



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Summary Pack: The Rough Sleeping Questionnaire Findings

December 2020



Purpose of Slide Pack

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have been working with a number of local authorities and homelessness services across England to undertake research into people's experiences of rough sleeping. Researchers at MHCLG, with input from survey experts, academics, government analysts, people with lived experience of sleeping rough, and frontline homelessness staff, have designed the 'Rough Sleeping Questionnaire' (RSQ). This is a questionnaire that can be self-administered or used in a structured interview format. The topics and questions were designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of respondents' backgrounds, histories of homelessness, support needs, and public service use.

This slide pack highlights some of the initial findings, from data collected between February 2019 and early March 2020. A total of 991 respondents took part in the data collection. This report presents descriptive high level findings on the 563 respondents, who were the focus in the Initial Findings report, who had slept rough in the last year, alongside comparable descriptive information from the full set of respondents (the full 991 respondents).



The fieldwork was facilitated through the support of local authority rough sleeping leads and local rough sleeping and homelessness services. It was conducted in 25 areas. At an individual level, people were asked to participate if they were currently sleeping rough; had slept rough in the previous six months; or were considered to be at risk of rough sleeping, due to the precarity of their living situation or their support needs.

The majority of questionnaires were completed in day centres or hostels. On average, each wave of the fieldwork took place over a two-week window, with researchers in the field throughout. Respondents had the option to complete the RSQ independently or assisted by a researcher, and some service staff supported participants to complete the questionnaire. The majority of respondents completed the questionnaire with at least some input from interviewers. The sample broadly fit the same demographic profile as those reported in the Rough Sleeping Statistical release but should not be treated as statistically representative of the rough sleeping population¹.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2019>



The sample profile is similar to the recent Rough Sleeping Statistics¹

Respondents who slept rough within the last year (563 respondents)

84%
Caucasian

87%
Heterosexual

82%
Men

81%
UK Nationals

All Respondents (991 respondents)

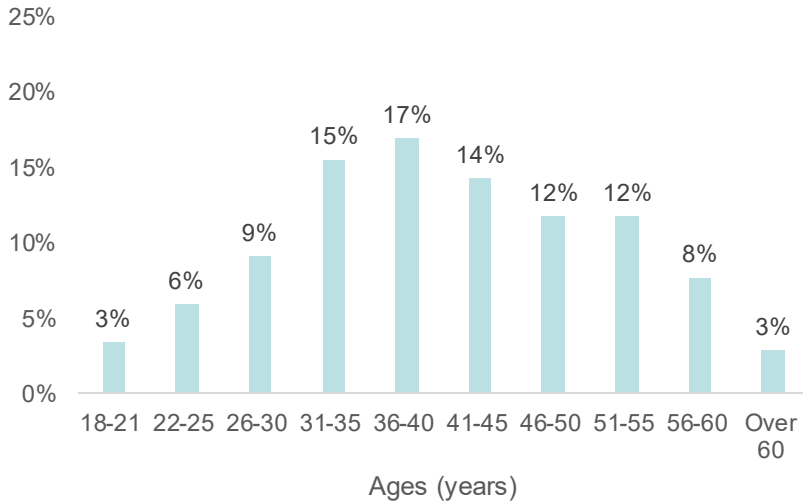
83%
Caucasian

86%
Heterosexual

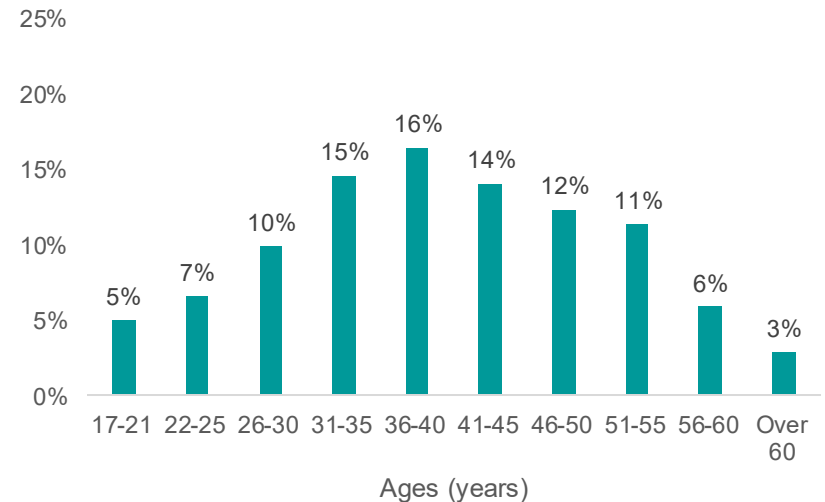
79%
Men

83%
UK Nationals

Age of Respondents



Age of Respondents



¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2019>



Experiences of Homelessness

Most of the sample had experienced a number of different types of homelessness, and a large number had spent several years homeless

Respondents who slept rough within the last year (563 respondents)

84%
Homeless Last Night*

20% Respondents who had been homeless for more than 10 years across their lifetime

3.5
Average number of types of homelessness or homeless accommodation experiences

26%
reported a financial reason for leaving their last settled base

All Respondents (991 respondents)

