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## Research Summary #08

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### **Absolute and Relative Homelessness: A Case Study of the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter Using ETHOS Criteria**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

This report uses data provided by the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter (CWES) about their *absolutely homeless* clients, who received shelter on the night of The City of Calgary's *2008 Count of Homeless Persons in Calgary*. It also includes data on their *relatively homeless* clients, who did not receive shelter but who were served through the CWES Non-Residential Program during regular business hours that day. Findings are presented on the demographic characteristics of *all* absolutely and relatively homeless clients served by CWES on 2008 May 14. This information is traditionally reported for sheltered clients only in the *Biennial Count of Homeless Persons*, which enumerates only those people who are *absolutely homeless* on the night of the count.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to demographic information, the housing situation of both sheltered and non-sheltered CWES clients is reported using the full ETHOS classification system, which was developed by the European Union to enable member states to report more fully on citizens who are living in a variety of precarious circumstances. Using ETHOS criteria provides insight into the number of *absolutely homeless* people who were sheltered by CWES on 2008 May 14, as well as the number of *relatively homeless* people living in precarious housing who received non-shelter services from CWES that day.

The City of Calgary gratefully acknowledges the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter for offering to provide data on non-shelter clients experiencing housing insecurity for the *2008 Count of Homeless Persons*. Deepest thanks are extended to Lisa Falkowsky, Executive Director, for her support of this initiative, and to Lissa Samantaraya-Shivji, in conjunction with the Department of Research and Evaluation, for collecting and verifying the data on residential crisis counselling and non-residential services that were needed to complete the case study.

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<sup>1</sup> Data for clients who received shelter from the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter on 2008 May 14 are also included in the *Biennial Count of Homeless Persons – 2008 May 14* (City of Calgary, 2008), which will be available in mid-July. Once released, the full report and other related documents can be downloaded from The City of Calgary website at [www.calgary.ca/affordablehousing](http://www.calgary.ca/affordablehousing) by selecting the link to 'Research on Affordable Housing and Homelessness.'

## 2.0 Understanding Homelessness and Housing Exclusion

### 2.1 'Absolute' and 'Relative' Homelessness

In 2002, the Calgary Homeless Foundation commissioned a comprehensive study on homelessness in Calgary. The report authors note that “the definition of homelessness continues to be debated.” Following extensive community consultation, however, a majority of those consulted preferred the United Nations’ definition of homelessness, “which clearly differentiates between the absolutely and the relatively homeless.” This definition was used in the *2002 Calgary Homelessness Study* (Gardiner and Cairns, 2002: 33) and in *The Calgary Community Plan 2004-2008: Building Paths Out of Homelessness* (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2003: 9).

As reported by Gardiner and Cairns (2002: 33), the United Nations has defined two forms of homelessness. One is known as **absolute homelessness**, which refers to “individuals living in the street with no physical shelter of their own, including those who spend their nights in emergency shelters.” The second, **relative homelessness**, refers to “people living in spaces that do not meet the basic health and safety standards” including protection from the elements; access to safe water and sanitation; security of tenure and personal safety; affordability; access to employment, education and health care; and the provision of minimum space to avoid overcrowding.

### 2.2 The City of Calgary’s Definition of Homelessness

The City of Calgary has conducted a point-in-time census or ‘count’ of homeless persons every two years in May since 1992. The ninth *Biennial Count of Homeless Persons in Calgary* was held on 2008 May 14. The findings provide a snapshot of the number and characteristics of people in Calgary who are likely to be experiencing absolute homelessness *on any given night*. The formal definition that has been used for every count conducted by The City of Calgary since 1996<sup>2</sup> is:

*Homeless persons are considered to be those who do not have a permanent residence to which they can return whenever they so choose.*

This definition includes people who are living on the streets, as well as those who are staying in emergency shelters or facilities offering longer term shelter and support for people who would otherwise be living on the streets. Since only those individuals and families *who do not have a permanent residence to which they can return whenever they so choose* are included in the count, The City of Calgary only enumerates people who are absolutely homeless. It does not report on the many Calgarians who may be relatively homeless on the night of the count. Nor does it provide an assessment of the number of different people who experience homelessness in the course of a year.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This definition was formalized for the count undertaken for the first published report of the research findings (see City of Calgary, 1996: 2; 1998: 1; 2000: 2; 2002: 2; 2004:3; 2006: 4; and 2008: 2).

<sup>3</sup> For information on full-year shelter utilization in Calgary, see Perras and Huyder (2003).

