

CHAIN ANNUAL BULLETIN

GREATER
LONDON
2025/26



This bulletin presents information about people seen rough sleeping by outreach teams in London between April 2025 and March 2026. Information in the bulletin is derived from the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN), a multi-agency database recording information about people seen rough sleeping, 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 2025/26 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.



HEADLINE FINDINGS



TOTAL PEOPLE SEEN ROUGH SLEEPING

12,938 people were seen rough sleeping by outreach workers in London during 2025/26.

- This represents a 2% decrease compared to the total of 13,231 people seen in 2024/25.
- The 2025/26 total is 60% higher than the total of 8,108 people seen rough sleeping ten years ago, in 2016/17.
- Outreach teams and other support services helped 4,893 (38%) of these people to access accommodation during the year.



NEW AND LONGER-TERM ROUGH SLEEPING

People who had also been seen rough sleeping in the previous year were the only group to show an increase in number.

- 3,184 people seen rough sleeping in 2025/26 had also been seen rough sleeping in 2024/25. This group are also referred to in this bulletin using the term 'stock', and their number increased by 5% compared to 2024/25.
- 8,078 people were seen sleeping rough for the first time in London in 2025/26, with this group decreasing by 4% compared to 2024/25.
- 1,676 people seen rough sleeping during 2025/26 were those who had returned to rough sleeping in London after at least a year away, which is 7% fewer than recorded in 2024/25.



HISTORY PRIOR TO ROUGH SLEEPING

21% of people who were new to rough sleeping in 2025/26 had arrived on the streets following departure from asylum support accommodation.

- 56% of people new to rough sleeping reported their last settled base as being some form of long-term accommodation, compared to 45% of people returning to rough sleeping.
- 22% of people new to rough sleeping had left their last settled base after being asked to leave by someone they were staying with, while 22% were evicted.
- This compares to 12% of people returning to rough sleeping being asked to leave, while 29% were evicted.



NATIONALITY

UK nationals were the single largest nationality group, with 49% of people seen rough sleeping in 2025/26.

- 31% of people seen rough sleeping in 2025/26 were from Africa, Asia, the Americas, and Australasia, while 20% were from Europe (excluding the UK).
- Despite a decline in numbers, Romanians continued to represent the single biggest non-UK nationality, comprising 6% of all people seen rough sleeping in the year.



DEMOGRAPHICS AND SUPPORT NEEDS

Women and people aged over 55 showed an increase compared to 2024/25, while other groups decreased in number.

- 1,711 people aged over 55 were seen rough sleeping in 2025/26, compared to 1,578 in 2024/25.
- 2,251 women were seen rough sleeping in 2025/26, compared to 2,149 in 2024/25.
- 52% of people seen rough sleeping during 2025/26 had a support need relating to mental health, while 33% had a need relating to drugs, and 27% had a need relating to alcohol.
- 27% of people seen rough sleeping during the year had experience of spending time in prison.

NUMBER OF PEOPLE SEEN ROUGH SLEEPING

12,938

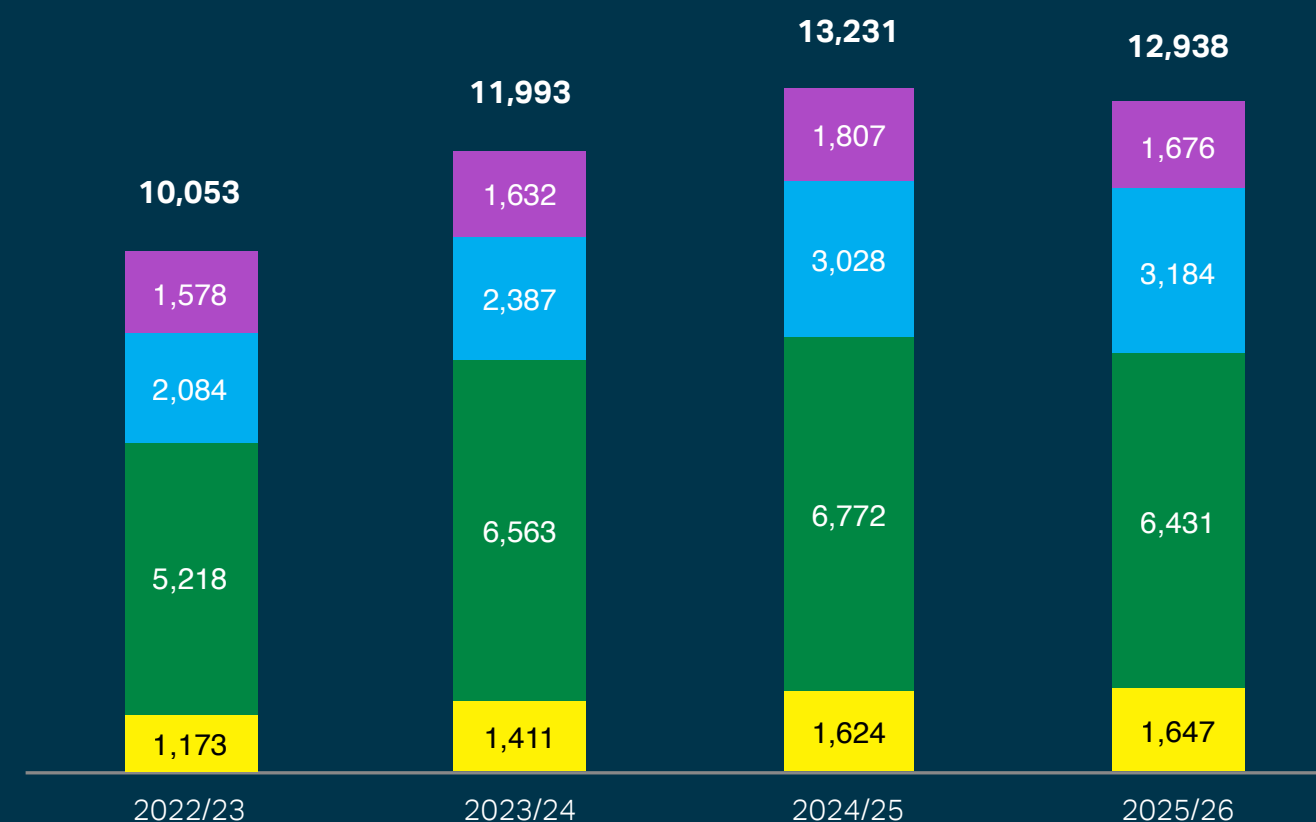
12,938 people were seen rough sleeping in London in 2025/26, which is a 2% decrease compared to the total of 13,231 people seen in 2024/25.

8,078

8,078 people were seen rough sleeping for the first time this year (also referred to as flow), which is 62% of all people seen rough sleeping in the period. 3,184 (25%) of people seen rough sleeping in 2025/26 were also seen in the preceding year (referred to as stock). 1,676 (13%) of people seen rough sleeping were in the returner group, meaning they had been seen rough sleeping in the past but not in 2024/25.

People seen rough sleeping across two consecutive years (referred to as stock) were the only group to show an increase compared to 2024/25, and this group also displayed the largest increase between 2023/24 and 2024/25, indicating a sustained trend. The totals for both the flow and returner groups fell, with returners showing the greatest proportionate decrease, while the flow group contributed the greatest reduction in absolute numbers. The decrease in the flow group was the most significant determining factor in the overall total of people seen rough sleeping falling by 2%. Despite the decrease in the flow group, its total is still the second highest ever recorded.

