



2023 GREATER VICTORIA POINT-IN-TIME HOMELESS COUNT AND HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY



The 2023 PiT Count was conducted within the traditional territories of many First Nations. We would like to acknowledge the First Nations governments across this region — BOKÉCEN (Pauquachin), MÁLEXEŁ (Malahat), P'a:chi:da?ah (Pacheedaht), Pune'laxutth' (Penelekut), Sc'ianew (Beecher Bay), Songhees, STÁUTW (Tsawout), T'Sou-ke, WJOŁEŁP (Tsartlip), WSIKEM (Tseycum), and xʷsepsəm (Esquimalt) Nations — all of whom have a long standing relationship with the land and waters from time immemorial, that continues to this day.

We would like to thank everyone who contributed their invaluable time, support, and expertise to the 2023 Point-in-Time Count & Survey, including all of the organizations, community partners, sponsors, supporters, and 138 volunteers. We would like to extend a special thank-you to all of those experiencing the challenges of homelessness who took the time to share their personal and often difficult experiences, to contribute to local, provincial, and national efforts to reduce homelessness — this report is dedicated to you.

2023 GREATER VICTORIA POINT-IN-TIME HOMELESS COUNT AND NEEDS SURVEY

Community Report / July 2023

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

GREATER VICTORIA'S FOURTH POINT IN TIME (PiT)

Count and Homeless Needs Survey took place on March 7 and 8, 2023. PiT Counts are intended to provide a community-based measure, or snapshot, of individuals experiencing sheltered and unsheltered homelessness at a single point in time. The initiative is funded through the Reaching Home Program: Canada's Homelessness Strategy and contributes to a national picture of homelessness.

The 2023 PiT Count and Homeless Needs Survey was completed with the support of 138 community volunteers, in conjunction with local housing facilities and service providers. The PiT Count took place within the Victoria Census Metropolitan Area (CMA), commonly referred to as Greater Victoria, which contains 13 municipalities and spans the traditional territories of approximately 11 First Nations.

On the night of March 7, the 2023 PiT Count found that at least 1,665 individuals were experiencing homelessness in Greater Victoria. The count, or enumeration, is intended to identify, on a single night, how many individuals and families are experiencing homelessness in emergency shelters, transitional housing and on the streets, staying in public systems without permanent housing, and people experiencing hidden homelessness such as couch surfing or staying with family and friends because they have nowhere else to go.

Throughout the day and night of March 8, 765 homeless needs surveys were conducted gathering invaluable data understanding local stories and experiences of homelessness. Homeless needs survey collects data about the demographics,

history, and service needs of those experiencing homelessness. The survey allows communities to better understand who is experiencing homelessness, why they are experiencing homelessness, and how, as a community, we can better serve these individuals and families.

Results of the count and survey can help guide decision-making for funders, governments, community organizations and service providers on how to prevent and reduce homelessness. Results can also inform the development and implementation of services, programs, and policies that reflect the needs of residents experiencing homelessness and those at risk of experiencing homelessness.

ENUMERATION RESULTS

PiT Counts are considered an underestimate of the number of people experiencing homelessness on a given night. This is due to a variety of factors, such as the number of participating facilities, challenges reaching individuals and families experiencing hidden homelessness (e.g. couch surfing), or location of surveyors and their physical proximity to potential respondents. It is also important to note that PiT Count findings are not comparable year over year. This may be due to changes in participating facilities, changes within the unhoused populations, or modifications to methodology. For example, the increased number of individuals experiencing homelessness in the 2023 count compared to 2020 is partly due to the exclusion of Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Centre (VIRCC) in 2020. A detailed methodology and

discussion on the data limitations, can be found in the Technical Appendix.

KEY SURVEY FINDINGS

By examining the findings from four PiT Counts in the region completed in 2016, 2018, 2020 and 2023, it is possible to gain insight into shifts related to homelessness and examine trends over time. Findings of the 2023 Point in Time Count indicate the structure of homelessness has changed since 2020 with notable shifts between sheltered and unsheltered populations.

At least 1,665 people were experiencing homelessness on March 7, 2023.

- 601 people were in transitional housing
- 282 people were emergency sheltered
- 410 people were in public systems (e.g. corrections, hospitals)
- 242 people were unsheltered
- 85 people were couch surfing
- 45 people were in an unknown sleeping location.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE CONTINUE TO BE

OVERREPRESENTED: Indigenous peoples make up 5% of the population in Greater Victoria (Statistics Canada, Census 2021, Victoria CMA). In contrast, 32.9% of survey respondents identify as Indigenous. This is consistent with findings in previous PiT Surveys for Greater Victoria and the broader literature, which indicate the significantly higher likelihood of homelessness for Indigenous peoples due to systemic barriers, racial discrimination, and the intergenerational trauma of colonization and experiences of residential and day schools.

OVER 1/3 HAVE BEEN DISCHARGED INTO

HOMELESSNESS: A total of 35.4% of respondents have been discharged or evicted into homelessness. A survey question was added that asked respondents if they had been discharged or evicted from subsidized housing, transitional housing, supportive housing,

corrections, mental health/substance use residential treatment, or hospital emergency rooms. 9.3% of survey respondents identified being discharged from hospital emergency rooms.

MOST HAVE BEEN IN GREATER VICTORIA FOR A YEAR OR MORE:

There is a common misconception around the motivations and numbers of people moving into Greater Victoria in homelessness. In line with previous homeless needs surveys for the region, 10.3% have been here under a year. A large majority of respondents (81.7%) have lived in Greater Victoria for a year or more, while the other 8% declined to answer. The most common reason respondents moved here was due to their family also moving here.

OVER 1/3 OF YOUTH WERE UNSHELTERED:

Youth (14-24 years old) made up 7.7% of all survey respondents; however, youth are a demographic that is difficult to reach as they are more likely to be in hidden homelessness. Thus it is challenging to reach youth for surveys and/or enumeration. Of youth survey respondents, 35.6% were unsheltered, 8.5% were emergency sheltered and 54.2% were provisionally accommodated. Youth are more likely to be unsheltered than the general survey population in which 14.5% were unsheltered.

OVER 2/3 OF RESPONDENTS ARE CONSIDERED CHRONICALLY HOMELESS:

One of the criteria for being chronically homeless is experiencing homelessness for more than six months in a year. In the survey, 67.4% of respondents identified being homeless for more than six months of the prior year. This is a decrease from 82% in 2020. While this is a decrease, 67.4% remains a high number of people who are chronically homeless in a region. Further, over half of the respondents (56.2%) who are chronically homeless identified as being homeless 9-12 months of the prior year.

NEARLY 1/4 OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS ARE 55+:

Nearly one-quarter (24.8%) of survey respondents identified as being 55+. This is a 5% increase from 2020. Though many may be aging in homelessness, over 1/3 had their first experience of homelessness

PiT 2023 KEY HIGHLIGHTS

PiT COUNT

The night of March 7, 2023 at least **1,665** people were experiencing homelessness in Greater Victoria.

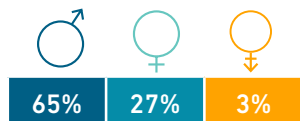


45 WERE IN UNKNOWN LOCATIONS

On the night of March 8, 2023, **765** individuals participated in the homeless needs survey, representing over half of those enumerated.

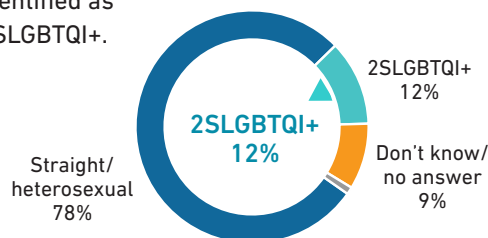
GENDER

Two thirds identified as male.



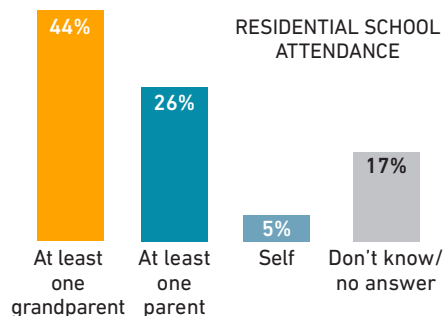
SEXUAL ORIENTATION

31% of youth identified as 2SLGBTQI+.



INDIGENOUS

33% are Indigenous, compared to 5% of the Greater Victoria population. 35% are **women**, 61% first experienced homelessness as a **youth**, and 49% have **foster care** experiences.



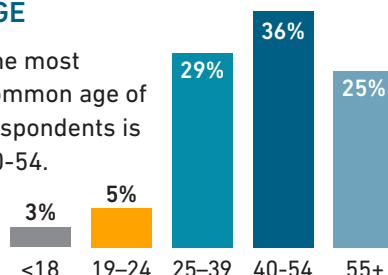
EXPERIENCES OF FOSTER CARE

1 in 3 were in government care as a child or youth. 17% were homeless within a week of leaving care.

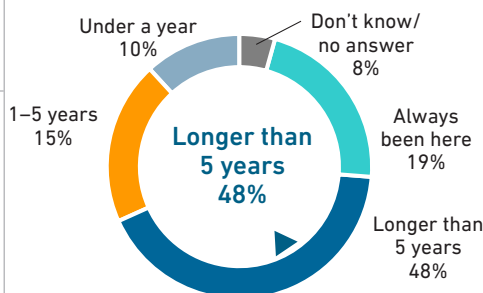


AGE

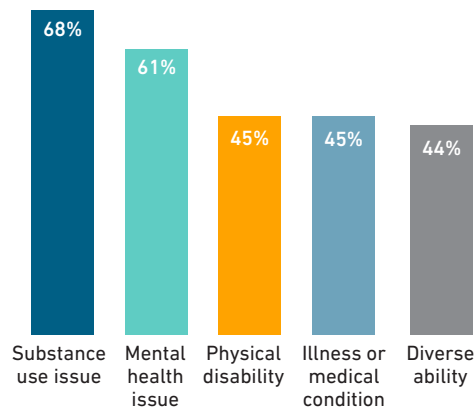
The most common age of respondents is 40-54.



TIME IN GREATER VICTORIA



HEALTH CHALLENGES



Research indicates that homelessness exacerbates some health challenges, such as substance use.

