Homeless women in Spain

National Report
for
FEANTSA
1999

Pedro José Cabrera Cabrera
Universidad Pontificia Comillas de Madrid
May 2000

In collaboration with: Ángeles Arechederra-Ortiz, Isabel Madruga-Torremocha and Eva Rubio-Guzmán
TABLE OF CONTENTS

OUR VIEW OF REALITY.................................................................................................................3

A PROPOSAL FOR A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.................................................................3
SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF HOMELESS PEOPLE IN SPAIN ..............................................8
  A) Social relationship axis. .................................................................................................10
  B) Economic-labour axis. ..................................................................................................11

POVERTY AND EXCLUSION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF GENDER

A) SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP EXCLUSION OF WOMEN IN SPAIN ..............14
  Changes in the model of the traditional family..............................................................14
  Demographic changes......................................................................................................15
B) ECONOMIC-LABOUR EXCLUSION OF WOMEN IN SPAIN ..............18
  Education ........................................................................................................................19
  Labour situation ..............................................................................................................20
  Housing Situation ..........................................................................................................24

CARE SERVICES FOR HOMELESS WOMEN IN SPAIN .........................26

THE SERVICES NETWORK .................................................................................................26
HOW MANY HOMELESS ARE THERE IN SPAIN? .................................................28
WHO DO WE TAKE CARE OF? ..................................................................................29
  Homeless immigrants ..................................................................................................33
HOW MANY HOMELESS WOMEN ARE THERE IN SPAIN? .........................34
SERVICES NEEDED ...........................................................................................................36
WOMEN SUBJECTED TO ILL-TREATMENT .............................................................39
  A concrete experience: The Shelter Home for Ill-treated Women “Luz Casanova” of Madrid. ........................................................................................................43
EFFECTS OF SINGLE-PARENTHOOD ON POVERTY SITUATIONS ......45

CONCLUSIONS ......................................................................................................................51

BIBLIOGRAPHY .......................................................................................................................52
OUR VIEW OF REALITY

This report attempts to throw some light on the situation of homeless excluded women in Spain. The difficulty in researching social exclusion in our country is enormous. The lack of sources and of studies on a national scope and the scarcity of resources amongst which the experts in poverty and exclusion usually have to move become extreme when, to the almost impossible wish of taking a look at exclusion, we try to add the perspective of gender. At that very moment the information wasteland turns into an absolute desert. If the homeless poor hardly appear in official statistics, poor homeless women simply do not exist.

We have tried to solve these problems by using, in the first place, a general theoretical framework about extreme exclusion. This would allow us to make sense of a series of pieces of information and of general information that in our opinion highlight the differential exclusion that, in a specific way, women suffer in our country.

Finally we have tried to present the additional exclusion that women suffer within the already excluded collective of homeless people. For this purpose we have used the information from a macrosurvey conducted during 1999 among the centres and services aimed at the care of homeless people in Spain. Lastly we present some specific aspects that refer to single-parent families headed by a woman, and to mistreated women, with information obtained in several experiences of social intervention.

A PROPOSAL FOR A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Since the late fifties and the early sixties, to a large extent as a consequence of the programmes of the fight against poverty by the U.S.A. Johnson administration, two lines of work have been used to take care of the most disadvantaged: one has considered poverty as a degraded status, linked fundamentally to the lack of economic means; and another one has taken care of studying it, binding it to the analysis of social deviation, that is, as differing, anomalous or atypical conduct, as it has been reflected in the studies on ostracised, unusual or simply criminal groups.

The sociology of poverty and the sociology of deviant behaviour have often followed parallel paths, being linked by close bonds because of the object of the study itself, but rarely have they been in the frame of reference as inter-relating. If the former was bond to the macro studies type, and to the economy –since poverty as a massive fact, emerges mainly from a specific distribution of the income-, the latter, the sociology of deviation, was restricted to micro research, to a study focused on the description and the analysis of “exotic” behaviours and environments in line with disciplines like anthropology and psychology.

The needs of social intervention that are faced day by day by those who have to work with homeless groups of the population rapidly demonstrate the inadequacies of the sociology of poverty. We see the huge void left between the figures which show a multitudinous number of persons who do not surpass the threshold of 50% of the average national income (around eight million people in Spain), and the immediacies of social work with a specific group of persons with names and faces, who cannot accept delays nor postponements. How to place each life, each vital event, full of concreteness and subjectivity, in the framework of an understanding of the problem that only takes care of structural causes, or long-term global tendencies?

As for the psychosociology of deviation, as long as it busies itself with making inventories of behaviours, it's easy to guess the danger it's in of leading to the dissolution of the elements which make up the structural global framework of any human action, to end up simply dissecting individual
behaviours, in an exercise of intellectual tightrope walking which moves with precarious balance from theoretical analysis to the simple moral judgement (usually condemnatory) of those who appear different.

Nowadays, we count, however, on a new theoretical framework that, even when it presents many not well defined or even confused aspects – or, maybe just because of it-, can help us to overcome the limitations and inadequacies which come out of the previous two perspectives, usually burdened by an excess of definition. Social exclusion is the new paradigm (Paugam 1996) in which the developments obtained up till now from the research on poverty and social deviation can merge and be productively used.

Without pretending to present it as a panacea since it only collects the best of both research traditions to give them a new direction, the table enclosed shows what, from my point of view, the improved contribution that the sociology of exclusion proposes could be. Of course, it is still a schematic view and reduced to a certain point because not all the realities now conferred on the term exclusion were in its origin1, nor have the studies of poverty or of marginality/deviation strictly abided by the plan that we present.

Nevertheless, in general, it can be said that the sociology of poverty has been essentially interested in the consequences, the final output, consolidated in a status reflecting destitution and lacks. On the other hand, the view of deviation has focused on investigating aspects of behaviour which characterised marginal or "strange" roles. As opposed to both views, the sociology of exclusion tends to give priority to the disentangling of the process which leads certain persons and/or collectives to be excluded from social participation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poverty (Result/output/status)</th>
<th>Deviation (Behaviour/role)</th>
<th>Exclusion (Process/process)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Necessities</td>
<td>Pathology</td>
<td>Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrictive</td>
<td>Diagnostic</td>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution</td>
<td>Differentiation</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threshold</td>
<td>Typology</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Countable)</td>
<td>(Clinic)</td>
<td>(Socio-Politic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deficit</td>
<td>Inadaptation</td>
<td>Social shape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack</td>
<td>Non-adaptation</td>
<td>Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privation</td>
<td>Poor adaptation</td>
<td>Structuring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsistence</td>
<td>Self-fulfilment</td>
<td>Citizenship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redistribution</td>
<td>Readaptation</td>
<td>Reinsertion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final result or the differential conduct adopted does not interest us as much as the process which the more unprivileged citizens undergo. Deep down, behind each of the three possible approaches, some attitude from the one who studies, observes or looks is found. If you'll excuse the expression, behind each one of these approaches three different views of one reality may be found. From the first one needy people can be perceived –and it's true that a lot of unsatisfied necessities

---

1 Verdes-Leroux a’s criticism of the first version of exclusion proposed by René Lenoir in 1974, ends with the reproach that its major virtue was allowing “the exclusion of the origin of” exclusion,” forgetting social and class inequalities. According to Paugam (1996:11), in this way “it was even perceived as a maneuver by the governing class to make the greatest number of people possible believe in their interest in social reform and thus avoid attacking the real problems of social inequality.”
underlie poverty (but not only); from the second one, one tends to identify pathologies, while, finally from the view of exclusion, extreme poverty appears as the clearest expression of insufficiently respected or clearly violated rights.

In short, when studying the phenomena of homeless people, from the point of view of the sociology of poverty, a restrictive criteria is being applied, focused, in an unidimensional way, on material aspects –frequently the criteria has been even economy-based-. While from the psychosociology of deviation the diagnosis criteria take precedence (Ex: Vexliard). On the other hand, what the sociology of exclusion tries to favour are the comprehensive, global, multi-dimensional approaches.

This means that while the study of poverty has operated technically through the setting of thresholds or levels of poverty from a certain distribution of income, experts in deviation, led by their desire to differentiate, distinguish and separate, have helped to generate numerous typologies, classifications and taxonomies of the poor and "subpoor". But, nowadays, we do not care much about putting the accent on the distribution of certain variables between the mass of citizens, nor on the conduct that differentiates the "normal" from the "strange", but rather on the relation amongst them, so it is clear that the way of operating in the studies on exclusion has to give priority to profound understanding, while the setting of thresholds and the establishment of typologies of the excluded is placed in the background.

Moving forward, we could say that in the studies on poverty, habitually of the macrosociological and quantitative type, the tendency is to adopt an accounting criteria, as becomes obvious when insisting on determining the exact number of poor people living in a country (in all this it is obvious that echoes of the old, archaic population censuses remain) In the study of deviation, priority has been given to clinical research, so that a view toward diagnosis, which deals with the identification of characteristic symptoms and traits of marginal collectives, has frequently eclipsed social-political analysis, which is the most active area in current research on social exclusion.

All this is really coherent, because as it has been explained, the view of poverty usually points out, because of its own interior logic, the aspects that show a deficit, a lack or privation, present among poor people. While, on the contrary, studying deviation behaviour has dealt with the problems that have been identified as a result of misadaptation, inadaptation or poor adaptation of some minority groups as opposed to the dictates of the majority. In this sense, problems of homelessness would not be a problem resulting from an insufficient endowment of material resources, but a simple problem of adjustment to collective rules. Lastly, the point of view of exclusion gives priority to the study of the problems that appear from social organisation in general. It is the way in which current society is formed, the structure of contemporary life, which ends up engendering systematically and implacably some rules of the game that make it very likely for certain collectives to be thrown into social exclusion.

In short, considering it in terms of poverty, what is at stake is mere subsistence, and the challenge of building a better society requires the redistribution of income; in the classical triad it would be the hope of equality. From the view of deviation, what is in danger is the right to be different, to seek self-fulfilment according to postulates and particular and minority views; so that for different persons, we would have to add a greater dose of tolerance and civility, in that way freedom as a collective and common vocation would be a more and more plausible reality.

To finish, considering the problem of the existence of homeless people among us from the point of view of exclusion alerts us to the danger that comes from the fact that problems are not only of subsistence or of self-fulfilment from a certain dissidence, but are even more about the threat that looms over them as citizens. What is most worrying of all the threats to excluded people is the danger in which the nature of citizenship itself is found, that –something which should never be forgotten- when questioned for some of us, it's questioned for all of us (Garcia Roca, 1998). Assuming this, it is obvious that the challenge in the future involves building a society in which the conditions of being a citizen (for all citizens) are strengthened from a logical position of insertion, participation, and social cohesion - of brotherhood in short.
To try to express graphically the analytical potential of the new paradigm, I suggest the following outline (see graph 1), constructed with the aim of offering a visual representation of the theoretical framework suggested from the ideas in Castel, and transmitted in Spain by J. García Roca.

From my point of view, this theoretical model, allows the integration of research on individual processes, through which empirical research on the homeless have often moved, with a panoramic understanding of global processes that affect contemporary societies. From this model, it is easy to understand the optimistic view of the 60's when the area of vulnerability seemed to be controlled, thanks to the existence of a wide area of integration, and because the occupational rates were of full employment, and there were social programmes in expansion, etc. All that allowed the disaffiliation area to be referred to as an area in extinction, or almost, but always as a reality directed towards a marginal survival within developed societies. On the other hand, from the 80's until now we have been going through a process in which the internal fracturing of the integration area is obvious: the segmentation of the employment market, the greater precarity of employment, the high unemployment rates, the cuts in social spending, etc., expand the vulnerability area and as a logical consequence, more and more people are going to swell the disaffiliation-exclusion area.

Of course, this doesn't happen in a void, but in the context of a structured society of classes, in which the possibilities of being at risk of exclusion are not by chance. On the contrary, it is rather a raffle where some layers of society have almost all the tickets. We just have to think that when economic-labour vulnerability (ex.: unemployment) appears in a home, the resources available to endure it are very different among members of one class or another. Even the same strategy to try to face up to it, like looking for shelter within family ties, leaves some people in the centre of an environment of relationships which are very "rich" and powerful in contacts, knowledge and information, while it hurls others even more into already very impoverished and weakened inner-relational contexts. The differences in the accumulated capital (either economic, cultural, relational or symbolic) for one class or the other result in very unequal opportunities for social insertion (integration) as well as for social exclusion (marginalness).
In any case, the process of social exclusion that appears graphically represented, goes through three phases (integration, vulnerability and disaffiliation, (or if you prefer, insertion, precarity, exclusion) whose boundaries are more blurred than the graphic representation found here suggests. We should take that into account because it is precisely on the edges, on the frayed edges, where those situations that permit the establishment of structural connections between areas, between socially marginal areas and other “worlds” of integration and welfare, are found.

Understanding the importance of transitions from one area to another is essential when studying social exclusion as a social condition of the system, and not as a reality locked in itself, "strange" and unrelated to the global society that supports it. In the last instance, it is the same process of distancing that moves many citizens away from goods and scarce resources, and that reserves certain fields of feeling and participation for a part of society. This is the process that causes vulnerability/precarity and disaffiliation/exclusion in such a way that, if vulnerability is marked by the precarious access to employment, housing and social and political participation, exclusion would be defined by the pure and simple "non-access" (Laparra; Gaviria; Aguilar, 1996).

—“The road that goes from integration to labour exclusion is the same as the one that goes from labour exclusion to relationship isolation and from here to the absence of motivation and feelings for life. This maze is so radically perverse that it works inversely: the weakness of the life dynamics makes social relationships more fragile and the latter in turn promote labour exclusion. The borders between the zones are easily crossed” (García Roca, 1998:142)
SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF HOMELESS PEOPLE IN SPAIN

As well as for all the aforementioned reasons, we insist on framing the analysis of social reality of the homeless under the paradigm of exclusion, because among other things, it is obvious to the public opinion that the homeless are excluded people. Not all excluded people are homeless (e.g.: disabled, ethnic minorities), but, of course, all persons who do not have a roof to shelter them are excluded. That is how it has been reflected in a recent survey of opinion, when to the question "who are the excluded?", 84% of those who answered said: "the homeless" in first place (Tezanos, 1999:94).

Who are we talking about?

In our country there isn't an officially accepted definition of "homeless person". Until recently the use of the term "transéúnte" (transient; vagrant) was most-used, and it is only slowly that the concrete case of those homeless who wander from one shelter to another, sleeping some times out in the open and others under shelter but in either case having a nomadic and travelling life, is being restricted.

This profile that is similar to the traditional wanderer (the colloquially-called tramp), obviously doesn't correspond to the internationally accepted definition of the English term homeless, that translates into French as sans-abri and to Spanish as sin-hogar or sin-techo.

In this version the concept has to do more with a situation than with a norm of specific behaviour. In general, the tendency is to accept that the homeless person is any person who lacks accommodation or who cannot get it by his/her own means, or who is incapable of supporting himself/herself unless he/she has the help of some supporting social service. Sometimes, the definition grows wider and includes all those who don't have accommodation in decent living conditions, according to the current norms of the society of reference. This last meaning would include all the population living in shanty towns, accommodated in precarious conditions, as well as all the people living in squatte houses, and even those who, wanting to live independently, are forced to live at some friend's, acquaintance's or relative's house.