Chart 1: People seen rough sleeping, by flow, stock, returner breakdown, 2022/23 - 2025/26



Category	Description
Flow - unidentified	People who had never been seen rough sleeping prior to 2025/26 (i.e. people new to rough sleeping), who were recorded without a name, and with only one contact.
Flow - identified	People who had never been seen rough sleeping prior to 2025/26 (i.e. people new to rough sleeping), who were recorded with a name, and/or with more than one contact.
Stock	People who were also seen rough sleeping in 2024/25 (i.e. those seen across a minimum of two consecutive years).
Returner	People who were first seen rough sleeping prior to 2024/25, but were not seen during 2024/25 (i.e. those who have had a gap in their rough sleeping histories).

LONG RANGE TREND

2025/26 is only the third year during the last ten in which the total number of people recorded rough sleeping was lower than the previous year. The reduction of 2% was more modest than the decreases of 8% in 2017/18 and 24% in 2021/22, however. Despite the year-on-year decrease, the 2025/26 total is the second highest ever recorded on CHAIN, and is 60% higher than the total of 8,108 people seen rough sleeping ten years ago, in 2016/17.

It is likely that the especially notable reduction in the total number of people seen rough sleeping during 2021/22 was at least in part due to the additional resources that were put into addressing rough sleeping during the Covid-19 pandemic under the government's Everyone In initiative.

Chart 2: People seen rough sleeping by year, 2016/17 - 2025/26

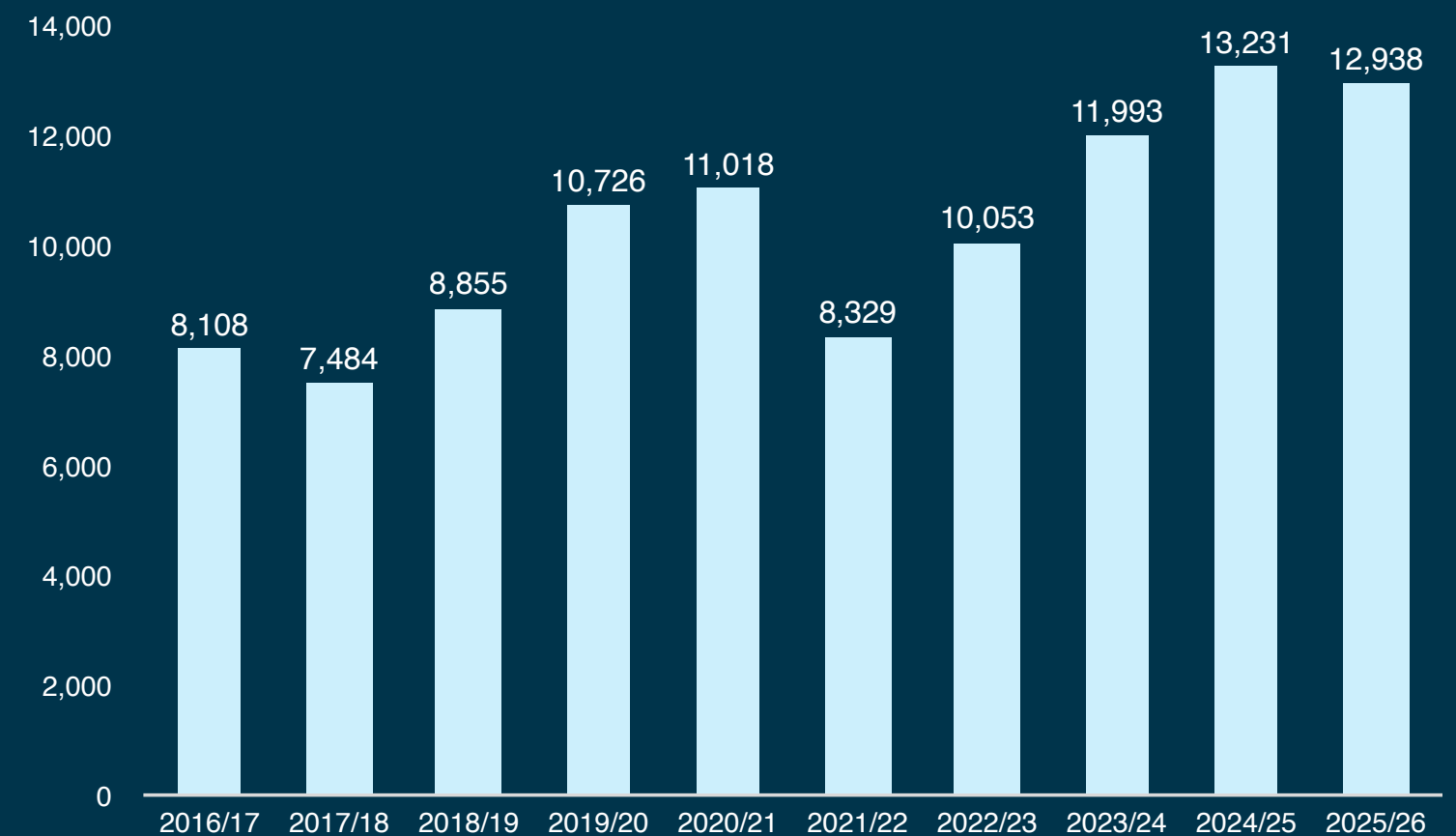
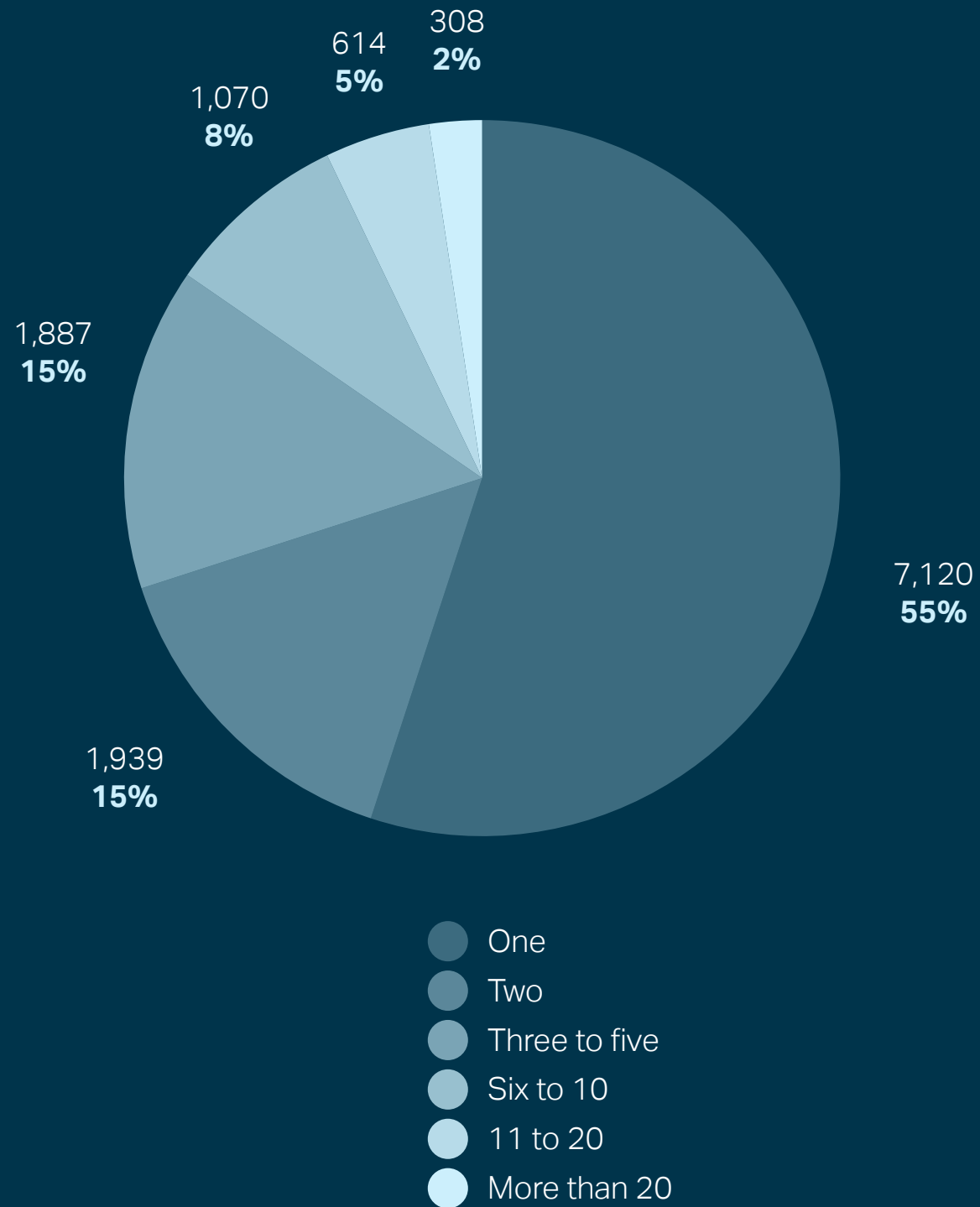


