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Combatting Homelessness i Norway

19.09.2025

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Combatting Homelessness i Norway

- Norway is among the countries in Europe that have the best knowledge about homelessness.
- This is largely due to the national surveys that have been conducted regularly since 1996
- The surveys have also provided the basis for national and local measures and initiatives to combat homelessness for over 20 years
- Norway, together with Finland, is one of the few countries in Europe that placed early emphasis on housing-led strategies and that both have had a large decrease in homelessness. (Dyb 2019)
- Long-term strategy work.

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Long term strategical work and national strategies

1st national survey on homelessness

6200 homeless

1996

Housing-led, planning and support services: “local action plans”

1st national project

1999-2001

From staircase to normalization and integration: “project homelessness”

2nd national project

2001-2004

Setting specific targets: “towards your own home”

1st national strategy

2005-2007

coordinated and targeted government approach “Housing for welfare”

2nd national strategy

2014-2020

7th National survey on homelessness

3325 homeless

2020

Targeted help for disadvantage people: “Everyone needs a safe home”

3rd national strategy

2021-2024

Homeless count

2024

8th National survey on homelessness

? homeless

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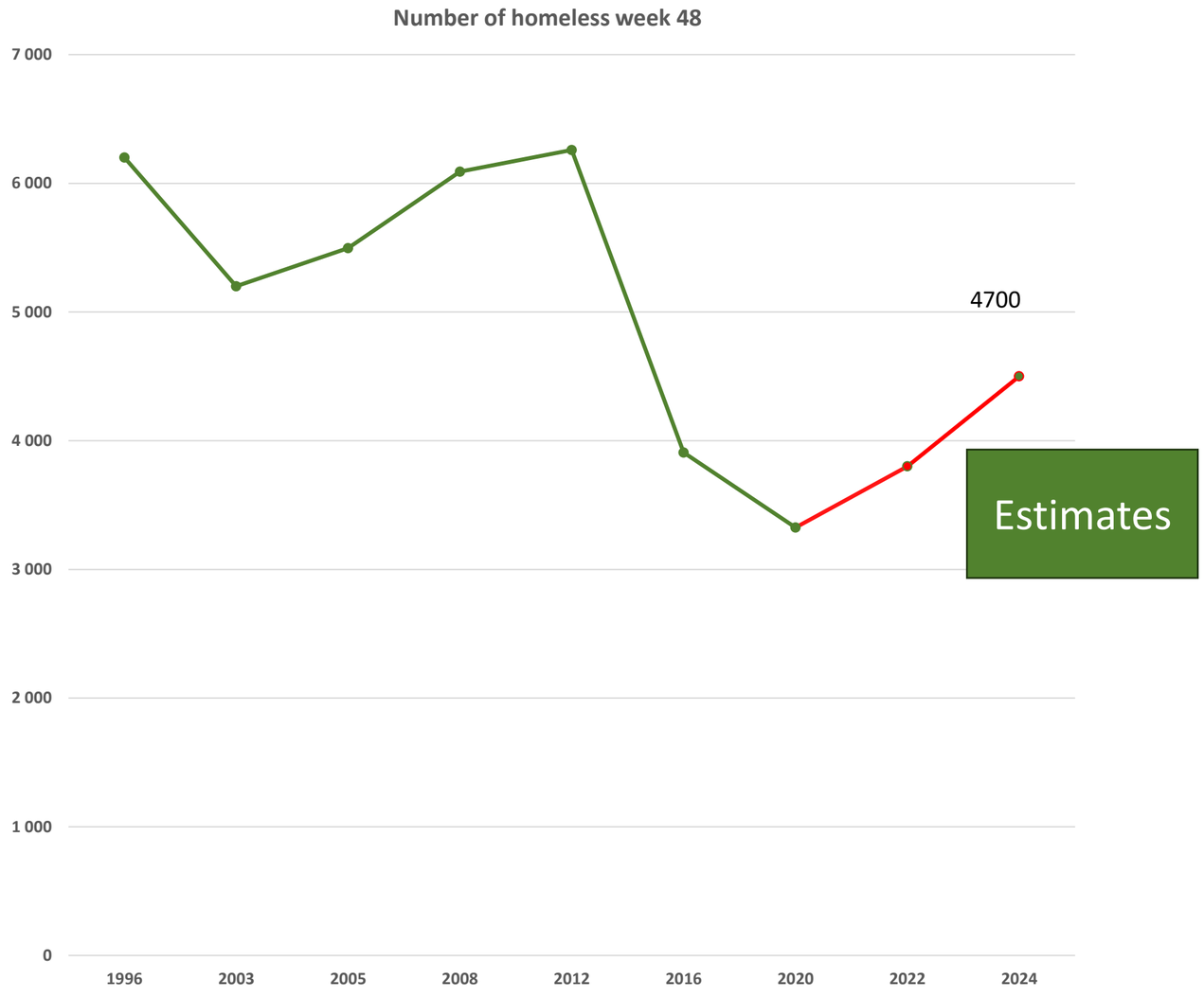
2025

