



BMSZKI

Budapesti Módszertani
Szociális Központ és Intézményei

Unaccompanied homeless mothers

FEHÉR, Boróka PhD – LENGYEL, Lea PhD
BMSZKI

BMSZKI is the largest provider of accommodation services to homeless people in Hungary. 2500 beds in 15 locations. About 1/3 host women.





The Data

50 first interviews with women
accessing hostels

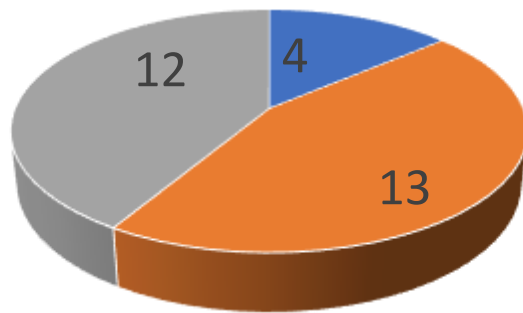
- Women under 50
 - Romantic relationships
 - Children

Care plan + Documentation of social
work

Age



korcsoportok (N=29)



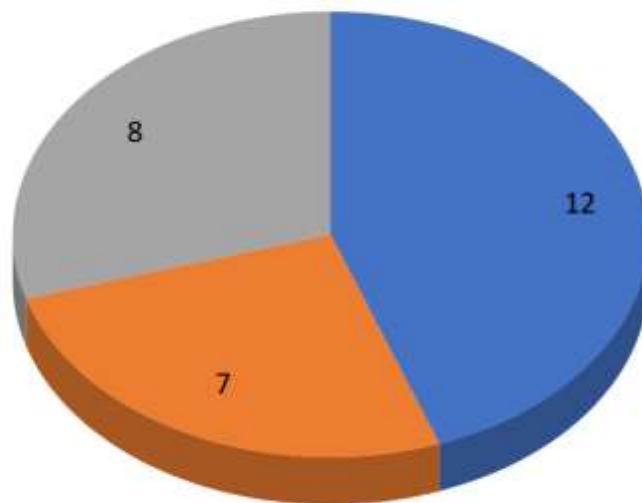
■ ≤30 ■ 31-40 ■ 41≤

The youngest mother was 21.
Oldest 48.
Average age: 38 years.

Family background



Where did you grow up? (N=27)

