

2010 Annual Report Card  
on Homelessness  
for Nelson & Area

Prepared by the Nelson Committee on  
Homelessness

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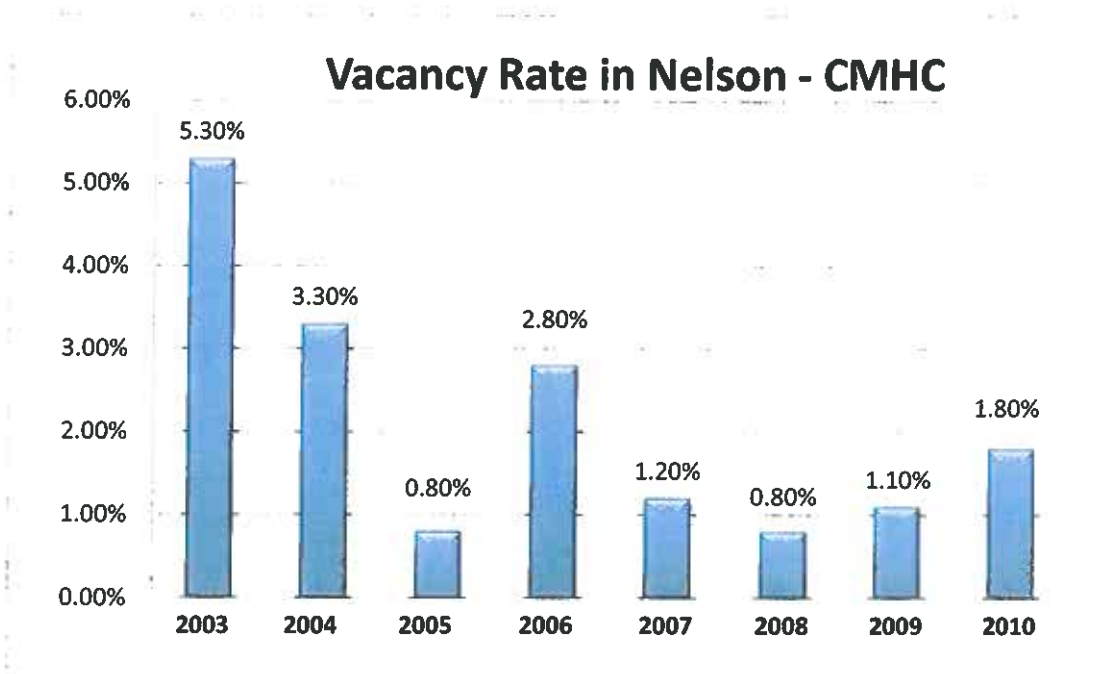
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# 1. Context

Chart 1.1



Nelson's issues with housing and increasing homelessness/housing insecurity are inextricably linked with the area's low vacancy rate. It has consistently remained one of the lowest in the Kootenay region, and in 2010 was lower than:

Vancouver – 2.2%

Victoria – 2.5 %

Penticton - 4.1%

Kelowna – 3.7%

Vernon – 5.6%

Cranbrook – 4.7%

According to Paul Fabri, Housing Market Analyst for the Kootenay Region (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation), any movement in the rate between 1% and 2% is statistically insignificant due to the small apartment pool surveyed. Only purpose built apartments of 3 units or more are counted. Multi-unit residential, secondary suites, and rental condominiums are not included.

In 2010, the average vacancy rate across the province increased to 4.1%. Nelson was left behind in this trend. There are several reasons for this: Other cities have expanded their secondary suite and condominium rental offerings more so than Nelson, added some purpose built rentals to the housing stock, and when renters in Nelson move into home ownership, there are many amenity migrants who move here to rent the unit they vacated.

The low vacancy rate places an upwards pressure on rents as the market will bear increases that price apartments out of reach for people with low incomes.

Chart 1.2

Household Spending for Nelson, BC

Year	Household Type	Number of Households	Housing costs as a percentage of household income (before tax)			
			30-49%		50% and over	
2006	Rented	1,505	410	27.2%	320	21.3%
2000	Rented	1,535	390	25.40%	375	24.40%

Source: BC Housing, Research & Corporate Planning, 2006 Census Custom Table

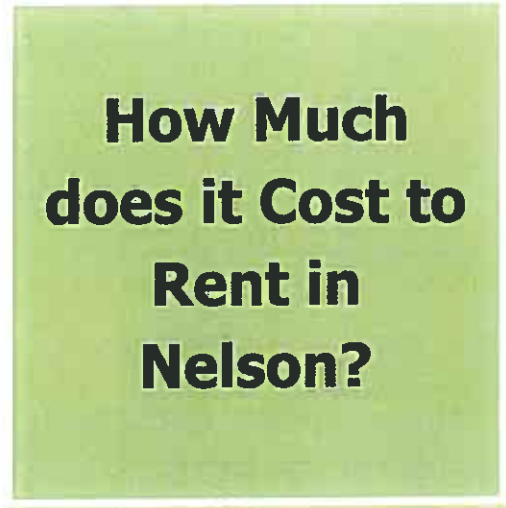
In 2004, the city of Nelson was deemed a Designated Community to receive federal homelessness funding due to the fact that the city of Nelson had one the highest proportion of individuals in the province paying over 50% of their income on rent.

According to the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the definition of affordability is recognized as a maximum of 30 per cent of the household income spent on shelter. Renters spending over 50% of their income are classified as having “extreme affordability issues”.

The most recent data from Census Canada indicates a slight decrease in renters paying above 30% of their income between 2000 and 2006, however, since this time the vacancy rate has decreased by more than 50% and a recession began in fall of 2008.

Below is a snapshot of rental prices advertised in the fall of 2010. The Nelson Committee on Homelessness compiles these rental averages 2x a year.

<u>Chart 1.3</u>	<u>Bachelor</u>	<u>One Bedroom Apt.</u>	<u>Two Bedroom Apt.</u>	<u>Three Bedroom</u>
	\$800.00	\$950.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,600.00
		\$750.00	\$1,200.00	\$1,000.00
		\$625.00	\$835.00	\$1,500.00
		\$625.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,500
		\$640.00	\$1,600.00	\$1,150
		\$590.00	\$1,300.00	\$1,000
		\$640.00	\$1,050.00	\$1,150
		\$590.00	\$1,200.00	\$1,175
		\$640.00	\$800.00	\$1,200
		\$950.00	\$800.00	\$1,000.00
		\$800.00	\$1,400	\$1,700
		\$700	\$800	\$1,500
		\$700	\$1,600	\$1,500
		\$900	\$1,100	\$1,700
		\$650	\$1,500	
		\$850	\$825	
		\$750		
		\$695		
		\$700		
		\$740		
<b>Average Rent</b>				
Sept. / 2010	\$800.00	\$725.00	\$1,125.00	\$1,350.00



Sources: Pennywise Ads, llovenelson.com, Nelson Star, Express News, kijiji.com, craigslist.com.

Apartments all located within the City of Nelson, some prices include utilities, others do not.

### Trend: Waitlists for Affordable Housing

Nelson is fortunate enough to have some options for affordable housing. However, demand far outstrips the supply, which is insufficient to put a dent in the numbers of homeless people in our community. Along with food bank usage, another indicator of increased need for affordable housing is the increase in size of the waitlists for these units.

**CLOSED DUE TO HIGH DEMAND:** The Links Coop closed its wait list at 42 families in 2008 due to the low turnover and unlikelihood of any further people on the list to ever be offered a vacant unit.

According to Keitha Patton, the Links administrator,

*“We have had our waitlist closed for about 3 years. We closed it as we have such a low turnover that to continue to accept applications was purposeless as the amount of applications we already had was beyond our capability to provide housing for.”*

↑ 150% Kiwanis Projects Society Senior's Housing affordable units from 2008-2010. According to Janet Nichols, administrator with the Kiwanis Society, the largest increase has been among younger seniors aged 55-65 who are being priced out of a very expensive rental market.

↑ 59% Nelson & District Housing Society from 2007-2010.

