



research bulletin

August 2012



Inner City Rough Sleeper Street Count

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Background

The eleventh Inner City Rough Sleeper Street Count was conducted on 7 August 2012.¹ The Count located 69 people who were unsheltered or 'sleeping rough', seven of whom had a home 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. Previous Counts were conducted on:

- 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.

¹ A count was due to be conducted in May 2012; however this was deferred due to decision to review the methodology for the Count.

The Counts are a partnership between the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI) 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 7 August 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 replicated the basic methodology in the ten previous Counts.

Review of Methodology

With the advice and assistance of the inner city homeless 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 the information collected. A working group is now being established to progress these recommendations, with implementation anticipated in 2013.

Response rate

A total of 227 questionnaires were received.² Of those people approached by collectors and invited to participate, only 27 (11.9%) declined. A further three (1.3%) individuals were considered by staff to be not able to provide informed consent. This leaves 197 people who participated in the Count, a response rate of 86.8%.

² This figure should not be used to infer the number of clients attending at the inner city homelessness services.

Results

69 participants had slept rough the previous night. However, seven of these reported having a home elsewhere.

Trends

As seen in Figure 1 below, the August 2012 Count found an increase in the number of people sleeping unsheltered ('rough') from 60 in September 2011 to 69. (The vertical line in Figure 1 is to clearly delineate the change in questionnaires to focus purely on rough sleepers).

