



WHITEHORSE 2023 POINT-IN-TIME COUNT REPORT



This project funded in part by Reaching Home:
Government of Canada's Homeless Strategy | **Canada**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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We respectfully acknowledge that the 2023 Whitehorse PiT Count was conducted on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

PARTNERS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

BGCY

Blood Ties Four Directions Centre

City of Whitehorse

Downtown Outreach Clinic

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society Yukon

Independent Learning Centre

Government of Yukon - Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services

Skookum Jim Friendship Centre – Youth Emergency Shelter

Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre

Voices Influencing Change

Connective Support Society - Whitehorse Emergency Shelter

Whitehorse Correctional Centre

Whitehorse General Hospital – First Nations Health Programs

Whitehorse Individual Learning Centre

Youth Achievement Centre

Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition

Yukon Women's Transition Home: Kaushee's Place and Betty's Haven

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Cover image from Freepik.com

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FUNDED BY

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A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD

August 2023

On behalf of the Reaching Home Community Advisory Board, we would like to sincerely thank Whitehorse residents who are experiencing homelessness for sharing their experiences for the 2023 Point in Time Count. We would also like to thank the volunteers and front line service providers for helping undertake the fourth Point in Time count held in Whitehorse.

The count is a snapshot of homelessness in our community and this report is an important reference to help us understand the challenges facing people who are homeless or under-housed in our community. Regardless of ones age, gender or ethnic background, every person who experiences homelessness deserves a home.

The results of the report are alarming. With each PiT count, the number of people experiencing homelessness has increased. The barriers to housing are identified consistently around affordability, addiction and low income.

The report, like so many others, demonstrates that the systems we have built are failing people. Like the 94 Calls to Action, the recommendations in the Yukon Strategy on MMIWG2S+, the Putting People First report and the recently released Substance Use Emergency Health Strategy, the time to act is now.

We believe that the question that needs asking is: "How badly do we want to end homelessness?" We ask this question because we have all the tools at hand to end and prevent homelessness in our community. Members of the Community Advisory Board are committed to ending homelessness by coordinating our efforts, making targeted funding decisions and bringing our best selves and resources to the table.

We have serious and hard work ahead and ask all community members to join in this urgent call to action.

Respectfully,



Bill Bruton
Co-Chair
Community Advisory Board



Kate Mechan
Co-Chair
Community Advisory Board

POINT IN TIME COUNT KEY FINDINGS 2023

At least **197** people experienced homelessness on the night of April 18, 2023.

75

Absolutely Homeless



65 people

Emergency Sheltered
...stayed at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter, Kaushee's Place and the Youth Emergency Shelter.



10 people

Unsheltered
...stayed in an unsheltered location including in a car, public space, or a tent.

**13 additional respondents were unsure of where they were staying*

109*

Provisionally Accommodated



51

transitional housing
...stayed at Betty's Haven, including children.



5

Public Systems
...including Whitehorse General Hospital, Whitehorse Correctional Centre, Withdrawal Management or the Intensive Treatment Program at Mental Health & Substance Use Services.



20

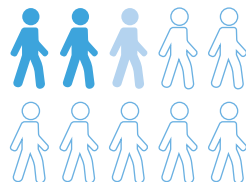
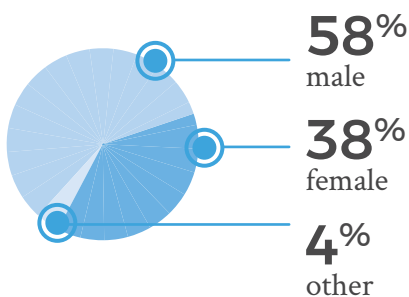
hotel/motel
...staying in a hotel/motel on the night of the count.



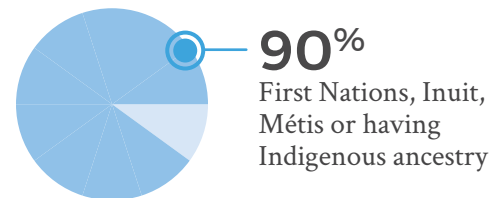
28

Someone Else's Place
...couch surfing and staying at a friend's, family member's, or stranger's place temporarily.

Demographics



26 children of respondents



Social Factors

58% had experience in foster care or a youth group home

44% reported having a mental health issue

69% reported having a substance use disorder

55% experienced homelessness for the first time before the age of 20

Top Barriers to Housing

Low income • Affordability • Addiction

Top Supports Needed

Addiction or substance use • Mental health • Ongoing medical issues

INTRODUCTION

Whitehorse received funding from the Government of Canada to conduct a Point-in-Time Count (PiT Count) – a ‘snapshot’ look at homelessness. Typically, over 60 communities partake in this nationally coordinated initiative each spring; however, since the COVID-19 pandemic, the Count has looked different across the country and has taken place at different times throughout the year. In the Yukon, the last PiT Count took place in April 2021. The 2023 Whitehorse PiT Count was conducted over a 24-hour period, starting at 4:00 p.m. on April 18th, ending at 4:00 p.m. on April 19th. This was the 4th PiT Count conducted in Whitehorse.

What is a PiT Count?¹

A PiT Count is a community-level measure of sheltered and unsheltered homelessness. It is a coordinated approach to gathering data which aims to count or enumerate the number of people experiencing homelessness on a single night. It also contributes to a national picture of homelessness. The standard methodology offers a minimum number of data elements that must be gathered in the same way across Canada.

A PiT Count has two components:

1. **An enumeration, or count.** This is a count of people experiencing absolute homelessness. It is intended to identify how many people in a community experience homelessness in shelters, transitional housing and on the streets at a given time. Conducted over subsequent years, PiT Counts can be used by the community to track progress in reducing homelessness.
2. **A survey of people experiencing homelessness.** Through an accompanying survey, the PiT Count gives the community information on the demographics, service needs and experiences of people affected by homelessness. This information can be used to target community resources to where they are most needed.

A PiT Count is not intended to:

- ▶ **Be a measure of everyone who experiences homelessness in a community over time.** By focusing on a single day, the PiT Count will not include some people who cycle in and out of homelessness.
- ▶ **Be a count of everyone who is experiencing hidden homelessness (e.g., people who are “couch-surfing”).** The focus of the PiT Count is instead on those who are experiencing absolute homelessness (e.g., sleeping in shelters or on the street) on the day of the Count. We do our best as a part of our PiT Count to capture the experiences of people experiencing hidden homelessness, but we expect that this population is underrepresented.

Definitions of homelessness²

The core PiT Count approach includes people who are experiencing sheltered and unsheltered homelessness.

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.

¹ This information was taken directly from the *Guide to Point-in-Time Count in Canada: 3rd Edition* developed by Employment and Social Development Canada.

² This information was taken directly from the *Guide to Point-in-Time Count in Canada: 3rd Edition* developed by Employment and Social Development Canada.



Sheltered homelessness

includes people sleeping in the following locations: emergency shelters (general and specific to men, women, youth, etc.), Violence Against Women (VAW) shelters, and transitional shelters. It may include people who receive hotel/motel vouchers in lieu of shelter beds. It does not include people who have security of tenure, who are in Housing First programs or in social or subsidized housing.

In this Count, like past PiT Counts in Whitehorse, every attempt was made to capture people who were experiencing hidden homelessness and the individuals without housing who were staying in a public system on the night of the Count:



Hidden homelessness

includes living temporarily with others without legal protection, guarantee of continued residency, or prospects of permanent housing. In Whitehorse this may include anyone staying in hotels, couch-surfing with family, friends or others.



Public Systems

is used interchangeably with institutional settings and includes correctional facilities, hospitals, substance use treatment centres, and health and mental health programs.

RESULTS

Enumeration results

The number of individuals experiencing homelessness on the night of April 18, 2023, was at least 197³. In 2021, there were at least 151 people experiencing homelessness.

	2021	2023
Unsheltered	5	10
Staying with someone else (couch surfing)	27	28
Hotel	31	20
Public Systems	21	10
Emergency Shelters	38	65
Transitional Housing	29	51
Unsure	N/A	13
TOTAL	151	197

The information above is from a combination of administrative data (for public systems, emergency shelters and transitional housing) and survey data (unsheltered, hotel, staying with someone else and unsure of where they were staying).

Throughout the results section below, the 2018 and 2021 results are compared to the results from 2023. There are some caveats to this including that in 2021 the COVID-19 pandemic affected where people were staying and their experience of homelessness. Otherwise, our methods for each PiT Count remained the same. Only questions that were the same for all three surveys are compared.

Where individuals stayed the night of the PiT Count⁴

Of the 155 individuals who identified their sleeping location in a survey response on the night of the PiT Count, 46% were experiencing absolute homelessness. All other respondents fell within the provisionally accommodated definition, making up 45% of those counted.

Comparison to previous PiT Counts:

- ▶ In 2018, 34.2% of respondents were experiencing absolute homelessness and 65.8% were provisionally accommodated.
- ▶ In 2021, 35% of respondents were experiencing absolute homelessness, 60% were provisionally accommodated and the remaining 5% were not sure where they were staying the night of the count.



A PiT Count cannot accurately measure the magnitude of hidden homelessness in a community due to the methodological and practical challenges of enumerating this population. That said, almost a third

³ The actual number of individuals experiencing homelessness may be similar or higher due to the inherent limitations of capturing the entire population over one single 24-hour period. For example, it is expected that the PiT Count will not be able to capture people who are experiencing "hidden homelessness" (couch surfing etc.).

⁴ The data in the next section is based on survey responses only and does not include enumeration data. In total, 155 surveys were included in the final data. All percentages are based on the number of respondents to that specific question and not based on all the 155 survey participants. Participants could choose to skip over any question or end the survey at any time. Where individuals stayed is from the survey responses and is not the same as the administrative data tallies that were provided directly from services themselves.

(31%) of surveyed respondents identified as couch-surfing and living in hotels/motels during the 2023 Count (ie. hidden homelessness).

