



Cowichan Valley
Point-in-Time Homelessness Count
Report on the Findings
June 2023



Artwork by John Eddie Peters

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Interior, Lower Mainland, Central
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BACKGROUND

The 2023 Point-in-Time (PiT) Homelessness Count was conducted by Cowichan Housing Association with support from the Community Action Team (CAT) Peers. The 2023 Count included the whole of the Cowichan Region (from Malahat to Ladysmith), and it was funded by Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy and the United Way. To learn more about United Way's projects visit www.uwbc.ca/program/reaching-home/.

The last Point-in-Time Homelessness Count for the Cowichan Region was conducted 3 years ago in March 2020, just as the COVID 19 pandemic was beginning. Since that time, service providers and others who work with those experiencing homelessness noted a significant increase in the number of people they serve and in the complexity of their service and support needs. To validate this perspective, there was a strong interest in the community to conduct a post-Covid 19 PIT Count to better understand what was actually happening in relation to homelessness and the needs of those counted among the homeless.

Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy

Launched in April 2019, Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy is a community-based program aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness across Canada. This program provides direct support and funding to Designated Communities (urban centres), Indigenous communities, territorial communities, and rural and remote communities across Canada to help them address their local homelessness needs. The Strategy also supports the goals of the National Housing Strategy, in particular, to support the most vulnerable Canadians in maintaining safe, stable and affordable housing and to reduce chronic homelessness nationally by 50 percent by fiscal year 2027 to 2028. The Government of Canada has invested nearly \$4 billion over nine years to address homelessness through Reaching Home. This includes funding invested through the COVID-19 Economic Response Plan, the 2020 Fall Economic Statement; Budget 2021 and Budget 2022.

To learn more about Reaching Home, visit the [Infrastructure Canada - About Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy](#) web page.

COMPARISON TO PREVIOUS PIT COUNTS

	SUMMER 2017	SPRING 2020	SPRING 2023
Counted	150	129	223
Where stayed	Sheltered - 31% Unsheltered - 65% Other - 4%	Sheltered - 58% Unsheltered - 42%	Sheltered - 22% Unsheltered - 78%
Age	25 and under - 13%	24 and under - 9% 25-54 - 64% 55+ - 27%	24 and under - 7% 25-54 - 77% 55+ - 16%
Gender	Female - 39% Male - 61%	Another gender identity - 1% Female - 34% Male - 65%	Gender diverse - 1% Female - 38% Male - 61%
% Indigenous	Indigenous - 46%	Indigenous - 34%	Indigenous - 46%
Been in foster care?	Yes - 35%	Yes - 32%	Yes - 36%
Health concerns	Not Available	Medical condition - 41% Physical disability - 47% Mental health - 43% Addiction - 63% Learning disability - 19% Traumatic brain injury - 35% Two or more health concerns - 63%	Medical condition - 51% Physical disability - 51% Mental health - 56% Addiction - 79% Learning disability - 36% Traumatic brain injury - 40% Two or more health concerns - 83%
Time living here?	Two years or more - 65%	One year or more - 88% 10 years or more - 47%	One year or more - 87% 10 years or more - 64%
Income	Income assistance - 30% Disability benefit - 43%	Income assistance - 43% Disability benefit - 33% Have one or more sources of income - 95%	Income assistance - 43% Disability benefit - 35% Have one or more sources of income - 94%
Length of time experiencing homelessness	Less than 1 year - 24%	Less than 6 months - 23% More than 1 year - 69%	Less than 6 months - 18% More than 1 year - 80%
Reasons for housing loss	Abuse/conflict - 42% Addiction - 27%	Not enough income - 45% Substance use - 24% Conflict with landlord - 21%	Not enough income - 37% Substance use - 31% Conflict with landlord - 22%

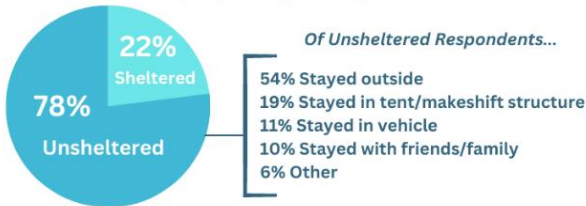
INFOGRAPHIC FOR 2023 COUNT

Duncan/Cowichan Valley 2023 Point in Time Homeless Count

The 2023 Point in Time Homeless Count occurred in Duncan/Cowichan Valley on the evening of April 11th and the day of April 12th to help provide an overall snapshot of homelessness in the community.

223 people who completed surveys identified as experiencing homelessness, compared to 129 in 2020

Where did people stay the night of the count?



Age Breakdown



- 36%** Experienced homelessness for the first time before the age of 19
- 49%** Experienced homelessness for the first time before the age of 25
- 36%** Had been in foster care, a youth group home, or under a youth agreement

Indigenous Identity

46% of respondents identified as Indigenous

84% of those who identified as Indigenous had a family history of attending residential school



43% of all surveyed individuals had a family history of attending residential schools

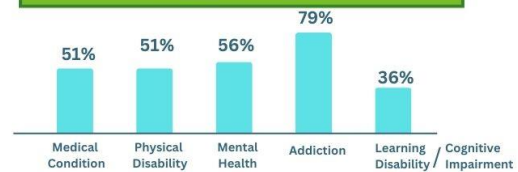
Gender Identity



Sexual Orientation

7% Identified as 2SLGBTQIA+

Health Concerns



- 83%** Reported having 2 or more health concerns
- 57%** Reported having 3 or more health concerns
- 40%** Reported having an acquired traumatic brain injury

Length of Time Experiencing Homelessness



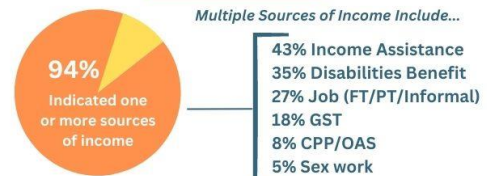
Length of Time Living in the Community

- 37%** Have always been in the community
- Of those who've moved here...*
- 86%** Have been in the community for 1 year or more
- 66%** Have been in the community for 5 years or more

Top Reasons for Housing Loss

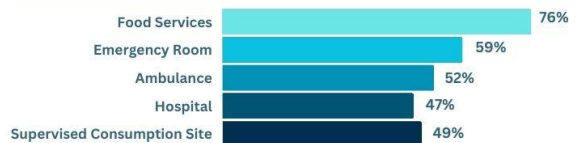


Income



40% had 2 or more sources of income

Percentage of People who Accessed Specific Services



Top 3 Barriers to Accessing Services



THE COUNT

Purpose of the Count

The purpose of the Cowichan PiT Count was to create a snapshot estimate of the minimum number of people experiencing homelessness on a typical day/night in the Cowichan Valley. The primary aim of the Cowichan PiT Count was to estimate the number of people who are staying in emergency shelters and who are unsheltered. There was also interest in getting an estimate of ‘hidden homelessness’ including specifically those who are ‘couch surfing’.

Defining Homelessness

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness defines Homelessness as:

- *The situation of an individual, family or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, meaning the ability to acquire it.¹*

Sheltered homeless:

- *Refers to people who, because they cannot secure permanent housing, are accessing emergency shelter and system supports, generally provided at no cost or minimal cost to the user.¹*

Unsheltered homeless:

- *This includes people who lack housing and are not accessing emergency shelters or accommodation, except during extreme weather conditions.¹*

When applied to the PiT Count in the Cowichan Valley, the above definition of unsheltered homeless includes those who reported that they ‘couch surfed’ or stayed with family and those who stayed short term in hotels.

The definition does not apply to temporary housing that is guaranteed for more than 30 days and where individuals pay rent. This includes sites in the Cowichan Valley such as:

- The 24 transitional apartments at Warmland House Shelter (Canadian Mental Health Association [CMHA])
- The 11 bunkhouse beds at Warmland House Shelter (CMHA), where individuals pay a monthly rent to live in a shared dorm within the shelter.

¹ Gaetz, S., Barr, C., Friesen, A., Harris, B., Hill, C., Kovacs-Burns, K., Pauly, B., Pearce, B., Turner, A., & Marsolais, A. (2012). *Canadian definition of homelessness*. Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. <https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/COHhomelessdefinition.pdf>

- The 34 units at the Village temporary housing site (CHA/Lookout Housing and Health Society), where individuals pay a monthly fee to live in temporary accommodations that are guaranteed for longer than 30 days.
- The 51 permanent supportive housing apartments at Sq'umul' Shelh Lelum' (Lookout Housing and Health Society).

