

Understanding Migrant Homelessness: Pathways Approach and Barriers to Housing Access in Spain

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Spain data

<i>Category</i>	<i>Details</i>
<i>Total Homeless Population (INE 2022)*</i>	28.552
<i>Gender Distribution</i>	Men: 76.7% Women: 23.3%
<i>Age Distribution</i>	18-29 years: 16.5%
	30-44 years: 27.5%
	45-64 years: 43.3%
	65+ years: 12.7%
<i>Nationality</i>	Spanish: 51.1%
	Foreign: 49.9%
<i>Administrative Situation</i>	15% without legal documentation
<i>Employment Status</i>	65% unemployed
<i>Primary Cause of Homelessness</i>	Migration: 28.8%
	Job loss: 26.8%
	Eviction: 16.1%
	Others: 28.3%
<i>Most Affected Cities</i>	Madrid, Barcelona, Sevilla, etc.
<i>Duration of Homelessness</i>	Over 3 years: 39.83%
	1-3 years: 26.52%
	Less than 1 year: 33.65%
<i>Income Sources</i>	No income: 28.5%
	Social benefits: 40% (e.g., RMI, IMV)
	Informal work: 31.5%
<i>Current Housing Solutions</i>	80% in temporary shelters or centers

Spanish Statistical Office – INE 2022

*Total Homeless Population (estimated by Hogar Sí and Provienda) ~33,000

Research background

The increase in the migrant population in a situation of homelessness makes it necessary to highlight the obstacles they face in accessing and maintaining housing. These are people whose migratory processes have been truncated by different circumstances, leaving them in situations of extreme vulnerability that make it difficult to cover their basic needs and develop their life project. Vulnerability and obstacles increase in the case of people in an irregular administrative situation.

Spanish Statistical Office 2012	→	45.8%
Spanish Statistical Office 2022	→	49.9%

Despite an increase in migrant homelessness a small number of studies investigated this social issue.

Migrant Homeless Pathways

Transitions into,
through and out of
homelessness

In the realm of housing studies, the intersection of migration and homelessness aren't enough an explored domain, especially within the Spanish context. While previous research has given us a fundamental understanding laid a foundational understanding of the barriers to housing access for migrant populations, there remains a significant gap in our comprehension of the nuanced, lived experiences of these individuals.

Present study

Aim of the research

To conduct an in-depth analysis of narratives from immigrants experiencing homelessness in Spain, with a specific focus on housing-related experiences using a pathways approach. Through a detailed exploration of the life stories of these individuals, we wanted to identify recurring patterns, shared challenges, and pivotal moments that offer essential insights.

Research question

What are the specific barriers and pathways that migrants in Spain encounter in their journey toward securing stable housing?

