

9 October 2012

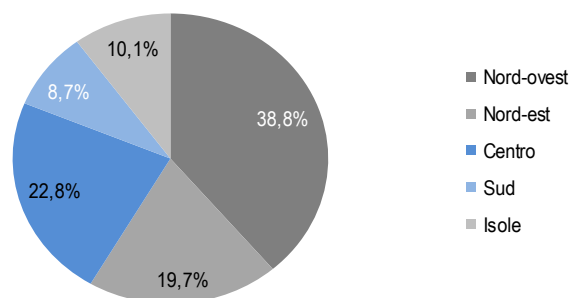
Year 2011 THE HOMELESS

According to a survey conducted by Istat as part of a research project about the conditions of people living in extreme poverty -under an agreement between Istat, the Italian Ministry of Employment and Social Policy, the Italian Federation of Associations for the Homeless (fio.PSD) and the Italian Caritas organisation- in November and December 2011¹ an estimated 47,648² homeless people used a canteen or night-time accommodation service at least once in the 158 Italian municipalities in which the survey was conducted. This estimate is based on a sample survey, and is subject to error due to observing only part of a population, rather than the whole: therefore the confidence interval within which the number of homeless people may vary, with a probability of 95%, is of between 43,425 and 51,872 people.

The estimated number of homeless people corresponds to approximately 0.2% of the population regularly registered in the municipalities covered by the survey. However, it should be noted that this group includes individuals that are not registered by town halls or who are officially resident in municipalities other than those where they actually live. The proportion of homeless people out of the total number of residents was highest in the North-west³, where homeless people corresponded to approximately 0.35% of the resident population, followed by the North-east with 0.27%, the Centre with 0.20%, the Italian islands (0.21%) and the South and the Islands (0.10%).

**FIGURE 1. GEOGRAPHICAL
DISTRIBUTION OF HOMELESS
PEOPLE.**

Year 2011, percentage values



¹ For details on the survey and the municipalities involved, please refer to the methodology note on page 12.

² This estimate excludes any homeless people who did not eat at a canteen or sleep in a shelter in the months in question, in addition to minors, the Rom population and all those who, although homeless, slept in more or less temporary private lodgings (for example, in the homes of friends, relatives, etc.).

³ These geographical areas are used here and elsewhere in this paper for the purpose of brevity, and would be more fully described as follows: "in the municipalities in the North-west where the survey was conducted" (see methodology note on page 12).

Most homeless people were male (86.9%) and under the age of 45 (57.9%), two thirds had a maximum level of lower secondary school education and 72.9% stated that they lived alone. The majority were foreign citizens (59.4%) and the most common countries of origin were Romania (11.5% of the total), Morocco (9.1%) and Tunisia (5.7%).

On average, those interviewed stated they had been homeless for around 2.5 years. Nearly two thirds (63.9%) had their own home before becoming homeless, while the others were almost equally divided between those who lived with friends and/or relatives (15.8%) and those who lived in institutions, detention centres or care homes (13.2%). 7.5% stated that they had never had their own home.

The homeless foreign citizens are younger than the Italians (47.4% were under the age of 34, against 11.3% of Italians), they had a higher level of education (40.8% had at least a secondary school diploma, against 22.1% of Italians) and they had been homeless for a shorter period of time (17.7% for at least two years, against 36.3% of Italians). Further, they were more likely to live with other people (30% against 21.8%), in particular with friends (17.4% against 10.2%); as many as 99.1% were born abroad and only 20% were homeless before coming to Italy.

TABLE 1. HOMELESS PEOPLE DIVIDED BY CHARACTERISTICS. Year 2011, absolute values and percentage composition

	Absolute values	Percentage composition
Geographical distribution		
North-west	18,456	38.8
North-east	9,362	19.7
Centre	10,878	22.8
South	4,133	8.7
Italian islands	4,819	10.1
Gender		
Male	41,411	86.9
Female	6,238	13.1
Citizenship		
Foreign	28,323	59.4
Italian	19,325	40.6
Age group		
18-34	15,612	32.8
35-44	11,957	25.1
45-54	10,499	22.0
55-64	7,043	14.8
65 or over	2,538	5.3
Total	47,648	100.0

More than half live in the North

More than half the homeless people who access services (58.5%) live in the North (38.8% in the North-west and 19.7% in the North-east), just over a fifth (22.8%) in the Centre and only 18.8% in the South and Islands area (8.7% in the South and 10.1% in the Islands). The result in terms of geographical breakdown, however, stems from the considerably higher concentration of the population in big cities. The higher percentages observed in the North-west and the Centre essentially depend on the fact that Milano and Roma account for as much as 71% of the samples surveyed. As many as 44% of homeless people use services based in Roma or Milano: 27.5% in Milano and 16.4% in Roma.

