Vehicular Homelessness and Dwelling: Review and Analysis

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Executive Summary

This report provides a broad overview of the subject of vehicular homelessness and dwelling, drawing upon recent source material from the last two to five years, with a primary focus on Canada. It includes a detailed literature review on the topic, as well as a reflection on the acclaimed film *Nomadland* and its connection to the reality of vehicular living. In addition, the report offers a comprehensive scan of the rules and regulations governing vehicle living in Alberta. To further enhance the reader's understanding, the report concludes with graphics that depict the key findings of the study. A key finding is that a vehicular dwelling is not always out of necessity, but also a lifestyle that offers a combination of freedom from financial tethers like mortgages or rents, and freedom to travel.

Literature Review

Vehicular dwelling is an emerging issue that needs more attention and research, as it is not only a homelessness problem but also a deliberate lifestyle choice for some individuals. This literature review took a thematic approach to discuss:

- What causes someone to live in a vehicle
- Who lives in vehicles
- The challenges they encounter
- What kinds of policies and programs are connected to the topic of vehicular homelessness

Significant gaps in research were identified on the following topics :

- he movements of nomadic populations, their demographic make-up, and day-to-day life
- Similarities and differences between the emerging norm of vehicular dwelling in North America, and the long traditions of nomadic peoples in Europe, and the discrimination they have experienced

- The influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on the culture of vehicular dwelling, as more people work remotely and seek a minimalist lifestyle.

Nomadland Review

Nomadland is a 2020 film directed by Chloe Zhao that portrays the story of Fern, a middle-aged woman who adopts a nomadic lifestyle after losing everything. This section of the report reflects on how this film portrays vehicular living in comparison to scholarly articles on the subject. The film:

- Depicts the community of people who choose to live in their cars or RVs and the challenges they face
- Showcases the courage of those who embrace vehicular dwelling
- Raises the question of homelessness by offering a nuanced and empathetic approach to the phenomenon

Regulatory Scan

The scan is an overview of regulations in the province of Alberta regarding living in vehicles. The scan reviewed:

- Provincial and federal legislation and regulations
- Municipal bylaws in cities including Edmonton, Calgary, and Lethbridge

Graphical Summary

The report concludes with novel visualizations of key findings of the research, which contribute to understanding

the different types of vehicular living. Two graphs illustrate the following:

- Types of vehicular dwelling on a spectrum from compulsion to choice, followed by a list of definitions for the types of vehicular dwellers
- Where types of vehicle dwellers fall in regards to the relationship between socioeconomic status and mobility.

Literature Review

There are a myriad of reasons for using a vehicle as a dwelling, ranging from a chosen lifestyle to a last resort. The connotation of the words “vehicular homelessness” are negative in that they insinuate that a person who lives in their vehicle is without a home. While this may be true in many cases, it is not true for all houseless individuals living in their vehicles. This is a multi-faceted phenomenon that demands a range of perspectives and a deep look at what drives this way of living. Some of these perspectives challenge the notion of what makes a home and if a home is defined by having a permanent residence. In this paper, “vehicular dwelling” will be used to refer to individuals or households that live in vehicles regardless of whether they choose the lifestyle or not.

Although the primary sources of this literature review are based on North American studies published within the last six years, also included are some secondary literature sources on nomadic communities living in Europe to add context to the marginalisation that vehicle-dwelling individuals have to face. This paper will take a thematic approach to discuss what causes someone to live in a vehicle, who lives in vehicles, the challenges they encounter and what kinds of policies and programs are connected to the topic of vehicular homelessness.

What causes someone to live in a vehicle?

In her Master’s Thesis “Defining Freedom: An Ethnographic Study with American Vanlifers,” Stephanie Murray (2019) wrote about her experience living in a van for a summer travelling

through the United States in order to study the lifestyle and the people who practise it. Though there are many ways to describe them, these people are essentially nomads and choose the lifestyle “to experience freedom and escape the constraints of routine home life” (Murray, 2019, p.39). The word ‘freedom’ turned up in all of Murray’s interview transcripts as a reason for why people chose the nomadic lifestyle. Participants stated that being mobile full-time gave them the opportunity to choose their own routes rather than the ones society perceives as normative.

In their study in western Canada, Duff and Rankin (2020) focused on trying to understand the lived experience of employed people whose permanent residence is inside a vehicle. Remote work offered an opportunity for people to not be constrained to one location, thus, opening up opportunities for mobility. The reasons that participants gave for why they chose to live in a van included saving money, paying off debt, having more work-life balance, and also more career opportunities since they were not constrained by a permanent location. In Vancouver, where housing is becoming prohibitively expensive, Jean Chretien (2021) indicated that the reasons for the move from traditional housing to living in a vehicle varied based on individual perspectives and financial circumstances. Some viewed it as a preferred lifestyle choice, while others were driven to it by the excessive rent and expenses of living in the city.