As can be noticed, this way of defining the phenomenon of homeless people, has the basic reference of the situation regarding housing. A homeless person is anyone who doesn't have a house or accommodation that provides independence and allows them to live in decent conditions. However, this type of strictly situational definition also entails problems, because, as professor Sánchez Morales well points out, "the tendency is to define the phenomenon in terms of urban and housing planification in general, cutting it off from the cognitive approaches that can explain the roots of social exclusion"; for this reason, an outlook in which, somehow, the lack of housing would be emphasised as well as all the other "deficits and lacks that are derived from the non-participation in the community relationships that take place in the home framework" (Sánchez Morales, 1999:28) would be better.

It is important to note that, to a large extent, the problems of definition are political problems, because in the academic framework, reaching an agreement that permits adopting an effective definition is relatively easy, but, on the contrary, in the political scope, any definition has immediate budgetary consequences. This is the problem mentioned in the Report on "The problem of the homeless and housing", passed in June of this year by the European Union Committee of Regions: "we know little about the homeless basically because there isn't an exact definition nor a stable legal classification in each country. The term "homeless" covers different realities in each country. The

3 See the excellent introduction to the article by Manuel Muñoz and Carmelo Vazquez (198) for a summary of the situation in this respect.
definitions, norms and practices of the different member States complicate even more this situation” (1999:6)⁴.

As an unfortunate result of this difficulty in defining the problem, we find that the figures available are necessarily imprecise. FEANTSA, The European Federation of Associations that work in favour of the Homeless, has carried out the biggest and strongest attempts to bring this matter to light. However, the figures that have been offered are full of problems and difficulties. As the author of the three first reports remarked, "the figures obtained are, in the first place a reflection of the number of services available in a country: The member States that offer a wide range of services will have higher rates of effect than the countries where the services are less numerous. In a similar way, the figures depend on the counting methods available for the suppliers of the services and on the importance they want to give to this counting" (Daly, 1994:5). That explains the enormous differences in figures between one country and another that appear on the following table, drawn up from the information in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th reports of the FEANTSA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>All year</td>
<td>One day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GERMANY</td>
<td>1,030,000</td>
<td>876,450</td>
<td>490,700</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BELGIUM</td>
<td>26,000</td>
<td>5,500</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DENMARK</td>
<td>2,800</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>2,947</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPAIN</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRANCE</td>
<td>627,000</td>
<td>346,000</td>
<td>250,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GREECE</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>7,700</td>
<td>5,500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOLLAND</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRELAND</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>3,700</td>
<td>2,667</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITALY</td>
<td>90,000</td>
<td>78,000</td>
<td>56,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUXEMBOURG</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>194</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PORTUGAL</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNITED KINGDOM</td>
<td>688,000</td>
<td>460,000</td>
<td>283,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>2,531,800</td>
<td>1,810,544</td>
<td>1,117,008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Elaboration by author    Source: FEANTSA

As can be noticed, it is doubly surprising that certain countries with a more developed social-protection system have higher rates of homelessness: this is the case of Germany, France or the United Kingdom, over 10 per thousand in the three cases; while in Spain it is around 0.08 and in Portugal 0.2.

⁴ In the first FEANTSA report in 1993 it was already pointed out: “There is no widely accepted definition of homelessness –not by governments nor the EU Commission” (Daly,1993:15). In fact, where it exists there is no clear definition or work is done on housing rights which are restricted in one way or another. The archetype is in the UK where a person is defined as homeless if he has no access to housing, but the right to receive public assistance for housing is limited to “priority groups” who can prove they are not “intentionally” homeless.
Evidently, the question of the problem's institutional definition hovers over these figures; "there are many obstacles: the statistics rest on the different definitions of the notion of homelessness in one country or another: in some countries, figures refer to the total number of homeless, while in other countries they measure the flow of homeless during a period of time; finally, the lack of updated information obliges us, in some cases, to rely on old figures and estimates" (Daly, 1994:5). Thus, from one year to another the difference in the figures is really huge. This led Dragna Avramov to distinguish between the population sheltered during the whole year and the population dealt with on an average day.

On 1995, Avramov re-examined the previous information and gave his own estimate: "the minimum number of people that depend on public or private services every year to find a temporary shelter or housing can tentatively be estimated at 1.8 million people. On an average day, around 1.1 million people can have to depend on accommodations provided by the public or voluntary sector, or they are squatters or they have to sleep out in the open, because they don't have any shelter" (1995:91), These are the figures that appear in the last two columns of the previous table.

However, if we add to these numbers the group of people living in pensions and paying for their accommodation, or living with friends or acquaintances that take them in temporarily, we would find that, following the experts' indications, this figure of 1.8 million would have to increase by 30 or 50 per cent, which would "imply that in the 12 member States of the European Union between 2.3 and 2.7 million people may be homeless during the year" (1995:92). Lastly, if we count the European Union's citizens living in really low quality houses, or in places not suitable for living, then we would have to talk of 18 million people precariously accommodated.

In our country the situation is more or less the same. The lowest figures are those which have only counted the number of persons living strictly on the streets, or in shelters destined for that purpose, and that is 11,000 homeless. On the contrary, those who have referred, from the point of view of the housing and residential exclusion, to those who "don't have any accommodation, or precarious accommodation, i.e., the homeless", to the people accommodated in shelters, and also to those who live in "underhoused conditions, in caves, or 'accommodations' (from the National Institute for Statistics definition), shacks, prefabricated houses, etc." (Cortés & Paniagua, 1997:108) the figures increase to 273,000 excluded people without a home, around 7 per thousand of the population in Spain.

Between one set of figures and another, F. Salinas, responsible for the national reports for FEANTSA between 1990 and 1995, has handled the figure of 40,000 people (Muñoz; Vázquez 1998).

In our case we can go over some data of the situation from the perspective of graph 1, to try to present the current situation and the perspectives of the evolution in the near future of the phenomenon of social exclusion in our country.

A) Social relationship axis.

It is a widespread opinion that in Spain the absorbing role of supporting family networks is crucial; these operate as a sort of buffer to exclusion, which although if it doesn't resolve the fundamental problem, at least permits many people to subsist in relatively decent conditions, even if it's by placing some members of the family (specially young people) in a situation labelled as "stable precarious" (Tezanos, 1999:102). That explains that when asking Spaniards if they have felt at risk of falling into social exclusion during the last few months, the affirmative answer – 17% - is still very far from the figures reached on similar polls in France for example, where a couple of years ago a percentage of 35% was obtained for the same question (Castel, 1993,13).

However, that this has been like this until now, doesn't mean that it's going to be the same in the future. In fact, in the homes there is a greater and greater loss of the functions that until now were carried out by the family, and the Government is taking over more and more, "the Spanish family is
gradually less of a school, less of a hospital and less a form of social security”, in a way that even if it still maintains many functions of caring and psychological and economic aid for the members” (J. De Miguel, 1998:443), it can be anticipated that in the future the supporting and social protection role carried out by the family will decrease, among other things because “women are not available”, as they were a couple of decades ago, to take care of elderly and needy people” (Tezanos, 1999:1389).

Very different factors contribute:

a) There has been an increase in women in the work market.

b) We are witnessing a change in opinion as regards housewives, who are evaluated and are socially considered much more negatively than years ago.

c) Young women's attitude has substantially changed, in a way that when they're asked if they will take care of their grandchildren, the answer generally given is negative (Tobío, 1996).

Also, there is a structural issue that makes us think that, in the future, the family will be a lot less helpful: very simply, the Spaniards of the future will have fewer relatives to protect them. The reduction of family size is obvious, generated among other circumstances by the collapse of birth rates that have fallen 54% between 1964 and 1991. The estimate for 1997 places it at 9.2 births per thousand inhabitants, the lowest in Europe. The average number of children per woman, or fertility rate, has gone from 2.8 children in 1960, to 1.3 in 1991, and to 1.16 in 1997.

At the same time, the number of persons living alone has increased 79% between 1970 and 1991; the homes formed by 2 persons has also increased 23% during the same years, while numerous homes, with five or more members, have decreased 40% (J.De Miguel, 1998:450). Nowadays, around 2 million people live alone, especially elderly women.

We should remember that the homeless condition is in inverse proportion to the number of family ties that are still active, and that this number is at the same time directly dependent on the quantity of relatives on whom we may count during our lives (Cabrera, 1998:290).

B) Economic-labour axis.

It is not necessary to have a lot of data to observe that in this aspect our country's situation isn't especially buoyant. The unemployment rate has been, and still is, really high. In general terms, for many years we have more than doubled the European average: 22.1% as opposed to the 10.9% in the EU in 1996.

Also, unemployment has been accompanied by great labour precarity and instability: In 1996 temporary contracts represented 33.6% of the salaried population, as opposed to 12.6% in France, or 7.5% in Italy; the average in Europe was 11.8%. This situation becomes really serious in the two essential sectors of sources of employment for the homeless: construction and the hotel and catering industry.5

The information that I have speaks clearly about the difficult conditions in which the work experience of the homeless has developed: only one forth has ever worked with a permanent contract; the rest have only known temporary, seasonal and precarious jobs, without a contract (36%) and without Social Security (30%). That explains in great measure the helplessness and vulnerability they suffer during periods of unemployment. Almost half come from the construction sector (25%) and from the hotel and catering industry (20%), where they have held posts of low or non-existent qualification; in such a way that the most widely mentioned professions among the homeless are, in this order: Painter, Cook, Waiter, Unskilled construction worker, Construction worker and Carpenter (Cabrera, 1998:182).

---

5 In both cases the effect of tourism is determining. We must remember that in Spain, with less than 40 million inhabitants, each year more than 60 million tourists visit our country (65 million in 1997).
With this precarious and unstable insertion in the job market, the access to housing becomes extraordinarily complicated, and we should not forget that we are in a country where rented public housing is almost non-existent, as opposed to what happens in the rest of Europe, and the rental market is completely deregulated, so that prohibitive prices force us into the acquisition of a house. In fact, we have the highest owned housing rate in Europe. Nevertheless, for some years public money was destined to promoting the construction—the so-called "aid to the stone mason" (LEAL, 1998)—and not to directly supporting those with fewer resources who wanted to buy a house: while in 1985 unregulated prices in housing represented 33% of all that were built, in 1991 the proportion had increased to 83% of the total.

As an immediate effect, we find that the price of the square metre shot up alarmingly: if in 1987 it was at 52,789 pts., in 1991 it had reached 107,543 pts. That meant that, if a house were mortgaged for 15 years, the acquisition consumed 37.6% of the income of 1987, four years later, in 1991, buying a house took more than half of the income: 57.3%. Since then, the situation seems to have experienced a certain improvement, but in any case, a third of the average income has to be set aside for the acquisition of a house.

Concerning this aspect, the information obtained on the access to housing of the homeless are tremendously illuminating. Only 43% of the homeless in Madrid have ever lived in a dwelling under their own name, either rented or owned; the rest have always lived in parent's, friend's, partner's, etc. houses. And from this privileged fraction of the homeless, that in the past have lived in a private dwelling on their own, only 45% were there as owners, the rest rented or held them even more precariously. That means that only 19% of the homeless have reached the status of owners of a house (usually without finishing the payments), while of the adult population of Madrid on the whole that rent or own a dwelling, 81% are the owners (Cabrera, 1998:311).

Because of the difficulty to access a dwelling, it isn't strange that many Spanish youths live with their parents, 74% of the 20-year-olds to be exact. It is a logical strategic decision, because moving out in the current conditions would oblige them to descend in social status. However, as we've seen before, according to certain definitions, usual in other countries, we would have to consider as homeless these old-youths who still live with their parents because they don't have any other choice, and who postpone more and more the creation of an independent home, postponing the time to get married as long as they can. The average age to get married in 1991 was 28.2 for men and 25.8 for women, and it has been progressively increasing. In 1995 it was 29.8 for men and 27.5 for women. That means an increase of almost two years in only five years’ time (CECS 1999:533).

For all these reasons, it isn't strange that the experts in poverty questions predict a pessimistic future as regards the evolution of the excluded in our country. If 46% of the Spaniards think that exclusion is increasing, and 43% think that within ten years the number of excluded will have increased even more (in comparison with 19.3% that think it will decrease), the opinion of the experts consulted through a Delphi poll to try to make a prediction about the question, is a lot more pessimistic; 65% of them think that within ten years the situation will be even worse than now (Tezanos, 1998:93).
POVERTY AND EXCLUSION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF GENDER

The situation of subjection of women to the head of the family, their dependence as regards reproduction, as well as their marginal position in the job market, have historically impoverished women and even nowadays impoverishes them, favouring their economic and social exclusion. In this sense, the analysis of gender relations, results simply essential when trying to study social phenomena, especially those linked to the inequality structure. From a perspective of gender, relations of gender is understood as all the practices and structures together which produce the differences, inequalities and the hierarchy of genders of a given society (Orloff, 1996:3).

Patriarchy, understood as all the practices, traditional uses and institutions together that favour and maintain male dominance and the relations of dependency of woman upon men, is still firmly established in many sectors of life. Established on protection-submissiveness links, it not only makes women poorer than men but makes them submissive and dependent on the man, who, this way, can "defend", "protect", "shelter" and "enrich" them, or more often: impoverish them. In the first place, through the division of work according to gender, which makes women responsible for housework and the functions of care and reproduction. However, the modernisation process has meant, among other changes, the incorporation of women in the job market and because of that has reduced the offer existing up till then in the network of family solidarity.

Nevertheless, patriarchal relations go beyond the home by means of the family income, thanks to which men receive higher wages and fiscal advantages that are, in a way, justified by the responsibility of the support of their dependent wives and children.

In the unequal distribution between men and women of living conditions we find a fixed expression of the situation of patriarchal domination in which women still live in our society.

In the Annual Report that Caritas published in 1990, the obvious fact of the feminisation of poverty in Spain was confirmed: three out of four poor persons were women. So, ten years ago the alarm was raised: "women living alone with family responsibilities and young long-term unemployed women who are becoming vagrants" are newly-precarious collectives that need special attention.

The specific situation of homeless women is an extreme expression of poverty, particularly difficult to detect, study and analyse. The definition in Spain of the homeless, from the definition itself, widely differs from the habitual one in Europe. In our country the collective of the homeless is defined not so much for their precarious accommodation but for the total or almost total lack of accommodation. Because of that, if we don't want to restrict our view to the institutional construction of the problem, derived from the information provided by the institution specifically destined to attend the homeless – most of which were designed to accept only men- we should start our approach to homeless women in Spain from the analysis of the feminisation of poverty.

Carmen de Elejabeitia (1996) points out that the proportion of women out of the total of the poor has increased in the last few decades. The reasons that explain this increase are various:

- **family**: the greater number of split-ups and divorces, leaving women more economically unprotected than men;
- **economic**: more difficulty in obtaining a job and a sufficient salary;
- **demographic**: higher longevity of women.

As far as we're concerned, we're going to try to arrange the data relating to poverty and exclusion from a perspective of gender, using the theoretical framework of the explanation of the aforementioned process. For this purpose, we're going to start by going over some of the most recent changes which have occurred in Spanish society and that have substantially changed family ties and the relationships between family members on which women and men can count to face their difficulties in life.
A) SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP EXCLUSION OF WOMEN IN SPAIN.

Even if the progress of the country after the end of the Franco regime has been spectacular, and the legislative development has put women on a par with men in almost every aspects of public life, it is also true that only twenty years ago, in Spain, married women couldn't freely open a bank account without the express permission of their husbands.\(^6\)

This minor anecdote serves to highlight the importance of the change Spanish society has undergone during the last quarter of the century, and at the same time to attract our attention on the close interrelationship between family and society roles. It is more or less simple to change the laws and instil a modern and democratic spirit, it isn't that simple to introduce those values in the most restricted aspect of home and daily relationships, in which the influence of old habits and stereotypes that established male dominance and the submission of women to them is still frequently found.

