

Annual report 2018

# Homelessness in Finland 2017

5 March 2018

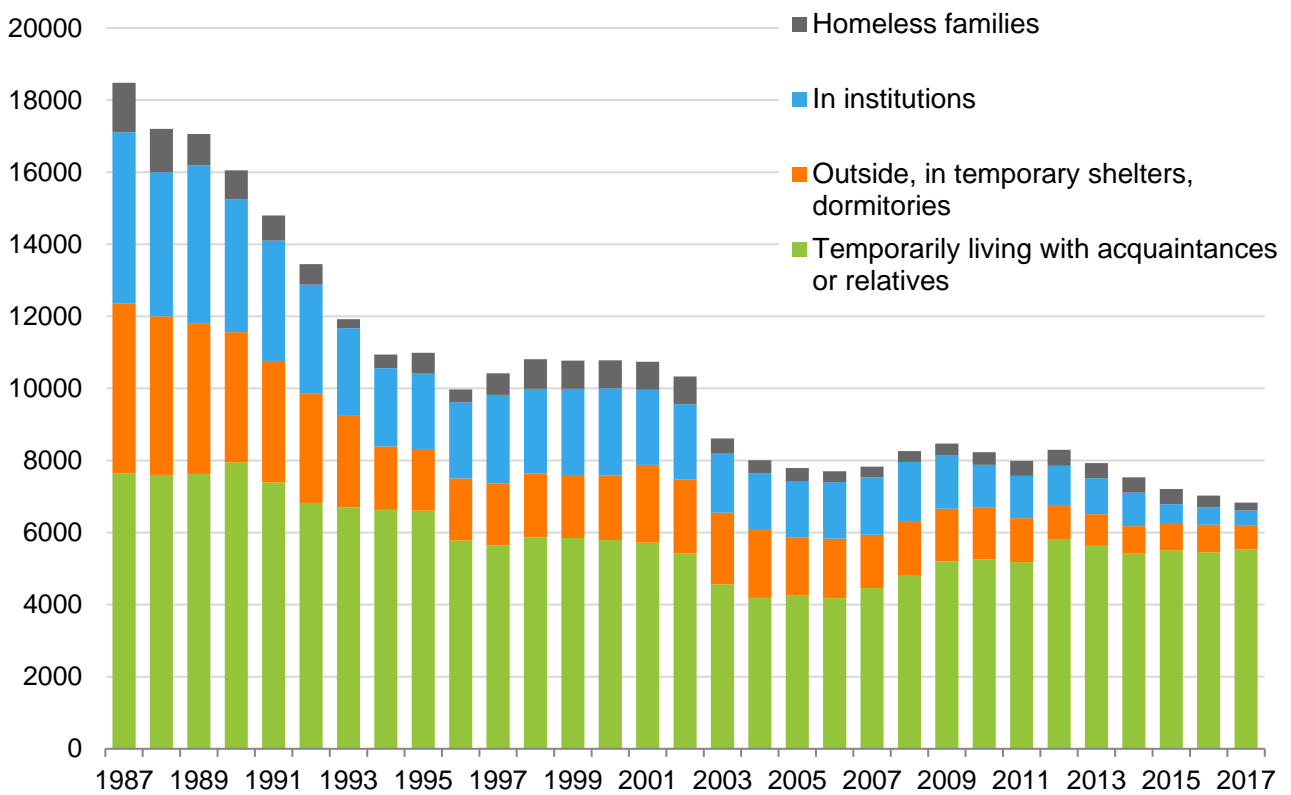


Figure 1. The number of homeless people for the period 1987-2017.

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## REPORT 2/2018: HOMELESSNESS IN FINLAND 2017

This report includes the essential statistical data on homelessness in Finnish municipalities in 2017. The report discusses the development of homelessness by making comparisons with figures from the previous year. The cut-off point for this statistical comparison was 15 November 2017. The data is based on ARA's housing market survey which was responded by 278 municipalities of the 295 municipalities of Mainland Finland in 2017. The different forms of homelessness and the different categories of homeless are discussed separately.

Annex 1 includes the definitions of homelessness and Annex 2 includes the municipality-specific homelessness statistics of 2017.

