

Young people's rough sleeping census pilot

Sarah McCoy, for Depaul UK

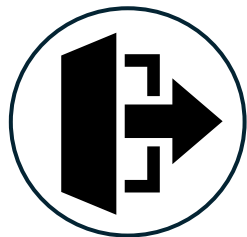
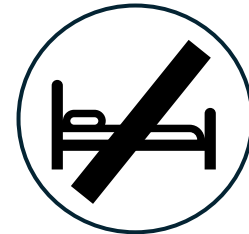
Summary of findings

Key findings

From 1st – 7th July 2024, a Young People’s Rough Sleeping Census was piloted across Bromley, Camden and Lambeth. In total, the census reached **40 young people** who said they had slept rough in the three months prior to completing our survey*.

Through the census pilot, we found 11 (28%) young people who had slept rough in London whose details were **not on CHAIN**.

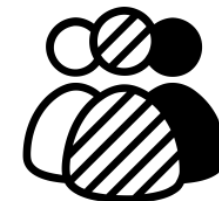
17 of the young people we spoke to (44%) said they had slept rough for **more than 30 nights** during the three months before completing our survey.



Six of the young people we spoke to said they had been **younger than 18 years** old when they first slept rough.

The type of accommodation young people were most likely to have left when they slept rough for the first time was **asylum accommodation**.

In all boroughs, **Black African** was the most common ethnicity amongst census respondents. 80% identified as non-White.



*We used a broad definition of ‘rough sleeping’ in the survey (i.e. ‘Nowhere safe to go at night, or nowhere to go at all’) so this included five young people who had slept in places that we would not usually describe in this way, see slides 22 and 29.

Main report

Introduction

- Following the success of the [Women's Rough Sleeping Census](#), in the first week of July 2024, a pilot of a Young People's Rough Sleeping Census was delivered across three London boroughs: Camden, Lambeth and Bromley.
- Delivered by Depaul UK, with support from London Councils, a short survey was administered by local outreach teams, youth services and the research team.
- The aim was to speak to as many young people as possible during a seven-day period to ascertain how many 18 to 25-year-olds slept rough within the three pilot boroughs in the three months prior to the survey. We also gathered data on rough sleeper demographics and journeys into homelessness.
- This report presents findings from an initial analysis of the pilot data. It also considers learnings from the pilot process that will be used to inform the development of a larger scale, pan-London, census (currently planned for 2025, subject to securing funding).

Why a young people's census?

We piloted a Young People's Rough Sleeping Census for four main reasons:

1. To gather more accurate data on the prevalence of rough sleeping by young people

Like women, young people are likely to be underrepresented in rough sleeping data because their choices make them more hidden. The census aimed to collect more comprehensive data on the number of young people rough sleeping in London.

2. To hear new voices in research

Research into young people's experiences of rough sleeping tends to be undertaken with those who have already accessed support (e.g. clients of young people's homelessness services). The census aimed to reach a wider group of young people, including those who are yet to receive support.

3. To reach more young people in need of support

Through the act of undertaking the census, we hoped to reach young people who needed support but were yet to access it. We aimed to engage these young people with appropriate services if that's what they wanted to do.

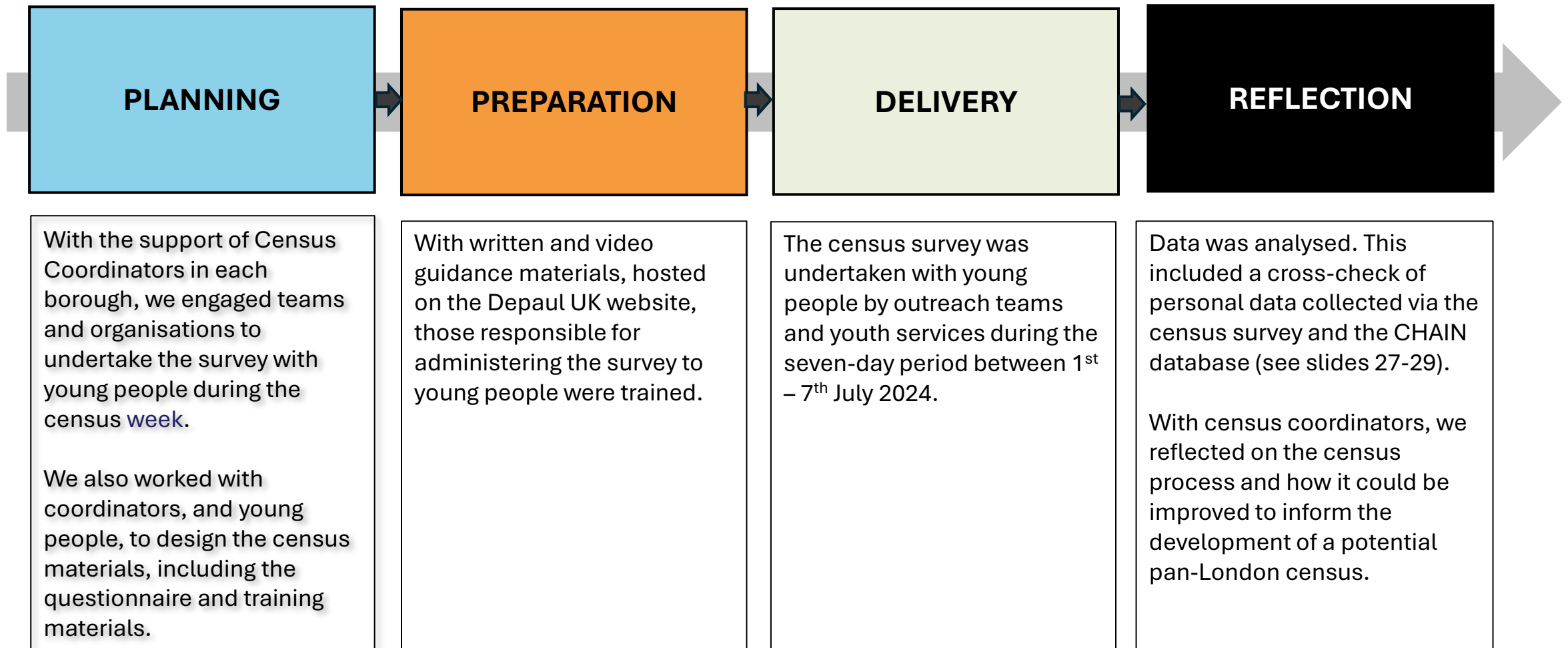
4. To generate insight for a pan-London census

Through the pilot, we aimed to learn about how the census could be delivered on a pan-London scale.

**How was the Young People's Rough
Sleeping Census delivered?**

The census pilot process

The census pilot involved four stages of work, undertaken simultaneously across the three participating boroughs: **Camden**, **Lambeth** and **Bromley**.



Phase 1: Planning

- In each of the participating local authorities, a staff member was allocated the role of **Census Coordinator**.
- The coordinator role was to:
 - Support planning for the census by sharing information about local context with the research team, then helping to facilitate a wider planning meeting for their borough
 - Share information from census team with local services and encourage involvement
 - Provide feedback on census materials designed by the census team (and facilitate consultation with young people where possible)
 - Support local services to plan for and undertake census week
 - Share reflections from the census week with the research team following the pilot
- The Census Coordinators in each of the boroughs were:
 - For Bromley: Rough Sleeping Coordinator
 - For Camden: Routes Off The Streets Coordinator
 - For Lambeth: The role was shared between Rough Sleeping Coordinator and Strategic Commissioning Manager

Phase 1: Planning

- With the support of the Census Coordinators, a wider planning meeting was undertaken in each borough. These meetings were attended by representatives from outreach teams and local services that would be key to the successful delivery of the pilot in each borough.
- The main purpose of these meetings was to generate a plan for how the census could be delivered within each borough, to maximise the number of young people engaged. Specifically, attendees discussed:
 - Plans for reaching young people through outreach shifts. Whilst there was no requirement to undertake additional shifts during the census week, we asked that outreach shifts be designed to reach as many young people as possible.
 - Which other teams/services should be involved in the pilot and strategies for engaging them.
 - Plans for training staff and administering the census survey with young people.
 - Potential challenges in delivering the census.
- As part of the planning phase, those attending the planning meetings in each of the boroughs were given an opportunity to review draft materials. Young people were also consulted on the content of the questionnaire and planned process for delivery of the pilot. This was organised through Depaul UK's Client Involvement Team.

