



Y-FOUNDATION

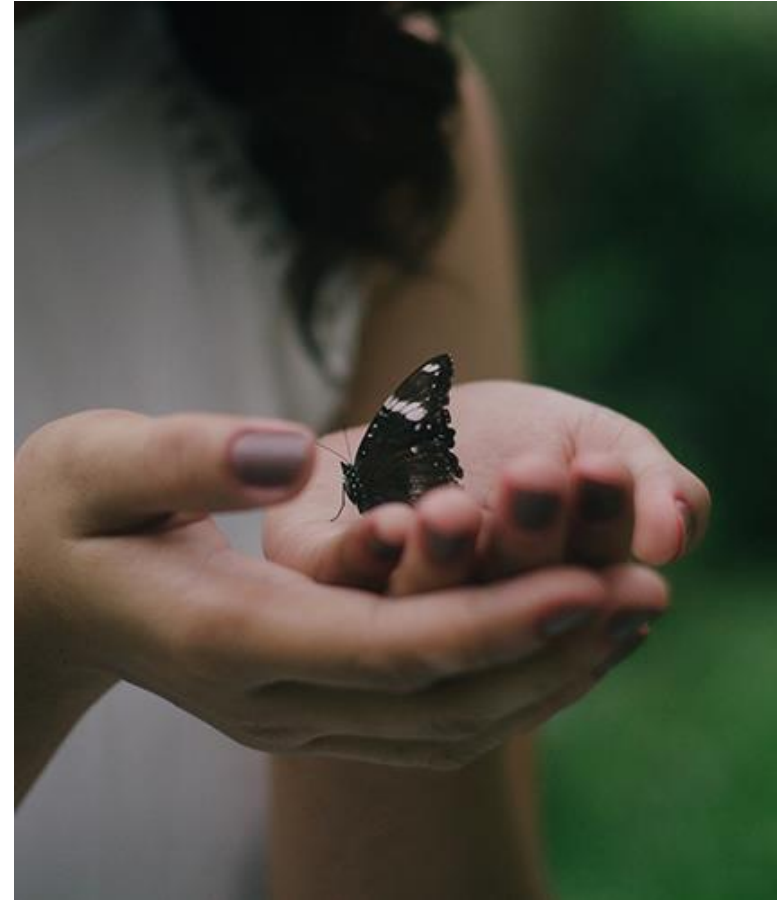
# Homeless Families in Finland

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Child Homes and Shelters

NEA-project - Securing Housing for Women

# Presentation

- Background
- Homelessness in Finland
- Families: homelessness and insecure housing
- The Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters



