

RESEARCH REPORT



Profile of Rooming House Residents

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Profile of Rooming House Residents

Final Report

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Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

Prepared by:

Social Data Research

Specializing in Social Research

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Profile of Rooming House Residents

INTRODUCTION

Rooming houses, one of the most inexpensive types of housing in most cities, play an important role in addressing the housing needs of very low-income single people. This study had three main objectives.

1. Create a profile of rooming house residents in three cities.
2. Assess residents' views about the affordability and quality of rooming houses.
3. Determine whether residents consider rooming houses as temporary or permanent housing.

METHODOLOGY

The study included two phases. In the first one, researchers reviewed literature about rooming houses and residents of rooming houses. Most of the literature reviewed was Canadian. This review produced a working definition of a rooming house, which the researchers used to gather the research sample:

A “rooming house” is a permanent form of housing that consists of a building, or part of a building, where living accommodation is provided in at least four, separate, habitable rooms, each of which may contain limited food-preparation facilities or sanitary facilities, but not both.

In the second phase, researchers interviewed 240 rooming house residents—80 in Vancouver, 80 in Ottawa and 80 in Montréal—and a small number of landlords in each city. The researchers chose those three cities because each has a unique rooming house history.

Two recent studies on rooming houses—one in Toronto and the other in Winnipeg¹—also provided information about rooming house residents and the quality of rooming houses in Canada.

GENERAL APPROACH

The key components of the fieldwork were:

- local advisory committees to facilitate the research and help interpret the results;
- peer interviewers, where appropriate, to help with tenant interviews;
- an honorarium to encourage residents to respond to the survey;
- a standardized tenant questionnaire;
- an over-sampling of female tenants for comparison purposes;
- including as many unlicensed rooming houses and rooming houses outside downtown cores as possible, as little is known about them; and
- workshops with experts and stakeholders in each city to validate and interpret the results.

¹ Distasio, J. Dudley, M., Maunder, M. (2002) *Out of the Long Dark Hallway: Voices from Winnipeg's Rooming Houses*. Institute of Urban Studies; Hwang, S., Martin, R., Hulchanski, D., Tolomiczenko, G. (2003) *Rooming House Residents: Challenging the Stereotypes*. Research Bulletin no.16, Centre for Urban and Community Studies. University of Toronto

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

The study was exploratory, community-driven and used a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. As a result, it has both inherent strengths and limitations.

Using a standardized tenant survey that included questions from other studies allowed the researchers to compare results. Bringing stakeholders together in each city to help design the research, to help implement the research and to discuss the results, encouraged constructive dialogue, brainstorming about solutions and setting out next steps. Because the research was community-led, the approach was customized to each city.

Since there were no complete lists of rooming houses from which to randomly select buildings, the researchers drew “samples of convenience” in each city. This means there are some limitations on the research results. The samples may not be truly representative of the rooming house residents population; as well, they may or may not reflect the range and characteristics of rooming houses. Validation workshops with stakeholders during analysis of the results partially compensates for these sampling limitations; however, readers are cautioned not to generalize the results beyond the boundaries of this research.

RESULTS

The results of this study and of the recent ones conducted in Winnipeg and Toronto are remarkably similar.

Profile of rooming house residents

The typical rooming house resident in Canada is likely to be:

- a single or divorced Canadian-born male
- of British, francophone (in Montréal) or First Nations ancestry
- in his late 30s to late 40s
- living well below the poverty line.

In many cases, he is unable to work because of poor physical or mental health or addictions. In other cases, he will be recovering from ill health, substance abuse or other disruptive life circumstances and will be trying to re-enter the mainstream of society by looking for work, volunteering his time, or working.

Many students (including foreign students) appear to be turning to rooming houses as an alternative to more expensive on-campus housing. Recent immigrants to Canada are also using rooming houses as they settle into a new location. In a few instances, individuals who can afford other forms of housing choose to live in a rooming house because they do not want the responsibility of a larger home.

A small and steady proportion of women live in rooming houses. Their profile is much the same as for men. However, this study and others show that some rooming houses are problematic for women—particularly for those with multiple health and social needs. This subject needs further study.

THE AFFORDABILITY AND QUALITY OF ROOMING HOUSES

Although it may appear that rooming houses are an affordable housing option for low-income people, the study found that most tenants pay more than they can afford on rent. Many rooming house residents use food banks. Some earn money by dumpster diving, panhandling or involvement in illicit activities.

At the same time, landlords report being unable to cover their costs and said not being able to raise rents is a major issue.

Most tenants appear to be satisfied with their accommodation, particularly those living in smaller rooming houses, those living in rooming houses with responsive landlords or those who have social supports, such as friendships with other residents.

Tenants who were dissatisfied with their accommodation sometimes blamed landlords for not responding quickly enough to problems. In other cases, both landlords and tenants blamed the disruptive behaviours of certain tenants as the main cause of problems.

The study uncovered a number of issues affecting the quality of life and health of tenants. Perhaps the most compelling was the large number of people sharing bathrooms in some of the larger rooming houses. There is a clear correlation between this overcrowding and the reported poor state of repair of the bathrooms in many rooming houses.

Both landlords and tenants identified a need for more support, either on-site or through linkages with community agencies, for tenants with mental health or addictions issues. Landlords reported that people with mental illness and addictions seem to be an increasing proportion of rooming house residents.

Both tenants and landlords identified the lack of accessibility for aging tenants or younger persons with physical disabilities as an issue.

ARE ROOMING HOUSES TEMPORARY OR PERMANENT ACCOMMODATION?

The study found that most rooming house residents viewed their tenancy as temporary. Students or young people trying to get an independent start in life often lived in a rooming house less than a year or two.

About one third of the residents interviewed called their current place home and saw their rooming house as long-term accommodation. Experts consulted during the results workshops felt that good quality rooming houses could be a feasible housing choice for low-income, single people either as a temporary or longer-term arrangement.

IMPLICATIONS OF RESULTS

The results workshops held to review the survey outcomes for each city brought together a range of stakeholders, including rooming house tenants, private and non-profit landlords, city housing officials and community support agency staff. In spite of differing perspectives, there was consensus around the following issues.

- There appears to be a widening gap between what tenants can afford to pay for a room and the cost of operating a rooming house.
- Economic pressures, such as the aging of the building stock and the rising cost of utilities, operations and general maintenance, could threaten the sustainability of the rooming house sector because other investment options are becoming more attractive to landlords.
- As the population ages, so will rooming house residents age—making the need for “supportive housing” more pressing.
- *Good quality* rooming houses can play a role in the array of housing options for low-income people and those who choose this form of housing for lifestyle reasons.
- There is growing pressure on cities to further regulate rooming houses and enforce violations to ensure properties are properly maintained. At the same time, there is a danger that regulatory requirements will drive both good and bad landlords out of the business as a result of the increasing cost of meeting such requirements.
- There is a need for different government sectors to work together to maintain or increase the affordability of rooming houses.

Research Highlight

Profile of Rooming House Residents

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Profil des résidents de maisons de chambres

INTRODUCTION

Les maisons de chambres constituent l'un des types de logement les moins onéreux dans la plupart des villes et contribuent considérablement à répondre aux besoins de logement des personnes seules à très faible revenu. L'étude entreprise poursuivait trois principaux objectifs :

1. Créer un profil des locataires de maisons de chambres dans trois villes;
2. Évaluer l'abordabilité et la qualité des maisons de chambres du point de vue des locataires;
3. Déterminer la mesure dans laquelle les locataires considèrent leur maison de chambres comme un logement temporaire ou permanent.

MÉTHODE

L'étude comportait deux étapes. Dans la première étape, les chercheurs ont examiné la documentation sur les maisons de chambres et leurs résidents. La plupart des documents examinés étaient canadiens. Cet examen a produit une définition de travail du terme « maison de chambres » dont se sont servis les chercheurs pour constituer leur échantillon de recherche :

Une « maison de chambres » est une forme de logement permanent se composant d'un bâtiment ou d'une partie de celui-ci et qui comporte au moins quatre chambres habitables distinctes, chacune renfermant soit des installations restreintes pour la préparation de repas, soit des installations sanitaires.

Dans la seconde étape, les chercheurs ont interrogé 240 résidents de maisons de chambres — 80 à Vancouver, 80 à Ottawa et 80 à Montréal — et un petit nombre de propriétaires dans chacune de ces villes. Les chercheurs ont choisi ces villes en raison de leur histoire unique en matière de maisons de chambres.

Deux récentes études sur les maisons de chambres — une réalisée à Toronto et l'autre, à Winnipeg¹ — ont également fourni de l'information sur les résidents des maisons de chambres et sur la qualité des maisons de chambres au Canada.

DÉMARCHE GÉNÉRALE

Les éléments clés du travail sur le terrain étaient les suivants :

- Comités consultatifs locaux pour faciliter la recherche et l'interprétation des résultats;
- Confrères-enquêteurs, au besoin, pour aider les chercheurs à réaliser les entrevues auprès des locataires;
- Rétribution pour encourager les résidents à répondre aux questions de l'enquête;
- Questionnaire standard à l'intention des locataires;
- Surreprésentation de femmes locataires aux fins de la comparaison des résultats;
- Inclusion du plus grand nombre possible de maisons de chambres non agréées et de maisons de chambres à l'extérieur des centres-villes, car très peu de données sont disponibles à leur sujet;
- Ateliers s'adressant aux spécialistes et aux intéressés dans chacune des villes pour valider et interpréter les résultats.

¹ J. Distasio, M. Dudley et M. Maunders (2002) *Out of the Long Dark Hallway: Voices from Winnipeg's Rooming Houses*. Institute of Urban Studies;
S. Hwang, R. Martin, D. Hulchanski et G. Tolomiczenko (2003) *Rooming House Residents: Challenging the Stereotypes*. Research Bulletin #16, Centre for Urban and Community Studies. University of Toronto

POINTS FORTS ET LACUNES

L'étude était de nature exploratoire, elle était dirigée par les collectivités et a fait appel à une combinaison de méthodes qualitatives et quantitatives. Par conséquent, elle comporte à la fois des points forts et des lacunes.

Le recours à un questionnaire standard à l'intention des locataires et à d'autres études a permis aux chercheurs de comparer les résultats. Le fait d'avoir réuni les intéressés dans chaque ville pour qu'ils participent à la conception de la recherche, facilitent sa mise en œuvre et discutent de ses résultats, a favorisé un dialogue constructif, l'éclosion de solutions et l'organisation des prochaines étapes. Comme la recherche était dirigée par les collectivités, l'approche a été adaptée à chaque ville.

Comme il n'y avait aucune liste complète de maisons de chambres à partir de laquelle ils pouvaient établir un échantillon au hasard, les chercheurs ont établi un « échantillon de commodité » dans chaque ville. Par conséquent, les résultats de la recherche comportent des lacunes. L'échantillon peut ne pas être tout à fait représentatif de la clientèle des maisons de chambres. En outre, l'échantillon peut ne pas refléter tout l'éventail et toutes les caractéristiques des maisons de chambres. Les ateliers de validation réalisés auprès des intéressés au cours de l'analyse des résultats compensent en partie les lacunes de l'échantillon. Nous prions néanmoins le lecteur de ne pas tirer de généralités dépassant le cadre de cette recherche sur la foi de ces résultats.

RÉSULTATS

Les résultats tirés de cette étude et ceux tirés desdites études de Winnipeg et Toronto se ressemblent étrangement.

Profil des résidents de maisons de chambres

De façon générale, le résident d'une maison de chambres située au Canada est :

- un homme célibataire ou divorcé, né au Canada;
- d'origine britannique, autochtone ou francophone (à Montréal);
- dans la trentaine ou la quarantaine avancée;
- bien en-dessous du seuil de la pauvreté.

La plupart des résidents sont incapables de travailler en raison de leur mauvaise santé physique ou mentale ou de toxicomanies. D'autres se rétablissent d'une maladie, se désintoxiquent ou se relèvent d'un événement qui a perturbé leur vie avant de tenter leur réinsertion dans le courant dominant de la société par la recherche de travail, le bénévolat ou un emploi.

De nombreux étudiants (y compris des étudiants de l'étranger) semblent s'être tournés vers les maisons de chambres en raison du coût supérieur des logements sur les campus. Les récents immigrants au Canada qui ne sont pas encore établis utilisent également les maisons de chambres. Certains résidents ont les moyens de s'offrir d'autres formes de logement qu'une chambre, mais ils préfèrent se libérer de la responsabilité d'un logement plus spacieux.

Un faible mais constant pourcentage de femmes habitent les maisons de chambres. Leur profil est très semblable à celui des hommes. Cependant, cette étude ainsi que d'autres études révèlent que certaines maisons de chambres posent des problèmes aux femmes — et en particulier à celles qui ont des problèmes sociaux ou de santé multiples. Ce sujet mérite d'être approfondi par d'autres études.

ABORDABILITÉ ET QUALITÉ DES MAISONS DE CHAMBRES

On pourrait croire que les maisons de chambres constituent un choix de logement abordable pour les personnes à faible revenu, mais l'étude démontre que la plupart des locataires paient un loyer supérieur à ce qu'ils peuvent se permettre. Bon nombre de résidents de maisons de chambres utilisent des banques alimentaires. Certains d'entre eux fouillent les poubelles, mendient ou se livrent à des activités illégales pour gagner de l'argent.

Pourtant, des propriétaires se plaignent de ne pouvoir faire leurs frais ou hausser le coût des loyers, ce qui pose un problème majeur.

La plupart des locataires semblent satisfaits de leur logement, en particulier ceux qui habitent de petites maisons de chambres, ceux dont le propriétaire est sensible à leurs besoins, ou ceux qui bénéficient d'un soutien social (amis, résidents, etc.).

Les locataires insatisfaits de leur logement accusent parfois leur propriétaire de ne pas régler assez rapidement leurs problèmes. Parfois, les propriétaires comme les locataires jugent que les comportements perturbateurs de certains locataires sont la principale cause des problèmes.

L'étude a fait ressortir plusieurs problèmes nuisant à la qualité de vie et à la santé des locataires. Le plus déterminant est sans doute le nombre imposant de personnes qui partagent la même salle de bains dans certaines grandes maisons de chambres. Il y a un lien évident entre ce surpeuplement et le mauvais état des salles de bains signalés dans de nombreuses maisons de chambres.

Les propriétaires comme les locataires soulignent la nécessité d'un meilleur soutien, sur place ou au moyen de liens avec des organismes communautaires, pour les locataires souffrant de problèmes de santé mentale ou de toxicomanie. Les propriétaires ont indiqué que les personnes souffrant de maladie mentale ou de toxicomanie constituent un pourcentage croissant des résidents de maisons de chambres.

Les locataires comme les propriétaires déplorent le manque d'accessibilité pour les locataires âgés ou atteints d'une incapacité physique.

LES MAISONS DE CHAMBRES SONT-ELLES UN LOGEMENT TEMPORAIRE OU PERMANENT?

L'étude révèle que la plupart des résidents de maisons de chambres considèrent leur logement comme temporaire. Les étudiants ou les jeunes gens en quête d'autonomie y habitent souvent moins d'un an ou deux.

Environ le tiers des résidents interrogés qualifient de « chez-soi » leur logement actuel et voient leur chambre comme leur logement à long terme. Les spécialistes consultés au cours des ateliers sur les résultats estiment qu'une maison de chambres de bonne qualité pourrait constituer un bon choix de logement temporaire ou permanent pour les personnes seules à faible revenu.

INCIDENCES DES RÉSULTATS

Les ateliers sur les résultats, organisés pour examiner les résultats des enquêtes dans chacune des villes, ont réuni un large éventail d'intéressés, y compris des locataires de maisons de chambres, des propriétaires-bailleurs des secteurs privé et sans but lucratif, des responsables municipaux du logement et des employés d'organismes de soutien communautaire. Malgré les divergences d'opinions, un consensus s'est établi autour des questions suivantes :

- L'écart entre le loyer que peuvent se permettre les locataires et les frais d'exploitation d'une maison de chambres semble se creuser.
- Les pressions économiques, comme le vieillissement du parc de logements et la hausse du coût des services d'utilité publique, de l'exploitation et de l'entretien général, pourraient mettre en péril la durabilité du secteur des maisons de chambres, car d'autres choix d'investissement se font plus attrayants pour les propriétaires.
- Le vieillissement de la population s'accompagne du vieillissement des résidents des maisons de chambres, ce qui accroît le besoin en logements supervisés.
- Des maisons de chambres de bonne qualité peuvent jouer un rôle dans l'éventail de choix de logement pour les personnes à faible revenu et celles qui choisissent cette forme de logement pour des raisons de mode de vie.
- De plus en plus, les municipalités sont pressées de réglementer les maisons de chambres et d'infliger des amendes aux contrevenants pour s'assurer que les propriétés sont dûment entretenues. Du même coup, l'accroissement des coûts résultant des exigences de réglementation risque de mener à la faillite les mauvais propriétaires comme les bons.
- Il faut que les divers secteurs gouvernementaux collaborent au maintien ou à l'amélioration de l'abordabilité des maisons de chambres.

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1. Introduction

Rooming houses play an important role in addressing the housing needs of very low-income single people. They are one of the least costly forms of accommodation currently available in most cities. This study had three main objectives:

1. Create a profile of rooming house residents in three cities.
2. Assess the affordability and quality of rooming houses from the point of view of residents.
3. Determine to what extent residents view rooming houses as transitional or permanent housing.

1.1 Methodology

The study was conducted in two phases. The first phase consisted of a literature review primarily of Canadian publications including unpublished reports. The review, which is available in Appendix A, produced a working definition of a rooming house that was used to sample rooming houses for the fieldwork. In the second phase, face-to-face interviews with 80 rooming house residents were conducted in each of three major Canadian cities – Vancouver, Ottawa and Montreal. Interviews with a selected number of landlords in each city were also conducted. The three cities were chosen partly because each had their own unique history in terms of rooming houses. Two other recent studies on rooming houses – one completed in the City of Toronto and the other in Winnipeg¹ – raised a number of interesting questions about the profile of rooming house residents and the quality of rooming houses in Canada. The CMHC study, albeit exploratory in nature, is intended to add to the overall body of knowledge about rooming houses in Canada.

General approach

A common study framework was used to conduct the fieldwork in each city. The key components of this framework were:

- Local advisory committees in each City to facilitate the research and assist with interpretation of the results; (List of members attached in Appendix B)
- Peer interviewers where appropriate to assist in the tenant interviews;

¹ Distasio, J. Dudley, M., Maunder, M. (2002) Out of the Long Dark Hallway: voices from Winnipeg's Rooming Houses. Institute of Urban Studies; Hwang, S., Martin, R., Hulchanski, D., Tolomiczenko, G. (2003a) Rooming House Residents: Challenging the Stereotypes. Research Bulletin #16, Centre for Urban and Community Studies. University of Toronto

- Monetary incentives to encourage rooming house residents to respond to the survey.
- A standardized tenant questionnaire to collect the same information from tenants in each city; (Attached in Appendix C)
- An over-sampling of female tenants for comparison purposes;
- Inclusion of as many unlicensed rooming houses and rooming houses located outside the downtown core as possible as little is known about this part of the rooming house sector;
- Interviews with a small number of rooming house landlords in each city; and
- Results workshops with the advisory committee members and other invited stakeholders in each city to validate and interpret the results.

An overall methodological design guided the common approach in each city. The advisory committees in each city were instrumental in working with the consultants to finalize a workable approach to the actual fieldwork including the identification and number of rooming houses to be surveyed, the number and types of tenants to be interviewed in each building and the use of peer interviewers. The rooming houses selected were intended to be fairly representative of the characteristics of the rooming house stock in each city in terms of size, for-profit / not for profit, location, and licensed / unlicensed. Based on advice from its advisory committee, the Vancouver team decided to put special emphasis on the unlicensed sector outside the downtown core since there was already a large body of research on downtown licensed rooming houses. The Ottawa team also strived to include as many unlicensed rooming houses as possible.

Two cities – Ottawa and Vancouver – used peer interviewers. Previous research has shown the use of peers to be successful in penetrating hard-to-reach population subgroups. The definition of “peer interviewers” included current rooming house tenants, former rooming house tenants and front line staff working in the rooming house sector. Peers were paid the going rate for their assistance in each site.

Definition of a Rooming House

The literature review demonstrated the challenge of arriving at a single generic definition of a rooming house. After reviewing various potential definitions, the following definition was used for the sample selection in this research:

A “rooming house” is a permanent form of housing that consists of a building or part of a building where living accommodation is provided in at least 4 separate habitable rooms, each of which may contain limited food preparation facilities or sanitary facilities, but not both.

This definition is close to the one used in the City of Toronto. The key added word in this definition is “permanent”. This word is meant to set rooming houses apart from “tourist homes”. The “minimum number of rooms” criteria is somewhat arbitrary but fits the definition used by the City of Ottawa and was accepted as reasonable by the advisory committees in all three field sites.

Description of the Rooming Houses Surveyed

This study surveyed a total of 119 rooming houses – 54 in Vancouver, 53 in Ottawa, and 12 in Montreal. The majority (91%) of these rooming houses in each city were owned by private sector landlords and operated on a for-profit basis. Over half (59%) were licensed or in the process of obtaining a licence². The Ottawa sample contained the most unlicensed rooming houses (66%) followed by Vancouver (22%). In Montreal, the sample contained only licensed rooming houses. In Ottawa, most (89%) of the rooming houses surveyed were located inside the city core area while in Vancouver and Montreal, a good proportion (41% and 58% respectively) were located outside the downtown core.

In terms of size, 37% of the surveyed rooming houses had less than 10 rooms, 18% had between 10 and 30 rooms, 19% had between 31 and 99 rooms, and 5% had 100 or more rooms. The largest rooming houses were all located in Vancouver where many older hotels have been converted to rooming houses over the years. In Vancouver almost half (46%) of the rooming houses surveyed were larger than 30 rooms. Ottawa, on the other hand, had the highest percentage of smaller rooming houses under 10 rooms (51%). Ottawa and Montreal also had proportionately higher numbers of rooming houses with 10 to 30 rooms (43% and 42% respectively).

Exhibits D1 to D5 in the fieldwork report attached in Appendix D provide the detailed statistics on the rooming houses surveyed in each city.

² In Ottawa, it was possible to distinguish those rooming houses that were pending a license – for the purpose of the analysis these rooming houses were grouped with those that were licensed.

2. The Profile of Rooming House Residents in Vancouver

The results presented in this section of the report are based on the answers received from the 80 rooming house residents who responded to the survey in Vancouver.

Identification of Residents

Because both rooming houses located in downtown Vancouver and the 'Downtown Eastside', and their residents, are already well studied, the local advisory committee was particularly interested in profiling tenants who live in rooming houses outside of this area. The team therefore made a particular effort to identify people fitting that profile.

The tenants who participated in the interviews for this project were identified using a variety of methods. Posters were placed in strategic locations across the City of Vancouver, and SPARC BC's contacts with local service agencies were also invaluable in identifying Rooming House residents. The peer interviewers also identified some interviewees during their process of doing the interviews.

Tenants who contacted SPARC BC and expressed interest in being interviewed were placed on a Master list, and assigned to an interviewer. Some tenants provided member phone numbers at community agencies as their contact information. This resulted in interviewers going to an agency to complete a set of interviews that had been arranged. Particular efforts were made to identify and interview women who lived in rooming houses, as they proved much more difficult to find, given that the residents of most rooming houses in Vancouver are predominantly male.

2.1 Demographic, Socio-economic and Health-related Characteristics

Sex and age

It is generally believed that about 90% or more of rooming house residents are male. There was a conscientious effort made to identify and interview as many female rooming house residents as possible. In Vancouver the field team was successful in attracting responses from an over-representation of females to the survey. *One third of the Vancouver respondents were female and two thirds were male.* To be inclusive, respondents were also asked their sexual identity and most (86%) stated heterosexual. A small percentage (3%) reported being bisexual and 11% declined to specify.

The age of respondents in Vancouver ranged from as young as 17 to as old as 80. The average age was 43. Exhibit V1 gives the age groupings and shows that most respondents (66%) are over the age of forty.

Exhibit V1- Age Group

	Number	Percent
<30	9	11.4
31-40	18	22.8
41-50	36	45.6
51+	16	20.3
Total	79	100.0

Marital Status

Exhibit V2 shows that most (83%) of respondents reported being either single or divorced. A small number were widowed and 14% indicated they were married.

Exhibit V2- Marital Status

	Number	Percent
Single	48	60.0
Married	11	13.8
Divorced	18	22.5
Widowed	3	3.8
Total	80	100.0

Birthplace, status and cultural background

Almost all (92%) of Vancouver respondents were born in Canada. Those that were born outside Canada were asked to give their birthplace and what year they came to Canada. About half of the foreign born respondents were born in the United States. Other places of origin included China, India, South Korea and Europe. A small number of respondents were recent immigrants having arrived in Canada just 3 or 4 years ago. The remaining immigrants had lived in Canada for at least twenty years. Almost all respondents (94%) were Canadian Citizens. A small percentage (3%) indicated they were refugees and the same small percentage reported being landed immigrants.

Respondents were asked to describe their cultural background. The most frequently reported heritage was British (31%) followed by First Nations (29%).

About 9% mentioned a mixed heritage of First Nations, Métis, and other cultures. Other cultures mentioned included Francophone, Irish, Chinese, Italian, Finnish, Sikh, Caribbean, and Canadian. A few respondents indicated they didn't know their cultural background, were adopted or said "white".

Migration characteristics

Respondents were asked how long they had lived in British Columbia and the City of Vancouver. They were also asked where they had lived just prior to moving to Vancouver. About one third of respondents (34%) reported living in BC their whole lives. At the other end of the scale as Exhibit V3 shows, 13% of respondents are very recent migrants to the province. The majority of respondents, however, have lived in BC for more than 10 years.

Exhibit V3- Length of Time Lived in BC

	Number	Percent
<1 yr	10	12.5
1-5 yrs	7	8.8
6-10 yrs	11	13.9
>10 yrs	25	31.0
Whole Life	27	33.8
Total	80	100.0

Exhibit V4 shows that migration to the City of Vancouver from other parts of the province or from further away is more recent. About one third of respondents (36%) have lived in Vancouver for five years or less and only 16% have lived in Vancouver their whole lives.

Exhibit V4- Length of Time Lived in Vancouver

	Number	Percent
<1 yr	11	13.8
1-5 yrs	18	22.6
6-10 yrs	11	13.8
>10 yrs	27	33.5
Whole Life	13	16.3
Total	80	100.0

Most of the migrants to Vancouver came directly from other parts of the province (35%) or Ontario (31%). In fact fully 16% came from the City of Toronto, the single largest city of origin for migrants. Other origins included Alberta, Quebec, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba in that order. A few respondents came to Vancouver directly from other countries including China and the United States.

Migrants to Vancouver come from large cities, small towns and rural areas. In addition to Toronto, other cities mentioned included Edmonton and Calgary. Responses reflected over 40 communities across British Columbia, Canada and other parts of the world.

Educational background

Exhibit V5 shows that almost half of the surveyed Vancouver rooming house residents reported that they had completed high school and almost 20% had a college or university degree.

Exhibit V5 – Highest Level of Education Completed

	Number	Percent
Elementary	5	6.3
Some high school, trade school	37	46.3
High school diploma, some college	24	30.0
College degree, some university	7	8.8
University degree	7	8.8
Total	80	100.0

Respondents who indicated that they did not complete high school were asked why they left school early. Fourteen percent reported they had been expelled. The majority reported leaving school early for personal or economic reasons such as “needed money for self or family” (30%), “family moved often” (17%), “pregnancy” (13%), “conflict at home or school” (13%), and “use of drugs” (9%).

Almost one quarter (24%) of Vancouver respondents reported that they had attended a special education program in either elementary or high school. Twelve per cent indicated that they had been told that they had a learning disability.

Current status

Respondents were asked their current status – how they typically spent their day. As the list below shows, almost half reported being unable to work. But half also

indicated they volunteer with social agencies doing work such as street outreach to others in need. Almost one quarter of respondents are employed – either full or part time. Respondents classified their current status in the following ways:

- Volunteer work (48%)
- Unable to work due to poor health, injury etc. (48%)
- Looking for work (24%)
- Informal activities such as binning, petty crime etc. (13%)
- Self-employed (13%)
- Employed full-time (11%)
- Employed part time (11%)
- Full or part-time student (3%)

The percents add up to more than 100% indicating that some respondents are engaged in more than one activity such as working and going to school.

Sources and level of income

The sources of income reported by respondents from most frequently reported to least common source are as follows:

- Social assistance/welfare (63%)
- Underground economy (24%)
- Disability pension (21%)
- Employment/self employment (15%)
- Old Age Security (4%)
- Employment insurance (1%)

Respondents were asked to provide their gross (before taxes) monthly income from all sources. Those who felt uncomfortable providing exact figures or did not know the exact figure were given annual income groupings and asked to indicate into which income group their gross annual income fell. As Exhibit V6 shows about 11% of respondents either could not or declined to provide their income regardless of the monthly or annual grouping option. This percent is actually lower than what is typical in most population-based surveys where it not unusual to have as many as 20% of respondents refuse the income question.

In the Vancouver survey, about half of the respondents provided monthly figures and half provided annual amounts. For the purpose of the analysis, the monthly figures were converted to annual amounts and are shown in Exhibit V6.

Exhibit V6 reveals that the majority (70%) of respondents reported receiving an annual gross income of \$12,000 or less. At the other end of the scale, a small percentage of respondents reported receiving more than \$20,000 annually.

Exhibit V6 – Gross Annual Income (Before Taxes)

	Number	Percent
Less than \$8000³	26	32.5
\$8000-\$12000	30	37.5
\$12001-\$15000	6	7.5
\$15001-\$20000	3	3.7
Greater than \$20000	6	7.5
DK/refused	9	11.3
Total	80	100.0

Amount of and how rent is paid

Respondents were asked to provide the amount of rent they pay for their accommodation. Exhibit V7 presents the monthly ranges in rents paid by Vancouver respondents. The actual amount reported ranged from \$300 to as high as \$900. The average monthly rent paid was \$371.

Exhibit V7 – Monthly Rent

	Number	Percent
\$300-325	20	25.3
\$326-350	23	29.1
\$351-375	19	24.1
\$376-400	5	6.3
\$401-450	6	7.6
\$451-900	6	7.6
Total	79	100.0

Rooming house renters have a number of options for paying their rent including automatic withdrawal from their bank account or direct payment by social services. Vancouver respondents reported the following methods for rent payment:

- Pay direct (36%)

³ It should be noted that some respondents who pay their rent direct may have reported monthly income figures that represented their "take home" income after their rent was deducted.

- Monthly cheque (35%)
- Cash (24%)
- Other (4%)

According to the survey, not all Vancouver respondents are provided with a receipt for the rent paid. About one third of respondents reported that they do not receive a receipt.

Food security

According to Statistics Canada, a single person living in a city larger than 500,000 people would need \$15,172 to reach the low income poverty line.⁴ Recognizing in advance that the majority of rooming house residents were likely to have an income well below this figure, there were two questions in the survey that addressed the issue of “getting by” on income levels that are well below Canadian low income cut off figures. First, respondents were asked if they had used a number of food sources or underground approaches in the past month to help pay for food. Second, respondents were asked if they had ever skipped a meal due to a lack of money. If this was the case, they were asked to estimate how often they had skipped a meal in the past month.

