



Homelessness & Ties To The Criminal Justice System
A Project by Connect Alloa, funded by Youth Scotland



Connect Alloa is a Registered Charity: SCIO Number: SC049028

Table of Contents

Page 03 - Introduction and Thanks

Page 04 - Facts and Figures

Page 07 - Appendix 1 – Table of answers

Page 16 - Appendix 2 - Conclusions

Page 17 - Appendix 3 – Perceived Homelessness *please note our disclaimer*

Page 18 - Sources

Introduction and Thanks

In the latest estimates for population in Alloa (based on figured from 2016), Alloa had a population size of 20,730. Our Survey only got a result back of 51 people however 3 did not give consent to use their information so we had to remove their information from our results. Had we had permission to use their results we would have had just short of 0.25% of people who live in Alloa providing us with their feedback and understanding of homelessness in the area.

This may not seem significant, but it has allowed us to take a very small sample size of all age ranges and consider what further research into this topic or another may look like, how we may improve our process and how we gather evidence.

We believe that at this stage, it is a small sample of people, but it is still enough to support our findings and show what is and is not understood and perceived when it comes to homelessness in our local area.

We want this information to be used in the future to help people learn and be aware of homelessness and how it can connect to the criminal justice system and hope it could serve as a paper made by people with an interest in the topic which will be easy to digest and understand.

We would like to say thank you to all participants who completed this questionnaire throughout Alloa, our community as a whole. We would also like to thank you, the reader, for taking the time to read our findings.

We would finally like to thank Youth Scotland for the funding provided to conduct this research and their understanding in it taking longer than expected due to restrictions placed upon our youth group due to Covid-19.

We believe that making people aware of their perceptions compared to facts as well as having information readily available about how homelessness links to the criminal justice system will allow people to understand the facts based on an understanding of statistics locally and further afield.

We Appreciate You.

- The Connect Alloa Team of Young People, Staff and Volunteers.

Facts and Figures

To begin our project, we had to start with some facts and figures to see what demographic of respondents we had and then gauge their understanding or perception of homelessness first locally, and then on a wider scale.

The questions we asked in a survey which was live for approximately 1 month had varying results and can be seen in full in Appendix 1.

We believe it is important to highlight the main results of each question asked and although the graphs highlight this well, we want to make the main points clear in text too.

Everyone agreed to our privacy & GDPR statement which we felt was essential to put in, even though no one gave any personal details. Information will be used for this report, and we felt that we as a group would like to know what our information was being used for so other people should have that same opportunity.

When asking the age of participants, the ages that were potentially underrepresented included the 10–15-year-olds (6.3%), 55–64-year-olds (4.2%) and 65+ age range (6.3%). Highest respondents were the 35–44-year-olds with almost 1/3 of the responses at 31.3% followed by the 45-54 age range with 22.9%. We believe that this may be the case as many parents and guardians (as well as general community supporters) fall into these age ranges and they will have seen us promoting our survey on social media where they follow on a personal or professional basis. Finally, almost 30% (29.2%) of 16–34-year-olds completed the survey to support us. We believe this age range ranked so high due to many of Connect Alloa's young people being 16+ as well as our volunteers and workers mainly meeting this demographic and we understand this was widely shared by team members who were likely to have similar aged friends.

An overwhelming 60.4% of people who answered our survey identified as female, 35.4% identified as male and 4.2% either identified as 'nonbinary / other' or preferred not to disclose their gender.

When asked 'Do you think homelessness is an issue locally' 62.5% of people had the opinion that yes, it was. 20.8% did not think homelessness was an issue and 16.7% of respondents were unsure whether it was or was not. In discussions as we decided on what questions to ask the community, we discovered that our opinions as a group varied based on who we knew, things we had seen and even our understanding of homelessness, so it is understandable that the results to this question were so varied.

The next question was 'Have you ever known anyone who has been at risk of becoming homeless or who was homeless?' with a high percentage (62.5%) of people saying yes, 31.3% of people saying no and 6.3% of people being unsure. These are being taken as facts as they have been answered by individuals, but we would like to note that this question again depends on their knowledge of a person who may have been at risk of becoming homeless as well as the definition of homelessness. We wonder upon reflection that had we provided a definition of homelessness, these results may have been different.

