London Women's Rough Sleeping Census 2023

London Women's Rough Sleeping Census 2023

Contents

"I was arrested and released with nowhere to go. I've been offered places to stay by strangers – I went with one man, but felt extremely unsafe and managed to leave. I've been threatened." - **Women's census respondent**

Executive summary

Rough sleeping was defined by the Government for the purpose of local authorities conducting rough sleeping counts and estimates in 2010. Since rough sleeping counts began to report on gender breakdowns in 2016, it has been reported that women make up on average around 15% of those sleeping rough.[1] This figure is similar in London and nationally.

"The client would stay in a McDonald's until night buses started running, where she would sleep. The client said that indoor spaces made her feel safer as she feared harassment from men - men on the streets made her feel 'unsafe and uncomfortable'."
- Women's census volunteer

Since rough sleeping was defined for the purposes of enumeration, a growing body of research, the accounts of women with lived experience of rough sleeping, and the experiences of front-line services have all pointed to the fact that women are underrepresented in the figures resulting from yearly snapshot counts and estimates.[2] The reasons for this vary, but the predominant reason is that women often rough sleep in ways which mean they are less likely to be seen 'bedded down or about to bed down' than men who sleep rough, due to a constant fear of violence and abuse.[3] In London, this lack of visibility can also result in women who sleep rough being less able to access services and accommodation, as in many local authorities people must be 'verified' as sleeping rough by being seen by outreach workers 'bedded down or about to bed down', in order to access support and accommodation.

Methodology

The women's rough sleeping census was developed in 2022 in response to the problem of counting women rough sleeping described above. The coalition of organisations and researchers that developed the methodology drew on existing research, the accounts of women with lived experience of rough sleeping and the experiences of front-line services to create a methodology shaped around the experiences of women who sleep rough. The methodology for the women's rough sleeping census 2023 involved:

- Over a 7-day period, outreach teams and other cross sector services undertook a short survey with women they encountered who identified as having rough slept in the last 3 months. It was recommended that outreach teams undertook 'gender informed' outreach shifts to find women who may not be identified during generic outreach shifts.
- Following the census week, local authorities were asked to undertake census data meetings. These involved cross sector services coming together to share data on the numbers of women they knew to have been rough sleeping within the last three months. This was followed by a discussion about the key challenges to supporting women who sleep rough in that area.

---

[1] www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2023/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2023#demographics
[2] Bretherton, J. and Maycock,P. (2021) Women's Homelessness: European Evidence Review. Brussels: FEANTSA
[3] Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2018) Women and rough sleeping. York: University of York. Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse and St Mungo's, (2021) Safety by Experience: Women's experiences. London: Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse.

The 2023 women's rough sleeping census took place in London between Monday 25th September and Sunday 1st October 2023. 30 London boroughs agreed to take part in the census, with 27 boroughs submitting survey responses. 17 London boroughs participated in the additional census data meetings.

Key findings from the 2023 census

- 391 survey responses were received across London, over double the figure from the pilot census in 2022 (154 survey responses received). This is likely to be due to increased familiarity with the census, with many boroughs completing it for the second time, and a higher level of engagement from services in census activities. The survey responses may also reflect an increase in women's rough sleeping in London from 2022 to 2023.
- 656 known women were counted in the data meetings across 17 boroughs, and 193 additional women were noted as those services knew about, but couldn't provide details for.
- Women reported sleeping rough/sheltering overnight in a variety of 'hidden' locations including A&E waiting rooms, on buses or trains, in squats, and in many other locations where they are unlikely to be identified by outreach workers tasked with verifying and supporting people sleeping rough.
- As with the 2022 census, women reported rough sleeping patterns which were transient and intermittent, meaning they are less likely to be identified by outreach workers tasked with verifying and supporting people sleeping rough. For example, a significant proportion of women (120 women) reported that they had spent the night walking around.

"It's cold outside, it's tough and scary – there are mainly men out there, when you're a woman and so vulnerable and you've got no help, you go to somewhere like a station and think I'll be ok - and then it's not ok, it's closed or there are other intimidating scary people there. I don't talk to staff or security when they ask if I'm ok because I don't know if I'll be made to leave." **- Women's census respondent**

- 56.8% of respondents (222 women) reported that they had been homeless in some form before rough sleeping. This data speaks to the fact that rough sleeping often forms part of a trajectory of women's homelessness, and that preventative work is needed to resolve women's homelessness before they resort to rough sleeping.
- 33.7% of respondents (133 women) reported that they had been in some form of homelessness accommodation prior to rough sleeping. This included council and government provided homelessness accommodation, and homelessness services such as hostels and refuges. This data demonstrates that for many women, the accommodation offered to them is not resolving their homelessness, as it is either unsuitable for their needs or they have been unable to sustain it.

"The client has been rough sleeping on and off for almost 20 years. She indicated that she finds it challenging being indoors and has become so accustomed to rough sleeping that she can't cope indoors, especially in hostel environments." **- Women's census volunteer**

- 51% of respondents were from White ethnic groups, 25.8% of census respondents were Black ethnic groups, 9% were mixed ethnic groups and 6% were Asian ethnic groups. Responses from the census correspond with existing data and research showing that Black ethnic groups are disproportionately affected by homelessness: Black ethnic groups made up 25.8% of the census respondents, and yet make up 14% of the London population. Black ethnic groups were even more overrepresented in the census data than in rough sleeping data for all genders: more investigation is needed to understand whether rough sleeping is even more likely to impact Black women, and what steps could be taken to lessen this.
- The most common age of respondents was between 30 and 49. Many women approaching homelessness services fall between these ages, however the census also identified ten people aged 21 and under and 27 people aged 60 and over. The census responses showed that despite the added vulnerability of age, women over 60 and over 70 were using similar patterns of rough sleeping to their younger counterparts.

Emerging themes and recommendations

Identifying women as rough sleeping and verification

The 2023 census has provided a body of data from almost 400 women in London describing their recent experiences of rough sleeping. This data has, similarly to the 2022 census, revealed that women's experiences of rough sleeping tend to be hidden, transient and intermittent, and the locations/ways in which women sleep rough frequently fall outside of the Government definition of rough sleeping. This means women are highly likely to be missed in the current snapshot counts used to enumerate rough sleeping. It also suggests that many women in London may not be identified as rough sleeping during normal outreach work, meaning that they may be unable to access support and accommodation pathways for people who sleep rough.

Several London boroughs who undertook data meetings reported that having to 'verify' that people are sleeping rough according to the current definition (those bedded down or about to bed down in certain locations) posed challenges for identifying and supporting women who are sleeping rough.

To overcome this challenge, it is recommended that all London boroughs adopt an inclusive and gender informed definition of rough sleeping, which enables outreach teams to 'verify' that women are sleeping rough according to their local knowledge, professional experience and, most significantly, the accounts of women themselves. It is also recommended that outreach teams are able to 'verify' and support women who are sleeping rough using intel from local specialist services who support women who sleep rough, such as women's services. It is a useful to note that a small number of London boroughs are beginning to pilot this approach to verification currently, following their involvement in the census.

Women's homelessness is not being resolved by available resources

A significant number of women who took part in the 2023 census reported that they had been experiencing homelessness in another form prior to rough sleeping, and 33.7% of women reported that they had been in some form of homelessness accommodation prior to rough sleeping. This is concerning, as it demonstrates that the accommodation offered to women to resolve their homelessness is either not sustainable (and they are forced to return to rough

sleeping) or not suitable for their needs (so they return to rough sleeping rather than using the accommodation offered). Additionally, many local authorities that took part in the data meetings reported that accommodation options for women were often not deemed safe by women, were not specialist or able to respond to effectively to women's needs, or were unsuitable for other reasons, for example the widespread lack of accommodation for couples who are rough sleeping.

It is recommended that further work is undertaken to understand women's trajectories through homelessness, and to ensure that the provision available for women who experience rough sleeping can meet their needs and resolve their homelessness. At a London-wide and borough level, responses need to include:

1. Identifying preventative solutions that can find and support women who are not yet sleeping rough, or who are occasionally resorting to sleeping rough.
2. Identifying responses that can find and support women who are regularly sleeping rough more quickly, and providing them with longer-term, gender-informed housing solutions that will enable women to move away from rough sleeping and revolving door homelessness completely.

Introduction

Organisations involved in this work

The 2023 London women's rough sleeping census was overseen and supported by the Life Off the Streets women's rough sleeping workstream, and was designed and coordinated by Solace Women's Aid and Single Homeless Project, with support from the Greater London Authority and London Councils. These four organisations form the 'census core team' referred to throughout this report.

The census core team undertook a range of activities in order to ensure that the census took place in London in 2023. This involved: developing the 2023 census methodology using feedback from the 2022 pilot census and lived experience perspectives; undertaking activities to engage cross-sector stakeholders across London in the census; creating and disseminating training and guidance for participants; working with local authority census leads to plan census outreach shifts, service-based activities and data meetings; recruiting and distributing volunteers to support with census activities; and regularly sharing learning and recommendations from the census work back to the Life Off the Streets women's rough sleeping workstream, the Life Off the Streets core group, and with other stakeholders more widely.

Solace Women's Aid collated the data for the London women's rough sleeping census, and have presented the data for the purposes of this report. This report has been created with the support of the census core team to provide an in-depth interpretation of the data received across London, and to highlight emerging themes and brief related recommendations for practice and policy change. The views represented in this report are that of the census core team in relation to the 2023 census data and what it shows about women's rough sleeping in London. This report is not a full report on the 2023 women's rough sleeping census, and does not seek to evaluate the effectiveness of the census or to provide detailed recommendations for national practice and policy change in this area of work. A comprehensive report bringing together the 2023 census data from London and 14 local authorities nationally is currently being completed by researchers at Change Grow Live, and will be released in April 2024.

Acknowledgements

The London Women's Rough Sleeping Census 2023 was made possible by the combined efforts of many different individuals and organisations from a range of sectors across London. The census core team would like to thank all local authorities that took part in the census, particularly the individuals who undertook the coordination of census activities in their boroughs. The team would also like to say a huge thank you to every single service and person who took part, and who worked creatively and flexibly to reach women and support them to take part in the census survey. The census is a great example of what can be achieved when organisations come together to make change happen.

Finally, the census team would like to thank every woman who gave their time to take part in the census survey – your resilience in the face of extreme difficulties continues to inspire this work, and the census core team are committed to using your voices to drive change to the way that women's rough sleeping is recognised and responded to.

Methodology

This section will provide a brief overview of the census methodology. Further information about the background and development of the women's rough sleeping census can be found in the report Making Women Count[4], resulting from the first census in 2022.

Further information about the delivery of the 2023 census, including guidance and resources provided to participating services, can be found [here](#).[5]

What is the census?

Every year, data is collected about people who are rough sleeping in London and across the UK. Research, the lived experience of women who sleep rough and the experience of front-line services have all highlighted that women are underrepresented in this data, and that women are some of the most vulnerable people within the rough sleeping population.

Key data sources used to understand rough sleeping come from recording practices which are not adapted to women's patterns of homelessness. It follows that if services are then commissioned based on this data, they will not be meeting the needs of those who are not included in it.

The census aims to bring visibility to the experiences of women who are rough sleeping and may not be represented in data, policy or services. By using methods which consider gendered experiences, the census aims to:

- Collect anonymised data to build a more comprehensive understanding of women's experiences of rough sleeping;
- Use the findings to advocate for targeted support for women and inform policy and practice;
- Test, support and encourage good practice; and
- Help support services and sectors to forge links and share good practice to result in joined-up support for women.

How did the census work?

The census operated similarly to the first year it was delivered in 2022. Following feedback and reflection, some changes and modifications were made to the 2023 census, the most significant of which was the inclusion of data meetings. With this addition, there were two components to the census in 2023:

Census survey – Over the 7 day census period**,** a 10 question survey was completed with women who had experienced rough sleeping in the last 3 months. The survey was available as an online form and as a 'paper' copy.

A range of services conducted the survey with women they saw during census week, and outreach teams conducting the survey on gender-informed outreach shifts during census week, as well as on ordinary outreach shifts.

---

[4] Young, L. and Hodges, K. (2022) Making women count: Designing and conducting a rough sleeping census for women in London. Online: PraxisCollab.
[5] www.solacewomensaid.org/london-womens-rough-sleeping-census-2023

Each participating borough was asked to deliver at least 6 hours of gender-informed outreach: this is to support teams to consider and test practices which may be more likely to reach women.

Data meetings - after census week, local services came together in a borough data meeting to submit the numbers of women they work with who are rough sleeping and to discuss key challenges in their local area in supporting women who are rough sleeping. More information can be found in a later section of this report.

Which services were involved and what guidance was provided?

The census core team encouraged any services who might have contact with women who experience rough sleeping to take part, as well as working closely with outreach teams in each participating borough.

The census core team asked each participating borough to allocate a borough lead to disseminate information about the census and encourage local services to take part. Guidance and online training sessions (live and recorded) were provided with in-depth detail for services about how to participate in the census. £5 supermarket vouchers were provided for women completing the survey, in acknowledgement of their time and to encourage women to take part.

Defining rough sleeping

Government definition

Since 2010, the Government has defined rough sleeping for the purpose of single night snapshot counts and estimates as:

"People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as, on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or 'bashes').

The definition does not include people in hostels or shelters, sofa surfers, people in campsites or other sites used for recreational purposes or organised protests, squatters or Travellers sites."

London definition

In London, many local authorities also use this definition to enable commissioned outreach services to 'verify' that someone is sleeping rough, and someone must be verified in this way in order to be included on the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) database. Guidance on the recording of street contacts on CHAIN states:

"The recording of street contacts on CHAIN can have significant consequences both for individuals and at a more strategic level, so it is important that all users work to a common understanding and follow core guidelines. For individual rough sleepers, verified status is predicated on having had at least one bedded down contact recorded."

The London women's rough sleeping census was developed in response to the fact that the way women often rough sleeping is not recognised in the Government definition. The 2022 found that women's rough sleeping is often:

- **Hidden:** Women often avoid bedding down on the streets and will shelter/sleep in places that outreach are unlikely or unable to access as part of their routine shifts.
- **Transient:** Women often stay on the move i.e. walking all night or moving locations regularly for safety reasons.
- **Intermittent:** Women may sleep rough interspersed with other forms of dangerous hidden homelessness, such as sex working in exchange for a place to stay overnight or staying in flats belonging to unknown or unsafe people. They may make decisions about where to sleep/shelter on a night by night basis based on their assessment of risk and what options are available.

The 2023 census therefore defined women's rough sleeping as:

Having nowhere safe to stay at all: for example, sleeping outside on the ground or in a tent, sitting/sleeping in places which are open late or 24/7 (such as fast-food restaurants and hospitals), walking all night, sex working at night but not having anywhere to sleep during the day, using drugs in other people's accommodation at night but not having anywhere to sleep during the day, etc.

Women may not do this every night, and rough sleeping may be interspersed with other forms of hidden homelessness such as staying in accommodation belonging to unsafe/unknown people/perpetrators, staying in 'cuckooed' flats, or staying with friends/family/associates on a very insecure and transitory basis (e.g. nightly or weekly, or regularly being forced to leave immediately).

Key findings for 2023 London Women's Rough Sleeping Census

Responses by borough

The 2023 London women's rough sleeping census received **391 responses** which are included in this report. This is following data checks and removals of any responses which fell outside of the parameters.

The full data from the survey can be found in appendix 1.

2023 census responses by borough
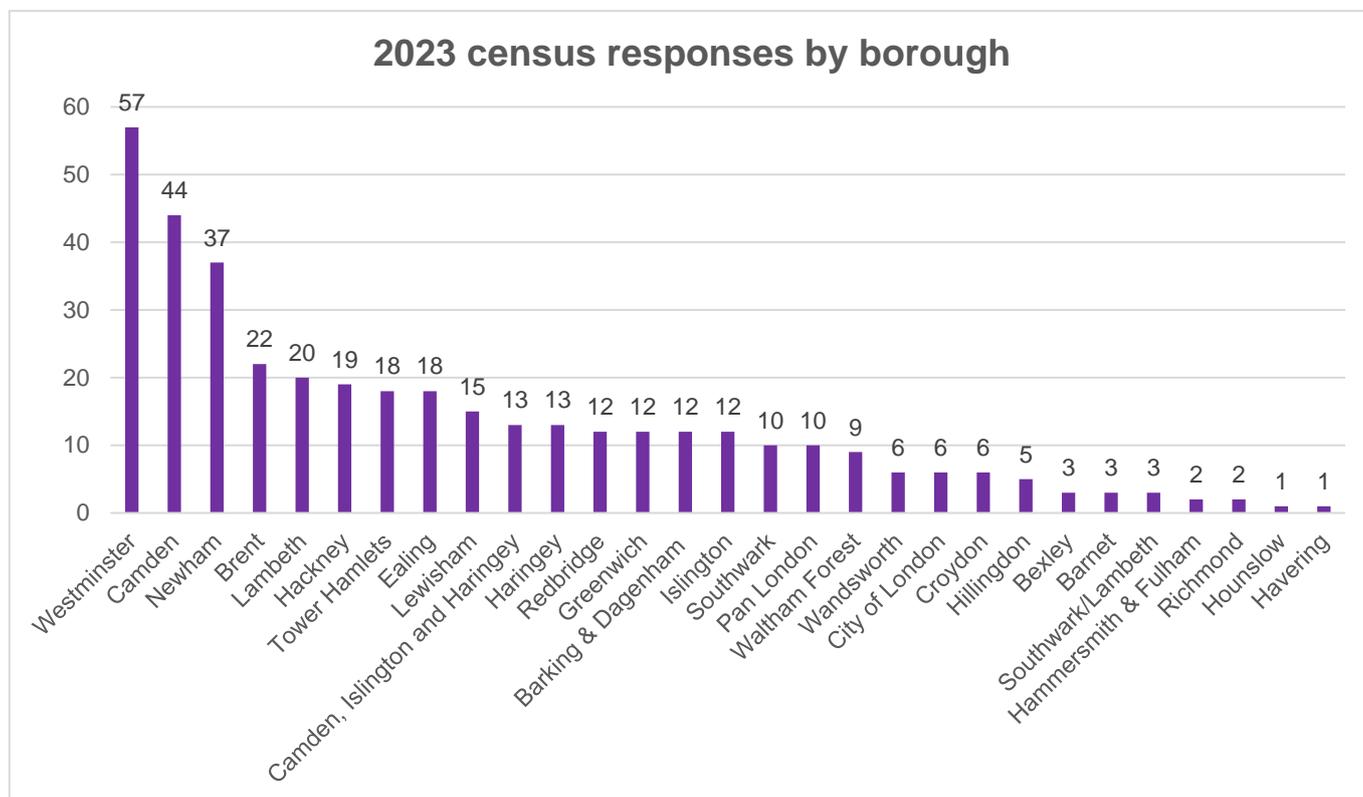
*"The client regularly moves around London – she has no fixed location."* **Women's census volunteer**

The boroughs in some surveys were recorded as 'Camden, Islington and Haringey' and 'Southwark/Lambeth'. This is likely due to services supporting people across a tri-borough set up, and people being seen on the border of two boroughs. These survey responses have been left under these categories, but should be taken into account for the numbers of the relevant individual boroughs. Some survey responses were also recorded as pan London or their exact location wasn't known.

