

Community Report

Point-in-Time Count



Kelowna, British Columbia

2024

—CENTRAL OKANAGAN—
FOUNDATION
empowering generations to give

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 Cover Photo: Kalamoior Regional Park (courtesy of Regional District of Central Okanagan)

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Abstract

Overview

The Point-in-Time Count (PiT Count) is part of Reaching Home: Canada's Homeless Strategy, providing a one-day snapshot of homelessness in communities nationwide. Participating communities collect information from people experiencing homelessness in sheltered and unsheltered locations, those provisionally accommodated in transitional housing, people without a permanent residence in health or correctional facilities, and those who are staying with others because they have no access to a permanent residence. The PiT Count is an enumeration of individuals who, on the night of the Count, are staying in sheltered or unsheltered locations (e.g. on the street, in parks). Through a survey, the Count provides communities with information on characteristics such as the age, gender, veteran status, and Indigenous identity of the homeless population. In 2024, Kelowna participated in the federally coordinated Count for the fourth time, having previously conducted Counts in 2016, 2018, and 2020. The 2024 Count represents a four-year gap in data, whereas previous Counts took place every two years. It is also worth noting the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic on homelessness across the country. The 2024 results help reflect on the changing dynamics from previous Counts, such as progress in reducing homelessness and respondent demographics while identifying evolving service needs in the community.

Methodology

The methodology used for the 2024 PiT Count remained consistent with previous Counts conducted in the community. Systems data and survey data remained the primary sources of information for the 2024 PiT Count. A combination of 7 shelters, 3 transitional housing sites, and 6 system-supported interim housing or institutional health locations, submitted system data on their residents. Systems data includes information on age, gender, Indigenous identity, and the number of accompanied children staying in these locations on the night of the Count. The research team, consisting of the PiT Count Coordinator, Data Coordinator, and Steering Committee members, developed a list of sheltered and unsheltered locations to capture a representative picture of the level of homelessness in Kelowna. On the night of the Count, teams of trained volunteers led by experienced team leaders from outreach and local homeless-serving agencies travelled throughout the designated locations to invite individuals to complete the survey.

Conclusion

The results of the 2024 PiT Count offer an estimate of the current state of homelessness in Kelowna on a single night. The information collected provides direction for local stakeholders and agencies addressing homelessness to inform strategic community planning. The added questions to the 2020 survey can be compared for the first time using the data from the 2024 Count. However, acknowledging the four-year gap in the data is imperative when directly comparing the 2020 and 2024 results. The 2024 findings offer a reference to track changes in the homeless population and the factors influencing efforts to address homelessness in Kelowna.

This project was funded in part by Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy through the Central Okanagan Foundation. The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.

Executive Summary

Background

In 2019, the Government of Canada launched the Reaching Home program aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness. Homelessness refers to the situation of an individual, family, or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect means and ability of acquiring it.¹ Under the program, the government collaborates with community partners to develop projects that represent community needs and priorities. To develop a community-based approach to reducing homelessness, the federal government supports the delivery of PiT Counts. PiT Counts provide a community-level estimate of sheltered and unsheltered homelessness on a single night that also contributes to a national picture of homelessness. On November 12, 2024, Kelowna participated in its fourth PiT Count. Kelowna's 2024 PiT Count had two objectives:

1. To provide an enumeration of the number of people experiencing homelessness in the city on a given night.
2. To collect information on the demographics and service needs of the local homeless population.

The last time Kelowna participated in the nationally coordinated PiT Count was in 2020. It is imperative to note the four-year gap in the data when comparing the 2020 and 2024 results. Within that four-year gap, events like the COVID-19 global pandemic significantly impacted homelessness across Canada. A 2022 report by Housing Infrastructure and Communities Canada (HICC) highlights the increase in homeless encampments in communities across Canada since the beginning of the pandemic.² A complex set of factors associated with the pandemic, such as the strain on public healthcare and social services systems, rising housing market and living costs, and economic uncertainty, partially reflect the rise of encampments. Different levels of government in Canada independently and collaboratively developed strategies to confront the complex factors impacting homelessness in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Belonging in BC is part of the government of British Columbia's comprehensive plan to address homelessness through coordinated action with multiple ministries and partners.³ The plan includes funding for Homeless Encampment Action Response Teams (HEART) and the Homeless Encampment Action Response for Temporary Housing (HEARTH) to provide rapid, coordinated, multidisciplinary responses when encampments arise. Kelowna is one of five cities (Abbotsford, Nanaimo, Prince George, and Victoria) that have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the provincial government to better support people who are unhoused and sheltering in encampments. The HEART and HEARTH program is guided by a shared commitment by all partners to prioritize

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1 Gaetz, S.; Barr, C.; Friesen, A.; Harris, B.; Hill, C.; Kovacs-Burns, K.; Pauly, B.; Pearce, B.; Turner, A.; Marsolais, A. (2012) Canadian Definition of Homelessness. Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press. www.homelesshub.ca/homelessdefinition

2 Canada, Infrastructure. Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada - Homelessness Data Snapshot: Findings from the 2022 National Survey on Homeless Encampments. 10 Aug. 2023, <https://housing-infrastructure.canada.ca/homelessness-sans-abri/reports-rapports/encampments-survey-2022-enquete-campements-eng.html#h2.05>.

3 Government of British Columbia. Belonging in BC: A Collaborative Plan to Prevent and Reduce Homelessness. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/housing-tenancy/affordable-and-social-housing/homelessness#BiBC>

Executive Summary

the health, physical safety, cultural safety, and dignity of people sheltering outside.⁴ The point is to illustrate the various independent and collaborative strategies developed at different levels of government to try to address the complex factors impacting homelessness in Canada.

Although beneficial, the multi-level approach has limitations in that each level of government and partner organization operates using context-specific approaches and definitions. The research team acknowledged these limitations and challenges when implementing the 2024 PiT Count in Kelowna. It mitigated these limitations by following the guidelines and definitions established by the federal Reaching Home strategy.⁵ Future Counts in Kelowna may consider revising their strategy to better reflect provincial and municipal conditions.

Enumeration Results

PiT Counts only capture a snapshot of the number of people experiencing homelessness on a given night due to a variety of factors related to reaching individuals or homeless-serving facilities. The number of participating shelters and transitional houses has changed throughout the years due to the opening, expansion, or closure of these facilities. These changes affect the data available for PiT Counts, which in turn alters the representation of the homeless population in that community. For example, the 2024 PiT Count in Kelowna was unable to collect data from the same number of shelters and transitional houses as in 2020. It is also challenging to reach individuals and families experiencing hidden homelessness (e.g. couch surfing). These challenges limit the ability to compare PiT Count results across different years. Although this report compares some of the data with previous findings, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of these comparisons.

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4 "Encampment & Homelessness Response: HEART & HEARTH." BC Housing, <https://www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/homelessness-services/HEART-HEARTH>. Accessed 31 Mar. 2025.

5 Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy. Everyone Counts - A guide to Point-in-Time Counts in Canada - 4th Edition. Retrieved from: <https://homelessnesslearninghub.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Guide-to-Point-in-Time-Counts-in-Canada-4th-Edition-2-1.pdf>

Executive Summary

Key Findings

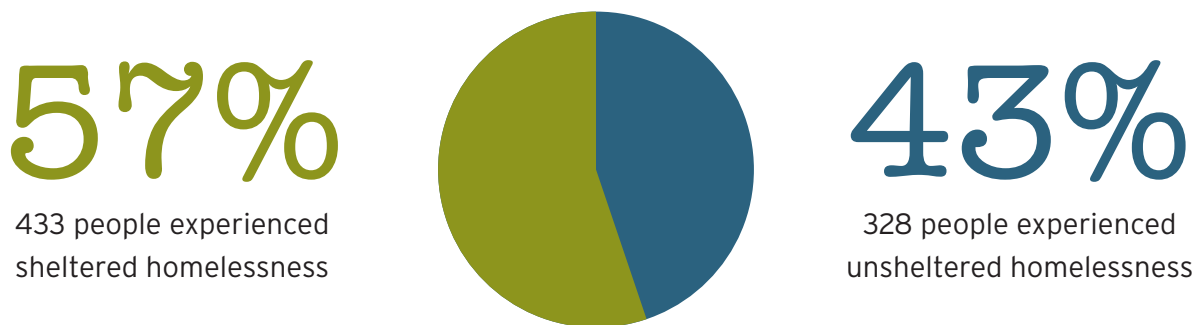
At least 761 people experienced homelessness on November 12, 2024

At least 582 people experienced Absolute Homelessness

At least 148 people experienced Temporarily Housed Homelessness

31 people could not be included into the two categories above⁶

433 (57%) people experienced sheltered homelessness, and 328 (43%) experienced unsheltered homelessness on the night of the Count.



The average number of days spent homeless for survey respondents increased from 267 in 2020 to 287 in 2024, signalling the rise of chronic homelessness in the community. 24% of survey and systems data respondents identified as Indigenous Peoples.⁷

The top five challenges to finding housing for survey respondents were:



⁶ The 31 were included in the total enumeration because they experienced homelessness, but the available data cannot categorize them as either absolute homeless or temporarily housed homeless.

⁷ Studies have highlighted the higher likelihood of homelessness for Indigenous Peoples due to systemic barriers, racial discrimination, and the intergenerational trauma of colonization and experiences of residential schools. For more information see - "Indigenous Peoples and Homelessness." Homeless Hub, <https://homelesshub.ca/collection/population-groups/indigenous-peoples/>. Accessed 1 Apr. 2025.

Introduction

Homelessness is a multifaceted experience resulting from a series of complex factors. Individuals become homeless due to the availability and affordability of housing, a lack of or sudden loss of income, mental health issues, substance use issues, or domestic abuse, among other factors. Preventing and reducing homelessness requires first understanding who is being affected and why. As a designated community under Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy, Kelowna received funding to participate in the fourth coordinated PiT Count from April 2024 to March 2025.

A PiT Count is a method used to measure sheltered and unsheltered homelessness in a particular location. It enumerates individuals who, at a given time, are staying in homeless shelters, temporary housing, or an unsheltered location. The Count uses this enumeration to provide a snapshot of homelessness in a community. To understand who is being affected and why, the Count also collects information on the characteristics of homeless populations (e.g. age, gender, and Indigenous identity). The survey helps to understand the local context, support local planning, and identify community priorities for developing service mapping. Data from communities that follow national guidelines contribute to a macro understanding of homelessness throughout Canada. PiT Count data helps generate public awareness and promotes government engagement in confronting homelessness.

Homelessness has grown significantly in Kelowna, signalling the need for increased resources to confront existing and emerging challenges. Kelowna's community-led homelessness strategy, the Journey Home Strategy, was developed in 2018 with support from the City of Kelowna. The strategy comprised 35 actions to be implemented over five years and served as a roadmap to address homelessness. In 2024, in response to the community's call for greater investment, the City of Kelowna assumed the lead in developing and implementing a renewed community homelessness response plan. Findings from the 2024 PiT Count and survey will provide invaluable insights into community needs and will be used to track progress toward the community goals included in the plan.

It is essential to acknowledge the scope and limitations of the PiT Count to prevent misinterpretation of the data. When comparing the 2024 findings with previous Counts, such as those from 2020, one must consider the four-year gap in the data and the impact of the global pandemic on homelessness across British Columbia and other parts of Canada.⁸ Contextual changes that occurred in a city between Counts, such as an increase in population and the opening or closing of shelters and interim housing facilities, should also be considered. It is also of note that organizations may fall in and out of the definition of interim housing between Counts due to changes in operational practices.