The most commonly reported food sources or underground approaches to pay for food used in the past month were:

- Drop-in meal service or soup kitchen (73%)
- Food bank (51%)
- Binning – looking in waste containers (14%)
- Pan handling (10%)

The majority (39 respondents or 63%) of respondents admitted that they have skipped meals due to a lack of money. On average, respondents say they have skipped about one meal per day in the past month. As Exhibit V8 shows, one third of the respondents who skipped meals and could give a number skipped more than 20 meals in the past month – as many as 60 or more meals were skipped by some respondents.

⁴ National Council of Welfare Reports: Income for Living? Spring, 2004.

Exhibit V8 – Number of Meals Skipped in Past Month

	Number	Percent
1-9	14	35.9
10-20	11	28.2
21-60+	14	35.9
Gave a number	39	100.0
Not applicable/DK	41	
Total	80	

Health and well-being

Income is an important determinant of health – people living on low income typically also have poorer health. The survey addressed a number of health related areas including perceived general health, the use of substances, health conditions, activity limitations and the use of health related services.

General health

Perceived health is a standard Statistics Canada health indicator – one that has been shown to relate well to other health factors such as diagnosed health conditions including mental health. Exhibit V9 shows how respondents feel about their own general health. The Exhibit reveals that almost twenty percent of the Vancouver respondents perceive themselves to be in poor health and an additional 25% of respondents say they are feeling in fair health. To put these results in some perspective, the figures can be compared to how the general population would answer this question. In a joint Canada/United States Survey of Health conducted in 2002-2003⁵, only 7% of Canadians aged 18 to 44 and 11% of those aged 45 to 64 reported that they were feeling in either fair or poor health.

⁵ Statistics Canada, 2003 – statistics provided on Statistics Canada's website.

Exhibit V9 – Perceived General Health

	Number	Percent
Excellent	5	6.3
Very good	9	11.4
Good	32	40.5
Fair	20	25.3
Poor	13	16.5
Total	79	100.0

Among other factors, decent, safe, and well-designed housing can contribute to overall good health. The converse is also true. Respondents were asked if their health had changed at all since they moved to their current residence. Twenty percent stated that their health was better and 25% indicated it had become worse. The following are some of the most common reasons given for these responses.

Reasons why health has become better for some respondents

- I finally have a roof over my head/not outside any more
- I now have support/help from friends
- I'm biking the hills/ I started weight training
- I'm no longer down on the east side doing drugs/quit drugs
- I'm eating better now/gaining weight
- I like Vancouver weather
- I am now on medication
- Vancouver is a cleaner city than where I'm from (Seoul)
- I'm more relaxed now – going to the community centre and using their facilities (sauna, Jacuzzi)

Reasons why health has become worse for some respondents

- I have little money for food/not enough food
- There's mould in the wall/building
- I can't cook – have no kitchen
- It's damp & cold in my room sometimes
- My place isn't clean/infections from bathroom, unclean toilets
- I have a drug problem
- I can't sleep – too noisy – most residents are on drugs
- I'm worn down

Addictions

Respondents were asked whether or not they had any addictions and the nature of these addictions. Two thirds of the Vancouver respondents admitted to having one or more addictions. About forty percent revealed that they had two or more addictions. In order of frequency reported, the types of addictions revealed were:

- Street drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, heroin (46%)
- Cigarettes (45%)
- Alcohol (21%)
- Over the counter drugs (8%)
- Gambling (8%)

When asked whether they were currently active or recovering, 47% of respondents addicted to alcohol reported being active, 76% of smokers were active, and 67% of those using street drugs were active.

Health conditions

Respondents were asked if they had any health conditions that have been diagnosed by a health professional and that have lasted or are expected to last six months or more. Over 70% of respondents listed one or more conditions. In fact, almost one third (31%) of respondents reported having three or more diagnosed conditions. The types of conditions mentioned most often were:

- Hepatitis C (36%)
- Depression (35%)
- Arthritis/Osteo Arthritis (20%)
- Anxiety/panic disorder (19%)
- Schizophrenia/paranoia (9%)
- HIV/Aids (8%)
- Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (8%)
- Heart disease/stroke (7%)
- Diabetes (4%)
- Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (4%)
- Cancer (2%)
- Other single responses include Fibromyalgia, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, high blood pressure, nerve damage, whiplash, blood clots, and numbness from repeated beatings

Activity limitations

The majority (59%) of Vancouver respondents reported that they were limited in the kind or amount of activity they can do because of a long-term (6 months or more) physical or mental health condition. According to the interviewers, a few respondents used assistive devices such as a cane or walker to help with mobility.

Use of health related services

Access to health related services such as a family physician or dentist as well as community support services can be critical to overall physical and mental well-being. Respondents were asked a series of questions related to their use of health-related services. They were asked if they were currently receiving any outreach or support services for personal issues such as mental health, addictions or something else. Most respondents were not currently using these types of services. For those respondents who were using one or more of these types of services, the types of services received most often were:

- Services to help with addictions (21%)
- Mental health services (16%)
- Home management/life skills (4%)
- Occupational therapy (3%)

When asked how often they used one or more of these services, sixty percent of those respondents using services indicated they received these services at least once a week.

Two thirds of respondents reported having a family physician. However, only one third reported having a dentist. Almost 60% indicated that they go to a community health centre or clinic for their health care including dental care. The analysis showed that 13% of respondents do not have a family physician or dentist and also do not use the services at a health centre or clinic. A smaller percent (6%) of respondents may not be receiving any community support or health related services.

2.2 History of Rooming House Tenure

Length of time lived at current address

For most Vancouver respondents, residence at their current location has been fairly short. As Exhibit V10 shows, over half of respondents have lived at their current rooming house for no longer than one year. Just under one quarter of respondents report living at their current location for between one and two years, and about the same percentage are longer term residents of at least two years. Some respondents have lived in their location for as long as 15 years.

Exhibit V10 – Length of Time Lived at Current Address

	Number	Percent
< 1 month	5	6.3
< 3 months	8	10.3
3-6 months	16	20.0
6-12 months	14	17.5
1-2 years	18	22.5
> 2 years	19	23.8
Total	80	100.0

Respondents who reported living at their current location for less than two years were asked how many times they had moved in the past two years. Exhibit V11 shows that many respondents have made multiple moves in a fairly short time frame. About 30% of all respondents have moved at least three times. In fact, some respondents had moved as many as 13 times in the past couple of years.

Exhibit V11 – Number of Times Moved in Past Two Years

	Number	Percent
None	19	23.8
Once	9	11.3
Twice	18	22.5
Three times	10	12.5
Four + times	14	17.5
DK/NA	10	12.5
Total	80	100.0

Why some respondents do not move

Respondents who had indicated a longer residency of at least two years were asked why they had stayed at their present location for such a long time period. The types of responses given can be summarized as follows:

- Convenient location to services (41%)
- Financial reasons – rent reasonable/can't afford more (28%)
- Nice place, comfortable, clean (14%)
- Friendly residents, good landlord (10%)
- Waiting for other accommodation (subsidized apartment) (7%)

Pattern of moving in the past

Respondents were asked how long they had lived in their last two locations. As Exhibit V12 shows, over half of respondents reported that they had lived in their last place for less than one year. Almost half indicated the same response for the place previous to their last location. About 10% of respondents have had more stable housing of at least 5 years duration in their previous two locations.

Exhibit V12 – Length of Times Lived in Past Two Locations

	<i>Last location Number</i>	<i>Last Location Percent</i>	<i>Two locations before Number</i>	<i>Two locations before Percent</i>
< One year	43	53.8	37	46.3
1-2 years	21	26.3	20	25.0
3-4 years	8	10.0	7	8.7
5+ years	8	10.0	9	11.3
Whole life	0	0.0	1	1.2
DK/NAs	0	0.0	6	7.5
Total	80	100.0	80	100.0

Why some respondents are planning to move soon

Just over half (53%) of the Vancouver respondents indicated that they were planning to move in the next few months. The reasons given for this decision were as follows:

- Would prefer a different type of accommodation – more privacy, want a kitchen, more space, subsidized apartment (55%)
- Want a place in a more convenient location (24%)
- Problems with landlord (19%)
- Poor quality of building – bugs, dirty, smells (19%)
- Current location too expensive (14%)
- Problems with other tenants (12%)

How respondents found out about current location

Respondents were presented with a list of common approaches to house hunting and asked to indicate which one they had used to find their place. Exhibit V13 shows that most respondents had found out about their current location from a friend or someone else they knew such a former landlord. While advertisements

and signs also appear to be effective in leading respondents to their current place, few had used the services of a formal housing agency.

Exhibit V13 – How Respondent Found Out About Current Location

	Number	Percent
Friends/knew landlord	42	52.5
Advertisement in paper/internet	14	17.5
Sign in building/walk by	11	13.7
Sign posted elsewhere	6	7.5
Referral from agency	5	6.3
NA	2	2.5
Total	80	100.0

Respondents were asked if it was easy to find their current location and whether it was the first place they had looked at. Most respondents (76%) indicated that it was easy to find their current place. Most (63%), however, said it was not the first place they had looked at.

Why respondents chose their current place

When respondents were asked why they decided to move to their current location, the following reasons were given:

- Convenient location/close to services/employment/school etc. (55%)
- Better accommodation (cleaner, safer, better landlord etc.) (44%)
- More affordable (29%)
- Left bad situation/abusive partner/was homeless/desperate (18%)
- Close to family, friends (14%)
- No first/last month deposit required (5%)
- Was referred by an agency (5%)

Previous type of accommodation

Exhibit V14 shows the last type of accommodation where respondents lived. Just over forty percent reported that they had lived in another rooming house just prior to moving to their current location. *About half of the remaining respondents had not been in stable housing situations* living either on the street, someone's couch, a hotel, or transitional housing.

Exhibit V14 – Where Respondent Lived Before Moving to Current Location

	Number	Percent
Another rooming house	33	41.3
Apartment/condo	15	18.8
House	8	10.0
Street/homeless	7	8.7
Shelter	4	5.0
Halfway/recovery/transit ion house	4	5.0
Hotel	4	5.0
Couch surfing	3	3.7
Prison/hospital	2	2.5
Total	80	100.0

Respondents who lived in stable housing were asked if they had owned or rented their previous home. Almost all (94%) responded that they had paid rent at their previous place.

Why respondents left previous location

Respondents were presented with a list of reasons why they might have left their previous place and asked to indicate their main reasons. More than half also added their own reason for leaving. The most common reasons were:

- Poor quality of building – bugs, dirty, etc. (33%)
- Problems with other tenants (33%)
- Preferred a different location (26%)
- Problems with landlord (21%)
- Too expensive (19%)
- Preferred a different type of accommodation (16%)
- Moved to Vancouver from another geographic location (14%)
- Evicted from last place (6%)
- Was on street/had housing help (5%)
- Roommate left (4%)

History of eviction

About one fifth (21%) of respondents admitted that they had been asked to leave a rooming house in the past. The main reasons why they had been asked to leave according to these respondents were:

- Conflict with landlord/broke rules (25%)
- Use of substances (18%)
- Conflicts with other tenants (18%)
- Non-payment of rent (12%)

History of homelessness

Respondents were asked if they had ever lived on the streets or in a shelter because they were homeless in the last three years. Fully 55% of Vancouver respondents indicated that they had been homeless in the past three years.

2.3 Quality of Life Factors

Friends and pets

Most respondents (69%) indicated that they had friends living in the building. Over half (54%) also reported that pets were allowed in their building. A small percentage (5%) of these respondents said that pets were a problem.

Furniture and room contents supplied by landlord

Respondents were provided with a list of common rooming house furniture items and other content items and asked which of these items had been supplied by their landlord. The following list reflects that there may be differences among rooming house landlords in terms of what is supplied or not.

Contents of room supplied by landlord according to Vancouver respondents:

- Bed (81%)
- Smoke detector (74%)
- Chair(s) (66%)
- Fridge (63%)
- Wardrobe/closet (49%)
- TV/cable (45%)
- Desk (34%)
- Coffee table/side table/eating table (10%)
- Microwave (9%)
- Sink (9%)
- Phone/phone jack (3%)

- Lamp (3%)
- Stove (1%)
- Other (single responses – sofa bed, hospital bed, bed linen, TV stand)

A few respondents (3%) reported that their landlord did not offer to supply any of the contents in their room. The same percentage indicated that although the landlord offered to supply furniture they had their own furniture.

Bathroom arrangements

A small percentage (5%) of Vancouver respondents reported that they have their own private bathroom. Almost all respondents share a bathroom. There was a large range in the number of other residents with whom respondents share their bathroom – from one other person to as many as 100.⁶ The average number reported was 12. Exhibit V15 summarizes the number of residents sharing a bathroom. The Exhibit reveals that at least one third of respondents report that more than 10 people share their bathroom.

Exhibit V15 – Number of residents who share the bathroom

	Number	Percent
1-4	14	21.5
5-7	20	25.0
8-10	12	15.0
11-20	13	16.3
21-100	6	17.5
Don't Know	15	18.8
Total	80	100.0

Issues related to sharing a bathroom

Respondents who share their bathroom were asked if there were any problems with this arrangement. Almost forty percent (39%) of these respondents indicated that there were some problems. Not surprisingly, this percentage increased with the number of people sharing the bathroom. Over half (54%) of

⁶ According to some respondents the reason this number is so high is that not all bathrooms in some rooming houses are fully functional at the same time. This results in residents living on other floors sometimes using a bathroom located elsewhere in the building. This reason was mentioned by respondents in all three cities.

those respondents who share a bathroom with 11-20 people and 67% of those who share a bathroom with more than 20 people indicated there are problems with this arrangement. The types of problems related to sharing mentioned most often were:

- Lack of cleanliness related to poor hygiene of other roommates/guests (40%)
- Use of drugs/alcohol by other roommates, guests in washrooms often results in mess (needles, vomit) (32%)
- Toilet/sink often plugs because too many people use facilities (24%)
- Long line-ups because too many people share (16%)
- Lack of privacy (12%)

Respondents were asked to rate the overall cleanliness of the bathroom they use. Exhibit V16 below shows the ratings. The Exhibit reveals that just under half of the respondents rate their bathroom's state of cleanliness as good or excellent and a slightly higher percentage rate it as fair or poor.

Exhibit V16 – Rate the Cleanliness of the Bathroom

	Number	Percent
Excellent	16	20.2
Good	21	26.6
Fair	21	26.6
Poor	21	26.6
Total	79	100.0

Bathroom fixtures and ventilation

The bathrooms in the sampled Vancouver rooming houses typically contain a toilet (96%), a sink (89%), and a shower (85%). Most but not all respondents reported that their bathroom also has a tub (64%). The majority (63%) of respondents indicated that their bathroom had a window and 44% reported that there was also another form of ventilation in the bathroom.

Bathroom state of repair

Respondents were asked to rate the state of repair of the bathroom. Exhibit V17 shows the results of this rating. The Exhibit reveals that most (58%) Vancouver respondents rate their bathroom as being in fair or poor repair.

Exhibit V17 – State of Repair of the Bathroom

	Number	Percent
Excellent	8	10.0
Good	26	32.5
Fair	23	28.8
Poor	23	28.8
Total	80	100.0

Respondents were asked to list the types of problems in their bathroom related to the general state of repair. The responses could be grouped into four major categories:

- Plugged or broken toilets (34%)
- Water damage to floors or ceilings due to plugged drains, leaky faucets, sinks, showers or toilets (28%)
- Old/broken/missing fixtures (23%)
- General repairs needed (painting, drywall etc.) (21%)

Access to and use of a kitchen

Just over half (54%) of Vancouver respondents reported that they had access to a kitchen in their rooming house. In almost cases (88%) this was a shared kitchen although a small number had their own kitchen. The majority (72%) of respondents use the kitchen to prepare meals. Those who say they do not use the kitchen gave a few different reasons including “kitchen too dirty”, everybody wanted my food”, “I eat out”, “I go the shelter for meals” “stove doesn’t work” and “I use my microwave”.

For those respondents who share the kitchen, just over one third (37%) reported that all or most of the other residents in the building use the kitchen to prepare their meals. In the majority of cases, however, the shared kitchen appears not to be well used by other residents.

Respondents who had access to a kitchen were asked where they stored their food. The majority (70%) indicated that they store their food in their own fridge. The rest use the common fridge available in the kitchen and a few store their food in a cupboard in their room.

State of repair and cleanliness of the kitchen

Exhibit V18 shows that about half of the Vancouver respondents rate the state of repair in their kitchen as either excellent or good and the other half rate it as fair or poor.

Exhibit V18 – State of Repair of the Kitchen

	Number	Percent
Excellent	6	14.0
Good	16	37.2
Fair	13	30.2
Poor	8	18.6
Total	43	100.0

As Exhibit V19 shows respondents are also split in half with respect to the rating of the state of cleanliness of the kitchen.

Exhibit V19 – State of Cleanliness of the Kitchen

	Number	Percent
Excellent	7	16.3
Good	14	32.6
Fair	12	27.9
Poor	10	23.3
Total	43	100.0

Sharing of other amenities and expenses

Most (61%) Vancouver respondents reported that they shared other amenities in the building including a laundry facility (39%), a telephone (29%), and a lounge (16%). A small percentage (11%) also shares expenses such as the cost of food with other residents.

Having family or friends move in

There are occasions when some respondents have family members or friends living with them for a while. Sixteen percent of respondents reported that this had occurred. The long stay visitors were usually other friends (46%), a partner/boyfriend or girlfriend (30%), children or grandchildren (15%), brothers, sisters or cousins (15%) or parents/grandparents (8%).

On-site services and support

Most (79%) Vancouver respondents reported that there was an on-site janitor or caretaker for their building. In 20% of the cases, this person was also the

landlord. When asked how often, they speak with the janitor or caretaker, just over half (52%) of respondents said daily. As Exhibit V20 shows, there are some residents that rarely or never connect with the on-site janitor or caretaker.

Exhibit V20 – How Often Respondents Speaks with On-site Caretaker

	Number	Percent
Daily	37	52.1
Weekly	8	11.3
Monthly	5	7.0
Less often	12	16.9
Never	9	12.7
Total	71	100.0

Respondents were asked if there was someone they could go to in the building if they needed some help. The majority (69%) indicated that there was someone. In most cases (64%) this person was another resident. About one quarter of respondents would go the janitor or caretaker (25%) and 16% would go to their landlord.

Landlord rules

According to respondents, almost all the rooming houses in the Vancouver sample have some rules related to security. Seventy five percent of respondents reported that there were rules related to security such as not taking the batteries out of smoke detectors, keeping the building locked and not letting strangers into the building. When asked if there was a no smoking rule in their building, 39% said this was the case. As well, 14% of respondents reported that drinking was not allowed in their building.

Sixty-six percent of respondents indicated that their rooming house had other rules. The types of other rules mentioned most often were:

- No use of drugs on premise (23%)
- No overnight visitors (some landlords charged extra for visitors after a certain hour) (18%)
- No excessive noise (9%)
- No violent/abusive behaviour (6%)
- Respect property, keep room clean, and use utilities wisely etc. (6%)

Rules that are and are not appreciated

Not all respondents appreciated having rules. In fact, almost one third (31%) reported that there were some rules they did not appreciate – mainly around not being allowed to have visitors. However, rules that are appreciated (or would be if they don't exist now) related to safety and security, no drugs on the premise, and no tolerance for violent or abusive behaviour.

Extra services provided by the landlord

Respondents were asked if their landlord provided any extra services such as prepared meals, cheque cashing or filling out forms and if there was a charge for these extra services. Only a minority of Vancouver respondents reported that extra services were provided. Ten percent of respondents said that their landlord provided prepared meals. In half the cases, this was included in the rent. Only 5% of landlords offer to cash cheques and in most cases (75%) this is included in the rent. Fewer landlords (4%) help with filling out forms but, for those that do, it is usually (66%) included in the rent.

Transportation and communication

Respondents were asked about their primary mode of transportation. Most respondents indicated that walking (69%) and/or public transit (47%) were the main ways they got around followed by bicycle (14%). A small percentage (3%) had a car.

Respondents were asked two additional questions related to transportation. The first was whether or not there was a place to store bikes on the property, and the second was whether or not there was enough parking at the rooming house. Only 3% of respondents reported that there was some form of bike storage but half (50%) indicated that there was enough parking in the area.

One third of Vancouver respondents indicated they had their own cell phone.

2.4 The Profile of Respondents Living Outside the Downtown Core

Just over forty percent (41%) of the Vancouver respondents lived in rooming houses located outside the downtown core area of Vancouver. Although the study was exploratory, there were some differences found in the results between the respondents living in rooming houses located downtown Vancouver versus outside the downtown core. These differences may be real; however, further research with a larger sample is needed to validate these findings.

In terms of socio-demographic characteristics, the following differences were found between respondents living in rooming houses downtown versus outside the downtown core. Respondents living outside the Vancouver city core were:

- More likely to be divorced (39% versus 11%)
- More likely to have completed college or university (21% versus 15%)
- More likely to be working full-time (15% versus 8%)
- More likely to be working part time (18% versus 6%)
- More likely to be self-employed (21% versus 6%)
- Less likely to be unable to work (33% versus 57%)
- Less likely to be involved in the underground economy (pan handling, petty crime, searching through public waste containers (3% versus 19%)
- Less likely to be receiving social assistance (41% versus 59%)
- More likely to be receiving income from employment or self employment (30% versus 4%)
- More likely to be receiving income from disability insurance (30% versus 15%)
- More likely to be paying > \$375 in monthly rent (53% versus 40%)
- More likely to be living in smaller rooming houses of less than 10 units (52% versus 6%)
- Less likely to be living in licensed rooming houses (27% versus 94%) (27% of respondents living outside the core did not know the licensing status of their place)

Although health related issues were quite pronounced compared to the general population regardless of place of residence, there were differences between respondents living in the downtown core and living outside the core in terms of health and history of homelessness. Respondents living outside the Vancouver downtown core were:

- Less likely to have been homeless in the past three years (48% versus 60%)
- Less likely to be skipping meals because they ran out of money (51% versus 70%)
- Less likely to be using food banks (42% versus 57%)
- Less likely to be using soup kitchens (27% versus 68%)
- Less likely to be searching public waste containers for food (6% versus 19%)
- Less likely to report feeling in poor health (6% versus 24%)
- Less likely to say they have diagnosed health conditions such as HepC (21% versus 47%) and Aids (3% versus 11%)
- Less likely to say they have addictions (18% versus 23%)

- More likely to report having a family physician (73% versus 62%) and a dentist (52% versus 23%)
- Less likely to use a community health clinic (39% versus 72%)
- Less likely to say they are limited in their day to day activities due to a health condition (48% versus 66%)
- More likely to say their health was better since moving to their current location (24% versus 17%) and less likely to say it had become worse (15% versus 32%)

In terms of transportation and communication, respondents living outside the core are less likely to say that their main mode of transportation is walking (54% versus 79%). They are also more likely to have a cell phone (42% versus 25%).

The quality of life in Vancouver rooming houses may also vary by location. Respondents who live in a rooming house outside the city core were:

- More likely to rate the state of repair of their bathroom as excellent or good (54% versus 34%).
- More likely to rate the cleanliness of their bathroom as excellent or good (51% versus 42%)
- More likely to say they had access to a kitchen (61% versus 49%)
- More likely to rate the state of repair of the kitchen as excellent or good (33% versus 23%)
- More likely to rate the cleanliness of the kitchen as excellent or good (30% versus 23%)
- More likely to say they have someone they can go to for help in their building (73% versus 66%)
- Less likely to say that their landlord provides extra services such as prepared meals, cheque cashing or help filling out forms (6% versus 19%)
- Less likely to say they have been evicted in the past (18% versus 23%)
- More likely to say their housing is long term (33% versus 19%)

2.5 Satisfaction with Current Accommodation

How respondents rate different aspects of their accommodation

Respondents were asked to rate different aspects of their accommodation on a simple “good”, “fair”, “poor” scale. The detailed responses for Vancouver respondents are shown in Exhibit V21. The percents are based on the number of responses received for each item. The number of non-responses is also

shown in the Exhibit. Non-response occurred in those instances where a particular aspect did not apply to the rooming house in question or a respondent did not know or preferred not to give a response. In terms of overall trends, the Exhibit reveals that there are only three aspects rated as “good” by more than half the respondents – location (76%), building security (56%), and being able to have visitors (54%). On the other hand, the only aspect that was commonly rated as “poor” by the majority of respondents was accessibility for persons with disabilities (86%).

Exhibit V21 – Ratings of Different Aspects of Accommodation

	Good	Fair	Poor	<i>Non Response</i>
Exterior of the building/use of yard/appearance	37%	41%	22%	2
Quality of the building interior (maintenance, soundproof walls, heating/air conditioning etc.)	38%	26%	26%	0
Cleanliness of the building (no garbage around, no pests, mice or other rodents, vermin, bedbugs, cockroaches)	45%	31%	24%	0
Building security (good locks on main entrance, your room, janitor/building manager responsive when needed etc.)	56%	24%	19%	2
Personal safety (feel safe in terms of neighbours, no violent tenants or visitors, weapons on site, police responsive when needed etc.)	49%	28%	23%	2
Feels like a “home”	37%	30%	33%	4
Stability, mobility of tenants (i.e. turnover low)	36%	43%	20%	6
Tenants, socializing, getting along	44%	40%	16%	3
Being able to have visitors	54%	26%	20%	2
Cost to live here	44%	29%	27%	0
Quality of your room (size, furniture, lighting, ventilation, storage/closet/shelves etc.)	37%	36%	26%	0
Responsiveness of your landlord to problems	45%	27%	28%	5
Common areas in the building (lounge, kitchen, bathrooms)	39%	27%	34%	10
Accessibility for persons with disabilities (wheel chair access etc.)	11%	3%	86%	18
Location (close to stores, services, transportation)	76%	20%	4%	0
Neighbourhood (friendliness, noise level etc.)	39%	33%	28%	1

Another way to analyze the results in Exhibit V21 is to calculate the mean scores for each item and then to rank order the mean scores for the different aspects. For this analysis the responses were reverse scored. In other words, “good” was assigned the highest score (3), and the response “poor” was assigned the lowest score (1). The rank order based on the mean scores from most highly rated aspects to least highly rated is as follows (mean score given in brackets):

- Location (2.72)
- Building security (2.37)
- Being able to have visitors (2.33)
- Socializing with other tenants (2.29)
- Personal safety (2.26)
- Cleanliness of the building (2.21)
- Responsiveness of the landlord (2.17)
- Cost (2.16)
- Stability of tenants (2.16)
- Appearance of the exterior of the building (2.15)
- Friendliness/noise level of the neighbourhood (2.11)
- Quality of the building interior (2.11)
- Quality of the room (2.11)
- Feels like a “home” (2.04)
- Common areas of the building (2.04)
- Accessibility for persons with disabilities (1.26)

The previous list clearly shows which areas are most and least satisfactory to Vancouver rooming house residents.

Differences by gender

A different analytical method was used to examine whether or not there was a difference between male and female respondents in terms of the ratings of different aspects of their accommodation. The analysis found the following differences between males and female respondents:

Aspects rated higher by males

- Location
- Socializing with other tenants
- Personal safety
- Cleanliness of the building
- Responsiveness of the landlord
- Appearance of the exterior of the building
- Quality of the building interior
- Quality of the room

- Feels like a “home”
- Common areas of the building

Aspects rated higher by females

- Building security
- Being able to have visitors
- Cost
- Stability of tenants
- Friendliness/noise level of the neighbourhood

There was no difference between males and females on the rating of accessibility for persons with physical disabilities. This is an area clearly not highly rated by anyone.

Overall satisfaction

After the rating question, respondents were asked how satisfied they were with their overall housing situation. Exhibit V22 shows that most Vancouver respondents are at least somewhat satisfied with their accommodation. However, over one third are dissatisfied and almost 20% are very dissatisfied.

Exhibit V22 – Overall satisfaction

	Number	Percent
Very satisfied	17	21.2
Somewhat satisfied	32	40.0
Somewhat dissatisfied	16	20.0
Very dissatisfied	15	18.8
Total	80	100.0

Respondents were asked why they were satisfied or dissatisfied with their current accommodation. The following statements reflect why many Vancouver respondents like their current place of residence.

“I can put up with the minor irritants – it’s not perfect but rent is cheap.”

“Because I get ‘value for money’ in the area that I live.”

“It is comfortable. I get maid service once a week and clean linen. The staff is friendly.”

“The house has been totally renovated. It is quiet and private.”

"I like living here better than an apartment. My basement suite is private and there are less noise issues."

"The landlord is trying to address issues – trying to clean up the place."

"It fits my busy lifestyle – close to my volunteer jobs. The cost is good and the location is good."

"This is a very good place compared to some of the others out there."

The reasons why some respondents are not happy with their accommodation are reflected in the statements below.

"The bathrooms are unclean, the place needs renovation, there is no kitchen, and the breakers pop off once or twice a day."

"It's mainly the behaviour of other tenants – sometimes I'm scared at night."

"Everything sucks – there's no peace or privacy."

"I can't have my kids for the night if I take them out and it's too late to take them home."

"The place is filthy and the landlord does not respond."

"Sometimes the landlord comes into my place when I'm not there – also turns my visitors away without letting me know."

I just wish the landlord would clean up the place, get rid of bad tenants and just keep the ones that cause no problems and pay their rent."

"It just doesn't feel like home."

"It's too cold in the winter – the house is too old to live in."

"It's too expensive, the appliances are run down and the place has been neglected."

"There are too many drug addicts and dealers in the building."

"It's way too expensive for the quality of the room."

"I would like to move into a more self-contained unit – wouldn't you?"

Factors related to satisfaction

There may be some factors related to improving the quality of life for residents of rooming houses in Vancouver. To address this issue the response to overall satisfaction were compared with the rating of the various aspects listed in Exhibit V21. The aspects most closely related to how satisfied respondents were with their accommodation in order of importance were:

- The extent to which the rooming house felt like a home;

- The quality of the room;
- The quality of the building;
- The responsiveness of the landlord;
- The access to common areas in the building (kitchen, lounge etc.);
- The feeling of safety;
- The longer term tenure of the other tenants; and
- The cost.

There were some other factors related to how satisfied respondents were with their overall housing situation in Vancouver. Respondents who were more satisfied with their housing were more likely to:

- Live outside the core area of the City
- Live in an unlicensed rooming house (most of the unlicensed homes in the sample were located outside the core area)
- Live in a non-profit rooming house
- Live in a smaller rooming house of less than 10 units
- Have lived in the rooming house longer than two years
- Have a friend in the building
- Have access to their own bathroom (small sample)
- Have access to a kitchen
- Have someone they could go to in the building for help
- Have a landlord who provides additional services such as prepared meals, cheque cashing or filling out forms.

Satisfaction and demographic, socio-economic and health factors

Do demographic, socio-economic or health factors make a difference when it comes to overall housing satisfaction? Although the research is exploratory and thus not conclusive, there is some evidence that the demographic, socio-economic and health background of respondents may have an influence on how they feel about their housing situation. Respondents who were less satisfied were more likely to be:

- Female
- Under the age of 30
- Be receiving social assistance
- Be skipping meals in the past month because they ran out of money
- Aboriginal
- Feeling in poor health
- Diagnosed with one or more health conditions
- Reporting that health has gotten worse since moving to their current location
- Active substance abusers

What respondents like most and least about their current accommodation

Respondents were asked to describe what they liked most and least about their current housing situation. In terms of what they liked most, their answers could be grouped into two main categories; convenient location (56%) and affordable cost (52%). Some respondents mentioned that they felt safe and secure (25%), they liked the privacy (25%), they liked the landlord (24%) and they liked the cleanliness (17%).

