



Within the United Kingdom, London is the city with the highest percentage of the population sleeping rough or intermittently homeless.

According to Evolve, an organisation dedicated to providing support to people in London who find themselves homeless, 58% of people in temporary accommodation (defined as housing provided to unhoused people while they find a permanent home) across the UK were in London, while research from the charity Shelter states that 1 in 58 people in London were homeless in 2022 – or roughly 1.5% of the total population of London.

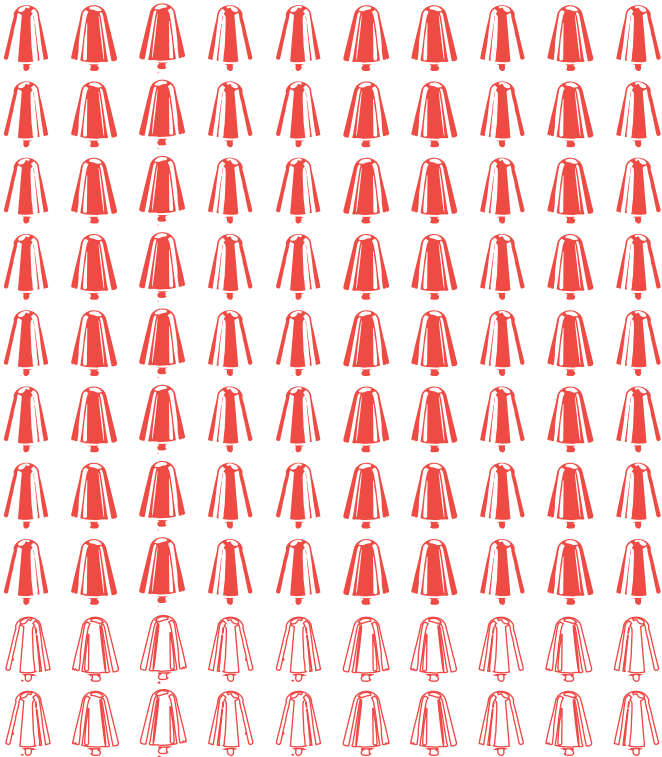
While those who are rough sleeping are the most visible in our cities – according to the Greater London Authority there were roughly 3570 people sleeping rough in London in the last quarter of 2022 – there are thousands more people who are considered to be ‘hidden homeless’, meaning that their living situation is insecure, but they are not rough sleeping or in temporary accommodation – such as squatting, or sofa surfing – and so do not show on official statistics. Many people can become homeless due to high cost of living, relationship break down, or sudden loss of employment.

# HOMELESSNESS IN LONDON

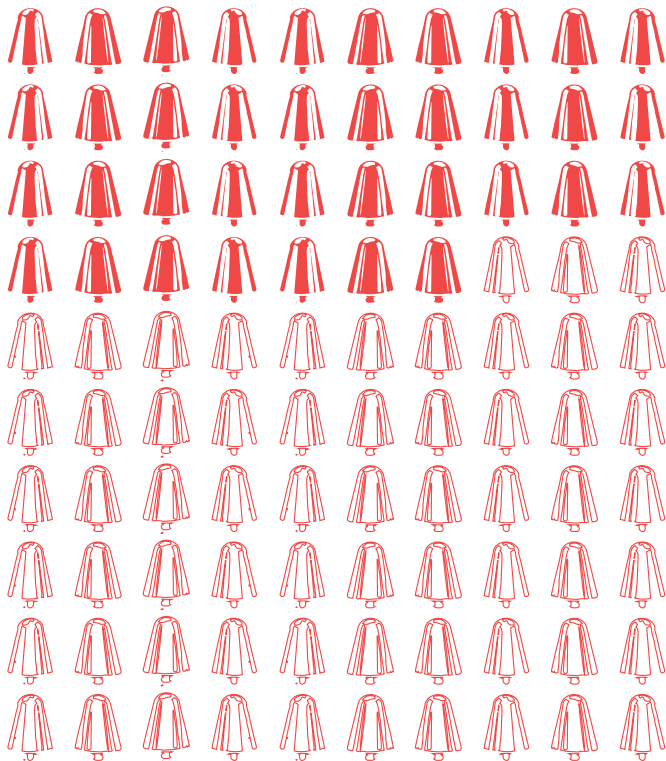
In London specifically, boroughs in the centre of the city have the highest rate of homelessness, with one in twenty-seven residents of Westminster being homeless (Shelter, 2023). These numbers are only increasing year on year.

Trust for London (2023) recently reported a significant increase in the number of people sleeping rough (and known to outreach workers) in London in the last 10 years, from 5,678 in 2011/12 to 8,209 in 2021/22. This number significantly jumped at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the highest number of rough sleepers in the capital being 10,916 in 2020/21.

This increase in the number of people sleeping rough comes at a time when local authorities, councils, and private building owners have increasingly been implementing ‘hostile architecture’ measures designed to make rough sleeping more difficult for those who are homeless. As stated by Smale, A, Street, A (2020) ‘Camden London Borough Council was hailed for creating the ultimate “anti-object” - a large concrete public bench in Camden specifically designed to be uncomfortable to sit upon,’ with other examples, such as the ‘inhumane’ use of deterrent spikes in Southwark in 2014 (Halliday, J, The Guardian, 2014), being well documented.



**80% OF PEOPLE SLEEPING ROUGH  
REPORT THAT THEY ARE  
STRUGGLING WITH MENTAL  
HEALTH CONDITIONS**



**NEARLY 40% OF PEOPLE SLEEPING  
ROUGH BECAME HOMELESS DUE TO  
COMPLICATIONS WITH  
A PRIVATE RENTAL  
AGREEMENT**

While cases such as these have received considerable backlash, the use of hostile architecture is still prevalent enough in London that it can be difficult for people sleeping rough to find a safe and sheltered place for the night. Many places in London are either observed by CCTV cameras or have been purposefully made uncomfortable using either physical or audio deterrents.

# LOOKING FOR SHELTER – A JOURNEY THROUGH WESTMINSTER



Low



Mid



High



Very high

The following spreads documents a reflective experiment undertaken by one of the students, looking to understand the level and nature of architectural hostility in Westminster, the borough with the highest incidence of rough sleeping in the capital. For this experiment, the student uses Google Earth to re-enact the activity of looking for shelter, and documents the environmental factors using the “hostility level” scale.