



Living Experiences of Post-secondary Student Homelessness:

Mobilizing Despair & Hope From
Post-Secondary Students Across
Canada

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Canada 



Agenda


- Who and Where we are
- A Brief History
- Methodology
- Global Scan
- Distribution & Demographics
- Student vs Staff Perspective
- Recommendations
- Next Steps & Conclusion



Who and Where we are




Why do this work? - A Brief History

2018  Housing Needs Report at NSCC


Surveys:

- Red Deer Polytechnic
- University of Calgary

2019  Emergency Housing Program at NSCC

Surveys:

- University of New Brunswick
- Lakehead University

2021  UTILE Survey

2023  Ongoing PSSH Research Project

Ongoing global Scan

A Growing Problem

Then:

- About 2,170,000 PS students in Canada.
- Close to 5% or 110,000 experience some form of homelessness each year.

Now:

- Nova Scotia served about 58,760 students from 2021-2022
- ~9% of the student respondents identified as being unhoused.

Outreach and Global Scan

Conduct Interviews

Gather and Clean Transcripts

Qualitative Data Extraction


**Quantitative Techniques on
Extracted Data**

600+ articles

- 80% peer reviewed
- ~25% of articles focus on resilience
- <10% focus on historically marginalized homeless
- <5% focus on structural support systems

300+ Resources; 150+ Programs

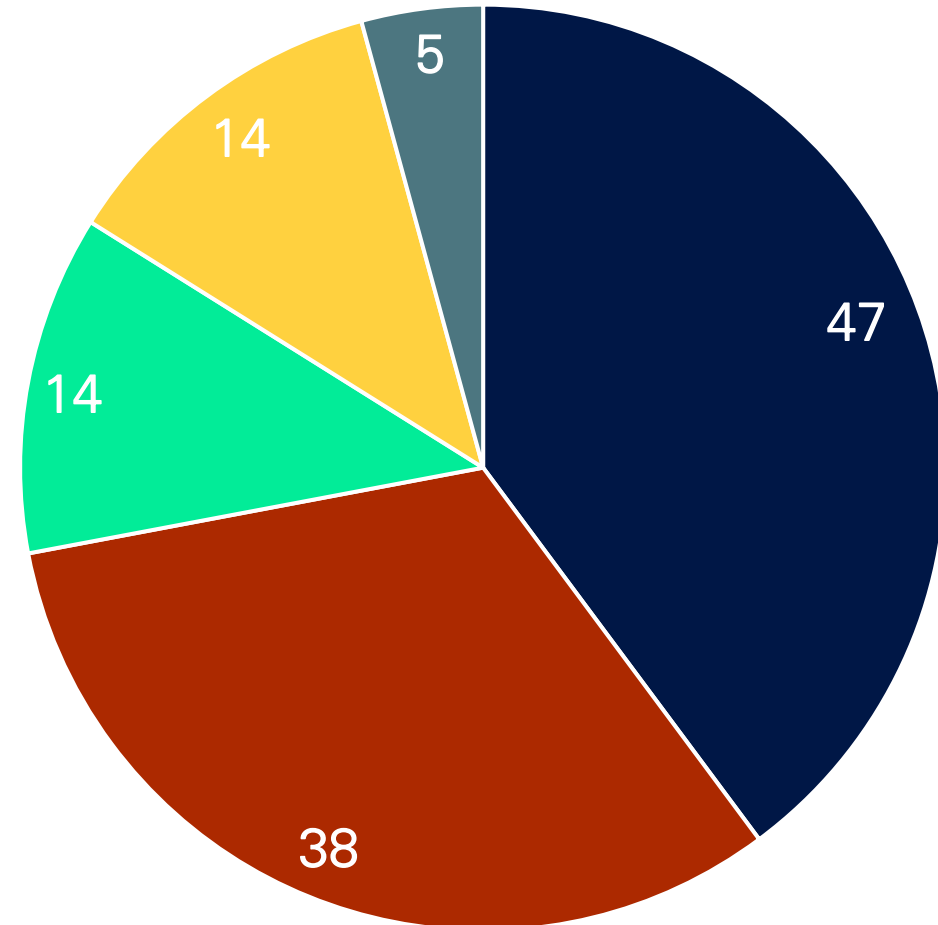
- Food Insecurity
- Emergency Housing
- Transitional Housing
- Bursaries & Financial Aid
- People with Lived Experience

A person's hands are visible holding a large, light-colored sign with rounded corners. The sign contains a testimonial in white text. The background is a blurred crowd of people, suggesting an outdoor event or festival.

“Before getting here, I was tenting when it started. I was tenting for five nights. I was with my ex-boyfriend, and we were basically living in a tent with three sleeping bags and those pocket hand warmers, which got really cold.”

