

Community Report

Point-in-Time Count



Kelowna, British Columbia

2020

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Abstract

The results of the 2020 PiT Count provide a better understanding of the current state of homelessness in Kelowna.

Background: Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy (formerly The Homelessness Partnering Strategy) provided support to over 60 communities across Canada to conduct a coordinated Point-in-Time (PiT) Count of the homeless population in 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, only 5 of the Federally funded communities were able to complete a PiT Count. Kelowna was one of the few communities that was able to complete a PiT Count in 2020. This is because Kelowna's count was scheduled on March 10th, 2020, which was early during the official PiT Count period of Mar 1 - Apr. 30. A Federal report will be published in 2021 with data from counts that took place in participating communities across 2020 and 2021. The count provides vital information to participating communities about their homeless population and contributes

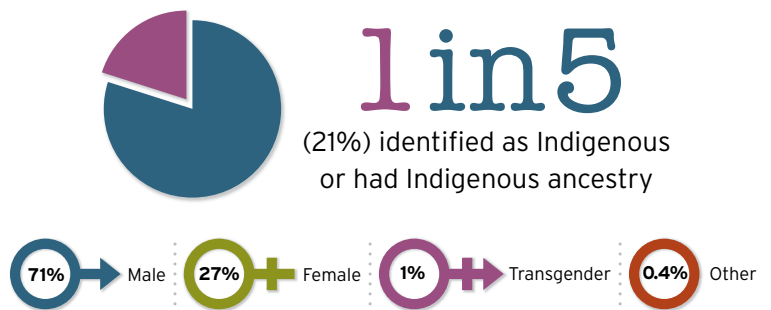
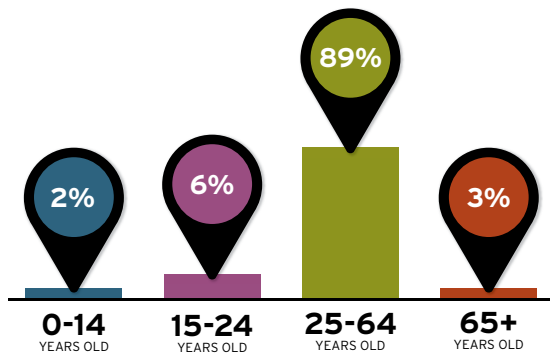
to the understanding of homelessness in Canada. A PiT Count aims to provide a snapshot of homelessness in a community by enumerating individuals who are, at a given time, staying in shelters or unsheltered locations (e.g. on the street, in parks). PiT Counts include a survey that provides communities with information on the characteristics of their homeless population (e.g. age, gender, veteran status, Indigenous identity). The 2020 PiT Count was the third Federally coordinated count, with previous counts taking place in 2016 and 2018. The 2020 PiT Count can be used to evaluate progress in reducing homelessness, tracking demographic changes and monitoring evolving service needs in the community.

Methodology: A community strategy was developed in consultation with local stakeholders and homeless serving agencies in 2016 and was reproduced in 2018 and 2020 to allow for comparisons between the counts. A list of sheltered and unsheltered locations where people experiencing homelessness can be found was compiled and categorized using a set of pre-determined guidelines and operational definitions. Teams of trained volunteers, led by experienced team leaders (including outreach workers from local homeless serving agencies), traveled through designated street zones, and into emergency shelters and interim housing locations to conduct the count and invite individuals to take part in the survey. Additional systems data (age, gender, Indigenous identity, accompanied children) for individuals staying in shelters and temporary system-supported housing was collected from 6 shelters, 11 interim housing locations, and 9 institutional care facilities.

Conclusion: The results of the 2020 PiT Count provide a better understanding of the current state of homelessness in Kelowna. These results may be used to provide direction and inform strategic community planning. Due to the reproducible methodology, the results from Kelowna's 2020 PiT Count are comparable to the results from the 2018 and 2016 Kelowna PiT Counts. For the first time, three consecutive homelessness enumerations can be compared for the city of Kelowna. These findings will continue to act as a benchmark to track changes in the homeless population over time and measure progress in addressing homelessness.

Point-in-Time Count

KELOWNA MARCH 10, 2020



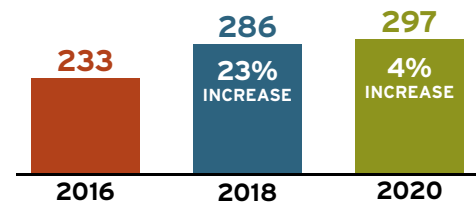
AT LEAST
297
PEOPLE



were experiencing homelessness in Kelowna

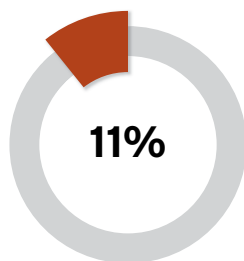
↑ **4% INCREASE** SINCE 2018

Number of People Experiencing Homelessness



84%

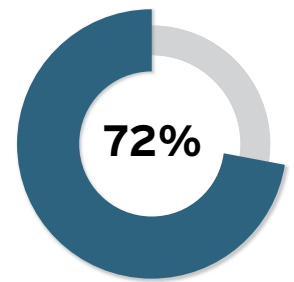
indicated that they had stayed in an emergency shelter within the past year



Episodically Homeless

experienced 3 or more episodes of homelessness within the past year

Average days homeless within the past year has increased from **192 days in 2016** to **241 days in 2018** to **267 days in 2020**



Chronically Homeless

homeless for 6 months or more within the past year

There were an additional **335** individuals living in temporary system-supported housing

Top 5 Reasons for Housing Loss

- Household Conflict
- Not Enough Income for Housing
- Substance Use Issues
- Conflict With Landlord
- Illness or Medical Condition

View the full 2020 Point-in-Time Count report online at centralokanaganfoundation.org

Thank you to all of the organizations, community partners, participants, and volunteers that contributed to the 2020 Point-in-Time Count.



Introduction

Homelessness is a pervasive issue in Canada. It is estimated that 235,000 Canadians experience homelessness each year¹. As the largest city in British Columbia's interior, Kelowna is no exception. With a population of approximately 142,146 residents, Kelowna's primary rental vacancy rate was estimated at 1.9% in fall 2018², which was significantly lower than the Canadian average rate of 2.4%³. According to the 2020 Demographia International Housing Affordability Survey⁴, Kelowna's housing market is ranked the 9th least affordable market in Canada.

Beyond the availability and affordability of housing, the causes and consequences of homelessness are complex and affect a diverse cross-section of the population. Many factors can contribute to an individual being homeless, including mental health, a lack or sudden loss of income, addiction, substance use, or domestic abuse, among other factors⁵. To prevent and reduce homelessness, it is important to understand who is being affected. As a designated community under Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy, Kelowna received funding to take part in the third nationally coordinated Point-in-Time Count between March 1 and April 30, 2020.

When completed in subsequent years using consistent methodology, a PiT Count can be used to track changes in the homeless population over time and measure progress in reducing homelessness in a community.

A Point-in-Time (PiT) Count is a method used to measure sheltered and unsheltered homelessness. It aims to enumerate individuals in a community who are, at a given time, staying in homeless shelters, temporary housing, or an unsheltered location (e.g. on the street or in parks). By doing this, it provides a snapshot of homelessness in a community. A PiT Count also includes a survey that collects information on the characteristics of the homeless population (e.g. age, gender, Indigenous identity). This information can be used by the community to gain a better understanding of the local context, support local planning, identify community priorities, and assist with service mapping. PiT Count data may also be used to increase public awareness and promote government engagement. When completed in subsequent years using consistent methodology, a PiT Count can be used to track changes in the homeless population over

time and measure progress in reducing homelessness in a community. Data collected by participating communities who are following national guidelines⁶ will contribute to a broader understanding of homelessness across Canada. However, it is important when comparing PiT counts to consider the contextual changes observed within the city between counts, such as the increase in overall population size and the opening of new shelters and interim

housing facilities. For example, the City of Kelowna has an increasing population so we can track the changes in the homeless population as a proportion of the overall population of Kelowna.

It is also important to consider the scope and limitations of the PiT Count and to interpret the findings carefully. For example, PiT Counts are limited in their ability to capture hidden homelessness (e.g. people who are “couch-surfing”). Further, by focusing on a single night, the count will not include some people who cycle in and out of homelessness. What a PiT Count can do is provide an estimate of how many people are homeless on a given night. The number of individuals enumerated in a PiT Count should be considered the minimum number of people experiencing homelessness in a community.

The two primary purposes of the Kelowna PiT Count are to (1) provide an enumeration, or count, of people experiencing absolute homelessness, and (2) through a survey, provide information on the characteristics of the homeless population.

Methodology

While following the national guidelines, a community strategy was developed to most accurately reflect the current state of homelessness in Kelowna.

A PiT Count Steering Committee, guided by the PiT Count Coordinator, was created to build on the local approach developed in 2016 and provide input throughout the implementation of the count^{7,8}. Sector representation on the committee included the RCMP, homelessness services, frontline shelter staff, mental health awareness and advocacy, the Indigenous community, people with lived experience, youth homelessness, and others. Six of the fourteen members returned from the 2018 PiT Count Steering Committee.

Criteria were determined, based on the local context, to identify locations where homeless individuals may be found. While following the national guidelines⁶, a community strategy was developed to reflect the current state of homelessness most accurately in Kelowna. It is of note that due to the demand for shelter beds in Kelowna, a temporary cold weather emergency shelter was operational between December 2019 and

Methodology

Mar 2020. In addition, organizations may fall in and out of the definition of interim housing between counts due to changes in operational practices.

Absolutely Homeless⁶. An individual is operationally defined as absolutely homeless if they are residing in an unsheltered location or accessing a homeless shelter. Unsheltered homelessness includes people who are sleeping in places unfit for human habitation, including the following locations: streets, alleys, parks and other public locations, transit stations, abandoned buildings, vehicles, ravines and other outdoor locations where people experiencing homelessness are known to sleep. One month prior to the count, a known-location strategy was used to compile a list of unsheltered locations frequented by homeless individuals. Feedback was provided by the PiT Count Steering Committee as well as other community partners, including municipal by-law, RCMP, and outreach service providers. Homeless shelters include emergency shelters (general and specific to men, women, youth, etc.), extreme weather shelters, and Violence Against Women (VAW) shelters.

Temporarily Housed Homeless⁹. An individual is operationally defined as temporarily housed if they are accessing system-supported (government or non-profit sector) interim housing or institutional care. Interim housing provides services beyond basic needs, offers residents more privacy, and emphasises participation and social engagement. Interim housing targets those who would benefit from structure, support, and skill-building prior to moving to long-term housing, with the ultimate goal of preventing a return to homelessness. Institutional care serves individuals who are provisionally accommodated in medical/mental health institutions, penal institutions, residential treatment, withdrawal management centres, or children's institutions/group homes but lack permanent housing upon release. This includes individuals who: a) were homeless prior to admittance and who have no plan for permanent accommodation after release; b) had housing prior to admittance, but lost their housing while in institutional care; or c) had housing prior to admittance, but cannot go back due to changes in their needs. Without adequate discharge planning and support, including arrangements for safe and reliable housing (and necessary aftercare or community-based services), there is a likelihood that these individuals may transition into homelessness following their release. For both interim and institutional care, locations were included if residency was guaranteed for three years or less.

Hidden Homeless¹⁰. An individual is operationally defined as experiencing hidden homelessness if they are living temporarily with others, but without guarantee of continued residency or immediate prospects for accessing permanent housing. These individuals are typically not paying rent, the duration of stay is unsustainable in the long term, and they do not have the means to secure their own permanent housing in the future. They differ from those who are staying with friends or family out of choice in anticipation of prearranged accommodation, whether in their current hometown or a new community. This living situation is understood by both parties to be temporary, and the assumption is that it will not become permanent.

