



GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES

Iechyd Cyhoeddus
Cymru
Public Health
Wales

Commonly Identified Health Issues of Individuals with Lived Experience of Homelessness

A summary of a rapid desktop review of published literature across the UK.

Published data and evidence dated 2012 - 2025

The Health of Individuals with Lived Experience of Homelessness



1 in 14

of Welsh population reported lived experience of homelessness



Emergency department attendance and admissions are **6x higher** for people experiencing homelessness



Tri-Morbidity

- People with lived experience of homelessness are at increased risk of facing multiple, co-occurring and compounding poor health, known as Tri-Morbidity.
- Tri-Morbidity is the presence of poor physical health, poor mental health and substance use.

Cause and Consequence

Poor health is a consequence and cause of homelessness.



Barriers

Generally, available health provision to support people who are homeless is variable, people often experience practical, structural and discrimination barriers when trying to access mainstream primary care services.

Primary care services have a responsibility to develop inclusive and accessible services that meet the need of this user group.

Tools and resources have been developed to support.

Morbidity



- **46%** of adults experiencing homelessness asked, report one longstanding illness compared to 33% of the general population
- In Wales, individuals experiencing homelessness report increased prevalence of living with co-morbidity;
 - **17%** prevalence of 1 co-morbidity
 - **13%** prevalence of 2 or more co-morbidity

Mortality



Mortality risk for a person experiencing homelessness higher than general population, studies report up to 10x higher

- The mean age of death for a **male** experiencing homelessness was **45**
- The mean age of death for a **female** experiencing homelessness was **43**
- Almost **two in five** deaths of homeless people were related to drug poisoning in 2021
- **80** children living in temporary accommodation have died between October 2023-September 2024
- **58** of those were under 1 year old

Chronic Conditions

Lack of access to housing is not an independent risk factor for chronic disease but individuals experiencing homelessness do report substantially worse health than the general population and are three times more likely to report a chronic disease.



2-30% prevalence of epilepsy



6x more likely to have heart disease



Increased prevalence of hypertension



Increased prevalence of diabetes



Higher occurrence and risk for respiratory conditions including:

- Pneumonia
- Influenza
- Asthma
- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

Communicable Disease

Individuals experiencing homelessness are directly affected by infectious diseases. The compromised environment, poor health status, lack of opportunity for personal hygiene and increased risk of IV drug use makes this population group significantly at risk of being infected and spreading communicable diseases.

- **50x** more likely to have Hepatitis C
- **34x** more likely to have Tuberculosis
- **55%** per cent increase in HIV risk
- **7x** more likely to die from HIV or Hepatitis
- High occurrences of blood borne viruses



Immunisation

- Significantly low uptake of vaccine when compared against general population
- Poorest uptake for COVID-19 vaccination in Wales

Lifestyle and Risk Factors

In Wales adults with lived experience of homelessness are significantly more likely to be managing substance dependency.

20x more likely to die due to drug use

In Wales, **11%** prevalence of drug dependency



57-82% of homeless population smoke

54% would like to give up smoking

Smoking is a leading cause of death for individuals over 45 and homeless

Mental Health

Mental health is often a cause and consequence of homelessness with this population having much higher rates of poor mental health

Twice the levels of common mental health conditions compared to general population

Psychosis is **4 – 15x** more prevalent

80% street homeless report poor mental health



Suicide and Self Harm

Suicide and self-harm rates are far higher in homeless population.

- Suicide accounted for an estimated **13.4%** of all deaths of homeless people in 2021
- **14x** more likely to die from suicide

Trauma and Violence

People experiencing homelessness are at increased risk of trauma and violence.

3x more likely to die from a fall	Significant prevalence of traumatic brain injury for individuals experiencing homelessness	3x more likely to die from a traffic accident
17.5% High occurrence of assaults (17.5%) and fractures (28.6%)	16x more likely to be homeless in adult life if an individual has 4 or more Adverse Childhood Experiences	

Maternal Health

99.7% of the midwives reported that they had seen a pregnant woman who was homeless in the past 6 months

Gap in evidence on maternal health outcomes and needs for this group

