

# RESEARCH UPDATE

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# RESEARCH UPDATE JULY 2017

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Prepared by John Kolkman,  
Research Associate

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## IMMIGRATION AND DIVERSITY: POPULATION PROJECTIONS FOR CANADA AND ITS REGIONS, 2011 TO 2036, STATISTICS CANADA (JANUARY 2017)

REVIEWED BY ZAHRO HASSAN

Canada's population has long been made up of large percentage of immigrants. Since Confederation, the proportion of immigrants has not been below 13% of total population. This number continued to grow especially in the past 30 years, accounting for 20.7% of the total population in 2011. Statistics Canada has produced the report "Immigration and Diversity: Population Projections for Canada and its Regions, 2011 to 2036" to look at ethnocultural diversity trends over the next 25 years, from 2011 to 2036. The report examines key aspects of immigration "such as the number of new immigrants, their geographic distribution and their origin". The report also looks at how key aspects of immigration can affect the future ethnocultural diversity of different regions in Canada.

The starting point for the projection report is May 10, 2011, which is the reference date of the 2011 Canadian Census of Population and the National Household Survey (NHS). The base population was developed from the 2011 NHS data. Other variables were added to the base population including immigrant admission category (economic immigrants, family reunification, refugees, and other immigrants) for those who have been admitted since 1980. The results of the report are presented in two parts: An overall portrait and a brief analysis of the provinces and selection of regions (Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver and a region combining the three territories).

The results of the report are divided in 5 areas: population, languages, visible minority status, religion and regional analysis. Based on the projections the research used, immigrants in Canada would represent between 24.5% and 30% of Canada's total population in 2036, compared to 20.7% in 2011. This would be the highest proportions since 1871. More than half of Canada's immigrant population would be from Asia, accounting between 44.7% and 57.95%. Immigrant and second-generation individuals will make up almost half of Canada's population in 2036, between 44.2% and 49.7%. As a direct result, Canadians whose mother tongue is neither English nor French would make up between 26.1% and 30.6% in 2036 vs. 20% in 2011.

A higher immigrant population will result in an increase in the proportion of the population with visible minority status. It is important to keep in mind that in Canada, visible minority status is primarily used for application of the Employment Equity Act for the purpose of combating discrimination. According to the projection report, individuals with visible minority status will make up between 34.7% and 39.9% of the working-age Canadians compare to 19.65% in 2011. The biggest visible minority group will be South Asians followed by Chinese. The most rapidly growing groups will be the Arab, Filipino and West Asians groups.

We have seen profound changes in Canada's religious profile over the years. In 1981 Census, approximately 90% of Canadians self-identified as Christians. This number has decreased to 67% in 2011 (just 3 decades later). The biggest contributing factor is not the increase of immigrant populations from non-Christian countries, but rather the number of Canadians with no religious affiliation; from 7% to 24%. The number of people who report not having any religion will continue to increase and represent between 28.2% and 34.6% in 2036. Catholicism would still remain the religion with the largest number of followers between 29.2% and 32.8%, although it is down from 38.8% in 2011. The number of Canadians affiliated with non-Christian religions will almost double by 2036 accounting between 13% and 16% of total population compared to 9% in 2011. Islam, Hindu and Sikh faith will see the number of their followers grow more quickly due to them being over represented among immigrants, even if they represent a modest share of the total population.

As for regional analysis, in all provinces and territories, the number of immigrants will continue to increase between 2011 and 2036. The geographic distribution of immigrants will be similar to 2011. The three primary areas of residence for immigrants will remain to be Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. In Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary, and Abbotsford-mission, more than one in two people in 2036 would be an immigrant or the child of an immigrant.

The report is meant to provide a portrait of Canada's population in 2036; it is not meant to predict the future. Readers are cautioned to note that these are just projections and subject to "a number of sources of uncertainty". That being said, this report is helpful in giving us a snapshot of Canada's population makeup in 2036 while taking into account past trends.

