

## **The longer you're homeless, the sicker you get: survey**

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### **CBC News**

A survey of homeless people in Halifax suggests many have at least three chronic illnesses and the longer they're on the street the worse they get.

Community Action on Homelessness, a group made up of various health, social and advocacy organizations, released data from the Halifax Street Health Report on Tuesday.

Researchers surveyed 158 people who were living on the street in January, asking 242 questions relating to physical and mental health, covering a range of issues from allergies to nutrition.

About 43 per cent of the people surveyed said they had arthritis, while 37 per cent reported mood disorders such as depression or bipolarism.

"We do know that if you've been homeless for at least a year, you probably have three chronic health conditions. And the longer you're homeless, the more your chronic health conditions are going to grow," said Jean Hughes, a professor at the Dalhousie School of Nursing who worked on the report.

The numbers don't surprise Patti Melanson, with the Mobile Outreach Street Health Program, but she believes the data will be useful.

"A lot of that's been known. But what that does is give us a baseline to then work from," said Melanson, whose group plans to start running at the end of May to serve many of those surveyed.

A complete report is expected by June.

According to the Community Action on Homelessness, there were more than 1,000 people without a home in the Halifax Regional Municipality last year. Shelters hosted 1,252 people.

Community Services Minister Chris d'Entremont said he hasn't seen the group's data, but he's promising millions of dollars for affordable housing soon.

"Whether they be looking for housing, whether they need renovations to existing facilities, we'll work with shelters around the province to provide them with funding in order to stay open," he said.