Why did some boroughs see such different results compared to 2022?

Overall, the census had over double the number of responses than the previous year: 154 in 2022 compared to 391 in 2023. Most boroughs saw more women in 2023 they saw in the 2022 pilot census.

This is for the most part likely due to increased familiarity with the census in completing it for the second time, a longer lead in time, and a higher level of engagement overall. In particular, a number of boroughs were keen to improve their census response having felt that their census response the previous year had missed women they know to be rough sleeping but

did not encounter during the 5-day census period. Even though completing the census is an additional piece of work for services, many teams and practitioners were very enthusiastic and supportive about taking part in 2023.

Surveys by borough
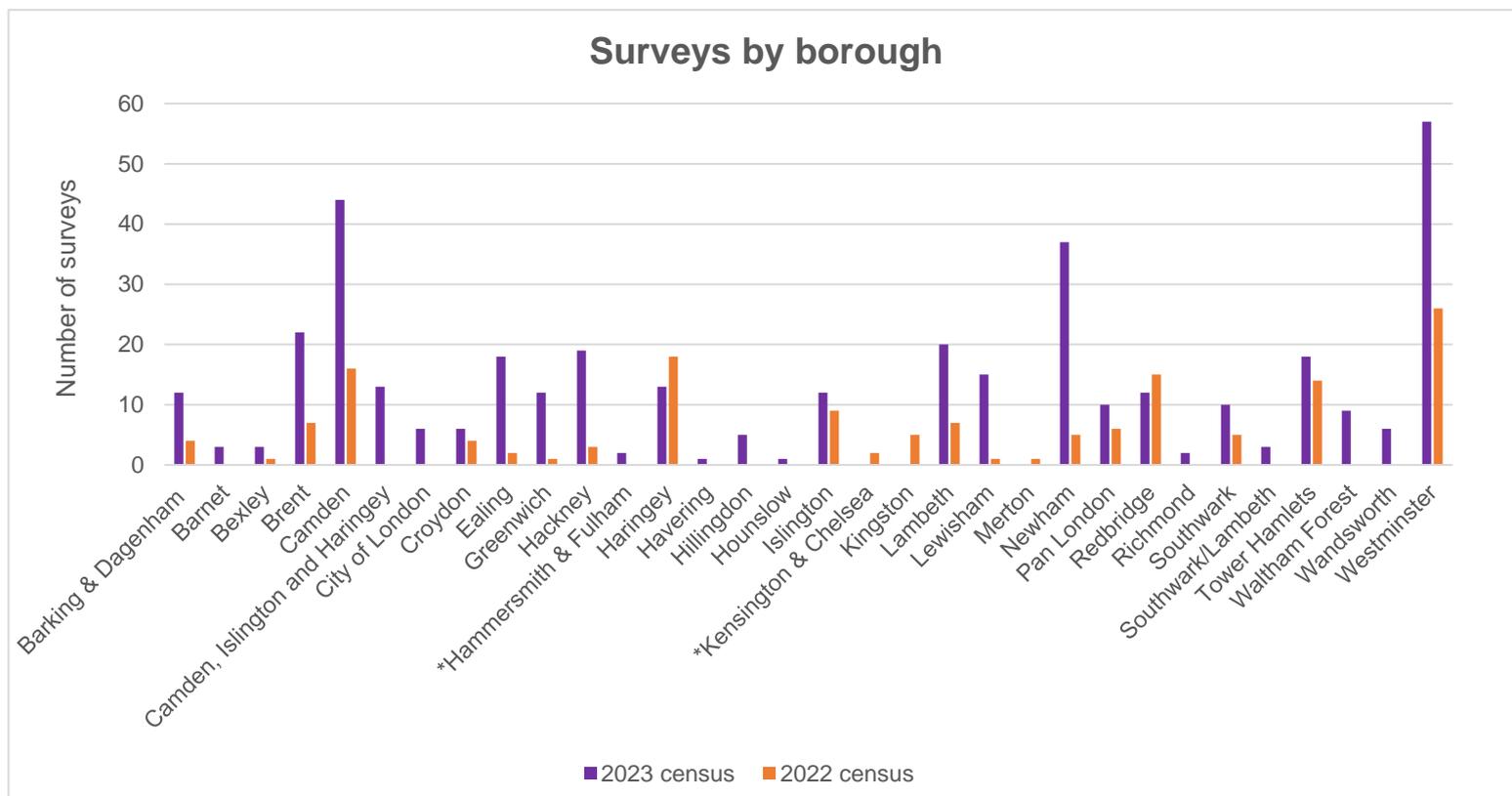
There is a possibility that some of these numbers are due to an increase in women rough sleeping, supported by the results of the annual rough sleeping snapshot in 2023 and CHAIN data: the annual snapshot showed a 32% increase in rough sleeping London between 2022 and 2023, and an increase of 12.8% for women in particular. CHAIN showed a 15% increase for women between Quarter 2 of 2022 and Quarter 2 of 2023. As the census is repeated over multiple years, it will become easier to notice year-on-year trends and changes.

The census core team noted an increase in activity and planning from the participating boroughs. Approaches included:

- **Census planning sessions** – bringing together a range of agencies to plan gender-informed outreach shifts (including joint shifts and shifts from different teams), and other census activities.
- **Women's census sessions** – advertised in day centres to encourage women to come to the service and receive support, as well as complete the survey. Some services planned in-reach sessions, barbecues or wellbeing sessions to encourage women to attend and support those who did.
- **Women's spaces or safe spaces** – some teams arranged to have a women's space open during the week, with some ensuring there was a different space available every day. This also helped outreach teams who didn't usually have suitable spaces to meet with women off the street.
- **Vouchers** – some boroughs arranged for additional top up funding to increase the voucher amount to £10.

- **Volunteers** - some teams arranged for volunteers to attend busy services to support women to complete the survey, for example in health services and day centres when staff might not be available.

Which boroughs didn't take part?

Three boroughs did not take part in the census this year and therefore have no results for 2023 (Enfield, Harrow and Sutton). A few boroughs did agree to take part but did not return any survey results, either due to difficulties finding women to complete the survey with or lack of capacity in census week. These boroughs show no results for 2023: Merton, Kingston and Bromley. Kensington and Chelsea took part in the census, but due to a problem in submitting, their two surveys have not been included.

Which boroughs did data meetings?

The data meetings were a new component of the census in 2023 and were completed by the following 17 boroughs: Barking and Dagenham; Brent; Bromley; Camden; City; Ealing; Greenwich; Hackney; Hammersmith and Fulham; Haringey; Hounslow; Islington; Kensington and Chelsea; Lambeth; Redbridge; Tower Hamlets; Westminster.

Further details about the data meetings and results can be found later in this report.

Experiences of rough sleeping

A full list of the survey questions can be found in Appendix 2 of this report.

When did you last sleep rough?
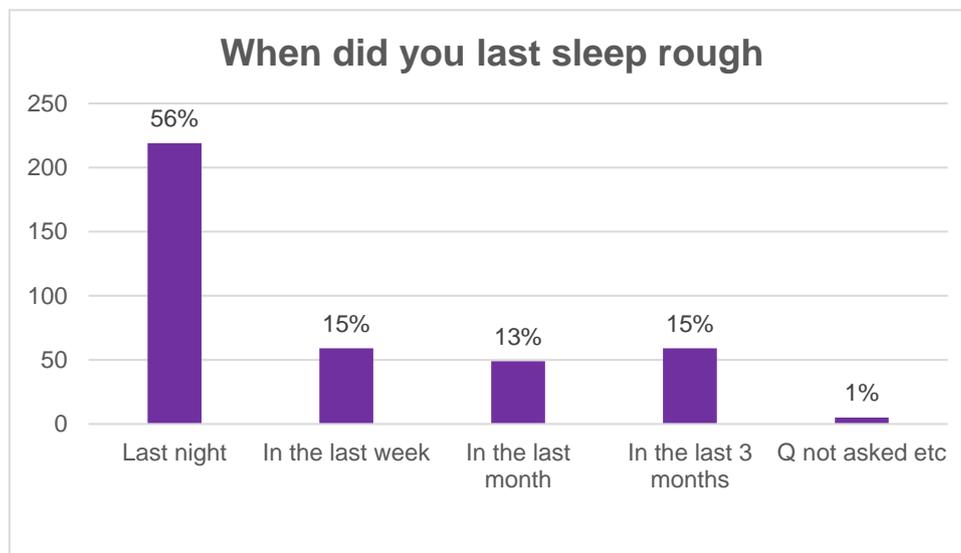
Just over half (56%) of respondents selected 'last night'. Evidently a significant proportion of women had slept rough the previous night. However, the number of responses for options other than 'last night' reinforces that women often aren't sleeping rough every night and that they are likely to be rough sleeping intermittently. (NB. 'Last night' was not the same night for everyone as people completed the survey on different days.)

This question and its options were the same as asked in 2022 and the results were relatively similar.

When did you last sleep rough: 2023 and 2022

Chart showing percentages for 2023 and 2022:
- Last night: 56% (2023), 49% (2022)
- In the last week: 15% (2023), 15% (2022)
- In the last month: 13% (2023), 10% (2022)
- In the last 3 months: 15% (2023), 11% (2022)
- Q not asked etc: 1% (2023), 15% (2022)

Legend: ■ 2023 Percentage of total ■ 2022 Percentage of total

Approximately how many nights have you slept rough in the last 3 months?

How many nights have you slept rough
- 1 night: 4%
- 2-5 nights: 11%
- 6-10 nights: 8%
- 11-20 nights: 10%
- 21-30 nights: 10%
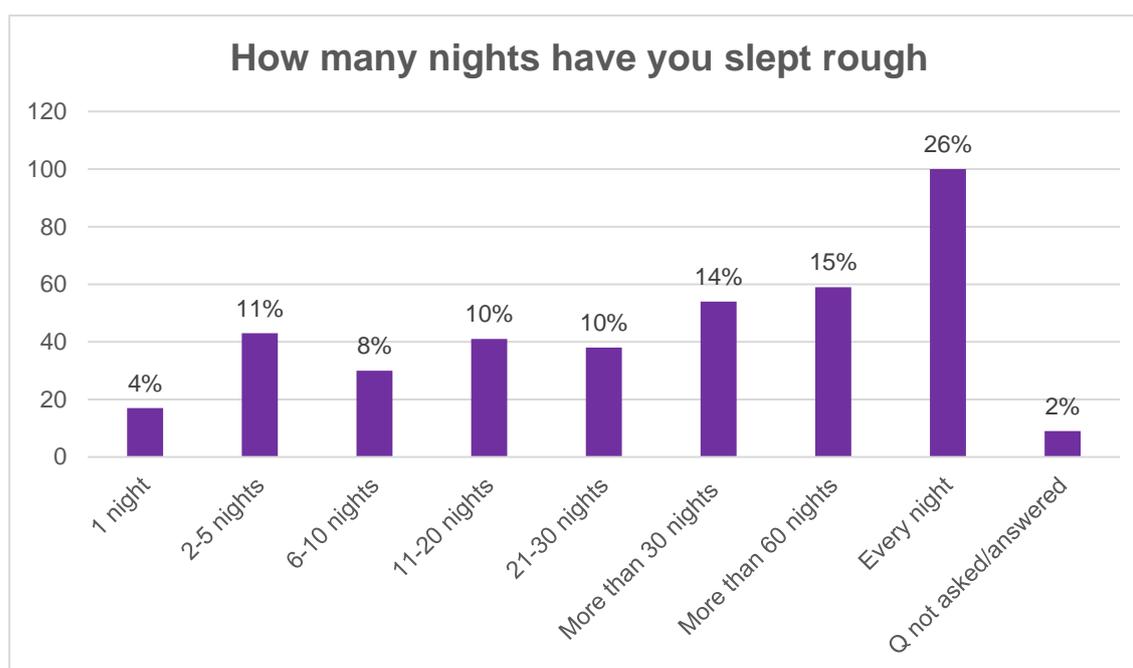- More than 30 nights: 14%
- More than 60 nights: 15%
- Every night: 26%
- Q not asked/answered: 2%

- The most frequently selected response was every night - 26% of respondents.
- 54% of respondents had slept rough more than 30 nights – more than 1 month out of the last three.
- 23% of respondents had slept rough 10 nights or less.

219 women had slept rough the previous night, but only 100 said they were sleeping rough every night. This suggests that women are rough sleeping regularly enough for the numbers of those who rough slept 'last night' to be high, but individuals aren't always sleeping rough every single night. This is evidently a prevalent problem in London in any given week, and a high proportion of women are sleeping rough very regularly, but many women are also rough sleeping intermittently.

Importance of first point of contact

It follows that responses to rough sleeping that rely on someone being in one location for more than one night are unlikely to be effective for women. For example, if a woman is referred to Streetlink on one night and an outreach worker tries to find her the following night, she may have moved on or be using another form of hidden rough sleeping. Likewise, if an outreach team are trying to keep contact with a particular woman by finding her regularly, or wish to bring another practitioner or specialist to see her, they may have difficulty finding her on any given night.

Because of this, and because women who rough sleep and experience multiple disadvantages can often present in crisis and with low levels of trust in services, the options provided at the first point of contact are of particular importance. These options also need to have reduced barriers to entry to ensure they can be easily accessed. A good option provided at this point could increase a woman's safety as well as her trust in and relationship with services, making her more likely to reach out again. For women new to rough sleeping, it could quickly end their homelessness.

The need for high quality, proactive interactions whenever a woman is seen by any service is further supported by the fact that women avoid or attend homelessness services less frequently[6] and that some women can be rough sleeping and homeless over long periods of time. This also means that services need to consider alternative ways to reach and keep contact with women, so that interventions aren't reliant on women remaining in one place.

There is also an opportunity to do rapid intervention work for the women sleeping rough 10 nights or less, for example. Understanding where women in this situation stay for the majority of the time and how to reach them would allow services to better support them to avoid more frequent rough sleeping and its associated risks. Finding ways to reach women who are rough sleeping infrequently is vital to providing preventative options to resolve their homelessness before prolonged rough sleeping increases their level of need and further distances them from services.

It is important to consider that we don't know when each person started or ended rough sleeping: some of the people who slept rough less than 10 nights in the past 3 months could have been new to rough sleeping in that timeframe, or could have been accommodated at some point during the timeframe and were perhaps rough sleeping more frequently prior to this.

Comparison to 2022

This question was asked in the same way with the same options provided in both years. The pattern of responses was relatively similar for the options covering 1-30 nights, but differed significantly for the options with higher frequency of rough sleeping.

- 'Every night' doubled from 13% in 2022 to the most common response in 2023 at 26%.

[6] Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2018) Women and rough sleeping: A critical review of current research methodology. York: Centre for Housing Policy, University of York.

- 'More than 30 nights', the most common answer in 2022 at 22%, became the third most selected answer at 14% in 2023.
- In 2022, 44.8% of respondents were rough sleeping 30, 60 nights or every night (i.e. more than one third of the time), rising to 54% in 2023.

This suggests that the 2023 census reached more women who had slept rough every night or almost every night: it is not clear whether this is because more women are sleeping rough more frequently than a year ago, but this is one possibility.
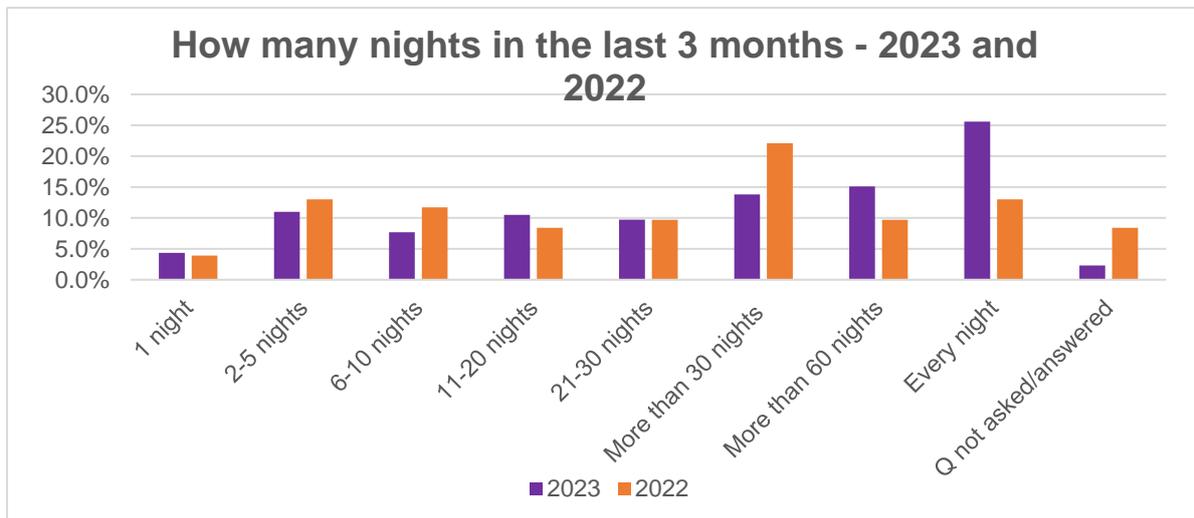
Where have you stayed or slept in the last 3 months?

