

April 2021

Crisis

Understanding attitudes towards non-UK nationals facing homelessness

Full report

britainthinks.com

Contents

01 3-8

Background and methodology

02 9-12

Key findings

03 13-21

Background views

04 22-49

Attitudes to the issue of homelessness amongst non-UK nationals

05 50-67

Responses to messaging

06 68-69

Recommendations

07 70-73

Appendix

01 Background and methodology

Background and objectives

A significant proportion of the people experiencing homelessness in the UK are originally from another country. Although there are substantial gaps in the data available, we know that in some areas, such as London, around half of people rough sleeping were born outside the UK.

Crisis services help people experiencing homelessness, regardless of where they are from, but current Government policies mean some non-UK nationals are locked out of the support they need to help to prevent or resolve their homelessness. This means it can often take months, even years in some cases, to help a non-UK national to end their homelessness as they can face additional barriers and issues accessing support that UK nationals do not.

Crisis' aim is to end homelessness for good, and this can only be achieved if the specific barriers that affect people who are not originally from the UK are addressed. Making sure that no one is homeless because of their immigration status is therefore one of Crisis' campaigning priorities.

To understand how best to campaign and communicate on this issue, Britain Thinks conducted research on behalf of Crisis to better understand:

- The baseline understanding of and attitudes to the issue of non-UK nationals experiencing (or at risk of) homelessness.
- The most effective messaging to build awareness and support for the cause.

Research was conducted with three key audiences for the campaign:

Persuadable
Public

Stakeholders

Crisis
Supporters

Overview of our research approach



Desk research

Rapid review of existing research and communications on this issue



Messaging development workshop

Workshop to begin process of developing message territories



Phase 1 qualitative research

4 x focus groups with the general public to understand attitudes towards the issue and test initial messages; 5 x interviews with stakeholders to explore stakeholder awareness and understanding of the issue



Testing surveys

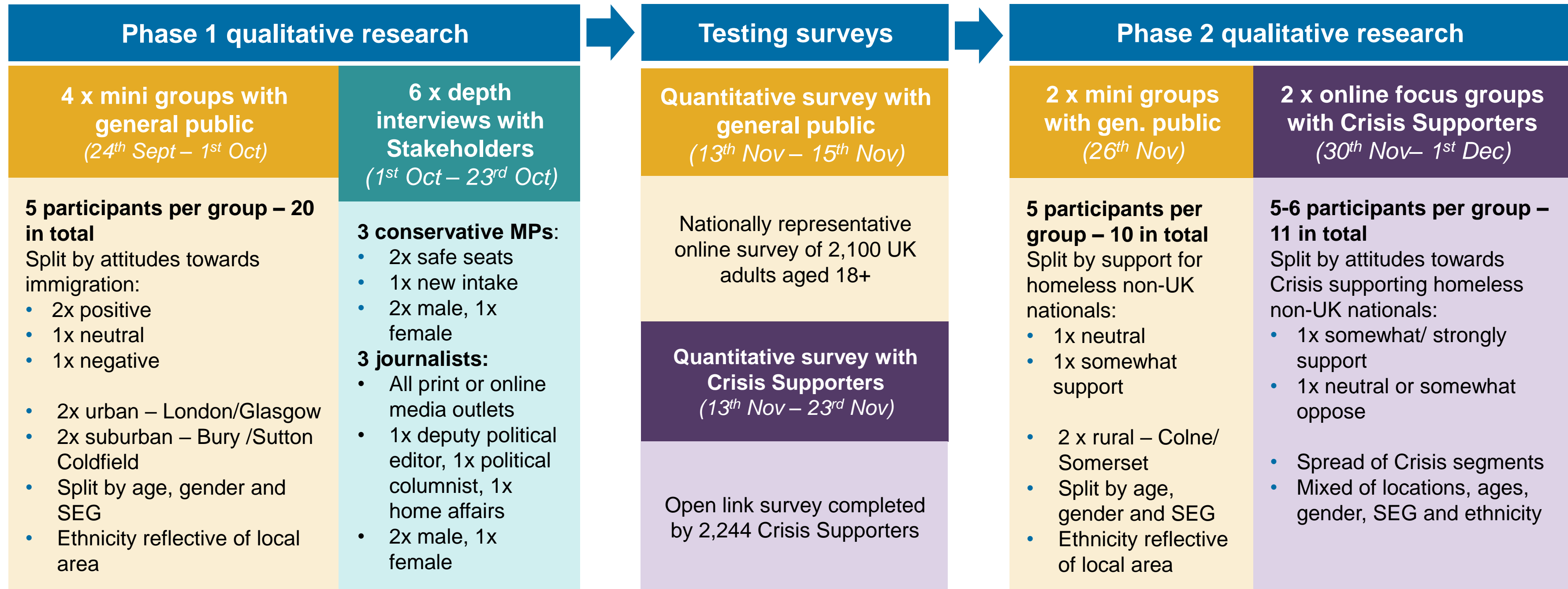
10-question nationally representative online survey with the general public and a 15-question open link survey shared with Crisis Supporters to quantify the findings from the qualitative stage and understand incidence of different attitudes



Phase 2 qualitative research

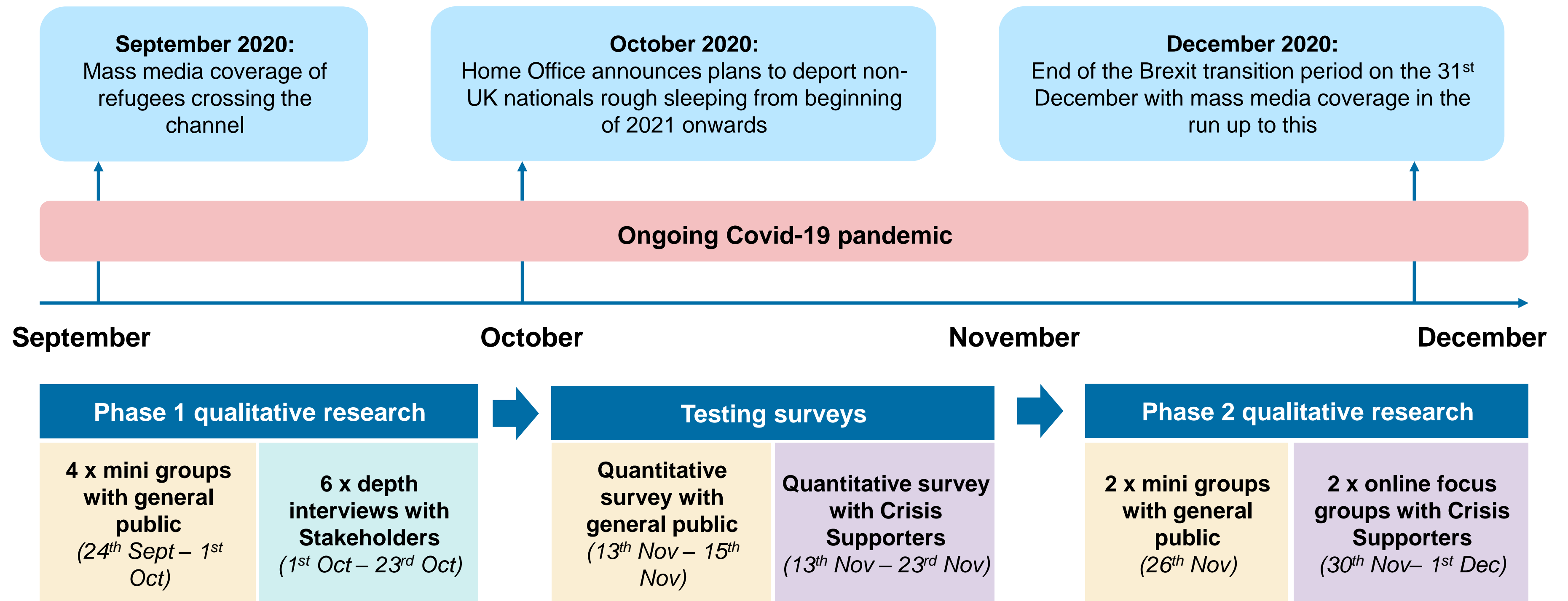
2 x focus groups with the general public and 2 x focus groups with Crisis Supporters to explore whether attitudes towards the issue have shifted over time, and to re-test and refine messages

Methodology

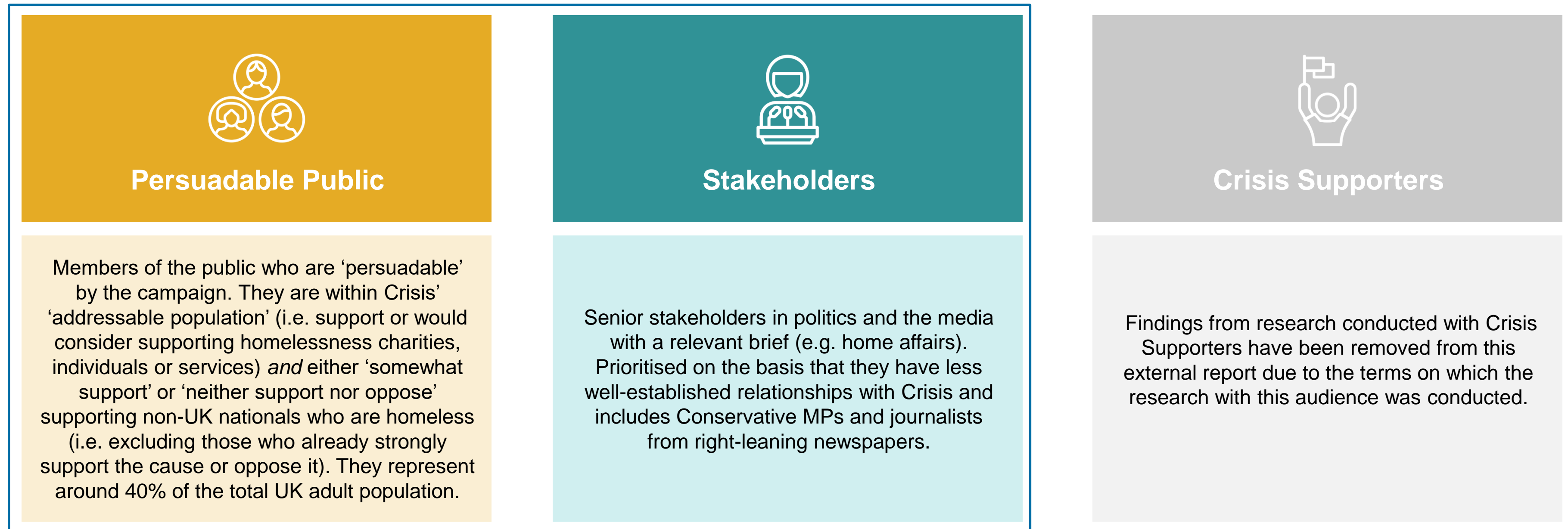


Qualitative fieldwork was staggered over two phases in order to explore any changes in public attitudes as a result of media coverage (e.g. related to Brexit or Covid-19). See next slide for key contextual events.

Contextual timeline



This report will focus on two out of the three main audiences for the non-UK nationals homelessness campaign



Occasional reference is made to the wider **General Public** audience where relevant.

More detailed profiles of each of these key audiences can be found in the appendix.

02 Key findings

Key findings

1

While homelessness is a salient, emotive and high priority issue, the specific issue of homelessness among non-UK nationals is not front-of-mind for any of the key audiences – and there is very limited understanding of any unique, structural challenges that non-UK nationals face.

2

The topic of homelessness among non-UK nationals is narrowly associated with Channel crossings and people seeking asylum. This strongly colours views toward the issue and divides opinion, with many – particularly among Persuadable Public and Stakeholder audiences – prioritising addressing illegal immigration over tackling homelessness among non-UK nationals (if not outright opposing the latter).

3

Even among those who are less concerned about illegal immigration and less inclined to prioritise tackling homelessness among UK nationals, there is some reluctance to ‘single out’ non-UK nationals or discriminate between different groups of homeless people, rather than considering the issue of homelessness as a whole.

