



research bulletin

September 2011



Inner City Rough Sleeper Street Count

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Background

The tenth Inner City Rough Sleeper Street Count was conducted on 13 September 2011.¹ The Count located 60 adults who were unsheltered or 'sleeping rough'. Six of these people had a house elsewhere. The Rough Sleeper Street Counts aim to monitor levels of homelessness in the Adelaide inner city area as well as provide information about the circumstances and profile of the population. Previous counts were conducted on:

- 2011 - 10 May
- 2010 – 4 May and 10 August
- 2009 – 5 May and 11 August
- 2008 – 13 May and 12 August
- 2007 – 19 June and 21 August.

¹ The second Count in a year is typically held in August, but was deferred to September at the request of the Australian Bureau of Statistics to avoid simultaneous data collection with the Australian Census of Population and Housing.

The Counts are a partnership between the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI)² and key homeless services in the inner city: Byron Place Day Centre, Hutt Street Day Centre, Street to Home and Westcare Day Centre. The data reported in this Bulletin were collected in the morning or early afternoon of 13 September at the four homeless services listed above (see Appendix A for a copy of the questionnaire).

In the early morning, Street to Home visited the parklands and other areas around the city in order to locate people sleeping 'out'. The three Day Centres also approached people attending their services that day and invited their participation in completing a short survey. This replicates the basic methodology in the nine previous Counts.

Questionnaire design

With the advice and assistance of the inner city homeless services, the Count was revised in May 2011 to focus definitively upon those who were rough sleeping the previous night. The May 2011 Count highlighted a few minor issues with the form which were addressed in the September count.³

Response rate

A total of 199 questionnaires were received.⁴ Of those people approached by collectors and invited to participate, only 11 (5.5%) declined. A further two (1.0%) individuals were considered by staff to be not able to provide informed consent. This leaves 186 people who participated in the count, a response rate of 93.5%.

2 Formerly the Department for Families and Communities

3 Regarding seeking alternate accommodation: separation of 'where' and 'what happened' elements into distinct queries. Regarding time since they last had stable housing: addition of a response item stating that they currently have stable housing.

4 This number should not be taken to infer the number of clients attending at the inner city homelessness services on that day.

Results

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

Trends

As seen in Figure 1 below, the September Count identified an increase in the number of people sleeping unsheltered ('rough') from 51 in May 2011 to 60. The vertical line in Figure 1 is to clearly delineate the change in questionnaires to focus purely on rough sleepers.

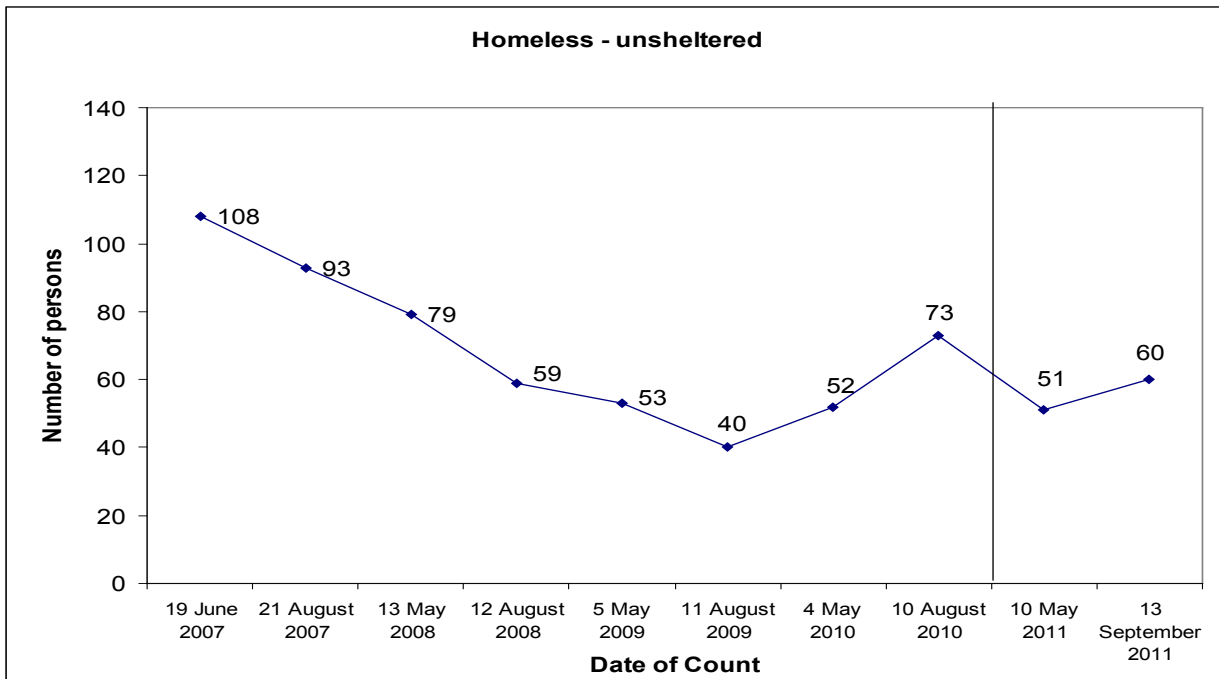


Figure 1: Total number of participants and those sleeping unsheltered

Sleeping rough and having a house elsewhere

Six people indicated that, although they had slept rough the previous night, they had a home elsewhere. This represents 10.0% of all those who slept rough.

