BUZZ-ONOMICS

A CLEAR AND ACCESSIBLE GUIDE TO THE STORIES THAT MATTER

St Catherine's BRAMLEY

This week saw news coverage of a very important issue - the number of women sleeping rough. Not only is this a concern in itself because (as the quotes to the right show) women sleeping rough are so vulnerable but the latest Women's Rough Sleeping Census shows that the numbers affected are around ten times higher than the official statistics in some cases. Data problems are arising because women are sleeping rough in locations that are not recognised within existing government definitions.

According to a recent report, many of these women spend nights hiding from harm or relying on strangers for shelter. Almost 1 in 10 receive no support at all. Critics say the result of such women not being captured by the data is that the problem is not being solved by existing approaches and provision.

A key question is where these women are sleeping. Some try to sleep in railway stations, some in A&E, some on night buses or trains and others in parks or bushes. The government classes rough sleeping as bedding down in the open air or in buildings not designed for habitation such as car parks. According to the Single Homeless Project "As a woman rough sleeper, you are far less likely to be discovered rough sleeping and that's your route into services, into support, into accommodation".

Another key question is why women find themselves sleeping rough. The primary reason is domestic abuse. The government has promised to half long-term rough sleeping in England by the end of this Parliament and to halve violence against women and girls within the next decade. The charities behind the survey say that this cannot be achieved unless the government has accurate figures on the extent of the problem. They say that policies must be more gender-informed and must address women's experiences of rough sleeping, homelessness, and gender-based violence.



As a woman, I was often afraid to sleep, so I wouldn't sleep at all, especially at night.

Women need to be protected and supported at all costs, because they are at higher risk of harm than men while being homeless.

WRSC respondent, 2025



1,406

women were identified as having slept rough in the previous three months

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