

# HOMELESSNESS IN GREATER VICTORIA

2014/15 REPORT ON HOUSING & SUPPORTS



greater victoria  
coalition to end  
homelessness

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**hope has found a home**

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# Executive Summary

This report examines the key structural factors that significantly contribute to homelessness in Greater Victoria, including the growing disparity between income and housing costs. Not only have vacancy rates decreased in most municipalities within the region but rental rates have also increased making it extremely difficult for low-income earners to secure stable and affordable housing. Both housing for single individuals and families are in decline leaving many at risk of housing instability and homelessness in the region. Resources available to those living on a low-income have showed a minimal increase. In 2015 the minimum wage increased to \$10.45. Although this is a step in the right direction this amount falls significantly below the wage needed for low income families to have enough money to cover their costs of living. Comparatively, the living wage for families in the region increased to \$20.05 in 2015. Although the challenge is similar for singles on social assistance or fixed incomes as income assistance rates have not increased since 2007.

The report provides information on the risk of homelessness in the community. Individuals and families are in core housing need if they pay more than 30% of their income on housing putting them at risk of homelessness. The latest 2011 census data showed that 20,870 households were in core housing need and of these households 53% were single person households. Subsidized housing continues to have lengthy waitlists, with 1,502<sup>1</sup> households on the housing registry in 2015, which indicates an ongoing need for subsidized housing. There was an increase in the number of families and seniors listed on the housing registry. Food bank

usage is an indicator of food insecurity and those at risk of homelessness. Although food bank use is down slightly from 2013 there has been a substantial increase (33%) in the number of children accessing food banks since 2012. Food bank use is still up when compared to 2008.

The extent of homelessness is measured by examining emergency shelter use over the past year. 1,725 unique

individuals used an emergency bed in one of Greater Victoria's six emergency shelters at least once last year. The occupancy rate of emergency shelters increased from 93% in 2013/14 to 112% in 2014/15 due to increased emergency mat capacity.

The community response to the challenge of homelessness and housing exclusion is an ongoing effort. Some progress has been made in the last year as there was an increase in the number of new affordable housing units that were added for people who are at risk of homelessness or formerly experienced

homelessness. There have not been any new subsidized housing units for Aboriginal people added over the past year. There continues to be an under-supply of affordable housing. Rental assistance rates for families and seniors have increased over the past year in an effort to address the rising rental rates. In general there has been an increase in the use of rental assistance programs by families and seniors. In 2014/15 the Homelessness Prevention

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Increase the number of subsidized housing units**
- **Extend the criteria for rental assistance to allow more households access**
- **Increase understanding of housing needs for Aboriginal peoples**
- **Increase housing outreach initiatives and the number of rental supplements available**
- **Review housing and support service system to ensure effective and efficient program coordination**

Program was launched and included 117 additional rent supplements for unhoused individuals in the region. Rental supplements for individuals at-risk of homelessness or formerly homeless have more than doubled since 2012/13 in the region. The number of people who have been housed in the last year through HPP has decreased but for those that have been housed they remain successfully housed.

<sup>1</sup> The total of 1,502 includes households who are waiting for transfers, have pending applications, or are under review.

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# Introduction

## **Homelessness continues to be a major concern for our community, and**

communities across Canada. Structural and systemic aspects of our society, like income and the cost of housing, can collide with personal circumstances, which may lead to experiences of homelessness. Income and housing are the foundation of addressing homelessness, although we are witnessing a decrease in the supply of safe, low-cost housing coupled with a growing number of people whose incomes that are not enough to even cover basic living costs like rent and food.

Since the first iteration of the Greater Victoria Report on Housing and Supports in 2008/2009 was released our community has seen the cost of housing increase, income assistance rates remain stagnant, and our emergency shelters operating beyond full capacity. But our community has also seen 272 new supportive housing units and 350 new affordable housing units built and an increase in the number of rent supplements available to people experiencing homelessness.

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## **Income and housing are the foundation of addressing homelessness**

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This report begins with an examination of the structural conditions that contribute to homelessness. It then looks at the number of households who are in core housing need in our community - a strong indicator of the number of people across our region who are at-risk of homelessness. We also look at food bank use as a means to determine the rate of food insecurity and how many people are on the social housing registry list as an indicator of demand for affordable, low-cost housing. The report then provides a look at the extent of homelessness in our community by looking at the number of unique people accessing emergency shelters. We finish the report by looking at community responses to homelessness.

# What is Homelessness

Homelessness is not just what you see on the street. Even when homelessness is not visible, it still exists when people in our community are living in abandoned buildings, camping, staying in emergency shelters, or couch surfing.<sup>2</sup>

There are many other people in our community who are living in housing that does not meet health and safety standards such as presence of mold and inadequate electrical or heating systems. All of these living situations, from unsheltered to insecurely housed, put people at risk of poor physical, mental and emotional health.

## Canadian Definition of Homelessness<sup>3</sup>

The Canadian Homelessness Research Network (2012) developed the Canadian Definition of Homelessness. The definition describes homelessness as a range of physical living situations, organized here into four categories. Homelessness and housing exclusion include:

- **Unsheltered**, or absolutely homeless and living on the streets or in places not intended for human habitation;
- **Emergency Sheltered**, including those staying in overnight shelters for people who are homeless, as well as Violence Against Women shelters;
- **Provisionally Accommodated**, referring to those whose accommodation is temporary and who do not have their own home or security of tenure;
- **Insecurely Housed**, referring to people who are 'at-risk' of homelessness, and whose current economic and/or housing situation is precarious or does not meet public health and safety standards.

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<sup>2</sup> Canadian Homelessness Research Network (2015). Canadian Definitions of Homelessness. Available online at Homeless Hub.

<sup>3</sup> Canadian Homelessness Research Network (2015). Canadian Definitions of Homelessness. Available online at Homeless Hub.

# Contributors to Homelessness

Homelessness can affect anyone. A layoff or a workplace injury, long-term illness, family violence or family tragedy, among other reasons can propel people into precarious and unstable living conditions.

Homelessness is not a static state but rather a fluid experience, where one's shelter circumstances and options may shift and change quite dramatically and with frequency. Experiences of homelessness are unique and each individual or family will have a story about their pathways into and out of homelessness.

## CONTRIBUTORS

- **Structural**
- **Systemic**
- **Personal**

Homelessness is an outcome of the complex interplay of structural factors, systemic failures and individual circumstances.<sup>4</sup>

**Structural factors** are those conditions in society that have led to an increased cost of living but without a commensurate increase in incomes, particularly for those in the lower income brackets

or those on social assistance.<sup>5</sup> Factors such as stigma and discrimination can act as barriers to obtaining housing, employment, health and social services.

**Systemic failures** occur when people fall between the cracks or are trapped in the fault lines in our systems of care.<sup>6</sup> For example, when people are discharged from hospitals or correctional facilities into emergency shelters or when youth transition out of the child welfare system without support.

**Personal circumstances** of homelessness occur when individuals or families experience catastrophic events such as job loss, illness, house fire, traumatic events or health problems can add to the risk of experiencing homelessness when housing or income are in short supply.<sup>7</sup> Family violence and conflict, particularly for women, children and youth, may push individuals to flee their homes in order to protect themselves.

This report focuses on the structural factors that contribute to homelessness in our region, particularly housing and income issues.

4 Gaetz, S., Donaldson, J., & Gulliver, T. (2013). The State of Homelessness in Canada 2013. Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness

5 Gaetz, S., Donaldson, J., & Gulliver, T. (2013). The State of Homelessness in Canada 2013. Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness.

6 Ibid

7 Ibid

# Housing

Housing in Greater Victoria has become increasingly more expensive and out of reach for many low-income individuals and families. This is due to a perfect storm of changes to national housing policies and a reduction of government investment in social housing, increasing land prices, and stagnating incomes. In January 2015, an international housing affordability study ranked Victoria as the second least affordable housing market in Canada behind Vancouver.<sup>8</sup>

## Victoria's the 2<sup>nd</sup> least affordable housing market in Canada

The availability of safe and affordable housing is a key element in preventing and solving homelessness. A review of the most current data on rental market costs and availability provides an overall picture of the rental market, and shows the challenges low-income individuals and families face when trying to access and secure housing in Greater Victoria. A key component of the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness' strategy is to increase access to rental market housing for people experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness.