This question allowed respondents to select multiple options. In order to understand how many women were experiencing different forms of rough sleeping, the responses have been grouped into the following categories:

- **Outside:** 'Outside' includes all places which are highly insecure and exposed to the elements with no or poor shelter.
    - This includes: outside, walking around all night, in a park, in a car, in a tent, in a garage, in a bin shed.

- **Indoor or inside:** 'Indoor' includes places which aren't safe/comfortable sleeping places, where there won't be a bed, and which also aren't at an address that is legally connected with the inhabitant, but which involve some sort of building that provides protection from the elements.
    - This includes: train and bus stations, or a train or bus, McDonald's, A&E, in a flat block/stairwell, church or mosque, in an airport, at a police station, in a library.
- **Housing (precarious):** In accommodation – housed, in a refuge or hostel, in a night shelter, in hospital, in custody, staying with someone.

NB. Police station is included separately to custody as people specifically entered police station (when they could have selected custody) and women talk about reaching out to police for help (as opposed to being arrested), sitting all night in a police station and moving on in the morning.

Where are women sleeping?

295 people (75% of respondents) had slept outside in the last 3 months.

> 243 people (62%) answered 'slept outside on the street' (others selected or provided answers which included outside locations as listed above).

163 people (41.7%) had slept in both outdoor and indoor locations.

> Only 13% of people who'd slept in an indoor place, *hadn't* also slept outside.
> Only 17% of people who'd slept in a precarious housing, *hadn't* also slept outside.

119 people had slept in all three types of location – outdoor, indoor and precarious housing - in the last three months.

269 people listed 2 or more places they had slept in the last three months.

> 145 people listed 4 or more places.
> 11 people listed 10 or more places, with the highest being 14.
> 122 people listed just one place. 53 of those people selected 'slept outside on the street'. The next most common answers were then 'with a friend', 'at a bus or train station', 'homelessness service', and 'walked around all night'.

These figures show that a significant proportion of women slept outside during their period of rough sleeping. While a woman's experience may be more hidden and the definition of rough sleeping needs to expand to include the broader forms of rough sleeping that women often experience, this data confirms that a significant proportion of women are sleeping outside according to how rough sleeping is currently understood, but may not be being found. However, it is also the case that many women slept in a combination of different types of spaces, which demonstrates the need for an expanded definition of rough sleeping that better understands the patterns of rough sleeping, which often varies on a night-by-night basis.

As the first two questions show, many women are not rough sleeping every night: this suggests that on at least some nights, they have somewhere else to go. From this question, we can see

that for some people, this includes some form of accommodation. It could be useful for a definition of rough sleeping to explicitly include people who have somewhere to go some of the time: the majority of respondents were sleeping rough a significant proportion of the time, despite potentially having somewhere else to go on some nights. That accommodation was likely unsuitable, unsafe, or not always available, and so in itself formed part of women's overall rough sleeping journeys.

Significant numbers of women are walking around all night

"The client disclosed she feels unsafe at times with men asking for sex and business. She has been attacked by a male in the park before and is difficult having monthly periods whilst homeless as she feels unwell for the first 4 days." **- Women's census volunteer**

120 women had walked around all night. Walking around all night is both risky and exposed to the elements in the same way as bedded down rough sleeping, but is highly unlikely to be noticed or recorded by outreach teams as rough sleeping, and is not encompassed by the current Government definition. It is important to include this prevalent way of spending the night within the definition of rough sleeping, and also to consider how services can reach and support people who are walking at night.

First point of contact and better ways to reach women

The responses to this question again point to the difficulties of expecting a woman to remain in one place in order to find her and offer support. As the results show, women are often a) not rough sleeping every night, b) moving between multiple different locations, and c) not necessarily sleeping in the circumstances required for some services to verify that they are rough sleeping/encompassed by the rough sleeping definition. Waiting to see a woman in particular circumstances in order to offer her the available options (i.e. waiting to see her bedded down so that she meets required criteria), is likely to result in missed opportunities to engage her and end her rough sleeping, particularly if she is new to rough sleeping and homelessness. Additionally, services asking women to rough sleep visibly in the same place is also highly likely to increase the risk that she could be physically or sexually attacked, as is the experience of many women who have slept rough.[7]

"Being female has meant I have been subjected to sexual abuse because I had nowhere else to go." **- Women's census respondent**

Services need to find different ways to reach women to offer continued support; they need to make sure that there is a strong first point of contact; and they need to make sure that offers really work for women and have limited entry barriers. Being reliant on seeing women in a particular situation or on a given day is highly likely to perpetuate women's experiences of rough sleeping and, in turn increase their risk of women being exposed to violence and abuse.

---

[7] Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2018) Women and rough sleeping. York: University of York.

Most commonly mentioned locations

Most commonly mentioned locations - by type
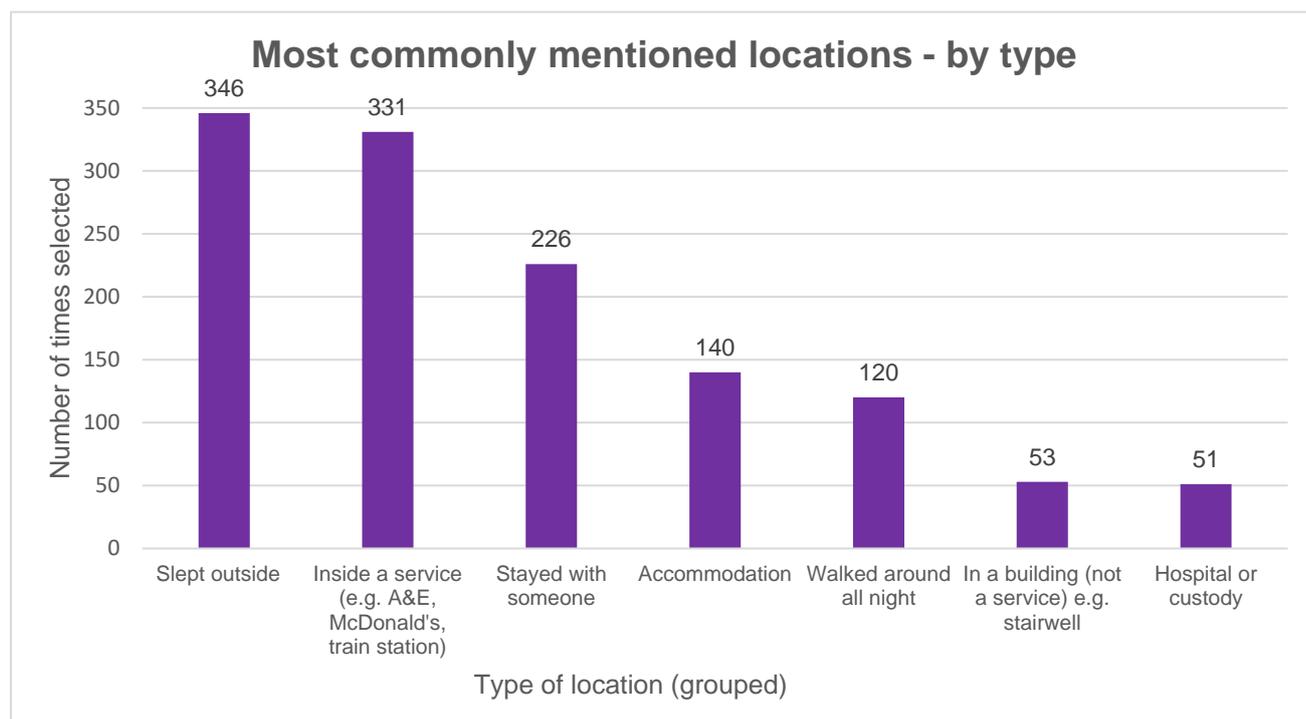
The data above does not correspond to the number of respondents as each person may have mentioned multiple places listed in one category.

| Specific locations	
Stayed with someone	• 22% of respondents had stayed with a stranger or new acquaintance. • 36% had stayed with a friend or relative. One person explicitly mentioned they'd stayed with an ex-partner who was a perpetrator of abuse.
In accommodation	• Only 3.8% mentioned having their own house – rented, owned, social rent. • 9.5% had stayed in a B&B, hotel, or temporary accommodation. • 11.3% had stayed in a homelessness service, 6.9% had stayed in a night shelter, and 4.1% had stayed in refuge accommodation.
Hospital, police station or custody	• 10.2% had been in hospital. • 2.8% had been in police stations and 2.6% had been in custody.
Inside a service	• 13% (51 people) had stayed in an A&E waiting room. • 31% had stayed at a bus or train station. • 15.1% had stayed in McDonald's or similar.
Outdoors	• 30.7% (120 people) had walked around all night. • 20.2% (79 people) had been on a bus or train. • 11.3% (44 people) had stayed in a squat.

	- 6.4% (25 people) had stayed in a car. - 6.4% slept in a park or wooded area.
Other responses	Between 2 and 6 people specifically mentioned the following: - Bin shed; car park; in a flat block; in a stairwell; in a tent; outside a church and under a bridge. Some people mentioned they'd stayed in an airport. Other answers (provided by one person each) included: - Garages, under flats, a graveyard, in toilets, in tunnels, in a library, 'hiding in alleyways in the rain', and 'outside the council office'. - 1 person specifically said they'd sex worked as an answer to this question.

Comparison to 2022

In 2022, this question was asked as 'Where did you stay last night?'. In 2023 we instead asked about the places stayed over the past three months. While the 2022 question provided us with an understanding of the ranges of places in which people stayed as a whole, 2023 provided us with more detail about the range of places one individual might stay in while they're rough sleeping. Options provided were also slightly amended, informed by results from 2022 and further lived experience focus groups. Women were also able to select more than one response in 2023, meaning it's not possible to fully compare the results.

However, a very high number of responses included sleeping outside in both years, with 32.5% of women selecting that they rough slept on the street the previous night in 2022, compared to 75% selecting sleeping outside in some form in the last three months in 2023. (As the options provided were slightly different, answers can't be categorised in the same way for both years).

Where were you staying most recently before sleeping rough?
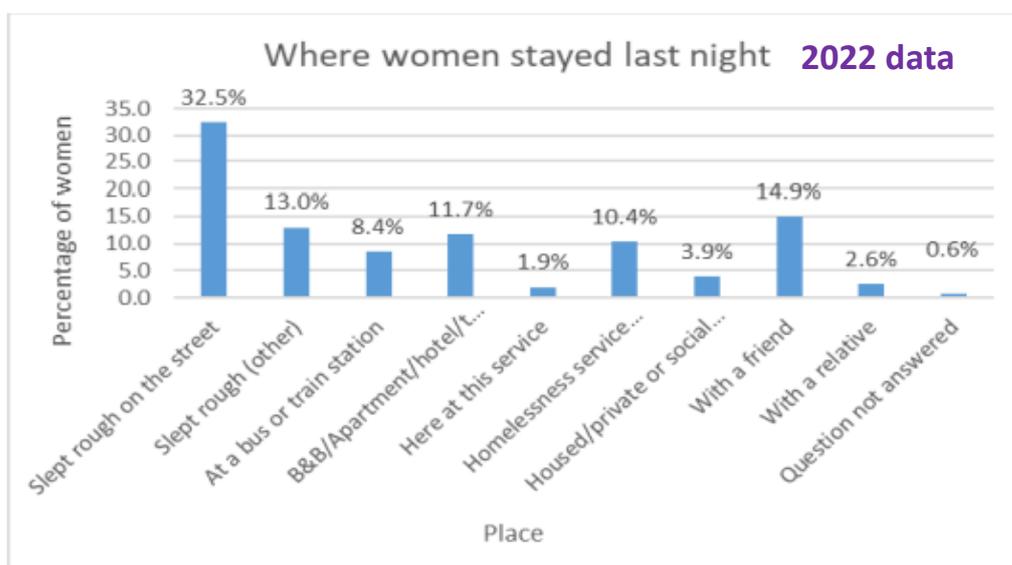
Where were you staying before you were rough sleeping?
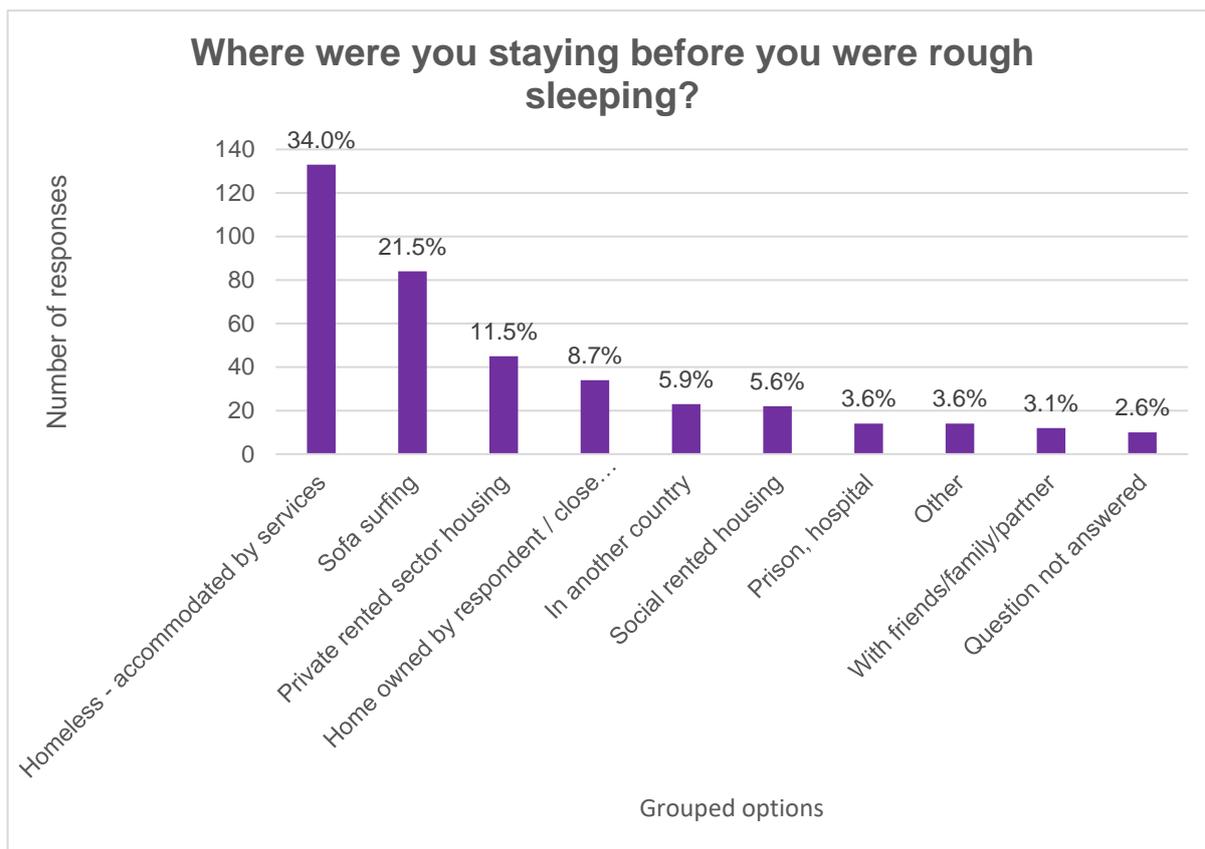
This chart shows responses grouped into categories. For this question, respondents could only select one answer.

It's possible that some respondents interpreted this question as meaning where were you staying 3 months ago (i.e. before the time period discussed in the last questions), rather than before they were rough sleeping.

Accommodation before rough sleeping	
Sofa surfing	• 21.5% had sofa surfed (most frequent with 84 responding this option)
Housing – non supported	• 11.5% were in private rented housing • 8.7% were in a home owned by them or close family (this could include some people who are sofa surfing) • 5.6% were in social rented housing
Supported housing	• 11% were in supported housing • 8.7% were in a hostel with no support
Council/government provided homeless accommodation	• 12% were in either temporary accommodation, emergency accommodation, asylum accommodation or hotels related to covid-19 pandemic (48 respondents).

	• 21.7% were in homelessness services such as hostels, refuges or supported housing (85 respondents)
Other responses	• 5.8% were in another country • 4.9% had been in asylum accommodation • 1.3% were living with an abusive partner, customers homes or an empty property

Combining all of the above responses, it seems that at least **56.8%** (222 people) were homeless in some form before rough sleeping.

Rough sleeping following statutory and supported accommodation

These results suggest that women are moving in and out of homelessness accommodation option. Evidently, women who have been provided accommodation as a response to homelessness have nonetheless had to resort to rough sleeping. It isn't known how many times this might have happened for each woman.

"Night shelter provision is so limited, there's not enough, it's not fair. I heard that one girl gave up her night shelter space for someone else which is so sad. Someone says go to xyz, but then they don't have anything there to give." **- Women's census respondent**

It is clear that for some women, the accommodation provided was not considered a better or safer option than homelessness. This is further supported by the responses to the question 'where have you stayed in the past 3 months' which show that women are rough sleeping as well as using various forms of accommodation.