Experiencing Absolute Homelessness (46%)

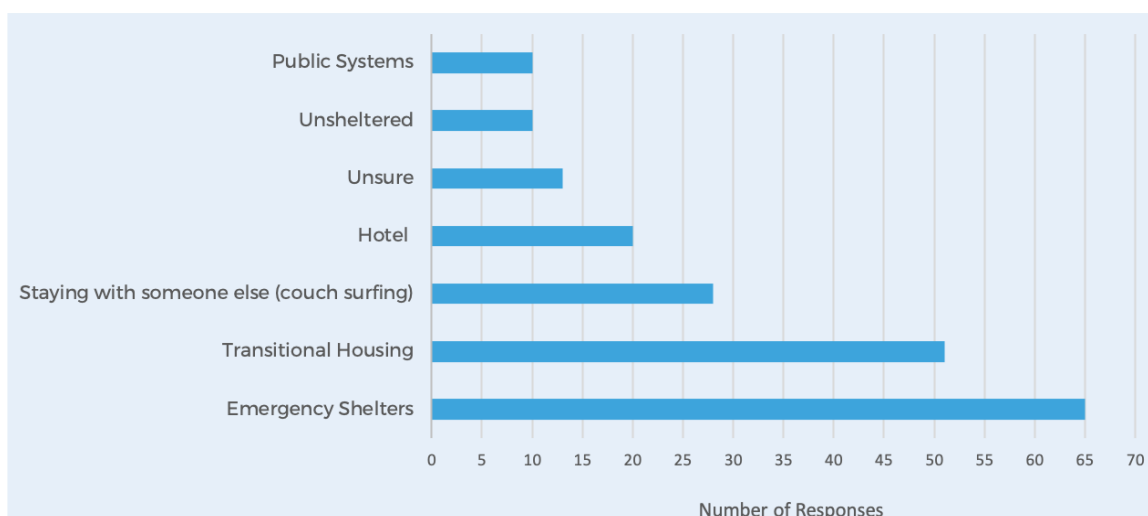
- ▶ 39% of respondents were staying at a homeless shelter on the night of the Count (61 of 155 respondents)
- ▶ 7% of respondents were unsheltered on the night of the Count (10 of 155 respondents)

Provisionally Accommodated (45%)⁵

- ▶ 13% of respondents were staying at a hotel on the night of the Count (20 of 155 respondents)
- ▶ 18% of respondents were staying at someone else's place on the night of the Count (28 of 155 respondents)
- ▶ Around 2% of respondents were staying in public systems on the night of the Count (less than 5 of 155 respondents)
- ▶ 12% of respondents were staying in transitional housing on the night of the Count (19 of 155 respondents)

The remaining people indicated that they were experiencing homelessness and were not sure where they were staying on the night of the Count and a probable location was not able to be recorded.

Figure 1: Count of overnight location reported by PiT survey respondents (n=155)



Who individuals stayed with

- ▶ 73.3% of respondents were staying alone the night of the Count (i.e., did not stay with any friends or family) (107 of 146 respondents).
- ▶ 11% of respondents were staying with a partner the night of the Count (16 of 146 respondents).
- ▶ 10% of respondents were staying with others the night of the Count (15 of 146 respondents).
- ▶ 5% were staying with children or dependants the night of the Count (8 of 146 respondents).

Comparison to previous PiT Counts:

This is similar to the percentage of respondents that reported staying alone on the night of the 2021 Count (73%). In 2018, more respondents reported staying alone (80%).

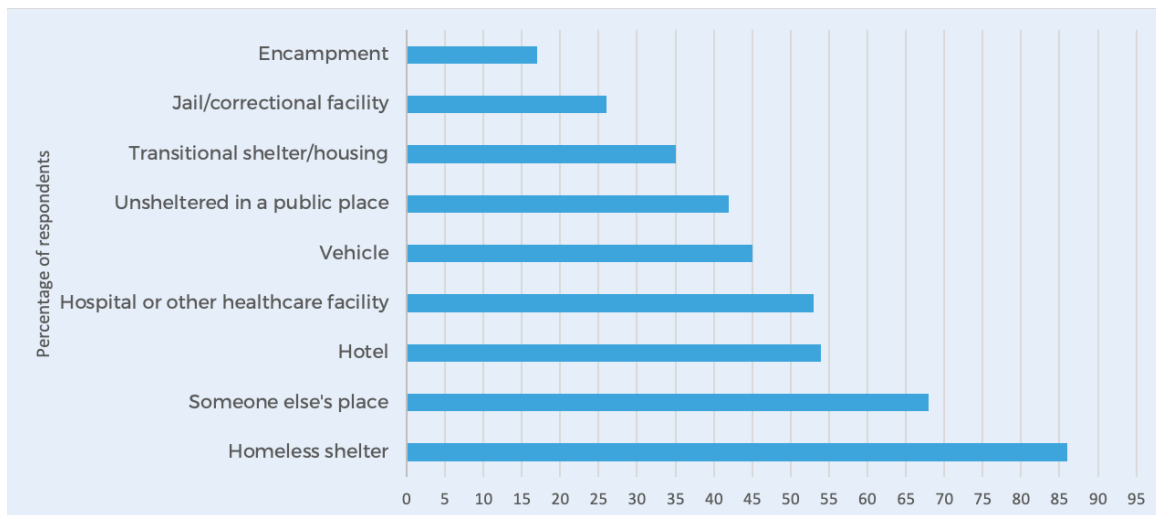
⁵ These people also responded that they did not have access to a permanent residence where they could safely stay as long as they wanted.

Where people have stayed in the past year

When people were asked about the locations where they had spent at least one night in the past year, the most common locations for people to have stayed was the homeless shelter, followed by someone else's place and a hotel. The least common place for people to have stayed in the past year was an encampment (Figure 2).

Of the people who had not stayed in a shelter in the past year, the most common reason was fear for safety, followed by being turned away because the shelter was full or turned away because they were temporarily banned due to behaviour or various factors.

Figure 2: Locations people have stayed in the past year by percentage of respondents, (n=155)



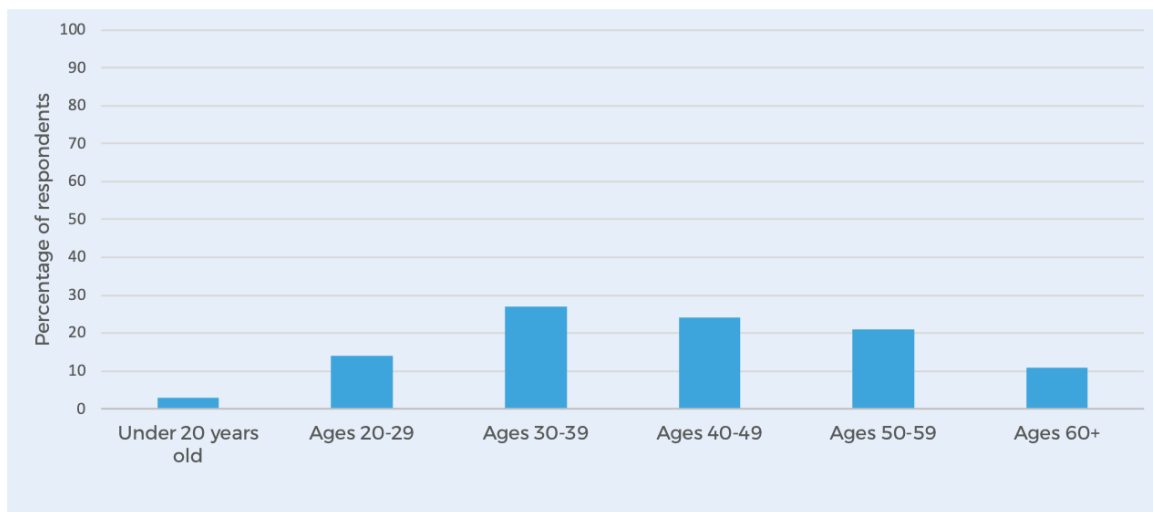
Note: people could answer multiple responses to this question

DEMOGRAPHICS

Age

- ▶ 15 survey respondents were under the age of 25 (9.6% of respondents), and 5 of which were under the age of 20 (3% of total respondents). Youth under the age of 16 were not eligible to participate in the survey and no unaccompanied youth under 16 were encountered on the night of the Count.
- ▶ There were 26 non-surveyed dependent children (under the age of 18) reported by their parents or guardians as experiencing homelessness on the night of the Count or counted through administrative tallies from shelters or transition homes.
- ▶ 36 survey respondents were 55 years old or older (23% of respondents) and 6 of these people were 65 years old or older (4% of respondents).

Figure 3: Percentage of survey respondents by age category (n= 155)



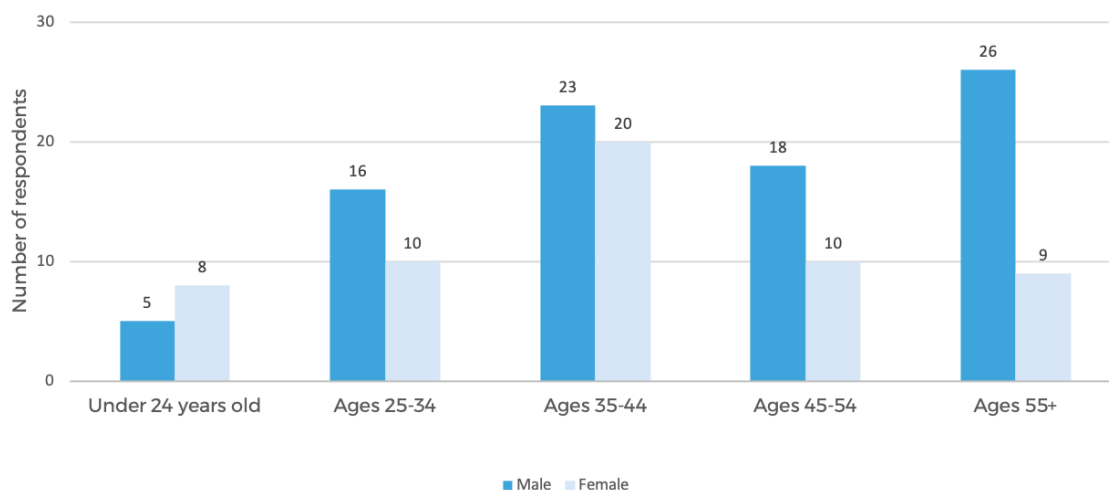
Comparison to previous PiT Counts:

- ▶ In 2021, 7% of total respondents were under the age of 25 and in 2018, 12% of respondents were under the age of 25.
- ▶ In 2021, there were 21 non-surveyed dependent children (under the age of 18) reported by their parents or guardians as experiencing homelessness on the night of the Count or counted through administrative tallies from shelters or transition homes. During the 2018 PiT Count, there were 17 non-surveyed dependent children under the age of 18 counted.
- ▶ In 2021, less than 5 seniors over the age of 65 were surveyed on the night of the Count.