## Private Rental Market

### Vacancy Rates

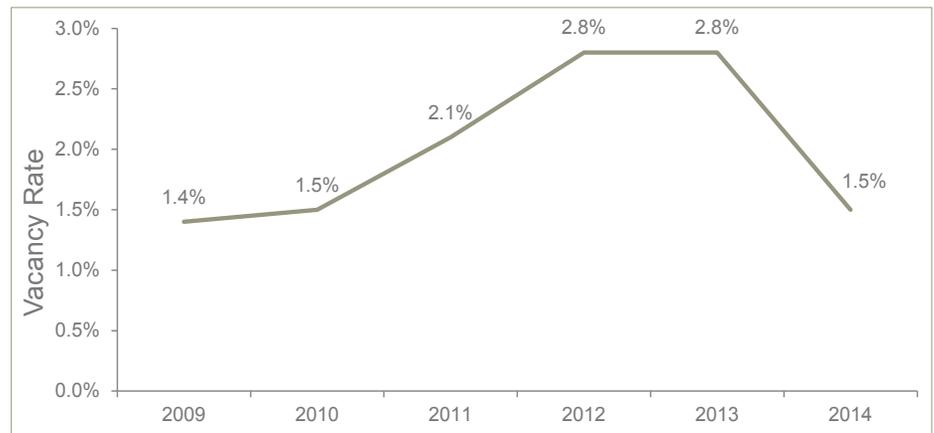
Victoria CMA's overall vacancy rate showed a notable decline from 2.8% in 2013 to 1.5% in 2014, and is now at its lowest level since 2010.<sup>9</sup> This vacancy rate is just below the provincial overall vacancy rate of 1.6%, and even further below the national overall vacancy rate of 3.0% in 2014, situating Greater Victoria's vacancy rate considerably below the Canadian average.<sup>10</sup>

Much of the decline of available rental housing stock in the Greater Victoria area can be attributed to a combination of factors including better employment opportunities for younger age groups, population growth and the gap between the high cost of renting and the high cost of homeownership.<sup>11</sup>

The Victoria CMA rental market is becoming increasingly inaccessible for anyone looking to rent for less than \$700/month or between \$700 and \$799 per month. The vacancy rate for apartment units for less than \$700 a month was 1.5% and 1.1% for apartment units within the \$700 to \$799 price range for Victoria CMA in 2014.<sup>12</sup> These low vacancy rates are a sign of an unhealthy rental market.

Bachelor apartments are often the least expensive market rental housing available and historically have been a viable option for low-income singles. But when vacancy rates hover around 1%, individuals experiencing homelessness looking to rent the least expensive units in the rental market often find

### Vacancy Rate for Private Row (Townhouse) and Apartments 2009 to 2014, Victoria CMA



Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2014). Rental Market Report: Victoria CMA

8 11th Annual Demographia International Housing Affordability Survey: 2015 Ratings for Metropolitan Markets. Accessed online at: <http://www.demographia.com/dhi.pdf>

9 Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation. Rental Market Survey (2013-2014).

10 Ibid

11 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2014). Rental Market Report: Victoria CMA

12 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2014). Rental Market Report: Victoria CMA

that there is nothing available to them, which can prolong their experience of homelessness.

The overall vacancy rate for bachelor apartments declined by a full percentage point from 2.3% in 2013 to 1.4% in 2014, and the vacancy rate for bachelor units in the \$700 to \$799 rent range was less than one per cent (0.9%). The overall vacancy rate for one-bedroom apartments experienced a similar decline between 2013 and 2014. In 2013, the overall vacancy rate was 3% for one-bedroom apartments but then decreased to 1.5% in 2014. The vacancy rate for one-bedroom apartments in the less than \$700 rent range was 1.4% in 2014 and 1.1% for units in the \$700 to \$799 rent range.

Multi-bedroom units also experienced a decline in vacancy rates. The overall vacancy rate for two-bedroom units went from 2.5% in 2013 to 1.4% in 2014. What is especially troubling, particularly for low-income families looking for affordable rental units, is the vacancy rate for multi-bedroom units considered affordable for low-income families are in decline. For example, two-bedroom apartments for less than \$700 per month had a 0.0% vacancy rate in 2013 and 2014. Two-bedroom units in the \$700 to \$799 range had a 1.9% vacancy rate in 2013 and a 1.7% vacancy rate in 2014. The decline in vacancy rates for multi-bedroom units available at an affordable price may put more low-income families at risk of housing instability and homelessness.

### Bachelor Apartment Vacancy Rate Comparison<sup>13</sup>

	2011	2012	2013	2014
Bachelor Overall Vacancy Rate <sup>14</sup>	1.7%	1.3%	2.3%	1.4%
Bachelor Vacancy Rate for Rent Range less than \$700/month <sup>15</sup>	2.1%	0.9%	2.1%	1.5%
Bachelor Vacancy Rate for Rent Range \$700-799		1.6%	2.3%	0.9%

Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2011-2014). Rental Market Report: Victoria CMA

### 1 Bedroom Apartment Vacancy Rate Comparison

	2011	2012	2013	2014
1 Bedroom Overall Vacancy Rate <sup>16</sup>	2.5%	2.9%	3.0%	1.5%
1 Bedroom Vacancy Rate for Rent Range less than \$700/month <sup>17</sup>	1.1%	1.0%	2.4%	1.4%
1 Bedroom Vacancy Rate for Rent Range \$700-799		2.7%	2.5%	1.1%
1 Bedroom Vacancy Rate for Rent Range \$800-\$899		3.4%	3.0%	1.2%

Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2011-2014). Rental Market Report: Victoria CMA

### 2 Bedroom Apartment Vacancy Rate Comparison

	2011	2012	2013	2014
2 Bedroom Overall Vacancy Rate <sup>18</sup>	1.7%	2.9%	2.5%	1.5%
2 Bedroom Vacancy Rate for Rent Range less than \$700/month <sup>19</sup>	**20	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
2 Bedroom Vacancy Rate for Rent Range \$700-799		2.1%	1.9%	1.7%
2 Bedroom Vacancy Rate for Rent Range \$800-\$899		4.6%	4.5%	1.5%

Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2011-2014). Rental Market Report: Victoria CMA

13 Note that this data is based on private apartments only, not apartment and townhouse combined, as is the case for the rest of the rental market data in the report. However, the rental stock universes for the categories of 'private apartments only' and 'private apartments and row house combined' are approximately the same for these portions of the market and thus, does not affect data comparability with other housing data in this report.

14 Private Apartment Vacancy Rates (%) by Structure Size and Bedroom Type: Victoria CMA

15 Ibid

16 Ibid

17 Private Apartment Vacancy Rates (%) by Rent Range and Bedroom Type: Victoria CMA

18 Private Apartment Vacancy Rates (%) by Rent Range and Bedroom Type: Victoria CMA

19 Private Apartment Vacancy Rates (%) by Rent Range and Bedroom Type: Victoria CMA

20 Data suppressed by CMHC to protect confidentiality or data not statistically reliable.

As illustrated in the table below, vacancy rates for bachelor apartments are notably higher in Greater Victoria's outlying municipalities where fewer services and rental units are located. The vacancy rate in the West Shore showed a considerable increase in vacancy rate rising from 5.6% in 2012/13 to 11.5% in 2014. In contrast, the City of Victoria is on the lower end of the spectrum at 1.1% in 2014, down from 2.2% in 2013.

The least expensive rental option – a bachelor unit in the West Shore at \$599 – has an 11.5% vacancy rate, at first glance this seems promising but these numbers are not so optimistic when we consider that there are only a total of 39 units available in the West Shore and that these units are located far away from services. The majority of bachelor units in the rental universe are located in the City of Victoria (2,284) with an average rental cost of \$731 – and a 1.1% vacancy rate.

<b>Average Rent and Vacancy Rates for Bachelor Apartments, 2013 to 2014, Victoria CMA</b>				
<b>Area</b>	<b>2013 Average Rent</b>	<b>2014 Average Rent</b>	<b>2013 Vacancy Rate</b>	<b>2014 Vacancy Rate</b>
Cook Street Area	\$710	\$718	1.6%	0.7%
Fort Street Area	\$694	\$718	1.6%	0.4%
James Bay Area	\$711	\$727	1.5%	2.0%
Remainder of City	\$732	\$745	3.2%	1.0%
City of Victoria (Zones 1-4)	\$715	\$731	2.2%	1.1%
Saanich/Central Saanich	\$672	\$717	3.5%	2.6%
Esquimalt	\$643	\$656	2.5%	1.6%
Langford/View Royal/Colwood/Sooke	\$604	\$599	5.6%	11.5%
Oak Bay	\$685	\$693	0.0%	1.8%
North Saanich	-	-	-	_ <sup>21</sup>
Sidney	**	**	**	** <sup>22</sup>
Remainder of CMA (Zones 5-10)	\$658	\$683	2.8%	3.1%
<b>Victoria CMA</b>	<b>\$706</b>	<b>\$723</b>	<b>2.3%</b>	<b>1.4%</b>

Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2014). Rental Market Report: Victoria CMA

## Cost of Rent

From 2012 to 2014, as in previous years, average rents increased for all unit types. The 2014 average rent for a bachelor apartment in Greater Victoria increased by 2.3%<sup>23</sup> since 2012 to \$723 (compared to \$695 in 2012). Nationally, the average rent for bachelor apartments in Canada was \$690 (\$674 in 2013) with Victoria ranking 8<sup>th</sup> most expensive city in Canada.<sup>24</sup>

Most municipalities in Greater Victoria experienced a decrease in rental vacancy and an increase in average monthly rent for a bachelor apartment, with the exception of the West Shore municipalities where there was an increase in rental vacancy and a slight decrease in rental costs per month.

