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SERIES OF REPORTS AND STUDIES

ISSUED BY THE

SOCIAL SURVEY  
OF CAPE TOWN

EUROPEAN BEDROOM  
OCCUPANCY



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UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN  
School of Social Science and Social Administration

REPORTS AND STUDIES

of

THE SOCIAL SURVEY OF CAPE TOWN

by

PROFESSOR EDWARD BATSON  
Director of the Survey

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- SS 1 The Growth of the Population of Greater Cape Town  
SS 2 The Ethnic Distribution of the Population of Greater Cape Town  
SS 3 The Survey Poverty Datum Line  
SS 4 The Distribution of Poverty among Coloured Households in Cape Town  
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THE HOUSING OF EUROPEAN HOUSEHOLDS IN CAPE TOWN

II BEDROOM OCCUPANCY

BY PROFESSOR EDWARD BATSON

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1944

REPORT NO. SS 20

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I

The origin and statistical basis of the data in this report are briefly described in Appendices A and B. The data constitute a contribution towards a description of the housing conditions of the thirty thousand European private households that existed in the Municipality of Cape Town in the pre-war year 1938-1939.

The present Report, like the companion report on the Coloured population [SS 21], which contains a fuller description of the measures used, is a complementary study to an earlier report [SS 11] which dealt with housing in relation to a simplified general occupancy standard. The present Report deals with sleeping accommodation.

The following rule has been adopted as a measure of needs for minimum sleeping accommodation:-

A household requires one room for each married couple and such additional rooms as will ensure that of the remaining members of the household aged 10 or more none are obliged to sleep in the same room with others of the opposite sex.

It is important to stress that this rule is intended merely to establish a minimum to be applied in conjunction with the general standard of average occupancy already referred to. The rule is not intended to establish an independent standard, but to set a minimum limit, based solely on the abstract consideration of separateness of sleeping quarters. According to the usual norms of the Western world, a household which fails to attain this minimum limit lacks something which is essential for a decent life; but a household which attains this limit may still fall far short of the accepted requisites of health.

It should also be noted that there are several ways in which the rule may be applied to the accommodation disposed over by a household. Of those discussed in Report SS 21, the two following are used as the basis of tables, both in that and in the present Report:-



"Method (v)" of Report SS 21: "At the extreme limit of tolerance", all the rooms occupied by a household may be regarded as potential bedrooms for the purposes of applying the sleeping accommodation rule.

"Method (iv)" of Report SS 21: The rule may also be applied to those rooms used by a household solely for sleeping purposes and not also as living rooms.

## II

In the companion report [SS 21] to the present, it is shown that 3,500 [P] of 25,000 [P] Coloured households, or 14 [P] per cent., failed to attain the minimum sleeping accommodation requirement calculated by Method (v) above. The situation as far as European households is concerned is entirely different, for in a random sample of 411 manual-working-class European households, eight households only were found to fail to reach the minimum. We are justified in concluding that the total incidence of the sub-standard condition among European manual-working-class households in the Municipality was 200 [P], 0-400 [LL, CL], or expressed as a percentage, 2 per cent [P], 0-4 per cent. [LL, CL]. If we make the reasonable assumption that no households of the business-and-professional class failed to reach this minimum, our estimate for the percentage incidence of this sub-minimal condition among all European households in the Municipality will be 1 per cent. [P], 0-2 per cent. [LL, CL].

In other words, overcrowding of this type was practically non-existent among Europeans.

## III

Working by Method (iv) indicated above, we derive the following statistics for the number of manual-working-class European Households with sub-minimal bedroom occupancy:-

2,000 [P]  
1,500-2,500 [LL]  
1,400-2,600 [CL]

and for the percentage incidence among manual-working-class households:-

16 per cent. [P]  
12-20 per cent. [LL]  
11-21 per cent. [CL]

Assuming that no households of the business-and-professional class failed to reach this minimum, the incidence of the sub-minimal condition among all the European households in the Municipality may be estimated as:-

6 per cent. [P]  
4-8 per cent. [LL, CL].

The corresponding estimates in the case of the total Coloured population were 12,000 [P] or 48 per cent. [P].



There is no evidence of any significant local variation in the sub-minimal condition among European households throughout the Municipality.

It is interesting to note that the proportion of households failing to attain minimum bedroom occupancy (6 per cent. [P]), although small, is significantly greater than the proportion failing to attain the average occupancy standard (3 per cent. [P]).

