



research bulletin



Inner City Rough Sleeper Street Count May 2011

Background

The ninth Inner City Rough Sleeper Street Count was conducted on 10 May 2011. The Count located 51 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:

- 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 Families and Communities, the Social Inclusion Unit (Department of Premier and Cabinet) 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 10 May 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. The methodology for the Count was very similar to that used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) in the 2006 Census with the same agencies being involved and similar collection strategies. This also replicated the basic methodology employed in the eight previous Counts.

Revised questionnaire

In a departure from previous Counts, the questionnaire was revised to focus definitively upon those who were rough sleeping the previous night. The inner city homeless services provided advice and assistance in the development of the new questionnaire. In addition, all workers who would administer the questionnaire were briefed by DFC staff as to changes in administration and question content.

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The key change was that only those who had been rough sleeping completed the questionnaire. Previous counts collected housing and demographic information from all participants regardless of where they had slept the previous night. The current survey also recorded more detail regarding:

- why people had slept out
- attempts to find alternate accommodation
- presence of a house or home elsewhere and why this may not have been used
- proportion of the last year spent sleeping out
- time since a participant last had stable housing.

Please refer to Appendix B for a copy of the previous Counts questionnaire.

Results

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

Trends

Due to changes in the questionnaire, trends across time for some previously used categories cannot be established. Consequently, we are only reporting on the total number of participants who identified as having slept rough the previous night.

As seen in Figure 1 below, the current Count identified a decline in the number of people sleeping unsheltered ('rough') from 73 to 51. This is a return to levels of sleeping rough seen in May 2010 and across 2009 (the vertical line in Figure 1 is to clearly delineate the change in questionnaires).

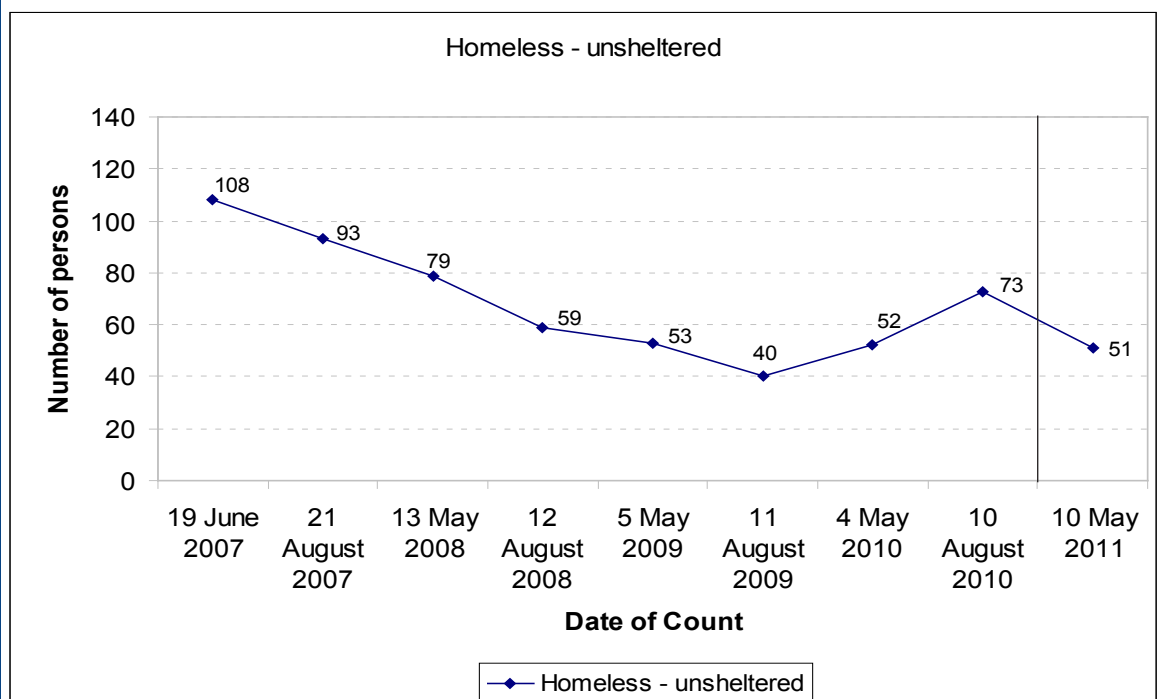


Figure 1: Total number of participants and those sleeping unsheltered

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 11.8% of all those who slept rough.

Four of this group of people were Aboriginal: two men and two women. These participants, as a group, were spread across the age range, though Aboriginal participants were typically older. All reported spending most of their time over the last 12 months in the Adelaide metropolitan region.

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

	Male	Female	Age range				
			18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64
Aboriginal	2	2			1	2	1
Non-Aboriginal	1	1	1	1			

Two Aboriginal respondents (despite having a home somewhere else) reported having been sleeping out for over a year. They reported problems at home, either overcrowding or feeling paranoid when sleeping at home and preferring not to be there. They reported that they slept out 'almost all of the time'.

