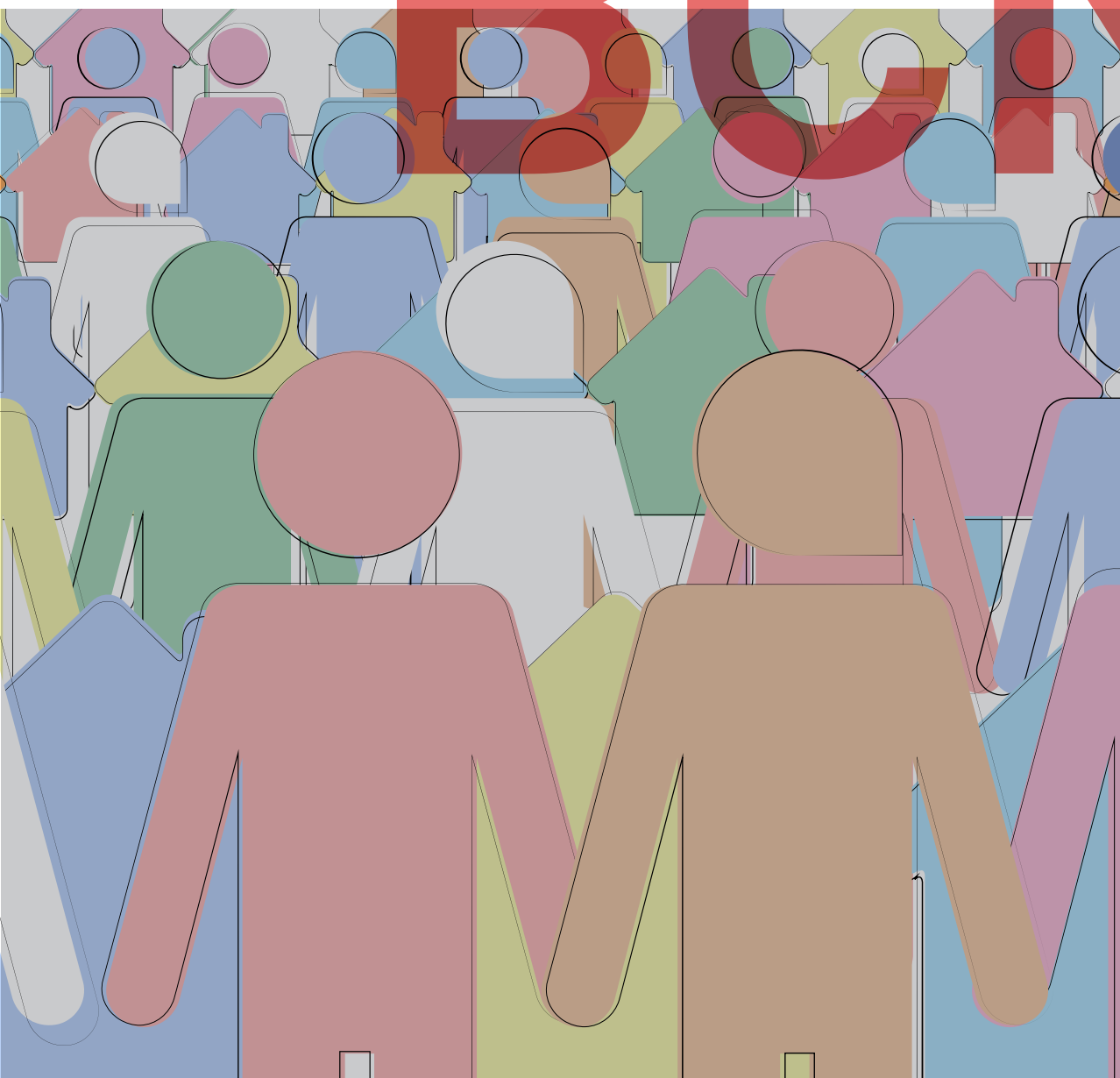


Who's sleeping rough in Barcelona?

Characteristics of homeless people in the city according to data from municipal public space social intervention teams

BCN



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The data used in this research comes from the records of the Barcelona City Council Social Integration Service outreach teams (Servei d'Inserció Social en Medi Obert, SISMO).

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ABSTRACT

The number of people found sleeping rough in Barcelona rose steadily from 634 in the first one night count in 2008 to 956 detected in the last one in 17 May 2018. During that decade the city's social organisations and the City Council worked together to mobilise volunteers and conducted 5 counts in one night (in 2008, 2011, 2016, 2017 and 2018). At the same time, municipal outreach teams have collected and systematized data on the people assisted and contacted sleeping rough as a part of their daily tasks.

This research uses databases on everyone detected, contacted or annually assisted by the Barcelona City Council Social Integration Service outreach teams (Servei d'Inserció Social en Medi Obert, SISMO), for the purposes of presenting the evolution in the social and demographic characteristics (sex, age, nationality and administrative situation) of the population living rough in Barcelona between 2008 and 2018.

It also analyses aggregate data on the 2,452 people detected, contacted or assisted by SISMO in 2018 to find out in greater depth who was sleeping rough in the city and guide assistance policies. It analyses such variables as sex, age, nationality, administrative situation and time living rough, and distinguishes groups of special interest for empirical research such as long term rough sleepers and young people.

The data collected by the street teams suggest the following conclusions:

1. The increased number of people sleeping rough in Barcelona during the last decade is dominated by EU foreign nationals. Although a significant growth was detected in the number of non-EU foreign nationals and undocumented people between 2017 and 2018, they continue to represent 27% of the total number of people detected living rough, compared to EU foreign nationals (45%) and Spanish nationals (28%).
2. The 25% of the people detected in 2018 had been living rough for over 3 years. Such chronicity affects Spanish, EU and North American nationals to a greater extent, whereas those living rough over shorter periods come from Africa or Central and South America.
3. People from Central and South America and from Africa were considerably younger than the rest, with the oldest being Spaniards.
4. In just two years the number of young people (between 18 and 30 years old) living rough has doubled. Of the homeless people under the age of 30, 36% come from North Africa and the Maghreb.
5. Women continue to account for less than 15% of the people living rough and present an age bracket different from the men's, with a greater number of people under the age of 25 and over the age of 65. They spend shorter periods living rough.

1. INTRODUCTION

Around 1,000 people slept rough in Barcelona every night in 2018. The one night count taken by the Homeless People's Assistance Network (XAPSLL) on 17 May 2018 found 956 people sleeping rough, a figure very close to the 962 that Barcelona City Council's Social Integration Service estimated were sleeping rough each night. Also on 17 May, 2,130 people spent the night in the XAPSLL's resources – residential centres or public and private flat programmes. If we add the 444 individuals spending the night in settlements and informal structures put up on plots of land, a total of 2,962 people experience extreme housing exclusion in Barcelona¹.

So, between 2008 and 2018, there was an increase in the number of people recorded sleeping rough, from the 658 detected in the first count to the 956 in the last. At the same time, the XAPSLL's resources grew steadily, from providing shelter for 1,190 people on the night of the count taken in 2008 to 2,130 on 17 May 2018. So, the rough sleepers counted on a specific night grew by 45.3% in those 10 years, whereas the capacity for assistance in the XAPSLL's residential and accommodation centres grew by 78.9%.

Like practically all big European cities, Barcelona has seen twenty years of steady growth in the resources earmarked for providing care for homeless people. Increased numbers of places in facilities, a broader range of public and private services and innovations in social intervention methods have paralleled the growth in housing exclusion and the number of people who find themselves with no choice but to sleep on the streets. Caring for homeless people and establishing policies that enable drastic reductions in the numbers of people sleeping rough is an unavoidable political commitment in fighting inequalities and poverty in our city. However, policies focused on reversing the effects of housing exclusion have to be accompanied by preventive policies that stop people from ending up homeless.

The design of these policies comes up against the lack of any analysis of existing empirical evidence on the characteristics, experiences and lives of people sleeping rough. Whereas Barcelona has much more complete sources than other public authorities or cities in Spain, the data available and published at present on street homelessness are even more descriptive and restricted to the evolution in the number of people affected and to the social and demographic features collected by the SISMO teams or by the volunteers who carried out the counts in 2008, 2011, 2016, 2017 and 2018 (De Inés *et al.*, 2017; Salas *et al.*, 2015).

This report expands our knowledge of the reality of people sleeping rough in the city, based on the use of data created by SISMO in carrying out its detection, contact, assistance and connection work with people spending their nights in Barcelona's public space.

