

People sleeping rough

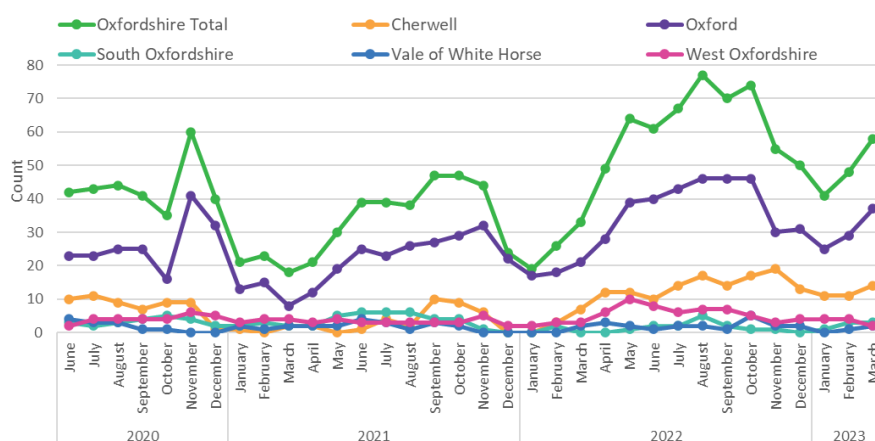
People sleeping rough is at the extreme end of homelessness¹. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) defines people who sleep rough as:

People sleeping, about to bed down or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways or parks) or in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells or car parks)².

People sleeping rough in Oxfordshire

- The number of people estimated to be sleeping rough on a single night in Oxfordshire, in March 2023 was 58, up 76% compared to March 2022³. Of these, 22 were new people sleeping rough.
- This is a rate of 10.0 people per 100,000 population aged 18+ years, higher than the rate of 6.0 in the South East.
- Oxford had the highest number of people sleeping rough in March 2023, followed by Cherwell.

Number of people sleeping rough on a single night in Oxfordshire and districts over time



People sleeping rough and complex needs

Many people sleeping rough have experienced severe trauma in their lives such as abuse, neglect or loss. Periods of rough sleeping may have further significant impacts on someone's mental and physical health⁴:

- The longer a person sleeps rough for, the more likely they will develop additional mental and physical health needs and substance misuse issues⁵.
- It can be difficult for people sleeping rough to get access to mental health services and often services will not carry out assessments on the street⁵.
- Research has shown that people are around 50% more likely to have spent over a year sleeping rough if they are also experiencing mental ill-health as this can make moving into accommodation more challenging for people sleeping rough⁵.

People sleeping rough also face other risks to their health:

- The prevalence of infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, HIV and hepatitis C, is considerably higher in the street-sleeping population than in the general population⁶.
- Many are vulnerable to malnourishment which alongside exposure to the elements can reduce the effectiveness of the immune system^{4,7}.

People sleeping rough are more likely to be exposed to cold weather periods, increasing the risk of cold-related illness and deaths. For example, there is an increased risk of hypothermia and existing chronic health conditions can be exacerbated by cold exposure⁷.

[1] [Public Health England - Homelessness: applying All Our Health](#) [2] [GOV.UK - Homelessness data: notes and definitions](#) [3] [Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities - Rough sleeping and the support for people sleeping rough in England](#) [4] Seale, J.V. (2016) *Nutrition and the homeless: the underestimated challenge*, *Nutrition Research Reviews*, 29(2) [5] [Crisis - Rough sleepers and complex needs](#) [6] [Peate, I. \(2019\) The rough sleeper, British Journal of Nursing, 28\(22\)](#) [7] [UK Health Security Agency - Supporting vulnerable people before and during cold weather: people homeless and sleeping rough](#)