In terms of what respondents liked least, the answers were more diverse. The lack of cleanliness was mentioned by 29% of respondents, followed by a lack of privacy (23%), lack of extras such as a kitchen or lounge (21%), the location (20%), it was too expensive (19%), they didn't feel safe or secure (19%), and problems with other tenants (15%). About one quarter of the respondents said they just didn't like this type of accommodation (a rooming house).

Applying for subsidized housing

Forty percent of the respondents in Vancouver have applied for subsidized housing. Of these, most (77%) indicated they were on the waiting list. The remaining respondents either had difficulty getting a response or have just been approved. For those respondents who said they were on the waiting list, half have been waiting for less than one year, about one third have been waiting for up to three years and the remaining 17% indicated they have been waiting for more than three years.

2.6 Future Housing Plans

Most (75%) respondents saw their current housing situation as a temporary one. The response to this question differed somewhat by the length of time respondents had lived in their current location. All of those who had only just moved in the past few weeks saw it as a temporary situation compared to 58% who had lived in their current place for at least two years. Respondents who viewed their current place as temporary were more likely to report that they were dissatisfied with their accommodation and that it did not feel like home than those who viewed their current accommodation as a long-term arrangement. They also differed in their profile. Respondents who viewed their current place as a temporary home were more likely to:

- Be living on social assistance
- Have activity limitations
- Have not completed high school
- Be actively using substances
- Have a First Nations cultural background
- Be looking for work
- Be part of the underground economy

Vancouver respondents who viewed their current place as a permanent home were more likely to:

- Be over the age of 40
- Be actively using substances
- Be unable to work
- Be of British origin
- Be divorced

When respondents were asked what they would be looking for in a new home if they decided to move, the single largest response category was “a self contained one bedroom apartment (42%) followed by “another rooming house but better quality (more space, newer, more private, own washroom, kitchen, cleaner, etc.) (38%), a bachelor or studio suite (15%), and housing for special needs (5%).

At the end of the survey respondents were asked to speculate about the kind of housing they saw themselves living in five years from now. Not everyone had an answer. In fact, 30% of the respondents indicated that they didn’t know or “can’t think that far ahead”. Of the remaining respondents, most (57%) saw themselves in a rental apartment. Just over one quarter (27%) were hoping to own their own place – either in a house or condo, and 16% thought they would likely be living in a bachelor apartment or basement suite.

2.7 The Last Word from Vancouver Respondents

At the end of the interview, respondents were asked if they had anything else they would like to say about themselves and their life in the rooming house. About one third of Vancouver respondents provided some additional comments. Of these, two thirds made negative comments about their situation and one third were positive or constructive. The quotes below reflect the types of comments received from rooming house residents in Vancouver.

“I’m depressed because I have no family or friends in B.C. I’m stuck in this hotel because of my financial situation. I had paid 3 months rent ahead of time when I lost my job. If I can’t find work I will be homeless for the 4th time in my life.” (a 41 year old male)

“I like this place – it’s kind of homey and a good sized room. I have a couch as well as a bed.” (a 55 year old male)

"Living here drives me crazy. I can never have anyone over without other tenants hearing everything we are saying. There's no privacy." (a 28 year old female)

"I'm totally content. It's a nice building and I have friends here." (a 37 year old male)

"I'm feeling stressed out because of my confined living arrangements. If I could move to a better building I think I would feel better about myself." (a 48 year old male)

"I feel good in this place and I like the neighbourhood. I would like to stay here but the landlord is evicting everybody." (a 50 year old male)

"The city should build more low-cost housing. It's crazy living in a rooming house when you are trying to recover from an addiction." (a 55 year male)

"This rooming house is the best but people need housing. I will need housing for my kids so that I can live with them. I also want to bring my Mom here from India." (a 46 year old female)

"Welfare recipients are discriminated against when seeking decent accommodation. It is difficult to get a leg up." (a 45 year old male)

"Guest fees – how can you say that we can't have visitors. There's abusive behaviour in a lot of rooming houses. It's a horrible way to live." (a 38 year old female)

"I'm quite satisfied aside from having to share the bathroom and the small size of the suite." (a 52 year old male)

3. The Profile of Rooming House Residents in Ottawa

The results presented in this section of the report are based on the answers received from the 80 rooming house residents who responded to the survey in Ottawa.

Identification of residents

The Ottawa field team worked closely with the local steering committee and representatives from the City to identify the sampling parameters for the rooming houses and residents. In Ottawa, the majority of rooming houses are small (less than 10 units) are privately owned, and located in the downtown core. The sample of residents reflects this reality. The City provided a list of rooming houses that were either licensed or pending their license. This list was helpful in identifying the licensing status of the rooming houses included in the study. In the end, most rooming houses included in the study were unlicensed. A large number of rooming house addresses, both licensed and unlicensed, were identified by an outreach worker (one of the peer interviewers) whose main responsibility was to work with rooming house owners and landlords.

Although it is estimated that 90% of rooming house residents in Ottawa are male, females were over-sampled for the purpose of the analysis and gender comparisons. As well, an effort was made to recruit tenants who live in rooming houses outside the downtown area of the city and in unlicensed rooming houses. To obtain a broad sample of rooming houses with different physical characteristics, it was decided that no more than 1 or 2 residents would be interviewed in smaller rooming houses (less than 10) and that the maximum interviewed in larger rooming houses would be 5.

Several approaches were used to recruit rooming house residents. These included:

- Working with frontline staff in drop-in centres, housing help agencies, food kitchens, and other agencies in the core area to identify clients who live in rooming houses;
- Obtaining permission from rooming house landlords and superintendents to enter buildings and recruit tenants for the study;
- Visiting rooming houses with City Health Inspector and recruiting tenants for the study; and
- Obtaining referrals from tenants and landlords interviewed to other rooming houses and tenants.

3.1 Demographic, Socio-economic and Health-related Characteristics

Sex and age

It is generally believed that about 90% or more of rooming house residents are male. There was a conscientious effort made to identify and interview as many female rooming house residents as possible. In Ottawa the field team was successful in attracting females to in the survey. *One third of the Ottawa respondents were female and about two thirds were male - 5% identified themselves as transgender.* To be inclusive, respondents were also asked their sexual identity and most (97%) stated heterosexual. A small percentage (3%) reported being bisexual.

The age of respondents in Ottawa ranged from as young as 17 to as old as 60. The average was 38. Exhibit O1 gives the age groupings and shows that over one third of respondents (35%) are thirty years of age or younger.

Exhibit O1- Age Group

	Number	Percent
<30	28	35.4
31-40	15	19.0
41-50	22	27.8
51+	14	17.7
Total	79	100.0

Marital Status

Exhibit O2 shows that most (90%) of respondents reported being either single or divorced. A small number were widowed and 8% indicated they were married.

Exhibit O2- Marital Status

	Number	Percent
Single	48	63.8
Married	11	7.5
Divorced	18	26.3
Widowed	3	2.5
Total	80	100.0

Birthplace, status and cultural background

Most Ottawa respondents were born in Canada; however, 13% were foreign-born. Those that were born outside Canada were asked their birthplace and what year they came to Canada. About half of the foreign born respondents were born in the United States. Other countries of origin were China, Indonesia and Belgium. A small number of respondents were recent immigrants having arrived in Canada within the last three years. Almost all respondents were Canadian Citizens. A small percentage (4%) indicated they had 'visitor' status and 3% reported being landed immigrants.

Ottawa respondents had a wide diversity of cultural backgrounds. The most frequently reported heritage was British (44%) followed by Francophone (15%) and Francophone/Anglo/bilingual (9%). About 9% reported having an Aboriginal/First Nations heritage. Other cultures mentioned by more than one respondent included Italian (4%), Scottish/Irish (4%), Thai (3%), and Chinese (3%) as well as Swedish, Russian, Jewish, Mulatto, Hindu, Greek and Danish (single responses). A few respondents indicated they didn't know their cultural background because they were adopted.

Migration characteristics

Respondents were asked how long they had lived in Ontario and the City of Ottawa. They were also asked where they had lived just prior to moving to Ottawa. Over forty percent (44%) of respondents reported living in Ontario their whole lives. At the other end of the scale as Exhibit O3 shows, ten percent of respondents are very recent migrants to the province. The majority of respondents, however, have lived in Ontario for more than 10 years.

Exhibit O3- Length of Time Lived in Ontario

	Number	Percent
<1 yr	8	10.0
1-5 yrs	9	11.3
6-10 yrs	4	5.0
>10 yrs	27	29.9
Whole Life	35	43.8
Total	80	100.0

Exhibit O4 shows that migration to the City of Ottawa from other parts of the province or from further away is more recent. Over forty percent (45%) of respondents have lived in Ottawa for five years or less and only 10% have lived in Ottawa their whole lives.

Exhibit O4- Length of Time Lived in Ottawa

	Number	Percent
<1 yr	9	11.3
1-5 yrs	27	33.8
6-10 yrs	6	7.5
>10 yrs	30	37.4
Whole Life	8	10.0
Total	80	100.0

Most of the migrants to Ottawa came directly from other parts of the province (48%) or Quebec (20%). New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland were the provinces of origin for 14% of the migrants and a smaller number came from as far away as British Columbia (6%), Alberta (5%), and Manitoba (1%). A few respondents reported coming to Ottawa from places in the United States.

A good proportion (30%) of migrants to Ottawa come from other larger cities across Canada including Vancouver, Toronto, Hamilton, Montreal, Halifax, Calgary and Winnipeg. In addition to these cities, over 40 smaller communities were mentioned – mainly across Ontario and Quebec but also in other parts of North America.

Educational background

Exhibit O5 shows that almost two thirds of Ottawa rooming house residents who responded to the Ottawa survey reported that they had completed high school and almost one third have a college or university degree.

Exhibit O5 – Highest Level of Education Completed

	Number	Percent
Elementary	2	2.5
Some high school, trade school	27	34.1
High school diploma, some college	23	29.1
College degree, some university	17	21.5
University degree	10	12.8
Total	79	100.0

Respondents, who indicated that they did not complete school, were asked why they left school early. The majority of those who did not complete high school reported leaving school early on their own volition for school related, personal or economic reasons such as “didn’t like school/rebelled/bored/expelled” (40%), “did drugs/sniffed glue” (20%), “had mental health problems/depression” (15%), “economic reasons/had to work to help support family” (15%), and “family abuse” (10%).

Just over one fifth (21%) of Ottawa respondents reported that they had attended a special education program in either elementary or high school. The same percentage indicated that they had been told that they have a learning disability.

Current status

Respondents were asked their current status – how they typically spent their day. As the list below shows, about one third of the Ottawa respondents reported being unable to work. A slightly higher proportion (44%) of respondents were employed either full or part time and one quarter were looking for work. The Ottawa sample also contained a fair share of students. Respondents classified their current status in the following ways:

- Unable to work due to poor health, injury etc. (33%)
- Looking for work (25%)
- Employed part time (19%)
- Full or part time student (16%)
- Employed full-time (13%)
- Other (5%) (Self-employed, volunteer work, life skills training, unemployed and not looking)

The percents add up to more than 100% because some respondents were engaged in more than one activity.

Sources and level of income

The sources of income reported by respondents from most frequently reported to least common source are as follows:

- Social assistance/welfare (39%)
- Disability pension (24%)
- Underground economy (11%)
- Employment/self employment (11%)
- Student bursary/loan (9%)
- Old Age Security (1%)

Respondents were asked to provide their gross (before taxes) monthly income from all sources. Those who felt uncomfortable providing exact figures or did not know the exact figure were given annual income groupings and asked to indicate into which income group their gross annual income fell. As Exhibit O6 shows about 11% of respondents either could not or declined to provide their income regardless of the monthly or annual grouping option. This percent is actually lower than what is typical in most population-based surveys where it not unusual to have as many as 20% of respondents refuse the income question.

In the Ottawa survey, most but not all of the respondents provided monthly figures. Twenty percent gave annual amounts. For the purpose of the analysis, the monthly figures were converted to annual amounts and are shown in Exhibit O6.

Exhibit O6 reveals that the majority (65%) of respondents report receiving an annual gross income of \$12,000 or less. At the other end of the scale, a small percentage of respondents report receiving more than \$20,000 annually.

Exhibit O6 – Gross Annual Income (Before Taxes)

	Number	Percent
Less than \$8000 ⁷	27	33.7
\$8000-\$12000	25	31.3
\$12001-\$15000	7	8.7
\$15001-\$20000	8	10.0
Greater than \$20000	4	5.0
DK/refused	9	11.3
Total	80	100.0

Amount of and how rent paid

Respondents were asked to provide the amount of rent they pay for their accommodation. Exhibit O7 presents the monthly ranges in rents paid by Ottawa respondents. The actual amount reported ranged from as low as \$85 to as high as \$650. The average monthly rent paid was \$396.

Exhibit O7 – Monthly Rent

	Number	Percent
\$85-325	20	14.3
\$326-350	3	3.9
\$351-375	11	14.3
\$376-400	17	22.1
\$401-450	27	35.1
\$451-900	8	10.3
Total	77	100.0

Rooming house renters have a number of options for paying their rent including automatic withdrawal from their bank account or direct payment by social services. Ottawa respondents reported the following methods for rent payment:

- Cash (39%)

⁷ It should be noted that some respondents (i.e., those who reported monthly income levels below the minimum amount for disability pensions) who pay their rent direct may have reported monthly figures that represented their "take home" income after their rent was deducted.

- Pay direct (34%)
- Monthly cheque (16%)
- Post dated cheques (9%)
- Other (1%)

According to the survey, not all Ottawa respondents are provided with a receipt for the rent paid. Almost thirty percent (29%) of respondents reported that they do not receive a receipt.

Food security

According to Statistics Canada, a single person living in a city larger than 500,000 people would need \$15,172 to reach the low income poverty line.⁸ Recognizing in advance that the majority of rooming house residents were likely to have an income well below this figure, there were two questions in the survey that addressed the issue of “getting by” on income levels that are well below Canadian low income cut off figures. First, respondents were asked if they had used a number of food sources or underground approaches in the past month to help pay for food. Second, respondents were asked if they had ever skipped a meal due to a lack of money. If this was the case, they were asked to estimate how often they had skipped a meal in the past month.

The most commonly reported free food sources or underground approaches to secure food used in the past month were:

- Drop-in meals service or soup kitchen (48%)
- Food bank (38%)
- Drop-in meal service (28%)
- Pan handling (15%)
- Binning – looking in waste containers (6%)

The majority (38 respondents or 58%) admitted that they have skipped meals due to a lack of money. On average, respondents said they had skipped about one meal per day in the past month. As Exhibit O8 shows, one third of the 38 respondents who skipped meals and could give a number skipped more than 20 meals in the past month – as many as 60 or more meals were skipped by some respondents.

⁸ National Council of Welfare Reports: Income for Living? Spring, 2004.

Exhibit O8 – Number of Meals Skipped in Past Month

	Number	Percent
1-9	13	34.2
10-20	12	31.6
21-60+	13	34.2
Gave a number	38	100.0
Not applicable/DK	42	
Total	80	

Health and well-being

Income is an important determinant of health – people living on low income typically also have poorer health. The survey addressed a number of health related areas including perceived general health, the use of substances, health conditions, activity limitations and the use of health related services.

General health

Perceived health is a standard Statistics Canada health indicator – one that has been shown to relate well to other health factors such as diagnosed health conditions including mental health. Exhibit O9 shows how Ottawa respondents feel about their own general health. The Exhibit reveals that one third of the Ottawa respondents perceive themselves to be in fair or poor health. To put these results into some perspective, the figures can be compared to how the general population would answer this question. In a joint Canada/United States Survey of Health conducted in 2002-2003, only 7% of Canadians aged 18 to 44 and 11% of those aged 45 to 64 reported that they were feeling in either fair or poor health.⁹

⁹ Statistics Canada, 2003 – statistics provided on Statistics Canada's website.

Exhibit O9 – Perceived General Health

	Number	Percent
Excellent	15	19.7
Very good	9	11.8
Good	25	32.9
Fair	18	23.7
Poor	9	11.8
Total	76	100.0

Among other factors, decent, safe, and well-designed housing can contribute to overall good health. The converse is also true. Respondents were asked if their health had changed at all since they moved to their current residence. Fourteen percent stated that their health was better and almost thirty percent (29%) indicated it had become worse. The following are some of the most common reasons given for these responses.

Reasons why health has become better for some respondents

- I finally have a roof over my head/not outside any more
- I'm happier here/better than my last place
- I'm eating better now/gaining weight
- I'm getting my teeth fixed and some glasses
- My mental health is better – less stress here
- My outlook is better because I have my own place
- I feel more secure here than in my last rooming house
- I have employment now

Reasons why health has become worse for some respondents

- I have little money for food/not enough food
- There's mould in the wall/building – I have allergies
- The neighbourhood is bad – I feel unsafe
- I was diagnosed with Hep C
- My disease (MS) has rendered me disabled so I can't work
- I'm not working so no money for food
- It's cold in my room – sometimes I freeze at night
- There's too much stress here

Addictions

Respondents were asked whether or not they had any addictions and the nature of these addictions. Just over half (56%) of the Ottawa respondents admitted to

having one or more addictions. Over forty percent (44%) revealed that they had two or more addictions. In order of frequency reported, the types of addictions revealed were:

- Cigarettes (44%)
- Street drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, heroin (25%)
- Alcohol (18%)
- Gambling (3%)
- Other (Glue) (1%)

When asked whether they were currently active or recovering, 62% of respondents addicted to alcohol reported being active, 91% of smokers were active, and 75% of those using street drugs were active.

Health conditions

Respondents were asked if they had any health conditions that have been diagnosed by a health professional and that have lasted or are expected to last six months or more. Sixty percent of respondents listed one or more conditions. In fact, almost twenty percent (19%) of respondents reported having three or more diagnosed conditions. The types of conditions mentioned most often were:

- Depression (29%)
- Anxiety/panic disorder (24%)
- Arthritis/Osteo Arthritis (14%)
- Hepatitis C (11%)
- Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (10%)
- Diabetes (9%)
- Cancer (9%)
- Heart disease/stroke (8%)
- Schizophrenia/paranoia (5%)
- Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (4%)
- Other single responses include Fibromyalgia, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, high blood pressure, Muscular Dystrophy, Epilepsy, bad back, asthma, repeated leg operations

Activity limitations

Over forty percent (44%) of Ottawa respondents reported that they were limited in the kind or amount of activity they can do because of a long-term (6 months or more) physical or mental health condition. According to the interviewers, a few respondents used assistive devices such as a cane or wheel chair to help with mobility.

Use of health related services

Access to health related services such as a family physician or dentist as well as community support services can be critical to overall physical and mental well-being. Respondents were asked a series of questions related to their use of health-related services. They were asked if they were currently receiving any outreach or support services for personal issues such as mental health, addictions or something else. Most respondents were not currently using these types of services. For those respondents who were using one or more of these types of services, the types of services received most often were:

- Mental health services (11%)
- Services to help with addictions (4%)
- Occupational therapy (3%)
- Home management/life skills (1%)
- Other types of services (9%)

When asked how often they used one or more of these services, just over one third of those respondents using services indicated they received these services at least once a week.

Just over sixty percent (61%) of Ottawa respondents reported having a family physician. However, only 45% reported having a dentist. Almost sixty percent (57%) indicated that they go to a community health centre or clinic for their health care including dental care. The analysis showed that 18% of respondents do not have a family physician or dentist and also do not use the services at a health centre or clinic. Fourteen percent of respondents may not be receiving any community support or health related services.

3.2 History of Rooming House Tenure

Length of time lived at current address

For most Ottawa respondents, residence at their current location has been fairly short. As Exhibit O10 shows, just over half (55%) of respondents have lived at their current rooming house for less than one year. Just under one quarter of respondents report the same living location for between one and two years, and about the same percentage are longer term residents of at least two years. Some respondents have lived in their location for as long as 17 years.

Exhibit O10 – Length of Time Lived at Current Address

	Number	Percent
1 month or less	5	6.3
2 months	10	12.5
3-6 months	19	23.8
6-12 months	10	12.5
1-2 years	18	22.5
> 2 years	18	22.5
Total	80	100.0

Respondents who reported living at their current location for less than two years were asked how many times they had moved in the past two years. Exhibit O11 shows that many respondents have made multiple moves in a fairly short time frame. About one quarter of all respondents have moved at least three times. Some respondents had moved as many as 8 times in the past couple of years.

Exhibit O11 – Number of Times Moved in Past Two Years

	Number	Percent
None	26	32.5
Once	17	21.2
Twice	17	21.2
Three times	9	11.3
Four + times	11	13.8
Total	80	100.0

Why some respondents do not move

Respondents who had indicated a longer residency of at least two years were asked why they had stayed at their present location for such a long time period. The types of responses given can be summarized as follows:

- Financial reasons – rent reasonable/can't afford more (41%)
- Nice place, comfortable, clean (28%)
- Convenient location to services (21%)
- Friendly residents, good landlord (10%)

Pattern of moving in the past

Respondents were asked how long they had lived in their last two locations. As Exhibit O12 shows, almost half of respondents reported that they had lived in their last place for less than one year. Exactly half indicated the same response for the place previous to their last location. A smaller percentage (12% and 17%) of respondents have had more stable housing of at least 5 years duration in their previous two locations.

Exhibit O12 – Length of Times Lived in Past Two Locations

	<i>Last location</i> Number	<i>Last Location</i> Percent	<i>Two locations before</i> Number	<i>Two locations before</i> Percent
< One year	39	48.8	40	50.0
1-2 years	25	31.3	21	26.2
3-4 years	6	7.5	4	5.0
5+ years	10	12.5	14	17.5
Whole life	0	0.0	1	1.2
Total	80	100.0	80	100.0

Why some respondents are planning to move soon

About one third (32%) of the Ottawa respondents indicated that they were planning to move in the next few months. The reasons given for this decision were as follows:

- Would prefer a different type of accommodation – more privacy, want kitchen, more space, house (50%)
- Problems with other tenants (27%)
- Problems with landlord (27%)
- Want a place in a more convenient location (20%)
- Poor quality of building – bugs, dirty, smells (12%)
- Too expensive (12%)

How respondents found out about current location

Respondents were presented with a list of common approaches to house hunting and asked to indicate which one they had used to find their place. Exhibit O13 shows that most respondents had found out about their current location from a friend or someone else they knew such a former landlord. While advertisements

and signs also appear to be affective in leading respondents to their current place, almost fifteen percent (13.7%) had used the services of a formal agency.

Exhibit O13 – How Respondent Found Out About Current Location

	Number	Percent
Friends/knew landlord	32	40.0
Advertisement in paper/internet	21	26.2
Referral from agency	11	13.7
Sign in building/walk by	9	11.3
Sign posted elsewhere	7	8.8
Total	80	100.0

Respondents were asked if it was easy to find their current location and whether it was the first place they had looked at. Most respondents (78%) indicated that it was easy to find their current place. Less than half (45%) said their current place was the first place they had looked at.

Why respondents chose their current place

When respondents were asked why they decided to move to their current location, the following reasons were given:

- Most affordable (70%)
- Convenient location/easy to find (61%)
- Close to services/employment/school etc. (37%)
- Better accommodation (cleaner, safer, better landlord etc.) (31%)
- No first/last month deposit required (26%)
- Close to family, friends (16%)
- Was referred by an agency (16%)
- Was homeless/desperate/needed a place (5%)

Previous type of accommodation

Exhibit O14 shows the last type of accommodation where respondents lived. Just over thirty percent reported that they had lived in another rooming house just prior to moving to their current location. *Most of the remaining respondents had not been in stable housing situations* living either on the street, someone's couch, a hotel, or transitional housing. A few (mainly students) had lived at home or in university residences.

Exhibit O14 – Where Respondent Lived Before Moving to Current Location

	Number	Percent
Apartment	25	31.2
Another rooming house	24	30.0
Shelter	12	15.0
House	10	12.5
Residence/dorm	3	3.7
Street/homeless	2	2.5
Couch surfing	2	2.5
Halfway/recovery/transit ion house/hospital	2	2.5
Total	80	100.0

Respondents who lived in stable housing were asked if they had owned or rented their previous home. Almost all (85%) responded that they had paid rent at their previous place.

Why respondents left previous location

Respondents were presented with a list of reasons why they might have left their previous place and asked to indicate their main reasons. Many added their own reason for leaving. The most common reasons were:

- Problems with other tenants (25%)
- Problems with landlord (20%)
- Too expensive (14%)
- Was on street/shelter/hospital (13%)
- Moved from family home/residence (13%)
- Personal problems (break-ups/family problems) (10%)
- Preferred a different location (8%)
- Poor quality of building – bugs, dirty, etc. (8%)
- Evicted from last place (8%)
- Preferred a different type of accommodation (6%)
- Roommate left (4%)
- Move to be closer to work (4%)

History of eviction

About one fifth (22%) of respondents admitted that they had been asked to leave a rooming house in the past. The main reasons why they had been asked to leave according to these respondents were:

- Conflict with landlord/broke rules (43%)
- Use of substances (29%)
- Noise related (14%)
- Non-payment of rent (7%)
- Place being renovated (7%)

History of homelessness

Respondents were asked if they had ever lived on the streets or in a shelter because they were homeless in the last three years. Over one third (36%) of Ottawa respondents indicated that they had been homeless in the past three years.

3.3 Quality of Life Factors

Friends and pets

Most respondents (66%) indicated that they had friends living in the building. Just under half (46%) also reported that pets were allowed in their building. A small percentage (6%) of these respondents said that pets were a problem.

Furniture and room contents supplied by landlord

Respondents were provided with a list of common rooming house furniture items and other content items and asked which of these items had been supplied by their landlord. The following list reflects that there may be differences among rooming house landlords in terms of what is supplied or not.

Contents of room supplied by landlord according to Ottawa respondents:

- Bed (81%)
- Fridge (73%)
- Smoke detector (66%)
- Chair(s) (56%)
- Wardrobe/closet (56%)
- Desk (39%)
- Hot plate (21%)
- Microwave (16%)
- TV/cable (14%)

- Air conditioning (8%)
- Coffee table/side table/eating table (5%)
- Sink (3%)
- Lamp(s) (3%)
- Sofa bed (3%)
- Other (single responses – stove, bookcase, bed linen, TV stand)

A few respondents (4%) reported that they had their own furniture. In most cases this was because the landlord did not offer to supply any of the contents.

Bathroom arrangements

A small percentage (8%) of Ottawa respondents reported that they have their own private bathroom. Almost all respondents share a bathroom. There was a large range in the number of other residents with whom respondents share their bathroom – from one other person to as many as 30. The average number reported was 6. Exhibit O15 summarizes the number of residents sharing a bathroom. The Exhibit reveals that over twenty percent share their bathroom with at least seven other people.

Exhibit O15 – Number of residents who share the bathroom

	Number	Percent
1-4	27	33.7
5-7	36	45.0
8-10	9	11.2
10-30	3	3.8
Don't Know/NA	5	6.3
Total	80	100.0

Issues related to sharing a bathroom

Respondents who share their bathroom were asked if there were any problems with this arrangement. One third (34%) of these respondents indicated that there were some problems. Not surprisingly, this percentage increased with the number of people sharing the bathroom. Respondents who share with fewer people were less likely to report problems with the arrangement. Just under twenty percent (19%) of those respondents who share a bathroom with four or fewer people indicated there are problems with this arrangement.

The types of problems related to sharing fell mainly into two groups: lack of cleanliness/personal hygiene of other tenants (52%); and too many people sharing/long waits/no privacy (48%).

Respondents were asked to rate the overall cleanliness of the bathroom they use. Exhibit O16 below shows the ratings. The Exhibit reveals that just over half of the respondents rate their bathroom's state of cleanliness as good or excellent and a slightly lower percentage rate it as fair or poor.

Exhibit O16 – Rate the Cleanliness of the Bathroom

	Number	Percent
Excellent	9	11.3
Good	34	42.5
Fair	21	26.3
Poor	16	20.0
Total	80	100.0

Bathroom fixtures and ventilation

The bathrooms in the sampled Ottawa rooming houses typically contain a toilet (98%), a sink (86%), and a shower (98%). Just over half of Ottawa respondents reported that their bathroom also has a tub (55%). About half (51%) of respondents indicated that their bathroom had a window and 74% reported that there was another form of ventilation in the bathroom.

Bathroom state of repair

Respondents were asked to rate the state of repair of the bathroom. Exhibit O17 shows the results of this rating. The Exhibit reveals that most (58%) Ottawa respondents rate their bathroom as being in fair or poor repair.

Exhibit O17 – State of Repair of the Bathroom

	Number	Percent
Excellent	7	8.9
Good	29	36.7
Fair	26	32.9
Poor	17	21.5
Total	79	100.0

Respondents were asked to list the types of problems in their bathroom related to the general state of repair. Over half (41 respondents) of the Ottawa respondents provided comments. The responses could be grouped into five major categories:

- General repairs needed (fixtures, painting, drywall etc.) (27%)
- Plugged or broken toilets (24%)
- Water damage to floors or ceilings due to plugged drains, leaky faucets, sinks, showers or toilets (22%)
- Poor ventilation/lack of heat (15%)
- Problems related to lack of cleanliness (cockroaches, dirty floors, shower stalls, toilets) (5%)

Access to and use of a kitchen

Almost all (86%) of Ottawa respondents reported that they had access to a kitchen in their rooming house. In most cases this was a shared kitchen; however, 30% of respondents reported having their own. The majority (71%) of respondents use the kitchen to prepare meals. Those who say they do not use the kitchen gave different reasons including “kitchen too dirty”, “I eat out”, “I go the shelter/drop-in centre for meals”, “I go to friends’ places to eat”, or “I don’t have pots and pans”.

For those respondents who share the kitchen, about half (48%) reported that all or most of the other residents in the building use the kitchen to prepare meals.

Respondents who had access to a kitchen were asked where they stored their food. The majority (75%) indicated that they store their food in their own fridge. The rest use the common fridge available in the kitchen and a few store their food elsewhere in their room.

State of repair and cleanliness of the kitchen

Exhibit O18 shows that the majority of Ottawa respondents rate the state of repair in their kitchen as excellent or good. About one third rate it as fair or poor.

Exhibit O18 – State of Repair of the Kitchen

	Number	Percent
Excellent	9	13.2
Good	34	50.0
Fair	18	26.5
Poor	7	10.3
Total	68	100.0

As Exhibit O9 shows most respondents rate the cleanliness of the kitchen as either excellent or good. However, over 40% are not happy with the state of the kitchen giving it only a fair or poor rating.

Exhibit O19 – State of Cleanliness of the Kitchen

	Number	Percent
Excellent	8	11.8
Good	32	47.1
Fair	17	25.0
Poor	11	16.2
Total	68	100.0

Sharing of other amenities and expenses

Just over half (54%) of Ottawa respondents reported that they shared other amenities in the building including a laundry facility (39%), a lounge (14%), outside space such as a backyard, balcony or porch (11%) a telephone (8%), and cable or the Internet (6%). Just over ten percent (13%) also share expenses such as the cost of food with other residents.

