

Samuel Hudon,
Group 1-61

What I learned from my research on homelessness in Canada

Homelessness in Canada has been a problem for over 40 years, it started in the 1980's when the government started to cut funding for affordable housing and social services. Because of that, many people, especially those facing severe mental issues, poverty or addiction were stuck without stable housing. Over time the lack of affordable housing and rising rental costs made it even harder for people to find and keep stable housing.

Currently, homelessness is still a big issue in Canada, affecting many individuals across the country, especially in major cities like Vancouver, Montreal and Toronto. The pandemic of Covid-19 made the situation even worse, many losing jobs and access to support systems. Low wages, high costs of living and mental health struggles are factors that contribute to the problem. There are some government programs and shelters that help, but the number of homeless people continues to rise, showing the need for more affordable housing and better systems to address this problem.

I also learned about the hidden homelessness: when somebody is living with family or friends without stable housing.

Through this project, I learned important aspects of Homelessness in Canada. My main takeaways are:

1. Mental health and addiction is often a cause for homelessness;

Felix's mom, Astrid, suffers from mental health problems, such as depression because of her brother's death. Astrid had a traumatic childhood due to the abuse she suffered from her father; it didn't seem like she was ever offered therapy for her trauma which led to instability in her adulthood.

2. Lack of support systems for those in need: no family or friend support network, governmental programs that were reduced and removed since the 1980's, insufficient employment services;

After Astrid's mom died, losing the main member of her support system, she lived with a boyfriend (with Felix) which was abusive. They broke up and lived in a few other apartments, but she ended up losing them because she lost multiple jobs due to her negative attitude. Astrid and Felix had to live with a friend (Soleil) but Astrid made rude comments to Soleil and she kicked them out. Without the support from these people, they had nowhere to go so they decided to live in a van, using shelters to wash and newly built unowned houses to charge devices and get water.

3. Affordable housing crisis is becoming worst; often mentioned in current news

The lack of affordable housing is the most pressing issue currently in Canada, rents are increasing while wages do not follow. Felix's mother had to resort to live in a van because she could not find an affordable form of housing with her limited means.

4. Inflation and cost of living with low paying jobs

Inflation has been on the rise in the last few years, which has caused the cost of living to increase dramatically. Astrid earned low wages and with the cost of living increasing it was difficult to make ends meet.

5. Hidden homelessness

Hidden homelessness refers to people that lack stable housing but do not appear to be in official homeless statistics because they live in temporary

housing with friends or family, in tents or vans, in abandoned buildings etc. Because they are not staying in shelters or on the streets, they are often overlooked. Felix does not have a “Fixed Address” of his own but does not live on the streets either; he is part of the hidden homeless community. It was only towards the end of the story that he improved his situation and could afford a stable form of housing.