Gender

- ▶ 58% of respondents identified as male (88 of 151 respondents).
- ▶ 38% of respondents identified as female (58 of 151 respondents).
- ▶ 4% of respondents identified as a gender other than male or female (5 of 151 respondents).

Figure 4: Count of gender and age among survey respondents (n=146)



Note: In order to preserve anonymity, this figure excludes responses identified as other genders, didn't know and dependents that were listed by survey participants.

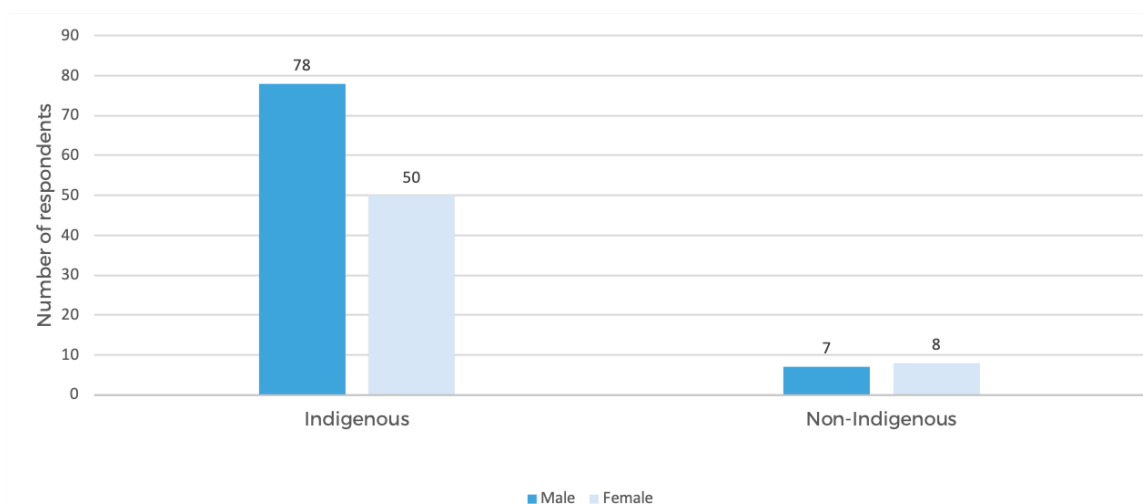
Comparison to previous PiT Counts:

- ▶ In 2021, survey respondents were 54% male and 44% female respondents. The remaining respondents identified as a gender other than male or female.
- ▶ In 2018, survey respondents were 61% male and 39% female respondents.

Indigenous identity and ethnicity

- ▶ 90% of survey participants identified as Indigenous (136 of 151 responses) (i.e., First Nations, Inuit, Métis or having Indigenous ancestry).
 - ▶ Of these people 93% identified as First Nations (127 of 136 responses).
 - ▶ The additional 7% identified as being Métis, Inuit or having Indigenous Ancestry (9 of 136).
- ▶ 31 survey participants identified as being an ethnicity other than Indigenous.⁶
 - ▶ Of these respondents 87% identified as being White (27 of 31 responses) (e.g., European, French, Ukrainian, Euro-Latinx).
- ▶ Less than 5 respondents reported being immigrants to Canada.

Figure 5: Count of gender and Indigenous status among survey respondents (n=143)



Note: In order to preserve anonymity, this figure excludes responses identified as other genders.

Comparison to previous PiT Counts:

- ▶ In 2021 85% of survey participants identified as Indigenous. This was slightly higher than what was seen in 2018 when 82% of respondents reported being Indigenous. In the 2023 Count we saw the highest proportion of all three Counts yet of Indigenous respondents.

Sexual orientation

- ▶ 90% of respondents reported their sexuality as straight/heterosexual (133 of 149 responses).
- ▶ 5% of respondents reported their sexuality as bisexual (7 of 149 responses).
- ▶ The remaining 5% of respondents reported their sexuality as lesbian, gay, two spirit or not listed in the survey list (9 of 149 respondents).

⁶ These 31 respondents could have also identified as Indigenous.

Comparison to previous PiT Counts:

- ▶ In 2021, 11% of respondents reported their sexuality as bisexual and 10% of respondents reported their sexuality as either: asexual, gay, lesbian, pansexual, queer or two-spirit. This was a higher proportion of people than was seen in 2023.
- ▶ In the 2018 PiT Count, exact numbers of sexual orientation were not released due to low counts.

Sexuality, gender and ethnicity

In the previous PiT Count, we were able to look a bit more closely at gender, sexuality and ethnicity. In this PiT Count there were only 16 respondents that identified with a sexuality other than heterosexual. This information could become identifiable if we further broke this down into other groups. Therefore, this analysis was not completed.

Language

When asked what language respondents are best able to express themselves 100% of respondents identified English as their preferred language to communicate (153 of 153).

Comparison to previous PiT Counts:

- ▶ In 2021, 94% of respondents identified English as their preferred language to communicate. Of the people who identified a language other than English as their preferred language to communicate, 6 out of 7 identified an Indigenous language.

Individual context

Veteran Status

- ▶ 7% of respondents reported previously working with either the military, RCMP or both (11 of 151 respondents).

Comparison to previous PiT Counts:

- ▶ This was similar to the findings in 2021; 8% of respondents reported previously working with either the military, RCMP or both

Foster Care

- ▶ 58% of respondents reported being in foster care or a youth group home when they were younger (84 of 145 respondents).
- ▶ Of the people who reported being in foster care or a youth group when they were younger:
 - ▶ 80% reported that Family and Children's Services did not help them transition to independence (63 of 79 respondents).
 - ▶ 11% reported that Family and Children's Services did help their transition to independence (9 of 79 respondents).
 - ▶ 9% did not know if Family and Children's Services helped their transition to independence (7 of 79 respondents).
- ▶ When survey respondents were asked approximately how long after leaving foster care/group home did you start experiencing homelessness:
 - ▶ 19% of respondents reported starting to experience homelessness less than 1 year after leaving care (15 of 79 respondents).

- ▶ 14% of respondents between 1 year and less than 5 years after leaving care (11 of 79 respondents).
- ▶ 46% of respondents 5 years or more after leaving care (36 of 79 respondents).
- ▶ 22% did not know how long it was after leaving foster care/ group homes that they started experiencing homelessness (17 of 79 respondents).

Comparison to previous PiT Counts:

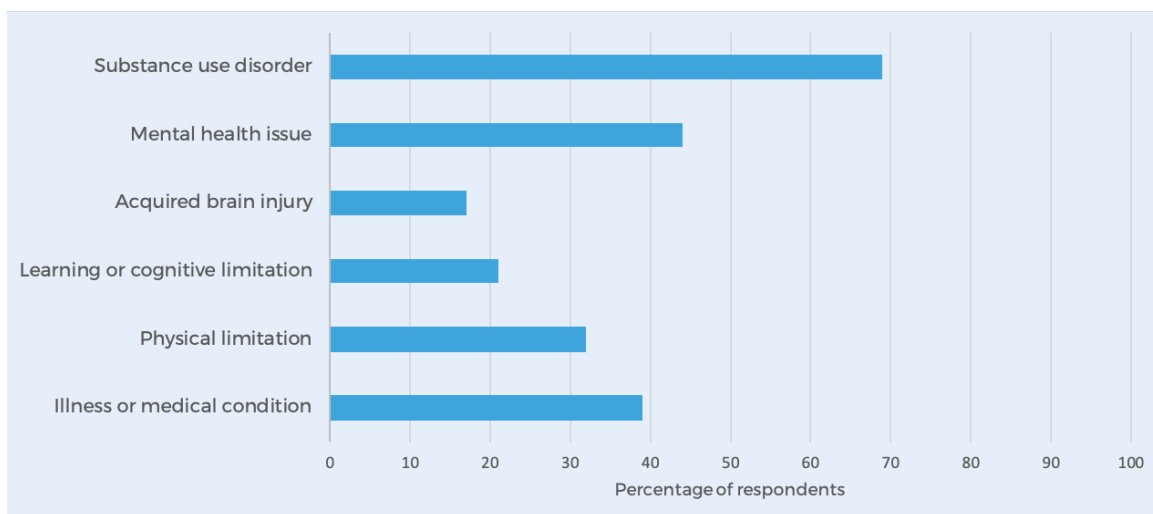
- ▶ In 2021 there was a lower percentage of respondents that reported being in foster care or a youth group home when they were younger (41%). A lower percentage of respondents (63%) reported that Family and Children's Services did not help them transition to independence and a higher percentage of respondents reported starting to experience homelessness within a year of exiting the foster care system (69%).
- ▶ In 2018, 47% of individuals responded that they had been in foster care at some point. This is also lower than the results seen in this round of the 2023 survey.

