



Giving Hope Today



Poverty shouldn't be a life sentence

A report on the perceptions of homelessness
and poverty in Canada

Homelessness and poverty are two of the most critical social issues impacting millions of Canadians today. For many, homelessness and poverty is a vicious cycle that devastates lives. The Salvation Army believes that poverty shouldn't be a life sentence.

This year, The Salvation Army is releasing data to illustrate the public's perception on homelessness and poverty. By releasing this data, our goal is to illustrate the realities, and lay to rest some commonly-held misconceptions, about homelessness and poverty. Ultimately, we hope this information will help the public understand why homelessness and poverty persist.

As Canada emerges from one of the most severe economic recessions in history, the public is well aware of the consequences of economic instability. One in 10 Canadians, more than 3 million people, live in poverty today. Unemployment remains well above average, at more than 8% and the financial fall-out has made more people homeless and in need of basic necessities like food, shelter and personal care.



The Salvation Army continues its efforts to understand and address the needs of those living in poverty and on the streets. Last May, for example, The Salvation Army released a report detailing the *perspectives on service delivery* of homeless people living in our shelters. The report called for long-term programs that address issues related to homelessness, such as access to affordable housing, drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs and physical and mental health counselling. This year, we wanted to take a look at the broader public's perception of this extremely challenging issue.

During the month of May, The Salvation Army will raise money through its National Red Shield Campaign. Each year this vital appeal helps The Salvation Army support more than 1.5 million Canadians with emergency and basic needs care. You, too, can join in to help end the cycle of poverty. To learn how, visit www.SalvationArmy.ca

Methodology

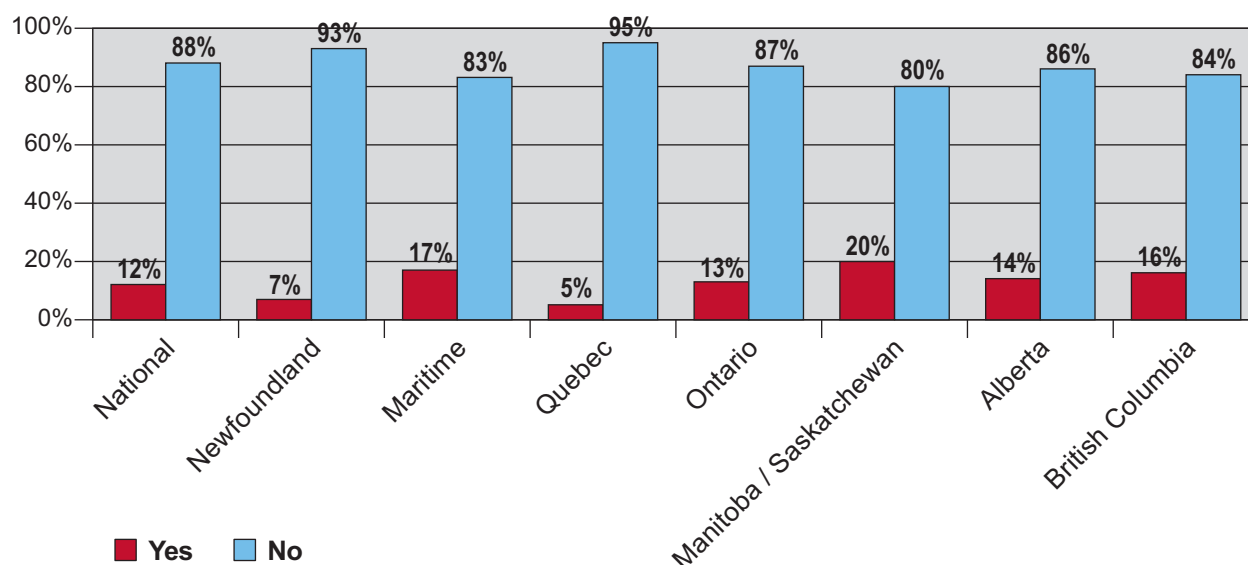
The *Poverty shouldn't be a life sentence* findings were taken from public opinion polling conducted in late 2009. The polling research was undertaken by a third-party, national market-research firm, The Strategic Counsel.

A national sample of 1,000 Canadians, ages 18 and over, were asked several questions regarding homelessness, poverty and charitable giving. The research was conducted by telephone and respondents were asked to answer a series of multiple-choice and free-response questions. A sample of 1,000 is considered to be accurate to within +/- 3.10%, 19 times out of 20.

True or False? Homelessness affects very few Canadians.

False: Approximately one in nine Canadian adults, close to 3 million people, said that they have experienced homelessness or come close to experiencing homelessness in their life; in some parts of the country, the figure is closer to one in five.

Have you experienced or come close to experiencing homelessness?



