

# New research reveals impact of homelessness on EU citizens living in Britain

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Credit: Jon Tyson

New research led by Heriot-Watt University and the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) for homelessness charity Crisis has revealed people from EU countries living in Britain are nearly three times more likely to experience rough sleeping than the general adult population. They are also twice as likely to experience homelessness overall because they struggle to access support.

The project is the first of its kind to explore the scale, causes and impact of homelessness experienced by people from the European Economic Area (EEA) who have made their home in Britain.

Following the findings, Crisis is calling on the Westminster Government to make progress on its commitment to end rough sleeping for all by 2024. The charity also wants a package of employment and housing [support](#) introduced for EU citizens, to help them out of homelessness for good and to stop people's potential from going to waste.

Out of all the people experiencing core homelessness across Britain, 22,200 are originally from EEA countries which is approximately 9% of the total. The research found startling trends among EEA citizens in Britain experiencing homelessness, including how they've been disproportionately affected by [job losses](#) over the last eighteen months.

For those recently experiencing rough sleeping, job loss and [financial difficulties](#) were cited as the most frequent adverse experiences (51% and 49%). This was over other common pressures that can push people into homelessness, regardless of their background, such as health problems or a relationship breakdown.

For those EU citizens experiencing homelessness who were in employment, insecure and exploitative work was a common theme. Over a quarter of people surveyed (28%) had to put up with unacceptable employment conditions such as working without a contract and having an abusive employer. Many shared their experiences of being paid below the minimum wage for their work or not being paid at all.

For those with recent experience of homelessness, nearly half had no income, with 87% living below the standard poverty line, while just over half (51%) were on clearly inadequate income and were not receiving any kind of welfare support to help them stay afloat.

The research also identified specific barriers to support. These include rules limiting access and entitlement to housing and welfare support when people needed them and language barriers preventing people from finding out what help they are entitled to.

Glen Bramley, Professor of Urban Studies and member of the Institute for Social Policy, Housing, Equalities Research (I-SPHERE) at Heriot-Watt University, said that "it is particularly striking that large numbers of people have come from EEA countries and made a major working contribution to our economy and society yet are now experiencing homelessness. They're in situations where they're getting little or no financial support from the state or anywhere else, having previously often endured insecure and exploitative work conditions."

Jon Sparkes, chief executive of Crisis, said "Having a home and job provides a solid foundation for us all to thrive, build our lives and contribute to our community, but this research shines a light on the fact this foundation just isn't there for many people who have made Britain their home.

"It's unacceptable people originally from other European countries are experiencing homelessness here and aren't able to access the system of support when something like a job loss or health problem hits. They want to contribute to their communities and given the shortage of workers in some industries right now, enabling people to do so will not only make a difference to our country but will also make a difference to these individuals and make sure they can leave homelessness behind for good.

"We know what the solutions are to help people out of homelessness for good. If the Government committed to providing emergency accommodation and help to find secure, properly paid employment, people from EEA countries wouldn't be left stuck in homelessness but

would instead be able to progress with their lives."

Marley Morris, Associate Director for Migration, Trade and Communities at IPPR, said that their "research has found systemic barriers to support for EU citizens experiencing homelessness in Britain. Many of the people we interviewed had faced poor conditions at work and at home—from low wages and excessive hours to exploitative employers and landlords. Often, they had lost their job, in some cases as a result of the pandemic. Yet when they looked for help, some faced difficulties qualifying for welfare, while others were simply unaware of their rights and entitlements. This left many without an adequate safety net."

Provided by Heriot-Watt University

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