

Research Bulletin

May 2013



Inner City Rough Sleeper Street Count

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The thirteenth Inner City Rough Sleeper Street Count was conducted on 7 May 2013. The Count located 62 people who were unsheltered or 'sleeping rough', of whom 5 had a house elsewhere.

Background

The Rough Sleeper Street Counts aim to monitor levels of rough sleeping in the Adelaide inner city area as well as provide information about the circumstances and profile of the population. While the Counts and Census data cannot be compared, estimates released by the Australia Bureau of Statistics show South Australia recorded a 41% drop in the number of people sleeping rough, down from 436 in 2006 to 258 in 2011. This is in comparison to a 6% decrease across Australia.

Previous Counts were conducted on:

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The information in this publication can be provided in an alternative format or another language on request.

Please contact (08) 8204 8473

- 2013 – 12 February
- 2012 – 7 August
- 2011 – 10 May and 13 September
- 2010 – 4 May and 10 August
- 2009 – 5 May and 11 August
- 2008 – 13 May and 12 August
- 2007 – 19 June and 21 August



Government of South Australia

Department for Communities and Social Inclusion

The Counts are a partnership between the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI) and eleven key inner city homeless services from eight different organisations. Prior to February 2013, the Counts involved four participating homelessness services: Street to Home, New ROADS (formerly Byron Place), Hutt Street Centre and WestCare Centre. Additional inner city homelessness services have been participating since the February 2013 Count. These services are: Fred's Van (St Vincent de Paul), St Vincent de Paul Men's Shelter, Magdalene Centre (Anglicare), Helping Young People Achieve (HYPA), Streetlink (Uniting Communities), Community Support Services (Salvation Army) and Towards Independence (Salvation Army), which incorporates the Sobering Up Unit, Supported Accommodation and Recovery Services EAST and Supported Accommodation and Recovery Services WEST.

In the early morning of the day of the Count, Street to Home visited the parklands and other areas around the city in order to locate people sleeping 'out'. Workers at the other homelessness services approached people attending their service that day. Workers from Hutt Street Centre visited Fred's Van in the evening (between 7pm and 7:30pm) and approached people attending. If the people approached had slept rough the previous night, workers invited their participation in completing a short survey (see Appendix A for a copy of the questionnaire). This replicated the basic methodology in the previous Counts.

Review of methodology

Since the inception of the Counts, there have been two significant changes to the methodology. With the advice and assistance of the inner city homelessness services, the questionnaire was revised in May 2011 to focus definitively upon those who were rough sleeping the previous night. In June 2012 a forum was held with a wide range of stakeholders, to review the methodology of the Count and provide advice on future directions. This forum was highly supportive of the Count, and proposed a number of additional strategies to improve the robustness of information collected. A working group was established to progress these recommendations.

The working group recommended two enhancements to improve the reliability and accuracy of the data and the participation of young people and women. These recommendations were:

Increase the frequency – an additional Count to be conducted in the summer months.

Increase collection points – additional inner city homelessness services should be involved in the Count to collect data.

As a consequence of these recommendations, a Count in February 2013 was implemented and an additional seven homelessness services agreed to participate (giving a total of eleven services).

May 2013 Count

The data reported in this Bulletin were collected on 7 May 2013 at the eleven homelessness services listed above.

