

# Rural Homelessness in South Belgium

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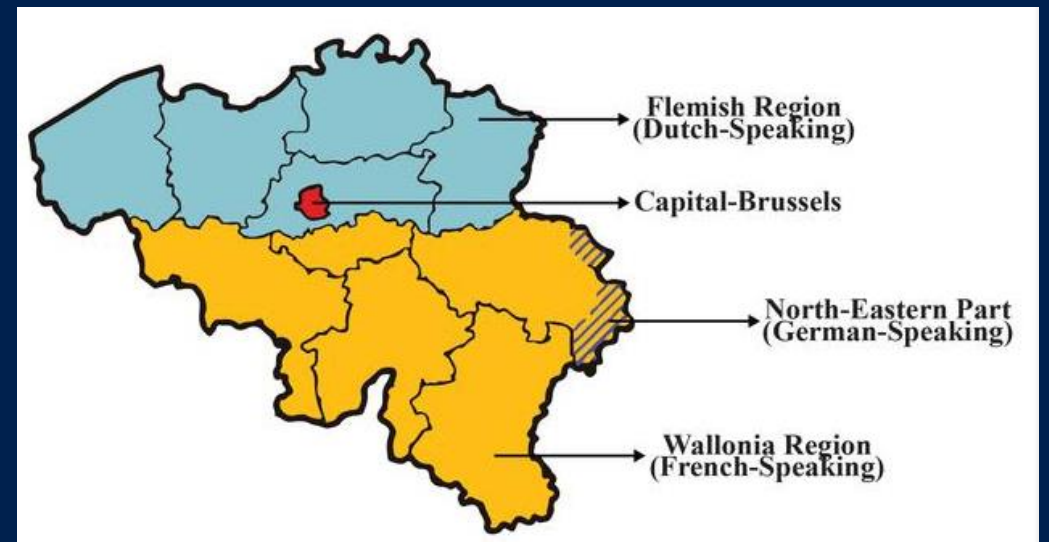


# OUTLINE

- 1. Approach - counting homelessness and absence of housing
- 2. Homelessness in Belgium
- 3. Rural Homelessness in Wallonia
  - Quantitative description
  - Situations
- 4. Conclusion

# A SHORT NOTICE ABOUT BELGIUM

- One overview in a minute
  - 3 languages – regions, communities, provinces
  - Very different socio-economic situations
- A country in the heart of Europe
  - Longstanding history of migration





# APPROACH - COUNTING HOMELESSNESS

## FINDINGS (MEHOBEL REPORT 2018)

Lack of  
comparable  
national statistics

Quite not  
possible  
harmonisation

## CONTEXT

Belgian cooperation agreement on  
homelessness (12 May 2014)