*"The Nelson and District Housing Society has 106 units at three different properties and our vacancy rates can't keep up with demand. At any given moment I could replace 100% of our tenants with those who are waiting for decent, affordable housing. For families, single adults, seniors, and persons with disabilities, the story is the same: the inventory in Nelson does not meet the demand."*

Cathy Heyland,  
Property Manager  
Nelson and District Housing Society

↑ 58% Cicada Place Youth Housing from 2007-2010

*"The implications for youth on our waitlist means that they are at a greater risk for homelessness and exploitation. They also may be unable to attend school or work and their mental health and physical needs. Cicada Place offers more than just housing and the youth on our waitlist often lack support and the connection to the necessary community resources."*

Joyce Dahms-Whiffen, Co-ordinator of Youth Services, Nelson Community Services

## 2. Homeless at the Emergency Shelter

"Stepping Stones is a regional emergency shelter for people 19 years or older, that serves the Kootenay – Boundary area. The majority of our clientele is from the West Kootenay area which includes Castlegar, Trail, Nakusp, Kaslo, and the Slocan Valley area. The occupancy rate for the 2010-2011 fiscal year was at 98%, which is the highest rate the shelter has seen since it's opening in 2004. Over the last number of years the need for emergency youth services has become more evident as currently there are none. We see that as an area which will need to be addressed by the community of Nelson.

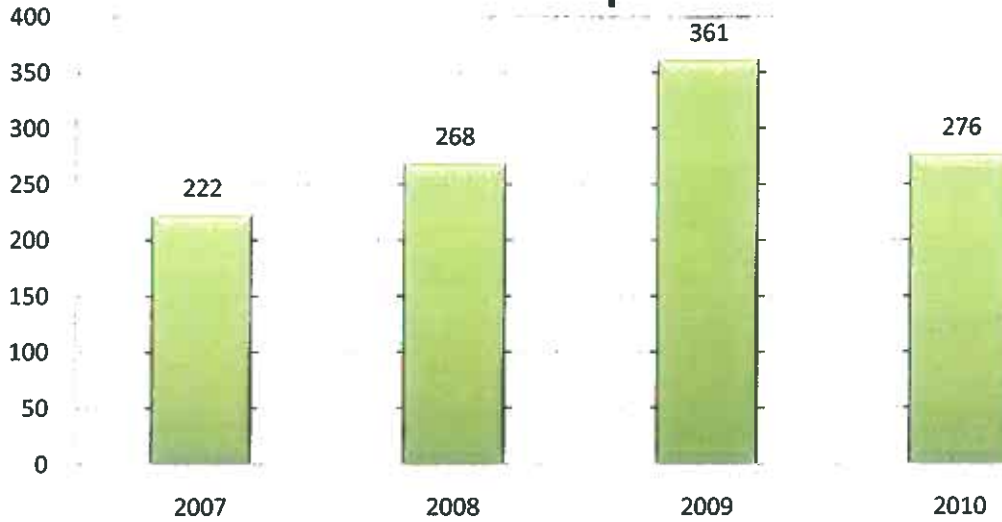
In April 2008 the federal government Homelessness Partnering Strategy started funding a Residential Transition Support Worker who works one to one with people who have had multiple stays at Stepping Stones. The funding will continue until March 31 2012. This position is an effective tool for helping people locate and maintain housing, even in a challenging rental market.

We also were able to create a part time outreach position with funding by BC Housing. With the new part time outreach position and additional federal HPS funding, we were able to open a house for up to 4 clients who could stay for up to a year. The program was designed to promote wellness, physical /mental health, safety, life skills education and self awareness for clients. This program is a pilot project and meets a need for people who are struggling with difficult challenges in addition to trying to locate secure housing."

Klee Hunter, Manager of Affordable and Emergency housing at Nelson CARES Society

Chart 2.1

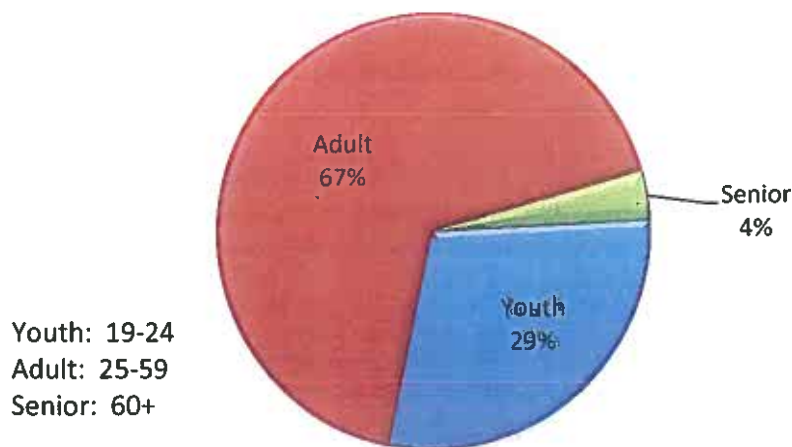
### Stepping Stones and Winter Emergency Bed Individual Clients per Year



Homelessness is increasing in the West Kootenay region. Official shelter numbers the homeless population increased by 24% from 2007 to 2010. Who are they? Where did they come from?

Chart 2.2

### Ages of Clients at Stepping Stones



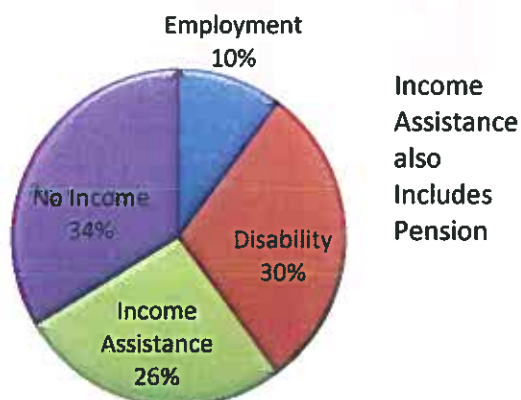


Youth are highly over-represented at 29%, despite being only 10% of the population in the West Kootenay Region (BC Stats 2008, George Penfold, Regional Innovation Chair at Selkirk College). The percentage of women rose from 2009-2010 from 21% to 24%. Homeless women who stay at shelters are particularly vulnerable to various forms of abuse. According to a study by the Ontario Women’s Health Network, 66% of women are homeless simply because they cannot afford to pay rent. In addition, “homeless women are 10 times more likely to die prematurely than women with homes. 21% of women living on the streets were sexually assaulted or raped in the past year. More than half of the women on the streets have been diagnosed with mental-health issues, primarily severe depression and anxiety, with 2% of them suffering from schizophrenia.” 43% of women at Stepping Stones in 2010 were clients of Mental Health – Interior Health.

People with disabilities receiving PWD income assistance are 30% of the shelter population, however, there are many more with disabilities who are homeless and not currently receiving benefits. 34% have no income whatsoever, and only 10% have any kind of employment - p/t, f/t, or seasonal.

Chart 2.3

### Sources of Income for Clients at Stepping Stones



## 3. Homeless and Hidden from View

In addition to shelter data from 2010, we now have an accurate estimate of how many people were homeless and couchsurfing in private homes. Researchers from the Social Planning and Research Council of BC interviewed 1000 people in Nelson and area via telephone and found that at any given time, there are 75 homeless people staying temporarily with friends, acquaintances, or family. Researchers interviewed those who were among the hidden homeless at that time, as well as those who had been in the previous twelve months.

This research was funded by the federal government and also looked at hidden homelessness in the cities of Kamloops, Nanaimo, Kelowna, and Prince George.

**306** – Estimated number of hidden homeless people in 2010, 11% higher than the shelter population of **276**.

Below are the reasons the hidden homeless respondents cited for their situation.

