

Investigating drivers of rising homelessness: Comparing unfolding scenarios in England and Australia

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Quotation of Aus stats embargoed until 15 May

Presentation overview

1. Wider international context – recent homelessness change in continental Europe and USA
2. Calibrating recent homelessness change:
 - a) England
 - b) Australia
3. Analysing changing profile of Australia's homelessness cohort
4. Interpreting spatial patterns of change in homelessness rates in Eng and Aus
5. Conclusions

Rising homelessness – a European norm

- Homelessness of course notoriously problematic to enumerate consistently or comparably
- Official definitions in some countries but few if any are common across borders
- Recent evidence indicates generally rising numbers (of homeless people – variably defined) across developed countries
- FEANTSA (2018) analysis of 11 EU countries, indicates recent homelessness trend is up in 10
- Same in England and Australia – but, Finland aside, is this a universal post-GFC pattern?

Recent homelessness change in selected EU countries

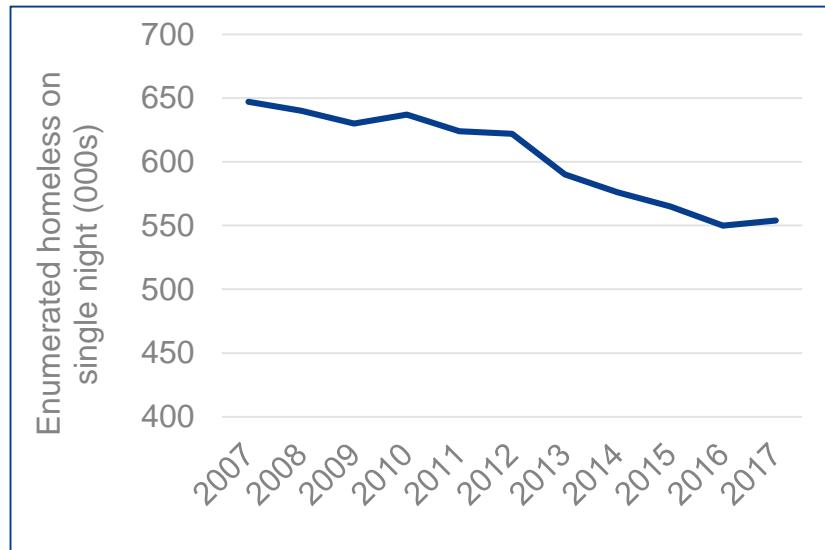
	Time period	Annual change	Metric
Netherlands	2011-16	+2%	Homelessness accom service users
Denmark	2015-17	+4%	Homeless people enumerated over 1 week
Spain	2014-16	+10%	Homeless people in emergency shelters
Ireland	2014-17	+48%	Homeless people in emergency housing
Finland	2009-16	-3%	Homeless on 1 night

Source: FEANTSA (2018) *Third Overview of Housing Exclusion in Europe*

US homelessness

- Post-2007 US trend shows steady homelessness **reduction** over 10 years – 14% since 2007
- Neither GFC, nor post-2011 housing market recovery have reversed this at national scale
- Possible contributory factors (Dennis Culhane):
 - Substantial Federal funding program for homeless veterans (2009)
 - Additional prioritisation of chronically homeless people in Federal housing funding (2004)
 - Post-2009 Federal policy push on rapid rehousing and homelessness prevention
 - Cohort effect: premature deaths among LT homeless

