



# Inner City Rough Sleeper Street Count

May 2015

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The nineteenth Inner City Rough Sleeper Street Count was conducted on 5 May 2015. The Count located 83 people who were unsheltered or 'sleeping rough', of whom three 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 Australian 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:

- 2015 – 3 February
- 2014 – 4 February, 6 May and 5 August
- 2013 – 12 February, 7 May and 6 August
- 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 thirteen key inner city homeless services from eight different organisations. These services are: Street to Home; Hutt Street Centre (The Daughters of Charity); WestCare Centre (Baptist Care SA); Fred's Van (St Vincent de Paul); St Vincent de Paul Men's Crisis Accommodation Service; Magdalene Centre (Anglicare); Helping Young People Achieve (HYPA) (Service to Youth Council); New ROADS (Uniting Communities); Streetlink (Uniting Communities); Emergency Assistance – Adelaide (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.<sup>1</sup>

In the early morning of the day of the Count, Street to Home staff visited the Park Lands and other areas around the city to locate people sleeping 'out'. Workers at the other homelessness services approached people attending their service that day. Workers from DCSI coordinated data collection at Fred's Van in the evening and approached people visiting this service. If the people approached had slept rough the previous night, data collectors invited their participation in completing a short survey (see Appendix A for a copy of the questionnaire). This replicated the basic methodology in previous Counts.

### **Review of methodology**

Since the inception of the Counts, there have been two significant changes to the methodology:

1. 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.
2. Following a forum in June 2012 with a wide range of stakeholders, a working group was established to provide advice to improve the robustness of the information collected. Their recommendations were to:
  - **Increase the frequency** of the Count by conducting an additional Count in the summer months (in addition to the May and August Count).
  - **Increase collection points** by approaching additional inner city homelessness services to be involved in the Count to collect data.

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

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<sup>1</sup> 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.



## May 2015 Count

The data reported in this Bulletin were collected on the 5 May 2015 at the thirteen homelessness services listed above.

### Participation in Count

One hundred and forty-nine questionnaires were received.<sup>2</sup> Of the people approached by collectors and invited to participate:

- 12 (8%) declined or were not capable of participating and where they had slept the previous night was not known.

This leaves 137 people who participated in the Count. A considerable number of people who were sleeping rough declined to answer questions on their circumstances. This should be considered when interpreting the results, particularly when comparisons are made with previous Counts.<sup>3</sup>

### Results

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

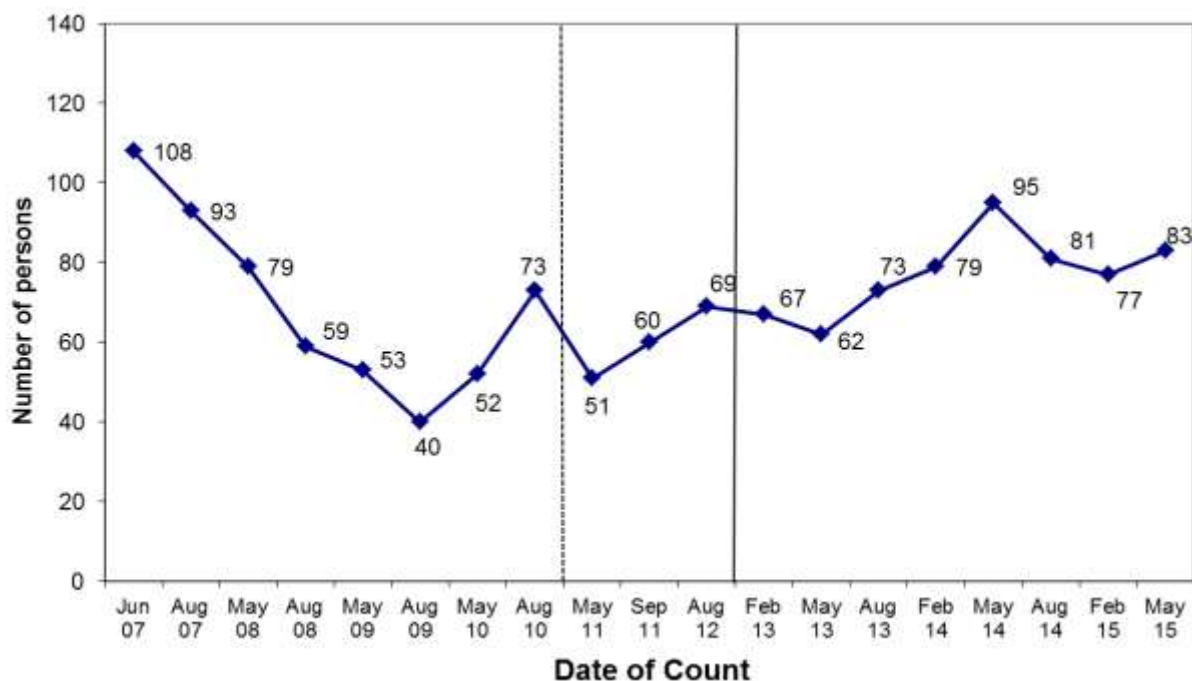


Figure 1: Total number of participants sleeping rough<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> This figure should not be used to infer the number of clients attending at the inner city homelessness services.  
<sup>3</sup> Non-response varied across questions. Level of non-response is similar to the previous Count (around a third).  
<sup>4</sup> The solid vertical line in Figure 1 is to indicate the inclusion of additional collection points (implemented in 2013) and the dashed vertical line is to indicate the change in the questionnaire to focus purely on people sleeping rough (implemented in 2011).