The enumeration on the night of the Count should be interpreted as a minimum representation of the number of people experiencing homelessness in that community.

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8 Tuyt, Rana Van, and Michael Young. "New and Expanding Populations of People Experiencing Homelessness in British Columbia, Canada During the COVID-19 Pandemic." *International Journal on Homelessness*, vol. 3, no. 2, May 2023, pp. 112-23. ojs.lib.uwo.ca, <https://doi.org/10.5206/ijoh.2022.2.15042>.

Methodology

A PiT Count Steering Committee collaborated with the PiT Count Coordinator to develop and implement the 2024 Count in Kelowna. Representatives from the homeless-serving sector and individuals with lived and living experiences were invited to participate in the steering committee. The committee comprised of shelter service providers, local outreach services, the Interior Health Authority, Advocacy Canada (LGBTQ2S+), the City of Kelowna, Indigenous and Métis services, and youth services. Insight and input from committee members helped guide the community strategy used for the Count. The 2024 Kelowna PiT Count relied on a combination of national guidelines and a community strategy based on the local context.⁹ The criteria for the night of the Count followed the national framework while reflecting Kelowna's contemporary state of homelessness. The 2024 strategy reflected changes within the homeless service sector since the last enumeration and survey were conducted in 2020, including the impact of COVID-19 responses on people experiencing homelessness between 2020 and 2024.

The PiT Count took place on the evening of November 12, 2024, from 4 - 10 PM. The temperature high was 12°C with a low of 5°C overnight. The PiT Count Coordinator organized groups of three or more volunteers to conduct the enumeration and surveys across 13 zones in the city, including the designated outdoor sheltering site (OS4). Sixty volunteers, recruited from local post-secondary institutions, staff from local service providers, and members of the public, helped conduct and distribute surveys throughout the designated locations in the city. Individuals from the Nursing, Psychology, and Health and Exercise Science Departments at the University of British Columbia Okanagan (UBCO) also assisted as volunteers. Before the Count, volunteers received six hours of training on understanding homelessness, survey administration, enumeration protocols, cultural awareness, and personal safety.

Volunteer teams each had a team leader from a local agency or with lived experience to guide and facilitate the interactions with the homeless population. Teams covering unsheltered locations received a map with detailed directions, highlighted points of interest and a tally sheet to report the number of observed homeless individuals. These teams gathered a count of people visually experiencing homelessness in designated areas while also conducting surveys for those who agreed to participate. Volunteer teams received honorariums in the form of \$5.00 in cash and \$10.00 Tim Hortons gift cards to distribute to survey participants and homeless individuals they encountered. The City of Kelowna also provided volunteers with resources, including warm clothing (socks, mittens, and toques), hand warmers, and snacks, to distribute to people experiencing homelessness.

The Kelowna PiT Count community strategy is not without limitations including inconsistent administration of survey questions and the inability to be able to engage with every individual in the 13 designated zones.

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⁹ Canada, Infrastructure. "Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada - Everyone Counts - Standards for Designated Community Participation," March 31, 2022. <https://housing-infrastructure.canada.ca/homelessness-sans-abri/resources-ressources/point-in-time-guide-denombrement-ponctuel-eng.html>.

Operational Definitions

Absolute Homeless

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

Chronically Homeless

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 habitation).

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 Homeless

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

Hidden Homeless

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.

Homeless Shelters

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

Institutional Care

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.

Operational Definitions

Interim Housing

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.

Sheltered Homeless

Includes people sleeping in emergency shelters (general and specific to men, women, youth, etc.), extreme weather shelters, and Domestic Violence (DV) shelters. It may include people who receive a hotel/motel vouchers in lieu of emergency shelter. It does not include people who have security of tenure or who are in social or supported/subsidized housing. The sheltered enumeration is divided into three sub-components:

1. **Emergency shelters:** Temporary, short-term accommodation for people experiencing homelessness. At a minimum, emergency shelters provide overnight accommodation.
2. **Hotels/motels:** Overnight accommodations in a hotel or motel provided to people experiencing homelessness in lieu of shelter beds (e.g., through a voucher or arrangement with the operator). Stays are paid for by the service provider (e.g., through a voucher or arrangement with the operator), not privately (e.g., through income or savings).
3. **Domestic violence shelters:** Temporary accommodation or housing with support for individuals and/or families experiencing domestic abuse or the threat of violence.

Temporarily Housed Homeless

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.

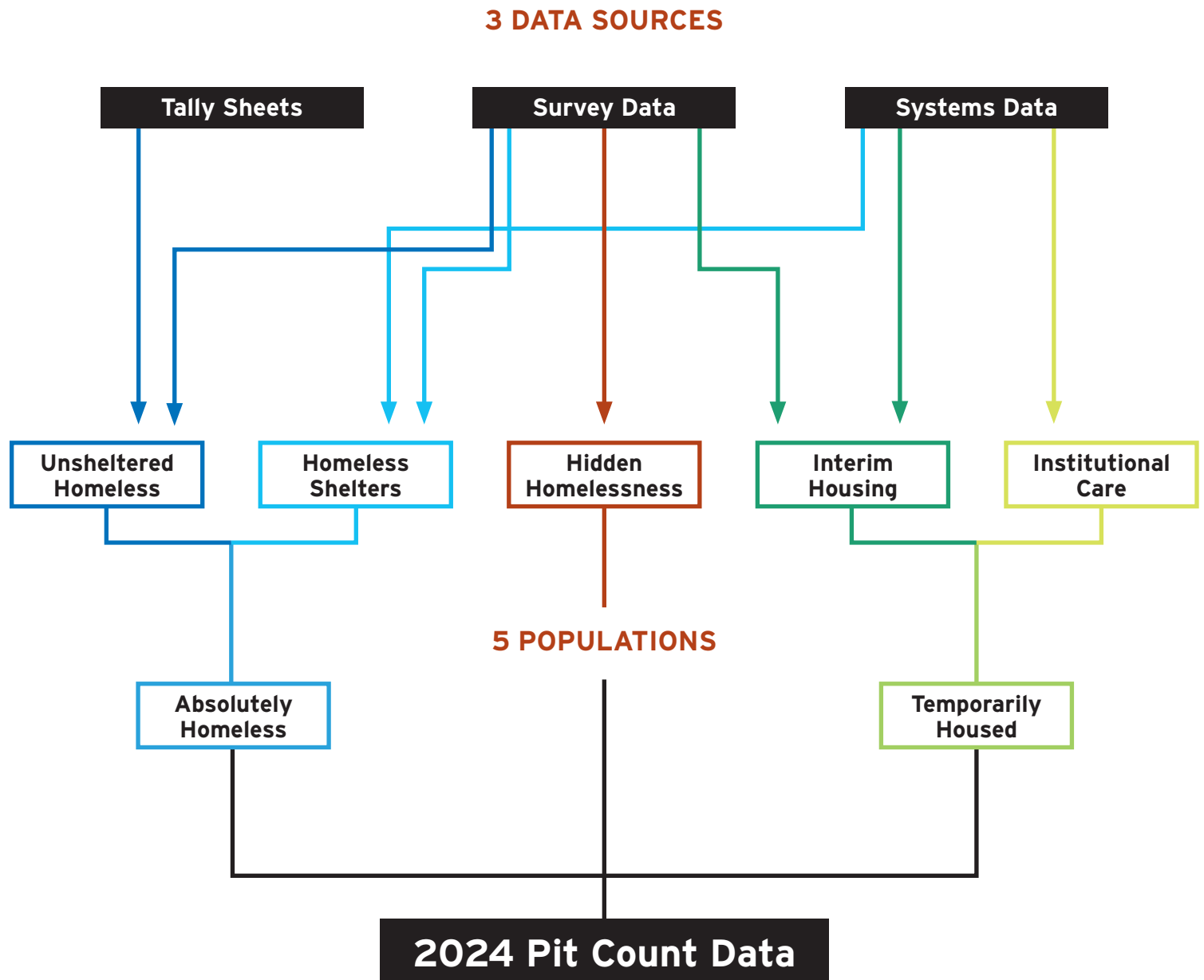
Transitional Housing

is intended to offer a supportive living environment for its residents, including offering them the experience, tools, knowledge, and opportunities for social and skill development to become more independent and transition from homelessness to secure housing. It is considered an intermediate step between emergency shelter and supportive or independent housing and has limits on how long an individual or family can stay. This category can include people in transitional bed-based facilities located within other service providers. Transitional housing with stays guaranteed for longer than a year, where residents have security of tenure and pay a portion of the rent, should not normally be included.

Unsheltered Homeless

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.

Data Sources



The PiT Count data collection strategy collected information from the 5 target population groups using 3 different data sources.

Data Collection

Systems Data

Shelter and housing services supplemented the enumeration and data collected from unsheltered locations with systems data. The PiT Count Coordinator requested systems data submission forms from homeless shelters, transitional housing, interim housing, and institutional facilities. Representatives from these locations received detailed instructions on how to report their records while maintaining the confidentiality and anonymity of each resident. Systems data includes agency capacity (e.g., the number of beds available), the number of beds filled, and the number of waitlisted individuals on the night of the Count. Staff from these shelter and housing services also provided individual resident information, including age, gender, Indigenous identity, and whether a child accompanied the individual. The options on gender and Indigenous identity differed on systems data submissions compared to survey data. For example, systems data only included male, female, and other as the gender options for residents. Inuit was also not an option for systems data residents who identified as Indigenous.

Survey Data

The 2024 Count used the previous Counts' survey as a foundation while amending certain sections to reflect evolving local conditions. Surveys took place in both sheltered and unsheltered locations. The survey consisted of four sections: an introductory script, a screening section, 15 core questions from Reaching Home, and 4 questions recommended from the harmonized survey platform and included based on Steering Committee discussions. The screening section was to determine if individuals were willing to participate, to validate their eligibility, and to ensure they had not already completed a survey. Participation in the survey was entirely voluntary and lasted between 15 - 20 minutes. Volunteers informed participants that they could skip any question or stop the interview at any time with no questions asked. The screening question, "Where are you staying tonight?" helped categorize the type of homelessness they were experiencing based on their response. For example, if an individual responded at "someone else's place," they would be identified as experiencing hidden homelessness for the night of the Count.¹⁰ The survey provides information on respondents' characteristics (e.g. age, gender, Indigenous identity, number of accompanied family members, race and/ or ethnicity, military or Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) service, and foster care/group home history), homeless episodes (e.g. amount of time being homeless, age at first homeless episode, reason for housing loss, and challenges in finding housing), and health challenges and services needed.

Tally Sheets

Volunteer teams covering designated unsheltered locations used tally sheets to enumerate individuals who did not participate in the survey but were identified as homeless. The criteria for including an individual as observed homeless followed the Everyone Counts A guide to Point-in-Time Counts in Canada definition of observed homeless.¹¹ The tally sheets included a brief description of why volunteers perceived the individual to be homeless (e.g., sleeping on the bench with belongings or pushing a cart full of belongings).

