

National Survey on the Homeless Population in Brazil: giving a face to homelessness and formulating strategies and policies to address homelessness

Roberta Mélega Cortizo / Ministry of Citizenship (Brazil)

Nairobi, May/2019

MINISTÉRIO DA
CIDADANIA




PÁTRIA AMADA
BRASIL
GOVERNO FEDERAL

Main goals of the National Survey were:



- Quantify and investigate the socioeconomic characteristics of homeless people in Brazil
- Support the formulation of public policies for the homeless population

Background of the National Survey

- August/2004: seven homeless people were brutally murdered in the “massacre of the Praça da Sé” (São Paulo)
- The **massacre** had a huge media coverage

milestone in the fight for homeless people rights

After the massacre, there was a confluence of actions directed to homeless people in Brazil

1. Creation of the National Homeless Movement (2004)
2. First National Meeting of the Homeless (2005)
3. Organic Law of Social Assistance added the service to homeless people (2005)
4. Creation of the Inter-Ministerial Working Group to develop public policies for the homeless population (2006)

The National Survey was a result of the demands of social movements

According to the National Homeless Movement, a census survey would help to break decades of social invisibility, contributing to the recovery of the status of citizen

National Survey's target population was people over 18 years-old living in the streets

Brazil's concept of homeless population: a group that has in common the extreme poverty, broken or weakened family ties and the lack of regular conventional housing, and that uses public places and degraded areas as living space and livelihood, temporarily or permanently, as well as public hostel units for temporary overnight

National Survey's challenges

Lack of a fixed residence and high mobility of this population in the big cities



how to collect data from a homeless population?

The mobility of this population required that the information collection was done in the shortest possible time to **minimize double counting**



the fieldwork was conducted in the evening, when generally these individuals are in the place they will remain for the night

- National Survey covered 71 Brazilian cities, including 23 capitals and other 48 cities with more than 300,000 citizens

Planning the National Survey's data collection

- Pre-test forms were applied in some cities
- To facilitate the approach, the data collection process was planned with the help of social movements and organizations working with the homeless population
- Interviewers had explanation of the habits, language, approach manners, codes of conduct and characteristics of this population

National Survey's fieldwork

- A key activity was to map places where the population remained during the night – for that, we received a great support of movements and associations working with the homeless
- Big effort was made to locate the places where this population lived – including sidewalks, squares, underground galleries, bridges, ports, abandoned buildings, among others

Field Survey was:

- Census – basic data of all interviewees (19 questions)
- More detailed research of 10% of the population about the main reasons to live in the street, income, time spent in the street, education, family ties, health conditions, among others (62 questions)



National Survey's team

- 55 coordinators, 269 supervisors and 926 interviewers
- 147 homeless/former homeless people and 86 professionals working with this population supported the fieldwork



almost 1,500 people have worked in the data collection activities for 3 months (between October/2007 and January/2008)

Rate of refusal

The active participation of homeless, former homeless people and social educators contributed to the **proper approach**



only 13% of homeless people refused to answer the National Survey

National Survey's main results: general profile

- **31,922** homeless adults (0.06% of the population)
- Gender: 82% were men
- Age: 53% were between 25 and 44 years old
- Skin colour: 67% brown or black (general population in Brazil: 45%)
- Education: 64% have not completed the 1st educational grade

National Survey's main results: work and income

- 71% worked and performed some sort of **remunerated activity**
↓
recyclable materials collectors (28%), car washers (14%), construction workers (6%) and cleaning (4%)
- 53% earned between US\$ 11 and US\$ 45 per week
- 2% had a formal work contract

National Survey's main results: beggars?

Only 16% asked for money as the primary means of survival



this goes against the common perception in Brazil that homeless people are all “beggars”



National Survey's main results: migration

76% have always lived in the city where they live now or in nearby municipalities



contradicting the myth that homeless people are from other states or regions

National Survey's main results: documents and government benefits

- 25% did not have an identification document, hindering to obtain formal work and to access public policies
- 89% did not receive any benefit from the government



among the received benefits: retirement (3%), Bolsa Família Program (2%) and the Continuous Welfare Benefit for the Elderly and Disabled (1%)

Did the Survey reduce prejudice?

- The Survey has helped to deconstruct the myth that homeless are “people who come from far away, do nothing, are only asking for money” – a key step to give to these people the dignity and rights of Brazilian citizens
- One year after the Survey, **an article of a 1941 Law was revoked**



wich considered begging a misdemeanor, subject to jail (15 days to 3 months)

Outcomes: creation of the National Policy for the Homeless Population in Brazil

- Provide access for homeless people to social security benefits, social assistance and income transfer programs
- Implement specialized social assistance centers for homeless population
(among other points...)

