



Homeless Needs Survey 2007 *A Pathway to Home*

HOUSING FIRST – PLUS SUPPORTS

Summarizing the results of the Homeless Needs Survey
conducted from February 5 to 9, 2007,
in the Capital Regional District of British Columbia, Canada.

“Being homeless affects you mentally and physically. When you are homeless, you are out of the loop of daily living. You are worried about everyday living – eating, plus where to sleep. That is the foremost in your mindset.”

Survey Participant

The Government of Canada has contributed funding to this initiative.



(250) 383-1977, www.Coolaid.org
(250) 383-6166, communitycouncil.ca





Table of Contents

Executive Summary 5-10

 Homelessness and Unstable Housing..... 5

 Survey Summary 6

 Recommendations..... 7

 Create a Range of Affordable Housing Options..... 7

 Provide Intensive Community Support for Housing 8

 Provide a Range of Harm Reduction and Treatment Services 8

 Provide Income Supports for People Who Are Homeless or
 Unstably Housed 9

 Provide Short-Term Solutions During the Transition to
 Affordable Housing 10

 Engage the Broader Community in Solutions..... 10

Acknowledgements and Thanks..... 11-13

Introduction 14

Methodology 15-22

 Enumeration 16

 Enumeration Locations 17

 Unstable Housing..... 17

 Interviews..... 18

 Survey Locations 19

 Analysis Process 21

 Limitations of Interview Data..... 22

Demographics..... 23-31

 The Region..... 23

 Gender 24

 Aboriginal People 25

 Youth 27

 Families 28



Housing Situation..... 32-39

- Extent of Homelessness 32
- Houselessness 33
- Where People Stay 33
- Shelter Use 33
 - Those Turned Away From Shelters 34
 - Those Who Do Not Use Shelters 35
 - Interim Supports..... 35
 - Cost-effectiveness..... 36
- Subsidized Housing Wait-list 37
- Lack of Affordable Housing 38

Contributing Factors: The Paths to Homelessness..... 40-51

- Health 40
 - Physical Health..... 40
 - Mental Health..... 41
 - Alcohol and Drug Use..... 41
 - Health Service Use..... 43
- Life Skills..... 43
- Domestic Violence 44
- Criminal Record 45
- Government Income 46
 - Provincial Government Assistance..... 46
 - Federal Government Assistance 48
- Paid Work..... 48
 - Employment Assistance 49
 - Housing for Employment 50
 - Education and Training..... 50
 - Health for Employment 51
 - Personal Identification..... 51

Overall Recommendations 52

Discussion of Recommendations 53-61

- Create a Range of Affordable Housing Options in the Capital Region 53
 - Suggestions for Local and Regional Governments 54
- Provide Intensive Community Support for Housing 55
- Provide a Range of Harm Reduction and Treatment Services 56



Discussion of Recommendations (continued)..... 53-61

- Provide Income Supports for People Who Are Homeless or Unstably Housed 57
 - Adequate Income Assistance..... 57
 - Employment Supports..... 58
 - Government 58
 - Businesses 58
 - Social Service Agencies..... 59
 - Individuals..... 59
- Provide Short-Term Solutions During the Transition to Affordable Housing 59
- Engage the Broader Community in Solutions 60

Appendix A – Data Tables 62-69

Appendix B – Enumeration Form 70-71

Appendix C – Questionnaire..... 72-77

Appendix D – Community Conversation Partners..... 78

Appendix E – Contact Information..... 79

Appendix F – References and Resources 80-83



Executive Summary

*“My story is no different than anybody else's in this survey.
We are, always have been, and will always be able to love and be loved.”*

“Humans are our best resources. We should take care of them.”

“We are all people and need to be treated as such.”

- Survey participants

More than 1,242 of our neighbours in the Capital Region are homeless or nearly homeless. Above all, they need more than 1,242 housing units; affordable housing which is able to meet the many housing challenges they face. The homeless and nearly homeless also need more support workers to help them keep their new housing and to provide mental health and addictions care. And they need reliable and realistic income assistance, including help finding work.

- Affordable housing is needed.
- Health and housing support workers are needed.
- Income supports need improvement.

Homelessness and Unstable Housing

The Homeless Needs Survey was a collaborative research project led by the Victoria Cool Aid Society. The question that this survey answers for the Capital Region is: “What housing and supports do people require when they are not housed or are in unstable housing?”

To answer this question an enumeration and a questionnaire survey were conducted from February 5 to 9, 2007, with over 60 social service providers and 220 volunteers participating throughout the Capital Region, from Sooke to Sidney and Salt Spring Island. Over 815 questionnaires were anonymously completed by citizens who were homeless or unstably housed and who felt able to share their personal information.

Homelessness was defined as, “being without a predictable, clean, safe residence to return to whenever one chooses.”



Unstable housing was defined as any of the following:

- More than half of income is spent on rent.
- An eviction notice has been issued, and no other housing is available.
- Housing is overcrowded.
- Housing does not meet basic health and safety standards.
- Violence or abuse happens in the home.
- The resident can't stay in or return home whenever they choose.

The researchers believe that some subpopulations were under-represented in this survey. Such “undercounts” were more pronounced outside the four core municipalities, youth and children, Aboriginal people, people with mental health issues and families.

Survey Summary

The enumeration identified 1,242 persons throughout the Capital Region who were homeless or unstably housed – an undercount.

It is a common myth that many of the people who are homeless choose to be homeless. Our findings show that only a small percent (3%) of the population do not want permanent housing.

Homelessness is a regional problem that impacts more than downtown Victoria. Volunteers surveyed 815 people and found that 73% were from the four core municipalities, 4% from the Western Communities, 3% from the Saanich Peninsula, and 4% from Salt Spring Island; 16% did not state a municipality.

Contrary to another common myth, homelessness is not imported into the Capital Region. It is a home-grown problem. Only 11% of those surveyed were from outside B.C., with 73% from the CRD, and 16% from elsewhere in B.C., mostly Duncan and Vancouver.

People who are homeless are of all ages. The youngest person interviewed was 14 years old and the oldest was 77. Two-thirds of participants (64%) identified themselves as male, 34% as female and 2% as transgendered or other.

While only 2.8% of the Victoria Census Metropolitan Area's population are Aboriginal, one in four (25%) of those surveyed identified themselves as Aboriginal, First Nations, Métis, Inuit or Native. A disproportionate number of Aboriginal people are living without homes or are inadequately housed.



People reported that they cycle in and out of homelessness. Over half of the participants have been unstably housed for the last two years or longer, and 44% had been homeless more than twice in the last ten years.

Recommendations

More than anything, the Homeless Needs Survey shows that we need to provide more affordable housing options. The survey also points to the need for more health and housing supports, and the need to improve income supports for people who are homeless.

Six basic recommendations emerge:

1. Create a range of affordable housing options.
2. Provide intensive community support for housing.
3. Provide a range of harm reduction and treatment services.
4. Provide income supports for people who are homeless or unstably housed.
5. Provide short-term solutions during the transition to affordable housing.
6. Engage the broader community in solutions.

Create a range of affordable housing options.

Of those surveyed, 78% identified the lack of affordable housing as their main barrier to being housed. Our region needs many units of new and repurposed affordable housing, ranging from single rooms to family housing, and with both privately and publicly funded solutions contributing to the mix.

Diverse housing options are required to meet the variety of needs – especially low-barrier housing that emphasizes ease of entry and ongoing support services. Tenants need help to keep their housing. And many require housing that tolerates active addictions and mental health problems:

- 48% of participants reported active alcohol or drug use.
- 42% reported mental health issues.
- 27% reported both alcohol or drug use and mental health issues.

All levels of government need to fund housing and related supports. A collaborative approach is needed, both vertical (all levels of government) and horizontal (across ministries), and including non-profit service providers and the broader community. Such a wide collaboration will ensure comprehensive



housing solutions that include both bricks and mortar and adequate housing support services.

By following a housing-first policy, the B.C. government could save at least \$9.5 million taxpayer dollars annually in the Capital Region – \$12,000 a year for each person who is homeless. A housing-first policy would improve the quality of life for *all* residents in the region and would help marginalized citizens better reintegrate into the community (source: Capital Regional District, 2007).

Provide intensive community support for housing.

In this survey, 41% of respondents said that having a community outreach worker would help them find and maintain housing. They said that they need advocates, assistance, supported housing, and easily accessed primary health care. A common thread throughout the questionnaires was the importance of community outreach workers to help people find, receive and maintain services, especially mental health and addictions services, as long as they are needed.

Community outreach workers should be in all involved agencies and should work together to ensure a continuous range of support, advocacy and referrals, including while a client's housing situation is changing (such as after being evicted or released from hospital).

Workers linked in a community-based case management model would make some housing options more feasible (for example, subsidized market rentals). Supports should range from intensive support for mental health and addiction clients, to volunteers or peers who help tenants get to medical appointments and other important meetings. Community outreach workers could also reduce the significant number of incidents of discrimination that participants identified.

Provide a range of harm reduction and treatment services.

Health support workers are also needed. The top three factors cited by participants as contributing to their inadequate housing situation were alcohol or drug use (41%), medical problems (35%), and social or emotional challenges (27%). Participants looking for work also asked for education and training (60%), accessible health and dental care, better physical and mental health care, and addiction or detox support and transition services (58%).



Health is a critical component of the solution to the Capital Region's housing challenge. We recommend that a wide variety of primary health care and social services be located together in a single building in downtown Victoria. The proposed ACCESS Health Centre will greatly improve the availability of addictions counselling, mental health services, and various other supports for the homeless and marginalized. It will help individuals and families stabilize and participate more fully in the wider society.

A community discussion was begun after this survey, involving both people who are homeless and many helping agencies; it is detailed at the end of this report. Their discussion developed more suggestions for ways our community can provide harm reduction and treatment services.

Provide income supports for people who are homeless or unstably housed.

People are homeless for a wide variety of reasons – everyone has a different story.

Many of them have jobs (17%), or are engaged in non-traditional work such as binning or squeegeeing (32%), and many more want help to find a job or a better job (42%). Many are unable to work due to physical or mental health challenges, including addictions.

In this survey, 65% of respondents reported receiving provincial government income assistance, including Employment and Income Assistance, Persons with Disability benefits and Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers benefits.

But many also often reported they had been denied income assistance benefits: 41% had been denied Employment and Income Assistance, and 29% had been denied benefits for Persons with Disability or Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers. Of those who had been denied, 80% were still not receiving income assistance and were not formally employed. Instead, they reported surviving by binning, panhandling, illegal activities, under-the-table jobs, sex work, squeegeeing, or with the help of family or friends.

Over two-fifths (42%) of participants want help finding work. The supports they said they need include many simple, low-cost supports and services that the community could easily provide: clothing, transportation, trade tools and resumé assistance; a shower, phone, personal storage and alarm clock; and help replacing lost identification.



The community discussion that followed this survey developed many other suggestions for ways government, businesses and social service agencies can give these people the employment support they need.

“I’ve been homeless for five years. At 17, I left home due to family systemic violent abuse. I’m very willing to work, yet there are so many obstacles currently in my life.”

- Survey participant

Provide short-term solutions during the transition to affordable housing.

Before this report was published, housing stakeholders and people without homes discussed the research project’s findings. They developed several possible short-term solutions that could make life easier for people while they are homeless or unstably housed.

Government and business offices could give these people better access to telephones. The municipalities and community centres could provide more free bathrooms and showers, and even community laundries. More winter night shelters need to be available. And research with homeless families could lead to providing them a proper emergency shelter.

Engage the broader community in solutions.

The post-survey community discussion also developed a few suggestions for ways in which individuals in our broader community can get more involved in solutions to homelessness. When teachers notice changes in children caused by housing stresses, for example, the school could offer extra supports to those families.

“Crime would likely be a lot less if there was more affordable housing. Drug problems would also be less. Without housing, people are on the street and lose heart and feel there is nothing they can do to change the situation, so go downhill mentally and physically.”

- Survey participant



Acknowledgements and Thanks

No words can replace what is missing in the lives of over one thousand seniors, adults, youth and children in the Capital Regional District: a stable home. We give our heartfelt thanks to the 815 individuals who chose to share their personal information for this study, believing that the rest of us would step up to the challenge and make sure no one in our community will remain homeless or inadequately housed. Let us all honour their courage and fortitude and end homelessness in the Capital Region.

Our sincere thanks and acknowledgement go to the hundreds of individuals and organizations who gave their time, ideas and resources to the Homeless Needs Survey 2007. Without these many partners from throughout the Capital Region, such a large study would never have been possible. We apologize to those who have been forgotten; your efforts are very much appreciated, even if your name is not on these pages.

A special thanks to our dedicated staff and contractors:

Derek Book (contractor), Melanie Clarke (manager of human resources), Erin Davis (research assistant), Lauren Elving-Klassen (research assistant), Ruth Gillese (research assistant), Meghan Jezewski (research assistant), Bill Johnstone (editor), Selina Jorgensen (volunteer assistant), Colleen Kasting (research assistant), Don McTavish (manager of shelters), Ken Neal (administrative assistant), Cathy Percival (outreach assistant), Barry Perrin (volunteer assistant), Alan Rycroft (project manager), Esther Stevens (research assistant), Kathy Stinson (executive director), Karen Uldall-Ekman (volunteer assistant) and Jane Worton (lead researcher).

Incredibly, over 340 dedicated volunteers stepped forward from the community to help the Homeless Needs Survey. Unfortunately we were only able to place 220 during this project. Thank you *all* for such a powerful outpouring of community care.

Over 60 social service agencies, organizations and businesses participated in the enumeration and questionnaire survey. Thank you all for adding to your already-too-busy workload to make this project a success:

AIDS Vancouver Island, Alano Club, Alcohol and Drug Services, Beacon Community Employment, Beacon Community Services,



Beacon Out of the Rain, Blanshard Community Centre, Bridges for Women, Burnside Gorge Community Association, Central Saanich Police Department, Child and Family Counselling Association, Community Council, Victoria Cool Aid Society, Cridge Centre for the Family, Downtown Community Activity Centre, Fernwood Community Centre, Greater Victoria Public Library, Hill House, Hulitan Social Services, James Bay Community Project, John Howard Society, Kiwanis Emergency Youth Shelter, Kiwanis House, Margaret Lawrence House, Methadone Clinic, Mustard Seed, Native Friendship Centre, Nine-to-Ten Club, Our Place, Pacific Centre, Pacifica, PEERS - Prostitutes Empowerment Education & Resource Society, PEERS Outreach Van, Phoenix, Quadra Clinic, Quadra Street Bottle Depot, REES Network (Research, Education, Employment & Support), Saanich Police, Salt Spring Community Centre, Salvation Army, Sanctuary, Sandy Merriman House, Schizophrenia Society, Shoe Box, Sidney Food Bank, Sidney RCMP, Sobering and Assessment Centre, Sooke Family Resource Centre, Sooke Transition House, Specialized Youth Detox (Ashgrove), Spectrum Employment Services, St. Saviour's Anglican Church, St. John the Divine Food Bank, Streetlink Emergency Shelter, Threshold Youth Shelter, Upper Room, Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Centre, Vancouver Street Bottle Depot, VARCS Mobile X Van, Victoria General Hospital, Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre, Victoria Police, Victoria Women's Transition House, Westshore RCMP, Withdrawal Management, Women's Transition House, Worklink and Youth Empowerment Society.