Methodology

Who planned the Cowichan PiT Count?

Cowichan Housing Association hired a Coordinator to oversee the planning and delivery of the Cowichan PiT Count. The Count was planned using the [Guide to Point-in-Time Counts in Canada: Edition 3.1](#).²

The 2023 Cowichan PiT Count was peer-led, which means that people with lived experience of homelessness were actively involved in both the planning and delivery of the Count. With the help of the Cowichan Community Action Team, a Peer Advisory Committee composed of people with current or previous lived experience of homelessness was formed. The Peer Advisory Committee met in-person bi-weekly for several weeks leading up to the Count to help in the preparation and planning. Peers were provided with a \$25 honorarium for attending and participating in planning meetings.

A Core Committee was formed with community service organizations who provide services and support for people experiencing homelessness in the Cowichan Valley. The Core Committee, along with the coordinator, was responsible for the planning and delivery of the Count.

The Core Committee was composed of representatives from the following organizations:

- | | |
|--|---|
| ★ Cowichan Women Against Violence | ★ Canadian Mental Health Association - Cowichan Valley Branch |
| ★ The Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction | ★ Lookout Housing and Health Society |
| ★ Hiiye'yu Lelum - House of Friendship | ★ Cowichan Lake Community Services |
| ★ Cowichan Tribes | ★ Cowichan Housing Association |
| ★ Island Health (SUIT and ACT teams) | ★ Cowichan Community Action Team |

² Employment and Social Development Canada. (2021). Everyone counts: *Guide to point-in-time counts in Canada* (3.1 ed.). Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy.

In addition to the Core Committee, other agencies were also consulted through the planning process. These groups included:

- ★ Vancouver Island Regional Library
- ★ Cowichan Valley Basket Society
- ★ Cowichan Neighbourhood House
- ★ The Duncan United Church
- ★ The Housing First for Youth Committee
- ★ RCMP
- ★ North Cowichan and City of Duncan Bylaw
- ★ Cowichan Green Community

When did the Count take place?

The 2023 Cowichan PiT Count commenced with counting shelter occupants starting at 5:00 pm on Tuesday, April 11th, and ended at approximately 11:00 pm on Wednesday April 12th. These dates were chosen because they fell between pay days for Income Assistance, which was the time of the month that the Core Planning Committee determined would be the easiest to locate unsheltered people. Wednesday was chosen because there are services available that draw people in.

Where did the Count take place?

On April 11th, 2023, volunteers for the PiT Count conducted a count at Warmland House Shelter and the Ladysmith Emergency Shelter. Staff at Charlotte’s Place Women’s Shelter and at Somenos Transition House (short-term transition housing for women and children fleeing violence/abuse) also conducted counts on the evening of April 11th.

Drop sites were set up throughout the Cowichan Valley on April 12th. Each drop site was run by either a small groups of peer workers and volunteers or by staff already working at the site.

These sites included:

- ★ Cowichan Valley Basket Society (Foodbank)
- ★ The Wellness and Recovery Centre
- ★ Warmland House Shelter
- ★ Lake Cowichan Christian Fellowship
- ★ The Island Savings Centre/Cowichan Library
- ★ House of Friendship - Breakfast Club
- ★ Cowichan Neighbourhood House
- ★ Ladysmith Shelter
- ★ Meals on the Ground
- ★ Sq’umul’ Shelh Lelum’

A Magnet event was held at Duncan United Church during the day of the 12th. This event offered donations of clothing, camping gear, and other personal supplies. A hot lunch was provided by the Cowichan Green Community along with hot coffee and pastries donated by Brewpoint Cafe were also offered.

Multiple teams of volunteers and peers went out into the community looking for those who were sleeping rough. The locations where the teams checked were identified in advance by the Peer Committee, local service providers, the RCMP and Bylaw enforcement as locations that are often occupied by experiencing homelessness.

BC Housing provided information on the number of people in hospital with no fixed address and the RCMP shared that one individual with no fixed address spent the night in city cells.

How were the surveys conducted?

Volunteers were recruited through CHA networks and the networks of the Core Committee members. Volunteers were also recruited using social media, by reaching out to Vancouver Island University, and through ads posted in different locations across the Cowichan Region. Volunteers were required to fill out an application form and a confidentiality agreement and waiver. Local agencies were also asked if they had the capacity to have staff conduct surveys for their clients.

Two in-person training sessions were held on April 11th to train volunteers and peers on how to administer the survey, and one online training session (via Zoom) was held the weekend before the Count. The opportunity for in-person training was also offered to all staff at the sites where surveys were completed. Those conducting surveys received information packages with a script on how to approach people along with instructions for filling out the survey and information on Indigenous homelessness.

The training content that was used was based on the content provided by the Homelessness Services Association of BC with some additions/revisions provided by the Peer Committee. It included general information about the Count, information about safety and emergency response, community resources, what it means to be trauma-aware/informed in your approach, and a detailed overview of the survey questions and possible responses. Peers attended the in-person training sessions and provided Naloxone training to anyone who requested it.

As compensation for their time, those who participated in the survey were offered a \$5 Tim Hortons gift card along with 'ice breakers' such as socks, chocolate bars, and sunglasses.

What questions were asked on the survey?

The same survey questions are used in the homelessness counts in every province across Canada to ensure we have a consistent picture of homelessness nationally. Through consultation with the Peer Committee an additional question, "What barriers have you faced while accessing services?" was added. Every survey began with screening questions to determine if the individual was eligible to be surveyed,

followed by key questions related to demographics. Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary, and they could end the survey at any time.

What were the local conditions on the day of the count?

In the week leading up to the Count there were several days of rain. Nighttime temperatures ranged from -1- 5 degrees and daytime temperatures ranged from 7-11 degrees. The evening of the 11th when shelter counts began it was overcast and the nighttime low temperature was 2 degrees. By the morning of the 12th, the sun was out, and temperatures rose to 11 degrees. The change in weather brought many unhoused people into town to access services.

How many surveys were conducted?

On the evening of the 11th, 16 surveys were conducted by volunteers at Warmland House Shelter. The sobering center staff conducted 5 surveys. Volunteers and staff conducted 6 surveys at the Ladysmith shelter. Charlotte's place staff conducted 9 surveys and Somenos House staff did 4 surveys.

Beginning at 7am on April 12th, mobile teams of volunteers and peers began surveying in parks and known camping areas, beginning with McAdam Park. These teams continued in shifts throughout the day, ending the last shift at approximately 11:00 pm. There were 47 surveys were conducted by mobile teams throughout the community.

There were 8 surveys were conducted at the Hiiye'yu Lelum - House of Friendship Breakfast club as participants enjoyed their breakfasts. Another table was set up at Cowichan Valley Basket Society (foodbank), volunteers were there from 10:30 am-3:30 pm and were able to conduct a total of 29 surveys.

A table was set up at 9:00 am at the Island Savings Center as their bathrooms are open to those experiencing homelessness, volunteers set up outside in hopes to also connect with those who use the library during the day. There were 13 surveys conducted at the Island Savings Center where there is a public bathroom and the library.

Warmland House put on a BBQ in their backyard to draw people in from 11 am -1 pm. There were 21 surveys conducted throughout the day at Warmland. Across the street, the Wellness and Recovery center proved to be the busiest location with 51 surveys conducted inside and in front of the building.

A team of volunteers and peers set up a table at Cowichan Neighbourhood house for their free lunch, after which time they went into the community looking for camps; there were 4 surveys conducted by this team of volunteers. Ladysmith Shelter had two outreach workers surveying throughout the community; they were able to conduct 13 surveys.

Staff at Sq'umul' Shelh Lelum' conducted 3 surveys for guests visiting their residents throughout the day of April 12th. Cowichan Lake Community Services staff conducted 4 surveys at a community lunch for those experiencing homelessness in Lake Cowichan.

The magnet event, hosted at Duncan United Church, invited those experiencing homelessness to enjoy chili made by the Cowichan Green Community and refreshments donated by the Brewpoint Cafe. There were 9 surveys conducted at the magnet event. Because food was also being offered at the BBQ at Warmland and at the Cowichan Valley Basket Society, fewer people came for the hot lunch at Duncan United Church. After the event ended, volunteers took the leftovers into the community to distribute while conducting surveys.

