

# HOMELESSNESS IN ITALY

## KEY STATISTICS

Official statistics by Istat (National Institute of Statistics) show that in 2014, **50,724** homeless people were living in cities with over 250,000 inhabitants. There were 47,648 in 2011<sup>i</sup>.

The majority of homeless people live in the North of Italy (56%). 23.7% reside in the centre of the country, and only 20.3% in the south. Milan has the highest homeless population of any Italian city (12,004 people counted in shelters and soup kitchens), followed by Rome (7,709) and Palermo with 2,887 severely disadvantaged people counted (See table below).

Big Cities	2011 (The First survey)	2014 (Follow up)
Milan	13,115	12,004
Rome	7,827	7,709
Palermo	3,829	2,887
Florence	1,911	1,992
Turin	1,424	1,729
Naples	909	1,559
Bologna	1,005	1,032

According to the Ethos typology, the Italian survey identifies “homeless people” as *People living rough, people in emergency accommodation (night shelters), people in accommodation for the homeless, homeless hostels, temporary accommodation, transitional supported accommodation, and people in women’s shelter accommodation.*

People living in insecure accommodation, temporary structures or overcrowded housing and people living temporarily with family/friends or without legal (sub) tenancy were excluded from the Italian survey. Housing exclusion measures (evictions, people living in unconventional housing, overcrowding, etc.) are available via Census, EU-SILC (Italian data collection) and the ministerial data set.

### Key pull-out statistics

*Official statistics show that in 2014, over 50,000 people were homeless in Italy.  
4 out of 10 homeless people have been living on the streets for more than 4 years  
A 2017 Report by Caritas found that 30% of homeless people were young.*

The survey was conducted in 158 big and medium-sized Italian cities from 21st November to 21st December 2014. It refers to people asking for basic services (food, shower, shelter) in one of the 768 providers across these cities.

Another important source for observing homelessness in Italy (and looking at the trend) is the **Caritas Report (2017)**<sup>ii</sup>. The report describes the poverty and social exclusion-affecting people in Italy. Information is based on a “need survey” compiled by social workers and volunteers supporting some of the most vulnerable people. The survey was conducted in **1.801 Caritas Counselling Services**, distributed over 180 Diocesi (more than 80% of the national territory)<sup>iii</sup>.

On the basis of the data collected in more than 1.801 “Caritas Counselling Centres” (50% placed in the Northern, 31% in the Centre and 19% in the Southern), 205,090 people have received support, **26,000** are homeless people (17%). They are male (74%), migrants (67,4%) living alone (45%).

According to the survey about homeless people in Italy (ISTAT, 2015), it is estimated that young people (18-34 years olds) number 13.012, 25.7% of the total number of homeless people in the country.

## Demographics of the homeless population

Based on the Istat survey (2015), 86% of homeless people were male and 14% female. 58% were foreign and 42% Italian.

4 out of 10 are Italian people; 4 out of 10 are chronically homeless (living on the street for more than 4 years). Foreign homeless people are, on average, younger and have a higher level of education than their Italian counterparts are. Homelessness affects 6,239 women (14%) but this number has increased in recent years.

**In Italy, the average profile of a homeless person is male, living in the north, 44 years old, previously a tenant (70%), was married and was employed. Homeless people tend to be separated, ill and unemployed for a long time.**

28% of the people spoken to, declared some kind of income per month (100/300 euros) obtained by a "job": 10% had a retirement income, 9% received public subsidies; 32% had support from families and friends and 38% lived mainly on donations.

Only 14% out of 50,724 had a severe mental illness and/or drug/alcohol abuse problem. These people were not able to respond to the questionnaire of the fio.PSD-Istat's survey.

## INCREASE/DECREASE IN NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

Based on official statistics (**Istat 2015**), homelessness has increased from 47,648 in 2011 to 50,724 in 2014 (an increase of 3,076 people).

Chronic homelessness has increased. The proportion of homeless people living in the street between two and four years has increased from 11% in 2011 to 20% in 2014 and the proportion of people living in the street for over four years has increased from 16% in 2011 to 21% in 2014.

The proportion of women as part of the overall homeless population has increased from 13% to 14%.

The number of homeless people with mental health disorders or drug/alcohol abuse problems has increased from 4,429 in 2011 to 7,130 in 2014.

The number of homeless migrants has decreased and the number of homeless Italian people has risen between 2011 and 2014.

