

CHAIN ANNUAL BULLETIN

GREATER
LONDON
2023/24



SUPPORTED BY
MAYOR OF LONDON



This bulletin presents information about people seen rough sleeping by outreach teams in London between April 2023 and March 2024. Information in the bulletin is derived from the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN), a multi-agency database recording information about rough sleepers and the wider street population in London. CHAIN, which is commissioned and funded by the Greater London Authority (GLA) and managed by Homeless Link, represents the UK's most detailed and comprehensive source of information about rough sleeping.

Copies of the full CHAIN Greater London 2023/24 annual report can be obtained from the GLA Datastore at <http://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/chain-reports>.

The data on which this report is based is also available in an accessible tabular format, aggregated to borough and Greater London level, in a separate CHAIN Annual Data Tables file. This can be downloaded from the GLA Datastore at <http://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/chain-reports>. A suite of interactive charts and maps based on the data can be accessed via the CHAIN Annual Data Visualisations Tool at <https://bit.ly/chain-annual-vis-tool>.

Percentage figures in this report

Please note that, in some cases, percentage figures given in this report are rounded up or down to the nearest whole number. This may mean that individual figures in tables and charts do not add up to a combined total of 100%, or that there could be small discrepancies between percentage figures in tables and corresponding charts or commentary.

Addendum - 13 February 2025

In the commentary on p.12, the figure for the number of people seen rough sleeping who were UK nationals was corrected from 4,689 to 4,869. The UK nationals percentage given in the commentary, and the number given in Chart 6, did not need to be corrected.

HEADLINE FINDINGS

TOTAL ROUGH SLEEPERS

11,993 people were seen rough sleeping by outreach workers in London during 2023/24.



- This represents a 19% increase compared to the total of 10,053 people seen in 2022/23.
- The 2023/24 total is 58% higher than the total of 7,581 people seen rough sleeping ten years ago, in 2014/15.
- 2023/24 was the first year in which more than 2,000 people have been recorded rough sleeping on CHAIN in a single month, with both September and November 2023 exceeding that threshold.
- Outreach teams and other support services directly helped 4,379 (37%) of these people to access accommodation during the year.

NEW & LONGER-TERM ROUGH SLEEPERS

7,974 people (66% of the total) were seen sleeping rough for the first time in London in 2023/24.



- 2,387 people seen rough sleeping in 2023/24 had also been seen in 2022/23 (20% of the total). This group are also referred to in this bulletin using the term 'stock'.
- 1,632 people seen rough sleeping in 2023/24 were those who had returned to rough sleeping after at least a year away (14% of the total).
- The new rough sleeper (flow) group increased by the largest proportion (25%, compared to 15% for the stock group, and 3% for returners).

HISTORY PRIOR TO ROUGH SLEEPING

17% of new rough sleepers in 2023/24 had arrived on the streets following departure from asylum support accommodation.



- 54% of new rough sleepers reported their last settled base as being some form of long-term accommodation, compared to 43% of returning rough sleepers.
- 20% of new rough sleepers had left their last settled base after being asked to leave by someone they were staying with, while 20% were evicted.
- This compares to 11% of returning rough sleepers being asked to leave, while 27% were evicted.

NATIONALITY

For the first time in CHAIN's history, the proportion of people seen rough sleeping who were from countries in Africa, Asia, the Americas, and Australasia was higher than the proportion of people from Europe (excluding the UK).



- 30% of people seen rough sleeping in 2023/24 were from Africa, Asia, the Americas, and Australasia, while 25% were from Europe (excluding the UK).
- 45% of people seen rough sleeping in 2023/24 were UK nationals.
- Romanians continued to represent the single biggest non-UK nationality group, comprising 9% of all people seen rough sleeping in the year.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND SUPPORT NEEDS

2023/24 saw a slight decrease in the proportions of people seen rough sleeping who had support needs relating to alcohol, drugs, or mental health.



- 48% of people seen rough sleeping during 2023/24 had a support need relating to mental health, while 29% had a need relating to drugs, and 28% had a need relating to alcohol.
- 84% of people seen rough sleeping in 2023/24 were men.
- 9% of people seen rough sleeping in 2023/24 were aged 25 or under.
- 25% of people seen rough sleeping during the year had experience of spending time in prison.

NUMBER OF PEOPLE SEEN ROUGH SLEEPING

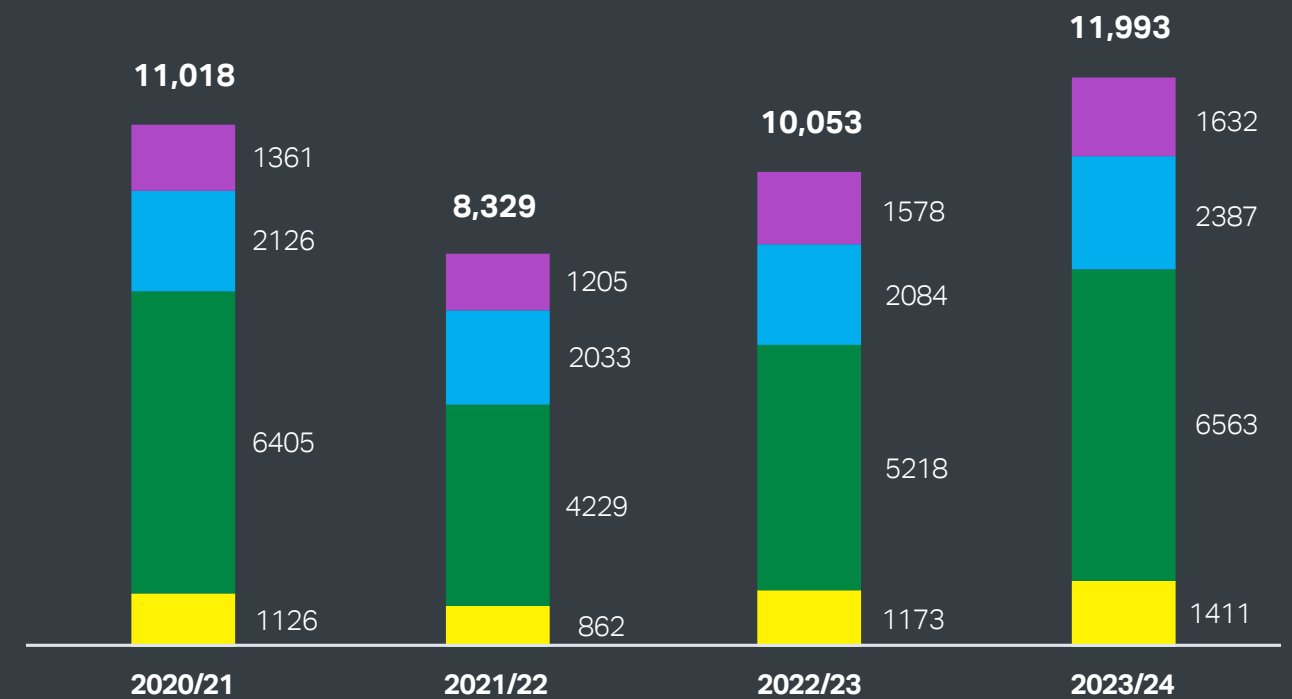
11,993

people were seen rough sleeping in London in 2023/24, which is a 19% increase compared to the total of 10,053 people seen in 2022/23. This compares to a 21% increase between 2021/22 and 2022/23.

