

GREECE

Recent data on homelessness

There is no coordinated national strategy to collect data on homelessness in Greece.

A pilot one-night survey in May 2018 conducted by the Greek Ministry of Labour, and Social Affairs (in partnership with Panteion University) counted 1,645 homeless people in seven Greek municipalities (Athens, Piraeus, Thessaloniki, Nea Ionia, Heraklion, Trikala and Ioannina). A survey conducted between March 2015 and March 2016 by the City of Athens Homeless Shelter (KYADA) found that 47% of the 451 homeless people interviewed cited the loss of their job as the main cause of their circumstances, with 71% having become homeless during the five years preceding the survey due to the consequences of the financial crisis.²¹ Another study published in 2015 estimated that there were 17,720 people sleeping rough and another 500,000 homeless people (defined as such under ETHOS typology) in the Attica region.²²

3,774 unaccompanied minors were living in Greece in March 2019. Among them, 1,842 were living in temporary or long-term accommodation (hostels, hotels or secure spaces in reception centres catering for asylum seekers) and 1,932 were living outside temporary or long-term accommodation (in 'hotspots', in informal settlements, in detention centres or on the streets). 605 were reported to be sleeping rough, i.e. 16% of the total (figures which do not take into account the many undocumented unaccompanied minors).²³

The rapid increase in homelessness in Greece is an empirical estimate shared by all FEANTSA member organisations – it is the result of an unprecedented financial, economic and social crisis in the country. Exploding unemployment and falling income levels have led to increased exposure to homelessness and housing exclu-

Total population on 1 January 2018:

10,741,165 people

GDP/resident in 2018 (Purchasing Power Parity – Index: EU 28 = 100): 68

Number of homeless people: unknown

Percentage of poor households: 18.5%

Sources : Eurostat / EUSILC 2018 & FEANTSA

sion, as households are no longer able to afford to keep their homes. Meanwhile, drastic austerity measures have had a major impact on the capacity of support and solidarity services, with demand having increased at the same time. A national homelessness strategy was announced by the Greek government in June 2018, but as Greece is still under increased European surveillance (until 2060 – after having emerged in 2018 from the multiple adjustment programme memoranda since the financial crisis), adequate funds could not be invested to ensure its implementation.

Context of the Greek housing market

In Greece, 73.5% of households in 2018 owned their own home (14.2% of households were mortgage-holders and 59.3% of households owned their home outright) and 26.5% rented (21.3% at market price and 5.2% at a below-market price or for free). Over ten years (between 2008 and 2018), the proportion of owners fell by 3.2 percentage points with the proportion of tenants rising by the same amount.²⁴

After years of deep recession and a consequent drop in property prices (-40% between 2008 and 2018), austerity policies, a rising disparity between housing costs and falling income

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https://www.affodioikisi.gr/mediafiles/2016/05/Street-work-presentation-final_26_5_2016.ppt

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<http://ineobservatory.gr/publication/kinoniki-episfalia-ke-ellipsi-stegis-stin-athina-diadromes-apoklismou-ke-entaxis/>

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National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA), 2019. http://www.ekka.org.gr/images/EKKA-Dashboard_31-3-2019.pdf

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Eurostat, 2018.

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The financialisation of housing refers to the transformation of a tangible asset, housing, into financial assets that can be traded on world markets (Dewilde, 2018). See also <https://newint.org/features/2019/06/19/unitednations-leilanifarha-housing>.

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The commodification of housing refers to the process by which economic value takes precedence over the value in use of housing: 'Living space will be distributed based on the ability to pay and provided to the extent that it produces a profit. But ability to pay is unequal while the need for a place to live is universal.' Madden & Marcuse (2016), In *Defense of Housing: The Politics of Crisis*, p. 51.

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<https://thepressproject.gr/erotisi-45-bouleuton-tou-surizagiametra-kata-tou-airbnb/>

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AirDNA, https://www.lemonde.fr/economie/article/2019/04/12/athenes-se-airbnbise-les-habitants-se-revoltent_5449229_3234.html

29*Ibid.***30**

<https://medium.com/athenslivegr/the-rent-is-too-damn-high-69e22e0daaa8>

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EU-SILC (2020) [ilc_mdes06].