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¹ <https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/premsa/2018/05/17/el-recompte-2018-visualitza-956-persones-dormint-al-carrer-i-2-099-allotjades-en-equipaments/>

2. AVAILABLE SOURCES

Data on the rise of homelessness in Spain are few and fragmented. Given that there is no State-level action plan and that social assistance for homeless people falls under municipal jurisdiction, the systematisation of information depends to a great extent on the political will of the local authorities and their priorities. The only institution that generates quantitative data above the municipal level is the Spanish State's National Institute of Statistics (INE) through two tools: the "Homeless People Survey" and the "Survey on Homeless People's Assistance Centres and Services". The data these two surveys offer refer exclusively to people assisted at centres and facilities specialising in providing services for the homeless.

The "Homeless People Survey" collects data from assistance centres located in municipalities with over 20,000 inhabitants. Two have been conducted so far, in 2005 and in 2012. Homeless people are deemed to be those who are at least 18 years old and who, during the week before the interview, had been using an accommodation and/or food assistance centre or sleeping in a "makeshift" shelter, in public spaces or in the open. Contact with such people is made through the accommodation, food or health services themselves, and the most important shortcoming in the survey is fails to collect information on people living rough in public spaces and who do not use any service during the six weeks the fieldwork lasts.

If we compare the two editions of this survey we can see there was a drop in the numbers of people recorded who were sleeping rough in public spaces and in a "makeshift" shelter, from 4,924 to 3,419 and from 3,294 to 2,943 respectively. These figures suggest that the economic and financial crisis that began in 2008 did not lead to an increase in the number of homeless people throughout Spain. But the very methodology for conducting surveys does not allow such a conclusion to be reached, as it only counts those who occasionally turn to this resource for covering their needs.

Curiously, the results of the "Survey on Homeless People's Assistance Centres and Services" show a moderate increase in the number of people sheltered in hostels and residences, in flats provided by third-sector associations or public institutions, and in pensions paid for by local associations or authorities. The number of people recorded as using this type of shelter rose from 14,681 in 2005 to 16,347 in 2016. This growth reflects, in part, the tensions experienced by social organisations and municipal social services for responding to the increase in residential exclusion, although it makes it impossible to know how the needs, budgetary restrictions and interactions between supply and demand influenced the evolution of this figure. We shall never know whether the capacity for increasing overnight and residential places or the need for shelter and housing was being measured with this survey (Salas, 2015).

Barcelona represents an exceptional case regarding the availability of information. From 2008 on, street counts, systematisation of data on people spending the night in facilities for homeless people carried out by the Homeless People Assistance Network, and the information provided by City Council open environment detection and social assistance teams has enabled the publication of reports on the situation of homelessness in the city, in 2008, 2011, 2013, 2015 and 2017 (Cabrera *et al.*, 2008; Sales, 2011; Sales, 2013; Sales *et al.* 2015; De Inés *et al.* 2017).

In these reports, the XAPSELL provided data on several realities of homelessness by attempting to go further than the reduction in this phenomenon to its expression on the streets and also trying to quantify the scope of the situations set out under the ETHOS (European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion) categories. This classification features four categories of residential exclusions (roofless, houseless, insecure housing and inadequate housing) and thirteen operational categories (Busch-Geertsema, 2010). The latest report published by the XAPSELL, from 2017, managed to systematise the subcategory data: living in a public space or external space, staying in a night shelter and spending the rest of the day in a public space, living temporarily in homeless hostels or centres, living in a residential centre with longer-term support for homeless people and, partly, living in a flat under an insecure tenancy system.

Table 1. Number of homeless people in Barcelona under the ETHOS classification categories 17 May 2017²

Categories	Operative categories	Total number
Roofless	1. Living in public space or external space.	962
	2. Staying in a night shelter and/or forced to spend the rest of the day in a public space.	265
Houseless	3. Living in hostels or centres for homeless people. Temporary shelters.	586
	4. Living in shelters for women.	n/d
	5. Living in temporary accommodation reserved for immigrants and asylum-seekers.	n/d
	6. Living in a residential institution or detention centre with the prospect of being finally released without a safe house available.	n/d
	7. Living in a shelter with longer-term support for homeless people.	717
Insecure housing	8. Living in housing under an insecure tenancy system Without paying rent.	438
	9. Living under threat of eviction.	n/d
	10. Living under the threat of violence from family or partner.	n/d
Inadequate housing	11. Living in temporary or unconventional structures.	415
	12. Living in housing deemed unfit under legislation.	n/d
	13. Living in extreme overcrowding.	n/d
TOTAL		3.383

Source: De Inés *et al.* (2017)

² Data from the last report published by the XAPSELL on 1 June 2019. Data from the count taken in 2018 organised under ETHOS categories will be presented in a report being drafted, which is expected to be published in October 2019.

For the purposes of determining the number of people found one night in operational category 1 (living rough in or a public or external space), counts have been taken in a number of cities. These were carried out by volunteers who combed their city to note down the number of people sleeping rough and some basic descriptive data. In the last decade, at varying intervals, counts have been done in the cities of Madrid, Zaragoza, Valencia, San Sebastián, Bilbao, Vitoria-Gasteiz and Barcelona. In addition to Barcelona, during the last three years counts have also been carried out in the Catalan cities of Badalona, Sant Adrià de Besòs, Girona, Lleida, Mataró, Santa Coloma de Gramenet, Terrassa, Reus and Tarragona.

These give us the number of people sleeping rough in a city on a specific night. In some cases they were accompanied with brief surveys or notes, taken by the volunteers, on the observable features of the people sleeping rough. The data is by no means exhaustive and, at present, there is no Spanish city has a set of statistics at hand that would enable us to analyse the evolution in the characteristics of homeless people surviving in public spaces.

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In Barcelona the information provided in Barcelona from the counts taken in 2008, 2011, 2016, 2017 and 2018 is accompanied by data collected every day by the municipal social services assistance and detection teams. SISMO collects data on every person sleeping rough in the city who is assisted, contacted and detected, for the purposes of facilitating interventions with those accepting social support as well as carrying out observation roles that enable the phenomenon of street homelessness in the city to be monitored. These data have been analysed for the purposes of tracing the changes in the profiles of the homeless population (people in operational category 1 under the ETHOS classification) in Barcelona from 2008 to 2018 and taking a snapshot of the characteristics of people who slept rough in the city in 2018.

3. METHODOLOGY

The Social Integration Service (SIS), created over 25 years ago, assists people in a situation of social vulnerability and severe residential exclusion. It aims to facilitate the processes of inclusion and achieving economic, housing and emotional stability for people sleeping rough in Barcelona or finding themselves in chronic insecure accommodation situations without any link with the territorial social services. The SIS is divided into two services: one that functions as a social services centre for the homeless and the other, SISMO, which carries out its activity out on the streets, assisting the homeless who spend their nights in public spaces.

SISMO also acts as an observatory for street homelessness, carrying out systematic and periodic explorations of the entire city. It is in this role that the teams contact everyone sleeping rough, irrespective of whether or not this initial contact marks the start of social support work. They record the information that each person voluntarily provides, otherwise, their location and directly observable characteristics. The information that the teams incorporate in their databases is subject to modification insofar as SISMO staff establish a link with the people they assist based on trust and documentary checks of the information they provide. That means where the support work confirms a different nationality or age from the one declared by the person assisted on initial contact, the reference team will update that data.

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The variables used for preparing this report have been collected for the total number of people contacted by SISMO. In the case of longitudinal comparisons, continuity is guaranteed for the series reflecting the results of the variables that were recorded the same way over the ten years analysed (2008-2018). These variables are as follows:

- sex, which was collected as a dichotomous variable with man and woman options;
- age, noted in whole numbers (and which were later processed by grouping the individuals by interval);
- geographical origin, created by dividing the nationalities into 20 groups, people of Spanish nationality, people from other EU countries and non-EU nationals;
- administrative irregularity, created as a dichotomous variable with two values (being a non-EU national without a residence permit and the other individuals), and
- the usual district for spending the night in.

The time spent living rough variable has been added to the in-depth analysis of the characteristics of the people contacted in 2018. This variable is based SISMO's records and the street experience declared by the people contacted and includes the total time that the person has spent sleeping rough at different times in their life.

The service teams complete their exploration of the entire city in different time bands over the course of a month and can estimate the number of people living rough in one night as well as some of their basic characteristics. The Homeless People's Assistance Network reports on the situation of homelessness in Barcelona include the figures for the number of people who were sleeping rough in the city on a specific night. These figures are the result of the counts that mobilised volunteers to cover the city on a single night (in 2008, 2011, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018) or the estimates based on the number of people that SISMO had contact with during the reference month. By the same token, in contrast to the previous research carried out in Barcelona, the

population analysed in this study are all people the service had been in contact with at the end of the year.

