Homelessness in Timmins, January 2011
Final Report

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POVERTY HOMELESSNESS AND MIGRATION
PAUVRETÉ SANS-ABRISME ET MIGRATION
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The essential contribution of homeless people in northern communities must be well recognized. We could not conduct the Poverty, Homelessness and Migration without their participation and willingness to share personal information. The service providers in our communities comprise another group that has made this study possible. They have assisted in many ways, such as providing feedback on methodology, facilitating access to service users, collecting information for the study, and discussing implications and recommendations. The commitment shown by Timmins service providers in helping with the project, despite ongoing service pressures, has been truly remarkable. A comprehensive enumeration of the homeless population could not be accomplished without their help.

In particular, we gratefully acknowledge the helpful suggestions, comments and assistance of the following people in various phases of this study:

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2. Caitlyn Lefebvre, Timmins Native Friendship Centre;
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5. Joseph Menzies, Research Assistant, Poverty, Homelessness and Migration;
6. Graduate and undergraduate students taking courses at Laurentian University and Université de Hearst, as well as Northern College, and working for Poverty, Homelessness and Migration in 2011.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This report provides a detailed portrait of the homeless population in Timmins by providing information on the following points:

- the numbers of people who, during the week of 24 to 30 January 2011, were at risk of becoming homeless or were absolutely homeless in Timmins;
- the background characteristics including children, youth, women, men, subgroups in the homeless population (i.e. those of Anglo/European origins, Aboriginal people, and Francophones) in Timmins;
- the sources of income of homeless people in Timmins;
- reasons for homelessness; and
- trends in referral of homeless people.

Defining Homelessness

The current project adopted an inclusive definition of homelessness by taking into account people who were vulnerable to becoming homeless in addition to those who were absolutely homeless at the time of the study. This definition views homeless people as those who are absolutely, periodically, or temporarily without shelter, as well as those who are at substantial risk of losing their housing in the immediate future. The broader definition of homelessness makes possible the development of strategies that address the problems that go beyond an emergency response and that deal with the fundamental causes of homelessness thereby preventing homelessness.

Research Methodology

- A period prevalence count was conducted of the homeless population using emergency shelters, social service agencies, and other services supporting this population in Timmins.
- The study identified individuals who were absolutely homeless and those who were at risk of becoming homeless.
- The study was conducted over seven consecutive days at the end of January, 2011.
- A structured questionnaire was used to obtain information about background characteristics, types of income support, the main reasons for homelessness, physical and mental health problems and referral patterns.
Key Findings

- The analysis to identify unduplicated cases indicated that there were 720 different individuals who were homeless during the week of the study.
- The temperatures during the week of the study ranged from daily highs of -5 to -15 °C and daily lows of -15 to -31 °C.

Total homeless population

- The total homeless population (high-risk and absolutely homeless) identified in the study (n=720) included 257 infants, children and adolescents under age 15.
- The majority of homeless people were adults in their 20s, 30s, 40s or 50s.
- Aboriginal people were greatly over-represented among the homeless population. Overall, 39% of homeless people were Aboriginals.
- The most frequently reported source of income was the Ontario Disabilities Support Program (31%).
- While the relative importance of self-reported reasons for homelessness differed somewhat for various subgroups, the central reasons were the same: taken together, the structural and systemic problems of unemployment, problems with social assistance, and the lack of affordable housing accounted for the largest proportion of homelessness.

Absolute homelessness

- Absolutely homeless people made up close to a third (30%) of the homeless people who used the services of the participating agencies.
- Nearly half (43%) were women. Less than half of the absolutely homeless people were between the ages of 20 and 59. Children and youth up to age 14 comprised 41% of the absolutely homeless population in Timmins; moreover, children and youth up to the age of 19 comprised 51% of this population. Combining the number of women with children and youth under age 20 indicates that, together, they constitute about two-thirds of those who are absolutely homeless in Timmins.
- Francophones were under-represented in the homeless population in comparison to their numbers in the general population (20% of absolutely homeless people as opposed to 40% of the total population of Timmins).
Aboriginal people were greatly over-represented among homeless people. They comprised well over a third of the absolutely homeless population (41%) but 8% of the total population in Timmins (2006 Census).  

About a quarter of those who were absolutely homeless indicated that they did not receive any government benefits. Those not accessing government benefits reported that they had no income, had some employment income or were receiving some financial support from family members or a private pension.

Problems with income security programs, notably Ontario Disabilities Support Program (ODSP) and Ontario Works (OW), identified by 27% as a source of income, were said to be directly linked to homelessness. This was cited by all absolutely homeless participants.

The inability to pay rent is clearly linked to poverty and low wages; 72 people reported that they were evicted, did not have enough money to pay rent or their housing was inadequate.

A number of homeless people indicated that struggles with substance abuse were related to homelessness. This was identified as a cause of absolute homelessness by 33 individuals.

A majority (75%) of absolutely homeless people reported that they were not referred to other services.

**Recommendations**

Forty-one recommendations were identified on the basis of the findings of the Timmins study and prior research on homelessness in Sudbury. These recommendations were reviewed and prioritized by 35 participants at a Community Forum in Timmins on April 25, 2012. The participants collectively identified 37 recommendations as relevant for Timmins. The top five recommendations focus on services for homeless people, shelters, beds and transitional housing, public housing, inter-agency collaboration, and community-based prevention programs for youth.