**Fio.PSDs Members Monitoring (2017)<sup>iv</sup>** found that between 2014-2016, 48% of providers (municipalities, social enterprises, foundation, religious organizations) had managed a change of their services for the most deprived. More night services for new comers; help centres for asylum seekers; food and hygienic aid stations; accompanying measures for favouring inclusion (job orientation, legal assistance, counselling); housing led oriented projects (Housing First, co-housing, pilot projects to ensure housing rights).

At the same time, 46% of members declared that the number of the users has increased by 10% over the last three years.

From 2014 to 2016, the fio.PSD survey reveals two trends:

- Appearing of new profiles of homeless people;
- Increasing number of traditional shelter users.

On the one hand, young people (18-25 years old), asylum seekers, irregular, family homelessness and job seekers with lower skills, appear more and more as new users. The latter have a sort of "episodic homelessness" correlated to low income and frequent loss of "bad jobs". The latter refers also to women working as domestic workers or caregivers for elderly people (when the person they are caring for dies, they lose their job and house at the same time). Irregular and temporary jobs, the loss of affordable housing and the loss of an "official residence" produces a drastic effect of marginalization.

On the other hand, the number of women, survivors of domestic violence and abuse, migrants and Italian people increased. There were more people asking for orientation, counselling and psychological support in homelessness services.

Health services for people who are chronically homeless and/or have a mental health problem remains a drastic problem because in Italy there is a weak integration between social and public sanitary services. Many social services open ambulatory and aid stations through doctor-volunteers, occasional collaboration of medical staff, post-acute surgery pilot projects. However, this seems not enough to guarantee a sort of "soft institutionalization" for chronic or ageing homeless people unable to live in the shelter.

Lastly, looking at the **Caritas Report** (2017), it is important to pay attention to the increase in **youth homelessness**. Based on data collected into the 1.801 Caritas Counselling Centre, 7,484 homeless people are 18-34 years old. They are Italian (12%) and Foreigners (88%). Italian young homeless people are mainly boys (60%) with a lower degree of study, a complex social history (inherited from their family), without a job and with children. On the other hand, there are many young migrants with an intermediate level of school, with regular residence permit, unemployed and with children in 30% of cases. Their condition is often linked to the unsuccessful exit from “community for minors not accompanied”.

This is alarming new trend in to the homelessness phenomenon in Italy, mainly referred to young migrants missing the “dream of integration and well-being” when they arrive in Italy.

During 2014, young people were 13,012 out of 50,724 homeless people (25%). Currently, Caritas reveals that 1 out 3,5 homeless people is young (7,484 out of 26,078) (about the 30%)

## POLICIES & STRATEGIES

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy has committed to paying special attention to homelessness during the period of 2014-2020. In order to programme solutions and interventions to reduce severe poverty, the Ministry has carried out different actions:

**1. National Survey on Homeless People and Services** (2012; 2015) by Istat<sup>v</sup>, fio.PSD<sup>vi</sup>, Caritas, MLPS<sup>vii</sup>. This survey has permitted more in-depth knowledge of the various manifestations of severe poverty in Italy, needs and performance systems offered to these categories of people and knowledge of the reasons people are in this situation. Currently, in Italy 50,724 people are homelessness.

**2. National Guidelines for contrasting with serious marginality** (2015) – by MLPS

The Guideline represents the main document for Regional governments and Municipalities to offer homogenous measures and interventions for ending homelessness. For the writing of the Guideline, the Ministry has involved various levels of government and relevant economic and social partnerships. Furthermore, the Ministry has

requested the collaboration of fio.PSD in the role of Technical Secretary. The Guideline is a practical and capacity building document for key actors who want to offer good quality services. Last but not least, **the Guideline is explicitly mentioned in the National OPs Inclusion and in the Call for proposals for ending homelessness, as a main document for addressing adequate, homogeneous and performing services.**

**3. Operative Program for INCLUSION – Thematic Objective 9** aims to reduce poverty by two paths:

- Experimentation of a minimum income support scheme for poorest family (Active Social Inclusion – SIA; Income for social inclusion – REI since the 1st December 2017);
- Strengthen public services for the most disadvantaged groups (homeless and Roma people included)

**4. Operative Program I FEAD Measure 4 and Call for proposal for innovative intervention to end homelessness– (OP Inclusion and OP I FEAD Measure 4) (2016)**

The aim of this strategy is promoting social innovation and complementary use of the ESIF resources on one hand for enforcing social services (ESF) and on the other to provide material assistance to the most deprived (FEAD) (this includes food, clothing and other essential equipment for personal use).

