

Homelessness in Northeastern Ontario

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Background

- Needed to obtain information about the “state of homelessness” in northeastern Ontario.
- Prior to 2010
 - Nine studies in Sudbury showed that the size of the homeless population was approximately 400 to 600 people in a city of 160,000 (0.3%).

Northern CURA: Poverty, Homelessness and Migration (PHM)

- A 6-year research project of the Centre for Research in Social Justice and Policy at Laurentian University.
 - PHM received an extension for the CURA project to 08-2016.
- Working with 10 communities in the vast area of northeastern Ontario and 1 in southern ON.
- Partner communities include:
 - 3 northern cities: Sudbury, Timmins, North Bay.
 - 4 towns: Cochrane, Hearst, Moosonee, Iroquois Falls.
 - 3 First Nations: Constance Lake, Fort Albany, Kashechewan.
 - London, ON

Ontario



PHM is bilingual and tri-cultural.

Works with communities in northeastern ON:

- Anglophone
- Francophone
- First Nation

Qualitative Data

- Digital storytelling: 16 digital stories and 20 hours of video recordings
- Photovoice: 1297 photos
- Interviews: 342
- Focus groups: 10
- Case studies/narrative studies: 12
- Mixed methods, 3-year follow-up study: 264 structured interviews (97 participants in yr. 1)

Objective of Period Prevalence Counts (PPC)

- ◎ To gather information about homelessness:
 - Socio-demographic and linguistic/cultural characteristics;
 - Forms of homelessness
 - Absolute, at risk, chronic, episodic;
 - Subgroups: families, youth, military service, etc.
 - Histories of homelessness;
 - Physical and mental health;
 - Reasons for homelessness;
 - Migration patterns;
 - Service use;
 - Current needs.
 - Some unique questions added to the 2015 PPC in Sudbury.

Definitions of Homelessness

- ⦿ **At Risk:**
 - Elevated risk due circumstances such as low wages, inability to pay rent, eviction, illness, violence.
- ⦿ **Absolute:**
 - No home of their own or home is not suitable for human habitation (e.g., sleeping outdoors, squats).
 - Unsheltered.
 - Emergency sheltered.
- ⦿ **Chronic:**
 - People who have been continuously homeless for approximately 1 year or more.
- ⦿ **Episodic:**
 - People who frequently experience homelessness.
- ⦿ **Hidden homelessness**
 - Invisible forms (couch surfing, concealed households, doubling up, tripling up etc.).
 - Individuals may not define themselves as homeless.

Methodology: Community surveys and PPCs

- Studies provide information about poverty, housing and the number of homeless people:
 - include absolutely homeless and provisionally accommodated/at-risk.
- Assistance from local agencies in conducting PPCs:
 - shelters, health services, social services, and other services supporting poor and homeless persons.
 - door-to-door community surveys in Hearst, Moosonee, and Cochrane.

Methodology for PPCs

- Used a structured questionnaire to collect the data from people using each service.
- Each PPC study conducted for 7 consecutive days.
- Community surveys conducted over 2 weeks (systematic sample door-to-door).
- Study design allows for the exclusion of duplicate cases.

Unduplicated Participants

Number of unduplicated participants in the PPC studies and community surveys:

2011 to 2015	5 895
2000 to 2009	4 783
TOTAL	10 678

- Community surveys provide for a comparison between homeless and housed individuals.

Comparison of communities participating in PHM studies

- ⦿ Poverty, Homelessness and Migration studies
- ⦿ Cities:
 - Sudbury (Anglophone, Francophone and Indigenous)
 - Timmins (Anglophone, Francophone and Indigenous)
 - North Bay (Mix of Anglophone, Francophone and Indigenous but predominantly Anglophone)
- ⦿ Towns:
 - Hearst (primarily Francophone town)
 - Moosonee (primarily Indigenous town)
 - Cochrane (mix of Anglophone, Francophone and Indigenous)

Comparing PPC results on homelessness in northern Ontario (PHM)

⦿ Excluding community surveys, unduplicated cases (including children):

- Sudbury (main urban centre, 160,000):
 - 2015 — 1540
- Timmins (pop. 43,165) 2011: 720
- North Bay (pop. 53,650) 2011: 513
- Hearst (pop. 5,090) 2011: 71
- Moosonee (pop. 1,725) 2012: 362
- Cochrane (pop. 5,295) 2013: 333

Comparison of results from previous studies (1)

- ◎ Gaetz, Donaldson, Richter & Gulliver (2013).
 - The State of Homelessness in Canada 2013
 - Homeless Hub Paper #4
 - Vancouver, Kelowna, Red Deer, Lethbridge, Toronto
- ◎ Poverty, Homelessness and Migration
 - Sudbury, Timmins, North Bay

Results: Comparison with previous studies (2)

Location & year	Total count	As a % of pop.
Vancouver (2012)	1,602	0.27
Kelowna (2007)	279	0.24
Red Deer (2012)	279	0.31
Lethbridge (2012)	99	0.12
Toronto (2009)	5,086	0.19
Timmins (2011)	720	1.67
North Bay (2011)	513	0.98
Sudbury (2015)	1,540	0.96

Conclusions

- ⦿ A number of indicators point towards underlying factors linked to the rise of homelessness:
 - Gap between social assistance benefits and requirements of rent and basic needs.
 - Lack of affordable housing.
- ⦿ Need information about hidden homelessness.
- ⦿ Less undercounting with improved methods for measuring homelessness:
 - 2/3 of agencies allowed for data collection.
 - Small payment of \$5-\$10 to participants.
 - Inclusion of outlying areas and food banks.

Examples of potential future analyses on homelessness in northeastern Ontario

- ◎ Hidden homelessness.
- ◎ Histories of homelessness.
- ◎ Particular subgroups:
 - Older adults, youth
 - Indigenous people
 - People with military service
 - Fathers
- ◎ Mixed methods analysis

Thank you, merci, miigwetch

Contact us:

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