LONG-TERM HOMELESSNESS

- 1 in 2** respondents first experienced homelessness as youth (under 25).
- 67%** have been homeless for a total of 6 months or longer over the past year—this is a decrease from the previous PiT survey (82%).

INCOME SOURCES

- 91%** have at least one source of income. Sources include disability benefits (46%), welfare/social assistance (27%), employment (13%) and others (17%).

NEED FOR HOUSING AND SERVICES

- 87%** want permanent housing.
- The top three obstacles to finding housing: **high rent, low income, and lack of available options.**
- Top three needed services include primary care services, food security supports, and identification services.

INTRODUCTION

ON MARCH 7 AND 8, 2023, 138 citizen volunteers and staff, along with a cross-sector of service agencies and community partners, participated in the Capital Region's fourth Point-in-Time (PiT) Survey.

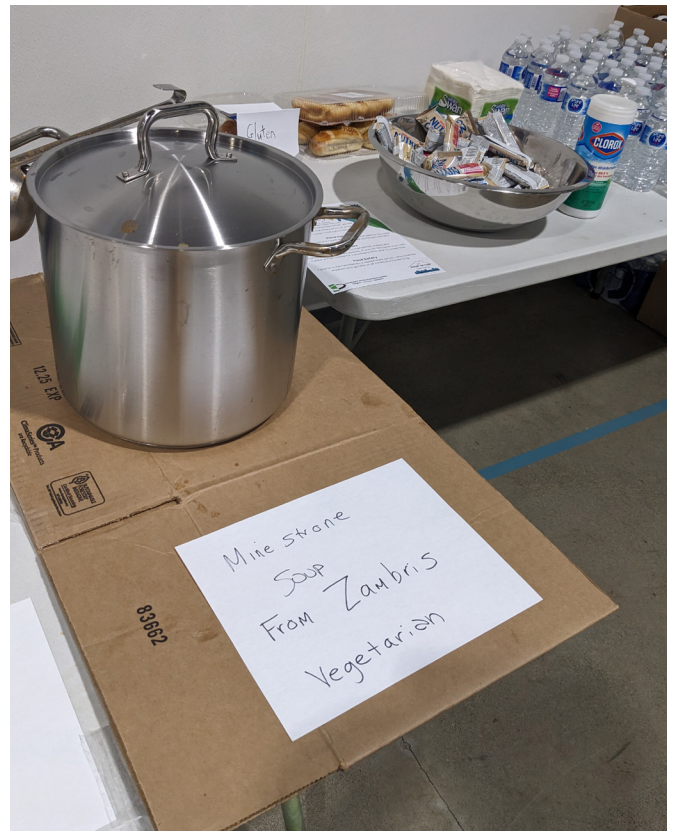
Data was provided from 49 shelters, transitional housing, and health facilities, and surveys were completed at 26 facility locations and along 49 walking routes. This extensive effort resulted in counting at least 1,665 individuals who were experiencing homelessness on the night of March 7, 2023. On March 8, volunteers conducted 765 surveys with people experiencing homelessness across the region, providing an invaluable set of personal histories, experiences, and needs.

While the total enumerated in PiT Counts are not comparable year over year, the consistent methodology of the surveys provides data for trends analysis. This report will provide an overview of the enumeration and an analysis of the survey data to outline how the structures and experiences of homelessness have changed for our region. The introduction of new housing facilities since 2020 was one cause of structural changes in the population counted. However, effects from the COVID-19 pandemic led to increased economic stress for the Greater Victoria population overall. While some people experiencing homelessness were housed, others became homeless because of evictions, job loss, income loss, domestic violence, and other reasons.

The PiT Count is a strategy to help provide insight into the nature and extent of homelessness within a community. The PiT project collects community

information about the demographics, history, and service needs of those experiencing homelessness through the survey.

While enumeration provides a snapshot of the numbers, the homeless needs survey provides valuable data to guide decision-makers, planners, and service providers in directing resources to the areas of greatest need.



Data was provided from 49 shelters, transitional housing, and health facilities, and surveys were completed at 26 facility locations and along 49 walking routes.

BACKGROUND

HOMELESSNESS IS A CHALLENGE impacting the whole country, with an estimated 235,000 Canadians experiencing homelessness in a given year and 35,000 Canadians experiencing homelessness on a given night (Gaetz et al., 2016). The widespread nature of homelessness and the growing length of periods of homelessness for many Canadians, sparked the Government of Canada to launch the National Poverty and Housing strategy to reduce homelessness nation-wide (Rech, 2019). To help reach its goal of ending homelessness, the Government of Canada's Reaching Home Program funds Point-in-Time Counts and surveys to help track the extent and experiences of homelessness in various communities across the country.

The coordinated approach followed by Point-in-Time Counts includes core standards for all participating communities. A consistent and nationally approved methodology is used by participating communities to collect information that is comparable at the national and provincial level. Communities can customize some aspects of data collection to ensure useful data is available for each local context. The enumeration of people experiencing homelessness from PiT Counts is known to be an undercount. This is because the data collected only represents facilities participating and individuals who are encountered and willing to participate in the survey. While the enumeration can be understood as a minimum number of people experiencing homelessness on one night, the survey provides invaluable data to give a clearer picture of who is experiencing homelessness and what their needs are. This data can help guide policy makers, planners, and service providers in their approach to reducing homelessness.

Under the leadership of the Capital Regional District (CRD), and with coordination by the Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria (CSPC), the region has been participating in PiT Count projects since 2016. Since the first PiT Count, the CSPC has partnered with the University of Victoria's Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research to enhance ethical and methodological components of the PiT project.

HOMELESSNESS IN GREATER VICTORIA

The Victoria Census Metropolitan Area (CMA), commonly referred to as Greater Victoria, is made up of 13 municipalities and is home to a population of almost 400,000 (Statistics Canada, 2023). This region spans the territories of approximately 11 First Nations and is a region that many people across Canada desire to live and visit. However, the housing and rental market is one of the least affordable in the country.

There are structural, systemic and personal factors that lead to homelessness within a region. There is a lack of affordable housing across Greater Victoria, impacting the health and well-being of many in the region. 19.7% of renters in the region fall within core housing need, meaning they fall below indicator thresholds measured across Canada and are spending more than 30% of their income (before income tax) on housing (Statistics Canada, 2021). As of October 2022, the vacancy rate for bachelor apartments in Greater Victoria was 1.1% with the average monthly cost of a bachelor apartment at \$1,138 (CMHC, 2023).

It is evident the high-priced rental market in Greater Victoria makes it challenging for people on low incomes and/or those experiencing homelessness. While the rental market impacts those experiencing homelessness, there are more complex challenges at play. Structural and systemic factors create the conditions for homelessness (Gaetz et al., 2013; Allegrante, JP., Sleet, DA, 2021). Structural factors include high cost and lack of affordable housing; low incomes relative to the cost of living as well as racism and other forms of discrimination including sex and gender discrimination (Gaetz et al., 2013). Systemic factors include discharges from hospitals, corrections and child welfare into homelessness (Gaetz et al., 2013). Structural and systemic factors mean that there is not a social safety net and individuals may

become homeless when they experience difficulties such as job loss, poverty, family violence, and illness. There are multiple policy decisions at every level of government that create the conditions that lead to homelessness (Allegrante, JP., Sleet, DA, 2021).

Greater Victoria's long-standing high cost of housing, low vacancy rates, lack of affordable housing, waitlists for subsidized and supportive housing, and inadequate incomes make life in the region challenging for its population and contributes to homelessness. The survey's findings show a picture of the diversity in populations experiencing homelessness in Greater Victoria and provide insight into unique experiences and needs among survey participants.

DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness defines homelessness in Canada as the inability of an individual, family or community to access or acquire stable, safe, permanent and appropriate housing (COH 2012). Homelessness describes a range of housing and shelter circumstances and encompasses a range of physical living situations, including:

1. **Unsheltered** — absolute homelessness and living on the streets or in places not intended for human habitation (i.e., public spaces, vehicles, abandoned buildings, etc.).
2. **Emergency sheltered** — those staying in overnight shelters for people who are homeless, or in shelter for those impacted by family violence.
3. **Provisionally accommodated** — staying in accommodation that is lacking security of tenure (i.e. transitional housing with a maximum stay of three years, living in hotels/motels funded by themselves, couch surfing, and public systems).
4. **At risk for homelessness** — people who are not homeless, but current economic and/or housing situation is precarious or does not meet public health and safety standards.

The Greater Victoria's 2023 PiT project's definition of homeless aligns with this widely accepted definition of homelessness and includes people who are unsheltered, emergency sheltered, and provisionally accommodated. The PiT project does not enumerate or survey people who are at risk for homelessness.

Additionally, Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy Directives defines **chronic homelessness** as individuals who are currently experiencing homelessness and who meet at least one of the following criteria:

1. They have a total of at least six months (180 days) of homelessness over the past year.
2. They have recurrent experiences of homelessness over the past three years, with a cumulative duration of at least 18 months (546 days).

METHODOLOGY

A high-level summary of the methodology is provided below. For those seeking a more detailed methodology, data set, research definitions, and the survey forms, refer to the 2023 Greater Victoria PiT Count and Survey Technical Appendix.

The Greater Victoria Point-in-Time Count and Homeless Needs Survey took place over a 24-hour period, providing a snapshot of homelessness across the region for that particular night. The 2023 PiT Count and Survey followed the methodology for national and provincial guidelines as well as being informed by previous PiT Counts.

The two key components of the PiT Count and Survey include the enumeration and the homeless needs survey.

POINT IN TIME ENUMERATION

The enumeration component provides a count of the minimum number of people staying in emergency shelters, provisional accommodations (transitional housing, couch surfing, public systems), or who are unsheltered (see definition of homelessness on p. 9).

The enumeration uses two key methods to estimate the count of people experiencing homelessness:

- **ADMINISTRATIVE DATA:** Administrative staff from participating homeless shelters, transitional housing facilities, and institutional settings (health, treatment, and correctional facilities) filled out an enumeration form, providing the number of individuals

experiencing homelessness who spent the night of March 7, 2023, in their facilities. These facilities were asked to self-identify the type of facility that they operated.

