

Feantsa 19<sup>th</sup> Research Conference, Utrecht  
19th September 2025

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**Attempting to Count Hidden  
Homelessness in the Dublin Region; A  
Methodological Account**

Oona Kenny, Focus Ireland



**FOCUS**  
Ireland

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## EU Homelessness Count project - context



Two year pilot funded by EU Commission, managed by KU Leuven, Belgium.

Focus Ireland leads the project for two participating Irish cities, Cork and Dublin.

Aims to broaden the definition of homelessness and develop a common European counting method.

1<sup>st</sup> year pilot tested in a homelessness count across 15 cities in October 2024. Results available at [https://www.kuleuven.be/lucas/en/eu\\_homelessness\\_counts](https://www.kuleuven.be/lucas/en/eu_homelessness_counts).

Method will be refined and tested again in October 2025 across 33 cities.

# EU Homelessness Count project - methodology



**ETHOS** Light

EUROPEAN TYPOLOGY OF HOMELESSNESS  
AND HOUSING EXCLUSION

1. People **living rough** in public spaces.
  2. People in **emergency accommodation** such as overnight shelters.
  3. People in **homeless accommodation** where period of stay is time limited, e.g. homeless hostels, temporary supported accommodation, women's refuge.
  4. People in **institutions**, e.g. hospital or prison for longer than necessary because they have no housing prior to being discharged.
  5. People in **unconventional dwellings** due to lack of housing, e.g. mobile homes or caravans on illegal campsites, non-conventional or temporary buildings
  6. People **living temporarily with family or friends** due to lack of housing
- EU Commission tender – count of ETHOS Light 1-3 mandatory
  - Modular method allowed cities to include ETHOS Light 4, 5 and 6 and use existing administrative or survey data sources
  - Mandatory variables - gender, age, citizenship, residence status, household composition, living situation, triggers, duration of homelessness
  - 2024 Dublin region count included ETHOS Light 1 – 4 and pilot for 5 & 6

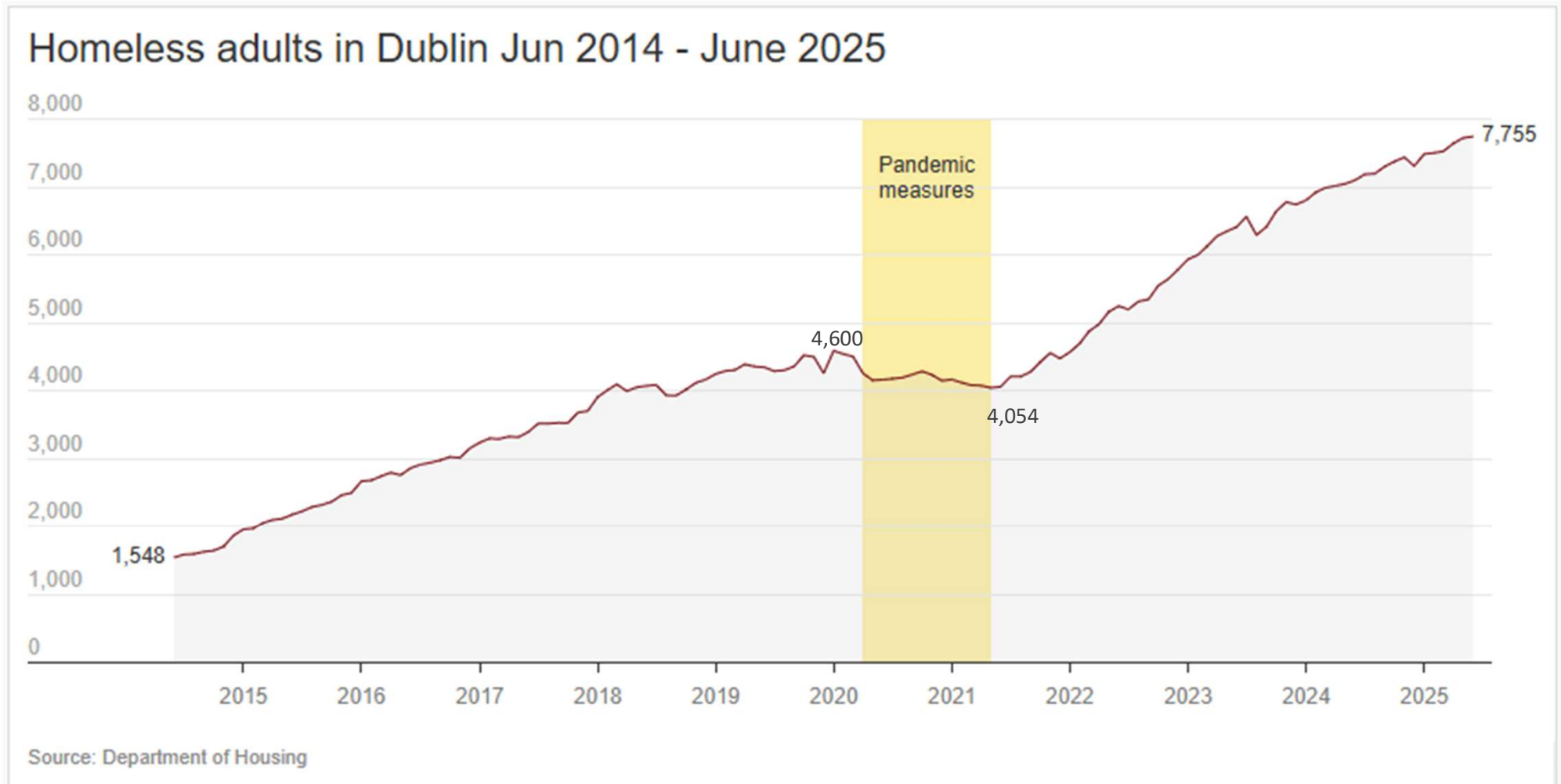
# Counting homelessness in the Dublin region



