

Insights on Canadian Society

Hidden homelessness in Canada

by Samantha Rodrigue

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- . not available for any reference period
- .. not available for a specific reference period
- ... not applicable
- 0 true zero or a value rounded to zero
- 0^s value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
- ^P preliminary
- ^r revised
- X suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*
- ^E use with caution
- F too unreliable to be published
- * significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)

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Hidden homelessness in Canada

by *Samantha Rodrigue*

Overview of the study

This study provides information on the number of Canadians who reported that they ever had to temporarily live with family, friends, in their car, or anywhere else because they had nowhere else to live—a situation referred to as ‘hidden’ or ‘concealed’ homelessness. It also examines the characteristics of those who had experienced hidden homelessness at some point in their life.

- In 2014, 8% of Canadians aged 15 and over reported that they, at some point in their lives, had to temporarily live with family, friends, in their car, or anywhere else because they had nowhere else to live—a situation referred to as ‘hidden’ homelessness.
- Of those who experienced hidden homelessness, about 1 in 5 (18%) experienced it for at least one year, 55% for less than one year but more than one month, and 27% for less than one month.
- Canadians with a history of childhood maltreatment were more likely to have experienced hidden homelessness. For example, among those who were victims of both physical and sexual abuse before age 15, 1 in 4 (25%) experienced an episode of hidden homelessness.
- Frequent movers and persons with a lower level of social support were more likely to have experienced hidden homelessness. For example, among those who moved at least four times in the past five years, 21% experienced hidden homelessness at some point in their life.
- Canadians with a disability were more likely to have experienced hidden homelessness. More particularly, those who reported at least three disabilities were four times more likely to have experienced hidden homelessness (26%) than those with no reported disability (6%).

Introduction

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH) defines homelessness as “the situation of an individual or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it.”¹ The COH categorizes the homeless population into three main categories: the unsheltered, the emergency-sheltered, and the provisionally accommodated.² The unsheltered homeless are those who lack housing and are not accessing emergency shelters or accommodation, with the exception of during extreme weather conditions. The emergency-sheltered are those who are accessing emergency shelter and system supports because they cannot secure permanent housing. The provisionally accommodated are people who access accommodation with no prospect of permanent housing, and are therefore still technically homeless with no permanent shelter.

In 2014, it was estimated that over 235,000 Canadians would experience homelessness within the year, including those who are provisionally accommodated.³ The provisionally accommodated category accounts for a range of living situations, including:

- (1) interim housing that bridges the gap between unsheltered or emergency accommodation and permanent housing;
- (2) short-term, temporary rental accommodations (e.g., staying in motels, hostels and rooming houses) that have no security of tenure;
- (3) institutional care (e.g., penal institutions, health institutions, residential treatment programs and group homes) that lacks permanent housing arrangements;

- (4) accommodation or reception centres for recently arrived immigrants and refugees before they secure their own housing; and
- (5) living temporarily with others with no guarantee of continued residence or with no immediate prospect of permanent housing—often referred to as the ‘hidden homeless’ or ‘couch surfers’ (e.g., people who stay with family, friends or even strangers).⁴

This study focuses on a portion of the provisionally accommodated homeless population—individuals who have experienced hidden homelessness. Although research has been conducted on the homeless population in Canada and the relationship with various factors such as substance use,⁵ mental health,⁶ victimization,⁷ and sexual orientation,⁸ there has been little analysis of hidden homelessness, which differs from sheltered and unsheltered homelessness. For the purpose of this paper, hidden homelessness is defined as ever having had to live temporarily with family, friends or in their car because they had nowhere else to live.⁹

This analysis provides an overview of Canadians aged 15 and over who ever experienced hidden homelessness and the factors that are associated with experiencing it, based on data from the 2014 General Social Survey (GSS) on Canadians’ Safety (Victimization). Although Statistics Canada does not collect data on the current homeless population, the General Social Survey can provide an overview of Canadians who have previously experienced hidden homelessness and are currently living in a household, along with multiple characteristics including sociodemographic characteristics,

experience of victimization, childhood abuse, disabilities and mental health, social environment, and substance use (see *Data sources, methods and definitions*).