Outcomes in the Unified Registry

The National Survey improved the **Unified Registry for Social Programs**, a strategic tool for mapping and identifying low-income families living in Brazil



more than 20 social programs select beneficiaries on the data base of the Unified Registry

Outcomes in the Unified Registry

- The National Survey supported:
 - ✓ the elaboration of the questions directed to homeless people in the Unified Registry: the Supplementary Form 2
 - ✓ the Unified Registry interviewers' training activities, with a specific class in order to educate participants on this matter

Example of question for homeless people in the Unified Registry

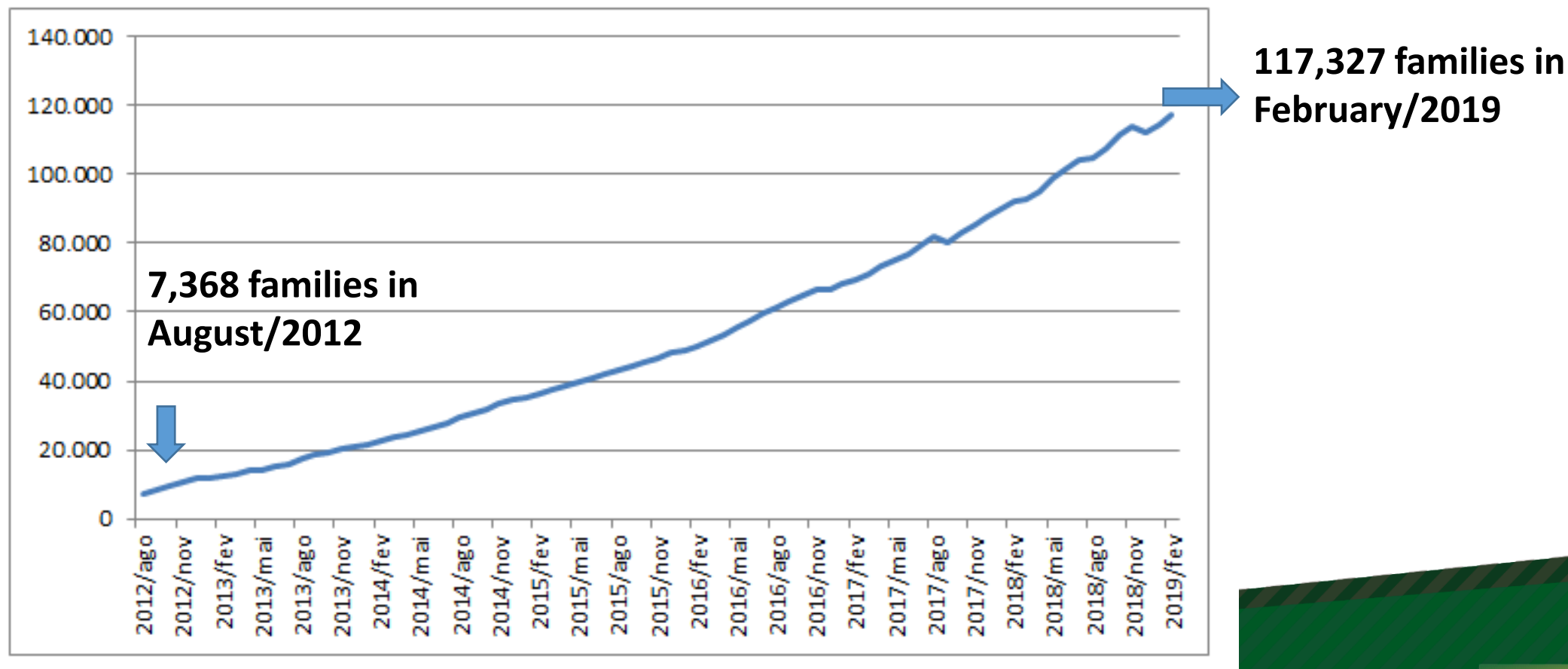
What are the main reasons for you to live in the street?

