

**HOMELESS SATISFACTION  
SURVEY  
PHASE ONE  
2005**



*Clients presenting as homeless at District  
Office and Housing advice Centre*

*Research Unit May 2006*

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## **1.0 Introduction**

The Research Unit was commissioned by Client Services in September 2005 to undertake a survey of satisfaction with the Housing Executive's homelessness service. It was decided, because of the complexity and sensitivity of the subject, to separate the research into four distinct phases examining the different stages at which homeless people interact with the Housing Executive. It was envisaged that this approach would allow results to be compared across each of the phases. The four phases of homelessness were defined as:

1. homeless presentation
2. temporary accommodation
3. homeless applicants' providing their own temporary accommodation and
4. permanent re-housing

This report summarises the findings of Phase 1 of the homelessness survey, which is designed to provide feedback on customers opinions of the service provided.

## **2.0 Methodology**

When clients first presented as homeless at a district office or the Homeless Advice Centre, staff interviewing applicants were asked at the end of the interview to provide them with a questionnaire for self completion.

Fieldwork for the survey was conducted in November and December 2005. Applicants were encouraged to complete the form while still in the district office or HAC and seal it in a prepaid envelope for forwarding unopened to the Research Unit.

### **3.0 Response to the Survey**

During the fieldwork period beginning Monday 28<sup>th</sup> November 2005 to Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2005, the Research Unit received 261 completed questionnaires from 30 out of the 37 district offices and the Homeless Advice Centre. The district office with the largest number of completed questionnaires returned was Belfast 6, with 22 responses (8%) (Table1). The following seven Districts offices did not return any questionnaires:

- Ballymena
- Belfast 5
- Larne
- Limavady
- Magherafelt
- Newtownabbey 1
- Newtownabbey 2

It should be emphasised that District Office staff were not required to insist on homeless applicants completing the questionnaire.

## 4.0 Summary of findings

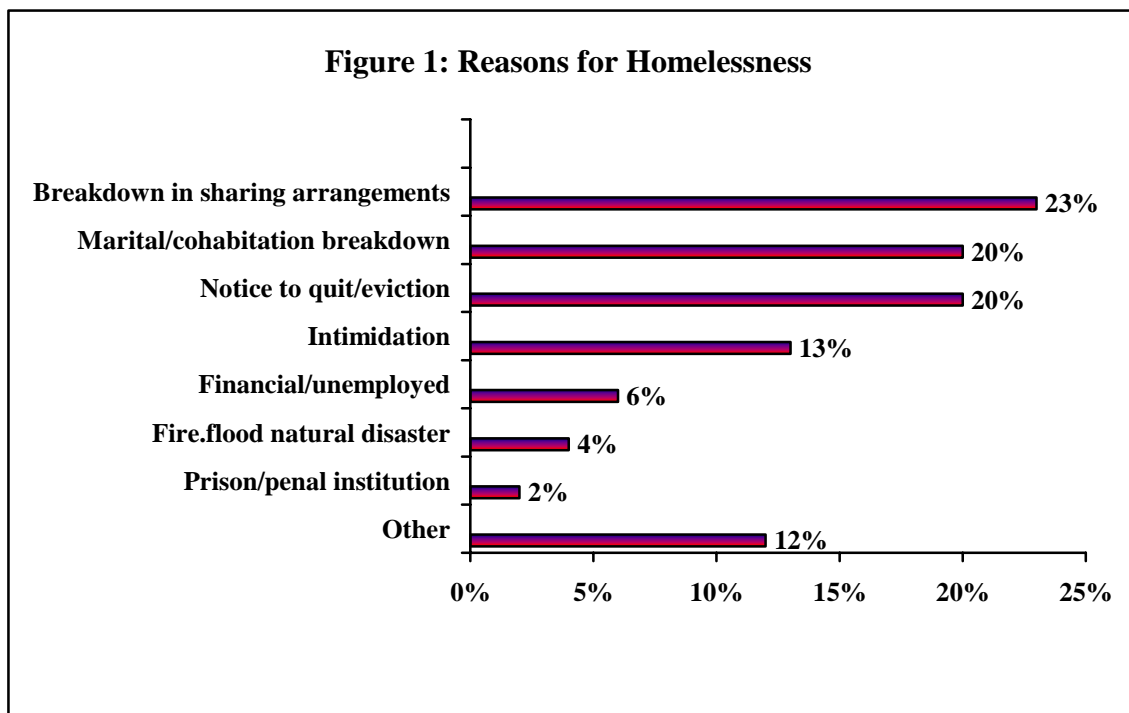
- The most common reasons for registering as homeless were: breakdown in sharing arrangements (23%), marital or co-habitation breakdown, (20%) and notice to quit or eviction (20%).
- Almost all respondents (98%) were attended to promptly by Housing Executive staff.
- Almost three-quarters of respondents (73%) were attended to by counter staff within five minutes.
- Almost all respondents (99%) said they were given adequate time to explain their circumstances.
- High proportions of respondents, found Housing Executive staff to be helpful (99%), courteous (98%) and sympathetic (96%).
- The majority of respondents (97%) stated staff had dealt with them in an interview room
- Almost all respondents (97%) stated that Housing Executive staff had explained the homeless assessment procedures to them; of these 92% were satisfied with the way in which the procedures had been explained.
- Ninety-two percent of respondents were very satisfied/satisfied with the way Housing Executive staff had treated them.
- Almost two-fifths of respondents (39%) had required temporary accommodation; of these almost three-quarters (73%) said Housing Executive staff had offered to arrange temporary accommodation for them, 27% said Housing Executive staff had not offered to arrange temporary accommodation.
- Of those offered temporary accommodation 61% had accepted the offer and 38% had declined the offer, more than half (52%) preferred to make their own arrangements.
- Almost three-quarters of respondents (71%) stated they were aware that the Housing Executive operates a homeless appeals procedure for applicants who are not awarded priority points status.