4

There is, though, relatively widespread support for a range of specific policy initiatives which tend to feel reasonable and equitable such as improving the decision-making process in the immigration system and better access to legal advice. There is also the general assumption that any support for non-UK nationals would entail preferential treatment over UK nationals (e.g. access to council housing).

5

Messaging that uses a broader ‘universal’ frame is significantly more popular than equivalent messaging using a more explicit ‘non-UK national’ frame. Within the ‘non-UK national’ frame, the most resonant territories appear to be those that make a strong moral statement – though practical arguments about integration and economic contribution are also important for more sceptical audiences.

Key findings: audience overview

Persuadable Public

- Awareness and understanding of homelessness amongst non-UK nationals is low and there is very limited appreciation of the additional barriers that homeless non-UK nationals face.
- The issue is strongly associated with illegal immigration – it is seen as a short-term problem faced by recent arrivals.
- There is intuitive sympathy for non-UK nationals experiencing homelessness – but this is limited by concerns about encouraging illegal immigration, neglecting UK nationals and/or a desire to avoid labelling or discriminating between different groups.
- There is relatively widespread support for most potential policy interventions.

Stakeholders

- The issue is not high up on the agenda for Stakeholders – though some have engaged with it previously in a limited way.
- Knowledge and understanding of the issue and the particular challenges that homeless non-UK nationals face is mixed – though some have a deeper understanding of structural/policy barriers.
- While it is regarded as an important issue, Stakeholders do not believe it to be a priority for the public (and therefore themselves), especially when compared with illegal immigration.
- There is support for Crisis campaigning on the issue, provided it is one part of a wider campaign against homelessness and not the primary focus.

Recommendations for communicating about homelessness amongst non-UK nationals

1

Wherever possible, use a broader 'universal' frame to build support for particular policies rather than a specific migration/non-UK national frame.

2

If a specific non-UK national frame is needed, use the term 'non-UK national' rather than 'migrant'. This tested as a more neutral term than 'migrant' which has negative connotations and strong associations with illegal immigration and Channel crossings.

3

Put the specific policy asks – which are generally popular and mitigate concerns about preferential treatment for non-UK nationals – front-and-centre of any campaign.

4

Emotive moral arguments are generally the most effective for communicating on this issue, though messages about integration and economic contribution can also be persuasive for more sceptical audiences.

5

Provide clear evidence and examples of the scale of non-UK nationals facing homelessness and position any campaigning carefully as one of a number of campaign priorities, giving the impression of the 'bigger picture' of homelessness.

03 Background views

- Overall understanding of homelessness
- Overall attitudes to homelessness

03 Background views

- Overall understanding of homelessness
- Overall attitudes to homelessness

Understanding of homelessness is limited, though there is a degree of recognition that it is a highly complex issue

There is a limited understanding of different types of homelessness beyond rough sleeping

- ‘Having a roof over your head’ and being ‘on the streets’ are very prevalent phrases
- Immediate associations were always of a homeless person in a sleeping bag in a shopfront or other public spaces
- ‘Sofa surfing’ was also mentioned a small number of times

“Wherever you go there’s a homeless person sitting in a shop door. You can’t avoid it now.”
Persuadable Public

A homeless person is most commonly associated with a middle-aged, White British male

- Most have a reasonably fixed, narrow view of a ‘typical’ person experiencing homelessness
- Some – particularly those in more urban areas (e.g. London) – spoke to a more diverse group, including women and young adults

“I think of middle aged, white male, white beard, alcoholic. They are unlucky, they possibly made bad choices.”
Persuadable Public

There is *some* awareness that people can become homeless for a variety of reasons

- Many associated homelessness with substance abuse or military experiences
- But others had more nuanced understandings of the causes of homelessness, believing ‘it can happen to anyone’
- Several participants had experience of homelessness – either personally or neighbours in the community

“I’ve come to realise that anyone can become homeless. You can lose your job, or your relationship. There’s no label.”
Persuadable Public

Stakeholders tend to have a more nuanced understanding of the issue – though it is still very mixed

- Tended to have a broader understanding of the homeless population compared to the general public – and some had very in-depth knowledge
 - Some mentioned victims of domestic violence and those coming from the care system as groups who are more at risk of homelessness
 - Two cited asylum seekers as a group that are at particular risk of becoming homeless due to an inability to access support services
- Some – particularly MPs – had limited understanding that was not much more nuanced or in-depth than the wider public's

“It comes down to defining what homelessness means. Some think it means rough sleepers, but this refers only to a small minority of people. I would define it as those in unsatisfactory or transient accommodation.”

Stakeholder

“Lots of people are vulnerable to homelessness - those with mental issues, traumatic childhoods, military, manic depressives, schizophrenics, those who have experienced domestic violence, drug abuse.”

Stakeholder

03 Background views

- Overall understanding of homelessness
- Overall attitudes to homelessness

Homelessness is a prominent and top-of-mind concern – but generally a ‘second-order’ issue behind health, economy and Brexit

Health concerns related to the pandemic are very prominent

Brexit is also increasingly a prominent issue (much more so in the second phase of qualitative fieldwork in November than in September)

There is widespread concern about the **economy** (often viewed through lens of jobs, business closures and poverty) – and this has intensified since September

Homelessness is cited spontaneously as a priority – though only one of a number of concerns related to the economy and generally not cited consistently



On prompting, homelessness is a salient, important and emotive problem – and one that is felt to be worsening

Strong, instinctive anger and moral indignation

Often a very emotional response to the issue – with strong sympathy toward those experiencing homelessness and outrage that the problem has not been solved

“There’s absolutely no excuse for anyone sleeping rough. It just shouldn’t be happening in this day and age.”

Persuadable Public

There is a perception that the issue has been getting worse in recent years

Widespread sense that there are more people living in homelessness in recent years – based largely on own experiences of seeing more rough sleepers in towns and cities

“Everyone should be provided with somewhere to live. But that’s not the case. People are losing their homes more and more these days.”

Persuadable Public

The expectation is that this issue will continue to worsen

Strong expectation that the issue is getting worse – both in the short-term with less footfall in local areas meaning fewer donations (and priorities elsewhere), but also longer-term with job losses and poverty caused by Covid-19

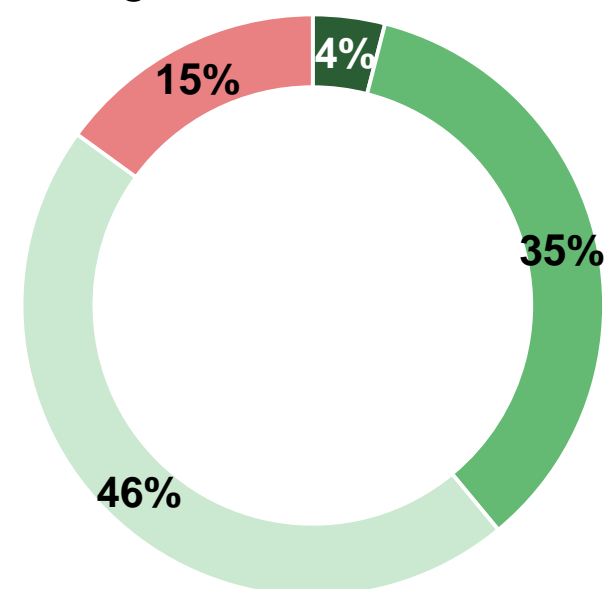
“I think they must feel very vulnerable right now. Winter is coming, where do they go? I’ve seen people sleeping in woods in the open air.”

Persuadable Public

Despite the perceived importance of homelessness, there are some reservations when it comes to providing support

Frequency of providing direct support for homeless individuals or a group of individuals

Showing % of Persuadable Public



- I regularly provide direct support...
- I sometimes provide direct support...
- I never provide direct support but would consider doing so...
- I never provide direct support and would not consider doing so...

Determining 'genuine' homeless

- Many draw a distinction between 'real' homeless people and beggars – the latter are perceived to be undeserving of support
- Sense of anger at 'organised begging' which detracts from the 'real issue'
- Perceived to be particularly prominent in London among Eastern European migrants

"There are people who pretend to be homeless who beg on the streets and go home to their place at night. It's shame because the people who really need help don't get it."

Persuadable Public

How best to support

- Some uncertainty about how best to help homeless individuals – with concern that giving money directly to a homeless person may fuel substance abuse
- Some claim only to provide food rather than cash – while others are frozen by indecision and provide neither

"Someone on the street once stopped me for money and I offered him food and fruit and he didn't want it. He wanted the money for alcohol or drugs."

Persuadable Public

While homelessness is considered an important issue, it is rarely a top priority for Stakeholders

- Homelessness is regarded as an important issue for Stakeholders, yet is not one that had regularly featured in their work over the past year:
 - Journalists had a greater focus on issues such as Covid-19 and Brexit, which in 2020 had consumed much of their work
 - MPs were focused firmly on the priorities of their constituents, including the local response to Covid-19 and illegal immigration
- Two stakeholders had focused on the issue of homelessness recently: one as part of a select committee study and the other as part of an investigation into the impact of universal credit

"It's not one of my top priorities to write about, but perhaps it's because we're in the middle of a pandemic and there's also Brexit coming up."

Stakeholder

"I've done a series before on homelessness, to do with UC and its efficacy, but nothing specifically about migrant homelessness."

Stakeholder

04 Attitudes to the issue of homelessness amongst non-UK nationals

- Spontaneous awareness and understanding of the issue
- Prompted attitudes to the issue
- Responses to policy solutions

04 Attitudes to the issue of homelessness amongst non-UK nationals

- Spontaneous awareness and understanding of the issue
- Prompted attitudes to the issue
- Responses to policy solutions

Awareness of the specific issue of homelessness amongst non-UK nationals is very low among the public and is not front-of-mind

<p>Non-UK nationals are rarely mentioned when thinking about a ‘typical homeless person’</p>	<p>Estimates of the incidence of homelessness amongst the the non-UK national population are wide-ranging</p>	<p>Few recall seeing non-UK nationals rough sleeping – though some regional variation</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typical association is of White British male • Occasional reference to others, typically people from Eastern Europe – these can be associated with ‘organised begging’ (i.e. not ‘real’ homelessness) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estimates ranged from anywhere between 10% to 60% - though most assume that the homeless population is mainly UK nationals • There is a perception that a higher proportion of the homeless population from overseas is in cities, particularly London 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a sense that it is difficult to distinguish between non-UK nationals and UK nationals on the streets – so it can be hard to know • Some based in London are more likely to recognise rough sleepers from abroad
<p><i>“I’ve noticed before there used to be a lot of Europeans, eastern Europeans, at the traffic lights wiping your screens.”</i> Persuadable Public</p>	<p><i>“It’s not more foreign people that you see, it’s more British people, which is sad, especially considering the benefits system that we have.”</i> Persuadable Public</p>	<p><i>“When you go to London sightseeing, I have seen foreigners with children begging for money.”</i> Persuadable Public</p>

There are a number of limits on the public's understanding of the issue – most notably a strong association with illegal immigration

Narrowly interpreted through the lens of 'illegal immigration'

- 'Migration' spontaneously associated with recent arrivals – particularly illegal immigrants and asylum seekers coming from Africa or the Middle East
- This negative association is exacerbated (but not caused) by use of the term 'migrant'

"You've got all the illegal immigrants coming in, from what I've seen of the footage on the BBC, 90% are African youths."

Persuadable Public

Little sense of the possible routes to homelessness for non-UK nationals

- There is an assumption that 'homelessness amongst non-UK nationals' is a related, short-term issue for recent arrivals
- There is a sense that this isn't an issue that affects those who have lived in the UK (and been housed) for a while

"I can imagine EU people being homeless when they first get here as they come without much money, but then they are able to find work."

