



Giving Hope Today

Poverty shouldn't be a life sentence

A report on the perspectives of service delivery
in Salvation Army shelters.

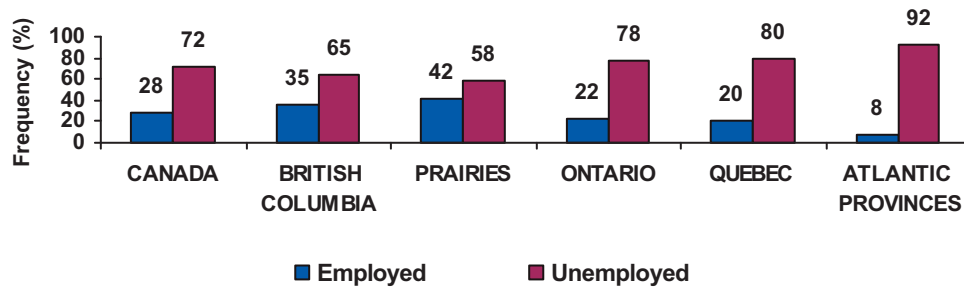
The persistence of poverty continues today largely because of an indifference that is morally unacceptable and unnecessary. Estimates from Statistics Canada show that 1 in 10 Canadians – or almost 3.5 million people – live in poverty. Add to this the large number of Canadians who recently lost jobs or income due to the economic crisis and the enormity of this problem is numbing. But, there is hope.

The tragedy of poverty is widespread and demands action. The Salvation Army answers the needs of those in poverty everyday – serving some 1.5 million Canadians each year facing all sorts of personal crises. We conducted a study in 2008 that surveyed hundreds of men facing extreme poverty and using our shelter services. We asked them about their lives, their needs and their experiences. By providing this information, we want to educate Canadians on the root causes of homelessness and severe poverty. We're also releasing these findings during the month of May as we raise money for the annual Red Shield Campaign, which supports our services to the poor. You can join us by helping to end the cycle of extreme poverty. Learn how. Spread the word! Visit www.SalvationArmy.ca

The following is information on homelessness that you need to know...

More than one-quarter of the homeless men surveyed are employed

Employment status of individuals, by region (Total number surveyed: 469)

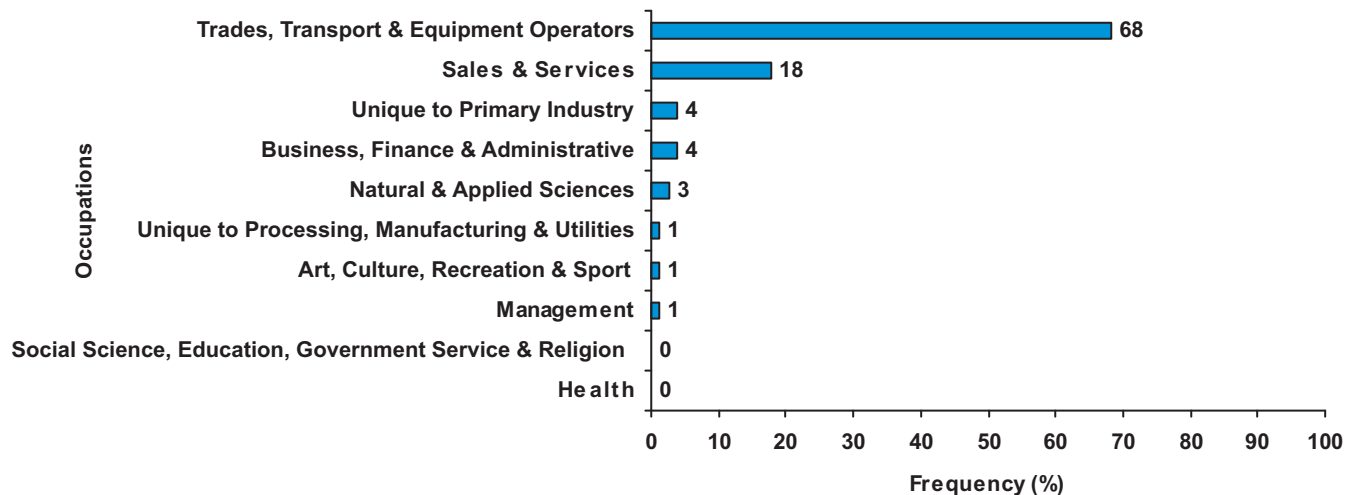


More than one-quarter of the homeless men surveyed indicated that they were employed in some capacity. This finding is consistent with recent studies that have demonstrated an increase in the number of Canadians who are employed and experiencing homelessness.¹ Remarkably, more than 40 percent of those surveyed in the Prairies region reported having a job. Many of these individuals work temporary jobs. These positions are typically low-paying, infrequent and on a need-only basis. Respondents said that a well paying, steady job would enable them to move into permanent housing.

