

Homelessness Partnering Strategy



HOUSING AND AFFORDABILITY

A Snapshot of the Challenges and Successes for Winnipeg's African Community

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1.0 Introduction

In Canada, international migration remains a vital part of our population growth (both historically and certainly in the contemporary). Locally, Manitoba and Winnipeg have relied heavily on immigration to reverse much slower growth trends that occurred in the 1990s. There is also little doubt that Winnipeg's population has been boosted significantly over the past decade by the in-migration of newcomers from all parts of the world. It is within this diverse population that this research sought to explore the housing circumstances of migrants arriving from African countries.

Affordable and quality housing is fundamental to overall wellbeing and helps support successful transitions to living in Canada. However, access to housing that meets the needs of individuals and families is often a challenge, especially in communities where tough market conditions prevent or limit availability through factors such as affordability or choice. The inability of the market to accommodate needs results in individuals and families being pushed to the limits with some becoming precariously close to or ending up homeless. Often we conceive of homelessness as being an either/or state, one is either in housing or not. For many, however, this does not account for the high volatility in the continuum of housing where being housed or homeless often includes living unstably from month to month or ending up in substandard housing that does not meet community standards for affordability, quality or suitability. Simply put, *homelessness* is vastly complex and is neither easily defined nor understood.

This community grounded project represents a mere snapshot of how one diverse community is responding to the local housing market and adjusting to living in Winnipeg. The goal was to begin a conversation within the burgeoning African community of Winnipeg. The intent was to explore housing in the broadest sense and offer insights as to what was occurring within this group as it struggles and succeeds in adjusting to living in Winnipeg. To undertake this work, the first step was to ground the effort in the community as much as possible. This was achieved by implementing a community-based participatory research model which offered the community a leading role in designing and undertaking the work from the ground up.

The purpose of this study was to examine the housing experiences and related challenges of settlement of African immigrants and refugees locating to Winnipeg. This included immigrant and refugee perceptions of housing, the challenges and barriers of finding affordable housing, satisfaction with current housing, neighbourhood perceptions, knowledge of community supports and service agencies, and the role of housing in the integration process. This report provides a "point in time" snapshot of the housing experiences of African immigrants and refugees in Winnipeg. The study builds on current discourse regarding the settlement experiences of newcomers in a period of increasing immigration in Canada.

It is important to note that the research team spent several years building up to this final effort. Thus it is difficult to acknowledge the significant time spent on building relationships within the community or the effort made to draw in local researchers and

leaders to participate in this effort. In the end, this research was created by and for the community. It is our intent to respect this process and be true to the views and thoughts expressed throughout the project. It is hoped that this was achieved and that our work presents a meaningful account of the general situation being encountered by those settling in a new country and city.

2.0 Our Approach to Working in the Community

The following section provides an overview of the key aspects used to undertake this important community-based effort that included:

- Conducting a brief review of the existing literature;
- Designing and undertaking a community survey;
- Hosting a community gathering;
- Coordinating a final community forum; and
- Synthesizing the results.

To ground this work, a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach was used to ensure the engagement of the community in all aspects of the research process. The experiences of African immigrants and refugees in finding suitable, adequate and affordable housing in Winnipeg were examined using mixed-methods. This included conducting one hundred surveys within the community and analyzing the results quantitatively.

In addition, qualitative data obtained from group discussions were assessed by coding and identifying themes and patterns in the transcripts and notes taken at facilitated community events. The statistical data and community-based knowledge were then synthesized to produce this report. The report is oriented toward providing an overview of the literature, the community survey, the community meeting and the wrap-up community forum. These four components of research were foundational to the work and are referred to throughout the report.

To help frame the work, a literature review was undertaken to assess general information on recent growth trends in the City of Winnipeg as well as the arrival of African immigrants and refugees to the city. A brief outline of the current support environment for newcomers was developed. The literature review assisted in structuring the framework of the study and helped inform the development of the personal interview questionnaire.

The research journey began with a gathering that brought together members of the African immigrant and refugee community to discuss the project and receive support. This informal meeting was critical in reviewing previous research, contemplating present research questions, and in formulating the initial research design. As well, a research team was drawn from the African immigrant and refugee community to help ground the work. Building a research team from within the community contributed to the study's participatory approach and helped facilitate stronger connections within the service and

support environment. The team received training by the Institute of Urban Studies, University of Winnipeg. Equally important was that the community-based researchers also provided input into the survey design and focus group format.

The research team worked collaboratively to design an appropriate survey that was vetted by the University of Winnipeg's Ethics Committee. The community survey consisted of one-on-one interviews with one hundred members of the African immigrant and refugee community. African Communities of Manitoba Inc. (ACOMI), an umbrella organization for the African Community in Manitoba, was consulted for advice on how to reach out to all sectors of the community. Through an online search, community researchers identified African organizations in Winnipeg to establish connections with and arranged interviews. The study team made an effort to include participant representation that reflected diversity in terms of age, socio-economic status, education and region and country of origin in Africa. The interview questionnaire included forty questions, half of which were open-ended questions designed to allow for a greater variation in responses (See Appendix I).

Following the one-on-one surveys, the research team worked with local stakeholders to host a community meeting. This meeting was held on November 23, 2013 and brought together a subset of the African immigrant and refugee community that had not been reached through the initial surveys. This event resulted in the attendance of twenty-one members of Winnipeg's Somali community. The meeting was held at a Somali community and prayer house in the Central Park neighbourhood as this location was familiar to this group. A local Middle Eastern restaurant catered the event in order to ensure that culturally appropriate food was available (as many of the attendees belonged to the Muslim faith).

It is important to note that a key purpose of the community meeting was to present preliminary findings from the survey. This was followed by group discussion to obtain feedback, suggestions, and assist in prioritizing results. The semi-structured group interaction allowed for open-ended discussion and dialogue to balance out the more rigid structure of the survey. Participants at the meeting were encouraged to share their experiences, stories, and advice.

In addition, the community meeting helped ensure that the survey results were congruent with the community's lived experiences and to add another dimension of richness to the findings. Not all of those in attendance were able to speak English; therefore an interpreter from the community provided translation. The inclusion of translation was critical to the event allowing for all to share thoughts and views.

The research collection phase ended with a Community Forum held on March 1, 2014. The purpose of this wrap-up event was to gain knowledge and share information between researchers, service providers and the community. The Forum began with a roundtable overview with researchers presenting an overview of the project and explaining the reasons for conducting the research as well as outlining key findings. From there, participants were split into two groups for smaller discussions, focused around predetermined topics. This event used open-ended questions to encourage more free-

flowing dialogue during the group roundtables and discussions (See Appendix II and III for the Community Handout and Questions used).

The event had a tremendous turnout, which, despite frigid -50 C temperatures, exceeded all expectations. The result was over forty people sharing their thoughts and insights about housing and homelessness in the African newcomer community. The event was promoted within the community through a number of avenues. First, the community researchers reached out to the African community and informed people of the event. Second, efforts were made to connect with community leaders. Finally, agencies providing services were sent invitations to encourage clients to attend the event.

Many women attended the Community Forum and provided meaningful input. This was considered one of the great successes of the event, as this sub-group had been difficult to reach in previous events. As well, community leaders attended and provided valuable insight and suggestions. An interpreter was used to translate, and appropriate catering was obtained.

At all stages of the research, careful analysis of the data was undertaken. Following the initial surveys, information was coded and entered into SPSS¹. Once the data were entered and coded, frequency distributions and cross tabulations of variables were explored for patterns in the data. Themes were identified by comparing data gained at each of the four stages of the research (the literature review, survey, community meeting, and community forum). Policy outcomes came out of the themes and key findings of the research.

2.1 Community-based participatory research & community researchers

This study used a community-based participatory research (CBPR) method. For the purposes of this work, CBPR was considered an equal partnership between trained researchers and members of the community. The African immigrant and refugee community was fully engaged in all aspects of the research. The community was central not only in its participation in the final stages of the study, but was engaged from the outset. In total, the study connected with over 170 members of the African community. The topic and research questions examined in this study came out of consultations with the African immigrant and refugee community. The community helped develop the research design, conduct research, interpret the results, and determine how the results should be used for action.

For this study, four community researchers were trained to conduct interviews. This contributed to the objective of building capacity within the community through the process of conducting research. Most of the community researchers were international students from Africa enrolled in the University of Winnipeg's Master's in Development Practice (MDP) program. The MDP is an inclusive program with a focus on participatory and indigenous development methods. The students were encouraged to reach out to

¹ Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) is a software program used to analyze survey data.

marginalized groups within the African immigrants and refugees such as women, youth, and those who do not speak English.

When possible, funds spent on the study were invested in the community in the form of participant honorariums, the rental of space from an African community association, catering by an African restaurant, and the employment of African youth. Further, the study included a transformative component that aimed to address cultural gender barriers by ensuring both women and men were part of the research team.

Winnipeg's African newcomer community is characterized by significant diversity and as a result interpreters were used to capture the voices and perspectives of various African countries. The employment of interpreters ensured the voice of as many participants as possible were heard, especially those who would otherwise be marginalized from this process due to significant language barriers. In total, seventeen different languages were incorporated into this research process.

2.2 Limitations

This study was designed to provide a snapshot of the participant's experiences at a single point in time. The sample of participants is not meant to be representative of the larger population; rather, the study aimed to examine the housing experiences of a group of newcomers to Winnipeg.

Participatory research is inherently associated with a level of uncertainty. Community events may not unfold as planned and their success is often dependent on uncontrollable external factors. An example was felt in this study at one of the planned community events. The study was originally designed to include a second Community Meeting, which was structured similar to the first. However, a funeral of a prominent community member was scheduled to take place at the time of the Community Meeting. As a result, turnout was very low—only two people attended, and the meeting was cancelled. Such uncertainty can be difficult if not impossible to avoid but is an inherent and essential risk when using a participatory methodology.

A final challenge to consider was the difficulty encountered in recruiting women to attend community events. Some African cultures and religious beliefs do not encourage women to talk to people they do not know, especially when they are men. Lack of participation of women limits the information gained through research to a dominantly male perspective and can cause important issues to be missed. This challenge was overcome in the Community Forum, which saw an impressive turnout of African women who contributed significantly to the event. This was due in large part to the community researchers promoting the event and making it a point of articulating the importance of female participation.

3.0 Trends in the Community

3.1 Winnipeg Growth and Immigration Trends

The following section provides a general overview of the population trends occurring within the last decade with a focus on exploring change among immigrant/refugees arriving in Winnipeg. The section ends with a brief overview of the key sectors influencing the settlement behaviors of recent arrivals as well as offering an overview of the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program (MPNP), which has been responsible for supporting the arrival of many newcomers over the last decade.

Historically, Winnipeg can be characterized as a slow-growth city with overall population change being consistent with this trend. While Winnipeg experienced a period of modest growth since 2003, 2012 saw a slight decline (City of Winnipeg, 2012). Much of the growth over this last decade can be attributed to immigration which has boosted overall population growth through steady gains in recent years, with the exception of 2012 which saw a somewhat decline (Table 3.1).

The recent moderation in population growth and net migration is likely due to an overall decline in international migration along with an increase of inter-provincial movers (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2013). Further complicating this situation is the changes made to Manitoba's Provincial Nominee Program (MPNP). The program underwent a restructuring in 2011 that likely contributed to the decrease in net migration. However, over the last 10 years (2003-2012) Manitoba became home to nearly 113,000 newcomers. This works out to an average above 11,285 persons per year.

	#	Change
2012	13,312	16.6% decrease
2011	15,962	1% increase
2010	15,809	16.9% increase
2009	13,520	20.5% increase
2008	11,221	2.4% increase
2007	10,955	9% increase
2006	10,051	24% increase
2005	8,097	9% increase
2004	7,427	14.4% increase
2003	6,492	41% increase

Source: Government of Manitoba, Annual *Manitoba Immigration Facts*, 2002-2012

3.2 The African newcomer population in Winnipeg

In looking specifically at immigration from African countries, Winnipeg has experienced an increase in recent years. Using data available from the Census, the number of African immigrants in Winnipeg grew significantly between 2006 and 2011 (Table 3.2). This growth certainly corresponds to the growth of the overall immigrant population as shown in Table 3.1.

The ensuing pattern settlement within the African community is also important to explore. Again, using data from the Census, the location of persons with African descent was mapped to visually explore for concentrations. From this assessment, there was a distinct central concentration of the African population in Winnipeg’s inner-city. However, Winnipeg’s south end has also been attracting an increasing number of African newcomers. In viewing Maps 3.1 and 3.2, the distribution of Winnipeg’s African immigrants, as a percent of population by Census Tract in 2006 and 2011, is displayed.

Overall, growth in the population has been dramatic since 2006 and while there is strong representation in the inner city, there also exists a broader distribution of persons throughout Winnipeg and increasingly into the south of the city.