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¹⁰ Nadia Ali. "Understanding Hidden Homelessness." Homeless Hub: Hidden Homeless and Population Groups Collections. August 1, 2028.
<https://homelesshub.ca/blog/2018/understanding-hidden-homelessness/>

Findings

Systems data was received from a total of 7 Shelters, 3 Transitional Housing sites, and 6 out of 9 known system-supported interim housing/institutional or health locations (See Appendix). Systems data highlighted the number of people staying in these locations and provided personal information on their age, gender, Indigenous identity, and whether they had an accompanying child. Staff from service providers was able to administer 54 surveys of the 272 individuals staying in any of the 7 participating shelters. The Count also includes 37 surveys completed throughout the 3 transitional housing sites. In total, there were 91 surveys from Homeless shelters, Transitional housing sites, and Interim/ Institutional facilities.

Volunteer teams surveyed 180 individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness and enumerated an additional 183 individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness who did not complete surveys. Out of the 180 unsheltered survey respondents, 35 individuals were removed from the absolute homeless enumeration because they indicated they would stay in a homeless shelter on the night of the Count. This was done to avoid a 'double count' in this category, considering they were surveyed in an unsheltered location but would be included in the systems data based on their admission into a homeless shelter for the night of the Count.

761 is the estimated number of people experiencing homelessness in Kelowna on November 12, 2024. In 2024, 328 (43%) were identified as unsheltered homeless, with 433 (57%) experiencing sheltered homelessness. The research team surveyed 19% of the 280 individuals in homeless shelters and 36% of those in participating interim housing and institutional facilities. Although these numbers provide valuable information, they only represent a single one day snapshot of homelessness in Kelowna. As a result, they should be interpreted as a minimum number rather than a complete result. It is also necessary to restate the four-year gap in the data since the previous Count in 2020, and the impact of factors during this period, such as the global Covid-19 pandemic. Table 1 demonstrates the changes in the number of individuals experiencing absolute homelessness and temporarily housed homelessness throughout the four single Counts.

Table 1

Years/Categories	2016	2018	2020	2024
Absolutely Homeless	233	286	297	582
Temporarily Housed Homeless	273	319	335	148
Undefined	NA	NA	NA	31
Combined	506	605	632	761

11 Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy. Everyone Counts - A guide to Point-in-Time Counts in Canada - 4th Edition. Retrieved from: <https://homelessnesslearninghub.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Guide-to-Point-in-Time-Counts-in-Canada-4th-Edition-2-1.pdf>

Absolutely Homeless

Individuals who are accessing a homeless shelter or residing in an unsheltered location (e.g. public space, vehicle, or encampment) are defined as absolute homeless. The 2024 PiT Count used a combination of homeless shelter systems data (n=280), unsheltered survey responses (n=119)¹², and volunteer-observed homelessness (n=183) to measure absolute homelessness in Kelowna. Individuals were categorized as absolute homeless based on their responses to the survey question, “Where are you staying tonight?” Only those who responded that they would be staying in an unsheltered location (e.g. public space), a vehicle, or an encampment were included in the unsheltered survey calculation. 35 individuals who responded that they would stay in a homeless shelter were excluded from the unsheltered survey tally to avoid a double count from their survey responses and homeless shelter systems data registration. Surveys with an ‘unclear/blank or ‘unsure’ response to the question were also removed from the enumeration. A total of 582 individuals were identified as being absolute homeless, with 280 (48%) experiencing sheltered homelessness and 302 (52%) being unsheltered.¹³

As seen in Table 2, homeless shelter systems data (n=280) and unsheltered survey data (n=119) helped reflect the age, gender, and Indigenous identity of the absolute homeless population. This population had an average age of 43 years old, with the majority identifying as male (70%), indicating no Indigenous status (72%), and falling between the ages of 25 - 64 years (90%).

The 2024 PiT Count volunteers and research team collected a total of 208 surveys from individuals identified as absolute homeless. The 208 surveys consist of individuals who indicated they would be staying in an unsheltered location (66), vehicle (4), homeless shelter (89), and encampments (49) on the night of the count.

These surveys offer details on the individual characteristics and factors affecting absolute homelessness in Kelowna.¹⁴ The majority (75%) responded that they did not have a family member (e.g. children, partner, dependents, pets) staying with them on the night of the Count with 25% indicating that they did. Of the 25% with a family member, 6% had accompanied children with them. In 2024, 3% of participants reported having come to Canada as an immigrant, refugee, or asylum claimant compared to 1% of respondents in 2020. 15 (8%) individuals served in the military.

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12 The n=119 corresponds to absolute homeless survey responses from individuals staying in an encampment (e.g. Group of tents, makeshifts shelters, or other long-term outdoor settlement), unsheltered public space (e.g. Street, park, bus shelter, forest), or vehicle (e.g. Car, Van, recreational vehicle RV, truck, boat). Those who indicated they would be staying in a Homeless shelter (n=35) were removed to avoid a double Count since their information was available through systems data

13 We used the following calculation to measure the number of people experiencing absolute homelessness in Kelowna. Absolute homeless: n = 280 (homeless shelter systems data) + n = 183 (Volunteer observed homelessness) + n = 119 (Individuals who indicated in their survey response that they would be staying in an unsheltered location, vehicle, or encampment).

14 The percentages were calculated based on the number of responses to particular questions where the data was extracted from. Although 208 surveys were conducted, not every question was answered by respondents. “Unclear/blank” responses were removed from the calculation.

Absolutely Homeless

Table 2 - Absolute Homeless: Systems Data and Unsheltered Survey Data Combined

Homeless Shelter systems data and unsheltered survey data combined		2024 n = 404	2020 n = 256	2018 n = 248	2016 n = 181
Age median = years		43	40	40	41
0-14	3	NR	2%	3%	2%
15-24	10	2%	6%	9%	13%
25-64	365	90%	89%	85%	79%
65+	25	6%	3%	3%	6%
Gender					
Female	108	27%	27%	31%	29%
Male	282	70%	71%	68%	70%
Non- binary	NR	NR	1.4% (Trans+ other)	1% (Trans)	1%
Indigeneity					
First Nations	63	16%	14%	14%	10%
Métis	28	7%	1%	5%	6%
Non-Status/ Indigenous Heritage	14	3%	4%	7%	6%
Inuit	3	NR	NR	NA	NR

Absolutely Homeless

The average length of time experiencing homelessness for those in the absolute homeless category grew 6.6% from 267 days (2020) to 286 (2024). In 2024, the average number of days spent homeless in a calendar year was 286 days compared to 267 days in 2020. 161 (80%) of the absolute homeless individuals surveyed are experiencing chronic homelessness compared to 72% in 2020, having been homeless for six months or more within the past year.¹⁵ 31 years old was the average age for when participants experienced homelessness for the first time. 38% of respondents experienced homelessness for the first time before the age of 25. Regarding sexual orientation, 88% described themselves as straight/heterosexual and 6% as bisexual. 1% noted that their sexual orientation was not listed among the options.

Participants were also asked questions about their most recent housing loss, the challenges or problems in finding housing, and their primary source of income. Similar to 2020, the highest reported reason for housing loss was a conflict (37%) (e.g. spouse/partner, landlord, parent/guardian, roommate, other). The second highest factor was not enough income for housing (26%). Most respondents (34%) indicated that their most recent housing loss occurred between 1 month to 1 year ago. 14% reported it happened more than 5 years ago and 4% less than a month ago (from the night of the Count).

Welfare/income assistance is no longer the most common source of income, as reported in 2020 (28%). Instead, in 2024, disability benefit (47%) was the most common source of income. Other significant sources include welfare/income assistance (34%) and informal income sources (e.g. bottle returns, panhandling) (18%). High rental prices remained the primary challenge when trying to find housing in 2024 (73%) compared to 2020 (20%). Low income (65%), addiction (46%), and discrimination (46%) remained the following most significant challenges in 2024. Table 5 provides a more detailed breakdown of this by year.

The average length of time experiencing homelessness for those in the absolute homeless category grew 6.6% from 267 days (2020) to 286 (2024). In 2024, the average number of days spent homeless in a calendar year was 286 days compared to 267 days in 2020.

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¹⁵ For a more detailed description of chronically homeless, see page 11 of this report.

Absolutely Homeless

Table 3 - Health Challenges and Services Needed 2024 and 2020

Health Challenges Absolute Homeless Population		
Responses	2024 n = 208	2020 n = 152
Substance use issue	83%	79%
Mental health issue	67%	61%
Grief/Bereavement (Added in 2024)	66%	NA
Illness or medical condition	59%	44%
Physical disability	57%	30%
Senses (e.g. seeing or hearing) (Added in 2024)	40%	NA
Learning disability or cognitive limitation	38%	45%
Acquired brain injury	33%	37%
Services Needed Absolute Homeless Population		
Responses	2024 n=208	2020 n =152
Addiction or substance use issue	26%	64%
Mental Health	23%	62%
Serious ongoing medical condition	14%	43%
Physical disability	11%	34%
Learning disability	10%	19%
Brain injury	10%	25%
None of the above	5%	8%
Pregnancy	1%	2%

Absolutely Homeless

Table 4 - Factor Leading to Most Recent Housing Loss 2024

What happened that caused you to lose your housing most recently 2024 n = 208	
Housing and Financial Issues	
Factor	Percentage
Not enough income	26%
Unfit/unsafe housing	6%
Building sold or renovated	3%
Conflict with (E.g. Spouse/partner, landlord, parent/guardian, roommate, other)	
Landlord	15%
Spouse/partner	13%
Parent/guardian	4%
Other	5%
Discrimination from/by (E.g. Spouse/partner, landlord, parent/guardian, roommate, other)	
Landlord	10%
Spouse/partner	3%
Parent/guardian	BR
Other	4%
Abuse from/by (E.g. Spouse/partner, landlord, parent/guardian, roommate, other)	
Spouse/partner	7%
Landlord	4%
Parent/guardian	1%
Other	2%

Absolutely Homeless

Table 4 (continued) - Factor Leading to Most Recent Housing Loss 2024

What happened that caused you to lose your housing most recently 2024 n = 208	
Health and Corrections	
Factor	Percentage
Substance use issue	10%
Mental Health issue	5%
Hospitalization or treatment	4%
Incarceration	3%
Decline to answer	0.5%
Other	
Death or departure of family member	8%
Complaints (E.g. pets, noise, damage)	6%
Left the community	3%
Other	8%

Table 5 - Housing Loss

How long ago did you lose your housing most recently?		
Response	2024 n = 208	2020 n = 152
Less than 1 month ago	4%	7%
1 month to 1 year ago	34%	48%
1+ to 3 years ago	20%	21%
3+ to 5 years ago	12%	13%
More than 5 years ago	14%	10%

Absolutely Homeless

In 2024, participants were asked to indicate how long they had been in Kelowna. Their answers were converted into years, which can be found by categories in figure 1. Like the 2018 and 2020 format, there were two follow-up questions in 2024: “What is the main reason you came to Kelowna?”¹⁶ and “Where did you live before coming to Kelowna?” 16% of respondents indicated they had always lived in Kelowna. Most individuals who reported moving to Kelowna (n=165) had done so more than 10 years ago (30%). 26% moved here between 1 - 5 years ago. The main reason why respondents came to Kelowna was because their family moved here (22%). Another significant factor was visiting friends and family (18%). Those who indicated they had moved to Kelowna came from various provinces and territories. Like 2020, the majority came from other areas of British Columbia (52%). Alberta (24%) and Ontario (13%) were the next most common places of residency for respondents who had moved to Kelowna.

Table 6 - Coming to Kelowna

What is the main reason you came to Kelowna?		
Response	2024 n = 208	2020 n = 152
Family moved here	22%	15%
To visit friends and family	18%	13%
Employment (seeking)	8%	15%
To access services and supports	6%	13%
Employment (secured)	6%	8%
To attend school	5%	NA
Fear for safety	4%	5%
To start over/have a better life	3%	3%
To access emergency shelters	3%	10%
On way to another community	2%	NA

.....

