

Housing Conditions in Kings County



Where The Information Came From:

In late 2012 The Housing First Association of Kings County received a grant to learn about housing conditions, and make recommendations based on what we learned.

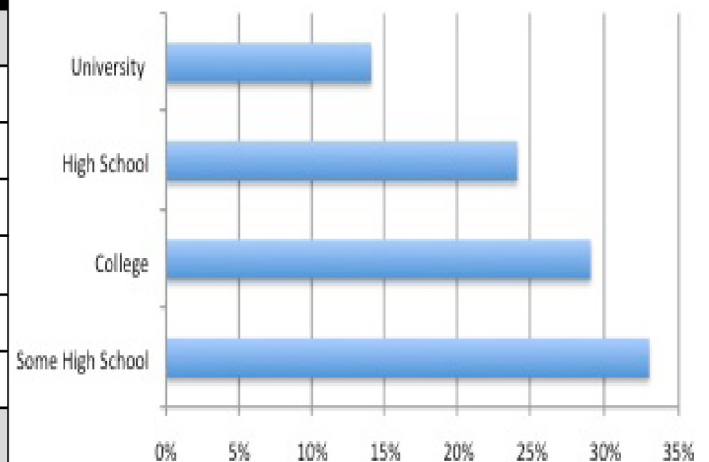
We spoke to **52 people** from **21 different communities** in the Kings County area. What we heard and saw was very powerful, and important to share, which is why you'll find direct quotes from people interviewed throughout this report.

We heard from **18 men and 34 women** between the ages of **19 and 73** years old. 100% of the 52 people we interviewed had **experienced homelessness** or had lived in **substandard housing**. Although homelessness is difficult to see in rural areas, we heard from **8 people** who have **recently been homeless** in Kings County.

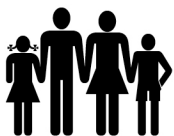
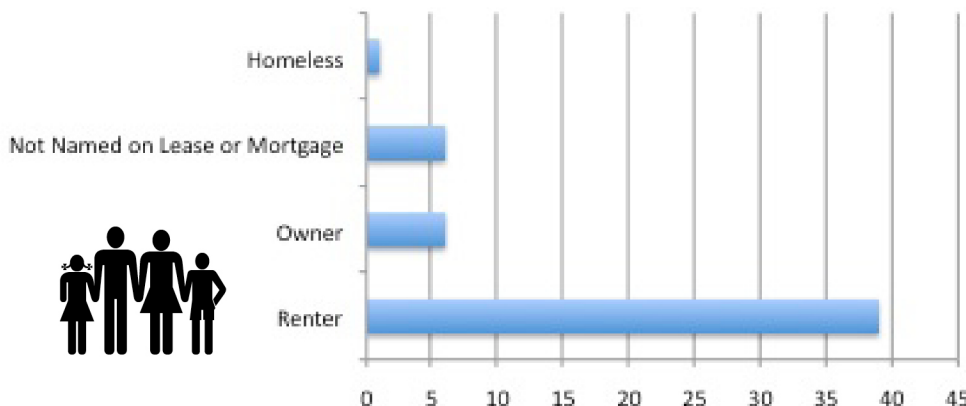
This report provides a brief snap-shot of housing conditions, and the impact on our neighbors in Kings County. We hope that it will give you a deeper understanding of the community where you live.

Where the Participants Lived					
Community	#	Community	#	Community	#
Berwick	1	Hantsport	2	Port Williams	2
Cambridge	1	Kentville	11	Truro	2
Canaan	1	Kingston	1	Waterville	1
Falmouth	1	Lake Paul	1	Wilmot	1
Grand Pre	1	Lockhartville	1	Windsor	1
Greenwich	1	New Minas	4	Wolfville	11
Hants Border	1	North Kentville	4	Total	52

Level of Education



Occupancy



64% had felt at-risk of losing their home at least once in their lives

Insecure and Unsafe Housing in Kings County*

THE PRECARIOUS HOUSING “ICEBERG”

Visible homeless

"We lived in a field for a summer - there was a hurricane - we had nowhere else to go"

"I slept in my car, had two jobs, still not enough for rent"

Hidden homeless ("couch surfing")

"We sleep in the living room with our baby; my parents have the bedroom. I feel I'm imposing all the time."

Substandard housing

"I fell through the bathroom floor. The porch fell off."

"There was enough mold to kill an army."

Overcrowded housing

"I lived on a couch for 15 years so my son could have his own bedroom."

"There's a stress of being too close together. One fight causes another."

Unaffordable housing

"I'm surrounded by violence, I have no phone to call police. There are guns, crime. I can't afford to live anywhere else."

"When I make sure my rent is paid, I can't afford transportation for medical appointments that my doctor tells me I need to get to."

*Quotes from Kings County Residents as they experienced such housing difficulties.

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Kings County Citizens Who Have Been Homeless Have Lived and Slept...

