

NANAIMO COMMUNITY REPORT

Everyone Counts: 2020 Point-in-Time Count (Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy)

Prepared for the Nanaimo Homeless Coalition



Funded by the Government
of Canada's Reaching Home:
Canada's Homelessness Strategy



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This year's count was once again led by a team from the Nanaimo Region John Howard Society (NRJHS): Andrew Ferguson, Housing Manager, Anne Marie Tosh, Housing Case Manager and Andrew Thornton (Research Director: Justice Research Centre). We also had administrative and financial management support from NRJHS. Terra Kaethler, Community Impact Officer, United Way Central & Northern Vancouver Island (UWCNVI) provided invaluable guidance and support throughout the process. Signy Madden, Executive Director (UWCNVI) as the person ultimately responsible for the PiT Count and Reaching Home funding supported us along the way. Kevin Flood and Dave Scherr of the Nanaimo RCMP Bike Patrol Unit, the CMHA Community Outreach Team lead by Adam Collishaw and VIHA Community Outreach Response (COR) lead by Karly Fennell contributed key support in conducting surveys with hard-to-reach individuals.

Over 40 volunteers from the community and service agencies conducted surveys at the fixed locations and at our Magnet Event at St Peter's Roman Catholic Church. Volunteers also provided food and supports to the public.

A special thanks to the administration and staff at St. Peter's who were unstinting in their support for the PiT Count.

We acknowledge that this work took place on the traditional and unceded territory of the Coast Salish Peoples, the traditional territory of the Snuneymuxw First Nation. We recognize the relationship between the historical and ongoing colonization of these lands, and experiences of displacement and homelessness.

This report is dedicated to all of the individuals living in homelessness in our community.

Thank you to all who shared your stories with us. Your stories and strength inspire us.

Nanaimo Homeless Coalition:

- AIDS Vancouver Island
- BC Housing
- City of Nanaimo
- Canadian Mental Health Association - Mid Island
- First Unitarian Fellowship of Nanaimo
- Haven Society
- Island Crisis Care Society
- Island Health
- Literacy Central Vancouver Island
- Men's Resource Centre
- Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
- Nanaimo Aboriginal Society
- Nanaimo Affordable Housing Society
- Nanaimo Chamber of Commerce
- Nanaimo Family Life Association
- Nanaimo Region John Howard Society
- Society for Equity, Inclusion and Advocacy
- Nanaimo Youth Services Association
- Nanaimo –Ladysmith SD-68
- Pacifica Housing
- Nanaimo RCMP
- Service Canada
- Salvation Army
- Tillicum Lelum Aboriginal Friendship Centre
- United Way Central and Northern Vancouver Island
- Vancouver Island Mental Health Society
- Widsten Property Management
- 7-10 Breakfast Club
- Citizens at-large

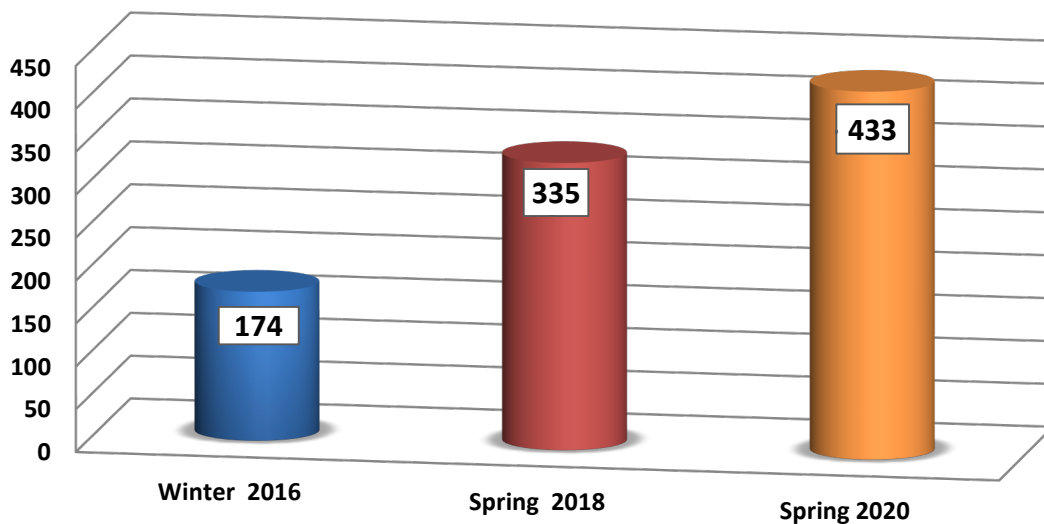
Executive Summary

The nation-wide Reaching Home Coordinated Point-in-Time (PiT) Count, conducted bi-annually, is intended to count the minimum number of people who are experiencing homelessness in a community over one 24-hour period. The survey results show that the minimum number of individuals experiencing homelessness in Nanaimo on March 12, 2020 was 433. This represents an increase of approximately 29% from 2018.¹

The overall patterns of the Nanaimo 2020 data are largely consistent with those from the previous two Coordinated Point-in-Time Counts.² The 2020 survey also contained new questions that will provide insights on major issues affecting those experiencing homelessness in Nanaimo.

On the day of the 2020 PiT Count, 61.9% (268/433) of those enumerated were 'unsheltered', that is, staying in public spaces, vehicles, makeshift shelters or in places not intended for human habitation. While this represents a drop (from 83% in 2018) in the proportion of unsheltered it is still far higher than almost any other city or town that conducts PiT Counts in Canada. For example, Victoria's 2018 PiT Count shows that only 15% of those enumerated were 'sleeping rough' or in places unfit for human habitation.³ This apparent drop in 'unsheltered' numbers in Nanaimo is largely due to the inclusion of data in the 2020 enumeration from two shelters that were not open at the time of the 2018 PiT count.

Homelessness Enumeration: Nanaimo 2016 / 2018 / 2020



¹ See the 2018 Community Report for Nanaimo here: https://www.nanaimo.ca/docs/social-culture-environment/community-social-service-programs/nanaimo-pit-count-report-2018_final_june-6.pdf

² See The 2016 Nanaimo Pit Count Community Report Written By Courtney Defriend In Full Here: <https://www.Nanaimo.Ca/Docs/Social-Culture-Environment/Community-Social-Service-Programs/Pit-Count-Nanaimo-2016-City-Report-Web.Pdf>

³ Page 14, *Everyone Counts: 2018 Greater Victoria Point-In-Time Count*, Accessed At: <https://www.Homelesshub.Ca/Resource/2018-Greater-Victoria-Point-Time-Count>

The majority (68.3%) of the persons surveyed in 2020 identified as male and 28.5% identified as female; 54.4% were between the ages of 25 and 44 (and another 20% between 45-54 years of age). Most respondents report they have lived in Nanaimo anywhere from 5-40 years or for their entire lives. Virtually none of the homeless in Nanaimo are immigrants to Canada, recent or otherwise. (Only three respondents identified as being immigrants to Canada.) In short, people experiencing homelessness in Nanaimo, are from Nanaimo.

