



Making women count

Designing and conducting a rough sleeping census for women in London

December 2022

Organisations involved in this work

This report was commissioned and funded by Single Homelessness Project (SHP). The project was conducted in collaboration by SHP, St Mungo's, the Women's Development Unit (Solace Women's Aid and The Connection at St Martin's) London Councils and the GLA alongside researchers from PraxisCollab. SHP also funded the incentive vouchers provided to women for women completing the survey.

PraxisCollab

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We provide collaborative consultancy, research, and training. We believe that findings and learning from research and evaluation must translate into action that changes policy and practice. We develop meaningful insights from data and put learning into action, helping to ensure that social research and evaluation has a long-lasting impact.

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Thank you to the practitioners and volunteers who conducted surveys with women. Lastly, but by no means least, we would like to thank each woman who chose to share details about themselves and their experiences of rough sleeping in London. Without your valuable and generous contribution, this project would not have been possible. We hope the findings and recommendations in this report will provide an important evidence base to transform how women's experiences of rough sleeping are understood and documented so that women can be better supported in the future.

Executive summary

This report sets out the key findings and learning from the initial pilot project of the women's rough sleeping census, which was conducted across London boroughs in October 2022, commissioned and funded by Single Homelessness Project (SHP). The project was conducted in collaboration by SHP, St Mungo's, the Women's Development Unit (Solace Women's Aid and The Connection at St Martin's) London Councils and the GLA alongside independent researchers from PraxisCollab.

Why the women's rough sleeping census was conducted

Rough sleeping has repeatedly been demonstrated to be highly damaging, yet recent research shows that traditional methods and systems for recording the numbers of people rough sleeping underrepresent women. Women are at great risk of harm sleeping rough on the streets, so this will tend to be a last resort. Women will exhaust all other options or sleep in more hidden locations. Therefore, it is important to develop a new methodology and strategy for counting women who sleep rough and for documenting their experiences.

The key aims of this pilot project were to:

- Design a methodology for surveying women rough sleeping including hidden rough sleeping in London boroughs between the 3rd and 7th October 2022 to provide a snapshot of the numbers of women surveyed during that time.
- Establish the circumstances and characteristics of women sleeping rough in London within that timeframe including the average and range of ages, ethnicity, support services they are linked in with and type of accommodation they previously had access to and recent rough sleeping experiences.
- Identify some of the places where women are rough sleeping so that outreach services and other homelessness services can tailor their offer of support to women who are rough sleeping intermittently and/or out of sight of existing services.

Methodology

The methodology was designed collaboratively between the core team and researchers from PraxisCollab and aimed to include multiple data points over the five-day data collection period. Main activities included: designing a survey; developing and delivering training and guidance to those who would use the survey; analysis of survey data from services and outreach teams; gathering feedback from practitioners involved in conducting the survey with women.

Key findings

- The majority of the surveys were conducted during street outreach sessions between the 3rd and 7th October 2022.
- Twenty-one London boroughs were represented in the data collection.
- Most data came from surveys conducted by homelessness outreach teams
- 154 responses to the survey were received for women that reported sleeping rough within the last three months.
- Most surveys were conducted during specific gender-informed outreach shifts carried out during daytime hours to make it more likely to contact women
- The average age of the respondents was 41 years old.
- The majority were White British, and 17 ethnicities were reported.
- Women were reported sleeping rough on the streets and in other places such as hospital toilets, in disused garages, squatting, on public transport with some reporting occasionally staying in hostels, emergency accommodation, or at a friends or relatives house interspersed with rough sleeping.
- There are important differences to note in women's circumstances and the services they are accessing. Some women responding to this census who have slept rough regularly in London in the last three months report accessing no services.

- The majority of, but not all, women responding to this survey who reported sleeping rough in London are accessing homelessness services.
- A small proportion of the women reporting they sleep rough in London report accessing women's centres, domestic and sexual violence services, health services, and drugs and alcohol services despite the evidence of these experiences being common for women who sleep rough.

Reflections from practitioners

Feedback from practitioners provided valuable learning points about the census process and methods. Positives included that the census was quick and easy to complete, as well as being appropriate for women. Conducting the census led some teams to become aware of more locations for rough sleeping, as well as providing opportunities for discussion with women about their circumstances.

Challenges related to the process of conducting the survey, including the practicalities of preparing for the task, the availability and capacity of practitioners to carry out the survey within their role, identifying and approaching women, and being able to accurately represent the women known to be sleeping rough in the figures recorded. Additionally, some reported the limitations in the scope of the project in effectively capturing and demonstrating a comprehensive picture of women's rough sleeping circumstances.

Conclusions

Data collected from the project cannot be taken to be representative of numbers or circumstances of women rough sleeping in boroughs or across London as a whole. Nevertheless, this was an ambitious project, and the first of its kind to develop and conduct a methodology specific to women's experiences. It is an important starting point for conducting future women's rough sleeping census.

Rough sleeping is not currently defined in a way that incorporates women's experiences. The findings from this census demonstrate that services, practitioners, and women still interpret this in different ways which impacts on the accuracy of the data gathered. More work is required here to develop a definition that is meaningful and relevant to women's experiences.

This methods piloted in this study seem promising for capturing women's specific experiences of rough sleeping. However, the methods will need further testing and comparison with other methodologies and results to establish a strong evidence base. The majority of the data in this census came from street outreach teams and so additional efforts and strategies to encourage the use of multiple data points such as administrative data from various sources alongside survey data are still needed. This requires a shared approach, a broad understanding of the value of using administrative data and willingness to participate from a broad range of sectors.

Recommendations

- Recognise that specific methods, tools, and processes are required to understand and establish a more accurate picture of how women experience rough sleeping, as their experiences differ from men.
- Develop a definition of rough sleeping that is appropriate for how women experience this so that they can have their circumstances documented in a way that is meaningful to them and be represented in official statistics.
- Improving the standardisation of how women experiencing rough sleeping are identified, approached, and offered an opportunity to participate in the census is important. The survey tool and accompanying guidance and training will likely require additional specific instructions about operating from a shared understanding of rough sleeping, and how and where to identify women.

- Review strategies and processes used by street outreach teams, to incorporate greater flexibility in places visited and times of sessions to maximise the possibilities to find women who are not easily visible.
- Retain a core set of survey questions with the possibility to add extra questions sets for different purposes. This would enhance the standardisation of core survey data collected rather than a dilution of original questions and variables.
- Undertake qualitative research with women to better understand their experiences of what rough sleeping means to them, and what it incorporates, to inform the development of a meaningful definition that is relevant to women's lived experience.¹

¹ Further detail can be found in the main report.

Introduction

This document sets out the findings from the initial pilot of the Women's Rough Sleeping Census across London boroughs in October 2022. SHP commissioned PraxisCollab as independent researchers to support the design of the methodology, the survey and the process; to advise upon guidance for disseminating the tools; and to analyse the quantitative data generated through the census.

This report provides an overview of the methodology used, key findings from the survey data with learning and recommendations for future work in this area. However, this pilot was conducted within limited time and resource. The project was not designed to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the overall process and findings as this was outside of its scope.

This research aims to establish a useful platform upon which others can build. It provides key insights about the characteristics and circumstances of the women that participated in the census, as well as recommendations for the future, including additional research required to continue to improve policy and service provision for women experiencing rough sleeping in London.

The importance of collecting data on women who are rough sleeping

Measuring rates of rough sleeping is notoriously challenging. Recent rough sleeping counts in London in autumn 2021 estimate the number of people rough sleeping on a single night to be 640, a decrease of 10% since 2020 and a 52% increase from 2010.² Thirteen percent of those people were reported to be female.³

² Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities. 2021. *Official Statistics: Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2021*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2021/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2021#demographics>

³ Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities. 2021. *Official Statistics: Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2021*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2021/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2021#demographics>

Rough sleeping has been shown to have huge detrimental effects on women's health and life expectancy with the average age of death for women who rough sleep reported to be lower than that of men.⁴ Women are also documented to experience higher rates of mental ill-health than men and are more likely to have experienced traumas including domestic abuse and self-harm.⁵ Statistics show that women's rough sleeping is increasing over time, but that less data are collected about women who are rough sleeping as methods to estimate numbers and circumstances of rough sleepers are tailored more towards men than women. Homelessness services engage with women less frequently as they are often not set up to be women specific, tend to be overwhelmingly male attended and do not meet the needs of women.⁶ Therefore, less data are recorded about the nature and extent of women's rough sleeping.

The rationale for conducting this census draws on growing evidence over the last ten years about the need for more data and evidence about women's homelessness in general, particularly rough sleeping.⁷ Recent work in this area conducted by The University of York⁸ critiques existing methodologies used to calculate the rates of rough sleepers and illustrates a gap in evidence about women's experiences of rough sleeping. The findings document evidence that women's experiences of rough sleeping are materially different to men's and that consequently the current systems and processes used by local authorities and central government for establishing rough sleeping among women are not fit for purpose as they are designed for men who are rough sleeping.

⁴ Statistics demonstrate that life expectancy for women who rough sleep is 41 years, compared to 44 years for men who rough sleep. In comparison to the average for the general population which is 81 years for women and 76 years for men: Public Health England. 2020. *Guidance. Health Matters: Rough sleeping* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-rough-sleeping/health-matters-rough-sleeping>

⁵ Public Health England. 2020. *Guidance. Health Matters: Rough sleeping* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-rough-sleeping/health-matters-rough-sleeping>

⁶ Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2018). *Women and Rough Sleeping: A Critical Review of Current Research and Methodology*. The University of York.

⁷ Bretherton, J. and Mayock, P. (2021) *Women's homelessness: European evidence review. Research Report*. FEANTSA.

⁸ Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. 2018. *Women and Rough Sleeping: A Critical Review of Current Research and Methodology*. The University of York.

In response to the challenges associated with existing methodologies, Bretherton and Pleace collaborated with Fulfilling Lives Islington and Camden (FLIC) to conduct research in Camden⁹ to explore the numbers and circumstances of women experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping in Camden using a pilot methodology to capture a more accurate picture. The research sought to better understand the numbers, experiences, and support requirements of women experiencing homelessness in Camden. This study identified women in Camden who experience prolonged homelessness alongside other forms of multiple disadvantage, who are at high risk, not having their homelessness adequately addressed and require specialist women specific support for their circumstances rather than mainstream provision which does not adequately meet women's needs.

Bretherton and Pleace¹⁰ also illustrate several challenges in being able to accurately identify the extent of women's homelessness. Firstly, a spatial challenge which uses a narrow definition of homelessness which doesn't neatly fit women's experiences. Secondly, an administrative challenge in that women's homelessness is recorded only in certain circumstances and systems. Thirdly, a methodological challenge that the strategies used to identify rough sleepers are not women focused and tend to over sample men.¹¹

The authors state that women's homelessness and rough sleeping is underrepresented, and that there is no reason to assume that what was found in Camden does not also exist in other areas. Recommendations include further research using a mixed methodology that is tailored the specific experiences and circumstances of homeless/rough sleeping women to build a more accurate picture.

⁹ Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. 2021. *Women's Homelessness in Camden: Improving Data Strategy and Outcomes*. The University of York.

¹⁰ Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. 2021. *Women's Homelessness in Camden: Improving Data Strategy and Outcomes*. The University of York.

¹¹ Bretherton, J. and Mayock, P. (2021) *Women's Homelessness: European evidence review. Research report*. FEANTSA.

Although the research by Bretherton and Pleace in 2021 focused more broadly on women's homelessness in Camden, this Women's Rough Sleeping Census was designed specifically to focus on women's experiences of rough sleeping, including hidden rough sleeping.

The aim of this study was to focus on rough sleeping which is defined more narrowly than homelessness by the government.¹² It is acknowledged however, that women's experiences of rough sleeping do not always fit the government definition, particularly when women experience rough sleeping in places that are less visible than on the streets. Therefore, women are not always counted and verified as rough sleepers to have their data recorded in current systems and processes.

In this study, a broader definition of rough sleeping has been used that is more relevant to women's circumstances and how they experience rough sleeping. This was explained to women who completed the survey and included having nowhere to go at night, sleeping outside or in other places that could be considered rough sleeping such as in doorways or stairwells, public spaces and restaurants that are open late, buses and train stations for example.¹³

In this report, we use the terms women's rough sleeping including hidden rough sleeping to incorporate the range of women's experiences.

Research aims

The main aims of the London women's rough sleeping census are to:

- Design a methodology for surveying women rough sleeping including hidden rough sleeping in London boroughs between the 3rd and 7th October 2022 to provide a snapshot of the numbers of women surveyed during that time.
- Establish the circumstances and characteristics of women sleeping rough in London within that timeframe including the average and range of ages, ethnicity,

¹² Public Health England. 2020. Guidance. Health Matters: Rough sleeping. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-rough-sleeping/health-matters-rough-sleeping>.

¹³ See guidance in appendix three for more detail.

support services they are linked in with and type of accommodation they previously had access to and recent rough sleeping experiences.

- Identify some of the places where women are rough sleeping so that outreach services and other homelessness services can tailor their offer of support to women who are rough sleeping intermittently and/or out of sight of existing services.

Part One: Identifying and surveying women rough sleeping in London boroughs.

Methodology

This research piloted a methodology to bring women's experience of rough sleeping including hidden rough sleeping to light. The activities were designed to take account of the specificity of women's experiences of rough sleeping; establish a more accurate picture than methods currently used by government and local authorities; and add to the mechanisms for identification of women's rough sleeping, using multiple data points to improve policy and service provision.

Briefly, the methodology comprised:

- A brief review of recent literature to establish the gaps and challenges in establishing an accurate picture of the number and experiences of women rough sleeping including hidden rough sleeping in London boroughs.
- Designing a tool for practitioners to use on outreach to identify and survey women who are rough sleeping.
- Providing guidance and training to practitioners that would use the survey tool.
- Developing templates for local authorities to establish the number of women presenting to housing departments with nowhere to go.
- Developing a template for Streetlink to contribute to the research with the numbers of women referred into their service over the data collection period.
- Analysing the data collated and reporting on the findings and learning.

In this collaborative study, the census core team and PraxisCollab led on different activities to bring the project to fruition. PraxisCollab were commissioned to support the design of the survey, advise on aspects of the survey guidance, analyse the data collected using the survey and report on the key findings.

A detailed methodology, including the rationale and development of the survey tool, is included in appendix one.

Data Collection

Conducting this pan London women’s rough sleeping census was an ambitious project, that required collaboration, communication and partnership working between different organisations.

The following organisations and people were involved.

Organisation	Role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SHP • St Mungo's • The Women's Development Unit (Solace Women’s Aid and The Connection at St Martin’s) • The GLA and London Councils. 	<p>SHP funded the research report and the incentive vouchers for women completing the survey.</p> <p>The core team of representatives from the organisations collaborated to lead the programme delivery of the census.</p>
<p>Organisations from the following sectors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness organisations • Women’s centres/VAWG services • Health sector • Drug and alcohol support services • Migrant services • Voluntary sector organisations 	<p>Participated in the training and guidance sessions to disseminate and conduct surveys with women.</p>
<p>Women rough sleeping including hidden rough sleeping in London boroughs</p>	<p>Women generously provided valuable data for the census.</p>
<p>PraxisCollab – independent social researchers with practitioner expertise in supporting women experiencing rough sleeping.</p>	<p>Supported the design of research methodology, supported the survey design, conducted quantitative data analysis, and drafted the report.</p>

One of the key aspects of this census was to include multiple data points over the five-day data collection period including:

- Survey data gathered by outreach teams that identified women as rough sleeping including hidden rough sleeping during the day.
- Survey data gathered by services that support women experiencing rough sleeping who come into the service.
- Administrative data from local authorities, prisons and Streetlink about the numbers of women known to be rough sleeping or who have nowhere to go

The aim was for the surveys to be conducted over five days in one week to avoid a one-day snapshot survey that has been reported to underrepresent the numbers of women rough sleeping due to the transient and intermittent nature of women's rough sleeping patterns.¹⁴ However, the majority of outreach teams completed one gender informed outreach shift to survey women rather than multiple shifts.¹⁵

Originally, the data collection period was set to take place in September, however, following the death of Queen Elizabeth II, and the funeral taking place in central London, it was not possible to conduct the survey as originally planned due to concerns about the impact of the events on central London and the accuracy of the data collected. Therefore, a different week was selected for conducting the survey between the 3rd and the 7th of October 2022.

