Results of the pilot study to estimate the size of the hidden homeless population in Metro Vancouver

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ABSTRACT

The size of the hidden homeless population in Canadian communities is unknown and of concern to those involved in homelessness planning and prevention. The present study aimed to address this gap using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative component tested an approach to estimate the size of the hidden homeless population in Metro Vancouver (at a point in time and on a yearly basis) using a made in Canada definition. It modified an approach used in Los Angeles in the General Population Telephone Survey as part of the Greater Lost Angeles Homeless Count. The quantitative research was operationalized in several questions incorporated in a monthly Omnibus telephone survey that employs multi-level random selection methods. 1,027 interviews were completed in two waves in January and February 2009. Projecting the results to the total population of Metro Vancouver households it is estimated that there were 9,196 hidden homeless persons at the time of the survey. Most of them would have been unrelated to the host household. The annual figure is estimated at 23,543 hidden homeless persons. The study demonstrates that this approach for estimating the size of the hidden homeless population is effective. Given the limitations associated with estimating "rare" events, replicating the survey in Metro Vancouver would confirm its validity. The qualitative research aimed to describe the characteristics of the hidden homeless and pathways into and out of hidden homelessness. A two-step process of interviewing the hidden homeless person proved difficult to implement and only two qualitative interviews with people who met the criteria for hidden homeless were completed.

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Executive Summary

Most of the elements of homelessness as defined by various studies are incorporated in existing data sources. For example, homeless counts in different cities in Canada demonstrate that communities are able to gather information about the number and characteristics of people living on the street, in shelters and, if known to outreach workers, places unfit for year-round habitation such as campgrounds or abandoned buildings. Statistics Canada and CMHC data provide several options for estimating the size and nature of the at risk population, including those that are overcrowded or living in inadequate housing. At present, there is no reliable source for data on the size of the hidden homeless population. This project tested an approach to estimate the size of the hidden homeless population in Metro Vancouver.

The research was modeled on the 2005 and 2007 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count General Population Survey.[1] The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), an independent agency established by the County and the City of Los Angeles, undertook a 15-minute survey of 1,000 households (contacted through random digit-dialling) to identify the hidden homeless as part of a larger homeless count. The first General Population Telephone Survey took place in 2005, and was the first of its kind in North America ever conducted as part of a homeless enumeration. In 2007, as in 2005, the aim was to estimate the number of "hidden" homeless that self define as homeless but who avoid homeless shelters and do not stay on the street. The definition of hidden homelessness used was based on that of U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD); an "unsheltered" homeless person was someone who "resides in a place not meant for human habitation" (HUD 2004). The focus of concern in the L.A. study was homeless persons staying on private property. These places included unconverted garages, backyard storage units, porches, vehicles or tents on private property and other structures not meant for human habitation (LAHSA 2007). Projecting the results to the entire Los Angeles population resulted in an estimate of 20,746 hidden homeless individuals situated on private property.

Purpose and objectives

The present study replicated the L.A. approach using a made in Canada definition to estimate the size of the hidden homeless[2] population in Metro

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[1] Applied Survey Research. 2007 *Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count. General Population Telephone Survey.* Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority.
http://www.lahsa.org/generalpopulationtelephonesurvey.asp

[2] While the term sofa surfing is used synonymously with hidden homeless by some jurisdictions, it is not consistently used. It suggests that "sofa surfers" stay in different households/places on a rotating and constant basis (versus staying with one household for an indeterminate period of

Vancouver. The L.A. study definition was deemed too restrictive for Canadian purposes; it was felt that the focus on outdoor structures not meant for human habitation would not reflect the reality of Canadian winters and would not capture the phenomenon of temporary shared accommodation. The objectives of the research were to:

- Develop a definition of the hidden homeless that can be used nationally and implemented through the pilot study;
- Refine the L.A. methodology for estimating the number of hidden homeless so that it could be used in communities across Canada;
- Determine the feasibility of identifying the characteristics of the hidden homeless population;
- Explore approaches to estimating the lifetime incidence of hidden homelessness;
- Estimate the current size of the hidden homeless population in Metro Vancouver;
- Learn about the characteristics of the hidden homeless and pathways into and out of hidden homelessness for some hidden homeless in Metro Vancouver; and
- Assess the potential for replicability of this research elsewhere in Canada.

Methodology

This research comprised both a quantitative and qualitative component and was carried out in two phases. The method was developed in the first phase, and consisted of a literature review, scan of communities for their definition of hidden homeless, selection of a definition of hidden homeless and preparation of the quantitative and qualitative survey materials.

Researchers ruled out the possibility of estimating the demographic characteristics of the hidden homeless due to the anticipated low incidence of hidden homelessness and therefore limited base size for reliable analysis. Researchers also considered the inclusion of questions regarding lifetime incidence of hidden homelessness as stated in the objectives above. After completing the literature review, the authors elected to substitute annual incidence i.e. an estimate of the number of hidden homeless people over the course of a year instead of lifetime incidence as the period prevalence measure of hidden homelessness. This time frame is more commonly considered in planning and policy making around absolute homelessness, see for example, the Corporation for Supportive Housing.[3]

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time*).* While this may be true, it is not the preferred term, as it tends to minimize the severity of the practice. We have elected to use the term "hidden homeless" throughout this report.

[3] Martha R. Burt and Carol Wilkins. 2005. *Estimating the Need: Projecting from Point-in-Time to Annual Estimates of the Number of Homeless People in a Community and Using this Information to Plan for Permanent Supportive Housing*. Corporation for Supportive Housing.

The second phase implemented the research design. The quantitative research was operationalized in several questions incorporated in a monthly Omnibus, a metro-wide, shared cost telephone survey that employs multi-level random selection methods. This non-custom format enables clients to sponsor a number of questions on a random household survey at less cost than a custom survey. Interviews were completed in two waves of 500 in January and February 2009.

For the qualitative component, a two-step process was followed, first requesting a follow up interview with the host household representative completing the quantitative survey. If agreed, and once that contact was made, the interviewer attempted to speak to the person staying temporarily.

Definition

One of the key tasks was to clarify the definition of hidden homelessness to be used in this study, and specifically to develop a way to operationalize the definition in the context of the random household survey method. Two approaches were used – a literature review and a scan of communities for their definition of hidden homeless.

The selected definition of hidden homelessness was intended to capture a range of situations:

> *Hidden homeless persons are people staying temporarily with another household and who do not have a regular address of their own where they have security of tenure.*

The literature suggested that the following variables are important elements of a nuanced operationalization of the definition of hidden homelessness:

- Relationship to head of household (e.g. friend, relative etc.);
- Age group (e.g. under 25 yrs);
- Sleeping arrangement (e.g. couch, floor, basement, garage, etc.);
- Owner/tenant (or leaseholder) satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the arrangements; and
- Financial or in-kind contribution.

The number of these variables that could be operationalized in this short random survey was limited. As such, two of these variables were selected – family relationship and a version of owner/tenant satisfaction with the arrangement.

In some jurisdictions with statutory definitions of homeless such as the U.S., family ties are enough to exclude a person from consideration as hidden homeless. That is, a family member staying temporarily with another member of the family cannot by definition be considered hidden homeless.

However, this approach was not taken in this study. While the relationship of the hidden homeless person to the host household was considered an important dimension for descriptive purposes, family relationship was not enough to exclude a person from consideration as hidden homeless. The rationale is that a homeless person may exhaust their welcome with family members, as well as others, with numerous or lengthy stays. Host dissatisfaction (whether family or not) with this type of arrangement ultimately results in a precariousness that represents lack of security of tenure. "Host household satisfaction with the arrangement" was felt to supersede family relationship and indeed other variables reported in the literature. If the host household is dissatisfied with the relationship then family status, payment of rent, sleeping location or other variables is inconsequential. Host household satisfaction was determined by asking if the visitor could stay as long as they needed to establish a home of their own. Thus a person who was a member of the immediate family was considered hidden homeless if they could <u>not</u> stay in the host household as long as they needed to establish a residence of their own. Importantly, this approach eliminated from consideration as hidden homeless a situation where a youth was living in the family home while in school, for example, and could stay as long as he or she wishes.

Findings

Among the 1,027 completed household interviews, 35 host household representatives reported having 49 individuals living with them at the time of the survey. When the definition of hidden homelessness was applied using the screening question that the individual visitor "cannot stay with you until they are able to establish a residence of their own", the number of positive responses was reduced. Applying this criterion reduced the number of households reporting a hidden homeless visitor from 49 to 8 households. They were accommodating 12 hidden homeless persons, 5 of whom were family members.

Projecting to the total population of Metro Vancouver households[4] it is estimated that there were 9,196 hidden homeless persons at the time of the survey. Most of them would have been un-related to the host household. The number of hidden homeless individuals in Metro Vancouver *in the past year* was estimated to be 23,543 persons. Most (18,000 or 75%) of these individuals were non-family members.

Since the incidence of hidden homelessness is considered a statistically rare phenomenon, these estimates produce fairly broad interval estimates. The margin of error is 7,650 at the 95% confidence level. That means that 95 times out of 100 the interval from 1,545 persons to 16,846 persons includes the actual number of hidden homeless individuals in Metro Vancouver. A much larger (and impractical) sample size would have been necessary to provide narrow interval

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[4] Source: 2006 BC Statistics. Estimated number of hidden homeless individuals housed temporarily across 817,225 households.

estimates. Despite the wide variance, and given that the survey has been conducted twice in L.A. with similar results, both the L.A. study statisticians and the statistician involved in the present study concluded that the method represents a reasonable approach for estimating the size of the hidden homeless population.

Qualitative research was designed to learn from hidden homeless individuals about their previous housing situation and barriers to obtaining stable housing. Two qualitative interviews with hidden homeless persons were completed and they are included as profiles in the report. This limited number means it is not possible to draw any conclusions about the characteristics of hidden homelessness and pathways into and out of hidden homelessness.

Significance

The study provides an estimate of the size of the hidden homeless population in a Canadian community using empirical methods.   It provides figures for the estimated number of hidden homeless individuals in Metro Vancouver over four weeks in January and February 2009 and an estimate of the number of hidden homeless individuals in Metro Vancouver over the course of a year.

The figures may be an underestimate of the actual number hidden homeless due to the limitations of telephone survey research such as exclusion of some non-English speaking and cell only households.

It represents findings for one community. Given variations in regional housing markets and other contributing factors, this estimate cannot be applied elsewhere.

The study demonstrates that this approach used for estimating the size of the hidden homeless population is effective. Given the limitations associated with estimating "rare" events, replicating the survey in Metro Vancouver would confirm its validity.