Almost exactly one-third (119/358) of those surveyed identified themselves as First Nations, Métis or having Indigenous Ancestry, a notable increase from the 2016 survey figure of 24%.

The Reaching Home Coordinated Point-in-Time Count, conducted bi-annually, is intended to count the *minimum* number of people who are homeless in a community over a 24-hour period. As the Reaching Home survey methodology identifies only the minimum numbers of those experiencing homelessness, we can assume that many more individuals were not located, or were not able to come forward on the day of the count. The collective numbers of people experiencing homelessness in Nanaimo, over time, would likely be much higher. In fact, Island Health and Canadian Mental Health Association Outreach workers and the RCMP Bike Unit (all members of the Nanaimo Homeless Coalition) estimate that, based on their ongoing work with homeless populations, the total number of homeless in Nanaimo is likely well over 600.

Context

Housing and Homelessness in Nanaimo have been the primary social, political and economic issue since the previous PiT Count in 2018. In the last two years every service agency and every level of government has been engaged with responding to the twinned crises of housing and homelessness. One response to this crisis was the formation and rapid growth of a homeless encampment in downtown Nanaimo. “Tent City” grew over a period of four to five months to contain at a minimum some 350 individuals. The impact of this encampment was felt across all social divides in Nanaimo. Finally, in late fall 2018 BC Housing stepped in to provide Supportive Housing for approximately 150-170 of the campers at Tent City. Yet Nanaimo’s homeless numbers, as evidenced by the data in this report, continue to grow.

The Nanaimo Homeless Coalition has been involved in a variety of initiatives to develop responses to homelessness. It has worked with partner agencies and all levels of government to develop immediate and long-term plans and solutions.

In 2016, the Government of Canada conducted the first nation-wide Coordinated Point-in-Time Count (PiT Count). The count was used to identify overall trends, themes, challenges and characteristics of homelessness in Canada. It helped to clarify service needs at a local, provincial and federal level. The PiT Count, conducted bi-annually, is intended to count the minimum number of people who are homeless in a community over a 24-hour period. The Nanaimo Region John Howard Society (NRJHS), as part of the Nanaimo Homeless Coalition, and in partnership with the United Way Central and Northern Vancouver Island (UWCNVI), was responsible for organizing the third consecutive Reaching Home Coordinated PiT Count in Nanaimo.

The Nationally Coordinated 2020 PiT Count was funded through *Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy*. The Count was intended to involve the collaboration of over 60 Reaching Home funded 'designated' communities across Canada. Unfortunately, as COVID19 took hold and governments implemented public health and safety measures most communities in Canada were unable to conduct their PiT Counts. In conversation with Reaching Home officials it was reported that only five communities were able to conduct their PiT Counts before COVID19 restrictions were imposed. Communities unable to conduct their count have been advised by the Reaching Home directorate to conduct it in Spring 2021.

The Nanaimo Homeless Coalition, formed in 2015, includes a number of non-profit agencies, federal and provincial government representatives, faith groups and residents of the community. The Coalition was preceded by the 'Nanaimo Working Group on Homelessness' which has been working to reduce homelessness in Nanaimo since 2001. The name change from 'Working Group' to 'Coalition' reflects a more proactive approach to the development and implementation of programs and services for the homeless.

The Coalition and its members provide a range of services for those experiencing homelessness; Emergency Shelter beds for men and women, and for extreme winter weather conditions, transitional and supportive housing, free or low cost meal programs at breakfast, lunch and dinner, outreach support to homeless individuals, harm reduction services such as a needle exchange program, rent subsidies, and more. The Provincial Government through BC Housing, the Federal Government through Service Canada, and the local government through the City of Nanaimo, Island Health, the Regional District and local non-profit organizations provide funding for the above noted programs and services, complemented by the charitable donations of Nanaimo residents.

In Nanaimo there are a number of services for transitional and emergency sheltering that run year round, including the *Island Crisis Care Society - Samaritan House* emergency shelter for women, *Unitarian Extreme Weather Shelter - Co-ed* emergency shelter beds; *Salvation Army - New Hope Centre* emergency shelter beds for men; Haven Society Transition House for women fleeing violence and, new this year, a temporary emergency shelter run by the Society for Equity, Inclusion and Advocacy that closed on March 31, 2020.

Supportive Housing units and systems include: *Wesley Street Supportive Housing* - 36 bachelor units each with its own small kitchen and bathroom; *Uplands Walk Supportive Housing* - 33 bachelor units each with its own small kitchen and bathroom. *Boundary Crescent Supportive Housing* - 41 furnished bachelor units, 12 dedicated to Haven Society, each with its own small kitchen and bathroom. Island Health Community Outreach Response and a Housing First program (administered by NRJHS) are among other supports in place. Two Modular Supportive Housing Complexes were funded and built by BC Housing in late December 2018: 1: Approximately 80 units located in the 200 block of Terminal Avenue North (Newcastle Place) operated by Island Crisis Care Society (ICCS) 2: Approximately 90 units located at 2020 Labieux (Nikao) operated by Pacifica Housing Advisory Association.

The Reaching Home funded communities were intended to conduct PiT Counts from March 1 to April 30 of 2020 to apply a national lens to the issue of homelessness. The Nanaimo Homeless Coalition has, since 2005, attempted to track the number of homeless. However, the methods employed have varied over time and, as such, comparison with numbers prior to the 2016 HPS PiT Count should be made with caution, though they do provide some context for analysing the longer term trends in homelessness.

Finding housing in Nanaimo, like most communities in Canada, is difficult for those with modest incomes and virtually impossible for those with support needs. The Vancouver Island Real Estate Board reports that Nanaimo's benchmark price for a single detached home rose by two per cent to \$572,200 in April, 2020.⁴

It is widely agreed that Nanaimo's proximity to Vancouver and Victoria continues to have a major impact on housing prices. One impact of this spill over is that Nanaimo, like many communities, has very high rents and very low or non-existent available rental units. According to the City of Nanaimo's recently released *2020 State of the Nanaimo Economy* report, the average private apartment rent in the city last year was \$1,039 per month, an increase of eight per cent from the previous year.

The increase came even though the number of available rental units increased by 3.2 per cent, according to the report, which notes that more than 30 per cent of residents live in rental accommodations. The average monthly rent of a bachelor suite in 2019 increased by 11 per cent to \$889, the average one-bedroom apartment rent rose seven per cent to \$946 per month, and the average two-bedroom rent was \$1,170 in 2019, up eight per cent from 2018. Nanaimo's vacancy rate was two per cent in 2019.⁵ This reality makes finding adequate housing especially difficult for those with any (or multiple) barriers to housing.