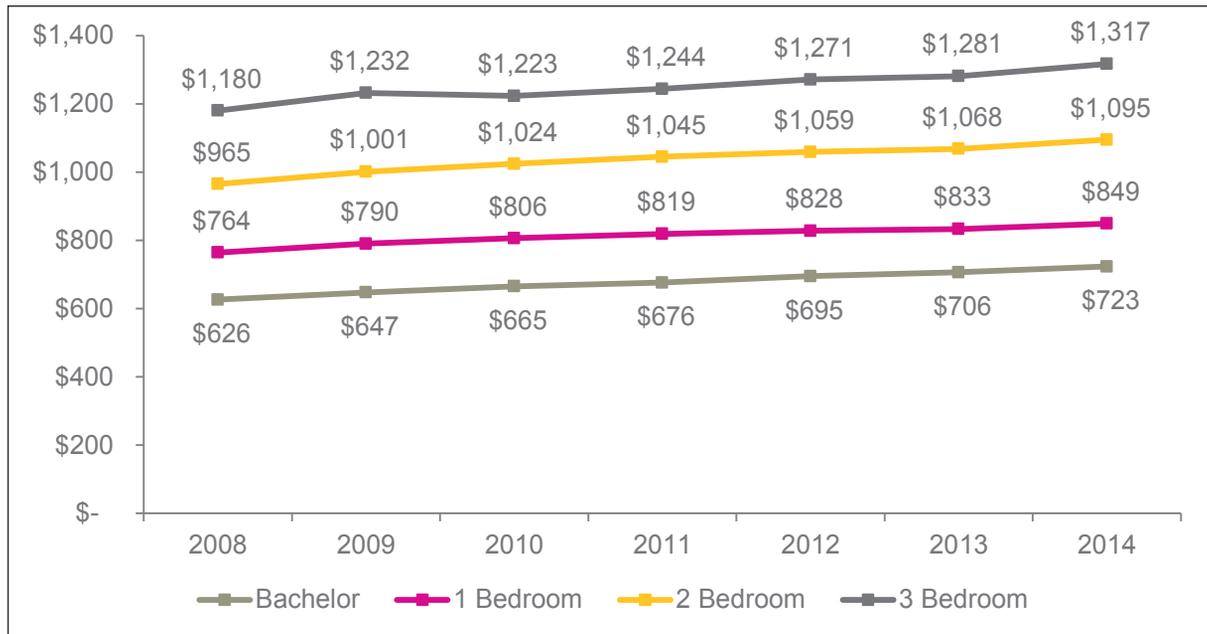
21 No units exist in the universe for this category

22 Data suppressed by CMHC to protect confidentiality or statistically unreliable data

23 The percent change of average rent is a measure of market movement, and is based on those structures that were common to the survey sample across the years.

24 CMHC. (2013-2014). Rental Market Statistics.

**Average Rent by Unit Type, 2008 to 2014, Victoria CMA**



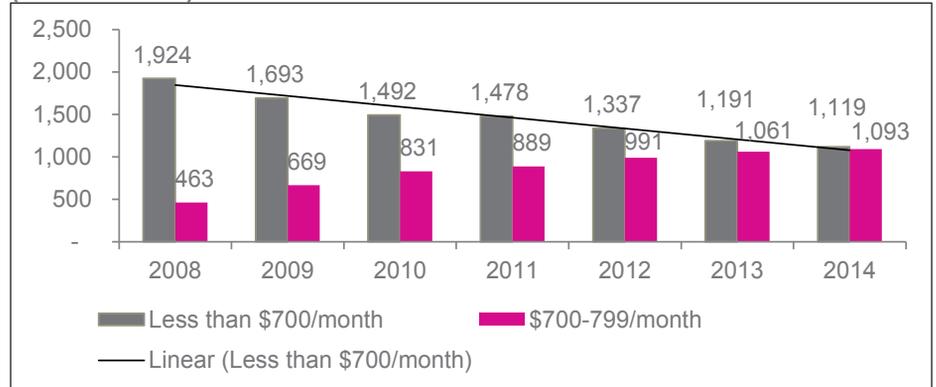
Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing. (2008-2014). Rental Market Survey, Victoria CMA.

In most municipalities the cost at the low end of the market continues to increase while the availability for affordable rental housing for people on social assistance or fixed incomes has been further diminished. As it will be revealed later in this report, incomes for people on social assistance have not increased at this rate to compensate for the rise in rental costs.

The challenge to find suitable housing for low-income individuals and families becomes more clear when we look at the declining number of bachelor and one-bedroom suites that cost less than \$700/month.

Since 2008, the overall rental stock has remained relatively stable and unchanged but there has been a continual decline in the total number of suites on the market that are less than \$700/month. The reality of a diminishing stock of affordable bachelor and one bedroom apartment rental options at the low end of the market suggests that people on low or fixed incomes are at risk of being pushed out of the rental market as there are fewer affordable rental options for them.

**Total Bachelor Apt Units in Rental Universe by Rental Range (Victoria CMA)**



Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2008-2014). Rental Market Survey.

**Total One Bedroom Apt Units in Rental Universe by Rental Range (Victoria CMA)**



Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2008-2014). Rental Market Survey.

# Income

It's well documented that an adequate income that affords individuals and families safe and affordable housing is a key factor in ending homelessness.<sup>25</sup> The living wage, a calculation of the cost of living for a family of four demonstrates why so many recipients of income assistance and minimum wage earners depend on other community resources in order to survive.

## Living Wage

The Living Wage<sup>26</sup> reflects the wage both parents in a two parent, two child family need to make in a 35-hour work week in order to experience an adequate quality of life in Greater Victoria. For 2015, the living wage increased to \$20.05, a 5.9% increase from 2014. Recently, in September 2015, the minimum wage in BC increased to \$10.45 per hour<sup>27</sup>, which is only slightly over half the wage needed to obtain an adequate lifestyle in the region.

**A family of four would have to make approx. \$5,606.97 per month to maintain an adequate quality of life.**

A family of four would have to make approximately \$5,606.97 per month to maintain an adequate quality of life.<sup>28</sup>

Instead of the living wage, low-income families are often earning at or slightly above the minimum wage. Many jobs, even those requiring technical training and education, pay above minimum wage but still remain below a living wage.<sup>29</sup> For example, cashiers, security guards, cooks, childhood educators and assistants are paid a wage below the living wage and many of these jobs carry the additional challenge of job insecurity, as minimum wage jobs may have a brief tenure.<sup>30</sup>

Families who receive a low-income wage often face impossible choices between rent and food, utilities and clothing, transportation and school supplies. Every dollar earned that falls below the living wage comes at the cost of some basic living requirement. Many families in this predicament face the risk of food, income and housing insecurity.

25 Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria. (2015). Supplement Report: Working for a Living Wage Report 2015 Update.

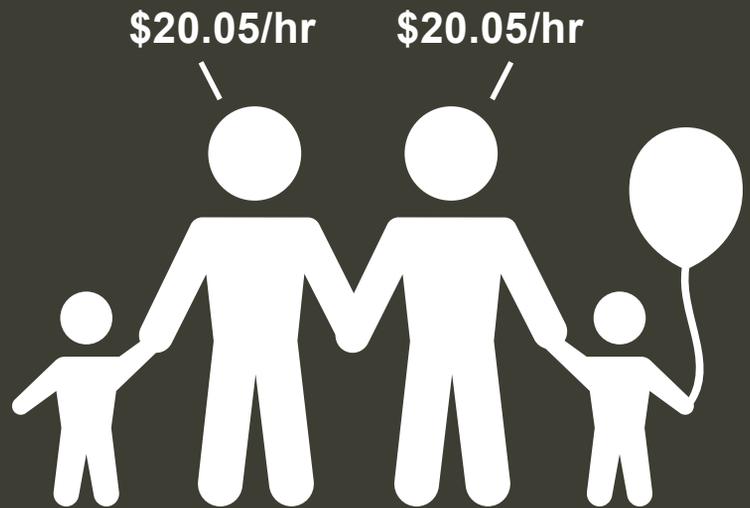
26 Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria. (2015). Supplement Report: Working for a Living Wage Report 2015 Update.

27 Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training and Responsible for Labour. (2015). Minimum Wage Factsheet.

28 Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria. (2015). Supplement Report: Working for a Living Wage Report 2015 Update.

29 BC Stats. (2010). BC Wage & Salary Survey 2009: Highlights. Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development.

30 BC Stats. (2010). BC Wage & Salary Survey 2009: Highlights. Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development.



## WITH A LIVING WAGE, A FAMILY IN GREATER VICTORIA:



**Adequately feed, clothe and shelter their household**



**Save for children's education, to purchase home, holidays or retirement**



**Maintain the health of family members**



**Service debts or credit card bills**



**Participate in activities that are an ordinary part of community life**



**Afford to care for an elderly relative or a disabled family member**



**Receive up to two weeks paid time off for illness annually**



**Own a home**

## Basic Costs for Individuals

The struggle to secure an adequate standard of living is comparatively difficult for singles on low incomes where it can be challenging to cover the basic necessities – food and shelter. Often low-income singles may have to choose between paying the rent and other necessities such as food, or utilities.

The table below estimates the amount a single male collecting income assistance would have left over after rent and food costs were paid. Each scenario demonstrates that even for the assistance category that receives the highest benefit, Persons with Disabilities; there is not enough income to cover basic costs. Income assistance rates have not increased since 2007.

Monthly Costs: Shelter and Food for Single Individuals on Income Assistance, 2012-2014									
Single Individual (male)	Persons with Disabilities			Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers			Income Assistance - Expected to Work		
	2012	2013	2014	2012	2013	2014	2012	2013	2014
Average Assistance Paid <sup>31</sup>	\$848.00	\$841.00	\$841.00	\$626.00	\$614.00	\$612.00	\$543.00	\$547.00	\$527.00
Median Rent - Bachelor Apt <sup>32</sup>	\$695.00	\$700.00	\$720.00	\$695.00	\$700.00	\$720.00	\$695.00	\$700.00	\$720.00
Average monthly cost of eating <sup>33</sup>	\$300.24	\$308.84	\$313.94	\$300.24	\$308.84	\$313.94	\$300.24	\$308.84	\$313.94
<b>Remainder for other monthly expenses</b>	<b>-\$147.24</b>	<b>-\$167.84</b>	<b>-\$192.94</b>	<b>-\$369.24</b>	<b>-\$394.84</b>	<b>-\$421.94</b>	<b>-\$452.24</b>	<b>-\$461.84</b>	<b>-\$505.94</b>

Sources: Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation; Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (2012-2014); Provincial Health Services Authority; Dieticians of Canada; Statistics Canada.