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## SUMMARY

### In 2017:

- There were 7,112 homeless people in Finland. 6,615 of these people lived alone and 497 had families.
- The number of homeless people decreased by 331 people. 2017 was the fifth consecutive year in which the number of homeless decreased.
- The number of long-term homeless decreased by 154 people.
- There were 214 homeless families, which is 111 families less than in 2016.
- There were homeless people in 113 municipalities, and the highest numbers of homeless were reported in the Capital Region (Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa) and in Turku, in which there were 452 homeless people.
- More than half of Finland's homeless live in Helsinki (3,760).
- Homelessness among young people increased by 186 people. Of these, 100 lived in Helsinki and 37 in Turku.
- The number of homeless people who live alone and temporarily reside with acquaintances or relatives is the highest both relatively (84%) and absolutely (5,528).

## 1 HOMELESSNESS IN 2017 REPORT

The annual Homelessness report of ARA, the Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland, addresses developments in homelessness by making comparisons with figures from the previous year. The cut-off point for this statistical comparison was 15 November 2017. The data is based on ARA's housing market survey which was responded by 278 municipalities of the 295 municipalities of Mainland Finland in 2017. The response rate was 94.2%. The definitions of homelessness used in this report are described at the end of the report (Appendix 1).

The municipalities' data on homelessness has been collected from various sources, such as data on rental apartment applicants, social service customer data and service provider customer data. Some municipalities have also used the population register and other registers based on personal identity codes for determining the figures. When examining the homelessness figures, it should be noted that the data collecting methods vary municipality-specifically, and the figures are not completely comparable with those of 2016.

In addition, the duty to manage the payment of the basic amount of social assistance was transferred from municipalities to the Social Insurance Institution of Finland (Kela) in early 2017, which means that Kela, too, has had data on homelessness. This caused difficulties for municipalities in collecting data on homelessness as in some localities, the operator which possesses data on homelessness is Kela. Some municipalities have expressed the wish to systematise future data collection on homelessness to Kela, for example.

## 2 DECREASE IN HOMELESSNESS CONTINUES

At the end of 2017, there were 7,112 homeless people in Finland. Of these, 6,615 lived alone and 1,893 were long-term homeless. There were 214 homeless families.

In comparison to the previous year, homelessness decreased by 331 people; the number of homeless who live alone decreased by 69 people and the number of long-term homeless decreased by 154 people. The number of homeless families decreased by 111 families in comparison to 2016.

Table 1. Different forms of homelessness in 2017.

	2017		Change year-on-year	
	Homeless people who live alone	of which long-term homeless	Homeless people who live alone	of which long-term homeless
<b>Homeless people</b>				
Outside, in staircases, shelters etc.	415	185	- 10	+ 1
In dormitories, boarding houses	244	65	- 87	- 60
Institutional units	428	168	- 45	- 16
Temporarily with friends or relatives	5,528	1,475	+ 73	- 79
<b>Homeless people who live alone, total</b>	<b>6,615</b>	<b>1,893</b>	<b>- 69</b>	<b>- 154</b>
Homeless women	1,538	428	- 16	+ 2
Young people under 25 years	1,585	322	+ 186	+ 29
Immigrants	1,742	496	- 61	- 30
	<b>Number</b>		<b>Change year-on-year</b>	
<b>Homeless families</b>	214		- 111	
Families with children	193		- 80	
Immigrant families with children	138		- 72	
	102		- 84	
<b>Homeless who live alone and homeless families, total</b>	<b>7,112</b>		<b>- 331</b>	

### 3 HOMELESSNESS DECREASED IN THE CAPITAL REGION

In ARAs survey, 113 municipalities in Mainland Finland reported homelessness in 2017. More than half of Finland's homeless people live in Helsinki. In the Capital Region, homelessness decreased in Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa. In Turku, the number of homeless people increased by 117 people. Homelessness increased also in Kuopio, Nurmijärvi, Oulu and Pori.

Long-term homelessness decreased in most large cities.

Table 2. Municipalities with the highest number of homeless people in 2017.

	Homelessness in 2017			Change in comparison to 2016		
	Total (% of people in the municipality*)	Living alone	Long-term homeless	Total	Living alone	Long-term homeless
<b>Helsinki</b>	3760 (0,6)	3500	1 130	- 230	0	0
<b>Espoo</b>	653 (0,2)	567	153	- 20	- 3	- 46
<b>Turku</b>	452 (0,2)	452	113	+117	+ 117	+ 11
<b>Vantaa</b>	256 (0,1)	222	26	- 69	- 62	- 10
<b>Tampere</b>	223 (0,1)	202	53	- 32	- 23	+ 1
<b>Jyväskylä</b>	131 (0,1)	131	30	- 7	+ 3	- 19
<b>Kuopio</b>	128 (0,1)	126	29	+ 15	+ 16	- 16
<b>Nurmijärvi</b>	98 (0,2)	98	0	+ 65	+ 79	0
<b>Oulu</b>	97 (0,1)	92	30	+ 57	+ 54	+ 12
<b>Pori</b>	90 (0,1)	88	44	+ 22	+ 22	+ 6
<b>Kerava</b>	60 (0,2)	56	25	- 1	- 5	- 27

\*The percentage of homeless people in relation to the municipality's population is based on the municipalities' populations in 2016.