Also included in the 2020 economic report was information regarding incomes and wages in Nanaimo. In 2019, nearly 19 per cent of households in Nanaimo reported an annual income between \$20,000 and \$39,999, while 32 per cent of households reported an annual income of \$100,000 or higher in 2019, with 1.7 per cent of households reporting an income exceeding \$299,999. There are quite significant disparities in the ability of Nanaimo's residents to access housing.

Furthermore, Nanaimo is experiencing sustained population growth. Between 2017 and 2041 the Nanaimo region is expected to grow by an additional 30,000 people⁶, all of whom will need to be housed. This factor alone will continue to increase pressure on the housing supply and support systems in Nanaimo.

Landlords can and do select out anyone with any sort of problems in their tenancy or financial history. The impact on the hard-to-house and the homeless is amplified in this context. Given that many of the homeless population have poor credit records and, or, mental and physical health problems, the likelihood of the homeless population finding housing is greatly diminished.

PiT Count Methodology

The National PiT Count methodology was used to determine the minimum number of individuals experiencing homelessness within a 24-hour period (Appendix A: Definitions of Homelessness). These include 'sheltered' and 'unsheltered' individuals. 'Unsheltered' homeless includes anyone living in public spaces, parks, vehicles and any other place unfit for human habitation. 'Sheltered' homeless can include

⁴ Page 5, *VIREB Monthly Statistics Package* (2020), Accessed at: http://www.vireb.com/assets/uploads/04apr_2020_vireb_stats_package_64803.pdf

⁵ *2020 State of the Nanaimo Economy* Accessed at: <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/63092197/nanaimostateeconomy-digital>

⁶ *BC Stats* population estimates: Retrieved from: <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/data/statistics/people-population-community/population/population-estimates>

anyone in emergency shelters, transitional shelters, safe houses with no stable or long term residence to return to. (Individuals experiencing ‘hidden homelessness’ are categorized as those in temporary or precarious housing e.g. ‘couch surfing’). We also draw from Systems data in corrections and medical health facilities.

Surveys were conducted at fixed sites throughout the community, for example at service agency partners like Harris House. Surveys were conducted at multiple unsheltered locations where people are known to habituate, including encampments and parks. And we conducted many surveys at our ‘Magnet Event’ at St. Peter’s Roman Catholic Church. In addition to the count, community agencies involved in serving the homeless were invited to submit their observations and comments to provide further background on the homelessness situation in Nanaimo.

Limitations of the PIT count

PiT counts are designed to measure the *minimum* number of those experiencing homelessness in a community on a given day. It is not possible to identify the exact number of people experiencing homelessness from a Point-in-Time survey. PiT Counts are not able to measure those individuals who may be temporarily housed on the specific day of the count, but who may be cycling in and out of homelessness. This includes precariously housed individuals who do not have any kind of secure housing contract, yet they are able to find means of temporary shelter for uncertain periods of time (e.g. “couch surfing”, “staying with a friend”).

Furthermore, while every effort was made to locate and survey individuals throughout the downtown core and other parts of Nanaimo, it is not possible to cover every location, and there will be many more individuals who were not surveyed. As our understanding increases of the homeless situation in Nanaimo, our ability to identify the conditions and related needs of people experiencing homelessness will improve.

The PiT count survey provides a *picture of general trends* of homelessness and the characteristics of those who experience homelessness in a community. The data provided should be read as such, as identifying various *trends in the composition and backgrounds* of the homeless population. Thus it becomes possible to compare the 2020 PiT Count numbers with the previous count, in order to make comments about what is going on. This in turn provides a basis upon which we can compare our data with other communities across BC and Canada where PiT counts have been done.

In British Columbia considerable effort has gone into harmonizing the Federal and Provincial PiT Count survey questions and data collection methodology. BC Housing sponsored a two-day workshop for all communities in BC that conduct either a federal Reaching Home survey or a provincially funded BC Housing supported PiT Count. The workshop was attended by Reaching Home staff, provincial and municipal government representatives. The BC and Federal Survey, questions and methodology are now almost identical. This will allow for greater coordination and communication between all levels of government which should in turn provide for better planning and strategies to respond to our homelessness crisis.

To aid this approach it would be invaluable to develop research and communication that sheds light on the everyday lived experience of homelessness. Such work could shed light on the resilience

strategies of the homeless, and just as importantly serve as a mechanism for those experiencing homelessness to develop and drive solutions to this crisis.

Magnet Event

A magnet event is a strategy used to draw people to a common place on a given day to share information and carry out the PiT Count enumeration for those willing to participate. On the day of the Nanaimo PiT Count it was sunny and clear, but actually quite cold for a day in mid-March. To create awareness of the event the Housing Support Team from NRJHS posted flyers around Nanaimo to advertise the Magnet Event and we provided the RCMP Bike Patrol and the VIHA and CMHA outreach team with information flyers to distribute directly to encampments around Nanaimo. We made our partner agencies aware of the upcoming event and provided advertising to raise awareness of the event among service users. This was aided greatly by the provision of extensive social media produced by the communications team, Nicole Benson and Sara Couper, at the UWNCVI.

The event had the intended effect of drawing people to a key survey site where they could receive free services and participate in the survey. The Magnet Event was well attended but drew fewer members of the public than expected, though we still provided food for over 150 community members. Survey respondents and anyone who chose to attend had access to various services: Barber, Hairdresser, donation table (which had clothing, and other life necessities), hot food and beverages. Literacy Nanaimo provided a mobile library, there were two groups of musicians that provided background music, Service Canada and Revenue Canada provided direct service to individuals on the day. *The Storytellers Project* volunteers gathered stories of community members which will eventually become part of a public education project.

Volunteers

PiT Counts cannot be conducted without volunteer labour from the local community, and people in Nanaimo were more than generous with their time. We held two training sessions for volunteers in order to provide guidance in conducting the survey and to prepare volunteers for their support roles in the 2020 Point in Time Count. More than 40 volunteers attended our training sessions. Many volunteers were from the partner social service agencies of the Homeless Coalition. A number of volunteers from various academic programs at Vancouver Island University donated their time. The RCMP Bike Patrol Unit as well as VIHA and CMHA sent outreach workers to conduct surveys at encampments and known areas of homeless habitation around the city.

