



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

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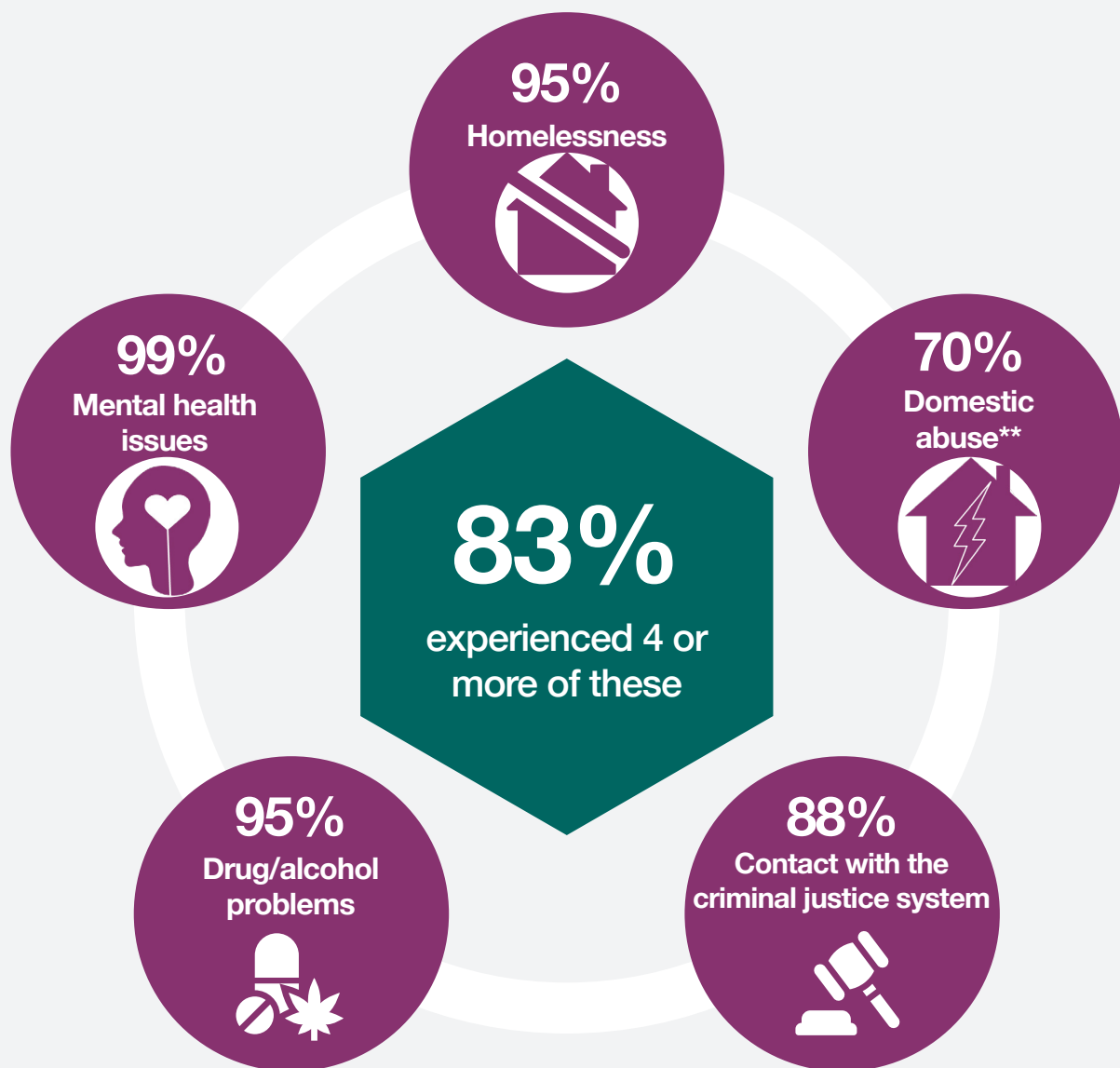
# Understanding multiple disadvantage

Insights from the Changing  
Futures programme

There are an estimated 363,000 people affected by multiple disadvantage in England. The Changing Futures programme aims to test innovative approaches to improving outcomes for this group. This infographic provides information about the characteristics, needs and experiences of over 3,000 people who have received support from the programme.\*

## Disadvantage is interconnected and mutually reinforcing

The Changing Futures programme targets those for whom current systems of support are not working. The image below shows the proportion of Changing Futures participants who had experienced different forms of disadvantage prior to joining the programme.\*\* It also highlights the overlap of disadvantage, making the case for more joined-up support.