¹⁶ Participants were supposed to only indicate the primary reason why they came to Kelowna. Due to ‘misinterpretation during survey collection, there were multiple responses to this question per respondent. During the data cleaning process, all the surveys with various responses to this question had to be changed to ‘unclear/blank’ responses, resulting in an underrepresentation of the reasons why individuals decided to come to Kelowna.

Absolutely Homeless

Figure 1 - Time in Kelowna

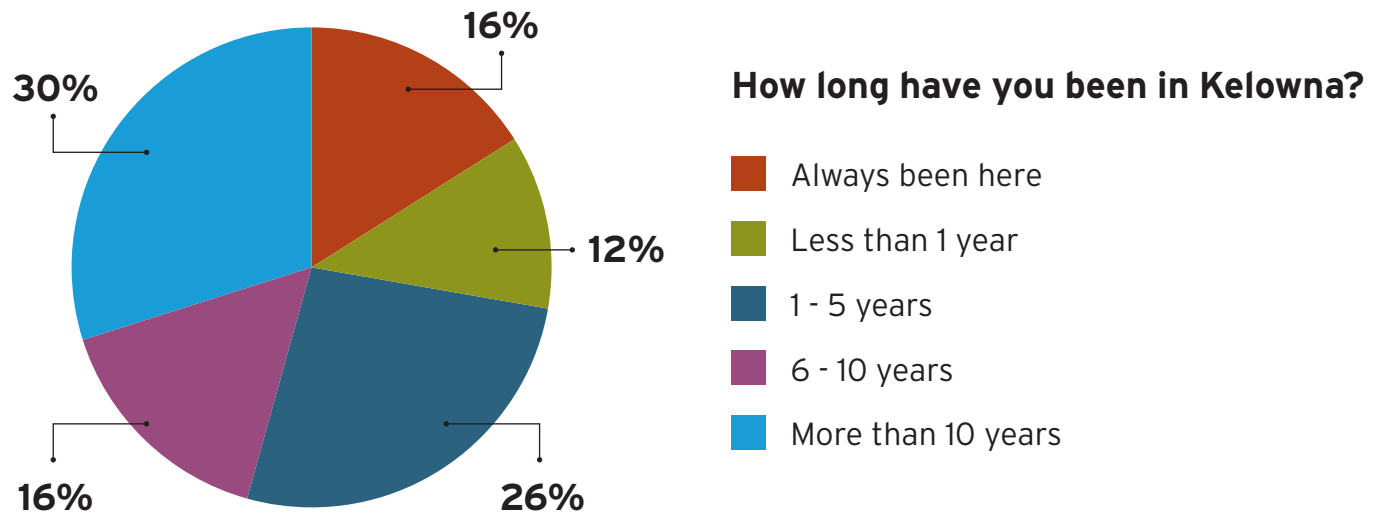
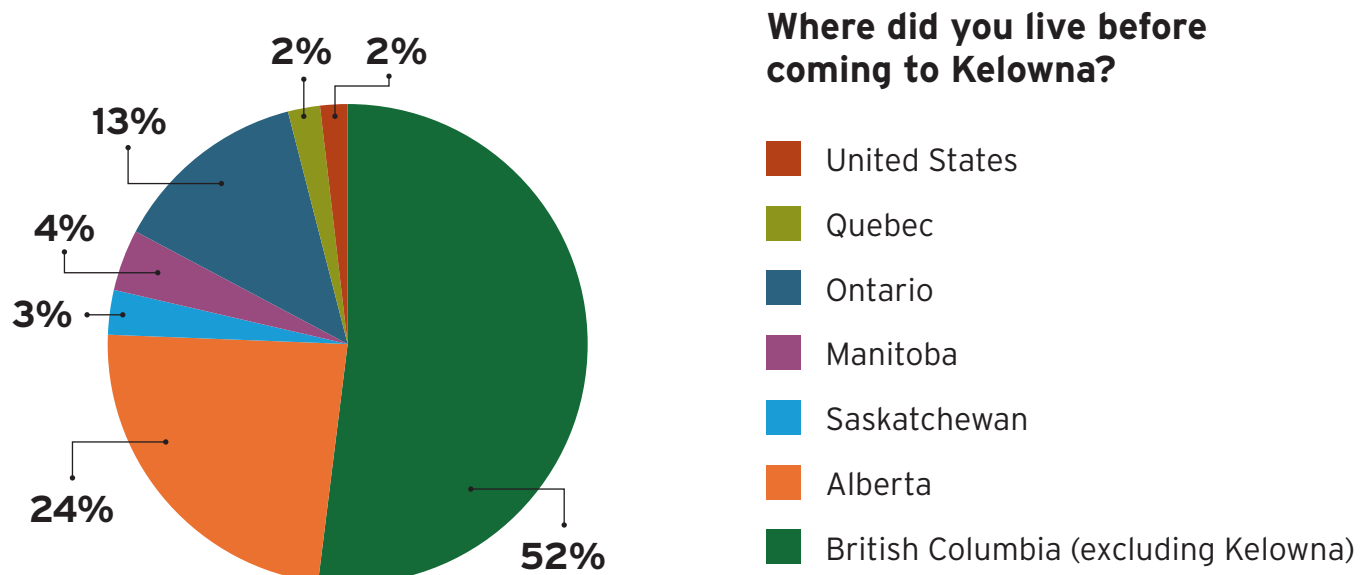


Figure 1.2 - Place of Residency Before Kelowna



Temporarily Housed Homeless

A total of 148 individuals were identified as temporarily housed in transitional housing (n=95), interim housing (n=42), and institutional care (n=11). Only individuals considered homeless at intake in these locations or having no permanent housing arranged for discharge were included in this section. Systems data from participating agencies provided an enumeration of the temporarily housed homeless population in Kelowna for 2024. However, systems data only provides additional information on individuals' age, gender, Indigenous identity, and the number of accompanied children. The 2024 PiT Count was unable to collect substantial information on individuals' demographics due to limited survey delivery in these locations. Consequently, there is a discrepancy between the proportion of people enumerated in the temporarily housed homeless category and the number of survey data available for this population. Based on systems data and surveys available, the 148 individuals identified in temporary housing had an average age of 48 years, with the majority (82%) falling between the ages of 25 - 64 years. Individuals who identified as Indigenous accounted for 19% of the temporarily housed homeless population. Out of the 82% between the ages of 25-64 years, 61% identified as First Nations, 10% as Métis, and 4% as non-status/with Indigenous Ancestry.

Table 7 - Age, Gender, and Indigenous Identity of Individuals in Temporary Housing

Temporarily Housed Homeless	
2024 n = 148	
Age Range	2024 Percentage (%)
0 - 14 years	NA
15 - 24 years	6
25 - 64 years	82
65+ years	12
Gender	Percentage (%)
Male	57
Female	43
Transgender	NR
Trans and non-binary	NA
Indigenous Identity	Percentage (%)
Indigenous	19
First Nations	14
Métis	3
Non-status/ Have Indigenous Ancestry	NR
Inuit	NA

Temporarily Housed Homeless – Survey Data

A total of 37 surveys (n=37) were completed with individuals in temporary housing (e.g. transition, interim, or institutional housing). It is necessary to note that not all temporary housing agencies participated in the surveyed section of the 2024 PiT Count. Consequently, the survey data for this section offers a partial representation of the temporarily housed homeless population.¹⁷ Similarly, with the decrease in survey response numbers in 2024 (n=37) compared to 2020 (n=91), caution should be used when comparing to previous survey years. Since 2020, several housing organizations removed their maximum residency limits which removed them from the scope of existing Interim Housing definitions. Interim agencies that change their guaranteed residency limit may fall in or out of the scope of future PiT Count in Kelowna, which, as of 2024, screens in facilities that have a guaranteed residency of three years or less. It is vital to consider these contextual community changes when interpreting the data.

Figure 2 - Health Challenges

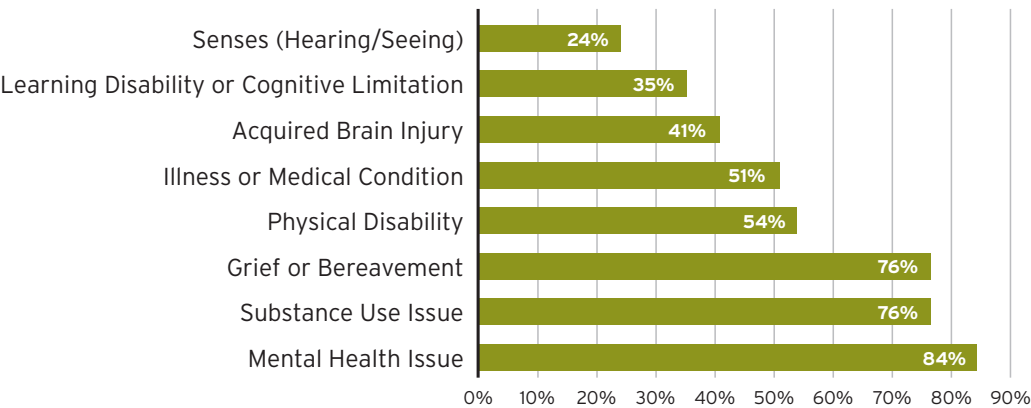
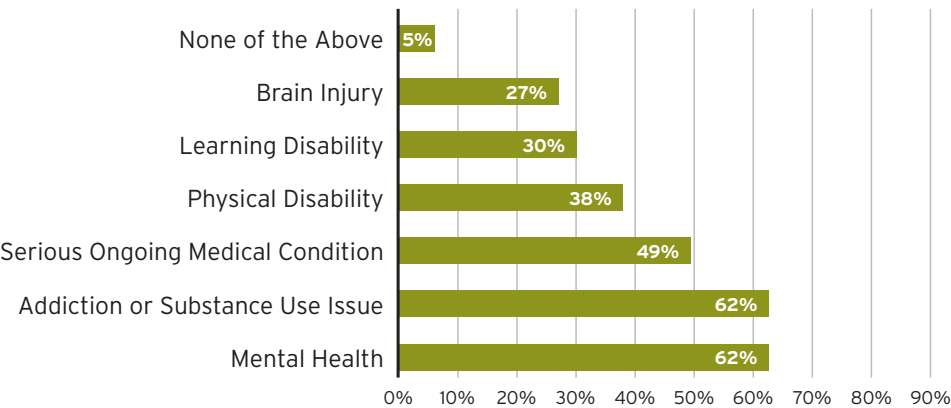


Figure 2.1 - Health Services Needed



17 Participants were supposed to only indicate the primary reason why they came to Kelowna. Due to ‘misinterpretation during survey collection, there were multiple responses to this question per respondent. During the data cleaning process, all the surveys with various responses to this question had to be changed to ‘unclear/blank’ responses, resulting in an underrepresentation of the reasons why individuals decided to come to Kelowna.