Distribution of Transcripts

- NSCC
- University of Alberta
- Red Deer
- Lakehead University
- University of New Brunswick



Understanding our Convenience Sample

72.3%

Identified as female (she/her pronouns)

65.6%

Self-Identified as a Visible Minority

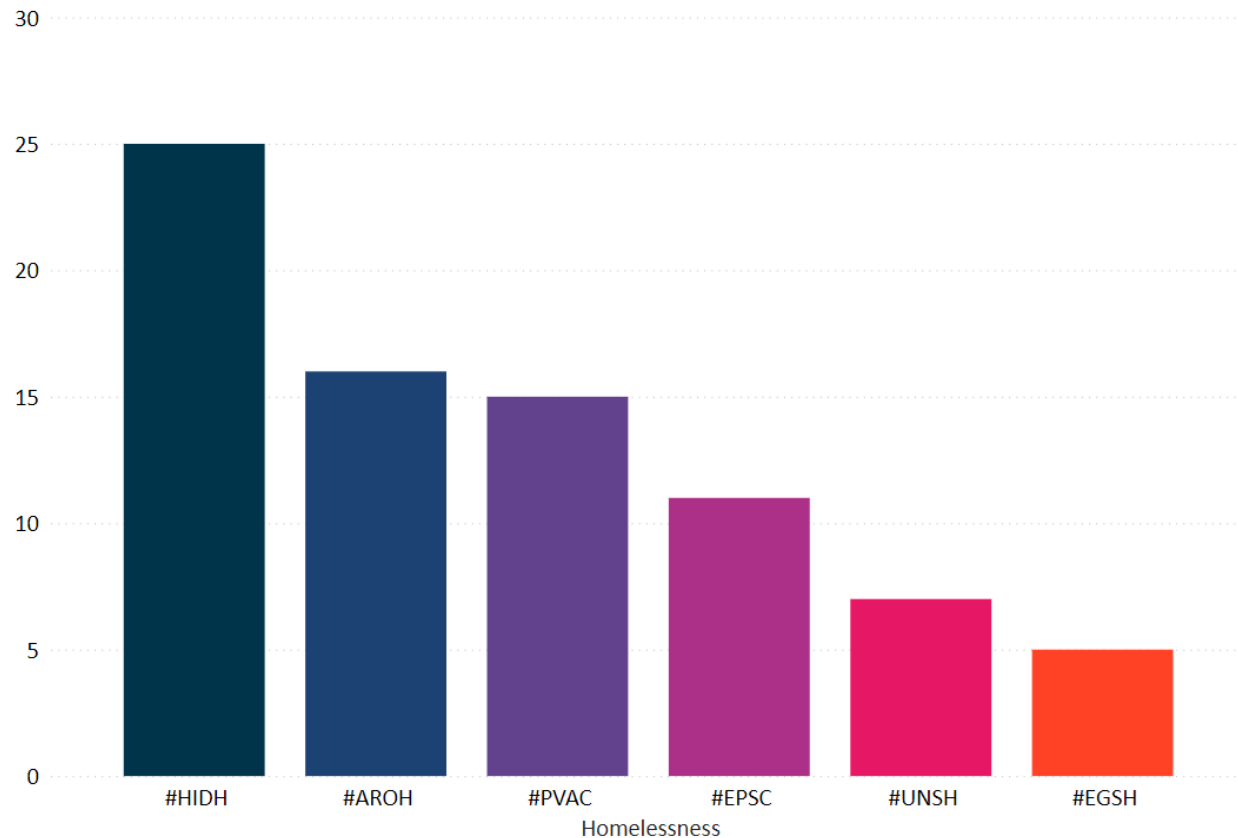
46.2%

Identified as Heterosexual

45.3%

25-34 years of age (at time of interview)

Defining Homelessness



- **Hidden Homelessness**
 39.1% of students interviewed had couch surfed or lived with friends.
- **At Risk of Homelessness**
 25% of students interviewed had been at risk of being homeless.
- **Provisionally Accommodated**
 23.4% of students interviewed had temporary and insecure housing.
- **Episodic**
 17.2% of students interviewed had moved in and out of periods without shelter.
- **Unsheltered**
 10.9% of students interviewed had no safe, sheltered place to sleep.
- **Emergency Sheltered**
 7.8% of students interviewed had accessed an emergency sheltered space.

The Student vs Staff Perspective





Humanizing Staff

28% of staff interviewed had previously faced their own struggles with housing precarity

Reasons for Student Homelessness

Student

- **25%**: Couldn't afford rent
- **17%**: Escaping Conflict
- **15%**: Internal Family Troubles

Staff

- **45%**: Economic Barriers
- **37%**: Lack of Available Housing
- **22%**: Lack of Safe, Clean Housing

Effects of Housing Precarity

Student

- **78%**: Feeling ashamed or embarrassed
- **71%**: Hid/Hiding their current living situation from others
- **63%**: Missing classes

Staff

- **35%**: Negatively impacting mental health
- **26%**: Poor academics
- **23%**: Exacerbating pre-existing mental health conditions

Why are students not accessing school services?