The National Survey 2024 cancelled

- The 2024 survey in Norway has unfortunately been cancelled due to problems related to privacy and confidentiality in the social services, as well as requirements in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- National indicators (Administrative data)
  - Temporarily Housing/Shelter number of persons per year (Statistics Norway KOSTRA)
  - Housing situation for cases on social assistance/benefit - Homeless per year (Statistics Norway KOSTRA)
  - Evictions carried out by the judicial/police authorities annual (National Police Directorate/Husbanken)



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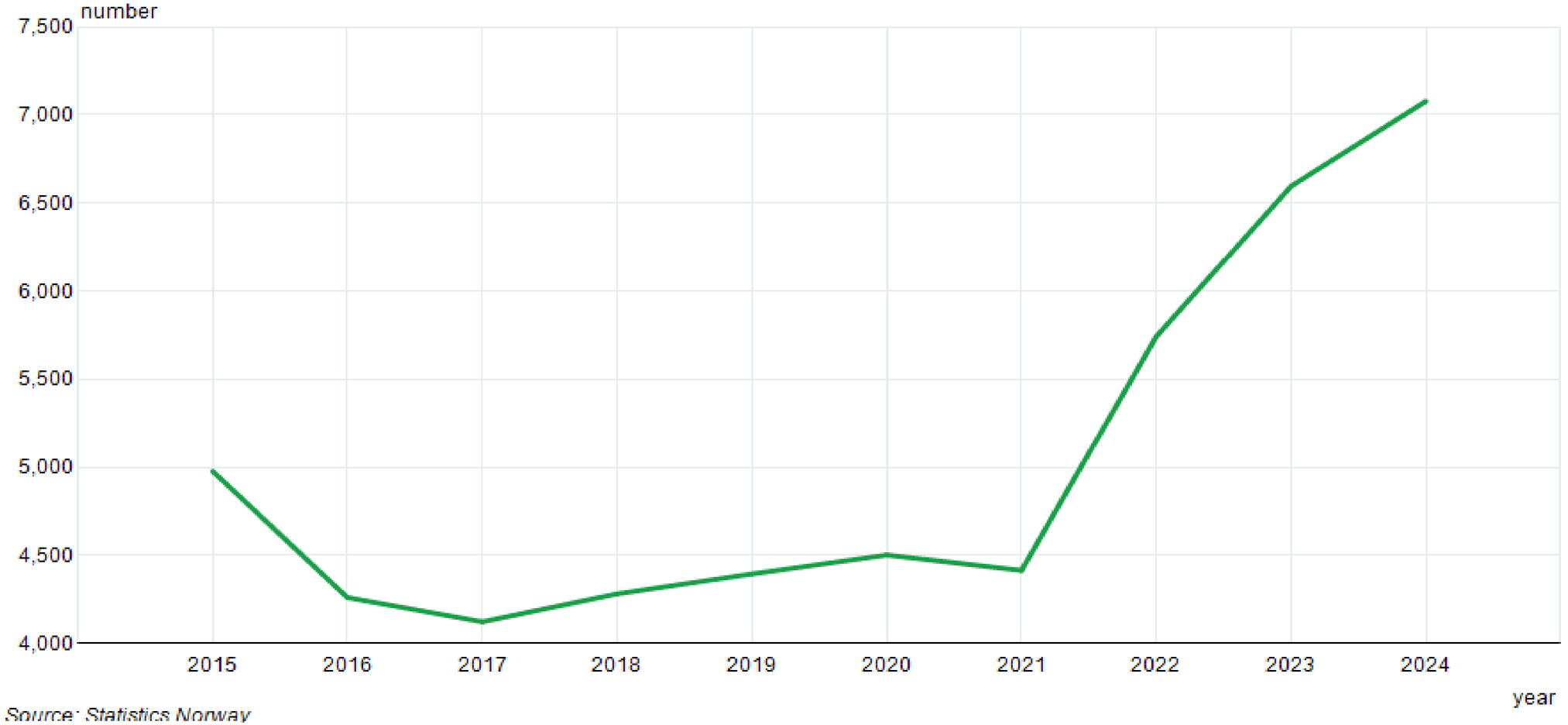
Temporariy Housing/Shelter - Number of housholds per year



Source: Statistics Norway

The mappings are getting attention

- The results of the homeless census are receiving a lot of attention. It leads to wide media coverage both nationally and locally. Politicians level show interest in the findings and the development of homelessness. Different stakeholders also use the results in their work related to homelessness.
- There is great interest in new data on the homeless in 2025, both in terms of the challenges in the housing market and the increased use of shelters and emergency housing.
- Many have requested data from the mapping scheduled in 2024

Erna fikk antall bosteds-løse ned til et bunnivå. Nå vil hun gjøre det igjen

Antallet bostedsløse i Norge har økt kraftig de siste årene. Nå vil Høyre gjøre det samme som de gjorde sist: Ta problemet på alvor og få tallene ned igjen.