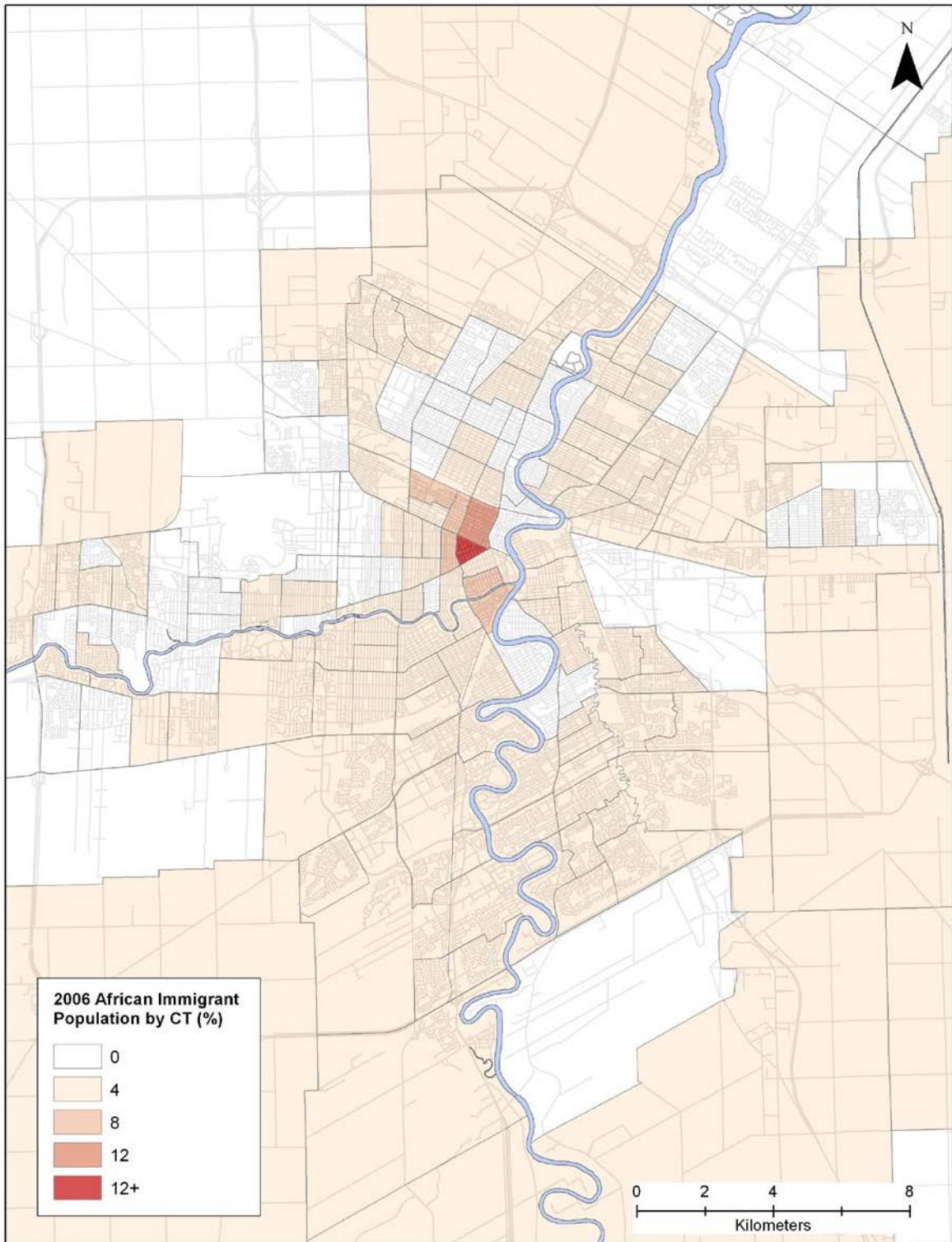
Table 3.2 African immigrant population in Winnipeg (by number of participants)			
	2006	2011	Change
Total African immigrant population	6,720	9,840	46%
Recently arrived African immigrant population*	3,605	4,465	24%
*For 2006: Recently arrived immigrants refers to immigrants who landed in Canada between January 1, 2001 and May 6, 2006; For 2011: Recently arrived immigrants refers to immigrants who landed in Canada between January 1, 2006 and May 10, 2011.			

Source: Statistics Canada, 2008 and Statistics Canada, 2013

The population of migrants from African countries in Winnipeg is diverse. Canadians often think of the African community as homogenous, when in fact this community comes from many different countries and includes a wide variety of ethnicities, languages, religions, cultures, and backgrounds (Asagwara, n.d.). Although the majority of newcomers emigrate from Eastern Africa, African people from all over the continent have come to Winnipeg (see Table 3.3).

African Manitobans come from different backgrounds and cultures and have different values. There are, however, certain commonalities that unite the community. There are traditions and customs that are remembered and standards they want upheld. They do not want their children to forget their history. Hence, certain institutions and values, such as marriage and family, language, religion, and traditions related to the arts, literature, music, sports, and food and drink, are emphasized (Asagwara, n.d.). As well, people of African origin seek to maintain a strong connection to their homeland through phone calls, local publications and other means.

Map 3.1: Winnipeg's African immigrant population as a percentage of Census Tract, 2006



Map 3.2: Winnipeg's African immigrant population as a percentage of Census Tract, 2011

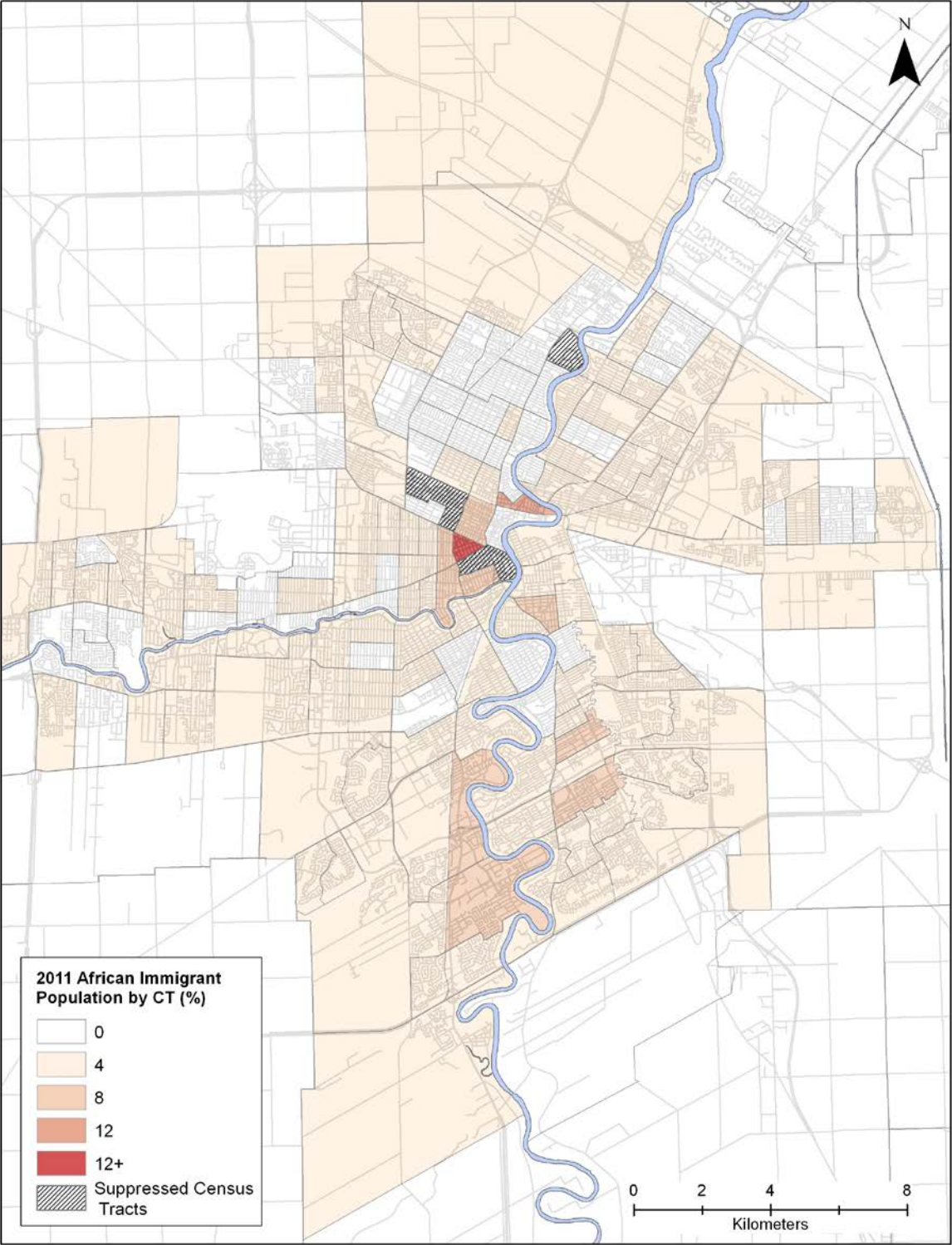


Table 3.3 African population in Winnipeg (2006)		
	#	% (of total African population)
Western Africa	1,435	21.4%
Sierra Leone	690	10.3%
Nigeria	340	5.2%
Ghana	150	2.4%
Liberia	105	1.6%
Other	155	2.3%
Eastern Africa	3,115	46.4%
Ethiopia	1,440	21.4%
Somalia	345	5.1%
Kenya	340	5.1%
Eritrea	285	4.2%
Uganda	165	2.6%
Burundi	135	2.0%
Other	405	6.0%
Northern Africa	1,185	17.6%
Sudan	725	10.8%
Egypt	270	4.0%
Other	190	2.8%
Southern Africa	640	9.5%
South Africa	620	9.2%
Other	20	0.3%
Central Africa	340	5.1%
Democratic Republic of the Congo	275	4.1%
Other	65	1.0%
Total	6715	100%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006

Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program

While immigration is largely a federal responsibility, the province of Manitoba has played an increasingly key role in boosting the numbers of migrants. Much of this effort stems from the innovative Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program (MPNP) which is a federal-provincial agreement that brought skilled workers and their families to Manitoba. The MPNP was the first of its kind in Canada. It was implemented in 1998 and administered by the Immigration and Multiculturalism department. Applicants are assessed based on employability, education, language proficiency, connection to Manitoba, and adaptability criteria (Pandey & Townsend, 2011).

The MPNP was designed to encourage more even distribution of immigrants throughout Canada, as recent immigrants settled disproportionately in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. It was hoped that such programs would allow for increased “spillover” of benefits from immigration, which were concentrated in Canada’s big three cities, to be shared more evenly (Carter, Morrish, & Amoyaw, 2008).

In 2011, the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program (MPNP) brought in nearly three quarters (77%) of all new arrivals to Winnipeg (Government of Manitoba, 2011). One study found that MPNP was successful at both recruiting and retaining immigrants (Pandey & Townsend, 2011). Since the study was conducted, however, Winnipeg has been less successful in attracting and retaining immigrants. In 2012, Winnipeg saw a 4% decrease in international migration and a 32% increase in inter-provincial losses (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2013).

While it is beyond the scope of this study to assess the MPNP and the recent changes, it is clear that the MPNP had a huge impact on immigration to Manitoba since its inception. Given how successful this has been for Manitoba and the economy, it will be important to carefully monitor and assess the impact going forward.

Experiences of Newcomers: Housing, Employment and Skills

Due to the significant increase in Canada’s immigrant population, greater attention has recently been given to the housing challenges of immigrants and refugees (Murdie and Logan, 2011). Challenges such as language barriers, difficulty finding employment, discrimination and racism, and lack of knowledge about agencies and supports available all affect the newcomer’s experience in finding housing. These challenges are complex and interrelated. The search to secure adequate and affordable housing is one of the most daunting challenges facing newcomers (Carter, Friesen, & Osborne, 2008; Garang, 2012; Magro & Ghorayshi, 2011) .

Affordable, adequate, and suitable housing is a crucial component of the successful integration of newcomers. Although good housing alone does not solve all the complex issues newcomers deal with during the integration process, it does provide a solid base from which immigrants and refugees can to begin to address other challenges (Carter, Friesen, et al., 2008).

Immigrants are often brought in to fill skills shortages that exist in many sectors. Despite the need for trained workers and the assessment process designed to bring in immigrants who will be able to contribute to the economy, there remains a higher level of unemployment and underemployment among the immigrant population (Picot & Hou, 2003). For example, in a study that examined employment challenges of skilled workers, Sakamoto, Chin, & Young (2008) determined that lack of recognition of foreign credentials and experience, language and communication barriers, and discrimination contribute to the disconnect between newcomers and employment opportunities. Employment and housing are intimately related; unemployment and underemployment are indicators of increased risk of homelessness (Thurston et al., 2013).

Community supports and service agencies play an important role in the housing experiences of newcomers. Such services can assist newcomers with the transition and integration process, help to identify the services they require, and assist them in accessing affordable housing. However, there is a need for greater coordination between service agencies and immigrant communities in Winnipeg as many newcomers are unaware of the services available to them (Garang, 2012). Although agencies exist to assist newcomers with integration, few immigrants used or were aware of many of the service agencies intended to serve newcomers.

Efforts to integrate into the community are made more difficult by the fact that many African newcomers arrive in Canada with little knowledge of English, a requirement in order to find employment. In 2012, Manitoba welcomed 13,312 newcomers (Statistics Canada, 2013). Of these, thirty percent (3973) were not fluent in English or French. Not having fluency in English can not only hinder the integration process it can impede efforts to find secure housing that often requires application forms to be completed as well as communicating with property managers. Certainly this is simply an additional set of barriers that often requires time and effort to surmount.

