

PORTUGAL



KEY STATISTICS

There is no concrete data, so far, from official entities about the number of homeless people at national level in Portugal. However, the context of the National Strategy, "Planning and Intervention for Homeless People Nuclei" (NPISA; see below) and homeless services provide important information at national level. There is an attempt to consolidate and standardise the procedures for collecting information and data and in this context some progress has been made.

Recent Statistics

In 2009, a survey by the Social Security Institute identified 2,133 homeless people on one night in Portugal. Of these:

- 922 were sleeping rough (ETHOS 1.1);
- 1,088 were living in homeless shelters (ETHOS 2.1);
- 43 were institutionalised (in mental health centres and prisons) (ETHOS 6.1 and 6.2);
- 80 were uncategorised.

63% of the people surveyed were located in Oporto and Lisbon.

More recent and comparable data can be reported regarding Lisbon. The entity responsible for social action in the city of Lisbon – Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa – performed two night counts in 2013 and 2015, covering only categories 1 and 2 of ETHOS. The following table shows the main outcomes of these counts:

Homeless population in Lisbon (nr.) (%), 2013, 2015ⁱ, 2018ⁱⁱ

	2013		2015		2018	
	Nr.	%	Nr.	%	Nr.	%
People sleeping rough	509	59.7	431	52.7	361	15,5
People sleeping in overnight shelters	343	40.3	387	47.3	1967	84,5
Total	852	100	818	100	2328	100

KEY TAKEAWAYS

(2009): Social Security Institute survey identified 2,133 homeless people on one night in Portugal
 (2016): Social Security services registered 4,003 beneficiaries of "active homelessness case files" in Portugal

According to Oporto's Municipality data report, in 2019 there were 420 homeless people in accommodation and around 140 sleeping in the street per night in a total of 560 signaled situations. The majority are men (84%), born in Portugal (89%), and aged between 45 and 64 years old (64%) or between 31 and 44 years (26%). The school qualifications are low 46% has 6th or 9th grade and 9% only the 4th grade.

In 2019, the organisation AMI Foundation (*Fundação de Assistência Médica Internacional*) supported 1,386 people who were in a homeless situation, of which 418 were being supported by AMI for the first time. The majority were men (75%). 51% were aged between 40 and 59 years old 16% 30 to 39 years. Most of them were born in Portugal (79%), followed by PALOP countries (Angola, Cape Verde, Sao Tome and Principe, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau) (11%), other countries, including Brazil and India (4%) and other European Union countries (3%).

The Social Security Institute states that its official data from 2013 is still being compiled and handled. However, initial unapproved data shows that 4,420 people were recorded in "active homeless situations" over the year on the social security information system. This means that they had an open case, i.e. were receiving support from social workers. 76% were male and 24% female.

It is not clear whether it is possible to make a direct comparison between these figures and the ones provided below, because of the lack of information regarding concepts and methodology used.

The latest evaluation report on the implementation of the National Homelessness Strategy (ENIPSA) for the period 2009-2015 ⁱⁱⁱ reports that in 2016 the social security

services registered a total of 4,003 beneficiaries of “active homelessness case files” in Portugal. These data refer only to the information collected by the information system of the Social Security, which does not include the data collected by the local homelessness units (NPISA), nor in the case of Lisbon, the data collected by the entity responsible for all the social action in the Lisbon municipality. The figure below shows the geographical distribution of the beneficiaries according to the District Social Security Centre which collected the data.

More recently (February 2020), in the context of the National Strategy, an inquiry ^{iv} has been published regarding data collected from the 278 municipalities of continental Portugal referring to homelessness by the end of 2018. According to this publication, by that time there were, in the National continental territory, 6.044 people in an homeless situation. According to the ETHOS typology, the majority was houseless (60%) and the others were roofless(40%). Lisbon Metropolitan Area has 54% of these situations, the city of Lisbon itself has 41% of the total cases. The North region has 26% and if we look only to Oporto city it represents 9% of the total (560 homeless people).

Region	Total Nr.	Roofless	Houseless
North	1596	597	999
Center	541	332	209
Lisbon Metropolitan area	3242	937	2305
Alentejo	179	114	65
Algarve	486	448	38
Total	6044	2428	3616

INCREASE/DECREASE IN NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

The lack of comparable up-to-date national data makes it difficult to describe overall trends. However, data collected about service use gives an indication of some trends. Between 2015 and 2019, the number of homeless people that AMI supported decreased by 5% (2015: 1,455 homeless people; 2019: 1,386 homeless people). Regarding new situations, the number of new cases of homelessness decreased by around 17% in this period (2015, 502 new homeless cases; 2019, 418 new homeless cases).