Cerveny et al. (2020) wrote an article about people living in vehicles on public land in National Forests and Grasslands in California, USA and how authorities have not established a way to effectively manage the impacts of these campers. This kind of

non-recreational camping or “boondocking” involves living in a vehicle without using any services. This makes it an inexpensive option for people who are challenged with living costs due to unemployment and poverty, or loss of housing, while also not having to deal with the challenges that come with living in urban areas. Some people choose to live in the forest moving from site to site to seek seclusion from society and still, others are fugitives or refugees choosing to hide (Cerveny et al., 2020). Retirees who are temporarily living in recreational vehicles make up a significant portion of the camping population in areas that are well-suited for mobile, nomadic lifestyles (Cerveny et al., 2020). Many people all throughout North America camp this way recreationally, so the line gets blurred when deciphering how much of this is a homelessness problem, how much is a choice made by people who could otherwise afford a home, and how much is simply recreation/tourism. In Los Angeles, California, vehicular homelessness has become a prolific phenomenon and a growing societal conundrum. In a comprehensive study on this issue, Giamarino et al., (2022) found that vehicular homelessness has become a necessity for people who have lost their homes but managed to keep their vehicles. Vehicular homelessness is LA growing and the reasons cited in the study include rising unemployment, lack of mental and physical health services, and policies that prioritise shelters over permanent housing. Many people choose to sleep in their vehicles instead of in shelters because they feel it is safer and provides a place to secure their belongings and stay with their pets, partners, and children (Giamarino et al., 2022). Some of these people were fleeing unsafe domestic situations as well which left them with no place to go but their vehicles.

Another study by Smith and Knechtel (2019) examined homeless postsecondary students in an unnamed university in the western United States who dwell in vehicles. The students were interviewed and the reasons they gave for their situation were the inability to make rent, unemployment, lack of familial support, and lack of support from postsecondary institutions. These students had also struggled with mental health and many had to leave their previous dwellings because they became inhabitable due to bugs, floods, fires, etc. This study only looked at one educational institution so the results may not be generalizable to other post-secondary institutions; however, it does provide some insight into what causes vehicular homelessness in this context. For vehicle dwellers, the reasons for living this way are as varied as the people are (reference Table 1).

Table 1: Common reasons for vehicular dwelling

Economic reasons	Low income/high rent, rising unemployment, unaffordability
Sudden loss of housing	Bugs, floods, fires, evictions domestic violence
Health related reasons	Mental health problems
Lifestyle related reasons	Freedom, adventure, travel, minimalism, environmentalism

Who inhabits their vehicles?

A superficial look at vehicular homelessness leads one to believe that this is not a chosen way of life and that the folks who do not have permanent housing require assistance in order to be placed within more normative permanent housing. A study by Cindy Mendoza (1997) challenged the notion of the house as a home and how this dominates traditional

views of shelter in her article on a three-month pilot program on urban camping for the homeless in Eugene, Oregon. She found that the encampment was home for the residents, because of the community support and networks for the people living there, and that this sense of home did not depend on any kind of permanent housing. Unlike the rest of the sources compiled for this literature review, this one was over two decades old, showing that vehicle dwelling is not a new phenomenon but one that has been with us for a long time.

There is a wide demographic range of people who dwell in vehicles. In her study about American Vanlifers, Murray (2019) identified “grey nomads” and “snowbirds” as some of the groups she encountered. The terms "grey nomads" and "snowbirds" both refer to retirees within the age group of 55-64 who reside in RVs, however, they differ in their motivations. Snowbirds are primarily motivated by the pursuit of sunshine and warmth during the cold Northern winter months, and tend to gravitate towards RV resort parks that offer a wide range of amenities and activities. On the other hand, grey nomads prefer to travel in smaller vehicles and avoid the overly organised resort RV parks, opting to keep to themselves. Some of these grey nomads prefer camping in remote areas without services such as power, water, and sanitation; a style of camping known as “boondocking”, which is a stark contrast to the snowbirds. Murray (2019) notes in her article that there is a significant gap in research when it comes to the demographics of these groups, indicating a need for further investigation into this topic.

A study by Duff and Rankin (2020) of workers living in vans identified a wide range of workers, from teachers to construction workers, with ages from 20 to 54 years. They found that data on vehicular nomads in North America is scant and all the research so far has shown that there are no specific characteristics that distinguish them from domiciled groups.

There is more data on the people who are experiencing vehicular homelessness not as a lifestyle choice but because of hardships such as domestic violence, job loss, and unaffordable housing. Giamarino et al. (2022) found that vehicle dwellers were more likely to be female, white and older, and most likely to be in households with children. The study also found that they had higher employment rates than homeless non-vehicle dwellers, and they were less likely to be chronically houseless. Smith's (2019) study on students who dwell in their cars found that many were from ethnically marginalised groups and cared for dependents. These students were older than traditional college students and came from a lower socioeconomic background.

There is not a lot of research on the demographics of vehicular dwellers but from the limited resources available it seems as though it varies widely and no one group of people dominate this way of living in North America. In Europe, it is much different because Gypsies, Travellers and Roma have been present in the landscape for centuries. Zoe James (2020) studies hate crimes and discrimination against these nomadic vehicle dwellers, and found that they constitute the largest minority group in Europe. One of the disputed issues in the study of these communities is the definition of who has Gypsy or Traveller identity

and status. This determination has been complicated by policy and planning, leading to confusion and inaccurate statistics. However, race relations laws recognize Romany Gypsies, Irish Travellers, and Scottish Travellers as specific ethnic groups deserving of protection.

What kinds of challenges do people living in vehicles face?

Living in a vehicle comes with several challenges ranging from finding a place to park and satisfying basic human needs to discrimination and even violence. Chretien (2021) aimed to investigate the ways in which individuals residing in their vehicles try to access the city's technology network and how these temporary connections help them establish and maintain a sense of home in their improvised, "unauthorised" living areas. Individuals living in their vehicles make a constant effort to remain connected to the city's technological network. Common techniques used by those involved in the study include filling up water jugs at public parks, taking advantage of free Wi-Fi hotspots, plugging in devices at public outlets, and locating local facilities for sewage disposal to compensate for their limited connection to infrastructure.