Information regarding the aims of the census methodology was sent out to approximately 790 individuals and organisations from across the homeless, health, VAWG, drugs and alcohol, migrant, and community support sector services. From those engagement efforts, around 100 contacts engaged with the core team either by

¹⁴ Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2018). *Women and Rough Sleeping: A Critical Review of Current Research and Methodology*. The University of York.

¹⁵ More detail about specific activities can be found in the methodology in appendix one.

responding, signing up to the mailing list, or attending an information or training session. The majority of engagement was from the homelessness sector.

Data received

Although the methodology was designed to collate data from multiple points, the data received was mostly survey data gathered by homelessness outreach teams.

Thirty-eight outreach shifts were conducted by twenty-eight outreach teams across the five-day data collection period.

Using the template designed by the core team, Streetlink provided a figure of 140 women that had been referred into their service over the data collection period.¹⁶

Data templates provided to each local authority were mostly not completed. One borough provided a response to say that four women had been recorded as having nowhere to go by the housing department.¹⁷ No data were received from prisons about women released with nowhere to go.

In total, 184 survey responses were collected and uploaded onto the Microsoft Forms survey platform.¹⁸ Twenty entries were removed as the respondents had answered 'yes' to the question about double counting to determine whether they had been asked the same questions by anyone else in the last few days.

¹⁶ From the data received from Streetlink it is not known whether the women referred to Streetlink include women who had also completed a survey. This figure is for illustration only.

¹⁷ From the data received from local authorities, it is not known whether the four women documented by Camden also completed a survey or not and so may be double counted. Therefore, this figure is for illustration only.

¹⁸ Surveys were conducted using either paper format during outreach or using electronic devices during outreach. Data collected using paper forms were uploaded to the online system later.

To ensure that the data analysed was from the agreed data collection period, a further seven entries were removed that fell outside that period. The breakdown of the total number of survey responses analysed and the attrition rate can be found in the following table.

This figure is not representative of the population of rough sleeping women in London but is a self-selecting sample from a pilot methodology to strengthen the strategy for understanding women’s experiences of rough sleeping and hidden rough sleeping¹⁹

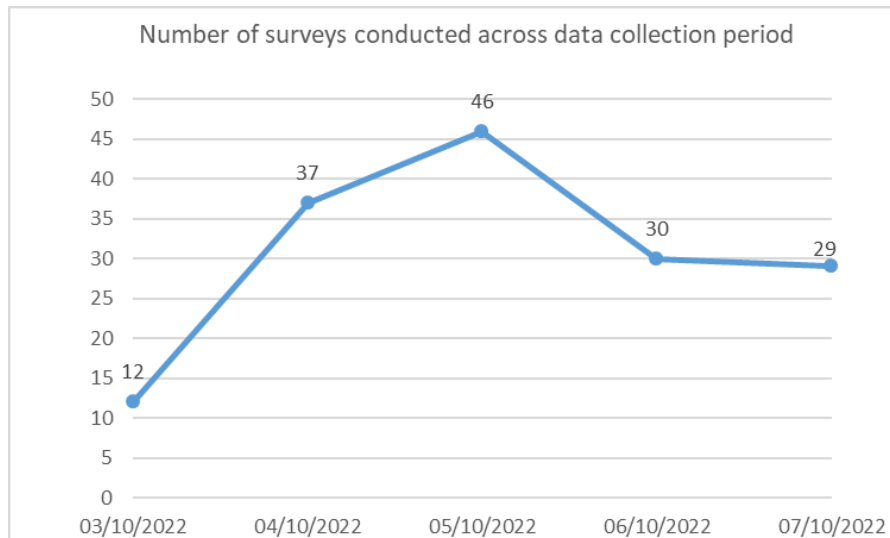
Total number of survey responses	184
Number of responses removed due to double counting	20
Number of responses removed as outside of data collection period	7
Number of responses removed as response outside of rough sleeping or homeless definition. ²⁰	3
Number of responses included in analysis	154

Chart 1 shows the number of surveys collected over the five-day data collection period.

¹⁹ It is important to note the limitations of the results, as data were not gathered systematically from all rough sleeping women in London. Women were asked to participate and share their information. Therefore, the data represents the experiences of those who chose to do so and is for illustrative purposes, not to be generalised.

²⁰ Responses to all three homelessness and rough sleeping questions showed that the respondents were not rough sleeping, had not in the last 3 months and had stayed somewhere other than rough sleeping last night.

Chart 1.



Survey data

To help ensure that the survey could be completed with women in a short timeframe (approximately 7 minutes or less), the survey was purposefully designed to have a maximum of ten questions with predetermined response fields. This was to encourage a positive response rate and not to overburden women with unnecessary questions. To achieve this, decisions were made about which variables to include and exclude within this pilot. The background research, design and development work that went into creating the survey is explored thoroughly in the methodology (see appendix one) along with the rationale for the variables included.

The final survey variables and available data include the following:

Women's recent housing and homelessness circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When women last slept rough • How many nights they had slept rough in the last 3 months • Where they stayed last night • Where they stayed prior to sleeping rough • Types of services accessed
Demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Ethnicity • Sex • Gender Identity
Data about the person conducting the survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The type of service they provide • The borough the service is in • Whether the data was collected during a specific gender informed outreach shift

Services collecting data

This section of the report provides an overview of the types of services involved in the data collection, and the borough representation in the census.

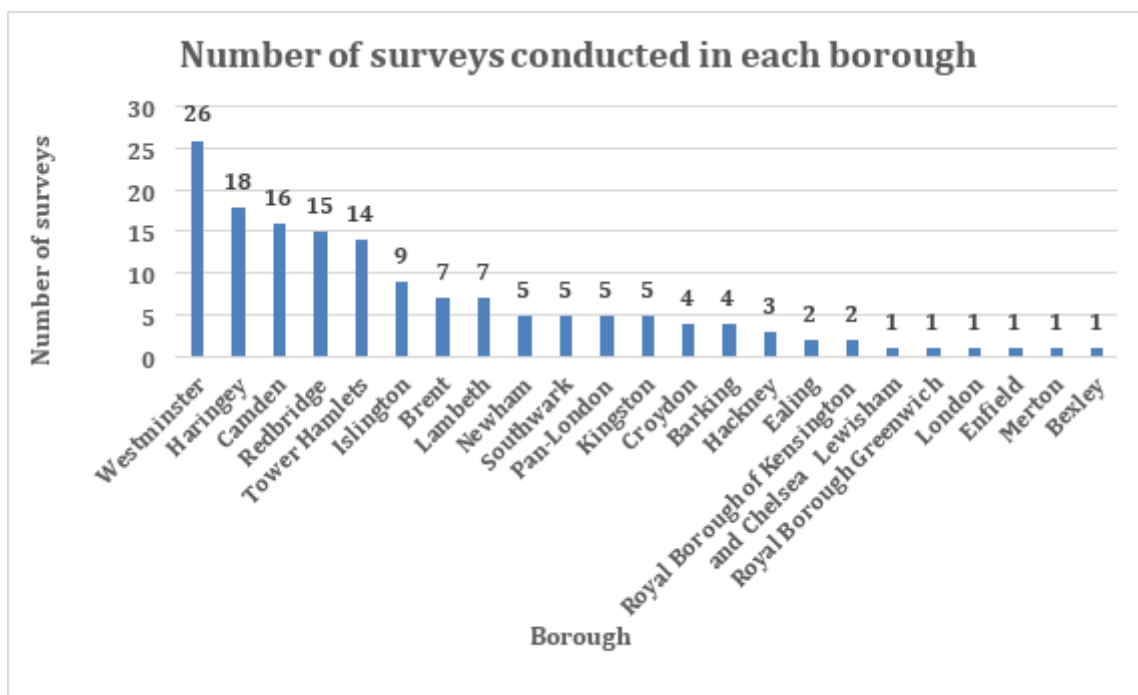
Borough representation

This was a pan London project. The core team communicated with the GLA and all London borough local authorities to cascade guidance, training, and the link to the survey amongst local services.

Twenty-one separate boroughs were represented in the census.²¹ Chart 2 below demonstrates the numbers of surveys conducted in each borough.

²¹ In 6 of the survey responses, the staff member conducting the survey reported their service operated across London, rather than one specific borough.

Chart 2.



These figures cannot be interpreted to demonstrate or draw inferences regarding the overall numbers or the proportions of women rough sleeping in London. Neither can they be used to infer that the boroughs conducting most surveys had higher rates of women rough sleeping in each borough as there are many extraneous variables to consider.²² For example, the number of surveys conducted could depend on the commitment and buy in from each borough, the effectiveness of communication about the census, how much time and resource available from each borough or service

²² The figures contained in this report are for illustration purposes only and do not represent the population of women sleeping rough in London as the responses are from women who self-selected to participate in the survey. The methods and processes for collecting the data are different to other rough sleeping so results are not directly comparable with existing rough sleeping counts. These figures provide a useful insight into how the pilot methodology was used and illustrate the findings from the pilot. They are a useful starting point upon which to build future research.

involved in outreach, which women were identified as rough sleeping, and whether women chose to participate in the survey or not.

Anecdotal data from the census feedback gathered by the core team indicates that some women seen on outreach chose not to take part in the survey, and so the survey is likely to be an undercount of women seen by the outreach teams. Other anecdotal feedback also suggested that some outreach teams did not see all of the women they usually engage with during outreach shifts whereas others saw women they would otherwise not have encountered.

This indicates that the census methodology had some success in reaching women not usually engaged by some outreach teams, but it did not capture all women that are known by local outreach teams to be rough sleeping, so there is still more to do to improve the accuracy of recording the numbers of women rough sleeping including hidden rough sleeping in London.

The number of women rough sleeping in the government snapshot of autumn 2021 was 86²³. The census methodology surveyed a larger number of women,²⁴ however, it is important to be cautious in drawing direct comparisons with the government figures as the methods and processes for reaching this figure are different to the census methodology. It is more methodologically robust to use the census as a starting point and compare results with future census surveys.

Services conducting the survey

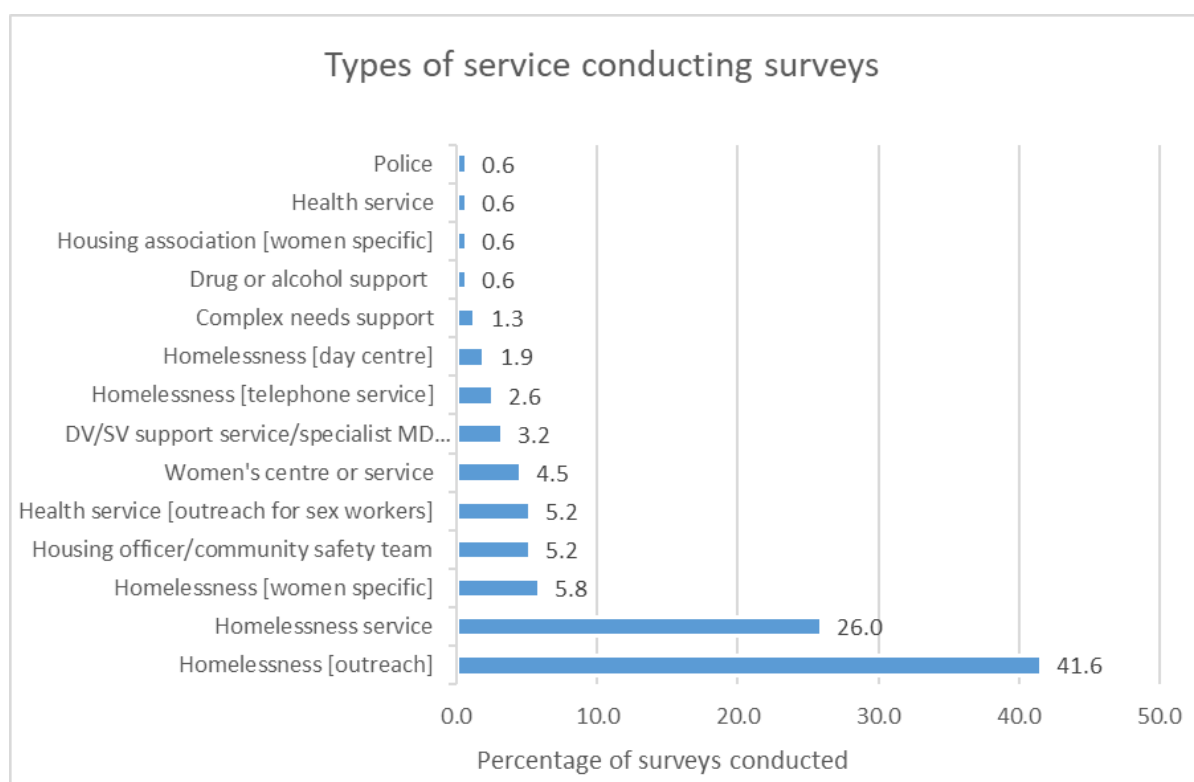
A broad range of sectors and services were invited to take part in conducting the surveys, however, the data was mostly gathered by different types of homelessness

²³ Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities. 2021. Official Statistics: Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2021 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2021/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2021#demographics>

²⁴ The census also asks more from women in terms of responding to the survey rather than simply being counted as rough sleeping.

services (78%).²⁵ Although women specific services, services for domestic or sexual violence, and health services were included in conducting the surveys, and had engaged with the core census team, the numbers of surveys completed by these services were in much smaller numbers. This indicates that future work to conduct a women’s rough sleeping census might focus more on engaging women specific services and wider sectors to participate further in the data collection, particularly those services that do not conduct street outreach.

Chart 3.²⁶



²⁵The methodology (see appendix one) also provides more comprehensive information about the process of disseminating the survey and communicating with stakeholders. Some learning from the feedback gathered by the core team appears on page 49.

²⁶ The survey guidance explained that police were not requested to conduct surveys directly with women and although Chart 3 includes a survey completed by the police, it is not recommended that this takes place as standard.

The women's rough sleeping census provides a useful platform for strengthening the links across all sectors that support women rough sleeping including hidden rough sleeping.