Persuadable Public

Very limited appreciation of the additional barriers that non-UK nationals face

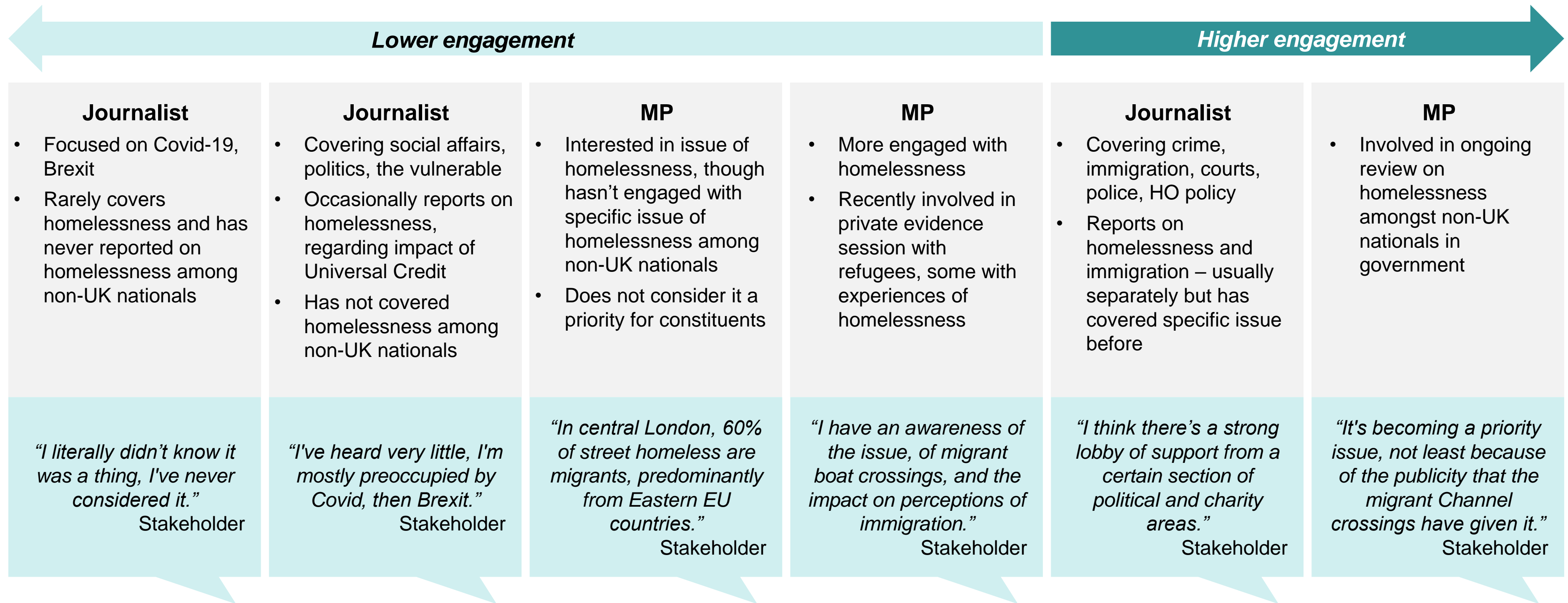
- 44% of the Persuadable Public believe non-UK nationals face additional challenges to avoid homelessness compared to UK nationals
- And even those perceived challenges tend to be limited to language barriers, no knowledge of 'the system' and lack of support network – not systemic or structural barriers

"Maybe they are slightly more vulnerable as they don't know how the systems work, or places like charities to go and get hot food."

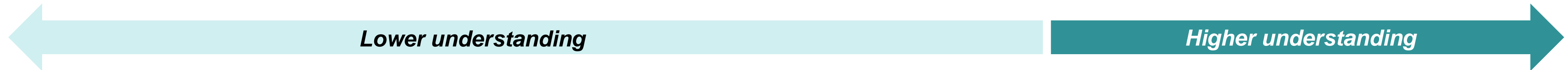
Persuadable Public

4. Attitudes to the issue of homelessness amongst non-UK nationals: Spontaneous awareness and understanding of the issue

For most, the issue of homelessness amongst non-UK nationals is not top of their agenda, though some have touched on it previously



Stakeholders' knowledge and understanding of the issue and the challenges that homeless non-UK nationals face is mixed



- Most claim limited knowledge and state that homelessness amongst non-UK nationals is not something they have covered extensively in their work
- Do not have a strong sense of routes to homelessness for non-UK nationals
- Tend to have a very general understanding of the additional barriers that non-UK nationals who are homeless may face, citing similar barriers to the public (i.e. language, support networks and knowledge of system)
 - An additional barrier mentioned by stakeholders was discrimination / stigma among the public
 - Immigration system, structural barriers and government policies were rarely mentioned

- Higher levels of awareness around additional barriers faced by non-UK nationals who are homeless, with a focus on immigration system and government policies:
 - Employment restrictions (i.e. asylum seekers being unable to work while their application is considered)
 - NRPF
 - Immigration system being slow and cumbersome

"[Non-UK nationals face] more racism and less empathy. There's more concern and nervousness about them being different or seen as 'others', and there is a lack of ability to understand the system, and to be able to work."

Stakeholder

"I would imagine there's loads of stigma, finding it hard to get jobs, finding it hard to access help, language and communications barriers."

Stakeholder

"If you're from a society different from ours, it's about knowing how structures work. Without identification, it can be hard to access support."

Stakeholder

04 Attitudes to the issue of homelessness amongst non-UK nationals

- Spontaneous awareness and understanding of the issue
- Prompted attitudes to the issue
- Responses to policy solutions

Support for the cause is mixed among the Persuadable Public and Stakeholders

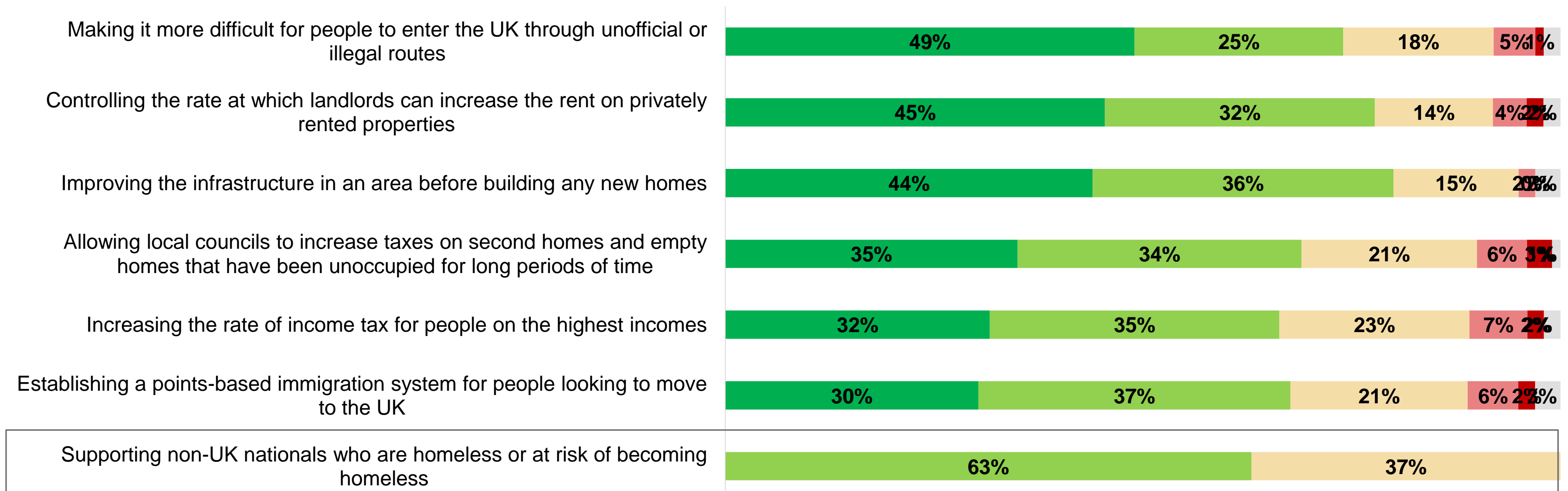
Attitudes to the cause of 'supporting non-UK nationals who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless'*		
All Public	Persuadable Public	Stakeholders
<p>51% support (strongly/somewhat) 23% neither support nor oppose 21% oppose (strongly/somewhat)</p>	<p>63% somewhat support 37% neither support nor oppose</p>	<p>Generally believe the issue to be important and worthy – though feel it is not a priority for readers/constituents and voice concerns that it is potentially divisive. Some MPs express similar concerns to the public in terms of 'fixing' illegal immigration being a higher priority</p>
	<p>Intuitively sympathetic – although have concerns about encouraging illegal immigration and possibility of UK nationals experiencing homelessness being neglected</p>	
	<p><i>"Give support but not luxury accommodation because otherwise everyone will want to come to the UK."</i> Persuadable Public</p>	<p><i>"It's important to try and flag it up without making it contentious or using it in a political way."</i> Stakeholder</p>

4. Attitudes to the issue of homelessness amongst non-UK nationals : Prompted attitudes to the issue

Compared with other policy initiatives, supporting homeless non-UK nationals is relatively unpopular among the Persuadable Public

Levels of support for the following initiatives
Showing net: support

■ Strongly support
 ■ Somewhat support
 ■ Neither support nor oppose
 ■ Somewhat oppose
 ■ Strongly oppose
 ■ Don't know



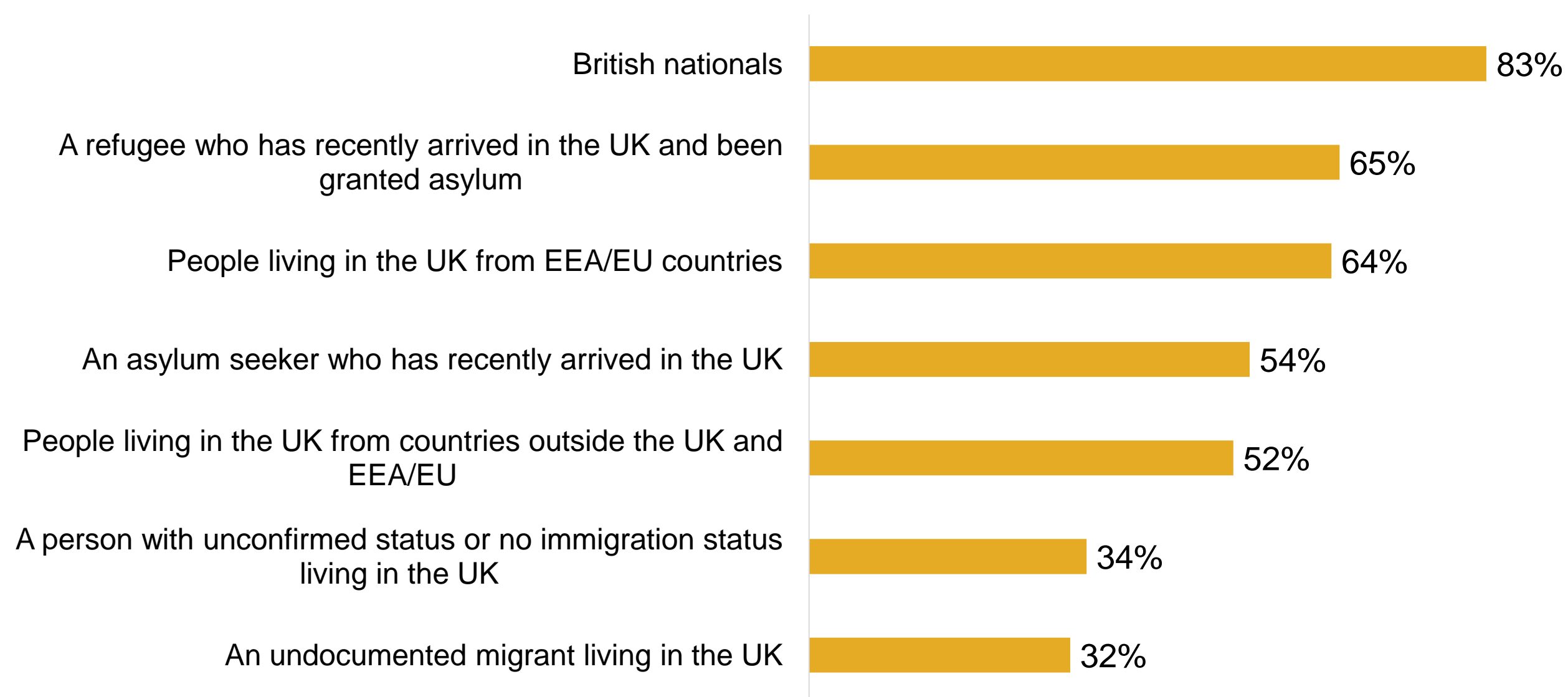
Despite underlying support for ending all homelessness, there are reservations about supporting non-UK nationals specifically