Changes in the model of the traditional family

As in the rest of the European countries during the 90's, in Spain a new type of family has joined the traditional family models - the single-parent family. Although it isn't exactly a new reality, because homes formed by single mothers or widows with children have always existed, what is new is the extension of the number of homes, the higher proportion of the group led by separated/divorced women, and the participation of the middle-class in many of those behaviours that previously entailed a strong stigma.

In his analysis of feminine single-parenthood, Iglesias de Ussel (1998) highlights that this is a family reality that’s intentionally tried to be hidden and of which “historically, its external expression has been purposely impeded”. To achieve this occlusion, the means used have gone from restrictive legal regulations, principally focused on the prohibition of divorce (in Spain it has only been allowed between 1932 and 1939 and after 1981), to the repression with legal measures or with social, ideological or economic pressure.

Consequently, the emergence of single-parent families as a problematic reality is quite recent, at least in its current multiple forms, because families headed by widowed women have always been present. The consequences of this fact are the following:

- The lack of statistical data: from the mid 70's research on this matter has been encouraged.

- The lack of specific social services of attention to these families, whose necessities have been treated, traditionally, by religious institutions or through informal aid.

Homes headed by women have gone from 15.8% in 1981 to 20% in the last census of 1991 (Madruga; Mota 2000:41). Since then they haven't stop increasing.

---

\(^6\) 1981 is the date of an official change in the traditional family. The Civil Code reform introduced important changes in the rights of the Spanish family.
- Reform of 13 May 1981 referring to affiliation, custody and economic system in marriage.
- Reform of 7 July referring to nullity, separation and divorce.

With reference to marriage, legal equality for both partners is established as well as economic solidarity between the spouses and joint responsibility for children. Two new aspects of the new family system son equal rights for all children, irrespective of the circumstances of their birth and the possibility of dissolving the marriage bonds during the lives of the two spouses. (Alberdi, 1993).
Nowadays, the cause of this kind of families can be found, principally, in the break-up of couples with children, whether they're linked by marriage or not. According to recent studies (VV.AA. 1999), once the break-up of the couple is final, children remain with the mothers in 84% of the cases. Then, we find a massive feminisation of single-parenthood, which will lead to a series of economic consequences that will make the new family unit more vulnerable.

We should bear in mind that, the great majority of the families formed by just one parent, father or mother, are in fact single-mother families: around 9 out of 10. 91.83% of all the single-parent families have the mother as head of the family or as the reference person. Bearing in mind that women have a greater life expectancy than men do, it could be thought that these are homes headed by widows. However, this isn't true. Young women head the great majority of these homes: in 66.26%, they're under 45. Only 1.43% of the homes are headed by women over 60. That means that, elderly widows live alone or if they live with any of their children, they're no longer the person of reference, the "head of the family". This widely contrasts with the fact that single-parent families with men over 60 represent 7.37% of the total of single-parent homes headed by a man. This means that, when they grow old, men with children have five times more possibility of being "in charge" of the house than the women that lose their partner (See Table).

| Table 1.- Single-parent families according to age group of the head of the family |
|---------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Both sexes                      | Women          | Men            |
| Absolute | % Women | Absolute | % | Absolute | % |
| Under 45 years                   | 169.3          | 95.92         | 162.4         | 66.26 | 6.9 | 31.8 |
| From 45 to 59 years              | 92.4           | 85.71         | 79.2          | 32.31 | 13.2 | 60.83 |
| 60 and over                     | 5.2            | 67.31         | 3.5           | 1.43  | 1.6  | 7.37 |
| Total                            | **266.9**      | **91.83**     | **245.1**     | **100** | **21.7** | **100** |

Note: Data under 5 should be considered with precaution, because they're affected by strong errors in sampling. SOURCE: Institute of Women. Specific use of the Poll of Active Population, IV Quarter, 1999. INE

A lot of these single-mother families that come from the most impoverished strata of society, are usually subjected to added poverty situations that, in a way, come from the previous situation of dependency on men that has come as a consequence of a separation, divorce, imprisonment, illness, death and/or emigration process.

As Fernández Viguera highlights, “in the bosom of the patriarchal family is where women’s dependency on men is consolidated, through an unequal distribution of social functions as well as through a process of initial sociability”. In that sense, we should note the existence of a new poverty that turns many poor women who weren't poor in their family of origin but who go on to live an impoverished existence as a consequence of the extreme vulnerability in which they are placed after a process of family breakdown that leaves them more ill-equipped than men to compete in the job market. The lack of education and the lack of work experience that a lot of them have, force them into a situation of extreme precarity.

Demographic changes

The most striking data about our country is the huge fall in the birth rate over the last 25 years. Although the birth rate had been decreasing slightly since the beginning of the century. With the arrival of democracy our birth rates were some of the highest in Western Europe. However, the liberalisation of contraceptive methods, till then of a restricted use, the incorporation of new models and social norms, and the huge changes in women's roles, made birth rates start plummet. To all those factors, during the 80's an economic crisis was added, whose effects on Spaniards' daily life had been delayed in an artificial way by the first democratic governments to not make the change of political regime more difficult and unpopular. When finally those effects made themselves felt, Spaniards were subjected to high unemployment rates, especially among the young, and to a huge rise of housing prices. Both factors are still fully in force, and lead, in the first place, to consequences such as a
progressive delay in the age at marriage, and finally, when young couples reach their independence and get married, the result is a spectacular reduction in the average number of children per family.

In this sense, the high unemployment figures among young people and the ridiculous prices of houses, have been a real contraceptive for a whole generation, as the following cartoon by El Roto, recently published in the newspaper ‘El País’ highlights.

El Roto, ‘El País’ April 30, 2000 “My boyfriend and I use housing prices as a contraceptive.”

All that, among other consequences, has caused a drop in births from 677,456 in 1976, a year after general Franco's death to hardly half that, 361,930, in 1998. Or in another way, the group of children from 0 to 4 years old has almost been reduced by 42% in the last 22 years: Spaniards with ages between 0 and 4 numbered 3,309,118 in 1997 and now, in 1999, they number only 1,919,375. In Spain there are a few children (See Graph).

**Spanish population between the ages of 0 and 4**

*(Prepared by author. Source: Spanish Institute of Statistics (INE)*)
That means that, from the point of view of sociology of gender, the spectacular reduction in the global fertility rate, has been the most striking and important demographic fact of all those occurring in Spain. In fact, the average number of children per woman which in 1975 was 2.78, and in 1985, 1.63 children, became 1.33 in 1991, and in 1996, at the same time as the electoral defeat of the last socialist government, it was 1.17, greatly under the generation replacement rate.

So, as is highlighted on the graph, women's strategy has consisted not only in reducing the number of children but also in delaying the age of having children. Young women under 30 are the ones who have especially reduced their fecundity rates, but those between 30 and 39 years of age have even increased it in relative terms.

![Fertility rates by age groups](image)

From all this it's easy to deduce that, in Spain, along general lines, it is hard to have and support children. Without a doubt, the almost inexistent policy of family aid, and the low levels of provisions reached by social policy in the family field during the last two decades has helped this. In fact, families with more than three children are the ones who're most likely to be under the poverty threshold. In the most favourable situation for the birth rate, which is when both husband and wife go out to work and have a stable work situation, we notice that they rarely reach a number higher than one or two children; and even more, couples that renounce having children are more frequent. That means that, when a woman alone has to support children, for the majority the social and economic situation is just hopeless. Being part of a single-mother family is in itself a factor of risk and social precarity in Spain.

Another demographic fact, the lengthening of life expectancy has a direct effect on the feminisation of poverty in Spain. As Ariño Villarroya highlights, during the century we're just ending, women’s life expectancy has grown more than men’s, which means a feminisation that grows with age. The proportion of women increases within older groups. We should bear in mind that the difference in the average life expectancy at birth, which in 1920 was 1.79 years in favour of women (40.26 men / 42.05 women), has gradually increased to 7.83 years difference in 1997 (73.63 men / 8146 women). This may be one of the few data that socially favour women as opposed to men.

Bearing in mind the low rate of feminine activity in our country during decades, and because many women have been in the underground economy (so they don't pay social security contributions), we find that, nowadays, the number of old women that do not have a decent pension at the age of retirement is abundant. In fact old women are doubly discriminated: as women and as old people.

So, we find old women who have to survive counting only on widow's pensions or on little pensions of the non-contributing type that place them under the threshold of poverty. In fact, the majority of poor homes headed by a woman, are by widowed women (62%).

Of course, there is a close relationship between the new demographic norms mentioned above and the family types that are appearing and spreading.

B) ECONOMIC-LABOUR EXCLUSION OF WOMEN IN SPAIN.

In our strongly salaried societies, it is obvious that the insertion through employment is the most important condition on which adults count to get economy independence and to build a life project endowed with independence. Usually, the conditions of access to the job market are going to be closely linked to the formation previously acquired. Because of this, it's important to highlight the special difficulties that women had and still have to face, to get an equal education, and in the second place, to get a paying job.

Of course, the perception society has of the job of women and specially mothers has changed. The years when even defenders of the right of women to work out of their homes thought that women should only work until they had children when they should return to the home have ended. To the demand of women’s right to work followed the demand of working women to the right to have a family, and nowadays, we talk openly of the conciliation of family and work.
However, in Spain, there's a lot to do. Now, in our country, as Luis Garrido (1991) notes there are two different biographies of women which coexist. On one hand we have women over 45 who were incorporated only slightly into the workforce and in jobs requiring low qualifications and with little previous education; and, on the other hand, we have young women who have enjoyed better educational possibilities and who have massively joined the workforce, but at a moment when the economic crisis and the high unemployment rate have combined to make it more difficult for them than for their male colleagues.

**Education**

Traditionally, women have had a limited access to education, and it is just recently that women have been incorporated into an equal education system with men. Nowadays, young women form the majority in university education; they constitute 53% of the million and a half university students in our country. Nevertheless, some aspects that still reflect the strong sexist bias which has saturated Spanish society persist. So, for example, it turns out that women who reach the university level in more or less the same proportion as men, chose a short cycle degree (three years) in a greater proportion than men who usually chose a two cycle degree (five years).

The disparity in PhD studies is equally significant; women hardly represent a third (37.7%) of the total number of students who aspire to get the highest academic category.

As a result of accumulated history and of the greater difficulties that girls find in finishing their PhD studies, the truth is that women constitute 95% of the teachers of pre-school education, and 69.3% in primary education, but, on the other hand, among university professors, women occupy only 33%. As well as for the sexist component that, even if it isn't formally penalised still exists in fact, in the recruitment of lecturers, the truth is that women still find added difficulties in our country to make maternity compatible with the hard requirements of time and dedication that teaching entails, especially in its beginning periods, when labour and economic stability are lower.

We see proof of this when we analyse the composition of university teachers by categories. The percentage of women decreases as we take a step up in category. Women constitute 47% of the assistant teachers, 35% of the professors and, on the other hand, they rarely reach the highest positions in their fields as they only represent 13.8% of all Full and Associate Professors.

In this same way, a strong bias according to gender also persists when choosing a profession. While women represent 71% of all those who study degrees in health sciences (such as nursing), or 64% of the Humanities students, on the contrary, they scarcely represent a forth of the technical or engineering degrees (26%).

This means that great differences between men and women still exist, and that even if they do not lead to a premature abandonment of the educational system to dedicate themselves to housework and reproduction as happened in other eras, they mark great differences: their stay in Universities is shorter than men’s, and they chose degrees that are still considered more "feminine"—such as those related with care and attention—, while they still don’t opt for "hard" professions, even if afterwards, these will be the ones which receive greater salaries, and—maybe because of that— they are still a private field for men.

Of course, there's a strong relationship between the higher educational level of women and their change of role. This fact is causing important changes in the family sphere as well as in the demographic behaviour norms in all societies. But, actually because in Spain the universalization of

---

7 Within the family, the economic focus of Becker has had great influence. For him, from the point of view of utility and opportunity cost that the different options represent, as the woman increases her level of education, it would be foreseeable that she would postpone marriage and having children. Recently, however, Blossfeld has questioned this hypothesis. The fact that women acquire more education would influence significantly the postponement of marriage and children only in the family systems which he called traditional (Italy and Spain).
education is a more recent phenomenon than in other countries, there are still important differences between sexes as we step upward on the age pyramid. Women’s participation in the educational system has increased since the 60's, and only in this decade it's reaching its peak, with all the reservations mentioned above. Of course, the effect on social exclusion of all this process is huge; the job possibilities it opens, the change of inner and outer home roles that entails, and the possibilities of independence and freedom that it gives to young women are innumerable. Because of that it is especially important to highlight the huge deficit that older women have in all this fields.

Actually, because of the age effect, in Spain, there are still 718,000 illiterate women, as opposed to 284,000 illiterate men. 72% of all illiterate persons are women. If to these figures we add the relevant number of women without studies, i.e. those who haven't finished primary school, there are 3,443,500 women (as opposed to 2,228,600 men). Almost three and a half million women without studies or illiterate, in a country that hardly has 40 million inhabitants. History still weighs, without a doubt.

In our society, it's obvious that poverty is greater among those people with lower educational levels. Bearing in mind that traditionally women have had fewer educational possibilities than men, it isn't strange to see that, in fact, poor homes headed by a woman have a certain negative balance from a formative point of view. In Spain, 25% of poor homes headed by a woman, have an illiterate woman in charge, while only 10% have illiterate men in charge of their home.

Labour situation

Spain is one of the European countries with the lowest rate of women working. The provisional data referring to all the countries of the European Union highlights that in 1998 the female work rate was 45.9%. However, this average figure conceals huge differences among countries, because, while in Denmark the rate is 59.4% and in Spain it barely reaches the figure of 37.9%, the lowest in Europe after Italy.

The tendency to a higher level is constant and gradual: in the last few years we have moved from a female work rate of 34.8% in 1993 to 39.11% in 1999.

We should add, to this low activity rate, the fact that, since the mid 80's, the female unemployment rate has been 10 points higher than the male unemployment rate. The horrible labour crisis through which the country has gone for more than 10 years has wreaked havoc especially on big collectives that have resulted specially prejudiced: young people and women.

Nevertheless, the employment recovery from 1994 is making it possible, even if really slowly, for the male and female incorporation to the workforce to even out.
Nowadays, unemployment rates are still higher among women than men, as is highlighted in the following graph, where a difference of 10 points in all age intervals can be observed. Reaching its maximum in the interval between 30 and 34, which is the moment of maternity, where it reaches 15 points.

Women enter the workforce with more difficulties than men, and when they do, they will probably do so as unemployed.

Lastly, the accumulated experience during the last few years has shown that, when finally the worst of the crisis was left behind, and the massive incorporation of women to work out of their homes was started, they ended up working in more precarious and unstable jobs than men, receiving lower salaries, and usually, with temporary contracts.
In the mid 90's, temporary contracts among men represented 17%, while among women they almost reached thirty per cent of all female work: 29%. Finally, as the Survey on Salary Structure has shown, the average salary per hour of work for women is 67% of that which men receive. In the same way, the Survey on Industry and Services Salary that the Spanish Institute of Statistics (INE) makes, shows the following balance in the last quarter of 1998: while, on average, male workers receive 208,561 pesetas per month, women only receive 158,829 pts.