In the evening a team attended Meals on the Ground, a community dinner at Duncan United Church, where they were able to conduct 7 surveys.

How did we screen for duplicate surveys?

To screen for duplicates of surveys, key demographics that were unlikely to be repeated were analyzed to check for doubles. For example, having two people of the same gender, same age, who became homeless at the same age and have the same medical conditions. Through this process 4 double surveys were identified and removed.

Did we accurately count the number of people who were experiencing Absolute Homelessness in the Cowichan Valley?

PiT Counts are known to be an undercount. Some locations were knowingly avoided by mobile units because the peer committee identified locations of known camps that are on private property or where it might have been dangerous to send volunteers, so there are people in these areas who were not counted. There were more than 50 people who did not consent to the survey who were suspected of experiencing homelessness.

In preparation for the Count, the Housing First for Youth Committee met and discussed a definition of youth homelessness that would work for the purpose of the Count. There were 25 youth identified by the youth teams ahead of the Count as possibly experiencing homelessness in the Cowichan Valley. Unfortunately, the youth teams were unable to locate the youth on the day of the count. Only one survey was conducted for a youth under the age of 19 years by a mobile team on the day on the Count.

Although surveys of those who are couch surfing or staying with family were counted, this was done to better understand their experiences. The number collected is not an accurate representation of the number of the people experiencing “hidden homeless” in the Cowichan Valley. For example, those who are living in their vehicles (cars, motorhomes, campers) were not adequately captured through the Count for a variety of reasons (location not known, volunteers felt unsafe about approaching a vehicle, etc.).

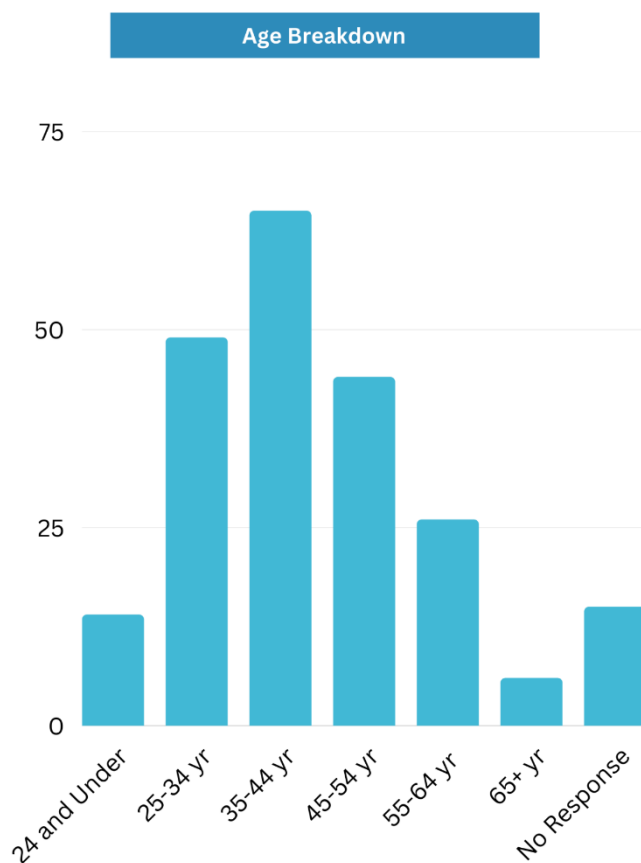
HOMELESSNESS IN THE COWICHAN VALLEY

223 individuals were surveyed during the 2023 Point-in-Time count that fit the definition of homelessness from the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. Some individuals declined to participate in the survey. Surveyors used a tally sheet to count those who declined. 54 individuals were tallied who declined to participate, however indicators of homelessness, such as sleeping outside, carts with belongings or being known to the surveyor, were witnessed.

How old are you?

Of the 204 individuals that chose to respond to this question:

- 14 respondents (7%) were 24 and under
- 49 respondents (24%) were 25-34
- 65 respondents (31%) were 35-44
- 44 respondents (21%) were 45-54
- 26 respondents (13%) were 55-64
- 6 respondents (3%) were 65+

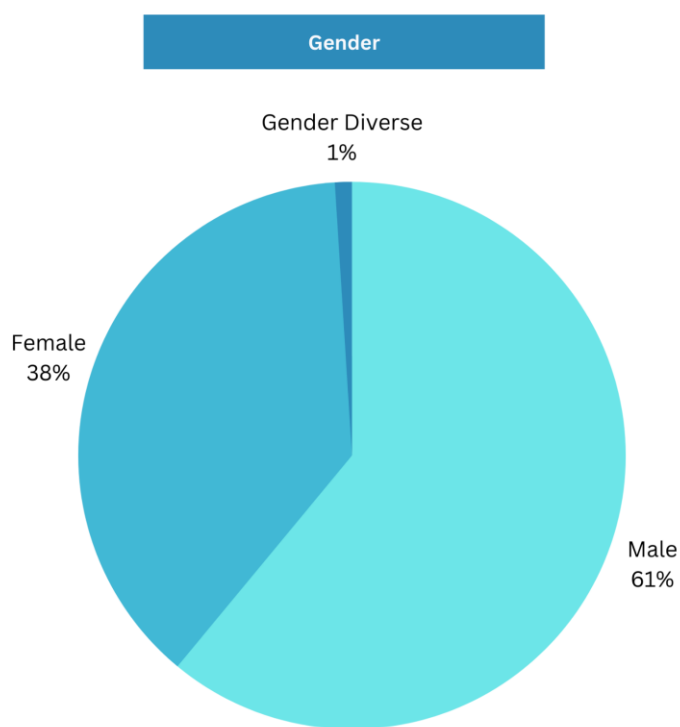


What gender do you identify with?

There were 216 respondents to the questions about gender.

Of the 216 responses:

- 81 (38%) identified as women
- 3 (1%) identified as identifying with multiple genders or being agender
- 132 (61%) identified as male
- Two individuals identified as someone with trans experience



How do you describe your sexual orientation?

Of the 203 respondents to this question:

- 188 (93%) identified as straight/heterosexual
- 8 (4%) identified as bisexual
- 3 (1%) identified as two-spirited
- 2 (<1%) identified as queer
- 1 (<1%) identified as polyamorous
- 1 (<1%) identified as something not listed on the questionnaire

What racial groups do you identify with?

Of the 213 individuals who responded to the question about Indigenous identity, 98 (46%) identified as Indigenous. Participants were asked to identify what racial groups they identified with; they were instructed to identify all that apply.

There were 190 individuals who responded to the question, of respondents:

- 62 (33%) identified as Indigenous only
- 120 (63%) identified as white
- 1 (<1%) identified as Arab
- 2 (1%) identified as Black Canadian/American
- 1 (<1%) identified as Latin American
- 3 (1.5%) identified as East Asian
- 1 (<1%) identified as West Asian
- 1 (<1%) identified as South East Asian
- 1 (<1%) identified as Afro-Caribbean or Afro-Latinx

What are your sources of income?

Of the 203 individuals who responded to this question, 94% of respondents indicated they had one or more sources of income, and 40% reported having two or more sources.

- 87 respondents (43%) received income assistance
- 55 respondents (27%) received income from working
 - 3 (1%) had full-time work, 9 (4%) had part-time work, 14 (7%) had casual work, 2 (1%) received honoraria, and 6 (3%) had informal work
- 71 respondents (35%) received Disability Benefits
- 37 respondents (18%) received GST
- 22 respondents (11%) received money from friends and family
- 16 respondents (8%) received CPP and or OAS
- 10 respondents (5%) received income from sex work
- 2 respondents (1%) received child tax
- 2 respondents (1%) received Employment Insurance
- 1 respondent received income from a youth agreement
- 1 respondent received a veteran's benefit
- 8 respondents (4%) have other sources of income
- 15 respondents (7%) reported having no source of income

Have you ever had any service in the Canadian Forces?

Of the 198 individuals who responded to this question, 13 (or 7%) reported serving in the Canadian Forces.

- 12 (6%) served in the Canadian Military
- 1 (1%) served in the RCMP

Do you prefer to access services in English or French?

Of the 204 individuals who responded:

- 5 (2%) preferred to access services in both English and French
- 1 (<1%) preferred to access services in French

- 1 (<1%) preferred to access services in Sign language and English
- 197 (97%) preferred to access services in English

How long have you been without a place of your own?

