



# The Future of Homelessness

**Clemency Littler (University of Gloucestershire), Francesca Cremona (University of Malta)  
Paula Martinez (UNED), Nicole Casha (University of Malta) and Ebrar Çevik (Gazi University)**

## What are the data blind spots?

First of all, there is no international definition of homelessness which not only makes it difficult to measure and collect data about homelessness but also makes it extremely hard to compare data from different sources. The scope and nature of the problem should be thoroughly understood in order to solve it successfully.

Secondly, there is a problem with the data we do have as it is insufficient. The main problems around this are: number of discrepancies between governments and other agencies and NGOs, data limited to only certain areas such as bigger cities and/or the capital of a country, data only reflecting people who qualify for government aid, outdated data recollections, overall lack of data and data collection strategies. It also seems that men are more likely to experience homelessness than women however it may also be the case that some women are part of the "hidden homeless" and more data is needed to understand why men are overrepresented in the homeless population.

Regarding methodology, the most used data collection methods (indirect estimation, single contact census, and capture-recapture studies) can be unreliable which causes blind spots. Human emotions that homeless people might face including feeling ashamed can cause some homeless people to be reluctant to participate in interviews/surveys.

## Why should we fill the data blind spots?

Filling data blind spots ensures greater accuracy of findings hence more accurate results. This leads to greater likeliness of moving towards solving homelessness, which we hope will achieve the following:

- Firstly, different research in the US, the UK, Finland and Australia shows that preventing homelessness saves taxpayers' money. In the US, the average cost per year for each chronically homeless person is around \$35,578, costs on average are reduced by 49.5% when they are placed in supportive housing (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2017).
- We also want to add that solving and preventing homelessness will bring us closer to achieving some of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals such as reducing poverty, bettering health and wellbeing, gender equality, decent work and economic growth, reduced inequalities and sustainable cities and communities.

## How should we fill the data blind spots?

**One global definition of homelessness:** all countries should focus on one definition, in order to be realistic and practical about it we suggest countries focus on "primary homelessness" which has already been successfully defined and agreed on by several governments and international agencies.

**Bettering the methods of data collection that are being used:** we encourage all countries to adopt one method, we suggest ETHOS which has been already tried and tested in the European Union to at least have a more homogeneous source of data worldwide. However, only one method is not enough to properly research the issue, other regularly used methods (indirect estimation or capture-recapture) are encouraged but should be improved by focusing on prioritizing the homeless as human beings, having better trained interviewers, offering food and/or drinks to encourage participation and making an emphasis in following data ethics to guarantee total confidentiality.

**Funding more research:** more surveys and studies need to take place, with a special focus in the Global South.