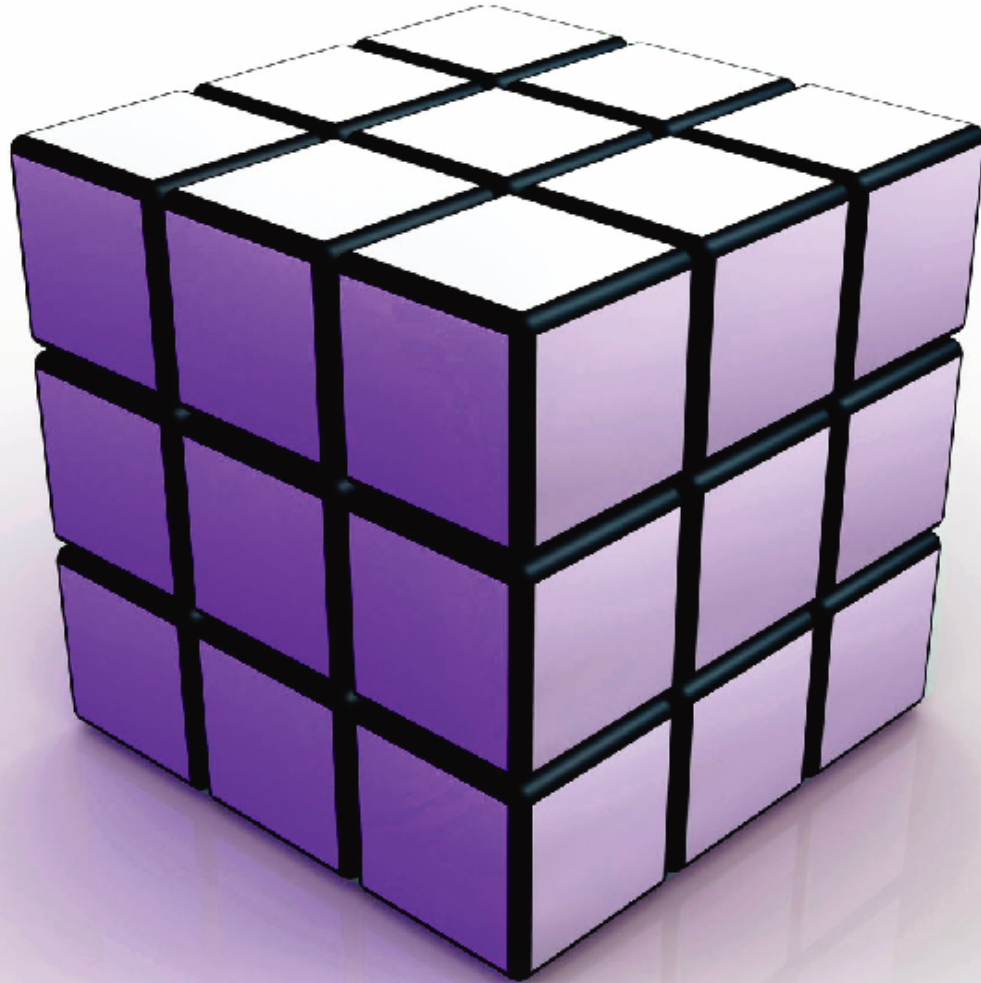


Hanover Welfare
Services

Quantitative
Research Report

October, 2006



forethought
RESEARCH
The Science of Marketing™

 **Hanover**
FOR OUR HOMELESS
HOUSING • SUPPORT • RESEARCH

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Introduction

Hanover Welfare Services (*Hanover*) are involved in providing support and services to those in danger of losing their home, as well as those who do not have a home. As an organisation involved in homelessness, *Hanover* was interested in research to explore and understand the public's perceptions of homelessness. Roberts Research Group (*Roberts*), in conjunction with Maurice Blackburn Cashman (MBC), was commissioned on a pro bono basis to conduct this research.

Qualitative research

A number of research areas were outlined to generate a focused discussion among participants. These included but were not limited to:

- Perceptions of a 'typical' person experiencing homelessness;
- Perceptions of experiences of homelessness;
- Perceptions of the causes of homelessness; and
- Perceived responsibility of solutions to homelessness.

The key research goals were to provide insight that could assist in shifting public perceptions of homelessness from sympathy to positive engagement and to provide facts that can be used to influence State and Federal government agencies.