- In this study, 72 percent of participants were unemployed, yet a mere 6 percent had accessed employment assistance services.
- Access to employment services and resources must be improved in order for social service agencies to meet clients' needs.
- Many of the individuals in this study discussed the difficulty of retaining stable employment while experiencing homelessness.

Since our study, the recession has cut more than 350,000 jobs, increasing Canada's unemployment rate to a seven-year high of 8.0 percent, as of March 2009.²

Occupational areas of employed respondents (Total number surveyed: 79)



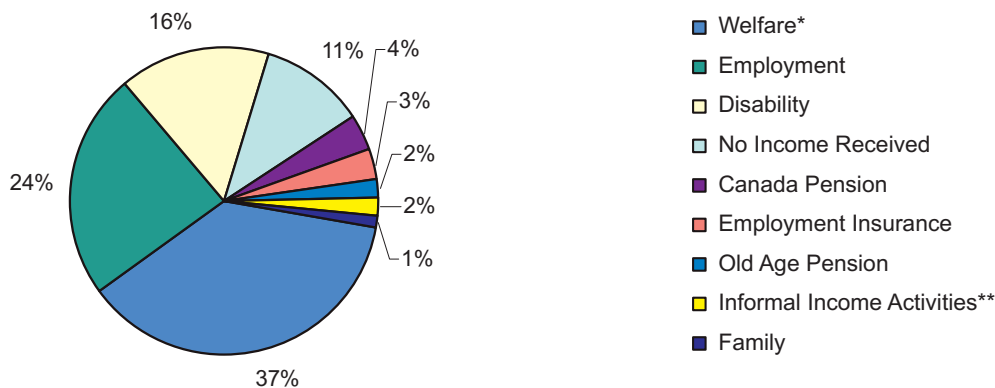
“ You don't know where to start... You don't know what to do to recover your dignity. It's hard to get out of there. It's a wheel because a lot of times people put a stamp on you and a lot of doors close because of that.”

– Quebec shelter user

Nearly two-thirds of shelter users receive income from welfare or a job

Sources of Income (Total number of responses: 542)

Individuals were allowed to respond to more than one category



* Includes Personal Needs Allowance (PNA); ** Other sources include: criminal activity, collecting bottles, panhandling, etc.

The surveyed shelter users received minimal income and experienced serious financial crises.

- Of those surveyed, 37 percent were on welfare and 24 percent received income from a low-paying job.
- This study revealed that many shelter users relied on social assistance; however, the amount that they receive is generally not enough to afford housing.
- It was recommended by service providers that Salvation Army shelters provide clients with financial services. Specifically, staff would assist their clients with financial management skills and connect them to financial resources.

The income gap between the rich and poor has widened over the past ten years and income inequality is greater in Canada than it is in most other developed countries.³

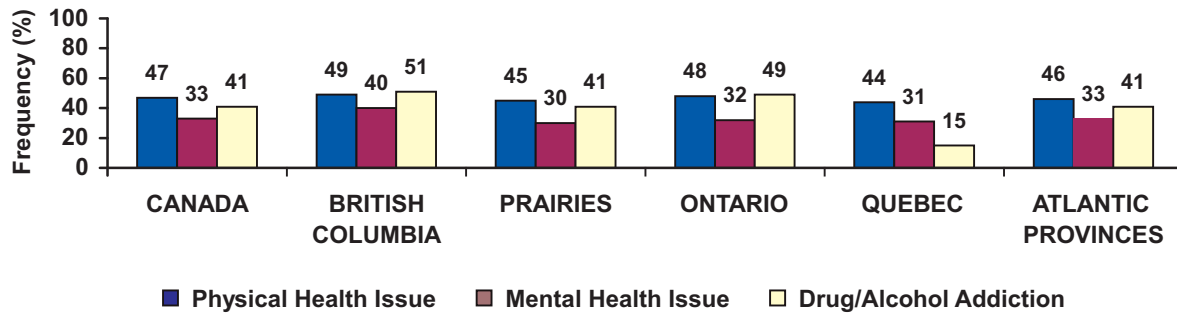
“ In my case, I get enough money each month to live. I get over twelve hundred dollars a month - Old Age Pension, Canada Pension and supplement, so that should be enough for me to live on, but I’m having a terrible time trying to find affordable housing.”