A special thanks to our committed and knowledgeable volunteer Advisory and Research Committees. Midway through the project the Research Committee was folded into the Advisory Committee, and the Community Council was hired to lead the research.

Advisory Committee: Rick Anthony (Victoria Police), Jim Bennett (Victoria Real Estate Board), Judith Branion (St. John the Divine), Roger Butcher (B.C. Housing), Brad Crewson (Pacifica Housing), Maureen Duncan (United Way), Gordon Harper (Umbrella), Linda Johnson (VIHA), Amy Jordan (B.C. Housing), Henry Kamphof (Capital Region Housing Corporation), Ken Kelly (Downtown Victoria Business Association), Colleen Kerr (Saanich Police), Andrew Lane (Victoria Steering Committee on Homelessness), Connie McCann (Carol James Constituency Office), Bruce Parisian (Victoria Native Friendship Centre), Bernie Pauly (Cool Aid Board of Directors), Herman Rebneris (Cottage Grove Construction), Kelly Reid (VIHA),



David Stott (Capital Families), Jeremy Tate (Capital Regional District), Charlayne Thornton-Joe (Counsellor, City of Victoria), Rev. Al Tysick (Our Place), Wendy Zink (City of Victoria).

Research Committee: Cecilia Benoit, Anne Drost (Cool Aid Community Health Centre), Jim Hackler, Irene Haigh-Gidora (Cool Aid Community Health Centre), Ginnie Holden (B.C. Housing), Melanie Hope (Pacifica Housing), Mikael Jansson, Meghan Jezewski (AIDS Vancouver Island), Amy Jordan (B.C. Housing), David Minshall, Bruce Parisian (Victoria Native Friendship Centre), Bernie Pauly (Cool Aid Board of Directors), Greg Steves (B.C. Ministry of Forestry, Housing Policy), Bruce Wallace.

Our appreciation to those who deliberated over the data and provided practical recommendations for action – our “recommenders” are listed in Appendix D.

Over 25 major donors generously contributed to the project. Without their funds and in-kind donations the Homeless Needs Survey would have been only a good idea. Thank you to *all* donors for making it possible, including:

Anounce Printer Works, Cadillac Homes, Canadian Home Builders Association, Capital Iron, Capital Regional District, City of Victoria, Cob's Bakery, Diamond Communications, District of Metchosin, District of North Saanich, DTI Computers, Fiber Options, Government of Canada (Service Canada), Kiwanis Rose Manor Seniors, The Ladybug Foundation, Leadership Victoria, Moore Paterson Architects, Oak Bay Kiwanis, Old Victoria Water Company, Regent Hotel, Salvation Army, Shaw Cablesystems, Shoppers Drug Mart, Steve Copp Construction, Thrifty Foods, Tom Harris Cellular, United Way, Vancity, Victoria Real Estate Board, and VIHA, the Vancouver Island Health Authority.

A special thanks to all those who came before us and especially the 150 individuals who worked on the 2005 Victoria Homeless Count, setting a powerful precedent for us to follow.

Researchers from several other cities generously shared their homeless count experiences, resources and feedback, making our job much easier. Thank you to our colleagues in Toronto, Vancouver, Los Angeles and Edmonton. We hope this report is as helpful to you as your advice and information have been to us.



Introduction

The purpose of the Homeless Needs Survey was to understand more deeply what the people who are homeless or unstably housed feel they need to find and maintain housing. The Homeless Needs Survey enumerated some of the people who are homeless and unstably housed in most areas of the Capital Region, from Sooke to Sidney and Salt Spring Island.

People who are homeless or unstably housed come from a range of backgrounds. Their life situations are different and the support each person needs are unique. There is no single solution.

Homelessness is a growing problem in our community. We are looking for a combination of short-term and long-term solutions so that no one in our community will be homeless or unstably housed.

There is a myth that many of the people who are homeless choose to be homeless. Our findings show that only a small percent (3%) of the population do not want permanent housing.

The following section describes the methodology used for this study. The next three sections report the results of the Homeless Needs Survey questionnaire interviews – the demographics, their housing situation and the factors contributing to homelessness. The final two sections report recommendations and a discussion, based on the survey's findings and a community conversation about them that involved local housing stakeholders (Appendix D).



Methodology

In 2005, the Victoria Cool Aid Society and several community agencies cooperated to create the region's first Homeless Count. The 2005 count happened in one night, including both a count in facilities that shelter people who are homeless and a count of people sleeping outside. In-depth interviews were also conducted with 170 people who were homeless.

In 2006, building on lessons learned from the 2005 Homeless Count, the Victoria Cool Aid Society began to plan for the Homeless Needs Survey. Housing and homeless stakeholders from around B.C.'s Capital Region were invited to a community discussion. Research and advisory committees were formed from this meeting; they later merged together. Cool Aid staff reviewed lessons and reports from other North American homeless counts. Instead of another homeless count, the community groups advised that a Homeless Needs Survey would be more useful.

- As well as a facility enumeration, the Homeless Needs Survey would sample as many homeless people as possible. Rather than just counting people, anyone wishing to contribute was interviewed about their housing needs.
- The survey would be expanded across the region and to interviews offered over a four-day period.
- Interviews would be voluntary and self-initiated; interviewers would not approach potential participants, but wait to be approached.
- Finally, the decision was made to include both homeless and unstably housed individuals, as people move between the two situations rapidly.

Homelessness was defined as, "being without a predictable, clean, safe residence to return to whenever one chooses."

Unstable housing was defined as any of the following conditions:

- Housing is not affordable (that is, a tenant spending more than 50% of income on rent).
- An eviction notice has been issued and no other housing option is available.
- Overcrowding: there are more people living in the home than rooms available to sleep individuals or couples.
- Housing conditions do not meet basic health and safety standards (for example, damage to roof or structure, lack of protection from the



elements, lack of safe water and sanitation, lack of security or locks and personal safety).

- Living in a violent or abusive situation in the home.
- Not being able to stay in or return to home whenever one chooses.

Researchers who assessed the one-night-count method identified undercounts of almost half. Better results were found with substantial advanced promotion of the count or survey and with training of the interviewers (Drever, 1999). A Vancouver report noted that service-based counts tend to provide better estimates of the numbers of homeless people (though still undercounting) than do night-time street counts. Many potential participants may deliberately avoid a night-time street count, as people often try to hide at night for their own safety (SPARC, 2005).

A leading Canadian academic on housing and homelessness, Dr. David Hulchanski of the University of Toronto's Centre for Urban and Community Studies, stated that there is no reliable way to count the homeless:

“We need to concede that all attempts at counting the homeless are doomed to failure (insurmountable methodological flaws). There are too many who do not want to be counted, too many places where the houseless can find a place to stay for the night, no method at all for counting those in the ‘concealed houseless’ category, and attempts to count are never provided enough resources to produce a somewhat defensible number” (Hulchanski, 2000, p.5).

The purpose of the Homeless Needs Survey was not just to count, as we know the numbers cannot be accurately determined, but to better understand the needs of people who are homeless or unstably housed, directly from people with this experience. The number of homeless people generated as a side product of this survey should be taken as an undercount. We know there are more, but we do not know how many more. Nor do we think it is useful to spend resources trying to determine a more accurate number when the need for housing and support services is great.

The Homeless Needs Survey had two parts: enumeration and questionnaire interviews.

Enumeration

The enumeration occurred on the night of Monday, February 5, 2007. Facilities that sheltered homeless families and individuals included shelters, transition houses,



jails and holding cells, recovery and safe houses, and motels. Enumerators were asked to complete an enumeration form for those without permanent addresses who were housed that night from 10 pm to 6 am. Unfortunately it was not possible to conduct an enumeration in hospitals.

Enumeration forms gathered the numbers of children, youth and adults, broken down by gender. The enumeration provided basic demographic information for individuals who might not otherwise have been identified, including residents in transition houses, youth shelters and jails (where interviews were not conducted), or other people who simply chose not to participate in the interviews. These numbers were later added to the numbers of people who came forward for interviews, who identified themselves as homeless, and who reported not staying in an enumerated facility Monday night.

Enumeration Locations

Annie's Place	Sandy Merriman
Beacon Out of the Rain	Sidney RCMP
Burnside Gorge Community Association (conducted an enumeration of motels)	Sobering and Assessment Centre
Central Saanich Police Holding Cell	Specialized Youth Detox (Ashgrove)
Hill House	Streetlink
Kiwanis Emergency Youth Shelter	Upper Room
Saanich Police Holding Cell	V.I. Regional Correctional Centre
Salvation Army	Victoria Police Holding Cell
	Victoria Women's Transition House
	Youth Empowerment Society

Unstable Housing

The 372 interviewees who identified themselves as having unstable housing provided a good sample of people in our region who are in this housing situation, but this is not intended to be a count. A better estimate of the number of unstably housed people is the 13,085 renters in the Capital Regional District in 2001 who lived in housing that was unaffordable (more than 30% of income), not in adequate condition, or not a suitable size for their household (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2001).

**Table 1: Homeless and unstably housed people identified through Homeless Needs Survey**

	Adults			Youth (16-25)	Children (<16)	Total
	Male	Female	Transgender			
Homeless	480	142	2	108	59	791
Unstable Housing	172	133	3	59	84	451
Total	652	275	5	167	143	1,242

Table 2: How homeless and unstably housed people were reached through Homeless Needs Survey

	Adults			Youth (16-25)	Children (<16)	Total
	Male	Female	Transgender			
Enumeration	337	107	N/A*	49	62	555
Interviews with homeless and unstably housed (excluding people enumerated)	315	168	5	118	81	687
Total	652	275	5	167	143	1,242

* Note: enumeration data from facilities did not record anyone who was transgendered, but five people reported that they stayed in a facility which was enumerated and that they were transgendered.

Interviews

The questionnaire was developed first by using questions from other Homeless Count surveys, but with a focus on information that was relevant locally. Focus groups with persons who were homeless were held in several shelters and housing outreach agencies to refine answer options. The goal was for interviews to be brief, approximately 15-30 minutes, which limited the length of the questionnaire. Questionnaire designers kept in mind the proposed administration of the questionnaire, by volunteers with limited training, in relatively public spaces.

Some questions were eliminated, where responses would likely be substantially under-reported, or which had a higher likelihood of being distressing to answer. Examples of these were explicit questions about mental health diagnosis or domestic violence. Attempts were made to match questions to other B.C. counts, so data could be compiled provincially if possible. The questionnaire went through numerous edits by local service providers, members of the Research and Advisory



Committees and others experienced with homeless counts. Finally the questionnaire was pilot-tested several times.

Over 220 volunteers were recruited and trained in one of two five-hour sessions. Over three-quarters (76%) of volunteers ranked their familiarity with homelessness issues as seven or higher out of ten; and 91% of volunteers ranked the training as seven or better out of ten for preparing them for the Homeless Needs Survey. Suggestions for improvement included more time to practise the questionnaire and better clarity about start times.

Surveyors conducted interviews at over 40 locations throughout the Capital Region, from Sooke to Sidney and Salt Spring Island, but excluding the northwest Juan de Fuca area. These places included service providers and the Salvation Army Beacon Bus, which visited outdoor locations, mostly in downtown Victoria. Efforts were made to have survey locations outside of social service agencies, to reach individuals who do not use these agencies. As well, not all agencies felt able to host Homeless Needs Survey (HNS) interviewers, despite large numbers of homeless people at their facilities.

Some agencies had their HNS-trained staff complete interviews with participants, while others used HNS-trained volunteers. A small number of volunteer interviewers were people with recent experience of homelessness, and these people were each given an honorarium to support their participation. Participants were given the option to fill out the questionnaire themselves, or complete it with a peer if they were insufficiently literate. Otherwise HNS volunteers or staff completed the questionnaire with them.

Survey Locations

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| AIDS Vancouver Island | (downtown branch) |
| Alano Club | James Bay Community Project |
| Annie's Place | James Bay Youth Clinic |
| Beacon Hill Park | John Howard Society |
| Beacon Community Services | Laurel House |
| Blanshard Community Centre | Methadone Clinic |
| Bridges for Women | Mustard Seed |
| Burnside Gorge Community Association | Native Friendship Centre |
| *Centennial Square | Nine to Ten Club |
| Downtown Activity Centre | Our Place |
| Fernwood Community Centre | Pacifica Housing (DOS) |
| Greater Victoria Public Library | Prostitutes Empowerment Educ. & Resource Soc. (*RV & office) |





Research, Education, Employment
& Support Network (Cool Aid)
Salt Spring Island
Salvation Army
Sanctuary Youth Drop In
Sandi Merriman House
Sidney Food Bank
Sooke Family Resource Centre
Spectrum Job Search Centre
St. John the Divine
St. Saviours
Streetlink

The Bottle Depot (Quadra St. and
Vancouver St. locations)
*The Far Side
*The Whale Wall
Upper Room
Victoria AIDS Resource and
Community Service Society –
Mobile X
Victoria Immigrant & Refugee
Centre
Youth Empowerment Society
Youth Forensics

** asterisked locations are outdoors and were surveyed using the Salvation Army's Beacon Bus*

In recognition of their time, survey participants were offered outreach resources in the form of a “supply pack,” which included items such as a guide to local resources, socks, a toque, a travel mug and a hygiene pack. The supply pack was offered instead of a cash honorarium to minimize the incentive for double-counting.

Participants were also asked to provide a confidential personal code: the first letter of their mother's name, the first two letters of their name, and the month and year of their birth. This was the same code used by a local service provider who works with many of the potential participants in the Homeless Needs Survey, so it was felt many participants would be familiar with it. Volunteer interviewers had some trouble with the code, and many of the codes were incorrectly recorded. It was hoped that this code would help assess double-counting and allow for tracking from one year's survey to the next, without requiring participants to share their names.