Having family or friends move in

There are occasions when some respondents have family members or friends living with them for a while. One third of respondents reported that this had occurred. The long stay visitors were usually other friends (50%), a partner/boyfriend or girlfriend (27%), children or grandchildren (23%), brothers, sisters or cousins (23%) or parents/grandparents (12%).

On-site services and support

Most (66%) Ottawa respondents reported that there was an on-site janitor or caretaker for their rooming house. In 23% of the cases, this person was also the landlord. When asked how often, they speak with the on-site janitor or caretaker, almost half (45%) of respondents said daily. As Exhibit O20 shows, most Ottawa respondents connect with the on-site janitor or caretaker at least once a week.

Exhibit O20 – How Often Respondents Speaks with On-site Caretaker

	Number	Percent
Daily	24	45.3
Weekly	17	32.1
Monthly	10	18.9
Less often/never	2	3.8
Total	53	100.0

Respondents were asked if there was someone they could go to in the building if they needed some help. The majority (71%) indicated that there was someone. In about half the cases this person is another resident. The other half of the respondents would go the janitor or caretaker or landlord.

Landlord rules

According to the respondents, almost all rooming houses in the Ottawa sample have some rules related to security. Seventy five percent of respondents reported that there were rules related to security such as not taking the batteries out of smoke detectors, keeping the building locked and not letting strangers into the building. When asked if there was a no smoking rule in their building, 39% said this was the case. As well, 14% of respondents reported that drinking was not allowed in their building.

The majority (75%) of respondents indicated that their rooming house had other rules. The types of other rules mentioned most often were:

- No overnight visitors/late visitors/calls (39%)
- No use of drugs on premise (21%)
- No excessive noise (11%)
- No pets (8%)
- No violent/abusive behaviour (6%)
- Respect property, keep room clean, and use utilities wisely etc. (3%)

Rules that are and are not appreciated

Not all respondents appreciated having rules. In fact, about one quarter (25%) reported that there were some rules they did not appreciate – mainly around not being allowed to have visitors. However, rules that are appreciated (or would be if they don't exist now) related to safety and security, no drugs on the premise, and no tolerance for violent or abusive behaviour.

Extra services provided by the landlord

Respondents were asked if their landlord provided any extra services such as prepared meals, cheque cashing or filling out forms and if there was a charge for these extra services. A good number (44%) of Ottawa respondents reported that extra services were provided. Five percent of respondents said that their landlord provided prepared meals. In half the cases, this was included in the rent. Over one third (36%) of Ottawa landlords offer to cash cheques and in almost all cases (93%) this is included in the rent. Fewer landlord (5%) help with filling out forms but for those that do it include it in the rent.

Transportation and communication

Respondents were asked about their primary mode of transportation. Most respondents indicated that walking (79%) and/or public transit (49%) were the main ways they got around followed by bicycle (20%). A small percentage (4%) had a car.

Respondents were asked two additional questions related to transportation. The first was whether or not there was a place to store bikes on the property, and the second was whether or not there was enough parking at the rooming house. Only 5% of respondents reported that there was some form of bike storage but over half (58%) indicated that there was enough parking in the area.

Over one half (52%) of Ottawa respondents indicated they had their own cell phone.

3.4 Satisfaction with Current Accommodation and Future Plans

How respondents rate different aspects of their accommodation

Respondents were asked to rate different aspects of their accommodation on a simple “good”, “fair”, “poor” scale. The detailed responses for Ottawa respondents are shown in Exhibit O21. The percents are based on the number of responses received for each item. The number of non-responses is also shown in the Exhibit. Non-response occurred in those instances where a particular aspect did not apply to the rooming house in question or a respondent did not know or preferred not to give a response. In terms of overall trends, the Exhibit reveals that there are only four aspects rated as “good” by more than half the respondents – location (71%), being able to have visitors (58%), tenants socializing or getting along (54%), and building security (51%). On the other hand, the only aspect that was commonly rated as “poor” by the majority of respondents was accessibility for persons with disabilities (67%).

Exhibit O21 – Ratings of Different Aspects of Accommodation

	Good	Fair	Poor	<i>Number Non Response</i>
Exterior of the building/use of yard/appearance	44%	41%	15%	0
Quality of the building interior (maintenance, soundproof walls, heating/air conditioning etc.)	45%	32%	23%	0
Cleanliness of the building (no garbage around, no pests, mice or other rodents, vermin, bedbugs, cockroaches)	45%	38%	17%	0
Building security (good locks on main entrance, your room, janitor/building manager responsive when needed etc.)	51%	31%	18%	0
Personal safety (feel safe in terms of neighbours, no violent tenants or visitors, weapons on site, police responsive when needed etc.)	61%	25%	14%	0
Feels like a “home”	41%	27%	31%	0
Stability, mobility of tenants (i.e. turnover)	50%	33%	17%	2
Tenants, socializing, getting along	54%	35%	11%	2
Being able to have visitors	58%	24%	18%	1
Cost to live here	44%	35%	21%	0
Quality of your room (size, furniture, lighting, ventilation, storage/closet/shelves etc.)	38%	36%	26%	0
Responsiveness of your landlord to problems	42%	36%	22%	3
Common areas in the building (lounge, kitchen, bathrooms)	34%	46%	21%	12
Accessibility for persons with disabilities (wheel chair access etc.)	22%	11%	67%	44
Location (close to stores, services, transportation)	71%	26%	3%	0
Neighbourhood (friendliness, noise, etc.)	44%	46%	10%	1

Another way to analyze the results in Exhibit O21 is to calculate the mean scores for each item and then to rank order the mean scores for the different aspects. For this analysis the responses were reverse scored. In other words, “good” was assigned the highest score (3), and the response “poor” was assigned the lowest score (1). The rank order based on the mean scores from most highly rated aspects to least highly rated is as follows (mean score given in brackets):

- Location (2.69)
- Personal safety (2.47)
- Socializing with other tenants (2.42)
- Being able to have visitors (2.41)
- Building security (2.34)
- Friendliness/noise level of the neighbourhood (2.34)
- Stability of tenants (2.33)
- Appearance of the exterior of the building (2.29)
- Cleanliness of the building (2.28)
- Cost (2.22)
- Quality of the building interior (2.22)
- Quality of the room (2.22)
- Responsiveness of the landlord (2.19)
- Common areas of the building (2.13)
- Feels like a “home” (2.10)
- Accessibility for persons with disabilities (1.56)

The above list clearly shows which areas are most and least satisfactory to Ottawa rooming house residents.

Differences by gender

A different analytical method was used to examine whether or not there was a difference between male and female respondents in terms of the ratings of different aspects of their accommodation. The analysis found that females tended to rate most items higher than males. The aspects rated higher by male respondents were being able to have visitors, and the responsiveness of the landlord. There was no difference in ratings between the sexes around the cleanliness of the building, tenants socializing, getting along, or the location.

Overall satisfaction

After the rating question, respondents were asked how satisfied they were with their overall housing situation. Exhibit O22 shows that most Ottawa respondents are satisfied with their accommodation. One quarter are very satisfied.

Exhibit O22 – Overall satisfaction

	Number	Percent
Very satisfied	19	24.1
Somewhat satisfied	42	53.2
Somewhat dissatisfied	11	13.9
Very dissatisfied	7	8.9
Total	79	100.0

Respondents were asked why they were satisfied or dissatisfied with their current accommodation. The following statements reflect why many Ottawa respondents like their current place of residence.

"I like the location and I like the people who live here. This does not feel like a rooming house. It feels like a home."

The location is excellent and the cost is good. The landlord is friendly and the tenants get along well."

"It's nice and the cost is not too expensive and close to everything – easy access to work and buses."

"It's a nice warm place."

"It's better than a shelter. I feel safe and I have some privacy."

"The landlord is good and the price is affordable."

"It's a lot better than living on the street."

"It's a good place to stay until I can find an apartment."

"I have my own bathroom and the location is convenient."

"I have a better place than my friends. I have my own fridge, its quiet and a good place to study."

"The house is well run and maintained."

The reasons why some Ottawa respondents are not happy with their accommodation are reflected in the statements below.

"7 years is too long to live in one room – I'm waiting for subsidized housing."

"I feel unsafe and unwanted. The people here do not respect my opinion at all. It's like I have fallen off another planet and landed in hell."

"Fire safety is a concern for me."

"I don't have my own furniture and I have no money to buy any so I can't have the ideal place."

"It's very small and has no sink – I had to buy my own mattress."

"It's a place but too small and not home like."

"The landlord does not respond – doesn't do any work or repairs. The fire escape doesn't work and is falling down."

"The cost of rent with hydro is too much for me."

"It's the general state of repair – there's cockroaches everywhere."

"There's no doorbell so you can't hear visitors knocking – when friends knock on the front window I get into trouble."

"It's the type of people that live here – drugs, too much traffic in and out of the building."

"You pay \$400 for a room that's not worth it and get told what to do."

Factors related to satisfaction

There may be some factors related to improving the quality of life for residents of rooming houses in Ottawa. To address this issue the response to overall satisfaction were compared with the rating of the various aspects listed in Exhibit O21. The aspects most closely related to how satisfied respondents were with their accommodation in order of importance were:

- The responsiveness of the landlord;
- The access to common areas in the building;
- The extent to which the rooming house felt like a home;
- The quality of the room;
- The quality of the building;
- The physical accessibility of the building;
- Having a secure building;
- The cost;
- Tenants socializing, getting along;
- Being allowed to have visitors;
- The feeling of safety;
- The longer term tenure of other tenants; and
- The cleanliness of the building.

There were some other factors related to how satisfied respondents were with their overall housing situation in Ottawa. Respondents who were more satisfied with their housing were more likely to:

- Live in a licensed rooming house
- Live in a not for profit building

- Live in a smaller rooming house of less than 10 units
- Have lived in the rooming house longer than two years
- Have a friend in the building
- Have someone they could go to in the building for help
- Have a landlord who provides additional services such as prepared meals, cheque cashing or filling out forms.

Satisfaction and demographic, socio-economic and health factors

Do demographic, socio-economic or health factors make a difference when it comes to overall housing satisfaction? Although the research is exploratory and thus not conclusive, there is some evidence that the demographic, socio-economic and health background of respondents may have an influence on how they feel about their housing situation. Respondents who were less satisfied were more likely to be:

- Transgender
- Under the age of 30
- Be receiving social assistance
- Skipping meals in the past month because they ran out of money
- Aboriginal
- Feeling in fair or poor health
- Diagnosed with one or diagnosed health conditions
- Still active substance abusers

What respondents like most and least about their current accommodation

Respondents were asked to describe what they liked most and least about their current housing situation. In terms of what they liked most, the majority of respondents indicated the location (78%) and the affordable cost (70%). More than half (57%) liked the privacy, followed by the safety or security (49%), and the landlord (46%). Thirty percent of respondents said they actually preferred this type (a rooming house) of accommodation.

In terms of what respondents liked least, the answers were more diverse. The cost was mentioned by 26% of respondents followed by the lack of cleanliness (25%), problems with the landlord (20%), the lack of extras such as a kitchen or lounge (19%), the lack of privacy (16%), and they didn't feel safe or secure (10%). About one quarter (26%) of the respondents said they just didn't like this type of accommodation.

Applying for subsidized housing

Forty percent of the respondents in Ottawa have applied for subsidized housing. Of these, 21% indicated they were on the waiting list. The remaining either had lived in subsidized housing in the past and had left or were asked to leave or

gave up looking. For those respondents who say they are still on the waiting list, about one third (35%) have been waiting for less than one year, 29% have been waiting for one or two years and the remaining 36% indicated they have been waiting for at least three years (up to 7 years).

3.5 Future Housing Plans

Most (64%) Ottawa respondents saw their current housing situation as a temporary one. The response to this question differed somewhat by the length of time respondents had lived in their current location. 100% of those who had only just moved in the past few weeks saw it as a temporary situation compared to 39% who had lived in their current place for at least two years. Respondents who viewed their current place as temporary were more likely to report that they were dissatisfied with their accommodation and that it did not feel like home than those who viewed their current accommodation as a long-term arrangement. They also differed in their profile. Respondents who viewed their current place as a temporary home were more likely to:

- Be single or divorced
- Be living on social assistance
- Be under the age of 31
- Be looking for work or a student

Ottawa respondents who viewed their current place as a permanent home were more likely to:

- Be males
- Be over the age of 40
- Have active addictions
- Have not completed high school
- Be unable to work

When respondents were asked what they would be looking for in a new home if they decided to move, the single largest response category was “a self contained one or two bedroom apartment (49%) followed by “another rooming house but better quality (more space, newer, more private, own washroom, kitchen, cleaner, etc.) (23%), a bachelor apartment (16%), and a house or condo (4%).

At the end of the survey respondents were asked to speculate about the kind of housing they saw themselves living in five years from now. The single largest response was an apartment – one two or three-bedroom (42%). Almost thirty percent (29%) saw themselves living in a house – in some cases with a spouse and family. A smaller percentage imagined themselves still be living in a rooming house (9%) and 5% said a bachelor apartment.

3.6 The Last Word from Ottawa Respondents

At the end of the interview, respondents were asked if they had anything else they would like to say about themselves and their life in the rooming house. Almost one half of Ottawa respondents provided some additional comments. Of these, about half made negative comments about their situation and half were positive or constructive. Some respondents actually gave recommendations. The quotes below reflect the types of comments received.

"Rooming houses are not a good place to live if you like peace and quiet. You can expect substandard living conditions nearly every time you live in one – dirty, bug infested, dilapidated with no resources to change anything except the landlord. You are better off living in a tent." (a 31 year old male)

"Living in a rooming house is good for students because it creates a kind of a residence. The atmosphere is social and some things can be shared such as the telephone and Internet." (a 22 year old male)

"This place is like living hell. I won't do it again unless I have to – landlords should live there to see what it is like." (a 24 year old male)

"I like living here – it's roomy and affordable." (a 17 year old female)

"The landlord pretty much ignores that we live here. There are some repairs from the summer that have still not been completed." (a 19 year old female)

"There should be more affordable housing built. Everyone should at least have a one bedroom apartment." (a 42 year old male)

"Rooms should be bigger – there should be a minimum room size. Also it sucks having to share a bathroom. There's also too many drugs. Landlords should be held more accountable." (a 45 year old male)

"Owners should take a course on how to run a rooming house – people skills, licensing is good – We need a better security system such as a camera. Owners should also be part of neighbourhood watch." (a 48 year old male)

"Rooming houses are needed for people who can't afford an apartment but don't want to live in a shelter." (a 53 year old male)

"I hate cooking in my room. It makes my room smell like dinner all night. But in general I'm happy." (a 24 year old male)

"I like living here it feels like home." (a 22 year old male)

"I like living in a rooming house. I can afford a bachelor but with the money I save I can order food & meals instead of cooking." (a 55 year old male)

"I felt like I didn't want to bring any friends or family here because of what the building looked like. I didn't want to bring my kids. The place was not kept

clean. We had a fire and everyone was evacuated. .Someone was supposed to find us a place but they didn't." (a 33 year old female)

"All my landlord cares about is collecting the rent – if it's not in on time you're out. The landlord doesn't respond to problems such as the broken window in my room or lack of insulation." (a 53 year old male)

"I hope this study helps rooming house tenants." (a 54 year old male)

4. The Profile of Rooming House Residents in Montreal

The results presented in this section of the report are based on the answers provided by the 80 rooming house residents who responded to the survey in Montreal.

Identification of Residents

The City of Montreal provided a list of rooming houses that dated from 2002, just before the merger of municipalities on the island and a redistribution of responsibilities to the boroughs (including defining, accepting and licensing rooming houses). This list was coded to identify which rooming houses were believe to still be operational, which ones were “dubious” and whether they were managed privately or by a non-profit organisation.

A second list of contact names and numbers was provided by a community outreach worker who uses rooming houses to house clients. This list was used to contact landlords and in some cases the managers/janitors of the rooming houses. (NB all of the addresses appearing on this list were also on the one provided by the city.)

The most successful method used by the interviewers was to target an area, door-knock, and go from door to door, once inside the rooming house. The interviewers were refused in a number of places and the interviewers would then go onto the next rooming house on their list. It should be noted that there are certain areas or streets with a concentration of rooming houses in the city, so finding another rooming house was not usually a problem.

The residents would often recruit or suggest others in the building for an interview. Since the process was random, there is an overrepresentation of men – it is not clear whether this is a reflection of the total population.

Most of the rooming houses in the Montreal sample were located outside the core area of the city. When interpreting the results, it should be noted that these non-core rooming houses were all situated in the Plateau Mont-Royal, a borough which is contiguous to the downtown core.

4.1 Demographic, Socio-economic and Health-related Characteristics

Sex and age

It is generally believed that about 90% or more of rooming house residents are male. In Montreal, interviewers had a difficult time finding female tenants to interview. In the end, 9% of the respondents were female and 91% were male.

To be inclusive, respondents were asked their sexual identity and most (94%) stated heterosexual. A small percentage (6%) reported being gay or bisexual.

The age of respondents in Montreal ranged from as young as 25 to as old as 80. The average was 48. Exhibit M1 gives the age groupings and shows that half of the respondents are over the age of fifty.

Exhibit M1- Age Group

	Number	Percent
<30	6	7.6
31-40	16	20.3
41-50	17	21.5
51+	40	50.6
Total	79	100.0

Marital Status

Exhibit M2 shows that most (81%) of the respondents reported being either single or divorced. A small number were married and 6% indicated they were widowed.

Exhibit M2- Marital Status

	Number	Percent
Single	54	76.9
Married	3	3.8
Divorced	16	20.5
Widowed	5	6.4
Total	78	100.0

Birthplace, status and cultural background

Most Montreal respondents were born in Canada; however, 9% were foreign-born. Respondents born outside Canada were asked their birthplace and what year they came to Canada. The foreign born respondents were born in France, Algeria, or Tunisia. About half of the foreign born respondents immigrated to Canada in the past 5 years. The other half came in the years from 1953 to 1965. Almost all respondents were Canadian Citizens. A small percentage (4%) indicated they were landed immigrants and 1% had visitor status.

In terms of cultural background, the majority of Montreal respondents identified themselves as Francophone, 4% were of British descent and 9% reported a combination of Francophone and another cultural heritage.

Migration characteristics

Respondents were asked how long they had lived in the province of Quebec and the City of Montreal. They were also asked where they had lived just prior to moving to Montreal. The majority (87%) of respondents reported living in Quebec their whole lives. At the other end of the scale as Exhibit M3 shows, five percent of respondents are more recent migrants to the province.

Exhibit M3- Length of Time Lived in Quebec

	Number	Percent
<1 yr	2	2.5
1-5 yrs	2	2.5
6-10 yrs	2	2.5
>10 yrs	5	5.0
Whole Life	69	87.5
Total	80	100.0

Exhibit M4 shows some respondents (27%) have lived in Montreal their whole lives and many more (42%) have lived in the city for at least ten years. Only a small number (15%) have come to the city in the past few years.

Exhibit M4- Length of Time Lived in Montreal

	Number	Percent
<1 yr	7	8.7
1-5 yrs	6	7.5
6-10 yrs	11	13.8
>10 yrs	34	42.5
Whole Life	22	27.5
Total	80	100.0

Most of the migrants to Montreal (89%) came from other parts of the province of Quebec. A small number came from Alberta and Ontario (4% each) and a smaller number from Nova Scotia and British Columbia (2% each).

In terms of city of origin, migrant respondents came from as far away as Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver, Halifax and Toronto. However, most came from communities large and small across the province of Quebec. Over 35 different communities of origin were identified.

Educational background

Exhibit M5 shows that the majority (57%) of Montreal rooming house residents who responded to the survey reported that they had completed high school and about one quarter have a college or university degree.

Exhibit M5 – Highest Level of Education Completed

	Number	Percent
Elementary	6	7.6
Some high school, trade school	28	35.4
High school diploma, some college	25	31.6
College degree, some university	13	16.5
University degree	7	8.9
Total	79	100.0

Respondents, who indicated that they did not complete high school, were asked why they left school early. The majority (70%) of those who did not complete high school reported leaving school early to work because they needed the money. The rest left for personal reasons such as a family break-up or because they got into trouble with the law.

A small percentage (6%) of Montreal respondents reported that they had attended a special education program in either elementary or high school. Only a slightly higher percentage (9%) indicated that they had been told that they have a learning disability.

Current status

Respondents were asked their current status – how they typically spent their day. As the list below shows, about twenty percent of the Montreal respondents reported being unable to work. About the same proportion were looking for work.

Over one quarter were employed either full or part time. Respondents classified their current status in the following ways:

- Unable to work due to poor health, injury etc. (34%)
- Looking for work (18%)
- Employed part time (15%)
- Employed full-time (12%)
- Self-employed (11%)
- Retired (11%)
- Full or part time student (1%)
- Informal – Binning (looking in waste containers), petty crime etc. (1%)

The percents add up to more than 100% indicating that some respondents are engaged in more than one activity.

Sources and level of income

The sources of income reported by respondents from most frequently reported to least common source are as follows:

- Social assistance/welfare (66%)
- Employment/self employment (15%)
- Underground economy (11%)
- Disability pension (5%)
- Employment insurance (4%)
- Canada Pension Plan (4%)
- Old Age Security (1%)

Respondents were asked to provide their gross (before taxes) monthly income from all sources. Those who felt uncomfortable providing exact figures or did not know the exact figure were given annual income groupings and asked to indicate into which income group their gross annual income fell. As Exhibit M6 shows only one respondent either could not or declined to provide his or her income regardless of the monthly or annual grouping option. This percent is actually much lower than what is typical in most population-based surveys where it not unusual to have as many as 20% of respondents refuse the income question.

In the Montreal survey, most but not all of the respondents provided monthly figures. About twenty percent gave annual amounts. For the purpose of the analysis, the monthly figures were converted to annual amounts and are shown in Exhibit M6.

Exhibit M6 reveals that the majority (81%) of respondents reported receiving an annual gross income of \$12,000 or less. Ten percent of respondents reported receiving more than \$20,000 annually.

Exhibit M6 – Gross Annual Income (Before Taxes)

	Number	Percent
Less than \$8000¹⁰	26	32.5
\$8000-\$12000	39	48.7
\$12001-\$15000	4	5.0
\$15001-\$20000	2	2.5
Greater than \$20000	8	10.0
DK/refused	1	1.3
Total	80	100.0

Amount of and how rent paid

Respondents were asked to provide the amount of rent they pay for their accommodation. Exhibit M7 presents the monthly ranges in rents paid by Montreal respondents. The actual amount reported ranged from as low as \$50 to as high as \$675. The average monthly rent paid was \$364.

Exhibit M7 – Monthly Rent

	Number	Percent
\$50-325	25	33.3
\$326-350	8	10.7
\$351-375	8	10.7
\$376-400	10	13.3
\$401-450	17	22.7
\$451-675	7	9.3
Total	75	100.0

Rooming house renters have a number of options for paying their rent including automatic withdrawal from their bank account or direct payment by social services. Montreal respondents reported the following methods for rent payment:

¹⁰ It should be noted that some respondents (i.e., those who reported monthly income levels below the minimum amount for disability pensions) who pay their rent direct may have reported monthly figures that represented their "take home" income after their rent was deducted.

- Cash (67%)
- Monthly cheque (16%)
- Pay direct (6%)
- Post dated cheques (1%)
- Automatic withdrawal (1%)
- Other (9%)

According to the survey, the majority (88%) of Montreal respondents are provided with a receipt for the rent paid.

Food security

According to Statistics Canada, a single person living in a city larger than 500,000 people would need \$15,172 to reach the low income poverty line.¹¹ Recognizing in advance that the majority of rooming house residents were likely to have an income well below this figure, there were two questions in the survey that addressed the issue of “getting by” on income levels that are well below Canadian low income cut off figures. First, respondents were asked if they had used a number of food sources or underground approaches in the past month to help pay for food. Second, respondents were asked if they had ever skipped a meal due to a lack of money. If this was the case, they were asked to estimate how often they had skipped a meal in the past month.

The most commonly reported food sources or underground approaches to secure food used in the past month were:

- Food bank (35%)
- Drop-in meal service or soup kitchen (25%)
- Pan handling (1%)

Almost thirty percent (23 respondents) admitted that they have skipped meals due to a lack of money. As Exhibit M8 shows, about forty percent of the respondents who skipped meals and could give a number skipped more than 10 meals in the past month – some respondents claimed they skipped as many as 60 meals.

¹¹ National Council of Welfare Reports: Income for Living? Spring, 2004.

Exhibit M8 – Number of Meals Skipped in Past Month

	Number	Percent
1-9	14	60.9
10-20	5	21.7
21-60	4	17.4
Gave a number	23	100.0
Not applicable/DK	57	
Total	80	

Health and well-being

Income is an important determinant of health – people living on low income typically also have poorer health. The survey addressed a number of health related areas including perceived general health, the use of substances, health conditions, activity limitations and the use of health related services.

General health

Perceived health is a standard Statistics Canada health indicator – one that has been shown to relate well to other health factors such as diagnosed health conditions including mental health. Exhibit M9 shows how respondents feel about their own general health. The Exhibit reveals that one quarter of the Montreal respondents perceived themselves to be in fair or poor health. To put these results in some perspective, the figures are compared to how the general population would answer this question. In a joint Canada/United States Survey of Health conducted in 2002-2003, only 7% of Canadians aged 18 to 44 and 11% of those aged 45 to 64 reported that they were feeling in either fair or poor health.¹²

¹² Statistics Canada, 2003 – statistics provided on Statistics Canada's website.

Exhibit M9 – Perceived General Health

	Number	Percent
Excellent	21	26.2
Very good	16	20.0
Good	23	28.7
Fair	12	15.0
Poor	8	10.0
Total	80	100.0

Among other factors, decent, safe, and well-designed housing can contribute to overall good health. The converse is also true. Respondents were asked if their health had changed at all since they moved to their current residence. Seventeen percent stated that their health was better and almost the same percent (19%) indicated it had become worse. The following are some of the reasons given for these responses.

Reasons why health has become better for some respondents:

- The stability of the housing (more than one respondent) or “I now feel secure”
- The stability and the possibility of participating in activities.
- “I am eating more often”, although another stated that they were not able to eat as much, but they were no longer on the street.
- It’s quiet and peaceful
- I’m not stressed out any more.
- I’m not drinking as much.
- I’ve gotten help from a doctor to help me lose weight.

Reasons why health has become worse for some respondents:

- People smoking around me.
- The cost - what can you do with \$128 a month?
- I have trouble sleeping because of the noise here.
- I live on the third floor and it’s hard to get up and down the stairs.
- I get headaches because of my neighbour’s glue.
- I have breathing problems but this isn’t related to the housing.
- I have a lot of little problems, for example, I just got out of a one-week stay at the hospital.
- I’m getting older.

Addictions

Respondents were asked whether or not they had any addictions and the nature of these addictions. Just under half (44%) of the Montreal respondents admitted to having one or more addictions. In order of frequency reported, the types of addictions revealed were:

- Cigarettes (35%)
- Street drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, heroin (16%)
- Alcohol (15%)

When asked whether they were currently active or recovering, only 17% of respondents addicted to alcohol reported being active, 65% of smokers were active, and 50% of those using street drugs were active.

Health conditions

Respondents were asked if they had any health conditions that have been diagnosed by a health professional and that have lasted or are expected to last six months or more. Half of the respondents listed one or more conditions. The types of conditions mentioned most often were:

- Depression (11%)
- Aids/HIV (6%)
- Hepatitis C (4%)
- Arthritis/Osteo Arthritis (4%)
- Anxiety/panic disorder (3%)
- Other responses include asthma, allergies, thyroid problems, high blood pressure, Epilepsy, hernia, bronchitis, bad back, personality disorder, brain injury

Activity limitations

Over one third (35%) of Montreal respondents reported that they were limited in the kind or amount of activity they can do because of a long-term (6 months or more) physical or mental health condition. According to the interviewers, a few respondents used assistive devices such as a cane to help with mobility.

Use of health related services

Access to health related services such as a family physician or dentist as well as community support services can be critical to overall physical and mental well-being. Respondents were asked a series of questions related to their use of health-related services. They were asked if they were currently receiving any outreach or support services for personal issues such as mental health, addictions or something else. Most respondents were not currently using these

types of services. For those respondents who were using one or more of these types of services, the types of services received most often were:

- Mental health services (7%)
- Home management/life skills (6%)
- Services to help with addictions (5%)
- Occupational therapy (1%)
- Other types of services (6%)

When asked how often they used one or more of these services, just over one third of those respondents using services indicated they received these services at least once a week.

Only one third (36%) of Montreal respondents reported having a family physician. A slightly higher percentage (39%) reported having a dentist. Sixty percent (60%) indicated that they go to a community health centre or clinic for their health care including dental care. The analysis showed that 15% of respondents do not have a family physician or dentist and also do not use the services at a health centre or clinic.

4.2 History of Rooming House Tenure

Length of time lived at current address

For most Montreal respondents, residence at their current location has been fairly short. As Exhibit M10 shows, just over half (52%) of respondents have lived at their current rooming house for less than one year. Over one third of respondents reported living at their current location for at least two years. Some respondents have lived in their location for as long as 30 years.

Exhibit M10 – Length of Time Lived at Current Address

	Number	Percent
1 month or less	6	7.5
2 months	10	12.5
3-6 months	14	17.5
6-12 months	12	15.0
1-2 years	9	11.3
> 2 years	29	36.2
Total	80	100.0

Respondents who reported living at their current location for less than two years were asked how many times they had moved in the past two years. Exhibit M11 shows that many respondents have made multiple moves in a fairly short time frame. More than one quarter of all respondents have moved at least three times. Some respondents had moved as many as 10 times.

Exhibit M11 – Number of Times Moved in Past Two Years

	Number	Percent
None	29	36.0
Once	21	26.3
Twice	9	11.3
Three times	4	5.0
Four + times	18	22.5
Total	80	100.0

Why some respondents do not move

Respondents who had indicated a longer residency of at least two years were asked why they had stayed at their present location for such a long time period. The types of responses given can be summarized as follows:

- Nice place, comfortable, clean, quiet, good size room (42%)
- Financial reasons – rent reasonable/can't afford more (35%)
- Convenient location to services (21%)

Pattern of moving in the past

Respondents were asked how long they had lived in their last two locations. As Exhibit M12 shows, about one third of respondents reported that they had lived in their last place for less than one year. Over forty percent indicated the same response for the place previous to their last location. About one quarter of respondents have had more stable housing of at least 5 years duration in their previous two locations.

Exhibit M12 – Length of Times Lived in Past Two Locations

	<i>Last location Number</i>	<i>Last Locatio n Percent</i>	<i>Two locations before Number</i>	<i>Two locations before Percent</i>
< One year	26	32.5	34	42.5
1-2 years	24	30.0	16	20.0
3-4 years	12	15.0	9	11.3
5+ years	18	22.5	21	26.2
Whole life	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	80	100.0	80	100.0

Why some respondents are planning to move

Almost forty percent (39%) of the Montreal respondents indicated that they were planning to move in the next few months. The reasons given for this decision were as follows:

- Would prefer a different type of accommodation – more privacy, want kitchen, more space, house (26%)
- Too expensive (19%)
- Problems with other tenants (13%)
- Poor quality of building – bugs, dirty, smells (10%)
- Problems with landlord (6%)
- Want a place in a different/more convenient location (6%)

How respondents found out about current location

Respondents were presented with a list of common approaches to house hunting and asked to indicate which one they had used to find their place. Exhibit M13 shows that many respondents had found their current location through an advertisement or from a friend or family member. While advertisements and signs also appear to be affective in leading respondents to their current place, almost fifteen percent (14%) had used the services of a formal agency.