31 In consultation with staff at the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation, Average Assistance Paid replaces Income Assistance Rates in the calculation for the monthly costs for individuals receiving Income Assistance. The ministry maintains dozens of allowance codes (e.g. sixty-eight as of March 2015) that clients might receive based on their particular circumstances (i.e. household size, medical needs, etc.) at any point in time. Some are received as a one-time only allowance, and others are provided on an ongoing/monthly basis. Similarly, many clients have sources of income that are exempt. As each client's needs are unique, it is more accurate to provide figures that represent actual amounts paid (as opposed to what might be a hypothetical client).

32 The median rent presented in this table is from the corresponding Fall Rental Market Surveys for 2012, 2013, and 2014. The Fall Rental Market Survey presents a more complete picture of the housing market for the reference year, compared to the Spring Rental Market Survey released in April of the reference year. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2012-2014). Advancing Affordable Housing Solutions: Affordability Criteria.

33 The cost of eating for 2012 is based on an analysis by the Dieticians of Canada. (2011). The Cost of Eating in British Columbia; the 2013 and 2014 estimates are based on an analysis by the Provincial Health Services Authority (2014). Food costing in BC 2013. For each year, the cost was adjusted for Island Health Area and household size, and adjusted using the consumer price index (CPI).

Since 2012, the average rent paid by recipients of Income Assistance (total) in Greater Victoria has increased from \$488 per month in 2012 to \$498 per month in 2014, which was noticeably higher than the provincial average of \$465 per month.<sup>34</sup> In comparison, the maximum shelter portion for employable singles is \$375 so recipients have to use the rest of their income to cover rent, which doesn't leave much for other basic needs like food or utilities.

As noted earlier, the availability of affordable rental units in the private rental market is decreasing. A single individual working a full-time job for minimum wage will continue to find it difficult to secure affordable housing. An individual earning a low-income means that the median rent for a bachelor apartment at \$720 in 2014 would be 42% of their income, well above what is considered affordable.<sup>35</sup>

To meet the affordability threshold of 30% (see Core Housing Need on next page), the individual would have to work a 54-hour work week or alternatively pay approximately \$520/month for rent.

<b>Monthly Costs: Shelter and Food for Single Individual</b>			
	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>
Single individual earning minimum wage <sup>36</sup>	<b>(\$9.50/hour)</b>	<b>(\$10.25/hour)</b>	<b>(\$10.25/hour)</b>
After-tax income <sup>37</sup>	\$1,433.00	\$1,524.00	\$1,523.00
Bachelor Apartment Media Rent <sup>38</sup>	\$695.00	\$700.00	\$720.00
Average monthly cost of eating	\$300.24	\$308.84	\$313.94
<b>Remainder for other monthly expenses</b>	<b>\$437.76</b>	<b>\$515.16</b>	<b>\$489.06</b>

34 Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation. (2015).

35 Housing is considered affordable when it does not exceed 30% of a household's before tax income.

36 Ministry of Jobs, Training and Skills Training. (2012-2014).

37 After tax income was calculated using an online tool TaxTips (<http://www.taxtips.ca/>). The amount includes federal and provincial taxes paid, plus EI and CPP contributions. The after-tax income presented here does not include GST credit, PST credit, BC Low Income Climate Tax Credit or the Working Income Tax Benefit (which this individual would not be eligible for).

38 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2012-2014).

# The Challenge in Greater Victoria

## At-Risk of Homelessness

Having examined some of the contributors or pathways into homelessness, the following section of the report will investigate indicators that will outline the scope of the challenges individuals and families face in securing adequate shelter and basic necessities for living. It is difficult to identify an exact number of those at-risk of or currently experiencing homelessness in Greater Victoria. Yet we are able to use a variety of data from different sources to help identify strong indicators to measure the extent of the challenge and to gain a better understanding of how many individuals are at risk of homelessness and how homelessness is experienced in the community.

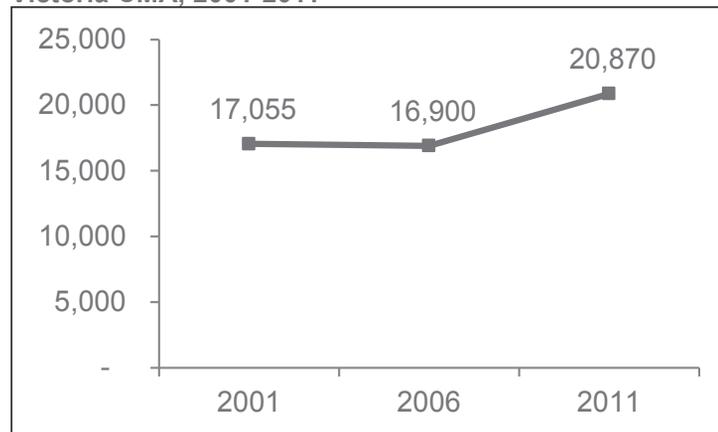
### Core Housing Need

A household is in core housing need if its housing does not meet one or more of the adequate, suitable or affordability standards and it would have to spend 30% or more of its before-tax income to access local housing that meets all three standards.<sup>39</sup>

A household is in core housing need if its shelter is in need of major repairs, is overcrowded or where rental or mortgage payments cost more than 30% of before-tax household income.<sup>40</sup> A household would be in severe housing need if they were below median income and paying more than 50% of their income on housing.<sup>41</sup>

In the Victoria CMA, in 2011, 20,870 households were considered to be in core housing need.<sup>42</sup> Single person households accounted for more than half (53%) or 11,230 of households in core housing need. Renter households experience higher rates of core housing need than homeowners.<sup>43</sup> The total number of households in core housing need in the Victoria CMA has increased since 2001.<sup>44</sup>

**Number of Households in Core Housing Need, Victoria CMA, 2001-2011**



Source: *Capital Region Housing Data Book and Gap Analysis*. (2015).

39 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. 2011 Census/National Household Survey Housing Conditions Series: Issue 2 The Geography of Core Housing Need in 2011.

40 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. 2011 Census/National Household Survey Housing Conditions Series: Issue 2 The Geography of Core Housing Need in 2011.

41 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2010) 2006 Census Housing Series: Issues 8 – Households in Core Housing Need and Spending at Least 50% of Their Income on Shelter.

42 Capital Regional District. (2015). *Capital Region Housing Data Book and Gap Analysis*.

43 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. 2011 Census/National Household Survey Housing Series: Issue 3. The Adequacy, Suitability, and Affordability of Canadian Housing, 1991 – 2011.

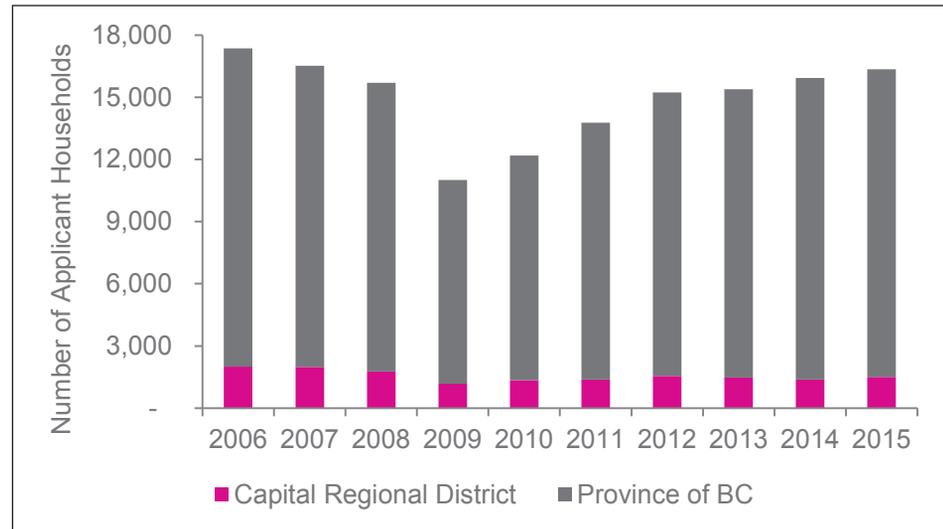
44 Capital Regional District. (2015). *Capital Region Housing Data Book and Gap Analysis*

## Social Housing Registry

The Housing Registry is a centralized database for housing providers, which allows individuals and families to apply for subsidized housing using one application form.<sup>45</sup> When housing units become available, housing providers are able to use the database to find tenants.<sup>46</sup>

The Housing Registry also provides an up-to-date assessment of the demand for subsidized housing.<sup>47</sup> As of March 31, 2015, there were a total of 1,502 households on the registry in the Capital Regional District (CRD), which is an increase of 121 households from 1,381 in 2014. The total of 1,502 includes households who are waiting for transfers, have pending applications, or are under review.