How the data were gathered

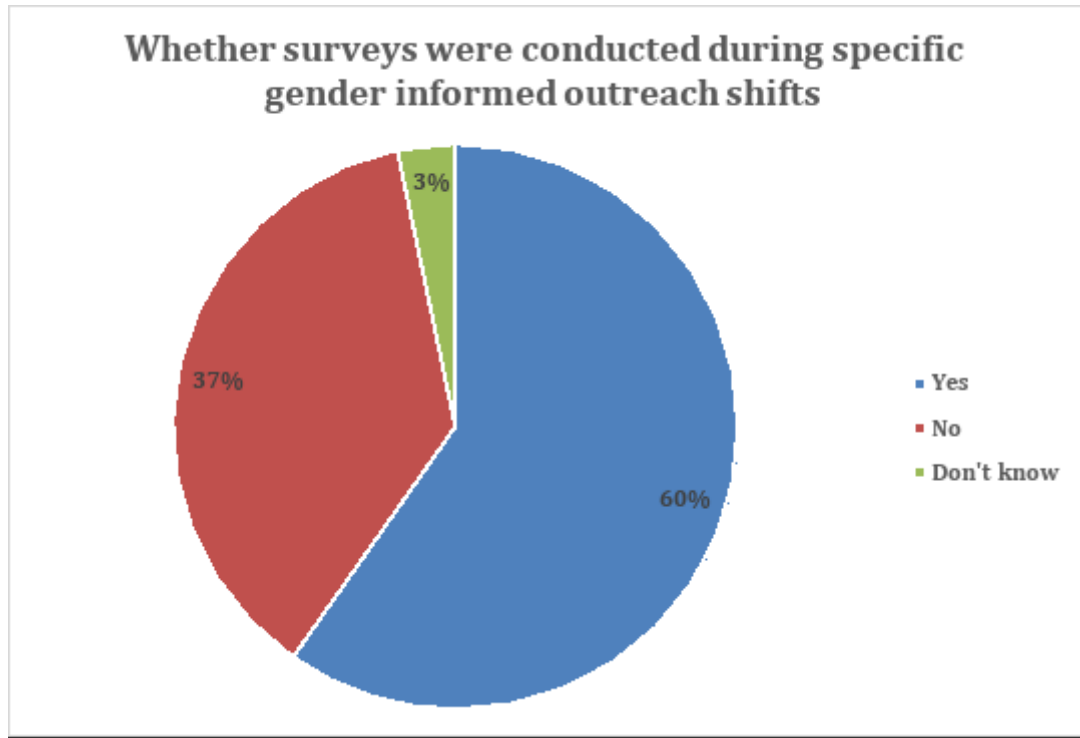
Chart 4 below illustrates that the majority of the surveys (60%) were conducted during specific outreach shifts²⁷ designed to engage with women rough sleeping. Therefore, a large proportion of the services involved in conducting the survey had incorporated these specific shifts into their work, and 37% were conducted through the normal operation of the service which may have involved street outreach. These findings suggest positive levels of will and buy-in to carry out this census with women through the implementation of additional time and resource to conduct the surveys.

The guidance specified the outreach shifts take place throughout the day as women are less likely to be easily seen at night, and services already have an idea of who would be seen at night from outreach shifts and snapshot counts which are done at night. Gender informed outreach shifts included daytime shifts conducted by practitioners and volunteers that had read the guidance and attended the training, so that they were informed about the context and rationale.²⁸ This included information about the places to look for women particularly if they are hidden rough sleeping such as restaurant toilets or stations for example.

²⁷ Conducted on a single day between 7am and 7pm, although the day varied across the teams.

²⁸ All outreach was conducted in pairs. Any male outreach workers were paired with a female.

Chart 4.



The time and resource required to conduct the census should be an important consideration in any future census when encouraging services to participate and use the tools and research methods. Six responses within the 'No' category had responded, 'No, during other outreach.'

Part Two: What have we learnt

Key findings

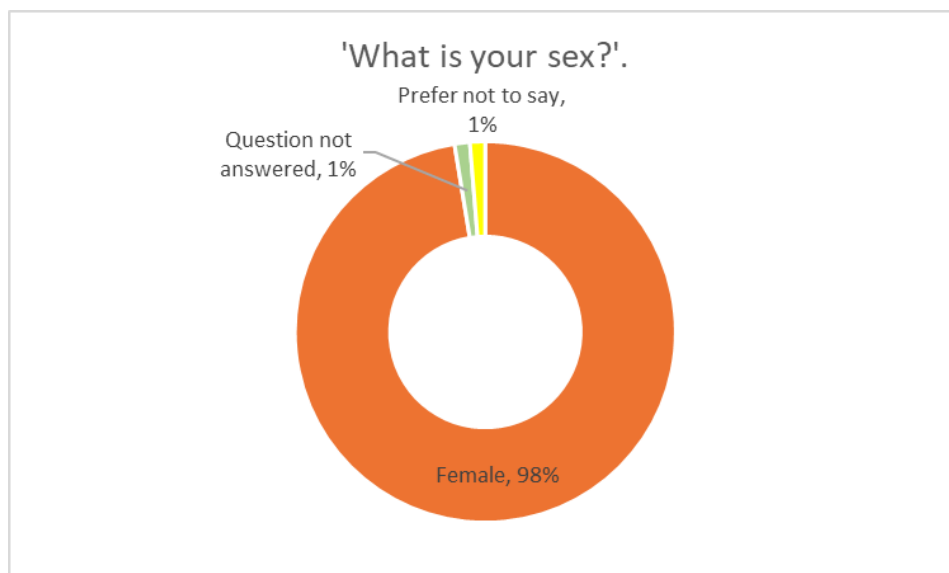
This section of the report details the key findings about the characteristics and circumstances of women that completed the survey, alongside an exploration of women's circumstances based on how often they reported rough sleeping in the last three months. It is important to note that this is self-report survey, therefore all responses reflect the participants' own understanding and interpretation of the questions set out in the survey tool.

Demographics

Sex and gender identity

In line with the Office for National Statistics census, questions on both sex and gender identity were included in the survey to capture relevant and specific data for this project.²⁹ Ninety-eight percent of respondents reported their sex as female, with 1% reporting they 'prefer not to say' and 1% opting to not answer the question.

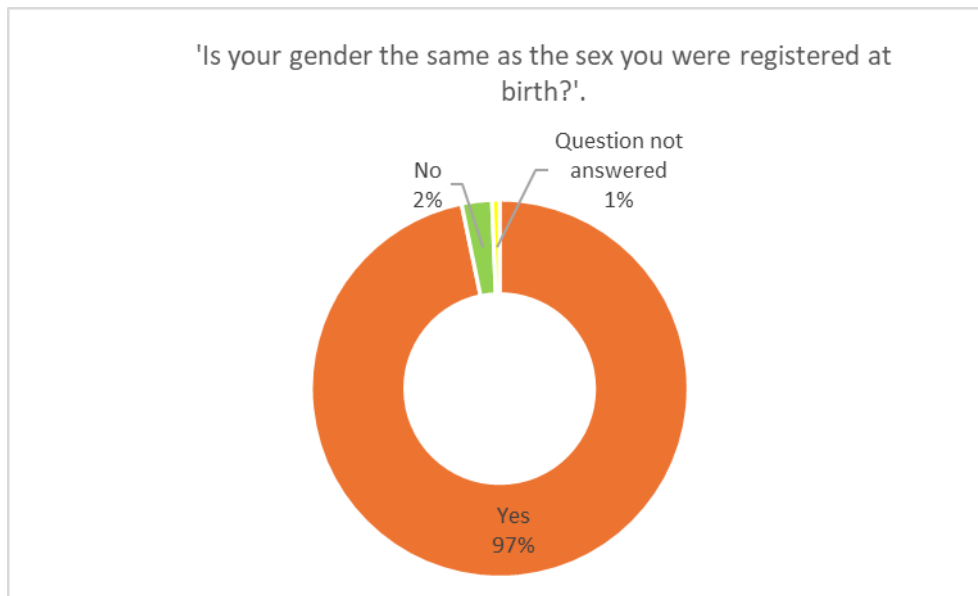
Chart 5.



²⁹ This is to support transparency and future replication of any survey tool as well as to provide a starting point for comparing data with ONS in the future. ONS question wording was used so that data is comparable with ONS census.

Ninety seven percent of respondents reported that their gender identity was the same as sex registered at birth, with 2% reporting 'no' and 1% chose to not answer the question.

Chart 6.



For those reporting that their gender identity is different to the sex registered at birth, an open text response option was provided for respondents to self-describe their gender identity. Of the 2% (4 respondents) who reported that their gender identity is different to their sex registered at birth, two chose to describe their gender identity in the open text response.³⁰

Gathering data on both sex and gender identity provides an important starting point for understanding the proportion of female, transgender and non-binary rough sleepers, which will improve research and support based on their specific experiences and circumstances in the future.

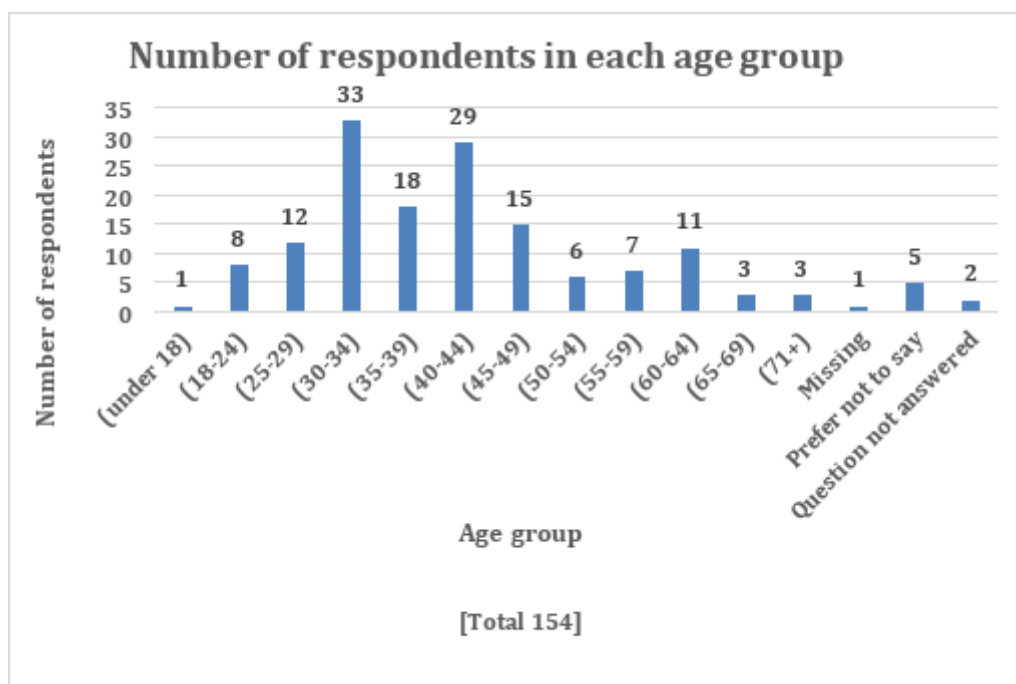
³⁰ Responses have not been included to avoid potential identification of individuals.

Age

Respondents were asked to provide their age on their last birthday rather than ask for a date of birth, to preserve anonymity. Of the 146 women who chose to provide the age at their last birthday, the average age (mean) was 41 years. The average age (median) was 43 years old. The most frequently reported age (mode) by women was 32 with fourteen women reporting that they were 32 years old.³¹ The age range was between 17 years and 76 years.³²

The responses were recoded to age groups in line with ONS census data on age. The following chart demonstrates that the majority (52%) of respondents were concentrated between the ages of 30 to 44 years old. Interestingly, 6% of the respondents were young people aged under 25 and 11% were reported to be over 60 years old.

Chart 7.

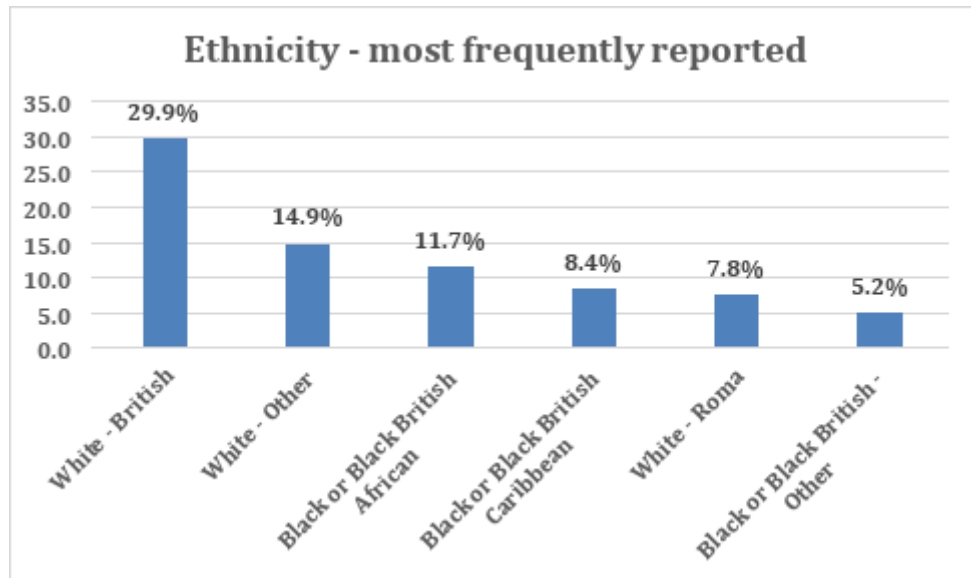


³² The 17-year-old respondent reported that they were in contact with social services.

Ethnicity

Seventeen different ethnicities were represented by the respondents. The six most frequently reported appear in chart eight below, with 29.9% of the respondents reporting to be White-British.³³

Chart 8.



Other ethnicities also reported by small numbers of respondents included White-Irish, Gypsy Romany Irish Traveller, White Gypsy Irish Traveller, Asian or Asian British Pakistani, Asian or Asian British Indian.

³³ These results are for illustration purposes only and are not representative of the population of women sleeping rough in London but used to explore trends over time if the census is repeated.

Women's experience of rough sleeping

The survey was designed to include an initial explanation of rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping, to provide each respondent with an opportunity to decide if the survey was relevant to them and their circumstances. The definition of rough sleeping for this project was broader than the existing government definition of rough sleeping on the streets because of the evidence about how women's experiences differ from men and because places women sleep rough may not always be visible directly on the streets.

The explanation of rough sleeping for the purposes of this census was provided to women at the start of the survey. This was contained in the survey guidance and included having nowhere to go at night, sleeping outside or in other places that could be considered rough sleeping such as in doorways or a stairwells, public spaces and restaurants that are open late, buses and train stations for example.³⁴

The first three questions on the survey sought to establish women's recent housing circumstances and experiences of rough sleeping. The findings are as follows:

Women's experience of rough sleeping in the last three months

CHAIN collect data on a quarterly basis, and so this census asked about women's rough sleeping circumstances within the last three months.

³⁴ See guidance in appendix three for more detail.

Chart 9.



Almost half of the respondents (48.7%) reported that they slept rough last night, a further 14.9% in the last week, 11% in the last month and 10.4% in the last three months. That gives a combined total of 85% of the respondents reporting that they have slept rough in the last 3 months.³⁵

9.7% of respondents (15) provided a response of 'other' which typically included reports of sofa surfing, staying in hostels or with friends or relatives. Four respondents (2.6%) commented that they were not necessarily 'sleeping rough' as they interpreted it but were included in the sample as responses to further survey questions deemed them eligible for this research.

³⁵ As noted above, women were provided with an introduction about the survey and asked about rough sleeping, using a definition that included having nowhere to go at night, sleeping either outside, or other places that could be considered rough sleeping such as restaurants or public spaces open late, bus and train stations etc. See guidance in appendix three for more details. Despite this, the interpretation of the term 'rough sleeping' could still differ which may impact the results.