Evidently, interventions need to be the right ones: services need to look further into why women who can access accommodation are not using it, and why women who have had accommodation provided in response to their homelessness have lost the accommodation, or are still having to resort to rough sleeping. From existing research, the census data meetings and the experiences of front-line services, it is clear that women often feel unsafe in accommodation that is provided to them, and that accommodation is often not designed for women and does not meet their needs.[8]

Accommodation by itself is also unlikely to be sufficient for some women exiting rough sleeping: for example, women experiencing multiple disadvantages or high support needs are unlikely to be able to sustain temporary accommodation without support, and while housing is for many the most important first step, it is unlikely to be sufficient for long-term recovery from rough sleeping by itself.[9] Women who are still in abusive relationships may also be unable to take up offers of accommodation due to coercive control from their partners, especially when their partners are not also given an offer of accommodation.

---

[8] St Mungo's (2014) Rebuilding Shattered Lives: The final report. London: St Mungo's.
Sharpen, J. (2018) Jumping through hoops: How are coordinated responses to multiple disadvantage meeting the needs of women? London: AVA, MEAM, Agenda and St Mungo's.
[9] www.gov.uk/government/publications/ending-rough-sleeping-for-good

Rough sleeping after sofa surfing

The high number of women falling into rough sleeping following sofa surfing seen in the 2023 census data is not unexpected, but is also significant. This is an important form of 'hidden homelessness' – homelessness which can continue without any services being aware and without being included in any homelessness statistics, for some people for many years at a time.

"The client was found sleeping in a tent with two other women within proximity for protection." **- Women's census volunteer**

The number of women moving from sofa surfing to rough sleeping indicates the importance of earlier interventions for this group and finding better ways to reach them. Some of these women may approach housing options for support, but many are likely to be found not in priority need (as is the case for many single people who are not obviously very vulnerable for any other reason). Some women may also reach out to other services for support with other needs prior to contacting a homelessness service, providing opportunities for intervention within or via services with specialisms other than homelessness.

Comparison to 2022

Broadly, there isn't a significant difference across the two years. Some significant differences e.g. reduction in number of 'other' responses in year 2, might reflect additions or changes to the options provided in the survey.

The biggest notable jump was supported housing – 6.5 to 11%. However, when all supported housing, hostel and refuge options are combined, this difference reduces to 3%.

Where were you staying	2022 (%)	2023 (%)
Sofa surfing	20.1	21.5
Other	12.3	3.6
Private rented	11.7	11.5
Home owned by respondent/close family/ partner	10.4	8.7
Hostel (no support)	10.4	8.7
Supported housing	6.5	11
Social rented housing	6.5	5.6
Other temporary accommodation from council	5.2	4.1
Question not answered	5.2	2.6
Prison	4.5	2.3
Emergency accommodation	1.9	2.8

Refuge	1.9	2
With a friend	1.3	3.1
Caravan or squat	1.3	NA
Question not asked	0.6	0
Hospital	0	1.3
In another country	NA	5.9
Asylum accommodation	NA	4.9
Hotel - covid	NA	0.5

Which services are you currently accessing support from?
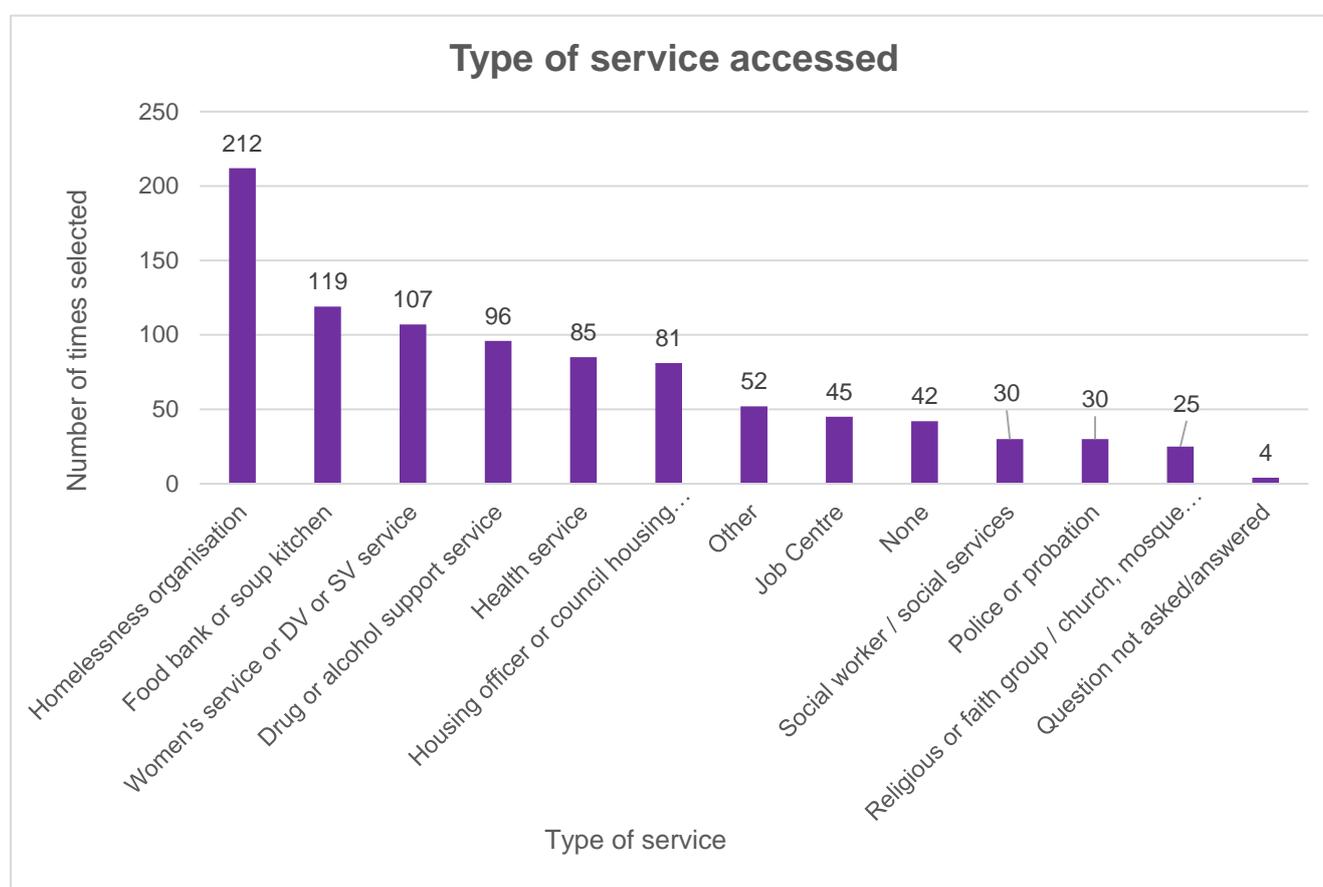
Respondents could select multiple options for this question. 'Other' includes any type of service selected less than 15 times.

The most frequently selected service was homelessness organisation, selected by 54% of respondents (212 people). 251 people were accessing support from some form of homelessness or housing service – including council housing department, day centres, one-stop shops or their housing association or supported accommodation staff.

This suggests that 140 people *weren't* accessing any official housing or homelessness support. While it should be acknowledged that some other services could be providing support

with homelessness – for example a women's centre/service could specialise in homelessness – the figures suggest this is likely to account for only a small percentage. For example, of the 61 people who selected women's centre/service, 45 also selected a type of homelessness support. This only leaves 16 women who didn't access a homelessness service, but could be accessing homelessness support through the women's centre.

The next most common single answer was drug or alcohol support service, 96 people (24.6%). 42 people (10.7%) said they weren't accessing any support at all.

In terms of the number of services accessed:
- 234 people listed 2 or more services.
- 145 people listed 3 or more.
- 44 people listed 5 or more.

Women are not accessing support

The percentage of women who said they weren't accessing any support is significant at **10.7%.** This suggests that there are women who are rough sleeping and aren't accessing any support, but who *can* be reached. This also reflects the importance of the census methodology in being able to reach such women – 42 women who aren't otherwise accessing support. There will also be more women not reached by the census who were rough sleeping during that week and weren't accessing services.

It is notable that one respondent selected that they were being supported by a housing officer or council housing department, but also said they did not feel they were being supported by anyone. One other person selected both 'none' and 'women's centre'. It's possible that other people who specifically selected 'none' or didn't list any services could potentially have been working with a service/s, but did not recognise this as support, perhaps for a variety of reasons (e.g. dissatisfaction with support, not being supported with their primary needs, or making a distinction between a service provided and having a support worker). This could also link to the lack of trust in services for women experiencing rough sleeping and multiple disadvantages.[10]

Rather than pointing to any 'untruth', this should highlight that these women feel a lack of positive impact from the support they have accessed. This might be particularly so with, for example, a housing officer who is unlikely to be able to offer any level of intensive support and may be heavily restricted by processes which could end or limit the support provided.

Of the 42 women who responded that they weren't accessing support, 17 women had done the survey with a drug and alcohol service. 19 women were seen by a homelessness service/outreach team, 14 of those on a gender-informed outreach shift, 3 on an ordinary outreach shift. 2 of the 42 were seen by a health team on an outreach shift and 2 by a domestic abuse service.

140 respondents didn't mention accessing any type of homelessness or housing support. While some of these respondents may have been accessing support from elsewhere, this lack

---

[10] Johnsen, S and Blenkinsopp, J. (2024) Hard Edges: The reality for women affected by severe and multiple disadvantage. Edinburgh: Heriot-Watt University.

of homelessness support is concerning for this group, and will likely continue to keep them out of homelessness data.

Positively, 70 of the 81 people who selected 'housing officer or council housing department' were also working with at least one other service, and 47 were also working with a homelessness service: this seems important given that housing departments are usually unable to offer high levels of support or may find the client not in priority need. Likewise, of the 85 people who selected health service, 78 people were working with at least one other service.

Number of services listed	Number of respondents
1	157
2	89
3	59
4	42
5	28
6	8
7	4
8	4
Grand Total	391

Comparison with 2022

This question was asked in the same way in 2022 and 2023, with a slight change in the order of options provided to make them easier to navigate.

- For the most common answers, the number of responses was surprisingly similar year on year.
- There was a surprising fall in the percentage of women selecting job centre – 20% to 11.5%. Possible reasons could be a difference in interpretation of support e.g. accessing a service vs having a support worker to address their needs. It could also reflect potential changes in access, perhaps being less able to see a worker in person, more online processes, or perhaps reaching a slightly larger cohort of women who are not eligible for benefits and therefore cannot access the job centre.
- Access to support from a domestic abuse or sexual violence service rose slightly from 7% to 11.8%.
- The percentage of respondents accessing food banks and soup kitchens rose slightly from 12% and 11% to 16.4% and 14.1% respectively. This is perhaps not surprising and could reflect the difficult economic climate, with the cost of living crisis affecting individuals and charities.
- The percentage of people selecting police and probation dropped from 13% to 7.7% in 2023.
- The number of women who stated they weren't accessing any services dropped slightly in 2023, from 13.6% to 10.7%.

It should be noted that some of these differences could be ascribed to the growth in numbers between the two years giving a much larger sample size: 154 responses in 2022 growing to 391 in 2023.

Type of service accessed   **2022 data**

Percentage of women

- Homelessness organisation: 58%
- Health: 21%
- Drugs and alcohol: 21%
- Housing officer/council: 20%
- Job centre: 20%
- Women's centre: 15%
- No support: 14%
- Foodbank: 12%
- Faithbased: 12%
- Soup kitchen: 11%
- Domestic/sexual violnece: 7%
- Police: 7%
- Social services: 6%
- Probation: 5%
- One stop shop: 3%
- Citizens Advice: 3%
- Question not answered: 1%
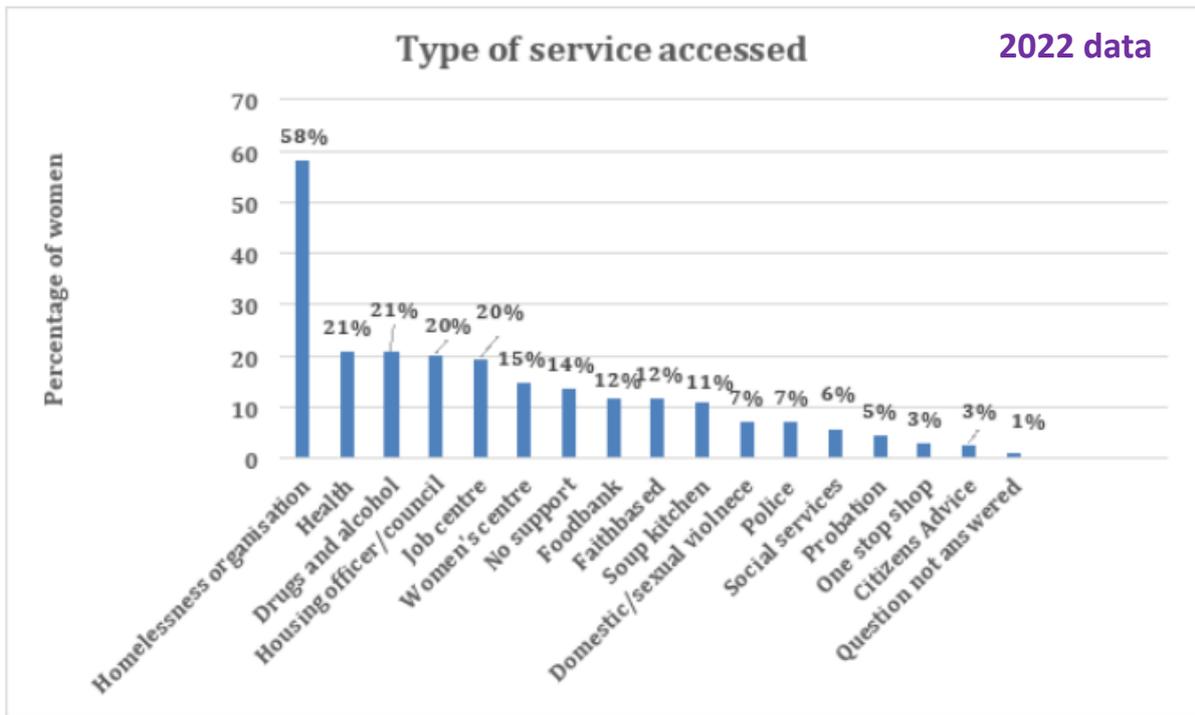
Demographics

How old were you on your last birthday?

Age of respondents

- <18: 0.3%
- 18-24: 6.6%
- 25-29: 6.4%
- 30-34: 14.8%
- 35-39: 15.9%
- 40-44: 15.9%
- 45-49: 13.8%
- 50-54: 7.4%
- 55-59: 6.9%
- 60-64: 3.6%
- 65-69: 2.3%
- 70-74: 0.8%
- 75-80: 0.3%
- Unknown: 5.1%
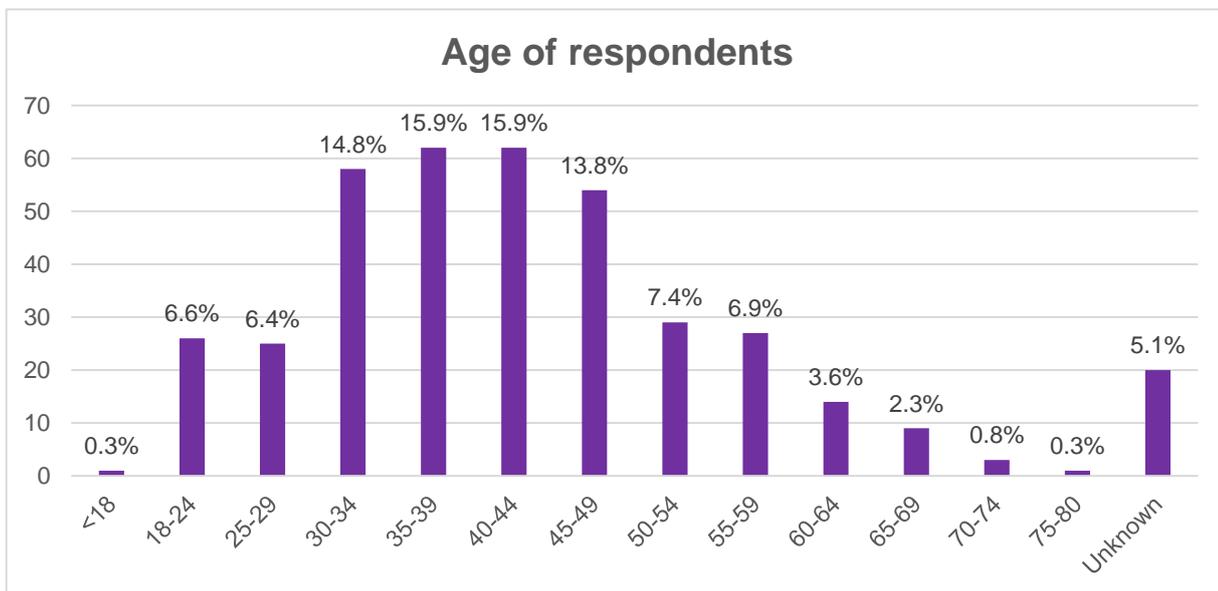
Key observations on age

- The most frequently selected responses were ages 30 and 49.
- There were ten people aged 21 and under, including two 18 year olds and one person under 18 (this was addressed by support workers).
- There were 27 people aged 60 and over, and four people aged 70-80.

The concentration of ages between 30-49 is not surprising as many people approaching homelessness services fall between these ages and 36-45 is the most common age range of people recorded on London CHAIN data.[11] Unfortunately, this also links to the reported average age of death for women who are rough sleeping: the mean age of death for homeless women in 2021 was 43.2 years and the most common ages of death were between 35-44, accounting for 48% of the total deaths of homeless women.[12]

Looking more closely at older and younger groups

While older and younger groups made up a small percentage of respondents, that they are experiencing rough sleeping is concerning, and it is important to explore whether there are differences in their experiences.