Phase 2: Preparation

- Guidance and materials for outreach teams and services were made available via a 'Census Hub' on the Depaul UK website.



Home / young people's rough sleeping census pilot

YOUNG PEOPLE'S ROUGH SLEEPING CENSUS PILOT



- This included:
 - Full written guidance on how to undertake the census survey with young people
 - A companion 'video explainer'
 - A link to the online survey
 - Downloadable versions of:
 - The survey questionnaire in English
 - The project's privacy notice
 - Translated paper versions of the survey and privacy notice in Arabic, Tigrinya and Romanian*

*These languages were agreed in consultation with boroughs after reviewing CHAIN data for the most common languages used by young people rough sleeping in London.

Phase 3: Delivery

- Between 1st and 7th July 2024, outreach teams and youth services carried out the census survey with as many young people as possible.
- In Camden, all survey completions were undertaken by New Horizon Youth Centre.
- In Lambeth, surveys were submitted by:
 - Thames Reach Lambeth Outreach Team
 - Lambeth Young People's Project
 - Marcus Lipton
 - South London Refugee Association
 - Spires
- In Bromley, all survey completions were undertaken by Thames Reach Bromley Outreach Team.
- Young people completing the survey were given a £10 supermarket voucher as a thank you. This was issued in physical form at the time of completion.
- On the Census Hub, a list of local services was available to be given to young people following completion of the census survey should they need further support.

Phase 4: Reflection

- In August 2024, basic analysis of the pilot data was undertaken to generate the findings presented in the next section of this report.
- Analysis included a cross-check of personal data (names and DOBs) collected via the survey with the CHAIN database. This was undertaken by Homeless Link in accordance with existing data sharing arrangements.
- Learnings from the pilot process (outlined from slide 36) incorporated insight from:
 - A reflections meeting with coordinators from all boroughs
 - Direct feedback from New Horizon Youth Centre
 - Internal reflections from the research team

The census survey

- The census survey was available to any young person who had slept rough in the three months before census week. The pilot defined rough sleeping as:

Nowhere safe to go at night, or nowhere to go at all: for example, sleeping outside on the ground or in a tent, in stairwells or somewhere else that is hidden; sitting/sleeping in places that are open late or 24/7 (such as all-night restaurants) or on transport; or walking around all night.

- The survey included questions on:
 - The number of nights young people had slept rough during the three months before census week
 - Locations of rough sleeping
 - Experience of hidden homelessness
 - The age young people first slept rough
 - Reasons for first sleeping rough
 - Services that young people were accessing at the time of survey completion
 - Demographic questions for analysis purposes, such as ethnicity, gender, sexuality. These questions were asked sensitively and developed alongside specialist agencies*.

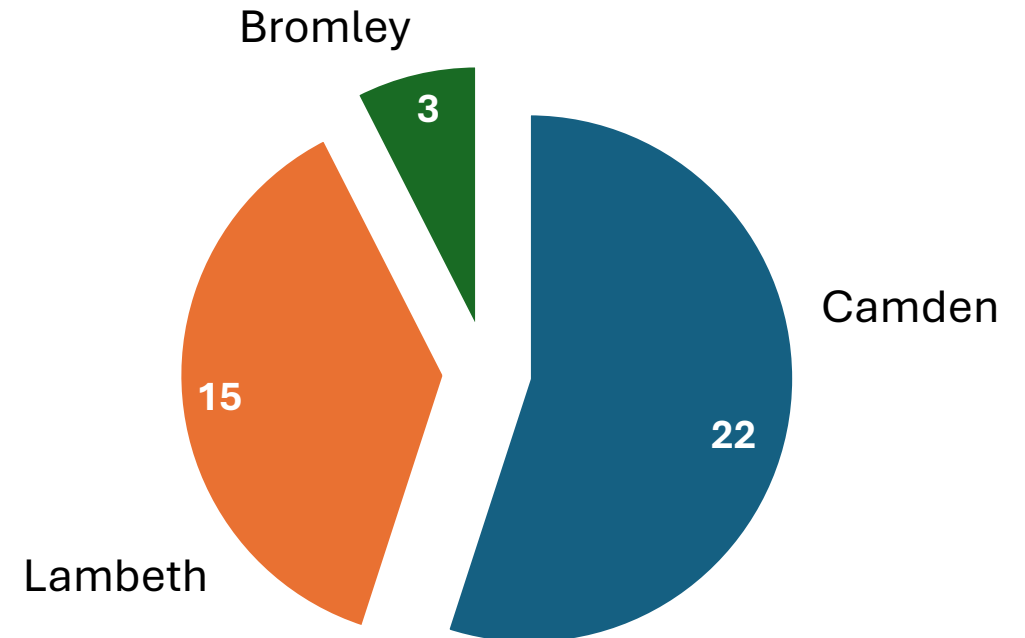
*For example, the questions related to gender identity were developed with involvement from the Albert Kennedy Trust.

Who completed the census survey?

Who completed the census survey?

Overall response

- In total, the Young People's Rough Sleeping Census Pilot reached **40 young people** across the three boroughs during census week (1st – 7th July 2024).
- The number of responses gathered by each of the boroughs varied considerably. This is likely a reflection of a combination of three main factors:
 - **Differing levels of rough sleeping** in the boroughs. There have been suggestions, for example, that young people are more likely to be hidden homeless than sleep rough in Bromley.
 - **Differing presence of youth services** across the boroughs, which affected the number of organisations we could engage with the pilot.
 - **Differing levels of capacity** within the boroughs for coordinators to engage and motivate teams/organisations to undertake the survey with young people.

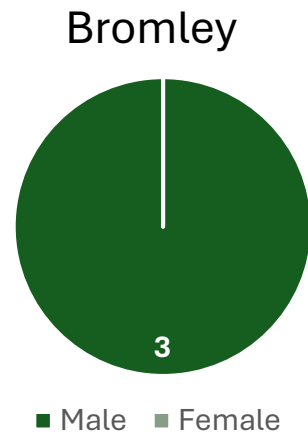
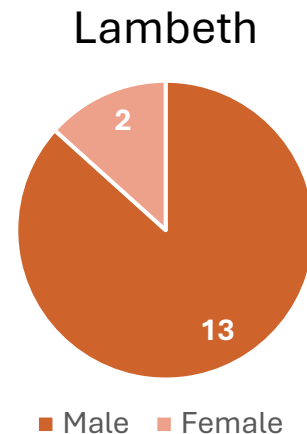
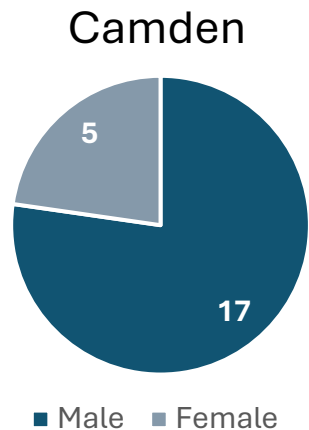


*For more information on how capacity within the boroughs differed, see slide 37 onwards.

Who completed the census survey?

Gender and ethnicity and sexual orientation

- All but one young person who completed the survey stated their gender identity. 33 of these young people (83%) identified as male and 7 (18%) as female.