*Publication Source:*

*Statistics Canada. (2017). Immigration and Diversity: Population Projections for Canada and its Regions 2011-2036. Retrieved from: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-551-x/91-551-x2017001-eng.pdf>*

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**ABOUT THE RESEARCH REVIEWER:**

*Zahro Hassan is a PhD student in educational policy at the University of Alberta with a research focus on educational barriers faced by immigrant youth and how these barriers can be removed. Zahro's hobbies include reading, travelling, playing old school video games, and volunteering with causes she is passionate about.*

Domestic violence continues to be regarded as a social taboo and consequently becomes overlooked in government policies and in everyday conversation. Moreover, this multifaceted issue faces challenges with providing safety for those involved in domestic violence situations and securing permanent housing. On October 11, 2016, Homeward Trust hosted the Domestic Violence and Housing Forum in which professionals from relevant sectors discussed the often neglected issues of domestic violence survivors and permanent housing. The forum was also used for better collaboration efforts with government, non-profit organisations, and housing providers.

In order to provide a larger grasp on domestic violence, a keynote address highlighting the benefits of physical proximity of landlords to sites of domestic abuse and presentations from Homeward Trust, Alberta Council of Women's Shelters, Alberta Residential Landlord Association, and Capital Region Housing presented attendees with information on Edmonton's current stance on housing options on women fleeing domestic abuse and how landlords can identify early signs of domestic violence. Afterward, group discussions regarding how effective agencies are with providing permanent housing options and how landlords and property managers can improve their responses to securing housing for women fleeing abuse were conducted to provide insight to the forum's overarching question: *How do we make sure survivors of domestic violence are connected to permanent housing?*

### **Systems and Agencies**

Given the breadth of information from the presentations, key findings from the small group discussion about systems and agencies that cater to women fleeing domestic abuse included: focusing on efficiency of stakeholders and housing agencies to eliminate barriers for women and families, suggestions for agencies to respond to unique needs, and increasing diversity awareness by providing training sessions to service providers to ensure sensitivity for Indigenous and minority groups.

Additionally, participants identified that current assessment tools used to obtain housing are outdated and inaccessible to some agencies. Therefore, suggestions were such that assessment tools need to be aligned with current research and also need to be available in more agencies to provide better accessibility to women in need. Finally, participants suggested that in order to avoid overlooking the root of domestic violence, inclusive trauma informed service provisions should be given to allow everyone in the family – victims, perpetrators, and children – access to the supports and resources they need to overcome trauma.

### **Landlords and Property Managers**

The key findings in the group discussion regarding how housing providers can improve their responses to securing housing for domestic abuse cases included increasing education and awareness to properly identify signs of domestic abuse and for the housing sector to develop clear guidelines to ensure an easier process to securing permanent housing. Moreover, the discussion identified that “approachability and sensitive are key” (p. 10) as a strong relationship between landlords and women is vital to securing permanent housing.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this forum was to provide a common place for multiple groups to add to the discourse on housing and domestic violence. As such, Zinyemba (2017) described 3 priority areas on what Homeward Trust intends to do to move forward:

1. Creating a network with key figures from shelters, housing, landlords and property managers in order to strengthen communication
2. Conduct more evidence-based research on how to increase second and third stage and how to adopt "Housing First principles for women fleeing domestic violence" (p. 2)
3. Conducting more public education sessions especially for landlords and property managers for greater understanding of domestic violence situations and the "unique needs of women fleeing domestic violence" (p.2)

In sum, the forum suggested that collaborative work and regular communication is beneficial for all the parties involved – women and children, housing providers, and key agencies and organisations. This would ensure a shared mindset and lead to creating more effective strategies to secure housing for women fleeing abuse.

*Publication Source:*

*Zinyemba, R. Homeward Trust Edmonton. (2017). Domestic violence and housing forum 2016: Final report. Retrieved from the Homeward Trust website: <http://homewardtrust.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Domestic-Violence-Forum-Report-1.pdf>*

#### **ABOUT THE RESEARCH REVIEWER:**



*Janine Isaac graduated from the University of Alberta in 2015 with a Bachelor of Science in Atmospheric Sciences. She is currently interested in research on social policy issues such as poverty, homelessness, and city housing.*

The rise in home prices and consumer goods, precarious labour and slow increase of real wages has led many groups to advocate for a living wage. A living wage refers to a wage that allows workers to have a decent quality of life, rather than just make ends meet. The goal of a living wage is to ensure workers have the ability to fully participate in social life, provide for their families and be able to take part in recreational, cultural and extra-curricular activities.