Community Strategy

The Kelowna PiT Count was conducted on the evening of March 10th, 2020. The temperature high during the day was 4°C, with a low of -6°C. 75 volunteers were recruited from the School of Social Work, Southern Medical Program, and the School of Nursing at the University of British Columbia Okanagan campus, as well as the Nursing program at Okanagan College. The volunteers conducted surveys with individuals experiencing absolute homelessness and also conducted surveys in some interim housing locations. Additionally, 30 team leaders were recruited from local homeless serving agencies to support and lead the 75 volunteers during the count. Volunteers and team leaders were required to attend a three-hour training session where they were provided with detailed information on homelessness, survey administration, enumeration protocols, cultural awareness, and personal safety.

Teams consisting of three to five volunteers and one to two team leaders were assigned to a homeless shelter, unsheltered location, or interim facility depending on the density of the location. A total of 28 teams participated in the count including 14 unsheltered teams, six sheltered teams, six interim facility teams, one designated magnet event team at Foundry Kelowna, and one Interior Health Mobile Supervised Consumption Services RV team. It should be noted that the Richter Street Overnight Program team (Okanagan Boys and Girls Clubs) also hosted a youth magnet event at their location. The magnet events functioned to increase survey engagement among young people as they are generally considered to be a hard-to-reach population. Surveys were conducted between 6:00 pm and 10:00 pm to correspond with homeless shelter intake and reduce opportunities for duplication in the enumeration of people experiencing absolute homelessness. Unsheltered teams were given a map with detailed directions and highlighted points of interest, a tally sheet to report the number of observed homeless individuals, and surveys to be conducted. Volunteer teams were instructed to approach everyone that they encountered within their assigned zone. Teams entering a homeless shelter or interim facility conducted surveys only, and were not provided with a tally sheet, as the enumeration of the sheltered population was accomplished through the collection of systems data. Volunteers were provided with an emergency contact number, veteran resource cards, and Kelowna Community Resources Street Survival Guides listing local resources for people experiencing homelessness. KCR Street Survival Guides were offered to unsheltered individuals in crisis or immediate need. All participants that completed a survey were given a \$10 Tim Hortons Gift Card.

PiT COUNT



6:00pm - 10:00pm

March 10, 2020

75

volunteers

30

team leaders

Data Collection

To enumerate and collect demographic information about individuals experiencing homelessness, a mixed-methods design was used including tally sheets, survey data and systems data (Figure 1).

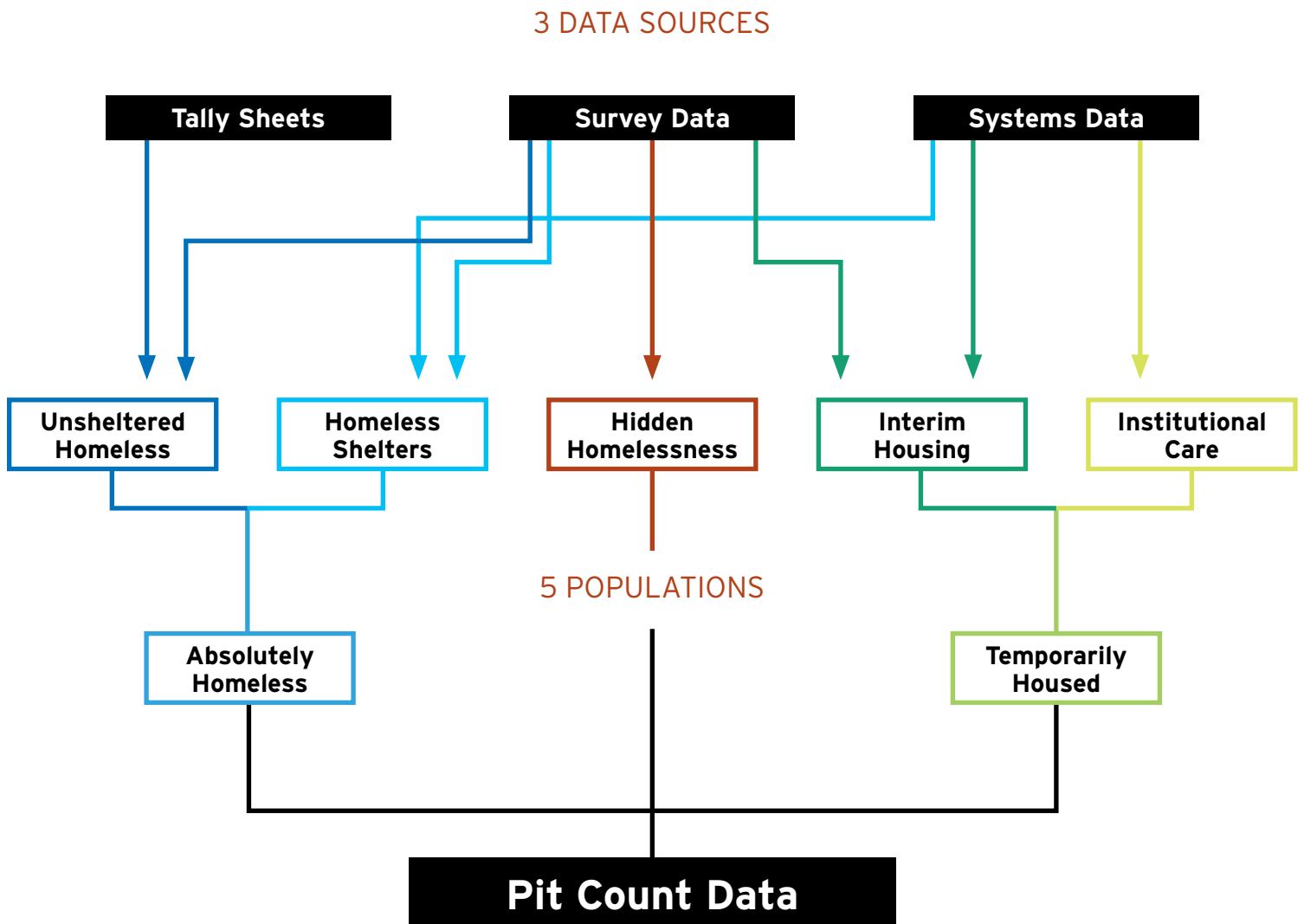


Figure 1. The PiT Count data collection strategy consisted of collecting 3 types of data sources from the 5 population groups defined.

Data Collection

Systems Data. Sheltered locations where homeless individuals may be residing, including homeless shelters, interim housing, and institutional care facilities, were contacted prior to the night of the count to obtain access to systems data for individuals residing at each location on the night of the count. Each organization received detailed instructions regarding how to report their records, including instructions on how to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of each client. Information was collected regarding the total number of clients residing at each location on the night of the count as well as demographic information including age, gender, whether they identified as an Indigenous person, and whether the individual was an accompanied child aged 18 or younger. Institutional care providers were asked to only provide information on temporarily housed clients, as previously defined, that would lack permanent housing upon release, including those that self-reported being homeless, have no fixed address, or discharge plan. Sheltered locations were also asked to provide data regarding their total capacity and the number of waitlisted individuals where applicable.

Survey Data. The survey consisted of three sections, including an introductory script, 4 screening questions, 15 core questions from Reaching Home and 1 additional question suggested by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH). Several core questions contained additional optional sub questions also taken from the optional questions suggested by COH. The introductory script introduced the volunteer and the purpose of the survey. Individuals were informed that the survey would take about 10-15 minutes to complete, that their participation was voluntary, that they may skip any question or stop the interview at any time, and that their responses would be anonymous. Screening questions were used to determine if an individual had previously taken the survey, was willing to participate, and was eligible to conduct the survey. Additional screening questions were added to identify and screen-in individuals experiencing hidden homelessness. Individuals were asked, “Where are you staying tonight?” If someone identified with a hidden homeless location (e.g. “someone else’s place”), the follow-up question was asked, “Do you have access to a permanent residence where you can safely stay as long as you want?” Depending on the responses to these questions, an individual’s eligibility was determined. Survey questions included participants’ age, gender, Indigenous identity, number of family members present, military or RCMP service, number of homeless episodes, amount of time being homeless, age of first homeless episode, health challenges, reasons for housing loss, sources of income, foster care/group home history, and challenges faced while trying to secure housing. A complete list of the survey questions and potential responses are available online at www.centralokanaganfoundation.org.

Tally Sheets. Volunteer teams surveying in unsheltered locations used tally sheets to record individuals that did not participate in the survey. Tally sheets were used to record when an individual was not surveyed. Volunteers reported the reason the person was not surveyed (whether they declined, already responded, or were observed only). For individuals that were observed as homeless, volunteers indicated the reasons why they perceived the individual to be homeless (e.g. sleeping on bench with belongings).

Findings

Systems data from social agencies was used to collect information regarding an individual's age, gender, whether they identified as an Indigenous person or were an accompanied child. Data was received from a total of 6 shelters (Table 1), 11 system-supported interim housing locations (Table 2), and 9 institutional care locations (Table 3). A total of 225 individuals were identified as staying in a homeless shelter on the night of the count. An additional 253 individuals were identified as residing in interim housing and 82 individuals residing in institutional care. Volunteer teams surveying unsheltered locations identified 72 individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness during the night of the count, with 2 additional individuals unsure of where they were spending the night. A total of 249 surveys were completed, including 119 with people staying in shelters and 31 with people staying in unsheltered locations. This represents a response rate of 53% of the sheltered homeless population and 43% of the identified unsheltered homeless population. In addition, 91 surveys were completed by individuals in interim housing, six surveys were completed by individuals experiencing hidden homelessness and two surveys were completed by individuals who didn't know where they were staying the night.

| HOMELESS SHELTERS | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| | Location (Organization) | Count | Total Capacity ¹ | Survey Data | Systems Data |
| 1 | Alexandra Gardner Shelter (NOW Canada) | 18 | 20+ | x | x |
| 2 | Cornerstone (John Howard Society) | 78 | 80+ | x | x |
| 3 | Welcome Inn | 40 | 40 | x | x |
| 4 | Kelowna's Gospel Mission | 76 | 76 | x | x |
| 5 | Kelowna Women's Shelter | 13 | 16+ | x | x |
| 6 | Youth Shelter (Okanagan Boys and Girls Clubs) | 0 | 10+ | n/a | n/a |
| Total | | 225 | 242+ | | |

Table 1. Client enumeration, total capacity, and data collection strategy (survey or systems data) for local homeless shelters.

¹ The total capacity of the homeless shelter may be expanded by providing sleeping mats or additional cots, denoted by the (+) symbol.

6

homeless shelters

11

interim housing locations

9

institutional care providers

Findings

| INTERIM HOUSING | | | | | |
|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|-------------|--------------|
| | Location (Organization) | Count ¹ | Total Capacity | Survey Data | Systems Data |
| 1 | 1043 Harvey House (John Howard Society) | 5 | 9 | | x |
| 2 | Cardington Apartments (John Howard Society) | 28 | 30 | x | x |
| 3 | Fuller Place Bridge to Housing (John Howard Society) | 37 | 37 | x | x |
| 4 | Essentials Safe Housing (NOW Canada) | 11 | 12 | x | x |
| 5 | Family Den (Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society) | 13 | 8 | | x |
| 6 | Freedom's Door | 63 | 63 | x | x |
| 7 | Gateway (Okanagan Boys and Girls Clubs) | 1 | 2 | x | x |
| 8 | Penny Lane (Okanagan Boys and Girls Clubs) | 3 | 6 | x | x |
| 9 | Karis Support Society | 39 | 36 | x | x |
| 10 | Ozanam House (Society of St. Vincent de Paul) | 15 | 18 | | x |
| 11 | Francis Avenue & Gordon Drive (Society of Hope) | 38 | 38 | | x |
| Total | | 253 | 259 | | |

Table 2. Client enumeration, total capacity, and data collection strategy (survey or systems data) for local interim housing locations.