\* The infographic draws on questionnaires completed up to February 2024. Questionnaires are completed, on average, two and a half months after participants begin to get support from the programme. Bases for the statistics differ depending on how many people answered a particular question.

\*\* This differs significantly by gender: 93% of women participants have ever experienced domestic abuse compared to 46% of men.


## People experiencing multiple disadvantage are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation

Of the 88% of Changing Futures participants with experience of the criminal justice system (see previous page), almost half had experience of offending and been a recent victim of crime. This highlights the importance of seeing the full range of people's experiences and understanding how offending and victimisation are linked.




Many participants are extremely vulnerable. In the three months around when they joined the Changing Futures programme:


**43%**  
had been a recent victim of violent crime



**35%**  
had been a recent victim of other crime e.g. theft

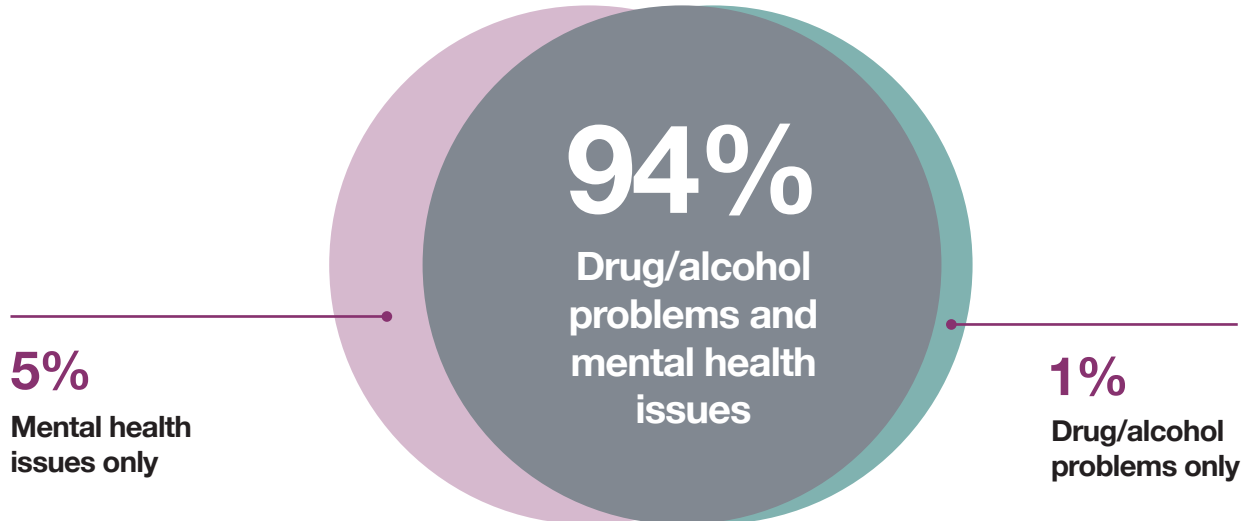


**32%**  
had probably or definitely experienced recent abuse or exploitation



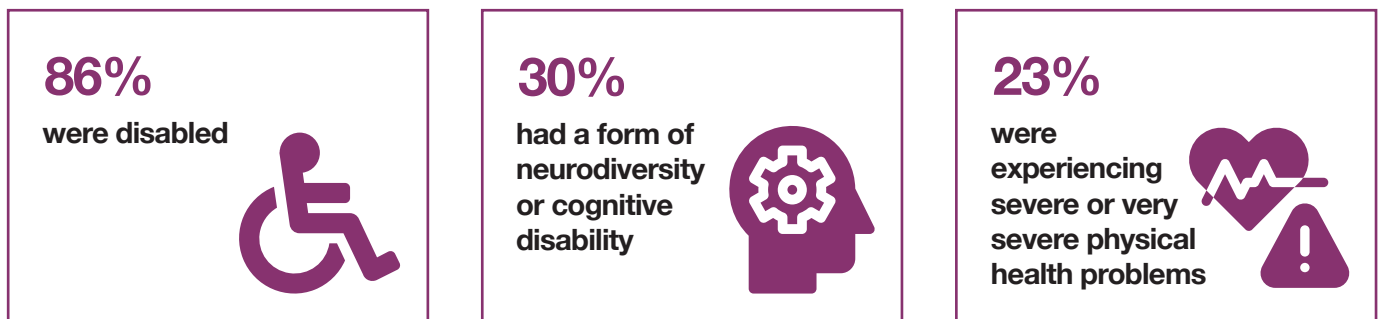
## Drug and/or alcohol problems are often linked to mental health issues

Most Changing Futures participants with experience of drug and/or alcohol problems had also experienced mental health issues. This underlines the importance of services addressing these problems together.