Of this group, two identified as being of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background and one identified as Aboriginal. As a group, these participants were spread across the age range. Five reported spending most of their time over the last 12 months in the Adelaide metropolitan region, and one non-Aboriginal man had spent most of the last 12 months interstate.

Table 1: Demographic information: slept rough but have a house elsewhere

	Age range					
	Male	Female	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	2	1		1	1	1
Non-Aboriginal	1		1			1
Not recorded	1			1		

None of the six people had attempted to find an alternate place to sleep the previous night. When asked why they had not slept at their own home, all three Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander participants reported it was due to overcrowding. Two non-Aboriginal men reported domestic problems (*'kicked out'* or *'can't live with wife'*). The final participant's home was interstate.

Sleeping out seemed to be an established pattern for the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander participants: despite having a home, they indicated they had slept out 'some of the time', 'about half of the time' and 'most of the time' during the last year. One woman, who had been sleeping rough for 5 to 11 weeks, reported that a 6 year old child had slept out with her the night before.⁵

Of those participants who did not identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, one participant reported having slept rough for more than two years, including almost all of the time over the last year. The remaining two said they slept out 'hardly ever' and had begun sleeping out quite recently.

None of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants agreed to provide an individual identifier.⁶ The remaining three participants all provided an identifier: this was their first appearance in the Count.

5 When children are identified as having slept rough, the Department alerts the inner city agency to ensure a response.

6 All respondents were asked if they were willing to have an individual identifier recorded on the survey (initials, month and year of birth). This is used to track appearance in multiple Counts. See Appendix A.

Sleeping rough without having a house elsewhere⁷

54 people (who did not have a home elsewhere) were found to have slept rough.⁸ Table 2 summarises their reasons for sleeping out.

Table 2: Reasons why people slept rough

	N	%
General response - no other options	27	50.0
Personal preference	3	5.6
Inebriated	3	5.6
Standard practices	2	3.7
Financial reasons	2	3.7
Traveller, recently arrived	2	3.7
Waiting for accommodation from services	2	3.7
Recently released from prison	2	3.7
Other	3	5.6
Not stated	8	14.0
Total	54	100.0

The most common reason given for sleeping out (50%) was that there was no other option: *'Don't have home', 'Nowhere else to go', 'Had to'*. Three said that they preferred sleeping rough (*'by choice'*). Another three reported sleeping rough due to being inebriated. Two said sleeping rough was standard practice (*'I live in the shed'*). Two identified financial reasons, or not being prepared to pay rent: *'I am not prepared to pay exorbitant rent – far too expensive. When you're on the pension you've got to budget really well and it's pretty tight as it is'*. Another two said they were waiting for housing and were sleeping rough rather than stay in alternate accommodation: *'I don't want to stay in the boarding house and I am waiting for Housing SA to give me a house.'*

Two recently arrived travellers said they were *'from interstate – searching for accommodation'* or *'just came from Alice Springs'*. Two others said they had *'no fixed address. Just out of prison'*.

Most had not attempted to find accommodation the previous night. Of those who had, eight had sought assistance from support services, identified as Housing (presumably Housing SA), the Sobering Up Unit, The Homelessness Assertive Response Team, Salvation Army, Byron Place and Common Ground. Two attempted to use their personal connections (*'friend's place'*). The final participant tried to source private accommodation options.

⁷ Please note that throughout the remainder of the report all percentages are calculated based on the 54 participants who slept out and did not report having a house or home elsewhere.

⁸ This figure includes five people who did not answer the question as to whether they had a home elsewhere.

Table 3: Feedback on unsuccessful attempts to seek shelter

	N	%
Sought service support	8	14.8
Personal connections	2	3.7
Private accommodation	1	1.9
N/A	43	79.6
Total	54	100.0

The most common reason for not seeking accommodation was money: *'cheaper to live on street – rent too dear!'*. Six reported that they preferred sleeping out: *'Prefer this lifestyle'*, *'Didn't want to'*. A further five reported having given up trying to find alternative accommodation, or not wanting to face rejection: *'Too many knock backs'*, *'It's just not worth it'*. Four reported a lack of personal connections: *'No mates'*. Three participants gave feedback suggesting sleeping rough was their lifestyle: *'Always been sleeping rough'*, *'Sleeping in car'*. The remaining three gave divergent responses (ie being too late to seek supports, difficulties in finding accommodation when you have pets and rejection by an unspecified contact).