Qualitative Research Goals

- Focus groups were recommended for the initial phase of the research to generate insight and capture the public's perceptions of homelessness. In addition, they provided an opportunity to brainstorm ideas on ways to 'engage' people in homelessness.
- Six focus groups across ages and Melbourne locations (Coburg and St Kilda) were conducted to engage a range of views for this research.
- The total number of participants across focus groups was 53, with 17 males and 36 females.

| Age range (years) | Number of participants | Gender | Number of groups |
|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| 18-30 | 16 | 7 Males 9 Females | 2 |
| 31-50 | 19 | 8 Males 11 Females | 2 |
| 51+ | 18 | 2 Males* 16 Females* | 2 |

Qualitative Research - Key findings

The research results suggested the following key findings:

1. The 'Typical' homeless profile

- The primary profile identified was a 40+ male living on the streets with a substance abuse problem or mental illness, who is less likely to accept assistance or seek it out.
- A secondary profile identified was youth homelessness.
- Women, families and children were far less prominent in the 'typical' profile.

2. Motivation to Donate

- The general perception amongst participants was that donating money overseas and to causes involving children was more worthwhile than donating to homelessness.
- The research suggested a 'return on investment' attitude was important to many participants, particularly among the 18-30 year old groups. For example, many participants asked the question "*what difference will my contribution make?*"

3. Empathy and sympathy

- Younger age groups tended to show empathy but not sympathy for the homeless, that is, they could understand how the homeless became so but were not particularly sympathetic to their remaining in the situation. Older groups tended to be more empathetic and sympathetic towards the homeless.
- Children in need evoked a great sense of sympathy as they were perceived as helpless in their plight. An example of effective use of the sympathy provoked by children in need was World Vision which, participants commented, was perceived to focus on children.
- There was a lack of understanding regarding adult homelessness when considering the resources and opportunities available in Australia.

Qualitative Research - Key findings

4. Perception of fear of the homeless

- The participants expressed a fear of the homeless due to negative encounters with individuals and their perceived anti-social behaviour. The fear may be related to a perception of blame of the homeless for their circumstances.

5. Perceived causes of homelessness fell into three main categories: economic, social/domestic and psychological

- Economic factors included low socio-economic status and job loss
- Social/domestic factors included family background and the lack of a support network
- Psychological factors such as poor coping skills and the absence of a support network were thought to intensify the causes of homelessness.

6. Inadequate information regarding homelessness

- There was a general lack of awareness of the size of the problem of homelessness.
- Information was not proactively sought by participants.

7. Barriers to positive engagement

- Homelessness was perceived as too big a problem to fix.
- Homelessness was thought to be overlooked in the context of other causes.
- There was a perceived negative social stigma associated with homelessness.
- Structural causes such as the nature of government policies.

Quantitative Research

The quantitative phase of the research consisted of a CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interview) survey of 1,000 respondents across Australia as a part of an omnibus survey on 18 and 19 September, 2006. An omnibus survey was chosen as it provided a national sample that provided a representative view of the Australian population with a sample size that enabled reporting of results at the 95% confidence level.

Quantitative Research Goals

The key research goals were to provide insight that could assist in shifting public perceptions of homelessness from sympathy to positive engagement and to provide facts that can be used to influence State and Federal government agencies. The research objectives of the quantitative stage of the research were:

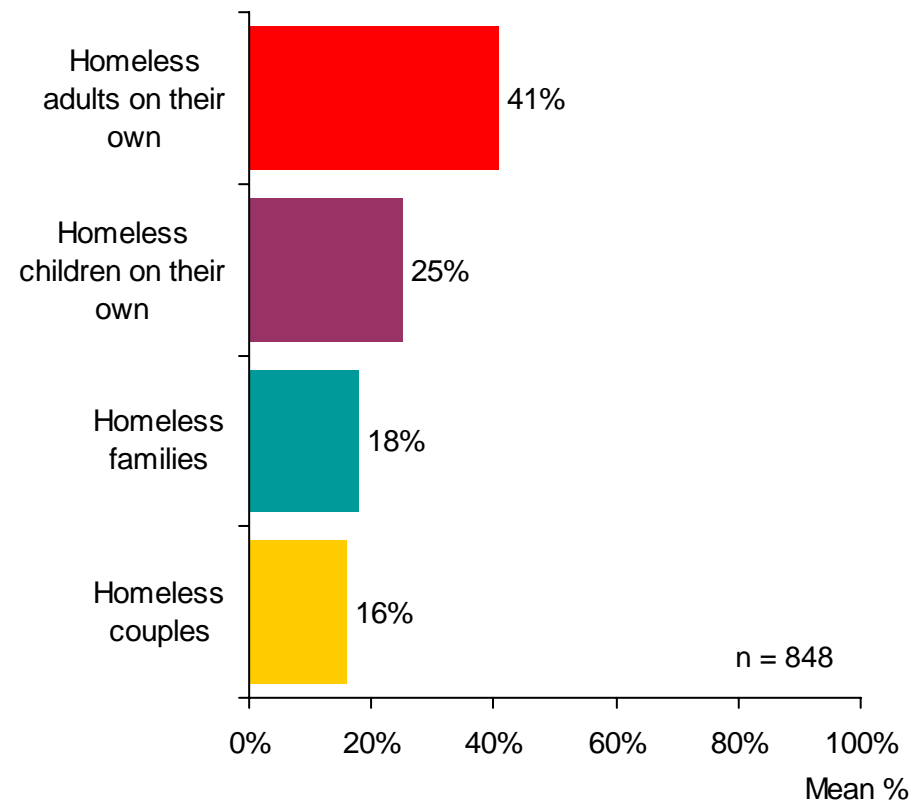
- To establish the **public's perceptions of the demographics of homelessness** by family status, age and gender.
- To research the **public's attributions for homelessness**, that is, to what extent did they consider that homelessness was the individual's "fault" or to what extent were there structural or external reasons for homelessness.
- To explore the public's attitudes to homelessness in terms of their level of **personal engagement**, for example, did they consider that they would only give to a charity if they could see a tangible result for their donation? Or that they would make a sizeable donation or donate time to a charity for the homeless.
- To establish the **public's views of who was responsible for solving homelessness**: was it the government, charities, public services provided by the community, big business, homeless people themselves, the families of the homeless, no-one in particular or all members of the community?

