Homelessness in Wales

What are these statistics?

Statutory homelessness statistics provide summary information on local housing authorities' activities under the homelessness legislation, introduced in the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, and collected through quarterly statistical returns. The statistics cover the prevention and relief of homelessness as well as information on the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation.

Summary information is published on a quarterly basis, detailed analyses are available in an annual Statistical First Release, and all data are published on StatsWales.

The information published refers to statutory homelessness only and does not include any information on ‘rough sleepers’. A national count of those sleeping rough is carried out annually and the results are available in a statistical release and on StatsWales.

Policy and operational context

The main aim of the new legislation is to reduce levels of homelessness by placing prevention at the centre of local authority duties to help everyone at risk rather than just those in priority need groups. The changes to statutory homelessness legislation arising from the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 were introduced on 27 April 2015 and replaced the previous statutory duties under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996.

Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act puts in place seven well-being goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators (“national indicators”) that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the Well-being goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before the National Assembly. The 46 national indicators were laid in March 2016.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the well-being goals and associated technical information is available in the Well-being of Wales report.
Further information on the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The statistics included in this release includes one of the national indicators namely indicator 34 ‘Number of households successfully prevented from becoming homeless, per 10,000 households’.

Users and uses
The data in this Statistical Release form the basis of evidence on statutory homelessness in Wales and are used by the Welsh Government, homelessness agencies and other housing organisations to monitor trends in the overall level of statutory homelessness across Wales. The information is used to monitor the effectiveness of current policy, particularly progress against the Ten Year Homelessness Plan for Wales, the Well Being of Future Generations National Indicators and for future policy development.

The data are also used for answering Assembly Questions, ministerial correspondence, Freedom of Information Act cases and queries from the public. Local housing authorities are both providers and users of the statistics and use the data extensively in order to plan services, allocate resources, monitor performance and benchmark against other authorities. There are a variety of users of these statistics including national and local government, researchers, academics and students. The voluntary sector also uses the statistics to monitor and evaluate housing policy and for campaigning and fundraising purposes.

Strengths and limitations of the data

Strengths

- The information is processed and published frequently and in an ordered manner to enable users to see the statistics when they are current and of greatest interest.
- Outputs have a clear focus on Wales and have been developed to meet the internal and external user need in Wales.
- The data is derived from existing administrative systems within local authorities.
- Detailed statistics are provided via our StatsWales website at local authority level.
Limitations

- It is not possible to directly compare statutory homelessness statistics under the old and new legislation on homelessness (see Comparability section).

- There were a number of issues which impacted on the comparability, quality and accuracy of the data collected and published under the new legislation during both 2015-16 and 2016-17. Further detail is provided within the Accuracy section.

- Because of the devolved administrations and differing policy, there is less scope for direct UK comparisons (see ‘Coherence’ later in the document).

Data processing cycle

Data collection

The figures in this Statistical Release are based on a quarterly statistical return completed by local authorities in Wales. The returns are based on management information local authorities maintain about their actions under the homelessness legislation in relation to those households who apply to the local authority for assistance with housing.

Local authorities are notified of the data collection exercise timetable in advance. This allows adequate time for local authorities to collate their information, and to raise any issues they may have.

Copies of the current statutory homelessness data collection forms are available at the statistics and research website.

Information is collected quarterly via Excel spreadsheets. These are downloaded from the Afon file transfer website which provides a secure method for users to submit data. There is guidance in the spreadsheet, which assists users on completing the form. The spreadsheets allow respondents to validate some data before sending the spreadsheet to the Welsh Government. Respondents are also given an opportunity to include contextual information where large changes have occurred. Examples of validation checks within the forms include cross checks with other relevant data tables and checks to ensure data is logically consistent.
Validation and verification

Once the homelessness data is submitted to the data collection team within the Welsh Government, it goes through further validation and verification checks, for example:

- common sense check for any missing/incorrect data without any explanation;
- arithmetic consistency checks;
- cross checks against the data for the previous year;
- cross checks with other relevant data collections;
- thorough tolerance checks;
- verification that data outside of tolerances are actually correct.

If there is a validation error, we contact the organisation and seek resolution. If we fail to get an answer within a reasonable timescale, we will use imputation to fix the error. We will then inform the organisation and explain to them how we have amended or imputed the data. The method of imputation and the affected data is highlighted in the ‘quality information’ section of the first release.

Following the introduction of new homelessness legislation and new data collection returns in April 2015, we have continued to work closely with local authority data providers and have carried out a number of measures aimed at resolving issues with their data reporting processes and improving the quality and accuracy of the data provided. This included the provision of improved and extended guidance, changes to the format and content of the data collection returns, training events and visits to individual local authorities to resolve specific issues. In addition, there was considerable correspondence/discussion between the Data Collection Team and the data providers over the 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18 data collection years to ensure that the data collected was as consistent and complete as possible.