## 5.0 Results

The results from the survey follow the sequence of the questionnaire used in phase-one of the survey.

### 5.1 Registering as Homeless

5.1.1 The main reasons stated by respondents for registering as homeless were, a breakdown in sharing arrangements (23%), a breakdown of marriage or cohabitation (20%), notice to quit or were evicted from their home (20%) and homeless because of intimidation (13%). Six percent gave financial reasons, e.g. unemployment, 4% were homeless because of fire, flood or other natural disaster and 2% had been released from prison or other penal institution. The remaining respondents (12%) gave other reasons for registering as homeless, including; living in unfit property, needing support because of disablement, no accommodation, unsuitable accommodation, moved to Northern Ireland from another country and domestic violence (Figure 1; Table 2).



## **5.2 Waiting time and who dealt with respondents query**

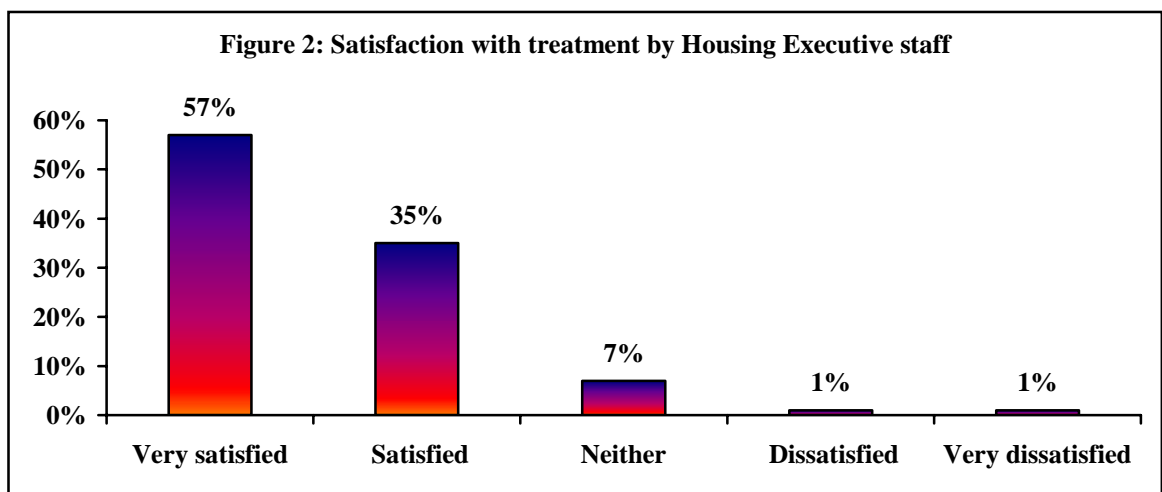
- 5.2.1 Almost all respondents (98%) stated Housing Executive staff had dealt with them promptly (Table 3).
- 5.2.2 Respondents were asked how long they had to wait in the reception area before counter staff attended to them and if they had been given adequate time to explain their circumstances. Almost three-quarters of respondents (73%) were attended to by counter staff within five minutes, 18% had waited between six and 10 minutes and the remaining respondents (9%) had waited between 15 and 40 minutes. Almost all respondents (99%) stated they had been given adequate time to explain their circumstances (Table 4 & 5).
- 5.2.3 Most respondents (85%) said that the member of staff who dealt with their query had provided identification, 12% said the person who dealt with them had not provided identification and three percent already knew the member of staff who dealt with their query (Table 6).
- 5.2.4 Almost all respondents (99%) stated that Housing Executive staff had been helpful, courteous (98%) and sympathetic (96%)(Table 7).
- 5.2.5 Respondents were asked if their query was dealt with at the counter or in an interview room and how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with confidentiality at the counter and the interview room.
- 5.2.6 **Confidentiality in the interview room:** The majority of respondents (97%) had their query dealt with in an interview room, of these (98%) were very satisfied/satisfied with the confidentiality in the interview room, seven percent were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and two percent were dissatisfied/very dissatisfied. No reasons were given for dissatisfaction.

