

Homelessness as an Injury Risk Factor

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Homelessness as an injury risk factor – a review of the literature

Agenda

1. Introduction and Aim
2. Definitions
3. Pathways into homelessness
4. Findings and Discussion
5. Conclusions

1. Introduction

- There are homeless people in all communities
- According to Shelter International there are up to 100 million people homeless globally
- People, particularly young people, are continually moving into and out of homelessness

2. Definitions

- House and Home
- Homelessness and Homeless people
- Homeless young people (HYP)
- Injury
- Risk factor and Causal factor

What is home



What is home



What is home



What is home



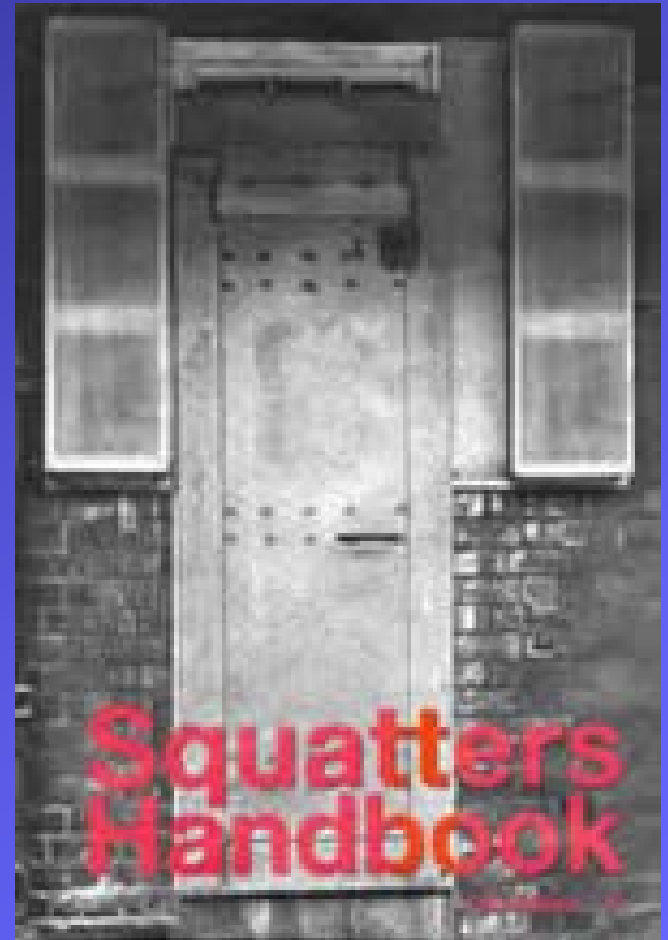
Definitions - Who are the homeless

- People who do not have a fixed, regular and adequate night time residence to which they can return whenever they so choose
- which includes people who are

Who are the homeless

1. roofless (primary homelessness) - people without any accommodation – sleeping rough

Who are the homeless



Who are the homeless

2. Houseless (secondary homelessness) - people who move frequently from one form of temporary shelter to another

Who are the homeless

3. Insecurely housed - (tertiary homelessness) — people without secure tenure

Who are the homeless

4. Marginally housed –

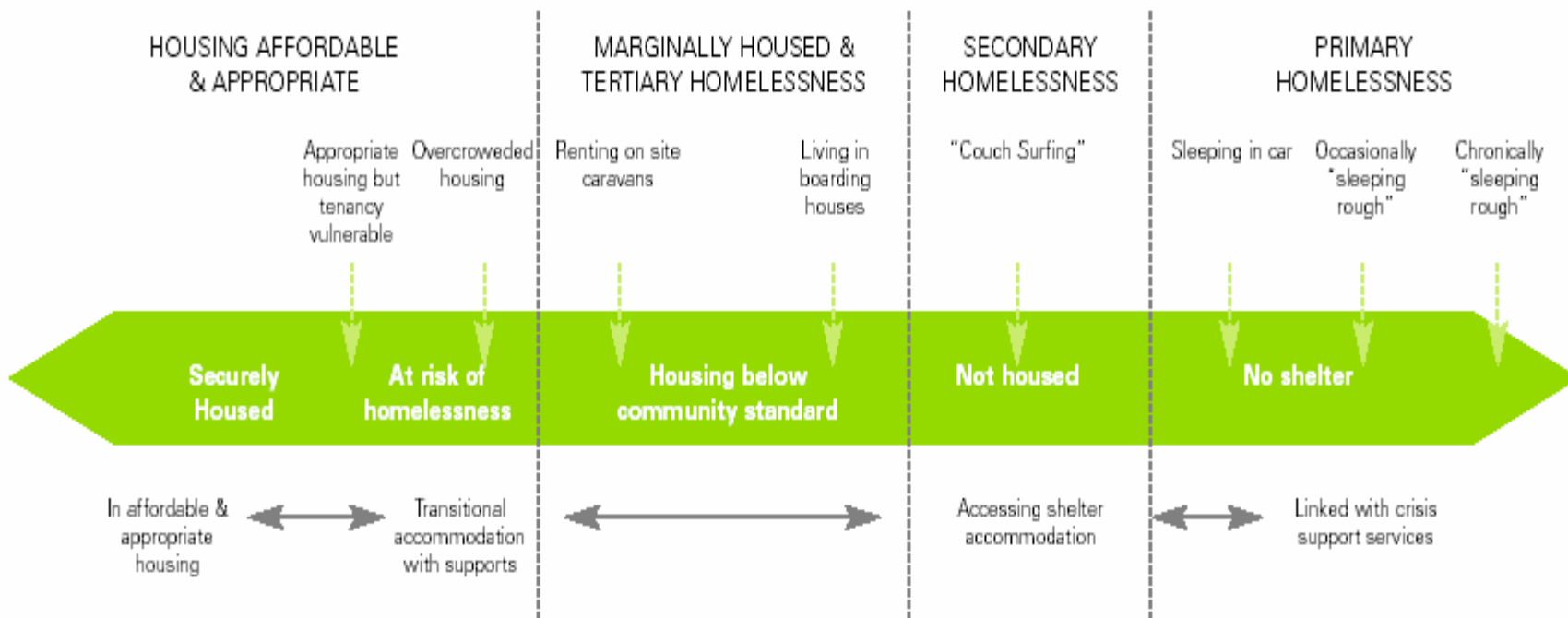
- people living in overcrowded or substandard residences

