

Attitudes to Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

Oxfordshire Community Foundation (OCF) commissioned research on attitudes to homelessness and rough sleeping from YouGov on behalf of Oxford Homeless Movement.

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2,023 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 5th - 8th April 2019. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+). A boost for Oxfordshire of an extra 126 respondents, which has been weighted and representative of all Oxfordshire adults has been quoted separately, only where it is statistically correct to do so. As Oxfordshire was very consistent with the national picture this report quotes mostly from the national data. Significant variations for Oxfordshire compared with the national picture are highlighted.

Oxford Homeless Movement is a budding partnership of public, private and charitable organisations aiming to tackle the problem of rough sleeping in the city. The research responses on who should be responsible for tackling the issue of homelessness fits with this partnership idea. By working together, Oxford Homeless Movement aims to help people off the streets and keep them off the streets.

An Opportunity to Connect with a Community that Cares

Summary

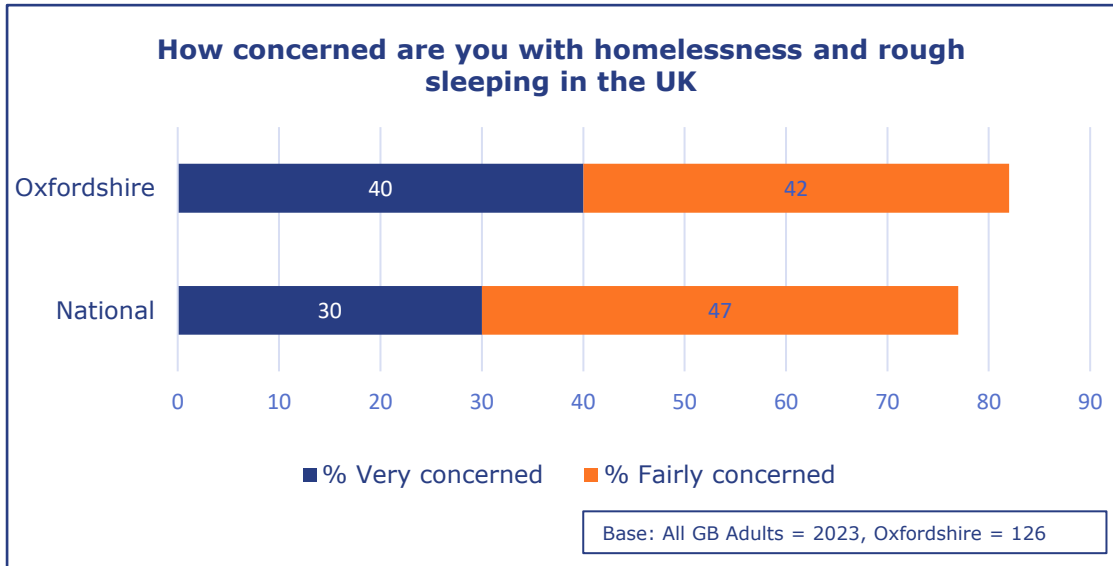
The research establishes a benchmark on attitudes to homelessness and rough sleeping nationally and in Oxfordshire. Key points are:

- People in Britain and in Oxfordshire do care about homelessness in the UK. 30% are “very concerned about it” nationally, this increases to **40% in Oxfordshire**.
- People are not clear about *who is helping* to tackle the issue of homelessness and rough sleeping in the UK – with 37% saying ‘nobody’ or ‘they do not know’ (14% and 23% respectively).
- Shelter has the largest number recognising its contribution unprompted with 26% followed by Charities in general at 15%. Few people see Local Government (7%) or Central Government (4%) as helping
- When asked *who are responsible* for helping with the issue from a prompted list there was a clearer view with 67% saying Central Government and 65% saying their Local Council and 50% saying charities.
- These numbers were higher in Oxfordshire with 71% saying Central Government, 68% their Local Council and 55% charities. This fits with the aim of Oxford Homeless Movement – that has these groups working together.
- There is untapped potential for donations and volunteering. Far more people say they would consider both than say they have done them. **41% of people in Oxfordshire** would be willing to donate money to a homeless organisation in the future compared to 35% nationally.
- 19% of British adults would give money directly to people on the street if they walked past them. More would buy them food or drink at 30% but a similar number would ignore them (29%). Part of the role of Oxford Homeless Movement is help the public understand where they can help.