The number is higher in Milano, especially for those using canteen services; in fact, these represent 86.4% of the homeless people estimated to be living in Milano, against 66.2% of those in Roma (note that although there are fewer canteen services in Milano - 12 against 32 - they are generally larger, providing 112,000 meals against the 93,000 offered in the capital).

The municipality of Roma is characterised by a higher number of homeless people among those using canteen services (24.7% against 17.4%), a higher number who regularly use the same service (out of those accessing the canteen service, 47.4% use the same service at lunchtime every day of the week - against 35.3% in Milano - and 53% in the evening - against 49.7%) and a lower number of foreign citizens (46.7% of the homeless, against 78.3% in Milano).

After Roma and Milano, out of the 12 largest municipalities Palermo has the largest number of homeless people (3,829); nearly 80% of the homeless who use services in the Islands live there, and as many as 60.7% of those are foreign citizens. These are followed by Firenze (1,911), with 60.9% foreign citizens, Torino (1,424) with 56.5% and Bologna (1,005) with 51.6%.

TABLE 2. CONFIDENCE INTERVAL AND DISTRIBUTION OF HOMELESS PEOPLE BY GEOGRAPHIC AREA, REGION AND LARGE MUNICIPALITIES. Year 2011, absolute values

	Homeless people	Confidence interval	
		Lower limit	Upper limit
North-west	18,456	16,068	20,844
Lombardia	15,802	13,446	18,158
<i>Milano</i>	13,115	11,354	14,876
Piemonte	2,112	1,079	3,145
<i>Torino</i>	1,424	560	2,288
North-east	9,362	7,645	11,080
Emilia-Romagna	4,394	2,706	6,083
<i>Bologna</i>	1,005	481	1,529
Centre	10,878	8,247	13,509
Toscana	2,612	1,562	3,662
<i>Firenze</i>	1,911	1,114	2,707
Lazio	8,065	5,049	11,081
<i>Roma</i>	7,827	4,832	10,822
South	4,133	2,731	5,535
Campania	1,651	967	2,334
<i>Napoli</i>	909	555	1,264
Italian islands	4,819	4,275	5,363
Sicilia	4,625	3,724	5,525
<i>Palermo</i>	3,829	3,045	4,612
Total	47,648	43,425	51,872

Nearly 10% could not answer the interview

9.3% of homeless people had problems interacting with the interviewers (PDI), and were not able to answer the interview. Basic information on these people was recorded with the help of the service operators. Among those who had difficulty interacting, 76% had problems associated with physical or clear disabilities (incapacity, disease or mental disability) and/or dependency issues; the percentage fell to 31% of those who did not have difficulty interacting. More than 80% of these cases were male, and around half were Italian. Of those who did not have problems interacting, the percentages were 86.5% and 40.6% respectively. The average age was of 44.5 (46.3 among those with no difficulty interacting): a third were under the age of 35 (against 18.9% of those without difficulty), while around a quarter were over the age of 54 (28.5%); two thirds lived alone (79.3%) and around a quarter lived with friends or family other than spouses or children (14.1%).

A quarter of these people had difficulty interacting due to their limited knowledge of the Italian language, a similar number to those who did not have difficulty interacting (26.4%). Composition by gender (more than 80% were male), age (average age of 32.0, while more than half were under 35) and family type (more than 90% did not live with any family member) were in line with those observed for people with no difficulty interacting.

TABLE 3. DISTRIBUTION OF HOMELESS PEOPLE BY DISABILITY OR DEPENDENCY ISSUES AND LIMITED KNOWLEDGE OF ITALIAN LANGUAGE. Year 2011, percentage composition and absolute values

	Disability or dependency issues	Limited knowledge of Italian language	No disability/dependency issues or limited knowledge of Italian language	Total (=100%)
People with difficulty interacting (PDI)	76.0	24.0	-	4,429
People without difficulty interacting	31.0	26.4	42.6	43,219
Homeless people:	35.2	26.2	38.7	47,648

Majority of male, foreign citizens under the age of 45

Detailed information was collected on those capable of answering the interview, regarding socio-demographic aspects, relations with family, relatives and friends, type of employment, health conditions, use of services and main source of subsistence⁴.

TABLE 4. HOMELESS PEOPLE (NET OF PDI) BY CITIZENSHIP AND OTHER CHARACTERISTICS. Year 2011, percentage composition and absolute values

	Foreign citizen	Italian	Total
Gender			
Male	87.6	86.2	87.0
Female	12.4	13.9	13.0
Age group			
18-34	46.5	10.4	31.8
35-44	27.7	22.0	25.3
45-54	17.4	30.3	22.7
55-64	7.0	26.5	14.9
65 or over	*	10.9	5.3
Qualification			
None	11.2	*	9.1
Primary school	13.4	19.3	15.8
Lower secondary school	32.3	51.5	40.1
Secondary school or higher	43.1	23.1	35.0
Duration of homelessness			
Less than 1 month	17.8	11.7	15.3
1 to 3 months	16.4	12.8	15.0
3 to 6 months	15.5	7.6	12.3
6 to 12 months	17.1	15.5	16.4
1 to 2 years	14.7	14.9	14.8
2 to 4 years	9.2	13.6	11.0
more than 4 years	9.3	24.0	15.3
Homes			
Never had a home	9.2	5.1	7.5
Where they lived before becoming homeless			
At home	57.5	73.2	63.9
With relatives or friends	18.7	11.5	15.8
Other	23.7	15.3	20.3
Total (=100%)	25,658	17,561	43,219

* Irrelevant data due to low number of samples

⁴ The analyses presented below (tables 4 to 14) refer only to homeless people capable of answering the interview.

