

SELECTED FINDINGS OF 2008 UPPER FRASER VALLEY HOMELESSNESS SURVEY WITH LIMITED ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

(More comprehensive analysis and interpretation will be presented in a full report which is anticipated to be released at end of July 2008)

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS SURVEYED PER COMMUNITY

Community	2008 n	2008 %	2004 n	2004%
Abbotsford	235	50.5	226	55.0
Mission	100	21.5	75	18.2
Chilliwack	98	21.1	87	21.2
Agassiz-Harrison	12	2.6	1	0.2
Hope	20	4.3	19	4.6
Boston Bar/North Bend	0	0	3	0.7
Total	465	100.0	411	100.0

Overall the phenomenon of homelessness in the Upper Fraser Valley did not get better over the past 4 years. Based on the results of the 2008 survey there is a 13% increase overall in homelessness in the Upper Fraser Valley since 2004.

Keep in mind that homelessness surveys are known to undercount. Also, given the fact that the 2008 survey was conducted towards the end of winter whereas the 2004 survey was conducted during the latter part of summer is an important variable to keep in mind when looking at the 2008 number of 465. Information from homeless persons suggests that there is a tendency to start moving more to the outside in upper valley communities from mid-late spring through early-mid fall.

All Survey Community Coordinators reported at the end of the survey period that volunteers have come across camps, with obvious signs that people live there, but no-one around. The wet and cold weather of the night of March 10 and the morning of March 11 could have contributed to this. Specifically in Hope six empty camps were observed and in Chilliwack three empty camps. In Chilliwack one transition house had zero residents on the night of the count, whereas it normally averages 5 per night. On the day of the count the Soup Kitchen in Hope served 40 dinners.

The number of 465 homeless persons should also be looked at in relation to the phenomenon of recovery houses. Although not included in the survey, given the definition of homelessness for this survey, a voluntary count of recovery house residents on the day of the survey yielded the following result:

Abbotsford 112
 Mission 49
 Chilliwack 20¹
 Total – 181

¹ Anecdotal information obtained from a representative of the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance in Chilliwack.

Of those residents in Recovery Houses in Abbotsford who returned a questionnaire 68 reported that they do not have a place where they pay rent whilst 28 indicated that they do. Exactly how many of these residents do have a home of their own to go to once they leave the recovery homes is not clear. Suffice to say that once these residents leave the recovery houses some may become part of those who have no alternative but to live homeless or be at risk of becoming homeless.

Based on returned information 56 respondents in Recovery Houses in Abbotsford indicated that "home" is Abbotsford, 20 indicated Mission as "home" whilst 19 called various GVRD communities "home" and 14 are from elsewhere in BC or from somewhere else in Canada.

In Chilliwack the Empress Hotel is slated for demolition later this year. It is estimated by social service workers in Chilliwack that between 60 -75 people reside in this hotel and will have to find new accommodation when the hotel is demolished.

It is also important to reflect on the Salvation Army Outreach Programme in partnership with the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance that is being implemented since 2006 in Abbotsford and Chilliwack. Based on information from the Salvation Army, in Abbotsford, from April 2006 to March 2008, 277 persons have been **"housed in their own place"**, 208 persons were **"housed in treatment centres"** and 140 persons were **"housed in recovery homes"** for a total of 625. In Chilliwack, over the same period, the Salvation Army has housed 242 persons. At this point of the analysis it is not possible to report on if and how many persons rotate back into homelessness at the end of their treatment and/or recovery.

TABLE 2: GENDER OF SURVEYED RESPONDENTS

Gender	2008 n	2008 %	2004 n	2004 %
Female	142	32.1	134	32.6
Male	292	66.1	277	67.4
Not identified	8	1.8	0	0
Total	442	100.0	411	100.0

The proportion of females and males in the 2008 survey is similar to that of 2004.

TABLE 3: ACCOMMODATION ON NIGHT OF COUNT

Place stayed	2008 n	2008 %	2004 n	2004 %
Transition				
House	21	5.1	42	11.5
Shelter	48	11.7	22	6.0
Safe House	0	0.0	0	0.0
Outside	199	48.7	158	43.4
Friend's place	104	25.4	131	36.0
Recovery				
House	2	0.5	0	0.0
Detox	2	0.5	0	0.0
Hospital	3	0.7	0	0.0
Other	30	7.3	11	3.0
Total	409	100.0	364	100.0

The proportion of homeless people “not sheltered” remains high in 2008, namely 199 persons or 48.7% of the respondents in comparison with 43.4% in 2004.

More people have made use of shelters in 2008 (11.7%) than in 2004 (6.0%).

A substantial proportion (25.4%) reported to have stayed at a friend’s place in 2008 compared to (36.0%) in 2004.

Fewer individuals were counted in Transition Houses in 2008 (5.1%) than in 2004 (11.5%).

TABLE 4: COMPANYY

Company	2008 n	2008 %
Alone	153	53.1
With pet	9	3.1
With partner/spouse	37	12.9
With friend	59	20.5
With children	12	4.2
Other	18	6.3
Total	288	100.0

In 2004, 44.6% of respondents indicate that they were by themselves, 13.0% were accompanied by a partner and 7.4% had children with them.