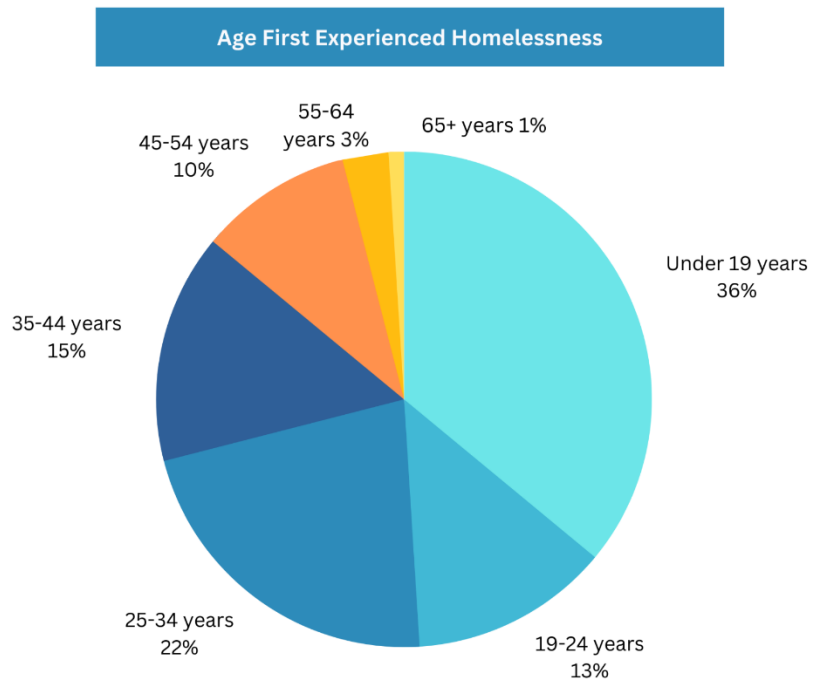
Of the 191 individuals who responded to this question:

- 157 (82%) have been without a place of their own for more than 6 months
- 152 (80%) have been without a place of their own for 1 year or more
- 64 (34%) have been without a place of their own for 5 years or more
- 15 (8%) have been without a place of their own for 10 years or more

How old were you the first time you experienced homelessness?

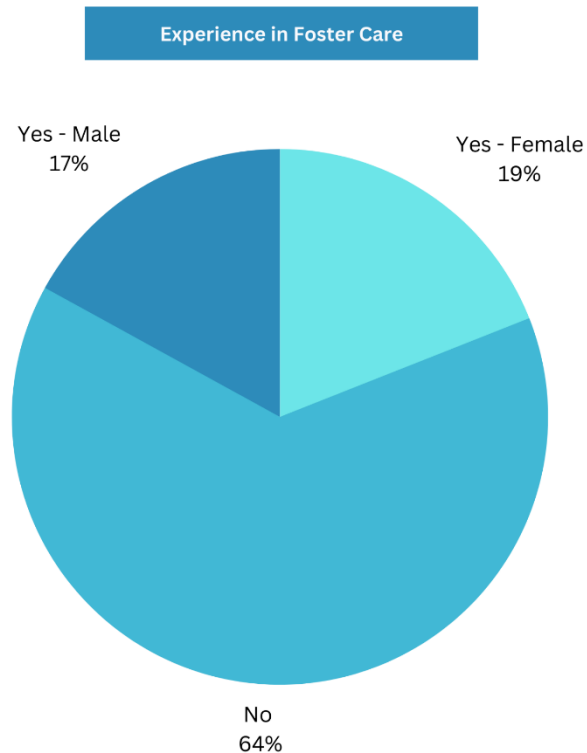
Of the 215 individuals who responded to this question:

- 70 (36%) were under 19
- 24 (13%) were 19-24
- 43 (22%) were 25-34
- 29 (15%) were 35-44
- 19 (10%) were 45-54
- 6 (3%) were 55-64
- 2 (1%) were 65+



As a child or youth, were you ever in foster care, in a youth group home or on an Independent Living Agreement?

Of the 209 respondents, 73 (36%) reported being in foster care as child/youth and 139 (64%) reported that they were not.



How long have you been in the Cowichan Valley?

Of the 195 individuals who responded to this question:

- 75 (37%) have always been in the Cowichan Valley
- Of the 120 individuals who reported moving to the community:
 - 17 (14%) have been in the community for 1 year or less
 - Of these individuals, 6 moved between communities in the Cowichan Valley, 3 came from other communities on Vancouver Island, 3 came from other communities in BC, and 3 came from other regions of Canada
 - 79 (66%) have been in the community for 5 years or more
 - 57 (48%) have been in the community for 10 years or more

Did you come to Canada as an immigrant, refugee, or a refugee claimant?

208 individuals responded:

- 200 (96%) were not immigrants
- 7 (3%) were immigrants
- 1 (<1%) was a refugee claimant

Did you stay without anyone last night?

Of the 190 respondents:

- 40 (21%) stayed with a partner or spouse
- 26 (14%) stayed with family or friends
- 9 (5%) stayed with pets

In what locations have you spent at least one night in the past year?

Respondents were asked to choose all that apply. Of the 199 individuals who responded:

- 149 (75%) spent one or more nights outside
- 122 (61%) spent one or more nights in a homeless shelter
- 105 (53%) spent one or more nights at someone else's place or couch surfing
- 86 (43%) spent one or more nights at an encampment
- 74 (37%) spent one or more nights in a vehicle
- 63 (32%) spent one or more nights in a hotel/motel
- 19 (10%) spent one or more nights in transitional housing
- 6 (3%) spent one or more nights in Second Stage Housing
- 1 (<1%) spent one or more nights in jail

Are you on a housing waitlist?

Of the 194 respondents,

- 62 (32%) said they aren't on a housing waitlist,
- 101 (52%) said they are on a housing waitlist and
- 31 (16%) didn't know if they were on a housing waitlist

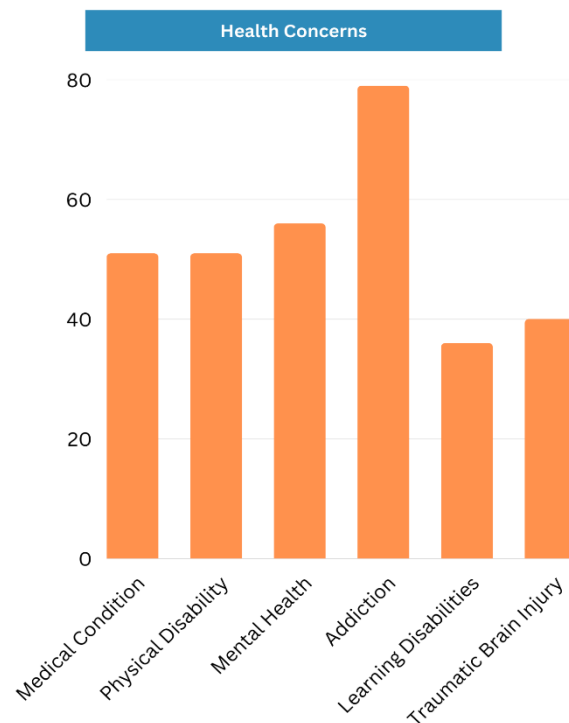
Do you identify with having any health challenges?