## 2.3 The ETHOS Classification System

ETHOS is the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion. It is the standard used by member states in the European Union for reporting on homelessness and housing exclusion (FEANTSA, 2007). In the ETHOS classification system, the housing situation of people who are *absolutely homeless* is broadly categorized as **roofless** or **houseless**. Similarly, accommodation used by people who are *relatively homeless* is broadly classified as either **insecure** or **inadequate**. The definitions for each of these four ‘conceptual categories’ are provided in Table 1.

TABLE 1. ETHOS 2007 – EUROPEAN TYPOLOGY OF HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING EXCLUSION	
<i>ABSOLUTE HOMELESSNESS</i>	
ROOFLESS	People living rough or in emergency accommodation.
HOUSELESS	People in accommodation for the homeless, in accommodation for immigrants, receiving longer-term support due to homelessness, or due to be released from institutions.
<i>RELATIVE HOMELESSNESS</i>	
INSECURE ACCOMMODATION	People living in insecure accommodation, under threat of eviction, or under threat of violence.
INADEQUATE ACCOMMODATION	People living in temporary or non-conventional structures, in unfit housing, or in extreme overcrowding.

These four conceptual categories are divided into ‘operational categories’ such as people living rough; people living in emergency accommodation; people due to be released from institutions; and so on. For clarity of evaluation, however, the ETHOS operational categories are subdivided to show the *range of living conditions* possible within each category. Generic definitions are also provided to further describe the type of shelter that a person might be accessing.

For example, in the operational category ‘people due to be released from institutions,’ possible living conditions include penal institutions, medical institutions, and children’s institutions or homes. Then, for penal institutions as an example, the condition defined is ‘people due to be released from penal institutions, where no housing is available prior to release.’ Table 2 lists the four conceptual categories, the various operational categories within them, and definitions for the housing conditions they include.

<i>ROOFLESS</i>	
PUBLIC SPACE OR EXTERNAL SPACE	Roofless people living rough in the streets or in public spaces without a shelter that can be defined as living quarters.
NIGHT SHELTER	Roofless people in emergency accommodation with no usual place of residence, who make use of <u>overnight</u> , low threshold shelter. [e.g., hotel; motel]
<i>HOUSELESS</i>	
HOMELESS HOSTEL	Houseless people in accommodation for the homeless, where the period of stay is intended to be <u>short term</u> , normally less than one year.
TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION	Houseless people in accommodation for the homeless, where the period of stay is intended to be <u>short term</u> , normally less than one year.
TRANSITIONAL SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION	Houseless people in accommodation for the homeless, where the period of stay is intended to be <u>short term</u> , normally less than one year.
WOMEN'S SHELTER ACCOMMODATION	Houseless people in accommodation for the homeless, where women are accommodated due to the experience of domestic violence and where the period of stay is intended to be <u>short term</u> , normally less than one year.
IMMIGRANTS' TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION OR RECEPTION CENTRES	Houseless people in accommodation for immigrants, where immigrants are in reception or <u>short-term</u> accommodation due to immigrant status, normally less than one year.
MIGRANT WORKERS' ACCOMMODATION	Houseless people in accommodation for immigrants, staying in accommodation for migrant workers.
RESIDENTIAL CARE FOR <u>OLDER</u> FORMERLY HOMELESS PEOPLE	Houseless people receiving longer-term support in <u>long-stay</u> accommodation with care for older, formerly homeless people, normally more than one year.

(continued)

<b>HOUSELESS (CONTINUED)</b>	
SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION FOR FORMERLY HOMELESS PEOPLE	Houseless people receiving longer-term support in <u>long-stay</u> accommodation with care for formerly homeless people, normally more than one year.
DUE TO BE RELEASED FROM PENAL INSTITUTIONS	Houseless people due to be released from institutions, where no housing is available prior to release.
DUE TO BE RELEASED FROM MEDICAL INSTITUTIONS	Houseless people due to be released from institutions, where they stay longer than needed due to a lack of housing.
DUE TO BE RELEASED FROM CHILDREN'S INSTITUTIONS OR HOMES	Houseless people due to be released from institutions, where no housing is identified (e.g., by their 18th birthday).
<b>INSECURE ACCOMMODATION</b>	
TEMPORARILY WITH FAMILY OR FRIENDS	People living in insecure accommodation, in conventional housing but not their usual place of residence due to a lack of housing (e.g., 'couch surfing').
NO LEGAL TENANCY OR SUB-TENANCY	People living in insecure accommodation, occupying a dwelling with no legal tenancy or sub-tenancy or illegally occupying a dwelling (e.g., living in an 'illegal suite').
ILLEGAL OCCUPATION OF LAND	People living in insecure accommodation, occupying land with no legal rights to do so (e.g., 'squatting').
LEGAL ORDERS ARE ENFORCED (RENTED)	Renters living under threat of eviction, where orders for eviction are operative.
RE-POSSESSION ORDERS (OWNED)	Owners living under threat of eviction, where the mortgagor has legal order to re-possess.
POLICE RECORDED INCIDENTS	People living in insecure accommodation, where police action is taken to ensure a place of safety for victims of domestic violence.