Distraction from clamping down on illegal immigration	Could encourage further illegal immigration	UK nationals should be prioritised	Could 'other' non-UK nationals and encourage discrimination
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More say that clamping down on illegal immigration is a priority than say supporting homeless non-UK nationals is a priority • Sense that issue of non-UK national homelessness could be solved simply by clamping down on illegal immigration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense that creating a 'favourable' system that supports people who are in the UK without a valid immigration status sends the message to other potential non-UK nationals that entering the UK illegally is acceptable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern that supporting non-UK nationals may increase pressure on already limited government resources for homelessness (particularly due to cuts and Covid-19), meaning less support for UK nationals • Some believe that 'charity begins at home' and UK nationals should be prioritised 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More pro-immigration groups were reluctant to label or discriminate between groups and felt emphasis should be on equality • Concern among some that immigration is a contentious topic and focusing on non-UK nationals would undermine support
<p><i>"For anyone in those categories, if they come over, we should be able to know who they are."</i> Persuadable Public</p>	<p><i>"Everyone always wants to come to the UK. I'm all for helping, I really am, but they have to be for the right reasons."</i> Persuadable Public</p>	<p><i>"We don't have the housing for our own people, let alone the immigrants. We should look after our own first."</i> Persuadable Public</p>	<p><i>"Everyone deserves a chance. If you're coming over, you need to be given that chance."</i> Persuadable Public</p>

These concerns play out differently for different groups: some, more anti-immigration individuals are likely to believe that UK nationals should be prioritised – whereas more pro-immigration individuals would disagree but believe that focusing on non-UK nationals is problematic due to undermining a universal message.

Support is highest for UK nationals and ‘legal’ migrants – and is much lower for ‘illegal’ migrants and economic migrants

Levels of support different groups experiencing homelessness in the UK
Showing net support



Strong distinction drawn between legal and illegal migrants

- Support and sympathy for migrants that were seen to be ‘acceptable’ e.g. those fleeing persecution or arriving via legal routes
- By contrast, very little support for (and sometimes outright hostility toward) those that were seen to be ‘unacceptable’ i.e. economic migrants arriving illegally

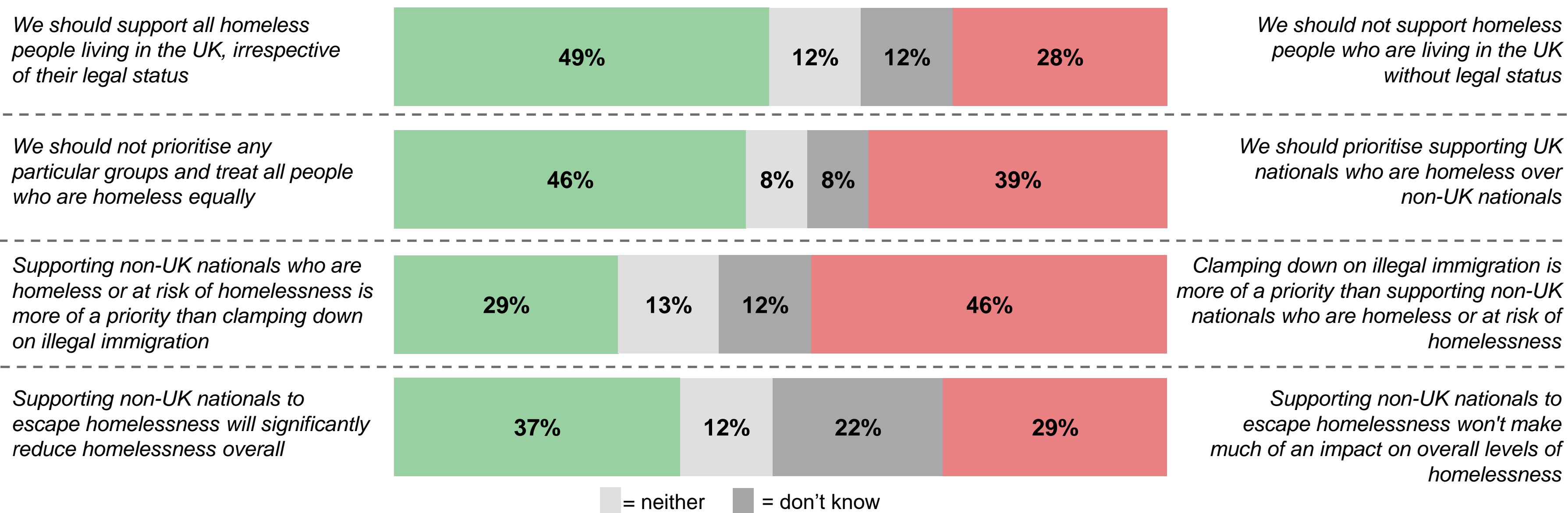
“There are international students and I assume their families can pay for them. They are accepted because they are no problem. It’s the other ones that that get the stigma – it seems to be those who are European.”

Persuadable Public

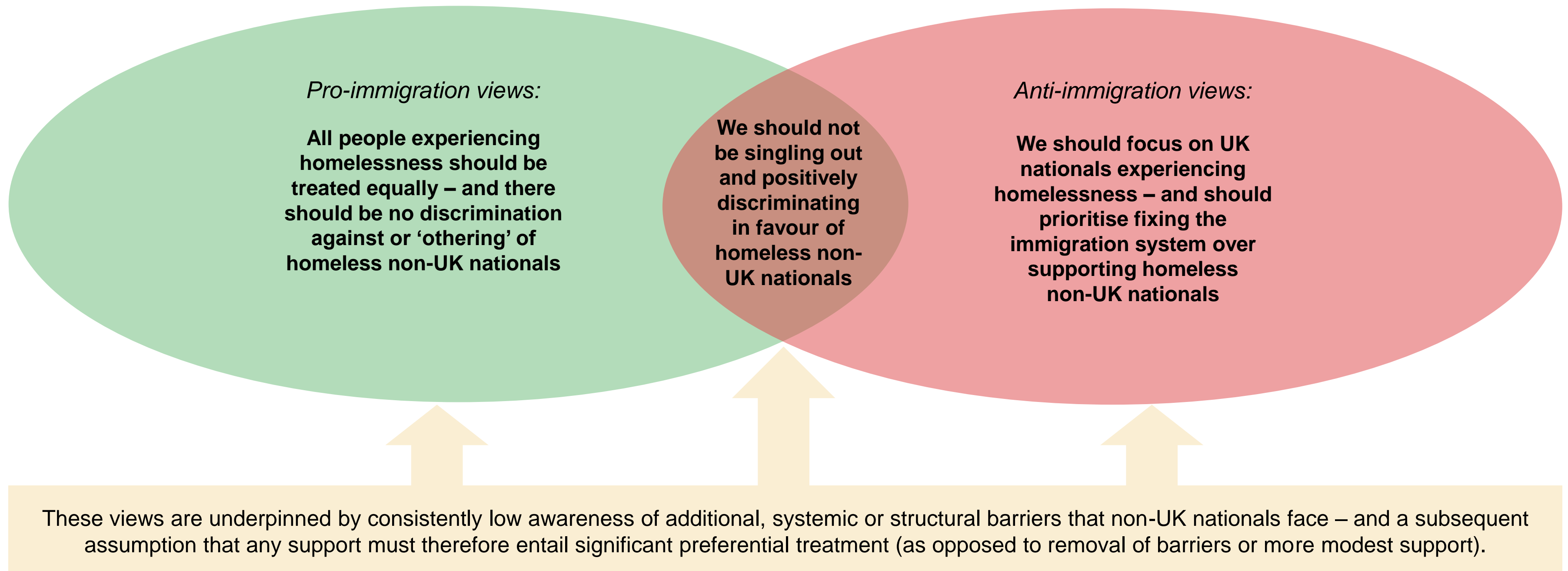
4. Attitudes to the issue of homelessness amongst non-UK nationals : Prompted attitudes to the issue

Ultimately, the Persuadable Public is very divided on the issue and there is little common ground

Showing % who say each statement comes closest to their view



Opposition to 'singling out' homeless non-UK nationals unites those who are pro-immigration with those who are anti-immigration



Stakeholders do not believe homelessness amongst non-UK nationals to be a high priority issue – largely because there is little perceived public interest

MPs

- Report that the issue of homelessness amongst non-UK nationals is rarely, if ever, raised by constituents (and even homelessness is rarely mentioned compared with Covid-19, Brexit and illegal immigration)
- Are much more preoccupied with the issue of illegal immigration and migrant Channel crossings (even in regions with low levels of immigration)

Journalists

- Note that they are currently preoccupied with Covid-19 and anticipate Brexit will follow – with little space for anything else on the agenda
- Few have covered the issue specifically in their work, though they have covered the issues of immigration and poverty separately
- Do not believe specific topic of homelessness amongst non-UK nationals to be of much interest to readership

This is underpinned by a presumption that anti-immigration sentiment and concern about illegal immigration is widespread among the public

“I haven’t got a single migrant channel house or accommodation in my constituency, but that hasn’t stopped my constituents writing in to complain about it.”

Stakeholder

“There’s a difference between economic migrants and someone that is here because they are a victim of violence. Our readers would be liberal towards the latter, but more xenophobic towards the former.”

Stakeholder

Stakeholders support Crisis campaigning on the issue – though warn against it being positioned as its main/sole campaign

The issue of homelessness amongst non-UK nationals is perceived to be worsening

There is a strong sense among Stakeholders that the issue of homelessness amongst non-UK nationals requires attention from government.

“It’s clearly a problem here, but it’s a difficult balance. I can see it putting people off even though it’s an issue that needs to be dealt with.”

Stakeholder

Crisis is perceived to be an appropriate voice to raise awareness and campaign on the issue

Crisis is a reputable homeless charity and Stakeholders are familiar with wider campaigning work.

“I’ve seen a number of the campaigns they’ve launched...I know they’ve done a lot on the landlord point.”

Stakeholder

Support for non-UK homeless people should not come at the expense of support for UK nationals

There is widespread concern for homelessness among UK nationals, particularly in the context of a recession and rising unemployment rates and poverty.

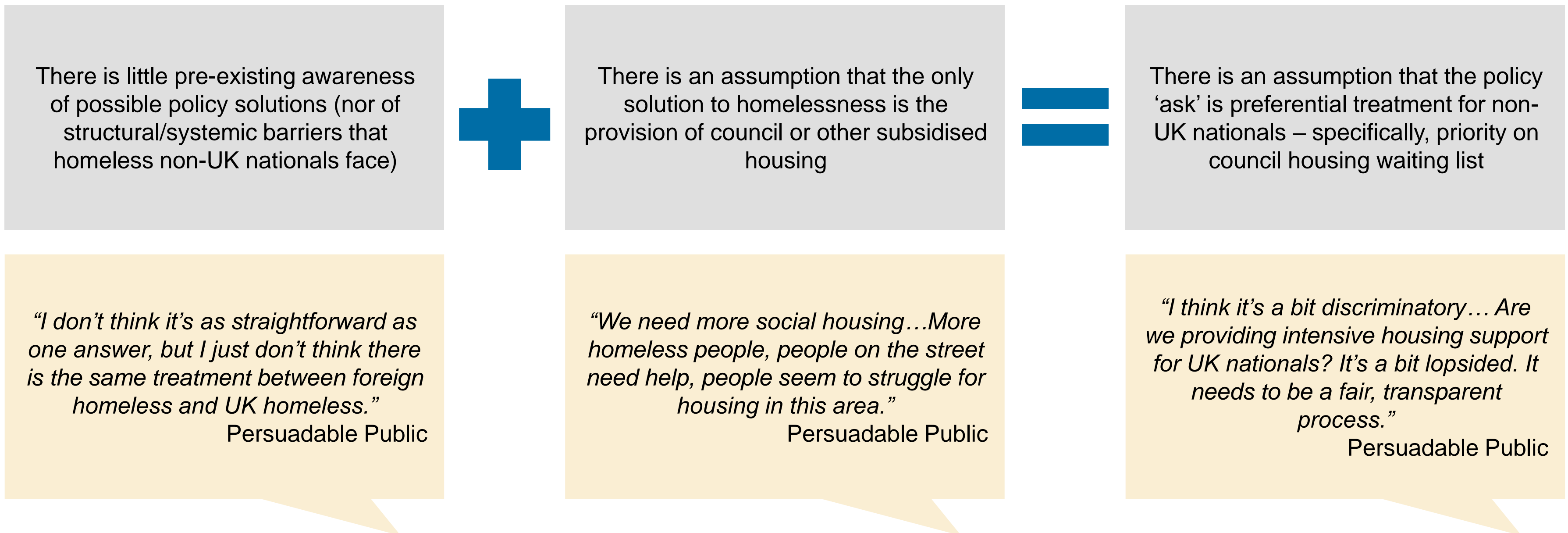
“I don’t think the charity should allow it to be seen as that being its main campaign, it is a strand but there are others too.”