One of the key factors that makes the lifestyle of living in a vehicle more appealing than living in a traditional shelter is the ability to store belongings within the vehicle, which can become problematic when people are forced to leave their vehicles. This is documented in Faiza Moatasim's (2023) study on so-called "anti-homeless" policies. Laws were being made prohibiting people from living in their vehicles and from storing their belongings so homeless people were given trash bins to store their belongings. This was a

solution for a while, but problems arose when the city started throwing away their belongings. This is a major challenge for those who live in their vehicles especially when they do not have the financial means to store their belongings in a secure area.

Neighbourhood complaints and fear of the homeless population keep these regulations in place causing people not to be able to park their vehicular homes. This bias and stigmatisation that vehicle dwellers face from society is not new and has been documented historically with the Roma people in Europe. These sedentarist attitudes and harassment towards vehicle nomads are no different than what nomadic populations have had to face in Europe for some time (Murray, 2019). What Murray means by 'sedentarism' is that it is a way of thinking that considers mobility as a temporary function and not as a chosen way of living. In Europe, there are several nomadic populations that still exist and constantly face harassment and discrimination from the sedentary population. James (2022) explains that vehicular living is perceived as a cultural anathema to the larger population creating all sorts of problems for nomadic communities. She noted in her 2020 study that in the UK, Gypsy, Traveller, and Roma children in England and Wales are marginalised in terms of their standards of living, education and health and were bullied because they live in vehicles. Michele Lancione (2019) wrote that the Roma people in Bucharest, Romania became a precarious population due to forced and often violent evictions perpetuating racialized discrimination.

Lack of safety is another challenge vehicle dwellers have to face on a daily basis regardless of where they choose to park and whether they choose to live in a vehicle or are

faced to choose it as a last resort. Vehicular dwellers face victimisation rates that exceed those of the general population and even at-risk domiciled and homeless groups, placing them at a level of vulnerability comparable to those who live on the street (Whaley & Abbott, 2022). Travelling in an RV is generally considered safe, but travellers must acknowledge that crime can occur. RVers and van dwellers who park in isolated locations face higher risks than those who stay in campgrounds, which offer some level of security. While travelling across the US in 2021 in a van, a young woman named Gabby Petito was murdered by her fiance. This homicide highlighted the lack of safety and vulnerability of people living in vehicles.

Considering all of the challenges vehicle dwellers face there is a need for programs and policies to help protect people who reside in vehicles but governments and organisations still have a long way to go.

What kinds of programs and policies exist?

There are policies that are meant to regulate vehicular dwelling but are often seen as a way to prohibit this way of living. Giamarino et al. (2022) identified five ways cities in the greater Los Angeles area were regulating vehicular homelessness: citywide bans, overnight restrictions, permit parking, zone restrictions, and time-limited parking. There were penalties for violating the overnight restrictions that increased with successive infractions. This is partly due to the fact that neighbourhood associations want to keep vehicle dwellers out of particular areas and city bylaws facilitate this by prohibiting parking in public areas (Moatasim, 2023). This parking problem persists no matter where a person travels to

unless they find a campground that they are able to pay for, but even then vehicle dwellers can only stay for a limited time otherwise they will be cited with a “stay violation” (Cerveny et al., 2020). Finding a place to park for vehicle dwellers is such a huge challenge that it was mentioned in almost every source found for this literature review.

Most cities have a 72-hour rule policy in which a person has to move their vehicle every 72 hours to avoid it being towed. In Los Angeles, almost 10,000 vehicles a month were being towed and individuals were ending up on the street so the City stopped towing vehicles that had over five unpaid parking tickets (Giamarino, 2022). Because this regulatory enforcement is not solving the problem of vehicular homelessness, some cities are adopting safe parking programs which help people living in vehicles find a legal place to park and sleep overnight and provide them with the opportunity to transition into permanent housing. For homeless students living in their vehicles, the post-secondary institution responded by providing more support in terms of addressing budget gaps and doing more outreach (Dowling, & Smith, 2019).

In the US, federal regulations prohibit residing on national forest system lands and facilities without permission, as well as building structures, altering surface lands, leaving trash or unsanitary debris, and camping for longer than designated (typically 14-16 days). Each forest can implement its own policy regarding "stay limitations" and enforcement can vary by jurisdiction. Some visitors must leave the forest boundary, while others may have to move to another site within a certain distance (Cerveny et al., 2020).

The National League of Cities (Crawford, 2020) noted that since the pandemic cities have responded to vehicular homelessness by expanding their parking programs and providing hygiene facilities, drinking water, electricity and weekly shower services. New Beginnings in Santa Barbara is a similar program that partners with organisations that transform parking lots into trailer park-like communities (Giamarino, 2022).

In regards to protecting vehicular dwellers, there are no programs and policies in place. Whaley and Abbott (2022) suggest that useful policies could include informing campers at rest stops on how to protect themselves wherever they end up camping in their car; however, more research on the safety of nomadic populations in North America needs to be done.

Conclusion

Vehicular dwelling is a multifaceted issue that demands more attention and research. The reasons for using a vehicle as a home vary from a chosen lifestyle to a last resort. Some people choose to live in a vehicle for freedom, work-life balance, and cost savings, while others are driven by financial circumstances, unemployment, poverty, or unsafe domestic situations. The studies reviewed in this paper show that vehicular dwelling is not just a homelessness problem but also a deliberate choice by some individuals. It is clear that there is a need for a deeper understanding of this emerging cultural phenomenon, including the challenges that vehicle dwellers face and the responses of society.

Although there is not a large amount of research regarding vehicular homelessness it is an emerging issue, which means that much of the research that is available is recent.