Where they had slept

- Using the 30-49 age group as a control group, their most common responses were: slept outside on the street, walked around all night, with a friend, at a bus or train station and with a stranger or new acquaintance.
- Respondents 60 and over had slept in the following places: 14 had slept outside on the street, and the most common answers after this were on a bus or train, at a bus or train station, in an A&E waiting room, and with a friend. Other answers included walking around all night, McDonald's, hostel/supported housing, night shelter, in hospital, and more.
- This is concerning as women over 60, (and the four respondents over 70) are likely to be more vulnerable, and yet are staying in the same high risk and less visible places as their younger counterparts.
- Respondents aged 21 and under most frequently selected the following locations – walked around all night, slept outside on the street and with a friend.

Where they had stayed before rough sleeping

- Women aged between 30 and 49 again provided a range of answers, but the most common responses were sofa surfing, hostel (without support) and supported housing.
- Prior to rough sleeping, 30% of respondents 60 and over had been sofa surfing. The next most common answer after this was supported housing at 15%.
- 40% of respondents aged 21 and under had stayed in a home owned by the respondent/close family/partner or with friends/family or a partner. 20% had been sofa surfing and a further 20% had been in private rented sector housing, and 20% in social rented housing.
- It's notable that younger women were more likely to have been staying with friends or family prior to rough sleeping, which corresponds with research.[13]

---

[11] https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/chain-reports
[12] www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deaths ofhomelesspeopleinenglandandwales/2021registrations#deaths-among-homeless-people-in-england-and-wales
[13] Centrepoint (2023) Failure to Act: The scale of youth homelessness in the UK London: Centrepoint.

- The most common services selected by women aged 30-49 were homelessness organisation; drug or alcohol service; health service; housing officer or council housing department; women's service; food bank and soup kitchen; domestic abuse and sexual violence service; and 'none'.
- The most common services selected by respondents aged 60 and over were the following: 19 people were accessing homelessness services; 11 food banks and soup kitchens; 9 were accessing health services; 6 women's centre or domestic violence service; and 5 housing officer or council housing department.
- Respondents aged 21 and under were most commonly accessing homelessness services, social worker, women's centre and domestic abuse service, education, and housing officer.

Comparison to 2022

There's notable variation between the two years – and much more variation between answers in 2022 than in 2023.

- In 2023, responses for the age ranges of 30-49 are very consistent and are the largest group of respondents. In 2022 they were also the largest group, but with significant variation between the ages.
- In 2022, there was also a higher proportion of women aged 60 and over – 10.9% in 2022 and 6.9% in 2023.
- There was a slight rise in percentage of young women – 5.2% aged 18-24 in 2022 and 6.6% in 2023.

While this could potentially show a trend, this could again reflect a change in sample size and perhaps the types of services taking part. It will be easier to start to see trends after a few annual repetitions of the census, with more consistent engagement.

How would you describe your ethnicity?
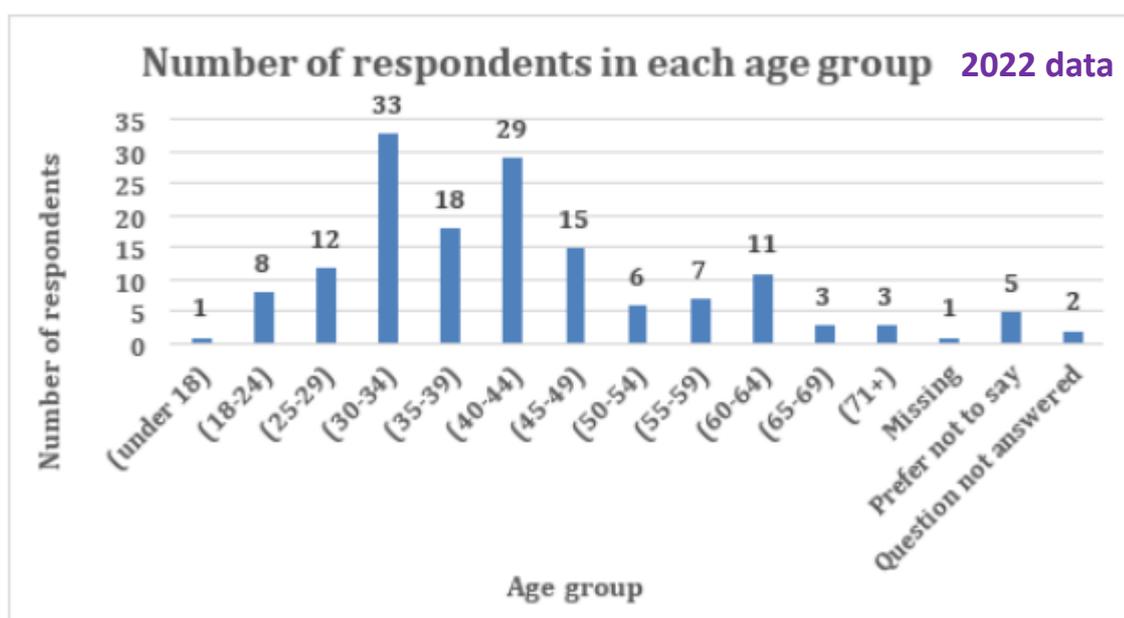
Ethnicity **grouped** (6a)
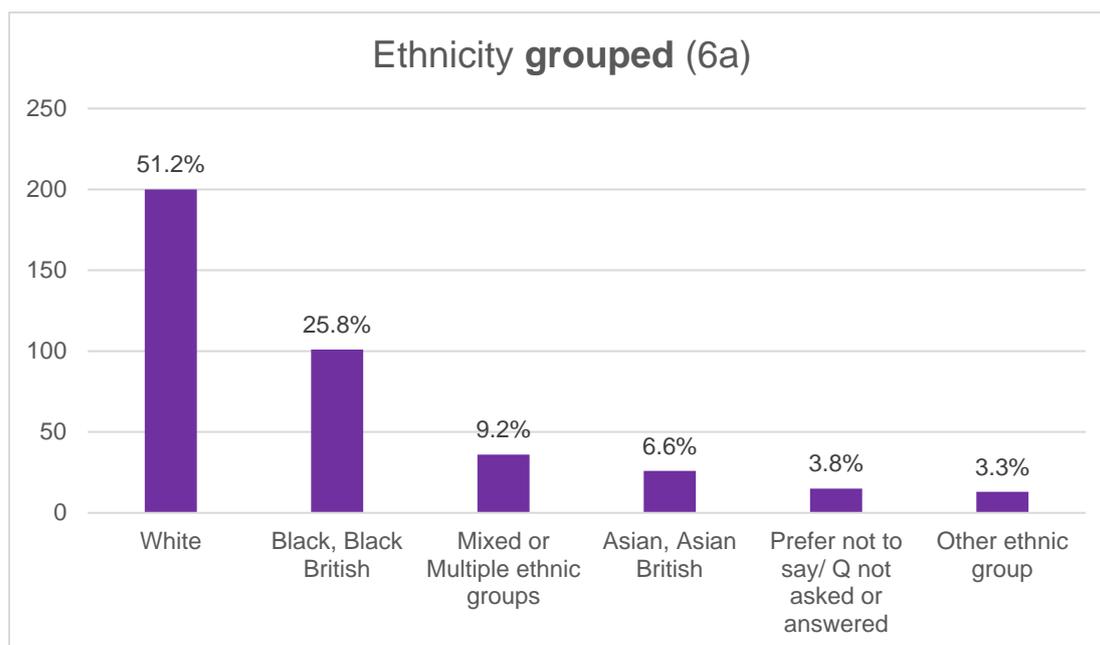
As a range of answers were provided, the responses are grouped according to the classifications used by the ONS in the 2021 census for England and Wales. The graph uses classification 6a.[14] Before grouping, the most common responses were the following:

Grouping	Percentage of respondents	Number of women
White - British	33.2%	130
Black or Black British African	15.3%	60
White - other	10.5%	41
Black or Black British Caribbean	8.4%	33
White – Roma	3.6%	14
Mixed White and Black Caribbean	3.3%	13
Asian or Asian British	2.8%	11
White - Irish	2.6%	10

In order to meaningfully interpret the data for this question, it is contrasted here with the most recent data on ethnicity for the London population as a whole.[15]

The data shows that White ethnic groups make up approximately 54% of the London population, Asian ethnic groups make up approximately 21% of the population, Black ethnic groups make up 14%, mixed ethnic groups make up 6% and 'other' ethnic groups also make up 6%.

---

[14]www.ons.gov.uk/census/census2021dictionary/variablesbytopic/ethnicgroupnationalidentitylanguage andreligionvariablescensus2021/ethnicgroup/classifications

[15] https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/2021-census-wards-ethnicity-language-identity-religion

When comparing this with the women's census data, it is possible to note significant differences, but these differences largely correspond with the London data for all rough sleeping people recorded on CHAIN in Q2 of 2023-24.

- **White ethnic groups** within the women's census equal **51%** - this is compared to 54.6% recorded on CHAIN and **54%** in the wider London population.
- **Asian ethnic groups** within the census made up **6%** of the total – this is compared to 9.4% on CHAIN and **21%** in the wider London population.
- **Black ethnic groups** within the census made up **25.8%** of the total – this is compared to 21.4% on CHAIN and **14%** in the wider London population.
- **Mixed ethnic groups** within the census made up 9.2% of the total – this is compared to 3.4% on CHAIN and **6%** in the wide London population.
- **'Other' ethnic groups** within the census made up 6.6% of the total – this is compared to roughly 4.1% on CHAIN and **6%** in the wide London population.

This information suggests that responses from the census correspond with existing data and research showing that Black ethnic groups are disproportionately affected by homelessness – while this data may not be telling us anything unknown in this sense, it is very much worth re-emphasising that structural and societal inequality has a very significant impact on the proportion of homelessness experienced for some groups.[16] Black ethnic groups made up 25.8% of the census respondents, and yet make up 14% of the London population. There was also a slight increase in representation in the census compared to CHAIN data on all genders (21.4%): it's possible that this overrepresentation is even more pronounced for Black women.

In relation to this, the data reinforces the need to provide ringfenced funding for specialist 'led by and for' services and for universal services to undertake training to ensure that they are delivered with cultural competency and understanding. As the census data as a whole demonstrates, there are multiple barriers to women who sleep rough accessing support, and just as we emphasise that women have different routes into and experiences of homelessness due to their gendered experiences, this is of course also the case for minoritised experiences and we need to be highly aware of the impact of multiple intersecting inequalities.

It is notable that Asian ethnic groups are significantly underrepresented in the data. This corresponds with research by Heriot Watt University which looks at households of different ethnicities and suggests that Asian-led households are more likely to experience more hidden forms of homelessness than rough sleeping.[17] The report by Heriot Watt highlighted that this was particularly so for Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian-led households.

For women more specifically, high risks forms of hidden homelessness can include staying with abusive partners; staying with family members or relatives who are potentially connected to a perpetrator of abuse or in some situations perpetrating abuse themselves; or staying with strangers or new acquaintances who in some situations may take advantage or pose a risk themselves. Women in these situations are less likely to appear in the census figures and while these are situations that very much impact all women, it's possible that some women

---

[16] Finney, N. (2022) Ethnic inequalities and homelessness in the UK. Centre for Homelessness Impact
[17] Bramley, G., Fitzpatrick, S., McIntyre, J., and Johnsen, S. (2022) Homelessness Amongst Black and Minoritised Ethnic Communities in the UK: A Statistical Report on the State of the Nation. I-SPHERE, Heriot Watt University.

from Asian ethnic groups may be more likely to experience these forms of hidden homelessness than rough sleeping when reaching the point of high-risk homelessness.

It's important to note that this is one possible factor in under-representation in these statistics, but there are likely to be a complex range of related factors, including differing experiences for more specific groups.

However, for women who are experiencing these high-risk but hidden forms of homelessness, specialist 'led by and for services' are again important for ensuring that women who may be less visible to services are able to reach support they can feel comfortable accessing and which can provide understanding and high level of support. This also applies when supporting with domestic abuse and other forms of gender-based violence within different cultural backgrounds, and reaching women who are more 'hidden' in the nature of their homelessness.

It is also worth noting that the annual snapshot collects limited data on nationality, but does not collect data on ethnicity and we do not have access to data on ethnicity disaggregated by gender from CHAIN in London. However, the census percentages aren't hugely dissimilar to the percentages for all genders shown by CHAIN for Quarter 2 of 2023/24. It would be interesting in future years to see if the relatively small percentage differences between the census and overall CHAIN data hold, and if the disaggregated CHAIN data shows anything different for women. Part of the difference could be that not all boroughs took part in the census.

Comparison to 2022

There are some differences in the responses for the two years of the census:

- Increase for White British – 29.9% in 2022, 33.2% in 2023.
- Increase for Black or Black British – African – 11.7% 2022, 15.3% 2023
- Decrease for White other – 14.9% 2022, 10.5% 2023
- Decrease White – Roma – 7.8% in 2022, 3.6 in 2023 (this could be likely explained by reliance on a few specialist teams to reach these groups).

It is hard to know the reason for this, it could be in part due to the significant change in numbers overall and potentially the involvement of different boroughs and teams. It will be useful to monitor this in future years to get a truer and consistent picture.

Ethnicity - most frequently reported 2022 data
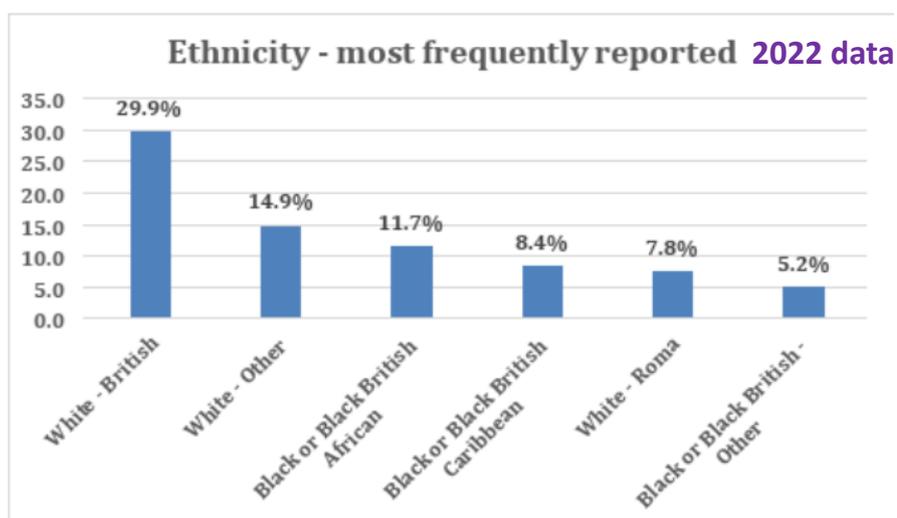
What is your gender?

Few people answered other than 'woman'. Of those that answered differently, 3 people said non-binary or gender fluid and one person said man.

Is your gender the same as registered at birth?

8 people said 'no' to the question on whether their gender is not the same as registered at birth. 2 of those people identified as non-binary or gender-fluid, and 5 people had answered 'woman' to the question about gender.

While eight people is a very small sample size from which to draw significant conclusions, research has highlighted that transgender people experience homelessness disproportionately[18] and data on gender identity and homelessness remains scarce, so it is important to look at where the eight people had slept in the last three months (they could select multiple options). Notably:
- 4 people responded that they had slept outside.
- 5 people responded they had stayed with a stranger/new acquaintance.
- There was no particular pattern to where they had stayed before rough sleeping.

Four people who responded that their gender was not the same as registered at birth commented on how their gender identity had impacted their experience of rough sleeping:

"Definitely. Treated initially as male by other rough sleepers or staff then when they speak people react which brings them down. Feels services need to be more visible." **Women's census respondent**

"It's very hard being a trans woman on the streets, people ask me for sex work all the time. It's scary" **Women's census respondent**

"Being transgender I have faced mental, physical, emotional abuse. I never feel safe anywhere and I am constantly on the move." **Women's census respondent**
Comparison to 2022

The questions on gender were changed in 2023 to ensure they were more sensitive and focused on gender rather than sex, as gender is of more relevance to this piece of work. The results were very similar in 2022 and 2023, with 2% in both years answering 'no' to 'Is your gender the same as registered at birth?'. With a larger number of respondents overall in 2023, 2% provides more information and in 2023, people were given the opportunity to comment on how their gender identity had impacted on their experience of rough sleeping, which four people did.

---

[18] Bachmann, CL., Gooch, B., (2018). LGBT in Britain: Trans Report. Stonewall.

Insights from staff and volunteers

What type of service do you deliver?
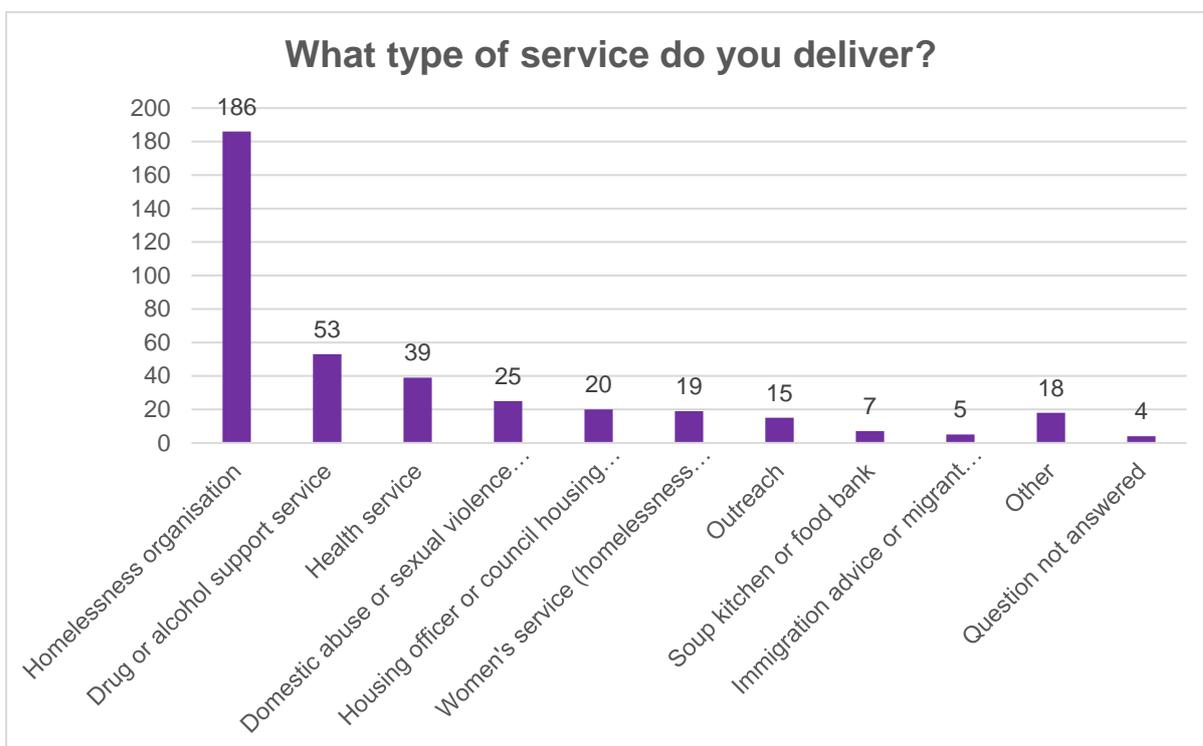
Unsurprisingly, the primary type of service completing the census survey with women was homelessness organisations. However, it is positive to see a wide range of other types of organisations involved, as a cross sector approach is vital to recognising and responding to women's rough sleeping effectively, and one of the key aims of the census is to facilitate a cross-sector approach.