Nearly 1 in 10 Canadians have experienced hidden homelessness

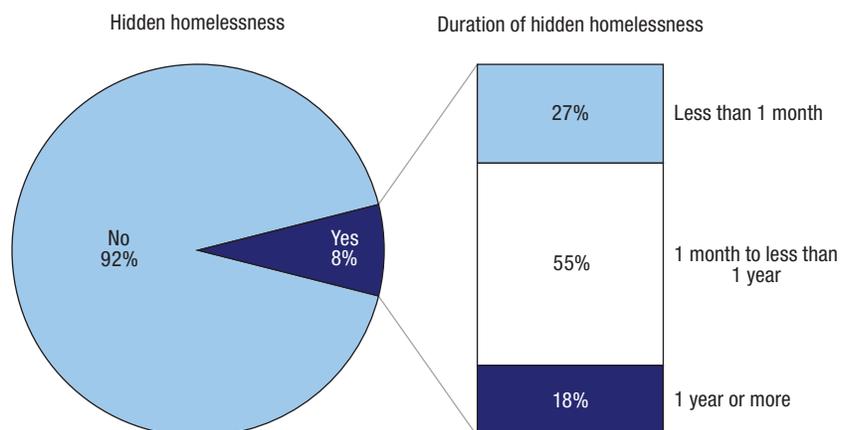
In 2014, approximately 2.3 million Canadians (representing 8% of the overall population aged 15 and over) reported that, at some point in their life, they had to temporarily live with family, friends, in their car, or anywhere else because they had nowhere else to live. More than one-half (55%) of those who had experienced hidden homelessness were in this situation from one month to less than one year, while about 1 in 5 (18%) experienced it for one year or more (Chart 1). Among males, 8% reported having experienced hidden homelessness previously, while 7% of females did so.

Those who reported an Aboriginal identity—either First Nations, Métis or Inuit—were more than twice as likely (18%) to have experienced hidden homelessness as their non-Aboriginal counterparts (8%). Immigrants (6%) and individuals who belonged in a visible minority group (4%) were less likely than non-immigrants or non-visible minority people (9% in both cases) to have experienced hidden homelessness (Chart 2).

Childhood maltreatment is associated with experiences of hidden homelessness

Victims of childhood maltreatment are also more likely to have experienced hidden homelessness. Childhood victimization can be derived from a series of questions on this topic in the GSS on Canadians’ Safety (Victimization).¹⁰

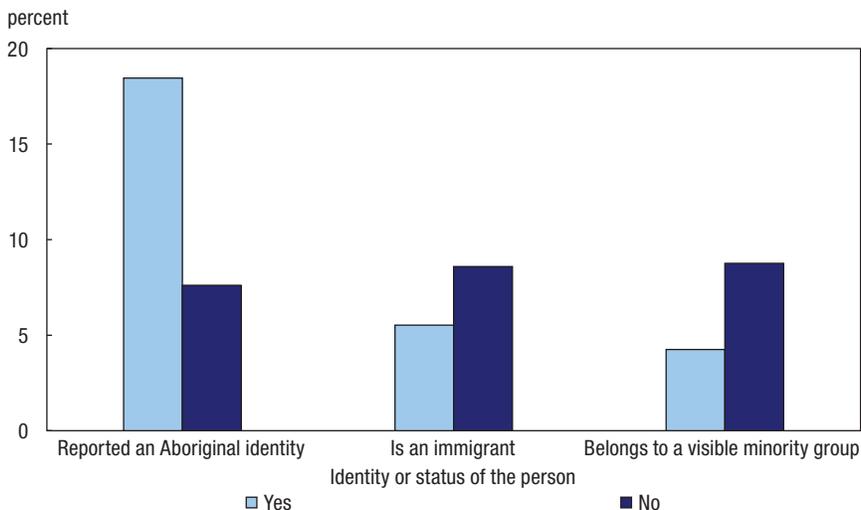
Chart 1
Percentage of the Canadian population aged 15 and over with previous experience of hidden homelessness and length of longest period of homelessness, 2014



Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey on Canadians’ Safety (Victimization), 2014.

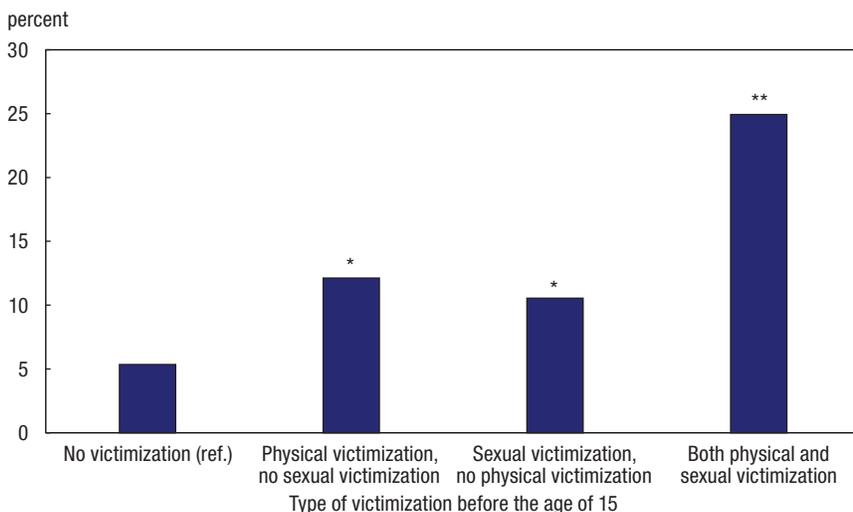
Hidden homelessness in Canada

Chart 2
Proportion of Canadians aged 15 and over who experienced hidden homelessness, by Aboriginal identity, immigrant status and visible minority status, 2014



