

Community Report

# Point-in-Time Count



**Kelowna, British Columbia**

# 2016

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# Acknowledgements

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The Central Okanagan Foundation would like to thank everyone who contributed to the 2016 Kelowna Point-in-Time Count, including all of the organizations, community partners, and survey participants that provided invaluable support and feedback throughout the process. Finally, we would like to extend a special thank-you to all of the volunteers and team leaders that dedicated their time and effort in conducting the Count.

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# Abstract

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**Background:** The Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy has provided support to 31 communities across Canada to conduct a coordinated Point-in-Time (PiT) Count of the homeless population. The count will provide vital information to participating communities about their homeless population, and contribute to the understanding of homelessness in Canada. It aims to enumerate individuals in a community who are, at a given time, staying in shelters or "sleeping rough" (e.g., on the street, in parks), providing a "snapshot" of homelessness in a community. PiT Counts include a survey that provides communities with information on the characteristics of their homeless population (e.g., age, gender, veteran status, Aboriginal identity). As one of the designated communities, Kelowna's PiT Count was held on February 24th, 2016.

**Methodology:** A community strategy was developed in consultation with local stakeholders and homeless-serving agencies. A list of sheltered and unsheltered locations frequented by the homeless population was compiled and categorized using a set of pre-determined guidelines. Teams of trained volunteers led by experienced team leaders (outreach workers from local homeless serving agencies) traveled through designated zones and into emergency shelters to conduct the count and invite individuals to take part in the survey. Additional data (age, gender, Aboriginal identity) on individuals staying in temporary system-supported housing were collected from 12 interim housing locations and 8 institutional care facilities.

**Conclusion:** The results of the 2016 PiT Count provide a better understanding of the current state of homelessness in Kelowna. These results may be used to provide direction and inform strategic community planning. Further, these findings may act as a benchmark to track changes in the homeless population over time and measure progress in addressing homelessness.



A snapshot of  
homelessness in  
our community

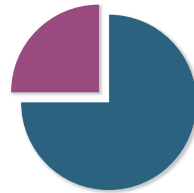
# Point-in-Time Count

KELOWNA FEBRUARY 24, 2016

AT LEAST  
**233**  
PEOPLE



were experiencing homelessness in Kelowna



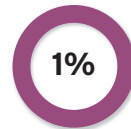
**1 in 4**  
(23%) identified as Aboriginal or had Indigenous ancestry



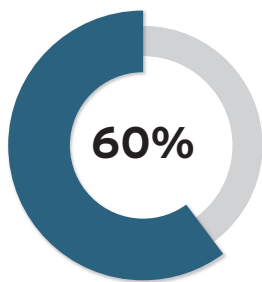
Male



Female

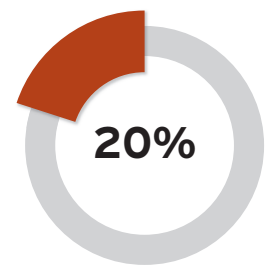
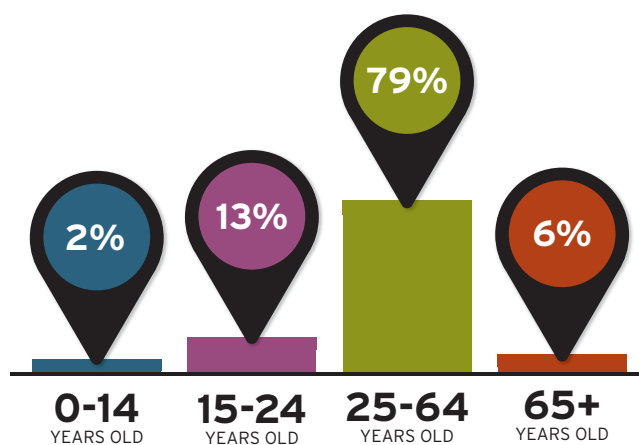


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## Chronically Homeless

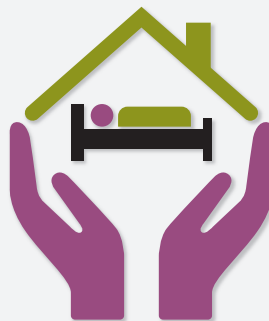
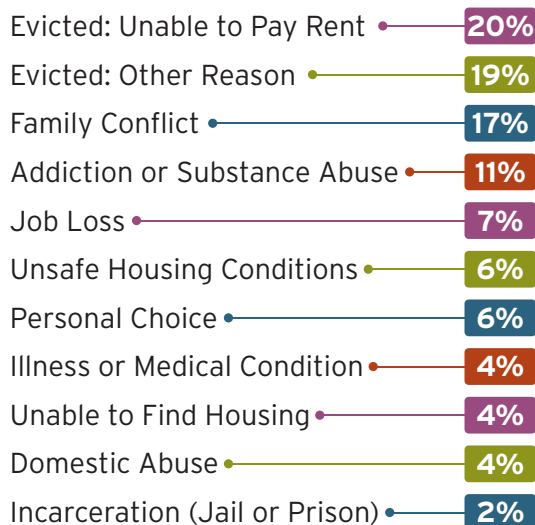
homeless for 6 months or more within the past year



## Episodically Homeless

experienced 3 or more episodes of homelessness within the past year

## Reason for Housing Loss



There were an additional

**273**

individuals living in temporary system-supported housing

**93%**

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

View the full 2016 Point-in-Time Count report online at [centralokanaganfoundation.org](http://centralokanaganfoundation.org)

Thank you to all of the organizations, community partners, participants, and volunteers that contributed to the 2016 Point-in-Time Count.