The remaining two Aboriginal participants reported that they slept out 'hardly ever', had been sleeping out for '1 week or less'; had stable housing but chose to sleep rough on the night of the count to socialise with family and friends.

Both of the non-Aboriginal participants who slept rough while having alternative housing reported having slept out 'most of the time' over the last year though their latest 'period' or 'episode' was short (1 week or less or 2 to 4 weeks). Both also reported it was two to four weeks since they last had 'stable' housing. On the night prior to the Count the male respondent had slept rough to socialise and the female had not wanted to sleep at home due to safety concerns.

As in previous counts, all respondents were asked if they were willing to have an individual identifier recorded on the survey (initials, month and year of birth). Of the five who provided this information, two had been involved in a previous count, where they had been sleeping rough. One participant had been involved in two previous counts – one where they had slept rough and another where they reported sleeping in "other" accommodation¹.

¹ This category included the following options: hotel/motel, boarding house, homelessness shelters, backpackers, caravan park, City Watchhouse, prison, Remand Centre, detox/sobering up unit and hospital.

Sleeping rough without having a house elsewhere²

45 people were found to have slept rough, without having a home anywhere else. Table 2 summarises the reasons participants gave as to why they had slept out.

Table 2: Reasons why people slept rough

	n	%
General response - no other options	20	44.4%
Financial problems	4	8.9
Lack of support or dispute with service provider	4	8.9
Personal preference	2	4.4
Other	1	2.2
Gave an answer about 'where' they slept	11	24.4
Not stated	3	6.7
Total	45	100.0

The most common response was "No other place to go", "No other option". Four (8.9%) participants indicated a lack of finances. Another four (8.9%) participants suggested some form of dispute or lack of support from support services: "Argument with mental health", "No one will assist with housing...have contacted Housing SA – no outcomes."

Two (4.4%) participants said they slept out as a personal preference. The remaining participant (2.2%) said he/she had been "kicked out" from an undisclosed residence.

Fifteen (33.3%) respondents said they had tried to find other accommodation on the previous night (Table 3). Nine (20.0%) had sought assistance from support services, identified as Street to Home, Common Ground, Unity Housing, shelters and Crisis Care. Two (4.4%) participants attempted to use their personal connections (eg "Person not home").

² Please note that throughout the remainder of the report all percentages are calculated based on the 45 participants who slept out and did not report having a house or home elsewhere.

Table 3: Feedback on unsuccessful attempts to seek alternative shelter

	n	%
Sought service support	9	20.0
Used personal connections	2	4.4
General statement of 'nothing available'	2	4.4
Other	2	4.4
N/A	30	66.7
Total	45	100.0

Twenty seven (60.0%) people had not tried to find other accommodation; and of these, 23 (51.1%) participants gave additional information as to the reasons why not (Table 4). Six (13.3%) reported having given up trying to find alternative accommodation. A further five (11.1%) indicated that sleeping rough was the preferable option: "Don't want to sleep in a homeless shelter", "Don't like living in [a] motel", "Prefer sleeping in the park", "Lifestyle choice".

Two participants gave responses suggestive of being denied service from an agency: "...Vinnies won't have me...", "Overcrowded". One participant had mental health issues associated with sleeping rough, noted by the collector as: "Delusional belief he needs to stay where he is to protect the public". The final participant's response was unclear.

Table 4: Why people did not seek alternative shelter

	n	%
Given up	6	13.3
Most preferable option	5	11.1
No alternatives	4	8.9
Lack of finances	3	6.7
Potentially denied services	2	4.4
Intoxicated	1	2.2
Other	2	4.4
Not stated	4	8.9
N/A	18	4.0.
Total	45	100.0

As shown in Table 5, 60.0% had been sleeping rough for a year or more and 82.2% reported sleeping rough for more than three months. In regards to the proportion of time spent sleeping rough over the last year, 77.8% 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	1	2.2
2 to 4 weeks	1	2.2
5 to 11 weeks	4	8.9
3 to 6 months	6	13.3
7 to 12 months	4	8.9
1 to 2 years	10	22.2
More than 2 years	17	37.8
Not stated	2	4.4
Total	45	100.00

Table 6: Sleeping out patterns over the last year

	n	%
Almost all the time	27	60.0
Most of the time	8	17.8
About half of the time	1	2.2
Some of the time	5	11.1
Hardly ever	2	4.4
Not stated	2	4.4
Total	45	100.0

Participants were also asked to identify how long it has been since they last had stable housing. As shown in Table 7, 32 (71.1%) reported not having stable housing for over a year and 37 (82.2%) reported 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	0	0.0
5 to 11 weeks	4	8.9
3 to 6 months	4	8.9
7 to 12 months	1	2.2
1 to 2 years	9	20.0
More than 2 years	23	51.1
Not stated	4	8.9
Total	45	100.00

Thirty eight participants (84.4%) had been primarily based in the Adelaide metropolitan region over the last 12 months. Five (11.1%) had spent most of their time interstate, including one Aboriginal person.