¹ Some counts include infants or young children who may not be factored into the Total Capacity for a facility.

| INSTITUTIONAL CARE | | | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|
| | Location (Organization) | Count | Survey Data | Systems Data |
| 1 | Cara Centre | 6 | | x |
| 2 | Coral House (Okanagan Mental Health Society) | 5 | | x |
| 3 | Florin House | 8 | | x |
| 4 | Holding Cells (RCMP) | 8 | | x |
| 5 | Kelowna General Hospital | 25 | | x |
| 6 | Bridgeway Intensive Residential Treatment (The Bridge Youth and Family Services) | 14 | | x |
| 7 | Adult Withdrawal Management (The Bridge Youth and Family Services) | 7 | | x |
| 8 | Youth Withdrawal Management (The Bridge Youth and Family Services) | 0 | | x |
| 9 | Supported Recovery (The Bridge Youth and Family Services) | 9 | | x |
| Total | | 82 | | |

Table 3. Client enumeration (of individuals that would lack permanent housing upon release) and data collection strategy (survey or systems data) for local institutional care providers.

Absolutely Homeless

To reflect the most accurate enumeration of the absolutely homeless population in Kelowna, a combination of homeless shelter systems data (n=225), unsheltered survey data (n=31), and volunteer-observed homelessness (n=41) were used. A total of 297 individuals were identified as being absolutely homeless, with 225 (76%) experiencing sheltered homelessness, 72 (24%) experiencing unsheltered homelessness. There were also two additional individuals experiencing absolute homelessness but staying in unknown locations. These individuals could not be added to the tally as they may be accessing a shelter and thus be double counted. However, their survey responses were used in survey question analysis for understanding service needs.

Systems data and unsheltered survey data were used to most accurately reflect the age and gender of this population, as well as the percentage of the population who identify as Indigenous (Table 4). The absolutely homeless population had a mean age of 40 years, with the majority being male (71%), indicating no Indigenous identity (79%), and falling between the ages of 25-64 years (89%). Notably, there were a higher number of women indicating Indigenous Identity (25%) when compared to their male counterparts (19%). Figure 2 depicts the percentage distribution of gender by age ranges.

| ABSOLUTE HOMELESSNESS DEMOGRAPHICS | n=256 |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Age (Mean, Standard Deviation) | 40 years (±13) |
| Age Range (%) | |
| 0-14 years | 2 |
| 15-24 years ¹ | 6 |
| 25-64 years | 89 |
| 65+ years | 3 |
| Gender (%) | |
| Male | 71 |
| Female | 27 |
| Transgender | 1 |
| Other | 0.4 ² |
| Indigenous Identity (%) | |
| Non-Indigenous | 79 |
| First Nations | 14 |
| Métis | 4 |
| Non-Status / Indigenous Ancestry | 1 |
| Inuit | 1 |

Table 4. Age, gender, and Indigenous Identity of individuals experiencing absolute homelessness. Rounding may cause some categories reporting (%) not to add to 100%.

¹ Some local youth homelessness services organizations define youth as people aged 12-24. The percentage of people who are experiencing absolute homelessness in this category is 7%.

² Decimal place added in this case to prevent 0% representation (n=1 individual).

Absolutely Homeless

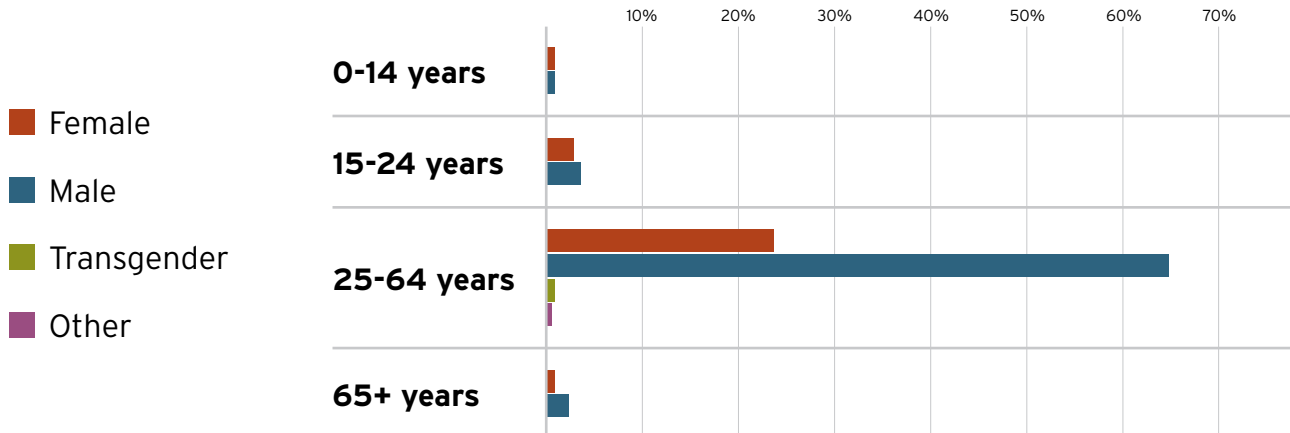


Figure 2. Gender distribution (%) by age range of individuals experiencing absolute homelessness.

A total of 152 surveys were completed with individuals that were identified as being absolutely homeless (Table 5). 89% indicated that they were not with any family members, whereas 11% identified being with a family member on the night of the count. 84% indicated that they had stayed in an emergency shelter within the past year. 7% indicated that they had served in the Canadian Military and none indicated service in the RCMP. 1% indicated they were new immigrants or refugees that had moved to Canada within the past five years. The average number of days spent homeless within the last year was 267 days, ranging from 12 days to 365 days. 72% of participants were identified as being chronically homeless as a result of being homeless for six months or more within the past year. The average number of homeless episodes within the past year was 1.4 times, ranging from one (current episode) to seven episodes. 11% of participants were identified as being episodically homeless as a result of experiencing three or more separate episodes of homelessness within the past year. 38% of those experiencing absolute homelessness identified that they had been in foster care and/or a group home. Of those who had been in foster care and/or a group home, 50% became homeless within one year of leaving care. 88% of participants identified their sexual orientation as straight, 8% as bisexual, 2% as asexual, 1% as gay, 1% as queer, and 1% as other. The absolutely homeless population had a mean age of 28 years when they experienced homelessness for the first time, with 48% of those experiencing absolute homelessness before the age of 25.

In 2020 participants were asked for the first time to identify health challenges they may be facing. 79% of individuals reported substance use issues, with 61% reporting mental health issues, 45% reporting a learning disability or cognitive limitation, 44% reporting an illness or medical condition, and 40% a physical disability. They were also asked if they identified as having an acquired brain injury, with 37% responding 'yes'. In addition, participants were asked about their service needs. The highest reported service needs were related to addiction or substance abuse, which accounted for 26% of answers, and mental health, which accounted for 23% of answers. Other service needs included serious/ongoing medical condition (14%), physical disability (11%), learning disability (10%), and brain injury (10%), none of the above (5%), and pregnancy (1%).

Absolutely Homeless

| ABSOLUTE HOMELESSNESS CHARACTERISTICS | n=152 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Staying with Family Members (%) | |
| Yes | 11 |
| No | 89 |
| Have Used Emergency Shelter in Past Year (%) | |
| Yes | 84 |
| No | 16 |
| Service (%) | |
| Military | 7 |
| RCMP | 0 |
| No Service | 93 |
| Immigrant or Refugee in Past Five Years (%) | |
| Yes | 1 |
| No | 99 |
| Days Homeless Within Past Year (Mean, Standard Deviation) | 267 days (± 128) |
| Length of Time Homeless Within Past Year (%) | |
| 0-2 Months | 12 |
| 3-5 Months | 16 |
| 6-12 Months | 72 |
| Homeless Episodes Within the Past Year (Mean, Standard Deviation) | 1.4 episodes (± 1.0) |
| Number of Times Homeless Within Past Year (%) | |
| 1 Time (current episode) | 75 |
| 2 Times | 13 |
| 3 or more Times | 11 |
| Been in Foster Care and/or Group Home (%) | |
| Yes | 38 |
| No | 62 |
| Became Homeless Within 1 Year of Leaving Foster Care/Group Home (%) | |
| Yes | 50 |
| No | 50 |
| Sexual Orientation (%) | |
| Straight | 88 |
| Bisexual | 8 |
| Asexual | 2 |
| Queer | 1 |
| Gay | 1 |
| Other | 1 |

Table 5. Characteristics of individuals experiencing absolute homelessness. Rounding may cause some categories reporting (%) not to add to 100%.

Absolutely Homeless

Table 5. Continued

| | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|----|
| 1st Homelessness Experience (Mean, Standard Deviation) | 28 years (± 14.6) | |
| 1st Homelessness Experience (%) | | |
| 0-14 years | 18 | |
| 15-24 years | 31 | |
| 25-64 years | 51 | |
| 65+ years | 1 | |
| Health Challenges (%) | Yes | No |
| Substance Use Issue | 79 | 21 |
| Mental Health Issue | 61 | 39 |
| Learning Disability or Cognitive Limitation | 45 | 55 |
| Illness or Medical Condition | 44 | 56 |
| Physical Disability | 40 | 60 |
| Acquired Brain Injury (%) | Yes | No |
| | 37 | 63 |
| Service Needs (%) ¹ | | |
| Addiction or Substance Abuse | 26 | |
| Mental Health (Counselling, Treatment etc.) | 23 | |
| Serious/Ongoing Medical Condition | 14 | |
| Physical Disability | 11 | |
| Learning Disability | 10 | |
| Brain Injury | 10 | |
| None of the Above | 5 | |
| Pregnancy | 1 | |

Participants were asked, “What happened that caused you to lose your housing most recently?”, “How long ago did that happen (that you lost your housing most recently?)”, “What are your sources of income?” and “What challenges or problems have you experienced when trying to find housing?” The highest reported reason for housing loss was household conflict (21%), which includes spouse/partner conflict, parent/guardian conflict and roommate conflict, followed by not enough income for housing (18%) and substance use issue (13%). 55% of people responded that they lost their housing within the past year, with 7% of those being within the last month. 21% responded that they lost their housing between one to three years ago, 13% between three to five years ago, 10% more than five years ago, with 1% never having had stable housing. The highest reported source of income was from welfare/social assistance (28%), followed by disability benefits (21%), and informal income (e.g. bottle returns, panhandling) (19%). The highest reported challenge when trying to find housing was rents too high (20%), followed by low income (18%), addiction (10%), and discrimination (9%).

¹ Service Needs is a multi-response question where respondents could select more than one response. Response percentages shown represent highest to lowest reported answer frequency (e.g., x=10 means that x accounted for 10% of all responses).

Absolutely Homeless

| ABSOLUTE HOMELESSNESS CHARACTERISTICS | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Reason For Housing Loss (%)¹ | |
| Household Conflict ² | 21 |
| Not Enough Income for Housing | 18 |
| Substance Use Issue | 13 |
| Conflict with Landlord | 9 |
| Illness or Medical Condition | 7 |
| Incarceration (jail or prison) | 4 |
| Building Sold or Renovated | 4 |
| Unforeseen Event (e.g. fire or flood) | 3 |
| Conflict With: Other | 2 |
| Other ³ | 2 |
| Unfit/Unsafe Housing Condition | 2 |
| Experienced Abuse by Spouse/Partner | 2 |
| Experienced Abuse by Other | 2 |
| Hospitalization or Treatment Program | 2 |
| Left the Community/Relocated | 1 |
| Experienced Discrimination | 1 |
| Complaint (e.g. pets/noise/damage) | 1 |
| Never Had Stable Housing | 1 |
| Theft of Property | 0.5 |
| Addition to Family (Too Many People in Housing) | 0.5 |
| How Long Ago Did You Lose Your Housing Most Recently? (%) | |
| Less than 1 month ago | 7 |
| 1 month to 1 year ago | 48 |
| 1(+) ⁴ to 3 years ago | 21 |
| 3(+) to 5 years ago | 13 |
| More than 5 years ago | 10 |
| Never Had Stable Housing | 1 |
| Source of Income (%)¹ | |
| Welfare/Social Assistance | 28 |
| Disability Benefit | 21 |
| Informal Income Sources (e.g. bottle returns, panhandling) | 19 |
| Employment | 10 |
| GST/HST Refund | 7 |
| Money from Family/Friends | 4 |
| No Income | 4 |
| Seniors Benefits | 2 |

Absolutely Homeless

| Source of Income (%) Continued | |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Employment Insurance | 1 |
| Child and Family Tax Benefits | 1 |
| Income from Deceased Family Members/Inheritance | 1 |
| Other ⁵ | 1 |
| Barriers to Housing (%) ¹ | |
| Rents Too High | 20 |
| Low Income | 18 |
| Addiction | 10 |
| Discrimination | 9 |
| No Income Assistance | 8 |
| Mental Health Issues | 5 |
| Poor Housing Conditions | 5 |
| Family Breakdown/Conflict | 5 |
| Criminal History | 4 |
| Health/Disability Issues | 3 |
| Domestic Violence | 2 |
| Pets | 2 |
| Don't Want Housing | 2 |
| Children | 1 |
| No References | 1 |
| Lack of Housing Availability | 1 |
| Other ⁶ | 1 |
| Bad/No Credit | 1 |
| Currently on Waitlist | 1 |
| Transportation | 1 |
| Roommates/Problems with Shared Housing | 0.4 |
| No Barrier | 0.2 |

Table 6. Survey responses to the questions, “What happened that caused you to lose your housing most recently?”, “How long ago did that happen (that you lost your housing most recently)?”, “What are your sources of income?” and “What challenges or problems have you experienced when trying to find housing?” Note: Multiple responses were accepted. Rounding may cause some categories reporting (%) not to add to 100%.