Canada **CENTRAL OKANAGAN FOUNDATION**  
empowering generations to give.



# Introduction

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Homelessness is a pervasive issue in Canada. It is estimated that 235,000 Canadians experience homelessness each year<sup>1</sup>. As the largest city in British Columbia's interior, Kelowna is no exception. With a population of approximately 123,500 residents, Kelowna has one of the lowest apartment vacancy rates in Canada, falling to an all-time low of 1.0% in the Fall of 2014<sup>2</sup>. Despite being voted one of the most livable cities in Canada<sup>3</sup>, affordability remains a major concern. According to the 2016 Demographia International Housing Affordability Survey<sup>4</sup>, Kelowna's housing market ranked as the fifth least affordable market in Canada. Beyond the availability and affordability of housing, the causes and consequences of homelessness are complex and affect a diverse cross-section of the population. Many factors can contribute to an individual being homeless, including addiction, substance use, mental health, domestic abuse, or a sudden job loss, among other factors. To prevent and reduce homelessness, it is important to understand who is being affected. As a designated community of the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS), Kelowna received funding to take part in the first nationally coordinated Point-in-Time Count between January 1 and April 30, 2016.

A Point-in-Time (PiT) Count is a method used to measure sheltered and unsheltered homelessness. It aims to enumerate individuals in a community who are, at a given time, staying in homeless shelters, temporary housing, or "sleeping rough" (e.g., on the street, in parks), providing a "snapshot" of homelessness in a community. A PiT Count also collects information on the characteristics of the homeless population (e.g., age, gender, Aboriginal identity). This information can be used by the community to gain a better understanding of the local context, support local planning, identify community priorities, and assist with service mapping. PiT Count data may also be used to increase public awareness and promote government engagement. When completed in subsequent years using consistent methodology, a PiT Count can be used to track changes in the homeless population over time and measure progress in reducing homelessness in a community. By following a national framework<sup>5</sup>, the data collected will contribute to a broader understanding of homelessness across Canada.

Despite the numerous benefits of conducting a PiT Count, it is important to interpret the findings carefully as it is impossible to capture everyone who experiences homelessness in a community. PiT Counts are limited in their ability to capture hidden homelessness (e.g., people who are "couch-surfing"). Further, by focusing on a single night, the count will not include some people who cycle in and out of homelessness. As such, a PiT Count should be considered the minimum number of individuals experiencing homelessness in a community. Thus, the focus of the 2016 Kelowna PiT Count is to identify individuals who are absolutely homeless (e.g., sleeping in shelters or on the street) and temporarily housed on the day of the count.

The primary outcomes of the Kelowna PiT Count are to (1) provide a count of people experiencing sheltered and unsheltered homelessness, and (2) provide information on the characteristics of the homeless population.

# Methodology

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A PiT Count Steering Committee of stakeholders, guided by the PiT Count Coordinator, was formed to develop a local approach and provide input throughout the implementation of the count. Sector representation on the committee included the Municipal Government, Federal Government, local Health Authority, RCMP, HPS Community Entity, Community Advisory Board on Homelessness, Aboriginal Community, Youth, staff from homeless serving agencies, and an individual with lived homeless experience. Criteria were determined, based on the local context, to categorize locations where the homeless population resides. A community strategy was developed to most accurately reflect the current state of homelessness in Kelowna.

**Absolutely Homeless.** An individual was operationally defined as absolutely homeless if they were residing in an unsheltered location or accessing a homeless shelter. 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. A known-location strategy was used to compile a list of unsheltered locations where homeless individuals frequented one month prior to the count. Feedback was provided by the PiT Count Steering Committee as well as other community partners including municipal and regional by-law. Homeless shelters include emergency shelters (general and specific to men, women, youth, etc.), extreme weather shelters, and Violence Against Women (VAW) shelters.

**Temporarily Housed.** An individual was operationally defined as temporarily housed if they were accessing system-supported (government or non-profit sector) interim housing or institutional care. Interim housing provides services beyond basic needs, offers residents more privacy, and places greater emphasis on participation and social engagement. Interim housing targets those who would benefit from structure, support and skill-building prior to moving to long term housing, with the ultimate goal of preventing a return to homelessness. Institutional care serves individuals that are being provisionally accommodated in medical/mental health institutions, penal institutions, residential treatment or withdrawal management centres, or children's institutions/group homes but lack permanent housing to return to upon release. This includes individuals who: a) were homeless prior to admittance and who have no plan for permanent accommodation after release; or b) had housing prior to admittance, but lost their housing while in institutional care; or c) had housing prior to admittance, but cannot go back due to changes in their needs. In any case, without adequate discharge planning and support, which includes arrangements for safe and reliable housing (and necessary aftercare or community-based services), there is a likelihood that these individuals may transition into homelessness following their release. For both interim and institutional care, locations were included if residency was guaranteed for 3 years or less.