CHANGE IN PROFILE OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

The 2009 survey by the Social Security Institute reported that 82% of the homeless people were male, 82% had Portuguese nationality, more than 60% were aged between 30 and 40, and 31% had received secondary education. 28% had problems related to drug addiction, 19% suffered from alcoholism, and 11% had mental health issues.

AMI has collected profile data on new clients in 2015 and 2019, and reports the following:

- 25% were women in 2015, and 25% were women in 2019
- 79% were born in Portugal in 2019, as well as in 2015
- 12% were born in PALOP (Portuguese-speaking African countries) in 2015, compared with 11% in 2019
- 23% were under 30 in 2015, compared with 19% in 2019
- 23% were beneficiaries of the Social Inclusion Income (RSI) in 2019, compared to 21% in 2015
- 32% were sleeping rough in 2019, compared with 28% in 2015
- The number of homeless people sleeping in rented rooms or pensions decreased 15% between 2015 (207) and 2019 (177), mostly due to scarcity of places and inflated prices

NATIONAL STRATEGY

National Strategy for the Integration of Homeless People (ENIPSSA) 2017-2023

On 25 July 2017, the new [National Strategy for the Integration of the Homelessness People](#) (ENIPSSA 2017-2023) was published.

Objectives

The new strategy is based on 3 strategic objectives:

1. Promoting knowledge, information, awareness raising and education regarding homelessness;
2. Strengthening intervention aiming at promoting the integration of homeless persons;

3. Strengthening coordination, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

The new revised policy plan, that was approved by the Portuguese Government, includes the promotion of housing solutions for homeless people through programmes that support access to or maintenance of housing for individuals and families, and gives priority to permanent housing solutions using the Housing First approach. The strategy is being implemented according to bi-annual action plans. The most recent action plan, referring to the period 2019-2020 is [available online](#) (in PT).

The National Strategy developed a website <http://www.enipssa.pt/enipssa> where news about homelessness, reports, available resources and events might be consulted and disclosed.

Governance

The strategy is coordinated by the Institute of Social Security, a public institute created in 2001 under the aegis of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. This institute was already responsible for the previous National strategy (ENIPSA 2009-2015, stopped in 2013). To develop the strategy, the former Inter-Institutional Group responsible for the first strategy's implementation has been re-established. It is constituted with representatives from public and non-profit social service providers. The group is now known as GIMAE (Implementation and Evaluation of the Strategy Group). At local level, implementation groups called NPISA (Planning and Intervention for Homeless People Nuclei) had been established for the previous strategy, and positive changes were observed there, local responses to homelessness being reorganized in a coordinated and integrated way (Baptista, 2013). The representation of these local homelessness units was strengthened for the new strategy, through their inclusion within the GIMAE.

An assessment work was put in place by the ISS, the GIMAE, and the local homelessness units, acknowledging some failures in the implementation of the previous strategy: lack of political endorsement, lack of institutional drive, lack of transparency in resource allocation, weak horizontal coordination, and a failure to implement monitoring and evaluation procedures. The new 2017-2023 ENIPSSA was drawing from this assessment.

The bi-annual action plans are prepared by the GIMAE, in cooperation with the local homelessness units, and approved by a new entity, the Interministerial Committee.

TARGETED PREVENTION

Preventive action in order to avoid situations of homelessness arising from eviction or discharge from institutions is one of the main policy actions set out in the national strategy. However, a new urban lease law has been approved under the EU-IMF Adjustment Programme, aiming at faster eviction procedures and introducing a sunset clause of five years for contracts currently under rent control. Eviction due to non-payment of rent in urban residential buildings rose by approximately 9.7% between 2008 and 2010.

In terms of discharge from institutions, people who leave psychiatric or therapeutic hospital centres tend to leave with planned accommodation. This is not generally the case for former prisoners.

HOUSING LED APPROACHES

Portugal has adopted a housing-led approach. The national strategy emphasises housing as a key response to homelessness for the first time. It stresses that people should not stay in temporary accommodation for long periods and that permanent housing solutions should be found.

Housing First is an increasingly important intervention model. A Housing First project for 65 mentally ill homeless people has been developed in Lisbon. A protocol was signed in 2009 between the Association for Research and Psychosocial Integration (AEIPS) and other entities permitted the execution of the programme, which has achieved excellent results - 85 to 90% of residents have stayed in their homes since the project was launched. However, the initial funding was not continued after 2012. Fortunately, the Lisbon City Council Social Emergency Fund, with the support of other local institutions, have funded the project. This project is also being implemented in Cascais with the support of Cascais City Council and Tourism of Portugal.