TABLE 5: AGE OF SURVEYED RESPONDENTS

Age	2008 n	2008 %	2004 n	2004 %
Under 15	7	1.8	12	3.1
15 – 19	36	9.3	40	10.3
20 – 24	36	9.3	38	9.8
25 – 34	86	22.1	95	24.5
35 – 44	109	28.0	107	27.6
45 – 54	79	20.3	68	17.6
55 – 64	31	8.0	18	4.7
65 – 74	4	1.0	8	2.1
75+	1	0.3	1	0.3
Total	389	100.0	387	100.0

Similar to 2004 the biggest proportions of homeless respondents fall in the age categories 25-34 (22.1%); 35-44 (28.0%) and 45-55 years (20.3%). Combined, these three categories amount to 72.4% in 2008 and 69.7% in 2004.

TABLE 6: LENGTH OF HOMELESSNESS

Duration	2008 n	2008 %
0 – less than 1 month	46	15.3
1 month – less than 6 months	73	24.3
6 months – less 1 year	54	18.0
1 year +	127	42.3
Total	300	100.0

A substantial proportion (24.3%) of respondents, are homeless for less than 6 months.

However, a total of 60.3% are homeless for longer than 6 months with a substantial proportion (42.3%) who are homeless for longer than one year. In 2004, 36.2% were homeless for more than one year, 31.5% between 6 months and one year and 19.8% less than six months. These could be seen as comparable proportions.

TABLE 7: WHERE DO YOU CALL HOME

Home community	2008 n	2008 %	2004n	2008%
Abbotsford	89	30.3	95	31.9
Mission	62	21.1	32	10.7
Chilliwack	43	14.6	51	17.1
Agassiz-Harrison	9	3.0	1	0.3
Hope	5	2.0	13	4.4
Other FVRD	4	1.7	1	0.3
GVRD	19	6.4	73	24.5
Rest of BC	18	6.1	19	6.4
Rest of Canada	32	10.9	13	4.4
Other	12	4.0	0	0.0
Total	293	100.0	298	100.0

Majority of those interviewed (72.2%) calls Upper Fraser Valley communities “home” with 27.4% who indicated that “home” is elsewhere. This is a fairly similar pattern compared to 2004 when 64.7% respondents indicated that their last permanent address was in the Upper Fraser Valley.

TABLE 8: REASONS FOR BEING HOMELESS

Reason	2008 n	2008 %
Affordability	60	21.3
Inadequate income	77	27.3
Addiction	42	14.9
Mental Health/Disability	13	4.6
Relational conflict/breakdown	37	13.1
Own responsibility	11	3.9
Other	42	14.9
Total	282	100.0

Almost half of the respondents (48.6%) claim that the reason for their homelessness relates to the issue of affordability/inadequate income. Comparison with the 2004 survey is not possible as response categories were quite different then.

TABLE 9: SOURCE OF INCOME

Source	2008 n	2008 %
Full time employment	12	4.1
Part time employment	51	17.2
Welfare and part time employment	42	14.2
Welfare	84	28.4
Disability allowance	35	11.6
EI and OAS/GIS	4	1.4
No Income	31	10.5
Panhandling	5	1.7
Other	32	10.8
Total	296	100.0

When the response categories “full time employment”, “part time employment” and “welfare and part time employment” are combined, 35.5% of respondents are working.

In 2004, 29.9% of respondents indicated that their source of income is through employment, including full time work, part time/casual employment as well as binning and recycling. In 2004, 14.8% reported welfare as their source of income, with 8.0% reporting no income in comparison with 10.5% who reported “no income” in 2008.

The fact that more respondents in 2008 reported “Welfare” as their source of income could probably, at least in part, be linked to the Salvation Army Outreach Programme in partnership with the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance.

TABLE 10: REPORTED HEALTH ISSUES

Health issue	2008 n	2008 %
Medical Condition/Physical disability	52	21.3
Addiction	77	31.6
Mental Illness	21	8.6
Medical Condition &Addiction	26	10.6
Physical Disability &Addiction	9	3.7
Mental Illness &Addiction	26	10.7
Physical Disability & Mental Illness	10	4.1
Physical Disability & Mental Illness & Addiction	2	0.8
Medical Condition & Physical & Disability & Addiction & Mental Illness	10	4.1
Other	11	4.5
Total	244	100.0

In total 244 of the 465 respondents or 52.5%, reported a health issue or a combination of health related issues. Of these 31.6% reported that they have an addiction, with another 29.9% who reported addiction in combination with another barrier, for a total of 61.5% reporting that they have an addiction. Those who reported mental illness amount to 8.6% and those with mental illness and addiction count 10.7%.

In 2004 this question was phrased differently so direct comparison is not possible, however in 2004, 50.7% of respondents reported an addiction with 7.3% reporting mental illness. Therefore, it could be argued that the results of 2008 and 2004 are somewhat comparable in respect of mental illness and addictions.

TABLE 11: ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH YOUR CURRENT LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

Response	2008 n	2008 %
Yes	54	17.9
No	248	82.1
Total	302	100.0

The majority of respondents (82.1%) reported that they are not satisfied with their current living arrangements.