1 Reason for Housing Loss (%)⁺, Source of Income (%)⁺, and Barriers to Housing (%)⁺ are multi-response questions where respondents could select more than one response. Response percentages shown represent highest to lowest reported answer frequency (e.g., x=10 means that x accounted for 10% of all responses).

2 Household conflict included: spouse/partner (11%), roommates (8%) and parent/guardian (2%).

3 Other answer options included: work, medication, loss of personal documents, boredom.

4 1(+) indicates >1 year and so forth.

5 Other answer options included: lotto, settlement from an accident

6 Other answer options included: too many criteria, landlord advancing on wife, haven't looked, lack of education

Absolutely Homeless

The question “How long have you been in Kelowna?” is reported as the number of people that moved to Kelowna in the past year to match the question asked in 2016 and 2018. Two additional follow-up questions were asked in 2018 and 2020: “What is the main reason you came to Kelowna?” and “Where did you live before you came here?” The highest reported reasons for moving to Kelowna were family moved here (15%) and employment (seeking) (15%), followed by to access services and supports (13%) and to visit friends and family (13%). Of those that identified that they had moved to Kelowna within the past year, their answers as to where they moved from varied. Communities were spread throughout Canada with the majority being within British Columbia. This was similar to the answers provided to the question “Which Indigenous community are you from?” where those that identified a community were from a wide range of communities across British Columbia and the rest of Canada, with some coming from the USA (Table 12).

| ABSOLUTE HOMELESSNESS CHARACTERISTICS | |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Moved to Kelowna Within Past Year (%) | |
| No | 70 |
| Yes | 30 |
| What is The Main Reason You Came to Kelowna? (%) | Within Past Year (N=45) |
| Family Moved Here | 15 |
| Employment (seeking) | 15 |
| To Access Services and Supports | 13 |
| Visit Friends/Family | 13 |
| Access Emergency Shelter | 10 |
| Weather/Climate | 10 |
| Unforeseen Event (e.g. car broke down) | 8 |
| Employment (secured) | 5 |
| Fear for Safety | 3 |
| Recreation/Shopping | 3 |
| Other | 3 |
| To Start Over/To Have a Better Life | 3 |
| To Get Away from Previous Place | 3 |

| Where Did You Live Before You Came Here? | |
|------------------------------------------|------------------|
| British Columbia | # of Respondents |
| Abbotsford | 1 |
| Coldstream | 1 |
| Cranbrook | 1 |
| Fort St. John | 1 |
| Golden | 1 |
| Grand Forks | 1 |
| Halifax | 1 |
| Kamloops | 1 |
| Lake Country | 1 |
| Lumby | 1 |
| Merritt | 1 |
| Nelson | 1 |
| Penticton | 6 |
| Prince Rupert | 1 |
| Salmon Arm | 1 |
| Squamish | 1 |
| Terrace | 1 |
| Trail | 1 |
| Vancouver | 4 |
| Victoria | 2 |
| Manitoba | |
| Winnipeg | 1 |
| Alberta | |
| Calgary | 2 |
| Edmonton | 3 |
| Saskatchewan | |
| Prince Albert | 1 |
| Regina | 1 |
| Ontario | |
| Toronto | 1 |
| Other | |
| All over AB/BC | 1 |
| Tokyo | 1 |
| USA | 2 |

Table 7. Survey responses to the questions, “How long have you been in Kelowna?”, “What is the main reason you came to Kelowna?” and “Where did you live before you came here?”. Rounding may cause some categories reporting (%) not to add to 100%. Responses of “I don’t know” and “decline to respond” caused the list of respondents for “Where did you live before you came here” to add to less than n=45.

Indigenous Identity and Homelessness

Those who identify as Indigenous have been noted as overrepresented in the homeless population. In the 2018 Federal PiT Count Report, respondents that identified as Indigenous represented 30% of the homeless population¹¹. During the 2020 Kelowna PiT Count 21% of both absolutely homeless individuals and temporarily housed individuals identified as Indigenous. Respondents were also asked: “Which Indigenous community are you from?” Most people responded that they had relocated from a community within BC. It is important to note that several of the individuals who identified as Indigenous did not provide an Indigenous community of origin.

| INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES ¹ |
|--------------------------------------------|
| Absolutely Homeless |
| British Columbia |
| ?Esdilagh First Nation |
| Cheslatta Carrier Nation |
| Esk’etemc First Nation |
| Kitselas First Nation |
| Lheidli T’enneh First Nation |
| Lhtako Dené Nation |
| Musqueam Nation |
| Nisga’a Nation |
| Nlaka’pamux Nation |
| Secwepémc Nation |
| Soowahlie First Nation |
| Upper & Lower Similkameen First Nations |
| Ontario |
| Batchewana First Nation |
| Cree Nation (ON specified) |
| Kasabonika Lake First Nation |
| Mi’kmaq Nation (ON specified) |
| Sandy Lake First Nation |
| Temagami First Nation |
| Wahgoshig First Nation |
| Walpole Island First Nation |
| Alberta |
| Alexander First Nation |
| Tsuut’ina Nation |
| Saskatchewan |
| Mistawasis First Nation |
| Zagime Anishinabek (Sakimay First Nations) |
| Northwest Territories |
| Tetlit Gwich’in First Nation |
| Manitoba |
| Rolling River First Nation |

| INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Absolutely Homeless |
| Other |
| Cherokee Nation (Southeastern USA) |
| Comanche Nation (Southwestern USA) |
| Cree Nation (North Central Canada) (x3) |
| Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation (Northwestern USA) |
| Mi’kmaq Nation (Eastern Canada) |
| Ojibwe Nation (Ontario/Northeastern USA) |
| Treaty 6 Territory (Central AB & SK) |
| Ute Nation (Western USA) |
| Temporarily Housed |
| British Columbia |
| Cree Nation (BC specified) |
| Haisla Nation |
| Lytton First Nation |
| Oregon Jack Creek Band |
| Secwepémc Nation (x2) |
| Upper & Lower Similkameen First Nations |

| INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Temporarily Housed cont’d |
| Alberta |
| Kainai Nation |
| Sucker Creek First Nation |
| Saskatchewan |
| Sioux (SK specified) |
| Treaty 4 Territory (unspecified First Nations) |
| Manitoba |
| Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation |
| Peguis First Nation |
| Other |
| Blackfoot Confederacy (South Central Canada, North Central USA) |
| Cree Nation (North Central Canada) |
| Haudenosaunee (North Eastern USA) |
| Great Sioux Nation (South Central Canada, North Central USA) |
| Hidden Homeless |
| Dene Nation (Northern Boreal Canada) |

Table 8. Survey responses to the question “Which Indigenous community are you from?” from all respondents that identified as Indigenous or having Indigenous Ancestry, and categorized by Absolutely Homeless, Temporarily Housed, and Hidden Homeless. Each community was identified once except for communities denoted by a x2 or x3.

¹ Some Indigenous communities are listed more than once under various provinces/territories. This is because efforts were made to represent as much information as was given through the survey questions; while some respondents identified specific provinces/territories, others did not (e.g. Cree Nation).

Temporarily Housed Homeless

A total of 335 individuals were identified as temporarily housed in interim housing (n=253) or institutional care (n=82). Individuals identified in temporary housing had a mean age of 36 years, with the majority being male (59%), indicating no Indigenous identity (79%), and falling between the ages of 25-64 years (74%) (Table 9). Figure 3 depicts the percentage distribution of gender by age ranges.

| TEMPORARILY HOUSED DEMOGRAPHICS | | n=335(311) ¹ |
|----------------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| Age (Mean, Standard Deviation) | | 36 (±17) |
| Age Range (%) | | |
| 0-14 years | | 14 |
| 15-24 years ² | | 10 |
| 25-64 years | | 74 |
| 65+ years | | 3 |
| Gender (%) | | |
| Male | | 59 |
| Female | | 40 |
| Transgender | | 0.3 ³ |
| Indigenous Identity (%) | | |
| Non-Indigenous | | 79 |
| First Nations | | 17 |
| Métis | | 3 |
| Non-Status / Indigenous Ancestry | | 1 |
| Inuit | | 0 |

Table 9. Age, gender, and Indigenous identity of individuals in Temporary Housing.

- One facility was only able to provide a partial data set, which allowed for that data set to be used in only calculations for total number of people who were temporarily housed, gender distribution, average age, and total percentage of people identifying as Indigenous. All other data analysis was performed on a smaller data set from facilities providing complete line level data.
- Some local youth homelessness services organizations define youth as people aged 12-24. The percentage of people who are temporarily housed in this category is 11%.
- Decimal place added in this case to prevent 0% representation (n=1 individual)

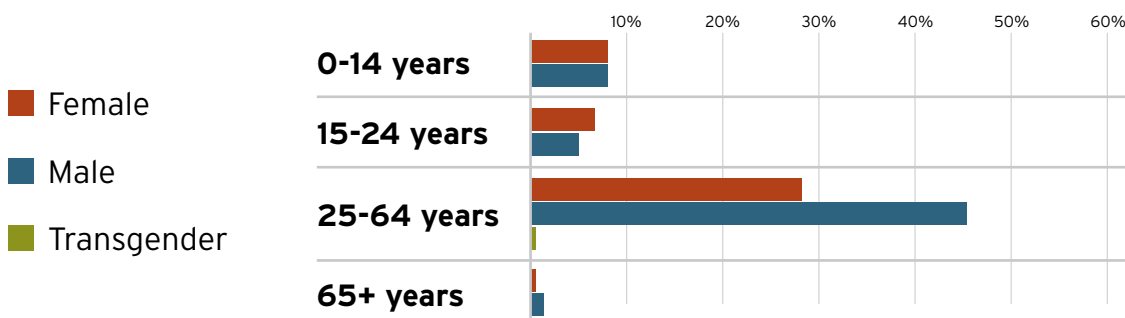


Figure 3. Gender distribution (%) by age range of individuals residing in temporary housing.

Temporarily Housed Homeless

A total of 91 surveys were completed with individuals living in interim housing (Table 10). It should be noted that not all interim housing facilities participated in the survey portion of the PiT Count. The survey data collected represents a subpopulation of those residing in interim housing and may not represent the whole group. This population is part of the core population as defined by Reaching Home⁶. This is the second time that Kelowna's interim housed individuals have had the opportunity to participate in the survey portion of a PiT Count. Please see Table 2 for a list of facilities that completed surveys. Future counts may include all interim housing facilities depending on available resources. Interim housing facilities which change their guaranteed residency limit over the years may fall in or out of the scope of the Kelowna PiT Count, which only screens in facilities that have a guaranteed residency of three years or less. This can impact the number of individuals enumerated as staying at interim housing locations.