Dealing with discrimination is complex and often manifests in many ways. For newcomers this can make the search for adequate, affordable, and suitable housing an even greater challenge. Racism can contribute further to segregation of immigrants. Discrimination of immigrants and refugees by landlords is well documented (Carter, Friesen, et al., 2008; Halliday, 2009; Hulchanski, 1993; Larios, 2013; Mensah & Williams, 2013; Teixeira, 2008). Most African newcomers experience discrimination by landlords at some time during their search for housing. It has been suggested that the feeling one is being discriminated against decreases over time. Carter et al. (2008) found that, in their first year in Winnipeg, some newcomers felt they faced discrimination in the housing market. Fewer felt discriminated against in their second year and those who did felt they were better able to cope with it.

Newcomers face many obstacles in adjusting to a new country and city. This includes finding housing, dealing with language barriers and transferring skills. Each of these areas presents a challenge that must be overcome. To support positive change in the community, the last decade has also seen a rise in the range of local initiatives aimed at offering newcomers services and hope for success. While many of these organizations have

expressed that they are strained, their role in the transition period is fundamental for success.

3.3 Supporting New Canadians in Winnipeg

In exploring the range of programs and support services available to newcomers in Winnipeg, an increasing number of programs geared toward supporting success among new arrivals were discovered. This section provides a generalized list of service agencies and community-based organizations targeted toward African newcomers or immigrants and refugees in general. This list is not exhaustive, but rather is meant to provide a sample of organizations and programs targeted toward African newcomers.

Community-Based Organizations

- Newcomer Employment and Education Services (NEEDS),
- African Communities of Manitoba Inc. (ACOMI),
- Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba (IRCOM),
- Islamic Social Services Association,
- Manitoba Somali Association,
- Black Youth Hotline,
- Philippines Association of Manitoba,
- Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba,
- Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council Inc. (MIIC),
- MCC Manitoba Refugee Assistance,
- Age and Opportunity,
- The Global Welcome Centre for Newcomers (University of Winnipeg),
- Mosaic Newcomer Family Resource Network,
- Immigrant Women's Counseling,
- Immigrant Centre,
- New Journey Housing,
- Welcome Place,
- The Family Centre,
- Employment Solutions for Immigrant Youth, and
- New Immigrant Chai Centre.

Cultural Associations

- Ethiopian Society of Winnipeg,
- African Association of Manitoba,
- African Canadian Disability Association Inc.,
- Afro-Caribbean Association of Manitoba,
- Eritrean Community of Winnipeg,
- Grenadian Association of Manitoba,
- Sudanese Association of Manitoba, and
- Ugandan-Canadian Association of Manitoba Inc.

Provincial Programs

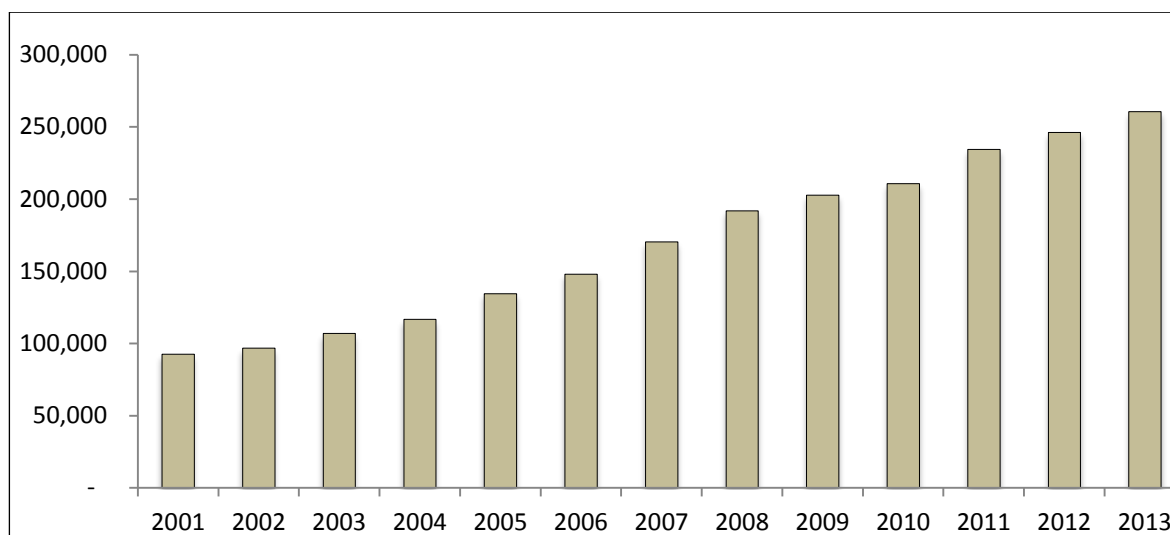
- Neighbourhood Immigrant Settlement Workers (NISW),
- Manitoba Start, and
- Working in Manitoba Online Tool.

In addition to the organizations that directed supports toward newcomers, many other community-based organizations offer programming for immigrants and refugees, such as the Newcomer Youth Program at the Spence Neighbourhood Association. As well, some churches, such as Knox United and Calvary Temple, offer support to new immigrants and refugees. Overall, there is a range of supports and services being offered in Winnipeg.

3.4 Housing market analysis

Winnipeg's tight housing market remains a significant barrier in securing safe, affordable and quality housing in a range of neighbourhoods for an increasing number of people. The local market conditions have also changed over the last decade with prices for homes on the resale market increasing to levels that now rest above \$260,000 in 2013 (see Figure 3.1). This escalation in value has certainly eroded the affordability of homeownership for many lower income working families and individuals. One might also speculate that a tight homeownership market has put pressure on the rental market with fewer people being able to move up in the market and transition from rental to home ownership.

Figure 3.1 Winnipeg Resale Averages 2001-2013

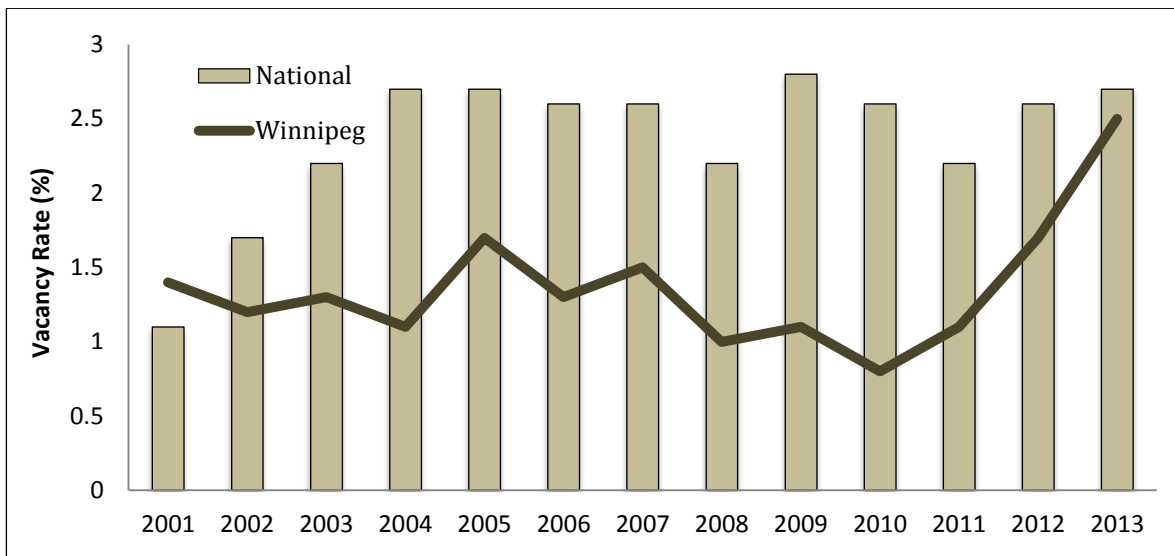


Source: Manitoba Real Estate Association

The rental market been hampered by very low vacancy rents. As is shown in Figure 3.2, the vacancy rate over the decade has hovered dangerously close to the 1% mark, before rising from less than 1% in 2011 to sit at 2.5% as of 2013 (CMHC, 2013). While the news is somewhat encouraging with respect to the most recent data on

vacancy rates, the sustained period of tight conditions proved to be very challenging for renters looking for units and rents that are affordable. In fact, between 2001 and 2013, the average two bedroom rent in Winnipeg climbed from \$605 to \$969 as of October, 2013 (CMHC 2013). This steep rise in rent has come at a time when the overall stock of rental units in Winnipeg shrunk due to demolitions, conversion to condominiums and through temporary removals for renovations/repairs. In fact CMHC’s Winnipeg Rental Market Report (2013) indicated that the total number of rental units in Winnipeg has declined from just over 54,000 in 2003 to under 52,500 in 2013.

Figure 3.2 Winnipeg Vacancy Rates by Year: Winnipeg and National



Source: CMHC Canadian Housing Observer 2012/Winnipeg Rental Market Report 2013

Overall, Winnipeg’s housing market has changed dramatically over the past decade resulting in increasing pressure on those looking to either buy or rent. This upswing in the market has certainly been influenced by Winnipeg’s increasing population, which has boosted demand across all sectors of the market, including both public and private. As well, these factors have contributed to creating a difficult situation for both buyers looking for affordable options for homeownership and for renters looking for choice and rents that match incomes.

4.0 Findings

The following section of the report explores the results of the various community engagements that occurred over the course of this research. The review begins by providing an overview of the community survey and then moves to summarize the key findings of the community meeting and the wrap up forum. The section ends with a summary and conclusion of the research.

4.1 Survey results

Fieldwork was conducted using a survey comprised of forty questions (see Appendix I). The survey was administered to 100 African immigrants and refugees in Winnipeg. As noted, the research employed a Community Based Participatory Research design, using community members and groups to conduct the surveys and help facilitate recruitment. The fieldwork was conducted by community members who connected with various service and support agencies to facilitate recruitment. Generally speaking the sampling technique is referred to as a snowball sample. Therefore, the results should be viewed as offering a preliminary glimpse into the community rather than being considered representative.

About the participants

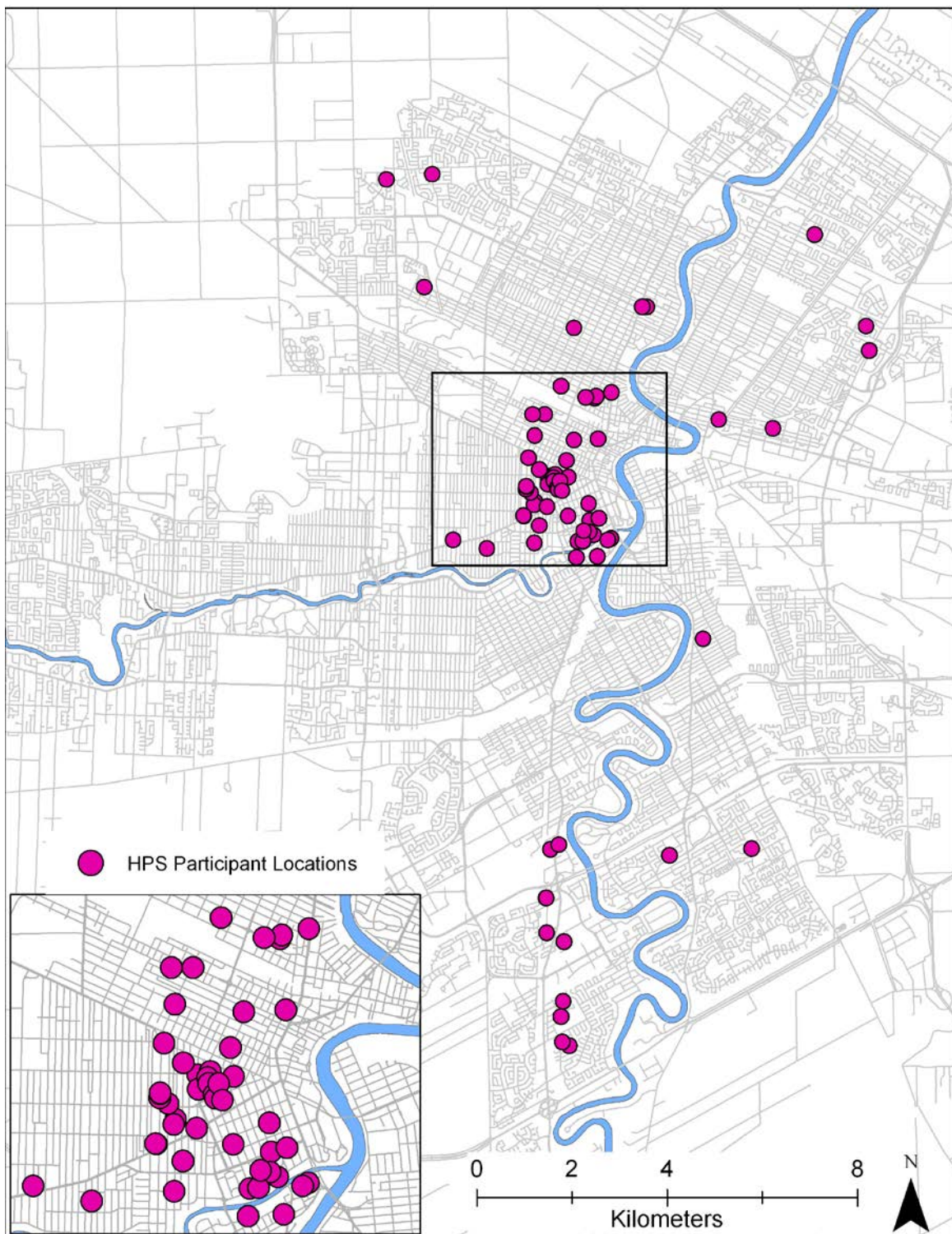
The most unifying characteristic of the participants interviewed was that nearly all of those who participated in the survey (92%) were renters. Furthermore, three quarters lived in apartments, and nearly half (41%) had housing that was partially or fully subsidized.

