# Centre for Homelessness Impact

# Evidence and framing: public perceptions and homelessness

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## About the Centre for Homelessness Impact

The Centre for Homelessness Impact champions the creation and use of better evidence for a world without homelessness. Our mission is to improve the lives of those experiencing homelessness by ensuring that policy, practice and funding decisions are underpinned by reliable evidence.

## Acknowledgments

# Foreword

Why do perceptions matter when it comes to ending homelessness with evidence? People's perceptions are a driving force in forming their opinions, values and feelings about what is important to them, their politics and the way they view the world. Our perceptions are constantly impacted by external stimuli, from what we see on the news to the experiences we have in our local communities. So the way we present information and tell stories can have a profound effect on every individual's perceptions of homelessness, and the steps we need to take to end it.

We are delighted to have worked with Ipsos MORI to undertake this survey to better understand how the general public perceives homelessness and the role of evidence in addressing it. We also wanted to experiment how to shift perceptions, and explore the kinds of language and framing that could encourage people to think of ending homelessness as a priority for policymakers and something we should all be invested in.

The project yielded some promising results. 86% of respondents believe that homelessness is a serious problem in the UK, with 71% saying we do not pay enough attention to homelessness. We're seeing a respect for evidence-led decision-making (57% of respondents said that decisions should be made based on evidence of what works). But we're also seeing a disconnect between perceptions of homelessness and what we know to be reality. For example, the majority of respondents believe that 11% of adults in the UK are homeless, but in reality the figure is closer to 0.5%. Also, people were more accurate for poverty – the mean guess at incidence in the UK was 25%, much closer to the estimated 17% before housing costs are included (it is 22% afterwards).
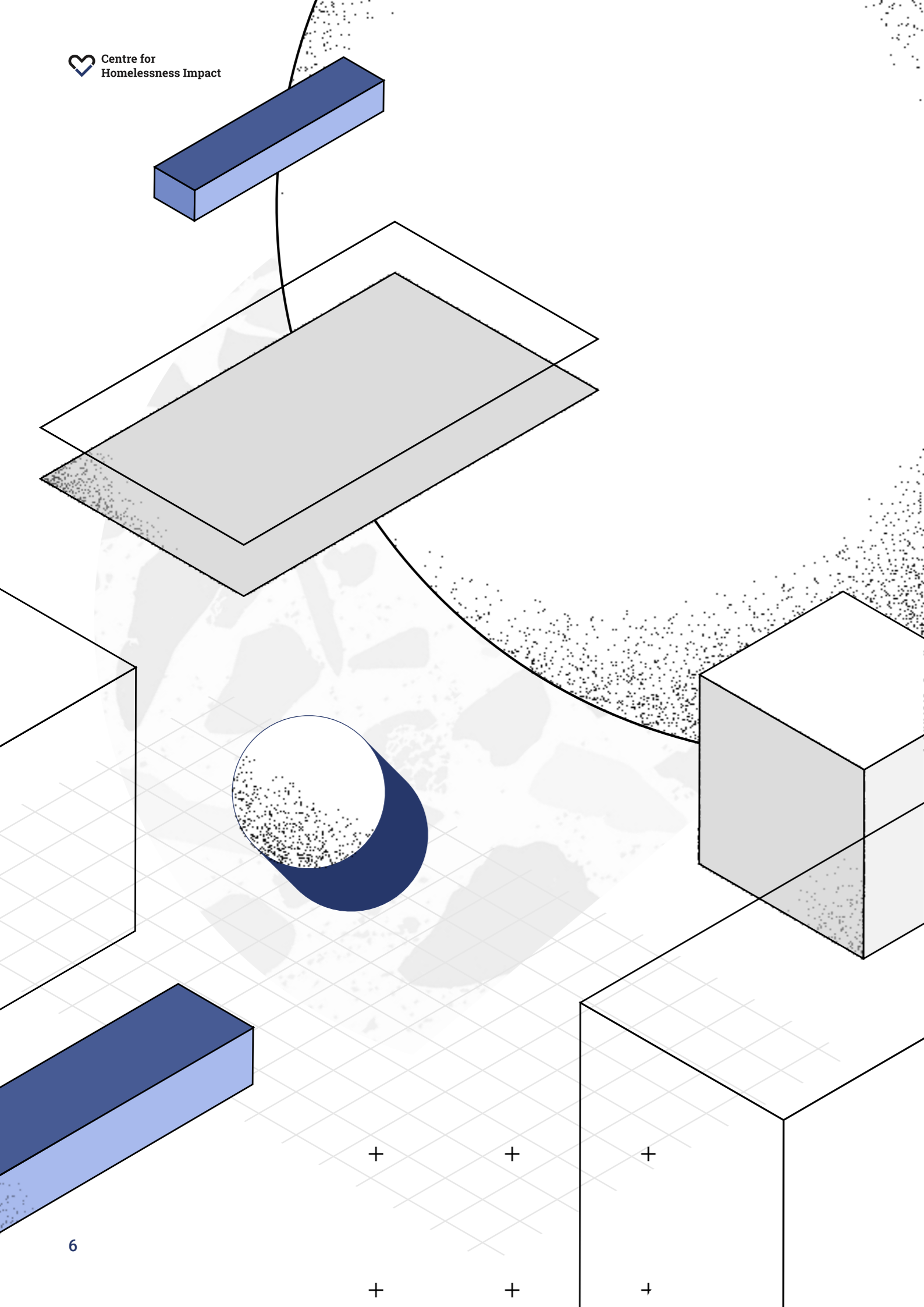
Another challenge in changing people's perceptions of homelessness is this: If the evidence does not exist, how can people form opinions on it? It is vital that we are investing in rigorous evaluations of homelessness interventions so we can have a clear picture of what works. This data, combined with the stories of people who have experienced homelessness, will help us to bust stereotypes and develop a clear picture of the different causes of, and solutions to homelessness.

The pandemic has led us to a crossroads for homelessness, and the survey shows that as a nation, we believe it is set to get worse. Indeed, there is a real risk that the direct and indirect economic impacts of the pandemic will cause a rise in homelessness over the coming months. However if we take this opportunity to take stock of where we are, and develop new, evidence informed, creative ways to tackle homelessness, we may be closer to ending homelessness than ever before. One thing is certain – we cannot end homelessness by continuing to do what we have always done.

The findings in this report offer insight on how we can advance the evidence-led movement to end homelessness, but we're only just getting started. We hope you will join us.

Dr Lígia Teixeira
Chief Executive

# Contents

# 1.Executive summary

**Ipsos MORI conducted an online survey for the Centre for Homelessness Impact between 25 November and 2 December 2020. The Centre's objective was to build an evidence base of public understanding and attitudes towards homelessness while also investigating perceptions of the role of evidence in addressing the issue. We also wanted to explore, through simple experimentation, the contribution evidence might make to positive framing, to narratives centred on making ending homelessness a shared priority, and to efforts to champion evidence-led change.**

The survey involved a representative sample of 2,180 UK adults aged 16-75 sourced from Ipsos MORI's online panel. Booster sampling increased the number of surveys completed in Wales (to a total of 514), Scotland (516) and Northern Ireland (200) in order to improve our ability to make comparisons but the samples achieved there are not necessarily representative of the populations there and should not be considered in isolation. Data was weighted to the known population profile at the UK level.

## Homelessness is perceived as a serious problem and people believe it will get worse

The survey found almost nine in ten people, 86%, across the UK saying that homelessness is a serious problem and only 4% expect it to decrease in the next year, 6% over the next 2 years. These views are widely held; 86% of people in each of England, Wales and Scotland consider homelessness a serious problem for the UK, 81% do so in Northern Ireland.