Survey locations

Unsheltered

- Magnet Event at St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church
- Vancouver Island Regional Library (Nanaimo downtown)
- Wesley St./Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)

- Society for Equity, Inclusion and Advocacy
- Harris House needle exchange/harm reduction site
- Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
 - Richards Street
 - Labieux Road
- Uplands Walk
- Nikao Supportive Housing - Entrance
- Newcastle Supportive Housing - Entrance
- RCMP Bike Patrol: Nanaimo - encampments
- Canadian Mental Health Association Outreach Team –Nanaimo Area encampments
- VIHA Community Outreach Response Team – Nanaimo Area Encampments

Sheltered

- Salvation Army – New Hope Men’s Center Shelter
- Samaritan House Women’s shelter (Island Crisis Care Society)
- Haven Society Transition House
- Shelter at St Peter’s run by Society for Equity, Inclusion and Advocacy
- Tillicum Lelum – 1: Youth Safe House, 2: Young Mother’s Program

The survey is composed of, in essence, two sections: The first contains Standardized Questions drawn from the Reaching Home National database. The second contains several optional questions that address community specific interests. The responses to the Community Questions are discussed in Section 2 of the report. Everyone who completed a survey was provided with a ‘care package’ or a gift card for food.

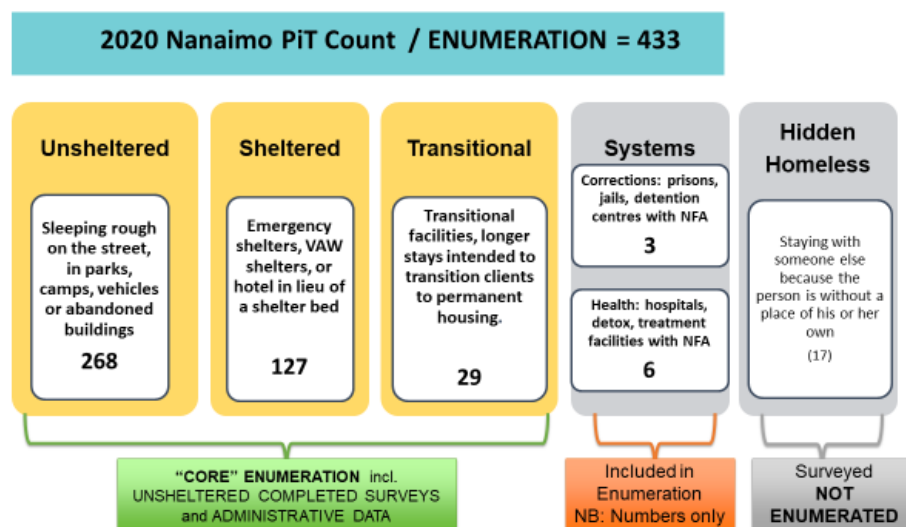
What is Enumeration?

A Point-in-Time Count is based on an ‘enumeration’ which provides a minimum estimate of the numbers of people experiencing homelessness on a single day. It is not reflective of every experience of homelessness throughout the year, as homelessness is a fluid state that people may move in and out of over time. Furthermore, these numbers are representative only of those reached by the PiT Count efforts, rather than reflective of all experiences of homelessness. The Point-in-Time Count enumeration data come from two places:

1. **Administrative data** from service providers: This includes only basic demographic data on individuals staying in emergency shelters (Cold Weather and Violence Against Women), Transition Houses, and ‘systems’ data, e.g. Hospitals and Corrections.

2. **The Housing Needs Survey:** Survey respondents who indicated they were staying in public spaces, parks, vehicles, and other conditions unfit for human habitation. This means only those reached by the PiT Count efforts were “counted,” which was neither a comprehensive nor completely accurate count of all individuals who stayed in these specific types of living situations the night of March 12.

The housing needs survey was conducted throughout the community on March 12th the *day after* the Administrative Data was gathered on March 11th. This means that some of the individuals surveyed were likely already enumerated. (And this can result in some Enumeration figures being different from Survey Respondent figures for the same category). In the Reaching Home methodology any respondent who indicates that they stayed in a ‘sheltered’ situation is removed from the enumeration total. However, their *survey responses* are part of the data base *that describes the conditions* of homelessness. As such the Enumeration total is based upon the Administrative Data Totals added to the Number of Survey Respondents who indicated they had stayed in a public space, vehicle or other place unfit for human habitation plus Systems data and includes fifteen accompanying children (18 and under). The Enumeration does not include the Hidden Homeless, but the data from these respondents *is* included in the analysis of the trends and patterns of those experiencing homelessness.



Therefore, the total figure for the 2020 Nanaimo PiT Count Enumeration is 433. This is the figure that should be cited when identifying the *minimum* number of people experiencing homelessness in Nanaimo. This figure is about 29% greater than 2018 (and almost 2.5 times the number of 174 from the Nanaimo 2016 PiT Count). It is important to note that most of the calculations, charts and figures in this report are based on the 358 completed hard copy surveys.

Survey Results Section 1: Responses to Reaching Home standardized questions

In total some 400 Surveys were filled out on March 12th, but after removing duplicates and ineligible surveys ('data cleaning') the final number of completed surveys was 358. However, some of the figures below also include 17 dependent accompanying children (18 years and under) identified in the survey.

Some of the questions in the survey have been rewritten since 2018 but they do contain components of previous questions. Most of the questions about physical and mental health have been re-written, and the data as such are not entirely comparable to the data from 2018 and 2016.⁷ That being said these new and refined questions, as mentioned previously, will produce 'better' data, so to speak. They will help to enhance the overall consistency and comparability of the data on homelessness provincially and nationally and provide new data on issues like brain injury, hospitalization, interactions with police and foster care.

Where did you stay last night? (n = 358)

	2020	2018
Unsheltered (vacant building, makeshift shelter, tent, or shack, other unsheltered location unfit for human habitation, public spaces, or a vehicle, don't know)	253	243
Sheltered: (Transitional Shelter / Housing, Emergency Shelter, Domestic Violence Against Women Shelter, Hotel Paid by City Program)	84	46
Jail, Prison, Hospital	4	n/a
Hidden Homeless (Staying at someone else's place)	17	n/a
TOTAL SURVEY RESPONDENTS	358	289