Demographics of homelessness: family status.

The stereotype of the single homeless adult continued, although there was an awareness of homeless children.

Q2 Out of the total number of people who are homeless in Australia, what do you think would be the percentage of.....

Overall

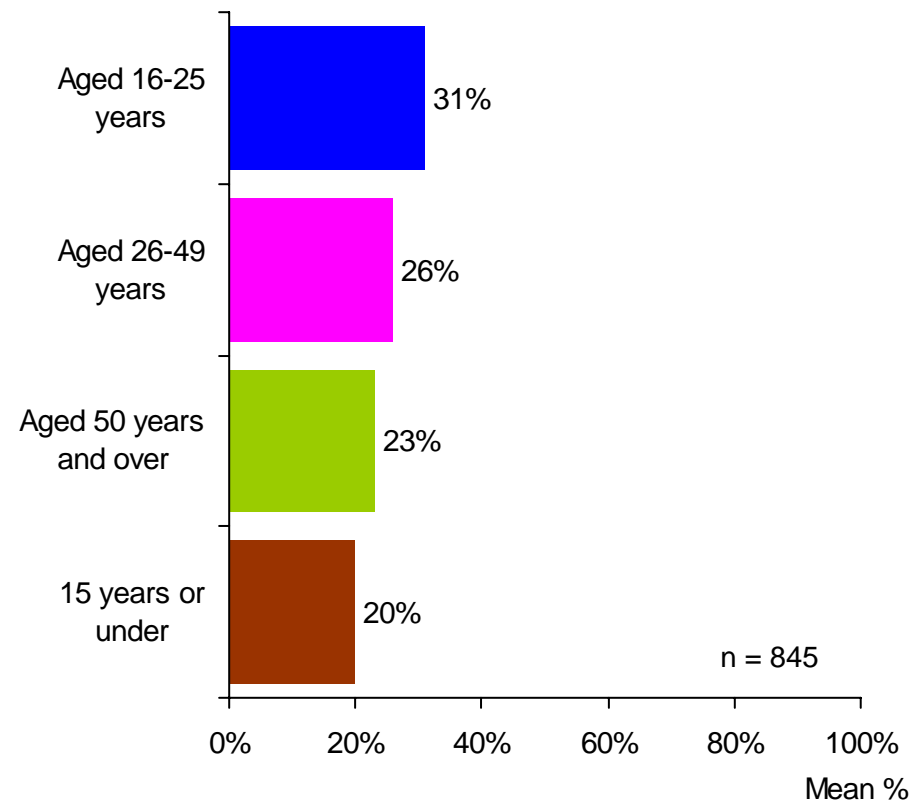


Demographics of homelessness: age.

Respondents believed that half (51%) of all homeless people were under age 25.

