

"A HOME IS DIGNITY"

A COLLECTION OF VOICES AND ANALYSIS
OF WOMEN'S MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL
EXPERIENCES OF HOMELESSNESS
IN IRELAND

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Presentation Outline



- Purpose
- What is homelessness?
- Background Research
- Methodology
- Findings
- Discussion
- ACTION!
- Questions

WHAT IS HOMELESSNESS?

"Homelessness is a condition where a person or household lacks habitable space with security of tenure, rights and ability to enjoy social relations, including safety."

Homelessness is a manifestation of extreme poverty and a failure of multiple systems and human rights".

- United Nations Expert Group on 'Affordable Housing and Social Protection Systems for All to Address Homelessness '

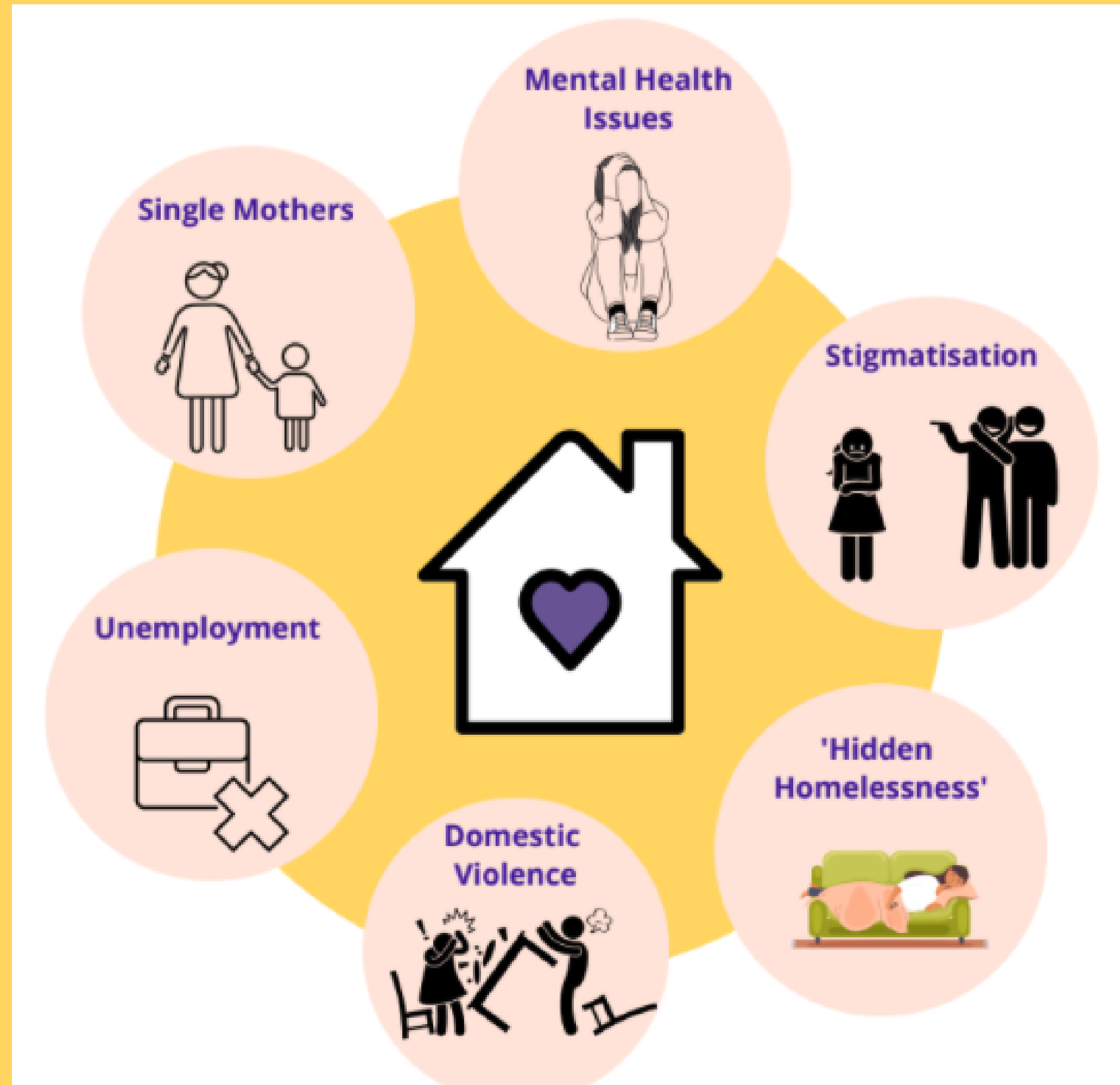
Types of homelessness:

- Rough sleeping
- Living in emergency accommodation
- 'Hidden homelessness'
- Staying in public or private homeless shelters
- Living in inadequate housing

Drivers:



GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF HOMELESSNESS



Supportive Housing Models

- A Holistic approach
- Person-Centred
- Compassionate responses
- Trauma-Informed Care
- Offering support, space and time



Breaking the cycle of homelessness



METHODOLOGY

- >> *Objective 1:* To investigate the impact of the experience of homelessness on women's wellbeing.
- >> *Objective 2:* To understand how transitioning to housing with Sophia impacted the women's wellbeing.
- >> *Objective 3:* To gather messages for the Irish Government or United Nations in regards to women's homelessness in Ireland.



THE EFFECTS OF HOMELESSNESS ON WOMEN'S WELL-BEING

***THE OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY IS TO COLLECT
THE UNHEARD VOICES OF HOMELESS WOMEN
IN IRELAND***

Your participation in the survey will be completely anonymous.

Instructions:

- Use a pen to complete the questionnaire.
- Complete ALL or as many questions as possible.
- Put your survey (and nothing else) in the enclosed Reply Paid envelope.
- Send that envelope in the mail (no stamp needed)... today if you can!



Carol D. Ryff's Six Factor Model of Well-Being

Resilience: "The capacity of some to experience and sustain their well-being, perhaps even deepen it, despite the challenges that life presents to them, be they loss events, social inequalities, unexpected traumas or living in a sometimes hostile world." ¹

¹ Ryff C, D: Psychological Well-Being Revisited: Advances in the Science and Practice of Eudaimonia. *Psychother Psychosom* 2014;83:10-28. doi: 10.1159/000353263

FINDINGS

What words would
you use to describe
homelessness?



Fearful

Helpless

Alone

Scary

Heartbreaking

Sorrow

Homelessness

Sick all the time

Weak

Useless

Terrible mother

Disaster

Isolated

Lost

Objective 1: To investigate the impact of homelessness on women's psychological well-being

THEMES

Mental Health

Motherhood

Social Support

Resilience



MENTAL HEALTH

"I felt completely out of control in every way. I could hardly concentrate in work so it affected all aspects of my life"

"I was so stressed in the hotel"

"I had no control over anything not even keeping my kids together... Nothing was working, even in the process I lost my ten-year-old son"

"A lot of people believe when you are homeless, you are worthless".

"Probably 2hours sleep on a good night. I was too overwhelmed with guilt and fear, I was separated from my kids"