Key Findings

1. People Care

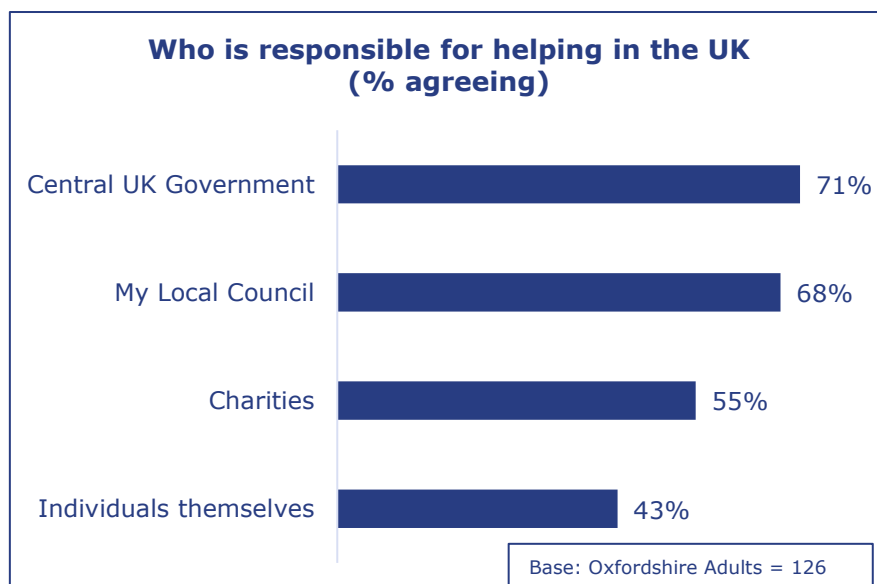
The vast majority say they do care about homelessness and rough sleeping. This is consistent across age, social class and gender. 78% are concerned nationally, increasing to 82% for Oxfordshire.



2. A shared responsibility is recognised but there is confusion about who is helping.

When asked to name "who if anyone have you heard *is helping* to tackle this issue?" a large proportion of British adults (37%) either don't know or specifically state "nobody" (14% and 23% respectively). Shelter has the largest number recognising its contribution with 26% followed by charities in general at 15%. Few people see Local Government (7%) or Government (4%) as helping.

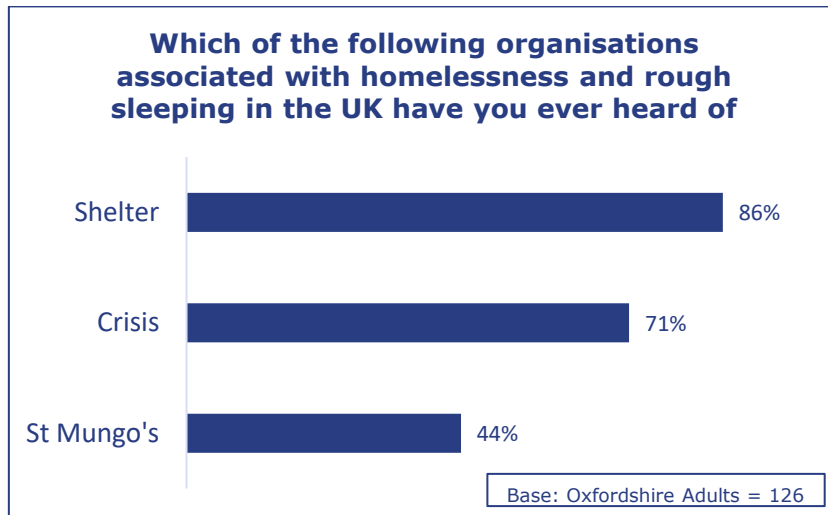
When asked "who *is responsible* for helping" (from a prompted list) there was a clearer view of where responsibility lies and that it is shared among different agencies with National and Local Government, charities and the individuals themselves having a role to play. These numbers were higher in Oxfordshire, than nationally, with 71% saying Central Government, 68% their Local Council and 55% charities (compared to the national level of 67%, 65% and 50% respectively).



