

Homelessness in Sweden 2017

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Introduction

The national mapping of homelessness in Sweden 2017 has been carried out by the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare commissioned by the Government. This is the fifth report on homelessness nationwide. The mapping is based on information obtained from municipalities, correctional authorities, healthcare providers, churches, NGO's, etc. The subjects of the report are individuals who were in one of four situations associated with homelessness during the week of 3–9 April 2017. We have compared some of the findings with the mapping conducted in 2011.

Homelessness defined, 2017

The Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare employs a broad definition of homelessness, ranging across four situations that people may find themselves in for various lengths of time.

Situation 1 - Acute homelessness

Situation 2 - Institution or assisted living

Situation 3 - Long-term living arrangements organised by the Social Services

Situation 4 - Private short-term living arrangement

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The report includes:

1. individuals age 18 or older who are in one of the four situations above and are Swedish citizens or have temporary or permanent residence permits
2. individuals younger than 18 who are living without their parents or family of origin but otherwise meet the above requirements

The report does not include:

1. individuals younger than 18, including unaccompanied refugees, who have been placed outside the home according to the Social Services Act (SoL) or the Care of Young Persons (Special Provisions) Act (LVU) ¹
2. individuals in assisted living facilities according to SoL or the Act concerning Service for Persons with Certain Functional Impairments (LSS) ²
3. individuals born abroad who have neither a temporary nor permanent residence permit in Sweden
4. individuals from other parts of Europe who are living in Sweden without personal or professional ties (EU/EEA third countries)

¹ Care of Young Persons (Special Provisions) Act (LVU) (Swedish Code of Statutes 1990:52)

² Act concerning Service for Persons with Certain Functional Impairments (LSS) (Swedish Code of Statutes 1993:387).

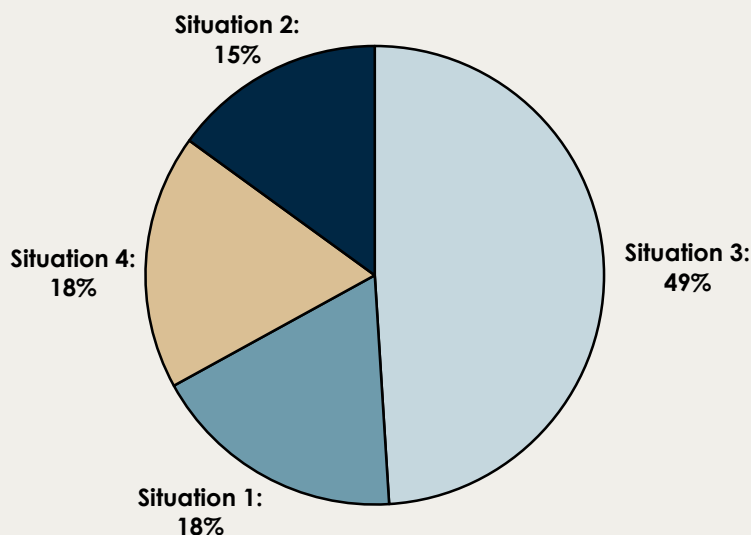
Findings – homelessness 2017

The findings are based on data about more than 33,250 individuals in one of the four situations associated with homelessness on 3–9 April 2017. It is important to keep in mind that the results reflect a snapshot of that particular spring week. We do not claim to present a full overview of the complexity, nature or scope of the issue based on such limited data. The findings may serve as a basis for describing tendencies, trends and the distribution among the four groups.

Individuals in the four situations

Almost half (15,900) of the individuals had some type of long-term housing arrangement (situation 3) during the week in question. The next largest group (5,900) were acutely homeless (situation 1). Approximately 650 of them were sleeping outdoors or in a public space. More than 5,700 individuals had private short-term living arrangements in other person's homes (situation 4). The smallest group (4,900) were staying at various kinds of institutions or assisted living facilities and had no place to live after their scheduled discharge or move (situation 2).

Figure 1. Individuals in one of the four situations, 3-9 April 2017



Source: National Board of Health and Welfare Homelessness Mapping, 3-9 April 2017

Each situation includes various types of living arrangements. Table 1 shows where each individual was staying or living during the week.

Table 1. Type of living arrangement for each individual reported during the week of 3–9 April 2017. Number, percentage

Type of living arrangement 2017	Number	Percentage
Acute homelessness:		
Outdoors or public space	647	2
Tent, vehicle, trailer, cabin	343	1
Shelter, emergency housing	1,229	4
Hotel, hostel	1,903	6
Temporary housing/emergency shelter	1,325	4
Protected housing or women's shelter	464	1
Total, situation 1 (including 24 individuals with unspecified arrangements, situation 1)	5,935	18
Institution or assisted living – scheduled discharge within three months and no place to go		
National Board of Institutional Care placement, care and residence centre, foster family	1,397	4
Correctional facility, custody, probation	705	2
Assisted living, boarding house	2,452	8
24-hour care at a treatment centre, as well as pursuant to the Act on Compulsory Mental Care (LRV) or the Act on Compulsory Forensic Psychiatric Care (LPT)	345	1
Total, situation 2	4,899	15
Long-term living arrangements:		
Reference-based, training apartment	2,615	8
Trial apartment, transitional apartment	2,051	6
Social contract, municipal contract	9,891	31
Housing First	245	1
Temporary accommodation	1,036	3
Total, situation 3	15,838	49
Private short-term living arrangement:		
Involuntary living arrangement with a family member without lease	2,383	7
Involuntary living arrangement with a friend or acquaintance without lease	1,981	6
Temporary sublease less than three months in other persons homes	802	2
Temporary lodger less than three months in other persons homes (situation 4)	560	2
Total, situation 4	5,726	18
TOTAL	32,398	100

Internal dropout, 871 individuals, total: 33,269 Source: Swedish Board of Health and Welfare Homelessness Mapping, 3–9 April, 2017

More people were acutely homeless

The total number of individuals, as well as parents of children under 18, who were acutely homeless increased between the mappings of 2011 and 2017. The number of women, most of whom had children and were born abroad, increased the most. One-third of acutely homeless women reported domestic violence as a contributing factor to their situation.