Upon asking 'How many homeless applications in Clackmannanshire do you think there were between April 1 2019 and March 31 2020?' 56.3% of people thought '251-500', one third (33.3%) thought it was 501-750 people and the remaining 10.4% of people thought the answer was 1-250 people.

Clackmannanshire Council received 523 homeless applications between April 1 2019 and March 31, 2020 meaning that only 1/3 of all participants either knew or guessed correctly. 66.7% of people thought that less people had or needed to declare themselves homeless than actually did.

Next, we asked 'How many of these applications were deemed to be homeless?'. With the correct answer being 424 applications, most guessed that it was less that were deemed to be homeless with 62.5% of people saying it was only 1-250 people and 8.3% of people thinking it was more than 500, voting for 501-750 people. Around a third (29.2% of people answered in the accurate range of 251-500 people).

The next question was 'How many homeless people per 1000 people do you believe live in Clackmannanshire?'. Results varied, with 25% thinking that it was only 5 out of every 1000 people in Clacks who were homeless, 27.1% thinking it was higher at 15 people to every 1000 and 47.9% of respondents answering with the correct value of 10 people per 1000.

We were very glad to see our next question answered correctly by so many people. It was asked 'Do you know where to go if you needed to declare yourself as homeless?' and 91.7% of people knew the correct answer which was Kilncraigs Council Offices in Alloa and only 8.3% of people thinking it was either your GP, a local police station or a local MP.

When asking what rate of homelessness Clackmannanshire has, the answer is unfortunately third. This has only very recently changed, and we it used to be second. We have the third highest rate of homelessness in Scotland behind only Glasgow City and West Dunbartonshire. 35.4% of people who responded knew or guessed correctly but this left 64.6% of people who thought we were 7th or 23rd. it is an unfortunate statistic and one that will hopefully help people realise how serious an issue homelessness is locally.

We asked next 'Of the total number of homelessness/at risk of homelessness cases, how many included children and young people?' and exactly half of the people answered that it was 136 cases and a further 29.2% of people answering 82 cases included children and young people.

This means that only 20.8% of people correctly identified the correct answer being the highest one possible to guess – 174 cases of people either homeless or at risk of homelessness included children or young people.

As we start to move into **how** homelessness ties into the criminal justice system now we referred to 'The Hard Edges Scotland research' and asked how many people were found to experience a combination of offending, substance misuse **and** homelessness within one year?

66.7% of people guessed one of the answers that were lower than the actual answer of 28,800 people, suggesting a lack of knowledge or understanding around how many people are affected by not just homelessness but the things that can go hand in hand with being homeless such as offending and substance issue.

Linking prison to homelessness we asked 'HM Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) found that ___% of people were released into homelessness in 2018-19, making them almost twice as likely to reoffend'

The majority of people actually overestimated the correct percentage, with 41.7% guessing it was 45% of people. The correct answer was actually 35% and there was still over 1/3rd of participants who answered this accurately.

When asked 'Recent research commissioned found that ___% of homeless people have committed "imprisonable offences" to spend a night in the cells rather than be on the streets.', the correct

answer was the lowest option of 20% which was answered correctly by 27.1% of respondents but the option of 60% of homeless people were committing crimes to get back into jail was equally answered. This left 45.8% of people under the impression that **double** the amount of people were seeking reimprisonment rather than spending another night on the streets.

No matter the answers to questions like this, providing answers does not make things more understandable. This has left us lots to think about. Not just why, but what kind of crimes, how this will affect them in their lives, what they must be going through and what we can or should be doing to help make things better.

Further research showed that 30% of people released from prison have nowhere to live (which may lead to more instances of individuals reoffending). 66.7% of [people who answered our questionnaire answered this correctly.

97.1% of people answering our survey answered 'yes' to the question 'Research suggests that being on the streets increases the likelihood that young people will be vulnerable to violence and susceptible to becoming involved in gang activity. The other 2.1% of people answered unsure. This statistic shows that people answering are aware of the connection between being homeless and becoming increasingly vulnerable and potential links to violence and gang activities.