# NEA-Securing Housing for Women

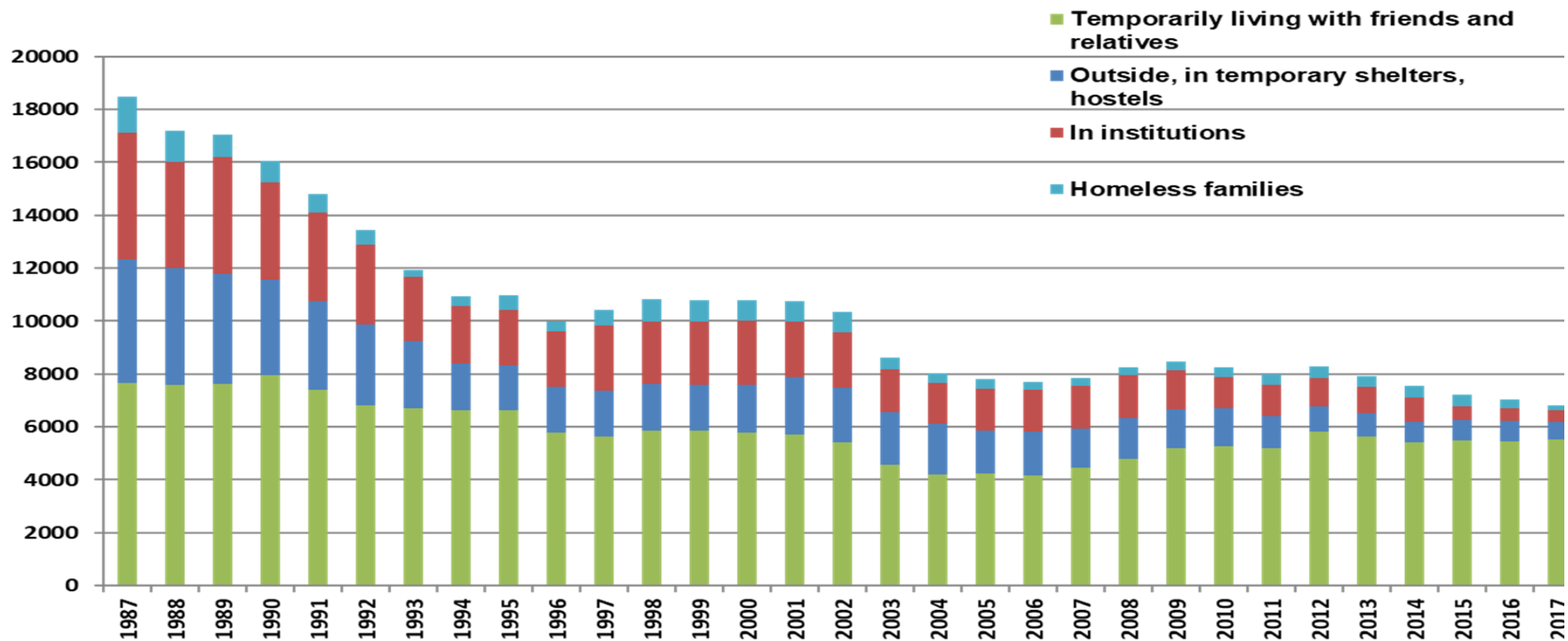
- Main goal: to end women`s homelessness by securing their paths to housing
- Y-Foundation is coordinating
- 8 other organisations
- Co-creation: homelessness, family work, substance abuse, woman specific work, violence work, people with lived experience.