	Housing Type		Home Ownership		Subsidization	
	Apartment	House	Rent	Own	Yes	No
Inner-city	57	9	68	3	31	40
Non inner-city	10	14	21	5	8	18
Total	67	23	89	8	39	58

Perhaps most important about the participants is that many lived on low income. This is evident in Figure 4.1 in which the yearly household incomes of nearly half the sample was \$20,000 or less, with over a third having incomes of less than \$10,000. Over half (57%) of participants were responsible to pay the full cost of their current housing themselves, while the remainder shared the cost with other members of the household.

Employment varied greatly among participants. Forty percent were employed full time, 24% had part-time employment, and 36% were unemployed. Of those interviewed, half arrived in Winnipeg through sponsorship.

Map 4.1: Distribution of interview participant households



Map 4.2: Distribution of interview participants by income

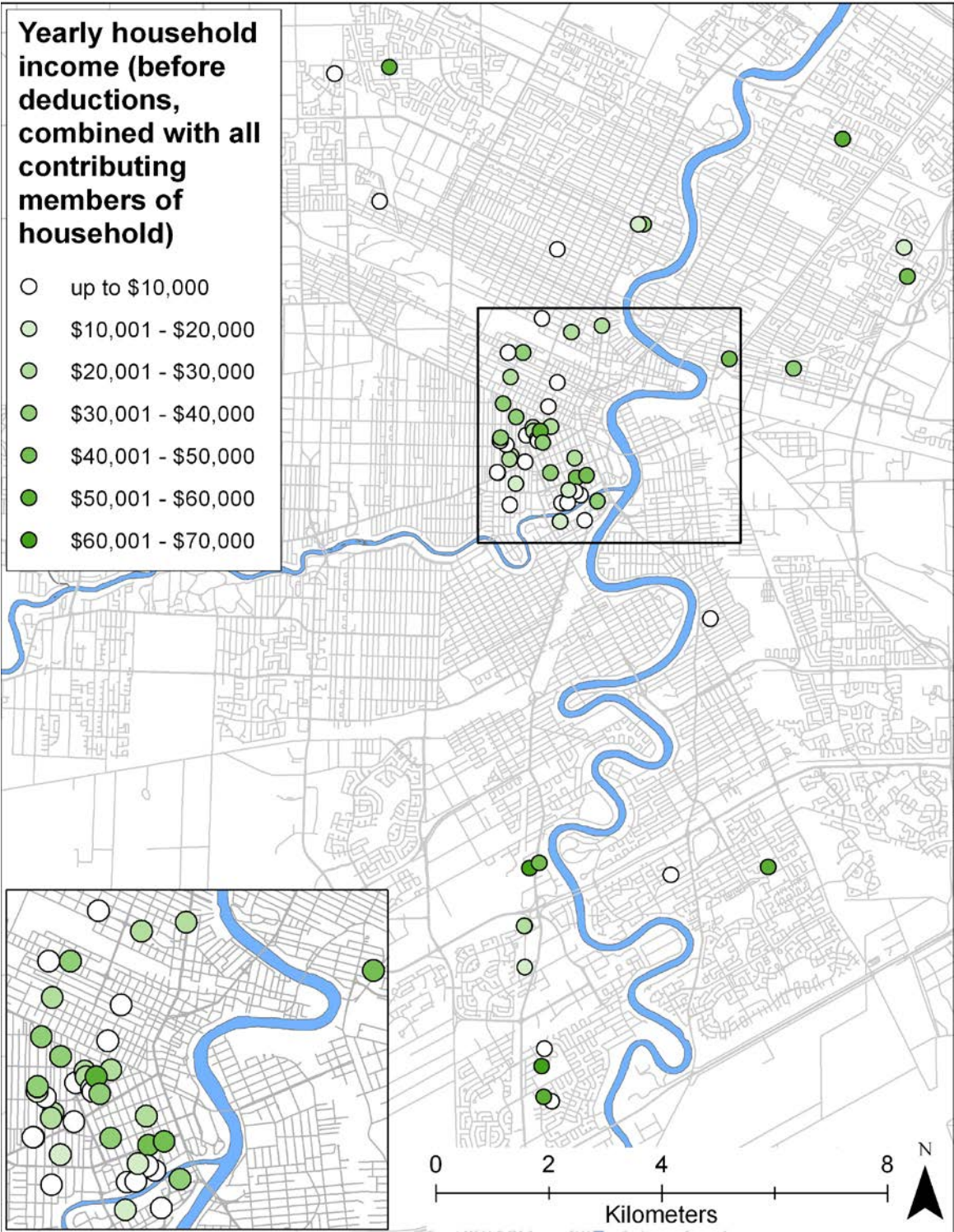
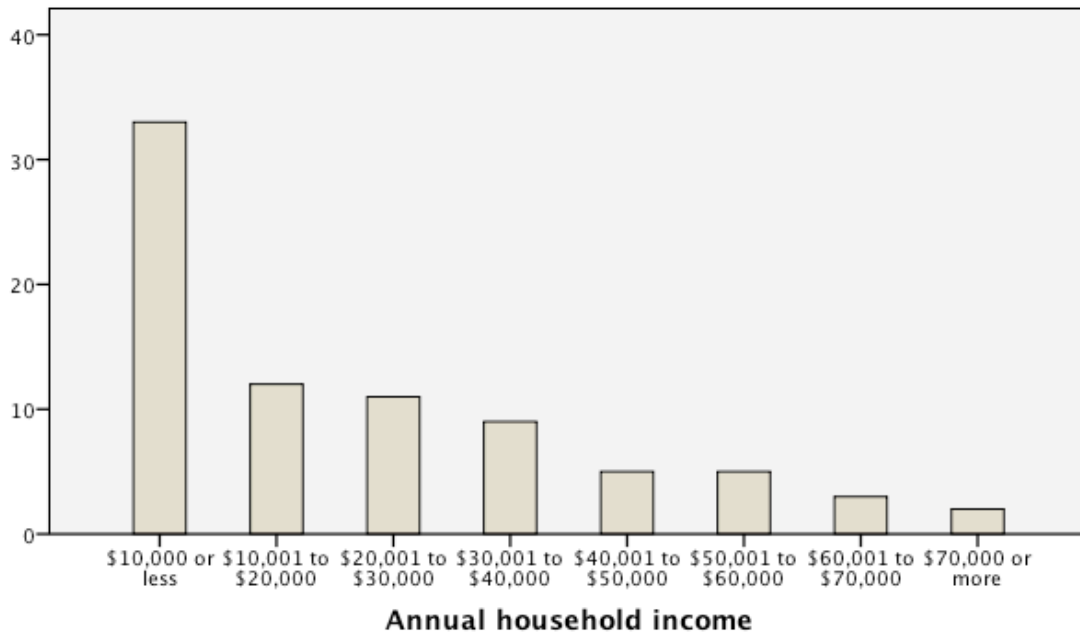


Figure 4.1 Percentage of participant’s annual household income by ranges



What participants had to say about their homes

In general, people were satisfied with their housing. Few respondents (less than 10%) reported being unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with their current housing. When asked what they liked most about their residence, the most common answers were that it was clean, big, comfortable, close to amenities, or quiet. When asked what respondents liked least about their current residence, the most common answer was “nothing,” followed by the residence being too small. Sixty percent indicated they had an on-site caretaker. Most participants felt that their residence had enough space and only one fifth of respondents felt that their housing was overcrowded. Crowded households also tended to be located within the inner city.

	Housing satisfaction		Overcrowding in housing	
	Satisfied or neutral	Unsatisfied	Yes	No
Inner-city	60	7	16	55
Non inner-city	26	0	3	23
Total	86	7	19	78

Neighbourhood perceptions

When asked what they liked the most about their current neighbourhood, a variety of answers were given. The most common responses were that it was close to amenities or that it was quiet. When asked what they liked the least about their current neighbourhood, safety was a top concern for many. Although the most common answer given was “nothing,” over a quarter identified concerns related to safety and security.

Fifty percent of respondents said that recreation was not easily available in their neighbourhood. Of those who did not have easily available recreation facilities, respondents wanted to see more children’s facilities/playgrounds, soccer fields, gyms/pools, and spaces for public recreation in general.

Perceptions of safety

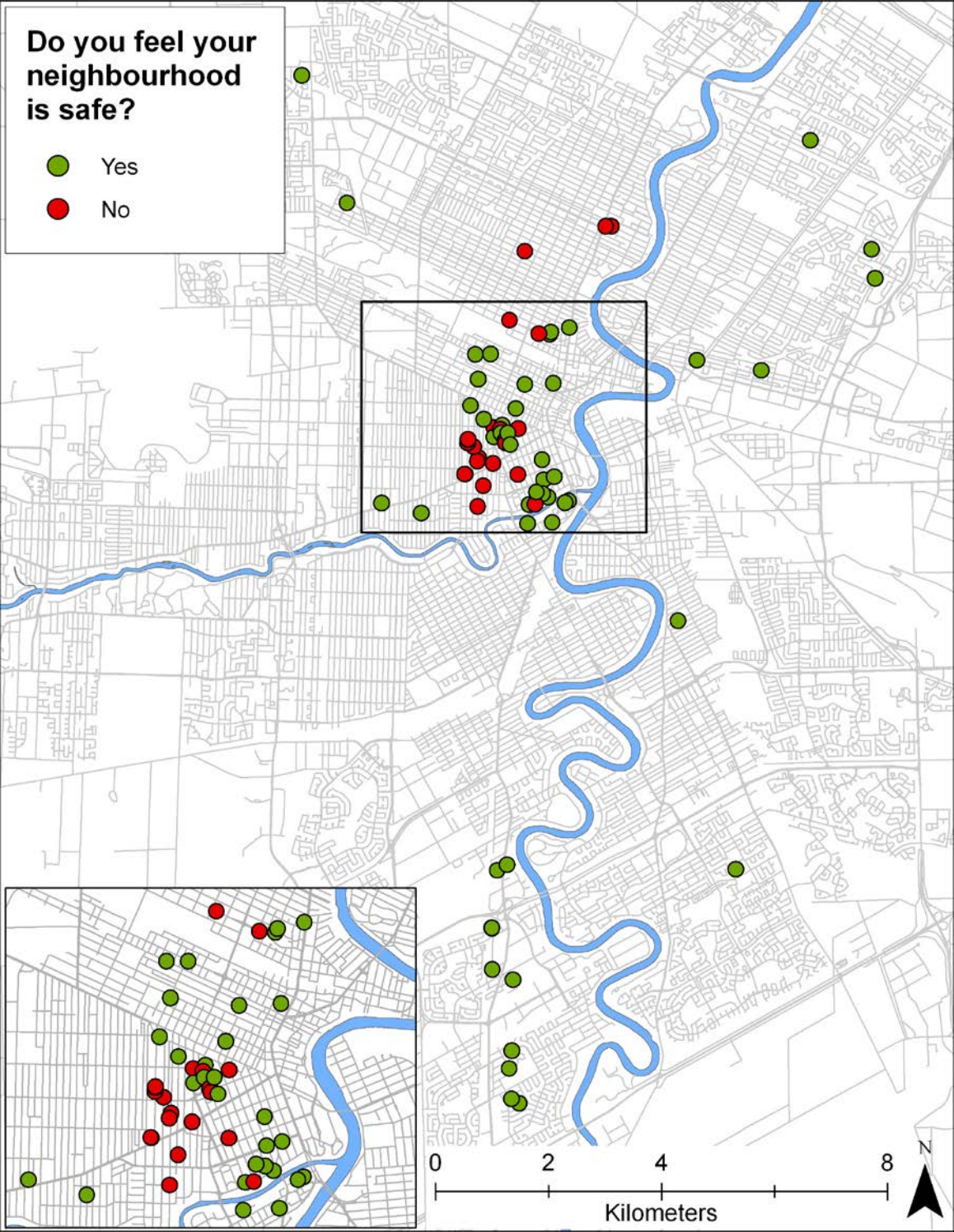
Over three quarters of respondents (79%) felt their housing was safe. When asked why they felt it was safe, most said it was because they hadn’t personally experienced any problems. Others talked about a sense of security (i.e. it “feels safe”), building security, or a sense of community. Those who felt their housing was unsafe talked about security issues (eg. doors or windows don’t lock), lack of sense of security (i.e. it “doesn’t feel safe”), or a prevalence of drug and alcohol use in or around the building.