In all 817 people came forward to be interviewed. Two people later asked to have their data removed from the sample, and their questionnaires were destroyed. One person witnessed the destruction of her questionnaire; another simply left no contact information but a voice mail message asking for their questionnaire's destruction.



Analysis Process

Interview data was entered using the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences. Most participants answered most of the 23 questions, an improvement over some other homeless surveys which found substantial drop-off after the eleventh question.

Some questions were combined to create categories. For example, the Homeless Needs Survey did not explicitly ask people to report mental health challenges. Instead, this information was solicited in three ways:

- When asked which factors contributed to their current housing situation, participants were given an answer option of: “social/emotional challenges.”
- When asked what would help them find housing, answer options included: “advocate to help access mental health services” and “mental health supports.”
- When asked what would help them find and keep a job, an answer option included: “better mental health care.”

During questionnaire development, the designers felt that many participants would be unlikely to answer an explicit question about mental health, which would result in substantial under-reporting of mental health issues in the homeless and unstably housed population. The combination of these three questions resulted in a count similar to previous B.C. research on mental health issues in the homeless population.

As part of making sense of the data, some reports of subpopulations were prepared and distributed to relevant service providers. This included demographic reports (youth, Aboriginal people), sub-regional reports (Salt Spring Island, Western Communities) and, in some cases, agency-specific reports where more than 30 participants reported using an agency at least once per month. The reasons for these reports were twofold: first to help agencies better understand the needs of the people they work with, and second to help agencies advise the Homeless Needs Survey about the limitations of the data collected compared with their pre-existing knowledge of their clients.



All participating agencies were also sent a questionnaire asking:

- Who they thought was missed in the Homeless Needs Survey.
- Ideas to better reach these people in future surveys.
- Their assessment of the number of homeless people identified (too high, too low, about right).
- Their recommendations for action to help their clients find and maintain housing.

Youth data were reported at a February dinner for street-involved youth. A poster was created with a selection of the findings from the full data set. Posters were sent to all participating agencies, with the request that they be displayed with an opportunity for comments from clients. Few participant comments were received, but agencies have generally reported finding this a useful and welcomed process.

A basic summary of the data were presented to the Advisory Committee, and themes and recommendations for action were identified. These themes were investigated in more detail and are discussed in the final section of the report. Recommendations for action from recent and relevant reports were also presented to the Advisory Committee for discussion.

Limitations of Interview Data

Feedback from agencies emphasized a missing component: many people who were in crisis. Housing outreach workers for families specifically noted this; and transition houses and youth shelters felt unable to participate in interviewing because of the level of crisis of their clients. Many other agencies noted lower participation of people with substantial mental health issues. It was suggested that asking agencies to have staff interview people with substantial mental health issues might improve participation rates.

While efforts were made to expand the survey regionally, organizers and participating agencies noted that most interview locations were in the four core municipalities. Western Communities and Peninsula agencies further noted that people living in their sub-regions often do not use services as regularly as people in the core, due to travel times. Even allowing for interviews over four days, some people were excluded simply because they were not in an agency during the survey times. It is recommended that future surveys include more survey locations in outlying areas and substantial advertising in the sub-regions to ensure much higher awareness of the survey.



Demographics

There is no one face of homelessness or unstable housing. Participants in the Homeless Needs Survey included men, women, children and families from many areas, age groups and ethnicities.

Of those interviewed, the youngest person was 14 years old, the oldest 77. Of all survey participants, 12% were under 25, and 11% were 55 years or older. Half the participants (below the median) were under 41 years old.

The Region

Homelessness is home-grown. A common myth about people who are homeless or unstably housed in our community is that most of these people came from outside this region. The Homeless Needs Survey 2007 has provided further data to show this is not true. Of the people who answered what municipality they lived in when they last had stable housing, three-quarters (73%) reported living somewhere in the Capital Regional District. A further 16% reported living somewhere in B.C., often as close as Duncan or Vancouver. Only 11% of people surveyed were from outside of B.C.

Homelessness affects all municipalities. Most participants (73%, 596 people) in the Homeless Needs Survey reported usually sleeping in one of the four core municipalities (Victoria 61%, 496 people; Saanich 6%, 48 people; Esquimalt 3%, 24 people; Oak Bay 1%, 6 people).

This was the first time the Homeless Needs Survey included people in the Western Communities (4%, 33 people), the Peninsula (3%, 22 people), and on Salt Spring Island (4%, 32 people). Some either did not know or did not answer the question about which municipality they usually slept in (16%, 132 people).

The numbers of people outside of the Victoria municipality should be interpreted with caution. The lower numbers may reflect the fewer interview places in these areas, the different ways that people in more rural areas use services, and less communication about the Homeless Needs Survey outside of the core municipalities.

“As a care manager, I consistently have clients tell me that they prefer to sleep outside on the west shore than stay at a shelter downtown.”

- Local care manager



"I would like a tent city. It would be nice not to have to hide any more – not to have to go to Langford to camp. I'm not supposed to be there either."
- Survey participant

Gender

Two-thirds of participants (64%) identified as male, 34% as female, and 2% as transgendered or other. About twice as many men, compared to women, were identified as homeless or unstably housed. 74% of the surveyed men were homeless and 52% of the women surveyed were homeless.

Men, women and transgendered people experience homelessness differently. So too, solutions to one's homeless situation differ depending on one's gender.

Of those who were homeless, 28% of the women and 14% of the men had children staying with them. The survey did not identify how many were two-parent families. However, from the Burnside Gorge Homeless Families experience, 78% of those families were headed by single mothers, while about 10% were headed by single fathers, and another 10% by two-parent families (Burnside Gorge Community Association, 2006a). Caring for one's children generally falls to the mother. Trying to find stable housing for a family is a very different experience than trying to find housing for oneself.

More men than women stayed on the street (45% compared to 38%), and more men used rooming houses (10% compared to 6%). On the other hand, more women than men rented (42% as compared to 24%), more women used the hospital (12% compared to 8%), and more women stayed with family (14% compared to 6%).

Factors that contributed to current housing situations for men and for women were quite similar, with a few exceptions. More men said they lost their jobs (26% compared to 15%). The percentage of women who left because of unsafe housing (25% compared to 15%), and domestic violence (34% compared to 7%), was significantly higher than for men.

Women are more likely to be homeless because of domestic violence. Safe housing is generally a more important factor for women than for men. Women generally will not stay in rooming houses at the low end of the market. But with \$325 per month housing allowance while on income assistance (raised on April 1, 2007, to \$375), there is little else to choose from. Many women who do stay in such places live in continual fear for their safety or become homeless.



When asked what would help survey participants find and maintain housing, more women than men mentioned mental health support, advocates to assist with health and addiction issues, and the need for less discrimination by housing agencies and landlords because of pets or children. Men were more frequently concerned about the need for employment and challenges they faced to obtain housing due to their criminal records.

*“It’s very hard to find affordable housing on Salt Spring...
The children, it seems, are also a hindrance, which is a huge shame.”*
- Survey participant

Income sources for both men and women were more or less the same, with two exceptions. A higher percentage of women received income from family or friends than did men (13% compared to 7%). And nearly 10% of women received their income from sex work, compared to less than 1% of men.

When asked what would help survey participants get a job, a higher percentage of women identified the need for clothing and child care. More also identified the need for training, education, resumé writing, available jobs, and supports to better mental health care, anger management and addictions resources. Men were more interested in the need for a permanent address, tools for trade and personal storage.

The experiences of transgendered people who are homeless or unstably housed are mostly unknown. Disclosure of gender status outside of women or men is limited. None of the enumeration facilities reported having transgendered people staying there on the night of the Homeless Needs Survey enumeration, though several of the transgendered interview participants reported staying in these facilities that night.

The researchers believe that, for a variety of reasons, three subpopulations were under-represented in the survey: Aboriginal people, youth and families. The term “undercount” is used to describe such under-reported groups. Each is detailed in the following sections.

Aboriginal People

A quarter (25%) of people who were homeless or unstably housed identified themselves as First Nations, Aboriginal, Métis, Inuit or Native. This is almost ten times larger than the percentage of Aboriginal people in the overall local



population. The 2001 Statistics Canada Census reported that 2.8% of the population in the Victoria Census Metropolitan Area identified as Aboriginal.

Local Aboriginal service providers have suggested that many Aboriginal people were missed by the survey and that the percent of homeless or unstably housed people who are Aboriginal is likely even higher than 25%.

Although the Homeless Needs Survey 2007 shows that 25% of the homeless and unstably housed population are Aboriginal, Aboriginal service providers have suggested that many homeless or unstably housed Aboriginal people did not participate in the survey for reasons associated with culture, discrimination and privacy. Some Aboriginal people do not use traditional service agencies, as they often are not culturally appropriate, so would not have been interviewed at many locations. Two Aboriginal service providers were not able to participate in the Homeless Needs Survey as their staff were not able to attend training. A third Aboriginal service provider had a very small number of participants at their location.

Even at 25%, the proportion of Aboriginal people in the homeless population is unacceptably high, considering that only 2.8% of the population in the region is Aboriginal.

The Homeless Needs Survey identified some differences between the Aboriginal population and the total surveyed population:

- 15% stayed with family members, compared to 9% of the whole surveyed population.
- 46% were stably housed within the past year, compared to 27% of the surveyed population.
- 56% (10 of 18) of the total number of youth “aging out” of foster care were Aboriginal.
- 42% of Aboriginal participants (36 of 84) had children staying with them.
- No Aboriginal women reported staying in transition houses. Yet 25% reported domestic violence as a factor that contributed to their homelessness.

Aboriginal youth, who comprise 46% of the total Aboriginal population in the Victoria region, showed as only 16% of the Aboriginal respondents to the survey. The Victoria Native Friendship Centre noted that many people, especially youth, are “hidden homeless,” couch-surfing on or off reserve. Still, 33% of all youth who participated in the survey were Aboriginal, whereas the Aboriginal youth population in this region is 5% of the total youth population.



The proportion of Aboriginal youth (34%) was higher than the proportion of Aboriginal people overall in the survey (25%). Other B.C. research suggests that the percentage of homeless or unstably housed Aboriginal youth is likely higher than was found in this survey. Aboriginal youth is the fastest-growing demographic group in Canada.

Youth

Through the Homeless Needs Survey, 108 homeless youth (16-25) were identified, 58 of whom completed interviews. A further 39 interviews were conducted with unstably housed youth.

Comparing these numbers with youth-serving agency data, the researchers determined that at least 25 youth were not counted. In reporting these results to a youth focus group, participants estimated that the number of homeless youth in B.C.'s Capital Region is likely at least 140. Previous research, given studies in other cities (Benoit, Jansson, Hallgrimsdottir and Roth, in press), has estimated 250 to 300 street youth between the ages of 14 and 24 at any given time in the Capital Region.

"Every since my parents died my life has been shit."

"There are too many kids are on the street, and they are getting younger and younger."

- Survey participants

The reality of the number of homeless and unstably housed youth and children in our region shocks many people, leading them to ask why this is happening. It is important to keep in mind the diversity of experiences of youth, as with all people who are homeless or unstably housed.

"A lot of people my age are out here and don't care anymore. It's like a Cinderella story - they've run out of belief, hope, etc. I'm 63 and there's not much help. And I see young kids - 16 - and I wonder what's going to happen to them if I'm still getting no help."

- Survey participant

There is no common contributing factor to all homeless or unstably housed youth. The most frequently reported contributing factor was personal conflict, violence or neglect by a family member, friend or caregiver (55%).



Other local research with homeless youth found a common characteristic of the young marginalized people was tremendous change in their living situations while growing up. Many homeless or unstably housed youth also lived in care at some point, such as in a foster home.

The second most frequently reported contributing factor was alcohol or drug use (50%). Three-fifths (58%) of youth were using alcohol or drugs. This is lower than found in other data, showing that almost 95% of marginalized youth use such substances. Almost half (45%) of injection drug users in the federal government's "I-track" surveys reported being 19 years of age or younger the first time they injected (Health Canada, 2006).

Almost half of homeless and unstably housed youth reported receiving income from provincial government sources (47%), compared to 66% of adults (people 25 and older). This lower percentage may be due to policies that restrict access to income assistance, such as the two-year independence test for welfare. A smaller percentage of youth than expected (given other research and the knowledge of local youth service providers) reported illegal activities or sex work as sources of income. This supports either a youth undercount (youth receiving income from these sources did not participate), or under-reporting of these sources of income, or both.

A quarter of youth participants (25%) said the creation of a casual labour pool for youth would help them find housing. This ready source of income might also reduce numbers of youth engaging in illegal activities or sex work, even if they are not able or interested in participating in traditional employment.

*"I am now 22. I have been on my own from 15 to 19 outside.
Within the last four years I've been on and off the streets,
having worked most of that time."*

- Survey participant

Families

One in ten participants (10%) had children or youth staying with them, or with family and friends, because their housing situation could not accommodate children. While most of these participants identified themselves as unstably housed, 19% of these families were homeless. Most families had multiple children and the survey also included pregnant women.



The Burnside Gorge Community Association's "Homeless Families" survey in 2006 found that over half of the families surveyed had young children (birth to age six).

"I rented a one-bedroom apartment for \$550 a month. There were a couple of times that I was unable to pay my full rent or only pay partial rent. My landlord was extremely considerate and allowed me to stay. If not for him, my baby (one-year old then) and I would be homeless."

- Survey participant

The Homeless Needs Survey found that 74 homeless or unstably housed people had children staying with them. Other local research into homeless families conducted by the Burnside Gorge Community Association (2006a) suggests that the number of homeless families is higher than counted for the following reasons:

1. There is no local family shelter.
2. Families generally do not stay on the street, but couch-surf with friends or family members, and thus are part of the "invisible homeless".
3. Many parents stay hidden, as they fear their children will be taken into care if it is known that they are homeless.

"I was told to take my daughter to the women's shelter in Surrey, and my son would have to go to the downtown men's shelter in Vancouver. I felt that this was dangerous for him, and so sent the children to be with my sister in Victoria and started to live on the street myself."

- Survey participant

Capturing a snapshot of homeless families is difficult, since most families spend the duration of their homeless period in some combination of shelter arrangements, including transition houses, motels, with family or friends, and on the street. Identifying families experiencing homelessness is also more difficult, as Burnside Gorge is the only local agency which provides outreach housing services specifically to families. Where families who are homeless are receiving other services, they are unlikely to identify as homeless.