**5. National Poverty Fund**

Currently, the National anti-poverty fund has reserved 20 million euros to homeless people for funding measures and interventions to combat severe poverty.

**6. Homeless Zero Campaign**

The #HomelessZero Awareness Campaign, promoted by the Fio.PSD and sponsored by the Ministry, was launched on 11 June 2016. On 17 September 2017, the Ministry LPS launched the Campaign again. This is to confirm engagement of policy-makers in raising awareness around this issue.

# REMARKS ON KEY POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

## Positive

- Homelessness is now on the political agenda and is recognized as specific issue in the National Anti-Poverty Plan.
- Housing First (and the Housing First Network) is recognised as the best approach for ending homelessness in the Call for Proposal for innovative interventions to end homelessness (OP Inclusion and OP I FEAD Measure 4).
- The partnership between the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and fio.PSD has been consolidated.
- 50 million euros has been set aside for funding innovative projects to end homelessness (see above the point number 4).
- Since 2018, 20 million more euros will be invested in measures and services for homeless people.

## Negative

- There is still no minimum income for homeless people. Criteria for access to the current minimum income scheme in Italy (residence in Italy from two years; low income; employability in program for social inclusion) are unaffordable for many homeless people. An enlargement of criteria (and beneficiaries) is expected for 2018.
- Regional Governments are late in spending structural funds on poverty and Homelessness.
- The third sector, Caritas Cares and Foundations often provide the majority of homeless services without an institutional framework or sufficient coordination. Long-term public planning is still missing in many cities.
- Many municipalities do not know how many homeless people there are in their territories. The issue is often underestimated and homeless people remain invisible.

- Residence is, still now, a denied right in many cities; without a residence, it is impossible to get many other rights.
- Affordable housing is a “mirage” for every citizen, much more for most vulnerable people. Housing Benefits, Housing National Policies, Social Housing for most vulnerable people (homelessness) are missing or not appropriate.
- There is not an official follow up of ISTAT data updates. A new survey on homelessness will be necessary to include the other typologies of ETHOS to measure the full spectrum of homelessness and housing exclusion.
- According fio.PSD members’ experience, homelessness is going to increase.
- For example, the situation of irregular migrants (without a permit to stay, with a denial measure or waiting for an answer from the tribunal) gives cause for concern about homelessness.
- The recent law about migration and refugees (law n. 46/2017) aggravates this problem. Policies are oriented towards criminalisation (first as regards the security) and rather than real integration or the protection of rights.
- The recent Decreto Minniti seems to return to a view of "poverty as guilt" and "homelessness as inconvenience/trouble". Safeguarding urban security and urban decency as well as "street cleaning" are priority at the moment for many Municipalities.
- Investment in the training of social workers is needed.

## REFERENCES

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<sup>i</sup> Istat (2015), *Le Persone Senza Dimora - Homeless People in Italy*, available at [www.fiopsd.org](http://www.fiopsd.org)

<sup>ii</sup> Caritas Italiana, *Futuro Anteriore*, 2017. <http://bit.ly/2zxxGfS>

<sup>iii</sup> Caritas Counselling Centre (Centri di ascolto Caritas) is a specific service furnished by Caritas organizations at the local level (Diocesi). Diocesi corresponds to Italian town and cities or group of cities. For details see [http://banchedati.chiesacattolica.it/chiesa\\_cattolica\\_italiana/regioni\\_\\_diocesi\\_e\\_parrocchie/00007907\\_Diocesi\\_e\\_Parrocchie.html](http://banchedati.chiesacattolica.it/chiesa_cattolica_italiana/regioni__diocesi_e_parrocchie/00007907_Diocesi_e_Parrocchie.html)

<sup>iv</sup> Members of fio.PSD are 125 units. They represent around the 20% of the national homelessness sector in the stricter sense (shelters, day centres, soup kitchen, outreach...)

<sup>v</sup> National Institute of Statistics

<sup>vi</sup> Fio.PSD is the Italian Federation of Organizations working with Homeless People. It is Italian full member of FEANTSA

<sup>vii</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Policy