Continued close working with both policy colleagues and local authority data providers throughout the 2016-17 data collection year ensured that the quality and accuracy issues experienced during the 2015-16 data collection year were improved. This resulted in the ending of the temporary National Statistics de-designation in July 2017 following discussion with the Office for Statistics Regulation which is the regulatory arm of the UK Statistics Authority. Further information on the designation of National Statistics.

We have continued to work closely with the local authority data providers throughout 2017-18 to ensure that the information provided and published on statutory homelessness is accurate and of good quality. This includes providing extended guidance in relation to the reporting of Section 62 assessments and visiting a number of local authority data suppliers to resolve specific issues with their data recording processes. Local authority visits also led
to an improved understanding of the quality assurances processes and checks undertaken by some data suppliers.

No changes were made to the data items collected during 2017-18 which has enabled more detailed year on year comparisons to be included within this year’s release.

**Publication**

Once the data has been finalised, the release is compiled and the key points and commentary are drafted. The release is independently checked and a final sense check is carried out by the relevant statistician prior to publication on the website.

**National Statistics status**

The [United Kingdom Statistics Authority](https://www.ons.gov.uk) has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](https://www.ons.gov.uk). National Statistics status means that statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value. All statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the UK Statistics Authority’s regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is Welsh Government’s responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

**Administrative data quality assurance**

This release has been scored against the UK Statistics Authority Administrative Data Quality Assurance matrix. The matrix is the UK Statistics Authority regulatory standard for the quality assurance of administrative data. The Standard recognises the increasing role that administrative data are playing in the production of official statistics and clarifies what producers of official statistics should do to assure themselves of the quality of these data. The toolkit that supports it provides helpful guidance to statistical producers about the practices they can adopt to assure the quality of the data they receive, and sets out the standards for assessing statistics against the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

The criteria this release has been scored against are as follows:

- **Operational context and administrative data collection**
- **Communication with data supply partners**
Quality assurance principles, standards and checks applied by data suppliers

Producer’s quality assurance investigations and documentation

We have assessed this release as ‘A2’ because, given the processes we have in place, we consider the statutory homelessness statistics to be of medium data quality concern and of medium public interest. We are confident that the scores are appropriate according to the toolkit, both in terms of the data quality concerns and public interest level.

Going forward we will continue to work closely with both policy colleagues and local authority data providers to further improve the quality, accuracy and relevance of the data provided. We have, and will continue to work to gain an improved understanding of the quality assurances processes and checks applied by data suppliers. This will be done through local authority visits, attendance at homelessness stakeholder meetings and through the provision of improved guidance where required.

**Disclosure control and confidentiality**

All data on statutory homelessness is transferred and held securely and steps are taken to ensure there is no risk of identifying individuals in the published data.

Disclosure control has been applied to the figures in this release and to accompanying data on StatsWales. All figures less than 3, and percentages based on less than 3 have been suppressed and shown as a ‘*’. All other figures are rounded independently to the nearest 3. As a result, there may be a difference between the sum of the constituent items and the total. All percentages quoted in this report were calculated using the unrounded data.

**Quality**

Welsh housing statistics adhere to the Welsh Government’s Statistical Quality Management Strategy, and this is in line with the European Statistical System’s six dimensions of quality, as listed in Principle 4 of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Details of the six dimensions, and how we adhere to them, are provided below:
Relevance
The degree to which the statistical product meets user needs for both coverage and content.

The data in this Statistical Release form the basis of evidence on statutory homelessness in Wales and are used by the Welsh Government, homelessness agencies and other housing organisations to monitor trends in the overall level of statutory homelessness across Wales. Other interests and uses of this data are outlined above.

The data in the ‘Homelessness in Wales’ statistical outputs covers statutory homelessness only. The information covers households applying to local authorities for housing assistance under the Housing Act (Wales) 2014 and does not include persons sleeping rough. We have added lines to the release to make this clear for end users and have included a link to the Information published on persons sleeping rough.

Following informal discussions with key stakeholders, between 4 March and 1 April 2015 a user consultation was conducted to ask for views on proposed changes to both the amount and frequency of information collected and published on statutory homelessness, in line with the changes to statutory homelessness legislation arising from the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. The consultation documents, including the response summary report, are available here.

We actively review all our outputs and welcome feedback.

Accuracy
The closeness between an estimated result and the (unknown) true value.

2015-16 data
A number of factors impacted on the quality and accuracy of the data collected and published on statutory homeless during 2015-16, including:

- timing of the legislative changes
- recording of outcomes data (with the possibility of multiple outcomes for individuals)
- delays in the change over of IT reporting systems to cover the new legislation.

A more detailed outline of these issues is available in section 2 of the 2015-16 annual release.