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1 At the time this report was prepared, the 2011 census data pertaining to linguistic groups and background had not been released. Only data on population counts and age groups were available.
INTRODUCTION

On a per capita basis, poverty, housing need and homelessness are as acute in northern communities as in the southern regions of Canada and they have been persistent problems through times of economic boom and bust. While little information is available about homelessness in communities within northeastern Ontario, such as Timmins, we know that the extent and nature of the homelessness problem in Sudbury remained largely unchanged between 2000 and 2009 (Kauppi, Gasparini, Pallard, Garg, Montgomery & Webster, 2009). However, the quality of housing available to low income people has deteriorated since 2000 given low rental vacancy rates, strong rental demand and increases in rents (CMHC, 2011).

Knowledge about the size of homeless populations, characteristics of homeless people and living circumstances within near northern regions of Canada is limited and superficial. Those who have not experienced homelessness, including service providers who support this population, often have difficulty comprehending the nature of the challenging life experiences and circumstances and their varied impacts on homeless persons. Given the human and systemic costs, it is vital to acquire a better understanding of homelessness within cities in northern regions of Ontario in order to ensure that people’s needs are met. In addition, research on issues of deep poverty and homelessness can support local initiatives to make positive changes, including advocacy for policies that can prevent and eliminate homelessness.

The major objective of the Poverty, Homelessness and Migration (PHM) Project is to examine the extent of homelessness in northeastern Ontario communities to gain a better understanding of the issues related to forms of homelessness including absolute homelessness and near homelessness and patterns of migration and transience. This report addresses the findings from the period prevalence count conducted in the community of Timmins in January 2011.

Defining Homelessness

In reviewing the literature on homelessness for the Political and Social Affairs Division of the Parliamentary Research Branch, Casavant (1999) noted that the various definitions of homelessness used in research may be viewed as a continuum, with the most extreme, restrictive definition comprising people who do not have shelter:

At one extreme on this continuum, a “homeless” person is defined solely with reference to the absence of shelter in the technical sense... But, although a large
sector of the community has adopted this definition, and uses the term “homeless” exclusively to describe people living on the street or in emergency shelters, and although all of the researchers and field workers agree that such people certainly ought to be characterized as homeless, many think that this is too restrictive a definition” (p. 2).

Like the earlier studies on homelessness in Sudbury (Kauppi et al., 2009), the current project adopted an inclusive definition of homelessness by taking into account people who were precariously housed and vulnerable to becoming homeless in addition to those who were absolutely homeless at the time of the study. This approach is similar to that taken by the Mayor’s Homelessness Action Task Force, in Toronto. The definition used in the Toronto study was based on work by Daly (1996) and views homeless people as those who are absolutely, periodically, or temporarily without shelter, as well as “those who are at substantial risk of being on the street in the immediate future” (p. 24). As Peressini, McDonald and Hulchanski (2010, p. 2) have noted, the use of “relative definitions”, which are broad and inclusive, can ensure that the study includes a “representative sample of all the constituent groups”. The broader definition of homelessness enables the development of strategies to address the problems that go beyond emergency response to deal with the fundamental causes of homelessness thereby preventing homelessness.

Similarly, Casavant (1999) observed that many researchers and service providers believe that defining homelessness in terms of the absolute absence of shelter (i.e., the unsheltered homeless population) is overly restrictive. Therefore, in order to gain a better understanding of the dimensions of the problem in Timmins, this study has identified and enumerated those who were absolutely without housing as well as those at risk of becoming homeless.

**Absolutely homeless**

We defined absolute homelessness as situations in which a homeless person does not have a place that he/she considers to be home or a place where he/she sleeps regularly. The questionnaire provided the following definition:

You are homeless if:
- You have no place to call home OR
- Your home is neither a room, an apartment, nor a house, OR
- Your room, apartment or house is not your own OR
- You either stay there four times a week or less OR
**Homelessness in Timmins, January 2011**

- You have no arrangement to sleep there regularly.

**At-risk for homelessness (relative homelessness)**

Due to particular circumstances, a person is at an elevated risk for homelessness (i.e. pending eviction, extremely low income, familial abuse, inability to pay rent, existing medical condition with no benefits etc.). As Peressini et al. (2010) observed, studies employing relative definitions must sample from a wide range of locations to cover the greatest number of sites where persons at risk of homeless may be found.

**Migration or transience**

Transience was described by Pollio (1997) as comprising four dimensions based on the concepts of migration, duration, intention and involvement. We adopted this definition in our 2009 survey of homeless people in Sudbury (Kauppi et al., 2009) but we also drew on the earlier work of Rahimian et al. (1992) who argued that definitions of migration used for domiciled populations may not be helpful in understanding migration among homeless persons. Building on a study by Rahimian et al. (1992), our definition of migration includes three groups: individuals who have been in the community less than one year are viewed as recent migrants, those who have been in the community between one to five years are considered to be intermediate-term migrants and stayers have been in the community more than five years.

**Hidden Homelessness**

It is difficult to identify the hidden homeless population. This subgroup of the homeless may include people who “double up” by permitting a homeless person to live with them. Some consider doubling up or “double bunking” to be a type of homelessness since it can create housing situations involving overcrowding. A key factor that may create a challenge in counting the “hidden homeless” is the reluctance of low income residents in subsidized housing units to reveal how they are “doubling up” because of fear that they will be penalized if the housing authority were to find out that someone was staying with them. “Double bunking” is often not permitted by public housing authorities. The study of homelessness in Timmins included the hidden homeless who accessed services during the week of the period prevalence count. However, those who did not use services did not have an opportunity to participate in the study.
Estimating Homeless Populations

Defining homelessness, counting or estimating the size of the homeless population, and determining an appropriate methodology for studying homeless people continue to be somewhat problematic (Counting Homelessness, 2010). In prior studies on homelessness in Sudbury, a decision was made to utilize service-based techniques (Kauppi & Lemieux, 2000). This method was described by Iachan & Dennis in 1993 (cited in Peressini, McDonald, & Hulchanski, 1996). These authors identified 14 studies of homelessness employing a service-based method and classified them into three groups.