- **SURVEY DATA:** Individuals who stayed in an unsheltered location (outdoors, vehicle, etc.) not captured in the administrative data above or with someone else but were reached by volunteers conducting surveys the following day, were included in the enumeration¹.

HOMELESS NEEDS SURVEY

A team of approximately 138 trained community volunteers, people with lived experience of homelessness, service providers and homelessness outreach workers conducted 765 surveys from early morning to late evening on March 8, 2023. The survey included a short set of screening questions based on the PiT Count and Survey definition of homelessness. The Homeless Needs Survey was conducted by volunteers and staff in outdoor locations, temporary housing/shelter facilities, homeless and non-homeless serving agencies (i.e. food banks, meal programs, etc.), and magnet events. Survey methodology followed federal guidelines on PiT Count standards (Government of Canada, 2022).

¹ If survey respondents reported spending the night of March 7, 2023 in a sheltered facility, then they were not counted in the enumeration, since they would have already been captured in the administrative data provided directly from the facility for that night. These individuals were surveyed to collect the broader survey information not covered in the facility enumeration form.



A group of seven individuals with lived experience met bi-weekly from January to early June. This group helped develop the outdoor routes, piloted and suggested changes to the survey, and worked on discussing the importance of humanizing the data shared in this report.

COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The project followed best practices for participatory and community-based research and met Point-in-Time standards for a community-based methodology. In the early stages of project planning, representatives from local service providers, academics, and government as well as people with lived experience were invited to sit on a committee to engage in planning the 2023 Point-in-Time Count and Survey. This committee met approximately six times over the course of the project to advise on survey development, route mapping, and other project planning decisions.

LIVED EXPERIENCE

The project followed best practices for participatory and community-based research, recognizing the importance of including a perspective of lived experience throughout all stages of the project. This was achieved by including CSPC staff team members with lived experience and a lived experience advisory committee organized through a partnership with the University of Victoria's Right to Housing Research Collective and Housing Justice Project. Advisory members were recruited and hired and paid an honorarium. A group of seven individuals with lived

experience met bi-weekly from January to early June. This group helped develop the outdoor routes, piloted and suggested changes to the survey, and worked on discussing the importance of humanizing the data shared in this report. Additionally, members from the group participated in a volunteer training session and conducted surveys on the day of the PiT Count.

CONNECTING WITH POPULATIONS WITH UNIQUE EXPERIENCES AND NEEDS

While structural and socioeconomic factors contribute to and drive experiences of homelessness, each experience is unique. There are some specific population groups that are particularly impacted by the factors that contribute to homelessness and who experience higher rates of homelessness than the general population. The Greater Victoria Point-in-Time project focused efforts on making contact with populations that have higher rates of hidden homelessness, including newcomers, Indigenous, and youth. We undertook specific efforts to engage more deeply with those groups in conducting this year's PiT to ensure that the survey was inclusive, and to tap into hidden homelessness. The PiT Count and Survey team also made special efforts to reflect the geographic diversity of the region including outlying areas such as Sooke.

COMPLEMENTARY METHODS- PiT, BY-NAME LISTS AND OTHER METHODS

A PiT Count is not the only method to collect data on homelessness. Complementary strategies such as Registry Weeks, period prevalence counts and housing needs assessments can be used in combination with PiT Counts to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of homelessness locally. Fortunately, the PiT Count methodology is flexible so communities can combine data collection strategies to meet their local needs.

INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT

Recognizing that Indigenous populations are overrepresented in homelessness, the 2023 Greater Victoria PiT Count and Survey partnered closely with the Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness (ACEH). The CSPC and ACEH collaborate closely with each PiT project to increase Indigenous engagement. The 2023 PiT Count had a strong cultural focus and targeted outreach, including: involvement in survey design, cultural sensitivity training for volunteers, targeted outreach with local Indigenous serving agencies, and increased participation of volunteers conducting surveys in Indigenous-specific areas. To enhance cultural relations and connections, an Indigenous lens was applied to research to ensure cultural appropriateness and safety. New to this count was a cultural aspect with an Elder and Indigenous drummer opening the PiT headquarters on the day of the survey.

PiT Counts have consistently found that more than one-third of people experiencing homelessness in our region are Indigenous—it is important that housing and services in the region reflect this.

The PiT Count & Homeless Needs Survey data has been a valuable resource for Indigenous organizations across Greater Victoria. ACEH, for example, has used data from the 2018 and 2020 PiT Surveys to identify targets for housing policy and advocate for funding to open new Indigenous housing facilities. PiT Counts have consistently found that more than one-third of people experiencing homelessness in our region are Indigenous—it is important that housing and services in the region reflect this. These targets are now used in supportive and subsidized housing projects across Greater Victoria, ensuring Indigenous peoples entering housing have proportional access to beds or units, and to set goals for appropriate levels of cultural supports and culturally sensitive services.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Youth are over-represented in hidden homelessness, making them more difficult to reach with the PiT enumeration and survey. Through discussions with local youth serving organizations, it was identified that the best way to access youth experiencing homelessness would be through hosting a magnet event. Post pandemic, youth service organizations identified capacity issues that limited their participation, necessitating new partnerships and potentially accounting for the lower youth participation in the 2023 PiT. The CSPC staff and the Victoria Youth Empowerment Society's Alliance Club staff worked together to arrange an event on March 8, 2023, aimed at gathering youth to complete surveys. Additionally, all youth housing facilities were contacted for the enumeration to ensure clients at their facilities were captured and to complete surveys. The Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness's youth team members were also engaged and connected within their professional networks to coordinate survey presence, likely accounting for the higher Indigenous youth participation.



GREATER VICTORIA POINT-IN-TIME COUNT 2023

AT LEAST

1,665 people were experiencing homelessness in Greater Victoria on the night of March 7, 2023

242

UNSHELTERED



242 stayed in an unsheltered location, such as a public space, park, tent, vehicle, or other place not intended for human habitation

282

EMERGENCY SHELTERS



282 in emergency shelters, seasonal shelters, youth shelters, and domestic violence shelters for emergency accommodation

85

COUCH SURFING



At least 85^a stayed with a friend, family member, or stranger, or at a hotel/motel, because they did not have a secure place of their own

410

PUBLIC SYSTEMS



410 stayed in public system settings with no home to return to, such as correctional halfway houses, hospitals, and treatment centres

601

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING



601 stayed in transitional housing, a temporary type of accommodation meant to bridge the gap from homelessness to permanent housing

In total, **524** people were unsheltered and emergency sheltered

A total of **1,096** were provisionally accommodated

Another **45** spent the night in an unknown sleeping location.

^aThe total number of people counted to be couch surfing is an undercount as it solely relies on the survey outreach methodology. There are likely many couch surfing individuals not accessing services who did not know about the count.



The table below illustrates the changes between unsheltered, emergency sheltered, provisionally sheltered, and total homeless individuals identified by the PiT Count enumeration over time, starting in 2016.

There is a notable fluctuation in the types of homelessness people are experiencing—which is influenced by system changes, such as changes in the number of facilities over the past three years, and people moving in and out of homelessness due to other other factors. On the night of March 7, 2023, there was a higher number of people staying in public systems and transitional housing facilities compared to the previous 2020 PiT enumeration. A notable

On the night of March 7, 2023, there was a higher number of people staying in public systems and transitional housing facilities compared to the previous 2020 PiT enumeration.

difference is that the Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Centre (VIRCC) was included in this year's enumeration while they did not participate in 2020, due to limited staff capacity.

Sleeping location	2016	2018	2020	2023
UNSHELTERED in indoor locations, vehicles, and other places not intended for human habitation ^a	192	158	270	242
EMERGENCY SHELTERED in seasonal and emergency shelters, including domestic violence shelters	333	359	350	282
COUCH SURFING (without secure housing and sleeping at someone else's place or in a self-funded hotel/motel) ^b	74	95	145	85
PUBLIC SYSTEMS - temporary stay with no permanent housing of own within health care facilities and correctional halfway houses	150	248	198 ^c	410
TRANSITIONAL HOUSING - typically a maximum stay of three years	573	588	545	601
Unknown sleeping location	40	77	15	45
TOTAL (minimum number of people counted)	1362	1,525	1,523	1,665

^a13 individuals were living in vehicles.
^bThe survey does not accurately measure hidden homelessness such as couch surfing. This is an underestimate but provides important data on experiences and needs.
^c Excludes Vancouver Island Correctional Centre



EMERGENCY SHELTER AND TRANSITIONAL HOUSING CAPACITY

The table below shows the shelter capacity in Greater Victoria which includes both emergency shelters and transitional housing but does not include public systems (corrections, correctional halfway houses, hospitals/emergency rooms, or treatment facilities). The percent of occupancy to capacity at the shelters varied, with some being over capacity while others were at below capacity on March 7 due to a planned closure, renovations/maintenance, or recent turnover, etc. (see Technical Appendix for details). The second table shows a gender breakdown of individuals who were sheltered in emergency shelters (including violence against women shelters) or transitional housing.

Emergency shelter and transitional housing capacity

Reserved for families	98
Reserved for adults	806
Reserved for unaccompanied youth	65
Reserved for accompanied children	25
Not reserved for a specific population	25
Total capacity (excluding extreme weather protocol mats)	1,019
Additional extreme weather protocol mats	71
Total capacity (including extreme weather protocol mats)	1,090

Occupancy to capacity at the shelters varied, with some being over capacity while others were below due to a planned closure, renovations/maintenance, or recent turnover, etc.

Sheltered individuals on March 7 by gender

Adults	
Total male adults	486
Total female adults	253
Total gender diverse adults	NA
Youth	
Total male youth	27
Total female youth	33
Total gender diverse youth	NA
Children	
Total male children	47
Total female children	34
Total gender diverse children	NA
Total individuals	883

Notes: Excludes all public systems facilities (corrections, correctional halfway houses, hospitals/emergency rooms, or treatment facilities). Total number is not reported to protect identity of small sample size.



SURVEY FINDINGS

THE FINDINGS BELOW are on the data generously shared by the 765 people who participated in the PiT homeless needs survey on March 7 and 8, 2023 (refer to the Technical Appendix for the survey questions and data tables). The number of surveys collected is slightly lower than prior years despite similar methods. The lower number may be due to a lack staff capacity within housing facilities and service providers (refer to the Technical Appendix for limitations on survey methods). Surveys were conducted across Greater Victoria in outdoor locations, housing facilities and shelters, and service agencies.