Fewer respondents (two-thirds) felt that their neighbourhood was safe. When asked why, responses most commonly talked about the fact that they hadn’t had any problems, they felt a sense of security, or that it was quiet. Those who felt their neighbourhood was unsafe cited prevalent drug and alcohol use in the area or a lack of sense of security.

Perceptions of safety varied greatly between inner-city and non-inner-city residents. More people living in the inner city felt that their housing and neighbourhoods were unsafe. Of those living in the inner-city, 26% felt their housing was unsafe, as opposed to those living outside the inner-city, of which only 4% felt their housing was unsafe. Regarding neighbourhood safety, 43% of those living in the inner-city felt their neighbourhood was unsafe, compared to only 8% of those living outside of the inner-city (see table 4.3).

	Housing		Neighbourhood	
	Safe	Unsafe	Safe	Unsafe
Inner-city	51	18	40	30
Non inner-city	25	1	22	2
Total	76	19	62	32

Map 4.3: Interview participants' perceptions of safety in their neighbourhood



Finding housing

In general, participants struggled to find housing in a reasonable amount of time, and moved often. For three-quarters of respondents, it took over one month to find their current housing. Twenty-one searched for over a year. Half of participants stayed with friends or family before finding permanent housing, and many respondents stayed at Welcome Place when they first arrived in Winnipeg.

Knowledge about community supports

When asked what somebody in their community does when they cannot afford to pay the rent, most said they stay with friends or family. Almost half of respondents were unaware of community services that can assist with housing issues, and 70% currently use no housing supports. Of those who did, most used Manitoba Housing. A small amount of respondents mentioned IRCOM, Rent Aid, Employment Income Assistance, Siloam Mission and Winnipeg Housing and Renewal Corporation (WHRC). Two-thirds of respondents have used no community housing supports in the past. Of those who did, most had used either Manitoba Housing or Welcome Place (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4 Community housing support use (by number of responses)		
	Use now	Have used in past
Manitoba Housing	19	13
IRCOM	3	1
Welcome Place	0	11
Rent Aid	1	0
EIA	3	0
Winnipeg Housing	1	4
Other	2	6
None	71	65
Total	100	100

House sharing practices in African culture

Of those African immigrants and refugees surveyed, 16% had been without a place to live since coming to Canada. Over three quarters of respondents (79%) felt the practice of sharing a place with relatives or a friend is common among immigrants and refugees when one is unable to pay rent. Most of those who said that house sharing is common felt that this was part of African culture. Some of the responses also talked about house sharing in African culture included:

“It is a cultural practice in many African countries.”

“Africans do not leave someone stranded.”

“We are African. It’s part of our culture.”

“It is how we do things back home.”

“Africans traditionally live in extended family communities.”

“Africans are very communal.”

“When someone is in need, you help them.”

There was an overwhelming unified feeling among those interviewed that the Africans have a responsibility to make sure their extended families have somewhere to stay. Family structures are often intergenerational and often include extended families.

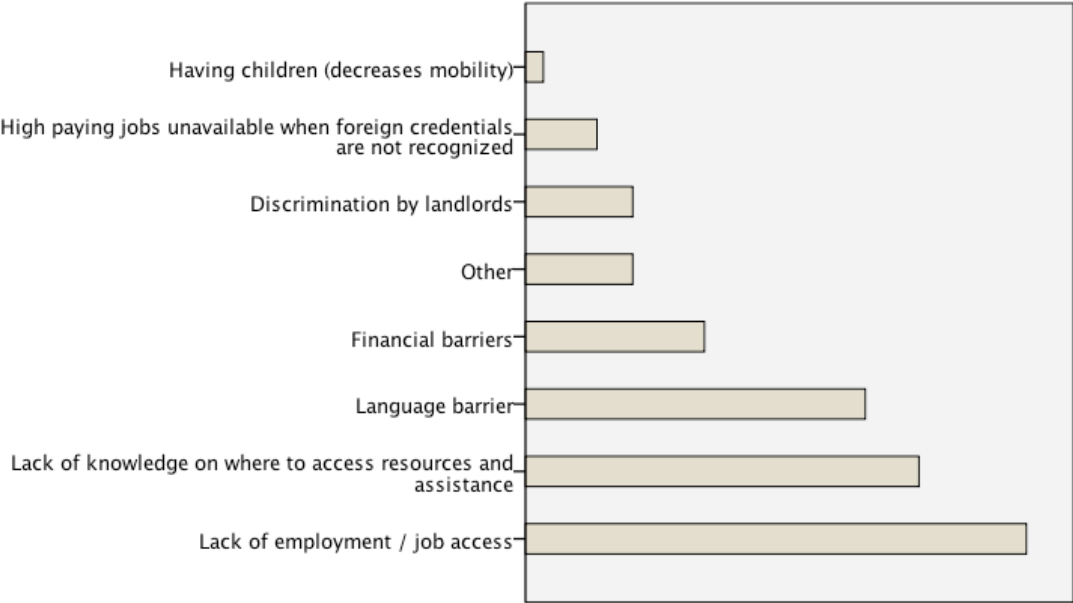
Affordable housing

Affordable housing (that which consumes no more than 30% of a household’s total income) was found to be an issue for many participants. Over half of respondents (54%) were found to be currently living in housing that is not affordable. Those with the lowest annual household incomes were the most likely to live in unaffordable housing. This proportion increased greatly among those with low annual household incomes. In particular, 80% of those with annual household incomes of \$20,000 or less lived in housing that was not affordable.

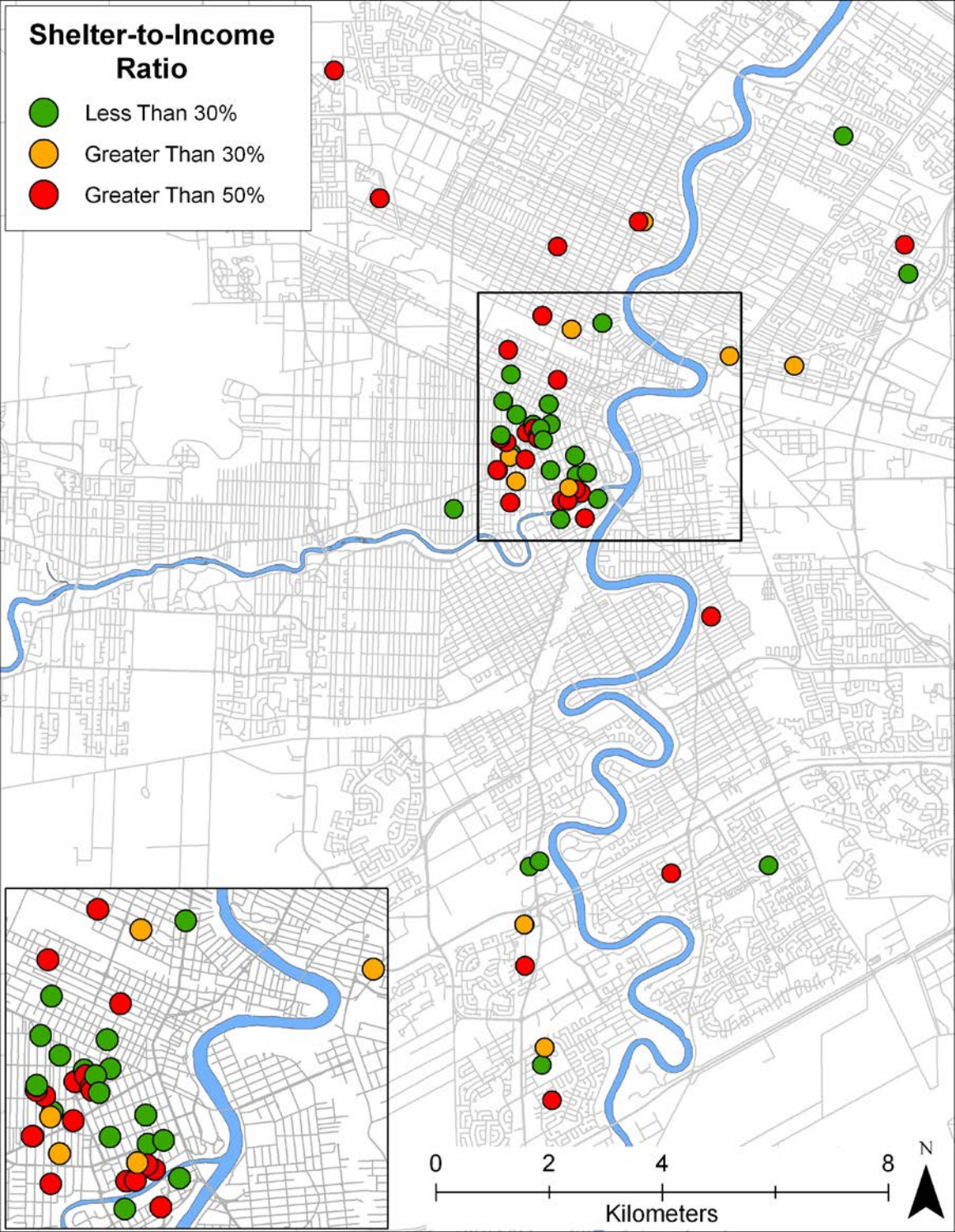
There was a wide range of answers to the question, “What does affordable housing mean to you?” Many respondents talked about the need to have extra money left over after paying for rent, food and bills. Others felt that they should be able to pay rent without feeling anxiety or stress, while some felt that affordable housing was based on rents and income. When respondents gave numerical answers, most felt that \$400 per month or less was affordable.

This community survey revealed much about the community including that many lived with low incomes while experiencing affordability problems. The strategies to deal with housing challenges were to rely on friends and family to offer supports. Surprisingly, Figure 4.2 pointed to gaps in finding help as being related to language barriers and / or the ability to find the right supports in the community.

Fig. 4.2 Barriers to affordable housing as identified by interview participants



Map 4.4: Distribution of interview participants by shelter-to-income-ratio (STIR)





4.2 Community Meeting results

A Community Meeting was conducted on November 23, 2013, and was attended by twenty-one community members. The event sought to gain feedback on the survey findings, gain insight into the housing issues of this particular subset of the population, and prioritize the results. Through a facilitated semi-structured group discussion, the main findings from the survey were restated, and some nuances that were not identified in the survey were brought to light.

Affordable housing stock does not meet current demand

Concerns about the type and quality of the housing available were identified by participants. Many shared the problem of overcrowding, although it was not identified as a significant issue among survey respondents. Many had large families – up to eight members under one roof. Some said they had to hide some of their children from landlords in order to find housing. Concerns about the wait times for public housing were raised many times throughout the course of the day. One person said he had been on a wait list for four years. The housing that is available to low-income individuals and families is often of poor quality making the search for housing harder. One member shared pictures of his suite, showing broken steps and mold, and others spoke of unsafe and unsanitary conditions in their housing as well. The stories offered a snapshot of the emerging issues faced by many new arrivals who are finding the search for quality housing is often fraught with difficulty.

Great Expectations and the Realities of Housing

Many who participated in the community meeting shared in the feeling that what they had been told about life in Canada did not match with their current experience. One person offered a story about his arrival to Canada, saying that a Canadian immigration officer gave him the advice to, “work hard, remember your people, and contribute to your community and country.” Yet, living in Winnipeg, the newcomer does not know how to get to the point where he can contribute and be a good citizen. Many felt that the barrier to good housing and employment blocked them from being more able to contribute to helping themselves and their community members.

One of the most strongly echoed sentiments was that African immigrants want to work but are unable to get to the point where they can gain appropriate employment. Speaking to his lack of guidance through this process, one participant said,

“I come with skills...

but don’t know where to get the services to get started.”

Another participant shared his experience of trying to find employment in Winnipeg and said he had worked in Africa for nearly thirty years as a mechanic but was unable to find employment in his trade in Winnipeg. He feels that his lack of English is what has kept him from gaining employment as a mechanic, but is unable to attend English as an Additional Language (EAL) classes. It was this type of struggle that resonated in the voices of those who attended the meeting. The shared view of hardship in finding work was clear among all in the room, especially a community leader who spoke through a translator. He stressed concern about the state of supports in Manitoba and others shared this view, expressing that some might move out of province to find work or access a higher level of governmental support.

“I don’t have time to go to school because I have to work for my family

– I don’t have help with this.”

Another participant stated that he had been a welder for forty years but was unable to get a job in Canada because he did not have his certificate. Many agreed that it was common among immigrants to come to Manitoba first, and then move to other provinces shortly thereafter due to a perceived lack of services, housing or employment in the province.

Manitoba, an entry point but not a destination

This issue was raised multiple times throughout the event. Many felt that there was a lack of opportunity in Manitoba relative to other provinces and the sense that newcomers have few employment opportunities here. Further, there was a perceived lack of employment services for newcomers. It was reported that newcomers often come to Manitoba first, but move to other provinces after only a few weeks in order to pursue job opportunities, housing and income supports that many contended were superior to those offered in Manitoba. In addition, there was a view that the Manitoba government “brings people but does not look after them when they get here.” As a result, the view among this study’s participants, is that many educated and skilled people that are brought into the province migrate elsewhere shortly after arriving.



