

TRAJECTORIES OF HOMELESS WOMEN IN RELATION THROUGH A GENDER PERSPECTIVE ON SOCIAL WORK

PHD STUDENTS: Josepha Moriau (UCL) & Noémie Emmanuel (UCL)

PROMOTORS: Martin Wagener (UCL)

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REPRESENTATIONS OF HOMELESSNESS



EMPLOYÉE À TEMPS PARTIEL, MAL LOGÉE À TEMPS COMPLET.

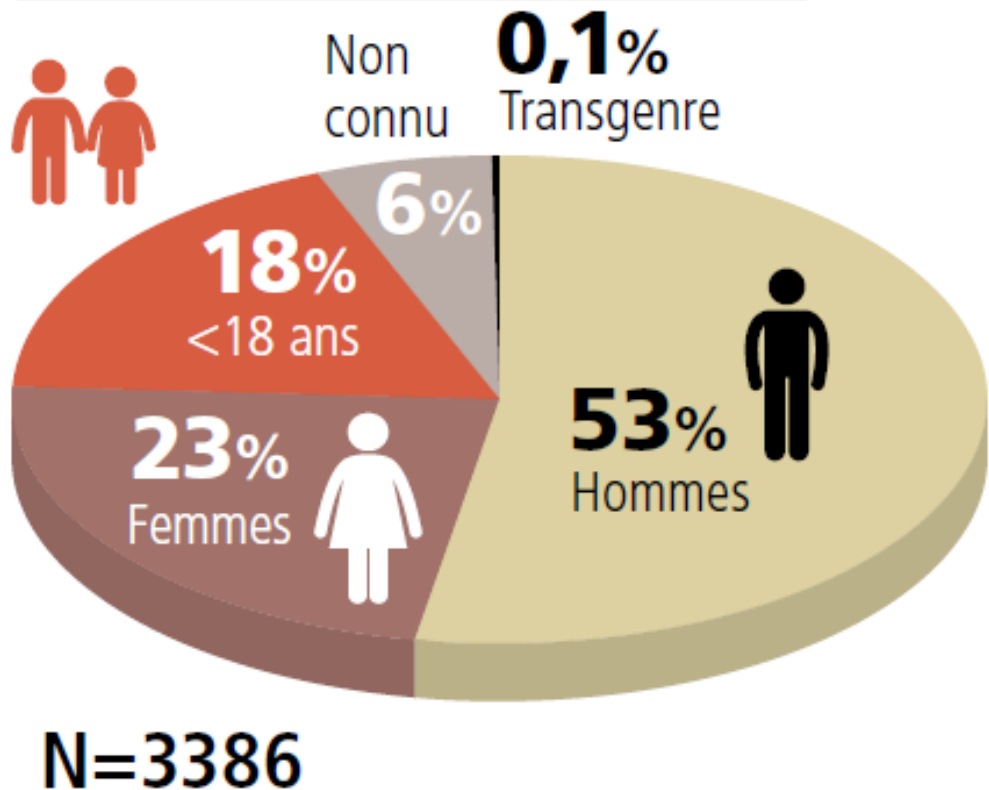
DÉSORMAIS, AVOIR UN EMPLOI NE NOUS GARANTIT PLUS D'AVOIR UN LOGEMENT DÉCENT.