5.2.7 **Confidentiality at the counter:** Of the three percent of respondents who had their query dealt with at the counter, 66% were very satisfied/satisfied with confidentiality at the counter area, 17% were neither satisfied/dissatisfied and 17% were very dissatisfied. Lack of privacy at the counter was given as the reason for dissatisfaction (Tables 8, 9 and 10).

### 5.3 Advice and helpfulness

5.3.1 The vast majority of respondents (97%) stated that the homeless assessment procedures had been explained to them and three percent said they had not been explained. Of the respondents who had the procedures explained to them, 92% said they were very satisfied/satisfied, 7% said they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and 1% were dissatisfied with the way the homeless assessment procedures were explained to them (Tables 11 and 12).

5.3.2 Respondents were asked how satisfied they were with the treatment they received from Housing Executive staff. The majority of respondents (92%) were very satisfied/satisfied with the way they had been treated by Housing Executive staff; 7% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and 2% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. The reason given for dissatisfaction was that staff had not been very helpful (Figure 2, Table 13).





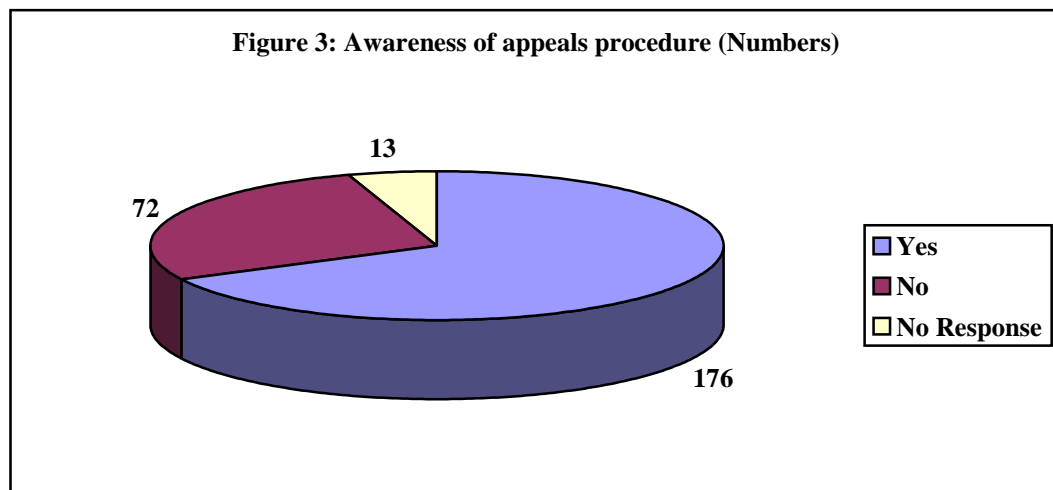
## 5.4 Temporary accommodation

5.4.1 Almost two-fifths of respondents (39%) had required temporary accommodation. Of these, almost three-quarters (73%) said the Housing Executive offered to arrange temporary accommodation for them, 61% of whom had accepted the offer (Tables 14, 15 and 16).