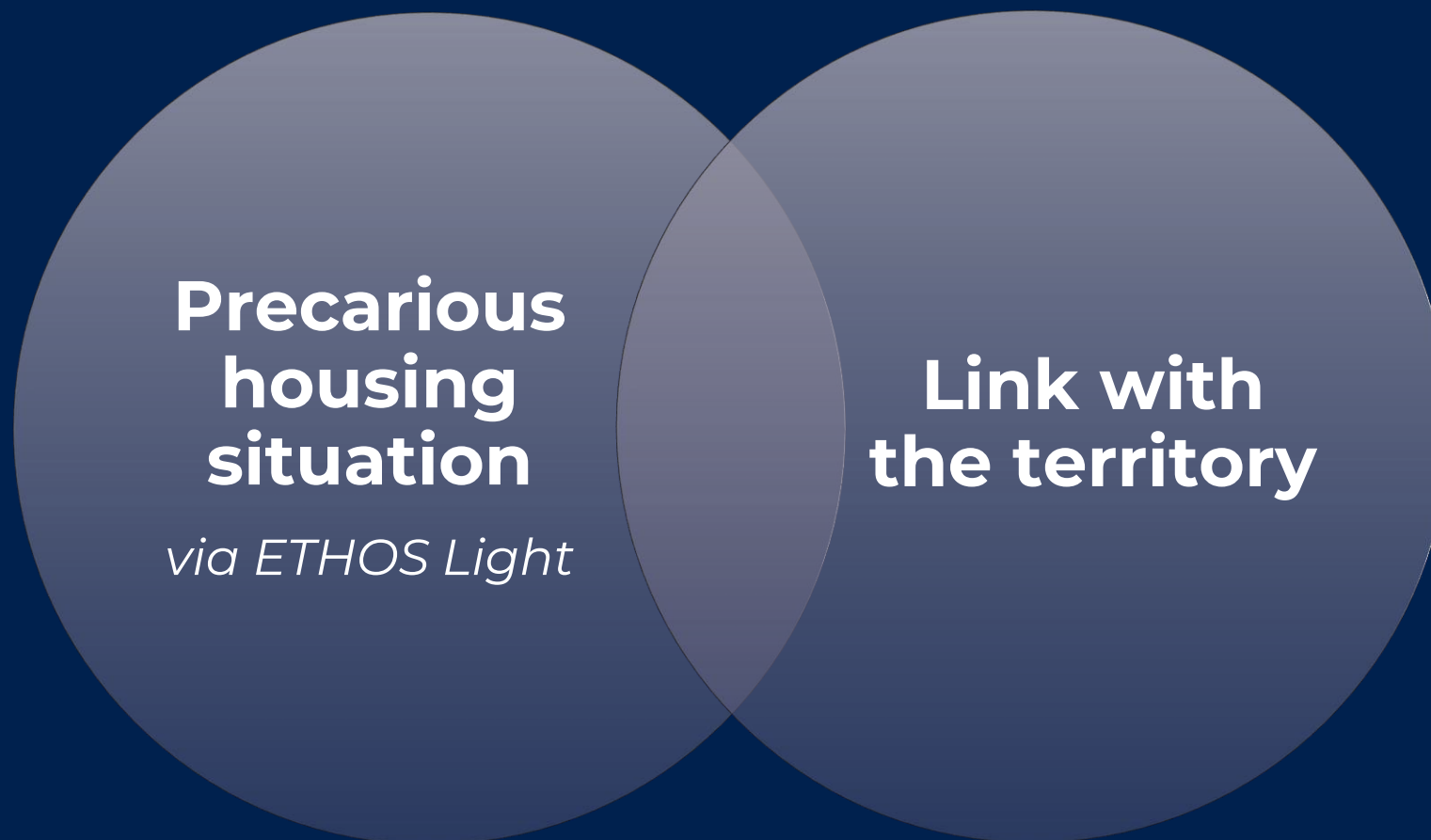
Define via ETHOS

Gathering  
quantitative data

# Ethos Light typology

<i>Operational category</i>	<i>Life situations</i>
<b>1. In the public space</b>	In the public space.
<b>2. In emergency accommodation</b>	In low-threshold, short-term accommodation.
<b>3. In temporary accomodation</b>	In long term shelters or temporary accommodation (< 1 year)
<b>4. People leaving institutions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. People who leave the institution within one month of the count date without a stable living solution.</li> <li>b. People who stay longer in the institution due to the lack of a stable housing solution.</li> </ul>
<b>5. In non-conventional housing</b>	In unconventional homes or premises.
<b>6. With friends, family or third persons</b>	Staying with friends, family or third parties because you have no accommodation of your own.
<b>+ 7<sup>e</sup> category: threat of eviction</b>	People who have to leave their homes within one month of the day of the count for the following reasons

## 2 criteria for being counted





# PHOTOGRAPHING THE SITUATION



## Process

Actors are invited to take part in the count

Employees fill in a questionnaire for all those who meet the conditions.

Researchers analyse the results and write a report

# WORKING TOGETHER WITH A DIVERSE SET OF PARTNERS

Local organizations	Examples
Services for homeless persons	Night shelter, emergency accommodation, women shelter, temporary housing solutions, outreach
Frontline services	Social work service from: public, health insurance, community health centers, general welfare centers
Institutions	General hospital, mental health hospital, youth care organization, prison, facilities for people with disabilities, reception centers for asylum seekers
Railway and police	Local/regional police Railway
Low threshold services	Drop-in centers, social restaurants, community initiatives, volunteer programs
Housing Agency	Social housing companies

Table 2. Local organizations.

# Questionnaire

- Completed by workers
- Anonymous ID
- Various topics covered:

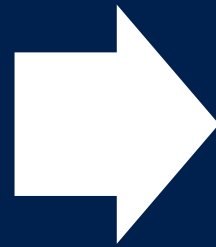


# Confidentiality



## OBJECTIVES

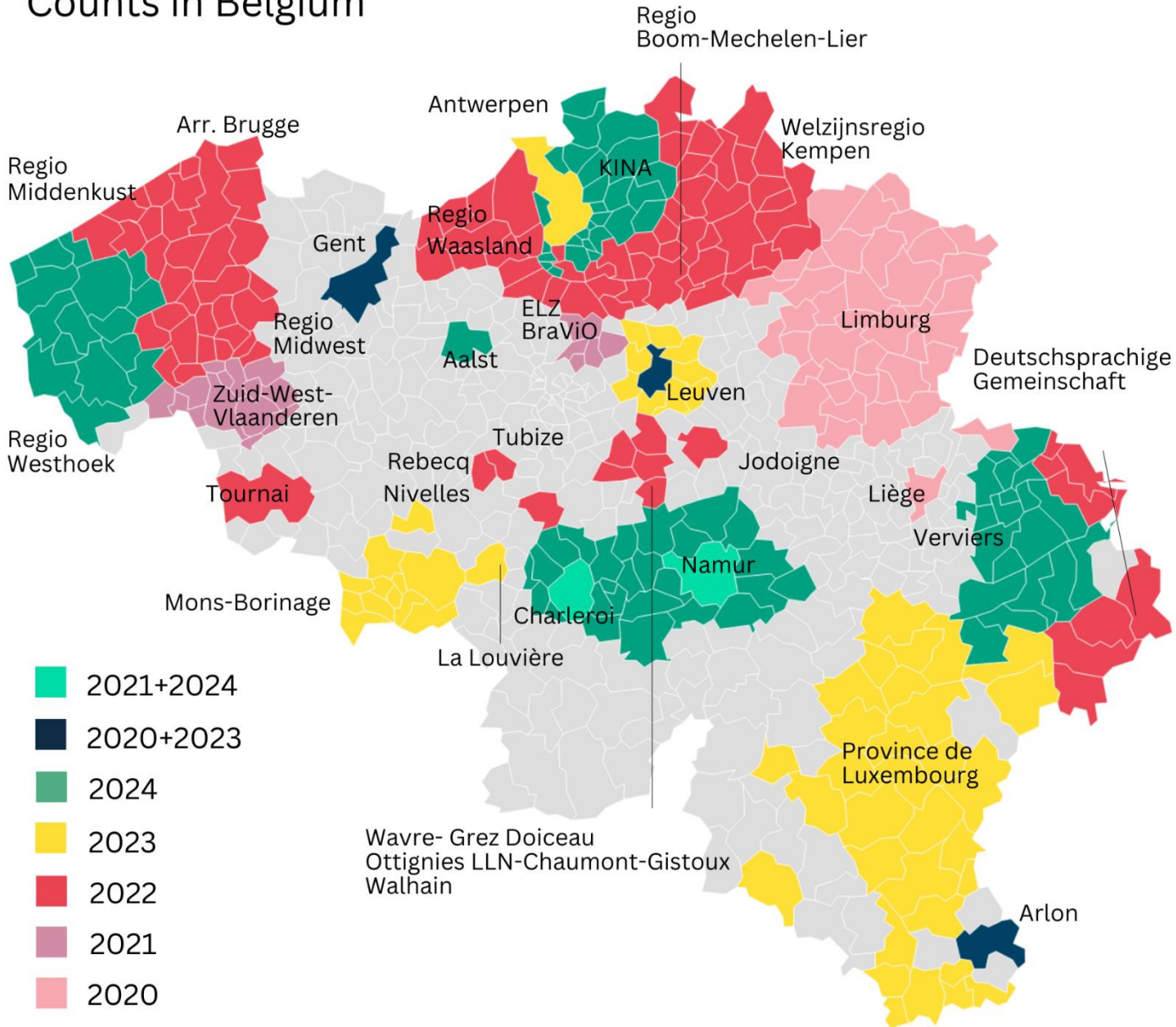
Gathering figures on  
homelessness in  
Belgium



Making this scientific  
material available for  
the development of  
effective policies to  
combat homelessness