— British Columbia shelter user

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Nearly half of all shelter users surveyed suffer from health care and addiction related problems.

Individuals, by region, suffering from an ongoing physical or mental health condition, or a drug or alcohol related addiction (Total number surveyed: 469)



The results of this study demonstrate that an alarmingly high rate of homeless men face a number of serious health problems. These issues range in severity and frequently pertain to mental health, physical health and addictions to drugs and alcohol.

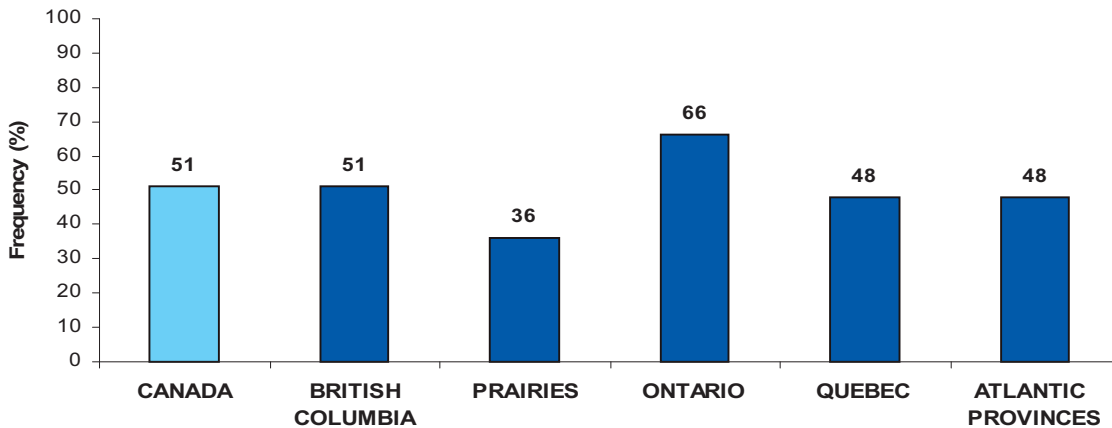
- The relationship between health and homelessness moves in two directions: For some individuals, their health problems have caused their homelessness, while others experience health problems as a by-product of their homelessness.
- Shelter users were not required to disclose any specifics about their physical health condition. Nevertheless, a large number of participants indicated that they were suffering from diabetes, arthritis, Hepatitis C and HIV.
- Service providers acknowledged that gaining access to treatment for addictions could move homeless individuals toward permanent housing.

“ I used to own my own home, and I had a brain hemorrhage and couldn’t work, so I lost my home. So I came and lived at The Salvation Army. You can’t really call this a home, it’s more like a residence.”

– Atlantic Province shelter user

Affordable housing is seen as the first step toward resolving homelessness

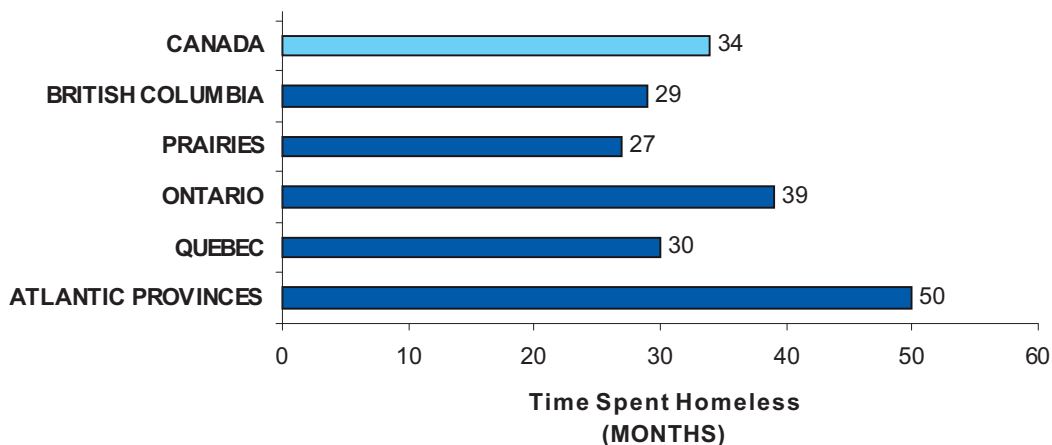
Respondents, by region, who have recently looked for permanent housing
(Total number of responses: 469)



Shelter users said that attaining housing would be the first step toward resolving many of the issues commonly associated with homelessness. Almost all the shelter users surveyed said they want to move into permanent housing and more than half reported that they have searched for housing in the past.