7,974

people were seen rough sleeping for the first time this year (also referred to as flow), which is 66% of all people seen rough sleeping in the period. Of this group, 70% were only seen once, and 12% were categorised as 'unidentified'. 20% of people seen rough sleeping in 2023/24 were also seen in the preceding year (the stock group). 14% of people seen rough sleeping were in the returner group, meaning they had been seen rough sleeping in the past but not in 2022/23. All three groups have shown increases in their numbers between 2022/23 and 2023/24, with the flow group showing the largest proportionate increase.

Chart 1: People seen rough sleeping, by flow, stock, returner breakdown, 2020/21 - 2023/24



Category	Description
Flow - unidentified	People who had never been seen rough sleeping prior to 2023/24 (i.e. new rough sleepers), who were recorded without a name, and with only one contact.
Flow - identified	People who had never been seen rough sleeping prior to 2023/24 (i.e. new rough sleepers), who were recorded with a name, and/or with more than one contact.
Stock	People who were also seen rough sleeping in 2022/23 (i.e. those seen across a minimum of two consecutive years).
Returner	People who were first seen rough sleeping prior to 2022/23, but were not seen during 2022/23 (i.e. those who have had a gap in their rough sleeping histories).

LONG RANGE TREND

Across the last ten years, the number of people recorded rough sleeping on CHAIN has risen year on year, with the exception of 2017/18, and 2021/22. The 19% increase in 2023/24 is the third largest proportionate increase during the ten year period, being slightly smaller than the 21% increases seen in 2019/20 and 2022/23. However, it is the largest increase during the period in terms of actual numbers. The 2023/24 total is the highest ever recorded on CHAIN, and is 58% higher than the total of 7,581 people seen rough sleeping ten years ago, in 2014/15.

Chart 2: People seen rough sleeping by year, 2014/15 - 2023/24

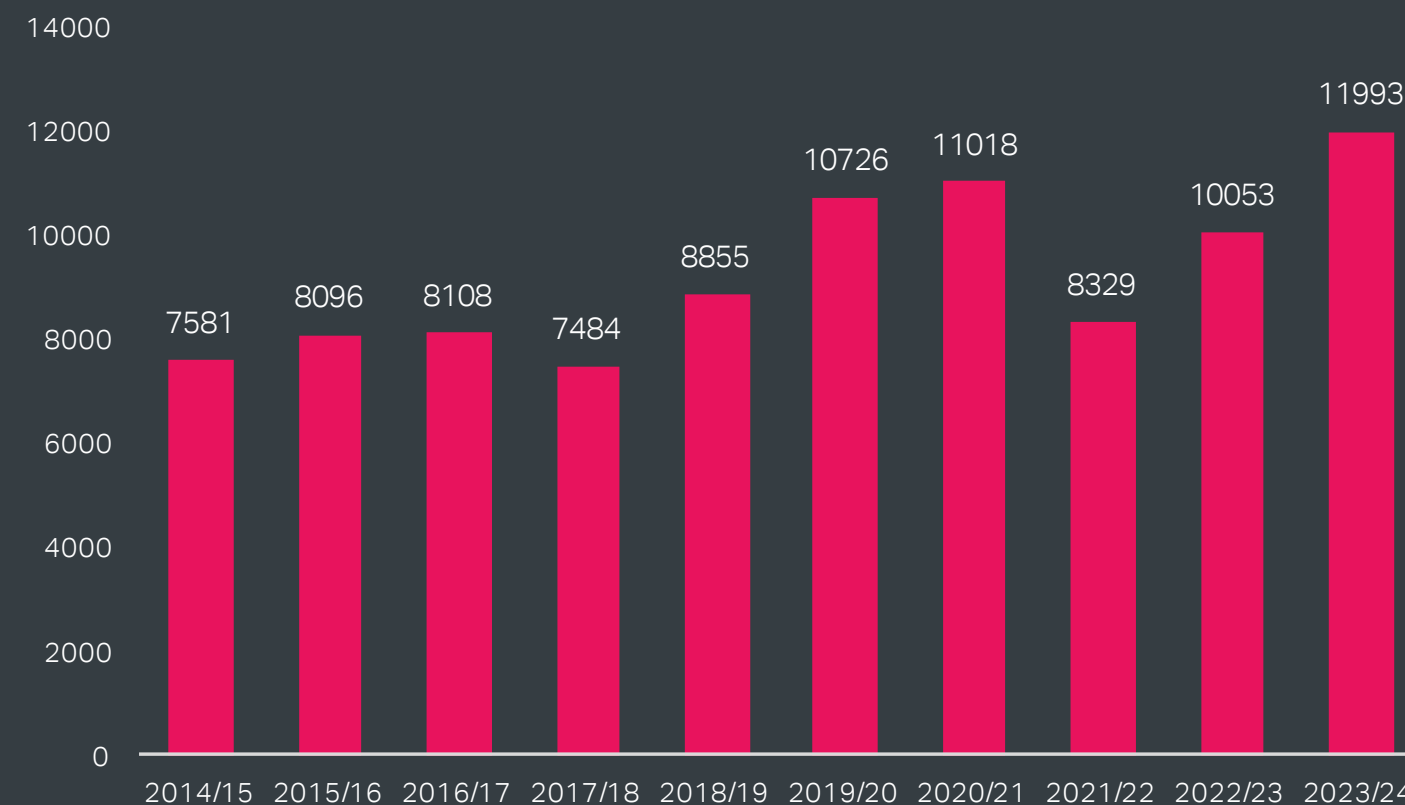
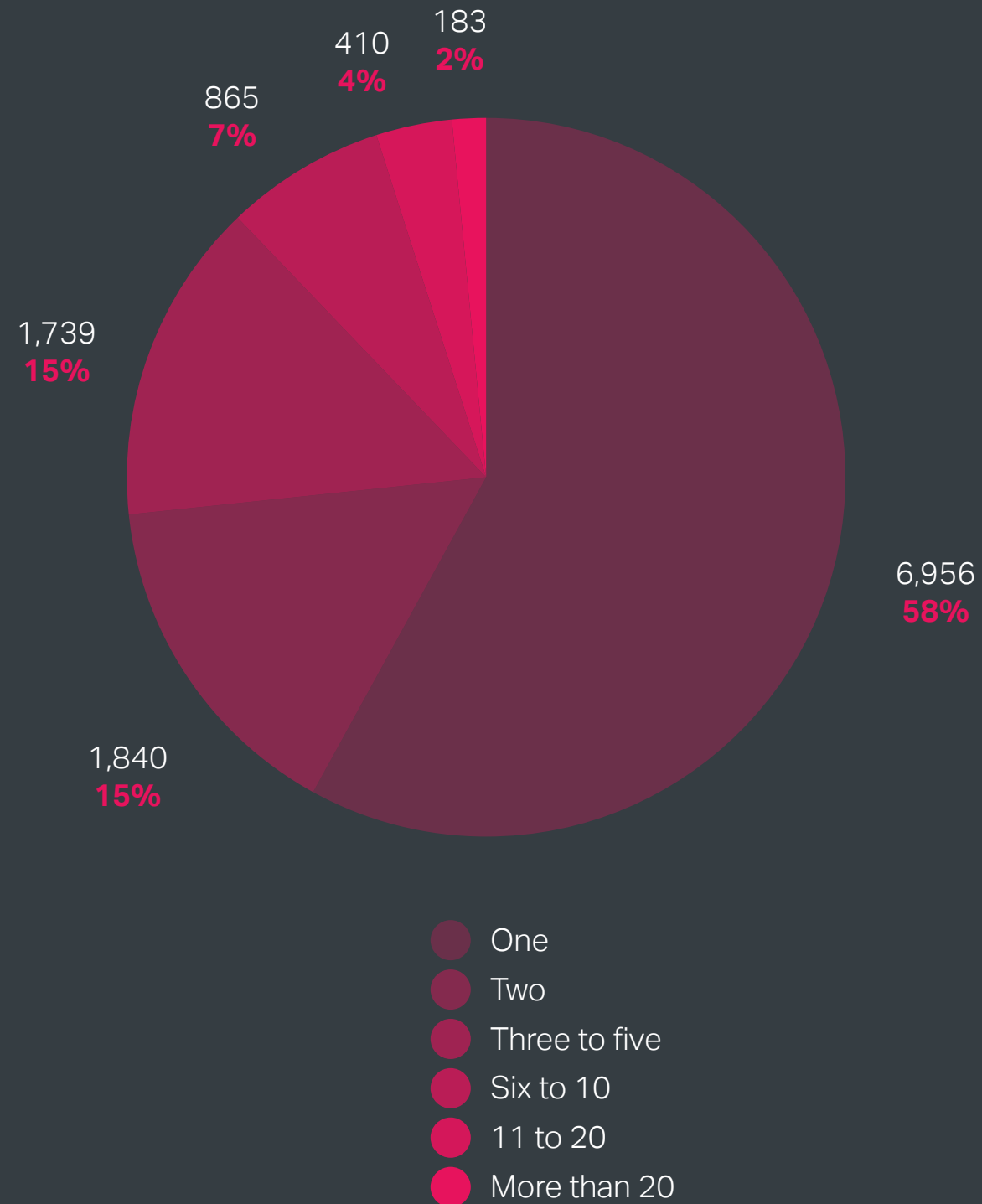