Chart 3: People seen rough sleeping in 2025/26, by number of times seen rough sleeping



Base: 12,938 people seen rough sleeping in 2025/26.

NUMBER OF TIMES SEEN ROUGH SLEEPING

7,120 (55%) people were seen rough sleeping only once in 2025/26, which compares to 7,446 (56%) seen rough sleeping just once in 2024/25.

922 (7%) people recorded rough sleeping in 2025/26 were seen more than ten times. 28 people were seen rough sleeping more than 50 times in the year, compared to 26 people with this many contacts in 2024/25, and 18 in 2023/24.

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

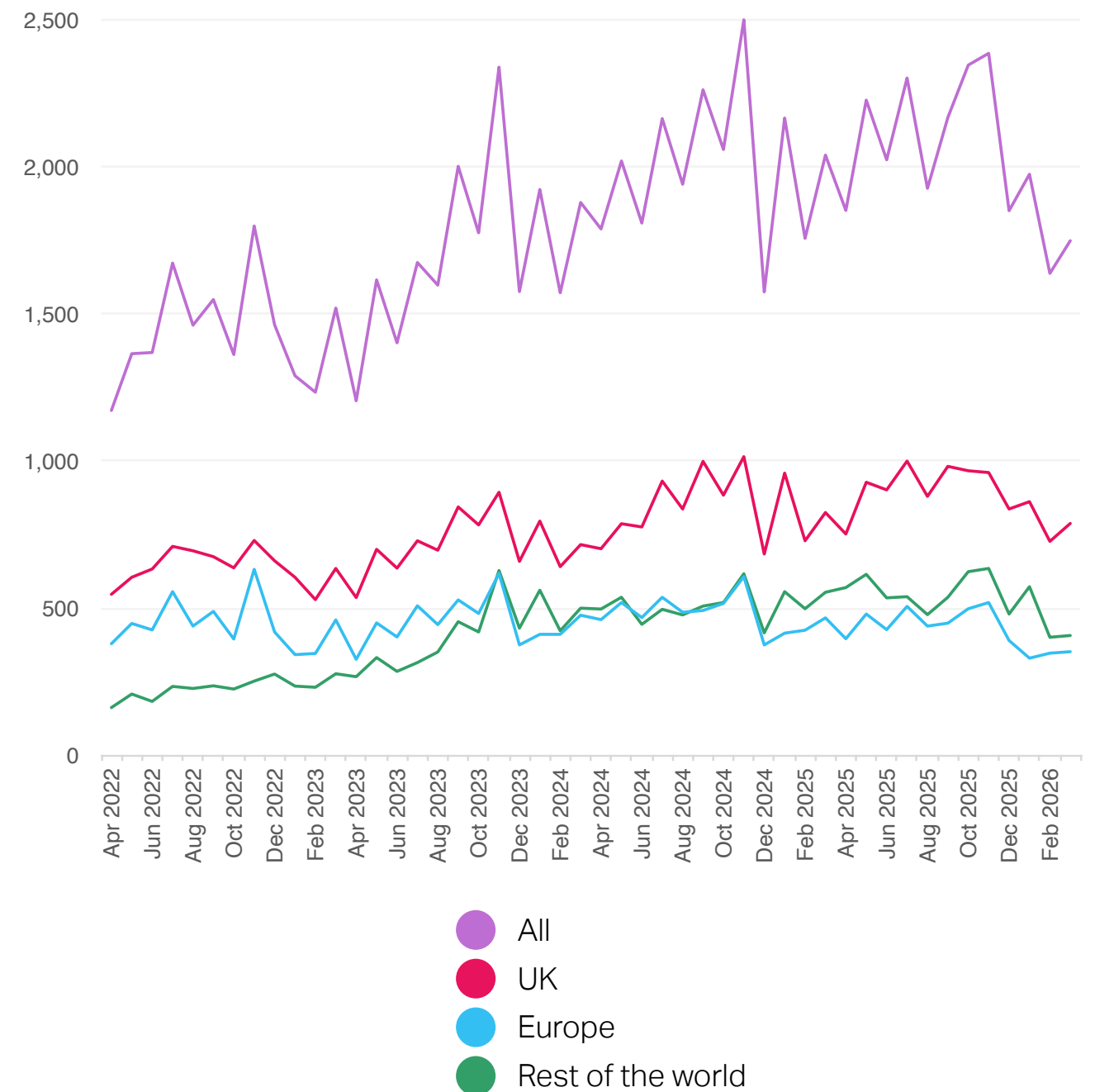
This chart shows the monthly trend in numbers of people seen rough sleeping over the last four years, broken down by nationality group.

The typical seasonal trend shows monthly totals increasing throughout the year from their lowest point during the December to February period, and peaking in November, when the government's annual street count takes place.

The highest monthly total during 2025/26 was recorded in November 2025, with 2,386 people seen rough sleeping that month. The lowest monthly total, 1,638 people, was recorded in February 2026. The November 2025 peak was somewhat less pronounced than in previous years, and was followed by a comparatively smaller dip in December. Seasonal trends during 2025/26 may have been affected by a relatively mild winter, with fewer periods of SWEP activation.

The nationality comparison confirms the trend of recent years, with the numbers for the 'Rest of the world' group continuing to be higher than the numbers for people from Europe (excluding the UK). The higher numbers recorded for the 'Rest of the world' group are at least partially driven by the continuing trend of people experiencing rough sleeping following departure from asylum support accommodation.