Chart 3.1

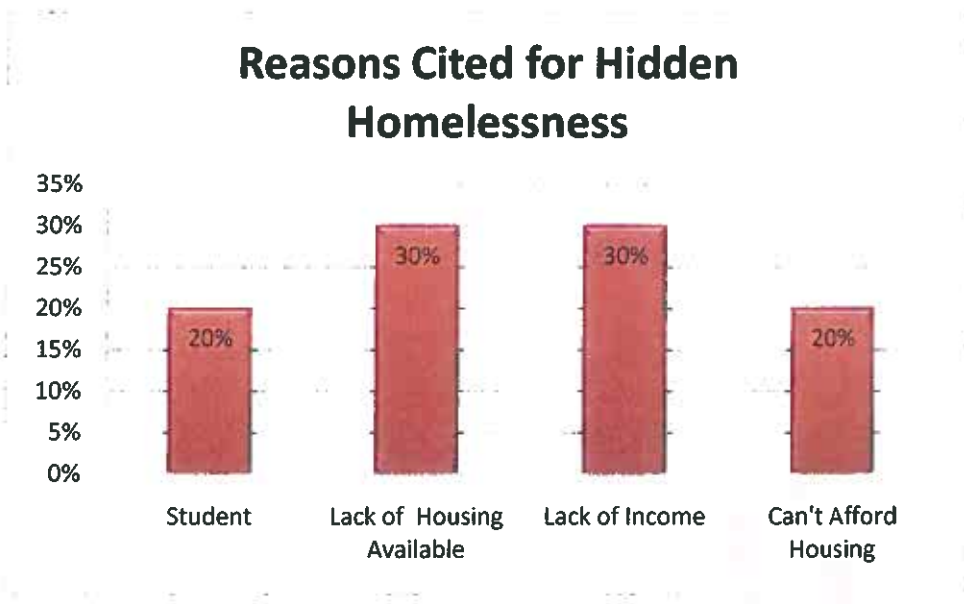
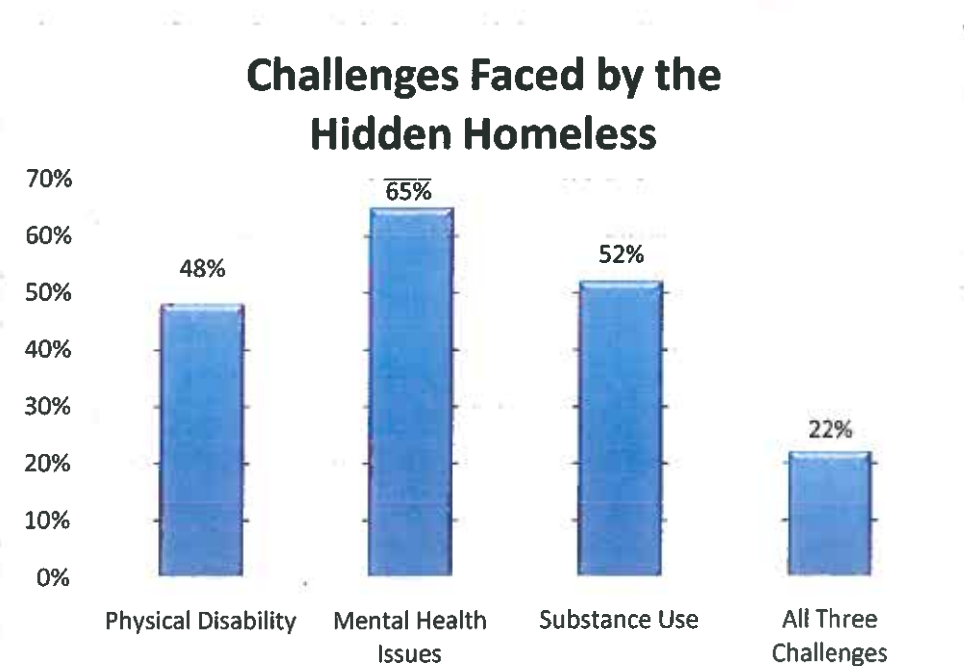


Chart 3.2



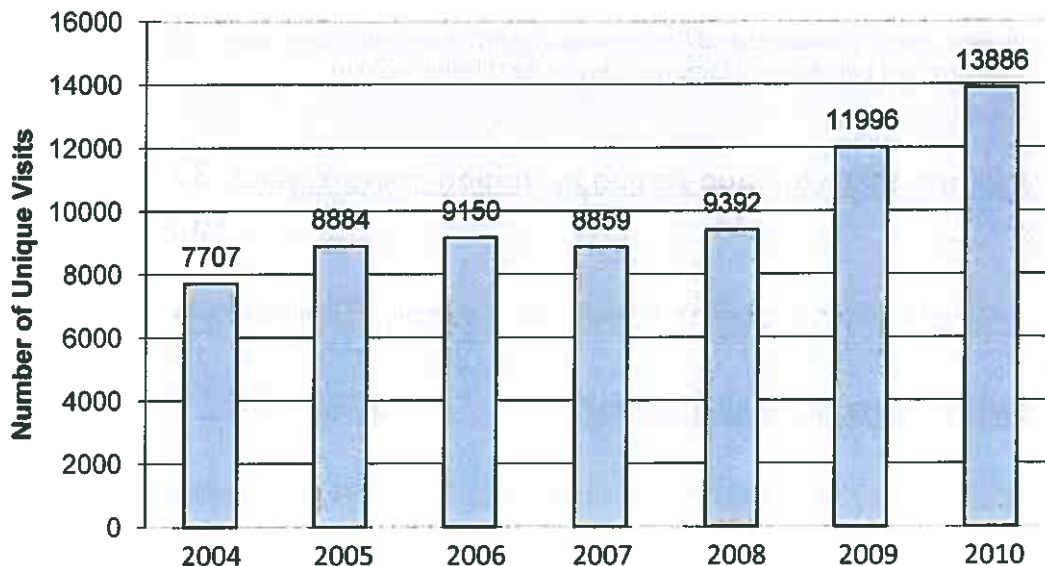
Women make up 52% of the hidden homeless population, in contrast to the smaller percentage staying in shelters, owing to women's greater reliance on social networks than men. Youth, at 23% of the hidden homeless are also over-represented compared to their percentage in the general population (10%). Only 14% are employed: 4% full time and 10% part-time/seasonal/self-employed. Average income per month for those employed less than full time is \$500.00.

## 4. Food Security – the Hungry Among Us

The increasing numbers seen at all food banks in Nelson is a good indication that there are more people than ever at risk of homelessness due to poverty. Some food banks count unique visitors and others do not, so the precise number of people is not clear, however, the Salvation Army served an average of 313 separate individuals a month in 2010. The Nelson Food Cupboard and all other food banks had an average of 1321 visits per month, so even with some overlap between the two and accounting for the possibility of more than one visit per month the number of people needing emergency food is certainly 5% or more of the population of the town of Nelson. It could be also be as high as 9% of the population.

Chart 4.1

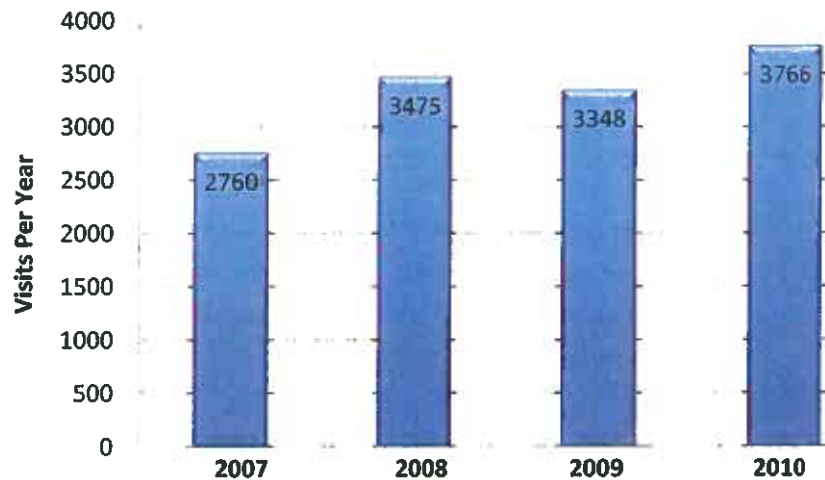
**Client Visits to the Nelson Food Cupboard**



Demand at the Food Cupboard in Nelson has increased by 80% from 2004-2010. During this same period demand across BC increased by only 11.9%. (Food Banks Canada – Hunger Count 2004, Hunger Count 2010).

Chart 4.2

### Client Visits to Salvation Army Food Bank



At the Salvation Army demand from 2007-2010 increased by 36%.

In addition to the Nelson Food Cupboard and the Salvation Army numbers, there were 1433 visits to the Anglican Food Cupboard and 540 to the Women's Centre food bank in 2010.

**How Many Visits are there to Food Banks in Nelson Every Week? 377**  
**Every Month? 1634**

**Picture 126 people lining up for food, 3x a week, 52 weeks a year.**

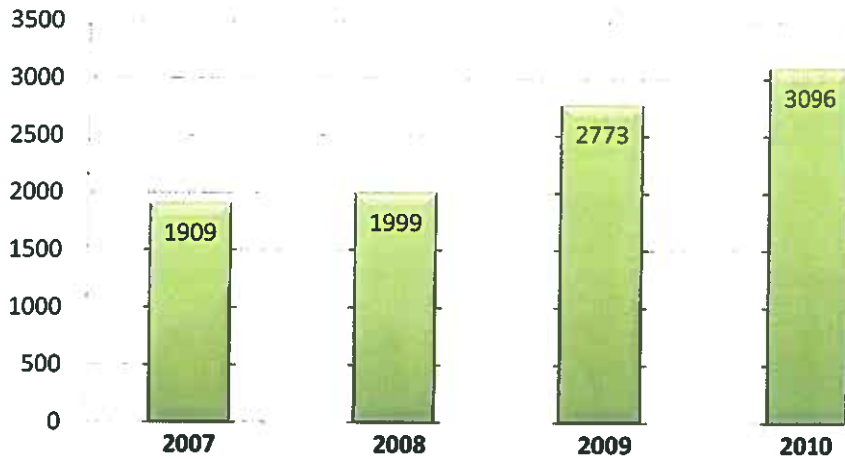
**How Many Monthly Visits are by Children? OVER 400**

**This is the same number of visits as the entire student body of Trafalgar Middle School.**

The number of visits from children to the Nelson Food Cupboard increased by 62% from 2007 to 2010. This is an indication that families with children are experiencing more poverty and are increasingly at risk of becoming homeless. During this same period food bank use by children across BC increased by only 1.9%. (Food Banks Canada – Hunger Count 2007, Hunger Count 2010).