Note: All "Yes" categories were significantly different from the reference category "No" ($p < 0.05$).
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey on Canadians' Safety (Victimization), 2014.

Chart 3
Proportion of Canadians aged 15 and over who experienced hidden homelessness, by type of childhood¹ victimization, 2014



* significantly different from reference category (ref.) ($p < 0.05$)

** significantly different from reference category (ref.) and other types of childhood victimization ($p < 0.05$)

1. Before the age of 15.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey on Canadians' Safety (Victimization), 2014.

Canadians with any experience of abuse by an adult before the age of 15 were nearly three times more likely (14%) to have also experienced hidden homelessness than those with no abuse during their childhood (5%). However, the type of victimization experienced correlates with the likelihood of having experienced hidden homelessness. While the proportion of Canadians who have experienced hidden homelessness did not vary between those who have experienced childhood physical abuse and those who have experienced childhood sexual abuse (12% and 11%, respectively), having been the victim of both physical and sexual abuse before the age of 15 correlates with being more than twice as likely (25%) as either of the previous two groups to have experienced hidden homelessness at some point (Chart 3). Having experienced both physical and sexual abuse during childhood increases the likelihood of also having experienced hidden homelessness five-fold in comparison with Canadians who reported no occurrences of childhood abuse.

Although there is a correlation between these negative childhood experiences and hidden homelessness, causation cannot be implied because there is no certainty as to which event came first.

The GSS asks all respondents if they have ever been under the legal responsibility of the government as a child, which is defined as the government assuming the rights and responsibilities of a parent for the purpose of the child's care, custody and control. Canadians who reported ever having been

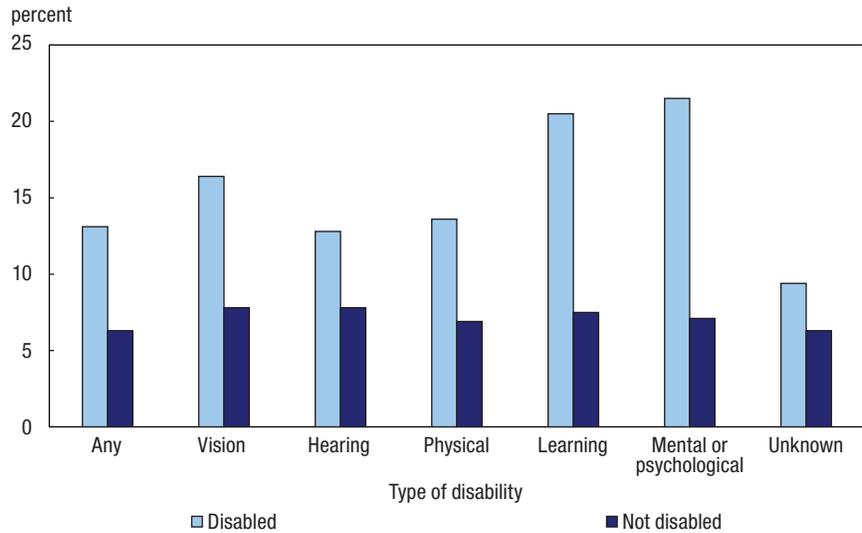
under the legal responsibility of the government were more than three times as likely (26%) to have experienced hidden homelessness than Canadians who were never under the legal responsibility of the government (8%).

Having a disability is associated with hidden homelessness

Out of the 7.2 million Canadians aged 15 and over who reported having a disability,¹¹ 13% also reported having experienced hidden homelessness, compared with 6% of Canadians without a disability. With regard to the different types of disabilities, those who reported having a mental or psychological illness (21%) or a learning disability (20%) had the highest likelihood of also reporting an experience of hidden homelessness. Of all Canadians who reported having a disability, those whose type of disability was “unknown”¹² were least likely (9%) to have experienced hidden homelessness (Chart 4).

