

**Case study for Road Map on Statistics for SDGs 2.0**  
**France: Surveying the homeless**

**Description**

The main objectives of the survey Homeless in 2012 are:

- To describe the characteristics of the homeless people and the people without a fixed residence: the aim is to compare the homeless with the population living in an ordinary housing on topics such as health, employment, living standards.
- To describe the difficulties of access to housing and the life trajectories that led people to the situation of being homeless in order to identify the processes of exclusion.
- To estimate the number of homeless people.

The 2001 survey was first conducted in Europe. The survey is part of continuity. The 2001 methodology was based on the analysis of experiments in the United States since the 80s ( Urban Institute (1987), Research Triangle Institute (1991), Board of the Census (1996)) and in France by INED (in 1995, 1997 and 1998). The principle is to sample locations likely to host homeless and, in these places, to sample users (these are not necessarily homeless, and the questionnaire must establish their housing (or non-housing) status).

The target population is individuals attending hosting or catering services offered by organizations or associations for free or in exchange of a low participation for people in extreme precarity. In 2001, only French-speaking individuals were interviewed. The data collection mode was face to face. In 2012, self-interview pen and paper short questionnaires translated in 14 foreign languages were used to catch non-French speaking individuals.

It is an ad-hoc survey (2001, 2012).

**Advantages**

The most precarious populations are poorly taken into account in censuses and general surveys. Non-French-speaking foreign populations, people living in squats or in the street, very mobile people are by definition difficult to survey and are therefore excluded from the statistics. Only a specific survey based on rigorous definitions accepted by all could make it possible to approach the number of people, the profiles of homeless people and the processes which had brought them there.

**Challenges**

An expensive survey conducted only around ten years; the increasing share of non-French speaking individuals (with a high proportion of people with very low reading and writing skills), as well as the increasing number of homeless people due to the recent humanitarian crises make the fieldwork very difficult.

**Future steps**

INSEE is currently working on the concept of the next survey, whose method shall be largely improved to reflect the current homeless situations. It should take place in 2025 if a decision is made.

**More information**

<https://www.INSEE.fr/fr/metadonnees/source/serie/s1002>