Homeless counts frequently note under-reporting of families who are homeless. The information from the Homeless Needs Survey is complemented by information gathered through the Burnside Gorge Community Association's (2006a) recent Homeless Families Outreach Project. That project did interviews with 432 families who were homeless or at risk of homelessness at some point over a three-year period. As of April 1, 2007, there were 236 families on the



CRD / BC Housing waitlist whose housing situation met the Homeless Needs Survey definition of homelessness.

The BGCA (Burnside Gorge Community Association) data show that 50% of families the association works with are homeless and 50% are unstably housed. The majority (76%) of the families are headed by females. Another 10% include single fathers, and 14% are two-parent families. These families average less than two children each, although a number of families have up to seven members. Approximately 50% of children are pre-school age (birth to six years).

During January 2007, BGCA worked with seven homeless pregnant women. Other studies note that pregnancy is common among young women on the street, with homelessness preceding pregnancy in many cases.

“In a tough spot now because my roommates jammed out on me. I need affordable housing immediately to be able to prepare a home before my baby is born.”
- Survey participant

Income sources for parents according to the BGCA study (2006a) are listed below, with the Homeless Needs Survey (HNS) comparative numbers in brackets:

- Working 12% BGCA (24% HNS).
- Welfare 54% (28%).
- Disability insurance 6% (50%).
- Unemployment insurance 7% (3%).
- No incomes 4% (9%).
- Other parent incomes include prostitution, student loans and family support.

“If we want to buffer children from the adverse long-term effects of homelessness and prevent repetition of their parents’ history, then we must support parents to maintain stability in their lives.”
- Burnside Gorge Community Association (2006b)

Reasons given for the housing crisis for families include fleeing violence at 28% (16%), evicted or unaffordable rent at 29% (25%), and substandard or unaffordable housing at 30% (22%).

In the BGCA study, nearly 45% of these parents experienced past or present abuse, 37% had identified mental health problems, and 30% had alcohol or drug use issues. If depression were considered, the mental health issues would top 90%.



Housing options for families are more limited than for the overall homeless and unstably housed population, because there is no family shelter in the region other than transition houses. Five percent of participating families stayed in motels in the winter, which are less available in the summer when tourists are using them.

“Having been homeless for six months with two children, after coming out of a transition house, it has been nearly impossible to find affordable housing. No one was willing to rent a one-bedroom or bachelor suite to a person with children.”

- Survey participant



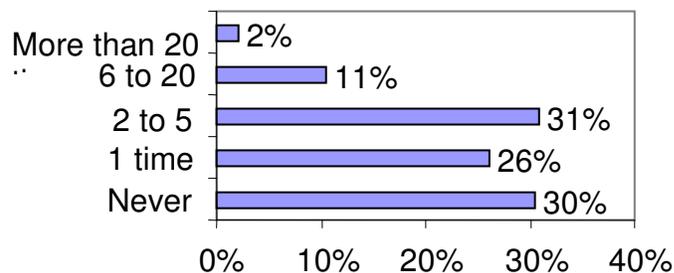
Housing Situation

Extent of Homelessness

Through the Homeless Needs Survey, both people who were homeless and people who were unstably housed were interviewed. This is because there are a range of situations between unstable housing and homelessness, and people frequently move between the two. As the CRD Regional Housing Affordability Strategy states, “Households don’t always remain within one type of housing throughout their lives; changing circumstances (both positive and negative) can move people along the continuum” (Capital Regional District, 2007). Within this range or continuum are different levels of support that individuals and families require to find and maintain housing.

One-third (35%) of unstably housed people said they used shelters, compared to 72% of people who were homeless. Of the 339 individuals who reported being unstably housed, two-thirds (65%) reported being homeless at least once within the last ten years.

How many times people have been homeless



People who are in unstable housing are often at risk of homelessness. Many respondents who were currently unstably housed reported being unable to afford their current accommodations, which were often unsafe and unhealthy. One participant shared their experience in struggling to find suitable accommodation:

“Some people who are homeless are homeless because they can't keep a place, not because they can't get one. Some people lose their home because they can't follow the rules... then it takes months to find one.”

- Survey participant



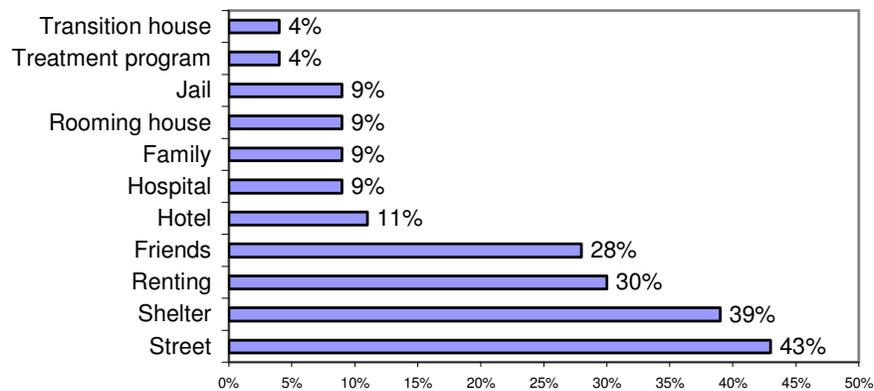
Houselessness

Some participants on Salt Spring Island identified themselves as being “houseless,” as opposed to the “homeless” option that was provided for them on the questionnaire. The point was collectively made that simply because they were without a house, they were not without a home. One participant responded:

“I’ve been living in the woods and on the road for seven years. That is where I choose to be. I am not homeless. I am houseless.”
- Survey participant

Where People Stay

Places participants stayed in the last month



The most common place participants reported staying was outside, followed by shelters.

Interviews were not conducted with people in jails who had no forwarding address (71 people). Also, interviews were not done with people in transition houses (39 people), motels (34 people), or youth shelters (44 people) unless they also used other services that week. As a result, some of the people sheltered in those facilities were excluded from our interview data on where people stayed.

Shelter Use

More than half of those who responded (57%) reported staying at shelters sometime. Two in five participants (39%) said they had used shelters in the last month. Many people who are homeless do not use shelters, either because they are turned away or because the shelters are not appropriate for their needs.



Those Turned Away From Shelters

There are not enough shelter beds or even mats in the Capital Regional District to meet the need. Two-thirds of people who used shelters had sometimes been turned away, with the most common reason being no beds (80%), followed by alcohol or drug use (13%), and behaviour (10%).

Seasonal difference between supply and demand of shelter beds and mats

	Men	Women	Youth	Total
People who use shelters	260	101	56	427
Shelter Beds & Mats Avail. in Winter*	105	36	40	181
Needed in Winter months	- 155	- 65	- 16	-246
Shelter Beds & Mats Avail. In Summer	96	31	10	111
Need in Summer months	- 164	- 70	- 46	-316

** Except when the “Cold Wet Weather Protocol” is in place, when there are between 35 and 125 additional mats available for a few days at a time, depending on the severity of the weather.*

There are no family shelters in the region. So when families become homeless, they must find somewhere else to stay, or must separate parents from children. Often the spouses or partners also must be separated.

Though only a few people who reported “transgendered” or “other” as their gender participated in the Homeless Needs Survey, each of them reported using shelters. This small sample size may not represent a larger group of people who are homeless and do not identify as men or women. But it suggests that emergency housing providers may need to consider how to appropriately support people who do not fit traditional gender assumptions. Local transition houses have reported being faced with this need directly.



While we create more affordable housing, we continue to need more shelter beds in the interim to meet the demand. We also need a variety of shelters to accommodate different needs and behaviours (e.g. family shelters, where parents are not separated from their children).

Those Who Do Not Use Shelters

One-quarter of respondents who were homeless (26%) did not stay at shelters. Of those, most (60%) slept outside or “rough.” Many barriers to shelter use were mentioned by survey participants, such as:

- The amount of alcohol and street drugs used and available.
- Physical ill health (for example, back problems).
- Being a family without access to a family shelter.
- Other barriers concerning health and safety.

We often hear about people choosing to be homeless or choosing a homeless lifestyle. But for most people who sleep outside, it is only their best choice among poor alternatives. Some participants felt living on the streets was a safer, more viable alternative than staying at shelters.

Interim Supports

While people are homeless and unstably housed, they urgently need some interim supports such as shower and laundry facilities, more diverse emergency shelter options, and adequate washroom facilities.

Participants identified several supports that would help people find a place to live. (They are similar to ones identified by participants who were looking for work.) These included phone or voice mail (34%) and shower and laundry facilities (29%). While these resources are typically linked to housing, there are low-cost options that provide these outside of permanent housing.

The Homeless Needs Survey omitted asking a question directly related to the need for washrooms, but some participants identified the need for more public washrooms in the questionnaire’s “additional comments” section.

“Washroom facilities are one of the biggest challenges to find.”
- Survey participant

The lack of housing impacts not only the ability of people to have the safety and security that comes along with stable housing, but also their ability to



fulfill basic physical needs. The services currently available in the Capital Region District are not meeting the basic needs of people without stable housing.

Cost-effectiveness

Almost half of Homeless Needs Survey participants (48%) reported staying in a more costly public facility, such as a jail, shelter or hospital, at least once in the last month.

A major study done by the B.C. government in 2001, *The Cost of Homelessness in British Columbia*, emphasized that subsidized, supported housing units are more affordable than operating emergency shelters and services. This conclusion has been echoed by the CRD Regional Housing Affordability Strategy, which noted:

“...the public costs for providing services and shelter for one homeless person is approximately \$40,000 annually, compared with the cost of \$28,000 to house that person. The costs of homelessness include those required for emergency services (including shelter and police), hospital and health care costs, and costs to the judicial system. This study found that homeless people are disproportionately high users of these public services” (Capital Regional District, 2007).

Despite this six-year-old finding, not enough has been done to redirect public dollars towards building housing with supports for people who are homeless, even though it is a more cost-effective solution. A certain level of these emergency services will always be needed. Yet if there were more affordable, supportive housing options for people in our community, the demand on emergency services would decrease.

“Crime would likely be a lot less if there was more affordable housing. Drug problems would also be less. Without housing, people are on the street, and lose heart, and feel there is nothing they can do to change the situation, so go downhill mentally and physically.”

- Survey participant



Subsidized Housing Wait-list

“Waiting lists for regional social housing projects have grown steadily, to the point that eligibility for social housing now focuses on people one step away from homelessness.”

- Capital Regional District (2007)

One-third of respondents reported being on a waiting list for social housing (40% of people who were unstably housed, compared to 30% people who reported being homeless). Subsidized housing wait-lists are geared towards people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, or have health or addiction issues made worse by their current housing situation. The Homeless Needs Survey found that of those on subsidized housing wait-lists, 58% had physical health issues and 51% had mental health issues.

As of March 2007, there were 560 active clients on the Pacifica Housing Services Community Housing Registry for supported subsidized housing and 1,958 active applicants on the CRD / BC Housing waitlist. Definitions of an active client vary by list but range from someone who has checked or made changes to their application within the last 6 months to one year. In the Homeless Needs Survey, 80% of participants who reported being on a housing wait-list were active clients. Almost one quarter (22%) of applicants on the CRD / BC Housing waitlist currently meet the Homeless Needs Survey definition of homelessness, including 236 families.

Currently emergency housing is limited. Local housing providers reported that if someone on a wait-list for housing is evicted, they most likely end up on the street or in a shelter. There are almost no single-room occupancy (SRO) spaces in this region and not enough turnover in subsidized housing stock to provide emergency subsidized housing.

“From getting an eviction notice for renovation, plus breaking up from my relationship with a man who suffered from PTS disorder, we ended up in July 2006 homeless.”

- Survey participant



Lack of Affordable Housing

“For a variety of reasons, including diminishing federal support, the supply of social housing in the region has declined. Since 1995 there have been 990 social housing units created in the Capital Region. This compares with almost 6,200 social housing units built in the region between 1970 and 1995.”

- Capital Regional District (2007)

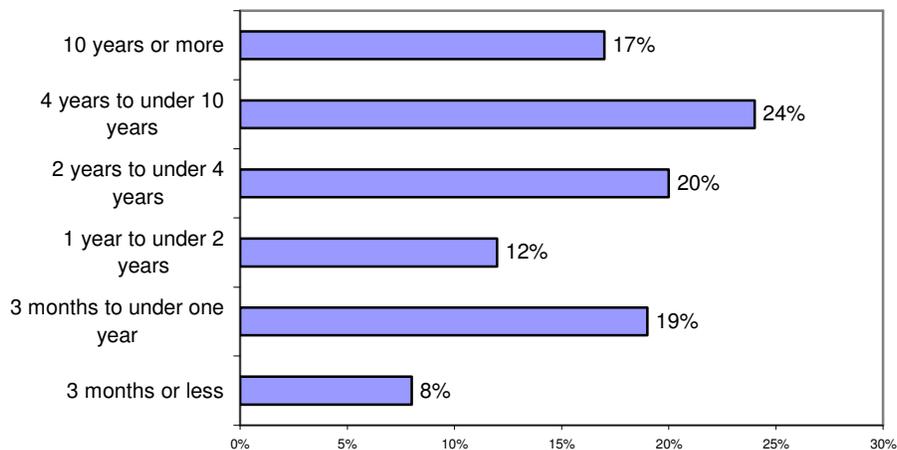
Many factors besides the simple lack of affordable housing contribute to homelessness. However, the creation of affordable housing was overwhelmingly reported as the number one support that would help people find and maintain housing (78%). A diversity of housing options is needed, ranging from single rooms to family housing, including both social and market (public and private) rental solutions.

“Low-income housing is being replaced by expensive condos – limits the availability of housing for families. People who have lived here for years are being forced out.”

- Survey participant

New affordable housing must take into account the high incidence of chronic homelessness, as over half of participants had not felt stably housed in over two years. People also reported cycling in and out of homelessness: 44% of participants had been homeless two or more times in the last ten years.

How long since people have felt stable



Housing options should be provided along the range of need, including low-barrier housing that emphasizes ease of entry and ongoing access to services, with minimal eligibility criteria. The focus needs to be on helping tenants keep



their housing, rather than making housing depend on other requirements. The evidence points to the need for low-barrier housing and support services:

- 48% of participants reported alcohol or drug use.
- 42% reported mental health issues.
- 27% reported both alcohol or drug use and mental health issues.

“A lot of homeless with mental disabilities, drug addictions, need help guiding them with treatment and medication services. The rest will FOLLOW.”

- Survey participant

There are many challenges to maintaining housing.

- 30% of participants reported needing a personal or housing reference.
- 26% received some form of provincial income assistance but still reported needing help with a rental damage deposit.
- 25% of participants said that eviction had contributed to their current housing situation.



Contributing Factors: The Paths to Homelessness

As a community, we want to better understand how people have become homeless or unstably housed so we can work to reduce the incidence of homelessness.

