



Estimating the Prevalence of Homelessness across Nations

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3 Basic Approaches

- **Point-in-time (PIT) and other census-style counts**
 - **Service utilization (e.g., shelter bed counts)**
 - **Large-scale household surveys**
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Problems with Point-in-Time Estimates:

- Estimate point prevalence only
 - Very costly to execute
 - Method yields underestimates (misses all but the most “obvious” homeless)
 - Hard to replicate across cities, states, & nations
 - Limited value for international research
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Pros & Cons of Service-Based Estimates:

- Can estimate point, annual, or multi-year prevalence
- Can account for and predict multiple episodes of homelessness
- Difficult to establish reporting systems (e.g., MIS) and to have systems comparable across cities, states, and nations
- Yield underestimates (misses those who don't use services)

Household Survey Method

Provides underestimates because it excludes:

- **Currently homeless (mostly)**
 - **Minors**
 - **Poor persons without phones (or only mobile)**
 - **Forgotten/unrecognized homeless episodes**
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Household Surveys

Still yield highest rates because of:

- Inclusiveness (e.g., both “obvious” and “marginal homelessness”)
 - The only method that can estimate lifetime prevalence
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Household Survey Method

Other advantages:

- Very low cost, even with large samples
- Easily replicated across nations with comparability of method
- Assesses public opinion *and* prevalence

Other disadvantages/problems:

- Inclusion of mobile-only households
 - Some have “trouble” seeing it’s value
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Data Collection in 11 Nations:

- 2 in US (fixed only, 1994 & 2001)
- Belgium (fixed & mobile; French only)
- Germany (fixed & mobile)
- UK (fixed & mobile)
- Canada (fixed & mobile)
- France (fixed only)
- Italy (fixed & mobile)
- 2 in Poland (fixed & mobile, 2005 & 2014)
- Japan (fixed, incomplete)
- Portugal (fixed only)
- Czech Republic* (fixed & mobile)

*Completion expected in 2015

Method

- Random samples of adults in each country were interviewed by telephone.
- Interviews consisted of 128 items assessing respondents' experience with homelessness as well as their attitudes towards and beliefs about the homeless.
- Lifetime prevalence of literal and total homelessness was assessed.

See Toro, P.A., Tompsett, C.J., Lombardo, S., Philippot, P., Nachtergaeel, H., Galand, B., Schlienz, N., Stammel, N., Yabar, Y., Blume, M., MacKay, L., & Harvey, K. (2007). Homelessness in Europe and North America: A comparison of prevalence and public opinion. In P.A. Toro (Issue Editor), *International Perspectives on Homelessness in Developed Nations*, *Journal of Social Issues*, 63, 505-524.

Lifetime Prevalence (Fixed Phones Only)

<u>10 Nations</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Literal</u>	<u>Overall</u>
US	460	6.1%	12.8%
Belgium	323	3.4%	9.6%
UK	291	7.6%	15.5%
Germany	250	2.4%	5.6%
Italy	250	4.0%	10.5%
Canada	364	8.6%	10.8%
France	244	2.2%	6.2%
Poland	262	4.3%	8.8%
Japan	127	2.4%	3.9%
Portugal	332	3.3%	7.2%

Lifetime Prevalence (Fixed and Mobile)

<u>10 Nations</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Literal</u>	<u>Overall</u>
US	460	6.1%	12.8%
Belgium	523	6.3%	12.9%
UK	356	8.5%	18.3%
Germany	398	2.4%	5.8%
Italy	378	3.5%	11.8%
Canada	479	7.6%	9.9%
France	244	2.2%	5.7%
Poland	302	4.3%	8.3%
Japan	127	2.4%	3.9%
Portugal	332	3.3%	7.2%

Some correlates of literal prevalence across 8 nations

- Sympathy Index ($r=-.82$; $p<.01$)
- GINI Index ($r=.61$; $p<.05$)
- Net immigration ($r=.65$; $p<.05$)
- % over 65 ($r=-.70$; $p<.05$)
- % under 15 ($r=.62$; $p<.05$)
- % single parent households ($r=.91$, $p<.01$)

National Differences on Attitudes about Homelessness (fixed phones) across 5 nations (US, UK, Belg., Germ., & Italy)

Attitude Factors	F	Post-hoc Tests
General Compassion	11.67	I>US,UK>G,B
Limit Public Rights	37.38	US,UK,I>B,G
Trustworthy	12.29	G>B,UK,US I>UK,US B>US
Social Isolation	32.91	B,G,I>US,UK
Economic Factors	3.96	I>B,G,US
Personal Failings	57.06	US>UK>B>I>G

Note. B=Belgium, G=Germany, I=Italy, UK=United Kingdom, US=United States. $p<.01$ for all Fs.

National Differences on Attitudes about Homelessness (continued)

General Opinion Items	F	Post-hoc Tests
Homelessness is Serious		
in nearest city	16.75	US,UK,G,B>I
nationwide	15.50	US,B>I,UK,G I>G
Homelessness improving	20.50	I>US,UK>B,G
Increase federal spending	14.52	B,UK>G,US,I
Freq. sees panhandler	32.56	I,B>G,UK,US G>US
Freq. sees homeless	5.33	G,I>US
Freq. talks about homeless	7.01	I,B>US,G,UK