Present study

**Qualitative
methodology : 33
life-stories of women
and men**

**Locations:
Barcelona and
Madrid cities**

**Non-Spanish
nationals**

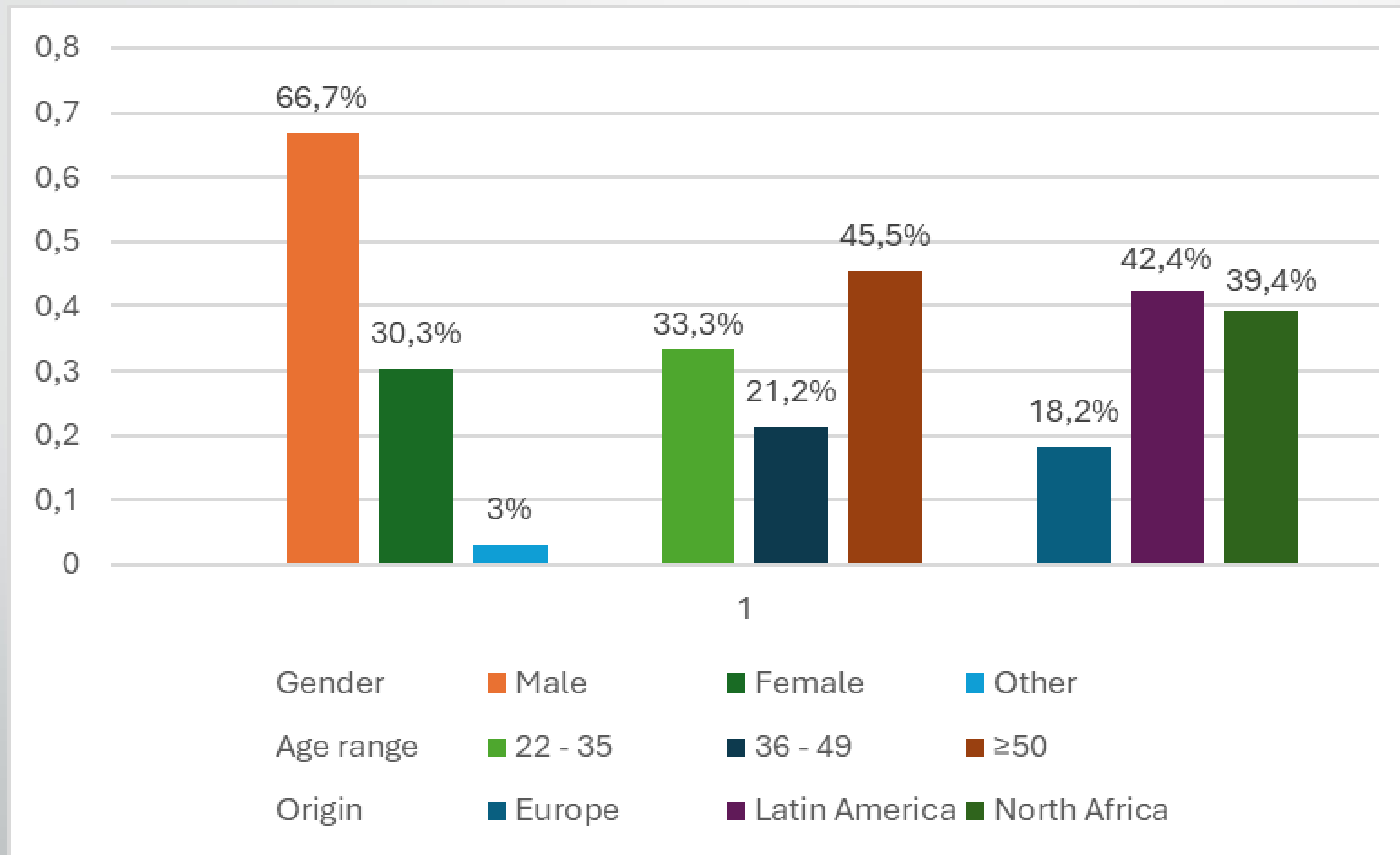
**Duration: between
January 2023 and
September 2023**

**Age range: 22 to 65
years**

NVivo14

Results

Demographic profile of the participants



The average amount of time that they were in a homeless situation was 13.7 years

Pathways into Homelessness

- Familial and caregiver conflicts.
- Private rented sector.
- External conflicts.
- Administrative regularization.
- Gender identity.
- Substance abuse.

"It all started because of the war in Ukraine, you all know that we have the parts that are occupied by Russia... and in Georgia, some groups were also created that were dedicated to disseminating information as Russians did... so I simply had another opinion of all this, I was towards Europe and a few times I had a strong argument with the boss... and one of these disputes he threatened me saying that soon we will be at the top, in the government, and all those who think like you will shoot you or kill you with a gun..." Georgia

Pathways into Homelessness

- Mental and/or physical health
- Job loss
- Structural barriers
- False promises

“It was in 2021 in September, I had a friend who said that I was her sister: “come here, they will protect you here, there is asylum here, I don't know how much”. Two years went by, and I decided to come here because I was still having problems with my children's father. But my friend cheated me and took all my money as soon as I arrived. And after 10 days she kicked me out on the street... and I didn't know where to go.” Peru

“I didn't know anything, I didn't have that information, it's not my country. Pretend you're in a foreign country, you don't know anything, and well I didn't get any information or anything. There were kids there who took drugs, but not me. I had problems on the street, a Catalan kid, he was a junkie, he used to shoot up. He also slept there. He offered me drugs sometimes, but I'm not on the street because I'm a drug addict, no. I'm on the street because I don't have a place to live.” Equatorial Guinea

Pathways through Homelessness

- Bureaucratic impediments
- Regularization challenges
- Discrimination
- “Homeless cultures”
- Squating

“I found a group of Ecuadorians, Peruvians, Bolivians, well, South Americans, mostly South Americans, because from Central America where I come from. I rubbed shoulders with people from South America. I met them in a big square, they were all there, I arrived there with my suitcases, I didn't know where I was going, they took me in, and we started to drink. I gave in to alcohol, I had nowhere to go, I had no escape, I gave in to alcohol with them there, they accepted me into their group, they showed me where they slept and I took them in, I slept with them, each one on his own side. And well, I became... I started to get to know everyone. The shops that were located there also getting to know us. And well, I spent about eight years in the street there, seven or eight years there in that street, yes.” Nicaragua