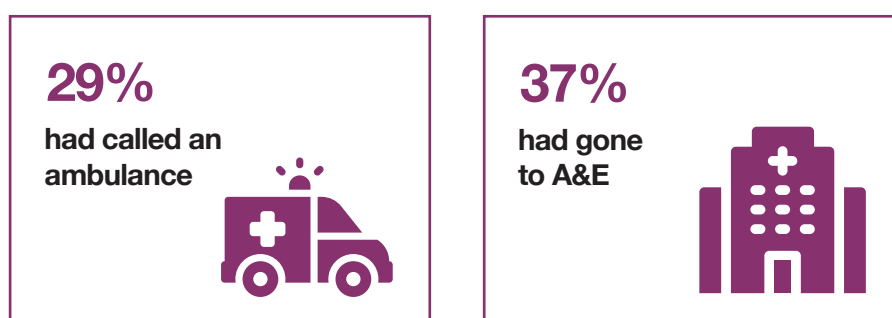
## Disability and physical ill health are common

There is also substantial need for health and social care support. On joining Changing Futures:



## People are not getting timely treatment and support and are therefore accessing help in crisis

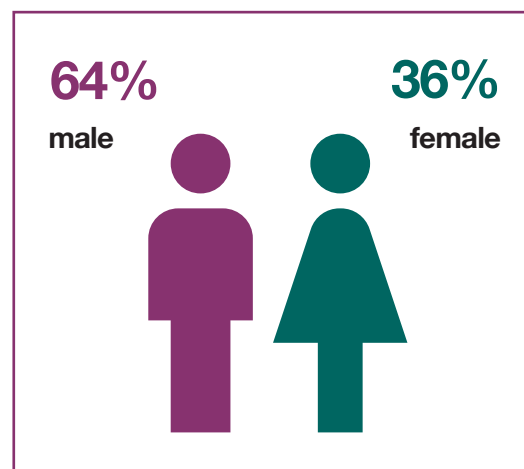
High thresholds for some specialist services, long waiting lists, and people being excluded due to behaviour can drive up use of emergency services. In the three months around when participants joined Changing Futures:



## Targeted approaches are needed to reach under-represented groups

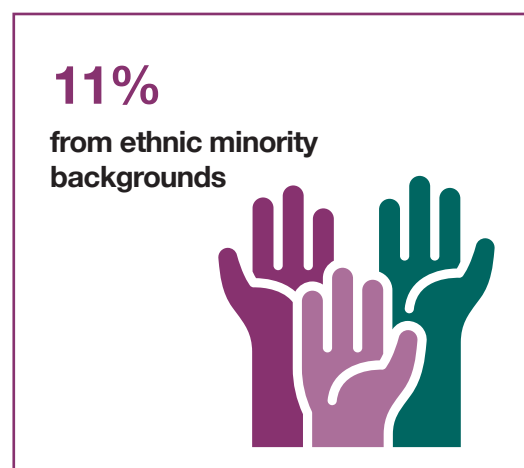
Overall, women appear to be under-represented among Changing Futures participants

- Women's experience of multiple disadvantage can mean they are less visible to services. Outreach work is therefore particularly important.
- Women are more likely to experience domestic abuse. Support needs to be flexible so they can meet workers without abuse perpetrators finding out.
- Single sex spaces and accommodation where women feel safe are important but can be lacking.



Changing Futures staff and stakeholders agree that more could be done to reach ethnic minorities

- Collaboration with trusted community and faith groups can help raise awareness and reach under-represented groups.
- Dedicated specialist workers have also been successful in reaching target groups.
- Diverse support teams, including people with lived experience of multiple disadvantage, can help to build trust.



## People want services that are easy to access, flexible and understand their needs

People experiencing multiple disadvantage often say they feel stigmatised by services as well as the public. Disconnected services make it hard for people to find and get the help they want. Rigid policies and procedures mean support is not tailored to people's needs. People need time to re-build trust in services and want a say in the help they get.

They weren't listening

It takes a lot of time to build up a relationship; it's hard to do this in a 10-minute appointment

They would just pass us pillar to post

The Changing Futures programme demonstrates a more joined-up, 'whole person' approach to support. You can read more about the evaluation findings, including what participants think, here: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-the-changing-futures-programme](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-the-changing-futures-programme)

Every interaction I've had with the Changing Futures staff, I've felt at ease

What Changing Futures has done is connected all the services together for me