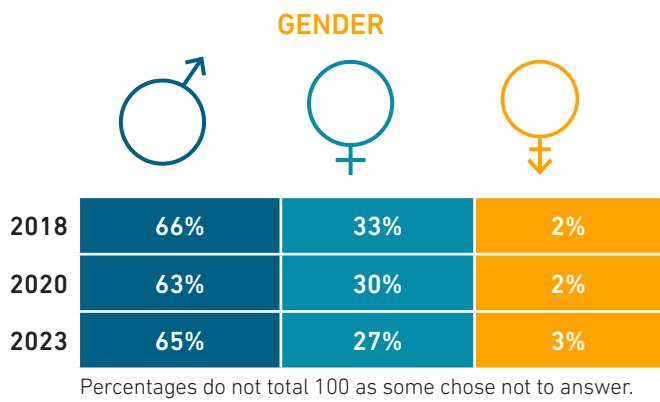
The real value of the PiT must be seen in the collection of data from the extensive survey completed by those experiencing homelessness. The homeless needs survey is cross sectional and has been conducted in Greater Victoria four times allowing for identification of emerging trends.

Staff and volunteers conducting surveys ‘screened in’ all applicants where the participant provided informed consent and was asked where they slept the night before to ensure it fell under the project’s definition of homelessness. The information below is based on all 765 homeless needs survey respondents unless otherwise indicated.

GENDER

In line with previous PiT Count Reports in Greater Victoria, individuals who identified as male are found to be overrepresented in the findings. Almost two-thirds (64.6%) of respondents identified as male while approximately one-quarter (27.2%) identified as female. Options were provided for gender diverse individuals, but responses were aggregated to protect any identifiable data. While most respondents identified as male, it is important to note that research shows we are almost always undercounting women, girls, and gender diverse individuals in homelessness due their experiences of homelessness often being less visible (Schwan et al., 2020).

There are some differences in the location of where people stayed on the night of March 7, 2023, by gender, as shown in the table below. There were noticeably more women and individuals identifying as gender diverse provisionally sheltered than emergency sheltered or unsheltered when compared to men. Among those identifying as gender diverse, more individuals with diverse gender identities were unsheltered than emergency sheltered.



Two thirds identify as male.

	Unsheltered	Emergency sheltered	Provisionally sheltered
Male	32.0%	23.5%	38.5%
Female	28.8%	25.0%	41.8%
Gender diverse ^a	31.8%	13.6%	45.5%

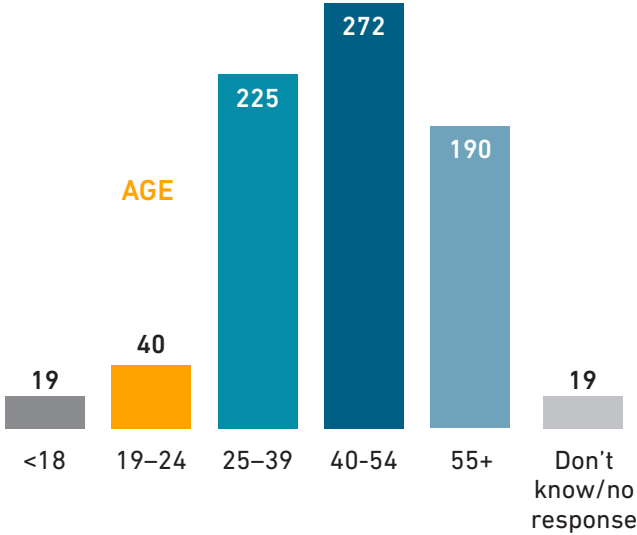
^aGender diverse include two-spirit, trans woman, trans man, non-binary (gender queer), and others.

Percentages do not total 100 as some chose not to answer each question.

AGE

The age of people experiencing homelessness in Greater Victoria varies greatly. The youngest respondents were 14 and the oldest respondents were 76. As part of research ethics, respondents under the age of 16 were only surveyed with consent of a parent. Most respondents (65%) fell into the age range of 25–54. Youth (24 and under) made up a smaller portion (7.7%) of respondents while seniors (55 and over) made up nearly a quarter (24.8%) of all respondents.

There are some differences in the sheltered to unsheltered split by age group. The youth (16-24) and seniors (55+) age groups made up the largest proportion staying in provisional accommodations. However, more youth are unsheltered when compared to those using emergency shelter.



Nearly one-quarter are seniors.

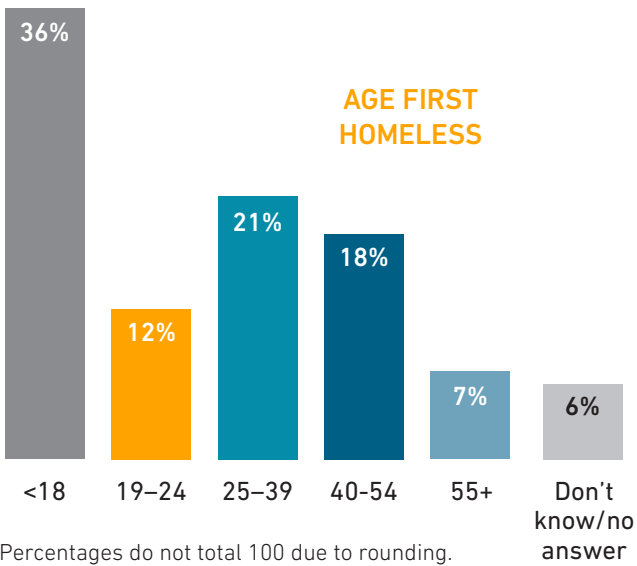
	Unsheltered	Emergency sheltered	Provisionally sheltered
Youth (16-24)	35.6%	8.5%	54.2%
25 to 39	39.6%	16%	39.1%
40 to 54	32.7%	12.1%	47.8%
55+	18.4%	21.1%	55.8%

Percentages do not total 100 as some chose not to answer each question.

AGE OF FIRST HOMELESS EXPERIENCE

Nearly half (48.1%) of respondents had their first experience of homelessness before the age of 25, with over one-third (35.7%) responding they were first homeless before the age of 19. Over one-quarter (25.9%) first experienced homelessness over the age of 40. Similar to previous homeless needs surveys, a significant number of respondents first experienced homelessness as older adults 55 and over (7.5% in 2023, 7.1% in 2020 and 7.6% in 2018).

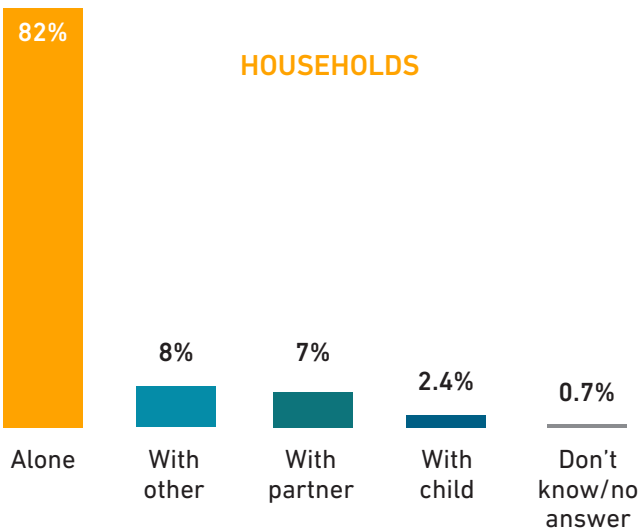
More than one-third first experienced homelessness by the age of 19.



Percentages do not total 100 due to rounding.

HOUSEHOLDS

Over three quarters (81.8%) of respondents spent the night of March 7 alone. A small portion (15.2%) were either with their partner or someone else they consider family (this may include chosen family or friends) and only a few (0.7%) were with children.



Over three quarters (81.8%) of respondents spent the night of March 7 alone.

INCOME

The vast majority (90.5%) of respondents identify as having at least one source of income. Almost half (46.3%) of respondents who receive income obtain it through provincial disability benefits. This is followed by welfare/income assistance (26.8%) and employment (12.6% when including casual, part-time, and full-time employment).

Most income findings are consistent with previous PiT reports; however, 2023 saw an increase of about 10% for respondents who received disability benefits (in 2020, 36.1% of respondents received disability benefits). This also reflects an almost 10% decrease in respondents receiving welfare/income assistance

as their income source (2020's survey found 36.7% of respondents were receiving welfare/income assistance).

Sources of income	#	%
Government transfers		
Disability benefits	354	46.3%
Welfare/income assistance	205	26.8%
Seniors benefits (CPP, OAS, pensions etc.)	53	6.9%
GST/HST refund	22	2.9%
Employment Insurance	13	1.7%
Veteran/VAC benefits	2	0.3%
Employment		
Casual employment (contract work etc.)	41	5.4%
Part time employment	31	4.1%
Full time employment	24	3.1%
Other sources		
Other sources not listed	56	7.3%
Informal sources (bottle return, panhandling etc.)	44	5.8%
Money from family/friends	23	3.0%
Other money from a service agency	9	1.2%
No Income	44	5.8%
Don't know/Decline to answer	29	3.8%

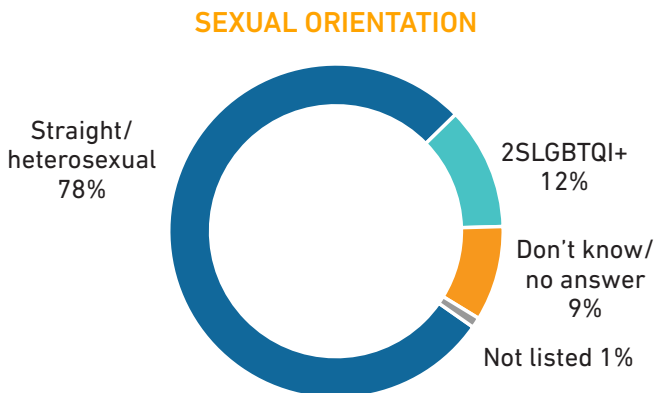
More than one response was possible.