# Community Strategy

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The Kelowna PiT Count was conducted on the evening of February 24th, 2016. The average temperature during the day was 9°C, with a low of -4°C. Fifty volunteers were recruited from the School of Social Work, Southern Medical Program, and the School of Nursing at the University of British Columbia Okanagan campus, as well as the Human Service Work program at the Okanagan College, to conduct surveys with individuals experiencing absolute homelessness. Additionally, twenty-one team leaders were recruited from local homeless serving agencies to support volunteers during the count. All volunteers and team leaders were required to attend a three-hour training session where they received detailed information on survey administration, enumeration protocols, cultural sensitivity, and personal safety.

Teams consisting of 3-4 volunteers and 1-2 team leaders were assigned to a homeless shelter or unsheltered location, depending on the density of the location. A total of 17 teams participated in the count including 13 unsheltered teams and 4 sheltered teams. Surveys were conducted between 6:00pm and 10:00pm to correspond with the homeless shelter's intake and reduce opportunities for duplication in the enumeration of people experiencing absolute homelessness. Unsheltered teams were given a map with detailed directions and highlighted points of interest, a tally sheet to report the number of observed homeless, and surveys to be conducted with eligible individuals. Volunteer teams were instructed to approach everyone that they encountered within their assigned zone. Volunteer teams entering a homeless shelter conducted surveys only, and were not provided with a tally sheet, as the enumeration of the sheltered population was accomplished through the collection of systems data. A magnet event for youth was held at the local youth shelter to increase survey engagement among young people as they are generally considered to be a hard-to-reach population. All volunteer teams were provided with emergency contact numbers and an information sheet about local resources to hand out if they encountered an individual in crisis or immediate need. All participants that completed a survey were given a \$5 Tim Hortons Gift Card.

## PiT COUNT



**6:00pm – 10:00pm**

February 24th, 2016

50

volunteers

21

team leaders



# Data Collection

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

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

**Survey Data.** The survey consisted of three sections, including an introductory script, 4 screening questions, and 12 core questions. The introductory script served to introduce the volunteer and the purpose of the survey. Individuals were informed that the survey would take about 10 minutes to complete and that their participation was voluntary, they may skip any question or stop the interview at any time, and that their responses would be anonymous. The screening questions were used to determine that an individual had not already taken the survey, was willing to participate, and was eligible to conduct the survey. Individuals were asked; “Do you have a permanent residence to return to tonight?” and “Where are you staying tonight?” Depending on the responses to these questions, an individual’s eligibility was determined. Survey questions included participants’ age, gender, Aboriginal identity, number of family members present, military or RCMP service, number of homeless episodes, amount of time being homeless, reason for housing loss, and source of income. A complete list of survey questions and potential responses are available online at [www.centralokanaganfoundation.org](http://www.centralokanaganfoundation.org).

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

# Data Collection

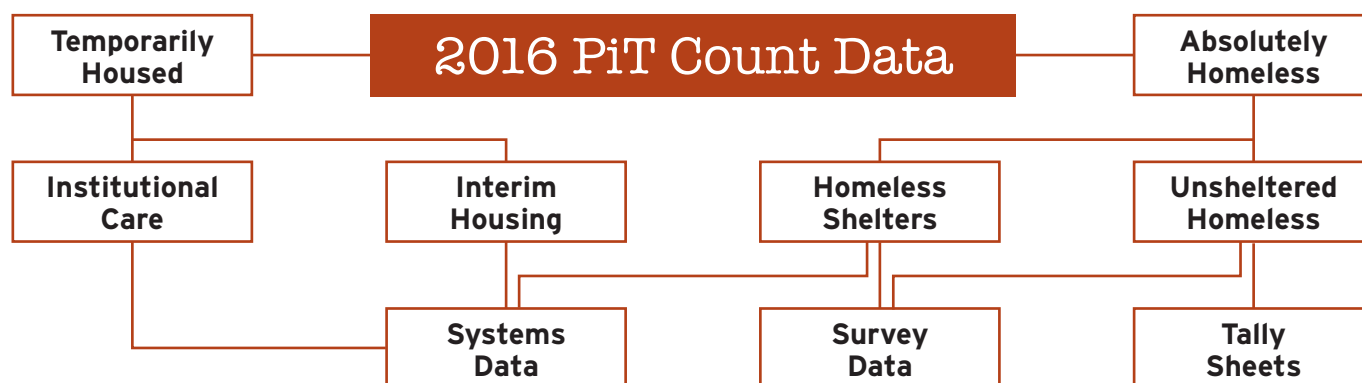


Figure 1. PiT Count Data Collection Strategy.