Table 3. Municipalities with the highest number of homeless people in 2017, categories of homeless.

	Number of homeless people (change in comparison to 2016)				
	Young, under 25	Women	Immigrants	Families - persons	Families - households
<b>Helsinki</b>	800 (100)	900 (-45)	1400 (0)	260 (-230)	130 (-70)
<b>Espoo</b>	145 (1)	112 (-12)	127 (-32)	86 (-17)	28 (-11)
<b>Turku</b>	107 (37)	98 (30)	81 (36)	0 (0)	0 (0)
<b>Vantaa</b>	51 (-27)	56 (-16)	33 (-39)	34 (-7)	12 (-3)
<b>Tampere</b>	41 (-21)	52 (-4)	32 (10)	21 (-9)	10 (-6)
<b>Jyväskylä</b>	34 (9)	29 (0)	3 (-1)	0 (-10)	0 (-4)
<b>Kuopio</b>	37 (9)	19 (-8)	7 (3)	2 (-1)	1 (0)
<b>Nurmijärvi</b>	20 (15)	36 (31)	4 (4)	0 (-14)	0 (-5)
<b>Oulu</b>	30 (27)	12 (7)	4 (2)	5 (3)	2 (1)
<b>Pori</b>	15 (10)	9 (-2)	3 (0)	2 (0)	1 (0)
<b>Kerava</b>	30 (26)	10 (6)	3 (2)	4 (4)	2 (2)

#### 4 HOMELESSNESS AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE INCREASED

The number of homeless young people under the age of 25 increased by 186 people in comparison to the previous year. One fifth of these homeless were long-term homeless. In Helsinki, the number of homeless young people increased by 100 people and in Turku, by 37 people.

The homelessness of women and immigrants decreased in the whole of Finland. The share of women decreased by 16 people and the share of immigrants decreased by 61. Of homeless women, the percentage of long-term homeless was 28% and of homeless immigrants, 29%. The homelessness of families and couples decreased by 111 households and 262 people.