SCHOOL

Respondents were asked if they were attending school. Only a small percentage (4.2%) were attending some form of education (e.g. high school, university/college, adult upgrading, vocational training, etc.). It is also important to note that 3.6% of respondents said they would like to attend some form of education.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Respondents identifying as 2SLGBTQI+ selected between choices such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, two spirit and more. Though the majority (78.2%) of respondents identified as straight/heterosexual, a significant portion (11.9%) identified as 2SLGBTQI+. This is almost three times the Canadian average of 4% (Statistics Canada, 2015 to 2018 Canadian Community Health Survey). This is even higher for youth: 30.5% of homeless youth (14-24) respondents identified as 2SLGBTQI+, which is almost 8 times the Canadian average.



Research shows that 2SLGBTQI+ individuals are more likely to experience homelessness in their lifetime, specifically as youth, due to reasons such as rejection from families (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, n.d.-b).

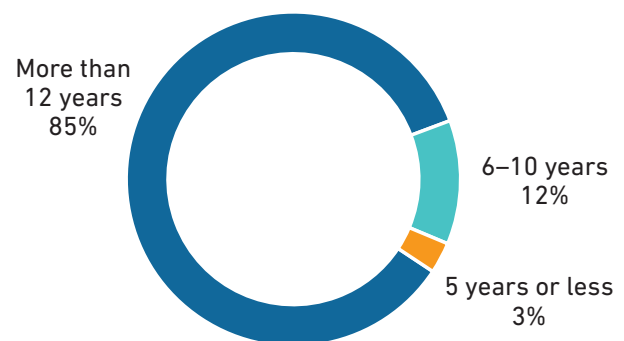
RACIAL & ETHNIC IDENTITY

Participants were asked about their racial and ethnic identity. Over one-third (36.4%) answered that they identify as Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Colour (BIPOC) while 62.5% identified as white. The questions differs slightly from that asked in the census but, for comparison, 26.5% identified as a visible minority in the 2020 census (Statistics Canada 2021). Of the percentage that identified as BIPOC, 30.1% identified as Indigenous, 1.3% responded that they were black and 4.4% identified being a person of colour of different background.

IMMIGRATION

The majority (83.3%) of respondents were born in Canada while 6.4% of respondents came to Canada as either an immigrant, refugee, or a refugee claimant. This is significantly lower than the Canadian average immigration figure of 23% (Statistics Canada, Census 2020). It important to note immigrant/newcomer Canadians are much more likely to be in hidden homelessness and thus, undercounted. The majority of respondents (85%) who came to Canada were born outside of Canada, and who chose to respond to this question had been in Canada more than 12 years.

LENGTH OF TIME IN CANADA

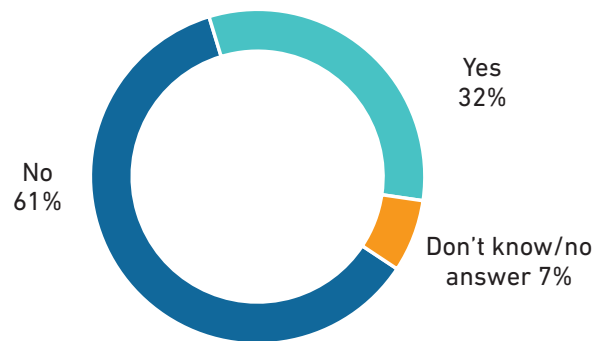


Over one-third (36.4%) answered that they are Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Colour.

GOVERNMENT/MINISTRY CARE

Almost one-third (32.2%) of respondents were in foster care or a youth group home as a child or youth. Research shows that children under government care are more likely to experience homelessness in their lifetime. The survey found that 17% of those with experience in government care were homeless within less than a week of transitioning out of care and 27.2% were homeless within less than a year of transitioning out of care. Only 11.3% of youth who had experience in government care said they found Child Protection Services helpful in transitioning them to independence after leaving foster care.

EXPERIENCE IN MINISTRY CARE

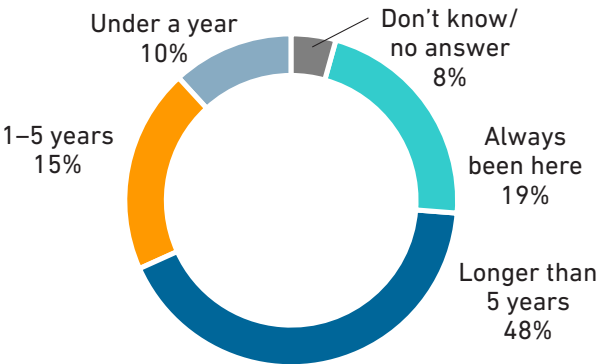


The survey found that 17% of those with experience in government care were homeless within less than a week of transitioning out of care and 27.2% were homeless within less than a year of transitioning out of care.

MOBILITY

In line with previous homeless needs surveys for the region, a large majority of respondents (81.7%) have lived in Greater Victoria for a year or more, 10.3% have been here under a year and 8% declined to answer. Nearly half (48%) of all survey respondents have lived here for longer than five years.

LENGTH OF TIME IN GREATER VICTORIA



Respondents who were born outside of Greater Victoria were asked to identify their main reasons for moving here.

TOP 5 REASONS RESPONDENTS MOVED TO GREATER VICTORIA:

(Note: For a full list of reasons, see the data tables in the technical appendix)

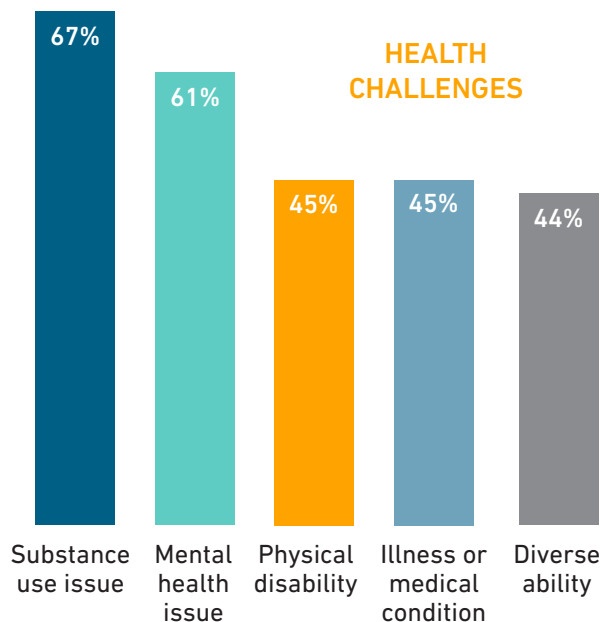
- Family moved here (17.9%)
- Wanted a change in life (10.5%)
- To visit friends/family (10.2%)
- Seeking employment (5.1%)
- Leaving an unhealthy living environment (4.6%)

HEALTH CHALLENGES

Nearly half of respondents identified as having a physical disability (45.4%), an illness or medical condition (45.2%), or diverse abilities (44.3%). Diverse abilities may include learning disabilities, cognitive limitations, ADHD, dyslexia, autism spectrum disorder and/or others. Additionally, almost one-third (32.5%) of respondents identified as having an acquired brain injury that happened after birth.

Homelessness exacerbates mental health and substance use issues associated with sleeplessness, trauma and stress. Two-thirds (67.5%) of respondents identified as having a substance use issue and well over half (61.2%) identified as having a mental health issue. It is important to note that only 17% identified substance use as a cause for homelessness (see below), illustrating that these issues can be a symptom, not a cause of homelessness. It does

Two-thirds (67.5%) of respondents identified as having a substance use issue and well over half (61.2%) identified as having a mental health issue.



increase challenges in exiting homelessness with 25% identifying addiction as a barrier to housing. This reinforces the importance of prevention.

HOUSING LOSS

One of the survey questions asked respondents how they recently lost their housing. Respondents had the option to choose more than one answer. For this question, housing did not include temporary arrangements such as couch surfing or shelter stays. Nearly one-quarter (23.7%) of respondents identified they did not have enough income for housing. This could be due to loss of benefits, income, or their job. Eviction was the third most common reason for housing loss, consistent with research showing that B.C. has the highest rate of eviction in the country (Xuereb & Jones, 2023).

TOP 5 REASONS FOR MOST RECENT HOUSING LOSS:

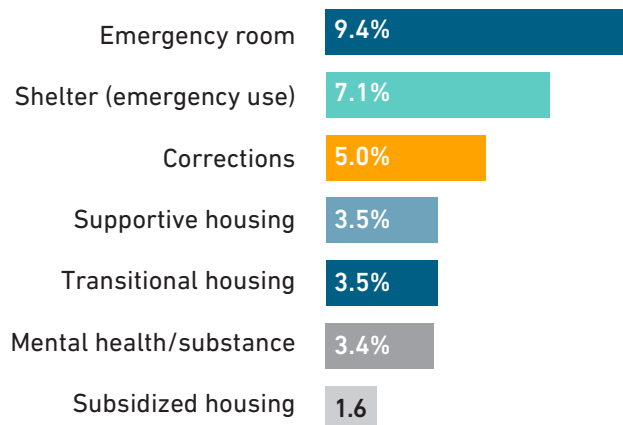
- Not enough income for housing (23.7%)
- Substance use issue (17.0%)
- Eviction (14.5%)
- Conflict with spouse/partner (11.5%)
- Unfit/unsafe housing condition (9.9%)

(Note: For a full list of reasons, please see the data table in the Technical Appendix)

Over one-third (37.3%) of respondents identified having lost their most recent housing within the last year. Respondents were asked if their most recent housing loss was related to the COVID-19 Pandemic, 11.4% of respondents said yes.

Nearly one-quarter (23.7%) of respondents identified they did not have enough income for housing.

DISCHARGED/EVICTED INTO HOMELESSNESS



Previous reports surveyed housing loss as it pertains to rentals in the general housing market. For this year's survey, a question was added to explore whether respondents had been discharged/evicted into homelessness from different types of accommodations. Respondents had the option to select from subsidized housing, transitional housing, supportive housing, corrections, mental health/substance use residential treatment, or hospital emergency rooms. 35.4% of respondents have been discharged or evicted into homelessness. The most common response (9.3%) was being discharged from hospital emergency rooms into homelessness.