## Findings

Data were collected from agencies regarding individual's age, gender, and whether they identified as an Aboriginal person, from a total of 5 shelters (Table 1), 12 system-supported interim housing locations (Table 2), and 8 institutional care providers (Table 3). A total of 164 individuals were identified as staying in a homeless shelter on the night of the count. An additional 231 individuals were identified as residing in interim housing and 42 individuals residing in institutional care. Volunteer teams identified 69 individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness during the night of the count. A total of 86 surveys were completed, including 69 sheltered homeless and 17 unsheltered homeless, representing a response rate of 42% of the sheltered homeless population and 25% of the identified unsheltered homeless population.

5  
homeless shelters

12  
interim housing locations

8  
institutional care providers

HOMELESS SHELTERS					
	Location (Organization)	Count	Total Capacity <sup>1</sup>	Survey Data	Systems Data
1	Kelowna's Gospel Mission	90	94+	x	x
2	Kelowna Women's Shelter	8	16+		x
3	Richter St. (Okanagan Boys and Girls Clubs)	8	10+	x	x
4	Alexandra Gardner Shelter (NOW Canada)	19	20+	x	x
5	Inn From the Cold	39	40+	x	x
Total		164	180+		

Table 1. Client enumeration, total capacity, and data collection strategy for local homeless shelters.

<sup>1</sup>The total capacity of each homeless shelter may be expanded by providing sleeping mats or additional cots, and is denoted by the (+) symbol.

# Findings

INTERIM HOUSING					
	Location (Organization)	Count	Total Capacity	Survey Data	Systems Data
1	Essentials Safe House (NOW Canada)	9	8		x
2	Penny Lane (Okanagan Boys and Girls Clubs)	6	6		x
3	Gateway (Okanagan Boys and Girls Clubs)	3	6		x
4	Ozanam House (Society of St. Vincent de Paul)	18	19		x
5	1043 Harvey House (John Howard Society)	8	8		x
6	Cardington Apartments (John Howard Society)	30	30		x
7	Connected by 25 (CMHA)	7	7		x
8	Willowbridge (CMHA)	35	40		x
9	Scattered-site Units (CMHA)	18	18		x
10	Freedom's Door	50	50		Age and Gender only
11	Rowcliffe - 2nd & 3rd floor (Karis Support Society)	38	42		x
12	Harmony House (Kelowna's Gospel Mission)	9	13		x
<b>Total</b>		<b>231</b>	<b>247</b>		

Table 2. Client enumeration, total capacity, and data collection strategy for local interim housing locations.

INSTITUTIONAL CARE				
	Location (Organization)	Count	Survey Data	Systems Data
1	Coral House (Okanagan Mental Health Society)	2		x
2	Cara Centre (Interior Health)	3		x
3	Florin House	8		x
4	Econo Lodge (Interior Health)	13		Age and Gender only
5	Withdrawal Management Program (Bridges Youth and Family Services )	4		x
6	Residential Treatment Program (Bridges Youth and Family Services)	6		x
7	Holding Cells (RCMP)	1		x
8	Kelowna General Hospital	5		x
<b>Total</b>		<b>42</b>		

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

# Absolutely Homeless

To reflect the most accurate enumeration of the population who are absolutely homeless in Kelowna, a combination of homeless shelter systems data (n=164), unsheltered survey data (n=17), and volunteer-observed homelessness (n=52) were used. A total of 233 individuals were identified as being absolutely homeless with 164 (70%) experiencing sheltered homelessness and 69 (30%) experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

A combination of shelter systems data (n=164) and unsheltered survey data (n=17) were used to most accurately reflect the age, gender, and percentage of the population who identify as Aboriginal (Table 4). The absolute homeless population had a mean age of 41 years, with the majority being male (70%), indicating no Aboriginal identity (70%), and falling between the ages of 25-64 years (79%). Notably, there was a disproportionately high number of women indicating Aboriginal Identity (42%) when compared to their male counterparts (17%),  $X^2 (2, N = 168) = 14.57, p = .001$ . Figure 2 depicts the percentage distribution of gender by age ranges.

ABSOLUTE HOMELESS DEMOGRAPHICS		n=181
Age (Mean, Standard Deviation)		41 years ( $\pm 15$ )
Age Range (%)		
0-14 years		2
15-24 years		13
25-64 years		79
65+ years		6
Gender (%)		
Male		70
Female		29
Transgender		1
Aboriginal Identity (%)		
None		70
First Nations		10
Metis		6
Non-Status / Aboriginal Ancestry		6
Inuit		1
Unknown		7

Table 4. Age, gender and Aboriginal identity of individuals experiencing absolute homelessness.

