

Statistical bulletin

# Deaths of homeless people in England and Wales – local authority estimates: 2013 to 2017

Preliminary estimates of the number of deaths of homeless people in England and Wales at local authority level.

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# 1 . Main points

- In 2017, the highest estimated numbers of deaths of homeless people by local authority were in major urban areas such as Manchester and Birmingham.
- The highest estimated rates of deaths of homeless people, relative to the total population of each area, included some smaller towns such as Blackburn with Darwen.
- Local areas in England with the highest deprivation had around nine times more deaths of homeless people relative to their population than the least disadvantaged areas.
- Many more deaths of homeless people occurred in urban areas (574 in 2017) compared with rural areas (only 26).

## 2 . Introduction

In December 2018, we published the first official estimates of the number of [deaths of homeless people in England and Wales](#), in which we estimated that there were 597 deaths in England and Wales in 2017. This report builds on our previous analyses by providing estimates at local authority level for the same period. These new estimates are important because of the need for high-quality health intelligence to inform local homelessness strategies and the most appropriate provision of services.

Deaths of homeless people were identified from the death registration records held by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), and a statistical method called capture-recapture modelling was applied to estimate the most likely number of additional registrations not identified as homeless people. The figures reported here are the total estimated numbers. The method used provides a robust but conservative estimate, so the real numbers may still be higher.

## 3 . Definition of homelessness

Definitions of homelessness exist for different purposes and with variations across the UK for legal and policy reasons. A Government Statistical Service report on homelessness definitions will be published on 28 February 2019.

The meaning of homelessness in this release is not based on a pre-existing definition but follows from the scope for identification of affected individuals in the death registration data. The records identified are mainly people sleeping rough, or using emergency accommodation such as homeless shelters and direct access hostels, at or around the time of death.

## 4 . In 2017 the highest estimated numbers of deaths of homeless people by local authority were in major urban centres

In 2017, deaths of homeless people were identified in 156 of the 347 local authorities (LAs) in England and Wales (Figure 1). The LAs with the highest estimated numbers of deaths included:

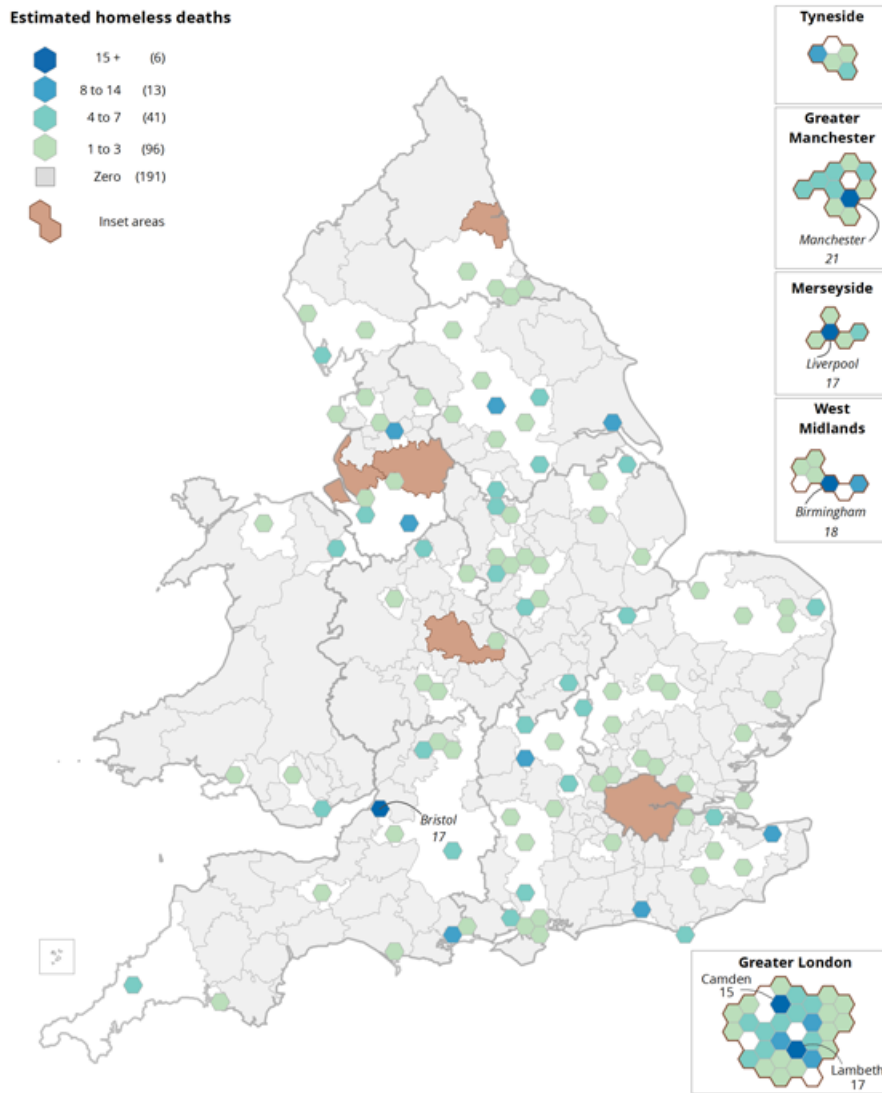
- Manchester (21 deaths)
- Birmingham (18 deaths)
- Bristol (17 deaths)
- Lambeth (17 deaths)
- Liverpool (17 deaths)
- Camden (15 deaths)