We do not analyse data relating to people sleeping out in the open on one night here, we analyse the data of all those detected and contacted by SISMO at the end of the year. This report presents the change in the main social and demographic characteristics of these people living rough over the last ten years, as well as an analysis of the database on the people detected, contacted and assisted in 2018.

The main aims of this use of SISMO data are to describe longitudinally the changes in the social and demographic characteristics of the people who slept rough in Barcelona between 2008 and 2018, and to find out in detail the characteristics of the people who slept rough in Barcelona in 2018 (sex, age, nationality / geographic region of origin and length of time living rough).

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4. PEOPLE SLEEPING ROUGH IN BARCELONA FROM 2008 TO 2018. DATA AND TRENDS

The data published so far in Barcelona thanks to XAPSSL's systematisation work allow us to follow the evolution in the number of people living rough on one particular night. After the counts, this number was determined following a night of observation carried out by volunteers throughout the municipal area, counting each of the people observed who spent a night in public space. When estimates were made on the basis of data from open environment social assistance staff, the number of different people assisted, contacted or detected by the Open Environment Social Integration Service in one month was taken as a reference figure, on the assumption that during that period the teams had made a thorough sweep of the city. The detection capacities of SISMO and the counts have gradually converged in recent years, so that by 2018 the difference between the two methodologies was insignificant.

4.1 EVOLUTION IN THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE DETECTED AND CONTACTED SLEEPING ROUGH

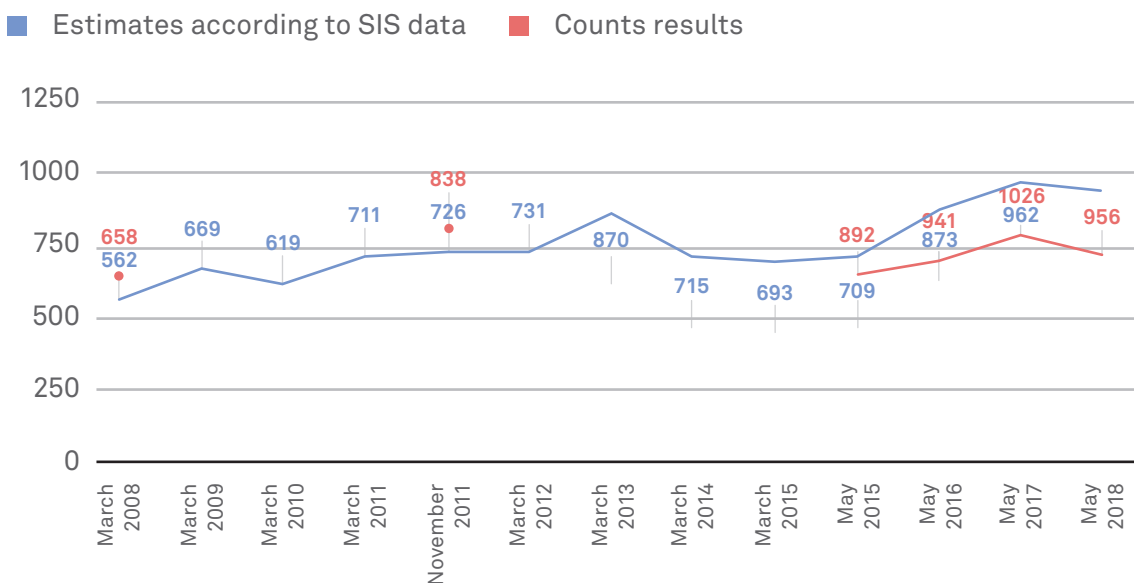
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Both sources point to a steady increase in the number of homeless people living rough, from the 658 detected during the first headcount on 12 March 2008 to the 956 counted on the night of 17 May 2018. SISMO's estimate of the number of people sleeping rough in the city was 562 in March 2008 and 962 in May 2018.

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Chart 1. Evolution in the number of people sleeping rough in Barcelona in one night



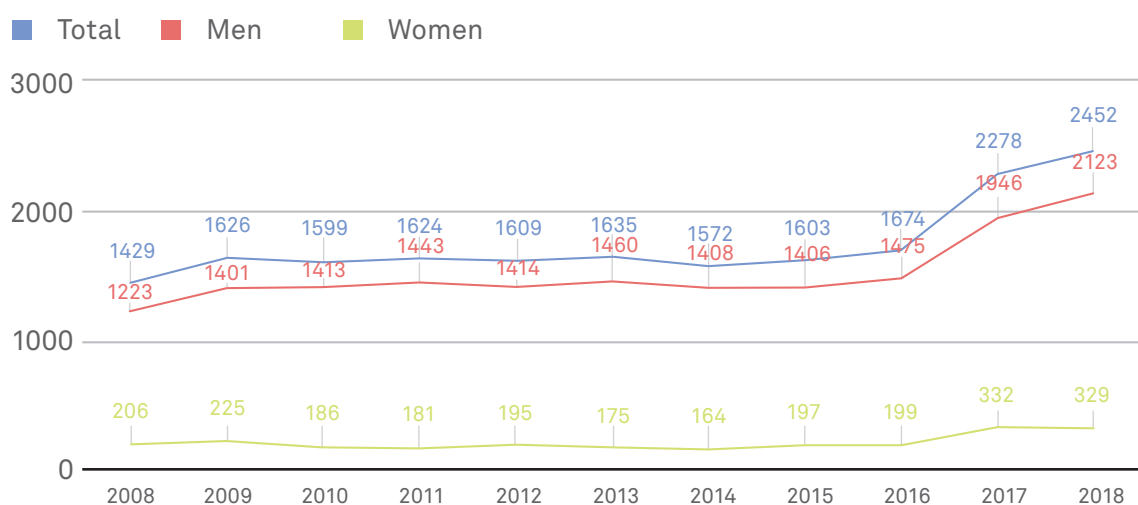
Source: Barcelona City Council, XAPSSL

This increase occurred at the same time as a rise in the number of people experiencing other forms of insecure housing in the city. Data published in the report on the situation of homelessness in Barcelona in 2017 (De Inés *et al.*, 2017) show that the number of people accommodated in residential centres run by social entities and Barcelona City Council went up from 500 in 2008 to 855 in 2017, and the number of people in inclusion flats and housing-based assistance programmes rose from 182 to 713. The increase in the supply of residential and accommodation resources failed to reduce street homelessness and the number of people given emergency accommodation in pensions, hotels, hostels and rented dwellings paid for by social entities and services.

According to data published by the XAPSELL, there were 1,129 people sleeping in the residential and accommodation resources of municipal entities and authorities on the night of the count of 2008 compared to 2,130 on the night of 17 May 2018. So both the number of homeless people requiring accommodation and the resources grew, although the latter failed to cover the needs of everyone coming to Barcelona lacking access to residential solutions. Within ten years the number of people sleeping rough in one specific night grew by 45.3%, whereas the number of occupied residential and shelter places in one night rose by 78.9%.

This increase occurred during the first period of growth between 2008 and 2013, following a drop in 2014 and a new increase up to the maximum in 2017. But the increase in number of people detected sleeping rough in the city over the year evolved in a different way. The number rose from 1,429 to 1,626 between 2008 and 2009. From then until 2016, the municipal services detected around 1,600 homeless people in public spaces annually. Then there was a large rise from 2016 to 2017 (to 2,278) which continued in 2018 and by 31 December 2,452 people had been counted sleeping rough with an accumulated 10-year increase of 72%.

Chart 2. Evolution in the number of different people detected sleeping rough annually. Women, men and total. Barcelona 2008-2018



Source: Original, using data from SISMO.

This differing pace of growth stems from two reasons. In the first place, the detection capacity of the street teams gradually rose as data could be verified by comparing the count from one night with the estimates based on the service's information (Chart 1). The service and the number of staff dedicated to this work was boosted in 2017. Comparisons between the data from the exhaustive count and SISMO's estimates show that the latter were becoming increasingly accurate. In 2008, the service estimated that any night in March would see 562 people sleeping rough and the count made on 12 March located 634 such people. The deviation between the two methodologies was 12.8%. In November 2011, the SISMO teams estimated that 873 people were sleeping rough on any night and the XAPSL headcount reached 941 on the night of 8 November. A 15.4% deviation. In the last three headcounts the deviation has dropped from 7.8% in 2016, to 6.7% in 2017 to 1.5% in 2018. SISMO's estimate for May 2018 was 942 people sleeping rough while 956 people were located by the headcount on the night of 17 May.

However, this increase in detection capacity alone cannot explain why the number of people sleeping rough at a particular time over the last three years stabilised while the number of people detected during the year grew from 1,674 to 2,452. The second reason must therefore be a growth in number of people sleeping intermittently in public spaces, whether because they switch between the streets and other sub-housing situations such as re-let rooms or beds, occupied spaces or irregular settlements, or because they spend a limited time in the city.