Participation in Count

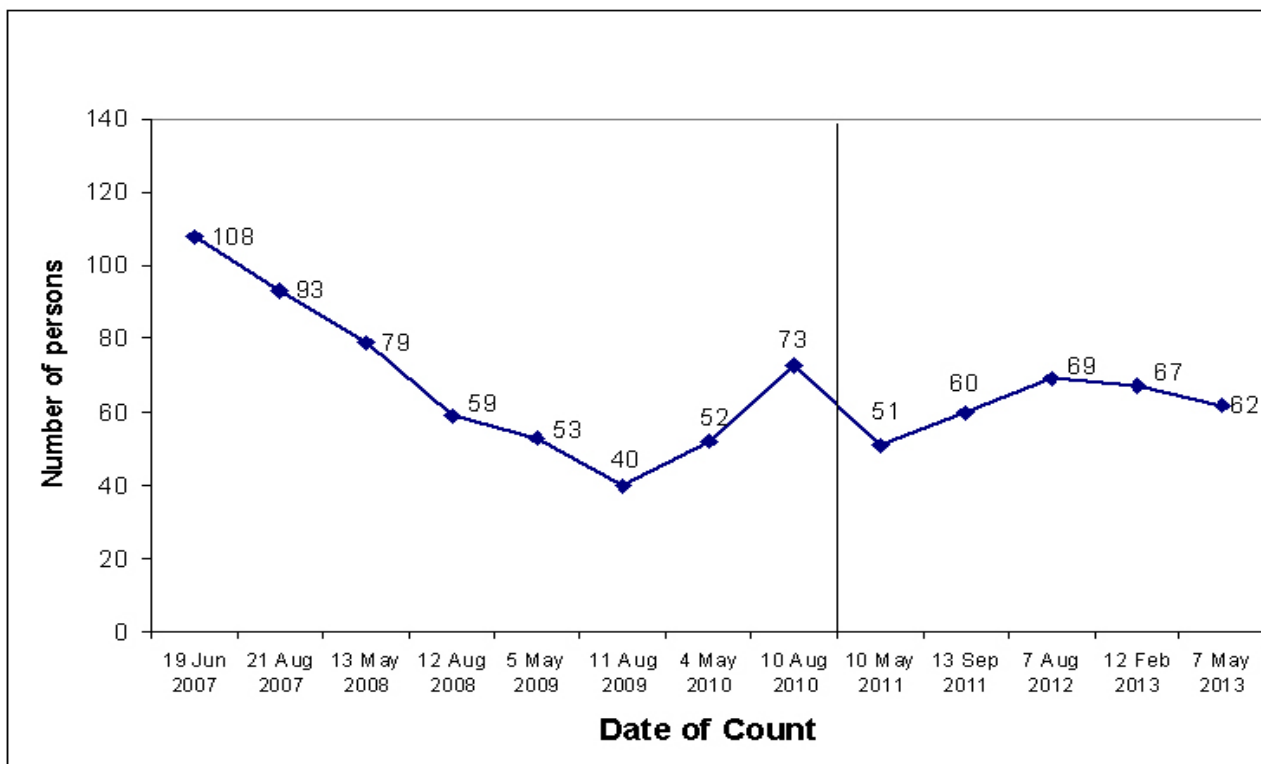
Questionnaires from 154 people were received.¹ Of the people approached by collectors and invited to participate, 4 (3%) declined to participate and where they had slept the previous night was not known. This leaves 150 people who participated in the Count. About a third of people who were sleeping rough declined to answer a number of questions on their circumstances and this is higher than in previous Counts. This should be considered when interpreting the results, particularly when comparing to previous Counts.

Results

Sixty-two participants had slept rough the previous night. However, five of these reported having a house or home elsewhere.

As seen in Figure 1 below, the May 2013 Count found a slight decrease in the number of people sleeping rough, from 67 in February 2013 to 62. (The vertical line in Figure 1 is to clearly delineate the change in questionnaires to focus purely on people sleeping rough implemented in 2011).

Figure 1: Total number of participants sleeping rough



¹ This figure should not be used to infer the number of clients attending at the inner city homelessness services.

Sleeping rough and having a house elsewhere

Five people indicated that, although they had slept rough the previous night, they had a home elsewhere. This represents 8% of all those who slept rough. Four of the five had slept rough in the Adelaide inner city or parklands and one had slept in the Adelaide suburbs.

When asked why they had not slept at their own home, various reasons were reported. Two felt unsafe at their home; one has a home in the Northern Territory; one lives with their family in the Adelaide suburbs but elected to sleep rough and one reported the reason as 'mental health issues'. One of the five attempted to find other accommodation the night before.

The pattern of rough sleeping over the last year varied between the five people. One person indicated they had slept rough 'almost all of the time', one 'most of the time', two 'about half of the time' and one 'hardly ever'. One person reported having slept rough for more than two years (despite also reporting having a home) while three reported sleeping rough for 4 weeks or less.

Of this group, all five were male and three identified themselves as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders. Two were aged 25 to 34 years, two were 35 to 44 years and one was 45 to 55 years. One reported he had spent most of his time over the last year in the Northern Territory and four had spent most of their time in the Adelaide metropolitan area.

Sleeping rough without a house elsewhere ²

Fifty-seven people had slept rough the previous night, without having a home anywhere else.³ The majority of these had slept rough in the Adelaide inner city or parklands (67%, 38 people), 2 had slept in the Adelaide suburbs (4%) and 17 people (30%) did not report their location.

Table 1 summarises the reasons given for sleeping rough. The most common reason reported by 29 people (51%) was that there was no other option ('no other choice at the moment', 'no choice' or 'unable to find anywhere else to stay'). A small number of other reasons were reported, including: financial; personal preference; it was their standard practice; has recently arrived in Adelaide; and behaviour ('self destructive behaviour'). A reason was not provided by 22 (39%) people.

² Please note that throughout the remainder of the report all percentages are calculated based on the 57 people who slept rough and did not report having a house or home elsewhere.

³ This figure includes 19 people who did not answer the question as to whether they had a home elsewhere.