In 2020, 95% of participants indicated that they were not with any family members, whereas only 5% identified being with a family member on the night of the count. 51% indicated that they had stayed in an emergency shelter within the past year. 7% indicated that they had served in the Canadian Military, while none indicated prior service in the RCMP. 34% indicated they had moved to Kelowna within the past year. 1% of participants indicated they were new immigrants or refugees that had moved to Canada within the past five years. The average number of days spent homeless within the last year was 269 days, ranging from zero days to 365 days. It was explained to participants that "homelessness" was defined as any time that they have been without a permanent and secure place to live, which includes staying in transitional/interim housing, however the answers provided by respondents were noted as recorded by surveyors.

77% of participants were identified as being chronically homeless as a result of being homeless for six months or more within the past year. The average number of homeless episodes within the past year was 1.4 episodes, ranging from zero to four episodes. 11% of participants were identified as being episodically homeless as a result of experiencing three or more different episodes of homelessness within the past year. 32% of those experiencing temporarily housed homelessness identified that they had been in foster care and/or group home. Of those who had been in foster care and/or group home (n=29), 68% became homeless within one year of leaving care. 87% of participants identified their sexual orientation as straight, with 9% identifying as bisexual, 2% identifying as asexual, and 2% as pansexual. Of the people staying at interim housing facilities, 55% experienced absolute homelessness before the age of 25.

In 2020 participants were asked for the first time to identify health challenges they may be facing. 84% of individuals reported substance use issues, with 79% reporting mental health issues, 46% reporting a learning disability or cognitive limitation, 37% reporting an illness or medical condition, and 36% a physical disability. They were also asked if they identified as having an acquired brain injury, with 37% responding 'yes'. In addition, participants were asked about their service needs. The highest reported service needs were related to mental health (counselling, treatment), which accounted for 29% of answers; addiction or substance abuse, which accounted for 28% of answers. Other service needs included serious/ongoing medical condition (11%), physical disability (11%), learning disability (10%), brain injury (8%), pregnancy (2%), and none of the above (2%).

Temporarily Housed Homeless

| TEMPORARILY HOUSED CHARACTERISTICS | | n=91 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|--|------------|
| Staying with Family Members (%) | | |
| Yes | | 5 |
| No | | 95 |
| Have Used Emergency Shelter in Past Year (%) | | |
| Yes | | 51 |
| No | | 49 |
| Service (%) | | |
| Military | | 7 |
| RCMP | | 0 |
| No Service | | 93 |
| Immigrant or Refugee in Past Five Years (%) | | |
| Yes | | 1 |
| No | | 99 |
| Days Homeless Within Past Year (Mean, Standard Deviation) | | 269(±126) |
| Length of Time Homeless Within Past Year (%) | | |
| 0-2 Months | | 10 |
| 3-5 Months | | 13 |
| 6-12 Months | | 77 |
| Homeless Episodes Within Past Year (Mean, Standard Deviation) | | 1.4 (±0.8) |
| Number of Times Homeless Within Past Year (%) | | |
| 0 Times ² | | 2 |
| 1 Time (current episode) | | 73 |
| 2 Times | | 14 |
| 3 or more Times | | 11 |
| Been in Foster Care and/or Group Home (%) | | |
| Yes | | 32 |
| No | | 68 |
| Became Homeless Within 1 Year of Leaving Foster Care/Group Home (%) | | |
| Yes | | 68 |
| No | | 32 |
| Sexual Orientation (%) | | |
| Straight | | 87 |
| Bisexual | | 9 |
| Asexual | | 2 |
| Pansexual | | 2 |

Temporarily Housed Homeless

Table 10. Continued

| | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------|----|
| 1st Homelessness Experience (Mean, Standard Deviation) | 26 (±14) | |
| 1st Homelessness Experience (%) | | |
| 0-14 years | 19 | |
| 15-24 years | 35 | |
| 25-64 years | 45 | |
| 65+ years | 0 | |
| Health Challenges (%) | Yes | No |
| Substance Use Issue | 84 | 16 |
| Mental Health Issue | 79 | 21 |
| Learning Disability or Cognitive Limitation | 46 | 54 |
| Illness or Medical Condition | 37 | 63 |
| Physical Disability | 36 | 64 |
| Acquired Brain Injury (%) | Yes | No |
| | 37 | 63 |
| Service Needs (%) ¹ | | |
| Mental Health (Counselling, Treatment etc.) | 29 | |
| Addiction or Substance Abuse | 28 | |
| Serious/Ongoing Medical Condition | 11 | |
| Physical Disability | 11 | |
| Learning Disability | 10 | |
| Brain Injury | 8 | |
| None of the Above | 2 | |
| Pregnancy | 2 | |

Table 10. Characteristics of those individuals surveyed in interim housing. Rounding may cause some categories reporting (%) not to add to 100%.

1 Service Needs is a multi-response question where respondents could select more than one response. Response percentages shown represent highest to lowest reported answer frequency (e.g., x=10 means that x accounted for 10% of all responses).

2 Some respondents answered "0" as the number of times they had experienced homelessness. This may be related to the way respondents identify and whether they agree with the definition of homelessness presented to them. Please see the "Changes Since the 2016 and 2018 PiT Counts" section on pages 33-34 of this report for more information on this topic.

Temporarily Housed Homeless

Participants were asked, “What happened that caused you to lose your housing most recently?”, “How long ago did that happen (that you lost your housing most recently)?”, “What are your sources of income?” and “What challenges or problems have you experienced when trying to find housing?” (Table 11). The highest reported reason for housing loss was substance use issue (25%), followed by not enough income for housing (11%), household conflict (10%), which includes spouse/partner conflict and parent/guardian conflict, and illness or medical condition (10%). 57% of people responded that they lost their housing within the past year, with 7% of those being within the last month. 27% responded that they lost their housing between one to three years ago, 6% between three to five years ago, 8% more than five years ago, with 2% never having had stable housing. The highest reported source of income was from disability benefits (40%), followed by welfare/social assistance (28%), and employment (7%). The highest reported challenge trying to find housing was that rents too high (18%), followed by low income (15%) and addiction (14%).

| TEMPORARILY HOUSED CHARACTERISTICS | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Reason for Housing Loss (%) ¹ | |
| Substance Use Issue | 25 |
| Not Enough Income for Housing | 11 |
| Household Conflict ² | 10 |
| Illness or Medical Condition | 10 |
| Hospitalization or Treatment Program | 8 |
| Unfit/Unsafe Housing Condition | 5 |
| Conflict with Landlord | 5 |
| Experienced Abuse by Spouse/Partner | 5 |
| Left the Community/Relocated | 3 |
| Experienced Discrimination | 3 |
| Complaint (e.g. pets/noise/damage) | 3 |
| Incarceration (jail or prison) | 3 |
| Experienced Abuse by Other | 2 |
| Departure of Family Member | 2 |
| Building Sold or Renovated | 1 |
| Conflict with Other | 1 |
| Experienced Abuse by Parent/Guardian | 1 |
| Never Had Stable Housing | 1 |
| Other Reason ³ | 1 |
| Owner Moved In | 1 |
| Theft of Property | 1 |
| How Long Ago Did You Lose Your Housing Most Recently? (%) | |
| Less than 1 month ago | 7 |
| 1 month to 1 year ago | 50 |
| 1(+) ⁴ to 3 years ago | 27 |
| 3(+) to 5 years ago | 6 |

Temporarily Housed Homeless

Table 11. Continued

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| More than 5 years ago | 8 |
| Never Had Stable Housing | 2 |
| Source of Income (%) ¹ | |
| Disability Benefit | 40 |
| Welfare/Social Assistance | 28 |
| Employment | 7 |
| GST/HST Refund | 6 |
| Money from Family/Friends | 3 |
| No Income | 3 |
| Informal Income Sources (e.g. bottle returns, panhandling) | 2 |
| Seniors Benefits | 2 |
| Child and Family Tax Benefits | 2 |
| Employment Insurance | 2 |
| Other Money from a Service Agency | 2 |
| Other ⁵ | 2 |
| Veteran/VAC Benefits | 1 |
| Barriers to Housing (%) ¹ | |
| Rents Too High | 18 |
| Low Income | 15 |
| Addiction | 14 |
| Mental Health Issues | 8 |
| Poor Housing Conditions | 8 |
| Family Breakdown/Conflict | 6 |
| Discrimination | 6 |
| No Income Assistance | 6 |
| Health/Disability Issues | 6 |
| Pets | 4 |
| Children | 4 |
| Criminal History | 3 |
| Domestic Violence | 2 |

Table 11. Survey responses to the questions, “What happened that caused you to lose your housing most recently?”, “How long ago did that happen (that you lost your housing most recently)?”, “What are your sources of income?” and “What challenges or problems have you experienced when trying to find housing?” Note: Multiple responses were accepted. Rounding may cause some categories reporting (%) not to add to 100%.

1 Reason for Housing Loss (%)⁺, Source of Income (%)⁺, and Barriers to Housing (%)⁺ are multi-response questions where respondents could select more than one response. Response percentages shown represent highest to lowest reported answer frequency (e.g., x=10 means that x accounted for 10% of all responses).

2 Household conflict included: Spouse/Partner (9%) and Parent/Guardian (1%).

3 Other answer options included: living in the bush, death

4 1(+) indicates >1 year and so forth.

5 Other answer options included: child support, trust

Temporarily Housed Homeless

The question “How long have you been in Kelowna?” is reported as the number of people that moved to Kelowna in the past year to match the question asked in 2016 and 2018. Two additional follow-up questions were asked in 2018 and 2020: “What is the main reason you came to Kelowna?” and “Where did you live before you came here?” (Table 12). 82% of respondents indicated access to services and supports as their reason for moving to Kelowna. The remaining reported reasons included to find housing (7%), family moved here (4%), employment (secured) (4%), and other reasons (4%).

Of those that identified that they had moved to Kelowna within the past year, their answers as to where they moved from varied. Communities were spread throughout Canada with the majority being within British Columbia. This was similar to the answers provided to the question “Which Indigenous community are you from?” where those that identified a community were mainly from a wide range of communities across British Columbia, with a smaller percentage coming from rest of Canada (Table 8).

| TEMPORARILY HOUSED CHARACTERISTICS | |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Moved to Kelowna Past Year (%) | |
| No | 66 |
| Yes | 34 |
| What is the Main Reason You Came to Kelowna? (%) | |
| Within Past Year (n=31) | |
| To Access Services and Supports | 82 |
| Find Housing | 7 |
| Family Moved Here | 4 |
| Employment (secured) | 4 |
| Other | 4 |
| Where Did You Live Before You Came Here? | |
| British Columbia | # of Respondents |
| Abbotsford | 1 |
| Courtenay | 1 |
| Delta | 1 |
| Enderby | 1 |
| Hope | 1 |
| Kamloops | 3 |
| Oliver | 1 |
| Osoyoos | 1 |

Temporarily Housed Homeless

Table 12. Continued

| Where Did You Live Before You Came Here? | |
|------------------------------------------|------------------|
| British Columbia | # of Respondents |
| Princeton | 1 |
| Sicamous | 1 |
| Vancouver | 3 |
| Vernon | 5 |
| Victoria | 1 |
| Alberta | |
| Calgary | 1 |
| Cardston | 1 |
| Edmonton | 1 |
| Grande Cache | 1 |
| Lethbridge | 1 |
| Red Deer | 1 |
| Saskatchewan | |
| Regina | 1 |
| Ontario | |
| Beaverton | 1 |
| Toronto | 1 |
| Windsor | 1 |

Table 12. Survey responses to the questions, “How long have you been in Kelowna?”, “What is the main reason you came to Kelowna?” and “Where did you live before you came here?” Rounding may cause some categories reporting (%) not to add to 100%.