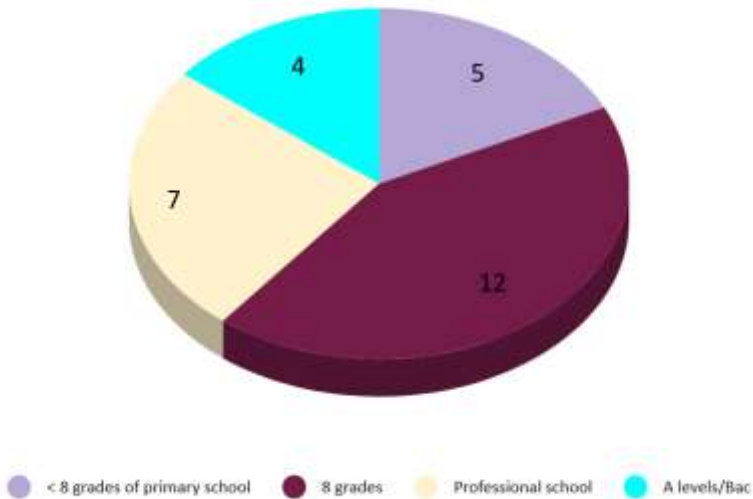


● in family, but not harmonic ● in a harmonic family ● foster care

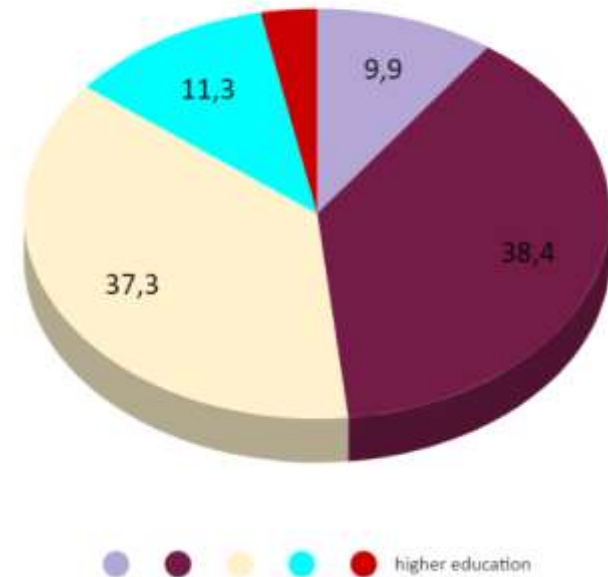
Education



Level of education (N=28)



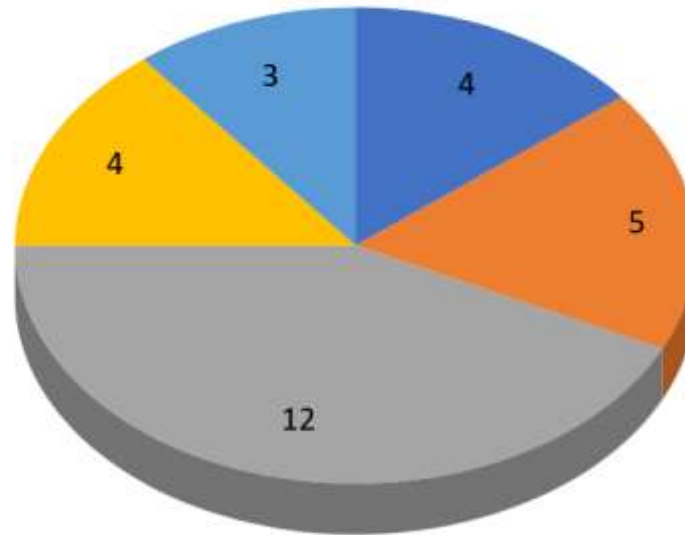
2016 national survey, courtesy of BREITNER, Péter



Becoming homeless



cause of becoming homeless (N-28)



● eviction ● "because of a man" ● family conflict ● other ● from foster care



Abuse

- As a child (n=6)
 - 4 cases by father
 - 3 cases raped by their father
 - 2 cases physical abuse by foster parents/foster siblings
- As an adult (n=8)
 - 7 cases by partners (usually several consecutive abusive relationships)
 - 1 case forced prostitution
 - 1 case robbery (while pregnant)

Children

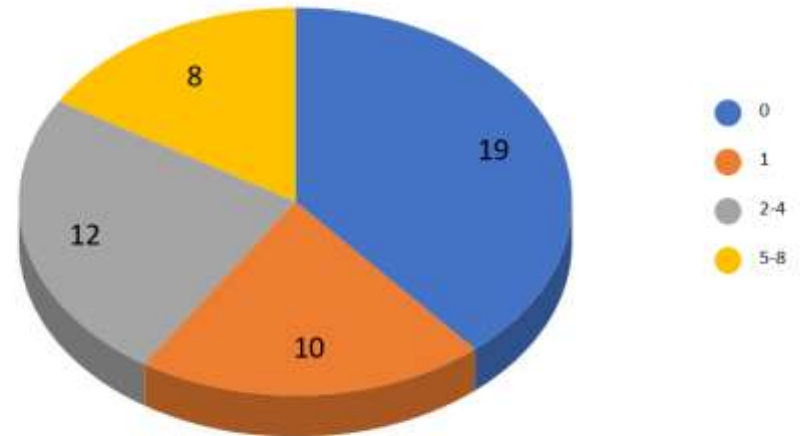


31 women have children

Some of them are adults

61 children under 18

Number of children (N=31)

