# Deaths of people experiencing homelessness in Poland

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## Health inequalities

- Systematic differences in the health status of different population groups
- Significant social and economic costs both to individuals and societies

#### IN POLAND

 Steady decline of age-standardised mortality rates from avoidable causes (Wojtyniak & Stokwiszewski 2020)

#### BUT

- Halted increase in life-expectancy (Zatoński et al. 2022)
- Increase in SRM from alcohol-attributable causes (Zatoński et al. 2022)
- Widening gender and education-level differences in mortality (Pikala et al. 2016)

## What is mortality rate?

Number of people who have died per 100 000 population in a year

• SMR (standardized for gender, age, cause-of-death)

 Concise and one of the most reliable data on the health condition of the population

Standardized WHO codes

## What we know about "homeless mortality"?

- Causes of death:
  - drug poisoning and overdose
  - suicide and intentional self-harm
  - traffic accidents
  - violent assaults
  - diseases rare in the general population: diseases of liver, TBC
  - high prevalence of behavioural health problems
- Very low mean age at death 45-50 years
- Homelessness as an independent contributing factor to mortality, also after adjustment for morbidity requiring hospitalization (Morrison 2009)

# Why we want to know more about "homeless mortality"?

• Invisibility (namelessness) of homeless people that extends also after their deaths

- Aging homeless populations (more than 3/4 of people counted experienced homelessness for more than 2 years) (MRPiPS 2019)
- Need for evidence-based policies reveal critical policy gaps

## Data sources on homeless mortality

- 1. Extract data on people experiencing homelessness from the general death register
- 2. Calculate mortality rate from data base on people experiencing homelessness

3. Premature deaths, violent deaths

Linking data bases

## What we know about homeless deaths in Poland?

- Two-step coding procedure (death certificate and death register)
- Garbage codes
- Autopsy records
  - Forensic autopsy alleged felony, suicide, establishing the identity of the diseased
  - Clinical autopsy determine the cause of death in unclear cases (or when death occurred less than 12 hours from a hospital admission)
- Funeral allowance
  - Paid to the Social Welfare Office, because of unidentified death or funeral organized by the municipality

#### Homelessness and deaths in Poland

- Self-assessment of health impacts sense of agency etc. (Bodys Cupak et al. 2020)
- Reports on deaths from hypothermia
  - winter of 2020-2021 63 deaths (31 people who died were identified as homeless)
- Bydgoszcz homeless mortality data (Olech et al. 2021)
  - Deaths of clients or former clients of homeless services in the city
  - About 10% have died in the years 2017-2021
  - Median age at the time of death was 61 years

### Cooperation of social and health sectors

- Critical post-hospitalization care
- Streamlining the process of referring and transferring people to and between medical, nursing and homeless facilities (Budzyńska-Gawron et al. 2021).
- Streetwork with professional medical staff is now offered in only three large Polish cities

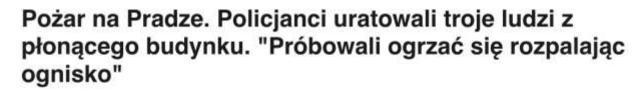
## Social class differences in death rituals and remembrance

- Catholic vs personalized/humanistic rituals
- Funeral is seen as an expression of social status and family standing (Kubiak 2016).
- Virtualization of death and bereavement (Kubiak 2014)
- Organizations such as Collectief Straadoden Brussel

### Media

## Bezdomny, z którego szydzili na Facebook wychłodzenia. Znieczulica?

red. 15 października 2016, 10:47



Konrad Dąbrowski 10 listopada 2018, 9:30



#### Streetworkerzy MONARU na ulicach Śródmieścia

Redakcja 24 października 2011, 17:34





## Media, social media, research

Service providers' stories about people

- Powerful metaphors and images
  - Mean age at death
  - Causes of death

### In lieu of conclusion

- Challenges of obtaining the data
- Linking different data sources
- Presenting the data in a non-sensationalizing/stigmatizing way

Thank you