81%
Homeless Last Night*

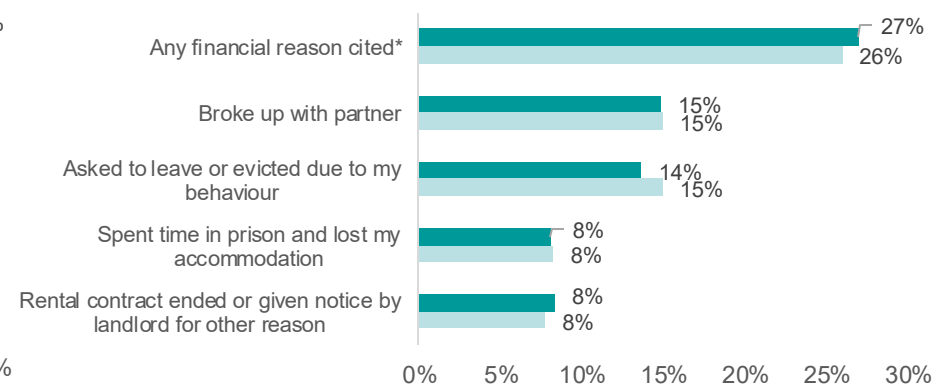
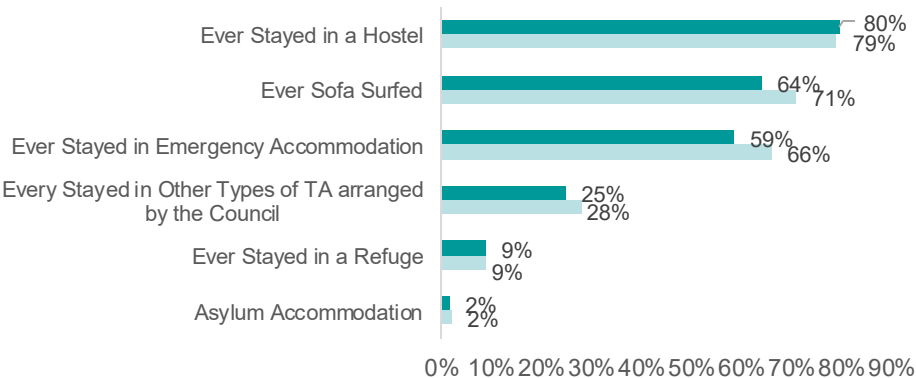
16% Respondents who had been homeless for more than 10 years across their lifetime

3.1
Average number of types of homelessness or homeless accommodation experiences

27%
reported a financial reason for leaving their last settled base

Experiences of homelessness

Reasons for Leaving Last Settled Accommodation



■ All respondents (n=991)

■ Respondents who slept rough within the last year (n=563)

■ All respondents (n=680)

■ Respondents who slept rough within the last year (n=408)

*This might refer to the following types of accommodation: Hostel, emergency accommodation, refuge, other types of temporary accommodation arranged by the council, tent, caravan, car, squat, temporarily with friends, sofa surfing, rough sleeping, sleeping in transport or in a transport hub.



Experiences of Rough Sleeping

Almost half of the respondents who had slept rough in the last year had slept rough for at least 30 nights out of the last three months

Respondents who slept rough within the last year (563 respondents)

25%
Last slept rough as no homeless accommodation available in local area

23%
Sofa surfed prior to last sleeping rough

73%
Slept rough in the last three months

46%
Slept rough more than 30 nights in the last three months

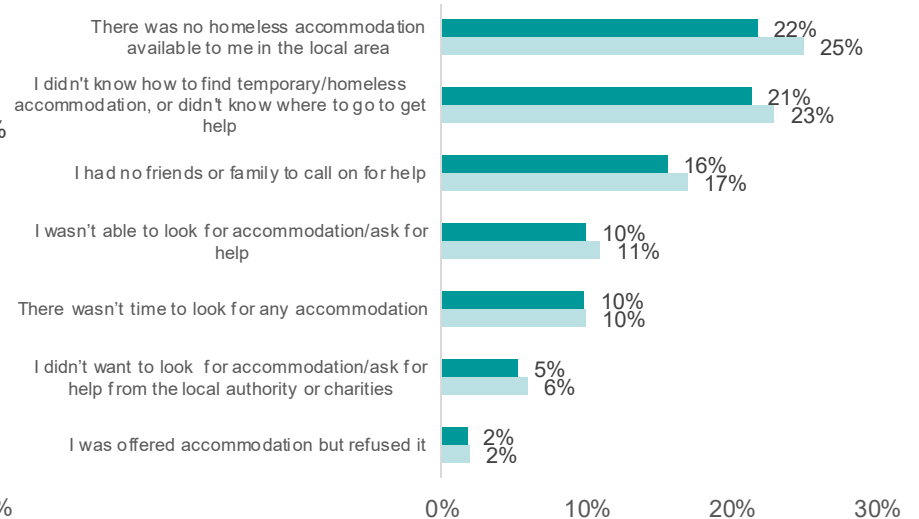
All Respondents (991 respondents)

78% (n=770)
Ever Slept rough

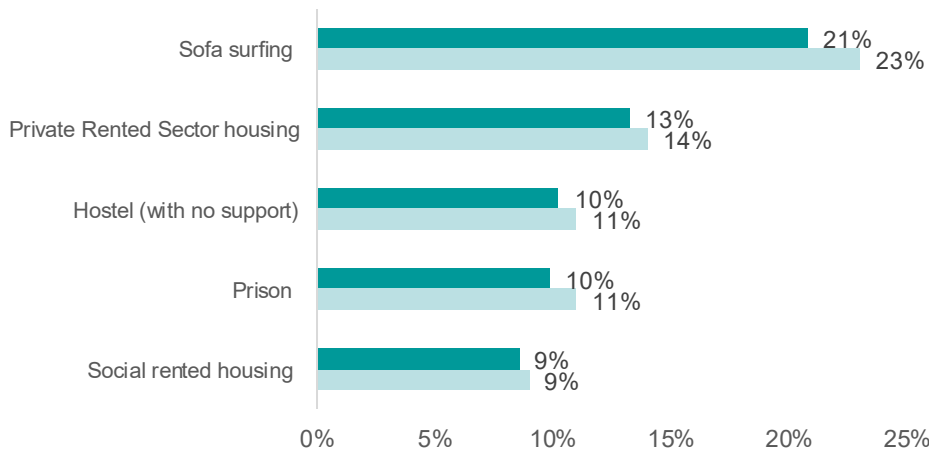
41%
Slept rough in the last three months