Illness, medical conditions, disorders and limitations

Many respondents reported having a medical condition, illness, limitation or disorder (Figure 6)

- ▶ 39% of respondents reported having an illness or medical condition (56 of 143 respondents).
- ▶ 32% of respondents reported having a physical limitation (47 of 145 respondents).
- ▶ 21% of respondents reported having a learning or cognitive limitation (28 of 137 respondents).
- ▶ 17% of respondents reported having an acquired brain injury (23 of 138 respondents).
- ▶ 44% of respondents reported having a mental health issue (64 of 146 respondents).
- ▶ 69% of respondents reported having a substance use disorder (101 of 146 respondents).

Figure 6: Percentage of respondents with various health conditions, illnesses or disorders



Note: people could answer multiple responses to this question, and therefore the overall total is more than 100%.

Comparison to previous PiT Counts:

The results for this section are quite similar to the results seen in the 2021 PiT Count. In 2021:

- ▶ 40% of respondents reported having an illness or medical condition.
- ▶ 39% of respondents reported having a physical limitation.

- ▶ 22% of respondents reported having a cognitive limitation.
- ▶ 47% of respondents reported having a mental health condition.
- ▶ 64% of respondents reported having a substance use disorder.

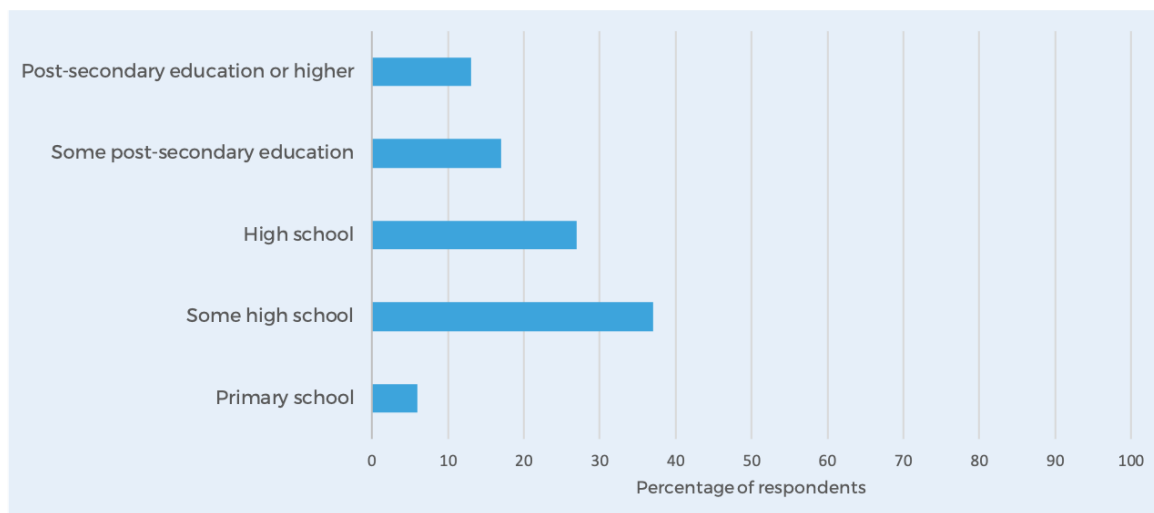
Education

In this year's PiT Count, we asked about education level which we had not done in previous PiT Counts. When asked "what is the highest level of education you completed":

- ▶ 6% of respondents completed primary school (9 of 152 respondents).
- ▶ 37% of respondents completed some high school (57 of 152 respondents).
- ▶ 27% of respondents completed high school (41 of 152 respondents).
- ▶ 17% of respondents completed some post-secondary education (26 of 152 respondents).
- ▶ 13% of respondents completed post-secondary education or higher (19 of 152 respondents).

There was no option for respondents to indicate whether they had completed trades school. When conducting surveys, we heard from respondents that they may have not necessarily finished high school but had completed trades school. Due to the structure of this question these responses were not captured.

Figure 7: Highest level of education completed (percentage) (n=152)



Source of income

The PiT Count asks respondents about how they receive income. Respondents could select multiple forms of income. This survey did not ask about level of income. Notably, 13% had no source of income (19 of 152 respondents).

The most common forms of income reported include⁷ :

- ▶ 70% received welfare/social assistance (106 of 152 respondents).
- ▶ 13% had employment (full time, part-time or casual employment) (19 of 152 respondents).

⁷ Respondents could select multiple forms of income. Other forms of income that were reported less frequently include: employment insurance, seniors' benefit, disability benefit, veteran pay and child and family support.

- ▶ 9% reported getting money from friends or family (14 of 152 respondents).
- ▶ 8% reported getting GST/HST rebate (12 of 152 respondents).

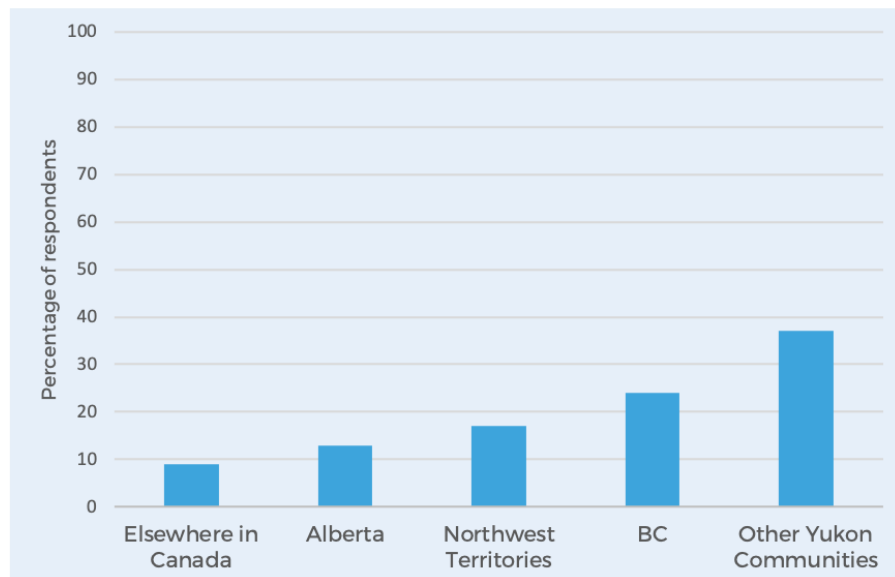
Comparison to previous PiT Counts:

In 2021, there was a smaller percentage of respondents who reported being employed (9%) and a smaller percentage were on social assistance (60%). There was also a smaller percentage of respondents who reported no income (5%).

Community of origin and migration

- ▶ 41% of respondents have always lived in Whitehorse (59 of 145 respondents). This is a higher percentage than in previous years.
- ▶ 59% of respondents moved to Whitehorse (86 of 145 respondents).
- ▶ When asked where they moved from:
 - ▶ 37% moved from rural Yukon to Whitehorse (28 of 76 respondents).
 - ▶ 17% moved from Northwest Territories to Whitehorse (13 of 76 respondents).
 - ▶ 24% moved from BC to Whitehorse (18 of 76 respondents).
 - ▶ 13% moved from Alberta to Whitehorse (10 of 76 respondents).
 - ▶ 9% moved from other locations across Canada (7 of 76 respondents).

Figure 8: Percentage of respondents from Yukon communities and other Canadian jurisdictions (n=76)



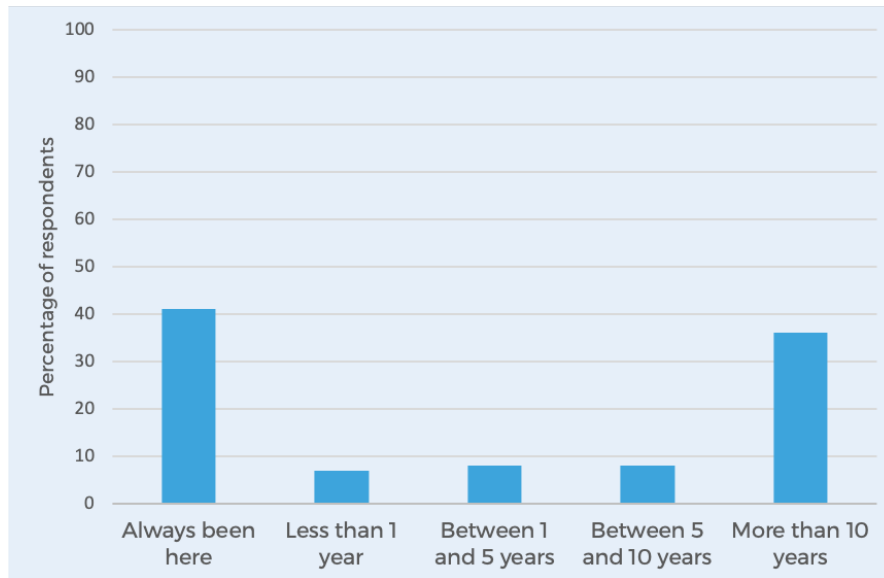
Comparison to previous PiT Counts:

- ▶ In 2021, 36% of respondents reported having always lived in Whitehorse and 64% of respondents had moved to Whitehorse. Of those people,
 - ▶ 32% moved from rural Yukon to Whitehorse.
 - ▶ 22% moved from Northwest Territories to Whitehorse.
 - ▶ 20% moved from BC to Whitehorse.
 - ▶ The remaining respondents moved from other locations across Canada or did not respond where they had moved from.

- ▶ In the 2018 Count, the findings showed that 27% of respondents had always lived in Whitehorse while 73% of respondents had moved to Whitehorse.

When people who moved to Whitehorse were asked how long they had been in the community, most had been in Whitehorse for over 10 years (36%). Only a small percentage of respondents reported moving to Whitehorse in the past year (7%).

Figure 9: How long survey respondents reported being in Whitehorse (percentage) (n=145)



Comparison to previous PiT Counts

In 2021, there were similar results. Many people who had moved to Whitehorse had been in Whitehorse for over 10 years (39%). However, in 2021, more respondents had moved to Whitehorse within the past year (22%) than seen in this PiT Count.