Within the Canadian population, there is a possibility of co-occurrence of disabilities—that is, one individual can suffer from more than one disability. While those who reported one disability were about twice as likely (11%) as those with no disability (6%) to report that they had experienced hidden homelessness, that proportion was even higher among those with multiple disabilities. Those with two reported disabilities, for instance, were three times as likely to have experienced hidden homelessness than those with no reported disability (18% vs. 6%), while Canadians who reported three or more disabilities were at least four times more likely to have experienced hidden homelessness (26% vs. 6%).

Chart 4
Proportion of Canadians aged 15 and over who experienced hidden homelessness, by type of disability, 2014



Note: All "Disabled" categories were significantly different from the reference category "Not disabled" ($p < 0.05$).
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey on Canadians' Safety (Victimization), 2014.

Canadians with a weaker social network are more likely to have experienced hidden homelessness

Canadians with a stable place of residence who had not moved within the last five years were least likely (6%) to have experienced hidden homelessness at some point in their life. However, the proportion reporting an experience of hidden homelessness increased with the number of times an individual changed their residence. The likelihood of experiencing hidden homelessness increased from 8% for those who had moved once during the past five years, to 12% for those who moved twice during this period of time, to 18% for those who moved three times, and to 21% for those who moved four or more times (Table 1).

Although it is expected that individuals who had temporarily lived with family or friends would have some sort of a support network, Canadians with a weak sense of belonging to their community—as well as those with fewer close relatives and friends—were more likely to have ever experienced hidden homelessness, compared with those who had a strong sense of belonging and more close family and friends.

Among Canadians who had a very strong or somewhat strong sense of belonging to their local community, 7% experienced hidden homelessness at some point in their life. However, those with a somewhat weak (10%) or very weak (14%) sense of belonging were more likely to have reported an experience of hidden homelessness.

Similarly, Canadians who had a wider network of friends were less likely to have experienced hidden homelessness. For example, the percentage was 7% among those who had nine or more relatives and friends to whom they felt close; 10% among Canadians with one or two relatives and friends; and 15% for those with no relatives or friends.

Victims of crime were more likely to have experienced hidden homelessness

With the GSS, indicators of victimization as well as information on drug use and alcohol consumption can also be used to get a more complete profile of Canadians who experienced hidden homelessness. It is important to note, however, that the relationships found below do not imply causality.

Canadians who reported having been the victim of one incident of crime in the past 12 months were nearly twice as likely (12%) to have experienced hidden homelessness than those who were not the victim of a crime (7%). The likelihood of ever having experienced hidden homelessness was even higher among victims of two (16%) and three or more (18%) incidents of crime. Similar results were found when looking at violent crimes; close to 2 in 10 victims of crime with violence in the past 12 months (18%) also reported that they had to temporarily live with family, friends or in their car, compared with 8% among those who were not victims of a violent crime (Table 2).

In the GSS, respondents were also asked about their alcohol, marijuana and medication consumption in the past month. These variables cannot be interpreted as risk factors, but

Table 1
Proportion of Canadians aged 15 and over who experienced hidden homelessness across various indicators of mobility and social support, 2014

| | Experienced hidden homelessness |
|--|---------------------------------|
| | percent |
| Mobility and social support | |
| Moved in the last 5 years | |
| Never (ref.) | 6.3 |
| Once | 7.6* |
| Twice | 11.5* |
| Three times | 17.8* |
| Four times or more | 20.7* |
| Sense of belonging to their local community | |
| Very strong (ref.) | 6.5 |
| Somewhat strong | 7.2 |
| Somewhat weak | 10.5* |
| Very weak | 13.8* |
| No opinion or don't know | 8.9* |
| Number of relatives and friends they feel close to | |
| 9 or more (ref.) | 7.1 |
| 5 to 8 | 8.2* |
| 3 or 4 | 8.7* |
| 1 or 2 | 10.3* |
| None | 15.2* |

* significantly different from reference category (ref.) ($p < 0.05$)

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey on Canadians' Safety (Victimization), 2014.

can help provide a profile of those most likely to have experienced an episode of hidden homelessness.

Although the frequency of alcohol consumption in the past month had no association with experiences of hidden homelessness, the frequency of marijuana use in the past month was associated with ever having had to temporarily live with family, friends or in their car. Nearly twice as

many Canadians who used marijuana once or twice in the past month (13%) reported having experienced hidden homelessness compared with those who had not used marijuana in the past month (7%). About 2 in 10 Canadians who used marijuana at least once a week in the past month (18%) experienced hidden homelessness at some point in their lives (Chart 5).