19%
Slept rough more than 30 nights in the last three months

Reasons for sleeping rough after leaving prior accommodation



Where respondents stayed before last sleeping rough



■ All respondents who had slept rough (n=770)
■ Respondents who slept rough within the last year (n=563)

■ All respondents who had slept rough (n=770)
■ Respondents who slept rough within the last year (n=563)



Support Needs and Vulnerabilities:

Respondents of the questionnaire appear to be highly vulnerable. Almost everyone who had slept rough in the last year (96%) reported at least one vulnerability* in addition to sleeping rough

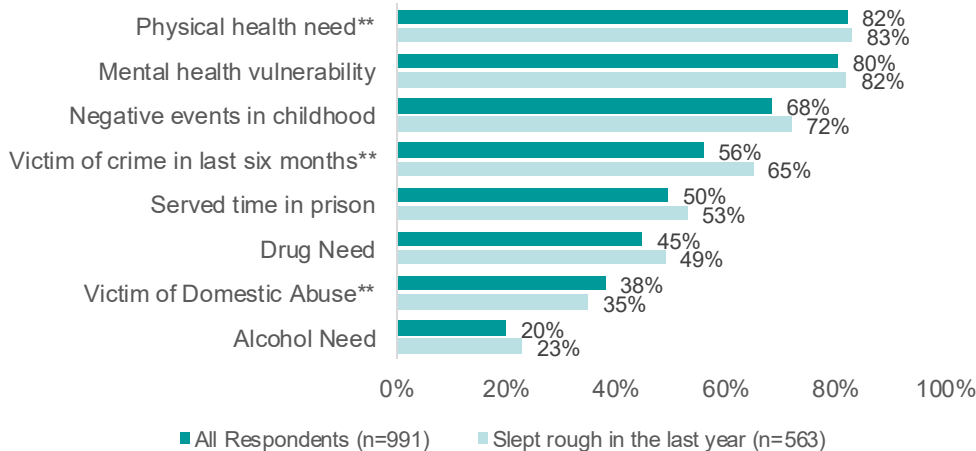
Respondents who slept rough within the last year (563 respondents)

91% 2+ Vulnerabilities in addition to homelessness	47% Mental health vulnerability & served time in prison	45% Mental Health & drug Misuse Needs
76% Mental & physical health** needs	26% In social care as A child	33% Excluded from school

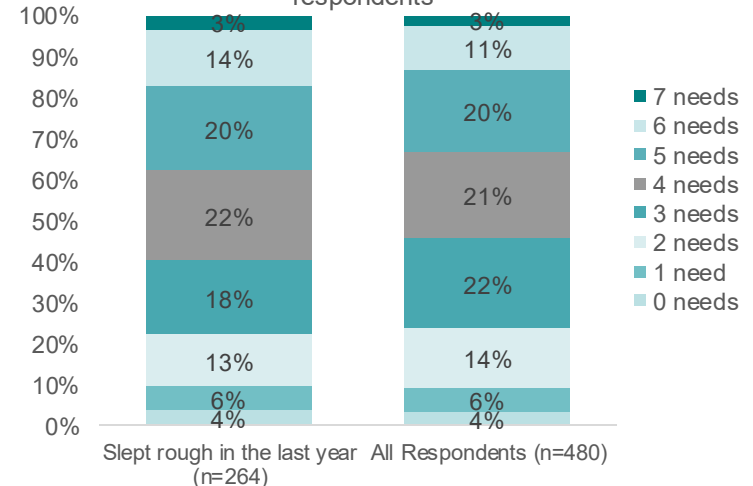
All Respondents (991 respondents)

91% 2+ vulnerabilities in addition to homelessness	43% Mental health vulnerability & served time in prison	41% Mental Health & drug Misuse Needs
73% Mental & physical health** needs	25% In social care as A child	32% Excluded from school

Vulnerabilities of the cohort



Number of needs or vulnerabilities reported by respondents



*Vulnerabilities refer to events in adulthood. This includes: current mental or physical health need, a current drug need or alcohol need, been a recent victim of crime, ever been a victim of domestic abuse, ever served time in prison.

** For mental and physical health needs, the percentage reported is only of the respondents who had the support need or vulnerability and took part in fieldwork waves where this other need or vulnerability was also asked.



General and Physical Health

Respondents of the questionnaire have worse physical health than the average population

Respondents who slept rough within the last year (563 respondents)

32%
Reported 'Very Good' or 'Good' General Health, in contrast the average self-reported health of the English population is 81%