Homelessness is associated more with the UK's cities than with rural areas and there is a national-local perception gap; while 83% consider it a serious problem at a UK-level, a much smaller 44% think the same in terms of the area where they live. And there are large geographic differences; homelessness is recognised as a problem locally by 65% in London but only 34% in the North East of England. Overall, 45% of people in England think it a problem in their local area compared to 39% in Wales, the same in Scotland and 32% in Northern Ireland.

It is considered a serious problem in Wales by 75% of people living there, slightly lower than the equivalent 79% in both Scotland and Northern Ireland, and 84% in England. There is much less variation in the proportions who expect homelessness to increase in the next 12 months, just three percentage points separate Scotland (72%), England (73%), Northern Ireland (74%) and Wales (75%).

Seven in ten in the UK, 71%, believe that we do not pay enough attention to the issue as a society and there are strong levels of support for a range of policies designed to address homelessness. Again, this is consistently felt across the UK – it's 70% in England, 75% in Northern Ireland, 76% in each of Scotland and Wales.

## Homelessness is a personal issue for some, and a social issue for many more

Across the UK, a quarter, 26%, say they have ever experienced homelessness either personally or through family and friends. It is 34% among those aged 16-34 and even higher, 40%, among those renting from a private or social housing landlord. Personal experience (they have themselves experienced homelessness) is very similar within England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales (ranging from 12% to 16%).

Alongside this, 15% of people think that it is very or fairly likely that they could personally experience homelessness in future. It is similar across England (15%), Northern Ireland (13%), Wales (11%) and Scotland (10%) but, across the whole of the UK, reaches 26% among 16-34-year-olds.

A fifth, 20%, agree that homelessness only really affects those who experience it, including 6% who strongly see it this way. But many more, 56%, see homelessness as affecting the whole of society including 19% who agree strongly that it does. Older age groups are much more likely to recognise the social impacts – 64% of those aged 55-75 years old compared to 48% of those aged 16-34.

## There are important misperceptions and knowledge gaps

On average, the public think that 11% of adults are currently homeless in the UK. While there isn't a unified, UK-level estimate of people experiencing homelessness, it is thought to be around 0.5% – recent studies estimated between 200,000 and 280,000 people.[1]

Homelessness is associated with men as well as younger age groups, immigrants and people who are not in work. While majority opinion holds that homelessness is driven by poverty and factors outside individuals' control, people expect 51% of those currently experiencing homelessness to be living with alcohol or drug dependency when figures are considerably lower even for those who are experiencing street homelessness, the most visible types of homelessness.

Problems with drugs and alcoholThese are the most commonly perceived main cause of homelessness, selected by a little over half (52%) among a list of 17. Mental/physical health comes next, 35%, whilst poverty and unemployment follow with 31% and 25%.

Reflecting their concern, the public are instinctively supportive of a range of policies designed to address homelessness

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1   Crisis and Heriot Watt University published research estimating that 202,000 people experienced homelessness on any given night in 2020 although estimates published by Shelter are higher (around 280,000 people in 2019): see https://www.crisis.org.uk/about-us/the-crisis-blog/how-many-people-are-homeless-in-england-on-any-given-night/ and https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_release/280,000_people_in_england_are_homeless,_with_thousands_more_at_risk

Overall, the public are more likely to see homelessness as the consequence of things outside people's their control (52%) rather than bad choices people have made (17%). Related to this, the widest margins of support relative to opposition occur for working to change any negative views of people who are homeless (70% support vs 4% oppose) and creating a legal right to shelter for anyone who does not have somewhere to live (73% support vs 5% oppose).

Levels of support are lowest for investing money in preventing homelessness rather than in services to help those who are homeless, but this is relative; still, 61% back this policy and just 6% are opposed. The main difference compared to other policy propositions is the higher proportion - a third (33%) - who are not sure either way or don't know. This perhaps reflects public understanding of prevention and its efficacy, a potential topic for further research.

**Who's responsible for doing something?**

Local councils and the UK government are selected from a list of eight by 64% and 54% respectively. Devolved administrations feature prominently in Wales (chosen by 62% there), in Scotland (69%) and Northern Ireland (71%).

**Evidence has a role to play…**

A majority would like to see important decisions about homelessness made based upon evidence of what works (57% choose this from a list) as well as the views of those affected by or at risk of homelessness (55%). These feature ahead of expert's views, the cost/amount of money needed, and public opinion.

By a margin of 6 to 1, people agree with basing decisions mostly on evidence in preference to mostly on what people think is the right thing to do. Just over a quarter, 27%, strongly prefer this approach. Evidence-based decision-making is the preferred basis for decisions among all age groups and socio-economic groups, but younger age groups are relatively less sure, so too are those who do not see homelessness as a serious problem.

**…and our experiments suggest that it can contribute to framing too**

The first experiment was designed to understand framing effects and involved showing five different types of stimulus (frames) which drew on previous research showing that multi-faceted narratives were the most effective.

While, for the most part, changes in aggregate opinion were restricted to small changes of between one and four percentage points, Stimulus C - using an individual story linked to structural causes of homelessness plus a reference to an evidence-based solution - was most effective at moving aggregate opinion. Among those who saw stimulus C there was an increase of two percentage points in the proportion who preferred the statement "Decisions about homelessness should be made based mostly on evidence of what works", an increase in five percentage points for "Homelessness is a major problem and needs to be given top priority" and eleven for "Most people who are homeless are probably in that situation because of things outside of their control".

Our second experiment was designed to test whether or not using different words would make a difference to the public's support for certain policies regarding different types of accommodation. While the use of terms 'rough sleepers' and 'people who are experiencing homelessness and living on the streets' have less impact overall than the types of property proposed, the level of support for a block of flats is five percentage points higher - a statistically significant difference - when couched in terms of people who are presented as being for people 'experiencing homelessness and living on the streets', rather than for 'rough sleepers'.

Together, these experiments suggest that messages relating to evidence of what works, and the use of more positive language, can have a positive influence when engaging the public about homelessness. Even if they are insufficient on their own to change the external culture around the issues, they can make an important and helpful contribution.

# 2. Survey findings

**This section summarises the main findings from the survey conducted by Ipsos MORI for the Centre for Homelessness Impact between 25 November and 2 December 2020. Commentary addresses three main questions and covers similarities and differences among demographic groups of the population and different geographies:**

1. Are people concerned about homelessness?

2. How much do they know about it?

3. What do they think are its causes and potential solutions?

## 2.1 Are people concerned about homelessness?

Homelessness is seen as a serious problem across the UK. Just short of nine in ten, 86%, people consider it a very or fairly serious problem, including nearly half, 47%, who see it as being very serious. Many more, 56%, see homelessness as affecting the whole of society rather than thinking the issue only really affects those who experience it (20%). Overall, 71% agree that as a society we don't pay enough attention to homelessness and there are high levels of support for doing more to address the issue in principle; 79% support this including 37% who strongly support this.

These views are widely held; 86% of people in each of England, Wales and Scotland consider homelessness a serious problem for the UK, 81% do so in Northern Ireland. It is considered a serious problem in Wales by 75% of people living there, slightly lower than the equivalent 79% in both Scotland and Northern Ireland, and 84% in England.

As shown in Figure 1, homelessness is an issue associated more with the UK's cities than with rural areas. There is a national-local perception gap; while 83% consider it a serious problem at a UK-level, a much smaller 44% think the same in terms of the area where they live. And there are large geographic differences; homelessness is recognised as a problem locally by 65% in London but only 34% in the North East of England. Overall, 45% of people in England think it a problem in their local area compared to 39% in Wales, the same in Scotland and 32% in Northern Ireland.

