



# Simon Communities of Ireland: Census 2027 Public Consultation

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## Introduction

The Simon Communities of Ireland are proposing the inclusion of a question in Census 2027 seeking to capture the extent of hidden homelessness in Ireland. The submission will outline wording of potential questions that could be used to capture this data. Following this, an overview of hidden homelessness and the data currently available on the issue will be provided, along with benefits to understanding and the utilization of this data on a national level.

## Suggested Wording:

- Is a person/s in the household temporarily staying here because they not have a regular address of your own with a tenancy?
- In the last 3 months, how many times did that person/s move house/place of stay in Ireland
  - o N/A
  - o 1
  - o 2
  - o 3
  - o 4+
- In the last month, has any person in the household experienced any of the following situations
  - o without a shelter of any kind, sleeping rough
  - o Stayed in emergency homeless accommodation
  - o Stayed in a refuge from domestic abuse
  - o Stayed in temporary accommodation for migrants
  - o Stayed in an institutional setting for longer than needed due to a lack of housing/ accommodation (e.g. Penal institutions, Medical institutions, Children's institutions/homes)
  - o Stayed temporarily with friends or family due to a lack of housing
  - o Occupied a vacant dwelling/land (squatting)
  - o Living with an eviction notice
  - o Lived temporarily in an extremely overcrowded home (3 or more people per room)

**Potential Location of Question:** after Q8 ('Where did you usually live one year ago?') and before Q9 ('have you ever lived outside the Republic of Ireland?')

**The requirement for cross-tabular analysis:** Socio-economic, household, and person specific comparisons would be hugely beneficial in understanding groups who are most likely to experience hidden homelessness. On a national level, this could support the development of national, targeted supports that would prevent insecure housing/living situations for different cohorts of people.

### Purpose of the User Need

The purpose of this question is to examine the prevalence and to better understand the types of 'hidden' homelessness in Ireland. This data is currently not captured.

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage publishes monthly data on the number of people staying in emergency homeless accommodation<sup>1</sup>. The data looks at the number of people staying in section 10 funded accommodation in the last week of the month prior. This data is a good indicator of homeless trends. However, this is not the entirety of homelessness. Many people experience different forms of homelessness that are not counted in these statistics:

- People sleeping rough,
- people temporarily staying with family and friends (couch surfing),
- those living in cars,
- women and children in domestic abuse refuges,
- those who have received citizenship but remain in direct provision centres due to a lack of accommodation options/support

These are all examples of people experiencing a form of homelessness that is not captured in official statistics and is therefore 'hidden'.

The European Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS)<sup>2</sup> is an internationally accepted means of improving understanding and measurement of homelessness in Europe, and to provide a common 'language' for transnational exchanges on homelessness. ETHOS categories attempt to cover all living situations that amount to forms of homelessness across Europe. These fall under four broad categories:

- rooflessness (without a shelter of any kind, sleeping rough)
- houselessness (with a place to sleep but temporary in institutions or shelter)
- living in insecure housing (threatened with severe exclusion due to insecure tenancies, eviction, domestic violence)
- living in inadequate housing (in caravans on illegal campsites, in unfit housing, in extreme overcrowding).

In order to understand the true extent of hidden homelessness in Ireland, national Homeless data records need to align with the ETHOS definition of homelessness. This methodology is already seen in other EU countries such as Denmark, Finland, and the UK where people staying with friends or

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<sup>1</sup> Available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/80ea8-homelessness-data/>

<sup>2</sup> More information available here: <https://www.feantsa.org/en/toolkit/2005/04/01/ethos-typology-on-homelessness-and-housing-exclusion>

family because they have nowhere else to go, or young people ‘sofa surfing’ are regarded as homeless.<sup>3</sup>

### Existing data on Hidden Homelessness

Very little data is available on this broad understanding of homelessness in Ireland. Given the unknown and transitional nature of hidden homelessness, it is difficult to capture on a widespread basis. However, it is thought to affect a large proportion of the population.

In 2022<sup>4</sup>, the Simon Communities of Ireland conducted a poll with Red C Research looking better understand the prevalence and experience of hidden homelessness in Ireland. The poll estimated that up to 290,000 people could be experiencing hidden homelessness in Ireland:

- 1 in 4 people reported either themselves, family, friends, or acquaintances affected by hidden homelessness
- 1 in 100 report both themselves and their family personally experiencing this
- 18-34-year-olds are significantly more likely to reporting experiencing hidden homelessness themselves, which contrasts with 55+ year-olds who are not experiencing this. (12% of 18-34 year olds compared to 0 of those aged 55+)
- Of those knowing of someone experiencing hidden homelessness, they mostly tend to describe the situation as being unintended and without a clear leaving date
- Some evidence that situation is more long term for lower Social Grades. Lower social grades are less likely to describe their own or someone else’s situation as temporary, which paints a picture of great uncertainty for this group and a lack of a clear leaving date from these locations.

In 2021, the Simon Community in Northern Ireland<sup>5</sup> commissioned and published a report on Hidden Homelessness. The research estimates that up to 110,000 people experience hidden homelessness in the North of Ireland.

### Benefits of Counting and Understanding Hidden Homelessness

The Simon Communities of Ireland have been working with people across Ireland experiencing – or at risk of – homelessness for over 50 years. This work happens through street outreach, emergency accommodation, homelessness prevention, tenancy sustainment, resettlement, as well as youth specific service provisions. What is clear from our work – and is now emerging through research – is that homelessness does not have a linear trajectory. Many people who stay in emergency homeless accommodation end up there after a long, complicated journey with housing, health, mental health, and countless other factors. Prior to entering emergency homeless accommodation, many report experiences that can be categorised as ‘hidden homelessness’ such as couch surfing, living in cars, sleeping rough, etc.