Exhibit M13 – How Respondent Found Out About Current Location

	Number	Percent
Advertisement in paper/internet	27	33.7
Friends/Family	19	23.8
Referral from agency	13	16.4
Sign in building/walk by	7	8.7
Sign posted elsewhere	7	8.7
Other	7	8.7
Total	80	100.0

Respondents were asked if it was easy to find their current location and whether it was the first place they had looked at. Most respondents (66%) indicated that it was easy to find their current place. The same percentage said their current place was the first place they had looked at.

Why respondents chose their current place

When respondents were asked why they decided to move to their current location, the following reasons were given:

- Better accommodation (cleaner, safer, better landlord etc.) (35%)
- Most affordable (32%)
- Convenient location/easy to find (31%)
- Was referred by an agency (8%)
- Close to services/employment/school etc. (6%)
- Close to family, friends (5%)

Previous type of accommodation

Exhibit M14 shows the last type of accommodation where respondents lived. Over one third of the Montreal respondents had lived in apartment prior to moving to their current location and a smaller percentage (12%) reported living in a house. *Most of the remaining respondents had not been in stable housing situations* living either in another rooming house, on the street, someone's couch, a hotel, or transitional housing.

Exhibit M14 – Where Respondent Lived Before Moving to Current Location

	Number	Percent
Apartment	28	35.0
Another rooming house	25	31.3
House/condo	10	12.5
Street/homeless	7	8.7
Couch surfing	4	5.0
Halfway/recovery/transit ion house/hospital	3	3.7
Other (foster home, hotel)	3	3.7
Total	80	100.0

Respondents who lived in stable housing were asked if they had owned or rented their previous home. Almost all (94%) responded that they had paid rent at their previous place.

Why respondents left previous location

Respondents were presented with a list of reasons why they might have left their previous place and asked to indicate their main reasons. Many added their own reason for leaving. The most common reasons were:

- Problems with other tenants (20%)
- Wanted a different location/change (20%)
- Too expensive (14%)
- Problems with landlord (10%)
- Became sick/had to go to hospital (9%)
- Poor quality of building – needed renovations/repairs etc. (8%)
- Personal problems (break-ups/family problems) (4%)
- Evicted from last place (3%)
- Preferred a different type of accommodation (3%)
- Last place had a fire (3%)
- Other reasons (not accessible/not secure) (3%)

History of eviction

Just over ten percent (11%) of respondents admitted that they had been asked to leave a rooming house in the past. The main reason given why they had been asked to leave according to these respondents was non payment of rent.

History of homelessness

Respondents were asked if they had ever lived on the streets or in a shelter because they were homeless in the last three years. Just over one quarter (26%) of Montreal respondents indicated that they had been homeless in the past three years.

4.3 Quality of Life Factors

Friends and pets

Most respondents (63%) indicated that they had friends living in the building. Forty percent also reported that pets were allowed in their building but 11% did not know whether pets were allowed or not. A small percentage (5%) of respondents indicated that pets were a problem.

Furniture and room contents supplied by landlord

Respondents were provided with a list of common rooming house furniture items and other content items and asked which of these items had been supplied by their landlord. The following list reflects that there may be differences among rooming house landlords in terms of what is supplied or not.

Contents of room supplied by landlord according to Montreal respondents:

- Fridge (94%)
- Bed (91%)
- Hot plate (80%)
- Chair(s) (64%)
- Desk (59%)
- Smoke detector (54%)
- Wardrobe/closet (53%)
- Coffee table/side table/eating table (6%)
- Stove (4%)
- Couch (4%)
- Carpet (4%)
- TV/cable (3%)
- Microwave (1%)
- Air conditioning (0%)

Bathroom arrangements

Just over ten percent (14%) of Montreal respondents reported that they have their own private bathroom. There was a large range in the number of other residents with whom respondents share their bathroom – from one other person to as many as 24. The average number reported was 8. Exhibit M15 summarizes the number of residents sharing a bathroom. The Exhibit reveals that over twenty percent of respondents share their bathroom with at least seven other people.

Exhibit M15 – Number of residents who share the bathroom

	Number	Percent
1-4	12	15.1
5-7	35	43.8
8-10	11	13.7
10-24	11	13.7
Don't Know/NA	11	13.7
Total	80	100.0

Issues related to sharing a bathroom

Respondents who share their bathroom were asked if there were any problems with this arrangement. About one quarter (25%) of these respondents indicated that there were some problems. The types of problems related to sharing fell mainly into two groups: lack of cleanliness/personal hygiene of other tenants (55%); and too many people sharing/long waits/no privacy (45%).

Respondents were asked to rate the overall cleanliness of the bathroom they use. Exhibit M16 shows the ratings. The Exhibit reveals that the majority of the respondents rate their bathroom's state of cleanliness as excellent (60%). Just under twenty percent rate it as fair or poor.

Exhibit M16 – Rate the Cleanliness of the Bathroom

	Number	Percent
Excellent	48	60.0
Good	17	21.2
Fair	9	11.3
Poor	6	7.5
Total	80	100.0

Bathroom fixtures and ventilation

The bathrooms in the sampled Montreal rooming houses typically contain a toilet (100%), a sink (85%), and a shower (90%). The majority (68%) of Montreal respondents reported that their bathroom also has a tub. Most bathrooms do not have a window according to respondents. Just over one third (39%) of respondents indicated that their bathroom had a window. However, the majority (74%) reported that there was another form of ventilation in the bathroom.

Bathroom state of repair

Respondents were asked to rate the state of repair of the bathroom. Exhibit M17 shows the results of this rating. The Exhibit reveals that the majority (91%) of Montreal respondents rate their bathroom as being excellent or in good repair. In spite of the high rating, over twenty percent of respondents listed problems with the state of repair of their bathroom. Included in the list were problems with clogged toilets and drains, ventilation not working properly, small repairs needed, and lack of a bathroom mirror.

Exhibit M17 – State of Repair of the Bathroom

	Number	Percent
Excellent	53	66.3
Good	20	25.0
Fair	6	7.5
Poor	1	1.2
Total	80	100.0

Access to and use of a kitchen

Most but not all (78%) of Montreal respondents reported that they had access to a kitchen in their rooming house. In about half the cases (47%) this was a shared kitchen. The majority (69%) of respondents use the kitchen to prepare meals. Those who say they do not use the kitchen gave a few different reasons including being too sick to cook or not owning cooking utensils. However, in most cases these respondents report that they go out to eat.

Respondents who had access to a kitchen were asked where they stored their food. The majority (71%) indicated that they store their food in their own fridge. The rest use the common fridge available in the kitchen and a few store their food elsewhere in their room.

State of repair and cleanliness of the kitchen

Exhibit M18 shows that the majority of Montreal respondents rated the state of repair in their kitchen as either excellent or good. Just over one quarter rated it as fair or poor.

Exhibit M18 – State of Repair of the Kitchen

	Number	Percent
Excellent	24	39.3
Good	20	32.9
Fair	12	19.7
Poor	5	8.1
Total	61	100.0

As Exhibit M19 shows almost all Montreal respondents rated the cleanliness of the kitchen as either excellent or good.

Exhibit M19 – State of Cleanliness of the Kitchen

	Number	Percent
Excellent	47	79.7
Good	10	16.9
Fair	2	3.4
Poor	0	0.0
Total	59	100.0

Sharing of other amenities and expenses

The majority (70%) of Montreal respondents reported that they shared other amenities in the building including a laundry facility (70%), telephone (29%), a lounge (11%), and an outside space such as a backyard, balcony or porch (9%). Just over ten percent (14%) also share expenses such as the cost of food with other residents.

Having family or friends move in

There are occasions when some respondents have family members or friends living with them for a while. Sixteen percent of respondents reported that this had occurred. The long stay visitors were usually other friends (54%), a partner/boyfriend or girlfriend (23%), or children or grandchildren (15%).

On-site services and support

Almost all (90%) Montreal respondents reported that there was an on-site janitor or caretaker for their rooming house. However, in only a few cases (6%) is this person also the landlord. As Exhibit M20 shows, more than half of Montreal respondents connect with the on-site janitor or caretaker daily and most connect at least once a week.

Exhibit M20 – How Often Respondents Speaks with On-site Caretaker

	Number	Percent
Daily	39	53.4
Weekly	21	28.8
Monthly	5	6.8
Less often/never	8	11.0
Total	73	100.0

Respondents were asked if there was someone they could go to in the building if they needed some help. The majority (73%) indicated that there was someone. When asked who they go to for support, one third of the respondents mentioned another resident. One third mentioned the janitor or caretaker, and another one third mentioned a community support worker.

Landlord rules

Not all Montreal rooming houses in the sample had rules related to security according to respondents. Just over half (55%) of respondents reported that there were rules related to security such as not taking the batteries out of smoke detectors, keeping the building locked and not letting strangers into the building. When asked if there was a no smoking rule in their building, 10% said this was the case. As well, 14% of respondents reported that drinking was not allowed in their building.

Almost half (49%) of respondents indicated that their rooming house had other rules. The rules mentioned most often were related to keeping the noise down or having no visitors after 11 pm (20%). Other rules mentioned included no drugs, no pets, no smoking in common areas, no loitering in the bathroom, and no laundry after 8pm.

Rules that are and are not appreciated

All Montreal respondents indicated that they appreciated having rules. Rules that were most appreciated (or would be if they don't exist now) related to safety and security, no drugs on the premise, and no tolerance for violent or abusive behaviour.

Extra services provided by the landlord

Respondents were asked if their landlord provided any extra services such as prepared meals, cheque cashing or filling out forms and if there was a charge for these extra services. Most (84%) Montreal respondents reported that there were no extra services provided by their landlord. A small number indicated that their landlord provided extra services such as prepared meals (9%), cashing cheques (13%), or filling out forms (6%). In most cases, the provision of meals was not included in the rent, however, the other services were typically included in the rent according to respondents.

Transportation and communication

Respondents were asked about their primary mode of transportation. Most respondents indicated that public transit (62%) and/or walking (49%) were the main ways they got around followed by bicycle (20%).

Respondents were asked two additional questions related to transportation. The first was whether or not there was a place to store bikes on the property, and the second was whether or not there was enough parking at the rooming house. Only 5% of respondents reported that there was some form of bike storage and just 2% indicated that there was enough parking in the area.

Over one third (39%) of Montreal respondents indicated they had their own cell phone.

4.4 The Profile of Respondents Living Outside the Downtown Core

The majority (70%) of the Montreal respondents lived in rooming houses located outside the downtown core area. Although the study was exploratory, there were some differences found in the results between the respondents living in rooming houses located downtown Montreal versus outside the downtown core or in the periphery. These differences may be real; however, further research with a larger sample is needed to validate these findings.

In terms of socio-demographic characteristics, the following differences were found between respondents living in rooming houses downtown versus outside the downtown core. Respondents living inside the core area of Montreal were:

- More likely to be 50 years of age or younger (55% versus 37%)
- More likely to be divorced (23% versus 12%)
- More likely to have some college or university (63% versus 42%)
- More likely to be working part time (18% versus 8%)
- Less likely to be retired (9% versus 17%)
- Less likely to be self-employed (9% versus 17%)
- Less likely to be unable to work (14% versus 25%)
- More likely to be collecting some income from employment/self employment (20% versus 4%)
- More likely to be paying > \$400 in monthly rent (44% versus 8%)
- More likely to be living in larger rooming houses of more than 30 units (75% versus 0%)

Although health related issues were quite pronounced compared to the general population regardless of place of residence, there were differences between respondents living in the downtown core and living outside the core in terms of health and history of homelessness. Respondents living outside the downtown core or in the periphery areas of Montreal were:

- Less likely to have been homeless in the past three years (21% versus 33%)
- Less likely to be using food banks (30% versus 46%)
- More likely to be using soup kitchens (27% versus 17%)
- Less likely to be using drop-in meal services (5% versus 13%)
- Less likely to report feeling in poor health (7% versus 17%) and more likely to report feeling in excellent health (30% versus 17%)
- Less likely to say they have diagnosed depression (9% versus 17%)
- Less likely to say they have addictions (2% versus 13%)
- Less likely to say they have a dentist (34% versus 50%)
- Less likely to use a community health clinic (57% versus 67%)

In terms of transportation and communication, respondents living outside the core are less likely to say that their main mode of transportation is walking (46% versus 54%) or using a bicycle (14% versus 33%). They are also less likely to have a cell phone (32% versus 54%).

The quality of life in Montreal rooming houses may also vary by location. Respondents who live in a rooming house outside the city core were:

- Less likely to report having friends in the building (53% versus 76%)
- More likely to report that pets were allowed (45% versus 33%)
- Less likely to have their own bathroom (21% versus 27%)
- Less likely to rate the state of repair of their bathroom as excellent (55% versus 82%)
- Less likely to rate the cleanliness of their bathroom as excellent (49% versus 76%)
- Less likely to rate the state of repair of the shared kitchen as excellent (26% versus 36%)
- Less likely to rate the cleanliness of the shared kitchen as excellent (23% versus 30%)
- Less likely to say they have someone they can go to for help in their building (64% versus 85%)
- Less likely to say that their landlord provides extra services such as prepared meals, cheque cashing or help filling out forms (8% versus 27%)
- More likely to say their housing is temporary (71% versus 50%)

4.4 Satisfaction with Current Accommodation and Future Plans

How respondents rate different aspects of their accommodation

Respondents were asked to rate different aspects of their accommodation on a simple “good”, “fair”, “poor” scale. The detailed responses for Montreal respondents are shown in Exhibit M21. The percents are based on the number of responses received for each item. The number of non-responses is also shown in the Exhibit. Non-response occurred in those instances where a particular aspect did not apply to the rooming house in question or a respondent did not know and/or preferred not to give a response. In terms of overall trends, the Exhibit reveals that Montreal respondents rate most aspects as good. In fact there are only three aspects – cost, accessibility and quality of the room – that are not rated as good by the majority of respondents.

Exhibit M21 – Ratings of Different Aspects of Accommodation

	Good	Fair	Poor	Number Non Response
Exterior of the building/use of yard/appearance	77%	14%	9%	1
Quality of the building interior (maintenance, soundproof walls, heating/air conditioning etc.)	50%	31%	19%	0
Cleanliness of the building (no garbage around, no pests, mice or other rodents, vermin, bedbugs, cockroaches)	80%	16%	4%	0
Building security (good locks on main entrance, your room, janitor/building manager responsive when needed etc.)	77%	5%	18%	0
Personal safety (feel safe in terms of neighbours, no violent tenants or visitors, weapons on site, police responsive when needed etc.)	86%	9%	5%	2
Feels like a “home”	68%	17%	15%	1
Stability, mobility of tenants (i.e. turnover low)	51%	28%	21%	5
Tenants, socializing, getting along	76%	21%	3%	5
Being able to have visitors	95%	3%	3%	1
Cost to live here	43%	22%	35%	0
Quality of your room (size, furniture, lighting, ventilation, storage/closet/shelves etc.)	50%	31%	19%	0
Responsiveness of your landlord to problems	65%	8%	27%	6
Common areas in the building (lounge, kitchen, bathrooms)	73%	12%	15%	21
Accessibility for persons with disabilities (wheel chair access etc.)	44%	14%	42%	30
Location (close to stores, services, transportation)	82%	15%	3%	0
Neighbourhood (friendliness, noise level etc.)	80%	14%	6%	2

Another way to analyze the results in Exhibit M21 is to calculate the mean scores for each item and then to rank order the mean scores for the different aspects. For this analysis the responses were reverse scored. In other words, “good” was assigned the highest score (3), and the response “poor” was assigned the lowest score (1). The rank order based on the mean scores from most highly rated aspects to least highly rated is as follows (mean score given in brackets):

- Being able to have visitors (2.92)
- Personal safety (2.81)
- Location (2.80)
- Cleanliness of the building (2.76)
- Socializing with other tenants (2.73)
- Friendliness/noise level of the neighbourhood (2.73)
- Appearance of the exterior of the building (2.68)
- Building security (2.60)
- Common areas of the building (2.58)
- Feels like a home (2.53)
- Responsiveness of the landlord (2.38)
- Quality of the room (2.31)
- Quality of the building interior (2.31)
- Stability of tenants (2.29)
- Accessibility (2.02)

The above list clearly shows which areas are most and least satisfactory to Montreal rooming house residents.

Differences by gender

A different analytical method was used to examine whether or not there was a difference between male and female respondents in terms of the ratings of different aspects of their accommodation. The analysis found that in Montreal males tended to rate most items higher than females. The only exception was that females rated “feels like a home” higher than males.

Overall satisfaction

After the rating question, respondents were asked how satisfied they were with their overall housing situation. Exhibit M22 shows that most Montreal respondents are satisfied with their accommodation. Just over ten percent were not satisfied.

Exhibit M22 – Overall satisfaction

	Number	Percent
Very satisfied	34	42.5
Somewhat satisfied	37	46.3
Somewhat dissatisfied	7	8.7
Very dissatisfied	2	2.5
Total	80	100.0

Respondents were asked why they were satisfied or dissatisfied with their current accommodation. The following statements reflect why many Montreal respondents like their current place of residence. It should be noted that there were more than three times more positive statements than negative ones from the Montreal respondents.

"It's accessible and quiet."

"After the street, a communal place like this is really good."

"I'm treated well and the landlord is understanding."

"I like the atmosphere in the building – it's friendly."

"There's respect between the tenants, it's secure and the landlord is very respectful of tenants."

"This is a good place for a divorced man."

"It's quiet and the people are nice."

"It's like a little family."

"It's well situated and quiet."

"The price is good."

"It's a good neighbourhood and I have good neighbours."

"After living on the street, I really appreciate being well-treated here."

"I get along well with the other tenants."

"The rules here guarantee a good quality of life."

"I like the size of my room."

"The janitor is good."

"It's clean, quite and secure."

"The services are good."

"While the room is not very big, it's quiet, clean and problems are taken care of."

"This is a great location but it took a registered letter to get repairs done."

The reasons why some Montreal respondents are not happy with their accommodation are reflected in the statements below.

"The room could be a better size."

"The bathrooms are dirty."

"Sound insulation is lacking, making this an unpleasant place."

"It's too expensive for what I'm getting."

"There are too many people who consume – it's noisy."

"There are problems with the janitor – the atmosphere here is pretty bad."

"It's not private enough."

"It looks awful – I don't want to invite people."

"The building is not well maintained."

"It's too far – I'm used to living closer to the city centre."

"It's not big enough, I don't have an oven – but otherwise it's perfect."

Factors related to satisfaction

There may be some factors related to improving the quality of life for residents of rooming houses in Montreal. To address this issue the response to overall satisfaction were compared with the rating of the various aspects listed in Exhibit M21. The aspects most closely related to how satisfied respondents were with their accommodation in order of importance were:

- Building security
- The cost
- Access to common areas in the building;
- The quality of the room;
- The quality of the building;
- The responsiveness of the landlord;
- The extent to which the rooming house felt like a home;
- The cleanliness of the building.
- The longer term tenancy of other tenants;
- Tenants socializing, getting along;
- Physical accessibility; and
- The exterior of the building;

There were some other factors related to how satisfied respondents were with their overall housing situation in Montreal. Respondents who were more satisfied with their housing were more likely to:

- Live in a rooming house located in the core of the city
- Live in a not for profit building
- Live in a smaller rooming house of less than 10 units
- Have lived in the rooming house longer than six months
- Have a friend in the building
- Have their own bathroom
- Have someone they could go to in the building for help
- Have a landlord who provides additional services such as prepared meals, cheque cashing or filling out forms.

Satisfaction and demographic, socio-economic and health factors

Do demographic, socio-economic or health factors make a difference when it comes to overall housing satisfaction? Although the research is exploratory and thus not conclusive, the analysis found the following demographic, socio-economic or health factors related to satisfaction. Respondents who were less satisfied were more likely to be:

- Female
- Under the age of 30
- Feeling in poor health
- Diagnosed with one or health conditions
- Skipping meals in the past month because they ran out of money.

What respondents like most and least about their current accommodation

Respondents were asked to describe what they liked most and least about their current housing situation. In terms of what they liked most, respondents indicated aspects such as the privacy (55%), the location (45%), the affordable cost (40%), the cleanliness (26%), and the safety/security (18%). As well, almost twenty percent of respondents said they actually preferred this type (a rooming house) of accommodation.

In terms of what respondents liked least, the single largest response was a dislike for this type of accommodation, particularly the small size of the room and the shared bathroom. One third of the respondents gave this response followed by the cost (29%), the lack of extras such as a kitchen or lounge (20%), lack of privacy (13%) and lack of cleanliness (13%).

Applying for subsidized housing

Almost one third (31%) of the respondents in Montreal have applied for subsidized housing. When asked what the outcome of their application was, 40% indicated they were still on the waiting list. The remaining applicants had given up because they were told the waiting list was too long or they did not qualify.

4.5 Future Housing Plans

Most (65%) respondents saw their current housing situation as a temporary one. The response to this question differed somewhat by the length of time respondents had lived in their current location. 100% of those who had only just moved in the past few weeks saw it as a temporary situation compared to 48% who had lived in their current place for at least two years.

One third of Montreal respondents viewed their current place as a permanent home. These respondents were more satisfied with their accommodation and were more likely to report it felt like a home. These respondents were also more likely to:

- Be over the age of 50
- Have addictions
- Be unable to work
- Have not completed high school

When respondents were asked what they would be looking for in a new home if they decided to move, the single largest response category was “a self contained one, two or three bedroom apartment/walk-up (74%) followed by their own house or condo (11%), another rooming house but better quality (more space, newer, more private, own washroom, kitchen, cleaner, etc.) (8%), a studio apartment (3%), and a seniors residence (3%).

At the end of the survey respondents were asked to speculate about the kind of housing they saw themselves living in five years from now. Everyone in the Montreal sample gave a response. The single largest response was an apartment or walk-up – one, two or three-bedroom (68%), followed “my own house or chalet” (20%), their current place (10%), and a seniors residence (3%). A few respondents said they couldn’t project that far ahead.

4.6 The Last Word from Montreal Respondents

At the end of the interview, respondents were asked if they had anything else they would like to say about themselves and their life in the rooming house. Thirty percent of Montreal respondents provided some additional comments.

Most of the comments were positive although a few persons had negative “last words”.

I'd like to find another place.

This place is in bad shape.

I absolutely dislike it here and find it deplorable.

Positive comments dealt with neighbours and the rooming house in general.

There are good people here, I can socialize with them.

This is the cleanest and quietest place out of the three rooming houses I've ever lived in.

It's good here.

In a number of cases the comments were divided.

The rooming house is good, the neighbours are good, but it's too expensive.

I'd really like to have a lease because it would give me a sense of security and insurance whenever something goes wrong with the room.

I'd like it better if it was more affordable.

Its better here than on the street – but I don't have enough money for things like glasses.

Others had more general comments about life in a rooming house, relationships with other rooming house residents and more general observations.

A functioning kitchen is important

You have to stay autonomous and not mingle too much with the other tenants.

It's important to get along with the neighbours.

It's important to be quiet.

Having a phone is important for things like finding work.

Security and sound insulation are important.

There shouldn't be prejudice against people who live in rooming houses.

Don't put the TV cable on the joint wall. Having peace and quiet is really important.

More public housing would be a good idea.

5. Summary of the Tenant Survey

5.1 Similarities in Results Across the Three Study Sites

The following results appear to hold up in each city regardless of the methodology used to sample the buildings and residents for the survey.

Demographic, Socio-economic and Health Characteristics

Sex, age and marital status

In spite of an effort to over sample women the study appears to validate the experts' consensus that 90% of rooming house residents are men. The majority of respondents in this study were males.

Although there was a wide age range from teens to seniors among residents in all three cities, the average age of residents fell in a similar range of 38 (Ottawa) to 48 (Montreal).

In each city the majority of respondents were single.

Birthplace, status and cultural background

The majority of respondents in each city were Canadian born but other cultural and language groups were also represented. Persons with an Aboriginal/First Nations background may be over-represented among rooming house tenants relative to the size of their population in Vancouver and Ottawa.

Migration characteristics

The majority of respondents in each city have lived in the province for at least ten years or their whole lives. Many migrated years ago into the city from smaller communities across their province. Other migrants are drawn from major cities across Canada.

Educational background

Although most respondents had not completed high school, the sample at each site had its fair share of college and university graduates – from 18% (Vancouver) to 34% (Ottawa). Over twenty percent of respondents in Ottawa and Vancouver had attended a special education program when they were in school and about 10% (Montreal) to 20% (Ottawa) had been told they have a learning disability.

Current employment status

Most respondents in Vancouver and Ottawa and one third of respondents in Montreal said they are unable to work or are looking for work. About the same proportion (32%-38%) said they are employed full-time, part-time or self-employed. Half of Vancouver respondents reported doing volunteer work in their community and a small proportion of Montreal respondents were retired.

Sources and level of income

In all three cities the most frequently reported source of income was social assistance – two thirds of Vancouver and Montreal respondents reported social assistance/welfare as their source of income. The underground economy also played a role with 11% (Ottawa, Montreal) to 24% (Vancouver) reporting this as their source of income. About one quarter of Vancouver and Ottawa respondents were receiving a disability pension. Ottawa had the most students, most of whom had student loans.

One third of the respondents in each city reported a gross annual income of less than \$8000. About the same number reported receiving between \$8000 and \$12,000 annual income.

Amount of rent paid

Most respondents pay between \$300-\$400 for rent in all three cities with the highest reported rent being \$900 (Ottawa and Vancouver). Average rent ranged from \$364 in Montreal to \$396 in Ottawa. According to landlords interviewed for the study, room size is one of the determining factors for differential rents. However, those paying higher rents in all three cities were more likely to report being very dissatisfied with their accommodation.

Food security

Respondents in all three cities reported having to skip meals because they had run out of money. One third to one half of respondents in each city used food banks, drop-in meal services and soup kitchens to get by. About one quarter of respondents in Vancouver and Ottawa also reported pan handling and searching through public waste containers to help pay for food.

Health and well-being

Respondents in all three cities had poorer average health than what would be reported by the general population. They reported a range of health problems. Near the top of the list in all cities is depression. Many also report one or more addictions including the active use of street drugs.

The majority of respondents in each city use local health centres or clinics for their health and dental care needs. As many as 15% or more in each city may not be using any health services at all.

Satisfaction with Life in a Rooming House

Most respondents were satisfied with their accommodation. However, between 11% (Montreal) and 38% (Vancouver) were dissatisfied. Aspects about their accommodation that were rated the highest by respondents in all three cities were location, being able to have visitors, building security, socializing with other tenants and personal safety. Cleanliness also made the top list in Montreal.

Areas of most dissatisfaction in all three cities included the lack of accessibility in the building for persons with physical limitations including older residents, inadequate or poor quality common areas (bathrooms, kitchen, lounge), the poor quality of the room (size, furnishings), the lack of homelike atmosphere, and the poor quality of the interior of the building (needs repair/renovation). Ottawa respondents added the poor responsiveness of the landlord to the bottom of their list and in Montreal the stability of other tenants was also poorly rated.

Other factors associated with higher satisfaction in more than one city

- Living in a smaller rooming house of less than 10 rooms (3 cities)
- Living in a non-profit rooming house (3 cities)
- Having a friend in the building (3 cities)
- Having someone you can go to for help in the building (3 cities)
- Having a landlord who provides additional services such as prepared meals, cheque cashing or filling out forms (3 cities)
- Having your own bathroom (3 cities)
- Residency of more than two years in Vancouver and Ottawa; Residency of more than six months in Montreal.

Factors associated with dissatisfaction in more than one city

- Being under the age of 30 (3 cities)
- Feeling in fair or poor health (3 cities)
- Having one or more diagnosed health conditions (3 cities)
- Skipping meals in the past month (3 cities)
- Being female (Vancouver, Montreal) (In Ottawa transgendered respondents were least satisfied)
- Being Aboriginal (Vancouver, Ottawa)
- Being on social assistance (Vancouver, Ottawa)
- Being an active substance abuser (Vancouver, Ottawa)

Future Plans

Most respondents in all three cities saw their current accommodation as temporary. Many of these respondents had a vision of one day living in a self-contained apartment. A small number were hoping to someday have a family and house of their own. Between one quarter and one third of the respondents in each city called their place home. These respondents, who were typically males, unable to work, over the age of 40, with active addictions who saw themselves living in the same rooming house five years in the future.

5.2 Comparison of Results to other Recent Studies in Canada

This study of rooming house residents and issues was initiated in part to add to the growing literature about rooming house accommodation in Canada. As part of this research, two recent studies were reviewed and compared to the CMHC study. The first was a study conducted in Toronto in 2003 and the second was a study in Winnipeg conducted in 2002.¹³ The methodologies used in the two studies were different from each other and also different from the methodology in this CMHC study. However, in spite of this, there were some similarities in the results across all five cities.

Where the results are similar across studies

- The majority of rooming house residents in all studies are male.
- Average age of respondents spans the decade of the late thirties to late forties (38 in Ottawa, 41 in Toronto, 43 in Vancouver, and 48 in Montreal).
- Most residents are white/Anglo (Francophone in Quebec) but other races and cultures including Aboriginal/First Nations were identified in all studies.
- 13% of Ottawa and 15% of Toronto respondents had a university degree; 14% of Montreal and 20% of Vancouver respondents had at least some university education.
- About two thirds of Vancouver, Winnipeg, and Montreal respondents were on social assistance.
- 22% of Vancouver, 28% of Montreal, 31% of Ottawa and 33% of Toronto respondents were employed.
- In all five cities rooming house residents reported high use of food banks and other meal services because they had run out of money for food.

¹³ Distasio, J. Dudley, M., Maunder, M. (2002) Out of the Long Dark Hallway: voices from Winnipeg's Rooming Houses. Institute of Urban Studies; Hwang, S., Martin, R., Hulchanski, D., Tolomiczenko, G. (2003a) Rooming House Residents: Challenging the Stereotypes. Research Bulletin #16, Centre for Urban and Community Studies. University of Toronto

- In all five cities respondents had poorer health than the general population. There was a consistent correlation between respondents feeling in poor health and being dissatisfied with their accommodation.
- The majority of respondents in all five cities said they felt safe in their rooming house.
- Friendship and social contact with fellow residents was seen as one of the key benefits and sources of satisfaction of living in a rooming house in all five cities.
- About one quarter to one half of residents in all five cities reported having been homeless in the last few years.
- Having to share a bathroom and the poor conditions of the shared bathroom was a key area of complaint in four of the five cities. The exception was Winnipeg.
- Rooming houses have a high turnover of occupants. About two thirds of respondents had lived for less than three years in their rooming house.

5.3 Results of the Stakeholder Workshops

Results workshops were conducted in each of the three sites – Ottawa, Vancouver and Montreal. The workshops were held after the preparation of the draft report but before the conclusions of the report were written. The purpose of these workshops was threefold:

1. To help validate the results in each city,
2. To assist with the analysis of the results by examining the implications of the results given the study objectives; and
3. To discuss next steps and the need for further research.