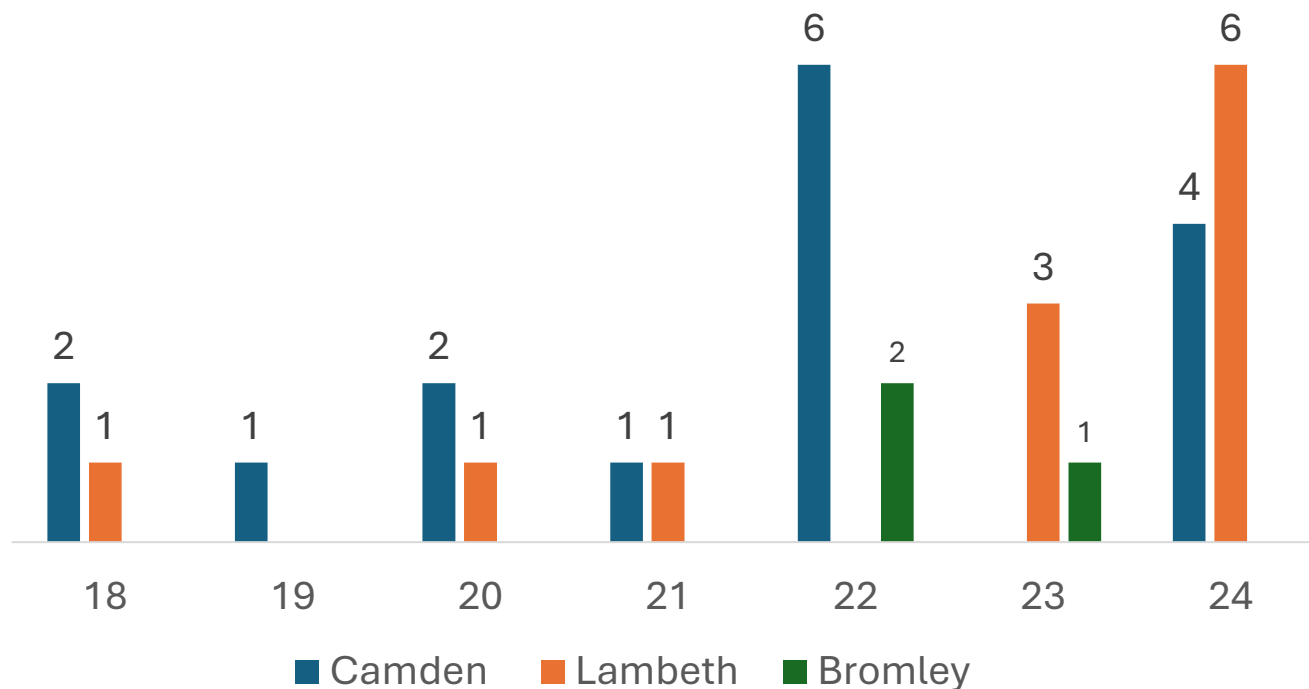


- 37 young people gave their ethnicity. Thirty (80%) of these young people identified as non-White, with 25 (68%) identifying as 'Black African'.
- In all boroughs, Black African was the most common ethnicity amongst census respondents. In Bromley, all three survey respondents were Black African.
- In Camden, 15 of the 21 respondents who gave their ethnicity (71%) were Black African. Five were white (of these two were British) and one was Asian.
- In Lambeth, eight of the 13 respondents who gave their ethnicity (62%) were Black African. Another was Black Caribbean. Two were white (one British) and two were Asian.
- None of the young people who completed the survey identified with a sexual orientation other than heterosexual. However, six (15%) either chose not to answer the question (4) or were not asked (2).

Who completed the census survey?

Age

- 32 young people gave their age. Whilst the survey was designed for 18-25s, one young person – from the Lambeth Young People’s Project – was just 16*.
- The age breakdown of the remaining respondents is shown below (by borough):



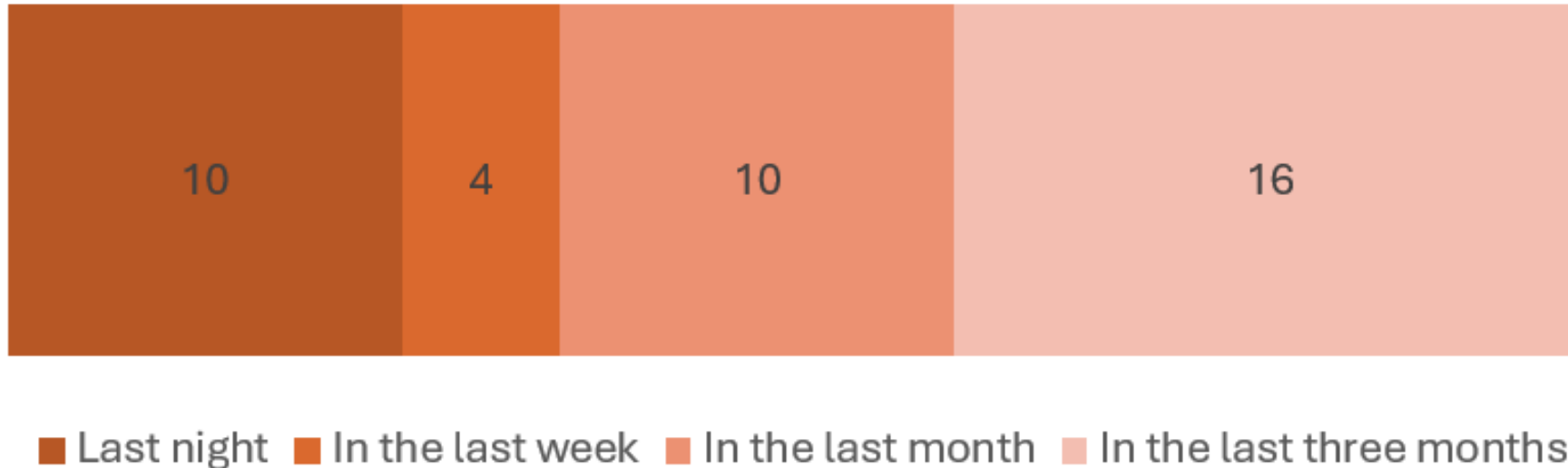
- In all boroughs, the young people who completed the survey tended towards the older end of the age range. There were, however, eight young people (including the 16-year-old mentioned above) who were under 21 years of age.
- Whilst the majority of survey respondents identified as male, those under 21 years of age were equally likely to identify as female. In fact, the majority (4 out of 7) female respondents were in this younger age category.

*This young person said she had sofa-surfed in the last three months, but not slept anywhere we would consider ‘rough sleeping’

Our findings

How recently had young people slept rough?

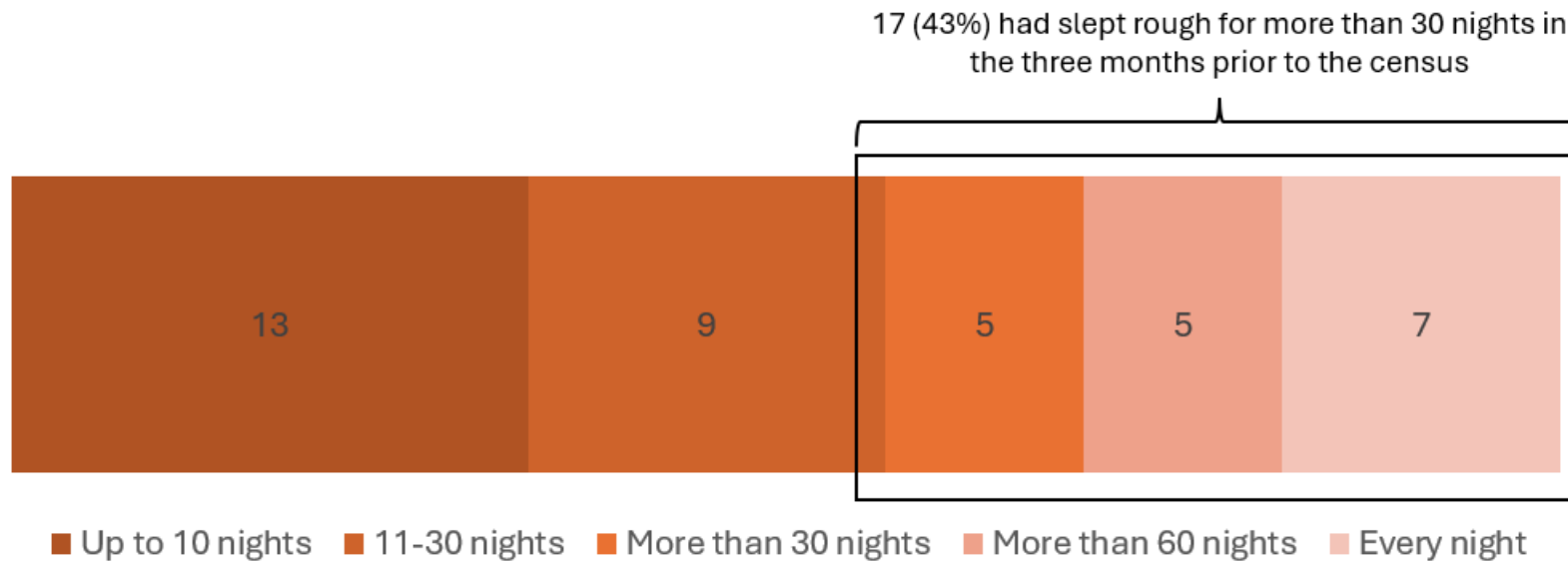
- Ten (25%) of the young people who completed the survey had slept rough the previous night. Including these, 14 young people (35%) had slept rough for at least one night in the week prior to the census. The survey reached a total of twenty-five young people (63%) who had slept rough in the month prior to the census.