Chart 4.3

## Nelson Food Cupboard - Visits by Children per Year



**Increase of 62%  
from 2007-2010**

*"The Nelson Food Cupboard offers a barrier-free emergency food supply and strives to address the root causes of hunger in our community. In 2010 we saw another dramatic increase in the number of individuals and families regularly accessing our services. More and more people in Nelson and area are struggling to afford safe housing, monthly living expenses and food on a monthly basis. The upwards trend in food bank usage shows us that more of our neighbours are now at risk of becoming homeless.*

*Unemployment or underemployment, lack of affordable housing and childcare, rising food costs and funding cuts in the social service sector have all contributed to the alarming trend of hunger in our community. Emergency food services were intended to be a short term solution to hunger...not the answer.*

*Despite stereotypes and stigma around emergency food service use, customers regularly include individuals with physical and developmental disabilities, employed workers who earn less than a living wage, people with mental health issues, seniors on fixed incomes, students, families with young kids, and those who have lost secure employment in the recession. We often hear people say "I never thought I would have to use a food bank in my lifetime".*

Lauren Steeg – Director, Nelson Food Cupboard

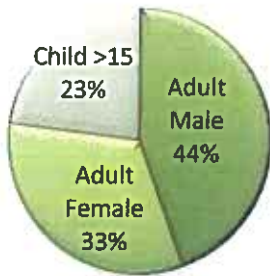
*"The Women's Centre operates a food bank, and although we receive donations from the Nelson Food Cupboard, the Kootenay Co-op, Silverking Tofu, and Burrell's Grocery there are many times that women come the Centre needing food and there are no more donations available."*

Beth Seed – West Kootenay Women's Association / the Women's Centre

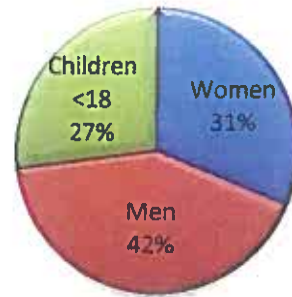
# Demographics of Food Bank Clients

## Charts 4.4

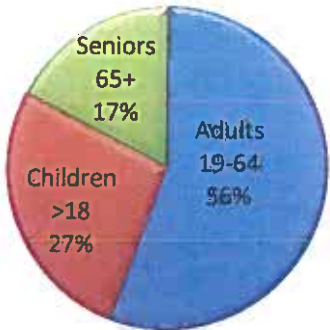
### Age & Gender of Nelson Food Cupboard Clients



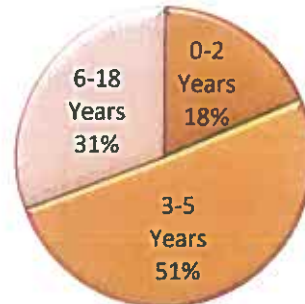
### Age & Gender Salvation Army Food Bank



### Salvation Army Food Bank Ages of Clients



### Salvation Army Food Bank Ages of Children

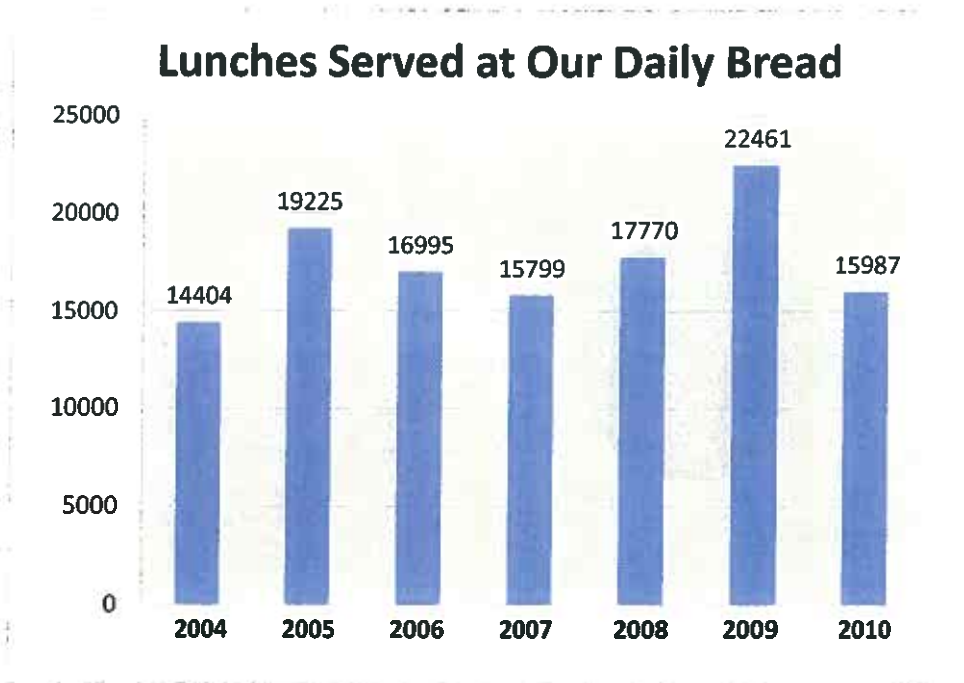


**69% are aged 0-5:**

an indication of their developmental vulnerability to the effects of hunger.

# Our Daily Bread Hot Lunch Program

Chart 4.5



In 2010, Our Daily Bread served a hot, nutritious lunch to an average of 64 people a day. In June of 2010, they instituted a new policy of requesting a donation of \$.90 for meals for residents who purchase a punch card and \$4.00 for non-residents or people who do not purchase one, resulting in the decrease in lunches served observed from 2009-2010. The trend resulting from this policy change has been to decrease the number of transient individuals eating lunch at Our Daily Bread and increase the percentage of long-term residents using the service.

Chart 4.5

## Ages of ODB Guests

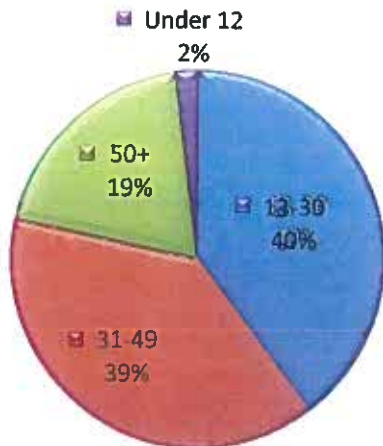


Chart 4.6

## Gender of ODB Guests

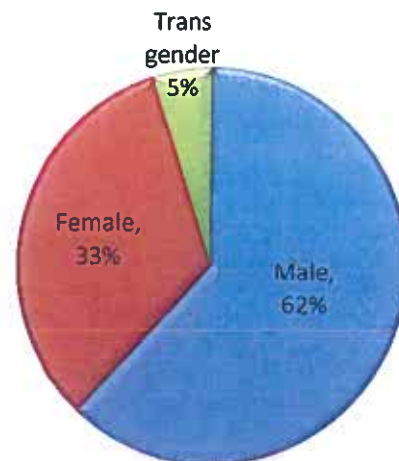
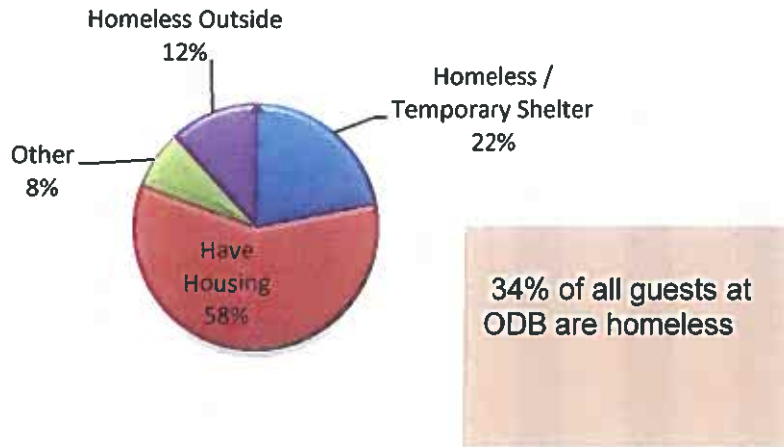