The majority of research on this topic was found in the US, especially in California where this phenomenon has become a point of focus in the state. There are significant gaps in research regarding vehicular homelessness in states other than California and in Canada in general. More widespread research is needed regarding this topic as it is a growing trend not only due to problems related to unaffordable housing and poverty but also as a lifestyle choice for people not experiencing financial problems. If vehicular dwelling is a growing concern, steps need to be taken in order to protect people and to provide a means to live in harmony with normative society. Policies and programs would have to be made in order to make vehicle living less marginalised, but in order to do that more research needs to be conducted in terms of the movements of nomadic populations, demographics, and how they go about their day-to-day life.

There was not a lot of information to be found about how vehicular dwelling is becoming a lifestyle choice and how this is shaping culture as well. In Europe nomadic cultures are far from new and people have had to live with nomads for centuries yet discrimination has persisted (James, 2022). If vehicle dwelling is becoming a new norm in North America more research can help get ahead of the problems that the nomads of Europe are still trying to overcome. More people are working remotely now since the pandemic and many are looking to live a more minimalist and less restrictive lifestyle, so this may be the beginning of a new culture and opens many doors for research (Duff & Rankin, 2020).

Nomadland Review

Nomadland is an Academy Award-winning American film directed by Chloe Zhao in 2020 that follows the story of Fern, portrayed by Frances McDormand, a middle-aged woman who embarks on a nomadic lifestyle after the loss of her town, her job and her husband. Based on a non-fiction novel by Jessica Bruder, "Nomadland: Surviving America in the Twenty-First Century," this film captures the experience of the vehicle dwelling lifestyles that people embark upon.

Throughout the movie, the audience is introduced to a community of people who have made the choice to live in their vehicles or RVs as a way of life. The characters all have different reasons for living this way, but they share a sense of camaraderie and support for each other. In one scene in the film a community of older vehicle dwellers all sit around a fire after sharing a communal meal telling stories of how they landed on their decision to live a nomadic lifestyle. This brief scene highlights how these retirees underwent a pivotal realization regarding the brevity of life, leading them to aspire to live fully and unencumbered. A study on vehicle dwelling in the National Forests of California supports this depiction by noting that retirees who are temporarily living in recreational vehicles make up a significant portion of the camping population in areas that are well-suited for mobile, nomadic lifestyles (Cerveney et al., 2020).

Nomadland depicts vehicular dwelling authentically by capturing both the difficulties and the allure of this way of life and by showcasing the courage of those who embrace it. It

does not romanticize vehicle dwelling and does not judge the characters for their choices exhibiting a nuanced and empathetic approach to this phenomenon.The inclusion of genuine nomads, Bob Wells, Linda May, and Swankie, who portray versions of themselves in the film, amplify its authenticity and emphasizes that these characters are part of a real community.

In her study on American Vanlifers, Murray (2019) talks about the “sedentarist” attitudes people have towards vehicle dwellers. People consider them homeless because they have no fixed address, so the community of vehicle dwellers in Murray’s study went as far as to have t-shirts made with the statement “Houseless, not homeless” emblazoned on the front. Early on in the film, you find out that Fern intentionally chose to live in her vehicle when she meets an old acquaintance in a shop whose daughter informs her that people think she is homeless. Fern clears this up by explaining that she is not homeless but houseless and that they are not the same thing.

Homelessness can be defined as “the situation of an individual, family, or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect means and ability of acquiring it” (Homeless Hub, 2021, para.1). Fern could certainly be considered homeless but is a complex character in that she has chosen the nomadic lifestyle. She had everything that mattered to her taken away when the gypsum mine in her town of Empire, Nevada closed and all of the citizens had to leave due to lack of work. She lost her job, community, spouse, and her stable existence, so she chose to

transition into a nomadic way of life, motivated by practical necessities but also as an introspective healing journey.

The aforementioned definition states that an individual is homeless if they lack housing and have no ability to acquire it, but this is not the case for Fern. Though the film does not go into detail about her past life, the audience learns that she worked in the local school as a substitute teacher and in HR at the gypsum mine which gives you the idea that she has employable skills and could find gainful employment if she chose to. She also is offered a place to live twice in the film: when her sister invites her to stay with her and husband, and when a love interest in the film invites her to stay with him and his family. She rejects all of the offers and intentionally chooses a precarious nomadic lifestyle instead.

Fern experiences some of the challenges depicted in the literature regarding vehicular dwelling, including freezing cold temperatures, finding legal spots to park, and dealing with vehicle repairs. The literature does not speak much to vehicular homelessness in cooler climates, as most studies on the subject are based in places with more temperate climates like California. Early on in the film, Fern finds herself trying to secure an overnight parking spot for her van when a gas station attendant advises her that the temperature will drop significantly during the night. The attendant suggests that she would be better off staying at a shelter to stay warm. However, despite the advice, Fern chooses to brave the frigid conditions inside her van. In the next scene, the audience sees Fern driving towards

Arizona, known for its warmer climate, in search of respite from the harsh weather she endured earlier.

The main challenge for vehicular dwellers noted in all the literature is the struggle to find parking and this too is depicted in *Nomadland* when Fern is frightened by a harsh knocking on her van and the voice of a man telling her that she cannot park overnight. Giamarino et al. (2022) go into detail about the parking problems for vehicle dwellers in California and how Safe Parking Programs are needed to protect vehicle dwellers. The study also mentions how lower income people, like Fern, have older vehicles that are more likely to break down. This is portrayed in the film when, after her interaction with the person evicting her from the illegal parking location, Fern finds that her van will not start. She takes it to a mechanic that tells her it is not worth paying for the repairs since the van is not worth much but she emphatically but slightly shamefully explains to them that she needs the repair because she lives in the vehicle.

