

Follow-up Work: Attitudes to Homelessness
(Based on the Social Attitudes Survey carried out by
Shelter in Scotland in 2006)

Shelter Social Attitudes Survey 2006

Attitudes towards homelessness:

Q.1. “Most homeless people have just been unlucky in their lives.”

- A. 48% agree.
- 28% disagree.
- 22% neither agree nor disagree.

Homeless Organisations say: ‘In the vast majority of cases, homelessness is nobody’s ‘fault’. It tends to happen as a result of societal pressures and individual circumstances. This is why the Scottish Government has introduced progressive new legislation (By 2012 Scottish legislation says that all unintentionally homeless people will have a right to somewhere permanent to live) to help people find a permanent route out of homelessness.’

Q.2. “Most homeless people could find somewhere to live if they really tried.”

- A. 45% agree.
- 33% disagree.
- 12% neither agree nor disagree (agree).

Homeless organisations say: ‘Due to a shortage of housing it can take years to get a permanent place to stay. While waiting for a permanent place to stay the council places people in temporary accommodation, such as a B&B or hostels. These types of accommodation can be very unsettling, difficult places to live in. This means that it can take some people years to get out of homelessness and a long time to get their life back on track.’

Q.3. “Most homeless people sleep rough at some point”.

- A. 61% agree
39% either disagree or neither agree nor disagree.

Homelessness organisations say: ‘There is a widespread misconception that being homeless is about sleeping rough. Sadly, a minority will end up on the streets. However, homelessness affects a much greater number of people, such as people ‘sofa-surfing’ at their friends or families, those living in overcrowded housing and people in temporary accommodation.

Q.4. “Most people end up homeless simply because they drink too much.”

- A. 21% agree.
50% disagree.

Q.5. “Most homeless people use hard drugs.”

- A. 21% agree.
50% disagree.

Both **Q.4 & Q.5.** Homeless organisations say: ‘The Scottish government reports that although some homeless people have drink or substance abuse problems, they are in the minority. Rather than alcohol itself being the cause of homelessness, it is more often the case that some people end up turning to alcohol or drugs once they become homeless as a way of dealing with the stress or to escape from their daily lives. I think it is safe to assume that this situation is not dissimilar to that in the rest of the United Kingdom.

Ways of Using this Information in the Classroom

1. Show of hands. Convert into percentages.
Compare with Scottish survey results.
Discuss.
2. Flipcharts around the room with each statement on a separate flipchart and three columns: Agree, Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree.
Students to indicate their personal view on each flipchart.
Convert to percentages.
Display to the class, compare with the results of the Scottish survey and discuss.
3. 'Open' classroom.
One end of the room is the 'agree' area.
One end is the 'disagree' area.
The middle of the room is the 'neither agree nor disagree' area.
Read each statement and ask the students to go stand in the area which matches their opinion.
Count the numbers for each opinion and convert into percentages.
Compare with the Scottish survey results and discuss.