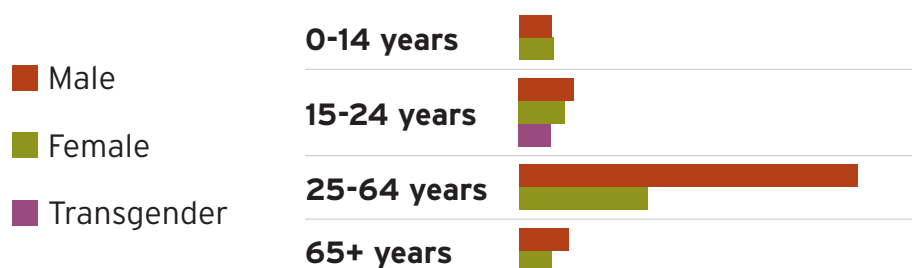


Figure 2. Gender distribution (%) by age range of individuals experiencing absolute homelessness.

# Absolutely Homeless

A total of 86 surveys were completed with individuals that were identified as being absolutely homeless (Table 5). 90% indicated that they were not with any family members, whereas, 10% identified being with a family member on the night of the count. 93% indicated that they had stayed in an emergency shelter within the past year. 6% indicated that they had served in the Canadian Military and none indicated service in the RCMP. 29% indicated that they had moved to Kelowna within the past year. There were no new immigrants or refugees that had moved to Canada within the past 5 years. The average number of days spent homeless within the last year was 192 days, ranging from 1 to 366. 60% of participants were identified as being chronically homeless as a result of being homeless for 6 months or more within the past year. The average number of homeless episodes within the past year was 1.8 times, ranging from 1 (current episode) to 10 episodes. 20% of participants were identified as being episodically homeless as a result of experiencing 3 or more different episodes of homelessness within the past year.

ABSOLUTE HOMELESS CHARACTERISTICS		n=86
Family Members with Them (%)		
Yes		10
No		90
Emergency Shelter Stay (%)		
Yes		93
No		7
Service (%)		
Military		6
RCMP		0
No Service		94
Immigrant or Refugee (%)		
Yes		0
No		100
Moved to Kelowna Past Year (%)		
Yes		29
No		71
Days Homeless (Mean, Standard Deviation)		192 days ( $\pm 119$ )
Length of Time Homeless (%)		
0-2 Months		17
3-5 Months		23
6-12 Months		60
Homeless Episodes (Mean, Standard Deviation)		1.8 episodes ( $\pm 1.5$ )
Number of Times Homeless (%)		
1 Time (current episode)		57
2 Times		23
3 or more Times		20

Table 5. Characteristics of individuals experiencing absolute homelessness.

# Absolutely Homeless

Participants were asked, “What happened that caused you to lose your housing most recently?” and “Where do you get your money from?” (Table 6). The highest reported reason for housing loss was eviction (39%), including 20% that were unable to pay rent and 19% that were evicted for other reasons (e.g., lease expired, landlord sold house), followed by family conflict (17%), and addiction or substance use (11%). The highest reported source of income was from disability benefits (40%), followed by Welfare / Income Assistance (29%), and Informal income (e.g., Bottle Returns, Panhandling) (12%).

REASON FOR HOUSING LOSS (%)	n=86
Evicted: Unable to Pay Rent	20
Evicted: Other Reason	19
Family Conflict	17
Addiction or Substance Use	11
Job Loss	7
Unsafe Housing Conditions	6
Personal Choice	6
Illness or Medical Condition	4
Unable To Find Housing	4
Domestic Abuse	4
Incarcerated (Jail or Prison)	2
SOURCE OF INCOME (%)	
Disability Benefit	40
Welfare / Income Assistance	29
Informal Income (e.g., Bottle Returns, Panhandling)	12
Seniors Benefits (e.g., CPP/OAS/GIS)	6
Employment	6
No Income	5
Money From Family / Friends	1
Private Insurance	1

Table 6. Survey responses to the questions, “What happened that caused you to lose your housing most recently?” and “Where do you get your money from?” Note: Multiple responses were accepted.



# Temporarily Housed

A total of 273 individuals were identified as being temporarily housed in interim housing (n=231) or institutional care (n=42). Individuals identified in temporary housing had a mean age of 40 years, with the majority being male (66%), indicating no Aboriginal identity (66%), and falling between the ages of 25-64 years (81%) (Table 7). Figure 3 depicts the percentage distribution of gender by age ranges.

TEMPORARILY HOUSED DEMOGRAPHICS	n=273
Age (Mean, Standard Deviation)	40 years ( $\pm 15$ )
Age Range (%)	
0-14 years	4
15-24 years	13
25-64 years	81
65+ years	2
Gender (%)	
Male	66
Female	33
Transgender	1
Aboriginal Identity (%)	
None	66
First Nations	8
Inuit	0.5
Metis	2
Non-Status / Aboriginal Ancestry	0.5
Unknown	23

Table 7. Age, gender, and Aboriginal identity of individuals in Temporary Housing.