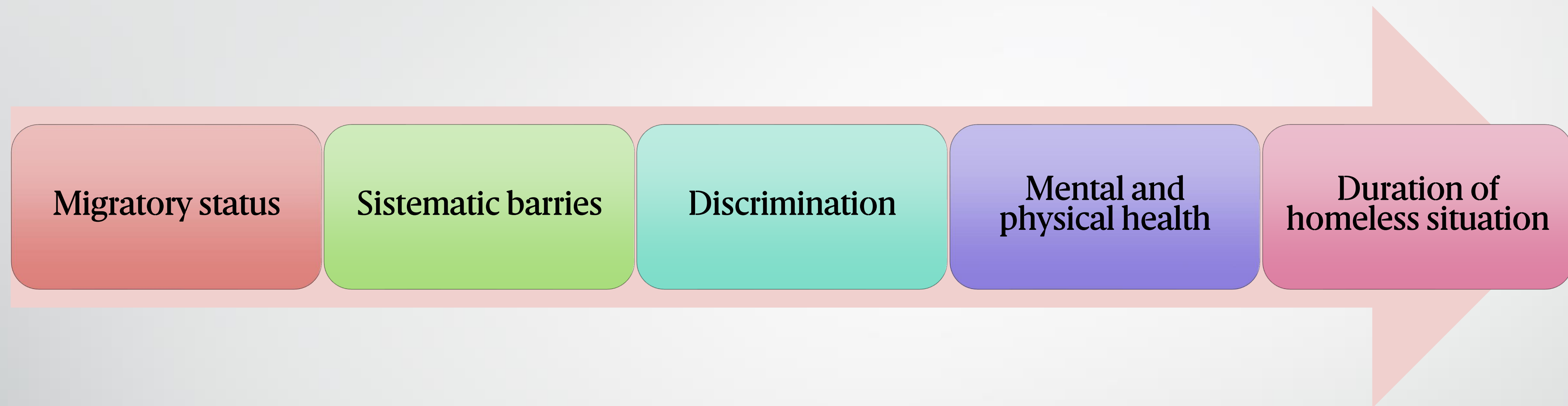
Pathways out of Homelessness

→ Role of support networks

I have an income of 700-800 euros or something like that per month... I say: why don't I rent a room and all that, but when you call, everybody... the usual question: "where are you from?", "Moroccan", "Sorry" or they cut you off. When I saw that there was a problem that nobody wanted to rent to me, I started to ask for help from social workers and all that. And that's how it was, for example, this flat where I live was thanks to the social worker who has been helping me. Morocco

Renting a room is getting more and more expensive, and you can't do anything without anyone's help. And even more so when I'm working, cleaning places. I am happy because now I have a contract and I know that if something happens to me, I can ask for unemployment, I can ask for help, but without that, I would be back in the hostel or who knows where. But without that, I would be back who knows where, because who would pay the rent? Colombia