Hidden Homeless

A total of six individuals were identified as experiencing hidden homeless (n=6) so it can be concluded that the PiT Count was not able to collect a representative cohort of the hidden homeless population. Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy acknowledges that a PiT Count cannot accurately measure the number of people who are experiencing hidden homelessness during the count⁶, however communities can still screen in this population to attempt an enumeration of hidden homelessness to raise awareness of the vulnerability this group faces. 3 of the 6 hidden homeless respondents reported having accessed emergency shelter in the past year (50%). Although this may not be representative of the hidden homeless population, it shows that further efforts to learn about this population are justified as some are part of the shelter system. Based on information from our community partners in the youth homelessness sector, we know that youth are one of the populations which are more likely to experience hidden homelessness, and also one of the populations more difficult to reach with a PiT Count. Recommendations on p.37 in the Discussion section of this report may be elaborated on in future counts to improve on methodology to enumerate the youth hidden homeless population.

Changes Since the 2016 and 2018 PiT Counts

Introduction

The changes from Kelowna's 2016 PiT Count must be considered in the context of the changes seen in the city within the past four years including an increase in population, additional facilities opening, and closures of other facilities. It is also important to note that the comparisons made between years are only a comparison between three one-night snapshots of homelessness. The Kelowna 2020 PiT Count methodology has mirrored the 2018 and 2016 PiT Count methodology, so the results can be reasonably compared. The PiT Count can be used as a longitudinal look at homelessness as a whole in the community of Kelowna. Across the three years that PiT Count data has been collected, data has always been represented as the percentage of the homeless population identified in that year. This allows for the comparison of how variables within the population change proportionally.

Due to the expansion in core questions through three PiT Counts (2016, 2018, 2020) and the additional Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH) questions added in 2018 and 2020, only the responses to the 12 questions from the 2016 surveys can be compared across all 3 PiT Counts. There is more data that can be compared across the 2018 and 2020 PiT Counts because all 16 questions that appeared on the 2018 survey were reproduced in the 2020 survey.

Changes Since the 2016 and 2018 PiT Counts

The overall population experiencing absolute homelessness has increased from 233 individuals in 2016, to 286 in 2018, and finally to 297 in 2020.

One new 3-part question was introduced in the 2020 PiT Count survey. The first part is a core question that asks participants about health issues they may be experiencing. There is also a Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH) optional sub question which asks about the service needs of the respondent. Finally, there is a sub question asking if respondents identify as having an acquired brain injury (ABI). This question was developed by The Nanaimo Brain Injury Society, BC Housing, and the BC Non-Profit Housing Association in response to recent research showing that acquired brain injuries are more prevalent amongst those experiencing homelessness¹². The estimated prevalence of ABI among the homeless population is significant. For example, a study out of Toronto indicates that 53% of the homeless population surveyed reported a traumatic brain injury¹³. However, more ABI screening, identification and diagnosis is needed to better understand the impacts of ABI on the homeless population, the intersection of ABI with homelessness, access to services and ABI co-morbidity with mental health and addictions among this population.

In 2020 a new core sub question asking participants how long ago they lost their housing was added onto the existing question about reasons for housing loss. Unfortunately, the data from questions added in 2020 cannot be compared with previous years.

Survey information was not collected in 2016 for those in interim housing, so there was no opportunity to compare this population's survey responses between 2016 and 2018. Now that this population was surveyed for two consecutive counts, we can compare the 2018 and 2020 results. The following sections compare data across the years for both absolutely homeless and temporarily housed individuals, focusing more strongly on the absolutely homeless population whose data can be compared across the three PiT Counts.

Absolute Homelessness

It is important to start this comparison by noting that the overall population experiencing absolute homelessness has increased from 233 individuals in 2016, to 286 in 2018, and finally to 297 in 2020. This represents a 23% increase from 2016 to 2018 and a 4% increase from 2018 to 2020. In comparison to a 2% overall population growth rate in Kelowna between 2018-2019¹⁴ and projecting a similar growth rate for 2019-2020, the rate in growth of absolute homelessness shown in the PiT Count data appears to mirror that of the overall Kelowna population for the past two years.

Changes Since the 2016 and 2018 PiT Counts

The proportion of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness as a percentage of the absolutely homeless population has changed over the years. Between 2016-2018 the proportion of unsheltered individuals declined from 30% to 18%, while the number of people enumerated in emergency shelters increased by 43% (70 people). Between 2018-2020 the proportion of unsheltered individuals increased by 6% from 18% to 24%, while shelter use decreased by 4% (9 people). Concurrently, in 2020, 84% of people reported having accessed a shelter in the past year, which is significantly lower than in 2018 (98%) and 2016 (93%). The reason for this difference could be that in 2020, roughly double the number of surveys were completed with people staying in unsheltered locations in comparison to previous counts (17 in 2016, 14 in 2018, and 31 in 2020).

The age that people report experiencing their first episode of homelessness decreased from age 31 in 2018 to age 28 in 2020. People identifying their first episode of homelessness happening before the age of 25 increased by 11% from 37% in 2018 to 48% in 2020. The change is even more dramatic when looking at the number of people reporting their first episode of homelessness as happening before age 20 with 24% in 2018 and 37% in 2020, an increase of 13%. This points to the continued need for housing and support services for youth aged 25 and younger. The fact that nearly half of absolutely homeless respondents reported their first episode of homelessness as happening before age 25, shows that experiences of homelessness in youth often carry over to experiences of homelessness later in adulthood.

At the same time, a 3% decrease in youth representation (ages 12-24) amongst the absolutely homeless population was noted in 2020 (7%) compared to 2018 (10%). A similar decrease of 4% had been noted between 2018(10%) and 2016 (14%)². The proportional decrease in youth absolute homelessness could be attributed to the efforts of organizations that provide programs and supports specifically to youth. The PiT Count can be used as a tool to measure continued efforts to reduce youth absolute homelessness in Kelowna. However, as noted in the 2018 PiT Count, youth experiences of hidden homelessness are high. Since it is difficult to include data on hidden homelessness in a PiT count, it is beneficial to exercise caution when interpreting PiT Count data on youth. A PiT Count may not be an ideal methodology to accurately capture and represent the complexities of youth homelessness.

The decrease in youth homelessness has also come with an increase in the proportion of people aged 25-64. The proportion of people in this age category has been increasing since 2016. The representation was at 79% in 2016, 85% in 2018, and 89% in 2020.

There was also 5% decrease from 2018 in those identifying as Indigenous. The percentage of absolutely homeless people identifying as Indigenous has changed from 24% in 2016, to 26% in 2018, to 21% in 2020. It is possible

² Youth is being represented in this case within the age category used by local community youth service organizations. If we look at the official Kelowna PiT Count report age category of 15-24, the percentages are similar at 6% (2020), 9% (2018), and 13% (2016).

Changes Since the 2016 and 2018 PiT Counts

that this decrease could be partly linked to the opening of a new temporary homeless shelter in January 2020 in West Kelowna.

There continues to be an overrepresentation of Indigenous women identified in the enumeration, with 25% of absolutely homeless women identifying as Indigenous, as compared to 6.1% representation of Indigenous women in the general Kelowna population¹⁵. However, this is a measurable decrease from the 34% of homeless women identifying as Indigenous in 2018, and the 42% in 2016, which suggests that there may be a downwards trend in the representation of Indigenous women in the absolutely homeless population of Kelowna. It should be noted that Indigenous men have also been overrepresented in the Indigenous population of Kelowna over the years, though not to the same extent as women. Indigenous men made up 17% of the male absolutely homeless population in 2016, 23% in 2018, and 19% in 2020.

In addition, there was a notable decrease in the proportion of Métis individuals who represented 4% of the absolutely homeless population in 2020 and 7% in both 2016 and 2018. There was also a decrease in the proportion of Non-Status Indigenous people who made up 1% of the absolutely homeless population in 2020, 5% in 2018, and 7% in 2016.

Within the absolutely homeless population, there has been a steady increase in the percentage of people experiencing chronic homelessness, 2016 (60%) 2018 (67%) and 2020 (72%). Conversely, the proportion of people experiencing episodic homelessness has been going down from 2016 (20%), to 2018 (18%), and 2020 (11%). This shows that people experiencing absolute homelessness are spending a larger proportion of their time homeless in a given year. This trend is supported by the increase in days spent homeless within the past year that has been noted from 2016 (192, SD=119), 2018 (241, SD=135), and 2020 (267, SD=128).

The overall gender distribution of the absolutely homeless population between 2018 and 2020 has stayed similar. The biggest difference in this area is that the percentage of women decreased by 4%, while the percentage of males increased by 3%. 0.4% of individuals identified their gender as “other/not listed” (n=1) under their gender description in 2020, whereas no respondents identified as “other/not listed” in 2018 or 2016.

In 2020, the selection of answers available to respondents to the sexual orientation question on the surveys was expanded to increase inclusivity⁶ and there was a special resource developed by Dr. Alex Abramovich about creating PiT Counts that are inclusive for the LGBTQ2S community¹⁶. Asexual and pansexual were added as optional responses. As a result, 2% of absolutely homeless respondents listed asexual as their sexual orientation in 2020. Other differences in sexual orientation were noted between 2018 and 2020 including: the percentage of people identifying as straight decreased by 6% from 94% in 2018 to 88% in 2020. Bisexual representation increased by

Changes Since the 2016 and 2018 PiT Counts

3% from 5% in 2018 to 8% in 2020. In 2018, no participants identified their sexual orientation as gay, whereas 1% identified as gay in 2020. Conversely, in 2018 1% identified as lesbian, whereas 0% identified as lesbian in 2020.

There was little change in proportional family homelessness seen in Kelowna between 2016, 2018, and 2020. The percentage of people staying with family has hovered around 10% from 2016 (10%) to 2018 (9%) to 2020 (11%).

The percentage of individuals experiencing absolute homelessness who served either in the Canadian Military or RCMP increased from 4% in 2018 to 7% in 2020. However, it is noted that the number of veterans identified in 2020 (n=11) was slightly more than double that of previous counts (n=5 in 2016 and 2018).

Newcomers to Canada within the past five years continue to represent a very small proportion of the population, hovering between 0-1.6% (0% in 2016, 1.6% in 2018, 0.7% in 2020).

The number of people experiencing absolute homelessness who have moved to Kelowna within the past year has remained relatively steady at around 28% across 2016 (29%), 2018 (26%), and 2020 (30%). Within the top five reasons given for moving to Kelowna between 2018 and 2020, the following reasons are common to both years: visit friends/family, access services and supports, and employment (seeking). The third most common reason cited in 2018 was to find housing (13%), whereas this reason was not cited at all in 2020. At the same time, family moved here was tied with employment (seeking) for the top reason cited in 2020 (15%). In 2018, family moved here was one of the bottom reasons cited (3%) with employment (seeking) at 8%.

Across the 3 PiT Counts, the top three reasons for housing loss have remained the same for this population. The wording around one of the top reasons for housing loss has shifted over the years and has sometimes comprised of more than one category. If represented as one category, it can be named: evicted/not enough income for housing (includes job loss). This was the top reason that individuals identified as being responsible for housing loss in 2016 (46%) and 2018 (31%). The second and third reasons were household conflict and addiction or substance use. In 2020, the top reason identified was household conflict (21%) followed by evicted/not enough income for housing (18%) and addiction or substance use (13%). There has been a diversifying trend in reasons for housing loss over the years with the top three reasons comprising of 74% of answers in 2017, 64% in 2018, and only 52% in 2020. At the same time, there has been an uneven number of potential responses included on surveys across 2016-2020, which should be taken into consideration when interpreting this data. For instance, there were 11 options on the 2018 survey, but 20 options on the 2020 survey (all surveys included "other" as an option as well).

When looking at the top sources of income for this population across PiT Counts, the three main sources have remained consistent. They are disability benefit, welfare/income assistance, and informal sources of income.