Q3 Of the people who are homeless, what percentage do you think are

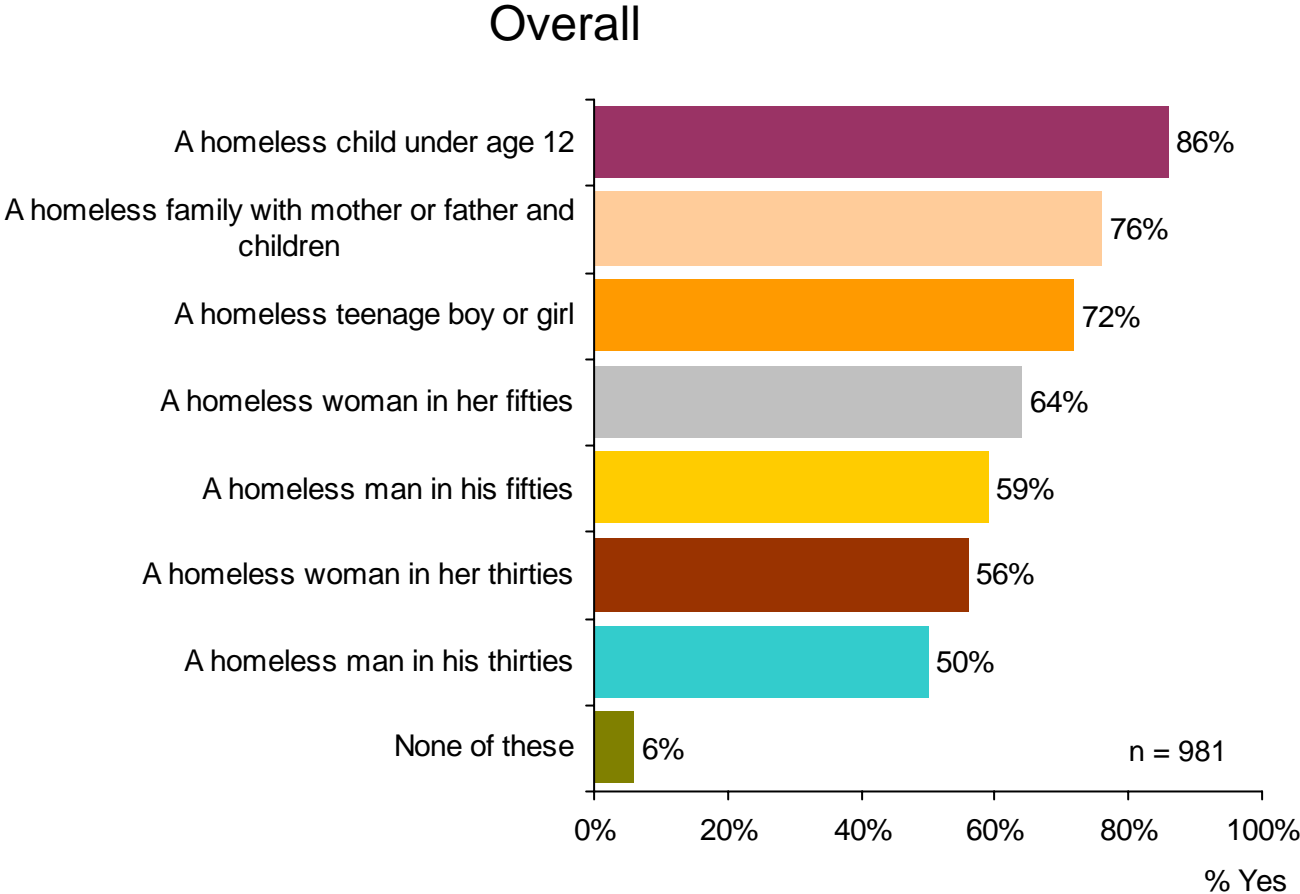
Overall



Support for different demographics of homeless people.

Children, particularly those under age 12, were the touchstone demographic.

Q4 Which of these people deserve YOUR financial support?



