Research Report

# Community Views on Homelessness, Western Australia

Released January 2021

#EndHomelessnessWA

shelterwa

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# 1 How this Report is Structured

**Summary of Results**

This section contains the key take outs from the main report section. It is a summary of the descriptive information, allowing for a quick overview of the results.

**Background**

Information about the research is included in this section including, research technicalities, methodology, respondent demographics and the survey questions.

**The Main Report Section**

- Know l'edge ensures there is a clear distinction between the data and information provided from the research and Know l'edge's opinions and observations.
- This is important. It allows the client to look at the data for themselves and be certain of it.
- The main section of the report is *descriptive only* and does not have any inference or opinion from Know l' edge in it.

**Consultant's Comments**

This contains the opinion of the Consultant Team.

# 2 Summary of Results

## 2.1 What constitutes being homeless?

Overall, the top three responses on what defines homelessness situations were, living in a car, sleeping on the streets or living in a refuge/crisis accommodation.

There were differences in the top three by location, replacing living in refuge/crisis accommodation with sleeping on the floor of a friend's place or families living in a shed/garage at a friend's place.

## 2.2 Perceptions on why people experience homelessness

The top responses were unemployment, family/relationship breakdown or mental health.

There were differences in the top three by location, with domestic violence in the top three for Mandurah, Perth (north east and south east), Wheatbelt and Outback south. Drug/alcohol addiction in the top three for Bunbury.

In comments provided by respondents to this question, one of the most substantial themes was economic circumstances contributing to homelessness, such as precarious work situation, a lack of savings, intergenerational poverty, high rental costs and not having the skills to manage a household.

## 2.3 COVID-19 impact: has it influenced/changed perceptions about the most vulnerable in society?

Just under half of all respondents (47%) stated that COVID-19 had changed or influenced their views about the most vulnerable in society. The following locations had a higher percentage that had been influenced: Mandurah (64%), Perth south west (60%), Outback north (52%) and Perth inner (48%).

Of those that had seen a difference in their views, the main themes from their comments related to mental health being negatively impacted, insufficient financial support being provided by government, a lack of affordable rental properties and becoming more aware of how vulnerable people are and how much is taken for granted by others not in a vulnerable situation.

In relation to homelessness, the main theme was how much more noticeable the situation was both in terms of what they personally saw and what gets reported by the media. There was uncertainty on whether the homelessness situation had worsened or it was the effect of the media giving more attention to the issue? There was an increased realisation that homelessness could happen to anyone and that society was more fragile than originally thought.

For individual vulnerable people, the comments from respondents had themes about not having a home as a safe place to avoid COVID-19 issues and inability to comply with COVID-19 personal hygiene advice or social distancing. It had become more obvious, to respondents, that homeless people need more support for 'proper' accommodation.

There was also concern for people trapped in an abusive situation and not having anywhere to go due to COVID-19 restrictions on movement.

## 2.4 Impact from ending of government stimulus and having a place to live?

Ending of government stimulus support, such as JobKeeper and JobSeeker were seen as having a major impact, even a catastrophic impact.

The impact on society included perceptions of an increase in crime, violence and antisocial behaviour. At an individual level, there was concern about a mental health crisis across the whole of society, including depression leading to an increase in suicides. The issues leading into depression were stated as, people running out of money, unable to find work and this leading to a loss of their home (rented or with a mortgage) and becoming homeless. JobKeeper was seen as critical to retain as it maintains a connection to employment and an ability to pay rent or mortgage to retain a home.

Without continued government stimulus support, respondents believed there would be an increase in demand and increased pressure placed on family, friends, charities and government services such as health and welfare.

The consequences cannot be fully seen yet by respondents but the expectation is a deep recession and big impact on everyone's mental health.

## 2.5 Level of belief that 'blame' for homelessness rests with the individual?

Respondents did not focus high level blame on an individual for becoming homeless. There was very high agreement (combined strongly agree and agree percentages) that homelessness can occur outside of an individual's control (94%) and that homelessness can happen to anyone (89%).

Two thirds of respondents agreed that no one chooses to be homeless (61%).

Low level of agreement that the main drivers of homelessness are drug or alcohol problems (39%) or that most homeless people do not live on the streets (34%).

## 2.6 Responsibility

### 2.6.1 Who is responsible for solving homelessness?

Top three entities seen as responsible for solving homelessness were, Federal Government, State Government and homeless people.

There were differences by location. Local Government replaced homeless people in the top three for Bunbury, Perth inner and Perth north east. In the Wheatbelt, local charities/local community was in equal third place with homeless people.

### 2.6.2 How can the community help people overcome homelessness?

Top three suggestions for how the community can help people overcome homelessness were financial support/counselling, more public/social housing and addressing underlying issues in society.

A difference across locations was in non-metro areas, with the inclusion of investing in homeless shelters/refuges and creating safer places for people and families to live temporarily.

### 2.6.3 How homeless people can get themselves out of homelessness?

Top three suggestions for how homeless people can get out of homelessness were to get a job, go to rehabilitation or get an education.

A difference in the locations of Bunbury, Perth south east and the Wheatbelt, in the top three, was the belief that people cannot get out of homelessness.

# Background

# 3 Research Technicalities

## 3.1 Random Probability

In order to be able to infer the results to the general population of Western Australia, the method had to include random probability. Simply put, random probability means anyone in the general population can be selected to participate in the survey. The only method that caters for random probability is a phone survey.

The mathematics of probability renders sample size irrelevant. There is not a linear relationship between sample size and accuracy. A sample size of n=384, if random probability is present, will be accurate for populations in the millions.

## 3.2 Confidence Level and Confidence Interval

The Confidence Interval for this research is +/-5% and is referred to as the 'margin of error.'

**Confidence Level 95%**: If the survey was run 100 times, the data would be within a certain number of percentage points above the percentage reported in 95 of 100 surveys.

**Example:** 60% of the respondents select a particular option. This means that if we repeated the survey several times we could be certain the results would be in the range of 55-65%, 95% of the time.

## 3.3 Impacts on Confidence Interval

### 3.3.1 Sample Size

The larger the sample size, the smaller the margin of error, however, it's not a linear relationship. Doubling the sample size does not halve the margin of error.

### 3.3.2 Population Size

The mathematics of probability proves the size of the population is irrelevant. This means that a sample of 400 people is equally useful in examining the opinions of a state of 4,000,000 as it would a city of 100,000.

### 3.3.3 Result Percentage

Accuracy also depends on the percentage of the sample that picks a particular answer. If 99% of the sample said "Yes" and 1% said "No," the chances of error are remote, irrespective of sample size. However, if the percentages were 51% and 49% the chances of error are much greater.

## 3.4 Fieldwork Technical Information

A team of 23 interviewers worked on the project. Survey length averaged 11m 46s.

All respondents aged 18+ who lived within the identified regions were eligible to participate in the survey. The survey achieved an overall incidence rate of 96% after removing all 'out of scope' contacts as follows:

- Fax machine
- Invalid number
- Language barrier
- Unavailable for duration of study
- Do not call list
- Not in region

# 4 Methodology

The approach taken was to use ABS location data for homelessness in Western Australia[1]. Those locations were selected for this study. The quota of respondents in each location is proportional to ABS locations. This ensures that areas are not over or under represented in terms of the level of homelessness in each location.

To ensure the data could be inferred to the W.A. population, a phone survey was conducted in July 2020 to ensure random probability occurred. A mix of mobile and landline numbers were called.

The sample size chosen was n=384, which provides a Confidence Interval of +/-5% at a Confidence Level of 95%.

## 4.1 Location of Respondent

**Table 4-1 Respondent Location**

| Location Composition | % |
|---|---|
| **Bunbury** | 5% |
| **Mandurah** | 3% |
| **Perth Inner** | 10% |
| **Perth north East** | 8% |
| **Perth north West** | 11% |
| **Perth south East** | 16% |
| **Perth south West** | 11% |
| **Wheatbelt** | 5% |
| **Outback north** | 21% |
| **Outback south** | 11% |

[1] Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness 2016

# 5 Demographics of Respondents

The quotas were to generally follow the age and gender pattern of Western Australia's demographics at a state level. Due to the locations selected, there was expected variance to the state demographics. Location demographics vary due to the specific situation and profile for the location. For example, locations that attract a high level of retirees or rural locations where younger people leave for larger centres, will skew to older age groups and will not match the overall state demographics exactly.

## 5.1 Gender

Location also impacts gender percentages. Overall, Western Australia has an equal split on gender. The ABS data on population by age and gender (2018)[2] states females outnumbered males in Greater Perth, while males outnumbered females in the rest of WA. Given the selection of locations, there is a variance in the research demographics compared to the state demographics on gender.

The overall percentages on gender were:

58% Female

41% Male

1% Self Described (non-binary).

## 5.2 Age Group

**Age groups**:

| | |
|---|---|
| 18 to 24 | 4% |
| 25 to 34 | 11% |
| 35 to 44 | 12% |
| 45 to 54 | 23% |
| 55 to 64 | 23% |
| 65+ | 27% |

## 5.3 Self-Identification of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

None of the respondents identified as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage.

## 5.4 Gross Weekly Household Income

High income households are those earning $2,500 week or more and low income households are those earning less than $650 per week. Id profile, for Western Australia, using the last Census data, states,

*'Overall, 23.6% of the households earned a high income and 16.2% were low income households.'*

[2] 3235.0 - Regional Population by Age and Sex, Australia, 2018

The table below of the respondents' household income shows 18% earned a high household income and 12% were low income households.