**Housing Registry Applicant Households, as of March 31st of Each Year, 2006 to 2015**



Source: BC Housing, Operations Branch, Housing Services Reporting, 4th Quarter Activity - March 31, 2006-2015

The dramatic drop in the number of applicants between 2006 and 2009 was due to the Rental Assistance Program (RAP) for working families, which was introduced in 2006 and expanded in 2008.<sup>48</sup> In 2015, there were 414 families<sup>49</sup> on the registry in the CRD, up from 379 in 2014. The number of seniors on the registry also increased to 510 from 452 in 2014. The number of seniors on the registry has been relatively steady since 2006 with the exception of a dip in 2009. These year-over-year numbers demonstrate an on-going need for subsidized housing in the CRD.

45 Applicant statistics reflect applicant households with active (live) or on hold status in the Housing Registry (BC Housing, 2015)

46 BC Housing, 2015. Accessed online at [http://www.bchousing.org/Partners/Housing\\_Registry](http://www.bchousing.org/Partners/Housing_Registry)

47 Housing providers that do not participate in the Housing Registry keep their own applicant lists; therefore this is not a census of the number of individuals and families in need of subsidized housing. (BC Housing, 2015)

48 For families to be eligible, they must have a gross household income of \$35,000 or less, have at least one dependent child, and have been employed at some point over the last year (BC Housing, 2015).

- See more at: [http://www.bchousing.org/Options/Rental\\_market/RAP#sthash.V2cQPpPO.dpuf](http://www.bchousing.org/Options/Rental_market/RAP#sthash.V2cQPpPO.dpuf)

49 Families are a minimum of two people, including a child (BC Housing, 2015)

## Food Bank Use

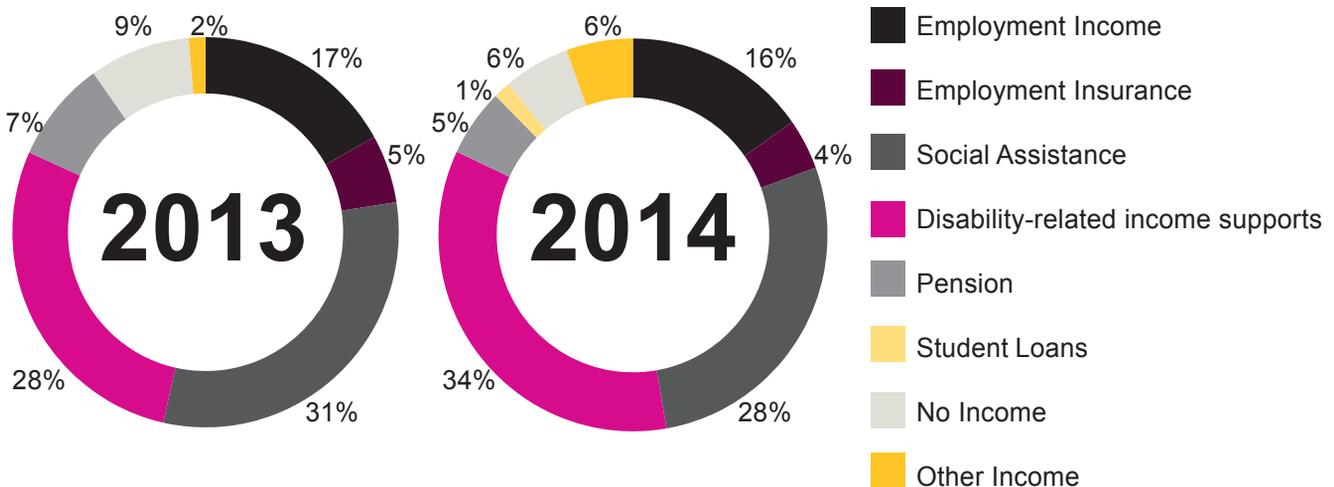
Food bank usage is an indicator both of food insecurity and those at risk of homelessness. In 2013, there was an overall increase in the number of people accessing food banks from the previous year, however there was a decrease in the number of adults accessing food banks and an increase in children's usage of food banks; 32% of food bank users in Greater Victoria were children.<sup>50</sup> In 2014 food bank usage dropped for adults and children.



Number of Individuals Accessing Food Banks in Greater Victoria <sup>51</sup>			
	2012	2013	2014
Adults accessing food banks	16,527	14,437	12,718
Children accessing food banks <sup>52</sup>	3,997	7,111	5,985
<b>Total people accessing food banks</b>	<b>20,524</b>	<b>21,524</b>	<b>18,703</b>

Source: Food Banks Canada (2014). HungerCount 2014.

## Sources of Income of Total Households Assisted in March 2013 and 2014



Source: Food Banks Canada (2014). HungerCount 2014.

50 Food Banks Canada (2014). HungerCount 2014.

51 The figures used are based on data collected from five Greater Victoria food banks. The data is collected through a survey conducted every March for individuals served that month.

52 Food Banks Canada defines children as 17 years of age and under. Generally these clients are part of a family receiving food and not collecting their own food bank hampers.

# Experiencing Homelessness

To better understand the scope of housing need and the number of people currently experiencing homelessness in Greater Victoria we can observe annual emergency shelter use and the number of people accessing temporary accommodations. While these observations and counts are typically underestimates, they can inform us about the scope and nature of homelessness and can be used as a benchmark as to whether or not the condition is changing.

## Emergency Shelter Use

There are many individuals that are currently experiencing the realities of having no permanent place to call home and need to access emergency shelter. Drawing on data from six Greater Victoria emergency shelters over the past year, at least 1,725 unique individuals used an emergency shelter at least once in 2014/15.<sup>53</sup>

<b>Unique Emergency Shelter Clients including Out of the Rain Youth Shelter, 2012-2015</b>			
	<b>2012/13<sup>54</sup></b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>
<b>Emergency Shelter Users</b>	<b>1,784</b>	<b>1,919</b>	<b>1,725</b>

53 Of the five adult programs, all of them are run by Victoria Cool Aid Society and three operate year-round (Next Steps, Sandy Merriman, and Rock Bay Landing emergency shelter beds) and two operate seasonally (Rock Bay Landing seasonal mat program and Seasonal Shelter (formerly Divine Intervention) mat program). The one youth shelter program is a seasonal mat program run by Beacon Community Services. Source: Victoria Cool Aid Society. (2015). HIFIS Report extract "Shelter and Stay Statistics"

54 Numbers differ slightly from those previously reported as a result of data corrections and increased standardization.

## Emergency Shelter Occupancy

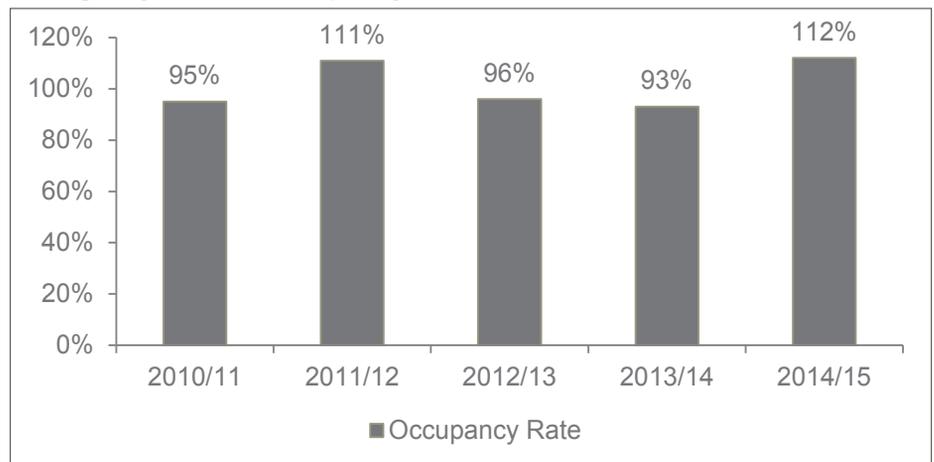
Emergency shelters in Greater Victoria are extensively accessed and used. Shelter occupancy is a measure of how frequently shelter beds were used throughout a given year. At times when shelters reach maximum levels of occupancy facility operators are often forced to turn people away as a result of having no extra beds to accommodate individuals in need of shelter. On the night of the February 5, 2014 facility count, 41 individuals were turned away from emergency shelters.<sup>55,56</sup>

**On Feb 5, 2014**

**41 individuals  
were turned away**

In 2014/15, emergency shelters funded through BC Housing's Emergency Shelter Program had an occupancy rate of 112%.<sup>57</sup> This reveals that our emergency shelters are still operating over capacity. This is primarily due to the use of emergency mats in a communal space within shelters opened to accommodate those in need of shelter during the winter months.

Emergency Shelter Occupancy Rate, 2010/11-2014/15



Source: BC Housing, Homelessness Services System (HSS), 2010-2015

## Profile of Emergency Shelter Users

People who access emergency shelters in Greater Victoria come from a range of backgrounds.

Since 2005/06 far fewer women have been accessing emergency shelters than men.<sup>58</sup> Between 2013/14 and 2014/15, there was a slight increase in the percentage of women accessing emergency shelters. In 2013/14, 20% of shelter users reported female as their gender and in 2014/15, 26% reported female as their gender.<sup>59</sup>

Women are often victims of violence and trauma and are therefore reluctant to access co-ed shelters because

of safety concerns.<sup>60</sup> Also, women's experiences of homelessness are often hidden which means they access shelters at a less frequent rate than men do.<sup>61</sup>

Similar to previous years, 20% of emergency shelter users identified as Aboriginal<sup>62</sup> in 2014/15. Shelter users who identify as Aboriginal have represented between 19% and 23% of the emergency shelter user population in Greater Victoria since 2008/09.<sup>63</sup>

Since 2008/09 there has been a steady increase in the proportion of people age 56 years and over accessing emergency shelters in Greater Victoria. The proportion of younger people aged 19 to 36, also showed an increase up

55 Albert, M., Pauly, B., Cross, G and Cooper, T. (2014) One Night Only: Report of those Staying in Temporary Accommodation in Greater Victoria. Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness.