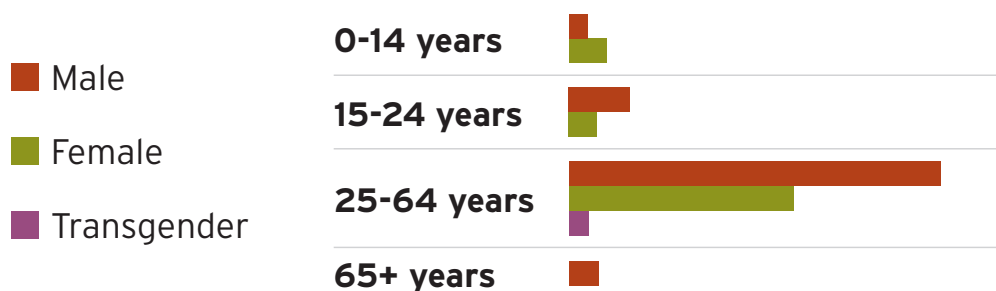


Figure 3. Gender distribution (%) by age range of individuals in temporary housing.

# Discussion

AT LEAST  
**233**  
PEOPLE



were experiencing  
homelessness in Kelowna

The 2016 PiT Count results represent the most accurate information currently available regarding the state of homelessness in Kelowna. A combination of volunteer teams and organizations' systems data were collected from 5 homeless shelters. An additional 17 volunteer teams canvassed the streets, alleys, and parks of Kelowna where homeless individuals were known to frequent and entered emergency shelters to conduct surveys with individuals experiencing homelessness. Findings suggest that there are at least 233 individuals experiencing absolute homelessness. To develop strategies targeted at addressing homelessness in our community, it is important to understand the characteristics of this population.

Kelowna's homeless population is diverse, with males aged 25-64 years representing the largest cohort. Other key subpopulations include Aboriginal peoples (23%), youth aged 15-24 (13%), and older adults (6%). Consistent with national averages, Aboriginal peoples are over-represented in the homeless population, making up only 4.5% of Kelowna's total population<sup>6</sup> and nearly one quarter of the homeless population. Of particular concern, is the disproportionately high number of women indicating Aboriginal identity, representing 42% of all women experiencing absolute homelessness. When compared to their male counterparts, Aboriginal males make up 17% of the total male population experiencing absolute homelessness. According to the present findings, rates of youth homelessness in Kelowna fall below the national average<sup>1</sup>, which estimates about 20% of the homeless population to be young people. Regardless, youth remain a distinctly unique population that must be considered.

70%

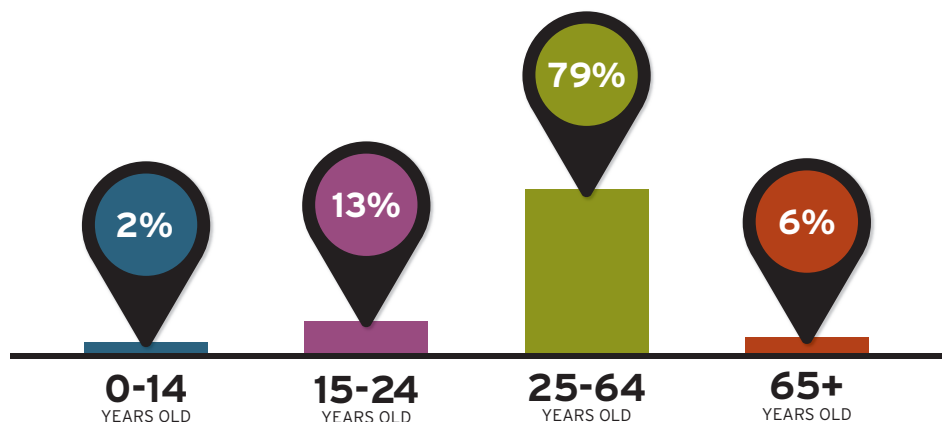
Male

29%

Female

1%

Transgendered



With an average age of 41 years and 6% of individuals being over the age 65, a distinct proportion of Kelowna's homeless population is aging. This is of particular concern as the median age of death for a homeless person in BC is 40-49 years, whereas the average life expectancy of a non-homeless individual is 76 years<sup>7</sup>. Another interesting finding of the current study is that 29% of individuals experiencing homelessness moved to Kelowna within the past year. It is difficult to discern if these individuals lost their housing prior to moving to

# Discussion

Kelowna or once they had arrived. Regardless, it may indicate that new residents to Kelowna are struggling to find employment and affordable housing. Despite ongoing efforts of many organizations, large-scale systemic changes will be required to reduce and prevent homelessness in Kelowna.

Findings suggest that the reasons for an individual to become homeless are varied. The most frequently recorded reason for housing loss was an inability to pay rent (20%). In addition, 7% of individuals reported a loss of employment, and 4% reporting an inability to find housing as their reason for housing loss. It is a common misconception that individuals that are homeless, choose to be homeless. Results indicate that only a small portion (6%) of individuals indicated that being homeless was their personal choice. In many circumstances, personal choice may be a reflection of an individual's decision to leave a precarious or intolerable living situation, or other complex life challenges and barriers. For example, in situations of family conflict (17%), unsafe housing conditions (6%), or domestic abuse (4%) an individual may choose to sacrifice their current living arrangements to ensure their personal safety. Finally, results suggest that health concerns such as addiction or substance abuse (11%) and illness or medical condition (4%) pose an ongoing struggle for many individuals. In any situation, it is important that appropriate supports be put in place in order for individuals to re-establish permanent housing, and that the broader community, economic, and societal factors are considered as part of a strategy to address homelessness.