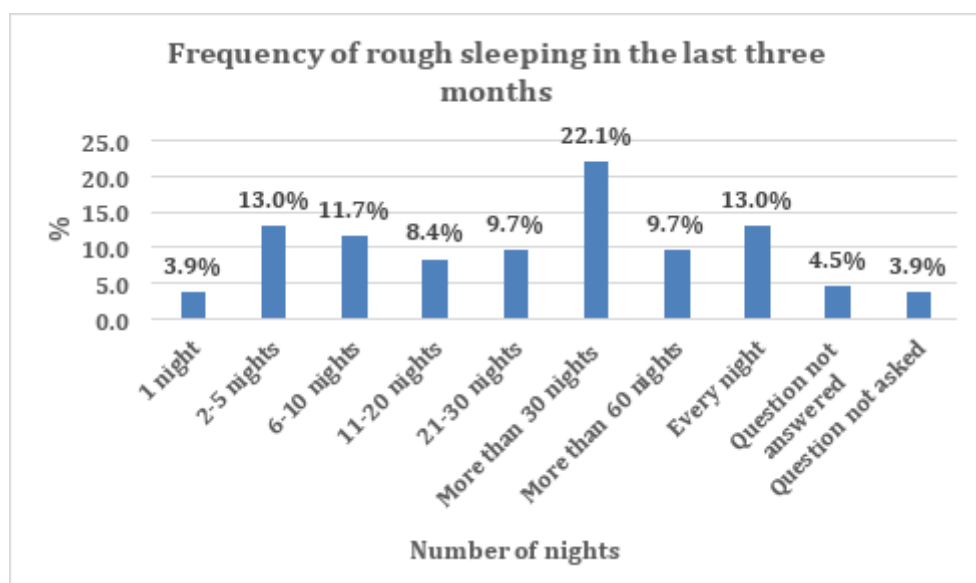
Women's frequency of rough sleeping in the last three months

To assess the extent of rough sleeping amongst the survey respondents, the question, 'how often have you slept rough in the last three months?' was asked. The results are shown in chart 10 below.

A broad range of experiences were reported, ranging from women who had slept rough for one night (3.9%) in the last three months, through to those who had slept rough every night in the last three months (13%). The most frequent response provided by 22.1% of the respondents was 'more than 30 nights' in the last 3 months.

44.8% of the women reported having slept rough regularly, either more than 30 nights, more than 60 nights, or every night within the last three months.

Chart 10.



Where women stayed the previous night

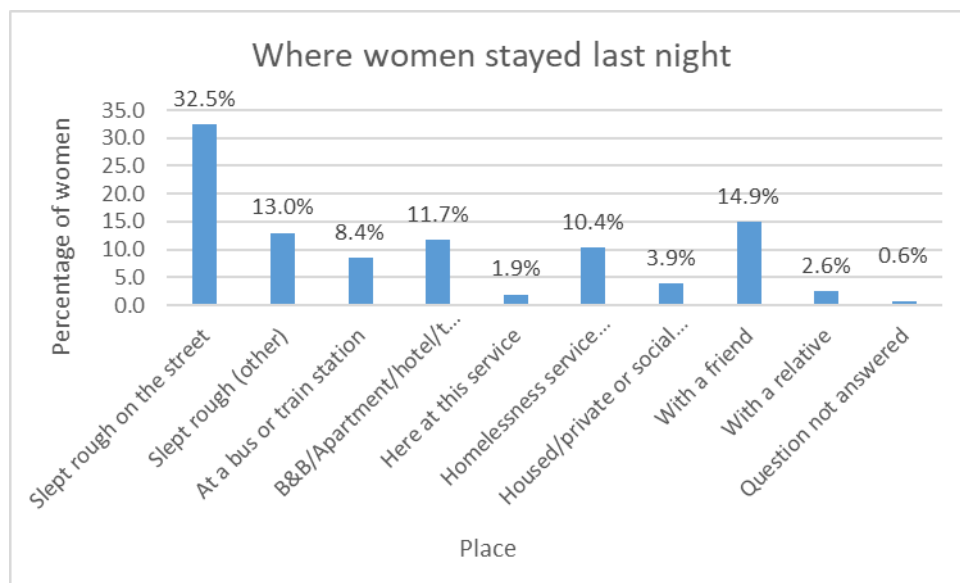
To gather specific data on women's recent rough sleeping including hidden rough sleeping experiences, the respondents were asked 'Where did you stay last night?'

The most frequent response provided was 'slept rough on the street' (32.5%). The second most frequent response was from 14.9% of women who reported staying 'with a friend' last night, followed by 13% who reported 'slept rough other' last night.

Typically, 'slept rough other' included a variety of places such as 'public disabled toilet', 'hospital toilet', 'churches', 'standing outside the hospital after discharge', 'in a tent', 'in a disused garage', 'in a car' and 'in doorways.'

Some women that have been rough sleeping in the places mentioned above might not have been counted or verified in other rough sleeping methodologies, for example if they did not meet the government rough sleeping definition or might not have been seen in other rough sleeping street counts.

Chart 11.



Strikingly, 53.9% of women reported having spent the previous night either on the street, rough sleeping other or in a bus or train station and 46% of the respondents reported that the night before the census they stayed in places such as hostels, emergency accommodation or with friends or relatives. Options such as staying with a

friend could either be more settled or less settled or even exploitative, depending on the individual circumstances and data do not exist about the wider context of those circumstances.

The responses to this question and the previous question relating to the frequency of women's rough sleeping are interesting particularly when thinking about the transiency and the hidden nature of women's rough sleeping experiences. Women often don't feel safe in mixed hostels or are known to experience high levels of domestic and sexual violence from perpetrators and so will sometimes flee certain types of accommodation, only to continue to be at risk of harm on the street or in public places.³⁶

The evidence from this census also suggests that some women are oscillating between periods of rough sleeping interspersed with staying in a variety of other places. This could impact on the likelihood of women being seen, counted, and verified by outreach teams and their ability to be eligible for support.

Qualitative research with women who experience this would be welcomed. This would explore the broader context and circumstances surrounding these patterns for women, the trajectory to rough sleeping and establish from women what support it would take to help them to disrupt those cycles.

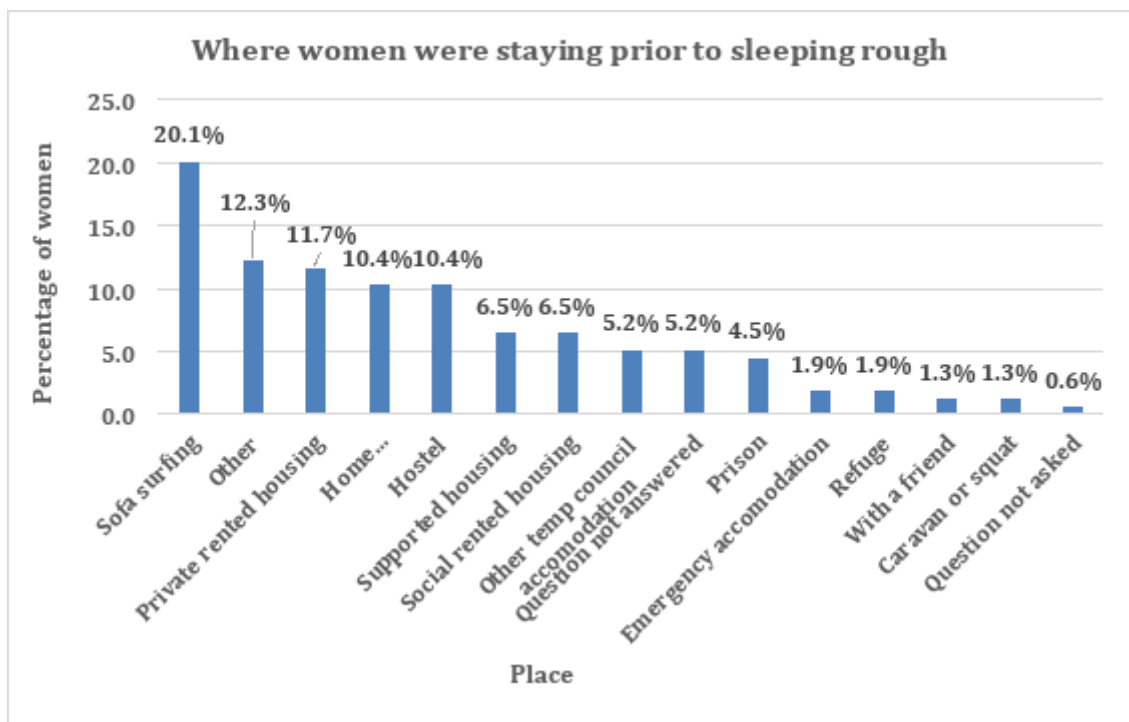
Where women stayed prior to sleeping rough

To gather data about women's homelessness trajectories and rough sleeping or patterns the respondents were asked: '*Where were you staying prior to sleeping rough?*'

³⁶ Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. 2018. *Women and Rough Sleeping: A Critical Review of Current Research and Methodology*. The University of York.; Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. 2021. *Women's Homelessness in Camden: Improving Data Strategy and Outcomes*. The University of York.; Young, L. and Horvath, T. 2019. *Promising Practice from the Front Line. Exploring support for homeless women experiencing multiple disadvantage*. Homeless Link and Women's Resource Centre.

The responses illustrated in chart 12 vary considerably. The most frequent response from women is that they were 'sofa surfing' prior to sleeping rough (20.1%). Twelve percent of respondent reported 'other' which included being in a different country prior to sleeping rough in London, and others who reported long patterns of homelessness and rough sleeping. Twenty nine percent of the respondents reported staying in private or social rented housing or staying in a house owned by a partner or close relative. Six percent chose not to respond to that question or were not asked that question by people conducting the survey.³⁷

Chart 12.



The interpretation of the question might differ across the respondents which might affect the results. However, these findings could support the notion that women experience a trajectory of homelessness whereby they exhaust all other options prior to

³⁷ People conducting the survey could use discretion about whether it was appropriate to ask each question.

sleeping rough and experience a gradual deterioration in the stability of their housing circumstances before having no other option but to sleep rough on the streets or other forms of hidden rough sleeping.³⁸

Although some of the options such as social or private rented could be considered more stable forms of housing, without more knowledge of the wider context, it is not possible to fully understand women's circumstances prior to sleeping rough or the reason for the change in their situation.

It is important to consider women's safety within the context of the place's women reported staying before rough sleeping. Women are at risk of harm, exploitation, and violence whilst sofa surfing, in mixed hostels, anywhere where they do not have a safe home to call their own.

Services accessed by women

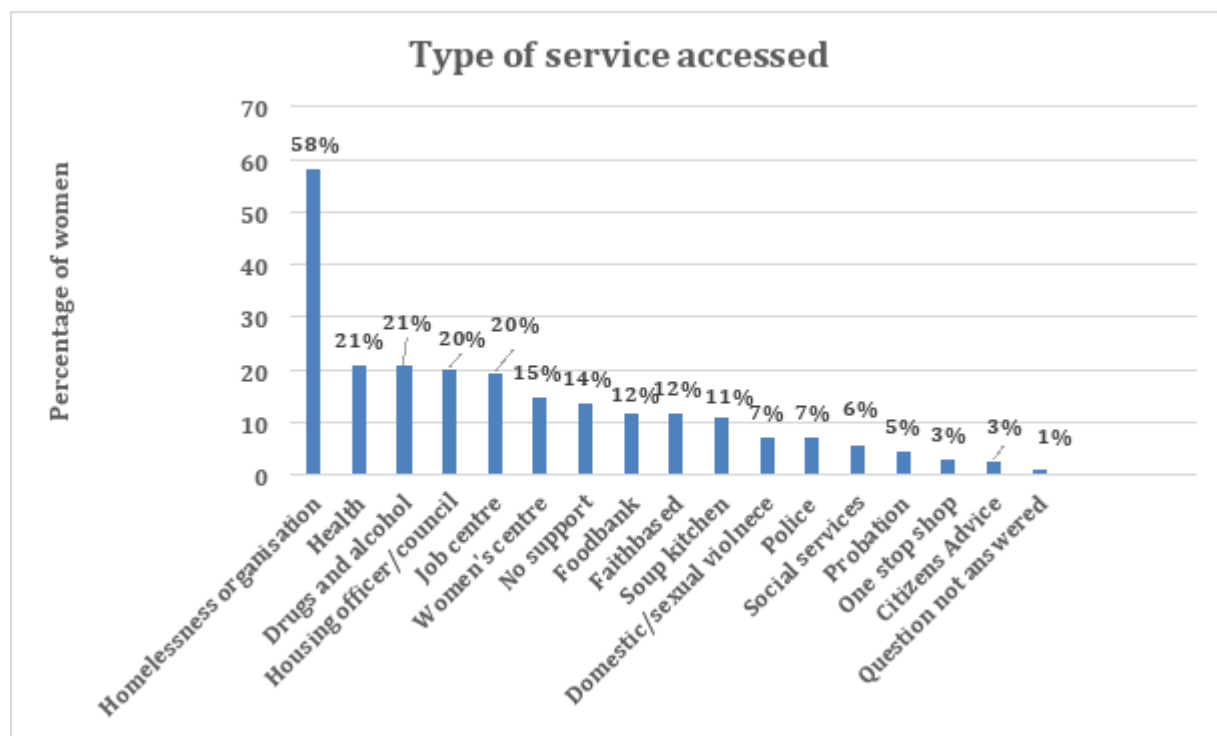
The respondents reported accessing various forms of services and organisations. Unsurprisingly, the type of services mentioned most frequently was that of homelessness organisations with 58% of the respondents saying they were accessing this type of service³⁹. The other forms of services that women reported accessing included:

- 21% of respondents accessing health services
- 21% accessing drugs and alcohol services
- 20% accessing the council housing department or a Housing Officer
- 20% accessing the job centre

³⁸ Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. 2018. *Women and Rough Sleeping: A Critical Review of Current Research and Methodology*. The University of York.

³⁹ Also, the majority of services who conducted the survey were homelessness services.

Chart 13.



Interestingly the other types of services were reported to be accessed by smaller numbers of the respondents indicating that there is work to do for services to improve their engagement with women who are rough sleeping including hidden rough sleeping. Only 7% of the respondents reported accessing domestic or sexual violence services and 15% reported accessing a women's centre.

In this study, data regarding the types of service that women felt they did require were not collected so it is not possible to establish whether women were accessing all the types of service they needed. However, comparing these findings with the evidence in other research regarding the prevalence of violence against women and girls (VAWG) amongst homelessness and rough sleeping women⁴⁰ and related support needs, indicates a potential gap in the numbers of women experiencing VAWG and the

⁴⁰ Bretherton, J. and Pleave, N. 2018. *Women and Rough Sleeping: A Critical Review of Current Research and Methodology*. The University of York.

numbers that are accessing services for those experiences.⁴¹ Potentially there could be an extension of the assertive outreach strategies employed by some specialist VAWG services to engage women experiencing rough sleeping. Increased partnership working between homeless services and other community support services could also improve onward referrals and support for women who are rough sleeping.

Women reported accessing up to eight different types of support or service, with two being the most frequent response from 25% of the respondents. The majority (64%) of the respondents reported accessing 1-3 types of service.

A further 14% of respondents (21 women) reported not accessing any services. Of those women, three reported sleeping rough ten nights or less in the last three months, nine for more than 30 nights, two for more than 60 nights and five reported sleeping rough every night in the last three months.⁴² This indicates there are some women sleeping rough regularly in London that report not accessing services.

⁴¹ It is also important to note that, understandably, women may not wish to discuss support for domestic or sexual violence and there is a possibility of under reporting.

⁴² One respondent was not asked the question and one respondent chose not to answer.

Women sleeping rough: exploring differences and similarities

This section of the report demonstrates some of the insights across key variables for women who reported differences in the extent of rough sleeping in the last three months. The longer women experience rough sleeping and homelessness, the longer they are at risk, and there is a potential for their situations and circumstances to become more complex over time, requiring more intensive support to enable them to recover, move on and find stability.

Consequently, exploring women’s circumstances through the lens of how often they have slept rough in the last three months was an important aspect of this project. The data were grouped into four, according to the number of nights women had reported sleeping rough over the last three months.