Certainly, during recent years, women have been incorporated into the workforce in large numbers, but this hasn't always meant an achievement of greater personal independence, but simply, in many cases, it has been the way in which many homes have received an extra 'subsalary' to allow them to live with a little additional comfort.

On the other hand, frequently those 'subjobs' are left when children are born, at least temporarily, to take care of them. The social care function to which women are still prepared will end up conditioning not only their job continuity, but also the kind of job they will get access to. In fact, the abandonment of the workforce is massive, as is confirmed by looking at the employment rates in relation with marital status. While the male activity rate doesn't present noticeable differences between bachelors (63,6%) and married men (65,4%), women’s activity rate presents huge differences; only 37% of the married women are still active, while single women are active in 54.7% of the cases. Being married is still a strong obstacle to holding a paid job out of their own home. Of course, this creates a situation of great dependence on men, which can be suddenly broken in case of separation or divorce. At the moment, the necessity to succeed by her own means will leave many women immobile in the face of a world in which they have not learnt to move, or that has changed so much that they cannot recognise it at all.

Of course, the women who have low qualifications are welcome in a particular sector of the workforce: work in other homes that from chauvinist stereotypes have been called 'women’s work'; that is, housework, or similar jobs of cleaning, attention and care of old people and children, etc. In general, these jobs are characterised by their precarity, low salaries, excessively long days of work, great instability, a strong lack of social protection and, in many cases, in conditions of marked illegality (underground economy).

Certainly, education is a decisive factor in unifying the working positions of men and women, and it is thus reflected in the following data:

| Table 2.- Working activity rate according to studies finished and gender |
|---------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Illiterate | No studies | Primary school | Middle schooling* | Higher vocational training | UNIV 1st cycle (2-3 yrs) | UNIV. 2nd Cycle (3-5 yrs) |
| Women      | 5.4       | 11.7      | 24.8      | 51       | 79.9     | 69.4     | 83.9     |
| Men        | 14.3      | 28.3      | 57.4      | 72.8     | 86       | 72.3     | 83.9     |
| Difference | 8.9       | 16.6      | 32.6      | 21.8     | 6.1      | 2.9      | 0        |

* Includes vocational training at the first level

Leaving aside the case of the illiterate population and those without studies, in general lines correspondent to the older population, whose working activity is really small, we find that as we rise in the level of studies, differences between sexes diminish till none exist between (men and women) university students.

The same thing is confirmed, when, instead of on the rate of activity we concentrate on the employment rate according to sex. The rise in the educational level is the most rebalancing factor of all that can be imagined to put women on a par with men as far as working conditions are concerned.
Employment rate by studies finished and gender

![Bar chart showing employment rates by studies finished and gender.]

All this makes something clear that later we will be able to confirm: women with lower levels of study, and as a result women with less work experience, with fewer social abilities to live independently, are those who will swell the rank of the women evicted from their homes, with great accommodation and social integration problems as a consequence of domestic violence.

Appallingly, the improvement in employment conditions in our country, since the peak reached in 1994, hasn't had differential repercussions on female employment, but the decrease of unemployment rates according to sex has equally affected men and women, as is highlighted on the almost parallel progression of the series shown on the following graph.

Unemployment rates by sex

![Line graph showing unemployment rates by sex over the years. *Data from the IV Trimester. Prepared by author: Survey of the Working Age Population. INE.]

In any case, if to the Mediterranean norm (Italy, Greece, Spain) which seems to go with the low-paid activity of women out of their homes, we add the specific fact of the Spanish unemployment rate, we find one of the most essential elements of socio-economic precarity of women in Spain. Our
country has the lowest female work rate in the European Union: only 27.2% of Spanish women are working; far from the 56% of the Danes, 51% of the Swedish, 50% of the English, etc. We should not forget that we are referring to a decisive element in one of the two basic axes of social inclusion-exclusion.

The dependent position of women on men in Spain, even if it's been corrected among the younger generations, it is still higher than any of our neighbouring countries. This situation is clearly reflected when comparing the differences between men’s and women’s unemployment rates in the European Union. Even if it is widespread for unemployment to affect women more than men—in every country, except Sweden and the United Kingdom, where the difference is negative for women—, in Spain, this is extraordinarily striking and atypical; the difference between the two rates is 13 points, quite far from those of the neighbouring countries: Greece (9,6) and Italy (6,9).

Unemployment rates in the EU by sex

Housing Situation

Continuing on what was said before, we find that, because the housing situation greatly depends on the existence of poverty in economic, formative, labour and relationships terms and because at the same time, all forms of poverty have special seriousness among women, it seems obvious that residential precarity and the difficulties in accessing a decent house, will be greater among women than among men.

Recent research demonstrates that, in Spain, there are around 54,000 families living in subhuman conditions (shacks, caves, etc.), and 245,000 more families living under bad conditions—altogether around 300,000 homes. This living precarity is especially serious among certain groups, so, while 13.7% of all families situated under the threshold of poverty live in bad conditions or in subhuman houses, we find that 31.2% of the emigrant poor families live under these conditions, and the percentage can reach 43.9% of all poor gypsy families (EDIS 1998:280).

Poorer people not only live in worse houses but also suffer a more precarious and insecure system of possession. In a country where the rate of owned housing is the highest in Europe (around 85%), poorer families have to resort to other systems: 27.6% of the poor live in rented houses, and 8.5% in lent or occupied houses or accommodations. Only 47.7% of the poor have an already paid for house, and 14.1% are now paying for it.
Bearing in mind the Spanish inflexibility in the housing market, this greater insecurity in the system of possession in the most impoverished homes, turns out to be a twice as dangerous an element for women with dependent children, because, in case of splitting up or divorce, they have to leave their homes and go to the family network (in the case that it exists or that they still have relations with it) or to a less expensive rented house. The lack of work or work within the underground economy can complicate this situation even more, because one of the requirements to rent a house consists of proving through a payroll voucher that they have a contract of employment.

In case of separation/divorce, women with small children who are not incorporated in the workforce, they can only keep their house as long as they're granted custody of the children and the ex-husband is prepared to regularly pay the maintenance, which doesn't happen in many cases. On the other hand, in the case of women who work, when they get their separation/divorce, they work twice as much and they receive less income, which means difficulties in making their daily work compatible with the care of the house and children.

Of course, the house of the most impoverished groups of Spanish society is smaller, of worse quality, and it is worse equipped. The crush of people is the characteristic mark of many poor homes, where 21% of them are accommodated in houses with less than one room for two persons. And as for basic installations, 65,000 homes are estimated to lack running water; 273,000 persons live in these homes. Similarly, 56,500 homes, i.e. 246,800 persons, don't have electricity in their homes; and lastly, 100,200 homes don't have their own WC, which means that 388,600 persons on the verge of the third millennium don't have this basic and essential equipment.

---

8 In Spain alimony is established by the judge calculating it as a proportion of the salary of the father. Thus, in the families where the father has a low income, alimony is very low. This is different from other countries where the State establishes a minimum which guarantees the welfare of the children. In those cases in which the father cannot guarantee the support of the children (if he has a low salary, and he would also be impoverished) it is the State which pays the difference.
CARE SERVICES FOR HOMELESS WOMEN IN SPAIN

In the light of all this, it isn't strange that there are more and more women calling on social services that provide accommodation. Unfortunately, in Spain, there are no recent studies of a national scope on the problems of homeless people. At the beginning of the 90's, the Ministry of Social Affairs ordered a macrostudy (INCIS, 1991 *Sociological study on marginal transients*) that through widespread field work tried to show the general situation of the problem on a national scale; nevertheless, the results were never published.

Different local studies with which we have worked, show a percentage of women, between 13% and 20%, of the treated homeless population. However, we should bear in mind that traditionally, the centres destined to homeless people in Spain have been those places destined to the socially more isolated and excluded persons, who were called *transeúntes* (transients or vagrants), wanderers or even beggars. In general, those were services which counted on only, or almost only, male clients who were alone, rootless, and often with alcohol problems.

For all that, we have to highlight, in the first place, the lack of services specialising in homeless women. In general, the existing accommodation resources, are designed to try to cover other side problems as, for example, mistreatment problems. So, the social services network has information and orientation centres which provide accommodation, treatment and follow-up of these women. But, of course, when in addition to being homeless, we add other kinds of problems like these, the possibilities of a psycho-social intervention and treatment are very different.

Lately, the strong development undergone by the campaign for the social awareness of mistreated women, is spreading the knowledge of the existence of this kind of resource, which makes its access or utilisation easier.

The same thing doesn't happen when the loss of the home comes through separation and progressive impoverishment. The social protection system has among its measures the building and awarding of houses (usually rented) for low prices to persons and families with incomes that prevent them from getting into the free market. In the awarding of this kind of houses one of the categories considered is that of women with non-shared family responsibilities (single-mother families), however, the fulfilment of this requirement is not decisive in the awarding of a dwelling.

As for the access to residence services for elderly women with few resources, there are many different overtones. Services for senior citizens have had an increasing development because of the increase in the population over 65. The detection and assistance systems for this kind of need in this collective are widespread and cover a great proportion of the necessities, so, they have not much to do with the services for homeless women. However, the future can bring many surprises in this area. We should bear in mind that Spain is the country with the fastest rate of ageing in the world.

Bearing all this in mind, there isn't any other way to tackle the matter of the services destined to the care of homeless women except by presenting the general situation of the network destined for the homeless and subsequently trying to analyse the particular difficulties that women find when trying to access it. Lastly, we will try to give some specific examples referring to two specific types of problems: mistreated women and women who are in charge of a single-parent home.

THE SERVICES NETWORK

Fortunately, we have the first data obtained from a study commissioned by Spanish Caritas and that has been financed in great measure by funds from the Labour and Social Affairs Ministry.
The project, which was started in October 1998, was designed in four stages, and it has been planned for three years, at the end of which we hope to have a renewed way of understanding and acting regarding homelessness in our country. After a first preparatory stage (from October 1998 to January 1999) in which the drawing up of the final outline, the building up of procedures for collecting information and the procedure to publicise the project were carried out, the second stage of analysis of the situation followed and has lasted until now. In this stage they have proceeded to:

a) Create a map of all experiences of social intervention with the homeless in Spain.

b) Make a survey of experts, as a preliminary step before doing what would be the essential component of the study.

c) Conducting a macrosurvey in centres and services, that would allow us to obtain first hand information on the situation of the care of the homeless in our country.

The field work ended in October 1999, obtaining an answer rate near 70% from the previously detected centres. The following data are the results obtained in this survey.

In the light of the data obtained it can be affirmed that it is a network overwhelmingly made up of private centres and that in great measure belong to religious institutions; either Cáritas itself, the Diocesan Church (parish church), or religious orders, associations, brotherhoods, etc. In an incipient way, centres designed for the care of homeless are starting to appear which belong to Christian evangelical or Protestant confessions that follow the habitual way of acting of other countries with a Protestant majority (The Salvation Army, Reto, Remar, etc.); however, in our country, the great majority of the institutions belong to the Catholic Church.

The presence of the public administration is really small, hardly reaching 16% in all the sector. This percentage goes up to 18% if we add some joint centres to it. In fact when we think of not just ownership, but of the organisation in charge of management, we find that the percentage of participation of public administration in direct management goes down to 10% of all centres. All that

---

9 In Spanish we have coined the term “sinhogarismo” as no term exists and it would require a rather long explanation to transmit the idea conveyed by the English word. “Transeúntes” was the traditional word used, which conveys the idea of “tramps” or “vagrants.”

10 We started from the guide prepared by the Ministry of Social Services in 1994 which includes 273 addresses. Thanks to the invaluable work in tracking and detecting done by Cáritas, a computerized data bank with 678 references to services which, in one way or another, offer help to the homeless in Spain was drawn up.
seems to be the result of a privatisation process of the centres’ management which has looked to lowering prices, a generically present objective also in other social services, and specifically, it also reveals a certain inability of the administration to directly accept the challenge that the homeless in Spain represent.

In general, services which deal with the care of the basic necessities of subsistence predominate. Centres which provide information and guidance constitute 73% of the total, and then those which distribute clothing (62%), food (61%) and offer accommodation in the centre itself (49%).

The most-offered kind of provisions are those which cost less to maintain -because they require less specialised personnel-, and, in general, all those which take care of primary necessities: accommodation, food and clothing. In great measure this happens because it is a population in an extreme poverty situation, but also as a result of the poor means on which centres rely.

Only in this way is it understandable that, while the majority opinion among the persons who care for the homeless defends the importance of unemployment, the breakdown of links and the shortage of housing in the genesis of the problem, there are just a few centres that have workshops (27%), that provide psychological care (20%), or residential alternatives different from accommodation in shelters; only 10% of the centres have residential proposals in supported flats.

The shortage of means is also reflected in the small presence of health services that are not provided by free health assistance which the government administration gives, like dentistry and podiatry that, nevertheless, have great importance among the homeless population, because the pathologies being treated by both specialities are very frequent among the homeless.

**HOW MANY HOMELESS ARE THERE IN SPAIN?**

It is quite impossible to give an exact answer to this question because of the current conditions of statistical information. The only thing we can do is to try to get closer through indirect estimates.

We've used different strategies on the survey conducted in centres and services. A first possibility is the one that emerges from asking the centres which provide accommodation directly, how many places they have, how many are occupied on any one day in winter, and on another in summer, and from that, try to estimate the number of people who have been taken care of any day.

We should bear in mind that the figures obtained will be the minimum estimate of all possible figures, because the phenomenon being defined from the network of specific assistance, the resulting figures will be the final result of a complex process of socio-institutional definition of homelessness, in which all those persons who have never had any contact with the institutional network of assistance to the homeless will not be included (e.g.: squatters, evicted people, young people looking for housing and precariously accommodated, etc.). Because of that, our estimate will be dependent in great measure not as much to the information related to the homeless themselves but to the "social treatment of their situation, [and] in particular of the role institutions [play] in the social construction of a category of the homeless" (Marpsat, 1999:887).

Bearing in mind all these details, and not counting the effect of the non-answered, one can say that in Spain there are around 333 centres that give accommodation to the homeless. Although among them there are institutions of different size, on average they have 26.61 places per centre, so that in our country there would be around 9,000 places for accommodation for the homeless.

Even if during the stage of field work, we've tried to extend the spectrum of our interests and we've insisted on the answer of all services in charge of providing temporary or permanent accommodation (centres for homeless addicted to drugs, ex-convicts, etc.), the truth is that the effect created by the institutional application labelled "service for transients" is still really important, and
only in part have we broken the limits of the traditional definition of the problem. In any case, we think we have achieved it, at least partially, because in the last inventory made by the Social Affairs Office, in its publication "Centres and services for homeless transients", published in 1994, the total number of places of accommodation for "homeless transients" was estimated in 5,526 in our country (CENTROS, 1994:309). The data was collected from 168 accommodation services, which meant around 32.9 average places per centre. We understand that, in our case, we have reached a greater number of small rural services, and also, we have managed to partially break the restrictive definition of "centre for transients." This has allowed us to include many centres destined for homeless "non-transients" (e.g.: Shelter homes for mistreated women).

As the average occupation during a year is around 85%, we have an average figure of the homeless accommodated any day in the network that would be more or less 7,700 persons.

This figure is quite coherent with the one obtained through another procedure. We asked all the people who answered the survey to try to make an estimate of 'the average number of homeless who are being taken care of each day in their city'. In this case, the figure obtained, after extrapolating it to the Spanish population and applying a correction according to the size of the network, was 8,500 homeless being taken care each day. All that confirms the goodness of Dragana Avramov in his estimate in 1995.