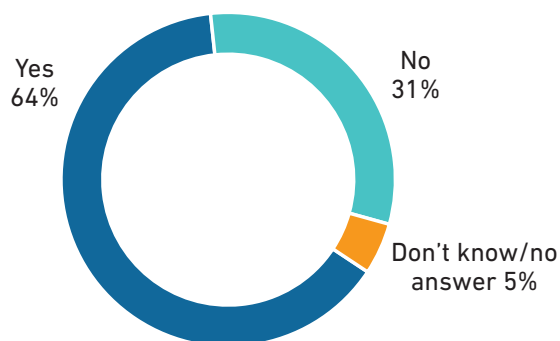
Over half (54.1%) of the respondents who said they would not stay in a homeless shelter in Greater Victoria said it is due to being turned away as shelter capacity was full.

SHELTER STAYS

Nearly two-thirds (64.3%) of all respondents have stayed in an emergency homeless shelter in the past year. The question asked referred specifically to short term stay shelters with no program agreements.

When asked if there were any reason respondents would not stay in an emergency homeless shelter in the past year, nearly half (45%) said yes. Over half (54.1%) of the respondents who said they would not stay in a homeless shelter in Greater Victoria said it is due to being turned away as shelter capacity was full.

SHELTER STAY IN THE PAST YEAR



TOP SIX REASONS RESPONDENTS DID NOT WANT TO STAY IN A HOMELESS SHELTER:

(Note: For a full list of responses, please see the data tables in the technical appendix)

- Turned away—shelters full (54.1%)
- Turned away—banned (36.9%)
- Lack of transportation (35.8%)
- Fear for safety (29.7%)
- Cleanliness/Bugs/Pests (29.4%)
- Stigma (21.2%)

To ensure community practices of Emergency Weather Protocols (EWP) are successful, respondents were asked if they are aware of when emergency weather shelters are open: 71.1% of respondents said they do know how to find out when emergency weather shelters are open and 21.6% of respondents do not.

BARRIERS TO HOUSING

When asked about barriers respondents encountered when trying to access housing, the top three reasons were high rents, low incomes and lack of affordable options. Over half identified high rents (56.1%) and low incomes (52.9%) as barriers faced. Nearly half (48.9%) identified a lack of available options (low vacancy) as a barrier. This data is in line with current research relating homelessness to rental housing markets. Only 1.2% of respondents said they have not encountered barriers when trying to access housing. For over one-in-four respondents, addiction was a key barrier to housing and exiting homelessness. For more than one-in-five respondents, lack of personal identification was a key barrier to housing.

Responses	%
Rents too high	56.1%
Low income	52.9%
Lack of available options	48.9%
Addiction	25.1%
No identification	22.7%
Mental health issues	18.7%
Discrimination	18.7%
Poor housing conditions	16.3%
Credit scores	15.9%
Health/disability issues	14.8%
No previous landlord references	14.6%
Employment confirmation/reference	12.4%
Criminal History	12.2%
No income assistance	10.8%
Family breakdown/conflict	8.9%
Pets	8.2%
Lack of technology	8.1%
Racism	7.1%
Domestic or sexualized violence	4.8%
Sexism	3.1%
Children	2.6%
Other	14.2%
No barriers to housing	1.2%
Don't know/Decline to answer	7.3%

More than one response possible.

DESIRE FOR PERMANENT HOUSING

There is a common misconception that individuals experiencing homelessness do not want to get into some form of permanent housing. However, only 4.7% said they did not want housing, while 86.8% wanted housing. The remaining percentage represents those who chose to not answer the question.

Respondents were asked to identify services they may need. This question provides the community with useful information about gaps in support for those experiencing homelessness. Over half of respondents identified needing access to primary care services (58.4%) and food security supports (50.6%). This was closely followed by identification services (45.6%), mental health supports (45.2%), and addictions services (43.8%). Substance use and mental health issues were the most common health challenges experienced by respondents. This correlates with the high number of respondents indicating the need for mental health and addictions supports.

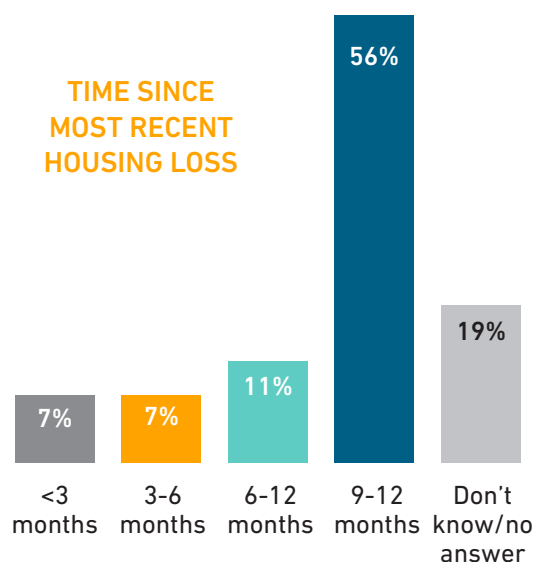
There is a common misconception that individuals experiencing homelessness do not want to get into some form of permanent housing; however, only 4.7% of respondents said they did not want housing.

Service need	%
Primary care services	58.4%
Food security supports	50.6%
Identification services	45.6%
Mental health supports	45.2%
Addictions services	43.8%
Emotional wellness supports	33.9%
Harm reduction supports	32.2%
Financial counselling	31.1%
Spiritual wellness supports	30.5%
Life skills	26.4%
Learning disability supports	19.5%
Justice navigation	19.1%
Indigenous treatment and support	15.6%
Culturally sensitive services	14.0%
Faith based supports and services	12.8%
Religious supports and services	11.8%
Indigenous justice navigation	8.2%
Youth services	6.4%
Gender specific housing services	5.6%
Newcomers support/settlement services	4.6%
Pregnancy supports	2.1%
Other	4.6%
None of the above	5.8%
Don't know/Decline to answer	6.3%

Almost half of respondents were homeless for 365 days of the past year.

CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

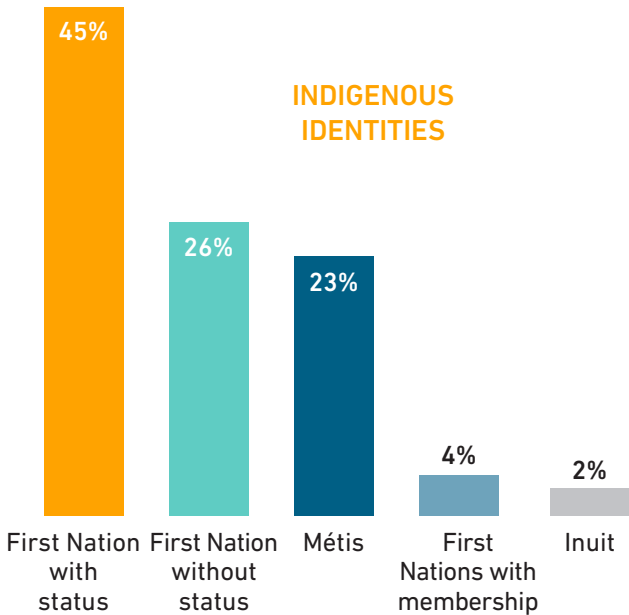
Over half (56.2%) of respondents were homeless for 9-12 months of the past year. Over two-thirds (67.4%) of respondents are considered chronically homeless as they have been experiencing homelessness for more than six months in the past year. Almost half (49.5%) of respondents were homeless for 365 days in the past year.



Over half of respondents identified needing access to primary care services and food security supports. This was closely followed by identification services, mental health supports, and addictions services.

INDIGENOUS IDENTITY

It is well recognized that the disproportionately high rates of homelessness amongst the Indigenous population are attributed to systemic barriers, racial discrimination, and the intergenerational trauma of colonization and experiences of residential and day schools. Widespread research indicates that colonial treaties, policies, and practices designed to eradicate Indigenous cultures across Canada, including the Indian Act, residential and day schools, and the Sixties Scoop, have led to intergenerational trauma, causing extensive health and social implications for Indigenous people today (Buccieri et al., 2022; Thistle, 2017). Urban Indigenous Peoples (UIP) experience homelessness at a disproportionate rate. Research found 1-in-15 UIP experience homelessness, compared to 1-in-128 for the general population (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, n.d.-a).



More than one response was possible.

Almost one-third of Indigenous respondents are from communities within the three tribal regions on Vancouver Island.

INDIGENOUS STATUS

In the 2023 homeless needs survey, 32.9% of respondents identified as Indigenous. This is slightly lower than the 2020 homeless needs survey (35.0%). This is significantly higher than the Indigenous population in Greater Victoria where 5% identified as Indigenous in the 2020 census (Statistics Canada, 2021, Victoria Census Metropolitan Area (CMA)).

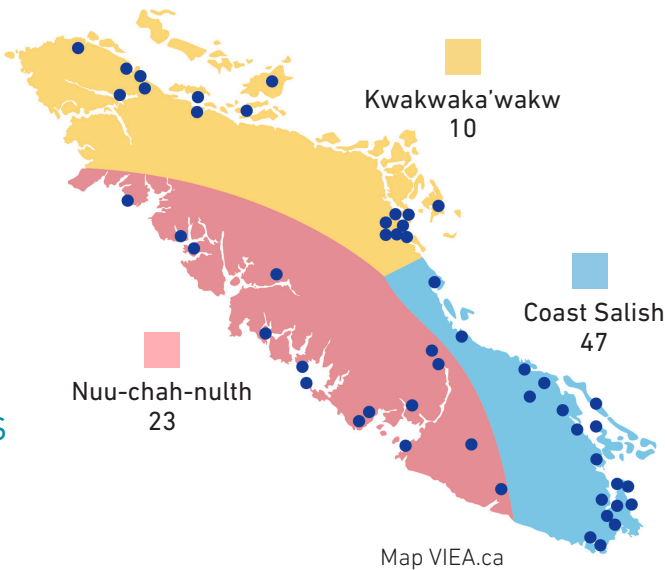
In the 2023 homeless needs survey, 75% of respondents who identified as Indigenous are First Nations, with 45.2% having status. Nearly a quarter of respondents identified as Métis.

