

Homelessness Facts and Stats

- OSW carried out a research study which included a survey of 300 homeless individuals, interviews with 200 individuals, and 10 focus groups. In-depth interviews were also conducted with fifteen private sector employers and fifty staff at homeless organisations. The findings of the research were published in a report entitled [No Home, No Job](#) (225 Kb), in March 2005. In addition to the main report itself, you can also download summaries, appendices and translations from the OSW [Online Library](#).
- The research found that homeless people's attitudes to work were largely positive. Over three-quarters (77%) of respondents said that they wanted to work at the time of the research, which challenges commonly held assumptions that homeless people don't want to work. Furthermore, 97% of the respondents said that they would like to work in the future.
- A quarter (24%) of respondents reported that the main barrier to employment related to housing issues, such as a lack of suitable accommodation or hostel costs. A further 9% reported that they were unable to find a job at a wage level that would cover their accommodation and living expenses. This financial disincentive to work is often referred to as the 'benefits trap'. There were also specific work-related barriers reported, including a lack of:
 - experience (8%);
 - specific skills or training (6%);
 - relevant qualifications (4%).
 - Other respondents said that they were unable to work as they:
 - had dependency issues to resolve (7%);
 - were committed to attending training or college courses (7%);
 - had asylum/refugee issues or low levels of English that needed to be addressed before employment could be sought (6%).
 - In addition, frontline staff in homelessness agencies reported the following barriers preventing their clients from entering employment:
 - Ongoing, unresolved benefits issues and previous negative experiences of reapplying for benefits after periods of employment;
 - Lack of childcare;
 - Peer pressure, particularly amongst younger people, to engage in non-work activities;
 - A general lack of support networks to encourage employment;
 - The high cost of living in London, which means that many of the jobs that can be more readily accessed by homeless people, often at minimum wage level, are not financially worthwhile;
 - The high incidence of health problems, disability and other physical and mental health issues;
 - The lack of move-on accommodation;
 - Difficulties in opening bank accounts, adverse effects of noise levels and poor nutrition, particularly for people living in hostels.

- Some 86% of respondents thought that further training would have made the most difference as a means of moving towards employment. This was followed by:
 - work experience (83%);
 - volunteering (77%);
 - part-time work (77%);
 - one-to-one support/mentoring (74%).
- Around 40% of respondents had worked while they were homeless. The main methods of securing employment were through personal networks, such as word of mouth, and also through homelessness and other services. Many of the jobs were for a fixed- or short-term, although other reasons why a job came to an end included housing issues, medical issues and working conditions.