If in a greatly generous hypothesis we would estimate that for each person being taken care of daily, there was another one who sleeps out on the streets, we would have to talk of 17,000 persons living daily in strictly defined homelessness in Spain.

WHO DO WE TAKE CARE OF?

Reaching this point, we can start analysing the specific difficulties that a person has when as well as being homeless, she's a woman. In general, the traditional network of assistance to "transients" thought they would receive an overwhelming population made up of lone men. As a more comprehensive view of the problem is being spread, which tries to take care of the homeless in general, regardless of sex, services which take care of both men and women are proliferating. In the same way, centres which not only take care of lone persons but also of couples and families are starting to be relatively numerous. Nevertheless, there are only of few of the latter in our country. In general, a service which takes care of evicted families, or families without a home, is usually not included under the name of "centre for the homeless", but rather, it is part of other networks of less specific social attention, either general social services, or family aid services.

As shown in the following graph, women count on very limited possibilities to access the network for care of the homeless. These possibilities decrease even more when the homeless woman is accompanied by other family members: a partner, children.
Men continue to be the type of people with the greatest possibility of being attended in the current network of centres for the homeless. This can be accounted for, in part, by the fact that the majority of the homeless are men, but it is also the result of strong institutional inertia, which produces an added difficulty when, in addition to being homeless, the person is a woman or lives as a couple or in a family.

In these cases, the fact that the network itself favours separation by reason of gender, frequently forces separation, sending the husband to a centre for men and the wife to one for women. This is especially evident in the case of some homeless groups where family ties usually remain intact, as is the case of immigrants, refugees, etc. This points out the difficulties inherent in attending to and respecting the affective needs of the homeless within the present institutional structure. It appears to us that this fact is of extreme importance given that affective deficiencies and the difficulty in maintaining relationships are some of the major obstacles to personal recuperation of the excluded homeless.

Thus, in the following table for example, we can see how, apart from exceptions, men who are alone can be attended in almost all of the network (93% of the centres); women alone can only access three out of four centres (74%); couples can only be attended to in half the centres (49%) and, finally, minors have only one in every four centres for the homeless available to them (26%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.- Ease of access to the network of centres for the homeless according to gender, living arrangement and age.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Men</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, attended to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO, not attended to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The previous data refer to the totality of existing centres, be they of one type of another, including dining halls, information centres, etc. If we concentrate specifically on those which offer housing, the possibilities for women, couples and children are even fewer. Women alone have access
to 64% of the centres that offer housing. If they are married or living with someone, they only have access to 38% of the network, and finally, if they are accompanied by children then the possibilities are reduced even more since children can only be housed in one out of five of the centres that offer housing to the homeless.

Table 4.- Ease of access to the services that offer housing in the center itself, according to gender, living arrangement and age.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Couples</th>
<th>Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, attended to</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, not attended to</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NR</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The structure of the network and the requirements for access to it undoubtedly continue to be anchored in the old social configuration of the problem, with services primarily aimed at single men of a specific age. All of this especially penalises women and the young. And these are precisely the categories of the population which, together with immigrants, have the most rapid growth rate among the homeless in Spain.

The only result of this is a repetition of the steps taken in other places. In general there is a tendency to admit that over the last few decades in almost all the Western countries there has been a change in the profile of the people who, in either a permanent or a circumstantial way, find themselves without housing. The risk of finding oneself excluded and homeless has been progressively spreading to new groups that, up till now, did not call at the door of the services aimed at attending to the homeless, or at least they did not do it in such large numbers. All this has produced the consequential problems of fit between the organisation of accommodation vacancies currently available and the new profiles of the demand.

We have pointed some of this out when we presented the profile of the population receiving attention and called attention to the special difficulties that women, family groups, etc. had to find housing. If, in addition to this, it turns out that these are the groups which are growing in number within the homeless population, the problem for these outcast minorities within the outcasts in general, cannot but worsen in the future.

Precisely, in order to explore these new realities from the direct experience of those who, day by day, see how the human landscape with which they must work, is changing, we have included in the survey a battery of questions that try to sketch the changing face of the homeless poor in Spain. The answers received appear in the following table.

Table 5.- “Considering your personal experience in the centre in which you work, would you say the number of... in the last ten years...”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Immigrants</th>
<th>Young people</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Has increased greatly</td>
<td>39.2%</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has increased slightly</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remains more or less the same</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has decreased slightly</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has decreased greatly</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>40.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N)</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From these answers it can be deduced that there is a clear awareness of a fact which, although it is known, should still be repeated again and again: the increase in the number of immigrants in the shelters. Spain is a rich country which has become the receiver of immigrants from its southern
neighbours. Many of them have to face a serious problem of housing, and with a certain frequency, have to solve it, if only provisionally, by going to the centres that traditionally have been attending to the Spanish homeless.

The problems which all of this entails are innumerable: language, cultural adaptation coexistence, etc. The struggles for “a place in the shelter” have only just begun and in future years they will foreseeably bring a proliferation of housing options aimed specifically at these people.

Following the immigrants in line, there seems to be an agreement among those who care for the homeless that there has been a sharp rise in the “youngness” of the population helped. Difficulties in joining the job market and in finding accommodation at reasonable prices, besides the problems linked with the expansion of certain types of drug addictions among the very young, have provoked a greater presence of youngsters than what was habitual up until now. The perspectives of intervention naturally change radically when, instead of working with people in their fifties, work must be carried out to help youngsters in their early twenties with all their lives (although with many problems) ahead of them.

Evolution of some population groups in the last ten years

In an equally important way, an important increase in the presence of women has been noted. This also implies enormous challenges in the near future to the redesigning of the network of centres – which were essentially designed to attend to men –, so that they can accept many more women than in the past.

Family groups, on the other hand, have not appeared in great numbers in the centres for the homeless. Here, however, the definition commonly held by social service professions that links the homeless situation with personal solitude, isolation and a breakdown in relationships, may play a role in discouraging family groups who are without a home at a certain moment, but are sent to other networks of social services.

All these data point out that when each of these circumstances is added to another, the difficulties in finding specialized social attention are enormous; the extreme case of immigrant women with children who are homeless. We will present some examples further on in the text.
Homeless immigrants

Although the objective of the national reports for Feantsa consists in analysing the specific situation of homeless women, allow us to explain in some detail the newest factor which the network of care for the homeless faces. We are referring to the increasing number of immigrants.

Geographic areas of origen of the homeless foreigners
lodged in centers for the homeless

![Pie chart showing the percentage of geographic areas of origin of homeless foreigners.]

In the last few years Spanish society was been surprised in its inexperience by the massive arrival of immigrants from less developed countries. Although the number is not yet excessively high, especially if we compare it to other European countries, what is certain is that their presence is visible and significant as it represents a radical inversion of a historical tendency. For centuries the migratory balance in Spain has been negative. Emigration to Latin America was a constant demographic drain for several centuries and then in the 1960s economic emigration to more developed European countries took its place. Between 1960 and 1973 official figures speak of some two and a half million Spanish emigrants. If we add irregular emigration this number would be even higher.

In contrast to this historical tendency, Spain has evolved in recent history from a country of emigrants to a country which receives immigrants. Because of its geographic situation, its historical role and its culture, Spain has become a doorjamb, a threshold between Europe and Africa on one hand and between Europe and Latin America on the other. In the future this strategic position as the southern and western border of Europe will continue to be more and more important for all of the countries of the EU.

One part of this immigration which arrives in precarious conditions ends up using the mechanisms planned for the poor in our country. After exploring the opinions of those responsible for the centres and services aimed at the homeless about the importance of immigrants in the population cared for and about the places of origin of these people, the most important overall conclusions are the following:

- The predominance of people from Africa, either from the Maghreb or from sub-Saharan Africa, is clear. The former are clearly the most numerous, due, to a large degree, to the presence of Moroccans and Algerians. These two nationalities, together with the Portuguese – who hold the second position by country – are the three nationalities on
everyone’s mind: Moroccans, Portuguese and Algerians are specifically the three nationalities which stand out clearly above the rest.

Nevertheless, keeping in mind that many people, rather than citing a certain nationality, will point to a wider geographical or cultural area (South America, East Europe, etc.), perhaps it might be interesting to consider the origin of homeless foreigners from this point of view. In this line, several things prove surprising:

- In general these people come from regions which are geographically near and/or are poorer countries than ours. This highlights the economic nature of this emigration, performed in precarious conditions, with few means; all of which forces many of these people to end up using the shelters as a means of finding accommodation.

- At the same time, the presence of European Union citizens is not unnoticed, as it turns out to be the second largest area of origin. To tell the truth, however, a large part is made up of Portuguese citizens to whom many of the previous arguments could be applied. Nevertheless, the appearance of other homeless people from richer countries are becoming more frequent. Since the elimination of borders within the EU, these people move South easily, attracted among other things by a warmer climate (Germany, France, England, Belgium). On a European scale, part of what has become habitual in the “Sun states” (California, Florida) in the U.S.A. would find its echo here.

- Together with the Africans, who have long been habitual in the lines at dining halls and at the doors of shelters, the fall of the Berlin wall has flooded Western Europe with a diaspora of Eastern Europeans, to the point that they form the third largest area of origin - the Rumanians and the Polish standing out. Frequently they arrive in Spain after having tried their fortune in other countries of the EU, or have been directed to our country by organised mafias for the export of unskilled labour.

- The presence of immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa, although important, is not so important as it is often stated. Probably their visibility has led to the exaggeration of their number. In any case, this same circumstance has frequently led to explosions of xenophobia and racism among the other users of the services. This makes their presence in the shelters not always easily acceptable to the traditional clients.

- Latin Americans, on the other hand, are not especially abundant in the network for homeless people, taking into account that their presence in Spain is beginning to be numerically significant. The possibilities of cultural integration and employment are probably much greater and therefore lower their presence in this network of social attention below that which their numbers might suggest. Nevertheless, although their presence in the network for the homeless is generally of a short term urgency and transient until they find employment, it is also true that they are becoming more abundant. At the moment the presence of Ecuadorians is especially noteworthy. This is understandable given the situation of economic and politic breakdown which this country is undergoing.

**HOW MANY HOMELESS WOMEN ARE THERE IN SPAIN?**

There are no recent studies which cover all of Spain which would allow us to establish the number nor the profile of the homeless For this reason it is impossible to know the exact proportion that women represent within the totality of the homeless. We have only local studies with data from the annual reports of some particularly important centres.
With regard to the data found in the few national studies available, the Cáritas study in 1985 estimated the percentage of women at 15.6%; a few years later the IOPE-ETMAR study for the Ministry of Social Affairs in 1991 found 10.6% of women. We must remember, however, that these figures were taken exclusively of the users of transient shelters and did not include dining halls or other services and detection spots; instead of showing the reality of the homeless in Spain the percentage of women mentioned above reflected the number of places in the existing shelters for each sex in our country.

In 1996 in a survey of the homeless population in Madrid, Cabrera used the figure of 13% for women, obtained not only from sample data, but provided by the files of the services for the homeless in Madrid which include the homeless population with Spanish nationality cared for throughout 1995. More or less in the same period, Luis Vega (1996), obtained the same proportion (13%) in a study carried out in Gijon in the north of Spain. And in Barcelona, Lucas (1995) spoke of 14%. A year before, in 1994, Barroso and Martin, using data on social intervention with Transients in Extremadura (in the west of Spain) again gave 13% of women as the figure found.

A very interesting research project dealing with an estimation of the number of homeless people in the city of Seville has recently been carried out. The study, which has not yet been published, was made by the Centro Andaluz de Prospectiva (Andalusian Centre of Futurology) with professors from the University of Seville in charge. The methodology used was rigorous from a statistical point of view to be able to detect the homeless independently of whether they were being cared for by social services or not, lodged or sleeping outside, etc. This methodology could be applied to other geographic areas, adapting it to local particularities.

Field work was carried out between 9-18 February in Seville. 175 interviews of the population that came to several social services centres were conducted. Besides the municipal Shelter and some others that provide accommodation, interviews were conducted in other services such as dining halls, clothing distribution centres, etc., to which a large number of the homeless appealed. Once the data had been refined to exclude those persons with an address, interrupted or duplicated interviews, etc., they obtained a final sample of 130 interviews with homeless people. Among them, women represented 16.15%. Moreover, data from the referent population as it figures in the centres for attention to the homeless, once refined of duplications (through the use of the National Identity Number, date of birth and sex) and eliminating those cases which had an address, were not far from the data found in the sample. In the period between June 1, 1998 and December 1, 1998, i.e. during one semester, from June to November inclusive, 1,119 people were cared for, of whom 14.12% were women.

In our survey of centres and services, if we limit the answers offered to the centres that explicitly affirm that they care for women, we find the proportion of women lodged on average on any night is 19%. If, on the other hand, we consider the totality of the network which offers accommodation, many lodging only men, the proportion of women within the whole population goes down to 15%.

Considering these data, which, although partial and limited, are the only ones currently available, we could say that women represent at present between 15% and 16% of the homeless in Spain. This slight increase could be due to a greater participation of women in the processes of housing exclusion and to better systems of detecting them in the phrase of data collection as well as to a slow but steady acceptance of a wider definition of homelessness, to include centres specifically aimed at “transients” and also centres for other groups without an address. In any case, be it because the presence of women is increasing or because their invisibility is decreasing, what is certain is that we have gone from 13% in the mid 90s to 15% or 16% in the year 2000. If we accept the figure of 8,500 homeless on average cared for daily, then the number of homeless women on any day would be around 1,300. To this number, the uncared for women would have to be added, so that it would not be an exaggeration to speak of 2,000 or 2,500 homeless women in Spain on an average day. All this with the understanding that we are referring to the strictest, most exclusion definition of “homeless.”
On the whole, experts affirm that although the majority of the homeless are still men, there has been an increase in the number of women, especially young and middle-aged ones (see Sánchez Morales 1999: 57). There is currently a larger number of women who could pass the limits of precarity and join the group of the homeless. It is also true that, in general, the family usually is more active and intervenes more frequently in the case of women than in the case of men, to try and make the women who have started a process of extreme exclusion return to “a normal life.” It seems clear that we must accept that a new type of homeless person is breaking ground, in which, as professor Sánchez Morales presents in the following table, it is easy to detect a greater number of women.

### TAXONOMY OF THE HOMELESS IN SPAIN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRADITIONAL “HOMELESS”</th>
<th>NEW TYPES OF “HOMELESS”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Middle-aged or elderly man</td>
<td>- Middle-aged men – separated or divorced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Single</td>
<td>- Young men with employment problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Alcoholism</td>
<td>- Young and middle-aged men – drug addicts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Unfavourable social roots</td>
<td>or ex -drug addicts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Low training level</td>
<td>- Young and middle-aged women – mistreated, separated or divorced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Low educational level</td>
<td>- Young and middle-aged women – drug addicts or ex -drug addicts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Higher cultural and educational level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The mentally ill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Immigrants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PRINCIPAL TENDENCIES DETECTED IN THE HOMELESS IN SPAIN

| - More young people |
| - More women |
| - Legal Solitude (separated or divorced) |
| - Drug addictions |
| - Higher educational level |
| - Higher training level |
| - Internationalisation |


### SERVICES NEEDED

On the whole, there is a clear idea about the type of services needed. For the homeless population in general there are enough centres to care for their most immediate basic needs. In Spain it is relatively easy to find a bed, food and clothing. On the other hand, all the services of a more global nature which work from an overall vision and one of insertion and go beyond subsistence care, incorporating professional care of quality, are still clearly insufficient.