- 1- Loss of housing
- 2 - Threat / violence
- 3 - Problems with family
- 4 - Alcoholism / drugs
- 5 - Unemployment
- 6 - Work
- 7 - Health treatment
- 8 - Preference / own option
- 9 - Other



In the last 7 years, the number of homeless families in the Unified Registry has increased about 16 times

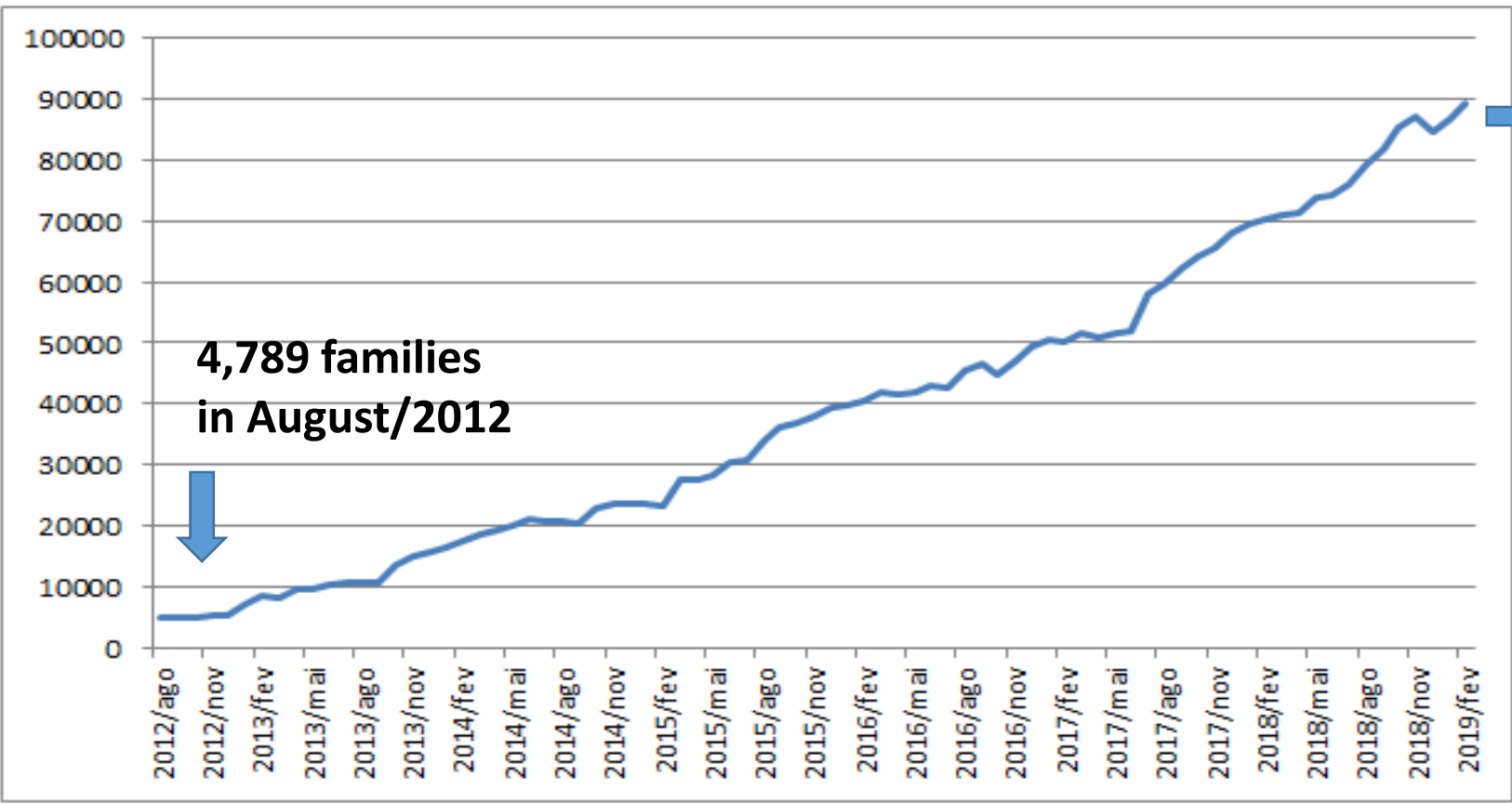
Homeless families in the Unified Registry – 2012 to 2019



Source: Social Information Matrix, SAGI.

In the last 7 years, the number of homeless families in the Bolsa Família Program has increased more than 18 times

Homeless families in the Bolsa Família Program – 2012 to 2019



89,485 families in February/2019

Bolsa Família is the largest conditional cash transfer program in Brazil, attending more than 14 million families in poverty and extreme poverty

