

DECEMBER 2021

REPORT

# LIVING ON THE STREET IN BARCELONA

A focus on mobile EU citizens

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Arrels Fundació



European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless

Arrels Fundació is a private foundation that has been caring for homeless people in the city of Barcelona since 1987. It provides accommodation, food, social care, and guidance to more than 2,600 people every year. It is made up of more than 400 volunteers and about seventy employees who, together with the people facing this problem, work to make #ningú dormint al carrer possible.  
#ningú dormint al carrer.

**We accompany**

We support and guide homeless people towards a more autonomous situation.

**We raise awareness**

to the public about the problems of poverty in our context.

**We denounce**

unjust situations and provide solutions to public authorities and civil society.

**To get to know us**

[www.arrelsfundacio.org](http://www.arrelsfundacio.org)

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**Text by:** Arrels Fundació Legal Team

**Pictures:** ©Juan Lemus / Arrels Fundació

Many thanks to the 377 people living on the streets who responded to the survey in November 2020. Thanks also to the more than 750 volunteers who made it possible.

**AUTHOR**



**ARRELS FUNDACIÓ**

Riereta 24

08001 Barcelona, Spain



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# Introduction

This report is part of the second phase of the PRODEC (Protecting the Rights of Destitute mobile EU Citizens) project that is being carried out in several other European cities, namely Stockholm, Münster and Brussels. This project aims to create a greater sense of urgency at the European political level on the issue of homelessness among citizens from other EU member states, to ensure legal certainty regarding their rights and to empower those who have become homeless to claim their rights.

In Arrels Fundació, for the last four years, we have been carrying out an annual census in which volunteers and professionals have been able to interview people living on the street in Barcelona and, after this time, we have come to a very harsh conclusion: six months sleeping on the street is by far too long. Just one day on the street is already a violation of rights, but after six months, the deterioration and vulnerability of people increases alarmingly. Nobody lives on the street because they want to. And despite some people reject being accommodated in shelters -because it is not an option that takes into account every specific situation and problems-, in Barcelona those who want to stay in a shelter find themselves with saturated resources and limited access. These are people trapped for a long time, not allowing them to move forward. Until there is a commitment to responses that adapt to their needs and capacities, traditional solutions will not work and will condemn them to perpetuity.

Surveys of people living on the street make this harsh reality visible. There are neither sufficient resources nor any long-term consensus to eradicate this injustice. The situation is complex and worsening, as we have seen in the context of covid-19 and the state of alarm decreed in Spain. Beyond resources, there are laws, such as the

residence law for EU citizens, which prevent any kind of optimistic prospects for a large part of the migrant population. Likewise, the number of young migrants living on the street is increasing and they are totally unprotected. Living on the street drastically shortens people's lives. The structural factors that push people onto the streets is more efficient than our capacity to reverse the problem. The solution is prevention and housing. While this response is not forthcoming, we have to look for solutions that minimise people's suffering. And, of course, to solve the causes that lead people to live in homelessness.



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# The report

## METHODOLOGY

The report 'Living on the street in Barcelona. A focus on mobile EU citizens' gives a closer look to the **situation of people from European Union (EU) member states** who live on the street in Barcelona, based on the analysis of data obtained during the night of 26 November 2020.

The main source of information to draft this report is a survey carried out by Arrels Fundació in the streets of Barcelona on 26 November 2020, with a curfew imposed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The aim of the survey is to deepen our knowledge on the problem of homelessness, and specifically on the people who sleep rough in the city of Barcelona. This knowledge is essential in order to advocate for social policies and useful resources that are adapted to their reality and that focus on reducing homelessness.

### What is the data we analyse?

We analysed the data from the face-to-face surveys carried out in Barcelona among 377 people living on the street. Out of them, 99 people are from an EU country other than Spain, representing 27% of the total number of respondents to the survey.

### Who responds to the survey and who does not?

Every person sleeping rough (or whose attitude might suggest that they were about to do so) was asked to participate in the survey. In total, the volunteers counted 867 people sleeping rough, of whom 367 were interviewed on the first night and 10 more during the following week. On average, the interviews lasted about 30 minutes. There are several reasons why some people did not answer:

- ▶ Some people were sleeping soundly and could not be awakened.
- ▶ Some people were unable to respond due to language barriers.
- ▶ Some people declined to respond to the survey.

**When:** Mostly during the night of 26 November 2020, between 8 p.m. and midnight, although some of the interviews (10) were carried out afterwards. The interviews were conducted in the context of a pandemic and a curfew, which meant adapting and advancing the timing. This affects the results because not all the people living on the street were already in their place of stay at the time the volunteers passed by. In addition, several people who usually live on the street were housed in temporary emergency resources. Both factors made it difficult to reach a sample which could reflect well the reality.

**People sleeping rough:** On the night of the survey, 867 people were counted, out of whom 367 answered our questions and 99 of them were citizens from other EU countries. In addition, over the next few days, 10 more people answered to **the questions on the legal section** of the survey, of whom one person was a mobile EU citizen. **This report is based then on the 100 respondents who are citizens of another EU country**, out of the total of 377 surveys.

**Volunteers:** More than 750 people.

**Area:** 60% of the area of Barcelona, focusing on the urban area.

**Districts:** 64 neighbourhoods were visited - most on foot and others by car -, covering the districts of Ciutat Vella, Eixample and Gràcia and some areas of Sants-Montjuïc, Les Corts, Sarrià, Horta-Guinardó, Nou Barris, Sant Andreu and Sant Martí.

## WHICH TOOLS DID WE USE?

We obtained the information through a survey carried out by Arrels Fundació, which focused on the situation of people living on the street in Barcelona during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the aim of looking deeper into certain issues.

The following document presents the results of the answers by mobile EU citizens to the four sections of the survey.

**SECTION I:** This section provides an overview of the people living on the streets of Barcelona through the main socio-demographic indicators.

**SECTION II:** The questions in this section are related to the Covid-19 pandemic: how it is experienced by mobile EU citizens in homelessness? How it compares to the situation before the pandemic? What has happened to them since the beginning of the state of alarm until the date of the interview?

**SECTION III:** The aim of this section is, on one hand, to provide a description of the journey made by homeless EU migrants until reaching Barcelona, and on the other hand, to identify what kind of support and social care they receive.

**SECTION IV:** Finally, there is a summary of the judicial and administrative situation of homeless people, with the difficulties they face on this regard, which make it even more difficult to fulfill the right to decent housing.



## AN OVERVIEW ON THE FOREIGNERS RESIDING IN SPAIN

Before going into the data extracted from the surveys, we believe it is necessary to provide a general context on the EU migrants living in Spain and the legislation that applies to them.

### How does Spain regulate the residence of mobile EU citizens?

In Spain, the residence permit of foreigners is regulated differently depending on the nationality of the foreigner. Thus, the situation of persons who come from countries that are not members of the European Union or the European Economic Area is governed **under the General Scheme for migrants, established in LO 4/2000** of 11 January, on the rights and freedoms of foreigners in Spain and their social integration. (Reformed by LO 8/2000, LO 14/2003, LO 2/2009, LO 10/2011, and RDL 16/2012). In turn, the situation of EU citizens under the EU free movement scheme is regulated by the **Royal Decree 240/2007** of 16 February, **on the entry, free movement and residence in Spain of citizens of the Member States of the European Union and other States of the European Economic Area**. This Royal Decree, amended by Order PRE/1490/2012 of 9 July, establishes that the reasons for obtaining an EU citizen's permanent residence certificate may be: work, family, study or non-for-profit reasons.<sup>1</sup>

### How many foreigners reside in Spain?

According to data from the Permanent Immigration Observatory<sup>2</sup>, the total number of foreigners residing in Spain (with a valid registration certifi-

cate or residence card) amounted to 5,800,468 on 31 December 2020, 61% of them subject to the EU free movement scheme, a proportion that has increased by almost ten points in the last decade.

The cumulative growth of the resident foreign population over the last ten years is 19%, and 16% over the last five years. However, 2020 has seen the lowest annual increase (137,120 persons, or 2%) since 2016 and has broken the upward trend since 2014. The situation created by Covid-19 and the restrictions on international mobility explain this low increase. As in previous years, the 2020 growth is mostly explained by EU migrants: 100,930 more people (2.9%) compared to only 36,190 (1.6%) of migrants under the General Scheme.

Two thirds of EU and non-EU foreign residents live in four Autonomous Communities (Spanish regions): Catalonia, the Community of Madrid, Andalusia and the Community of Valencia. 57% of all migrants in Spain live only in seven provinces: Madrid, Barcelona, Alicante, Malaga, Valencia, Balearic Islands and Murcia, each of them exceeding the number of 225,000 resident foreigners. In contrast, Ceuta, Palencia and Soria are the provinces with the lowest number of foreign residents, with less than 10,000 each.

The number of residents under the EU Free Movement Scheme is higher than the number of foreigners under the General Scheme in all parts of Spain, with the exception of the Autonomous City of Melilla, the Region of Murcia and the Basque Country, with a percentage of residents under the General Scheme out of the total number of foreign residents of 66%, 65% and 51% respectively.

15 nationalities account for almost 75% of the total number of foreign residents in Spain. Eight of them correspond to European Union countries, among

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1 <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2007-4184> and [https://www.boe.es/diario\\_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2012-9218](https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2012-9218)

2 Statistics on foreign residents in Spain: [https://extranjeros.inclusion.gob.es/imagenes/estadisticas/con-certificado/2020-diciembre/Portada\\_\\_PR\\_Gr.jpg](https://extranjeros.inclusion.gob.es/imagenes/estadisticas/con-certificado/2020-diciembre/Portada__PR_Gr.jpg)

which Romania and Italy stand out. Also the United Kingdom, although it is no longer part of the EU.

The socio-demographic profile of foreign residents may vary a lot. The average age of the resident foreign population is around 40 and there are more men than women. However, there are rather older groups among EU nationals, such as the British (when they were still part of the EU) with an average age of 54 and, to a lesser extent, the Germans (49 years), while others are much younger such as the Pakistanis and Moroccans (33 years). On the other hand, there are no major gender differences between EU and non-EU nationals, with women outnumbering men among nationals of Ukraine, Venezuela, Colombia, Poland and Germany with a percentage of between 57 and 52%.

The number of foreign residents under the EU free movement was of 3,535,964 on 31 December 2020. The groups with the largest annual increases are nationals of the United Kingdom (29,977; 6%), Italy (18,520; 6%) and France (7,339; 4%). Non-EU family members of mobile EU citizens represent 15% (526,277) of the total number of people with an EU residence permit, being Moroccan, Colombian and Venezuelan the main nationalities.