**Figure 1: The salience of homelessness as a problem**



Source: Ipsos MORI/Centre for Homelessness Impact, 2,180 UK adults (England - 950, Wales - 514), Scotland - 516 and Northern Ireland - 200), 25 November-2 December 2020

There is a strong sense of pessimism around the prospects for reducing homelessness. In the UK, only 4% think that homelessness will decrease over the next 12 months whilst 6% think the same over the next 2 years. Three-quarters (74%) expect an increase in the next 12 months with 35% expecting the numbers to increase a lot. They also tend to be resigned to the fact that homelessness will always happen and it is not possible to prevent, only manage, by a margin of two to one (50% to 23%).

Expectations sit in a narrow range across the UK as shown in Figure 2; 72% of people living in Scotland expect homelessness to increase there in the next 12 months, compared to 73% in England, 74% in Northern Ireland and 75% in Wales.

**Figure 2: Expectations of homelessness in individual nations of the UK**



Q. Thinking now about [ENGLAND/WALES/SCOTLAND/NORTHERN IRELAND] do you
think homelessness will increase or decrease or stay the same in the next 12 months?

■ % increase a lot   ■ % increase a little   ■ % stay the same
■ % decrease a little   ■ % decrease a lot   ■ % don't know

% increase a little/lot

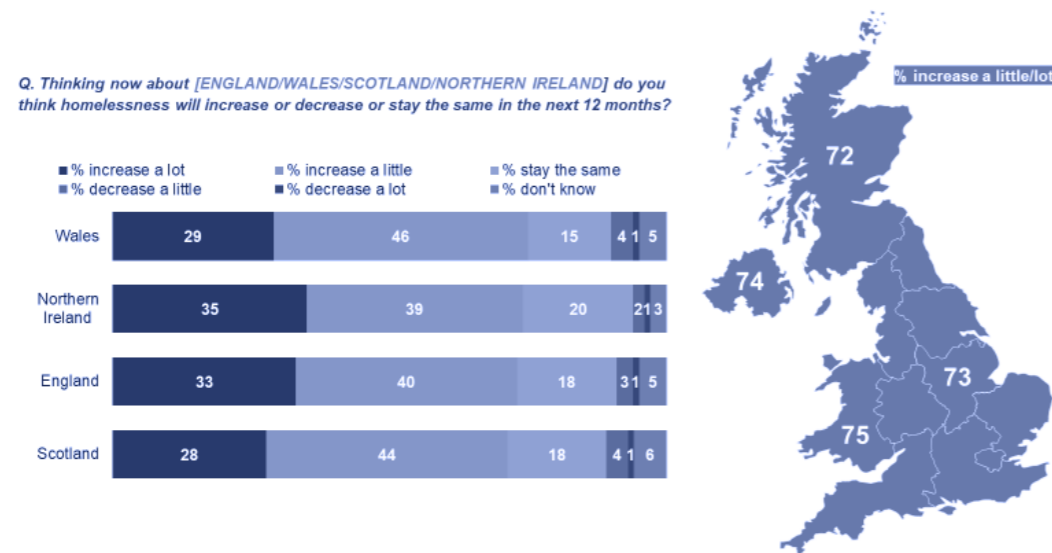| | % increase a lot | % increase a little | % stay the same | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Wales | 29 | 46 | 15 | 4 1 5 |
| Northern Ireland | 35 | 39 | 20 | 2 1 3 |
| England | 33 | 40 | 18 | 3 1 5 |
| Scotland | 28 | 44 | 18 | 4 1 6 |

Source: Ipsos MORI/Centre for Homelessness Impact, 2,180 UK adults (England - 950, Wales - 514), Scotland - 516
and Northern Ireland - 200), 25 November-2 December 2020

Seven in ten in the UK, 71%, believe that we do not pay enough attention to the issue as a society and there are strong levels of support for a range of policies designed to address homelessness. Again, this is consistently felt across the UK – it's 70% in England, 75% in Northern Ireland, 76% in each of Scotland and Wales.

Less than half of people, 46%, agree that homelessness is a major problem and needs to be given top priority" compared to 20% who think that there are other more important problems. A third, 34%, either agree equally with both ideas or say they don't know. Older age groups are relatively more likely than younger ones to deprioritise the issue. Similarly, owner-occupiers (owning outright or buying on a mortgage) are relatively less likely than renters to agree that it is a major problem and a priority (24% compared to 16%) but still, on balance, more are sympathetic to this idea than are not.

While most people think that homelessness is already a serious problem and expect it to get worse, a clear majority (64%), think that it is either very unlikely or fairly unlikely that they could ever personally experience homelessness (as described to them as per the box below). However, almost one in four (26%) say they have experienced homelessness, either through direct personal experience (12%) or via a family member (10%) or close friend (10%). This increases to one in three, 34%, of those aged between 16-34, compared to 25% of 35-54s and 20% among those aged 55-75 years old. Personal experience is higher among renters of any age at just over one in five (21%).

**"Homelessness includes people experiencing street homelessness but you don't have to be sleeping on the streets to be considered homeless – people can be homeless if they are living in hostels, shelters, B&Bs, squatting, or 'sofa surfing' i.e. staying with friends or relatives while attempting to find permanent accommodation".**

Direct personal experience is very similar across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales (ranging from 12% to 16%). Across the UK 15% of people think that it is very or fairly likely that they could personally experience homelessness in future – and this is similar across England (15%), Northern Ireland (13%), Wales (11%) and Scotland (10%), but reaches 26% among 16-34-year-olds across the UK.

**Figure 3: Personal experience - future and past**

# 15%

think that it is either very or fairly likely that they could ever personally experience homelessness

# 26%

have some past experience of homelessness either through direct personal experience or via a family member or close friend

Source: Ipsos MORI/Centre for Homelessness Impact, 2,180 UK adults (England - 950, Wales - 514), Scotland - 516
and Northern Ireland - 200), 25 November-2 December 2020

A fifth, 20%, agree that homelessness only really affects those who experience it, including 6% who strongly see it this way. But many more, 56%, see homelessness as affecting the whole of society including 19% who agree strongly that it does. Older age groups are much more likely to recognise the social impacts – 64% of those aged 55-75 years old compared to 48% of those aged 16-34.

## 2.2 How much do people know about homelessness?

**For several years Ipsos MORI has recorded significant 'perils of perception' - gaps between people's perceptions and reality[2] - described extensively by Professor Bobby Duffy.[3] In a similar vein, we designed a series of 'perils' style questions with the Centre for Homelessness Impact on the incidence and nature of homelessness.**

Our survey found that, on average, the public think that 11% of adults are currently homeless in the UK (at this point in the survey we had not defined homelessness for respondents). The distribution of answers ranged between 0% - with 28% giving this answer - and values in excess of 20%, given by 12%. While there isn't a unified, UK-level estimate of people experiencing homelessness, it is thought to be around 0.5% – recent studies estimated between 200,000 and 280,000 people.[4]

While the mean guess for the incidence of homelessness is 11%, this compares with a slightly higher 15% for the proportion of UK adults who have been homeless at some point in their lives either as an adult or a child (and the 12% of our sample who recalled this about themselves).

Those rating homelessness as a serious problem gave a higher mean answer than those who did not (a mean of 12% compared to 9%), possibly a product of 'emotional innumeracy' identified by Professor Duffy as crucial to many misperceptions – that is, a worry about something causes us to (usually) over-estimate the incidence of something.[5] The absence of official statistics and regular media commentary on these may also contribute to this; for example, by contrast, Ipsos MORI has found people's guesses of average house prices to be relatively accurate.[6]

People were more accurate for poverty. The mean guess at incidence in the UK was 25%, much closer to the estimated 17% before housing costs are included (it is 22% afterwards).[7] Of note, a quarter, 24%, gave a 0% answer for poverty and 28% did the same for homelessness. A zero percent estimate is likely to include people who guess at answers less than 1% but also those rejecting the notion that there is any homelessness or poverty at all in the UK.