Source: Social Information Matrix, SAGI

Social Assistance services for homeless people



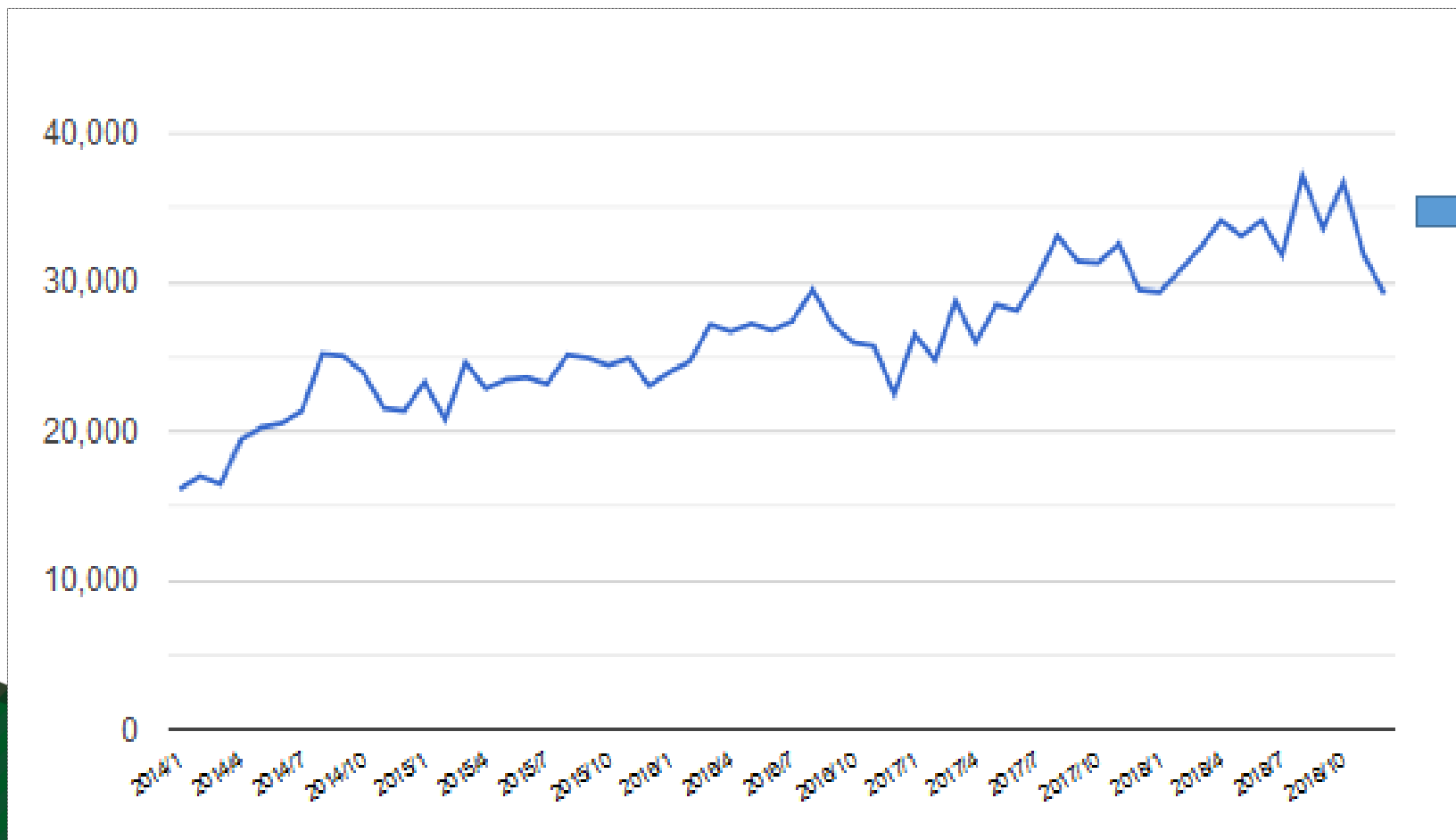
Between 2011 and 2017, the number of Specialized Centers for the Homeless Populations (**Pop Centers**) more than doubled: from 90 to 227 units



providing social approach, inclusion in the Unified Registry, hosting services

Social service in Pop Centers

Monthly service to homeless people in Pop Centers – 2014 to 2018



Pop Centers attended almost 30 thousand homeless people in December/2018

Of these, 49% were drug users, 29% were migrants and 6% had mental disorders

Source: Monthly Registry of Attendance of the Unified Social Assistance System

MINISTÉRIO DA
CIDADANIA



Continuous Welfare Benefit for the Elderly and Disabled

Ensures one minimum wage for people aged 65 or over, and for people with disabilities with no means of supporting themselves



almost **7 thousand homeless people** receiving the benefit in February/ 2019

To Sum up: National Survey and Public Policies

The Survey has supported the National Policy for the Homeless Population



Today in Brazil:

- ✓ 117 thousand homeless people in the Unified Registry
- ✓ 89 thousand in the Bolsa Família Program
- ✓ 7 thousand in the Continuous Welfare Benefit
- ✓ 227 Pop Centers

Thanks for your attention!

MINISTÉRIO DA
CIDADANIA



PÁTRIA AMADA
BRASIL
GOVERNO FEDERAL

roberta.cortizo@cidadania.gov.br