



2025 Greater Victoria Point in Time Homelessness Count and Survey





Land Acknowledgment

The 2025 PiT Count was conducted on the traditional territories of many First Nations. We respectfully acknowledge the First Nations governments across this region — BOKEĆEN(Pauquachin), MÁLEXEL (Malahat), P'a:chi:da?ah (Pacheedaht), Pune'laxutth' (Penelakut), Sc'ianew (Beecher Bay), Songhees, STÁUTW (Tsawout), T'Sou-ke, W JOLÉLP (Tsartlip), W SIKEM (Tseycum), and x^wsepsəm (Esquimalt) — all of whom have cared for and maintained deep connections to these lands and waters since time immemorial and continue to do so today. We especially acknowledge the relationship between homelessness and the ongoing impacts of colonization. The dispossession of land from Indigenous peoples, along with historical and continued colonial policies and practices, have contributed to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples being disproportionately affected by homelessness in our region and across Canada. We recognize that any effort to address homelessness must also confront and work to dismantle these systemic inequities.

Thank you message

We are incredibly grateful to everyone who contributed their invaluable time, support, and expertise to the 2025 Point in Time (PiT) Count & Survey. This includes all of the organizations, community partners, sponsors, supporters, and 130 dedicated volunteers who made this effort possible. We would like to extend a special thank you to those experiencing the challenges of homelessness who generously shared their personal and often difficult experiences through their participation in the survey. Your willingness to participate plays a crucial role in shaping local, provincial, and national efforts to reduce and ultimately end homelessness. This report would not have been possible without your contributions. Thank you all, this truly is a community effort. The success of the PiT Count and Survey depends on the dedication of everyone involved in the many aspects of planning and delivery. Survey depends on the dedication of everyone involved in the many aspects of planning and delivery.

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Report Artwork

CSPC commissioned artwork from participants of local social service agencies. Thank you to all the artists who contributed their work to the 2025 Greater Victoria Point in Time Homelessness Count and Survey Report.

In-Kind Contributions

Magnet Event Partners

QomQom Coastal Connections, Cornerstone Youth Society, John Howard Society of Victoria, Victoria Cool Aid Society, Beacon Community Services, and the Salvation Army Connection Point Church and Resource Centre

Volunteer Headquarters

Salvation Army ARC

Sponsors & Donors

With gratitude to:

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Project Funder

This project was funded by the Government of Canada's *Reaching Home* program: Canada's Homelessness Strategy, through the Capital Regional District.

Cover art: "Blue Moon" by John Prevost

"The blue moon every 4 years comes our way. The two wolves are protecting the mother blue moon."
—John Prevost

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Executive Summary

Greater Victoria's 2025 Point in Time (PiT)

Count and Homeless Needs Survey took place on March 25th and 26th, 2025. Sheltered enumeration (at emergency shelters, transitional housing, and public systems including health and corrections) occurred the night of March 25th. Unsheltered enumeration took place the following day, March 26th, during which survey participants were asked where they had slept the previous night. 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 federally funded through *Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy* and contributes to a national picture of homelessness.

The 2025 PiT Count and Homeless Needs Survey was completed with the support of 130 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 at least 11 First Nations.

On the night of March 25th, 2025 the PiT Count found that at least **1,749 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; or experiencing hidden homelessness, such as couch surfing or staying with family and friends because they have nowhere else to go.

On March 26th, Homeless Needs Surveys were conducted, gathering invaluable data to help understand local stories and experiences of homelessness. The 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.

Infographics: Key Survey Findings

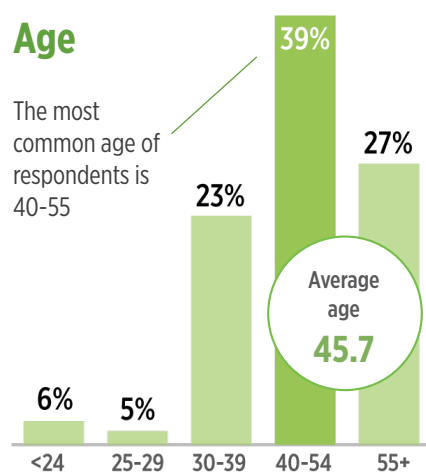
Enumeration Breakdown

The night of March 25, 2025, at least **1,749 people** were experiencing homelessness in Greater Victoria. Categories listed do not add to 1,749, as there were 3 individuals who slept in an unknown location.



Age

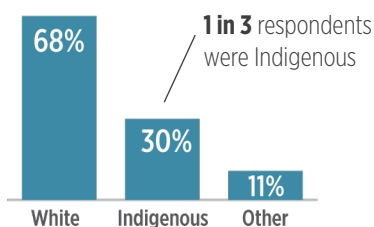
The most common age of respondents is 40-55



11% were youth (defined as 29 and younger)

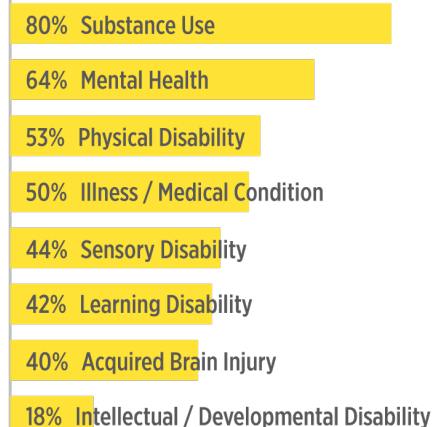


Ethnic identities



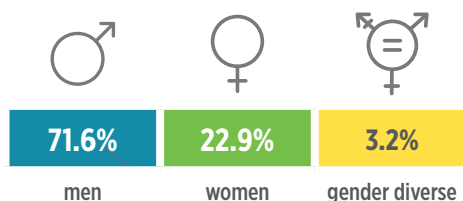
* Respondents could report multiple.

Priority Health challenges

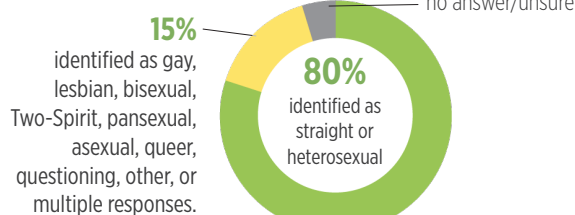


Gender

Over two-thirds identified as men



Sexual orientation



Foster care/ group homes



< Over a third (36%) of all respondents were in government care during their childhood or youth.
33% of respondents from foster care became homeless within the first year of exiting the system.
7% became homeless on the first day.

Discharged into homelessness



12% of respondents reported being discharged from a hospital into homelessness during the past year.

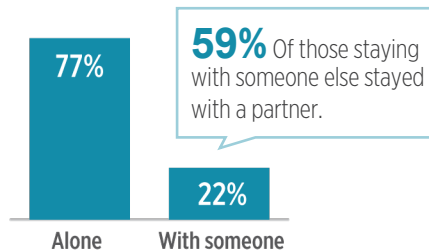
Most Reported Service Needs

- 1 Primary Care Services—67%
- 2 Food Security Supports—57%
- 3 Mental Health Services—51%
- 4 Identification Services—46%
- 5 Transportation—45%
- 6 Addiction/Substance Use Services—43%

Infographics: Key Survey Findings

Family composition

77% of respondents spent the night of March 25th alone.



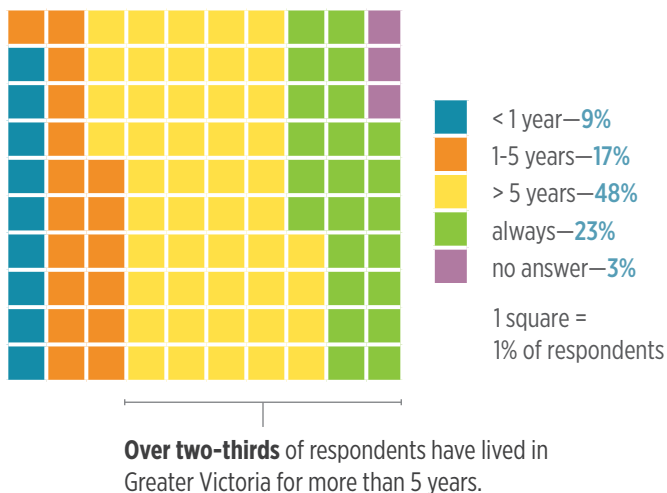
* Remaining responses no answer/unsure

76% had reasons for avoiding shelters in Greater Victoria

Top reasons for not staying in a shelter

47%	Fear for Safety
37%	Not wanting to lose belongings/theft
31%	Issues with cleanliness/bugs/pests
29%	Crowding
21%	Substance use related concerns

Time in Greater Victoria



Immigration



< 6% came to Canada as an immigrant, refugee, or asylum claimant.

School attendance

- 3%** currently in school (high school, post-secondary, vocational)
- 14%** not currently in school and would like to be

Length of time of homelessness

Over the past year, **73%** experienced homelessness for 9–12 months



Over the past 3 years, **75%** experienced homelessness for half or more of that time

Most reported income sources

92% of respondents reported **at least one** form of income.

- 1** Disability benefits—52%
- 2** Social assistance/welfare—28%
- 3** Informal income sources—9%

Barriers to Housing



High rent prices (**65%**) and low income (**61%**) were the most frequent answers when asked what is keeping respondents from finding housing.

Introduction



On the March 25th and 26th, 2025,

130 citizen volunteers and staff, along with a cross-sector of service agencies and community partners, participated in Greater Victoria's 2025 PiT Count and Survey.

Data was collected from 58 locations, including shelters, transitional housing, and health facilities. Surveys were completed at 20 indoor sites and along 26 walking routes throughout Greater Victoria. While the number of walking routes appears lower compared to the 49 routes in 2023, the 2025 PiT Count extended each route to cover a larger area and assigned more surveyors per route.

Through this extensive effort, at least 1,749 individuals experiencing homelessness were counted on the night of March 25th, 2025. Between March 26th and April 4th, 2025, volunteers conducted 607 surveys with people experiencing homelessness across the region, offering an invaluable collection of personal stories, experiences, and identified needs.