# Homelessness

## Counts in Belgium



# Cities 2024

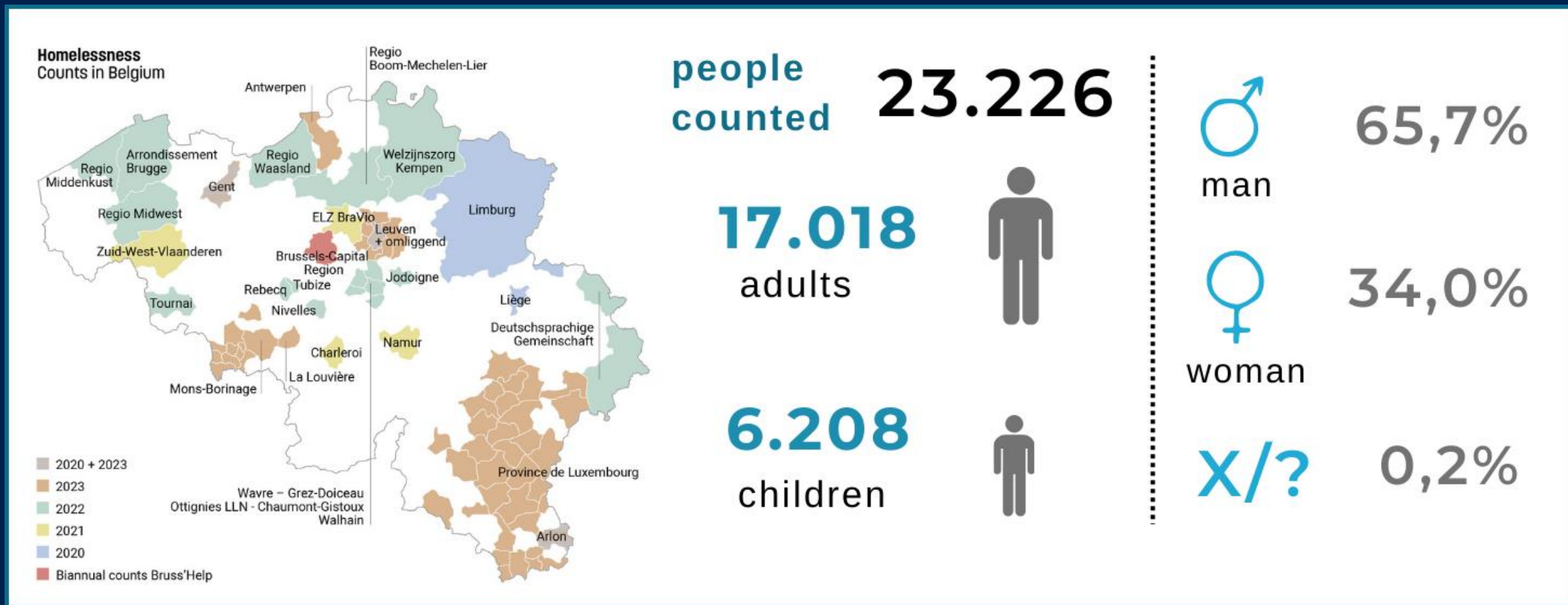




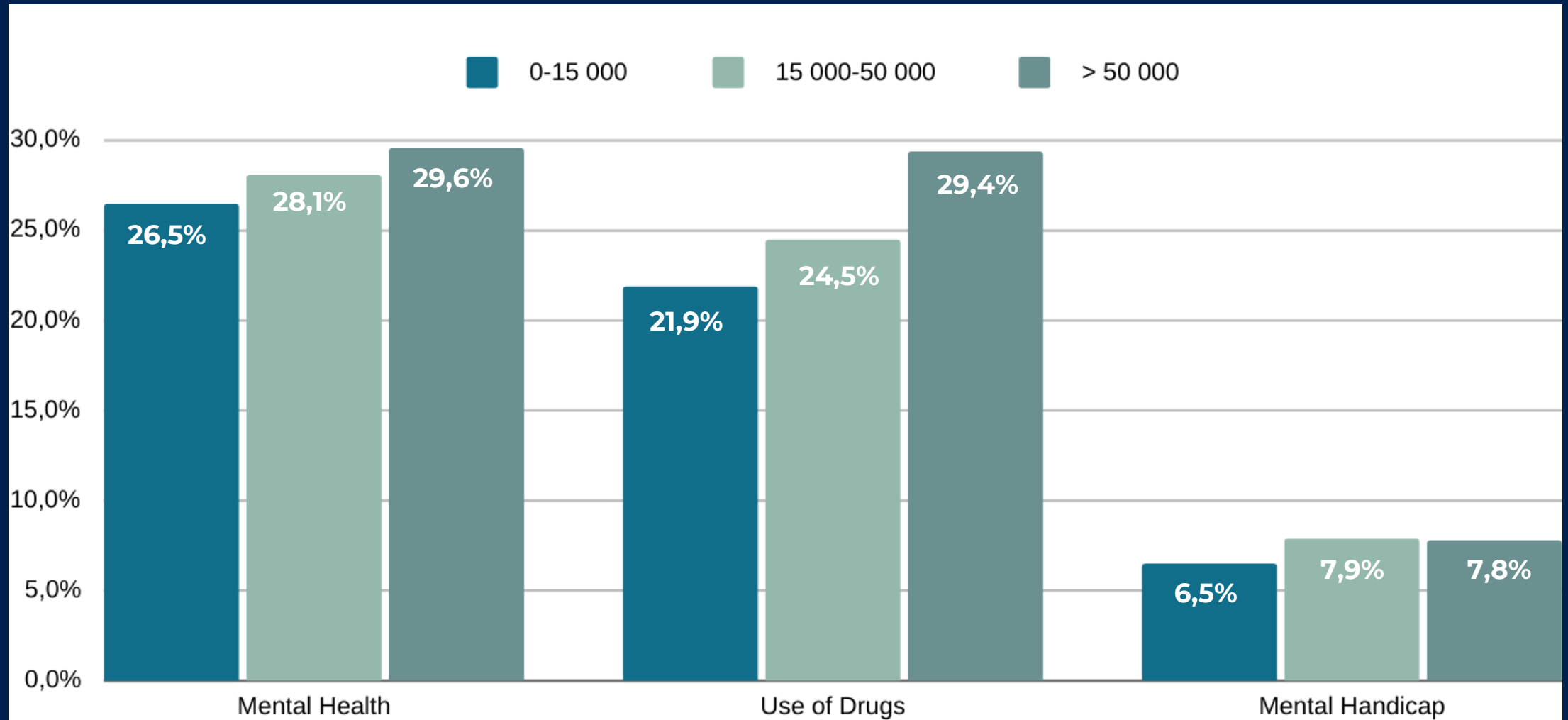


## 2. HOMELESSNESS IN BELGIUM

# A more detailed analysis of certain groups based on counts in 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023.