*(continued)*

<b>INADEQUATE ACCOMMODATION</b>	
MOBILE HOMES	People living in temporary or non-conventional structures, not intended as place of usual residence (e.g., campers; trailers).
NON-CONVENTIONAL BUILDINGS	People living in temporary or non-conventional structures, such as a makeshift shelter, shack or shanty.
TEMPORARY STRUCTURES	People living in insecure accommodation, such as a semi-permanent structure, hut, or cabin.
OCCUPIED DWELLINGS UNFIT FOR HABITATION	People living in unfit housing, defined as unfit for habitation by national legislation or building regulations.
HIGHEST NATIONAL NORM OF OVERCROWDING	People living in extreme overcrowding, defined as exceeding the national density standard for floor-space or useable rooms.
Source: FEANTSA (2007).	

## 2.4 The Relevance of the ETHOS Classification System for Calgary

The ETHOS classification system is of interest for Calgary as the community moves to implement *Calgary's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness*. Released on 2008 January 29, the Plan includes “12 guiding principles, five strategies and one objective: ending homelessness in Calgary.” It also sets a wide range of short- and long-term milestones for measuring its success (Calgary Committee to End Homelessness, 2008a: 9-12).

Strategy 4 in the Plan is designed to improve data and systems knowledge. Its first goal is to introduce a mandatory Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to provide “real-time data on how long people are homeless, what their needs are, what the causes of homelessness are, how people are interacting with our systems of care, how effective our interventions are, the number of homeless people, and detailed demographic and biographical information” (Calgary Committee to End Homelessness, 2008a: 37).<sup>4</sup> The Calgary Homeless Foundation, which is charged with implementing the 10-year plan, will also be able to use its HMIS to evaluate how homeless people flow through both formal and informal systems of care and support.

<sup>4</sup> Once the Homeless Management Information System is in place, there will no longer be a need to conduct a point-in-time count of homeless persons. Until that time, The City of Calgary will continue to coordinate a count of homeless persons every two years and report on the findings.

The ETHOS classification system has been suggested as a reporting tool that might be useful for the Calgary Homeless Foundation as part of its HMIS. This case study represents the first time ETHOS criteria have been used in Calgary to provide a comprehensive picture of both sheltered and non-sheltered clients served by a homeless-serving organization, albeit for only one 24-hour period. As noted by the staff of the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter on their enumeration form for the *2008 Count of Homeless Persons* (City of Calgary, 2008):

Our historical data collection and supporting research indicates that Domestic Violence is a prevalent cause of homelessness amongst women, and our facility does not have the capacity to accommodate all of the women who call to seek shelter throughout the year.

Another study that is currently underway will use ETHOS criteria to report on *Housing Stress among Newcomers to Calgary*. As with women fleeing violence, immigrants and refugees are believed to be underrepresented in homelessness statistics because many of them are among the 'hidden homeless' who are sheltered, often precariously, by family, friends, or community members. Building on work completed in 2007<sup>5</sup> for *Calgary's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness*, researchers from the Poverty Reduction Coalition of the United Way of Calgary and Area, the University of Calgary, and The City of Calgary are collaborating on a comprehensive study of housing stress experienced by this population group. The results are slated for release in October 2008.

### **3.0 Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter: Case Study Results**

Staff of the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter (CWES) expressed strong interest in enumerating not only the people they sheltered on the night of the *2008 Count of Homeless Persons* but also those people served through the CWES Non-Residential Program the same day who were found to be living in precarious housing as a result of domestic violence. The City of Calgary agreed to undertake a case study with CWES, using ETHOS criteria to report on the full complement of both absolutely and relatively homeless clients served by CWES for a 24-hour period on 2008 May 14.

CWES used the standard Facilities Enumeration Form provided by The City of Calgary for the *2008 Count of Homeless Persons*, which enabled them to report on the people they were sheltering who are deemed to be 'roofless' or 'houseless' within the ETHOS classification system. CWES was also provided with a Modified Services Enumeration Form, which enabled them to report on their non-sheltered clients using the remaining ETHOS categories. It included all ETHOS categories for *relatively homeless* people living in 'insecure' or 'inadequate' accommodation, as well as any categories that were not appropriate for use by homeless-serving facilities but can be used to describe the living conditions of *absolutely homeless* people who are 'roofless' or houseless.'