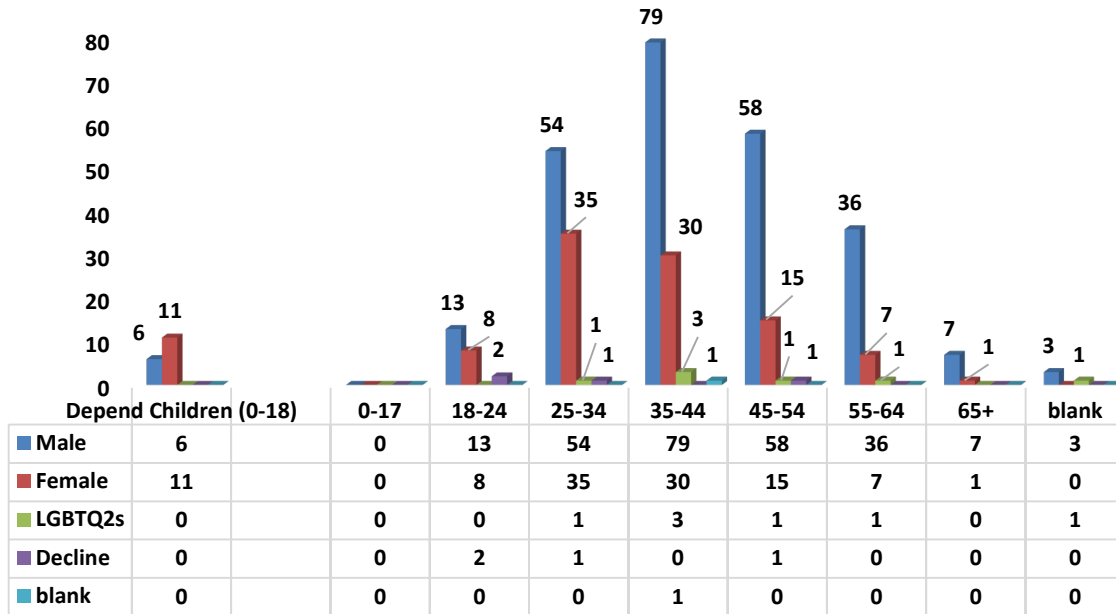
What gender do you identify with?

	2020 (n=375)	%	2018 (n=300)	%
Male	256	68.3%	205	68.3%
Female	107	28.5	87	29.0
Gender non-conforming	0	0	1	0.3
Non-Binary	2	0.5	-	-
Two Spirit	3	0.8	1	0.3
Trans Female / Woman	1	0.3	1	0.3
Not Listed	1	0.3	-	-
Don't know /Decline/ Blank	5	1.3	5	1.7

⁷ See Appendix E for data from questions on similar topics, but using different questions in 2016 and 2018.

In terms of age and gender the outcomes of the 2020 survey are consistent with surveys from previous years and other communities administering the Reaching Home PiT Count .⁸ However, as noted in the 2016 PiT Count results⁹ it appears as though the homeless population as a whole is continuing to age. Approximately 68% of the respondents were male, and 28% female. Despite general trends across Canada of increasing homelessness for young people, only 10.7% (40/375) of survey respondents were under the age of 25 in Nanaimo (10% were under 25 years of age in 2018).¹⁰

Age and Gender Distribution



In the 2020 count, 54.4% (204/375) of survey respondents (including dependent children) were between the ages of 25 and 44 with a further 20.0% (75/375) in the 45-54 age cohort. These figures are largely consistent with the 2018 figures though the average age of survey respondents experiencing homelessness, continues to rise. Since 2016, the first Canada-wide Coordinated Point-in-Time count, the average age of respondents in Nanaimo has risen steadily from 39.7 to 41 in 2018, and now is up to 43.7 (based on survey respondent’s age not including dependent children).

The only notable shift in the overall age and gender distribution is the number of males between the ages of 45-54 which doubled since 2018 from 29 to 58 and as a percentage of the respondents has risen from about 9% in 2018 to just over 15% in 2020. Otherwise the age and gender distribution is almost identical to the 2018 survey data.

⁸ Age and Gender distribution figures in this section include dependent children: 11/300 in 2018 And 17/375 in 2020.

⁹ Defriend, 2016, P.22

¹⁰ This figure and chart includes accompanying dependent children aged 0-18 (not surveyed) making the sample size n = 375.

How would you describe your sexual orientation, for example straight, lesbian, gay? (Respondents shown a list)

	2020 (n=358)	2018 (n=289)
Straight/Heterosexual	309	252
Gay	5	1
Lesbian	2	1
Bisexual	10	14
Two Spirit	1	2
Pansexual	4	-
Asexual	2	1
Queer	2	1
Not Listed	4	-
Multiple responses	1	-
Don't know	1	5
Decline to Answer	16	12
(blank)	1	-

The vast majority of respondents, just over 86%, identified as straight / heterosexual and overall 7.3% identified as LGBTQI2S. This pattern is consistent with previous years. It has been demonstrated that the number of LGBTQI2S experiencing homelessness is underreported in PiT Count enumerations. And in particular LGBTQi2S youth are at a higher risk of homelessness and also commonly experience homophobia and transphobia within the shelter and homeless serving systems.¹¹

Did you have family members or anyone else who stayed with you last night?

	2020	2018	2016
Stay with Family or Someone else	48	41	10
Alone	309	248	144
Blank/Decline/Unclear	1	0	20

	Other adult	Partner	Children
Stay with...	19	25	14

Categories are overlapping and not exclusive.

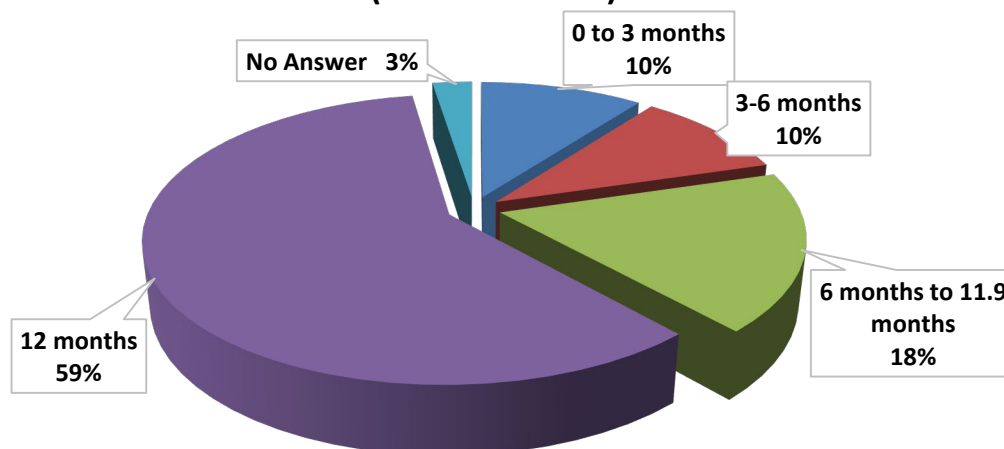
¹¹ Page 388, Abramovich, A. (2013). No Fixed Address: Young, Queer, and Restless. In Gaetz, S., O'Grady, B., Bucciari, K., Karabanow, J., & Mar-solais, A. (Eds.), *Youth Homelessness in Canada: Implications for Policy and Practice* (387-403). Toronto: Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press

There is a slight rise in the number of individuals staying together who represent about 13% of the total respondents. This data correlates with the expressed need in later responses for more couples and family-friendly shelters or housing as one potential method for decreasing homelessness.

Duration of homelessness

One important measure of homelessness is the proportion of time in the previous year that people do not have access to safe and consistent accommodation.