Another question which was answered correctly by the majority with 77.1% of people saying 'yes' to the question 'It is believed that if every part of the justice system interacts with people at risk of homelessness, they can play a part in prevention of not only homelessness, but any risk of crime.'

When asked 'In America, local jurisdictions are increasingly implementing policies that criminalise activities associated with homelessness like sleeping in public and living in vehicles.' 1/3rd of people answering that they were unsure (33.3%), 8.3% thought this was false and 58.3% answered correctly that this statement was true.

The next question was 'the Social Exclusion Unit found a reduction in relapses into criminal behaviour of ___% when people were given a tenancy, compared to when they were released into homelessness?' 39.6% of people answered this correctly by answering that it was a reduction of 20% of people.

We asked next, '___% of people accessing homeless accommodation projects have had recent contact with the criminal justice system?'. 41.7% of people answered correctly by saying that it was 23% of people that were accessing homeless accommodation which had had recent contact with the criminal justice system.

Upon asking 'People always leave the same prison as they started their sentence so have easy access to their belongings such as ID upon being released.' 85.1% of people answered correctly by saying 'false'. Unfortunately, many people are moved around between prisons during their sentence. Often the belongings they entered with do not follow so, when released, they may be without key possessions, such as ID and other paperwork necessary for access to housing.

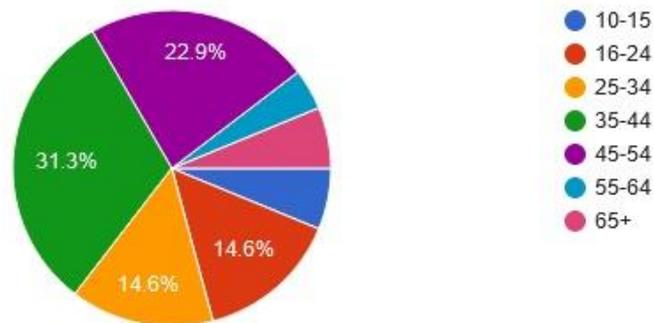
Lastly, we asked 'About ___ of people in prisons lose their housing on imprisonment.'. The potential answers were 1/4, 1/3 and 1/2. 52.1% of people overestimated by choosing '1/2', 16.7% chose the lower statistic of '1/4' and 31.3% people chose the correct statistic of '1/3'.

Appendix 1 – Table of answers

Question 1:

What is your age

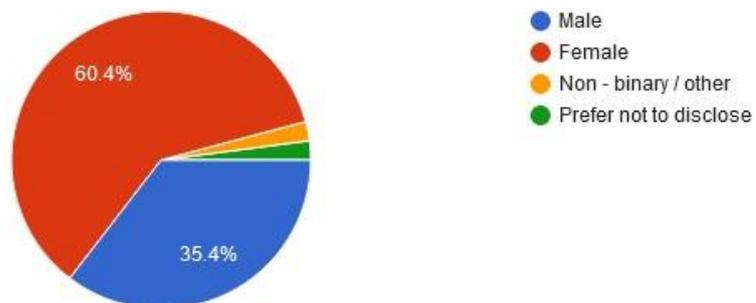
48 responses



Question 2:

What describes you best?

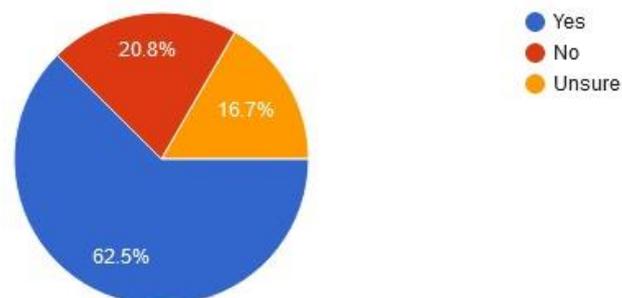
48 responses



Question 3.

Do you think homelessness is a large issue locally?