We were also interested in understanding the public's perception about who is experiencing homelessness, and their characteristics; and how these compare with the actual figures. In the UK, each nation reports different information on the characteristics of people experiencing homelessness,[8] and the existing statistics do not capture 'hidden homelessness'. For the purpose of comparing public perceptions from our survey with objective measurements, we used two benchmarks: one of people experiencing street homelessness (i.e. the CHAIN data for London) and one of people approaching their local authority for support with their housing situation (i.e. MHCLG's statutory homelessness 'live tables').

Even if imperfect, these sources offer a comparison point to understand how biased perceptions might be and whether public perception is more closely aligned with the more visible type of homelessness - street homelessness (as represented by CHAIN data); or a wider group of people experiencing homelessness (as represented by the statutory homelessness data).

- The public generally recognises that homelessness is more common among men; the perception that 59% are men compares with 55% of all households having assessed for homelessness were single men,[9] 83% according to CHAIN.[10]

- On average, the public estimate that 43% are under the age of 35 which sits almost halfway between the 52% of homelessness applications from adults under 35 years old,[11] and CHAIN's 35%.[12]

- The public think that a quarter, 26%, are immigrants; halfway between the 16% of homelessness applications from adults born outside of the UK or not known[13], 47% from CHAIN.

2   See https://perils.ipsos.com/archive/index.html
3   Bobby Duffy, The Perils of Perception: Why We're Wrong About Nearly Everything, 2018
4   Crisis and Heriot Watt University published research estimating that 202,000 people experienced homelessness on any given night in 2020 although estimates published by Shelter are higher (around 280,000 people in 2019): see https://www.crisis.org.uk/about-us/the-crisis-blog/how-many-people-are-homeless-in-england-on-any-given-night/ and https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_release/280,000_people_in_england_are_homeless_with_thousands_more_at_risk
5   This is a theory which proposes that when we are wrong about a social reality, cause and effect may very well run in both directions… creating a feedback loop of misperception…" (that is, we overestimate what are concerned about, and are concerned about what we overestimate) Bobby Duffy, The Perils of Perception: Why We're Wrong About Nearly Everything, 2018
6   https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/money-misperceptions-and-personal-finance

7   https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn07096/
8   See ONS' guide to the differences in how data are reported and how definitions vary across nations: https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/dashboard/tools/homelessness-statistics/about.html
9   Based on data between April 2018 and March 2020 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/930577/Flows_2018-2019.ods
10  See https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/chain-reports
11  Data based on homelessness applications for England April 2019-March 2020: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/923144/DetailedLA_2019-2020.ods
12  See https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/chain-reports
13  Data based on homelessness applications for England April 2019-March 2020: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/923144/DetailedLA_2019-2020.ods

- The public estimate that 18% are employed which compares with 26% of homelessness applications including a person in part- or full-time employment[14] (this data is unavailable from CHAIN); and

- The public substantially overestimate the proportion who have alcohol/drug dependency, putting this at 51% compared to only 4% of all households assessed for homelessness having alcohol dependency and 6% drug dependency[15] although it is 40% according to CHAIN.[16]

There are also some other important knowledge gaps, summarised in Table 1 below which shows that the public are most likely to correctly identify that:

- People experiencing street homelessness are 10 times more likely to die prematurely than those who aren't - 85% get this right.

- More adults are experiencing homelessness compared to five years ago - 76% get this right.

- About half of people experiencing homelessness have been homeless more than once in their lives - 72% get this right.

They are, however, most likely to be incorrect in terms of:

- The UK having one of the highest rates of homelessness among richer countries - only 18% know this to be false.

- Most people living on the streets have been doing so for less than six months - only 27% know this to be true.

Only 32% recognise that it is false that there are more adults experiencing street homelessness than 'hidden homelessness' (explained as "people who were sleeping temporarily in friends' houses, squatting, staying at hostels etc."). And a similar proportion (33%) know that it is not the case that most people in work are at risk of becoming homeless if they miss just one month's pay.

In terms of official statistics on homelessness, 39% think it is the case that these include counts of the 'hidden homeless'. They don't, something recognised by 33%.

**Table 1: True/false knowledge of homelessness. Blue highlighting shows statement is true, pink that it is false (source: Centre for Homelessness Impact)**

| | % true | % false | % don't know |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1) More adults are experiencing homelessness compared to five years' ago | 76 | 10 | 15 |
| 2) The UK has one of the highest rates of homelessness among richer countries | 53 | 18 | 29 |
| 3) There are more adults experiencing street homelessness than 'hidden homeless' e.g. people who were sleeping temporarily in friends' houses, squatting, staying at hostels etc. | 46 | 32 | |
| 4) Most homeless people living on the streets have been doing that for less than six months | 27 | 40 | 33 |
| 5) About half of homeless people have been homeless more than once in their lives | 72 | 9 | 20 |
| 6) Most people in work are at risk of becoming homeless if they miss just one month's pay | 48 | 33 | 19 |
| 7) Homeless people living on the streets are 10 times more likely to die prematurely than those who aren't | 85 | 5 | 10 |
| 8) The official statistics on homelessness include counts of people sleeping on the streets plus those living in hostels, shelters, B&B's, or temporary accommodation, squatting, or 'sofa surfing' (staying temporarily with friends and relatives while attempting to find permanent accommodation) | 39 | 33 | 29 |

Source: Ipsos MORI/Centre for Homelessness Impact, 2,180 UK adults (England - 950, Wales - 514), Scotland - 516 and Northern Ireland - 200), 25 November-2 December 2020

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14  Ibid.

15  Data based on homelessness applications for England April 2019-March 2020: (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/923144/DetailedLA_2019-2020.ods)

16  See https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/chain-reports The 40% relates to people who have at least two support needs including drugs, alcohol and/or mental health issues.  It should be noted that two fifths (41%) did not have a support needs assessment recorded and the majority of these (87%) had been street homeless only once or twice. Thus, this proportion is likely to be an overestimate of the actual proportion who have support needs related to alcohol and drugs use among all people experiencing street homelessness.

## 2.3 What do people think are the causes of homelessness?

**By a margin of three to one, the public are more likely to see people experiencing homelessness as the consequence of things outside of their control (52%) than the bad choices they have made (17%). As many strongly agree that this is the case (17%) as tend to agree and strongly agree combined (12% and 5% respectively) that bad choices are the causing factor. Moreover, three-quarters (73%) agree that poverty is the root of the problems that lead people into homelessness.**

There is an association between issue-salience and what previous research has called 'self-makingness'[17] (the notion that homelessness happens because individuals make bad choices), those who think homelessness is not a serious problem in the UK are relatively more likely to think it is caused by bad choices than by situational factors - 34% compared to 14% of those who think it is a serious problem.

While majority opinion holds that homelessness is driven by poverty and 'outside' factors, alcohol or drug problems are the most commonly perceived main cause of homelessness selected by just over half (52%) among a list of 17 possibilities. Mental/physical health comes next, identified by 35%, whilst poverty and unemployment followed with 31% and 25% respectively.

Among a list of 17 options provided, the most commonly perceived main causes of homelessness were:

- Alcohol or drug problems (52%);

- Mental/physical health (35%);

- Poverty (31%); and

- Unemployment (25%).