Of the 26 respondents (38%) who did not accept the offer of temporary accommodation 23 gave the following reasons for refusing. Twelve preferred to make their own arrangements, eight stated the accommodation offered was too far away, two said the accommodation offered was too expensive and one respondent did not know why they had refused the offer of temporary accommodation (Table 17).

## 5.5 Homeless appeals procedure

5.5.1 Almost three-quarters of respondents (71%) stated they were aware of the appeals procedures for applicants who are not awarded priority status, the remaining 29% were unaware of the procedures (Figure 3; Table 18).



## 5.6 General

5.6.1 Respondents were asked if they had any suggestions for improving the service the Housing Executive provides to homeless persons when they call at a district office or the Housing Advice Centre. A small percentage of respondents (5%) made comments or suggestions, which included the following:

- There should be drinking water/tea/coffee available
- Filling in questionnaire is a waste of time
- Satisfied with service
- More hostels for single men

(full details in Table, 19).

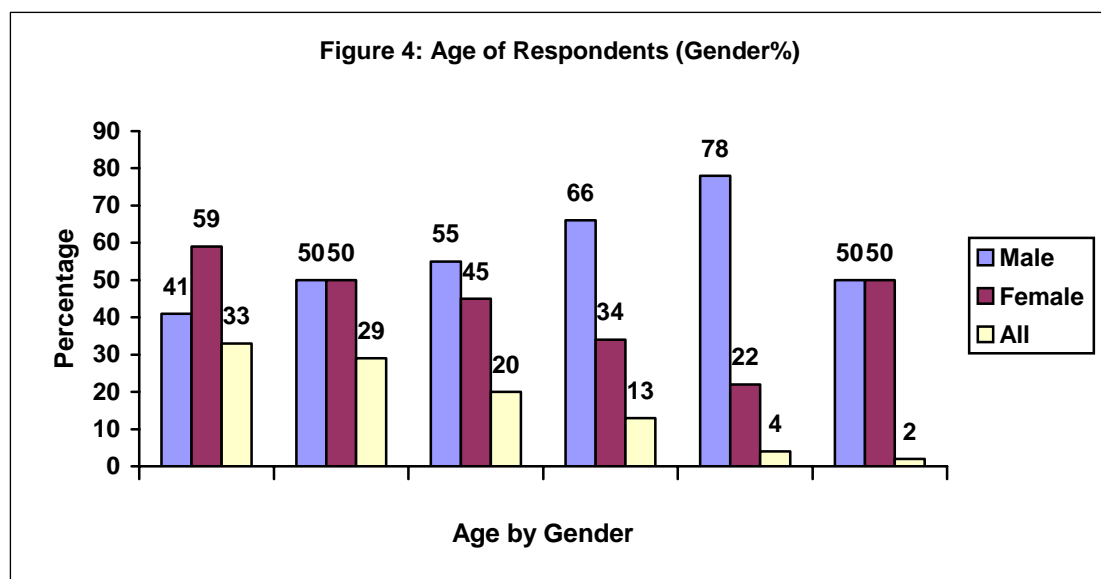
## 5.7 Profile of respondents

### Age of respondent

5.7.1 Almost one-third of respondents (32%) were aged between 16 and 24, 28% were aged between 25 and 34 and one-fifth (20%) were aged between 35 and 44. Twelve percent were aged between 45 and 54 and 3% were aged between 55 and 64, 2% were over 65. The remaining 2% did not state their age (Table 20).

### Gender of respondent

5.7.2 Forty-nine percent of respondents were male and 47% were female. Four percent did not state their gender (Figure, 4 Table 21).



### **Employment Status**

5.7.3 Almost two-thirds of respondents (61%) were not working, 20% were working full-time eight percent were working part-time, 4% were retired and equal proportions (1%) were permanently sick/disabled, a full-time mother, a student and on maternity leave. Five percent of respondents did not state their employment status (Table 23).

### **Religion**

5.7.4 Religion of respondents was as follows: Catholic (44%), Protestant (40%), other (6%), no religion (2%) and the remaining 8% did not state their religion (Table 24).