The accompanying datasets provide figures for all LAs that had at least one identified death of a homeless person in the relevant year(s). The table contains numbers of identified deaths, numbers of estimated deaths, and rates of estimated deaths per 100,000 total population of the LA.

The map of LAs in England and Wales (Figure 1) provides a visual comparison of estimated number of deaths by LA. The expansion boxes at the right of the chart provide an expanded view of the highest estimates and also provide more detail where there are closely placed LAs in these large urban areas.

**Figure 1: Deaths of homeless people (estimated), 2017**

Local authority districts, England and Wales



Notes: 1. Figures are for deaths registered, rather than deaths occurring in the calendar year.  
 2. Figures for England and Wales may include deaths of non-residents.  
 3. Data have been combined for City of London and Hackney

Graphic created by GIS and Mapping Unit, ONS Geography  
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**Source: Office for National Statistics**

**Notes:**

1. The white areas are the LAs that are represented by a coloured hexagon within their boundary. Grey shaded areas had no identified deaths of homeless people.
2. LAs are shown on the map in four bands. These were grouped using the [Jenks method](#) of natural breaks because of the uneven distribution of deaths across LAs.

The local authorities with the highest estimated number of deaths varied from year to year. However, Birmingham featured in the five LAs with the highest numbers of deaths of homeless people in every year from 2013 to 2017, while the London boroughs of Camden and Lambeth each featured in three of the five years. The highest estimate for any LA in any year was 23 deaths in Camden in 2016.

Table 1: The five local authorities with the most deaths of homeless people  
England and Wales, 2013 to 2017

	2013		2014		2015		2016		2017	
1	Camden	21	Birmingham	18	Birmingham	20	Camden	23	Manchester	21
2	Birmingham	16	Lambeth	14	Westminster	19	Birmingham	18	Birmingham	18
3	Lambeth	16	Bristol, City of	13	Camden	19	Liverpool	17	Lambeth	17
4	Tower Hamlets	12	Manchester	12	Tower Hamlets	12	Brighton and Hove	13	Liverpool	17
5	Bournemouth	12	Newcastle upon Tyne	12	Leeds	12	Southampton	12	Bristol, City of	17

Source: Office for National Statistics

## 5 . The highest estimated rates of deaths of homeless people, relative to the total population of each area, included some smaller towns

While the highest numbers of deaths were in large urban areas, the highest estimated rates of deaths of homeless people, relative to the total population of each area, included some local authority (LA) areas containing smaller towns – such as Blackburn with Darwen, and Weymouth and Portland.

When analysed by deaths of homeless people per 100,000 population, Camden still featured in the highest three areas each year from 2013 to 2017. However, some local authorities with smaller populations were prominent, with Blackburn with Darwen appearing in the five highest rates in four of the five years.

In 2017, there were an estimated nine deaths in Blackburn with Darwen, well below the numbers for Camden, Birmingham and Manchester, but the smaller population of the LA means that Blackburn with Darwen had the highest rate in England and Wales.

The highest estimated rate for any LA in any year was 11.7 deaths per 100,000 population in Camden in 2016. Note that these figures are calculated per 100,000 total population of the relevant LA, and are not mortality rates related to the number of homeless people in the area.