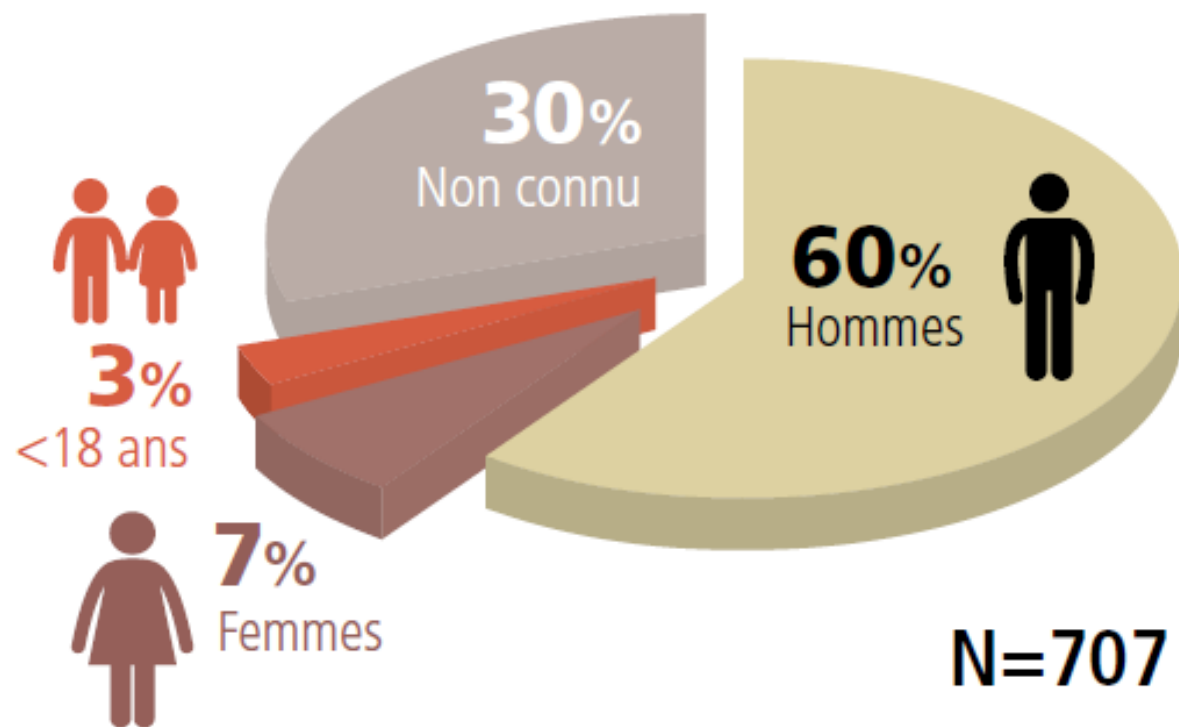
Fondation
Abbé Pierre
pour le logement
des défavorisés

AGISSONS !

