

Examining Forms of Hidden Homelessness in Rural And Northern Ontario: Comparing Experiences of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous People

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Introduction

- Importance of obtaining information about the “state of homelessness” in rural and northern regions.
- More attention now focused on measuring homelessness in Ontario and Canada.
- Growing awareness of homelessness in communities where it was not recognized previously.
- Little research conducted in rural and northern Ontario.

Definitions of Homelessness in the Literature

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

Hidden or Concealed Homelessness

- The scope of hidden homelessness in small and rural areas:
 - “...estimated to represent 80 per cent of those who have no place to call home.” (MAH, 2015)
- Hidden homelessness is more prevalent in northern, rural and small communities (Kauppi, O’Grady, Schiff, Martin & OMSSA, 2017).

Hidden Homelessness

- Often invisible.
- People may not use services.
- Forms of homelessness are often not recognized.

Forms of hidden homelessness

- Kauppi, O'Grady, Schiff, Martin & OMSSA (2017) interviewed people living with homelessness in rural and northern Ontario and described main types of/ themes of hidden homelessness:
 - Couch surfing (“crashing”)
 - Doubling, tripling (overcrowding)
 - Living in tents or RVs (bush camps, encampments, hut)
 - Motels or single rooms (SRO)
 - Substandard accommodation (requires major repairs, “shack”, unsafe, no water, no toilet or bathing facilities)

Current study compares Indigenous and Non-Indigenous participants

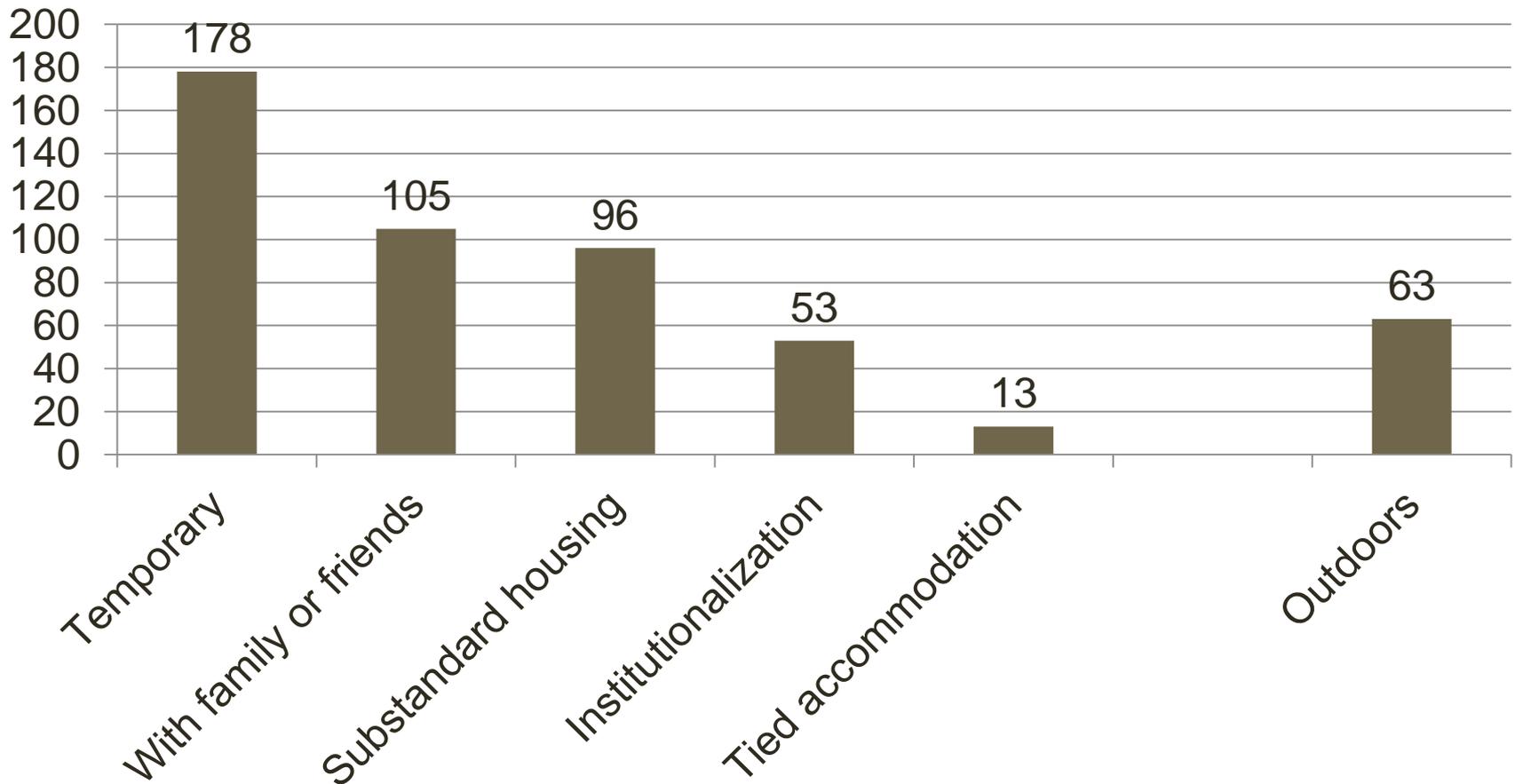
- Sample:
 - 45 participants
 - northeastern and northwestern Ontario and rural southwestern Ontario
 - Age: 22 to 66 years
 - Gender:
 - Women 38%
 - Men 58%
 - LGBTQ2S 4%
 - Cultural background:
 - Indigenous 56%
 - Non-Indigenous 44%
 - Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants were similar in terms of age and gender.