The distribution of people contacted sleeping rough in the city is very unequal. In 2008 most homeless people spent the night in the open in the districts of Ciutat Vella, Eixample and Sants-Montjuïc, and, to a lesser extent, in Sant Andreu and Sant Martí. The last ten years have seen the population living rough increase throughout the city, except for Sant Andreu, where it has dropped owing to the displacement caused by work on the La Sagrera interchange, which has destroyed sites that were regular spaces for spending the night.

Table 2. Evolution in the number of people sleeping rough annually contacted by the SIS teams, by district. Barcelona 2008-2018

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Ciutat Vella	257	317	300	290	297	302	293	336	324	607	571
L'Eixample	308	323	268	277	286	287	253	325	427	420	528
Sants-Montjuïc	244	230	260	308	286	273	219	189	213	331	353
Les Corts	39	39	54	58	74	62	65	54	55	102	81
Sarrià - Sant Gervasi	93	143	137	156	149	167	175	135	135	152	135
Gràcia	51	93	60	53	59	75	58	65	74	113	136
Horta-Guinardó	33	35	72	77	64	67	64	54	56	74	90
Nou Barris	18	25	43	40	55	81	80	75	74	108	129
Sant Andreu	192	196	137	99	119	106	112	94	43	59	54
Sant Martí	194	225	268	266	220	215	253	276	273	312	375
Total Barcelona	1.429	1.626	1.599	1.624	1.609	1.635	1.572	1.603	1.674	2.278	2.452

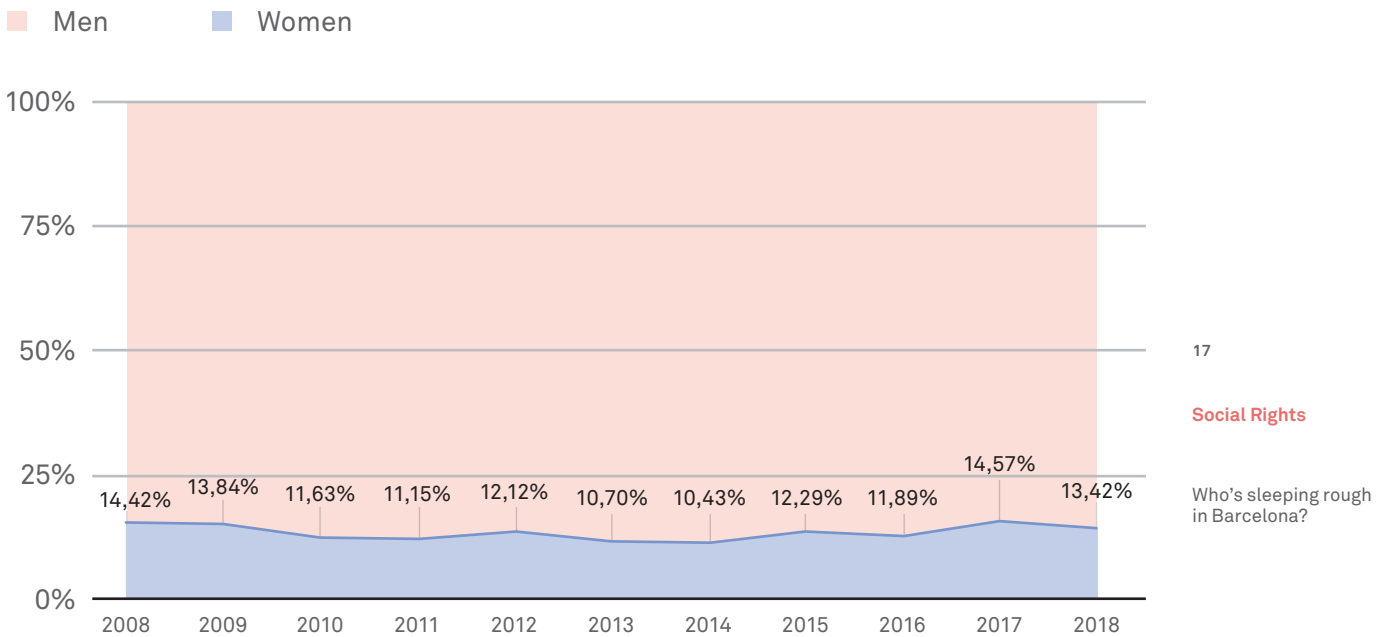
Source: Original, using data from SISMO.

4.2 EVOLUTION IN THE SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PEOPLE DETECTED SLEEPING ROUGH

Besides giving the absolute number of homeless people, the data collected by the municipal services also allows us to analyse the evolution in the social and demographic variables of the people detected. For the purposes of monitoring the phenomenon of homelessness in the city, SISMO's teams record the sex, age, nationality and administrative situation of the people contacted.

On a quantitative level, street homelessness is a very male problem. The proportion of women among all those sleeping in public space in Barcelona has never risen above 15% during the last 10 years. Women made up 14.42% of the total in 2008. That proportion steadily dropped to its lowest level, 10.43%, in 2014, before rising again to 13.42% in the year analysed. In absolute terms, while the services contacted 206 women in 2008, the number was 329 in 2018.

Chart 3. Evolution in the proportion of men and women sleeping rough. Barcelona 2008-2018



Source: Original, using data from SISMO.

If we look at the ages of the people contacted on the street, the age bracket for men has not changed significantly, whereas that for the women has registered some changes worthy of attention. During these 10 years, more than 85% of men were aged between 30 and 65, with people under the age of 30 representing around 10% of total and over the age of 65 around 3%. By contrast, the proportion of women under the age of 30 reached 21.7% in 2013 and 14.6% in 2018. The proportion over the age of 65 also varied, with an upward trend reaching a maximum of 6.7% in 2018.

Table 3. Evolution in the number of people detected annually sleeping rough. Percentages by age group. Men and women. Barcelona 2008-2018

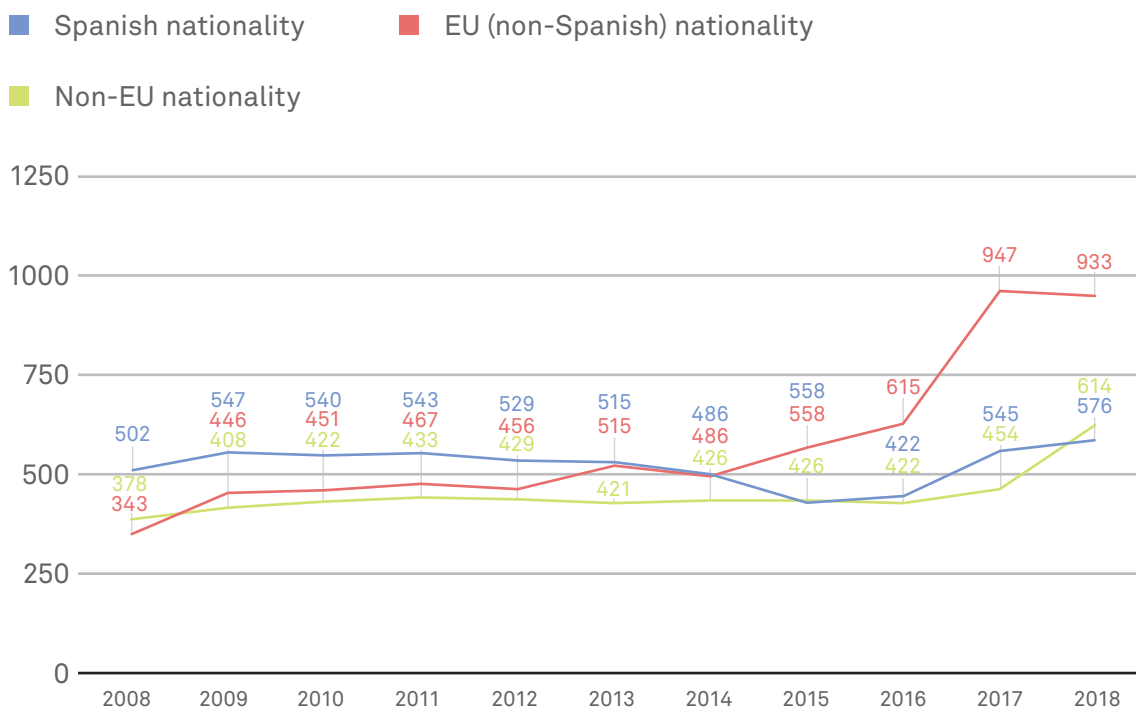
Men											
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Under 18	0,7%	0,3%	0,2%	0,1%	0,4%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,2%	0,2%
18 to 29	10,1%	9,5%	11,5%	11,6%	9,5%	8,8%	7,2%	7,2%	7,3%	9,4%	10,3%
30 to 65	85,9%	87,4%	85,5%	86,3%	88,1%	88,1%	88,5%	88,8%	88,7%	87,8%	86,3%
66 to 75	2,5%	2,3%	2,3%	1,5%	1,8%	2,5%	3,8%	3,6%	3,3%	2,3%	2,8%
Over 75	0,8%	0,5%	0,5%	0,3%	0,2%	0,7%	0,6%	0,5%	0,7%	0,5%	0,4%
Number of people	1.223	1.401	1.413	1.443	1.414	1.460	1.408	1.406	1.475	1.946	2.123
Women											
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Under 18	3,4%	0,9%	1,6%	0,6%	2,1%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,6%
18 to 29	18,0%	14,2%	15,6%	20,4%	20,5%	21,7%	15,2%	14,2%	14,6%	15,7%	14,6%
30 to 65	77,2%	82,2%	79,0%	75,1%	72,3%	72,6%	79,3%	79,7%	80,4%	79,8%	77,2%
66 to 75	1,0%	2,2%	3,8%	3,9%	5,1%	5,1%	4,3%	5,6%	4,5%	3,0%	6,7%
Over the age of 75	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%
Number of cases	206	225	186	181	195	175	164	197	199	332	329