Chart 4: Number of people seen rough sleeping per month, April 2022 - March 2026, by nationality



SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION

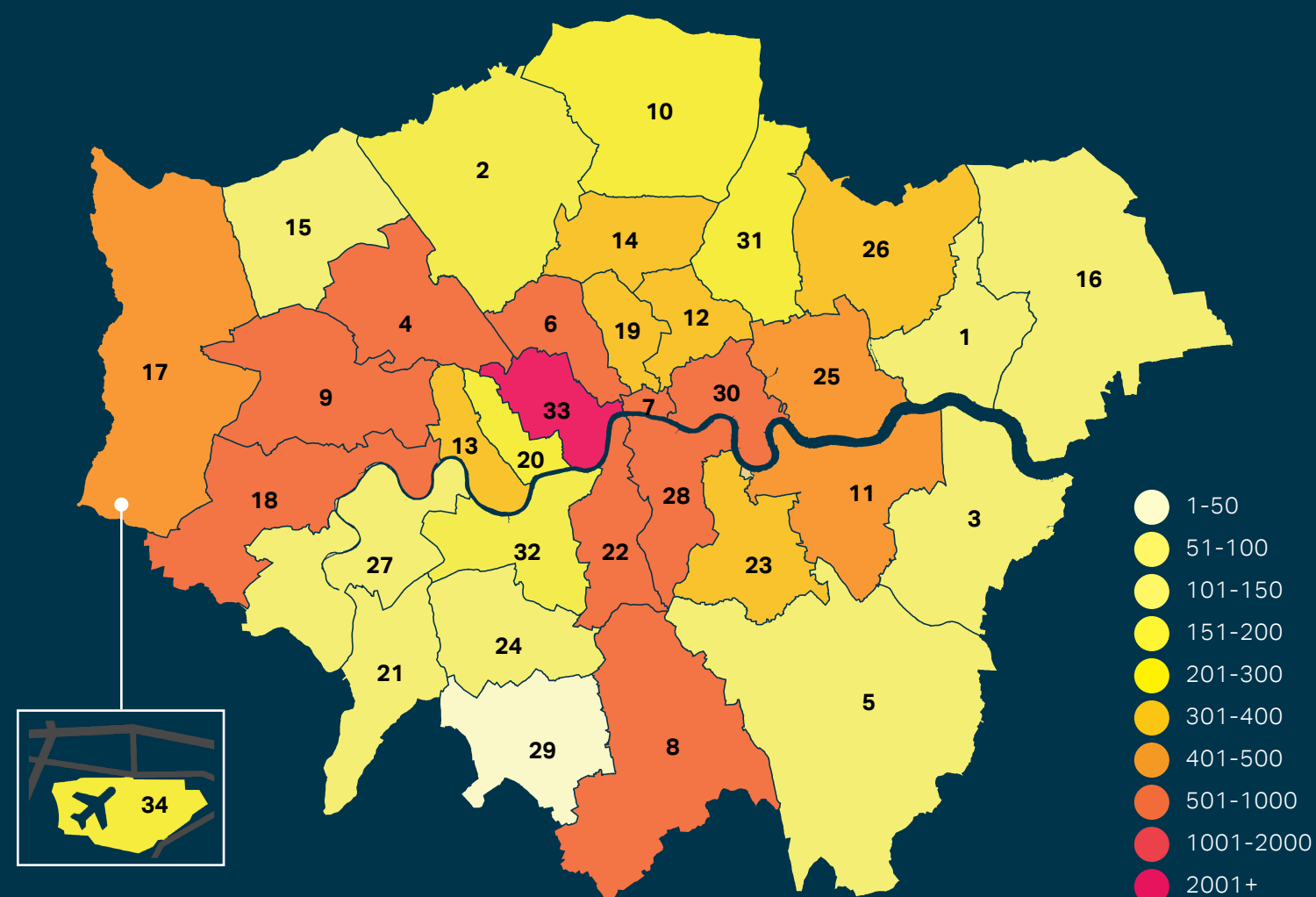
As in previous years, the borough in which the greatest number of people were seen rough sleeping was Westminster, with 2,583 people (20% of the overall London total).

Ten boroughs recorded more than 500 people rough sleeping during the year. Of the top ten boroughs, five recorded decreases in the number of people seen rough sleeping, and four recorded increases, while one recorded an unchanged total. The borough recording the greatest increase, both in proportion and actual numbers, was Hounslow. The borough recording the greatest decrease, again both in proportion and actual numbers, was Islington. City of London also recorded a notable decrease in numbers, albeit one that is somewhat less significant proportionately.

A total of 227 people were seen rough sleeping at Heathrow airport, which is counted separately from Hillingdon, due to the prevalence of rough sleeping at and around the airport.

During 2025/26, 71 people were recorded rough sleeping on buses, and five were recorded on the London Underground network.

Map 1: Total number of people seen rough sleeping in each borough during 2025/26



Key	Borough	Total	Key	Borough	Total
1	Barking & Dagenham	128	18	Hounslow	513
2	Barnet	176	19	Islington	378
3	Bexley	136	20	Kensington & Chelsea	239
4	Brent	530	21	Kingston upon Thames	113
5	Bromley	145	22	Lambeth	571
6	Camden	974	23	Lewisham	345
7	City of London	757	24	Merton	96
8	Croydon	527	25	Newham	499
9	Ealing	642	26	Redbridge	314
10	Enfield	217	27	Richmond	84
11	Greenwich	406	28	Southwark	613
12	Hackney	319	29	Sutton	43
13	Hammersmith & Fulham	391	30	Tower Hamlets	557
14	Haringey	360	31	Waltham Forest	224
15	Harrow	93	32	Wandsworth	170
16	Havering	81	33	Westminster	2583
17	Hillingdon	480	34	Heathrow	227

Table 1: Boroughs in which the five highest totals of people were seen rough sleeping during 2025/26

Borough	2025/26	2024/25
Westminster	2,583	2,612
Camden	974	975
City of London	757	878
Ealing	642	723
Southwark	613	613

HISTORY PRIOR TO ROUGH SLEEPING

CHAIN records information about people's circumstances prior to a new or repeat instance of rough sleeping, including what type of accommodation they had been staying in, and the type and cause of departure from the accommodation.

Of those people new to rough sleeping during 2025/26 with information recorded about their last settled base prior to sleeping rough in London, 56% had come from some form of long-term accommodation, including 28% who had been living with family, friends or a partner, and 22% who had been tenants in private rented accommodation. 21% of people who were new to rough sleeping reported that they had been staying in asylum support accommodation.

Among people returning to rough sleeping, 45% reported their last settled base as having been long-term accommodation, from which 22% were tenants in private rented accommodation, while 16% had been living with family, friends or a partner. 26% of those returning to rough sleeping had left short or medium-term accommodation, of which 16% had been living in a hostel or other supported accommodation.

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

Table 2: Last settled base of people who were new or returning to rough sleeping in 2025/26