- Of those who had slept rough the night before they completed the survey, six were from Camden, three from Bromley (which was all the young people reached by this borough), and one was from Lambeth.

How many nights had young people slept rough*?

- Seven (18%) of the young people had slept rough every night of the three months prior to the census pilot. Seventeen (44%) had slept rough for more than 30 nights during the same period. Only 1 young person had slept rough for one night only.
- Of those who said they had slept rough for more than 30 nights during the three-month period before the census, 14 identified as male and three as female. Two of these young people were under 21 years old (both from Camden, engaged by New Horizon Youth Centre).

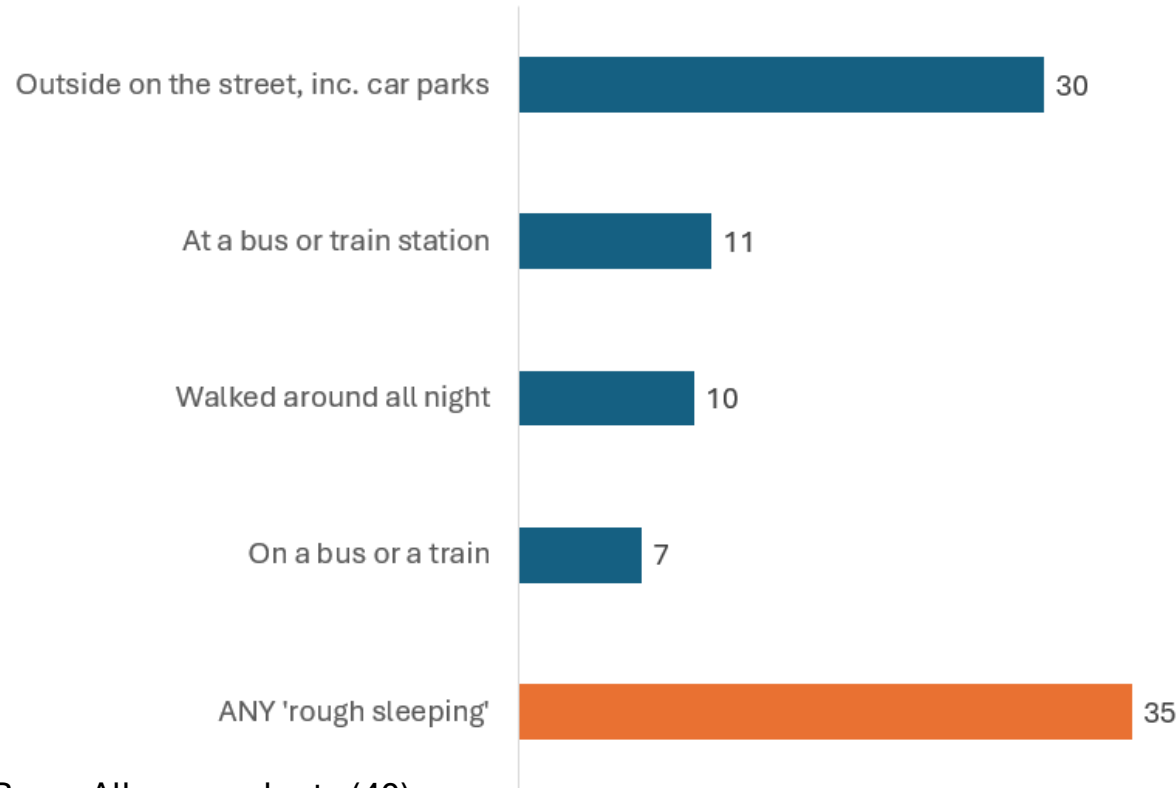


*As we let young people determine what they considered 'rough sleeping' themselves, the sample includes some young people who had slept in places we wouldn't consider fit even a broadened definition. For example, one young person who completed the survey had only slept in a hostel during the three-month period prior to completing the survey.

* It should be noted that there were other inconsistencies in the data that mean it should be treated with caution. For example, four of the seven young people who said they had slept rough every night of the three months prior to the census did not say they had done so the night before they completed the survey. .

Where had young people slept?

- Thirty-five (88%) of the young people who completed the survey had slept in places we would consider 'rough sleeping'. The five who had not had: sofa-surfed with family (3); stayed in a hostel (1); or stayed in a squat (1). The fact these young people completed the survey suggests they may see these accommodation types as 'rough sleeping'.



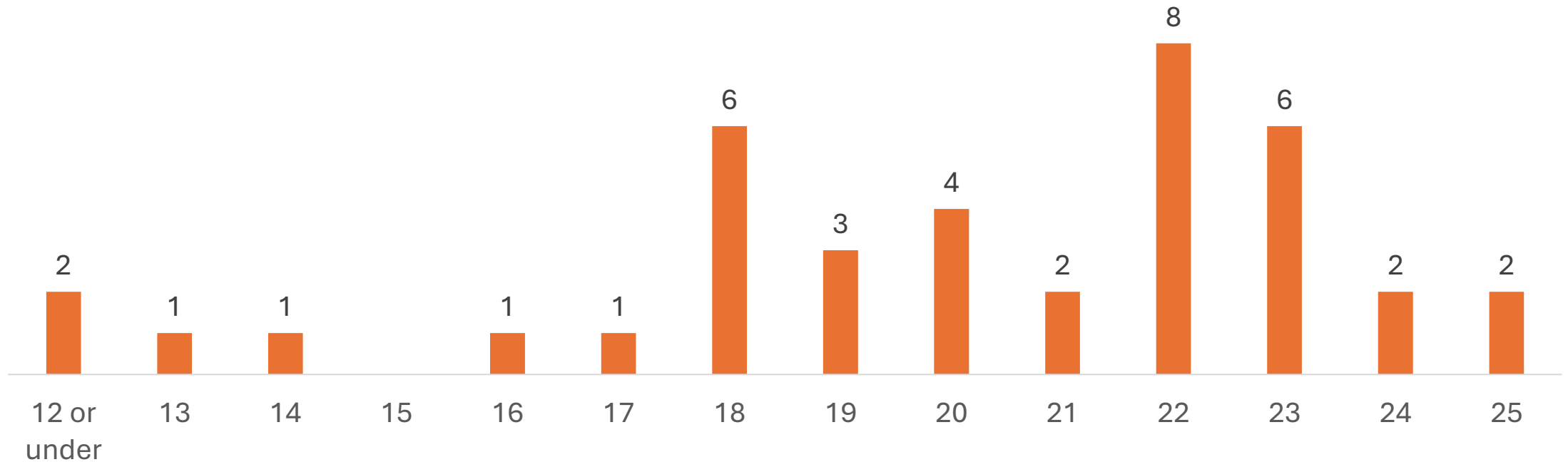
Base: All respondents (40)

- Of the high frequency rough sleepers (those who said they had slept rough for at least 30 days during the three months prior to completing the survey), all but one said they had slept rough on the streets at some point during this time. Six had also slept in a bus or train station.
- In terms of experience of other forms of homelessness, 41% (17) of the young people had 'sofa surfed' with friends/family; 12% (5) had 'sofa surfed' with strangers/new acquaintances; 15% (6) had stayed in a hostel for people of all ages.