Invited participants at the workshops included members of the advisory committees and other stakeholders (determined by the advisory committees) with knowledge of and an interest in the rooming house sector in their city. The format for the workshop was the same in each city. The half-day session began with an interactive overview presentation of key results in each city. This was followed by a round table discussion led by a facilitator around the implications of the results given the objectives of the study.

5.4 Results of the Ottawa workshop

Seventeen people participated in the Ottawa results workshop. The participants represented a wide array of stakeholders including landlords (for profit and non-profit), the City of Ottawa (Public Health, Housing, Licensing, Employment and Financial Assistance, Bylaw Enforcement), the police, neighbourhood association, housing help agencies, social workers, and rooming house outreach workers.

Validation of the results – does the study present an accurate profile of rooming houses and rooming house residents in Ottawa?

Throughout the initial slide presentation, participants were asked to indicate if the results or any particular slide seemed inaccurate or different from what they would have expected. After some discussion, there was general consensus that the profile of rooming houses and residents uncovered in the research reflected the reality in Ottawa.

Implications of the results

There was much discussion among the Ottawa stakeholders about the implications of the results for the rooming house sector in Ottawa. Where there was most consensus was around the following four issues:

- Sustainability of the rooming house sector in Ottawa – participants felt that the study results pointed towards a number of factors that threaten the sustainability of the rooming house sector in Ottawa. These included the aging of the housing stock itself (noted by the low rating by tenants around the quality of the exterior and interior of some rooming houses), the number of landlords who indicate they are planning to sell their buildings, the poor image that rooming houses have in the eye of the public, the difficulty obtaining financing and insurance, and the rising costs of maintenance, operations and renovations.
- The needs for more ongoing supports for landlords and tenants – the study clearly showed that many rooming house residents in Ottawa have social and health related needs that may not be being met. According to landlords, the numbers of residents with high needs particularly with respect to mental health is increasing. Residents who are in generally poor health, have one or more diagnosed conditions, as well as addictions combined with in some cases, increasing disability due to normal aging may also be on the rise. These issues challenge landlords and indicate a need for more supportive housing for the most vulnerable who presently reside in this form of housing, or at least suggest that more support services which rooming house residents can access easily are needed.
- A need for more rigorous monitoring and enforcement of existing regulations and standards – There was some debate around the merit of licensing rooming houses given that in many cases, according to workshop participants, compliance is an issue by some owners. The Ottawa results pointed toward a need for increased city staff resources to monitor and enforce existing standards in some rooming houses particularly when safety (no smoke detectors in rooms) or health (too many people sharing bathrooms) of the tenants may be at risk.
- The increasing disconnect between tenants' ability to pay and the rents needed by landlords to maintain quality properties – The study revealed that many tenants are paying more than half of their income on rent. This

factor contributes towards tenants having to skip meals, rely on food banks and soup kitchens for their meals and in turn can contribute to poor health. Some landlords, on the other hand, may not be generating enough revenue to properly maintain their buildings or make necessary renovations.

Next steps

Participants suggested a number of potential next steps that might begin to address the challenges outlined above. Perhaps the most compelling one was a commitment to work together by forming an Ottawa Rooming House working group. Everyone in the room agreed that rooming houses do and should play a strong role in the Ottawa housing market by providing both temporary short term housing as well as longer term affordable housing. One of the key themes raised during the discussion around solutions and next steps for the working group related to raising the profile of the rooming house sector through strong advocacy directed at all levels of government and other interest groups. The positive outcome of this effort would be a sector that everyone would value and that would provide the most vulnerable of Ottawa's citizens a decent affordable place to live.

There was also a recommendation put forth that further research be conducted with landlords. A small sample of landlords was interviewed as part of this study. The interviews yielded interesting results that need to be validated with a larger and more representative sample. Landlords who participated in the workshop want to continue to play an active role in identifying and implementing solutions.

Some simple and immediate solutions to some of the challenges raised by the results were introduced at the workshop. One was to identify "high need" rooming houses and to target these locations for intensive support. Based on a successful pilot some years earlier, "action teams" could be set-up that include housing outreach workers, public health nurses, police officers and other identified support workers. These action teams would be on call as needed. A neighbourhood association representative introduced another solution. In one Ottawa neighbourhood with high concentrations of rooming houses, the neighbourhood formed a "community protection team". In this case, the neighbourhood works together with police and other community supports to prevent crime in their neighbourhood.

5.5 Results of the Vancouver workshop

Ten people participated in the Vancouver results workshop. The participants represented a range of perspectives, including advocates for the legal rights of tenants, city housing planners, community support agencies, youth and immigrant service agencies, and two tenants who were peer interviewers in the research process.

Validation of the results – does the study present an accurate profile of rooming houses and rooming house residents in Vancouver?

Throughout the initial slide presentation, participants were asked to indicate if the results or any particular slide seemed inaccurate or different from what they would have expected. In general, it was felt that the profile was accurate, particularly with respect to the picture of rooming house residents living in the downtown core area where much previous research has been conducted. However, participants felt that the sample likely under-represented new immigrant populations and younger people including students. Some workshop participants held the view that these types of residents were more likely to live in rooming houses located outside the downtown core.

Implications of the results

There was much discussion among the Vancouver participants about the implications of the results for the rooming house sector in Vancouver. The discussion began with a reminder from one participant that much research has been done on the rooming house sector in the downtown core of Vancouver and that this study, although much smaller in scope, confirms the results of previous research related to the fragile existence of rooming residents in downtown Vancouver. There is less knowledge, according to participants, about rooming houses and residents living outside the downtown core. Although this study was exploratory with a relatively small non-random sample, the effort to gather information outside the downtown core was appreciated.

Participants agreed that the results showing the poor quality of some rooming houses underlines the current crisis in affordable housing in Vancouver. The rooming house sector is perceived to receive little support and may in fact be “housing policy by default” as tenants have few other options, and governments accept the existence and use of marginal rooming houses. There is a perception that some of the rooming house owners retain their properties strictly for their capital value, and have little interest in upgrading or maintaining the properties as housing. Although city officials respond to complaints, there appears to be little that can be done to “force” owners to comply with maintenance and upgrade requirements beyond closing down the buildings, which can result in tenants becoming homeless. As well, tenants are reluctant to lodge a complaint for fear of being evicted. According to participants, there are some rooming houses in Vancouver that have a reputation so poor that residents may be better off health-wise living on the street.

There was strong agreement that rooming houses were not affordable housing options for many tenants. Many residents spend more than the acceptable proportion of their income on rent (some as high as 75%). The rooming house residents at the workshop spoke of the desperation felt by many residents as well as volunteers, often other tenants, who try to assist.

There was a plea from one rooming house tenant that the city be tougher in enforcing penalties when landlords do not comply with the city's "standards of maintenance". There have been some successes, according to the city representative, but it is difficult. Closing down a rooming house is not easy and the city has been taken to court on a number of occasions at taxpayers' expense by landlords who feel they have just cause.

The rising costs of repair and renovations make it difficult for some landlords to sustain their operations given the inability to raise rents. In British Columbia, Income Assistance limits the shelter allowance portion of a recipient's welfare to \$325/month, which creates a de facto upper limit on potential rental income for a rooming house operator. In discussion, participants identified that rooming houses with less than forty units face possibly insurmountable maintenance and operations costs with a limited and fixed revenue, which makes it difficult to improve or maintain a property.

There was a general sense that this sector was not sustainable in downtown Vancouver, where new condo developments are almost daily replacing many of the older buildings including housing stock. Vancouver has an existing policy of 1:1 replacement of rooming house stock with subsidized housing, which has so far been successful but does not account for increased demand. Some participants held the view that the number of rooming houses may actually be increasing in areas outside the downtown core and in suburban areas.

The lack of physical accessibility for an aging resident population was seen as an issue. There was a suggestion that the city should invest in rooming houses and retrofit some properties to accommodate persons with disabilities.

The issue of supportive housing was raised in light of the high percentage of rooming house residents with addictions or mental health issues. Rooming houses may not be appropriate housing for many of these residents. There are agencies providing support, however, and these are mostly located in the core area. If indeed rooming houses are increasingly being developed outside the downtown core, the lack of support services nearby may become an issue. Some existing models of support provided by mental health agencies within rooming houses were identified, and may merit further study.

Solutions and next steps

Participants brainstormed solutions and next steps in light of the study results and workshop discussion. The following ideas were put forth:

- Encourage and support self-governance models for tenants similar to co-op housing
- Advocate for more top-down solutions including city leadership in articulating and enforcing a clearer policy related to rooming houses
- Rooming houses should be protected and seen as a housing choice for some but quality must improve – smaller may be better

- There are good rooming houses out there where tenants are healthy and happy – let's learn from them
- Work towards reducing the stigma related to living in a rooming house – tenancy laws may need to change
- Encourage private-public partnerships to provide more economically viable rooming houses
- Build awareness with rooming house owners and operators about resources that may be available to them such as CMHC's RRAP (Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program)
- Encourage more research about rooming houses outside the downtown core, as well as unlicensed rooming houses
- Work together with municipalities across the greater Vancouver area – housing is not just a downtown Vancouver issue, and homelessness exists in every community in Greater Vancouver.
- Look at a more integrated approach with agencies working together to provide a more supportive community – like the “wrap-around” model
- Involve tenants and landlords in the solutions

5.6 Results of the Montreal workshop

Ten people participated in the Montreal results workshop. The participants represented a variety of institutions, agencies and interests, including the City of Montreal's Housing Department, an inner city community health and social services centre, advocacy groups and a non-profit housing corporation that manages a significant number of rooming houses.

Validation of the results – does the study present an accurate profile of rooming houses and rooming house residents in Montreal?

Throughout the initial slide presentation, participants were asked to indicate if the results or any particular slide seemed inaccurate or different from what they would have expected. This took up an important part of the workshop and formed the basis for much of the discussion.

It was generally felt that the study captured an important aspect of the Montreal rooming house sector. However questions were raised about populations, such as women or immigrants, that may not have been captured because of the location or ownership of the rooming houses included in the study. Some participants questioned some of the results. For instance, some were surprised that so few rooming house residents indicated drug use or had been evicted, which led to a discussion about the limits of self-reporting.

While the participants agreed that the study was an important step in understanding of this under-researched sector, they also felt that it was not possible to generalize about the rooming house sector based on a small, non-

random sample, since the rooming house population is changing and rooming houses in different sectors cater to people with different needs.

Participants suggested that the high proportion of private sector rooming houses, although thought to represent the overall distribution, did present some biases. Thus while the overall distribution of male/female residents was thought to reflect the rooming house population, participants felt that the proportion of women is likely to be significantly higher in the non-profit sector, which provides a more secure and controlled environment.

It was also suggested that there are rooming houses that have high proportions of immigrants, often because residents learn of these through social networks and word of mouth. It was suggested that rooming houses with greater proportions of immigrants are more likely to be in peripheral neighbourhoods.

Other results were seen as reflecting population trends in Montreal, such as the proportion of residents who had come from other regions of Quebec.

There was some discussion about the relatively high proportion of rooming house residents without a family physician, compared to the other two cities studied, but this was thought to reflect both provincial differences in delivery of health services and the situation of the overall Montreal population.

Implications of the results

The high level of satisfaction with the quality of accommodation that was recorded in the study surprised participants. It was hypothesized that, given the difficulty for the interviewers to gain access to some rooming houses, there may have been a bias towards those of better quality. Furthermore, some participants pointed out that the high level of satisfaction is not necessarily indicative that living conditions are good: most residents do not have other options and may therefore perceive the rooming house as an improvement over homelessness. However, it was also suggested that since many of the rooming houses in the study were in an area that is in high demand, some participants felt that residents may have chosen to live in rooming houses in spite of their drawbacks, so that they could be in this neighbourhood instead of an apartment in another, more affordable, part of the city.

Notwithstanding the sampling biases identified, some of the results were considered especially significant. For example, the fact that residents ranked universal accessibility as one of the most important considerations in choosing a rooming house indicated to several participants that ageing is important issue. There was a discussion about private rooming houses which house residents in need of greater support: many rooming houses are now playing the role of rehabilitation or transition centres, but they completely lack the necessary support services.

As well, knowing that rooming house residents highly value location and access to services, some participants felt that efforts should be made to locate new rooming houses in central and inner-city neighbourhoods.

No one was surprised to find out that most rooming-house residents spend more than 25% of their income on rent, but there was a general concern among participants that rooms are becoming less and less affordable to people of low income, especially for recipients of social assistance. Some participants also pointed out that residents will sometimes pay an intermediary (usually the janitor) to cash their cheques, which results in even greater financial vulnerability. All participants agreed that rent increases and income security are important issues.

With regard to the temporary and transitory nature of rooming houses, participants felt that the desire of most residents to become established in an apartment in the next five years was probably unlikely if not unrealistic. Most participants felt that for most residents, rooming houses are a permanent, rather than a temporary, solution. Although rooming house residents appear to be very mobile, it is usually because they are forced to move and not because they choose to go.

Finally, regarding the importance of providing help to landlords and incentives for them to maintain the current stock of rooming houses, most participants felt that more information is needed before a proper assessment can be made. For instance, it would be important to find out about the profitability of private sector rooming houses. It was pointed out that for the non-profit sector, there were costs associated with the high levels of repair and maintenance that are required.

Solutions and next steps

After reviewing the findings of the current study, participants pointed to a number of areas that need be researched further. These include:

- More information about the profitability of private sector rooming-houses and the financial constraints of landlords;
- The differences between the non-profit and private rooming-house sectors in terms of demographics, quality, resident satisfaction, substance abuse, etc.;
- The actual prevalence of drug abuse and mental disorders in the rooming-house sector;
- More information about rooming houses in peripheral sectors of the city and the proportion of new immigrants in these; and
- The needs and difficulties encountered by residents with physical and other problems, (e.g. linked to mental health issues and ageing).

6. Results of Landlord Interviews

Rooming house landlords in Vancouver, Ottawa, and Montreal were interviewed as part of this study. Attempts were made to obtain interviews from private and non-profit and licensed and unlicensed rooming house landlords in all three sites. Interviews were conducted by telephone and face-to-face.

6.1 Who Responded

Fourteen rooming house landlords participated across all three sites. As a group, these individuals had been in the business from 1 to 35 years, with 50% having been in the business for 16 years or more.

The second most common reason cited by for-profit landlords for getting involved in the rooming house business, beyond revenue or investment, was an inherited or family business. Non-profit housing providers indicated that their involvement in the business was initiated by requests from for-profit rooming house owners to take over their rooming houses. An opportunity to access a provincial funding program for singles housing at that time also played a role for one.

Collectively the interviewed landlords managed 37 rooming houses. At the time of their interview few reported any vacancies. Of the 37 rooming houses, involving approximately 850 units, 32 were licensed with 4 pending licenses. Exhibit 6.1 provides this information by city.

Exhibit 6.1 – Profile of Landlords by Site

	Vancouver	Ottawa	Montreal
Number of for-profit landlords	3	5	4
Number of non-profit landlords	1	1	0
Number of rooming houses managed by landlords	4	27	6
Total # of units	233	449	172
Number of licensed rooming houses	4	22 licensed with 4 pending	4

6.2 What Landlords Had to Say About Their Tenants

The responses from landlords were remarkably similar across the 3 cities and between for-profit and non-profit rooming house providers. Where there were differences in responses they are noted in the following sections.

Profile of Tenants

The interviewed landlords were asked to describe their tenants including their age, gender, language/cultural background, sources of income and health. The responses were similar in all three cities. Landlords reported an age range for their tenants from as young as 16 to well into the 80's with 80% -100% of tenants in each building being male. Languages spoken were predominately English (in Ottawa and Vancouver), followed by French (main language in Montreal); however, many other cultural groups were represented, including Arabic, Chinese, Russian, Vietnamese, Italian, Spanish, Aboriginal, European, and Somali.

When asked about the educational level of their tenants, landlords described the majority as not having completed high school, with a minority having some college or university education. Immigrants were described as being better educated. One Ottawa non-profit landlord identified 50% of his tenants in one building located close to a university as university students from Somalia receiving funding from the Ontario Student Assistance Program.

According to the landlords, most tenants received some form of social assistance with no more than 10% employed. Ottawa and Montreal landlords identified students as an identifiable group using rooming houses for short-term residence while at school.

Landlords identified predominant tenant health issues as mental illness and substance abuse, alcohol abuse, Hep C, AIDS/HIV and chronic physical illnesses. One landlord noted an inability to house those with physical disabilities because the building is not accessible. Tenants were described as using an array of community support services including meal programs.

Turnaround in tenancies was high in all cities, with some as frequent as monthly. However, landlords also described having some tenants for long periods of time - in some instances 10 to 20 years. The majority of tenants were described as coming from other rooming houses, shelters and transitional housing. Most were thought to move on to other rooming houses or better accommodation, but in general, landlords were unaware of where departing tenants were headed.

How Tenant Profiles Have Changed Over Time

Landlords were asked to comment on trends or changes in the profile of their tenants over time. Most expressed concern about an increasing incidence of mental illness and substance abuse, including alcohol, amongst tenants. As well,

landlords noted a growing number of people in the workforce, women, youth, and immigrants seeking rooms in their buildings. Some landlords described a decrease in problematic issues: perhaps "Because I am getting better at choosing good tenants".

Tenant Selection

Potential tenants came most frequently from support worker referrals or appeared as "walk ins". Most landlords reported that they seldom had the need to advertise in newspapers.

Respondents most frequently described the perfect tenant as: non violent, keeps to self, pays the rent on time, keeps room clean, minds houses rules, and creates no disturbances. Landlords spoke of balancing or keeping the existing tenant mix in mind when filling vacancies. One spoke of the need for a variety of different types of rooming houses for different types of tenants.

Several landlords mentioned existing tenant safety as their prime consideration when selecting a new tenant. It was noted by more than one landlord that mixing men and women does not work. Tenants under age 25 or coming directly from shelters were also considered problematic and described as "Being into the party or flop house mode".

The majority of landlords employed a screening process in selecting new tenants. Some only did a short interview to assess lifestyle issues or request ID. Others required completion of an application form, credit checks, reference checks (including former landlords) and occasionally police checks. Candidates were refused for behaviour, appearance, attitude, being "under the influence", reference check failure, and not being "a fit" to the current tenant group. Some landlords reported having few problems in their buildings due to their tenant selection practices.

6.3 Rooming House Management

Quoted rental rates ranged from \$250 to \$410 a month. The range was fairly consistent in the 3 study cities. Rate variables were explained as being due to different sized rooms, amenities (cable, refrigerator, etc.) length of tenancy, and whether a tenant's rent was subsidized - such as the Rent Geared to Income (RGI) program.

Some landlords provided on-site property management themselves. However, the majority of interviewed landlords in Vancouver and Ottawa hired a tenant to act as caretaker. Common activities undertaken by caretakers included: cleaning, dealing with emergency situations, repairs and maintenance. Desirable personal qualities sought in a caretaker included: someone who cares about people, a problem solver, reliability and "has the confidence of the neighbours."

Several landlords indicated that they provided tenants with information about local services and supports such as food banks. One commented, "I offer a service. It's a business but you also have to do social work. I'm close to my tenants. It's like a big dysfunctional family." Another landlord provided meals.

Although some indicated that the best part of being a rooming house landlord was making a living at it, the majority were proud of being able to house and help a large number of disadvantaged people over the years - in fact they saw this as their role. One described it aptly as, "I'm a provider of good housing and they provide my income." Most saw themselves continuing in the rooming house business for at least an additional five years, or until retirement.

6.4 Rooming House Development

Landlords in Ottawa were most familiar with CMHC's RRAP program for Rooming Houses. Some described it as an excellent program, with helpful staff, that should have more funding available for allocation. Those in Montreal indicated familiarity with the City's version of the program. In Montreal, one landlord described situations where other landlords had lost everything by using the city program. Supposedly this was because payments from the program were only made as work was completed and very slow in coming.

Two other funding programs were identified to support rooming house development - the federal/provincial affordable housing program and the federal energy retrofit program. Most interviewed landlords thought municipal government should be responsible for funding initiatives for rooming houses, followed by landlords who felt rooming house support should be a federal responsibility.

6.5 Challenges Faced by Landlords

Lack of Support Services

Most landlords received frequent referrals from support workers, but had mixed feelings about accepting such referrals. Their collective experience was the lack of adequate follow up once the individual was housed. One spoke wistfully of a time when workers used to visit and had a relationship with clients in his building. Another spoke of the need to put more funding into addictions and mental health supports.

The majority of landlords in Montreal felt they had access to some ongoing or emergency services for their tenants; while none of the landlords in Vancouver did. One Vancouver landlord expressed bitter frustration at the lack of police support when situations erupted in his rooming house, while on the other side of the country, in Montreal, landlords expressed appreciation of the support they received from their city police.

Ottawa landlords expressed the most confidence in access to a range of support services. Several mentioned receiving great assistance from outreach psychiatric services from a local hospital, Assertive Community Treatment Teams (ACTT) for residents with mental illness, Community Health Centres, Housing Help and Action Logement - agencies that will provide housing retention services.

Tenant Issues

Mental illness was cited as the major issue creating difficulties within a rooming house, especially when tenants did not take their prescribed medication. Substance use, including alcohol, was also high on the list; with “crack” use mentioned as particularly difficult to deal with. Other identified challenges included issues such as prostitution and drug dealing. Landlords described violence, abuse, tenant conflicts, anti-social behaviour, and increased traffic from disruptive visitors as frequent outcomes of these issues.

Rental Arrears

Rental arrears were problematic for most interviewed landlords. Tenants vacating without paying rent was also identified as a major issue, as landlords have no means to recoup the loss. One landlord commented that he had lost \$35,000 on unpaid rent over the last ten years. Another noted, “The priority for people on crack is buying it, not paying rent.”

One for-profit landlord expressed concern that Ontario Works was not cooperative in granting direct rental payments to landlords. However, a non-profit landlord commented on how well rent direct worked for his rooming house. Another non-profit landlord found having tenants pay rent in instalments effective in avoiding rental arrears.

Property Damage

Most landlords cited property damage as a major issue. One commented, “I just had someone who did four to five thousand dollars damage but there was nothing I could do. The person was on social assistance and had no money.”

Tenant Legislation

Several Ontario landlords expressed concern over the Tenant Protection Act. Comments included: “It is too hard to evict people for antisocial behaviours and criminal behaviour”; “It is difficult to evict people, even when they are a danger to someone. There is no immediate removal”; “The tenancy Act is more protective of tenants than landlords”; “I’ve gone to the rental board to evict people. I understand that tenants have rights and that’s OK, but there are abuses – just like there are owners that abuse”; “Bad tenants are better protected by the Act than landlords trying to protect the well being of other good tenants.”

Financial Issues

For-profit respondents described slim profits due to the rising cost of utilities, maintenance and property taxes. They also declared an inability to raise rents due to rental boards or because the majority of tenants were on some form of social assistance. One for-profit landlord noted, "You need more than 10 units in a building to make a go of it. We're planning to sell off our smaller stock of 7-10 units in the spring." This landlord went on to state, "Since 9/11, banks and insurance companies have raised their rates. Insurance rates are 3 times higher because it is a rooming house."

Several landlords noted problems related to obtaining and insuring mortgages. One respondent believed that rooming houses were discriminated against. Others noted that banking institutions were reluctant to finance rooming houses.

Zoning, NIMBY and Gentrification

Most landlords were unable to identify specific zoning, NIMBY¹⁴ or gentrification issues as they were not trying to create new rooming houses. They did, however, comment that gentrification was happening in the areas of some of their rooming houses and that people have always resented rooming houses in their neighbourhood. They also reported that rooming houses run by others were being lost - mainly due to conversion into single family homes. One commented, "It is difficult to integrate rooming houses into society. "They have a bad reputation, when lots are fine."

For the few still undertaking rooming house development, one landlord noted he was able to avoid NIMBY by choosing neighbourhoods carefully, while another spoke of avoiding areas with new condos.

Licensing

Although most of the buildings owned by the interviewed landlords were licensed, several landlords were not supportive of this requirement in their cities. One commented, "This is a joke. The city just wants to increase its revenue. It ends up costing landlords lots of money to retro-fit units according to standards. Having 1 washroom for 4 tenants is not realistic." Another commented, "Don't over regulate rooming houses or they will disappear."

6.6 Landlord Advice to Policy Makers

Landlords offered the following advice for government officials, politicians and other policy makers:

¹⁴ Acronym for Not in My Backyard

- There has to be regulation – safe secure housing is really important, but existing licensing needs to be easier;
- Allow for rebuilding rooming houses for the same use in M2 zoning;
- There has to be ways to encourage private landlords to enter the business, such as letting the rents go up at the rental board;
- Implement rent direct payments from social services;
- Cheaper insurance rates are needed;
- Government-insured financing needs to be available to operators;
- Educate the public to get rid of the stigma of living in a rooming house. They house single, deserving people;
- CMHC should abide by its mission statement;
- Amend the Tenant Protection Act. There should be quicker evictions for illegal activity; (Ontario respondents)
- Address the abuse that goes on. People are taken advantage of by other tenants and landlords;
- End homelessness. The welfare system is not run properly and everyone should have room & board – no questions asked;
- Put money into health care for the mentally ill and addictions treatment and set up a referral network;
- Don't promote rooming houses as affordable housing for singles;
- Government rules, by-laws and policies make it hard, risky and economically undesirable to be an owner.

6.7 Lessons Learned

When asked what advice they had for future rooming house landlords, comments ranged from, "Don't do it" to; "It can be hard at times, but once the building has good people living there, the job is very good."

More specific advice included:

- Go into the business with your eyes open about the difficulties tenants may have and make sure you are connected with social service agencies and other community supports. You have to want to deal with people in difficulty;
- Screen potential tenants. Get references;
- Don't underestimate the amount of work it takes to operate a rooming house;
- Develop a firm yet fair attitude and be consistent;
- Have a good building superintendent;
- Locate outside the city core.

6.8 Rooming Houses as an Affordable Housing Option

Although not directly asked to comment if rooming houses should be considered an affordable housing option, many landlords made comments relevant to this topic. One Montreal landlord expressed concern about a possible moratorium on rooming house conversion in favour of more social housing. Others supported the need for more social housing across Canada. One respondent commented that the lack of affordable housing was disgraceful. Another expressed concern about the continued existence of rooming houses. This landlord stated, "This is a residual form of housing. We shouldn't have rooming houses. Everyone should have individual units."

7. Conclusions

This study surveyed rooming house tenants and landlords in three Canadian cities – Ottawa, Montreal and Vancouver. A review of recent studies on rooming houses in two other cities in Canada was also conducted and the results compared. The findings across all five cities were remarkably similar in spite of the fact that no two studies used the same methodology. Rooming house experts in Ottawa, Montreal and Vancouver were consulted at the end of the fieldwork to validate the study and assist with the interpretation of the results. The conclusions presented here are based on these consultations and represent the bottom line.

7.1 Re-Addressing the Study Objectives

A profile of rooming house residents

The typical rooming house resident in Canada is likely a single or divorced Canadian born male, of British, Francophone (in cities where French is the dominant language), or First Nations descent, in his late thirties to late forties, living well below the poverty line. In many cases he is unable to work for a number of health related reasons including poor physical health, and/or poor mental health and in some instances, added addictions. In other cases, he will be in the process of recovering from ill health, addictions or other disruptive life circumstances and will be trying to re-enter the mainstream of society by looking for work, volunteering his time, or actually working.

The above paragraph describes the typical rooming house resident; however, it does not give the total picture. Rooming houses may be becoming a viable housing choice for more and more students (including foreign students) in Canada, as an alternative to more expensive on-campus housing, as well as recent immigrants to Canada from around the world as they first try and settle into a new location. In a few instances, even though it could be equally affordable, individuals choose to live in a rooming house, as opposed to sharing accommodation, in order to avoid the risk of having to move house because of the actions of another person. The study also uncovered individuals who could afford other forms of self-contained housing but chose to live in a rooming house because they did not want the responsibility of a larger home.

This study and others found that women are far less likely than men to access this type of housing. For those that do, however, their profile is much the same as for men. This study and others have revealed that some rooming houses may not be the most suitable housing for women particularly those with multiple health and social related needs. This needs further study.

The affordability and quality of rooming houses

Although on the surface it may appear that rooming houses are a low cost alternative to more expensive self-contained apartment living for persons on low income, the study found that most tenants are paying more than they should and can afford on rent. Necessities such as food and clothing are supplemented in other ways including the use of food banks, searching through public waste bins, pan handling, and activities contributing to the underground economy. At the same time, landlords reported not being able to cover their costs and cited the inability to raise rents as a major issue. In B.C., for example, Income Assistance sets the shelter allowance at \$325. This limits the options for tenants and limits the revenues for landlords.

Most tenants appear to be satisfied with their accommodation, particularly those tenants living in smaller rooming houses, in rooming houses with responsive landlords, and tenants with informal support through friendships with other residents. The study, however, uncovered a number of issues affecting the quality of life and health of tenants living in rooming houses. These issues were not unique to this study. Perhaps the most compelling was the large number of people sharing bathrooms in some of the larger rooming houses. The overcrowding and reported poor general state of repair of the bathrooms in many rooming houses are clearly interrelated. In some cases, tenants blamed landlords for not responding quickly enough and in other cases, the disruptive behaviours of other tenants were identified as the main cause (by both landlords and tenants interviewed).

Landlords and tenants identified a need for more “support” either on-site or through linkages with community agencies for tenants with mental health problems and/or addictions. This segment of the rooming house population may in fact be increasing if the observations of landlords interviewed for this study are taken into account. Both tenants and landlords acknowledged the lack of or nonexistent accessibility for aging tenants or younger persons with physical disabilities who may be using a wheelchair or other mobility aids.

Are rooming houses a temporary or permanent form of accommodation?

The study found that most rooming house residents viewed their tenancy as temporary. In some cases, particularly students or young people trying to get a start, residency in a rooming house may occur for a year or two or less. About one third of residents interviewed, however, saw their current accommodation as a longer-term housing option and called their current place home. Experts consulted during the results workshops felt that good quality rooming houses could play a role in the array of housing choices for persons on low income both as a temporary form of housing and a longer term arrangement.

7.2 Implications of results

The results workshops held at the end of the field period brought together a range of different stakeholders from the rooming house sector in each city representing and reflecting the needs of unique communities including rooming house tenants, private and non-profit landlords, city housing officials, and community support agencies. In spite of differing perspectives, there was consensus around the following issues:

- There appears to be a growing disconnect between what tenants can afford to pay for a room in a rooming house and the cost of operating a rooming house.
- A number of factors could threaten the sustainability of the rooming house sector including the aging of the building stock, the rising costs of utilities, and other market factors and economic pressures on landlords that may make other investment options more attractive.
- As the population ages so will rooming house residents making the need for more “supportive housing” a reality in the future.
- Good quality rooming houses can play a role in the array of housing options for persons on low income and those who choose this form of housing for “lifestyle” reasons.
- There is growing pressure on cities to further regulate rooming houses and enforce violations more vigorously to ensure that negligent landlords maintain and improve their properties where needed. At the same time there is a danger that regulatory requirements will drive both good and bad landlords out of the business due to the increased cost of meeting such requirements.
- There is a need for different government sectors to work together to maintain or increase the affordability of rooming houses.