Table 4: Why people did not seek alternative shelter

	N	%
Financial reasons	7	13.0
Preferred sleeping rough	6	11.1
Given up/did not want to face rejection	5	9.3
Lack of personal connections	4	7.4
Stable rough sleeping pattern	3	5.6
Intoxicated	2	3.7
Unclear response	2	3.7
Other	3	5.6
N/A	22	40.7
Total	54	100.0

As shown in Table 5, 50.0% had been sleeping rough for a year or more and 66.7% reported sleeping rough for more than three months. In regards to the proportion of time spent sleeping rough over the last year, 72.2% reported sleeping out most or almost all of the time (Table 6).

Table 5: How long participants had been sleeping rough

	N	%
1 week or less	3	5.5
2 to 4 weeks	5	9.3
5 to 11 weeks	5	9.3
3 to 6 months	5	9.3
7 to 12 months	4	7.4
1 to 2 years	8	14.8
More than 2 years	19	35.2
Not stated	5	9.3
Total	54	100.00

Table 6: Sleeping out patterns over the last year

	N	%
Almost all the time	29	53.7
Most of the time	10	18.5
About half of the time	5	9.3
Some of the time	3	5.6
Hardly ever	4	7.4
Not stated	3	5.6
Total	54	100.0

Participants were also asked to identify how long it has been since they last had stable housing. As shown in Table 7, 38 (70.4%) reported not having stable housing for over a year, with a total of 44 (81.5%) not having stable housing for three months or more.

Table 7: How long since participants had stable housing

	N	%
1 week or less	0	0.0
2 to 4 weeks	2	3.7
5 to 11 weeks	2	3.7
3 to 6 months	3	5.6
7 to 12 months	3	5.6
1 to 2 years	11	20.4
More than 2 years	27	50.0
Not stated	6	11.1
Total	54	100.00

Most participants had been primarily based in the Adelaide metropolitan region over the last 12 months.

Table 8: Area spent the most time in over the last 12 months

	N	%
Adelaide metropolitan area	40	74.1
Country South Australia	0	0.0
Interstate	8	14.8
Overseas	0	0.0
Transitory	2	3.7
Not stated	4	7.4
Total	54	100.00

One participant said she had two children in her care (aged one and three years).⁹ This woman had recently come to Adelaide from interstate and reported having slept rough for about half of the last year, with her more recent period of rough sleeping from five to 11 weeks in duration.

Demographic information is summarised in Table 9. Most rough sleepers were male, over 35 years old and non-Indigenous.

Table 9: Demographics of those sleeping out without other housing

	Males		Females		Gender not specified		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<i>Cultural background</i>								
Aboriginal	3	5.6	3	5.6	2	3.7	8	14.8
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	1	1.9	1	1.9	0	0.0	2	3.7
Not stated	3	5.6	2	3.7	0	0.0	5	9.3
<i>Age group</i>								
18-24	3	5.6	2	3.7	0	0.0	5	9.3
25-34	4	7.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	7.4
35-44	12	22.2	1	1.9	0	0.0	13	24.1
45-54	14	25.9	3	5.6	0	0.0	17	31.5
55-64	8	14.8	1	1.9	0	0.0	9	16.7
65 and over	1	1.9	1	1.9	0	0.0	2	3.7
Not stated	1	1.9	1	1.9	2	3.7	4	7.4
Total	43	79.6	9	16.7	2	3.7	54	100.0

⁹ When children are identified as having slept rough, the Department alerts the inner city agency to ensure a response.

Presence in previous Counts

Forty two (77.8%) participants provided identifier information. Table 10 shows how many times participants had been in previous Counts:

- Sixteen of those who had slept rough and did not have a house elsewhere could be traced to previous Counts
- Eight of these had been involved in only one previous count. Of this group, two had reported 'other accommodation' (as opposed to sleeping rough) in a previous Count
- Four had been involved in two previous Counts, and in all but one instance had reported rough sleeping
- Four participants were found to be present in three, four, five and six previous Counts, respectively. Those in three and five previous Counts had reported rough sleeping for every Count. The participants found in four and six previous Counts had two occasions each of reporting 'other accommodation' with the remaining occasions being 'rough sleeping'.

Table 10: Repeat presentations in previous counts

	Total Counts	
	n	%
Participants sleeping rough and no home elsewhere	54	100.0
Participants with identifier	42	77.8
In September 2011 and no previous Counts	26	48.1
In September 2011 and one previous Count	8	14.8
In September 2011 and two previous Counts	4	7.4
In September 2011 and three previous Counts	1	1.9
In September 2011 and four previous Counts	1	1.9
In September 2011 and five previous Counts	1	1.9
In September 2011 and six previous Counts	1	1.9

Appendix A

September 2011 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
- Park/ street
- Shed
- Tent
- Squat
- Verandah

- Slept inside/sheltered

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

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, now 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?

- 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)

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

10. 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 |

11. Are you Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Torres Strait Islander | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|

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

- Yes
- No

If yes: How old are they?

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.