Table 1: Reasons why people had slept rough

	n	%
No other option	29	50.9
Financial reason	1	1.8
Personal preference	1	1.8
Standard practices	1	1.8
Traveller, recently arrived	1	1.8
Other	2	3.5
Not stated	22	38.6
Total	57	100.0

Almost a quarter of people reported they had attempted to find accommodation elsewhere for the previous night (23%, 13 people) (Table 2). Of these, all thirteen had sought assistance from support services, identified as Housing SA, Hutt Street, St Vincent de Paul, Trace-A-Place, Crisis care, Street to Home and Services. Four also attempted to use their personal connections ('friends'). Three also tried to source private accommodation ('newspaper').

Table 2: Where people attempted to find alternative shelter

	n	%
Sought service support ^a	13	22.8
Sought personal connections ^a	4	7.0
Sought private accommodation ^a	3	5.3
Did not attempt to find	25	43.9
Not indicated if attempted to find	19	33.3
Total	57	100.0

^a People could have attempted to find accommodation at multiple types of alternative shelter (eg service support and personal connections)

Twenty people indicated they had not attempted to find alternative shelter elsewhere (44%) and a range of reasons were reported (Table 3). The most common reason was people had given up trying to find alternative accommodation ('no hope of getting one' or 'no point'). Four reported they preferred sleeping rough ('my car is more convenient' or 'keep myself out of trouble'). Three reported money issues ('no money'). Another five gave divergent responses ('too drunk' or 'can't keep bludging off friends').

Table 3: Why people did not seek alternative shelter

	n	%
Given up	5	8.8
Preferred sleeping rough	4	7.0
Financial reasons	3	5.3
Other	2	3.5
Alcohol/ substance misuse	2	3.5
Does not like staying in emergency accommodation	1	1.8
Not stated	8	14.0
Attempted to find alternative shelter	13	22.8
Not indicated if attempted to find	19	33.3
Total	57	100.0

As shown in Table 4, 23% had been sleeping rough for a year or more and 37% reported sleeping rough for three months or more. In regards to the proportion of time spent sleeping rough over the last year, 30% reported sleeping out most or almost all of the time (Table 5).

Table 4: How long people have been sleeping rough

	n	%
1 week or less	7	12.3
2 to 4 weeks	7	12.3
5 to 11 weeks	3	5.3
3 to 6 months	6	10.5
7 to 12 months	2	3.5
1 to 2 years	4	7.0
More than 2 years	9	15.8
Not stated	19	33.3
Total	57	100.0

Table 5: Sleeping rough pattern over the last year

	n	%
Almost all of the time	10	17.5
Most of the time	7	12.3
About half of the time	11	19.3
Some of the time	4	7.0
Hardly ever	6	10.5
Not stated	19	33.3
Total	57	100.0

People were also asked to identify how long it has been since they last had stable housing. As shown in Table 6, 27 (47%) reported not having had stable housing for 3 months or more and of these, 13 had not had stable housing for over 2 years.

Table 6: How long since people have had stable housing

	n	%
1 week or less	0	0.0
2 to 4 weeks	8	14.0
5 to 11 weeks	1	1.8
3 to 6 months	9	15.8
7 to 12 months	2	3.5
1 to 2 years	3	5.3
More than 2 years	13	22.8
Not stated	21	36.8
Total	57	100.0

Most people had been primarily based in the Adelaide metropolitan area over the last 12 months (Table 7).

Table 7: Area spent the most time in over the last 12 months

	n	%
Adelaide metropolitan area	31	54.4
Country South Australia	3	5.3
Interstate	3	5.3
Overseas	0	0.0
Not stated	20	35.1
Total	57	100.0

Demographic information is summarised in Table 8 and Table 9. Most rough sleepers were male, 35 to 54 years old and non-indigenous. Eleven (19%) identified themselves as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. There were 7 women and 6 people under 25 years (including 4 under 18 years).

Table 8: Indigenous status by gender

	Males		Females		Gender not specified		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Non-Indigenous	38	79.2	3	42.9	0	0.0	41	71.9
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander ^a	8	16.7	3	42.9	0	0.0	11	19.3
Not Stated	2	4.2	1	14.3	2	100.0	5	8.8
Total	48	100.0	7	100.0	2	100.0	57	100.0

^a includes 1 person who identified themselves as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Table 9: Age by gender

	Males		Females		Gender not specified		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Under 18	2	4.2	2	28.6	0	0.0	4	7.0
18-24	1	2.1	1	14.3	0	0.0	2	3.5
25-34	5	10.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	5	8.8
35-44	13	27.1	4	57.1	0	0.0	17	29.8
45-54	14	29.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	14	24.6
55-64	11	22.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	11	19.3
65 and over	1	2.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	1.8
Not Stated	1	2.1	0	0.0	2	100.0	3	5.3
Total	48	100.0	7	100.0	2	100.0	57	100.0

Presence in previous Counts

Forty-four (77%) people provided identifier information. Table 10 shows how many times people had been identified as sleeping rough in previous Counts.