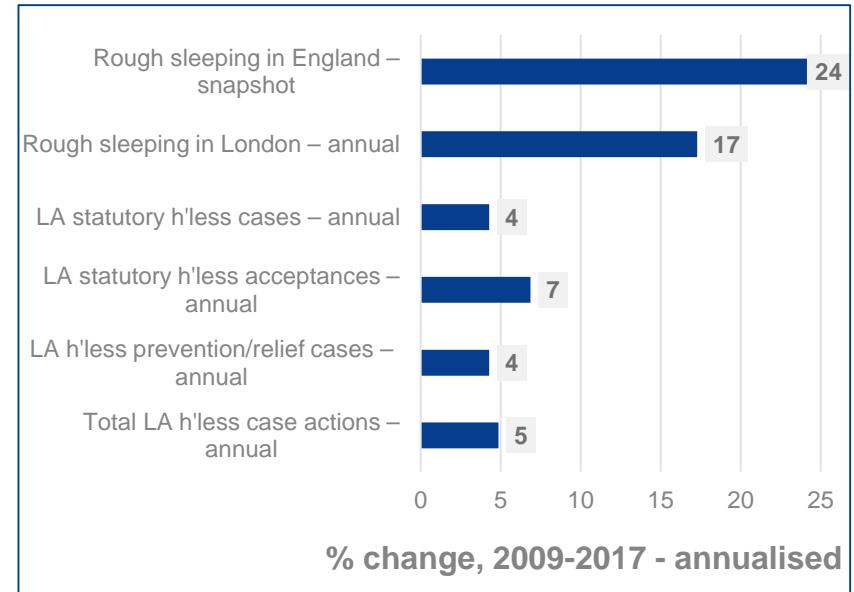
Annual homelessness trend, USA, 2007-2017



Source: US Dept of Housing & Urban Development (2017)
Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress

Recent homelessness change in England

- Homelessness in England has risen in recent years on all metrics
- Of course, there are numerous problems with these stats – e.g:
 - Growing tendency for LAs to process applications informally
 - LA administrative capacity limitations
 - Inherent imperfection of RS count and estimate data
- But they are the best numbers we have

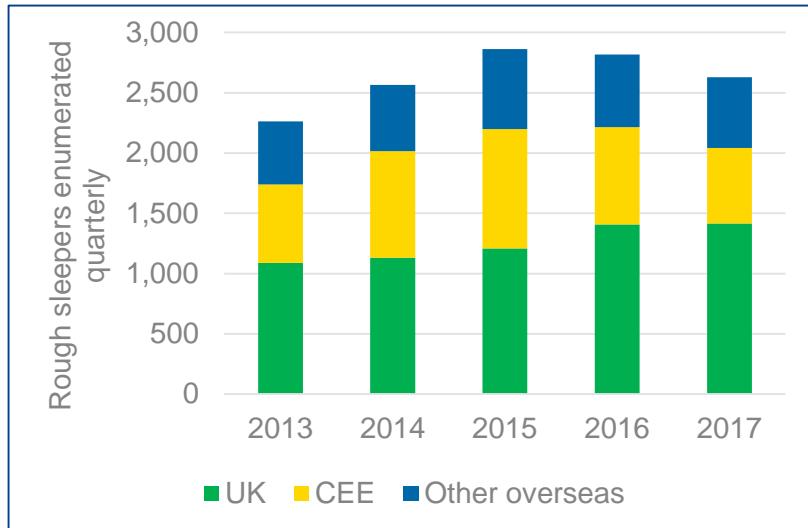


Source: Fitzpatrick et al (forthcoming 2018)
Homelessness Monitor, England 2018

Rough sleeper trend in London

- Probably most reliable UK series is London RS enumeration
- Generated from a highly structured and professionalised administrative recording system
- No of rough sleepers logged during year up from 3,700 to 8,100 (121%) 2009/10 – 2016/17
- But latest London stats indicate numbers peaked in 2015
- Sharply falling CEE total has since outweighed ongoing steady rise in UK-origin numbers