Of the 200 respondents who answered this question:

- 9 (5%) reported having no health concerns
- 166 (83%) reported having 2 or more health concerns
- 114 (57%) reported having 3 or more health concerns
- 80 (40%) reported having 4 or more health concerns
- 34 (17%) reported having 5 or more health concerns

The following health challenges were reported:

- 99/196 respondents (51%) reported having a medical condition/illness
- 98/191 respondents (51%) reported having a physical disability
- 111/200 respondents (56%) reported having a mental health issue
- 155/197 respondents (79%) reported having an addiction
- 67/187 respondents (36%) reported having a learning disability or cognitive impairment
- 77/194 respondents (40%) reported having a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)



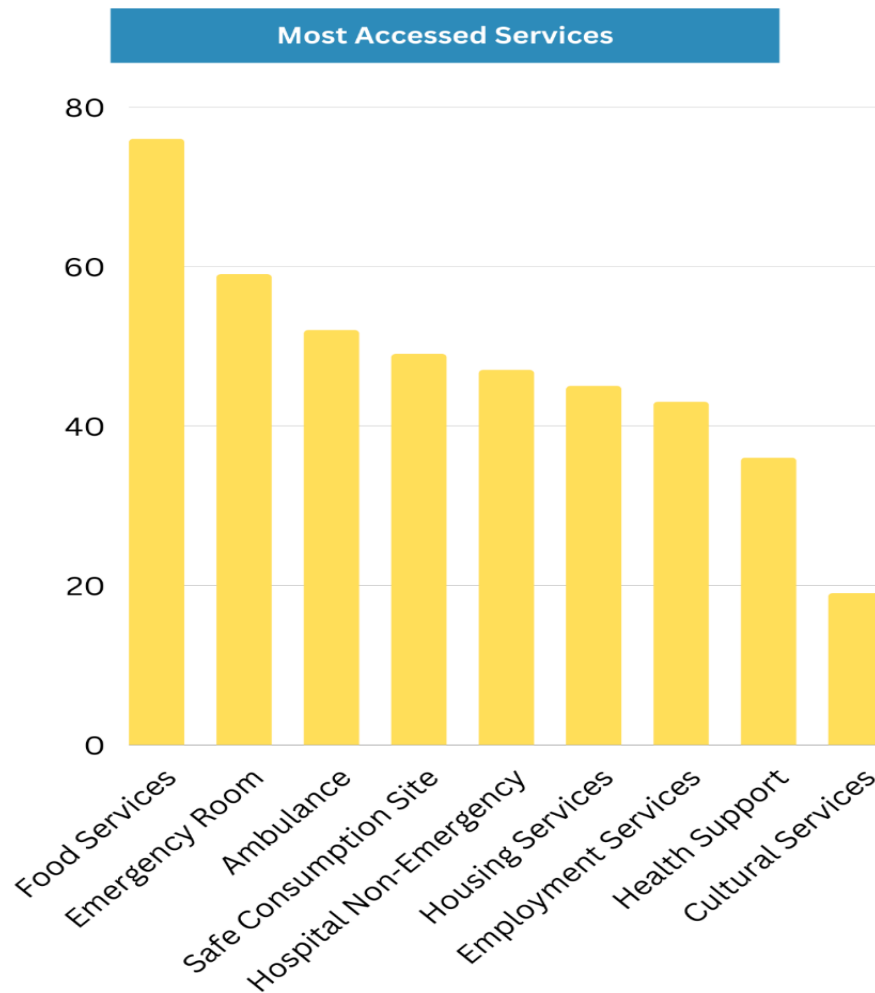
What services have you used in the past 12 months?

Of the 199 respondents:

- 151 (76%) have used food services
- 118 (59%) have gone to the emergency room
- 103 (52%) have used an ambulance
- 97 (49%) have used a supervised consumption site
- 93 (47%) have gone to the hospital non-emergency
- 89 (45%) have used housing services
- 86 (43%) have used employment services
- 71 (36%) have used mental health services
- 66 (33%) have used legal services
- 63 (32%) have gone to a health clinic
- 62 (31%) have used other addiction services
- 38 (19%) have used cultural supports
- 11 (6%) have used other services
- 4 (2%) haven't used any services

Of the 199 respondents:

- 182 (91%) have used 2 or more services
- 115 (56%) have used 5 or more services
- 67 (34%) have used 7 or more services
- 23 (12%) have used 10 or more services



Reasons for Housing Loss?

Of the 200 people who responded to this question (respondents were asked to choose all reasons that applied), the contributing factors to homelessness were:

- 74 (37%) not enough income for housing
- 62 (31%) addiction/substance use issue
- 30 (15%) experienced one or more forms of abuse from:
 - 17 partner/spouse
 - 13 parent/guardian
 - 2 child
 - 9 undisclosed

- 42 (22%) conflict with landlord
- 41 (21%) mental health issue
- 31 (16%) conflict with spouse/partner
- 29 (15%) unfit/unsafe housing conditions
- 26 (13%) physical health issue
- 23 (12%) conflict with parent/guardian
- 23 (12%) conflict with 'other'
- 22 (11%) death or departure of family member
- 19 (10%) experienced discrimination
- 16 (8%) complaint (e.g. pets/noise/damage)
- 13 (7%) incarceration (jail or prison)
- 12 (6%) hospitalization or treatment program
- 9 (5%) building sold or renovated
- 5 (3%) left the community
- 3 (2%) place not physically accessible
- 2 (1%) owner moved in
- 1 (<1%) rent supplement expired

Was housing loss related to the COVID-19 pandemic?

Of the 185 respondents, 21 (11%) indicated that COVID-19 contributed to their housing loss.

Sheltered vs Unsheltered

Where did you stay last night?

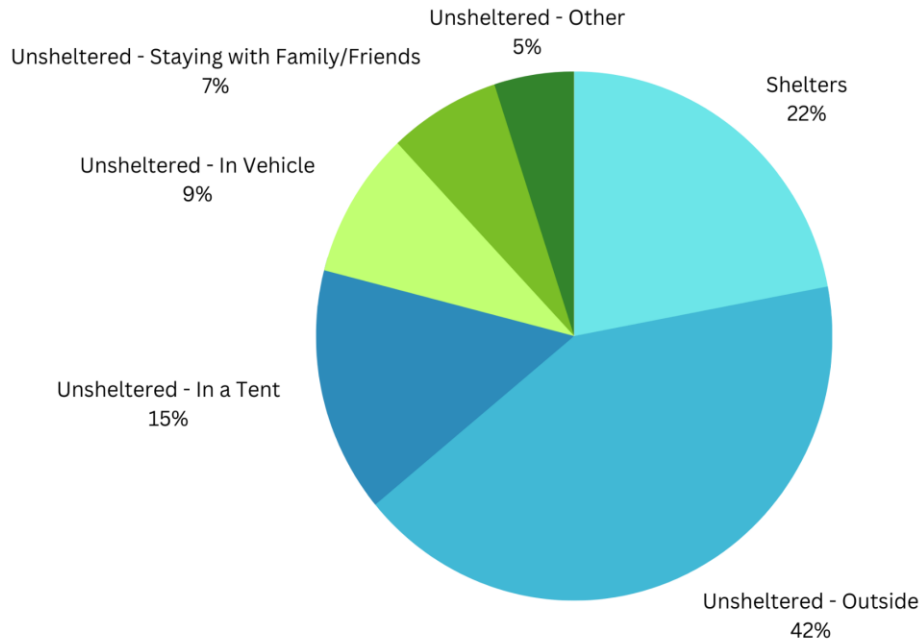
Sheltered:

- 48 people reported staying in shelters, this includes the 37 people surveyed at local shelters along with another 11 people surveyed the following day who reported going to shelters.
 - 4 individuals were identified at the Sobering and Assessment Centre, 9 at Charlotte's Place Women's Shelter, 4 at Somenos Transitional House, 6 at the Ladysmith Shelter, and 13 at Warmland House Shelter.
 - A total of 53 beds are available on an average night in the Cowichan Valley, including 12 beds at Charlotte's Place Women's Shelter, 6 beds at Somenos Transition House, 19 beds at Warmland House Shelter, 6 beds in the Sobering and Assessment Centre, and 10 beds in the Ladysmith Shelter.
 - Some of those staying in the shelters did not consent to being surveyed.

Unsheltered:

- 147 individuals (67%) reported sleeping rough the night of the count. This includes:
 - 94 individuals (42%) who slept outside
 - 33 individuals (15%) who slept in tents or makeshift shelters
 - 19 individuals (9%) who slept in vehicles
 - 3 individuals (1%) who slept in abandoned buildings
- 26 individuals (12%) reported sleeping indoors the night of the count. This includes:
 - 9 individuals (4%) who were couch surfing
 - 8 individuals (4%) who were temporarily staying with their parents and had nowhere else to go
 - 5 individuals (2%) who stayed in hotels
 - 4 individuals (2%) who stayed at clients places
- 54% of unsheltered respondents said they felt unsafe where they stayed the night of the count.

Where Surveyed Individuals Stayed Night Before PIT Count



How old are you?