The low budget of the network has not allowed the incorporation of all the professionals (social workers, psychologists, educators, etc.) who would be necessary. Although important steps have been taken in the last twenty years, the choking budget, in a network that needs support from private initiative, has certainly made the number of volunteers used excessive in comparison to the number of salaried personnel.

In the network of centres taken as a whole, the volunteers are unequally spread, according to whether it is a Publicly or Privately administered centre. It is true that, today, the incorporation of volunteers in the public network entails serious difficulties: in recruitment, in follow-up, dynamic philosophy, etc. Nevertheless, these reasons alone cannot explain the huge imbalance reflected in the data in the following table.
Table 6.- Salaried personnel, volunteers and social service volunteers*, according to the type of administration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of administration</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Salaried</th>
<th>Volunteer</th>
<th>Social Service*</th>
<th>Ratio Vol./Sal.</th>
<th>% SS*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>(28)</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0,36</td>
<td>3,9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>(273)</td>
<td>1190</td>
<td>7234</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>6,08</td>
<td>21,7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


While in the publicly-administered centres there are barely 3.6 volunteers for every 10 salaried people, in the privately-administered centres, we find 61 volunteers for every 10 people under contract. Almost 20 times more volunteers in the private centres than in the public ones! This is one of the riches of the private centres. Nevertheless, these disproportionally high figures make us fear that perhaps the enriching quality of the volunteers is not always fulfilling the role to which it corresponds, but is in quite a few cases being used as a means to reduce costs in a sector that is permanently weighed down by the lack of financial resources.

Some years ago, in the first report by the European Observation of Homelessness, its author, Mary Daly, pointed out that in almost all the member states of the EU, private services and assistance predominate in a ratio of two-thirds to one third with respect to the public sector. She complained that this vigorous presence of lay society should not always be considered positive since “as a general rule, private services are generated and called to fill the void created by the insufficiency or absence of public activities,” in such a way that “they often work in conditions without sufficient financial support and recognition on the part of the authorities” (1992: 10) In Spain this is precisely the situation.

Speaking in general terms we can say that, with regard to the type of assistance demanded at this time by the people responsible for the centres, in the country as a whole we need more:

- Supported accommodation, (the current offer is considered too small by 66.2% of those who answered), i.e. more alternative accommodation and not so many shelters are needed.
- Insertion workshops (63.3%), i.e. employment alternatives. At the moment, the law which should regulate the special ruling for the functioning of insertion firms has still not seen the light of day. This law has been requested for a long time by the sector, which has serious problems in developing socially and economically feasible company initiatives.
- Self-help groups (57.9%) i.e. therapeutic and group help.
- Podiatry and dentistry services (54.3%), or what is the same, those health specialities which are not normally covered by the public health services and which are expensive to maintain.
- There is still little work done in the street, although there are pioneer experiences in some cities (Ex. Valencia: Project Simón).
- Lastly, more day care centres are needed, to supplement those which have opened in the last few years. It is true that in this area there has been an important change of view which includes the need to intervene during the day, when larger doses of discouragement and desperation among the homeless in the face of a lack of possibilities is produced during their waking hours, rather than only shelter services at night, as has been the case historically.

Now then, what happens specifically to homeless women? Are there needs which are especially uncared for?

We can approach the subject using some of the answers obtained in the survey of centres. In the following table the definitions given by the people who answered our questionnaire to describe their own centre/service are shown. As the same entity could have a day care centre, a training
workshop, a dining hall, etc. this is a question with multiple answers possible. We, therefore, have a total of 943 answers, collected from 371 centres which answered the question.

Moreover, we know that of those that answered there are 275 centres/services which answered affirmatively when asked if they cared for women. If we cross this answer with the previous one, we can find out the number of centres of each type which really assists women. From here, relating the total number, for example, of shelters detected with the number of shelters that say they accept women, we can see the percentage of shelters in the network that are accessible to homeless women. This is precisely what is found in the last column.

Table 7.- Degree of access for homeless women to the different types of centres

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Free definition. It is a . . .</th>
<th>Total of existing centres</th>
<th>Centres which assist women</th>
<th>% which assist women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day care centre</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>90.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project co-ordination</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>89.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-the-street work</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>88.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information and orientation centre</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>85.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dining hall</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>82.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing distribution centre</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>81.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social emergency service</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>80.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term orientation centre (short stay)</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>80.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance to drug addicts</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>77.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelter</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>73.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job training workshops</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>70.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health service</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night centre with few restrictions</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>64.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deintoxication service (alcohol)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>64.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinsertion centre (long stay)</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>50.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional workshops</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinsertion company</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other services to be specified</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent housing centre (chronic cases)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>46.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported housing</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance for compulsive gamblers</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ANSWERS</td>
<td>943</td>
<td>712</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL OF THE CENTERS THAT ANSWERED</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>275</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figures obtained are significantly discriminatory for women. Perhaps for historical reasons, the problem has not been thought about in a mixed format, or perhaps because homeless women are fewer in number than men. What is certain is that women have a significantly lower number of resources available to them in the existing network for homeless people. In addition, the availability diminishes with regard to those services which could be considered more modern, intensive in technical-professional work or oriented toward work or housing reinsertion.

Leaving aside services aimed at giving information and orientation, either in an open arena or a closed centre, which are generally open to both men and women with no distinction, we find that as soon as men and women try to access the same material assistance (food, clothing, etc.) the restrictions which penalise women begin: while women can use 83% of the dining halls and 82% of the clothing distribution centres, only 73% of the shelters for the homeless accept women.

If, among the centres that are defined as temporary accommodation, i.e. those which offer short stays, women can be accepted in 80% of them, in the centres for reinsertion, i.e. those which
provide the possibility of longer stays and in general do not establish a predetermined limit to the length of the stay, but allow it to vary depending on the development of the psycho-social intervention process, only 51% accept women.

The same thing happens in the few professional workshops and reinsercion companies. At the moment, the majority of the existing ones work from centres which only accept homeless men. Women can be accepted in only 50% of them. Something similar occurs with the alternative residences which start in different collective shelters, such as the supported accommodation or the transient houses moving toward autonomous or independent housing. Like most of these initiatives, these options have been developed by services specialised in housing for men so that currently only 44% of these initiatives accept women.

In short, women are offered fewer services, for shorter periods of time and receive more superficial treatment centring on material survival and not on insertion.

To finish this report, I'd like to call attention to two collectives of women among which the danger of being homeless and excluded is particularly important: mistreated women, and women who are in charge of single-parent families. I will include certain cases extracted from two current experiences taking place in Madrid in the presentation of the basic data.

WOMEN SUBJECTED TO ILL-TREATMENT

In 1975, the UN considered seriously for the first time the problem as of world interest. In 1980, the UN stated that violence within the family is the most frequent concealed crime in the world (Alberdi, 1995:245).

Years later, in 1984, for the first time in Spain, the number of reports to the National Police Stations because of ill-treatment was published: 16,070 reports of ill-treatment during the previous year. With relation to this subject, the Director of Public Prosecutions urges public prosecutors to follow-up and quickly process the causes of the ill-treatment and he urges them to exercise the appropriate legal action.

From then on, in the last few years a strong citizen awareness of the seriousness of the problem of domestic violence that many women suffer, has appeared in Spain. The media has week after week echoed new cases of women murdered by their partners. Many women have suffered a long history of disappointment with government offices; their demands for help to social services, the police or the judges often don't find the necessary answer, and the tragic result ends up by filling the pages of the homicides and beatings reported in the newspapers.

According to the data collected by the Spanish Home Office, in 1987, 79.2% of the victims of ill-treatment were women; in 1988, 81.2%. Regarding parricides, in 1987, 59.6% of the victims were women, and in 1988, they were 67.6%. In 1992, with information from the judicial police, the reports of ill-treatment were 15,900. The number of accomplished parricides was 47 and the number of attempted parricides was of 67 for the same year (Alberdi, 1995).

Finally, as late as 1993, in the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, the UN clearly admitted for the first time the human rights of women as part of the world's human rights, and in the Statement on the Elimination of Violence against Women, it's defined as: "...any act of violence based on the belonging to the feminine gender which have or can have as a result physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering for the woman. Also, the threats of those acts, the coercion or the arbitrary privation of freedom, whether it occurs in public or in private life. Ill-treatment can be defined as any action or aggressive behaviour which through different ways of expression, cause harm or lessen the freedom of the victims”.

Certainly, as Pierre Sané, general secretary of International Amnesty, said a couple of months ago, "the international law of human rights is guilty of blindness of gender: for a long time, the
subject has been focused on the public arena dominated by men and the so-called private sphere of the
home, the family and the community where women have traditionally been confined has been

In any case, all these circumstances that show a progressive increase of social conscience
concerning this problem made it necessary in Spain in 1998 for the Ombudsman to elaborate a
voluminous Report on "Domestic Violence against Women". Among its conclusions, the lack of
research capable of providing reliable information, and the shortage of the existing social resources
were reflected, which lead the institution to include among its recommendations asking the Ministry of
Work and the Ministry of Social Affairs, "to increase as regards the Administrations with competence
in this matter the number of Shelter Homes in our country, adapting, in this way, the number of places
available to the European Parliament’s recommendation".

Regarding the difficulties in obtaining the data for a problem that often remains hidden, we
now count on an interesting possibility. Last March, 2000, the first results of a macrosurvey on
"violence against women" commissioned by the Woman's Institute were presented to the press.
Though there isn't any chapter in which the matter has been clearly dealt with in connection with
housing, it is really interesting to analyse it because it presents updated and reliable data on the
magnitude of the problem in our country. The objectives of the study consisted of:
- Quantifying violent acts against women within their homes.
- Identifying the social-demographic variables which affect ill-treatment.
- Determining the symptomology derived from it.

In the survey stage 22,552 telephone interviews with Spanish women over the age of 18 were
carried out. From the answers two groups of women were established: a first group made up of what is
known as "technical ill-treatment", of women who answered "frequently" or "some times", to at least 1
out of 13 key descriptions as for example: "Does he insist on having sexual relations even if he knows
you don’t feel like doing it?", "Does he insult or threaten you?", "When he gets angry, does he ever
push or hit you?", etc; a second group was made up of women who directly classified themselves as
ill-treated in the last year, answering affirmatively to the question: "Have you suffered any situation in
which you've felt ill-treated by any relative, boyfriend or any person who lives with you, during the
last year?".

The most important results show that 4.2% of Spanish women over 17 state that they have
been victims of ill-treatment during the last year. This percentage represents a total of 640,000 women.
Regarding the Spanish women who can consider themselves "technically" ill-treated, there are 12.4%,
which represents a total of 1,865,000 women. From these data, it is obvious that it is an extraordinarily
serious and extended problem.

Most of the acts of violence within their homes are caused by the partner, 52% of the ones
who declare themselves ill-treated. Brothers cause 18%, children 12.5% and parents 11% of violence
acts.

Declared ill-treatment increases as the size of the habitat grows. And regarding ages, between
45 and 64 years of age ill-treatment is most frequent, followed by the ones between 30 and 44 years of
age. Ill-treatment decreases as the level of studies of the woman increases.

The consequences are terribly destructive. From the psychological point of view, it mainly
causes: anxiety, anguish, low self-esteem, changes of mood, feeling like crying, irritability, lack of
sexual desire, etc. Regarding the social consequences, unfortunately the study, in general, doesn't
investigate this aspect too much.

Nevertheless, later on, as part of the same study, a new, more exhaustive survey was
conducted on a sample made up of 395 women who in the first stage of the research have declared to
being ill-treated, or those who have declared to know some women, close to them, who were ill-
treated. Around half of the 395 women accepted being interviewed in person, and to the rest the
interview was made by phone. 40% of them affirmed having suffered ill-treatment during the last year, and 37% some time in their lives. This ill-treatment lasted an average of 8.87 years.

As regards the strictly social consequences, the following answers were obtained: 48% stated that they fear of the future, for economic reasons, because they have to face it alone; 13% said they have had to file for sick leave; 11% said that ill-treatment led to the loss of their job; and lastly, 8% were driven to excessive drinking and/or taking drugs.

The extreme social and job precarity which ill-treatment leads to is highlighted with these figures. After the losing of their jobs, the violence and the addictive behaviour, in many cases residential precarity is precipitated, and leads women to go out to shelter-homes. To assess in its whole scope the magnitude of the problem in absolute terms, we have only to relate the previous percentages with the figure of 640,000 women who declare having suffered ill-treatment in our country.

As for finding help, 47.3% say they have turned to someone for help, while the rest live hidden and ashamed. Those who ask for help, turn, in the first place, to the family (64%) and to their friends (38%), then to the psychologist (37%) and just a minority look for the services of a lawyer (25%), a doctor (20%) or a social worker (16%).

As a result of the enquiries only 67% of the ill-treated women took a decision in one way or another, and we should bear in mind that of the suggestions received, 20.3% were advised to leave their homes. That means that, in around one fifth of ill-treatment cases, the opinion of external observers, professional or just friends or relatives, is to advise them to look for another place to live.

Of course, this option is only viable for some persons who have enough economic and property resources. When women with few resources suffer ill-treatment, there isn't another way but to put up with it or to "go out to the streets". When there are children involved, frequently the step forward is postponed and leads to a huge and understandable sensation of insecurity and fear.

In fact, even if 57% know that there are shelter-homes, those women rarely use this kind of service. 17% say they have turned to the Social Services, 16% to services of legal information, 15% to the free telephone number at the Women's Institute, and 14% to specific organisations and associations which deal with these matters. However, the fact is that shelter-homes were used by 4% of the interviewed women, and 3.1% went to live in supported flats under the protection of town halls and autonomous regions.

Bearing in mind the characteristics and the size of the referential sample, it would be too much, naturally, to expect to refer this 3-4% of women who go to live in alternative social accommodation, to the estimated figure of 640,000 women who declare having suffered ill-treatment in the last year, but it won't be too much to make that statistical jump and think that maybe we're talking about temporal necessities of accommodation that, somehow or other, can be needed by around 25,000 women victims of domestic violence. Therefore we are faced with one of the largest collective, in a more or less prolonged or temporarily way, who are homeless, and that, however, never appear in the statistics relating to the homeless in Spain, because, usually, the figures offered have been obtained from institutions (shelter-homes, soup kitchens...) that until now have had other kinds of population as their main objective: men, transients, loners.

However, applying the most internationally accepted definitions of homelessness, ill-treated women who go to shelters are fully entitled to be considered part of the homeless. In fact, in the same Report by the Ombudsman mentioned above, the difficulties that many ill-treated women encounter to find housing after having their most urgent and immediate necessities covered at the shelters, are set forward. As the Report says, "it is obvious that there are many women who because of their jobs or their social circumstances can access the general property market or can reach a compromise solution, such as living with a relative [...], but there are other women to whom the access to this market is clearly impossible". Because of that, among the recommendations regarding the access to housing benefits, some, aimed at the persons in charge of housing in different Autonomous Regions, are included in which it is recommended to: "Specifically contemplate, in the procedures of awarding
houses with public support, ill-treated women who are in a shelter home or in any other public or private institution for the same reasons, so that their access to housing is considered as a concrete case and that they don't have to see the solution of the problem postponed”.

Fortunately, there are more and more devices which give temporary shelter while the basic problems that appear after the explosion of a crisis involving violence and making it necessary for the woman to leave her home are resolved. However, they are still not enough and they hardly find the needed means to continue with the psycho-social intervention, once the most urgent aid has been given.