While totals from PiT Counts are not directly comparable year over year, the surveys' consistent methodology allows for trend analysis. As in the 2023 PiT Report, this year's report provides an overview of the enumeration and an analysis of the survey data to show how the structures and experiences of homelessness have changed in our region. The PiT strategy gathers community-level information on the demographics, histories, and service needs of people experiencing homelessness, offering valuable insight into its nature and extent.

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.

Background

Homelessness is a widespread challenge

impacting communities all across Canada. According to Statistics Canada's 2021 Canadian Housing Survey, 11.2% of Canadians, approximately 1.69 million people, reported having experienced some form of homelessness in their lifetime (Statistics Canada, 2023). This includes both absolute homelessness, where individuals stayed in shelters or unsheltered locations (reported by 2.2% of households), and hidden homelessness, such as couch surfing or temporarily living with others without secure housing, which was reported by 10.5% of respondents (Statistics Canada, 2023).

In 2019, *Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy* was launched by the Federal Government under the National Housing Strategy to support the goal of solving the housing crisis (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2023). *Reaching Home* aims to prevent and reduce homelessness through community-based solutions and funds PiT Counts and surveys to help track the extent and experiences of homelessness in various communities across the country.

The coordinated approach of Point in Time Counts includes core standards for all participating communities. A consistent, nationally approved methodology is used to collect information that is comparable at both the national and provincial levels. Communities can customize certain aspects of data collection to ensure results are useful for their local context; Greater Victoria's 2025 survey included additional questions on the Indigenous population and access to housing and services. The enumeration of people experiencing homelessness in PiT Counts is known to be an undercount because it only includes facilities that participate and individuals who

are encountered and willing to take part in the survey. While the count represents a minimum number of people experiencing homelessness on a single night, the survey provides invaluable data that gives a clearer picture of who is affected and their presenting needs. This information can guide policymakers, planners, and service providers in efforts to reduce homelessness.

PiT Count efforts in the region have been led by the Capital Regional District (CRD) since 2016, with coordination provided by the Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria (CSPC). The region's first PiT Count and needs assessment was the 2007 Homeless Needs Survey, conducted by the Victoria Cool Aid Society in partnership with CSPC. For the 2025 PiT Count, CSPC continued collaborating with the University of Victoria's Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research to strengthen the ethical and methodological components of the 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). The region spans the territories of approximately 11 First Nations and is a highly desirable place to live and visit. However, the housing and rental market is one of the least affordable in the country.

Homelessness results from the interplay between structural and systemic factors. Structural factors are broad economic and societal issues including a lack of affordable housing, poverty, racism and other forms of discrimination including sex and gender discrimination, and the lasting impact of colonialism on Indigenous Peoples in Canada (Gaetz et al., 2013; Gaetz & DeJ, 2017).

Systems failures contribute to homelessness through barriers to accessing public systems, discharges from hospitals, corrections and child welfare into homelessness, and the complexity of the systems aimed at assisting individuals experiencing homelessness (Gaetz & DeJ, 2017).

The primary structural factor is a lack of affordable housing across Greater Victoria, impacting the health and well-being of many across the region. Within the region 19.7% of renters 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, 2022). As of October 2024, the vacancy rate in Victoria is 2.6% with the average monthly cost of a bachelor apartment at \$1,366 (CMHC, 2025). This is far beyond the means of someone on disability or income assistance which provides \$500 per month for the shelter component.

It is evident the high-priced rental market in Greater Victoria makes it hard for people on low or fixed incomes to afford rental housing. While the cost of rental housing is the main structural factor causing homelessness, it is one of several factors that drive homelessness (Community Social Planning Council, 2022). Structural and systemic issues including discharging people into homelessness create the conditions for homelessness (Gaetz et al., 2013; Gaetz & DeJ, 2017; Allegrante & Sleet, 2021). There are multiple policy decisions at every level of government that create the conditions that lead to homelessness (Allegrante & Sleet, 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 highlight the diversity of people experiencing homelessness in Greater Victoria and provide insight into the unique experiences and needs among survey respondents.

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 2025 PiT project's definition of homelessness 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

The following provides a high-level overview of the methodology used for the 2025 Greater Victoria PiT Count and Homeless Needs Survey. This summary is intended to support understanding of the standardized approach used for PiT Counts across regions, ensuring alignment with national practices and consistency in how counts are conducted across Canada.

The 2025 Greater Victoria PiT Count and Survey were conducted over a 24-hour period, providing a snapshot of homelessness in the region on a single night. The methodology followed both national and provincial guidelines and was informed by previous counts conducted locally and in other Canadian communities. Ethical considerations were a key part of the process, and the PiT Count was conducted in accordance with research ethics standards.

The two key components of the PiT Count are:

1. **Enumeration** – a count of people experiencing homelessness across various settings, including shelters, transitional housing, and unsheltered locations.
2. **Homeless Needs Survey** – a voluntary survey conducted with individuals experiencing homelessness to gather more detailed information on their needs and experiences.

For a more detailed account of the methodology, including the dataset, research definitions, research ethics, and survey tools, please refer to the 2025 Greater Victoria PiT Count and Survey Technical Appendix.

Enumeration

The enumeration component provides a count of the minimum number of people experiencing homelessness who were staying in emergency shelters, provisional

accommodations (such as transitional housing, couch surfing, or within public systems), or who were unsheltered.

Two primary methods were used to estimate the number of individuals experiencing homelessness:

■ **Administrative Data:** Staff from participating emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, and institutional settings (such as health care, treatment, and correctional facilities) completed enumeration forms reporting the number of individuals who spent the night of March 25th, 2025, in their facilities.

■ **Survey Data:** Individuals who stayed in unsheltered locations (e.g., outdoors, in vehicles) or who were provisionally accommodated (e.g., staying with someone temporarily) but not captured through administrative data were included in the enumeration if they were reached by volunteers conducting surveys on March 26th, 2025.

It is important to note that individuals who reported staying in a sheltered location when asked where they stayed last night during the survey, were not included in the total enumeration count, as they would have already been accounted for through the administrative data.

Homelessness Needs Survey

A team of approximately 130 trained community volunteers conducted 607 surveys, providing valuable data on the demographics and experiences of people experiencing homelessness in the Greater Victoria region. The survey began with a consent page and included a brief set of screening questions aligned with the PiT Count and Survey definition of



homelessness. Both the consent page and survey are included in the Technical Appendix for further review.

Survey questions included a combination of standardized items required by national guidelines and locally developed questions tailored to the unique context of the region. These local questions were created in collaboration with members of the Community Advisory Committee.

The Homelessness Needs Survey was administered by volunteers and staff across a variety of settings, including outdoor locations, temporary housing and shelter facilities, homeless- and non-homeless-serving agencies (such as food banks and meal programs), as well as through organized magnet events.

This survey method has limitations in capturing the full extent of both unsheltered and hidden homelessness. Hidden homelessness, in particular, is challenging to enumerate using point in time methodologies. Compared to the previous count in 2023, the 2025 survey placed greater emphasis on outdoor and drop-in locations, with reduced coverage of housing-based sites due to limited sector staffing capacity. As a result, while the overall number of surveys completed decreased, the number of unsheltered individuals surveyed increased, from 242 in 2023 to 318 in 2025.

The 2025 PiT Count also introduced a methodological change, allowing for a longer survey period. Surveys were conducted between March 26th and April 4th, 2025, and included five magnet events to support and expand data collection efforts. However, it is important to note that surveys completed after March 26th fell outside the 24-hour enumeration period and are not included in the official total count.

MAGNET EVENTS

Between March 26th and April 4th, 2025, five Magnet Events were held to supplement survey data and help reach individuals who may have been missed during the main Point in Time Count on March 26th. These events provided food and services to encourage participation, offering individuals the opportunity to complete the Homelessness Needs Survey in a welcoming and supportive setting, within the community they are living in.

Partnerships with local service providers in the homelessness-serving sector were essential to the success of these events. Through collaboration, we were able to plan and deliver targeted outreach to populations that are often underrepresented in traditional count methods, including youth and Indigenous community members.

We also made a concerted effort to reach individuals living outside the downtown core - areas that often have limited access to social services compared to the downtown area, where most shelters and service organizations are concentrated.

The 5 magnet events for additional surveying were as follows:

- **March 27th** (Downtown) – In partnership with QomQem Coastal Connections
- **March 27th** (Downtown) – In partnership with Cornerstone Youth Society
- **March 31st** (Saanich) – In partnership with the John Howard Society of Victoria and Victoria Cool Aid Society
- **April 2nd** (Saanich Peninsula) – In partnership with Beacon Community Services
- **April 4th** (Westshore) – In partnership with Salvation Army Connection Point Church and Resource Centre

COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The project adhered to best practices for participatory and community-based research and met Point in Time (PiT) Count standards for a community-driven methodology. In the early stages of planning, representatives from local service providers, academia, government, and individuals with lived experience were invited to join a planning committee for the 2025 PiT Count and Survey.

Community engagement in both the planning and implementation phases is essential to the success of the PiT Count. It ensures that decisions about how the count is conducted are well-informed, thoughtful, and reflective of a range of perspectives from those working in the homelessness-serving sector.

Committee meetings were held in the lead-up to the count to provide input on key methodological decisions and to review and offer feedback on the Homelessness Needs Survey. Additionally, a separate meeting was held with individuals working in homelessness outreach to collaboratively plan survey mapping routes. Their up to date, on-the-ground knowledge was invaluable in identifying the most appropriate locations to conduct the survey.

LIVED EXPERTS OF HOMELESSNESS

For the 2025 Point in Time Count, CSPC consulted with [The Housing Justice Project](#), an independent group of lived experts of homelessness, to identify project gaps in data collection, counting, analysis, and reporting. Being able to view homelessness from people who have/are experiencing it provides sightlines into previously invisible or misunderstood nooks and crannies. This ultimately improves the quality of the count and survey. The Housing Justice Project describes themselves as:

"We have 156 years of lived experiences with homelessness. We have survived and escaped all forms of homelessness. We are Indigenous, we are racialized, we are settlers, we are women, we are men, we are non-binary, we live with disabilities, we are seniors, and we are young. Many of us are not far enough away from our experience of homelessness to have survived it. Many of us live in fear of becoming homeless again because of the lack of safe affordable homes in our community. We hold space for those currently experiencing homelessness and for those who did not survive homelessness."