To note, it is likely that a number of those selecting 'homelessness organisation' will have been outreach services who could select either homelessness organisation or the more specific outreach option instead.

Comparison to 2022

This question was asked in the same way in each year, with small changes to the options and their order in 2023.

- There was a significant difference between the number of people selecting homelessness organisation vs outreach, as can be seen from the graph. This is likely to have been outreach teams selecting homelessness organisation rather than outreach; however, this does correspond with the reduction in surveys completed on shifts vs in services from 2022 to 2023 (see below).
- The percentage of homelessness services increased significantly from 26% to 47.6% and outreach decreased from 41.6% to 3.8%.
- The proportion of drug and alcohol services taking part also increased significantly from 0.6% to 13.6%. A high number of surveys were completed on outreach shifts delivered by drug and alcohol services.

- The percentage of women's services (either women's centre or women's homelessness) decreased from 10.3% to 4.9% - however, again this could be in part due to women's homelessness services selecting another similar but less specific option, e.g. homelessness organisation. Domestic abuse or sexual violence services also increased from 3.2% to 6.4%, potentially explaining some of this difference. With results for these options combined (women's service and domestic abuse or sexual violence service), they reduced from 13.5% in 2022 to 11.2% in 2023.
- The percentage of health services increased significantly from 0.6% to 10%. While this is surely due to an increase in involvement, for example organising volunteers to co-locate in some A&E departments during the 2023 census, it could also again be due to health outreach teams potentially defining themselves differently in this question.
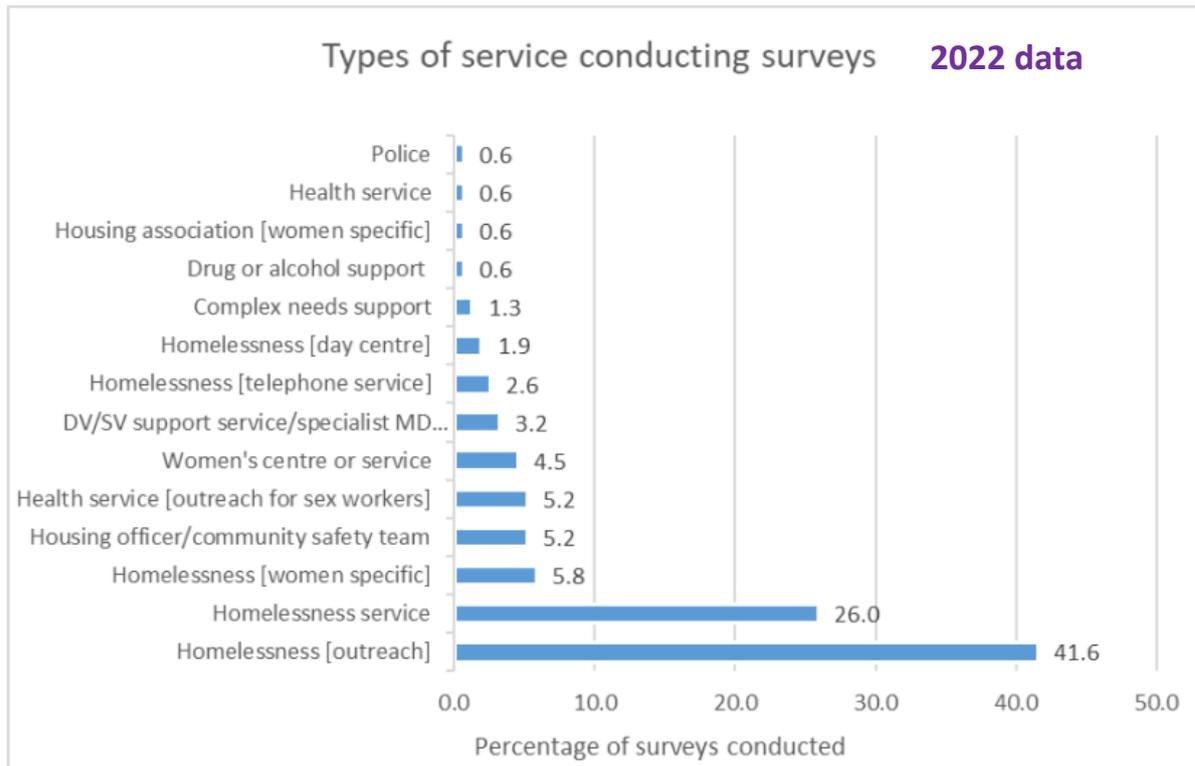
How did you conduct the survey?
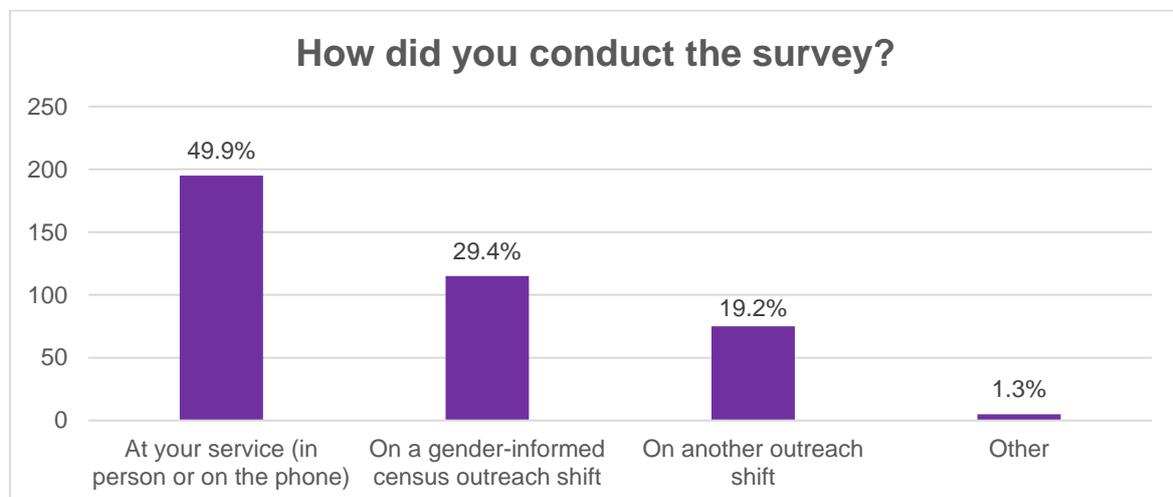
Comparison to 2022

In 2023, wording of this question was changed and additional options were added – instead of asking if the survey was conducted on gender-informed outreach shifts, services that participated were asked where the survey was conducted and offered the additional option of 'at your service'. Results are therefore not directly comparable.

However, results show that 60% of surveys were completed on the gender-informed outreach shifts in 2022, compared to 29.4% in 2023. This could suggest increased involvement of services other than outreach.

Looking at the previous question (What type of service do you deliver), it seems that while there is certainly a significant increase in participation from different types of services, the proportion of surveys conducted on outreach shifts likely suggests that a) people selected either outreach or their specialism – e.g. health outreach could have selected outreach or health service and b) services other than outreach delivered/joined outreach shifts.

Whether surveys were conducted during specific gender informed outreach shifts — 2022 data

- Yes — 60%
- No — 37%
- Don't know — 3%
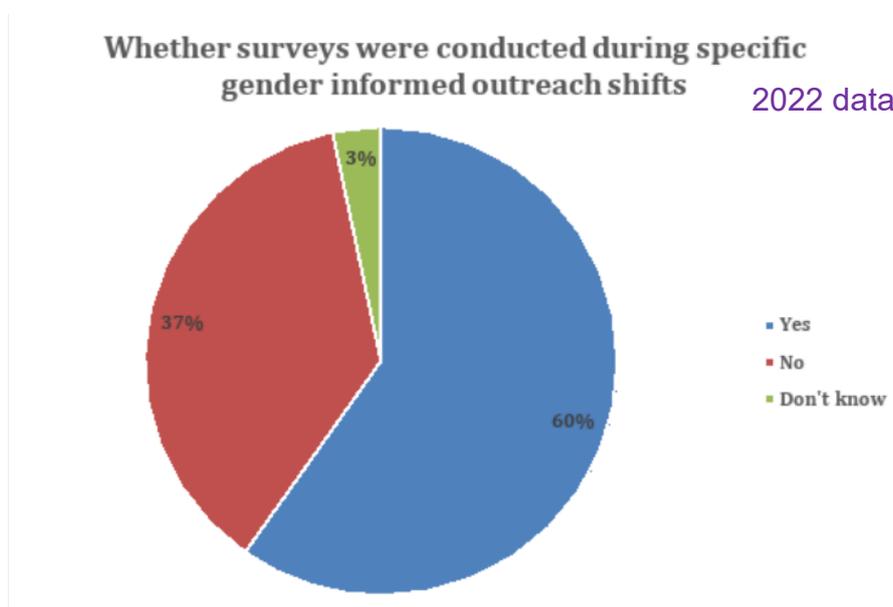
When was the survey conducted?

Day conducted
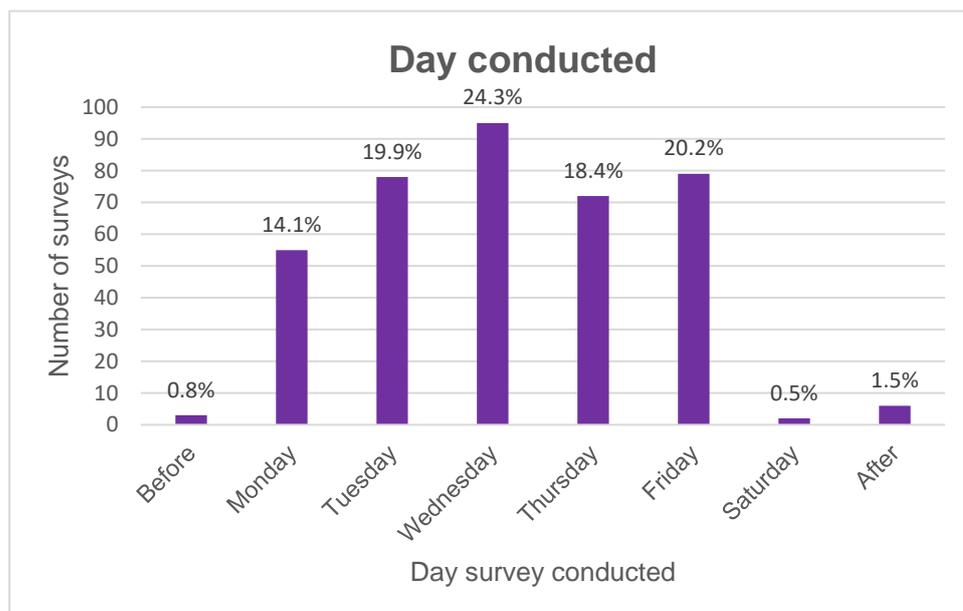
A small number of surveys were submitted slightly before the first day of the census and after the last day, however as this is a matter of 1-2 days maximum and a small proportion of results, researchers determined that the results were still equally relevant and should be included. The survey was only open to receiving responses for a limited number of days after the census ended (to account for surveys completed on paper and needing to be entered online afterwards), and it was evident that a few people entered the date submitted rather than date survey completed.

Comparison to 2022

There isn't a significant difference between the two years, with Wednesday on both days being the most populous day. Positively, there was a higher proportion of surveys conducted on the Monday which perhaps suggests more familiarity with the process in 2023. This is unsurprising both because the census was new in 2022, and because there had to be a last-minute date change in 2022, pushing the census back by a week, likely contributing to less certainty and readiness at the start of the week.

Data meetings

In 2023, data meetings were introduced as an additional element to the census. This was in response to feedback after the 2022 census, which was that some teams wanted to ensure that women they knew to be rough sleeping, but hadn't been able to speak to during the census week, were represented in the numbers. The census survey, as with any snapshot methodology, will only reach a proportion of women who sleep rough, and additionally is only possible in areas which are resourced to undertake outreach work.

The addition of a data meeting for each local authority is useful in two key ways: firstly, it allows for women who are known to be rough sleeping but aren't encountered during census week to be included, which is important given what the census has shown about the transience and intermittency of women's experiences.

Secondly, for local authorities who struggle to resource outreach-based census activity, the data meetings provide an alternative form of data collection which bring together data from local services to arrive at an inclusive and representative picture of women who are sleeping rough in that area. The data meetings are loosely based on the estimate meeting model employed by the annual rough sleeping snapshot, but involve wider parameters and a greater range of services. Ideally, local authorities would conduct the census using both the outreach census survey and the data meeting together – to be inclusive of women both known and not known to local services.

The data meetings were designed to take place in each borough, led by the appointed census borough lead and supported by a member of the census core team. Cross sector services were invited to attend (any services likely to work with or encounter women who were rough sleeping in the borough), and were asked to list the number of women they worked with in the past three months and who had rough slept in the past three months, according to the census definition of rough sleeping. Each list was cross-referenced against that of other agencies present, in order to avoid double counting. (As little information as possible was shared, and parties were asked to sign a data protection agreement before attending). Services could also provide a number for women who they thought were rough sleeping but had little information about, or who they couldn't provide details for.

After sharing the data, the organiser led a discussion on the most prevalent difficulties that the services face in providing support to women who are rough sleeping in their area.

17 boroughs completed a data meeting. This information is most useful within the borough's own context, as the data and feedback is specific to their area. The discrepancies between boroughs (which could reduce in future years with increased familiarity and adjustments to practice) make it more difficult to compare borough to borough, but are helpful in looking at an individual borough's situation. Overarching conclusions can be made from the combined data, however.

Borough	Total number of recorded women	Total number of 'unknown' women	Number of services providing data	Types of services providing data
Barking and Dagenham	20	0	4	Homelessness outreach; Women's service; Drug and alcohol service; Health - physical
Brent	28	19	5	Homelessness outreach; Homelessness service; Hospital homelessness team; Housing department; Drug and alcohol service
Bromley	12	0	3	Homelessness outreach; Physical health service; Homelessness service
Camden	85	34	9	Homelessness outreach; VAWG service x2; Women's service; Homelessness service; Inclusion health service; Specialist outreach x2; Other;
City	16	8	4	Homelessness outreach; Specialist outreach x2; Health - physical

Ealing	14	7	2	Drug and alcohol service, Homelessness service
Greenwich	61	4	6	Homelessness outreach; Drug and alcohol service; VAWG service; Community service (e.g. food bank, faith group) x2; Homelessness service
Hackney	23	41	6	Homelessness outreach x2; Women's service x2; Mental health service; Community service (e.g. food bank, faith group)
*Hammersmith and Fulham	NA	60	6	Homelessness service; Housing - accommodation service; Homelessness outreach; VAWG service; Housing First; Homelessness service
Haringey	10	0	4	Homelessness service x2; Housing department, council; Homelessness outreach
Hounslow	7	1	1	Homelessness outreach
Islington	38	2	9	Housing - accommodation service; Drug and alcohol service x2; Specialist outreach; Homelessness service; Homelessness outreach; Specialist outreach; Immigration support service; Women's service
Kensington and Chelsea	36	1	2	Homelessness outreach; Homelessness service
Lambeth	56	3	4	Other; Homelessness service; Homelessness outreach; Inclusion health service
Redbridge	22	0	4	Homelessness outreach; Drug and alcohol service; Housing - accommodation service; Homelessness service
Tower Hamlets	93	3	12	Drug and alcohol service; Homelessness service x2; Women's service; Other; Homelessness outreach x2; Housing - accommodation service x4; Community service (e.g. food bank, faith group)
Westminster	135	10	4	Homelessness outreach x2; Health – physical; Homelessness service

*Hammersmith and Fulham. A large number of services attended this meeting, though only a small number brought a list of women they were working with. Therefore all data provided was listed as 'unknown' as it would not have been possible to cross-reference between different services, and to make the most of the meeting and the positive widespread attendance.

The data meetings were a new practice introduced in 2023, and as with the census outreach activity, it is likely to take boroughs time to adjust to gathering data in this way. There were therefore a few discrepancies in approach between boroughs which involve considerations in using the data. In particular, in Islington and Haringey's meetings, attendees provided data about women who they hadn't completed census surveys with (as opposed to all women).
In a number of meetings, there were 1 or 2 services who didn't bring a full list and therefore provided their numbers as 'unknown' women as they couldn't be cross-referenced with other services.