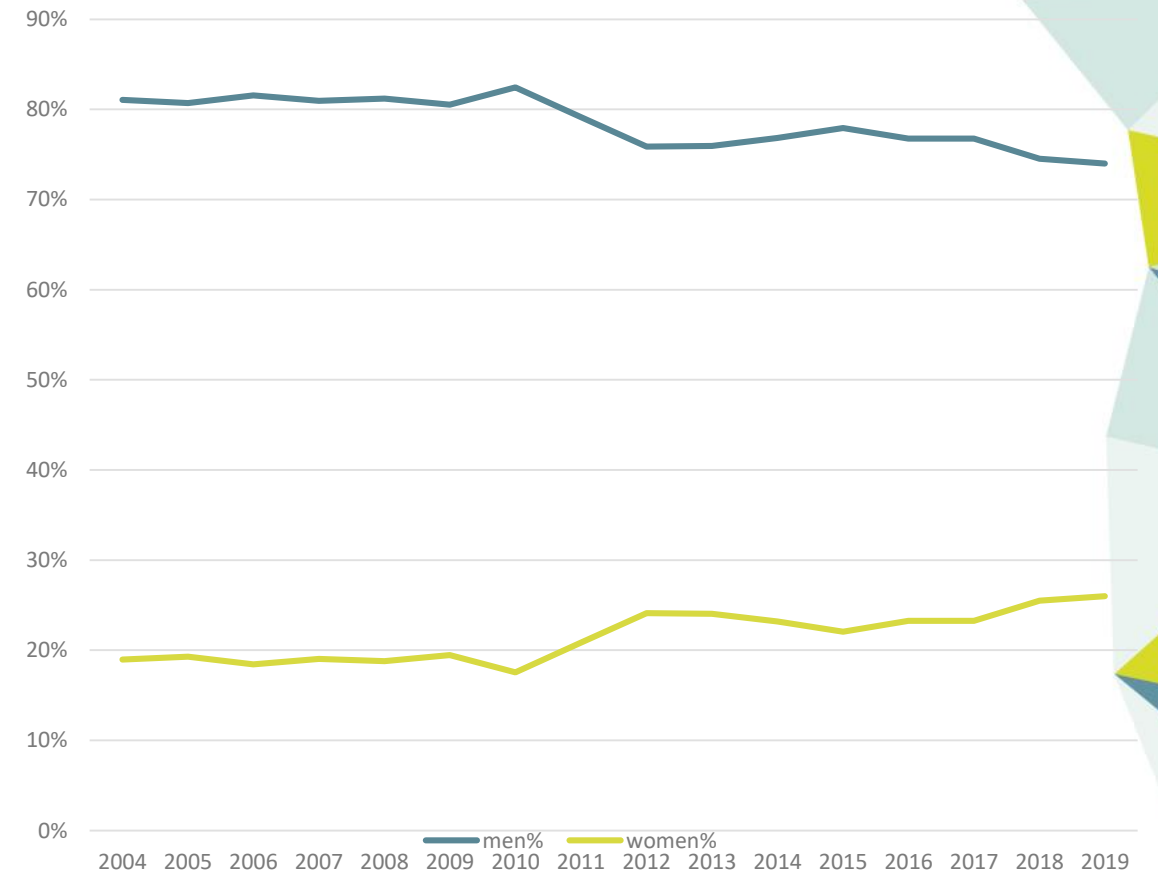
