

Point in Time Count of People Experiencing Homelessness FAQ's

Why do the Count?

Estimating the number of people experiencing homelessness in any given community is difficult because the issue is generally dispersed widely and people tend to try and shelter in secluded places for safety reasons. People who experience homelessness also lack fixed addresses, and they tend to be excluded from formal census and other enumeration programs. In order to better estimate the number of people experiencing homelessness and to gain a clearer picture of the challenges they face it is important to use an approach that meets these people "where they are at". The methodology used achieved that goal.

Has this ever been done before?

The PiT Count represents the first time that a count of people who are experiencing homelessness has taken place in communities across Canada using a common methodology. These 30 HPS funded communities conducted PiT Counts within the first four months of 2016 to apply a national lens to the issue of homelessness across the country.

The last local count and needs assessment was completed through the 2007 Homeless Needs Survey conducted by Victoria Cool Aid Society and the Community Social Planning Council.

How do these findings compare to previous counts of people who are experiencing homelessness in the region?

In 2007, there were 1,242 unsheltered, emergency or provisionally accommodated individuals who were enumerated as part of the Homeless Needs Survey. The PiT Count enumerated 1,387 individuals as experiencing homelessness. Although this could appear as an increase in homelessness in the region, the two methodologies were different, hence the results cannot be directly compared and a trend analysis cannot be applied to the two findings.

How do these findings fit with those in the Creating Homes and Enhancing Communities (CHEC) Plan?

The CHEC Plan was based on the Coalition report, "Patterns of Homelessness in Greater Victoria" published in 2014. This report identified 15.1% of unique shelter users over a 4-year timeframe experienced either episodic or long-stay patterns of shelter use in Greater Victoria. This data was then further analyzed to estimate a likely population of between 367 and 479 individuals experiencing chronic homelessness across the region. The PiT Count identified that there were a total of 545 people

who were either staying in local shelters (353) or unsheltered (192) on February 10, 2016. The CHEC report results were the result of successive monitoring of shelter data over a long period of time and was designed to determine chronicity with respect to homelessness, while the PiT Count provides a snapshot of need on a single night. It must be kept in mind that both approaches only provide an estimate of the numbers of people who are experiencing homelessness in the region.

Did the Count include people living at Super Intent City?

Yes. There was a special team assigned to Super Intent City that met with and surveyed as many of the residents as were willing to participate in the survey. Their expressed needs have informed the results reported.

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

No. It is understood that counts such as these provide incomplete results. There are likely some people who are too difficult to find or who, for various reasons, may have avoided being counted. This also does not include an accounting of all individuals who may have been staying with other family or friends due to a housing crisis, or who were living in housing that was not affordable, suitable or appropriate for their needs.

How will the count findings be used?

The CRD is the Community Entity responsible for the regional coordination of the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) and the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness Board of Directors is the Community Advisory Board, responsible for approving funding for HPS supported programs. These findings will inform efforts to target HPS funding toward local priorities as well as supporting emerging initiatives to develop and provide additional supportive housing programs to better address the needs of people who are experiencing chronic homelessness in the region.