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<sup>5</sup> See the reports *Housing Experiences of Newcomers to Calgary: Survey Results* (City of Calgary, 2007) and *Housing Issues of Immigrants and Refugees in Calgary* (City of Calgary and the Poverty Reduction Coalition, 2007). Both are available on The City of Calgary website at [www.calgary.ca](http://www.calgary.ca).

On 2008 May 14, a total of 102 ***absolutely and relatively homeless*** people were among those served during that 24-hour period by the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter. Of these, 29 women and children (28%) who were at great risk of domestic violence stayed at the CWES Facility. An additional 73 women and men (72%) sought assistance from the CWES Non-Residential Program because of the impacts of domestic violence on families, where it was determined that their housing security has been seriously compromised. Female clients find they have to give up their housing in exchange for their personal safety. Table 3 presents the findings by location enumerated, sex, and population group.

TABLE 3. SUMMARY DATA – ALL HOMELESS PEOPLE ENUMERATED BY CWES ON 2008 MAY 14		
LOCATION ENUMERATED – ALL CLIENTS	NUMBER	PERCENT
CALGARY WOMEN'S EMERGENCY SHELTER – FACILITY	29	28.4%
CWES – NON-RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM	73	71.6%
<b>TOTAL – ALL HOMELESS PEOPLE ENUMERATED BY CWES</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
OBSERVED SEX – ALL CLIENTS	NUMBER	PERCENT
MALE	17	16.7%
FEMALE	85	83.3%
<b>TOTAL – ALL HOMELESS PEOPLE ENUMERATED BY CWES</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
OBSERVED AGE GROUP – CHILDREN AND YOUTH	NUMBER	PERCENT
PRESCHOOLERS – AGE 5 OR YOUNGER	9	60.0%
SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN – AGE 6 TO 12	4	26.7%
YOUTH – AGE 13 TO 17	2	13.3%
<b>SUB-TOTAL – CHILDREN &amp; YOUTH ENUMERATED BY CWES</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
OBSERVED AGE GROUP – ALL CLIENTS	NUMBER	PERCENT
CHILDREN AND YOUTH – AGE 17 OR YOUNGER	15	14.7%
YOUNG ADULTS – AGE 18 TO 24	3	2.9%
WORKING AGE ADULTS AND MIDDLE-AGED ADULTS – AGE 25 TO 64	81	79.4%
SENIORS – AGE 65 OR OLDER	3	2.9%
UNKNOWN	0	0.0%
<b>TOTAL – ALL HOMELESS PEOPLE ENUMERATED BY CWES</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>100%</b>

As shown in Table 3, a total of **102 absolutely and relatively homeless people** were served by CWES on 2008 May 14. Of these, 29 received shelter at the **CWES Facility** (28%) and 73 sought assistance through the **CWES Non-Residential Program** (72%). Among the 102 *absolutely and relatively homeless* people affected by domestic violence who were served by CWES during that 24-hour period, 17 were **male** (17%) and 85 were **female** (83%). When assessed by *age group*, 15 clients were **children or youth** under 18 years of age (15%), 3 were **young adults** aged 18 to 24 (3%), 81 were **adults** aged 25 to 64 (79%), and 3 were **seniors** aged 65 or older (3%). Data on observed *population group* are only available for those people who received shelter at the CWES Facility (see Section 3.1).

Although the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter was full on the night of the count, only 29 of the 40 available beds were occupied. As explained by CWES staff, even though all *rooms* were occupied, family rooms may have more *beds* than needed by a particular family. This results in a number of unoccupied beds, which are not filled with non-family members in order to protect the privacy of the individuals and families who are receiving shelter. Given the number of CWES clients who are homeless or living in precarious housing situations as a result of domestic violence, CWES is only able to shelter a very small number of the women and children fleeing domestic violence who seek their assistance every day. On 2008 May 14, shelter was available to only 28% of the absolutely and relatively homeless CWES clients fleeing domestic violence who were in need of housing.

