

Deaths of homeless in UK reach new high under Starmer government

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A report by the Museum of Homelessness project-Dying Homeless Project 2024 into the deaths of homeless people in the UK provides evidence that homelessness and linked deaths will continue under this Labour government.

The Starmer government was elected in July last year with a manifesto stating that under the Conservatives rough sleepers were “an all too-common sight in our towns and cities, and a sharp rise in hidden homelessness.” It pledged “Labour will develop a new cross-government strategy, working with Mayors and Councils across the country, to put Britain back on track to ending homelessness.”

Since 2017, the Museum of Homelessness has aimed to document and remember every person who dies while homeless in the UK. Since that year there have been documented 8,523 deaths of homeless people. Data published October 8 by the Dying Homeless Project 2024, showed that 1,611 people who were homeless died in the year 2024, *an increase of 9 percent on the previous year.*

A good portion of these deaths—from July 2024 onwards—were on Labour’s watch. Matthew Turtle, director of the Museum of Homelessness said the deaths, “show how homeless people continue to be deeply failed”.

The data used in the report was acquired from Freedom of Information requests (FOI), coroners’ courts, family testimony and media coverage. This information records the actual deaths of homeless people and is not based on projections or estimates.

Most deaths were linked to suicide or drug use, with an increase in the number of people dying from the use of spice or nitazenes. Of the 1,611 who died, three quarters were men and included two thirds who were living in temporary or supported accommodation, while 169 were sleeping rough. Eleven of the 169 were children including six children under the age of five, and one was murdered

weeks before his eighteenth birthday.

Homelessness is surging. In the years 2023-24, local councils across the UK assessed 178,560 households as homeless, an increase of 12.3 percent on the previous year. The Shelter charity estimate that in 2024 the number of homeless people in England stood at 354,000 plus, that included 161,500 children.

There are 169,000 children living in temporary accommodation, with many having to live in hotel rooms, and bed & breakfast accommodation that do not have access to basic facilities, including kitchens, desk space or areas for children to play in. Such accommodation can often be out of area with people losing access to schools, support networks and places of worship.

The number of young adults who have perished while homeless remains high with at least 54 people under the age of 25 dying. Many of the young people experiencing acute trauma due to homelessness have left local authority care, with a significant number fleeing serious youth violence and exploitation.

The figures for 2024 include 88 people aged over 75,” with 73 percent of those living in Northern Ireland at the time of their death. Though most of the people who had died were living at the time in some form of accommodation, there was one case of an 84-year-old woman who died in England of no fixed abode.

The report points to research that has been carried out into accelerated ageing in people experiencing homelessness and associated frailty. In the study the average age of the homeless person was 56, yet their levels of frailty were comparable with that of people aged 89 years in the general population.

In one tragic case, Khaled Aribi, a 32-year-old homeless Algerian asylum seeker was found dead hanging by his hand from a skylight in an empty property in Walthamstow, north London. He was found by an estate agent who had arrived at the property for a house viewing.

Khaled had tried to get into the property via the skylight over the kitchen and the skylight had closed trapping his hand. The inquest heard that he had been dead for some considerable time before he was found. The postmortem examination found that his death had been caused by dehydration, starvation and ketoacidosis—high levels of acid in the blood, caused by malnourishment.

Khaled had been under the care of Camden and Islington mental health team in late 2023 with anxiety and depression. At the time of his death, he was considered a vulnerable adult at risk of sexual exploitation.

In November 2024 in Sheffield four women died within 10 days of each other. These included a woman in her forties who was buried without a single person attending her funeral. She had been known for years to homelessness services in Sheffield.

Since 2018, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) published data on deaths of homeless people in England and Wales, with the last data release about homelessness deaths published in 2022 for the year 2021. In January 2024, the ONS said it would consult on ending its compilation of homeless deaths. Despite being forced to backtrack on this two months later, due to opposition from campaigners, since that time there has been no official record of homelessness deaths for England and Wales.

The Dying Homeless Project met with ONS analysts in November 2024—who indicated that they were looking at an alternative method of collecting and analysing data. But as it stands, the Dying Homeless Project is now the only organisation publishing a record of homelessness deaths in England and Wales.

The Dying Homeless Project found that, as of August 1, 2025, 334 out of 390 county council (upper-tier) and a district council (lower-tier) authorities (88 percent) supplied data about deaths in 2024. This was an increase on the previous year 2023, up 9 percent. However, the project noted that 17 local authorities reported that they did not hold data about the deaths of homeless people. Twelve local authorities did not reply to the FOI requests, including seven London boroughs where rough sleeping and homelessness rates are higher than the rest of the UK.

Local authorities have a legal duty to respond to FOI requests within a legal framework of 20 days.

The report highlights the growing numbers of people, for the third consecutive year, living on the streets. Just since the 2024 report the number has increased by 20 percent. There are now double the numbers of people living on the streets since national records began in 2010.

The report uses a specific definition of those who died in “deaths of despair”, defined as those who have died from drug alcohol use (including overdose) and suicide. Deaths of despair represent the highest proportion of those who died, representing 43 percent of deaths in 2024. This definition includes those who are experiencing homelessness that happen at the intersection of severe exclusion and destitution, leading to a state of despair.

New figures acquired from local authorities by the Unison trade union show that this situation is likely to get worse as central government funding for councils faces a shortfall of more than £4 billion next year. It warns that some of society’s most vulnerable adults and children face losing vital support, with few places escaping the impact of deep cuts.

Earlier this month, the government announced it would allocate just £84 million “to help prevent homelessness and support families this winter and immediate help for children and families in temporary accommodation.” They boasted this was on top of £950 million committed “to increase the supply of good temporary accommodation”. This pittance can barely paper over the cracks.

The worsening homelessness crisis could be resolved overnight with the allocation of the necessary tens of billions of pounds made available, alongside a mass housebuilding programme, but this requires a challenge to the wealth of the super-rich oligarchy. The homeless will continue to die because this is not the priority of a government committed to defending the super-rich and spending billions more on the military. Labour has committed to spending £3 billion a year on military support for Ukraine “for as long as needed”—on top of £20 billion already handed over to Kiev. This is on top of a pledge to double military and national security spending to 5 percent of GDP over the next decade.



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