### **Ethnic Origin**

5.7.5 The majority of respondents (93%) were white and equal proportions (1% in each case) stated their ethnic origin as Irish Traveler and mixed ethnic. The remaining 5% of respondents did not state their ethnic origin (Table 25).

### **Disability**

5.7.6 Three-quarters of all respondents (75%) stated they did not have a disability which affected their day to day activities, 21% stated they had a disability and a small proportion (4%) either did not know or gave no response (Table 26).

# **APPENDIX 1**

## **Tabular Report**

*Clients Presenting as Homeless at  
District Offices and Homeless Advice Centre*

# TABULAR REPORT – HOMELESS SATISFACTION SURVEY

## PHASE 1

(Note: Due to rounding some tables may not add to 100 %. Also, in some cases where the number of responses has been less than five, the actual figures have been omitted and these are shown as <5)

### Responses from each District Office+ HAC

	Number	Percentage
Antrim	8	3
Armagh	2	1
Ballymoney	21	8
Bangor	13	5
Banbridge	2	1
Brownlow	12	5
Belfast 1	11	4
Belfast 2	7	3
Belfast 3	2	1
Belfast 4	5	2
Belfast 6	22	8
Belfast 7	13	5
Castlereagh	2	1
Carrickfergus	14	5
Cookstown	4	2
Coleraine	8	3
Downpatrick	8	3
Dungannon	13	5
Fermanagh	14	5
Lisburn 1 & 2	12	5
Lisburn 3	3	1
Londonderry 1	7	3
Londonderry 2	3	1
Londonderry 3	7	3
Newtownards	6	2
Newry	14	5
Omagh	3	1
Portadown	7	3
Strabane	3	1
HAC	14	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 261 respondents.*

**Table 2: Reasons that led to registration with the Housing Executive as homeless?**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Breakdown in sharing arrangements	59	23
Notice to quit/eviction	52	20
Marital breakdown/breakdown in co-habitation	52	20
Intimidation	33	13
Financial reasons/e.g. unemployment	16	6
Fire, flood or other natural disaster	9	4
Prison or other penal institution	6	2
Others reasons (included unfit property, disabled – need support, no accommodation, unsuitable accommodation, moved from abroad and domestic violence).	30	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 257 respondents who gave sufficient information.  
N.B. 4 respondents gave no response.*

**Table 3: In making your homeless application did Housing Executive staff attend to you promptly?**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	254	98
No	5	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 259 respondents who gave sufficient information.  
N.B. 2 respondents gave no response.*

**Table 4: Waiting time in reception area, before being attended to by counter staff.**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Seen immediately	21	8
1 to 5 minutes	168	65
6 to 10 minutes	47	18
15 to 40 minutes	22	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 258 respondents who gave sufficient information.  
N.B. 3 respondents gave no response.*

**Table 5: Were you given adequate time to explain your circumstances?**

	Number	Percentage
Yes	259	99
No	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 260 respondents who gave sufficient information.  
N.B. 1 respondent gave no response.*

**Table 6: Did the person who dealt with you provide any identification?**

	Number	Percentage
Yes	219	85
No	30	12
Already known	8	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 257 respondents who gave sufficient information.  
N.B. 4 respondents gave no response.*

**Table 7: When you registered as homeless were Housing executive staff...?**

	Yes		No		Total	
	Num	%	Num	%	Num	%
Helpful	253	99	2	1	255	100
Courteous	166	98	4	2	170	100
Sympathetic	158	96	7	4	165	100

*Base: varies according to response to this question.  
See Number column for individual bases.*

**Table 8: Was your query dealt with at the...?**

	Yes		No		Total	
	Num	%	Num	%	Num	%
Counter	7	3	254	97	261	100
Interview room	254	97	7	3	261	100

*Base: 261 respondents who gave sufficient information.*

**Table 9: How satisfied/dissatisfied are you with the confidentiality at the counter?**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Very satisfied	2	33
Satisfied	2	33
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	1	17
Very dissatisfied (no privacy at counter)	1	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 6 respondents who gave sufficient information.  
N.B. 1 respondent gave no response.*

**Table 10: How satisfied/dissatisfied are you with the confidentiality at the Interview room?**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Very satisfied	166	66
Satisfied	64	25
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	17	7
Dissatisfied	3	1
Very dissatisfied	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 252 respondents who gave sufficient information.  
N.B. 2 respondents gave no response*

