Point-in-Time Count and Survey of People Experiencing Homelessness FAQ

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 extent of homelessness and the characteristics of those experiencing homelessness. A PiT Count is also 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
- Increasing capacity to undertake a local needs assessment
- Enhancing system planning and program development
- Increasing public awareness about homelessness
- Providing important information for local, regional, provincial and national homelessness servicing systems

Has this ever been done before?

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 in an even larger number of communities using a common methodology.

What are the numbers in 2018?

The 2018 PiT Count identified people who were without a home and experiencing a variety of circumstances, including:

- Unsheltered and sleeping outdoors   158
- Unsure of where they would be sleeping   77
- Staying in an Emergency Shelter   359
- Living in Provisional Accommodations[1]   909
- TOTAL   1,525

Is homelessness increasing and can the 2018 findings be compared to the 2016 findings?

No, and no. The fact that the number is higher compared to the 2016 total of 1,387 is not an indicator of homelessness increasing in the region. Changing circumstances and differences in methodology mean the results from count to count are not comparable. More people were identified this time around because of improved and extended outreach efforts, including:

- increasing the number of provisional housing locations where people were interviewed,
- expanding the geographic scope to include Sooke, and
- hosting a "magnet event" on March 16, 2018 that attracted a larger number of youth.

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[1] Respondent was in a transitional shelter or housing, a treatment facility or other facility including corrections or "couch surfing".

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 have to 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 unique stories of those surveyed through the PiT Count. The survey data provides vital insight that is used to complement existing data sets by "filling in the gaps" and providing context. Ultimately, a range of data sources is important 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. 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. However, the limitations of this method should not prevent communities from undertaking a PiT Count, which will yield worthwhile data.

How will the count findings be used?

The findings of the survey, in particular, will add voice to the needs of people with lived experience of homelessness in the planning and implementation of a variety of significant programs in the region, including:

- 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 $30 million ($90 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 Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS), including recommendations for funding by the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness Board of Directors which acts as the HPS Community Advisory Board.
- A review and updating of priorities related to the investment of Government of Canada funding as the HPS program is replaced with the Reaching Home Program on April 1, 2019.
- The development of a Coordinated Assessment and Access system and a homelessness management information system to support the improved coordination of services throughout the region.