



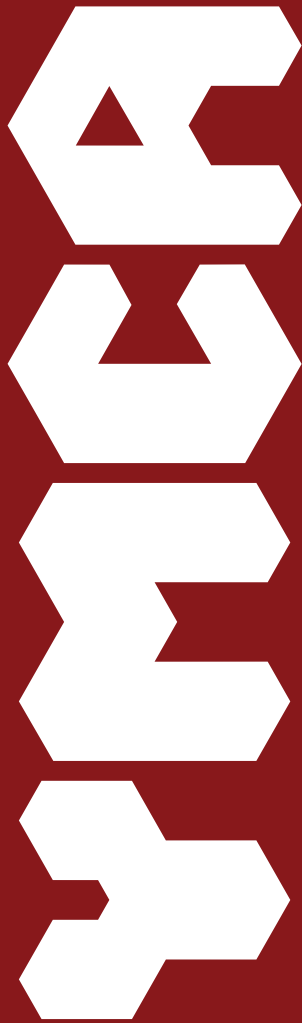
# Sleep Easy

A briefing paper on homelessness  
in England and Wales.

January 2019

## Methodology

This briefing paper was prepared by YMCA. The quantitative sample consisted of 285 young people who are homeless aged between 16 and 34 years-old from across England and Wales. To supplement this, YMCA also undertook qualitative research in the form of focus groups held in 11 different locations in England and Wales, with young people aged between 16 and 34 years-old. The fieldwork for this research was carried out between June and December 2018.



YMCA was established in 1844, and is the largest and oldest youth charity in the world, helping more than 65 million people in 120 countries. Here in England and Wales, 116 YMCAs work to transform 740 different communities.

YMCA is the largest charitable provider of supported housing for young people in England and Wales – providing more than 9,100 beds every night. Last year alone YMCA housed more than 18,000 homeless people.

YMCA offers a wide range of housing primarily targeted at young people who, for whatever reason, are unable to live independently and need both accommodation and support.

The young people YMCA supports include those who are homeless, vulnerable, care-leavers, ex-offenders, or have young children.

## Key Findings

Wanting a place to call home is a natural desire and a basic human right. However, the number of people affected by homelessness each year in England and Wales is considerable and growing.

Given the nature of homelessness, getting an accurate handle on its true scale is always difficult, but there are a range of measures which begin to express the reality of the problem.

Based on official government statistics, in autumn 2017 the total number of people were sleeping rough in England was 4,751.<sup>1</sup> This represents an increase of 169% since 2010 and a 33% increase since 2015. In Wales, 345 people were found to be sleeping rough in autumn 2017, which marks a 44% increase since 2015.<sup>2</sup>

# 5,000

More than 5,000 people slept rough in England and Wales last year

Last year, in total more than 5,000 people were estimated to have slept rough across England and Wales.

# 60,000

Almost 60,000 people were declared homeless by local authorities in England and Wales last year

As well as those sleeping rough, many more people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness approach local authorities for support. Last year, 56,600 households in England<sup>3</sup> and 2,229 in Wales<sup>4</sup> approaching local authorities were found to be statutory homelessness.

While this represents a slight decrease (-2%) since 2015, since 2010 the numbers assessed as being homeless in England has increased by 28%. In Wales, the number has increased by 38% since 2015.

In addition to this, 82,310 households in England<sup>5</sup> and 2,142 households in Wales<sup>6</sup> were deemed homeless as a result of living in temporary and insecure forms of housing such as bed and breakfast hotels and hostels.

# 85,000

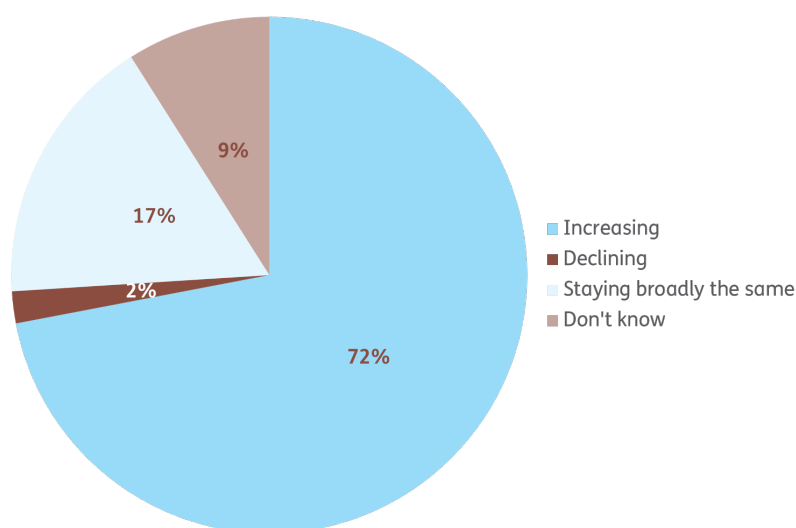
Nearly 85,000 households were living in temporary accommodation across England and Wales last year

In England this marks an increase of 63% since 2010 and an increase of 23% since 2015. While in Wales, the increase in households living in temporary accommodation has been 13% since 2015.

The rising numbers of people finding themselves homeless has not gone unnoticed among the general public.

The recognition of the growing problem facing England and Wales was reflected in a poll conducted by YouGov last year, which found that more than seven in 10 of the population (72%) thought that the numbers of homeless people were rising.<sup>7</sup>

*From what you have seen and read, do you think that the numbers of homeless people are...?*



Looking over a longer period of time, nearly half (47%) believed that there are more homeless people in their local area than there were 10 years ago.<sup>8</sup> In 2018, the proportion of the population believing housing was the biggest issue facing the country also reached its highest point since 1974, with one in five (22%) ranking housing as their top priority.<sup>9</sup>

In response to growing numbers of people experiencing homelessness, the governments in both England and Wales have begun taking action.

