



Ontario
Human Rights Commission
Commission ontarienne des
droits de la personne

OHRC survey on poverty, housing, mental health and addiction disabilities

About the OHRC's engagement and consultation

The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) is conducting this survey to hear from people facing poverty and their experiences with housing and mental health and addiction disabilities.

In its Strategic Plan (2017–2022), the OHRC committed to working towards human rights protection for people who experience poverty.

Research has shown two issues that can cause or sustain poverty are the lack of affordable, adequate and accessible housing and the experience of mental health and addiction disabilities.

In this context, the OHRC is undertaking an engagement and consultation related to poverty, affordable, adequate and accessible housing and mental health and addiction disabilities. After reviewing the findings, the OHRC will begin drafting a report to interpret the *Human Rights Code* (*Code*) in this area, along with related recommendations.

Understanding how the *Code* applies in the area of poverty will help to address human rights issues disproportionately experienced by groups protected under the *Code*, and exacerbated by systemic situations like the COVID-19 pandemic. [Visit our website](#) to learn more about the consultation.

About this survey

The OHRC encourages people who are experiencing poverty, or have experienced poverty in the past, to complete this survey. Family members, friends or service providers who know someone who has experienced poverty are also welcome to complete the survey.

This survey is anonymous. Your device IP address, location data and contact information are not recorded. We will take all reasonable steps to make sure any personal information you provide is treated confidentially and is only used for the intended purpose above. Please read the Notice of Collection of Information on the next screen.

The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. If you are having difficulty or need help completing this survey, contact the OHRC at 437-775-5248 or by email at consultations@ohrc.on.ca.

Notice of collection of information

Purpose

The purpose of collecting information in this survey is to understand and report on the experiences of people in Ontario who are, or have, experienced poverty with a particular focus on issues relating to housing and mental health and addiction disabilities.

Collecting personal information

The OHRC complies with all relevant laws that relate to handling personal information. As a provincial public institution, the OHRC must abide by the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA).

Limiting use and disclosure of personal information

The OHRC will take all reasonable steps to ensure that personal information is treated confidentially and is only used for the purposes it was collected for. We will take all reasonable steps to prevent unauthorized access, use or disclosure of your personal information as directed by the FIPPA.

We require your express consent to collect the information in this survey for the purpose described above.

- I agree to the use of my survey information for the purpose described above.
- I do NOT agree and understand this means I will not be able to do the survey.

This survey is for people who have experienced poverty, their family members and friends or people who provide them with services.

- I am currently experiencing poverty, or have experienced poverty in the past.
- I am completing this survey about someone I know who is currently experiencing poverty, or has experienced poverty in the past.
- I have not experienced poverty and do not know someone who has.

I am the person's:

- Family member
- Friend
- Service provider

Lived experience

Experiencing poverty means things like not having enough money to afford a place to live, put food on the table, buy clothing, access transportation, etc. We want to get a better understanding of people's actual situations and circumstances with poverty with a particular focus on issues relating to adequate housing and mental health and addiction disabilities.

Please choose one or more of the following that best describes your circumstances or the circumstances of the person you know:

- Do not have, or have not had, adequate housing
- Have, or have had, an addiction (defined as the problematic use of a substance such as alcohol or drugs)
- Have, or have had, another type of mental health issue or disability (such as depression, bipolar disorder, trauma, etc.)
- Have, or have had, another form of disability (mobility, sensory, learning, developmental, etc.)
- None of the above

Please tell us why the person does not or did not have adequate housing (choose all that apply):

- Unaffordable (pay more than 30% of your income on housing and utilities)
- Inappropriate for family needs (not enough bedrooms)
- Not in good repair (in need of major repairs, pest infestations)
- Not accessible because of disability-related needs
- Currently or was homeless or underhoused, couch surfing or sleeping rough
- Other (please describe)

What type of housing do you or the person you know currently live in?

- House/condominium that I own
- House/apartment that I rent
- Rooming house
- Hotel
- Shelter
- Encampment
- Couch surfing
- Sleeping rough
- Other (please specify): _____

Now, we have a few questions focusing on what people may and may not be able to afford financially. Use the text boxes if you would like to give more detail.