The Homeless Needs Survey identified six key factors that contributed to homelessness or unstable housing, each described in a section below:

- Health
- Life skills
- Domestic violence and caregiver abuse
- Criminal record
- Government income
- Paid work

Health

Throughout the Homeless Needs Survey, 80% of participants reported health concerns being a contributing factor to their inadequate housing or an important support they needed.

The three most commonly reported contributing factors to participants' current housing situation were all health-related:

- Alcohol or drug use (327 people, 41%).
- Illness or medical reasons (281 people, 35%).
- Social or emotional challenges (212 people, 27%).

Physical Health

58% of participants noted concerns about their physical health (excluding addictions). Physical health issues have contributed to their inadequate housing situation directly or indirectly by limiting work or income options.

"It's just so hard to move forward. Too many bad things happened in one year, and I've been sick ever since. I know that I need to get over it and move on so I am not sick anymore, but I can't work if I'm sick some days or this week, and I can't get on with life until I have an income. It's just so hard."

- Survey participant



Mental Health

Four in ten (42%) participants reported having a mental health concern. Agencies participating in the Homeless Needs Survey reported that many of the people they work with who have substantial mental health issues were not able to participate in the interviews, so this number is probably an underestimate.

A quarter of participants (27%) listed both mental health and alcohol or drug use as factors contributing to their inadequate housing. Local service providers reported that many clients self-medicate with street drugs to cope with mental illness.

Alcohol and Drug Use

Almost half (48%) of participants reported alcohol or drug use. Local service providers suggest that this number is likely low, possibly due to the survey question's wording. The Homeless Needs Survey data on "substance use" refer to a broad range of possibly harmful substances, including alcohol.

Alcohol or drug use influences the availability of services, including places where people stayed in the last month:

- 55% of people reporting alcohol or drug use slept on the street, compared to 28% of non-users.
- 15% of people reporting alcohol or drug use stayed at the hospital, compared to 3% of non-users.
- 14% of people reporting alcohol or drug use stayed in jail, compared to 3% of non-users.
- 40% of alcohol or drug users had been to the hospital emergency room in the last three months, compared to 24% of non-users.
- 34% of alcohol or drug users reported experiencing discrimination, compared to 25% of non-users.

People with mental health issues do not have to be free of mental illness symptoms in order to receive alcohol or drug use services. One service provider reported that virtually everyone with alcohol or drug issues also has mental health issues. But local service providers reported that people actively using alcohol or drugs are excluded from a number of mental health services. For people with both mental illness and addictions, such policies may mean that the people with the greatest needs go without service.



Only 14% of participants reported needing detoxification services. One local service provider suggested there are many barriers to getting detox services, so many people do not consider this an option. Many participants will need to repeat detox or other recovery stages several times.

“For many, the pain of what they are dealing with – childhood abuse, violence, memories that led to their addictions in the first place... Without housing first, they would not be able to face detox.”

– Local service provider

Additional local data were available about injection drug users. There are an estimated 1,500 to 2,000 injection drug users and 500 to 800 crystal methamphetamine users in B.C.’s Capital Region (VIHA, 2006). Over half (53%) of injection drug users are estimated to have unstable housing (Health Canada, 2006).

Homeless Needs Survey findings are generally consistent with Health Canada’s I-track data. Health Canada’s findings portray the people who use injection drugs as follows:

- The majority of injection drug users are between 30 and 49 years old.
- 45% of injection drug users reported being 19 years of age or younger the first time they injected.
- Aboriginal people are highly overrepresented among injection drug users in the region, at 15-20% of the injection drug users, but only 2.8% of the general population.
- 45% of injection drug users reported being on social assistance in the previous six months.
- 30% of I-track participants said they most often injected in the street in the past six months, and 6.7% of injection drug users reported injecting in prison at least once in the previous six months. Overall, 45% inject in their own homes, 30% on the street, 14% in someone else's home, 7% in a hotel, shelter or squat, and 3% in vehicles or public washrooms.
- 90% of I-track participants injected in Victoria (58% downtown, 10% Fernwood, 9% Burnside, 5% Hillside-Quadra, 5% North Park, 4% Vic West, 3% Fairfield, 3% James Bay, 2% Harris Green, 0.5% Rockland and 0.5% North Jubilee).
- 72% of injection drug users surveyed in I-track said they would use a safe injection site if it were offered (Health Canada, 2006).
- The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) rate among injection drug users is 15%, hepatitis C (HCV) is 69%, and close to 25% of those infected with either HIV or HCV were not aware of their infection status (VIHA, 2006).



- Over four-fifths (83%) reported they received their main income through drug dealing, panhandling or squeegeeing, involvement in the sex trade, or other criminal activities. Injection drug users reported spending on average \$700 to \$1,400 per week on drugs (Stajduhar et al, 2002).

Health Service Use

In this survey 63% of participants had used a health clinic in the last three months, and 37% of people who used a health clinic had used the Cool Aid Health Clinic. Other clinics mentioned were various walk-in clinics, street nurses at Our Place and elsewhere, the Youth Empowerment Society and the James Bay Community Project.

In this survey 33% of participants had used a hospital emergency room in the last three months, and 9% had stayed in the hospital at least once in the last month. In comparison, the Canadian Community Health Survey reported in 2003, that 12% of the general B.C. population went to emergency rooms once in the year. The same study found that people with lower incomes were more likely to go to an emergency room than people with higher incomes (Carriere, 2004). Other research has shown that people who are homeless tend to use more costly emergency-type services than people who are more stably housed (B.C. Ministry of Social Development and Economic Security, 2001).

While health may have been an important contributing factor to people becoming homeless or unstably housed, lack of housing worsens people's health, making it harder still for people to receive the supports they need. For example, several people noted that their bad backs now prevent them from using shelters, as they cannot sleep on the mats or beds.

Life Skills

Many people who took part in this survey do not have the basic life skills needed for day-to-day activities. These include everything from managing money and setting up a bank account, to personal and home cleanliness. Many other participants face barriers that stop them from developing healthy life skills. These barriers include addictions and chaotic lifestyles, in part due to lack of housing or a safe place to keep one's possessions.



Some practical supports identified by Homeless Needs Survey participants could easily be arranged with the support of the community. These include:

- Getting an alarm clock.
- Getting and keeping proper ID.
- Getting a bank account and learning to write cheques.
- Having a phone or voice mail service.
- Using shower facilities.
- Having bus tickets or other forms of transportation.

“Bus tickets, voice mailbox, showers and laundry would be really great to get people on their feet. (Those with jobs can actually get there.)”

- Survey participant

Other life skills must be taught. Some participants reported needing conflict or anger management, or reported that a factor in their housing situation was that they did not seem to fit into society. Others talked about the need for help getting motivated, writing resumés and acting as their own advocates. Some of these less formal supports may possibly be delivered by volunteers or peer supports.

Domestic Violence

Home is not always synonymous with safety. Depending on a person's home experience, they may understand a “home” as a place of violence and fear. Many of these people prefer not to have a home and may even prefer living on the streets, where they feel safer. This also causes problems, as there is a greater risk of violence when a person is homeless (Novac, 1996).

Over one-third (36%) of participants noted that domestic violence, family or friend conflict, or abuse by a caregiver was a factor contributing to their current housing situation. One in six participants (16%) cited domestic violence as a contributing factor, and of those 71% were female. One-third (34%) of all females mentioned domestic violence as a factor that contributed to their current housing situation. Only 7% of males reported domestic abuse as a reason for their current housing situation.

The difference between men and women was much less among those who reported caregiver neglect or abuse: 11% of men experienced caregiver abuse, compared to 15% of women.



Domestic violence was cited as a contributing factor in 25% of Aboriginal survey participants, compared to 16% of the total surveyed population.

The Burnside Gorge Community Association's homeless family data showed that 28% of families were fleeing violence. Our Homeless Needs Survey findings also showed that 28% of all women were fleeing domestic violence, and 7% of all men reported fleeing domestic violence.

"I believe there should, in particular, be special housing for women without children (even abused women), approximately 40 to 54, that would be available in every municipality – perhaps housing that would support women with no families. Yes, it is very obvious we are in a severe housing or accommodation shortage, especially short-term."
- Survey participant

Two factors led to an under-reporting of data on domestic violence. First, because of the levels of stress of most women staying in transition houses, transition house staff decided not to offer the Homeless Needs Survey interview to residents. Transition house residents were counted in the enumeration, but because they were not interviewed (unless at another service provider location that week), the number of people experiencing domestic violence was under-reported. Second, many women stay in abusive households because they see it as an easier alternative to no income and no place to live. Many have no funds because the abusive partner controls all of the money.

It is well established in research internationally and in Canada that most street youth come from households characterized by physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Young women are more likely than young men to come from such difficult backgrounds (Gaetz, 2004).

Criminal Record

One in five participants (21%) reported having a criminal record, and 32% of those with criminal records were Aboriginal. Research has shown that Aboriginal people face disproportionate rates of being charged, prosecuted and convicted (Rudlin, 2004). Over half of those with criminal records reported mental health issues (57%), and almost three-quarters (72%) reported alcohol or drug use.

People with criminal records reported higher levels of discrimination: two out of three (66%) said they had experienced discrimination because of their



criminal record. Being faced with discrimination can make it much harder to receive needed services.

Half of people with criminal records (50%) had been denied basic welfare, compared to 39% of participants without criminal records. People with criminal records reported a higher rate of such income sources as illegal activities (17%, compared to 7% with non-criminal record) or panhandling (16%, compared to 9% non-criminal record), and a lower rate of declared-income jobs (12%, compared to 18% non-criminal record).

People with criminal records were less likely to be renting apartments (24% compared to 32% non-criminal record). They were more likely to be staying on the street (62% compared to 38% non-criminal record), or in shelters (47% compared to 38% non-criminal record). People with criminal records were more likely to have been evicted (37% compared to 22% non-criminal record). They were also more likely to have been homeless more times: half (50%) had been homeless two or more times, compared to 38% of people without criminal records.

Government Income

Provincial Government Assistance

Almost two-thirds (65%) of people who were homeless or unstably housed were receiving provincial government funding (including Employment and Income Assistance, Persons with Disability benefits, or Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers benefits).

Four in ten homeless or unstably housed people (41%) reported being in need yet denied income assistance at some time. While many were now receiving welfare money, it appears that the process of receiving benefits includes being denied first. 40% of people now receiving basic welfare had been denied basic welfare at least once. People with disabilities were also denied: 30% of people now receiving Persons with Disability benefits had been denied basic welfare at least once.

“While I went through my radiation treatments for breast cancer, welfare cut me off and told me to get a job.”
- Survey participant

Denial of income assistance was more common for people who were homeless (47%) than for those who were unstably housed (33%). Denial or loss of



benefits at a time of need may have contributed to people losing housing: 9% of all participants cited being cut off from welfare as a factor contributing to their housing situation, and 7% cited being denied welfare as a contributing factor.

To receive Person with Persistent Multiple Barriers (PPMB) benefits, a person must first have been receiving basic welfare for 12 of the last 15 months. In our survey 29% of people had at some point been denied Persons with Disability (PWD) or PPMB benefits. And 24% of people, though already getting basic welfare, still reported wanting help to get social assistance.

- Nearly half (46%) of participants who needed help getting social assistance first needed help negotiating the technology, that is, the 1-800 number or website. A telephone or computer should be a service delivery option, not a requirement.
- More than three quarters (81%) of participants needed one-on-one help of an advocate, getting motivated to fill out forms, or to get a social worker or doctor's note. Doctors often require fees for providing these notes, but in some cases a community support worker might be able to provide this information instead, or to support the individual in getting the fee waived.

"The main need is a social worker for help with paperwork – high stress of living on the street – to get on disability."
- Survey participant

Of those who had been denied, 80% were now still not receiving any form of government income assistance and were not formally employed. Instead they reported surviving on panhandling, binning, illegal activities, under-the-table jobs, sex work, squeegeeing, or with the help of family and friends.

Even many of those receiving social assistance could not afford housing: 82% of people receiving provincial government assistance reported their need for affordable housing, compared to 71% of participants with other income sources.

"The population which cannot work is relegated to an income source or level that is unsustainable and impossible in terms of affording rent."
- Local service provider



Federal Government Assistance

Only a small number of participants (10%) reported receiving income from the federal government. This may be due to an undercount of people receiving income from these sources, especially the Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement. It could also be that this income is sufficient to help more people stabilize their housing situations. A third possibility is that people who are homeless or unstably housed have shortened life expectancies, and many such people are not living past 65. More research is needed to understand what happens to unstably housed seniors as they reach 65.

The Canada Child Tax Benefit and GST rebate were missed as possible sources of income in the questionnaire, though some participants noted these sources under “other income.” Agency workers noted that many clients were not getting this income, to which they were entitled, because they were unable or unwilling to file tax returns. When caseloads were lower, community support workers were able to provide one-on-one services for tax returns, from encouraging clients to fill out returns to actually filing them. Though volunteers do help some people who are homeless or unstably housed to file their tax returns, many do not use this service because they are delivered by strangers. Community support workers, if they had the time, could refer and personally introduce clients to volunteer tax filers.

Paid Work

One in six participants (17%) worked in jobs where income was declared, that is, T4 slips issued.

Two in five (41%) reported income from sources such as under-the-table jobs, binning, squeegeeing, panhandling, sex work or illegal activities. Some of these forms of work can generate little income, but still require substantial effort and hours. Others such as sex work can generate more income, but can be dangerous and physically harmful.

“Putting myself in harm's way because of having to do illegal activities in order to eat.”

- Survey participant

Almost two out of five of people who reported declared or undeclared income (37%) still wanted help to find more or better paid work.



“I also find that there is work out there, but sometimes it is so low-paying you need two jobs to be able to make enough to get a place. I think that affordable housing is the big issue. And even with the temp job place, the money ain’t all that great. I find it hard once having a job to wait two weeks to receive payment.”

- Survey participant

Over two-fifths (42%) of all participants would like help to find paid work. Supports they identified as helpful are listed here.

What would help people find paid work

Employment assistance (clothing, tools, transportation, resumé)	353 people	75%
Housing (address, shower, phone, storage, alarm clock)	316 people	67%
Education and Training	286 people	60%
Health (physical, dental, mental, addictions)	276 people	58%
Identification (driver’s licence or ID)	267 people	56%
Counselling (anger management, motivation, fitting in)	197 people	42%
Jobs available	167 people	35%

Notably, 40% also reported being unable to or not wanting to work right now. While many people who are homeless or unstably housed feel ready for some form of paid work, or are already earning income, two-fifths of them are not.

