As many as 520,700 people living with mental illness are inadequately housed in Canada and among them as many as 119,800 are homeless.

Recent research suggests that the percentage of people without housing who live with a mental illness may be higher than 50%. A recent report from the Canadian Mental Health Commission found that 33% of people living with mental illness who are homeless were severely mentally ill, compared to 8% of the general homeless population. This highlights the severity and urgency of the housing crisis for this population.

There are currently 152,077 households on waiting lists across Canada for affordable housing. This number is expected to increase as more people become homeless due to the lack of affordable housing.

In the absence of affordable housing, people with mental illness are at risk of becoming homeless. This puts their mental health and overall well-being at risk. It is estimated that 68% of consumers (n = 330) agreed that there is a lack of affordable housing while 45% were concerned with the lack of quality housing.

Income supports were cited most frequently (68%) by consumers as one of the most important factors that should be offered by housing programs. Family members of people living with mental illness (n = 183) were in agreement and deemed it the most important (69%).

Consumers emphasized the value in peer support with 73% of survey respondents (n = 330) noting the need for access to peer support. On the topic of supports:

- "There's a rotating door effect. Every time you get a little better, you lose support and it drags you back down." – webinar participant, consumer
- "There is a huge crisis in society resulting from inadequately housed people living with mental illness re-circulating through a range of emergency and institutional services (e.g., emergency rooms, hospital beds, emergency shelters, detox centres, jails)."
- "1 in 4 people who are vulnerable in housing or homeless have been hospitalized overnight at least once in the past year. People with serious mental illness are over-represented by a factor of roughly five in Canadian jails." - webinar participant, consumer
- "Alternate level of care (ALC) is used to describe hospital patients who no longer require hospitalization but remain in hospital until discharge to a more appropriate level of service (e.g., high support housing in Ontario). In Ontario, more than 50% of ALC clients are in psychiatric settings, consuming a significant portion of inpatient resources."
- "A Toronto-based program, Streets to Homes, demonstrates that once individuals are housed, they use fewer emergency services and begin accessing more appropriate ongoing health and community services."
- While there can be a wide variation in costing housing and support models, estimates of the cost of supportive housing is about ten times less than the cost of institutional care.

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