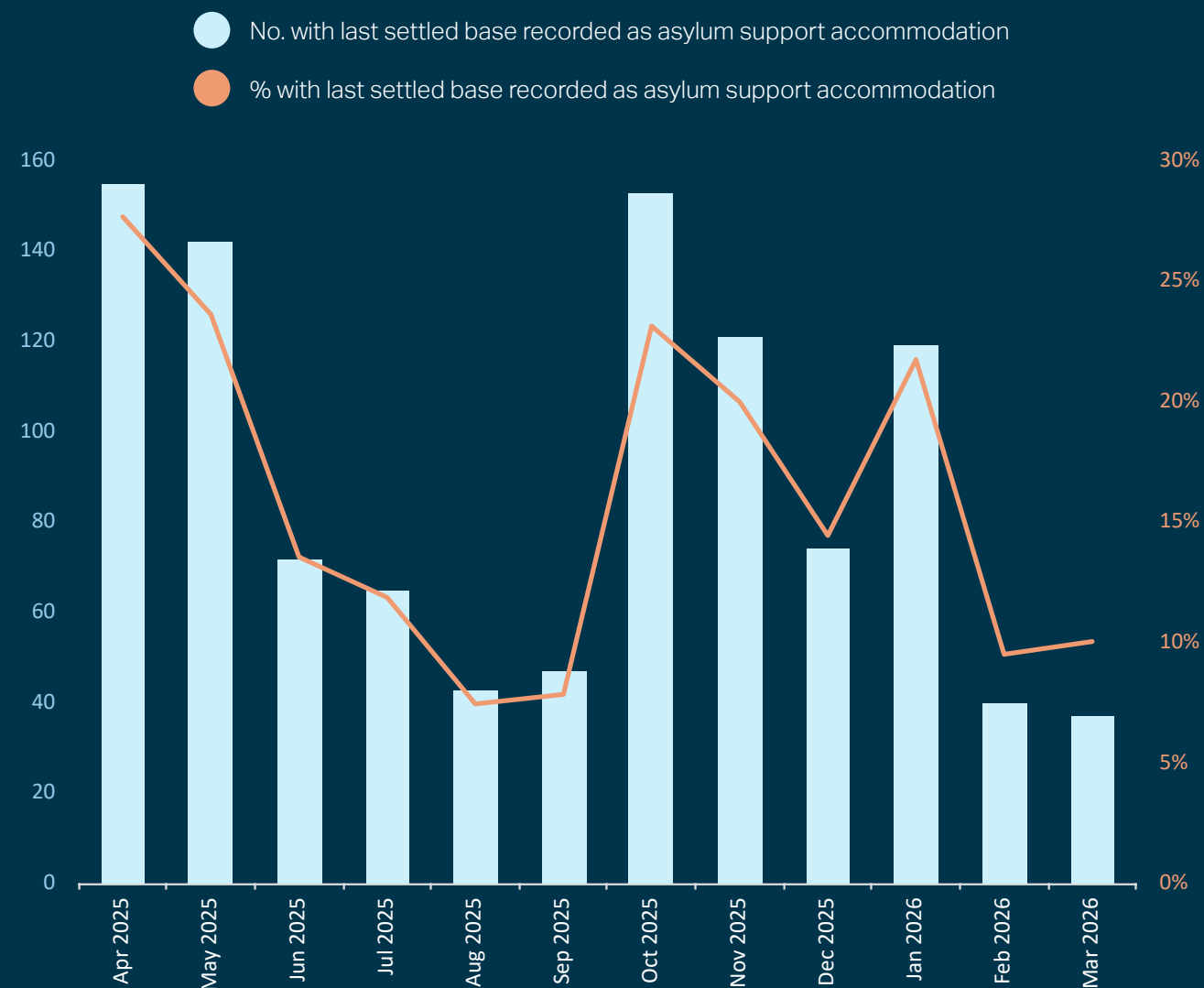
Last settled base in the UK	New		Returning	
	No.	%	No.	%
Long-term accommodation				
Living with family/friends/partner	1,371	27.5%	255	16.5%
Private rented accommodation	1,111	22.3%	346	22.4%
Council tenancy (local authority accommodation)	159	3.2%	48	3.1%
Housing association/RSL accommodation	100	2.0%	31	2.0%
Sheltered housing/registered care accommodation	14	0.3%	15	1.0%
Employment-related accommodation (except armed forces)	25	0.5%	5	0.3%
Owner occupied accommodation	17	0.3%	1	0.1%
<i>Long-term accommodation subtotal</i>	<i>2,797</i>	<i>56.2%</i>	<i>701</i>	<i>45.3%</i>
Short or medium-term accommodation				
Hostel or other supported accommodation	202	4.1%	247	16.0%
Temporary accommodation (local authority)	121	2.4%	111	7.2%
B&B (not local authority TA)	27	0.5%	10	0.6%
Winter/night shelter	7	0.1%	17	1.1%
Clinic/Detox/Rehab	4	0.1%	3	0.2%
Squat	17	0.3%	8	0.5%
<i>Short or medium-term accommodation subtotal</i>	<i>378</i>	<i>7.6%</i>	<i>396</i>	<i>25.6%</i>
Institutional & armed forces accommodation				
Asylum support accommodation (NASS/other)	1,037	20.8%	31	2.0%
Care (local authority youth care)	7	0.1%	0	0.0%
Hospital	17	0.3%	15	1.0%
Prison	153	3.1%	99	6.4%
Probation accommodation	17	0.3%	11	0.7%
Armed forces accommodation	1	0.0%	0	0.0%
<i>Institutional & armed forces accommodation subtotal</i>	<i>1,232</i>	<i>24.7%</i>	<i>156</i>	<i>10.1%</i>
No settled base since arriving in UK	336	6.7%	194	12.5%
Other	73	1.5%	43	2.8%
Not known	162	3.3%	58	3.7%
Not recorded	3,679		1,206	
Total (excl. not recorded)	4,978	100.0%	1,548	100.0%
Total (incl. not recorded)	8,657		2,754	

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 2025/26, either as a person new or returning to rough sleeping, whose last settled base was recorded as asylum support accommodation. People included in this chart are also counted in Table 2 of this bulletin.

The number of people seen rough sleeping after leaving asylum support accommodation fluctuated throughout the year. This was likely caused by a combination of factors, including changes in Home Office decision-making policy, a general downturn in decision activity over the summer (also observed in 2024/25), and pauses in evictions during SWEP and the Christmas period, alongside increased availability of winter night shelter.

Chart 5: People new or returning to rough sleeping during 2025/26 whose last settled base was recorded as asylum support accommodation, by month



Baseline for percentages is the total number of people new or returning to rough sleeping 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 142 different nationalities recorded during 2025/26. The proportion of people seen rough sleeping who were UK nationals was 49% (5,475 people), which is marginally higher than the proportion of 47% in 2024/25. The proportion of people from EEA countries was 18% (2,033 people), which is lower than the proportion of 21% in 2024/25.

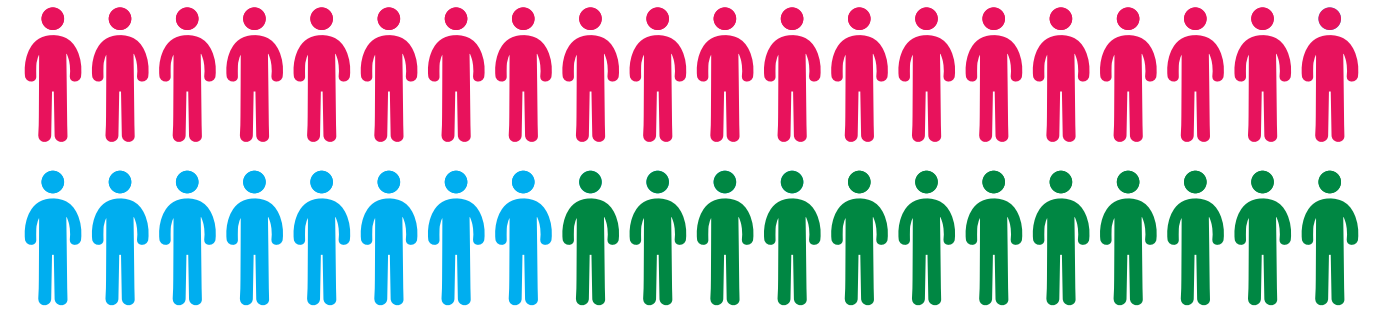
People from African countries constituted the third largest nationality group, at 18% (2,009 people). This is a very slight increase compared to the 17% from African countries recorded in 2024/25. Asian nationals constituted 11% of people seen rough sleeping in 2025/26 (1,198 people), which is the same proportion as in 2024/25.