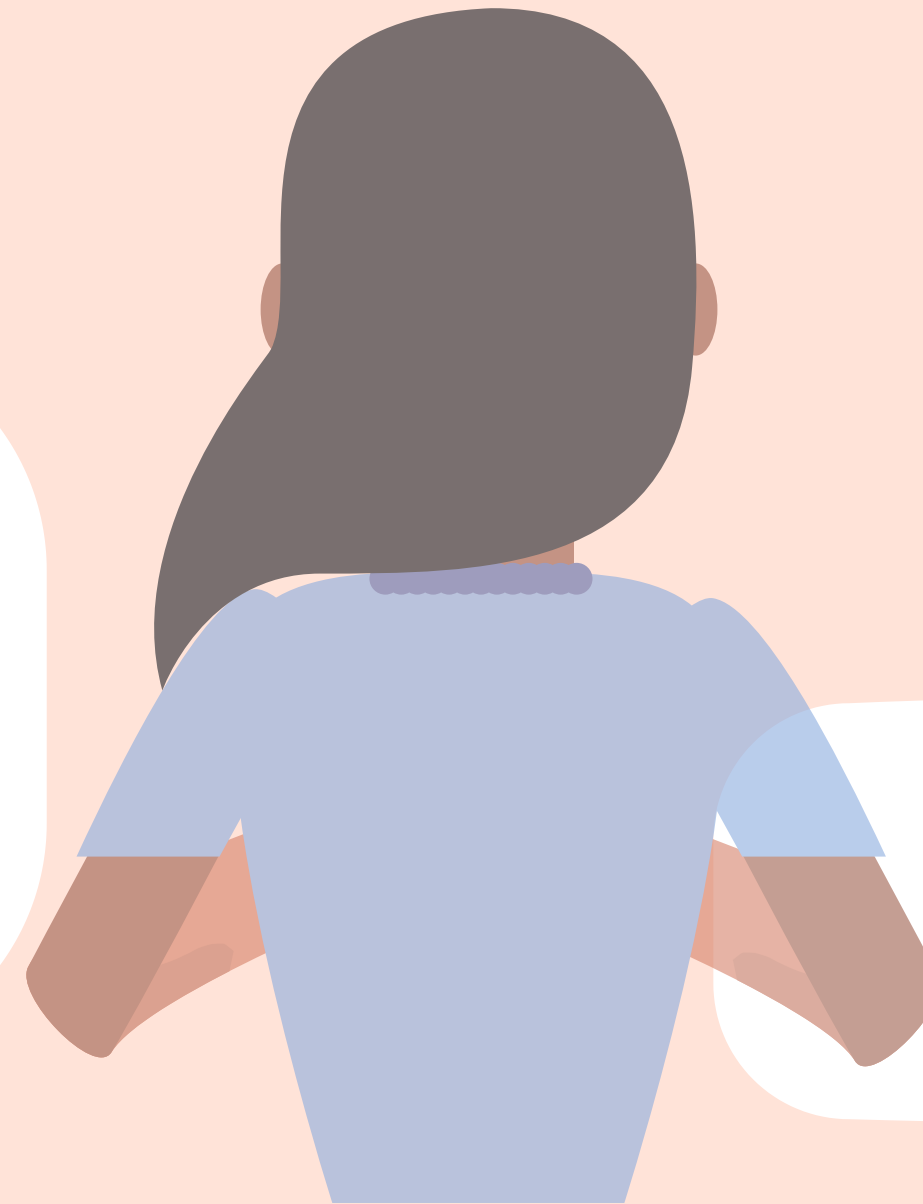


"Self-loathing, not wanting to be at my in-laws so trying to be out, but worthless as I could not settle my head"

"I would become irritable and aggressive"

***"I remember reading comments (derogatory ones)
It can get into your head that those comments are about you"***

"Paranoia when I was on the street"



Purpose in Life	A weak/diminishing sense of purpose in life was observed, as a result of distressing experiences of isolation, uncertainty and instability.
Autonomy	Social pressure and judgement from others decreased the women's abilities to regulate their behaviours from within and demonstrate high autonomy.
Personal Growth	The negative thoughts and compounding stressors reported by the women reflect a weak sense of personal growth.
Environmental Mastery	The lack of a sense of control over the external world decreased the women's sense of environmental mastery and their ability to manage their mental health.
Positive Relations	Negative public opinion regarding homelessness impacted their abilities to form warm, trusting relationships.
Self-Acceptance	The responses highlighted dissatisfaction with life due to low levels of self-esteem, instability, and a lack of control over their external environments.

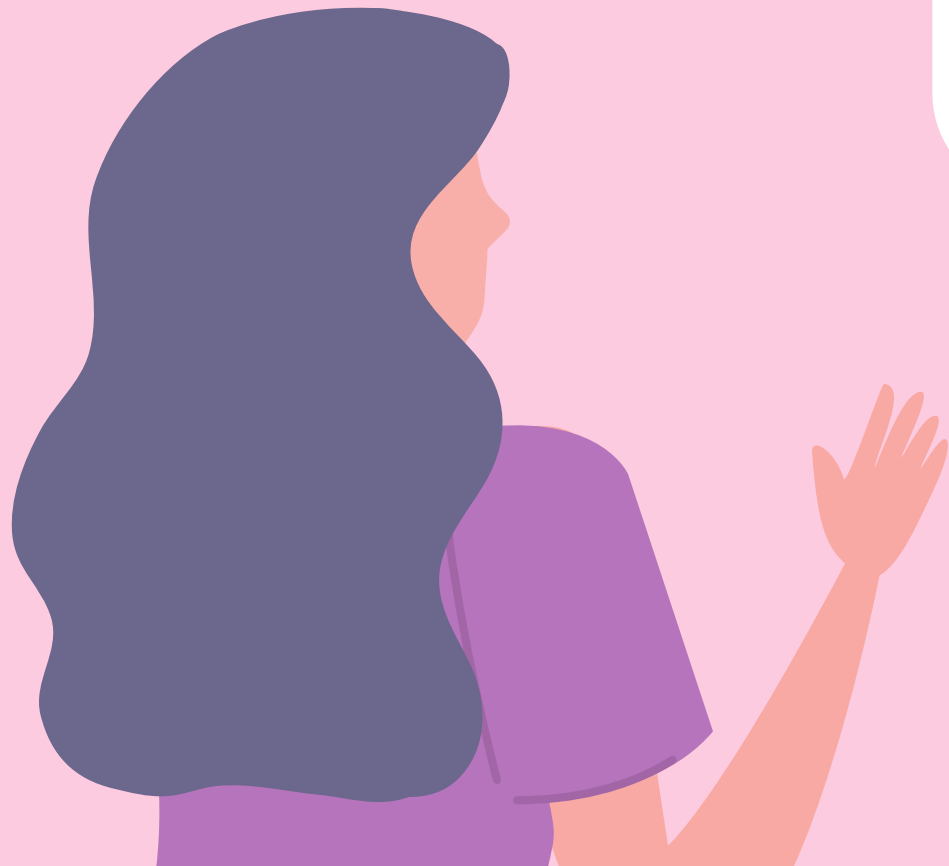
Objective 2: To understand how transitioning to housing with *Sophia Housing* impacted the women's wellbeing.