Those **least** frequently identified as key causes were:

1. Discrimination (2%)

2. Lack of targeted, evidence- based interventions (2%)

3. Lack of opportunity/inequality (3%)

Source: Ipsos MORI/Centre for Homelessness Impact, 2,180 UK adults (England - 950, Wales - 514), Scotland - 516 and Northern Ireland - 200), 25 November-2 December 2020

17   Talking about homelessness; Crisis with Frameworks Institute, 2020

## 2.4 What are the potential solutions?

**A large majority, 71%, agree that the issue would be helped by more affordable housing. There are also high levels of agreement in the idea that governments should guarantee that everyone has the right to access decent and affordable housing – a view shared by 74% of people.**

As shown in Figure 4, the public strongly support a range of policies designed to support those in need and eight in ten (79%) support the principle of doing more generally to address the issue. Nearly three-quarters, 73%, support creating a legal right to shelter for anyone who does not have a place to live while seven in ten, 70%, support moving people experiencing homelessness to their own flats rather than offering temporary solutions. Just over six in ten, 63%, support giving higher priority to building more housing for people to rent rather than buy.

A majority are also supportive of a number of monetary interventions including increasing housing-related benefits to help those who need it to afford somewhere to live (66% support this, 11% oppose it), paying for support needed to help people with drug, alcohol or mental health problems so they can stay where they live (65% support this, 9% oppose it) and investing money in preventing homelessness rather than in services to help those who are homeless (61% support this, 6% oppose it).

**Figure 4: Support/opposition for policies**
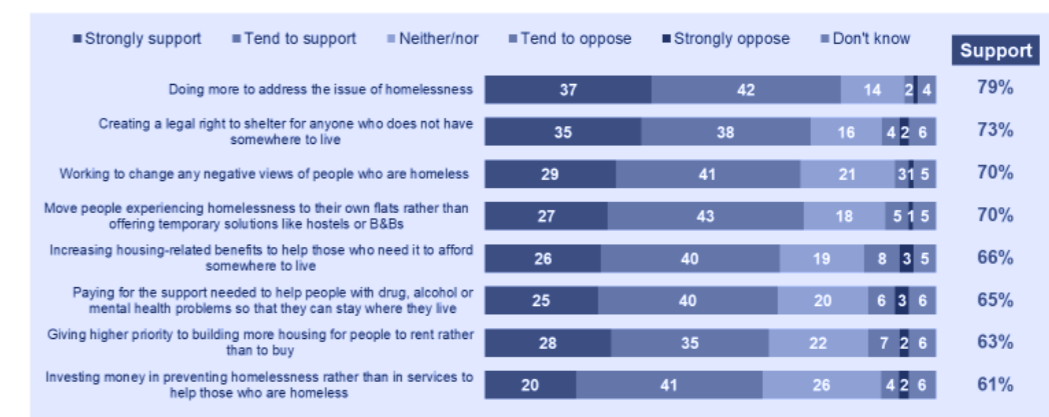


Source: Ipsos MORI/Centre for Homelessness Impact, 2,180 UK adults (England - 950, Wales - 514), Scotland - 516 and Northern Ireland - 200), 25 November-2 December 2020

## 2.5 Who's responsible for doing something?

**Local councils and the UK government are selected from a list of eight by 64% and 54% respectively. Devolved administrations feature prominently in Wales (chosen by 62% there), in Scotland (69%) and Northern Ireland (71%).**

There is a clear role for evidence. In general, people think that too little attention is paid to evidence of what works (54%) when decisions are made about important issues facing the country, while 60% think too much attention is paid to the media. Specifically, in respect of homelessness, by a margin of 6 to 1, people agree that decisions should be based mostly on evidence in preference to mostly on what people think is the right thing to do. Just over a quarter, 27%, strongly prefer this approach.

Evidence-based decision-making is the preferred basis for decisions among all age groups and socio-economic groups, but younger age groups are relatively less sure, so too are those who do not see homelessness as a serious problem.

Furthermore, 57% and 54% respectively select evidence of what works in the UK and the views of people affected by/at risk of homelessness as things that should be important in making decisions about what should be done about homelessness. These receive twice the number of mentions as the views of experts (27%) and the cost/amount of money needed (23%). The views of decision-makers and public opinion are both prioritised by just 10% of people.

## 2.6 Are there differences across the UK?

**We used booster sampling to increase the sample size in Wales (up a total of 514 respondents), Scotland (516) and Northern Ireland (200) in order to improve our ability to make comparisons. However, as boosters, the samples achieved there are not necessarily representative of the populations there and should not be considered in isolation. Data was weighted to the known population profile at the UK level.**

We have commented on differences throughout this report. For the most part, though, and as shown in Table 2 below, there are more similarities than differences in terms of sentiment.

**Table 2: Differences between UK nations (selection of questions)**

|  | England | Wales | Scotland | N. Ireland |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | n950 | n514 | n516 | n200 |
| Q2 Here is a list of issues facing the country these days. Please indicate how serious a problem, if at all, you think each one is? … Homelessness | | | | |
| % very/fairly serious problem | 86 | 86 | 86 | 81 |
| % not a very serious problem/ not a problem at all | 11 | 12 | 13 | 18 |
| Q3 … England, Wales, Scotland, N. Ireland | | | | |
| % very/fairly serious problem | 84 | 75 | 79 | 79 |
| % not a very serious problem/ not a problem at all | 13 | 21 | 18 | 20 |
| Q3 … the area where you live – that is within about 15-20 minutes' walk away | | | | |
| % very/fairly serious problem | 45 | 39 | 39 | 32 |
| % not a very serious problem/ not a problem at all | 50 | 56 | 57 | 65 |
| Q5 England, Wales, Scotland, N. Ireland … do you think homelessness will increase or decrease or stay the same … in the next 12 months? | | | | |
| Increase | 73 | 75 | 72 | 74 |
| Decrease | 4 | 5 | 5 | 3 |

| | England | Wales | Scotland | N. Ireland |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q19 (1) Please read the following pairs of statements about homelessness and decide which comes closest to your own opinion | | | | |
| A: "Decisions about homelessness should be made based mostly on evidence of what works" | 64 | 65 | 68 | 62 |
| B: "Decisions about homelessness should be made based mostly on what people think is the right thing to do" | 10 | 12 | 12 | 12 |
| Q19 (2) | | | | |
| A: "Most people who are homeless have probably made bad choices in life which has put them in that situation" | 17 | 18 | 15 | 23 |
| B: "Most people who are homeless are probably in that situation because of things outside of their control" | 51 | 51 | 60 | 55 |
| Q19 (3) | | | | |
| A: "Homelessness is a major problem and needs to be given top priority" | 45 | 48 | 54 | 47 |
| B: "There are other more important problems than homelessness so it shouldn't be given top priority" | 20 | 19 | 20 | 25 |

| | England | Wales | Scotland | N. Ireland |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q19 (4) | | | | |
| A: "Homelessness only really affects those people who experience it" | 21 | 18 | 18 | 28 |
| B: "Homelessness doesn't just affect the people experiencing it, it affects the whole of society" | 56 | 62 | 61 | 55 |
| Q26 Have you or someone close to you such as a family member or a good friend ever experienced homelessness? Homelessness includes… | | | | |
| Yes – myself | 12 | 16 | 15 | 13 |
| Yes – myself / Yes – a family member / Yes – a good friend | 26 | 26 | 27 | 26 |

Source: Ipsos MORI/Centre for Homelessness Impact, 2,180 UK adults (England - 950, Wales - 514), Scotland - 516 and Northern Ireland - 200), 25 November-2 December 2020

# 3.Experiments

**This section introduces two experiments embedded within the survey. More detailed descriptions are available in Appendix B.**

## 3.1 Experiment 1 – framing

**The first experiment was designed to understand framing effects.[18] Previous research has shown that framing strategies emphasising three key aspects of the issue of homelessness – people's fundamental commonality, the lived experience of homelessness, and the role of structural factors – can best help to "move the conversation on homelessness into more productive territory."[19] Crucially, effective framing requires communications and narratives that get at all of these aspects in an integrated way.**

The Centre for Homelessness Impact wanted to take this research further by investigating whether the inclusion of evidence about what works as a component within multi-faceted frames could have an impact on public attitudes towards homelessness and the role of evidence in addressing it.