- 52% of people who were unable to or did not want to work were receiving PWD or CPP.
- 68% of people who were unable to or did not want to work reported having mental health issues or using alcohol or drugs, problems they may need to address before they consider paid work.

Employment Assistance

As part of helping people find jobs, employment assistance agencies provide some services directly or by referral. Four of these services were commonly identified as ones that would help people find work, including:

- Work clothing (54%)
- Bus tickets or passes (50%)
- Resumé (37%)
- Tools for trade (35%)

Most agencies that serve people who are homeless or unstably housed do accept donations of clothing for their clients.



In 2006, the Community Council's B.C. Transit Ticket Assistance Program distributed 50,000 bus tickets for emergency travel and 120 bus passes to 34 community agencies, for free distribution to their clients. Of those, 24% of bus tickets were used for transportation to and from work or for looking for work.

In 2007, the number of tickets distributed will increase to 80,000, but transit fares will also increase by 25 cents. Since the program requires recipient agencies to pay for half the tickets they distribute, the fare increase may result in some agencies distributing fewer tickets. Fares continue to increase partly because the provincial government refuses to grant the Victoria Transit Commission's requested increase in local fuel tax to fund transit, though it granted a similar increase for the Lower Mainland.

Housing for Employment

Participants reported on the dilemma of needing housing to find work and needing work to find housing. Almost half of participants (44%) reported needing regular income or a job to find housing. Two-thirds (67%) of participants looking for work reported needing supports typically found with shelter, including simply having a permanent address. Some of these supports, while traditionally found with a home, can be used outside of a home, such as showers at recreation centres and phones at community centres. More of all these services are needed, as well as some new services such as places for personal storage.

"I find that while on waiting lists for housing it is hard to be found when there is a place for rent."

- Survey participant

Education and Training

Three-fifths of participants (60%) felt that education and training, including computer literacy, would help them find work. Employment agencies typically provide education and training. But only 6% of participants reported regularly using an employment agency (including the Cool Aid Casual Labour Pool). This may be under-reported, as most participants who receive basic welfare would be required to follow an employment plan, usually involving an employment agency.

Some people connected to employment agencies still felt they needed help with resumés or training. Employers struggling to find or retain workers, thus



seeking to increase potential employees, may succeed better if they can provide in-house training.

*“There is a great need for literacy training.
Most people I know at Our Place can’t read and write.”*
- Survey participant

Health for Employment

Better physical or mental health care, dental care or support for addictions were needed by 58% of participants looking for work. Lack of dental care, which is excluded from our medicare system, is an ongoing barrier for many people to participate broadly in the community, including the 34% of participants who named it as a barrier to their finding paid work (Wallace, 2000).

People receiving basic welfare receive limited health and dental care, but lose these benefits when they find paid work. Extending medical and dental benefits for basic welfare recipients for a limited time would help ease the transition to work for those with medical concerns.

Locating a wide variety of primary health care and social services for Victoria’s inner city and marginalized populations in a single building, as in the proposed ACCESS Health Centre, would also help. More research would be useful into specific gaps in the health care system for people who are homeless or unstably housed.

*“I want to settle into a secure and affordable home or apartment (both spouse and I),
so we can get our health back and stop suffering on the street with pain and illness.”*
- Survey participant

Personal Identification

Over half of participants looking for work reported needing identification or a driver’s licence. Local service providers report that loss of ID is a common problem and extremely costly to fix. People often lose ID, or have it stolen, more than once.

Project Literacy has developed an innovative program to scan people’s ID, so that when it is lost or stolen copies are available, making it easier to replace. Project Literacy has been working with local shelters and drop-in centres to offer this free service more widely.



Overall Recommendations

The set of recommendations below developed from community conversations based on the Homeless Needs Survey findings. Various housing stakeholders were consulted (listed in Appendix D), including people who have experienced homelessness, housing and other social service agencies, the business community, and government representatives from all three levels.

The Homeless Needs Survey has primarily made it clear that we need to provide more affordable housing options in the Capital Region. The survey also points to the need for more health and housing supports, and the need to improve income supports for people who are homeless. Six basic recommendations emerge from these needs:

1. Create a range of affordable housing options.
2. Provide intensive community support for housing.
3. Provide a range of harm reduction and treatment services.
4. Provide income supports for people who are homeless or unstably housed.
5. Provide short-term solutions during the transition to affordable housing.
6. Engage the broader community in solutions.

All levels of government need to fund housing and related supports. A collaborative approach is needed, both vertical (all levels of government) and horizontal (across ministries). That collaboration will ensure comprehensive housing solutions that include both the bricks and mortar and adequate housing support services.



Discussion of Recommendations

Many housing stakeholders helped analyze data from the Homeless Needs Survey 2007. They also helped our researchers identify concrete actions that could be taken to improve the availability of affordable housing and support services in the Capital Region. The following suggestions and discussion points – a compilation of their ideas for action – came from a range of local service providers.

This section is a starting point for further discussions in our community, as we look for solutions to homelessness. Primarily, this discussion suggests how to provide affordable housing options. It also suggests how to provide and direct health and housing support workers, and how to improve income supports for people who are homeless.

Create a Range of Affordable Housing Options in the Capital Region

A diversity of housing options is needed, ranging from single rooms to family housing, and including both public and private rental solutions. More low-barrier housing is needed, which accepts a wide range of behaviours. More housing appropriate for people with mental health challenges must be created. Housing design must be culturally sensitive.

*“Not enough social housing assistance for couples.
Focus appears to be on individuals.”*

- Survey participant

People with multiple barriers to housing and employment need housing with supports, where the funding for supports is stable, long-term and sustainable. Otherwise housing developers can face a 20-year mortgage but only a two-year contract for funding support. Housing supports for people who are homeless or unstably housed must also be flexible enough to follow them as they move through different forms of housing, including homelessness.

By following a housing-first policy, government could save at least \$9.5 million taxpayer dollars annually in the Capital Region – \$12,000 a year for each person who is homeless. A housing-first policy would also improve the quality of life for all residents in the Capital Region and help marginalized citizens better reintegrate into the community (source: Capital Regional District, 2007).



The new Regional Housing Trust Fund, created in 2005, now has eight municipalities and one electoral area contributing to it. Each year, the local funding is used to leverage between ten and 15 times as much money to create new, affordable housing. Since 2005, funding for 85 new units has been approved. It is anticipated that all 13 municipalities in the CRD will be full members of the Regional Housing Trust fund within the next year.

Suggestions for Local and Regional Governments

- Identify the full range of incentives that might ease basic housing costs and expedite greater production. For construction of affordable housing, for example, waive development cost charges, offer property tax holidays, pre-zone where possible, allow extra density, and so on.
- Draft and implement a Vacant and Derelict Buildings Bylaw (with permission from the Ministry of Community Services), using City of Winnipeg Bylaw No. 35/2004 as a template. This will empower the city to take title to buildings that have been vacant for five years, to be converted into affordable housing.
- Purchase or lease vacant buildings to convert to long-term affordable housing, with funds from the City of Victoria Affordable Housing Trust Fund and the CRD Regional Housing Trust Fund.
- Legalize secondary suites across B.C.'s Capital Region, and review building permit and inspection fees, and regulations that impede the expansion of this type of affordable housing.
- Similar to Vancouver policy, require 20% social housing for major rezoning of lands to multi-unit residential use.
- Pass zoning and management regulations that ensure safe, affordable and decent rooming houses, which offer an alternative to living in isolation.
- Allow rezoning to convert non-residential housing into residential housing.
- Encourage the creation of rental housing within existing stock; that is, support development of new, safe and affordable secondary suites or room rentals.
- Develop a plan to create a specific number of housing units to address the housing need. The new CRD Secretariat on Homelessness may be able to do this.
- Create a registry of surplus public and third-sector (non-profit) lands suitable for affordable housing.
- Invite more non-profit and faith-based organizations with available property to participate in the supply of housing.
- Develop temporary housing for Aboriginal people who move on and off reserve frequently while they try to establish themselves. At present



they “couch-surf” or move in with family and friends while looking for work or training opportunities, and may move back to the reserve if things do not work out.

Provide Intensive Community Support for Housing

Community support workers (including outreach and advocacy) should be located in all involved agencies and networked together to ensure a connected range of support and referral. The “every door is the right door” model is best. Housing supports must be available to individuals and families as they move between housing situations, including homelessness.

Community support workers linked in a community-based case management model would make some housing options more available. (For example, landlords might be more able to rent to people with mental health issues if adequate supports were in place.) Supports can range from intensive support for mental health clients to less formal supports perhaps delivered by volunteer or peer supports. Community support workers may be able to reduce the incidence of discrimination simply by accompanying those looking for housing.

Here are specific examples of housing outreach services currently working at full capacity and not able to meet the demand:

- Together Against Poverty Society’s tenant advocacy services, to help prevent evictions.
- Downtown Outreach Services or YWCA Supported Independent Living, to help place youth and single people into housing.
- Burnside Gorge Community Association Housing Outreach program, to help place families.

More services like these are needed – either more staff at these locations or more similar services throughout the region. These agencies can be supported by a central housing information and coordination service, potentially delivered through the new Capital Regional District Secretariat on Homelessness.

Housing supports should not be tied to bricks and mortar, so if people are evicted, they will not be entirely without supports.

Suitable housing supports for Aboriginal people must consider culture and racism. Training non-Aboriginal service providers, while important, may not



be enough. Programs that offer services must find a way to ensure connections to the Aboriginal community, including hiring Aboriginal people or seconding staff from Aboriginal organizations.

The Ministry of Child and Family Development needs to provide dedicated service to the 17- to 20-year-old group, particularly short-term, non-group home housing with some supports. Support is needed for youths leaving foster or group home care (and for those still in the care of the Ministry).

Special training and support around youth alcohol and drug use and violent behaviour is needed for alternate youth caregivers.

Provide a Range of Harm Reduction and Treatment Services

Harm reduction may be defined as, “a set of strategies and tactics that encourages people to reduce harm to themselves and their communities, through the sharing of relevant information, facts and practical material tools, that allow them to make informed and educated decisions. Harm reduction strategies meet clients ‘where they are,’ addressing conditions of crisis along with the crisis itself.”

People actively using alcohol or drugs are excluded from a number of services. Service providers need to allow people who are actively using these substances to receive housing, employment and mental health services without first getting their addictions under control. This includes the need for low-barrier or tolerant housing for people who use such substances.

A connected range of services for people in all phases of alcohol or drug use and recovery needs to be offered, from active use (“wet” housing), to detox, to supportive recovery, to residential treatment or outpatient, to “dry” housing.

“It is very hard to get into detox programs. If I could get help my situation would be great. When you're ready you have to go into the detox to get the best result.”

- Survey participant

VIHA and community-based health services should work together more closely to deliver everything from clinical, professional supports to community-based services. We recommend that a wide variety of primary health care and social services be located together in a single building in downtown Victoria. The proposed ACCESS Health Centre will greatly improve the availability of addictions counselling, mental health services and various other supports for



the homeless and marginalized. It will help individuals and families stabilize and participate more fully in the wider society.

Provide Income Supports for People Who are Homeless or Unstably Housed

Adequate Income Assistance

The use of technology to deliver welfare services (the 1-800 number and website) should be a service delivery option, not a requirement. Seeing a welfare officer should be an equal option.

Raise welfare rates by 50% and index them to inflation. Income assistance rates are not adequate to find or maintain housing in the Capital Region. Low rates also prevent people from having sufficient resources to help them find work.

“Income assistance or welfare is OUTRAGEOUSLY low. It is in FACT not possible to meet the cost of living on \$510 a month.”
- Survey participant

Clawback rules that prevent families which receive basic welfare from keeping any money they earn present a barrier to people working and, as a result, affording housing. These rules also apply to single people receiving basic welfare (at present most survive on \$560 per month).

“The process of applying for welfare must be redesigned to assist individuals in need, rather than to discourage, delay and deny.”
- Wallace et al (2006)

Adopt a regionally appropriate version of the Vancouver Fast Track program, which enables community support workers to help clients get welfare money quickly and then move them into housing. This program must recognize that our region has far less single-room occupancy housing than Vancouver.

The Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance should support tenants' efforts to get their damage deposits back. This is particularly a problem for rooming house tenants and “slum houses”.

Expand rental assistance so more people can receive portable rental subsidies. This increases the likelihood that people can compete for available housing – it



levels the playing field. This strategy must be in concert with the development of more affordable housing.

Allow people receiving basic welfare to maintain their health and dental benefits while they make the transition into work.

Employment Supports

The community discussion produced many suggestions for ways we can support people who are homeless as they look for employment. These suggestions are focused here on how particular stakeholders can help: government, businesses, social service agencies and individuals.

Government

- Allow a regional fuel tax to support transit and prevent further fare increases.
- Support the delivery of affordable, good-quality child care for people looking for work, and to add to the stability of homeless children while their parents search for housing.

“I had to quit my full-time job because I was unable to find child care for my daughter, who is under two.”

- Survey participant

Businesses

- Credit unions and banks could offer cheque-cashing services to avoid gouging by cheque-cashing businesses.
- Credit unions and banks could allow people with no ID to open accounts by using community support worker vouchers.
- Employers could pay for Cool Aid or other voice mail services for employees with no phones, to reduce “disappearing employees”.
- Businesses could increase their understanding of the impact of low wages on their employees’ ability to find and maintain housing.
- Employers could offer bus passes for new employees’ first month of work.
- VIATeC could be approached to help with free computer literacy programs for people looking for work, housing and income assistance.



Social Service Agencies

- Increase the number of agencies using the B.C. Transit Ticket Assistance Program, which distributes bus tickets for free through participating agencies. Encourage agencies to give out bus passes instead of tickets whenever possible.
- Develop employment programs (including training) that acknowledge and accommodate participants' unstable housing or homelessness.
- Create a casual labour pool for youth.
- Promote the Project Literacy ID scanning service to prevent lost ID, and offer these services in various downtown locations.
- Provide one-on-one support to help people file taxes, to make sure they get GST and child tax benefits.
- Offer financial literacy classes.
- Offer greater appropriate access to telephones.

Individuals

- Individuals and businesses can help people find and keep jobs by donating clothes, money for transportation or bus tickets and passes, and tools for trades. Such donations can be made at any social service organization for people who are homeless or unstably housed. These donations are needed year round, not just at Christmas.

Provide Short-term Solutions During the Transition to Affordable Housing

The short-term solutions below could make life easier while people are homeless or unstably housed.

Offer a series of workshops on “good tenancy” that could be used in lieu of housing references.