## Trends

As seen in Figure 1, the May 2015 Count found a small increase in the number of people sleeping rough, from 77 in February 2015 to 83.

### Sleeping rough and having a house elsewhere

Three people indicated that, although they had slept rough the previous night, they had a home elsewhere. They represent 3.6% of all those who had slept rough. All indicated they had slept rough in the Adelaide inner city or Park Lands.

When asked why they had not slept at their own home, various reasons were reported. Two had financial reasons (one indicated they could not travel back to their home due to financial reasons) and one had mental health issues. None of the three indicated they had attempted to find other accommodation the night before. One reported to prefer sleeping out and one was not interested in seeking other accommodation.

The pattern of rough sleeping over the last year varied between the three people. One person indicated they had slept rough 'most of the time' and two 'about half of the time'. One person reported having slept rough for more than two years, one for three to six months and one for two to four weeks.

Of this group, all identified themselves as male and non-Aboriginal. One was aged 25 to 34 years, one was 45 to 54 years and one was 55 to 64 years. Two reported they had spent most of their time over the last year in the Adelaide metropolitan area and one interstate (he did not indicate a specific state or territory).

### Sleeping rough without a house elsewhere<sup>5</sup>

Eighty people had slept rough the previous night, without having a home elsewhere.<sup>6</sup> Fifty-six (70%) had slept rough in the Adelaide inner city or Park Lands, five (6%) had slept in the Adelaide suburbs and 19 people (24%) did not report their location.

Table 1 summarises the reasons given for sleeping rough. The most common reason reported by 33 people (41%) was that there was no other option ('*We could not stay anywhere as a couple*' #127<sup>7</sup> and '*Nowhere else to live or sleep*' #33). Four people reported financial reasons ('*Necessity, limited finances. Cheap places full*' #35). A small number of other reasons were reported including: being kicked out of their previous accommodation ('*Nowhere to go - family*

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<sup>5</sup> Please note that throughout the remainder of the report all percentages are calculated based on the 80 people who slept rough and did not report having a house or home elsewhere.

<sup>6</sup> This figure includes 28 people who did not answer the question as to whether they had a home elsewhere.

<sup>7</sup> The # symbol identifies the unique client ID of the person who made the comment. Different client IDs indicate that comments were made by different people.

kicked me out' #121), they felt safer sleeping out ('Feared for personal safety' #74) and recently arrived in Adelaide ('Short-term staying in Adelaide' #65). A reason was not provided by 29 people (36%).

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

	n	%
No other options	33	41.3
Financial reason	4	5.0
Evicted / kicked out	2	2.5
Relationship breakdown	2	2.5
Feel safer	2	2.5
Traveller / recently arrived	2	2.5
Waiting for other housing options	2	2.5
Personal preference	1	1.3
Other	3	3.8
Not stated	29	36.3
Total	80	100.0

Ten people (13%) who slept rough reported they had attempted to find accommodation elsewhere for the previous night (Table 2). Of these, six had sought assistance from support services including the Homelessness Gateway, Hutt St Centre, Sobering Up Unit and St Vincent de Paul Men's Crisis Accommodation Service. Two attempted to use their personal connections (friends) and three tried to source private accommodation (Backpackers and private rental).

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

	n	%
Sought service support <sup>a</sup>	6	7.5
Personal connections <sup>a</sup>	2	2.5
Private accommodation <sup>a</sup>	3	3.8
Did not attempt to find	43	52.8
Not indicated if attempted to find	27	33.8
Total number of respondents	80	100.0

<sup>a</sup> People could have attempted to find accommodation at multiple types of alternative shelter (e.g. service support and personal connections)



Around half indicated they had not attempted to find alternative shelter elsewhere for the previous night (54%, 43 people) and a range of reasons were reported (Table 3). The most common reason was people had given up trying to find alternative accommodation (*'Sick of telling my story' #122* and *'Because there is nowhere' #60*). Nine reported financial issues (*'No income, unemployed' #119*). Five reported they preferred sleeping rough (*'Stayed with friends' #37*). Three reported they do not want to stay in other emergency or short-term accommodation and another six gave divergent responses (*'Wasn't aware of homeless services' #74*).

