

**INSTITUTE OF GLOBAL HOMELESSNESS  
HOMELESSNESS IN A GLOBAL LANDSCAPE**

**UNDERSTANDING AND MEASURING HOMELESSNESS IN  
BRASIL**

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## Background

### 1. Brazil

- Current population: 202,033,670
- 26 states and one federal district
- Number of homeless people: 48,843 – in 2007, Ministry of Social Development;
- 0,24 Homeless people per thousand inhabitants.

### 2. City of São Paulo: annual rate of change of the number of homeless people, 2000/2015

Population	2000	2015	Rate of growth per annum
City of São Paulo	10,426,384	11,582,000	0.70%
Street people	5,013	7,335	2.57%
People in homeless accommodation	3,693	8,570	5.77%
Total of homeless people	8,706	15,905	4.10%

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## **Who is considered “homeless” in Brazil**

### **1. How the definition came to be**

- The definition of homeless was conceived so that a methodology could be established for a census of the homeless people in the city of São Paulo which took place in the year 2000. The census was conducted by the Institute of Economic Research Foundation of the University of São Paulo;
- Most surveys regarding the homeless population in Brazil use the same methodology and definition, so the data between them are comparable.

### **2. Definition**

“people who don't have a home and that spend the night in parks, sidewalks, gardens and under awnings and overpasses. Also considered homeless are the individual people or whole families who also don't have a home and spend the night in shelters, regardless of whether the shelter is a private or public initiative”.

# Who is considered “homeless” in Brazil

## 3. Scope of the definition:

- Included in the definition:
  - People living rough;
  - People staying in a night shelter;
  - People in a women’s shelter;
  - People in a family shelter;
  - People in temporary accommodation;
  - People in specific accommodation for immigrants;
  - People in transitory housing facilities;
- Not included in the definition:
  - People living in conventional dwelling unfit for habitation;
  - People living in illegal occupation of land, slums;
  - People living in squatters;
  - People living temporarily with family/friends;
  - People living in residential care for older homeless people;
  - People living in residential care for drug addicts;
- The conditions that characterize housing exclusion are included in the definition of housing deficit and contemplated by the housing policy for low income families (social housing). Policies for homeless people are the responsibility of the social assistance department of each municipality.

## The surveys: methodology and scope

### 1. Carried Censuses

- All the population was taken into account, no sampling process was utilized; windshield surveys are not included in that category;
- The first census was taken in the city of São Paulo in the year 2000. The most recent one was completed in March 2015 , also in São Paulo;
- Research institutes from public universities were responsible for most of the survey data.
- Between the years of 2000 and 2015 several censuses were taken in Brazilian capitals, plus one of national range. :
  - São Paulo: 2000, 2003, 2007, 2009, 2011 e 2015;
  - Belo Horizonte: 2005, 2013;
  - Porto Alegre: 2007, 2011;
  - Recife: 2005;
  - National census: taken in the year 2007, only in capitals and cities with a population larger than 300 thousand people;
- There is an undergoing project to assess the socioeconomic status of homeless people. The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, an agency of the federal government responsible for nationwide collection of data, will be in charge for the project. The goal is to survey every brazilian city with more than 200 thousand inhabitants.

## Carried Censuses

### 2. Methodology: census of the homeless street people

- Snapshot research, through “single contact” approach;
- Urban areas divided into census districts; each district is surveyed in a single night; rural areas not included;
- Fieldwork hours: from 22 (PM) to 4 (AM)
- Approach through the application of “filter” questions to all people found on the streets whose behavior, use of the public space or activities suggests homelessness;
- The filter questions concern the places where they have spent previous nights and their expectations of overnight locations for the near future, consistent with the definition.
- Fieldwork teams go through the areas within the districts which have been previously identified as having or likely to have a homeless population;
- Each team is responsible for an area in each district; their maps and research scripts are prepared according to each área;

## Carried Censuses

### 3. Methodology: Census survey in homeless people accomodation

- Following a list of institutions, provided by the government agency in charge of the policies for homeless populations;
- Private or religious institutions are identified and listed;
- Census survey team members are selected and trained specifically for the work; volunteers and technicians from the hiring entities are not included.

# Survey of the socioeconomic characteristics of the homeless population

## 1. Methodology

- Sample surveys, usually taken after the census research, during a second stage of the process.
- The information obtained through the census enables the definition of the sample, with a defined sampling error and confidence interval.
- The difference between the fieldwork's scope and its duration justifies the use of a sample survey;
- Census survey demands readiness in identifying, locating and counting the population, while surveying socioeconomic characteristics demands longer questionnaires and other time consuming techniques.
- Some surveys obtain the information simultaneously to the census, but it is also through samples;



# Survey of the socioeconomic characteristics of the homeless population

## 2. Obtained information

- Demographic variables: sex, race, age, schooling, citizenship and home state;
- Work and income: Occupation prior to homelessness, current occupation, earned income, nature of employment;
- Housing prior to homelessness: family structure, housing occupancy conditions, homelessness time frame;
- Health: proclaimed diseases, use of medications, access to medical services, proclaimed physical impairments;
- Drug use: type of drug consumed, frequency and admissions to treatment facilities;
- Citizenship: documents, activity in social movements, discriminations suffered, physical and verbal violence suffered;
- The factors which lead people to homelessness are marginally explored, because there is the understanding that their identification requires specific research methodologies and procedures.

## Difficulties in implementing censuses and sample surveys

### 1. On planning:

- Fairly long planning period for surveying the necessary information for the definition of areas to be surveyed;
- Complex sampling scheme;
- Preparation of maps and scripts for the fieldwork stage;
- Selecting and training of fieldwork team members, in order to ensure quality;

### 2. On the execution of fieldwork:

- Difficulty of approaching people on the streets: drug and alcohol consumption;
- Integrity of the fieldwork team members: hired private, unarmed security;
- Complex strategies for coordinating fieldwork.

### 3. Resources

- High research costs;