

# Research Bulletin

February 2013



## Inner City Rough Sleeper Street Count

February 2013

### Background

The twelfth Inner City Rough Sleeper Street Count was conducted on 12 February 2013. This is the first Count conducted in the summer. The Count located 67 people who were unsheltered or 'sleeping rough', of whom 3 had a house elsewhere.

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.

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Please contact (08) 8204 8473

Previous Counts were conducted on:

- 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



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. Previous Counts involved four participating homelessness services: Street to Home, New ROADS (formerly Byron Place), Hutt Street Centre and WestCare Centre. This Count included additional inner city homelessness services, which participated in the Count for the first time. These services were: 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 (Salvation Army).

The data reported in this Bulletin were collected on the 12 February 2013 at the eleven of the homelessness services listed above. In the early morning, Street to Home visited the parklands and other areas around the city in order to locate people sleeping 'out'. 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

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, implemented for the February 2013 Count 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, this Count in February 2013 was implemented and an additional seven homelessness services agreed to participate (giving a total of eleven services)

### Response rate

A total of 191 questionnaires were received.<sup>1</sup> Of those people approached by collectors and invited to participate, only 23 (12%) declined. A further two (1%) individuals were considered by staff to be not able to provide informed consent. This leaves 166 people who participated in the Count, a response rate of 87%.

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

## Trends

As seen in Figure 1 below, the February 2013 Count found a slight decrease in the number of people sleeping unsheltered ('rough') from 69 in August 2012 to 67. (The vertical line in Figure 1 is to clearly delineate the change in questionnaires to focus purely on people sleeping rough implemented in 2011).

## Results

67 participants had slept rough the previous night. However, three of these reported having a house or home elsewhere.

