

Dublin Simon Community
Health Study 2010 - SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The Dublin Simon Community health survey was conducted during the week of July 26th – August 1st 2010 and highlights a sample week in Dublin Simon services. Overall 349 individuals responded to the survey from Dublin Simon services which include Rough Sleeper Team (92), Emergency Accommodation (61), Supported Housing (80), Treatment Services (35), Resettlement and Tenancy Sustainment (81).

Demographics

79.7% of respondents were male and 20.3% female
The majority age group of those surveyed was 36-45 years (29.5%).
The majority nationality was Irish (94.6%).
11 individuals were Habitual Residency Condition (HRC) affected¹.

Experience of homelessness

Length of time homeless ranges from less than three months to over five years.
The majority classified themselves as being homeless for over 5 years (24.6%).
Using the government definition of long-term homelessness², 90% of respondents (excluding DCTS) were experiencing long-term homelessness.

Physical and Mental Health

60% had at least one diagnosed physical health condition
Of these 30% had more than one diagnosed physical health condition
The most prevalent physical health conditions include Hepatitis C, Asthma, Dental conditions and Epilepsy.
27% also had one or more undiagnosed³ physical health condition

44% had at least one diagnosed mental health condition
Of these 11% had more than one diagnosed mental health condition
The most common diagnosed mental health conditions included depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and panic attacks.
24% also had one or more undiagnosed mental health conditions

24% of those surveyed had both a diagnosed physical and mental health condition

¹ All, bar one, of these were seeking services of the Rough Sleeper Team. A significant number of HRC affected foreign nationals opted not to respond to the survey hence the actual figure is lower than general estimates.

² Long-term homeless is defined by the Government as six months or more in homeless services.

³ Undiagnosed refers to a condition which appeared evident but was not professionally diagnosed at the time of the survey.

Self-harm and Suicide

15% of respondents had self-harmed

17% expressed suicidal thoughts

7% had attempted to commit suicide in the six months prior to the survey

Of those with diagnosed mental health conditions 10% had attempted to commit suicide in the previous six months. A further 22% had considered suicide.

Presentations to A&E

13% of respondents had presented to A&E in the four weeks prior to the survey – this represents 85 presentations in total

48 people were out patients and 27 people were inpatients in the same period

Drug and Alcohol Use

55% of people consumed alcohol

Of these 26% experienced complications from alcohol use

The most prevalent were memory loss, falls and head injuries, and liver damage

44% were active subscription and non-subscription drug users

Of these, 44% had experienced complications from drug use

Complications included vein damage, Hepatitis B/and or C and abscesses

The main drug consumed was heroin (68%), followed by benzodiazepines and methadone.

Dual Diagnosis

Over 40% of active drug users also had a diagnosed mental health condition

Reason for Homelessness

Alcohol and drug use were the most prevalent reasons stated for homelessness. However, almost 50% of the reasons listed were non substance abuse or health related (incl. family conflict, relationship breakdown, asked to leave by family), highlighting that a significant proportion of individuals become homeless for reasons outside of these areas. This evidence supports the theory that substance abuse is often a consequence as opposed to a cause of homelessness.

Regardless of theory it is evident from these research results that Homelessness Makes you Sick and the required supports need to be in place to help support people with multiple needs, both physical and mental, if they are to progress out of homelessness and into a home of their own.

The full survey can be downloaded at www.dubsimon.ie or contact Lorna Cronnelly 086 1724253, email: lornacronnelly@dubsimon.ie for more information