Policy implications are related to the potential relationship between the number of hidden homeless persons and the number of absolute homeless persons.[5] There were 2,660 absolute homeless people in Metro Vancouver counted on one day in March 2008.[6] The estimate of 9,196 hidden homeless persons may be viewed as an indicator of housing instability or precariousness that may predict future levels of absolute homelessness. However, there is insufficient information to determine the existence or strength of this relationship. Data for

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[5] Called the sheltered and street homeless in Metro Vancouver.

[6] SPARC. 2008. *Still on our Streets… Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count.* For Metro Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness. Some hidden homeless were included if they were located at outdoor locations or in homeless services such as drop in centres or meal programs.

both measures over several years would be required to determine the relationship.

It might be helpful to consider the hidden homeless population in the context of the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS) classification system.[7] Under this typology, the hidden homeless population would be considered under the general conceptual category "insecure" as opposed to "houseless" or "roofless". The benefit of this approach is that it lays out clearly the conceptual category (insecure), the operational category (living in insecure accommodation), the living situation (temporarily with friends or family), and housing situation (living in conventional housing but not the usual place of residence due to lack of housing). However, it may be that the language used in the ETHOS system "… temporarily with friends or family" does not give sufficient weight to the precariousness of these housing situations.

Recommendations are provided.

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[7] ETHOS - European Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion
http://www.feantsa.org/files/indicators_wg/ETHOS2007/general/EN_2007EthosLeaflet.pdf
retrieved 10/06/08.

1. Introduction

This project pilot tested an approach to estimate the size of the hidden homeless population in Metro Vancouver. Most of the elements of homelessness as defined by various studies are incorporated in existing data sources. For example, homeless counts in different cities in Canada demonstrate that communities are able to gather information about the number and characteristics of people living on the street, in shelters and, if known to outreach workers, places unfit for year-round habitation such as campgrounds or abandoned buildings. Statistics Canada and CMHC data provide several options for estimating the size and nature of the at risk population, including those that are overcrowded or living in inadequate housing. At present, there is no reliable source for data on the size of the hidden homeless population.

The research was modeled on the 2005 and 2007 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count General Population Survey, which was designed to measure the size of the homeless population staying on private property (particularly in outdoor spaces).[8] The present study replicated the L.A. approach (that is a random telephone survey) using a made in Canada definition to estimate the size of the hidden homeless[9] population in Metro Vancouver.

The objectives of the research were to:

- Develop a definition of the hidden homeless that can be used nationally and implemented through the pilot study;
- Refine the L.A. methodology for estimating the number of hidden homeless so that it could be used in communities across Canada;
- Determine the feasibility of identifying the characteristics of the hidden homeless;
- Explore approaches to estimating the lifetime incidence of hidden homelessness;
- Estimate the current size of the hidden homeless population in Metro Vancouver;
- Learn about the characteristics of the hidden homeless and pathways into and out of hidden homelessness for some hidden homeless in Metro Vancouver; and

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[8] Applied Survey Research. *2007 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count. General Population Telephone Survey*. Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority. http://www.lahsa.org/generalpopulationtelephonesurvey.asp

[9] While the term sofa surfing is used synonymously with hidden homeless by some jurisdictions, it is not consistently used. It suggests that "sofa surfers" stay in different households/places on a rotating and constant basis (versus staying with one household for an indeterminate period of time*).* While this may be true, it is not the preferred term, as it tends to minimize the severity of the practice. We have elected to use the term "hidden homeless" throughout this report.

- Assess the potential for replicability of this research elsewhere in Canada.

1.1 Definition

One of the key tasks was to clarify the definition of hidden homelessness to be used in this study, and specifically to develop a way to operationalize the definition in the context of the random household survey method. Two approaches were used – a literature review and a scan of communities for their definition of hidden homeless. The literature review illuminated various conceptions of the hidden homeless, particularly in studies that have sought to measure hidden homelessness. The literature review, which concludes with a definition proposed for use in this study, is contained in Section 1.3 of this report.

The purpose of the scan was to understand if communities have adopted a formal definition of hidden homelessness and the nature of that definition. Seven communities were contacted as part of the scan. The results are contained in Appendix A. Although most communities have no formal definition of hidden homelessness there is an awareness of this population and a concern about their welfare. Some communities informally recognize the hidden homeless as those staying temporarily with family or friends while others see the issue more broadly; encompassing dimensions such as lack of security of person or tenure. It is seen as particularly affecting women and children, Aboriginal people, and youth.

Based on this work, a broad definition of hidden homelessness was proposed to capture a range of situations:

> Hidden homeless persons are people staying temporarily with another household and who do not have a regular address of their own where they have security of tenure.

The literature suggested that the following variables are important elements of a nuanced operationalization of the definition of hidden homelessness:

- Relationship to head of household (e.g. friend, relative etc.);
- Age group (e.g. under 25 yrs);
- Sleeping arrangement (e.g. couch, floor, basement, garage, etc.);
- Owner/tenant (or leaseholder) satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the arrangements; and
- Financial or in-kind contribution.

The number of these variables that could be operationalized in this short random survey was limited. As such two of these variables were selected – family relationship and a version of owner/tenant satisfaction with the arrangement.

In some jurisdictions with formal definitions of homeless such as the U.S., family ties are enough to exclude a person from consideration as hidden homeless. That is, a family member staying temporarily with another member of the family cannot by definition be considered hidden homeless.

However, this approach was not taken in this study. While the relationship of the hidden homeless person to the host household was considered an important dimension for descriptive purposes, family relationship was not enough to exclude a person from consideration as hidden homeless. The rationale is that a homeless person may exhaust their welcome with family members, as well as others, with numerous or lengthy stays. Host dissatisfaction (whether family or not) with this type of arrangement ultimately results in a precariousness that represents lack of security of tenure. "Host household satisfaction with the arrangement" was felt to supersede family relationship and indeed other variables reported in the literature. If the host household is dissatisfied with the relationship then family status, payment of rent, sleeping location or other variables are inconsequential. Host household satisfaction was determined by asking if the visitor could stay as long as they needed to establish a home of their own. Thus a person who was a member of the immediate family was considered hidden homeless if they could <u>not</u> stay in the host household as long as they needed to establish a residence of their own. Importantly, this approach eliminated from consideration as hidden homeless a situation where a youth was living in the family home while in school, for example, and could stay as long as he or she wishes.

To screen in as hidden homeless, the survey was designed to determine whether a person/family:

- Was staying with the household on a temporary basis;
- Did not have a regular residence of their own for either *economic reasons* and/or *lack of choice*; and
- Could <u>not</u> stay as long as they needed to establish a residence of their own.

1.2   Research question

What is the estimated number of hidden homeless persons in Metro Vancouver at one point in time and over the course of a year?

1.3   Literature review

The idea of "hidden homelessness" is closely tied to the definition of homelessness itself and the range of situations that it encompasses. According to work undertaken by a European research network, "Constructing

Understanding of the Homeless Population (CUHP)",[10] concern with the issue of hidden homelessness was triggered by the realization that some groups/populations were not visible to providers and researchers, and thereby, the magnitude of problems could not be assessed or resolved (Somogyi and Tosics 2005). In the U.S., the much narrower concept of "unsheltered homeless people" is seen as part of the Continuum of Care and as an acknowledgement that "many chronically homeless people do not use shelters" and information about this population is important for service planning, accurately measuring and identifying needs, as well as raising public awareness (HUD 2004). Thus there is consensus that the number of homeless persons is underestimated, especially if many are "hidden". In Canada, organizations such as Raising the Roof and its members, estimate that 80% of the homeless population is not living on the street and "visible" but rather improperly housed or on the verge of eviction (Raising the Roof; Victoria Steering Committee on Homelessness). A similar proportion is believed to be hidden in Australia (Somogyi and Tosics 2005).

The discussion of hidden homelessness in the literature is fairly extensive, and is often tied to the definition of homelessness itself. We will quickly review these definitions, especially in terms of dimensions of homelessness to understand the underlying concepts, focusing more on definitions used in a number of studies and surveys that sought to quantify hidden homelessness. The review incorporates European, U.K., U.S., Australian and Canadian perspectives.

1.3.1   Dimensions of homelessness

Numerous definitions begin with a concept of homelessness as part of a continuum of housing, using quality and security as the main variables (e.g. high security and quality represent adequate housing, whereas low quality and security are literal homelessness). Other than "physical" (i.e. issues of adequacy), and "legal" (i.e. security of tenure) domains other dimensions can include the social domain (i.e. the ability to "maintain privacy and enjoy relations") as well as a "mismatch" between household and housing characteristics such as price/income; household size/unit size or suitability such as location to services and employment (Marpsat 2005). For example, the UN definition of homelessness includes not only those who have no homes and live either outdoors or in emergency shelters or hostels, but also those whose dwellings do not meet UN standards including protection from the elements, access to safe water and sanitation, affordable price, secure tenure, personal safety, and accessibility to employment, education and health care. Thus the UN definition of

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[10] The 3-year research network funded by the European Commission from 2002 to 2005 brought together research teams from Denmark, France, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, and the UK, to discuss a number of issues such as definitions, theoretical approaches, quantitative and qualitative methods, and integrating the preoccupations of NGOs and policy makers. The fifth conference dealt with hidden homelessness. See http://www.cuhp.org/

relative homelessness includes the notion of the "precariously housed" or those "at risk" of homelessness, and in touching on employment, education and health enter the realm of social exclusion.[11] In Canada, many researchers and practitioners have adopted a variant of the United Nations 1987 definition of absolute and relative homelessness (Pomeroy and Frojmovic 1995; Daly 1996) with *absolute homelessness*, referring to those living on the street, in temporary shelters or in locations not meant for human habitation, and *relative homelessness* or those "at risk" referring to those who pay too high a proportion of their income for housing or those living in inadequate shelter.

Other definitions place greater emphasis on perceptions, such as that used by the Australian Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) that could exclude people living in boarding houses "if they think of their single rooms as home" although the lack of adequate amenities in boarding houses is part of the definition of homelessness under SAAP (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2003). This also illustrates the "cultural definition" of homelessness whereby "homelessness" and "inadequate housing" are socially constructed, cultural concepts that only make sense in a particular community at a given historical period" (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2003). This leads to a four-level definition of homelessness:

- Marginally housed - people living in housing close to minimum standards;
- Tertiary homelessness - people living in single rooms in private boarding houses without their own kitchen, bathroom or security of tenure;
- Secondary homelessness - people moving between various forms of temporary shelters including friends and refuges and boarding houses;
- Primary homelessness - people without conventional accommodation living on streets, deserted buildings, improvised dwellings (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2003).