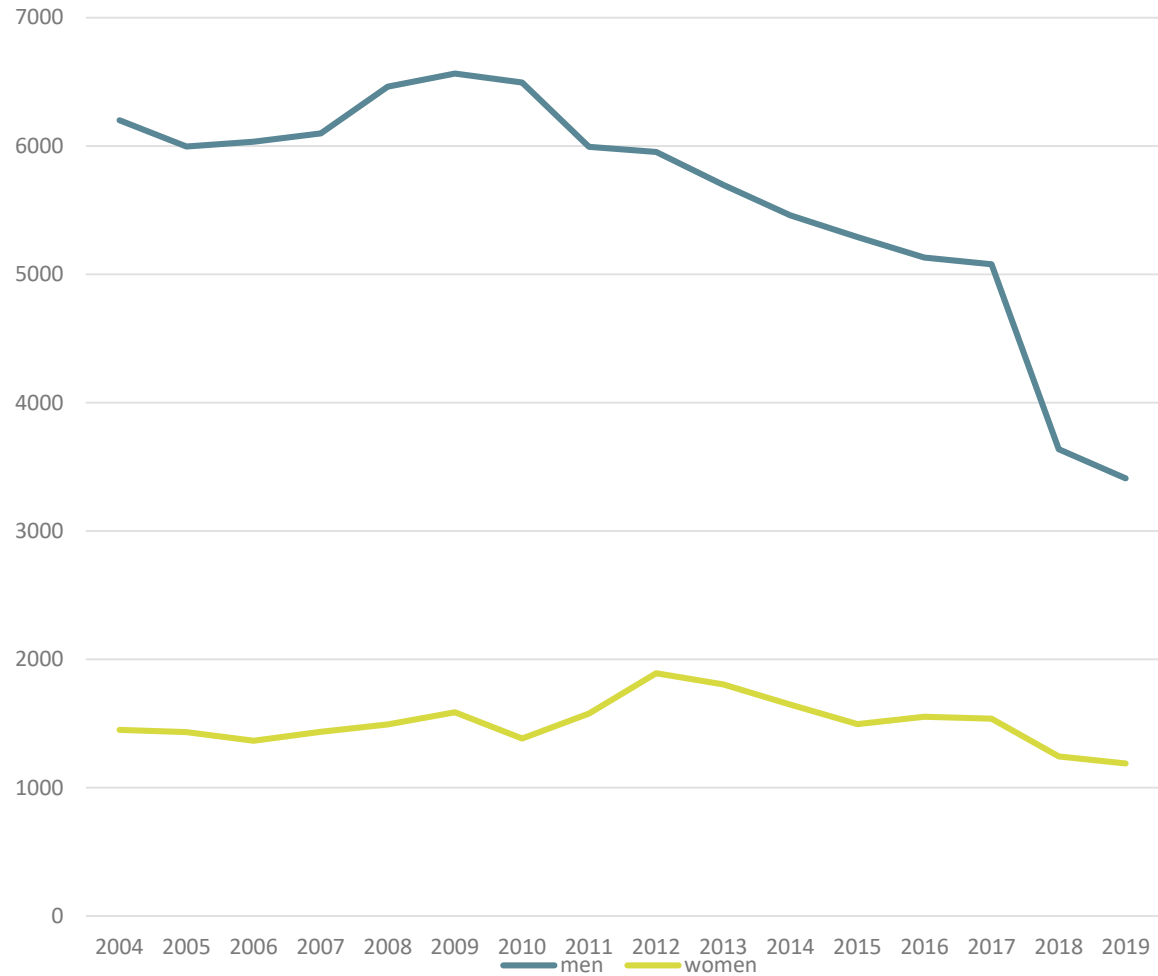
# Homelessness in Finland