Chart 3: People seen rough sleeping in 2023/24, by number of times seen rough sleeping



Base: 11,993 people seen rough sleeping in 2023/24.

NUMBER OF TIMES SEEN ROUGH SLEEPING

6,956 (58%) people were seen rough sleeping only once in 2023/24, which compares to 5,866 (58%) seen rough sleeping just once in 2022/23.

593 (5%) people recorded rough sleeping in 2023/24 were seen more than ten times. 18 people were seen rough sleeping more than 50 times in the year, compared to 15 people with this many contacts in 2022/23, and 19 in 2021/22.

Outreach resources vary across boroughs, but even in places with extensive outreach coverage there may not be a shift every night. This will affect the frequency with which people may be recorded rough sleeping.

MONTHLY TREND

The chart shows the monthly trend in numbers of people seen rough sleeping over the last four years, broken down by nationality group.

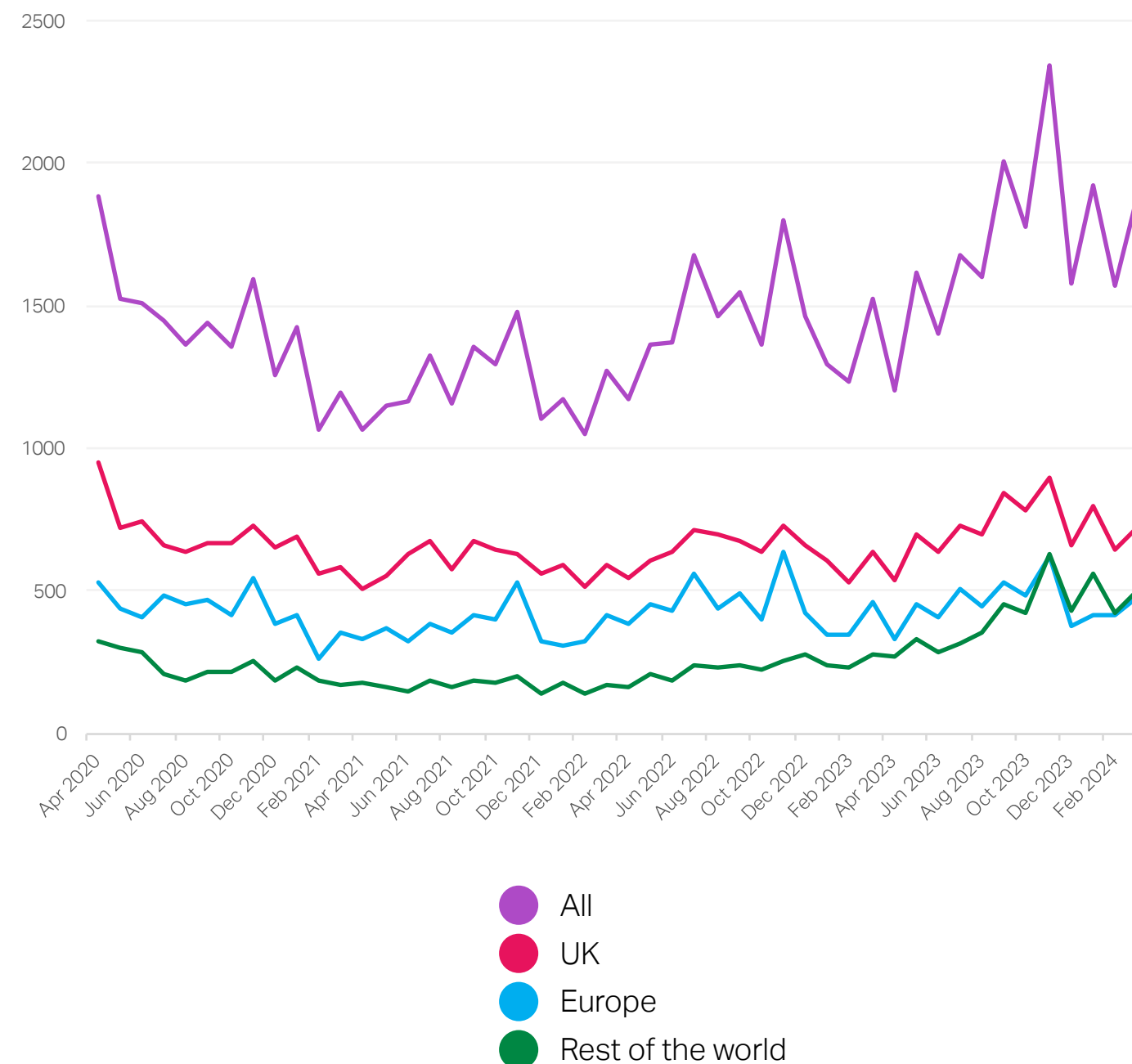
The 'All' line shows overall numbers seen rough sleeping per month. Historically (including periods prior to that shown in this chart), the typical trend shows rough sleeping numbers at their highest throughout the summer, although the peak month is usually November, when the government's annual street count takes place. Numbers continue at a lower level during the winter months, as winter shelters and other additional provision come into operation, before picking up again in the spring.