The provinces of the Mediterranean coast, the two archipelagos, Madrid and Barcelona are home to 60% of the mobile EU citizens residing in Spain as of 31 December 2020. In thirteen Autonomous Communities (out of seventeen), the most present nationality is Romanian. In the Canary Islands and the Balearic Islands, on the other hand, citizens of Italian, German and British origin are the majority. In the Canary Islands they account for 56% of the total number of EU residents, and 50% in the case of the Balearic Islands.

The reform of RD 240/2007, undertaken in 2012, established in Article 7 the ways to access to residence for a period of more than three months, which had to be stated from then on in the registration certificates issued. The category "Undetermined reason for residence" refers to certificates issued before the entry into force of this reform (when the reason for residence was not stated), issued to 1,316,364 residents as of 31 December 2020. Together with them, 805,771 already have permanent residence (28% of the total of mobile

EU citizens registered), for which the initial reason for granting a residence permit is not specified either; and 526,277 are issued to non-EU family members of mobile EU citizens.

Work is the most frequent means to residence for those who have an explicit reason in their permits, representing 48% (378,568) of the total number of residents with an explicit reason for residence. This is followed by the non-profit reason with 24%, 19% for family reasons and, finally, 9% for education.

### THE CASE OF THE BRITISH NATIONALS

On 31 January 2020, the UK left the EU, with a Withdrawal Agreement signed by the two parties. This Agreement established a transitional period until 31 December 2020, during which UK nationals and their family members who had exercised free movement would have exactly the same rights they had been enjoying. Furthermore, Article 18.4 of the Agreement provides for British citizens residing in another Member State to be issued with a residence document. The procedure for issuing this document in Spain was regulated in an Instruction signed by the Director General of Migration and the Director General of the Police and has been operational since 6 July 2020.

The number of British citizens with a registration certificate as of 31 December 2020 was 381,448 (almost 22,000 more than a year before), which means an annual increase of 6% despite COVID and Brexit. Almost 20% of them (64,715) have applied for a TIE (Tarjeta de Identidad de Extranjero/"Foreigner Identity Card") as of 7 July, making use of the procedure in art.18.4 of the Withdrawal Agreement; 75% (48,177) already had a previous registration certificate, i.e. were already resident in Spain, while the rest are new residents. Looking at the types of permits, the highest relative growth has been in permanent residence and non-profit residence. Indeed, two thirds of those who have applied for a TIE since 1 July 2020 were granted permanent residence, by virtue of their previous residence in Spain.

After having analysed the general legal situation of the foreign nationals in Spain, we will now focus on the topic of this report: mobile EU citizens living on the street in the city of Barcelona.



## THE CASE OF BARCELONA

### How many people are living in homelessness?

In Barcelona there are currently at least 4,845 homeless people. Thanks to counts, censuses and surveys, we know that:

- ▶ At least 1,064 people sleep on the street, according to the count carried out by Arrels Fundació on 10 June 2021<sup>3</sup>, as part of the survey of people living on the street.
- ▶ 3,046 people sleep in public and private resources in the city (according to the count of the Xarxa d'Atenció a Persones Sense Llar, May 2021).<sup>4</sup> Specifically, 1,741 beds are in public and subsidised accommodation and the remaining 1,305 are in private service providers.

According to municipal data, 735 people (adults and children) live in informal settlements in Barcelona, i.e. in abandoned factories or shanties.

More than half of the people sleeping rough are foreigners of EU or non-EU origin. In addition to the extreme vulnerability resulting from their lack of housing, in most cases they do not have documentation proving their stay or residence in Barcelona. As a result, their access to many of the services offered by the city or other public authorities is limited.

### What services are offered in Barcelona to people sleeping rough?

In Barcelona, there is a network of public and private services to support homeless people. In 2017, Barcelona City Council's Department of Social Rights published the Plan to Combat Home-

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3 <https://www.arrelsfundacio.org/es/encuesta2021/>

4 <https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/premsa/2021/05/20/el-recompte-2021-visualitza-895-persones-dormint-als-carrers-de-barcelona-i-3-046-allotjades-en-equipaments/>

lessness 2016-2020.<sup>5</sup> This plan considers that, in order to combat homelessness, the focus must be placed on the right to housing, as the violation of this right is the common factor for all people who find themselves in homelessness. Alongside this plan, the municipality offers a network of services.<sup>6</sup>

In the pre-Covid-19 period, some of these services were directly accessible. This has changed due to pandemic restrictions, and today, most municipal services can only be used with after contacting an employee in the social services.

In a report drawn up by the Barcelona Ombudsman's Office in 2020<sup>7</sup>, it was highlighted that "*The irregular administrative situation of certain immigrants hinders their social integration and access to certain resources and benefits. [...] The difficulty of a sustained approach over time to people in the process of asylum or refuge and also with refugee status, given the length in time of administrative processes, while the support offered by the competent Administration (Ministry of the Interior) is insufficient*".

## What work does Arrels Fundació do?

Arrels Fundació is a private, non-profit organisation that is part of the network of private services supporting the homeless. The experience and daily contact with homeless people has built, from the beginning, our way of accompanying people and tackling the causes that generate homelessness.

- ▶ **We address situations, but also their causes.** We stand by homeless people, promoting their self-esteem and confidence and guaranteeing

that, when they decide to leave the street, their basic needs will be covered. At the same time, we work to explain to society the causes of homelessness and make possible proposals for improvement.

- ▶ **We work with people from an integral point of view,** respecting their rhythms, promoting participation and decision-making in their own improvement process and encouraging harm reduction.
- ▶ **We work together with other social, health and legal services with the person at the centre of the intervention.**
- ▶ **We are an organisation where everyone contributes.** The homeless contribute with knowledge from their experience and critical perspective, the team of volunteers allows us to create new links with the most vulnerable people and the team of employees adds technical expertise and continuity to the processes.
- ▶ **We are committed to social innovation.** We like looking at projects and initiatives in other countries that focus on homeless people in order to learn new ways of giving support.
- ▶ **We are independent.** The fact that we have a broad social base supporting us facilitates our security and freedom of action.

In the case of foreigners, the fact that we are a private, independent entity allows us to provide support not only to those whose administrative situation is regularised, but also to those in an irregular situation, for whom it is almost impossible to access the network of public services.

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5 [https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dretssocials/sites/default/files/arxiu-documents/pla\\_lluita\\_sensellarisme\\_barcelona\\_2016-2020.pdf](https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dretssocials/sites/default/files/arxiu-documents/pla_lluita_sensellarisme_barcelona_2016-2020.pdf)

6 <https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/serveissocials/es/canal/persones-sense-llar>

7 [https://www.sindicabarcelona.cat/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/sensellarisme.resum\\_.pdf](https://www.sindicabarcelona.cat/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/sensellarisme.resum_.pdf)

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## SECTION



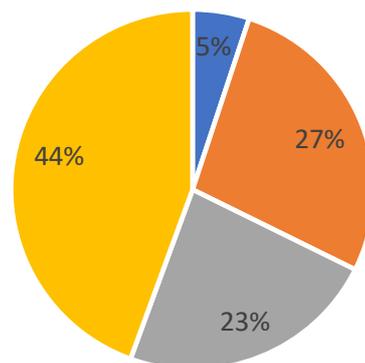
# Analysis of who lives on the street in Barcelona



## WHO ARE THE MOBILE EU CITIZENS LIVING ON THE STREETS OF BARCELONA?

During the night of 26 November 2020, we were able to interview 367 people who were sleeping rough. Of these, 99 people were citizens of EU countries other than Spain, representing 27% of those surveyed.

**DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN (N:367)**

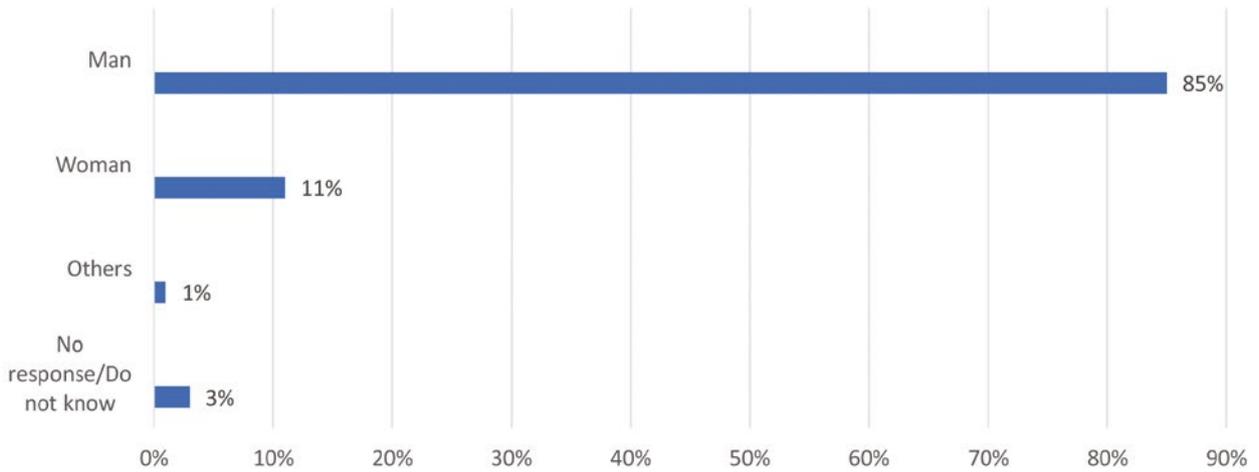


- No response/Do not know
- EU citizens
- Catalonia and Spain
- Non-EU citizens

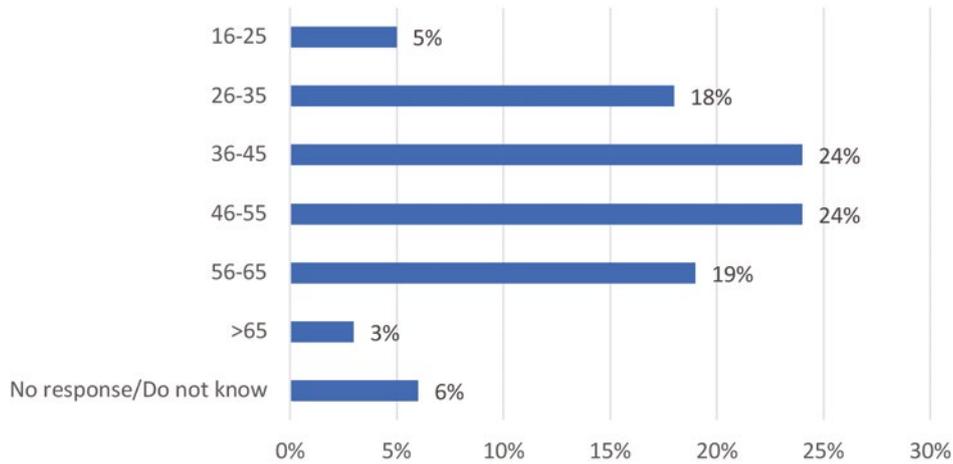
## 1- Gender and age

Out of the 99 mobile EU citizens who responded to the survey, 85% were men, 11% were women and 4% had other identities or did not want to answer the question.