How much time have you spent homeless in the last 12 months (Nanaimo 2020)



***In total how much time have you been homeless in the last 12 months?
2020 / 2018 / 2016***

	0 to 3 months	3 to 6 months	6 to 12 months	12 months +	No answer
2020 (n=358)	37	36	63	213	6
	10.3%	10.1%	17.6	59.5	2.5%
2018 (n=289)	30	33	55	154	17
	10.4%	11.4%	19.0%	53.3%	5.9%
2016 (N=174)	0-3 months	3 to 6 months	6 months or more	n/a	n/a
	18.4%	17.8%	59.8%	n/a	4.0%

As we can see from the table above 77.1% of the respondents in 2020 reported being homeless for six months or more, of the last 12. This is an almost 5% increase from the 2018 figure. This finding suggests that on average the length of time that individuals are experiencing homelessness is increasing: Clearly a sign that homelessness as a whole is getting worse in Nanaimo.

Continuing the trend from previous PiT Counts and based on other findings, a high percentage of people experiencing homelessness in Nanaimo would be considered “chronically” homeless:

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).¹²

How long have you been in Nanaimo?

A very high percentage of respondents reported that they had lived in Nanaimo for most or all of their lives. The majority would certainly, by most measures, qualify as being “from Nanaimo”:

- 88.9% more than 1 year (318 / 358)
- 83.0% more than 2 years (297 / 358)
- 71.2% more than 5 years (255 / 358)

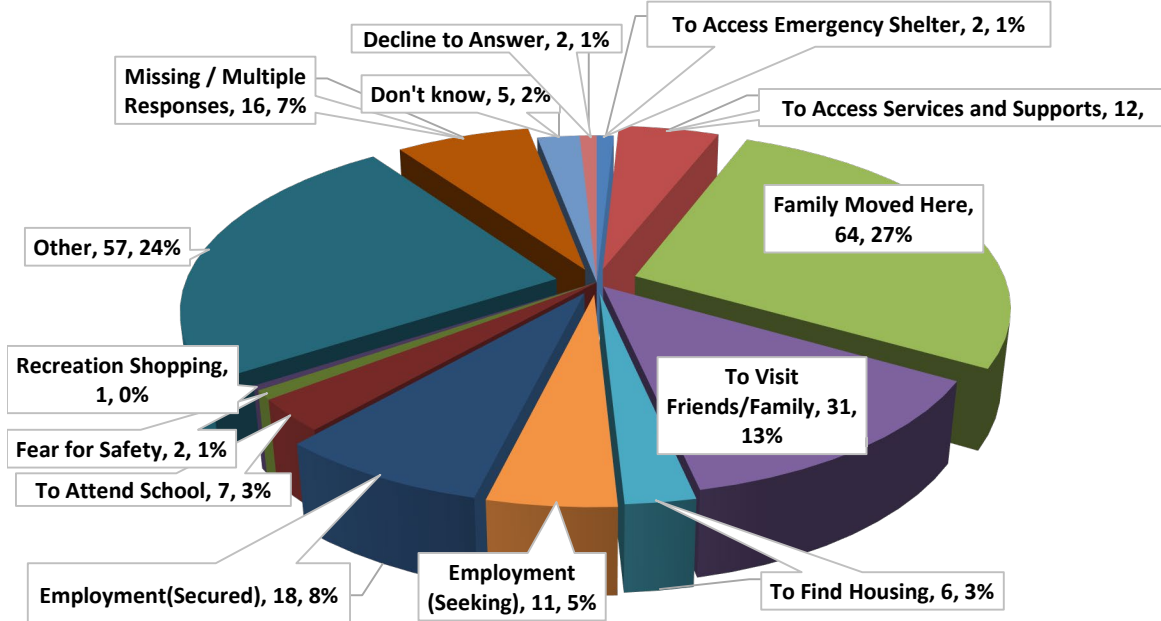
	0 to 3 months	3 to 6 months	6 to 12 months	1-5 years	5–40 + years	Always been here	Decline / no answer
2020	17	7	10	63	132	123	6
2018	23	9	8	50	96	87	16

	Less than 1 Year	More than 1 year	No answer
2020 (n = 358)	34	318	6
2018 (n=289)	40	233	16
2016 (n=174)	48	122	4

The evidence is entirely clear: People experiencing homelessness in Nanaimo are in large part *from* Nanaimo. This finding debunks the popular (and derogatory) myth that “homeless people come to Nanaimo for the weather, public services, free accommodation etc. ...” And according to the survey data (illustrated below) the reported reasons people came to Nanaimo were identical to the reasons that anyone else does: For work, to go to school, to join family, to start a new life.

¹² See Employment and Social Development Canada. Homelessness Partnering Strategy Directives 2014-2019. Accessed at: <http://www.esdc.gc.ca/Eng/Communities/Homelessness/Funding/Directives.Shtml>. This definition has recently been expanded to include those who have recurrent experiences of homelessness over the past three years, with a cumulative duration of at least 18 months (546 days). Though not specifically asked many respondents indicated in their replies that they would meet this second criteria. See *National Housing Strategy* – adapted from the Canadian Definition of Homelessness developed by the Canadian Observatory of Homelessness.

What is the main reason you came to Nanaimo?



And while the paths into or causes of homelessness are complex and driven by large -scale social and economic forces, homelessness is realized or manifest in the immediate locale. It is a sign of local inequality and inequity. As such it can, in fact, must be changed and addressed at a local level. And not surprisingly many have come to Nanaimo from communities close by on Vancouver Island. Significantly, there is no one community (in the 60 plus identified) or region, except Vancouver Island, that is the overwhelming source of inflow to Nanaimo¹³ and the highest single number coming from any one other community was 14 .

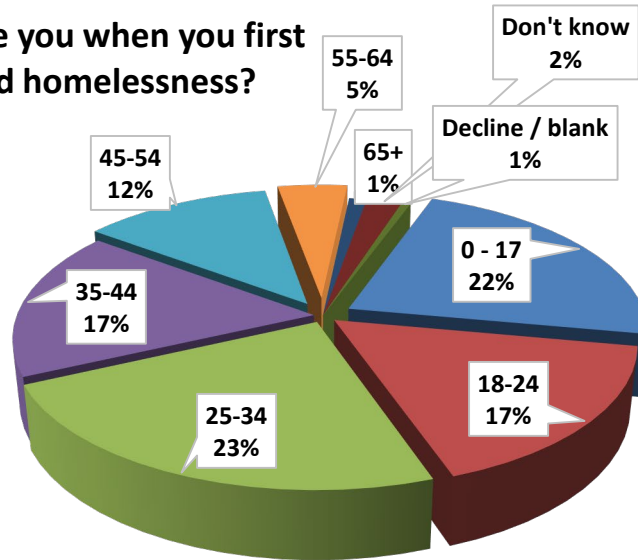
What community did you come from? (top responses)

Calgary	8
Duncan	8
Edmonton	14
Kelowna	6
Ladysmith	6

Nanaimo	6
Parksville	7
Vancouver	14
Victoria	14

¹³ See Appendix H for full list of responses: What community did you come from?