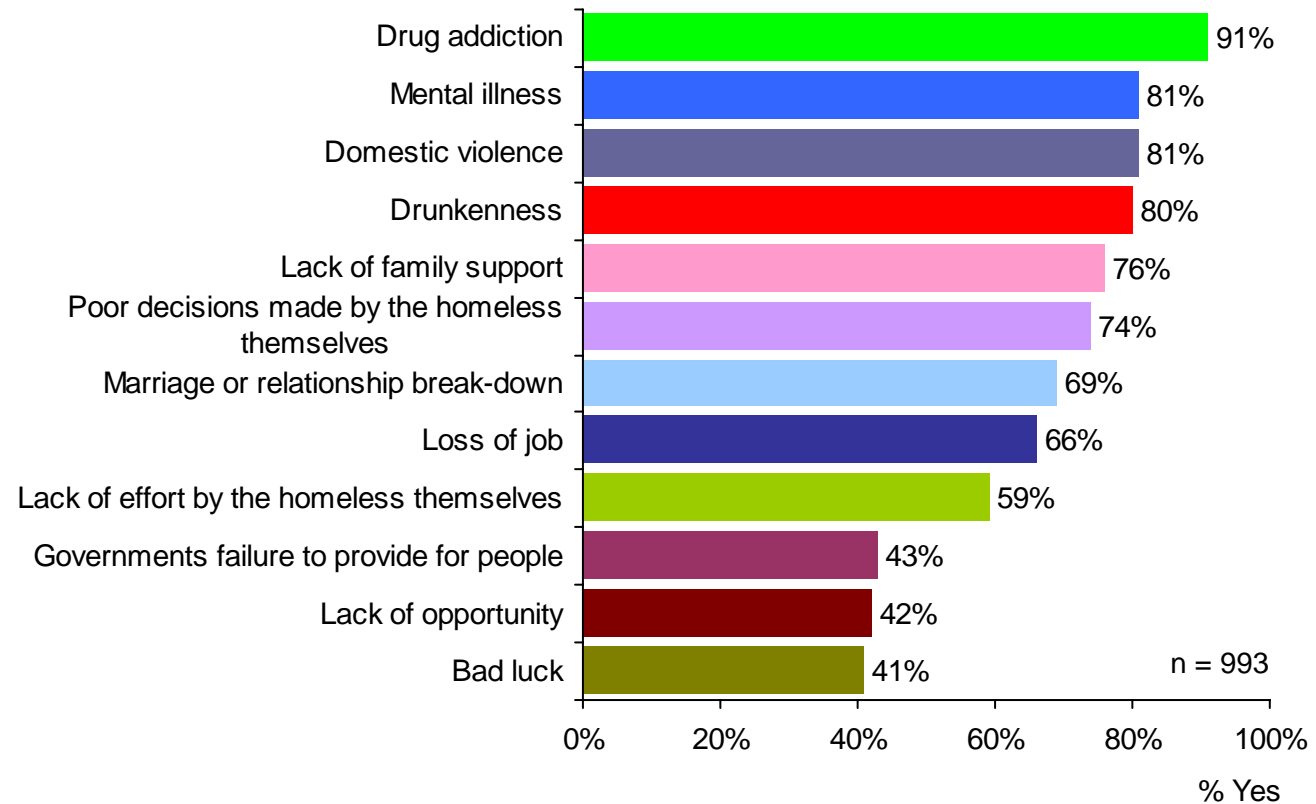
For survey purposes, gender and age were combined into one question.
Note: This is a multiple response question and therefore results may not add to 100%.

Attribution for homelessness.

Drug addiction, mental illness, domestic violence and drunkenness were the top four attributions, or reasons for homelessness.

Q5 Which of these factors are the MAIN reasons why some people are homeless?

Overall

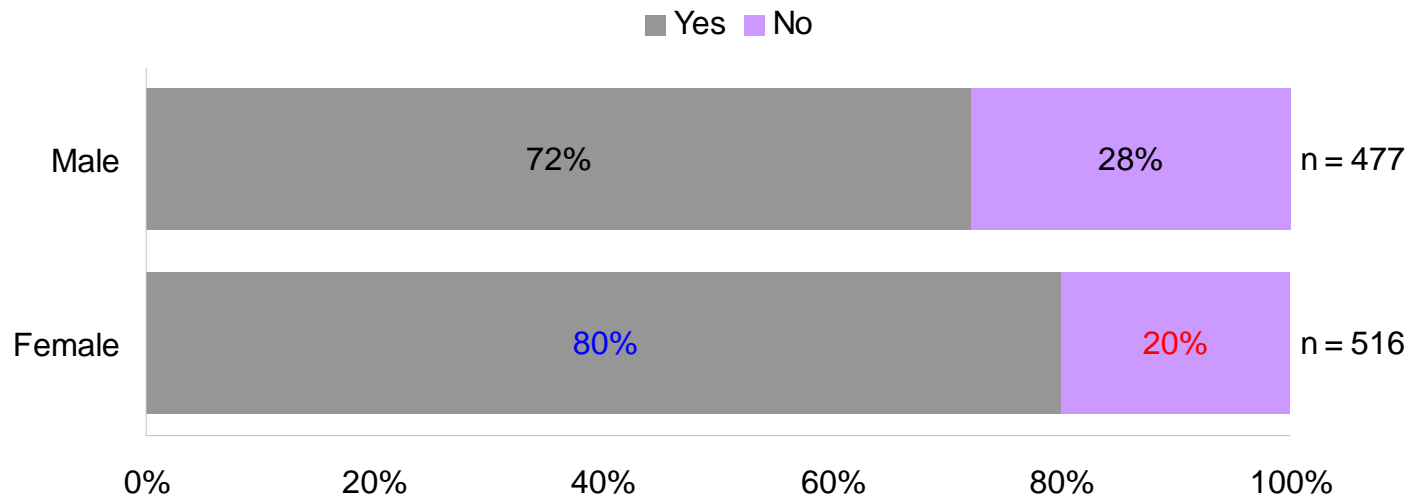


Note: This is a multiple response question and therefore results may not add to 100%.