Prolonged periods of hidden homelessness can be damaging for people and can compound issues such as addiction, health, financial stability, safety, and so on.

A six-year Irish study showed that young people trying to exit homelessness ‘demonstrated enormous determination in their attempts to sustain housing and took specific steps to avert a

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<sup>3</sup> Counting All Homelessness in Europe: The Case for Ending Separate Enumeration of ‘Hidden Homelessness’, Available at: [https://www.feantsaresearch.org/public/user/Observatory/2020/EJH/EJH\\_14-3\\_A2\\_v02.pdf](https://www.feantsaresearch.org/public/user/Observatory/2020/EJH/EJH_14-3_A2_v02.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Hidden Homelessness poll results available here: [https://www.simon.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Simon-Communities-of-Ireland\\_Hidden-Homeless-Poll.pdf](https://www.simon.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Simon-Communities-of-Ireland_Hidden-Homeless-Poll.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Hidden Homelessness in Northern Ireland, Available at: <https://simoncommunity.org/homelessness/knowledge-hub/hidden-homelessness>

return to homelessness. It is significant that their strategies and actions included efforts to avoid homeless hostels, settings which most perceived as undesirable and stigmatising'.<sup>6</sup>

Research shows that women avoid emergency shelters and are more likely to rely on informal arrangements such as temporarily staying with friends and family or couch surfing which can make their homelessness less likely to be visible.<sup>7</sup> A lack of suitable accommodation designed specifically for women experiencing homelessness means can be discouraging and even frightening for women in need of help.

As set out above we have some understanding of these journeys into and through hidden homelessness. Increasing the understanding of the nature and scale of these experiences creates the potential to enhance preventative strategies' and stop homelessness before it starts.

### About Simon Communities

The Simon Communities support over 22,000 men, women, and children. We have 50 years of experience providing homeless, housing and treatment services to people facing the trauma and stress of homelessness. We are a network of independent Communities based in Cork, Dublin, Dundalk, Galway, the Midlands, the Mid West, the Northwest and the Southeast, responding to local needs and supported by a National Office in the areas of policy, research, communications and best practice. We share common values and ethos in tackling homelessness and, informed by our grassroots services, we campaign for more effective policies and legislation regionally, nationally and at European level.

Whatever the issue, Simon's door is always open for as long as we are needed. For more information, please visit [www.simon.ie](http://www.simon.ie)

### Services include:

- Early Intervention, Homelessness prevention, tenancy sustainment and resettlement.
- Street outreach, emergency accommodation and harm reduction
- Housing with support and Housing First services
- Homeless specific health and wellbeing services (counselling; addiction treatment and recovery; and mental health supports)
- Personal development, education, training, and employment services
- Food banks, drop-in centres and soup runs.

### Supported by:



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.homelessdublin.ie/content/files/Young-Peoples-Homeless-and-Housing-Pathways.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.feantsa.org/en/report/2021/04/01/womens-homelessness-european-evidence-review?bcParent=27>

## Ethos definition of homelessness:

	OPERATIONAL CATEGORY	LIVING SITUATION	GENERIC DEFINITION
Conceptual Category	ROOFLESS	1 People Living Rough	1.1 Public space or external space Living in the streets or public spaces, without a shelter that can be defined as living quarters
		2 People in emergency accommodation	2.1 Night shelter People with no usual place of residence who make use of overnight shelter, low threshold shelter
	HOUSELESS	3 People in accommodation for the homeless	3.1 Homeless hostel 3.2 Temporary accommodation 3.3 Transitional supported accommodation Where the period of stay is intended to be short term
		4 People in Women's Shelter	4.1 Women's shelter accommodation Women accommodated to experience of domestic violence and where the period of stay is intended to be short term
		5 People in accommodation for immigrants	5.1 Temporary accommodation/reception centres 5.2 Migrant workers accommodation Immigrants in reception or short term accommodation due to their immigrant status
	INSECURE	6 People due to be released from institutions	6.1 Penal institutions 6.2 Medical institutions (*) 6.3 Children's institutions/homes No housing available prior to release Stay longer than needed due to lack of housing No housing identified (e.g. by 18th birthday)
		7 People receiving longer-term support (due to homelessness)	7.1 Residential care for older homeless people 7.2 Supported accommodation for formerly homeless people Long stay accommodation with care for formerly homeless people (normally more than one year)
		8 People living in insecure accommodation	8.1 Temporarily with family/friends Living in conventional housing but not the usual place of residence due to lack of housing
			8.2 No legal (sub)tenancy Occupation of dwelling with no legal tenancy illegal occupation of a dwelling
			8.3 Illegal occupation of land Occupation of land with no legal rights
		9 People living under threat of eviction	9.1 Legal orders enforced (rented) 9.2 Re-possession orders (owned) Where orders for eviction are operative Where mortgagee has legal order to re-possess
		10 People living under threat of violence	10.1 Police recorded incidents Where police action is taken to ensure place of safety for victims of domestic violence
	INADEQUATE	11 People living in temporary/non-conventional structures	11.1 Mobile homes 11.2 Non-conventional building 11.3 Temporary structure Not intended as place of usual residence Makeshift shelter, shack or shanty Semi-permanent structure hut or cabin
12 People living in unfit housing		12.1 Occupied dwellings unfit for habitation Defined as unfit for habitation by national legislation or building regulations	
13 People living in extreme over-crowding		13.1 Highest national norm of overcrowding Defined as exceeding national density standard for floor-space or useable rooms	

Note: Short stay is defined as normally less than one year. Long stay is defined as more than one year.