Group 1: Women sleeping rough ten nights or less in the last three months	
Number of women in this group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 44 women
Average age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 36 years, the lowest average across all four groups
Where women stayed last night	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 38.6% [17 women] slept rough / slept rough ‘other’ or at a bus or train station last night. • 61.4% [27 women] reported staying in other forms of housing situation last night. This is different to the other 3 groups in that the majority of women in the other groups report sleeping rough, sleeping rough other or at a bus or train station last night rather than having somewhere to stay for the night.
Services women access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women reported accessing an average of 2.8 types of service each, the highest across all four groups. • Services that women in this group reported accessing include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness organisations 56.8% [25 women] • Women’s Centre 34% [15 women] • Health services 25% [11 women] • Drugs and alcohol services 25% [11 women] • Housing Officer or council 25% [11 women]

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Centre 25% [11 women] • Domestic and/or sexual violence services 18.2% [8 women] • Faith based services 13.6% [6 women] • Social services 11.4% [5 women] • Soup kitchen 11.4% [5 women] • Police 11.4% [5 women] • Foodbank 6.8% [3 women] • 6.8% [3] women report not accessing any services. • One stop shop 4.5% [2 women] • Citizen's advice 2.3% [1 woman] • Probation 2.3% [1 woman]
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Group 2: Women sleeping rough 11 to 30 nights in the last three months	
Number of women in this group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 28 women
Average age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 43 years, the highest average across all groups.
Where women stayed last night	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority, 60.7% [17 women] reported they slept rough / slept rough other or at a bus or train station last night. • 39.3% [11 women] reported staying in another housing situation last night.
Services women access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women report accessing an average of 2.1 types of service each • Services that women in this group reported accessing include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness organisations 60.7% [17 women] • Drugs and alcohol services 28.6% [8 women] • Housing Officer or council 25% [7 women] • Foodbanks 17.9% [5 women] • Health services 14.3% [4 women] • Job Centre 10.7% [3 women] • Women's Centre 10.7% [3 women] • Soup kitchen 10.7% [3 women] • Faith based service 7.1% [2 women] • Police 7.1 % [2 women] • One stop shop 7.1% [2 women] • Probation 3.6% [1 woman] • Citizens advice 3.6% [1 woman] • Social services 0% [0 women] • No services 0% [0 women] • Domestic/sexual violence services 0% [0 women]

Group 3: Women sleeping rough more than 30 nights in the last three months	
Number of women in this group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 34 women
Average age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 41 years - the same as group four and the same as the overall average across the total number of respondents.
Where women stayed last night	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 61.8% [21 women] reported they slept rough / slept rough other or in a bus or train station last night. • 38.2% [13 women] reported they stayed in another housing situation last night.
Services women access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women reported accessing an average of 1.7 types of service each, the lowest average across all four groups. • Most common services that women in this group reported accessing include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness organisations 44% [15 women] • Not accessing any services 26.5% [9 women], more women in this group report not accessing any services than any other group, closely followed by group four where seven women also reported not accessing any services. • Health services 20.6% [7 women] • Faith-based organisations 17.7% [6 women] • Soup kitchen 17.7% [6 women] • Foodbanks 11.8% [4 women] • Job Centre 11.8% [4 women] • Drugs and alcohol 11.8% [4 women] • Housing Officer 8.8% [3 women] • Social services 5.9% [2 women] • Women's centres 5.9% [2 women] • Domestic or sexual violence service 2.9% [1 woman] • Police 2.9% [1 woman] • Probation 2.9% [1 woman] • Citizens Advice 0% [0 women] • One stop shop 0% [0 women]

Group 4: Women sleeping rough between 60 and every night in the last three months	
Number of women in this group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 35 women
Average age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 41 years - the same as group three and the same as the overall average across the total number of respondents.
Where women stayed last night	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% [28 women] reported they slept rough / slept rough other or in a bus or train station last night – the largest proportion from all four groups.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20% [7 women] reported they stayed in another housing situation last night.
Services women accessed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women report accessing an average of 2.2 services each • Services that women in this group report accessing include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness organisations 68.6% [24 women] • Job Centre 25.7% [9 women] • Drugs and alcohol 22.9% [8 women] • No services 20% [7 women] • Health services 20% [7 women] • Housing Officer or council 14.3% [5 women] • Probation 11.4% [4 women] • Faith based services 8.6% [3 women] • Soup kitchen 8.6% [3 women] • Foodbank 8.6% [3 women] • Women's centres 5.7% [2 women] • Police 5.7% [2 women] • Domestic or sexual violence service 2.9% [1 woman] • Social Services 2.9% [1 woman] • Citizens Advice 2.9% [1 woman] • One stop shop 2.9% [1 woman]

Key differences noted in these groups:

Age of women

- The average age differed across the groups. The average age of women that reported sleeping rough less than ten nights in the last three months was lower than the other groups (36 years). A higher average age (43 years) was noted amongst the group of women that reported sleeping rough between 11 and 30 nights in the last three months.

Where women stayed last night

- A difference in where women reported staying last night was noted amongst the groups. In group 1, the majority (61.4%) reported that they had stayed in a housing situation last night, rather than sleeping rough, with 38.6% reporting that they had slept rough/slept rough other or at a bus or train station last night.

For groups 2, 3 and 4, the women sleeping rough for more than ten nights in the last three months, the majority reported that they slept rough, slept rough other or at a bus or train station last night rather than having anywhere to stay.

It is important that those women who oscillate between rough sleeping and having anywhere to stay are taken seriously and are counted in rough sleeping strategies and verified so that they can have their experiences documented and can access relevant support systems.

Services women access

- Across all groups, the most common service that women reported engaging with is homelessness services. Health services, drugs and alcohol services, and the job centre also feature in the services accessed across all groups. However, beyond that some important differences were noted.
- More women in group 1 report that they engaged with women's centres than the other groups, with 34% [15] of women in group one reporting that they engaged with a women's centre, compared to 10.7% [3] of women in group two, 5.9% [2] of women in group three and 5.7% [2] of women in group four.
- More women in group 1, women reported accessing domestic/sexual violence services than groups 2, 3 and 4 indicating that there is more work to do to engage women who sleep rough more frequently who might require this type of service.
- Women in group 1 reported accessing an average of 2.7 services each, a higher average than women in groups 2,3 and 4 who reported sleeping rough more frequently in the three months period.
- Women sleeping rough for more than 30 nights in the last 3 months (Group 3) reported engaging with the fewest services, an average of 1.7 each.
- In groups 3 and 4, women sleeping rough between 30, 60 and every night in the last three months, there were 16 women (out of a total of 21) that reported not

accessing services. This compares to 3 women in group 1 and no women in group 2 reporting that they do not access any services.⁴³

⁴³ One woman preferred not to answer, and another was not asked the question.

Reflections from practitioners

This section of the report provides a snapshot overview of feedback provided by practitioners and services conducting the survey with women. It is important to note that a comprehensive process evaluation of the design, implementation and delivery of the women's rough sleeping census was outside the scope of this project. To offer an opportunity for the staff teams and services involved in conducting the surveys a chance to feedback following the data collection period, the core team designed a small number of questions to be emailed out to projects. Data were not systematically collected; respondents were a self-selecting sample. Therefore, the robustness of the data is limited, and findings are for illustration purposes only and cannot be generalised.

Future work on a women's census would welcome a systematic approach to gathering qualitative data from inception, survey design, communication and cascade of guidance and training, through to data collection and collation to establish findings and learning about the end-to-end process.

Feedback was provided by practitioners from 10 boroughs involved in conducting the survey. Some responded to the direct questions asked by the core team, with others providing generic feedback. Key themes include the strengths and value of the survey, any challenges and barriers experienced in the process and some practitioner suggestions on potential improvements if the census was repeated in future. Feedback was collated by the core team and quote attributions have been removed to protect anonymity.

Strengths and value

Feedback received demonstrated overall that the practitioners considered the census as a valuable project to do and to be a part of. Specific strengths of the census, the implementation and the data collection process included:

The nature of the survey

Positive feedback was provided about the survey design and question selection, and the speed with which it could be completed:

“Questions asked did cover key issues relating to women”

‘Survey was quick and appropriated by the rough sleeping client’

Several women that completed the survey said ‘thank you’ in the space provided after they had taken part with one woman acknowledging the work being undertaken to try and help women experiencing rough sleeping:

‘Thank you for trying to make a difference for people in need!’

Training and guidance

Some practitioners supported the overall rationale and development of the project and commented positively about the training and guidance:

‘In all, I think it’s a great idea, the methodology behind it and the webinar training around it were great.’

Another provided feedback about the content of the training noting that it was:

“Helpful to have reminders from time to time about vulnerabilities and other key points of minority groups within the general rough sleeper population.”

Incentives for women

Valuing women's time through the voucher incentives was noted as an important aspect: *"I don't think we would have got the 4 surveys without an incentive".*

And another reported that they: *'Appreciated the time it took of the survey and the 5 pounds gift.'*

Engaging with women not seen before

For some practitioners, the census methodology had enabled them to engage with women during the daytime outreach shifts in places they might not have looked before. One reported that they were:

'Surprised the number of coffee shops and libraries are a good hotspot source.'

This is contrasted in the next section with practitioners from another borough reporting a different experience.

Gaining helpful insights into women's circumstances

Some practitioners commented in their feedback that the census had been a useful exercise to gain insights into women's experiences that weren't necessarily captured by the census survey tool. The census presented an opportunity to have discussions with women about their circumstances:

'Of those that did engage, they were happy to talk and tended to actually offer a lot more than was asked, and none who did it said there were too many questions...'

This feedback is contrasted in the challenges and barriers section as not all outreach team or practitioners had the same experience.

In terms of topics raised during discussion with women whilst completing the survey, the issue of women sleeping rough intermittently even when they do have a bed space became apparent. Reasons for this included women not feeling safe in mixed hostels:

'Many women are rough sleeping as a result of not feeling safe in their temporary accommodation/ hostel especially in the case of mixed hostels.'

'Most of the women we saw in the shift that I did already had accommodation but were out begging / rough sleeping for various issues so it would appear that our current long term housing options are not necessarily working for them and would be something to think about long term for commissioning.'

A platform for future work

Other respondents were supportive of the census as an ongoing event and would participate again in the future:

'I found taking part in the census this year really interesting and is definitely something [borough] wants to remain involved with moving forward.'

This demonstrates the value of replicating the census to explore shifts and changes in the characteristics and circumstances of women rough sleeping in the future and to be better able to respond and support them appropriately.

Challenges and barriers

Some of the main challenges and barriers reported by professionals were regarding the process of conducting the survey, including the practicalities of preparing for the task, the availability and capacity of practitioners to carry out the survey within their role, identifying and approaching women, and being able to accurately represent the women known to be sleeping rough in the figures recorded. Additionally, some reported the limitations in the scope of the project in effectively capturing and demonstrating a comprehensive picture of women's rough sleeping circumstances.

Lead in time and availability of practitioners

One respondent commented that they felt the *"Timing of the event could be better...there wasn't enough lead in time, many people were still taking summer holidays in the lead up which affected planning and training"*

Another reported that they were limited in what their service could achieve within the planned time frame as a train strike was called on the day of their planned survey activity.

A third practitioner noted that their service could only cover a limited geographical area *"due to capacity of staff and volunteers"*

Identifying and approaching women

Challenges were acknowledged with identifying and approaching women who practitioners thought may be rough sleeping. This is illustrated by one respondent who commented:

"...asking strangers on the street during the day if they are rough sleeping vs talking to strangers clearly rough sleeping bedded down at night are two really different things...We had a lot of people thinking we were fundraising or something"

Another respondent from a different borough echoed these comments, which contrasts what others had said in the above about the census methodology being helpful to find women in places they had not looked previously. This practitioner commented that it was *"really difficult to find targeted, known women during the day."*

The boroughs and outreach teams had clearly had different experiences in their engagement with women using this census methodology.

Although the survey and the guidance were designed to include some standardised text and tips to help practitioners introduce the survey to women they meet, the challenges of identifying and approaching women are valid and require sensitivity as well as assertive outreach and engagement skills. In future, more consideration of this should be provided in the pre census processes, guidance, and communications to help those conducting the surveys to feel more confident and to help standardise the process across areas.

Encouraging a positive survey response rate

Practitioners from three separate boroughs reported challenges in successfully engaging women to complete the survey:

“The rough sleepers refused to engage, as did a clearly homeless woman in the library”.

“A lot of people who ignored us or said they weren't interested before we could open our mouths”.

The survey is entirely voluntary and so women can choose whether they consent to participate or not, which is a vital element of research ethics and ensures women have agency of their actions and personal information. Documenting women who choose not to complete the survey raises ethical concerns and runs the risk of double counting individuals. However, this can be frustrating for practitioners who come into contact with women who are rough sleeping yet are not necessarily reflected in the census figures, as they are not able to accurately document the reality of numbers of women seen or engaged with as rough sleepers.

In contrast to a practitioner who said the length of the survey was not a barrier to engagement, another commented that the number of questions within the survey was

reportedly deemed too much by one woman participant: *“she said as the first page only had three questions and then changed to many more, she felt misled and would not have chosen to complete it if she had seen the full extent of the questions”*.

This clearly demonstrates the importance of telling women upfront in the introduction how many questions there are and how long the survey will take to complete so that each woman can make an informed decision before commencing the survey. This information was contained in the survey guidance, and in the survey introduction but illustrates how there is potential variability in how the survey is conducted.

Methods not capturing the real picture

Practitioners from some boroughs noted that they felt they had been unable to capture the realities of the number of women rough sleeping in the area that they would normally interact with in the course of their work. This indicates that this census methodology, is likely to have underrepresented the total number of women experiencing rough sleeping.⁴⁴

A practitioner from an outreach organisation highlighted they may only see some women every couple of weeks, therefore, although this methodology was deliberately expanded to cover 5 days, this is still a time limited snapshot that would not capture all the women who the outreach teams were aware of who were rough sleeping.

In contrast to what was noted in the strengths section above, another practitioner from an outreach team noted that in the census data collection week there weren't any women to be found: *“There were no females in waiting rooms, McDonalds or other places of*

⁴⁴ Higher numbers of women experiencing rough sleeping were recorded using this census survey methodology than the most recent government snapshot in autumn 2021, however, caution is advised in directly comparing the figures documented using two separate approaches as they are different. It is more robust to use this methodology as a starting point and then to repeat it to explore changes over time.

safety which was a surprise." Outreach teams clearly had a variety of experiences using these methods.

There was also critique of the scope of the census at capturing accurate figures of rough sleeping women: *"It will always fall way short on the actual numbers for a variety of reasons, which is a shame as it does not capture the extent of the issue of female RS'ing [rough sleeping], which is what we would all like to address more effectively."*

This illustrates the value of incorporating multiple data points and encouraging different sectors to get involved in the work to evidence women's rough sleeping.

Challenges of services not effectively recognising women's experiences of rough sleeping, so women remain out of official rough sleeping figures, were also noted. One respondent commented on, *"services' inability to recognise sofa surfing/cuckooing as a form of homelessness"* which means women in these situations may not have the opportunity to complete the survey.

Suggested improvements for the future

There were a number of suggestions made by practitioners and others conducting the surveys about what they feel would improve future surveys. These suggestions centred around how to better value women's involvement, additional questions to include, ways to draw on local knowledge, and practicalities about when and how to carry out the survey.

Suggested questions to include

There were a number of suggestions made by practitioners about additional questions to include in future surveys, particularly around exploring women's triggers for homelessness, women's own perception of their safety, what support would most help their circumstances and their patterns and routines:

"I would add a question surrounding cuckooing and whether someone else had a role in the woman ending up homeless e.g., domestic abuse."

"When was the last time you stayed/slept somewhere you did not feel safe": a lot of women will sex work at night to avoid sleeping on the street or stay with an abusive ex/partner to avoid sleeping on the street and to have a shower, to be warm or to get some food."

"I think ... questions about what they think about outreach services and how we may provide a better service for women."

"Where they spend time during the day."

