

Worst forms of homelessness less common in Scotland than England

September 29 2021, by Annie Pugh



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

Rates of the worst forms of homelessness are significantly lower in Scotland than in England, new research from the Institute for Social Policy, Housing and Equalities Research (I-SPHERE) at Heriot-Watt

University has found.

The [2021 Homelessness Monitor Scotland](#)—commissioned by homelessness charity Crisis and led by Heriot-Watt University—provides the most in-depth study of homelessness in Great Britain.

The research found that the rate of 'core homelessness,' which includes people rough sleeping, using unsuitable temporary accommodation such as B&Bs, sofa surfing or sleeping in garages or industrial premises, was almost twice as high in England than in Scotland.

Overall, it found that 0.94% of households in England were experiencing a form of core homelessness, compared with 0.66% in Wales and 0.57% in Scotland, with the report identifying Scottish homelessness and housing policy as one cause of lower rates.

Researchers found that since 2012, England has had consistently higher rates of 'core' homelessness than both Scotland and Wales, with rates growing faster in England over that time.

These findings are a result of homelessness being a long-term priority for the Scottish Government. Recent progress was made when the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG), was formed. The Group's recommendations led to the Scottish Government and COSLA publishing the Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan—the first plan to end homelessness in the UK.

But, while 57% less households in 2020/21 presented as [homeless](#) due to an eviction compared to the previous year, [local authorities](#) have warned that temporary restrictions on evictions may have only delayed people being forced out of their homes, particularly in the rented sector. Every local authority in the survey said they expect to see an increase.

Dr. Beth Watts, a senior research fellow at I-SPHERE Heriot-Watt University, is the report's lead author. She said: "This year's Homelessness Monitor provides encouraging evidence that the radical and rapid response to tackling homelessness during the pandemic has prevented many people from experiencing it in the first place.

"But it is worrying to see how many councils fear a rise in homelessness as some of these measures are lifted. As we look ahead, we must take this opportunity to build on the positive work that is already happening in Scotland. The focus on rapid rehousing to move people quickly out of temporary accommodation and the intentions to strengthen the prevention legislation will build on the ambitions to end homelessness for good."

Housing secretary Shona Robison said: "During the last 12 months there has been remarkable progress towards our goal of ending homelessness. We have demonstrated that, with the right approach and funding, local authorities and their third sector partners have the means to end rough sleeping in Scotland.

"That said, we know there is still much more to do, and we are building on our progress by following the policies outlined in our Ending Homelessness Together action plan. These include placing greater emphasis on preventing homelessness, making greater use of rapid rehousing, and ending the use of night shelters and dormitory style provision.

"We are also doing all we can to support tenants who are struggling as a result of the pandemic, with total housing support at almost £39 million. This includes a new £10 million fund allowing councils to provide grants to those at risk of homelessness so they can reduce or pay off rent arrears."

The Homelessness Monitor Scotland report comes after First Minister Nicola Sturgeon announced new plans to strengthen homelessness prevention legislation and to consult on introducing new prevention duties in the Programme for Government.

Jon Sparkes, chief executive of Crisis, said: "This research shows that with the right political will and by working together we can make huge strides in tackling homelessness. The emergency response to the pandemic from national and local government, as well as homelessness services, saw thousands of people moved off the streets and given safe, self-contained accommodation. There is no doubt that action saved lives.

"But with the economic impact of the pandemic yet to take effect it is critical that we act now to protect against a rise in homelessness.

"Crisis was delighted to see the First Minister announce plans to strengthen the law around prevention in Scotland, as well as to consult on plans for new prevention duties.

"These proposals, if implemented, could stop thousands more from experiencing the trauma and indignity of losing their home, while making Scotland a world-leader in its journey to ending homelessness altogether."

Provided by Heriot-Watt University

Citation: Worst forms of homelessness less common in Scotland than England (2021, September 29) retrieved 9 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2021-09-worst-homelessness-common-scotland-england.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--