Marginal
housing can
be unsafe,
as well as
over-
crowded



Summary

Housing – Homelessness Continuum



Reducing Homelessness: A Plan for Immediate Action, Social Inclusion Briefing Paper, August 2004
http://www.socialinclusion.sa.gov.au/webdata/resources/files/H_ness_Update_Aug_2004.pdf

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3. Pathways into homelessness

Homelessness can result from :

1. **natural disasters** – hurricanes, fires, floods, earthquakes, tsunamis;
2. **conflicts** - at international, national, regional, community or personal levels; and
3. **changes in economic circumstances** – again, affecting people globally, locally or individually.

Pathways into homelessness – natural disasters

“Devastation to Banda Aceh on the island of Sumatra as a result of the tsunami caused by the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake”

(Credit: DigitalGlobe)
2004 Indian Ocean Earthquake, Wikipedia



Pathways into homelessness – conflict and war veterans

- People fleeing conflict can become homeless
- Wars also have a secondary impact on homelessness.
- There are over 275,000 homeless veterans living on US streets

Coalition for the Homeless, 2003; Benjamin M, Washington Times, 7 December 2004

Pathways into homelessness – interpersonal conflict

violent conflict and physical and sexual abuse are among the major causes of homelessness in western communities, with thousands of women, young people and children leaving family homes to escape these horrors

Pathways into homelessness – conflict, violence and abuse

72% of the young people interviewed by the Project i team mentioned 'conflict with parents' as an important or very important reason for leaving home – other major reasons for leaving included violence at home between family members (43%), physical abuse (over 20%) and sexual abuse (over 10%)

Myers, Rossiter and Rosenthal, Project I Broadsheet No 2 – Pathways into Youth Homelessness, Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, Melbourne, 2001,

Pathways into homelessness – sexual abuse

Grace, now 18, was not believed when she told her parents that she had been raped repeatedly by a family member. “... when I was 7, my uncle... raped me for three years straight. My parents put me into counselling ‘cause they thought there was something wrong with me.”

Rosenthal D, Keys D, Mallett S, Edwards J, Getting out: young people’s true stories, Project i, Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, Melbourne, 2005, p11

Pathways into homelessness – changed economic circumstances

most clearly demonstrated in the world-wide depressions in the 1890's and the Great Depression from 1929 to 1933 – when world trade fell by over 60%.



Pathways into homelessness –

physical or mental illness, injury or disability leads to loss of income and homelessness

“Wayne was begging in Little Collins Street yesterday (in the centre of the Melbourne CBD). After 90 minutes he had made \$7.50 which, he said, was more than usual”

Age 17 Feb 2005



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The favela or shanty towns of Brazil



4. Findings / results

- After wading through masses of articles and web pages
- Only seven studies were found on homelessness as an injury risk factor
- One study was found on victimisation
- And one on characteristics of HYP and their pathways into homelessness

Homeless Rates

- Are reported to range from 1 to 15 per 1000 population across 23 countries
- On census night 2001, 99,900 people were homeless in Australia - ABS – 5 / 1000

Homeless Young People Rates

- Global HYP rates are estimated in the paper at 21/1000 population for primary homelessness.
- In Australia – HYP rate is 7/1000 for all four categories of homelessness.