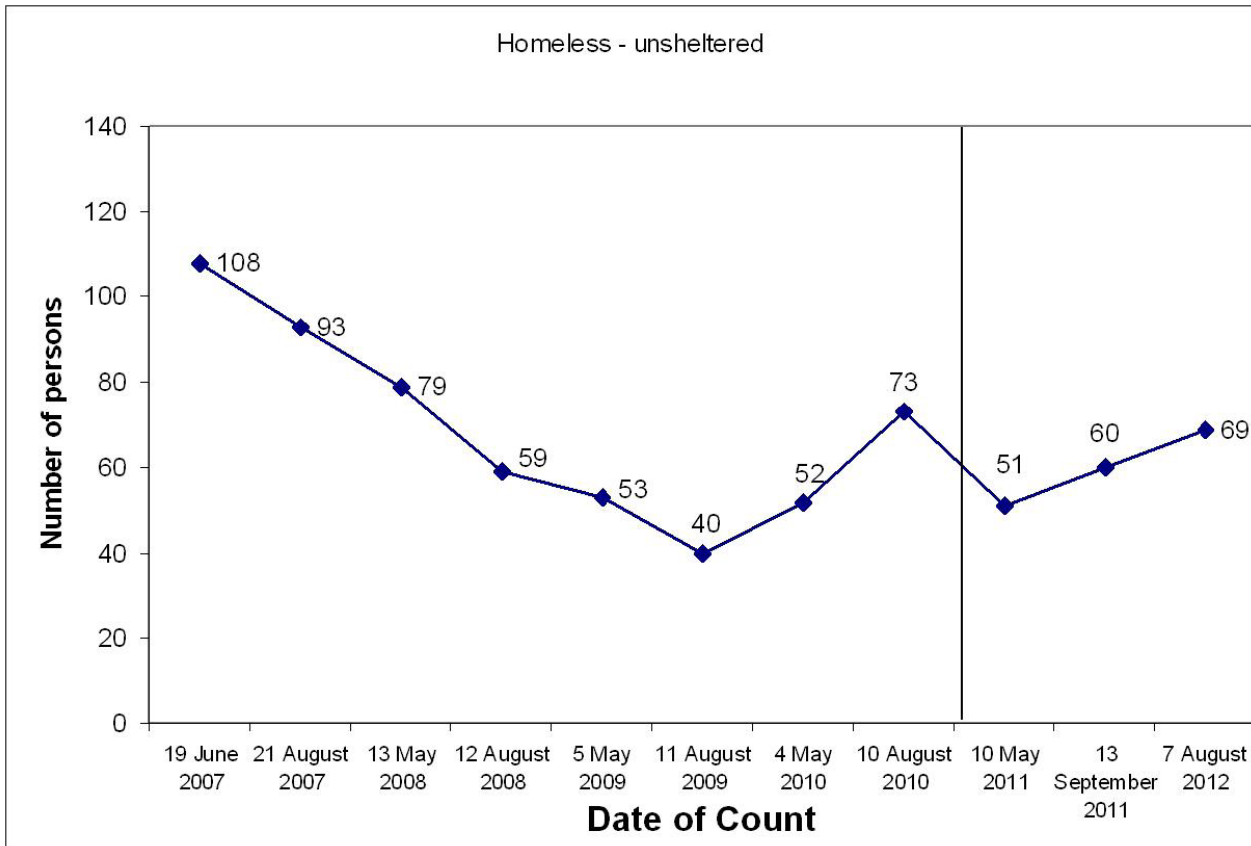


Figure 1: Total number of participants sleeping unsheltered

Sleeping rough and having a home elsewhere

Seven people indicated that, although they had slept rough the previous night, they had a home elsewhere. This represents 10.1% of all those who slept rough.

Of this group, one identified as Aboriginal - a female aged between 45 and 54 years. Six reported spending most of their time over the last year in the Adelaide metropolitan region, with one having spent most of the last year in country SA.

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

				Age range			
	Male	Female	Not recorded	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander		1				1	
Non-Aboriginal	5		1	1	2	1	2

Only one person in this group had attempted to find an alternate place to sleep the night before. When asked why they had not slept at their own home, two men reported they were inebriated. Three reported not being able to stay in their home, for various reasons. One man was a visiting Adelaide and another 'did not feel like it'.

Sleeping out seemed to be a pattern for most - four indicated they had slept out 'some of the time', and two slept out 'most of the time'. One man reported having slept rough for more than two years, including almost all of the time over the last year, despite also reporting having a home.

Sleeping rough without having a home elsewhere³

62 people had slept rough, without having a home anywhere else.⁴ Table 2 summarises the reasons given for sleeping out.

³ Please note that throughout the remainder of the report all percentages are calculated based on the 62 participants who slept out and did not report having a home elsewhere.

⁴ This figure includes twelve people who did not answer the question as to whether they had a home elsewhere

Table 2: Reasons why people slept rough

	n	%
No other option	34	54.8
Financial reason	4	6.5
Personal preference	3	4.8
Standard practices	2	3.2
Traveller, recently arrived	1	1.6
Other	5	8.1
Not stated	13	21.0
Total	62	100.0

The most common reason given for sleeping out was that there was no other option (54.8%): 'can't get a place at the moment', 'everything full - nothing for couples'. Four participants identified financial reasons ('rent is unaffordable' or 'no money'). Three reported they preferred sleeping rough ('works for me'). Another two said sleeping rough was their standard practice ('live in park'). One recently-arrived traveller said 'can't find shelter – new to city'. Another five named divergent reasons why they slept rough: 'didn't like sober-up' or 'chose to stay with partner'.

Most people hadn't tried to find accommodation elsewhere. Of those who had, nine had sought assistance from support services, identified as Hutt Street, "Vinnies", Aboriginal Hostels, Westcare, Centrelink, Housing SA, Byron Place, Common Ground and Street to Home. Two attempted to use their personal connections ('friends' or 'family/sister'). One tried to source private accommodation ('rental but unsuccessful').

Table 3: Attempts to seek alternative shelter

	n	%
Sought service support	9	14.5
Personal connections	2	3.2
Private accommodation	1	1.6
Other	1	1.6
N/A	49	79.0
Total	62	100.0

The most common reason for not seeking accommodation was money: ‘financial reasons – can’t afford it’, ‘too expensive’. A further four reported having given up trying to find accommodation: ‘waste of time’, ‘it’s a bit of a hassle’. Three said they preferred sleeping out: ‘happy where I am’, ‘happy in tent’. Three reported a lack of personal connections: ‘no friends or family’. Two gave feedback suggesting a stable pattern of behaviour in terms of sleeping rough: ‘live in park’, ‘used to sleeping out’. The remaining two gave divergent responses (ie ‘Doesn’t work for me’, ‘not drunk’).