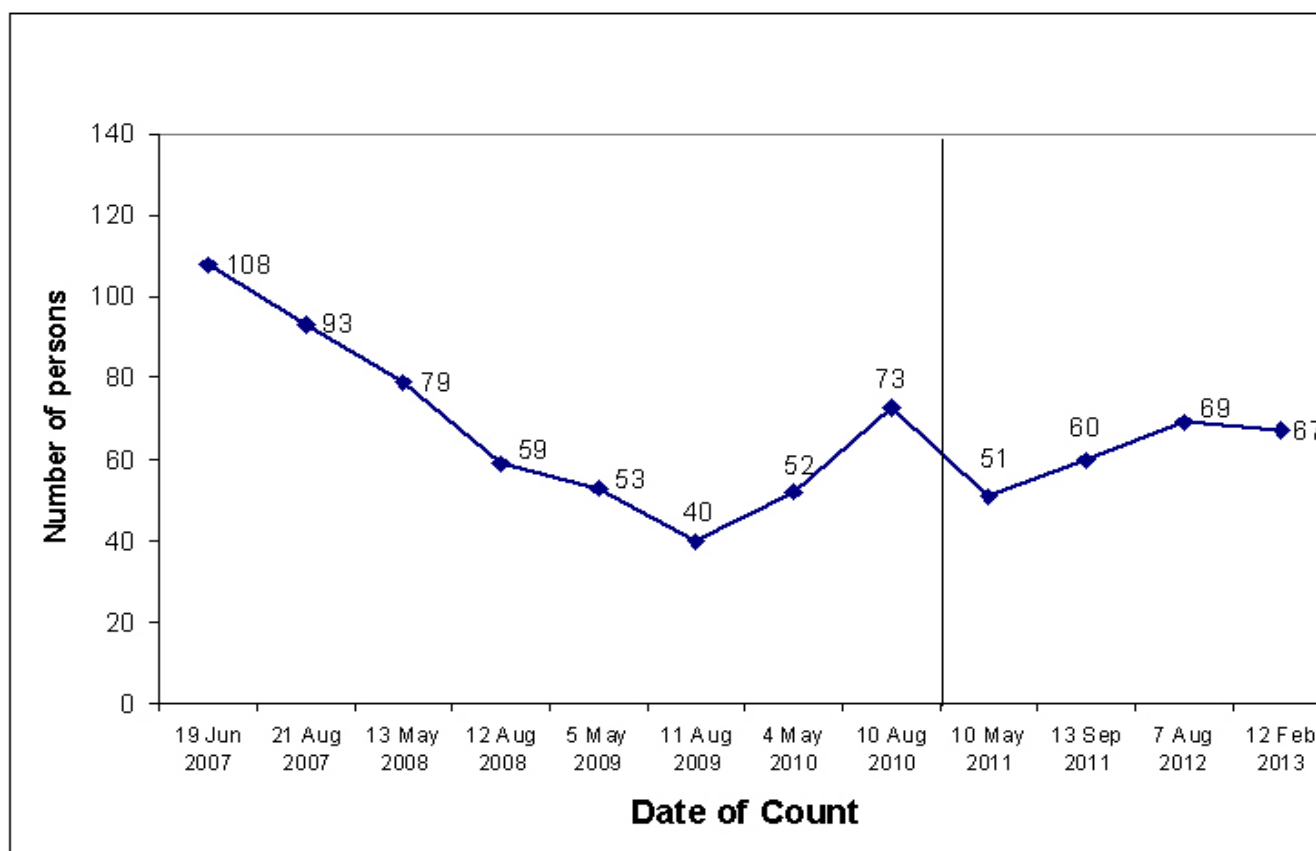


Figure 1: Total number of participants sleeping rough

### Sleeping rough and having a house elsewhere

Three people indicated that, although they had slept rough the previous night, they had a home elsewhere. This represents 4.5% of all those who slept rough.

When asked why they had not slept at their own home; one felt unsafe at their home, one lives in a boarding house but does not enjoy staying there and one reported it was 'too late to get home'. None of the three attempted to find other accommodation the night before.

The pattern of rough sleeping varied between the three people. Two people indicated they had slept rough 'most of the time' and one 'some of the time'. One reported having slept rough for more than two years, one for 7 to 12 months and one for a short time (2 to 4 weeks).

Of this group, all three were male and non-Indigenous and their age varied (one was 18 to 24, one was 25 to 34 and one was 35 to 44). All three reported spending most of their time over the last year in the Adelaide metropolitan area.

### Sleeping rough without a house elsewhere <sup>2</sup>

64 people had slept rough, without having a home anywhere else.<sup>3</sup> Table 1 summarises the reasons given for sleeping rough.

**Table 1: Reasons why people had slept rough**

	n	%
No other option	30	46.9
Financial reason	7	10.9
Personal preference	7	10.9
Standard practices	2	3.1
Other	5	7.8
Not stated	13	20.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The most common reason given for sleeping rough by 30 people (47%) was that there was no other option ('slept in park, nowhere else to go' or 'I can't find a house'). Seven people identified financial reasons ('not paid until tonight' or 'nowhere else to live, power bills and rent too high'). Seven reported they preferred sleeping rough ('because I can'). Another two said sleeping rough was their standard practice ('usual habit'). Another five named divergent reasons why they slept rough ('in car – family violence' or 'tired and slept where fell').

<sup>2</sup> Please note that throughout the remainder of the report all percentages are calculated based on the 64 people who slept rough and did not report having a house or home elsewhere.

<sup>3</sup> This figure includes eleven people who did not answer the question as to whether they had a home elsewhere.

Almost a quarter of people had attempted to find accommodation elsewhere on the previous night (23%) (Table 2). Of these, twelve had sought assistance from support services, identified as Housing SA, Hutt Street, Hospital, Police, St Vincent de Paul, Trace-A-Place, Common Ground and Street to Home. Two attempted to use their personal connections ('friends'). One tried to source private accommodation.

**Table 2: Where people attempted to find alternative shelter**

	n	%
Sought service support	12	18.8
Personal connections	2	3.1
Private accommodation	1	1.6
Did not attempt to find	34	53.1
Not indicated if attempted to find	15	23.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The most common reason for not seeking accommodation was money ('no money, no housing' or 'couldn't afford it') (Table 3). A range of other reasons were reported. Two people reported they do not like staying in alternative emergency / short-term accommodation ('wont stay in shelters, not safe'). Two reported having given up trying to find alternative accommodation ('it's never worked before'). Two reported being kicked out of previous accommodation. Two reported they preferred sleeping rough ('good camping weather'). Two reported they were waiting for accommodation from Housing SA. Two gave feedback suggesting a regular pattern of behaviour in terms of sleeping rough ('sleep in car').