3. Shelter “owns” homelessness in the public mind

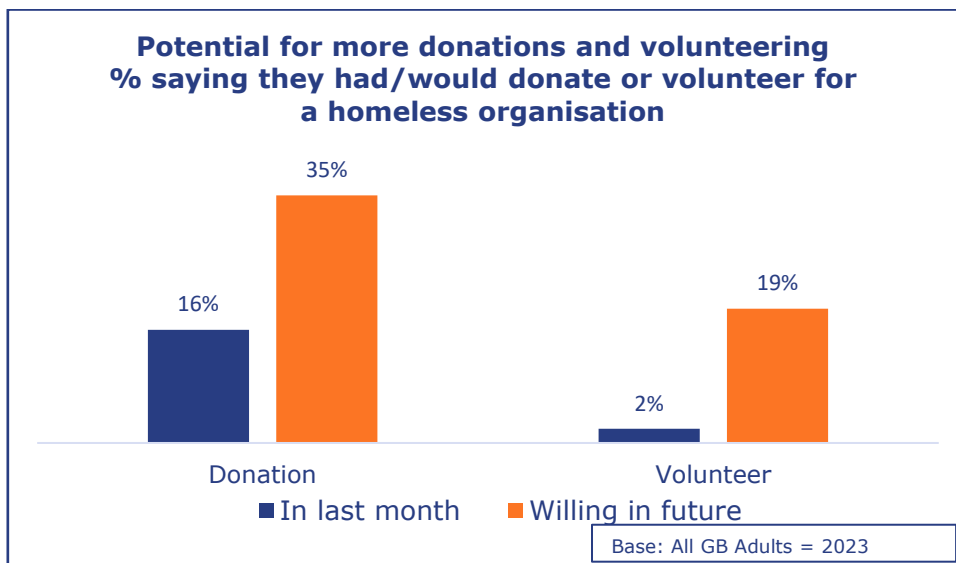
In the question about who is helping to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in the UK today Shelter had the largest unprompted response at 26%, far more than any other organisation. This lead was just as strong when respondents were shown a list of organisations and asked which they had ever heard of. 82% had heard of Shelter nationally (86% in Oxfordshire), Crisis was its nearest rival at 54% (increasing to 71% in Oxfordshire), followed by St Mungo’s at 30% (increasing to 44% in Oxfordshire). National brands are naturally high in people’s awareness.

Oxford Homeless Movement aims to establish itself as a new and local ‘brand’ at the same time as retaining and promoting the identities of other local organisations.



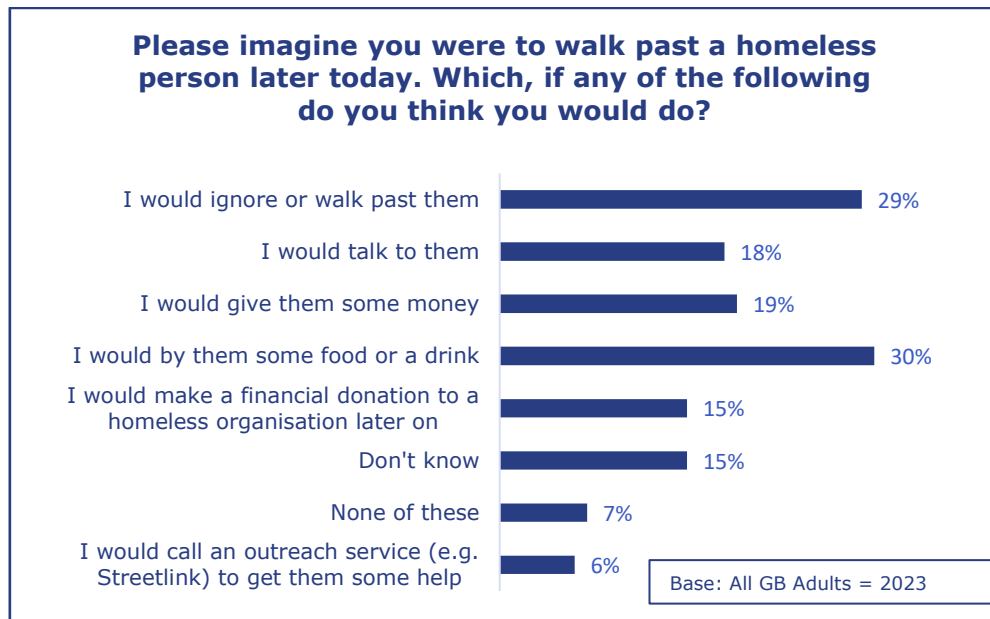
4. There is untapped potential for volunteering and fundraising

Respondents were asked if they had donated and volunteered to a homeless organisation and whether they would be prepared to do so in the future. The British population who would be prepared to either donate money or volunteer far exceeded those who had recently done so. These figures increase for future support when you look at females, 37% would donate and 24% would volunteer. The potential is even higher for the younger age-range (18-24 year olds), 55% would donate and 35% would volunteer. In Oxfordshire those willing to donate money in the future is larger than the national figure of 35% at 41%.