What age were you when you first experienced homelessness?



What age were you when you first experienced homelessness?

	17 or less	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+	No answer
2020 (n=358)	80	60	84	61	43	20	10
2018 (n=289)	80	46	56	46	35	12	14
2018%	27.7%	15.9%	19.4%	15.9%	12.1%	4.2%	4.8%

The data for 2020 shows that almost 39% of respondents report first experiencing homelessness under the age of 25 (22% in the 0-17 years’ cohort and 17% in the 18-24 years’ cohort). This finding is consistent with the 2018 findings and more importantly points to the need for interventions for youth to be a focus in homelessness serving and prevention systems. It is likely that the number of youth is under counted as homeless youth tend to avoid engagement with mainstream agencies and systems.¹⁴ It may be the case that we need to have a specific method of counting youth who are experiencing homelessness. Many communities employ separate surveys or events to count the number of youth who may be experiencing homelessness. For example, Vancouver in 2018 conducted a unique ‘Youth Homeless Count in Metro Vancouver’ that employed a different method that that normally employed in PiT Counts.¹⁵

¹⁴ Page 12, BC Non-Profit Housing Association. (2018). *2018 Youth Homeless Count in Metro Vancouver*. Prepared for the Metro Vancouver Homelessness Partnering Strategy Community Entity. Burnaby, BC: Metro Vancouver.

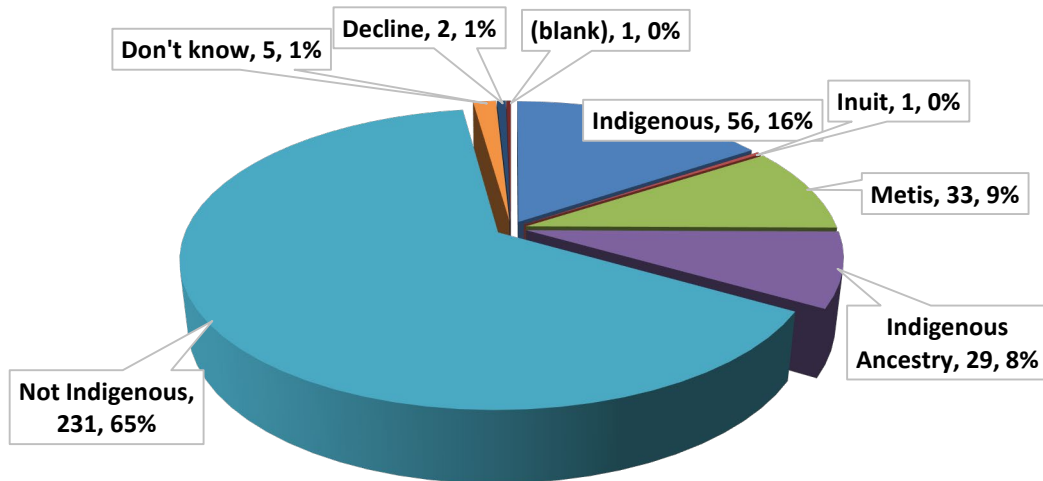
¹⁵ Ibid, Page 4

Have you ever had any service in the Canadian Military or RCMP?

	2020	2018	2016
No	330	275	167
RCMP	(1)	3	0
Military	14	8	6
Both	(1)	0	0
Decline / Unclear	14	3	1

The number of respondents reporting service in the military or RCMP rose in 2020 but at 3.9% remains low compared to national figures. The 2018 *Everyone Counts* Canada wide data reports that 4.4% of those experiencing homelessness had prior RCMP or military service experience.¹⁶

Do you identify as First Nations (with or without status), Métis, or Inuit, or do you have North American Indigenous ancestry?



The Indigenous population in the 2020 count represents fully one third of all respondents (119/358) experiencing homelessness in Nanaimo. This figure is consistent with the 2018 survey data. Given that Aboriginal populations represent about 6% of Nanaimo’s population they are highly (statistically) overrepresented among the homeless population. The high levels of Indigenous homelessness are based

¹⁶ *Everyone Counts: 2018 Highlights – Report*. Accessed at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/homelessness/reports/highlights-2018-point-in-time-count.html>

on a combination of structural factors that are only beginning to be addressed at local, national and provincial levels.

Additionally, this year we included a question asking respondents which Nation or Community they belonged to. The respondents reported being from primarily Coast Salish Nations and Communities on Vancouver Island and other nations in British Columbia though some from quite far away. For example, one respondent reported their nation as Apache/Chibnowa from New Mexico.¹⁷

	First Nations	Inuit	Metis	Indigenous Ancestry	Not-Aboriginal	Don't Know	Unclear / blank	Decline
2020 (n=358)	15.6%	0.3%	9.2%	8.1%	64.5%	1.4%	0.3%	0.6%
2018 (n = 289)	25%	0%	4.2%	2.1%	64.7%	2.8%	1.2%	-
2016 (n= 174)	18.4%	0.6%	2.9%	1.7%	74.1%	1.2%	1.1%	-

Have you stayed in a homeless shelter in the past year?