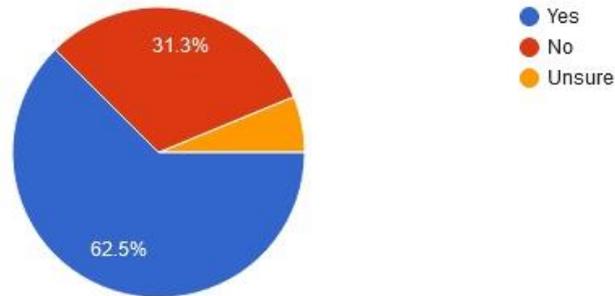
48 responses



Question 4.

Have you ever known anyone who has been at risk of becoming homeless or who was homeless?

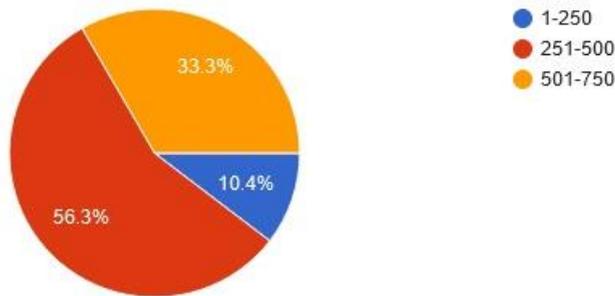
48 responses



Question 5.

How many homeless applications in Clackmannanshire do you think there were between April 1 2019 and March 31 2020?

48 responses

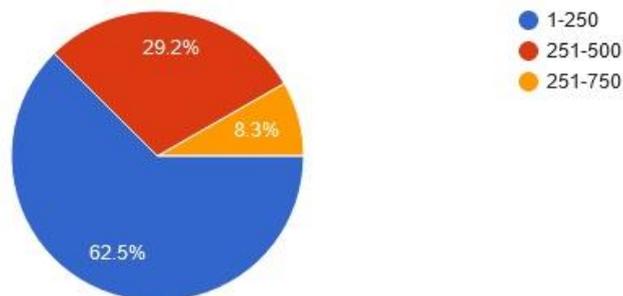


Answer : 523 homeless applications

Question 6.

How many of these applications were deemed to be homeless?

48 responses

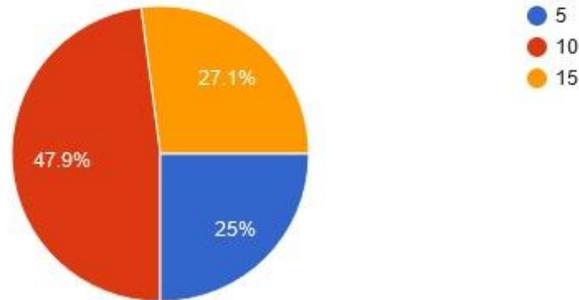


Answer : 424 applications

Question 7.

How many homeless people per 1000 people do you believe live in Clackmannanshire?

48 responses

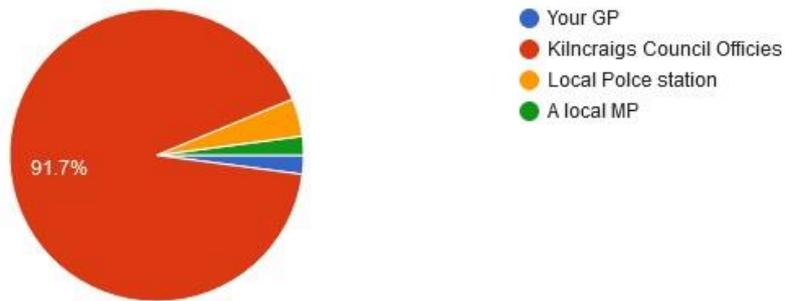


Answer : 10

Question 8.

Do you know where to go if you needed to declare yourself as homeless?