Lack of family support as a reason for homelessness by gender.

Females were significantly more likely than males to consider a lack of family support as a reason for homelessness.

Q5 In your opinion, which of these factors are the MAIN reasons why some people are homeless? Lack of family support

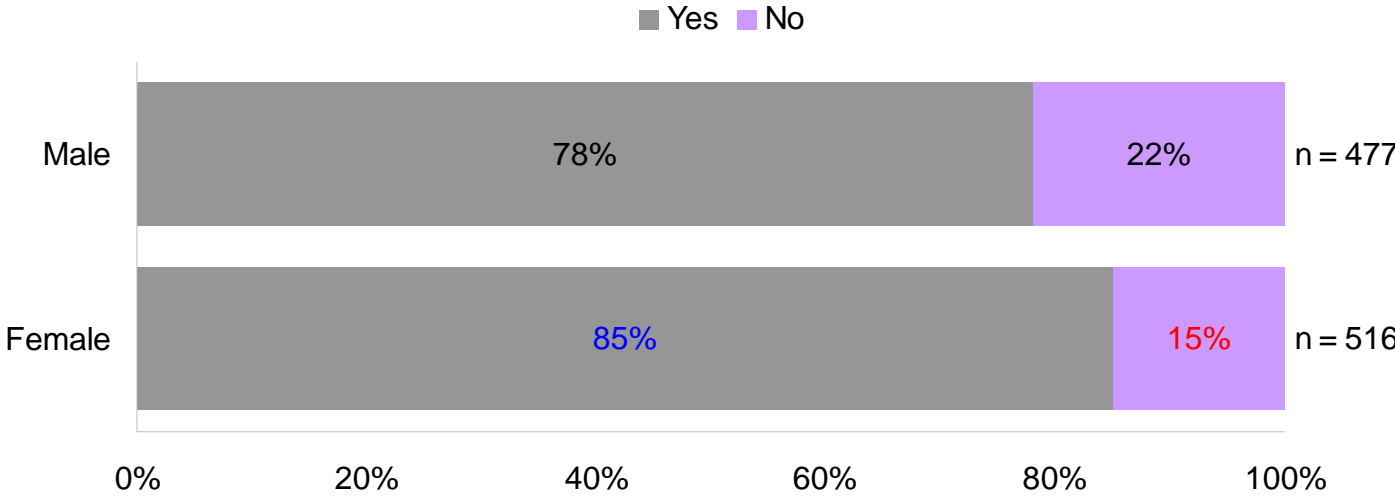


Note: Significance testing was conducted between Male and Female at the 95% level of confidence. Blue indicates the Female result was significantly higher than the Male result; Red indicates that the Female result was significantly lower.

Domestic violence as a reason for homelessness

by gender. Females were significantly more likely to consider domestic violence as a reason for homelessness than males. While perhaps unsurprising, it contributes to the trend of greater sympathy for homelessness among females than males.

Q5 In your opinion, which of these factors are the MAIN reasons why some people are homeless? Domestic violence