On average, homeless people were aged 42.2; around a third (31.8%) were under the age of 35 and only 5.3% were over 64. Foreign citizens are younger than Italians (36.9 against 49.9 years): nearly half (46.5%) were under the age of 35, while 10.9% of Italians were over the age 64. The age difference also meant that the duration of homelessness tended to be higher among Italians: around half the foreign citizens (49.7%) had been homeless for less than six months, against a third (32%) of Italians; while "only" 9.3% had been homeless for at least four years, against a quarter (24%) of Italians. Overall, the result was an average duration of homelessness of 2.5 years, lower for foreign citizens (1.6 years) and higher for Italians (3.9 years).

The fact that homeless foreign citizens tended to be younger was also linked to higher average levels of education: as many as 43.1% had at least a secondary school diploma (9.3% had a university degree) against 23.1% of Italians; nonetheless, 6.1% of foreign citizens stated that they were illiterate. More than half the Italian citizens (51.5%) had no more than compulsory schooling (lower secondary school diploma).

Among the homeless, 7.5% stated that they had never had a home; of these, similar numbers stated that before becoming homeless, they had lived with friends and/or relatives, in a travellers' camp or similar or who lived in shared lodgings, institutions for minors, disabled or other. These were mainly foreign citizens (72.3%) or younger people (the average age was of 37.4); 28.8% had been homeless for at least two years, 58.5% lived alone and 30.7% with friends or relatives.

Before becoming homeless, 63.9% lived in their own home, a percentage which rose to 73.2% among Italians. Moreover, 58% of Italians were living as homeless people in a different municipality to that where they had a home in the past and 43.8% had also changed province; these were usually transfers to larger cities: for example, 8% had moved to Milano and 10% to Roma.

Out of the foreign citizens, 20% were already homeless before arriving in Italy, 41.4% stated that their last home was abroad and the remaining 38.6% in Italy. Around half of the latter stated that their last home was in a different municipality to that where they were living as homeless people.

More than a quarter are in employment, particularly occasional or temporary work

28.3% of homeless people stated that they were in employment⁵: in most cases, in short term, occasional or temporary positions (24.5%); they worked in low-qualified jobs in the services sector (8.6% of homeless people worked as porters, transporters, loading/unloading goods or collecting waste, gardeners, window cleaners, dish washers, etc.), in construction (4% worked as bricklayers, labourers, construction workers, etc.), in the various manufacturing sectors (3.4% as labourers, carpenters, steel workers, bakers, etc.) and in the cleaning sector (3.8%).

TABLE 5. HOMELESS PEOPLE (NET OF PDI) BY CITIZENSHIP AND EMPLOYMENT.

Year 2011, percentage composition and absolute values

	Foreign citizen	Italian	Total
Employed	27.8	29.2	28.3
<i>Short term, occasional or temporary position</i>	24.2	25.1	24.5
<i>Has a stable position</i>	3.6	4.1	3.8
Unemployed	72.2	70.8	71.7
<i>Had a stable position in the past</i>	23.7	28.6	25.7
<i>Had a short term, occasional or temporary position in the past</i>	40.8	36.8	39.3
<i>Never been employed</i>	7.7	5.4	6.7
Total (=100%)	25,658	17,561	43,219

On average, those who did have a job worked for 13 days each month (37.6% for fewer than 10 days and 32.2% for 20 days or more) and earned €347 per month (around a quarter earned less than €100 and nearly a third earned more than €500). There were no particular differences found between Italians and foreign citizens.

⁵ For the definition of employment, please refer to the glossary on page 14.

71.7% of homeless people did not work at all; however, only 6.7% had never had a job (a quarter of these were female, two thirds were foreign citizens and under the age of 35). In fact, 61.9% of homeless people had lost a stable job due to redundancy and/or the closure of the firm (22.3%), the failure of their own business (14.3%) or health reasons (7.6%). Among those who had lost a stable job, the majority did not work (55.3%) and 44.8% did short term, temporary or occasional work.