For certain segments of the Canadian population, homelessness is either a real or near threat. Approximately one in nine Canadian adults, or close to 3 million people, reported that they have either experienced or come close to experiencing homelessness. Respondents in Manitoba and Saskatchewan reported the highest rate, with one in five (20%) respondents voicing concern about homelessness. Rates were also highest (16%) amongst respondents, 45 to 55 years of age, and not surprisingly, among those with income levels less than \$40,000 a year (20%).

True or False? Homelessness has been on the rise during the economic downturn.

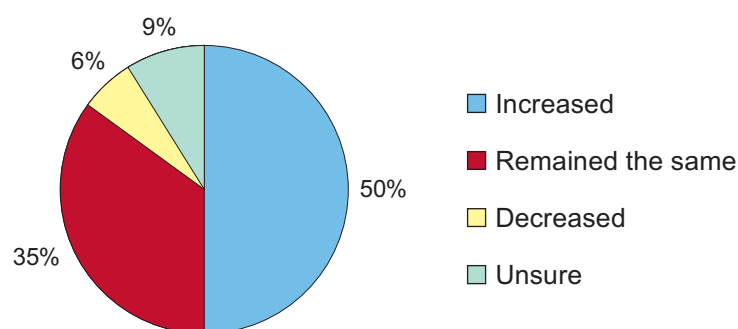
True: In 2009, The Salvation Army saw demand increase by more than a quarter for general social services; the economic downturn has exacerbated long-existing problems like homelessness and poverty.

Over the past few years, The Salvation Army has noted a marked increase in demand for our social services. In 2009, The Salvation Army helped more than 1 million persons with food, clothing and other practical assistance. The demand for these services jumped by more than a quarter in one year – a 26% increase over 2008.

We have also seen a rise in demand for feeding programs and addiction and rehabilitation treatment. In 2009, The Salvation Army served almost 2.8 million meals – 120,000 more meals than in 2008. The Army also helped more than 6,000 new clients seeking alcohol and drug treatment last year.

Most recently, local reports, including data from the Alliance to End Homelessness in Ottawa, have shown further examples of the persistence of homelessness. According to the report, shelter-bed occupancy rates in Ottawa, including statistics from *The Salvation Army's Ottawa Booth Centre*, were up by more than 9% in 2009, and shelter-bed stays were 12% longer than in 2008.

What are your perceptions about changes in homelessness rates over the last few years?

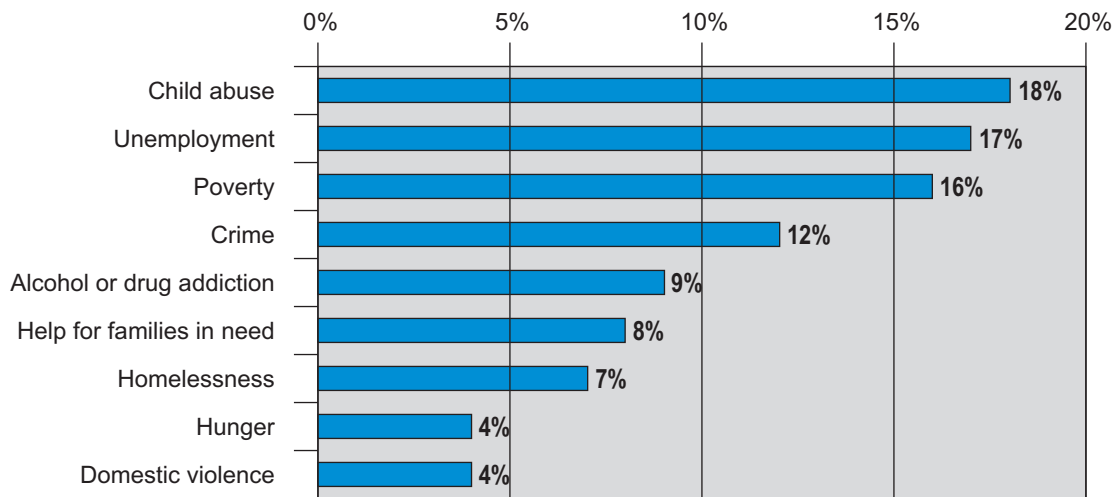


Respondents to our survey perceived this increase in service demand. Half of the respondents (50%) thought that the severity of homelessness has increased over the last few years, while close to a third (35%) felt that homeless rates have remained the same. Very few respondents (6%) felt the situation was improving and homelessness was decreasing.

True or False? Poverty is one of the most pressing social issues today.

True: Nearly two-thirds of all respondents ranked poverty, and issues linked to poverty, as the most important social problems in Canada.

What is the primary social problem in Canada?