Of those who moved to Whitehorse, the most common reasons for doing so included:

- ▶ because their family moved here.
- ▶ for employment (either seeking or secured).
- ▶ to visit friends or family.

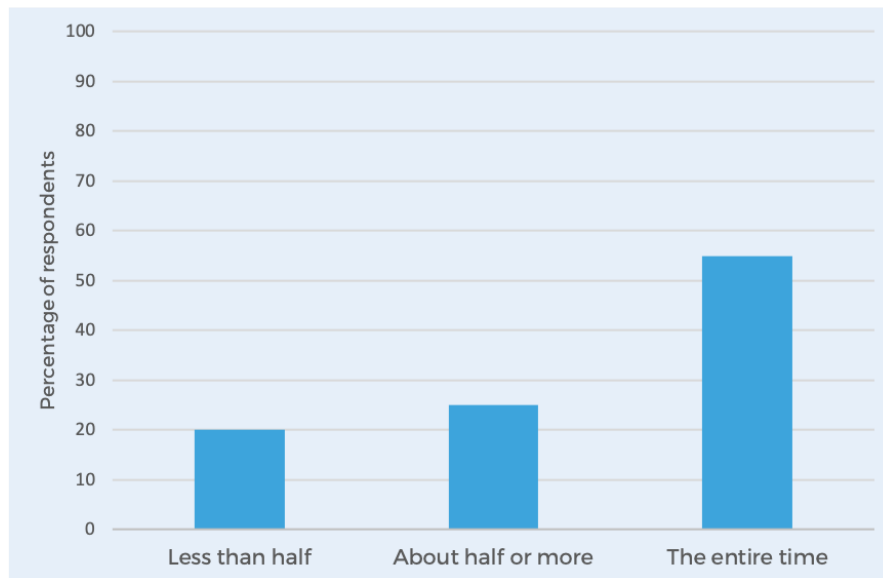
These were also the most common reasons reported in 2021.

PATTERNS OF HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness in the past 12 months

- ▶ 20% of respondents spent less than half the time over the past 12 months without housing (29 of 142 respondents).
- ▶ 25% of respondents spent about half or more over of the past 12 months without housing (35 of 142 respondents).
- ▶ 55% of respondents spent the entire past 12 months without housing (78 of 142 respondents).

Figure 10: Experience of homelessness in the past 12 months (percentage) (n= 142)



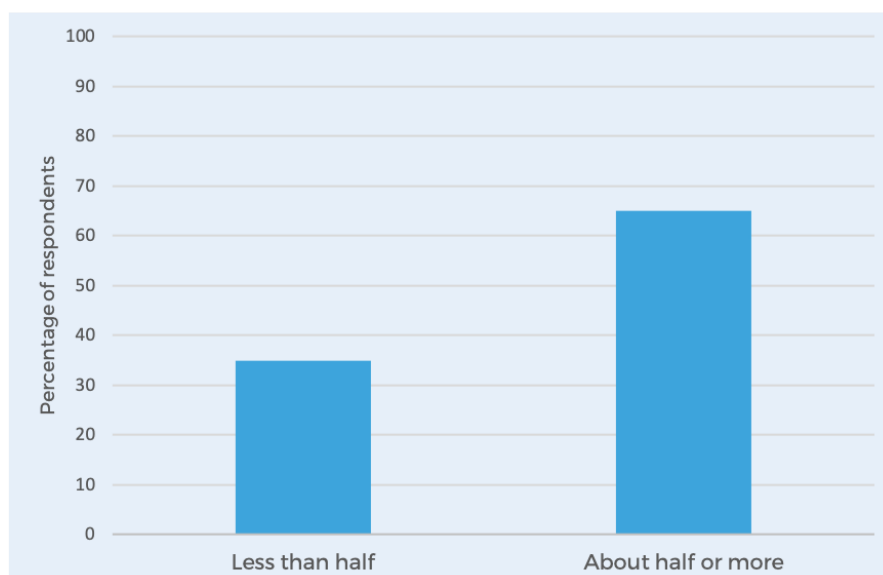
Comparison to previous PiT Counts:

In 2021, 52% of respondents spent the entire past 12 months experiencing homelessness which is similar to what was seen in the 2023 PiT Count. However, in 2021, 31% of respondents spent less than half the time in the past 12 months experiencing homelessness. This is a higher percentage than was seen in this year's PiT Count.

Homelessness in the past 3 years

- ▶ 35% of respondents spent less than half the time over the past 3 years without housing (49 of 140 respondents).
- ▶ 65% of respondents spent about half or more over of the past 3 years without housing (91 of 140 respondents).

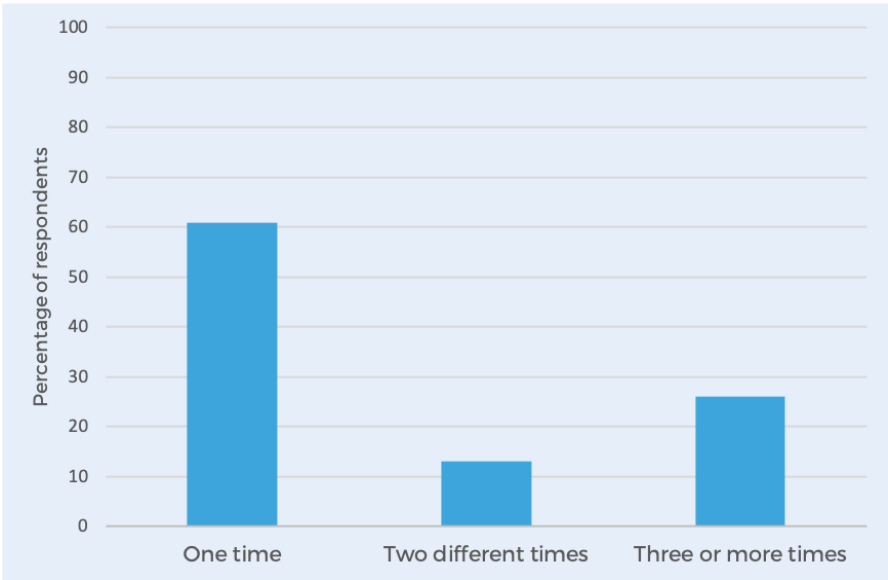
Figure 11: Experience of homelessness in the past 3 years (percentage) (n= 140)



Number of different times experiencing homelessness in the past year (episodic homelessness)

- ▶ 61% of respondents reported experiencing homelessness one single time in the past year (76 of 125 respondents).
- ▶ 13% of respondents reported experiencing homelessness two different times in the past year (16 of 125 respondents).
- ▶ 26% of respondents reported experiencing homelessness three or more different times in the past year (33 of 125 respondents).

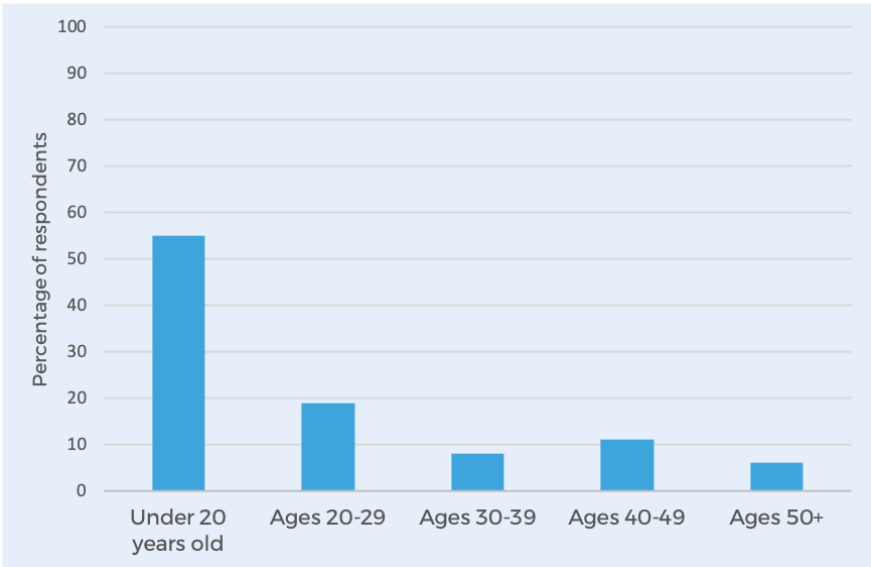
Figure 12: Experience of episodic homelessness in the past year (n= 125)



First experience of homelessness

- ▶ 55% of respondents reported first experiencing homelessness before the age of 20 (78 of 142 respondents).
- ▶ Of these respondents, 8% first experienced homelessness before the age of 10 (6 of 78 respondents).

Figure 13: Age at which respondents first reported experiencing homelessness (percentage) (n=142)



Comparison to previous PiT Counts:

- ▶ In 2021, there was a similar percentage of respondents who first experienced homelessness before the age of 20 (51%). However, there was a much higher percentage of respondents who reported experiencing homelessness before the age of 10 (31%) in 2021.

Reasons for most recent housing loss

When individuals were asked what the reason was for their most recent housing loss was the most frequent responses were (n=147):

- ▶ Substance use issue
- ▶ Not enough income for housing (e.g. lost benefit, income, or job)
- ▶ Conflict with a spouse or partner
- ▶ Landlord/tenant conflicts
- ▶ Unfit or unsafe housing conditions

These were the most common responses seen in the 2021 PiT survey as well.

In the 2023 PiT Count, half of respondents reported that their most recent housing loss was due to an eviction (71 of 142 respondents). This question had not been asked before in the Whitehorse survey.

