

Considerations for Addressing Inuit Homelessness in Nunavut

A CAEH17 Conference Presentation

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Challenges in Defining Homelessness in Nunavut



Different understandings of homelessness

- *“I don’t consider myself to be homeless, my uncle is letting us stay”*
(Individual)
- *“I don’t know where I’ll be staying tonight” ... [but] no, I don’t consider myself to be homeless”* *(Individual)*
- *“I don’t consider myself to be homeless because I have family”* *(Individual)*
- *“Individuals staying in the family violence shelter wouldn’t consider themselves to be homeless, they just need a place to stay temporarily. However, if there were more housing, people would want to move to other living situations.”* *(Service Provider)*



Different understandings of homelessness

- *“Even though they have a place to stay, the person staying with family still feels homeless, they don't want to be a burden” (Service Provider)*
- *“I consider everyone on the public housing waiting list (who is not a transfer) to be currently homeless, even though some may be staying with family on a long-term basis” (Service Provider)*
- *“If you don't have your own space and own security you are homeless” (Service Provider)*
- *“If you are properly housed, I imagine that your nuclear family would be housed, not your extended family” (Service Provider)*



Hidden homeless – living temporarily with others

- “Temporary” residents staying in another person’s dwelling:
 - 1,200 people
 - 4% of Nunavut’s population

Residents staying in another person’s dwelling:

- ✓ Without a place of their own
- ✓ Not paying rent
- ✓ Living in housing where their duration of stay is unsustainable in the long term
- ✓ Do not have a means to secure their own permanent housing
 - An estimated 3,200 people (based on non-youth applicants on the public housing waiting list)
 - 10% of Nunavut’s population

Dimensions that factor into what Nunavummiut consider to be homelessness

- Sense of security
- Stability
- Privacy
- Ability to control one's own living space
- Comfort
- Social interaction/inclusion



Inuit conceptions of home

- **Nunavut Tunngavik Inc:** “a place that provides shelter...a response to special needs, social interaction [and] comfort and security.”
- **Qikiqtani Inuit Association:** “a place where someone feels they belong, but its geography is not always fixed in time or space—it can expand, contract, move, and change shape according to cultural and personal experiences. Inuit homes had a specific relationship to the land—they came from it and they were part of it.”



Size and Scope of Homelessness among Inuit in Nunavut



Absolute homelessness – Snapshot in time

98

ABSOLUTE HOMELESS, INCLUDING:



68

STAYING IN
SHELTERS



AT LEAST 30

STAYING IN PLACES NOT
MEANT TO BE HOUSING

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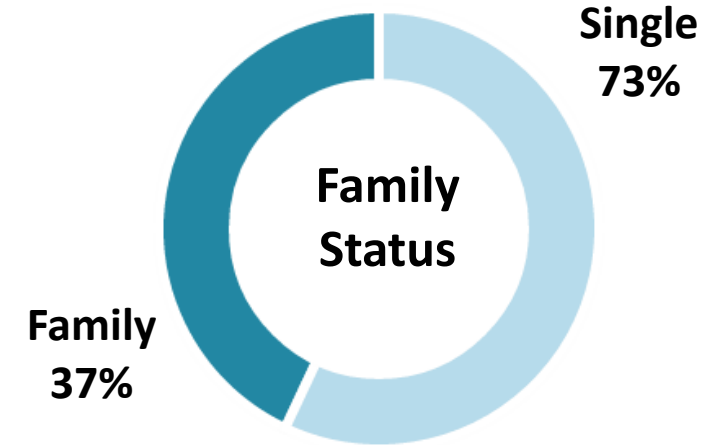
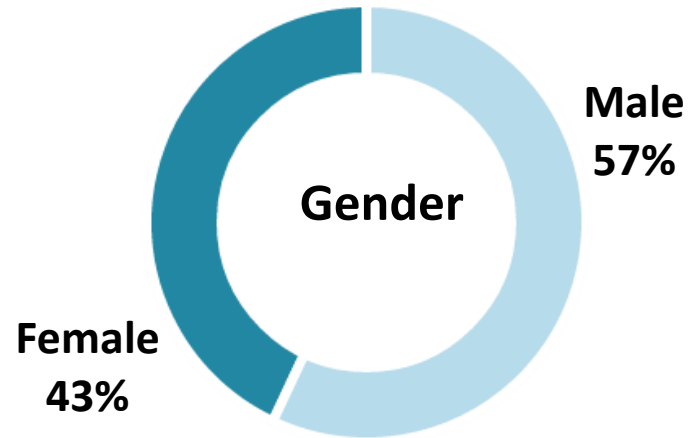
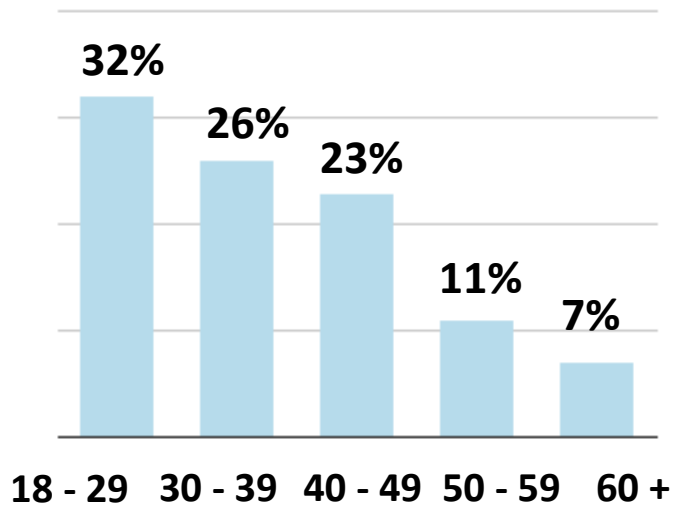
Homelessness – Over a one year period

Estimated Number of People Affected Annually	
Released from correctional facilities into temporary housing arrangement	120
Removed from their housing through a Protection Order	80
Lose their housing a result of a fire	200
Stay in health facilities longer than required due to lack of housing	40
Youth ages 16, 17 or 18 transition out of the Nunavut care system	20
Formal eviction as a result of failure to pay rent	14
Become homeless for other reasons (e.g. unresolved personal issues)	400

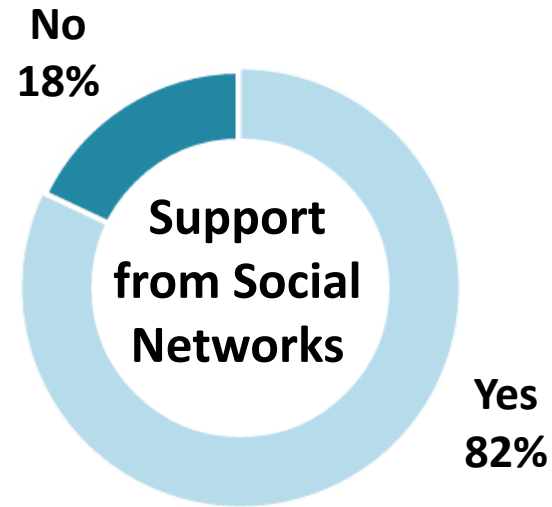
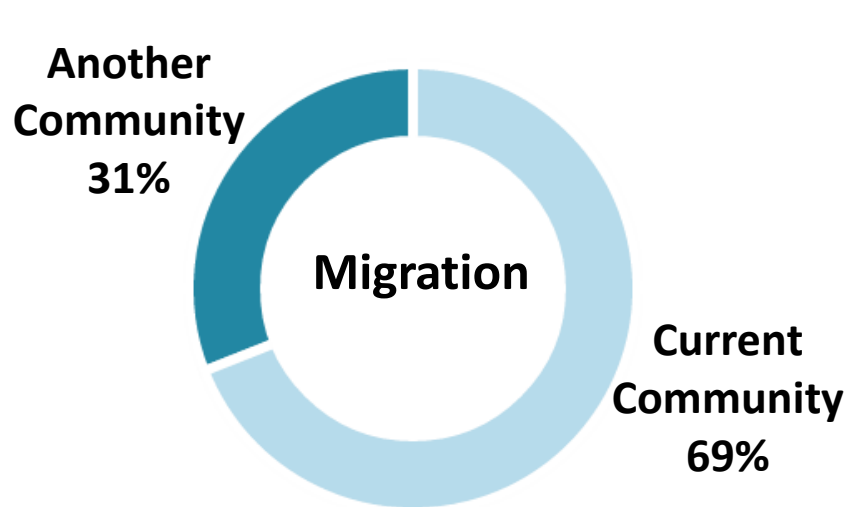