Journeys into homelessness

Age first slept rough

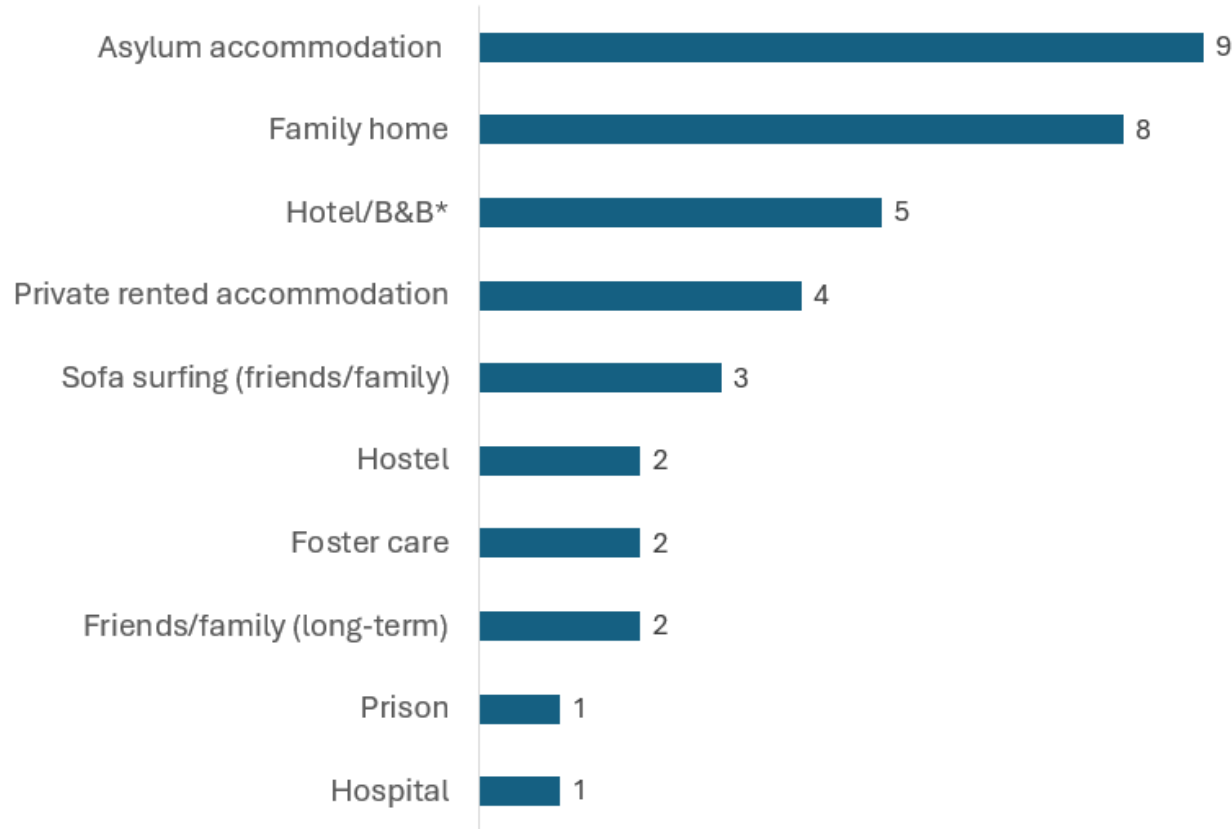
- Six (15%) of the young people who told us how old they were when they first slept rough said they had been younger than 18 years old. A further 13 young people were over 18, but under 21 when they first slept rough.
- The majority had their first experience of rough sleeping as an adult, which may reflect differences in duties to children and adults by housing services.



Base: All who stated the age they were when they slept rough for the first time (39)

Journeys into homelessness

Where young people left when they first slept rough



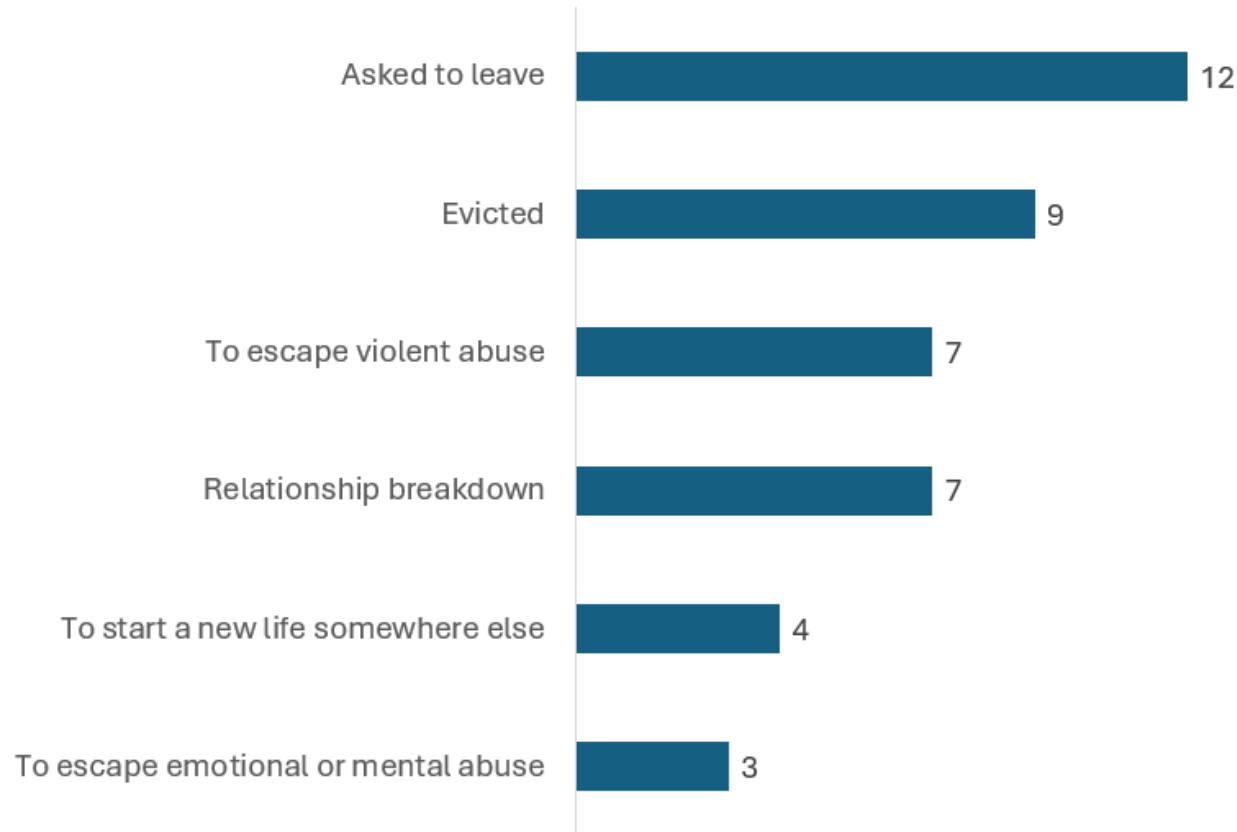
Base: All respondents (40)

- The most common place for young people to have left when they slept rough for the first time was asylum accommodation. The nine young people who left this type of accommodation were aged between 19 and 24. Seven identified as Black African and two as Asian.
- Of the young people who slept rough before they were 18, four had left their family home or long-term accommodation with a friend or family member. One – a 17-year-old – was asked to leave foster care or another form of accommodation provided by the council.
- The two young people who became homeless after leaving foster care (or other LA provision for children) were 17 and 18 years old. The young person leaving prison was 22.