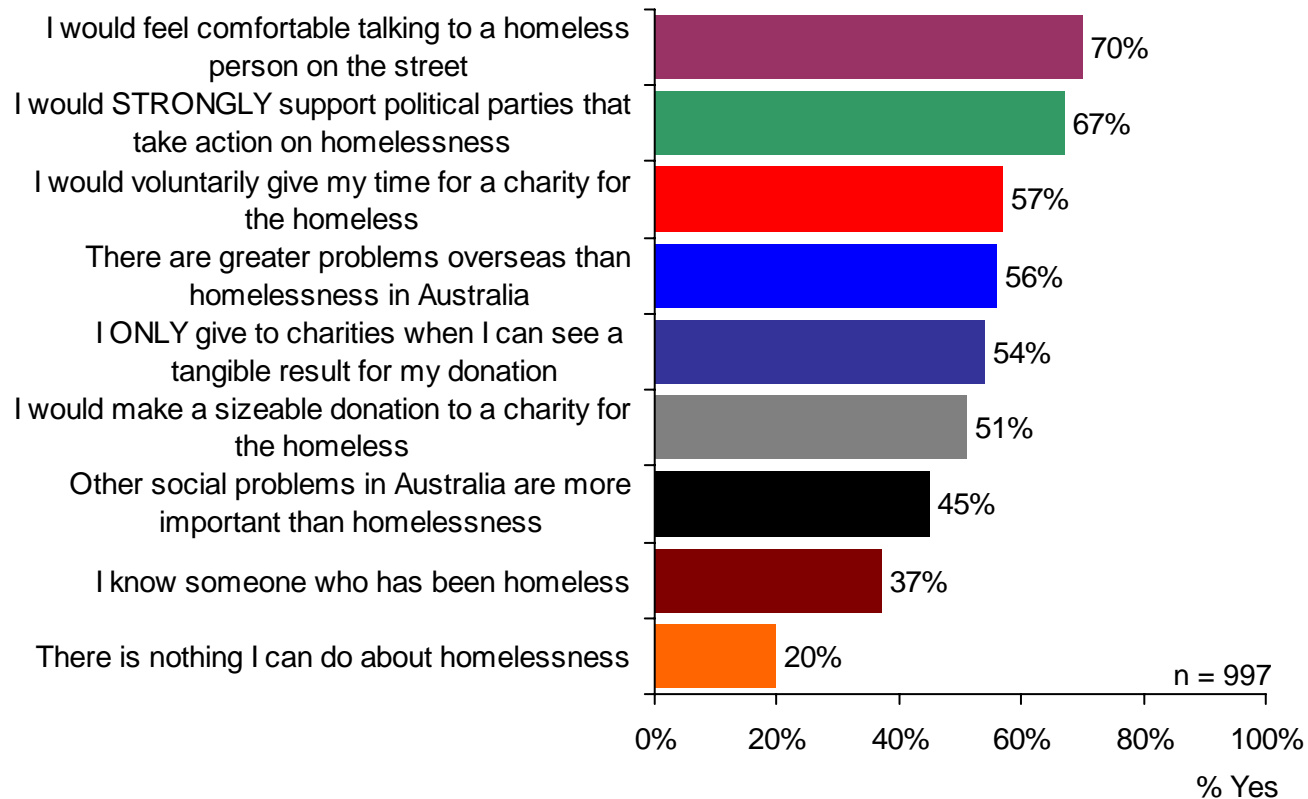
Note: Significance testing was conducted between Male and Female at the 95% level of confidence. Blue indicates the Female result was significantly higher than the Male result; Red indicates that the Female result was significantly lower.

Personal engagement with the homeless.

70% of respondents would feel comfortable talking to a homeless person on the street suggesting that the homeless are not generally perceived as a personal threat.

Q7 Which of these statements are true of your attitude to social causes?