**Table 5-1 Gross Weekly Household Income**

| Gross weekly household Income | % |
|---|---|
| $1 to $599 | 12% |
| $600 to $999 | 13% |
| $1,000 to $1,499 | 14% |
| $1,500 to $2,499 | 17% |
| $2,500 to $3,499 | 9% |
| $3,500 to $4,999 | 4% |
| $5,000 or more | 5% |

Other results on gross weekly income:

16% Prefer not to say
8% Unsure
1 % No income
1 % Negative income (examples might be from a self-employed person or someone relying on income from a rental property)

# 6 Survey Questions

**Demographics**: Gender, age groups, weekly gross household income and whether or not the respondents identify as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

- I am going to read through a list of people in different situations. For each situation, which would you consider to be a person experiencing homelessness? *Prompted.*
- What best describes why you think people experience homelessness? *Unprompted. Open Response.*
- Has the COVID-19 situation influenced your perceptions about vulnerable people in society? If answered yes, ask, *can you tell me a bit more about how your view has changed? Unprompted. Open Response.*
- The government stimulus initiatives (such as JobKeeper) will eventually end. When this happens, what sort of impact will it have on society in general if people struggle with having a place to live? *Unprompted. Open Response.*
- And what sort of impact will it have on individuals having a place to live when the stimulus initiatives end? *Unprompted. Open Response.*
- I am now going to read out a few statements and I would like you to use the scale I will give you to answer for each one. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree, how much do you agree or disagree with each statement? *Prompted.*
    - No one chooses to be homeless
    - Homelessness can happen to anyone
    - Most homeless people do not live on the streets
    - Homelessness can occur due to factors outside an individual's control like job loss or family break up
    - The main drivers of homelessness are personal, such as drug and alcohol problems
- Who is responsible for solving homelessness? *Unprompted. Open Response.*
- How can we, as a community, help people overcome homelessness? *Unprompted. Open Response.*
- How can people get themselves out of homelessness? *Unprompted. Open Response.*
- I am going to read some statements on possible ways society can support people to break the cycle of homelessness and I would like you to use the scale I will give you to answer for each one.

  On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree, how much do you agree or disagree with each statement? *Prompted.*

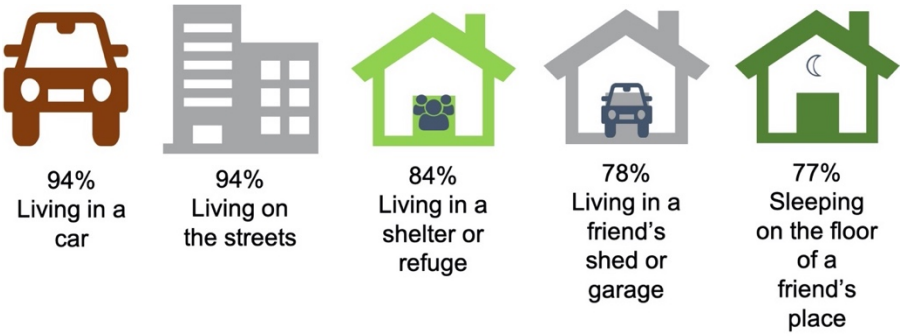
    - Be offered and receive appropriate support

- Be offered appropriate education options
- Be offered appropriate opportunities for training
- Be offered appropriate opportunities for work
- Receive priority listing for housing
- Get directly involved in a community activity/local responses

# Main Report

# 7 Main Report

## 7.1 What is a homeless situation?




This question was prompted with multiple responses allowed, with interviewers asking, *I am going to read through a list of people in different situations. For each situation, which would you consider to be a person experiencing homelessness?*

Overall, the top three responses were, living in car, on the streets and in a refuge or crisis accommodation.

By location, there was a difference the top three, replacing *refuge or crisis accommodation*:

- Bunbury had sleeping on the floor of a friend's place
- Perth north east had sleeping on the floor of a friend's place
- Perth north west had families living in a shed/garage at a friend's place
- Wheatbelt had families living in a shed/garage at a friend's place. And people who are sleeping on the floor of a friend's place

**Statistically significant differences:**

- People staying in refuge or crisis accommodation was more likely to be stated by respondents aged 45 to 54 years of age and those located in Outback south.
- People who are sleeping on the floor of a friend's place was more likely to be stated by respondents aged 65 plus.
- People/families staying in hotels in the medium to long term was more likely to be stated by respondents in Perth north east.
- People staying in boarding houses was more likely to be stated by respondents in Bunbury.

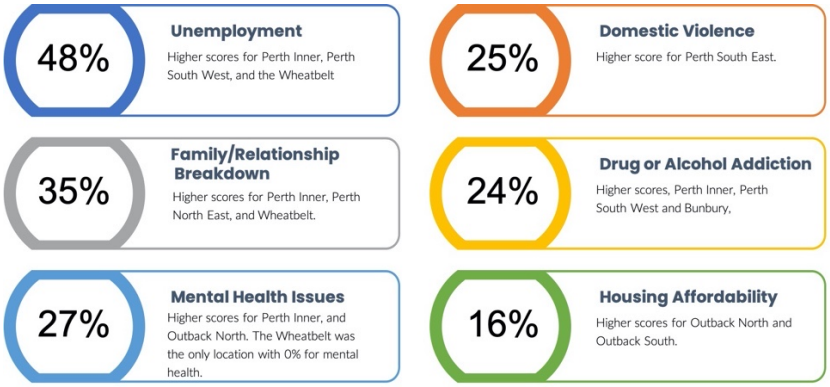
## Table 7-1 Defining a homeless situation? Results by location

| Situation Perth | Perth Inner | Perth North East | Perth North West | Perth South East | Perth South West |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| People living in their car | 90% | 94% | 95% | 90% | 98% |
| People sleeping on the streets | 90% | 100% | 85% | 90% | 98% |
| People staying in refuge or crisis accommodation | 83% | 94% | 78% | 84% | 86% |
| Families living in a shed/garage at a friend's place | 75% | 84% | 80% | 76% | 81% |
| People who are sleeping on the floor of a friend's place | 73% | 97% | 76% | 68% | 81% |
| People/families staying in a caravan or tents medium to long-term | 48% | 48% | 46% | 44% | 57% |
| People/families staying in hotels medium to long-term | 38% | 45% | 32% | 31% | 38% |
| People living in a boarding house | 40% | 45% | 32% | 31% | 21% |
| None of the above FOR ALL | 3% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| Unsure/don't know FOR ALL | 0% | 0% | 2% | 0% | 0% |

| Situation - Regional Centres | Bunbury | Mandurah |
|---|---|---|
| People living in their car | 100% | 91% |
| People sleeping on the streets | 100% | 100% |
| People staying in refuge or crisis accommodation | 63% | 100% |
| Families living in a shed/garage at a friend's place | 68% | 64% |
| People who are sleeping on the floor of a friend's place | 74% | 82% |
| People/families staying in a caravan or tents medium to long-term | 53% | 27% |
| People/families staying in hotels medium to long-term | 37% | 27% |
| People living in a boarding house | 32% | 0% |
| None of the above FOR ALL | 0% | 0% |
| Unsure/don't know FOR ALL | 0% | 0% |

| Situation - Rural & Remote Areas | Wheatbelt | Outback North | Outback South | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| People living in their car | 94% | 96% | 95% | 94% |
| People sleeping on the streets | 100% | 95% | 93% | 94% |
| People staying in refuge or crisis accommodation | 61% | 90% | 88% | 84% |
| Families living in a shed/garage at a friend's place | 78% | 76% | 83% | 78% |
| People who are sleeping on the floor of a friend's place | 78% | 75% | 80% | 77% |
| People/families staying in a caravan or tents medium to long-term | 50% | 41% | 46% | 46% |
| People/families staying in hotels medium to long-term | 39% | 41% | 39% | 37% |
| People living in a boarding house | 44% | 29% | 27% | 31% |
| None of the above FOR ALL | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| Unsure/don't know FOR ALL | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |

## 7.2 Why people experience homelessness?




When asked to describe why people experience homelessness, the top three responses were unemployment, family or relationship breakdown and mental health issues.

Highest results for mental health being an issue were Perth inner, Perth north west, Outback north and south. The Wheatbelt had zero mentions for mental health issues. This was not consistent with other location results. Which ranged between 9% to 40% across other locations, with an average of 27%.