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

	n	%
Adelaide metro	38	84.4
Country South Australia	0	0.0
Interstate	5	11.1
Overseas	0	0.0
Not stated	2	4.4
Total	45	100.00

No participants reported having children currently in their care.

Demographic information is summarised in Table 9.

There were seven women sleeping rough without a home elsewhere (15.6%). Forty respondents (88.9%) were between 25 and 64 years of age. Aboriginal people constituted 13.3% of the respondents (n=6).

Table 9: Demographics of those sleeping out without other housing

	Males		Females		Gender not specified		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Cultural background								
Aboriginal	4	11.8	2	28.6	0	0.0	6	13.3
Non-Indigenous	30	88.2	5	71.4	1	25.0	36	80.0
Not stated	0	0.0	0		3	75.0	3	6.7
Age group								
Under 18	0	0.0	0		0	0.0	0	0.0
18-24	0	0.0	1	14.3	0	0.0	1	2.2
25-34	6	17.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	6	13.3
35-44	10	29.4	5	71.4	2	50.0	17	37.8
45-54	10	29.4	1	14.3	0	0.0	11	24.4
55-64	6	17.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	6	13.3
65 and over	2	5.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	4.4
Not stated	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	50.0	2	4.4
Total	34	100.00	7	100.0	4	100.0	45	100.0

Forty participants (88.8%) provided identifier information. Table 10 shows how many times these participants had been in previous Counts.

Only six (13.3%) of those who had slept rough and did not have a house elsewhere could be traced to previous Counts. Three (6.7%) of these had been involved in two previous Counts; two had slept rough during both previous counts and one had slept rough during one Count and reported 'other accommodation' for the remaining Count.

Of the three who had been involved in only one other Count, two had slept rough in the previous count and one had slept in 'other accommodation'.

Table 10: Repeat presentations in previous Counts

	Total counts	
	n	%
Participants sleeping rough and no home elsewhere	45	100.0
Participants with identifier	40	88.9
In May 2011 and no previous counts	34	75.6
In May 2011 and one previous count	3	6.7
In May 2011 and two previous counts	3	6.7

Appendix A: May 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	• Caravan park
• Friend's or family's place	• City Watchhouse
• Hotel/motel	• Prison
• Boarding house	• Remand centre
• St Vincent de Paul shelter	• Detox/sobering up unit
• Catherine House	• Hospital
• Backpackers	

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 stay there last night?

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

Yes – where and what happened

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?

- 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?

<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
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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 August. 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.

<input type="checkbox"/>	No - Survey completed
<input type="checkbox"/>	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.

Appendix B: August 2010 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)

2. **Declined to participate in the survey**
No more Questions (By observation fill out Questions 10, 11, 12 and 17)

3. **Incapacitated to participate in the survey**
No more Questions (By observation fill out Questions 10, 11, 12 and 17)

4. Where did you sleep last night?
(eg park, car, own home, boarding house or homeless shelter)

5. Where was this located? (Please tick one box only)

Adelaide city or parklands Adelaide suburbs Other, please state

6. How long have you been staying there/ sleeping out?

(If answer is **more than 12 months** go to Q.10)

7. Where else have you been staying in the last 12 months? (Tick as many as apply)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Primary homeless (eg streets/ park/ squat/ car) | <input type="checkbox"/> Hotel / motel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boarding house | <input type="checkbox"/> City watchhouse |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Own house or flat | <input type="checkbox"/> Prison |
| <input type="checkbox"/> At a friend's or relative's house (temporary) | <input type="checkbox"/> Remand Centre |
| <input type="checkbox"/> St Vincent de Paul shelter | <input type="checkbox"/> Hospital |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Catherine House | <input type="checkbox"/> Detox / sobering up unit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Backpackers | <input type="checkbox"/> Caravan park |
| Other please state _____ | |

8. Where did you spend most time in the last 12 months?
(please indicate one of the above from Q.7, please do not provide a location)

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

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

10. What is your age? years

11. What is your country of birth?

Australia Other

12. Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?
 No Yes, Aboriginal Yes, Torres Strait Islander
13. Are you here by yourself or with your partner or other family member?
 Presenting Family Unit
 Single Person
 Single with Child/ren
 Couple
 Couple with Child/ren
 Other _____
14. Do you have children currently living with you?
 Yes
 No
 Noted on partner's form
15. How old are they?

16. Have you or will you use another inner city service today?
 No
 Yes Name(s): _____
17. Is this person male or female? (By observation)
 Male Female

We will be doing this survey again 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. Thank the participant for their time.
 Yes Fill out boxes below

First name initial	Last name initial

What is your month & year of birth?

MONTH	YEAR
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

SURVEY COMPLETED. THANK THE PARTICIPANT FOR THEIR TIME.