5. **Awareness of outreach services is low and a significant number of people would give directly to those on the street.**

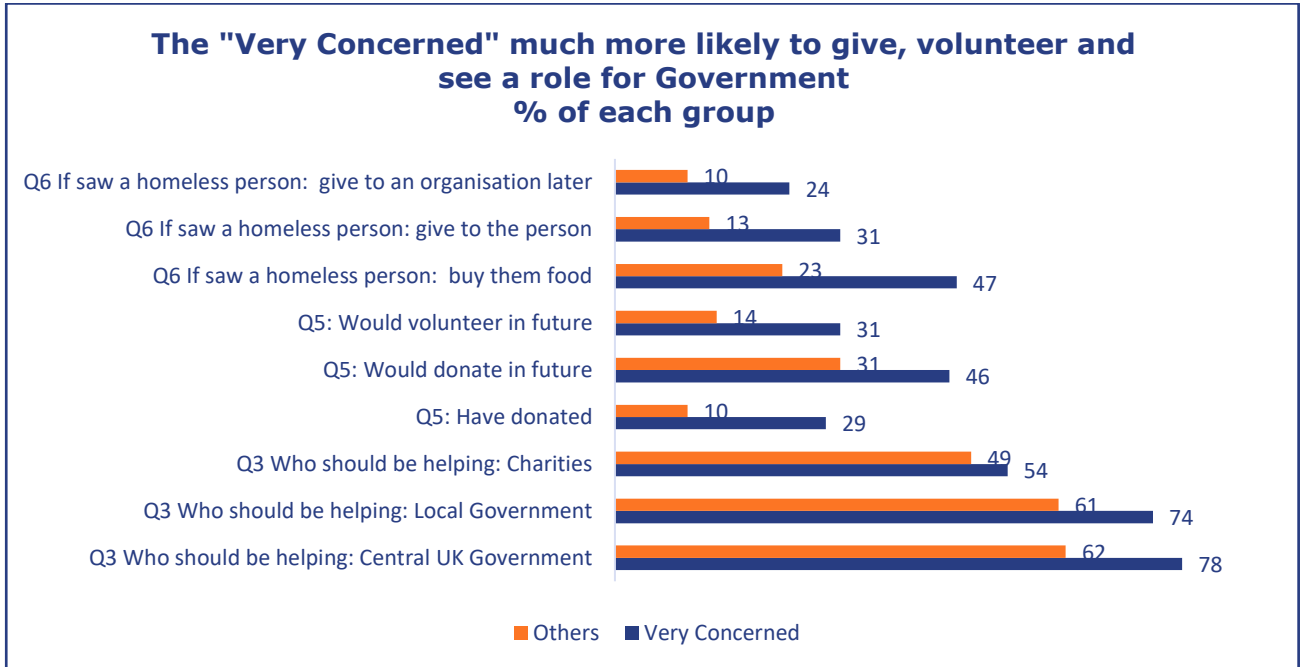
Respondents were asked how they would react if they encountered a rough sleeper. Almost a fifth of GB adults (19%) would give money directly to the person while only 6% would call an outreach service like Streetlink. A similar number would ignore them as would buy them food or drink (29% and 30% respectively). There is an obvious confusion as to what is the 'right' thing to do. Part of the work of Oxford Homeless Movement is to make it easier for the public to understand how they can help.