Half of the membership of the Housing Justice Project is Indigenous, and for this project, the group they convened was 75% Indigenous. The Housing Justice Project is committed to making Indigenous experiences of homelessness visible and figuring out how to work in a decolonizing way. CSPC requested the Housing Justice Project provide input into preferred terminology to describe people experiencing homelessness.

An excerpt of this work, the HJP definition of Lived Experts is included below.

“The term lived experts is acceptable when the context is shared decision-making, as opposed to being mined for data. Lived experts of homelessness are people who:

- have experienced homelessness,*
- are able to communicate their experiences and the context of their experiences (whether that context is colonialism or government policy failure)*
- are in the room, as equal partners and/or collaborators in the project (as opposed to being mined for knowledge production)*

We have seen the term ‘lived experts’ abused, noting that sometimes the speaker is not even looking for data, they are just looking to check a box. We have seen the term be dismissive, belittling and patronizing.”

HJP was supported with professional independent facilitation which enabled group decision-making from diverse lived experts. Group decision-making supported by independent facilitation inoculates against tokenization and manipulation.

With the support of CSPC, the Housing Justice Project facilitated workshops with the Community Advisory Committee for the 2025 Point in Time Count and local housing providers to propose a definition of Transitional Housing that reflects the lived realities of individuals without security of tenure. While this definition was not formally adopted, the collaborative process surrounding this work was helpful in informing decisions about facilities included in the Point in Time Count, resulting in a broader and more inclusive set of transitional housing facilities being counted. The full proposed definition of Transitional Housing that was created can be found in the Technical Appendix.

“To find effective ways to end homelessness, we need clear lines of sight to the outcomes of homelessness. This happens with genuine, respectful partnerships with lived experts.”



NUMBEROSITY

"We chose the orange to harmonize with the Every Child Matters movement and Orange Shirt Day which are part of the Indigenous healing movements in Canada, where Indigenous people are overrepresented in homelessness counts. The fist overlaid with computer-generated binary code is to represent resistance to being reduced to statistics."

– Rama de la Rosa and Bruce Livingstone, Housing Justice Project

Artwork has been added to enrich this report. CSPC is grateful for the artists' contributions.

Enumeration

GREATER VICTORIA POINT IN TIME COUNT 2025

AT LEAST

1,749

people were experiencing homelessness in Greater Victoria on the night of March 25, 2025

318

Unsheltered



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

493

Emergency Shelters



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

73

Couch Surfing



*At least 73** stayed with a friend, family member, or stranger, or at a hotel/motel, because they did not have a secure place of their own

112

Public Systems



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

750

Transitional Housing



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

In total, **811** people were unsheltered and emergency sheltered

A total of **935** were provisionally accommodated

Another 3 spent the night in an unknown sleeping location

*The 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 do not know about the count.

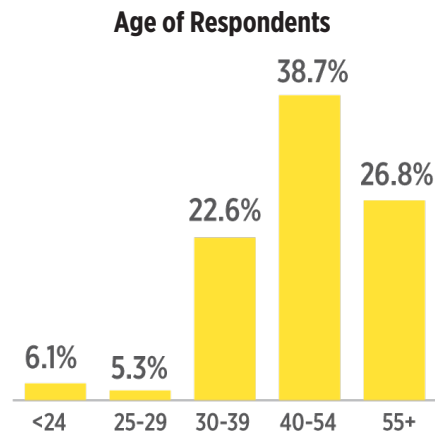
Survey Findings

The findings in this section are based on the data shared from 607 people who participated in the PiT Homelessness Needs Survey from March 26th to April 4th, 2025 (see the Technical Appendix for a sample survey and complete data tables).

Surveys were administered throughout the Greater Victoria region, including outdoor locations, housing facilities, shelters, and service agencies. Staff and volunteers conducted surveys to people who provided informed consent and were identified as meeting the project's definition of homelessness, based on their response to the question about where they had slept the previous night.

AGE

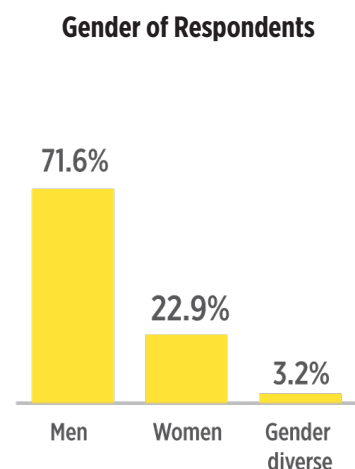
People experiencing homelessness in Greater Victoria varied greatly in age. The largest age range among respondents was 40 to 54 years old, accounting for 38.7% of the total. Youth, defined as individuals aged 29 and younger, represented 11.4% of respondents, while seniors (aged 45 and older) comprised just over half of all participants at 51.9%. Refer to Youth and Senior profiles to see breakdown of survey results by age groups.



GENDER

Consistent with previous years' PiT Count findings, the majority of respondents identified as men: 71.6% identified as men, 22.9% as women, and 3.2% as gender diverse. In the survey, participants had the option to self-identify as Two-Spirit, trans man, trans woman, non-binary (gender queer), or other gender identities. However, due to the small number of responses in these categories, the data was consolidated into a single 'gender diverse' category to protect participants' identifiable information.

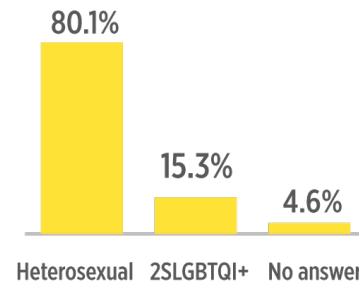
See Gender profile to see breakdown of survey responses by gender groups: men, women, gender diverse.



SEXUAL ORIENTATION

A total of 80.1% of respondents identified their sexual orientation as straight/heterosexual. Respondents who identified as 2SLGBTQI+ were able to select from options such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, Two-Spirit, and others. Including transgender identity within sexual orientation helped our descriptive statistics better reflect the diversity of respondents (Reynolds et al., 2025). 15.4% of respondents identified as 2SLGBTQI+ which is considerably higher than the national average of 4.4% (Statistics Canada, 2024). This over representation of 2SLGBTQI+ people experiencing homelessness is consistent with previous years' PiT Count survey findings.

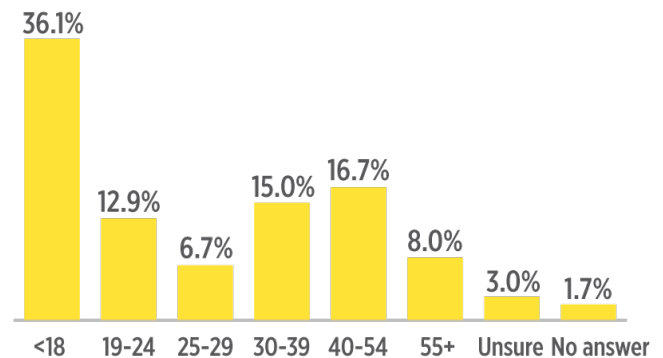
Sexual Orientation of Respondents



AGE AT FIRST HOMELESSNESS

The mean age of first experiencing homelessness was 28.7 ± 15.6 . A majority of respondents (55.6%) indicated that they first experienced homelessness while in their youth (29 and younger), with 36.1% of those experiencing it at age 18 or younger. 17.8% reported first experiencing homelessness as a senior (aged 45 and over).

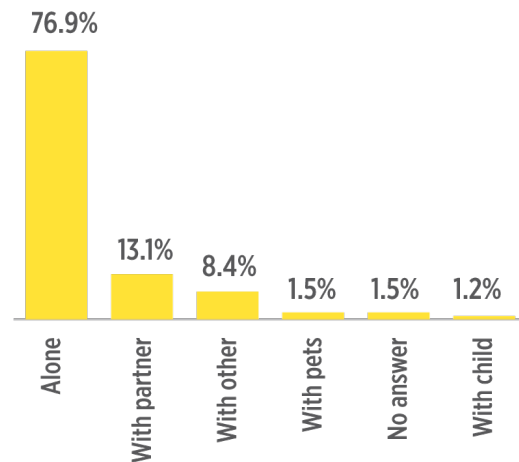
Age at First Experience of Homelessness



SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS

Over three quarters (76.9%) of respondents spent the last night alone. 13.1% reported staying with a partner, or someone else they considered family (8.4%). Only a small proportion (1.2%) indicated they had children or dependents staying with them.

Living Situation Breakdown



Over three quarters
spent the last night alone.

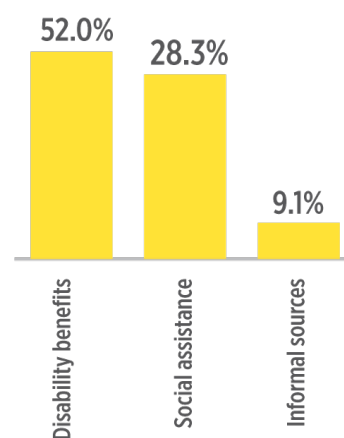
INCOME SOURCES

Respondents were asked to report their sources of income and were able to choose more than one option. Over half (52.0%) of the respondents reported receiving income from disability benefits. This reflects a continued upward trend in income from disability payments, increasing from 36.1% in 2020 to 46.3% in 2023. The second most reported form of income was social assistance or welfare (28.3%), which was followed by informal income sources, including activities like bottle returns and panhandling, at 9.1%.

“Personal instability makes it hard to work and take care of yourself. If you can’t have a home, you don’t have stability”

– Anonymous survey respondent

Income Sources of Respondents



The maximum a single person can make on PWD a month is \$1,483.50 (max \$500 for shelter) and the average cost for a bachelor suite in the Greater Victoria region is \$1,366.

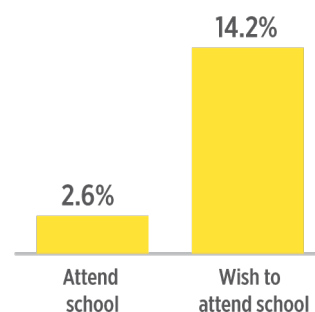
SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

A very small number of respondents reported attending some form of schooling, including high school, post-secondary, adult upgrading, or vocational, at 2.6%. However, 14.2% of respondents said they would like to attend school, which was a notable increase from 3.6% in 2023.

