

Seminar 6: Measurement of Homelessness (Room: 00.14)

Chair: **Lars Benjaminsen, DK**

Hermund Urstad and Liv Halseth, NO: New Data Collection Methods in Norway



Liv Halseth and Hermund Urstad work as Senior Advisers in The Norwegian Housing Bank (Husbanken) who is the main agency implementing Norwegian social housing policy on the national level. Both with a particular responsibility for homelessness. Liv for implementing methods and strategies towards the municipalities and Hermund for statistics, analyzes and data collection.



The main goal of the current Norwegian national strategy “Everyone needs a safe home” (2021–2024) is to help more disadvantaged people to obtain a secure and adequate home. One of the subgoals is to eliminate homelessness, and various actions have been taken to help achieve this goal. The Housing Bank is responsible for ensuring that there are regular surveys of homelessness, and that work is done to provide better data. One task in the strategy is to develop annual data over the number of homeless in Norway.

The national survey of homelessness is carried out every 4 years and used by the Norwegian state to monitor trends in homelessness. The survey is carried out by external researchers and is similar to those performed in other Nordic countries and described in several research articles. To this date, seven surveys have been carried out (since 1996) and the next is scheduled in 2024. In addition to the survey The Housing Bank have been working with several approaches to obtain annual data and made a national estimate for 2022.

In this paper we will discuss the approaches to gain data, which includes use of indicators as shelter/temporary housing, number of homeless reported through the social services, evictions, and others. In addition is data collected from a selection of municipalities who experience problems with homelessness. Based upon these sources The Housing Bank has been able to follow the development in homelessness and have made an estimate for 2022 which shows an increase in the annual number of homeless after a longer period of significant reduction.

The latest shift in the economy regarding increased living costs, interest rates, and house rents may affect the situation for homeless people in Norway. We have seen an increase in use of temporary housing of 33 per cent in 2022. Also, the large number of refugees from Ukraine add pressure on the rental market and adequate housing. The work is still in progress, and we will discuss our experience and challenges concerning methodology and data protection.

Nana Mertens, Evelien Demaerschalk, BE: Point-in-Time Homelessness Counts in Belgium



Nana Mertens is researcher at LUCAS, Center for Care Research and Consultancy, KU Leuven. She works on the research topics of care and support for vulnerable and underserved populations in society. In recent years, she has focused on the development and organisation of local and regional homelessness counts in Belgium.

To provide local and regional governments with concrete tools in the fight against homelessness, LUCAS KU Leuven developed a methodology for a point in time count based on the ETHOS Light typology. The point in time count is a ten-month process involving intensive collaboration with local services that have (in)direct contact with homeless people. From 2020 to 2022, 11 point-in-time counts took place in cities and regions in Flanders and 7 in Wallonia. For the Walloon counts, there is a collaboration with a research team from UCLouvain. In 2023, researchers from Hogeschool Utrecht are testing the methodology in two regions in the Netherlands.



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In total, the counts mapped 11,729 homeless adults and 4,394 directly involved children. On average, children make up 27% of the total number of homeless people. Further, results show that homelessness is not only a metropolitan problem. Contrary to expectations, a high number of homeless people was counted in more rural municipalities. The counts in the different regions culminate in a comprehensive database that contains profile characteristics as well as information about the homelessness situation of the persons counted. Moreover, the data allow us to identify and examine some specific groups. For example, we have analysed the data of young adults, who make up 1 out of 5 counted homeless persons, and the situation of elderly homeless people. We will continue working with this database to analyse specific groups (e.g. Housing First target group, women) and make an extrapolation for Flanders to have a better insight on homelessness in Flanders.

During this presentation, we specifically focus on the main overarching results and dive deeper into the profile characteristics of some subpopulations, such as young adults, homeless women and children.