The history of shelter homes for women victims of domestic violence is quite recent. In 1972, the first shelter home in the United Kingdom was created, and in Spain the first house of these characteristics was created in 1984. At first it dealt with shelter, protection, 'having a place to hide' and get solidary support. Subsequently, the necessity of therapeutic intervention to tackle the different behaviours and symptomologies developed in a situation of mistreatment has been admitted. In the same way, the conviction of the importance of also facing the training for a job and the acquisition of social abilities frequently decreased because of the isolation to which many women have been subjected, is being more and more accepted.

In Spain, those services that provide temporary accommodation to mistreated women are slowly accepting being co-ordinated with the rest of the institutions which provide shelter for the homeless, but the opinion of those who think that because of being really different problems, they don't have to be included under the same heading still has priority. Because of that, it is necessary to insist on the importance of the situational definitions of homelessness, instead of those of an ontological or identity nature, to study the case of ill-treated women from their residential involvement, because, certainly, domestic violence in many cases has immediate consequences on women and their children's accommodation, turning them into homeless for a more or less prolonged period.

Any way, the services network is still in the middle of a stage of development, and even if many centres are being created, for the moment there are not enough of them. For example, in the Town Council and the Autonomous Region of Madrid, as well as Short Stay and Emergency Centres, there are:

- Another three “Shelter-Homes” for longer stays, where specialised social intervention takes place;
- Some supported flats, to lone women with family responsibilities; the maximum period of a stay is 12 months, and intervention is channelled to making the process of personal, social and labour normalisation easier;
- Youth residences, which take care of women under 25 years of age who have no family or their support; victims of ill-treatment, thrown out of their homes or at social risk;
- Maternal residences, for pregnant women or women with children under two years of age.
- Social Emergency Information and Care Services (SITADE): which takes care of social emergency situations; it is a 24 hour free telephone service which works the 365 days of the year. Once the emergency has been taken care of, the general social services are informed so they can continue the intervention.

Naturally, not all ill-treated women go to public centres to get help, in general, only those women with fewer resources and support. So, the women victims of ill-treatment who go to Social Services in Madrid are the following:

- Aged between 20 and 45.
- With children.
- Lack of economic resources of their own.
- Lack of vocational training and work experience.
- Usually with family precedents of ill-treatment.
- With personal difficulties to get out of the situation they're in.
- Great feeling of guilt.

The Commission for Research of Ill-treatment to Women made, during 1995 and 1996, a sampling-study of 50 shelter homes of Spain. The data obtained reveal that the girls who go to those centres are increasingly younger, around 30 years old, with an average of two children, 95% of them have no studies, no income, and more and more, a greater number of immigrants and of women from rural environments go there. Now, in Spain, the number of immigrants has shot up, especially in centres in big cities like Madrid or Barcelona.

60% of the women who went to shelter homes left the process to return with the aggressor. This number is hair-raising because it means that all these women fail in their attempt to start a new life away from violence and ill-treatment. They return to the place they wanted to get out of, with immense personal deterioration, the sensation of failure and feeling good-for-nothing, and the danger this means. And all this happens mostly because of the lack of social and professional resources which can allow them to face an independent life with guarantees.

This failure is due to different kinds of variables: social, psychological and economic. The first attention in emergency homes is, because of this, essential and basic, because on this first period of shelter will depend, in part, the stay of those women in the programme of personal recovery.


This is an emergency centre for ill-treated women usually with small children who are sent to the centre by the police or the social services. It is the first emergency help device and from there they continue the process in a long term stay centre or in a supported flat, depending on the case.

Because it is an emergency centre we should bear in mind that all interventions are based on the short term nature of the centre which then sends cases on to other institutions and that the cases handled daily are of an urgent nature. This intervention is interdisciplinary and includes social, psychological, medical and legal advice. From the psychological point of view, the emotional, cognitive, motivational and behaviour aspects are worked on, individually as well as in groups.

Group work with mistreated women is extraordinarily important because it makes possible:
- Becoming aware –when seeing that their experience is common to those of many other women- of the fact that violence is a social and gender matter and not an inner-psychic problem, derived from the individual characteristics of the personality.
- Breaking isolation, characteristic of violent and ill-treatment relationships.
- Developing skills such as communication, listening, expression of feelings and exchange of ideas.
- Giving authority to equals, breaking the model of unequal relationship learnt in violent relationships.

Because it is a centre which acts as a threshold to the general network, it has to be in constant co-ordination with the different entities involved:

- Social Services Centres.
- Minors Protection Commission.
- SITADE (emergency social services).
- Police Courts.
- Autonomous Region. Women's Department.
- NGOs devoted to aspects related to the problem.
- Network FACIAM.
This last network mentioned is the Federation of Associations and Information and Orientation Centres to marginals. It is made up of most of the private centres (most linked to the Catholic Church) which take care of the homeless in Madrid. Because it is a shelter owned by a religious order, the Apostolics of the Heart of Jesus, the centre "Luz Casanova" is the only one which takes care of mistreated women and is somehow included in the network of Centres for the care of the homeless in Madrid. If it were not for this reason, it would remain completely on the sidelines, and both social problems would remain completely separate at an institutional level, as happens with the rest of the centres for women.

During 1999, in this emergency home alone, 170 women and 150 children were taken care of. The average age of the women is 29, so we are dealing with young or very young people, with small children. There are more and more immigrants, most of whom come from Latin America (especially from Ecuador and Santo Domingo), the Maghreb (Morocco) and lastly from Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Ukraine, Bosnia). During 1999, 47% of the women taken care of were immigrants, and 53% Spaniards. 69% of the women have no labour qualification and work as maids.

The average length of the stay was 19 days. Though it is a centre for short stays, the duration of the stay has increased over other years, because there were some family groups who had to stay longer, and because of several problems (especially the situation of illegality of many immigrant women); they couldn't leave the shelter to go to other resources which provide longer stays. This situation exceeds strictly emergency interventions, and makes other resources and infrastructures necessary, which many times we don't have.

Naturally, we have to give social and psychological attention to the children who come with their mothers. They're also direct or indirect victims of ill-treatment. They have to leave their homes, schools, environment and friends. During the short period of time in which they're in the Shelter, they go to a school near the centre with the aim of a certain "normalisation" within the atypicalness of the situation. In the centre, homework support, leisure activities, psychomotricity, creative expression, etc. take place.

Finally, for mothers there are workshops for looking for a job, social skills, classes in reading and writing, creative expression and child-care schools.

The heterogeneousness and diversity of the accommodated group makes giving a single description of them difficult, but, for the purpose of clarification, the following cases taken from real situations, might be illustrative to show the connection between domestic violence and homelessness.

Irene: A Spanish woman, 41 years of age, accompanied by a five-year-old son. She got married in 1990 and she separated two years later. Now she's divorced. As she says, living with her husband was impossible. After the separation she went to live with her parents and brothers. Her father ill-treated her mother all her life. They had 12 children. Irene dropped out of school at 10 to take care of her brothers. Now there are eight persons living in a tiny house and they all live off the pension of the already retired father. She can't work due to a permanent injury in her hand. Before, she worked as a maid and a babysitter. In spite of being divorced, her ex-husband keeps on harassing her, threatening her, using the visits to the child to keep on persuading her: "I know you love me, you'll end up with me. If you leave me, I'll commit suicide", etc. After the last episode of violence, the father took the child and didn't want to give him back; he had a gun. Finally, the police arrested him for reckless driving… Now she takes refuge in a shelter.

Antonia: She's a gypsy woman, 31, with six children; the oldest is twelve years old. Following the customs of her ethnic group, she got married really young, at the age of 16, with one of her cousins, a cocaine user. They worked in street trading. During all her marriage she was beaten up. A couple of times, she left "so he'll learn the lesson". When this happened, her husband threatened her parents; sometimes he even hit them. Antonia fears for her family. Her husband's clan is all around Spain, so wherever she is hidden there will be a relative who knows her and he'll end up finding her. The "gypsy law" says that in case of separation the sons should remain with the father, Antonia doesn't want to, but at the same time she is afraid to rebel. In the centre she missed the open air; her six
children didn't get along with the rest and fights among them were continuous. Finally, she returned to him: "He finds me everywhere I go, I have no escape".

Yessica: a young woman 27 years old, with a one-year-old daughter. She was born in Valencia. Her father had a stall selling clothes in a street market; he got divorced when Yessica was one-year-old. She met her mother twenty years later, married to another man who worked as a policeman. Her grandmother brought her up and she always had learning problems; her IQ isn't very high. A couple of times she was put into a religious institution due to her problems living with others, until she met a young man and went with him. Just after she found out he was addicted to drugs, they became beggars and he forced her to prostitute herself to get money for drugs. They went from one town to another as vagrants, sleeping in abandoned cars. Finally, she got pregnant. Her life was miserable, she was filthy and wondering if she had contracted AIDS. She decided to escape and went to Madrid looking for some relatives. After a couple of months she went to the centre. Now she's married to a Moroccan and things seem to be going better.

Marilina: She is an attractive 22 year-old Dominican woman, with a two-year-old daughter. Her parents emigrated to Spain when she was a child. She got married to a Spaniard who made her work in a singles bar, forcing her to prostitute herself to make money, amid threats, blackmail and physical ill-treatment. Although she has lived in Spain for more than ten years she has no legal papers. After her stay in the information and orientation centre, she went to live under supported housing for a year. After being provided with a lot of psychological, social and legal support, she has decided to start the legal battle to get a separation and to obtain the custody of their daughter. Now she works as a maid, she has a low income, and lives in a little rented house in really bad conditions. In spite of everything she's surprisingly finding how happy she is living alone with her daughter. Unfortunately, she has to keep on seeing her husband when he visits the child, although the judge stipulated that the visits should always take place in a public place and she should go with someone else.

Lastly, we have the following statement, written by a Colombian girl who went to a shelter, who has studied secondary school in Spain and has worked for four years in a hotel and as waitress. She was married to a man from the North of Africa.

“My name’s Ana Pilar, I’m 27 years old and I have an almost five-year-old daughter. Five years ago I met the man who’s now my husband, and since then things have gone quite badly. Two months after meeting him we got married, just then my problems began. His main problem is drinking; whenever he drank, and that was every day, he beat me for nothing – just to beat me up. When he didn’t drink I was really good, but when he was drunk I was useless and he said he hated me. I put up with him because in spite of everything I loved him dearly. When I got pregnant, problems grew. He hit me a lot more, he said so the baby would die, he threw me down stairs, he hit me on the stomach. So, gradually I stopped loving him, and when my daughter was born I stayed there because I thought I couldn’t leave her without her father. But when he started also with the girl then I decided to leave him forever and succeed alone with my daughter. During these years I’ve gone through things I couldn’t imagine could happen to me, from going to a psychologist to having to take pills to live each day. A day arrived when if I didn’t take Prozac I couldn’t get out of my bed. Thanks to my daughter I’ve got over an anorexia that left me weighing 38 kilos, and even a bulimia which caused me to weight 110 kilos. I would like to succeed in life just for her; she’s the only thing I care about”.

EFFECTS OF SINGLE-PARENTHOOD ON POVERTY SITUATIONS

To finish with this report, we're going to present some information about the consequences of single-parenthood in families headed by women, which means an increase in the precarity and social vulnerability of the situations. For that purpose we'll present information obtained from discussion groups made up of eight women who usually take part in a group of self-help in the bosom of the Association of Women with non shared Family responsibilities in Tetuán (a famous quarter of
This Association of Women was created in 1994, at the request of the social services of the district.

In this centre, a great increase in single-parent families headed by a woman was noticed. It was thought that it would be good to promote their joining together so they could, together, try to solve their problems. The Association has always been a rather small group (around 30 women from everywhere in Madrid) which has been progressively changing its members. Now it is made up of 20 middle-class women with children, whose work is mainly what we call the "profession of housework": cleaning and care of dependent persons. Their income is really low, and it gets more serious when paying for a rented house. They count on really low or even on no family support. Now in the Association there are Spanish women as well as women from other countries: Morocco, Cape Verde, Peru, although these last ones are a minority.

In the discussion group they especially tried to go deeply into their housing problems and into their experience with the services and networks of social protection. The biographic profiles of the women who took part in the group reflect the huge difficulties women with children find to obtain the economic resources which will allow them to support a minimum steady residence in a city like Madrid. The persons who took part in the discussion group were the following:

**Angelines**: 47 years old. She's been separated for around 15 years now. She has two children, 17 and 20. She's always worked as a maid. The economic support of her husband has been low and restricted to specific moments. The Housing Department gave her a rented apartment, on the occasion of the process of urban redevelopment in her area.

**María**: 36 years old. She's been separated for around five years now. She has two children, a nine-year-old and a 13-year-old child. During the last few years of her relationship she started working as a maid and now she still works in that situation. The father of the children doesn't help with their support. She lives in a rented house, in really bad conditions, for which she pays an exorbitant price.

**Marivi**: 48 years old. She's been separated now for five years. She has two daughters, 13 and 19. After the bankruptcy of the company for which she worked as a secretary, she has had to work as charwoman by the hour. Her husband doesn't help with the maintenance of their daughters. She lives in a house owned by the couple, of which she's the owner until her daughters reach the age of 18.

**Pilar**: 57 years old. She's been separated for around six years now. She has two children, 28 and 23. The elder is married and the younger one lives with her in a rented apartment. She works in a cleaning company without fixed hours. She doesn't receive any kind of support from her husband.

**Sonia**: A 32-year-old Peruvian. She has a 4-year-old and a 3-year-old. She works as a maid by the hour. Her husband left her when she was pregnant with her younger daughter. She's never heard from him, and he doesn't help with the maintenance and education of the children. She lives in a rented apartment with other foreign young women (she can't pay the rent herself).

**Mª Angeles**: 39 years old. Single mother of a 19-year-old son. She works as a maid in private houses. She lives with her mother in an officially supported house.

**Celia**: 42 years old. She's been separated for four years now. She has two children, a ten-year-old and a twelve-year-old. She works as an administrative assistant for the public administration, increasing her income with other informal jobs in the underground economy. Her husband doesn't help with the maintenance of the children.

**Alicia**: 36 years old. She's been separated for eight years now. She has a twelve-year-old boy. She lives in a rented apartment. She's never heard from her husband who doesn't help with the maintenance of the child. She works cleaning offices for a cleaning company.
The different aspects dealt with throughout the discussion were the following: economic difficulties; jobs; problems regarding housing; and the conditions of access to the services of social protection.

Economic Difficulties

One of the better known aspects of a marriage break-up is the negative economic consequence it entails, especially for women. As Ruiz Becerril says (1999), "the economic factor is an obvious and direct feature of the break-up, and at the same time a key variable which significantly determines the rest of the process linked to the post-divorce". The economic aspect is the main problem separated and divorced persons have to face.

The spending per capita is less in complete families than in single-parent families, especially regarding fixed expenses. In general, it can be affirmed that divorced persons become poorer, but this impoverishment has its worst consequences among marriages which before their break up had low economic levels. Among the marriages with low income, the consequences of the separation for the women who are left alone with children can be horrible: "Now you can tell that you're alone and however much you work you don't have enough" (Mª Angeles).

The marriage break-up has different economic consequences for men and women. Most of the studies agree on pointing out that men, on the average, maintain a similar standard of living or the separation may even cause an increase in his standard of living and income. On the other hand, women's situation is a lot different. In general, women suffer an obvious impoverishing process regarding the previous standard of living. This relative decrease is especially serious among women with fewer job and education qualifications: "There are women who adapt themselves to their situation because they don't dare go out to earn money" (Mª Angeles)

Some reasons for this decrease are the following:

1.- Many times, ex-husbands fail in their duties and don't pay the pensions stipulated by the judge. In other cases, the low amount make the maintenance of the previous standard of living impossible.