Conceptual definitions of homelessness and housing exclusion have also been the focus of work undertaken by the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) and the European Observatory on Homelessness to improve trans-national exchanges on homelessness. The summary definition integrates four dimensions:

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[11] Social inclusion or exclusion has been a topic of debate in Europe for 30 years, but is relatively new in the Canadian context. It grew out of a concern about vulnerable groups and their loss of social ties and social relations through events such as unemployment, family breakdown, and homelessness and encompasses more than poverty, which focuses on issues of distribution and lack of resources available to an individual or household. Social exclusion comprises "the progressive loss of a positive identity and the lack of a project providing a meaning to existence and an incorporation into society" (Blanc 1998) and focuses on relational issues – inadequate social participation, social integration, and lack of power (Marsh and Mullins 1998).

TABLE 1 European typology of homelessness and housing exclusion

Conceptual category	Operational category
Roofless	• People living rough • People in emergency accommodation
Houseless	• People in accommodation for the homeless • People in women's shelters • People in accommodation for immigrants • People due to be released from institutions • People receiving longer-term support (due to homelessness)
Insecure	• People living in insecure accommodation • People living under threat of eviction • People living under threat of violence
Inadequate	• People living in temporary / non-conventional structures • People living in unfit housing • People living in extreme overcrowding

Source: ETHOS (2007)

In the Canadian context, homelessness research has especially focused on the roofless category with database initiatives such as Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) for people in emergency accommodation or point-in-time counts such as those undertaken in various cities including Vancouver, Calgary, and Edmonton to identify those sleeping rough and in shelters. Other data about houselessness, insecure or inadequate situations are partially available through methods such as the core housing need model developed by CMHC, although one study finds that "more nuanced measures would be preferred" (Fiedler, Schuurman and Hyndman 2006).

1.3.2 Dimensions of hidden homelessness

Based on a review of international literature on homelessness, Somogyi and Tosics (2005) identify four categories that are found within the concept of hidden homelessness and which focus primarily on the last three categories in Table 1:

- Acute homelessness/roofless (i.e. people hiding/living in remote locations, tents, huts);
- People who do not have safe and permanent accommodation and are not part of the homeless care system;
- People living in housing which is intolerable (e.g. sub-standard, overcrowded, involuntarily shared or threatened by eviction); and
- Those who are not "registered" (i.e. this depends on registration criteria, as for example the U.K., and may overlap with other categories).[12]

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[12] In England to be classified as statutorily homeless, persons have to first apply to their local authority and are considered homeless according to the law if there is no accommodation that they are entitled to occupy or they have accommodation, but it is not reasonable for them to continue to occupy it.

Awareness of housing problems in the U.K. and London in particular during the late 1980s led to the first study of "concealed households" in 1988 using the London Household Survey. (The term "concealed" rather than "hidden" is current in the U.K.). Subsequent surveys refined the methodology (Smith 2005). The dimensions of homelessness used by the Greater London Authority (GLA) to identify "at risk" or "in need" populations are based on the larger ETHOS categories but with added GLA sub-categories:

TABLE 2 GLA Dimensions of Hidden Homelessness

Houseless	• People living involuntarily in B&Bs and other boarded accommodation • People living in hostels, night shelters or refuges on a non-permanent basis • People staying in institutions who are due for discharge/release but have no accommodation to go to
Insecure Accommodation	• Concealed households living in overcrowded conditions • Concealed households where the owner/renter is dissatisfied • Households where someone is being harassed • People at imminent risk of eviction • People squatting involuntarily
Inadequate Accommodation	• Severely overcrowded households • Households without central heating who are also dissatisfied with their accommodation.

Source: Palmer (2004)

To a large extent these dimensions of hidden homelessness meld elements often found in the Canadian distinction between "absolute" homelessness (e.g. uninhabitable spaces) and "relative" or "at risk" (e.g. substandard or insecure housing). These elements are found in the Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) definition of hidden homelessness which includes "individuals or families living in locations not meant for human habitation (i.e. abandoned buildings) and/or continuously moving among temporary living arrangements provided by strangers, friends or family" (HRSDC 2008). Raising the Roof also incorporates similar concepts, identifying hidden homeless populations as those who are "improperly housed or on the verge of eviction. Many are sleeping in temporary beds - with friends or relatives, in church basements, in welfare motels, in abandoned buildings and vehicles, and in other sites away from the public eye" (Raising the Roof) while Metro Vancouver defines the "invisible" homeless as individuals who are sofa surfing.[13] However, other Canadian communities do not use the term "hidden homeless", but continue to define homelessness only in terms of absolute and relative

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[13] Social Planning and Research Council of BC. 2003. *3 Ways to Home, Regional Homelessness Plan Update.* Prepared for the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness.

homelessness.[14]

Definitions used in studies of hidden homelessness

A number of studies that have undertaken counts or estimates of hidden homelessness were identified. These are summarized below.

Australian Census: In 1996, the Australian Census targeted the homeless population with a special enumeration strategy, using a cultural definition of homelessness (see Section 1.3.1). The enumeration strategy placed special emphasis on identifying primary homelessness, that is people without conventional dwellings, and included field staff working closely with service providers to identify buildings where people squatted or handing out census forms at services for homeless people such as mobile food vans. The same process was used in the 2001 Census and 2006 Census and supplemented by SAAP data.

The Census enumeration used a three-part definition of homelessness; primary, secondary and tertiary. The primary category corresponds to rooflessness and is operationalized using the census category "improvised homes, tents and sleepers out". Secondary homelessness is a broad category including people who move frequently from one form of temporary shelter to another such as emergency or transitional accommodation provided under the SAAP and people residing temporarily with other households because they have no accommodation of their own. The latter report "no usual address" on their census form. Secondary homelessness also includes people staying in boarding houses on a short-term basis, operationally defined as 12 weeks or less." Finally, tertiary homelessness refers to people living in boarding houses on a medium or long-term basis (i.e. over 13 weeks), having no kitchen or bathroom facilities of their own, nor security of tenure provided by a lease (Chamberlain and McKenzie 2003).

The analysis of this census data found that primary or absolute homelessness (e.g. sleeping rough or in improvised shelters) accounted for only 14% of homelessness and that most homeless people were sheltered somewhere at night, with about half staying temporarily with friends, acquaintances and relatives (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2003).

The Homeless Enumeration Strategy for the 2006 Census acknowledged the increasing shortage of homeless accommodation, which meant that homeless people would be found in places not traditionally associated with homelessness, such as motels and caravan parks. Public Relation measures were taken to address this issue as well as to target "couch surfers", or young people without a

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[14] Poverty and Homelessness Action Team Central Okanagan. 2007. *Survey and Assessment of Homelessness in Kelowna.*

home of their own alternating between the homes of varying friends and relatives.

U.K. Crisis: The definition of hidden homelessness is rooted in the concept of statutory homelessness and includes those who meet the legal definition of homelessness but for whom there is no accommodation or those who have not been provided with accommodation by their local authority because they have not applied or have applied but were judged not to be in priority. Based on the analysis undertaken on the Survey of English Housing (an annual survey of 30,000 households that includes information on adequacy of accommodation and household composition), an estimated 4.3 million adults 16 and over in England were in "concealed households". These were people who did not own or rent a property; were neither the head of the household nor their partner; and were not considered a dependent child. Of these 480,000 were estimated to be in overcrowded conditions and therefore considered homeless or at risk. Of the remaining "concealed households" that were not overcrowded, it was estimated that 160,000 persons were at risk of homelessness because the head of the household was dissatisfied with the arrangements (Kenway and Palmer 2003). Using these data Crisis estimates that there are as many as 380,000 hidden homeless people in the U.K., "almost equal in size to the city of Manchester" (Crisis 2004).

London Household Survey: An early survey of "concealed households" in London used the 1986 London Household Survey to identify a sample of 1,112 concealed households that were surveyed about intentions to form new households. The study found that "potential" households varied by type, for example only 28% of single persons living with relatives, friends or parents wanted to move, whereas this comprised 79% of couples and 71% of single parents. However this survey did not include questions about levels of security or past housing history (Smith 2005).

In a 2002 survey by the GLA, 8,150 interviews (lasting 35-55 minutes) were undertaken of pre-selected addresses in London boroughs, weighted towards "deprived areas" and dealing with issues including poverty, health, and housing. Interviews were conducted with either the person responsible for the mortgage or rent, or their partner. Issues of concealed household were built around a number of questions:
- Age, sex, relationship to respondent of every person in the household (household defined by "people living here who share a living or sitting room or share at least one meal a day with you).
- Satisfaction with accommodation and with sharing.
- Whether anyone in the household needs to or is likely to move within the next five years, and if so who and with whom (e.g. "Will you or your whole household move TOGETHER to a different home?" "Who in your household is likely to move out?")
- Reasons for moving out (all and the most important).

- Views on sharing with other households (Greater London Authority DMAG 2003).

It found that under the category of insecure housing:
- An estimated 210,000 adults were households where someone was being harassed;
- 700 were at imminent risk of eviction; and
- A maximum of 8,000 were squatting involuntarily.

Furthermore 190,000 adults[15] were considered concealed households[16] living in overcrowded conditions and 50,000 adults[17] were concealed households where the owner/renter was dissatisfied (i.e. both insecure and inadequate).

Under the category of inadequate housing, 140,000 adults and 50,000 children were estimated to be in severely overcrowded households.

The rationale for distinguishing among various situations underlines issues of instability, insecurity and inadequacy.

- A distinction in age groups was considered important and based on the hypothesis that "the vast majority of those aged 25 and over have reached a settled living arrangement, whereas those aged 24 and below are often still in the period of transition from dependent to independent living". The risk was determined as high if the person was over 25 and living with non-relatives, medium if 25 and over living with relatives or 16-24 living with non-relatives, and low if 16-24 living with relatives.
- Overcrowding was defined as: "Adults living with their parents, other relatives or friend in accommodation where they are not the owner or renter of that accommodation (nor their partner) and where at least one of the adults does not have their own bedroom" and based on the rationale that this accommodation is insecure because "people have no legal rights to stay in their accommodation, with their ability to stay there depending on the view of the owner/renter (something which may well be problematic given the overcrowded nature of the accommodation. The accommodation is inadequate because at least one of the adults (presumably usually those

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[15] Of which 80,000 were 25 years and over and 110,000 were between 16-24 years old.

[16] Palmer (2004) discusses the process of identification of concealed households, including the categories of "all student households" in which sharing is considered a common occurrence and does not imply insecurity or that they are "concealed"; "multi-households where there is one adult not a dependent child, such as a parent of an owner/renter or their partner; "other households" such as two or more non-relatives or two or more siblings sharing accommodation. Clearly the relationships between the various adults in a household are key to understanding whether a household is "concealed" or falls into one of the other categories.