The most commonly recorded single nationality during 2025/26 was UK (5,475, 49%). This was followed by Romania (719, 6%), Eritrea (713, 6%), Poland (438, 4%), India (386, 3%), and Sudan (378, 3%).

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 2025/26, the proportion of people seen rough sleeping from this 'Rest of the world' heading was 31%, which continues the trend first observed in 2023/24 for this group to account for a higher percentage than those from European countries (excluding the UK), who represented 20% of the total this year. The decrease in the overall total of people seen rough sleeping appears to be primarily driven by the reduction in the number of EEA nationals.

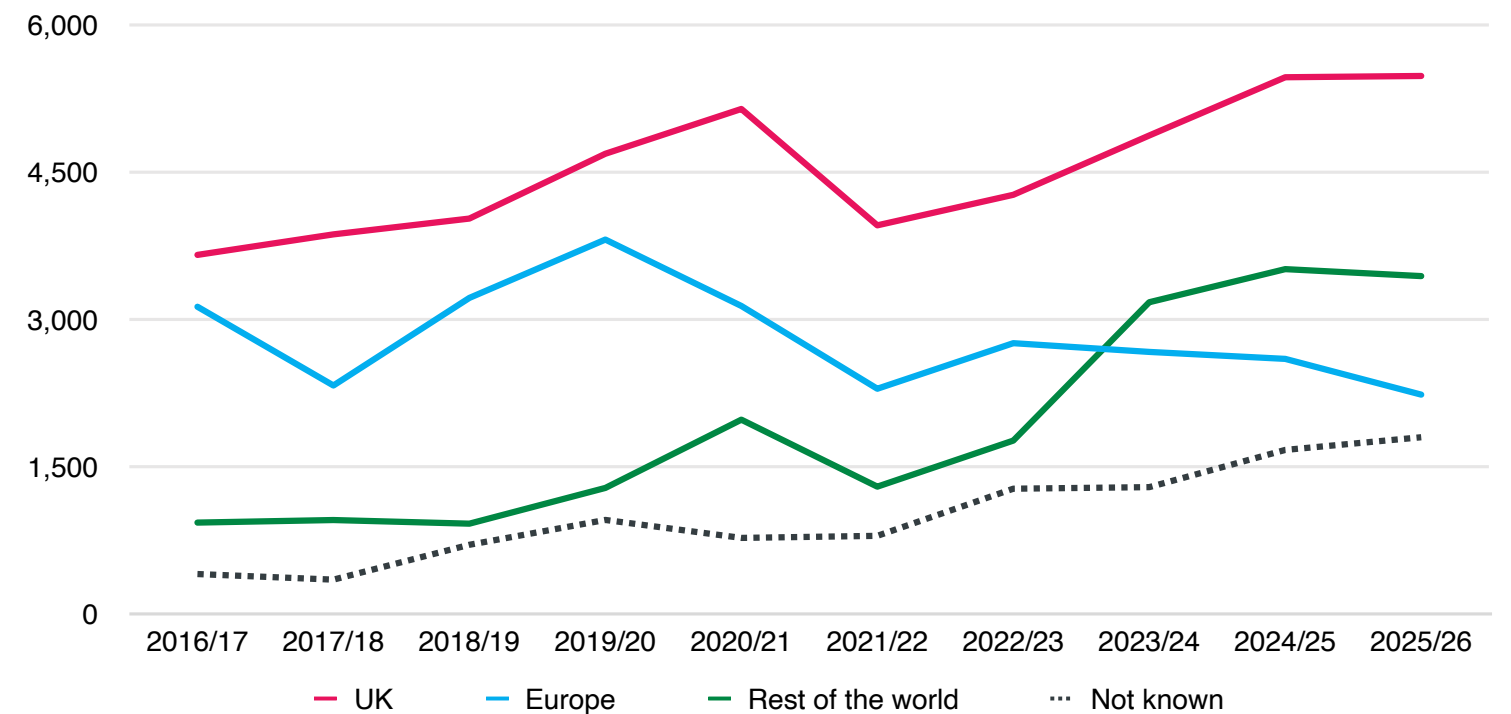
Chart 6: Nationality of people seen rough sleeping in 2025/26

Nationality	UK	Europe	Rest of the world	Total
No.	5,475	2,230	3,437	11,142



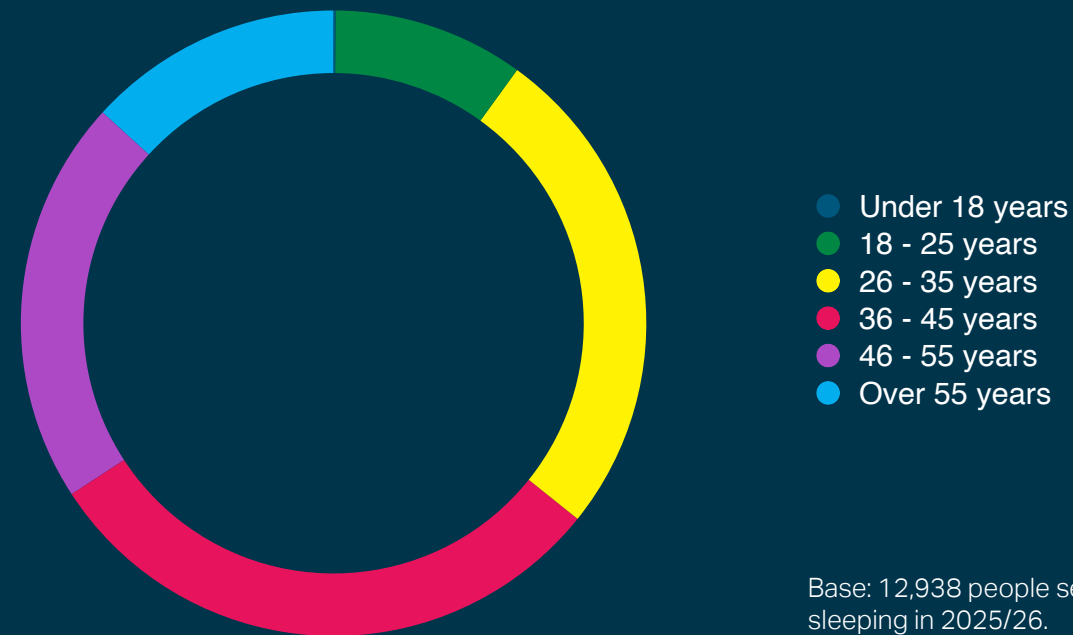
Base: 11,142 people seen rough sleeping during 2025/26 whose nationality was known.