All 48 sheltered individuals responded:

- 1 respondents (2%) were 24 and under
- 39 respondents (24%) were 25-34
- 50 respondents (31%) were 35-44
- 33 respondents (21%) were 45-54
- 19 respondents (12%) were 55-64
- 4 respondents (4%) were 65+

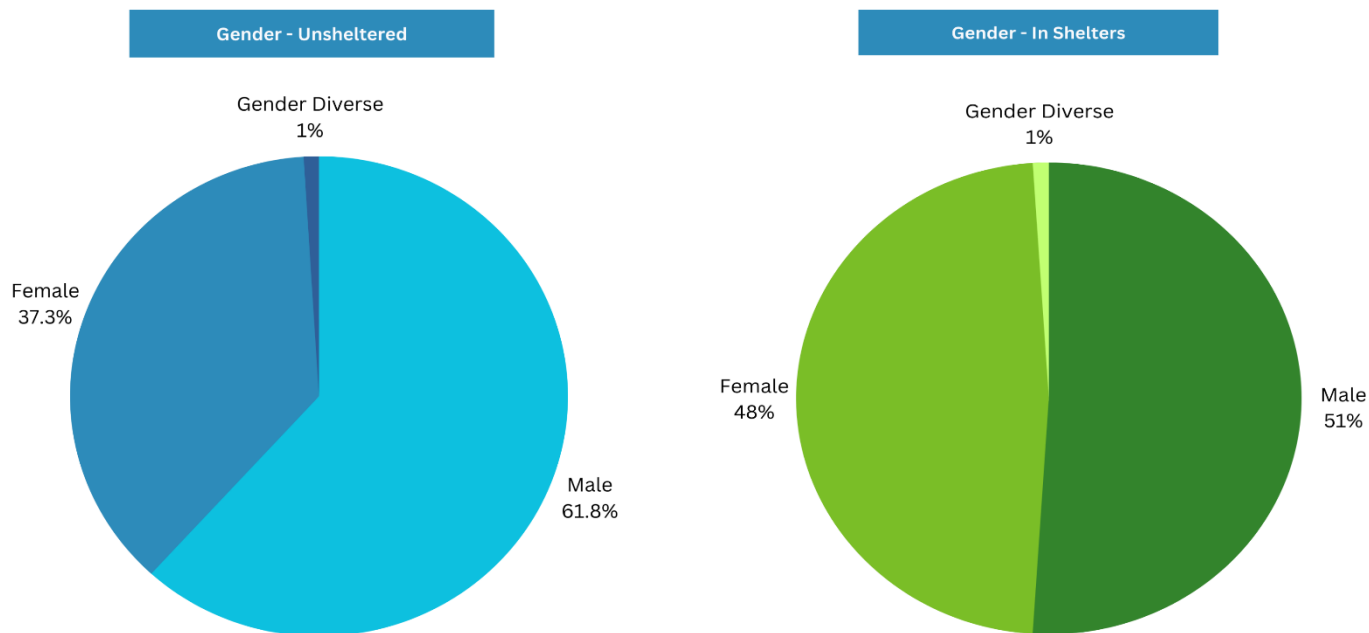
160 unsheltered individuals responded, 15 chose not to respond.

- 13 respondents (8%) were 24 and under
- 39 respondents (24%) were 25-34
- 50 respondents (31%) were 35-44
- 33 respondents (21%) were 45-54
- 19 respondents (12%) were 55-64
- 2 respondents (1%) were 65+

Homelessness and Gender

Cowichan Women Against Violence provides 18 beds specifically for women between Charlotte’s Place Women’s shelter and Somenos Transition House. Because of this, women were more likely than men to find a shelter bed.

- 21 of the 48 respondents (44%) who stayed in shelters identified as women
- 60 of the 169 respondents (36%) who were unsheltered identified as women
- 25 of the 48 respondents (52%) who stayed in shelters identified as male
- 107 of the 169 respondents (63%) who were unsheltered identified as male
- 2 of the 48 respondents (4%) who stayed in shelters identified as gender diverse
 - 1 identified with multiple genders, 1 didn’t identify with gender at all
- 2 of the 169 respondents (1%) who were unsheltered identified as gender diverse
 - 1 identified as agender, 1 identified with multiple genders



PROFILES

To protect privacy, profiles are a compilation of factors often experienced by people within this demographic.

Man Sleeping Rough

Rick moved to Lake Cowichan from Victoria when his parents divorced when he was 12 years old. He found the move isolating and struggled with anxiety and depression. As a teen, Rick consumed drugs and alcohol at parties. He dropped out of school shortly before he began the 12th grade and moved to Fort McMurray where found a camp job. Rick continued to drink and use drugs on weekends without much issue, he was even able to save up a down payment for a house and had begun house searching. When the COVID 19 pandemic began, Rick was laid off and began collecting CERB, he moved back to Lake Cowichan to live with his mom while he waited to go back to work. With more free time on his hands, he began drinking and using drugs more frequently. The pandemic made him feel very isolated and the depression he struggled with as a teenager started affecting him again. Rick started dating Sam, who he drank and used drugs with daily. Sam moved in with Rick and his mom however there was conflict between Sam and Rick's mom to do with their increasing drug use. This led Rick and Sam to be kicked out of his mom's house. They stayed in the Duncan motel for a month until Rick ran out of savings, and they started sleeping in Rick's truck. At this time, CERB ended, and Rick was unable to go back to work due to his substance use issues. He began collecting income assistance. Rick's truck then broke down while street parked and was towed. As they couldn't afford the tow fee, they began sleeping rough on the streets of Duncan. Rick and Sam have been living outside for over a year. They avoid sleeping at the shelter as they don't allow couples to sleep together. They do use the shelter on occasion for showers and laundry. In the Spring and Summer, they camp near the river however come into town and sleep on the street when the weather gets cold and the river floods. Recently Rick began working as a peer worker at the Wellness and Recovery Centre, although he doesn't make much, working gives him purpose and makes it easier for him to stay on track. When asked about barriers to accessing services Rick shared that he has experienced stigma when looking for housing and work.



Artwork by Percy Nathaniel Modeste

Senior

Kurt is a 65-year-old who has lived in the Cowichan Valley for 30 years. He has three adult children who live in different communities and visit him occasionally. Three years ago, when Kurt was 62, he and his wife of 40 years left him. They sold their family home and paid off their debt. He moved into a small one bedroom in a building downtown Duncan. Shortly after the move, Kurt had a stroke that stopped him from working. At this time Kurt began struggling with depression and had a hard time leaving his apartment so was unable to return to work as he recovered from his stroke. When Kurt's apartment building had a fire two years ago, he was unable to find an apartment that he could afford on long-term disability. When he was no longer able to afford to stay in a hotel, he arrived at Warmland shelter. He intended to only stay at Warmland for a short time while he continued to save to afford an apartment. However, without a place to prepare food or store his things, along with the odd hotel stay when he was unable to get a shelter bed, Kurt found it impossible to save money. Kurt has been on the housing waitlist since he arrived on the street, however he has yet to be offered an apartment. Now that Kurt is 65, his income has increased as he began receiving a pension. He has been applying for apartments through Facebook and on property management websites. Stigma is now his biggest challenge as he is often asked for his housing history and recent references.

Hidden Homelessness

Hidden homelessness refers to the population who “live temporarily with others but without guarantee of continued residency or immediate prospects for accessing permanent housing.”³ Although those experiencing hidden homelessness were counted, it is recognized that it was a vast undercount. The information gathered can be used to better understand the needs of those experiencing hidden homelessness.

³ Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. (n.d.). *Hidden homelessness*. Homeless Hub. <https://www.homelesshub.ca/about-homelessness/population-specific/hidden-homelessness>

Profile - Youth Out of Care

Matthew is a 21-year-old man, he is a Cowichan Tribes member who was born in the Cowichan Valley and has never been off Vancouver Island. As a child, his grandpa taught him how to carve, which is something he still enjoys. Matthew was diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder as a child and found school challenging because of his learning disability. Matthew was put into the foster system at 12 years old. He was mistreated by his caregiver and missed his parents. He ran away for the first time at 15 years old. Since then, he has been on and off the street, this is also the time he stopped attending school. It has been challenging for Matthew to find long term accommodations, he has bounced between sleeping on friends couches and spending the occasional night outside. When he was 16 he was staying with an older friend who offered him crystal meth. Not long after he tried it, Matthew was using crystal meth and heroin daily. He has been taken to hospital three times this year due to overdoses. Matthew was surveyed at the Overdose Prevention Site where he goes daily to use drugs and to meet with his pharmacist for his safe supply. When asked what barriers he has faced when accessing services, Matthew described challenges with transportation and not knowing what services are available. In the future, Matthew hopes to go back to school to get his GED, he then would like to pursue his artwork and carving.