Table 2
Proportion of Canadians who experienced hidden homelessness, by number of victimizations in the past 12 months, 2014

| Number of victimizations in the past 12 months | All types of crimes | Violent crimes |
|--|---------------------|--------------------|
| | percent | |
| 0 (ref.) | 6.7 | 7.6 |
| 1 | 11.7 | 18.1* |
| 2 | 15.5 | 17.2* ^E |
| 3 or more | 17.6 | F |

^E use with caution

F too unreliable to be published

* significantly different from reference category (ref.) ($p < 0.05$)

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey on Canadians' Safety (Victimization), 2014.

In 2014, about 1 in 10 Canadians who used medication in the past month to help them sleep (11%) reported ever having experienced hidden homelessness, compared with 8% among those who did not. In addition, Canadians who reported using medication in the past month to help them calm down or to help get out of depression were more than twice as likely as those who did not use these types of medication to have ever experienced hidden homelessness (Chart 6).

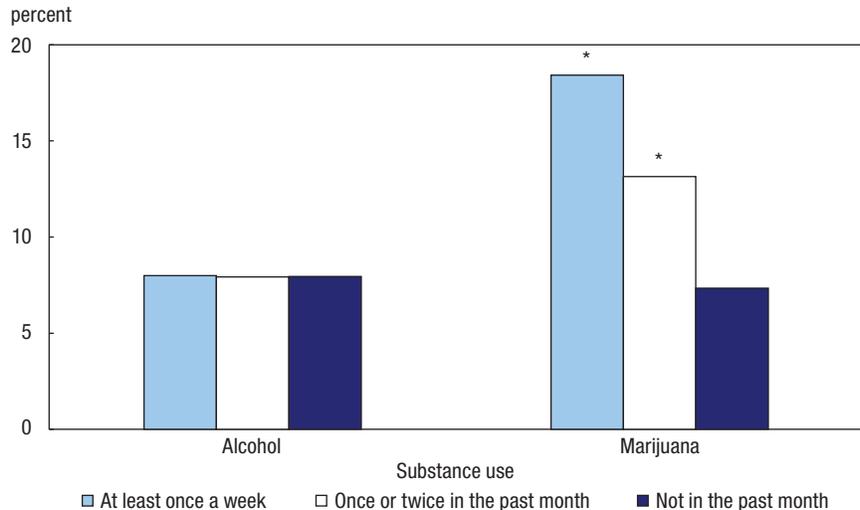
Interestingly, among Canadians who used all three types of medication in the past month, the proportion of those who ever had to temporarily live with family, friends or in their car because they had nowhere else to live rose to 21%.

Other demographic characteristics associated with previous experiences of hidden homelessness

In addition to the characteristics discussed above, other sociodemographic characteristics were also associated with hidden homelessness. The characteristics discussed below reflect the situation of respondents at the time of survey collection, in 2014.

Older Canadians might be expected to be most likely to have ever experienced hidden homelessness as they have lived longer.¹³ However, the highest proportion of persons who ever had to temporarily live with family, friends or in their car was found among those aged 25 to 54 (10%). In comparison, those aged 65 to 74 and those aged 75 and over were least likely to have experienced hidden homelessness (5% and 2%, respectively) (Table 3).

Chart 5
Proportion of Canadians aged 15 and over who experienced hidden homelessness, by type and frequency of substance use in the past month, 2014

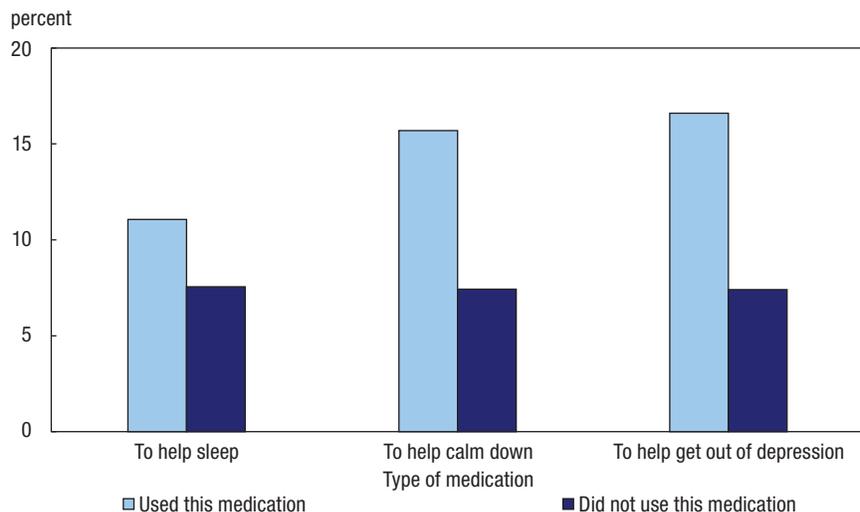


* significantly different from reference category (Not in the past month) ($p < 0.05$)

Note: "Not in the past month" includes those who reported never having consumed the substance.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey on Canadians' Safety (Victimization), 2014.