[17] Of which 30,000 were 25 years and over and 20,000 were between 16-24 years old.

who are not the owner/renter) does not have a bedroom of their own." (Palmer 2004).

- The idea of dissatisfaction was defined as "Adults living with their parents, other relatives or friend in accommodation where they are not the owner or renter of that accommodation (nor their partner) and where the owner/renter is dissatisfied with the current accommodation" and based on the rationale that the accommodation was insecure because there was no legal right to stay there and the views of the owner/renter might be problematic because of their dissatisfaction, although the data did not offer any direct information about the reasons for dissatisfaction (Palmer 2004).

Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count: The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), an independent agency established by the County and the City of Los Angeles, undertook a 15-minute survey of 1,000 households (contacted through random digit-dialing) to identify the hidden homeless as part of a larger homeless count. The first General Population Telephone Survey took place in 2005, and was the first of its kind ever conducted as part of a homeless enumeration. It was implemented again in 2007. As in 2005, the aim was to estimate the number of "hidden" homeless that self define as homeless but who avoid homeless shelters and do not stay on the street. The definition of hidden homelessness used was based on that of HUD; an "unsheltered" homeless person was someone who "resides in a place not meant for human habitation" (HUD 2004). The focus of concern in the LA study was homeless persons staying on private property. These places included unconverted garages, backyard storage units, porches, vehicles or tents on private property and other structures not meant for human habitation (LAHSA 2007).

Respondents were asked whether there were persons living on their property who could be considered homeless. If answered affirmatively, further questions were asked about sleeping arrangements to confirm that they were homeless:

- They were living in outdoor locations, including porch, tent, RV or other vehicle, regardless of the relationship to the owner/tenant or whether they were paying rent;
- They were not part of the immediate family of the owner/tenant and were living in interior locations considered not fit for human habitation, such as unfinished garages, attics or basements and either did not pay rent or had been living on the property for less than six months; and
- They were not paying money to stay in any indoor location although those making in-kind contributions would be considered homeless if they were staying in an outdoor location or vehicle or they were staying in an indoor but unimproved space for less than six months.

The 2007 General Population Telephone Survey revealed 28 household respondents with 43 potentially hidden homeless persons staying on their property. Screening reduced the number of hidden homeless to 8 individuals,

some of whom were accompanied by family members. Projecting results to the entire Los Angeles population resulted in an estimate of 20,746 hidden homeless individuals situated on private property. Of these, 7,780 people were individuals, and 12,966 people were in families (representing 5,187 family units).   The results confirmed expectations in that there had been a discrepancy in the number of homeless families eligible for homeless services in LA and the number of homeless families documented in street and shelter counts.

2   Methodology

This research comprised both a quantitative and qualitative component and was carried out in two phases. The method was developed in the first phase, and consisted of a literature review, scan of communities for their definition of hidden homeless, selection of a definition of hidden homeless and preparation of the quantitative and qualitative survey materials.

For the quantitative component, researchers ruled out the possibility of estimating the demographic characteristics of the hidden homeless due to the anticipated low incidence of hidden homeless and therefore limited base size for reliable analysis. Researchers also considered the inclusion of questions regarding lifetime incidence of hidden homelessness as stated in the objectives above. After completing the literature review, the authors elected to substitute annual incidence i.e. an estimate of the number of hidden homeless people over the course of a year instead of lifetime incidence as the period prevalence measure of hidden homelessness. This time frame is more commonly considered in planning and policy making around absolute homelessness, see for example, the Corporation for Supportive Housing.[18]

2.1   Quantitative

The methodology of the Metro Vancouver Hidden Homeless Survey was patterned after a similar recent telephone survey in the Los Angeles area. A conversation with that study's authors informed the current research.

The Metro Vancouver survey was conducted by way of Mustel Research Group's monthly Omnibus, a metro-wide, shared cost telephone survey employing multi-level random selection methods and other quality control measures to ensure proper representation of the population. This non-custom format enables clients to sponsor a number of questions on a survey, and is typically costed on a per question basis.

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[18] Martha R. Burt and Carol Wilkins. 2005. *Estimating the Need: Projecting from Point-in-Time to Annual Estimates of the Number of Homeless People in a Community and Using this Information to Plan for Permanent Supportive Housing*. Corporation for Supportive Housing.

The Omnibus begins with an unaided "mood of the province" question, asking about the issue of greatest concern to B.C., and ends with a series of demographic questions common to all Omnibus clients. The client-commissioned questions are proprietary. This survey has been used for more than 15 years to track incidence, attitudes, awareness and behavioural characteristics of the population. An Omnibus methodology offers a cost-effective way of reaching the broad population and accurately determining incidence levels—particularly for low incidence populations, such as the hidden homeless.

The hidden homeless quantitative survey questions are located in Appendix B.

The survey process also included recruitment for follow-up qualitative interviews with host households that were providing shelter for people who had been identified as staying temporarily and who agreed to further participation.

2.1.1 Survey Timing

Two rounds of the Metro Vancouver Omnibus were used to collect the data for this research—January and February 2009. The field dates for data collection were: January 8-15, 2009 and February 2-10, 2009. Winter months were chosen intentionally to maximize the incidence of hidden homeless reporting, as opposed to the warmer months when homeless persons might be more likely to spend the night outdoors. This period also approximates the timing of the Metro Vancouver Homeless Count which typically occurs in the winter months.

The hidden homeless survey was implemented in the November 2008 Omnibus survey as well, but an error made those results ineligible.[19]

2.1.2 Sampling

Industry-standard, random selection techniques were used to draw the samples of households and then the sample of individuals to be interviewed.

The sample frame for this survey consisted of households with land-line telephone service in Metro Vancouver. A random-digit dialing (RDD) sampling method was used to remove potential bias due to having a published or unpublished telephone number. As a result, both listed and unlisted household telephone numbers were included in the sample frame for each Metro Vancouver Omnibus utilized. A ratio of 80% listed and 20% unlisted numbers was drawn, representing the known ratio for the study area. The random digit sample generated for unlisted numbers was based on known exchanges for land-lines.

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[19] The survey was mistakenly implemented throughout B.C., rather than in Metro Vancouver alone. Results were not included and the survey was treated as a pilot test.

Known cell phone exchanges were excluded from the sample frame. (Issues related to cell-only households are discussed in the section below on Sample Limitations.)

The sample frame of listed telephone numbers is composed of regularly updated electronic databases obtained from the various Canadian telephone providers. These databases are continually updated to include newly assigned and changed telephone numbers.

Following random selection of households, the individual within the household was selected using the next birthday method, incorporating a gender rotation to balance male and female responders. This method involves interviewing the male/female whose birthday falls next in the household ensuring the person interviewed is randomly selected.

The sample of respondents is representative of B.C. residents 18 years of age or older who are permanent residents of the households contacted.

2.1.3   Measures to Ensure Representation of Sub-populations

Geographic representation: Households with listed phone numbers were drawn at random, geographically proportionate to the population. The unlisted sample was also generated according to the geographic distribution of phone numbers. Additional sample was drawn at random as needed on a geographic basis to ensure adequate geographic representation by six areas within the Metro Vancouver region. Note that the area/municipality of residence was confirmed by the respondent in the questionnaire.

Hard-to-reach segments: Up to five callbacks were made to each selected household and/or individual in an attempt to complete an interview. This call-back procedure helps minimize bias due to non-response at both the household and individual respondent level.

To further ensure that the sample was representative of the population, Mustel Research Group incorporated sampling ratio refinements to account for non-response bias on the basis of gender and age. Males and youth are traditionally and continue to be the most difficult to reach and completion rates are lower for these groups. This method was vetted by a sampling statistician and deemed a reasonable sampling strategy to compensate for demographic skews in resulting survey samples due to unequal response rates.

Overcoming language barriers: The questionnaire was fully translated into key alternate languages to encourage greater response among the largest non-English speaking populations in Metro Vancouver. Respondents were given the choice of completing the survey in English, Cantonese, Mandarin or Punjabi,

Language interpreters were available in approximately 40 other languages if on shift when the need arose. In any such cases, the interviewer would provide assisted interpretation of the survey, but the interview would be conducted primarily in English.

2.1.4   Sample Weighting

Weighting adjustments were made to the final resulting samples to match known Census demographic statistics. The variables used in weighting are age within gender and geographic area. This process ensures that households of various age and gender mixes are represented properly. Table 1 details the distributions of the actual survey sample, the sample after weighting by known demographics and the population proportions (per 2006 Census).

Table 1

SAMPLE DISTRIBUTION				
	Actual Sample Size (n)	**Weighted Sample Size (n)**	**Weighted Sample %**	**2006 Census % of Population**
Region				
City of Vancouver	301	301	29.4%	29.4%
North Shore (North Vancouver City and District/West Vancouver to Lions Bay)	85	86	8.4%	8.4%
Burnaby/ New Westminster	130	132	12.9%	12.9%
Northeast Sector (Coquitlam, Port Moody, Port Coquitlam, East to Maple Ridge)	124	123	12.0%	12.0%
South of Fraser River East (Surrey/ Delta/ Langley City and Municipality)	280	275	26.8%	26.8%
Richmond	107	110	10.7%	10.7%
TOTAL METRO VANCOUVER	1,027	1,027	**100%**	**100%**

Table 2

SAMPLE DISTRIBUTION				
	Actual Sample Size (n)	**Weighted Sample Size (n)**	**Weighted Sample %**	**2006 Census % of Population**
Gender				
Male	505	494	48.1%	48.1%
Female	522	533	51.9%	51.9%
Age				
18-24 years	87	124	12.0%	12.1%
25-34 years	125	176	17.1%	17.2%
35-44 years	218	211	20.6%	20.6%
45-54 years	215	206	20.0%	20.0%
55-64 years	161	144	14.1%	14.1%
65 years and over	220	165	16.1%	16.1%
Refused	1	1	.1	-

2.1.5   Sample Limitations

Survey research has a number of limitations. To the extent that the hidden homeless may be more likely to be found in cell phone only households, households without telephones or in non-English speaking households, the survey would underestimate the number of hidden homeless.

Cell-only households: Cell phone exchanges were excluded from the sample frame. The reason is that the sampling process involved random household selection and that the survey was intended to measure hidden homelessness on a household basis (one survey was conducted per household). A sample frame of cell phone numbers would include a very high proportion of those who also have land-lines. The proportion of cell-only households in B.C. is 10.1% (source: Statistics Canada). For this reason it is extremely inefficient to locate cell-only households for inclusion in a survey such as this and thereby cost-prohibitive.