48 responses

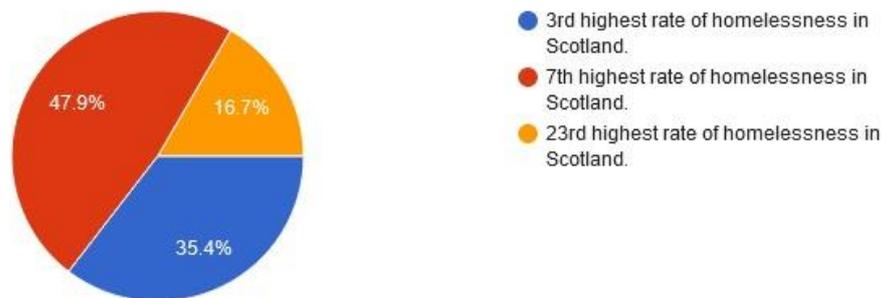


Answer : Kilncraigs Council Offices

Question 9.

Clackmannanshire has the...

48 responses

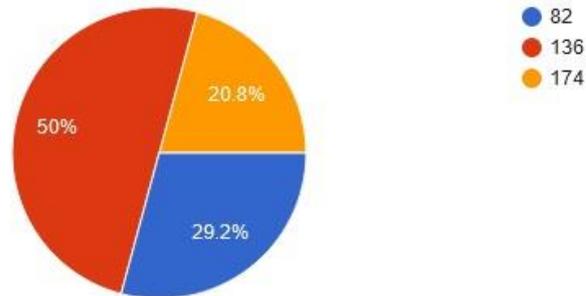


Answer : 3rd highest rate of homelessness in Scotland

Question 10.

Of the total number of homelessness/at risk of homelessness cases, how many included children and young people?

48 responses

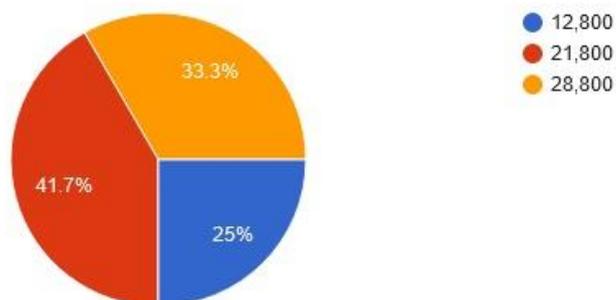


Answer : 174

Question 11.

According to research from The Hard Edges Scotland, how many people experience a combination of offending, substance misuse and homelessness within one year?

48 responses

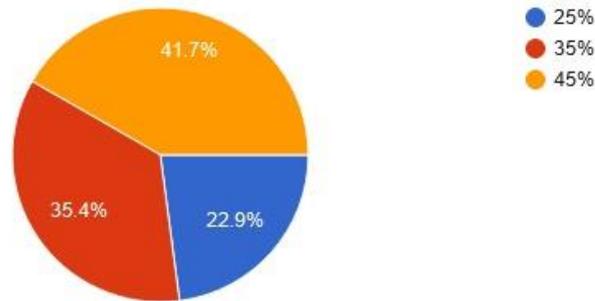


Answer : 28,000

Question 12.

HM Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) found that __% of people were released from prison into homelessness in 2018-19, making them almost twice as likely to reoffend.

48 responses

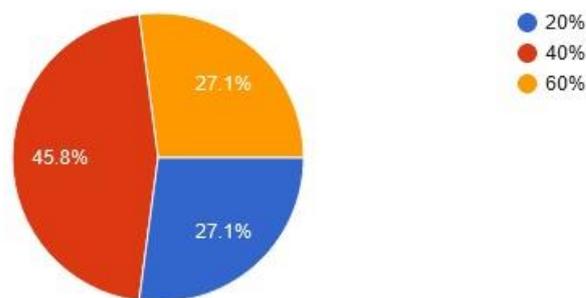


Answer : 35%

Question 13.

Recent research commissioned found that __% of homeless people have committed "imprisonable offences" to spend a night in the cells rather than be on the streets.