*This includes one respondent who said they left 'Lambeth Temporary Accommodation' using the self-describe box.

Journeys into homelessness

Reasons for leaving (when first slept rough)



Base: All respondents (40)

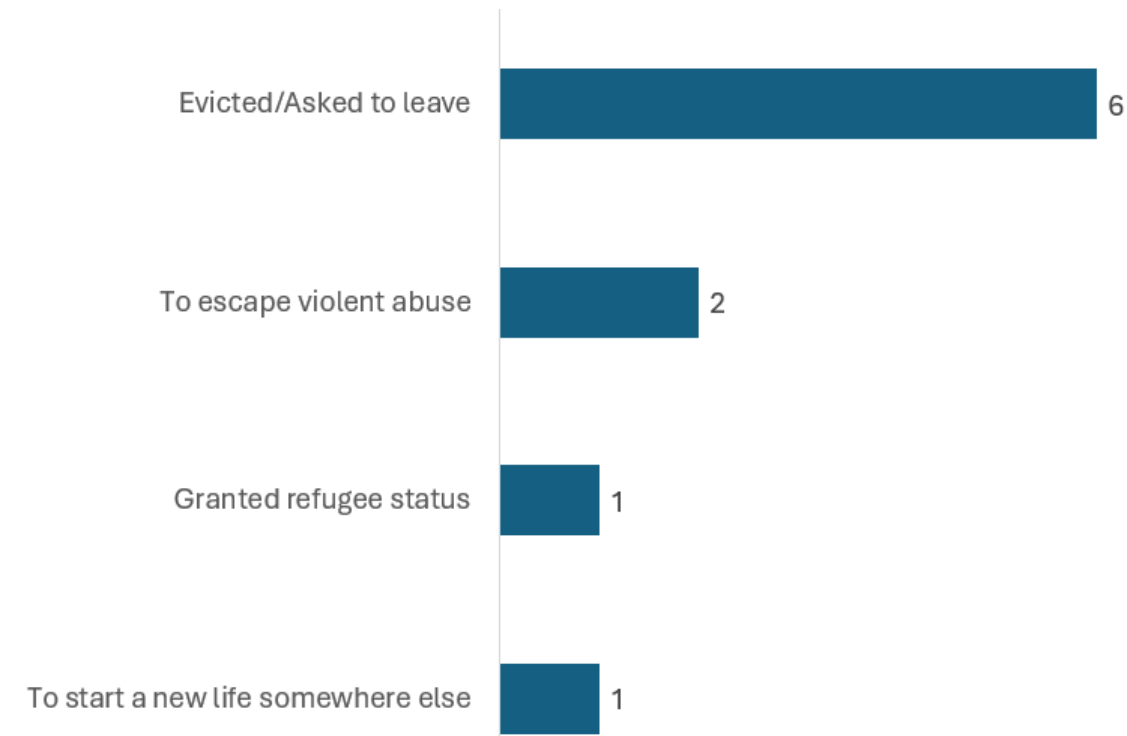
- Young people were most likely to have left stable accommodation because they were ‘asked to leave’ or ‘evicted’*. The next most common reasons for leaving were relationship breakdown and to escape violent abuse, both selected by 7 young people.

*We expect there is some overlap between these categories and that young people (or staff) were interpreting/using them inconsistently. This wouldn’t meet our definition of rough sleeping.

Journeys into homelessness

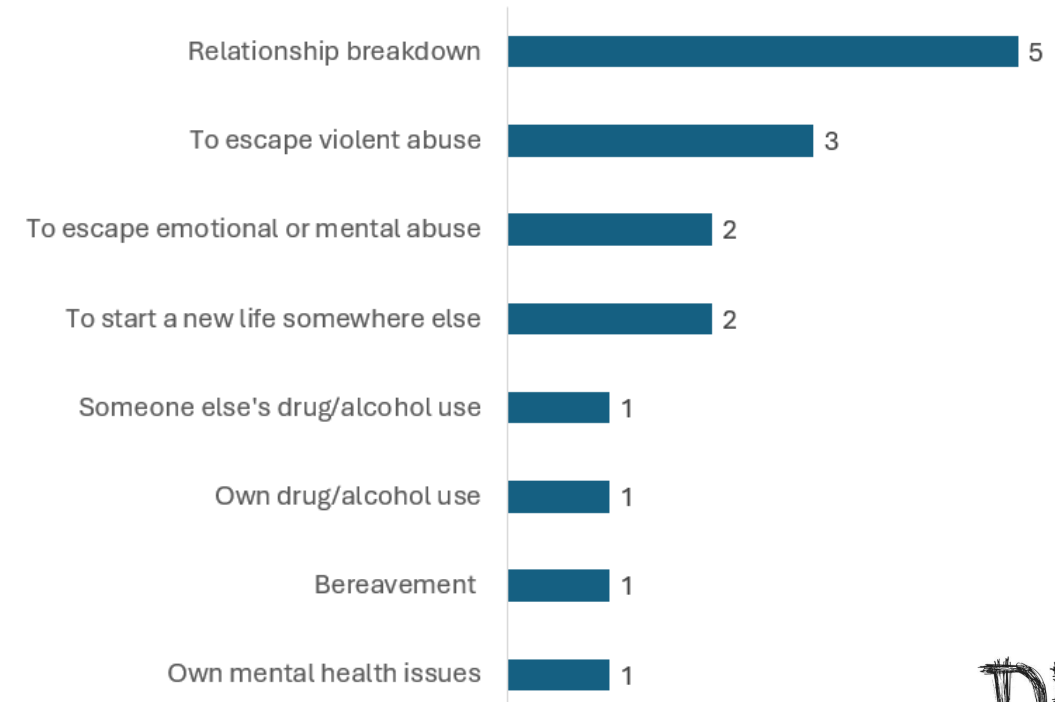
Reasons for leaving (when first slept rough)

- Those leaving asylum accommodation were most likely to have done so because they were asked to leave. Two young people said they had left asylum accommodation to escape violent abuse.



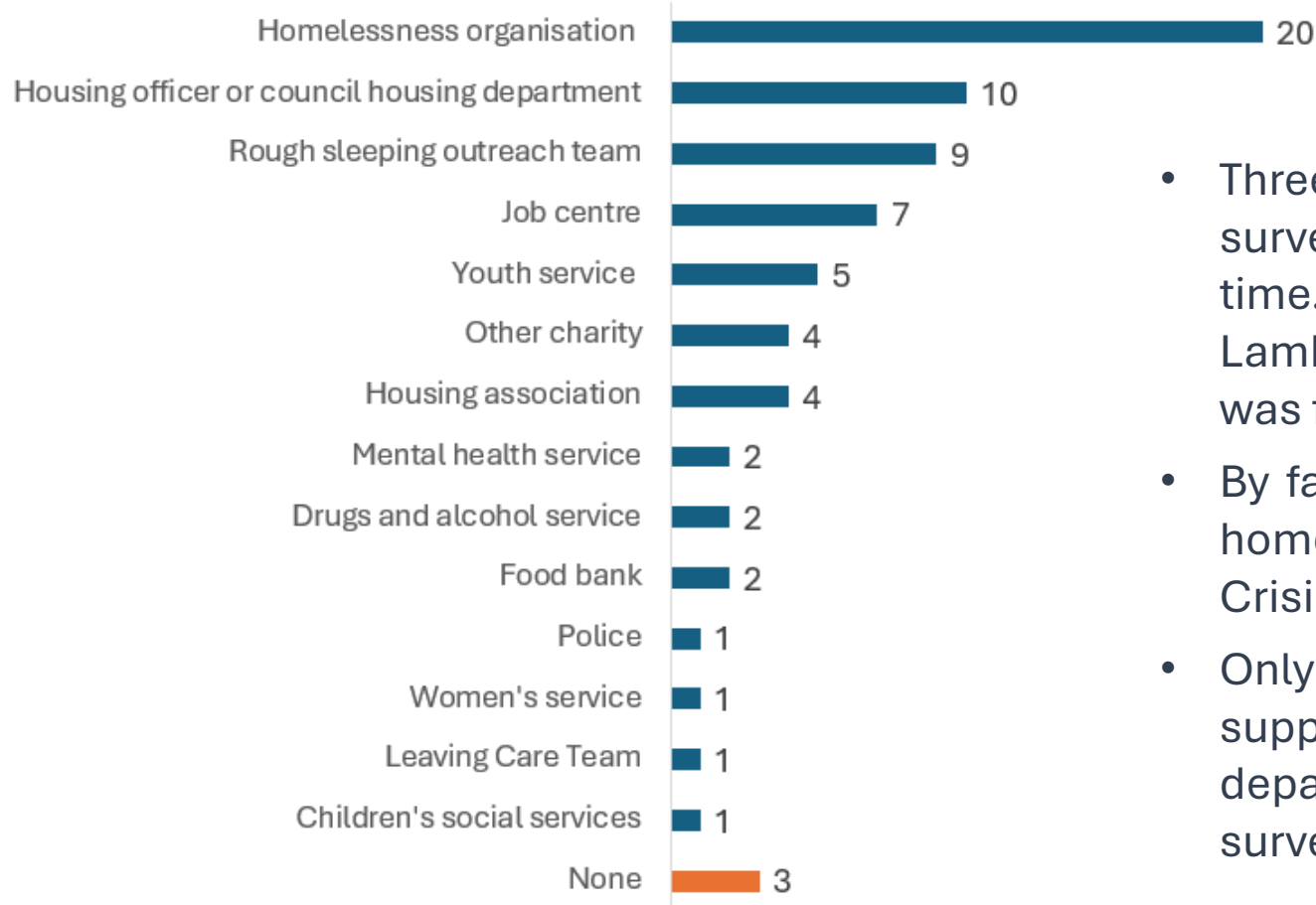
Base: All who left asylum accommodation (9)