**Table 3: Why people did not seek alternative shelter**

	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Financial reasons	6	9.4
Other	3	4.7
Does not like staying in emergency accommodation	2	3.1
Given up	2	3.1
Kicked out of previous accommodation	2	3.1
Preferred sleeping rough	2	3.1
Regular rough sleeping pattern	2	3.1
Waiting for Housing SA	2	3.1
Lack of personal connections	1	1.6
Not stated	12	18.8
Attempted to find alternative shelter	15	23.4
Not indicated if attempted to find	15	23.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100.0</b>

As shown in Table 4, 36% had been sleeping rough for a year or more and 55% reported sleeping rough for three months or more. In regards to the proportion of time spent sleeping rough over the last year, half 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	8	12.5
2 to 4 weeks	9	14.1
5 to 11 weeks	2	3.1
3 to 6 months	6	9.4
7 to 12 months	6	9.4
1 to 2 years	8	12.5
More than 2 years	15	23.4
Not stated	10	15.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 5: Sleeping rough pattern over the last year**

	n	%
Almost all of the time	22	34.4
Most of the time	10	15.6
About half of the time	6	9.4
Some of the time	14	21.9
Hardly ever	1	1.6
Not stated	11	17.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100.0</b>

People were also asked to identify how long it has been since they last had stable housing. As shown in Table 6, 40 (63%) reported not having had stable housing for 3 months or more and of these, 30 had not had stable housing for over 2 years.

**Table 6: How long since people have had stable housing**

	n	%
1 week or less	2	3.1
2 to 4 weeks	4	6.3
5 to 11 weeks	2	3.1
3 to 6 months	6	9.4
7 to 12 months	1	1.6
1 to 2 years	3	4.7
More than 2 years	30	46.9
Not stated	16	25.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100.0</b>



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

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

	n	%
Adelaide metropolitan area	43	67.2
Country South Australia	5	7.8
Interstate	5	7.8
Overseas	0	0.0
Not stated	11	17.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Demographic information is summarised in Table 8 and Table 9. Most rough sleepers were male, 35 to 54 years old and non-Indigenous. Thirteen (20%) identified themselves as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. There were 8 women and 3 people under 25 years.

**Table 8: Indigenous status by gender**

	Males		Females		Gender not specified		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Non-Indigenous	34	72.3	3	37.5	1	11.1	38	59.4
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander <sup>a</sup>	9	19.1	4	50.0	0	0.0	13	20.3
Not Stated	4	8.5	1	12.5	8	88.9	13	20.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<sup>a</sup> includes 2 people 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	1	2.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	1.6
18-24	2	4.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	3.1
25-34	4	8.5	3	37.5	0	0.0	7	10.9
35-44	16	34.0	3	37.5	3	33.3	22	34.4
45-54	19	40.4	1	12.5	0	0.0	20	31.3
55-64	5	10.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	5	7.8
65 and over	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Not Stated	0	0.0	1	12.5	6	66.7	7	10.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Presence in previous Counts

Thirty seven (58%) people provided identifier information. Table 10 shows how many times people had been identified as sleeping rough in previous Counts.

Seven of those who had slept rough (without a home elsewhere) could be traced to sleeping rough in at least one previous Count. Three of these seven had been identified in the previous Count (September 2012) as rough sleeping.

Five people had been identified as rough sleeping in one previous Count, one person in two previous Counts and one person in three previous Counts.

According to the information available from previous rough sleeper Counts, no person rough sleeping in this Count had been identified presenting to a homelessness service as sleeping rough in more than two successive Counts.

**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	64	100.0
Participants with identifier	37	57.8
In February 2013 and rough sleeping in no previous Count	30	46.9
In February 2013 and rough sleeping in one previous Count	5	7.8
In February 2013 and rough sleeping in two previous Counts	1	1.6
In February 2013 and rough sleeping in three previous Counts	1	1.6

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](http://www.dcsi.sa.gov.au/research)

# APPENDIX A

## February 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

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

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

3. Why did you sleep out last night? (Please prompt for why they slept out (not where))

.....

4. 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

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

Yes

No

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

.....

6. 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

7. 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

8. 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

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

- Adelaide metro
- Country South Australia
- Interstate (please indicate which state?)
  - Victoria
  - WA
  - Qld
  - ACT
  - Tas
  - NSW
  - NT
- Overseas

10. What is your age?

- Under 18
- 18 to 24
- 25 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 to 54
- 55 to 64
- 65 to 74
- 75 and over

11. Are you Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

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

12. Do you have a child/children under 18 who stayed with you last night?

Yes If yes: How old are they?.....

No

13. Gender of respondent?

Male

Female

We will be doing this survey again in May next 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 Families and Communities 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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