Please indicate whether you, or the person you know, have ever experienced any of the following. Select all that apply:

	Ongoing	Time-to-time	More recent	Long ago
Late paying rent or mortgage	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Not able to pay a utility bill (such as hydro, water, heat, phone, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have to borrow money for essential things like groceries or transportation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Can't afford good quality nutritious groceries, have to buy what's cheap	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Not able to buy new clothes when needed, e.g. coats and boots in the winter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Live in a place that doesn't meet needs (too expensive, not accessible, far away, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Use a "pay day loan"-type service that offers access to cash at higher interest rates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Not able to afford to go for dental care or mental/addiction treatment, other health care	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Don't have the money or time for self-care, e.g. accessing nature, exercise, personal development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Don't have money or time for recreation or entertainment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other reason (please specify)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments (optional):

We have a few questions about accessing food. Use the text box if you would like to give more detail.

Please indicate whether you, or the person you know, have ever experienced any of the following. Select all that apply:

	Ongoing	Time-to-time	More recent	Long ago
Struggling to feed oneself or family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use foodbanks/other free food services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have to travel far to access food	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Don't have access to culturally appropriate food	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Child/children rely on food programs at school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other reason (please specify)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments (optional):

Please indicate which, if any, of the following have had a negative impact on your financial situation, or the financial situation of the person you know.

Select all that apply. Use the text boxes if you would like to give more detail:

Education/training

- Need more education
- Need specific job skills/training
- Currently a student and can't work full time

Comments (optional):

Circumstance

- Mental health disabilities that can interfere with work or access to housing
- Addiction disabilities that can interfere with work or access to housing
- Physical health issues that can interfere with work or access to housing
- Discrimination (due to mental health and addictions, race, gender, or another Code ground)

Comments (optional):

Location

- No jobs close to where I live
- Housing costs in my neighbourhood/community are too high/cannot find housing
- Not enough mental health and addiction services where I live

Comments (optional):

Employment/income

- Wages are too low
- Can't get enough work (underemployed)
- Can't get a job (unemployed)
- Can't work due to a disability
- Social assistance rates are too low

Comments (optional):

Other factors that have had a negative impact on your financial situation, or the financial situation of the person you know (please specify):

The next few questions are about expenses involving children.

Thinking about the time you, or the person you know, experienced poverty, were there any children living at home?

- Yes
- No

Does any child have a mental health disability?

- Yes
- No

Does any child have another disability?

- Yes
- No

Comments (optional):

Are you, or the person you know, able to feed the children properly?

- Yes
- No

Comments (optional):

Is there enough space in the home for the size of the family?

- Yes
- No

Comments (optional):

Does poverty deprive you or your family, or the person you know and their family, of any of the following:

- Access to childcare
- Social supports, e.g. therapy
- Sports/extra-curricular activities, recreation time
- Other (please specify):

Comments (optional):

The next two questions are focused on what a “good life” looks like to you, or the person you know.



Thinking about things like friends, family, nature, culture, belonging and community connection, can you describe what a “good life” means to you, or the person you know?

Can you tell us how the experience of poverty impacts your ability, or the ability of the person you know, to live a “good life”?

Discrimination in housing, mental health and addiction disabilities

It can be really hard to find housing, and many people are treated differently when trying because they are experiencing poverty, receive social assistance, have a mental health or addiction disability, or because they are Indigenous, Black, or identify with another racialized community, their gender, whether they are a single parent, have kids, or other [discriminatory grounds under Ontario's Human Rights Code](#).

Have you, or the person you know, experienced difficulty finding **supports for mental health and addiction disabilities**? If so, please describe the experiences.

Do you feel that the difficulty might have been related to discrimination based on a [Code ground](#)?

People who experience poverty, mental health and addiction disabilities, or other disabilities may face discrimination while trying to access other social services outside of housing and mental health and addictions supports.

Have you, or the person you know, ever experienced discrimination while trying to access **other services** like transit, health care, food or child care? If so, please describe the experiences.

The COVID-19 pandemic and public health restrictions are really hard for people who are experiencing poverty, homelessness or mental health and addiction disabilities.

