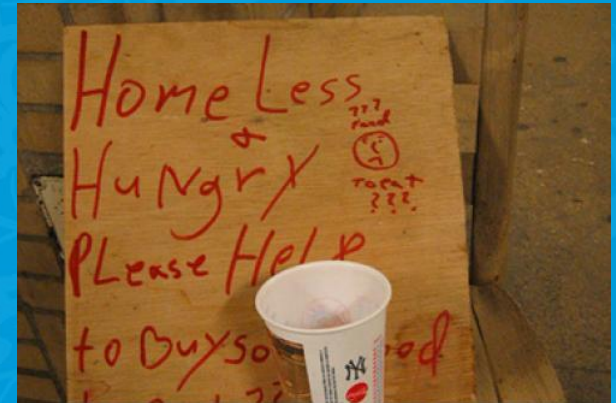


# Begging in the UK: Practices, policy responses and public perceptions



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# Outline

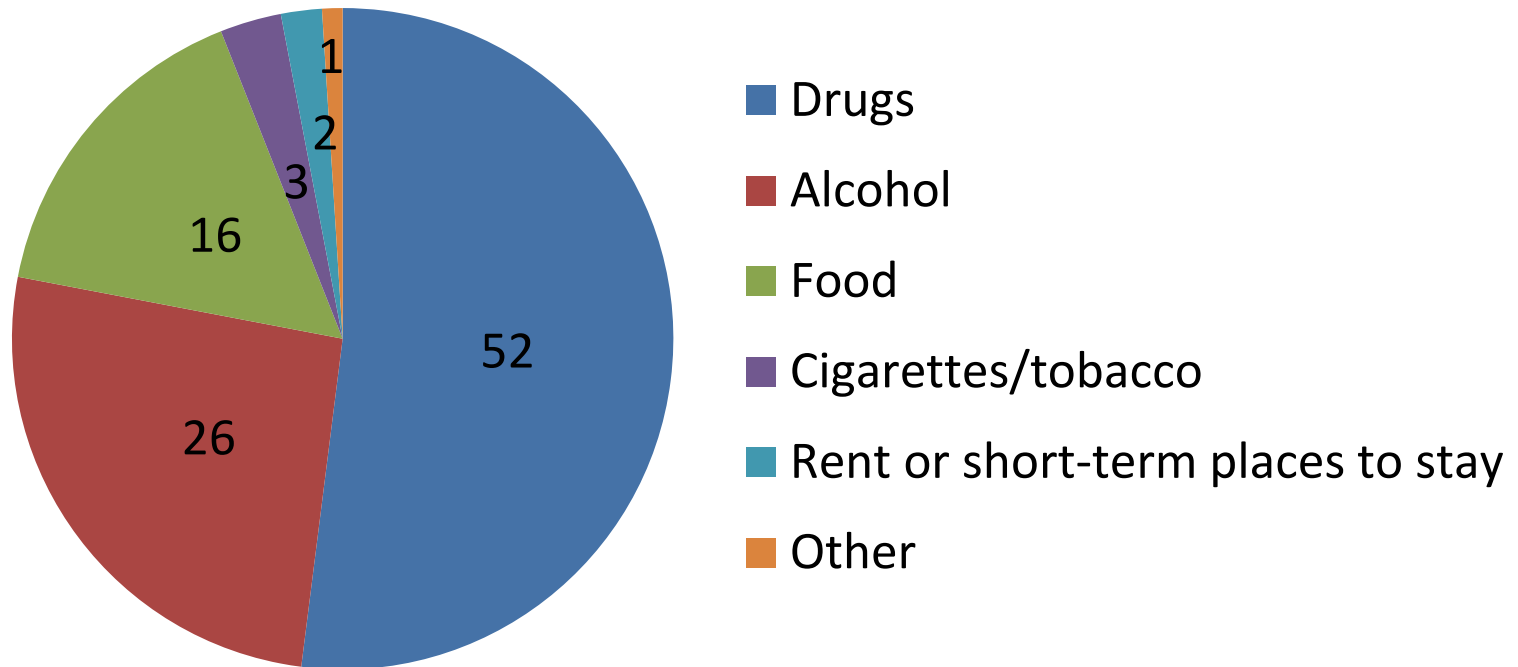
- Who begs and why?
- Begging practices
- Policy responses
- Public perceptions
- Conclusion

# Who begs?

- Existing evidence (now fairly dated) indicates that people who beg are predominantly:
  - Male
  - Middle age range (c.25-55)
  - Homeless (rough sleeping or in temporary accommodation)
  - Vulnerable; widespread experience of trauma
  - White British
- Anecdotal reports that numbers increasing and population composition potentially changing
- Need for more up-to-date research on scale of issue and profile of those involved

# Why do people beg? - 1

Most of the money earned begging is/was spent on... (%)



Source: Multiple Exclusion Homelessness study, 2010; Base: 153

## Why do people beg? - 2

- Begging widely viewed as the ‘least bad’ of a ‘bad bunch of options’ to fund addiction, i.e. less ‘damaging’ and/or ‘risky’ than alternatives (shoplifting, burglary, sex work)
- But, picture possibly becoming more complicated given recent welfare reforms and benefit sanctions?
- Again, more research needed

# How do people beg?

- Styles of begging









# Policy and police responses

- Degree of ‘persuasion’ used by support services to discourage begging varies
- Vast majority ‘moved on’ by police with no penalty
- Enforcement sometimes used:
  - *blanket* enforcement during begging ‘clampdowns’; and/or
  - *targeted* enforcement aimed at ‘problematic’ (esp. aggressive) begging



ANNO QUINTO

GEORGH II. REGIS.

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C A P. LXXXIII.

An Act for the Punishment of idle and disorderly  
Persons, and Rogues and Vagabonds, in that  
Part of *Great Britain* called *England*.

[21st June 1824.]

**W**HEREAS an Act was passed in the Third Year of the  
Reign of His present Majesty, intituled *An Act for conso-* 8 G. 4. c. 40.  
*lidating into One Act and amending the Laws relating to idle*  
*and disorderly Persons, Rogues and Vagabonds, incorrigible Rogues*  
*and other Vagrants in England:* And whereas the said Act was to  
continue in force until the First Day of September One thousand

ASBO

Your  
**Kindness**  
could kill

If you give money to beggars in Newcastle city centre, they will probably spend it on drink or drugs that could kill them.

If you want to help the homeless, support a local charity. Visit [www.safenewcastle.org.uk](http://www.safenewcastle.org.uk) for charity details.



**BEGGING:  
WATCH YOUR  
MONEY GO  
TO A FRAUD**

Beggars aren't what they seem. #givesmart

 POLICE  
 Newcastle City Council

# Public perceptions

- Fear and intimidation; perceived vs. actual anti-social behaviour
- Common tendency to conflate begging and rough sleeping
- Extent of sympathy apparently associated with (often incorrect) presumptions re housing status, i.e. perception of 'legitimacy'

# Conclusion

- To date, strong associations between:
  - Begging and substance (esp. drug) misuse
  - Begging and homelessness (broadly defined, not just rough sleeping)
- Degree of overlap between these ‘scenes’ may be changing
- Clear need for more research on:
  - Profile of individuals involved and their reasons for begging
  - Impact of policy responses on those affected and public perceptions