Source: Original, using data from SISMO.

Between 2008 and 2013, the 18-30 age bracket represented around 11% of the total number of people living rough. In absolute numbers, there were between 160 and 200 young people in that age group contacted every year. In 2014 the proportion of young people dropped to 8%. But between 2016 and 2018, the number of people under the age of 30 living rough in the city doubled. The number of young people contacted rose from 136 to 267 in the same period. The composition and characteristics of these young people are analysed below, for the purposes of guiding prevention strategies.

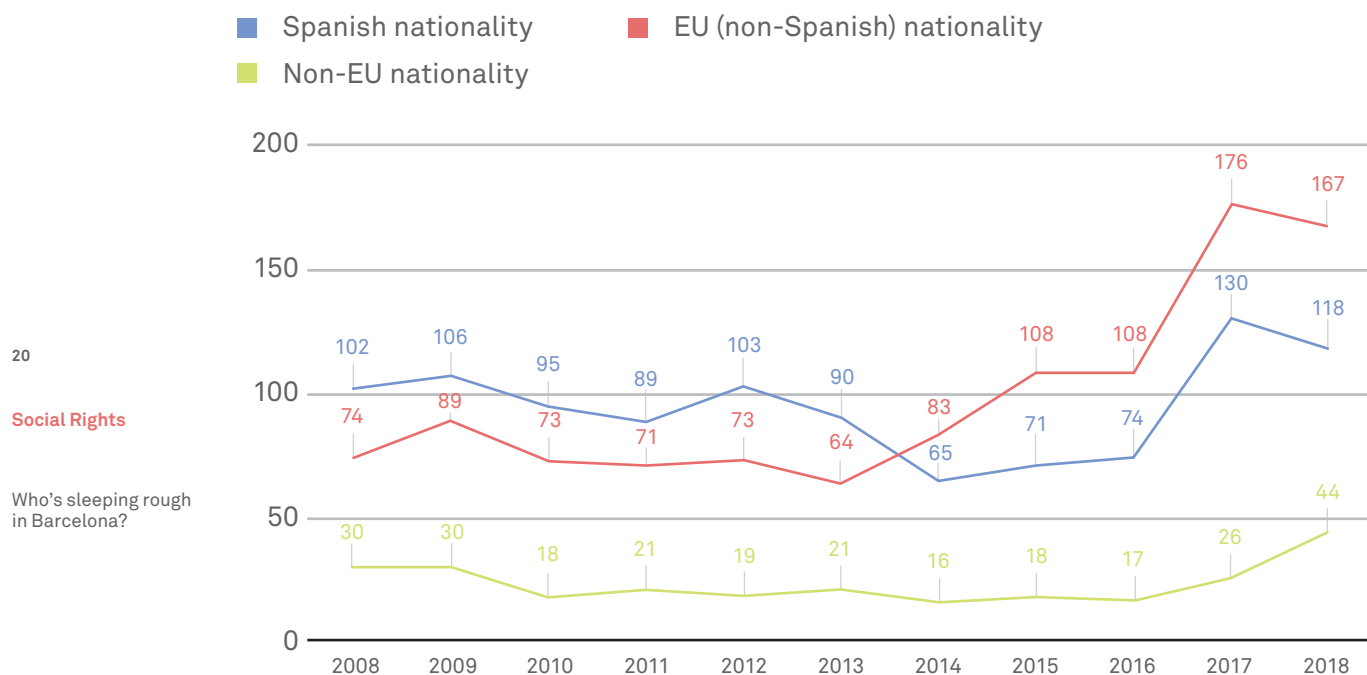
The variable which reveals a significant change in the composition of the population contacted by SISMO is nationality. The number of Spanish men living rough rose from 502 in 2008 to 576 in 2018. The number of non-EU male nationals grew from 378 in 2008 to 614 in 2018. But the most notable increase was in the case of EU male nationals, whose number rose from 343 at the start of the series to the 933 contacted in 2018.

Chart 4. Evolution in the number of men detected sleeping rough annually according to nationality. Barcelona, 2008-2018



Source: Original, using data from SISMO.

Chart 5. Evolution in the number of women detected sleeping rough annually according to nationality. Barcelona, 2008-2018



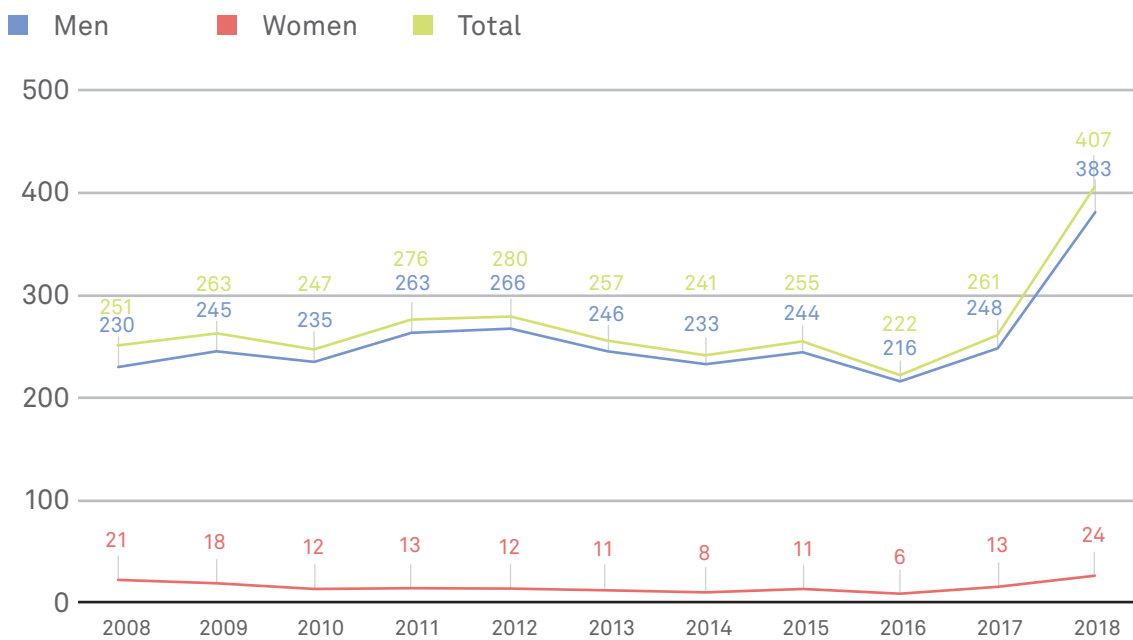
Source: Original, using data from SISMO.

There was also a rise in the number of Spanish nationals from 2008 to 2018 in the case of women. The number of non-Spanish EU nationals went up from 74 to 167, that of Spanish nationals rose from 102 to 118 and of non-EU foreign nationals from 30 to 44. Even though these numbers of women sleeping rough are considerably lower than those for men, the absolute numbers also underwent a worrying growth insofar as women are especially vulnerable on the streets and it shows the harshest side to female residential exclusion, such as insecure housing and dependence on others to avoid living rough (Sales and Guijarro, 2018).

The increase in the number of people sleeping rough mainly involved non-Spanish EU nationals during the period running from 2008 to 2017. Even so, the last year analysed shows a sudden rise in the non-EU homeless population. Whereas the services had detected 454 men of non-EU nationality in 2017 (only 30 more than in the previous year), they contacted 614 in 2018. As regards women, the number of non-EU nationals detected rose from 17 in 2016 to 44 in 2018.

