaiting a judge’s decision on their age, forced to live on the streets, in squats or in informal encampments.**

The rise in the number of people whose requests to 115 go unmet affects all household types, reflecting widespread difficulties in accessing accommodation or housing. However, families account for a significant proportion of people experiencing homelessness. **Of the 6,840 people for whom 115 could not find a solution because no accommodation places were available, 4,300 were in families** – 63% of all people whose

requests went unmet. Their number rose by 6.5% compared with last year and by 37% compared with 2022.

Among people in families whose requests went unmet, **41% were single women with children, representing 1,755 people — twice as many as in 2022.** More broadly, the number of women experiencing homelessness is increasing, whether they are with their families or on their own. On the night of 18–19 August, at least 604 single women were left without accommodation after calling 115. Their number has doubled since 2022. This increase is consistent with findings from the Senate Delegation for Women's Rights and with FAS surveys on women's homelessness, as seen by frontline outreach and social monitoring services, which point to the growing feminisation of homelessness.

The number of children under the age of three whose requests for accommodation go unmet is also rising. On the night of 18–19 August, **at least 514 children under three were left without accommodation after their parents called 115 — 2% more than last year and 40% more than in 2022.** Of these, 173 were under one year old. These figures confirm what the Integrated Reception and Orientation Services (SIAO) have been reporting: a growing number of very young children and pregnant women, or women leaving maternity wards, are being left on the streets.

Although incomplete, these figures confirm **a worrying trend in homelessness and point to major failings in public policies intended to prevent it.**

A blocked pathway from emergency accommodation to housing

The rise in the number of children whose requests for accommodation go unmet is primarily due to chronic pressure on the accommodation system. Although capacity has increased considerably in recent years — particularly to meet the needs that arose during the COVID-19 pandemic — before stabilising at a historically high average of 203,000 places per year, **it is clearly still insufficient to meet growing needs.**

This pressure is largely the result of increasingly difficult access to housing. In response, the French government launched its Housing First strategy in 2018, presented as a profound transformation of public policy to tackle homelessness. Implemented through a five-year plan renewed in 2023, the strategy aims to help people experiencing homelessness access housing quickly and remain there in the long term, through close

cooperation between state services, local authorities, charities and social landlords. Welcomed by stakeholders, this approach has produced tangible results: the number of housing allocations to homeless households has risen steadily since 2017, reaching 31,845 in 2025 — 12,800 more than in 2017. **However, these advances remain insufficient at a time when needs are soaring.**

Yet a major contradiction is undermining this strategy: **while the success of Housing First depends, among other things, on a sustained increase in the supply of affordable housing, policies pursued since 2017 have contributed to weakening it.** Financial levies imposed on social housing providers through the solidarity rent reduction (RLS) — introduced to offset cuts to personal housing benefit (APL) — combined with reduced capital subsidies for housing construction and rising building costs, have severely affected social housing output. The number of social homes receiving funding fell from 124,000 in 2016 to just 95,000 in 2025. This decline has inevitably affected allocations within the social housing stock, which have fallen by 20% since 2017 to a historic low of 385,000 allocations in 2024, while demand has never been higher.

At the same time, private rented housing has become increasingly unaffordable for the poorest households and for a growing proportion of middle-income households. Despite this, the government has been slow to make rent controls permanent and extend them more widely, even though the trial — which has demonstrated clear benefits — is due to end in November 2026.

Charities' capacity to act is shrinking as poverty deepens

In recent years, funding for accommodation has also been systematically under-budgeted, reflecting a recurring tendency to limit increases in the initial finance bills without any link to an objective assessment of needs. Successive governments have regularly used supplementary budgets or end-of-year adjustments to cover some of the gap between approved budgets and the funding required to keep services running. **However, this budgetary approach — criticised by the Court of Auditors and the inspectorates-general for finance, social affairs and public administration — places considerable strain on the organisations running these services, most of which are charities.**

Data collected by FAS from its network for its survey 'Solidarity charities on the brink of extinction', published in September 2025, reveal how fragile the voluntary sector has become. The findings show that nearly a quarter

of charities had less than two months' cash reserves at the end of 2024; half faced delays of more than 90 days between starting an activity and receiving their first public funding payment, forcing them to bear the financial burden themselves; and nearly a third were in a critical position that could lead to closure in the short term. Once again, the late adoption of the budget and funding that fails to match charities' needs and costs are now forcing them to close accommodation places, scale back their activities or discontinue integration programmes. Unprecedented in more than 50 years, this situation reflects a profound retreat in public solidarity policies, which began after the COVID-19 health crisis and the 'whatever it takes' approach.

Although this latest barometer paints a deteriorating picture, child homelessness is not inevitable. Action can still be taken, starting with an ambitious, multi-year policy to support people's journey from the streets into housing, providing organisations with the resources and certainty they need. Beyond housing and accommodation policies, a cross-government approach is essential. This should involve child protection services; address residence permit applications for people who have spent many years in accommodation so that they can move into housing; and mobilise health and employment services to remove barriers to social inclusion. The forthcoming presidential election and the next five-year term must rise to the scale of the challenge.