Changes Since the 2016 and 2018 PiT Counts

In 2016 and 2018 the top source of income was disability benefit, though there was a decrease in people identifying this source between 2016, when it accounted for 40% of responses and 2018, when it accounted for 27% of responses. This decrease has continued through 2020. Disability benefit is now the second most common source of income identified (21%), with the first now identified as welfare/social assistance (28%). Similar to reasons for housing loss, there has been a diversifying trend in income sources across the years, with the top three sources accounting for 81% of total responses in 2016, 71% in 2018, and 68% in 2020. Formal employment amongst people experiencing absolute homelessness, typically defined as the “working homeless”, had shown an increasing trend between 2016, when formal employment represented 6% of answers, and 2018, when formal employment represented 10% of answers. It remained constant in 2020 at 10%. This could signal that the cost of housing in Kelowna is exceeding limits even for those with employment. Seniors benefits represented 2% of answers in both 2018 and 2020, a decrease from 6% in the 2016 PiT Count. This shows consistency with the decreasing numbers of the 65+ population identified in this population (3% in 2020/2018, down from 6% in 2016).

In 2018 and 2020, survey respondents were asked to identify challenges they experienced when trying to find housing. Across both years, the top five reasons remained the same: rents too high, low income, addiction, discrimination, and no income assistance. This was also the order of frequency that the responses were given in both years, with the exception that in 2018 discrimination (10%) was slightly ahead of addiction (8%), whereas in 2020 the converse was true with addiction (10%) coming before discrimination (9%).

Lastly, there was a 9% increase in the number of absolutely homeless individuals who reported having been in the foster care system, from 29% in 2018 to 38% in 2020. Amongst those who had been in foster care 20% more stated they had become homeless within one year of leaving foster care in 2020 (50%) than in 2018 (30%).

Temporarily Housed Homelessness

The overall population enumerated as experiencing temporarily housed homelessness has increased from 273 individuals in 2016, to 319 in 2018, to 335 in 2020. This represents a 17% increase from 2016-2018 and a 5% increase from 2018-2020. There has been an increasing trend in the absolute numbers of people who are temporarily housed, however, it is important to remember there are many variables affecting this population. For instance:

- some facilities get screened in or out of the PiT Count based on changes in their mandates between the bi-annual PiT Counts (e.g. 2 facilities included in 2018 were screened out of the count in 2020)
- facilities close and open over the years (e.g. one institutional care facility and one interim housing facility have closed since 2018, while one new interim housing facility has opened)
- the opening of new supportive housing projects between counts impacts the number of temporarily housed individuals who are enumerated (e.g. a supportive housing project opened in 2018 after the 2018 PiT Count report was published; one additional supportive housing project opened shortly after the 2020 count took place, and another 3 are set to open within the coming year)

Changes Since the 2016 and 2018 PiT Counts

For the temporarily housed population, the 2020 gender representations (male: 59%, female: 40%, transgender: 0.3%) were very similar to those in 2018 (male: 59%, female: 40%, transgender: 1%), with the one notable difference being in transgender representation going down to 0.3% in 2020 from 1% in 2018 and 2016 (a difference of 2 individuals).

The age demographics of this population were quite similar from 2018 to 2020, with a slightly larger proportion belonging to the 0-14 category (14% in 2020 vs. 11% in 2018) and a slightly lower proportion belonging to the 25-64 age category (74% in 2020 vs. 78% in 2018).

Only 5% of survey respondents identified that they were staying with family the night of the count vs. the 12% identified in 2018. This could be due to the fact that parents of younger children may have preferred not to participate in the surveys. One facility noted that the surveys were administered around the evening feeding time for children. This year, two interim facilities not included in the 2018 survey collection provided a large proportion of the survey data; neither facility had families or children staying there, so this could also be responsible for the lower response rate for people staying with family members.

The representation of sexual orientation amongst this population has some differences between 2018 and 2020. In 2020, 2% identified as asexual and 2% as pansexual, which again, may indicate that making the count inclusive through adding more options helps respondents feel represented. In 2020 3% less people identified as bisexual (9%) than in 2018 (12%), with 0% identifying as lesbian in 2020, compared to 4% in 2018. 0% identified as gay in both 2018 and 2020. In 2020 87% identified as straight, which is 3% more than the 84% in 2018.

Those that identify as Indigenous represented 21% of the temporarily housed population in 2020, which was similar to the 20% identified in 2018. In 2018 there had been an increase of 6% from 2016 and it was noted that the Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society's interim housing facility "Family Den" was included in 2018 for the first time, which could have contributed to this increase. The facility was included in 2020 again which would make sense given the consistent numbers from 2018 to 2020. The proportion of temporarily housed women identifying as Indigenous in 2020 (29%) was significantly higher than in both 2018 (17%) and 2016 (16%). The proportion of men identifying as Indigenous was lower in 2020 (17%) than in 2018 (22%) but higher than in 2016 (13%).

One of the biggest differences for the temporarily housed population between 2018-2020 was an increase in the reported average days spent homeless over the past year. In 2018 this number was 194 (SD 150), whereas in 2020 it was 269 (SD 126), showing a 39% increase. This difference could be due to the complexities of navigating the term "homelessness" within the temporarily housed community. In 2020 additional clarification was sought from the PiT Count team at Reaching Home (Canada) about whether or not temporarily housed individuals were considered homeless for the purposes of the PiT Count survey questions. The clarification provided was that these individuals

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are indeed considered “provisionally accommodated but still homeless” as they do not have a permanent place to live. A special training message was sent out to the Kelowna team leaders conducting surveys at interim housing facilities to help clarify this terminology for survey participants. This additional training message may have created some differences in how surveys were administered between 2018 and 2020. It is possible that more respondents in 2018 would not have considered themselves homeless, thus contributing to the lower tally of average days spent homeless. In 2020, there were still 2% of individuals who didn’t choose to identify their situation as “homeless” and their answers were accepted as written.

There has also been a notable increase of 9% in people identifying as having come to Kelowna within the last year, rising from 25% in 2018 to 34% in 2020. The top reason for moving to Kelowna listed in both 2018 and 2020 was to access services and supports (69% in 2018, 82% in 2020). Of the top four reasons listed across both years, common reasons were: to access services and supports, to find housing, and family moved here.

The proportion of veterans has increased from 2% in 2018 to 7% in 2020. The percentage is the same between the absolutely homeless and temporarily housed populations in 2020.

Another notable difference between 2018 and 2020 was that the proportion of temporarily housed individuals who had accessed an emergency shelter in the past year increased by 11% from 40% in 2018 to 51% in 2020. This may be an indication of significant movement of individuals from shelters into transitional housing over the past year.

Of the top four reasons for housing loss reported in 2018 and 2020, three were the same across the two counts: addiction or substance use, family/household conflict, and evicted/not enough income for housing. The top reason across both the 2018 and 2020 counts was addiction or substance use; however, in 2020 this answer accounted for 25% of responses, while in 2018 it accounted for 42%. As with the absolutely homeless population, the temporarily housed population experienced a diversification in reasons for housing loss, with more reasons accounting for smaller percentages of answers. In 2018 the top three reasons accounted for 71% of responses, whereas in 2020 they accounted for only 47% of responses.

One of the other major differences between 2018 and 2020 for this population was the proportion of individuals who reported becoming homeless within one year of leaving foster care. First, it should be noted that the percentage of people who reported having been in foster care was 5% lower in 2020 (32%) than in 2018 (37%). However, 35% more individuals reported having become homeless within one year of leaving foster care in 2020 (68%) than in 2018 (33%). This difference is somewhat in parallel to the 20% rise in people reporting having become homeless within one year of leaving foster care amongst the absolutely homeless population.

Discussion

In 2020 it was possible for this first time to compare a large portion of data across 3 standardized PiT Counts.

The 2020 PiT Count results represent an accurate collection of information regarding the state of homelessness in Kelowna on Mar 10th, 2020. That being said, the true value of PiT Counts comes with the repetition of these counts over time¹¹. Survey data and systems data was collected at local organizations, with an additional 14 volunteer teams canvassing the streets, alleys, and parks of Kelowna where people experiencing homelessness are known to be located. In 2020 it was possible for this first time to compare a large portion of data across 3 standardized PiT Counts.

Findings suggest there were at least 297 individuals experiencing absolute homelessness in Kelowna on the night of March 10th, 2020. To develop strategies targeted at addressing homelessness in our community, it is important to understand the characteristics of this population, such as their service needs and reasons for losing housing, which is why the PiT Count includes survey questions to collect this information.

Before discussing the data findings, it is important to talk about the variables that can impact the count and the data collection from year to year. The first of these is seasonality; depending on the time of year in which the PiT Count is conducted, the number and distribution of homeless individuals may vary. To keep the 2016, 2018, and 2020 PiT Counts as comparable as possible, they were performed within 10 calendar days apart. The temperatures during each PiT Count were comparable as there was only 1°C of variation between average daily temperatures across the 2016, 2018, and 2020 counts. During the colder months, homeless individuals may be more likely to gravitate towards service providers, such as homeless shelters, resulting in more individuals being enumerated in homeless shelters rather than sleeping rough. In 2020, 225 individuals were enumerated in shelters and 72 in an unsheltered location. A higher survey response rate in shelters (53%) compared to unsheltered locations (43%), combined with more people staying in shelters overnight, suggests that a cold weather count may allow for more surveys to be completed..

The proportion of sheltered to unsheltered individuals across the three counts suggests that shelter bed availability corresponds to increased shelter usage. In 2018 a new cold weather shelter had been set up and the proportion of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness dropped by 11%. This proportion did go up in 2020 by 6%, however, most shelters were at or near capacity, so the increase in unsheltered homelessness may instead point to a lack of shelter bed availability. It should be added that between 2018 and 2020, one of the long-running homeless shelters in Kelowna closed, while a new temporary cold weather shelter was set up between Dec 2019-Mar 2020.

Another contextual factor that was relevant for 2020 was that two official tent sites had been designated by the City of Kelowna for the homeless population to use as of November 2019. However, on the evening of the PiT Count,

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Overall, the 2020 Kelowna PiT Count methodology exemplifies the benefits of coordinated efforts.

March 10th, 2020, one tent was present at one of the sites, which could be linked to the opening of a new bridge housing facility and a new temporary cold weather shelter in the winter.

Overall, the 2020 Kelowna PiT Count methodology exemplifies the benefits of coordinated efforts. The collection of systems and survey data would not have been possible without the help of all organizations participating. By coordinating volunteer recruitment through local post-secondary institutions, the PiT Count provided an opportunity for students to connect with local service providers and learn more about homelessness. Front-line workers were able to facilitate a valuable, practical experience in a safe and friendly environment, and to share their experiences and expertise with future professionals. 2020 was the first year that trained debriefing volunteers were available at the PiT Count Headquarters to meet with every team returning from their PiT Count survey route to debrief about the experience and review the surveys for completion.

As this was the third count conducted in Kelowna following the National Reaching Home (formerly Homelessness Partnering Strategy) Guide to PiT Counts in Canada⁶, it is not recommended that comparisons be made to previous homeless counts before 2016, as the enumeration strategy and survey design were significantly different. This count followed and built upon the 2016 and 2018 methodological design allowing for the results to be comparable. Future counts should follow and build upon the current methodological design, so that changes in Kelowna's homeless population can continue to be observed.

Key Findings - Absolute Homelessness

In Kelowna, the population experiencing absolute homelessness is diverse, with males aged 25-64 years representing the largest cohort (64%). Other key subpopulations include Indigenous people (21%), youth aged 15-24 (6%), older adults over the age of 65 (3%), and children aged 0-14 (2%). Consistent with national research, Indigenous people are over-represented in the homeless population. Indigenous people make up only 6% of Kelowna's total population¹⁵ but 21% of the absolutely homeless population. In the 2018 federal PiT Count report¹¹, Indigenous people were enumerated as making up 30% of the nation-wide homeless population. Of additional concern is the disproportionately high number of women indicating Indigenous identity, representing 25% of all women experiencing absolute homelessness.

According to the present findings, rates of youth absolute homelessness in Kelowna fall below the national average recorded during the 2018 Coordinated PiT Count¹¹. Youth remain a unique population that must be considered. As mentioned previously, a decrease in youth absolute homelessness has been observed in Kelowna between

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For the Kelowna community, rapidly rehousing this at-risk population should continue to be a focus.