- The first set of studies employed sub-samples of service system locations (e.g., shelters, soup kitchens, day programs) because they can be surveyed inexpensively and cover most of the population.
- The second set of studies used probability samples of shelter and street locations to reduce the potential for bias due to under-coverage and limitations of service systems.
- A final set of studies, representing a compromise approach, focuses on service system samples, but also include either purposive or partial samples of high-density street locations.

Researchers working in this field have noted the difficulties in studying this population; a key problem is that particular subgroups in the population are not captured in “homeless counts” that use particular types of methodologies, such as 24-hour counts and studies that focus on homeless persons who live on the streets—rough sleepers. In a review of methods for counting homeless people, Peressini et al. (2010) reported that “service-based methods produce the most accurate and reliable results”. Indeed, they state that such service based methods reportedly produce more accurate population estimates than the Canadian Census. Moreover, collecting data at services such as shelters, soup kitchens and drop-in centres captures nearly all of the urban homeless population (90 to 95%).

Thus Peressini, McDonald & Hulchanski (1996) noted that there has been a tendency to utilize a variation of the service-based methodology in most studies of homelessness conducted since the late 1980s. This methodology was used in the current study because it captures most of the population. The study in Timmins sought to include all agencies and programs in the city that provide services to people experiencing forms of homelessness.
This study draws on the same methodology used in nine studies conducted on homelessness in Sudbury between 2000 and 2009. The use of the same methodology allows for the examination of basic trends in homelessness. Service providers were asked to provide the information on homeless people using their services during a one-week period at the end of January, 2011. They collected this information from clients who consented to provide it. The data collection instrument used in conducting the unduplicated count was designed to gather the same information as in the studies in Sudbury but was refined to improve recording procedures and to gather some additional data. The data collection instrument differentiates between people who were absolutely homeless and those who were at high risk of homelessness and collects information on background characteristics, receipt of income support, and the main reasons for homelessness. In addition, the questionnaire gathers information about the physical and mental health problems experienced by homeless people, as well as migration patterns.

Overview of the Current Report

This report describes the following:

- the number of people who are homeless in Timmins and absolutely homeless;
- breakdowns on background characteristics including children, youth, women, men, subgroups in the population (i.e. those of Anglo/European origins, Aboriginal people, and Francophones);
- sources of income;
- reasons for homelessness; and
- trends in referral of homeless people.

METHODOLOGY

Approach to the Study

In order to provide accurate data and estimates that reflect the extent of homelessness in the community, our methodology consequently utilizes a service-based method, extended to a full week of data collection in order to maximize the number of people included in the study. The study was conducted during a seven-day period at the end of the month, during the week of 24 to 30 January 2011. It focussed on obtaining a count of the homeless population using emergency shelters, social service agencies, and other services supporting this population in Timmins as well as gathering information on their characteristics, reasons for homelessness and migration patterns.
Period Prevalence “Count” or Census of the Homeless Population

We worked with local service providers in order to obtain an accurate snapshot of the homeless population during a one week period. Given the inherent difficulties in studying homeless people, as noted above, it must be recognized that any count will produce an under-estimate of the total homeless population. Nevertheless, by securing the participation of a majority of the service providers in Timmins, a reasonable estimate can be obtained. A preliminary list of providers was developed and then expanded to ensure that organizations serving this population would be invited to participate. Searches were conducted to identify and locate additional services such as food banks. Using the internet, telephone directories and the network of identified service providers, a list of 31 services was generated. A letter explaining the objectives of the study and the need for participation from all providers was delivered to the agencies along with a copy of the data collection instrument to be used for the count. Every provider was subsequently contacted by telephone in order to set a date and time for a meeting to review the information to be collected in the study and to determine how the data could be collected from each agency. The data collection instrument consisted of a questionnaire for collecting information on each homeless person (see explanation in the following section).

The Count

By gathering detailed information about each individual using shelters and allied services for seven consecutive days, we are able to identify the number of repeat service users and unique cases. In contrast, other researchers, such as those conducting research on homelessness in Canadian cities such as Edmonton (2010), Prince George (2010) and Vancouver (2011), have opted to conduct their count of homeless people by collecting data on a single day (17 to 24 hours). A recent count in Calgary (2012) was conducted over five hours in shelters and on the streets, with a focus on a subgroup of absolutely homeless people. While this approach reduces the time and effort required to collect the data, it produces a more conservative estimate of the number of homeless people, since individuals who are not visible on the streets or using services on the day of the count will be excluded. Continuing the data collection for a one-week period captures a more accurate “snap-shot” of the homeless population.

Furthermore, by having the count conducted by providers who are experts in the field, the intrusiveness of the study is reduced and client confidentiality is maintained. However, given limited staff resources available to perform this task and service pressures for some agencies, it was
necessary to involve research staff in data collection in some agencies. The research staff received training and were closely supervised to ensure that the study protocols were followed.

The service-based method used in this study was designed to obtain an unduplicated count of the homeless population in Timmins. In order to accomplish this, the week of 24 to 30 January was identified as the time period in which the count would take place. The timing of the study was planned so that the data collection would be conducted at the end of the month when homelessness has been found to increase (Peressini et al., 1996). Some of the agencies contacted did not participate for various reasons. The data collection was operationalized by using a questionnaire that would allow us to gather information about each one of the homeless people using the service. It was found that some individuals did not want to provide information about themselves. However, the senior research assistant who supervised the data collection observed that the majority of people using services were willing to participate. The following excerpts from field notes explain the process followed at a food bank and the reactions of people who were accessing meals at a soup kitchen:

At a busy food bank, there was a constant line up of 10 to 20 people. Four PHM staff were present to administer the surveys and we asked clients while they were waiting in line whether they were willing to participate. It was a very narrow area to administer surveys but we managed and received a lot of completed surveys.