48 responses

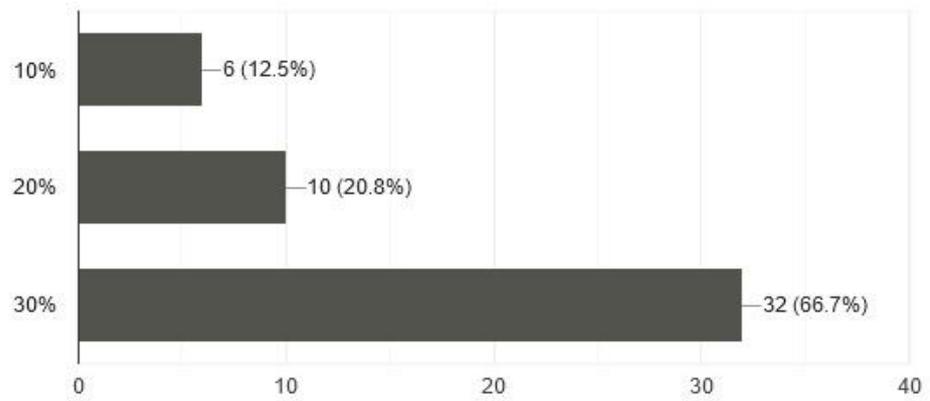


Answer : 20%

Question 14.

Further research showed that ___% of people released from prison have nowhere to live (which may lead to more instances of individuals reoffending)

48 responses



Answer : 30%

Question 15.

Research suggests that being on the streets increases the likelihood that young people will be vulnerable to violence and susceptible to becoming involved in gang activity.

48 responses

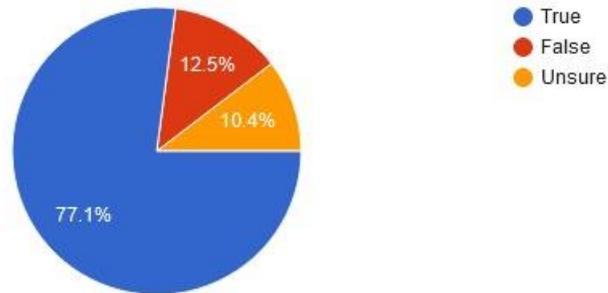


Answer : True

Question 16.

It is believed that if every part of the justice system interacts with people at risk of homelessness, they can play a part in prevention of not only homelessness, but any risk of crime.

48 responses

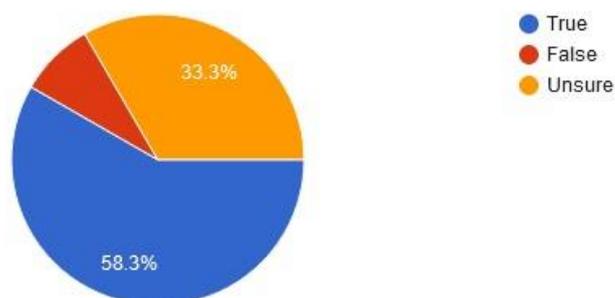


Answer : True

Question 17.

In America, local jurisdictions are increasingly implementing policies that criminalise activities associated with homelessness like sleeping in public and living in vehicles.

48 responses

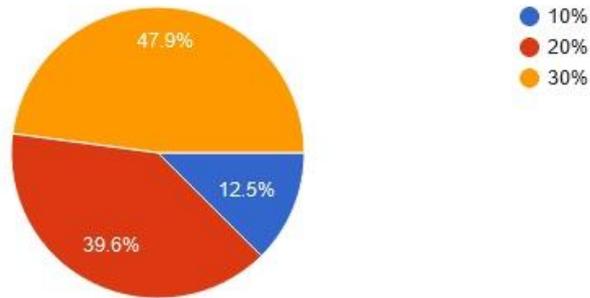


Answer : True

Question 18.

the Social Exclusion Unit found a reduction in relapses into criminal behaviour of __% when people were given a tenancy, compared to when they were released into homelessness?

