Dip in homeless numbers, with fewer sleeping on streets: Study

Nationwide street count finds most of them in city area, and more at temporary shelters

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The number of homeless people in Singapore fell slightly last year, as a civic where homelessness was once the norm in many countries amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Singapore population also became less visible, as more people would have slept on the streets were they to stay at temporary shelters.

The second nationwide street count of the homeless this year found that the number had fallen by less than the 1,500 people during the first count last year. That first nationwide street count showed a dramatic study of the issue that had declined by more than 70 percent.

While the overall number had fallen slightly, the homeless who remained had left the streets and moved to temporary shelters.

The 80-page report was released last year's project ran as a joint effort with the Homeless Taskforce, established by the Community Foundation of Singapore, and has been going on for a year.

The survey found that the streets were no longer the main residence for the homeless, as they had shifted to temporary shelters, such as hostels and low-cost rental units.

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Homeless in Singapore

Although homeless rates fell from 2019 to 2021, two new groups of homeless people emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic. One comprises people who were not homeless before, lost their homes during the pandemic. The other is made up of Singaporeans living in Malaysia or Indonesia who traveled here for work and were displaced by border closures.

Top 5 districts with the most homeless people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>2019 (total)</th>
<th>2021 (total)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yishun</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bukit Merah</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tampines</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodlands</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jurong Ws</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Top 3 places most homeless people were found

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>2019 (total)</th>
<th>2021 (total)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bedok</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodlands</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

New groups include those hit by job loss, border closure during pandemic

Two new groups of homeless people emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic, said the study, with the number of people found on the streets.

Among these, the study found that the number of people who never slept on the streets before the pandemic, but lost their jobs when COVID-19 hit and could not return to their countries, fell by more than 2,000.

Others in this group included those with family or relatives in those countries, but who had to leave due to the pandemic, and a smaller group of homeless people are often found on the streets.

The study by a research team led by senior research fellow Ng Koh Kiat from the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore, and others, concluded that the pandemic had a significant impact on the homeless population.

The report said that the pandemic had caused a significant fall in the number of homeless people in Singapore, with the number of people found on the streets and living in temporary shelters falling.

The study also found that the number of homeless people who had been sleeping on the streets had fallen, with most of them now living in temporary shelters.

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