Stakeholder

04 Attitudes to the issue of homelessness amongst non-UK nationals

- Spontaneous awareness and understanding of the issue
- Prompted attitudes to the issue
- Responses to policy solutions

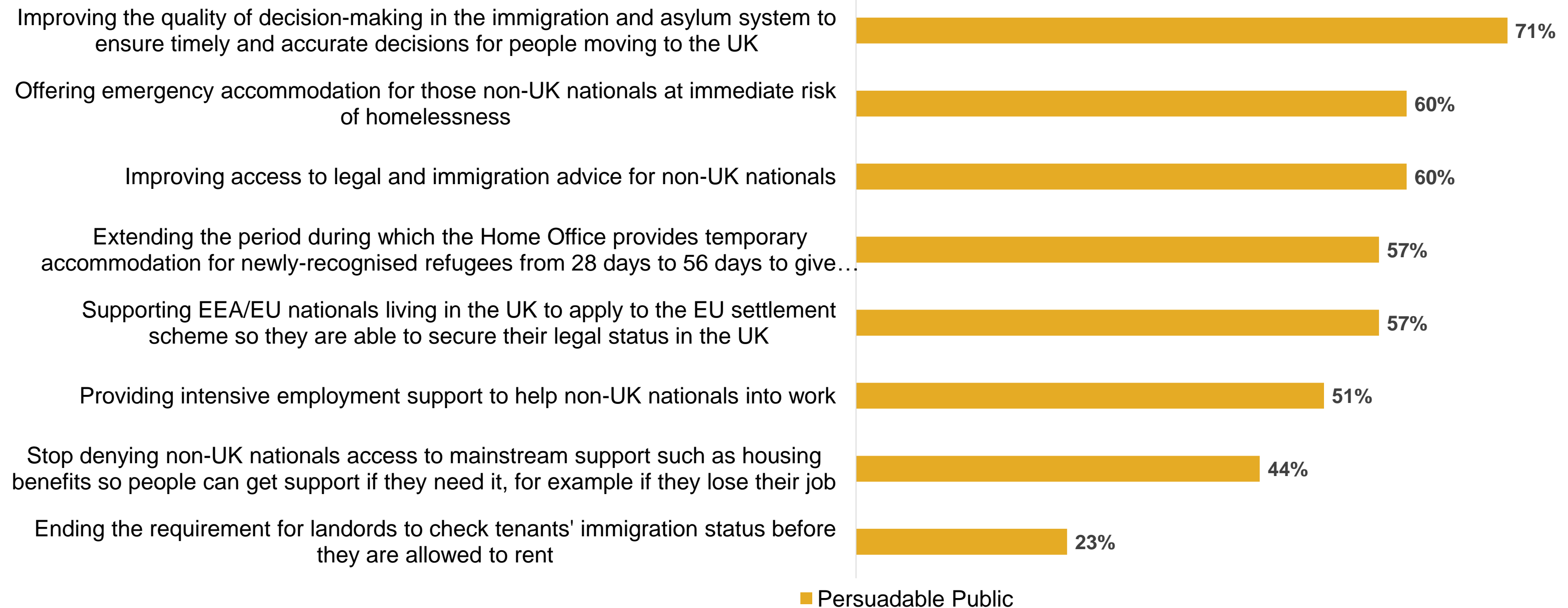
There is low (spontaneous) awareness of policy solutions – and an assumption it must entail preferential access to council housing



On prompting, however, there is relatively widespread support for most suggested policy initiatives

Levels of support different groups experiencing homelessness in the UK

Showing net support



4. Attitudes to the issue of homelessness amongst non-UK nationals : Responses to the policy solutions

On prompting, there is relatively widespread support for most suggested policy initiatives

Improving quality of decision-making in immigration & asylum system	Improving access to legal and immigration advice	Offering emergency accommodation	Support applying to EU Settlement Scheme	Extending period of HO-provided temporary accommodation	Providing intensive employment support	Enable access to mainstream support (e.g. housing benefits)	Ending right to rent policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seen as a 'no brainer' • Current system is perceived to be slow, with awareness of past errors (e.g. Windrush) • Upcoming changes to the UK immigration system leads some to feel improving 'current system' is pointless 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regarded as an important and relatively uncontentious (particularly as it chimes with views of language and knowledge barriers) • Some MPs were wary of speculative and obstructive legal interventions by 'left-leaning' lawyers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seen as important and humane (though many feel it should only be temporary) • Some concern that offering accommodation to those who have entered the UK illegally may incentivise further Channel crossings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong sense that the system needs to be improved to support those who are legally entitled to be in the UK, particularly EU nationals currently living in the UK 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 28 days regarded as insufficient time to find permanent accommodation • Some MPs sought more information/evidence on the 28-day time limit in order to decide whether it is was sufficient or not 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many support the idea of helping non-UK nationals into work, enabling them to pay taxes and contribute to the economy • Some concern about increasing rates of unemployment among UK nationals and competition for jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very low awareness of NRPF – some think non-UK nationals here legally are entitled to same benefits as UK nationals • Most support access for legal migrants, but not for illegal migrants • Sense the current government is unlikely to implement this 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most contentious policy across all audiences • Felt to potentially endanger the livelihoods and safety of UK landlords – and also distracted back to the issue of illegal immigration



4. Attitudes to the issue of homelessness amongst non-UK nationals : Responses to the policy solutions

The policies generally feel modest, achievable and equitable – though some have reservations about how likely or realistic they are

Reasonable and fair

- Policies that were tested often haven't been considered before
- Individual policies tend to feel modest and equitable – especially compared with expectation of preferential treatment / access to council housing (which was presumed to be only solution)

“Who is making these decisions? Probably someone that's never been homeless before. The Home Office are so far removed from it all...what they think is fair is not fair in the real world.”

Persuadable Public

Unrealistic?

- Taken as a group, there is some scepticism about how much of a priority the policies will be in current context of intense concern about Covid-19, Brexit and the economy
- Also an assumption that there will be significant cutbacks to public money in years to come which make new services/support feel unrealistic

“I don't know whether we as a country, if we're cutting foreign aid, can we look after UK nationals, and other people seeking asylum – there's a bottom to our pockets!”

Persuadable Public

Unlikely?

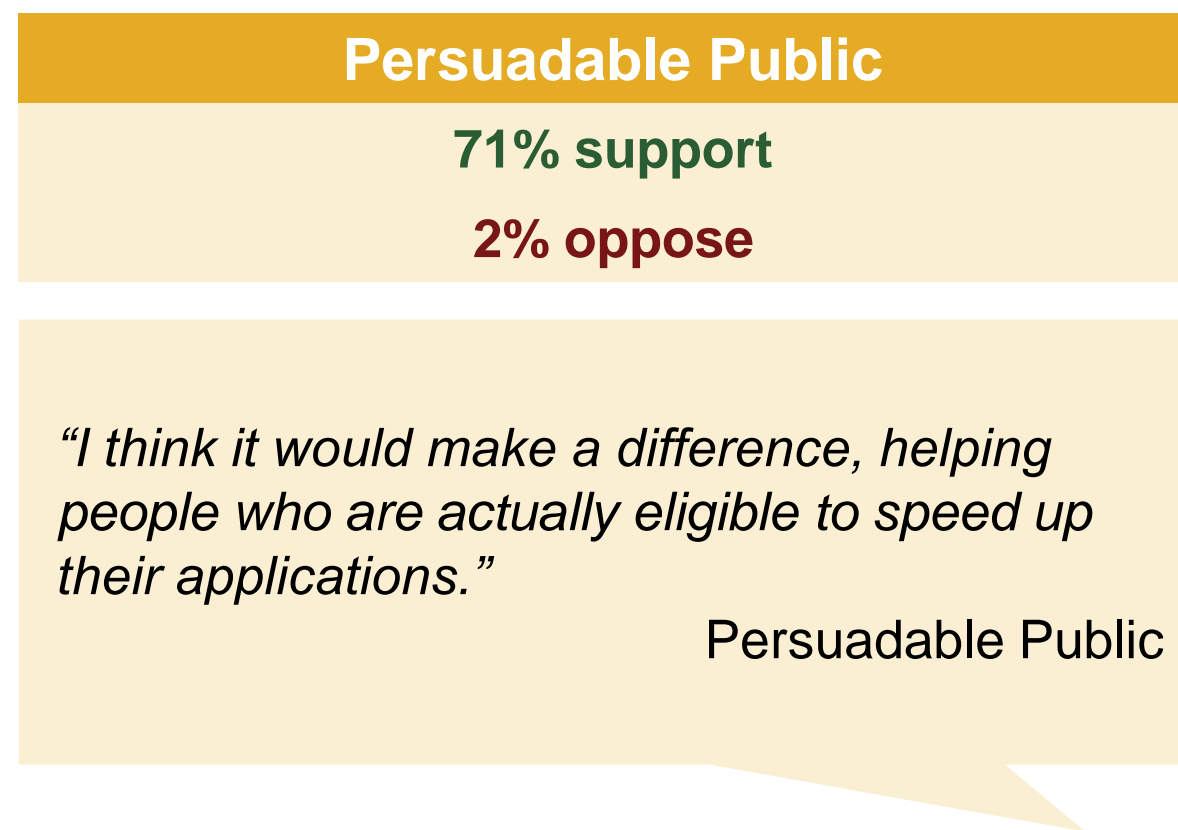
- In addition, there is a degree of scepticism that policies supporting homeless non-UK nationals are likely to be prioritised or implemented by the current government
- Some cite the 'hostile environment' and current Home Office policies in relation to this

“The whole situation needs to be sorted out, it's a mess right now, but that goes back generations. We do need to do more, but I'm not sure Priti Patel is the right person to do it.”