“(Homelessness has) put my life on hold completely — have had to stop online study”

– Anonymous survey respondent

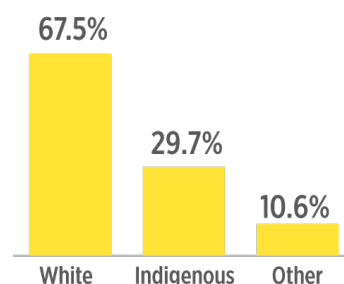
School Attendance of Respondents



ETHNIC IDENTITY

Participants were able to report multiple racial and ethnic identities. The largest racial group was white, with just over two-thirds (67.5%) of respondents. The second largest group was Indigenous (including First Nations, Indigenous, Métis, and Inuit) at 29.7%. A total of 10.6% of respondents identified as people from backgrounds other than Indigenous or White, including Black, Asian, Latin American, or other.

Ethnic Identity of Respondents

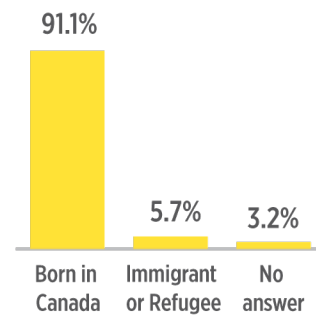


IMMIGRATION STATUS

Most respondents were born in Canada, at 91.1%, while 5.7% came to Canada as an immigrant, refugee, or a refugee claimant.

Remaining respondents were unsure or declined to answer.

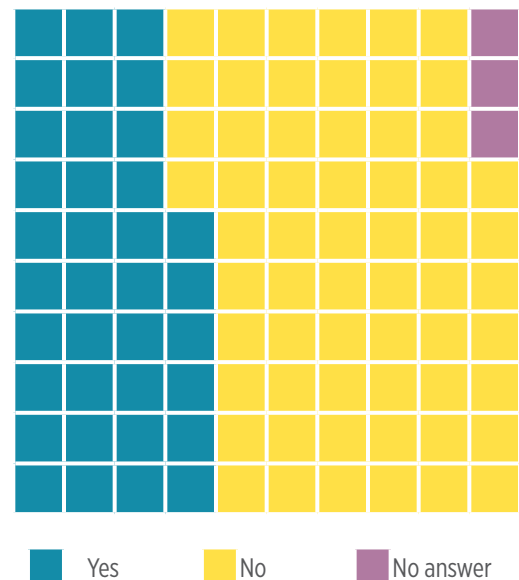
Immigration Status of Respondents



GOVERNMENT/MINISTRY CARE HISTORY

Over a third (35.5%) of respondents were in foster care during their childhood or youth. This is similar to the findings in 2023 of 32.2% and consistent with research that suggests children from government care systems are more likely to experience homelessness. Among respondents with a history of foster care, 32.8% reported becoming homeless within the first year of leaving care, including 7.0% who became homeless on the very day they exited the system. Only 15.6% of respondents reported that Child Protection Services were helpful in supporting their transition from foster care to independent living.

Foster Care Experience (out of 594 responses)



1 square = 1% of respondents (or ~6 people)

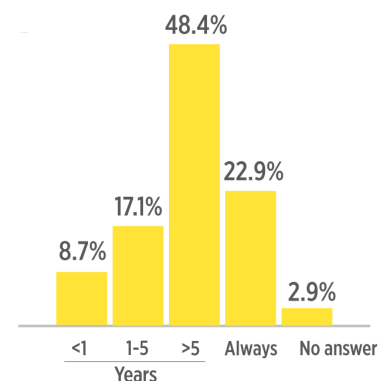
PATTERNS OF MIGRATION

Nearly half (48.4%) of respondents have lived in Greater Victoria for longer than five years, and an additional 22.9% having always been here.

8.7% have lived here for less than one year.

When asked about their reasons for moving to Greater Victoria, the most cited responses were because family moved to the area (29.5%) and to visit friends or family (15.1%).

Time in Greater Victoria



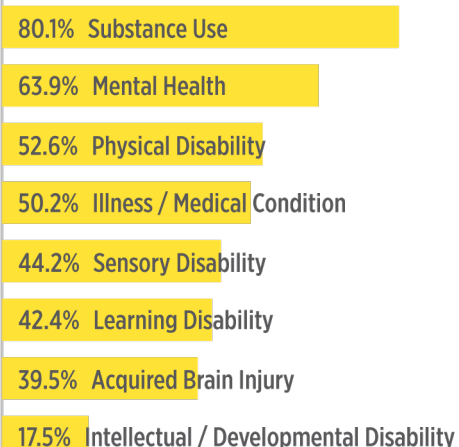
HEALTH CHALLENGES

Just over half (50.2%) of respondents were experiencing an illness or medical condition, such as diabetes, tuberculosis, and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Moreover, 52.6% had a physical disability or mobility impairment, 39.5% had acquired a brain injury at some point during their life, and 44.2% had sense related challenges, such as seeing or hearing impairments.

42.4% reported challenges related to learning or cognitive function, which includes attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, and dementia. Additionally, 17.5% have some form of intellectual or developmental challenge, such as fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) or autism.

The majority of respondents reported having a substance use-related issue (80.1%), and just under two-thirds of respondents reported having mental health related challenges (63.9%).

Priority Health Challenges of Respondents



Substance use is a general term that refers to use of legal substances (e.g. alcohol, cannabis) and illegal substances (e.g. heroin, crack, cocaine, illicitly produced fentanyl). Substance use does not necessarily mean addiction. In fact, approximately 80% of Canadians used alcohol in the last 12 months and approximately 8% of the general survey population consumed illegal drugs in the last 12 months. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/canadian-alcohol-drugs-survey/2023-summary.html>

People use substances for a wide range of reasons such as to celebrate, to relax, to feel better or perform better, to cope with difficult or stressful situations and/or trauma (CISUR, 2021). However, the circumstances in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age, known as the social determinants of health, play a critical role (World Health Organization). Substance use can be a response to difficult situations such as poverty, abuse, conflict, and trauma; situations which may precede homelessness. Homelessness, itself, is an extremely difficult and stressful living situation that impacts mental health with experiences of fear, anxiety, and isolation. So, it is no surprise that substance use may increase the longer people are homeless (Reaching Home, 2021) and make it more difficult for them to find housing. Of serious concern is that homelessness increases the risks associated with substance use such as overdoses (Yamamoto et al., 2019; BC Corners Service, 2025). A risk that is further increased when homeless people are displaced (Barocas et al., 2023).

“It (homelessness) has affected my way of thinking. There are times when I have wanted to end my life. Depression plays a strong role of being homeless”

– Anonymous survey respondent

“Being homeless leads to addiction and mental health crisis”

– Anonymous survey respondent

HOUSING ACCESS: LOSS AND BARRIERS

The survey included a question on barriers to finding housing, where respondents listed costs as the primary reason, including high rent prices (64.5%) and low income (61.1%). Other commonly reported barriers to finding housing included lack of available options (44.8%), substance use related challenges (29.6%), and lack of identification (23.5%).

“Victoria is super expensive, impossible to find a place even when I was working, couldn’t afford it”
- Anonymous survey respondent

Respondents were asked how they had lost their most recent housing, with the option to select more than one reason. Not enough income was the most common reason for losing their most recent housing (25.4%), which was followed by conflict with their spouse or partner (13.2%), and substance use issues (11.7%).

- 44.9% of respondents reported being evicted from their last housing.
- A total of 62.1% of respondents reported losing their most recent housing within the past four years.

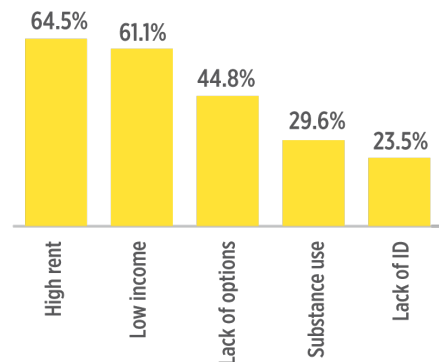
Respondents were asked whether they had been discharged into homelessness from various types of accommodations in the last year. 12.1% of respondents reported being discharged from a hospital into homelessness, 11.6% from an emergency shelter stay, and 6.3% from a corrections facility.

HOUSING WAITLIST

62.6% of respondents have applied for subsidized, supportive, or Indigenous culturally supportive housing. With nearly half (48.2%) reporting being on the waitlist for under one year, and 25.8% waiting for over two years.

“I apply for housing all the time. I’m on every list there is for housing”
- Anonymous survey respondent

Barriers to Housing Access



“(Homelessness is) a hole where it gets too deep you can’t get out, continuing circle. If you don’t have a house, you can’t shower, you can’t eat, you can’t get a job.”

- Anonymous survey respondent



SHELTER STAYS

Just under two thirds (64.9%) of respondents have stayed in a homeless shelter within the past year. Meanwhile, 75.6% of respondents reported having a reason for not staying in a shelter. The most common reasons were safety concerns (46.9%) and fear of theft or losing belongings (37.3%). This contrasts with the 2023 PiT findings, which identified shelter capacity as the main reason for not staying in a shelter.

“Shelters are not safe for technology, phones, tablets often robbed”

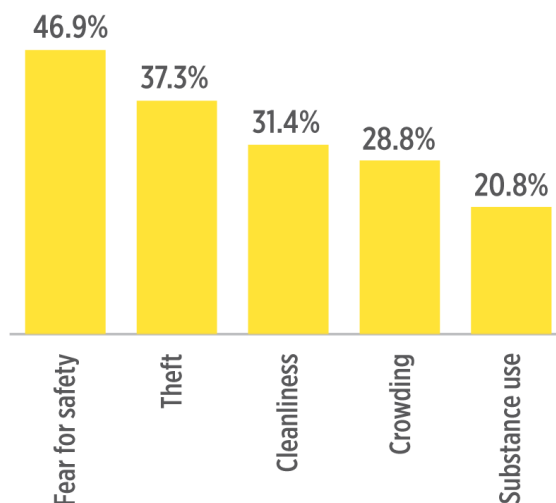
– Anonymous survey respondent

During severe weather events, Extreme Weather Responses (EWRs) are activated to increase availability of emergency shelters temporarily. A total of 69.7% of respondents reported being aware of when EWR shelters are open.