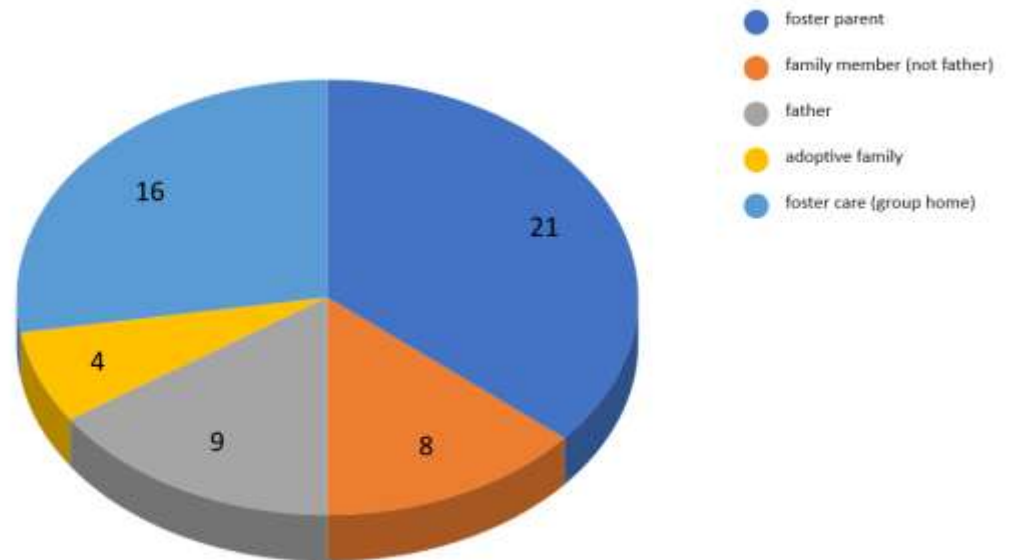




Where are the children?

- Data about 58 (61) children
- At least 8 were removed from their mom right at birth
- Most of them in early childhood

Where are the children under 18? (N=24)





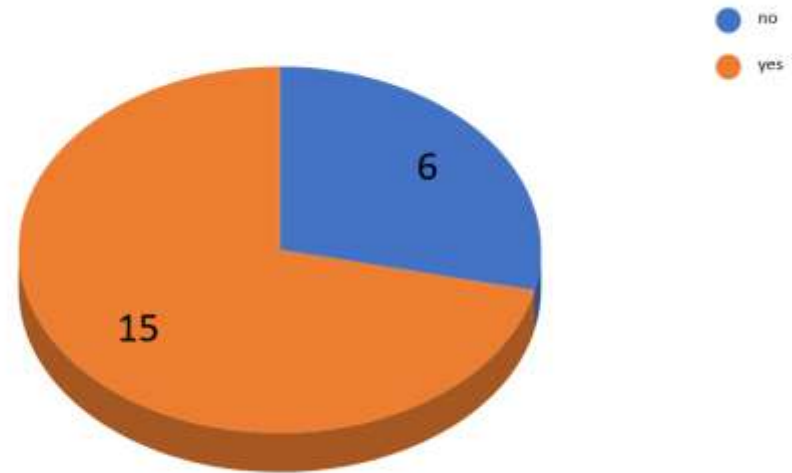
Contact with children under 18

4 children are adopted

14 regular
(weekly/biweekly
contact)

1 mostly through
telephone

Are you in contact with your children under 18? (N=21)



Children in the Plan of Social Work



16 mentions (N=31)

- 4 cases regular contact
- 12 cases living together

“Their primary goal is to regain custody of their children and be able to keep the baby to be born. To achieve this, they have submitted applications to various temporary hostels for families.

- * Support with placement in temporary hostel for families
- * Emotional support of family
- * Contact with children
- * Cooperation with child welfare services
- * Cooperation with family nurse“

Angela (29), 7 children, expecting 8th

“Her sister would demand custody of her children and they would move to rented accommodation together. “

Vera (31), 4 children

„ Her main goal is to live with her daughter again.

- Contact with her child
- Cooperation with child welfare services”

Evelin (32), 1 child



Children in daily social work

„Even though there is a visitor’s room in the hostel, it cannot be used due to COVID. E. is upset, feels this is no longer valid and wants to file a complaint. The Single Room Occupancy program does not accept minors, thus it is not an option for her. She cannot apply for social housing as she cannot cover the costs of renovation.”