When considering changes to the numbers or types of questions to incorporate it is important that the survey is as short as possible to encourage a positive response rate, and to only collect necessary information for the specific research aim. A survey or census cannot cover everything. Additional aspects of interest or other research aims, or questions can be incorporated into other separate research projects using different methods. Qualitative research methods would help to capture in depth data on women's experiences and rough sleeping trajectories in separate studies.

Local knowledge and practice

The importance of having people conduct the survey that have good knowledge of the area was noted in the borough feedback as this was reported to assist in finding women that are sleeping rough but not necessarily on the streets: *"local knowledge of the hotspots is valued information."*

Another suggested that future data collection methodologies have greater flexibility, enabling boroughs to carry out the survey based on *“their boroughs needs / makeup (e.g., day shift only, throughout the week only, or a combination of both)?”*

This suggestion would make the process of the census more relevant to each borough or area and might encourage greater service participation, but consideration would need to be given to ensuring some aspects of standardisation across the research for quality and robustness of data.

When to carry out the census

Suggestions about the optimal timing of the census and the length of the data collection window were also provided:

“If doing it again, it would be better to have it perhaps in April/May time, as it was also too close to the big street count, so there is enough time to properly plan and send out guidance in advance.”

Conducting the census at a similar timeframe to the existing street count was purposeful so the conditions of the census were similar to the street count, despite not being a particularly comparable process. Again, information about the rationale and the methodological approach is important to communicate to those conducting the surveys so that key messages are heard effectively.

Although the methodology was designed for outreach teams to have the opportunity to undertake multiple shifts across the week, few were able to do this, but the value in doing so was apparent from this practitioner:

'I do think though for the outreach teams in our boroughs, it would have generated better results though if we had captured throughout the week though, instead of doing daytime shifts that yielded little.'

One respondent suggested that the survey could be conducted over *"a longer period"* and another said that they *"would extend the period of time able to complete the survey to two weeks."*

Again, based on the knowledge and experience of the services conducting the surveys, this suggests that the numbers of women could be more accurately reflected if the data collection window is widened even further to capture the patterns of women rough sleeping that they engage with in their work.

Female only services

Additional suggestions from women who completed the survey included more female only services for women experiencing rough sleeping:

'The suggestion from the woman being surveyed is that it's beneficial to have more female specific centres in different parts of the borough'

'The woman being surveyed suggested that more female only hostels in the borough would benefit female rough sleepers'

Conclusions

This was an ambitious project which was the first of its kind in England, much welcomed by many researchers, practitioners, and advocates that have been working on the topic of women's homelessness and rough sleeping for many years.

Several studies in recent years have recommended changes and improvement to the way that women's experience of rough sleeping is understood and documented to provide a more accurate picture of the nature and scale of the issue so that effective solutions can be found. The findings from this project support a significant forward step in helping to ensure that women and their specific experiences of rough sleeping are recognised and taken seriously.

The findings provide valuable insights about women's circumstances of rough sleeping in London that have not been captured on this scale using this methodology before.

Key findings:

- 154 women participated in the survey, as having slept rough in London in the last three months. More women were seen by those conducting outreach, who chose not to participate in the census.
- Women report a wide variety of places where they are sleeping rough, and some places that women were found are broader than the current government definition which has been shown to not be appropriate at incorporating the entirety of women's rough sleeping experiences.
- The current rough sleeping definition does not fully capture women's experiences of sleeping rough by including a greater awareness of less easily observable forms of rough sleeping. Women's experiences of rough sleeping are not necessarily verified and documented to provide accurate statistics.
- Some outreach services reported that they surveyed women using this census methodology that they would not normally engage with during their usual

outreach shifts, contrasted with others that reported not seeing some women known to be rough sleeping.

- There are important differences to note in women's circumstances and the services they are accessing. Some women responding to this census who have slept rough regularly in London in the last three months that report not accessing services.
- The majority of, but not all, women responding to this survey who reported sleeping rough in London are accessing homelessness services.
- A small proportion of the women reporting they sleep rough in London report accessing women's centres, domestic and sexual violence services, health services, and drugs and alcohol services despite the evidence of these experiences being common for women who sleep rough.
- To some extent the census methodology has been successful in shining a light on women who are rough sleeping in areas less common to outreach services and some that might not otherwise be counted or verified in other rough sleeping methodologies that take a narrower definition and focus.
- This pilot methodology, using multiple data points, and a broader definition of rough sleeping that fits women's circumstances, needs to be used more regularly to continue to build evidence about women's rough sleeping patterns and circumstances that can be compared over time to demonstrate shifts and trends.

These findings will not be surprising or necessarily provide new information to those working in front line services with women who are rough sleeping. However, this project forms part of an important evidence base which allows us to move from services holding intelligence about the women they work with to providing data and evidence upon which future decisions about how to effectively support women can be made.

This pan London women's rough sleeping census is an important stepping stone to developing a standardised and cohesive approach to researching women's experiences

of rough sleeping in London in the future and could potentially be conducted on a national scale. The findings and learning from this project provide an excellent platform for work which has already been put into action by ONS who are funding research to develop a national women's rough sleeping census.

Rough sleeping is not currently defined in a way that incorporates how women experience rough sleeping. The findings from this census demonstrate that services, practitioners, and women still interpret this in different ways which impacts on the accuracy of the data gathered. More work is required here to develop a definition that is meaningful and relevant to women's experiences.

This methods piloted in this study seem promising for capturing women's specific experiences of rough sleeping. However, the methods will need further testing and comparison with other methodologies and results to establish a strong evidence base. The majority of the data in this census came from street outreach teams and so additional efforts and strategies to encourage the use of multiple data points such as administrative data from various sources alongside survey data are still needed. This requires a shared approach, a broad understanding of the value of using administrative data and willingness to participate from a broad range of sectors.

As the survey needed to be short and quick to complete, it was not possible to include a long list of variables which would have provided even more comprehensive data about women's circumstances. As is common in research, this study also raises many questions about what is still unknown about this population of women, which will be important to explore in the future research.

Recommendations

Recommendations for policy

- Recognise that specific methods, tools, and processes are required to understand and establish a more accurate picture of how women experience rough sleeping, as their experiences differ from men.
- End the assumption that men's rough sleeping is the norm and women's experiences are viewed as 'other'. Women's lived experiences cannot be incorporated into current homeless systems and strategies by being seen as an 'add on'. The current system is not fit for purpose for collating good quality data about women.
- Use the findings and learning from this study to inform the design of national standardised strategies and methods for capturing good quality data on women's rough sleeping across England.
- Develop a definition of rough sleeping that is appropriate for how women experience this so that they can have their circumstances documented in a way that is meaningful to them and be represented in official statistics.
- Commissioners to review and evaluate the design of outreach teams, to enable and encourage greater flexibility in the times, places and regularity of sessions conducted to reach and engage more women.
- Make changes to the rough sleeping verification guidelines and process so that women experiencing rough sleeping including hidden rough sleeping can be counted in official figures and women are not precluded from accessing support in circumstances where they are not necessarily bedding down on the street.

Recommendations for services leading the census programme delivery

- Improving the standardisation of how women experiencing rough sleeping are identified, approached, and offered an opportunity to participate in the census is important. The survey tool and accompanying guidance and training will likely require additional specific instructions about operating from a shared understanding of rough sleeping, and how and where to identify women.
- Encourage broader participation from other sectors in disseminating the survey amongst women who are rough sleeping including the organisations that are known to have contact with this group of women such as specialist VAWG services, substance use services, mental and physical health services.
- Further refine the approach to collecting data from multiple sources by encouraging wider sector services to utilise the survey in their work where possible.
- Potentially secure additional resource to help community support organisations to take part in the data collection.
- Standardise the tools that are used to collect administrative data to aid analysis.

Recommendations for services supporting women

- All services working with women rough sleeping and at risk of rough sleeping to engage in the census and offer the opportunity to women to participate in the survey to improve the accuracy of the data gathered.
- Develop improved partnership working between the homelessness sector, outreach teams and other community support services so that women that are identified on street outreach as rough sleeping or hidden rough sleeping can be referred into the support they need.
- Women's sector services, health services, drugs and alcohol support services and community services designed to support women should attempt to improve how

they engage with women who experience rough sleeping, potentially by designing assertive outreach strategies into their service delivery model.

- Review strategies and processes used by street outreach teams, to incorporate greater flexibility in places visited and times of sessions to maximise the possibilities to find women who are not easily visible.

Recommendations for evidence and measurement

- Retain a core set of survey questions with the possibility to add extra questions sets for different purposes. This would enhance the standardisation of core survey data collected rather than a dilution of original questions and variables.
- Consider incorporating a variable into the survey that explores reasons for women's entry into rough sleeping using predetermined standardised fields taken from the existing evidence regarding women's homelessness (for example, VAWG and other forms of disadvantage including poverty, mental ill-health, experience of substance misuse).
- Develop a strategy for collating and analysing data on women's rough sleeping that does not require attempting to accommodate women's information within a system that is designed for understanding men's rough sleeping and is not effective at recognising women's specific experiences.
- If the women's rough sleeping census is conducted again, resource should be made available to conduct a process evaluation of the setup, the operation, including the guidance and training, the communication with sectors, and the dissemination of the surveys and data collection process. This would allow the strengths, challenges, and learning from the breadth and depth of the process to be thoroughly evaluated to strengthen the evidence available.
- Using the findings from this census, further clarify a definition of rough sleeping that is relevant to women's circumstances that can then be used in policy and

practice to better understand and document women's broader experiences of rough sleeping than the current government definition.

- Undertake additional analysis of the women's census data alongside CHAIN data using detailed borough breakdown to explore potential comparability of data.
- Undertake qualitative research with women to better understand their experiences of what rough sleeping means to them, and what it incorporates, to inform the development of a meaningful definition that is relevant to women's lived experience.
- Re-clarify the aims of the census to align the variables required to answer specific research questions.
- Recognise that the census survey data is particularly specific on establishing the number and characteristics of rough sleeping women. Use separate, additional, or alternative research methods to answer broader research questions about rough sleeping women's wider circumstances.
- Evaluation of the survey tool as well as the implementation process and data collection process are equally important for improving the quality of data collected. Gathering quality, robust research data from those implementing and conducting the survey is key to establishing learning and strong recommendations for improvement. Practitioners have a wealth of knowledge and hearing directly from them about how they would find, identify, and hear from women is essential.

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Appendices

Appendix One: Methodology

In this collaborative study, the census core team and PraxisCollab led on different activities to bring the project to fruition.

PraxisCollab:

- Ensured the work builds on existing evidence and literature in this area
- Designed practical and useable research survey tool to collect standardised data from women using appropriate questions
- Supported aspects of the guidance and training for practitioners to conduct the data collection
- Provided trouble shooting support to the census core team regarding data collection queries
- Collated, cleaned, and analysed survey data
- Produced a report with findings and practical recommendations

The census core team:

- Collaborated on designing the research tools
- Led the design and dissemination of tools, guidance, and training amongst partner agencies across London boroughs
- Led on data collection and data collation with individual boroughs
- Acted as a single point of contact for data collection queries from borough leads

Research activities:

Ensuring this work builds on existing evidence

To ensure that this census builds on existing evidence, PraxisCollab conducted a rapid review of existing evidence. This included a selection of reports published within the last five years on women's homelessness and rough sleeping, recent rough sleeping surveys, and reports by the GLA and the government on the health outcomes of homeless populations.

Design of survey tool

PraxisCollab reviewed validated and bespoke surveys to produce a table of potential variables and measures alongside the relevant sources from which the core team selected the priority variables to be tested through this pilot.

The core team then selected the priority variables to include in the survey. A maximum of ten questions were selected to ensure data could be gathered quickly and with minimal burden on women experiencing rough sleeping.

Variables selected include:

- Age on last birthday
- Ethnicity
- Sex and gender identity⁴⁵
- The location each woman slept the previous night
- Number of nights rough sleeping in the last 3 months
- The type of accommodation that was last used before sleeping rough
- What services women access

To lower the likelihood of double counting women, the survey also included a question to determine if women have been included in this survey through other means, either at a service or from any other person asking them the same questions within the last few days.⁴⁶

The table on the next page demonstrates the variables and measures selected with their source.

⁴⁵ As the researchers commissioned to advise on the methodology, PraxisCollab suggested that the most reliable and robust way to gather these data is to follow the ONS approach after ONS conducted a broad consultation to achieve specificity of data across these variables in the ONS general population census.

⁴⁶ This will limit the chances of double counting women but would not entirely rule out the possibility that women may be included in the survey more than once or included in other strands of activity with services.

Survey Questions

Variable	Question	Response options	Source
Age	<i>How old were you on your last birthday?</i>	Open text response [group ages in analysis phase] Prefer not to answer Question not asked	Bespoke question from Bretherton and Pleace 2021.
Ethnicity	<i>How would you describe your ethnicity?</i>	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 White – Roma Gypsy Romany Irish Traveller Arab Other – plus open box text Question not answered Question not asked	CHAIN

Variable	Question	Response options	Source
Sex	<i>What is your sex?</i>	Male/ Female / Prefer not to say Question not asked Introduce that there will be a question on gender identity next.	ONS census Used to avoid conflating gender and sex.
Gender Identity	<i>Is your gender the same as the sex you were registered at birth?"</i> <i>"If you answer 'No' please enter the term to describe your gender in the space provided.</i>	Yes / No / Prefer not to answer Provide space for people to write the term to describe their gender if they answered 'no' above. Question not asked	ONS census Used to avoid conflation of gender and sex.
Rough sleeping	<i>When did you last sleep rough?</i>	Last night/In the last week/last month/last 3 months. Question not answered Question not asked	Bespoke question to screen women as eligible to take part.
Rough sleeping frequency	<i>How many nights have you slept rough in the last 3 months?</i>	1 night 2-5 nights 6-10 nights 11-20 nights 21- 30 nights Questioned not answered Question not asked	MHCLG Survey 2020

Variable	Question	Response options	Source
Recent housing/homelessness situation	<i>Where did you stay last night?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Here in this service • Slept rough on the street • Homelessness service (hostel/supported housing) • B&B/Apartment hotel/temporary accommodation • Housed/private or social rented • With a friend • Other – plus open text box • At a bus or train station • With a relative <p>Question not answered Question not asked</p>	Bretherton and Pleace survey 2021
Previous housing situation	<i>Where were you staying most recently before sleeping rough?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sofa surfing • Private rented sector housing • Hostel (with no support) • Prison • Social rented housing • Emergency accommodation • Home owned by respondent/close family/ partner • Supported housing • Caravan or squat • Hospital • Other temporary accommodation by council • Other – open text box <p>Question not answered Question not asked</p>	MHCLG survey 2020

Variable	Question	Response options	Source
Women's support network	Which services are you currently accessing?	Homelessness organisations Housing Officer or council one-stop shop Food bank Health professional Job Centre Plus Staff Drug or alcohol treatment worker Soup Run Housing association Police Probation Officer Social Worker Citizen's Advice Service Prison Officer Religious representative Education Other services Women's centre/service (added) Domestic or sexual violence support service (added) Other services None <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question not answered • Question not asked 	MHCLG survey 2020
Question to minimise double counting.	<i>Has someone at this service or another service already asked you these same questions – this week/in the last few days?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes/No/Don't know • Question not answered • Question not asked 	Bretherton and Pleace survey 2021.

Implementation of tools and capacity building

PraxisCollab fed into the development of guidance and training for practitioners to learn about the survey before commencing data collection.