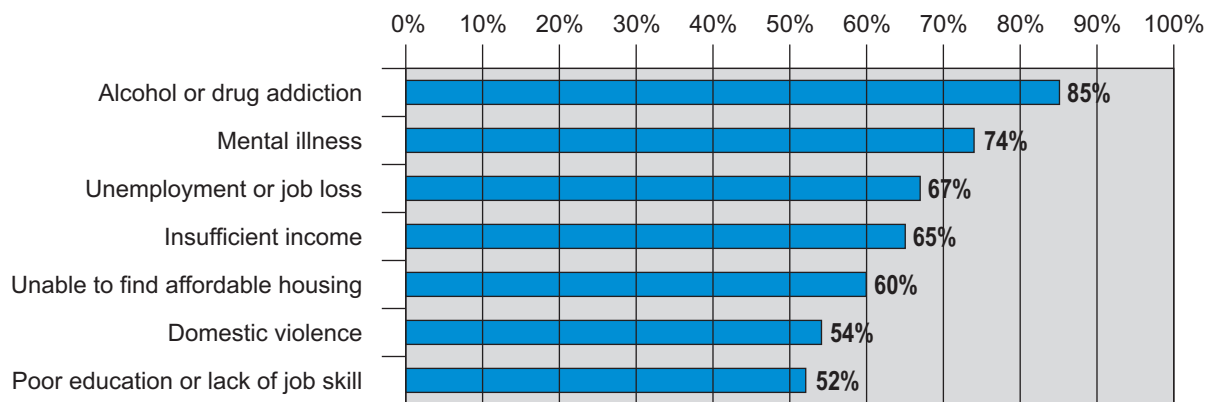
Homelessness and poverty are among the most critical social problems in Canada today, according to a majority of respondents. Poverty was the third most frequently cited social problem representing 16% of the public's primary concern; only child abuse (18%) and unemployment (17%), which is closely linked to poverty, ranked higher.

Other contributing factors to poverty also ranked high in the public's mind. Unemployment, substance abuse, homelessness and hunger were considered five of the nine most important social issues nationally. Together, these concerns, along with poverty, account for nearly two-thirds of all responses made (61%) by the general public.

Q True or False? There are many factors that contribute to homelessness.

A True: There is no single risk factor that leads to homelessness. In fact, there are typically a combination of reasons why an individual or family ends up on the streets.

What factors contribute to homelessness?



The Canadian public generally understands that there are a number of factors contributing to homelessness. When given a list of seven factors, all were listed as “major” factors in influencing homelessness by more than half of the respondents. The factors ranked highest by the public included alcohol and drug addiction (85%), mental illness (74%), unemployment (67%), insufficient income (65%) and inaccessibility to affordable housing (60%).

These perceptions are consistent with research from our 2009 report on homelessness and poverty – an informal “census” of shelter users. That report indicated that the poor and homeless face a number of unique challenges, including inaccessibility to affordable housing, job-skills training, health and counselling services – all of which were outlined as basic needs from a national homeless population.

Conclusion

The Salvation Army is a leader in the fight against homelessness and poverty.

As the largest non-governmental direct provider of social services in Canada, The Salvation Army serves more than 1.5 million people in Canada each year. There are nearly 6,400 shelter beds throughout the Army's nationwide network of facilities, making up a quarter of all shelter beds available in Canada each night.

For The Salvation Army, it's important to understand the public's perception on homelessness and poverty. Breaking through misconceptions and moving toward facts are critical ways that we can help break the cycle of poverty. This report demonstrates that the general public views homelessness and poverty as two social problems on the rise.

Currently, one in nine Canadians have either experienced or come close to experiencing homelessness, and a majority of the public thinks homelessness rates are increasing, which is consistent with what The Salvation Army is seeing nationally. At the same time, homelessness and poverty remain at the forefront of the public's mind. Both the problem of poverty and the issue of homelessness were cited as leading social concerns across the country. Additionally, the public recognizes that a variety of factors contribute to homelessness.

Throughout the month of May, The Salvation Army is encouraging those who see homelessness and poverty in their communities to respond in action. For 128 years, The Salvation Army has remained committed to serving those who need it most. Please join us this May, during our National Red Shield Campaign, as we fight to end poverty's life sentence.

About The Salvation Army

- As experts in crisis care, The Salvation Army provides safe accommodations and social service support to more than 1.5 million people each year.
- The organization currently provides nearly 6,400 emergency and short-term transitional housing beds for men, women, and families across the country. This accounts for more than a quarter of all the shelter beds in Canada, each night.
- The Salvation Army is the largest non-governmental direct provider of social services in Canada, serving 400 communities across the country.



Giving Hope Today

Get involved during the 2010 National Red Shield Campaign!

The Salvation Army's National Red Shield Campaign is an annual fundraising event now in its 91st year. The campaign utilizes online, phone, text-to-donate, direct-mail, and door-to-door appeals to solicit donations from generous donors.

Two ways to help:

- **Donate** Make a donation to The Salvation Army
Online: www.SalvationArmy.ca
Phone: **1-800-SAL-ARMY** (725-2769)
Mobile: Text **HOME** to **45678** from most wireless phones in Canada.
A \$5 donation will be added to your monthly bill.
Mail: **The Salvation Army**
 2 Overlea Blvd.
 Toronto, ON M4H 1P4
- **Volunteer** Find out how you can volunteer your time at a local
 Salvation Army shelter: www.SalvationArmy.ca/volunteer