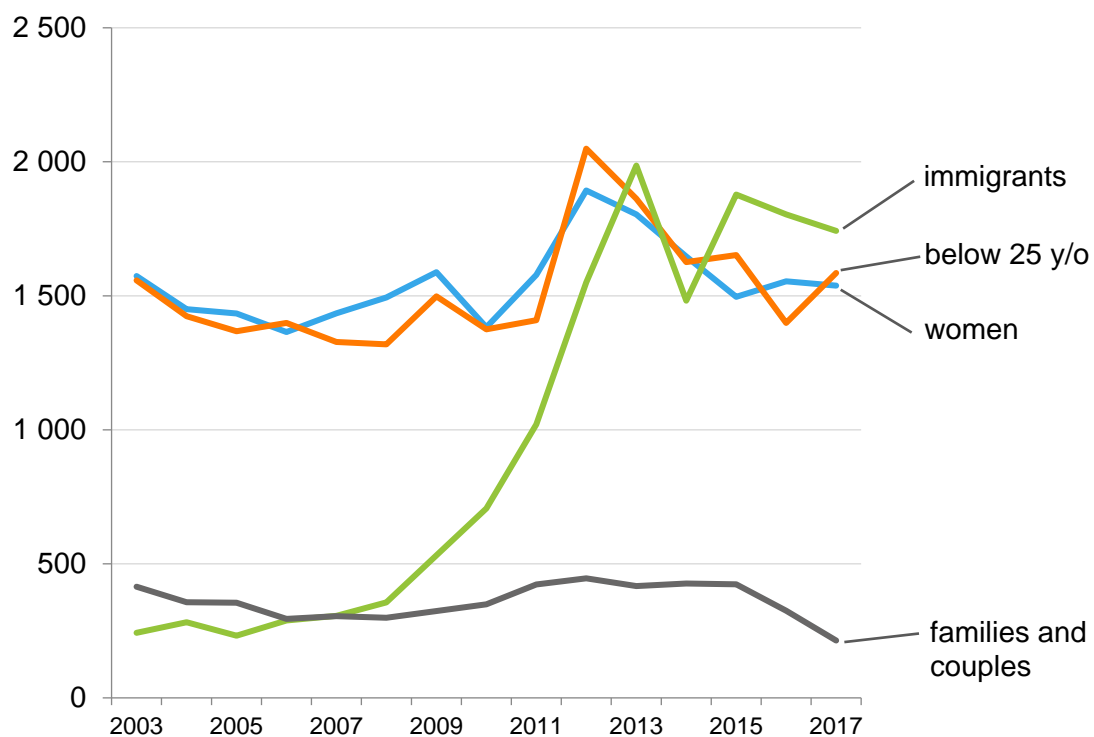


Figure 2. Homelessness in different groups in 2003–2017.

## 5 RELATIVE SHARE OF PEOPLE TEMPORARILY RESIDING WITH OTHERS INCREASED

People temporarily residing with acquaintances or relatives are still the largest group of homeless. The share of this group of homeless people, who live alone, is 84%. The number of single homeless people living outside, in staircases etc. decreased by 10 people. The share of long-term homeless in this group is 45%. The number of people who live in dormitories, boarding houses and various facilities decreased by 132 people. The share of long-term homeless is 35% in this group.

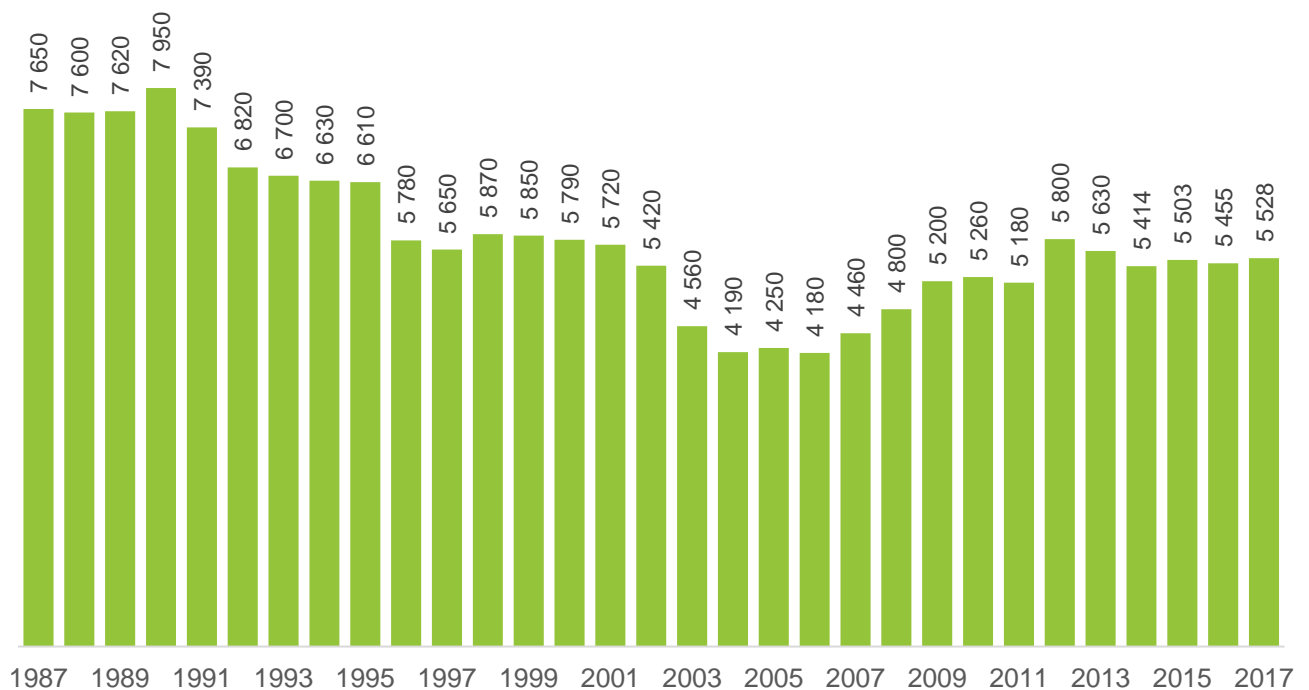


Figure 3. Single homeless people temporarily residing with acquaintances or relatives.