Chart 4.7

## ODB Guests - Where do they Go Home after Lunch?





## 5. Income and Employment

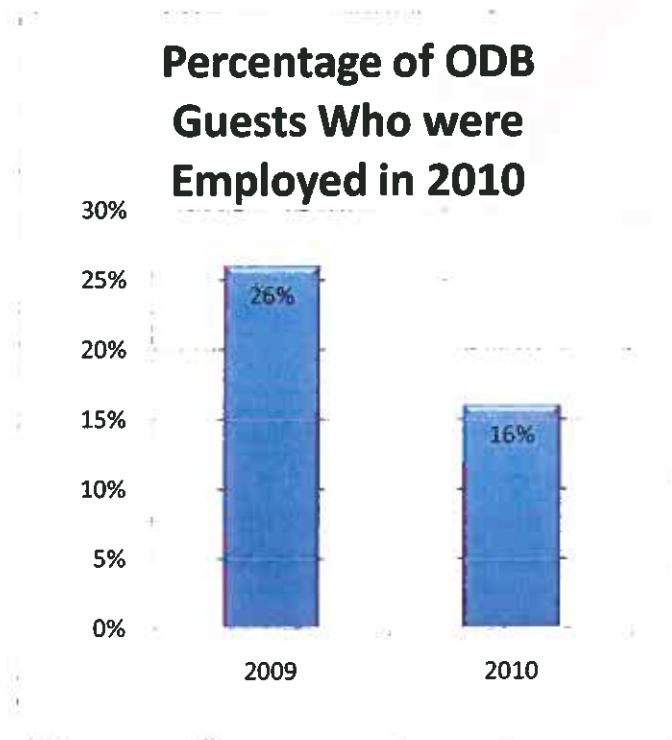
The vast majority of the homeless population is not able to participate in the economy

The West Kootenay Region has been impacted greatly by the recession that began in 2008. "In December 2010, the Kootenay Development Region (the three East and West Kootenay Regional Districts) had a 3-month unemployment rate of 8.7 per cent, the highest in B.C. The Thompson Okanagan Development Region was second highest at 7.9 per cent.

These are not seasonally adjusted numbers. If the B.C. average seasonal adjustment is added, **our unemployment rate in 2010 was 9.4 per cent**. That's over 4.5 per cent higher than the unemployment rate in 2007 and early 2008. This means there were over approximately 7,000 unemployed people in the development region. About 3,000 jobs would have to be created to reduce our unemployment to the 5 per cent range we experienced in 2007 and 2008." *The West Kootenay's Incredible Shrinking Labour Force*, by George Penfold - Regional Innovation Chair at Selkirk College

13 Feb., 2011, Castlegar Source

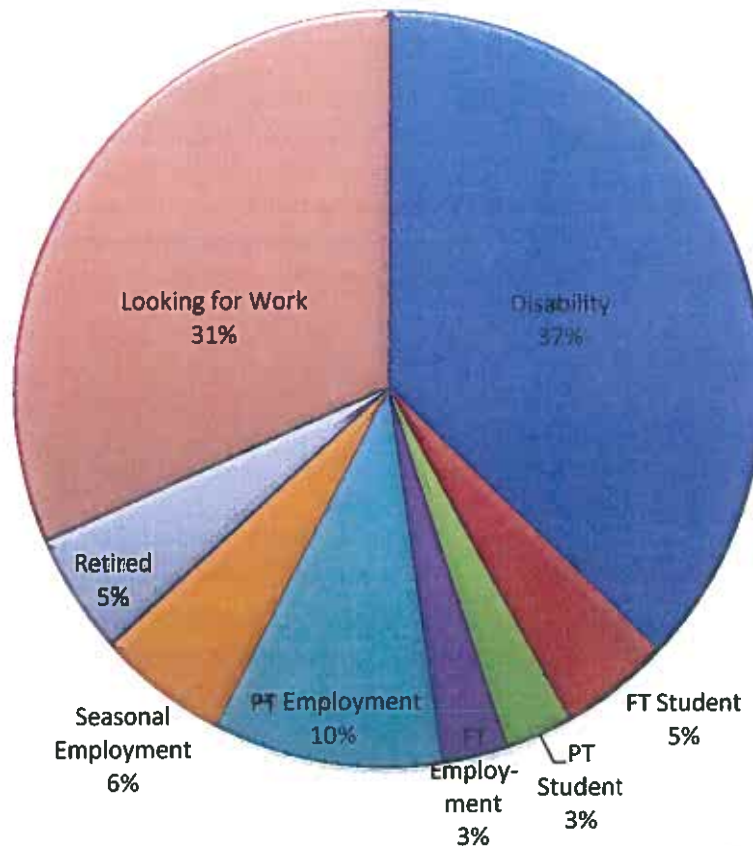
Chart 5.1



The trend for clients at Our Daily Bread is similar to that at Stepping Stones. Fewer guests have the income to be able to afford rent, utilities, and food. 34% are currently homeless, with 12% sleeping outside.

Chart 5.2

## Employment for Guests of ODB

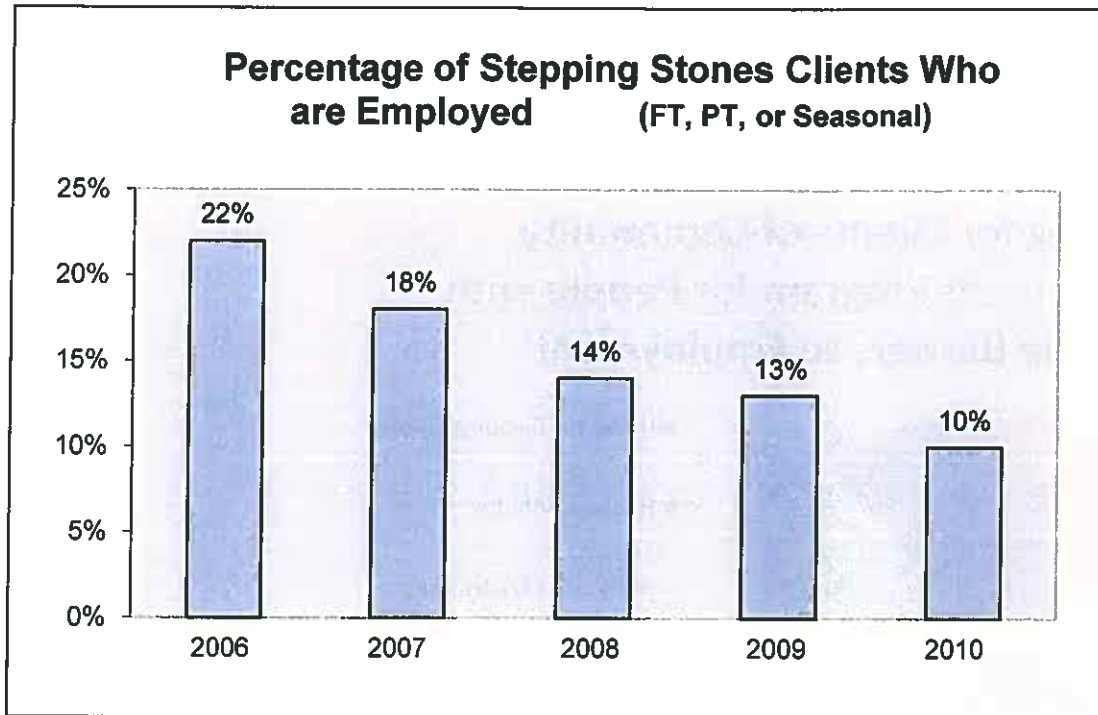


Youth in this West Kootenay region are a larger percentage of the homeless population than the size of their demographic suggests. (29% of the population of Stepping Stones, 10% of the general population). This is most likely due to the fact that the BC unemployment rate for youth is usually double the adult rate. For 2010 adult rate was the second highest in the province at 9.4%, making the estimated youth unemployment rate 18.8%.

*The situation this year (2010) is not as grim as in 2009, however, 80% of the youth using the centre's employment services are returning as they are not finding work. Demand for youth employment services is up 30% this year and we need to start looking for some creative solutions. We had a job fair this year where no employers showed up. Many youth came to the centre all dressed up in their suits expecting to speak to someone willing to hire them.*

Maibrit Sorensen, Youth Employment Resource Centre

Chart 5.3



**1 in 5** clients of Stepping Stones were employed in 2006

**1 in 10** clients were in 2010

Many people are under the impression that people who are homeless are in that state because they lack motivation to work. The experiences and voices of people who need the food and shelter support services in Nelson speak otherwise. Feedback to the Nelson Committee on Homelessness from guests at Our Daily Bread Thanksgiving in 2009 was that their number one solution to homelessness was sustainable employment that would allow them to live in the community.

