

Women, Homelessness, COVID-19: An empirical study on the situation of homeless women in Vienna

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Objective

To analyze the impact of the pandemic on homeless women in Vienna, taking into consideration:

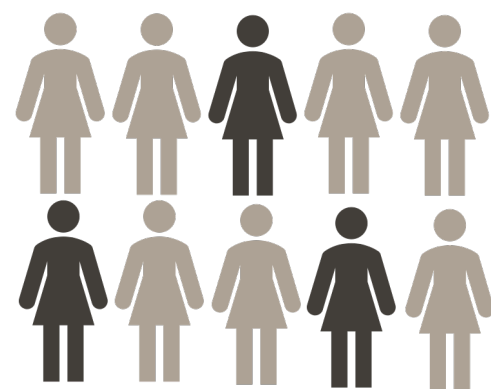
- how support services for homeless women were affected
- whether certain gaps in the service system existed before the pandemic
- how the pandemic affected gaps that may exist already

To increase the very limited amount of research on women's experiences of homelessness

Results

Exacerbation of risk factors of women's homelessness:

- Negative socio-economic effects (e.g., loss of income or employment, increased demand for (unpaid) care work) disproportionately affected women and especially those at risk of poverty, or those living in poverty already
- Increased potential for conflict and risks of gender-based violence, a leading cause of women's homelessness

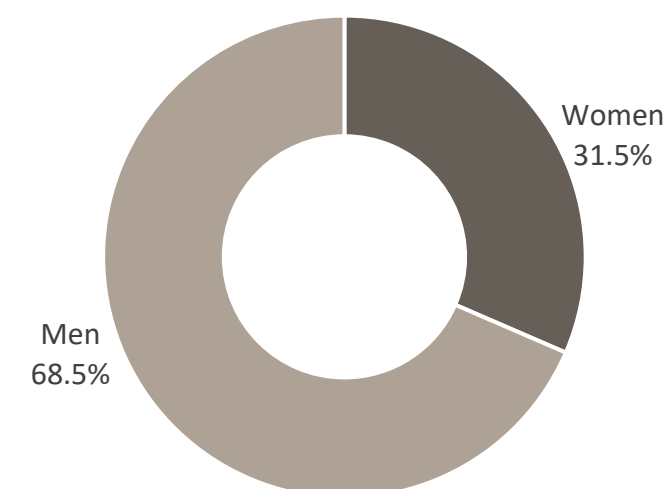


One in three women between the ages of 18 and 74 in Austria has experienced physical and/or sexual violence from the age of 15

References

Statistik Austria (2023). Wohnen 2022. Zahlen, Daten und Indikatoren der Wohnstatistik. https://www.statistik.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Wohnen-2022_barrierefrei.pdf
Statistik Austria (2022). Geschlechtsspezifische Gewalt gegen Frauen in Österreich. Prävalenzstudie beauftragt durch Eurostat und das Bundeskanzleramt.

19,450 Persons registered as homeless in Austria, 2021



A support system not suitable for a heterogeneous target group:

Homeless women in Vienna face a matrix of overlapping, mutually exacerbating problem situations (e.g., experiences of gender-based violence, (severe) mental health disorders, missing residence status). The current assistance network in Vienna is not able to adequately address the heterogeneity of its target group.

- Bureaucratic hurdles for homeless women with experiences of gender-based violence; homelessness, rather than experience of violence decisive for care. Only short-term refuge in a women's shelter possible, facilities for homeless women unable to adequately address the experiences of violence

- Facilities for homeless people in Vienna lack resources to provide appropriate care for women with severe mental health disorders, mental health issues can act as a barrier to or reason for exclusion from adequate care

- Official residence status is required to claim benefits and to receive services within the assistance to homeless people in Vienna, especially concerning long term housing options

Method

Guideline-based in-depth interviews with four representatives of organizations involved in the assistance to homeless women in Vienna

Pandemic as a burning glass on existing shortcomings:

The pandemic did not lead to the creation of new gaps within the assistance network but acted like a burning glass on existing shortcomings

Registered homelessness in Austria by federal state, 2021