- **Dublin region** = 4 local authorities: Fingal, Dublin city, Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown and South Dublin
- **Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE)** coordinates homeless services across the four local authorities in the region
- **Pathway Accommodation & Support System (PASS)** data providing information on extent and profile of homelessness since 2014
- NGO **Street Outreach** teams and bi-annual, week long **rough sleeper street count**
- Some **accommodation / services not on PASS**



## ETHOS Light 2 & 3 (emergency and homeless accommodation)



# Hidden homelessness in Dublin



- Official Irish statistics on ETHOS 1-3 don't include
  - People in crisis accommodation due to domestic violence (excluded since 2016 as considered not homeless accommodation)
  - Those in 'own front door' accommodation (excluded since 2018 as 'non-traditional' homeless accommodation)
  - PEH in some temporary accommodation (certain hostels and temporary supported accommodation)
  - Asylum seekers sleeping rough
  - Refugees who can't move on from temporary accommodation
- Data not collected for those in ETHOS Light categories 4 – 6

## Estimating ETHOS Light 4 – 6 in previous research



- Proxy variables from admin data e.g. O’Sullivan, Byrne, Allen (2024); O’Sullivan, Reidy, Allen (2021); Hearne and McSweeney (2023)
  - Those in overcrowded, unsuitable or unfit accommodation in the Social Housing List data
  - Those with ‘no fixed abode’ in psychiatric hospital and prison admin data
- Interviews with key nursing staff in psychiatric units to identify housing need, delayed discharge and discharge into homelessness (Cowman and Whitty, 2016; Cowman et al., 2018)
- Opinion polls with representative sample to understand scale of hidden homelessness in Ireland (SCI, 2024)



## Extended Service-Based Survey method



- Method used since 1990's in Sweden and Norway, since 2007 in Denmark and since 2020 in some Belgian cities.
- Services from homeless and non-homeless sector involved in collecting data.
- Standardised questionnaire to collect data on people across all ETHOS living situations on a reference date.
- Profile characteristics to allow subgroup analysis

# EU Homelessness Count Dublin Methodology 2024



ETHOS Light CATEGORY	WHO	HOW	WHEN (ref date)
ETHOS Light 1	Rough sleepers including asylum seekers	PASS data Service-based survey	4 – 11 Nov 5 Nov
ETHOS Light 2	Overnight only / emergency accommodation	n/a	n/a
ETHOS Light 3	Hotels, B&Bs, homeless hubs, hostels, temporary supported accommodation and refuges for domestic violence	PASS data Service-based survey	31 Oct
ETHOS Light 4	Institutions – residential addiction treatment centres and prisons	Service-based survey	31 Oct
ETHOS Light 5 & 6	Unconventional housing & Staying with family and friends	Service-based survey (Pilot)	31 Oct

# Service-based survey data collection



- Survey data collected via online survey tool by service staff
- Posters, participant information sheets and consent forms available. No incentives given for participation
- Preparatory information / training sessions completed with 26 services throughout October. Data collected from 31<sup>st</sup> October - 8<sup>th</sup> November
- Services used dedicated a staff member, additional relief staff or full team to carry out the survey
- Questionnaire included all mandatory variables and unique identifiers. Survey data cleaned and joined with PASS data for analysis
- 17 services completed a short feedback survey on their experience
- See [https://www.kuleuven.be/lucas/en/eu\\_homelessness\\_counts](https://www.kuleuven.be/lucas/en/eu_homelessness_counts) for 2024 count results from the 15 participating cities with discussion from 4 cities including Dublin



# Assessing the Service Based Survey method

## Benefits

- Valid and reliable results
- Useful supplement to PASS data
- Rewarding and useful to identify as homeless

## Informed consent challenges

- Time required to explain consent process
- Particular challenges in prisons and non-residential day services
- Language barriers and concerns around anonymity

## Other challenges

- Client group moved out of city where services based
- Ethical approval

# Returned surveys



- 124 surveys returned from 11 out of 14 different services for ETHOS 3 homeless accommodation
- 3 of 7 addiction treatment centres (ETHOS 4) returned data for a total of 11 clients – eligibility criteria
- Only 1 of 3 prisons covered, with just 3 surveys returned
- Only 1 of 4 day services working with asylum seekers sleeping rough returned data for a total of 11 clients
- 6 out of 7 day services collected data for ETHOS 5 & 6 but much lower than expected number of surveys returned

# Planning the EU Homeless Count 2025 in Dublin



- Different legal basis for collecting data?
- Include former asylum seekers unable to leave temporary accommodation
- Ethical approval for hospitals and treatment centres
- Align reference dates for ETHOS 1 and ETHOS 2-6

# Thank you!

Questions to [oona.kenny@focusireland.ie](mailto:oona.kenny@focusireland.ie)

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## Dublin region results – ETHOS Light 1-3



An Roinn Tithíochta,  
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta  
Department of Housing,  
Local Government and Heritage

**Official government figure for  
October 2024 = 7,388**

7,213 PASS  
+ 159 OFDs  
+ 124 Surveys  
7,496 Total