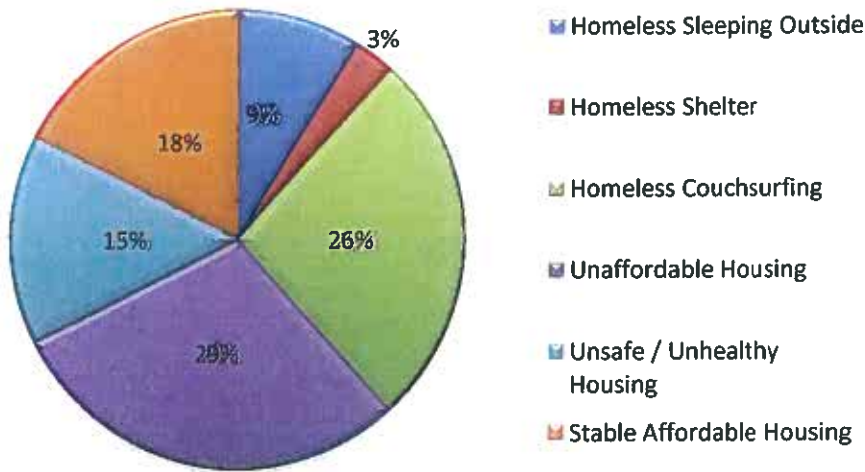
When the economy was better in 2006 twice as many clients at Stepping Stones had employment as in 2010. A full 36% of clients at a community engagement program who have Persistent and Multiple Barriers to Employment are currently homeless, with 9% of them sleeping outside. This shows a remarkable degree of motivation in clients to make improvements in their lives. 9% of clients in an employment program for people with disabilities are currently homeless.

## 6. Vulnerable Populations and Homelessness

### I: People who have Mental Health Issues

Chart 6.1

#### Housing for Clients of Community Engagement Program for People with Multiple Barriers to Employment



Above is a graph representing 34 income assistance clients who are in a community engagement program that seeks to improve their quality of life and increase participation in the community. This is a program of the Canadian Mental Health Association. All 34 clients have Persistent and Multiple Barriers (PPMB) to employment or are persons with disabilities (PWD) who are unable to participate in an employment program. Examples of PPMB may be severe Anxiety Disorder or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Their source of income is PPMB income assistance (\$657.92 a month, 375.00 a month maximum for shelter) or assistance to persons with disabilities (\$906.42, 375.00 a month maximum for shelter), and they are not required by the Ministry to find or maintain employment.

**38%** are currently homeless.

**9%** are sleeping outside.

**44%** are living in unaffordable or unsafe/unhealthy housing.

**18%** live in stable affordable housing.

Imagine having a medical condition or illness so severe you could not work, then you are also homeless or very stressed about unsafe/unaffordable housing. You wake up every day to participate in an employment designed to increase your engagement in the community.

Could you arrive clean and presentable if you live in the woods? Could you focus and learn if you show up hungry? What would your state of emotional and mental health be like? Can a person participate in the community fully with these living conditions?

### Mental Health Friendship Clubhouse

The Mental Health Friendship Clubhouse is a social and recreational program that operates in the city of Nelson. It is a place where people with mental health issues or those who are seeking treatment for addictions can go and relax, eat dinner together once a week, use the computer, watch TV, and benefit from a social network of peers who are accepting.

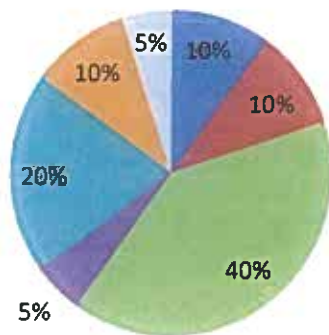
NCOH has done research with Clubhouse Members to find out more about their housing situation - 22 individuals filled out a survey. Their situations are more than challenging – it is apparent that housing is a significant stressor and contributes greatly to worsening mental and physical health.

81 % of Clubhouse Members are receiving disability benefits, a few work part time, one has no source of income.

Chart 6.2

### Members of the Mental Health Clubhouse: What Percentage of Income is Spent on Housing?

- 20-30%
- 30-40%
- 40-50%
- 50-60%
- 60-70%
- 70-80%
- 80+%



According to the CMHC, anything above 30% of income is not affordable, and above 50% creates extreme issues of affordability.

Only 10% of Clubhouse Members have housing that is affordable.

14% of Clubhouse members are currently homeless. For those who described their living situation, 1 is sleeping outside, 2 are couch surfing, and 2 are staying at Stepping Stones Emergency Shelter.

10% have affordable housing, according to the CMHC definition.

40% are experiencing “extreme issues of affordability” according to the CMHC definition, by paying over 50% of their income on housing.

73% have experienced homelessness in the past:

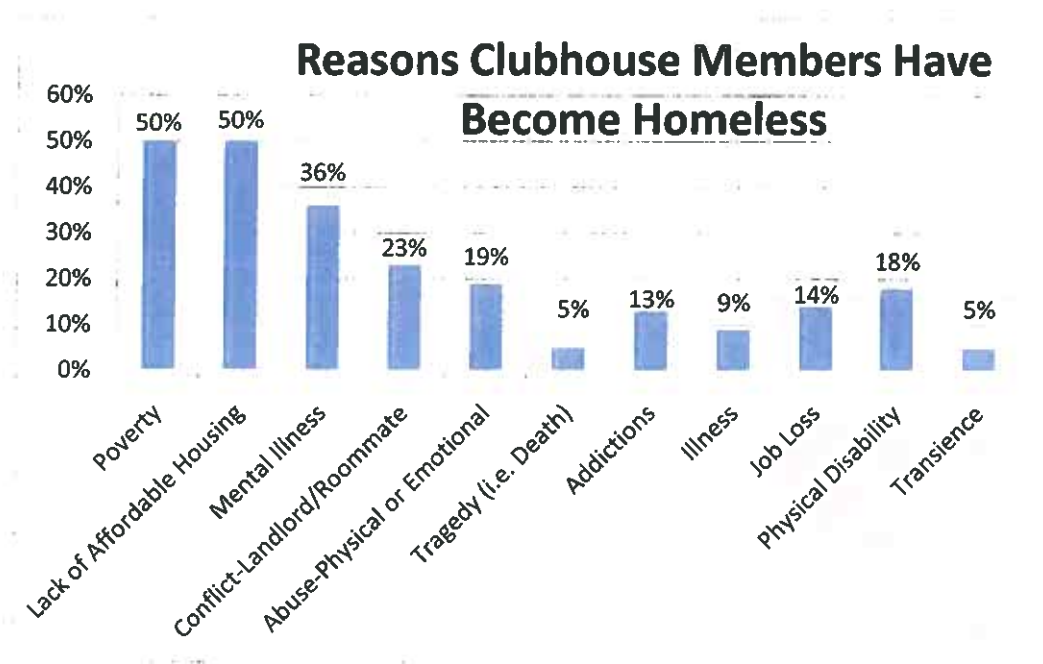
5% - one time

45% - between 2 and 5 times

9% - between 5 and 10 times

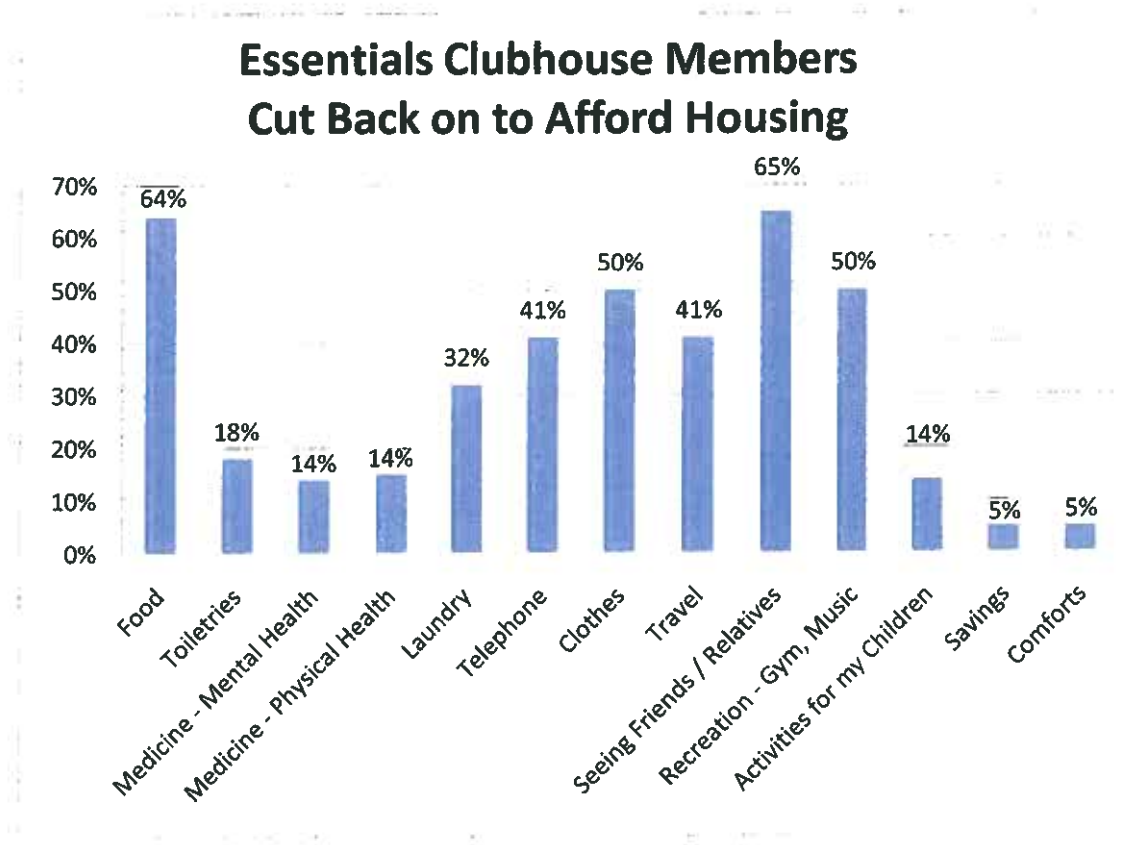
14% - more than 10 times....For some of the reasons, see the following chart:

Chart 6.3



73% of those who currently have housing cut back on essentials to afford rent and utilities. For details, see chart below.

Chart 6.4



The types of essentials that clubhouse members cut back on impact in three key areas:

Mental and Physical Health: Food, medicine for mental and physical health, recreation, comforts

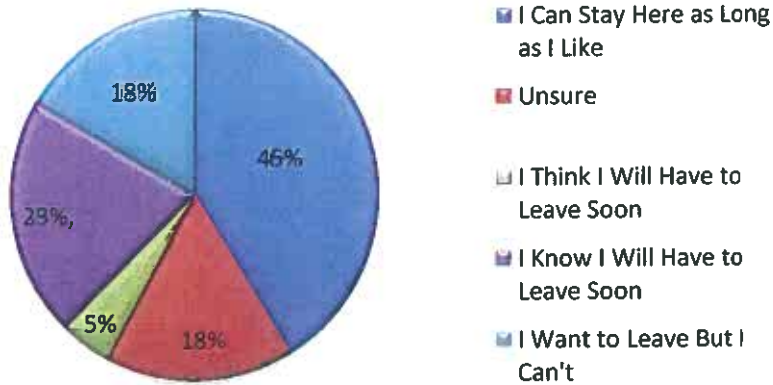
Social Connections: telephone, travel, seeing friends/relatives, activities for my children

Dignity and Hygiene: Clothes, savings, laundry, toiletries

All of these cutbacks will increase stress and worsen emotional and physical health. In addition, for the 86% of Clubhouse members who have housing, less than half of them indicate that their housing is secure. See the following chart:

Chart 6.5

## Housing Security for Clubhouse Members



**Secure Housing – 45%**

**Insecure Housing – 55%**

Clubhouse Members comment on the main reasons for their housing insecurity:

*“Drunks and dope smokers.”*

*“It is a temporary accommodation program”*

*“In 2 years my children will have moved out and I won’t qualify for my suite anymore (at Nelson & District Housing).”*

*“[House] is for sale...we will have 2 months to move out if it sells.”*

*“I can only stay 30 days in a 60 day period.” (Stepping Stones)*

*“I can’t find anything small I can afford and I can’t find a roommate.”*

The largest groups among the homeless in the West Kootenay Region are people with mental health issues and people with disabilities. The other highly significant category is any group of people who are poor due to their inability to participate in the economy and/or obtain sustainable employment: vulnerable youth, people with physical illnesses, women fleeing abusive relationships, and anyone on a fixed income that is inadequate to purchase housing and the other necessities in life.



Clubhouse Members comment on how their housing situation impacts on their well-being:

*"Neeeargh!"*

*"I need a stable living environment to stay [a] sane and happy person. "*

*"I have to go to Nelson Clubhouse to...stay away from the drunks and drug addicts and yelling and screaming and swearing and arguing and fights."*

*"It causes undue stress."*

*"Housing is important for stability both physical and mental and spiritual."*

*"Really taxing on my physical health."*

*"Housing is a healing ground. When you're a slave to another in private housing you can't taste the freedom of being comfortable."*

*"It makes me very ashamed and embarrassed. I can't eat properly. I can't sleep or do laundry. I can't have my boys with me." [from someone who lives in a tent]*

*"Depending on where I am living, my health fluctuates."*

*"Insecure. Afraid. Low self esteem."*

*"I'm stressed all the time, could be asked to leave for the tiniest of reasons. Rent and space not available means I could be one stop away from the stress. Like I mentioned, I'm stressed and worried all the time because I feel so close to homelessness."*

*"Park full. [Nelson Campground] Small housing. Poor. Less food."*

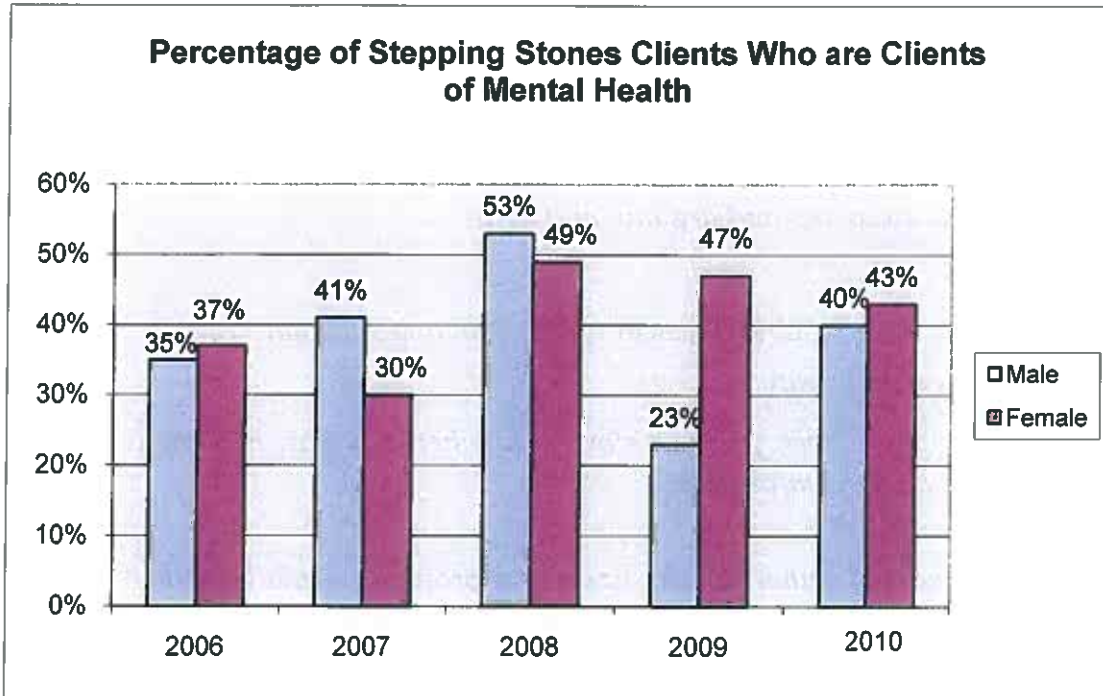
From a handful of Members with affordable, safe housing:

*"I'm in a positive state. Good overall emotional and physical health."*

*"My housing is good. I live at Kiwanis."*

*"I am in low income housing. It saves a lot of financial stress. I am more settled and [it's] good for my emotional well-being."*

**Chart 6.6**



**Chart 6.6**

The above chart represents only clients who have now or in the past an official file with Mental Health at Interior Health. Staff estimate that upwards of 80% of clients at Stepping Stones have significant mental health issues that impact their ability to find and maintain housing.