- Reasons for young people leaving their family homes were more varied, with the most common reason being relationship breakdown (5) followed by a need to escape abuse – either violent (3) or emotional (2).



Base: All who left their family home (8)

Support being received



Base: All respondents (40)

- Three of the young people who completed the survey said they were receiving no support at the time. Two of these young people were from Lambeth (engaged by the outreach team) and one was from Camden*.
- By far the most common source of support was homelessness organisations (such as Depaul UK, Crisis or Centrepoint).
- Only 10 (25%) of the young people were being supported by the local authority housing department at the time they completed the survey.

*Note that the young person from Camden who said they weren't receiving any support engaged with the census through New Horizon Youth Centre. If they were being supported by the Centre, this suggests some inconsistency in how the question was answered.

Comparison to CHAIN

Were the young people reached by the census on CHAIN?

- 35 of the 40 young people who completed the census survey provided their name and date of birth. This information was gathered so that it could be cross-checked against the CHAIN database to see if young people were already on the system (i.e. been picked up by homelessness services).
- There was an exact match of the details of 17 of these young people on CHAIN. Because there was only a slight mismatch in the details (e.g. a slight difference in spelling) we can say that a further four young people were on CHAIN with high confidence.
- This leaves 14 young people – which is 40% of those who provided their details – who were not on CHAIN. We would not have expected two of these young people to be on CHAIN because they had not slept in places we would describe as ‘rough sleeping’*. However, 10 of the remaining 12 said they had ‘slept outside on the street’ during the three months prior to the census, one said they had slept at a bus or train station, and one said they had slept on a bus or train. All but one of these young people confirmed that they had rough slept in London at least at some point during the time period.
- This means our census reached 11 young people who said they had slept rough in the capital in the three months prior who had not been recorded on CHAIN.

*Both said they had only ‘sofa-surfed’ in the three months prior to completing the survey.

Were the young people reached by the census on CHAIN?

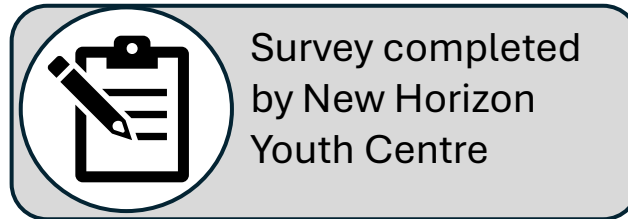
- Of the 11 young people we would have expected to be on CHAIN who were not:
 - five of these young people had slept rough for more than 30 nights in the three months prior to the census.
 - nine were from Camden and two were from Lambeth;
 - eight identified as male and three as female;
 - seven identified as heterosexual, three preferred not to give their sexual orientation and one was not asked; and
 - fewer than half (5) described their ethnicity as 'Black African', which means other ethnicities were overrepresented within this group.
- Interestingly, when they were asked where they were receiving support from, one young person said they were being supported by a rough sleeping outreach team.

Some important case examples

Case example 1: Elena (Respondent 6)

Young female (20) currently sleeping rough in the capital having been evicted from a hostel.

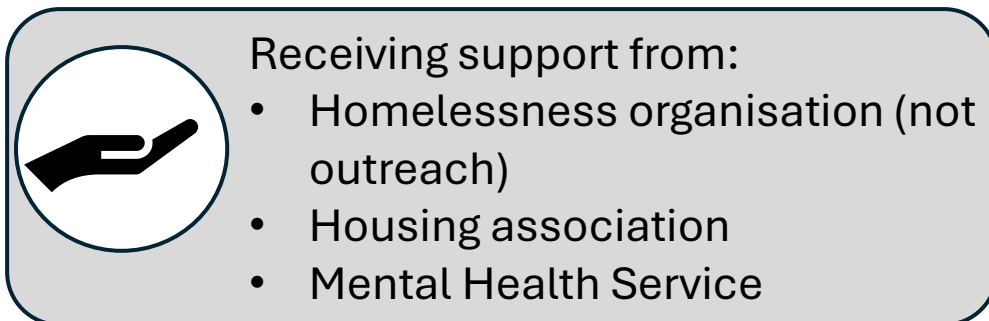
SURVEY COMPLETION:



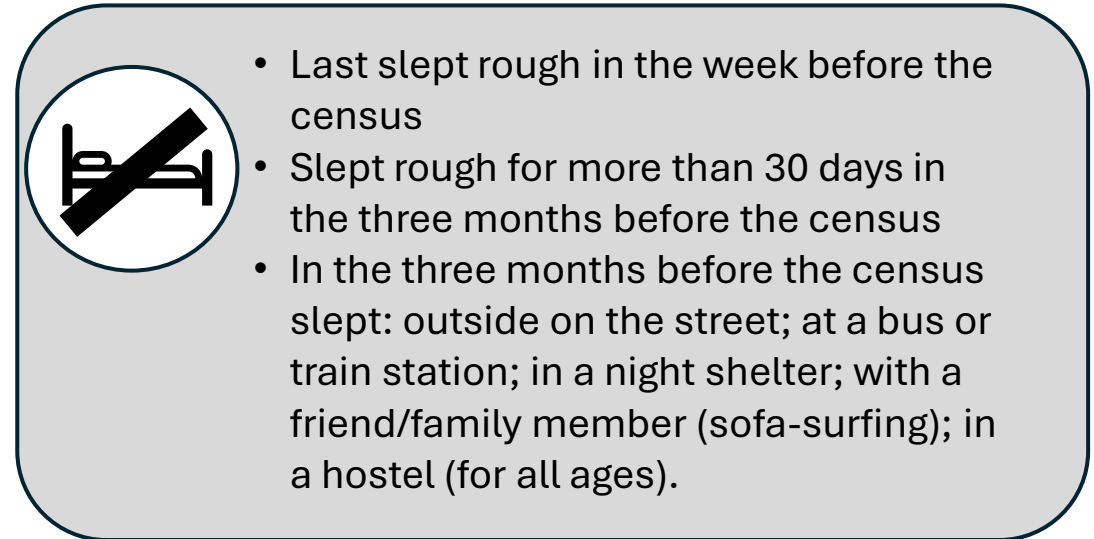
DEMOGRAPHICS:



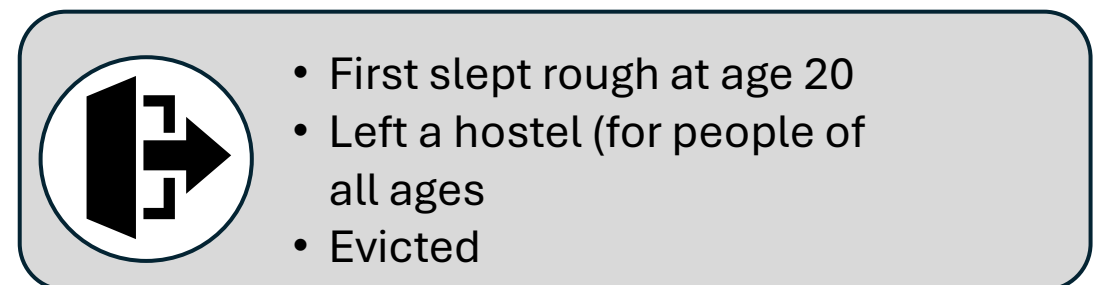
SUPPORT:



ROUGH SLEEPING IN 3 MONTHS PRIOR TO CENSUS:



JOURNEY INTO ROUGH SLEEPING:



Case example 2: David (Respondent 8)

**NOT on
CHAIN**

Young male (22) currently sleeping rough in the capital and NOT on CHAIN.

SURVEY COMPLETION:



Camden

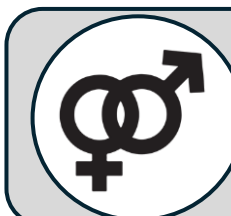


Survey completed by
New Horizon Youth
Centre

DEMOGRAPHICS:



22 yrs



Male



Asian

SUPPORT:



Receiving support from:

- Homelessness organisation
- Housing officer or council housing department.

ROUGH SLEEPING IN 3 MONTHS PRIOR TO CENSUS:



- Last slept rough the night before completing the census
- Slept rough every night in the three months before the census
- In the three months before the census slept: outside on the street; hostel (for all ages)*

JOURNEY INTO ROUGH SLEEPING:



- First slept rough at age 22
- B&B/hotel
- Evicted

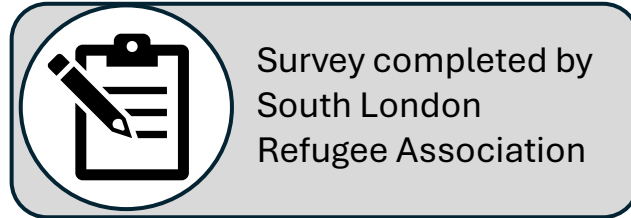
*Note that staying in a hostel during the three months is inconsistent with sleeping rough every night. This suggests some differences in how young people are defining 'sleeping rough'.

**NOT on
CHAIN**

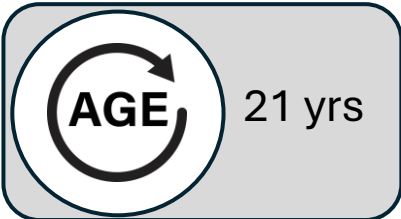
Case example 3: Kai (Respondent 15)

Young male (21) who slept rough in the capital having been evicted from asylum accommodation.

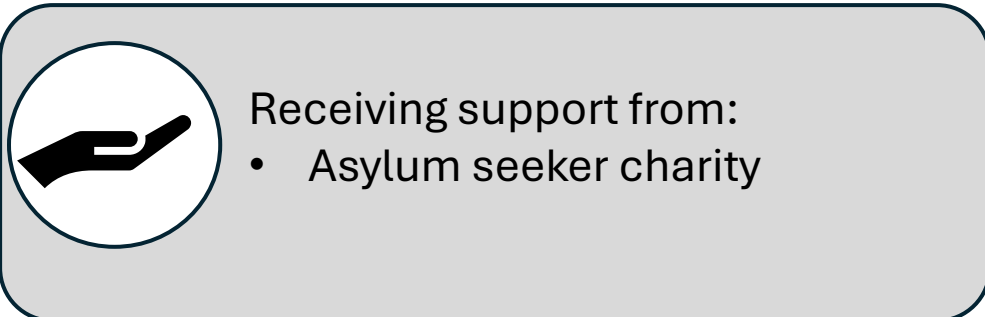
SURVEY COMPLETION:



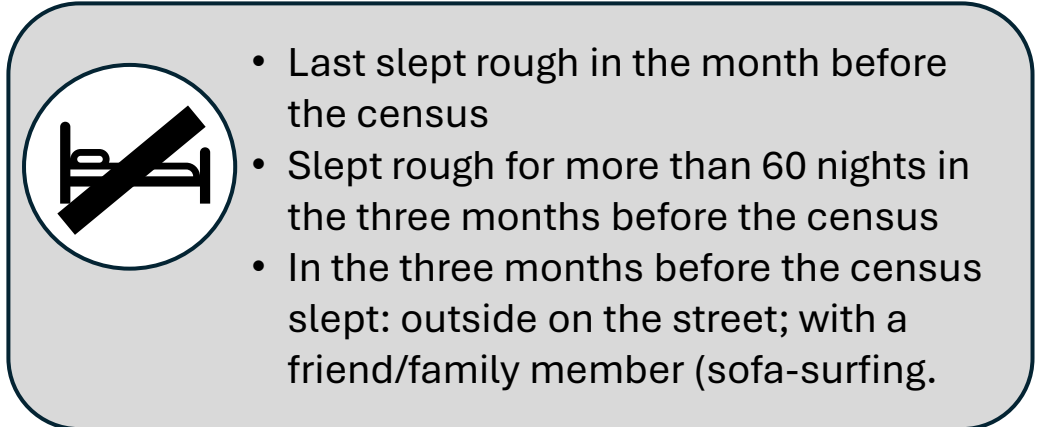
DEMOGRAPHICS:



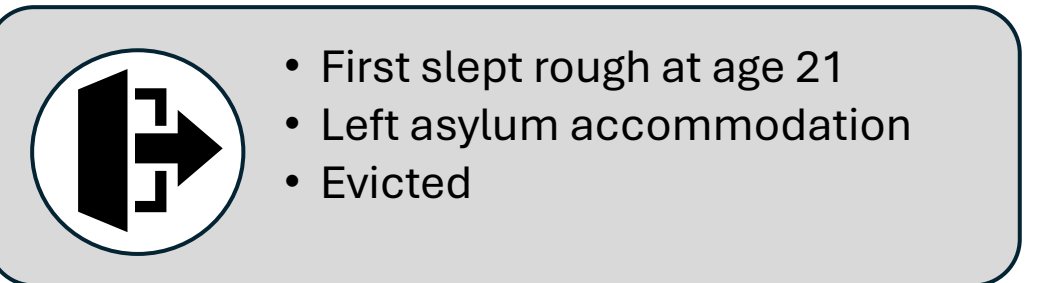
SUPPORT:



ROUGH SLEEPING IN 3 MONTHS PRIOR TO CENSUS:



JOURNEY INTO ROUGH SLEEPING:




Case example 4: Omari (Respondent 17)


Young male (24) who slept rough in the capital to escape violent abuse in asylum accommodation

SURVEY COMPLETION:


 Lambeth

 Survey completed by Thames Reach (outreach)

DEMOGRAPHICS:

 AGE 24 yrs


 Male

 Black: African

SUPPORT:

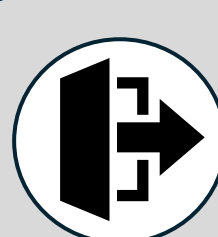
 Receiving support from:
• None

ROUGH SLEEPING IN 3 MONTHS PRIOR TO CENSUS:



- Last slept rough in the three months before the census
- Slept rough for more than 30 nights in the three months before the census
- In the three months before the census slept: outside on the street.

JOURNEY INTO ROUGH SLEEPING:



- First slept rough at age 23
- Left asylum accommodation
- Left to escape violent abuse