HOME TAKEOVER COMMUNITY PARTNER SURVEY RESULTS SUMMARY – NOVEMBER 2021

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BACKGROUND

A home takeover happens when someone enters a home and refuses to leave. They can include financial, physical, or emotional abuse.[1] The issue of home takeovers was identified by Grey County Housing staff during a community engagement meeting at the Alpha Family Resource Centre in Owen Sound in September 2021. Staff continue to observe and address the issue of home takeovers in rent-geared-to-income (RGI) neighbourhoods and are seeing the significant impacts it is having for tenants, families, individuals taking over the unit(s) and the neighbourhood.

This particular issue is complex with many intersecting factors, and intervention requires time, referrals and response from a number of organizations. Through consultation with Public Health staff, an opportunity was identified to engage with community stakeholders and have a conversation about how to address the issue collaboratively.

PURPOSE

The issue of home takeovers has not been studied or quantified at the local level in Owen Sound, Ontario. In the absence of formalized local knowledge about home takeovers, a survey was developed for distribution to community partners in order to better understand awareness of the issue, and existing response strategies. The results would help guide conversation at the first Home Takeover meeting with community partners on November 22, 2021. Ultimately, the results will also help to inform the development of a multi-stakeholder Home Takeover Response Framework, as part of a pilot project specifically aimed at supporting low-income tenants living in rent-geared-to-income (social) housing in Owen Sound.

METHOD & RESPONSE

The survey was distributed by email to community partners from a variety of sectors on November 17, 2021 as part of the invitation to the first community stakeholder meeting and remained open until November 19, 2021. One reminder was sent over the course of the survey period. The invitation was sent to a total of 32 people and 22 responded (69%). A breakdown of respondents by sector can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: In which sector are you employed?

Answer Choices	Responses
Public Safety (Law enforcement, By-Law, Fire)	5
Healthcare (Primary Care, Hospital, Public Health)	3
Human Services (Housing, Social Services)	9
Community-based or non-profit organization	3
Other (please specify)	2
Total	22

*Other (please specify): *peer support* (n=2)

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[1] Crime Prevention Ottawa.

RESULTS

FAMILIARITY WITH TERM "HOME TAKEOVER"

Just over half (n=13, 59%) of respondents indicated that they had heard of the term home takeover prior to hearing about the pilot project, just less than half (n=9, 41%) had not.

HOME TAKEOVER ENCOUNTERS IN PAST 12 MONTHS

Only two respondents had <u>not</u> encountered a home takeover in their work within the last 12 months. All other respondents had encountered at least one, with most having experienced 2-5, and some more than 5.
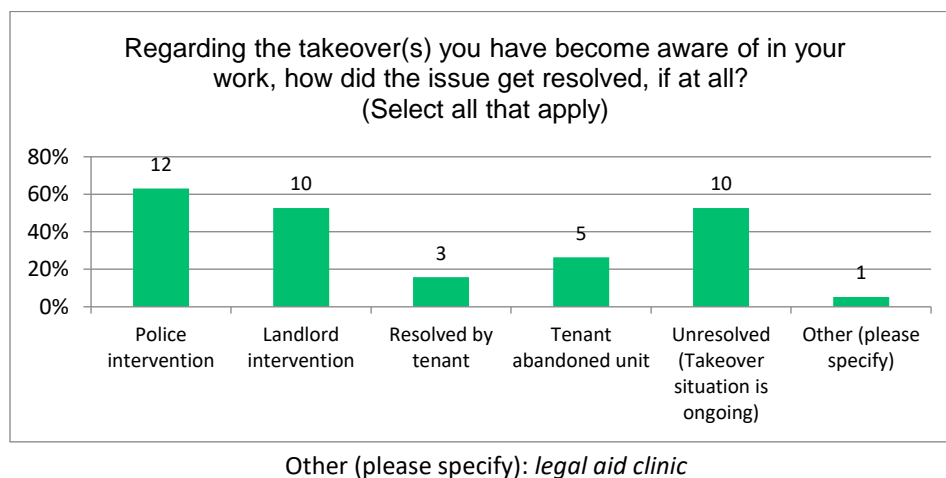
Table 2: In the past 12 months, have you encountered a home takeover in your work?