Homeless pathways: Interseccionalidad

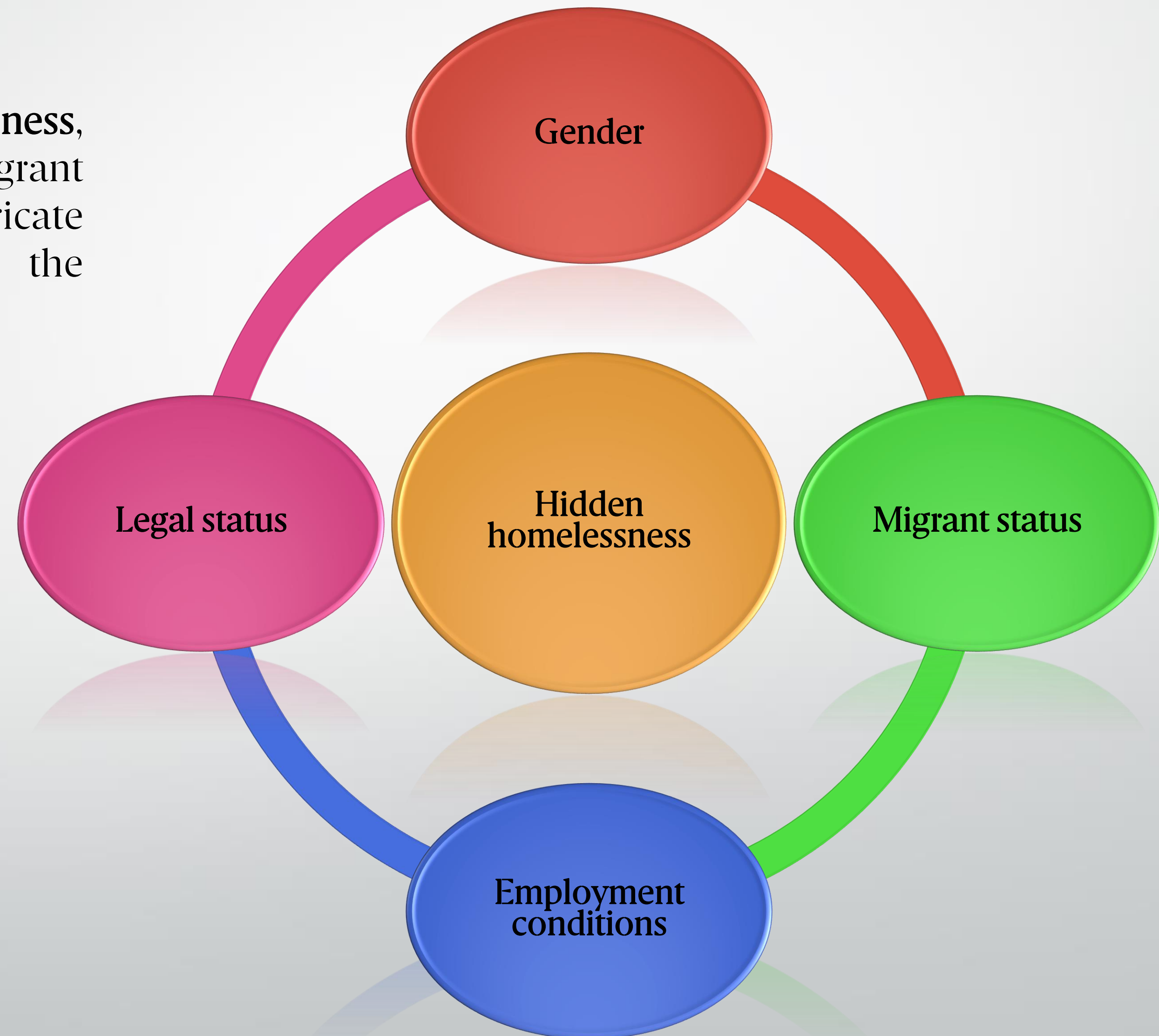


Notably, migratory status and systemic barriers emerge as significant obstacles across all phases, underscoring the need for policy interventions that address the specific vulnerabilities of immigrants.

Discrimination experiences, particularly based on ethnicity and social status, further exacerbate these challenges, highlighting the urgency of developing inclusive and supportive frameworks for addressing homelessness.

Homeless Pathways

The exploration of **hidden homelessness**, especially as it pertains to immigrant women, brings to the forefront the intricate interplay of intersectionality within the context of homelessness.



“I worked as an intern, but my life was like being in prison, because I didn't go out, they didn't give me much leave, I went out early on Saturdays in the afternoon and in the evening, I came back.... I looked after a whole family. I lasted three years, but the last year and a half, during the pandemic, they didn't pay me. Even though I complained to them, I couldn't do anything because I had no documents, and I was afraid. I had a very bad time. They left me on the street with no money and with the promise that they were going to give me a contract to be legal...” Peru

“So, well, I left the room because my friend robbed me and tried to abuse me, and a girl told me: ‘look, call them’. I called the Red Cross, and they told me that I had to wait more or less three to six months before I could have housing or at least a place to stay. But after eight days they called me from a shelter to come in. I was there for more than a year, but there are women who can stay longer if they can't find an alternative”. Colombia

Conclusions

- This research contributes to a broader understanding of migrant's homelessness outcomes, emphasizing the need for tailored interventions considering the varied and intricate pathways individuals navigate during and after periods of homelessness in Spain.
- Risk of becoming homeless and the possibility of ending homelessness are unequally distributed in society. Biographic crises are dealt with differently on an individual basis and in the immediate environment, dependence on the existence (and taking advantage) of assistance etc.
- By focusing on the personal narratives of migrants, this work not only humanizes statistics but also uncovers the complexity of the lives behind the data.
- Even with the presence of all other facilitators, attempts to avert homelessness are destined to be unsuccessful without ensuring fair access to assistance.
- The systematic marginalization of migrants lacking access to public funds, along with the exclusion of other demographics due to inadequate service planning, poses a significant challenge in numerous countries and serves as a critical impediment to the successful prevention of homelessness.
- Migrant homelessness as an extremely complex, multi-causal social phenomenon.

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Gracias

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