**Table 11: Did Housing Executive staff explain the Homeless Assessment procedure to you?**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	252	97
No	7	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 259 respondents who gave sufficient information.  
N.B. 2 respondents gave no response.*

**Table 12: How satisfied were you with the way in which the Homeless procedures were explained to you?**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Very satisfied	134	54
Satisfied	95	38
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	17	7
Dissatisfied (not provided with any extra information)	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 247 respondents who gave sufficient information.  
N.B. 5 respondents gave no response.*



**Table 13: Overall how satisfied were you with the treatment you received from Housing Executive staff?**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Very satisfied	146	57
Satisfied	91	35
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	17	7
Dissatisfied	3	1
Very dissatisfied (not very helpful)	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 258 respondents who gave sufficient information.  
N.B. Due to rounding percentages do not add to 100.  
N.B. 3 respondents gave no response.*

**Table 14: Did you require temporary accommodation?**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	99	39
No	157	61
<b>Total</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 256 respondents who gave sufficient information.  
N.B. 5 respondents gave no response.*

**Table 15: Did Housing Executive offer to arrange temporary accommodation for you?**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	71	73
No	26	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 97 respondents who gave sufficient information.  
N.B. 2 respondents gave no response.*

**Table 16: If you were offered temporary accommodation did you accept it?**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	42	61
No	26	38
Don't know	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 69 respondents who gave sufficient information.  
N.B. 2 respondents gave no response.*

**Table 17: If you did not accept the offer of temporary accommodation was it because .....**

	Number	Percentage
You preferred to make your own arrangements	12	52
The accommodation was too far away	8	35
Other reasons were:- Temporary accommodation is too expensive	2	9
Don't know	1	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 23 respondents who gave sufficient information.  
N.B. 3 respondents gave no response.*

**Table 18: Are you aware that the housing Executive operates a homeless appeals procedure for applicants who are not awarded priority points status?**

	Number	Percentage
Yes	176	71
No	72	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 248 respondents who gave sufficient information.  
N.B. 13 respondents gave no response.*

**Table 19: Do you have any suggestions for improving the service the Housing Executive provide to Homeless persons when they call at the office?**

	Number
Drinking water/tea/coffee made available to customer	3
Satisfied with service	2
Questionnaire is a waste of time	2
More hostels for single males	1
More hostels in local areas	1
Provide list of vacant properties available	1
Reduce waiting time at reception	1
Staff could be more understanding	1
Provide better staff training	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>

*Base: 13 respondents who do gave sufficient information.*

**Table 20: Age groups of respondents**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
16 – 24 years old	83	32
25 – 34 years old	73	28
35 – 44 years old	52	20
45 – 54 years old	32	12
55 – 64 years old	9	3
65 or older	6	2
No response	6	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 261 respondents.***Table 21: Gender of respondents**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	128	49
Female	123	47
No Response	10	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 261 respondents.***Table 22: Age and Gender of Respondent**

<b>Age groups</b>	<b>Male</b>		<b>Female</b>		<b>All</b>	
	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
16-24	33	26	47	38	80	32
25-34	36	28	36	29	72	29
35-44	28	22	23	19	51	20
45-54	21	16	11	9	32	13
55-64	7	5	2	2	9	4
65+	3	2	3	2	6	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 250 respondents who gave sufficient information.**N.B. Due to rounding percentages do not add to 100.***Table 23: Employment status**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Not working	158	61
Working full-time	52	20
Working part-time	22	8
Retired (excludes looking after home)	10	4
Other	7	3
No Response	12	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 261 respondents**N.B. Due to rounding percentages do not add to 100.*

**Table 24: Religion**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Catholic	115	44
Protestant	105	40
Other	16	6
None	5	2
Refused	2	1
Don't Know	1	1
No Response	17	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 261 respondents.*

*N.B. Due to rounding percentages do not add to 100.*

**Table 25: Ethnic Origin of Respondent**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
White	242	93
Irish Traveller	3	1
Mixed ethnic	3	1
Black Caribbean	1	1
Other	1	1
No Response	11	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 261 respondents.*

*N.B. Due to rounding percentages do not add to 100.*

**Table 26 Do you have a disability which affects your day to day activities?**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	56	21
No	195	75
Don't know	1	1
No Response	9	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 261 respondents.*