THE CONCEPTUALISATION AND THE RESULTS OF THE 2024 HEADCOUNT IN BUDAPEST

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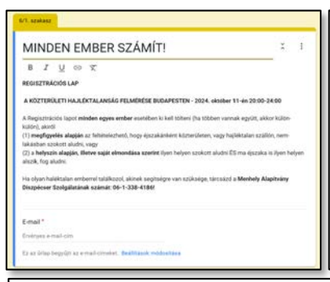
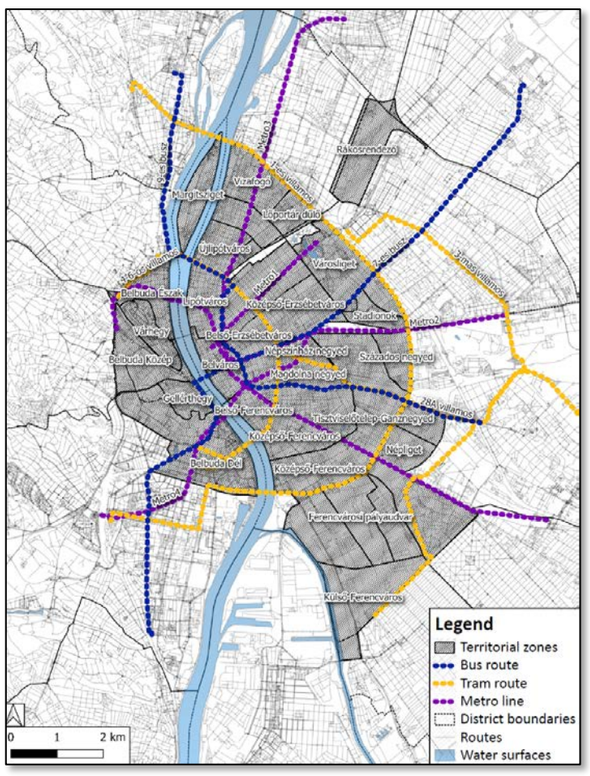
Introduction

- ***Circumstances:***
  - The last count was conducted **18 years ago.**
- **Criminalized environment**: As a result of the constitutional amendment in 2018, living in public spaces has been prohibited and responsibility to ensure placement.
- Since 2018, street **homelessness has decreased**, but…
  - The number of people experiencing homelessness at ETHOS levels 1–3 has been declining for a long time. (Only an insignificant proportion were living on the streets — approximately 490 out of 10,000 people.)
  - The relatively small number of individuals visibly living on the streets represent only the 'tip of the iceberg'; however, surveys of this kind make it possible to reveal the much larger, often hidden dimensions of homelessness.
  - Rough sleepers are a highly stigmatized group in society.
- The research was framed within a larger international study; the counting took place last year (2024), and this year (2025) it is being carried out in the outer areas of the city.
- ***Timing***: October 2024
- ***Place:*** 15 cities across 10 countries
- ***Aims:***
  - At the EU level: to establish a new general methodology at the European level, while also taking local specificities into account.
  - At the Budapest level: to measure the number of people experiencing homelessness in the inner districts of Budapest, at railway stations, and on certain public transport routes.
  - At the Budapest level: to provide a broader understanding of the territorial landscape covered by street outreach services, along with the geographical patterns and characteristics of people experiencing homelessness, due to the lack of prior comprehensive insight into the spatial distribution of homelessness.