Barriers to housing

95% of respondents want to get into permanent housing (146 of 153 respondents)

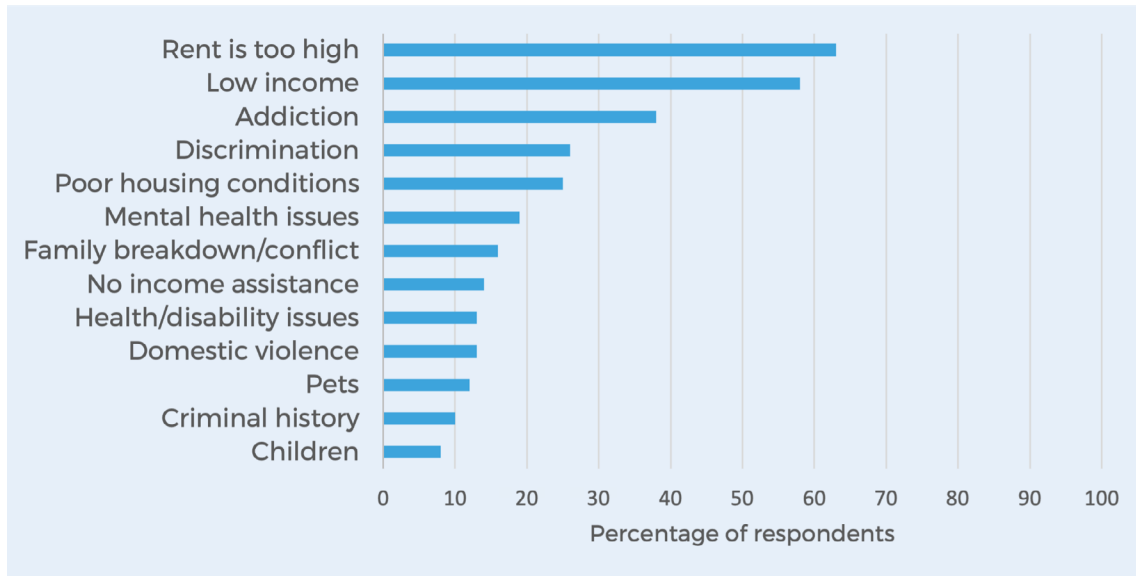
When asked what barriers exist when trying to access housing, the most common responses were:

- ▶ Rent is too high
- ▶ Low income
- ▶ Discrimination
- ▶ Addiction

These were the same as the most common responses in the 2018 and 2021 PiT Count when individuals were asked the same question.

Note: Not all answers fit into the pre-determined survey. For example, the availability of housing was a common response. One of our recommendations to the Government of Canada for future PiT surveys is to include availability as one of the selections.

Figure 14: Barriers to housing (percentage) (n=149)



Note: Percent totals exceed 100 because survey participants could select more than one response. The number of total responses for each barrier are below:

- ▶ Low income (n=86)
- ▶ No income assistance (n=22)
- ▶ Rent is too high (n=97)
- ▶ Poor housing conditions (n=39)
- ▶ Domestic violence (n=20)
- ▶ Health/disability issues (n=20)
- ▶ Mental health issues (n=30)
- ▶ Addiction (n=58)
- ▶ Family breakdown/conflict (n=24)
- ▶ Criminal history (n=16)
- ▶ Pets (n=18)
- ▶ Children (n=14)
- ▶ Discrimination (n=40)
- ▶ Do not want housing (n=5)

SERVICE USE

Shelter use

- ▶ 86% of respondents had used a shelter in the past year (130 of 151 respondents).
- ▶ This is higher than in both 2018 and 2021, where 61% and 73% of respondents reported using a shelter respectively.

This could have included a local shelter (the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter, Kaushee's Place, Youth Emergency Shelter), but could also have included a shelter outside of Whitehorse.

Other service use

Emergency Department

- ▶ 71% of respondents had visited the emergency department in the 12 months (107 of 151 respondents)
- ▶ Of these people:
 - ▶ 71% had been to the emergency department 1-5 times in the past year (63 of 89 respondents).
 - ▶ 16% had been to the emergency department 6-10 times in the past year (14 of 89 respondents).
 - ▶ 13% had been to the emergency department more than 10 times in the past year (12 of 89 respondents).

Comparison to previous PiT Counts:

- ▶ In 2021, 59% of respondents had visited the emergency department in the 12 months
- ▶ Of these people:
 - ▶ 76% had been to the emergency department 1-5 times in the past year.
 - ▶ 14% had been to the emergency department 6-10 times in the past year.
 - ▶ 10% had been to the emergency department more than 10 times in the past year.
- ▶ In 2018, the same percentage of respondents reported using the emergency department (71%).

Hospitalizations

- ▶ 47% of respondents reported being hospitalized in the past 12 months (69 of 147 respondents). Half of these people reported being hospitalized only one time in the past 12 months (24 of 47 respondents). The other half reported being hospitalized 2 times or more in the past 12 months.

Comparison to previous PiT Counts:

- ▶ In 2021, 13% of respondents reported being hospitalized in the past 12 months. In 2023, the results are similar, with 42% reporting that they had stayed in a hospital overnight.

Police Interactions

- ▶ 46% of respondents reported at least one interaction with police in the past 12 months (67 of 147 respondents). Approximately one-third of these respondents reported having only one police interaction over the past 12 months (15 of 48 respondents). The remaining respondents had more than one police interaction over the past 12 months. Interactions could have included tickets, arrests, or searches, although respondents were not asked to be explicit as to which type of interaction, they had experienced.

Comparison to previous PiT Counts:

- ▶ In 2021, fewer respondents (32%) reported at least one interaction with police in the past 12 months. In 2018, a similar percentage of respondents, (42%) reported interacting with police at least once in the past year.

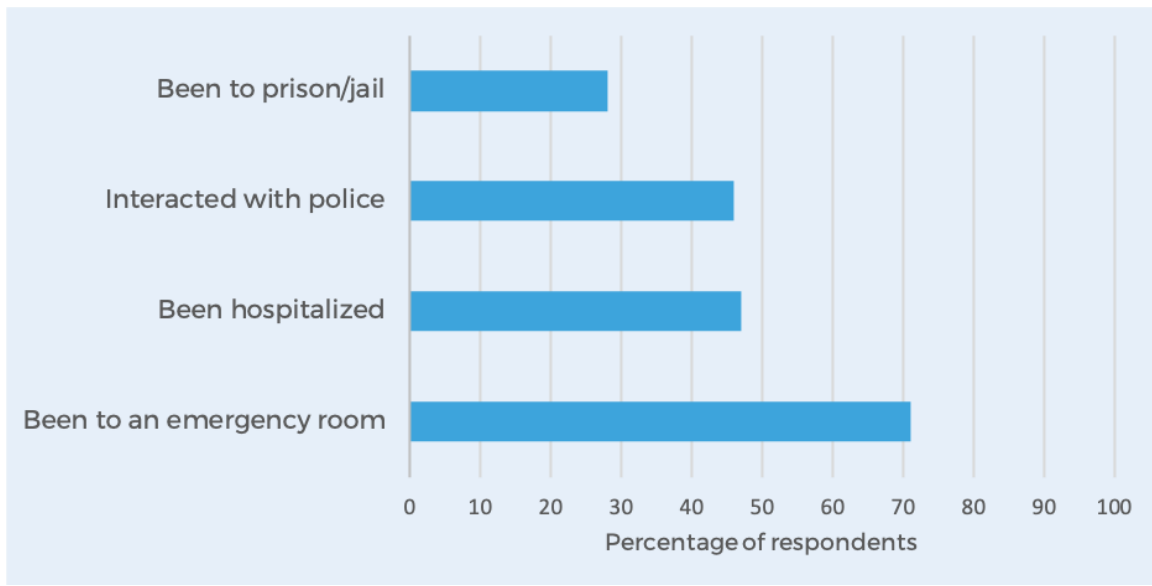
Correctional Centres

- ▶ 28% of respondents reported being in a correctional facility at least once the past 12 months (41 of 149 respondents). Of these people 57% reported being in a correctional facility only once in the past 12 months.

Comparison to previous PiT Counts:

- ▶ In 2021, the same percentage of respondents (28%) reported being in a correctional facility at least once in the past 12 months. In 2018, 34% of respondents reported being in jail in at least once in the past 12 months.

Figure 15: Percentage of respondents who reported interacting with public institutions in the past 12 months



Service needs

Participants were read a list of services that they may or may not need, to gain insight into participants' service needs. They either answered "yes" or "no" to needing the specific service. Participants were not asked whether they were connected to or engaged with the services listed at the time of the PiT Count.

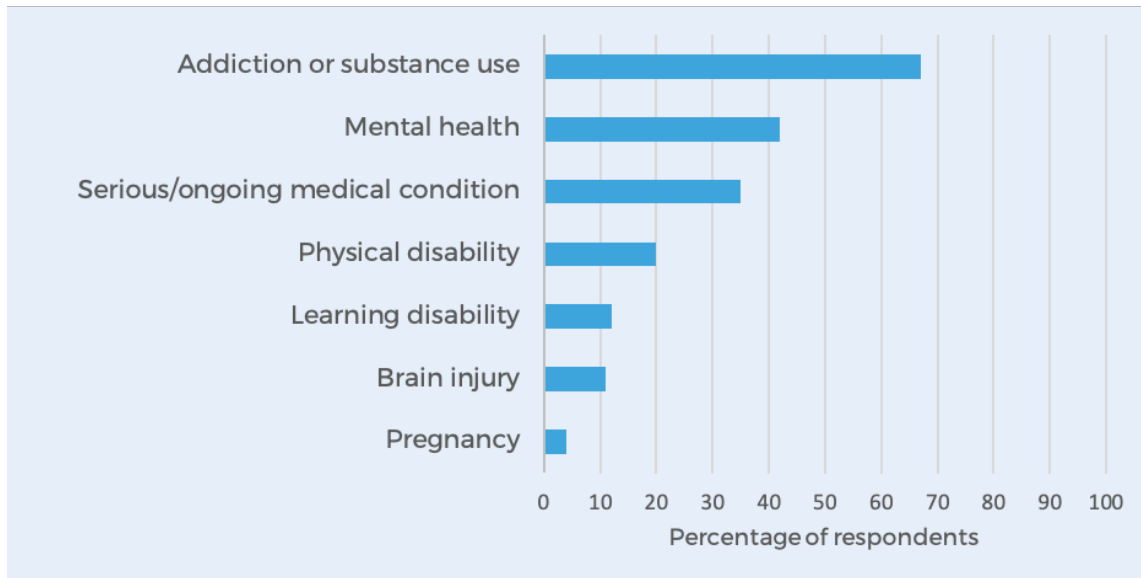
Of the people who responded, the top service needs included:

- ▶ addiction or substance use,
- ▶ mental health, and,
- ▶ ongoing medical issues.