Most people at the soup kitchen really enjoyed talking with us. One man explained to me that it [participating in the study] made his week because he never feels like anyone wants to hear what he has to say. This same man cried a lot while I administered the survey with him; at the end of the survey, I gave him the list of support services and he was pretty happy about that.

Hence, while the method is appropriate and captures most of the homeless population, it is likely that the results provide a conservative estimate of the extent of homelessness in Timmins. In addition, some agencies did not participate in the study which may impact on the results. However it is also possible that, for example, some of the same people utilize the services of non-participating agencies and participating agencies, thereby enabling them to be included in the count.

The data collection tool was designed to obtain information providing a valid, unduplicated count of the homeless population without raising concerns about violating the privacy rights of individuals using services. The data collection tool utilized was adapted from the Automated National Client-
specific Homeless services Recording System (ANCHoR). The ANCHoR recording system is an information system designed to support the coordination of services to the homeless. It was designed to collect basic socio-demographic information about the consumers using the services, including the first, middle, and last initials, date of birth, gender, ethnicity/race or cultural group, linguistic orientation, marital status, date of entry or use of services and referral (Peressini, McDonald and Hulchanski; 1996). We also gathered information on employment, education, welfare status and income, reasons for homelessness, physical and mental health, history of homelessness and migration patterns.

RESULTS

Unduplicated Count of Homeless People

The data collection instrument provides for the identification of unduplicated cases. An unduplicated count was obtained by examining the first, middle, and last initials as well as the date of birth and gender; individuals with identical information were considered to be the same person and the duplicated information was eliminated from further analysis. Most individuals provided all of the information required to identify duplicate cases. The raw numbers (duplicated and unduplicated cases) from the agency count of homeless people, conducted by the shelters and other service providers, indicated that there were 761 people who were identified as absolutely homeless or at risk of homelessness during the week of the study conducted during January 24th to 30th, 2011. However, four individuals were identified as duplicate cases. The service providers have adopted varied approaches to recording information on individuals who used the agency more than once during the study period. A few recorded the information for each person on each occasion while most recorded the individual only once since the primary purpose of the count was to obtain an unduplicated count of homeless individuals. People using services were asked to complete the survey only once. In addition to the four duplicate cases, parents using services identified 37 dependent children who were over the age of 17. We used the age of majority in Ontario to define dependent children. Thus, the analysis of the background information indicated that there were 720 different individuals who were homeless during the week of the study and used the services of an agency listed in Table 1 (surveys were completed at 21 of the 31 agencies). The homeless persons who participated in the study included 219 absolutely homeless and 501 persons at high risk of becoming homeless. Those absolutely without housing were just under a third (30%) of the homeless people identified by the participating agencies (see Figure 1).
### Table 1: List of agencies/services identified

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<td>1</td>
<td>Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)</td>
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<td>Centre Passerelle Pour Femmes</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Cochrane Temiskaming Resources Centre</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Jubilee</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Le Marin du Porest: Food Bank</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Lord’s Kitchen—Soup Kitchen</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Mennonite Central Committee</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Metis Nation Ontario</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Ministry of Probation and After Care</td>
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<td>Misiway Health Centre</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Northern College: Native Student Services</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Northern College: Resident Services</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Ontario March of Dimes</td>
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<td>Ontario Works—DSSAB</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Porcupine Health Unit</td>
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<td>Salvation Army</td>
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<td>Seizure and Brain Injury Centre</td>
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<td>Sevicers Familiaux Jeanne Sauve</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>South Cochrane Addiction Services</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>South Porcupine Food Bank</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>The Good Samaritan Inn</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>St.Vincent du Paul</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>Timmins Area Women in Crisis</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>Timmins District Hospital (TDH) : Mental Health Department</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>Timmins Family Counselling</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>Timmins Housing - DSSAB</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>Timmins Native Friendship Centre (TNFC)</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>Timmins Native Housing Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Timmins Temiskaming Community Legal Clinic</td>
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Table 1: List of agencies/services identified

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agency/Service</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Tranquility House: Matheson Shelter (Associated with CMHA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>VCARS</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: The homeless persons and those at risk of homelessness participated in the survey at 21 of the 31 agencies identified.

Socio-Demographic and Health Profile of Homeless Persons in Timmins:
Characteristics of the Total Homeless Population

Table 2 provides a socio-demographic profile of the homeless persons in the sample and shows that women and girls comprised a slight majority of the homeless persons (52.8% females versus 47.2% males). When taking into account the age groups of men and women, several studies in Sudbury have shown that there was a gender difference in homelessness among adults. An examination of the average (mean) age of homeless men and women indicated that there was a significant gender difference in the age of homeless people in Sudbury, wherein the average age of women was consistently lower compared to men. This was not the case in the Timmins study. The average age
of adolescents or women using services (over 14) was 42 versus 44 for adult men (this difference was not statistically significant). The average age of both men and women in Timmins was 43.

The overall age distribution of homeless people showed that there are many children under 10 years old among the homeless population (27% of the homeless). Moreover, young people aged 10 to 19 also represent a substantial proportion of the homeless, at 18%. Few people aged 60 and older were identified among the homeless population (8.5%). Thus, a substantial proportion of homeless people are adults between 20 and 59 years of age (47.1%) but well over a third are infants, children or adolescents (44.4%).