50%
Long-standing physical impairment, illness or disability

3.6
Average number of reported physical health conditions*

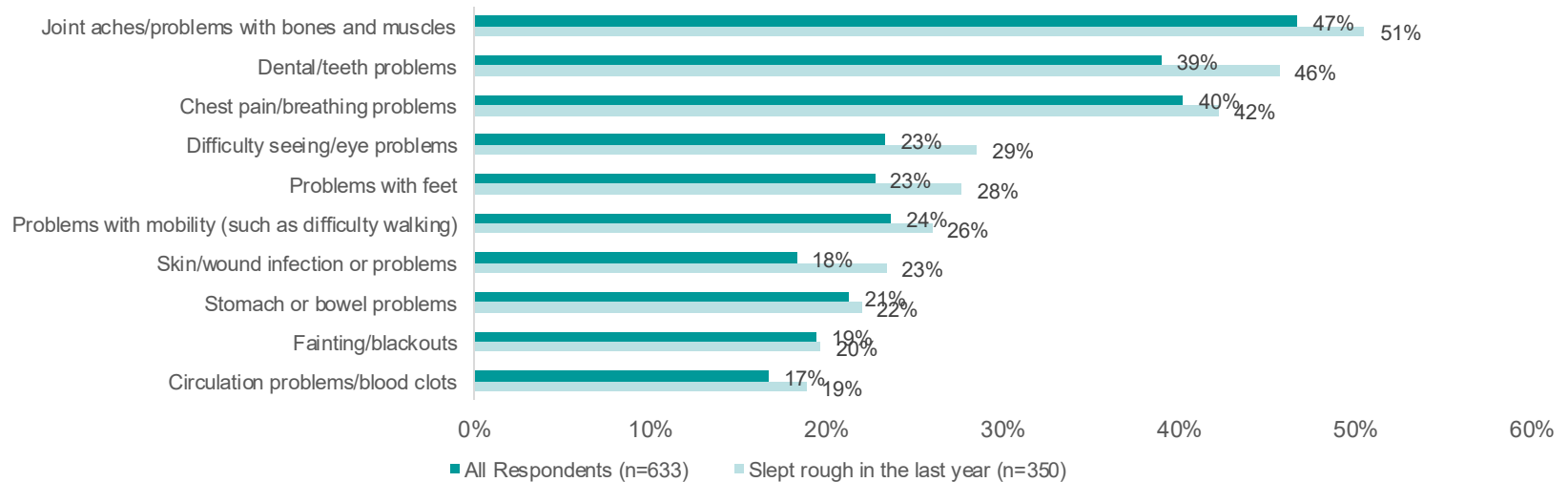
All Respondents (991 respondents)

33%
Reported 'Very Good' or 'Good' General Health, in contrast the average self-reported health of the English population is 81%

48%
Long-standing physical impairment, illness or disability

3.2
Average number of reported physical health conditions*

Most Prevalent Physical Health Conditions* Reported



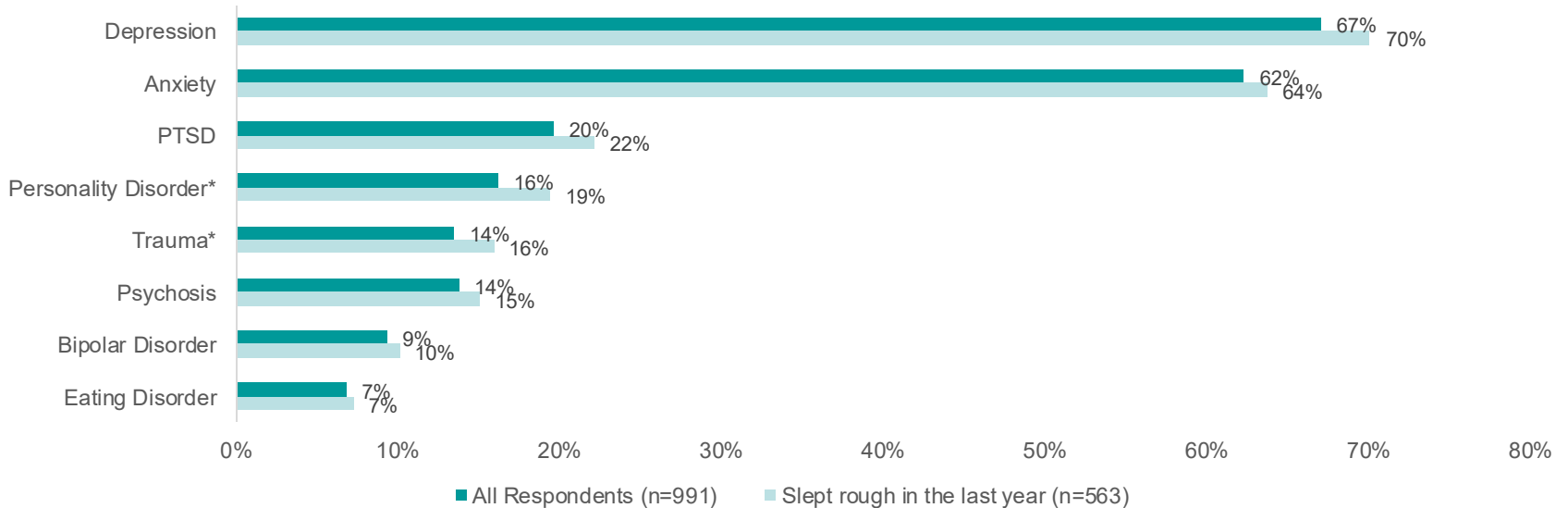
*Questions about physical health conditions was added partway through fieldwork, and as such asked to a smaller sample of respondents. Respondents who slept rough within the last year (n=350) and All respondents (n=633)



Respondents of the questionnaire have high levels of mental health vulnerability.
The most prevalent conditions were depression and anxiety

Respondents who slept rough within the last year (563 respondents)		All Respondents (991 respondents)	
82% Mental Health vulnerability	2 Average number of reported Mental Health Conditions	80% Mental Health vulnerability	1.9 Average number of reported Mental Health Conditions
19% Learning Disability		16% Learning Disability	
5% Autism	10% ADHD*	4% Autism	12% ADHD*

Most Prevalent Mental Health Conditions Reported



*Some mental health conditions were added partway through fieldwork, and as such asked to a smaller sample of respondents. The base sizes for these are: Slept rough in the last year: ADHD, Personality Disorder and Trauma n=257. All respondents: ADHD, Personality Disorder and Trauma, n=461.