The film touches on the broader issue of income inequality and the challenges faced by many Americans who are struggling to make ends meet. The characters in Nomadland are not just people who have fallen on hard times but are also part of a larger community of working-class Americans who are struggling to find stability in an increasingly unstable world due to lack of housing, rising housing costs, wage stagnation, and job loss causing evictions and foreclosure (National League of Cities, 2023). In one scene, Linda May explains to Fern how she was on the brink of suicide when she realized she was behind on rent and dismayed with the fact that she had worked her entire life to earn a measly social

security cheque that could not cover her basic needs. The literature has not yet examined the connection social security benefits have to a vehicle dwelling lifestyle but there is evidence that retirees make up the majority of nomads (Cerveney et al., 2020). This could be due to the fact that once a person in the US retires, if they rely solely on social security income, they can no longer afford basic housing and choose a nomadic lifestyle because it is more cost effective.

Nomadland is a powerful and moving film that sheds light on the issue of vehicular homelessness in a respectful and realistic way. The film is not just a story of hardship and struggle, but also a celebration of the resilience and strength of the human spirit. Through its portrayal of the characters and their experiences, the movie encourages us to think more deeply about the struggles faced by those who are living on the margins of society and to consider how we can work together to create a more just and compassionate world.

Review of Vehicular Dwelling Regulations in Alberta

The following table provides an overview of the bylaws and legislation in Alberta that set limitations on individuals in regards to residing in their vehicles within the province. Provincial and federal legislation and regulations were reviewed, as well municipal bylaws in cities including Edmonton, Calgary, and Lethbridge. An analysis of the findings in this table is provided below.

Government		Legislation	Section	Regulations
Municipal		Traffic Bylaw 5590	13(1)	A vehicle shall not be parked on Parkland except in a developed parking lot or other area specifically designated for the parking of vehicles.
	Edmonton		30	A vehicle shall not be parked on a highway in any location identified as a zone where parking is prohibited.
			36(1)	A vehicle shall not be parked on a highway in any location subject to a parking ban.
			19(2)	(2) A recreational vehicle parked pursuant to this section: (a) shall not be parked for more than 72 consecutive hours; and (b) shall be removed to an off-highway location for at least 48 consecutive hours before it may be parked again on a highway.
			19(3)	(3) A recreational vehicle parked on a highway shall not be occupied.
			26(2)	Without restricting the generality of subsection (1) a vehicle that is left standing in one location on a highway for more than 72 consecutive hours is deemed to have been abandoned at that location.

		Zoning Bylaw 12800	23.1(7)	It is an offence to use a Recreational Vehicle as a Dwelling for a Residential Use. In determining if a Recreational Vehicle is being used as a Dwelling for a Residential Use criteria, including but not limited to the below, may be considered. a) The Recreational Vehicle is connected to utilities for the purpose of power, water, gas, or sewer services. b) The Recreational Vehicle is storing food, personal effects, clothing, or bedding. c) The Recreational Vehicle is being occupied for the purpose of sleeping or accommodation. d) The kitchen or sanitary facilities show signs of recent use.
			23.1(8)	Notwithstanding 23.1(7) a Recreational Vehicle located in a Tourist Campsite is permitted.
		Parkland Bylaw 2202	18(a)	No person shall: (a) leave a Motor Vehicle on Parkland during the hours people are not permitted to enter or remain on Parkland as set out in this bylaw.
	Calgary	Traffic Bylaw 26M96	17(1)	An owner or operator of a recreational vehicle must not park the recreational vehicle on a street in the City, except in the area of the street immediately adjoining the owner or operator's place of residence.
			17(2)	An owner or operator of a recreational vehicle must not park the recreational vehicle on the area of the street immediately adjoining the owner or operator's place of residence for a period of more than 36 consecutive hours.
			17(3)	An owner or operator of a recreational vehicle must not park the recreational vehicle on the area of the street immediately adjoining the owner or operator's place of residence if the recreational vehicle was previously parked on that area of the street at any time during the preceding 48 hour period.

			18(1)	No owner or operator shall, between the hours of eight o'clock in the evening and eight o'clock in the morning of the following day or at any time on a holiday, park or permit the parking of a vehicle other than: (a) a private passenger type vehicle; or (b) a truck having a maximum weight of 4500 kg or less; on either side of a street in which any property abutting the street in the same block is used as a park, playground, school site, church or other place of public worship or for residential purposes.
		Community Standards Bylaw	8.2 (1)	Within a Residential Development, a Person must not park, or allow to be parked, a Recreational Vehicle in front of a house on a Premises for more than 36 consecutive hours.
	Lethbridge	The Traffic Bylaw	1309(2)	An owner or operator of a Recreational Vehicle shall not park the Recreational Vehicle on any street in the City, except in the area of the street immediately adjoining the owner or operator's place of residence.
			1309(3)	An owner or operator of a Recreational Vehicle shall not park the Recreational Vehicle on the area of the street immediately adjoining the owner or operator's place of residence for a period of more than FORTY EIGHT (48) consecutive hours.
			1309(4)	An owner or operator of a Recreational Vehicle shall not park the Recreational Vehicle on the area of the street immediately adjoining the owner or operator's place of residence if the Recreational Vehicle was previously parked on that area of the street at any time during the preceding THIRTY SIX (36) hour period.
			1001	No person shall place upon any street within the City, any Vehicle or derelict Vehicle which does not have the ability or means of independent locomotion without delay.
Provincial		Traffic Safety Act	14(b)(i)	b) with respect to private property that is located within the municipality to which vehicles driven by members of the public generally do not have access but on which the owner of the property or a