### 3.1 Detailed Demographic Data, by Program

Table 4 provides a detailed demographic breakdown of the clients served by CWES on 2008 May 14. Observed sex, population group, and age group are reported for Facility clients, who were enumerated during intake on the night of the count. Data on sex and a partial breakdown by age group are available for Non-Residential Program clients. This is because information entered into the *HOMES* database that is used by many service providers cannot easily be disaggregated for age, sex, and population group to report on homelessness as requested on The City of Calgary's enumeration form.<sup>6</sup>

**Facility Data** – A total of **29 absolutely homeless people** stayed at the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter *Facility* on the night of 2008 May 14. Among them were 15 **children and youth** (52%) age 17 or younger, consisting of 6 **males** and 9 **females**. All other residents were **adult females**. Among the 14 adults (48%) in residence at the CWES shelter on the night of the count, there were 3 **young adults** (age 18 to 24), 9 **working age adults** (age 25 to 44), and 2 **middle-aged adults** (age 45 to 64). There were no people age 65 or older in residence, as **seniors** are generally directed to the Kerby Centre shelter. When assessed by observed *population group*, the 29 shelter residents were almost evenly divided: 9 were **Caucasian**, 10 were **Aboriginal**, and 10 were members of a **visible minority** group.

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<sup>6</sup> While functional in many other ways needed by service providers, the inability to easily disaggregate information in the *HOMES* database to report on homelessness may be problematic if this system is to be used as part of the Homeless Management Information System that will be developed.

**TABLE 4. ALL CWES CLIENTS ENUMERATED, BY OBSERVED SEX, POPULATION GROUP, AND AGE GROUP**

CWES CLIENT GROUP	SHELTERED AT CWES FACILITY							NON-RESIDENTIAL SERVICES PROVIDED BY CWES			ALL PEOPLE COUNTED, BY OBSERVED AGE GROUP	
	CAUCASIAN		ABORIGINAL		VISIBLE MINORITY		SUB-TOTAL	UNKNOWN <sup>1</sup>		SUB-TOTAL		
POPULATION GROUP	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	ALL	MALE	FEMALE	ALL	No.	%
SEX	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	ALL	MALE	FEMALE	ALL	No.	%
PRESCHOOLERS (AGE 5 OR YOUNGER)	1		1	3	3	1	9			0	9	60.0%
SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN (AGE 6-12)	1			3			4			0	4	26.7%
YOUTH (AGE 13-17)		2					2			0	2	13.3%
<b>SUB-TOTAL: CHILDREN AND YOUTH</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>15</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100%</b>
CHILDREN AND YOUTH (AGE 17 OR YOUNGER)	2	2	1	6	3	1	15			0	15	14.7%
YOUNG ADULTS (AGE 18-24)				1		2	3			0	3	2.9%
WORKING AGE ADULTS (AGE 25-44)		3		2		4	9					
MIDDLE-AGED ADULTS <sup>2</sup> (AGE 45-64)		2					2	11	59	70	81	79.4%
SENIORS (AGE 65 OR OLDER)							0		3	3	3	2.9%
UNKNOWN							0			0	0	0.0%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Notes:**

- 1 The *HOMES* database cannot easily be disaggregated to the extent requested in The City's enumeration forms.
- 2 Only one person (a middle-aged female) was assigned to an emergency bed by CWES on the night of 2008 May 14. All other shelter clients of CWES, in all age groups, were assigned to transitional beds.

**Non-Residential Program Data** – A total of 282 *Non-Residential Program* clients who were fleeing domestic violence were served by CWES on 2008 May 14, including **73 relatively homeless people** (26%) who were forced into precarious housing situations because they were fleeing domestic violence. When the 73 *Non-Residential Program* clients who were also in housing need were assessed by *age group*, 70 clients were working age and middle-aged **adults** (age 25 to 64), consisting of 11 **males** and 59 **females**. The remaining 3 clients were **female seniors** (age 65 or older).

**Refusal Rates** – A total of 9 homeless **females** who were referred to the CWES Facility on 2008 May 14 were **refused shelter**. All were referred to other facilities: 5 because the facility was full, 1 because she did not fit into the target population served by CWES, and 3 because it was believed that they would be better served by other organizations.

### 3.2 Family Homelessness among CWES Clients

For the purposes of the *Biennial Count of Homeless Persons in Calgary*, families are defined as *a couple, a couple with one or more children, or a lone adult with one or more children*. The 2008 count marks the first time that data specific to homeless families *with children* have been collected. As shown in Table 5, there were a total of **45 homeless families** enumerated by CWES on the night of 2008 May 14, of which **29 included children** (64%). All 16 families enumerated by the CWES Facility had children with them (100%), while only 13 of the 29 families using the *Non-Residential Program* included children (45%). All three of the families that were *refused shelter* by the CWES Facility included children.