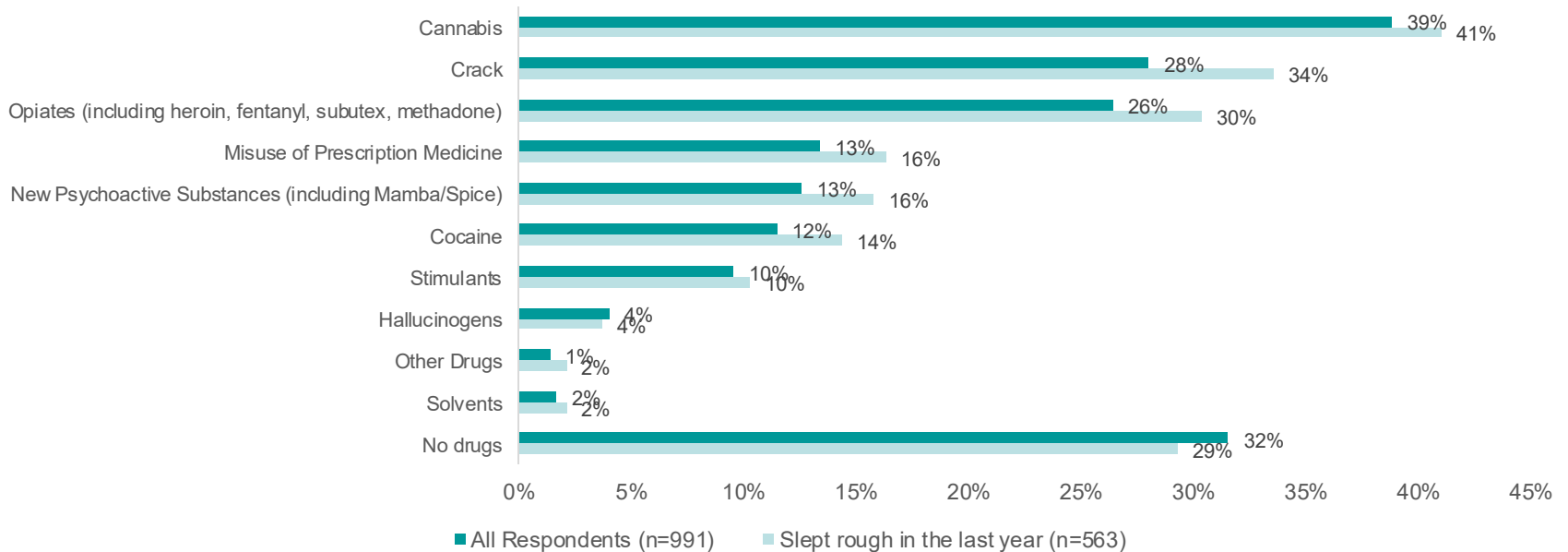


Substance Misuse

Respondents reported high levels of substance misuse. Almost two thirds of respondents who had slept rough in the last year had used drugs in the last three months. The most common drug used across all respondents was cannabis

Respondents who slept rough within the last year (563 respondents)		All Respondents (991 respondents)	
60% Substance misuse need	49% Drug support need	55% Substance misuse need	45% Drug support need
23% Alcohol support need	12% both drug & alcohol support needs	20% Alcohol support need	10% both drug & alcohol support needs

Drugs Used in the Last Three Months





Development of Support Needs*

Respondents show evidence of developing these vulnerabilities from a young age

Respondents who slept rough within the last year (563 respondents)

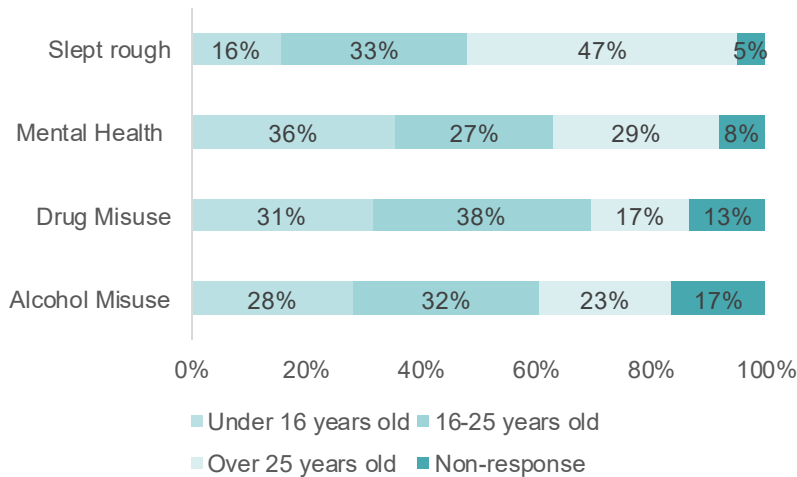
16%
Slept rough before the age of 16

31%
Drug support need before age of 16

28%
Alcohol support need before age of 16

36%
Mental health vulnerability before age of 16

Respondents who slept rough in last year: Age when they first slept rough, developed substance misuse issues or mental health vulnerabilities



All Respondents (991 respondents)

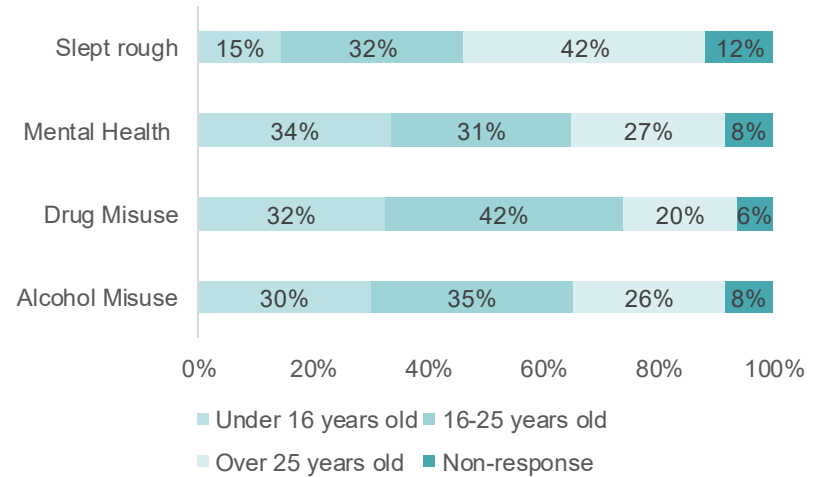
15%
Slept rough before the age of 16

32%
Drug support need before age of 16

30%
Alcohol support need before age of 16

34%
Mental health vulnerability before age of 16

All respondents: Age when first slept rough, developed substance misuse issues or mental health vulnerabilities



*age at which support needs developed is only recorded for those with the relevant support need, Percentages are of the total with each support need, and not representative of the sample as a whole.