4.3 Community Forum Overview

The Community Forum was held on March 1, 2014 in the Richardson Complex Atrium at the University of Winnipeg. The event was attended by thirty-seven community members, international students, and agency representatives. The purpose of the Community Forum was to gain knowledge and share information among researchers, service providers and the community. This event used an open-ended structure in order to encourage free-flowing dialogue. After a brief dissemination of research findings, participants split into smaller discussion groups. The ensuing dialogues were focused around predetermined topics. The results below summarize the roundtable discussions (See Appendix II for a complete list of questions).

Perceptions of homelessness

When asked, “*What does homelessness mean to you?*” respondents cited a lack of housing or shelter being readily available. As well, some reflected on living with extended families and friends as also constituting homelessness. This was clear from one participant who stated “Homelessness has a different meaning to us, but if you understand the Canadian meaning of the word, it has been the situation of many African people.”

For a number in attendance, homelessness was something to avoid. This sentiment was shared by many who said you had to reach out to help one another, whether this meant helping with the rent or having people living with you. Some commented on the harshness of the weather and the need to help out, given that winter can be tough.

Successes in Winnipeg housing and housing services

When participants were asked, “*What is being done well regarding housing and housing services?*” the following points were raised:

- Participants expressed positive feelings about public housing provided by Manitoba Housing and the Winnipeg Housing Rehabilitation Corporation (WHRC). Most felt that public housing is crucial to maintaining an adequate level of affordable housing in the city.
- Another person commented, “Private developers are building and upgrading homes for newcomers and renting them out at a subsidized cost, filling in [the] place of the government.”
- These points were countered by many contending that while the private market is doing some good, it has not been able to keep up with demand with either the number of available units or the size apartments (not enough bedrooms).

Other participants spoke positively about nonprofits that offer subsidized housing, especially when done in a way that is responsive to the changing needs of the community. In particular, it was thought that S.A.M. Management provided an important service. Many felt that although public housing (Manitoba Housing) delivers the majority of affordable housing and is an invaluable component of the affordable rental market, the nonprofits are providing subsidized housing and are a positive alternative to public housing.

- “Not all landlords are bad.”

One participant talked positively about the relationship she had with her landlord and shared a few stories with the group about some experiences. This included hosting up to fifteen people in her house at one time. The landlord allowed this and did not increase her rent. The landlord empathized with the lady and shared stories about his family’s experience immigrating from Germany. Others said that landlords have been reporting that African immigrants pay their rent on time and are good tenants.

- Participants spoke favourably about many service agencies. In particular, Welcome Place stood out as providing an invaluable service to newcomers.

Areas of weakness in Winnipeg housing and housing services

The following points were raised when participants were asked, “*What needs to be improved with regard to housing and housing services?*”

- Many suggested that policymakers make little effort to connect with the communities they are seeking to serve. The view was that they are not fully aware of the unique issues faced by newcomers and need to better connect with the community.

“Immigrants should be actively involved in policymaking, because they know the issues they face better than anybody else.”

Much of the discussion focused on the concerns raised about the affordable housing stock in Winnipeg. This theme permeated throughout the dialogue and included:

- Winnipeg’s affordable housing stock is old, poor-quality and needs to be updated.

It was contended that many refugees end up living in worse conditions in Canada than they did in the refugee camps they left.

- The size of affordable housing units is not suitable to larger family structures. Very few large suites (three or four bedrooms) exist in the affordable housing market.
- Winnipeg’s affordable housing (public and low rentals) is disproportionately concentrated in the inner-city.

A number of participants commented that this situation segregates newcomers in a way that is not reflective of a multicultural city. Furthermore, concentrating vulnerable populations in areas of urban decline puts children at greater risk of becoming involved in gangs, drugs and other criminal activity.

- The size of the affordable housing stock does not meet current demand.

Many commented on the view that for families in need of housing, they can wait for more than a year, and as many as nine years, to be approved for public housing. The sentiment was that the private market is significantly undersupplied.

- The availability and access of services that support successful transitions were discussed by many.

This included participants commenting on the disconnection between those who are providing services and the newcomers themselves. Many newcomers remain unaware of what services are available. Others stated that while there are services available, they are inadequate and do not reflect current needs. Institutional challenges such as language barriers limit awareness and accessibility.

Tensions in tenant-landlord relationships were cited as being common. These tensions go both ways and are usually the result of a lack of information. For example, new African immigrants sometimes do not understand a lease due to language barriers. Some do not realize that, when they sign the lease, they are committing to stay in the apartment for a full year.

Others felt that some landlords are not accommodating to newcomer situations or cultural differences, often due to a lack of understanding. Many participants felt that landlords were strict about having friends or relatives stay; with few exceptions, extra guests are not allowed to stay even temporarily (less than one month). Landlords suggest, instead, that there are other places for the homeless to go or say this is how it is, you can stay or you can move. As well, racism and discrimination by landlords often works against newcomers in the housing market.

What can be done to improve the situation?

A key part of the forum was to explore ideas around solutions from Community Forum participants. The following list provides a brief summary of the responses participants gave when asked, “*What do you think is most important (with regard to housing and housing services) that needs to be done today?*”

- Build more affordable housing,
- Renovate poor quality and vacant housing stock,
- Reduce the waiting time for public housing,
- Plan for collaboration between government and the community in policymaking,
- Increase awareness of available newcomer services,
- Provide education for landlords and tenants about rights and responsibilities,
- Design and build affordable housing that is suitable to newcomer families (often larger than typical Canadian family size),
- Make affordable housing available throughout the city, and
- Increase employment opportunities.

What are the most important changes needed

This theme explored participants’ sentiment toward what should be taken into consideration when preparing a final report regarding affordable housing in the African immigrant and refugee community. The discussion was very lively with many focusing on several areas that they felt were critical. This included the following four points that were most often raised:

- Host families are stressed and need supports.

A number of participants expressed that guests sometimes stay much longer than anticipated if they cannot find work or affordable housing. This leads to overcrowding, higher utility bills and higher food costs. These increased expenses set the host family

back. The money that people come over with does not last long. The quality of life a person can afford in an African country is not equal to the quality of life a person can afford in Canada.

- Policymakers and service providers must recognize the diversity within the African community.

Non-Africans often see the African population as a homogenous group, which, in reality, is not the case. Although there are many commonalities within the community and many have similar experiences when they first arrive in Canada, there is indeed great diversity between different ethnic groups and religions. Many different languages, religions, and cultures exist within this population. This diversity should be recognized and acknowledged when planning for and with the community.

- Different categories of newcomers should be addressed accordingly.

A number of participants stated that there are sponsored refugees, refugee claimants, landed immigrants, and international students, to name a few. These groups have different experiences and should not be considered as a single group.

- Find a solution to the unemployment.

Unemployment, overcrowding, and the struggle to find affordable housing directly affects people's mental health and the larger community. It must be stressed that issues related to employment arose throughout the forum. This includes how difficult it was for newcomers to find work in Manitoba, even with a university degree or skills in the trades. When work is found, wages are low. It was mentioned repeatedly that wages are higher and it is easier to find work in other provinces.

"If you want to become educated, go to Manitoba.

If you want to earn money, go to Alberta."

Overall, the Community Forum provided a positive and open atmosphere for participants to share stories and offer thoughts on their experiences. This provided the research team with the ability to confirm results from previous engagements and to explore new areas such as policy direction for future programs needed to improve the situation. The final sections of the report try to more specifically draw out overriding themes and to summarize the research.

5.0 Themes Identified

This project was based on four important steps: a literature review, community survey, community meeting, and community forum. Each step provided an additional layer of understanding the experiences of participants. The research team sought to use the community surveys as a starting point with subsequent engagements serving to help reaffirm and explore the results in the community meeting and community forum. A final step was to synthesize the findings into broad based themes that draw in all the material. This resulted in the identification of the following six areas:

1. Poverty as a driver of homelessness
2. The situation of host families and extended families
3. Youth aging out of the system
4. Landlord - tenant relationships
5. Outmigration of newcomers to other provinces
6. The affordable housing stock

Poverty as a driver of homelessness

Although Canada has no official measure or definition of poverty, it is generally accepted that relative poverty is the most useful measure for determining poverty rates in developed countries. The Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) is the measure commonly used to determine the poverty rate in Canada. The LICO varies depending on family size and community size.

Employment has a direct link to poverty. Participants felt that lack of employment opportunities was the greatest barrier to finding affordable housing. The reasons for lack of employment opportunities in the African immigrant and refugee population are complex. Immigrants to Canada face higher unemployment rates and lower incomes than Canadian-born citizens (Becklumb, 2008; Gilmore, 2008), even though they are more likely to have a University education (Frenette and Morissette, 2003).

It is contended that there is a lack of recognition of foreign credentials in many sectors, which often makes it impossible for newcomers to gain employment in their field. Other factors that make it difficult to gain employment include language barriers, lack of knowledge of programs that assist in finding employment, and discrimination.

Poverty was also raised as a determinant of wanting to leave the province. This was due to many who indicated that they were struggling with poverty and felt that there were more opportunities elsewhere.

The pressure on host families and extended families

Survey participants felt overwhelmingly that it was common among African immigrants and refugees to share a place with friends or relatives if they were unable to pay rent. This practice can certainly have a positive effect for newcomers who may have otherwise felt isolated and overwhelmed when arriving in a new place with no connection. Many respondents viewed this as a point of pride in the African culture and explained that if somebody didn't have a place to live, the community would help that person. Hosting newcomers also puts a significant burden on the host family – especially when newcomers struggle to find housing and employment. Of the participants surveyed in this study, 47% stayed with friends or family upon arrival in Winnipeg. Compounding the extra burden put on host families by housing extended family or friends is the fact that landlords often increase rent if the number of people living in a suite is increased. For all of the associated extra responsibility and cost, host families receive no extra support beyond what the extra person(s) have to contribute.

As well, the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program puts significant weight on an applicant's connection to the province. Often, those immigrating to Winnipeg have a connection to the city through friends or family who have already immigrated. When newcomers arrive, they often stay with this connection during the initial settlement process. The problem is that this practice places extra responsibility on the host family and draws on already limited resources.

While overcrowding did not seem to be an issue for many of the survey participants it came out as a serious concern in the Community Meeting and Community Forum, with many people sharing stories about hosting up to fifteen people at a time. The housing rental supply is made up mostly of small suites and is not accommodating to the multi-family or intergenerational household structures that are the norm for many newcomers. The limited number of larger suites and the tight market conditions have certainly strained the ability of many larger families to find accommodation. As was noted, for some, the only option is to not disclose the number of family members.

Youth aging out of the system

One issue that was of concern to many was how Manitoba Housing deals with youth who approach eighteen. Manitoba Housing requires that children move to other housing when they reach eighteen years of age. This conflicts with the practices of many newcomer families, where children remain in the household for longer. Increasingly, this trend is seen in families in cities throughout Canada. In an economy where youth have relatively high rates of unemployment, many continue to live with their nuclear family well into

***“If an 18 year old has to leave the house but has no solid ground,
how is he going to integrate into the system?”***

their twenties to save money and find stable ground. To restrict the most vulnerable youth from staying with their nuclear family when they reach the age of majority puts them at an even greater disadvantage.

Landlord - tenant relationships

There were mixed feelings among Community Forum participants regarding the relationship between landlords and tenants; both negative and positive experiences were shared. Many felt that landlords are often unaware of or are unaccommodating toward cultural practices. It was felt that many were unsympathetic to the situation of African immigrants and refugees. In general, there is little tolerance toward hosting friends or family and extra guests are not allowed to stay even temporarily (e.g., 1-2 weeks).

Although many concerns were raised on this topic, some positives were brought up as well. One participant talked about her positive experience with her landlord. The landlord allowed her to host friends and relatives temporarily without penalty, and empathized by sharing stories of the experience of his own family when emigrating from Germany.

There is a need for greater education for both tenants and landlords. This education should increase knowledge about tenant and landlord rights and responsibilities, foster a greater understanding of cultural differences among landlords, and improve tenants understanding of leases and expectations of renters in Canada.

Outmigration of newcomers to other provinces

Although Manitoba has been successful in attracting and retaining immigrants since the inception of the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program (MPNP) in 1998, this trend slowed in 2012. This was reflected in the Community Meeting, where participants shared stories about how many newcomers move to Saskatchewan shortly after arriving in Manitoba in order to pursue employment opportunities and/or a higher level of support services.

There is a perception amongst newcomers that they can achieve a greater standard of living in provinces other than Manitoba (Alberta and Saskatchewan were commonly referred to as destination points for newcomers). As immigration policies do not restrict mobility once immigrants are accepted into the MPNP and receive permanent resident status, they are not required to stay in the province.

The affordable housing stock

Having a place to live is a first step in the settlement and integration process for immigrants and refugees when they first arrive in Canada. It is only when adequate, suitable, and affordable housing has been secured that newcomers may begin to look for employment, language training, education, or access any other services they require. In Winnipeg, the supply of affordable housing has not kept up with demand. Further,

affordable housing that is available is old and of poor quality, and concentrated in the inner-city (Carter, 2008). This concentration of affordable housing in the inner-city has resulted in concentration of immigrants and refugees in the inner city.