56 A limitation of this data is that there is no way to ensure that individuals who may be denied entry into one emergency shelter are not double counted when they attempt to gain entry into another full shelter on that same evening.

57 Total occupancy rates were over 100% primarily due to extra mats at Rock Bay Landing, which are not included in ESP capacity but recorded by provider as shelter stays in Homelessness Services System. Other shelters may also have additional capacity, which is not included in bed-nights available but is included in bed-nights used.

58 The number of shelters users reporting 'Other' as their gender have been less than 1% since 2008.

59 BC Housing, Research and Corporate Planning Department Databases, 2005-2008; BC Housing, Homelessness Services System (HSS), 2008-2015

60 Elizabeth Fry Society. (2012). Bridging the Divide: Building Safe Shelters for Women and Families in BC.

61 Van Burkam, A and Oudshoorn, A. (2015). Best Practice Guideline for Ending Women's and Girl's Homelessness.

62 The Aboriginal identity indicator became mandatory for providers to fill in during the 2010/11 fiscal year, which has led to improved reporting on this indicator. Aboriginal identity is self-reported by clients.

63 BC Housing, Research and Corporate Planning Department Databases, 2005-2008; BC Housing, Homelessness Services System (HSS), 2008-2015

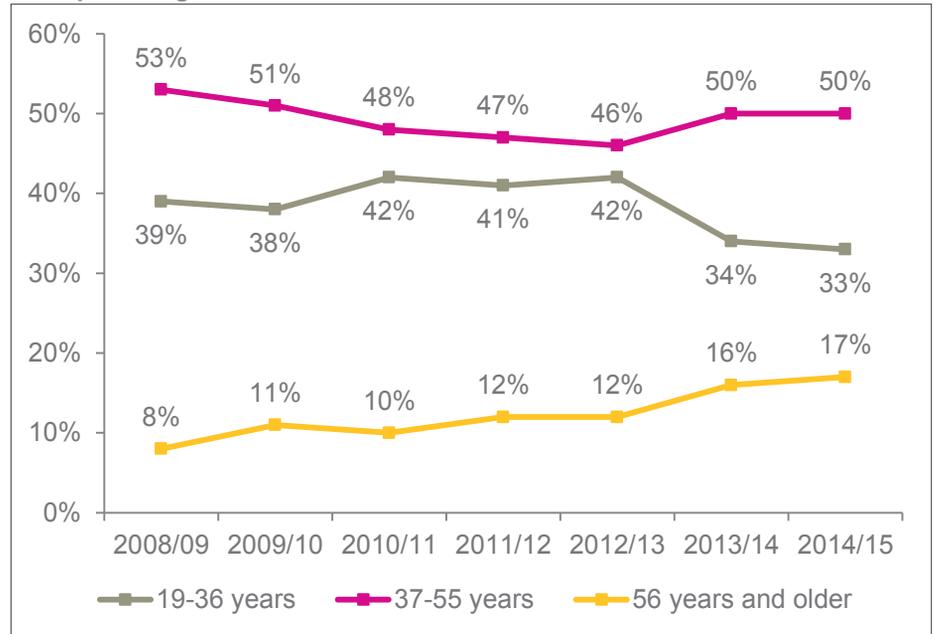
**Women accessing EWR beds has increased from 6% in 2010/11 to 25% in 2014/15.**

to 2012/13. From 2012/13 onward there has been a steady decline in emergency shelter use by younger people.

There are a variety of reasons why people experiencing homelessness do not stay in emergency shelters. Some of these reasons include restrictive policies like not allowing pets while others have to do with safety concerns. People not accessing emergency shelters often end up sleeping outdoors.

Sleeping outdoors is not easy and becomes life threatening when the weather becomes colder and wetter. Extreme Weather Response (EWR) mats (also known as the Extreme Weather Protocol in Greater Victoria)

**Age Profile of Emergency Shelter Program (ESP) Clients in Capital Regional District, 2008-2015**



Source: BC Housing, Research and Corporate Planning Department Databases, 2005-2008; BC Housing, Homelessness Services System (HSS), 2008-2015

supplement year-round emergency and seasonal shelters. The EWR mats are activated during extreme weather conditions and usually involve mats on a hall floor. When the EWR mats are activated, there is always space available to accommodate people seeking shelter. In 2014/15, on nights when the EWR mats were activated, an average of 100 mats were available from October to December and 81 mats were available from January to March,

including both EWR and seasonal shelter beds. People accessing the EWR mats and seasonal shelter beds in 2014/15 were 25% female and 75% male. The percent of females accessing beds has increased steadily from 6% in 2010/11 to 25% in 2014/15.

**2014/15 Greater Victoria Emergency Shelter User Stats**

**1,725**  
Emergency Shelter Users

**112%**  
Occupancy Rate

**166**  
Youth Shelter Users

**26%**  
Female

**20%**  
Aboriginal

**17%**  
Age 56+

# Community Response to Homelessness

**Many communities across British Columbia are working on a variety of ways to support individuals and families experiencing homelessness, and respond to affordable housing crises.**

To understand if our responses are effective, we focus on three things that can help us understand if we are making progress on housing and supporting people.<sup>64</sup> These include looking at the number of new affordable units added in our community, looking at how many people receive rent supports to help them stay housed, and how many people have become, and remain housed.

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<sup>64</sup> These three areas were also examined in the 2012/13 Report on Housing and Supports.

## Subsidized Housing Units

Subsidized housing units are available to families and individuals across Greater Victoria. In some cases tenants pay a flat rent below the maximum shelter allowance for income assistance and in other cases tenants will contribute 30% of their household income up to a maximum of the market or economic rent for the project.<sup>65</sup> Subsidized units are operated by BC Housing and other non-profit housing providers in the region.

<b>Average Monthly Tenant Rent Contributions, March 31, 2015</b>	
<b>Client Group</b>	<b>Average Monthly Tenant Rent Contribution</b>
Homeless Housed <sup>67</sup>	\$373
Frail Seniors <sup>*68</sup>	\$1,163
Special Needs <sup>69</sup>	\$352
Independent Seniors <sup>**70</sup>	\$403
Low Income Families <sup>***71</sup>	\$536
<b>All Client Groups</b>	<b>\$522</b>

\* includes shelter and support costs

\*\* excluding SAFER

\*\*\* excluding RAP

Source: BC Housing, *Housing Connections, March 31, 2015*

The average monthly tenant rent contributions in units directly managed by BC Housing and non-profit housing providers that receive a subsidy from BC Housing as of March 31, 2015, ranged from \$373 (for tenants in units targeted to individuals who are at risk of homelessness or formerly experienced homelessness), to \$536 (for low-income families), to \$1,163 (frail seniors who need access to housing with on-going supports and services).<sup>66</sup>

## New Affordable Housing Units

In 2014/15, there were 112 new affordable units added to the supply in the CRD. This does not include emergency shelters or rent supplement units. At the same time, there were 256 units that were deactivated.<sup>72</sup>

Since 2009, a total of 272 new units were added to the affordable housing stock in the CRD, not including emergency shelters or rent supplement units. See the following section for a discussion on rent supplements.

As of 2014/15, BC Housing administered a total of 7,402<sup>73</sup> affordable housing units in the Capital Regional District, 444 of which are designated for individuals experiencing homelessness.<sup>74</sup>

The need for more affordable housing in the region has been clear for almost a decade. The 2007 CRD Regional Housing Affordability Strategy stated that the housing situation had worsened in the decade preceding the report.<sup>75</sup> More recently, the CRD released a housing gap analysis that clearly shows an over-supply of high cost housing, and a stark under-supply of housing affordable for low-income families and individuals.<sup>76</sup>

65 BC Housing's Research and Corporate Planning Department, September 2015

66 BC Housing, *Housing Connections, March 31, 2015*

67 Refers to housing for clients that is provided for a minimum of 30 days and up to two or three years. The housing includes the provision of on- or off-site support services to help the clients move towards independence and self-sufficiency. This housing is targeted to individuals who are at risk of homelessness, or formerly homeless.

68 Housing for seniors who need access to housing with ongoing supports and services. Tenant rent contributions for frail seniors includes shelter and support costs.

69 Housing for clients who need access to affordable housing with support services. These clients include for example adults with mental and/or physical disabilities or youth.

70 Housing for seniors where minimal or no additional services are provided. Seniors are usually defined as individuals who are 65 years of age and older.

71 Independent housing for low to moderate income households with a minimum of two people including at least one dependent child.

72 Number of units deactivated counts the number of units that are no longer counted because the agreement between BC Housing and the housing provider expired or terminated during the fiscal year based on. This does not mean these units were removed from the regional housing stock. Almost all the deactivated units were in older care facilities where mortgage was paid off.