			person having possession or control of the property may park or otherwise keep vehicles, prohibiting (i) the parking of vehicles on that property without the permission or authorization of that person;
		76(2)(a)(b)	(2) A vehicle that is (a) left standing on a highway for more than 72 consecutive hours, unless otherwise provided for in a bylaw in the case of a highway under the direction, control and management of the council of a municipality, or (b) left standing on public or private property for more than 72 consecutive hours without the consent of the owner or person in possession or control of the property, is deemed to have been abandoned at that location.
	Provincial Parks Act	11(1)	11(1) No person shall make or attempt to make a place of residence in a park or recreation area other than persons (a) who are employed in the Department administered by the Minister and who are engaged in the development, maintenance or supervision of parks or recreation areas, (b) who have received specific permission from the Minister to do so, or (c) who are specifically allowed to do so by a disposition.
		11(2)	(2) If, in the opinion of the Minister, a person is making or attempting to make a place of residence in a park or recreation area, other than when allowed to do so by or under subsection (1), the Minister may by written notice served on that person require that person to cease making or attempting to make a place of residence on that land.
		11(3)	(3) If within 14 days after being served with a notice under subsection (2) a person fails to comply with the notice, the Minister may apply to the Court of King's Bench for an order directing that person to cease making or attempting to make a place of residence on the land.
	Public Lands Administration Regulation,	33.2(3)	(3) Subject to sections 32(2)(a) and 42.1, a person occupying vacant public land for a recreational purpose with a camping accommodation unit must,

	Alta Reg 187/2010		immediately after 14 consecutive days of occupying the area, move their camping accommodation unit a minimum of one kilometre away for a period of at least 72 hours.
		190(1)	190(1) No person shall have a camping accommodation unit within the boundaries of a public land recreation area for a period exceeding 14 consecutive days unless the person first obtains an access permit for authorizing entry and occupation of the public land recreation area for a longer period.
Federal	Canada National Parks Act	3(1)	No person shall use or occupy or reside or camp on any public land in a Park or park any vehicle on such land for the purpose of camping unless he is (a) the holder of a valid camping permit authorizing him to use that land for that purpose; or (b) a member of a group in respect of which a camping permit has been issued and is still valid.
		6(2)	(2) For the purposes of subsection (1) and paragraph 16(a), the campsite to which a camping permit applies is deemed to be not occupied where a tent or trailer has been unoccupied for a period exceeding 48 hours or has been removed from the campsite for a period exceeding 24 hours.
		7	A camping permit expires (a) on the expiry date specified therein; and (b) at the time specified therein or at the time specified by the superintendent on a notice located at the entrance to the public campground.
		19	19 (1) The superintendent may, in a camping permit issued for seasonal camping, authorize for a period not exceeding 24 weeks.

The traffic bylaws in Edmonton, Calgary, and Lethbridge all restrict where and for how long recreational vehicles can be parked.

In Edmonton (Bylaw 5590, 2023) a person could conceivably live in their vehicle as long as they move every 72 hours, and do not park in parkland overnight (Parkland Bylaw 2202, 2021). They would also not be allowed to live in a recreational vehicle because the Edmonton Zoning Bylaw 12800 (2023) prohibits this use everywhere except for in a legal campground.

In Calgary (Traffic Bylaw 26M96, 2019) a person cannot park their recreational vehicle on the street in the City except for the area directly next to their home. If they do not have a permanent home they would have to find a private parking lot that allows overnight parking. There were no general bylaws found to restrict non-recreational vehicles from parking overnight on Calgary streets.

In Lethbridge (The Lethbridge Traffic Bylaw, 2018) a person must move their recreational vehicle every 48 hours. All other vehicles must have the ability to move from where they are parked but there is no specified time limit, so a person could conceivably live in their vehicle as long as they move it consistently enough.

The Provincial Parks Act (2022) prohibits people from making residence in a Provincial park and the province's Public Lands Administration Regulation (2023) limits a person's stay on Crown land to 14 consecutive days. They can, however, move to another area for 72 hours and then move back to the original spot for 14 days again if they choose to do so. This prohibits someone from making permanent residence in a location.

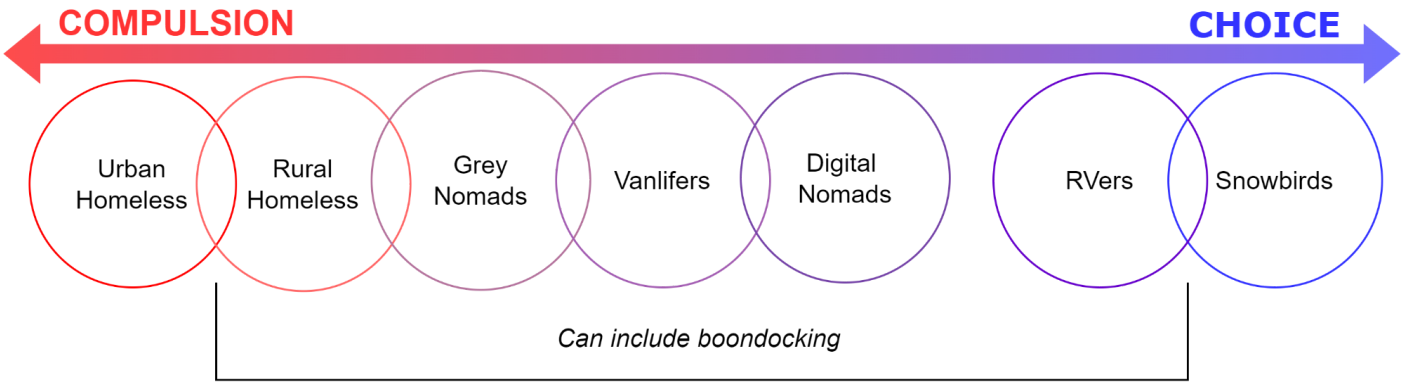
In regards to federal regulations, the *Canada National Parks Act 2023* was reviewed. Alberta is home to four national parks: Jasper National Park, Banff National Park, Elk Island

