

# S.O.S.

## Sick of Suffering

St Mungo's report into the health problems of homeless people



Further details available upon request

## Introduction

St Mungo's is London's leading homeless charity. A survey of 1491 homeless people showed that 2 in 3 homeless people have physical health problems, and over 1 in 3 who need treatment are not receiving it. The average life expectancy for homeless people is now 42, which is less than that of the general population during the Victorian era.

We then conducted a more in depth survey of the health problems of 601 homeless people.

Key figures from the Health research showed that

- 1 in 2 of those with a physical health problem that is related to sleeping rough are not receiving treatment.
- Over 1 in 3 (38%) of those with respiratory problems are not receiving treatment
- 1 in 3 homeless people with a cardiovascular problem are not receiving treatment

Further statistics about the health of homeless people show that:

- Their average life expectancy is now 42<sup>1</sup> down from 47 less than a decade ago
- Rough sleepers between 45 and 62 have a death rate 25 times that of people aged between 45 and 62 from the general population



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<sup>1</sup> (Crisis, *Still Dying for a Home*, 1996).

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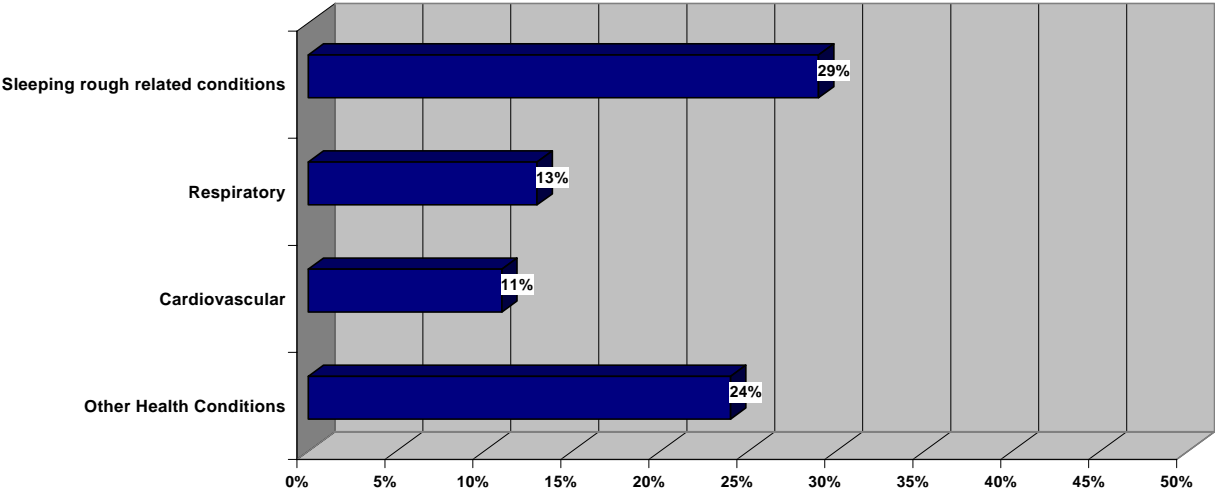
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# Health Problems

## The results of St Mungo's health survey

Physical Health Problems Suffered by Homeless People



### Sleeping rough related conditions

Nearly 1 in 3 homeless people (29%) have a known and identified condition related to sleeping rough.

Sleeping rough related conditions identified for the purposes of this report include:

- Bronchitis (also identified under respiratory)
- Pneumonia (also identified under respiratory)
- Trench foot/frostbite
- Wound infection

## **Respiratory conditions**

More than 1 in 8(13%) of homeless people have a known and identified respiratory condition.

Respiratory conditions, for the purposes of this research, have been identified as:

- Asthma
- Bronchitis
- Pneumonia
- Other respiratory problems

## **Cardiovascular conditions**

Nearly 1 in 10 (11%) of homeless people have a known and identified cardiovascular condition.

For over 50's that number doubles to 1 in 5.

Cardiovascular conditions, for the purposes of this report, have been identified as

- Heart problems
- Blood pressure issues (high/low)
- Diabetes

## **Other identified physical health conditions**

Nearly a quarter (24%) of homeless people have physical health conditions other than respiratory, cardiovascular or sleeping rough illnesses

The other conditions identified for the purpose of this report include:

- Cancer
- Epilepsy/seizures
- Renal damage
- Hernia
- Hepatitis A
- Liver damage

## Treatment

Fewer than 1 in 3 of the homeless people who need treatment are receiving it.