Temporarily Housed Homeless – Survey Data

Respondents also answered the question: “What happened that caused you to lose your housing most recently?” The survey also included similar questions related to the challenges or problems in finding housing and participants’ primary source of income. Due to the subjective and complex dynamics influencing people’s access to housing, these questions had a select all that apply option for respondents to explain their experience in as much detail as possible.¹⁸

Figure 2.2 highlights respondents’ reasons for their most recent housing loss with categories. The 6 categories include Abuse from/by (e.g. Spouse/partner, landlord, parent/guardian, roommate, other), Health (e.g. Substance use issue, physical health issue, and disability), Complaints (e.g. Pets, noise, damage), Corrections (e.g. Incarceration, released from incarceration, parole), Conflict with (e.g. Spouse/partner, landlord, parent/guardian, other), and Housing and Financial issues.

Figure 2.2 - Most Recent Housing Loss – Reasons

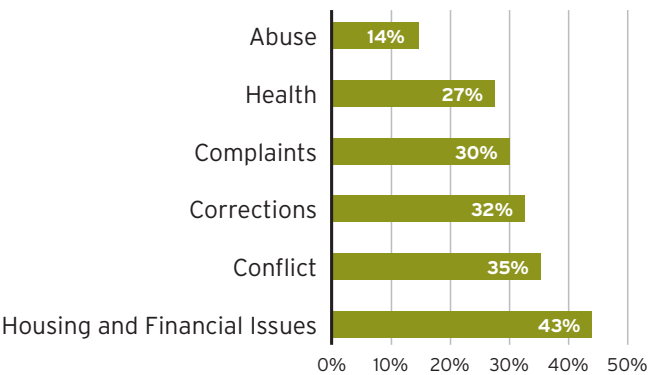


Table 8 - Most Recent Housing Loss

How long ago did you lose your housing most recently?	
Response	Percentage(%)
Less than 1 month ago	0
1 month to 1 year ago	43
1+ to 3 years ago	30
3+ to 5 years ago	14
More than 5 years ago	14

18 In the 2020 PiT Count report, Rent too high (18%) and Low income (15%) were the main barriers to housing for the temporarily housed population. Central Okanagan Foundation. Point-in-Time Count 2020 Kelowna, BC. June 2020. https://www.centralokanaganfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/COF_PiT_Report_2020_R7.pdf

Temporarily Housed Homeless – Survey Data

Figure 2.3 - Primary Sources of Income

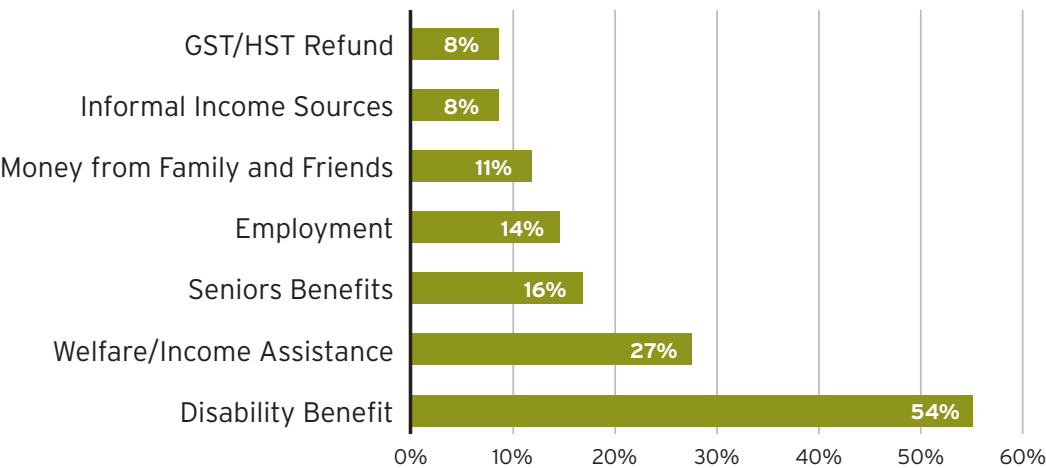
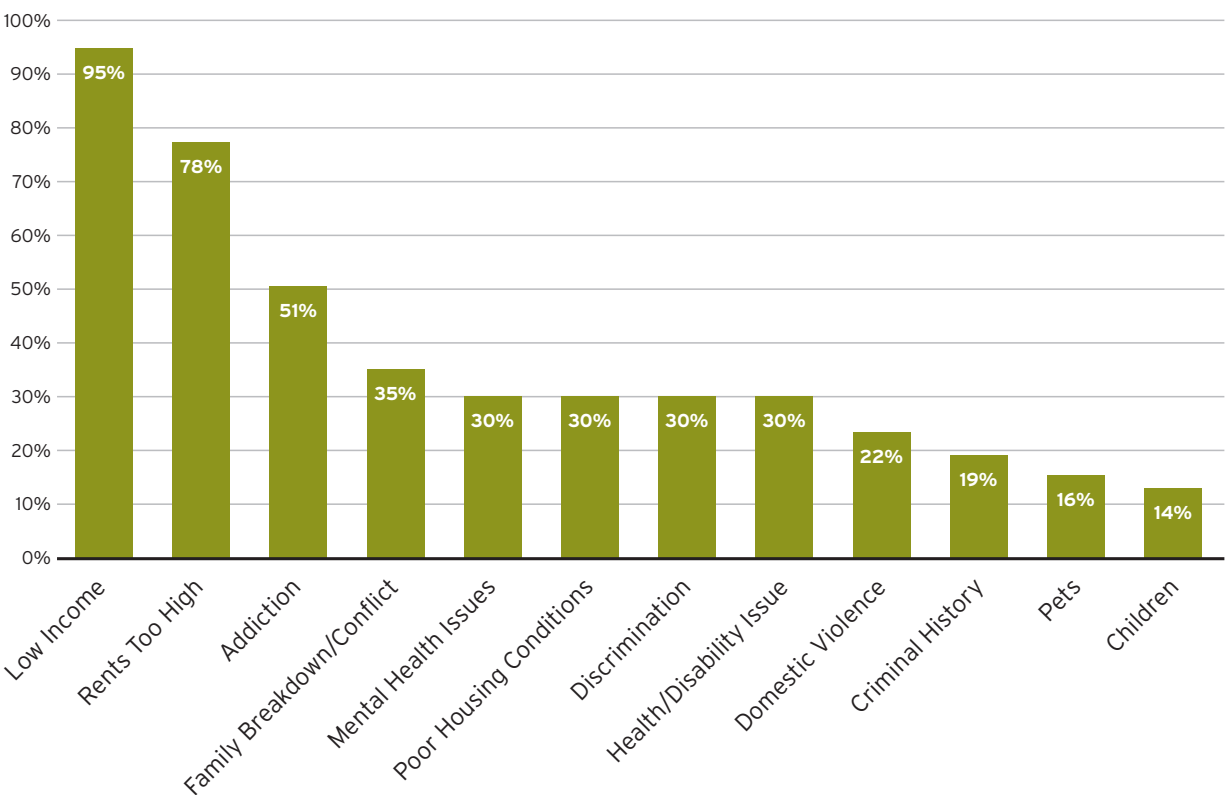


Figure 2.4 - Finding Housing – Challenges



Temporarily Housed Homeless – Survey Data

Figure 2.5 - Time in Kelowna

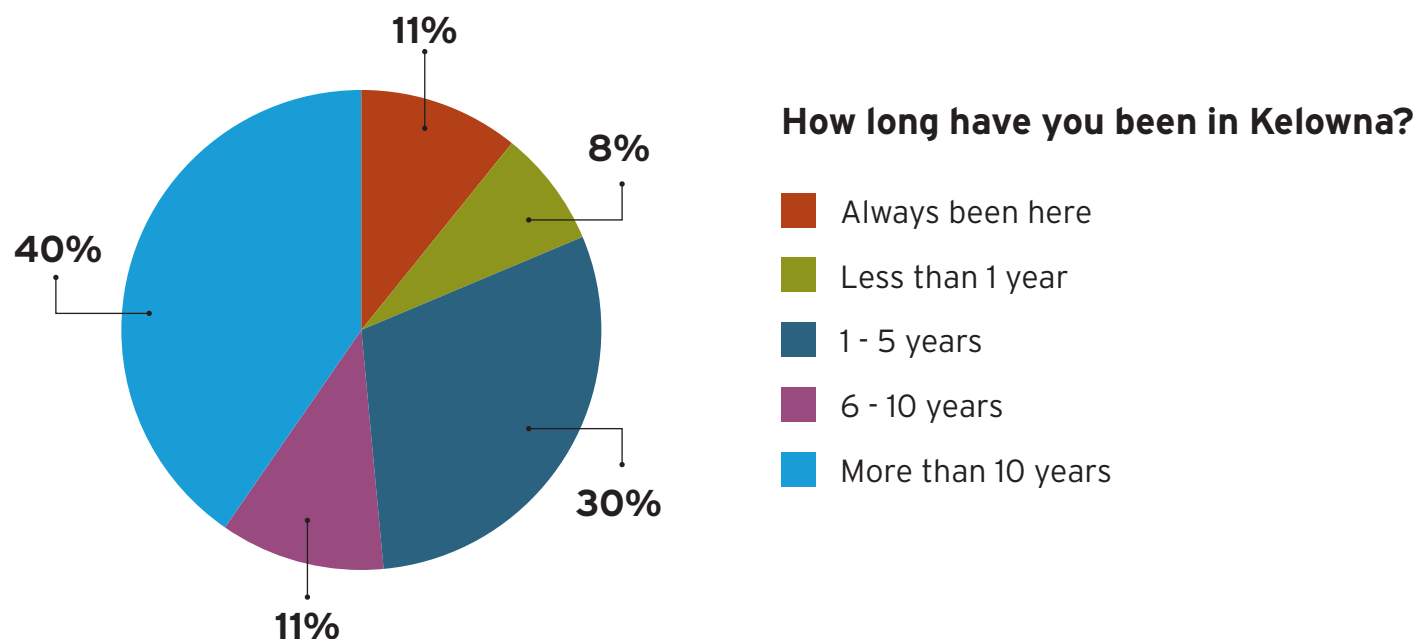
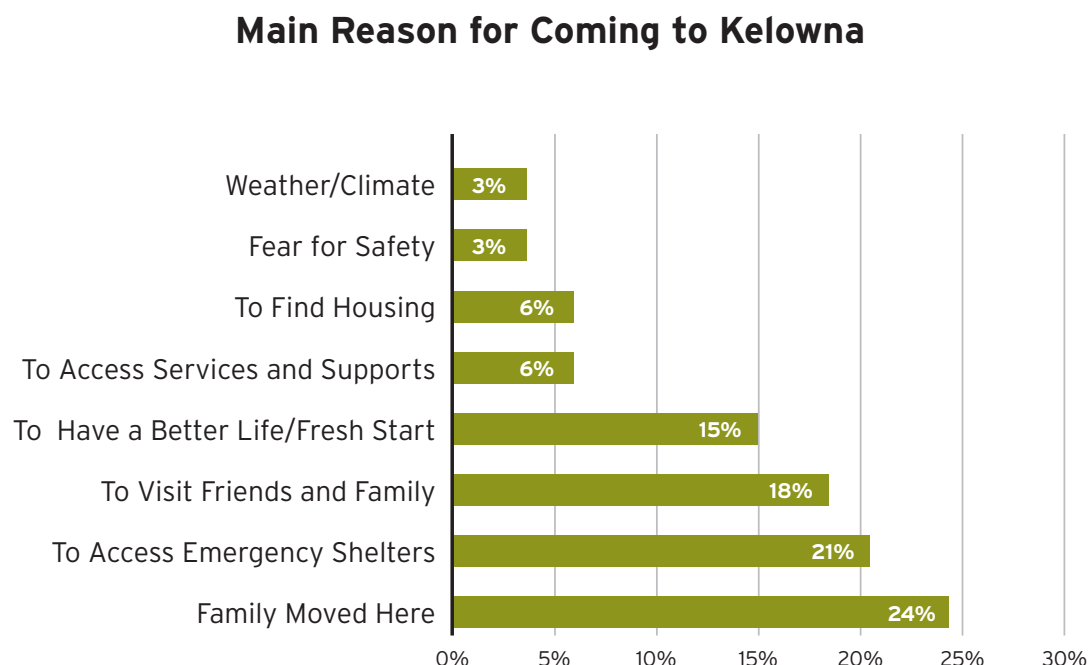


Figure 2.6 - Coming to Kelowna



Indigenous Identity and Homelessness

Indigenous Peoples experience homelessness at a disproportionate rate while making up approximately 5% of the Canadian population.¹⁹ According to the 2020 - 2022 national PiT Counts, 35% of individuals experiencing homelessness identified as Indigenous Peoples.²⁰ It is vital to note that because Indigenous People are also more likely to experience unsheltered and hidden homelessness, the rate of Indigenous homelessness is likely to be higher, as they are less likely to be counted using the PiT Count methodology. Post-Count discussions highlighted that individuals may decline to identify as Indigenous Peoples depending on the volunteer conducting the survey. These are some of the variables to consider when interpreting the findings.