Student

- **40%**: Lack of awareness
- **25%**: Struggled to find information through school
- **22%**: Didn't know of any services available to them through school

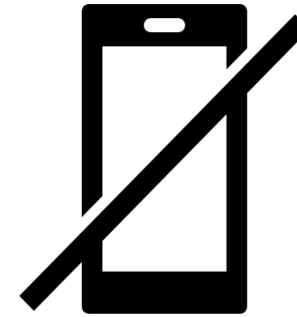
Staff

- **40%**: Shame or embarrassment
- **34%**: Lack of Awareness
- **26%**: COVID-19 Impacts

Why are Students Not Accessing Third Party Services?

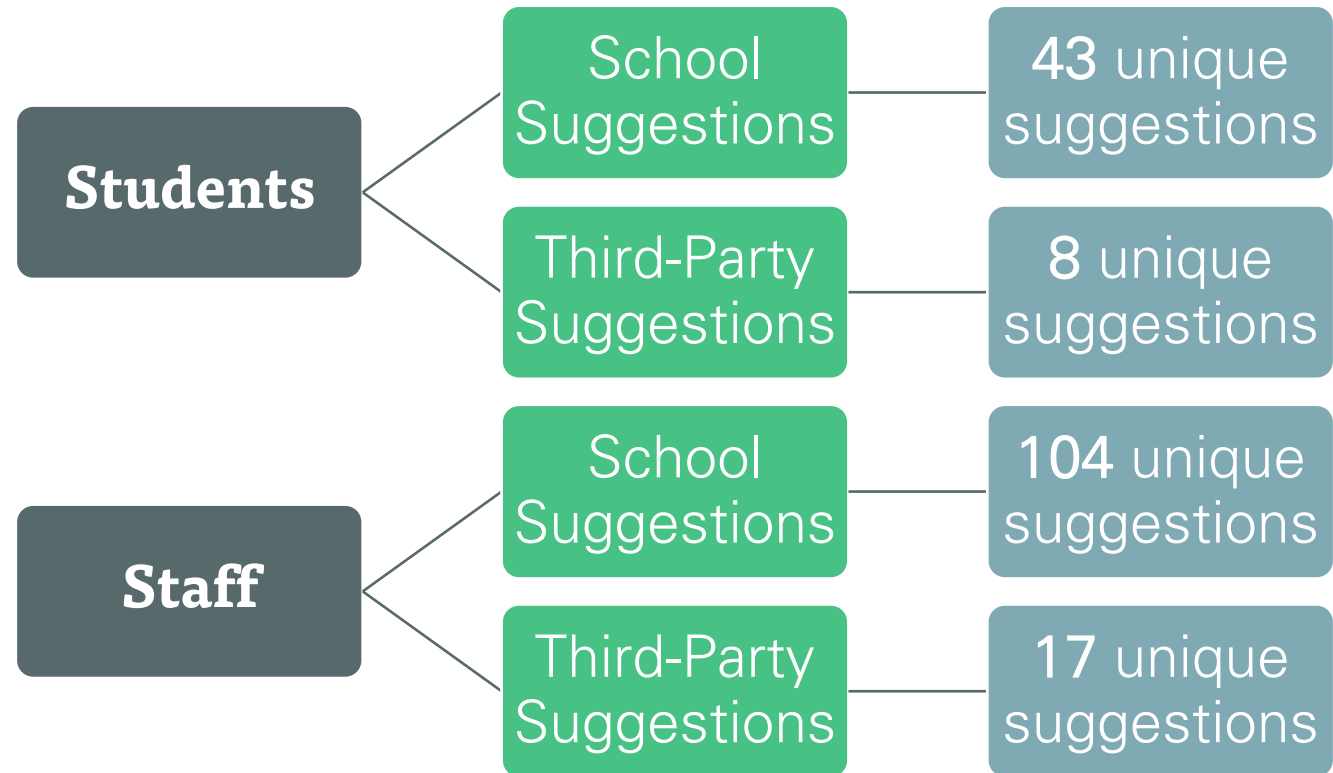


29.7% of students interviewed expressed that lack of awareness about these third-party services is a barrier to accessing them.



23.4% of students interviewed expressed that lack of communication is a barrier to accessing them.

Recommendations Overview



Recommendations for Schools (from students)



RAISING
AWARENESS



CHEAPER
CAMPUS
HOUSING



MIDDLE TERM
HOUSING/A
SERVICE TO FIND
HOUSING

Recommendations for Schools (from staff)



RAISING
AWARENESS



MORE CAMPUS
HOUSING



MORE STAFF

Recommendations For Third-Parties

Students

14%:
More
Inclusive
Options

8%:
Student
Rent
Caps

8%:
Cheaper
Cost of
Living

Staff

6%:
Student
Rent
Caps

6%:
Cheaper
Cost of
Living

4%:
More
Inclusive
Options

NEXT STEPS

- Interim reports
- Media and social media outreach
- Develop student-driven research and support collaboration
- Publish articles and final report
- Set up information tabling for sites
- Officially launch the www.pssh.ca website
- Potential National Conference
- Create local networks



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