Most of these homeless non-EU foreign nationals did not have their papers in order. The number of men SISMO detected sleeping rough without residential or work permits rose from 246 in 2017 to 383 in 2018. If we add the number of women to that, the total number of people contacted in 2018 whose papers were not in order come to 407 (146 more than in the previous year).

Chart 6. Evolution in the number of foreign nationals without their papers in order and detected sleeping rough.



Source: Original, using data from SISMO

5. WHO WAS SLEEPING ROUGH IN BARCELONA IN 2018?

In 2018, SISMO teams detected, contacted or assisted 2,452 people sleeping rough in Barcelona. Basic data was collected from all of them, enabling a simple yet exhaustive collection of data on those sleeping rough in Barcelona throughout the year.

5.1 SEX AND AGE

Of these 2,452 people, 329 were women and 2,123 men. Women represented 13.42% of the total and show a broader age range than men. Whereas 80% of the men were in the 30-60 age bracket, the proportion of women in that bracket was 70%. The big difference between the absolute number of men and women sleeping rough make it difficult to draw any conclusions on the age differences. All the more so if we take into account that the empirical research on female homelessness suggests that this phenomenon has very different dynamics according to the gender and sex roles of the people affected (Bretherton and Pleace, 2018).

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Table 4. Age brackets of the people detected sleeping rough by sex. Barcelona, 2018

Ages	Women	Men	Total
0-17	0,61%	0,19%	0,24%
18-25	5,78%	6,31%	6,24%
26-30	10,94%	4,76%	5,59%
31-40	29,18%	24,59%	25,20%
41-50	26,44%	36,65%	35,28%
51-60	14,89%	18,37%	17,90%
61-65	4,56%	5,98%	5,79%
66-75	6,69%	2,78%	3,30%
Up to 75 years	0,91%	0,38%	0,45%
Total	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%
(N)	(329)	(2.123)	(2.452)

Source: Open Environment Social Integration Service (SISMO). Barcelona City Council

As already pointed out above, the last year saw an increase in the recorded number of young people contacted. The proportion of people under the age of 30 reached its lowest point between 2014 and 2016 but went up again between 2017 and 2018. While 136 people under 30 were detected sleeping rough in 2016, the number was 292 in 2018. Of these, 239 were men and 57 women. So, women have a bigger weight among the young people contacted than among those over 30. They represent 19% of the people contacted up to the age of 30 and 12.6% of those over 30.

Table 5. Proportion of women and men among the population sleeping rough contacted by age. Barcelona, 2018

	Women	Men	Total	N°.
Up to the age of 30	19,3%	80,7%	100,0%	296
People over the age of 30	12,6%	87,4%	100,0%	2156

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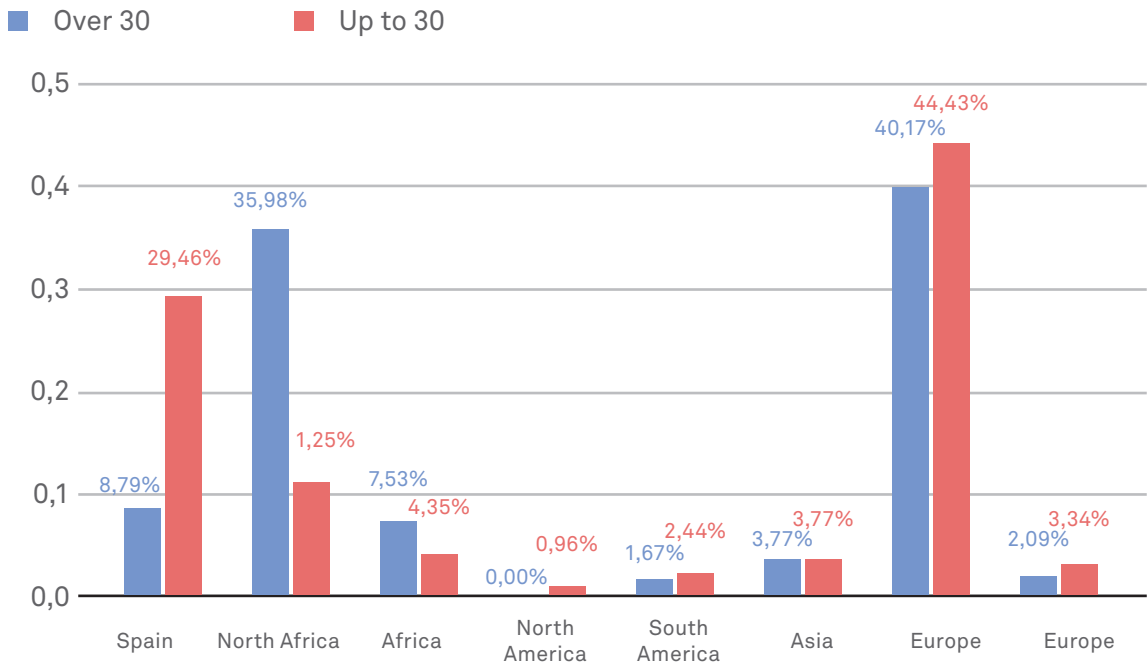
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Source: Original, using data from SISMO.

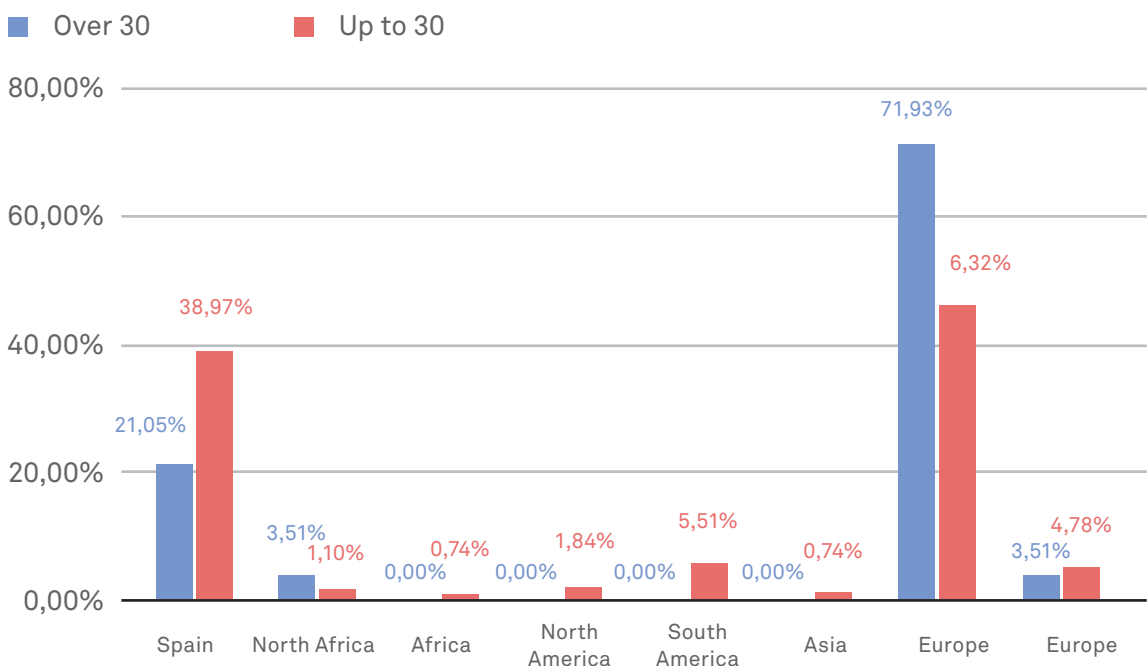
The geographic origin of the people aged up to 30 also shows important differences with the others contacted. Seventy-two per cent of the women aged up to 30 come from EU countries and 21% are Spanish nationals. Of the women over 30, 39% are Spanish whereas 46% come from other EU countries. As regards men aged up to 30, the EU is also the most usual place of origin (40%) and only 9% are Spanish nationals. A notable aspect is the over-representation of people from North Africa and the Maghreb, who make up 36% of the people under 30 compared to 11% of those over 30.

Chart 7. Geographic origin of the men contacted sleeping rough in Barcelona in 2018 by age.



Source: Original, using data from SISMO.

Chart 8. Geographic origin of the women contacted sleeping rough in Barcelona in 2018 by age.



Source: Original, using data from SISMO.