Mortality rates for homeless people

The mortality rate among homeless people has been found to be much higher than for comparable general populations –

- **Stockholm Sweden, 1969 to 1971, 6032 men, 327 deaths – 3.8 times**

(Alstrom C, Lindelius R, Salum I, Mortality among homeless men, Br J Addict 1975;70:245-252)

- **Toronto, Canada, 1995 to 1997, 8933 men, 201 deaths – 2.3 times for 45 to 64, 3.7 times for 25 to 44, and 8.3 times higher for 18 to 24 years**

(Hwang S, Mortality among men using homeless shelter in Toronto Canada, JAMA, 2000; 283: 2152-2157)

Mortality rates for homeless young people

The mortality rates among homeless young people are also much higher than their counterparts in housed communities –

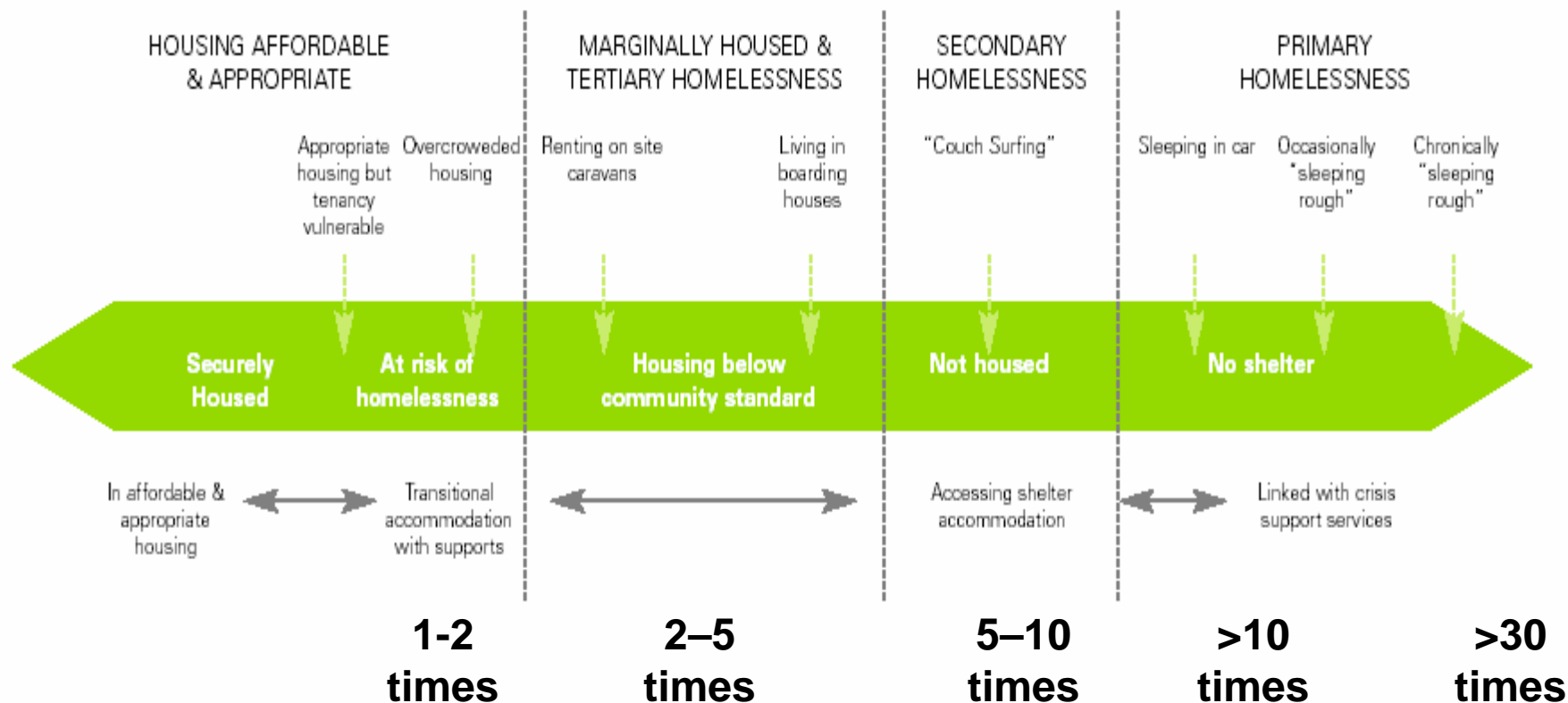
- **New York shelter residents, 1987 to 1994, 949 males 20 to 24 – 2.7 times** (Borrow, Herman, Cordova, Struening, Mortality among homeless shelter residents in NY City, Am J Public Health, 1999; 89: 529-534)
- **Montreal, Canada, 1995 to 2000, 1013 homeless people 14 to 25 years, 26 deaths – 11.4 times overall – 11.1 times for males; 13.5 times for females** (Roy E, Haley N, Leclerc P, Sochanski B, Boudreau JF & Boivin JF, Mortality in a cohort of street youth in Montreal, JAMA, 2004; 292: 5569-574)
- **Toronto, Canada, 1995 to 1997, 1046 men 18 to 24 shelter residents – 8.3 times** (Hwang S, Mortality among men using homeless shelter in Toronto Canada, JAMA, 2000; 283: 2152-2157)