We worked closely with local authorities throughout 2015-16 to improve the quality of the data. However, there was a limit to the improvements that could be made retrospectively to the 2015-16 data and at the time of the release in August 2016 some concerns over the quality and accuracy of the data remained. In the light of these concerns over data quality a
temporary de-designation of the Homelessness Statistics data for 2015-16 as National Statistics was agreed with the UK Statistics Authority. Further information on the designation of National Statistics is available here.

2016-17 data
We continued to work closely with both policy colleagues and local authority data providers throughout 2016-17. Information on the work undertaken and changes made to the data collection form are provided within Annex A of the 2016-17 release along with detail around quality and accuracy issues specific to the 2016-17 data collection year.

We are confident that the quality and accuracy issues experienced during the previous year have now been generally resolved. The temporary National Statistics de-designation came to an end in July 2017 following discussion with the Office for Statistics Regulation which is the regulatory arm of the UK Statistics Authority. Further information is available here.

2017-18 data
Throughout 2017-18 we have continued to work closely with the local authority data providers to ensure that the information provided and published on statutory homelessness is consistent, accurate and of good quality. This has included providing extended guidance and instructions in relation to the reporting of Section 62 assessments and visiting a number of local authority data suppliers to resolve any specific issues with their data recording processes.

As no further additions or changes were made to the data collection forms for the 2017-18 collection year the data are fully comparable with 2016-17

Revisions
Revisions can arise from events such as late returns from a local authority or when a data supplier notifies the Welsh Government that they have submitted incorrect information and resubmits this. Occasionally, revisions can occur due to errors in our statistical processes. In these cases, a judgement is made as to whether the change is significant enough to publish a revised statistical release. Where changes are not deemed to be significant i.e. minor changes, these will be updated in the following year’s statistical release. However, minor amendments to the figures may be reflected in the StatsWales tables prior to that next release. Revised data is marked with an (r) in the statistical release. We also follow the Welsh Government’s statistical revisions policy, details of which are available online.

As part of the annual validation and quality control process, local authorities are asked to confirm all the data provided for previous quarters of that data collection year and where necessary revise any information previously provided.
As a result of the annual validation process for the 2017-18 data collection year, a number of local authorities amended some of the data provided for previous quarters of 2017-18. These revised figures will be published on Stats Wales, and marked accordingly.

The process also resulted in revisions being made to the data previously provided and published for 2016-17 for one authority, the Isle of Anglesey. The Isle of Anglesey had previously submitted data for 2016-17 which only accounted for the first outcome of a Section 62 assessment. This resulted in an under reporting of the Section 73 and Section 75 outcomes and of the total number of outcomes per assessment. The data has now been revised for Anglesey to include all outcomes occurring for each assessment. The Wales totals have also been revised and all relevant data within the charts and tables of this release were also revised accordingly.

These revised figures for 2016-17 will also be published on Stats Wales, and marked accordingly.

Following the original publication of the 2017-18 release, we were informed by one authority, Neath Port Talbot, that they had provided incorrect figures for the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation at the 31 March 2018. The correct figures were subsequently provided by the authority and the data has now been revised (from 246 to 27). The corresponding Wales totals have also been revised (from 2,271 to 2,052) and all relevant data within the charts, and Map 4 of the release were also revised accordingly.

**Timeliness and punctuality**

*Timeliness refers to the lapse of time between publication and the period to which the data refer. Punctuality refers to the time lag between the actual and planned dates of publication.*

All outputs adhere to the Code of Practice for Statistics by pre-announcing the date of publication through the [Upcoming calendar](#) pages on the Statistics for Wales website. Furthermore, should the need arise to postpone an output this would follow the Welsh Governments [Revisions, Errors and Postponements](#) arrangements.

We publish releases as soon as practical after the relevant time period. Quarterly data for the first three quarters of the financial year are published within three months of the end of the reference period. Fourth quarter and annual data are published within four months of the end of the reference period.

**Accessibility and clarity**

*Accessibility is the ease with which users are able to access the data, also reflecting the format(s) in which the data are available and the availability of supporting information. Clarity refers to the quality and sufficiency of the metadata, illustrations and accompanying advice.*
Homelessness statistics for Wales are published in an accessible, orderly, pre-announced manner on the Welsh Government website at 9:30am on the day of publication.

An RSS feed alerts registered users to this publication and a tweet from @statisticsWales alerts Twitter users to its release. Simultaneously the releases are also published on GOV.UK.

We aim to inform known key users of the publication of the statistics when they are published. An e-mail is circulated to the Housing Information Group.

All releases are available to download for free. More detailed data are also available at the same time on the StatsWales website and this can be manipulated online or downloaded into spreadsheets for use offline.

In our outputs, we aim to provide a balance of commentary, summary tables, charts and maps where relevant. The aim is to ‘tell the story’ in the output, without the bulletin or report becoming overly long.

