

*Pathways into Homelessness: Understanding
How Both Individual and Structural Factors
Contribute to and Sustain Homelessness*

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Introduction

- Context: At Home/Chez Soi: federally funded, mixed methods RCT evaluating *Housing First* in five Canadian cities
- Aim: To examine how homeless individuals with mental illness experience and make sense of their pathways into homelessness

Methods

- Consumer baseline narrative interviews (n=219) were conducted with participants to better understand the lived experience of becoming and being homeless
- Qualitative analysis; constant comparative method leading to theme identification
- Theoretical grounding: social ecological perspective

Results

- Interaction between individual and structural factors: substance abuse, relationship conflicts, and mental health issues contributed to homelessness, in addition to transitions from foster care and institutional settings into the community
- Lack of affordable housing, poverty, stigma, racism and discrimination *entrenched* participants in unsafe communities, *created obstacles* to exiting homelessness, and *amplified* individual risk factors

Conclusions

- The findings underscore the need for policies and interventions to address structural factors that exacerbate individual risks and create barriers to existing homelessness