Table 2: The five local authorities with the highest deaths of homeless people per 100,000 population England and Wales, 2013 to 2017

	2013		2014		2015		2016		2017	
1	Camden	11.5	Weymouth and Portland	7.4	Westminster	10.1	Camden	11.7	Blackburn with Darwen	10.2
2	Bournemouth	8.6	Blackburn with Darwen	6.7	Camden	10.0	Blackburn with Darwen	10.1	Oxford	8.1
3	Watford	7.1	Camden	5.7	Blackburn with Darwen	7.8	Oxford	7.9	Camden	7.4
4	Westminster	6.9	Lambeth	5.6	North Devon	7.0	Southampton	6.2	Barrow-in-Furness	7.3
5	Lambeth	6.4	Newcastle upon Tyne	5.4	Reading	6.9	Brighton and Hove	5.8	Canterbury	6.8

Source: Office for National Statistics

## 6 . Local areas in England with the highest deprivation had around nine times more deaths of homeless people relative to their population than the least disadvantaged areas

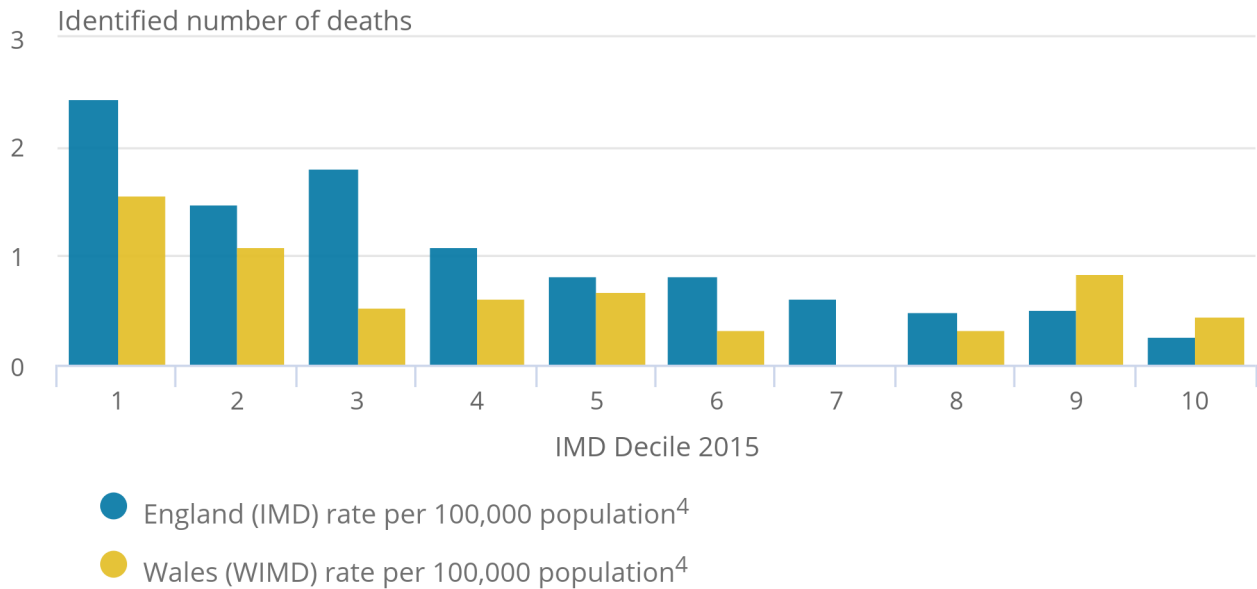
[The Index of Multiple Deprivation \(PDF, 575KB\)](#), commonly known as the IMD, is the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas in England. The Index of Multiple Deprivation ranks every small area in England from 1 (most deprived area) to 32,844 (least deprived area). Areas can then be grouped into deciles, numbered from 1 (most deprived tenth of areas) to 10 (least deprived tenth). Wales uses the [Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation \(WIMD\)](#), which is similar, but not directly comparable.

**Figure 2: England and Wales rate comparison of deciles of Indices of Multiple Deprivation, for identified deaths**

2013 to 2017<sup>1,2</sup>

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**Source: Office for National Statistics**

**Notes:**

1. Figures are for deaths registered, rather than deaths occurring in each calendar year.
2. Figures for England may include deaths of non-residents.
3. 1 = most deprived, 10 = least deprived.
4. This calculation is per 100,000 total population of the geographical area, based on ONS mid-year population estimates for the relevant year.
5. counts less than 3 supressed, which is why WIMD decile 7 is 0.