A variety of sources of income were identified by those who were surveyed. Notably, the most frequently cited source was from disability benefits (40%), suggesting that a significant portion of the population may be living with some form of physical or mental disability that is affecting their ability to secure employment. Furthermore, three of the top four sources of income, disability benefits, welfare/income assistance, and senior's benefits, are all a form of government subsidy. For an individual who is unable to secure additional sources of income, government subsidies alone may not be sufficient to secure a permanent residence.

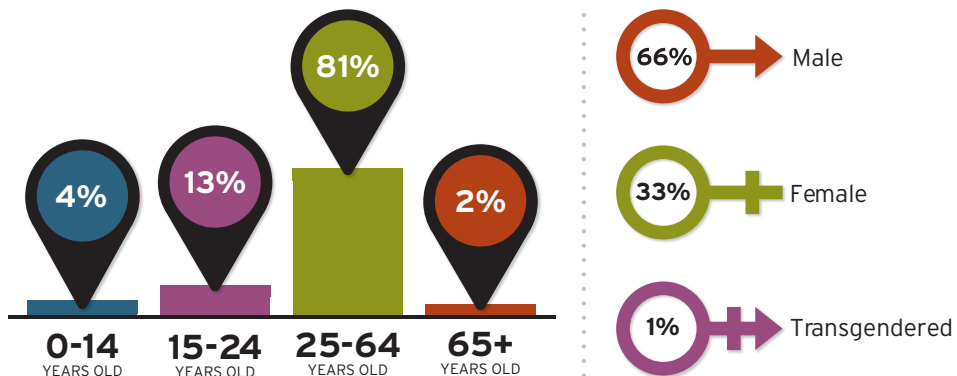
Homeless shelters provide a diverse range of services to various populations. The large majority (93%) of individuals surveyed reported that they had stayed in an emergency shelter in the past year, indicating that these organizations provide much needed supports for individuals experiencing homelessness. In addition to homeless shelters, there are many interim housing locations that serve individuals

## Source of Income

Disability Benefit	40%
Welfare/Income Assistance	29%
Informal Income	12%
Seniors Benefits	6%
Employment	6%
No Income	5%
Money from Family/Friends	1%
Private Insurance	1%

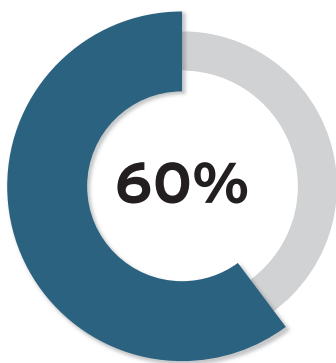
# Discussion

## Temporarily Housed



who may otherwise be homeless if not for their particular services. These organizations serve a variety of populations, offering programs specific to men, women, youth, and families. The range of services and housing options provided are as diverse as the populations they serve. In addition to interim housing, homeless individuals may also be temporarily residing in 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 who lack permanent housing to return to upon release. To provide the most accurate snapshot of homelessness in Kelowna, the count was expanded to include individuals that were temporarily housed in interim housing or institutional care. Information was collected from 12 interim housing locations and 8 institutional care providers. An additional 273 individuals were enumerated living in temporary system-supported housing. Similar to the absolute homeless population, individuals identified in temporary housing had a mean age of 40 years, with the majority being male (66%), indicating no Aboriginal identity (66%), and falling between the ages of 25-64 years (81%).



## Chronically Homeless

homeless for 6 months or more within the past year

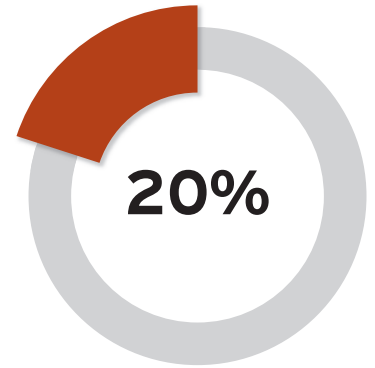
Although a PiT Count is a widely used strategy to enumerate the homeless population and considered to be one of the most accurate strategies, there are several considerations that must be made when interpreting the findings. Despite extensive efforts to capture a large breadth of individuals experiencing homelessness, there are certain populations that will be missed during the count. For example, a PiT Count is unable to capture individuals that are at-risk of homelessness or experiencing hidden homelessness (e.g., people who are "couch-surfing"). It is estimated that over 50,000 Canadians experience hidden homelessness per year<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, as the Count was conducted on a single night, it is more likely to include individuals who experience long-term, chronic homelessness than those who move in and out of homelessness. Accordingly, the majority of individuals (60%) were classified as being chronically homeless

# Discussion

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(homeless for 6 months or more within the past year). Episodic homelessness refers to individuals that have experienced 3 or more episodes of homelessness within the past year. These individuals move in and out of homelessness and make up 20% of the enumerated population experiencing absolute homelessness in Kelowna.