We aim to use Plain English in our outputs and all outputs adhere to the Welsh Government accessibility policy. Furthermore, all our headlines are published in Welsh and English.

We regularly peer review our outputs internally.

Further information regarding the statistics can be obtained by contacting the relevant staff detailed on the release or via stats.housing@gov.wales

**Comparability**

*The degree to which data can be compared over time and domain.*

Comparisons with Old Legislation: It is not possible to directly compare the number of ‘homeless households’ collected under the current and previous legislations. The data collected under the previous legislation (Part VII of the Housing Act 1996) was based only on the final assessment decision made by local authorities on households who applied for assistance with housing. From April 2015 onwards, local authorities are required to record all the outcomes of assessments made about households who apply for assistance with housing and receive an assessment under Section 62 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. It is possible for a single household to have up to three separate outcomes under this process depending on the outcomes of each duty within the legislation. Further information is provided in Section 2.1 of the Homelessness in Wales: 2015-16 statistical release. A paper outlining the legislative changes is available on the Welsh Government website.

Comparisons with first year (2015-16) data: Care should be taken when comparing more recent homelessness data with data for 2015-16. This is due both to the data quality issues for 2015-16 and the additions and changes to the quarterly and annual returns for 2016-17. Information on changes made to the data collection form for 2016-17 are provided within
the Annex to the 2016-17 release. References are provided within the Statistical Release where applicable. The data collection form remained unchanged for 2017-18 which has allowed direct comparisons to be made within the 2017-18 release with the data published for 2016-17.

Comparisons with other parts of UK: There is similar information available from other parts of the UK, but the data is not directly comparable due to different legislative processes in each of the UK countries – see Coherence below.

Coherence

*The degree to which data that are derived from different sources or methods, but which refer to the same phenomenon, are similar.*

Rough sleeping

A one night snap shot count of rough sleepers was carried out across Wales on 9th November 2017. The results were published in a statistical release on 1 February 2018.

It is not relevant to try to directly compare rough sleeping figures with the statutory homelessness figures shown in this release as they are capturing different aspects of homelessness. Statutory homelessness figures do not include persons sleeping rough but cover information on the number of households applying to local authorities for housing assistance under the Housing Act (Wales) 2014 because they are homeless or threatened with homelessness. Some people who sleep rough may have been in contact with a local authority for assistance with housing either recently or in the past and some may not have.

National Strategic Indicators

Prior to 2015-16, the National Strategic Indicators for local government collected information on homelessness prevention. The numerator for the indicator HHA/013 is the number of substantiated potentially homeless households. These figures will differ from those shown in this release which covers assessments made by local authorities on those households who apply to them for assistance with housing and are assessed under Section 62 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

Statutory homelessness statistics for the other UK countries

Statutory homelessness statistics for England and Northern Ireland are no longer comparable with the figures for Wales following the introduction of new Homelessness legislation in Wales (Housing is an issue which is devolved to the Welsh Government).

England

Prior to April 2018, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) collected and published summary information on English local housing authorities’ activities
under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Localism Act 2011) which places statutory duties on local housing authorities to provide assistance to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. Statistics on homeless prevention and relief for January 2016 onwards were published as part of the combined quarterly statistical release. The latest published being 'Statutory homelessness and homelessness prevention and relief, England: October to December 2017.'

In 2016, MHCLG embarked on a project to completely overhaul the P1E homelessness statistics collection. The new data collection is being set up to receive household level rather than aggregated local authority level data. It will cover a broader range of households, including all those who receive homelessness assistance from their local authority rather than, as now, focusing primarily on those that authorities are currently legally obliged to help under the statutory homeless definition. The design of the new data collection has been shaped by the Homelessness Reduction Act and will collect data to enable the effects of the Act to be monitored. The information will be collected by MHCLG’s new online data collection system, DELTA.

Scotland
The latest annual statutory homelessness statistics for Scotland for the period 2016-17 as well as data for the period 1 April to 30 September 2017 are available from the Scottish Government statistics website. Data on applications are collected on a continuous case level electronic data capture system. Cases can also be grouped to household level to identify instances of repeat homelessness. Data are also collected on households in temporary accommodation at the end of each quarter as well as information on households at risk of homelessness as defined under Section 11 of the Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003.

Northern Ireland
In Northern Ireland statistics on homelessness are sourced from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). Under the Housing (NI) Order 1988, NIHE has a similar statutory responsibility to secure permanent accommodation for households who are unintentionally homeless and in priority need; to secure temporary accommodation in a variety of circumstances and to provide advice and assistance to those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The most recent statutory homelessness statistics for Northern Ireland are available at the Northern Ireland Housing Executive website.
Evaluation

We always welcome feedback on any of our statistics. Please contact us via:
stats.housing@gov.wales

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