Chart 6
Proportion of Canadians aged 15 and over who experienced hidden homelessness, by medication used in the past month, 2014



Note: All "Used this medication" categories were significantly different from the reference category "Did not use this medication" ($p < 0.05$).

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey on Canadians' Safety (Victimization), 2014.

Hidden homelessness in Canada

While it is not possible to determine a causal link between marital status and the experience of hidden homelessness, there is a relationship between the two. Those who reported their marital status as separated (17%) or divorced (15%) were more than twice as likely to have experienced hidden homelessness as those who were married (7%), or single—never married (8%).

In general, as the highest level of education increases, the likelihood of experiencing hidden homelessness decreases. Approximately 9% of

Canadians aged 25 and over¹⁴ whose highest level of education was below a university certificate, diploma or degree reported having experienced hidden homelessness. This group includes those with a college or CEGEP certificate or diploma, a trade certificate or diploma, a high school diploma or equivalent, and less than a high school diploma. Of Canadians aged 25 and over with a university certificate, diploma, or a bachelor's degree or higher, 7% had to temporarily live with friends, family or in their car at some point in their life.

Lastly, of Canadians who self-identified as homosexual or bisexual, 15% reported having experienced hidden homelessness. Notably, 2 in 10 bisexuals (18%) had experienced hidden homelessness compared with 8% of heterosexuals.

Factors associated with hidden homelessness

Many of the characteristics examined could be related to one another. As a result, three logistic regression models were developed to examine the characteristics that remain significant when all other characteristics of interest are simultaneously taken into account (Table 4).

Model 1 contains the variables most likely to have occurred prior to the experience of hidden homelessness, with the exception of current age, which instead indicates a cohort effect. Model 2 includes the addition of a few more variables related to current sociodemographics. Model 3 contains all variables of interest that have been discussed in previous sections in order to determine which characteristics are most associated with hidden homelessness.

While Model 1 shows that the variables most likely to have occurred prior to the experience of hidden homelessness all remained significant with the exception of immigrant status, three variables had a comparatively stronger association when all others were held constant. The two variables on childhood experiences—being victim of abuse before age 15 and being under the legal responsibility of the government—and self-identifying as an Aboriginal person increased the probability of having experienced hidden homelessness more than any

Table 3
Proportion of Canadians aged 15 and over who experienced hidden homelessness, various sociodemographic characteristics, 2014

| | Experienced hidden homelessness |
|--|---------------------------------|
| | percent |
| Age group | |
| 15 to 24 (ref.) | 4.8 |
| 25 to 34 | 10.5* |
| 35 to 44 | 10.8* |
| 45 to 54 | 9.6* |
| 55 to 64 | 8.2* |
| 65 to 74 | 5.0 |
| 75 and over | 2.4* |
| Current marital status | |
| Married (ref.) | 6.6 |
| Common law | 11.8* |
| Widowed | 4.0* |
| Separated | 17.0* |
| Divorced | 15.3* |
| Single, never married | 7.8* |
| Highest level of education¹ | |
| Less than a high school diploma | 9.3* |
| High school diploma or equivalent | 9.4* |
| Trade certificate or diploma | 10.1* |
| College, CEGEP or other certificate or diploma | 9.4* |
| University degree below bachelor's | 7.9 |
| Bachelor's degree (e.g., BA, BSc, LLB) | 7.0 |
| University degree above bachelor's (ref.) | 5.8 |
| Sexual orientation | |
| Heterosexual (ref.) | 8.1 |
| Homosexual | 11.6 ^E |
| Bisexual | 18.3* |

^E use with caution

* significantly different from reference category (ref.) ($p < 0.05$)

1. People aged 25 and over.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey on Canadians' Safety (Victimization), 2014.

other characteristic when all other characteristics were accounted for in the model.

Model 2 shows that when additional sociodemographic characteristics are accounted for, the same three characteristics mentioned above were still significantly associated with experiences of hidden homelessness, as were having a marital status of separated or divorced, and having two or more disabilities. Although the probability of experiencing hidden homelessness remained the same for Aboriginal persons between Model 1 and Model 2, the coefficients associated with childhood experiences declined slightly, dropping by two percentage points each.