TABLE 6. HOMELESS PEOPLE (NET OF PDI) IN EMPLOYMENT BY CITIZENSHIP, NUMBER OF DAYS OF EMPLOYMENT AND MONTHLY EARNINGS. Year 2011, percentage composition and absolute values

	Foreign citizen	Italian	Total
Days of employment per month			
Less than 10 days	40.4	33.8	37.6
10 to 19 days	32.1	27.6	30.2
20 days or more	27.5	38.6	32.2
<i>Average number of days of employment per month</i>	12	14	13
Monthly earnings			
Less than €100	26.0	21.3	24.1
€100 to €499	47.2	49.7	48.2
€500 or more	26.7	29.1	27.7
<i>Average monthly earnings</i>	349	342	347
People employed (=100%)	7,126	5,120	12,246

More than half of homeless people (51.5%) stated that they did not work because they couldn't find a job, around a tenth (9.8%) for health reasons and around 3% due to justice issues (3.3%) or the inability to get regular permits (2.7%); problems in finding work (57.8%) and issues associated with work permits (4.6%) were more common among foreign citizens. The older average age of the Italian component, however, was reflected in a higher number of people not working due to health reasons (12.9%) or age limits (3.9%).

53% received financial aid from family, friends or volunteer associations

17.9% of homeless people did not have any source of income, 28.3% stated they received employment income, 9% received a pension and 8.7% received benefits from a public institution; lastly, 27.2% stated that they had received money from relatives, friends or family and 37% from strangers (collection, volunteer associations or other). Therefore, the majority of homeless people (53.4%) receive financial aid from the support network of family, friends or volunteer associations, which in many cases represent their only source of subsistence; in fact, 57.6% declared that they had a single source of income. In particular, 16.5% of homeless people rely on a single employment income, 5.9% on a pension, 3.8% on public benefits; 11.4% only receive aid from family, friends or relatives and 20% from strangers (collection, volunteer associations or other).

Around a quarter of homeless people (24.5%) stated that they had two or more sources of income; only 11.8% had an employment income and only 4.2% had a pension or other public benefits; the rest relied on a combination of aid from family, friends, relatives or strangers.

TABLE 7. HOMELESS PEOPLE (NET OF PDI) BY CITIZENSHIP AND INCOME SOURCE.
Year 2011, percentage composition and absolute values

	Foreign citizen	Italian	Total
Source of income			
No source of income	22.1	11.8	17.9
Single source of income	56.2	59.6	57.6
Two or more sources of income	21.7	28.6	24.5
Type of income			
Employment	27.8	29.2	28.3
<i>Only employment income</i>	17.0	15.8	16.5
Pension	*	19.3	9.0
<i>Only pension income</i>	*	12.7	5.9
Municipal or other public benefits	6.1	12.4	8.7
<i>Only municipal or other public benefits</i>	3.4	*	3.8
Family, friends or relatives	29.5	24.0	27.2
<i>Only family, friends or relatives</i>	13.8	8.1	11.4
People I don't know (collection) or volunteers, other sources	37.3	36.5	37.0
<i>Only people I don't know (collection) or volunteers, other sources</i>	20.8	18.7	20.0
Total (=100%)	25,658	17,561	43,219

* Irrelevant data due to low number of samples

Loss of employment and separation are the most important factors

The loss of employment was one of the most important factors in the gradual process of social exclusion that leads to "homelessness", along with separation from spouses and/or children and, to a more limited extent, health issues. As many as 61.9% of homeless people had lost a stable employment position, 59.5% had separated from their spouse and/or children and 16.2% stated they were in bad or very bad health. Moreover, very few had not experienced any or only one of these events, confirming the fact that homelessness is caused by a combination of factors.

TABLE 8. HOMELESS PEOPLE (NET OF PDI) BY CITIZENSHIP AND LIFE EVENTS.
Year 2011, percentage composition and absolute values

	Foreign citizen	Italian	Total
Type of event			
Disease	13.7	19.8	16.2
Separation from spouse and/or children	54.4	67.0	59.5
Loss of stable employment	55.9	70.6	61.9
Number of events			
None	23.9	11.7	18.9
Only one:	35.1	31.0	33.4
<i>Disease</i>	*	*	2.2
<i>Separation from spouse and/or children</i>	15.5	12.5	14.3
<i>Loss of stable employment</i>	17.4	16.3	16.9
More than one:	41.0	57.3	47.7
<i>Separation from spouse and/or children and loss of stable employment</i>	29.7	39.7	33.7
<i>Disease, separation from spouse and/or children or loss of stable employment</i>	4.7	5.9	5.3
<i>Disease, separation from spouse and/or children and loss of stable employment</i>	6.7	11.7	8.7
Total (=100%)	25,658	17,561	43,219

* Irrelevant data due to low number of samples

Around one third of homeless people (33.4%) had experienced only one event (14.3% separation, 16.9% loss of stable employment and 2.2% disease), which in most cases pre-dated the condition of homelessness (10.6% in the case of separation and 11.2% in the case of loss of employment).