A combination of systems data and survey data indicates that in 2024, 24% of the 614 respondents identified as Indigenous, including First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and Non-status/have Indigenous ancestry. It is also worth noting the difference between the 2020 and 2024 categorization of Indigenous Peoples. The 2024 Count extended the options available for individuals who identified as Indigenous by including First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and non-status/have Indigenous ancestry as the options in survey responses (n=272).²¹ However, systems data (n=433) did not have the Inuit option. In 2024, respondents could identify as more than one option, which increases the number of people within each identity. Most respondents who identified as Indigenous (n=150) were men, 62%, and 34% were women. The remaining 4% includes individuals who identified as two-spirit or declined to answer the survey question on gender. The information collected from systems and survey data highlights a continued overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples in the homeless population.

In 2024, 24% of the 614 respondents identified as Indigenous, including First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and Non-status/have indigenous ancestry.

62%

identified as men

25%

identified as women

¹⁹ Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. Indigenous Peoples - 2021 Census Promotional Material. 16 Sept. 2022, <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/census/census-engagement/community-supporter/indigenous-peoples>.

²⁰ "Indigenous Peoples and Homelessness." HomelessHub, <https://homelesshub.ca/collection/population-groups/indigenous-peoples/>. Accessed 1 Apr. 2025.

²¹ These options were added following the Government of Canada's recognition of the different Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Canada; G. of C. C.-I. R. and N. A. (2009, January 12). Indigenous peoples and communities [Administrative page; fact sheet; resource list]. <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100013785/1529102490303>

Indigenous Identity and Homelessness

Table 9 - Indigenous Identity and Gender

Indigenous Identity and Gender n = 150	
Indigenous Peoples Men	62%
Indigenous Peoples Women	25%
Indigenous Peoples Non-Binary and Two-Spirit	NR
First Nations Men	43%
First Nations Women	17%
Métis Men	15%
Métis Women	9%
Inuit Men	NR
Inuit Women	NR
Indigenous Identity and Gender n = 150	
Indigenous Peoples Men	62%
Indigenous Peoples Women	25%
Indigenous Peoples Non-Binary and Two-Spirit	NR
First Nations Men	43%
First Nations Women	17%
Métis Men	15%
Métis Women	9%
Inuit Men	NR
Inuit Women	NR

Indigenous Identity and Homelessness

7% of Indigenous youth are below 25 years old. Most of those who identified as Indigenous are between 25 - 64 years old (96%). Table 10 highlights the percentage of people who identified as Indigenous who experienced the foster care/youth group system. The table also provides a representation of Indigenous people who had themselves or a family member experience the residential school system. In 2024, 64% of survey respondents who identified as Indigenous men reported having experienced the foster care system compared to 33% reported by Indigenous women. Similarly, 61% of Indigenous men reported experiencing the foster care system and had themselves or a family member attend an Indian residential school.²²

Table 10 - Foster Care and Residential School System

Homelessness Indigenous Identity Foster Care System and Residential Schools	
As a child or youth, were you ever in foster care or in a youth group home?	
Responses n = 263	Percentage (%)
Yes, Non-Indigenous Identity	35
Yes, and Indigenous Identity	16
Foster Care System, Indigenous Identity, and Gender n = 42	
Yes, Indigenous Identity and Man	64
Yes, Indigenous Identity and Woman	33
Yes, Indigenous Identity and Two-Spirit	NR
Foster Care System, Residential Schools, and Indigenous Identity n = 28	
Foster care and residential school system - Man	61
Foster care and residential school system - Woman	36
Foster care and residential school system - Two-Spirited	NR

22 Those who answer 'yes' to the question on residential schools include individuals who had themselves, one or more parents, or one or more grandparents attend an Indian residential school.

Indigenous Identity and Homelessness

Survey data (n = 272) provides more detailed information regarding Indigenous identity and health challenges. 33% of surveyed participants identified as Indigenous Peoples. Regarding health challenges, 69% of those who identified as Indigenous reported experiencing challenges related to grief and bereavement. 64% indicated dealing with mental health challenges, and 62% reported dealing with a serious illness or medical condition. 91% of this population reported coping with substance use issues. Such information offers a platform for service providers to mobilize resources that acknowledge the interconnection of culture, discrimination, and health challenges.

High rent prices (72%) and low income (60%) are also the main challenges when trying to find housing for the Indigenous homeless population. Nearly 46% also reported challenges related to addiction. Issues related to conflict (e.g. Spouse/partner, parent/guardian, landlord, roommate, other) were the main reason for the most recent housing loss of 44% of those who identified as Indigenous. Housing and financial issues, including not enough income, unfit/unsafe living conditions, and buildings sold or renovated, amongst others, were also significant for 34% of this population. Future Counts may build upon this information to identify trends or changing dynamics for the Indigenous homeless population.

The following section and the discussion have a breakdown of the Indigenous homeless populations' demographics within the absolute homeless and temporarily housed homeless categories.

72%

High rent prices

.....

60%

Low income

are also the main challenges when trying to find housing
for the Indigenous homeless population.

Changes Since the Previous Counts

Kelowna has also undergone significant changes and growth since the first Reaching Home PiT Count was conducted in 2016. Between 2016 and 2021, Kelowna's population grew by 13.5%.²³ Since the last PiT Count occurred in 2020, Kelowna's population grew from 146,127 to 165,907 people in 2024. The rapid population growth contributed to a rise in homelessness due to housing affordability and imposed pressure on the housing market.

The landscape around homelessness in Kelowna has intensified due to many factors since the 2020 Point-in-Time Count, including housing unaffordability, the continued toxic drug supply crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Affordable housing projects are a top priority for local authorities trying to address the gap between salaries and rising living costs. In collaboration with BC Housing, the City of Kelowna developed three transitional housing projects. Like STEP and Trailside, Appaloosa Road will provide an additional 60 temporary homes to provide safe, affordable, and quality housing.²⁴ The expansion of transitional housing facilities will alter the proportion of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in future Counts by opening capacity in these locations and homeless shelters. Despite significant increases in housing with support and purpose-built rentals, Kelowna remains at a housing deficit, and the number of people sheltering outdoors continues to exceed emergency shelter capacity.

The City's designated outdoor overnight sheltering Site (OS4) was first implemented at the end of 2019 in response to the growing need for a dedicated space for people to shelter outdoors. The COVID-19 pandemic greatly impacted this need when social distancing requirements led to a reduction in the number of shelter beds available in the community. Though social distancing requirements no longer exist, the current Site continues to provide a public space for people to temporarily shelter outdoors in Kelowna. When there is insufficient housing and shelter space for people experiencing homelessness, case law in British Columbia prevents municipalities from prohibiting temporary overnight sheltering in all its parks and public spaces. In addition to providing a place to temporarily shelter outdoors, the designated Site offers access to potable water, meal services, portable toilets, handwashing stations and garbage pickup. It also provides a centralized location for social support agencies to do outreach and connect people experiencing homelessness to invaluable services.

In total, 92 people at the designated outdoor overnight sheltering Site were included in the Count, representing close to 16% of the overall absolute homeless population (n =582) in 2024. Of the 302 total people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in 2024, 30% were at OS4 on the night of the Count. The research team identified three encampments on that night, with 85% of the total homeless individuals enumerated at encampments (n=107) being at OS4. This data highlights the significance of OS4 for the homeless population in Kelowna, as well as the interpretation of data from Counts in Kelowna based on existing terminology.

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²³ Statistics Canada. 2023. (table). Census Profile. 2021 Census of Population. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Ottawa. Released November 15, 2023. (accessed April 27, 2025). <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>

²⁴ Those who answer 'yes' to the question on residential schools include individuals who had themselves, one or more parents, or one or more grandparents attend an Indian residential school.

Changes Since the Previous Counts

The core PiT Count Survey describes an encampment as a “group of tents, makeshift shelters or other long-term outdoor settlement”. It lists Encampments separately when compiling the data for Visible Homelessness. Though the designated Site meets the description of an “encampment,” caution should be used when comparing data between communities with respect to encampments, as community-sanctioned space for people to shelter outdoors is uncommon in communities across Canada. Kelowna encampment data represent a combination of unsanctioned encampments and the designated Site.

Surveys and Community Strategy

Before the implementation of the 2020 Count, provincial homeless-serving associations highlighted issues with aggregating the data across the federally funded PiT Counts and the provincially funded Counts. The problems included data collection, who was screened in and out of the Count, and the difference in wording of survey questions. To address this, the BC Government approached representatives from the federally funded Reaching Home PiT Counts in 2019 to develop a harmonized survey. The objective was to create a harmonized survey that provides a better understanding of homelessness throughout each community and across the province. Representatives from participating Reaching Home communities, the Provincial Government of BC, the Government of Canada, and the Health Sciences Association of British Columbia (HSABC) reviewed the 2018 survey questions to develop a harmonized survey that spoke to local and provincial efforts to understand and confront homelessness. These changes were significant for future Counts, including 2020 and 2024, because Kelowna has chosen to use the harmonized survey as a template for its sheltered and unsheltered surveys.

Service sector and City of Kelowna officials from the 2024 Steering Committee established a survey working group, along with the Count Coordinator and Data Coordinator, to finalize the surveys. The group met for a three-hour session discussing which questions to include and exclude from the harmonized survey. The value of the questions and the length of the survey were the primary considerations when finalizing the survey questions. Adding more selections to the provided response options helped increase the value of responses through enhanced representation. Survey length was a constant concern for the group, as it aimed to maximize volunteer and participant engagement. The group concluded that the survey should include questions that would generate valuable data for service providers while also ensuring that the length would not deter participation. This was the basis for the finalized version of the 2024 survey.

Local changes to shelters and transitional houses impacted the systems data and number of surveys collected for the 2024 PiT Count. The changes to these facilities must be considered when interpreting the 2024 findings. Shifts in bed capacity in these facilities generate different data throughout the Counts. Reduced participation in PiT Counts from some of these facilities also influences the data available to compare. Finally, policy and program shifts screened out some of these facilities from the transition/interim housing categories required for system data collection. The following tables highlight some of these changes.