2.- The lower employment of women. Separated or divorced women usually have lower qualifications, abilities and/or experience: what's known as human capital. To this fact we should add the lower rate of female employment and the lower salaries they receive, for working fewer hours or for having less wages for working the same hours.

3.- The deficits in social policies regarding separated and divorced people. This is an especially serious circumstance, because currently, those families who need more economic support are the ones most likely to be unprotected or not protected enough. The situation of poverty becomes more serious because among the lower classes the problems of non-payment are more frequent. "For years I've had to balance the accounts to the cent, supplement my job by selling cosmetics, typing projects, buying the clothes when sales are ending to have them for next year and convincing the kids of that trainers from the bargain store are the same the brandname ones their friends have" (Celia).

Labour Difficulties

Many married women still work preferably as housewives, which places them in a more dependent and a lot more vulnerable position if the marriage breaks down. (Martínez:1996). The difficulties women have to get a steady job become more serious when they have to support a family with little children: "Work is the source of all our income to survive. I say one thing, the source then has to be to obtain jobs and with the salaries from those jobs have enough money to pay the rent, properties... Everybody needs to have security. But if you have a job.. what on earth does it matter if you have a partner or not? No, we have to stop messing about; from the time we're born we have to
make our children understand that a person alone has to survive and work and that from her job all the expenses in her life have to come: the rent, food, clothes and everything" (Angelines)

Separated women with children usually have to put up with added difficulties regarding the workforce which imply a series of different aspects:

- Employment precarity: Lone women with family responsibilities are an especially vulnerable collective, forced to work in precarious jobs, usually in the underground economy which entails a lack of protection from the system of social security: "They give us jobs that nobody pays, that actually in the social security system have a special structure and we have no right to anything" (Angelines).¹¹

- Lower salaries: As we mentioned before, women tend to get lower salaries than men in a paid job. When all the income of the family comes from the woman who tries to succeed alone, this means especially low economic levels: "Everybody wants to change jobs to be better off. What's all that about? You don't look for another job you can do; you always look for the same. You haven't thought about giving up the mop? Why? Yes, in the services sector, there are a lot of jobs, in the hotel and catering industry, as waiters, everything but it's the same. What I don't agree with is that for women there are jobs as maids that are socially looked down on and badly paid" (Angelines).

- Low job qualifications: As we've mentioned before, women who are in charge of single-parent families from the middle-low-class are those who have more risks of falling into poverty. Those women usually have minimum studies, or a non-well-adapted education to the requirements of the current market (lack of professional retraining). This leads to a low labour mobility, forcing them to remain in non-satisfactory jobs, personally as well as economic, and of low social recognition, as is housework and the care of ill persons and elderly people: "I was born in a village... and I've moved to Madrid and I've started to do the housework in a house because I could live there, well, then I got married, and we've separated. I've kept on working in this and I've struggled and I've always lived on this" (Angelines); or this other statement: "Before we separated I worked at the American university and afterwards, well, as a maid; it's the only thing I could do (...). The job is bad. One of the difficulties in changing jobs is my age... you see, 35 years old: young people; 36 and you're already an old fogey, so... Yes, age is essential. Now people are a lot more educated; they want younger people..." (Maria)

- Family responsibilities: Being a woman and in charge of a family doesn't make the attainment of a job easier within the normal employment market. Being in charge of children usually is a negatively assessed aspect in the selection of personnel: "When they interviewed me, everything was going all right, until I said I had two children to support by myself. Then, the interviewer said, "We'll call you". Probably, if I were a man he wouldn't have had a change in his expression. In companies, if you're a woman and you have children they think you're going to miss days of work" (Celia).

**Housing Problems**

The current housing policies assume that everyone is able to access property ownership. In Spain, renting is considered an eccentricity, a choice which requires an explanation in comparison to property ownership which is “natural.” Nevertheless, this “anti-natural” option is one of the few remaining for most of the single-parent families of women with low income: “My dream in life would be to have an apartment” (Maria); When I got married, rent was expensive, but not as expensive as now. We got married and moved into a rented, furnished apartment. There were two of us working and it wasn’t a problem.” (Pilar).

¹¹ This women is referring to the special system in the Social Security for maids. The level of services differs greatly from the general system.
In the present housing market in Spain, who can afford to buy? The majority of the family units with two or more people earning a salary can plunge in, but in very few cases can a sole person with one income or none acquire a house or apartment: "I don’t have my own place to live because I’m not on a payroll. If I pay 70,000 pesetas in rent, I could easily pay for my own apartment, which would make me proud to pay those 70,000 pesetas. [however now] I’m horrified: every month I pay 70,000 pesetas for an apartment that isn’t mine. It’s the worst money in the world because I don’t enjoy it. I get money today and I spend it tomorrow and the apartment isn’t mine of course. That’s the worst thing for me." (María). Not having a stable job is an almost insurmountable obstacle to being able to get a mortgage or a stable rent: "When rental contracts are private, the landlord comes every year and raised the rent as much as he likes and then you have to make real sacrifices to pay and you are really insecure." (Alicia). Even when job conditions improve somewhat, the lack of government housing forces people to waste money which took so much effort to earn on astronomical rents: "I now have a stable job, but my biggest problem is still how to pay the rent. I have requested subsidised housing several times. At first I was eliminated for not earning the minimum necessary. I don’t understand. And when you fit the requirements, it all depends on a drawing. It’s not fair that luck determines who gets help. The rent for my apartment eats up three quarters of my salary, and I have to manage with what’s left. It’s impossible. I depend on my family and my friends, when with a minor subsidy for housing, I would be happy." (Alicia).

If there is a family dwelling, women with little children usually remain there, but often the ex-wife can remain in the dwelling until the children reach independence. As soon as they get older and leave the home, she can lose the house, without counting on any priority to be reaccommodated in supported accommodation.

What are the alternatives for these women, including those living alone, who don’t have an economic position to be able to buy a house, nor meet the requirements to access supported housing? Most times the only option is to rent a house by private means and this is a bad solution in many senses. On one hand, in the private sector rented dwellings at the prices they can pay are very possibly in bad conditions, and, on the other hand, lettings of new apartments are beyond the most modest rents: "I don't understand how banks work, they don't make thing easier for those who can pay... 'cause who tells me that I take the payslip to a bank, and that's my guarantee?, but if next month they can give me the sack and I can lose my payslip." (Maria). All this led some persons to think of innovative proposals: "I don't understand why there aren't residences for single-parent families like there are university halls of residences" (Mª Angeles). In view of the problem that many lone women with family responsibilities have, those new styles of alternative accommodation become necessary for reasons that just in part are the same as the homelessness in which many kinds of groups of women live: "I've made the request for a dwelling three times and I've been refused. I ended up squatting in a house for a couple of days to draw attention to my situation, but it was a waste of time. The only option that the social worker gave me was to send me to a shelter for mistreated women" (Alicia).

In short, women have an extraordinary knowledge of the problem of dwelling in Spain: "I would like the government to give women with children... to give us low rent apartments and nothing else, with the right to purchase it throughout the years, but rented for the moment" (Maria). Or at least, if dwellings can't be obtained, they should change the conditions for renting which now make the tenants' position extremely insecure: "What's important to me is security... that governments socially give you the security that at some point they won't exploit you; because non-fixed rents, that's the problem... if they give me that security I would count myself lucky, for me that's the basis; then property..." (Angelines); "Indisputably the State has to provide us with cheaper dwellings" (Marivi).

Referring the problem of housing to the free market entails many social, and not only economic, problems. That amounts to assuming that everyone has a well-paid job and lives in happy families, where they get on well, and where both members of the marriage have an income, and whose relationship lasts until death do them part. The real estate available is mainly directed to those situations. However, as not everyone is adapted to those biographic patterns, the market not only fails when offering the accommodation required for certain situations, but also ends up discriminating against an increasing number of people who can't fulfil their accommodation necessities within this
market, because they need minority and atypical residential solutions, greatly different from the existing offers to the majority of the population. Their case, therefore, becomes exceptional and extraordinary, and for that reason, strange and marginal.

Access to social protection services.

In our society, female single-parenthood isn't seen as a problem which requires specific attention. The resources available, as well as being few, are thought out and designed for other very different personal and family realities. As we've mentioned before, social policies suffer from an important bias of gender, giving priority to the nuclear patriarchal family.

The access of these women to the social protection services is a frustrating experience for them, as much for the lack of alternatives that they offer as for the disappointment they feel with regard to many professionals who unconsciously follow the models of gender discrimination socially predominant and end up marking and blaming those women with non-shared family responsibilities for their own situation, reproaching them their lack of responsibility and their lack of foresight: "What's hard is to prove to the people working… to fight against them and beg all day; they seem to not be there. They have a fantastic salary and are working for the people who have less income and it turns out that when you go, they slam the door in your face. You have to tell them: -excuse me, miss but, what are you here for?" (Angelines); "When I went to the social services they told me that what I had to do was to put my daughter who was already 18 years old to work" (Pilar); "I was 39 years old, I couldn't draw the dole any more, and I had no family support. I had no right to anything. I went to the social services and requested the IMI\(^{12}\) and what happened? They didn't give it to me' cause I owned my apartment and I was even getting paid, but I wasn't getting paid. I had my ex's pension of 25,000 pesetas, and then, of course, I said that was a lie, that I wasn't receiving the pension and they told me – then, sell the apartment so you can eat" (Mariví). This experience is twice as disheartening for foreigners: "At the town hall they told me: return to your country" (Sonia).

On many occasions the rigidity with which the available services are used is evident along with the difficulty in adapting to the particular circumstances of each case. The following testimony, imbued with the smashing logic of common sense, expresses this fact: "My little girl's father doesn't help me at all, but since he registered as her father at birth, I have to take him to court so that the Regional government will give me baby formula. (…) I have a lot of expenses and I only want them to give me food for my baby until I can get a job with more hours and I have the money to buy it myself. But they offer me absurd aid, like vacations for single mothers in communal flats at the beach. How am I going to go to the beach when I need money for food and milk for my daughter? (Sonia).

In these circumstances it is not strange that many women don't feel it is worthwhile to go to these services, and opt for trying to solve their problems outside them: "I could go to other services, but I find it really difficult to talk. It's so difficult for me to talk to them that I'd rather get it wherever I can" (María). The importance, therefore, for the experiences like the one carried out by this Association, which works as a mediator between the Social Services and the women.

As a conclusion we could say that, although the situation of single-parent families rarely becomes so bad that they are literally living in the street, it is nevertheless evident that they run the risk of finding themselves living in situation of extreme, or even severe, poverty. The female single-parent families are headed by tight-rope walking mothers who balance all their economic, social and affective needs without having sufficient resources within their reach and without having the welfare state place a protective net to catch them in case they fall.

We have before us the circle of poverty; the lack of training leads to the lack of a good job, but one that cannot be left because there is no opportunity to get more or better qualifications. The wages are low, insecure and obtained through long hours of non-satisfying work. This insufficient salary does not allow saving to buy a dwelling and the money so laboriously earned goes up in the

\(^{12}\) Money from the Madrid government for integration.
smoke of high rents which go up every year. These women live the risk of the street every day: any slip, any new loss (fundamentally of their job) ends up placing them directly in the centre of the homeless population in Spain.

CONCLUSIONS

Our understanding of extreme homelessness and poverty continues to be burdened with the weight of history, to the point that in Spain we still identify it with the tramp and the nomadic life more or less related to the picaresque. All of this leads to a social and political invisibility of homelessness in our country, converting it, symbolically at least, into something rejectionable on the outskirts from a statistical, political and social point of view.

If, besides being homeless, being a woman is added, then the difficulties in “seeing” the problem becomes enormous, to the point that, in general, it is affirmed that it doesn’t exist. Remembering the slogan from a famous TV commercial for cognac in the 60s, we could say that for many people in Spain, being homeless is “a man’s thing.”

However, the everyday experience of the people in change of shelters, dining halls and centres that care for the homeless shows that again and again the number of homeless women (the same as with young people and immigrants) is growing. This is consistent with the accelerated changes experienced in Spanish society in the last twenty-five years: demographic changes and changes in family models that have led to a considerable increase in single parent families and women living alone.

As the family becomes smaller and loses functions and becomes weaker as a basic mechanism for social protection, many aspects that discriminate against women remain. In spite of the fact that equality between men and women has progressed enormously, especially in the educational system, there continue to be important sexist biases in the job market. The rate of female labour is still low and the unemployment rate for women is practically double that of men. In these conditions, buying a house is much more difficult for women. Residential precarity is the dominant note in all the family units headed by a working class woman. If this does not lead to literal homelessness, it is largely due to the enormous capacity for daily resistance that these women show in giving their children a good start in life and keeping going.

In any case, the dependant situation of women makes them much more vulnerable from an economic and job perspective, as is highlighted in the stories lived by so many women who are the victims of mistreatment, who are literally in the street and homeless with nowhere to go when the crisis breaks. In Spain this problem affects hundreds of millions of women, but is not reflected in the figures of the homeless because, up till now, the network specifically designed for mistreated women has functioned autonomously; and also because we don’t have an official definition of homelessness, which has prevented them from being classified as homeless people. This explains the fact that in the figures taken from the network for the homeless the proportion of women is relatively low, varying around 13%, since the majority of women temporarily out of their homes do not have contact with this network and therefore are not counted as part of the homeless population.

The minimisation of the problem of female homelessness is also contributed to through historical tradition in which institutions dedicated to caring for the homeless have not been designed to deal with women and children, which leads to added difficulties for women to be attended in the services which they offer.

Cast even further inside the outcast groups, our conviction is that homeless women will continue to grow in number and importance over the next few years. We hope that a greater social and political sensitivity will open the way to social research and that the official statistics concerning this area will become plentiful, precise and modern so that the problem will no longer be hidden and will be recognised and dealt with in its true dimension.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Barroso Rodríguez, Mª del Puerto; Martín Simón, Francisco (1994) Intervención social con transeúntes en Extremadura. Universidad de Extremadura. Departamento de Psicología y Sociología de la Educación. Sin publicar.


Cabrera Cabrera, Pedro José (1998) Huéspedes del aire: Sociología de las personas sin hogar en Madrid, UPCO, Madrid


Cortés Alcalá, Luis; Paniagua Caparrós, José León (1997) ‘La vivienda como factor de exclusión social’ Documentación social, 106, 93-147.


Laparra, Miguel; Gaviria, Mario; Aguilar, Manuel (1996) ‘Peculiaridades de la exclusión en España’ en *Pobreza, necesidad y discriminación (II Simposio sobre Igualdad y Distribución de la Renta)*, Fundación Argentaria; Visor, Madrid.

Leal, Jesús (1998) *La vivienda de apoyo en España*, Informe para FEANTSA.


Madurga Torremocha, Isabel; Mota López, Rosalía (2000) *Las condiciones de vida de los hogares pobres encabezados por una mujer: Pobreza y género*, Cáritas Española, Madrid


Muñoz, Manuel; Vázquez, Carmelo (1998) ‘Las personas sin hogar: aspectos psicosociales de la situación española’ Intervención Psicosocial, 7:1, 7-26


VV. AA. (1999) La Población y los hogares madrileños según la zonificación de servicios sociales, Comunidad de Madrid, Madrid