The census core team led the design and delivery of guidance and training for people involved in the collection of data. The training included:

- An overview, background context of the need for the census
- Practical advice about how to conduct the census and how to collect standardised data across sites
- Why women's homelessness looks different to men's including the impacts and additional risks
- A brief overview of the other issues women experiencing homelessness are likely to also be affected by including mental ill health, VAWG, substance use.
- Impact of trauma on clients and the staff who support them, including framework for dealing with any issues that arise on shift, guidance on keeping yourself safe emotionally and a debrief process at the end of the shift.
- Sharing safe working practices – agreeing a safe word, when to not approach people etc.
- Signposting to training and resources if people want to find out more.

PraxisCollab provided troubleshooting support about data collection and the census core team acted as a single point of contact to help boroughs collect standardised data to support meaningful and robust findings and allow for future replication of the methods.

Following the learning session, the census core team disseminated the tools along with the guidance to the relevant boroughs to use for the data collection period. Sixty-four individuals attended the training session from homelessness, VAWG, drugs and alcohol, health, and migrant and legal services.

A survey of women rough sleeping

A rough sleeping census took place between 3rd and 7th of October 2022. As women are evidenced to avoid rough sleeping in public space due to the inherent and specific risks they face to their personal safety, those collecting data explored other areas that women may sleep rough or spend the daytime. These included:

- Train/tube stations
- Libraries
- McDonald's (including toilets)
- Police stations
- A&E waiting rooms
- Soup kitchens/churches
- Begging spots
- Homeless health services (homelessness GP services, homelessness nurse, sexual health clinics, mental health drop in, substance use drop in)

The survey was intended to be conducted over 5 days in one week to address the challenges with short-term one-off rough sleeping counts which have been shown to underrepresent the numbers of people sleeping rough. Services were requested to use the survey over the five days with women that accessed their projects, and outreach teams were requested to conduct multiple outreach shifts to incorporate more women into the survey. In practice, the majority of the surveys were conducted by outreach teams that mostly conducted one shift over the five-day period. In total 38 outreach teams were conducted by 28 outreach teams. The length and breadth of the data collection opportunity was not fully utilised as was originally hoped.

All of those undertaking this activity received the same information and guidance so that there was some level of standardisation in how women who were rough sleeping

could be surveyed as well as shared understanding about the places to look for women when on outreach.

Those conducting the outreach of women who were rough sleeping used a Microsoft Forms survey disseminated using phones and tablets to capture only necessary information. Those conducting the count explained to each woman the purpose of the activity including that there would be no identifying questions, that answers would be completely anonymous, and that participation was entirely voluntary. Participants surveyed during an outreach session were offered a £5 supermarket voucher for their time. To ensure robust and standardised data collection, the surveys were designed to be as brief and as non-intrusive as possible, capturing only necessary information.

Outreach

The census was conducted by staff from outreach services with the support of some volunteers. All outreach sessions were done in pairs. Where volunteers were being used, each volunteer was paired with a professional from the outreach service. Male outreach workers/volunteers were paired with a female outreach worker or volunteer. All workers and volunteers taking part in the census received the gender informed outreach training session and guidance prior to undertaking a shift.

Those undertaking the count also carried information packs that were borough specific. These information packs generally included:

- Maps to the local day Centre/advice service
- Streetlink self-referral information
- Local Housing Options department information
- Useful numbers - National Domestic Abuse helpline, Samaritans, Police non-emergency, NHS 111
- Immigration advice service information
- Welfare benefits contact information

£5 supermarket vouchers were also distributed by the outreach teams conducting the surveys as a thank you to women for taking the time to participate.

Efforts were made to standardise the outreach sessions as much as possible in terms of hours, times, and number of sessions across the data collection period by asking outreach teams to do one daytime outreach shift across the 5 days. If they wanted to do more, this was to be recorded. In practice, each borough conducted outreach that was relevant to their locality and dependent upon resourcing. As such, the number of sessions conducted varied according to locality which affected the amount of data collected.⁴⁷

Services included in the data collection

The Microsoft Forms survey was disseminated by the core census team to relevant services that provide support to homeless women and those who are rough sleeping or at immediate risk of rough sleeping, as well as services that women are known to access frequently to support with them with their circumstances related to homelessness. Within the limited scale and scope of this project, parameters were set regarding the types of organisations to invite to participate in the survey. These included those who were most likely to engage with women who are rough sleeping and include:

- Homelessness services including day services and outreach services
- Women's specialist homelessness drop-in services.
- VAWG services, drop ins, outreach, women's services
- Drugs and alcohol services
- Services specialising in supporting women experiencing multiple disadvantage
- Healthcare services that work specifically with the homeless and rough sleeping population
- Housing options in local authorities
- Migrant support services

⁴⁷ Please see appendix two where the details of the outreach sessions in each borough are documented.

- Voluntary community organisations

Additional separate data sources

In addition to conducting the count on outreach and within services that women may access, attempts were also made to collect data about the numbers of women rough sleeping from:

- Streetlink - a response was provided using a template designed by the core team, reporting that 140 women had been referred over the data collection period.⁴⁸
- Local authority Housing Options services – a response was provided by Camden Housing Options team using a template designed by the core team, to report that four women had been identified within the data collection period as having nowhere to go.⁴⁹
- Probation/prisons about the numbers of homeless women being released into the community with nowhere to go – no data was provided from prisons.⁵⁰

Data collation and analysis

There was a range of data available for analysis regarding women who are rough sleeping or at immediate risk of rough sleeping including:

- Number of women that completed the survey
- Demographics and recent rough sleeping circumstances of women that completed the survey
- Feedback from ten boroughs about the process of conducting the survey

⁴⁸ There is no way to tell if the women referred are the same or different to those identified through the survey in terms of whether women were double counted.

⁴⁹ There is no way to tell whether the women identified here are the same or different to those who completed the survey. More boroughs sent the templates back but did not report seeing any women so there was no more data available.

⁵⁰ One template was returned but contained no data about women.

Definitions

The purpose of this census is to strengthen the evidence about the extent and the experiences of women who rough sleep and advocate for improved support and provision to improve outcomes for women. The methodology has been designed to support future research and act as a blueprint for other researchers to build on.

To ensure that the results are as reliable as possible and to help these methods be replicated in the future, it is important to explicitly define the terms and the parameters to this research.

Rough sleeping

For the purposes of rough sleeping counts, the government⁵¹ define rough sleeping 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 street, 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, which are makeshift shelters often comprised of cardboard boxes).⁵²

However, as Bretherton and Pleace⁵³ note, this definition results in women being underrepresented in the official rough sleeping statistics because women actively avoid bedding down in a public space when rough sleeping due to the inherent risks to their physical safety, and often avoid homeless services due to them historically being predominantly male dominated services. A definition of rough sleeping that is women

⁵¹ Public Health England. 2020. *Guidance. Health Matters: Rough sleeping*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-rough-sleeping/health-matters-rough-sleeping>

⁵²Public Health England. 2020. *Guidance. Health Matters: Rough sleeping*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-rough-sleeping/health-matters-rough-sleeping>

⁵³ J., Bretherton, and N., Pleace. 2021. *Women's Homelessness in Camden: Improving Data Strategy and Outcomes*. The University of York.

specific is not in existence, although some developments could be made through this or other research in the future.

Consequently, for the purposes of this research, to acknowledge the way that women experience rough sleeping and more accurately capture the extent and picture of their circumstances women have been included as rough sleeping or hidden rough sleeping if they met the definition noted above. In addition, to the defined circumstances, the professionals who conducted the outreach used their professional expertise and judgment to help identify women who were rough sleeping. Women's circumstances are not always clear, and professionals had to be sensitive and avoid being overly intrusive. Women that were invited to participate in the survey were provided with the broader definition of rough sleeping for this research. This was explained to women who completed the survey and included having nowhere to go at night, sleeping outside or in other places that could be considered rough sleeping such as in doorways or a stairwells, public spaces and restaurants that are open late, buses and train stations for example.⁵⁴

Each outreach session and organisational strategy and process of supporting women is different. Therefore, professionals were advised by the core team to use their expertise to have appropriate conversations with women. Those collecting data were advised to explain the purpose of the rough sleeping count and then ask women if they wanted to participate if rough sleeping or immediate risk of rough sleeping applied to their current circumstances.

An introductory note was added to the survey so that those collecting data could conduct a standardised approach to the conversations with women to ensure that the survey applied to their circumstances. Piloting these methods acknowledges the

⁵⁴ See guidance in appendix three for more detail.

challenges and learning to be gained from this exercise so that research can be strengthened in future.

Women

As described above, homelessness has major impacts on the health, average age of death and other outcomes for women.⁵⁵ Women's experience of homelessness and rough sleeping differs from men and as such, specific mechanisms are required to establish the number and circumstances of women rough sleeping and to ensure the provision of specific support provided in such a way to adequately meet women's needs.

The terms sex and gender are sometimes used interchangeably in research and practice which can lead to a lack of specificity in data collection as the terms do not have the same meaning. To provide specificity in this research PraxisCollab recommended that data be collected in accordance with ONS guidance on this topic.⁵⁶ This approach helps to understand the circumstances and needs of different groups, enable comparisons with other ONS data sets in the future, improve understanding about the numbers of people who identify as transgender, or non-binary and allow for monitoring equality according to protected characteristic of sex under the Equality Act 2010.⁵⁷

⁵⁵Public Health England. 2020. *Guidance. Health Matters: Rough sleeping*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-rough-sleeping/health-matters-rough-sleeping>

⁵⁶Office for National Statistics. 2021. *Sex and gender identity question development for Census 2021* <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/censustransformationprogramme/questiondevelopment/sexandgenderidentityquestiondevelopmentforcensus2021>

⁵⁷Office for National Statistics. 2015. *Equality Act 2010: Guidance*. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance>.

Appendix two: Data included in analysis

Total number of survey responses	184
Number of responses removed due to double counting	20
Number of responses removed as outside of data collection period	7
Number of responses removed as response outside of rough sleeping or homeless research definition.	3
Number of responses included in analysis	154

Survey question	Number of responses	Proportion of responses
Date of survey completion	Total survey responses [154]	[100%]
	3rd October [12]	[7.8%]
	4th October [37]	[24%]
	5th October [46]	[29.9%]
	6th October [30]	[19.5%]
	7th October [29]	[18.8%]
When did you last sleep rough?	Total survey responses [154]	[100%]
	Last night [75]	[48.7%]
	In the last week [23]	[14.9%]
	In the last month [16]	[10.4%]
	In the last 3 months [17]	[11%]
	Other response [15]	[9.7%]
	Question not answered [6]	[3.9%]
	Question not asked [2]	[1.3%]

Survey question	Number of responses	Proportion of responses
Approximately how many nights have you slept rough in the last 3 months?	Total survey responses [154] 1 night [6] 2-5 nights [20] 6-10 nights [18] 11-20 nights [13] 21-30 nights [15] More than 30 nights [34] More than 60 nights [15] Every night [20] Question not answered [7] Question not asked [6]	[100%] [3.9%] [13.0%] [11.7%] [8.4%] [9.7%] [22.1%] [9.7%] [13%] [4.5%] [3.9%]
Where did you stay last night?	Total responses [154] Slept rough on the street [50] Slept rough other [20] With a friend [23] Homeless service (hostel/supported housing) [16] With a relative [4] At a bus or train station [13] Housed (private or social rented) [6] B&B Apartment hotel/temp accommodation [18] Here at this service [3] Question not answered [1]	[100%] [32.5%] [13.0%] [15.0%] [10.4%] [2.6%] [8.4%] [3.9%] [11.7%] [1.9%] [0.7%]

Survey question	Number of responses	Proportion of responses
Where were you staying most recently before sleeping rough?	Total [154] Sofa surfing [31] Supported housing [10] Refuge [3] Private rented sector housing [18] Social rented housing [10] Prison [7] Hostel (with no support) [16] Caravan or squat [2] Home owned by respondent/partner/close family [16] Other temporary accommodation owned by the council [8] Emergency accommodation [3] With a friend [2] Other [19] Question not answered [8] Question not asked [1]	[100%] [20.1%] [6.5%] [1.9%] [11.7%] [6.5%] [4.5%] [10.4%] [1.3%] [10.4%] [5.2%] [1.9%] [1.3%] [12.3%] [5.2%] [0.7%]
Which services are you currently accessing support from? *(double counting as 'tick all that apply').	Total [154] Homelessness organisation [90] Housing Officer [31] Health services [32] Women's Centre [23] Domestic or sexual violence services [11] Drugs or alcohol support services [32] Social Services [9] Food banks [18] Job Centre [30] Citizens Advice Centre [4] Faith based support [18] Probation [7] Soup Kitchen [17] Police [11] One Stop Shop [5] Other [6] None [21] Question not answered [2]	100% 58.4% 20.1% 20.8% 14.9% 7.1% 20.8% 5.8% 11.7% 19.5% 2.6% 11.7% 4.5% 11.0% 7.1% 3.2% 3.9% 13.6% 1.3%

Survey question	Number of responses	Proportion of responses
Age	Total responses [153] Under 18 [1] (18-24) [8] (25-29) [12] (30-34) [33] (35-39) [18] (40-44) [29] (45-49) [15] (50-54) [6] (55-59) [7] (60-64) [11] (65-69) [3] (71+) [3] Prefer not to say [5] Question not answered [2] *Of the 146 respondents who provided their age - the average age was 41 years.	100% 0.6% 5.2% 7.8% 21.6% 11.8% 18.9% 9.8% 3.9% 4.6% 7.2% 2% 2% 3.3% 1.3%
Sex	Total responses [154] Female [150] Prefer not to say [2] Question not answered [2]	[100%] [97.4%] [1.3%] [1.3%]
Is your gender identity the same as the sex you were registered at birth?	Total responses [154] Yes [149] No [4] Question not answered [1]	[100%] [96.8%] [2.6%] [0.7%]

Survey question	Number of responses	Proportion of responses
Ethnicity	Total responses [154]	[100%]
	White - British [46]	29.9%
	White - Other [23]	14.9%
	Black or Black British African [18]	11.7%
	Black or Black British Caribbean [13]	8.4%
	White - Roma [12]	7.8%
	Black or Black British other [8]	5.2%
	Mixed - other [4]	2.6%
	White - Irish [4]	2.6%
	Gypsy Romany Irish Traveller [3]	1.9%
	Asian or Asian British - other [2]	1.3%
	Asian or Asian British - Pakistani [2]	1.3%
	White - Gypsy Irish Traveller [1]	0.6%
	Asian or Asian British - Indian [1]	0.6%
	Mixed White and Black Caribbean [1]	0.6%
	Asian or Asian British - Chinese [1]	0.6%
	Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi [1]	0.6%
	Mixed White and Black African [1]	0.6%
Other - [8]	5.2%	
Prefer not to say [4]	2.6%	
Question not asked [1]	0.6%	
Has someone at this service or another service already asked you these same questions - this week/in the last few days?	Total responses [154]	[100%]
	No [151]	[98.1%]
	Don't know [2]	[1.3%]
	Question not answered [1]	[0.65%]

Survey questions from person / service conducting survey		
What type of service do you deliver?	Total responses [154]	[100%]
	Homelessness service (outreach) [64]	[41.6%]
	Homelessness service [40]	[26.0%]
	Homelessness service (women's specific) [9]	[5.6%]
	Homelessness service (telephone service) [4]	[2.6%]
	Homelessness service (day centre) [3]	[1.9%]
	Health service (outreach for street-based sex workers) [8]	[5.2%]
	Council housing department / Community safety team [8]	[5.2%]
	Women's Centre or service [7]	[4.5%]
	Domestic and sexual violence service/multiple disadvantage service [5]	[3.2%]
	Complex needs support [2]	[1.3%]
	Health service [1]	[0.7%]
	Housing Association (women specific) [1]	[0.7%]
	Drug or alcohol support service [1]	[0.7%]
	Police [1]	[0.7%]
Which borough is your service in?	Total responses [153]	[100%]
	Missing data [1]	
	Westminster [26]	[17%]
	Haringey [18]	[11.8%]
	Camden [16]	[10.5%]
	Redbridge [15]	[9.8%]
	Tower Hamlets [14]	[9.2%]
	Islington [9]	[5.9%]
	Brent [7]	[4.6%]
	Lambeth [7]	[4.6%]
	Newham [5]	[3.3%]
	Southwark [5]	[3.3%]
	Pan - London [5]	[3.3%]
	Kingston [5]	[3.3%]
	Croydon [4]	[2.6%]
	Barking [4]	[2.6%]
	Hackney [3]	[2.0%]
Ealing [2]	[1.3%]	
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea [2]	[1.3%]	

	Lewisham [1] Royal Borough of Greenwich [1] Enfield [1] Merton [1] Bexley [1] Other (London) [1]	[0.7%] [0.7%] [0.7%] [0.7%] [0.7%] [0.7%]
Was this survey conducted on your borough's planned gender-informed outreach shift?	Total [154] Yes [92] No [51] No other outreach [6] Don't know [5]	[100%] [59.7%] [33.1%] [3.9%] [3.2%]
Additional data received		
Number of female's referred to Street Link during data collection period.	Total [140] Number of members of public called to refer a female into Streetlink [86] Number of females self-referred into Streetlink [54]	
Number of women at risk of rough sleeping for the first time (i.e., leaving housing options with nowhere safe to go)	Borough 1 [4] *No other data received about women being seen from other boroughs.	
Feedback regarding the survey/implementation and data collection process	Qualitative data received from ten boroughs using a set of reflective questions designed by the core team exploring the experience of conducting the census, the survey tool and the process.	
Records from boroughs regarding numbers of outreach shifts undertaken.	A total of 38 outreach shifts were conducted by 28 outreach teams across the five-day data collection period.	