Lastly, even after all characteristics analyzed in this study are factored in, Model 3 shows that the majority of sociodemographic characteristics were still correlated with having ever experienced hidden homelessness. However, other characteristics—such as marijuana use and medication use in the past month—were no longer associated with a higher probability of ever experiencing hidden homelessness when all other characteristics were taken into account. The four characteristics with the highest predicted probabilities of having experienced hidden homelessness were self-identifying as an Aboriginal person; having been the victim of both physical and sexual childhood abuse; reporting two or more disabilities; and having moved three or more times in the past five years.

Table 4
Predicted probabilities of having experienced hidden homelessness, 2014

| | Model 1 ¹ | Model 2 ¹ | Model 3 ² |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| | predicted probability | | |
| Sex | | | |
| Male (ref.) | 0.09 | 0.09 | 0.09 |
| Female | 0.08* | 0.08** | 0.08* |
| Age | | | |
| 15 to 24 (ref.) | 0.06 | 0.06 | 0.05 |
| 25 to 34 | 0.11** | 0.12** | 0.09** |
| 35 to 44 | 0.11** | 0.12** | 0.11** |
| 45 to 54 | 0.09** | 0.09** | 0.10** |
| 55 to 64 | 0.08 | 0.08 | 0.09** |
| 65 to 74 | 0.05* | 0.05 | 0.05 |
| 75 years and older | 0.03** | 0.03** | 0.03 |
| Visible minority | | | |
| Visible minority (ref.) | 0.04 | 0.05 | 0.05 |
| Not a visible minority | 0.09** | 0.09** | 0.09** |
| Aboriginal identity | | | |
| Aboriginal (ref.) | 0.14 | 0.14 | 0.13 |
| Non-Aboriginal | 0.08** | 0.08** | 0.08** |
| Sexual orientation | | | |
| Heterosexual (ref.) | 0.08 | 0.08 | 0.08 |
| Homosexual or bisexual | 0.12** | 0.10 | 0.09 |
| Childhood victimization | | | |
| No victimization (ref.) | 0.06 | 0.06 | 0.06 |
| Physical victimisation, no sexual victimization | 0.12** | 0.11** | 0.11** |
| Sexual victimization, no physical victimization | 0.11** | 0.10** | 0.09** |
| Both physical and sexual victimization | 0.22** | 0.18** | 0.17** |
| Legal responsibility of the government as a child | | | |
| No (ref.) | 0.08 | 0.08 | 0.08 |
| Yes | 0.17** | 0.15** | 0.13** |
| Marital status | | | |
| Married (ref.) | ... | 0.07 | 0.07 |
| Common law | ... | 0.09** | 0.09* |
| Widowed | ... | 0.07 | 0.07 |
| Separated or divorced | ... | 0.14** | 0.12** |
| Single-never married | ... | 0.09* | 0.08 |
| Highest level of education | | | |
| University degree (ref.) | ... | 0.07 | 0.07 |
| Postsecondary but less than university | ... | 0.08** | 0.09** |
| High school diploma | ... | 0.09** | 0.09** |
| Less than a high school diploma | ... | 0.10** | 0.10** |
| Number of disabilities | | | |
| None (ref.) | ... | 0.07 | 0.07 |
| One | ... | 0.10** | 0.10** |
| Two | ... | 0.16** | 0.14** |
| Three or more | ... | 0.17** | 0.14** |
| Moved in the last 5 years | | | |
| Never (ref.) | ... | ... | 0.07 |
| Once | ... | ... | 0.07 |
| Twice | ... | ... | 0.11** |
| Three times | ... | ... | 0.15** |
| Four times or more | ... | ... | 0.17** |
| Sense of belonging to local community | | | |
| Very strong or somewhat strong (ref.) | ... | ... | 0.08 |
| Very weak or somewhat weak | ... | ... | 0.09* |
| No opinion or don't know | ... | ... | 0.10 |

Table 4
Predicted probabilities of having experienced hidden homelessness, 2014 (concluded)

| | Model 1 ¹ | Model 2 ¹ | Model 3 ² |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| | predicted probability | | |
| Number of victimizations in the past 12 months | | | |
| Not victimized (ref.) | ... | ... | 0.08 |
| Victimized one time | ... | ... | 0.10** |
| Victimized two times | ... | ... | 0.12** |
| Victimized three or more times | ... | ... | 0.11** |
| Total | 0.08 | 0.08 | 0.08 |

... not applicable

* significantly different from reference category (ref.) ($p < 0.05$)

** significantly different from reference category (ref.) ($p < 0.01$)

1. Included the following variable, which was not significant and is not displayed: immigrant status.

2. Included the following variables, which were not significant and are not displayed: immigrant status; number of relatives and friends they feel close to; frequency of alcohol use in the past month; frequency of marijuana use in the past month; number of medications used in the past month; and number of victimizations with violence in the past 12 months.

