



SHS CONSULTING
POLICY • RESEARCH • COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

1

Assessing the Societal Outcomes of Housing in Canada: Avenues for Future Research

National Housing Research Committee

May 5, 2009

Overview



2

- Purpose of Research
- Approach
- Key Findings
- Issues of Methodology
- Conclusions

Purpose of Research



3

- Assist CMHC in identifying the wider societal benefits of housing by examining existing research on linkages between housing and education, skills development and employment
- Assess strength of conclusions in existing research
- Identify research gaps, weaknesses

Purpose of Research (Cont.)



4

- Study aimed at addressing four key questions:
- What is current conceptual thinking on how housing affects societal outcomes related to education, skills development and employment - how can these be measured and what challenges exist?
- What perspectives exist regarding vulnerable groups with distinct housing needs?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the various methodological approaches used to identify, quantify and attribute these outcomes?
- What future research opportunities could be feasible and most promising?

Approach



5

- Peer Review Committee established
- Existing research papers (Canadian and international) identified through internet search, CMHC National Resource Centre, CMHC staff, Peer Review Committee
- Findings and conclusions of each identified and summarized
- Methodologies used to arrive at findings and conclusions identified and assessed
- Draft report reviewed by CMHC staff, Peer Review Committee
- Final report and Research Highlight completed