Use of Health Services

There are high levels of engagement with health services, including primary and emergency services

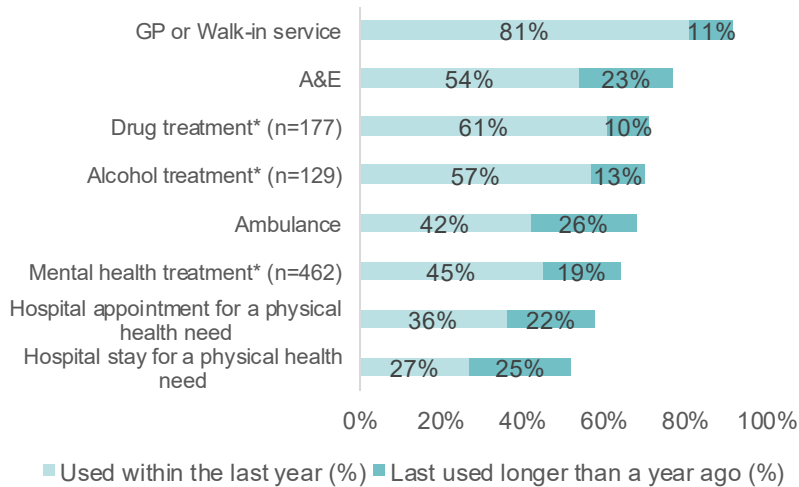
Respondents who slept rough within the last year (563 respondents)

85% Registered at a GP surgery	54% Used A&E within the last year
61% with a drug misuse need received treatment in the last year	45% with a mental health vulnerability received treatment in the last year

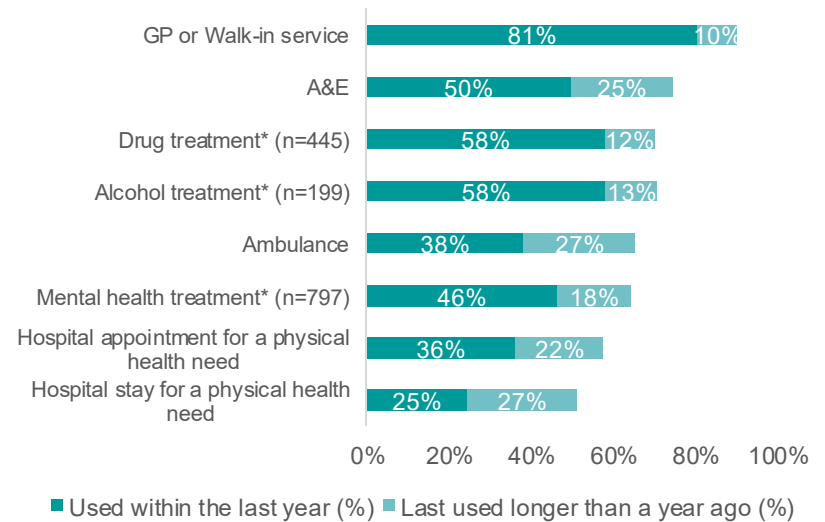
All Respondents (991 respondents)

87% Registered at a GP Surgery	50% Used A&E within the last year
58% with a drug misuse need received treatment in the last year	46% with a mental health vulnerability received treatment in the last year

Respondents who slept rough in the last year:
Health Service Use



All respondents: Health Service Use



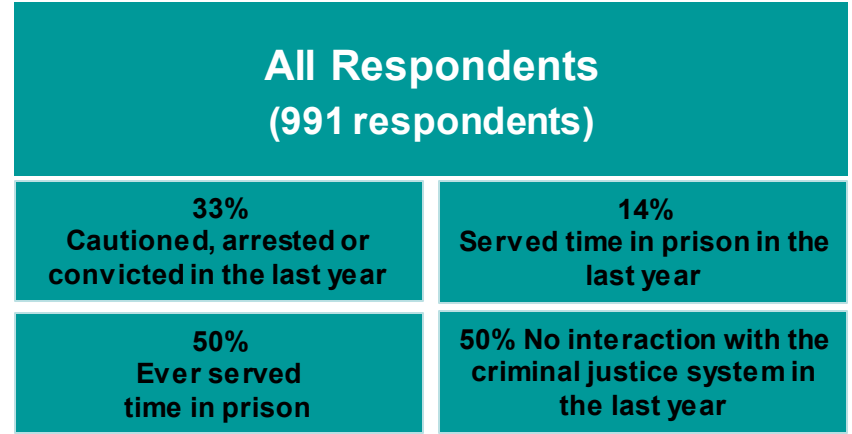
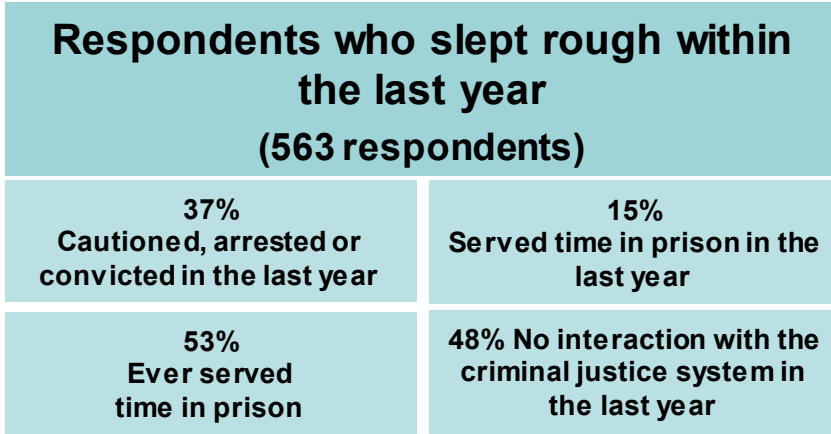
* This is the proportion of those with the relevant support need who received treatment, and as such may not be representative of the population as a whole.



