

UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing
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**REPLY TO QUESTIONNAIRE FROM THE SPECIAL
RAPPORTEUR ON THE RIGHT TO ADEQUATE
HOUSING**

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The Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR) – Denmark’s national human rights institution – is a national human right institution in accordance with the UN Paris Principles and a National Equality Body in accordance with EU equal treatment directives.

The Special Rapporteur has asked for statistical indicators regarding health, mortality and morbidity consequences of inadequate housing and homelessness in Denmark, disaggregated by sex, race, immigration status, age and disability, or other grounds, if and where possible.

It is not possible through the publicly available statistics provided by Statistics Denmark to obtain such statistical indicators, however numerous studies have been published (mainly in Danish) on the correlation between poor health status and homelessness in Denmark.

In the following, some of these studies are presented together with main results and conclusions.

A registry study from 2011 showed increased morbidity and mortality among homeless people compared with non-homeless people. The results of the study are published in the Lancet (in English), where the detailed statistics can be found.¹

¹ Nielsen, S.F., C.R. Hjorthøj, A. Erlangsen & M. Nordentoft (2011): "Psychiatric Disorders and Mortality among People in Homeless Shelters in Denmark. A Nationwide Register-based Cohort Study". The Lancet, 377(9784), s. 2205-2214.

In 2008² and 2012³, the National Council for Socially Marginalized People published surveys on health and sickness among socially disadvantaged people in Denmark (available in Danish only). The surveys were based on questionnaires handed out to 1,157 socially disadvantaged persons through shelters, drop-in-centres etc. Among these 340 stated to be homeless. The surveys are meant to be comparable with a similar survey conducted in 2010 on health and sickness in the general Danish population. The persons included were categorised based on their replies to questions of vulnerability criteria: alcohol abuse, mental disorder, homelessness, drug abuse, poverty and others. The surveys show overall a significant higher frequency of illness among socially disadvantaged persons than in the general Danish population. Persons categorised with mental disorders and poverty had the relatively highest frequency of illness while persons categorised as homeless had the relatively lowest frequency of illness. For most indicators of illness the frequency increases by the number of vulnerability criteria.

The following information is based on a registry research conducted by The Danish National Centre for Social Research (SFI) and published in the report 'Sickness and Use of the Health Services by the Homeless'⁴ (only available in Danish) in 2013.

The report contains the results of a survey of sickness and the use of health services by homeless persons who have lived at a public shelter during the period from 1999-2009.

The survey shows overall a significant higher frequency of a number of diseases among homeless persons than in the rest of the population, most significant in relation to infectious diseases such as Hepatitis C (HCV), HIV and tuberculosis. The survey also shows high incidences of substance abuse and mental disorders among the homeless. However, even after adjusting for demographic and socioeconomic factors such

² National Council for Socially Marginalized People (Rådet for Socialt Udsatte), 'SUSY Udsat 2007 – Sundhedsprofil for socialt udsatte i Danmark 2007', april 2008, available in Danish at: http://www.si-folkesundhed.dk/upload/susy_udsat_rapport_090408.pdf.

³ National Council for Socially Marginalized People (Rådet for Socialt Udsatte), 'SUSY Udsat 2012 – Sundhedsprofil for socialt udsatte i Danmark 2012 og udviklingen siden 2007' december 2012, available in Danish at: http://www.si-folkesundhed.dk/upload/susy_udsat_2012_webpublikation.pdf.

⁴ The Danish National Centre for Social Research (SFI), 'Sickness And Use Of The Health Services By The Homeless', 13:33, 2013, full report available in Danish at: https://pure.sfi.dk/ws/files/202151/1333_hjemloeses_sygdom.pdf. See more in English at: http://www.sfi-campbell.dk/search_results-view-7352.aspx?PID=18908&NewsID=4216#sthash.9T8v5zjA.dpuf.

as age, sex, substance abuse, mental disorders and other socioeconomic factors, homeless persons have a higher risk of contracting among others infectious diseases, pneumonia and COPD. Such analysis is conducted in order to isolate the effect of homelessness to risk of sickness.

When adjusting for sex and age differences in the homeless population and the general population but not for drug and alcohol dependence and other socioeconomic factors, the risk of HCV 29 times higher for men who have experienced homelessness and 60 times higher for women who have experienced homelessness than for the general population. For HIV the risk is 6 times higher for men and 16 times higher for women. For tuberculosis the risk is 13 times higher for men and 16 times higher for women, than for the general population. Adjusting for socioeconomic factors such as mental disorders and alcohol and drug dependence, isolating the effect of homelessness itself, the risk of HCV is twice as high for both men and women who have experienced homelessness than the risk for the general population. The risk of HIV is 1,6 times higher for men and 4 times higher for women, while the risk of tuberculosis is approximately 3 times higher for men and approximately 4 times higher for woman who have experienced homelessness.

The report concludes that even when adjusting for demographic and socioeconomic factors such as age, sex, substance abuse, mental disorders and other socioeconomic factors, the study shows a link between homelessness and the risk of such diseases.

With regard to question 2 and 3 of the Questionnaire, the right to life is not guaranteed in the Danish constitution. The European Convention on Human Rights is incorporated into Danish law, including article 2 on the right to life, however no case law or legislative references with regard to homelessness has been identified.

Yours sincerely,

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