The living wage is determined by a complex calculation which factors in basic needs of a family, government transfers, deductions and taxes, childcare subsidies. Basic needs categorizes food, clothing and footwear, shelter, transportation, childcare and medical costs. Government transfers such as Canada Child care benefit, GST credit, are factored in as income. Deductions relating to federal and provincial taxes and deductions are also factored in.

Advocates such as the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives have stated that major cities across Canada should drastically increase wages and transition from a minimum wage system to a livable wage system. In Metro Vancouver, child poverty, households who were classified as working poor is above the national average, this is largely attributed to households working precarious jobs with hourly wages close to minimum wage. As a result the Centre of Policy Alternatives has advocated the living wage in metro Vancouver for 2017 should be \$20.62 per hour.

A living wage is a powerful social and economic tool which has positive societal impacts. Children are negatively impacted when they are raised in a lower income environment. Children from low income families are less likely to do well in school resulting in limited careers choices in the future. Eventually, low income children are more likely to end up in low income jobs resulting in a cycle of poverty and economic insecurity. In addition, children living in a low income environment are faced with a higher risk of slipping into poverty. A living wage is a powerful tool to help reduce the risk of childhood poverty. Ultimately, a living wage allows children to live a stable life where they have the potential to participate in extra-curricular opportunities and build their social capital later in life.

The concept of living wage has many potential benefits to the public and private sector. However, some employers are adverse to implementing a living wage policy. Implementing a living wage is often very difficult because employers and governments are hesitant to drastically increase wages. Many public sector jobs already pay a living wage to their employees. However, some positions such as food vendors, janitorial staff and contracted labour may not be making a living wage. This is a big issue across the public sector. Despite this trend, 7 municipalities in British Columbia have adopted a living wage policy for all staff and contractors. It is essential that public sector organizations ensure all employees are given a living wage.

The living wage practice has yet to be adopted by certain industries of the private sector. The retail and service sector had often relied in low labour costs. They have been hesitant to adopt a living wage policy because cost of labour increase drastically. However, it has been argued that a living wage results in reduced absenteeism, staff turnover, increased productivity and improved customer satisfaction<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Reich, M., Hall, P., & Jacobs, K. (2005). Living wage policies at the San Francisco airport: Impacts on workers and businesses. *Industrial Relations: A Journal of Economy and Society*, 44(1), 106-138.



A living wage is a novel concept attempts to prescribe an hourly wage for a citizen in a city that factors in their basic needs and the social wellbeing. As labour markets shift and employment trends change it is paramount that policy makers work with employers to help ensure every worker has the ability to participate in recreational, cultural and extra-curricular activities.

*Publication Source:*

*Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. (2017). Working for a Living Wage 2017 Update:*

[https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/BC%20Office/2017/04/ccpa\\_bc\\_living\\_wage\\_%20update%202017%20FINAL%20.pdf](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/BC%20Office/2017/04/ccpa_bc_living_wage_%20update%202017%20FINAL%20.pdf)

#### **ABOUT THE RESEARCH REVIEWER:**

*Navroop Tehara is passionate about community development and evidence-based decision-making. He is working as a policy analyst with the province. Navroop is new to Edmonton and hopes to get a better understanding of urban issues in Edmonton.*

## TWO PERSPECTIVES ON HOUSING AFFORDABILITY IN CANADA

REVIEWED BY MAXWELL HARRISON

There is an ongoing affordability crisis in Canada's largest housing markets. This trend is not restricted to Toronto and Vancouver. We see it playing out across Canada's major metropolitan centers including Edmonton, Calgary, Montreal and Ottawa-Gatineau. These skyrocketing property values work to erode the purchasing power of middle income earners and threaten the housing security of low income residents. The staggering pace of growth in property values in these markets is a relatively recent phenomenon.

As a point of reference, in the Frontier Centre's report 'Canada's Middle-Income Housing Affordability Crisis', it outlines that for the 35 year period following 1971, Canadian "house prices increased at approximately the same rate as household incomes in the largest metropolitan areas." Since the early 2000s, however, the link between these two metrics has come undone. The report shows how since 2004, the six largest metropolitan areas saw the average price of housing rise "176 per cent from 2000 to 2015, or 3.3 times the 54 per cent average increase in household income." Toronto and Vancouver experienced the most dramatic rates of growth. Vancouver's housing price-to-income multiple (median house price divided by median household income) rose from 4.7 in 2000 to 9.6 by 2015; and Toronto grew from 6.0 to reach 9.6 over the same period.

