1. About: THIS REPORT
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Glasgow Homelessness Network undertook a survey of people who beg for money in order to better understand their circumstances. We did this so the findings could be considered alongside a public attitudes survey about begging being undertaken around the same time in Glasgow.

**What Did We Do?**

We designed a survey with the help of Heriot-Watt University to find out more about:

- What a typical day looks like when people are begging;
- How people are treated by others when they are begging;
- What other sources of income people have;
- People’s housing circumstances;
- People’s support needs and the services they are using; and
- The alternatives to begging people can identify.

During July 2016 we undertook a mapping exercise to identify the most common parts of the city people were begging, identifying key fieldwork routes across Glasgow’s West End, East End, South Side and City Centre.

GHN staff were accompanied by Roma translators during one fieldwork session to ensure representation from members of the Roma Community.

To ensure our survey captured those actively begging we approached people at their ‘pitch’, offering a £5 supermarket voucher as an incentive to participate.
67 People participated in our survey and they tended to be:

**Male**
*Although almost a quarter were female*

**Aged 25-55**
*With small numbers under 18 or over 55*

**White Scottish**
*Although around a fifth were Roma (and of Romanian nationality)*

**Resident in Glasgow**
*With very small numbers resident elsewhere*

**Homeless or at risk of**
*With more people reporting they slept rough the night before than stayed in their own home*

**Begging less than a year**
*But with a notable proportion begging for up to five years*

**Largely reliant on begging as their sole or main income**
*Although this is less likely if white Scottish/British*
3. A TYPICAL DAY

Different pitches are good on different days and if I move people don’t get sick of seeing me

When I see the police coming I stand up and move

For B&B or until I have enough

Soon as I make £20 I stop

Begging for most respondents is:

An everyday activity
With smaller numbers reporting less frequent activity

An all-day activity
With the most common shifts being 6-10 hours

Flexible in location
With people noting ‘regular’ pitches but moving on when told to or if quiet

As much about time spent as money made
With respondents being evenly split as to what makes then decide to stop each day
We were interested in finding out more about how people are treated by those they most routinely come into contact with when begging. We asked about how people felt they were treated on a scale of one to ten, with low scores representing treatment they might describe as aggressive, and higher scores representing treatment they might describe as friendly.

- 5.8 POLICE
- 7.4 PASSING PUBLIC
- 7.5 COMMUNITY SAFETY WARDENS
- 7.7 SHOP & SECURITY STAFF
- 7.7 OTHER PEOPLE BEGGING
- 7.8 WORKERS FROM SUPPORT SERVICES
I’m just glad to be acknowledged – even “sorry I’ve got no change” is better than not being acknowledged.

People walking by tell us to get jobs and wave us away.

Community Safety Wardens “look out for me” and ask after me when I’m not there.

I’m nice and polite to all staff and they’re nice back.

Bouncers will hit me.
The majority of the people responding to the survey were UK residents with entitlement to claim welfare benefits and we were interested in finding out more about the interplay between claiming benefits and relying on income from begging.

Most people were in receipt of benefits
but over one third of people (mainly within the Roma respondents) were not

50% of people identified income from begging as their sole source of income
including Glasgow residents eligible for and in receipt of benefits, often as a result of sanctions meaning that, at the point of interview, they had no other income

50% of people used their income from begging as additional income, often for a specific purpose

Disability benefits the most common
but smaller numbers receiving employment related benefits

Sanctions the main reason for those eligible for benefits not receiving them
while others didn’t want to engage with the DWP, didn’t know how to apply, or were waiting on claims being processed

When asked to prioritise the essentials when spending their money people reported:

1. Drugs
2. Food
3. Alcohol
4. Cigarettes/Tobacco
5. Housing costs (Rent/B&B)
6. Utilities
7. Travel
6. ABOUT: HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

We were interested in finding out more about the housing circumstances of people who were begging and whether they were also experiencing homelessness. We asked everyone where they had slept last night and to tell us a bit about their home if they had one.

Rough sleeping was the most common accommodation status with others commonly in temporary accommodation or sofa surfing.

Smaller numbers had their own home which tended to be in the private rented sector.

Members of the Roma population were more likely to identify having their own home but this was often overcrowded accommodation in the Private Rented Sector.

I don’t like being in my own city...begging but I’d rather do this than do crime, rob people and shit like that.
There are many services in Glasgow offering a range of help and support to people who are vulnerable and we were interested in the specific support needs of people participating in the survey and their relationship with support services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
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<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Work</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Getting a **home** would help me get back to work ...

I’m a car mechanic to trade ... drugs took it away from me

I feel like I’m the **shit on the shoe** of the people walking by me
We asked people what they would do if they were unable to get money from begging:

- Crime was the most common response, taking the form of shoplifting, theft, housebreaking, street robbery;
- ‘No alternative method’ was the second most common response;
- Prioritise essentials in spending (e.g. drugs, food, alcohol);
- Smaller numbers suggested ‘sorting out benefits’, looking for work, borrowing money from family or friends;
- Sex work or suicide were also identified as alternatives.

We were also interested in people’s thoughts on their future and what would help them to stop begging. The most common solutions were identified as:

- Having a stable place to stay;
- Being able to work and have a regular income;
- Detox or prescription;
- Sorting out benefits
We asked people *why* they were unable to get the money obtained by begging from elsewhere. The reasons given were:
Around one-fifth of the people taking part in the survey, with the help of translators, were Roma (and of Romanian nationality). While all participants were asked the same questions there were some specific themes arising from the responses from Roma participants.

Compared with the respondents who were UK residents (mainly White Scottish) Roma participants were:

- More likely to be female
- Less likely to beg each day
- More likely to experience the public and police as unfriendly
- Not engaged with services (*regardless of whether they expressed a need for them*)
- More likely to have no other source of income (*as not entitled to benefits*)
- Less likely to view criminal activity as an alternative to begging
- Less likely to experience rough sleeping
- More likely to be in their own home (*but this tended to be overcrowded housing in the Private Rented Sector*)
I’m not doing anybody any harm doing this... that’s the way I look at it anyway
Maybe tomorrow I won’t wake up
and that would be the best thing that could happen

Don’t like doing this - don’t know what else to do...

An existence not a life

If I wasn’t doing this
I’d be starving

I can’t believe it’s come to this:
I just want to work

Soul destroying...
horrible

Degrading gives you low self esteem

Tough
I feel demeaned
that could happen
It’s shit. I hate this but I want to keep myself out the jail.

An existence not a life

It’s not as embarrassing as I thought - people just seem to accept that you’re in a bit of a situation.

It’s my life.

It’s the way it is.