48 responses

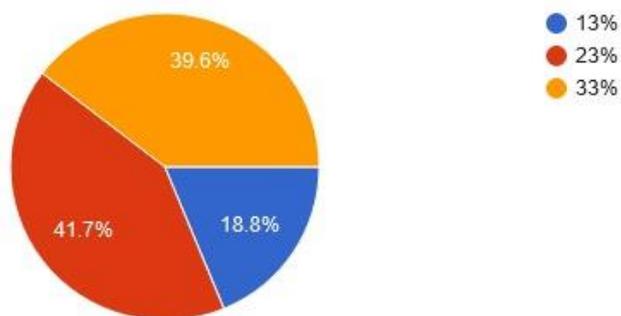


Answer : 20%

Question 19.

__% .of people accessing homeless accommodation projects have had recent contact with the criminal justice system?

48 responses

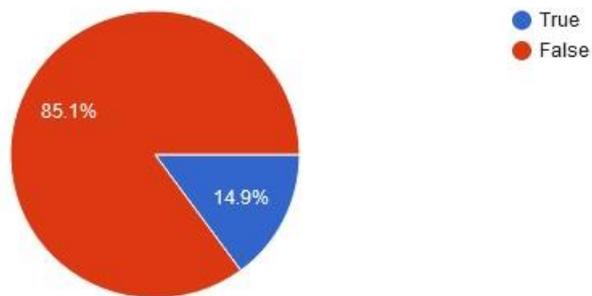


Answer : 23%

Question 20.

People always leave the same prison as they started their sentence so have easy access to their belongings such as ID upon being released.

47 responses



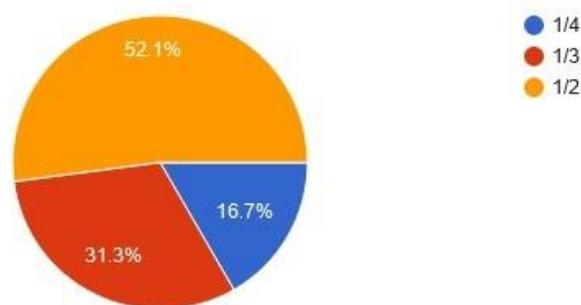
Answer : False

Many people are moved around between prisons during their sentence. Often the belongings they entered with do not follow so, when released, they may be without key possessions, such as ID and other paperwork necessary for access to housing.

Question 21.

About ___ of people in prisons lose their housing on imprisonment.

48 responses



Answer : 1/3

Appendix 2 – Conclusions

Much of our questionnaire was open to interpretation and more to make people realise the facts upon reading this paper. We understand that people interpret homelessness differently or their understanding of it will differ from another person in the community but we hope people will see the results and think about how big of a topic homelessness and how it connects with the criminal justice system. Quotes like the one below, although not a local statistic

Nearly 30% [of homeless people] admitted to committing a “minor crime such as shoplifting or anti-social behaviour” in the hope of being taken into custody for the night and a fifth of those questioned said they had avoided being given bail or committed “an imprisonable offence with the express purpose of receiving a custodial sentence as a means to resolving their housing problems”.
<https://www.kent.ac.uk/news/society/21449/expert-comment-youth-homelessness-a-major-factor-in-uk-knife-crime-rise>

After reading “ People sleeping on the street are almost 17 times more likely to have been victims of violence and 15 times more likely to have suffered verbal abuse in the past year compared to the general public” It shows that there is not only violence and offences caused by homeless people but there is abuse in many forms directed at them by all kinds of people.
<https://www.crisis.org.uk/about-us/latest-news/new-research-reveals-the-scale-of-violence-against-rough-sleepers/>

We discovered that only a minority of homeless people will become involved in offending but spending time in prison increases the risk of homelessness and then a lack of stable accommodation can increase the risk of (re-)offending. This tells us that it only takes one incident that leads to you being put in prison to put you at risk of reoffending.

During our research we found that each year in Scotland:

- 5,700 adults experience three ‘core’ forms of severe and multiple disadvantage (homelessness, offending and substance dependency)
- 28,800 experience two out of these three
- 156,700 experience one of these three
- Higher rates of extreme disadvantage are found in urban compared to rural areas
- Glasgow, West Dunbartonshire, Clackmannanshire, Dundee, North Ayrshire, and Aberdeen City show high prevalence of people experiencing ‘core’ forms of severe and multiple disadvantage
- Affluent, suburban towns and the Highlands and Islands have lower rates.