1 in 2 people with an identified health problem related to sleeping rough are not receiving treatment

1 in 3 people with a cardiovascular complaint are not receiving treatment

Over 1 in 4 are not receiving health treatment for respiratory problems.

Over 1 in 3 are not receiving treatment for their physical health conditions other than respiratory, cardiovascular or sleeping rough. These include conditions such as cancer and epilepsy.



**A separate survey was carried out amongst 1491 homeless people who answered further questions about their homelessness status. The research showed that:**

34% of homeless people were socially vulnerable, extremely withdrawn, incapable of social behaviour, prone to exploitation

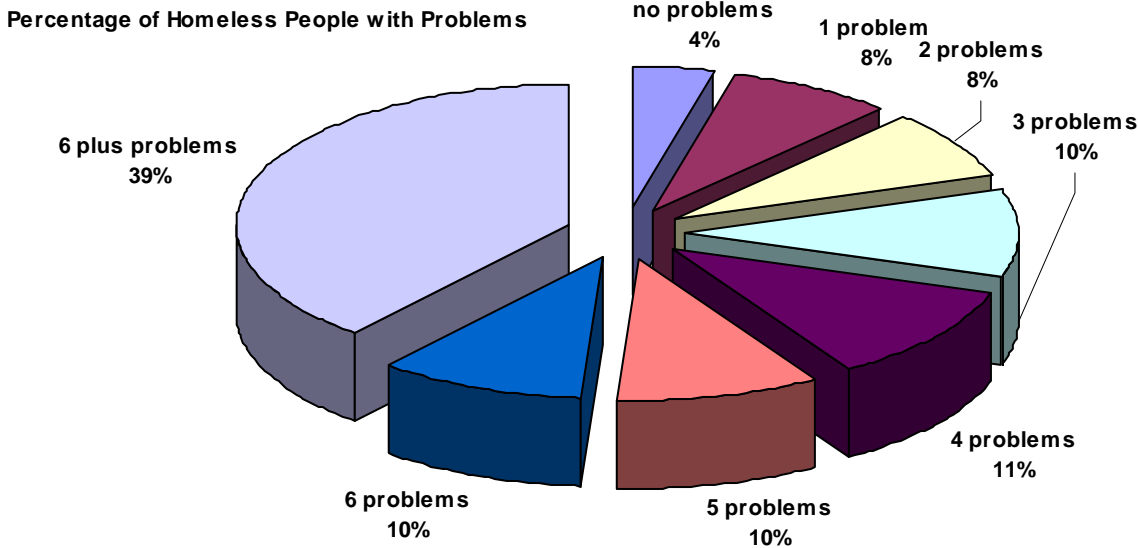
26% of people are homeless due to relationship breakdown

70% had 4 or more problems apart from being homeless

**Total numbers of problems**

- 83% of homeless people have at least one of the following problems: mental health, substance use, or physical health
- 70% of homeless people have four or more problems as well as their homelessness status

The graph below looks at the total numbers of problems identified for each homeless person



## Behavioural problems

The research showed that

- 34% of homeless people were socially vulnerable: extremely withdrawn, incapable of social behaviour, prone to exploitation etc.
- 20% of homeless people were socially excluded: No connections with family and no circle of friends or active social group with whom they interact.
- 11% had poor social skills
- In total, 53% of homeless people were classed as being socially vulnerable, socially excluded or as having poor social skills

**Socially vulnerable homeless people** were 38% more likely to have 4 or more problems compared to homeless people who are not classified as socially vulnerable.

- Specific problems that a higher percentage of socially vulnerable homeless people have included:
  - alcohol (16% more likely)
  - depression (23% more likely)
  - personal care (9% more likely)
  - 17 % less likely to be meaningfully occupied

**Socially excluded homeless people** were 33% more likely to have 4 or more problems.

- Specific problems that a higher percentage of socially excluded homeless people have include:
  - Mental health (35% more likely)
  - In addition they were 57% more likely to be socially vulnerable
  - And 30% more likely to have poor social skills.

## Institutional background

- 4% of homeless people had an ex-forces background
- 7% had an ex-care background

## Relationship history

26% of homeless people are known to have had a relationship breakdown that has affected their homelessness status.

11% of homeless people have been victims of abuse

7% have suffered domestic violence