“(It’s) hard to keep up with the emergency weather shelter options”

– Anonymous survey respondent

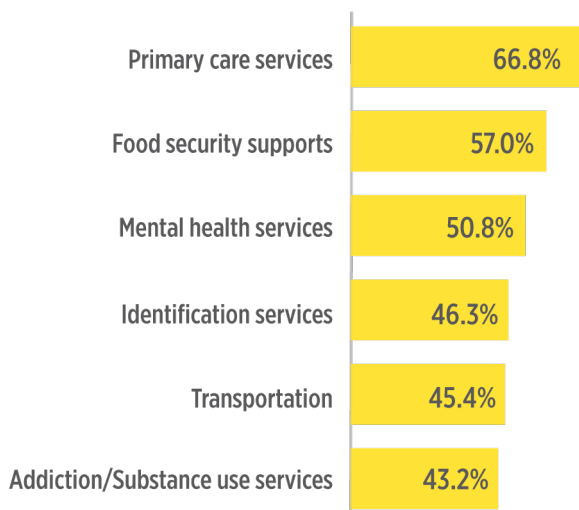
Reasons for Choosing Not to Stay in a Shelter



“The shelter counts are not indicative of anything I would say. Personally, I was never in a shelter, and every young woman that I knew avoided them as well because they had a reputation of being scary places. That is one of the reasons why Housing Justice Project says: “Shelters are not homes.”

– Housing Justice Project

Most Reported Service Needs



LENGTH OF HOMELESSNESS EXPERIENCE

The findings indicate that a substantial proportion of respondents have experienced long-term homelessness. In the past year, **73.4% reported being homeless for a duration of at least 9 to 12 months.** Additionally, over the past three years, **75.2% of respondents experienced homelessness for at least half of that period.**

“(Homelessness) makes it difficult to live a normal life. I miss appointments. I can’t wake up on time or have routine”

– Anonymous survey respondent

Population Profiles

Indigenous

Across Canada, Indigenous peoples experience disproportionately high rates of homelessness in both rural and urban communities. This burden on Indigenous peoples can be attributed to systemic barriers, racial discrimination, and the intergenerational trauma of colonization and experiences of residential schools (Peters & Christensen, 2016). The picture of Indigenous homelessness is further complicated by the high prevalence of hidden homelessness and rapidly changing living situations of Indigenous peoples experiencing homelessness. Research calls on us to recognize the multi-dimensionality of the Indigenous homelessness experience, by recognizing the role of colonialism, trauma, and the displacement of Indigenous peoples has on the prevalence of homelessness in this population (Peters & Christensen, 2016).

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness defines Indigenous homelessness as:

"Indigenous homelessness is 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. Unlike the common colonialist definition of homelessness, 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. Importantly, Indigenous people experiencing these kinds of homelessness cannot culturally, spiritually, emotionally or physically reconnect with their Indigeneity or lost relationships."

(Cited in Thistle, 2017)

INDIGENOUS STATUS

A total of 29.7% (n = 175) of respondents identified as Indigenous, representing a slightly lower count from the 2023 report (32.9%) and the 2020 report (35.0%). However, this figure remains notably higher than the proportion of Indigenous people in the Greater Victoria area, which is estimated at 5% (Statistics Canada, 2021, Victoria Census Metropolitan Area (CMA). Indigenous respondents identified primarily as First Nations (55.4%), Métis (31.4%), or having Indigenous ancestry (12.6%).

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY

- **69.6%** of Indigenous respondents shared what community they were from
- **25.7%** came from communities within Vancouver Island
- **9.4%** came from somewhere else in BC, and 34.5% came from communities outside BC

Remaining respondents did not specify or were unsure.

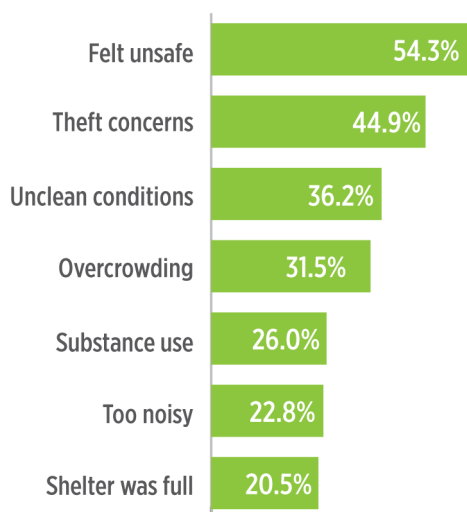
INDIGENOUS SLEEPING LOCATION

On the previous night, 32.6% of Indigenous respondents stayed unsheltered in a public space, while 24.6% stayed at a homeless shelter, and 13.7% at transitional housing/shelter.

INDIGENOUS SHELTER STAY

Just under two-thirds (63.6%) of Indigenous respondents reported staying in a homeless shelter within the past year, while 73.8% indicated that they had a reason for not staying at a shelter. These percentages are similar to those found in the general population survey, though there are notable differences in the reasons cited for avoiding shelters. Like the general population, the most common reasons for not staying at a shelter were concerns about safety (54.3%) and theft/fear of losing belongings (44.9%). However, while 5.0% of the general population cited racism as a reason for not staying in shelters, 12.6% of Indigenous respondents identified racism, an almost a three-fold increase.

Barriers to Shelter Use for Indigenous Respondents



INDIGENOUS BARRIERS TO FINDING HOUSING

Racism as a barrier appeared again when respondents were asked about challenges with finding housing. In the general population 6.3% reported racism, compared to 11.6% of Indigenous respondents. Yet, similar to the general population, the most reported barriers to housing were high rent prices (59.1%), low income (57.9%), and lack of available options (45.7%).

INDIGENOUS HOUSING WAITLISTS

60.8% of Indigenous respondents said 'yes' to having applied for subsidized, supportive, or Indigenous culturally supportive housing. Of those who have applied for housing, 51.0% have been on the waitlist between 0 to 11 months, while nearly a quarter (23.1%) have been on a waitlist for over 2 years.

Indigenous respondents were asked about their access to on-reserve housing, with 17.0% indicating that they were currently on a waitlist for housing. Of those on the waitlist, 51.7% had been on the waitlist for 2 years or more.

INDIGENOUS GENDER

Consistent with findings from the 2023 and 2020 homeless needs surveys, Indigenous women are disproportionately affected by homelessness. While women represent 22.9% of the total survey population, they make up 35.1% of Indigenous respondents. Gender diverse: *Not reported (sample too small)*.

INDIGENOUS AGE OF FIRST HOMELESSNESS

Over two-thirds (68.6%) of Indigenous respondents reported experiencing homelessness as a youth (29 or younger), with 48.3% first encountering homelessness at the age of 18 or younger. This contrasts with the total survey population, where 36.1% first experienced homelessness at age 18 or younger.

FOSTER CARE

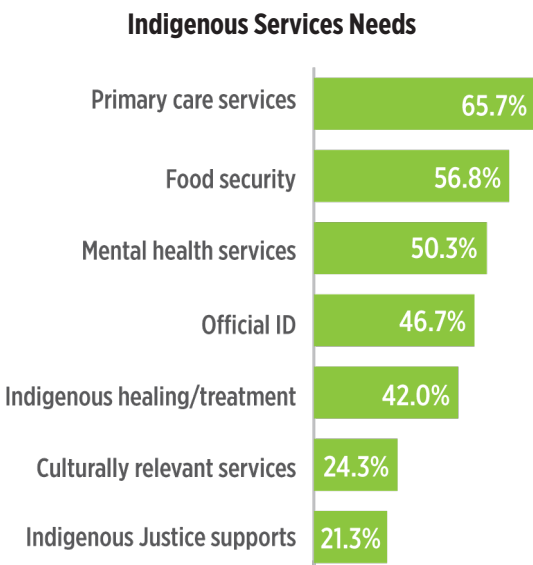
Almost half (48.3%) of all Indigenous respondents have a history of being in foster care, youth group homes, or other child welfare programs. This percentage is markedly higher compared to the general survey population, where 35.5% reported similar experiences. This pattern reflects the broader issue of Indigenous children and youth being disproportionately represented in the foster care system.

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

Of the Indigenous respondents, half (50.3%) reported that either themselves, their parents, or grandparents had attended a residential school.

SERVICE NEEDS

A list of services was read to respondents, who could indicate what services they needed, or state one not listed. Indigenous respondents reported primary care services (65.7%), food security supports (56.8%), mental health services (50.3%), and official identification services (46.7%) most commonly. Additional culturally specific services were also indicated, including Indigenous treatment and support (42.0%), culturally-sensitive services (24.3%), and Indigenous justice navigation (21.3%).



Youth

Youth is defined as individuals aged 29 and younger in this report, a shift from previous reports that used 25 as the threshold. This adjustment was made to align with Statistic Canada which considers youth as those aged 15-29 years old. Furthermore, many youth housing programs provide services to individuals up to 29 years old.

At least 40,000 youth experience homelessness annually

across Canada and this number has been on a steady incline across Canada since the 1980s (Dolson, 2024). The key drivers for youth experiencing homelessness are conflict and the breakdown of relationships, structural factors such as lack of employment or education opportunities, and institutional systems failures that occur when transitioning out of government care (Homeless Hub, 2025). It's important to note that amongst the youth experiencing homelessness in Victoria, the proportion of those who identify as 2SLGBTQI+, and Indigenous are much higher among youth when compared to the general survey population. Youth homelessness requires immediate attention as these early experiences of homelessness are associated with one's ability to maintain housing over the course of their lives (Parpouchi et al., 2021).

■ 69 (11.4%) youths were surveyed.

SLEEPING LOCATION

On the previous night, 47.1% of youth respondents reported sleeping unsheltered in a public place, a higher rate than the 36.8% reported by the general survey population.

SHELTER STAY

Just under two-thirds (63.8%) of youth respondents have stayed in a homeless shelter in the past year, yet 85.1% reported a reason for avoiding shelters, which is 10% greater than the general survey population at 75.6%.

When asked about the reasons for avoiding shelters, concerns for safety (45.6%) and loss of belongings/theft (43.9%) were most commonly reported, followed by crowding, at 29.8%.