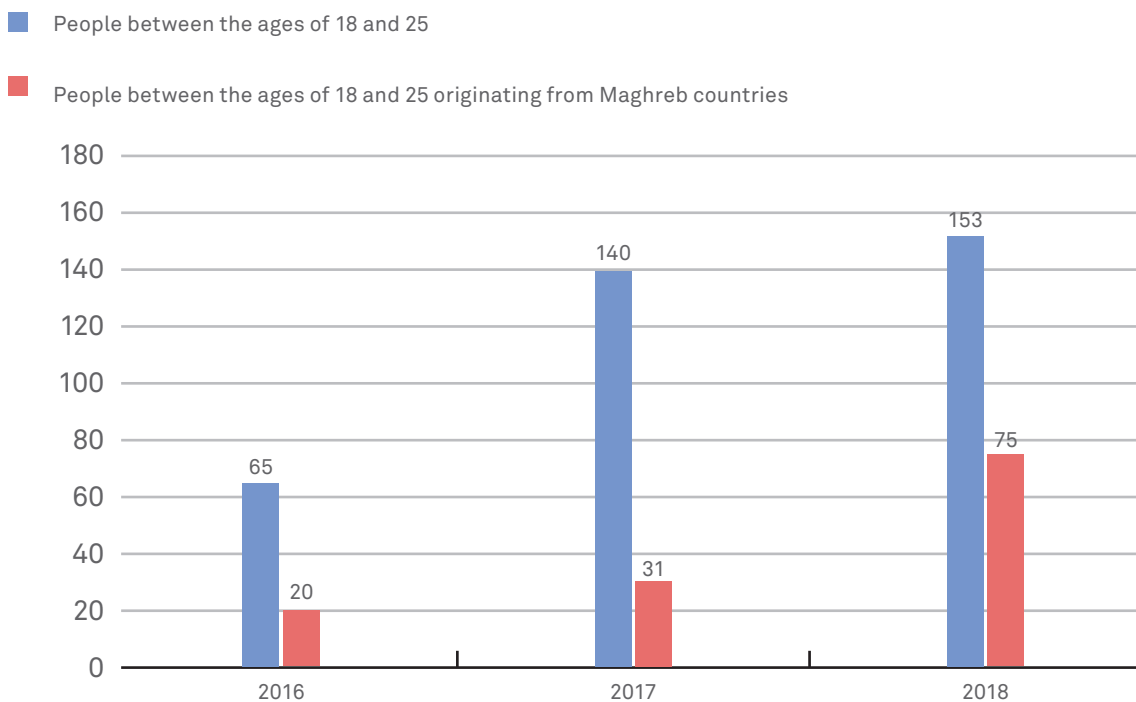
The increase in the absolute number of young people sleeping rough is especially worrying when we focus on the people detected aged between 18 and 25. In one year, from 2016, the SISMO teams detected a rise in the number of people in this age bracket from 65 to 153. The proportion of people from the Maghreb countries rose from under a third to half the total number of young people contacted under the age of 25 sleeping rough. In other words, the number of young people contacted in that age group sleeping rough rose from 20 in 2016 to 75 in 2018. This emerging phenomenon could worsen over the coming years, as children coming from this geographic area and currently under the protection of the Catalan Government Directorate-General of Children and Teenagers gradually reach majority age.

Chart 9. Number of people aged between 18 and 25 sleeping rough and contacted by SISMO throughout the year. Barcelona, 2016, 2017 and 2018

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Source: Original, using data from SISMO.

5.2 GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN AND NATIONALITY

Of those detected sleeping rough, 45% are originally from EU countries, 28% from Spain, 12% from North Africa and the Maghreb, 4% from Sub-Saharan Africa and 10% from other parts of the world. As shown in the previous section, EU citizens have largely accounted for the growth in number of people living rough in Barcelona. The problems that have led these people to live rough could be related to solitude or breaking with social networks, or vulnerability factors linked to the migration process (Bosch, 2010). Some studies point to the causes of homeless people's mobility between different European countries (Plea-ce, 2010) but, with the processed data we have, we do not know whether the people contacted had stable housing or residence in the Spanish State or whether their migration process began when they were already in a situation of residential exclusion.

Table 6. Geographic origin of the people detected sleeping rough by sex. Barcelona, 2018

	Women	Men	Total
Spain	35,87%	27,13%	28,30%
North Africa and the Maghreb	1,52%	14,04%	12,36%
Sub-Saharan Africa	0,61%	4,71%	4,16%
North America	1,52%	0,85%	0,94%
South America	4,56%	2,36%	2,65%
Asia	0,61%	3,77%	3,34%
European Union	50,76%	43,95%	44,86%
Non-EU Europe	4,56%	3,20%	3,38%
Total	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%
(N)	(329)	(2.123)	(2.452)

Source: Open Environment Social Integration Service (SISMO). Barcelona City Council

The main foreign nationality among the people contacted sleeping rough is Romanian. Of the 2,452 people contacted during 2018, 438 were Romanian nationals, 229 Moroccan, 78 Polish, 58 Italian, 33 Bulgarian and 33 French. The rest were divided among a further 85 nationalities. Romanian citizens were the biggest group among those from EU countries.

Table 7. Most common foreign nationalities of people contacted by SISMO. Barcelona, 2018

Romania	438
Morocco	229
Poland	78
Italy	58
Bulgaria	33
France	33
Russia	29
Pakistan	27
Germany	23
Algeria	23
Hungary	23
Czech Republic	23
Portugal	21
Spanish nationals	694
Other nationals and people with unverified nationalities (1)	720
Total number of people contacted in 2018	2.452

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Source: Original, using data from SISMO.

The last year has seen a significant increase in the number of undocumented foreigners. Their irregularity could be a determining factor when it comes to defining pathways to situations of homelessness, as difficulties for accessing the labour and housing markets constitute powerful factors for social exclusion. In general, relatives and friends support networks and the informal economy enable people without residence and work permits to avoid extreme situations such as having to live rough (Pleace, 2010).

In 2018, there was evidence that 7% of the women and 18% of the men contacted sleeping rough had no Spanish residence permit.

In absolute terms, the number of people contacted without residence permits rose from 261 to 417 between 2017 and 2018 alone.

These people present significantly shorter histories of living rough than people with their papers in order. As many as 43% of the people contacted without their papers in order had been in that situation for under 2 years, whereas only 27% of those with residence permits or Spanish nationality living rough had been in that situation for under 2 years.

5.3 TIME SPENT SLEEPING ROUGH

Although the time people detected and contacted spend in Barcelona is not recorded, the data show that the accumulated time of living rough among undocumented people is less than that for those that do have work and residence permits. Whereas 27% of the latter spend less than a year living rough, the proportion of those with Spanish nationality or residence permits and less than one year living rough is 42.75%. This difference is consistent with the sudden increase in the number of people without their papers in order that occurred between 2017 and 2018, during which the absolute number rose from 261 to 407, despite representing only 16.6% of all the people contacted.

The accumulated time of living rough recorded in the SISMO database is the total number of months that the people contacted had spent sleeping in public spaces in the city during the various stages they had links with the service. If we analyse this variable for all the population detected throughout 2018, it shows that 30% of the people contacted has spent fewer than 12 months living rough, 32% between one and two years, 14% between two and three years and 25% more than three years.

Table 8. Accumulated months of the people detected living rough by sex. Barcelona, 2018

Months living rough	Women	Men	Total
0-3	2,74%	1,60%	1,75%
4-12	31,61%	27,23%	27,81%
13-24	33,43%	31,32%	31,61%
25-36	16,11%	13,71%	14,03%
Over 36	16,11%	26,14%	24,80%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
(N)	(329)	(2.123)	(2.452)

Source: Open Environment Social Integration Service (SISMO). Barcelona City Council.

The people who have been living rough for less than a year shows no significant differences with the total number of people contacted when it comes to age brackets. But there are differences in relation to their country of origin. Among those with an accumulative total of less than a year living rough, the proportion of men with Spanish nationality is 22%, and women 29.2%, whereas for the total number of people contacted the proportions are 27% and 36% respectively.

Table 9. Age bracket of the population contacted by SISMO according to time living rough. Barcelona, 2018

Sex		Less than 1 year	More than 3 years	Total
Women	0-17	1,77%	0,00%	0,61%
	18-25	5,31%	3,77%	5,78%
	26-30	10,62%	5,66%	10,94%
	31-40	34,51%	20,75%	29,18%
	41-50	24,78%	26,42%	26,44%
	51-60	15,93%	18,87%	14,89%
	61-65	1,77%	7,55%	4,56%
	66-75	4,42%	13,21%	6,69%
	Over 75	0,88%	3,77%	0,91%
		100,00%	100,00%	100,00%
Number of women		113	53	329
Men	0-17	0,49%	0,00%	0,19%
	18-25	12,42%	0,54%	6,31%
	26-30	6,86%	2,34%	4,76%
	31-40	25,33%	17,12%	24,59%
	41-50	34,97%	41,08%	36,65%
	51-60	13,07%	24,50%	18,37%
	61-65	4,41%	8,65%	5,98%
	66-75	1,96%	5,41%	2,78%
	Over 75	0,49%	0,36%	0,38%
		100,00%	100,00%	100,00%
Total number of men		612	555	2.123
Total number of persons		725	608	2.452

The age of the 25% who have been living rough for more than three years is older than that of the total population analysed. In the case of men, 39% are over 50 whereas only 27.5% of all men contacted are. In the case of women, 43.4% of those living rough for more than three years are over 50, compared 27% of all the women contacted. People of Spanish nationality predominate among those with over three years living rough. They account for 33% of those people, compared to 27.5% of all the people contacted. In the case of women, 45% of those living rough for more than 3 years are Spanish, whereas only 27% of all the people contacted are Spanish.