Eva (33), 1 child

“She gets to see her children about once a month, due to financial difficulties (she would like to do so more often). This weekend she visited her daughter in the foster home after a long pause. She never goes to her without bringing gifts.

She enjoyed the holidays, she could visit both children and was able to buy them gifts.”

Szilvia (41) 1 adult + 1 minor child

“M. asked for my help in writing a letter to the legal guardian of her children, to ask for permission to take them to her mother’s for the Christmas holiday. Upon her request, I have asked for information about the temporary hostel for families and informed her of the conditions for applying there. She feels this is not the right place for her. She keeps looking for a place to be able to take her children back.

Mónika (48) (6 children - 2 already grown)

„She would like to be able to raise her children herself, but this would be difficult because of her late working hours and she has no help. She is excited about Christmas, started to buy gifts for the children in November. She is going to spend Christmas Eve with her mother.”

Petra (33), 3 children

Emotional issues



„She is upset about the visit to her son yesterday. It **was difficult to have to leave him.** ... We discussed about her plans for the future, which I do not find very realistic: she has not seen her new partner for three months but still hopes to rent a place with him and take her son to this new place for a visit in the summer.”

Brenda (28), 1 child

“She worried a lot about her son who is with foster parents and has had high fever but the foster parents did not want to let her know. He just started kindergarten. “

Rose (33) 1 child adopted + 1 with foster parents

“Talked about her relationship with her partner, adoption, her plans. ... She is to give birth with a planned Ceaserean - she has been hospitalized until then.”

Mary (30) (already has given up one child for adoption “because she did not want the baby to be lacking in anything)

„Susan is well, she is drinking less these days - since she has reconnected with her son. ... She has not seen her son for some time now - presumably because she visited him drunk.”

Susan (40), 4 children - 2 adult, 1 adopted and 1 in foster care



What would help you see your children more often?

- Help with costs of travel (even within the city)
- Administrative issues (locating the child, changing their placement to be closer to mother, change with the rules of visitation)
- Life together (temporary hostel for families or mothers)
- A place to be together with their child on visits (within the homeless service)
- Gifts for the children
- Fear of the violent father raising the children

Emotional support

Cooperation with professionals in the child welfare system

Adult children



„She and her son (GyK) support each other – he lives in ... shelter. Due to conflicts with her roommates B. would like to switch rooms, preferably be able to share one with her son. Unfortunately, that is not possible. [A week later she moves out.]”

Bella (43), only 3 of her 5 children are alive, all of them adults now

“A. shared that she did not sleep in the hostel the last five nights because of her son. He had been sleeping rough, and she did not want him to be alone until she could find him suitable accommodation.”

Andrea (37) adult son with psychiatric issues

„She worked last night and will not sleep in the hostel tonight, either – her grandchild has been hospitalized with high fever, she is going to babysit her other grandchild. She took a shower and left to visit them in the hospital. She can start to pay her housing arrear on Wednesday – she had lent money to her daughter.”

Juli (45), 6 adult children

“S. is well, she consumes less alcohol since she had reconnected with her son. ... She is upset about her adult son, who refused the aftercare option in foster care, abandoned former aspirations of further studies and moved in with an older friend.”

Susan (40) 2 adult children + 1 minor child



Conclusions

- Poverty and living in dysfunctional families reproduces itself
 - Stronger child protection and family protection system
 - Strengthening ways out of fostering
 - enabling women to make a living for themselves – education
- Lack of protocols within homelessness services
 - First interviews – gendered questions
 - A focus on relationships and children in care work – staff to receive training
 - YET many key workers still address these issues and go out of their way to support women
- Primary research instead of secondary research
 - Survey among women about their perceptions of security, support and children (September 2022)
 - Interviews with women in spring 2023
 - Hopefully modification of first interviews to enable secondary analysis

Thank you!

Feher.Boroka@bmszki.hu
Lengyel.Lea@bmszki.hu



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