We measured the impact of five different types of stimuli (frames) in terms of the incidence of respondents choosing between pairs of statements relating to the following:

1. The role of evidence in homelessness policy-making:

    A. "Decisions about homelessness should be made based mostly on evidence of what works"

    B. "Decisions about homelessness should be made based mostly on what people think is the right thing to do"

2. The perception that homelessness is a consequence of people's actions:

    A. "Most people who are homeless have probably made bad choices in life which has put them in that situation"

    B. "Most people who are homeless are probably in that situation because of things outside of their control"

3. Homelessness as a top policy priority:

    A. "Homelessness is a major problem and needs to be given top priority"

    B. "There are other more important problems than homelessness so it shouldn't be given top priority"

4. Homelessness is a shared priority affecting society as a whole[20]:

    A. "Homelessness only really affects those people who experience it"

    B. "Homelessness doesn't just affect the people experiencing it, it affects the whole of society"

**The impact of the stimulus overall**

Table 3 shows that, for the most part, changes in aggregate opinion were restricted to changes of between one and four percentage points (statistically significant changes in opinion are denoted by an *). Changes in one direction - for example, an increased preference for one statement over another - were often not matched by a similar movement in the opposite direction. In some cases, people moved from choosing one statement over the other to more neutral or non-committal answers, deciding to 'Agree equally with A and B' or answering 'Don't know'.

While there were three statistically significant changes in opinion, none of these were sufficiently large to tip the balance of preference between one statement and another i.e. the same statement continued to prevail after stimulus was shown and the stimulus' impact was to tip the balance slightly more in favour of a pre-existing opinion. Table 4 also shows that more substantial changes in opinion were recorded in terms of the perception that homelessness as being a consequence of people's actions. The stimulus had a much weaker impact, for example, on issue-salience and homelessness being a shared priority.

Overall, Stimulus C, using an individual story linked to structural causes of homelessness and a reference to an evidence-based solution was most effective at moving aggregate opinion:

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18  These occur when people change their minds about something depending on how it is described. Different frames can affect how people perceive a problem, what they consider to be the most relevant facts, and what they want to see happen as a result. See, for example, https://www.bi.team/blogs/in-the-frame-how-policy-choices-are-shaped-by-the-way-ideas-are-presented/
19  This has been called the Common Experience meta-frame: Reframing Homelessness in the United Kingdom, Frameworks Institute (in partnership with Crisis), 2018

20  This is one of the Centre for Homelessness Impact's five goal areas within a framework that "spans a whole system-level view of homelessness and its causes"; 'All in it Together: Make ending homelessness a shared priority'

**Table 3: Pre- and post-stimulus opinion – summary (full detail is provided in Appendix C)**

| *denotes statistically significant change at the 95% level | Stimulus shown at Q20 + point difference in % choosing each statement within each pair at Q20 vs Q19 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Pairs/statements (Q19/Q20)** | **A** | **B** | **C** | **D** | **E** |
| | n436 | n435 | n435 | n435 | n439 |
| 1A: "Decisions about homelessness should be made based mostly on evidence of what works" | -4 | -4 | +2 | -3 | -2 |
| 1B: "Decisions about homelessness should be made based mostly on what people think is the right thing to do" | +1 | +3 | -2 | +3 | - |
| 2A: "Most people who are homeless have probably made bad choices in life which has put them in that situation" | -1 | -4 | -4 | +1 | -9* |
| 2B: "Most people who are homeless are probably in that situation because of things outside of their control" | +2 | +7* | +11* | +3 | +2 |
| 3A: "Homelessness is a major problem and needs to be given top priority" | +2 | -4 | +5 | +1 | - |
| 3B: "There are other more important problems than homelessness so it shouldn't be given top priority" | -3 | - | -2 | -2 | -1 |
| 4A: "Homelessness only really affects those people who experience it" | +2 | -4 | +1 | -5 | -4 |
| 4B: "Homelessness doesn't just affect the people experiencing it, it affects the whole of society" | -3 | -1 | -5 | -2 | -4 |

Source: Ipsos MORI/Centre for Homelessness Impact, 2,180 UK adults (England - 950, Wales - 514), Scotland - 516 and Northern Ireland - 200), 25 November-2 December 2020

**Stimulus C was the most impactful**

Stimulus C, using an individual story linked to structural causes of homelessness and a reference to an evidence-based solution (shown in full below), was most effective at moving aggregate opinion.

**James' rent was very high and he was working a zero-hours contract on the minimum wage when he became ill. He couldn't afford the rent, so spent time sleeping on his friends' sofas and floors. He was welcomed for a few nights at a time, to then be told he'd have to find somewhere else to go. As a result, his physical and mental health got worse.**

**When James approached his local council and said that he was homeless, he was allocated a flat on his own with no conditions attached, and also given personalised support to help him cope with his mental health. He is now more able to cope.**

**This approach, called 'Housing First', is different because it provides long-term housing with no strings attached. There is strong evidence that it works in other countries but it hasn't been tried in the UK yet.**

Its impact was particularly strong in terms of the perception that homelessness is a consequence of people's actions ('self-makingness'), but there was also movement in terms of the salience of homelessness, its effect on the whole of society and there was an increase of two percentage points in the proportion preferring "decisions about homelessness should be made based mostly on evidence of what works":

- Between Q19 and Q20, there was a statistically significant increase of eleven percentage points in the proportion who preferred the statement "Most people who are homeless are probably in that situation because of things outside of their control".

- There was an increase of five percentage points in the proportion who preferred the statement "Homelessness is a major problem and needs to be given top priority".

- There was an increase of two percentage points in the proportion who preferred the statement "Decisions about homelessness should be made based mostly on evidence of what works".

- There was a drop of five percentage points in the proportion who chose "Homelessness doesn't just affect the people experiencing it, it affects the whole of society".

Opinion among the group shown stimulus A changed little between Q20 and Q21 which was also the case for those who were shown stimulus D. Stimulus E, which also included evidence and some structural causes, did have one statistically significant impact in terms of 'self-makingness', reducing the sentiment by nine points (more than any other stimulus) that "Most people who are homeless have probably made bad choices in life which has put them in that situation". However, there was little change in the view that "people who are homeless are probably in that situation because of things outside of their control" and in terms of using evidence in decision-making (despite the reference to interventions working).

## 3.2 Experiment 2 – language

The survey included a second experiment designed to explore the impact of language around homelessness. Earlier questions had found 51% disagreeing that 'the negative view of people who are homeless is fair' (20% agree) and most respondents did not, on balance, consider the following terms offensive as a way of describing someone who is homeless:

1. Someone with complex needs

2. A rough sleeper

3. A homeless person

4. Someone experiencing homelessness

5. A vulnerable person

As can be seen in Figure 5, relatively high levels of offence are caused by the term 'rough sleeper' which was considered very or fairly offensive by 39%. Next highest is 'someone with complex needs', considered offensive by 28% of people; 15% and 13% rate 'a vulnerable person' and 'someone experiencing homelessness' respectively as offensive.