Erna Solberg på besøk hos Kirkens Bymisjon, der hun snakket med blant andre kjæresteparet Anita og Pål. Foto: Nicolai Østeby

Source: Hoyre.no

NORWEGIAN INSTITUTE FOR URBAN AND REGIONAL RESEARCH

The National Surveys of Homelessness

Hilde Hatleskog Zeiner, 19.09.2025

STORBYUNIVERSITETET
OSLO METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

The National Surveys

- Quantifies and describes the homeless population since 1996
- The eight round to be carried out in 2025
- Definition and method unchanged (but changes to the questionnaire)
- Changes in the homeless population
  - migration, the EEA agreement
  - but the most prominent characteristics remains:
    - male, mid-30s, single, born in Norway, with a long history of homelessness and substance abuse
- Changes in the legal framework
  - GDPR
  - The Act on Municipal Responsibility in the Social Housing Field (2022)

Definition – from homeless to houseless

- A person is considered homeless if s/he has no privately owned or rented accommodation and:
  - Is reliant on occasional or temporary lodging
  - Lives temporarily with friends, acquaintances, or relatives
  - Is due to be discharged from an institution within two months and is without access to accommodation
  - Sleeps rough
- A redefinition of the ‘homeless person’ – from social deviancy to position outside the housing market

Method

Prepare

1. Revise questionnaire
2. Apply for exemptions from the duty of confidentiality

Count

1. Identify respondents in the services
2. Respondents reports on the homeless persons known to them in week 48

Report

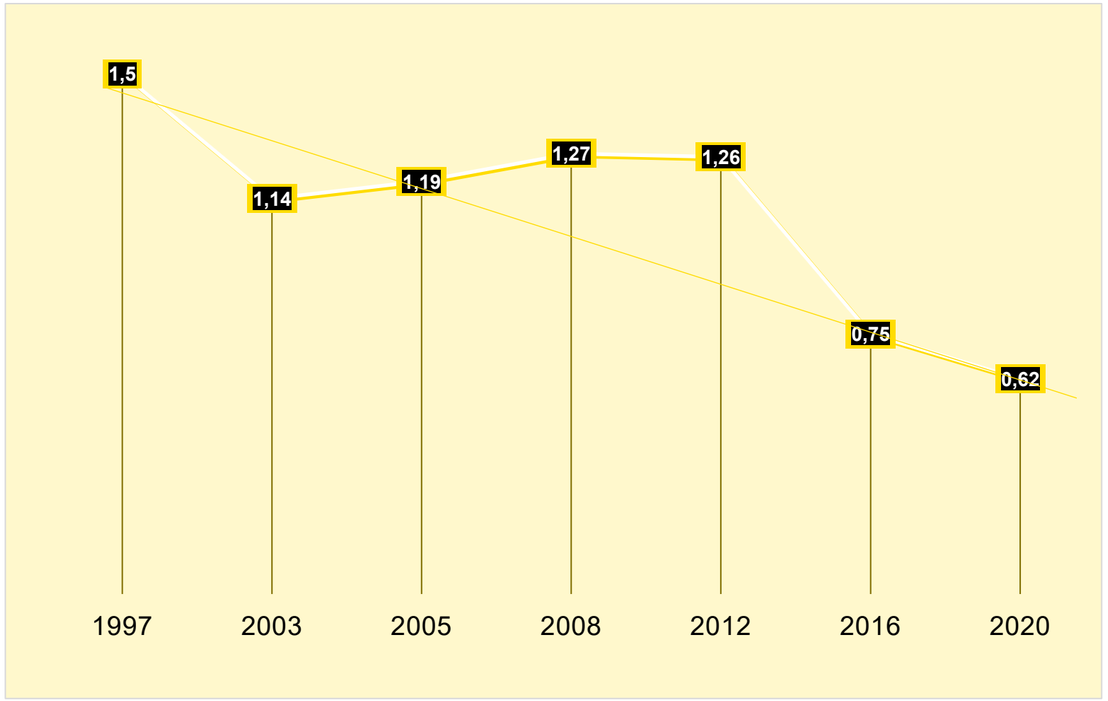
1. Number and proportion of homeless people
2. Describe the characteristics of homelessness

Phase 1: spring | Phase 2: Autum (2025) week 48 | Phase 3: spring (2026)