Conversely, Alberta's strong economic growth over the past decade has been a boon for most Albertans. The rapid growth in wages has partially offset the disparity observed in the Toronto and Vancouver housing markets. Yet even in Edmonton, residents witnessed an increase from 2.0 in 2000 to 3.5 by 2015.

So what's behind this growth? Well, according to the Frontier Centre, the prime culprit is the application of restrictive land use regulations. These rules are termed urban containment policies, and are "characterized by severe restrictions or even prohibitions on greenfield land." Prohibitions limiting development on the peripheries of major urban centers work to artificially cap the supply of land. As a result, construction of new housing units has fallen far short of meeting consumer demand. Urban containment policies act to restrict the supply of homes creating the frenzied market conditions which led us to this point.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' (CCPA) report titled, "Getting Serious About Affordable Housing: Towards a Plan for Metro Vancouver" provides another perspective on the potential source of this crisis (report focuses on Vancouver). CCPA proposes that Vancouver's affordability challenges are the result of a combination of factors. It attributes the crisis to a mix of population pressures, speculative investment, low interests rates, and intergenerational wealth transfers among Vancouver's property owning families.

The population of Vancouver now stands at 2.5 million. The city added approximately 420,000 new residents between 2001 and 2015. The bulk of these new arrivals are the product of international migration rather than internal migration. The resulting population growth coincided with an unprecedented inflow of foreign capital into Vancouver's housing market. Foreign investors have been parking their money in Vancouver's property market as a safe haven. Prospective home buyers, both native and foreign, have also taken advantage of today's low mortgage interest rates. These twin pressures have coalesced to create a surge in demand.

In 2010, 34 percent of households in Metro Vancouver were renting. Among these renters, 15 percent were situated in social housing (units owned by government, non-profits, or run as a cooperative). And although the affordability crisis has a direct impact on home buyers, it creates a knock-on effect in the rental market. High property values create barriers to middle income entrants looking to exit the rental market. As a result, rental units become scarcer driving up the rents for low income residents. This can end up squeezing vulnerable populations out of the market.

So what can be done? Well, both reports agree that there is an affordability crisis. They even manage to find some common ground on the cause. Both organizations, however, provide very different recommendations on how to solve the problem.

The Frontier Centre advocates for rethinking the restrictive land use policies that have come into force since the 1970s. The Canada Centre for Policy Alternatives offers a fuller pallet of policy prescriptions. Its report recommends measures aimed at curbing absentee ownership and speculative investment, mandating inclusionary zoning (zoning quotas for affordable housing units), enhancing public funding for affordable housing, and taking a progressive approach to property taxation.

There is a robust body of research that demonstrate the potential benefits to low income populations when a city repeals its archaic, overly restrictive zoning policies. Onerous limitations on the development of land only served to stymie the market's supply response to the dramatic growth in property prices. By relaxing zoning controls, developers will be able to construct new units to provide middle and low income residents some financial relief. It seems unlikely this measure alone would solve the affordability crisis, especially for cities constrained by geography like Vancouver. Additional measures aimed at limiting speculative foreign investment, especially for high end properties, may also be needed to control the demand-side pressures.

*Publication Sources:*

*Frontier Centre for Public Policy. (2016). Canada's Middle-Income Housing Affordability Crisis. Retrieved from: <https://fcpp.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Cox-He-Middle-Income-Housing-Crisis.pdf>*

*Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. (2016). Getting Serious About Affordable Housing: A Plan for Metro Vancouver. Retrieved from: <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/BC%20Office/2016/05/CCPA-BC-Affordable-Housing.pdf>*

**ABOUT THE RESEARCH REVIEWER:**



*Maxwell Harrison is a lifelong resident of the Edmonton area. He attended the University of Alberta where he received his Bachelors of Science. Mr. Harrison has worked as a private consultant, with the Public Service, and as an environmental researcher. Maxwell is currently employed as an energy policy analyst. He is actively interested in social issues, politics and the overall civic life of his community.*

## A SURVEY OF THE LIVING WAGE MOVEMENT IN CANADA: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES

REVIEWED BY ERIC VAN AERDE

This research paper, published in *Interface: a journal for and about social movements*, sets out to examine the living wage movement in North America, by comparing and contrasting the living wage movements in the United States and Canada. It looks at “the variety of Canadian living wage movements, origins, organization, objectives, tactics, achievements and ongoing challenges”, while highlighting weaknesses in the Canadian living wage movement’s relative inability to create a groundswell of grassroots mobilization compared to the United States.