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY

The majority of Indigenous respondents (83.7%) shared which community they are from:

- 31.7% of Indigenous respondents are from communities within the three tribal regions on Vancouver Island
- 13.5% are from communities elsewhere in BC
- 34.9% came from communities outside BC, and
- the remaining respondents either did not know or declined to answer.

Indigenous respondents identified as having come from more than 180 communities.



RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL HISTORY

There are complex threads of colonization that intersect in many ways in the lives of Indigenous peoples. These include, for instance, residential schools, the 60s/70s scoop, current scoop, foster care, and the way that the Indian Act controls Indigeneity, location, identity, sovereignty, and self-governance for Indigenous peoples. All of these colonial structures have led to other challenges related to homelessness, such as through the correctional system, child welfare, or challenges related to mental health and/or substances (Buccieri et al., 2022).

It is important to understand that Indigenous people experiencing homelessness have personally experienced residential school or day school or had a parent or grandparent experience a residential school or day school. Much of the literature shows the interrelated connections between the effects of colonization and residential and day schools with homelessness.

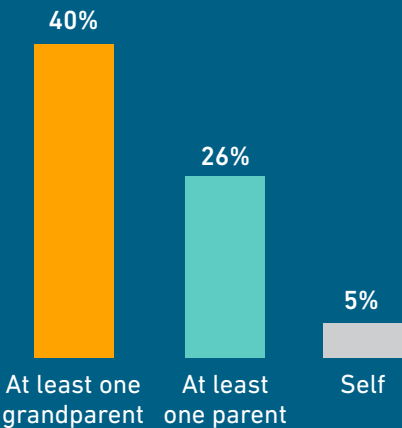
Understanding this within the local homeless population can help inform the degree to which housing and support solutions might consider incorporating strategies to address trauma, including intergenerational and historical trauma, and work towards the provision of culturally safe and appropriate spaces and services. Substance use is a response to and symptom of trauma and homelessness.

The use of the word “experience” in reference to residential and day schools is a way for us to reflect on how Indigenous peoples were not given a choice in attending residential or day schools, and instead were forced to experience them. For the 2023 homeless needs survey, day school experience was included to acknowledge those who may not have experienced residential schools, but still experienced the traumatic and colonial impact of day schools that were imposed within their communities (Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre, n.d.).

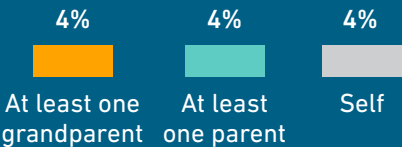
Of the respondents who identified as Indigenous, 39.7% reported that at least one of their grandparents had experienced residential schools, and 4% reported that at least one of their grandparents and themselves had experienced day schools.

For the 2023 homeless needs survey, day school experience was included to acknowledge those who may not have experienced residential schools, but still experienced the traumatic and colonial impact of day schools that were imposed within their communities.

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL EXPERIENCE



DAY SCHOOL EXPERIENCE



INDIGENOUS HOUSING WAITLISTS

Access to on-reserve and urban Indigenous housing is measured in the homeless needs survey through questions on waitlists: 16.3% of Indigenous respondents are on a waitlist for on-reserve housing, with nearly half (48.1%) identified being on a waitlist for their reserve for 2+ years. For urban Indigenous housing, 32.1% of Indigenous respondents are on a waitlist, with nearly three quarters (73.4%) of those respondents having submitted their application more than a year ago. Given that Indigenous communities and/or reserves place housing for families as a priority, it should be noted that many single individuals might not consider applying to housing waitlists.

INDIGENOUS EXPERIENCES OF HOMELESSNESS

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness defines Indigenous homelessness as:

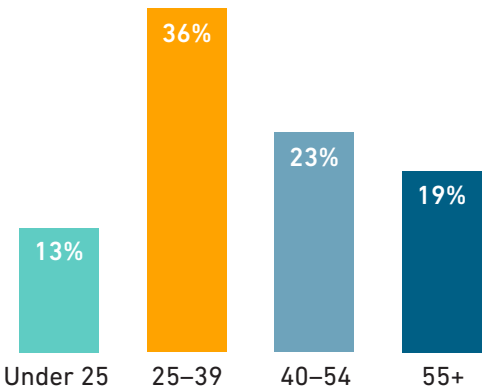
A human condition that describes First Nations, Métis and Inuit individuals, families or communities lacking stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means or ability to acquire such housing... Indigenous homelessness is not defined as lacking a structure of habitation; rather, it is more fully described and understood through a composite lens of Indigenous worldviews. These include: individuals, families and communities isolated from their relationships to land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages and identities (2017).

Understanding Indigenous homelessness goes beyond the lack of a physical structure of residence, as it comprises of the need for Indigenous people to “culturally, spiritually, emotionally or physically reconnect with their indigeneity or lost relationships” (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2017; Thistle, 2017).

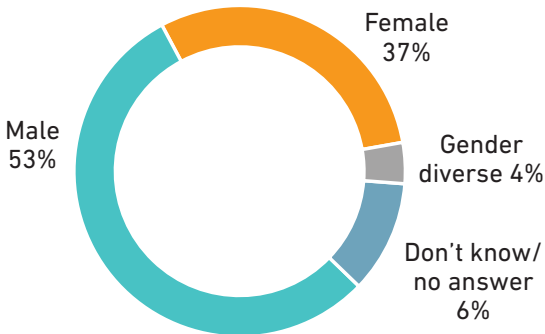
The experiences of homelessness, along with the personal challenges that act as contributors to homelessness such as substance use, addiction, and health challenges, can be directly linked to historical trauma, oppression, residential and day schools, and other acts of colonization (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2017). See survey data on the previous page for the high level of residential school experience reported.

- Similar to the 2020 homeless needs survey, more Indigenous women are experiencing homeless than non-Indigenous women: 37.1% identified as a female while only 27% of the general survey population identified as female.

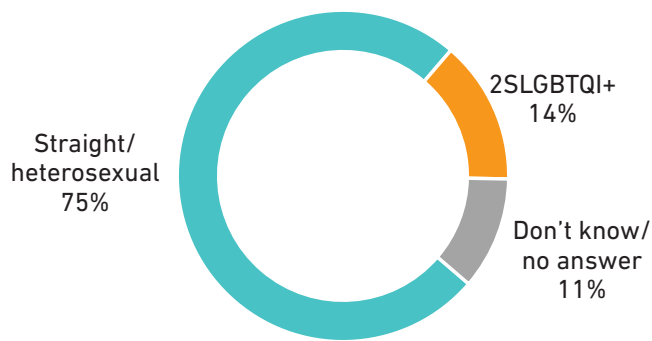
AGE AMONG INDIGENOUS RESPONDENTS



INDIGENOUS GENDER IDENTITY



INDIGENOUS SEXUAL ORIENTATION



- 14.3% identified as 2SLGBTQI+, which is higher than the general survey population (11.9%).
- Nearly one-third (32.5%) were unsheltered on the night of March 7, and 75.5% were alone or had no family members staying with them that night.
- 67.9% experienced chronic homelessness, meaning that they had been homeless for a total of six or more months out of the past 12 months. This is in line with the findings of all survey respondents where 67.4% of respondents were experiencing chronic homelessness.
- 60.8% had their first experience of homelessness as a youth (under the age of 25), with 46.4% having their first experience of homelessness at the age of 18 or younger. This is higher than the general survey population.

- Nearly half (49.4%) indicated they had been in foster care, a youth group home, or a child welfare program as a child or youth. This is much higher than the general survey population, where only 32.2% indicated the same. This is consistent with Indigenous children and youth being over-represented in the foster care system across the country.
- For Indigenous youth respondents, almost two-thirds (62%) identified as female and 34.5% identified as 2SLGBTQI+. These are both much higher than the overall Indigenous population and the overall survey population.
- Respondents identified living with at least one health challenge:
 - o Substance use issue: 76.8%
 - o Mental health issue: 68.8%
 - o Diverse ability: 55.7%
 - o Physical disability: 45.1%
 - o Illness or medical conditions: 43.9%
- The top three reasons for housing loss:
 - o Not enough income for housing (26.6%),
 - o Substance use issue (24.5%), and
 - o Conflict with a spouse/partner (16.9%).
- The five most common needed services include:
 - o Primary care services (57.8%),
 - o Addiction or substance use (51.5%),
 - o Food security supports (50.6%),
 - o Mental health (50.2%),
 - o Identification services (49.4%).

Nearly half (49.4%) indicated having been in foster care, a youth group home, or a child welfare program.

YOUTH PROFILE

Youth homelessness typically refers to young people aged 13 to 24 who are living independently of parents/guardians, which contributes to a lack of access to social supports, such as a stable or consistent residence and source of income, that are believed necessary to transition from childhood to independent adulthood (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, n.d.-d).

In 2020, the PiT project surveyed 84 youth aged 16 to 24 experiencing homelessness in Greater Victoria. While the 2023 PiT project surveyed only 59 youths, this does not necessarily reflect a decrease in youth homelessness. There was a change in which facilities participated in the count due to staffing constraints and lower attendance. This was seen at the magnet event, possibly due to the frequently changing availability of youth drop-in programs, both of which significantly affected the number of youths surveyed (see the Technical Appendix for a detailed outline of the methodology changes). Still, with 59 youth surveys completed, the data presents a well-grounded picture of youth homelessness.

Youth homelessness remains a salient issue, as the literature estimates that approximately 20% of the homeless population in Canada is comprised of youth (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, n.d.-c). Therefore, continuous efforts are needed to address and prevent youth homelessness in the region.

YOUTH EXPERIENCES OF HOMELESSNESS

- A higher rate of youth identified with another gender identity (3.4%) than the general survey population (2.9%), and 30.5% of youth identified as 2SLGBTQI+ compared with 11.9% of the general survey population.
- Over half (54.2%) of youth respondents identified as women, compared to 27.2% of female-identifying respondents in the entire survey population.
- 32.2% of youth were unsheltered in a public space on the night of March 7, while 50.8% were provisionally sheltered.
- The majority (61.0%) of youth reported spending the night of March 7 alone or had no family members or friends staying with them that night.
- Half (50.8%) of respondents identified as Indigenous, which is substantially more than the general survey population experiencing homelessness (31.0%).
- The majority of youth (78.0%) first experienced being homeless between the ages of 10 and 19.
- 54.2% are experiencing chronic homelessness, meaning that they have been homeless for six months or longer over the past year.
- Almost half (49.2%) of respondents currently are, or were, in foster care, a youth group home, or government care, which is more than the general survey population (32.2%).