Strengths and weaknesses

- Comprehensive – counts people not using facilities for homeless people
- Consistent – allows us to trace developments over time
- Contributes to increased awareness and understanding

- People not known by the services will not be counted
- Less apt at capturing new groups and forms of homelessness
- Vulnerable to overinterpretation of laws and ethics



The 2024 Survey cancelled

- Applications for exemptions from the duty of confidentiality
  - Regional Ethics Committee: Health care personnel exempted
  - The Correctional Service: Staff exempted
  - The Directorate for Welfare and Social Services: No exemption

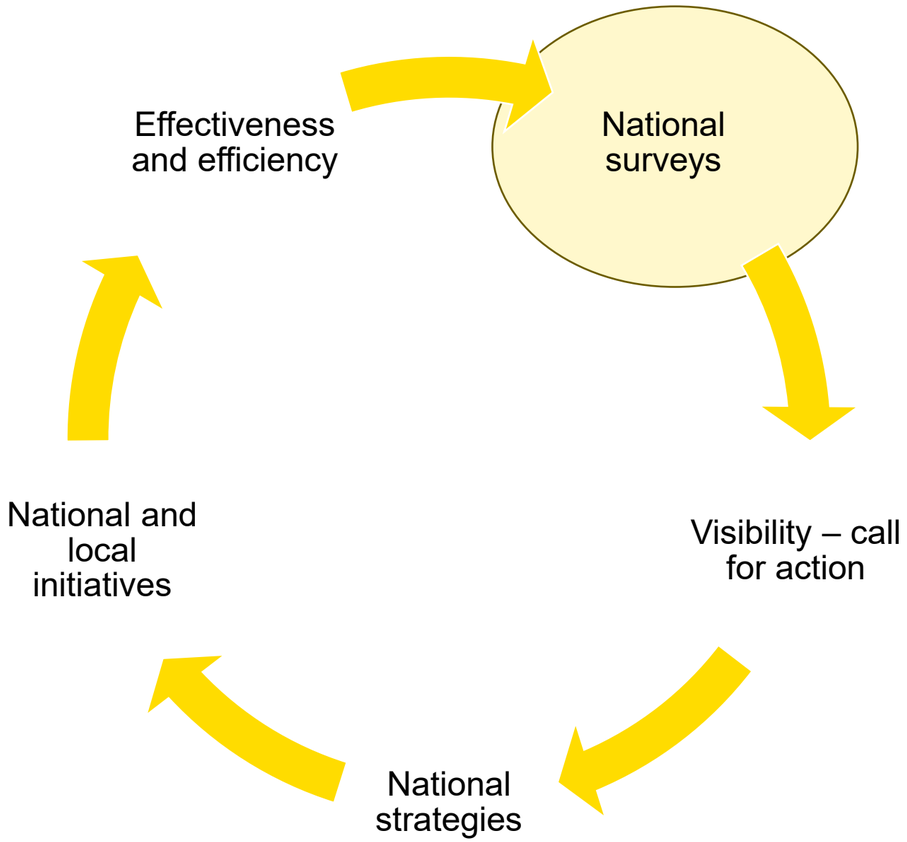
- Changing motivations:
  - Outside our area of responsibility
  - We do not collect such data
  - We do not own the data
  - Retrieving the data is too risky – the burden for the individual will be greater than the benefits to society

- The municipal social services – the most important respondent
  - Counting without them not an option
  - But neither was it an option to let them use a different method

- In June 2025 all applications approved
  - A year-long dialogue between the Directorate for Welfare and Social Services and the Housing Bank
  - Also involving the Ministries of Labour and Social Inclusion and the Local Government and Regional Development, and the Norwegian Institute for urban and regional affairs

The 2025 Survey

- The Method is continued but the scope is limited
- Will provide data on the number and proportion of homelessness
- Some characteristics of the population (age, sex, income, citizenship, children)
- Other characteristics and causes not included in the count (substance abuse, psychiatry, somatic illnesses, violence/threats/discrimination, evictions, transitions, etc.)


National surveys
Visibility – call for action
National strategies
National and local initiatives
Effectiveness and efficiency

2025 and beyond

- The government remains committed to its zero-homelessness vision, but the national social housing program expired without plans for a new one
- A simplified mapping week 48 2025
  - Evaluation of the survey in 2026
- Municipalities in Norway have relatively high levels of autonomy and are generally reluctant to collect data locally
- Like the other Nordic countries, Norway has relatively few homeless people per capita. Combined with many municipalities with small populations, the cost-benefit of having new systems is limited.
- Kobo is Husbanken's digital system to support municipalities work with social housing using housing registers, processing of housing applications and citizen services
- Legislation regarding privacy and confidentiality is a challenge to obtain data. Work is underway to provide new legal bases for collecting data