Methodology

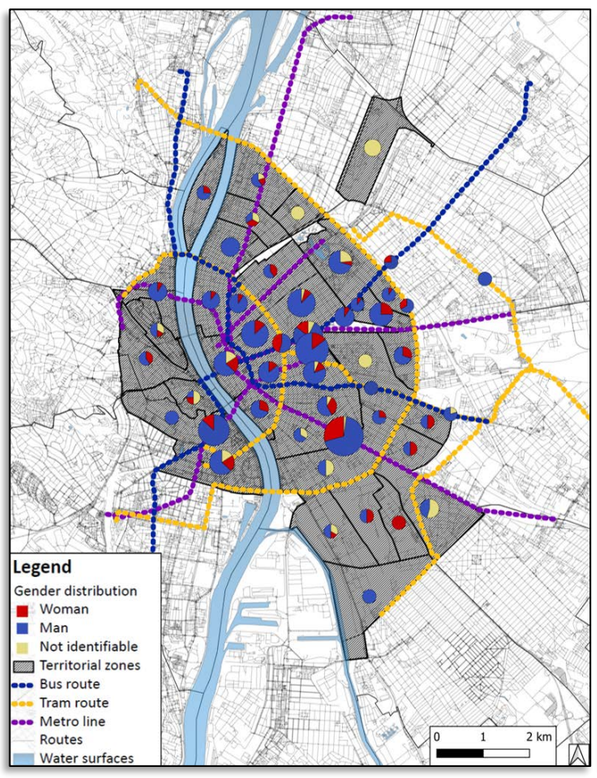


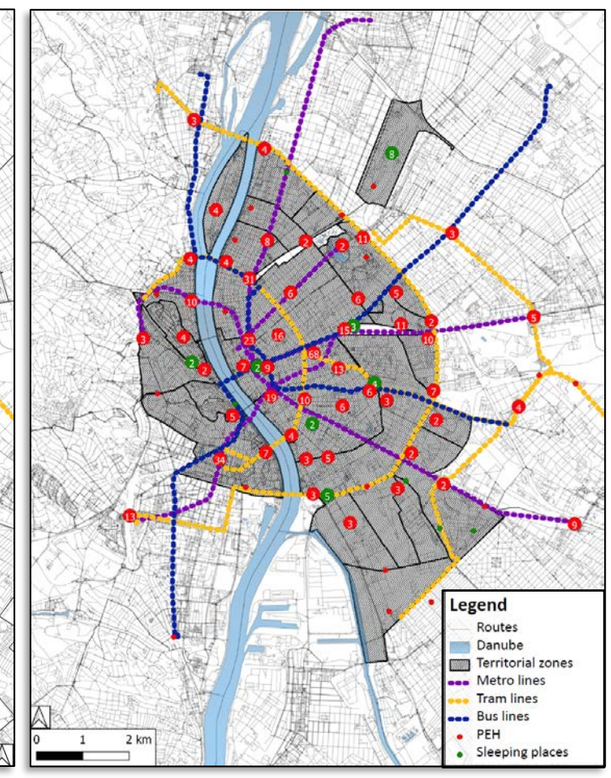


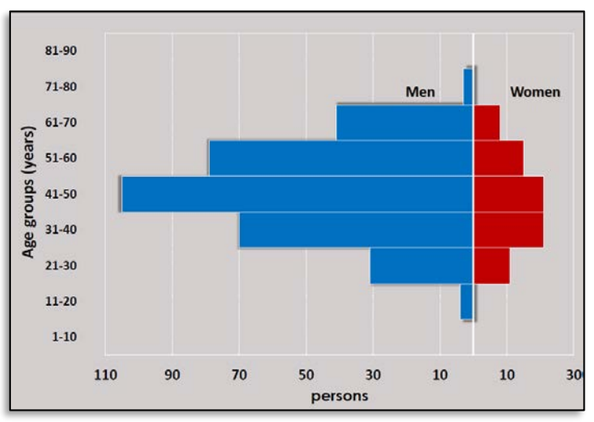
- On October 11, 2024, between 20:00 and 23:59.
- 132 volunteers and seven coordinators
- 42 area-based zones and six line-based zones
- Task: To count people who appeared to be PEH in public spaces and to observe their characteristics.
- Tools: Pre-designed Google Form and a paper questionnaire guide.
- Included:
  - Exact questions about coordinates
  - Body position
  - Estimated age and gender
  - Condition (state)
  - Type of location according to the ETHOS classification
  - Alone or with others

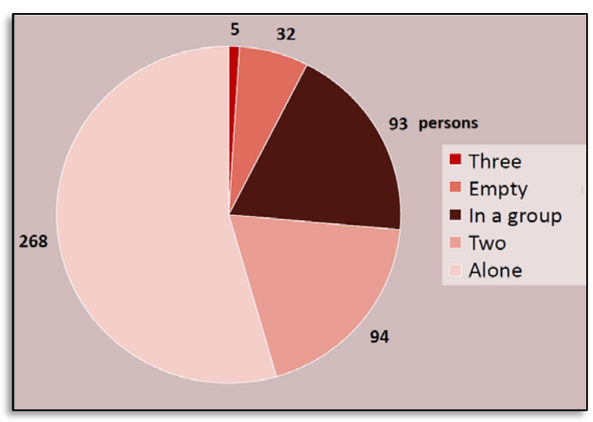
Results

- 457 individuals (259 people were sitting, lying down, or sleeping — definitely sleeping outdoors).
- They were observed near public transport hubs and in less-frequented public spaces.
- The majority were estimated to be between 30 and 60 years old — younger than sheltered PEH.
- Most of those observed were sitting or in a dazed state; many of them were in a condition that would not allow them to enter shelters.
- There is no sufficient service provision with emphasis placed on the care and support of women, young people, and those living as couples, yet their numbers are substantial.
- The majority of unsheltered people are women, young people, and individuals with partners. This indicates that these social groups are most likely to be excluded from shelters. As a result, they are forced onto the streets.
- One in five of those living on the streets are women; nearly half (190 people) are not alone on the streets, with 20% of these living as couples; and over 6% are underage.









Conclusions

- Our research findings can:
  - provide a clearer understanding of where people experiencing homelessness are located and their specific characteristics.
  - contribute to shaping future social policy guidelines and objectives, particularly in addressing spatial conflicts in the capital.

Academic literature:
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https://www.feantsa.org/public/user/Observatory/2025/EJH19-1/EJH_19-1_A05_v02.pdf
Teller, N., Gurály, Z., Surányi, Á., Vajdovich, N., & Görbe, L. (2024). European Homelessness Count – City report: Budapest [City report]. LUCAS – Centre for Care Research & Consultancy, KU Leuven. Funded by the European Union. https://www.kuleuven.be/lucas/en/images/city-report-budapest-final.pdf