Note: Predicted probabilities are derived from marginal effects at the mean, based on logistic regressions.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey on Canadians' Safety (Victimization), 2014.

Conclusion

This study explored the proportion of Canadians who have ever experienced hidden homelessness at some point in their life, as well as the characteristics associated with hidden homelessness using data from the 2014 General Social Survey on Canadians' Safety (Victimization). Hidden homelessness is defined as those who ever had to temporarily live with family, friends or in their car because they had nowhere else to live. In 2014, 8% of Canadians said

that they had been in that situation at least once—and of these, one in five experienced it for at least one year.

Some population groups are more likely to have experienced hidden homelessness. The Aboriginal population is overrepresented among those who have experienced hidden homelessness. Canadians with this experience are also more likely to have been the victim of childhood abuse and recent criminal incidents. Canadians with disabilities, and particularly those with multiple

types of disabilities, were more likely to have experienced hidden homelessness.

A higher proportion of Canadians with a weak sense of belonging or few close family and friends have experienced hidden homelessness, as have those who use marijuana weekly and use medication to sleep, calm down, or get out of depression. These variables, however, were not associated with hidden homelessness when other variables were accounted for in a model.

Lastly, Canadians whose highest level of education is less than a university certificate, diploma or degree are more likely to have experienced hidden homelessness, as are those who are separated or divorced, or those who reported a sexual orientation other than heterosexual.

It is important to note, however, that the relationships discussed above are not cause and effect relationships. Future research will be needed to identify the possible causes of hidden homelessness, as well as its possible long-term effects on individual well-being.

Samantha Rodrigue is an analyst with the Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division of Statistics Canada.

Data sources, methods and definitions

Data sources

This study uses data from the 2014 General Social Survey on Canadians' Safety (Victimization). The target population consisted of the non-institutionalized Canadian population aged 15 and over, living in the 10 provinces. The data were collected throughout the 2014 calendar year. The data are collected directly from the survey respondents (self-declared). The 2014 Victimization Survey had a final sample size of 33,127 and a 52.9% response rate.

For the analysis of the characteristics with a correlation to experiences of hidden homelessness, one of the main limitations of the data is that the survey only includes Canadians who are currently living in a household with a telephone or cell phone. This limitation has potentially resulted in an underrepresentation of the population with an experience of hidden homelessness if they are currently homeless, but the extent is unknown.

Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the calculated estimates of the Canadian population with an experience of hidden homelessness include only respondents who answered yes to "have you ever had to temporarily live with family or friends, in your car or anywhere else because you had nowhere else to live?" It is possible that respondents interpreted the question and concept of "having nowhere else to live" differently. Respondents from the sample who stated that they didn't know (0.09%), refused (0.66%) or were not asked the question (0.22%) on hidden homelessness are excluded from the estimates in this study.

Readers should note that the hidden homeless population is different from those who experienced homelessness in the street or in shelters. The latter group, which is not the focus of this study, can be identified with the following survey question: "Have you ever been homeless, that is, having to live in a shelter, on the street, or in an abandoned building?"

Notes

1. See Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (2012).
2. Note that these are the definitions of one organization. There are slight variations in the definitions and various methodologies for enumerating these subpopulations.
3. See Gaetz et al. (2014).
4. See Gaetz et al. (2014).
5. See Feng et al. (2013) and Grinman et al. (2010).
6. See Hwang et al. (2009).
7. See Perreault (2015).
8. See Frederick et al. (2011).
9. Note that other researchers and organizations may define this concept differently.
10. In the GSS, physical abuse is derived from questions CEX_Q010 (slapped or hit by an adult), CEX_Q020 (pushed, grabbed or shoved by an adult) and CEX_Q030 (kicked, punched or choked by an adult). Sexual abuse is derived from questions CEX_Q050 (forced into unwanted sexual activity by an adult) and CEX_Q060 (touched in a sexual way by an adult).
11. The type of disability is derived from a block of 31 questions that contain screening questions about difficulties and long-term conditions that have lasted or are expected to last for six months or more. To be identified as having a disability, the difficulty or condition must limit their daily activities sometimes, often or always.
12. They reported having any other health problem or long-term condition that has lasted or is expected to last for six months or more and limits their daily activities sometimes, often or always.
13. The age reported in the survey is the respondent's current age, not the age at which they experienced homelessness.
14. Estimates based on highest level of education are limited to Canadians aged 25 and over to allow the individual enough time to attend and complete postsecondary education. According to Hango (2011), by 28 months after high school graduation, 81% of those graduates had enrolled in postsecondary education.

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