The census core team also recommended that meeting organisers invite as wide a range of services as possible: number of services providing data in each meeting varied widely,

between 1 service attending and 12 services attending. This was for a variety of reasons, in some cases because other services weren't invited, in some cases because they didn't attend. For example, in one borough the local homelessness outreach team was invited but didn't attend, which was disappointing.

Whilst some areas regularly bring together cross-sector services to think about their local homelessness response, other areas do not joint work in this way, meaning that the data meetings may take more time to establish. Supporting local authorities to establish increased cross-sector joint working and a 'no wrong door' response to women's rough sleeping is a key ambition of the census. The view of the organisers is that the more teams attended the meeting, the more comprehensive the data and the more fruitful the ensuing discussion. The discussions from the data meeting proved to be very insightful and helpful in identifying some of the key challenges faced by services trying to support women who experience rough sleeping.

Key themes emerging from data meetings

Locating women: It can be hard to locate women who are rough sleeping: they don't look like they're rough sleeping; they're not sleeping at night; they move on quickly; they cross over between boroughs; they sometimes sleep in places outreach teams can't access.

Domestic abuse and couples: This was a significant theme across a large number of the data meetings. There were several key points:
- Women are often seen with men/partners, often for protection. The influence of the men/partners on women's interaction and engagement with services is significant and a major barrier to services. One service said 'this is exhausting as a professional'.
- Housing couples remains very difficult, due to limited provision for housing couples together and understandable reluctance for couples to be accommodated separately, leading to continued rough sleeping. There is also a significant impact of domestic abuse, which can mean women might not accept accommodation offered; their partners might attend the new accommodation (when not supposed to); women may not use the accommodation offered to them due to spending time/rough sleeping with their partners instead.
- Services also mentioned violence and exploitation of the women they work with by men, and the reluctance and fear of women to report to the police.

Need for flexibility: This was highlighted multiple times as vital to supporting women experiencing multiple disadvantages, and the lack of services able to support women at all or effectively was noted. A few services noted how limiting it can be if they themselves are operating flexibly, but no other services are.

No recourse to public funds (NRPF): Services reported the lack of safe or any options for women who don't have recourse to public funds, and the lack of safety net for women without recourse who are in high-risk situations.

Verification: This was raised as a barrier for women by a number of services across different boroughs.
- Discussions showed a difference in approach between boroughs and a positive impact where there was increased flexibility – but that flexibility could only help to a certain extent, and ultimately services had to get around a system that does not work well for

women. Services reported that current verification practices don't fit women, especially with the expectation that women will remain in one place.

- Services felt that even where there was flexibility, it was still more complicated to support and accommodate women who didn't have a CHAIN number, even if the outreach team knew them to be rough sleeping.
- Some boroughs operated with strict criteria about needing to see people bedded down before being able to work with them, and reported that it was a struggle to find women bedded down.

Cross borough working: There is a need to ensure services work cross borough as this reflects the reality of women's experiences. Services also raised the difficulty of statutory barriers and the 'back and forth' between services and boroughs in deciding who should support women. There was concern that this in itself was not responsive to the high-risk levels of many cases.

Supporting women into accommodation/away from rough sleeping: It was apparent that while the lack of accommodation for women is important, in some areas it was felt that there was a particular gap in effective services to support women into accommodation and providing support once there. Attendees also raised that:

- There is a lack of options for women in the borough and out of the borough, and there's very little available for women with high needs. There is also a lack of provision for couples.
- There's a lack of options which are actually suitable – in some cases, it can be hard to fill bedspaces (e.g. spaces for low to medium needs only), yet there are simultaneously women for whom that option won't work, but for whom there aren't any other options (e.g. women with high needs). Suitability can also differ from person to person, but if there is only one or even no women's accommodation, it can't account for that difference in need.
- There are few or no dedicated women's spaces (depending on the borough).
- Accommodation options that do exist and do work are oversubscribed.
- There is a lack of emergency accommodation.
- Accommodation is unsuitable or unsafe so women (understandably) won't accept it.

In accommodation: Where accommodation was available, it was noted repeatedly across different meetings that it was often unsuitable, unsafe, or not well used.

- Women are leaving accommodation due to being unsafe there and return to rough sleeping and/or a partner. This lack of safety applies to mixed services, but also some women-only services.
- Women are leaving or not using accommodation, sometimes because they're spending time with people who are a high risk to them.
- Services noted that women are targeted when in accommodation, by men unknown to them or by partners/ex-partners, and there are numerous incidents of assault and exploitation.
- It was noted in one borough that local safe seats were often deemed too unsafe for women to go to and they therefore weren't accepted into them.
- There is also a fear from respite room services that clients will disclose their location, e.g. to partners or ex partners.

What's needed?

Attendees mentioned the following ideas which would help them to support women.

- Women's accommodation designed and run by women, with high level of specialist and in-house/in-reach support.
- Women's specific, intensive, outreach/navigator teams which can work across boroughs.
- Wraparound women's services which can support women even once they've moved into accommodation.
- More prevention and early intervention services for women, to stop things from worsening at the early stages – for women who go unseen and unsupported by services for a long time, but who enter rough sleeping and homelessness with relatively low needs, their story could have been different if they were reached and supported at an earlier stage.

How does the 2023 census compare to existing datasets

While different data collection methods cannot be compared exactly (as they each have different aims, methods and timeframes), we can take some broad inferences from looking at the data.

The census allows boroughs to try gender-informed practices and collect information directly from women about their experiences. It also allows women who haven't before been encountered to be included and is relatively open access to any service who knows about it and wants to take part.

Data meetings

The data meetings evidently capture much greater numbers of women, and these are (in many cases) closer to the numbers seen on CHAIN across the same 3 months, and in some cases more. It is notable that numbers of women from the data meetings equalled 92% of the total seen on CHAIN in the same period, despite only being hosted in 17 of the 33 boroughs (and not including the 'unknown' women noted in the meeting). 10 of the meetings produced numbers of women greater than those recorded on CHAIN over the same time period (not including the 'unknown' women noted in the meeting). This is important in underlining the idea that there are a number of women known to be rough sleeping, but who aren't or cannot be recorded on CHAIN (i.e. because they haven't been seen bedded down).

In addition to the data, the meetings also provided important insight from the discussion section of the meeting, as well as offering insights to attendees at the time, for example the number of clients they may not have been aware of, the level of crossover between teams (or lack of), and learning about the different services in attendance.

Survey data

The census survey methodology deliberately uses different data collection techniques to the Annual Rough Sleeping Snapshot because the census core team and developers believe the snapshot methodology does not support accurate representation of women. The methodology is therefore necessarily different and cannot be compared exactly. However, it is highly notable

that in 2023 the census figures were well over *double* (146%) those of the snapshot count for women in London.

It is also notable that while there was a 32% increase in the snapshot figures in London from 2022 to 2023, there was only a 13% increase for women, yet a 30% increase for men. While some of this could be accounted for because of specific pressures at the time – rapid evictions from asylum accommodation more likely to impact men's rough sleeping – this difference still seems significant.

This is particularly so when we think about other contextual issues having a current impact on homelessness and rough sleeping. Issues that have caused rough sleeping to increase in the past few years since Covid - such as the cost of living crisis and local housing allowance remaining frozen - have not been shown to affect men disproportionality. In fact, the opposite is true, with reports showing that the cost of living crisis has affected women more significantly than men.[19] It therefore does not follow that the proportion of women pushed into rough sleeping over the last year has fallen - this is again likely to be due to the lack of visibility of women when they sleep rough, and the 2023 census data has been more accurately able to capture this probable increase

Looking at the CHAIN figures for Q2 in both 2022 and 2023 (full year figures are not yet available for 2023/24), there is in fact a *greater* increase for women (15%) over the two years, compared to men (12%). The proportion of women of the total snapshot figures also *reduced* from 16.4% (the highest of any snapshot year) to 14% in 2023, but CHAIN data suggests a .5% increase in the proportion of women seen in Q2 over the two years. The snapshot figures therefore do not match the representation of women in the census or on CHAIN, and we therefore need to remain careful in taking the annual snapshot figures as representing the true picture for women, especially when they capture such a particular moment in time.

This supports the need for the census to continue to gather more comprehensive and representative data about the experiences of women who are rough sleeping, and to improve data capture for women's rough sleeping more widely.

Data source	Total women counted
2023 census – surveys (26 boroughs)	**391**
2023 census – data meetings (17 boroughs)	**656**
2023 census – unknown women from data meetings (cannot be cross referenced)	**193**
Rough Sleeping Snapshot 2023 – London	**159**
CHAIN Q2 2023	**716**

---

[19] Feenstra, M., Laryea, C., Stojilovska, A. (2024) Gender aspects of the rising cost of living and the impact of the energy crisis. Brussels: Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, European Parliament.

Available data - 2023

Legend:
- Number of census surveys 2023
- Number of women - data meetings 2023
- Number of unknown women - data meetings (details unknown or can't be crossreferenced) 2023
- Rough Sleeping Snapshot 2023
- CHAIN Q2 2023-24

*South West subregion had particularly low participation in the census, with no involvement from one borough and limited involvement from 3 boroughs, meaning the data is much less comparable to other regions.

26 boroughs provided census survey responses and 17 conducted data meetings. Snapshot and CHAIN totals include all 33 London boroughs.

A full breakdown of comparative data can be found in appendix 2.

Conclusion

The London women's rough sleeping census 2023 found 391 women to be rough sleeping in 27 boroughs, identified by means of the census survey. In the 17 boroughs that also undertook census data meetings, 656 women known by services to be rough sleeping were identified, with a further 193 women identified as rough sleeping that services could not provide identifying information on. This suggests even higher numbers of women rough sleeping in London would be captured if all London boroughs were to fully participate in the census survey and data meetings.

Since rough sleeping was defined by the Government in 2010 for the purpose of guiding local authority snapshot counts and estimates to enumerate rough sleeping, a growing body of research has pointed to the fact that the snapshot methodology, and associated street outreach practice and provision, is gender biased and does not accurately capture the extent of women's rough sleeping. The pilot 2022 census in London and more recent 2023 census have now provided a comprehensive body of data which explores the recent rough sleeping experiences of 545 women, that confirms that this is the case - women often sleep rough in ways that are not captured or validated by current methods, and the numbers of women sleeping rough in the capital are significantly higher than previously evidenced.

Whilst the soon to be completed Change Grow Live report bringing together the national women's rough sleeping census data will contain recommendations that consider national practice and policy change in relation to women's rough sleeping, the in-depth exploration of the London data set out in this report provide significant evidence of the need for change in the capital. To conclude this report, three key recommendations must be taken forward if women's rough sleeping is to be accurately identified and responded to in London:

- Outreach teams and other specialist services that encounter women experiencing rough sleeping must be able to verify that women are rough sleeping according to the gender informed definition of rough sleeping developed by the census, without having to see them bedded down/about to bed down according to the current Government definition. Services should use their experience, local intel and most importantly, women's own accounts of their circumstances in order to 'verify' that women are sleeping rough. Women identified in this way should then have access to the support and accommodation pathways that women who are 'verified' using traditional methods have access to.
- Databases that record rough sleeping in London such as CHAIN should consider methods of recording and quantifying women's rough sleeping as identified above, so that women's rough sleeping is more accurately represented in London data and is able to be used in relation to funding and commissioning decisions accordingly.
- The women's rough sleeping census should be undertaken annually in all London boroughs, in order that more accurate and inclusive data on women's rough sleeping can be accumulated and tracked over time, and more women not currently known to services can be found and supported.

It is notable that five London boroughs have agreed to pilot working in the above ways already, but centralised leadership and resource is needed in order to embed year-round practice change and annual repetition of the census across the capital.

Women's rough sleeping is a complex societal problem which goes beyond rough sleeping and homelessness - it is a safeguarding and domestic abuse issue, a critical health issue, and, as the census has demonstrated in relation to existing practices, an equalities issue. The census has given London the tools and guidance needed to respond to this problem more effectively, and to ensure that many more hidden women can have their life limiting experiences of rough sleeping resolved faster. The next step is to make the use of these tools and guidance widespread, embedded and part of routine practice – because to be able to end rough sleeping for everyone, we need to end rough sleeping for women.

Appendix 1: Full 2023 London Women's Rough Sleeping Data

1. **Surveys by borough**

Borough	2023 census survey responses	2022 census survey responses
Barking & Dagenham	12	4
Barnet	3	
Bexley	3	1
Brent	22	7
Bromley	0	0
Camden	44	16
Camden, Islington and Haringey	13	
City of London	6	
Croydon	6	4
Ealing	18	2
Enfield	NA	NA
Greenwich	12	1
Hackney	19	3
Hammersmith & Fulham	2	
Haringey	13	18
Harrow	NA	NA
Havering	1	
Hillingdon	5	
Hounslow	1	
Islington	12	9
Kensington & Chelsea	0	2
Kingston	0	5
Lambeth	20	7
Lewisham	15	1
Merton	0	1
Newham	37	5
Pan London	10	6
Redbridge	12	15
Richmond	2	
Southwark	10	5
Southwark/Lambeth	3	
Sutton	NA	NA
Tower Hamlets	18	14
Waltham Forest	9	
Wandsworth	6	
Westminster	57	26

2. When did you last sleep rough?

Last slept rough	Number of responses	Percentage
Last night	219	56%
In the last week	59	15%
In the last month	49	13%
In the last 3 months	59	15%
Question not asked	1	0%
Question not answered	3	1%
Other	1	0%
Grand Total	**391**	**100%**

3. Approximately how many nights have you slept rough in the last 3 months?

How many nights	Number of responses	Percentage
1 night	17	4%
2-5 nights	43	11%
6-10 nights	30	8%
11-20 nights	41	10%
21-30 nights	38	10%
More than 30 nights	54	14%
More than 60 nights	59	15%
Every night	100	26%
Question not answered	7	2%
Question not asked	2	1%
Grand Total	**391**	**100%**

4. Where have you stayed or slept in the last 3 months?

NB. This table shows the responses as grouped in the graph under question 4. This table does not total 391 responses as each respondent could select multiple options.

Location	Number of times mentioned	Percentage of 391
Slept outside	**346**	
Slept outside on the street	243	62.1%
Park/wooded area	25	6.4%
In a car	25	6.4%
Slept rough - other (please describe in the 'other' option)	16	4.1%
Car park	6	1.55%
Tent	6	1.5%
Slept rough other - no further detail	4	1.0%
Bin shed/area	4	1.0%
Under a bridge	2	0.5%

Outside a church	2	0.5%
Shop or church	1	0.3%
Tunnels	1	0.35%
Toilets	1	0.3%
Garage	1	0.3%
Hiding in alleyways, in the rain	1	0.3%
Outside the Council office	1	0.3%
Tent in car park with her partner	1	0.3%
Sex worked	1	0.35%
Town centre	1	0.3%
Graveyard	1	0.3%
Under flats	1	0.3%
Has also slept outside elsewhere without tent	1	0.3%
Outside a shop	1	0.3%
Inside a service (e.g. A&E, McDonald's, train station)	**331**	
At a bus or train station	123	31.5%
On a bus or a train	79	20.2%
McDonald's or similar	59	15.1%
A&E waiting room	51	13.0%
Police station	11	2.8%
Church/mosque	4	1.0%
Airport	3	0.8%
Library	1	0.3%
Stayed with someone	**226**	
With a friend	116	29.7%
With a stranger/new acquaintance	84	21.5%
With a relative	25	6.4%
Stayed with ex-partner perpetrator of domestic abuse	1	0.3%
Accommodation	**140**	**5**
Homelessness service (hostel/supported housing)	44	11.35%
B&B / hotel / temporary accommodation	37	9.55%
Night shelter	27	6.9%
Refuge accommodation	16	4.1%
Housed - owned, rented or social rented	15	3.8%
Women's hostel	1	0.3%
Walked around all night	**120**	
Walked around all night	120	30.7%
In a building (not a service) e.g. stairwell	**53**	
In a squat	44	11.3%
Stairwells	5	1.3%
Inside a flat block	3	0.8%
A loft	1	0.3%
Hospital or custody	**51**	
In hospital	40	10.2%
In custody	10	2.6%
Holding room	1	0.3%

The following table shows all responses in order of frequency.