Key Findings



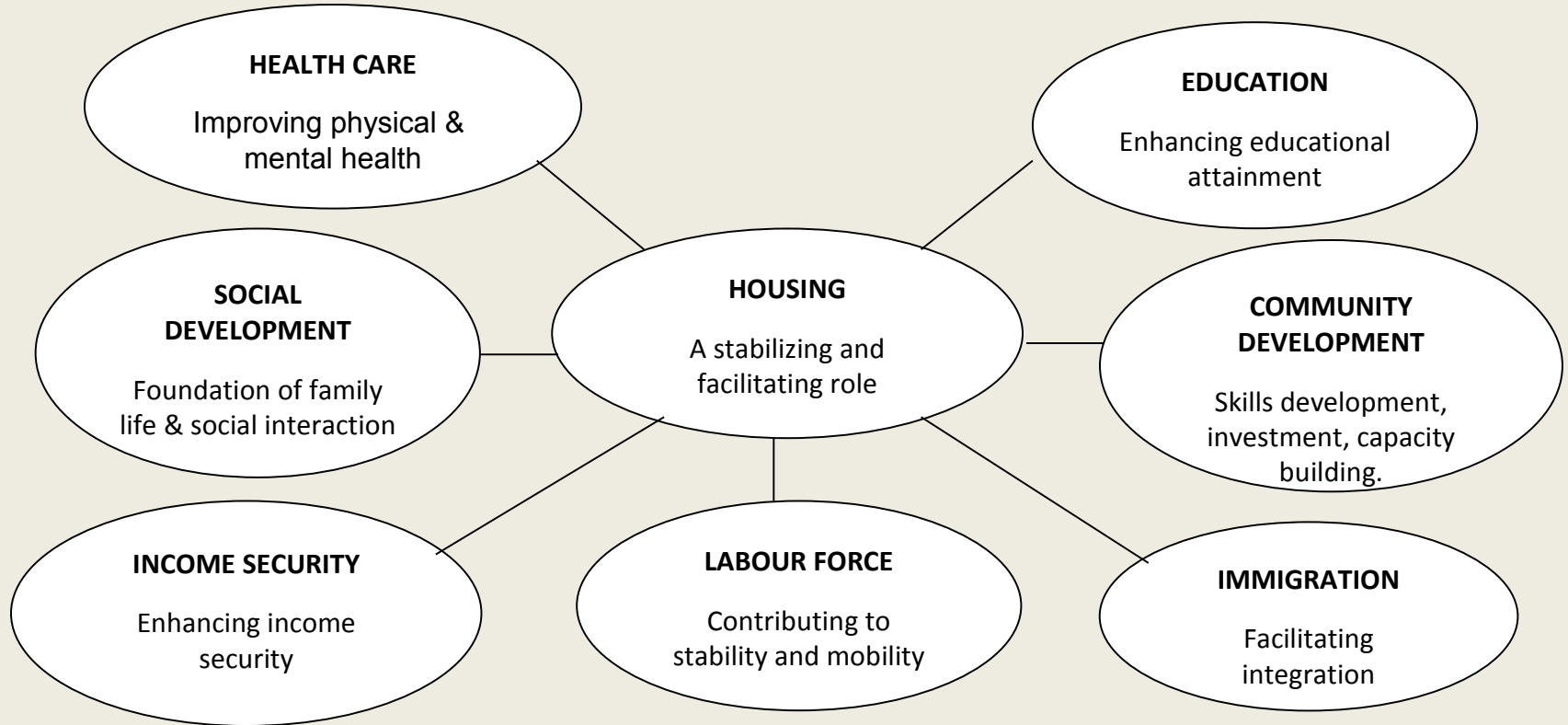
6

- More than 100 research papers identified and reviewed
- A. Jackson (Home Truths: Why the Housing System Matters to All Canadians, 2004) wrote: *“the housing system shapes individual well-being and a broad range of social outcomes because it is closely tied to the qualities of community and social space.”*

Key Findings (Cont.)



- Carter and Polevychok illustrated the central role housing plays in many aspects of a person's life:



Key Findings (Cont.)



8

- Societal benefits of housing linked to both individual dwellings and to characteristics of neighbourhood
- “geographies of opportunity” can impact societal benefits for residents, since markets and institutions not equally distributed
- Households often confined to certain areas due to socio-economic status; therefore available opportunities may be limited by geography

Findings (Cont.)

9

- Although generally lacking in rigour, existing research provides some evidence that housing has impacts on education, skills development and employment.
- **Factors Related to Educational Outcomes**
- Stable housing gives rise to improved educational performance
- Some evidence of association between tenure and education – generally higher educational performance among homeowners than tenants, although hours of parental time spent studying with children may be of greater influence
- Overcrowding, noise levels and other poor housing conditions negatively affect educational performance
- Some evidence that economic performance is linked to socio-economic status of neighbourhood; however, research not conclusive

Findings (Cont.)



10

- **Factors Related to Skills Development and Employment**
- Some housing programs discourage skills development because rents are increased as earnings rise
- Positive outcomes from Jobs-Plus program in US – increased earnings from skills development largely kept
- Women in subsidized housing more likely to benefit from skills development programs than men
- “spatial mismatch” between location of housing and jobs has direct impact on success in securing employment

Findings (Cont.)

11

- Housing stability positively affects skills development and employment through increased sense of security
- Socio-economic characteristics of neighbourhood have little influence on ability/motivation to find jobs
- Family differences may play equal or greater role
- Tenure not found to have significant effect on employment, being indicative of employment status rather than causative

Findings (Cont.)



12

- **Housing and Vulnerable Groups**
- Main finding is simply a lack of research on this subject
- Considerable research documenting poor housing conditions/affordability challenges among persons with disabilities, lone parent families, persons with mental health challenges, Aboriginal households, seniors, youth, etc., but very little research conducted on impact of housing on their education performance, skills development or employment
- A major gap in housing research (both Canadian and international)

Issues of Methodology



13

- Generally a lack of rigorous research to clearly establish linkages
- Most research of informal nature, such as literature reviews, anecdotal information
- Few studies used statistical or formal analytical techniques
- In some cases where empirical methods used, age of data proved problematic
- Lack of reliable, timely data represents key challenge to meaningful research on this subject

Issues of Methodology (Cont.)



14

- Most striking knowledge gaps are in data and information regarding impact of linkages between housing and education, skills development and employment among vulnerable groups
- MTO and HOPE VI studies in US provided highly reliable findings due to use of randomized control studies
- Other successful approaches included non-experimental, empirical study methodologies, such as longitudinal and cross-sectional
- Others have involved mixed-method research, blending literature review with empirical analysis

Conclusions



15

- Literature is fairly consistent in finding that housing itself is not the root cause of disadvantage; rather, it is only one element in set of interrelated factors
- Improvements in housing alone insufficient to result in significant improvements in non-housing outcomes
- Nevertheless, sufficient body of research to demonstrate that housing does have many important linkages to education, skills development and employment – the greater the degree of affordability, security of tenure, choice and quality of accommodation, the greater the positive impact on educational performance, skills development and employment success
- Greater emphasis on experimental, longitudinal and mixed-method models of study needed in future research on subject
- More must be done to encourage collection of required data

Conclusions (Cont.)



16

- Potential vehicles for gathering relevant data could include:
 - National Survey of Children and Youth
 - Survey of Labour Income Dynamics
 - Longitudinal Administrative Database
 - Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada
 - Public use micro-data files from Statistics Canada
- More consideration should be given to use of indicators in completing data collection and research

Questions?



17



- Ed Starr
 - 905 763 7555, ext 107
 - estarr@shs-inc.ca