With the increase in newcomers coming to Canada since the inception of the MPNP, there has been an increased demand for affordable housing. In the past ten years, there has been little built in the way of affordable housing, and units have been lost due to demolition and conversion to condominiums. Wait times can be years for public housing and newcomers often require low-rent housing when they first arrive in Canada.

6.0 Recommendations

Winnipeg's African community is growing. This is the result of the broader immigration trends that have resulted in more people choosing Manitoba than ever before. This was certainly evident in the year to year increases in people coming to Manitoba and Winnipeg. Within this growth has come some increasing pressure to help ensure that the migration process is successful and results in people finding places to live, education and access to housing and a range of supports.

The following recommendations are derived from drawing out the key findings of the research. The aim is to share the voices of those who participated throughout the stages of research as well as the broader African immigrant and refugee community in Winnipeg.

1. Improve the availability and quality of the affordable housing stock.

It was seen as critical to increase the stock of affordable housing. Many felt that there are very few units that have been purposefully built as affordable housing in recent years, and many have been lost. The fact that there is little incentive for developers to build affordable housing has led to this segment of the market being undersupplied. This, along with increased demand over the past fifteen years, has resulted in a significant need for more affordable housing.

In Canada, the private sector supplies 95% of the housing stock (Carter, 2008), therefore playing an important role in the provision of affordable housing. The private sector should be encouraged to develop new affordable and subsidized housing.

As well, the stock of public sector social housing should be increased to address the long wait times faced by those who may not otherwise be able to afford housing. This is crucial in keeping those who are at-risk of homelessness from becoming homeless.

Upgrading and renovating the current affordable housing stock is critical but this work must be done without significantly eroding the level of affordability (e.g., increasing the rents following repairs). The current stock of affordable housing was viewed as being older and in poor condition. Thus, repairing and modernizing the current affordable

housing stock must be a key priority to improve the housing circumstances of immigrants and refugees.

Diversify the location of social and affordable housing. Although some newcomers enjoy the benefits of living downtown, such as easy access to amenities and transportation services, others see the area as a concentration of low income and crime and want to find affordable housing in areas outside of the downtown area. Construction of both private social housing and public housing should be encouraged in a variety of neighbourhoods throughout the city.

2. Formalize the role of host families into a support model.

New immigrants often take in friends and extended family when they first arrive in Winnipeg. This places an extra burden on families whose resources are already limited. Creation of an avenue through which households in such situations can gain temporary access to extra support would help to lessen the burden put on the individuals supporting these households.

3. Review and potentially amend rules for youth.

Youth in many Canadian households are choosing to live at home longer. Many raised the issue that requiring the most vulnerable youth to become independent at age 18 puts them at an even greater disadvantage. Youth who live with their families in public housing should be allowed to continue living in the family household beyond age 18. The rules related to this must be reviewed with an emphasis on supporting families remaining together.

4. A more integrated model for service delivery.

It was suggested that a disconnection exists between agencies and the community they are intending to serve. As well, this research suggests that many newcomers are leaving Manitoba shortly after arrival to pursue what is perceived as greater employment opportunities and/or support services in other provinces. Newcomers need to feel that they will be assisted through all stages of the settlement and integration process. Client-based services with longer orientation times can help newcomers better adjust to their new life in Canada and identify the services they require for successful integration.

5. Focus on employment opportunity and skills transfer.

Throughout the research, many commented on the challenges of finding employment and having their credentials and experience recognized in Canada. Where possible, additional attention should also be offered to support newcomers, especially refugees who often have few employable skills, better prepare them for Winnipeg's job market. Overall, though many commented on the range of supports and services that were available, employment remained an area that was repeatedly raised as requiring more interventions.

7.0 Conclusion

This study provided a snapshot into the housing experiences of a group of African immigrants and refugees in Winnipeg. Immigration has been an important factor in maintaining and increasing Manitoba's population, throughout history and today. Immigration to Manitoba has increased significantly since the inception of the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program in 1998, with most of the 100,000 plus persons choosing to settle in Winnipeg. With this increase in international migration to the province, there has also been a corresponding increase in newcomers from African countries.

African newcomers thought Winnipeg's housing market provided limited options for those with low incomes. Rapidly increasing resale values have made it more difficult for people to move up in the market. As well, low vacancy rates in the rental market make it challenging to secure affordable and suitable housing. The increased pressure on the rental market has led to a precarious housing situation with some facing an increased risk of homelessness, especially for the most vulnerable individuals and families.

This research found that African newcomers in Winnipeg have significantly lower incomes on average compared to the City of Winnipeg. This was reflected in the survey results. Of those newcomers who participated in the survey, most relied on the rental market for housing that was concentrated in the inner-city. Finding affordable housing was a significant challenge for study participants, especially among those with annual household incomes of \$20,000 or less.

There was a divide in perceptions about housing and neighbourhood satisfaction and safety between those who lived in the inner-city and those who did not. Although most were satisfied with their housing and neighbourhood and felt safe, there was a large proportion, particularly among those located in the inner-city, who felt that their housing and neighbourhood was unsafe. As well, the study showed that many newcomers are unaware of community services and agencies targeted toward immigrants and refugees.

Open-ended group discussions held at community events revealed that there is a growing trend among newcomers to move to other provinces shortly after arriving in Manitoba. Many newcomers believe that other provinces can offer greater employment opportunities and/or support services. This is certainly a topic for further research to confirm whether this trend is observed in a larger sample.

Although homelessness did not arise as a specific concern, the lack of affordable housing puts many newcomers in precarious housing situations. House sharing was a very common practice among those surveyed. Many newcomers stayed with friends or family when they first arrived in Canada, and many have hosted their friends and family. Although it was strongly felt that house sharing was common among this community due to the more communal nature of many African cultures, it also became clear that the families hosting newcomers are stressed. The extra financial burden placed on these families stretches their already limited resources and leads to overcrowding of small

homes. As well, crowding of rental units can and was observed by many as contributing to evictions and strained tenant and landlord relations.

In closing, this study sought to simply highlight the housing experiences of a small sample of African immigrants and refugees. In this work the research team heard many successes as well as the challenges that exist. In the end, the issues faced by newcomers are complex, and the search for housing is only one of many factors. Securing adequate, suitable, and affordable housing is critical in providing a solid foundation from which people can begin to address the other challenges they face.

The final thought is that this project set out to draw in community members to help set the context and tone for this approach. It is felt that this was achieved and that the community based participatory model served as the correct format for striving to give voice to an emerging community in Winnipeg. Perhaps it is fitting ending the report by quoting one person who said “Immigrants should be actively involved in policymaking, because they know the issues they face better than anybody else.” It is our hope that we captured the spirit of the nearly 170 individuals that shared their time and stories.

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The Institute of Urban Studies, the University of Winnipeg

Introduction Script to be read aloud by the interviewer:

"This project is gathering opinions from African Immigrants and Refugees about their housing circumstances. The Institute of Urban Studies is a research centre at the University of Winnipeg. We will use this information to inform policy makers, and the public, on the housing needs of this community. Therefore, your participation and contribution to this project is very important. It will only take 15-20 minutes of your time to participate in this survey. Your privacy is assured, and you can skip any question that you do not feel comfortable answering."

Consent Form Number: # _____

Address: _____ house / apartment (Circle One)

"First, we'd like to ask you about your home"...

1. Do you rent or own your current home? Rent / Own
2. Do you live in a subsidized house or apartment? (Does the government pay part of the cost?)
a) Yes b) No (Circle One)

3. How satisfied are you with where you live? (Circle One)

Very unsatisfied	Somewhat unsatisfied	Neutral, or "It's Ok"	Somewhat satisfied	Very satisfied	Don't Know / No Response
---------------------	-------------------------	--------------------------	-----------------------	-------------------	-----------------------------

4. What do you like the most about your current residence?

5. What do you like the least about your current residence?

6. If you live in an apartment building, do you have an on-site caretaker? (Circle One)
a) Yes
b) No
c) Doesn't Apply (House)



14. Did you stay with friends or family before you found permanent housing?

a) Yes

b) No

If Yes, please explain further:

15. Did you search for housing before you arrived in Winnipeg?

a) Yes

b) No

Please explain further (how did you search for housing?):

“Next, we’d like to ask about community supports.”

16. When someone in your community cannot afford to pay the rent, what do they do?

17. Are you aware of community services that assist with housing? (Circle One)

a) Yes

b) No

18. Which community housing supports do you now use?

19. Which community housing supports have you used in the past?

20. What other community supports do you use? (Please tell us which ones and for what reason.)

“Next, we’d like to ask how you feel about affordable housing.”

21. What does affordable housing mean to you?



22. Have you been without a place to live since you came to Canada?

- a) Yes
- b) No

If Yes, please explain further:

23. Do you think the practice of sharing a place with relatives or a friend when one is unable to pay rent is common among African immigrants and refugees?

- a) Yes
- b) No

Please explain further:

24. Please tell us the things you think make it difficult for immigrants and refugees to get affordable housing.

“Lastly, we’d like to ask you some questions about yourself.”

25. What is your country of origin? _____

26. Why did you choose to live in Winnipeg?

27. How many times have you moved since you came to Canada (all moves)? _____

28. How many times have you moved in Winnipeg since you came to Canada? _____

29. How old are you? (Circle One)

18-19
20-24
25-29
30-34
35-39
40-44

45-49
50-54
55-59
60-64
65 and older



30. What is your Marital Status? (Circle One)

- Single
- Single parent with child/children
- Married
- Divorced / other

31. How many people live in this home with you? (Circle One)

- 0-1
- 2-3
- 4-5
- 6 or more

32. How many children do you have? _____

33. What is your Education level? (Circle One)

- Grade 1 - 11
- Grade 12 High School diploma
- College diploma
- Undergraduate or Graduate Degree

34. How long have you lived in Canada? _____

35. How long have you lived in Winnipeg? _____

36. Are you currently employed? (Circle One)

- a) Yes – Full time
- b) Yes – Part time
- c) No – unemployed
- d) Other – (e.g. student)

37. Do you share the cost of your current housing or pay all of it yourself? (Circle One)

- I share the cost
- I pay all of it myself

38. What is your yearly household income? (For the primary occupants (before deductions). This includes combined income of spouse or contributing partner). (Circle One)

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| Up to \$10,000 | \$40,001 to \$50,000 |
| \$10,001 to \$20,000 | \$50,001 to \$60,000 |
| \$20,001 to \$30,000 | \$60,001 to \$70,000 |
| \$30,001 to \$40,000 | More than \$70,000 |

39. How much do you pay in rent? (Rent or mortgage payment, including utilities.) _____

40. Please share your additional thoughts on homelessness and/or your own housing experience.



Appendix II – Community Forum discussion script

Group Discussion:

Introduction: Let's start with a round table introduction, can you tell us your name and what is your home country?

Thank you for sharing. Let's now shift to some questions. As you know, we are here to talk about housing. I'd like to start the discussion by asking you to share something about homelessness.

- What does *homelessness* mean to you?

Thanks again! Just before we move to some specific questions, let's talk briefly about the handout:

- Does anyone have any questions or comments about the information in the pamphlet?

Discussion questions:

1. What is being ***done well*** regarding housing and housing services in Winnipeg?
2. What housing and housing services need to be ***improved*** in Winnipeg?
(**Prompt:** Who is facing the biggest challenge: families, young people, the elderly, etc.)
3. If you had to pick something, what is the ***most important*** thing that needs to be done today?
4. If you could build a house for the community, what would it look like?

Final roundtable:

I would like to thank each of you for sharing your thoughts and views today. Can we end the discussion by going around the room one last time and have each of you consider this last question:

- If you could tell the government ***one thing*** about improving housing in Winnipeg, what would it be?

Appendix III – Community Forum information booklet

Affordable Housing and
the African Community

Community Forum



Saturday, March 1/14

Institute of Urban Studies,
University of Winnipeg

Welcome!

This Community Forum, held by the Institute of Urban Studies (IUS), is focused on housing related issues in Winnipeg's African immigrant and refugee community. The purpose of the forum is to share our research findings to date with the community, discuss these findings and get feedback, and explore possible solutions through group discussion.



Agenda	
1:00 pm	Lunch
1:30 pm	Welcome and overview of the day's events
1:45 pm	Discussion of research findings to date
2:00 pm	Group discussion
2:45 pm	Wrap up

Research Team:

Jino Distasio
Director, Institute of Urban Studies
Reuben Garang
Holly Ervick-Knote

Community Researchers:

Tatenda Bwawa
Sunday Lizu
Doreen Mutungi
Monybuny Chuol

Acknowledgements:

This study could not have been made possible without funding from the Homelessness Partnering Strategy, a community-based program aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness in designated communities across Canada through support and funding.

About this study

In recent years, more African people are moving to Winnipeg. Many African immigrants and refugees come from war-torn countries and arrive traumatized.

African immigrant and refugee population in Winnipeg			
	2006	2011	Change
Total African immigrant and refugee population	6720	9,840	46%
Recently arrived African immigrants and refugees	3605	4465	24%

Why housing?

- Previous research found that many African immigrants and refugees are living in housing that is not ideal.
- A lack of affordable housing was one of the most pressing issues facing African newcomers.
- Many African immigrants and refugees find that current housing policies place them in neighbourhoods with chronic social problems, putting their children at greater risk for gang and crime involvement.

