

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

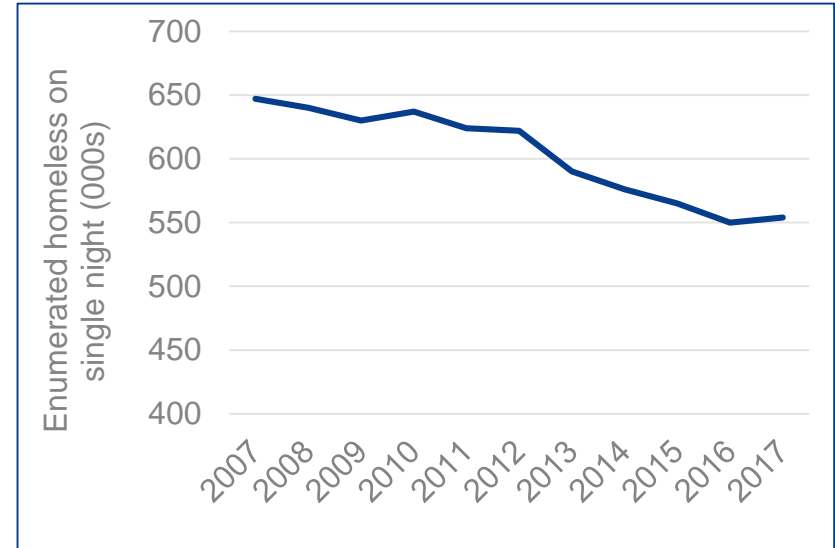
	Time period	Annual change	Metric
Netherlands	2011-16	+2%	Homelessness accom service users
Denmark	2015-17	+4%	Homeless people enumerated over 1 week
Spain	2014-16	+10%	Homeless people in emergency shelters
Ireland	2014-17	+48%	Homeless people in emergency housing
Finland	2009-16	-3%	Homeless on 1 night

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

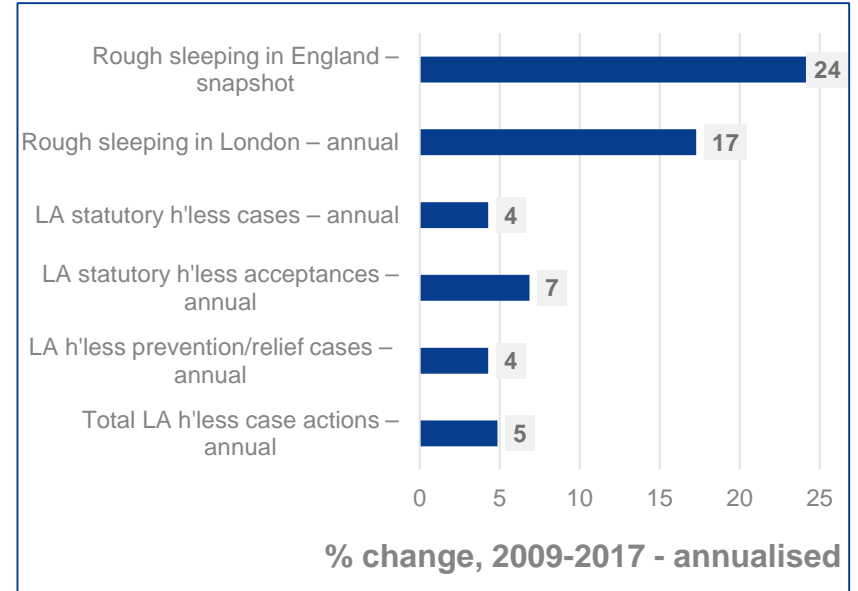
Annual homelessness trend, USA, 2007-2017