Stakeholder

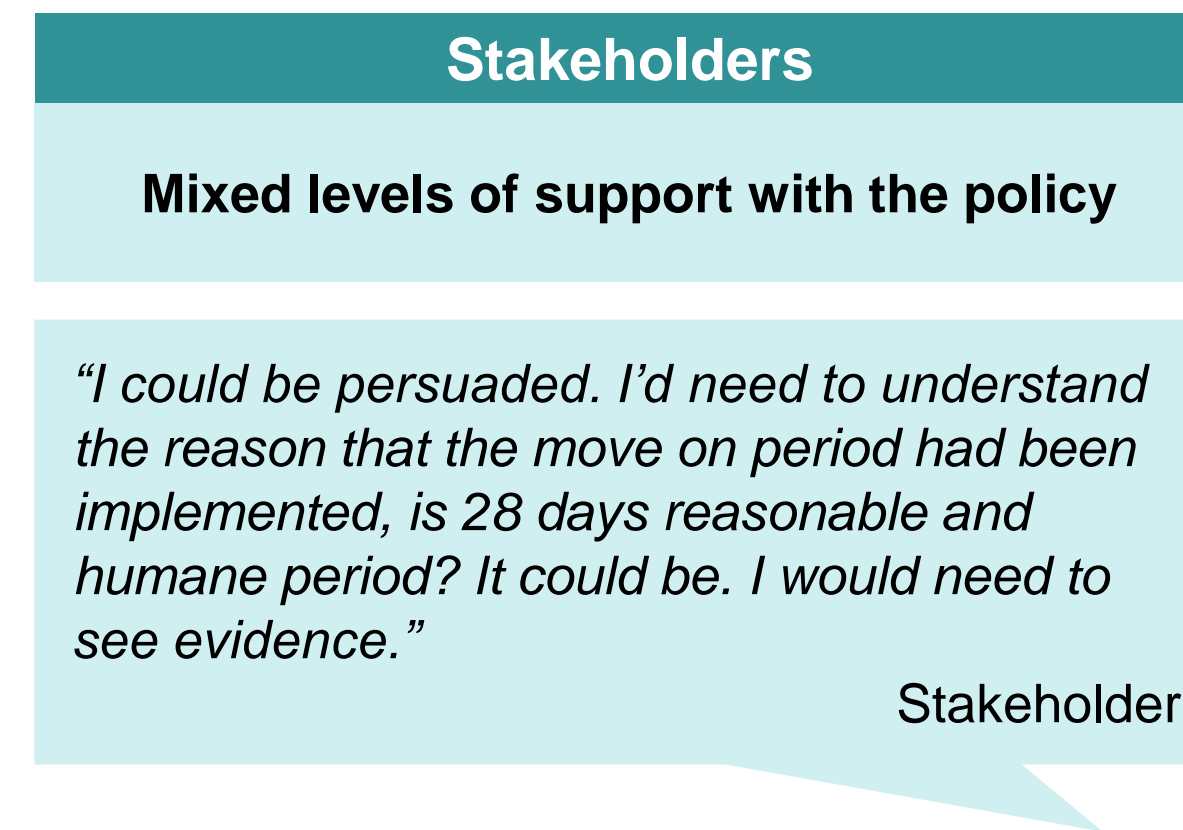
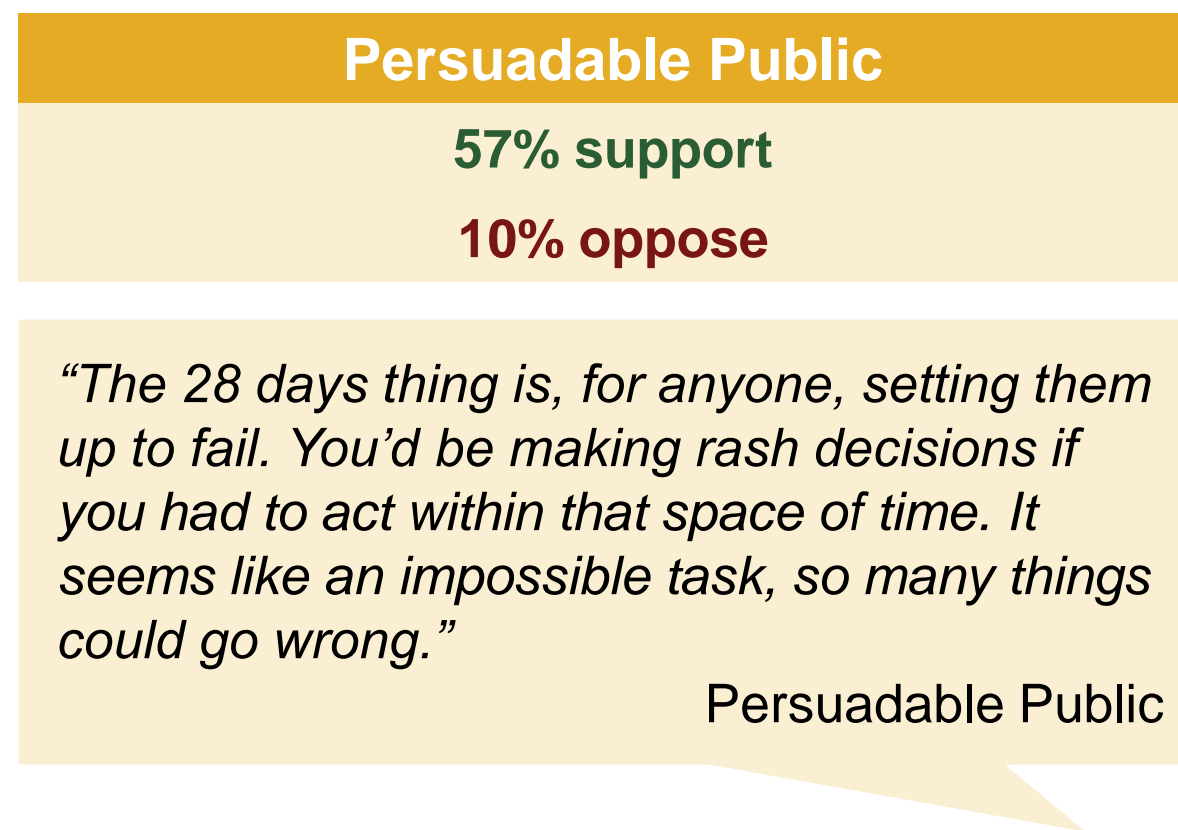
Improving the quality of decision-making in the immigration and asylum system to ensure timely and accurate decisions for people moving to the UK

- **Seen as a ‘no brainer’ by most – the current system is perceived to be slow (if not ‘broken’) and there is awareness of past errors (e.g. Windrush)**
 - **Persuadable public:** Upcoming changes to the UK immigration system leads some to feel improving ‘current system’ is pointless.
 - **Stakeholders:** Agreement that the system is slow and needed to be improved – though some cynicism about how likely or realistic this is.



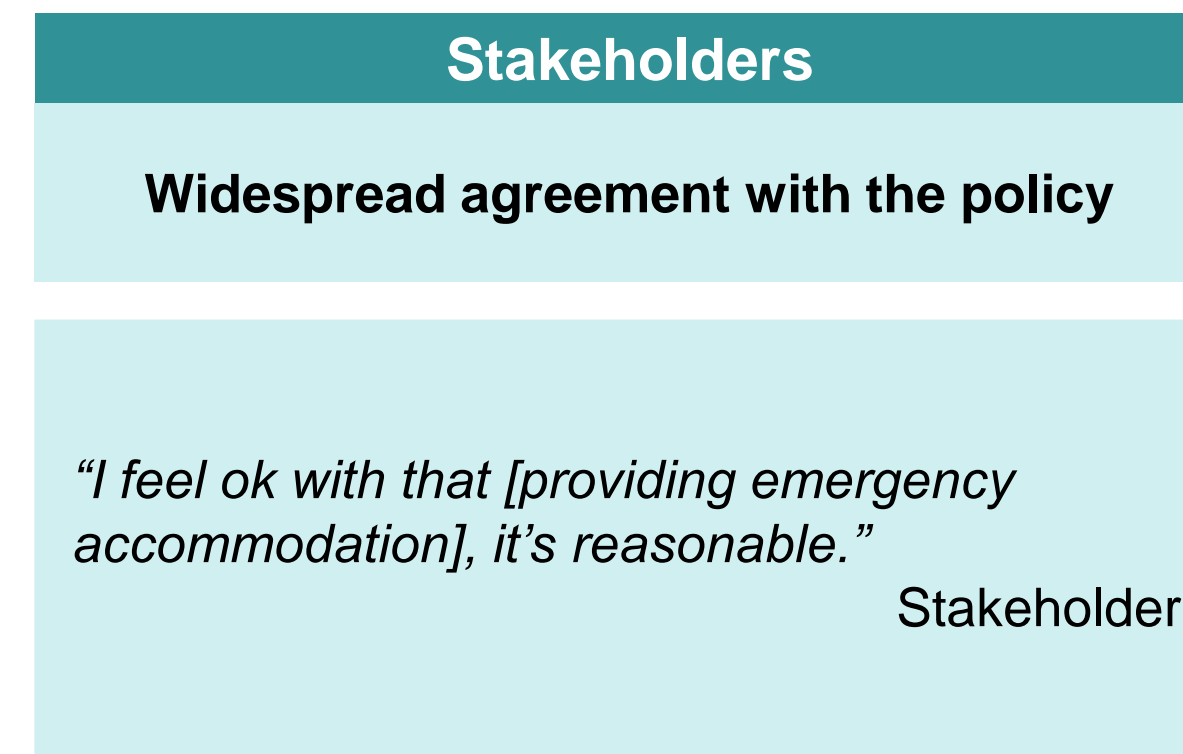
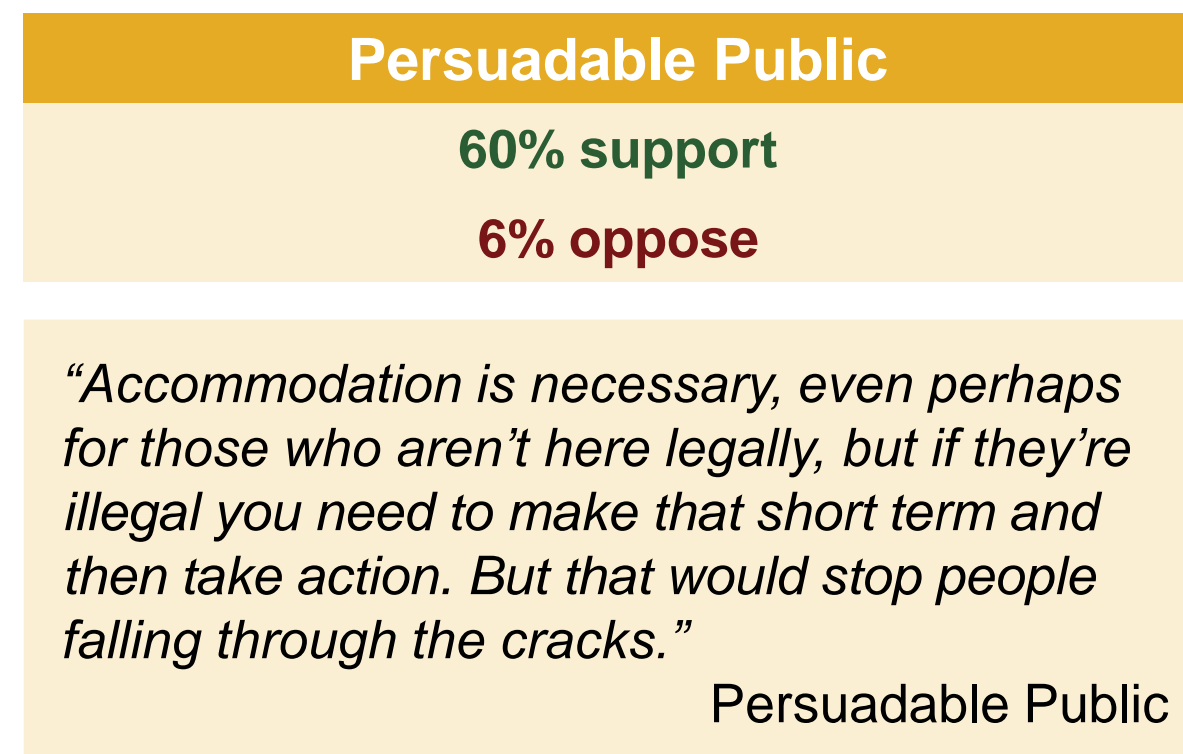
Extending the period during which the Home Office provides temporary accommodation for newly recognised refugees from 28 days to 56 days to give people more time to find somewhere else to live

- **Mixed views:** many agree that 28 days regarded as insufficient time to find permanent accommodation, though some stakeholders are less sure
 - **Persuadable public:** Most tend to feel that a 28-day limit is unfair and ‘setting people up to fail’
 - **Stakeholders:** Some MPs wanted more information and evidence on the 28-day time limit in order to decide whether it is was sufficient or not.



Offering emergency accommodation for those non-UK nationals at immediate risk of homelessness

- **Seen as important and humane (though many feel it should only be temporary).**
 - **Persuadable public:** Some concern that offering accommodation to those who have entered the UK illegally may incentivise further Channel crossings. There is also concern about the practicalities of offering emergency housing (i.e. availability), and those who are more opposed feel that UK nationals should be prioritized for emergency accommodation.
 - **Stakeholders:** Most support the policy and feel it's a reasonable ask.