TABLE 5. ALL HOMELESS FAMILIES ENUMERATED BY CWES, WITH AND WITHOUT CHILDREN				
LOCATION ENUMERATED	ALL FAMILIES ENUMERATED		FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN	
	NUMBER	PERCENT	NUMBER	PERCENT
FAMILIES <u>IN RESIDENCE</u> AT THE CWES FACILITY	10	62.5%	10	62.5%
FAMILIES REFERRED TO THE CWES FACILITY WHO WERE ACCEPTED BUT <u>NOT YET IN RESIDENCE</u>	3	18.8%	3	18.8%
FAMILIES REFERRED TO THE CWES FACILITY WHO WERE <u>REFUSED SHELTER</u>	3	18.8%	3	18.8%
<b>SUB-TOTAL – ALL HOMELESS FAMILIES ENUMERATED BY THE CWES FACILITY</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>SUB-TOTAL – ALL UNSHELTERED HOMELESS FAMILIES RECEIVING SERVICES FROM THE CWES <u>NON-RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM</u></b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>44.8%</b>
<b>TOTAL – ALL HOMELESS FAMILIES <u>ENUMERATED BY CWES</u></b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>64.4%</b>

### 3.3 Homeless and Precariously Housed CWES Clients

As reported in Table 4, only 1 of the 29 clients sheltered at the CWES Facility on the night of the 2008 Count was assigned to an **emergency bed**. The other 28 clients who received shelter were assigned to **transitional beds**. This categorization provides a very basic analysis of the housing situation of only a small number of the people who were served by CWES on 2008 May 14. A much more detailed understanding of the housing circumstances experienced by both sheltered and non-sheltered CWES clients in housing need emerges from an assessment using the **ETHOS categories** into which *absolutely* and *relatively* homeless clients were classified. Table 6 on the following page shows all of the ETHOS categories that applied to CWES clients on 2008 May 14. The breakdown proves to be quite interesting. The results are also presented in Box 1, in order of magnitude within each conceptual category.

BOX 1. ETHOS CLASSIFICATION OF CWES CLIENTS	
<b>ABSOLUTELY HOMELESS</b>	
<b>HOUSELESS</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>28%</b> were staying in <b>women's shelter accommodation</b> at the CWES Facility, and</li><li>• <b>2%</b> were staying in <b>medical facilities</b> because they had no place to go, even though they were ready to be discharged.</li></ul>	
<b>RELATIVELY HOMELESS</b>	
<b>INSECURE ACCOMMODATION</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>31%</b> were <b>facing eviction because they could not pay rent</b> for June 2008</li><li>• <b>21%</b> were <b>couch surfing</b> by temporarily staying with family or friends</li><li>• <b>4%</b> were <b>subject to police action</b> to ensure the safety of domestic violence victims,<sup>7</sup> and</li><li>• <b>3%</b> were living in <b>illegal suites</b>.</li></ul> <p>Of note, two additional sets of circumstances were identified for CWES clients that were <i>not</i> specifically described in the ETHOS criteria. These were recorded under the category of <i>insecure accommodation</i> and described as "other":</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>7%</b> were <b>relying on monthly gifts</b> from family or friends <b>to pay rent in full</b>, and</li><li>• <b>3%</b> were <b>seniors depending on monthly room and board paid by adult children</b> who are currently living with them.</li></ul>	
<b>INADEQUATE ACCOMMODATION</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>1%</b> reported living in a mobile home (<b>camper or trailer</b>).</li></ul>	

<sup>7</sup> This category can include male perpetrators of domestic violence who are removed from the home.

TABLE 6. ETHOS CLASSIFICATION OF ALL ABSOLUTELY AND RELATIVELY HOMELESS PEOPLE ENUMERATED BY CWES ON 2008 MAY 14

ETHOS CATEGORIES	NUMBER	PERCENT
<i>HOUSELESS</i>		
WOMEN'S SHELTER ACCOMMODATION (SHORT TERM, NORMALLY LESS THAN ONE YEAR)	29	28.4%
MEDICAL INSTITUTIONS (STAY LONGER THAN NEEDED DUE TO A LACK OF HOUSING)	2	2.0%
<i>INSECURE ACCOMMODATION</i>		
TEMPORARILY WITH FAMILY OR FRIENDS (IN CONVENTIONAL HOUSING BUT NOT THEIR USUAL PLACE OF RESIDENCE, E.G., 'COUCH SURFING')	21	20.6%
NO LEGAL TENANCY OR SUB-TENANCY (OCCUPYING A DWELLING WITH NO LEGAL TENANCY OR SUB-TENANCY, E.G., LIVING IN AN 'ILLEGAL SUITE')	3	2.9%
LEGAL ORDERS ARE ENFORCED (RENTED) (RENTERS LIVING UNDER THREAT OF EVICTION) <i>NOTE: REFERS TO NON-RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM CLIENTS WHO, ON 2008 MAY 14, KNEW THEY WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO PAY THEIR RENT AT THE END OF THE MONTH.</i>	32	31.4%
POLICE RECORDED INCIDENTS (POLICE ACTION IS TAKEN TO ENSURE A PLACE OF SAFETY FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE)	4	3.9%
OTHER – RELYING ON MONTHLY GIFTS FROM FAMILY OR FRIENDS TO PAY RENT IN FULL (CWES CATEGORY)	7	6.9%
OTHER– SENIORS DEPENDING ON MONTHLY ROOM AND BOARD PAID BY ADULT CHILDREN WHO ARE CURRENTLY LIVING WITH THEM (CWES CATEGORY)	3	2.9%
<i>INADEQUATE ACCOMMODATION</i>		
MOBILE HOME (TEMPORARY STRUCTURES, NOT INTENDED AS PLACE OF USUAL RESIDENCE, E.G., CAMPERS; TRAILERS)	1	1.0%
<b>TOTAL – CWES CLIENTS ENUMERATED ON 2008 MAY 14</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