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

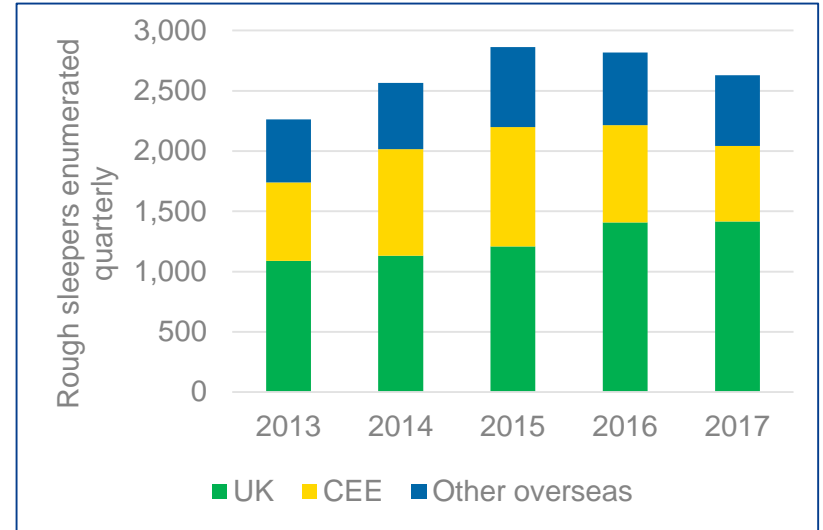


Source: Fitzpatrick et al (forthcoming 2018)
Homelessness Monitor, England 2018

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



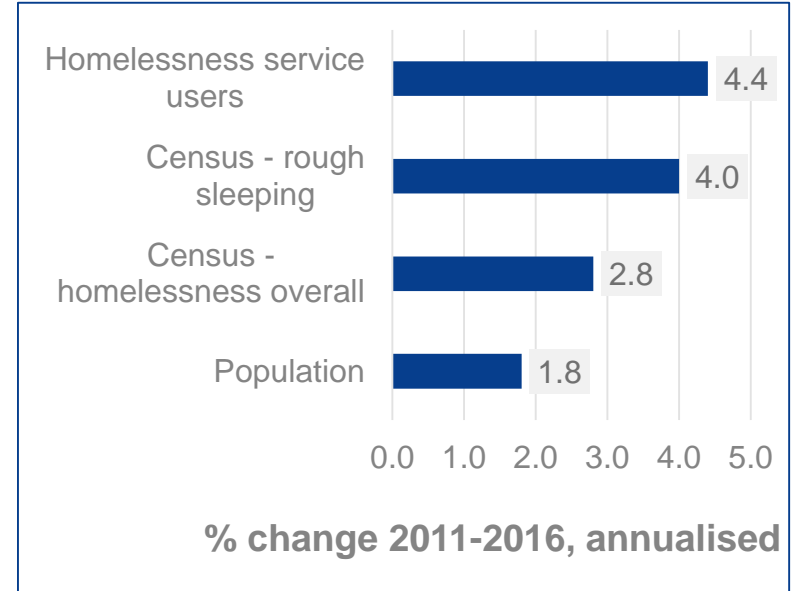
Source: Fitzpatrick et al (forthcoming 2018)
Homelessness Monitor, England 2018

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

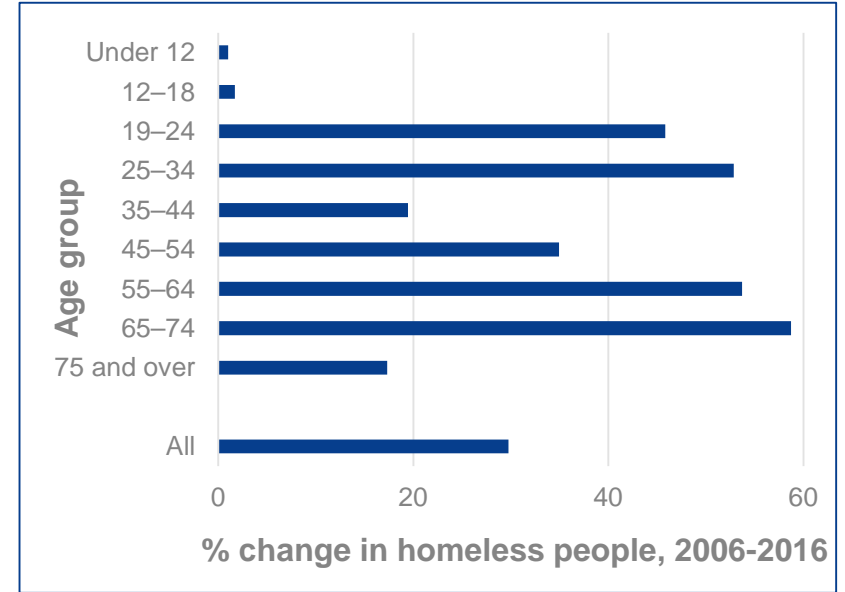
- Some contextual factors v different to UK:
 - GFC had limited impact – no economic recession
 - Unemployment has remained at v low levels
 - No sustained post-GFC ‘austerity’ welfare cutbacks
- Other potentially relevant trends more familiar:
 - ▲ % of SS claimants pushed onto lowest and most conditional 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

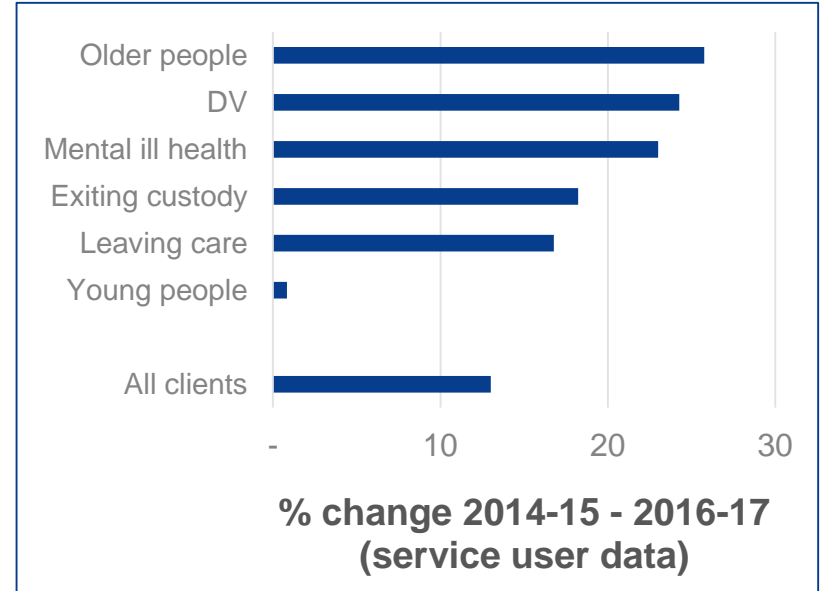
- Rates of homelessness change highly varied by age group
- Peaks among young adults and older (working age) people
- Hints at distinctly different homelessness drivers affecting different pop cohorts
- Near stability of figures for children, elderly – possibly indicates policy effectiveness