There was a departure from this regular pattern during the Covid-19 pandemic, as can be seen at the start of the chart, with the peak in April 2020 followed by a decline in monthly totals as the effects of the government's Everyone In initiative were felt. During the post-pandemic period, traditional seasonal patterns returned, and the effects of bimonthly street counts can also be observed, with spikes apparent in alternating months.

The lowest monthly total during 2023/24 was recorded in April 2023, when 1,205 people were seen rough sleeping. The highest monthly total was in November 2023, when 2,339 people were seen. 2023/24 was the first year in which more than 2,000 people have been recorded rough sleeping on CHAIN in a single month, with both September and November 2023 exceeding that threshold.

The nationality comparison shows that the previously observed upwards trend in the 'Rest of the world' group became more pronounced in 2023/24, with the monthly total for this group being higher than that for people from Europe (excluding the UK) for the first time in November 2023, and remaining so until the end of the year. The inflation in the 'Rest of the world' group was at least partially driven by the increasing number of people arriving on the streets following departure from asylum support accommodation.

Chart 4: Number of people seen rough sleeping per month, April 2020 - March 2024



SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION

As in previous years, the borough in which the greatest number of people were seen rough sleeping was Westminster, with 2,102 people (18% of the overall London total).

Seven boroughs recorded more than 500 people seen rough sleeping during the year. All but six of the 33 boroughs in London reported increases on the number of people seen rough sleeping in 2022/23. Hammersmith & Fulham showed the greatest increase compared to 2022/23, both in terms of numbers (224) and proportion (94%).

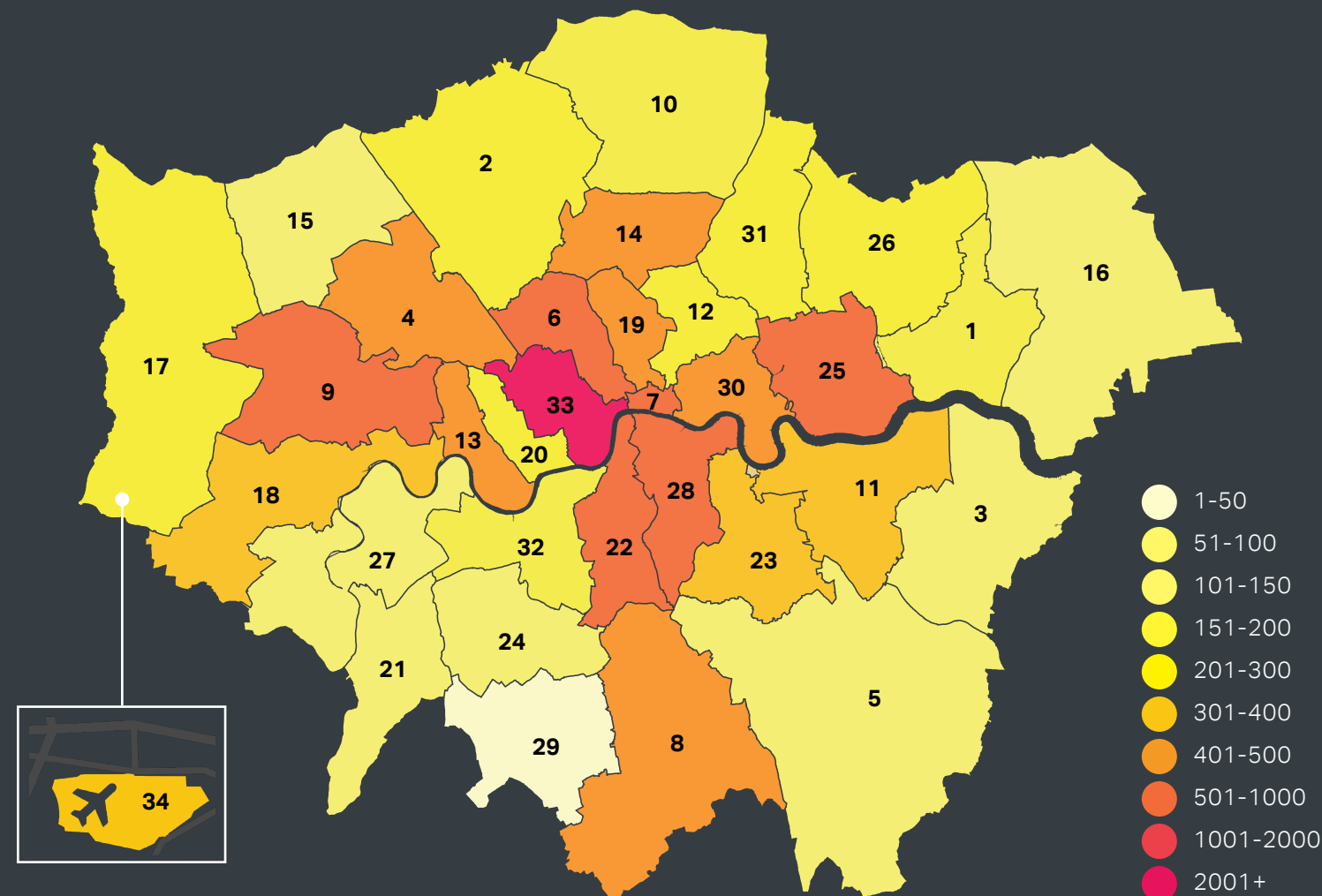
A total of 308 people were seen rough sleeping at Heathrow airport, which is counted separately from Hillingdon, due to the specific rough sleeping issues found there.

During 2023/24, 118 people were recorded rough sleeping on buses, and 14 were recorded on the London Underground network.

Table 1: Boroughs in which the five highest totals of rough sleepers were recorded during 2023/24

Borough	2023/24	2022/23
Westminster	2102	2050
Camden	903	719
Ealing	710	563
Lambeth	681	623
City of London	656	482

Map 1: Total number of people seen rough sleeping in each borough during 2023/24



Key	Borough	Total	Key	Borough	Total
1	Barking & Dagenham	159	18	Hounslow	328
2	Barnet	216	19	Islington	409
3	Bexley	106	20	Kensington & Chelsea	226
4	Brent	455	21	Kingston upon Thames	107
5	Bromley	113	22	Lambeth	681
6	Camden	903	23	Lewisham	353
7	City of London	656	24	Merton	77
8	Croydon	449	25	Newham	535
9	Ealing	710	26	Redbridge	279
10	Enfield	197	27	Richmond	100
11	Greenwich	337	28	Southwark	549
12	Hackney	251	29	Sutton	28
13	Hammersmith & Fulham	462	30	Tower Hamlets	498
14	Haringey	442	31	Waltham Forest	203
15	Harrow	128	32	Wandsworth	172
16	Havering	55	33	Westminster	2102
17	Hillingdon	296	34	Heathrow	308

HISTORY PRIOR TO ROUGH SLEEPING

CHAIN records information about people's circumstances prior to the start of a rough sleeping episode, including what type of accommodation they had been staying in, and the type and cause of departure from the accommodation. The information is collected for people who were seen rough sleeping for the first time ever, as well as for those who had returned to rough sleeping after a period away.