## 4.0 Conclusions and Implications

This Research Summary has provided an analysis of the housing circumstances of all *absolutely and relatively homeless* clients who were served by the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter during a 24-hour period on 2008 May 14. The intent was to apply the ETHOS criteria for homelessness and housing exclusion to CWES clients who were fleeing domestic violence and, as a result, living in precarious housing circumstances, in order to explore the potential for using the ETHOS classification system as a reporting tool for *Calgary's 10-year Plan to End Homelessness*. It was hoped that this would provide some insight into how homeless people flow through both formal and informal systems of care and support, which is one of the outcomes sought for the Homeless Management Information System that will be implemented as part of the 10-year plan.

In addition, a demographic analysis that is routinely used for The City of Calgary's *Biennial Count of Homeless Persons* was undertaken. The intent was to compare the demographic characteristics of the *absolutely homeless* people who received shelter at the CWES Facility to the characteristics of the *relatively homeless* clients served by the CWES Non-Residential Program, who were fleeing domestic violence and consequently experiencing significant housing stress.

This case study confirms anecdotal information that CWES, like many other frontline agencies providing assistance for people fleeing domestic violence, is unable to provide shelter for the many clients who become *relatively homeless* in order to protect their personal safety. In addition, some extremely useful information emerged about data management challenges that will have to be addressed in the Homeless Management Information System that is put in place for Calgary. The key findings and some of their implications are summarized below.

### **1. A significant proportion of people experiencing domestic violence who seek assistance from agencies such as CWES become *relatively homeless* in order to protect their personal safety. Indeed, over one quarter of CWES Non-Residential Program clients were relatively homeless on 2008 May 14.**

A total of 282 Non-Residential Program clients who were fleeing domestic violence were served by CWES on 2008 May 14, including 73 *relatively homeless* people (26%) who were forced into precarious housing situations because they were fleeing domestic violence. Clearly, far more people affected by domestic violence – men, women and children – would benefit from secure housing than can be accommodated by the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter at their Facility. This is consistent with previous research that has examined the domestic violence sector in Calgary and elsewhere.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, the *Calgary Family and Sexual Violence Sector Review* completed for program funders (Warthe, Hoffart, and Cooper, 2004).

**2. Unsheltered clients living in precarious housing circumstances outnumbered those who received shelter by a ratio of 2.5 to 1.**

A total of 102 *absolutely and relatively homeless* people were served by CWES on 2008 May 14. Although the CWES Facility was full, only 29 people (28%) could be sheltered. In contrast, 73 people (72%) who were feeling domestic violence and also in housing need could not be accommodated, and therefore remained precariously housed.

**3. The Homeless Management Information System that will be put in place as part of Calgary's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness must capture data on absolutely and relatively homeless people in order to understand how people move between formal and informal systems of care.**

A significant proportion of CWES clients are *relatively homeless*. Many people who are fleeing domestic violence and struggling to remain housed rely on temporary support from family and friends, while seeking assistance from agencies like CWES that may be able to offer shelter to *absolutely homeless* people as part of their bundle of services. Although CWES is only one agency working with people affected by domestic violence, the findings that emerged on absolute and relative homelessness demonstrate that data typically reported by homeless-serving agencies captures information on only a small number of their homeless clientele.

**4. The ETHOS Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion is a useful tool for understanding the number and type of living conditions experienced by Calgarians who are absolutely or relatively homeless.**

The case study findings illustrate the need for an integrated Homeless Management Information System that will help service providers better understand and assist people who are *sheltered* within a homeless-serving facility, as well as those who receive other *services* when housing is unavailable through formal systems of support. The ETHOS Classification System offers a well-established means of capturing information that can be reported in this way.