Changes Since the Previous Counts

Table 11 - Number of Shelters, Capacity and Occupancy from 2016 - 2024

Shelters Occupancy	2016	2018	2020	2024
Number of shelters	5	6	6	7
Capacity	180	254	242	291
Occupancy	164	234	225	280

Table 12 - Number of Transition Houses, Capacity, and Occupancy from 2016 - 2024

Transition Occupancy	2016	2018	2020	2024
Number of Transition Sites	12	13	11	3
Capacity	247	282	259	127
Occupancy	231	264	253	101

Local changes to shelters and transitional houses impacted the systems data and number of surveys collected for the 2024 PiT Count. The changes to these facilities must be considered when interpreting the 2024 findings. Shifts in bed capacity in these facilities generate different data throughout the Counts.

Changes Since the Previous Counts

Table 13 - Capacity Changes 2016 – 2024

Changes in Occupancy 2016 - 2024					
Changes	Beds offline/ service no longer fits enumeration	Beds added	Beds reduced	Re classified	
Program/ sites offline	2016	2018	2020	2024	+/- remaining
Connected by 25	7	-7			Not Enumerated
CMHA Scattered Sites	18	-18			Not Enumerated
Harmony House	13	-13			Not Enumerated
Essentials	8	+4		-12	Institutional
Ozanam	19		-1	-18	Institutional
Freedoms Door	50		+13	-63	Institutional
Society of HOPE		+36	+2	-38	Institutional
Cardington	30			-30	Institutional
Fuller			+37	-37	Not Enumerated
Family den		+8		-8	Not Enumerated
Gateway	6	-4		-2	Not Enumerated
Penny Lane	6			-6	Not Enumerated
Karis	42		-6	-36	Not Enumerated
1043 Harvey	8	+1			9
STEP				+60	60
Trailside				+59	59
	=247	=282	=259	=127	=127
		+35	-23	-104	

Changes Since the Previous Counts

Table 14 - Capacity and Resident Reporting Changes 2016 – 2024

Interim/ Institutional Housing	Capacity	2016	2018	2020	2024
Agency and Capacity		Number of Reported Residents by Agency			
Econo Lodge		13			
Cara Center		3	5	6	No Data
Coral House		2	9	5	No Data
Florin House		8	8	8	8
Holding Cells		1	9	8	1
KGH		5	6	25	No Data
Bridge WMS	20	4	5	7	12
Bridge RES TX	20	6	5	14	17
Bridge SR	10		4	9	4
Bridge Youth	14		3	0	3
Bridge Ethel	9				4
Winter surge IH			1		
New Facilities or Existing ones moving from Transition (2020) to Interim/Institutional (2024)					
Essentials	11				11
Ozanam	18				No Data
Freedoms Door	63				No Data
Society of HOPE	37				37
Xast Wilx Tn	10				8
Total Residents Reported	= 212	= 42	= 55	= 82	=105

Discussion

The 2024 PiT Count findings represent an estimate on the state of homelessness in Kelowna on November 12, 2024. As the fourth consecutive PiT Count in Kelowna, the true value of the 2024 Count is the opportunity it offers to compare results with previous findings.

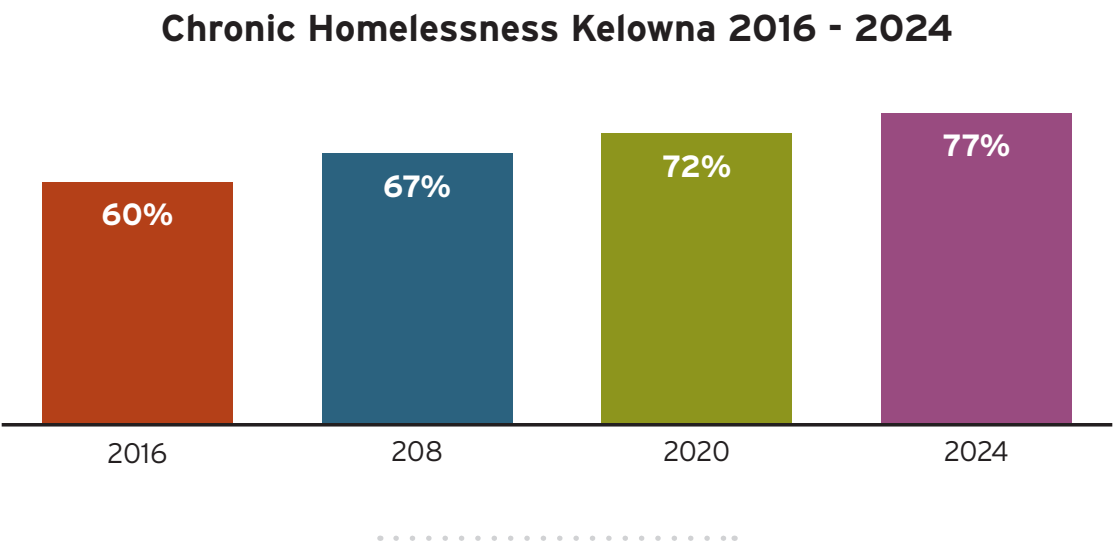
The findings note that at least 761 individuals experienced homelessness on November 12, 2024, in Kelowna. Of this total, 582 individuals are classified as absolute homeless and 148 as temporarily housed homeless.²⁵ Understanding the characteristics impacting the homeless populations' experiences is imperative for services and supports to reflect their needs. Survey data provides detailed information on these characteristics to address homelessness in the community. From the total homeless population enumerated (n =761), we surveyed a total of 272 individuals (36%).

Key Findings - Absolute Homeless

It is vital to begin this comparison by noting that the overall population experiencing absolute homelessness has gradually increased from 233 (2016) to 286 (2018) to 297 in 2020. The total number of people experiencing absolute homelessness in 2024 was 582. The number of people experiencing absolute homelessness in 2024 nearly doubled, with a 96% increase rate from 2020.

The proportion of people experiencing chronic homelessness has been increasing since 2016 (60%). From 2018 to 2020, it increased from 67% to 72% before reaching 77% in 2024.

Figure 3



²⁵ The 2024 combined total (n =730) does not include 31 individuals that could not be screened into either one of the categories based on existing definitions of absolute homelessness and temporarily housed homeless. The 31 were included in the total enumeration because they are experienced homelessness, but the available data cannot categorize them as either absolute homeless or temporarily housed homeless.

Discussion

Males continue to overrepresent the absolute homeless population, representing 70% in 2024. Women account for 27% of this population, with 17% of women also identifying as Indigenous Peoples. Like 2020, most individuals experiencing absolute homelessness are between 25 - 64 years, with 90% in 2024.

The 2024 survey added the question: “Do you identify as someone with a trans experience?” to increase inclusivity and reduce the limitations of the 2020 questions on gender and sexual orientation. Regarding sexual orientation, close to 79% of respondents indicated they were straight/heterosexual. This continues a decrease reported from 2018 (94%) to 2020 (88%). There was a 1% decrease in the proportion of people who reported being asexual in 2024 (1%) compared to 2020 (2%). The proportion of people who identified as bisexual also decreased from 8% in 2020 to 6% in 2024.

Indigenous People account for 27% of the absolute homeless population whom survey or system data is available on (n=404).²⁶ In 2024, individuals could identify as First Nations, Métis, Inuit, or non-status with Indigenous ancestry. These categories followed the Government of Canada definitions for Indigenous peoples in the country.²⁷ In 2024, 16% of this population identified as First Nations, 7% as Métis, 3% as non-status but having Indigenous ancestry, and 0.7% as Inuit. There was a 3% difference from the proportion of this population who identified as Métis in 2020 (4%) to the 7% in 2024. The expansion of these Indigenous identities in 2024 amplifies our understanding of the individual demographics in this population. It also helps guide service providers towards the need for cultural support and awareness when confronting homelessness in the community.

Regarding youth representation, 3% of the absolute homeless population is under the age of 25. Further analysis notes approximately 2% of this population between 14 - 24 years, contrary to the 6% identified in 2020. An indicator of this drop is the fact that youth are overrepresented in the hidden homeless category. The difficulty of measuring hidden homelessness was a primary concern in the 2024 methodology. Youth staying in impermanent or precarious situations with family or friends may see changes in their housing situations precipitate quickly. However, the data should not underestimate the value and work of youth service organizations that focus their work on reducing the number of youths experiencing homelessness in the community. Revising the wording of future surveys may also help reflect the experience of youth, as they often struggle with the terminology and different categories when explaining their situation. Future research on the impact of homelessness on youth may seek alternative methodologies or approaches to capture the extent of their experience.

.....

26 Despite an enumerated 582 individuals experiencing absolute homelessness in 2024, there is only system and survey data related to age, gender, accompanied family members, and Indigenous identity for 404 individuals.

26 Canada, Government of Canada; Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs. Indigenous Peoples and Communities. 12 Jan. 2009, <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100013785/1529102490303>.

Discussion

In 2024, the average age for experiencing homelessness for the first time was 36 years compared to 28 years in 2020. The proportion of individuals who experienced homelessness before the age of 20 decreased from 37% (2020) to 25% (2024). This signals a continued effort by homeless service agencies to provide housing and support services for youth 25 years old and younger.

A point of concern is the increasing representation of older generations in the absolute homeless population. The proportion of this population aged 65 and older increased from 3% in 2020 to 6% in 2024.

The primary reasons for this population's most recent housing experience continue to hover around not having enough income for housing, conflict with (e.g. spouse/partner, landlord, parent/guardian, roommate, other), and health and corrections-related issues. In 2024, 38% reported losing their housing most recently due to conflict within the category above. 36% attributed it to housing and financial issues (e.g. not enough income, unfit/unsafe housing, building sold/renovated). Based on these numbers it seems that, in some circumstances, individuals are making the difficult decision to leave a precarious or intolerable living situation, leading to homelessness. Substance use issues dropped from 13% in 2020 to 10% in 2024. Mental health issues were another notable factor, with 5% in 2024. Services and supports should focus on the initial housing, financial, and conflict issues experienced by individuals to provide an immediate response. Services related to substance use and mental health should also continue.

Comparing the data on health challenges and services needed for the first time with the 2020 results offers service providers vital insight into how to continue or adapt their work. Substance use issues (83%) and mental health issues (67%) remained the two primary challenges since 2020. Notably, in 2024, issues regarding grief/bereavement were a challenge for 66% of absolute homeless survey respondents. Steering Committee members proposed the addition of this option because the 'Mental Health' option was too broad and may not be selected by someone experiencing grief and in need of grief related supports. Respondents also noted their need for services associated with a serious ongoing medical condition (43%) and physical disability (34%). The need for these services will increase, considering this population has continued to age since the 2020 PiT Count.