The authors examine the differences between the living wage campaigns in the United States and Canada. While there is a robust collection of literature on living wage movements in the United States, the Canadian movement does not have a substantive body of academic literature. The paper is grounded in existing reviews of the academic literature, as well as secondary literature from by local living wage campaigns and various advocacy groups.

Evans and Fanelli begin by examining the rise of the living wage movement in the United States. While the United States and Canada share similar macroeconomics, the U.S. living wage movement focused on economic justice along anti-racist and feminist narratives, along with other intersectional perspectives that have created a broad national coalition tackling extreme social and economic inequalities. This broad coalition is able to maintain sustain political pressure on states and cities in the US to adopt living wages policies. The authors also highlight ability of more mobilized local campaigns to pressure cities to implement living wage laws, which Canadian cities do not have the ability to do, as labour legislation falls under provincial jurisdiction.

This is contrasted with the slower adoption of the living wage movement in Canada. The social safety net in Canada, compared to the United States, has reduced the more extreme inequalities that led to the American living wage movement. While American groups have focused more on sustained grassroots political pressure for direct political action on municipalities, Canadian groups have focused more on technical research, advocacy, and organizational lobbying to educate and influence employers, provincial governments, and the public. Since Canadian cities do not have the ability to set minimum or living wage laws, the grassroots techniques that have proven successful in the United States are less effective at bringing action into implementation of living wage policies for the broader public. The article does note that limited success has come in the form of local government’s committing to paying their own workers a living wage, or ensuring that contractors working with the city also pay their workers a minimum wage.

The authors conclude that legal, political and ideological factors have ultimately shaped the form of living wage campaigns in the United States and Canada, and suggest the Canadian focus on voluntary adoption of living wage requirements, compared to the US focus on formal legislative changes, has been key in the varying successes of the two movements. However, Evans and Fanelli acknowledge that the Canadian living wage movement is still relatively new, and that there is still opportunity for broader collective mobilization to bring about legislative changes in favour of living wage laws, and that future movement will be grounded in the essential issues of workplace democracy and social justice.

The article provides a good overview of the history of the living and minimum wage movements in the United States and Canada, and contrasts the differences between the two. However, while the authors are straight forward in providing a diagnosis for what has led to less success in Canada for the living wage movement, they are short on prescriptive paths forward. However, the paper is indented to be a survey of the movements themselves, and in this regard, Evans and Fanelli succeed.

*Publication Source:*

*Interface: a journal for and about social movements. (2016). A Survey of the Living Wage Movement in Canada: Retrieved from: <http://www.interfacejournal.net/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Issue-8-1-Evans-and-Fanelli.pdf>*

**ABOUT THE RESEARCH REVIEWER:**

*Eric Van Aerde is a Policy Analyst for the Government of Alberta. He has a background in qualitative and quantitative analysis and enjoys following global policy issues. Eric's hobbies include creating and recording music.*

## DISMANTLING THE WELFARE WALL FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

REVIEWED BY DEBYANI SARKER

In this report, the author intends to discuss the issue of 'welfare wall,' and its relevance to people with disabilities, where the term 'welfare wall' refers to any group of factors that causes people to be trapped in social assistance programs and makes it hard for them to abandon these sources of income support.

The report highlights three main categories of programs in the disability income system:

- i) **Compensation programs**, whose main purpose is to provide compensation for accident or injury. The main program in this category is the provincial/territorial Workers' Compensation, funded by employers, which compensates for work-related injuries or ill-health. The drawback is that many workers get pressurized to return to work, which leads to further deterioration in their health and income level and stability.
- ii) **Social insurances**, which replace lost earnings. Funded by employers and from payments deducted from employees' payroll, these programs only support the workers who have made the necessary contributions. The two main programs within this category are the Employment Insurance, which covers short-term absences from work due to temporary illness, and the Canada/Quebec Pension Plan, which provides financial support during critical and sustained disabilities.
- iii) **Social assistance/welfare**, which provides income support to individuals with few or no other means of financial support. Administered by different departments in 13 provinces and territories, the amount of aid received depends on factors such as household assets, household income, and household needs.