Chart 7: Nationality of people seen rough sleeping, 2016/17 - 2025/26



DEMOGRAPHICS

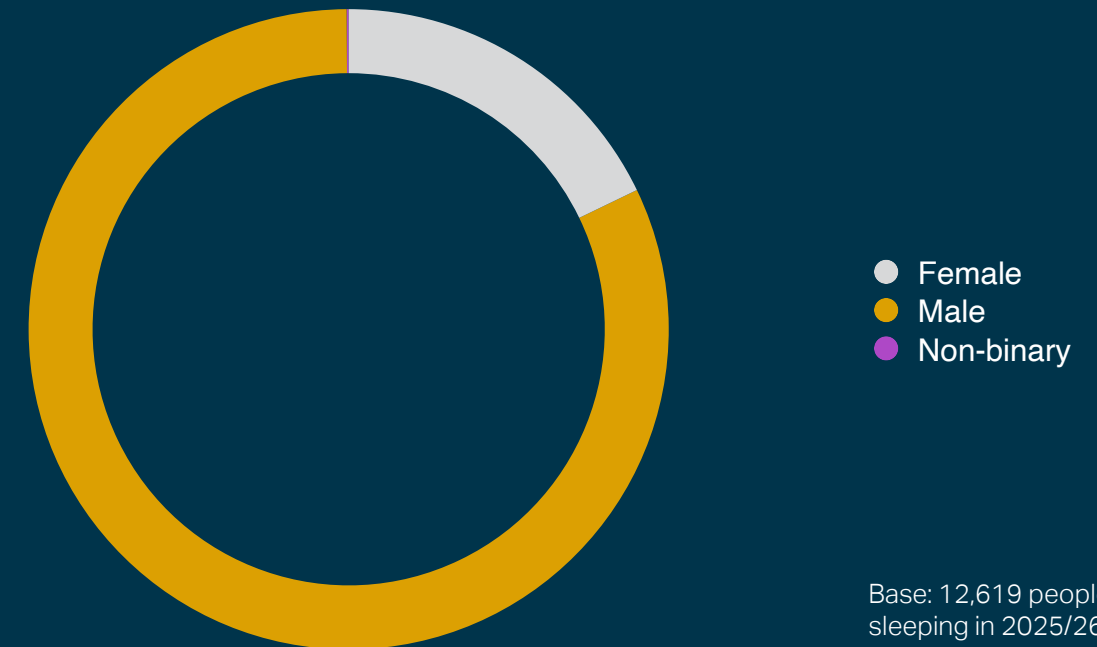
Chart 8: People seen rough sleeping in 2025/26, by age



Base: 12,938 people seen rough sleeping in 2025/26.

Age	No.	%
Under 18 years	13	0%
18 - 25 years	1,278	10%
26 - 35 years	3,335	26%
36 - 45 years	3,887	30%
46 - 55 years	2,714	21%
Over 55 years	1,711	13%
Total	12,938	100%

Chart 9: People seen rough sleeping in 2025/26, by gender



Base: 12,619 people seen rough sleeping in 2025/26 whose gender was known.

Gender	No.	%
Female	2,251	18%
Male	10,355	82%
Non-binary	13	0%
Total	12,619	100%

The gender and age profile of people seen rough sleeping in 2025/26 shows only minor variation from that of people seen in 2024/25. The majority of people seen rough sleeping were male (82%), but the proportion of women rose slightly from 17% in 2024/25 to 18% in 2025/26. It is notable that the number of women seen rough sleeping increased in 2025/26 compared to 2024/25, while the number of men decreased.

10% of those seen rough sleeping in 2025/26 were aged 25 or under, compared to 11% in 2024/25. People in the over 55 age group represented 13% of the total in 2025/26, and this is the only age category that saw an increase in numbers compared to last year (1,711 people in 2025/26, against 1,578 in 2024/25).

SUPPORT NEEDS

Chart 10: People seen rough sleeping in 2025/26, by support needs

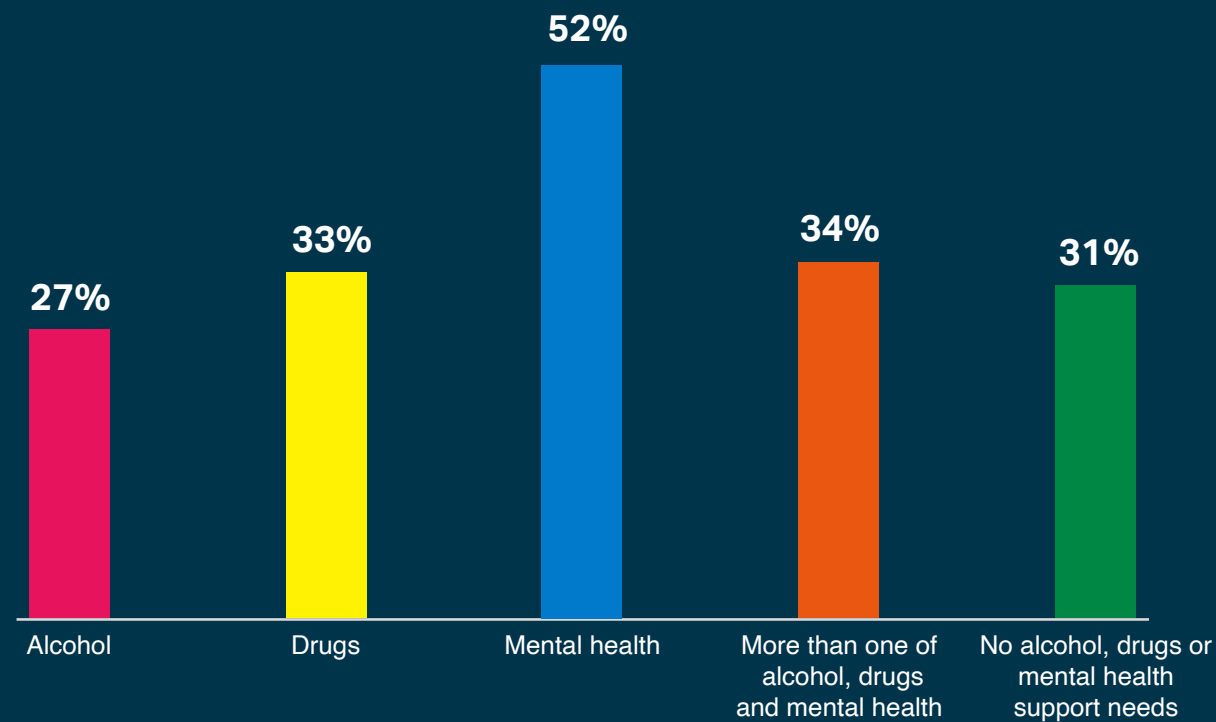
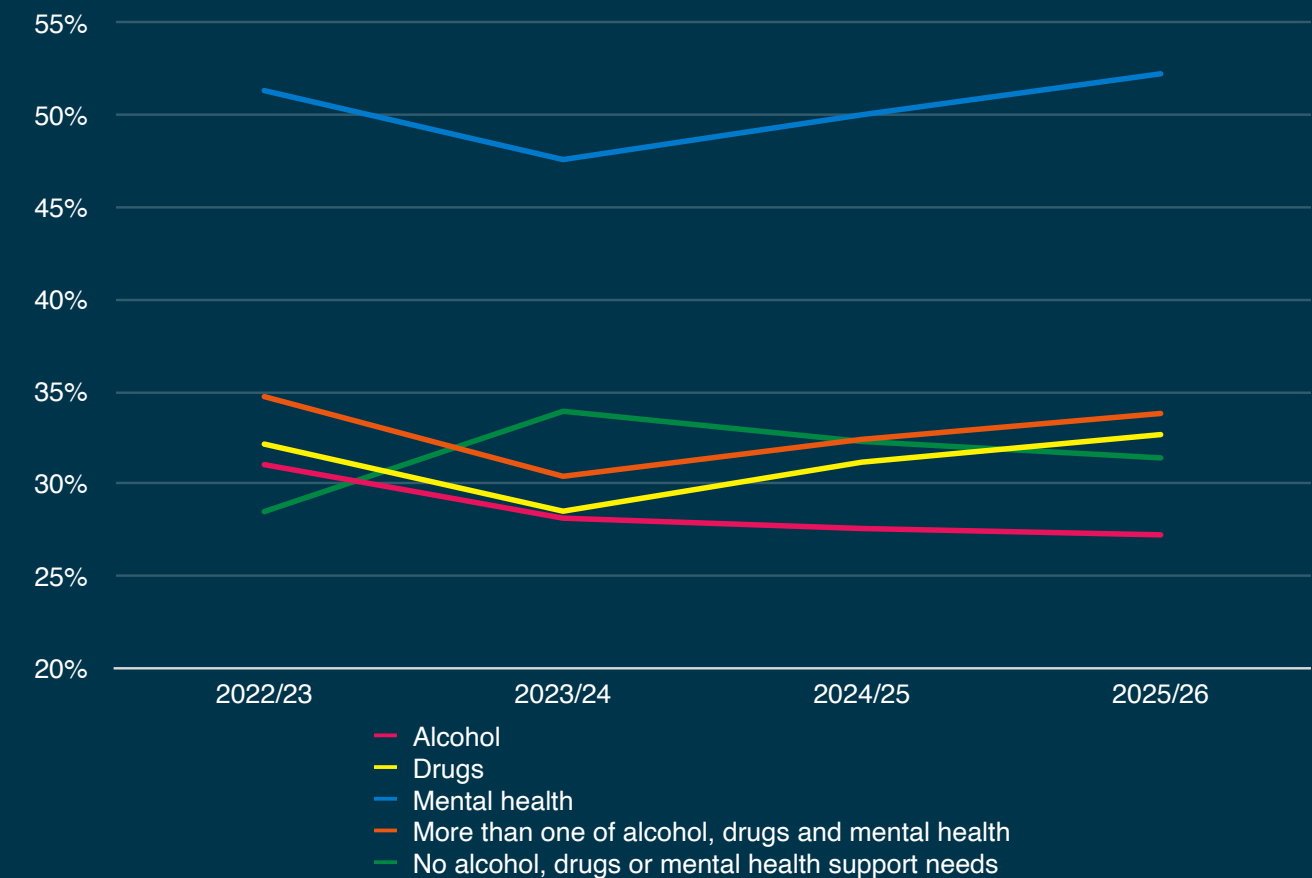