Demographic profile of homelessness

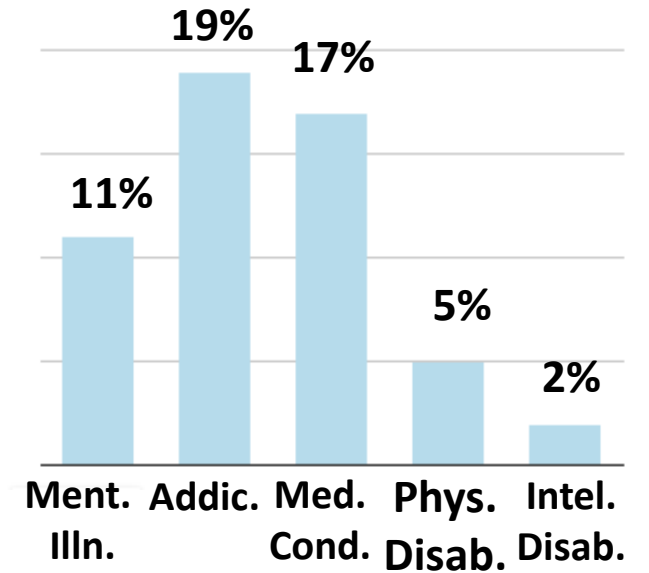
Age (Adults)



Demographic profile of homelessness



Reported Health Conditions



Experiences of homelessness

49%

HAD BEEN PREVIOUSLY
HOMELESS

82%

HAD BEEN HOMELESS
FOR A YEAR OR MORE



Factors contributing to homelessness

Survey Respondents' Reported Contributions to Becoming Homeless

Income is not enough to afford housing	25%
Family, partner or roommate made them move	25%
Broke up with a spouse or partner, or other family change	23%
Moved to the community	21%
Hurt or threatened by a relative or another person were staying with	20%
Evicted	15%
Using alcohol, using drugs or other substances	15%
No income	9%
Mental illness and disability	9%



Homelessness among Nunavummiut in gateway communities

- Yellowknife
 - 50% (40 men) of Salvation Army's male day shelter clients under the age of 30 were Nunavummiut
 - 30% of the Centre for Northern Families women's shelter clients originally from Nunavut (20 women per month)
- Montreal
 - Significant portion of the 200 Inuit in Montreal who are low-income or homeless
- Ottawa
 - 25% of Shepherds of Good Hope's downtown shelter population
 - 12% of the women served by Cornerstone



Actions to Address Homelessness Among in Nunavut



Suggestions for improving services and policy

- Collaboration between and across government departments and service providers
- Prevention approaches to avoid eviction from public housing
- Prevention approaches that include family mediation schemes
- Policy changes so that clients can stay at the women's shelter even if their income reaches a certain threshold
- Repositioning the homeless shelters as entry points for housing
- Greater range of housing options, including housing options to transition into from homelessness
- Discharge planning from correctional facilities



Framework for Action for Nunavut's Absolute Homeless

1. Strong Working Relationships
2. Community Engagement and Needs
3. System of Care
4. Policy
5. Resources