Research Process:

1. Interviews with African community
2. Community Meetings
3. Analysis
4. Final report



Community-based participatory research:

- gives a voice to those who are often not heard
- Lets the people who are impacted by an issue work

We want to find out:

1. What is your understanding of homelessness?
2. What has been successful regarding housing services?
3. What are the greatest concerns regarding housing?
4. How could the housing situation be improved?

What we found out: Survey Results

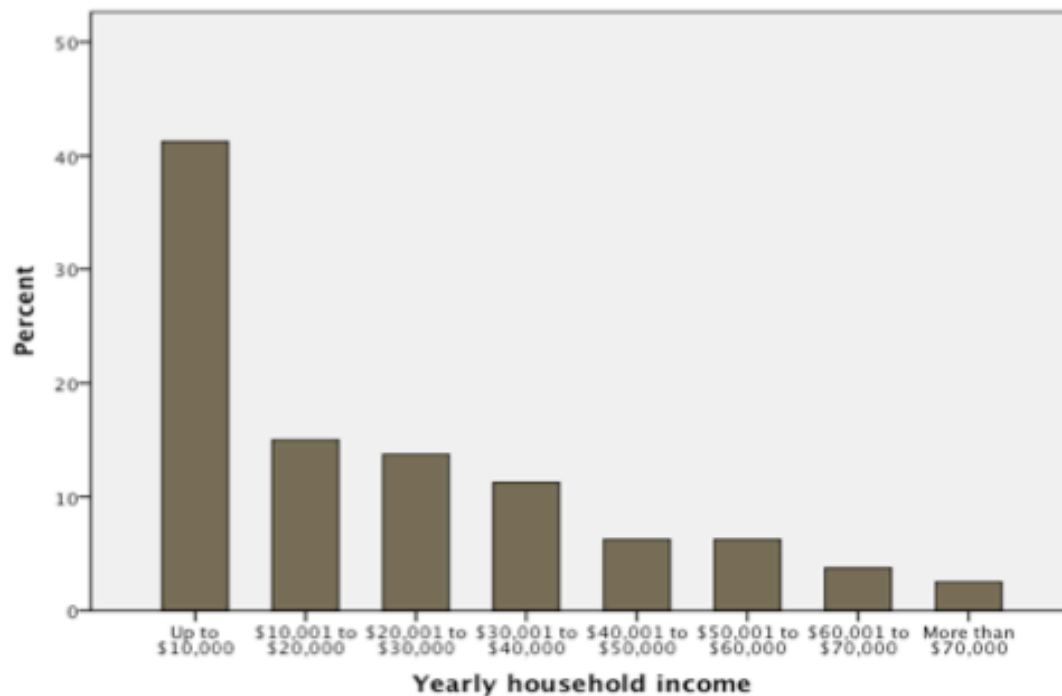


About the participants

- **92%** rent.
- **75%** live in apartments.
- **50%** arrived in Winnipeg through sponsorship.
- **41%** receive some sort of subsidization for their housing.
- **94%** had been in Canada for more than one year.

Low household incomes

- **41%** of those interviewed had an annual household income of \$10,000 per year or less.
- **56%** had an annual household income of \$20,000 or less.
- **80%** of those with annual household incomes of \$20,000 or less were found to be living in housing that was not affordable.
- **91%** of those with annual household incomes of \$10,000 or less lived in housing that was not affordable.

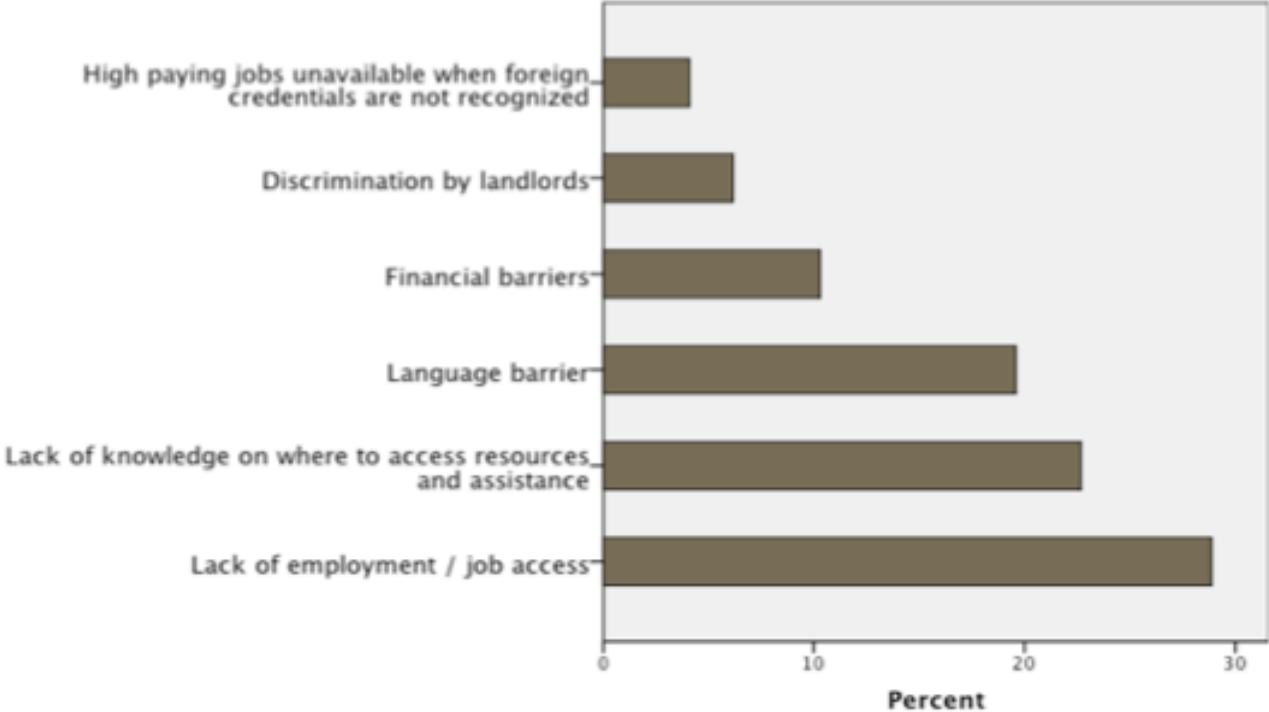


Lack of Affordable Housing

62% of respondents lived in housing that is unaffordable.

Housing costs of survey participants	
Average annual household income	\$22,125
Average monthly housing cost	\$605.51
Average shelter cost to income ratio (STIR)	56%
Households spending 30% of total income or more on housing	62%
Households spending 50% of total income or more on housing	49%

Barriers to Affordable Housing (identified in interviews)



Lack of Employment

- Less than **50%** of those interviewed had full time employment.
- **A third** were unemployed.

Lack of knowledge about community supports

- **45%** of respondents were unaware of community services that assist with housing.
- **59%** had never used community housing supports.

The Good:

House Sharing and African Culture

- 79% felt sharing a place with relatives or friends is common.
- **Africans felt strongly that this was part of their culture.**
 - "We are African. It's part of our culture"
 - "It is how we do things back home"
 - "Africans are very communal"

Overcrowding was not identified as an issue by most

- **20%** of people interviewed said that their housing was too crowded.
- **47%** stayed with friends or family before finding permanent housing.

Community Meeting Findings

- **Differences between expectations and reality of living in Canada**
- **Migration of newcomers out of Winnipeg and perceived lack of opportunity**
- **Suitable housing**



Group discussion

The roundtable will focus on group discussions about housing and housing services in Winnipeg.

We will be asking questions about homelessness, housing, and housing services.

We would also like to hear any questions or comments you have about the findings in this pamphlet.

The final report will be made available to anybody who attended this Community Forum. To receive a copy, please provide contact information on the sign-in sheet.

If you have any questions, please contact Jillian at:

Phone: 204-982-1140

Email: ius@uwinnipeg.ca



Appendix IV – Survey Results Table

Table 11. Survey Results		
	#	%
General		
# of people interviewed	100	
From Eastern Africa*	62	
<i>Age</i>		
18-24	5	5.1
25-44	79	80
45-64	13	13.2
65+	1	1
Married	32	32.7
<i>Number of children</i>		
Zero	42	42.9
1 to 4	46	46.9
5 or more	10	10.2
<i>Number of people in household</i>		
0 to 1	22	22.4
2 to 5	61	62.2
6 or more	15	15.3
<i>Education</i>		
Grade 1 - 11	15	15.6
Grade 12 High School diploma	23	24
ESL	18	18.8
College diploma	11	11.5
Undergraduate or Graduate degree	29	30.2
<i>Years living in Winnipeg</i>		
Less than 1	8	8.2
1 to 5	36	36.7
5 to 10	44	44.9
More than 10	10	10.2
<i>Reason for moving to Winnipeg</i>		
Family lives here	14	14.1
Sponsored refugee (no choice in location)	48	48.5
Chose based on cost of living, quality of life criteria or education	33	33.4
Other	4	4

Employment and Income		
<i>Employment</i>		
Employed full time	38	39.6
Employed part time	23	24
Unemployed	33	34.4
<i>Annual household income</i>		
\$10,000 or less	29	36.3
\$10,001 to \$20,000	12	15
\$20,001 to \$40,000	20	25.1
\$40,001 to \$60,000	10	12.6
More than \$60,000	5	6.3
Housing Characteristics		
<i>Type of housing</i>		
House	24	26.1
Apartment	68	73.9
<i>Housing tenure</i>		
Renters	92	92
Owners	8	8
<i>Monthly housing cost (rent/mortgage plus utilities)</i>		
No cost	4	4.5
Less than \$400	19	21.3
\$401 to \$500	23	25.8
\$501 to \$700	18	20.2
\$701 to \$1000	15	16.9
More than \$1000	10	11.2
<i>Paying for housing</i>		
Cost shared	36	36.7
Partially subsidized	37	37
Fully subsidized	4	4
Pays full amount him/herself	56	57.1
Housing Affordability		
<i>Average Shelter-to-income-ratio</i>		
Paid less than 30% of household income for shelter	29	37.7
Paid 30% or more of household income for shelter	48	62.3
Paid 50% or more of household income for shelter	39	50.6

<i>Affordable housing barriers identified</i>		
Lack of employment/job access	28	28.9
Lack of knowledge on where to access resources and assistance	22	22.7
Language barrier	19	19.6
Financial barriers	10	10.3
Having children (decreases mobility)	1	1
Lack of decent affordable housing	1	1
Discrimination by landlords	6	6.2
Lack of recognition of foreign credentials	4	4.1
Other	6	6.2
Mobility		
<i>Average length of tenancy</i>		
Lived in Winnipeg less than 1 year	8 months	
Lived in Winnipeg 1 to 5 years	12.4 months	
Lived in Winnipeg 5 to 10 years	2.4 years	
Lived in Winnipeg over 10 years	3.45 years	
Overall (weighted mean)	1.45 years	
Location		
Lived in inner-city	71	73.2
Lived in non-inner-city	26	26.8
Housing perceptions		
<i>Housing satisfaction</i>		
Satisfied or very satisfied	51	52.6
Neutral	37	38.1
Unsatisfied or very unsatisfied	8	8.3
<i>Liked most about current residence</i>		
Clean/big/comfortable	34	34.3
Close to amenities	19	19.2
Quiet	13	13.1
Good neighbours	6	6.1
Affordable	5	5.1
Safe/nice neighbourhood	3	3
Building secure	3	3
Other	11	11.1
Nothing	5	5.1

<i>Liked least about current residence</i>		
Too small	15	16
Dirty building/bugs/lack of maintenance	8	8.5
Too loud/busy	4	4.3
Bad neighbourhood/drugs and alcohol use prevalent	4	4.3
Lack of access to amenities	3	3.2
Building not secure	1	1.1
Lack of sense of security	1	1.1
Don't like neighbours	1	1.1
Other	25	26.6
Nothing	32	34
Had on-site caretaker	52	60.5
Overcrowded	20	20
Felt home was unsafe	20	20.4
Neighbourhood perceptions		
<i>Liked most about neighbourhood</i>		
Close to amenities	28	29.2
Quiet	19	19.8
Safe/nice neighbourhood	16	16.6
Sense of security	7	7.3
Friendly neighbours	4	4.2
Sense of community	1	1
Other	7	7.3
Nothing	12	12.5
<i>Liked least about neighbourhood</i>		
Bad neighbourhood/drugs and alcohol use prevalent	14	15.2
Lacked sense of security	12	13
Didn't like neighbours	5	5.4
Noisy	4	4.3
Bus routes/schedule	3	3.3
Dirty	3	3.3
Other	17	18.5
Nothing	32	34.8
Recreation easily available	50	50
Felt neighbourhood is unsafe	33	34

Finding housing		
Took more than 1 month to find current residence	73	73.7
Stayed with friends of family before finding permanent housing	47	47
Searched for housing before arriving in Winnipeg	21	21
Felt house sharing is common in African culture	76	79.2
Aware of community housing supports	55	55.6

*Eastern Africa defined by United Nations scheme of geographic regions.