There were differences by location in top three with domestic violence and alcohol/drug addiction being identified as reasons for homelessness to occur:

- Bunbury - drug/alcohol addiction
- Mandurah - domestic violence
- Perth North East - domestic violence
- Perth South East - domestic violence
- Wheatbelt - domestic violence
- Outback south - domestic violence

**Table 7-2 Perceived Reasons for Homelessness**

| Reason for homelessness - Perth | Perth Inner | Perth North East | Perth North West | Perth South East | Perth South West |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Unemployment | 50% | 39% | 39% | 47% | 57% |
| Other (specify) | 35% | 48% | 37% | 45% | 50% |
| Family or relationship breakdown | 40% | 48% | 32% | 32% | 38% |
| Mental health issues | 40% | 13% | 29% | 24% | 26% |
| Domestic violence | 28% | 23% | 20% | 32% | 26% |
| Drug or alcohol addiction | 30% | 16% | 22% | 19% | 31% |
| Housing/rental affordability | 18% | 19% | 17% | 5% | 19% |
| Household debt | 15% | 23% | 15% | 15% | 14% |
| Poor physical health | 5% | 3% | 2% | 8% | 0% |
| Gambling | 3% | 0% | 2% | 5% | 2% |
| Not sure/don't know | 0% | 0% | 2% | 3% | 7% |

| Reason for homelessness Regional Centres | Bunbury | Mandurah |
|---|---|---|
| Unemployment | 37% | 45% |
| Other (specify) | 37% | 36% |
| Family or relationship breakdown | 37% | 27% |
| Mental health issues | 21% | 9% |
| Domestic violence | 21% | 27% |
| Drug or alcohol addiction | 37% | 18% |
| Housing/rental affordability | 5% | 9% |
| Household debt | 5% | 18% |
| Poor physical health | 5% | 0% |
| Gambling | 5% | 9% |
| Not sure/don't know | 0% | 0% |

| Reason for homelessness - Rural & Remote | Wheatbelt | Outback North | Outback South | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Unemployment | 67% | 49% | 51% | 48% |
| Other (specify) | 17% | 44% | 54% | 43% |
| Family or relationship breakdown | 50% | 33% | 24% | 35% |
| Mental health issues | 0% | 34% | 29% | 27% |
| Domestic violence | 22% | 24% | 24% | 25% |
| Drug or alcohol addiction | 17% | 27% | 20% | 24% |
| Housing/rental affordability | 11% | 20% | 22% | 16% |
| Household debt | 11% | 19% | 5% | 15% |
| Poor physical health | 0% | 6% | 2% | 4% |
| Gambling | 0% | 6% | 0% | 3% |
| Not sure/don't know | 0% | 5% | 0% | 3% |

The main themes from the respondent's 'other' comments on why people experience homelessness can be grouped around economic circumstances, lack of support, personal situation and insufficient supply of housing.

Detailed summary of 'Other' responses on why people experience homeless included:

- Economic circumstances: such as precarious work situation, a lack of savings and intergenerational poverty
- Disability
- Sexual abuse
- Bad luck in life
- Natural disasters like bushfires
- Businesses failing
- By personal choice
- Rental cost too high
- Lack of family support
- Illness
- Let down by 'the system'
- Mental or physical trauma
- Not enough public housing
- Not having the skills to manage a household
- Not enough homes
- Government houses located in unsuitable areas (not close to work opportunities or services)
- The way they look (unclean or not Anglo Saxon looking)

**Statistically significant differences:**

- Mental health issues more likely to be mentioned by females and people aged 45 to 54 years of age.
- Housing/rental affordability more likely to be mentioned by females and people aged 35 to 44 years of age.
- Family or relationship breakdown more likely to be mentioned by those aged 65 plus and respondents in the Wheatbelt.
- Gambling more likely to be mentioned by those aged 45 to 54.
- Household debt more likely to be mentioned by those aged 18 to 24 years of age.
- Poor physical health more likely to be mentioned by those aged 25 to 34 and respondents in Perth south east.

## 7.3 COVID-19 Impact?

47% said yes, their perceptions had changed.

When asked if COVID-19 had influenced or changed perceptions held about the most vulnerable people in society, 47% said yes, it had (n=179).

Higher scores for 'yes' were in Perth South West, Mandurah and Outback North.

**Table 7-3 Influence of COVID-19 Situation on changing perceptions**

| Influence of COVID19 - Perth | Perth Inner | Perth North East | Perth North West | Perth South East | Perth South West |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 48% | 42% | 41% | 42% | 60% |
| No | 50% | 52% | 51% | 56% | 31% |
| Unsure/Don't know | 3% | 6% | 7% | 2% | 10% |

| Influence of COVID19 - Regional Centres | Bunbury | Mandurah |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 37% | 64% |
| No | 53% | 27% |
| Unsure/Don't know | 11% | 9% |

| Influence of COVID19 - Rural & Remote | Wheatbelt | Outback North | Outback South | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 33% | 52% | 44% | 47% |
| No | 44% | 39% | 49% | 46% |
| Unsure/Don't know | 22% | 9% | 7% | 7% |

The following locations had a high percentages of 'yes' responses:

- Mandurah 64%
- Perth South West 60%
- Outback North 52%
- Perth Inner 48%

Percentages shown below are based on multiple responses to an open response question. It is based on the number of respondents who answered 'yes' (n=179).

53% heightened noticing of homeless people

30% increased realisation homelessness could happen to anyone and less stigma around being homeless.

The main themes from respondent's comments were about how much more noticeable homeless people were on the streets and in media reports. There was an increased realisation that homelessness could happen to anyone given the tremendous effect of COVID-19 on society.

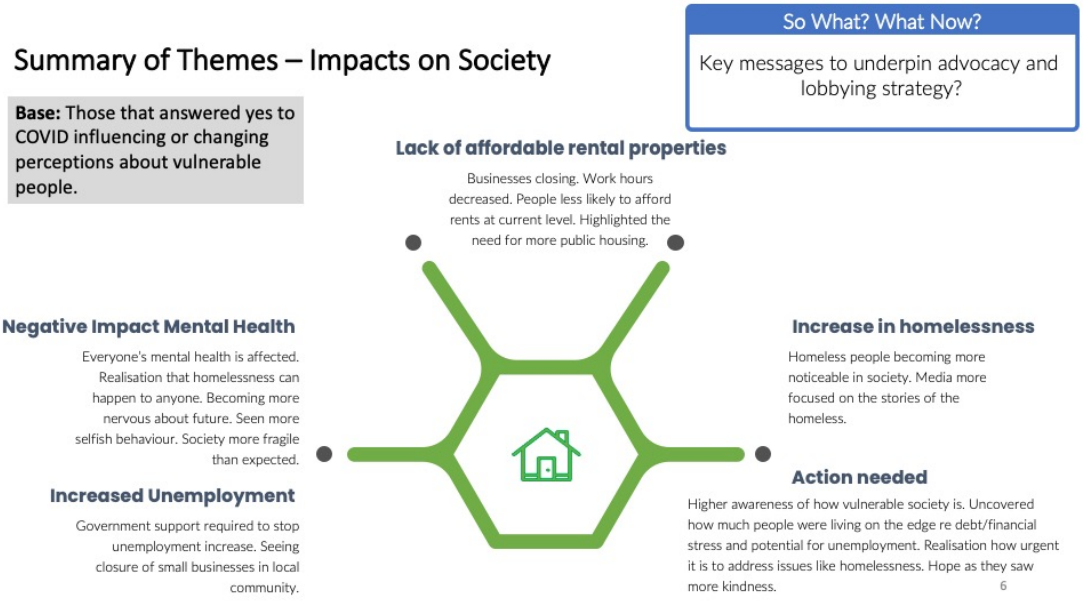
**Summary of Respondent Comment themes:** Of those that responded 'yes', the reason given for the impact on their perceptions were:

**Details on themes relating to Society**

- COVID-19 has really affected everyone's mental health.
- Government is not providing enough financial support given loss of jobs and people unable to work.
- Need more affordable rental properties.
- Homelessness has become more noticeable due to media attention.
- Became more aware of how vulnerable are and how much is taken for granted by others.
- Unsure if homelessness had worsened or it just seems that way due to media attention.
- Increased unemployment with small businesses closed in local community.
- Seeing more homeless in city centre.
- Uncovered how many people were on the edge of just getting by.
- COVID-19 has made things worse for vulnerable people.
- COVID-19 has made it clear that government is able to assist homeless people if the will is there.
- Realisation how urgent it is to address issues that are stopping people from having secure accommodation.
- Realisation it can happen to anyone.
- Becoming more anxious seeing so many becoming unemployed.
- People that would not normally be viewed as vulnerable, have become vulnerable during COVID-19.
- Less stigma around being unemployed due the high level of unemployment.
- Increased awareness that Indigenous communities have been highlighted as highly vulnerable during COVID-19.
- Saw increased kindness from people and increased humanity.

- Saw increase in selfishness.
- Highlighted the need for more public housing.
- Showed the reality of how many people are under financial distress.
- Society is more fragile than originally thought it was.
- Everyone has become more vulnerable.
- Become wary of contract with other people.
- Surprised that businesses and occupations thought secure suddenly were not.
- More understanding towards the need to protect all the vulnerable people.

**Individuals**

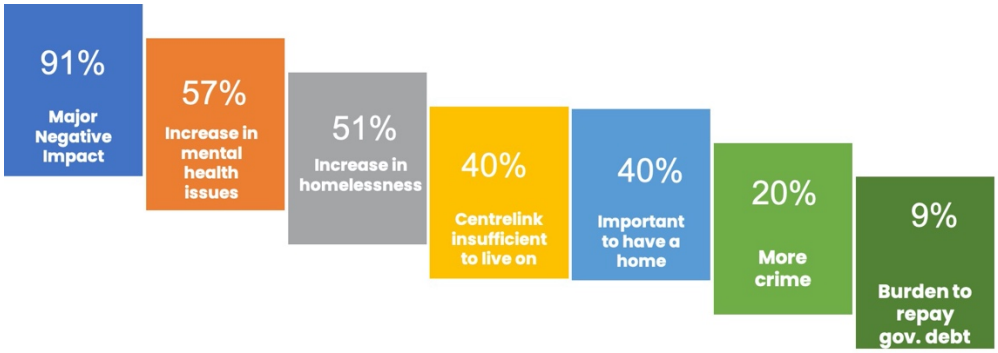



**Detail on themes relating to Individuals**

- Without a place to live homeless people are more susceptible to getting COVID-19 and other diseases.
- Imagine homeless people are frightened as they cannot lock themselves away in a house.
- Concerned about individuals who may be trapped in a situation and cannot leave due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- People were already financially on the edge and COVID-19 pushed them into not having a home.
- Homeless people may not be able to look after themselves in a potentially threatening scenario.
- More aware of how many people are struggling.