BARRIERS TO HOUSING

Similar to the general survey population, the most reported barriers to accessing housing were low income (67.7%), high rent prices (64.6%), and lack of available options (47.7%).

HOUSING WAITLIST

Almost half (48.5%) of youth respondents have applied for subsidized or supportive housing, with 65.6% having been on the waitlist between 0 to 11 months.

REASON FOR LOSING HOUSING

The most commonly reported cause for losing their most recent housing was conflict, with 20.6% of youth respondents specifically citing conflict with parents or other family members.

GENDER

A total of 35.3% of youths identified as women, which is higher than the general survey population at 23.0%. Additionally, 3.1% of the general survey population identified as gender diverse, whereas this proportion was more than doubled among youth, at 7.4%.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

38.2% of youth respondents identified as 2SLGBTQI+, compared to 15.4% of the general survey population. Furthermore, the proportion of 2SLGBTQI+ youth respondents was over eight times higher than the national average.

This overrepresentation highlights the increased risk of homelessness faced by 2SLGBTQI+ youth, often due to family conflict, rejection, or a lack of supportive environments (Statistics Canada, 2024).

INDIGENOUS YOUTH

Over one-third (36.8%) of youth respondents identified as Indigenous, which is higher than the general survey population of 29.7%.

SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS

Three-quarters (75.0%) of youth respondents reported that they were alone the previous night.

FOSTER CARE

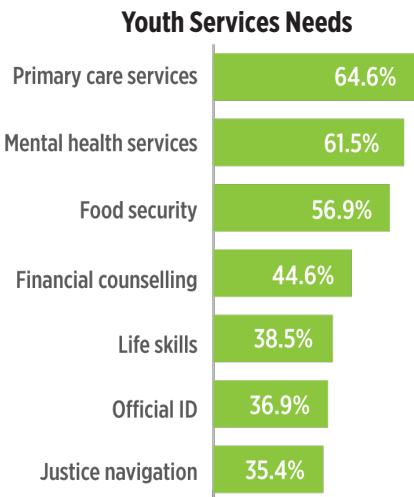
Almost half (48.5%) of youth respondents currently are, or were, in foster care, a youth group home, or government care, which is more than the general survey population (35.5%).

Of the youth who had experience with some form of government care, 48.5% reported becoming homeless within the first year of exiting the system.

57.6% of youth from government care do not believe that Child Protection Services was helpful in transitioning them from the system to independent living.

SERVICE NEEDS

When asked about the service needs, the most common response from youth was primary care, with 64.6%. The next most frequently mentioned service was mental health support, at 61.5%, which is higher than the 50.8% reported by the general survey population. Additionally, youth expressed a greater need for justice navigation services (35.4%) and financial counseling (44.6%) compared to the general survey population, where these needs were reported at 21.0% and 29.8%, respectively. Furthermore, youth also showed a 10% higher demand for life skills services, with 38.5% indicating this need, compared to 27.4% of the general survey population.



Veterans

Respondents were asked whether they had ever served in the Canadian Military or the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), to which 5.8% (n= 34) reported that they had.

Despite a limited body of research on veterans' homelessness in Canada, they are a distinct population with unique challenges and institutional relationships. Within the research literature, the proportion of individuals experiencing homelessness who are veterans in Canada is noted as being around 2% or 3% (Canada, 2019). However, in the 2025 PiT Count, 5.8% of respondents reported being a veteran. Relative to the 2023 PiT Count which was 6.7%, this number appears to be staying consistent.

SLEEPING LOCATION

During the previous night, 35.3% of veteran respondents stayed at a homeless shelter, and 26.5% stayed unsheltered in a public space.

SHELTER STAY

Almost two-thirds (63.6%) of veterans had stayed at a homeless shelter during the past year, yet 69.7% had at least one reason for avoiding shelters.

The most reported reasons for avoiding shelters included fear for safety (43.5%) and concern for losing belongs/theft (34.8%).

BARRIERS TO HOUSING

Consistent with trends in the general survey population, low income and high rent prices were reported as the main challenges in finding their own housing, at 58.8% and 55.9% respectively.

HOUSING WAITLIST

Over half (58.8%) of veterans have applied for subsidized or supportive housing, with 65.0% reporting to be on a housing waitlist for some time between 0 to 11 months.

VETERANS AFFAIRS SUPPORT

The majority (78.1%) of respondents who were involved in the military or RCMP said they were not currently receiving support from Veterans Affairs Canada.

SERVICE NEEDS

There is some variability in service needs between those with past involvement in the military or RCMP and the general survey population. Half (50.0%) reported primary care as a service need, which was lower than the general survey population at 66.8%. The next most reported service need was identification services at 38.2%, again, lower than the general survey population at 46.3%. Food security was the third most common service need at 35.3%, compared to the general survey population at 57.0%.

People with Disabilities

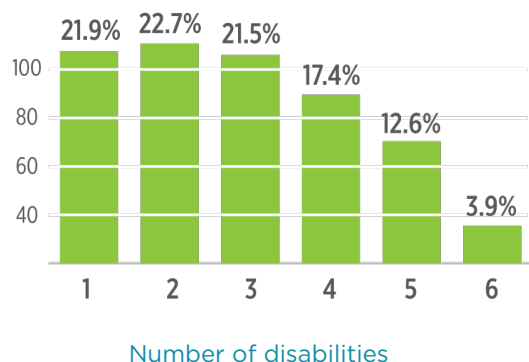
Disability was identified based on respondents who answered 'yes' to at least one question related to physical, learning, intellectual, brain injury, mental health, or sensory challenges. The percentage of people with a disability in the Greater Victoria Region is 36%, whereas the percentage of survey respondents identifying with a disability is 87.3% (n = 516).

The intersection of disability and homelessness is complex and further complicated when more than one disability is present, as is the case for a large majority of respondents with a disability in the 2025 PiT Count. According to research compiled by the Canadian Human Rights Commission (2025), people with disabilities are four times more likely to experience homelessness than those without a disability. They are also more likely to experience hidden homelessness which is consistent with the findings from the 2021 Canadian Housing Survey. Relationship breakdowns, poverty, and health problems are all factors that put someone at greater risk of homelessness and have a higher prevalence among people with a disability relative to those without a disability (Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2025).

NUMBER OF DISABILITIES REPORTED

Among respondents with a disability, 78.1% reported having more than one, with 3.9% indicating as many as six different disabilities.

Number of Disabilities Reported (Among 516 Respondents)



DISABILITY PROPORTION

Among respondents with a disability, 71.9% reported mental health-related challenges, making it the most common. This was followed by physical disabilities (58.9%), sensory challenges (48.1%), learning or cognitive challenges (46.7%), brain injuries (43.2%), and intellectual or developmental disabilities (19.0%).

SLEEPING LOCATION

On the previous night, 35.7% stayed unsheltered in a public space, 24.6% stayed in homeless shelter, and 11.9% stayed at a transitional shelter.

SHELTER STAY

65.7% reported staying at homeless shelter over the past year, yet 78.4% had at least one reason for wanting to avoid staying at shelters.

The most reported reason for avoiding shelters was fear for safety (49.2%), concern about theft or losing belongings (38.7%), cleanliness (32.5%), and crowding (29.4%).

BARRIERS TO HOUSING

The most commonly reported barriers to finding housing were high rent prices (65.3%), low income (63.0%), lack of available housing options (45.9%), and substance use-related challenges (31.5%).

HOUSING APPLICATION

Almost two thirds (63.3%) of respondents have submitted an application for subsidized, supportive, or Indigenous culturally supportive housing. Almost half (49.4%) of respondents who have applied for housing have been on a waitlist between 0 to 11 months, and 43.2% have been on a waitlist for a year or more.

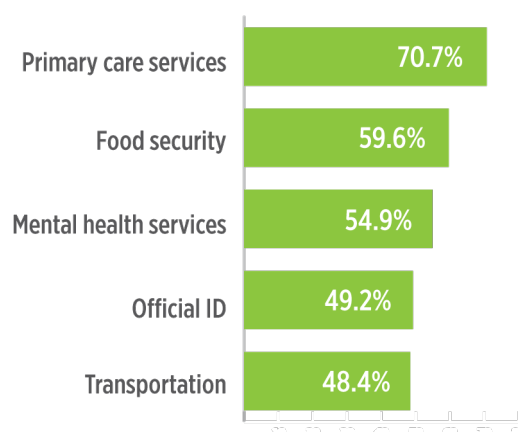
INCOME SOURCES

- **54.7%** of respondents with a disability reported receiving income support from disability benefits.
- **28.0%** were receiving social assistance or welfare.
- **9.2%** reported receiving income from informal sources.

DISCHARGE IN TO HOMELESSNESS

- **13.3%** of respondents with a disability reported being discharged into homelessness from a hospital in the past year.

Service Needs for Respondents with Disabilities



SERVICE NEEDS BY DISABILITY TYPE

	Physical (n=301)	Learning (n=238)	Intellectual (n=97)	Brain Injury (n=220)	Mental Health (n=367)	Senses (n=247)	Any Disability (n=508)
Primary Care Services	72.4%	76.9%	77.3%	75.5%	74.1%	74.1%	70.7%
Food Security	60.5%	63.4%	67.0%	65.0%	64.6%	64.0%	59.6%
Mental Health Services	54.8%	64.3%	63.9%	60.9%	67.6%	62.3%	54.9%
Identification Services	49.5%	50.8%	54.6%	53.6%	51.8%	54.7%	49.2%
Transportation	51.5%	52.9%	58.8%	46.8%	52.9%	54.7%	48.4%
Financial Counselling	33.9%	38.2%	43.3%	34.5%	36.0%	34.8%	31.7%
Life Skills	30.2%	37.8%	38.1%	35.9%	33.5%	37.2%	29.3%

*Note: Total number of respondents differs slightly from the disability proportion reported earlier due to incomplete survey responses.

Seniors

Over half (51.7%) of all survey respondents were aged 45 and older. While previous reports defined seniors as individuals aged 55+, this report expanded the age range to include those 45 and older. This adjustment was made to better capture the accelerated aging process and earlier onset of geriatric conditions often experienced by the homeless population, which is more vulnerable than the general survey population in Canada due to harsh living environments, high levels of stress, and limited access to health services.