7.3 Next steps/further research

A number of next steps and ideas for further research were generated as a result of this research. These were:

- Further research focusing on a larger sample of landlords should be conducted – their needs, and ideas for addressing these needs.
- Further research is needed on women living in rooming houses.
- More information is needed about the unlicensed rooming house sector and rooming houses located outside the core areas of a city.
- Cities should be encouraged to continue to provide leadership in the rooming house sector – ongoing working groups could be established with stakeholders representing tenants, landlords, city housing regulators, and community service providers around the table.

- There may be an interest in the development of a national working group on the rooming house sector if one or more local champions were willing to take the lead. Common issues were identified in each city such as how to address the challenges around the enforcement of existing regulations.
- Good quality rooming houses exist and should be promoted – a “best practices” document or “case study” research could be helpful to everyone in the field.
- More information is needed on aging rooming house tenants and those with special needs – are rooming houses appropriate housing options for these individuals given the finding that very few of the rooming houses in the sample were accessible to persons with physical disabilities.
- Linking rooming houses to community support services was an issue in all three sites particularly given the aging of the resident population. Research is needed on how rooming houses can be made more supportive.
- More could be learned about rooming houses as part of the residential trajectory of immigrants – the role rooming houses can play in assisting new immigrants to settle into the community through connections made with other immigrant residents (offering support for employment for example).

Appendix A:

Profile of Rooming House Residents Literature Review

1. Purpose

This report presents the findings of the literature review conducted during Phase One of the study: Profile of Rooming House Residents. The study was undertaken for Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation by Social Data Research Ltd.

The literature review provides the backdrop to the rest of the study by uncovering information relevant to the development of a working definition of “rooming house”. Currently, definitions vary from city to city and also from study to study. The definition determined for this study will be used in subsequent phases of the project to help:

Develop selection criteria for the types of rooming houses and residents to be surveyed;

Finalize the content of the survey instruments, and;

Set the results of the data collection activities into an overall context.

Previous studies producing profiles of rooming house users in Canadian cities were reviewed to inform the interviewing process for this study, and to provide points of comparison regarding rooming house user profiles in cities across Canada. Additional information about rental rates, loss of stock, landlord selection practices, differences for licensed versus unlicensed rooming houses, etc. was also sought in order to better understand any effect on access to and tenure in rooming houses, and the subsequent profile of those housed within.

1.2 Parameters

A search for published and unpublished documents produced in the last 20 years was undertaken using the key words "rooming houses", "single room occupancy" and "boarding houses".

The search used PubMed/Medline, Library and Archives Canada, SocioFile, Social Work Abstracts, EBSCO (Academic Search Premier), Proquest, Repère, LOGIS (SHQ documentation center), and CHIC. Google was also used to identify websites containing relevant information, especially definitions of “rooming house”.

A companion search was undertaken in French. Quebec has a long history in low-income housing and the research is often not captured when the literature review is conducted in English alone.

Local contacts in Montreal, Vancouver and Ottawa were approached to identify documents relevant to each city. A subsequent review of additional documents recommended by key informants during Phase Two of this study will further inform the final report.

1.3 Factors affecting Rooming House Use and Stock

The availability of rooming houses and rooming house units is affected by supply factors such as:

- Shrinking vacancy rates;
- Escalating rents;
- Long social housing waiting lists;
- Conversion of existing stock to more lucrative upscale condos or conversion back to single family housing;
- Lack of new social housing development, and;
- Gentrification.

Pressure exerted by supply factors is compounded by regulatory approaches intending to improve rooming house conditions. Outcomes may in fact be the closure of viable rooming houses and compromised rooming house development due to zoning requirements and additional operating costs to meet applicable by-laws.

Landlords faced with high expenses, income from rental rates restricted by prevailing shelter rates and an imbalance between owner rights and tenant responsibility are placed in the difficult position of having to weigh their ability to run a viable business and house those with serious issues. The result may be selective rental practices favouring tenants who are healthier, higher functioning, and less problematic.

(Starr & Drdla, 2000, Distasio et al., 2002, Hwang et al 2003, Colliers, 1999)

2. Defining “Rooming House” and Related Terminology

2.1 Rooming House

A variety of definitions for “rooming house” exist in Canada. This creates problems not only for researchers, but also for policy makers and funders as demonstrated in the following statement by Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton Centre-East, Canadian Alliance) during parliamentary proceedings in 2001.

“Ninety per cent of funding that has been going into RRAP repair programs has been going into upscale apartment projects, not into the most needed area, rooming house rooms. Part of the reason for that is the explanation and definition of what a rooming house room is and what an apartment is. That underlines the concerns and the need to develop national understandings and definitions for the terminology that we are using” (Hansard, 2001).

In Winnipeg, any single family home divided into three or more suites is a rooming house (Distasio et al, 2002), while across the country in Saint John, “rooming house”

means any building or any part thereof in which rooms are intended to be provided for compensation to 3 or more persons other than the owner or members of his immediate family. It includes hotels, or motels, lodging houses, boarding houses, and multi-use buildings containing any combination of sleeping units, house-keeping units, or dwelling units (City of Saint John, 1982).

Such broad definitions can lead to properties such as tri-plexes being classified as rooming houses when indeed they are not (Distasio et al., 2002). Others introduce variables such as length of the rental period:

Rooming house rooms refer to those rooms located in private residences and rented on a monthly basis. Such rooms typically offer shared baths with other rooming house residents. Also, some kitchen facilities are also available on a shared basis (Mah & DeSantis, 2000).

In Ottawa, the most commonly used definitions pertaining to rooming houses are those laid out in the City's licensing by-law (City of Ottawa, 2000). However, they only pertain to those properties in the former City of Ottawa prior to the amalgamation of several cities and the Region of Ottawa-Carleton into the new City of Ottawa:

“Rooming House” means a building that contains four or more rooming units in which persons are harboured, received or lodged for hire, but does not include a hotel, motel, bed and breakfast establishment, hospital, special needs housing, retirement home.

“Rooming Unit” is a room or suite of rooms that constitutes a separate, independent occupancy in which a person sleeps, and that may have either a kitchen or washroom but which does not have both.

Toronto includes similar restrictions on amenities in its definition:

A “rooming house” means a building or part of a building where living accommodation is provided in separate habitable rooms, each of which may contain food preparation facilities or sanitary facilities, but not both, and none of which are part of a dwelling unit; but this is not a Group Home, Residential Care Home, Nursing Home, Retirement Home or Seniors Community House (City of Toronto website).

In Quebec, the Cities and Towns Act permits municipalities to define “rooming houses” and “boarding houses”, although few municipalities have done so (Dansereau, 1998). Prior to the 2002 municipal mergers in Montreal the zoning bylaws defined a rooming house as “a building or part of a building where at least four furnished rooms are rented and where services, such as meals, cleaning, and supervision can be offered to residents”, which thereby included boarding houses. A further distinction was made between rooming houses and tourist homes with a clientele that was “passing through”.(Dansereau, 1998).

Rooming houses also require an operating permit, which ensures some control of building norms, fire prevention, plumbing, and liveability.

Since 2002 each borough of the new City of Montreal, can define what is a rooming house and whether it will grant occupancy permits. This latter right also grants boroughs (as in all municipalities in Quebec) the right to refuse rooming houses on their territory.

Nonetheless, while defining a rooming house in Montreal is within the power of the boroughs, Municipal By-law on the Hygiene and Maintenance of Dwellings does define a room. It is a rented unit or one offered for rent in a rooming house, used as a residence, which includes a maximum of two of the following three elements: a WC, bathtub or shower, a kitchenette.

Other terminologies further confound attempts to solidify a common definition of “rooming house”.

2.2 Single Rent Occupancy (SRO) Housing

SRO is a term commonly used in British Columbia. Typically it applies to privately owned buildings with minimal amenities containing three or more single room occupancy units. A common SRO unit consists of one room about ten by ten feet, with no private bathroom. Residents share common bathrooms, and sometimes cooking, facilities with other tenants. SRO units without cooking facilities are called sleeping units; those with cooking facilities (a fridge, stove/hot plate, and sink) but no three-piece bathroom are called housekeeping units. Some SRO buildings have self-contained units and/or units with two rooms, as well as single-room sleeping/housekeeping units. With few exceptions, SRO residents have low to very low incomes and cannot afford better accommodation. Often considered affordable housing (despite being far more expensive on a square foot basis than traditional rental accommodation), SRO units represent the housing of last resort for many individuals who are at risk of becoming homeless. Such units can be found in hotels and motels, or in rooming and boarding houses.

SRO buildings in Vancouver are categorized as:

1. Residential Hotels which are SRO buildings licensed to include a pub or lounge, or;
2. Rooming Houses which are not licensed. Vancouver's *Zoning and Development By-law* defines a rooming house as a building containing 3 or more sleeping units, excluding multiple conversion dwellings (MCDs) and special needs residential facilities. An MCD is defined as a building converted to contain 2 or more sleeping, housekeeping, or dwelling units. If sleeping or housekeeping units are rented out for periods of less than a month, under the *Zoning and Development By-Law* the building is defined as a hotel. The distinction between tourist and residential hotels is not always clear-cut. Most tourist hotels can be distinguished on the basis of the physical quality of their rooms, their higher cost, and the letting of rooms only on a daily basis. However, the distinction between the lowest quality “budget” tourist hotels and the highest quality residential hotels sometimes involves a decision about the intended market for the rooms. The

issue is complicated by seasonal changes – rooms may be let daily to tourists in the summer, reverting to weekly or monthly rentals in the winter. Hotels may also have a mix of tourist and residential rooms.

(The Housing Centre 2003, B.C. website)

2.3 Boarding Houses

One reviewed document differentiates between rooming houses and boarding houses:

A rooming house is where unrelated adults live together and share a common bathroom and kitchen; while a boarding house is where unrelated adults live together and share a common bathroom and kitchen and have an on site proprietor or agent (Pendergast, 2004).

3. Studies of Rooming Houses and Rooming House Users in Canada

History shows that rooming houses were once a commonly accepted and respectable form of housing as evidenced by an 1868 news report detailing the shooting outside his Ottawa rooming house of the Father of Confederation, Thomas D'Arcy McGee (CBC website). In recent decades they have become a neglected final housing option for the very poor.

A variety of studies exist in the literature documenting the decline of rooming houses in Canada. In general, they debate the need for rooming houses within the housing continuum, describe the impact of neighbourhood gentrification on low income residents and offer strategies to safeguard and improve such housing stock. As a group their focus was not intentionally the profile of roomers, although some contained general information in this area.

City of Vancouver, 2005; Colliers, 1999; The Housing Centre, 2003; Zenewych, 1993; Slater, T., 2004; Starr Group, 2002)

Six studies, however, emerged from the reviewed literature with a specific goal to produce a profile of rooming house users:

1. The Toronto study (Hwang et al, 2003 a&b) sought associations between the health status of roomers and the physical factors of rooming houses;
2. The Winnipeg study (Distasio et al, 2002) set out to examine rooming houses from a broader community based “people and place” perspective;
3. A 1999 Vancouver study (Main & Hastings Community Development Society, Tenants Rights Action Coalition, 1999) was designed to develop a picture of the housing and health needs of residents living in the single room occupancy hotels in the downtown core of Vancouver in comparison to information previously collected in 1991.
4. A 1991 Vancouver study (Butt, 1991) interviewed 278 SRO residents in Downtown Vancouver in order to better understand their housing, health, and social issues.

5. A 1989 evaluation of rooming houses in Ottawa (Hendrick, 1989) included a profile of residents in 3 rooming houses run by the City's non-profit Housing Corporation
6. A 2003 qualitative study in Montreal focussed on persons with mental health problems living in rooming houses and included a small sample of landlords (Grenier et al. 2003).

The profiles of rooming house users in centres outside the sites established for this study expand the opportunity for comparison between cities, while former studies in Vancouver and Ottawa provide an opportunity for a longitudinal view over time of rooming house users within those cities.

4. A Comparison of Rooming House Studies in Toronto and Winnipeg

4.1 Applied Methodologies

The Toronto study (Hwang et al, 2003 a&b) used a research team to interview a representative sample of 295 residents in 171 licensed rooming houses during 1998. The interview team consisted of 8 interviewers, all of whom had lived in rooming houses and were trained to administer surveys. Unlicensed rooming houses were excluded as there was no consistent or reliable way to identify them. The sample included private, for-profit rooming houses and non-profit houses. All had at least 4 rooms, shared bathrooms and kitchens; and most were converted single-family houses.

Interviewed participants were chosen by randomly identifying particular rooms within specific rooming houses. The St. Michael's Hospital Research Ethics Board approved this approach. If the selected resident could not be contacted after 3 visits, or refused to participate, or could not communicate in English, the interviewer approached the resident of the closest room. If the interviewer was unable to enter the house or if no one in the house was willing to participate, a roomer at a similar house was substituted. Residences were stratified according to the following characteristics: provision vs. non-provision of meals, ownership occupied vs. absentee landlord, participation in the Habitat program¹⁵, and for-profit vs. non-profits status. The survey questions covered demographic characteristics, lifestyle and health, as well as conditions in the rooming house and other health determinants. Health status was assessed using the SF-36 measurement tool. The physical attractiveness of each rooming house was rated using the Multiphasic Environmental Assessment Procedure.

The 2001/02 Winnipeg study (Distasio et al, 2002) focused on the quality of life of roomers and the physical aspects of rooming houses as described by roomers and others knowledgeable about rooming houses. It used a "participatory action research" approach and a combination of surveys, interviews and focus group work, each aimed at a different audience. An initial "low income housing" survey was conducted with 94

¹⁵ The Habitat Program unique to Toronto, places people with severe and persistent mental illness in selected rooming houses that receive supplemental funding.

individuals accessing 5 inner-city drop-ins in order to gain a preliminary “snapshot” of the prevalence of rooming houses as a housing option for low-income people. The second instrument was administered to 38 rooming house tenants by 7 community researchers - many of them rooming house tenants trained to conduct interviews. The academic community in Winnipeg, through its ethics committee, placed restrictions on going door-to-door because of perceived danger. Participants living in rooming houses were therefore identified mainly through personal acquaintance with the community research assistants. Only rooming houses in 3 inner-city neighbourhoods of Winnipeg were targeted, irrespective of their licensing status. A basic definition of rooming house was used – a house converted to rooms in which tenants share a washroom. The Winnipeg study also placed rooming houses into descriptive categories:

- Mega (over 15 tenants)
- Large (10-14 tenants)
- Medium (7-9 tenants)
- Small (5-6 tenants)

Other surveys were undertaken with 8 tenant/caretakers, 15 landlords, and 159 residents and business respondents living or working in the vicinity of rooming houses.

4.2 Findings of the Toronto, and Winnipeg Studies

4.2.1 Profiles of Rooming House Users in Toronto and Winnipeg

Aspects of the Toronto (Hwang et al., 2003 a&b) and Winnipeg (Distasio et al, 2002), studies allow for a comparison between cities of the characteristics and opinions of rooming house users:

	Toronto (1998)	Winnipeg (2001/2002)
Men	84%	73%
Women	16%	27%
Age	overall mean 40.6	
Education		
Employment and Income	approximately 1/3 employed (more than ½ of interviewed women)	70% received social assistance.
Rent	79.2% spent more than 30% of income on rent 33.1 % spent more than 50% of income on rent	72.5% of tenants paid more than the \$236 shelter allowance payment.

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Food Security	54% ran out of food from time to time and were unable to buy more. About 1/3 had gone to a drop-in or meal program during the previous year. More than 1/3 had visited a food bank in the previous year	Many used food banks and soup lines
Safety	More than ½ felt very safe and another 1/3 somewhat safe	71% were usually or always satisfied with safety, while 29% were usually or always unsatisfied
Social supports	85% got together with friends regularly or occasionally, and 5% had regular or occasional contact with their neighbours	31% identified having neighbours, friends and family nearby as one of the best things about a rooming house
Key perceived benefits	Study describes rooming houses as an important source of affordable housing	33% stated that affordability is what they liked about rooming houses
Key area of complaint		40% described sharing, lack of privacy, dealing with other tenants and conflict as the worst aspects
Major housing design issues	area of least satisfaction was bathrooms	
Housing stability	¼ had been homeless in last 5 years 66% lived in current rooming house for less than 3 years with almost 9% living in the same place for more than 10 years	77% of the interviewed low income respondents living in an apartment at the time of the study had lived in a rooming house at one time
Health Status	Rooming house users suffer from a high prevalence of ill health. Residents reporting worst health were concentrated in rooming houses in the poorest physical condition	
Cultural Background	82% white, 9% black, 3% Asian, 2% First Nations. As the survey excluded non-English speaking respondents, figures may be skewed and under represent immigrants or refugees.	

Some interesting surprises were uncovered according to Toronto investigators: a third of those interviewed were employed, 15% had university degrees, and 80% felt they had adequate social supports. It also appeared that those who had engaged (self reported) in heavy drinking and/or drug use were in the minority. The overall finding of the study concluded that generalizations about rooming house tenants are likely to be misleading. A different approach seeking similar information was used in Winnipeg. Rooming house users were asked to estimate the % of "hard to live with tenants". Results were mixed with 33% estimating less than 20%, and another 30% estimating 50-80%.

4.2.2 Major Issues and Considerations Regarding Toronto and Winnipeg Rooming Houses

The Toronto study (Hwang et al., 2003 a&b) concluded that residents reporting the worst health were concentrated in rooming houses in the poorest physical condition. This relationship may have been mediated by selection processes that placed the sickest individuals in the lowest-quality rooming houses, and/or by a direct effect of adverse housing conditions on health status. Further research is recommended to elucidate these processes and to improve the health of this vulnerable population.

The Winnipeg study (Distasio et al., 2002), began by talking to low-income people about their current housing/shelter situation. As part of their survey, they were asked to suggest improvements for rooming houses and housing opportunities for low-income people. The most common suggestions which could affect those accessing and remaining in rooming houses were: screen tenants to obtain better tenants; provide maintenance subsidies to improve the physical condition of rooming houses; and improve the safety and security of rooming houses.

Several important issues were discovered through the community surveys of Winnipeg businesses and residents. The importance of rooming houses was acknowledged, even if only as last resort housing. Rooming house residents were seen by many as neighbours and friends. Only a minority (21%) felt negative about the presence of rooming houses. Many pointed to the lack of maintenance and the disruptive influence rooming houses had on the neighbourhood and the need to build strong relationships between tenants, owners, and the community. Suggestions included a registry system for roomers and boarders; an information centre; working groups of landlords, tenants, members of the public and municipal representatives; and a non-profit community management scheme assuming responsibility for occupant related funding on behalf of owners for a reasonable fee.

A workshop was held at the end of the Winnipeg project. Roomers were asked for suggestions to improve rooming houses. Suggestions were consolidated into the following 6 areas according to priority:

- Tenant relationships, rules and standards
- Landlord responsibilities and standards
- Physical improvements

- More support from Government (financial reality/affordability)
- Women's rooming house
- Tenants' associations

Rooming House Caretakers participating in the workshop provided similar suggestions in a different order of priority:

- More supports from Government
- Tenant relationships, rules and standards
- Physical improvements
- Develop landlord responsibilities and standards

Interviewed owners called for: a program of grants for physical improvements that could improve the quality of life for tenants and improve the quality of the housing stock; restoring shelter rates to the pre-1993 levels and increasing supports for at-risk tenants.

Over the course of the Winnipeg study a number of recurring issues surfaced. Within each theme that follows, recommendations and practices were proposed:

- Affordability and support provision
- Increase shelter allowance
- A governmental subsidy program for employed tenants
- Social service and outreach supports for tenants with special needs
- Tenant relationships
- Ensure rooming houses have adequate "in house" support in the form of live-in caretakers
- Supports, financing, information and guidance should be provided to encourage the formation and running of associations for rooming house tenants and rooming house owners
- Encourage communication between owners and the community
- Physical improvements (especially safety, bathroom ratios)
- Government should review occupancy standards to ensure a reasonable minimum space allowance is enforced
- Owners ensure a reasonable tenant-to-bathroom ratio be set at 4:1
- Improve safety/crime prevention measures
- Financial affordability for owners
- A targeted government-funded program to assist owners in improving their properties

5. Rooming Houses in Vancouver, Ottawa and Montreal

A broad array of documents pertaining to rooming houses in the 3 urban centres of the study were reviewed in order to gain some perspective on the local status of rooming houses and influences that might affect user profiles.

5.1 Vancouver

Rooming houses appear as an integral part of the affordable housing infrastructure in Vancouver in a category known as 'Single Room Occupancy' or 'SROs'. Recent reports reveal a considerable amount of research and policy development focusing on the retention and improvement of existing SRO housing in Vancouver.

The 2003 Survey of Low-Income Housing in the Downtown Core lists a total of 4,152 rooms in 118 Rooming Houses in operation in downtown Vancouver. An additional 2,162 SRO units existed in 'Residential Hotels', which usually have a license to operate a pub or lounge on the premises. Between 2001 and 2003, a net loss of 61 units occurred, all in the rooming house stock, though the situation is quite fluid as many units are easily converted back and forth into backpacker hostels serving the low end of the tourist market (The Housing Centre, 2003).

Between 1970 and 2003, the total number of licensed rooming house units in Vancouver decreased from 9500 to 5093, through processes of conversion, demolition and closure (City of Vancouver, 2005). Recent bylaw changes have slowed the reduction in available rooming house units, primarily with the intent to prevent homelessness. Since 1991, Vancouver has sought to replace SRO/rooming house stock 'one-for-one' with non-market affordable housing. Between 1991 and 1996 there was still a net loss of housing stock, but from 1997 to 2001 there was a net gain as a result of increased funding for social housing (while the total SRO and rooming house stock declined) (City of Vancouver, 2005).

A significant and ongoing concern in many rooming houses and residential hotels is the impact of the drug trade in downtown Vancouver. Some of the drug trade occurs in hotels, which has been identified as having a detrimental effect on the housing stock. Similarly, the maximum shelter allowance for recipients of Income Assistance in British Columbia is \$325/month, which makes the operation of rooming houses economically challenging. "Simply looking at operating costs and regular maintenance means most cannot operate without subsidies" (City of Vancouver, 2005).

Retention and renovation of the rooming house and residential hotel stock in Vancouver is seen as a tool to help prevent homelessness. Despite these efforts, homelessness has increased dramatically in recent years, doubling between 2002 and 2005 (SPARC, 2005). The increased demand for low-income housing exists in conflict with the maximum shelter allowance for Income Assistance recipients, and the temptation for rooming house operators to convert into budget hotels, backpacker hostels or other more profitable business models (City of Vancouver, 2005).

5.1.2 Rooming House Users in Vancouver

Two studies of rooming house users in Vancouver were identified as relevant to this study.

- The 1999 Vancouver study (Main & Hastings Community Development Society, Tenants Rights Action Coalition, 1999) was designed to develop a picture of the housing and health needs of residents living in the single room occupancy hotels in the downtown core of Vancouver.
- An earlier study was undertaken by Butt in 1991 and is most likely the study referred to in the 1999 study. It reported on the status of Vancouver's lodging houses, examined the living conditions and health and social service needs of special groups such as seniors, Aboriginal, mentally ill and the disabled. Its focus was privately owned SRO hotels in specific census tracts of the downtown area (Butt, 1991).

5.1.3 Applied Methodologies

The Butt study (1991) randomly selected hotels, and then a random list of numbers was used to determine how many interviews surveyors would conduct in each hotel. Within each hotel attempts were made to interview residents from all floors and the fronts and back of buildings as hotels were renting out rooms on different floors to different types of people. 279 surveys were completed that sought information about housing, health and social needs as well as basic demographic information. Surveyors elicited a response rate of approximately 80%. Those not willing to be interviewed were mainly in the categories of:

1. People who appeared to have emotional/mental health problems and who were also uncomfortable with the idea of being asked questions (40%)
2. People who had only been in the area for a few days and felt they didn't know enough to answer the questions (30%)
3. People who professed a complete lack of interest in completing the survey (30%)

The 1999 Vancouver project was by far the most extensive of the 6 studies profiling rooming house users that were reviewed (Main & Hastings Community Development Society, Tenants Rights Action Coalition, 1999). It surveyed 1,447 residents housed in 6,060 units within a total of 144 SROs - approximately 1/4 of those living in "typical" SRO units in 1999. The surveys were administered by trained volunteers familiar with the geographical area. Each was paid an honorarium based on the number of surveys they completed. A collaborative community process was used that incorporated feedback from key agencies and groups in Vancouver during the development and administration of the survey.

5.1.4 Profiles of Vancouver Rooming House Users in 1991 and 1999

Investigators in the 1999 study (Main & Hastings Community Development Society, Tenants Rights Action Coalition, 1999) compared their findings with information

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previously collected in 1991 and discovered areas in which the overall quality of life for residents living in SROs had declined. Overwhelmingly (90%) of the interviewed residents indicated that they would prefer to live in a self-contained apartment, and only 2% indicated that they would choose to live in their current situation. Butt (1991) documented a similar preference for self –contained units.

Butt noted that generalizations about SRO residents were hard to make but that some patterns became evident when the 1991 captured data was compared to earlier surveys in 1984 and 1986:

- Downtown SRO hotels appeared to house a different group of people than those in Downtown South. Downtown SROs housed more women, and the population in general was older than those in Downtown South.
- Most tenants in 1991 continued to make Downtown SROs their permanent home

	(Butt) 1991 with reference to former studies in 1984 and 1986	(Main & Hastings Community Development Society, Tenants Rights Action Coalition, 1999) Vancouver (1999) with reference to a former 1991 study
Men	82%	83%
Women	18% 13% in 1987	15% (consistent with earlier studies)
Age	35% aged 26-45 33% over the age of 55 Average age was 47 (average for women was 46) Population over 55 was decreasing in number from pervious surveys	57% 25-44 (average age for women is 38 – a significant decline since 1991)
Education	Most had 6-14 years of schooling including 15% with more than high school	

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Employment and Income	<p>11% working in 1984/86 & 14% in 1991. Most received some form of social assistance</p> <p>There was a decrease in those receiving OAS/CPP funding in 1991</p>	<p>56% received BC benefits</p> <p>16% disability benefits</p> <p>7% income from employment (down from 14% in 1991)</p> <p>5% received a pension</p> <p>Women tend to be poorer</p>
Rent	<p>With an average income of \$763 and an average rent of \$293, almost 70% of residents paid more than 40% of their income on rent at a time when CMHC considered it reasonable to pay 28% of personal income on rent</p>	<p>Average reported income was \$658 a month (down from \$763 in 1991). Average reported rent \$339 a month (increased from \$295 in 1991).</p>
Food Security	<p>Average number of meals missed in 1 month was 33. Tenants also accessed free food opportunities</p>	<p>Access to cooking facilities was a major housing challenge</p>
Safety	<p>75% of women felt safe</p> <p>85% of men felt safe</p>	<p>Safety & security rated at 6.8/10</p>
Social supports	<p>Some had relatives in the same building, others preferred isolation.</p> <p>In areas of housing stability, there was a good sense of community. Many residents looked out for others in their hotels, especially for those with disabilities</p>	
Key perceived benefits		<p>Report highlighted the important role of SROs in meeting the basic housing needs of low income singles. However, affordability was a challenge for SRO users.</p> <p>20% liked cleanliness, 26% quietness and 16% convenience of their SRO</p>
Key area of complaint	<p>The quality of living was considered very poor and assistance to avoid exploitation by managers was identified as a need</p>	<p>Complaints included the way in which hotels were managed, vermin and noise (particularly in SROs with pub licenses)</p>

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Major housing design issues	Smallness of rooms, limited basic amenities. Little opportunity to socialize due to scarce public lounges	Access to cooking facilities. 94% shared a bathroom. Significant increase from the 1991 study of those without basic cooking facilities in their room
Housing stability	<p>more than 5 years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1984 - 60% • 1986 - 55% • 1991- 50% <p>less than 1 year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1984-12% • 1986-18% • 1991-26% <p>Few had lived in homes, apartments or in emergency shelters more than SROs. SROs seen as their only housing option.</p>	<p>42% had lived in another SRO and 4% had stayed in a shelter</p> <p>37% came from other rental housing.</p> <p>Many had lived in the area for an average of 6.25 years and the majority expected to still be living in the area for the next 3 years suggesting they had no alternative.</p> <p>In general, women had lived in both the area and their unit for a shorter period of time.</p>
Health Status	<p>Health status, level of disabilities, and emotional well-being rated lower than in wealthier populations.</p> <p>43% rated health as good, 28% as fair.</p>	<p>Longer tenancy in SROs related to poorer health</p> <p>39% of all women rated their health as fair to poor</p>
Cultural Background	<p>8% Cantonese/Mandarin speaking</p> <p>19% native descent – 1991</p> <p>12% native descent – 1987</p>	<p>15% First Nations</p> <p>9% spoke a first language other than English</p>

5.1.5 Major Issues and Considerations Regarding Vancouver Rooming Houses

Several themes emerged from the analysis of 1999 data collected in Vancouver (Main & Hastings Community Development Society, Tenants Rights Action Coalition, 1999) that echo those of the Winnipeg study (Distasio et al., 2002):

The B.C. government's commitment to increasing the supply of affordable housing is a sound investment and good public policy

The Federal government must re-commit to the provision of social housing

Efforts must be taken to prevent further loss of the SRO stock

Enforcement of the existing standards of management and maintenance by law requires examination

5.2 Ottawa

Reports about Ottawa rooming houses track issues and rooming house use overtime but only about those in the former City of Ottawa prior to amalgamation. Loss of stock without an alternative form of affordable accommodation, the condition of rooming houses, by-law contraventions, affordability, NIMBY, and inadequate revenue relative to the high operating costs for owners was initially documented in 1977. (City of Ottawa, 1977)

Nineteen years later the former City established a Rooming House Study team to explore licensing and the idea of a “response” to deal with rooming house issues. Originally a combination of licensing and a response team approach was recommended, but the consultation process identified that licensing may generate undesirable effects such as the closure of “good” rooming houses. A parallel Rooming House Landlords Working Group proposed assisting tenants with inadequate social skills and behaviour problems as the more appropriate approach to dealing with rooming house issues. An outcome of this dialogue was the establishment of The Rooming House Landlords Association facilitated by the City (City of Ottawa, 1997).

5.2.1 Evaluation of City Living’s Rooming House Program

Ottawa’s involvement in providing housing for singles began in the early 1980’s with a motion for the City’s non profit Housing Corporation (City Living) to proceed with the acquisition and management of rooming houses and other accommodation for low income singles. That role arose as a direct response to the gap at that time in social housing for this group.

An evaluation of the rooming house program was conducted in 1989. The final report includes demographic information on the tenants living in its three rooming houses during a one-month period.

(Hendrick, 1989)

5.2.2 Methodology

Information was gathered from a review of tenant files, program file data, discussions with rooming house staff, and tenant and community agency satisfaction surveys conducted in 1988 (Hendrick, 1989).

5.2.3 Profile of Rooming House Users in Ottawa

In 1976 there were approximately 3,000 roomers in 453 rooming houses with approximately 3,142 rooms. Based on discussions with key informants, rooming house users at the time were described as predominately low income single persons inclusive of students, senior citizens, persons with temporary personal problems, transients and

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new immigrants. Those considered hard to house were thought to be small in number (City of Ottawa, 1977).