Rough sleepers in London – no counted Q4 2013-17: breakdown by nationality



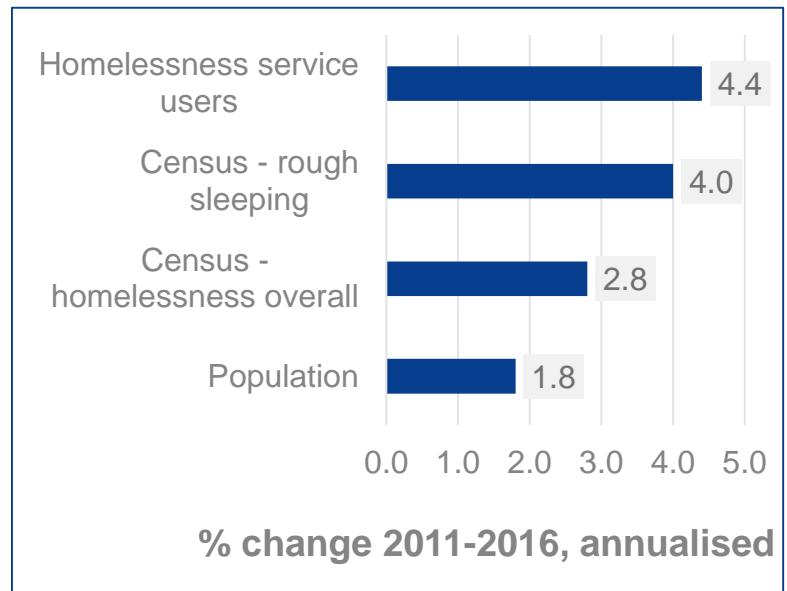
Source: *Fitzpatrick et al (forthcoming 2018)
Homelessness Monitor, England 2018*

Enumerating homelessness in Australia

- Recently released stats show homelessness rising ahead of population increase at national scale
- Prime data source since 2001: five-yearly ABS census – 6 homelessness categories:
 - Rough sleepers
 - Homelessness supported accom residents
 - Persons staying temporarily with other hhlds
 - Boarding house residents
 - Persons in other temporary lodgings
 - Persons living in 'severely crowded' dwellings
- Since 2011 administrative records on h'less service users – an alternative source

Homelessness contextual factors in Aus

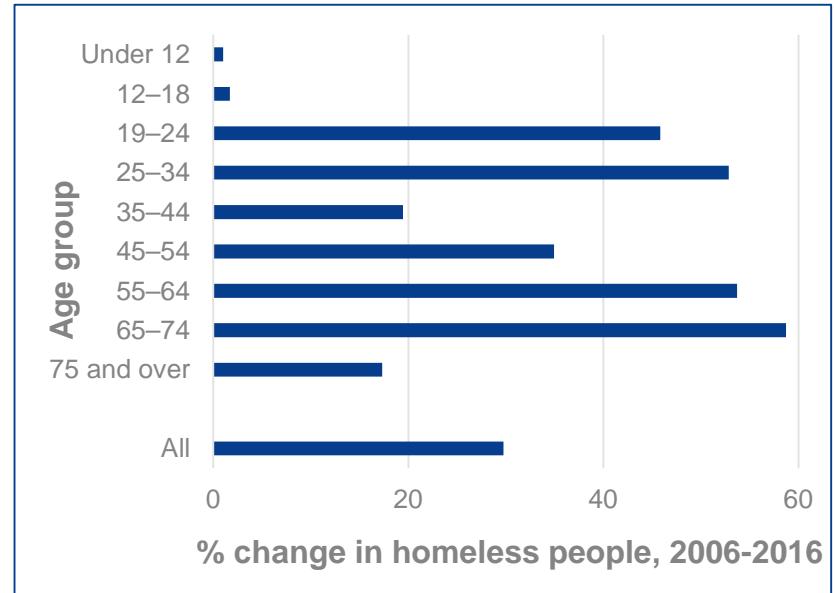
- Some contextual factors v different to UK:
 - GFC had limited impact – no economic recession
 - Unemployment has remained at v low levels
 - No sustained post-GFC ‘austerity’ welfare cutbacks
- Other potentially relevant trends more familiar:
 - ▲ % of SS claimants pushed onto lowest and most conditional benefit
 - Fivefold ▲ in benefit sanctions 2011-2016
 - Rapid ▲ prison pop inflating prison discharge rates
 - ▲ flow of young people leaving care