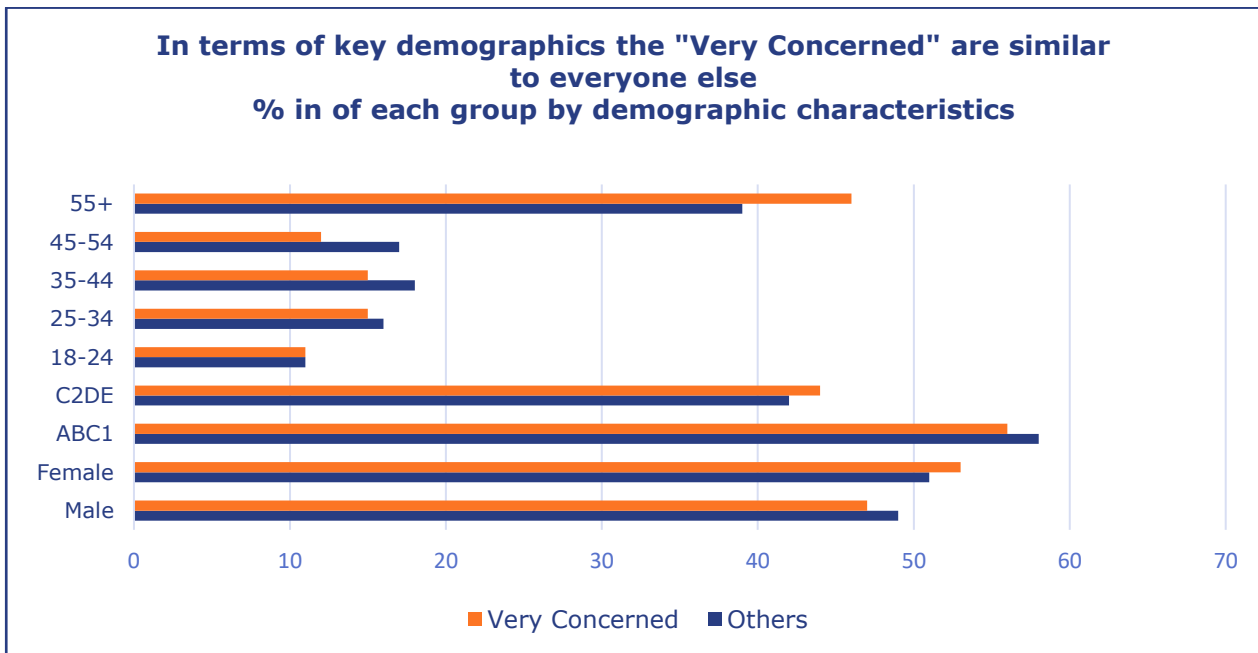
Appendix 1

Deeper look at the "Very Concerned"

The "very concerned" about homelessness represent about a third of the population (30% nationally, 40% in Oxfordshire). The increased openness to give, to volunteer and to see the role of government is clear in the chart below. They are also more likely to engage with a rough sleeper if they encountered one, with 31% giving to them directly and 47% buying them food.



A comparison of the Very Concerned with the rest of the population shows that this is in attitude not strongly associated with a particular age-group, gender or social class.



Appendix 2 The questionnaire:

Q1: In general, how concerned, if at all, are you about homelessness and rough sleeping in the UK?
Answer options: Very concerned, fairly concerned, not very concerned, not at all concerned, don't know.

Q2: Thinking about homelessness and rough sleeping in the UK. Who, if anyone, have you heard is helping to tackle this issue? Answers unprompted.

Q3: For the following question, if you think no one in particular is responsible for helping to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in the UK, please select the relevant 'Not applicable' option. Which, if any, of the following do you think are responsible for helping to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in the UK? (Please select all that apply, including any that you mentioned in the previous question).

Answer options: Central UK Government, My Local Council, Charities, Religious Groups, The Universities and Colleges in Oxford*, Landlords, The individuals themselves, Other, Don't know, Not applicable - no one in particular is responsible for helping to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in the UK, Not applicable - everyone in the UK is responsible for helping to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in the UK

* Presented only to Oxfordshire respondents. Responses not reported as not statistically reliable.

Q4: Before taking this survey, which, if any, of the following organisations associated with homelessness and rough sleeping in the UK had you EVER heard of? (Please select all that apply)

Answer options: Crisis, Shelter, St. Mungo's, Homeless Oxfordshire, Aspire, Oxford Homeless Movement, Emmaus, The Porch, The Gatehouse, Streetlink, None of these (note order of presentation was randomised).

Q5: For the following question, by 'donated money', we mean in any format such as donating spare change to a collection, setting up a monthly direct debit to a homeless organisation, etc. By 'volunteered', we mean working/ giving your time for an organisation without being paid. This could include working in a charitable homelessness organisation's shop, working at food banks and/ or soup kitchens, working at an event aiming to raise money to help tackle homelessness, etc. Thinking about homelessness and rough sleeping in the UK and the organisations involved with this issue...Which, if any, of the following apply to you? (Please select all that apply)

Answer options: I have donated money to a homeless organisation in the past month (i.e. since early March 2019), I have volunteered for a homeless organisation in the past month (i.e. since early March 2019), I would be willing to donate money to a homeless organisation in the future, I would be willing to volunteer for a homeless organisation in the future, I would not be willing to donate money to a homeless organisation in the future, I would not be willing to volunteer for a homeless organisation in the future, Don't know.

Q6: For the following question, please remember that your answers are always treated confidentially and are never analysed individually. We have provided you with a "Prefer not to say" option if you would rather not share your experiences. Please imagine you were to walk past a homeless person later today...Which, if any, of the following do you think you would do? (Please select all that apply)

Answer options: I would ignore/walk past them, I would talk to them, I would give them some money, I would buy them some food and/or drink, I would make a financial donation to a homeless organisation (e.g. Shelter, Crisis, etc.) later on, I would call an outreach service to get them some help (e.g. StreetLink, etc.) later on, None of these, Don't know.