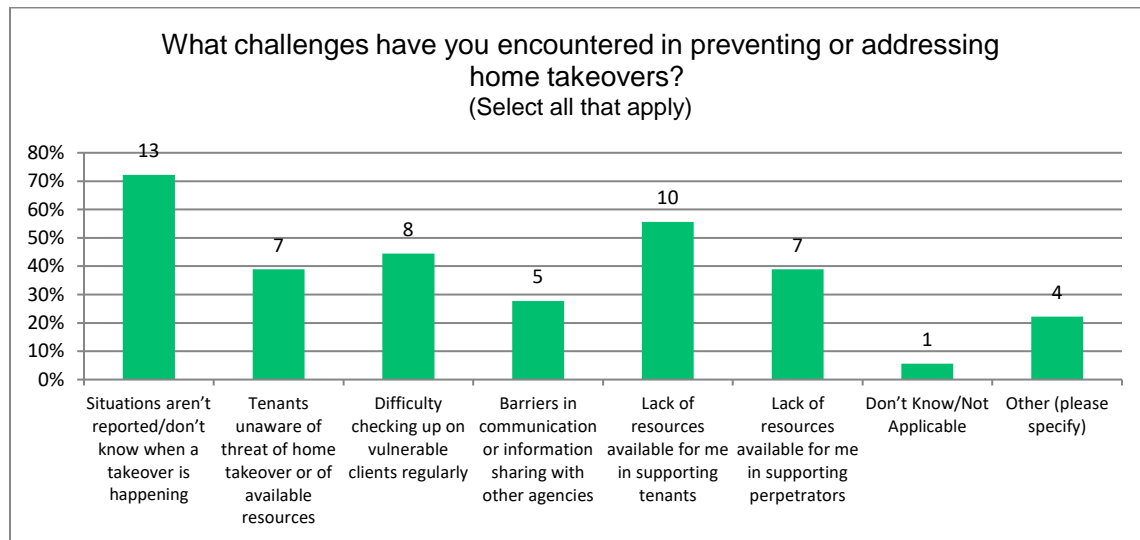| Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes, one	24%	5
Yes, between two and five	48%	10
Yes, more than five	19%	4
No	10%	2
	Answered	**21**

RESOLUTION OF HOME TAKEOVERS

Respondents were asked to indicate how, if at all, the takeovers they have become aware of were resolved. The most common responses were: *police intervention* (n=12) and *landlord intervention* (n=10). A smaller number were resolved when the *tenant abandoned the unit* (n=5) and even fewer were *resolved by the tenant* (n=3). One also indicated resolution by the *legal aid clinic*. Ten indicated that the takeover situation is unresolved.

Table 3: Resolution of home takeovers that respondents have become aware of in their work.

Regarding the takeover(s) you have become aware of in your work, how did the issue get resolved, if at all? (Select all that apply)

Other (please specify): *legal aid clinic*

Respondents were asked to indicate the challenges they have encountered in preventing or addressing home takeovers. The most common challenge was that the *situations aren't reported or that they don't know when a takeover is happening.* The next most common challenge was the *lack of resources available for service providers in supporting tenants*, followed by *difficulty in checking up on vulnerable clients regularly; tenants unaware of the threat of home takeover or available resources*; and, *lack of resources available for service providers in supporting perpetrators*. The least most common challenge was *barriers in communication or information sharing with other agencies*.

Other (please specify):

- *Housing crisis effectively people couch surf and many times return over and over to vulnerable peoples' home without anyone knowing. Also many tenants are in financial distress so allow others in to the home to help them out and then becomes violent/threatening takeover situation.*
- *Lack of housing.*
- *Home takeovers are also closely aligned with people sheltering too many individuals in their apartment, voluntarily. This is often reciprocated behavior for support that was received by the tenant when they required shelter. This also leads to the same type of damages and complaints from landlords that ultimately lead to someone losing their secure housing. The core housing need is so extreme, people are continually faced with "you can't stay here" scenarios that have social and emotional repercussions of their own. Often, there is nowhere else to go and that is where the system needs to step in to create responses to this complex problem.*
- *Client doesn't believe they are being taken advantage of.*

OTHER COMMENTS AND INFORMATION

Respondents were provided with an opportunity to share other information that they felt the group should be aware of from the project outset. Five respondents provided comments which are listed below:

- *The pandemic was a perfect storm for home takeovers, especially without direct interaction with some clients/general public. Phone calls, emails and text messages are not ideal with vulnerable populations, especially those who struggle with navigating the system.*
- *The complete lack of available housing is in my opinion a driving force for home takeovers in our community. There is NOWHERE for people to go. Emergency shelter provisions per person are exhausted quickly leaving nowhere for homeless to sleep.*
- *Support agencies must be able to communicate for the safety and security of their clients.*
- *The critical housing shortage is certainly a main contributing factor in home takeovers. The desperation of the perpetrators is often seen by break and enters when the tenant is temporarily away. Violence and assault is now becoming more of the norm due to the opioid crises. As this all plays out, community members are afraid and neighborhoods are becoming unsafe to reside and recreate.*
- *How effectively can we deal with home take overs and the housing crisis in the mentally ill and addiction clients? There is a major issue with homeless population presenting to the hospital and addiction inpatient services for a place to stay. They are admitted under the Mental Health ACT and then the issue is no discharge as they have no safe places to live. This will increase with removing people from places in Home Take overs. How can this be addressed as both the tenant and unwanted people are vulnerable in Home Take over removal?*

NEXT STEPS

The results of this survey will be used to inform the development of a multi-stakeholder Home Takeover Response Framework for organizations and service providers in Grey Bruce.