- Showed how quickly people can lose everything.
- Makes people think about their lives and how they are living.
- Almost impossible to have personal hygiene and adequate social distancing.
- Became more obvious that homeless people need more support for 'proper' accommodation.

## 7.4 Impact of government stimulus ending on having a place to live?




Without the question being date specific, due to the frequent change in the COVID-19 situation, respondents were asked, when the government stimulus ends, what impact would it have on society or individuals having a place to live?

Themes from comments. Multiple Responses due to being an open response question

| Theme | % respondents |
|---|---|
| Major negative impact | 91% |
| Increase in mental health issues | 57% |
| Increase in homelessness | 51% |
| Centrelink payments not sufficient to live on | 40% |
| Important to have a home | 40% |
| More crime | 20% |
| Negative impact on economy and burden on those with a job to repay Australia's debt | 9% |

Highest agreement was that it would have a major impact, even catastrophic. Perception that ending stimulus would lead to more crime, violence and anti-social behaviour. Having a home was seen as greatly important psychologically, emotionally and economically. With huge job losses, having a place to live gives a secure base to assist with finding work.

A flow on effect was seen to be an increase with mental health issues across the whole of society. Increase in depression as people run out of money, cannot find work and lose their home (rented or with a mortgage). The depression may lead to an increase in suicides. Perception that there would be an increase in homelessness with more people sleeping out on the streets.

> *if people have their jobs from before the situation will be the same but when JobKeeper ends for whoever and they have no employment then that will be an impact and more homelessness. Increased domestic violence, mental health and added stress will escalate. Drug and Alcohol abuse will increase.*

Cessation of JobKeeper was seen as a critical aspect that would lead to homelessness. It was seen as important to keep the connection to employment. For JobSeeker, its cessation was seen as leading to people going back to struggling again. In remote areas, with higher cost of living, the incentive it may not be enough but without it, life will be harder to continue.

Concerned that 'Mom and Pop' investors will end up carrying the cost as many are landlords of private properties. There is an expectation that Government needs to ensure that the basic wage is $720 a week instead of $500.

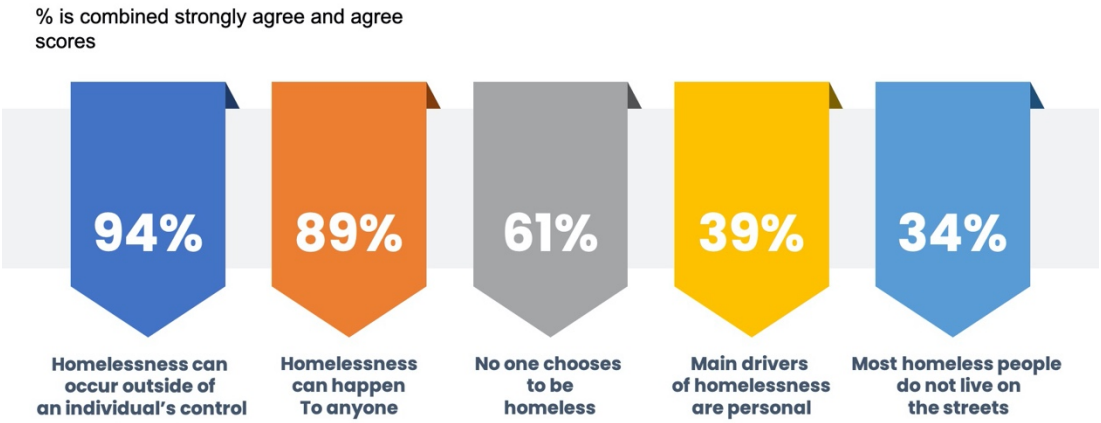
> *They will be homeless, maybe they don't have enough money to eat. They won't have enough money to have the essential needs in life and emotional well-being.*

Respondents believed there would be an increase in reliance on family, friends and charities. Concern that charities will face increased pressure on volunteers and more strain on their resources. Government health and welfare services will also be put under resource pressure. Increased pressure on social housing. There is a belief by respondents that it may create overcrowding for families as they take in family members who lose their jobs and become homeless.

There was a minor alternative view, that the government incentives are only delaying the problems. The paying of stimulus may create a sense of entitlement.

The consequences cannot be clearly seen yet by respondents, but it is seen as a recession that will be very deep with a big impact on everyone's mental health.

## 7.5 Level of belief that blame for homelessness rests with the individual?




Five perception statements were read to respondents asking them to rate each one, on a scale of agreement with 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The combined score is shown below each table (combined strongly agree and agree).

61% No one chooses to be homeless. There was a lower percentage of agreement in Outback North and South, Perth North West, Bunbury and Mandurah.

### Table 7-4 Perception: No one chooses to be Homeless? Results by Location

**No one chooses to be homeless**

| Statement Response - Perth | Perth Inner | Perth North East | Perth North West | Perth South East | Perth South West |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 3% | 3% | 7% | 5% | 5% |
| Disagree | 13% | 10% | 20% | 15% | 10% |
| Neither | 10% | 13% | 20% | 15% | 24% |
| Agree | 35% | 32% | 29% | 21% | 17% |
| Strongly Agree | 40% | 42% | 22% | 44% | 45% |
| Don't Know | 0% | 0% | 2% | 2% | 0% |
| Combined Strongly Agree/Agree | 75% | 74% | 51% | 65% | 62% |
| Combined Strongly Disagree/Disagree | 15% | 13% | 27% | 19% | 14% |

**No one chooses to be homeless**

| Statement Response - Regional Centres | Bunbury | Mandurah |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 16% | 0% |
| Disagree | 5% | 18% |
| Neither | 21% | 27% |
| Agree | 26% | 36% |
| Strongly Agree | 32% | 18% |
| Don't Know | 0% | 0% |
| Combined Strongly Agree/Agree | 58% | 55% |
| Combined Strongly Disagree/Disagree | 21% | 18% |

**No one chooses to be homeless**

| Statement Response - Rural & Remote | Wheatbelt | Outback North | Outback South | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 6% | 6% | 7% | 6% |
| Disagree | 11% | 20% | 27% | 16% |
| Neither | 11% | 15% | 15% | 16% |
| Agree | 28% | 23% | 7% | 24% |
| Strongly Agree | 44% | 34% | 44% | 38% |
| Don't Know | 0% | 1% | 0% | 1% |
| Combined Strongly Agree/Agree | 72% | 57% | 51% | 61% |
| Combined Strongly Disagree/Disagree | 17% | 27% | 34% | 22% |

**Statistically significant difference**: Outback South respondents less likely to agree.

### Table 7-5 Perception: Homelessness can happen to anyone. Results by location

**Homelessness can happen to anyone**

| Statement Response - Perth | Perth Inner | Perth North East | Perth North West | Perth South East | Perth South West |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 3% | 3% | 2% | 2% | 0% |
| Disagree | 5% | 0% | 2% | 6% | 5% |
| Neither | 5% | 6% | 5% | 5% | 2% |
| Agree | 23% | 32% | 39% | 18% | 19% |
| Strongly Agree | 65% | 55% | 51% | 69% | 71% |
| Don't Know | 0% | 3% | 0% | 0% | 2% |
| Combined Strongly Agree/Agree | 88% | 87% | 90% | 87% | 90% |
| Combined Strongly Disagree/Disagree | 8% | 3% | 5% | 8% | 5% |

**Homelessness can happen to anyone**

| Statement Response - Regional Centres | Bunbury | Mandurah |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 5% | 0% |
| Disagree | 5% | 0% |
| Neither | 0% | 9% |
| Agree | 21% | 18% |
| Strongly Agree | 68% | 73% |
| Don't Know | 0% | 0% |
| Combined Strongly Agree/Agree | 89% | 91% |
| Combined Strongly Disagree/Disagree | 11% | 0% |

**Homelessness can happen to anyone**

| Statement Response - Rural & Remote | Wheatbelt | Outback North | Outback South | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 0% | 0% | 0% | 1% |
| Disagree | 6% | 0% | 2% | 3% |
| Neither | 17% | 9% | 10% | 7% |
| Agree | 6% | 24% | 22% | 23% |
| Strongly Agree | 72% | 67% | 66% | 65% |
| Don't Know | 0% | 0% | 0% | 1% |
| Combined Strongly Agree/Agree | 78% | 91% | 88% | 89% |
| Combined Strongly Disagree/Disagree | 6% | 0% | 2% | 4% |

89% Homelessness can happen to anyone. The Wheatbelt had a lower percentage of agreement of 78%.

**Statistically significant difference**: More likely to agree were respondents aged 45 to 54 and 65 plus years of age and respondents in Perth North East.