Table 4: Why people did not seek alternative shelter

	n	%
Financial reasons	13	21.0
Given up	4	6.5
Preferred sleeping rough	3	4.8
Lack of personal connections	3	4.8
Stable rough sleeping pattern	2	3.2
Other	2	3.2
Not stated	11	17.7
N/A	24	38.7
Total	62	100.0

As shown in Table 5, 45.2% had been sleeping rough for a year or more and 66.1% reported sleeping rough for more than three months. In regards to the proportion of time spent sleeping rough over the last year, 58.1% 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	2	3.2
2 to 4 weeks	4	6.5
5 to 11 weeks	3	4.8
3 to 6 months	10	16.1
7 to 12 months	3	4.8
1 to 2 years	6	9.7
More than 2 years	22	35.5
Not stated	12	19.4
Total	62	100.0

Table 6: Sleeping out patterns over the last year

	n	%
Almost all the time	23	37.1
Most of the time	13	21.0
About half of the time	2	3.2
Some of the time	7	11.3
Hardly ever	4	6.5
Not stated	13	21.0
Total	62	100.0

Participants were also asked to identify how long it has been since they last had stable housing. As shown in Table 7, 35 (56.5%) reported not having stable housing for over a year and 44 (71.0%) not having had stable housing for three months or more.

Table 7: How long since participants had stable housing

	n	%
1 week or less	2	3.2
2 to 4 weeks	3	4.8
5 to 11 weeks	0	0.0
3 to 6 months	6	9.7
7 to 12 months	3	4.8
1 to 2 years	6	9.7
More than 2 years	29	46.8
Not stated	13	21.0
Total	62	100.0

Most people were 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	41	66.1
Country South Australia	4	6.5
Interstate	7	11.3
Overseas	0	0.0
Not stated	10	16.1
Total	62	100.00

Demographic information is summarised in Table 9 and 10. Most rough sleepers were male, over 35 years old and non-indigenous.

Table 9: Indigenous status by gender of those sleeping out without other housing

	Males		Females		Gender not specified		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Non-Indigenous	28	63.6	3	27.3	0	0.0	31	50.0
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander ^a	13	29.5	7	63.6	1	14.3	21	33.9
Not stated	3	6.8	1	9.1	6	85.7	10	16.1
Total	44	100.0	11	100.0	7	100.0	62	100.0

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

Table 10: Age by gender of those rough sleeping without other housing

	Males		Females		Gender not specified		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Under 18	1	2.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	1.6
18-24	3	6.8	1	9.1	0	0.0	4	6.5
25-34	7	15.9	2	18.2	1	14.3	10	16.1
35-44	13	29.5	4	36.4	0	0.0	17	27.4
45-54	10	22.7	2	18.2	0	0.0	12	19.4
55-64	7	15.9	2	18.2	0	0.0	9	14.5
65 and over	3	6.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	4.8
Not stated	0	0.0	0	0.0	6	85.7	6	9.7
Total	44	100.0	11	100.0	7	100.0	62	100.0

Presence in previous Counts

Thirty nine (62.9%) participants provided identifier information. Table 11 shows how many times participants had been rough sleeping in previous Counts.

Eleven of those who had slept rough, without a home elsewhere, could be traced to rough sleeping in previous Counts. Eight had not been identified in the previous Count (September 2011) as rough sleeping.

Three had been involved in one previous Count, five participants in two previous Counts and one participant in three, five and seven previous Counts each.

According to the information available from previous rough sleeper counts, only one of these eleven showed no interruption in primary homelessness (that is, had been sleeping rough in all the counts they had previously participated in).

Table 11: Repeat presentations of those rough sleeping in previous Counts

	Total Counts	
	n	%
Participants sleeping rough and no home elsewhere	62	100.0
Participants with identifier	39	62.9
In August 2012 and rough sleeping in no previous Count	28	45.2
In August 2012 and rough sleeping in one previous Count	3	4.8
In August 2012 and rough sleeping in two previous Counts	5	8.1
In August 2012 and rough sleeping in three previous Counts	1	1.6
In August 2012 and rough sleeping in four previous Counts	0	0.0
In August 2012 and rough sleeping in five previous Counts	1	1.6
In August 2012 and rough sleeping in six previous Counts	0	0.0
In August 2012 and rough sleeping in seven previous Counts	1	1.6

Appendix A

August 2012 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 Watch House
- 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?

- 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)

- | | | | |
|--|---|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <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 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.