Households without telephones: This survey by nature of the telephone methodology excludes those who do not have a telephone.

Persons in institutions: Institution phone numbers (hospitals, nursing homes, etc.) were ineligible for this study. However, persons residing in group residences with a personal or shared land-line would be included.

Some alternate languages not included: Aside from the most prevalent languages in the Metro Vancouver area for which a fully translated questionnaire was prepared in advance (Cantonese, Mandarin and Punjabi), other languages would have been included only if an interpreter was available at the time of the survey. The report of calls indicates that 5% (or 914) of potential telephone numbers attempted had 'language problems' and were not completed.

Further information detailing all call outcomes is found in Table 3 following.

Table 3

OUTCOME OF CALLS	
Total Attempted:	**25,514**
Out of Scope	
Not in service/number changed/moved out of area	7570
Modem/fax line/business	1483
Cell phone/teen phone/other	40
Total Potential:	**18,421**
No answer/busy	2169
Answering machine	4402
Respondent not available	797
Contacts	**10,011**
Refused/terminated partway	8497
Illness/incapable	128
Language/communication problem	914
Willing participants	**1514**
Disqualified during screening process (includes quota full)	487
Total Completions	**1027**
Contacts (% of potential)	54%
Refusal rate (% of contacts)	84%
Willing participants (% of contacts)	15%
Completion rate (% of contacts)	10%

10/06/09

2.2 Qualitative

The purpose of the qualitative interviews was to gain a deeper understanding of the circumstances of hidden homelessness than could be obtained through quantitative surveys. Questions were designed to probe hidden homeless individuals about their previous housing situation and barriers to obtaining stable housing. A two-step process was followed, first requesting a follow up interview with the host household representative. If agreed, and once that contact was made, the interviewer asked to speak to the person staying temporarily. The interview guide is attached in Appendix C. Testing of the interview guide occurred in November 2008.

Following completion of each round of quantitative surveys the interviewer responsible for the qualitative interviews received a list of names and phone numbers of people who had completed the initial telephone survey who had one or more people staying with them on a temporary basis and who had agreed to a follow-up interview.

In several instances, the interviewer called "host" households and was told that the person staying temporarily was not there at that time. However, the host gave permission to call back another time. Other households decided not to participate in the qualitative interview.

Following the interviews in January, it was decided that the interviewer would speak with the host if, when she called, she was unable to speak with the person staying with the host temporarily. This approach was used in February 2009. In addition, the interviewer called back households who had agreed to a follow-up call in January, and completed interviews with the hosts.

3 Findings

3.1 Quantitative results

Among the 1,027 completed household interviews, 35 host household representatives reported having 49 individuals living with them at the time of the survey. (The sample findings were weighted as described earlier. Applying weights to survey data can result in weighted findings that contain fractions. For example, the 35 households mentioned is actually 34.74 and the 49 individuals is 48.588. Since reading about fractional respondents can be disconcerting to some, whole numbers are reported for tabulated values.)

However, when the definition of hidden homelessness (as discussed in Section 1.1) was applied using the screening question that the individual visitor "cannot stay with you until they are able to establish a residence of their own" the number of positive responses was reduced. Applying this criterion reduced the number of households reporting a hidden homeless visitor from 49 to 8 (8.403). This represented 12 hidden homeless persons, 5 of whom were family members.

Projecting to the total population of Metro Vancouver households,[20] it is estimated that there were 9,196 hidden homeless persons at the time of the survey. Most of them would have been unrelated to the host household or non-family members (See Table 4).

Table 4 also shows that the estimated number of hidden homeless in Metro Vancouver *in the past year* was 23,543 persons, about 2.5 times the number currently hidden homeless. Most (18,000 or 75%) of these individuals were non-family members.

Table 4 Hidden homeless survey results

Hidden homeless	No. of Hidden Homeless Individuals in Sample	Projected to Metro Vancouver Population (estimated number of hidden homeless individuals housed temporarily across 817,225 households)	No. of Households with Hidden Homeless in Sample	Projected to Metro Vancouver Households (estimated number of households housing hidden homeless across 817,225 households)
Staying Currently With	Individuals	Individuals	Households	Households
Family	4.8	3,786	4.8	3,786
Non-family	6.8	5,410	3.6	2,900
Total	11.6	9,196**	8.4	6,687**
Stayed in Past Year With				
Family	7.3	5,778	5.4	4,286
Non-family	22.3	17,763	10.8	8,631
Total	29.6	23,543**	16.2	12,918**

**Errors due to rounding, numbers are not integers due to the application of a proportional weighting factor

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[20] Source: 2006 BC Statistics. Estimated number of hidden homeless individuals housed temporarily across 817,225 households.

3.1.1 Statistical basis for population estimates and limitations

Survey sampling involves the determination of the relevant population and the sample frame from which the sample is to be drawn. It is necessary to construct a protocol for identifying individual sample units in that sample frame and then randomly drawing the sample. Ideally, this study would have begun by identifying the population of homeless people in Metro Vancouver and then establishing a methodology for inviting individuals from that population to complete survey questionnaires; that sampling would have identified the hidden homeless. However, that population was not known at the beginning of this study (and will likely never be known) and a main objective has been to identify some basic characteristics of that population. Consequently, it was necessary to establish a surrogate relevant population, and that was the population of households in Metro Vancouver. The random sample of 1,027 households was drawn from that population and the estimates in Table 4 are based on that sample information. The inferences to the population were based on generally accepted statistical principles.

The sampling procedure followed is reasonable and justifiable under these circumstances.

The results have the following margin of error:

> For the total number of households in Metro Vancouver who were accommodating hidden homeless people at the time of the survey, we can be 95% confident that number is included in the interval between 2,182 and 11,191 households.

> We can be 95% confident that the interval from 1,545 persons to 16, 846 persons includes the actual number of hidden homeless individuals in Metro Vancouver.

When positive responses to completed surveys are less than 1%, the event being measured is considered a "rare" event. This results in estimates with a wide variance, as noted above, and as reported in the L.A. study. Since the incidence of hidden homelessness is considered a statistically rare phenomenon, these estimates produce fairly broad interval estimates; a much larger sample size would have been necessary to provide narrow interval estimates. According to the authors of the L.A. study, a sample size of 100,000 households would be needed to achieve a 95% confidence level within 10% of an estimate of this size. This was ruled out in the L.A. study as being impractical.

Despite the wide variance, the L.A. study statisticians concluded that:

> "Because it is a rare event, there are statistical limitations to these estimates, but this does not negate the potential usefulness of the

findings. The methodology is a reasonable approach to the problem of identifying the "hidden homeless".[21]

Further, the LA authors noted that the 2005 and 2007 findings were virtually the same, suggesting that the estimates were valid.

Dr. Ken Deal, President, marketPOWER Research Inc, reviewed the field methodology for the present study. He concluded that the design of the sampling and execution of the fieldwork was conducted in a professional manner and is consistent with generally accepted principles of survey research. He concurs that the present methodology represents a reasonable approach for estimating the size of the hidden homeless population.

3.2   Qualitative results

Four qualitative interviews were completed. With screening, two of the four people staying with others temporarily met the definition of "hidden homeless" – "Barbara" and "Donald"[22] (see below). They do not have security of tenure or assurances that they may stay with the host until they establish their own permanent residence.   The other two people, Adam and Catherine, were screened out because they can stay as long as they need to, and their stories are included in Appendix D. Adam was able to stay with the host family as long as necessary, and now lives with his mother in her apartment. Catherine does not meet the definition of hidden homeless because she is able to stay with the host as long as necessary – unless the host decides to move. The interviews depicted a range of circumstances among people staying temporarily with others. They also demonstrate the precariousness of their housing. However, an insufficient number of interviews with hidden homeless persons were completed to draw conclusions about the characteristics of the hidden homeless.

> **Barbara** is a female in her late 20s who is staying with friends.   She has stayed with the "host" 2-3 days a week for the last few months. He has known her for about three years.
>
> Barbara doesn't contribute to the rent. Sometimes Barbara and her father do a bit of work around the host's house, and sometimes Barbara does a bit of cooking. Barbara is not looking to find her own place. She has a few friends she can stay with where she can eat and sleep. The host believes she has stayed in a homeless shelter – perhaps about a week. He says Barbara has been very unstable for the last few years. He has been trying to help her out, but is losing patience.

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[21] 2007 *Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count. Homeless census and survey methodology.* p. 128.
[22] Names changed.

The host believes the main reason Barbara doesn't have her own place to stay is that she is using drugs. "In the last few years she fell off the wagon and hasn't got back on the wagon". Before she "fell off the wagon", Barbara was married and had two children. However, she and her husband became involved with drugs and split up.

Donald *is a 46 year old male who has been living with his mother for the last year. His mother has a 1 bedroom apartment and he sleeps on the living room floor. His mother doesn't have a couch. Donald receives disability assistance and does not contribute to the rent.*

Donald has been in and out of jail for the last 20 years. Before that, he was married and had children. However, he became involved with drugs and the family broke up.

Donald has never lived on his own. His mother says he has no experience with finding and maintaining housing. He has been out of jail now for about 2 years. He lived with his son and grandson for about a year. He then got into a fight, suffered a skull fracture and came to live with his mother. He has a court date coming up in the next month (March), and Donald does not know if he will be sent back to jail.

Donald's mother wants him to get his own place. Donald says he has been waiting to find out if he will be going to jail, waiting until his medications start to work and he feels more stable, and waiting to see if he will live with his girlfriend. He is now feeling more stable and plans to go to an agency in his community for help to look for housing. He says he is feeling much better about being around people and his medications are starting to work.

4   Discussion

4.1   Challenges and lessons learned

Quantitative research

The most challenging aspect of the quantitative component of the research was selecting the operational definition of hidden homeless and developing the related screening questions. A different operational definition with associated screening questions may have produced different results.

There were several challenges encountered in conducting the quantitative research. During the November 2008 Omni survey a relatively high number of positives for host households with temporary residents was found. This coincided with difficulty in gaining approval for follow up qualitative interviews primarily because respondents did not recognize their situation as the one being studied (e.g. "the person is not homeless"). Follow-up interviews with households hosting temporary residents revealed situations of, for example, a brother with cancer living with a sister while in treatment or international student boarders. Combined, these two factors suggested that the operational definition of hidden homelessness was too broad. The survey questions were amended to determine if a person staying temporarily with another household was there for either *economic reasons* and/or *lack of choice*. (See Appendix A.*)* The November 2008 results were treated as a pilot survey and not included in the final results.