Improving access to legal and immigration advice for non-UK nationals

- **Regarded as an important and relatively uncontentious, particularly as it chimes with perceived language and knowledge barriers.**
 - **Persuadable public:** Concern that those who are in the UK legally and eligible for support are prevented from accessing it due to lack of understanding and transparency around the system.
 - **Stakeholders:** Most support the policy – though some MPs were wary of speculative and obstructive legal interventions by ‘left-leaning’ lawyers.

Persuadable Public

60% support

7% oppose

“It does need improving. People take advantage of the benefit system and people who genuinely need help aren’t aware of the help they can get.”

Persuadable Public

Stakeholders

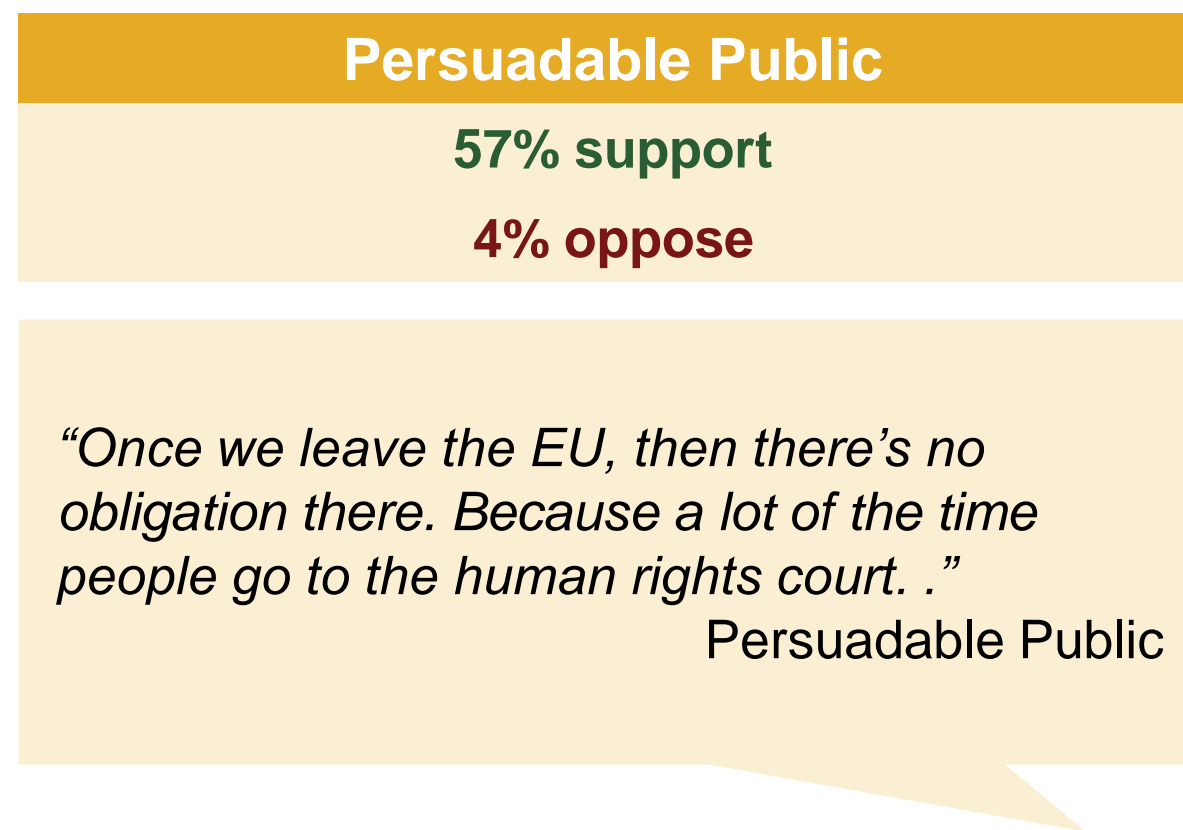
Widespread agreement with the policy

“Probably the right thing to do. I can see some people being opposed to that, due to concerns about leftie lawyers and legal loopholes - I can see that winding people up.”

Stakeholder

Supporting EEA / EU nationals living in the UK to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme so they are able to secure their legal status in the UK

- **Strong sense that the system needs to be improved to support those who are legally entitled to be in the UK, particularly EU nationals currently living in the UK.**
 - **Persuadable public:** Some feel that once we leave the EU there will be no imperative to help EU nationals settle in the UK.
 - **Stakeholders:** All stakeholders agreed with the policy and felt it to be reasonable, achievable, and in line with their expectations.



Providing intensive employment support to help non-UK nationals into work

- **Many support the idea of helping non-UK nationals into work, enabling them to pay taxes and contribute to the economy, however there are concerns**
 - **Persuadable public:** Broad support for the idea in principle – though some concern about increasing rates of unemployment among UK nationals and competition for jobs.
 - **[Stakeholders:** *This policy was not tested in the Phase 1 interviews with stakeholders.*]

Persuadable Public

51% support

9% oppose

“There’s enough people in Britain that need a job. The government are even asking people to retrain. I’d shelve that one.”

Persuadable Public

Stop denying non-UK nationals access to mainstream support such as housing benefits so people can get support if they need it, for example if they lose their job

- **Mixed support of the policy: most support access to benefits for legal migrants, but not for illegal migrants.**
 - **Persuadable public:** Whilst most are in favour of equal access to benefits, a significant minority believe that UK nationals should be prioritised. No awareness of NRPF and most assume equal access to benefits.
 - **Stakeholders:** Most believe that some distinction between UK nationals and non-UK nationals is required in terms of access to benefits – but mixed views as to where that line should be drawn. Most agree that government unlikely to implement this.

Persuadable Public

44% support
15% oppose

“I think the priority for benefits should go to UK nationals.”

Persuadable Public

Stakeholders

Mixed support with the policy

“I’m cautious – we some distinction between people who were born here and settled here, and those who haven’t. That should be reflected in welfare, but all the while making sure we meet a minimum standard of living.”

Stakeholder

Ending the requirement for landlords to check tenants' immigration status before they are allowed to rent

- **This was the most contentious policy across all three audiences – with a majority of persuadable public and stakeholders in favour of the Right to Rent policy.**
 - **Persuadable public:** Being able to check tenants' backgrounds seen to be important to the livelihoods and safety of UK landlords – and emphasis on 'legal status' also distracted back to the issue of illegal immigration.
 - **Stakeholders:** Mixed views as to whether landlords should be *required* to check immigration status. Either way, there is widespread agreement that landlords should be entitled to know tenants' status/residence rights to ensure they know who they are renting to.



05 Responses to messaging

The message development process



Using a 'migrants' v using a 'non-UK nationals' frame

5. Responses to the messaging

The term ‘migrant’ carries strong negative connotations – and other terms are strongly preferred (despite no standout ‘winner’)

People originally from another country/outside UK	People born in another country/outside the UK	Non-UK national	Migrant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considered warmer, with fewer connotations related to illegal immigration or bureaucracy • Although slightly long and clumsy – and less direct and simple 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feels less reductive than ‘migrant’ or ‘non-UK nationals’ • Some feel that this is more likely to evoke sympathy • Also considered slightly clumsy and indirect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More neutral in comparison to ‘migrant’ • Some feel the phrase is ‘official’ and bureaucratic • Those more pro-immigration believe it to be too negative, with emphasis on ‘non’ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many feel there are strong negative connotations with the term • Most also immediately associate ‘migrant’ with illegal immigrants
<p><i>“I sympathise more with people born in another country because as a baby you don’t have a choice of where you’re born.”</i> Persuable Public</p>	<p><i>“For me, being born elsewhere has a more sympathetic edge and sound to it.”</i> Persuable Public</p>	<p><i>“Non-UK national, it’s a bit...excluding. Like they’re making them out to be different from the UK.”</i> Persuable Public</p>	<p><i>“I think it might trigger a red flag for a lot of people and cause them to switch off. It’s provocative.”</i> Stakeholder</p>

More descriptive phrases of different migrant groups that avoid technical language were generally preferred

- Asylum seekers
- People seeking asylum
- People seeking safety/fleeing conflict/persecution
- Refugees

- Some confusion around what the different terms mean, particularly the difference between asylum seeker and refugees. Both carried some negative connotations though.
- Seeking safety/fleeing conflict raised concerns for the wellbeing of non-UK nationals, and was perceived to be an 'acceptable' reason to come to the UK – though some felt this to be wordy.

"I think third one is the kindest. If that's truly what they are. It's a bit of mouthful but probably most accurate and easily understood."
 Persuadable Public

- EEA citizens/nationals
- People originally from Europe
- People originally from other EU countries

- Some confusion around the acronym EEA and which countries this encompasses.
- Some felt that 'other EU countries' is technically incorrect given that the UK is no longer part of the EU.
- People originally from Europe was preferable and felt more inclusive.

xxxxx."
 Persuadable Public

- Person with unconfirmed status
- Undocumented Migrant
- Person/people with no immigration status

- All terms were considered to have negative connotations and sounded 'dodgy' – tending to be associated with illegal immigration.
- 'Some preferred 'no immigration status' as the most 'accurate' description of status and the least negative/biased.

"I think no immigration status. That's what it is, just stating a fact."
 Persuadable Public

Using a broad 'inclusive' frame v using an explicit 'migration' frame

Quantitatively, we tested 7 messages with an explicit ‘migration’ frame – and 7 parallel messages with a broader ‘universal’ frame

Broader ‘universal’ frame <i>No reference to ‘migrants’ or ‘non-UK nationals’</i>	‘Migrant homelessness’ frame* <i>Explicit reference to ‘migrants’ and ‘non-UK nationals’</i>
<p>Having a home is a basic human need and should apply to everyone, regardless of who they are.</p>	<p>Having a home is a basic human need and should apply to everyone, regardless of whether or not they were born in the UK.</p>
<p>Nobody in the UK should be homeless in this day and age.</p>	<p>Nobody in the UK should be homeless in this day and age just because of where they happen to have been born.</p>
<p>We all benefit if everyone has a safe place to live and is able to integrate and contribute to this country.</p>	<p>Without a safe place to live, non-UK nationals can't integrate and contribute to society.</p>
<p>We need to support people to avoid homelessness and protect them from exploitative employment or modern slavery.</p>	<p>We need to support non-UK nationals to avoid homelessness and protect them from exploitative employment or modern slavery.</p>
<p>We should ensure there is a level playing field so everyone has a fair chance of getting out of homelessness.</p>	<p>We should ensure a level playing field for non-UK nationals so that everyone in the UK has a fair chance of getting out of homelessness.</p>
<p>Preventing someone from becoming homeless in the first place is better than having to provide expensive emergency outreach support.</p>	<p>Preventing non-UK nationals from becoming homeless in the first place is better than having to provide expensive emergency outreach support.</p>
<p>We can only end homelessness in the UK if we end homelessness for everyone, regardless of their backgrounds.</p>	<p>We can only end homelessness in the UK if we end homelessness for everyone, including those who were not born in the UK.</p>

**Further variations of the migrant homelessness messages were tested quantitatively, however only the best performing messages (displayed here) were taken through to qualitative testing. Please see appendix for the full list of messages tested.*

The messages using the broader, ‘universal’ frame are significantly more popular than the more explicit ‘migration’ frame

Levels of agreement with each message (non-immigration vs. immigration statement)

Showing net: agree



Identifying the most effective territory within the 'non-UK national' frame

The most effective territories are those making a ‘moral’ argument – though the ‘contribution’ territory is also persuasive



The most effective territories are those making a ‘moral’ argument – though the ‘contribution’ territory is also persuasive

Most resonant	Having a home is a basic human need and should apply to everyone, regardless of whether or not they were born in the UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Message of inclusivity and universalism feels compelling and difficult to disagree with • Simple, direct and emotive language
	Nobody in the UK should be homeless in this day and age just because of where they happen to have been born	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Again, message of inclusivity and universalism feels compelling and difficult to disagree with • Reflects participants’ own language (i.e. ‘<i>in this day and age</i>’) and pre-existing views
	Without a safe place to live, non-UK nationals can't integrate and contribute to society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Argument makes intuitive sense (i.e. needing a home in order to work) • Ideas of contribution/integration address concerns more sceptical audiences have about (illegal) immigration
	We can only end homelessness in the UK if we end homelessness for everyone, including those who were not born in the UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feels logical and convincing – though not always motivating • Sense that the overall goal of ending homelessness is unrealistic
Least resonant	Preventing non-UK nationals from becoming homeless in the first place is better than having to provide expensive emergency outreach support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad agreement with the sentiment that ‘prevention is better than the cure’ and that outreach support is likely to be costly • Some question why this only applies to non-UK nationals – feels incongruous
	We need to support non-UK nationals to avoid homelessness and protect them from exploitative employment or modern slavery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modern slavery feels particularly relevant to non-UK nationals and resonates with own experiences and awareness of news stories • Not always considered particularly motivating or compelling as primary argument
	We should ensure a level playing field for non-UK nationals so that everyone in the UK has a fair chance of getting out of homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ideal of ‘fairness’ resonates and addresses concerns about preferential treatment • Some believe that UK nationals (or legal migrants) should be prioritised in the context of limited resources

Having a home is a basic human need and should apply to everyone, regardless of whether or not they were born in the UK

- Message of inclusivity and universalism feels compelling and difficult to disagree with.
- Language considered simple, direct and emotive.
- Some concerns that adopting a ‘moral’ position could encourage further immigration.
- Those who are warmer to the issue feel that having a home is the minimum someone needs to thrive and that we also need to offer employment, education and healthcare to support someone to settle in the UK.