Artwork by Tayton Joe

Profile - Residential School Survivor

As a member of the Penelakut Tribe, Doreen grew up on Penelakut island with her mother who was a single mother. As a child she attended the Kuper Island Indian Residential School, the same residential school that her mother attended. Doreen, who is now 56 years old, continues to struggle with PTSD and depression which she attributes to her experiences at school. She moved to the Cowichan Valley when she was 20 and met the father of her two adult children. While her kids were young, Doreen went to school to be a health care assistant. She worked until the COVID pandemic hit. Both her and her husband contracted COVID and sadly her husband died. After her husband's death her mental health issues worsened and she didn't return to work. She applied for Disability Assistance and was living alone in her home until she had a conflict with her landlord due to safety issues that weren't being addressed. Two years ago she was kicked out and stayed for a short time with her family. Because of the stress of her situation, Doreen began drinking more frequently, this led to more conflict with her mother who eventually kicked her out as well. Doreen usually camps with friends along the river. Occasionally she stays at Warmland shelter when the weather gets bad, but she prefers to camp as she has a hard time sleeping in a room full of people. Most mornings Doreen goes to the Breakfast Club at the House of Friendship to get food and to talk to the workers. She is on the BC Housing Supportive Housing waitlist. She hopes to get her drinking under control because she would like to be a bigger part of her children's and grandchildren's lives.

Indigenous Homelessness

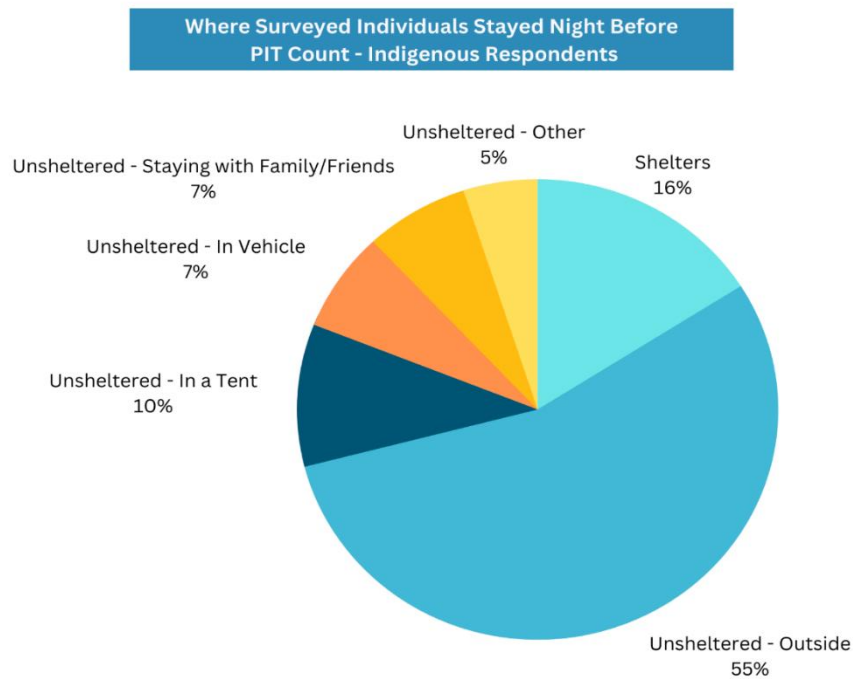
The definition of Indigenous homelessness is different from the common colonial definition. It is not defined as simply the lack of adequate, permanent, safe housing but also encompasses isolation from “the land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages and identities.”⁴

Because the survey was not designed around the definition of Indigenous homelessness, it is recognized that Indigenous people were undercounted, particularly those couch surfing.

Where did you stay last night?

Indigenous respondents were more likely than non-Indigenous respondents to have spent the night of the count outside and less likely to use shelters.

- 16 (16%) Indigenous respondents reported staying in shelters, 32 (28%) of respondents who identified as non-Indigenous stayed in shelters.
- 54 (55%) of Indigenous respondents reported staying outside, 37 (32%) of non-Indigenous respondents reported staying outside.

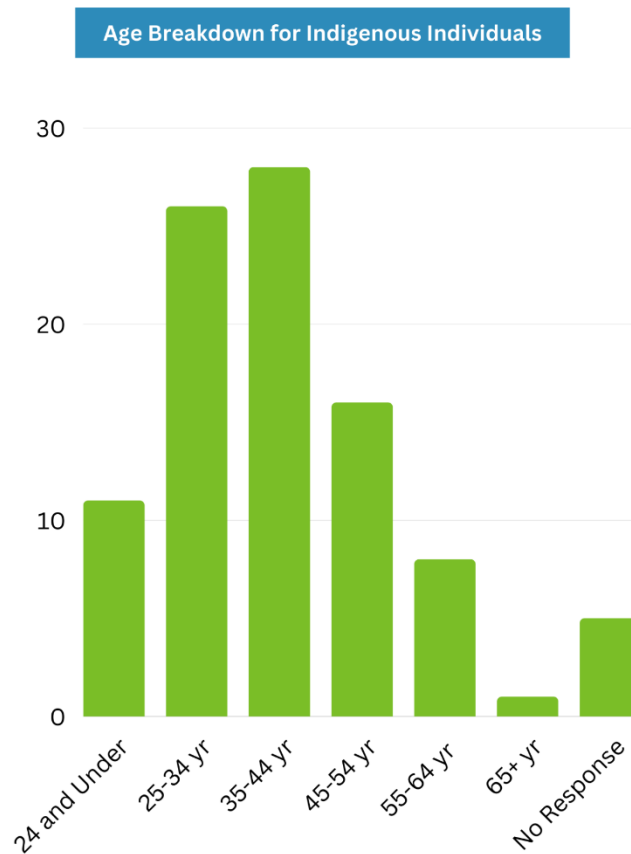


⁴ Thistle, J. (2017). *Indigenous definition of homelessness in Canada*. Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. <https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/COHIndigenousHomelessnessDefinition.pdf>

How old are you?

Of the 90 Indigenous respondents who shared their age:

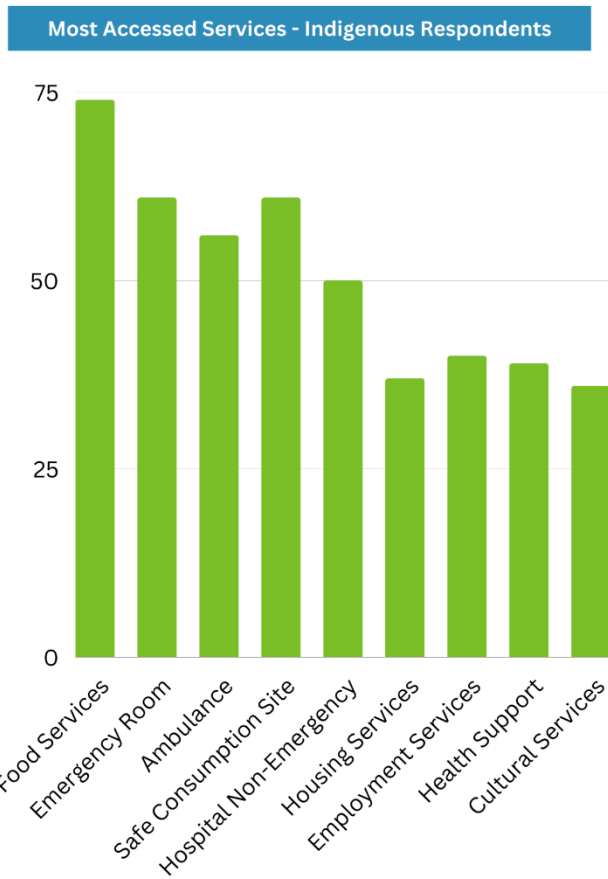
- 11 (12%) were 24 and under
 - Of the 109 non-Indigenous respondents who shared their ages, 3 (3%) were 24 and under
- 26 (29%) were 25-34
- 28 (31%) were 35-44
- 16 (18%) were 45-54
- 8(9%) were 55-64
- 1 (1%) was 65+



What services have you used in the past 12 months?