# Rural environment ↔ Urban environment: health problems



# Extrapolations for Flemish Region : estimated 13,533 adults in a situation of homelessness

	1. In the public space		2. In emergency accommodation		3. In residential homes		4. People leaving institutions		5. Non-conventional space		6. With friends, family or third persons		+ 7e category: threat of eviction		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
<b>0 - 15,000 inwoners</b>	4	0,5	4	1,0	317	11,0	323	18,2	241	15,4	508	10,3	120	9,5	1.517	11,2
<b>15,001 - 30,000 inwoners</b>	55	7,7	22	5,5	533	18,5	419	23,6	335	21,4	988	20,0	319	25,2	2.671	19,7
<b>30,001 - 50,000 inwoners</b>	70	9,8	11	2,8	541	18,7	382	21,6	172	11,0	848	17,2	309	24,4	2.333	17,2
<b>50,001 - 120,000 inwoners</b>	243	34,0	140	35,8	780	27,0	345	19,4	197	12,6	1.130	22,9	250	19,8	3.085	22,8
<b>&gt; 120,000 inwoners</b>	343	48,0	214	54,7	719	24,9	305	17,2	616	39,5	1.462	29,6	268	21,2	3.927	29,0
<b>Totaal</b>	<b>715</b>		<b>391</b>		<b>2.890</b>		<b>1.774</b>		<b>1.561</b>		<b>4.936</b>		<b>1.266</b>		<b>13.533</b>	

# Extrapolations for Walloon Region : estimated 14,342 adults in a situation of homelessness

	1. In the public space		2. In emergency accommodation		3. In residential homes		4. People leaving institutions		5. Non-conventional space		6. With friends, family or third persons		+ 7e category: threat of eviction		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
<b>0 - 15,000</b>	85	11,1	45	11,4	1.322	36,4	277	26,0	1.294	46,9	1.130	21,9	158	28,4	4.311	30,1
<b>15,001 - 30,000</b>	198	25,8	17	4,3	778	21,4	247	23,2	427	15,5	1682	32,6	238	42,8	3.587	25,0
<b>30,001 - 50,000</b>	123	16,0	51	12,9	547	15,1	76	7,1	152	5,5	373	7,2	16	2,9	1.338	9,3
<b>50,001 - 120,000</b>	240	31,3	157	39,7	615	16,9	358	33,6	454	16,4	1.391	26,9	105	18,9	3.320	23,1
<b>&gt; 120,000</b>	121	15,8	125	31,6	370	10,2	106	10,0	434	15,7	591	11,4	39	7,0	1.786	12,5
<b>Totaal</b>	<b>767</b>		<b>395</b>		<b>3632</b>		<b>1064</b>		<b>2761</b>		<b>5167</b>		<b>556</b>		<b>14342</b>	

= > 55,1 % of homeless people in municipalities with less than 30.000 inhabitants

# TRENDS IN WALLOON TERRITORIES



1/3 women



1/5 young  
people aged  
18-25



Proportion of  
ETHOS 1 does  
not exceed  
10%.