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Country profile of Greece/FEANTSA and <http://www.eauction.gr/>.

levels, and the financialisation²⁵ and commodification²⁶ of housing have had obvious consequences with all housing exclusion indicators still in negative territory in 2018. 90.7% of poor households spent more than 40% of their income on housing. In attractive tourist hubs, the harmful effects of the proliferation of short-term rentals of the Airbnb variety were being felt,²⁷ with rents becoming unaffordable for locals, who were forced to find cheaper housing on the outskirts or to share housing.²⁸ Short-term rental income increased 105% in 2018 across the country, where more than half of all leases are now short-term rentals.²⁹ Rents rose across Greece by an average of 6.9% between 2007 and 2019. According to a survey of more than 17,000 housing units offered for rent on one of Greece's largest online property platforms, a household earning the minimum wage could not afford to rent a two-bedroom apartment built before 2004 in the Attica region. Only 11 affordable listings – up to EUR 212/month, equivalent to 33.3% of the minimum wage – for one-bedroom apartments were counted (two of which also appeared on a short-term rental platform at rates of EUR 40 and EUR 22 per day).³⁰ According to Eurostat, 29% of Greece's population were living in overcrowded housing and 41% of poor households are financially unable to maintain an adequate temperature in their homes.

The proportion of households in rent/loan arrears doubled in ten years, between 2008 and 2018.³¹ In November 2017, an online platform

was set up for banks to auction off the primary residences of indebted homeowners (previously these sales were held publicly in civil courts but were very often prevented by activists). In the summer of 2018, 125 online property auctions were held every day in Greece.³²

In January 2019, a housing allowance was introduced for tenants to help them pay their rent. The standard amount of the allowance has been set at EUR 70/month for a single person (+EUR 35 for each additional person in the household, adult or child), with a total amount not exceeding EUR 210/month. Eligible single people must have an annual income not exceeding EUR 7,000 (+EUR 3,500 per additional person in the household, adult or child). The allowance is only for people who have been legally resident in Greece for more than five years, which excludes asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection who arrived after 2015. Furthermore, in view of the large-scale persistence of household over-indebtedness (at risk of being evicted from their primary residence), a new legal framework for the protection of primary residences against foreclosure was introduced in April 2019.³³

Between November 2015 and March 2019, 57,583 asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection benefited from successive accommodation programmes that were financed by the EU and supervised by the UNHCR (RSER then ESTIA).³⁴

Key figures for housing exclusion trends between 2008 and 2018³⁵

General population			
Indicator	2018	2008-2018 change	2013-2018 change
Housing cost overburden rate	Total: 39.5% Poor: 90.7%	Total: +77.9% Poor: +38.3%	Total: +7% Poor: -2.6%
Total housing costs (EUR PPP/month)	Total: 558 € Poor: 501.7 €	Total: +2.5% Poor: +9.3%	Total: +12.3% Poor: +13.6%
Mortgage/rent arrears	Total: 11.2% Poor: 19.7%	Total: +103.6% Poor: +56.3%	Total: -24.8% Poor: -21.5%
Overcrowding	Total: 29.2% Poor: 44.2%	Total: +9.4% Poor: +25.6%	Total: +7% Poor: +5.2%
Severe housing deprivation	Total: 5.9% Poor: 12.1%	Total: -27.2% Poor: -11%	Total: -15.7% Poor: +2.5%
Experiencing difficulty in maintaining adequate household temperature	Total: +22.7% Poor: 41.21%	Total: +47.4% Poor: +37.8%	Total: -23.1% Poor: -14.9%
Non-EU citizens			
Indicator	2018	Evolution 2008-2018	Evolution 2013-2018
Housing cost overburden rate	Total: 76.1%	Total: +28.1%	Total: +2.3%
Overcrowding	Total: 55.8%	Total: -7%	Total: +8.8%
Children under 18 years			
Indicator	2018	2008-2018 change	2013-2018 change
Cold housing	Total: 11.8% Poor: 18.8%	Total: -30.6% Poor: -29.6%	Total: -15.1% Poor: -14.9%
Overcrowding	Total: 40% Poor: 55.8%	Total: +30.7% Poor: +28.6%	Total: +21.6% Poor: +14.6%
People with an activity limitation/physical disability			
Indicator	2018	2010-2018 change	2013-2018 change
Housing cost overburden rate	Total: 34.5% Young people (aged 16 to 29): 48.8%	Total: +100.6% Young people (aged 16 to 29): +99.2%	Total: +3.9% Young people (aged 16 to 29): -21.2%
Severe housing deprivation	Total: 5.4% Young people (aged 16 to 29): 19.7%	Total: -34.9% Young people (aged 16 to 29): -33.7%	Total: -38.6% Young people (aged 16 to 29): -51.6%

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ESPN Greece (2019). It is also worth noting that since February 2017, Greece has implemented a minimum income nationally for the first time called the Social Solidarity Income (SSI), which is intended for people facing extreme poverty; homeless people are eligible (provided they are legal and permanent residents, meet income criteria and are registered with the municipal social services/attend day care centres).

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<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/68924>

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Indicators in yellow show a worsening of the situation.