With regard to the self identification of Aboriginal heritage or linguistic/cultural backgrounds (Anglophone or Francophone), most homeless people reported that they were Anglophones or Francophones of European origins, compared with visible minorities or Aboriginals (see Table 2). However, it is important to note that Aboriginal people are greatly over-represented amongst homeless people; they almost made up over a third (39%) of the homeless population. According to Statistics Canada (2006), the 2006 census data have indicated that the Aboriginal people, including North American Indians and Metis, made up 7.7% of the population in Timmins. In contrast, while French-speaking people are also a minority in the population, they are greatly under-represented amongst homeless people compared to their proportion in the general population of Timmins. Those of French origins comprised 40% of the total population, according to the 2006 Census. The number of homeless people who were members of visible minority groups was small, with only thirteen individuals participating in this study (less than two percent of the homeless persons in the study). This finding reflects the small proportion people from visible minorities in the Timmins population.
### Table 2: Characteristics of homeless people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>52.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>47.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Groups:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglophone/European</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>37.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francophone/European</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal/First Nations</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>39.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visible Minority</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>52.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>29.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Nations</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 - 4</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 9</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 14</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 - 19</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 24</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 - 29</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 34</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 - 39</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 44</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 - 49</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 - 54</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 - 59</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Receipt of social support/welfare benefits and sources of income

The main source of financial support received from government sources was the Ontario Disabilities Support Program (ODSP), reported by 31% (see Table 3). The second source of income was employment, cited by 23% of homeless people. The next main source of financial support is Ontario Works (18%) followed by Canada Pension Plan (CPP) or Old Age Security (OAS), mentioned by 10%. Employment Insurance (EI) was reported by 6.3%. The remaining type of government income support came from Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) benefits. Non governmental support came from a variety of sources such as private pension plans or financial support from family members. Further analysis of the sources of income indicates that the overall proportion of homeless people not reporting the receipt of any government support benefits was 27%. A larger proportion of young people (18 to 24) indicated that they were not receiving any type of income support (20%) compared to other age groups (e.g. 6% for 25-34 year olds and 8% for 35 to 44 year olds). Similarly, more young people aged 18 to 24 reported that they were not receiving any type of government funds (52%) than did adults (e.g. 21% of those 25-34 and 44% of those 35-44).

Table 3: Sources of income for homeless people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of Income</th>
<th>January 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No income</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ODSP</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario Works</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPP or OAS</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Insurance</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (WSIB, savings, private pension, support from family, sale of personal assets)</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Marital/family status

The findings of the study reinforce those of our previous studies on homelessness in northeastern Ontario indicating that the majority of homeless people are single/unattached or divorced/widowed (see Table 4). Less than half of those in the study reported that they are married or in a common law relationship.

Table 4 : Marital status for homeless people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>January 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married/common law</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced/Widowed</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reasons for homelessness

Table 5 summarizes the main reasons for homelessness in Timmins. The participants were asked to identify all relevant reasons for homelessness; thus, the number of responses is larger than the number of participants. Taken together, the central reasons stem from the structural/systemic problems of unemployment, problems with social assistance, and the lack of affordable housing. These issues accounted for the largest proportion of homelessness from the perspectives of the participants. In providing reasons for homelessness, the largest number of people indicated that they could not find work or an adequate level of employment. Thus unemployment or underemployment (n=230), as well as low wages or lack of money (n=108) were identified as the central reasons for homelessness. Secondly, a substantial proportion of homeless people cited problems with social assistance—they mentioned that social assistance payments were inadequate to live on (n=101), that they did not qualify for benefits (n=63), that their benefits had been cut (n=48) or that their payments from social assistance were late (n=42).

With regard to the third set of reasons for homelessness, housing problems, 120 individuals reported that they were unable to pay their rent (or in a few cases, a mortgage) while another 70 people had
been evicted from their homes. Participants stated that they were having problems with the landlord, family members or roommates, or that they could not obtain suitable or affordable housing.

Table 5: Main reasons for homelessness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for homelessness*</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problems with work:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Unemployment</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Seeking work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Low wages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No money</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with social assistance:</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Welfare not adequate/late</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Social assistance cut</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Waiting for disability pension</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Does not qualify for OW</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with housing:</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Unable to pay rent or mortgage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Evicted or kicked out</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Housing not adequate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic violence and family issues (including divorce)</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illness or mental illness</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance use</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of jail</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travelling/transient/ relocated, transferred or moving</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL RESPONSES</strong></td>
<td>1655</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Results are based on multiple responses. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding error.
Family problems, including domestic violence and divorce, were reasons cited by 11 percent of the participants. In most cases a general response indicating “family issues” was given. Divorce or separation was reported by 48 individuals as being directly linked to their homelessness.

Substance use and physical or mental illness were reported as causes of their homelessness by respectively 5% (n=53%) and 7% (n=82) of the homeless people in the study. However, it is important to note that while many people do not identify a physical or mental health problem as the source of their homelessness. Such issues may be contributing factors. We noted in Table 3 that 128 homeless people reported ODSP as a source of income. These persons would have had health issues that prevented them from being employed. Finally, the number of people citing transience, relocation, or moving (n=35) or release from jail/prison (n=39) was relatively small (about 7%).

Reasons for homelessness by gender, age, and ethnicity

Boxes 1 and 2 list, in order of importance, the main reasons for homelessness among various subgroups based on gender and background (Anglophone, Francophone or Aboriginal). The results reinforce the view that there are more commonalities than differences in the main reasons for homelessness among the various subgroups. Structural problems were cited as the main reason for homelessness by all subgroups of homeless people. Without exception, all of these subgroups reported unemployment, problems with social assistance and problems with housing as being among the main reasons for homelessness. Family issues, including divorce/separation and domestic violence were identified more often by women and Aboriginal people than by men and Anglophones and Francophones. Women (65%) reported a wider range of family and relationship issues compared to men (54%); in addition to divorce/separation and violence or abuse, as noted above, women mentioned that responsibility for grandchildren, children and aging parents contributed to circumstances leading to homelessness. Aboriginal people (73%) more often reported family issues as reasons for homelessness compared to Anglophones (66%) or Francophones (41%).