A December 2008 survey could not be undertaken due to lack of other Omni clients. This resulted in a delay of the next Omni survey until January 2009.

Qualitative research

The November 2008 Omni surveys uncovered difficulty in obtaining approval for follow-up qualitative interviews (as above). As this difficulty became clear, Mustel Research Group changed the script requesting a follow up interview.

The invitation changed from:

> *We would like to do an in depth interview with people or families who do not have a regular home of their own.   May we call back at a later date to arrange this?*

> *Please note that all responses are strictly confidential. The information will be presented to policy makers responsible for housing and homelessness.   May we call back at a later date to arrange this?*

To...

We would like to do a follow-up interview with people who do not have a regular home of their own or with those who have provided accommodations to such individuals. The interview is simply to gather more information about the circumstances to provide direction for solutions to issues of housing and homelessness. The interview will take no more that 20 minutes.

Your responses are strictly confidential and no personal information will be revealed. May we call back at a later date to arrange this?

Interviewers re-called respondents using the revised script and elicited more permissions for follow up qualitative interviews.

Not unexpectedly, the second challenge in conducting the qualitative interviews was being able to reach the people staying temporarily with others due to the two step process of re-calling the host household and asking to speak to the hidden homeless person. In almost all the situations, several attempts were needed. As a result, it was decided to speak to the host if the temporary resident was unavailable. This revised approach worked well, and four hosts agreed to complete an interview. Other challenges occurred when dealing with respondents in non-English speaking households through interpreters.

Given the above difficulties it was possible to complete only two interviews with individuals qualified as hidden homeless. One of the objectives of the qualitative component of this research was to learn about the characteristics of the hidden homeless and pathways into and out of hidden homelessness. Given that qualitative information was obtained for only two hidden homeless people, it is not possible to draw any conclusions about these questions.

4.2   Potential significance of research results

The study provides an estimate of the size of the hidden homeless population in a Canadian community using empirical methods. It provides figures for the estimated number of hidden homeless individuals in Metro Vancouver over four weeks in January and February 2009 and an estimate of the number of hidden homeless individuals in Metro Vancouver over the course of a year.

The figures may underestimate the actual number due to the limitations of telephone survey research such as exclusion of some non-English speaking households and cell only households.

It represents findings for one community. Given variations in regional housing markets and other contributing factors, this estimate cannot be applied

elsewhere. Other areas may have quite different incidences of hidden homelessness.

The study demonstrates that this approach used for estimating the size of the hidden homeless population is effective. Given the limitations associated with estimating "rare" events, replicating the survey in Metro Vancouver would confirm its validity.

The policy implications are related to the potential relationship between the number of hidden homeless persons and the number of absolute homeless persons.[23] There were 2,660 absolute homeless people in Metro Vancouver counted on one day in March 2008.[24] The estimate of 9,196 hidden homeless persons may be viewed as an indicator of housing instability or precariousness that may predict future levels of absolute homelessness. However, there is insufficient information to determine the existence or strength of this relationship. Data for both measures over several years would be required to determine the relationship.

It might be helpful to consider the hidden homeless population in the context of the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS) classification system (Figure 1).[25] Under this typology, the hidden homeless population would be considered under the general conceptual category "insecure" as opposed to "houseless" or "roofless". The benefit of this approach is that it lays out clearly the conceptual category (insecure), the operational category (living in insecure accommodation), the living situation (temporarily with friends or family), and housing situation (living in conventional housing but not the usual place of residence due to lack of housing). However, it may be that the language used in the ETHOS system "… temporarily with friends or family" does not give sufficient weight to the precariousness of these housing situations.

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[23] Called the sheltered and street homeless in Metro Vancouver.

[24] SPARC. 2008. Still on our Streets… *Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count.* For Metro Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness. Some hidden homeless were included if they were located at outdoor locations or in homeless services such as drop in centres or meal programs.

[25] ETHOS - European Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion http://www.feantsa.org/files/indicators_wg/ETHOS2007/general/EN_2007EthosLeaflet.pdf retrieved 10/06/08

Figure 1 European typology of homelessness and housing exclusion

Conceptual category	*Operational category*	*Living situation*	*Generic definition*
Roofless	People living rough	Public space	Living on the streets
	People in emergency accommodation	Night shelter	People with no usual residence who stay in overnight shelters
Houseless	People in accommodation for the homeless	Homeless hostel Temporary accommodation Transitional supported apts	Where the period of stay is intended to be short term
	People in women's shelters	Women's shelter	Women accommodated due to domestic violence and where stay is intended to be short term
	People in accommodation for immigrants	Temporary accommodation or reception centre Migrant worker accommodation	Immigrants in reception or short term accommodation
	People due to be released from institutions	Penal institutions Medical institutions Children's homes	No housing available prior to release Stay longer than needed due to lack of housing No housing identified by 18th birthday
	People receiving longer-term support (due to homelessness)	Residential care for older homeless people Supported accommodation for formerly homeless people	Long stay accommodation for formerly homeless people (normally longer than 1 yr)
Insecure	People living in insecure accommodation	Temporarily with family or friends No legal tenancy Illiegal occupation of land	Living in conventional housing but not the usual or place of residence due to lack of housing
	People living under threat of eviction	Legal orders enforced Re-possession orders	Occupation of dwelling with no legal tenancy Occupation of land with no legal rights
	People living under threat of violence	Police recorded incidents	Where police action taken to ensure place of safety for victims of domestic violence
Inadequate	People living in temporary / non-conventional structures	Mobile homes Non-conventional building Temporary structure	Not intended for usual residence Makeshift shelter, shack or shanty Semi-permanent structure, hut or cabin
	People living in unfit housing	Occupied dwellings unfit for habitation	Defined as unfit for human habitation by national legislation
	People living in extreme overcrowding	Highest national norm of overcrowding	Defined as exceeding national density standards for floor space or useable rooms

Source: ETHOS (2007)

5   Conclusions and Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

A. Consider replicating the hidden homeless survey in Metro Vancouver in two or three years to confirm these results.

B. Conduct this survey in another jurisdiction, and/ or nationally to gain an understanding of variations in levels of hidden homeless.

C. Other research could explore variations in screening questions, perhaps modeled more closely on the U.K., however this would affect comparability with the present findings.

D. The ETHOS typology offers clarity on the living situation and housing type associated with hidden homelessness. Consider situating hidden homelessness within the ETHOS typology or another similar framework.

E. Excluding cell phone only households is a common limitation of telephone survey research. These households represent approximately 10% of all households. This population is not reflected in the study and further research may be warranted to develop a method to address this limitation.

F. Consider incorporating a measure of the hidden homeless in the Census or other national survey. While the present approach is effective, there may be approaches other than an Omnibus survey to obtain estimates of hidden homelessness. The advantage of the Census is reliability and comparability across Canada. Australia uses this approach to estimate all homeless populations.

G. The authors do not recommend including a qualitative component in future similar studies to estimate the size of the hidden homeless population due to the difficulty of gaining access to this population.

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Appendix A -Scan of definitions used in the community

A regional scan of organizations working on homelessness in Toronto, Montreal, Quebec, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg and Halifax and Vancouver was conducted as part of the first stage of defining hidden homelessness. The purpose was to better understand the use of the term "hidden homeless" by those working in the field. The first step was contact with HPS regional representatives to ask them for contact information for HPS entities (non-profit, municipal, regional organizations) in the various cities. (NB the Vancouver interview was undertaken separately by phone.)

The representatives were then contacted by e-mail and asked to answer the five following questions, with the offer of an option of undertaking a telephone interview. (The introductory note and questions were translated into French for organizations in Quebec and Montreal.)

> 1. Does your organization have a definition of hidden homelessness?
> 2. If so, what is it?
> 3. Does your organization deal with people who are in a transitional housing situation – for example living with friends or relatives – but who do not have a permanent address?
> 4. If so, how do you identify this population (as opposed to those living in shelters, for example) and do you have a sense of the size of this group?
> 5. Is this population a priority/of concern?

While contact was made with all eight cities, no response was obtained for Montreal and Winnipeg, perhaps due to vacation periods. Three organizations opted for telephone interviews (Halifax, Quebec and Edmonton). The response to the questions is presented by city.

Vancouver
The interview with Peter Greenwell, Coordinator of the Metro Vancouver Regional Homelessness Secretariat, revealed that there is no formal definition of hidden homelessness used by the committee and this issue has not been discussed during his 6- month tenure, although it is an issue of concern.

The most recent plan prepared by the Committee Three Ways to Home Regional Homelessness Plan Update November 2003 by the Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC BC) has a glossary which defines "Invisible homeless" as those who are difficult to quantify such as individuals who are "couch surfing" (i.e. "temporary, transitory residence with friends or family" and falls within the population of "relative homeless".

The homeless count in March 2008 included people on the street who had stayed with someone else the night before, as in the 2005 count. Someone was considered homeless for the purposes of this and previous counts if they did not

have a place of their own where they could expect to stay for more than 30 days and if they did not pay rent. Someone who stayed at a friend's place where they did not pay rent was considered homeless, because they had no security of tenure. Thus this count included people who were sofa surfing if they were found in one of the daytime locations visited by a volunteer interviewer although there was no specific effort to find them.   The count acknowledges that it is a significant undercount of sofa surfers.

Toronto

Katherine Chislett (Director, Housing & Homelessness Supports & Initiatives, Shelter, Support & Housing Administration Division, City of Toronto) stated that they do not have an official definition but from time to time referred to hidden homelessness in reports and other documents, and generally define as people who are staying with friends, or couch surfing.   More recently, as part of evaluating some applications for housing, they have looked more at a definition being people who do not have security of tenure (i.e. not protected under the Residential Tenancies Act). While this is a wider definition than those used generally, Ms. Chislett felt that this is a fairer reflection of the issue at hand - i.e. people who could lose their place to sleep at any moment and for factors beyond their control.

For the Street Needs Assessment homeless people were defined as those staying outside, in a shelter, no fixed address (NFA) in a detox or health care facility (e.g. ER), or NFA in custody - therefore none of these would be classed as "hidden homeless".

In terms of dealing with this population, the City does not directly provide housing. While a number of non-profit and co-operatives are funded to directly provide housing and some are classed as "transitional" housing, in Ontario, this is a "dubious description" since tenants will generally have security of tenure in transitional housing (there are limited grounds for evictions, and lease agreements automatically renew).

The City did consider whether a count and needs assessment of hidden homeless could be done as part of the Street Needs Assessment, but a practical and effective methodology was not found, so they do not have a sense of the size of this group.