TABLE 9. HOMELESS PEOPLE (NET OF PDI) BY CITIZENSHIP AND RELATIONS WITH RELATIVES AND FRIENDS.
Year 2011, percentage composition and absolute values

	Foreign citizen	Italian	Total
Who do you live with?			
Alone	71.9	78.3	74.5
With children and/or spouse/partner	7.6	*	8.4
With other family and/or friends	20.5	12.1	17.1
Contact with family			
Yes	78.3	58.6	70.3
<i>I only hear from them</i>	35.5	7.8	24.3
<i>I see them</i>	42.8	50.8	46.0
No	21.7	41.4	29.7
Friends			
Yes	71.0	76.2	73.1
<i>All homeless people</i>	13.8	*	12.4
<i>At least one with their own home</i>	57.2	65.8	60.7
No	29.0	23.8	26.9
Total (=100%)	25,658	17,561	43,219

* Irrelevant data due to low number of samples

The lifestyle of homeless people is reflected in the fact that three quarters lived alone (78.3% of Italians and 71.9% of foreign citizens); the foreign citizens were more likely to live with family other than spouses or children, or with friends (20.5% against 12.1%); while only a very small number lived with their partner, spouse and/or children.

As many as 78.3% of foreign citizens stated that they were in contact with a family member: however, 35.5% had contact only through the internet or by telephone or letter (essentially with parents, spouses and/or children), only 42.8% stated that they managed to see their family and 21.5% did so less than once a year. The number of Italians who had family contact fell to 58.6%; nonetheless, 50.8% stated that they did see them (only 7.8% did so through the internet, by telephone or letter), 8.8% saw them less than once a year and 14% saw them at least once a week and the same number one or more times each month.

In terms of maintaining relations with people who have their own home, "living" in their country of origin only appeared to have limited benefits for Italians: 76.2% stated they had friends and 66% had non-homeless friends; for foreign citizens, the percentages were 71% and 57% respectively. Reliance on aid from relatives and/or friends also appeared to be equally common among Italians (41.8%) and foreign citizens (40.3%); in particular, 26.5% of homeless people stated they had received financial aid (24.8% of Italians and 27.7% of foreigners), 17.8% had been donated food (18.4% and 17.4%) and 14.5% had been offered free hospitality (15.2% and 14.0%).

About 9 out of 10 rely on canteens

In the 12 months prior to the interview, in addition to the services provided where the interview took place, 89.4% of homeless people had used at least one canteen service, 71.2% had used a night-time shelter and 63.1% a shower and personal hygiene service (with lower percentages for the use of medical services, day-time shelters and street units). No significant differences were observed between Italians and foreign citizens in the use of night or day-time shelters or food parcel distribution services; however, the foreign citizens made more use of canteen (91.3% against 86.5%) and personal hygiene services (67.5% against 56.7%), also due to the greater frequency with which they were forced to sleep on the street, in other public spaces or in make-shift lodgings.

TABLE 10. HOMELESS PEOPLE (NET OF PDI) BY CITIZENSHIP AND TYPE OF SERVICES ^(a) USED IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS. Year 2011, percentage composition and absolute values

	Foreign citizen	Italian	Total
At least one:	99.8	99.7	99.8
<i>Distribution of food parcels</i>	37.4	45.6	40.8
<i>Canteens</i>	91.3	86.5	89.4
<i>Distribution of clothes</i>	61.4	59.4	60.6
<i>Distribution of medicines</i>	35.1	31.1	33.5
<i>Personal hygiene (showers/baths)</i>	67.5	56.7	63.1
<i>Street units (mini-buses, vans, etc.)</i>	27.6	27.7	27.6
<i>Night-time shelters</i>	67.2	77.1	71.2
<i>Day-time shelters</i>	31.5	39.6	34.8
<i>Other</i>	31.9	41.2	35.7
At least one:	76.1	88.0	80.9
<i>Employment services</i>	45.2	44.8	45.0
<i>Bureaucratic services</i>	23.7	32.1	27.1
<i>Social services</i>	30.3	53.7	39.8
<i>Health services</i>	48.2	64.1	54.7
<i>Other services</i>	4.2	*	4.2
Total (=100%)	25,658	17,561	43,219

* Irrelevant data due to low number of samples

(a) For details, please refer to the Glossary on page 14.

Nearly half (45%) of the homeless people had used employment services (without any substantial differences between Italians and foreign citizens), while Italians tended to make greater use of social services (53.7% against 30.3% of foreign citizens) and health services (64.1% against 48.2%). This latter percentage was linked to the fact that Italians were older on average: nearly a fifth (19.8%) stated that they were in bad or very bad health, which rose to 22.3% for Italians aged between 35 and 64. Comparison with the overall level in the resident population in Italy, where the percentage of people in bad or very bad health was of 5.7%, also clearly showed how the Italian component of homeless people was in worse health conditions on average, even accounting for age.