**GENDER (N:99)**



**AGE (N:99)**



The average for mobile EU citizens living on the streets of Barcelona is 45 years old.

Between 36 and 55 years is the most frequent age among the EU migrants interviewed. However, although much lower, the percentage of people being less than 25 years old is also relevant.

According to the 2019 Diagnosis of the Xarxa d'Atenció a Persones Sense Llar (XAPSELL)<sup>8</sup>, in Barcelona in 2019, around 17.9% of the homeless population are young people (18-30 years old) and 18.3% are minors.

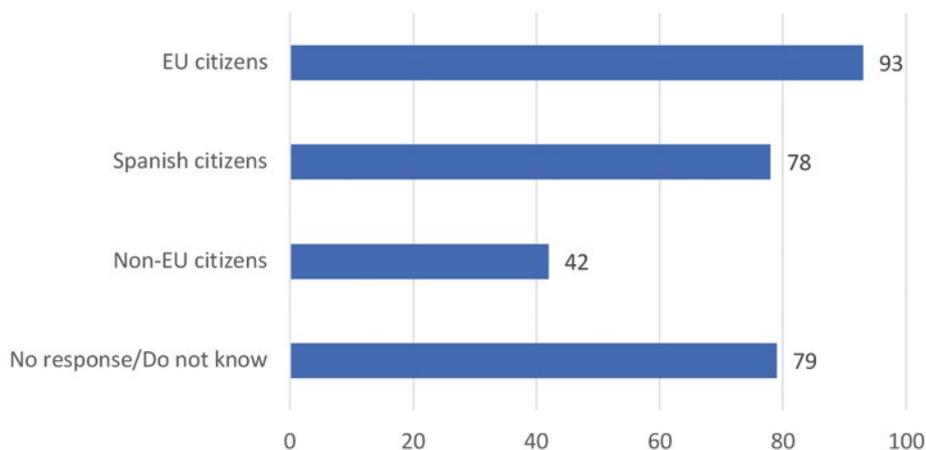
Homelessness is experienced differently in youth than in adulthood, and its causes are also different. For example, housing problems, such as severe material deprivation or housing cost overburden, are more likely during youth.

Young people in the 21st century are facing a new historical context defined by global capitalism and new technologies. The bursting of the real estate bubble, the international financial crisis, global housing finance and job insecurity are causing serious economic and social problems for youth which, at the local level, make it difficult for them to build a life project of their own.

At the national level, the lack of protection of the right to housing, the worsening of labour conditions and the social exclusion caused by migration laws increase the number of people dealing with poverty. If emancipation is at the heart of what it means to be young, the current social structure prevents it and makes young people become one of the groups that do not have full access to the rights of citizenship.

## 2- Time spent on the street

TIME SPENT ON THE STREETS IN MONTHS



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8 Diagnosis 2019 Homelessness in Barcelona. Evolution and situation of young homeless people. XAPSELL. [http://www.bcn.cat/barcelonainclusiva/ca/2019/11/Diagnosi\\_sensellarisme\\_2019\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.bcn.cat/barcelonainclusiva/ca/2019/11/Diagnosi_sensellarisme_2019_WEB.pdf)

AVERAGE TIME ON THE STREET (IN THE CITY OF BARCELONA ONLY)		AVERAGE TIME ON THE STREET (IN TOTAL)	
Men	Women	Men	Women
98	59	46	58
8 years and 2 months	4 years and 11 months	3 years and 10 months	4 years and 10 months

Mobile EU citizens have been on the streets for an average of 93 months (7 years and 9 months), more than 2 years above the overall average.

On average, men of EU origin have been on the streets longer than women: 8 years and 2 months for men and 4 years and 11 months for women. However, the women of EU origin interviewed have spent almost all of their time on the streets in Barcelona. In other words, the mobility of men of EU origin is higher than that of women, having been on the street in other municipalities and even in other countries.

The length of time that people live on the street is a crucial factor, as it is directly related to their level of vulnerability and deterioration. Six months living on the street is the turning point, after which vulnerability dramatically increases. Living on the street implies a constant violation of rights, as well as a deterioration of physical and mental health and a continuous risk of physical and verbal violence.



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## SECTION



# Analysis of the experience of the pandemic

## WHO ARE THE MOBILE EU CITIZENS WHO HAVE LIVED ON THE STREETS OF BARCELONA DURING THE PANDEMIC?

The Covid-19 pandemic has worsened the situation of people living on the street, as stated by 40% of the mobile EU citizens who responded to the survey. During the interviews we conducted in November, we asked who had started to sleep on the streets since the lockdown established by Royal Decree 463/2020<sup>9</sup> of 14 March (declaring the state of alarm), which imposed everyone to stay in to prevent the spread of the pandemic.

Out of all the mobile EU citizens interviewed, 19% stated that they started living in Barcelona since the Royal Decree mentioned before (March 2020).

Of these:

- ▶ 89% are men and 11% are women.
- ▶ The average age is 42.
- ▶ The length of stay on the street is 4 and a half months in average.

## WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO MOBILE EU CITIZENS IN HOMELESSNESS SINCE THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE STATE OF ALARM?

In addition to the people who have found themselves on the streets for the first time during lockdown, the experience of mobile EU citizens during the pandemic has also been very hard. Fortunately though, there has been a rather low incidence of Covid-19 virus infections (2% of the respondents reported having had Covid-19 or possible symptoms).

More than 89% have not used any municipal emergency beds made available because of the pandemic. In Barcelona, two new centres were set up with 400 places in total, together with other smaller centres with 50 or 70 places each. The requirements to enter these centres meant, among other things, not being able to bring any belongings or pets. Moreover, there wasn't any individual space, people were forbidden to leave once they accepted to stay inside, and they were not adapted to the needs of most of the people sleeping rough for a long time.

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<sup>9</sup> Royal Decree 463/2020, of 14 March, declaring a state of alarm for the management of the health crisis caused by COVID-19. Published in: "BOE" no. 67, of 14/03/2020.

Another problem has been the lack of information that homeless people have suffered, due to, among other things, the lack of access to media, language barriers or the closure of resources for homeless people (where they usually get the information).

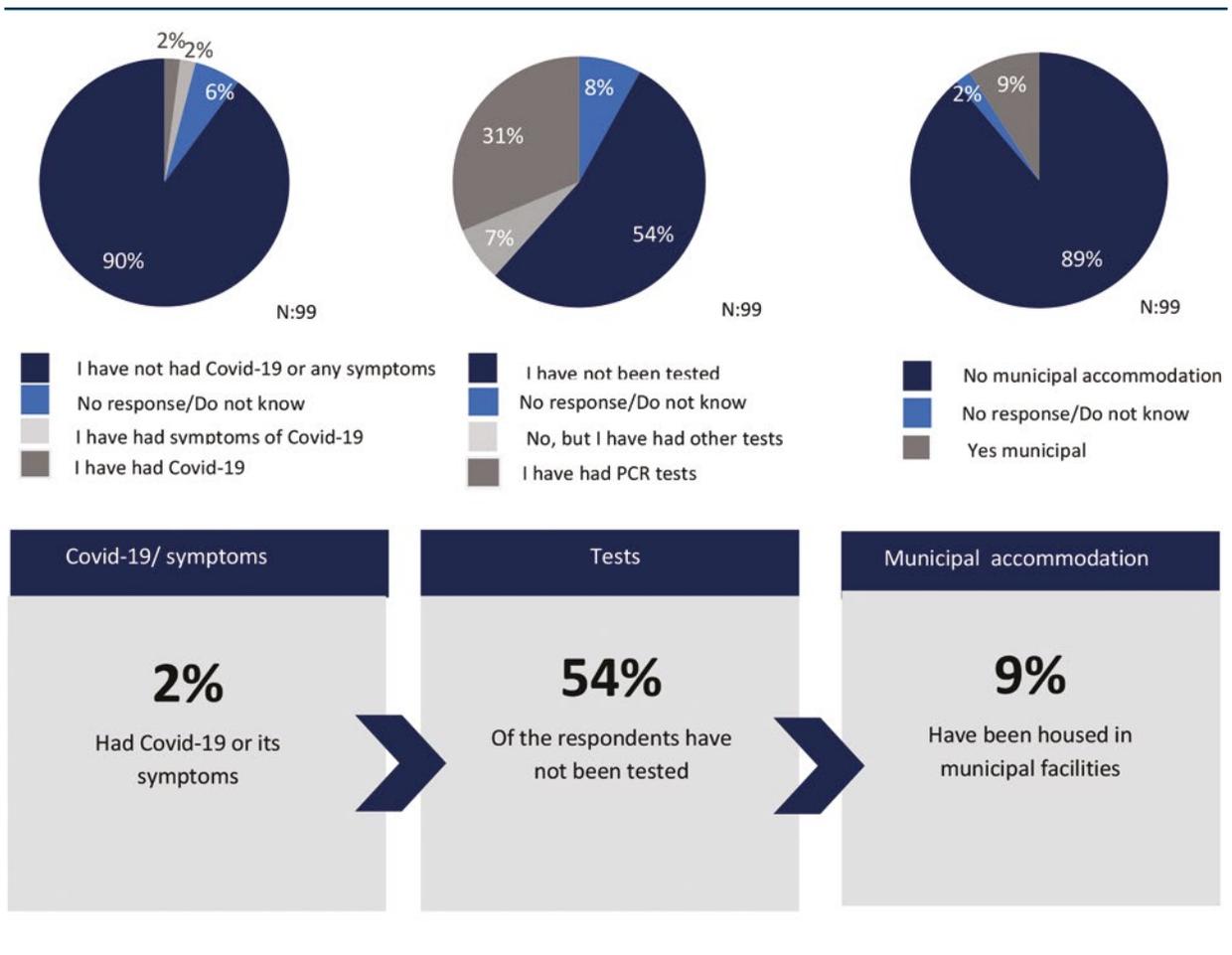
Arrels' educators have witnessed this lack of information and adapted resources:

"When you are in a situation of exclusion, even less information reaches you; that is what happened during the first days of the state of alarm. Those were days, moreover, when it rained, it was cold and there was nowhere to shelter", says an educator of Arrels' open centre.