Where have you slept or stayed in the last three months?	Number of responses
Slept outside on the street	243
At a bus or train station	123
Walked around all night	120
With a friend	116
With a stranger/new acquaintance	84
On a bus or a train	79
McDonald's or similar	59
A&E waiting room	51
Homelessness service (hostel/supported housing)	44
In a squat	44
In hospital	40
B&B / hotel / temporary accommodation	37
Night shelter	27
With a relative	25
In a car	25
Park/wooded area	25
Refuge accommodation	16
Slept rough - other (please describe in the 'other' option)	15
Housed - owned, rented or social rented	15
Police station	11
In custody	10
Tent	6
Stairwells	5
Car park	5
Slept rough other - no further detail	4
Bin shed/area	4
Church/mosque	4
Inside a flat block	3
Airport	3
Unknown	2
Question not answered	2
Under a bridge	2
Outside a church	2
Town centre	1
Garage	1
Various lots of places	1
Graveyard	1
Toilets	1
Hiding in alleyways, in the rain	1
Outside	1

Question not asked	1
Women's hostel	1
Holding room	1
Sleep where I find a place	1
Sex worked	1
Too many places to remember	1
2 weeks has been the longest time I have stayed anywhere in the past three months	1
Tunnels	1
Library	1
Under flats	1
Shop or church	1
A loft	1
Spent a week abroad	1
Outside the Council office	1
Does not sleep in buildings as scared will get drugged. Will sleep where I find a place, sometimes in a park.	1
Stayed with ex-partner perpetrator of domestic abuse	1
Outside a shop	1

5. **Where were you staying most recently before sleeping rough?**

Living situation	Number of respondents	Percentage of 391
Homeless - accommodated by services	**133**	**34.0%**
Supported housing (e.g. hostel with support)	43	11.0%
Hostel (with no support)	34	8.7%
Asylum accommodation	19	4.9%
Other temporary accommodation from the council	16	4.1%
Emergency accommodation	11	2.8%
Refuge accommodation	8	2.0%
Hotel - covid	2	0.5%
Sofa surfing	**84**	**21.5%**
Sofa surfing	84	21.5%
Private rented sector housing	**45**	**11.5%**
Private rented sector housing	45	11.5%
Home owned by respondent / close family / partner	**34**	**8.7%**
Home owned by respondent / close family / partner	34	8.7%
In another country	**23**	**5.9%**
In another country	23	5.9%
Social rented housing	**22**	**5.6%**
Social rented housing	22	5.6%
Prison, hospital	**14**	**3.6%**
Prison	9	2.3%
Hospital	5	1.3%

Other	**14**	**3.6%**
Live in carer	4	1.0%
Rough sleeping	3	0.8%
Living with abusive partner	3	0.8%
Treatment/rehab	2	0.5%
Customer's homes	1	0.3%
Empty property - made to clean and then made to suddenly leave	1	0.3%
With friends/family/partner	**12**	**3.1%**
With friends/family/partner	12	3.1%
Question not answered	**10**	**2.6%**
Question not answered	10	2.6%
Grand Total	**391**	**100%**

6. **Which services are you currently accessing support from?**

Service type	Number of responses	Percentage of 391
Homelessness organisation	**212**	**54.20%**
Food bank or soup kitchen	**119**	
Food bank	64	16.40%
Soup kitchen	55	14.10%
Women's service or DV or SV service	**107**	
Women's centre/service	61	15.60%
Domestic abuse or sexual violence support service	46	11.80%
Drug or alcohol support service	**96**	**24.60%**
Health service	**85**	**21.70%**
Housing officer or council housing department	**81**	**20.70%**
Other	**52**	
Education	8	2.00%
Citizen's Advice	6	1.50%
Housing association	6	1.50%
Day centre	5	1.30%
One-stop shop	5	1.30%
Immigration support	3	0.80%
Supported accommodation staff	2	0.50%
Prison service	2	0.50%
Legal support	2	0.50%
Migrant and refugee support service	2	0.50%
Feels that she is not getting any support from anyone.	1	0.30%
Friends	1	0.30%
Street Storage	1	0.30%
Home Office	1	0.30%
Charity	1	0.30%

Respondent stated she had recently seen an outreach team, but hadn't heard anything back. This is being looked into.	1	0.30%
Fed at night shelter	1	0.30%
Streetlink	1	0.30%
Religious organisation (not a church)	1	0.30%
With an unsafe partner	1	0.30%
Other organisation	1	0.30%
Job Centre	**45**	**11.50%**
None	**42**	**10.70%**
Social worker / social services	**30**	**7.70%**
Police or probation	**30**	
Probation	15	3.80%
Police	15	3.80%
Religious or faith group / church, mosque or temple	**25**	**6.40%**
Question not asked/answered	**4**	
Question not answered	3	0.80%
Question not asked	1	0.30%

7. How old were you on your last birthday?

Age range	No of responses	Percentage of 391	2022
<18	**1**	**0.3%**	**0.6%**
18-24	**26**	**6.6%**	**5.2%**
25-29	**25**	**6.4%**	**7.8%**
30-34	**58**	**14.8%**	**21.4%**
35-39	**62**	**15.9%**	**11.7%**
40-44	**62**	**15.9%**	**18.8%**
45-49	**54**	**13.8%**	**9.7%**
50-54	**29**	**7.4%**	**3.9%**
55-59	**27**	**6.9%**	**4.5%**
60-64	**14**	**3.6%**	**7.1%**
65-69	**9**	**2.3%**	**1.9%**
70-80	**3**	**0.8%**	**1.9% (70+)**
75-80	**1**	**0.3%**	
Unknown	**20**	**5.1%**	**5.2%**
Grand Total	**391**		

8. How would you describe your ethnicity?

Respondents could select options provided (based on current CHAIN categories), or could enter their own response in their own words – these are shown in quotation marks. The results in the table below have been classified according to ONS groupings, specifically 8a.[20] The graph in the main report uses classification 6a, but 8a is shown here to provide further detail.

Ethnicity (ONS classification 8a)	Number of responses	Percentage of 391
White - British	**130**	**33.2%**
White - British	130	33.2%
Black, Black British	**101**	**25.8%**
Black or Black British - African	60	15.3%
Black or Black British - Caribbean	33	8.4%
Black or Black British - other	8	2.0%
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller, Roma or Other White	**60**	**15.3%**
White - other	41	10.5%
White - Roma	14	3.6%
Gypsy Romany Irish Traveller	2	0.5%
"White European"	1	0.3%
"Other Roma"	1	0.3%
White - Gypsy Irish Traveller	1	0.3%
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	**36**	**9.2%**
Mixed White and Black - Caribbean	13	3.3%
Mixed - other	11	2.8%
Mixed White and Black - African	8	2.0%
Mixed White and Asian	2	0.5%
"Multi-Coloured"	1	0.3%
"Black – mix"	1	0.3%
Asian, Asian British	**26**	**6.6%**
Asian or Asian British - other	11	2.8%
Asian or Asian British - Indian	7	1.8%
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	4	1.0%
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	2	0.5%
Asian or Asian British - Chinese	2	0.5%
Prefer not to say/ Q not asked or answered	**15**	**3.8%**
Prefer not to say	6	1.5%
Question not answered	6	1.5%
Question not asked	3	0.8%
Other ethnic group	**13**	**3.3%**
"Romanian"	3	0.8%
Arab	3	0.8%

---

[20]www.ons.gov.uk/census/census2021dictionary/variablesbytopic/ethnicgroupnationalidentitylanguageandreligionvariablescensus2021/ethnicgroup/classifications

"African"	1	0.3%
"Persian"	1	0.3%
"Polish"	1	0.3%
"Ecuador"	1	0.3%
"Universal"	1	0.3%
"Iranian"	1	0.3%
"Irish – Italian"	1	0.3%
White - Irish	**10**	**2.6%**
White - Irish	10	2.6%
Grand Total	**391**	**100.0%**

9. What is your gender?

Gender	No of responses
Woman	383
Non-binary	2
Gender fluid	1
Man	1
Prefer not to say	2
Question not asked	2
Grand Total	**391**

10. Is your gender the same as registered at birth?

Same as registered at birth?	No of responses
Yes	379
No	8
(blank)	2
Prefer not to say	1
Question not asked	1
Grand Total	**391**

11. What type of service do you deliver?

Type of service	No of responses	Percentage
Homelessness organisation	**186**	**47.6%**
Drug or alcohol support service	**53**	**13.6%**
Health service	**39**	**10.0%**
Domestic abuse or sexual violence support service	**25**	**6.4%**
Housing officer or council housing department	**20**	**5.1%**
Women's service (homelessness and other)	**19**	**4.9%**
Outreach	**15**	**3.8%**
Outreach	12	3.1%

Outreach and domestic violence service	3	0.8%
Soup kitchen or food bank	**7**	**1.8%**
Soup kitchen	5	1.3%
Food bank	2	0.5%
Immigration advice or migrant support service	**5**	**1.3%**
Immigration advice service	3	0.8%
Migrant and refugee support service	2	0.5%
Other	**18**	**4.6%**
Day centre	4	1.0%
Religious or faith group / church, mosque or temple	3	0.8%
One-stop shop	2	0.5%
Housing association	2	0.5%
StreetLink	2	0.5%
Volunteer	2	0.5%
None	1	0.3%
Legal Services/Law Centre	1	0.3%
Social worker/social services	1	0.3%
Question not answered	**4**	**1.0%**
Grand Total	**391**	**100%**

12. How did you conduct the survey?

Row Labels	Count of Unique ID
At a service	**190**
At your service (in person or on the phone)	185
At service in ***	2
Drop-in service	1
Appointment	1
At women's census event	1
On a gender-informed census outreach shift	**115**
On another outreach shift	**75**
Phone	**5**
Other/information not provided	**6**
Grand Total	**391**

Appendix 2: Comparative data by borough

Numbers in green are census numbers higher than both the CHAIN and Annual Snapshot data for the borough. Orange shows census numbers higher than the Annual Snapshot data for the borough.

Borough	Census 2023	Data meeting 2023 – recorded women	Data meeting 2023 – 'unknown' women	Annual Snapshot 2022	Annual Snapshot 2023	CHAIN Q2 2023/24
Barking and Dagenham	12	20	0	2	0	5
Barnet	3	NA	NA	3	2	16
Bexley	3	NA	NA	1	2	7
Brent	22	28	19	2	3	13
Bromley	0	12	0	0	1	6
Camden	44	85	34	22	21	46
Camden, Islington and Haringey	13	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
City of London	6	16	8	2	4	18
Croydon	6	NA	NA	5	4	26
Ealing	18	14	7	1	2	27
Enfield	NA	NA	NA	1	1	8
Greenwich	12	61	4	2	6	23
Hackney	19	23	41	2	2	24
Hammersmith and Fulham	2	NA	60	1	0	29
Haringey	13	10	0	1	1	12
Harrow	NA	NA	NA	1	4	2
Havering	1	NA	NA	1	2	2
Hillingdon	5	NA	NA	3	2	9
Hounslow	1	7	1	0	1	21
Islington	12	38	2	2	2	28
Kensington and Chelsea	0	36	1	1	0	15
Kingston upon Thames	0	NA	NA	15	12	9

Lambeth	20	56	3	4	4	44
Lewisham	15	NA	NA	1	4	28
Merton	0	NA	NA	0	2	5
Newham	37	NA	NA	0	1	39
Redbridge	12	22	0	2	2	7
Richmond upon Thames	2	NA	NA	0	0	6
Southwark	10	NA	NA	0	5	24
Southwark and Lambeth	3	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Sutton		NA	NA	0	0	2
Tower Hamlets	18	93	3	4	2	27
Waltham Forest	9	NA	NA	3	6	8
Wandsworth	6	NA	NA	3	3	10
Westminster	57	135	10	56	58	170
Pan London	10	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Total	**391**	**656**	**193**	**141**	**159**	**716**

Appendix 3: Women's Rough Sleeping Census Survey 2023

London Women's Rough Sleeping Census 2023

What is the survey for?
We're conducting research to get a better understanding of women's experiences of rough sleeping and having nowhere safe to stay, and to help improve support and services for women.
We have 10 short questions to ask you - it takes less than 10 minutes to complete and is entirely voluntary. You are welcome to answer all or just some of the questions if you prefer.

Do you want to take part?
Rough sleeping can look different for everyone, especially for women. In this survey, rough sleeping means that sometimes you have nowhere safe to go at night, or nowhere to go at all. When that happens, you might sleep outside or in a stairwell or somewhere hidden, or you might walk around all night, or sit on transport, in a station or in McDonald's all night. You might also stay with friends or strangers and have to leave quickly and have nowhere else to go, or you might be sex working and don't have anywhere to stay. You might move between different places and circumstances, perhaps sometimes staying in accommodation and sometimes staying outside or on transport.

Is this something you've experienced within the last three months? If so, would you like to complete the survey?

To note, this survey is open to all women and people who feel the gender themes of this survey apply to them.

How will we use your data?
Your data will be pseudonymised and you don't need to tell us your name. Researchers will collect the results and write a report about the numbers of women who completed the survey and their answers. We will use this information to ask for better support and accommodation services for women who are rough sleeping.

We have a leaflet about how we will use your data which I can read out and give to you.

Thank you for your time.

About your recent experience of homelessness

In this section, we will ask about your recent experiences of housing and homelessness. This is to help us understand patterns of rough sleeping and how to support people. We won't be able to identify where you are rough sleeping from your answers and your answers will be anonymised.

1. **When did you last sleep rough?**
By sleeping rough we mean having nowhere to go at night. You might not do this every night, and sleeping rough might not mean sleeping outside. (Worker refer to definition to help give examples.)
Select one option

- ☐ Last night
- ☐ In the last week
- ☐ In the last month
- ☐ In the last 3 months
- ☐ Question not answered
- ☐ Question not asked

2. Approximately how many nights have you slept rough in the last 3 months?

This doesn't have to be an exact number. Select one option

- ☐ 1 night
- ☐ 2-5 nights
- ☐ 6-10 nights
- ☐ 11-20 nights
- ☐ 21- 30 nights
- ☐ More than 30 nights
- ☐ More than 60 nights
- ☐ Every night
- ☐ Questioned not answered
- ☐ Question not asked

3. Where have you stayed or slept in the last 3 months? Select all that apply

- ☐ Slept outside on the street
- ☐ At a bus or train station
- ☐ On a bus or a train
- ☐ Walked around all night
- ☐ McDonald's or similar
- ☐ A&E waiting room
- ☐ In a car
- ☐ In a squat
- ☐ Slept rough - other (please describe)

_____

_____

- ☐ In hospital
- ☐ In custody
- ☐ With a friend
- ☐ With a relative

- ☐ With a stranger/new acquaintance
- ☐ Night shelter
- ☐ Homelessness service (hostel/supported housing)
- ☐ B&B/ hotel/ temporary accommodation
- ☐ Refuge accommodation
- ☐ Housed – owned, rented or social rented
- ☐ Question not answered
- ☐ Question not asked
- ☐ Other (please describe)

_____

_____

_____

____

4. Where were you staying most recently before sleeping rough? Select one option

- ☐ Sofa surfing
- ☐ Hostel (with no support)
- ☐ Supported housing (e.g. hostel with support)
- ☐ Refuge accommodation
- ☐ Asylum accommodation
- ☐ Emergency accommodation
- ☐ Other temporary accommodation from the council
- ☐ Private rented sector housing
- ☐ Social rented housing

- ☐ Home owned by respondent/ close family/ partner
- ☐ In another country
- ☐ Prison
- ☐ Hospital
- ☐ Caravan
- ☐ Question not answered
- ☐ Question not asked
- ☐ Other (please describe)

_____

_____

5. Which services are you currently accessing support from?

(Prompt for worker: if respondent is uncertain which category their service falls into, try to establish this with them and select the most relevant option/s).

Select all that apply

- ☐ Homelessness organisation
- ☐ Housing officer or council housing department

- ☐ Housing association
- ☐ Drug or alcohol support service
- ☐ Health service
- ☐ Women's centre/service
- ☐ Domestic abuse or sexual violence support service
- ☐ One-stop shop
- ☐ Food bank
- ☐ Soup kitchen
- ☐ Job Centre
- ☐ Citizen's Advice
- ☐ Social worker/ social services
- ☐ Police

- ☐ Probation
- ☐ Prison service
- ☐ Religious or faith group / church, mosque or temple
- ☐ Education
- ☐ None
- ☐ Question not answered
- ☐ Question not asked
- ☐ Other (please describe)

  _____

  _____

  _____

About you

Thank you for the information you've shared. To help us understand about the people who are responding to this survey, we'd like to ask some questions about you. This includes your age, ethnicity, and gender - this is to help us understand how different people experience rough sleeping. Each question has an option not to answer, or to give an answer which we may not have provided as an option.

6. **How old were you on your last birthday?** _____

   If you prefer not to answer, please leave this question blank.

   (Prompt for worker: please follow your usual safeguarding processes if respondent is under 18).

7. **How would you describe your ethnicity?**

- ☐ Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
- ☐ Asian or Asian British – Chinese
- ☐ Asian or Asian British – Indian
- ☐ Asian or Asian British – Pakistani
- ☐ Asian or Asian British – other
- ☐ Black or Black British – African
- ☐ Black or Black British – Caribbean
- ☐ Black or Black British – other
- ☐ Mixed White and Asian
- ☐ Mixed White and Black – African
- ☐ Mixed White and Black – Caribbean
- ☐ Mixed – other
- ☐ White – British

- ☐ White – Irish
- ☐ White – Other
- ☐ White – Gypsy Irish Traveller
- ☐ White – Roma
- ☐ Gypsy Romany Irish Traveller
- ☐ Arab
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Question not answered
- ☐ Question not asked
- ☐ I prefer to self-describe here:

  _____

  _____

  _____

8. **What is your gender?**

   This survey is open to all women and people who relate to the gender themes of this survey in their experience of homelessness. If your gender isn't included in the options, please self-describe below.

- ☐ Woman
- ☐ Man
- ☐ Non-binary
- ☐ Gender fluid

- ☐ Questioning
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Question not answered
- ☐ Question not asked

☐ I prefer to self-describe here:

_____   _____

_____   ___

9. Is your gender the same as registered at birth?

☐ Yes   ☐ Question not answered

☐ No   ☐ Question not asked

☐ Prefer not to say

If you would like to add anything about how this has impacted your experience of rough sleeping, you are welcome to do so here. _____

_____

_____

10. Has someone at this service or another service already asked you these same questions this week or in the last few days?
We ask this question to make sure our research is as accurate as possible. It's ok if you've already answered this survey this week, but it's important for us to record it.

☐ Yes

☐ No   ☐ Question not answered

☐ Don't know   ☐ Question not asked

This is the last question on the form, thank you very much for your time.

Questions for people conducting the census (staff and volunteers)

This section is only for the worker filling in the form - the respondent does not need to answer questions in this section.

1. What type of service do you deliver?

_____

2. Which borough is your service in? _____

If your service operates in more than one borough, please answer as relevant to this survey response, i.e. where you conducted this survey or the area where the respondent was most recently rough sleeping.

3. Date survey was conducted _____

4. How did you conduct the survey?

☐ At your service (in person or on the phone)   ☐ On another outreach shift

☐ On a gender-informed census outreach shift   ☐ Other (please describe)

_____

_____

___

5. Is there anything else you would like to tell us? (for staff/volunteers)

Do not include identifying or personal information here. Please only include information which is relevant to this survey.

_____

_____

_____

___

Note for worker: *for security of data, a paper version of the survey should only be used if you are not able to use the online survey (for example, no access to internet or device). Please transfer answers to the online survey platform as soon as possible if using the paper form, and shred or delete any information recorded outside the online survey platform.*

Surveys dated after 1st October or submitted online later than 4th October 2023 will not be included in the final report.