ETHOS 6  
proportion  
between 1/4  
and 2/3



At least 1/4  
have no  
health  
problems

# TERRITORY COVERED





# 3. RURAL HOMELESSNESS IN WALLONIA

QUANTITATIVE DESCRIPTION

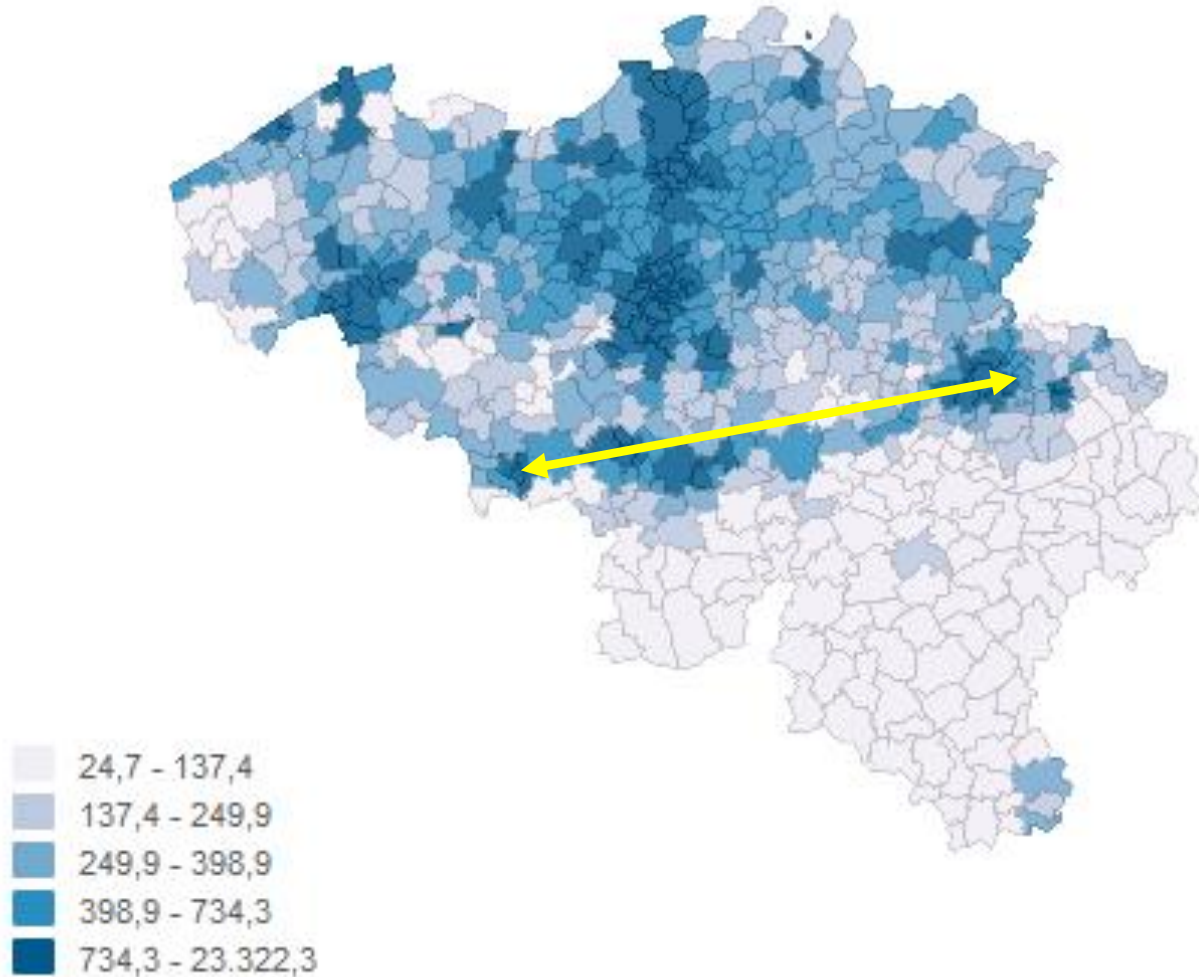


# TOTAL INHABITANTS AND PROPORTION OF HOMELESS PERSONS

Inhabitants	Total		Number of counted adults per 1000 inhabitants
0 – 15 000	1.388.285	38,5%	3,1
15 001 – 30 000	965.915	26,8%	3,1
30 001 – 50 000	310.264	8,6%	3,7
50 001 – 120 000	538.597	15,0%	4,3
> 120 000	399.131	11,1%	6,2
TOTAL	3.602.192	100,0%	4,5
			4

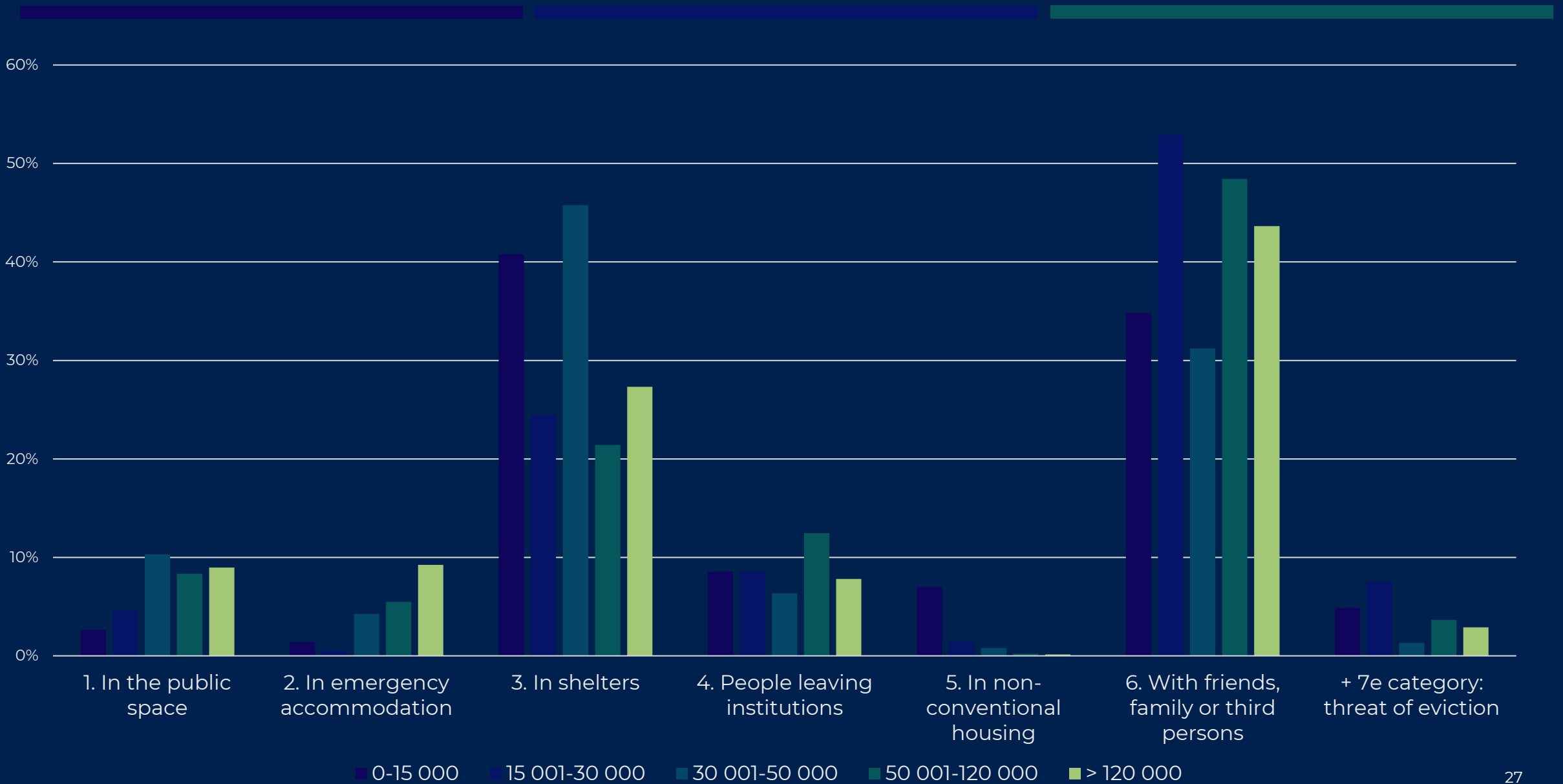
Below 30,000 = 65% of the overall population (VS 55% of Homeless)