73 This number does not include rent supplement units or homeless shelters.

74 BC Housing, Central Property System, Unit Count Model for March 31, 2008, March 31, 2009, March 31, 2010, and March 31, 2011; BC Housing, Central Property System, Unit Count Pivot Tables for March 31, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015

75 Capital Regional District. (2007). *Regional Housing Affordability Strategy for the Capital Regional District*

76 Capital Regional District. (2015). *Capital Region Housing Data Book and Gap Analysis*

<b>Number of New<sup>77</sup> and Deactivated Units<sup>78</sup> Administered by BC Housing by Target Client Group in the Capital Regional District<sup>79</sup></b>														
<b>Client Group</b>	<b>Fiscal Year</b>												<b>Cumulative New Units Since 2009</b>	
	2009/10		2010/11		2011/12		2012/13 <sup>80</sup>		2013/14		2014/15			
	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-		
Homeless Housed <sup>*81</sup>	0	0	67	0	95	0	0	0	0	0	0	25	0	187
Special Needs <sup>**82</sup>	13	4	0	16	13	4	0	6	30	8	19	21	16	
Aboriginal Households <sup>83</sup>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	26	0	0	0	26	
Frail Seniors	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	24	0	0	0	234	-258	
Independent Seniors <sup>***</sup>	0	14	0	0	0	6	55	12	79	0	0	0	102	
<b>Low Income Families<sup>****</sup></b>	<b>69</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>199</b>	
<b>Net New Units per Year</b>	<b>18</b>		<b>75</b>		<b>152</b>		<b>46</b>		<b>125</b>		<b>-144</b>		<b>272</b>	

\* excluding Homeless Rent Supplements

\*\*including women and children fleeing violence

\*\*\*excluding SAFER

\*\*\*\*excluding RAP

Source: BC Housing, Central Property System, March 31 of 2010-2015

'+' = number of new units activated

'-' = number of units deactivated

77 Number of new units counts the number of units created during the fiscal year based on operating start date.

78 Number of units deactivated counts the number of units that are no longer counted because the agreement between BC Housing and the housing provider expired or terminated during the fiscal year based on the status change date.

79 This table only includes units funded by BC Housing. There may be other affordable units in the region that are not funded by BC Housing.

80 The difference between new units and deactivated units for each client group may not account for the change in units between 2012 and 2013 in Table 14. The balance are additions/deletions of units within projects or changes in client groups served for existing units.

81 Refers to housing for clients that is provided for a minimum of 30 days and up to two or three years. The housing includes the provision of on- or off-site support services to help the clients more towards independence and self-sufficiency. This housing is targeted to individuals who are at the risk of homelessness, or formerly homeless.

82 Refers to housing for clients who need access to affordable housing with support services. These clients include for example adults with mental and/or physical disabilities or youth.

83 Units are off-reserve and mainly targeted for Aboriginal families and individuals (Aboriginal clients may live in units targeted for any client group, but some units are targeted specifically for Aboriginal clients).

## Rental Assistance

BC Housing offers two rent subsidy programs for seniors and families. These include the Rental Assistance Program (RAP), and Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER), which provide financial assistance towards shelter costs in the private rental market.

RAP officially started in 2006, and offers monthly cash assistance towards shelter costs for working families renting in the private rental housing market. To be eligible, individuals must have a household income of \$35,000/year or less, and at least one dependent child, and have been employed at some point over the past year.<sup>84</sup> SAFER provides monthly cash assistance to seniors with low to moderate incomes who are renting in the private rental housing market. To be eligible, applicants must be age 60 or over, meet citizenship requirements, spend more than 30% of their gross household income on rent, and have lived in BC for more than 12 months preceding their application.

In the fiscal year 2014/15, the number of seniors receiving rent assistance in the CRD was 1,703, an increase of 157 since 2012/13. Over the same time period, the number of families receiving rent assistance increased from 756 in 2012/13 to 827 in 2014/15, an increase of 71 families in a two year period. The number of seniors and families receiving rent assistance has increased by 16% and 22% respectively since 2009/10.

The increase in rent seen across the private rental market is reflected in the steady increase in the average amount of rent supplements for households across BC. In 2014/15, the average amount of rent supplements for households receiving RAP was \$403.55/month, an increase of 16% since 2009/10.<sup>85</sup> The average amount of rent supplements for seniors receiving SAFER increased by 18% since 2009/10 from \$151.99/month to \$178.99/month respectively.<sup>86</sup>

Households Receiving Rental Assistance Program (RAP) and Shelter Aid for Elderly Residents (SAFER) Rent Supplements in BC and the CRD, 2009-2015												
Client Group	Fiscal Year											
	2009/10		2010/11		2011/12		2012/13		2013/14		2014/15	
	CRD	BC	CRD	BC	CRD	BC	CRD	BC	CRD	BC	CRD	BC
Seniors Rent Assistance*	1,467	15,848	1,524	15,818	1,555	16,474	1,546	16,757	1,586	17,413	1,703	18,472
Family Rent Assistance**	678	8,786	740	9,370	719	9,671	756	10,211	794	10,453	827	10,794
Total Rent Supplements	2,145	24,634	2,264	25,188	2,274	26,145	2,302	26,968	2,380	27,866	2,530	29,266

\* includes SAFER and other family rent supplements

\*\* includes RAP and other family rent supplements

Source: BC Housing, RAP and SAFER Databases, 2006-2010, Unit Count Pivot Tables, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 (# of supplements); BC Housing, RAP and SAFER Quarterly Reports 2006-2015 (average rate of supplements - \$); BC Housing, Central Property System, Unit Count Model for March 31, 2009, March 31, 2010, and March 31, 2011; BC Housing, Central Property System, Unit Count Pivot Tables for March 31, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015

84 BC Housing. (2015). Accessed online: [http://www.bchousing.org/Options/Rental\\_market](http://www.bchousing.org/Options/Rental_market)

85 BC Housing, RAP and SAFER Databases, 2006-2010, Unit Count Pivot Tables, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 (# of supplements); BC Housing, RAP and SAFER Quarterly Reports 2006-2015 (average rate of supplements - \$)

86 BC Housing, RAP and SAFER Databases, 2006-2010, Unit Count Pivot Tables, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 (# of supplements); BC Housing, RAP and SAFER Quarterly Reports 2006-2015 (average rate of supplements - \$)

## Rental Supplements

Along with rent supplements for seniors and low-income families, BC Housing also offers rent supplements for individuals who are experiencing homelessness. Homeless rent supplements connect people who are experiencing homelessness to housing, income assistance, and community-based support services through the Homelessness Outreach Program (HOP), Aboriginal Homelessness Outreach Program (AHOP), Homeless Prevention Program (HPP), Assertive Community Treatment (ACT), Victoria Integrated Community Outreach Team (VICOT), and Streets to Homes. In 2014/15, the following outreach sites included: Victoria Native Friendship Centre, Pacifica Housing Services, Burnside Gorge Community Association, the Cridge Centre for Family, and Threshold Housing Society.

By working closely with BC Housing and local stakeholders, the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness successfully advocated for an increase in the number of rent supplements available in the region for people who are experiencing homelessness. In 2014/15, the HPP was launched across the province and included an additional 117 rent supplements for individuals experiencing homelessness in the Capital Regional District.<sup>87</sup>

<b>Rent Supplements to Address Homelessness in Capital Regional District, 2009-2015</b>						
	<b>Fiscal Year</b>					
	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
<b>Homeless Rent Supplements (Hop and HPP)<sup>88</sup></b>	<b>70</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>150<sup>89</sup></b>	<b>150</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>358</b>

Source: BC Housing, Central Property System, Unit Count Model for March 31, 2008, March 31, 2009, March 31, 2010, and March 31, 2011; BC Housing, Central Property System, Unit Count Pivot Tables for March 31, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015

87 BC Housing. (2015). Research and Corporate Planning Department

88 The number of units shown represent an estimate of rent supplements given monthly based on available funding. Homeless Rent Supplement projects were first initiated in the 2008/2009 fiscal year. There are 30 Homeless Rent Supplements (HOP and HPP) administered by Aboriginal housing providers. These Homeless Rent Supplements are counted in the Homeless Rent Supplement client group rather than the Aboriginal Household client group to show how many Homeless Rent Supplements are available in the community.

89 The increase in the number of homeless rent supplements between March 31, 2011 and March 31, 2012 is due to a change in the way that homeless rent supplements are recorded in BC Housing systems and is not reflective of an increase in funding for homeless rent supplements in the Capital Regional District. The rent supplements figures include rent supplement funding from BC Housing used for HOP, AHOP, VICOT, Streets to Home, and ACT.”

## Number of People Housed

Outreach programs in the community assist and support individuals to move from homelessness to housed. This support is often essential for individuals to make the important step from experiencing homelessness to permanent housing. More than 3,000 people have been housed through the outreach and shelter programs since 2008/09.

Beginning in the 2014/15 fiscal year, individuals housed through the HPP have been included in reporting on outreach programs. The HPP is a new initiative aimed at providing people in identified at-risk groups facing homelessness with portable rent supplements to help them access rental housing in the private market. There were 25 individuals housed through HPP in the CRD in the 2014/15 fiscal year.<sup>90</sup>

While the number of people housed each year has decreased since 2008/09, the programs appear to have been quite

successful in supporting individuals to remain housed. In 2014/15, 85% of individuals who were housed through Emergency Shelter Programs remained housed after six

## 92% housed through Homeless Outreach Programs remained housed after six months.

months.<sup>91</sup> During the same time period, 92% of individuals who were housed through Homeless Outreach Programs (A/HOP and HPP) remained housed after six months.<sup>92</sup>

Number of Individuals Housed through Outreach Programs (A/HOP and HPP) and Emergency Shelter Program (ESP) in Capital Regional District							
Secured Housing	Fiscal Year						
	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Outreach	355	359	297	433	294	229 <sup>93</sup>	268 <sup>94</sup>
Shelter	270	277	203	206	216	214 <sup>95</sup>	227
<b>Total Secured Housing</b>	<b>625</b>	<b>636</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>639</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>495</b>

Source: BC Housing Homelessness Services System, 2009-2015, based on March 31st snapshots

90 BC Housing. (2015) Research and Corporate Planning Department

91 % Stay Housed is based on only those individuals that were housed during the fiscal year of analysis and could be contacted at 6 months and includes those who are not still housed in their original placement, but are known to be still housed elsewhere.

