

EXPERIENCES OF PRISON CELL-SHARING

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Cell-sharing

- Some research on the (sometimes positive) impact of cell-sharing on personal wellbeing and prison quality (Molleman & van Ginneken 2014; Muirhead 2018), but much less on the lived experience of negotiating shared space under conditions of coercion
- According to the report:
 - 46% prisoners in the Irish prison system share a cell
 - Average time out of cell estimated at six hours per day
 - Single-cell accommodation a long-term objective of the IPS
 - Yet no designated IPS policy on cell-sharing



Autonomy and individuality

'They just throw you in a double and you can be in there with any Tom, Dick and Harry, anybody from like a heroin addict to a crack addict to an alcoholic...and it's like you have no say over the matter, they're putting them in there, it's tough shit, you're in jail, that's their kind of attitude'. (Lexi)

'I didn't have a telly for three weeks because my pad mate on G Wing, he smashed it up and chucked it out of the window'. (Tyler)

'My previous cell mate got caught with stuff in the cell, and both of us lost our jobs. [...] My cell mate is gone now but I've been treated like a leper'. (Earl)

Emotional privacy

'You can't break down, you haven't got time to cry or get a bit weepy or a bit emotional, there's nowhere for you to do that [as] you've always got someone watching you'
(Ibrahim)

'Sometimes I just need to be by myself. If I want to cry, I just want to cry. I don't want to see people around me, but when you are in a double room it is so hard, so difficult. You don't want to put your problems on somebody else as well, but if you are happy this day, and they are unhappy, and they sit in your room and cry, then you feel sad as well'
(Evelyn)





Bodily privacy

'You have to have a dump while he's sitting there watching TV, and you can smell it and see you, and then you have to smell his shit. I didn't even go to the toilet for the first couple of days, I just, my body would not let me, it was just the awkwardness'. (Jacob)

'In here when you have somebody washing their feet in the sink a yard from your head while you're lying in bed, and spitting and burping and just being generally unpleasant, it's kind of hard then to get past that as you're in such a confined space'. (Luca)

'He used to wake up, no wash, no clean his teeth, straight on with his clothes and gone. All the time I was in with him I think he had one shower'. (Albert)

Contamination

'Every time I go toilet, I'll wash my hands, but some prisoners don't, and that does my head in. Like when they're touching the [remote] control, and stuff like that, I'm like 'no'. And I've, like, got to jump down, 'What's happening?'" (Justin)

'She squats on my floor, she doesn't sleep in her bed or anything, she doesn't flush the chain after or wipe herself, she's got hepatitis, she is always asking for my food when I'm eating it, she smokes tea bags and makes me sick'.
(Chloe)





Fear and insecurity

Are you worried who else might come into your cell?
Yeah. It's all I've been thinking about. (Louis)

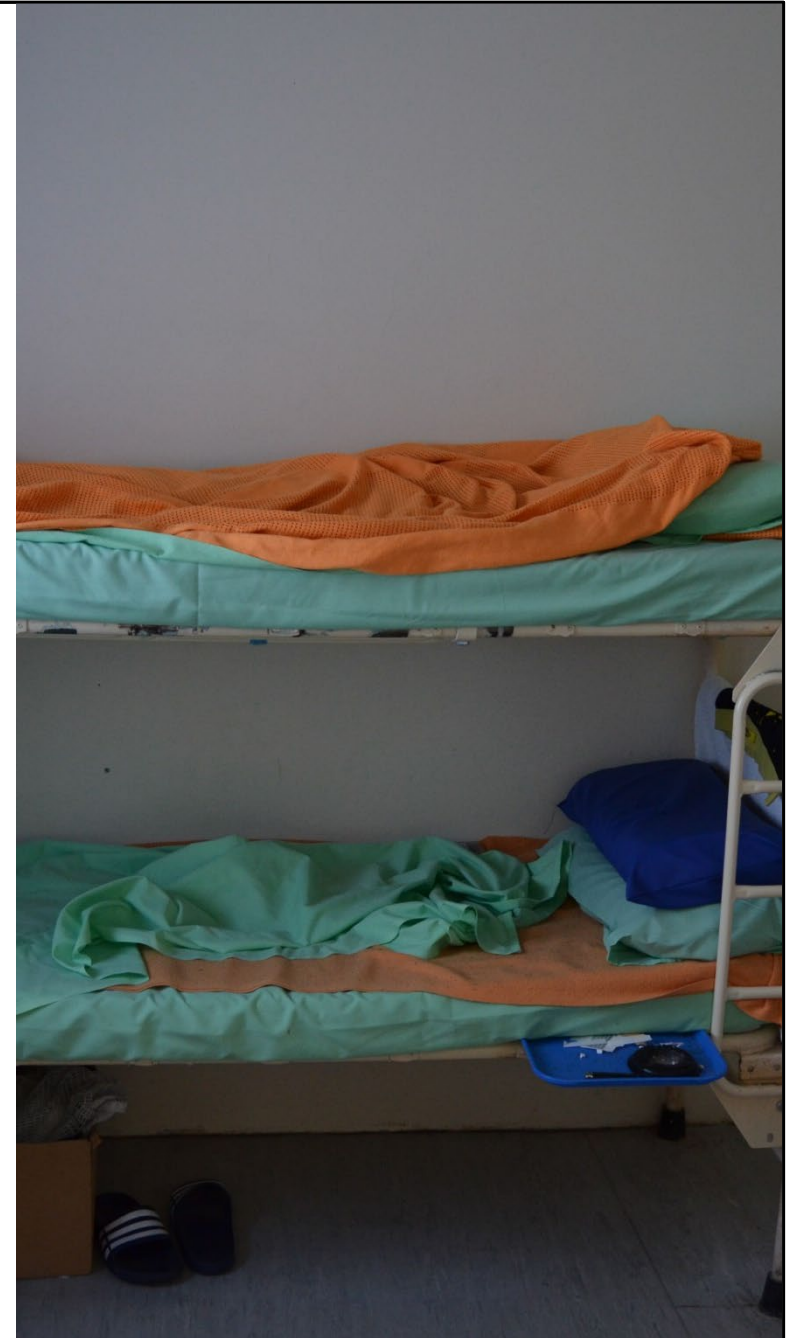
It got really hard to sleep and just knowing that someone was there that I don't actually know too well, like I know their name, I know what they've done, but do I really know them and are they going to put a bat over my head when I'm asleep? (Jacob)

He started going a bit crazy, and he started cutting his arms and writing on the walls with blood. Writing stuff like, 'Who needs voices - who needs friends when we have the voices?' in blood from his own arm. And he started going a bit crazy and getting violent towards me (Jacob)

Fear and insecurity

'[He was] a lot bigger than me, and what he said went. You know? (...) He took what he wanted, and there was nothing I could do about it'. (Nathan)

'He just kind of ignored me for the first day. On the second night, I was getting a lot of verbal abuse [...] Apparently one of the officers told him what my charges were, and he started punching me in the ribs and that; it was like: 'tell me what your charges are'. [...] At one point he hit me straight in the kidney, then the solar plexus'. (Charlie)



'It's the same as marriage, isn't it? If you get on you get on and if you hate each other's guts, well...' (Albert)