- On average, shelter users have been homeless for nearly three years. A lack of low-income housing causes shelters to become long-term housing replacements for some users.
- Currently, Canada does not have enough affordable and permanent housing to accommodate the homeless population.
- Salvation Army service providers said they struggle daily to help individuals transition into stable living environments.

Average number of months spent homeless by region (Total number surveyed: 469)



“It's not having a place to hang your hat and feel safe.”

– British Columbia shelter user's response when asked to define the meaning of being homeless

Concluding Statement

The bottom line is that there is an interest and need for permanent housing. Access to affordable housing was frequently cited as the number one service needed to move the homeless into stable living environments. However, the provision of housing by itself does not resolve the problem of homelessness. Factors such as unemployment, mental and physical health and addictions to drugs or alcohol can prevent some individuals from maintaining a permanent residency. Social supports must be available to enable successful transitions into housing and prevent individuals from falling back into homelessness.

The Salvation Army believes that a comprehensive approach – emphasizing job training, health care, spiritual care and counselling, is an important first step towards breaking the cycle of extreme poverty. These services should be targeted at the major needs of the homeless population, and they should be easily accessible to all shelter users.

The Salvation Army urges the federal government to develop a national housing strategy that includes ending homelessness as a priority. Without a national framework, addressing all of these issues at its foundation, individuals experiencing homelessness and poverty will continue to have difficulty building permanent and safe lives

About The Salvation Army

- The Salvation Army provides direct, compassionate, hands-on service to over 1.5 million people.
- The organization is the largest non-governmental direct provider of social services in Canada, serving 400 communities across the country.
- The Salvation Army assists thousands with chronic drug and alcohol related addictions each year. In 2008, approximately 2,000 people successfully completed addiction programs.
- Thousands of people, providing more than 1.4 million volunteer hours, work alongside Salvation Army officers and employees to provide direct service to those in need.
- The organization currently provides nearly 6,400 emergency and short-term transitional housing beds for men, women and families across the country, each night. This accounts for more than one-quarter of all shelter beds in Canada

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to identify perspectives of service delivery in Salvation Army emergency shelters as experienced by shelter users and service providers. The secondary purpose of this study was to gain perspectives of homelessness amongst Salvation Army shelter users and service providers.

To be eligible for the study, participants had to be male and using Salvation Army emergency shelter services. Single males were the focus of this study because they are the largest demographic group of homeless individuals throughout most of Canada's cities. Interviews were completed between November 2007 and March 2008. A total number of 469 shelter users, from 21 emergency shelters, participated in the study. To ensure a representative sample set, the number of respondents varied by region and depended upon the number of emergency shelter beds available within each locale.

*A detailed survey methodology is available upon request from Andrew Burditt, Territorial Public Relations Director: andrew_burditt@can.salvationarmy.org

Report Citations:

- ¹ Snow, D. (2008). *A roof over our heads 2008: Affordable housing and homelessness policy in Canada*. Calgary, Alberta: Canada West Foundation.
- ² Perry, Ann. *Jobless rate at 7-year high. Unemployment rises to eight per cent as Canada sheds 61,000 more jobs in March* – The Toronto Star, April 9, 2009.
- ³ Statistics Canada (December 2006). *Revisiting Wealth Inequality: Perspectives on Labour and Income*. Vol. 7, No. 12. Ottawa, Ontario.



Giving Hope Today

Get Involved During the May Red Shield Campaign!

The Salvation Army's Red Shield Campaign is an annual fundraising event now in its 90th year. The campaign utilizes online, phone, direct-mail and door-to-door appeals to solicit donations from generous donors. Throughout this month, The Salvation Army will spread awareness and advocate on behalf of Canada's poor.

Two ways to help:

- **Donate** Make a donation or contribution to The Salvation Army
Online: www.SalvationArmy.ca
Phone: 1-800-SAL-ARMY (725-2769)
Mail: The Salvation Army
 2 Overlea Blvd.
 Toronto, ON M4H 1P4
- **Volunteer** Find out how you can volunteer your time at a local
 Salvation Army shelter:
www.SalvationArmy.ca/volunteer