TABLE 11. HOMELESS PEOPLE (NET OF PDI) BY CITIZENSHIP AND PLACES WHERE THEY WERE FORCED TO SLEEP IN THE MONTH BEFORE THE INTERVIEW. Year 2011, percentage composition and absolute values

	Foreign citizen	Italian	Total
On the street, in parks or public areas	44.2	36.2	41.0
Rail or metro stations	29.3	22.9	26.7
Cars, mobile homes, wagons	22.9	22.5	22.8
Shacks, warehouses, abandoned buildings	25.8	*	22.0
Night-time shelters	58.4	65.6	61.3
Night and day-time shelters	20.1	30.5	24.4
Total (=100%)	25,658	17,561	43,219

* Irrelevant data due to low number of samples

In the month before the interview, 61.3% of homeless people had used a night-time shelter and 24.4% had also used a day-time shelter: 41% were forced to sleep in an outdoor public space at least once and 26.7% in an indoor public space; around a quarter had slept in a vehicle, shack or abandoned building. Foreign citizens, more than Italians, were more likely to have been forced to sleep in public spaces (73.5% against 59.1%) or make-shift lodgings (48.7% against 39.0%).

TABLE 12. HOMELESS PEOPLE (NET OF PDI) BY CITIZENSHIP AND NUMBER OF TIMES THEY HAD USED A SERVICE IN THE PREVIOUS WEEK. Year 2011, percentage composition

	Foreign citizen	Italian	Total
Lunch services			
Never	32.0	42.8	36.4
1 to 5 times	24.2	20.3	22.6
6 to 7 times	43.9	36.9	41.0
<i>Average number of times</i>	3.7	3.2	3.5
Dinner services			
Never	54.2	65.2	58.6
1 to 5 times	23.5	15.9	20.4
6 to 7 times	22.4	19.0	21.0
<i>Average number of times</i>	2.1	1.6	1.9
Accommodation services			
Never	55.4	46.1	51.6
1 to 5 times	9.8	9.4	9.7
6 to 7 times	34.8	44.5	38.7
<i>Average number of times</i>	2.7	3.4	3.0

In the week before the interview, on average homeless people had used lunch services 3.5 times, dinner services 1.9 times and an accommodation service 3 times; in other words, they ate half of their lunches and less than a third of their dinners in a canteen and they spent around half their nights in a shelter. However, behaviours varied considerably between individuals: more than a third (36.4%) did not use any service at lunch time and 58.6% at dinner. In particular, 29.7% did not have lunch or dinner in a canteen; this percentage refers to people who were working (and could probably afford to buy their own food and had a limited amount of time to spend queuing and eating in a canteen), who accessed food parcel distribution services or who ate on the street or in public bars or shops, often free of charge. On the other hand, 41% had at least 6 lunches at a canteen (33% always in the same canteen), 21% had dinner there (19% always in the same canteen) and 38.7% slept in a shelter (37.6% always in the same one).

In general, we observed a tendency to return to the same service: only 10.6% visited more than one canteen at lunch and only 3.3% for dinner (less than 2% for night-time shelters).

TABLE 13. HOMELESS PEOPLE (NET OF PDI) BY CITIZENSHIP AND TYPE OF SERVICES (a) USED IN THE LAST WEEK. Year 2011, percentage composition and absolute values

	Foreign citizen	Italian	Total
Type of service			
At least one institutional service	55.0	52.9	54.1
At least one formal service	33.8	38.5	35.7
At least one informal service	21.8	20.8	21.4
Total (=100%)	25,658	17,561	43,219

(a) Please refer to Glossary on page 14.

Given the varying range of services offered in the territory in terms of institutional, formal and informal services (ref. Services for Homeless People - Istat Note dated 3 November 2011), more than half the homeless people (54.1%) had used at least one institutional service in the week before the interview, more than a third (35.7%) accessed formal services and around a fifth (21.4%) informal services.

Around 6,000 were women, with similar characteristics to men

Women represented 13.1% of the homeless, with very similar characteristics to those observed among men. 10% of women had difficulty interacting (622 women), and 43.3% of those who did not have difficulty were Italian. The most common foreign countries of origin were Romania at 36.6% and the Ukraine, Bulgaria and Poland, which represented a joint 19.6% of female foreign citizens; more than a quarter (27.4%) were over the age of 55 (the average age was of 45.1) and around a fifth (21.9%) had been homeless for less than a month (14.6% had been homeless for four years or more). A quarter (25.3%) stated that they had a job, which employed them for an average of 14 days each month and provided them with an income of around €314.

Living with spouses or children was more frequent among women (31.4%) and this led to a higher percentage who slept in shelters (75.4%), where they often also had their meals - hence the reduced use of canteens, which 24% of the women stated they had never used over the last 12 months. However, this did not protect them from being involved in fights or acts of violence: 11.4% (a very similar percentage to that observed among men) stated that they had been involved in this kind of situation over the last 12 months. 15.1% of homeless men stated that they had been involved in fights or acts of violence, and in most cases these took place in a public place (10.5% on the street and 4.8% in indoor public spaces); only 3.3% stated that the episode took place in a canteen, shelter or community.