"People mainly needed a shower, but they also needed a place to charge their mobile phones to stay connected and to contact social services."

"People came to the door of the open centre asking what they could do; they didn't live on the street before, most of them are migrants and have not a strong social network to rely on. It happened during the first weeks and even now. People arrive with their suitcases in an extreme situation and don't know where to go", says another of the educators.

Concerning tests, only 31% of people said they have had a PCR test, despite people in homelessness being a group with high chances to be infected.



## WHAT IS THE SELF-DECLARED PERCEPTION OF THE SITUATION?

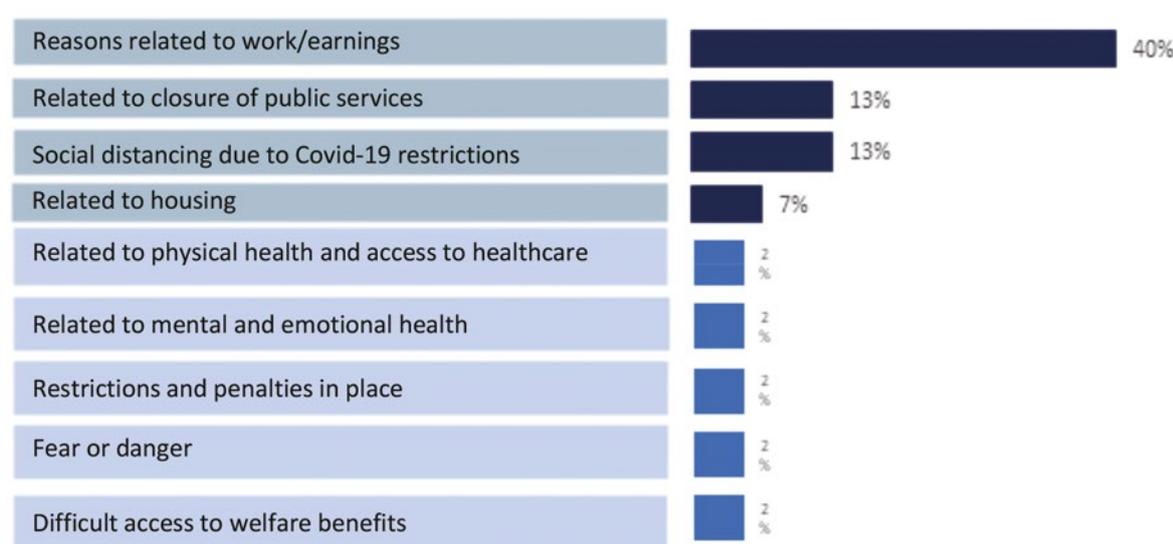
40% of EU migrants claim to be in a worse situation since the beginning of the state of alarm. Only 5% perceive themselves to be better off.

TOTAL	FREQ %
Same	36%
Better	5%
No response/Do not know	18%
Worse	40%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

Segmented by gender, most of women claimed to be worse off (73%), in contrast with the low proportion for men in the same category (37%).

TOTAL BY GENDER	MEN	WOMEN	OTHERS	NO RESPONSE/DO NOT KNOW
Same	39%	9%	0%	67%
Better	6%	0%	0%	0%
No response/Do not know	18%	18%	0%	33%
Worse	37%	73%	100%	0%
<b>Total (General)</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 1- What are the reasons for feeling that the situation has worsened?



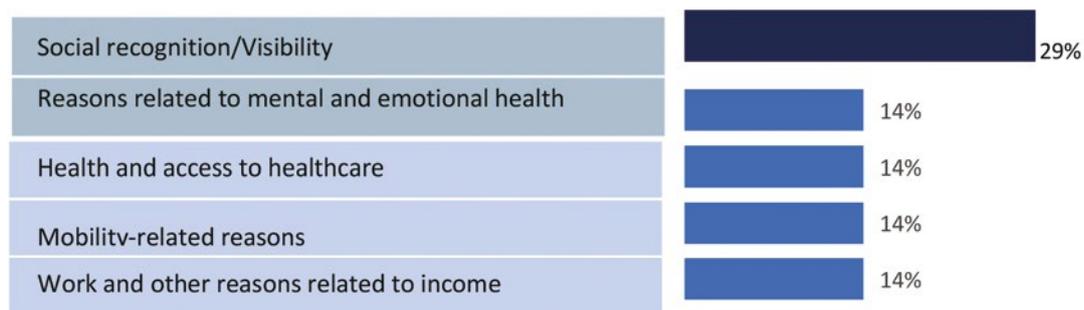
\* 16% No response/Do not know

\*\* N: 45 (the sample is higher than the total number of people who have answered that their situation has worsened as there can be up to 3 reasons per person).

The main reasons why people from other EU countries claim to have been most affected by the pandemic are related to the loss of work or difficulties in job seeking, with its consequences

on income. The closure of homeless services and resources or public spaces, and the difficulties in seeking help due to isolation and social distancing are other reasons highlighted.

## 2- What are the reasons for feeling that the situation has improved?



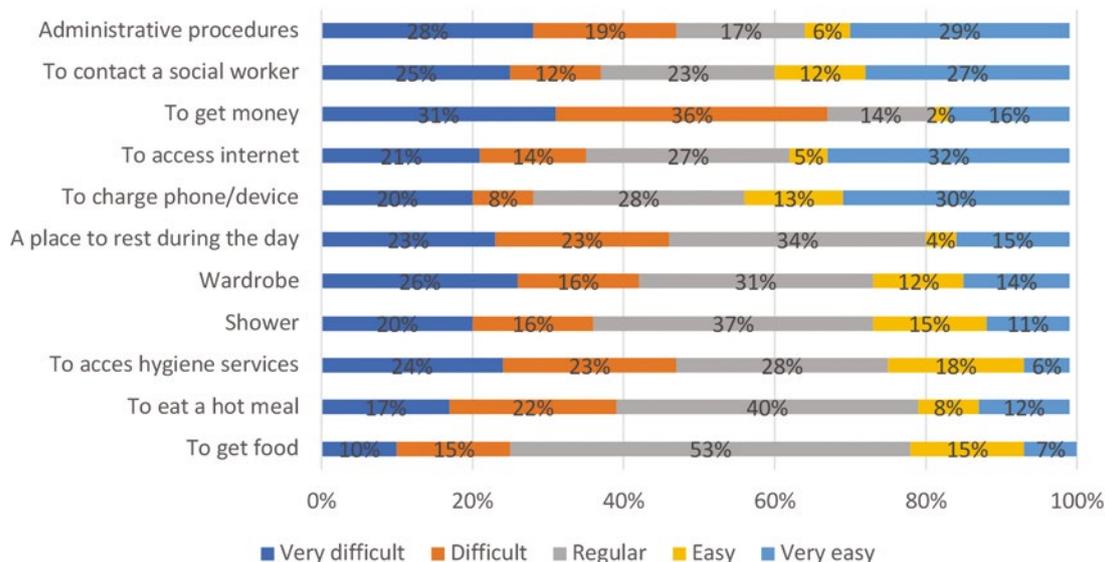
\* 14% No response/Do not know

\*\* N:7 (The sample is higher than the total number of people who have answered that their situation has improved as there can be up to 3 reasons per person).

**On the other hand, 5% (n:7) of respondents said that the pandemic had brought some positive consequences.** The main reason was, in their opinion, an increased visibility and social recognition (29%). This is due to the house confinement implemented by the authorities since the state of alarm in March 2020, so that homeless people were the only ones who were still on the streets and therefore their presence was much more noticeable. In this sense, the response of citizens

during the months of lockdown was crucial: in most of the neighbourhoods in Barcelona, community-led support groups were organised to offer food, emotional support and in some cases even accommodation to people who were sleeping on the street. Arrels Fundació set up a telephone help-line which, from the beginning of the state of alarm (March 2020) until December 2020 registered approximately 600 calls from citizens concerned about the situation of homeless people.

### 3- How difficult is it to do some selected activities during the pandemic?



As reflected in the graph, for those who answered that the pandemic had made their situation worse (40%), the actions with the highest level of complexity were, in order of importance:

1. **To get money (67%)**, since all activities carried out in the street disappeared due to the lockdown imposed, making it impossible to ask for money or to do small jobs;
2. **Administrative procedures (47%)**, such as registering in the city, renewing or applying for identity documents (Foreigner Identity Number, EU Citizen Registration Certificate, National Identity Card), obtaining the necessary health card to access the public health system, etc. These processes were paralysed during the period of the state of alarm;

3. **Contacting a social worker (25%)**. On the one hand, the resources providing face-to-face care were in many cases closed or significantly restricted their access, and on the other hand, the use of online tools with every public authority was increased. The digital divide became more evident than ever, as homeless people either had no devices, or no internet access (21%) or not enough digital skills.

Finally, **finding a place to rest during the day** was also complicated because of the closure or limited capacity in many establishments. This was particularly serious because the police were ordered to fine people who were on the street, which meant that homeless people could not stay peacefully in their usual places (46%).

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## SECTION



# Analysis of the reasons for staying in the city of Barcelona

## WHAT IS THE GENERAL CONTEXT?

This section aims, firstly, to provide an overview of the route of the mobile EU citizens interviewed until arriving to Barcelona, and secondly, to find out the reasons for moving to Barcelona. Finally, another objective is to identify the type of social assistance and care they receive.

## WHAT IS THE LAST PLACE YOU HAVE LIVED IN?

Out of the 99 respondents interviewed on the night of 26 November, 83% had previously lived in a different place other than Barcelona: 53% lived outside Spain, 12% lived in other towns of Catalonia, and 18% in other parts of Spain.

- a. *Outside Spain (53%): 44 years old on average; having stayed there on average for 10 years and 6 months.*
- b. *Other parts of Spain (18%): 48 years old on average; having stayed there on average for 3 years and a month.*
- c. *Another town in Catalonia (12%): 42 years old on average; having stayed there on average for 3 years and 6 months.*

d. *Always lived in the city of Barcelona (5%): 49 years old on average.*

e. *No response/Do not know (12%): 44 years old on average.*

Only 5% said they have always lived in Barcelona. They are older than any of the other groups: 49 years old on average.