Homelessness among those 45+ is diverse with much of this population experiencing homelessness earlier in life due to adverse experiences such as trauma, abuse, and mental health issues (Alston, 2024). It is known that early economic disadvantage may increase the impacts of housing unaffordability which is a core driver of experiences of homelessness later in life. Seniors experiencing homelessness also have unique needs due to the premature development of health problems such as hearing loss, and functional impairments which complicate service navigation (Alston, 2024).

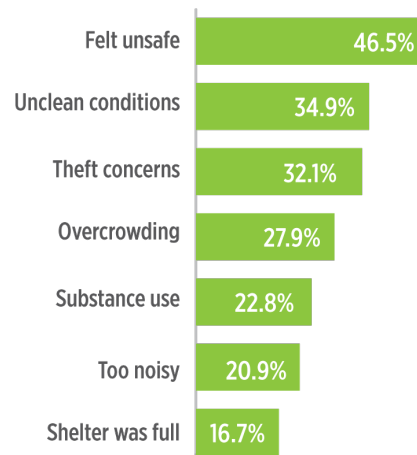
SLEEPING LOCATION

During the previous night, 28.1% of seniors stayed at a shelter, while 27.8% spent last night unsheltered in a public space.

62.6% reported staying at a homeless shelter at some point in the last year, with 71.0% reporting a reason to avoid staying at a shelter.

The most commonly cited reason for avoiding shelters was safety concerns (47.0%), followed by cleanliness issues (34.9%).

Barriers to Shelter Use for Senior (+45) Respondents



BARRIERS TO HOUSINGS

The primary barriers to housing identified by senior respondents were high rent costs (67.8%), low income (56.8%), and insufficient housing availability (46.8%).

HOUSING WAITLIST

Two thirds (66.2%) of senior respondents have applied for supportive or subsidized housing, with just under half (47.3%) stating that they have been on the waitlist for under one year. 23.2% reported being on a waitlist for housing for over two years.

MOST RECENT HOUSING LOSS

Consistent with the findings in the general survey population, the most reported reasons for their most recent housing loss among seniors was not enough income (28.9%).

SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS

Most seniors (80.6%) reported spending last night alone.

GENDER

The majority of senior respondents were men (78.2%), while 18.5% were women. Gender diverse too small to report.

INDIGENOUS SENIORS

A total of 27.9% of senior respondents are Indigenous.

TIME SPENT HOMELESS

The majority of senior respondents have experienced long-term homelessness, with 74.4% reporting experiencing homeless for the past 9 to 12 months. Additionally, over the past three years, 75.7% have been homeless for half or more of that time.

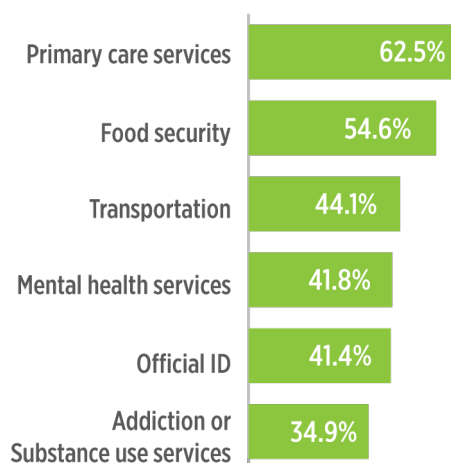
FIRST EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

Among senior respondents, 40.6% first experienced homelessness during their youth, while over a third (34.5%) of seniors did not become homeless until age 45 or older.

SERVICE NEEDS

Primary care services were needed by 62.5% of seniors, followed by food security services (54.6%) and transportation (44.1%) as the third most reported need.

Senior Services Needs



“(Homelessness) ages you quicker”

– Anonymous survey respondent

Gender

Respondents were given the option to report their gender as man, woman, trans man, trans woman, non-binary (gender queer), other, or multiple responses. To identify trends while protecting the privacy of smaller groups, responses trans man, trans woman, non-binary (gender queer), other, and multiple responses were aggregated into a single “gender diverse” category. Men made up 71.8% (n= 422) of the total survey population, while women made up 23.0% (n=135), and gender diverse respondents made up 3.1% (n=18)(with remaining respondents declining to answer or choosing the option “I don’t know”).

Men, women, and gender diverse people experiencing homelessness all have different experiences and needs that require appropriate interventions. Though there are many similarities in the results below across genders and men are overrepresented in the population experiencing homelessness, women and gender diverse individuals experience distinct forms of housing insecurity and homelessness due to intimate partner violence, discrimination, and barriers to accessing safe and affirming housing (Yakubovich & Maki, 2022).

SLEEPING LOCATION

Around a third of men (36.4%) and women (33.3%) reported spending the previous night unsheltered in a public space, compared to 44.4% of gender diverse individuals.

SHELTER STAY

Within the past year, 65.5% of men, 64.2% of women, and 83.3% of gender diverse respondents had stayed at a homeless shelter for at least one night. However, nearly three-quarters of all men (73.4%) and women (79.7%) reported having a reason for not wanting to stay at a shelter, with an even higher portion of gender diverse respondents (88.9%) indicating the same.

Concerns for safety were the most commonly reported reason for avoiding shelters among

men (47.5%) and women (52.8%). Theft/fear of losing belongings was also reported as a major concern, by 37.3% of men and 42.5% of women. Gender diverse response too small to report.

BARRIERS TO FINDING HOUSING

Men reported that high rent (64.1%), low income (59.4%), and lack of available options (45.0%) most commonly when asked about what is preventing them from finding housing.

Women most commonly reported low income, at 70.7% compared to the general survey population at 61.1%. Rent prices (69.2%) and lack of available options (44.3%) were the second and third most reported barriers. 13.5% of women listed domestic or sexualized violence as challenge in finding housing, which is over double what is reported by the general survey population (5.2%).

64.7% of gender diverse respondents cited high rent prices as a barrier to finding housing, followed by low income and lack of available options, both at 52.9%.

HOUSING WAITLIST

Around two-thirds of men (62.5%), women (63.4%) and gender diverse (66.7%) respondents have applied for subsidized or supportive housing.

47.3% of men have been on the waitlist between 0 to 11 months, and 27.7% have been waiting for over two years. Among women, 54.1% have been on a waitlist for under a year, while 21.2% have been waiting for over two years. Gender diverse responses too small to report.

FIRST EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

About half (56.0%) of men and women (49.6%) reported first experiencing homelessness while in their youth (aged 29 and younger). An even higher proportion (83.3%) of gender diverse respondents reported becoming homeless during their youth.

SERVICE NEEDS

Consistent with findings from the general survey population, primary care was identified as the most needed service across all gender groups, as it was reported by 66.9% of men, 67.9% of women, and 72.2% of gender diverse respondents.

Of the gender groups, women reported the highest need for food security supports (68.7%), compared to 54.0% of men and 44.4% of gender diverse respondents. Additionally, women reported the highest need for mental health supports, at 59.5%, compared to 48.2% of men and 50.0% of gender diverse respondents.

Official identification service needs were highest for gender diverse respondents at 55.6%, but it was notable need for men (44.6%) and women (50.4%) as well.



2SLGBTQI+

Respondents were able to identify as Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and other diverse gender and sexual identities (2SLGBTQI+). Transgender identity was included in sexual orientation to help our descriptive statistics better reflect the diversity of respondents (Reynolds et al., 2025). 15.4% of survey respondents identified as 2SLGBTQI+, which is slightly higher than the 2023 report at 11.9%.

2SLGBTQI+ Canadians have historically accounted for a disproportionate amount of the population experiencing homelessness (Goodyear et al., 2024). Considering the other populations discussed above, 2SLGBTQI+ Canadians who are also members of those other groups experience an even greater risk of homelessness due to the intersectional nature of their experiences. Different than other groups, 2SLGBTQI+ homelessness is often driven by discrimination, both within society and their relationships, as well as within institutions and social systems (Goodyear et al., 2024). Here it is important to consider the unique experiences of trans Canadians as they face additional barriers within social services as homelessness services, such as shelters, are often gendered.

SLEEPING LOCATION

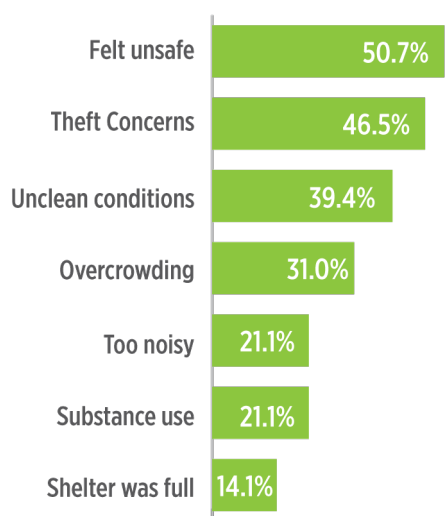
The most common location where respondents spent the previous night was unsheltered in a public space (40.7%), followed by a homeless shelter (28.6%).

SHELTER STAY

In the past year, 67.8% of respondents had stayed in a homeless shelter; however, 80.7% indicated they had reasons for choosing not to stay in one at some point.

Over half (50.7%) of 2SLGBTQI+ respondents cited safety concerns as a reason for avoiding shelters. Concerns about theft or losing personal belongings were also notable, reported by 46.5%, nearly 10% more than the general survey population (38.7%). Additionally, 39.4% of 2SLGBTQI+ respondents identified cleanliness as a reason to avoid shelters.

Barriers to Shelter Use for 2SLGBTQI+ Respondents



HOUSING WAITLIST

Over half (56.0%) of 2SLGBTQI+ respondents have applied for supportive or subsidized housing. Of those who have applied, 52.9% have been on a waitlist for under a year, while 11.8% have been waiting for over two years.

HOUSING BARRIERS

Consistent with the general survey population, the most commonly reported challenges for finding housing among 2SLGBTQI+ respondents was high rent (65.2%), low income (62.9%), and lack of available options (46.1%). Additionally, 36.0% of 2SLGBTQI+ respondents cited mental health related challenges, compared to 21.8% of the general survey population. 5.2% of the general survey population also reported domestic or sexualized violence as a barrier to housing, and this value was over 10% higher among 2SLGBTQI+ respondents at 15.7%.

AGE

The largest age group among respondents was 30 to 39 years old, making up 29.7%, which is slightly younger than the general survey population, where the largest group was aged 40 to 54 (38.7%).