The number of single homeless people temporarily residing with acquaintances or relatives increased by 73 in comparison to the previous year. In the past few years, there have been only slight yearly changes in the number of people in this group.

However, since 2012, the relative share of this group has increased by approximately 10% as the shares of the other groups (1) *outside, in stairways or overnight shelters*, 2) *in dormitories or boarding houses* and 3) *in welfare home-type housing service units, rehabilitative units, hospitals or other institutions*) have decreased. Different kinds of institutional social welfare and health care units' capacity to house homeless people has been decreased (Mikkola et al. 2015), and as per the homelessness programmes, the capacity of dormitory type housing has been decreased by increasing the number of apartments offered for the homeless. There is only a scarce amount of statistical and research data on the group of people residing with acquaintances and families and on their living conditions and situations in life.

## 6 HOMELESSNESS CAN BE DECREASED BY COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMMING

Finland has gained international recognition for its national programmes that aim at decreasing and preventing homelessness. Since 2008, Finnish governments have undertaken to decrease homelessness (PAAVO programmes 2008–2015), and the current government participates in the **Programme of measures for the prevention of homelessness** (AUNE) which will be active from 2016 to 2019.

Developing and strengthening housing advice activities is a central part of the AUNE programme. Housing advice activities have proven to be an effective means of preventing homelessness. Each year, ARA awards housing advice subsidies, as well as participates in the national development of the housing advice activities. Municipalities, associations and organisations that launch and develop these activities can apply for the subsidy. In 2018, a EUR 0.9 million subsidy authorisation was allocated in the Government Budget for housing advice, and the funding percentage was set at a maximum of 35%. Different parties applied for a total of approximately one million euros in funding, and it was granted to 29 projects. This amount allows hiring 60 housing advisers around Finland.

ARA also coordinates the Municipal Strategies to Prevent Homelessness - Early Intervention, Social Inclusion and Supported Housing project, in which Vantaa, Espoo, Tampere, Kuopio, Jyväskylä and Lahti took part. The project is related to the AUNE programme and is funded by the European Social Fund. The project involves creating urban strategies for the prevention of homelessness.

## 7 FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness is affected by various factors; individual reasons related to housing policies and housing production as well as social policies. The rents of apartments have increased in relation to the cost-of-living/consumer price index, especially since 2012 (Statistics Finland 2017). Housing costs are the largest expense of households (e.g. Ilmarinen & Kauppinen et al. 2017). The expensiveness of housing reflects as smaller amount of usable income and weakens the possibilities of reasonable consumption especially in Helsinki (Mukkila & Saikkonen 2018). Low-income people often use social assistance for the housing costs that they cannot cover with the housing allowance, and long-term use of social assistance has increased in the past few years (e.g. Kauppinen et al. 2015). In addition, the housing-related incurring of debt has increased in the past few years (Majamaa et al. 2017). The number of implemented evictions in 2016 was higher than in 2015 (National Administrative Office for Enforcement 2017). The accelerating urbanisation creates pressure on the housing market of larger cities, and in some cities, the housing production has not been able to meet the demand (e.g. Antikainen et al. 2017).

In addition to the homelessness visible in statistics, the existence of undocumented migrants is a phenomenon connected to homelessness. An undocumented migrant is a person, who does not have a legal right of residence and whose residence in Finland is not known to or permitted by the authorities. Different estimates by experts on the number of undocumented migrants in Finland vary between 500 and 3,000 people. The highest estimate on the number of undocumented migrants in Finland at the end of 2017 has it that there are 4,000 undocumented migrants if the so-called new undocumented migrants, i.e. asylum seekers who have not left Finland after receiving a negative decision on asylum, are included in the number. (Jauhiainen et al. 2018, 23–24.) The estimates vary, and an overall conception of the number or life situations of undocumented migrants does not exist. Most of the undocumented migrants reside in the largest cities and in the Capital Region. In Helsinki, for



example, emergency accommodation is arranged through collaboration of the municipality, congregations and organisations. In addition, emergency accommodation is offered to EU area travellers.

### **Municipalities' viewpoints on homelessness**

Municipalities were surveyed about the possible reasons for the decrease or increase of homelessness as well as about the means that municipalities implement in order to decrease homelessness.