Among women, 86.3% had experienced at least one of the events considered to be key factors of becoming homeless: 70.2% had separated from their spouse and/or children (40% from their children), 55.0% had lost stable employment; 26.7% had experienced both the above; as many as 25.6% stated that they were in bad or very bad health.

TABLE 14. FEMALE HOMELESS PEOPLE (NET OF PDI) BY SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS. Year 2011, absolute values and percentage composition

	Absolute values	Percentage composition
Citizenship		
Foreign	3,184	56.7
Italian	2,432	43.3
Who do you live with?		
Alone	3,167	56.4
With children and/or spouse/partner	1,762	31.4
With other family and/or friends	*	*
Employment situation		
Employed	1,421	25.3
Unemployed	4,195	74.7
Never been employed	*	*
Type of event experienced		
Disease	1,437	25.6
Separation from spouse and/or children	3,943	70.2
Loss of stable employment	3,090	55.0
Number of events experienced		
None	*	*
Only one:	2,061	36.7
<i>Separation from spouse and/or children</i>	1,281	22.8
More than one:	2,786	49.6
<i>Separation from spouse and/or children and loss of stable employment</i>	1,502	26.7
Total (=100%)	5,616	100.0

* Irrelevant data due to low number of samples

Methodology notes

The survey of homeless people was part of a research project on the condition of people living in extreme poverty, conducted following an agreement between Istat, the Ministry of Education and Social Policy, the Italian Federation of Associations for the Homeless (fio.PSD) and the Italian Caritas organisation.

The survey was conducted using a different methodology to that usually applied by Istat in surveys of households and individuals, given the lack of any pre-existing list of the population in question. According to the methodology based on the theory of indirect sampling, it is possible to use a population indirectly linked to the subject of the study and for which a sample list does exist as a base.

In this specific case, for the study of homeless people, the sample base was represented by the services offered (meals distributed and accommodation places) by certain types of providers (canteens and night-time shelters). The list of services was constructed in two phases, prior to the survey of homeless people: i) a census of the organisations offering services to the homeless in the largest Italian municipalities; ii) an in-depth survey of the services provided (ref. Services for Homeless People, Istat Note dated 3 November 2011).

The census of services was conducted in 158 Italian municipalities, selected according to their demographic size: all municipalities with a population of over 70,000 (81 municipalities), including Italy's 12 large municipalities - provincial capitals with a population of over 30,000 (37 municipalities) and all municipalities with a population of at least 30,000 in the area surrounding municipalities with a population of over 250,000 (40 municipalities).

We would like to specify that among the services considered, we did not include anti-violence centres, although these centres certainly represent a service for a part of the population which could include the homeless, due to the difficulty of setting up contacts, given their typically high level of security and confidentiality. We therefore reserved the survey of the people using these centres for a later date.

The survey of homeless people represents the third phase of the process, and was conducted over a period of thirty days (21 November - 20 December 2011), in order to include a larger number of service users. The sample design distributed the interviews in a random manner over the opening hours and days of the centres in the month of reference, and included all the centres involved in the two previous phases. We followed a two-phase sample plan, the first stage of which involved selecting the survey days, and the second the services provided.

We estimated the number of homeless people by measuring the number of *links* between each individual interviewed and the services they used in the week immediately preceding the interview: this was done by filling out a weekly diary recorded the individual's visits to the various centres on the reference list. In this way, we ensured that the estimates were accurate and not affected by distortions introduced by counting repeated visitors to the centres more than once during the survey period, and who could otherwise have been recorded as more than one individual.

During the month when the survey was conducted (21 November - 20 December 2011) we recorded 434 visits to night-time shelters, 190 lunches and 85 dinners distributed. The operation involved 43 territorial contacts and 773 interviewers who aimed to interview 4,963 homeless people: 2,875 (57.9%) at canteen services (38.5% at lunch-time and 19.4% at dinner time) and 2,088 (the remaining 42.1%) at night-time shelters (15.8% dormitories, 8.6% residential night-time communities and 8.2% emergency shelters).

7,364 contacts were made, resulting in 4,696 valid interviews (4,233 complete interviews and 463 summary records, filled out for people who were not capable of answering the interview). In general, more than one contact occasion was necessary to obtain each full interview in canteens, as non-homeless people can also use the services on offer. 67% of the contacts took place in canteens, and 33% in night-time shelters.

We succeeded in interviewing 94.6% of the theoretical sample, with slightly higher results for night-time shelters (96.5% against 93.3% in canteens), without any substantial difference noted between types of service (the percentage varied from 94% in self-run accommodation to 98.1% in residential community night-time shelters).

More than half (53%) of the 2,668 contacts which failed to result in an interview were due to the fact that the person contacted was not homeless; a further 27.8% refused to be interviewed and 13% had already been interviewed; the remaining 6.1% of interviews were interrupted. In canteens, the percentage of non-homeless people rose to 63% of contacts and reached 65.8% in lunch-time canteens; the presence of non-homeless people fell to zero in night-time shelters.