Source: Pawson et al (forthcoming 2018) Australian Homelessness Monitor 2018

Changing incidence of homelessness in Aus by age

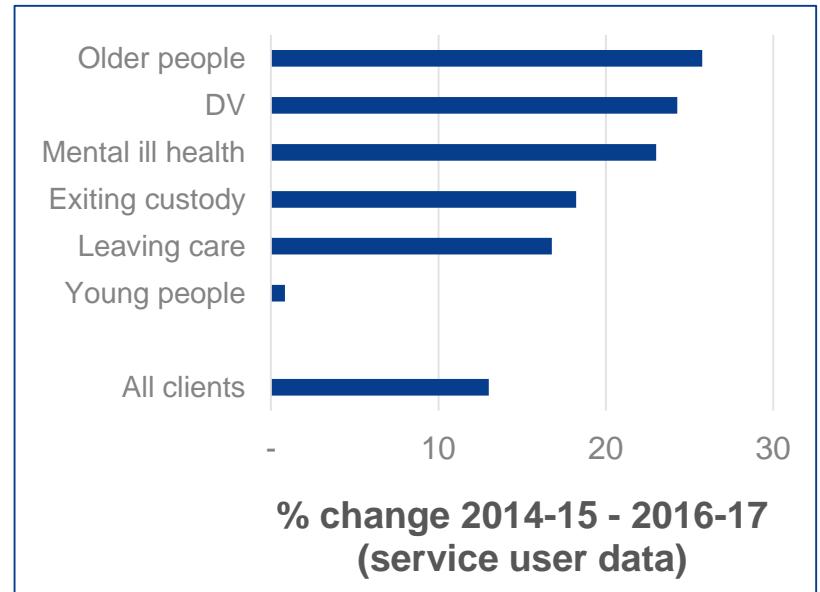
- Rates of homelessness change highly varied by age group
- Peaks among young adults and older (working age) people
- Hints at distinctly different homelessness drivers affecting different pop cohorts
- Near stability of figures for children, elderly – possibly indicates policy effectiveness



Source: Pawson et al (forthcoming 2018) Australian Homelessness Monitor 2018

Changing incidence of homelessness in Aus – service user data

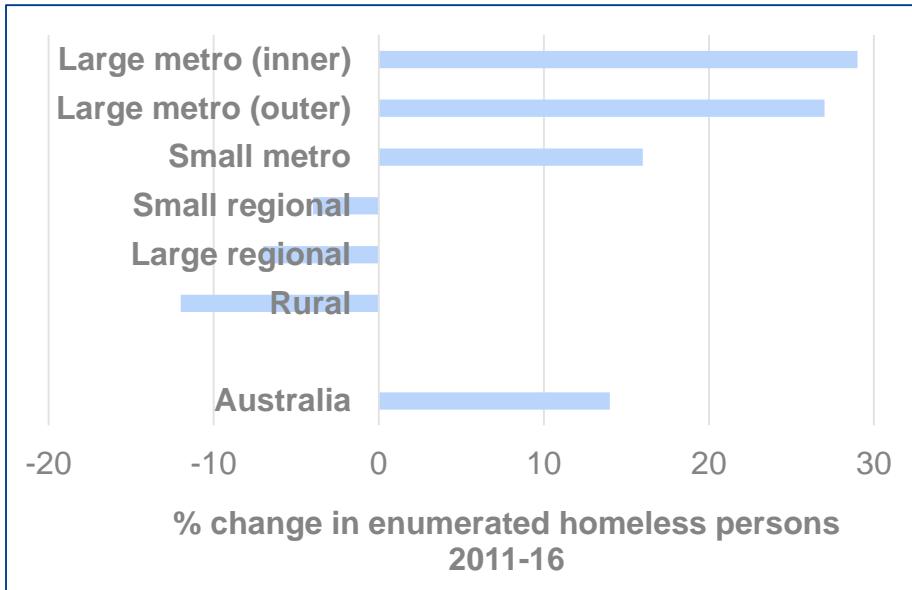
- Some cross-validation from service user data for most recent 3 year period
- Homelessness incidence growing:
 - Fast for older people
 - V. slowly for young people (16-17 year olds)
- Certain 'associated factors' overrepresented:
 - Domestic violence
 - Institutional discharge