2016-2020. However, many youth are known to experience hidden homelessness, which is difficult to measure with a PiT Count approach. Youth staying in impermanent or precarious situations with family or friends may see changes in their housing situations precipitate quickly. It is recommended by the PiT Count Youth Sub Committee that future PiT Counts continue to evaluate the extent to which PiT Counts are a useful tool for enumerating youth homelessness and explore additional or alternative methodologies to youth magnet events.

It was noted that youth sometimes struggled with some of the terminology used on the surveys. Youth staying temporarily with others often do not identify their situation as corresponding to “homelessness”. In order to more accurately capture data on people living in impermanent housing situations, it may be required to revise the wording on surveys implemented in locations where these individuals are surveyed.

With an average age of 40 years and 3% of individuals being over the age of 65, a proportion of Kelowna’s homeless population is aging. This is of particular concern as people experiencing homelessness tend to die at younger ages due to accidental overdose and being at higher risk for accidents and certain diseases¹⁷. For the Kelowna community, rapidly rehousing this at-risk population should continue to be a focus.

Findings suggest that the reasons for an individual to become absolutely homeless continue to be varied. The most frequently recorded reasons for housing loss were household conflict (21%), not having enough income for housing (18%), and substance use issues (13%). In some circumstances, it seems that individuals are making the difficult decision to leave a precarious or intolerable living situation rather than face other complex life challenges, barriers, or dangers. For example, experiences of household conflict (21%), abuse by spouse/partner & other (4%), or unsafe housing conditions (2%) could result in an individual sacrificing their current living arrangements and becoming homeless. In addition, 3% of participants who reported having arrived in Kelowna within the past year left their previous place of residence in fear for their safety.

Results suggest that health concerns such as addiction or substance use (13%), illness or medical condition (7%) and hospitalization or treatment program (2%) pose an ongoing struggle for many individuals and contribute to the loss of housing. A variety of other life events or changes such as conflict with a landlord (9%) or housing being sold or renovated (4%) could result in absolute homelessness if other accommodations cannot be found or afforded. It is important that appropriate supports be put in place for individuals to re-establish permanent housing, and that the broader community, economic, and societal factors are considered as part of a strategy to address homelessness.

Discussion

In 2020, participants were asked for the first time to identify how long ago they had most recently lost their housing. Most people surveyed (55%), lost their housing within the past year, but a significant portion had lost their housing between one to three years ago (21%), three to five years ago (13%), or more than five years ago (10%). 1% also stated that they have never had stable housing.

A variety of sources of income were identified by those experiencing absolute homelessness. The most frequently cited sources of income were welfare/social assistance (28%) and disability benefit (21%), which are both forms of government subsidy. This may suggest that for an individual who is unable to secure additional sources of income, government subsidies alone may not be sufficient to secure a permanent residence.

Of those that identified they had moved to Kelowna within the past year (30%), their answers as to where they moved from varied. Communities were spread throughout Canada with the majority being within British Columbia, and a few from abroad (USA and Japan). Similarly to other respondents (those who had moved to Kelowna from elsewhere but not within the past year), the top reasons newcomers within the past year stated for moving to Kelowna were that their family moved here (15%), employment (seeking) (15%), to access services and supports (13%), and to visit friends/family (13%). Individuals who answered that they came to Kelowna to access emergency shelters (10%), to get away from the previous place (3%), and for fear for their safety (3%) may also be fleeing violence or unsafe living conditions. Others also indicated a need to start over (3%). Except for those who identified that they moved to Kelowna to access emergency shelters, it is difficult to discern if these individuals lost their housing prior to moving to Kelowna or once they had arrived. Regardless, these results may indicate that new residents to Kelowna are struggling to find employment and affordable housing.

Although a PiT Count is a widely used strategy to enumerate the homeless population, there are several considerations that must be made when interpreting the findings. Despite extensive efforts to capture a large breadth of individuals experiencing homelessness, there are certain populations that will be missed during the count. For example, even though it is estimated that close to one in ten Canadians have experienced hidden homelessness¹⁸, a PiT Count is not designed to accurately enumerate those who may be experiencing hidden homelessness (e.g. people who are “couch-surfing”). Furthermore, as the PiT Count was conducted on a single night, it is more likely to include individuals who experience long-term, chronic homelessness than those who move in and out of homelessness. Accordingly, most absolutely homeless individuals (72%) were classified as being chronically homeless (homeless for six months or more within the past year). Episodic homelessness refers to individuals that have experienced three or more episodes of homelessness within the past year. These episodically homeless individuals move in and out of homelessness and make up 11% of the enumerated population experiencing absolute homelessness in Kelowna.

Homeless shelters provide a diverse range of services to various populations. The large majority (84%) of absolutely homeless individuals surveyed reported that they had stayed in an emergency shelter in the past year, indicating that these organizations provide much needed supports for individuals experiencing homelessness.

Discussion

Key Findings - Temporarily Housed

In addition to homeless shelters, there are many interim housing locations and public systems/institutional care facilities that serve individuals who may otherwise be homeless if not for their services. These organizations serve a variety of populations, offering programs specific to men, women, youth, Indigenous people and families. The range of services and housing options provided are as diverse as the populations they serve.

To provide the most accurate snapshot of homelessness in Kelowna, the count was expanded to include individuals that were temporarily housed in interim housing and institutional care. Information was collected from 11 interim housing locations and nine institutional care providers in 2020. As defined prior, it is important to emphasize that only facilities that have a maximum stay of three years or less were included. The count excluded facilities that provide supported care but have no official limitation on how long people can reside there, thus acting as permanent housing.

335 individuals were enumerated as living in temporary, system-supported housing. Similar to the absolutely homeless population, individuals identified in temporary housing were a majority of males (59%), indicating no Indigenous identity (79%), and falling between the ages of 25-64 years (74%). The mean age of 36 years in the temporarily housed population is less than the mean age of 40 years in the absolutely homeless population, which may be due to a few facilities housing families with dependent children. This is also represented in the higher proportion of people under the age of 25 (24%) identified in the temporarily housed population when compared to the absolutely homeless population (8%).

The 91 surveys collected from a subset of the people living in interim housing locations is another source of information to learn about the homeless population in Kelowna. It was not recorded at what time each individual had entered into the facilities or whether or not the participant had transitioned from absolute homelessness before entering into temporarily housed homelessness. However, we do know that 51% of this population had used an emergency shelter within the past year indicating that a large proportion was recently experiencing absolute homelessness.

When asked for the main reasons for their housing loss, this population provided the same top three reasons as those experiencing absolute homelessness but at different rates: substance use (25% for temporarily housed vs. 13% for absolutely homeless), not enough income for housing (11% for temporarily housed vs. 18% for absolutely homeless), and household conflict (10% for temporarily housed and 21% for absolutely homeless).

As mentioned previously, in 2020 participants were asked for the first time to identify how long ago they had most recently lost their housing. There were many similarities between the responses of the temporarily housed and absolutely homeless population. In both cases most people surveyed (57% temporarily housed, 55% absolutely homeless) has lost their housing within the past year, but a significant proportion of people had lost their housing

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between one to three years ago (27% temporarily housed, 21% absolutely homeless), three to five years ago (6% temporarily housed, 13% absolutely homeless), or more than five years ago (8% temporarily housed, 10% absolutely homeless).

When looking at the top income sources for this population, the top two are the same as those reported by the absolutely homeless population: disability benefit and welfare/income assistance. However, disability benefits account for a much higher proportion of responses amongst temporarily housed individuals (40%) vs. those experiencing absolute homelessness (21%). This could indicate that those staying in interim housing facilities are being connected to the appropriate resources to access disability support programs. Welfare/social assistance accounts for the same proportion of answers across both populations (28%). At the same time, informal income sources account for a much lower percentage of responses amongst temporarily housed (2%) vs. the absolutely homeless population (19%).

There is also an interesting parallel in the barriers faced when trying to secure housing for those who are temporarily housed and those who are absolutely homeless. Amongst both populations, the top three reasons are rents too high (18% for temporarily housed, 20% for absolutely homeless), low income (15% for temporarily housed, 18% for absolutely homeless) and addiction (14% for temporarily housed, 10% for absolutely homeless). This similarity shows the need for additional supports to lower barriers to accessing permanent housing opportunities for both absolutely homeless and temporarily housed populations.

Conclusion

The results of the 2020 Kelowna PiT Count come at a critical point in addressing homelessness in our community. Homelessness has recently been at the forefront of community discussions between all levels of government, community funders, homeless serving agencies, and the private sector. The Journey Home Society was created in 2018 to focus on the implementation of a 5-year plan to address homelessness with a focus on ensuring everyone has a place to call home. The findings of the three point in time counts can be used to assist with future development of initiatives through Kelowna's Journey Home Society and to act as a benchmark to measure the success of future efforts.

Operational Definitions

Absolutely Homeless⁶ An individual is operationally defined as absolutely homeless if they are residing in an unsheltered location or accessing a homeless shelter.

Unsheltered Homeless⁶ Unsheltered locations include places unfit for human habitation, including the following locations: streets, alleys, parks and other public locations, transit stations, abandoned buildings, vehicles, ravines and other outdoor locations where people experiencing homelessness are known to sleep.

Homeless Shelters⁶ Homeless shelters include emergency shelters (general and specific to men, women, youth, etc.), extreme weather shelters, and Violence Against Women (VAW) shelters.

Temporarily Housed Homeless⁹ An individual is operationally defined as temporarily housed if they are accessing system-supported (government or non-profit sector) interim housing or institutional care where residency is guaranteed for three years or less.

Interim Housing¹⁰ Interim housing provides services beyond basic needs, offers residents more privacy, and places greater emphasis on participation and social engagement. Interim housing targets those who would benefit from structure, support and skill-building prior to moving to long term housing, with the ultimate goal of preventing a return to homelessness.

Institutional Care¹⁰ Institutional care serves individuals that are being provisionally accommodated in medical/mental health institutions, penal institutions, residential treatment or withdrawal management centres, or children's institutions/group homes but lack permanent housing to return to upon release. This includes individuals who: a) were homeless prior to admittance and who have no plan for permanent accommodation after release; or b) had housing prior to admittance, but lost their housing while in institutional care; or c) had housing prior to admittance, but cannot go back due to changes in their needs. In any case, without adequate discharge planning and support, which includes arrangements for safe and reliable housing (and necessary aftercare or community-based services), there is a likelihood that these individuals may transition into homelessness following their release.

Hidden Homeless¹⁰ An individual is operationally defined as experiencing hidden homelessness if they are living temporarily with others, but without guarantee of continued residency or immediate prospects for accessing permanent housing. They are typically not paying rent, their duration of stay is unsustainable in the long term, and they do not have the means to secure their own permanent housing in the future. They differ from those who are staying with friends or family out of choice in anticipation of prearranged accommodation, whether in their current hometown or an altogether new community. This living situation is understood by both parties to be temporary, and the assumption is that it will not become permanent.

Operational Definitions

Chronically Homeless¹⁹ Individuals experiencing chronic homelessness are currently homeless and have been homeless for six months or more in the past year (i.e. have spent more than 180 cumulative nights in a shelter or place not fit for human habitation³). Chronic homelessness includes time spent in unsheltered locations, emergency shelters, staying temporarily with others without guarantee of continued residency or the immediate prospects for accessing permanent housing, or short-term rental accommodations (for example, motels) without security of tenure.

Episodically Homeless²⁰ Individuals who experience episodic homelessness are currently homeless and have experienced three or more episodes of homelessness in the past year⁴.

³ The federal definition of chronic homelessness¹⁵ includes individuals who also meet the following criteria: they have recurrent experiences of homelessness over the past three years, with a cumulative duration of at least 18 months (546 days). However, this criterion cannot be included in a PiT Count as PiT Count surveys only ask individuals about their experiences in the past year.

⁴ It should be noted that episodic homelessness is being tracked in the same way in 2020 as it was in the 2016 and 2018 PiT Counts in Kelowna to preserve methodological comparability. However, on a federal level, Reaching Home has expanded their definition of chronic homelessness to also look at individuals who experience several episodes of homelessness over multiple years. Episodic and chronic homelessness are no longer being tracked separately at the federal level.

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