- In a **car** with 2 children
- In a **tent** for 2 months
- In a **barn** for 6 months
- In the **homeless shelter**
- On the **railroad trails**
- In a **closed campground**
- In an **empty shed**
- In a **bank vestibule**
- Under an **overpass**
- In a **bus shelter**
- In an **empty cottage**
- In a **public park**

How are People Doing Financially?



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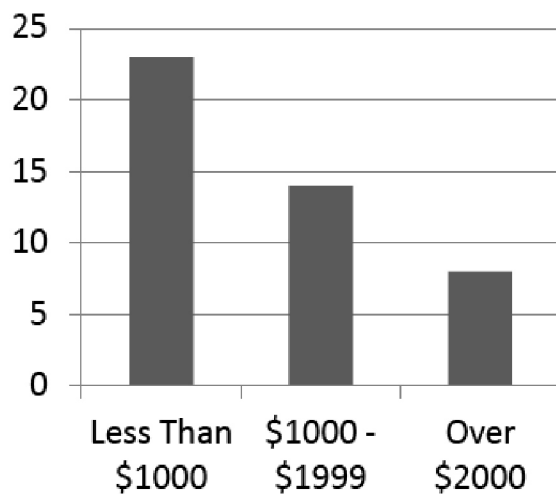
Kings County citizens told us that living with an extremely low income forced them to live in unsafe, unhealthy housing

Average household take-home pay \$1175/month supporting 2.7 people

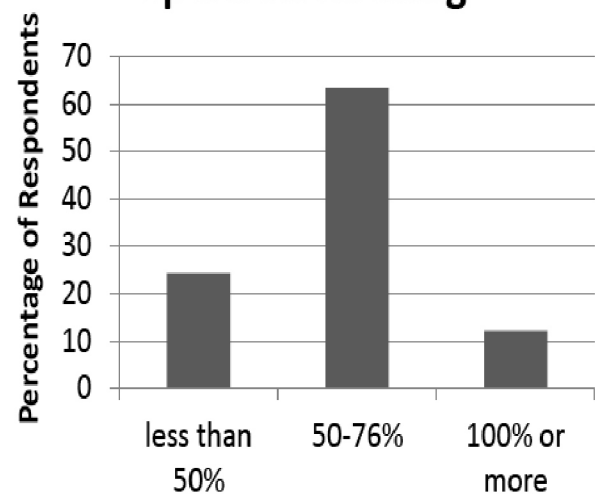
5 households lived on less than \$500/month

79% said an unstable job made it hard to pay their rent

Monthly Household Income



Percentage of Income Spent on Housing



People who spend more than **half** of their income on housing are at risk of **becoming homeless**¹
Almost **3/4** of people interviewed spend more than 50% of their monthly income on housing costs, and at risk of becoming homeless

1. Murphy, 2013

After paying for rent there is little money left for food.
76% regularly used the food bank.

When I make sure my rent is paid I can't afford transportation for important medical appointments.