FIRST EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

Almost three quarters (74.7%) of 2SLGBTQI+ respondents reported first experiencing homelessness in their youth, compared to 55.6% of the general survey population.

Almost half (46.2%) reported first experiencing homelessness at the age of 18 or younger, which is more than 10% higher than the general survey population at 36.1%.

SERVICE NEEDS

- Primary care services (68.1%),
- Food security supports (62.6%),
- Mental health (59.3%),
- Identification services (54.9%)
- Transportation (50.5%),

Changes Over Previous Counts

By using consistent questions in the Homelessness Needs Survey and standardized methods for enumeration, we can track how the experience of homelessness changes over time at the community level. While various factors may influence results, the trends offer valuable insights into local needs and highlight areas for targeted action. These findings should be considered in the context of any methodological changes that could affect data comparability, but overall, the analysis provides meaningful context for understanding long-term patterns.

Survey Result Changes

While the limitations to data comparability noted above should be considered, the 2025 survey findings revealed several notable changes compared to the 2023 PiT Count:

Increased shelter avoidance: A significantly greater percentage of respondents indicated they did not want

to stay in shelters. In 2023, 45% reported a reason for avoiding shelters; this rose to 75.6% in 2025, an increase of approximately 30%.

Shift in primary reason for avoiding shelters: In 2023, the most commonly cited reason for avoiding shelters was that they were full. In 2025, however, safety concerns became the most frequently mentioned reason. The percentage of respondents citing safety as a concern increased from 29.7% in 2023 to 44.7% in 2025.

Increase in self-reported substance use challenges: The proportion of individuals identifying substance use as a challenge rose from 67% in 2023 to 80.1% in 2025.

Greater interest in education: When asked if they were currently attending school, 3.6% of respondents in 2023 said they were not, but would like to. By 2025, this number had increased to 14.2%, indicating a growing desire among respondents to pursue education.



Limitations

The PiT Count is a valuable initiative for gaining insight into the needs and characteristics of individuals experiencing homelessness within a community. While CSPC has taken steps to minimize the impact of known challenges, several limitations remain, both inherent to the methodology and due to external factors. These limitations can affect the accuracy, reliability, and comprehensiveness of the data collected through both enumeration and survey responses.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

One key limitation involves the administration of the Homelessness Needs Survey, which is primarily conducted by volunteers from the general public. While all volunteers are required to attend training sessions prior to the PiT Count, these sessions cannot fully eliminate the potential for human error. Common mistakes, such as failing to skip questions when prompted or neglecting to record the survey location, can lead to data inconsistencies or gaps.

This was a challenge experienced in the 2025 PiT Count and could have possibly been heightened as approximately 77% of volunteers were participating for the first time, compared to a more experienced pool in 2023. The large influx of first-time volunteers, although positive in terms of community engagement, may have contributed to a higher rate of procedural errors.

Additionally, since most volunteers do not work within the homelessness-serving sector, there can be issues with trust and rapport during the survey process. Individuals experiencing homelessness may be hesitant to answer sensitive or

personal questions with someone they do not feel comfortable with and may not want to disclose that they are experiencing homelessness at all for fear of judgment, and stigma. This discomfort and lack of feelings of safety can be further exacerbated when surveys are conducted in public or non-private settings, limiting the respondents' willingness to fully engage.

Another notable limitation is the trade-off between the depth of information collected and the time required to complete the survey. Longer surveys can yield more comprehensive data on community needs, but they also extend the time needed per interaction. This results in fewer completed surveys overall, which in turn reduces the number of individuals captured through the unsheltered enumeration process.

ENUMERATION METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in the PiT Count to enumerate individuals experiencing homelessness also has several limitations, most notably the likelihood of undercounting. This is especially true for individuals experiencing unsheltered or hidden homelessness.

Accurately capturing the number of unsheltered individuals is particularly challenging. As mentioned earlier, the unsheltered count relies on screening individuals in through the survey to reduce duplication. However, many individuals may be missed if they are unwilling or unable to participate, for a range of personal or situational reasons. Additionally, for safety and logistical reasons, not all areas can be surveyed during the count period, resulting in further underrepresentation of this population.

Similarly, individuals experiencing hidden homelessness are significantly underrepresented in the count. By its very nature, hidden homelessness is difficult to observe, this population is less likely to access homelessness services or be present in areas where surveys are typically conducted. As a result, they are less likely to be identified and included in the enumeration.

SECTOR CAPACITY

The homelessness-serving sector in B.C. is currently experiencing significant capacity challenges making it difficult to meet the growing demand for services. This limited capacity can act as a constraint on the effective planning and execution of the PiT Count, particularly when key stakeholders are unable to participate in the early planning stages.

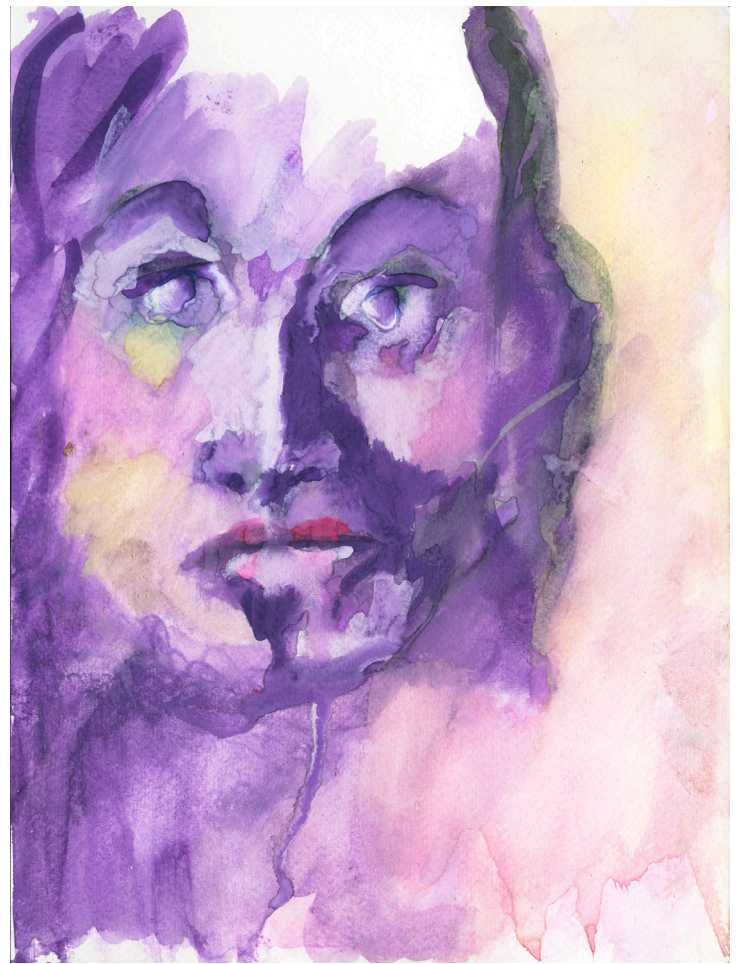
A 2024 report by Vantage Point and partners, including the Vancouver Foundation, found that respondents working in the social-services sector

reported growing demands from clients and communities, along with increased time spent reporting to funders, governments, and other stakeholders (Vantage Point et al., 2024). These increasing pressures make it difficult for organizations to maintain internal operations, and additional tasks, such as participating in a PiT Count, can further stretch already limited staff capacity.

This year, these constraints were reflected in reduced participation from partner organizations in planning committees and survey administration. Some service providers did not have the time or staffing resources to support enumeration efforts within their facilities. Although several new sites were added to the enumeration, others that were previously included could not be included for the 2025 PiT Count and Survey due to a range of factors, including capacity limitations. This impacted the number of surveys completed in certain settings, and sites included.

“Invisible homeless, there are different degrees of homelessness. I lived in my car for 3 years (employed) because I wanted to be alone”

- Anonymous Survey Respondent



These images, faces in different dimensions display the depth, the multiple characteristics of an identity. Each plays an important role in our society.

-Deanne Skinner

Artwork has been added to enrich this report. CSPC is grateful for the artists' contributions.

Conclusion

The 2025 PiT Count provides a crucial, if partial, picture of homelessness in the Greater Victoria region. With 1,749 individuals identified as experiencing homelessness on March 25th, 2025, and 607 surveys collected, this year's count reflects both the persistence of homelessness and the evolving nature of community needs.

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 over time provides an opportunity to analyze trends.

This year's findings point to several notable shifts, including increased safety concerns around shelter use, a rise in reported substance use challenges, and a growing interest in pursuing education. These shifts illustrate how the experience of homelessness in our region is changing and highlight the importance of centering the voices of those with lived and living experience to better plan and deliver responsive services.

The 2025 survey also underscores deep-rooted structural and systemic barriers. High rent (64.5%) and low income (61.1%) were the most frequently reported obstacles to securing housing, while 25.4% of respondents reported losing their housing due to inadequate income.

Youth and Indigenous populations remain disproportionately affected. Youth aged 29 and under accounted for 11.4% of respondents, with nearly half (48.5%) having been in government care, many becoming homeless within a year of leaving the system. Indigenous respondents represented 29.7% of the total, despite making up just 5% of

the region's population. These disparities reflect the enduring impacts of colonialism, systemic racism, and intergenerational trauma. Racism was cited as a reason for avoiding shelters by 12.6% of Indigenous respondents, compared to 5.0% in the general survey population, and as a barrier to housing by 11.6% of Indigenous participants.

Discharge into homelessness also remains a significant concern: 12.1% of respondents had been discharged from hospitals, 11.6% from shelters, and 6.3% from correctional facilities in the past year. Furthermore, the high prevalence of disability highlights the need for more accessible and inclusive services, 52.6% of respondents reported a physical disability, 44.2% reported sensory challenges, and 63.9% reported mental health concerns.

These findings offer a meaningful opportunity to explore the root causes of homelessness within our local context and to better understand how it can be prevented in the region. The insights from this report can support service providers and decision-makers in directly responding to the needs of Greater Victoria's homeless population and inform the development of effective programs, services, and supports. This count serves as both a snapshot in time and a reminder that behind each data point is a person, a story, and a fundamental right to safe, appropriate, and permanent housing.