Many Canadians with disabilities, however, are unable to qualify for most of the disability-related programs because they need to be employed, or the programs are just provided as a workplace advantage. This causes them to turn to social assistance/welfare to make ends meet, and eventually they become unable to climb the 'welfare wall' due to their increasing dependence on it.

One of the underlying causes of welfare dependence is that most recipients will financially hurt if they choose to leave the program and work instead. In a study conducted by the Caledon Institute of Social Policy in Ontario in 1993, it was found that the recipients tend to keep only a minor portion of their disposable income- i.e. the total income from welfare, work, child benefits and tax credits, minus payroll and federal/provincial taxes. This income only increased by 25%, for instance, for single welfare recipients who increased their work earnings by 1200%. Further losses occur due to taxpaying, loss of government benefits, and work-related expenses. The Working Income Tax Benefit (WITB) generally is designed to incentivize people to find employment and stick to it so that they do not need to be on welfare again. However, the cut-off point for WITB is so low that there remains the need to enhance this program. The welfare amount is also inadequate, falling well below the After-Tax Low Income Cut-Offs (LICO) in all provinces, confirming that it falls below poverty levels.

The report suggests that a new disability income program, modelled on the federal Guaranteed Income Supplement, is expected to be more adequate than the current welfare program. Designed as an income-tested benefit, it would cover the entire country, be transferrable between jurisdictions, and would not be taxed. Another effective measure would be to provide access to disability supports, which will offset any additional costs welfare recipients might have in purchasing them on their own.

The government offsets many disability-related expenses through the Disability Tax Credit, which only applicants with critical and sustained disabilities can qualify for. One limitation is that persons with mental impairment might face eligibility issues. Similar programs include Ontario Extended Health Benefit and the Transitional Benefit, which come into play when persons with high health costs are no longer eligible for the Ontario Disability Support Program as their income gets too high. The

Extended Health Benefit can help to deal with expensive prescription drugs, which would otherwise cause people to rely even more heavily on welfare. A new drug benefit in the April 2017 Ontario Budget was announced which will cover the cost of prescription medications for Ontarians aged 24 and under.

Overall, the paper does an impressive job of highlighting the root causes of the 'welfare wall,' which will enable federal, provincial and territorial governments to effectively implement potential solutions to improve the lifestyle and financial situations of persons with disabilities. Furthermore, the government should address their current and future needs by monitoring trends in their working conditions and disposable income. In addition, any disability-related program, other than welfare, could be made more accessible to applicants by placing more lenient eligibility criteria for them. Many non-profit organizations can also contribute by providing disability supports at little or no cost, and help persons with disabilities find suitable jobs. These strategies will ensure they do not depend strictly on welfare, and thereby, succeed in demolishing the 'welfare wall.'

*Publication source: Caledon Institute of Social Policy. (2017). Dismantling the Welfare Wall for Persons with Disabilities. Retrieved from: <http://www.caledoninst.org/Publications/PDF/1112ENG.pdf>*

#### **ABOUT THE RESEARCH REVIEWER:**

*Debanyi Sarker is a student at the University of Alberta. Her skills and interests include editing, critical analysis and working with the statistical software SPSS.*

## CONTROLLING HOMELESS PEOPLE? POWER, INTERVENTIONISM AND LEGITIMACY

REVIEWED BY SHION AONUMA

In this report, Watts et al., (2017) explore various examples from UK's homelessness practice to evaluate the validity of the several modes of power used to change the behavior of people experiencing homelessness (p. 3). The intent of this paper is to assess the legitimacy of interventions that intend to change the behavior of those experiencing homelessness and provide a normative framework to assess quality.