Themes

Changes in Health
and Well-being

Supports



"My head is more at peace. I have time to think things through and be less negative"

"I feel more settled, more in control, less stressed and more confident"

"The house has helped me completely to settle and de-stress"

"I have met some great staff and feel much better"

"No not really. I know there is stability for my kids but I feel I have label of homeless person on my back"

Purpose in Life	Receiving a home with supports strengthened the women's sense of purpose in life by tackling the root causes of their distress.
Autonomy	Improved levels of self-regulation and independence were indicated by all women.
Personal Growth	The improvements highlighted in the women's well-being suggests strong personal growth and improvements in self-overtime.
Environmental Mastery	The stability of the home provided the women with an improved sense of competence in managing their daily affairs.
Positive Relations	Positive relations with staff were revealed. Improved relationships with children were also reported.
Self-Acceptance	Most women described an improved attitude to life and higher self-acceptance.

Objective 3: To gather messages for the Irish Government or United Nations in regards to women's homelessness in Ireland.

***“Every person and child deserve a home.
A lot of people are caught in the trap
between earning too much to be on social
housing, but not enough for a mortgage.
This gap needs to be addressed”***

***“Everyone should have somewhere
to call home. Think of the thousands
who aren’t as comfortable as you.
We need a change”***



***“Everybody deserves a home,
a home is dignity,
it is the big start
for everything beautiful”.***



Fearful

Helpless

Alone

Scary

Heartbreaking

Sorrow

Homelessness

Sick all the time

Weak

Useless

Terrible mother

Disaster

Isolated

Lost

Considerate

Friendly

Helpful

Mindful

A lovely place

Care

SOPHIA HOUSING



Peace of mind

Saviour

Hopeful

People to talk to

CASE STUDY OF A WOMAN'S HOMELESS 'JOURNEY':

- A SINGLE MOTHER WITH TWO DEPENDENTS

"Failure as a mother because I could not give my children a home. They would have been better off without me as they mother or primary carer"



"I am more confident. I feel like I can provide for my family now that I have my children under one roof"



"There is light through the darkness don't be so hard on yourself. You are fighting a hard fight for your most precious creations and that makes it count so much more"



DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

- Homelessness was a highly **distressful** experience for all respondents.
- Many intersecting factors throughout the women's homeless experiences were found to contribute to the onset of- or worsening of-**poor psychological well-being**.
- As a result of receiving stable housing with holistic supports at *Sophia Housing*, it was clear that women's **psychological well-being improved**.
- A finding of particular importance was the structural issue of **stigmatisation** due to homelessness - Stems from a lack of understanding of the gendered experiences of homelessness among the public.

TAKE ACTION:

- 1. Tackle the stigmatisation of those rendered homeless by challenging stereotypes and raising awareness of the ‘humanity of homelessness’**
- 2. Address gaps in supports for women experiencing homelessness**
- 3. Advocate for the realisation of the human right to adequate housing for all**

***“Everybody deserves
a home, a home is dignity,
it is the big start
for everything beautiful”.***



Thank You.

Questions?