These were the same top service needs as in 2021.

Many respondents identified multiple service needs, reflecting some of the complex challenges that may impact the lives of individuals experiencing homelessness. This was also a finding from the 2021 PiT Count.

Figure 16: Percentage of respondents who reported needing select services



Note: Percent totals exceed 100 because survey participants could select more than one response.

THE PIT COUNT AND THE BY-NAME LIST

The By-Name List (BNL)

A By-Name List is a real-time list of all known people experiencing homelessness in the community. It includes a robust set of data points that supports coordinated access and prioritization at a household level and an understanding of homeless inflow and outflow at a systems level. This real-time actionable data supports triage to services, system performance evaluation and advocacy (for the policies and resources necessary to end homelessness).

What does the BNL have to do with the PiT Count?

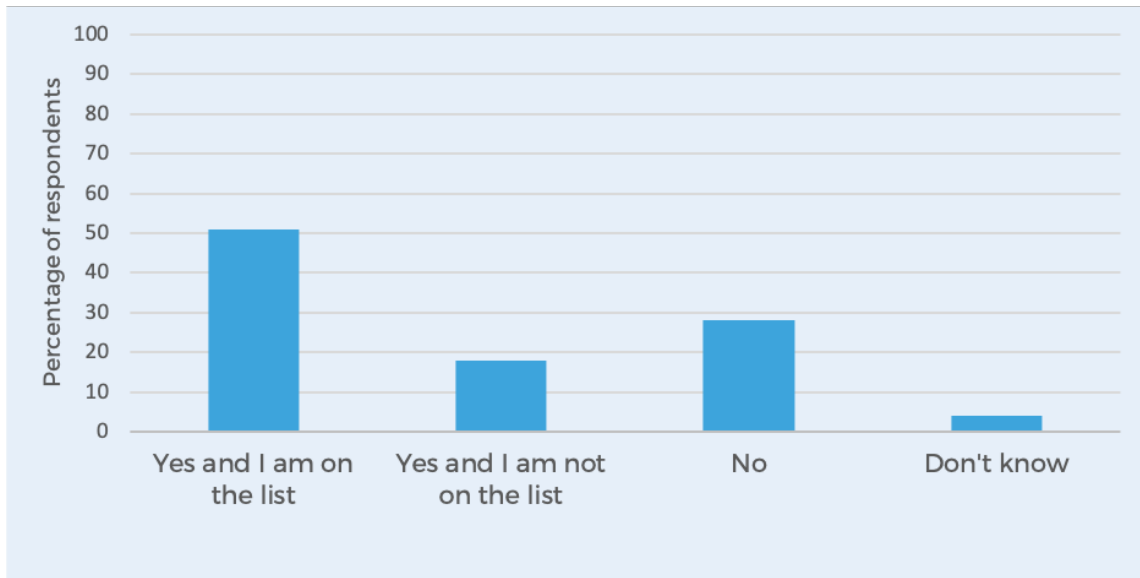
While the BNL is not comparable to the PiT Count data, the intake to the list requires individuals to answer many similar questions. When maintained and used in a coordinated way across a community, the BNL provides real-time data.

We are not able to directly determine whether the individuals on the BNL also participated in the PiT Count since the PiT Count does not collect personal identifying information. However, we did ask participants if they were aware of the BNL and if they were on the BNL.

This was the second time that questions about the BNL have been asked in Whitehorse. Half of the respondents (77%) reported being on the BNL (77 of 152 respondents) while approximately one quarter of respondents (28%) reported not being aware of the BNL.

On April 19th, 2023, the day that the 2023 PiT Count ended, there were 178 people on the BNL. This number includes inactive, housed and active people on the list.

Figure 17: Awareness of the By-Name List (percentage) (n=152)



In 2021, the BNL was fairly new. Most respondents (78%) reported not being on the BNL and only 17% of respondents were on the BNL (18 of 104 respondents).

On April 14th, 2021, the day that the 2021 PiT Count ended, there were 206 people on the BNL. This number includes inactive, housed and active people on the list.

For more information about the By-Name List' – contact the Coordinated Access Coordinated at Safe at Home Society at (867) 332-6201

METHODOLOGY

The overall methodology from the Whitehorse 2023 Point in Time Count followed the *Guide to Point-in-Time Count in Canada: 3rd Edition* developed by Employment and Social Development Canada. Outlined below are specifics to our local approach. As much as possible, the 2023 PiT Count was intended to be conducted similarly to the 2018 and 2021 PiT Count for comparability (i.e., similar locations used etc.).

Survey

The survey began with a brief introduction explaining the Count, its purpose, and how the results will be used. Informed consent was obtained prior to initiating the survey. Individuals who answered the screening questions and were eligible to continue with the survey were given a \$10 gift card to Superstore for their participation. It was important that this honorarium was offered as a thank you and a way of honouring a person's story, as opposed to a tool to coerce respondents to participate. Volunteers were asked not to mention the gift card until consent was received and were asked to provide the gift card regardless of the number of survey questions answered.

The survey had a total of 22 questions (some questions had multiple parts) and included:

- ▶ 1 screening question
- ▶ Mandatory core questions
 - ▶ Covering family status, age, Indigenous identity, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender identity, migration, military service, first experience of homelessness, length of homelessness in the past year, emergency shelter use, loss of housing and income.

- ▶ Optional questions
 - ▶ Covering reason for not using emergency shelter, reason for migration to Whitehorse, foster care, Indigenous community, service use, desire for housing, and barriers to housing.
- ▶ Locally developed questions
 - ▶ Covering information about the By-Name List

The PiT survey used for the 2023 Count is available upon request. Please contact ed@safeathomeyukon.ca

Data collection

Volunteers and frontline staff collected surveys over a 24-hour period from 4pm on Tuesday April 18th, 2023, to Wednesday April 19th, 2023.

Administrative tallies from service providers were completed for individuals who had no fixed address and were staying overnight in their care on the night of April 18th.

Data was collected at the following locations:

- ▶ Street routes throughout the downtown core
 - ▶ Some routes were pre-determined with the help of front-line outreach workers, others were modified on the evening of the Count based on where individuals were congregating. Each volunteer team was given a map of an area to conduct surveys of everyone they encountered.
- ▶ Emergency shelters and transitional housing programs
 - ▶ Both volunteers and frontline workers administered surveys at three different emergency shelters and two transitional housing programs. We also collected administrative tallies from all emergency shelter and transitional housing programs.
- ▶ Service locations
 - ▶ Both volunteers and frontline workers administered surveys at service locations during the day of April 19th, 2021. Service locations included organizations such as Blood Ties Four Directions and FASSY.
- ▶ Public systems
 - ▶ Due to capacity and logistical issues surveys were only conducted at Mental Wellness Substance Use Services and not in other public systems. We collected administrative tallies from other public systems including the Whitehorse Correctional Centre and Whitehorse General Hospital (First Nations Health Programs).
- ▶ A magnet event
 - ▶ A BBQ occurred at Shipyards Park over lunch on April 19th, 2023. This event was advertised at local service organizations and through social media, flyers, and posters.

Administrative tallies were collected from all three emergency shelters and two transitional housing programs. A supervisor at each location was asked to complete the form and report on the number and demographics⁸ of individuals staying there overnight on April 18th.

Data storage

After each volunteer shift, surveys were returned by volunteers to the Safe at Home office. Surveys completed at different agencies were collected by the PiT Coordinator and returned to the Safe at Home office. All paper surveys were secured in a locked filing cabinet at the Safe at Home office after the completion of the PiT Count including

⁸ Demographics included gender and age.

unused surveys.

Data entry and analysis

The PiT Count Coordinator was responsible for data entry. Data was manually entered from paper surveys into a Microsoft Excel sheet.

Previously, Homeless Individuals and Families Information System Lite (HIFIS), a standalone module designed by the Homelessness Policy Directorate at Employment and Social Development Canada was used for the PiT Count data entry. This was not used for the 2023 data entry.

Several strategies were employed to reduce double counting of individuals experiencing homelessness in the 2023 PiT Count

- ▶ All volunteers and frontline workers asked potential respondents if they had already completed the survey as part of the screening questions.
- ▶ All respondents were asked to provide a unique identifier (i.e., first initial, last initial, day of birth). Surveys with very similar or matching identifiers were reviewed manually to cross-reference answers and determine if they were duplicates.

In total over the 24-hour period, there were 180 surveys completed. There was a total of 25 duplicate surveys removed during the data entry and cleaning phase. When duplicates were discovered, the survey completed last was used for data entry. In the case that the last completed survey was less than 50% complete, the next most recent survey was used.

After the removal of duplicate surveys there were a total of 155 surveys remaining. These responses were analyzed and combined into the information in the results section above.

Not everyone responded to every question. In the results section, the exact number of respondents to each question is given (e.g., n = 118).

Enumeration

The PiT Count enumeration total is the number of community members experiencing homelessness on the night of the Count, based on both the administrative data provided and the survey data collected. The survey data provides the total of those who are unsheltered and experiencing hidden homelessness (including those staying at someone else's place or at hotel/motel). However, it is important to highlight that not everyone who was counted was surveyed.