Persuadable Public
76% agree with statement
6% disagree with statement
23% selecting as most important statement

“I like it but I do worry that if everyone came to England, we would sink.... It’s a kind statement but what if the rest of the world find out about this and they all come to the UK ”

Persuadable Public

Stakeholders
Widespread agreement

“I agree but I think it’s too long.”

Stakeholder

Nobody in the UK should be homeless in this day and age just because of where they happen to have been born

- Widespread agreement with the message across all audiences.
- Emphasis on inclusivity and equality feels compelling and difficult to disagree with.
- Reflects participants' own language and views (e.g. *'in this day and age'*) and feels intuitive and convincing.
- Again, more anti-immigration audiences are concerned that adopting such a 'moral' position could encourage further immigration.
- Some feel that the statement *'nobody in the UK should be homeless'* is too idealistic and ignores practical realities.

Persuadable Public

79% agree with statement

4% disagree with statement

18% selecting as most important statement

"It makes me feel like if I disagree with it then I'm a bad person! So persuasive-wise it works."

Persuadable Public

Without a safe place to live, non-UK nationals can't integrate and contribute to society

- Widespread agreement with the message across all audiences.
- Argument makes intuitive sense (i.e. needing a home in order to work) and echoes pre-existing views of homelessness.
- Benefits of contribution/integration are particularly persuasive to more sceptical/anti-immigration audiences (and stakeholders).
- Some believe that the argument is not specific/unique to non-UK nationals.

Persuadable Public

74% agree with statement

5% disagree with statement

3% selecting as most important statement

"I agree with that. When they do come here, giving them something emergency to get their foundations then they can go out and start working."

Persuadable Public

We can only end homelessness in the UK if we end homelessness for everyone, including those who were not born in the UK

- Message feels logical and convincing - but not always emotive and motivating.
- Some feel that the overall goal of ending homelessness is unrealistic
- Others find the tone more negative than other messages – the message doesn't highlight the positive and important impact that having a home has on someone's life.

Persuadable Public

71% agree with statement

7% disagree with statement

9% selecting as most important statement

"It's a stupid statement. We can't solve homelessness for anyone in the UK."

Persuadable Public

Stakeholders

Widespread agreement

"It's fine, but a bit wishy washy. It doesn't really 'speak' to that many people."

Stakeholder

Preventing non-UK nationals from becoming homeless in the first place is better than having to provide expensive emergency outreach support

- Broad agreement with the sentiment that ‘prevention is better than the cure’ and that outreach support is likely to be costly.
- Some question why this only applies to non-UK nationals which feels incongruous.
- Some feel that the language is not particularly emotive and powerful.
- Those who are more opposed feel we should focus on preventing non-UK nationals from entering the country in the first place and that doing so would help resolve the issue of homelessness amongst non-UK nationals and the need to provide expensive outreach support.

Persuadable Public

71% agree with statement

4% disagree with statement

3% selecting as most important statement

“I agree, it’s better than providing expensive outreach support.”

Persuadable Public

Stakeholders

Widespread agreement

“We should be preventing people arriving in this country illegally.”

Stakeholder

We need to support non-UK nationals to avoid homelessness and protect them from exploitative employment or modern slavery

- Modern slavery feels particularly relevant to non-UK nationals and resonates with own experiences and awareness of news stories.
- Not always considered particularly motivating or compelling as primary argument – though few disagree with it.
- Some more sceptical stakeholders feel that the issue of modern slavery could be resolved by ensuring there is quick decision making in the immigration and asylum system to ensure people are not left ‘in limbo’.

Persuadable Public

70% agree with statement

4% disagree with statement

3% selecting as most important statement

“The Morecambe bay cockle pickers. The nail bars have half a dozen girls locked upstairs, and they’re only allowed to come down to polish your nails. Those are the cases you seem to hear about.”

Persuadable Public

Stakeholders

Widespread agreement

“That comes about if you have a more effective and speedy system. While they are in limbo they risk disappearing from the system, that is the critical period.”

Stakeholder

We should ensure a level playing field for non-UK nationals so that everyone in the UK has a fair chance of getting out of homelessness

- The ideal of 'fairness' resonates and addresses concerns about preferential treatment.
- The most sceptical groups believe that UK nationals (and/or legal migrants) should be prioritised in the context of limited resources.

Persuadable Public

65% agree with statement

8% disagree with statement

3% selecting as most important statement

"We need a level playing field for all...not just non-UK nationals."

Persuadable Public

06 Recommendations

Recommendations for communicating about homelessness amongst non-UK nationals

1

Wherever possible, use a broader 'universal' frame to build support for particular policies rather than a specific migration/non-UK national frame.

2

If a specific non-UK national frame is needed, use the term 'non-UK national' rather than 'migrant'. This tested as a more neutral term than 'migrant' which has negative connotations and strong associations with illegal immigration and Channel crossings.

3

Put the specific policy asks – which are generally popular and mitigate concerns about preferential treatment for non-UK nationals – front-and-centre of any campaign.

4

Emotive moral arguments are generally the most effective for communicating on this issue, though messages about integration and economic contribution can also be persuasive for more sceptical audiences.

5

Provide clear evidence and examples of the scale of non-UK nationals facing homelessness and position any campaigning carefully as one of a number of campaign priorities, giving the impression of the 'bigger picture' of homelessness.

07 Appendix

- Understanding the audiences

General Public

The General Public represents the total UK adult population. This includes people who are outside of Crisis' addressable population, as well as people who strongly support and entirely oppose the initiative of supporting non-UK nationals who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Size	Gender		Age			Ethnicity		SEG		Crisis segments				
	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	BAME	ABC1	C2DE	Effectiveness	Makes me feel good	Personal responsibility (m)	Personal responsibility (f)	Change public policy
100% of total adult UK population (n=2,100 in our survey)	49%	51%	28%	34%	38%	91%	9%	55%	45%	8%	30%	4%	5%	11%

Attitudes to homelessness amongst non-UK nationals	Priorities	Priorities	Most resonant messages	Messages to avoid	Most popular policies
<p>% who support or oppose initiative of 'supporting non-UK nationals who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless':</p> <p>51% support 23% neither support nor oppose 21% oppose</p>	<p>51% believe clamping down on illegal immigration is more of a priority than supporting non-UK nationals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness v 29% who believe supporting non-UK nationals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness is more of a priority than clamping down on illegal immigration.</p>	<p>41% believe we should not prioritise any particular groups and treat all people who are homeless equally v 44% believe we should prioritise supporting UK nationals who are homeless over non-UK nationals.</p>	<p>Having a home is a basic human need and should apply to everyone, regardless of whether or not they were born in the UK</p> <p>Nobody in the UK should be homeless in this day and age just because of where they happen to have been born</p>	<p>No messages that over 15% of this audience disagreed with.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Improving the quality of decision-making in the immigration and asylum system Supporting EEA/ EU nationals living in the UK to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme Improving access to legal and immigration advice for non-UK nationals

Persuadable Public

The Persuadable Public is the proportion of the public who are within Crisis' 'addressable population' (i.e. support or would consider supporting homelessness charities, individuals or services) and who either 'somewhat support' or 'neither support nor oppose' supporting non-UK nationals who are homeless. This group is demographically diverse and not very different to the broader general public.

Size	Gender		Age			Ethnicity		SEG		Segmentation breakdown				
Around 40% of total adult UK population (n=837 in our survey)	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	BAME	ABC1	C2DE	Effectiveness	Makes me feel good	Personal responsibility (m)	Personal responsibility (f)	Change public policy
	44%	56%	30%	34%	36%	90%	10%	55%	45%	14%	54%	6%	6%	20%

<i>Attitudes to homelessness amongst non-UK nationals</i>	<i>Priorities</i>	<i>Priorities</i>	<i>Most resonant messages</i>	<i>Messages to avoid</i>	<i>Most popular policies</i>
<p>% who support or oppose initiative of 'supporting non-UK nationals who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless':</p> <p>63% somewhat support 37% neither support nor oppose</p>	<p>46% believe clamping down on illegal immigration is more of a priority than supporting non-UK nationals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness v 29% who believe supporting non-UK nationals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness is more of a priority than clamping down on illegal immigration.</p>	<p>46% believe we should not prioritise any particular groups and treat all people who are homeless equally v 39% believe we should prioritise supporting UK nationals who are homeless over non-UK nationals.</p>	<p>Having a home is a basic human need and should apply to everyone, regardless of whether or not they were born in the UK</p> <p>Nobody in the UK should be homeless in this day and age just because of where they happen to have been born</p>	<p><i>No messages that over 15% of this audience disagreed with.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improving the quality of decision-making in the immigration and asylum system 2. Offering emergency accommodation for those at immediate risk of homelessness 3. Improving access to legal and immigration advice for non-UK nationals

Stakeholders

Senior stakeholders in politics and the media with a relevant brief (e.g. home affairs). Prioritised on the basis that they have less well-established relationships with Crisis and includes Conservative MPs and journalists from right-leaning newspapers.

Total of n=6 stakeholders

MP (Con)	MP (Con)	MP (Con)	Journalist Deputy Political Editor	Journalist Political Columnist	Journalist Home Affairs Editor
----------	----------	----------	---------------------------------------	-----------------------------------	-----------------------------------

<i>Attitudes to homelessness amongst non-UK nationals</i>	<i>Illegal immigration v non-UK national homelessness</i>	<i>UK nationals v non-UK nationals</i>	<i>Most resonant messages</i>	<i>Messages to avoid</i>	<i>Most popular policies</i>
Generally reasonably supportive in principle – but do not believe it to be a top priority for themselves (nor for the wider public).	Mixed: some prioritise tackling illegal immigration (and believe that their readers/constituents do too), though others do not treat the two as mutually exclusive.	Tend to agree that all homeless people should be treated equally – and do not strongly believe that UK nationals in or at risk of homelessness should be prioritised.	Having a home is a basic human need and should apply to everyone, regardless of whether or not they were born in the UK Without a safe place to live, non-UK nationals can't integrate and contribute to society	<i>No messages that were strongly opposed.</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improving quality of decision-making in the immigration and asylum system 2. Improving access to legal and immigration advice for non-UK nationals 3. Supporting EEA/EU nationals to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme

Thank you

For more information:

Ben Shimshon
bshimshon@britainthinks.com

Raph Malek
rmalek@britainthinks.com

Issy Gill
igill@britainthinks.com

Alice Haywood
ahaywood@britainthinks.com

britainthinks.com