In 1883 the broad target population for City Living rooming houses was low-income single persons below 50 years of age, including transient men and women, psychiatrically disabled and marginally employed individuals who are capable of taking care of themselves and able to share close living arrangements. Students were given low priority. The following table provides key characteristics of singles housed in City Living rooming houses in 1988 (Hendrick, 1989):

	Ottawa (1988)
Men	70%
Women	30%
Age	70% aged 25-49
Education	
Employment and Income	69% on some form of social assistance. 12% receiving wages
Rent	62% paid more than 35% of income on rent.
Food Security	58% used food banks and lunch programs on a regular basis
Safety	69% yes 23% no
Social supports	65% knew other tenants in the building. 31% did not. 54% would go to another tenant for help with a problem. 27% would not
Key perceived benefits	Access to a common room (in one building only), free laundry facilities, location and cleanliness of the houses, security within the houses, provision of furniture, affordability. 69% satisfied with rooming house
Key area of complaint	<i>Not asked to identify issues</i>
Major housing design issues	size of units & storage space, no lounge area or pay phone in 2 of the 3 sites
Housing stability	previous residence: hospital 8%, hostel 29%, family 9%, private rental 51% length of residence in rooming house: less than 1 year 47%, 1-2 years 22%, 2-3 year 18%, 4-6 years 7% 23% plan to stay 1 year or less
Health Status	3% - physical disability, 29% mental illness, 4% alcohol abuse, 3% developmental disability
Cultural Background	

5.2.4 Major Issues and Considerations Regarding Ottawa Rooming Houses

The 1989 study (Hendrick, 1989) identified a continuing need for furnished rooming house stock in the future; however, the preferred type of housing was self-contained apartments. Recommendations were made concerning program policy, administration, housing design features and a marketing strategy. Of most relevance to this study are its recommendations regarding the need for rent supplements, minimal standards for the rooming house stock (e.g. square footage, ratio of bathrooms, common-lounge area, storage area etc.) and self contained accommodation through out the city including the suburbs.

5.3 Montreal

The issue of rooming houses in Montreal is one that has preoccupied community organizations and the City administration for decades. In 1982 a coalition of community organizations was formed to examine the issue of rooming houses – especially a loss of 40% of those in the down town area between 1979 and 1981 (Table de concertation sur les maisons de chambres 1982). Rooming house occupancy permits were not renewed during this period because of conversion into apartments, offices or commercial uses as well as loss due to fire (Dansereau, 1998). A six-month study in 1987 of rooming house permits revealed that 9.5 percent (representing 96 rooming houses) were not renewed, which would translate into a 19 percent annual rate of loss (Goulet ,1990). The loss was especially great among small rooming houses, located in downtown neighbourhoods, often those that also housed the owner. (Goulet, 1990; Ville de Montréal 1989). Furthermore, in two-thirds of the cases, more recent owners (i.e. less than five years) had transformed the rooming house – in 47 percent of the cases, the owner had purchased the property less than a year before (Goulet ,1990). Of the 96 non-renewed permits, 72 rooming houses were transformed into other residential uses (e.g. rental apartments or condos) or non-residential uses (e.g. tourist rooms, offices, stores), there had been a fire in 23, and one had been closed by the police (Goulet ,1990).

In 1987, in an effort to preserve rooming houses, the City launched a program that included renovation grants that could go up to 90 percent of the costs and, through its non-profit housing organization, it purchased twelve rooming houses containing 358 rooms between 1989 and 1993 (Dansereau,. 1998). Data from 1989, following these changes seemed to indicate that the rate of loss that had been revealed in the 1980s, was slowing down because of these measures (Goulet, 1990). However, more recent data seem to indicate that the overall loss of rooming houses has not greatly abated. A recent study of rooming houses in the downtown area noted that there were now 113 rooming houses compared to a 1985 study that had found 792 rooming houses in the same area: a loss of five out of six rooming houses in twenty years (RAPSIM, 2005).

5.3.1 Profile of the Residents and Owners

A number of studies have been undertaken on the characteristics of both tenants and owners of rooming houses in Montreal. For example, a 1989 study by the City of

Montreal revealed that the majority of owners¹⁶ were men (72 percent), owning only one rooming house (78 percent). The majority (72 percent) stated that this was not their major source of revenue, although 35 percent stated that the revenue was their primary reason for ownership and 20 percent stated that they had inherited the business. An equal number were found to be non-resident and resident of the rooming houses (including those who lived in close proximity). Almost a quarter (23 percent) had been operating the rooming house for a year or less, while 46 percent had been doing this for over 10 years. Half stated that they had problems with tenants (e.g. late rents, vandalism, psychological problems, drugs and alcohol, etc.) and almost 23 percent planned to sell in the next three years – the most frequent reason being problems with tenants or City requirements (Goulet, 1990; Ville de Montréal, 1989).

Owners stated that their tenants were primarily men (66 percent) although among those over 60 years there was an almost equal number of men and women. For two-thirds of residents, government transfer payments were the primary source of income and 16 percent were perceived to have problems of alcohol and 5 percent problems with drugs (Ville de Montréal, 1989).

A study in 1990 of non-profit housing for single, low-income persons (i.e. rooming houses and studio/one-bedroom apartments) found that men formed the majority of the clientele – ranging from 60 percent to 100 percent, although some organisations had developed mechanisms to attract more women. Persons between 30 and 59 years were found to be over-represented, with a low proportion of persons under 30 years old. The majority (never below 60 percent) received social assistance (Plante, 1990).

A qualitative study of persons with severe mental health problems living in rooming houses examined the role of rooming houses in the context of deinstitutionalisation of persons with psychiatric problems (Grenier et al., 2003). The study categorized these into three groups: “urban nomads” for whom rooming houses offered flexibility and tolerance of behaviours and who were well-connected to various resources offered to them; “outsiders” were persons who exhibit “deviant” behaviours such as drug and alcohol consumption, who often have exhausted traditional resources and had been excluded from other housing – for these persons the rooming house is an alternative to the street; and “abandoned dependents” who have been “abandoned” by family members or close friends who can no longer take care of them. This last group was found to be the most isolated and vulnerable and the least autonomous of the three categories of rooming house residents. Most of the women interviewed were in this latter category – a group that also made the least use of existing resources.

¹⁶ The term “owner” is used but Goulet (1990) points out that a more correct term would be “permit holder” or “operator” since a certain number of persons with permits to operate rooming houses were found to rent the premises from the owners of the buildings. Thus examination of 20 rooming houses revealed that for 6 rooming houses the name of the owner (listed on the property tax role) was not the same as that of the person operating the rooming house although this could in part be due to a delay in inscribing a new owner’s name following a sale (Goulet 1990). Goulet points out that this situation complicates the upkeep and improvements to the rooming house, since the operator must seek permission from the owner to undertake any significant work.

While variation was found among the three categories as to perceptions of the rooming houses themselves, most were unsatisfied with the quality – both the state of the rooming houses and the slowness of landlords to undertake repairs. However, landlords on their part complained that tenants caused damage and that these were costly works to undertake. Satisfaction with the rooms themselves was found to be linked to the previous situation – if the person had been in a larger room or had a better bed, for example – the current situation was likely to be seen as negative. Thus the “urban nomads” who often moved were found to be the most critical, whereas the “abandoned dependents” the least.

Of the four landlords interviewed, three had inherited the “business” from parents and had continued to manage these either because they didn’t want to find themselves alone upon closing the rooming house or did not want to put residents out on the street. Three of the four lived on the premises (in separate, self-contained units), which led to long-term and close contact with the residents and a continuous presence in the building.

Studies have found rooming house residents to have a variety of problems. For example a study in 1977 found that 80 percent of residents had mental health problems, while a more recent study, in 1997, found that 33 percent had HIV/AIDS; 70 percent problems of alcohol, and 33 percent with drug problems (Dansereau, 1998).

5.3.2 Methodology

The Montreal studies described above have used a variety of methods, including:

- The qualitative study by Grenier et al. (2003) used semi-structured interviews of 22 rooming house residents with severe mental health problems (schizophrenia, depression, etc.) and who had lived in the rooming house for at least a year. All were residents of 4 rooming houses: two in Montreal and 2 two outside of the city; two were considered “large” (9 rooms or more) and two were “small”, fewer than 9 rooms; and they were equally divided between male and female administrators. The four rooming houses were identified by organisations working with the target clientele and the owners of all four also were interviewed. A snowball methodology was used to identify participants, including identification of potential participants by landlords/managers, support service workers (where support was given), community organisations, and other participants. Participants were offered a \$20 honorarium.
- An overview of rooming houses in two boroughs in Montreal (RAPSIM, 2005) used a 2002 listing of rooming houses produced by the City of Montreal. The rooming houses were divided into categories, including those managed by non-profit organisations and private owners; targeting particular clienteles (e.g. students); tourist rooms; for sale; no longer operating/converted to other uses. Posing as potential tenants, the researchers asked questions about rents and noted the level of security (e.g. lack or presence of locks, smoke detectors, etc.) and quality (e.g. presence of roaches, availability of hot water, general physical state).

- The methodology for a 1990 study of non-profit organisations managing housing for low-income single persons (Plante, 1990) included a letter to all organisations identified informing them of the study, followed by telephone contact. Almost all the organisations (45 total) that were contacted, agreed to participate. Key informants from each organisation were interviewed in person.
- The study of rooming house owners undertaken by the City of Montreal (Service de l'habitation et du développement urbain, Ville de Montréal, 1989), in collaboration with the association of rooming house owners (Association des propriétaires de maisons de chambres du Québec) consisted of questionnaires mailed out to 500 owners of rooming houses. While responses were to remain anonymous, only 60 were returned.

6. Conclusions

In summary, the literature provides evidence of an array of variables requiring consideration in circumscribing a common definition of "rooming house":

- The minimum number of rooms/units to be considered a rooming house
- Amenities of both rooming house units and the building itself - bathrooms/washrooms, cooking facilities, lounge or pub, locks on doors etc.
- Unit design i.e. single room and or suite of rooms
- Rental period
- On site/off site property manager/landlord
- Relationship to other housing options such as SROs, boarding houses, hotels, motels, etc.
- Tenure/type of owner (i.e. private, non-profit) - size of holdings of private landlords would be interesting (e.g. might yield differences in management and selection) but perhaps hard to find
- Size of the rooming house (e.g. under 6 units, 7-15, 20-30, 30 and over)

The profile of rooming house users in studied Cities across Canada since 1988 is similar for those characteristics where comparable data was collected.

- 70-84% of rooming house users have been men over the last decade
- The majority of rooming house users were aged 25-45
- 7-33% of rooming house users were employed with the majority of cities reporting 7-14% of rooming house users employed
- Rooming house users in all cities reported relying on drop-ins and food banks to feed themselves
- The majority of rooming house users felt safe in their rooming house
- A significant number of rooming house users reported having social networks involving friends and family

- Affordability was the key perceived benefit but also a challenge as over 70% of roomers paid 30-40% of their income on rent.
- The major housing design issue was washrooms/bathrooms
- All studies documented a prevalence of poor health
- Rooming house users came mainly from other rental situations including rooming houses and homeless shelters. Rooming house residency tends to be 1-3 years in the same unit

The literature documents a decline in the numbers of rooming houses and SROs over time in Canada. However the studies producing profiles of rooming house users do not reveal any specific impacts on users due to decreasing stock. Statistics about homelessness over time when compared to rooming house loss in the cities to be studied may prove more revealing.

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Appendix B:
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Appendix C:
Tenant Interview Guide

ID: _____

Introduction: Thank you for taking the time to speak with me. As you know (tenant will have been recruited through peers, a landlord or a housing agency and has agreed in advance to take part in the study) we are conducting this study for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) about rooming houses. CMHC wishes to understand who lives in a rooming house and how satisfied tenants are with their accommodation. Your experiences and suggestions will be very helpful. Everything you tell us is totally confidential. Your answers will be grouped with those of others we are interviewing to give us a total picture. Just a reminder that your participation in this study is totally voluntary. You will be given \$10 for your participation at the end of the interview. You can decline to answer any questions you would prefer not to answer, and you may terminate the interview at any point.

First, let's talk about how and why you came to live here.

1.1. To start with...How long have you lived at this address?

- _____ Less than one month
- _____ Less than 3 months
- _____ 3-6 months
- _____ 6-12 months
- _____ 1-2 years
- _____ More than 2 years (Number of years = _____)

1.1a. (If lived at present address less than 2 years) Over the past 2 years, approximately how many times have you moved? _____

1.1b. (If lived at present address more than 2 years) Why have you stayed at your present address? _____

1.2. How long did you live at the place where you lived just before this one?

_____ Years _____ Months

1.3. How long did you live at the place you lived before that one?

_____ Years _____ Months _____ Not Applicable

1.4. Do you have any plans to move in the next few months?

_____ Yes _____ No

1.4a. (If Yes) Why are you planning to move? (Check all that apply)

___ Too expensive

___ Problems with other tenants

___ Problems with landlord

___ Prefer/moving to a different type of accommodation

___ Prefer/moving to a different location

___ Not close to employment/school location

___ Other (Please describe) _____

1.5. How did you find this place? (Check only one)

_____ Through friends/family

_____ Advertisement in paper

_____ Advertisement in building (walked by)

_____ Through a housing agency

_____ Sign in front of building

_____ Sign on telephone pole, bulletin board or elsewhere

_____ Other (Please describe) _____

1.6. Was it easy to find this place to rent (i.e., lots of choice, no difficulty getting landlord to accept you, etc.)?

_____ Yes _____ No

1.7. Was this the first place you looked at?

_____ Yes _____ No

1.8. Why did you first decide to move here? (Check all that apply)

_____ Affordability

_____ No first/last month deposit needed

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- ☐ Close to friends, family
- ☐ Convenient location/easy to find
- ☐ Better accommodation
- ☐ Close to employment /school/services needed
- ☐ Was referred by a housing help agency or other agency
- ☐ Other (Please describe) _____

1.9. Where did you live just before you moved here? Was it: (Read list to prompt and check only one)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> another rooming house | <input type="checkbox"/> an apartment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a condo | <input type="checkbox"/> a house |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a shelter | <input type="checkbox"/> couch surfer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> the street | <input type="checkbox"/> a group home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a halfway house | <input type="checkbox"/> a foster home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> prison/jail | <input type="checkbox"/> hospital |
| <input type="checkbox"/> lived with family | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other (Please describe) _____ | |

1.9a. (If lived in an apartment, house, condo) Did you own or rent?

☐ Own ☐ Rent

1.10. Why did you move from your last place? (Check all that apply)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Too expensive | <input type="checkbox"/> roommate left |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Problems with other tenants | <input type="checkbox"/> Problems with landlord |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Non-payment of rent | <input type="checkbox"/> was on street/had housing help |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Preferred a different type of accommodation | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Preferred a different location | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Evicted (probe why – if non payment of rent, check above) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please describe) _____ | |

1.11. Have you ever been asked to leave a rooming house?

☐ Yes ☐ No

1.11a. (If Yes) Why? _____

1.12. Have you ever been homeless in the last 3 years? (By homeless I mean actually lived on the streets for some time or in a shelter) (If already mentioned check yes)

_____ Yes _____ No

Now let's talk about what it is like to live here.

2.1 Do you have friends in the building?

_____ Yes _____ No

2.2. Does anyone have pets?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know

2.2a. (If Yes) Is this a problem?

_____ Yes _____ No

2.3. What furniture and other contents did your landlord supply – In other words what was in your room when you moved in? (Read list to prompt and check all that apply.)

_____ bed	_____ dresser
_____ desk	_____ chair(s)
_____ fridge	_____ hot plate
_____ microwave	_____ TV/cable
_____ window air conditioner	_____ smoke detector
_____ wardrobe/closet	
_____ other (Please list):	_____

2.4. Do you have your own bathroom or do you share?

_____ Own _____ Share

2.4a. (If own or share) What is in it? (Read list to prompt and check all that apply.)

_____ Sink _____ Toilet

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_____ Shower _____ Tub

2.4b. (If Share) How many people share your bathroom? _____

2.4b1. Are there any problems with this arrangement? ___Yes ___No

2.4b2. (If Yes) What are the problems? _____

2.5. How would you describe the bathroom in terms of its state of repair? Would you say:

_____ Excellent _____ Good _____ Fair _____ Poor

2.6. Is there a window in the bathroom?

_____ Yes _____ No

2.7. Is there any other ventilation?

_____ Yes _____ No

2.8 Please describe any problems with in the bathroom (such as running toilet, broken fixtures).

_____ No problems

Description of problem(s): _____

2.9. How would you describe the state of cleanliness of the bathroom? Would you say it's:

_____ Excellent _____ Good _____ Fair _____ Poor

Now let's talk about the kitchen

3.1. Do you have access to a kitchen?

_____ Yes _____ No **(If no skip to Question 3.7)**

3.1a. (If yes) Do you share or have your own kitchen?

_____ Share _____ Have own kitchen

3.2. (If shared kitchen) How many of the residents in your house prepare meals in the kitchen? Would you say:

_____ all or most residents _____ some residents _____ a few residents

3.3. (For those with a shared or their own kitchen) Do you use the kitchen to prepare your meals?

_____ Yes _____ No

3.3a. (If No) Why not? _____

3.4. Where do you store your food?

_____ in a fridge in your room

_____ elsewhere in your room

_____ in a common fridge in the kitchen

_____ other (please describe) _____

3.5. How would you describe the state of repair of the kitchen? Would you say it's:

_____ Excellent _____ Good _____ Fair _____ Poor

3.6. How would you describe the state of cleanliness of the kitchen? Would you say it's:

_____ Excellent _____ Good _____ Fair _____ Poor

ASK EVERYONE

3.7. Do you share anything else such as a laundry, living or lounge area, telephone?

_____ Yes _____ No

3.7a. (If Yes) What else do you share? (Check all that apply)

_____ Kitchen

_____ Laundry

_____ Lounge

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_____ Telephone

_____ Other (Please describe): _____

3.8. Do you share expenses (such as food) with any of the other tenants?

_____ Yes _____ No

3.9. Do you sometimes have family or other people living with you for a while (not just visiting)?

_____ Yes _____ No

3.9a. (If Yes) What is their relationship to you? (Check all that apply)

_____ Children/grandchildren

_____ Parents/grandparents

_____ Brothers/sister/cousins

_____ Partner/boyfriend/girlfriend

_____ Other friends

_____ Other

3.10. Is there a janitor/caretaker on site?

_____ Yes _____ No

3.10a. (If Yes) Is this person also your landlord?

_____ Yes _____ No

3.10b. How often do you speak with him/her? Would you say:

_____ daily _____ weekly

_____ monthly _____ less often

_____ have never spoken to him/her

3.11. Is there anyone here in the building you feel you could go to if you needed some help?

_____ Yes _____ No

3.11a. (If yes) Would this be:

_____ another tenant
_____ janitor/caretaker
_____ landlord
_____ someone else (Please describe) _____

3.12. Is there a no smoking rule in your building?

_____ Yes _____ No

3.13. Is there a no drinking rule in your building?

_____ Yes _____ No

3.14. Are there any rules related to security (such as not taking the batteries out of smoke detectors, keeping building locked, not letting strangers in, etc.)?

_____ Yes _____ No

3.15. Are there any other rules you must follow? (Interviewer probe about rule regarding drug use in building.)

_____ Yes _____ No

(If yes) what are they _____

3.15a. (If yes to any rules) Which rules do you appreciate having in place? (Check all that apply)

_____ no smoking _____ no drinking
_____ no drugs _____ rules related to safety and security
_____ no violence
_____ other (Please describe) _____

3.15b. Are there any rules you do not appreciate?

_____ Yes _____ No

(If Yes, check)

_____ no smoking _____ no drinking

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_____ no drugs _____ rules related to safety and security
_____ no violence
_____ other (Please describe) _____

3.16. Are there any services offered by your landlord such as prepared meals (this may have already been mentioned), help in cashing cheques, help in filling out forms, etc?

_____ Yes _____ No

3.16a. (If yes) What are these services? Is there an extra cost?

_____ Prepared meals _____ included in rent _____ offered at an extra cost
_____ Cashing cheques _____ included in rent _____ offered at an extra cost
_____ Filling out forms _____ included in rent _____ offered at an extra cost
_____ Other (please specify) _____

Now let's talk about how you would rate some other aspects

4.1. How would you rate your accommodation on the following aspects? Would you rate each aspect as good, fair or poor or maybe it doesn't apply. First of all what about the:

	Good	Fair	Poor	N/A
Exterior of the building/use of yard/appearance				
Quality of the building interior (maintenance, soundproof walls, heating/air conditioning etc.)				
Cleanliness of the building (no garbage around, no pests, mice or other rodents, vermin, bedbugs, cockroaches)				
Building security (good locks on main entrance, your room, janitor/building manager responsive when needed etc.)				
Personal safety (feel safe in terms of neighbours, no violent tenants or visitors, weapons on site, police responsive when needed etc.)				
Feels like a "home"				
Stability, mobility of tenants (i.e. turnover low)				
Tenants, socializing, getting along				
Being able to have visitors				

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Cost to live here				
Quality of your room (size, furniture, lighting, ventilation, storage/closet/shelves etc.)				
Responsiveness of your landlord to problems				
Common areas in the building (lounge, kitchen, bathrooms)				
Accessibility for persons with disabilities (wheel chair access etc.)				
Location (close to stores, services, transportation)				
Neighbourhood (friendliness, noise level etc.)				

4.2. How satisfied are you with your overall housing situation? Would you say you are:

_____ Very satisfied _____ Somewhat satisfied
_____ Somewhat dissatisfied _____ Very dissatisfied

4.2a. Why do you feel this way? _____

4.3. Do you see your present accommodation as a longer term or a more temporary situation?

_____ Long Term _____ Temporary

4.4. What do you like best about your present accommodation? (Check all that apply)

_____ Affordability _____ Close to friends, family
_____ Location - Close to services/school/employment needed
_____ Extras/shared facilities such as kitchen, lounge etc.
_____ Friendships with other tenants _____ Like the landlord
_____ Like this type of accommodation _____ Cleanliness
_____ Safety, security _____ Privacy
_____ Other (Please describe) _____

4.5. What do you dislike most about your present accommodation? (Check all that apply)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Too expensive | <input type="checkbox"/> Problems with other tenants |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Problems with landlord | <input type="checkbox"/> Dislike this type of accommodation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dislike location | <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of privacy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of extras/shared facilities such as kitchen, lounge etc. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't feel safe/secure | <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of cleanliness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please describe) _____ | |

4.6. If you decided to move, what would you be looking for in a new home?

4.7. Have you ever applied for subsidized housing?

☐ Yes ☐ No

4.7a. (If Yes) What happened? _____

4.7b. Are you on a waiting list (for subsidized housing)?

Yes ☐ No ☐

4.7c. (If yes) Since when/how long have you been on that waiting list?

☐ Months ☐ Years

4.8. In what type of housing do you see yourself living in 5 years? (Probe for type of accommodation [apartment, house etc.], owned or rented, share with others etc.)

Just a few more questions about you

5.1. How old are you? _____

5.2. What is your gender?

_____ Male _____ Female _____ Transgender

5.3. Do you identify as:

_____ Heterosexual

_____ Gay

_____ Lesbian

_____ Bisexual

_____ Two Spirit

_____ Intersex (someone born with an anatomy that someone has decided is not standard for a male or female)

_____ Questioning

_____ Other (Please describe) _____

5.4. Are you:

_____ single

_____ married/common law/same sex union

_____ separated/divorced _____ widowed

5.5. Where were you born?

_____ Canada

_____ Other – record birthplace _____

5.5a. (If other) What year did you come to Canada? _____

5.5b. What is your current status in Canada?

_____ Citizen

_____ Refugee Claimant

_____ Visitor/Student Visa

_____ Permanent Resident/Landed Immigrant

5.6a. How long have you lived in this province?

_____ Years _____ Months _____ Whole life

5.7. How long have you lived in this city?

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_____ Years _____ Months _____ Whole life

(If lived elsewhere before) Where did you live just before you came here?

Country _____

Province _____

City/town _____

5.8. How would you describe your cultural background? (Do not read categories)

_____ First Nations / Aboriginal

_____ British / Anglo

_____ Francophone

_____ Other (Please record) _____

5.9. What is your highest level of education?

_____ Some or completed elementary

_____ Some high school

_____ Completed high school

_____ Some or completed trade school or equivalent

_____ Some college (CEGEP)

_____ Some university

_____ Completed college degree (CEGEP)

_____ Completed university degree

_____ Other (Please describe e.g. ESL) _____

5.9a. (If not completed high school) Why did you leave school?

_____ Expelled _____ Early leaver

_____ Other (Please describe) _____

5.10. Were you ever in a special education program (in elementary or high school)?

_____ Yes _____ No

5.10a. (If yes) Why? _____

5.10b. (If not mentioned above) Have you ever been told that you have a learning disability?

_____ Yes _____ No

5.11. Are you: (Read categories and check all that apply)

_____ Working full time

_____ Working part time

_____ Student (describe full or part time and level)

_____ Looking for work

_____ Unable to work/disabled

_____ Retired

_____ Informal – Binning (dumpster diving), petty crime, etc.

_____ Self employed

_____ Other (Please describe) _____

5.12. Do you receive any of your monthly income from the following sources (check all that apply):

_____ Employment insurance

_____ Social assistance/welfare

_____ Old age pension

_____ Veteran's allowance

_____ Canada Pension Plan (CPP)

_____ Employment/self employment

_____ Disability pension (If yes, what is the source? _____)

_____ Student bursary/loan

_____ Other (underground economy, illegal activities) Please describe:

5.13. What is your gross (before taxes) monthly income from sources? \$ _____

(If refuse or don't know actual income ask annual income ranges below)

_____ Under \$8,000

_____ \$8,000-\$12,000

_____ \$12,001-\$15,000

_____ \$15,001-\$20,000

_____ More than \$20,000

_____ Don't know/refused

5.14. How much do you spend on rent?

_____ per week or _____ per month

5.15. How do you pay? Is it: (read categories)

_____ Interac _____ monthly/weekly cheque
_____ post-dated cheques _____ cash
_____ automatic withdrawal (from your bank account)
_____ other (Please describe) _____

5.16. Do you get receipts for the rent?

_____ Yes _____ No

5.17. In the last month, have you done any of the following: (Check all that apply)

_____ Used a food bank
_____ Ate at a soup kitchen
_____ Used another type of drop-in meal service
_____ Pan handled on the street
_____ Binning (dumpster diving)

5.18. Do you ever skip meals due to a lack of money?

_____ Yes _____ No

5.18a. (If yes) About how many meals a month do you skip? _____

5.19. Would you say that in general your health is:

_____ Excellent _____ Very good
_____ Good _____ Fair
_____ Poor

5.20. Has your health changed at all since you've lived here?

_____ Yes _____ No

5.20a (If yes) Is it better now or worse?

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_____ Better _____ Worse

Why do you think your health changed for the better/worse?

5.21. Do you think of yourself as having a substance abuse problem or an addiction of any sort?

_____ Yes _____ No

5.21a (If yes) What is your problem or addiction? (Check all that apply)

_____ alcohol
_____ cigarettes
_____ street drugs (Please describe) _____
_____ over the counter drugs (Please describe) _____
_____ gambling
_____ other (please describe) _____

5.21a. How long have you had this problem?

_____ Months _____ Years

5.21b. Are you currently active or recovering?

_____ Active _____ Recovering

5.22. Do you have any health conditions that have been diagnosed by a health professional (such as depression, anxiety disorder, HIV/AIDS, cancer, heart disease or diabetes) and that have lasted or are expected to last 6 months or more?

_____ Yes _____ No

5.22a. (If Yes) What is your diagnosis? (Check all that apply)

_____ Depression/mood disorder/bipolar _____ Anxiety/Panic disorder
_____ HIV/Aids _____ Hep C
_____ Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
_____ Schizophrenia _____ Dementia/Alzheimer's Disease

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<input type="checkbox"/> Cancer	<input type="checkbox"/> Heart disease
<input type="checkbox"/> Diabetes	<input type="checkbox"/> Chronic fatigue syndrome
<input type="checkbox"/> Fibromyalgia	<input type="checkbox"/> Arthritis/Osteo Arthritis
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please describe) _____	

5.23. Do you receive outreach or support services for any of the following reasons?
(Read list and check all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Mental health	<input type="checkbox"/> Addictions
<input type="checkbox"/> Occupational therapy	<input type="checkbox"/> Home management / life skills
<input type="checkbox"/> Anything else (Please describe) _____	

5.23a. (If yes to any of the above) How often on average do you receive/use one or more of these services?

☐ Daily
☐ Once a week
☐ Once a month
☐ Less often than this

5.24. Do you have a family physician?

☐ Yes ☐ No

5.25. Do you have a dentist?

☐ Yes ☐ No

5.25. Do you go to a community health centre/clinic for health/dental care?

☐ Yes ☐ No

5.26. Are you limited in the kind or amount of activity you can do because of a long-term (6 months or more) physical or mental health condition?

☐ Yes ☐ No

5.26a. (Interviewer record of respondent uses any mobility, hearing or sight aids such as a wheel chair, walker, cane, guide dog, white cane, hearing aid _____)

)

5.27. What is your primary mode of transport?

_____ walking

_____ personal motor vehicle

_____ public transit

_____ bicycle – is there bike storage? ____ Yes ____ No

_____ scooter

_____ wheelchair

_____ other (Please describe) _____

5.28. Is there enough parking at your rooming house?

_____ Yes _____ No

5.29. Finally, do you have your own phone or a cellphone?

_____ Yes _____ No

5.30. Is there anything you would like to tell me about your self and about living here?

Interviewer comments:

Appendix D:

Sample Characteristics by City

Exhibit D1 Number of Residents Interviewed by Gender

City	Total Number	% Male	% Female	% Transgender
Vancouver	80	66%	34%	0
Ottawa	80	61%	39%	5%
Montreal	80	91%	9%	0
TOTAL	240	175	65	4

Exhibit D2 Number of Rooming Houses by Ownership

CITY	Total Number	% For Profit	% Not For Profit	Ownership Status Unknown
Vancouver	54	91%	5%	4%
Ottawa	53	91%	9%	-
Montreal	12	91%	9%	-
TOTAL	119	108	9	2

Exhibit D3 Number of Rooming Houses by Licensing Status

CITY	Total Number	% Licensed	% Not Licensed	Licensing Unknown
Vancouver	54	74%	22%	4%
Ottawa*	53	34%	66%	-
Montreal	12	100%	-	-
TOTAL	119	70	47	2

*Includes those pending a license (in process)

Exhibit D4 Number of Rooming Houses Sampled by Size

CITY	Total Number	% < 10 rooms	% 10-30 rooms	% 31-99 rooms	% 100+ rooms	Unknown
Vancouver	54	26%	26%	35%	11%	2%
Ottawa	53	51%	43%	6%	-	-
Montreal	12	25%	42%	33%	-	-
TOTAL	119	44	22	23	6	1

Exhibit D5 Number of Rooming Houses Sampled by Location

CITY	Total Number	% inside city core	% outside city core
Vancouver	54	59%	41%
Ottawa	53	89%	11%
Montreal	12	42%	58%*
TOTAL	119	84	35

* The non-core rooming houses in Montreal were all situated in the Plateau Mont-Royal, a borough which is contiguous to the downtown core.

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