Interactions with the Criminal Justice System

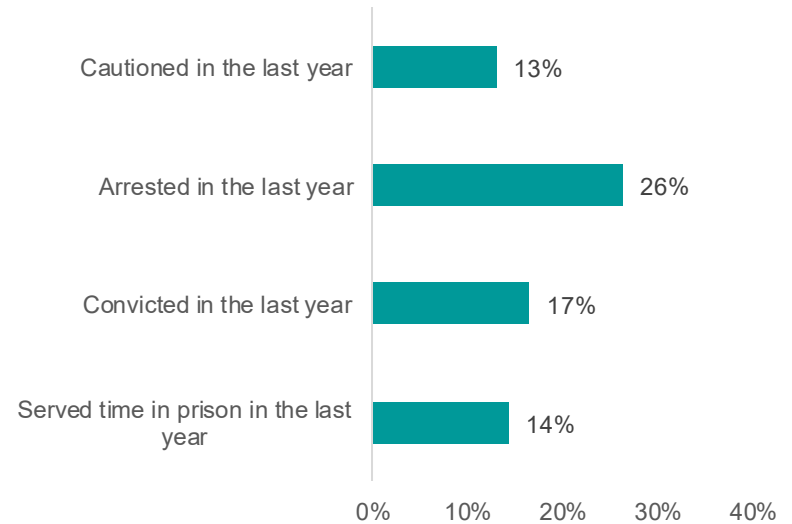
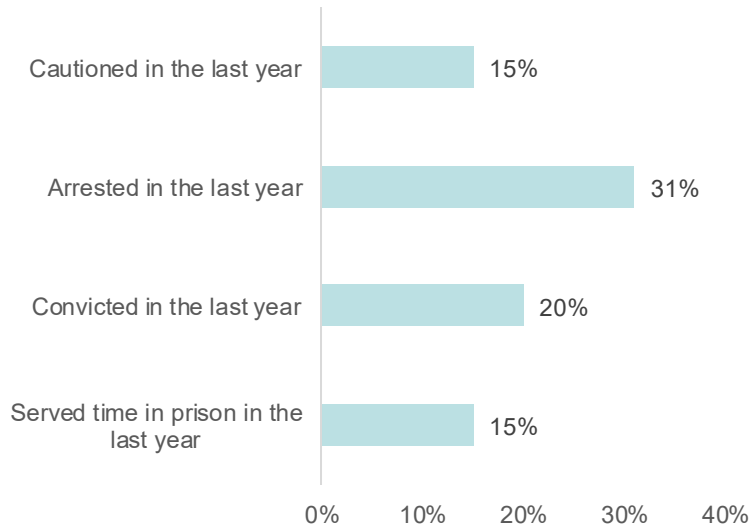
The majority of respondents who had slept rough within the last year had had some interaction with the criminal justice system.

A substantial minority had served time in prison within the last year



Respondents who slept rough in the last year:
Interaction with the criminal justice system

All respondents: Interaction with the criminal justice system





Interactions with the Welfare System and Work

The majority of respondents who had slept rough within the last year were in receipt of benefits (79%). The vast majority are unemployed, however, there are differences between the UK and non-UK nationals

Respondents who slept rough within the last year (563 respondents)

4% of UK nationals and 17% of non-UK nationals are currently employed

58%
Had a
qualification**

6%
Served in armed
forces

79%
Receiving
benefits

All Respondents (991 respondents)

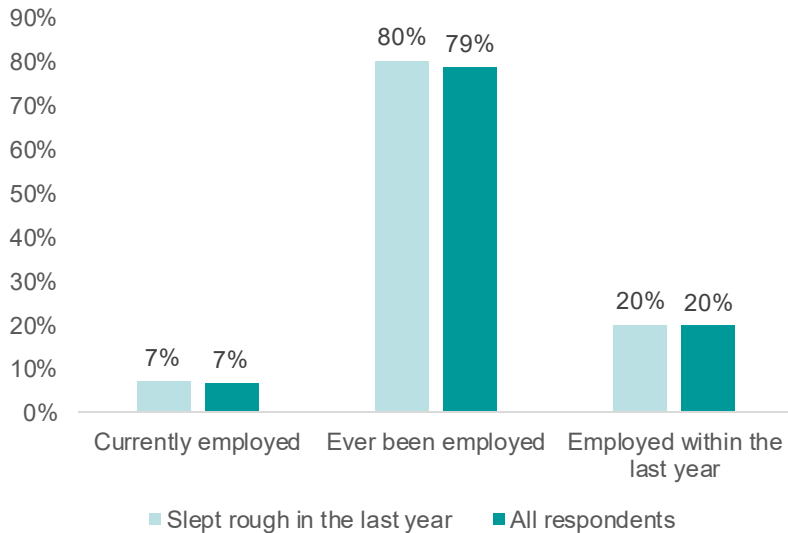
4% of UK nationals and 19% of non-UK nationals are currently employed