Of those new rough sleepers during 2023/24 with information recorded about their last settled base, 951 (17% of the total) reported that they had been staying in asylum support accommodation. A little over half (54%) of new rough sleepers had come from some form of long-term accommodation, including 26% who had been living with family, friends or a partner, and 22% who had been tenants in private rented accommodation.

Among returning rough sleepers, 43% reported their last settled base as having been long-term accommodation, from which 19% were tenants in private rented accommodation, while 16% had been living with family, friends or a partner. 28% of returning rough sleepers had left short or medium-term accommodation (compared to 6% of new rough sleepers), of which 17% had been living in a hostel or other supported accommodation.

The definitions of new and returning rough sleepers used in the section are different to those used in the flow/stock/returner model referenced elsewhere in the bulletin, in order to enable reporting against the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) data-led framework to end rough sleeping. This means that the bases for new and returning rough sleepers on this page will differ from the totals for flow and returner given elsewhere.

Table 2: Last settled base of new and returning rough sleepers in 2023/24

Last settled base in the UK	New		Returning	
	No.	%	No.	%
Long-term accommodation				
Living with family/friends/partner	1463	26.1%	243	16.1%
Private rented accommodation	1231	22.0%	294	19.4%
Council tenancy (local authority accommodation)	192	3.4%	56	3.7%
Housing association/RSL accommodation	68	1.2%	37	2.4%
Sheltered housing/registered care accommodation	20	0.4%	6	0.4%
Employment-related accommodation (except armed forces)	34	0.6%	7	0.5%
Owner occupied accommodation	21	0.4%	3	0.2%
<i>Long-term accommodation subtotal</i>	3029	54.0%	646	42.7%
Short or medium-term accommodation				
Hostel or other supported accommodation	167	3.0%	252	16.6%
Temporary accommodation (local authority)	96	1.7%	118	7.8%
B&B (not local authority TA)	27	0.5%	24	1.6%
Winter/night shelter	9	0.2%	16	1.1%
Clinic/Detox/Rehab	3	0.1%	6	0.4%
Squat	13	0.2%	9	0.6%
<i>Short or medium-term accommodation subtotal</i>	315	5.6%	425	28.1%
Institutional & armed forces accommodation				
Asylum support accommodation (NASS/other)	951	17.0%	17	1.1%
Care (local authority youth care)	8	0.1%	0	0.0%
Hospital	9	0.2%	9	0.6%
Prison	121	2.2%	76	5.0%
Probation accommodation	5	0.1%	2	0.1%
Armed forces accommodation	1	0.0%	1	0.1%
<i>Institutional & armed forces accommodation subtotal</i>	1095	19.5%	105	6.9%
No settled base since arriving in UK	350	6.2%	131	8.7%
Other	108	1.9%	37	2.4%
Not known	711	12.7%	170	11.2%
Not recorded	2805		1141	
Total (excl. not recorded)	5608	100.0%	1514	100.0%
Total (incl. not recorded)	8413		2655	

PEOPLE SEEN ROUGH SLEEPING AFTER LEAVING ASYLUM SUPPORT ACCOMMODATION

This chart provides a monthly breakdown of people who started a new rough sleeping episode during 2023/24, either as a new or returning rough sleeper, whose last settled base was recorded as asylum support accommodation. People included in this chart are also counted in the asylum support accommodation figures given in Table 2 of this bulletin.

The chart shows how the number and proportion of people starting to rough sleep after leaving asylum support accommodation increased during the year. It is likely that this increase is related to Home Office policy and operational changes made in 2023, including the introduction of a new 'streamlined asylum processing system', and the reduction of the 'notice to quit' period for newly recognised refugees from 28 to seven days.

Chart 5: New and returning rough sleepers during 2023/24 whose last settled base was recorded as asylum support accommodation, by month



Baseline for percentages is the total number of new and returning rough sleepers during the month who had information recorded about their last settled base (including that the last settled base was not known).

NATIONALITY

The nationality profile of people seen rough sleeping in London remains diverse, with a total of 146 different nationalities recorded during 2023/24. The proportion of people seen rough sleeping who were UK nationals was 45% (4,869 people), which is somewhat lower than the proportions of 49% in 2022/23 and 52% in 2021/22. The proportion of people from EEA countries was 23% (2,496 people), which is again lower than the proportions of 30% recorded in 2022/23, and 29% in 2021/22.

For convenience of reporting, and due to specific implications around benefit entitlements and access to services, people from Africa, Asia, the Americas, and Australasia are sometimes grouped together under the overall heading of 'Rest of the world'. During 2023/24, the proportion of people seen rough sleeping from this 'Rest of the world' heading was 30%, which is higher than the proportion of 25% of people seen rough sleeping who were from European countries (excluding the UK). This is the first time that the proportion of people seen rough sleeping from the 'Rest of the world' has been higher than that of people from Europe. The 'Rest of the world' proportion has increased by ten percentage points from the 20% recorded in 2022/23, while the proportion of Europeans reduced by six percentage points from 31%. Europeans were the only overall grouping which showed a decrease in numbers between 2022/23 and 2023/24, with 89 fewer people seen rough sleeping.

As in previous recent years, Romanians (957, 9%) comprised the single largest non-UK nationality, but Eritreans (671, 6%) have overtaken Poles (566, 5%) as the second largest. People from Sudan (393, 4%) and India (378, 4%) were the fourth and fifth most numerous non-UK nationalities.