Have you, or the person you know, ever experienced discrimination while trying to access **pandemic-related supports** like money from the government, testing/vaccines or rent relief? If so, please describe the experiences.

Please tell us about times when you had **difficulty getting housing, including while homeless**. Do you feel that that difficulty might have been related to **discrimination** based on a *Code* ground such as your mental health and/or addiction disability, or a combination of grounds like your race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed (religion), sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status, disability or your receipt of public assistance? If so, why?

Safety and security

The last two questions are about feeling safe, secure and free from violence. Please use the text boxes if you wish to provide more details.

Do you, or the person you know:

	Yes, feel safe and secure	No, don't feel safe and secure
Feel safe, secure and free from violence and harassment in the home?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feel safe and secure in the neighbourhood?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments (optional):

The survey is almost done. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about poverty or affordable, adequate and accessible housing and mental health and addiction disabilities?

Demographic information

Before finishing the survey, we would like to ask some demographic questions to understand the diversity of the people completing the survey. Responses to these questions will help the OHRC assess the unique challenges for people living in poverty who are also members of *Human Rights Code*-protected groups.

These questions are optional. Your responses will be kept confidential and not attributed to you in any way without your consent.

Which identity best describes you? (Choose all that apply)

- First Nations
- Métis
- Inuk/Inuit
- Black (African, Afro-Caribbean, African-Canadian descent)
- White (European descent)
- East Asian (Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Taiwanese descent)
- Southeast Asian (Filipino, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Thai, Indonesian, other Southeast Asian descent)
- South Asian (e.g. South Asian descent, East Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan, Indo-Caribbean, etc.)
- Middle Eastern (Arab, Persian, West Asian descent, e.g. Afghan, Egyptian, Iranian, Lebanese, Turkish, Kurdish, etc.)
- Latino (Latin American, Hispanic descent)
- Other _____

How long have you or your ancestors been in Canada? Are you:

- First generation Canadian – you were born in another country
- Second generation – one or both of your parents were born in another country
- Your family has been in Canada longer than that
- Unsure/prefer not to say

Do you identify as a member of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning or two-spirit (LGBTQ2sQ) community?

- Yes
- No

Which gender do you most identify with?

- Man
- Woman
- Transgender man
- Transgender woman
- Gender variant/non-conforming
- Not listed: _____
- Prefer not to say

Who do you live with? Select all that apply:

- I live alone
- With my parents and/or any siblings
- With my partner or spouse and children
- With my partner or spouse, but no children
- With my children, but no partner or spouse
- In a multigenerational household – there are grandparents and/or grandchildren in the household
- I live with roommates

What is your current working status? Select all that apply:

- Employed/self-employed full time (30 or more hours per week)
- Employed/self-employed part time (fewer than 30 hours per week)
- Caregiving responsibilities in the home, e.g. aging relatives, children
- Full-time student
- Homemaker
- Retired
- Currently looking for work
- Not working for medical/disability reasons
- Receiving Ontario Works
- Receiving Ontario Disability Support Program
- Other (please specify)

Which of the following categories best describes your total annual household income before taxes? If you experienced poverty in the past, please select your response based on your income at that time.

- Under \$15,000
- \$15,000 to less than \$25,000
- \$25,000 to less than \$50,000
- \$50,000 to less than \$75,000
- Over \$75,000
- Don't know/prefer not to say

What is your source of income? Select all that apply

- Ontario Works (OW)
- Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)
- Full-time employment
- Part-time employment
- Employment Insurance benefits (EI)
- Savings
- Parent/family member support
- No or little source of income

Finally, do you want an OHRC staff person to contact you if we have any follow-up questions about the information you provided or to learn more about your experiences?

As a reminder, this survey and any follow-up with OHRC is confidential. Providing your contact information is voluntary.

- Yes (Please enter email address and/or phone number)

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- No

We thank you for your time spent taking this survey. Your response has been recorded.

Visit the [OHRC's website](#) for more information about its [consultation](#) related to poverty, affordable, adequate and accessible housing and mental health and addiction disabilities.