Total number of counted people in 2014

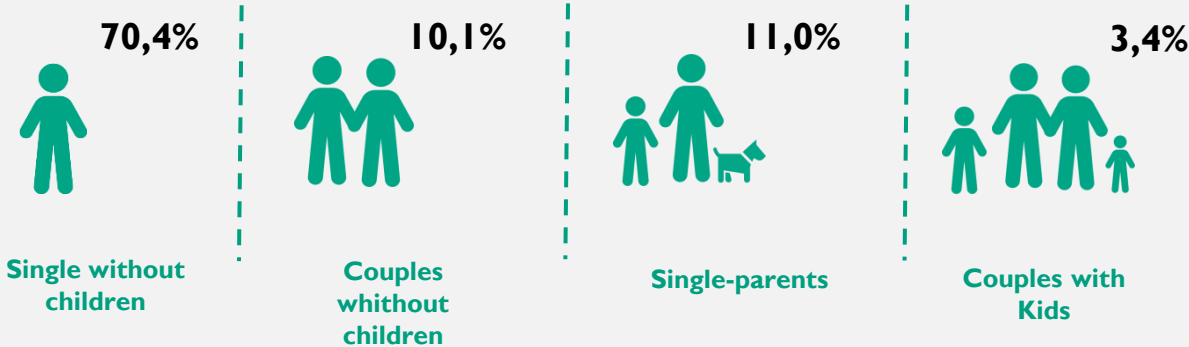


Persons in public space

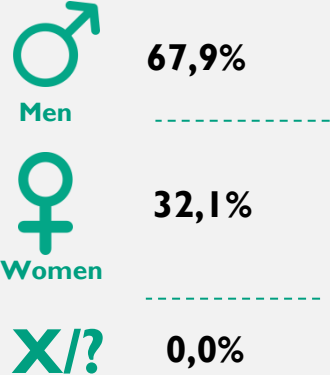


Catégorie ETHOS Light	Adults (#408)	%	Of which men (%)	Women (%)	Children (#96)	%
1 – Public spaces	26	6,4	80,8	19,2	1	1,0
2 – Emergency accomodation	18	4,4	88,9	11,1	0	0,0
3 - Shelter	100	24,5	51,0	49,0	48	50,0
4 – In institutions (prisons, psychiatry, youth work, ...)	42	10,3	90,5	9,5	2	2,1
5 - Unconventionnel accomodation (tent, garage, squat, ...)	83	20,3	71,1	28,9	25	26,0
6 – With parents / friends / others	110	27,0	67,3	32,7	16	16,7
7 – Threat of eviction	7	1,7	57,1	42,9	4	4,2
Situation 28/10 unknown, confirmed homelessness	22	5,4	63,6	36,4	0	0,0

Households



Gender



* Les enfants ne partagent pas nécessairement les mêmes conditions de logement que leurs parents

WOMEN HOMELESSNESS

- Historically only perspective on women in the streets
 - Women tend to regulate the potential impact of different forms of violence (being seen, wandering around (even during nights), “being dirty”, seeking to do be invisible,...)
- Main attention to women with children
- Role of domestic violence (and all other forms of violence)
- Women tend to find a different solution
 - Sofa Surfing
 - Between solidarity and exploitation

PATHWAYS OF WOMEN ON THE EDGE OF HOMELESSNESS : THE COUCHSURFERS

- Violence – gender studies approach (system, continuum).
- Social isolation, spatial isolation, material dependency → Impact on access to housing.

“It was very isolated. It was a village house [...] And I was always with my two children, at 24 years old. And then it was quite frustrating, because no more social contact, all the time between 4 walls. Well yes, there was still the garden, the vegetable garden, stuff like that. [...] But that’s not what nourished me humanly or mentally. Well, I don't know how to say it.»

Liève, 38 years old

- The “Breakup”

PATHWAYS OF WOMEN ON THE EDGE OF HOMELESSNESS : THE SOFASURFERS

- Use of the informal, friendly, family network

- Frequent moves
- Reconfiguration of your household: getting into a couple, entrusting your children, etc.

"And that's when I met someone [...] so, there you go, that was a solution that... well a solution. After that, that's not what I wanted. I wanted to have my independence, to be able to live with my two children and not be with a man I don't know very well. »

Liève, 38 years old

- Material precariousness – job market vs. family responsibilities
- Unsuitable housing market
- Shortcomings in public aid systems (“cohabitant status” in Belgium, family rights, etc.)

RECONNECTING SOCIAL SPHERES

Social reaffiliation involves different spheres of life (family and social relationships, cultural activities, health, etc.).

- Reintegration work in certain spheres of life / certain types of ties works best with an individual approach (citizenship ties, family relationships, etc.).
- Work in other spheres works best with a collective (social relations, cultural life, etc.) or community approach.
- Certain types of bond can be worked on using a combination of the two approaches

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS AND SOCIAL WORK

- 2 types of community: "organisational" (resources for the present) and "subject-actor/political" (resources for the future)
 - Organisational: Has the advantage of being useful in the short term (childminding, filling in for chores, passing on messages, asking for advice, etc.) but also creates problems (arguments about tidying up, chores, day-to-day worries, etc.).
- ➔ Can't be built up, is induced by the number and stops when the person leaves
 - Policy: Creating long-term relationships, social and sporting activities (Bruz'elles, Boxing), DPA-PC practices
- ➔ Creates resources that can be mobilised for the future, and is often established as a sub-group (Under what conditions? Recognition in the other of a condition similar to one's own?) and over a long period of time?