Limitations

In 2021, a territorial election and the COVID-19 pandemic presented unique challenges to the PiT Count. In 2023, we did not experience these types of challenges.

Volunteers

There were 21 volunteers recruited for the 2023 PiT Count. This included event volunteers, headquarters volunteers, survey volunteers on the street and at service locations, and data analyses volunteers. The number of volunteers does not include staff who facilitated surveying at their organizations. The PiT Count relies heavily on volunteers. Without the time that they donated this event and report would not be possible.

Not including the time frontline workers and partnering organizations provided to support the Count, volunteers collectively gave approximately 120 hours of their time. If we put a cost to this commitment at \$22 per hour, we

estimate that approximately \$2640 worth of volunteer time was contributed to Whitehorse's PiT Count.

Volunteer recruitment occurred in the 2 months leading up to the Count. Recruitment tactics included using social media, posting the position through Volunteer Yukon and reaching out to volunteers who had helped in the past. All volunteers had to participate in 3 hours of training. The training included:

- ▶ Purpose of a PiT Count
- ▶ PiT Count 101
- ▶ Findings from the 2021 PiT Count
- ▶ Logistics
- ▶ Safety planning when delivering surveys
- ▶ Survey review and practice

Volunteer surveyors were directed to approach everyone they encountered to determine their eligibility to participate in the survey, regardless of presumptions about appearance or perceptions of homelessness. Surveyors were trained to deliver surveys in a non-judgmental way, upholding respondents' rights to anonymity, to withdraw consent, or to stop at any time. Volunteers had information regarding access to various services in Whitehorse and information about the By-Name List if respondents had targeted questions about housing support.

NEXT STEPS

Recommendations for future Counts

- ▶ Engage early with potential volunteers, public systems and partner agencies.
- ▶ Provide feedback to Homelessness Policy Directorate on survey questions including, adding several strength-based questions in future Counts

Next steps

- ▶ This report will be made available to elected officials and all levels of government, volunteers, community members with lived experience, service providers, and the public.
- ▶ These results will be communicated broadly to bring awareness to the issue of homelessness in the community.
- ▶ The results will be used to advocate for change in the community.
- ▶ Continue to work with the Homelessness Policy Directorate to determine timing for potential future PiT Counts.

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

Shelters, transitional housing and public systems provided administrative data. This information is presented below. To protect privacy, Counts with less than 5 respondents are suppressed. Not included in the Counts below are people who stayed with someone else, people who stayed in hotels or people who were unsheltered the night of the Count.

Emergency shelters

Kaushee's Place, Emergency Shelter for Women and Children

- ▶ 12 beds occupied on the night of April 18, 2023 (including children)
- ▶ Total number of beds: 15 beds (9 rooms)
- ▶ Maximum length of stay: 30 days
- ▶ Average length of stay: 30-45 days

Skookum Jim, Youth Emergency Shelter (for youth aged 17 to 24)

- ▶ Less than 5 beds occupied on the night of April 18, 2023
- ▶ Total number of beds: 11 beds
- ▶ Maximum length of stay: N/A
- ▶ Average length of stay: N/A

Whitehorse Emergency Shelter

- ▶ 49 beds occupied on the night of April 18, 2023 (34 male/15 female)
- ▶ Total number of beds: 54
- ▶ Maximum length of stay: N/A
- ▶ Average length of stay: N/A

Transitional housing

Betty's Haven, Second Stage Housing for Women and Children

- ▶ 32 beds occupied on the night of April 18, 2023 (14 women, 18 children)
- ▶ Total number of beds: 15 apartments
- ▶ Maximum length of stay: 18 months
- ▶ Range of stay: 18-24 months

Safe at Home, Temporary Housing Project at the former High Country Inn

- ▶ 19 beds occupied on the night of April 18, 2023 (9 male/ 10 female)
- ▶ Total number of beds: 20 beds
- ▶ Maximum length of stay: 5 months
- ▶ Range of stay: 4 months

Public systems

Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services, Intensive Treatment Program

- ▶ Less than 5 service users were experiencing homelessness on the night of April 18, 2023
- ▶ Total number of beds: 20
- ▶ Maximum length of stay: 6 weeks
- ▶ Average length of stay: N/A

Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services, Withdrawal Management Services

- ▶ Less than 5 service users were experiencing homelessness on the night of April 18, 2023
- ▶ Total number of beds: 14
- ▶ Maximum length of stay: 7 days
- ▶ Average length of stay: 5-7 days

Whitehorse General Hospital

- ▶ Less than 5 service users were experiencing homelessness on the night of April 18, 2023

Whitehorse Correctional Centre including the Arrest Processing Unit

- ▶ Less than 5 people at the Correctional Facility were experiencing homelessness on the night of April 18, 2023
- ▶ Total number of beds: 170
- ▶ Maximum length of Stay: N/A
- ▶ Average length of Stay: N/A

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Name of Organization	Program Name	Category	Administrative Data Provided	Surveyed by Staff	Surveyed by Volunteers
Whitehorse Emergency Shelter	Emergency Shelter	Emergency Shelter	Y		Y
	Transitional Housing Units	Transitional Housing	Y		
Women's Transition Home	Kaushee's Place, Emergency Shelter	Violence Against Women Emergency Shelter	Y	Y	
	Betty's Haven - Second Stage Housing	Transitional Housing for Women and Children	Y	Y	
Skookum Jim Friendship Centre	Emergency After Hours Outreach Services (EAHOS)	Youth Emergency Shelter	Y	Y	

Name of Organization	Program Name	Category	Administrative Data Provided	Surveyed by Staff	Surveyed by Volunteers
Health & Social Services: Mental Wellness & Substance Use Services	Withdrawal Management	Public System: Treatment Centre	Y	Y	
	Intensive Live-In Treatment Program	Public System: Treatment Centre	Y	Y	
Department of Justice	Whitehorse Correctional Services	Public System: Corrections	Y		
Yukon Hospital Corporation - Whitehorse General Hospital	First Nations Health Programs	Public System: Hospital	Y		
Blood Ties Four Directions Centre	Drop-In Program	Service Location		Y	
Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society Yukon	Drop-In Program	Service Location		Y	
Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre	Wednesday Lunch and Drop-In Program	Service Location			Y
Department of Education	Individual Learning Centre	Service Location			Y
BGCY	Drop-In Program	Service Location			Y

Note: The Youth Achievement Centre had staff prepared to conduct the Count however no surveys were completed at either location.

GLOSSARY⁹

Absolute homelessness: Staying in an unsheltered location or in an emergency shelter.

Administrative data/tally: Information collected from organizations and public institutions (i.e. emergency shelters, transitional housing, Whitehorse General Hospital, Mental Health and Substance Use Services, and the Whitehorse Correctional Centre) where people meeting the definition of homelessness stayed on April 17, 2018. In addition to reporting the number of people who were experiencing homelessness on the night of the Count, the administrative data included aggregate information for observed gender, age, and ethnicity.

Canadian definition of homelessness: Homelessness describes the situation of an individual or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. It is the result of systemic or societal barriers, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household's financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination. Most people do not choose to experience homelessness, and the experience is generally negative, unpleasant, stressful and distressing.

Chronic homelessness: A period of six or more months of homelessness in the past year, or 180 days cumulatively.

⁹ Definitions were obtained from several sources: End Homelessness St. John's Everyone Counts Summary, Safe at Home: Community-Based Action Plan to End and Prevent Homelessness in Whitehorse, Yukon, and the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness.

Emergency shelters: Facilities that provide short-term accommodation for people experiencing homelessness, which may provide other essential supports and services such as food.

Episodic homelessness: Defined as three or more distinct episodes of homelessness in the past year.

Hidden homelessness: Living temporarily with others without legal protection, guarantee of continued residency, or prospects of permanent housing (e.g., couch surfing).

Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS): A national information system that helps service providers with their day-to-day operations and planning activities. HIFIS includes features to track and support the management of Housing First activities, collects data on shelter use, and has a Point-in-Time Count module that helps develop a national portrait of homelessness.

Indigenous homelessness: Indigenous homelessness is a human condition that describes First Nations, Métis and Inuit individuals, families or communities lacking stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means or ability to acquire such housing. Unlike the common colonialist definition of homelessness, Indigenous homelessness is not defined as lacking a structure of habitation; rather, it is more fully described and understood through a composite lens of Indigenous worldviews. These include: individuals, families and communities isolated from their relationships to land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages and identities. Importantly, Indigenous people experiencing these kinds of homelessness cannot culturally, spiritually, emotionally or physically reconnect with their Indigeneity or lost relationships.

Provisionally accommodated: Staying in transitional housing, living temporarily with others without guarantee of continued residency, and/or staying in institutional care with no permanent housing arrangement.

Public systems: Used interchangeably with institutional settings and may include correction facilities, hospitals, community-based residential facilities (e.g., halfway houses), substance use treatment centres, and health and mental health programs.

Transitional housing: Refers to housing where people can live for a limited period of time and participate in employment and/or training programs, enrol in education programs, address issues related to problematic substance use and/or mental illness, and ultimately transition to more permanent, stable housing.

Unsheltered homelessness: Staying outside, in places not intended for human habitation and/or in a public or private space without consent. This includes in a tent, vehicle, makeshift shelter or abandoned building. For the purpose of enumeration, this also included respondents who did not know where they were staying on the night of the Count.

Youth: Includes individuals aged 16 to 24 years at the time of the survey. Dependent youth or children reported as residing with their parents or guardians were included in the overall Count but were not included in the proportion of youth who were experiencing homelessness as they were not living independently of their parents and/or caregivers. Youth under the age of 16 were not surveyed due to the complexity of obtaining consent to participate without parent/guardian assent.

Youth homelessness: Refers to the situation and experience of young people between the ages of 13 and 24 who are living independently of parents and/or caregivers, but do not have the means or ability to acquire a stable, safe or consistent residence.