### Table 7-6 Perception: Most Homeless people do not live on the streets

**Most homeless people do not live on the streets**

| Statement Response - Perth | Perth Inner | Perth North East | Perth North West | Perth South East | Perth South West |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 5% | 3% | 10% | 11% | 17% |
| Disagree | 5% | 19% | 17% | 11% | 12% |
| Neither | 38% | 29% | 34% | 39% | 31% |
| Agree | 35% | 29% | 24% | 21% | 29% |
| Strongly Agree | 13% | 13% | 7% | 15% | 10% |
| Don't Know | 5% | 6% | 7% | 3% | 2% |
| | | | | | |
| Combined Strongly Agree/Agree | 48% | 42% | 32% | 35% | 38% |
| Combined Strongly Disagree/Disagree | 10% | 23% | 27% | 23% | 29% |

**Most homeless people do not live on the streets**

| Statement Response - Regional Centres | Bunbury | Mandurah |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 16% | 36% |
| Disagree | 26% | 0% |
| Neither | 32% | 27% |
| Agree | 16% | 18% |
| Strongly Agree | 5% | 9% |
| Don't Know | 5% | 9% |
| | | |
| Combined Strongly Agree/Agree | 21% | 27% |
| Combined Strongly Disagree/Disagree | 42% | 36% |

**Most homeless people do not live on the streets**

| Statement Response - Rural & Remote | Wheatbelt | Outback North | Outback South | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 11% | 6% | 2% | 9% |
| Disagree | 11% | 15% | 27% | 15% |
| Neither | 44% | 46% | 32% | 37% |
| Agree | 17% | 20% | 22% | 24% |
| Strongly Agree | 6% | 9% | 15% | 11% |
| Don't Know | 11% | 4% | 2% | 5% |
| | | | | |
| Combined Strongly Agree/Agree | 22% | 29% | 37% | 34% |
| Combined Strongly Disagree/Disagree | 22% | 22% | 29% | 24% |

34% Most homeless people do not live on the streets. There was a lower percentage of agreement in Outback north, Wheatbelt, Bunbury and Mandurah.

**Statistically significant difference**: Respondents aged 35-44 were more likely to agree.

## Table 7-7 Perception: Homelessness can occur due to factors outside an individual's control. Results by location

**Homelessness can occur due to factors outside an individual's control like job loss or family break up**

| Statement Response - Perth | Perth Inner | Perth North East | Perth North West | Perth South East | Perth South West |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 3% | 0% | 2% | 2% | 0% |
| Disagree | 0% | 0% | 0% | 2% | 0% |
| Neither | 5% | 6% | 2% | 3% | 7% |
| Agree | 18% | 26% | 37% | 26% | 21% |
| Strongly Agree | 75% | 68% | 56% | 65% | 71% |
| Don't Know | 0% | 0% | 2% | 3% | 0% |
| Combined Strongly Agree/Agree | 93% | 94% | 93% | 90% | 93% |
| Combined Strongly Disagree/Disagree | 3% | 0% | 2% | 3% | 0% |

**Homelessness can occur due to factors outside an individual's control like job loss or family break up**

| Statement Response - Regional Centres | Bunbury | Mandurah |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 0% | 0% |
| Disagree | 0% | 0% |
| Neither | 0% | 0% |
| Agree | 32% | 45% |
| Strongly Agree | 68% | 55% |
| Don't Know | 0% | 0% |
| Combined Strongly Agree/Agree | 100% | 100% |
| Combined Strongly Disagree/Disagree | 0% | 0% |

**Homelessness can occur due to factors outside an individual's control like job loss or family break up**

| Statement Response - Rural & Remote | Wheatbelt | Outback North | Outback South | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 6% | 1% | 0% | 1% |
| Disagree | 0% | 1% | 2% | 1% |
| Neither | 6% | 0% | 0% | 3% |
| Agree | 11% | 25% | 27% | 26% |
| Strongly Agree | 78% | 72% | 71% | 68% |
| Don't Know | 0% | 0% | 0% | 1% |
| Combined Strongly Agree/Agree | 89% | 97% | 98% | 94% |
| Combined Strongly Disagree/Disagree | 6% | 3% | 2% | 2% |

94% Homelessness can occur outside an individual's control like job loss or family break up. Results were similar across locations, ranging from 89% agreement to 100%.

**Statistically significant difference**: None.

## Table 7-8 Perception: Main Drivers of Homelessness are Personal. Results by Location

**The main drivers of homelessness are personal, such as drug and alcohol problems**

| Statement Response - Perth | Perth Inner | Perth North East | Perth North West | Perth South East | Perth South West |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 5% | 6% | 5% | 8% | 2% |
| Disagree | 28% | 23% | 41% | 16% | 29% |
| Neither | 40% | 23% | 15% | 31% | 29% |
| Agree | 15% | 35% | 20% | 26% | 24% |
| Strongly Agree | 10% | 6% | 20% | 19% | 17% |
| Don't Know | 3% | 6% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| | | | | | |
| Combined Strongly Agree/Agree | 25% | 42% | 39% | 45% | 40% |
| Combined Strongly Disagree/Disagree | 33% | 29% | 46% | 24% | 31% |

**The main drivers of homelessness are personal, such as drug and alcohol problems**

| Statement Response - Regional Centres | Bunbury | Mandurah |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 5% | 9% |
| Disagree | 16% | 27% |
| Neither | 37% | 18% |
| Agree | 26% | 27% |
| Strongly Agree | 16% | 18% |
| Don't Know | 0% | 0% |
| | | |
| Combined Strongly Agree/Agree | 42% | 45% |
| Combined Strongly Disagree/Disagree | 21% | 36% |

**The main drivers of homelessness are personal, such as drug and alcohol problems**

| Statement Response - Rural & Remote | Wheatbelt | Outback North | Outback South | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 11% | 13% | 10% | 8% |
| Disagree | 17% | 28% | 34% | 27% |
| Neither | 6% | 24% | 24% | 26% |
| Agree | 33% | 22% | 17% | 23% |
| Strongly Agree | 33% | 13% | 15% | 16% |
| Don't Know | 0% | 1% | 0% | 1% |
| | | | | |
| Combined Strongly Agree/Agree | 67% | 34% | 32% | 39% |
| Combined Strongly Disagree/Disagree | 28% | 41% | 44% | 34% |

39% Main drivers of homelessness are personal such as drug and alcohol problems. The Wheatbelt had a much higher level of agreement of 68%.

**Statistically significant difference**: None.

## 7.6 Responsibility

### 7.6.1 Who is responsible for solving homelessness?

46% Federal Government

45% State Government

32% Homeless People (included in process)

**Table 7-9 Responsibility for Solving Homelessness? Results by Location**

| Responsible for solving homelessness - Perth | Perth Inner | Perth North East | Perth North West | Perth South East | Perth South West |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Federal government | 43% | 55% | 44% | 50% | 38% |
| State government | 48% | 55% | 56% | 52% | 36% |
| Homeless people themselves | 28% | 26% | 29% | 31% | 29% |
| Local government | 33% | 39% | 32% | 27% | 19% |
| Other (specify) | 28% | 42% | 15% | 26% | 43% |
| Local community | 30% | 16% | 20% | 11% | 10% |
| Charites | 13% | 3% | 12% | 10% | 5% |
| Extended family | 10% | 6% | 2% | 6% | 5% |
| Not sure/don't know | 0% | 0% | 7% | 3% | 7% |
| Parents | 10% | 0% | 0% | 2% | 2% |

| Responsible for solving homelessness - Regional Centres | Bunbury | Mandurah |
|---|---|---|
| Federal government | 58% | 55% |
| State government | 37% | 45% |
| Homeless people themselves | 16% | 45% |
| Local government | 37% | 27% |
| Other (specify) | 21% | 45% |
| Local community | 21% | 27% |
| Charites | 11% | 18% |
| Extended family | 5% | 18% |
| Not sure/don't know | 11% | 0% |
| Parents | 5% | 9% |

| Responsible for solving homelessness - Rural & Remote | Wheatbelt | Outback North | Outback South | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Federal government | 50% | 44% | 44% | 46% |
| State government | 33% | 46% | 29% | 45% |
| Homeless people themselves | 28% | 37% | 41% | 32% |
| Local government | 22% | 32% | 24% | 29% |
| Other (specify) | 17% | 20% | 22% | 26% |
| Local community | 28% | 34% | 15% | 21% |
| Charites | 28% | 11% | 7% | 10% |
| Extended family | 0% | 10% | 5% | 7% |
| Not sure/don't know | 11% | 5% | 2% | 4% |
| Parents | 0% | 4% | 2% | 3% |

There were differences by location, with the following *replacing homeless people as responsible* in the top three:

- Bunbury - local government
- Perth inner - local government
- Perth north east - local government
- Wheatbelt – had in equal 3rd place with homeless people, local charities/local community

'Other' response included:

- All of society *'everyone has a part'*
- Community not for profits
- Homeless individuals
- Churches
- Community not for profits
- Corporate Australia
- Homeless shelters
- Homeowners as landlords
- Homeswest
- NGOs

### 7.6.2 How the community can help people overcome homelessness?

Overall, the top three responses, on how the community can help people overcome homelessness, were financial support/counselling, more public/social housing, addressing underlying issues in society.

'Other' responses had the highest percentage (57%), with the main themes around more community funding, good government strategies, acknowledging and fixing the problem(s), being less judgmental, pressuring government for housing, creating self-worth, earlier intervention for younger people whom are homeless.