## Population density by km<sup>2</sup>, 1st January 2023



« Old industrial axis » -  
between the two rivers

- main cities
- main presence of homelessness services



# TRENDS IN THE 8 TERRITORIES OF WALLONIA



1/3 women



1/5 young  
people aged  
18-25



Proportion of  
ETHOS 1 does  
not exceed  
10%.

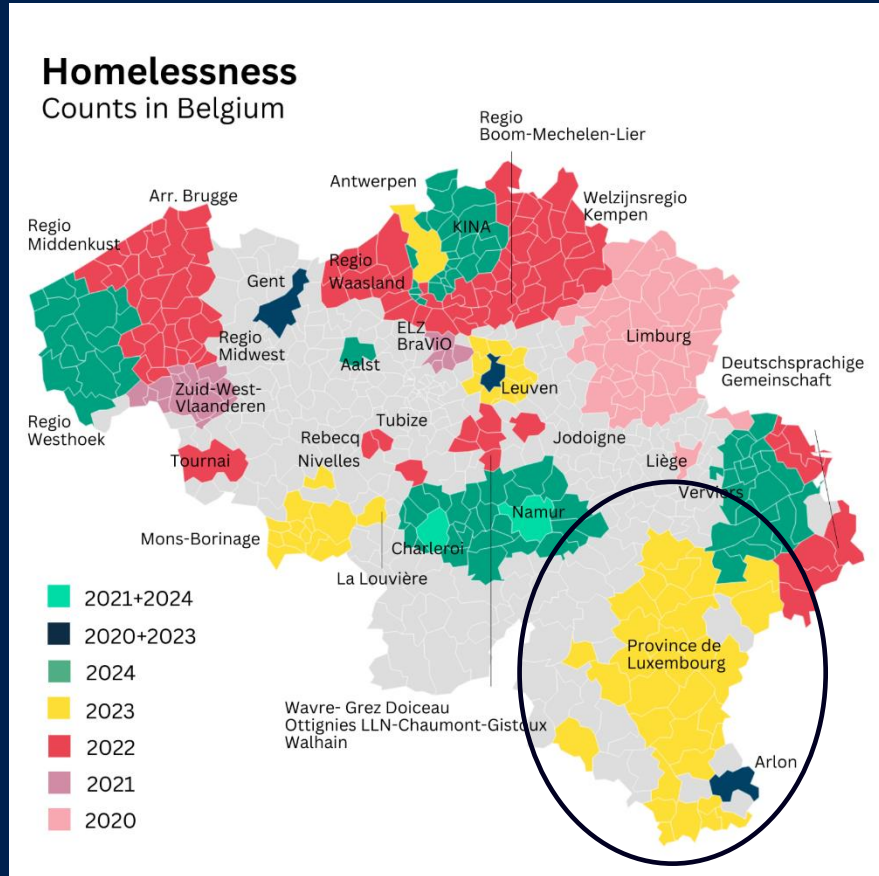


ETHOS 6  
proportion  
between 1/4  
and 2/3



At least 1/4  
have no  
health  
problems

# ZOOM ON THE PROVINCE OF LUXEMBOURG



**PROVINCE OF LUXEMBOURG**

<b>ETHOS Light category</b>	<b>Adults (#1 021)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Of which men (%)</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Children (#373)</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>1 - Public spaces</b>	44	4,3	81,8	18,2	0	0,0
<b>2 - Emergency accommodation (night shelters, etc.)</b>	23	2,3	82,6	17,4	4	1,1
<b>3 - Shelter (hostel, transit accommodation, etc.)</b>	303	29,7	60,4	39,6	191	51,2
<b>4 - In institutions (ILA, mental health, prison, youth work, etc.)</b>	73	7,1	64,4	35,6	20	5,4
<b>5 - Unconventional location (tent, garage, squat, etc.)</b>	267	26,2	63,3	36,7	53	14,2
<b>6 - With relatives / friends / third parties</b>	269	26,3	57,2	42,0	70	18,7
<b>7 - Threat of eviction</b>	37	3,6	59,5	40,5	35	9,4
<b>Situation 28/10 unknown, homelessness confirmed</b>	5	0,5	80,0	20,0	0	0,0