- In 2019, there were 4600 single homeless and 264 couples/families, over half in the capital area.
- Most of them are living with friends and relatives
- In recent years Finland has been the only EU-country where homelessness has decreased
- Strong national programs 2008-2019 to decrease long-term homelessness and prevent homelessness.
- "Strong" financing, new affordable housing and projects to different target groups.
- Housing First principle, families not a target group.
- During the programmes shelters were converted into normal independent apartments with support and housing advice services have prevented hundreds of evictions per year.
- Housing advice services

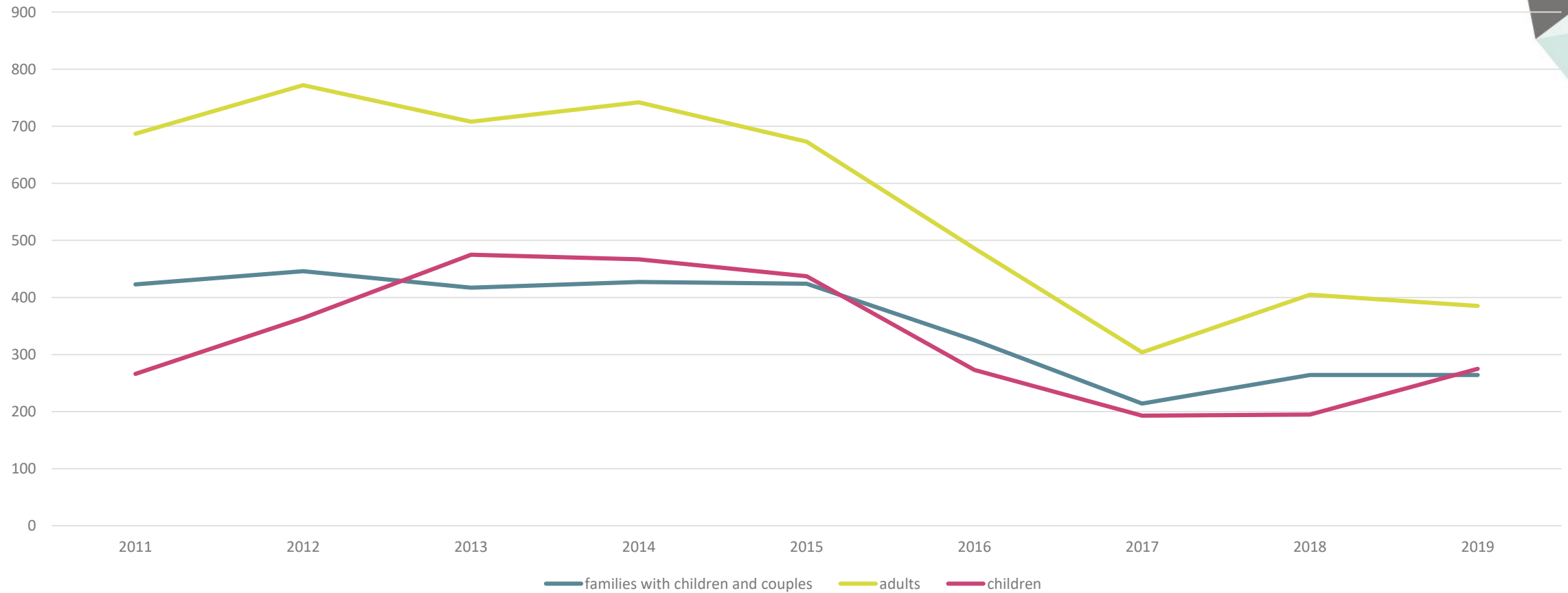
# Homelessness in Finland 1987-2017



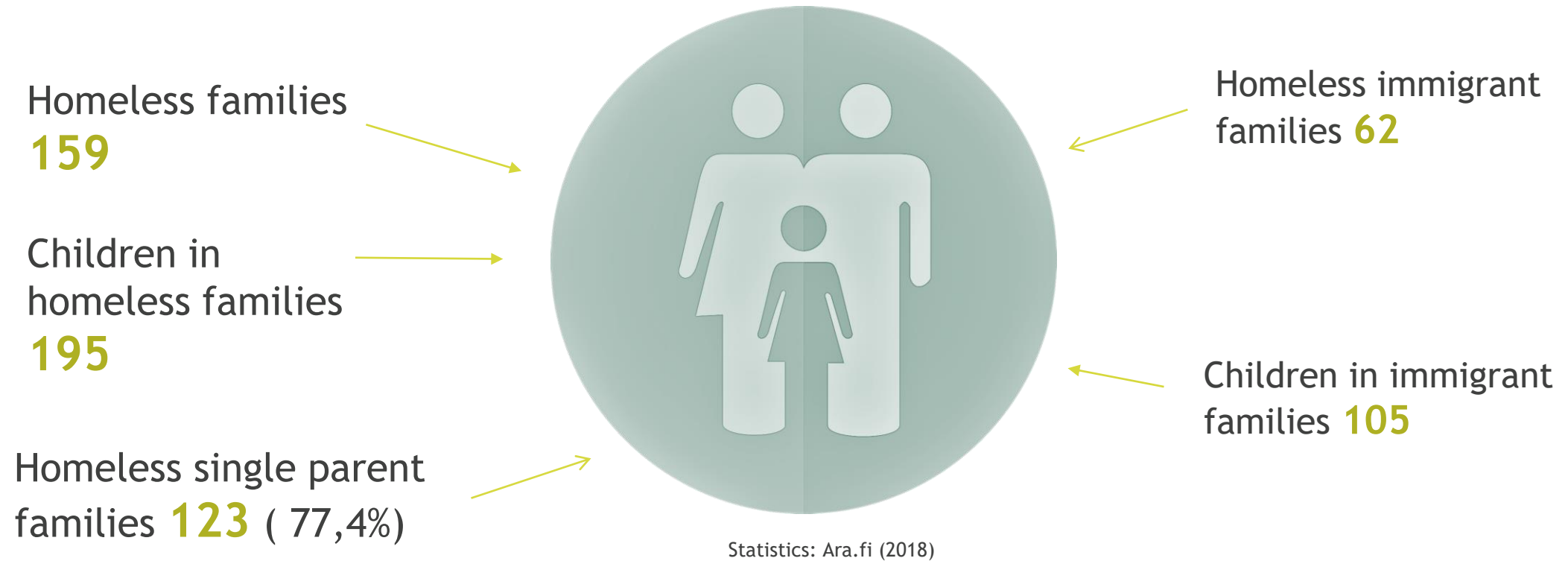
# Number of men and women and percentages of homeless people who live alone