Source: Pawson et al (forthcoming 2018) Australian Homelessness Monitor 2018

Spatial variations in Aus homelessness change

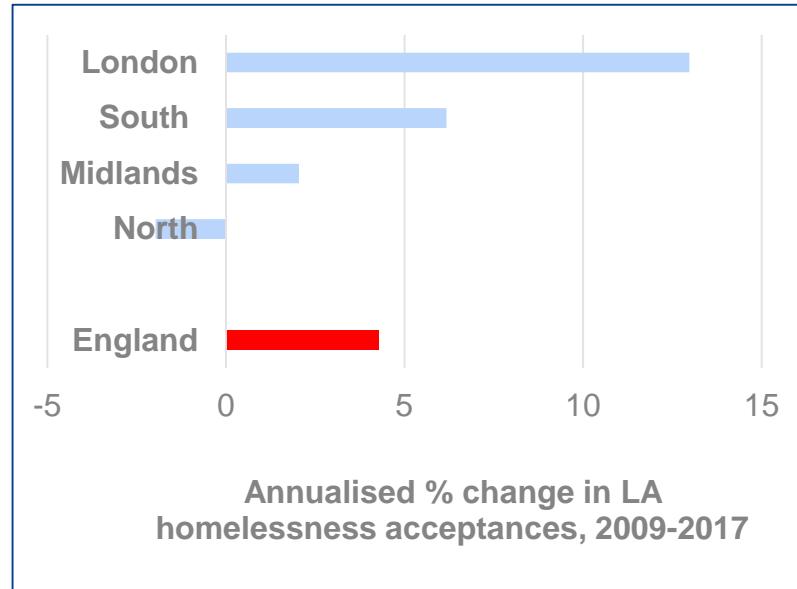
- Huge spatial variations across Aus – raises questions on value of national analyses
- Hints at geographically specific factors that fit with housing market trends
- Major city (large metro) markets – esp inner areas – generally more stressed
- Pressured markets in some regional towns deflated by end of mining boom
- Potentially relevant policy factor impacting ‘rural’ rate: remote Indigenous hsg program



Source: Pawson et al (forthcoming 2018) Australian Homelessness Monitor 2018

Spatial variations in Eng. homelessness change

- Housing market influence also implicit in highly variable recent change in homelessness in Eng
- Again, extent of variation raises questions on utility of national level aggregate stats
- As in Aus, strong implication that rising h'lessness mainly attributable to housing market pressure
- LA returns show rising rate of PRS evictions – single most important factor:
 - Up from 5,000 p.a. to 18,000 p.a.
 - Accounts for 72% of total increase 2009-17



Source: *Fitzpatrick et al (forthcoming 2018)
Homelessness Monitor, England 2018*

Explaining recent change in scale of homelessness

England	Australia
Low income groups impacted by increasingly competitive private rental markets in economically successful regions	
Declining HO affordability expanding cohort of middle-to-high-earner tenants competing for relatively fixed private rental supply	
Stock of social housing contracting relative to population	
Widescale benefit cuts reduce claimant incomes Single most significant measures (i) LHA restrictions; (ii) reduced HB entitlement for young people aged 26-35	Long term under-indexation of benefits – relative to rents
Sanctioning benefits highly liable to trigger housing crisis	
People in high pressure housing market regions more vulnerable to homelessness when encountering 'risky' personal circumstances – e.g. institutional discharge, domestic violence	

Conclusions

- Homelessness more likely to rise in boom times than in recession (as housing market tightens)
- At least in Aus, growing homelessness partly reflects policy complacency
 - Unwillingness to recognise and own the problem (beyond funding emergency services)
- In both Eng and Aus growing scale of homelessness also results from conscious policy choices:
 - Govt spending reductions achieved by suppressing or cutting benefit entitlements (rather than – e.g. winding back tax concessions benefiting the wealthy)
 - Criminal justice policies pushing up prison populations – and therefore discharge rates
 - Gratefully absorbing higher property tax takes when housing markets boom, but doing little or nothing to expand social housing commensurate with need
- More optimistically, as seems to have been achieved in the US, policy change could very quickly disrupt the rising trajectory that might otherwise be expected

Main sources