National Park, and Waterton Lakes National Park (Government of Canada, 2023). These are regulated by the *Canada National Parks Act* and prohibit camping in these parks without a valid permit. It also considers a campsite unoccupied when a tent or trailer has been unoccupied for a period exceeding 48 hours or has been removed for more than 24 hours. That would make it difficult for someone to return to their campsite after being gone for a period of 24 hours or more. This regulation is likely to limit the amount of time recreational campers can stay in one location and make it fair for others who want to enjoy the parks. There is a regulation stating that the maximum limit for seasonal camping is 24 weeks. This seems extensive but considering all of the camping permits that are required, a person staying in one of the national parks in Alberta would not be able to camp for that length of time anyways.

Although there are no laws in Alberta that explicitly forbid people from sleeping in their vehicles, there are time limits that dictate where and how long a vehicle can be parked, depending on the location. These restrictions vary across different cities and areas, including Crown land, provincial and national parks. These regulations were likely implemented in response to past issues with recreational vehicles and to prevent individuals from residing in certain areas permanently, ensuring fair use of public spaces. It is crucial for individuals to familiarize themselves with the pertinent regulations to prevent any legal repercussions while travelling or living in Alberta.

Spectrum Graph: Compulsion versus Choice

Some people are highly compelled to live in their vehicles due to circumstances that make it difficult for them to secure permanent housing. People on this side of the spectrum are not living in their vehicles because they want to be because they feel they have no choice but to. On the opposite side of the spectrum are the people who have the freedom to choose to live in a permanent residence but prefer to live in their vehicles.



Each of the groups of vehicular dwellers are defined below:

Urban Homeless individuals are unable to secure permanent housing but possess a vehicle may opt to reside in it rather than a shelter. They are situated in urban areas and are less mobile than their vehicular dwelling counterparts due to financial constraints. They must live in their vehicle out of necessity, whether due to socioeconomic circumstances, domestic abuse, or environmental crises. Typically but not always, their vehicle is not

outfitted for habitation and can be found in overnight parking lots and streets in busy downtown urban areas.

Rural Homeless individuals are those who cannot afford permanent housing but have a vehicle that they can inhabit such as an RV or a converted van. Because of financial constraints they tend to boondock or “wild camp” in remote areas. They tend to be more stationary as mobility costs money.

Grey Nomads are different from the rural homeless. They are highly mobile and pick up odd jobs to finance their travels. They prefer to travel in smaller vehicles and avoid the overly organized resort RV parks, opting to keep to themselves. They are labeled “grey nomads” because they are of an older demographic age and often have grey hair but it can also apply to the “grey area” of homelessness in that other people misconceive of them as homeless, which they associate with a negative connotation. Their lifestyle is usually not out of necessity but a combination of freedom from financial tethers like mortgages or rents, and freedom to travel.

Vanlifers are people who often live in converted vans and travel around the country or world, often for extended periods of time. Though this category can be quite broad, it is used here to describe the types of people who use the nomadic lifestyle as their monetizing device on social media in order to finance their way of living. They are often a

younger demographic and are highly mobile. They choose a highly mobile lifestyle over a stationary one likely due to their own preference, as opposed to necessity.

Digital nomads are people who use technology, such as laptops and smartphones, to work remotely from anywhere in the world. They are often self-employed or work for companies that allow remote work, and they use their freedom to travel and work from different locations; however, their work sometimes makes it difficult to be mobile due to their reliance on consistent internet service.