63%
Had a
qualification**

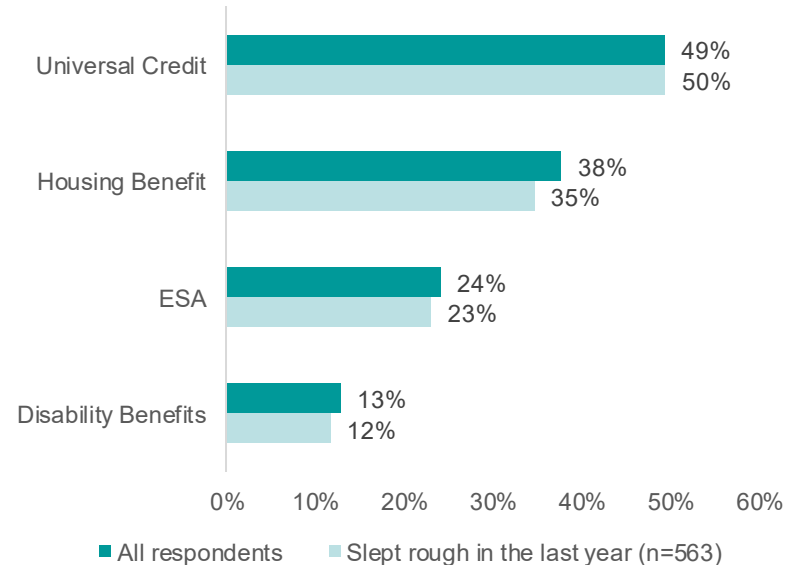
5%
Served in armed
forces

82%
Receiving
benefits

Employment status



Types of Benefits*



*The benefits are not mutually exclusive.

**The question on qualifications was added part way through fieldwork, and as such asked to a smaller sample of respondents. For those who slept rough in the last year n= 257 and for all respondents n=480



Engaging with Support: Touch points

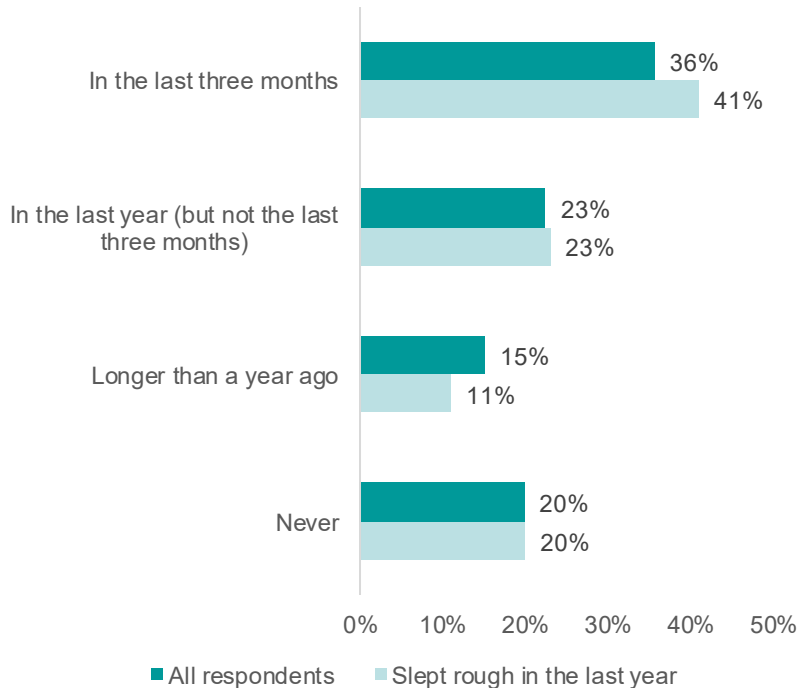
The majority of respondents had previously approached an LA for help. The picture may look different as the HRA embeds

Respondents who slept rough within the last year (563 respondents)

39%

Had approached the LA more than once in the last year

When approached the Local Authority for Help with Homelessness

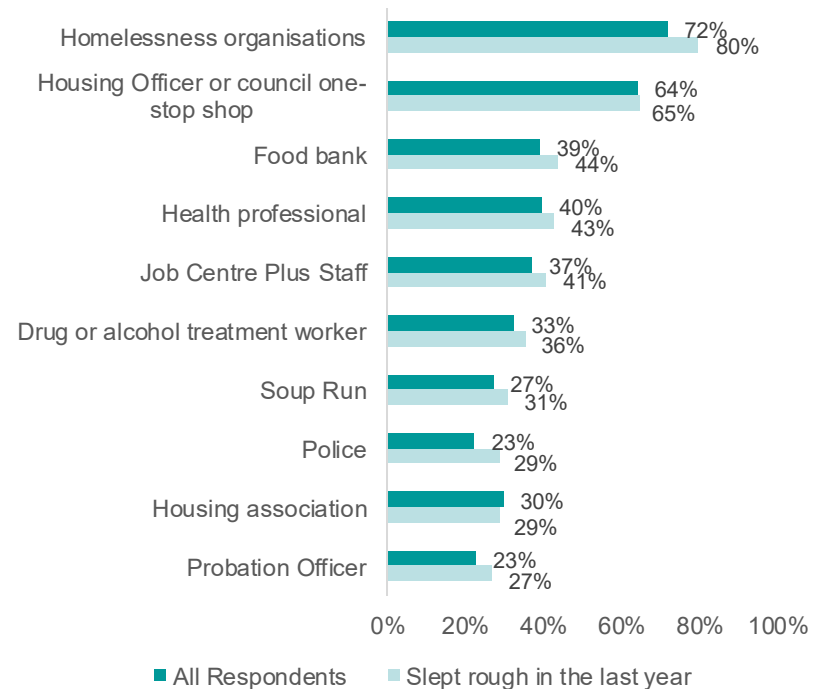


All Respondents (991 respondents)

34%

Had approached the LA more than once in the last year

Types of services engaged with while experiencing homelessness or housing issues





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Further Information

For full findings and further details on the research design, see the report
*Understanding the Multiple Vulnerabilities, Support Needs and Experiences of
People who Sleep Rough in England: Initial Findings from the Rough Sleeping
Questionnaire*

Please get in touch if you have any questions by emailing
roughsleepingresearch@communities.gov.uk