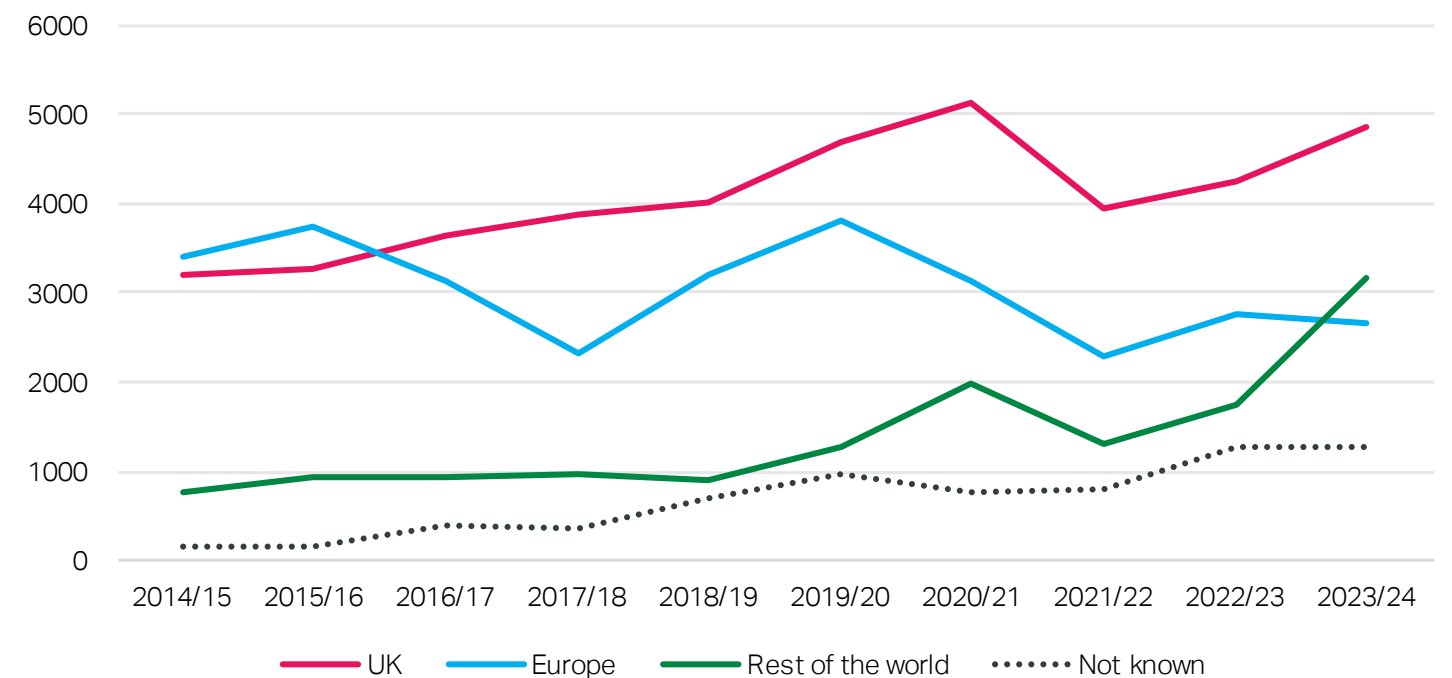
Chart 6: Nationality of people seen rough sleeping in 2023/24

Nationality	UK	Europe	Rest of the world	Total
No.	4869	2665	3171	10705



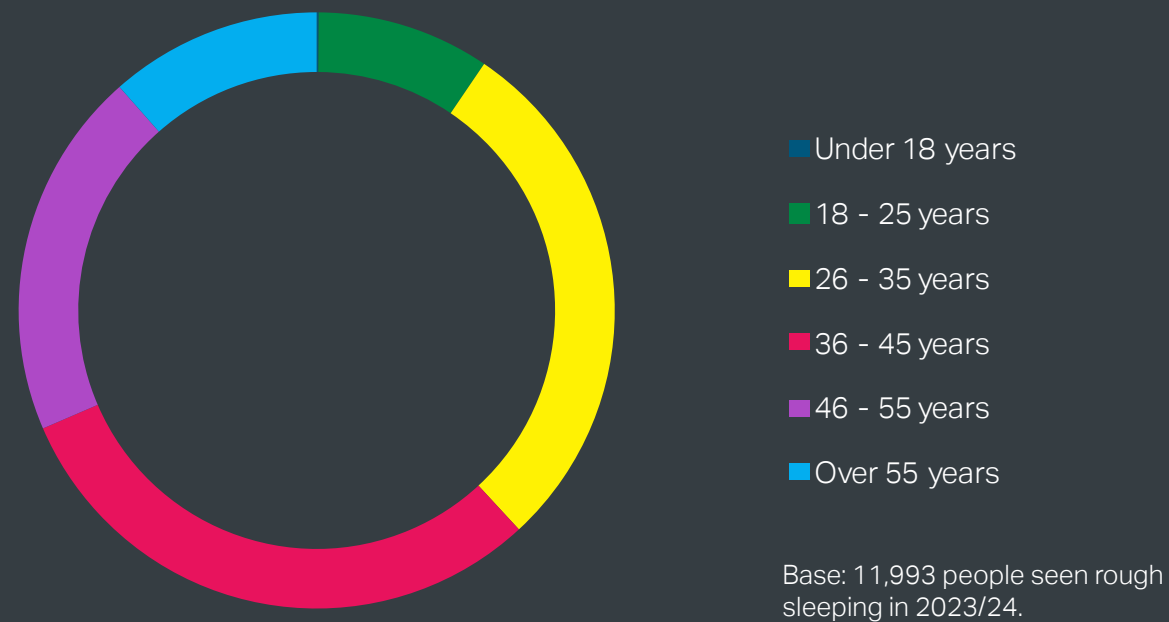
Base: 10,705 people seen rough sleeping during 2023/24 whose nationality was known.

Chart 7: Nationality of people seen rough sleeping, 2014/15 - 2023/24



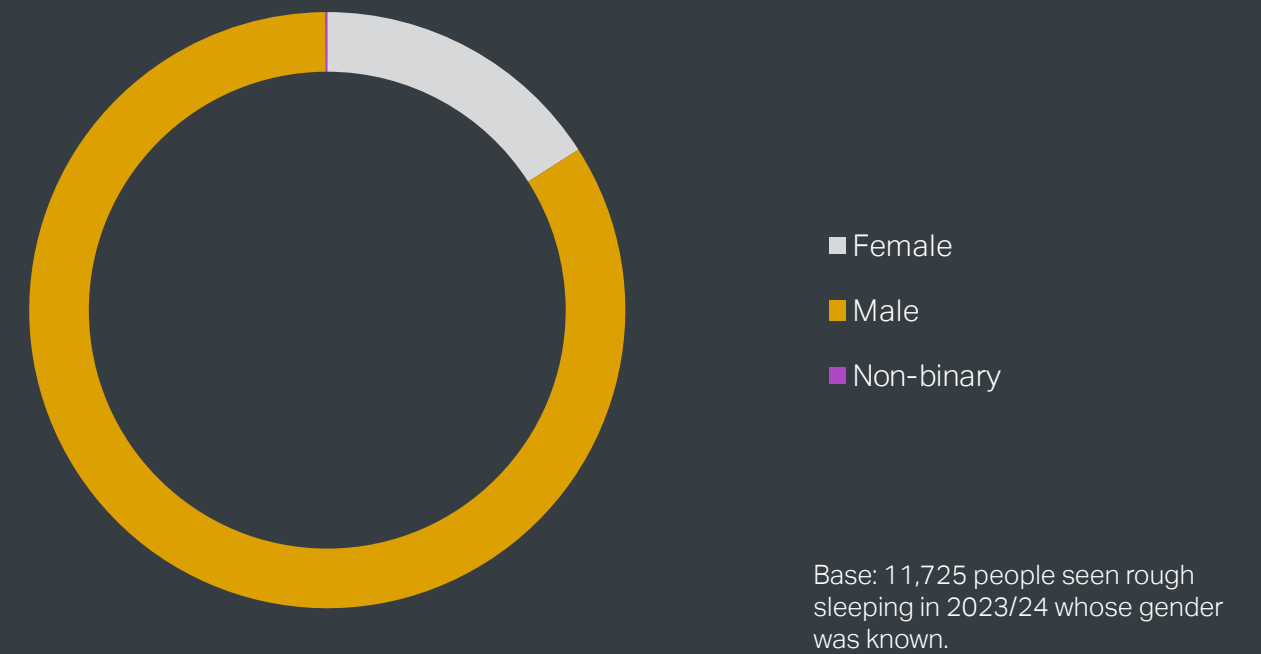
DEMOGRAPHICS

Chart 8: People seen rough sleeping in 2023/24, by age



Age	No.	%
Under 18 years	13	0%
18 - 25 years	1126	9%
26 - 35 years	3434	29%
36 - 45 years	3645	30%
46 - 55 years	2395	20%
Over 55 years	1380	12%
Total	11993	100%