Seasonality is another factor that may affect the Count. Depending on the time of year in which the PiT Count is conducted, the number and distribution of homeless individuals may vary. During the colder months, homeless individuals may be more likely to gravitate towards service providers, such as homeless shelters. Therefore, a cold weather count may result in more individuals being enumerated in homeless shelters rather than sleeping rough. This is reflected by the present findings of 164 individuals being enumerated in a sheltered environment and 69 in an unsheltered location.



## Episodically Homeless

experienced 3 or more episodes of homelessness within the past year

The 2016 Kelowna PiT Count methodology exemplifies the benefits of coordinated efforts.

The 2016 Kelowna PiT Count methodology exemplifies the benefits of coordinated efforts. Existing relationships and communication channels developed through the process should be maintained and ongoing collaboration fostered. By coordinating volunteer recruitment through local post-secondary institutions, the PiT Count provided an opportunity for students to connect with local service providers and learn more about homelessness. Front-line workers were able to facilitate a valuable practical experience in a safe and friendly environment as well as share their experiences and expertise with future professionals.

As this was the first count conducted in Kelowna following the national HPS Guide to Point-in-Time Counts in Canada<sup>5</sup>, it is not recommended that comparisons be made to previous homeless counts, as the enumeration strategy and survey design were significantly different. Future counts should follow and build upon the current methodological design, so that changes over time may be observed.

# Conclusion

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The results of the 2016 Kelowna PiT Count come at a pivotal point in addressing homelessness in our community.

The results of the 2016 Kelowna PiT Count come at a pivotal point in addressing homelessness in our community. Homelessness has recently been at the forefront of community discussions between all levels of government, community funders, homeless serving agencies, and the private sector. The Central Okanagan Foundation, in the role of the Community Entity, manages the federal HPS funding, and engages community stakeholders to actively work together to prevent and reduce homelessness. The Community Advisory Board on Homelessness facilitates the delivery of the HPS funding, and endeavours to articulate the true picture of homelessness in Kelowna. The HPS funding will be used to operate Kelowna's first federally funded Housing First Project, commencing April 1, 2016. Recently highlighted in the media, the City of Kelowna has taken a stance on addressing homelessness, and will hire a Social Issues Manager in Spring 2016, for the purposes of addressing local homelessness. The findings of the 2016 Kelowna PiT Count should be used to inform the development of these initiatives and act as a benchmark to measure future success.

## Operational Definitions

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**Absolutely Homeless.** An individual was operationally defined as absolutely homeless if they were residing in an unsheltered location or accessing a homeless shelter.

**Unsheltered Homelessness<sup>5</sup>.** Unsheltered locations include places unfit for human habitation, including the following locations: streets, alleys, parks and other public locations, transit stations, abandoned buildings, vehicles, ravines and other outdoor locations where people experiencing homelessness are known to sleep.

**Homeless Shelters<sup>5</sup>.** Homeless shelters include emergency shelters (general and specific to men, women, youth, etc.), extreme weather shelters, and Violence Against Women (VAW) shelters.



# Operational Definitions

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**Temporarily Housed.** An individual was operationally defined as temporarily housed if they were accessing system-supported (government or non-profit sector) interim housing or institutional care where residency was guaranteed for 3 years or less.

**Interim Housing<sup>8</sup>.** Interim housing provides services beyond basic needs, offers residents more privacy, and places greater emphasis on participation and social engagement. Interim housing targets those who would benefit from structure, support and skill-building prior to moving to long term housing, with the ultimate goal of preventing a return to homelessness.

**Institutional Care<sup>8</sup>.** Institutional care serve individuals that are being provisionally accommodated in medical/ mental health institutions, penal institutions, residential treatment or withdrawal management centres, or children's institutions/group homes but lack permanent housing to return to upon release. This includes individuals who: a) were homeless prior to admittance and who have no plan for permanent accommodation after release; or b) had housing prior to admittance, but lost their housing while in institutional care; or c) had housing prior to admittance, but cannot go back due to changes in their needs. In any case, without adequate discharge planning and support, which includes arrangements for safe and reliable housing (and necessary aftercare or community-based services), there is a likelihood that these individuals may transition into homelessness following their release.

**Chronically Homeless<sup>9</sup>.** Individuals, often with disabling conditions (e.g. chronic physical or mental illness, substance abuse problems), who 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).

**Episodically Homeless<sup>9</sup>.** Individuals, often with disabling conditions, who are currently homeless and have experienced three or more episodes of homelessness in the past year (of note, episodes are defined as periods when a person would be in a shelter or place not fit for human habitation, and after at least 30 days, would be back in the shelter or inhabitable location).

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