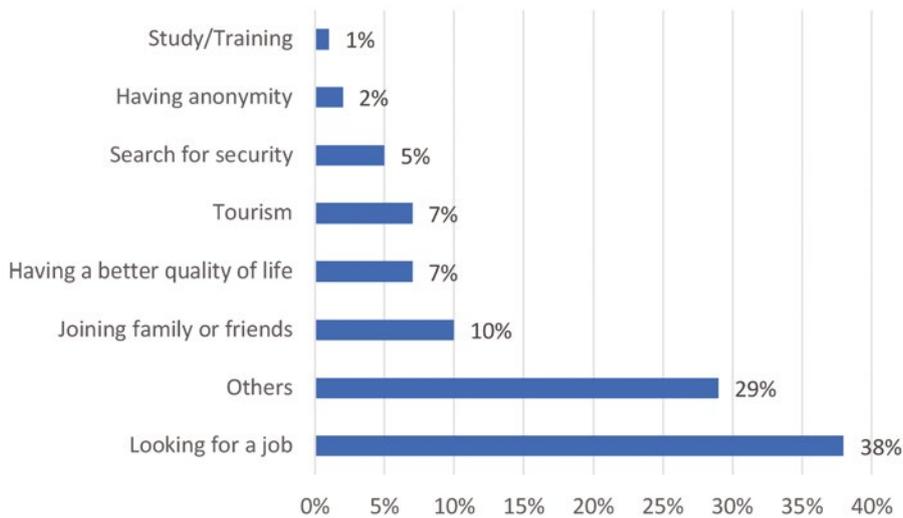
On the other hand, those who lived in a place outside Spain were those who had been living in the same place for the longest time: more than 10 years outside Barcelona.

Out of all those who have not always lived in Barcelona (82 people), 34% have lived on the street in the last place where they have lived and 50% have not. In other words, 34% of these people had already had an experience of living on the street before doing so in Barcelona.

The following questions were answered only by those who had not always lived in Barcelona (82 people). Another 5 people answered that they had always lived on the streets in Barcelona and another 11 answered No response/Do not know. Therefore, none of them was asked to say why they moved to Barcelona.

## WHAT ARE THE MAIN REASONS FOR MOVING TO BARCELONA?

Looking for a job or joining family or friends are the main reasons why people moved to Barcelona. In the “other” category, some of the reasons were: family break-ups, to facilitate administrative procedures (e.g., residence permit), health problems and the weather (especially people coming from EU countries with very cold winters).



### Testimonial

*D. A. is an Italian citizen who has been living for the last 3 years in a flat managed by Arrels Fundació. He arrived at Spain 18 years ago with a work contract in a hotel. He lived for 8 years in Madrid, where he worked without any problems until he lost his job. He then decided to move to Barcelona, where after 3 years living in a guesthouse, he ran out of savings and ended up living on the street. He was in this situation for 7 years until he moved into an individual apartment of Arrels. His biography reflects the reality of many of the mobile EU citizens Arrels works with: they move to Spain with a stable situation (job, accommodation, income...), but the lack of an employment and a support network makes them fall into homelessness.*

The results are distributed among gender and age groups below, taking into account the first reason mentioned in the interview.

<b>GENDER</b>	<b>MAN</b>	<b>WOMAN</b>	<b>NO RESPONSE/DO NOT KNOW</b>
Looking for a job	35%	70%	0%
Others	32%	10%	33%
Joining family or friends	10%	0%	33%
Search for security	3%	10%	33%
Study/training	1%	0%	0%
Tourism	7%	10%	0%
Having anonymity	3%	0%	0%
Having a better quality of life	9%	0%	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>AGE</b>	<b>16-25</b>	<b>26-35</b>	<b>36-45</b>	<b>46-55</b>	<b>56-65</b>	<b>&gt;65</b>	<b>NO RESPONSE/ DO NOT KNOW</b>
Looking for a job	75%	40%	40%	40%	24%	0%	50%
Search for security	0%	0%	5%	15%	0%	0%	0%
Study/training	0%	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Tourism	0%	13%	5%	5%	12%	0%	0%
Others	25%	27%	20%	20%	53%	50%	25%
Joining family or friends	0%	0%	15%	10%	12%	50%	0%
Having anonymity	0%	7%	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%
Having a better quality of life	0%	13%	10%	5%	0%	0%	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

In terms of gender, 70% of women chose looking for a job as the main reason for moving to Barcelona, compared to 35% of men. Looking for a job is also the main reason that stands out among young people aged 16 to 25.

## WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU WERE ABLE TO SLEEP IN AN ACCOMMODATION?

(From here on, the total sample is again of 99 interviews)

### 1- Average period since the last time a person has slept in an accommodation

<b>OVERALL AVERAGE</b>	2 years and 9 months
<b>AVERAGE BY GENDER</b>	
Man	2 years and 8 months
Woman	4 years and 8 months
<b>AVERAGE BY AGE</b>	
16-25	2 years and 9 months
26-35	1 year and 5 months
36-45	2 years and 11 months
46-55	2 years and 6 months
56-65	3 years and 8 months
> 65	2 years

On average, mobile EU women have not slept in an accommodation for longer than men (2 years more). This data proves both the longer time these women are on the street and the lack of accommodation adapted to the needs of these women. On many occasions, these women have preferred to continue sleeping on the streets rather than an accommodation which is not prepared to offer them the security, privacy and/or resources they need.

### 2- Type of accommodation they have slept in

13% of EU respondents slept for the last time in a hostel, followed by 12% who slept in a squat. This variable is then segmented by gender.

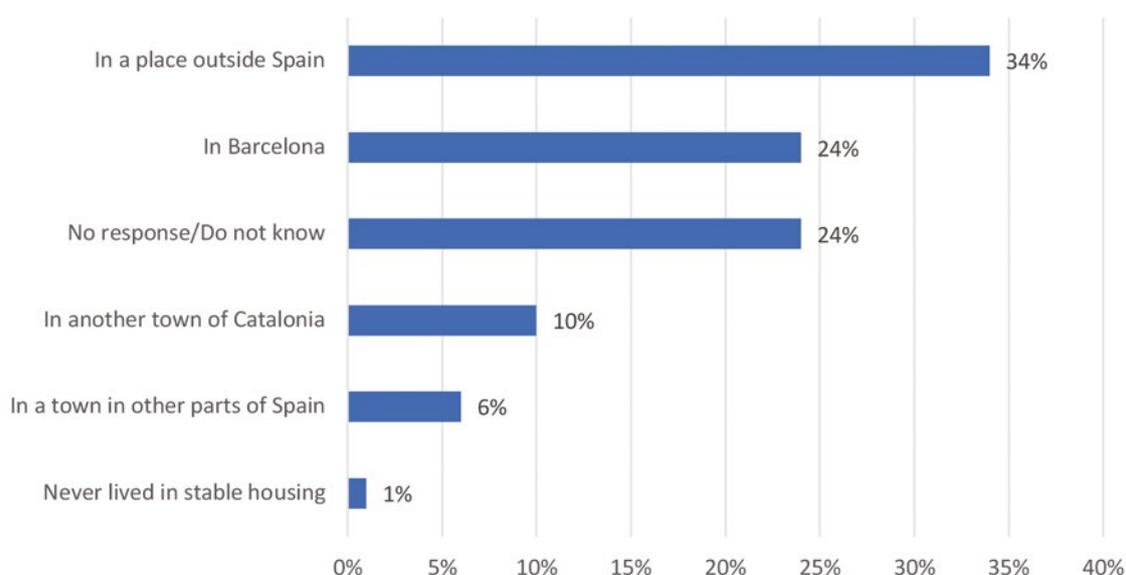


TYPE OF ACCOMMODATION	MAN	WOMAN
Homeless shelter	14%	0%
Hostel, guesthouse or hotel	6%	0%
Penitentiary institution	2%	0%
No response/Do not know	35%	45%
Other	4%	18%
Housing with support services	4%	0%
Rental housing	8%	18%
With relatives or friends	6%	0%
Home ownership	7%	0%
Occupied housing or squats	12%	18%
Sheltered housing	2%	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 3- Last place where they had stable housing

34% of the respondents last lived in a stable dwelling in a place outside Spain, while for 24% of them it was in the city of Barcelona.

LAST PLACE WHERE THEY HAD STABLE HOUSING (N:99)



The three most common options (in another place outside Spain, in Barcelona and No response/Do not know) are the same for both men and women. However, it is worth noting that, while for more than half of the women the last stable dwelling

they had was outside Spain, this was only the case for a third of the men surveyed. However, the low number of mobile EU women who answered (11% out of 99) is not enough to draft any conclusions.

GENDER	MAN	WOMAN	NO RESPONSE/DO NOT KNOW
In the city of Barcelona	24%	27%	0%
In another town in Catalonia	11%	0%	33%
In another place outside Spain	33%	55%	0%
In another town in the rest of Spain	7%	0%	0%
No response/Do not know	24%	18%	67%
I have never lived in stable housing	1%	0%	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

In terms of age, the same three options are the most frequent ones. Around 40% of people aged between 16 and 35, and between 46 and 55 have had a stable home outside Spain for the last time. However, for the 36-45 age group, the main option is 'in the city of Barcelona', while 'No response/Do

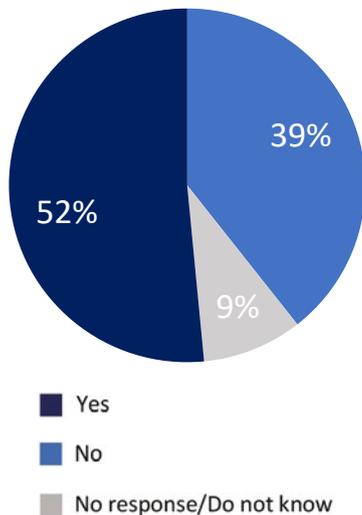
not know' is the preferred option for the 55+ age group. It is also worth noting that almost 1 in 5 people aged 36-55 had their last stable accommodation in another town in Catalonia, so they moved to Barcelona when they found themselves excluded from accommodation.

AGE	16-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	>65	NO RESPONSE/DO NOT KNOW
In the city of Barcelona	40%	17%	33%	21%	26%	0%	17%
In another town in Catalonia	0%	6%	21%	17%	0%	0%	0%
In another place outside Spain	40%	44%	29%	42%	26%	0%	33%
In another town in the rest of Spain	0%	6%	8%	0%	11%	33%	0%
No response/Do not know	20%	28%	4%	21%	37%	67%	50%
I have never lived in stable housing	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>						

## WHAT IS THE CONTACT YOU HAVE WITH THE SOCIAL SERVICES OF THE CITY OF BARCELONA?

Finally, we analysed the type of support offered by social services to homeless mobile EU citizens, in the last 6 months prior to the survey (therefore, with Covid-19-related restrictions).