Mortality rates for homeless young people

- **Boston, USA, 1988 to 1993, 11745 males 18 to 24 – 5.9 times**
(Hwang S, Orav E, O'Connell J, Lebow J, Brennan T, Causes of deaths in homeless adults in Boston, Ann Int Med 1997; 126: 625-628)
- **Copenhagen, Denmark, 2003, 10 year study, 15 to 24 – 13.3 times for males; 28.5 times for females**
(Nordentoft & Wandell-Holm, 10 year follow up study of mortality among users of hostels for homeless people in Copenhagen, BMJ, 2003; 327-81)
- **UK, 1998, rough sleepers 16 to 29 – 37.3 times mortality ratio of 16 to 19 year olds in the general population**
(Shaw & Dorling, Mortality among street youth in the UK, Lancet, 1998; 352: 743)

Summary of results – odds ratios

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4. Discussion

- *Homelessness has clearly not been eliminated as a risk factor*
- *But possible confounders have not been precluded – reverse of the healthy worker effect, mental health and alcohol and drug use*

Discussion

- *The strength of the combined evidence on homelessness as a risk or causal factor for injuries was tested using the 9 Meirik / Hill criteria – detailed in the paper*
- *The evidence indicates that homelessness is a risk factor for HYP and probably also a causal factor*
- *But the studies identified do not provide sufficient evidence for homelessness to be termed more than a contributory factor in western countries*

Community and government responses

- *Widespread formation of homeless advocacy and support groups*
- *Social inclusion and poverty programs in many countries*

Legal responses

- *But HYP remain in a legal chasm*
- *If they cannot find shelter they cannot go somewhere else when asked by police to move on – they will still be living in public space or squatting on someone else's property*
- *Performing essential human functions in public places is criminalised in many societies – so HYP risk arrest whenever sleeping, preparing food or gathering in public places*

5. Conclusions

- *Further studies are needed to exclude the possible confounders – poor health, mental health and drugs and alcohol*
- *by comparing the rates of drug and alcohol related deaths and injuries for housed and homeless communities of drug users and mentally ill people*

Conclusions

- *The period and severity of homelessness (categories one to four) appears to significantly affect results – further analysis of available data or inclusion of this dimension in current ongoing studies is warranted*

Conclusions

- *Mortality and morbidity rates from injuries for HYP are above comparable housed populations*
- *Particularly for intentional and unintentional poisoning, suicide, homicide, and sexual and physical assaults*

Conclusions

- *Available evidence supports the conclusion that homelessness is a risk factor for injuries and probably a causal factor*
- *Homelessness has been demonstrated to be a contributory risk factor in western societies, but more evidence is needed for it to be termed a necessary or sufficient causal factor – or to generalise to other cultures*
- *Social and legal responses to homelessness share many similarities*

The vision for the post war world -

"Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health & well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing & medical care, and necessary social services ..."

Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 10 December, 1948, General Assembly of the United Nations

The superadobe emergency shelter



End Photo - *Refugee Housing in Khuzestan (Persian Gulf) built by the refugees with the U.N. to Khalili's design*

“In the wake of disasters both natural and man-made, the provision of emergency shelter, in addition to food and water, is the most pressing challenge for local governments, international agencies, and humanitarian aid organizations.”

Using local earth as the major building material, "The structures make the materials of war--sandbags and barbed wire--into materials of peace," notes Khalili, who founded the California Institute of Earth Art and Architecture (known as Cal-Earth) in 1991 to focus on housing for the world's poor.”

“Standard polypropylene sandbags, 14 to 18 inches in diameter and up to a mile in length, are filled with dirt, sand, or clay, wound in circular or spiralling forms, and held in place with barbed wire in between each layer. One house, up to 16 feet wide, can be built in a day by a family of four. It can last decades if cement is added to the soil mix or if the exterior is plastered, as is the case with a community in Southern Iran.”

<http://www.calearth.org/archmag/ArchMag.htm>

Note the juxtaposition this construction method achieves between the social and humanitarian need for more emergency housing and the environmental need for less pollution by plastics.

Plastics have a long life in the environment.

However, it is this longevity in the face of continual onslaught from the elements, that make them an ideal material for the Superadobe.

Adobe - A sun-dried, unburned brick of clay and straw. The clay or soil from which this brick is made. A structure built with this type of brick.

<http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=adobe>