Offer greater appropriate access to telephones, which helps people reach income assistance workers and find housing and employment. For example, offer the use of local phones, or lend local cell phones on \$10 tickets for a specified period of time. Promote the Cool Aid voice mail service.

Support the inclusion of public bathing and toilet facilities downtown. Community centres and other social services could offer showers and laundry facilities on a scheduled basis. Consider promoting participation in the LIFE



program as a way to use free shower facilities; that may then involve people in recreation programs as well, reducing their isolation.

Offer social enterprises such as Calgary's and Ottawa's community laundries.

Increase short-term shelter opportunities (especially in the winter) to meet the need.

Consider an Aboriginal transition house or some other mechanism to support the specific housing needs of Aboriginal women.

Homeless families in Victoria need emergency shelter. Further research is needed as to how this can best be done. This research must be done in collaboration with all interested organizations that work with homeless and unstably housed families.

Engage the Broader Community in Solutions

For example, schools and school districts should be actively involved in discussions and actions on homelessness. Children and youth are affected by the instability of housing. The schools are often first to notice changes in the children. Teachers should be trained to look for housing-related stresses of children. Schools should offer extra supports for those children and include their parents in a positive learning situation.

School boards also have surplus public properties that could be part of affordable housing solutions.

"I would like Gordon Campbell to ensure more affordable housing for low income people. For example, utilize the schools that are being closed, so that rents paid go back to the taxpayer, while providing a decent place – a win/win situation."

- Survey participant



*“My story is no different than anybody else's in this survey.
We are, always have been, and will always be able to love and be loved.”*

“Humans are our best resources. We should take care of them.”

“We are all people and need to be treated as such.”

- Survey Participants



Appendix A - Data Tables

The following report summarizes responses from the Homeless Needs Survey interviews, with 815 participants, including both homeless and unstably housed participants.

Not everyone answered every question. Percentages are calculated based on the number of people who answered each question, which is recorded under each table (n= the number of people who answered each question).

Housing situation: Would you consider yourself in an unstable housing situation or homeless?

Homeless	476 people	58%
Unstably Housed	339 people	42%

n=815

Age: May I ask your age?

Youth (16-25)	96 people	12%
Adults (> 25 years)	696 people	88%

n=792

Children: Do you have children staying with you?

Homeless	16 people
Unstably Housed	68 people

n=815

Gender: What gender do you put down when filling out forms?

Male	515 people	64%
Female	275 people	34%
Transgender / Other	12 people	2%

n=802

Aboriginal identity: What do you put down as your ethnic background when filling out forms?

Aboriginal*	203 people	25%
Non-Aboriginal	595 people	75%

n=798

* including First Nations, Metis, Inuit, Native, Indian



Income sources: What are your sources of income? *(Check all that apply)*

Persons with Disability benefits	263 people	33%
Welfare	223 people	28%
Job (declared)	132 people	17%
Binning	109 people	14%
Panhandling	80 people	10%
Family/Friends	78 people	10%
No Income	72 people	9%
Illegal activities	71 people	9%
Job (under the table)	64 people	8%
Canada Pension Plan	57 people	7%
Persistent Multiple Barriers benefits	44 people	6%
Sex work	30 people	4%
Employment Insurance	20 people	3%
Squeegeeing	16 people	2%
Other*	68 people	8%

n=794

* Other responses included inheritance, GST cheques, Canada Child Tax Benefit, Guaranteed Income Supplement, Old Age Security, Community Volunteer Supplement, Worker's Compensation Benefit

Places people stayed: Over the last month, check all the places you have stayed

Street	341 people	43%
Shelter	315 people	39%
Renting	242 people	30%
Friends	224 people	28%
Hotel	87 people	11%
Hospital	77 people	9%
Family	71 people	9%
Rooming house	70 people	9%
Jail	68 people	9%
Treatment program	34 people	4%
Transition house	28 people	4%
Other*	76 people	10%

n=798

* Other responses included cars, boats, trailers, client's homes, hostels, subsidized housing, empty garages or laundry rooms



Municipality people most often sleep in: In which municipality do you most often sleep?

Victoria	500 people	74%
Saanich	49 people	7%
Esquimalt	34 people	5%
Oak Bay	6 people	1%
Western Communities	33 people	5%
Peninsula	21 people	3%
Salt Spring Island	32 people	5%

n=675

Municipality where people were last stably housed: Before you became homeless or had this unstable housing situation, in which municipality did you live?

In the Capital Regional District	500 people	73%
In B.C.	105 people	16%
Outside B.C.	71 people	11%

n=676

How long since people have felt stably housed: How long has it been since you felt you were in stable housing?

3 months or less	52 people	8%
3 months to under one year	133 people	19%
1 year to under 2 years	80 people	12%
2 years to under 4 years	135 people	20%
4 years to under 10 years	166 people	24%
10 years or more	119 people	17%

n=685

How many times homeless: In the last 10 years (including this time if now homeless), how many times have you been homeless?

Never	249 people	30%
1 time	212 people	26%
2 to 5 times	251 people	31%
6 to 20 times	86 people	11%
More than 20	17 people	2%

n=815



Contributing Factors: What led to your current situation? (*Check all that apply*)

Substance use	327	people	41%
Medical problem	281	people	35%
Social/emotional problem	212	people	27%
Evicted	198	people	25%
Unable to pay rent	175	people	22%
Lost job	173	people	22%
Family/friend conflict	166	people	21%
Unsafe housing	155	people	20%
Unhappy in previous housing	146	people	18%
Divorce/separation	141	people	18%
Very low wage	139	people	18%
Choice	129	people	16%
Domestic violence	127	people	16%
Too long housing lists	122	people	15%
Don't fit into society	96	people	12%
Abuse/neglect by caregiver	96	people	12%
In transition	92	people	12%
Cut off from welfare	72	people	9%
Landlord raised rent	65	people	8%
Released from jail	62	people	8%
Don't qualify for welfare	57	people	7%
Can't live alone	48	people	6%
Prefer not to work	37	people	5%
Aged out of foster care	20	people	2%
Fire	17	people	2%

n=793

Subsidized Housing Waiting Lists: Are you on a waiting list for housing?

Yes	264	people	34%
No	501	people	66%

n=765

Subsidized Housing Waiting Lists: If yes, which waiting list(s)?

B.C. / CRD Housing Registry	192	people	74%
DOS Community Housing Registry	51	people	20%
M'Akola	20	people	8%
Other	55	people	21%

n=246



Length of wait-lists: How long have you been on the waiting list(s)?

One year or less	136 people	58%
Between 1 and 3 years	49 people	21%
More than 3 years	48 people	21%

n=212

Waiting list application updates: How long ago did you update your application or ensure you were still on the list(s)?

Last 3 months	123 people	61%
From 3 months to 6 months	24 people	12%
From 6 months to 1 year	32 people	16%
More than one year	24 people	12%

n=203

Health clinic use: In the last three months, have you used a Health Clinic?

Yes	485 people	59%
No	285 people	41%

n=770

Emergency room use: In the last three months, have you used the hospital emergency room?

Yes	253 people	33%
No	520 people	67%

n=773

Shelter Use: Do you sometimes stay at shelters?

Yes	427 people	57%
No	327 people	43%

n=754

Shelter Turnaways: If yes, have you ever been turned away?

Yes	291 people	71%
No	121 people	29%

n=412

Shelter Turnaway Reasons: If yes, why?

No beds	224 people	82%
Substance use	35 people	12%
Behaviour	32 people	11%
Other*	56 people	19%

n=285

* Other responses included arrived too late, age, criminal record, shelter favouritism, religion



Help find housing: What would help you find housing? (check all that apply)

Affordable housing	591 people	78%
Bus passes/tickets	381 people	50%
Less discrimination	318 people	42%
Advocate	309 people	41%
Phone/Voice mailbox	277 people	37%
Regular income	277 people	37%
Advocate: housing search	270 people	36%
Transportation to see apartments	266 people	35%
Housing support information	249 people	33%
Job	243 people	32%
Shower/laundry facilities	235 people	31%
Personal/housing reference	227 people	30%
Damage/pet deposit	220 people	29%
Advocate: Money issues	208 people	28%
Low cost bank account	190 people	25%
Mental health supports	166 people	22%
Internet access	162 people	21%
Less discrimination: pets	145 people	19%
Advocate: mental health	130 people	17%
Computer literacy	115 people	15%
Less discrimination: criminal record	112 people	15%
Legal supports	112 people	15%
Detox services	107 people	14%
Harm reduction supports	94 people	12%
Advocate: substance use	81 people	11%
Less discrimination: Ethnicity	66 people	9%
Less discrimination: children	57 people	8%
Casual labour pool for youth	54 people	7%
Don't want permanent housing	22 people	3%
Other*	114 people	15%

n= 755

*Other responses included immigration support, physically appropriate housing, increased income assistance, ID

Denied welfare: Have you ever been denied basic welfare?

Yes	299 people	41%
No	428 people	59%

n=727



Denied PWD or PPMB: Have you ever been denied Persons with Disability Benefits (PWD or DB2) or Persistent Multiple Barriers Benefits (PPMB or DB1)?

Yes	179 people	29%
No	445 people	71%

n=624

Social assistance: If you want social assistance, do you need help to get it?

Yes, need help	229 people	39%
No help needed / have social assistance	295 people	50%
Do not want social assistance	69 people	11%

n=593

Support to get social assistance: What kind of help do you need? (*Check all that apply*)

Advocate	160 people	70%
Help getting proper ID	129 people	56%
Help filling out forms	97 people	42%
Social worker or Doctor's Note	94 people	41%
Phone	94 people	41%
Help getting motivated	75 people	33%
Internet access	42 people	18%
Conflict/Anger management	39 people	17%
Computer literacy	32 people	14%
Other*	41 people	16%

n=229

**Other responses included supportive network, transportation, permanent address, legal aid*

Paid work: If you want a job, do you need help to find work?

Yes, need help	284 people	42%
No help needed / have a job	117 people	17%
Can't work / do not want job right now	271 people	40%

n=672



Paid work: What kind of help do you need to find and keep a job? (*Check all that apply*)

Clothing	254 people	54%
Transportation	235 people	50%
Training	228 people	48%
Permanent address	210 people	44%
Phone/Voice Mail	208 people	44%
Education	198 people	42%
Driver's licence	190 people	40%
Help getting proper ID	183 people	39%
Resumé	176 people	37%
Better physical healthcare	168 people	35%
Jobs available	167 people	35%
Tools for trade	167 people	35%
Dental care	162 people	34%
Personal storage	156 people	33%
Better mental healthcare	136 people	29%
Shower facilities	135 people	28%
Help getting motivated	130 people	27%
Alarm clock	115 people	24%
Help fitting in at work	115 people	24%
Addictions resources	111 people	23%
Computer literacy	107 people	23%
Conflict/anger management	63 people	13%
Legal aid	60 people	13%
Work permit	37 people	8%
Child care	35 people	7%
Other*	69 people	15%

n=473

**Other responses included supports for self-employment, eyeglasses, work in my field, personal reference*



Appendix B - Enumeration Form

The following form was used to enumerate people in shelters, institutions, recovery, safe houses and overnight services (including motels). Those enumerated included individuals or families without secure housing on Monday, February 5, 2007.

Please fill out the following based on your records of people WITH NO FIXED ADDRESS staying overnight in your facility, **between 10:00 pm, February 5 and 6:00 am, the following morning** (February 6, 2007). We will contact you prior to the 5th to address any questions you might have.

Facility Name _____

Municipality _____

Regular Capacity Beds _____ Additional Extreme Weather Beds _____

NOTE: This information is confidential and anonymous. No personal identifying data is required. All responses will be aggregated by municipality and presented in a way so as not to identify any individual facility.

How many stayed in your facility on the night of Feb. 5-6?

# Adults _____	Male _____	Female _____
# Youth (16 - 24) _____	Male _____	Female _____
# Children _____	Male _____	Female _____

Turnaways on the night of Feb. 5-6?

# Adults _____	Male _____	Female _____
# Youth (16 - 24) _____	Male _____	Female _____
# Children _____	Male _____	Female _____



Any unusual circumstances that may have affected the count?

**PLEASE FAX THIS FORM to Victoria Cool Aid Society 383-1639 or call us at 414-4788 for us to arrange pick-up, NO LATER THAN NOON (12 PM) on Tuesday, February 6.
Thank you for your participation, Esther.**

Signature of facility contact _____

Time: _____

Print Name _____

Contact phone number _____



Appendix C - Questionnaire

Interviewer Initials _____ Location Number _____ Participant Code _____

Hi, my name is __(first name)__ and I am a volunteer with the Homeless Needs Survey to find out more about housing issues. Information from these questionnaires will help to better plan programs and services for people who are struggling with housing. First I need to ask a couple of questions:

Have you already been interviewed this week by someone wearing a button like this?

- Yes
- No (If Yes, end survey)

To see how this questionnaire applies to your situation, would you consider yourself in an unstable housing situation or homeless?

- Homeless
- Unstable Housing Situation
- Neither (if neither end survey)

Unstable Housing Situation:

- Housing is not affordable (e.g., spending more than 50% of income on rent).
- An eviction notice has been issued and no other housing option is available.
- Overcrowding - there are more people living in the home than rooms available to sleep individuals/couples.
- Housing conditions do not meet basic health and safety standards (e.g., damage to roof/structure, lack of protection from the elements, lack of safe water and sanitation, lack of security/locks and personal safety.)
- Living in a violent/abusive situation in the home.
- Not able to stay or return to home whenever one chooses.

- You may retract your information at any time including after a few days.
- If you decide to do this, come by the Cool Aid office and give them your code (which you will create in a minute) to have the information you have shared removed.
- During the survey you may find you wish to skip a certain question or stop the interview; that is okay.
- When you decide you are finished the interview, we will offer resources you may find helpful to thank you for your time.
- Because this study is confidential, we do not want you to sign anything.

If you have any questions, please ask me now or at any time during the interview.

DO YOU UNDERSTAND THIS? ____ YES ____ NO (Clarify/Discuss)

Informed consent obtained by:

(Interviewer's Initials - print) (Interviewer's signature) (Date)

MAY I ASK FOR YOUR CODE? (Fill in on top of pages.)

- **First, think of your mother's fist name.**
 - The two first letters of your mother's first name _____
 - Your first initial _____
 - The month and year you were born _____

The survey will take 15-30 minutes to complete. Please remember that the answers you give are totally confidential and you can skip a question or stop the survey at any time. Is there anything you need at this time? (Have available coffee, cigarettes, food)



Would you prefer to fill this out yourself or go through the questions together? Is side by side okay?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Think back to Monday night. Were you in a shelter, hospital, jail, or other facility?