The territorial analysis shows that the number of interviews conducted, expressed as a percentage of the theoretical sample, was essentially equal in all areas: from 93.7% in the Centre to 96.5% in the South and Islands; however, note that 56.8% of the theoretical interviews were for services located in the North, 19.7% in the Centre and 23.5% in the South; the territorial difference was even more accentuated for night-time shelters (59.1% in the North, 18.7% in the Centre and 22.2% in the South and Islands). The highest values were recorded in Puglia, Calabria, Sicilia and Sardegna (100%), and the lowest in Veneto, Friuli-Venezia Giulia (around 89%), Campania (84%) and Marche (71%). The Centre was characterised by the lowest number of refusals out of the contacts which did not result in an interview, of only 21% (against 29% and 27% in the North and South and Islands) and by the highest number of interrupted interviews (15.9% against 5.7% and 4.1%).

The percentage of contacts with non-homeless people rose when moving from North to South (from 48.6% in the North to 56.3% in the Centre and 60.5% in the South and Islands), while contact with people who had already been interviewed was considerably higher in the North (16.6% against 6.9% in the Centre and 7.9% in the South and Islands).

Lastly, in addition to refusals by some of the individuals contacted, some of the services also refused to participate: in total, 39 (22 night-time shelters, 11 lunch-time canteens and 6 dinner-time canteens) refused, for a total of 208 failed interviews.

A time delay between the survey of services (2010, early 2011) resulting in the data published in November (Services for the Homeless, Year 2011) and the survey of homeless people (November-December 2011) led to a change in the number of services operating in the territory. 81 services left the field of observation in this period: 43 of these closed their activities or moved to a municipality not included in the 158 of interest, and 38 changed their target users or did not have homeless people among their users. 54 new structures also joined the field: 18 night-time shelters, 21 lunch canteens and 15 dinner canteens.

Glossary

Homeless person: a person is considered to be homeless if they are in a state of material and immaterial poverty, associated with severe housing deprivation, i.e. the impossibility and/or incapacity to independently find and maintain a home. With reference to the ETHOS classification (European Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion), as set down by the European Observatory on Homelessness, the definition covers all those who live in: public spaces (on the streets, in shacks, abandoned vehicles, mobile homes or warehouses); a night-time dormitory and/or are forced to spend many hours of the day in a public space (outdoors); live in shelters for the homeless/temporary lodgings; lodgings provided in support of those in specific social situations (for singles, couples or groups with no fixed abode). It excludes anyone: living in overcrowded conditions, receiving guaranteed hospitality from friends or relatives or living in occupied lodgings or structured camps present in cities.

Service: a type of benefit provided in a certain location. Individual services must be provided: i) separately from any other services (it must be possible to identify the physical location, time and staff by whom it is provided); ii) continuously or repeatedly over time (for example, a group of volunteers who independently decide to provide a one-off distribution of used clothes to homeless people sleeping in a station is not a service, nor is a parish priest donating clothes left to him by his parishioners to the homeless); iii) socially recognised and accessible (potential users must be able to find information on the existence and way of accessing the service).

Types of services:

Distribution of food parcels - structures which distribute free support in the form of food parcels rather than meals to be eaten on-site.

Distribution of clothes - structures which distribute free clothes and shoes.

Distribution of medicines - structures which distribute medical supplies (with or without prescription).

Personal hygiene (showers/baths) - structures which provide free use of personal hygiene services.

Canteens - structures that offer free meals to be eaten in the place where they are distributed, and where access is usually subject to limitations.

Street units (mini-buses, vans, etc.) - mobile units that perform research activities and make contact with people in need of assistance in their place of abode (usually on the street).

Night-time shelters: these include *emergency shelters* (providing night-time accommodation set up only at certain times of year, usually in response to weather conditions); *dormitories* (run throughout the year, offering accommodation only during the night); *semi-residential communities* (offering temporary night-time and day-time accommodation and activities); *residential communities* (guaranteeing long-term accommodation on the premises, including during the day, and which also provide social and educational support), *protected accommodation* (with limited outside access and which usually have constant or regular access to on-site social workers); *self-run accommodation* (accommodation allowing users considerable independence in managing residential space/third stage accommodation).

Institutional service: a service provided either directly by a public institution or structured and managed by associations, foundations or social cooperatives and supported by public financing (conventions, tenders, etc.).

Formal service: structured and managed by associations, foundations or social cooperatives.

Informal service: a service which is provided spontaneously, while meeting the requirements of being provided on a regular and socially recognised basis.

Employment: any activity performed in exchange for monetary payment or fee. This study considers the concept of employment in the widest possible sense, without necessarily referring to any institutional connotation or being based on a contract; it therefore also includes irregular employment.