#### **Turku**

“The housing shortage has increased, and the city’s housing services cannot allocate apartments as easily as they could before. Non-payment records and earlier unpaid rental debts to the city’s housing service are the greatest obstacles for receiving an apartment. Despite the increase of supported housing, we have not been able to remarkably decrease the homelessness of people who reside by acquaintances and relatives. Transferring the duty to handle the social assistance to Kela may have caused evictions that could not be prevented.”

#### **Espoo**

“In the autumn of 2017, the city started to provide housing advice with two housing advisors as a new activity... The homelessness of families with children has been prevented through housing advice activities. In addition, The Voimapesä project and Espoon Diakoniasäätiö (Espoo church welfare services foundation), for example, have endeavoured to reduce homelessness by offering these families apartments and allowances to help with housing costs.”

#### **Oulu**

“The demand for rental apartments has increased. Getting an apartment from the free rental market is difficult for those who are in the weakest housing-related position.”

#### **Jyväskylä**

“The volume of migration to the city is large: nearly 1,500 new residents per year. Long-term homelessness has slightly decreased but the homelessness of young people has slightly increased through people who reside with acquaintances or friends.”

## Appendix 1. Definitions of homelessness

(ARA's guidelines for municipalities on decreasing homelessness)

A person is considered **homeless**, if they do not have an own home (rented or owned apartment) and if they live

**1. outside, in stairways or overnight shelters,**

**2. in dormitories or boarding houses,**

**3. in welfare home-type housing service units, rehabilitative units, hospitals or other institutions and**

**4. temporarily with acquaintances or relatives due to lack of own home.**

**A long-term homeless person** means a homeless person who has a health-related or social problem that makes housing remarkably more difficult, such as debt, substance or mental health-related problem, and whose homelessness has been prolonged or is in danger to be prolonged because normal housing solutions are not adequate for their situation and because of the lack of suitable support services. Homelessness is considered long-term if it has lasted for at least one year or if the individual has repeatedly experienced homelessness over the last three years. In cases of long-term homelessness, the emphasis is on the need for assistance and treatment – the length of time is of secondary importance.

The category **outside, in stairways or overnight shelters etc.** is used for those without a permanent residence who live in and move between different temporary shelters and locations. People who reside in, for example, dormitory-type housing or in boarding houses with the help of daily social assistance vouchers belong in the category **in dormitories or boarding houses due to the lack of own home**. The category **in welfare home-type housing service units, rehabilitative units, hospitals or other institutions due to the lack of own home** comprises people who reside in, for example, substance treatment service's rehabilitative units, various institutional treatment units, sheltered homes etc. This list does not include separate dwellings that are administered by housing services. A person who temporarily lives in this kind of apartment is not considered homeless.

In welfare home units, individuals *are not considered homeless* if they

- are there permanently for treatment purposes and are not seeking other housing solutions
- have signed a rental agreement with the welfare home or other type of institutional housing unit in which they reside.

Individuals in welfare home units are thus *considered to be homeless* if they have a rental housing application which is currently active.

The category **temporarily with acquaintances or relatives due to the lack of own home** is for those individuals who, according to assessments or municipal data, are living temporarily at, or moving between, the homes of relatives and acquaintances due to not having their own home. **The category does not include young people who live with their parents.**

- It can be assumed that the category **temporarily with acquaintances or relatives** involves the largest number of people who can be offered normal rental apartments through public housing services.
- In the **temporarily with acquaintances or relatives category**, *regarding a person long-term homeless* should be based on social service customership. This would allow determining whether or not the criteria of being long-term homeless are met.
- In addition, 'other solid evidence' on being long-term homeless can be considered a classification criterion. This includes, for example, the concerned person's known history of homelessness.
- Service providers' customer data can also provide information about those long-term homeless people that receive a pension and therefore do not frequent the social welfare office. These may also be young people with substance abuse and mental health problems.

The shares of **women, young people (below 25 years) and those with immigrant background** who live alone will be asked. All homeless people who live alone, who are not Finnish nationals and whose mother tongue is not Finnish or Swedish are considered homeless with immigrant background. Immigration-related information can be obtained from the population register by searching under mother tongue and place of birth.

The category of **families and couples living apart from each other or in temporary housing due to the lack of own home** is for those families and couples that are living apart from each other or in temporary housing because they do not have a shared home. They may therefore be in hostels or hotels or staying with relatives or acquaintances. Families who live in homes for unmarried mothers, sheltered homes and crisis apartments are also considered homeless families. *The number of children and adults belonging to the families* will also be asked. In addition, the share of families with immigrant backgrounds of homeless families will be asked.

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