Appendix three: Survey guidance

This survey guidance was developed by the core team, with some input on certain aspects from PraxisCollab.

Gender informed outreach guidance for Pan London women's census 2022

This guidance was created by the Women's Development Unit (Solace and The Connection at St Martin's), SHP and St Mungo's following a cross sector consultation attended by representatives from the WiSER project (Solace), Find and Treat (UCLH), Glassdoor, The Connection at St Martin's Street Engagement Team, St Mungo's outreach and St Mungo's Women's Safe Space.

Background

Why is there a need for 'gender informed' outreach?

Research, lived experience and the experiences of services tell us that women are some of the most vulnerable within the rough sleeping and homeless population, yet we also know that women are under-represented in rough sleeping statistics and provision. Key data sources used to understand rough sleeping come from street count figures based on recording practices which are not adapted to women's patterns of homelessness. It follows that if services are commissioned based on this data, they will not be meeting the needs of those who are not captured in this data. There are also particular risks to women who are rough sleeping, including extremely prevalent experiences of gender-based violence and abuse, and an average age of death of 41.6 years old, even lower than male counterparts (45.9 years) despite women in the general population having a longer life expectancy.

How can gender-informed outreach be part of the solution?

The Life Off the Streets women's workstream has been tasked with organising a women's census which aims to better capture data about the extent of women's rough sleeping. The census has the support of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), the Greater London Authority (GLA), London Councils and the Life Off the Streets Core Group.

The methodology used will differ from the normal rough sleeping snapshot count in recognition of the fact that women sleep rough less visibly and are less likely to come into contact with outreach teams as a result. This is the first undertaking of its kind on this scale and the aim is to gather more accurate data, in order to demonstrate the need for a strategic commitment to ending women's rough sleeping.

Gender-informed outreach takes into account the different experiences and patterns of rough sleeping for women, adjusting hours, routes, hotspots and approaches to better match women's experiences. It is also done with an understanding of women's safety risks and needs, how these may impact interactions and emergency responses which may be needed.

What will the census consist of?

The census will take place across a full working week 19th-23rd September.

With support from as many organisations as possible from across London, the census will consist of the following:

- Gender-informed outreach shifts across all participating London boroughs.
- A simple, anonymised survey to be completed by services likely to encounter women who are rough sleeping (e.g., day centres, women's services, health services).
- Data collection from Streetlink, Housing Options

The census is supported by researchers at Praxis Collab. Their expertise will ensure data can be analysed effectively, help minimise double counting and make recommendations for further work in this area.

Guidance

Who should conduct the gender informed outreach shifts?

Each borough taking part in the census will conduct at least one day of gender-informed outreach shifts within the census time period (3rd to 7th October).

All outreach should be done in twos. Outreach shifts will be undertaken by outreach staff from each borough, paired with a volunteer if necessary. Male outreach workers/volunteers must be paired with a female outreach worker or volunteer. All workers and volunteers taking part in the census must have watched a short, recorded gender-informed outreach training session and read this guidance prior to undertaking a shift. Details on the training session and recording can be found on the website [here](#).

When planning your outreach shift, if teams need volunteers to support capacity, please contact the census team with details.

In census week, we will send a document to all outreach teams taking part in which to record basic details about your shift to inform the methodology recorded in the report.

When should the gender informed outreach shifts be conducted?

Research and lived experiences tell us that women are often less visible to outreach services at night, so each borough's gender informed outreach shift should take place in the daytime, between 7am and 7pm, on any day within the census period (19th - 23rd September).

We are asking each borough taking part to conduct a minimum of 6 hours of gender-informed outreach. Times may vary according to the capacity of outreach teams and volunteers, but we suggest this can be split in to two shifts – one approximately 10am to 1pm, and a further shift approximately 4pm – 7pm). All 6 hours should be completed within one day and the entire borough should be covered on the same day. If outreach teams are able to conduct additional gender-informed shifts on other days during the census week please do so, for example if teams would like to revisit particular hotspots on other days during the week. Any additional gender-informed shifts should also be recorded as above.

Which places/areas in each borough should the gender informed outreach shifts go to?

We would ask that each borough map out their gender-informed outreach shift prior to census week, using their own local intelligence and that of local services.

In addition to normal outreach routes and 'hotspots' for rough sleeping/street activity, gender-informed outreach shifts should also go to:

- Quieter streets, car parks, parks/green spaces and areas where women could be concealed rough sleeping/sheltering
- Inside train/tube/bus stations including toilets
- Libraries
- McDonald's/Burger Kings etc (including toilets)
- A&E waiting rooms
- Around soup kitchens/inside churches or other places of worship which may provide shelter
- Around homeless health services – GPs, mental health drop in, substance use drop ins
- Around day centres and hostels (where women may not be living but may have reason to go to/be near)
- Around Housing Options departments where women may present
- Inside freely accessible public spaces in which women can be inconspicuous and are unlikely to be asked to move on, for example Southbank Centre.

Who should the outreach workers approach?

The methodology of this census recognises that women who are rough sleeping may not be physically bedded down in a sleeping bag when workers see them, and aims to reach out to a broader range of women whose rough sleeping patterns and circumstances may look different.

Each gender-informed outreach shift will have at least one professional outreach worker undertaking it, and professional judgement will be key in determining who to approach (when a woman's housing situation may not be clear), and also how to approach (ensuring that the approach is appropriate, sensitive to a woman's circumstances and not perceived as intrusive). Other than professional judgement, and approaching women who are bedded down, about to bed down or sitting/standing next to bedding (as per a normal shift), the following tips could be useful in knowing who to approach:

- Women who are engaged in any form of street activity (begging, street drinking, in groups with other people who are clearly or likely to be sleeping rough).
- Women in enclosed spaces such as train/tube stations, McDonalds, A&E waiting rooms, libraries etc. who appear to be vulnerable and/or may not be using the services in the intended way but may be sheltering there, and/or may have a number of belongings with them.
- If workers observe patrolling police/PCSOs, ask them whether they are aware of any women who appear vulnerable/may be experiencing homelessness in the area. Professional judgement should always be used when working with the police, and this suggestion is for local intel purposes on women's locations only: women should not be approached to do the survey with any form of police involvement or presence.

Important to note: Women's rough sleeping can be complicated and often not linear – for example, women may have a hostel bed space but spend some time sleeping rough with a partner, because they feel unsafe in the hostel or for other reasons. They may even have their own tenancy but not feel able to return to it due to certain risks or other reasons. Some women may be alternating between rough sleeping and other forms of homelessness or insecure housing e.g. sofa surfing or staying with a dangerous partner. The research survey will ask a clear, clarifying question of all women so it is clear

whether or not the survey is relevant for them, so outreach workers will not need to determine someone's exact circumstances in order to proceed.

The survey will include an introduction to be used by those disseminating the survey, for example:

'We are conducting research to get an accurate understanding of women's experiences of rough sleeping and improve support and services for women. By sleeping rough we mean having nowhere at all to go at night: for example, sleeping outside on the ground or in a tent, sleeping in a doorway or stairwell, sitting/sleeping in places which are open late or 24/7 (such as fast-food restaurants, bus and train stations), walking all night, sex working at night but not having anywhere to sleep during the day, travelling on transport all night, staying in derelict buildings. You might not do this every night, but it might be something you do on and off or have done within the last 3 months.

We have 10 short questions to ask you, if you did want to take part in the survey. It takes less than 5 minutes to complete, and you would receive a £5 voucher as a thank you for your time This is entirely voluntary. Thank you.

Is this something applies to you/your circumstances? [Y/N] Are you currently or have you recently been rough sleeping? [Y/N]

When did you last sleep rough? Last night/within the last week/1month/3 months]

What will the survey be like and how will the survey be done?

The survey will be on an online survey platform so outreach workers/volunteers can access it easily via smartphone or tablet when they are with women. Workers will be given a written explanation of the intention of the research to read through with women, which will make clear that participation is entirely voluntary, there are no identifying questions, and the resulting research will be completely anonymised. Once the information has been given to the woman, she will decide if the survey is relevant for her and if she wants to take part. Participants will be offered a £5 Sainsbury's voucher for their time, which will be given to outreach workers prior to the shift.

The survey questions are being finalised by researchers, and are likely to include the following themes:

- Age on last birthday (this will not record DOB)
- Where they stayed the previous night
- Ethnicity
- Duration and frequency of homelessness
- Sex and gender
- Services they are accessing
- Whether they have already been asked these questions by someone else this week

NB. Trans women are included in this research. The survey will include a question on both sex and gender identity to avoid conflation, increase specificity of the data collected and ensure women can record their identity as they see fit.

The question themes have been carefully selected from a range of possible options. Each option has been evaluated with the aim of achieving a careful balance of data quality, sensitivity and specific research needs of the women's census.

As well as asking women to complete the survey, what other information should workers have with them?

Some women who are approached may just want to do the survey and not require additional support, but it is likely that some women will need direct assistance and advice and may not have been seen by the outreach team before. As each shift will have at least one professional outreach worker carrying it out, they will be able to provide information and advice as standard. We also ask that all outreach workers put together borough specific information packs with handouts prior to undertaking the

gender informed outreach shift, to ensure that women encountered who need assistance can be given the right information. This should include:

- Contact details and map to local day centre/advice service
- Streetlink self-referral information
- Local Housing Options department information
- Useful numbers to call – National Domestic Abuse helpline, Samaritans, Police non-emergency, NHS 111
- Local VAWG and women’s services, including domestic abuse support service, local Rape Crisis service, and Ascent advice helpline for the area (Solace or Women and Girls Network)
- Immigration advice service information
- Welfare benefits contact information
- Crisis team contact number (borough specific)
- Mental health support via text message details (text SHOUT to 85258 free confidential 24/7 messaging mental health support service)

All workers should be equipped with information on how to refer into any emergency safe spaces that are available to their borough (night shelters, respite rooms etc).

Only women aged 18 and above should be included. If outreach teams encounter women under 18 who are rough sleeping or women rough sleeping with their children, teams should follow usual safeguarding procedures, including contacting Children’s Social Services and informing the woman that they are doing so.

Outreach teams should also be able to access telephone translators in case they meet women who do not speak English. Please let us know if your team does not have access to telephone translators. Outreach teams should also identify if a particular language is prevalent in their borough and join up with a service or practitioners who have those particular language skills. If you have a particular need, let the census team know when you request volunteers, and we can see if any volunteers have corresponding language skills.

What about CHAIN?

The CHAIN team are developing a feature which will allow street contacts to be designated as having been recorded as part of the Women’s Census. Detailed instructions of how to use the feature will be provided when the development has been completed.

During the gender-informed shift, outreach workers should use the new Women’s Census feature to record:

- Bedded down street contacts for all women they see sleeping rough
- Non-bedded down contacts for women not seen sleeping rough but engaged in street activity.

Please see the accompanying guidance on recording street contacts on CHAIN for more information about which settings meet the definition for recording a street contact.

If it is the first time the service has recorded information about the person on CHAIN, they should give them the CHAIN: Information for Clients leaflet (i.e. 'Privacy Notice'), as per the usual procedure.

Some locations visited as part of the gender-informed shift will not meet the definition for a standard street contact (e.g., inside a library or a fast-food restaurant). If a woman is encountered in one of these settings, outreach workers should not record a street contact or create a new client record on CHAIN. However, they should still ask the woman to complete the survey, as outlined previously.

You should offer the CHAIN Privacy Notice to anyone whose information you are recording on CHAIN who has not already received a Notice from your service. The Privacy Notice should not be offered to women who are not being recorded on CHAIN and are only asked to complete the survey.

The distinction between information taken for CHAIN purposes and information taken for via the survey should be made clear to ensure any women taking part are aware of where their information is being recorded and how it will be used.

What else should the outreach workers and volunteers take with them?

It would be helpful if outreach workers could offer water/energy bars/toiletries/other items to help with engagement. The census team are working to procure donations to support with this if possible.

What support will be offered to workers and volunteers taking part in the gender-informed outreach shifts?

Each outreach shift will have at least one professional for every two people, so this assumes a good level of training and knowledge on safe outreach practice, dynamic risk assessment, etc. However, we would ask that all workers and volunteers taking part in the gender-informed outreach shifts attend or watch a recorded training session, whether they have previous experience or not. This will include:

- An overview of the census work, why and how women's homelessness looks different to men's and the additional risks women face when rough sleeping.
- Guidance about how to collect good quality, standardised data using the survey template as well as data collection FAQs.
- A brief overview of the other issues women experiencing homelessness are likely to also be affected by (mental ill health, VAWG, substance use etc).
- An overview of the impact of trauma on clients and the staff who support them. This will include an overview of trauma-informed interactions, guidance for dealing with any issues that arise on shift, guidance on keeping workers safe emotionally and a suggested debrief process for the end of the shift.
- Suggested safe working practices – agreeing a safe word, when to not approach a woman etc.
- Signposting to training and resources if people want to find out more.

Visit the census webpage to register for the session or watch the recording.
<https://www.connection-at-stmartins.org.uk/womens-census/>

What happens after the shift?

The surveys should be completed in real time with each woman/immediately after the interaction. The results will go directly to the researchers via the online survey platform.

If a client is on CHAIN or is eligible to be put on to CHAIN, we ask that this be done in a timely way as per the normal practice of the outreach team leading the shift, either the same day after the shift or the next day.

All of the survey results recorded will go directly to the census team and to PraxisCollab, the researchers who are analysing the data gathered for the women's census. Relevant data from CHAIN will be provided in aggregate or pseudonymised form. They will use this to prepare a report which will include findings and recommendations from the census.

This piece of work would not be possible without the time, commitment and effort of everyone involved. On behalf of the Life off the Streets women's workstream, we would like to say a huge thank you to all staff, volunteers and services who are taking part in the census activity.

Further details: Please sign up to the census mailing list to ensure all updates on the census reach you, including the final report once published: <https://forms.office.com/r/Dfkey1UUiE>

Census webpage: <https://www.connection-at-stmartins.org.uk/womens-census/>

Contact address: womens.census@cstm.org.uk