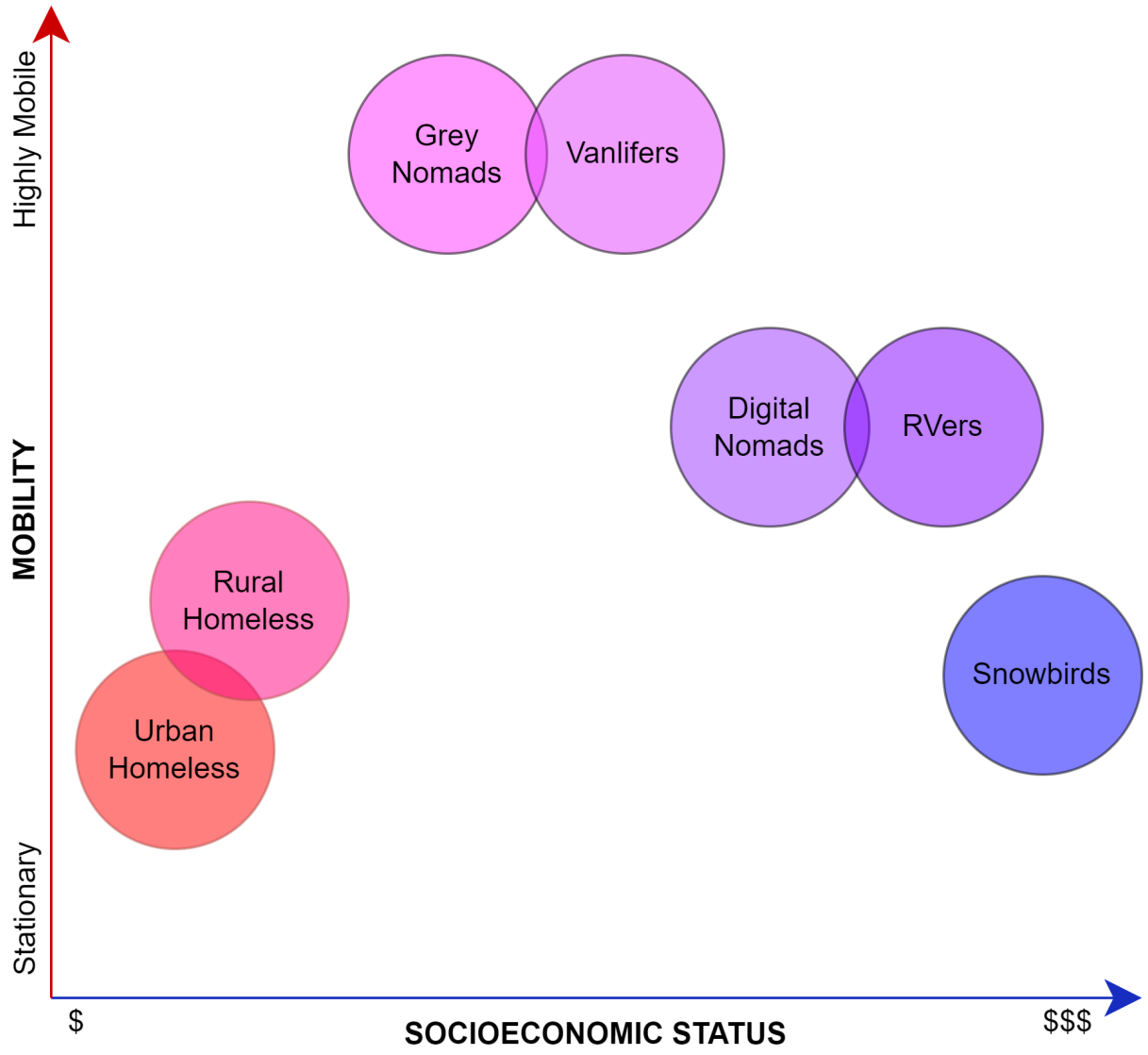
RVers are people who travel and live in recreational vehicles (RVs), which come in various sizes and types. RVers in this instance are described as people who work throughout the year and travel recreationally in RVs throughout the warmer months. They will camp at fully serviced campgrounds as well as boondocking. They are different from digital nomads and vanlifers because they have a permanent residence and they are different from snowbirds in that they still have to make an income to supplement their recreational lifestyle.

Snowbirds are typically retirees that are primarily motivated by the pursuit of sunshine and warmth during the cold Northern winter months, and tend to gravitate towards RV resort parks that offer a wide range of amenities and activities. They often have a permanent residence and can afford to be away for half of the year.

Boondocking was found to be more of an activity within vehicular living than a group of vehicle dwellers. Boondocking or “wild camping” refers to living in a vehicle without using any services. All of the above groups were found to engage in boondocking from time to time with the exception of the urban homeless who are too impoverished to leave the urban area and the snowbirds who depend on amenities too much to boondock.

Axis Graph: Mobility versus Socioeconomic Status

This graph is a depiction of where the categories of vehicular dwellers fall in terms of socioeconomic status and mobility.



The reasons for the placement of these categories will be described below:

The **urban homeless** are usually compelled to leave their permanent homes due to a variety of reasons and cannot afford to find housing elsewhere. Because they have a vehicle they have the ability to store their possessions and sleep in an enclosed space away from the elements and other people. Because of lack of financial means they tend to stay near the core of an urban area; however, due to regulations and bylaws prohibiting parking in one place for extended periods of time, they will likely have some mobility within this area.

The **rural homeless** lose their permanent housing due to a variety of reasons but have the means to camp out in rural areas such as Crown land and other public lands. Because of their financial situation they do not have the means to continuously move so they park their vehicle in an inconspicuous area and live there for long periods of time.

Grey nomads are labelled this way due to their grey hair indicating that they are retirees. Despite their retirement, however, they choose to embrace a nomadic lifestyle over a sedentary one, propelled by their strong desire for mobility. While they may not be able to rely solely on their retirement savings, they resourcefully finance their travels by taking on various odd jobs along their journeys.

Vanlifers (in this context) are characterized as individuals who share the same penchant for mobility as their grey nomad counterparts. However, unlike the latter, *vanlifers* leverage

their lifestyle as a means of funding their travels through social media, rather than relying on odd jobs for financial support.

Digital nomads are those who hold regular permanent employment but decide to embark upon a nomadic lifestyle due to a variety of reasons including cost of living and freedom to travel. They have more financial means to travel but their permanent vocations make them more stationary than *vanlifers* and *grey nomads*. They live and work in their vehicles and do not have permanent residences.

RVers are a group of leisure campers who typically maintain stable employment, and therefore travel part-time or seasonally. Similar to *digital nomads*, they possess the financial stability to explore the world on wheels, but they do not conduct their work from their mobile homes. They earn their livelihoods during specific times of the year, and typically maintain a fixed abode. Nevertheless, especially during summer, they relish the freedom of travelling in their RVs.

Snowbirds are distinguished as the most affluent of all groups. These retirees are financially secure, affording them the luxury of maintaining a permanent residence, while also indulging in up to six months of travel. However, their desire for pleasant weather and ample sunshine, rather than mobility, drives their travel frequency. They typically reside in

their capacious recreational vehicles, departing for sunny camping areas replete with lavish amenities for the season, only returning to their primary abodes when the climate shifts.

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