According to the information available from previous rough sleeper Counts, almost all of these 44 people who provided identifier information could not be identified in any of the previous twelve Counts as rough sleeping (42 people).

Two of those who had slept rough (without a home elsewhere) could be traced to sleeping rough in at least one previous Count. One of these two had been identified in the previous Count (February 2013) as rough sleeping.

Table 10: Repeat presentations of those sleeping rough (without a home elsewhere) in previous Counts

	Total Counts	
	n	%
Participants sleeping rough and no home elsewhere	57	100.0
Participants with identifier	44	77.2
In May 2013 and rough sleeping in no previous Counts	42	73.7
In May 2013 and rough sleeping in one previous Count	1	1.8
In May 2013 and rough sleeping in two previous Counts	0	0.0
In May 2013 and rough sleeping in three previous Counts	0	0.0
In May 2013 and rough sleeping in four previous Counts	1	1.8

For more information about the Inner City Rough Sleeper Street Counts please visit the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion Research Unit webpage at www.dcsi.sa.gov.au/research

APPENDIX A

May 2013 Rough sleeper questionnaire

INNER CITY AGENCY COUNT

1. Have you already completed a survey today?
(If Yes, do not ask any further questions or complete form)

Yes

No

Declined to participate in the survey

(If you feel reasonably confident that the person is a rough sleeper, please fill out all possible questions)

Incapacitated to participate in the survey

(If you feel reasonably confident that the person is a rough sleeper, please fill out all possible questions)

2. Where did you sleep last night?

Slept out

Includes:

Car Tent

Park/ street Squat

Shed Verandah

Slept inside/sheltered

Includes:

Your own house or unit Caravan Park Catherine House

Friend's or family's place City Watchhouse Hospital

Hotel/motel Prison Backpackers

Boarding house Remand Centre

St Vincent de Paul Shelter Detox / Sobering up unit

If the client answered with any of the 'Sheltered' options above – Thank them for their participation and conclude the interview.

NOTE: THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE ONLY FOR THOSE WHO ANSWERED 'SLEPT OUT'

3. At what location did you sleep out last night?

- Adelaide city or parklands
- Adelaide Suburbs
- Other, please state.....

4. Why did you sleep out last night? (Please prompt for why they slept out)

.....

5. Did you try and find any other accommodation last night (eg homeless shelter, with friends or family)?

Yes

a) Where did you try to find other accommodation?.....

b) What happened when you approached this agency/person(s) for accommodation?

.....

No – why not

.....

6. Do you have a house or home somewhere else?

Yes

No

If yes: why didn't you stay there last night?.....

.....

7. How long have you been sleeping out?

1 week or less

2 to 4 weeks

5 to 11 weeks

3 to 6 months

7 to 12 months

- 1 to 2 years
- More than 2 years

8. Over the last year have you slept out (read out the following options):

- Almost all of the time
- Most of the time
- About half of the time
- Some of the time
- Hardly ever

9. How long has it been since you last had stable housing?

- Currently have stable housing
- 1 week or less
- 2 to 4 weeks
- 5 to 11 weeks
- 3 to 6 months
- 7 to 12 months
- 1 to 2 years
- More than 2 years

10. What area did you spend most of your time in the last 12 months? (Please tick one box only)

- | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adelaide metro | <input type="checkbox"/> Victoria | <input type="checkbox"/> Tas |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Country South Australia | <input type="checkbox"/> WA | <input type="checkbox"/> NSW |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interstate (please indicate which state?) | <input type="checkbox"/> Qld | <input type="checkbox"/> NT |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> NSW | <input type="checkbox"/> ACT |
-
- Overseas

11. What is your age?

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Under 18 | <input type="checkbox"/> 18 to 24 | <input type="checkbox"/> 25 to 34 | <input type="checkbox"/> 35 to 44 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 45 to 54 | <input type="checkbox"/> 55 to 64 | <input type="checkbox"/> 65 to 74 | <input type="checkbox"/> 75 and over |

12. Are you Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

- No Yes, Aboriginal Yes, Torres Strait Islander
 Yes, both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

13. Do you have a child/children under 18 who **STAYED** with you last night?

- Yes If yes: How old are they?.....
 No

14. Gender of respondent?

- Male
 Female

We will be doing this survey again this year. It would be very helpful for us to have some idea of how many people who were here today are also here when we do the next count, and if their circumstances and housing have changed. It's entirely up to you, but would you mind letting me write down your initials and months and year of birth? This information will be given to the Research Unit in the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion who will keep it confidential and safe and will be used for statistical purposes only.

- No Survey completed.
 Yes Fill out boxes below

First Name Initial.....Last Name Initial.....

What is your month & year of birth?

MONTH.....YEAR.....

SURVEY COMPLETED. THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME.

Department for Communities and Social Inclusion

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