Experiences of homelessness

- Participants had collectively lived with many forms of homelessness, from absolute homelessness to varied types of hidden homelessness.
- Examination of the varied types of homelessness experienced by the participants showed that the 45 participants collectively mentioned 524 instances of homelessness.

Forms of homelessness and number of instances described

Number of Instances



Indigenous vs. non-Indigenous participants' experiences of homelessness

- No differences for
 - Temporary accommodation
 - Staying with family or friends
 - Substandard accommodation
 - Institutionalization
 - Tied accommodation
- Main difference pertained to staying outdoors:
 - 68% of Indigenous participants
 - 45% of non-Indigenous participants

Experiences of hidden homelessness and absolute homelessness: Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants

- Experienced hidden homelessness but not absolute homelessness:
 - 45% of non-Indigenous participants
 - 28% of Indigenous participants.
- Experienced both hidden homelessness and absolute homelessness:
 - 55% of non-Indigenous participants
 - 72% of Indigenous participants.

Hidden homelessness: turned away and banned from the shelter

- “All of a sudden, you're just refused. I'm always refused over there. There's so many people around here that is refused to go in there, and it's not right. Not right at all. They wander on the street too, my friends, you know. Yeah there's a lot of people there. There's a lot of them that are not allowed in there. And they have to sleep outside? Like come on now.” (I, W, 38)
- “It was a blizzard and we weren't allowed in the shelter, because [the shelter manager is] so mean and she likes to ban people. Seems like she picks and chooses. But anyways, um we huddled up together and we had to go digging in a garbage box to go get something to eat. And then we huddled up with each other by the train tracks, like in the back where the snow isn't blowing. And we just covered each other, held each other, [for] warmth, like body heat.” (I, W, 33)

Bush camps

- “Sleeping outside is not very comfortable, especially when it’s raining. Now, it’s cold is coming. I gotta be prepared. ... People got camps out in the bush. Yeah, wigwams or tents and stuff.” (I, W, 38).



Photo credit: Poverty, Homelessness and Migration, Laurentian University and Spotlight North Collective. Photo taken by a participant in a photovoice project, Sudbury.



Photo credit: Poverty, Homelessness and Migration, Laurentian University and Spotlight North Collective. Photo taken by a participant in a photovoice project, Sudbury.

Hidden homelessness: substandard accommodation

“It's, [there's] nothing there. There's no bathroom, no water.”



Photo credit: Poverty, Homelessness and Migration, Laurentian University and Spotlight North Collective. Photo taken by a participant in a photovoice project, Sudbury.

Conclusions

- Indigenous participants had more often experienced multiple forms of hidden homelessness and absolute homelessness (outdoors).
- A longitudinal study of housing and health showed that the categorization of people as homeless or vulnerably housed is false and arbitrary
 - Part of the same, disadvantaged group (REACH3, 2010).
- In research, extra effort must be taken to include people living with forms of hidden homelessness.
- Implications for enumeration studies in 2018:
 - PiT count guides specify that this method cannot enumerate hidden homelessness.
 - PPC method can include hidden homelessness (Kauppi, 2017).

References

- Kauppi, C. (2017). Period Prevalence Counts of People Experiencing Homelessness: A Guide for Rural and Northern Communities. Ministry of Housing, Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario.
- REACH3 (2010). Housing Vulnerability and Health: Canada's Hidden Emergency. The Homeless Hub Report Series, Report #2.

Thank you, miigwetch

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