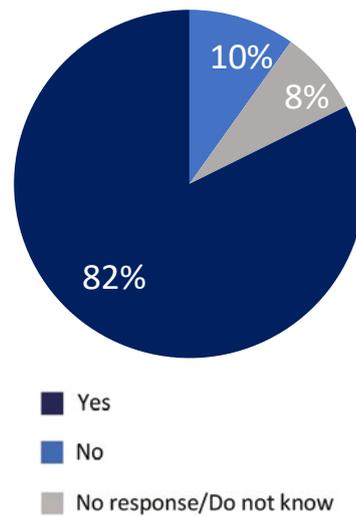
### WERE YOU IN CONTACT WITH A SOCIAL EDUCATOR OR WORKER ANY TIME DURING THE LAST 6 MONTHS? (N:99)



52% of the homeless mobile EU citizens received support from an educator or social worker.

Out of those who claimed having received support from a social worker or educator (52%), 82% received it from the social services of Barcelona.

### DID YOU RECEIVE SUPPORT FROM THE SOCIAL SERVICES OF THE CITY OF BARCELONA? (N:51)

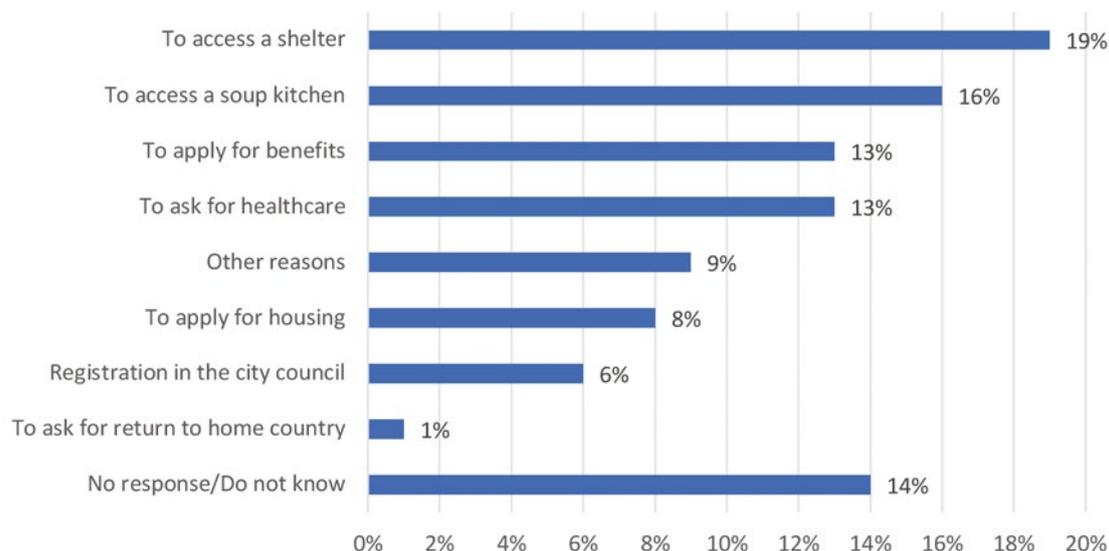


WHEN DID YOU RECEIVE IT? (N:27)	%
Since living on the street	38%
No response/Do not know	25%
Before living on the street	38%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

38% of the people who were assisted by social services in the last 6 months received support since living on the street.

## WHAT ARE THE REASONS TO REACH SOCIAL SERVICES?

REASONS TO REACH SOCIAL SERVICES



In Barcelona there are 3 shelters managed by the city council. Before the pandemic, it was possible to access them directly, but as a result of the restrictions caused by Covid-19, an allowance from the social services is now required. However, the waiting time to access one of these shelters can now exceed 12 months. There are also other types of housing solutions offered by the city, but again, in order to access them it is necessary to have the permission of a social worker first.

Concerning the soup kitchens dependent on the city council, anyone can go on their own for a maximum of three days a year. But after these, a report by a social worker is required. For private soup kitchens, it depends on whether the maximum capacity has been reached or not.

In terms of healthcare, everyone is entitled to receive treatment in case of emergency, but a

health card is needed in order to receive sustained care. The process to obtain a health card is free of charge, but there are 3 requisites: you must have a valid identity document (passport, identity card of the country of origin or Spanish identity card), be registered in the city census and be registered with the Social Security. Foreigners who are registered with the Social Security and have an income below the basic income (€604) can apply for a health card. In case of coming from another EU country, an official document from the home country is required in order to know whether the costs of healthcare are covered by the home country or not. Finally, for foreigners who are not registered or authorised to reside in Spain and who can prove that they have been registered in a municipality in Spain for more than three months, a specific application for a health card must be submitted, if they are not recognised as insured by the National Health System.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.boe.es/boe\\_catalan/dias/2018/07/30/pdfs/BOE-A-2018-10752-C.pdf](https://www.boe.es/boe_catalan/dias/2018/07/30/pdfs/BOE-A-2018-10752-C.pdf)

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## SECTION

# IV

## Administrative and judicial situation

In this section, one more mobile EU citizen has been added to the initial sample of 99 people, as a result of the 10 interviews conducted by the legal team in the days following 26 November 2020. Therefore, **the total sample in this section is 100 people.**

When discussing about administrative situation in this section, we do it around 2 procedures: registration in the city census and the residence status in Spain.

We claim that migrants have more structural risks and vulnerability because they often have a reduced network of family and friends, and more difficulties in obtaining economic and social support from public institutions, which are linked to the two administrative procedures mentioned previously.

### REGISTRATION

**Registration** means registering in the municipal census of one's place of residence and it determines that the person is considered to be a resident of that town. Thus, the **municipal census** is an administrative register collecting basic information: first and last names, address, sex, nationality, place and date of birth, DNI (National Identity Document, for Spanish citizens) / NIE (Foreigner's Identity Number) or any other similar document, and level of studies.

Anyone living in Barcelona can register as a resident, regardless of their administrative status, and therefore a valid passport from their country of origin can also be valid for registration. Foreigners who have a foreigner's identity card must use this document to register.

Registration thus becomes an obligation for the administration and a citizen's right of great importance, since it entails several rights and duties. Among others:

- ▶ Right to public **health care**
- ▶ Right to seek assistance from **social services**
- ▶ Right to services **for children and adolescents**
- ▶ Entitlement to **emergency welfare benefits.**

### HOW DIFFICULT IS IT FOR PEOPLE LIVING ON THE STREET TO REGISTER?

The regulations governing registration in the census (Law 4/1996, of 10 January 1996, amending Law 7/1985, of 2 April 1985)<sup>11</sup> establish that it must reflect the address where the person resides within the municipality. In the case of people who live in the street, they do not have any kind of supporting document of their address, so many town halls refuse to register them, even if it is clear that the person is living on the streets of that municipality.

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11 <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-1985-5392>

In order to avoid this and to establish a common interpretation of the regulation, the Resolution of 17 February 2020 was issued, giving technical instructions on the management of the municipal census<sup>12</sup>. **This resolution recognises the possibility of registering without an address and establishes the procedure for doing so, mobile EU citizens included.** However, currently most of the city councils in Catalonia do not take this resolution into account and refuse registration applications from people living on the street.

## ARE MOBILE EU CITIZENS REGISTERED?

Indeed, only 34% of the interviewees are registered, while 44% are not registered and 22% do not know anything about it or do not want to answer. Of those who are registered, on average they have been registered for 3 years and 6 months; 65% are registered in the city of Barcelona, 18% in other places, and 18% do not know in which municipality or do not want to say it.

There are large gender differences: while only 9% of mobile EU women are registered, this percentage rises to 38% for men.

For those who are not registered, the main reasons are: 34% because they do not have the right supporting documents, 20% because they do not know what registration is, 9% do not find it necessary and 36% do not know or do not want to answer.

As we have already explained, it is essential to have an identity document from the country of origin or a passport (in absence of a document issued by Spanish authorities) to register, and for many of the people who are living on the street it is impossible for them to obtain these documents by themselves. The vulnerability of homeless people and the complexity of administrative procedures make it very difficult to obtain the necessary documents.

## HOW IS THE RESIDENCE STATUS OF MOBILE EU CITIZENS REGULATED?

As already mentioned in the introduction to the report, EU citizens can move freely within EU member states by virtue of Directive 2004/38/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council. Their stay and/or residence in Spanish territory is regulated by Royal Decree 240/2007, of 16 February 2007, on the entry, free movement and residence in Spain of citizens of EU member states and other states of the European Economic Area.

According to these regulations, it is required that EU citizens register in the Central Register of Foreigners. After this, a certificate of EU citizenship (also known as green card) is issued. Without this document, residence or work permits are not granted, and it is not possible to access any welfare benefits, such as the state Minimum Vital Income<sup>13</sup> (Ingreso Mínimo Vital, IMV) or the regional Guaranteed Citizenship Income (Renta Garantizada de Ciudadanía, RGC).<sup>14</sup>

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12 [https://www.boe.es/diario\\_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2020-4784](https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2020-4784)

13 [https://www.boe.es/diario\\_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2020-5493](https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2020-5493) : The Minimum Vital Income is a welfare benefit which aims at preventing the risk of poverty and social exclusion of people who lack economic resources to cover their basic needs. It is part of the protective action of the Social Security provided by the central government, and guarantees a minimum level of income to those who are in a situation of economic vulnerability.