Overall

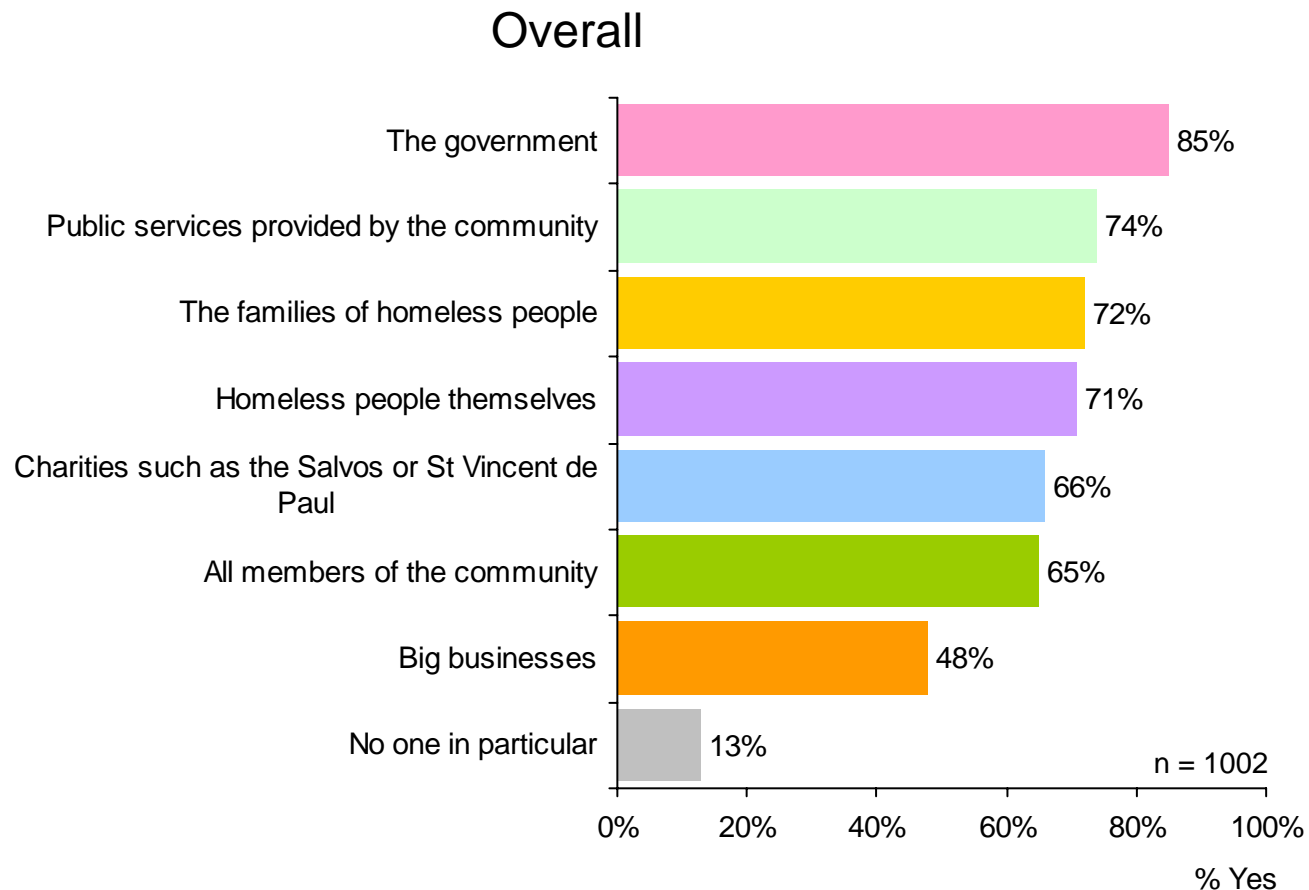


Note: This is a multiple response question and therefore results may not add to 100%.

Responsibility for solving homelessness.

Unsurprisingly the majority of respondents (85%) considered that the government was perceived as the main agency responsible for solving homelessness. Three quarters (74%) felt that it was the domain of public services provided by the community and two thirds (65%) considered that it was the role of all members of the community, suggesting quite a high level of responsibility for helping the homeless.

Q8 Of these groups, who do you think should be responsible for solving homelessness?

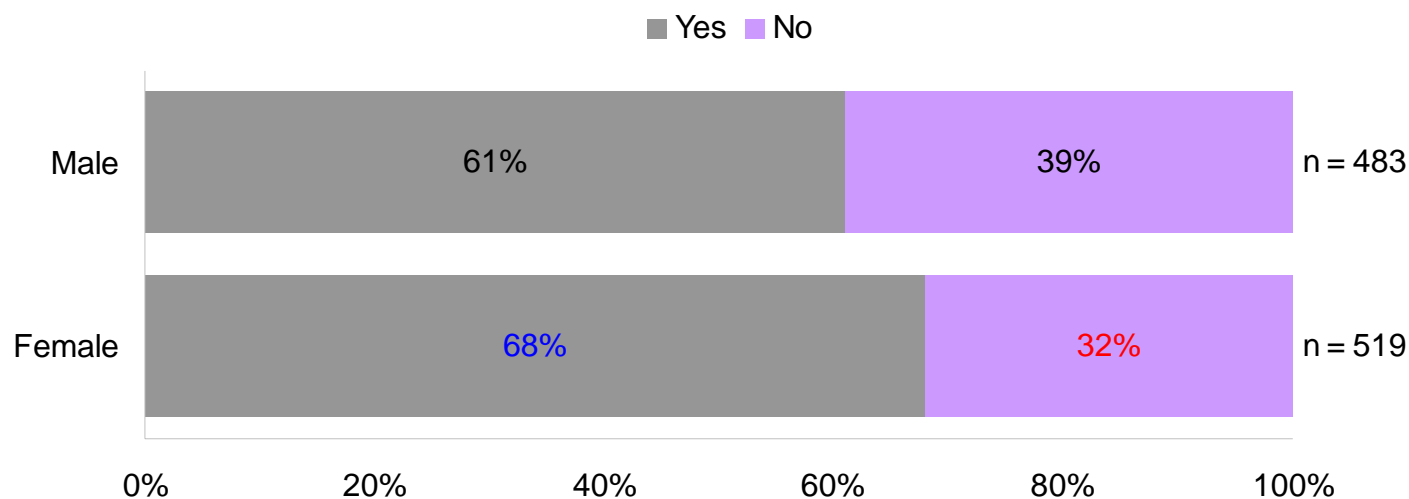


Note: This is a multiple response question and therefore results may not add to 100%.

Community responsibility by gender.

Females were significantly more likely than males to say that all members of the community were responsible for solving homelessness. This result, combined with the other gender results, supports the inference of greater sympathy for homelessness amongst women than men.

Q8 Of these groups, who do you think should be responsible for solving homelessness? All members of the community



Note: Significance testing was conducted between Male and Female at the 95% level of confidence. Blue indicates the Female result was significantly higher than the Male result; Red indicates that the Female result was significantly lower.