Point-in-Time Count 2023

Frequently Asked Questions

Why do a Point-in-Time Count?

A Point-in-Time (PiT) Count is a strategy to help determine the extent of homelessness in the community on a given night while also providing important insight into the nature and the characteristics of those experiencing homelessness. A PiT Count can also be an important part of a community's response to homelessness through increasing a community's ability to take action by:

- Identifying the characteristics of the local population.
- Enhancing system planning and program development.
- Increasing public awareness about homelessness.
- Providing important information for local, provincial, and national homelessness servicing systems.

How often is a PiT Count done?

There was an initial PiT Count and survey completed in 2016 in Greater Victoria, alongside 30 other communities across Canada. This was replicated in 2018 and 2020 with an even larger number of communities using a common methodology.

What are the numbers for 2023?

The 2023 PiT Count identified people who were without a home and experiencing a variety of circumstances, including:

- Unsheltered and sleeping outdoors 242
- Staying in an Emergency Shelter 282
- Living in Provisional Accommodations* 1096
- Unsure or unknown location of sleeping location 45
- **TOTAL** **1665**

* Respondent was in a transitional shelter or housing, a treatment facility or other facility including corrections, or provisionally accommodated at self-funded hotel/motel or someone else's place (i.e., "couch surfing")

Is homelessness increasing and can the 2023 findings be compared to the 2020 findings?

The survey data allows us to look at trends over time, but the larger enumeration (the actual count) is not comparable year over year. The number is slightly higher compared to the 2020 total of 1,523, but this is not necessarily an indicator of homelessness increasing in the region as there are differences in organizations that are able to participate each year. Some of the differences between the 'counts' include:

- In 2020, the Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Centre (VIRCC) did not participate in the enumeration due to staff capacity issues. VIRCC participated in the 2023 count, with 149 individuals who were of no fixed address (NFA).
- The number of facilities (i.e., transitional facilities, shelters) that participated in 2020 was lower due to capacity issues related to COVID. Also, new facilities have opened.

How do these findings fit with the research used to support the planning of new resources?

For approaches addressing homelessness to work well, projects and services must reflect the needs and characteristics of those they are intended to serve. This means having a sense of the scale of the challenge by looking at shelter data and use patterns, but also understanding the trends, experiences and needs of those surveyed through the PiT Count. The survey data provides vital insight that is used to complement existing data sets. Ultimately, a range of data sources is essential to supporting a holistic approach to addressing homelessness.

Does this represent all the people in the region who are experiencing either homelessness or housing stress in the region?

No. The PiT Count is a snapshot of those agreeable to being identified as experiencing homelessness on a given night. While a comprehensive PiT Count offers important information about a community, the count cannot provide an exact number of people experiencing homelessness in a given community. For example, those who are provisionally accommodated or disconnected from homelessness-serving agencies are less likely to be counted. Youth, newcomers, and women are over-represented in hidden homelessness and less likely to be surveyed or counted. Although the Pit Count makes efforts to reach these groups through alternative methods such as magnet events, these demographics will always be underrepresented.

How will the PiT Count findings be used?

This is important community level data that informs system and program planning for service providers and governments across the region. The CRD initiated Regional Housing First Program partnership with BC Housing and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, through which each partner has committed to investing $40 million ($120 million total) in the development of 400 housing units for people experiencing chronic homelessness. Island Health is also a partner, committed to providing health resources, where needed.

The CRD's administration of the Government of Canada's Reaching Home Program: Canada's Homelessness Strategy, supported by a Community Advisory Board of diverse local volunteers, use PiT Count data to inform program decision making. This includes supporting the development of a Coordinated Assessment and Access system, and implementation of a Homelessness Management Information System to support the improved coordination of services throughout the region.

Summary of Findings:

- The 1,665 homeless individuals on the night of March 7, 2023, were found across transitional housing, temporary shelters, couches, vehicles and outdoors. 765 individuals participated in the survey.
- Youth, Indigenous people, and seniors have unique experiences of homelessness – nearly one in four survey respondents (25%) are 55 and older, and 8% are youth under the age of 25. There are culture and age-related barriers to accessing housing as well as services. Homelessness often starts at an early age: 36% had their first experience of homelessness at 18 years of age or younger.
- One in three (33%) identify as Indigenous. This is much higher than the rate in the broader population (5%).
- Many have been homeless for long periods – 67% had been homeless for more than six months over the past year, and 50% report having been homeless for the past 365 days or more.
- A majority were British Columbians – 82% had lived in Greater Victoria for more than one year, and 19% have lived in the region their entire lives. Of those who moved to the region, 55% came from other regions in BC. The most common reasons for moving include: to be with family who had moved to the community, to visit friends or family, and to seek or secure employment.
- 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. About 35.4% of respondents have been discharged or evicted into homelessness.

- Common services and supports needed by survey respondents include 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%).

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The Point-in-Time Count is a partnership between:

Funded by the Government of Canada's Reaching Home Program:

Canada's Homelessness Strategy