**Figure 5: Terms and levels of offence**



*Q. The following is a list of words that people have used to describe people who are homeless. For each one, please indicate how offensive, if at all, you think it is as a way of describing someone who is homeless?*
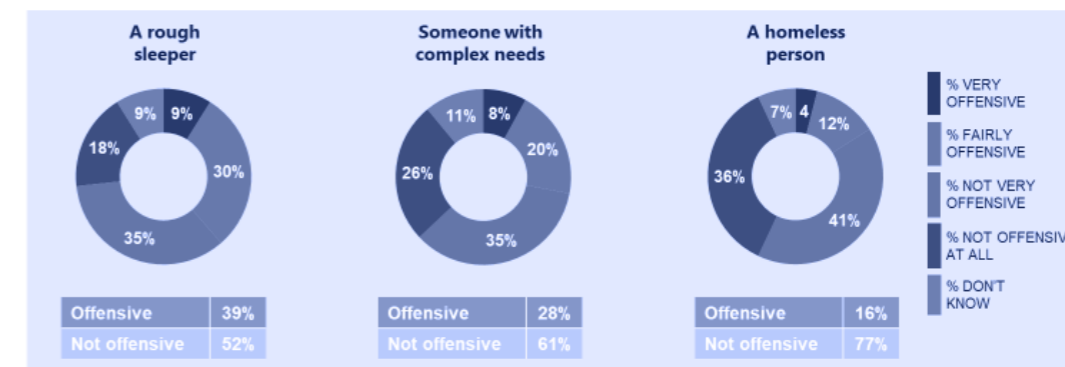
Source: Ipsos MORI/Centre for Homelessness Impact, 2,180 UK adults (England - 950, Wales - 514), Scotland - 516 and Northern Ireland - 200), 25 November-2 December 2020

Our second experiment was designed to test whether or not using some words less likely to cause offence (e.g. 'a person experiencing homelessness') with words more likely to cause offence (e.g. 'rough sleeper') would make a difference to the public's support for certain policies regarding different types of accommodation. (We should remember that these questions followed those asking about the level of offence caused by different terms, described above).

As Table 4 also shows, the use of terms 'rough sleepers' and 'people who are experiencing homelessness and living on the streets' has less impact overall than the types of property proposed. People are relatively cooler on the idea of a block of flats relative to repurposing an existing building as a hostel and using dispersed flats, although in both cases majority opinion is, in principle, supportive of this.

The most significant difference between the two sets of formulations occurs for flats. Support for these is 58% when couched in terms of people who are 'experiencing homelessness and living on the streets', five percentage points higher than the 53% who support this proposition when it is described as being for 'rough sleepers'. Opposition is four points lower. These are statistically significant differences and indicate the potential power of terminology and its influence on opinion.

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**Table 4: Impact of language at Q22**

| *denotes statistically significant at the 95% level | Set A - …rough sleepers | Set B - …people who are experiencing homelessness and living on the streets | Difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| | n1,090 | n1,087 | +/- |
| **An existing building in the area being used as a hostel for…** | | | |
| % strongly/tend to support | 60 | 62 | +2 |
| % strongly/tend to oppose | 14 | 12 | -2 |
| **A block of flats in the area being allocated to…** | | | |
| % strongly/tend to support | 53 | 58 | +5* |
| % strongly/tend to oppose | 20 | 16 | -4* |
| **Individual flats in different locations across the area being allocated to…** | | | |
| % strongly/tend to support | 62 | 65 | +3 |
| % strongly/tend to oppose | 10 | 11 | +1 |

Source: Ipsos MORI/Centre for Homelessness Impact, 2,180 UK adults (England - 950, Wales - 514), Scotland - 516 and Northern Ireland - 200), 25 November-2 December 2020

# Appendices

## Appendix A – Sample profile

**Weighted and unweighted sample profile**

| Population group | Sample size (unweighted) | Unweighted % | Weighted % |
|---|---|---|---|
| UK adults aged 16-75 | 2,180 | 100 | 100 |
| England | 950 | 44 | 84 |
| Scotland | 516 | 24 | 5 |
| Wales | 514 | 24 | 8 |
| Northern Ireland | 200 | 9 | 3 |
| Male | 1,057 | 49 | 50* |
| Female | 1,088 | 51 | 50* |
| 16-24 | 228 | 11 | 14 |
| 25-34 | 373 | 17 | 18 |
| 35-44 | 382 | 18 | 17 |
| 45-54 | 460 | 21 | 19 |
| 55-75 | 737 | 34 | 32 |
| Working full-time/part-time | 1,358 | 62 | 63* |
| Not working | 822 | 38 | 37* |
| Owner-occupier | 1,367 | 65 | 60* |
| Rent from private landlord or social housing | 723 | 35 | 40* |

Source: Ipsos MORI/Centre for Homelessness Impact, 2,180 UK adults (online), 25 November – 2 December 2020

Where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding

*indicates percentages of all those answering/data available

# Appendix B – Experiments in detail

**Experiment 1**

Our approach involved establishing a basic baseline of attitudes towards homelessness via a module of questions covering preferences relating to the role of evidence in policy-making, perceptions of its importance, 'self-makingness' (homelessness is a consequence of people's actions) and opinions about whether or not homelessness is a shared priority.[21]

We then randomly allocated respondents into one of five 'cells', each being shown one different type of stimulus or frame (developed by the Centre for Homelessness Impact and shown, in full, in the table below). We then repeated questions included in the baseline module in order to measure change.

The stimulus was multi-faceted - reflecting evidence from previous research that meta-frames are more powerful - meaning that we cannot isolate the impact of individual facets. Moreover, the 'evidence' included in stimulus C and E was 'proof' that the intervention worked but this was asserted, not shown (for example via fact or statistics[22]) and nor was it attributed to an agency or organisation.

**Our questions asked:**

Q Please read the following pairs of statements about homelessness and decide which comes closest to your own opinion…

We presented answer codes as follows:

1. Strongly agree more with A

2. Tend to agree more with A

3. Agree equally with A and B

4. Tend to agree more with B

5. Strongly agree more with B

6. Don't know

This scale was reversed and the order in which the four pairs featured, was randomised (reversal of answer codes and randomisation of batteries of statements was embedded throughout the online survey script and used at most other questions).

It should be noted the questions were repeated immediately after the stimulus and followed the baseline module – data was captured via consecutive questions, Q19 and Q20, i.e. respondents did not have long to dwell on the stimulus (although were instructed to read it fully with the stimulus remaining on screen throughout the module). The experiment also came after several questions about homelessness which themselves act as a form of framing. That said, we have analysed the changes in opinion among respondents in each 'cell' (we have done this at the aggregate level not among individual respondents), i.e. we have compared the opinion of the same group before and after stimulus was shown to them. We also showed respondents only one set of stimulus. This way, we can be sure that we are looking at change among a group of respondents who have been exposed to the same stimulus in the same way.

At the analysis stage, we reviewed the demographic profile of each 'cell' to ensure comparability (data was weighted to secure a nationally representative sample of UK adults at the aggregate level). Each one involved around 430-440 respondents, meaning that we would need to see differences of at least seven percentage points at the 95% confidence level for these to be statistically significant (although this depends on the percentages observed as described in Appendix D).

| Stimulus | Summary description of content |
|---|---|
| A | We all need a home, a stable foundation which allows us to feel safe, but a lack of social housing means that millions don't have the chance to get it. There are over 1 million households currently on the waiting list for social housing; many are experiencing homelessness.<br><br>(Campaign strapline) |
| B | After James became ill, he spent time sleeping on his friend's sofas and floors. He was welcomed for a few nights at a time, to then be told he'd have to find somewhere else to go. As a result, his physical and mental health got worse.<br><br>When James approached his local council and said that he was homeless, he was allocated a flat on his own with no conditions attached, and also given personalised support to help him cope with his mental health. He is now more able to cope.<br><br>(Individual example + Housing First-style intervention) |

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21  This is one of the Centre for Homelessness Impact's five goal areas within a framework that "spans a whole system-level view of homelessness and its causes" – 'All in it Together: Make ending homelessness a shared priority'.