## SOME FEATURES (VS >120 000 INHABITANTS CITIES IN BELGIUM)



**37,7% (vs 31,5%)**



**18,5% (vs 24,1%)**



**19,8% (vs 31,4%)**



**72,3% (vs 48,3%)**



**10,2% (vs 12,4%)**



**29,2% (vs 25,6%)**



**25,8% (30,9%)**

## COMING FROM AN INSTITUTION



**11,7% (vs 18,5%)**



**12,8% (vs 18,7%)**



**7,4% (vs 8,0%)**





# 3. RURAL HOMELESSNESS IN WALLONIA

SITUATIONS

Louis, aged 19, discharged from a youth welfare facility at the age of 18. He returned to live with his mother (for lack of a post-housing solution) but the family situation was unbearable. His mother kicked him out of her home. He had to spend the winter of 2023-2024 in a tent in the woods.

I'm 18, my father decided I had to leave home and dropped me off at the « SHELTER ». I had all my belongings, sheets, clothes, teddies, games and food to last a few days. I have a disability, so I don't know how to live on my own. I was taken in urgently, and the group integrated me well. After a few days, the educational team found me a place in a suitable centre.

Hi, my name is Carole and I'm 18. When I was 17, I was looked after by a youth welfare agency. They found me a small flat. Due to poor management of my accommodation and bad company, my contract has not been renewed. I'm trying to find other accommodation but my profile seems to frighten people; a young person with no training. I've looked hard but haven't found anything.

I'm scared because I don't have a network. On the day of the count, I'd just left my flat and for the first time I had to ask someone to take me in. I'm 18 and adult life isn't the stuff of dreams.

18 years old - which comes out of youth welfare.

A profile that frightens landlords. Youth welfare... no, they're not all delinquents. Unfortunately, there is real discrimination against young people, and even more so against young people in the youth welfare system, who are already severely affected by life and have to struggle to find accommodation. Or they have to accept an accommodation that others refuse.

Marvin is 30 years old. He's been living in his car for over 2 years. His car is his home, right down to having a microwave (unusable in this context) on the passenger seat.

A few weeks ago, his battery failed. He was in danger of finding himself without a way to keep warm in the middle of winter. Out of his "comfort zone" (if we dare use the term in these conditions...), he exceptionally agreed to let us help him look for solutions... Going to « nearby little city » and risking not being drawn to sleep in the night shelter? Go to the campsite despite the winter conditions, without being sure that his profile would be suitable? The mechanic finally managed to get the car started again... Here we go again, until when?

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# FAMILIES / HOUSING

- 
- My family and I found ourselves on the streets following an eviction. My wife and three children found a place at the « long term shelter » and I arrived at « emergency accomodation » at the beginning of November. It's hard to be separated, but I knew it was only for a short time because we were allocated accommodation. I left the shelter on 20 December and I can't wait to celebrate Christmas with my family.

## LIVING WITH FRIENDS, FAMILY OR THIRD PERSON

François has been renting for several years. He doesn't take loneliness well and is generous by nature. He took in a couple of friends who were in difficulty; although their housing situation was already quite fragile, they completely damaged the house and looted it. He then took in another couple of friends who tried to help him put things back in order. He still received an eviction notice. At that point, 3 people and their cat lost their home...

Cyril is the last tenant in a building that has been squatted and destroyed. The roof was damaged, to the extent that there was major water ingress into his home and electrical damage. Given the difficulties of rehousing, he didn't dare start the process of having his property recognised as unfit for habitation before finding another decent home, for fear that his poor housing situation would ultimately lead to an even more precarious housing situation. As a result, he did not dare claim his rights, which would have enabled him to benefit from certain social advantages such as a homelessness certificate allowing priority points for social housing or the ADeL bonus.

# MIGRATION

He arrived from Tunisia as an orphan, having lost both his parents there. He is 31 years old.

He came to Belgium following the loss of his parents and because he is bisexual and this is not accepted in his culture.

He came here in the hope of being able to apply for asylum, but for the time being he is using the night shelter.

Asylum seeker refused reception:

Tesfit is originally from Eritrea. As soon as he arrived in Belgium, aged 24, he applied for international protection. Without a place in a reception centre (normally granted by Fedasil), he first slept for a few weeks in a squat in Brussels. Then, by word of mouth, he found out about a shelter run by volunteers in the province of Luxembourg. This is where he is currently staying, pending a decision on his residency.

Migrants in "transit" situations :

Among the people living in the accommodation run by a group of volunteers is Aboubakar, a 30-year-old Sudanese man. He has been living in this former school for almost two years. His aim is to join his brother in the UK. Over the last few months, he has given up hope a little and is trying less and less to leave by lorry in the evening from the nearby motorway service area. He's thinking of trying to cross the Channel by boat in the spring.

# CONCLUSION

Homelessness and lack of housing are clearly also rural phenomenon

Proportions are quite comparable, but lesser visible

Lesser services, more mobility problems, presence of stigma

Counts as a moment of recognition of rural aspects of homelessness

# Questions / Answers

