



Health Concerns of Homeless People

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Perspectives From Four Canadian Cities

	Number of Participants	% of total
Toronto	149	42.5%
Victoria	44	12.5
Calgary	118	33.6
Regina	40	11.4
	351	

Major Health Concerns

Poor Health

Population	Average	Toronto	Regina	Calgary	Victoria
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Homeless	39.0	44.0	33.4	47.0	43.2
Canadian	11.6	10.6	10.1	9.0	11.8
Population					
(Statistics Canada)					

Health condition	Homeless sample (%)	General population (%)
HIV/AIDS	3.8%	0.09
Lung cancer	5.3%	.005%
Asthma	13.7%	8.1%
Hepatitis A, B or C	16.1%	6% - 7%
Arthritis	23.9 %	15.3%
Consider oneself to have a disability	50.6 %	14.3%

	Homeless	General population
Consider oneself to have a disability	50.6 %	14.3%

	Homeless	General population
Feel very stressed	65.3%	23.6%
Symptoms consistent with depression	53%	11.3%
Consider oneself to have a disability	50.6 %	14.3%

		Have you been in the hospital in the past year?		Total
		Yes	No	
% = yes				
52%	Toronto	76	69	145
54%	Victoria	21	18	39
42%	Calgary	50	68	118
45%	Regina	18	22	40
Total		165	177	342

		Do you generally have concerns about how you are treated in hospitals?		Total
		Yes	No	
% = yes				
24%	Toronto	34	108	142
46%	Victoria	17	20	37
26%	Calgary	29	84	113
10%	Regina	4	36	40
Total		84	248	332

Health and Hygiene

- Wash hands daily 92%
- Wash clothes weekly or more often 85%
- Eat on a clean surface (daily) 76%
- Take a shower 74% (daily) 93% (weekly)
- Brush teeth 80%

What to do when the flu strikes?



Where to get medical help

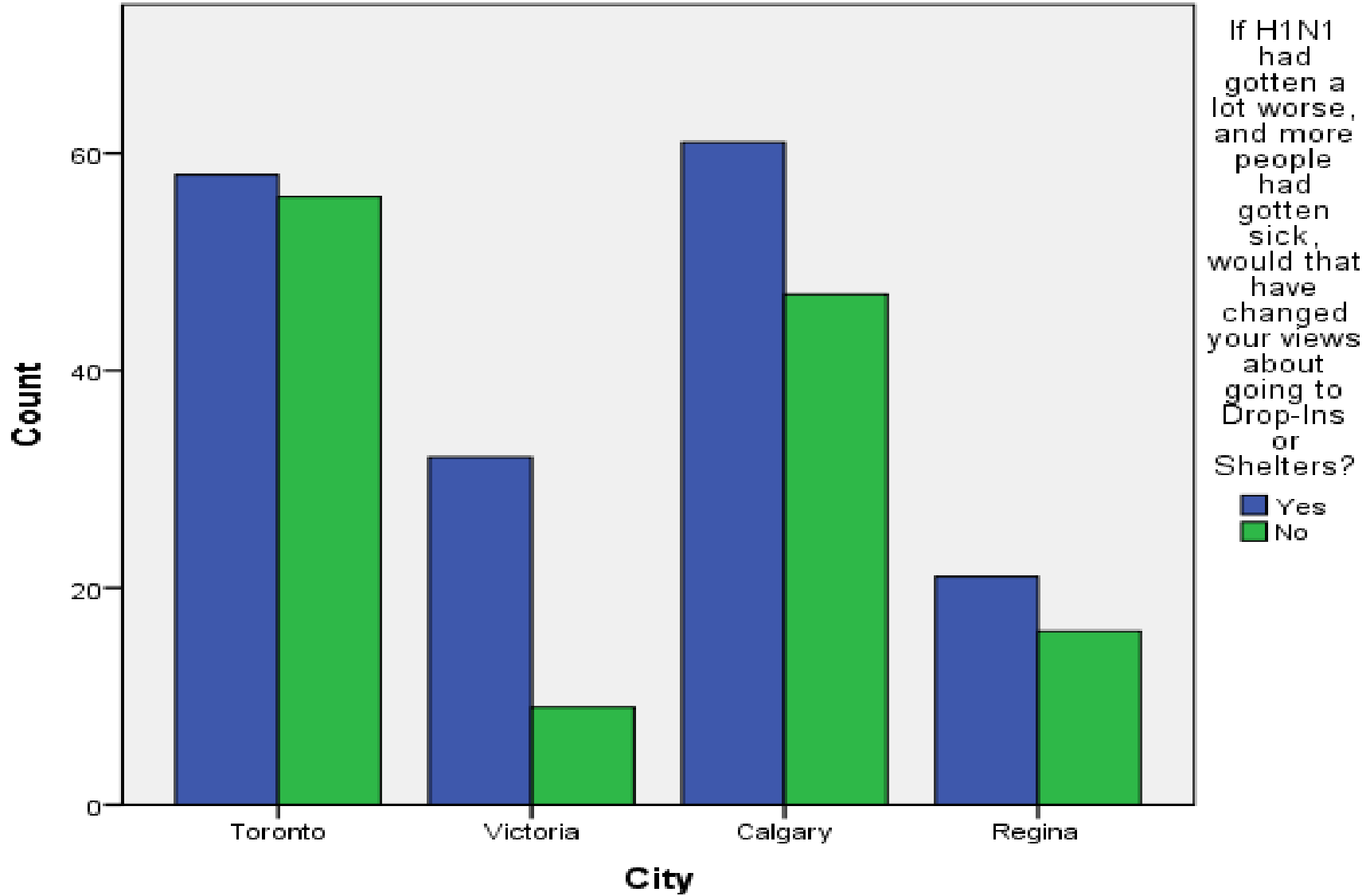
- Most would avoid
hospitals, doctors, nurses, street outreach nurses

Where to get help no answered by a lot of people

Challenges Identified

- Over crowded sleeping arrangements
- Too many people in same area – eating and sleeping areas
- Fear of contagion: contracting flu or other illness
- Concern about cleanliness and parasites

Bar Chart



Where would you go? Where would you stay?

- Most had no clearly defined alternative
- Libraries and malls frequently cited as places to stay
- Some would sleep rough but many would go to a shelter because of lack of alternative
- Many would plan to buy food rather than go to drop-in or shelter

No alternatives

- Response rates to questions about what to do in the future dropped by over one third.

The hope that the homeless situation will resolve?

Too concerned with daily survival

No energy or interest in future speculations (fueled by high levels of depression?)