Anglophones and Francophones more often noted unemployment compared with Aboriginal people as the primary reason for homelessness. The latter group more often mentioned problems with social assistance. All groups in the analysis cited substance use as well as physical or mental illness as reasons for homelessness. The rank ordering of the main reasons for homelessness shown in Box 2 does not reflect the nearly equal importance of release from jail as a contributing factor to homelessness among Anglophones and Aboriginals and of transience for Francophones.
Box 1: Main reasons for homelessness by gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Men (adults)</th>
<th>Women (adults)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problems with social assistance</td>
<td>Problems with social assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment/seeking work</td>
<td>Unemployment/seeking work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing issues/inability to pay rent/mortgage</td>
<td>Family issues/domestic violence/divorce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family issues/domestic violence/divorce</td>
<td>Housing issues/inability to pay rent/mortgage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical or mental illness</td>
<td>Physical or mental illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance use</td>
<td>Substance use</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Box 2: Main reasons for homelessness among Anglophones, Francophones and Aboriginals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anglophones</th>
<th>Francophones</th>
<th>Aboriginals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment/seeking work</td>
<td>Unemployment/seeking work</td>
<td>Problems with social assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with social assistance</td>
<td>Problems with social assistance</td>
<td>Unemployment/seeking work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing issues/inability to pay rent/mortgage</td>
<td>Family issues/domestic violence/divorce</td>
<td>Housing issues/inability to pay rent/mortgage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family issues/domestic violence/divorce</td>
<td>Housing issues/inability to pay rent/mortgage</td>
<td>Family issues/domestic violence/divorce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical or mental illness</td>
<td>Physical or mental illness</td>
<td>Substance use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance use</td>
<td>Substance use</td>
<td>Physical or mental illness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Absolute Homelessness

A majority of the agencies/services identified participated in the survey (21 of 31) and nearly all of those that participated (90% or 19 of 21) identified at least one person who was absolutely homeless. The agencies included food banks, soup kitchen, and services for housing or shelter, crisis,
Aboriginal people, mental health, employment, substance use treatment/recovery, and family services.

Table 6 compares the characteristics of the adult homeless (i.e. over age 17) who were absolutely without housing in the study. The analysis indicated that there were significantly more men than women among those who were absolutely homeless (58% men versus 42% women). Comparing the proportions of Anglophones, Francophones and Aboriginal people within the general population and in the study, the results indicate that Anglophones and Francophones of European origins were under-represented, while Aboriginal people were greatly over-represented (well over a third of those absolutely without housing). Absolutely homeless Aboriginal people included those who self-identified as First Nations, Metis, Cree, Ojibway or mixed heritage.

The analysis of age includes children in order to provide for an overview of the full age range of this population. The range was less than a year to 90 years. The absolutely homeless included 77 children under age 12 (36% of the sub-sample of absolutely homeless persons). In addition, 24 adolescents aged 12 to 17 were absolutely homeless (11%). It is remarkable that children and youth up to the age of 19 constitute 51% of the absolutely homeless population in Timmins. Furthermore, women, children and youth represent approximately two-thirds (65%) of this population.

Despite the large proportion of homeless children and youth, close to half of the absolutely homeless people were adults aged 20 and over. A small number of older adults, above age 60, were among those absolutely without housing (n=13).

With regard to marital status, about half (49%) of those who were absolutely homeless were single/unattached individuals while, additionally, nearly a quarter were divorced, separated or widowed (see Figure 2). Therefore, only a minority of those who were absolutely homeless were in marital or cohabiting relationships. An examination of gender differences in marital status indicates that more absolutely homeless men were single (55%) compared to women (44%), while slightly more women were married or in common law relationships (F=39%, M=18%).

Close to half of absolutely homeless adults stated that they had custody of children (42%) and most of them were women (64%). In contrast, about two-thirds of the men (65%) stated that they did not have custody of any children. However, neither of the gender differences pertaining to marital status nor custody of children were statistically significant.
Table 6: Characteristics of absolutely homeless people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>42.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>57.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Groups:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal/First Nations</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>40.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglophone</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francophone</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visible Minority</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Nations</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong> (including dependent children)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 - 4</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 9</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 - 19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 24</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 - 29</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 34</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 - 39</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 44</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 - 49</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 - 54</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 - 59</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7 shows the sources of income for those who were absolutely homeless. Twelve percent indicated that they had no source of income. The single largest source of income, Ontario Works, was received by over a third (37%). After Ontario Works, the source of income mentioned by the largest number of individuals was a disability pension (i.e. ODSP). Only a few individuals were receiving employment income or employment insurance benefits. Even fewer of the absolutely homeless people had other sources of income; those who did cited sources such as family support or a private pension. Comparing the sources of income for the absolutely homeless and those at risk indicates that the at risk population, as a whole, have greater access to a range of financial supports. These additional supports for the latter group included self employment income, savings, support from partners or the sale of assets.
Table 7: Sources of income for absolutely homeless people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of Income</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No income</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario Works</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>36.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ODSP</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EI or WSIB</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPP</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (family support, private pension)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reasons for absolute homelessness

As noted above, the questionnaire allowed participants to indicate multiple reasons for homelessness. Therefore, the number of responses is greater than the number of participants. The main reasons for absolute homelessness were based on the perceptions of the homeless individuals. These are listed in Table 8. Viewed as a whole, structural problems such as unemployment, lack of access to social assistance, poverty and lack of affordable housing were the primary causes of absolute homelessness in Timmins. These structural or systemic issues accounted for 69% of the reasons given by people who were absolutely homeless.