**5. The ETHOS Classification System can be easily adapted to meet local needs, without compromising the integrity of the typology.**

Some minor limitations related to the predefined categories in the ETHOS Classification System were revealed during the case study. CWES identified two situations faced by a number of their clients that were not among the predefined ETHOS options. However, it was easy to adapt the ETHOS system to suit the Calgary context by adding and defining two 'Other' operational categories. In this instance, both were in the realm of 'insecure' accommodation and were therefore placed in that conceptual category. As other research studies pilot the use of ETHOS criteria for different sub-populations of homeless people, more operational categories may need to be added.

This will ensure that Calgary's Homeless Management Information System reflects the complexity of the local environment. Indeed, this adaptive approach is endorsed by the federation that developed the ETHOS typology (Edgar and Meert, 2006: 51 [emphasis added]):

The development of the typology has been approached as an iterative process by which the typology can be refined as our understanding of the data collection and measurement issues improve. Our approach is that the conceptual model is robust and the four conceptual categories remain the basis of the typology. However, the *operational categories and sub-categories can be reviewed, and more accurately defined, in order to make the typology fit for the primary purpose of data collection for which it is designed.*

**6. Reporting demographic data related to homelessness for non-sheltered clients was significantly limited by the constraints of the database used by CWES (and many other frontline agencies).**

A very routine demographic analysis of the relatively homeless population served by CWES through its Non-Residential Program could not be completed. Disaggregated data for population group could not be easily generated so it was not produced at all. Similarly, data for a full range of age groups could not be easily reported. CWES staff explained that although the *HOMES* database that is used by CWES and many other frontline agencies works well to generate the kind of reports needed by agency funders, for example, there are significant reporting limitations when trying to produce information that is needed to report on homelessness. This unexpected finding may prove to be a significant factor in determining how to implement an integrated Homeless Management Information System since so many local agencies currently use the *HOMES* program to record and report on client data.

#### **4.1 Moving Forward**

This case study applied the ETHOS Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion that is used by the European Union to client data for 2008 May 14 that was provided by the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter on their clients who are fleeing domestic violence. Important findings emerged about the interplay between formal and informal systems of care available to people affected by domestic violence who are experiencing absolute and relative homelessness. Even though the data are only for one agency at a single point in time, the results are highly relevant to the design of the Homeless Management Information System that will be implemented as part of *Calgary's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness.*

The value of using the ETHOS Classification System for homelessness research in Calgary cannot be overstated. Its applications are best described by the authors of the *Fifth Review of Statistics on Homelessness in Europe* (Edgar and Meert, 2006: 53).

The ETHOS typology has a contribution to make in the development of policies on homelessness at national, regional and local level[s]. Importantly, it can inform debate regarding the appropriate definition of homelessness to employ for different policy purposes, and can provide a basis for co-ordination between different levels of government, or different ministries or agencies of government, whose collaboration is a necessary basis for the development of integrated strategies to prevent or tackle homelessness.

As a standardized means of reporting homelessness statistics, the ETHOS Typology may also be highly relevant to the Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness, recently created by the provincial government. The Secretariat will “develop and implement a provincial 10-year strategic plan to address homelessness” that will include “prevention strategies, research and education programs, as well as the creation of a homeless management information system” (Alberta Housing and Urban Affairs, 2008).

This case study research represents an important step forward towards ensuring that the data management system designed for Calgary, and perhaps Alberta, will serve a multitude of purposes as we seek to end homelessness in our city and beyond.

## Additional Information

For additional information on affordable housing and homelessness, and to view reports related to the ***Biennial Count of Homeless Persons in Calgary***, please visit The City of Calgary website at [www.calgary.ca/affordablehousing](http://www.calgary.ca/affordablehousing) and click on the link to 'Research on Affordable Housing and Homelessness.'

Note: The 2008 Count report and several companion documents will be released in mid-July. Go to [www.calgary.ca/affordablehousing](http://www.calgary.ca/affordablehousing) and click on the link to 'Research on Affordable Housing and Homelessness.' Then click on the box called 'Biennial Count of Homeless Persons' in the upper left hand corner of the research homepage to access the 2008 and previous Count reports.

To learn more about ***Calgary's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness***, please visit the project website at [www.endinghomelessness.ca](http://www.endinghomelessness.ca).

To learn more about the ***Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness***, please visit the Secretariat's homepage at [www.housing.alberta.ca/Alberta\\_Secretariat.cfm](http://www.housing.alberta.ca/Alberta_Secretariat.cfm).

To learn more about the ***Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter*** and the many programs and services they provide to people affected by domestic violence, please visit their website at [www.calgarywomensshelter.com](http://www.calgarywomensshelter.com).

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