30.5% of youth
identified as
2SLGBTQI+



- The top three reasons for losing housing most recently for youth: conflict with a parent/guardian (25.4%), eviction (20.3%), and substance use issue (20.3%). These results are different from the entire survey population where the top three reasons are not enough income (23.7%), substance use issue (17.0%), and eviction (14.5%)
- The top five needed services for youth are:
 - Primary care services (64.4%)
 - Mental health supports (61.0%)
 - Addiction or substance use supports (59.3%)
 - Food security supports (55.9%)
 - Harm reduction supports (54.2%)

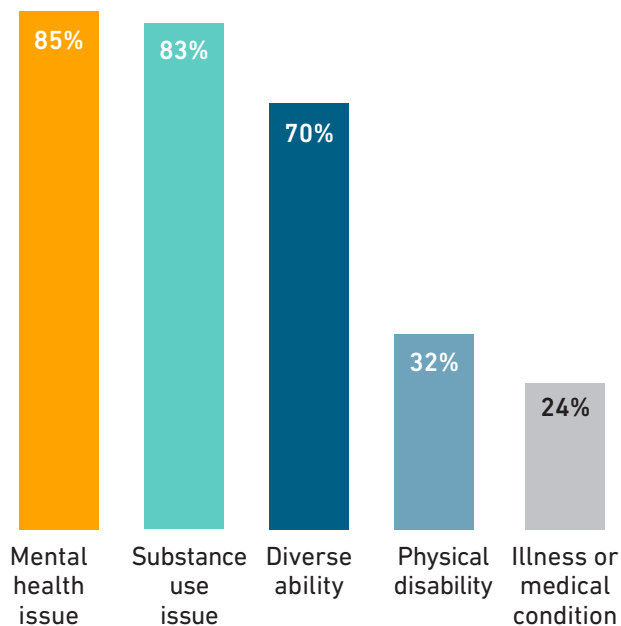
Primary health care is the most needed service for youth respondents.

VETERANS PROFILE

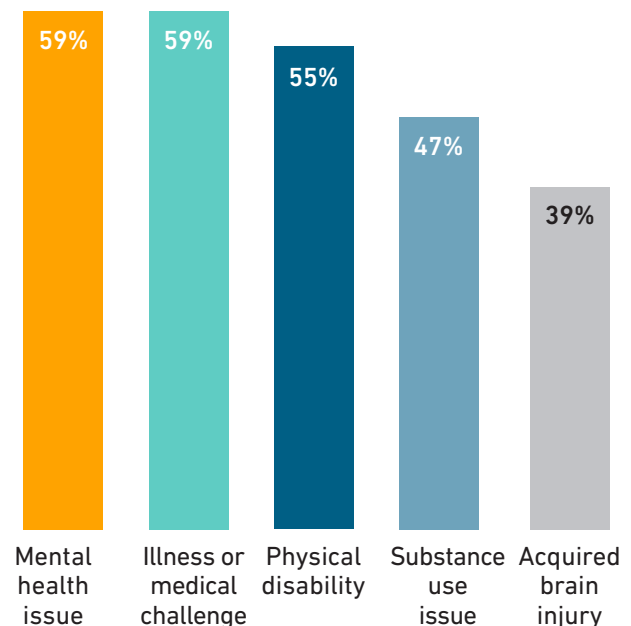
6.7% of respondents indicate they served in the Canadian Military (Canadian Army, Navy, or Air Force) or the RCMP. This finding is only slightly higher from the 2020 PiT homeless needs survey where 5.5% identified as veterans. Of these veterans, all of them had served in the Canadian Armed Forces. 15.7% of veterans are currently, or have been previously, supported by Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC).

In Victoria, 2.4% of the population are veterans (being served by the VAC Area Office in Victoria), yet 6.7% of survey respondents indicated being veterans (Statistics Canada, 2023; Veterans Affairs Canada, 2022). Research suggests that among the main reasons that veterans experience homelessness is due to difficulty transitioning back to civilian life upon returning from service, and thus they have unique needs and experiences of homelessness (Ellis, 2019). Therefore, it is essential to consider this population in homelessness prevention planning. There are 9,603 veterans served by the Veterans Affairs Canada Area Office in Victoria.

YOUTH EXPERIENCES WITH HEALTH CHALLENGES



VETERANS EXPERIENCES WITH HEALTH CHALLENGES



SENIORS (55+) PROFILE

The survey found 24.8% (190 respondents) of respondents to be aged 55+. This is higher than the 2020 report which found 160 respondents aged 55+. Although Canada's population is aging (18% of the Canadian population were aged 65+ in 2020), seniors see lower levels of poverty compared to other age groups within the country (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2021). However, there are specific seniors populations facing higher poverty rates, such as single seniors, immigrants, Indigenous seniors, and seniors with disabilities. Experiences of homelessness within these specific senior populations were reflected in the 2023 homelessness needs survey results. Seniors experience homelessness for similar reasons to those under the age of 55. The main reasons reported include a lack of income (e.g. low benefits), lack of safe and affordable housing, or low vacancy. The risk of homelessness for seniors can be increased by factors unique to seniors such as the death of a spouse, social isolation, or lack of awareness of available benefits and services (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, n.d.-c).

SENIORS EXPERIENCES OF HOMELESSNESS

- 74.2% of seniors identified as male while 20.5% of seniors identified as women. There are almost 10% more men in the senior population than there are in the general survey population (65%).
- 18.4% of seniors spent the night unsheltered and 63.7% reported having spent the night in a shelter in the past year.
- The vast majority (91.6%) reported having spent the night of March 7 alone.
- 23.2% of seniors are Indigenous; this is almost 10% lower of the Indigenous population in the general survey population (32.9%).

The vast majority of senior respondents spent the night single, with 91.6% reporting they spent the night of March 7 alone.

- 62.1% were chronically homeless, spending more than six months of the past year in homelessness while 46.2% reported having spent 12 months of the past year homeless.
- 36.8% of senior respondents reported first experiencing homelessness as a senior (55+).
- 31.6% of senior respondents lost their most recent housing in the past year, this is slightly lower than the response of the general population where 37.3% of respondents lost their most recent housing in the past year.
- Most common reasons seniors lost their housing:
 - o Not enough income for housing (22.6%)
 - o Eviction (12.6%)
 - o Unfit/unsafe housing condition (12.1%)
 - o Substance use issue (11.6%)
- Most common services needed by senior respondents:
 - o Primary care services (56.3%)
 - o Food security supports (40.0%)
 - o Identification services (33.2%)
 - o Mental health supports (30.0%)
 - o Emotional wellness supports (30.0%)
- Health challenges senior respondents are facing:
 - o Physical disability (60.5%)
 - o Illness or medical challenge (60.0%)
 - o Mental health issue (47.4%)
 - o Substance use issue (44.7%)
 - o Diverse ability (34.2%)

CONCLUSION

Results of the Point in Time Count and Homeless Needs Survey help determine the extent and experiences of homeless in the Greater Victoria region during a 24-hour period. The information gathered contributes to national and provincial data on homelessness, provides a community-wide measure of homelessness, identifies characteristics of the local population, and identifies service needs to prevent and reduce homelessness.

While the enumeration provides a figure that represents the number of people experiencing homelessness on a given night, it is important that this be understood as an undercount of people experiencing homelessness in Greater Victoria. There are individuals who choose not to participate, or who are in hidden homelessness and have not been counted.

Homeless needs survey findings provide a look into the unique demographics and service needs of Greater Victoria's homeless population which can be used by decision makers to better provide integrated services. While the enumeration should not be compared to previous years, the survey findings overtime provide an opportunity to analyze trends. Demographic findings and findings on service and support needs are similar to previous years with the specific findings, providing a direct link to what is needed in our community.

In line with current research, the survey found low incomes, lack of affordable housing, and low vacancy to be the most common cause of housing loss. Additionally, it was found that many respondents receive income through income assistance or provincial disability. These findings provide a unique opportunity to look at the causes of homelessness with respect to our local contexts and provide a pathway to understand how to prevent homelessness in the region.

Services and supports needed by those experiencing homelessness in our region included primary care services, substance use services, mental health services, identification services, and food security supports. It was found that we have a high number of senior individuals experiencing homelessness and a disproportionate number of Indigenous People experiencing homelessness.

The findings from this report provide an opportunity for service providers and decision makers to directly respond to the needs of Greater Victoria's homeless population and can be used to inform programs, services, and supports.

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APPENDIX A: COMMUNITY SUPPORTERS AND PARTNERS

ADVISORY TEAM

- Capital Regional District, Jerry Michael and Gina Dolinsky
- Island Health, Echo Kulpas and Curtis Hart
- Alliance to End Homelessness in the Capital Region, Janine Theobald, Sylvia Caecero, and Michelle Vanchu-Orosco
- Victoria Police Department, Cst. Mark Jenkins
- Victoria Cool Aid Society, Tracey Robertson
- Our Place, Jordan Cooper
- City of Victoria, Tanya Patterson
- Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Society, Asiyah Robinson
- Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness, Fran Hunt-Jinnouchi, Brielyn Ramsay, Filip Ani
- Victoria Native Friendship Centre, Katherin Cooper
- Cridge Transition House, Rochelle Esterhuizen and Amber Bell
- Beacon Community Services, Jen Mortimer
- Existence Project, Sinan Demirel
- Threshold Housing Society, Mary McBride
- Sooke Shelter Society, Sherry Thompson and Kristie Miller
- BC Housing, Michelle Powell
- Volunteer Victoria, Lisa Mort-Putland
- University of Victoria, Marshall Kilduff
- Lived Experience, Hilary Marks

LIVED EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE

- Hilary Marks
- Kesu Beaton
- Jennifer Johnson
- Michelle Ferris
- La Vonn Cham
- M. Riffle

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- City of Victoria Councillor Thompson
- City of Victoria Councillor Loughton
- Monk Office Supplies
- Viveka Foundation Fund
- Cool Aid Society – Downtown Community Centre

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