14 The Guaranteed Citizenship Income (GCI) is a regional welfare benefit established in Law 14/2017, of 20 July, for a dignified life to people and households in a situation of poverty in Catalonia, in order to promote their autonomy and active participation in society. It is a subjective right consisting of two parts: a) A guaranteed, unconditional benefit, subject to the requirements established by law and b) A complementary benefit under the condition of committing to a plan of social or job inclusion, which aims to overcome the conditions that have led to the need for the benefit. Any person who, during the 2 months prior to the application, has an income of less than 100% of the sufficiency income indicator for Catalonia can be a beneficiary. From April 2020, the income threshold is €664 per month in twelve payments. The GCI can be received by people who have no resources or whose resources are insufficient to cover basic needs, provided they meet a series of requirements. They can be people without work and/or without resources, retired individuals, recipients of benefits and other subsidies, single parents, etc. [https://dretssocials.gencat.cat/ca/ambits\\_tematics/pobresa\\_i\\_inclusio\\_social/renda\\_garantida\\_ciudadania/rendagarantida/](https://dretssocials.gencat.cat/ca/ambits_tematics/pobresa_i_inclusio_social/renda_garantida_ciudadania/rendagarantida/)

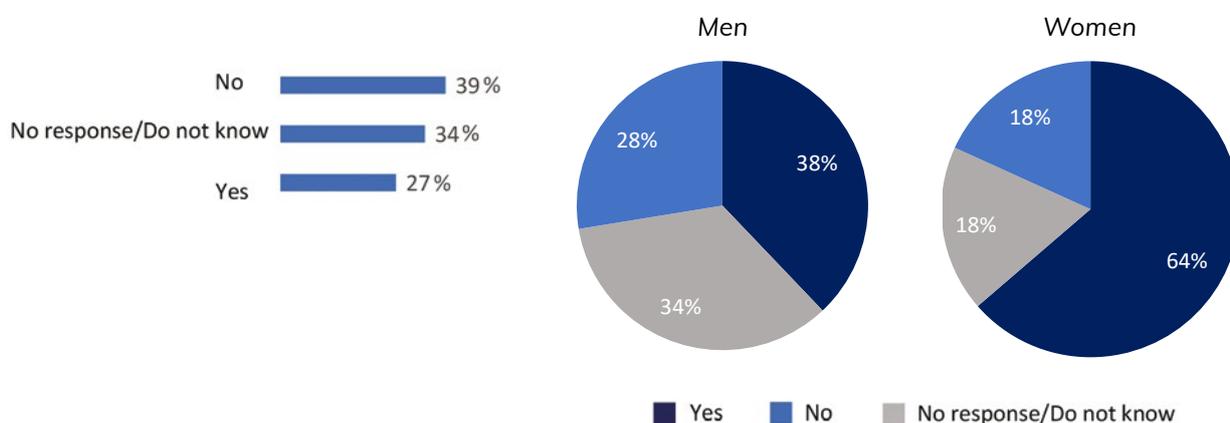
According to the survey results, only 27% of the mobile EU citizens interviewed have this certificate (green card), while 39% do not have it and 34% do not know anything about it or do not want to answer. In the distribution by gender, women again are more vulnerable, since only 18% of them have a certificate of EU citizenship.

On the other hand, 5% of those interviewed are asylum seekers in Spain or in another country:

they are men and mostly young, between 16 and 25 years of age. According to Spanish legislation, for citizens of an EU Member State the asylum application is not admitted, but in practice many applicants are admitted.

Moreover, given the difficulties for mobile EU citizens to obtain a regular administrative status, some choose to apply for asylum.

### DO YOU HAVE AN EU CITIZENSHIP CERTIFICATE? (N:100)



## WHY CAN'T MOST PEOPLE GET AN EU CITIZENSHIP CERTIFICATE?

In order to obtain the EU citizenship certificate or the so-called green card, the regulations establish the following requirements:

- ▶ Being an employed person in Spain, or
- ▶ Being a self-employed person in Spain, or
- ▶ Be a student and be enrolled in a public or private centre recognised or financed by the educational authorities.

And also

- ▶ Have sufficient resources for themselves so that they do not become a burden on the Spanish welfare system during their period of residence.
- ▶ Have public or private health insurance, obtained in Spain or in another country, which provides a coverage in Spain during their period of residence equivalent to that provided by the National Health System.

These requirements leave out most of mobile EU citizens in homelessness for several reasons:

- ▶ Firstly, for a person who does not have the basic needs of secure and stable housing, food, hygiene or health, and who often has no job skills, it is very difficult to obtain and maintain a job.

- ▶ Secondly, this employment, if any, must ensure sufficient economic resources. The Covid-19 crisis has highlighted the precariousness of the Spanish labour market, in which many workers (often in undeclared jobs) do not even receive the minimum wage established by law.
- ▶ Another obstacle to obtaining this European registration certificate is the difficulty in obtaining a health insurance, as not all European citizens have public insurance, and private insurance requires availability of income.

In order to meet these requirements, the role of organisations such as Arrels Fundació is essential. These organisations can offer not only information and support during the bureaucratic process, but in some cases they can also provide social, economic and health support to mobile EU citizens in order to overcome these administrative obstacles.

The support of these organisations is key, since not being registered and/or not having the right documentation restricts their access to public services. **Therefore, having social support can make it easier for the person to obtain the EU citizenship certificate and not be left out.**

Finally, it is important to highlight that the digital divide has also negatively affected the procedures for obtaining the residence certificate as an EU citizen, since they must be carried out digitally. As a consequence of the pandemic, it is essential to make an appointment online to apply for this certificate. At the time of writing this report, the number of available appointments is insufficient, running out in a few minutes, which means being always logged in, which is unfeasible for people on the streets. Moreover, this problem is leading to the emergence of a black market selling this kind of appointments.

#### Testimonial:

When D.A. (an Italian national) started living on the street, he had no documentation because it was stolen. D.A. spent 8 years living on the street, unable to access most public services because he was in an irregular situation. When he moved into one of the flats managed by our foundation three years ago, he started a bureaucratic process to get his papers back. First of all, he had to obtain his Italian identity card. This process took 1 year and a half and involved online coordination with the consulate and the requirement of several documents, which Arrels helped to manage.

Once the Italian identity card was obtained, it was necessary to get an online appointment to obtain the residence certificate. This procedure implied waiting for more than a month and the support of Arrels' staff.

Regarding the requirements to obtain the certificate, the case of D.A. is **representative** of the situation of mobile EU citizens who have been in homelessness for a long time: **after more than 8 years living on the street, he had no financial resources or health insurance.** Only the support from Arrels Fundació enabled him to provide a social report in which the organisation assumed the costs of D.A.'s maintenance and health.

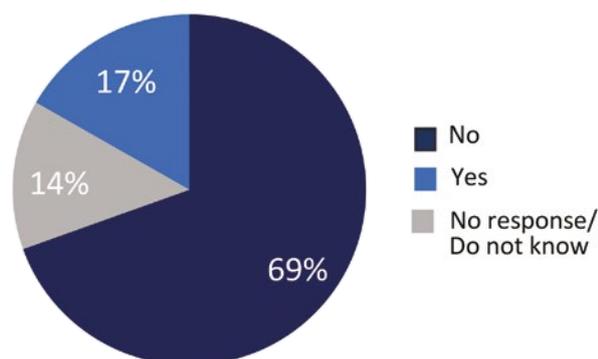
However, the relevant authorities did not accept it, so it was necessary to reapply for an appointment at another office (with more experience in similar cases) in order to finally obtain the corresponding certificate. The procedures started in 2018 and finished in May 2021. Without the support from Arrels Fundació, obtaining the EU citizenship certificate would not have been possible.

## ANALYSIS OF THE JUDICIAL SITUATION OF PEOPLE SLEEPING ROUGH

In this section we analyse the following data:

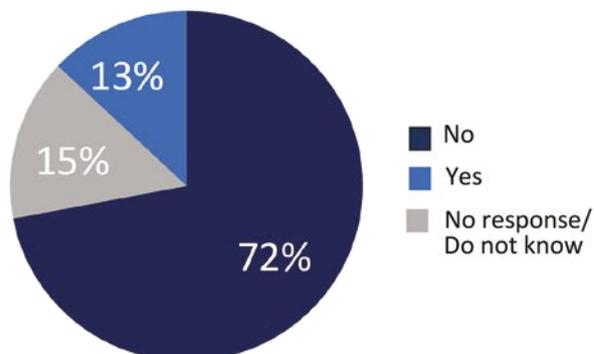
1. **Penalties received during the period of the state of alarm.** The Royal Decree regulating the state of alarm imposed confinement for everyone, with fines for people who did not comply with it. People living on the streets could in principle be fined by police officers without, a priori, being offered any housing alternative.

### 1- DID YOU RECEIVE ANY PENALTIES DURING THE STATE OF ALARM?

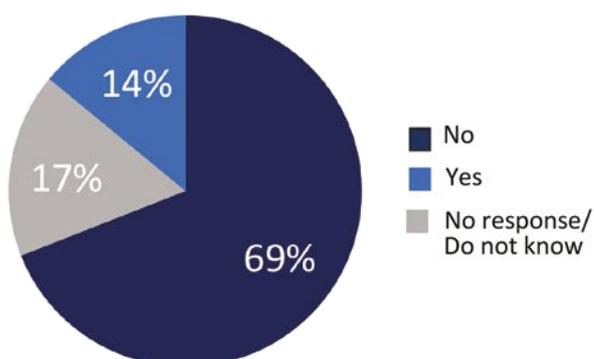


The Guardia Urbana (local police of Barcelona) and the Mossos d'Esquadra (regional police of Catalonia) fined some people living on the street for not complying with the confinement during the state of alarm. As a consequence, the City Council of Barcelona made a commitment to the organisations afterwards so the fines would not be enforced. Arrels has been informed of 24 fines from the Guardia Urbana and 12 from the Mossos d'Esquadra but, until the date of writing this report, none of them has been enforced when Arrels has played a mediation role.

### 2- COMPLAINTS RECEIVED DURING THE LAST YEAR (N: 100)



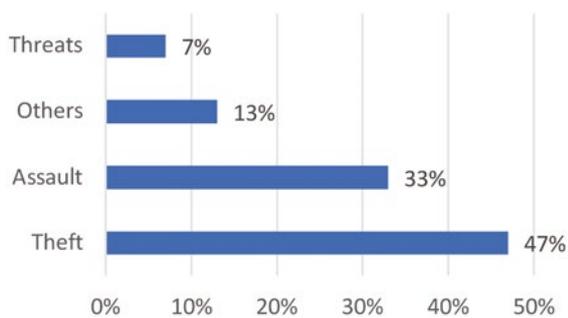
### 3- COMPLAINTS MADE DURING THE LAST YEAR (N:100)



2. **Complaints received during the last year:** people sleeping rough are often criminalised for actions or situations that are a consequence of their lack of housing, rights and dignified life conditions.
3. **Complaints made during the last year:** Living on the street is a risk in itself and involves a constant violation of people's rights, ranging from the right to housing to health, privacy, hygiene and personal safety.



#### REASONS FOR FILING A COMPLAINT (N: 14)

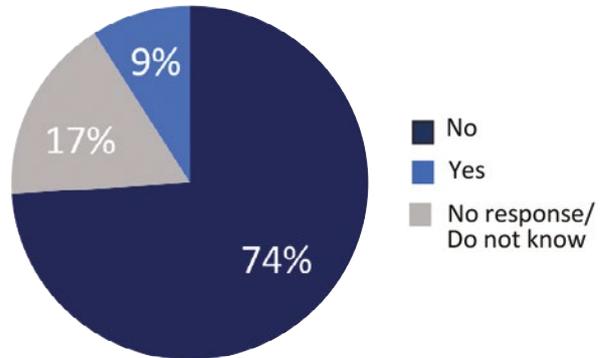


13% say they have been reported during the last 12 months.