Chart 11: Support needs proportions for people seen rough sleeping, 2022/23 - 2025/26

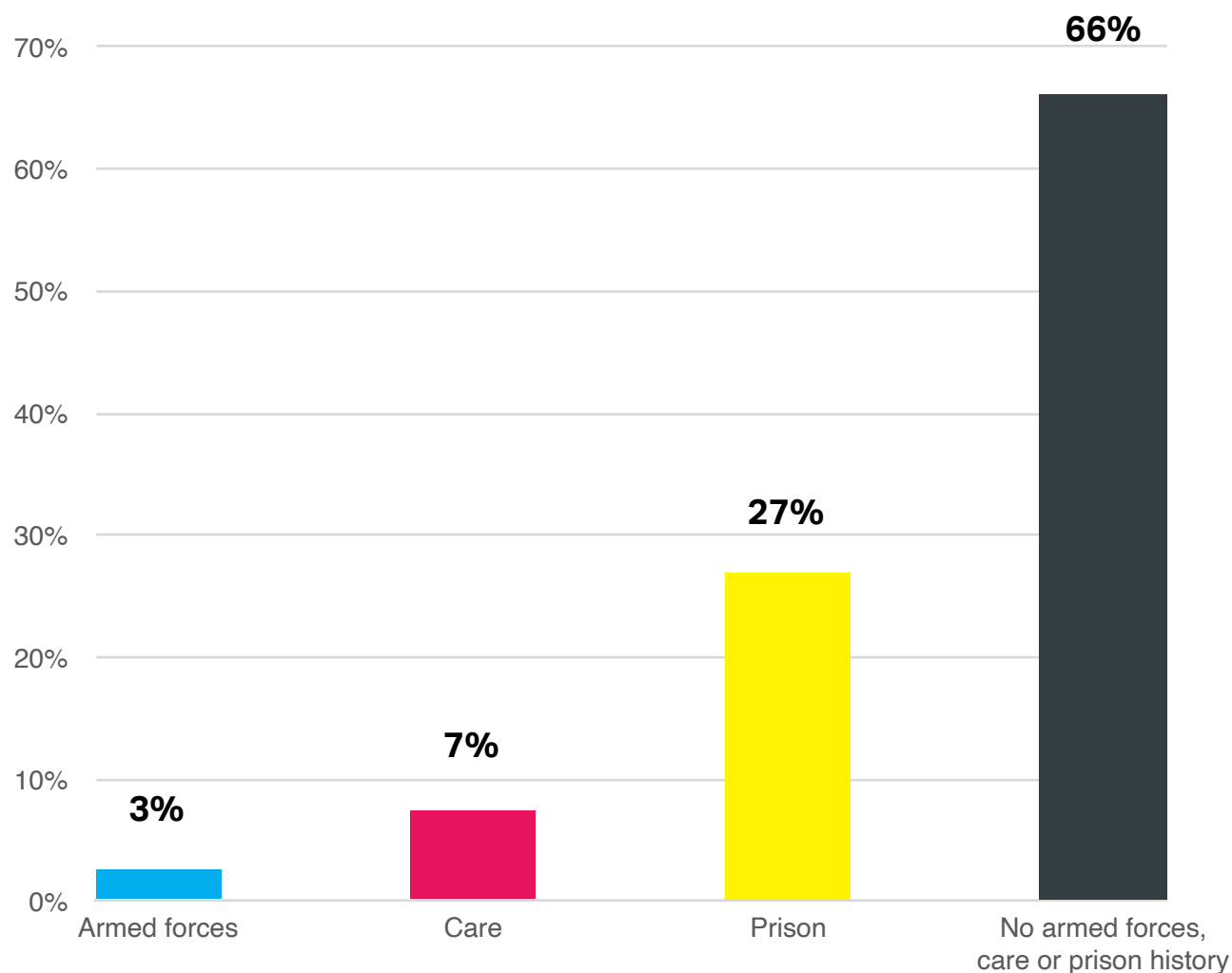


Base: 9,244 people seen rough sleeping in 2025/26 who had been assessed for at least one of the three key support needs.

The proportions of people seen rough sleeping with drugs or mental health support needs increased very slightly in 2025/26, with 33% recorded as having a drugs support need, compared to 31% in 2024/25, and 52% recorded as having a mental health support need, compared to 50% in 2024/25. The proportion of people with a need relating to alcohol use declined very slightly, at 27% in 2025/26, compared to 28% in 2024/25.

34% of people seen rough sleeping in 2025/26 who had received an assessment had more than one of the three needs, compared to 32% in 2024/25, while 31% were found to have none of the three needs, compared to 32% in 2024/25.

Chart 12: People seen rough sleeping in 2025/26, by institutional and armed forces history



Base: 9,076 people seen rough sleeping in 2025/26 who were assessed for at least one of the three histories.

INSTITUTIONAL AND ARMED FORCES HISTORY

CHAIN records information about whether people seen rough sleeping have had 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.

246 people seen rough sleeping in 2025/26 had experience of serving in the armed forces, of whom 107 were UK nationals. 667 people seen rough sleeping in 2025/26 had previous experience of living in care (compared to 721 in 2024/25), and 2,442 had experience of serving time in prison (compared to 2,453 in 2024/25). Of the 667 people with experience of living in care, 75 were aged 25 or under.

Differences between proportions of people with experiences of armed forces, care or prison between 2024/25 and 2025/26 are mostly minor.

CHAIN ANNUAL BULLETIN

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