Table 10. Geographic region of origin of the population contacted SISMO according to time living rough. Barcelona, 2018

Sex	Continent and Spain	Less than 1 year	More than 3 years	Total	
Women	Spain	29,20%	45,28%	35,87%	
	North Africa and the Maghreb	2,65%	1,89%	1,52%	
	Sub-Saharan Africa	0,88%	1,89%	0,61%	
	North America	1,77%	1,89%	1,52%	
	South America	7,08%	3,77%	4,56%	
	Asia	1,77%	0,00%	0,61%	
	European Union	52,21%	41,51%	50,76%	
	Non-EU Europe	4,42%	3,77%	4,56%	
	TOTAL	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	
	Number of women		113	53	329
Men	Spain	21,90%	32,97%	27,13%	
	North Africa and the Maghreb	19,77%	12,43%	14,04%	
	Sub-Saharan Africa	6,86%	3,42%	4,71%	
	North America	0,49%	1,26%	0,85%	
	South America	2,29%	2,70%	2,36%	
	Asia	3,59%	4,50%	3,77%	
	European Union	41,01%	39,64%	43,95%	
	Non-EU Europe	4,08%	3,06%	3,20%	
			100,00%	100,00%	100,00%
	Total number of men		612	555	2.123
Total		725	608	2.452	

Source: Original, using data from SISMO.

Broadly speaking, we can confirm that the people contacted in 2018 with a longer history of living rough belong to an older age bracket and there was a higher frequency of Spanish nationals among them than among the entire population analysed. By contrast, there are fewer Spanish nationals among those with less than a year living rough, whereas the age bracket is very similar to that of entire population analysed.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The number of people sleeping rough in Barcelona in one specific night has risen by 45% in 10 years. The last count, on 17 May 2018, set the absolute number of such people at 956. The number of different people detected sleeping in the streets in one year went up by 72% between 2008 and 2018. This suggests greater volatility in that regard and that an increasingly larger portion of the people sleeping rough are shuttling between sleeping rough and other kinds of residential exclusion or other geographic locations.

These increases have occurred despite the steady increase in residential places, accommodation and social intervention projects aimed at assisting homeless people. As pointed out by the 2017 Diagnosis Report (De Inés, 2017) published by the XAPSELL, the number of publicly owned places funded by the City Council have grown while the rise of privately owned places has stopped due to the increase in rental prices. NGOs are finding more and more problems to maintain housing programmes with social support. The property market not only makes access to housing more difficult for a growing section of the city's inhabitants, it also puts obstacles in the way of organisations assisting the most vulnerable.

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The latest works published throughout Europe warned that the increase in housing prices in cities around the world is leaving more and more people without access to a housing solution. This increase in prices is occurring above all in the types of residential accommodation traditionally used by people with low financial resources. With access to rented housing (or rooms) requiring high and stable incomes, and pensions offering low-price beds are gradually on their way out or becoming establishments geared towards tourism, there is a sector of the population that has to turn to social services to avoid sleeping rough. This is a problem shared by all big European cities and which is causing concern even in countries with an extensive stock of public and social housing. Germany has recorded a 150% increase in the number of homeless people and a 33% rise in the number sleeping rough. In Ireland, the number of people living in residential centres and shelters rose 145% between 2014 and 2017. The UK recorded a 170% rise in the number of people sleeping rough between 2010 and 2017³.

Job insecurity, a lack of income-guarantee policies and managing migratory flows are other areas we need to pay attention to explain why European cities (and even more North American ones) are experiencing an unprecedented crisis of homelessness and, consequently, a clear increase in the number of people living and sleeping rough.

This study does not explore the reasons behind this phenomenon in Barcelona. It offers a description of the people who lived rough in the city between 2008 and 2018 based on variables that the City Council's public space social intervention teams collected under the same methodology throughout the period. And now it describes in a little more detail the characteristics of the people who slept rough in the city in 2018.

While only a few variables have been used, their value lies in the fact that the data collected refer to the entire population contacted by the professionals of Barcelona City Council's Open Environment Social Integration Service (SISMO) in one year. So, we would be approaching the characteristic traits of all the people spending the night in the public space during a year, while avoiding the biases of a sample which, given the characteristics of those affected, could hardly be random.

³ <https://www.feantsa.org/en/event/2019/03/22/4th-overview-of-housing-exclusion-in-europe>

The year-on-year evolution in the social and demographic characteristics of the homeless population does not show any significant changes with respect to women, between 10% and 14% during the period 2008-2018, nor in the age range. Even so, the absolute figures warn of an increase in the number of young people: between 2016 and 2018, the number of people under the age of 30 living rough in the city doubled. The number of young people contacted rose from 136 in 2016 to 267 in 2018. One of the factors having an impact on this increase in the absolute numbers of young people contacted on the street is young people with no adult reference who arrived in Catalonia when they were minors are now reaching majority age. While SISMO contacted 20 youths from the Maghreb under the age of 25 in 2016, they contacted 75 in 2018.

The increasingly large presence of young people among Barcelona's homeless is even more noticeable in residential facilities. While the number of people assisted in day centres between the ages of 18 and 25 was 248 in 2015, it had risen to 869 by 2018⁴. Specific use should be made of their social and demographic characteristics for guiding assistance and prevention policies.

Substantial changes are occurring in the composition of the population with regard to geographic origin and nationality. Whereas the number of Spanish nationals contacted annually only grew by 90 in 10 years (from 604 to 694), the number of EU foreign nationals rose from 417 at the start of this period to 1,100 in 2018. At the same time, the number of non-EU nationals, which had only grown from 408 in 2008 to 480 in 2017, jumped to 658 in 2018. Therefore, the central figures in the increase in Barcelona's homeless population in the last 10 years have been EU citizens, with non-EU foreign nationals only coming to the fore in the last few years.

Twenty-five percent of the people contacted have spent over 3 years living rough. This chronic situation mostly affects Spaniards and other EU citizens, whereas those who have spent less time living rough are from Africa or Central or South America.

Thirty percent of the population contacted by the street teams have accumulated less than a year of living rough. As might be expected, people under the age of 30 are over-represented when it comes to short periods of living rough. Also higher are the numbers of people who spend short periods living rough in the city due to their mobility or because they combine several situations of exclusion, as suggested by the fact that the total number of people detected in a year grew more quickly than that for people detected in one night.

The geographic origin of these young people presents significant differences with those of the other people contacted. In the case of women, 72% are from the EU and only 21% are Spanish. Of the women over the age of 30, 39% are Spanish whereas 46% come from other EU countries. As regards men, 40% come from other EU countries and only 9% are Spanish nationals. Particularly notable is the fact that 36% of the homeless people under the age of 30 come from North Africa and the Maghreb, compared to only 11% of the people over the age of 30.

⁴ Data provided by the Department of Assistance for Vulnerable People in Barcelona City Council's Area of Social Rights.

This increase in the EU foreign population living rough is by no means exclusive to Barcelona. Nor is the situation of residential exclusion of foreign people without work and residence permits. Cross-border mobility is forcing us to reconsider, in varying degrees, the role of social services in covering the basic needs of people in a situation of extreme poverty. Migratory flows between states with different levels of social protection, together with the pull effect of many big cities in what were the EU15 countries, show the need for social policy analysis and coordination spaces. Social services fall under municipal jurisdiction in most EU member states and are tasked with assisting resident citizens.

The impossibility of assisting people without residence permits who are homeless and of offering them residential solutions had, in quantitative terms, been a stable problem in Barcelona until last year, whereas it is the main cause of street homelessness in other European cities. According to data from the municipal teams, the problems of finding shelter for migrants had a greater impact on the city's homeless population between 2017 and 2018.

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Homelessness is the local expression of a global problem of access to housing. The diverse routes to impoverishment and accumulated exclusion that can lead to people live rough forces us to reconsider the historical disconnection between housing and social service policies (European Commission, 2013; FEANTSA, 2013) and, at the same time, it forces us to go beyond the municipal dimension of the problem and roll out regional, state and European policies.

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