



INSTITUTE OF
URBAN STUDIES

AT HOME/CHEZ SOI FACT SHEETS

#3 - PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

The At Home/Chez Soi Fact Sheets comprises a series of brief reports highlighting key features and themes of the At Home/Chez Soi Housing First demonstration project in Winnipeg. As a collection, the fact sheets provide a broad overview of the project's structure, scope, methods, and outcomes to inform public understanding of the project. This Fact Sheet presents information regarding the demographics and previous personal, health, and social circumstances of At Home/Chez Soi project participants.

AT HOME/CHEZ SOI PARTICIPANTS

A total of 513 participants were eligible - experiencing homelessness and living with a serious mental illness - and enrolled in the At Home Chez Soi project in Winnipeg. Table 1 presents select demographic information about participants, highlighting characteristics at the time of the baseline interview. Since participants were randomized into either an Intervention (INT) or a Treatment as Usual (TAU) group following the baseline interview, Table 1 presents demographic data based on participant needs levels; high needs (HN) or moderate needs (MN). Needs levels were evaluated at enrolment based on mental health histories.

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

The number of female participants was deliberately sampled high to learn more about the understudied experiences of women experiencing homelessness and mental illness. The majority of participants in the project reported they were of Aboriginal descent (71%). The high percentage of Indigenous peoples experiencing homelessness in Winnipeg was one reason for its inclusion as a site in the project.

PARTICIPANT PERSONAL, HEALTH, AND SOCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

At enrolment, participants were asked a series of questions regarding their past and current personal, health, and social circumstances. Nearly all (99%) of the At Home/Chez Soi participants reported at least one serious physical health condition, and 82% reported having experienced a traumatic brain injury. Participants also reported symptoms consistent with the following mental health challenges: psychotic disorders (28%), non-psychotic disorders (86%), concurrent disorders such as substance-abuse problems (77%), and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD; 45%). Nearly one-quarter (22%) of participants were admitted to a hospital two or more times for a mental illness in any one-year period in the five years prior to the study.

At Home/Chez Soi participants had difficult personal histories; before the age of 18 participants were, on average, exposed to six different categories of child abuse and/or neglect. Furthermore, 49% of participants had a history in foster care, 42% had parents who attended residential schools, and 11% had attended residential schools themselves. A large percentage of participants were also victimized in the 6 months pre-ceding the study; Over half (51%) of participants reported having been physically assaulted, and 41% reported having been robbed or threatened to be robbed. Many participants (35%) were also involved in the criminal justice system during this 6-month period.

The demographic characteristics and personal circumstances highlighted in this fact sheet point to the vulnerabilities of At Home/Chez Soi participants. Readers should refer to the *Winnipeg Final Report: At Home/Chez Soi Project* for a more detailed account of participants' demographics and previous personal, health, and social circumstances.

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Table 1. Select Demographic Characteristics of Winnipeg Participants at Baseline

	TOTAL SAMPLE (n= 513) (%)	HIGH NEEDS (n= 199) (%)	MODERATE NEEDS (n= 314) (%)
AGE GROUPS			
34 & younger	37	41	35
35-54	57	57	57
55 & older	6	2	8
GENDER (SELF-IDENTIFIED)			
Male	64	59	67
Female	36	41	33
other	<1	0	<1
COUNTRY OF BIRTH			
Canada	97	95	98
Other	3	5	2
ETHNICITY			
Aboriginal	71	68	72
Other ethnocultural	5	5	5
MARITAL STATUS			
Single, never married	70	72	69
Married or common-law	5	5	5
Other	25	23	26
PARENT STATUS			
Any children	47	47	47
EDUCATION			
Less than high school	69	74	67
High school	12	12	12
Any post-secondary	19	14	21
PRIOR MILITARY SERVICE			
	5	5	5
PRIOR MONTHLY INCOME			
Less than \$300	47	45	49
PRIOR EMPLOYMENT (worked continuously at least one year in past)			
	52	44	57
CURRENTLY UNEMPLOYED			
	91	93	89

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

	TOTAL SAMPLE (n = 513) %	HIGH NEEDS (n = 199) %	MODERATE NEEDS (n = 314) %
HOMELESSNESS STATUS AT ENROLMENT			
Absolutely homeless ⁱ	69	71	68
Precariously housed ⁱⁱ	31	28	32
FIRST TIME HOMELESS			
The year prior to the study	22	16	26
2008 or earlier	78	84	74
LONGEST PERIOD OF HOMELESSNESS IN MONTHS			
(lowest and highest rounded to next month)	60 (1-420)	60 (1-420)	60 (1-324)
APPROXIMATE AGE FIRST HOMELESSⁱⁱⁱ			
	(n=507)	(n=194)	(n=313)
18 & Younger	27	32	24
19-34	39	45	34.5
35-54	31	23	37
55 & older	3	<1	4.5

Source: MHCC, Winnipeg Final Report, 2014

ⁱ Absolute homelessness refers to individuals “who lack a regular, fixed, physical shelter... and includes those who are living in rough in a public or private place not ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for a human being ”(MHCC, 2014, pg. 30).

ⁱⁱ Precariously housed refers to individuals “whose primary residence is a Single Room Occupancy (SRO), rooming house, or hotel/motel” and “have had two episodes of being absolutely homeless” (MHCC, 2014, pg.30).

ⁱⁱⁱ ‘Approximate age first homeless’ is approximate because it was calculated by subtracting a participant’s birth year from the year first homeless. Month and date data for ‘Age first homeless’ did not exist; ‘Approximate age first homeless’ assumes that participants already passed their birth date in the year they first experienced homelessness.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Mental Health Commission of Canada. (2014). *Winnipeg Final Report: At Home/Chez Soi Project*. Retrieved from: <http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/document/32946/winnipeg-final-report-homechez-soi-project>

Mental Health Commission of Canada. (2014). *National Final Report: Cross-Site At Home/Chez Soi Project*. Retrieved from: <http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/document/24376/national-homechez-soi-final-report>

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The Institute of Urban Studies is an independent research arm of the University of Winnipeg. Since 1969, the IUS has been both an academic and an applied research centre, committed to examining urban development issues in a broad, non-partisan manner. The Institute examines inner city, environmental, Aboriginal and community development issues. In addition to its ongoing involvement in research, IUS brings in visiting scholars, hosts workshops, seminars and conferences, and acts in partnership with other organizations in the community to effect positive change.