This population is a priority/of concern. A great many programs aimed at helping people to find and keep housing are funded, as well as a tenant hotline so they can find out about security rights (or lack thereof). People without security of tenure and a history of homelessness (shelter or street) have been treated as homeless for the purpose of housing supports (e.g. Housing Allowance Program). Furthermore, there is an emergency program for people evicted out of illegal rooming houses and by-law enforcement works collaboratively when such actions are planned so the department can be front line in helping. Council has

also approved second suites as-of-right throughout the City, and this gives some security to tenants who need not fear sudden eviction when the unit is discovered (although there are health and safety requirements).

They would like to be able to do more. "Being able to provide legal, safe, affordable housing in a range of types and locations - and to provide enough of it - would go a long way to addressing this concern."

Calgary

Tim Richter, President and CEO of the Calgary Homeless Foundation responded that they do not have a written definition of hidden homelessness but for the purposes of Calgary's 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness, a broader view of hidden homelessness beyond the "sofa / couch surfers" has been taken. The plan assumes that there are significant hidden homeless populations of young people and families, but also included in the "hidden homeless" population are the relatively homeless women and/or families trapped in domestic violence. In Calgary, many if not a majority, of the families becoming homeless are fleeing violence (families of course including single parents with children). Calgary has one of the highest rates of domestic violence in the country. Domestic violence shelters report that most of the women returning to partner after fleeing violence or abuse return because of a lack of affordable / available housing. Further, anecdotal evidence suggests that many women are not leaving abuse because they fear homelessness more than what they are getting at home now. If you consider the UN definition of relative homelessness being: "people living in spaces that do not meet the basic health and safety standards including protection from the elements; access to safe water and sanitation; security of tenure and personal safety; affordability; access to employment, education and health care; and the provision of minimum space to avoid overcrowding."

They deal with people who are in a transitional housing situation, who are a priority/of concern, although there is no ready means of identifying this population.

Edmonton

According to Susan McGee (Executive Director Edmonton Housing Trust Fund) there is no official definition of hidden homelessness and basically it is the homeless population that can't be counted – it's a generic definition. They have funded some work to develop a method to count the hidden homeless.

Over last few years the demand for services has "gone through the roof" with a substantial increase in homelessness. The number of people sleeping rough is high in the summer but these people are not in the shelters during the winter, when it's cold and are just not showing up in the count. They're also seeing a disconnect with the increase in demand in social service agencies – the

increases are huge, but it's really not clear how these people are surviving. Given the high cost of housing in Edmonton, the organisations suspect that people allow others to sleep on the couch for extra money. It's a way to cover the cost of rental for the tenants and because rents are so high, people are willing to pay for couch space.

Quebec

The Regroupement pour l'aide aux itinérants et itinérantes de Québec (RAIIQ) has just completed a study on the "spiral of homelessness" among women that included interviews with 63 women[26]. Hidden homelessness is considered one of the forms of homelessness among women and is seen as a strategy to avoid the street by staying with friends, family members or others, including situations of violence or degradation.

According to Nathalie Brisseau, co-ordinator of the RAIIQ, the major means to identify this population is through discussions with people who come to use member services and who describe the process by which they became homeless. This population is not noted as a priority as such but is of concern given the precarious and sometimes exploitative situations in which people find themselves to avoid the street. The RAIIQ feels that some of this population is in contact with member service agencies, especially those dealing with youth and women.

It should be noted that the Community Action Plan incorporates people who do not have a fixed address, stable, secure and healthy housing for the next 60 days as well as those find themselves in situations of domestic violence among the homeless population. Hidden homelessness is considered particularly of concern since it can be a key factor in the process of exclusion that can lead to homelessness. However, while work with homeless persons does confirm that strategies of "hidden homelessness" are used before becoming visibly homeless, there are no data to indicate the size of the current hidden homeless population.

Halifax

According to Claudia Jahn (Community Action on Homelessness in Halifax), while there is no clear definition of hidden homelessness, this population is of great concern. A number of studies have been undertaken to identify various situations of precarious housing. For example, a study of single mothers in rural areas of Nova Scotia revealed that many are living in unsuitable housing or with family or friends. They receive few services, in part because they are unaware of these, but also because of problems of access (i.e. transportation difficulties, particularly for those who are in wheelchairs) as well as a reluctance to self-

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[26] RAIIQ et al. 2008. *La spirale de l'itinérance au féminine: Pour une meilleure compréhension des conditions de vie des femmes en situation d'itinérance de la région de Québec* Québec

identify as homeless and the stigma and sense of failure that
this implies – especially in terms of the impact on their children. Another
phenomenon in rural Nova Scotia is that of people living permanently in the
woods, in uninhabitable buildings, such as shacks or trailers, without any
services such as water.

A series of roundtables held in various areas of Nova Scotia revealed a large
diversity in the situations, including severe overcrowding in some of the black
communities where there is a shortage of housing; people do not want to leave
the communities and up to three generations can find themselves living in one
house – some in insalubrious conditions. Urban situations are somewhat
different, for example, living in shacks is less acceptable, but the problems of
deep poverty still persist and are of ongoing concern, including the anticipated
impact of increased energy costs this winter.

While there have been attempts to quantify hidden homelessness, organisations
in Nova Scotia have been reluctant to embark upon this following a number of
cases where estimates that had been advanced were contested. For example,
government officials dismissed an estimate of 100 men living in the woods in a
Nova Scotia riding. An attempt was also made to quantify hidden homelessness
through shelters, but this proved to be difficult and an unreliable method.

Winnipeg/Prairies – Aboriginal populations
While contacts with organisations in Winnipeg were not successful, a study[27] in
2005 based on interviews with 129 aboriginal people in Saskatoon, Regina and
Winnipeg focussed on hidden homelessness. Undertaken in close collaboration
with Aboriginal organisations in the three cities, the study sought to identify
characteristics of the hidden homeless population and determine whether factors
such as migration to large urban centres and condition and availability of housing
contribute to hidden homelessness, as well as the means by which agencies are
addressing needs.

The study reviews definitions of hidden homelessness based on studies such as
Springer[28] and Shlay and Rossi[29] which define hidden homelessness around the
notion of imminent homelessness and people "who live temporarily in households
maintained by others because they cannot afford any shelter for themselves"[30].
The authors note that hidden homelessness is "particularly relevant" since the
"support of extended family and friendships networks is an inherent component

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[27] Distasio Jino, Gina Sylvestre and Susan Mulligan 2005. An Examination of Hidden
Homelessness among Aboriginal Peoples in Prairie Cities Winnipeg: Institute of Urban Studies
University of Winnipeg.

[28] Springer, Sabine. 2000 "Homelessness: A proposal for a global definition and classification."
Habitat International. 24: 475-484.

[29] Shlay, Anne B. and Peter Rossi. 1992. "Social Science Research and Contemporary Studies on
Homelessness." Annual Review of Sociology 18: 129-160.

[30] Distasio et al. op.cit

of Indigenous value systems" but is also hard to measure because there is a segment of the Aboriginal population which is highly mobile, moving between urban centres and home communities (e.g. the study found that 20 percent of participants in the study had a seasonal pattern of movement, while other studies indicated that up to 50 percent of participants in a Winnipeg study were part of the hidden homeless population[31]). Given the particular situation of this population, the study proposes that the usual continuum of homelessness (i.e. moving from "hidden" because people cannot afford shelter to visible homelessness), be amended to include a "grey area" that includes "those who live between places on a more frequent basis or those who are attached to multiple locations through a strong relationship with one's home community and family relations".[32]

In sum, although most communities contacted have no formal definition of hidden homelessness there is an awareness of this population, and a concern about their welfare. Some communities informally recognize the hidden homeless as sofa surfers, while others see the issue more broadly; encompassing dimensions such as lack of security of person or tenure, and it is seen as particularly affecting women and children, Aboriginal people and youth.

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[31] ibid.

[32] ibid.

Hello, my name is [First & Last Name] of Mustel Research Group, a professional opinion research firm. We're talking with people in your area today about issues of interest. Please be assured we are not selling or soliciting anything.

To randomize our interviews, may I please speak to the (youngest/oldest - male/female) in your household 18 years of age and over and who is a BC resident?

RECORD GENDER DO NOT ASK

       1. MALE
       2. FEMALE

1. Is there anyone currently staying with this household on a temporary basis who does not have a regular home/address of their own due to lack of money or other means of support or because they have no other alternatives?

    1. Yes
    2. No   GO TO Q 6.

2. If yes, how many people without a regular home of their own are staying here temporarily?

_____# pl

3a. If more than one person, is this a family? A family is considered a person or couple with at least one child under 18 living with them or a couple.

    1. YES - FAMILIES ONLY
    2. YES - FAMILY AND OTHER
    3. NO Go to Q 4.

3b. How many families?
_____# families

4. What is this person's/family's relation to you?
    1. Family member, specify
    2. Friend
    3. Other non-family member, specify

5. Can this person(s)/family stay with you until they are able to establish a residence of their own?

    1. Yes
    2. No
    3. Don't know

6. Is there anyone (else) who stayed with this household on a temporary basis in the past year who did not have a regular home/address of their own due to lack of money or other means of support or because they have no other alternatives?

    1. Yes
    2. No END

If yes, then proceed with the same Q 2-6 above.

7. If yes, how many people without a regular home of their own stayed here temporarily?

_____# pl

8a. If more than one person, were they a family? A family is considered a person or couple with at least one child under 18 living with them or a couple.

    1. YES - FAMILIES ONLY
    2. YES - FAMILY AND OTHER
    3. NO Go to Q 4.

8b. How many families?
_____# families

9. What was this person's/family's relation to you?

    1. Family member, specify

2. Friend
3. Other non-family member, specify

10. Did this person(s)/family stay with you until they were able to establish a residence of their own?

1. Yes
2. No

Finally, a few questions to help us classify the data and make sure we have represented all groups of the population in our study.

D4. Into which of the following age categories may I place you?

1. 18 to 24
2. 25 to 34
3. 35 to 44
4. 45 to 54
5. 55 to 64
6. 65 years and over

D6A. What is the highest level of school/education that you have completed?

1.PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (GRADES 1-7)
2.SOME HIGH SCHOOL
3.GRADUATED HIGH SCHOOL (GRADE 12 OR 13)
4.VOCATIONAL/TECHNICAL/COLLEGE/CEGEP
5.SOME UNIVERSITY
6.GRADUATED UNIVERSITY
7.POST GRADUATE

D6b.   What is your current employment status?

1. EMPLOYED FULL TIME
2. EMPLOYED PART TIME
3. STUDENT
4. HOMEMAKER
5. RETIRED
6. UNEMPLOYED/ON LEAVE

D3. Which of the following best describes your current life stage…?