The largest number of people indicated that they were absolutely homeless because they were unemployed and could not obtain employment (n=150). As we noted above with regard to reasons for being homeless among the total sample, problems with income security programs, notably Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disabilities Support Program (ODSP), are directly linked to homelessness. In Timmins, 144 people reported that they were absolutely homeless because they were deemed to be ineligible for social assistance benefits or their benefits were late or cut, or were simply inadequate to live on.
### Table 8: Main reasons for absolute homelessness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for homelessness*</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problems with work:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Unemployment</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>28.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Seeking work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Low wages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No money</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with social assistance:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Welfare not adequate/late</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Social assistance cut</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Waiting for disability pension</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Does not qualify for OW</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with housing:</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Unable to pay rent or mortgage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Evicted or kicked out</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Housing not adequate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic violence and family issues (including divorce)</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance use</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illness or mental illness</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of jail</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travelling/transient, relocated, transferred or moving</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL RESPONSES</strong></td>
<td>531</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Results are based on multiple responses. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding error.

The inability to pay rent is clearly linked to poverty and low wages and to the lack of availability of affordable housing. Many people become homeless because of eviction or inability to pay rent. In January 2011, 26 people reported that they were absolutely homeless because they had been evicted from their housing and an additional 45 people did not have enough money to pay rent.
Domestic violence and other family issues, including divorce or separation were also cited as causes of homelessness. When these categories are combined, they accounted for absolute homelessness among 11% of the sample (n=57).

The participants in the study reported other issues as reasons for absolute homelessness. Firstly, physical or mental illnesses were cited by 30 individuals. Additionally, a number of people indicated that struggles with substance abuse were related to homelessness. This was identified by 33 individuals. Release from jail was also given as a reason for being absolutely homeless by 26 people. Finally, transience was reported by relatively few people as the main reason for becoming absolutely homeless. In January 2011, 12 individuals stated that they were homeless for this reason.

Most absolutely homeless people stated that they had not been referred to other services in Timmins. A quarter (25%) were reportedly referred to other service providers in to assist with the problems they were experiencing. The main types of referrals were for housing, mental or physical health services, addictions, or income/financial assistance. However, the vast majority indicated that they had not been referred to other services.

![Figure 3: Referrals reported by absolutely homeless persons](image-url)
CONCLUSIONS

The reinforcement of the working relationships between Laurentian University, Université de Hearst and community agencies serving homeless people has created a possibility for making change locally. The study findings can draw attention to the needs of people living with circumstances of homelessness and can be used to support applications for funding from senior levels of government.

The strong partnerships between the key organizations involved in the research on homelessness in Timmins have resulted in benefits to community members. For example, local residents and students from the colleges and universities in Timmins and Sudbury have been working on the project, providing first-hand experience in working with homeless people and the organizations serving them.

The collaborative process that has been developed can assist with the dissemination of the project findings and may draw attention to the strategy of using research to inform the planning process around homelessness. Moreover, the study findings can provide additional community awareness of homelessness.

Given the increasing scarcity of decent, affordable housing, and the challenges people face in making ends meet when relying on OW or ODSP benefits, it is worth noting that there are numerous difficulties in counting the homeless. Despite the strengths of service-based period prevalence counts and the potential for capturing 90 to 95% of the homeless population (Peressini, McColl & Hulchanski, 2010), any homeless count is bound to underestimate the numbers of people who are homeless and precariously housed. Nevertheless, this report reinforces previous findings from our research on homelessness in Sudbury by revealing the diversity in the local homeless populations. Strategies to end homelessness in northern communities must take into account the needs of Aboriginal people who are so greatly over-represented amongst those without stable housing, the lack of access to employment among many homeless people, as well as the women, children and adolescents dealing with the impacts of family struggles, abuse and violence, people experiencing mental illness or physical disabilities, those struggling with substance abuse and those who are making the transition from incarceration to community life.
RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations shown in Table 9 are based on the research conducted in Timmins. They also draw upon best practices set out in numerous publications and the recommendations developed in nine studies conducted in Sudbury between 2000 and 2009. A community forum was held in Timmins on April 25, 2012 at which the results of the report were presented along with the recommendations. The 35 participants of the forum were invited to review the recommendations, revise them or put forward additional recommendations. A “dotmocracy” activity was then conducted to allow the stakeholders at the forum to indicate their endorsement of particular recommendations.

Dotmocracy Activity

Each participant was given four red, four green and four blue dots. The dots were assigned values: 3 points for red, 2 points for green and 1 point for blue. Participants placed their dots on the recommendations they endorsed. Following this activity, the total points were summed for each recommendation. In Table 9, the recommendations have also been rank ordered by score. In the case of recommendations with the same scores, those with red or green dots were given a higher rank than those with only blue dots.