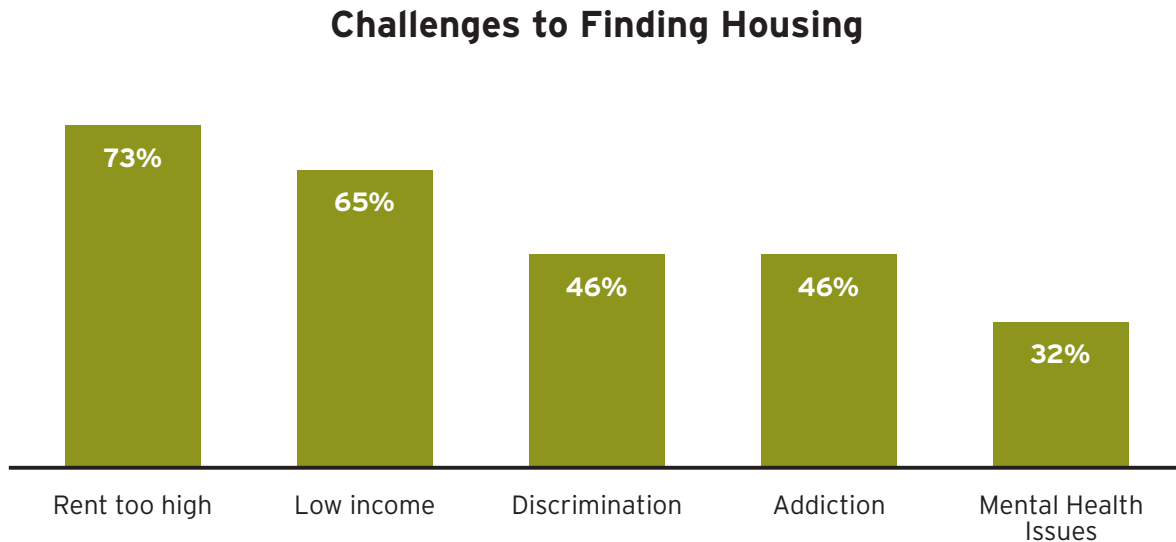
For the first time, we can also compare the data on how long individuals have lost their housing. The range 1 month to 1 year ago remains the primary response in 2024 (34%). However, the percentage of people selecting this option decreased from the 48% reported in 2020.

In 2024, survey participants had a 'select all that apply' option when noting the challenges they experienced when trying to find housing. Figure 3.1 demonstrates the 5 main challenges.

The proportion of absolute homeless individuals who accessed a homeless shelter in the past year decreased from 84% (2020) to 74% in 2024. Despite the drop, the proportion remains significant, which highlights the importance of these facilities for this population.

Discussion

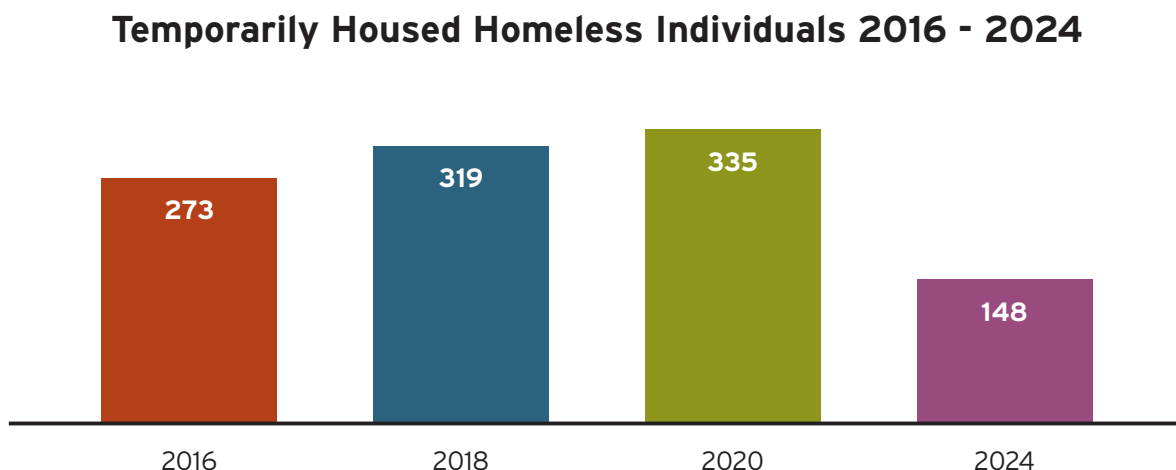
Figure 3.1



Key Findings - Temporarily Housed Homeless

In 2024, the total number of temporarily housed homeless individuals was 148, representing a decrease from the 335 identified in 2020. It should be noted that not all interim or temporary housing facilities participated in the survey portion of the PiT Count in 2024, which offers a partial explanation for the decreased participation. Survey participation from this population decreased from 91 surveys in 2020 to 37 in 2024. Consequently, the information below from the 37 completed surveys can only provide an overview of the characteristics within a much larger temporarily housed homeless population.

Figure 3.2



Discussion

Approximately 81% of survey respondents reported having spent at least one night in a homeless shelter. In 2020, only 51% reported the same answer, which indicates an increase in the proportion of temporarily housed individuals who previously experienced absolute homelessness.

Most individuals in this population identified as men (57%), and 43% identified as women. Regarding family composition, 10% of respondents in this category indicated they had an accompanying child on the night of the Count, which represents an increase from the 5% reported in 2020. All of those who answered yes to that question in 2024 (10%) were women.

There was a higher proportion of men who identified as Indigenous Peoples compared to women, with 16% of women indicating they also identified as First Nations, Métis, or non-status but having Indigenous ancestry. 6% of women identified as Métis, and another 6% were First Nations. Amongst the men (57%), 21% also identified as Indigenous peoples. Further analysis highlights that 19% of those men identified as First Nations.

There was an average age of 48 years amongst this population, with the majority (82%) between 25 - 64 years old. Future PiT Counts may decide to shift the age ranges to get a more detailed analysis of respondent demographics, considering the existing range (25 - 64 years) includes close to 40 years. Contrary to the 2020 results, the proportion of temporarily housed homeless individuals below 25 years decreased from 24% (2020) to 6% (2024). The 2024 findings demonstrate an increase in temporary housing facilities amongst older generations.

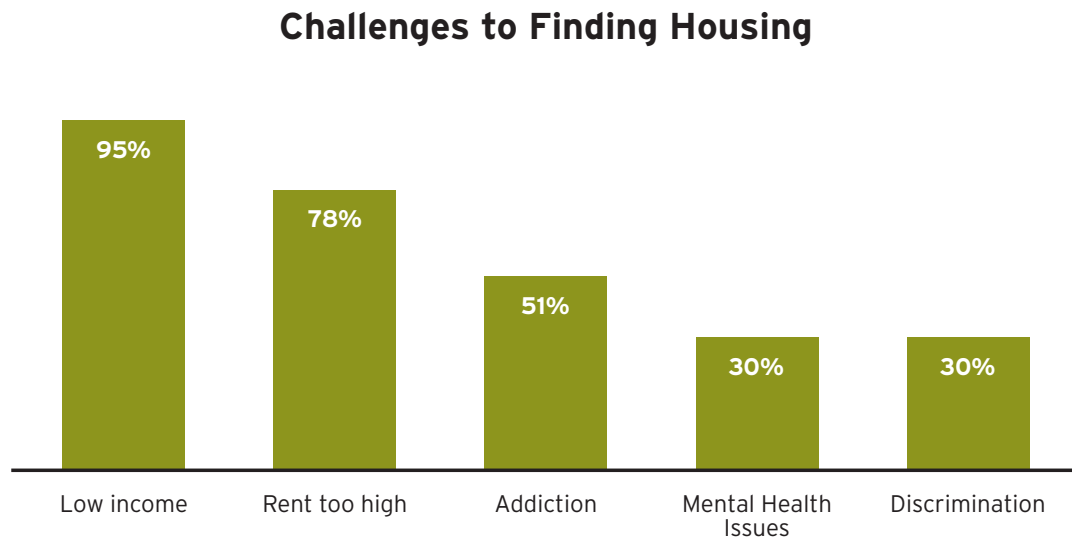
The percentage of participants who reported having been in the foster care system or a youth group home was 27% in 2024, which is 5% lower than the proportion in 2020 (32%).

Not enough income (38%) was the main reason for this population's most recent housing loss, which contrasts the conflict category reported by the absolute homeless population. Complaints (e.g. pets, noise, damage) and release from incarceration/parole were also notable responses, with 30% each. Service providers must also consider the significance of substance use issues (24%) when working towards rehousing these individuals. Like the absolute homeless population, most respondents in this group indicated that their most recent housing loss occurred between 1 month and a year ago (44%). Providing support and services during the onset of this period may be beneficial to confront the primary challenges leading to homelessness while reducing the transition to chronic homelessness.

Approximately 81% of survey respondents reported having spent at least one night in a homeless shelter.

Conclusion

Figure 3.3



The landscape around homelessness in Kelowna remains at the forefront of discussions among all levels of government, community partners, homeless-serving agencies, and the private sector. Results from the 2024 PiT Count provide a platform for these discussions as decision-makers, planners, and service providers develop programs and services that represent a community-based approach to addressing the multifaceted factors impacting homelessness in Kelowna. PiT Count data provides a baseline enumeration of the number of people experiencing homelessness on a given night. Homeless serving agencies estimate the number of people experiencing homelessness in the community to be higher. Due to limitations in the PiT Count methodology, the findings only offer a snapshot of homelessness. Rather than relying solely on the information from this report, other sources of data should be consulted to gain a more comprehensive understanding of homelessness in the community. However, the existing data highlights a continued need to strengthen collaborative efforts to address homelessness.

Addressing homelessness requires identifying who is being affected and why. The findings from this report indicate that the causes of homelessness are a combination of structural factors, system limitations, and individual circumstances. The overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples in the homeless population demonstrates the need to strengthen inclusive and directed programs that address the structural factors increasing their vulnerability to homelessness. Despite their tremendous efforts, existing homeless-serving systems face limitations in their ability to confront a rising number of people experiencing homelessness in Kelowna. The various challenges to finding housing and the diverse service needs expressed by survey respondents highlight the complex characteristics that influence homelessness in the community. An integrated approach that combines data-driven strategies with a deep understanding of the community's unique needs will be crucial in reducing homelessness and improving outcomes for vulnerable populations in Kelowna.

Appendix

Appendix - Systems Data and Surveys by Facility

Homeless Shelters (+* Domestic Violence Shelter)				
	Capacity	Count	Surveys Completed	Systems Data
Richter Street Shelter	48	48	16	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Bay Ave Shelter	65	57	12	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Leon Avenue Shelter	60	60	4	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
AG House	20	20	9	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Downtown Youth Shelter	10	NR	NR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Cornerstone	80	80	8	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
*Kelowna's Women's Shelter	8	6	4	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		272	54 = 20%	

Transitional Housing				
	Capacity	Count	Surveys Completed	Systems Data
Step Place	60	53	10	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Trailside	59	45	15	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1043 Harvey	8	3	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		101	25 = 24.75%	

Appendix

Appendix - Systems Data and Surveys by Facility

Interim/ Institutional (Health, Corrections, SU MH)				
	Capacity	*Count	Surveys Completed	Data Systems
Essentials	11	11	6	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Xast wilx ^tn	10	8	6	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Florin House	8	8	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Society of Hope	37	37	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
The Bridge Youth and Family Services (5 services combined)	73	40	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
RCMP Holding Cells		NR	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
		105	12 = 11.4%	
**Freedoms Door	No data provided	No data provided	No data provided	No data provided
**Ozanam	No data provided	No data provided	No data provided	No data provided
**KGH	No data provided	No data provided	No data provided	No data provided
* Agencies were instructed to only count residents identified as homeless at admission and/or those who will be homeless at discharge without intervention.				
** The research team was unable to collect data from Freedoms Door, Ozanam, and KGH for the 2024 PiT Count.				

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Thank You



Central Okanagan Foundation wishes to thank all of the community members and organisations who supported the 2024 Point in Time Count. The Count happens on one day and the efforts of many are required to support this annual enumeration. We look forward to working with our community again in fall 2025.



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