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

Changing incidence of homelessness in Aus – service user data

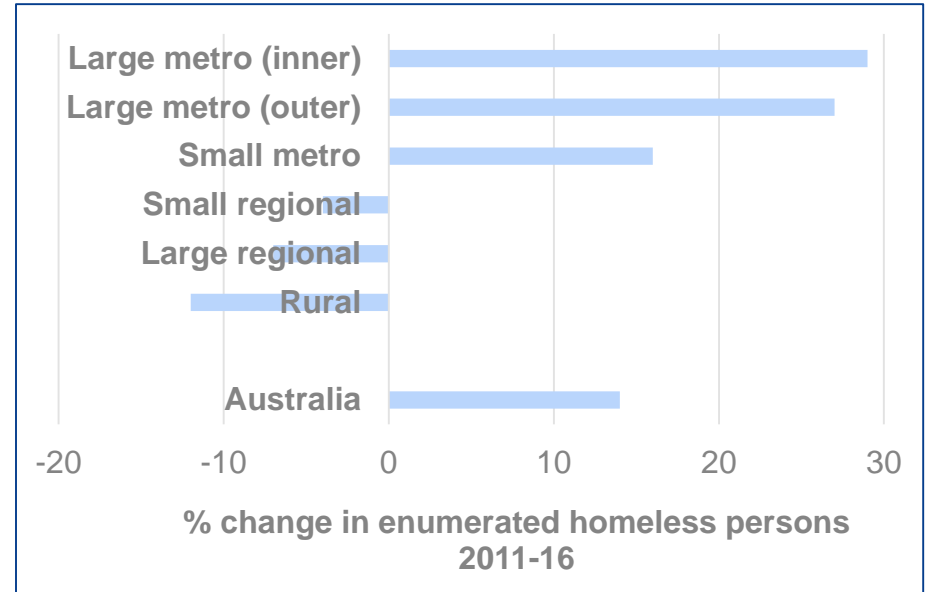
- Some cross-validation from service user data for most recent 3 year period
- Homelessness incidence growing:
 - Fast for older people
 - V. slowly for young people (16-17 year olds)
- Certain ‘associated factors’ overrepresented:
 - Domestic violence
 - Institutional discharge



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

Spatial variations in Aus homelessness change

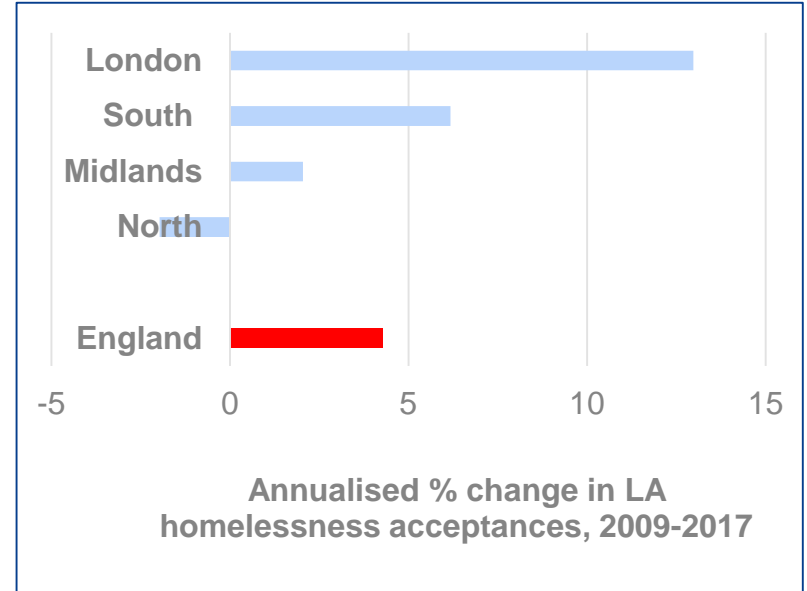
- Huge spatial variations across Aus – raises questions on value of national analyses
- Hints at geographically specific factors that fit with housing market trends
- Major city (large metro) markets – esp inner areas – generally more stressed
- Pressured markets in some regional towns deflated by end 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	
<p>Widescale benefit cuts reduce claimant incomes</p> <p>Single most significant measures (i) LHA restrictions; (ii) reduced HB entitlement for young people aged 26-35</p>	<p>Long term under-indexation of benefits – relative to rents</p>
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