The participants collectively endorsed 37 recommendations as relevant for Timmins. The top five recommendations focus on services for homeless people, shelters, beds and transitional housing, public housing, inter-agency collaboration, and community-based prevention programs for youth. Local action on these recommendations can help to ensure that the pressing needs of homeless people are met and that they are supported effectively in obtaining and retaining housing. A goal of this research is to facilitate the implementation of the top priorities identified by the Timmins community.
Table 9: Results of the “dotmocracy” activity  
Community Forum, Timmins, April 25, 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Enhance services in the areas of greatest need: <em>a.</em> housing and income security; <em>b.</em> counselling; <em>c.</em> health care, mental health services, and dental care; <em>d.</em> life skills; <em>e.</em> employment services; <em>f.</em> transportation; <em>g.</em> addictions; and <em>h.</em> education.</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Provide funding for shelters and beds for homeless people to ensure that there are adequate numbers of shelter beds available, as well as transitional housing and youth housing.</td>
<td>85</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Develop new public housing initiatives (i.e. the creation of subsidized housing units).</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Implement strategies to facilitate inter-agency collaboration and the coordination of services of services for people who are periodically or chronically homeless to ensure that local solutions are found that meet the needs of the individual (e.g. adopt a holistic approach).</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Provide enhanced funding for community-based prevention programs for youth (e.g. with a focus on family violence, abuse, sexual assault, bullying) in order to reduce youth homelessness.</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Provide more supportive housing services in order to reduce the risk of repeated or chronic homelessness</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Study the local housing market and develop strategies to create more safe, decent, and affordable private housing, including room and board accommodation.</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Take steps to address racism as a cause of homelessness to ensure that Aboriginal people can obtain rental housing.</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Provide more funding support for services to address trauma given the primacy of domestic violence and other family issues as a cause of homelessness.</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Look at ways to reallocate funding sources at the multi-agency level.</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Conduct a series of community forums to ensure that service providers and other community partners have opportunities to meet, exchange information about needs and local services, and resolve conflicting program requirements.</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>Recommendation</td>
<td>Score</td>
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<td>------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Educate landlords in order to reduce discrimination against key groups (e.g. People with mental illness, battered women, and Aboriginal people).</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Develop local, provincial, and national initiatives to address the structural problems of lack of access to education, unemployment, lack of jobs, and low wages for vulnerable groups.</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Provide sufficient funding to agencies serving homeless people to ensure that adequate staffing is available to meet the needs of clients.</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Establish more outreach services to homeless people in Timmins to connect them with existing community resources.</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Develop standards around food security to ensure that near homeless and absolutely homeless people have access to nutritious food supplies. For example, the needs for food security are not met when clients can only access food banks once per month and when homeless people are not permitted to use food banks due to the requirement to produce proof of residence.</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Examine how services can be made more responsive to the needs of adolescents. Homeless youth are among those who are the least well served by community agencies and most often do not have access to income support from government programs.</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Develop the service system for the provision of services addressing the basic needs of food, shelter, clothing, and medical care for homeless people, including youth, so that there are enough services to meet these needs.</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Identify the barriers to the receipt of social assistance benefits at the local and provincial levels in order to prevent homelessness among people who are denied benefits or who are disentitled.</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Establish income and housing supports that can prevent individuals and families from losing their housing and their possessions. For example, provide funding for an emergency fund for rent arrears, storage, and moving supports, including loans.</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Homelessness in Timmins, January 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Score</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Review and revise the provincial and federal income security programs for groups such as women experiencing domestic violence and families, seniors, Aboriginal people, youth, and people with mental illness to provide these groups with sufficient income to meet basic expenses.</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Provide funding support programs that assist people being released from incarceration to ensure that their basic needs for food, shelter, and clothing are met quickly.</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Take steps to address racism to ensure that Aboriginal people can gain access to services.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Work with Aboriginal communities to further develop strategies for supporting Aboriginals who move from their First Nations communities into urban centres. Culturally appropriate services must be further developed to assist with basic needs, education, and employment.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Develop programs that can address the social exclusion of homeless people. Many homeless people do not have access to family or friends who can assist and support them. Programs that strengthen ties between homeless people and others in the community must be designed to prevent marginalization and social exclusion.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Utilize practices from the literature on the integration and coordination of services in order to improve inter-agency collaboration and the coordination of services to homeless people.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Provide homeless people with free access to counselling services in the settings they inhabit (e.g. shelters, soup kitchens, and other emergency services). There must be more acknowledgment of the experiences of abuse among homeless people.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Develop materials to educate service providers and the general public about the complex individual and structural causes of homelessness, including the high prevalence of victimization and trauma among homeless people.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>Recommendation</td>
<td>Score</td>
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<td>------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Involve homeless people or formerly homeless people in the development of new services and the enhancement of existing services to ensure that services are sensitive to and effective in meeting the needs of various subgroups of homeless people.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Enhance emergency service systems to deal with the needs of those who become homeless as a result of relocation. Various levels of government must recognize the urban centres that are destination points for people leaving rural, and remote communities in search of work or services.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Develop linguistically and culturally appropriate emergency services for Aboriginals.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Develop strategies for ensuring that Aboriginal people moving to urban communities can be connected to emergency services.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Sustain local working relationships between the university, local planning bodies, and local agencies to ensure that there is an ongoing process for the ongoing collection of data on people who are homeless.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Establish a planning process to enable service providers to deal with peak periods in demand for services, thereby ensuring that homeless people are not turned away from services.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Develop linguistic and culturally appropriate services for Francophones.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Provide resources to key frontline services to enable the provision of comprehensive services and to work with individual clients in order to coordinate services.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Develop a program and materials drawing on the national and international literature on proven strategies for addressing the needs of various subgroups of homeless people through the application of best practice models of service delivery.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>Develop policies to prevent evictions from private and public housing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>Develop training materials documenting effective strategies for working with the most marginalized groups of people (e.g. people with addictions and serious mental illness) and ensure that these groups are not barred from access to services.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Homelessness in Timmins, January 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Develop programs that address trauma and reduce further exposure to abuse and</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>violence on the streets.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Increase funding for outreach and prevention programs to address domestic</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>violence and abuse among all age groups, including seniors.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Provide more community-based services to people with mental illness in order</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to prevent periodic or chronic homelessness.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Provide or enhance moving allowances.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Redesign the system of emergency services to reflect the characteristics of</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the homeless populations using them (e.g. more women, children and youth,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aboriginal people).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


Homelessness in Timmins, January 2011

www.unhchr.ch/huricane/hurica...CD8A618C1256A38002743AE?opendocument

