

RESEARCH SUMMARY: THE IMPACTS OF EVICTION

Eviction means the sudden and disruptive loss of one's home.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research has shown that eviction from rental housing is a harsh and harmful experience for tenants, their families, and communities more broadly.

Disruption to health

- Participants in a recent Canadian study used the language of trauma to describe the impacts of eviction on their lives. These tenants attributed feelings of distress, depression, anxiety, and fear to their eviction experiences.
- A substantial body of research has also established that eviction is associated with numerous negative physical health outcomes, including higher risk of hospitalization and death.



Disruption to family and life

- Eviction disrupts education and employment.
- Eviction is associated with child apprehension and the fragmentation of families, and is particularly harmful for children and youth.

Disruption to being housed

- Eviction is a significant pathway to homelessness and ongoing housing instability. A recent Saskatoon study found that eviction was a major factor leading to homelessness.

Eviction is not distributed equally among tenants.

Eviction disproportionately affects communities who are already facing the highest levels of poverty and discrimination. These tenants include:

- People receiving social assistance
- Indigenous women and girls
- Black women
- 2SLGBTQ+ persons
- People with disabilities
- Single mothers
- Newcomers to Canada.



RESEARCH DESIGN

We interviewed 18 people who had been evicted in Saskatoon.

This project was led by Sarah Buhler (University of Saskatchewan College of Law) in collaboration with Community Legal Assistance Services for Saskatoon Inner City (CLASSIC). Thanks to Ryan Cupid for research support and funding support by Pathways to Equity.



RESULTS

EXPERIENCES AND IMPACTS OF EVICTION

For participants, evictions were deeply impactful events that played out within, but also deepened, conditions of housing precarity.



- Most participants described long histories of housing instability and frequent moves, including multiple experiences of eviction.
- Many participants described living in overcrowded, inadequate, and unsafe dwelling places with landlords who were often unresponsive when it came to maintenance and safety.
- Many participants explained that due to unaffordable rental costs, they were forced to live in overcrowded places, often with strangers. Many also described either willingly or unwillingly hosting family or friends who themselves would otherwise be homeless.

REASONS FOR EVICTION

- Rental arrears, including missed payments or late rent.
- Landlords raising rents to unaffordable levels, meaning tenants fell behind in their rent.



[The landlord] got upset when the doctor wrote two letters asking him to fix the place. So instead of fixing the place while we were living in it, he decided to evict us.

- Actions of roommates or abusive spouses.
- Apparent retaliation by landlords after tenants complained about the condition of their unit.

RESULTS...continued

I know that it is going to be hell for me to find a place. Because I find that...this eviction kind of follows me, you know?

IMPACTS OF EVICTION

DIFFICULTY FINDING A NEW PLACE

Participants spoke about the extreme difficulty of finding a new place in the wake of eviction.

Eviction was portrayed as not simply a discrete event but rather as an ongoing burden that made life much more difficult.



- One participant referred to the ORT's practice of publishing tenant names in eviction decisions, saying that several prospective landlords had informed her that this meant they would never rent to her.



- Many participants said that they became homeless as a result of their eviction.
- Many others reported experiences of "hidden homelessness" - staying temporarily with friends or family, usually moving frequently from place to place. For those who were couch surfing or staying with others, housing conditions were often described as overcrowded, insecure, and unsafe.

LOSING PERSONAL ASSETS

A common experience for many was the loss of important personal belongings that were discarded by landlords.

Other times, tenants were unable to move belongings because of inability to access assistance with moving or because they became homeless.

...getting evicted and having to come up with money for damage and move and all of that. I haven't recovered from that.

They threw out everything!

It was all my belongings in that suite. Some stuff that I had was very valuable in a sense of like, you know, they were my special belongings from when I was in foster care...

Tenants also described the loss of security deposits and the weight of debt that followed their eviction, which often included orders for them to pay arrears and various fees or costs. One participant said that she was "in financial despair."

RESULTS...continued

IMPACTS OF EVICTION...continued

HARMS TO CHILDREN

- One participant linked her eviction to the apprehension of her children.
- Another talked about being homeless for two months with five dependent children following her eviction.



PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

Eviction often makes people feel helpless and has negative impacts on people's mental health and sense of worth and belonging.

- Housing instability and family fragmentation have negative psychological effects on both adults and children.

[Eviction] makes me feel unworthy...like not allowed to have a home. Makes me feel like I'm inadequate.



It was very hard. It was one of the worst times in my life as a father.

I lost my children. And...I didn't have a place to live...it affected me in all different ways...

[Eviction] was hell, and I'm still dealing with the repercussions.



WHAT CAN WE DO?

- Prioritize eviction prevention policies and strategies and treat eviction as a "last resort".
- Provide legal support to tenants facing eviction.
- Have eviction decision makers who understand the harms of eviction and who take a trauma-informed approach.
- Consult tenants when designing eviction policies.
- Support policies that promote affordable, safe and secure housing for everyone.

SOURCES / FURTHER READING

- [Proportionality by the CCHR](#)
- [2024 Saskatoon Point-in-Time Homelessness Count by the CUISR](#)
- [Implementation of Housing Rights Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People in Canada by the Office of the Federal Housing Advocate](#)
- [Housing Research Report by the CCHR](#)
- [The Lived Experience of Evictions in Canada by the CMHC](#)