L'AUTONOMIE : BETWEEN SELFDETERMINATION AND NORMALISATION

- Public policies: very material dimension of autonomy, socio-professional integration highly valued

"Although it tends to conceal the social normativity that remains the basis of all intervention, the goal of "autonomy" must not be understood as de-socialised individualism, but on the contrary as the capacity for social participation - the first operational criterion being exit from the aid system; the second, integration into the labour market. (Franssen,2003)

- Tensions between these different definitions of autonomy >< Social workers: more multidimensional conception of autonomy, valuing of other types of autonomy

"Social work advocates respect for people's autonomy. Intervention should encourage people to express and understand their deepest concerns, desires and hopes. A favourable relational context contributes precisely to offering this hope. First and foremost, intervention aims to increase the individual's power and autonomy [...]" (Grenier, J. & Simard, M, 2011).

- What is our understanding of autonomy and what impact does it have on professional practices?

L'AUTONOMIE : ENTRE AUTODÉTERMINATION ET NORMALISATION

- Although social workers try to work on other aspects of autonomy, the fact remains that material autonomy remains central in the discourse of institutions and is integrated by beneficiaries.

"There are three points: financial autonomy, hygiene autonomy and food autonomy. Knowing how to manage your expenses, knowing how to manage your lifestyle, for example, knowing how to set a framework for sleeping and food: knowing how to prepare food properly,..."

"Knowing how to make your own life, without needing this person or that person. Being able to do your own shopping, work, bring in money, manage your bills, look after the people you have at hand... knowing how to manage everything".



This raises the question of the role played by residential homes in the "return to independence"?

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: THE NOTION OF HOME

- Pascale Pichon and the 4 A's theory: Development, Attachment, Appropriation and Anchoring
 - How can you make these 4 conditions your own so that you can feel at home in a place like a nursing home?
- The notion of home came up a lot in all the interviews
 - Feeling at home
 - Feeling at home but remembering that it's not home
 - Feeling almost at home
 - Not feeling at home (because you can't make it, or because you have prospects)

FEELING AT HOME

- **Accommodation is** not just about the material aspects of occupying a space, but also about the relational and symbolic aspects of making arrangements with the space, shaping relationships with those around you, with neighbours and social support workers, and presenting yourself to others through the space you live in.
 - In residential homes: Limits to the layout of the premises: *"The physical layout of new living spaces, which may be more or less extensive depending on institutional guidelines, always depends on institutional arrangements and interactions with support professionals"* (Pichon, 2019, p.78).
- **Attachment is** based on a process of successive attachments and disconnections to people and products (alcohol, drugs) [...] which can be managed in very contrasting ways depending on the biographical moment. More generally, it appears that the sense of home is manifested particularly in attachment to things, people and places. It's everything that connects us to something other than ourselves.
 - *"The subtle and enlightening distinction between "not being at home" and nonetheless being able to "feel at home" emerges. This feeling is particularly evident in the attachment to things, people and places emphasised by the interviewees". (Ibid)*

FEELING AT HOME

- **Appropriation** involves the pleasures of living and the preservation of privacy. A set of activities that take "living" out of a strictly utilitarian context.
- Finally, **anchoring refers to** the social and territorial integration of people, giving them the opportunity to participate in the life of the city and to feel that they are a recognised member of it.
 - *"In their experience, residents experience what we might call "stage anchors", which give rise to paradoxical professional injunctions: showing a desire to leave the institution but showing involvement within the structure; envisaging the future but being content with the options presented; acting in an emancipated way but not showing too much collective initiative within the institution..."*

THANK YOU!

CONTACT

- ❖ Josepha Moriau, PhD Student, UClouvain-CIRTES josepha.moriau@uclouvain.be
- ❖ Noémie Emmanuel, PhD Student, UClouvain-CIRTES : noemie.emmanuel@uclouvain.be
- ❖ Martin Wagener, Ass. Prof. Sociology, UClouvain-CIRTES martin.wagener@uclouvain.be