- Yes No

1. May I ask your age? ... years old
2. (IF UNDER 18) Are you currently living away from your parent(s) or legal guardian?
3. Do you have children staying with you?
4. What gender do you put down when filling out forms?
5. What do you put down as your ethnic background when filling out forms?
6. What are your sources of income? (Check all that apply)
Would you prefer to check the boxes yourself, or have me read this to you?
Binning (collecting recyclables) hours per day?
Canadian pension plan (CPP)
DB2 / Disability benefits (single gets approx \$856)
DB1 / Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers benefits (single gets approx \$607)
Employment Insurance (EI)
Family/Friends
Illegal activities
Income Assistance/Welfare (single gets approx \$510)
Inheritance
Job (Declared Income) Occupation:
Job (under the table)
Panhandling
Sex trade work
Squeegeeing
No income
Old Age Security (OAS)
Other:
No response

Notes:
Notes:

7. Over the last month, check all the places you have stayed.
Would you prefer to check the boxes yourself, or have me read this to you?



- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> In a treatment program | <input type="checkbox"/> Rented a home/apartment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In foster care | <input type="checkbox"/> Shelter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In jail or prison | <input type="checkbox"/> Single room occupancy hotel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In the hospital | <input type="checkbox"/> Stayed with friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Owned a home | <input type="checkbox"/> Subsidized / social housing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rooming house | <input type="checkbox"/> Transition house |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lived with family | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> On the street / outside | <input type="checkbox"/> No response |

8. In which municipality do you most often sleep? *(Show map)*
 No response

9. Before you became homeless or had this unstable housing situation, in which municipality did you live?
 No response

10. In the last 10 years (including this time if now homeless), how many times have you been homeless?
 _____ times

11. How long has it been since you felt you were in stable housing?
(If possible, be specific)
 Days *(how many?)* _____
 Weeks *(how many?)* _____
 Months *(how many?)* _____
 Years *(how many?)* _____
 No response

12. What led to your current situation? *(Check all that apply)*
Would you prefer to check the boxes yourself, or have me read this to you?

<input type="checkbox"/> Abuse/Neglect by caregiver/foster/parent	<input type="checkbox"/> Illness or medical problem
<input type="checkbox"/> Aging out of foster care	<input type="checkbox"/> In transition
<input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol or drug use	<input type="checkbox"/> Landlord raised rent
<input type="checkbox"/> Can't live by myself	<input type="checkbox"/> Lost job
<input type="checkbox"/> Choice	<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to work
<input type="checkbox"/> Cut off from welfare	<input type="checkbox"/> Released from jail or prison
<input type="checkbox"/> Divorce or separation	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/emotional challenges
<input type="checkbox"/> Domestic violence	<input type="checkbox"/> Too long housing lists
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't qualify for foster care	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to pay rent
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't qualify for welfare	<input type="checkbox"/> Unhappy in previous housing situation
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't seem to fit into society	<input type="checkbox"/> Unsafe housing
<input type="checkbox"/> Eviction	<input type="checkbox"/> Very low wage
<input type="checkbox"/> Family/friend conflict	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Fire	<input type="checkbox"/> No response

13. Are you on a waiting list for housing?

Yes No No response

13a. If yes, which waiting list(s)?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Housing Registry (at DOS office) | <input type="checkbox"/> Pandora Youth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Housing Registry (CRD/ B.C. Housing/Pacifica Housing) | <input type="checkbox"/> M'Akola |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> PWA (Persons with AIDS) |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> No response |



18. What would help you find housing? (Would you prefer to check the boxes yourself, or have me read this to you?)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Affordable housing | <input type="checkbox"/> Legal support |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bus Passes/ Tickets | <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health supports |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Casual Labour Pool for Youth | <input type="checkbox"/> Outreach Worker/ Advocate to help you access services: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computer literacy | <input type="checkbox"/> Housing Search |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Damage/Pet Deposit | <input type="checkbox"/> Substance use |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Detox Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Harm reduction supports | <input type="checkbox"/> Money Issues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Safe Use Supports | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Housing where I can use | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal/Housing References |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Immigration support | <input type="checkbox"/> Phone / Voice mailbox |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Information about housing supports/services | <input type="checkbox"/> Regular Income |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Internet access | <input type="checkbox"/> Shower/laundry facilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Job | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation to see apartments |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Low cost cheque cashing/free bank account | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less Discrimination About: | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't want permanent Housing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pets | <input type="checkbox"/> No response |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ethnicity/Race | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Criminal Record | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | |

Notes:

19. Have you ever been denied basic welfare (employment and income assistance)?

- Yes No No response

20. Have you ever been denied PWD (formerly DB2, single gets approx. \$856) or PPMB (formerly DB1, single gets approx. \$607)?

- Yes No No response

21. If you want social assistance, do you need help to get it?

- Yes No Do not want social assistance No response

21a. If yes, what kind of help do you need?

(Check all that apply)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advocate | <input type="checkbox"/> Help getting proper ID |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computer literacy | <input type="checkbox"/> Phone |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conflict/Anger management | <input type="checkbox"/> Social worker or Doctor's Note |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Help filling out forms | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Help getting motivated | <input type="checkbox"/> No Response |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Internet access | |

22. If you want a job, do you need help to find work?

- Yes Have a job Do not want a job (right now)
 Can't work No response



22a. If yes, what kind of help do you need to find and keep a job?

(Check all that apply)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Better mental healthcare | <input type="checkbox"/> Education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Better physical healthcare | <input type="checkbox"/> Help getting motivated |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dental care | <input type="checkbox"/> Help getting proper ID |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Legal aid | <input type="checkbox"/> Jobs available |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Addictions resources | <input type="checkbox"/> Permanent address |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shower facilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Phone/Voice Mail |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alarm clock | <input type="checkbox"/> Place to store personal stuff |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assistance coping with or
"fitting in" to workplace | <input type="checkbox"/> Resume |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Child care | <input type="checkbox"/> Tools for trade |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clothing | <input type="checkbox"/> Training |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computer literacy | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conflict/Anger Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Work permit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Driver's License | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> No response |

Notes:

23. Is there anything else you would care to share about your story?

No response

Volunteer Closing Script (Please read)

Thank you for participating in our survey. We will be giving the results to decision makers in our region to better plan programs and services. Here is a token of our appreciation (provide a supply pack). Also, here is a card with information about emergency services where you can find medical attention, shelter and where you can find out additional information about housing. Thank you again for your assistance.



Appendix D – Community Conversation Partners

A wide variety of housing stakeholders were engaged in the analysis of the Homeless Needs Survey 2007. This helped to validate the research data. It also helped the researchers identify concrete actions, based on the data, that could be taken to improve the availability of affordable housing and support services in the Capital Region.

Feedback opportunities were provided to the following:

- People who were homeless and unstably housed had an opportunity to respond to a poster summary of results at participating social service agencies.
- Where statistically meaningful data sets allowed, agencies were provided with agency reports summarizing their clients' responses and were asked to comment on the data's accuracies and inaccuracies and to provide context to the information.
- Subpopulation reports were prepared for youth, Aboriginal people, families, Western Communities and Salt Spring Island residents and these reports were shared with relevant agencies with an opportunity to provide feedback and insight.
- A youth Valentine's dinner presentation provided an excellent opportunity to validate youth data.

Many housing stakeholders also provided input in the form of recommendations based on the data from the Homeless Needs Survey 2007 including:

- AIDS Vancouver Island: Miki Hansen
- B.C. Housing, Chuck Braun
- Capital Regional District: Jeremy Tate
- Carole James Constituency Office: Connie McCann
- City of Victoria: Charlayne Thornton-Joe
- Community Council: Jane Worton, Colleen Kasting and Lauren Elving-Klassen
- Cottage Grove Construction: Herman Rebneris
- Pacifica Housing: Brad Crewson
- Umbrella: Gordon Harper
- United Way of Greater Victoria: Maureen Duncan and Chris Poirier-Skelton
- Vancouver Island Health Authority: Kelly Reid
- Victoria Cool Aid Society: Kathy Stinson, Don McTavish, Irene Haigh-Gidora, John Crean and Dr. Bernie Pauly
- Victoria Native Friendship Centre: Bruce Parisian
- Victoria Steering Committee on Homelessness: Andrew Lane



Appendix E - Contact Information

The Homeless Needs Survey 2007 was led by the Victoria Cool Aid Society with research support from the Community Council. The project was managed by Alan Rycroft, and the lead researcher was Jane Worton.

Victoria Cool Aid Society
102-749 Pandora Avenue
Victoria B.C. V8W 1N9
Canada

(250) 383-1977
(250) 383-1639 fax

society@Coolaid.org
www.Coolaid.org

Community Council
1144 Fort Street
Victoria B.C. V8V 3K8
Canada

(250) 383-6166
(250) 385-6712

info@communitycouncil.ca
www.communitycouncil.ca



Appendix F - References and Resources

References

B.C. Ministry of Social Development and Economic Security (2001). The Costs of Homelessness in British Columbia. Victoria, British Columbia.

Benoit, Cecilia; Jansson, S. Mikael; Hallgrimsdottir, Helga Kristin; & Roth, Eric (2007, in press). Street Youth's Life Course Transitions. Comparative Social Research.

Burnside Gorge Community Association (2006a). Homeless Families Outreach Project Study. Victoria, British Columbia.

Burnside Gorge Community Association (2006b). Homeless Families Outreach Project Fact Sheet. Victoria, British Columbia.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (2001). Number and Incidence of Non-Farm, Non-Reserve, Non-Band Private Households in Core Housing Need (REVISED) by Tenure for Canada, British Columbia and the Capital Regional District, using Statistics Canada census-based housing indicators and data.

Capital Regional District (2007). Capital Regional District Regional Housing Affordability Strategy. CRD Planning and Protective Services. Victoria, British Columbia.

City of Winnipeg (2004). City of Winnipeg Bylaw No. 35/2004. Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Carriere, Gisele (2004). Use of Hospital Emergency Rooms. Health Reports Vol. 16 (1). pp. 35-39.

Drever, Anita. (1999). Homeless Count Methodologies: An Annotated Bibliography Prepared for the Institute for the Study of Homelessness and Poverty. Los Angeles, CA: University of California Weingart Center.

Gaetz, Stephen (2004). Understanding Research on Homelessness in Toronto: A Literature Review. Toronto, Ontario: York University.

Health Canada (2006). I-track: Enhanced surveillance of risk behaviours among injecting drug users in Canada. Surveillance and Risk Assessment Division, Centre for Infectious Disease Prevention. Ottawa, Ontario.



Health Canada (2004). I-track: Enhanced surveillance of risk behaviours among injecting drug users in Canada. Surveillance and Risk Assessment Division, Centre for Infectious Disease Prevention. Ottawa, Ontario.

Hulchanski, J. David (2000). A New Canadian Pastime? Counting Homeless People: Addressing and preventing homelessness is a political problem, not a statistical or definitional problem. Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Centre for Urban and Community Studies.

Kasting, Colleen & Artz, Sibylle (2005). Homeless Outreach Projects for Single Parent Families /What Happens to the Children? Irish Journal of Applied Social Studies Vol. 6 (1).

Novac, Sylvia (1996). No Room of her own: A literature review on women and homelessness. Ottawa, Ontario: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Rudlin Jonathan (2004). Aboriginal Peoples and the Justice System. Accessed at http://www.ipperwashinquiry.ca/policy_part/research/pdf/Rudin.pdf.

SPARC B.C. (2005). On our streets and in our shelters. Results of the 2005 Greater Vancouver Homeless Count September 2005. Vancouver, British Columbia: SPARC B.C.

Stajduhar, K., Poffenroth L., & Wong, E (2002). Missed opportunities: Putting a face on injection drug use and HIV/AIDs in the Capital Health Region. Scientific Monograph 10. Vancouver, British Columbia: Centre for Health Evaluation and Outcome Sciences.

VIHA - Vancouver Island Health Authority (2006): I-track: Enhanced surveillance of risk behaviours and prevalence of HIV and Hepatitis C among people who inject drugs Victoria, British Columbia: Epidemiology and Disease Control and Population Health Surveillance Unit, Vancouver Island Health Authority.

Wallace, Bruce (2000). Brushed Aside. Vancouver Island Public Interest Research Group. Victoria, British Columbia.

Wallace, Bruce; Klein, Seth; & Reitsma-Street, Marge (2006). Denied assistance: Closing the front door on welfare in B.C. Vancouver, British Columbia: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.



Additional Resources

Here are some great web resources where you can learn more about homelessness and connect with others to get involved.

Homeless Nation: Created in 2002, Homeless Nation is an excellent online resource created by and for homeless people in Canada. You don't have to be homeless to join the groups and the Victoria local group is actively posting blogs and videos that are very informative about the day to day reality of housing instability in our community: www.homelessnation.org

Stop Homelessness: In Vancouver, this website has great educational resources about homelessness under the "How to Help" and "Learn More" sections: www.stophomelessness.ca

Victoria Cool Aid Society: You can find information about Cool Aid's housing initiatives and the 2005 Homeless Count on their website: www.Coolaid.org

Spare Some Change: Online Homelessness Search engine with links to homelessness organizations and resources around the world. www.sparesomechange.com

National Homelessness Initiative: The federal government's homelessness strategy: www.homelessness.gc.ca

Raising the Roof: Created in 1996, this is a nationwide organization that works to share strategies, campaigning and fundraising to end homelessness in Canada. www.raisingtheroof.org

The Ladybug Foundation: Founded by Hannah, a 10 year-old girl from Winnipeg, this charity works to raise awareness and funds to assist organizations that work to end homelessness. Very interesting resource with lots of ideas. www.ladybugfoundation.ca

Hide and Go Homeless: In September 2004, a group of young people and a social worker in Victoria made a documentary film that challenges the way society and government portrays and addresses the issue of homelessness and poverty. There are a few videos to watch and some written information about the project on the website. Requires Real Player to view: <http://citizen.nfb.ca/onf/info?did=661>

Quality of Life Challenge: Since 1999, The Quality of Life Challenge has been an initiative for people from all walks of life, organizations, businesses and income levels to work together to create a sustainable quality of life for everyone in B.C.'s Capital Region. The Challenge focuses on three key areas: Housing, Sustainable Incomes and Community Connections: www.qolchallenge.ca or call 383-6166.



The City of Victoria Steering Committee on Homelessness: Learn about City initiatives at:
www.victoria.ca/cityhall/currentprojects_homelessness.shtml
Or call Chris Coleman, Chair at 361-0223.