The Lisbon City Council has also financed the project "É UMA CASA", carried out by the association CRESCER NA MAIOR. This is a Housing First project directed to homeless people with drug addiction issues.

In 2020, within the scope of the National Strategy for the Integration of Homelessness and the 2020 funds, 1,8M will be invested, through an Operational Regional Program

(POR Lisboa2020), in projects in seven Municipalities in Lisbon Metropolitan Area until 2023. In this context, AMI integrated a partnership with the Municipality of Almada and other social sector institutions, under this program. In this particular case AMI will have a Case Manager and will manage a daytime space in order to promote the social insertion of homeless people.

Also the Lisbon City Council opened applications for Housing First projects that aims to integrate about 200 homeless people.

QUALITY OF HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

There is no legislation or integrated policy to define the quality of the services provided to the homeless.

Although far from ideal, the institutions working with homeless people have been working hard to improve the quality not only in the services they provide, but also in the living conditions. However, these efforts take place under challenging financial constraints. Dormitories with excessive numbers of beds persist but reducing their number would mean alternatives with no support and surveillance, like hotels/guest houses.

There is a problem of homeless people staying in guesthouses without adequate support. The quality of this is very low. In the framework of the strategy, there was an attempt to create new “lodging centres” to provide accommodation over the medium- and long term. However, this was never put into practice, and a lot of homeless people are still living in guesthouses.

Whilst social workers are generally well-qualified, the ratio of staff to service users is often too high. The national strategy set a target of 15–20 service users per case manager. Currently, the reality is more like 30–40, and more in some cases.

REMARKS ON RESEARCH

One of the major objectives of the strategy has been to make policy more evidence-based. A series of studies commissioned and coordinated by the Social Security Institute (2004, 2005, 2009) provided a good basic diagnosis of the current situation, but they do not capture the full reality, and homeless service providers consider

that the homeless population is larger than these studies indicate.

Several research centres and universities have produced research relevant to homelessness.

REMARKS ON KEY POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

Positive

The introduction of the strategy has been an important step towards ending homelessness, even though progress on implementation is slowly being made.

In certain local areas such as Oporto, Coimbra, and Lisbon, civil society organisations remain mobilised around the strategy to find better ways to tackle homelessness.

After an increase in the poverty rate to 18.7% in 2013, and unemployment to 17.8% in 2019 the poverty rate decreased to 17,2%^v and the unemployment rate decreased to 6,5%^{vi}.

Negative

The social policy has been relegated to the background, with the measures imposed by the troika. Cuts and decreases in the social support, like the RSI level or unemployment benefit.

Other social help has been reduced in the several subsystems of the social security, including support for mothers.

The housing policies did not see improvements with the introduction of the rental law, which reduces eviction processes to three months.

The tourism registered in major cities (Lisbon, Oporto and Coimbra) boom has brought tremendous pressure on housing market and prices have been strongly impacted by inflation.

REFERENCES

ⁱ II Diagnóstico Social de Lisboa 2015-2016, available at http://www.cm-lisboa.pt/fileadmin/VIVER/Desenvolvimento_Social/DIAGNOSTICO_SOCIAL_versao_final_JANEIRO-2017_11_01_2017.pdf

ⁱⁱ Plano Municipal para a pessoa em situação de sem-abrigo 2019-2021 – Lisboa https://observatorio-lisboa.eapn.pt/ficheiro/Projeto_PMPSA_2019_2021.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ ISS (2017) Relatório de Avaliação da Estratégia Nacional para a Integração de Pessoas Sem-Abrigo 2009-2015: Prevenção, Intervenção e Acompanhamento, Lisboa, ISS, available at: http://www.seg-social.pt/documents/10152/13334/RA_ENIPSA/f9a37599-3334-4ad3-861e-d3c165349c68

^{iv} Inquérito de caracterização das pessoas em situação de sem-abrigo – 31 de dezembro 2018 <http://www.enipssa.pt/documents/10180/11876/Inqu%C3%A9rito+de+caracteriza%C3%A7%C3%A3o+das+pe%C3%A7as+em+situ%C3%A7%C3%A3o+de+sem-abrigo+-+31+de+zembro+2018+%E2%80%93+S%C3%ADntese+de+resultados/c982bee2-475e-42e4-9be6-756c09a2ed9f>

^v <https://www.pordata.pt/Europa/Taxa+de+risco+de+pobreza+antes+e+ap%C3%B3s+transfer%C3%Aancias+sociais-1940-314199>

^{vi} [https://www.pordata.pt/Portugal/Taxa+de+desemprego+total+e+por+sexo+\(percentagem\)-550](https://www.pordata.pt/Portugal/Taxa+de+desemprego+total+e+por+sexo+(percentagem)-550)