With regards to changing the individual's behavior, the three different kinds of overt interventionism are: force, coercion, and influence. "Force" and "coercion" fall in the category of hard measures as it criminalizes people that are "poor and vulnerable" (Watts et al., 2017, p. 1). Whereas, "influence" falls in the category of soft measures as it "seek to persuade people to change their lifestyles" (Watts et al., 2017, p. 1). On the other hand, non-interventionist approach does not involve any overt attempt to change one's behavior, rather, perpetuates it.

Watts et al., (2017) explore four legitimacy standards: legitimate purpose; voluntary response; effects on character; effectiveness, proportionality and balance. (1) It is important to identify what counts as a "legitimate purpose in the exercise of power" (Watts et al., p. 4) when supporting high-risk individuals. (2) "Voluntary response" discusses how individuals receive services, and whether they are able to act autonomously to improve their current circumstances by accessing services that are available to them. (3) "Effects on character" applies to individuals involved in interactions, such as those "engaged in making an offer, persuading, or threatening force and those who are responding to offers, arguments or threats" (Watts et al., p. 8). When given a choice, to voluntarily access services, it empowers the individual to make the right choice for themselves to change their lifestyle rather than being coerced into doing so which does not have a strong correlation to changing behavior in the long-term. (4) Watts et al., (2017) propose a three-pronged approach to gauge whether an initiative is meeting its moral obligations: (a) is it effective? (b) is it proportionate? (c) does it have negative consequences and does it allow an appropriate balance? Individual autonomy must always be perceived to have more weight than the intended outcome (e.g.: reducing homelessness in a community to curtail used needles) so the organizations' actions do not infringe upon individuals' rights (Watts et al., p. 10).

There are several limitations to this article. First, there are points where the authors generalize their argument in stating that faith based organizations are prone to "mission drift" at the cross roads of affiliation to secular governments, or that they are the enabling organizations that do not address the root cause of homelessness (i.e. providing food or shelter only). Watts et al., (2017) also state that some service providers have drifted away from their organizational values and what they strive to achieve as an organization; they have become "simply a 'tool' or 'arm' of government" (p.9). In Alberta, organizations are funded by the government and thus have to follow certain requirements and criteria (funding guidelines) when implementing programs. Service providers follow their own organizational mandates and values to achieve a common mission by collaborating with others. This is what makes each organizations unique, with distinctive mandates, allowing them to serve a diverse population without duplicating services within the support ecosystem. No system is perfect, therefore gaps will always exist, but the system is designed to accommodate for the identification of these gaps, and for new programs to enter the ecosystem.

Finally, the framework provided by the authors are too theoretical and lack case studies where the framework has been applied and tested with clear outcomes. It delves too deep into the philosophical implications of having the correct motivator to guide people/organizations, rather than tangible steps that could have been taken.



*Publication Source:*

Watts, B., Fitzpatrick, S., and Johnsen, S. (2017). *Controlling homeless people? Power, interventionism and legitimacy*. Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-social-policy/article/controlling-homeless-people-power-interventionism-and-legitimacy/0794C172577CAA13DFEF97421A01858E/core-reader>

**ABOUT THE RESEARCH REVIEWER:**

*Shion Aonuma is employed at Bissell Centre as an Employment Support Worker. Shion previously worked for the Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver and as a Research Assistant for Simon Fraser University's Intergroup Relations and Social Justice Lab.*

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“Through our research, analysis, and engagement, we hope to create a community in which all people are full and valued participants.”

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—The Edmonton Social Planning Council

## ABOUT ESPC

The ESPC is an independent, non-profit, charitable organization. Our focus is social research, particularly in the areas of low income and poverty.

We are dedicated to encouraging the adoption of equitable social policy, supporting the work of other organizations who are striving to improve the lives of Edmontonians, and educating the public regarding the social issues that impact them on a daily basis.

## OUR STAFF:

**Susan Morrissey**, Executive Director

**Heather Curtis**, Research Coordinator

**John Kolkman**, Research Associate

**Maxwell Jenkins**, Summer Research Assistant

**Stephanie Haar**, Executive Assistant

## THE RESEARCH UPDATE:

The Edmonton Social Planning Council, in collaboration with our volunteers, strive to provide stakeholders and community members with up-to-date reviews on recently published social research reports.

Interested in volunteering? Email [johnk@edmontonsocialplanning.ca](mailto:johnk@edmontonsocialplanning.ca)