Chart 9: People seen rough sleeping in 2023/24, by gender



Gender	No.	%
Female	1870	16%
Male	9844	84%
Non-binary	11	0%
Total	11725	100%

The gender and age profile of people seen rough sleeping in 2023/24 shows only minor variation from that of people seen in 2022/23. The majority of people seen rough sleeping were male (84%), and aged between 26 and 55 (79%). 9% of those seen rough sleeping in 2023/24 were aged 25 or under, which is the same proportion as in 2022/23. However, looking more broadly, 38% of people seen rough sleeping in 2023/24 were aged 35 or under, which is a slight increase compared to 35% in 2022/23.

SUPPORT NEEDS

Chart 10: People seen rough sleeping in 2023/24, by support needs

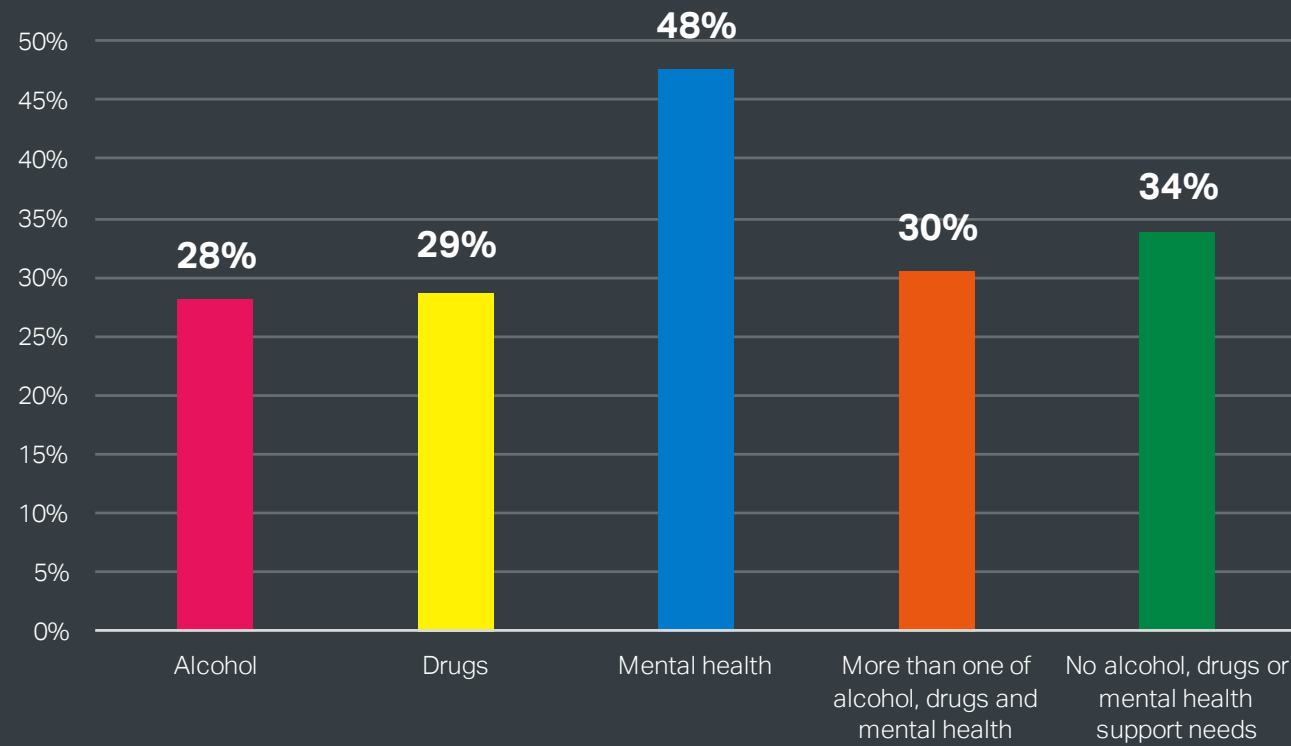
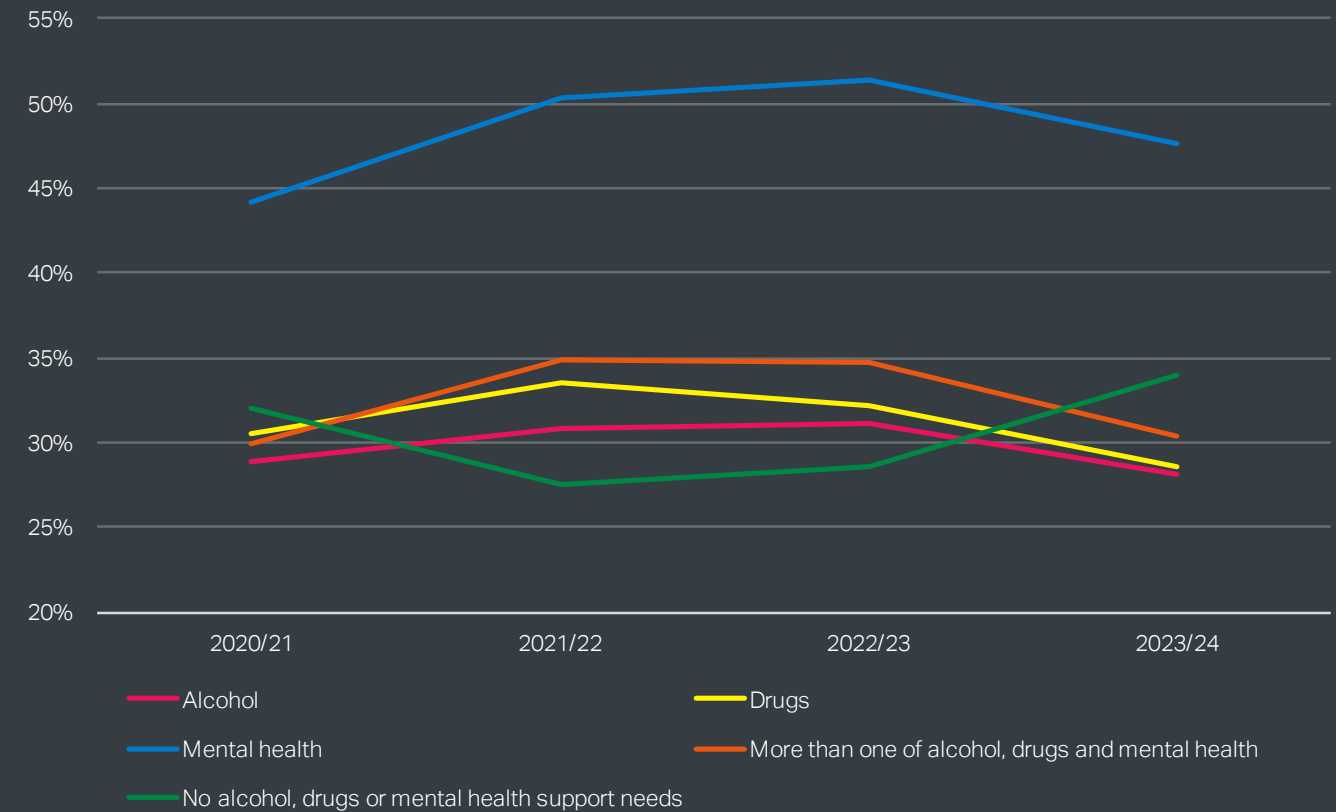