Men had been in acute homelessness for a longer average period than women. Men were also much more likely to require assistance, treatment or other interventions for substance abuse or addiction. The number of individuals sleeping rough has increased among the men, between 2011 and 2017. One-fifth of the men were living outdoors, in a public space, vehicles, tents, trailers etc. during the week of the mapping.

A large increase of individuals in long-term housing solutions

Almost half of the individuals had long-term housing solutions, mostly apartments with social or municipal contracts, where the municipality has a contract for the housing and sublets it. The number of individuals with long-term living arrangements increased by more than 1,900 from 2011 to 2017.

Statistics presented by The National Board of Housing Building and Planning show that these types of housing solutions have increased and that social services have become an increasingly large landlord for persons who are not accepted in the regular housing market. There is also a general lack of housing in most of the municipalities in Sweden.

Most parents, the majority of whom are single women, living with children under 18 were in this situation. The main income of one-fifth of the women was a salary or student aid. One-quarter of the women were not deemed to require any intervention other than a place to live. Although the need for intervention and treatment for substance abuse and addiction was relatively great among men, one-quarter of them were not regarded to require assistance other than a place to live.

Fewer people had private short-term living arrangements

Somewhat fewer people had private short-term living arrangements than in 2011. Most of them were living involuntarily without a lease with a family member. Even though this group on the average is younger than the rest, the majority of them had been in a situation of homelessness for longer than a year. Almost three-quarters of them had received social assistance during the past year, and one-fifth had received assistance and care for psychological problems. Substance abuse or addiction was common among the men and regarded as a contributing factor to their homelessness.

Few people in institutions or assisted living

The smallest group in the mapping were those without a place to live following scheduled discharge from an institution (treatment centre, correctional facility, psychiatric unit, etc.) or assisted living. The majority of them were men, generally born in Sweden and relatively few had children. A large percentage needed assistance and care for psychological problems, as well as for substance abuse or addiction.

Gender considerations

The majority of all individuals were men: 62%, as opposed to 38% women. Approximately 900 more women were reported than in 2011. Men averaged 41 years of age and women 39. The average age of all individuals was three years lower than in 2011.

A total of 7% of men and 4% of women were 65 or older. Approximately 1,800 individuals age 65 or older were reported. That number exceeded the 2011 mapping by approximately 300.

More people were born in a country other than Sweden

A total of 43% of the individuals were born outside Sweden. A larger proportion of women (48%) than men (40%) were born abroad.

Approximately 2,000 more individuals were born outside Sweden than in 2011. More than half of those born abroad had been in Sweden for at least five years: 57% of men and 48% of women. Almost one-quarter of people born in another country had been in Sweden for 24 months or less.

Parents and children

Approximately one-third of all individuals were reported to have children younger than 18. While these parents could be found in all four situations, the largest number were in situation 3 with some type of long-term living arrangement. More than one-fifth of the parents were acutely homeless. All in all more than 24,000 children had a parent in one of the four situations. By a conservative estimate, 10,500–15,000 children were living part-time or full-time with a parent in one of the four situations during the week of the mapping.

Income and maintenance

The single largest source of income was social assistance. More than half of the individuals were receiving most of their income that way. Almost one-tenth of them were earning a salary at a permanent or temporary job. The sources of income were largely the same as in 2011.

Most individuals had been in one of the four situations for longer than a year

The length of time that individuals have been in one of the situations affects their ability to enter the regular housing market and otherwise be integrated with society. The longer they are outside the regular housing market without the possibility to support themselves, the greater the risk that they will remain in one of the four situations. More than two-thirds of the individuals had been in one of the four situations for a year or longer. More than 3,000 had been in one of the four situations for at least ten years. One-third of them

were men with a reported need for assistance, interventions and treatment for substance abuse.

Reasons for homelessness

Homelessness is a complex issue where many factors come into play. People in one of the four situations constitute a heterogeneous group. Among them are individuals with complex social problems and the need for major care and assistance beyond housing per se and those with no problems other than those associated with not having a place to live.

Participation in the labour market is of vital importance. The mapping shows that very few were employed and had income from a salary. Many were dependent on social assistance. Individuals who have little or no income or who have some type of social problem, experience difficulty obtaining access to the regular housing market because many landlords do not accept social assistance as income.

Almost half of those involved in the mapping had been in one of the four situations even before the current period of homelessness. One-fifth of the individuals had lived in a home or apartment of their own, or had subleased, prior to their situation at the time of the mapping. Almost one-fifth reported eviction as a contributing factor to their current situation. More than one-fifth were reported to not require assistance, treatment or interventions other than a place to live.