1.single with no children at home   Go to D8
2.a couple with no children at home   Go to D8
3.a family with children at home (incl. single parent household)   Go to D3a
96. OTHER Specify:_____   Go to D3a

D3a. And do you have children less than 18 years of age living at home?

1. Yes
2. No

D8. Which of the following broad groupings best describes your total household income per year before taxes? **READ**

1. Less than $60k
2. Or $60k and more

ASK AFTER DEMOGRAPHICS
FOR HOUSEHOLDS WITH CURRENT/PAST HIDDEN HL PERSON/FAMILY

We would like to do a follow-up interview with people who do not have a regular home of their own or with those who have provided accommodations to such individuals.   The interview is simply to gather more information about the circumstance to provide direction for solutions to issues of housing and homelessness. The interview will take no more that 20 minutes.

Your responses are strictly confidential and no personal information will be revealed. May we call back at a later date to arrange this? If you would like more information about this project please contact Margaret Eberle, 604-254-0820.

1. Yes:
2. No:

If yes, who should we contact?
1. Yourself
2. Other household member
3. Person staying temporarily with you

Is this person 16 years of age or over? IF NO ASK FOR ALTERNATIVE CONTACT

IF YES: May we please have your/this person's first name ? _____

ARRANGE APPROXIMATE TIME of day for call back _____

IF NO: If you would like more information about this project please contact Margaret Eberle, of Eberle Planning & Research, an organisation dealing with housing issues in BC. The number is 604-254-0820.

Appendix C - Qualitative survey

Background

The purpose of the qualitative interviews is to find out more about people who are hidden homeless. According to the definition developed for this study, this includes people who stay temporarily with others and who do not have a place of their own.

Interviews will be conducted with the hidden homeless identified during the random telephone survey. Questions will address:

- Age, family status, Aboriginal identity;
- Relationship to the host household (e.g. friend or relative);
- Housing conditions (e.g. overcrowding);
- Degree of housing security;
- Length of time they have lived with the host household;
- Where they lived prior to moving in with the host household;
- Factors that precipitated becoming homeless;
- Services that might have prevented homelessness;
- Services used while hidden homeless or homeless; and
- Barriers to moving towards self-sufficiency.

The qualitative interviews are intended to provide a deeper understanding of hidden homelessness than can be obtained through quantitative surveys. However, as with all qualitative research, it is important to note that what is learned from these interviews cannot be applied to the hidden homeless population as a whole. The number of people who will be interviewed will be too small to make any generalizations. Another survey could have identified a group of hidden homeless people with different experiences.

Two potential limits of the qualitative research are whether host families will allow the interviewer to call back to speak with the hidden homeless person identified in the surveys, and whether the hidden homeless will agree to an interview. The process of seeking to conduct interviews will assist the researchers in assessing the potential for replicability of the proposed method elsewhere in Canada.

Part 1.   Process for recruiting participants

1. Mustel Group provides D. Kraus with phone numbers for all households that have one or more persons who meet our definition of "hidden homeless" – and who have given permission to call back later.

2. Mustel Group informs D. Kraus if translation services will be required. If so, D. Kraus arranges for a translator/interpreter to participate on phone calls.

3. D. Kraus calls each household identified as having one or more persons who meet our definition of "hidden homeless" and tries to arrange an interview with each person who meets our definition of "hidden homeless". D. Kraus will try up to 5 times per household to arrange an interview.

4. When D. Kraus calls, she will say: Hello, my name is Debbie Kraus. May I please speak with (name of person identified by Mustel)_____ I am following-up on an interview that you completed with the Mustel Group. I understand that you gave us permission to call back later. Can I please speak with the person who is staying with you temporarily?   OR can I please make an appointment to speak with the person who is staying with you temporarily?

   If more than one person:
   • Family with children - ask to speak with one of the parents
   • Two friends - ask to speak to whoever is less busy at the moment. Then try to arrange an interview with the second person.
   • Couple - ask to speak to whoever is less busy at the moment. Conduct only 1 interview per couple.

5. Check that person is 16 years or older.

6. D. Kraus reads approach and consent form and records if verbal consent is provided.

7. If consent is provided, D. Kraus proceeds with the interview.

Part 2.   Approach and Consent

1. Introduction

Hello.   My name is Debbie Kraus. I am part of a research team conducting random telephone surveys in Vancouver to find out more about people who stay temporarily with others and who don't have a place of their own.

I would like to ask you some questions – which should take about 20 minutes of your time.

2. Protection of your privacy

All the information you provide will be strictly confidential and will be reported in a way that protects your identity and privacy.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may end the interview at any time.

Do you agree to participate?

   Yes   No   If no – is there another time that would be better?

If you have any questions about this research, please do not hesitate to contact Eberle Planning and Research at 604-254-0820.

Part 3.   Questions

Length of time in temporary housing

1. I'm going to start by asking how long have you been staying with the current household?

Definition issues

Relationship to host household

2. Are you related to anyone in the household where you are staying?

   Yes - If yes, in what way are you related?
   No   If no, how do you know them? [E.g. How long have you known them, how did you meet them?]

Overcrowding

3. What part of the house do you sleep in? E.g. living room, spare bedroom….

4. What are the sleeping arrangements [E.g. do you sleep on a couch, extra mattress, some cushions, etc.?]

Contribution- which could affect stability and security

5. Do you contribute financially to the household expenses [E.g. help with the rent, or groceries?]

6. Do you contribute in other ways [E.g. clean up the house, cook, take care of children, etc.?]

Security

7. How long do you plan to stay here?

8. A) What kinds of things might make you decide to move [E.g. arguments with host, don't feel welcome, overcrowding, finding own place? etc.]

    B) Do you think you can stay where you are now as long as you need to get your own place?

9. If you were to leave, where do you think you would go?

Where lived prior to host household

10. Where did you live before this place? [Want to find out if person had their own place where they paid rent or a mortgage - could include sharing OR living at home with their parents OR couch surfing OR in a shelter.]

11. How long did you live there?

12. Why did you move out?

13. [If previous place was not their own place] - How long has it been since you had your own place - e.g. where you paid rent or a mortgage or lived with your parents in the family home and stayed 3 months or more? In other words, how long have you been moving around?

14. Other than the places you have already mentioned, have you stayed anywhere else during this time of moving around?

15. Were there any other times in your life when you stayed with others on a temporary basis? [i.e. a separate episode.]

Factors that precipitated becoming homeless

16. What would you say were the circumstances that caused you to move out of your own place - or place where you last paid rent - or move out of your parents' home? [Don't ask if answered in Q 12].

Services that might have prevented homelessness

17. Looking back to the time when you had your own place – or place where you paid rent – or your parents' home, did you go to anyone or an agency for help or advice that might have helped you keep your housing or find another place of your own to live?
    No   Yes   If yes, what did they do?

18. Looking back to that time, what kind of assistance or services might have helped you to keep your housing or find another place of your own to live?

Services while hidden homeless or homeless

19. Have you used any community or government services to try and help you get your own place? [Could include income assistance…]

   No   Yes   If yes, what kind of services?

                What would you say is helpful?   Less helpful?

20. Have you ever stayed in an emergency shelter, transition house for women fleeing abuse, or slept outside on the street or in your car?

   No   Yes   If yes, for how many nights?   Weeks? How long ago was this?

Barriers to moving towards self-sufficiency

21. What would you say are the current barriers/issues that keep you from getting your own place to live now?

22. What do you think would help you to get your own place to live?

Demographic/Personal questions

23. I have just a few last questions about your age and background. We are asking everyone these questions so we can describe the range of different people we are interviewing in this study. Again, this information will be anonymous.

a) Gender	Male Female
b) How old are you?	
c) Are you	Single Married Common law Separated Divorced Other: specify_____
c) (i) Do you have any children under 18 who are living with you right now? c) (ii) Do you have any children under 18 who are not living with you right now?	
d) What would you say is your ethnic/cultural background? [It is up to each individual to self-identify].	
e) Do you consider yourself to be an Aboriginal person?	□ Yes □No
f) What is your current source of income	Note all that apply: Employment Income Assistance Other: Specify_____

g) If employed, is your before tax monthly income:	less than $1600/month 1600 - $2500/month $3000/month or more

Thank you very much for your time and participation.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix D – Qualitative interviews, Adam and Catherine

Adam is a grade 12 student who sometimes stays with his former soccer coach's family. When Adam was in Grade 7, his mother was admitted to a psychiatric ward in a hospital. Adam, his two older brothers and his mother were living in a bachelor suite, and the stress contributed to the mother's breakdown.

When Adam's mother was in the hospital, Adam was home alone at night and was afraid to go to sleep. He began sleeping during the day – missing school and soccer practices. Eventually, the coach's wife reached Adam on the telephone, and Adam told her that his mother was in the hospital. The coach's wife went to visit the mother. When she learned about the situation, she offered to have Adam stay with her, her husband and four children, until the mother was better.   Adam shared a bedroom with one of the coach's children.

Adam's mother was in the hospital about nine months. Then she came home for visits, and Adam would go home for the weekend. In the second year (grade 8), the hosts renovated their basement and created an extra bedroom for Adam. During grades 9 and 10, the host helped Adam's family find a 2-bedroom basement suite. Adam continued to stay with the host family a few nights a week. During Grade 11, and now in Grade 12, Adam still stays with the host family one or two nights a week.   Adam still has a key to the house – but calls before he comes over. He will graduate this year, "is a fine young man" and able to look after himself now.

Catherine is a 30 year old student who has been living on and off with friends in the Vancouver area for the past 12 years. She has been going to university and stays with her friends during the school term. She often goes back to visit her mother in her home community (another part of B.C.). Her friends have a suite in their basement, and charge a nominal rent. Catherine often babysits for her friends, and the amount she earns from babysitting is deducted from the rent.

Catherine recently completed her Bachelor of Arts degree and has applied to University to further her education to become a teacher.

Catherine's fiancé also stays in the basement suite – when he can find construction work in the Vancouver area. When he is unable to find work, he returns to his home community and stays with his family or friends.

Neither Catherine nor her fiancé have a place in their home community where they pay rent. They never had their own place because they couldn't afford it. Their friends in Vancouver suspect they will continue to stay in their suite. However, the friends would like to purchase a home and may move to a community where it won't be convenient for Catherine to live if she is accepted into the teaching program.   Catherine's long term plan is to get a job teaching. Her fiance's long term plan is to continue to work in construction in the lower

mainland. Construction is slow right now, and Catherine's fiancé is unable to find enough work to pay market rent.