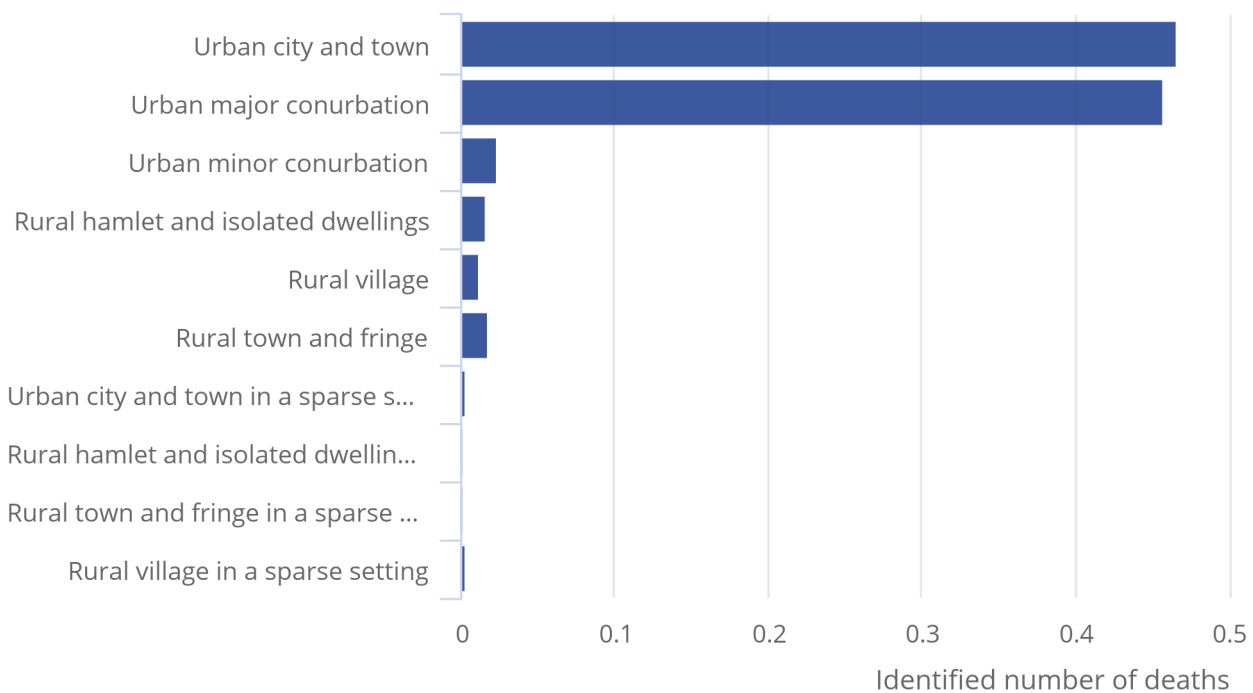
When the estimated deaths of homeless people are analysed using deciles of the IMD and WIMD, there is a clear gradient with most deaths occurring in the more deprived local areas. The rate of deaths per 100,000 population in the most deprived tenth of local areas in England was 9.2 times that of the least deprived tenth. For Wales, the rate of deaths per 100,000 population in the most deprived tenth of local areas was 3.4 times that of the least deprived tenth.

## 7 . Many more deaths of homeless people occurred in urban areas than rural areas

When the data are split into urban and rural categories, the great majority of deaths in the five-year period occurred in local areas classed as “urban city and town” (1,277 or 47%) and “urban major conurbation” (1,201 or 46%), as shown in Figure 3. The [2011 rural-urban classification](#) that defines these geographical categories was applied at the Lower layer Super Output Area (LSOA) level, an area typically containing about 1,500 people.

**Figure 3: Estimated deaths by 2011 Census urban rural category, 2013 to 2017 combined, England and Wales**

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**Source: Office for National Statistics**

The proportions of deaths in the two most common area categories fluctuated from year to year. Overall, 95% of all deaths were in areas classed as urban as opposed to rural.



## 8 . Quality and methodology

These figures are produced as [Experimental Statistics](#), which are in the testing phase and not yet fully developed. Experimental Statistics are new and still subject to testing in terms of their volatility and ability to meet customer needs. They have yet to be assessed against the rigorous quality standards of [National Statistics](#). Comments and suggestions to improve the quality of this output and make it more useful to users are invited, and can be sent via email to [mortality@ons.gov.uk](mailto:mortality@ons.gov.uk).

These are preliminary estimates and it is important to be aware of their limitations. In particular, the method did not allow any estimated deaths to be allocated to local authorities where there were no actually identified deaths of homeless people in the relevant year. This means that a small number of deaths may have occurred in areas that are shown as having no deaths in these figures. We plan to use a more sophisticated estimation method to overcome this in the next release (deaths registered in 2018).

Further detailed information on the methods used to produce the estimates in this report are contained in the previous release.

The Deaths of homeless people in England and Wales Quality and Methodology Information report contains important information on:

- the strengths and limitations of the data and how it compares with related data
- uses and users of the data
- how the output was created
- the quality of the output including the accuracy of the data