### Table 7-10 How the Community can help. Results by Location

| Community: Helping people overcome homelessness - Perth | Perth Inner | Perth North East | Perth North West | Perth South East | Perth South West |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Other (specify) | 63% | 45% | 54% | 61% | 60% |
| Not sure/don't know | 13% | 26% | 24% | 16% | 17% |
| Providing financial support/counselling | 15% | 16% | 12% | 19% | 17% |
| Providing more permanent public or social housing | 15% | 16% | 7% | 8% | 19% |
| Addressing underlying issues in society | 8% | 0% | 7% | 13% | 5% |
| Investing in homeless shelters/refuges | 13% | 3% | 7% | 6% | 7% |
| Creating safer places for people and families to live temporarily | 8% | 0% | 5% | 3% | 2% |
| Improve housing/tenancy support | 8% | 3% | 2% | 6% | 7% |
| Building more affordable, private housing | 8% | 10% | 7% | 0% | 5% |
| Increase in rental support funding | 3% | 0% | 0% | 2% | 5% |

| Community: Helping people overcome homelessness - Regional Centres | Bunbury | Mandurah |
|---|---|---|
| Other (specify) | 63% | 64% |
| Not sure/don't know | 16% | 0% |
| Providing financial support/counselling | 16% | 27% |
| Providing more permanent public or social housing | 16% | 9% |
| Addressing underlying issues in society | 16% | 9% |
| Investing in homeless shelters/refuges | 0% | 9% |
| Creating safer places for people and families to live temporarily | 5% | 9% |
| Improve housing/tenancy support | 11% | 0% |
| Building more affordable, private housing | 5% | 0% |
| Increase in rental support funding | 0% | 9% |

| Community: Helping people overcome homelessness - Rural & Remote | Wheatbelt | Outback North | Outback South | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Other (specify) | 44% | 58% | 56% | 57% |
| Not sure/don't know | 33% | 18% | 15% | 18% |
| Providing financial support/counselling | 0% | 18% | 17% | 16% |
| Providing more permanent public or social housing | 17% | 13% | 7% | 12% |
| Addressing underlying issues in society | 0% | 13% | 10% | 9% |
| Investing in homeless shelters/refuges | 17% | 6% | 5% | 7% |
| Creating safer places for people and families to live temporarily | 6% | 6% | 12% | 5% |
| Improve housing/tenancy support | 0% | 8% | 0% | 5% |
| Building more affordable, private housing | 0% | 8% | 2% | 5% |
| Increase in rental support funding | 0% | 3% | 5% | 2% |

'Other' responses included:

- Good government strategies
- More community funding
- Acknowledge problem and fix it
- Community to pressure government to support homeless with provision of housing
- Address the economic issues
- Raise awareness of the situation
- Less judgemental about the homeless
- Building small shelters
- Build shelters for men not just women
- By giving people options
- Create a sense of self-worth through educational programs and training for jobs
- Donations to appropriate organisations

- Earlier intervention for younger people who find themselves in difficulties
- Educate and raise awareness in the general community
- Vote for a government that provides policies that assist people not to become homeless
- Minor perception that the community cannot help the homeless

**Table 7-11 Top Three Responses: Overcoming Homelessness, Summary of differences by Location**

| Location | |
|---|---|
| **Mandurah** | • Invest in homeless shelters/refuges<br>• Creating safer places for people and families to live temporarily |
| **Perth Inner** | • Invest in homeless shelters/refuges (replaced addressing underlying issues in society) |
| **Perth North East** | • Invest in homeless shelters/refuges (replaced addressing underlying issues in society) |
| **Perth North West** | Included in equal second place<br>• Invest in homeless shelters/refuges<br>• Building more affordable private housing |
| **Perth South West** | Replacing addressing underlying issues in society<br>• invest in homeless shelters/refuges<br>• building more affordable private housing |
| **Wheatbelt** | Replacing providing financial support/counselling and addressing underlying issues in society<br>• invest in homeless shelters/refuges and creating safer places for people and families to live temporarily |
| **Outback South** | replacing providing more permanent public and social housing creating safer places for people and families to live temporarily |

The main themes from respondents were on addressing issues, better awareness of the situation, better support for individuals, and implementing community advocacy and action.

### 7.6.3 How can people get themselves out of homelessness?

Overall, the top three responses on how people can get themselves out of homelessness were to get a job, go to rehab or get an education.

'Other' responses had the highest percentage (59%), with the main themes around community connection, building homes, the homeless to ask for help they need and get appropriate support, dealing with underlying issues such as drugs, alcohol and domestic violence.

**Table 7-12 How Homeless People can get out of Homelessness**

| People getting themselves out of homelessness - Perth | Perth Inner | Perth North East | Perth North West | Perth South East | Perth South West |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Other (specify) | 50% | 55% | 61% | 58% | 60% |
| Get a job | 20% | 29% | 24% | 23% | 26% |
| Not sure/don't know | 20% | 16% | 10% | 8% | 14% |
| Go to rehab | 15% | 10% | 7% | 16% | 12% |
| Get an education | 5% | 3% | 2% | 6% | 10% |
| People cannot get out of homelessness | 8% | 6% | 2% | 10% | 5% |
| Move in with family | 13% | 3% | 2% | 5% | 0% |
| Get a house | 3% | 6% | 7% | 3% | 0% |
| Move to an affordable area | 3% | 0% | 7% | 0% | 0% |

| People getting themselves out of homelessness - Regional Centres | Bunbury | Mandurah |
|---|---|---|
| Other (specify) | 68% | 64% |
| Get a job | 26% | 36% |
| Not sure/don't know | 5% | 0% |
| Go to rehab | 16% | 45% |
| Get an education | 11% | 18% |
| People cannot get out of homelessness | 16% | 0% |
| Move in with family | 0% | 0% |
| Get a house | 0% | 9% |
| Move to an affordable area | 0% | 0% |

| People getting themselves out of homelessness - Rural & Remote areas | Wheatbelt | Outback North | Outback South | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Other (specify) | 39% | 68% | 54% | 59% |
| Get a job | 22% | 20% | 24% | 24% |
| Not sure/don't know | 33% | 18% | 22% | 15% |
| Go to rehab | 11% | 13% | 10% | 13% |
| Get an education | 6% | 8% | 2% | 6% |
| People cannot get out of homelessness | 17% | 3% | 0% | 6% |
| Move in with family | 0% | 3% | 0% | 3% |
| Get a house | 0% | 3% | 2% | 3% |
| Move to an affordable area | 6% | 6% | 0% | 3% |

There were differences in the top three by location:

- People cannot get out of homelessness was in the top three for Bunbury, Perth South East and Wheatbelt
- Perth Inner had move in with family
- Perth North West had they should get a house

Respondents 'other' comments were around community connection, building homes, for the homeless to ask for help and then being given access to services needed and dealing with underlying issues such as drugs/alcohol and domestic violence.

Summary of 'Other' responses included:

- Get people connected in communities
- Help homeless people get a job
- A stimulus package to encourage buildings to make sure everyone has a place to live
- Ask for help
- Accept the assistance that is offered
- Access support and do follow ups
- Access to mental health facilities
- Access to emergency accommodation
- Address addiction issues
- Be positive and constructive
- Commitment to finding a way to change their lifestyle
- Deal with domestic violence
- Access to short stay accommodation
- Keep off drugs and alcohol

### 7.6.4 Breaking the cycle of homelessness

Six perception statements were read to respondents asking possible ways society can support people to break the cycle of homelessness and to rate each statement, on a scale of agreement with 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The top responses on what to break the cycle of homelessness related to appropriate support, opportunities for work, training and education.

94% **Be offered and receive appropriate support.** Results similar across all locations, ranging in agreement from 89% to 98%.

**Statistically significant difference**: None.

## Table 7-13 Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness. Be offered and Receive Appropriate Support. Results by Location

**Be offered and receive appropriate support**

| Statement Response - Perth | Perth Inner | Perth North East | Perth North West | Perth South East | Perth South West |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 0% | 0% | 0% | 2% | 0% |
| Disagree | 3% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| Neither | 3% | 6% | 2% | 3% | 7% |
| Agree | 23% | 42% | 39% | 35% | 31% |
| Strongly Agree | 70% | 52% | 59% | 60% | 62% |
| Don't Know | 3% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| | | | | | |
| Combined Strongly Agree/Agree | 93% | 94% | 98% | 95% | 93% |
| Combined Strongly Disagree/Disagree | 3% | 0% | 0% | 2% | 0% |

**Be offered and receive appropriate support**

| Statement Response - Regional Centres | Bunbury | Mandurah |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 0% | 0% |
| Disagree | 5% | 0% |
| Neither | 0% | 0% |
| Agree | 26% | 45% |
| Strongly Agree | 68% | 45% |
| Don't Know | 0% | 9% |
| | | |
| Combined Strongly Agree/Agree | 95% | 91% |
| Combined Strongly Disagree/Disagree | 5% | 0% |

**Be offered and receive appropriate support**

| Statement Response - Rural & Remote | Wheatbelt | Outback North | Outback South | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| Disagree | 6% | 1% | 0% | 1% |
| Neither | 6% | 4% | 7% | 4% |
| Agree | 22% | 23% | 32% | 31% |
| Strongly Agree | 67% | 71% | 61% | 63% |
| Don't Know | 0% | 1% | 0% | 1% |
| | | | | |
| Combined Strongly Agree/Agree | 89% | 94% | 93% | 94% |
| Combined Strongly Disagree/Disagree | 6% | 1% | 0% | 1% |

### 7.6.4.1 Be Offered Appropriate Opportunities for Work

91% **Be offered appropriate opportunities for work.** Lowest level of agreement in Perth south east. Range of results across locations from 81% to 100%.

