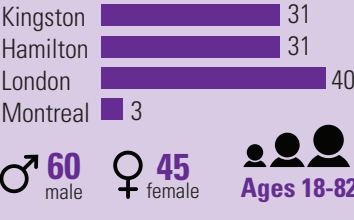


What is the EXPERIENCE AND IMPACT OF BOREDOM during and following homelessness?

We interviewed three groups in four cities (Kingston, London, Hamilton and Montreal)



Individuals who were **unhoused** (105 total)



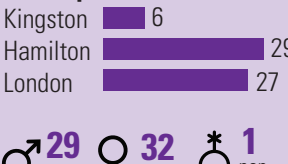
♂ **60** male ♀ **45** female 👤 **Ages 18-82**

Indigenous 13 LGBTQ2+ 14

Unhoused 1-12 months
(45% primarily unsheltered, 55% primarily sheltered)



Individuals **housed after homelessness** (62 total)



♂ **29** male ♀ **32** female ♀ **1** non-binary 👤 **Ages 18-87**

Indigenous 9 LGBTQ2+ 13

Housed 1-21 months



Social service and mental health **service providers** (20 total)



What did we find?

Quantitative Findings

We compared the **unhoused** and **recently housed** participants with participants in other studies and found:

Compared with these other groups, participants reported:

- ↑ increased boredom
- ↓ decreased meaningful activity
- ↓ lower mental well-being
- ↓ lower community belonging
- low to moderate alcohol/drug use



Participants with high levels of boredom reported:

- ↑ more drug use
- ↑ greater hopelessness
- ↓ lower mental well-being



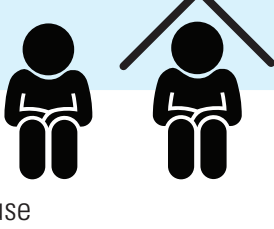
Engagement in meaningful activity was associated with:

- ↑ Greater mental well-being
- ↑ More time spent in the community
- ↓ Lower levels of drug use

When we compared participants who were unhoused with participants who were housed after homelessness, we found that:

That there were no differences in:

- ≠ boredom
- ≠ meaningful activity engagement
- ≠ hopelessness
- ≠ mental well-being
- ≠ alcohol use
- ≠ drug use
- ≠ community integration (both spending time in the community and having a sense of community belonging)



These findings show that:

- 1. Housing alone doesn't necessarily improve psychosocial well-being.** Hopelessness, boredom, and substance use were just as high in recently housed individuals as in those who remained unhoused.
- 2. There were no statistically important differences** between individuals who had been recently housed, and those who remained unhoused on measures of mental well-being, community integration, or engagement in meaningful activities.

Qualitative Findings

Individuals who were unhoused identified that **boredom was a central feature** of their experience of homelessness, and imposed a negative influence on mental health.

Participants indicated that they were:

"...bored til lunch, bored til dinner, and bored til bed"

Shawn, unhoused, London

Boredom was related to psychosocial difficulties that participants experienced:

"Boredom is anxiety. Boredom is depression"

Susan, unhoused, Kingston

During periods of boredom, they described reliving past traumas that they had experienced, and this led to the desire to use substances to cope:

"For me, I just wanna use mostly when I start thinking of bad things. I start thinking of my kids, and I can't stop those thoughts...so I need something to kind of distract"

Peanut, unhoused, Kingston

Individuals who were housed following homelessness similarly described boredom as central to their experience. At times, they described feeling it more deeply once they were housed.

"Because my place is so quiet, it feels like I'm the only one who's experienced such hollowness"

Sandy, housed, Hamilton

Service providers recognized that boredom is a **serious issue influencing the mental health** of individuals who experience homelessness.

Service providers emphasized the importance of meaningful activities for promoting mental health:

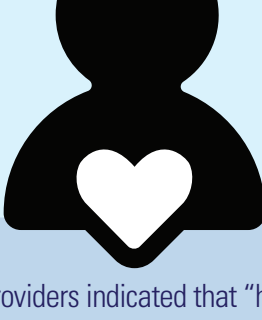
"humans need meaning and purpose in our lives just to have any sense of who we are"

Service Provider 2, London

Service providers indicated that the environments in which individuals are situated both *during and following homelessness* provide little opportunity to engage in meaningful activity to address the boredom that they experience:

"there's nowhere to go, and there's nothing to do"

Service Provider 4, London



Service Providers indicated that "housing is a shell...that you could potentially flourish in" [Service Provider 2, London]. They indicated that this doesn't always happen for individuals who have left homelessness, with many who are housed that feel under-occupied and isolated from others: "The novelty of being housed wears off...and they have that loneliness" [Service Provider 5, Kingston] and "a lot of people go downhill after being housed" [Service Provider 3, Kingston]

Though service providers recognized that boredom was a serious issue, they reported feeling trapped in a system that prevented them from addressing more than supporting individuals to secure housing. Attending to crises and working within a system with limited resources prevented them from focusing on helping people to find ways to occupy their time in meaningful ways.

What do our findings mean?

Boredom is a serious issue

among individuals who experience homelessness, and one that doesn't resolve on its own once a person is housed

Boredom has strong associations with mental health, community integration and substance use and needs to be addressed to promote the well-being of individuals with experiences of homelessness

Community initiatives

that engage individuals with experiences of homelessness in meaningful activity are needed

The way that systems are structured:

1. Limit opportunities for individuals who experience homelessness to engage in meaningful activity, leading to boredom;
- and
2. Prevent service providers from supporting this population to effectively engage in meaningful activity

What can we do next?

1

Collectively, we need to change systems to: **1) Address factors that limit engagement of individuals who experience homelessness in meaningful activity;** and **2) Support access to integrated health and social services and access to service providers who can engage people in meaningful activity including employment, education, training, and leisure.**

2

Our team will **share these findings with individuals with lived experiences of homelessness, service providers, and policy makers in all levels of government and within health and social care organizations** to draw attention to the impact that boredom can impose on the mental health of individuals who experience homelessness.

3

Researchers and service providers may consider **partnering with individuals with lived experience on developing evidence-based approaches** that can be used to support individuals to engage in meaningful activity during and following homelessness.

4

We need to know more about **effective approaches** for engaging individuals who experience homelessness in meaningful activity.

Who to contact for questions about this study?

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