Chart 11: Support needs proportions for people seen rough sleeping, 2020/21 - 2023/24

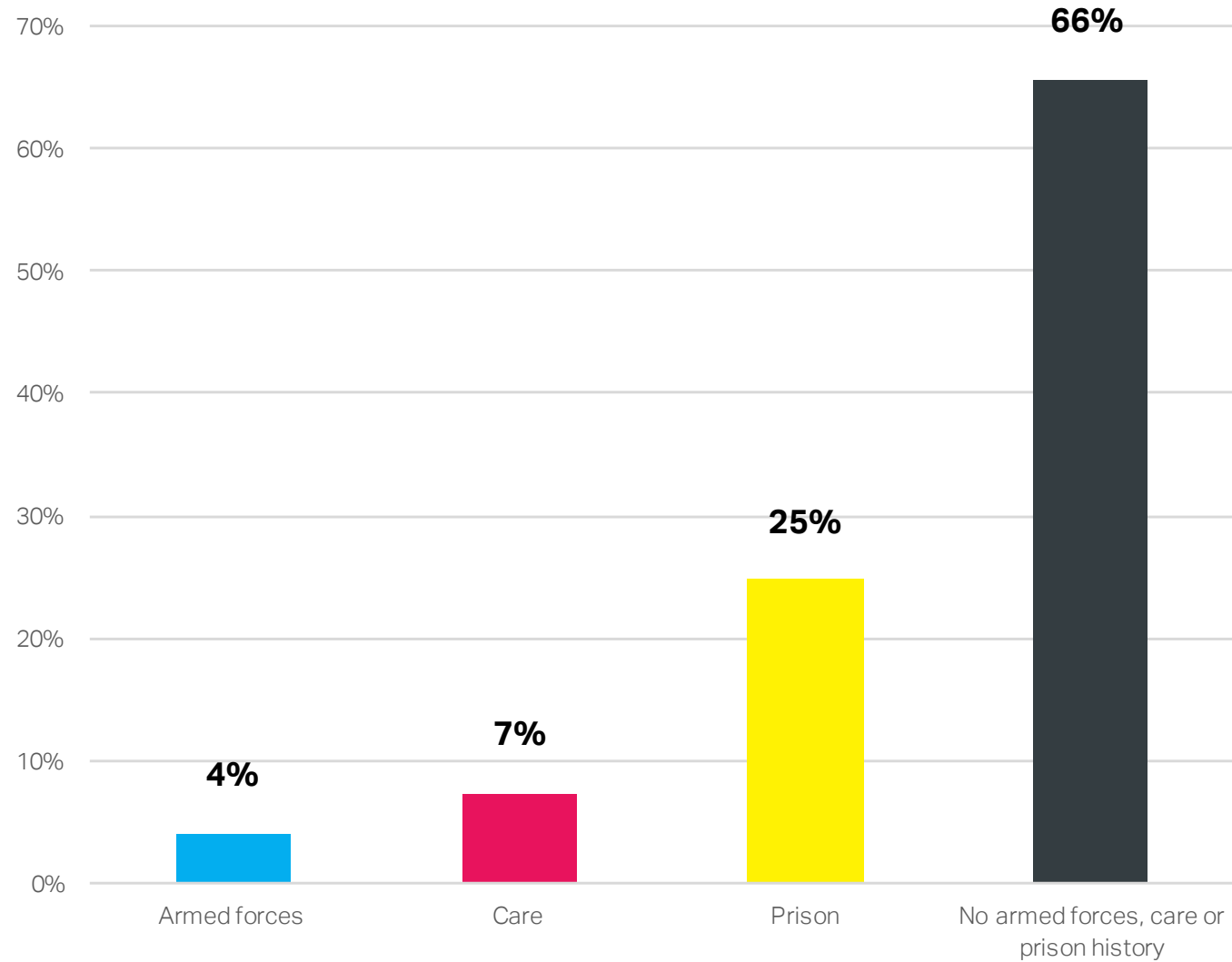


Base: 8,982 people seen rough sleeping in 2023/24 who had been assessed for at least one of the three key support needs.

Following a post-pandemic period in which proportions of people rough sleeping with alcohol, drugs or mental health support needs increased somewhat, 2023/24 saw a decrease in the proportions of people found to have needs in these areas. 28% of people seen rough sleeping in 2023/24 who had received a needs assessment reported a support need around alcohol, compared to 31% in 2022/23. 29% were found to have a need relating to drugs, compared to 32% in 2022/23, while 48% had a mental health support need, compared to 51% in 2022/23.

30% of people seen rough sleeping in 2023/24 who had received an assessment had more than one of the three needs, compared to 35% in 2022/23, while 34% were found to have none of the three needs, compared to 28% in 2022/23.

Chart 12: People seen rough sleeping in 2023/24, by institutional and armed forces history



Base: 8,744 people seen rough sleeping in 2023/24 who were assessed for at least one of the three histories.

INSTITUTIONAL AND ARMED FORCES HISTORY

CHAIN records information about whether people have experience of spending time in prison or in local authority care as a young person, or of serving in the armed forces. This information indicates whether individuals have ever spent time in one of these settings, and does not necessarily imply that this was recent. It can include time spent in one of these settings in any country, and does not necessarily imply that it was in the UK.

357 people seen rough sleeping in 2023/24 had experience of serving in the armed forces, of whom 109 were UK nationals (1% of the total assessed). 639 people seen rough sleeping in 2023/24 had previous experience of living in care (compared to 589 in 2022/23), and 2,175 had experience of serving time in prison (compared to 2,056 in 2022/23). Of the 589 people with experience of living in care, 84 were aged 25 or under.

Differences between proportions of people with experiences of armed forces, care or prison between 2022/23 and 2023/24 are mostly minor, although it is notable that 25% of the assessed total in 2023/24 had experience of prison, compared to 29% in 2022/23.

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