22  The only statistic used in the stimulus came in stimulus A – "There are over 1 million households currently on the waiting list for social housing".

| Stimulus | Summary description of content |
|---|---|
| C | James' rent was very high and he was working a zero-hours contract on the minimum wage when he became ill. He couldn't afford the rent, so spent time sleeping on his friends' sofas and floors. He was welcomed for a few nights at a time, to then be told he'd have to find somewhere else to go. As a result, his physical and mental health got worse.<br><br>When James approached his local council and said that he was homeless, he was allocated a flat on his own with no conditions attached, and also given personalised support to help him cope with his mental health. He is now more able to cope.<br><br>This approach, called 'Housing First', is different because it provides long-term housing with no strings attached. There is strong evidence that it works in other countries but it hasn't been tried in the UK yet.<br><br>(Individual example with link to structural cause + Housing First-style intervention + evidence) |
| D | Many people struggle to cope with high rents whilst working in low-paid jobs. When something unexpected happens such as illness, some end up homeless which has an impact on other aspects of their life such as their physical and mental health.<br><br>(Structural causes + Housing First-style intervention) |
| E | Many people struggle to cope with high rents whilst working in low-paid jobs. When something unexpected happens such as illness, some end up homeless which has an impact on other aspects of their life such as their physical and mental health.<br><br>To try to break this cycle, local councils sometimes place people in their own flats with no conditions attached, and also give personal support to help them cope with the challenges in their lives.<br><br>This approach, called 'Housing First', is different because it provides long-term housing with no strings attached. There is strong evidence that it works in other countries but it hasn't been tried in the UK yet.<br><br>(Structural causes + Housing First-style intervention + evidence) |

# Experiment 2

**Questions were prefaced by a preamble introducing a scenario:**

Now imagine that the following were proposed in your local area – that is the area within 5-10 minutes' walk from where you live. Please indicate the extent to which you would support or oppose each proposal in principle? It does not matter whether, or not, you think this would actually happen in your local area – we are still interested in your views.

Respondents were randomly allocated into one of two cells with each group receiving either question set A or set B. Set A included the term 'rough sleeper', B 'people who are experiencing homelessness and living on the streets' shown in the table below

**Question sets used at Q22**

| Q22 | Summary description of content | |
|---|---|---|
| Part 1 | An existing building in the area being used as a hostel for rough sleepers | An existing building in the area being used as a hostel for people who are experiencing homelessness and living on the streets |
| Part 2 | A block of flats in the area being allocated to rough sleepers | A block of flats in the area being allocated to people who are experiencing homelessness and living on the streets |
| Part 3 | Individual flats in different locations across the area being allocated to rough sleepers | Individual flats in different locations across the area being allocated to people who are experiencing homelessness and living on the streets |

Source: Ipsos MORI/Centre for Homelessness Impact

**Question answer codes were as follows:**

1. Strongly support

2. Tend to support

3. Neither support nor oppose

4. Tend to oppose

5. Strongly oppose

6. Don't know

We randomised the order in which the three parts were asked, and the answer code scale was reversed. At the analysis stage, we reviewed the demographic profile of each half the sample to ensure comparability and used an additional weighting of the data to balance samples for each question set.

# Appendix C – Experiment 1 results in detail

| | Stimulus shown and Q19, Q20<br>All figures are % agreeing with each statement within each pair at Q19, Q20 | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Pairs/statements** | **A - Q19** | **A - Q20** | **B - Q19** | **B - Q20** | **C - Q19** | **C - Q20** | **D - Q19** | **D - Q20** | **E - Q19** | **E - Q20** |
| | n436 | n436 | n435 | n435 | n435 | n435 | n435 | n435 | n439 | n439 |
| 1A: "Decisions about homelessness should be made based mostly on evidence of what works" | 68 | 64 | 60 | 56 | 66 | 68 | 66 | 62 | 64 | 62 |
| 1B: "Decisions about homelessness should be made based mostly on what people think is the right thing to do" | 9 | 10 | 10 | 13 | 11 | 9 | 9 | 12 | 11 | 11 |
| 2A: "Most people who are homeless have probably made bad choices in life which has put them in that situation" | 18 | 17 | 18 | 14 | 16 | 12 | 14 | 15 | 17 | 8 |
| 2B: Most people who are homeless are probably in that situation because of things outside of their control" | 55 | 57 | 51 | 58 | 47 | 58 | 56 | 59 | 50 | 52 |

| Pairs/statements | A - Q19 | A - Q20 | B - Q19 | B - Q20 | C - Q19 | C - Q20 | D - Q19 | D - Q20 | E - Q19 | E - Q20 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Stimulus shown and Q19, Q20** <br> **All figures are % agreeing with each statement within each pair at Q19, Q20** | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3A: "Homelessness is a major problem and needs to be given top priority" | 48 | 50 | 49 | 45 | 46 | 51 | 43 | 44 | 45 | 45 |
| 3B: "There are other more important problems than homelessness so it shouldn't be given top priority" | 18 | 15 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 18 | 21 | 19 | 23 | 22 |
| 4A: "Homelessness only really affects those people who experience it" | 19 | 21 | 20 | 16 | 18 | 19 | 22 | 17 | 24 | 20 |
| 4B: "Homelessness doesn't just affect the people experiencing it, it affects the whole of society" | 60 | 57 | 57 | 56 | 55 | 50 | 55 | 53 | 55 | 51 |

Source: Ipsos MORI/Centre for Homelessness Impact, 2,180 UK adults (England - 950, Wales - 514), Scotland - 516 and Northern Ireland - 200), 25 November-2 December

# Appendix D – Statistical reliability

It is important to note that, strictly speaking, confidence intervals relate only to samples that have been selected using strict probability sampling methods but, in practice, it is reasonable to assume that these calculations provide a good indication of the confidence intervals relating to this survey given the approach used.

The table below shows that we can expect an overall sampling tolerance (this refers to the upper and lower limit of error) of up to +/- 1.5 percentage points at the '95% confidence interval' for a 50% finding the survey overall.

**Survey sampling tolerances (rounded)**

| Size of sample on which survey result is based and approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **10% or 90%** | **30% or 70%** | **50%** |
| 2,180 UK | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| 950 England | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| 516 Scotland | 3 | 4 | 4 |
| 514 Wales | 3 | 4 | 4 |
| 200 Northern Ireland | 4 | 6 | 7 |

For example, with a sample size of 2,180 where 12% say that they have ever personally experienced homelessness, then the chances are 19 in 20 that the 'true' value (i.e. the one which would have been obtained if the whole UK population had been interviewed) will fall within the range of +1.4 percentage points from the survey result (i.e. between 13.4% and 10.6%).

The following table indicates the sampling tolerances when comparing different groups of participants (or the same group across different questions). If we once again assume a '95% confidence interval', the differences between the results of two separate groups must be greater than the values given in the following table in order to be deemed 'statistically significant':

**Survey sampling tolerances: sub-group level (rounded)**

| Sample sizes and differences required for significance at or near these percentage levels | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **10% or 90%** | **30% or 70%** | **50%** |
| 950 vs. 516 (England vs. Scotland) | 4 | 6 | 6 |
| 'Cell' responses at Q19 vs Q20 (n430) | 5 | 7 | 7 |

For example, if 30% of people in England give a particular answer compared with 36% of those in Scotland (assuming sample sizes in the table above), then the chances are 19 in 20 that this six-point difference is statistically significant.

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