We realised as a group that understanding of homelessness and its ties to the criminal justice system can come down to knowledge and awareness and although we differed as a group when it came to our experiences and knowledge of both homelessness and its ties to the criminal justice system, we also felt that the learning has been a journey and it has opened our eyes. Seeing information alongside personal opinions has helped us understand the importance of this piece of work and hopefully the impact it can have on those who read it.

Appendix 3 – Perceived Homelessness *please note our disclaimer*

Disclaimer

As summarised previously, homelessness and people involved in the criminal justice system are pictured differently by different people. We do not believe that any 2 people would describe the same thing however we have collated some opinions and quotes from the gathering of data.

If you have been affected by homelessness, the reading of this material may come across as judgemental or stereotypical however it is not our intention to hurt anyone's feelings or discriminate, we simply feel it is important to be honest about our levels of knowledge and how this changed throughout the research as we feel that for many readers it will have had a similar impact.

Thank you for understanding.

What does stereotypical homelessness look like in our heads (and what are ways homelessness looks like when thinking about criminal behaviour?)

Through conversations and when looking at information online, google searches and in papers there was a stereotypical image that consisted of a person with some of the following characteristics:

- They may sleep in a box, under a passageway or they may be a squatter
- They could break and enter to find somewhere warm
- They did not have a change of clothes and sat in a sleeping bag
- Some homeless people had pet dogs
- You could be homeless but stay on a friend's sofa
- They might carry a weapon for protection
- They might do drugs
- They might drink alcohol
- They usually have a hoodie or jacket on
- Some people sell the big issue
- Alloa has lots of people that are suspected drug and alcohol abusers who are also thought to be homeless or at risk of homelessness

What can we do to help?

- Buy them a food
- Donate to a charity
- Maybe Connect could raise funds?
- Give food vouchers
- Try not to judge
- Remember we aren't in their shoes
- If we could help more homeless people find homes and jobs maybe there would be less concerns around criminal behaviour

Sources

Below are a list of all the sources we used to come up with questions, make ourselves more informed around the topic and write a short report.

<https://www.qni.org.uk/resources/homelessness-criminal-justice-system-2/>

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/news/society/21449/expert-comment-youth-homelessness-a-major-factor-in-uk-knife-crime-rise>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/sep/18/slavery-homelessness-gangs-immigration-europe>

<https://www.crisis.org.uk/about-us/latest-news/new-research-reveals-the-scale-of-violence-against-rough-sleepers/>

<https://www.alloaadvertiser.com/news/19423680.clacks-third-highest-homeless-rate-country/>

<https://www.homeless.org.uk/working-with-prison-leavers>

<https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwiPys2BgJLxAhVC5AKHQTCUQQFjAJegQIBBAD&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.scot%2Fbinaries%2Fcontent%2Fdocuments%2Fgovscot%2Fpublications%2Fstatistics%2F2020%2F08%2Fhomelessness-scotland-2019-2020%2Fdocuments%2Fhomelessness-scotland-2019-20%2Fhomelessness-scotland-2019-20%2Fgovscot%253Adocument%2Fhomelessness-scotland-2019-20.pdf&usg=AOvVaw3ExfSe6oPdwhh2iqR2yNai>

https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwiPys2BgJLxAhVC5AKHQTCUQQFjARegQIEhAE&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.crisis.org.uk%2Fmedia%2F241620%2Fcriminal-justice-briefing-final.pdf&usg=AOvVaw0PJ4_GIZVxfEDsahhdN5e4

<https://www.qni.org.uk/resources/homelessness-criminal-justice-system-2/#:~:text=Further%20research%20showed%20that%2030,that%20of%20the%20general%20population.>

<https://lankellychase.org.uk/resources/publications/hard-edges-scotland/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2010/dec/23/homeless-committing-crimes-for-shelter>

<https://lankellychase.org.uk/resources/publications/hard-edges-scotland/>

<https://www.clacks.gov.uk/council/populationsettlement/>