

Suzanne Fitzpatrick & Volker Busch-Geertsema

Past Experience of Homelessness: The Use of Household Surveys

IGH Conference on Homelessness in a Global Landscape
Chicago, 1-2 June 2015

Retrospective Modules in Household Surveys

► Allow you to:

- estimate the overall incidence of past experience of homelessness
- analyse its social distribution
- conduct international comparisons

► Advantages

- cost-efficiency
- large sample sizes/rigorous design
- link homelessness experiences to individual, household and area characteristics
- reach 'hidden' homeless groups

► Disadvantages

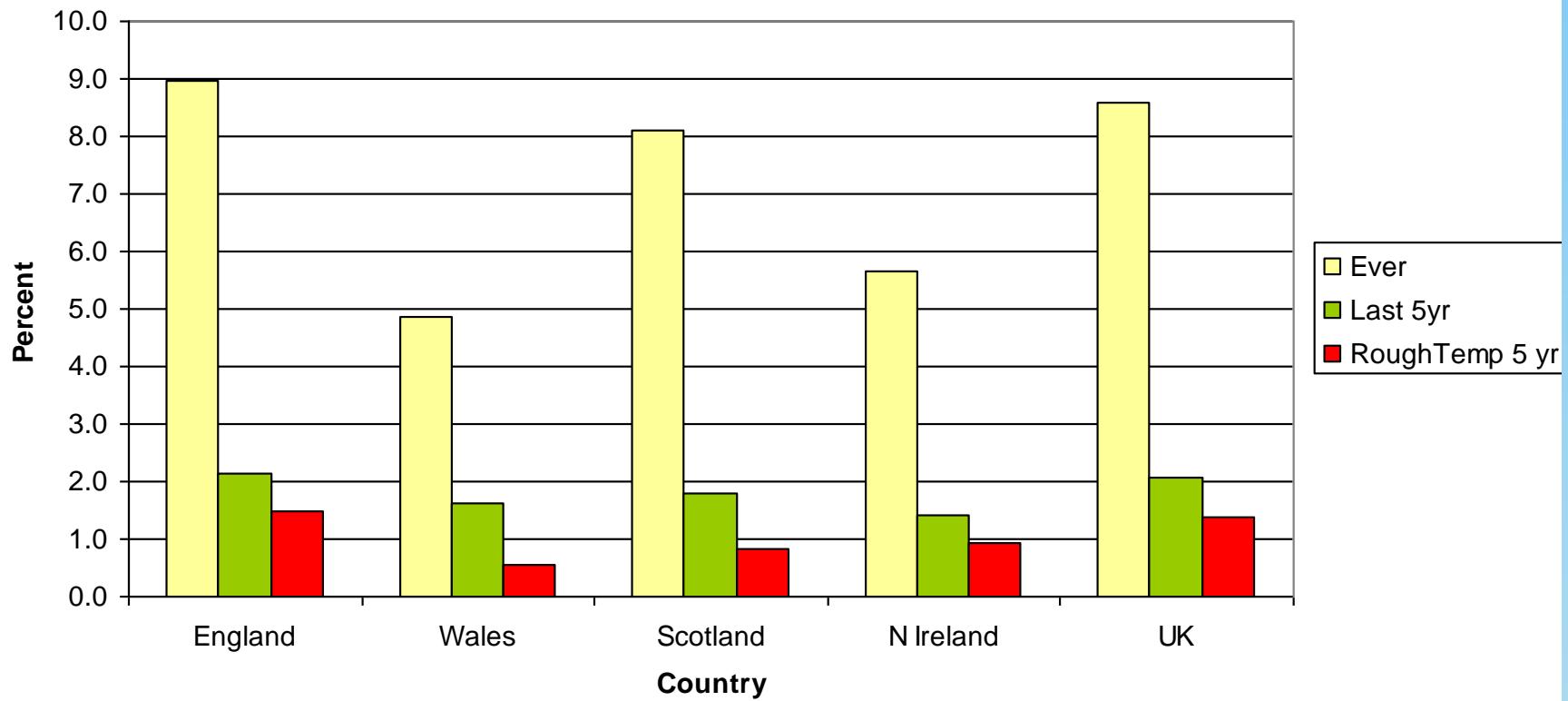
- exclude those not living in private households
- does not capture current or long-term homelessness

Examples from the UK

- ➡ Survey of English Housing (1994/5); Scottish Household Survey (2005-2008); UK Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey 2012
- ➡ SHS has the most detailed data and largest sample size, but PSE is UK wide. Both include:
 - ‘Subjective’ measures: ‘have you ever experienced homelessness/in past 2/5 years’
 - ‘Objective’ measures: specific housing problems/circumstances, e.g. rough sleeping, temporary accommodation, applying as homeless, etc.

Overall Prevalence in the UK

Prevalence of Past Homelessness Experiences by Country in UK



Social Distribution in the UK

Other things being equal, higher risks of past experience of homelessness associated with:

- ▶ being young
- ▶ Black ethnicity (lowered risk if Asian ethnicity)
- ▶ renters (social and private)
- ▶ single persons and lone parent households
- ▶ poor health
- ▶ material deprivation and living in a deprived neighbourhood
- ▶ urban areas

A Question on Experiences of Homelessness in EU SILC

- ▶ Attempts of FEANTSA and the European Observatory on Homelessness to convince EUROSTAT to include a question on past experience of homelessness in EU SILC (European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions; a recurrent household interview survey in all EU member states)
- ▶ Policy framework
 - ▶ Social Investment Package (SIP) asks MS to develop homelessness strategies, similar calls by European Parliament and various committees
 - ▶ Ongoing priority for Social Protection Committee – indicators sub group
 - ▶ Half of all Member States have homelessness as priority of National Reform Programmes; Joint Assessment Framework for European Semester includes homelessness; but no common indicators
 - ▶ DG EMPL commitment to “**revise the SILC housing module to focus on homelessness**” in period 2013 to 2017 (SIP Implementation Road Map 2014)

A Question on Experiences of Homelessness in EU SILC

- ▶ In the past 6 years, have you had to live in any of the following situations? [yes/no]:
 - ▶ 'Sleeping rough' or sleeping in public space?
 - ▶ Staying in emergency or temporary accommodation such as a night shelter, a women's refuge, a hostel or a hotel room provided for people who are homeless?
 - ▶ Staying with friends or relatives temporarily so as to avoid sleeping rough, sleeping in public space, or staying in emergency or temporary accommodation?
- ▶ Follow up questions:
 - ▶ What was the main reason (second main reason) for having to live in one of the situations described in the previous question?
 - ▶ A question on the length of most recent incident of the above situations or on the total amount of time spent homeless in past six years

A Question on Experiences of Homelessness in EU SILC

- ➡ EUROSTAT task force on past 2020 EU SILC is willing to test a retrospective question on homelessness in 2017 as an optional variable
- ➡ Problems discussed:
 - ▶ Finding a consensus on the definition and the prevalence period
 - ▶ Doubts if sample size is large enough to allow for valid results
- ➡ Implementation into EU SILC would be major breakthrough, although long-term homeless people would be largely excluded (as they cannot be included in household sample):
 - ▶ Attempts to collect data on the extent of homelessness in 2011 Census have largely failed and tendency to rely on registers for next Census will make it even more difficult
 - ▶ Retrospective question would provide comparable data for the first time and allow for international comparisons as well