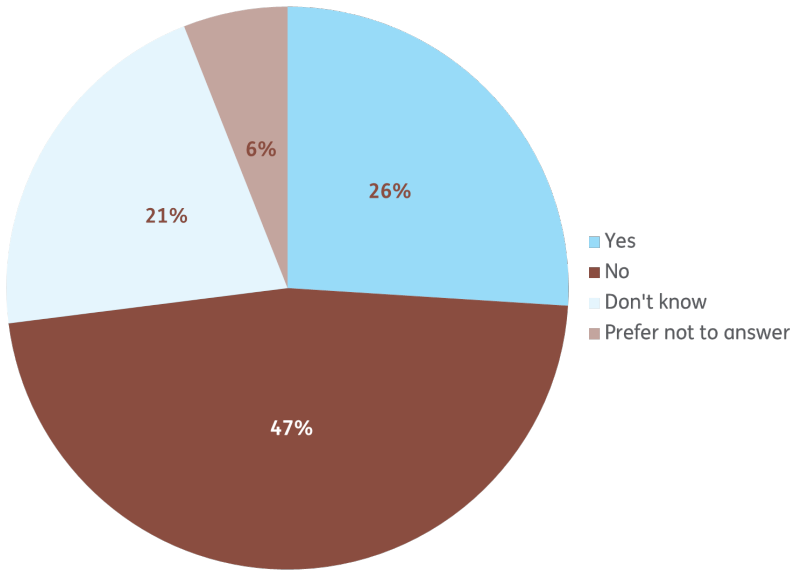
Coming into force in April 2018, the UK Parliament introduced the Homelessness Reduction Act, which enhanced the prevention duties placed on local authorities and was supported by an £72.7million in funding. This was also supplemented with a new Rough Sleeping Strategy which aims to halve rough sleeping by 2022.

Likewise in Wales, the Welsh Government has taken action by introducing the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and a subsequent Rough Sleeping Action Plan in 2017.

Despite the increased numbers affected, a higher press and public profile for the issue, and repeated Government announcements stating they are taking action, those young people faced with homelessness feel like they continue to be ignored and overlooked.

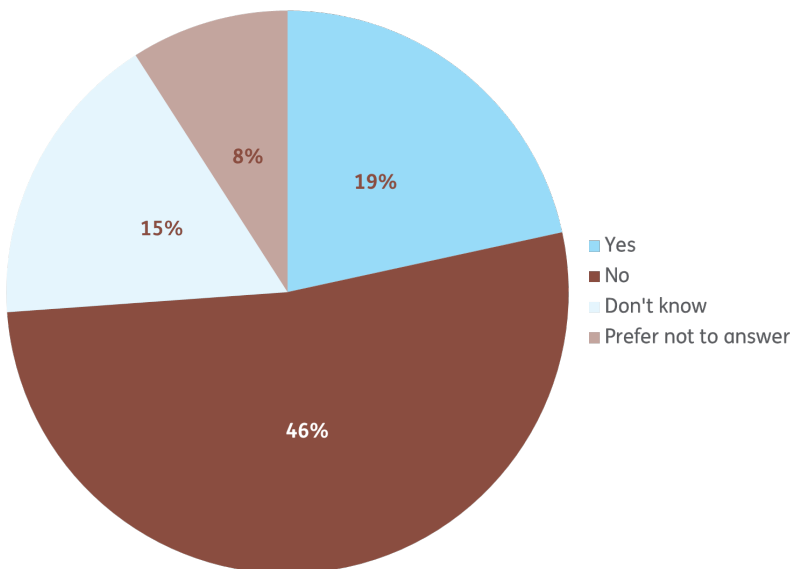
YMCA research found just one in four homeless young people who are homeless (26%) believed the public care about youth homelessness.

Do you think that people care about youth homelessness? (n=280)



When thinking about themselves and their personal situation, even fewer young people who are homeless believed the public are concerned. Less than one in five homeless young people (19%) believe the public care about their situation.

Do you think that people care about you being homeless? (n=280)



This sense that very few care about their plight suggests young people feel enough is still not being done to support them to avoid and escape homelessness.

**To address this wrong that is leaving young people who are homeless feeling abandoned and left behind, show you care by supporting YMCA to help young people who find themselves without a secure home to rebuild their lives.**

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, *Rough Sleeping in England*, January 2018
- <sup>2</sup> Welsh Government, *National Rough Sleeper Count*, February 2018
- <sup>3</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, *Statutory homelessness and homelessness prevention and relief*, December 2018
- <sup>4</sup> Welsh Government, *Statutory Homelessness: Prevention and Relief*, December 2018
- <sup>5</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, *Statutory homelessness and homelessness prevention and relief*, December 2018
- <sup>6</sup> Welsh Government, *Households in Temporary Accommodation*, December 2018
- <sup>7</sup> YouGov, *Can homelessness be eradicated?*, August 2018
- <sup>8</sup> YouGov, *Almost half of Brits believe homelessness has risen in their local area*, April 2018
- <sup>9</sup> Ipsos MORI, *Issues index*, December 2018

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YMCA enables people to develop their full potential in mind, body and spirit. Inspired by, and faithful to, our Christian values, we create supportive, inclusive and energising communities, where young people can truly belong, contribute and thrive.

SUPPORT & ADVICE

ACCOMMODATION

FAMILY WORK

HEALTH & WELLBEING

TRAINING & EDUCATION