**Statistically significant difference**: None.

**Table 7-14 Be Offered Appropriate Opportunities for Work**

**Be offered appropriate opportunities for work**

| Statement Response - Perth | Perth Inner | Perth North East | Perth North West | Perth South East | Perth South West |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 0% | 0% | 0% | 3% | 2% |
| Disagree | 3% | 3% | 0% | 0% | 2% |
| Neither | 3% | 10% | 5% | 16% | 5% |
| Agree | 28% | 32% | 39% | 26% | 38% |
| Strongly Agree | 68% | 55% | 56% | 55% | 52% |
| Don't Know | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| Combined Strongly Agree/Agree | 95% | 87% | 95% | 81% | 90% |
| Combined Strongly Disagree/Disagree | 3% | 3% | 0% | 3% | 5% |

**Be offered appropriate opportunities for work**

| Statement Response - Regional Centres | Bunbury | Mandurah |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 0% | 0% |
| Disagree | 0% | 0% |
| Neither | 0% | 18% |
| Agree | 26% | 45% |
| Strongly Agree | 74% | 36% |
| Don't Know | 0% | 0% |
| Combined Strongly Agree/Agree | 100% | 82% |
| Combined Strongly Disagree/Disagree | 0% | 0% |

**Be offered appropriate opportunities for work**

| Statement Response - Rural & Remote | Wheatbelt | Outback North | Outback South | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 6% | 0% | 2% | 1% |
| Disagree | 0% | 1% | 0% | 1% |
| Neither | 6% | 3% | 7% | 7% |
| Agree | 33% | 32% | 34% | 32% |
| Strongly Agree | 56% | 63% | 56% | 58% |
| Don't Know | 0% | 1% | 0% | 0% |
| Combined Strongly Agree/Agree | 89% | 95% | 90% | 91% |
| Combined Strongly Disagree/Disagree | 6% | 1% | 2% | 2% |

### 7.6.4.2 Be Offered Appropriate Opportunities for Training

89% **Be offered appropriate opportunities for training.** Lower agreement level for Perth south east.

**Statistically significant difference**: None.

**Table 7-15 Be Offered Appropriate Opportunities for Training**

**Be offered appropriate opportunities for training**

| Statement Response - Perth | Perth Inner | Perth North East | Perth North West | Perth South East | Perth South West |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 0% | 3% | 0% | 2% | 0% |
| Disagree | 0% | 0% | 2% | 10% | 0% |
| Neither | 5% | 10% | 5% | 10% | 10% |
| Agree | 40% | 32% | 32% | 24% | 33% |
| Strongly Agree | 53% | 55% | 61% | 55% | 57% |
| Don't Know | 3% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| | | | | | |
| Combined Strongly Agree/Agree | 93% | 87% | 93% | 79% | 90% |
| Combined Strongly Disagree/Disagree | 0% | 3% | 2% | 11% | 0% |

**Be offered appropriate opportunities for training**

| Statement Response - Regional Centres | Bunbury | Mandurah |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 0% | 0% |
| Disagree | 0% | 0% |
| Neither | 0% | 18% |
| Agree | 37% | 27% |
| Strongly Agree | 63% | 55% |
| Don't Know | 0% | 0% |
| | | |
| Combined Strongly Agree/Agree | 100% | 82% |
| Combined Strongly Disagree/Disagree | 0% | 0% |

**Be offered appropriate opportunities for training**

| Statement Response - Rural & Remote | Wheatbelt | Outback North | Outback South | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 6% | 0% | 0% | 1% |
| Disagree | 0% | 0% | 0% | 2% |
| Neither | 11% | 10% | 7% | 8% |
| Agree | 44% | 30% | 37% | 33% |
| Strongly Agree | 39% | 59% | 56% | 56% |
| Don't Know | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| | | | | |
| Combined Strongly Agree/Agree | 83% | 90% | 93% | 89% |
| Combined Strongly Disagree/Disagree | 6% | 0% | 0% | 3% |

### 7.6.4.3 Be Offered Appropriate Education Options

85 % **Be offered appropriate education options.** Lower level of agreement for Perth south east.

**Statistically significant difference**: Males more likely to agree.

**Table 7-16 Be offered appropriate education options**

**Be offered appropriate education options**

| Statement Response - Perth | Perth Inner | Perth North East | Perth North West | Perth South East | Perth South West |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 0% | 3% | 0% | 2% | 0% |
| Disagree | 0% | 0% | 5% | 5% | 0% |
| Neither | 15% | 13% | 5% | 18% | 10% |
| Agree | 40% | 32% | 39% | 37% | 29% |
| Strongly Agree | 43% | 52% | 49% | 39% | 60% |
| Don't Know | 3% | 0% | 2% | 0% | 2% |
| Combined Strongly Agree/Agree | 83% | 84% | 88% | 76% | 88% |
| Combined Strongly Disagree/Disagree | 0% | 3% | 5% | 6% | 0% |

**Be offered appropriate education options**

| Statement Response - Regional Centres | Bunbury | Mandurah |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 0% | 0% |
| Disagree | 0% | 9% |
| Neither | 11% | 0% |
| Agree | 37% | 45% |
| Strongly Agree | 53% | 45% |
| Don't Know | 0% | 0% |
| Combined Strongly Agree/Agree | 89% | 91% |
| Combined Strongly Disagree/Disagree | 0% | 9% |

**Be offered appropriate education options**

| Statement Response - Rural & Remote | Wheatbelt | Outback North | Outback South | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 6% | 0% | 2% | 1% |
| Disagree | 6% | 3% | 2% | 3% |
| Neither | 6% | 8% | 5% | 10% |
| Agree | 44% | 35% | 37% | 36% |
| Strongly Agree | 39% | 53% | 54% | 49% |
| Don't Know | 0% | 1% | 0% | 1% |
| Combined Strongly Agree/Agree | 83% | 89% | 90% | 85% |
| Combined Strongly Disagree/Disagree | 11% | 3% | 5% | 4% |

### 7.6.4.4 Get involved in Community Activity/Local Responses

75% **Get directly involved in a community activity/local responses.** Lowest level of agreement in Perth north east (65%). Range across locations on level of agreement from 65% to 85%.

**Statistically significant difference**: Females more likely to agree and respondents aged 18 to 24 years of age.

**Table 7-17 Get involved in a Community Activity/Local Response**

**Get directly involved in a community activity/local responses**

| Statement Response - Perth | Perth Inner | Perth North East | Perth North West | Perth South East | Perth South West |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 0% | 0% | 2% | 3% | 0% |
| Disagree | 3% | 10% | 2% | 6% | 0% |
| Neither | 13% | 19% | 17% | 18% | 21% |
| Agree | 43% | 35% | 34% | 32% | 45% |
| Strongly Agree | 43% | 29% | 41% | 39% | 29% |
| Don't Know | 0% | 6% | 2% | 2% | 5% |
| | | | | | |
| Combined Strongly Agree/Agree | 85% | 65% | 76% | 71% | 74% |
| Combined Strongly Disagree/Disagree | 3% | 10% | 5% | 10% | 0% |

**Get directly involved in a community activity/local responses**

| Statement Response - Regional Centres | Bunbury | Mandurah |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 0% | 0% |
| Disagree | 0% | 18% |
| Neither | 26% | 0% |
| Agree | 26% | 36% |
| Strongly Agree | 47% | 45% |
| Don't Know | 0% | 0% |
| | | |
| Combined Strongly Agree/Agree | 74% | 82% |
| Combined Strongly Disagree/Disagree | 0% | 18% |

**Get directly involved in a community activity/local responses**

| Statement Response - Rural & Remote | Wheatbelt | Outback North | Outback South | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 6% | 3% | 0% | 2% |
| Disagree | 6% | 3% | 2% | 4% |
| Neither | 6% | 19% | 17% | 17% |
| Agree | 44% | 33% | 41% | 37% |
| Strongly Agree | 39% | 41% | 39% | 39% |
| Don't Know | 0% | 3% | 0% | 2% |
| | | | | |
| Combined Strongly Agree/Agree | 83% | 73% | 80% | 75% |
| Combined Strongly Disagree/Disagree | 11% | 5% | 2% | 5% |

### 7.6.4.5 Receive Priority Listing for Housing

69% **Receive priority listing for housing.** Lowest agreement in Mandurah (55%). Range across locations on level of agreement from 55% to 79% (highest for Bunbury).