**Chart 6.7**

### Percentage of ODB Guests Who are Clients of Mental Health



*“From my vantage point at Our Daily Bread, we see the effects of the lack of housing for people who have mental health issues. They are struck with a double challenge. Many of them are not able to supplement their income with jobs and the rent being charged is way more than the funding they get through income assistance.*

*Thus they have to double up with others (usually mentally ill people as well) butting them in an unsafe, insecure, and difficult living conditions. It is hard enough to live with roommates without a mental health issues, it is doubly hard with one.*

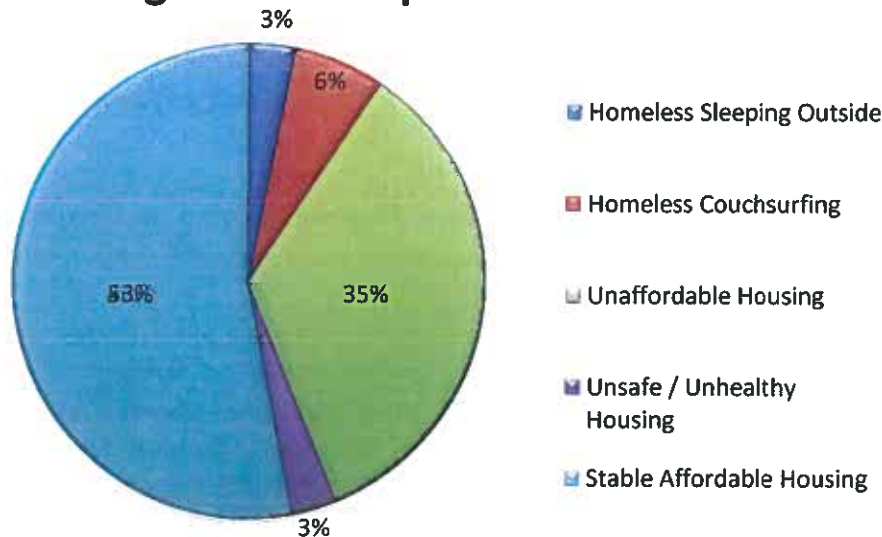
*We need stable secure single resident housing working poor, for people with mental health issues, and elderly folks on a low income. Thus we are trying to secure the 198 Baker street property where we could house 17 single people. The project is called Square Foot2 Freedom.”*

Pastor Jim Reimer, Our Daily Bread / Kootenay Christian Fellowship

## II: People with Physical Disabilities or Serious Illnesses

Chart 6.8

### Housing for Clients of Employment Program for People with Disabilities



Above is a graph representing the housing situation for persons with disabilities who are participating in an employment program.

The program aims to help clients improve their employability and achieve independence through full-time employment, part-time employment, self-employment, or volunteer work.

**9%** are currently homeless, and an additional

**38%** are living in unaffordable or unsafe/unhealthy housing.

Almost half of program participants do not have safe, affordable housing to go home to. This is a significant added barrier to participating in employment in addition to having a disability.

## **ANKORS** (AIDS Network Kootenay Outreach and Support Society)

Ankors provides support, advocacy, and education services to those living with or at risk of acquiring HIV / AIDS and/or Hepatitis C.

ANKORS serves clients who have difficulty obtaining services elsewhere, especially due to substance use, mental illness, sexual orientation, gender identity, race and ethnicity, and/or other social barriers.

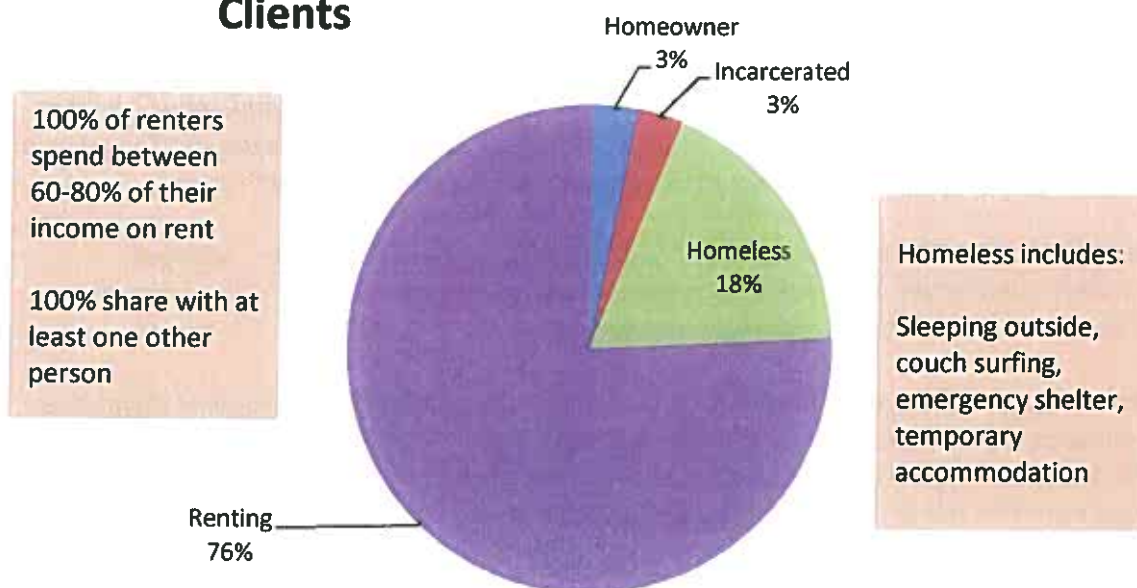
Below is a snapshot of 33 individuals who have used the services of ANKORS – including their housing status and some demographic information. They may be at risk for or have a current diagnosis of HIV /AIDS and/or Hepatitis C. Additional health challenges faced by some clients include illnesses such as diabetes, hypertension, fibromyalgia, PTSD, major depression, anxiety disorder, and addictions.

Fully one third of the group identifies as Aboriginal / Metis / Inuit; there are 12 women, 18 men, and 3 transgendered individuals. Their ages are relatively equally spread out between 19 and 50+.

The many health challenges alone faced by this group are formidable. Adding poverty, homelessness / precarious housing, and lack of food to their plate means that for the majority, their physical and mental health deteriorates and their capacity to cope is strained. The added stress also contributes to developing or maintaining addictions, as substances are used to escape from pain.

Chart 6.9

## Housing Status for ANKORS Clients



**18%** are currently homeless: sleeping outside, at the emergency shelter, couchsurfing at friends' houses, or temporary shelter with family members.

For those who have housing **100%** are paying between 60-80% of their income on rent, and

**100%** are sharing with at least one other individual.

**100%** need emergency food every month from the food bank.

**Less than 10%** are accessing services from the Mental Health and Substance Use branch of Interior Health.

### III: Women

Women fleeing from physical and emotional abuse, with or without children, remain a group very vulnerable to homelessness and/or to returning to abuse as there are few housing options open to them. Women are 52% of the hidden homeless population and 24% of the shelter population. Totals of these two groups indicate there were 225 homeless women in Nelson and area last year.

*“When a woman is living with violence and chooses to flee, finding housing and enough money to buy food are her two biggest concerns. Even though there is a transition house in Nelson or a ‘safe home’ in Castlegar they are both set up for a short stay - typically 30 days or less.*

*Where does she go from there? There is no second stage housing in Nelson or Castlegar. Sometimes there is no better option than to return abuse and endure because it is easier than trying to find a place of safety and adequate resources.*

*Many women living in abusive relationships have inadequate employment to support themselves and their children due to child care and home responsibilities. Even if she can find adequate housing the probability of a landlord renting to a woman without much proof of income is unlikely, and even less likely when there are children involved.”*

Beth Seed, Nelson and District Women’s Centre

Other than violence, women become homeless for the same reasons as men do – poverty, lack of housing, especially that which is affordable for families, mental health issues, illness, divorce, etc.

### IV: Youth

Youth who become homeless as a result of abuse or parental neglect have no options for emergency shelter in the region. Stepping Stones, in their agreement with BC Housing, are not permitted to allow youth under the age of 19 to stay there. Staff estimate that an average of 6 or 7 youth under 19 were turned away every month in 2010.

The Youth Employment and Resource Centre had 19 visits from homeless youth aged 15-19 in 2010, and 47 visits from those aged 20-30.

Nelson Committee on Homelessness members often encounter homeless youth under 19 at food banks, Our Daily Bread, the Salvation Army, Cicada Place, or doing Mental Health Outreach. They often tell stories of how they have been exploited sexually and become involved in alcohol and drugs as a result of their situation. Many are not eligible for foster care and for those who are, foster care homes are in far-away communities that they do not wish to relocate to.

The Nelson Committee on Homelessness is currently exploring options to open emergency beds for homeless youth.