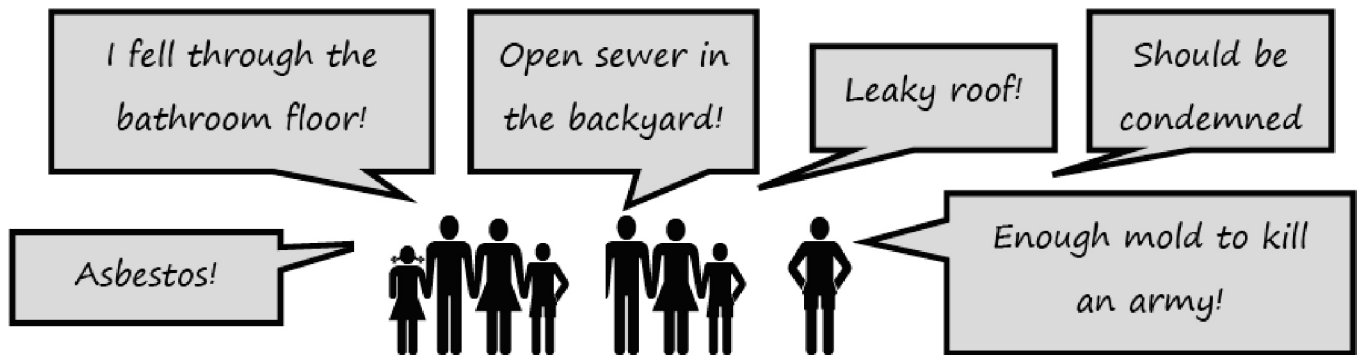
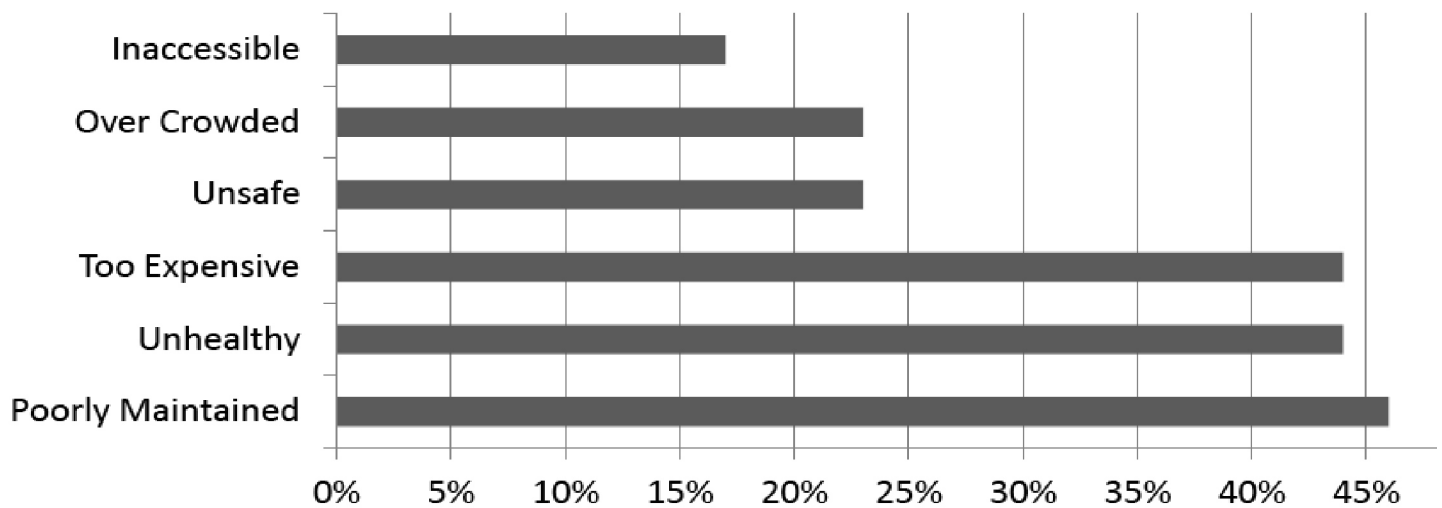


What Did People Say About Their Housing?

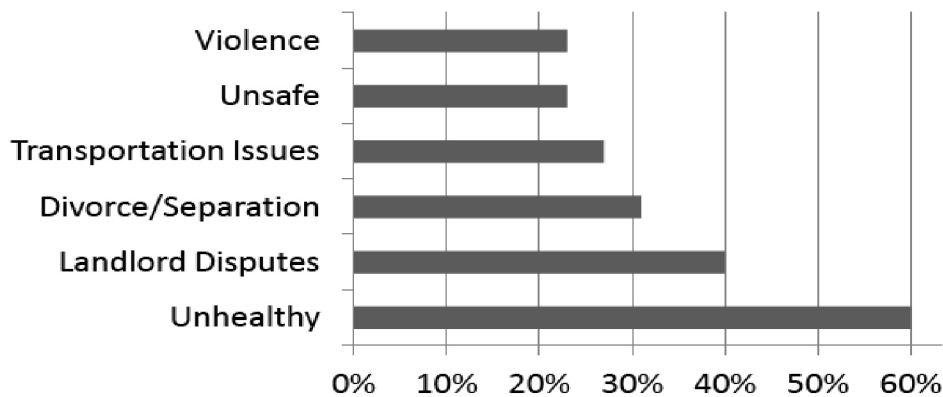


What Did People Say About Their Housing?

Describe Your Housing Situation



Reasons for Moving



79% had been forced to move out of their home at least once in their lives

35% said that their current housing did not meet their basic needs

I worry about my children. There's nowhere for them to do their homework. It's hard to parent when you're overcrowded.



EMPATHY

1. SEE & HEAR.
2. FEEL, THINK
3. ACT.



Recommendations

Taking Action

Sometimes we can feel overwhelmed by large, complex problems. In order to move forward it is important to have priorities, so that we can set goals. Through the research process Housing First identified priorities for action against homelessness and poor housing in Kings County.

How You Can Help:

The problems we heard about in our interviews are not easily solved. Our report has a number of recommendations, including:

- Getting the broader community involved in creating caring, healthy communities.
- Repairing current substandard housing.
- Developing new affordable housing units.
- Developing housing policy at all levels of government.

***“We need to come together as a community.
Nothing will change until people
stand up for each other.”***

We need help from caring citizens, like you. We need your ideas, your empathy and compassion as well as your willingness to make things better in our community.



If you would like to join a working group, share your ideas or to see our full report, video and updated information please visit our website

www.housingfirstkc.ca

Thank you to Mark Oakley for creating the beautiful artwork, and the Kings County Homelessness Iceberg. Thank you to the Wesley Institute for the Iceberg concept. Thank you Kim Smith for creating the logo. Thank you to the board of Housing First for supporting us in creating this short-form report.

- Penni Burrell and Emma Van Rooyen