## IV

From a comparison of §§ II and III it appears that a certain proportion of households achieved what we have called the sleeping accommodation minimum, but not the bedroom occupancy minimum. As a percentage of the manual-working-class households this proportion may be estimated at:-

14	per cent.	[P]
10-18	per cent.	[LL]
9-19	per cent.	[CL]

as a percentage of all the European households in the Municipality it may be estimated at:-

6	per cent.	[P]
4-8	per cent.	[LL]
4-8	per cent.	[CL]

and in absolute numbers at:-

1,800	[P]
1,300-2,300	[LL]
1,200-2,400	[CL]

In other words, of all the European households in Cape Town, one in seventeen occupied enough rooms, but not enough bedrooms, to reach the minimum accommodation for sleeping. To include those who did not even occupy enough rooms increases the proportion to one in sixteen.

## V

A further point is of some interest. The choice of the age 10 to mark the transition from infancy is more or less arbitrary. Two alternative choices for which the arguments are perhaps equally strong are the ages 12 and 7.

Of the three alternatives, the middle course was chosen for the principal Cape Town calculations, for reasons indicated in Reports SS 21 and SS 27. Certain calculations also made on the 12- and 7-year basis, however, show appreciable variation for the Coloured population [see SS 21], but, as appears in the following table, introduce no variation that is of so much significance for the European population.



TABLE 20.1

INCIDENCE OF SUB-MINIMAL  
SLEEPING AND BEDROOM ACCOMMODATION  
WITH ALTERNATIVE CRITERIA OF INFANCY

UPPER AGE-LIMIT OF INFANCY	PERCENTAGE [P] OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH	
	SUB-MINIMAL SLEEPING ACCOMMODATION	SUB-MINIMAL BEDROOM OCCUPANCY
7 YEARS	1	10
10 YEARS	1	6
12 YEARS	1	5

  

UPPER AGE-LIMIT OF INFANCY	THOUSAND [P] OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH	
	SUB-MINIMAL SLEEPING ACCOMMODATION	SUB-MINIMAL BEDROOM OCCUPANCY
7 YEARS	0.3	3.0
10 YEARS	0.2	2.0
12 YEARS	0.2	1.7



## Appendix A

During 1938-1939, the Social Survey of Cape Town conducted a sociological investigation of a "random" sample of all the private households in the Municipality, i.e. of all the homes in the ordinary sense of the term, but omitting hotels, boarding houses, and institutions of all kinds. A fuller description of the methods and objects of this investigation is given in Report No. SS 9 of the present Series. Here it will suffice to state that the sampling method had the disadvantage of yielding only approximate statistics of Cape Town as a whole; but that it had the advantage of costing only a few hundred pounds while a complete sociological census, even if it had been practicable, would have cost tens of thousands of pounds. The disadvantage is in fact not serious since the statistical randomness of the sample enables us to state with a high degree of accuracy the limits within which our approximations hold; and these limits are sufficiently narrow for the purposes in view.

1980 private households were enumerated in this sample, and the statistics in the present Report are all calculated from the data respecting these households. If we multiply the number 1980 by the appropriate "sampling factor", we arrive at the number 59,400. This number is the best estimate that our data enable us to make of the total number of private households in the Municipality at the time of the investigation.

Selecting the degree of statistical risk which we are prepared to run, we may draw from our data, with a known range of accuracy, conclusions respecting the whole population of the private households in Cape Town. This is done in the tables in this Report, in which the following conventions have been adopted:-

- (a) the statistics recorded as "probable" [ P ] are those drawn direct from the sample. They represent the best single estimates that the data permit.
- (b) the "likely limits" [ LL ] define the range corresponding to statistical odds of 20 to 1, which are adequate for many practical purposes.
- (c) the "cautious limits" [ CL ] recorded in some of the tables correspond to odds of 100 to 1, and may be taken as establishing virtual certainty [ see also Appendix B of Report SS 4 ].

## Appendix B

For the purposes of the Survey, the fifteen Wards into which Cape Town is administratively divided have been grouped as follows:-

Western Area (Wards 1, 4, 5)  
Central Area (Wards 2, 3, 6 and 7)  
Eastern Area (Wards 8, 9 and 11)  
Southern Area (Wards 10, 12, 13, 14 and 15)

As well as geographical compactness, each of these four Areas has a sociological unity and social characteristics which distinguish it clearly from the remaining three. It is true that parts of each Area are necessarily marginal, and may even appear to belong more properly to other Areas: Vredehoek and the northern part of Mowbray are clear examples. But in so far as we are bound by the limits of the present Wards, it does not appear that any alternative grouping would be better than the above. In any case, the weight of the marginal districts is not great enough to invalidate comparisons between the Areas.



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