**Statistically significant difference**: Respondents aged 65 plus more likely to agree.

**Table 7-18 Receive Priority Listing for Housing**

**Receive priority listing for housing**

| Statement Response - Perth | Perth Inner | Perth North East | Perth North West | Perth South East | Perth South West |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 3% | 3% | 5% | 5% | 2% |
| Disagree | 5% | 6% | 2% | 5% | 5% |
| Neither | 28% | 13% | 27% | 26% | 21% |
| Agree | 28% | 35% | 39% | 19% | 24% |
| Strongly Agree | 35% | 39% | 27% | 44% | 45% |
| Don't Know | 3% | 3% | 0% | 2% | 2% |
| Combined Strongly Agree/Agree | 63% | 74% | 66% | 63% | 69% |
| Combined Strongly Disagree/Disagree | 8% | 10% | 7% | 10% | 7% |

**Receive priority listing for housing**

| Statement Response - Regional Centres | Bunbury | Mandurah |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 0% | 0% |
| Disagree | 0% | 0% |
| Neither | 21% | 45% |
| Agree | 47% | 36% |
| Strongly Agree | 32% | 18% |
| Don't Know | 0% | 0% |
| Combined Strongly Agree/Agree | 79% | 55% |
| Combined Strongly Disagree/Disagree | 0% | 0% |

**Receive priority listing for housing**

| Statement Response - Rural & Remote | Wheatbelt | Outback North | Outback South | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 0% | 0% | 5% | 3% |
| Disagree | 11% | 3% | 5% | 4% |
| Neither | 11% | 23% | 20% | 23% |
| Agree | 22% | 34% | 37% | 31% |
| Strongly Agree | 50% | 41% | 32% | 38% |
| Don't Know | 6% | 0% | 2% | 2% |
| Combined Strongly Agree/Agree | 72% | 75% | 68% | 69% |
| Combined Strongly Disagree/Disagree | 11% | 3% | 10% | 7% |

# 8 Summary of Differences by Location to Survey Questions

The tables below are provided as a reference to inform future discussion on aspects to be universally applied and those locations where the approach will need to be tailored.

| All in agreement | Differences | Opportunities |
|---|---|---|
| **Reasons for homelessness?** Unemployment Family/relationship breakdown Mental Health issues | **Domestic Violence:** Perth outer suburbs, Mandurah, Wheatbelt and Outback south **Drug/alcohol addiction:** Bunbury | *Framework for breaking the cycle of homelessness* should recognise support needs to be holistic and tailored to local needs |
| **COVID19 situation creating a shift to a more positive attitude** towards vulnerable people. | **Higher level of change in perceptions** in Perth south west, Mandurah and Outback north | Pilot communications and initiatives in locations showing the strongest positive shifts in attitudes towards the vulnerable |
| **No one chooses to be homeless, very high level of agreement** | **Lower level of agreement** in Perth north west, Bunbury, Mandurah, Outback south and north. | Deeper dive to understand why locations with lower levels of agreement on no one chooses to be homeless? |

| All in agreement | Differences | Opportunities |
|---|---|---|
| **Homelessness can happen to anyone, very high level of agreement** | **Wheatbelt had substantially much lower agreement than other locations** | Deeper dive to understand why? |
| **Most homeless people do not live on the streets, mid range level of agreement** | **Substantially lower agreement** in Bunbury, Mandurah and the Wheatbelt | Regional centres and rural consistently differ from overall views – deeper dive to understands why? |
| **Homelessness can occur due to factors outside an individual's control, high level of agreement** | **No difference** | Extremely high level of agreement. COVID19 has shown no one is immune from becoming homeless |

| All in agreement | Differences | Opportunities |
|---|---|---|
| **The main drivers of homelessness are personal such as drug and alcohol abuse, low level of agreement** | **Wheatbelt had substantially much higher agreement than other locations** | Deeper dive to understand why? |
| **Who is responsible for solving homelessness? Federal and state government** | **Local government added** for Bunbury, Perth inner, Perth north east and the Wheatbelt Wheatbelt had charities and community alongside local government | Better understanding needed of the dynamics of government support for outer suburbs, regional centres and the Wheatbelt |
| **How can community help?** Financial support/counselling, more public social housing and addressing underlying issues in society | **Investing in shelters/refuges and creating safer spaces for people and families to live temporarily for Perth, Wheatbelt, Mandurah and Outback south** | Deeper understanding on situational needs for shelters/refuges and safer spaces for temporary accommodation? |

| All in agreement | Differences | Opportunities |
|---|---|---|
| How to get out of homelessness. Get a job, go to rehab or get an education | Perception cannot get out of homelessness for Bunbury, Perth south east and Wheatbelt | This perception may be a barrier to getting support for initiatives. Why is this perception present? |
| **Breaking the cycle:** offered and receive appropriate support, work, training, educational opportunities, direct involvement of homeless in community activity/responses | Lower support for receiving priority listing for housing | What are the underlying beliefs that receiving priority listing for housing is not a major way to break the cycle of homelessness? |

# 9 Consultant's Comments

## 9.1 Key Takeout Summary

1. **How strong the impact of COVID-19 has been in positively shifting community views on homelessness**. Examples, low level of blame on the individual for contributing to their homelessness. Concern for the wellbeing of homeless individuals that they could not comply with COVID-19 requirements on hygiene and social distancing if they did not have a home.

2. **Takeout is that we are all vulnerable. Realisation that becoming homeless genuinely could happen to anyone.** Shock of how seemingly safe and robust business sectors and job types have been impacted due to COVID-1, We are all vulnerable given COVID-19's negative impact on the economy, job losses, not having sufficient funds which could lead to homelessness.

3. **Everyone has to be part of the solution:** All levels of government, community, NGOs and homeless people themselves as they should be included in the process towards the solution. The main responsibility was seen as belonging to federal and state government. It was interesting to note that there were lower expectations for charities to be responsible for solving homelessness. Overall, charities were rated much lower than all levels of government, local communities and people who were homeless.

4. **Recognition that there are going to be mental health issues across society from the COVID-19 impact**. Loss of income, little or no government support, will result in depression, homelessness and possibility of suicide.

5. **Solution to homelessness has to be multifaceted**. It was interesting to note that the was not a high level of providing housing as the primary option. Instead, comments were focused on providing tailored, appropriate, support. Such support to be broader than focus on work, training - example was life skills such as how to manage a household.

6. **Differences by Location**: Whilst there were commonalities that could be the same for all locations, differences by location need to be understood and addressed appropriately with solutions and processes incorporating the implications of those differences.

7. **Concern for private landlords**: With the potential cessation of fiscal support from the federal government, there was concern that 'Mom and Pop' investors may end up carrying the cost of providing accommodation, if the basic wage is not adequate or fiscal support is lowered or removed.

## 9.2 Positive shift in Community Attitudes

The COVID-19 situation has brough about positive change in community perceptions about homelessness.

First, COVID-19 has made homelessness more obvious through personal observation of an increase in homeless people in places the respondents live or visit.

Second, the media has focused a higher level of reporting on homelessness. Respondents are unable to determine if there has been an actual increase in the number of homeless people or if media reporting has just made the situation more visible to the community?

Third, the stigma of being homeless or unemployed has decreased as respondents have had their belief system shattered by the impact of COVID-19. Two aspects stand out, the economy and high household debt.

With the decimation of the economy and its impact on businesses and employment, nothing appears to be secure any more. Business sectors, large employers and job security have suffered immensely, many of whom were perceived by respondents as being strong performers before COVID-19.

The second aspect is how little financial buffer many people have to cope with a major financial impact and the very high level of household debt. The RBA[3] states that Australian household debt is 200%, meaning that the debt level is two times the level of income.

Respondents could clearly see that the economy being impacted causes job uncertainty and job losses. Without government intervention, people will very quickly run out of money and therefore unable to afford a place to live, whether renting or with a mortgage. The next step, if there is a lack of support from family, friends, charities or government on a place to live, may lead to depression, homelessness and even suicide.

Respondents can clearly see the potential for anyone to become homeless and that it is everyone that needs to be involved in ensuring everyone has a place to live.

This is an important moment in time to utilise the momentum in society for positive change on how we think about homelessness and support for actions to make a string difference right now.

## 9.3 Policy and Advocacy Implications

Advocacy includes traditional activities such as lobbying, and public education. Lobbying refers to activities that are intended to influence a specific policy or piece of legislation.

Insights from this research can be used to provide information to key decision makers in government and other organisations.

The information can also be used to create communication campaigns for the general public.

The combined approach will allow for 'Push communication' to government to promote action on homelessness. A public campaign should have a focus on 'Pull communications' to implement a strategy that will encourage public support and for the community to advocate to government for the positive change for timely action to occur of addressing current and potential homelessness.

## 9.4 Communication Implications

The statements on the perceptions about homelessness provide a useful context for shaping communication messages. There are core messages that were similar across locations. However, there were noticeable differences by location that should be taken into account when crafting communication strategies and key messages.

[3] https://www.rba.gov.au/speeches/2019/sp-ag-2019-03-20.html

### 9.4.1 Suggested key message topics

- Correctly identifying homeless situations that are broader than the assumptions made by the community.
- Reinforcing that circumstances outside an individual's control can contribute to becoming homeless
- Acknowledging the scenarios that could occur due to COVID-19 and the impact on the economy leading to anyone potentially becoming homeless.
- Showcasing the positive shift in community attitudes towards homelessness.
- Create a vision for a pathway to a kinder society.
- Outline the importance of having a home from a work, family, individual aspect and the positive impact for society.
- Underlying message is that we all have a role to play in addressing homelessness.

## 9.5 Build a new framework for Inclusion for the solution

The framework for addressing homelessness and ensuring everyone has a home needs to be inclusive. Further engagement is needed to be clear on what can be done. A holistic model including all levels of government, the community, NGOs and most importantly, homeless people to all play their part in designing a model that works for everyone. Differences by location also need to be taken into account. In some locations the community have a history of working together for the benefit of their community and this should be harnessed.

A holistic model will need to take into account the underlying issues around homelessness and acknowledge these change, depending on location. Fresh thinking on support may also be needed, such as life skills.

# Limitation of our work

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