

Amidst the most vulnerable voices

Women and migrants in homeless situation with Alcohol Use Disorders (AUD)

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Background

- Homeless persons with AUD – not a homogenous group
- Intersectional perspectives: closer look at groups with added layers of vulnerability
 - Particularly, women and/or migrants

Background

- When designing harm reduction initiatives that consider such differences, how can the specific need of these groups be met?

Methodology

- Individual phone interviews to women (5) and migrants (6)
- Focus groups with clinical staff
- Content analysis

Results

- Experiences of added vulnerability

I never wanted to go to a centre, because I had no resources and no documents, we were all in the streets, and they came to get us and proposed a new centre where there was food... [women and migrant]

I managed to find a job in Portugal, but small tasks and I have more complex competences. There was great instability as I lived in torment... I already drank. [women and migrant]

Results

- Specific needs – migrants

The profile changed. There are more migrants, of a younger age, much younger than usual [...] with a different attitude regarding the social responses, more demanding and desperate, less willing to wait and to get used to live on the streets.

Results

- Specific needs – migrants

People in this second wave came to live on the streets but were relatively structured before the pandemic, they worked in restaurants or tuk-tuks... All that closed, and these precarious jobs left these people in a vulnerable position. There are also much, much, much bigger mental health problems. So, they had to be supported by psychiatry and in some there were also alcohol, substance use. [...] many of these people started using alcohol and other substances after being on the streets.

Results

- Specific needs – women

Women are really difficult to find on the streets, even for the technical teams. The other day, a group of homeless women said “we hide as much as we can, we only go out for food, for the public baths for a shower, and so on, but our goal is that no one knows where we are, because we are more protected if the technical team does not come to help us”, because that targets them and makes them more vulnerable.

Results

- Specific needs – women

I have the feeling that there are more women asking for support and entering in the centres. We knew from the start that we needed to find a specific response to women in the City Hall, specific for women, being a more vulnerable population, with singular needs we all know, and we had to have a centre just for women.

Results

- Specific needs – women

These women were on the streets, without a roof, invisible, didn't show up, and while they started to understand that the centres were safe and with few rules and where people felt relatively well, women started to show and not we have these 426 women that were not identified as being homeless.

Conclusion

- Women and migrants are perceived as more vulnerable
- Migrants seem to, more often, face limitations and scarcity of solutions
- Further analysis would allow for identifying user-led priorities
- Tailored harm reduction initiatives are key