Of the 87 Indigenous respondents:

- 65 (74%) have used food services
- 53 (61%) have gone to the emergency room
- 49 (56%) have used an ambulance
- 53 (61%) have used a supervised consumption site
- 43 (50%) have gone to the hospital non-emergency
- 32 (37%) have used housing services
- 35 (40%) have used employment services
- 34 (39%) have used mental health services
- 31 (36%) have used cultural supports

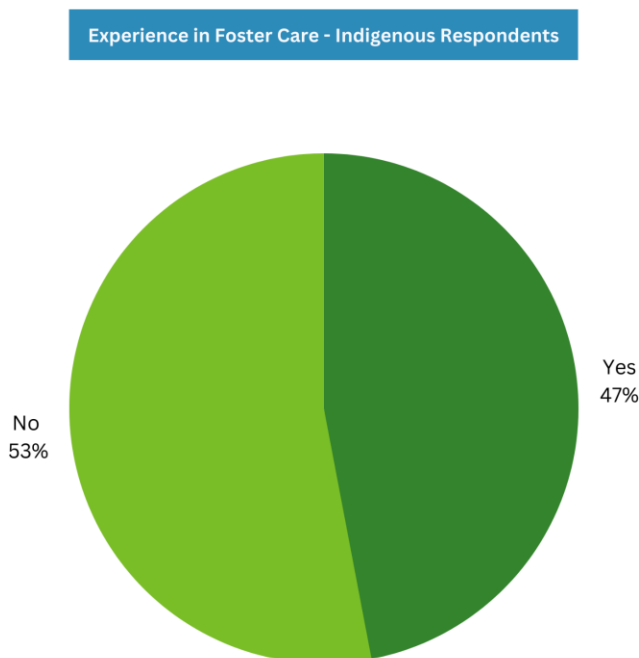


Indigenous People and Past Involvement in the Foster Care System

Indigenous people were overrepresented in the population of those experiencing homelessness that had been in foster care, youth group homes, and on Independent Living Agreements.

Of the 73 individuals who had been in the foster system, 43 were Indigenous. This means that 60% of those who had been in the foster system were Indigenous.

There were 92 Indigenous respondents who answered the question about foster care - 47% had been in the foster system compared to 27% of those who didn't identify as Indigenous.



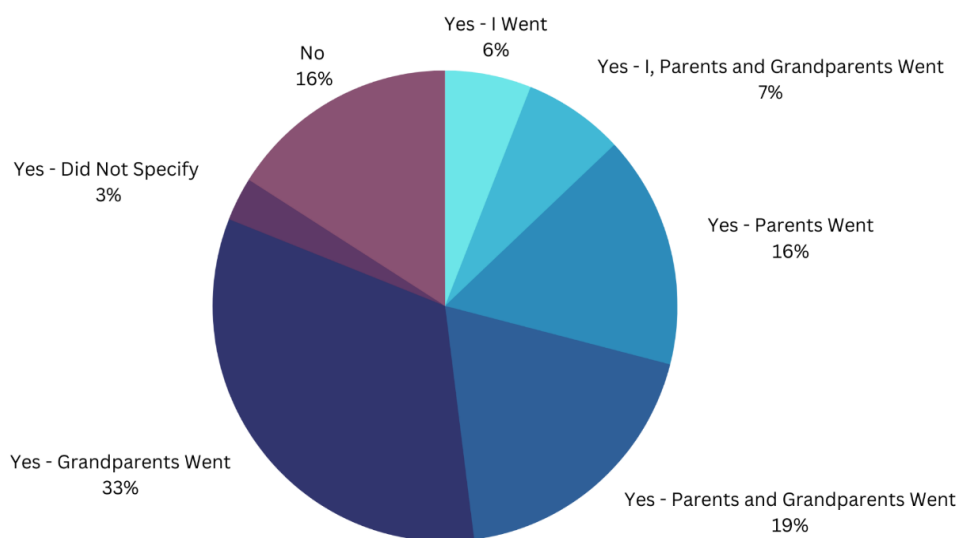
Family History of Residential School

Did you, your parents or grandparents ever attend residential school?

85 Indigenous respondents answered this question.

- 71 (84%) had a personal or family history or residential school, of them:
 - 5 (6%) went themselves
 - 6 (7%) went themselves, and their parents and grandparents went
 - 14 (16%) had one or more parents who went
 - 16 (19%) had one or more parent and grandparent who went
 - 28 (33%) had one or more grandparent who went
 - 2 (3%) didn't specify who went
 - 7% went themselves and their parents and grandparents also went
- 14 (16%) reported having no family history of residential school

Personal or Family History in Residential School from Indigenous Respondents



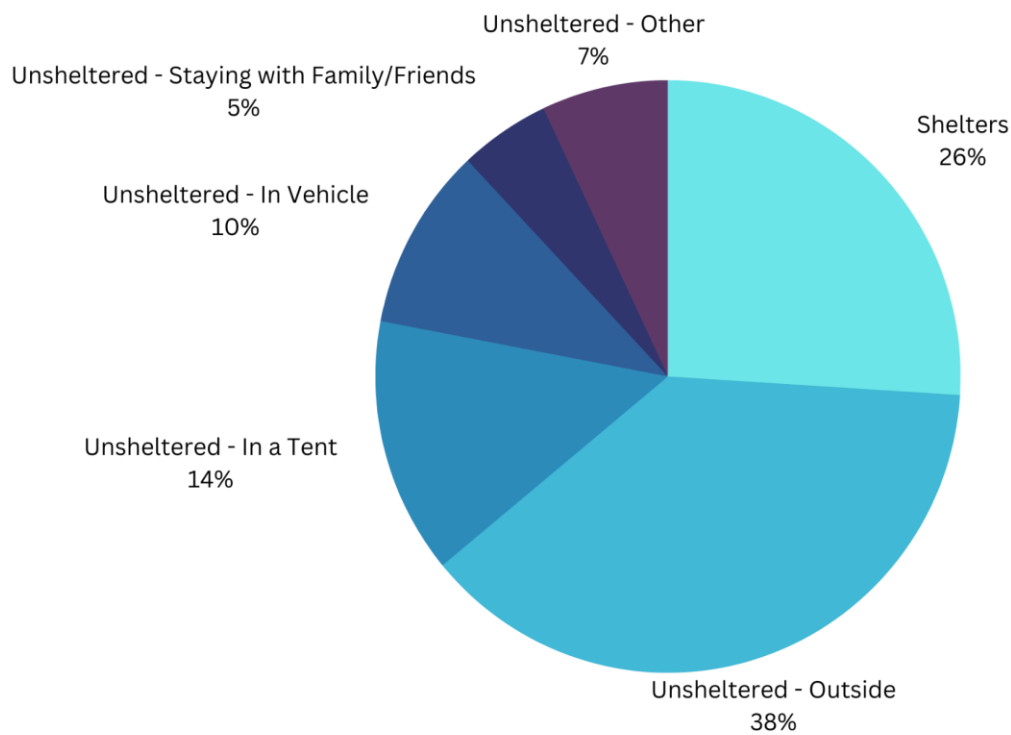
WOMEN AND HOMELESSNESS

216 respondents responded to the question about gender and 7 chose not to respond.

Of the 216 responses:

- 81 (38%) identified as women
- 3 (1%) identified as gender diverse
- 132 (61%) identified as male

**Where Surveyed Individuals Stayed Night Before PIT Count
- Female Identified Respondents**



Women and Past Involvement in the Foster Care System

Women represented 38 of the 73 respondents (52%) who had been in the foster system. This is alarming as women made up only 38% of the unhoused population.

Profile - Women Escaping Violence

Morgan is a 32-year-old single mother staying in transitional housing for women escaping violence with her young child. This is Morgan's first-time experiencing homelessness, and she has been staying at the shelter for six weeks. Morgan moved to the Cowichan Valley four months ago from Victoria to get away from her ex who was physically and emotionally abusive. Unfortunately, her ex found her, and she left her housing as she didn't feel that her and her child were safe. She has a 3-year-old golden retriever that is staying with a friend as she is unable to find a place to stay that allows pets. She is looking desperately for an apartment as she has already passed the maximum number of days one is meant to stay in the transition house. The staff have been helping her look for a place and have helped her access legal and food services. Because of her situation, Morgan had to leave her full-time job as an insurance broker. She gets money from her parents, child tax and is on Income Assistance. She is struggling because of the housing shortage and because she is unable to afford the increased rent prices on her own.



Artwork by M.J.