# Homeless families and couples



# Homeless families in Finland





# Social welfare

- Strong welfare state and laws ensuring benefits and services.
- Benefits can pay the living and housing; possible to pay rent even without a job.
- Good maternal benefits, until the child is 3 years old.
- The Child Welfare Act: requires the municipalities to organise matters of finances and housing so that children are appropriately housed.
- In practice, the housing authorities of the municipality decide who gets housing. Social workers can make statements to support the case of the family.
- Lack of affordable housing (especially in Helsinki Metropolitan area) and landlords are able to pick and choose their tenants. Debts can be a major reason why families are not chosen as tenants.
- Lack of options of supported housing for families with children.
- Homeless families with children are living either in temporary housing organised by child protection services or adult social work; with friends and families; shelters to victims of domestic abuse or in other type of housing organised by child protection (often with heavy support)
- After homelessness, how do families get new homes?

# Families' insecure housing (Lehtonen etc. 2013 and Lehtonen & Seppälä 2013)

- Childhood experiences
- Adulthood:
  - family dynamics, social relations
  - uncertain worklife, finance and housing
  - violence
  - illness
- Coping mechanism, way of acting
- Crisis
- Structural factors

# Homeless Families (Lehtonen 2021)

- Evicted families and others
- From temporary housing to home
- Over half are long term homeless
- Structural factors as barriers to have new home

# The Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters

Our main objective is the welfare of the child. We stand by families in difficult circumstances in our society.

We are involved in various lobbying activities to ensure that families with children have a voice in society and that their distresses is recognized and heard in social debate and decision-making process.

## Main areas of work



# The Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters

- A national child welfare organisation. Particularly concerned with helping families in need and with the prevention of problems. Non-governmental organisation (NGO).
- 700 employees, 1 600 volunteers.
- More than 16 000 people, approximately 5 500 of whom are children, use the associations' services every year.
- 30 member associations across Finland:
  - 10 Mother and Child homes
  - 7 Mother and Child Homes for substance-abusing pregnant women and families with infants (Holding Tight Treatment System)
  - 19 Shelters for the victims of domestic violence
  - All of the associations have also daytime support services



# Parenting and homelessness

## Why are we involved in the NEA-project?

- In 2018, about ¼ of the mothers in Holding Tight Mother and Child Homes reported their form of housing as homeless.
- Families have difficulties in managing their financial matters and bringing these matters up has been challenging for the employees.
- The time spent in shelters by clients prolongs due to a lack/availability of suitable or safe housing.
- The Child Welfare Act obliges municipalities to provide necessary housing to children, but there are differences between municipalities in the way child welfare services can influence on getting housing.

*"If a woman doesn't have the capacity to take care of her baby and the child is taken into care, the homeless woman has no place to go."*

# Survey in February 2019

A survey for the employees of the member associations: *What kind of challenges have you encountered in your work in relation to homelessness (or danger of becoming homeless) of women and children?*

- 98 responses
- The results highlighted issues such as problems with finances and debts; violence or danger of violence, substances, divorce or relationship breakdown and mental health problems.
- Main barriers for getting housing:
  1. problems with finances and debt
  2. language barriers and cultural differences, negative attitudes towards immigrants and Finnish romans
  3. substance abuse

# Survey in February 2019

- Most of the respondents (70%) recognised women specific elements in their work. Specific needs of women were related to motherhood and children, e.g. finding suitable housing solution to share with children. Women were regarded to be in worse physical condition and in worse financial situation than men.
- Shared knowledge and understanding of the needs of special groups were highlighted as positive impact when working together with housing providers and agencies.
- Need for more training on trauma and its' impact on housing retention, information about homelessness of women and families and training on how to advice about finances and debts.



## Learn more:

- NEA-project: <https://ysaatio.fi/en/nea-securing-housing-for-women>
- Y-Foundation: <https://ysaatio.fi/en/home/>
- Housing First in Finland: <https://ysaatio.fi/en/housing-first-finland>
- The Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters: <https://ensijaturvakotienliitto.fi/en/>
- Holding Tight Treatment System: [https://issuu.com/ensijaturvakotienliitto/docs/holding\\_tight\\_pida\\_kiinni\\_english](https://issuu.com/ensijaturvakotienliitto/docs/holding_tight_pida_kiinni_english)



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Thank you!