92 % Stay Housed is based on only those individuals that were housed during the fiscal year of analysis and could be contacted at 6 months% and includes those who are not still housed in their original placement, but are known to be still housed elsewhere.

93 The following outreach sites are included in this report for 2013/14: Victoria Native Friendship Centre, Pacifica Housing Services, Burnside Gorge Community Association.

94 The following outreach sites are included in this report for 2014/15: Victoria Native Friendship Centre, Pacifica Housing Services, Burnside Gorge Community Association, The Cridge Centre for Family, Threshold Housing Society

95 The following ESP shelters are included in this report for 2013/14 and 2014/2015: Addictions and Rehabilitation Centre, Next Steps, Rock Bay Landing and Sandy Merriman House.

## Homelessness Prevention Fund

The Homelessness Prevention Fund (HPF) provides emergency assistance to individuals and families in Greater Victoria who are experiencing the threat of homelessness. Grants may be used to pay rent, utility bills or damage deposits, and the maximum available amount is \$500. HPF is a partnership between the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness and ten Coalition partners. Recipients have to demonstrate that they have exhausted all other means of help, and can only apply once a year. They do not have to repay the money.

In 2014/15, the Homelessness Prevention Fund assisted 74 individuals and 23 families, averaging approximately eight grants each month. The majority (91%), of grants issued were used for rent and averaged \$437 each. Other grants were used for damage deposits (3%, averaging \$435 each) and emergency utility (6%, averaging \$340 each). In 2014/15, the Homelessness Prevention Fund distributed approximately \$42, 575 through ten partnering agencies.<sup>96</sup>

## Priority Housing Project List

The Priority Housing Project List (PHPL) contains housing projects that act as priorities for the Coalition. As of March 31, 2015, the PHPL contained approximately 123 supportive and 84 affordable housing units and 90 rental supplements.

The purpose of the PHPL is to raise awareness, create support and identify priority projects throughout the region through an assessment of community needs and support, value for money and other aspects of project feasibility. The PHPL enables the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness to use a strategic approach to regional supportive housing need through project advocacy work and through an exploration of funding opportunities as they may become available.

## PRIORITY HOUSING PROJECT LIST

**Cedar Grove**, Victoria – A proposal to redevelop an existing 21-unit supportive housing facility and site to contain a minimum of 60 supportive housing units. (Proponent: Victoria Cool Aid Society)

**Cottage Grove**, Saanich – A proposal to develop a new 45-unit supportive housing project for seniors, similar to the recently completed Olympic Vista Project in Saanich. (Proponent: Victoria Cool Aid Society)

**Rosalie’s Village**, Saanich – A proposal to develop a new 42-unit housing facility with accompanying day care centre to target young single mothers and children experiencing homelessness and older single women at risk of homelessness due to domestic abuse. (Proponent: St. Vincent de Paul Society)

**Siem Lelum Phase II**, Victoria – A proposal to develop 15 units of affordable and supportive housing in a safe, affordable, supported and holistic “Urban Village”. (Proponent: Victoria Native Friendship Centre)

**Wilson’s Walk**, Victoria – A proposal to develop 108 units of affordable housing for young urban singles, couples and families, with 84 units being affordable. (Proponent: Pacifica Housing Advisory Association)

**S2H Lite** – Along with the proposals for capital projects, the Coalition received a request for funding for rental supplements and supports to house 90 individuals in market housing, S2H Lite. This proposal does not include a capital component but is extremely cost effective. The Coalition strongly endorses this as an important component of its housing program. (Proponent: Pacifica Housing Society)

<sup>96</sup> Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness. (2014/15). Homelessness Prevention Fund Project Tracking.

## Data Limitations

Greater Victoria does not have an integrated data system such as HMIS (Homeless Management Information System) that is used extensively in the U.S. and by Calgary Homeless Foundation. In the absence of such a system, we draw data from multiple data systems with varying levels of data quality. As well, data reporting by any single data provider can change from year to year which requires reanalysis of previous years' data and revisions to previous findings. Thus, this impacts reliability over time. All data refers to the 2014-2015 fiscal year (April 1, 2014 to March 31, 2015 inclusive), unless otherwise noted. Data based on snapshots is extracted as of March 31, 2015. If data reported is prior to 2014-15, in most cases it represents the most recent data available.

### Data provider-specific limitations:

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation: All CMHC data is produced by the Rental Market Survey, which targets only privately initiated structures with at least three rental units which have been on the market for at least three months. Households tested for core housing need only include private non-farm, non-band, and non-reserve households with incomes greater than zero and shelter-cost-to-income ratios less than 100%. CMHC reporting does not include secondary suites, rooms rented monthly in houses or hotels.

Food Banks Canada: Data reported through the Hunger Count is based on the total number of individuals who receive groceries from food banks and their affiliated agencies during the month of March of a given year. March is the study period because it is an unexceptional month, without predictable high or low use patterns. This data represents a significant portion of agencies providing food services in Greater Victoria, but does not include all agencies. Data does not include people who receive food from food banks through prepared-meal programs, such as soup kitchens.

### Geographic Data Limitations:

Greater Victoria is used in this report to refer to both the Capital Regional District and the Victoria Census Metropolitan Area. Different data reporting structures limit the ability to report consistently. For a direct comparison between Victoria CMA and CRD, see <https://www.crd.bc.ca/docs/default-source/crd-document-library/maps/census/victoria-census-metropolitan-area-%28cma%29.pdf?sfvrsn=2> and <https://www.crd.bc.ca/docs/default-source/regional-planning-pdf/Population/crd-area-map---colour.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

The Victoria Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) includes: thirteen municipalities; Juan de Fuca Electoral Area [Capital H (Part 1) which is comprised of East Sooke, Jordan River, Malahat, Otter Point, Shirley, and Willis Point]; and nine First Nations reserves.

The Capital Regional District (CRD) includes the Victoria CMA as well as Salt Spring Island; the Southern Gulf Islands; and Juan de Fuca Electoral Area [Capital H (Part 2) which is comprised of the area north and west of Jordan River to Port Renfrew]; and an additional four First Nations reserves.

Data reporting based on CMA: BC Housing (shelter and outreach data), BC Non-Profit Housing Association, Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria  
Data reporting based on CRD: BC Housing (unit, tenant, and applicant data), Food Banks Canada.

Data sources not contingent on geography: shelter-specific data, Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation, Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness, and Dieticians of Canada.

### Shelter Data Limitations:

Victoria area shelters do not all use HIFIS (Homeless Individuals and Families Information Systems) to capture their shelter data. As such, there currently is no integrated data information system for the whole of Greater Victoria's emergency shelters. Emergency shelter indicators are based on shelters for which data is available. Data from five of the six major shelters in Victoria are reported through the use of HIFIS.

BC Housing extracts data from a live BC Housing database called the Homelessness Service System –it includes data from housing and shelter programs funded by BC Housing. Data in this database is entered and updated by agencies, so the accuracy of the data is dependent on provider entry. Data presented in this report was extracted as of March 31 for each fiscal year reported and thus represents a snapshot in time (previously entered data may be updated by the providers at any time, so data is based on snapshots of what was in the system on the date of the snapshot).

The number of shelter beds that BC Housing funds and monitors changes from year to year, meaning the data collected and reported are drawn from an annually shifting sample of the shelter population. As such, this limits the ability to compare shelter data over time.

All emergency shelter data is based on client records, not individuals. Individuals get a new client ID number and record when they go to a different shelter. While the data does not represent individuals, the general trends revealed through the database have been validated against other sources and appear to reflect what is known about the homeless population in BC.

There have been some refinements to the data extraction methodologies to improve data reporting over time. It is not believed that these changes will significantly affect comparisons between reporting years where comparisons are reported.

All percentages are based on the total number of records where there is a response to the question being examined, not the total number of records (i.e. records missing for the indicator in question are excluded from the calculations, so as not to skew responses).

### Housing Outreach Data Limitations:

All housing outreach data is based on client records, not individuals. As a result of this reporting practice and that BC Housing data are taken from several housing outreach providers, it is impossible to distinguish between different providers. For instance, it is possible that two records may come from the same individual (i.e. if the client used a different name at two agencies), or that an individual could potentially be housed by different sites during a year (client will get a new record if housed through a different site).

Housing information is based on the most recent incidence of housing for a particular record. Only the most recent housing placement is considered in this analysis.

## Data Sources

Thank you to our data providers and expert resources:

BC Housing, BC Non-Profit Housing Association, BC Stats Beacon Community Services, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria, Dieticians of Canada, Food Banks Canada, Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness, Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training and Responsible for Labour, Ministry of Social Development, Statistics Canada, Victoria Cool Aid Society.



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