

## Human dignity

Human dignity is a juridical key concept. It is the base of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Social Charter, the social constitutional laws in the Belgian constitution and the law on Public Centre for Social Welfare (in Dutch: OCMW).

*“Everyone has the right to social services. The goal is to give everyone the possibility to live a life in human dignity.” (art. 1 OCMW law)*

It is the **assignment of every OCMW**, and in addition of every local government, to **realise a life in human dignity** for every inhabitant. The community puts maximum effort into equal access to the fundamental social rights (art. 23 Belgian constitution), such as the right to a dignified income. Reference budgets for social participation provide answers to the question of what a dignified income is and how much it is.

## Reference budgets

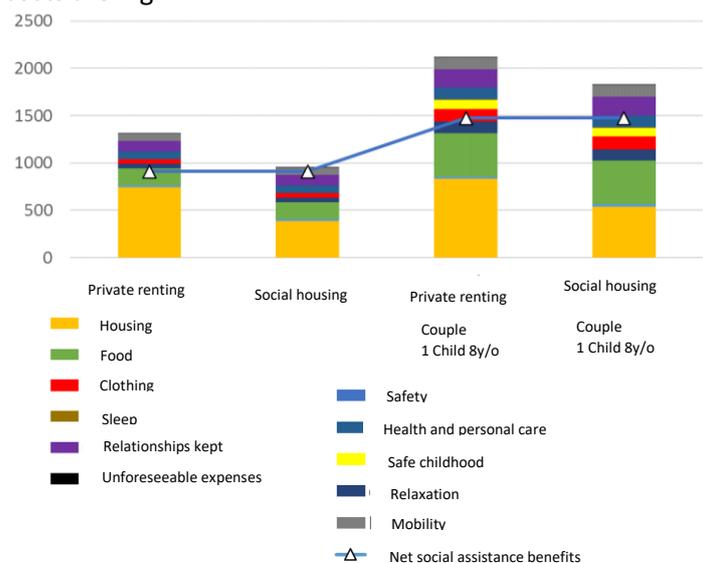
Reference budgets are priced baskets of goods and services that get used as a standard to decide the minimum requirements to lead a life in human dignity.

These budgets have been developed in our country since 2009. They mirror **a minimum limit below which a meaningful participation in society becomes impossible**. Full participation in society is defined as ‘the ability of people to act from their social positions in accordance with current societal expectations, as well as the possibility to shape these expectations.’

Scientific sources and expertise, (inter)national guidelines, data from surveys, and focus group talks are called upon, to decide which goods and services are needed.

It is also determined to what extent these are essential and what price is necessary to fulfil all essential needs. The graph below compares the level of the net social allowance to the reference budgets of two typical families.

The families rent property on the private market or social housing market and all family members are in good health. The graph shows that the allowance is too low to live a dignified life, especially if housing costs are high.



To guarantee a life in human dignity, all authorities on the different policy levels, have to provide efforts on both the income and expenses side.



Are you curious about your family's reference budget?

[www.cebud.be/budgetcalculator](http://www.cebud.be/budgetcalculator)



Interview with Bérénice Storms in [VIEWZ tijdschrift 2018/4](#)