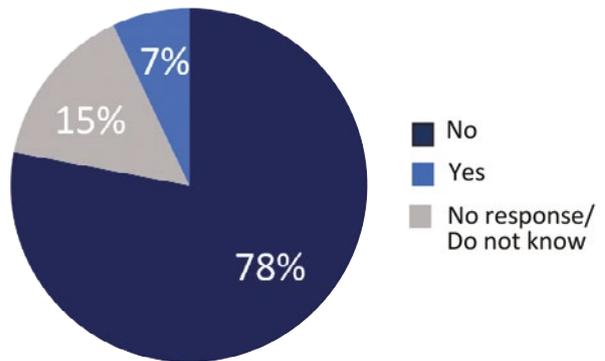
None of the mobile EU women said they had been reported, while 14% of the men said they had been.

On the other hand, 14% have filed a complaint against someone in the last year - all men - mainly for theft (47%) and assault (33%).

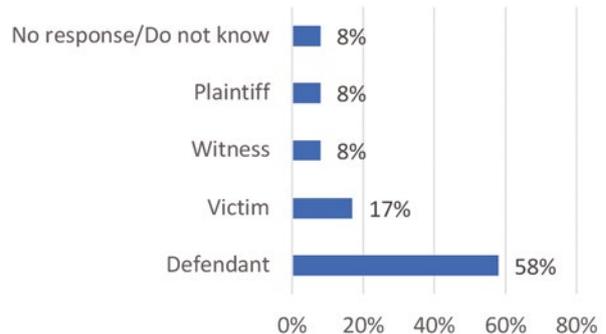
#### ATTENDANCE AT TRIALS DURING THE LAST YEAR (N:100)



#### SENTENCES RECEIVED DURING THE LAST YEAR (N:100)



#### ROLE IN THE TRIAL (N:9)



9% of the respondents attended at a trial during the last 12 months prior to the interview, out of whom 58% as defendants.

7% of the interviewees had to serve a sentence at any moment within the last 12 months prior to the survey.

Having to live on the street means that people are more exposed to physical or verbal violence and, sometimes, also to be violent against other people in destitution.

In the case of women, in addition to the violence they can suffer from sleeping rough, they have higher chances to suffer or having suffered gender-based violence and sexual assaults.

Violence against homeless people is one of the most invisible forms of violence. Many of the victims believe that the assaults are a part of their situation and do not even see themselves as victims. People in homelessness are not likely to report to the police because they do not trust in the judicial system, because of the difficulty in identifying the perpetrator(s) or because they think that sleeping rough entails receiving insults, threats and assaults. In the case of foreigners with an irregular administra-

tive status, most of the time they do not report due to the fear of receiving a deportation order.

Until recently, homeless people were not considered a vulnerable group to be protected, as the concept of aporophobia<sup>15</sup> was not included in the Criminal Code<sup>16</sup>. However, after a reform of this Code in 2021, aporophobia is now an aggravating circumstance in case of a crime and also a discrimination which can lead to a hate crime.

Living on the street involves many experiences of risk and violence, which are not always reported. They are often verbal threats or threats against physical integrity, or theft of personal belongings. Perpetrators are often people who have a home, but sometimes also other people who live on the street and who also suffer from situations of vulnerability.



15 Aporophobia refers to “phobia of poor or disadvantaged people” (Real Academia Española, n.d.).

16 On 25/06/2021, the 4th circumstance of article 22 of Organic Law 10/1995 of 23 November of the Criminal Code was modified by art. 6.1 of Organic Law 8/2021 of 4 June.

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# Conclusions

Despite the existence of a legal framework that, in principle, facilitates the free movement of European citizens, they experience more difficulties than Spanish nationals or non-EU citizens in several domains. For example, for third-country nationals, the Aliens Act provides for the possibility of obtaining a permit on the basis of exceptional circumstances for serious illnesses that cannot be cured in the country of origin, and if return would pose a serious risk to their health. This case does not apply to EU citizens, who are always required to have sufficient financial resources and to be covered by a health insurance.

The precarious living conditions of the mobile EU citizens interviewed are the result of their irregular residence status. Having a residence permit is the key to access every support service and improve one's condition. The more secure a person's residence status is, the more likely they are to have income, housing and health. People in irregular residence status are very vulnerable to homelessness as, most of the time, their only source of income is undeclared jobs that do not ensure social protection.

Access to the welfare system is extremely complex, especially for European citizens without resources who arrive in Spain and face difficulties in finding a job. In addition, complex administrative procedures also contribute to their exclusion.

Mobile EU citizens are more vulnerable to precariousness and exploitation at work. And in turn, not having a regular job prevents many from registering as EU citizens, which is an obstacle to accessing housing and social security. If prolonged for a long time, these living conditions may push people into extreme social exclusion and ultimately into homelessness.

The support of CSOs can facilitate their inclusion, as they offer counselling and social accompaniment to navigate the obstacles of the complex bureaucratic system. In addition, they are often mediators between these groups and public services. However, even if the work of CSOs is very important, it is essential that public institutions adopt a series of new measures and policy changes, which are described below.

## POLICY PROPOSALS

### Short-term measures at local level

#### **1. Open small centres in every neighbourhood so that people, including mobile EU citizens, can stop living on the streets.**

We need to overcome the current model of overcrowded hostels, and offer people a safe place to spend the night and which adapts to their needs (women and LGBTBI people, people with pets, people with addictions and/or mental health problems, people looking for or with a job, etc.). We propose small, night-time centres all over the city of Barcelona so that people do not have to spend many hours a day travelling in search of shelter. It is also necessary that these spaces do not require people to be registered in the city, since most of the mobile EU citizens who have been living on the streets for more than a year are not registered in the city.

#### **2. Strengthen outreach work in towns and cities.**

We propose to expand the teams of outreach workers in order to intensify accompaniment and to connect people to the services they need. To this end, it is essential that these teams receive ongoing training and are aware of the specific needs of people sleeping rough, both foreigners and nationals.

### **3. Make available more daytime centres to protect vulnerable people.**

We propose to open small spaces during the day, all over the city of Barcelona where people can relax, store their belongings, charge their mobile phones, have a hot drink, take a shower and change their clothes... As in the case of night-time spaces, they should be open to anyone who is in homelessness, regardless of their administrative situation.

### **4. More coordination and training of police officers.**

Law enforcement is often avoided by foreigners, both EU citizens and third country nationals. The fear of being expelled or fined for not having the proper documentation prevents contacting the police, who are often seen as part of the problem instead of the solution to their problems.

We need law enforcement officials to act beyond the administrative status of individuals and to be trained on the reality of homelessness and the situations of extreme vulnerability people live in. They must also have information on existing resources to guide homeless people. We need more coordination with social services and other public services, in general and for mobile EU citizens in particular, too.

### **5. More support from the city council.**

We urge the city council to advocate for the rights of all citizens in Barcelona, regardless of their country of origin or residence status. The regional government of Catalonia should accompany, train and provide resources to the municipalities so that they can offer support to people living on their streets, without them having to travel to big cities like Barcelona to seek adequate support.

## **Measures to end homelessness**

### **1. Prevention mechanisms to ensure that no one ends up in homelessness.**

On the one hand, everyone should know where to seek help if they are about to become homeless and find solutions that avoid this situation. On the other hand, the response from public institutions needs to be more agile in order to avoid the definitive loss of a housing.

### **2. The right to housing as a starting point, beyond social services.**

We need more facilities for homeless people to access public housing, as well as specific developments and public-private partnerships to increase the number of housing units that follow the Housing First model, giving access to mobile EU citizens too. The approach to housing should be comprehensive: a person cannot be released from prison, be discharged from a hospital or leave the child and youth protection services if they do not have any accommodation to go to.

### **3. Amend the rules governing the free movement and residence of EU citizens.**

We urge policy makers to amend this legislation so it is easier for homeless EU migrants to obtain the basic documentation that will allow them to access their rights, such as going to the doctor with a health card, looking for a job, or applying for welfare benefits.

### **4. Create teams of professionals from different health disciplines to visit people living on the streets.**

On average, people who sleep rough live twenty years less than those who have a home. We propose to create teams of health professionals to provide care for people on the street, to help reconnect them with the health system. Protocols are also needed in public hospitals so that no one is discharged without ensuring that they have a place to go.

## Measures in the context of Covid-19

### 1. Emergency resources need to be permanent.

During the state of alarm, several towns in Catalonia have been able to quickly open emergency centres for homeless people. This is an opportunity to ensure that people do not go back to living on the streets. Any centre that is set up must provide a place for confinement (if needed) as long as the pandemic exists, but they should also be transformed into permanent resources so that people do not have to return to living on the streets once the pandemic is over.

### 2. Centres for confinement need to be small and focused on specific needs.

Most of the emergency resources opened during the state of alarm are overcrowded spaces with strict regulations that exclude many homeless people. There is a need for smaller, directly accessible spaces that are committed to harm reduction and offer mental health care.

When people do not know where to ask for help and just try to survive, their physical and mental health deteriorates drastically. Many people living on the street report not being able to meet their basic needs and not receiving any kind of social care. The most obvious conclusion is that more resources are needed, but they must be adapted to the reality of homeless people and their specific and complex problems.

Very often many people do not go to centres set up for citizens in homelessness, because they do not respond to their needs and problems.

Most of the resources that exist in Barcelona focus on covering basic needs and do not work to change living conditions beyond the urgency of survival. In addition to being located far away from each other, they are currently saturated, which has serious consequences for people living on the street.

### 3. The low-threshold services and the outreach workers of NGOs and local authorities are the only contact point for people living on the street.

In case of future pandemic outbreaks, the centres offering hot meals, showers and shelter should be kept open. They are an essential contact point for people living on the street. On this regard, outreach work should be developed to provide social and healthcare support, to proactively detect possible cases of covid-19 and to provide people with useful information.

### 4. Information is essential to prevent new cases of homelessness.

Everyone should know where to ask for help if they live in precarious conditions and risk being homeless. Policy makers must put homelessness on top of their agendas and create policies aimed at preventing it and raising public awareness, so that every citizen knows what to do when they are at risk of homelessness.

Finally, public institutions must have strategies and plans that prevent people from sleeping rough, with access to decent housing as the core principle. At the same time, and in the case of those people who are already experiencing homelessness, this situation should be regarded as a housing emergency and policy makers should invest resources to reduce as much as possible the time spent in homelessness.



FEANTSA

**European Federation of National Organisations  
Working with the Homeless**

194 Chaussée de Louvain, 1210 Brussels, Belgium  
T +32 (0)2 538 66 69 • [information@feantsa.org](mailto:information@feantsa.org)

[www.feantsa.org](http://www.feantsa.org)

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