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

	n	%
Given up	11	13.8
Financial reason	9	11.3
Preferred sleeping rough	5	6.3
Does not want to stay in emergency accommodation	3	3.8
Other	6	7.5
Not stated	9	11.3
Attempted to find alternative shelter	10	12.5
Not indicated if attempted to find	27	33.8
Total	80	100.0

As shown in Table 4, 38% (30 people) had been sleeping rough for a year or more and half (50%, 40 people) reported sleeping rough for three months or more. In regards to the amount of time spent sleeping rough in the last year, 45% (36 people) 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	6	7.5
2 to 4 weeks	5	6.3
5 to 11 weeks	2	2.5
3 to 6 months	4	5.0
7 to 12 months	6	7.5
1 to 2 years	20	25.0
More than 2 years	10	12.5
Not stated	27	33.8
Total	80	100.0

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

	n	%
Almost all of the time	30	37.5
Most of the time	6	7.5
About half of the time	8	10.0
Some of the time	4	5.0
Hardly ever	4	5.0
Not stated	28	35.2
Total	80	100.0

People were also asked to identify how long it has been since they last had stable housing. As shown in Table 6, 44 (55%) reported not having had stable housing for three months or more and of these, 18 (23%) had not had stable housing for over two years.





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

	n	%
1 week or less	2	2.5
2 to 4 weeks	3	3.8
5 to 11 weeks	3	3.8
3 to 6 months	3	3.8
7 to 12 months	11	13.8
1 to 2 years	12	15.0
More than 2 years	18	22.5
Not stated	28	35.0
Total	80	100.0

One male participant reported his fifteen-year-old dependent child slept out with him the previous night. He reported sleeping rough for one week or less but had not had stable housing for more than two years.

Most people had been primarily based in the Adelaide metropolitan area over the last 12 months (Table 7). For the three people primarily based interstate, different states were reported (one in Victoria, one in Queensland and one reported three states (Victoria, Queensland, and New South Wales)).

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

	n	%
Adelaide metropolitan area	50	62.5
Country South Australia	4	5.0
Interstate	3	3.8
Not stated	23	28.8
Total	80	100.0

Demographic information is summarised in Table 8 and Table 9. Most people sleeping rough were male and non-Aboriginal and over three-quarters (79%) were 25 to 54 years. Eighteen (23%) identified themselves as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. There were sixteen women (20%) (seven of whom identified as Aboriginal) and eight people under 25 years (one of whom was under 18 years).



**Table 8: Aboriginal status by gender**

	Males		Female		Not stated		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Aboriginal <sup>a</sup>	11	17.7	7	43.8	0	0.0	18	22.5
Non-Aboriginal	46	74.2	9	56.3	0	0.0	55	68.8
Not Stated	5	8.1	0	0.0	2	100.0	7	8.8
Total	62	100.0	16	100.0	2	100.0	80	100.0

<sup>a</sup> includes one person who identified as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

**Table 9: Age by gender**

	Males		Females		Not stated		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Under 18	0	0.0	1	6.3	0	0.0	1	1.3
18-24	3	4.8	4	25.0	0	0.0	7	8.8
25-34	19	30.6	6	37.5	0	0.0	25	31.3
35-44	21	33.9	2	12.5	0	0.0	23	28.8
45-54	13	21.0	2	12.5	0	0.0	15	18.8
55-64	5	8.1	1	6.3	0	0.0	6	7.5
65 and over	1	1.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	1.3
Not stated	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	100.0	2	2.5
Total	62	100.0	16	100.0	2	100.0	80	100.0

### Presence in previous Counts

Forty (50%) people who were sleeping rough (without a home elsewhere) 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, 30 (75%) of the 40 people who provided identifier information could not be identified in any of the previous eighteen Counts as sleeping rough.

Ten (13%) of the 80 people who had slept rough (without a home elsewhere) could be traced to sleeping rough in at least one previous Count. Four of these ten were identified in the previous Count (February 2015) as sleeping rough.

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

	n	%
In February 2015 and sleeping rough in no previous Counts	30	37.5
In February 2015 and sleeping rough in one previous Count	7	8.8
In February 2015 and sleeping rough in two previous Counts	3	3.8
Participant did not provide identifier information	40	50.0
Total	80	100.0



## Appendix A

### Inner City Rough Sleeper Street Count Questionnaire: February 2015

#### 1. Have you already completed a survey today?

- Yes (If Yes, do not ask any further questions or complete form)
- No
  
- Declined to participate in the survey
- Not capable of participating 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
- Park/ street
- Shed
- Tent
- Squat
- Verandah

- Slept out

Includes:

- Your own house or unit
- Friend's or family's place
- Hotel/motel
- Boarding house
- St Vincent de Paul Shelter
- Catherine House
- Backpackers
- Caravan Park
- City Watchhouse

- Prison
- Remand Centre
- Detox / Sobering up unit
- Hospital

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 slept out)

#### 5. Did you try and find any other accommodation last night (e.g. 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)**

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

**11. 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

**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 in 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 month and year of birth? This information will be given to the Evaluation and 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 and year of birth?

Month .... Year ....

**Survey Completed. Thank you for your time.**