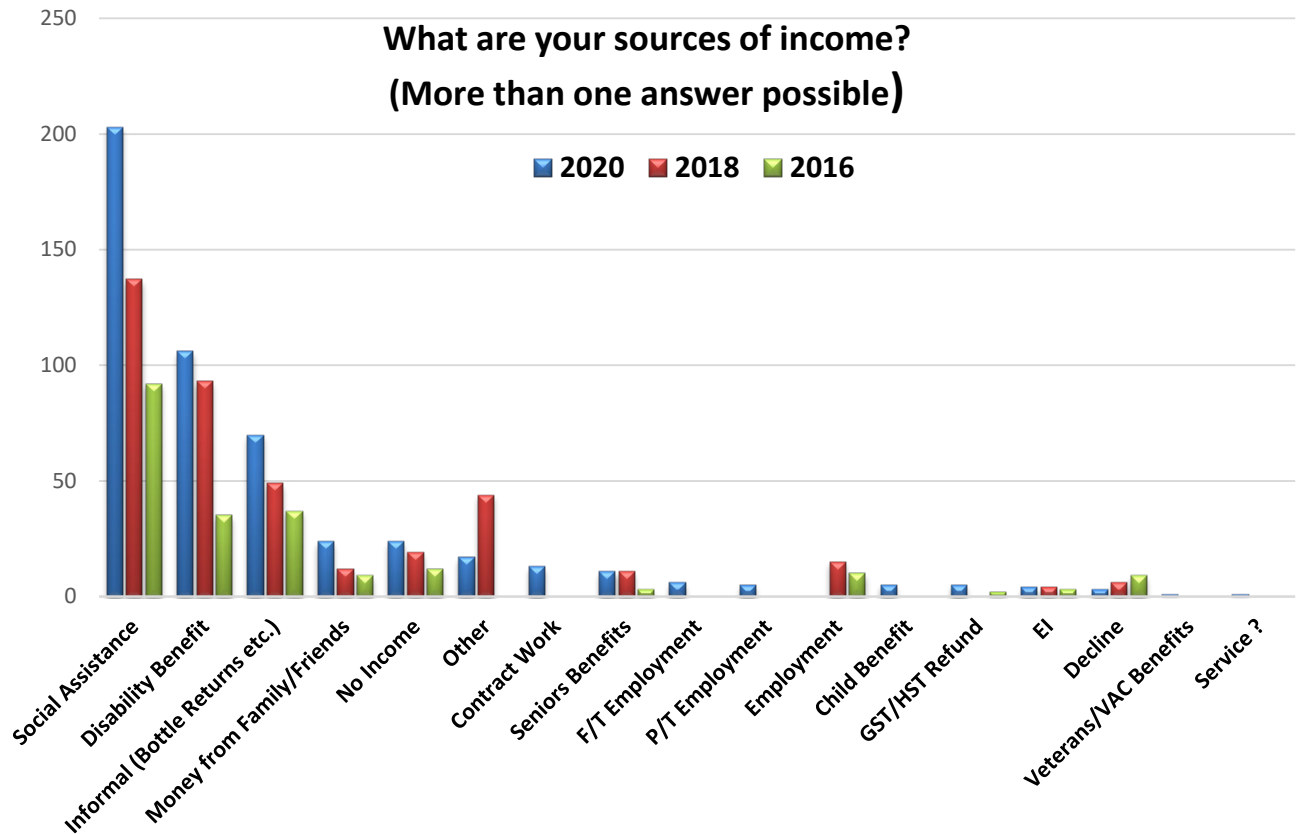
	Yes	%	No	%	Decline/blank/ don't know	%
2020 (n=358)	271	75.7%	86	24.0%	1	0.3%
2018 (n=289)	194	67.1	90	31.2%	5	1.7%
2016 (n=174)	130	74.7%	38	21.8%	6	3.4%

Similar to the previous surveys the majority (75.7%) of those surveyed in 2020 reported having stayed in a shelter in the previous 12 months. Significantly the total number of individuals that stayed in a shelter has risen by 40% from 2018 (from 194 to 271). This increase is reflected by reports from shelter providers that their staff and resources are in large part overburdened. In fact, the total number of shelter spaces of any description available on a given night in Nanaimo is approximately 150. In other words, Nanaimo's shelter capacity is far below the need. Given this reality there are simply no options for many homeless individuals except to sleep or camp in parks, doorways and other public spaces. It is also important to note that the number of available shelter spaces varies depending on the time of year as some of Nanaimo's shelters do not operate on a year round basis. For example, the Emergency Shelter run by the Society for Equity, Inclusion and Advocacy (SEIA) that sheltered 40 individuals on most nights, was closed on March 31st, only days after the 2020 Nanaimo PiT Count on March 12th. It is also the case that many survey respondents, almost one-quarter (86/358), do not enter or use shelters

Frequently cited reasons for not using shelters were: fearing for one's safety and being worried about possessions being stolen.¹⁸ Other prominent reasons included not being able to stay in a shelter as a couple, and not wanting to be in an environment where others were using and, or, selling drugs.

¹⁷ See Appendix I for full list of responses

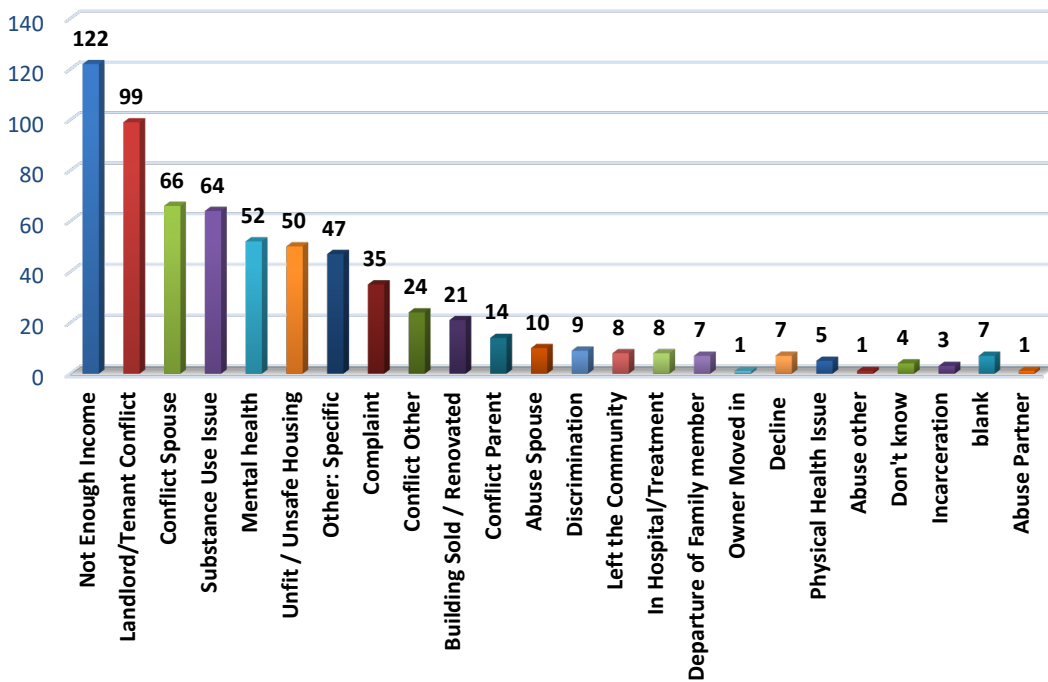
¹⁸ See Appendix G for details



Top Responses	2020	2018	2016
Social Assistance	203	137	92
Disability Benefit	106	93	35
Informal (Bottle Returns etc.)	70	49	37
Money from Family Friends	24	12	9
No Income	24	19	12
Other	17	44	0

The most common sources of income for respondents in 2020 largely reflected previous surveys in Nanaimo (See Appendix C for full list). About 57% of respondents reported that their source of income was social assistance and a further 30% Disability Benefits (though there is some overlap in these categories), but they also reported that these supports were entirely inadequate to meet rent and basic subsistence needs in Nanaimo. In total 24 respondents, compared to 19 in 2018, reported that they had *no income at all*. Also, very few reported receiving GST Refunds to which all Canadians, regardless of income, are entitled as long as they file an income tax return. Canada Revenue Service was present at the PiT Count Magnet Event and did assist individuals with filing income tax returns to enable many to receive GST Refunds from previous years.

What happened that caused you to lose your housing most recently? (more than one answer possible)



What happened that caused you to lose your housing most recently? (More than one answer possible)¹⁹

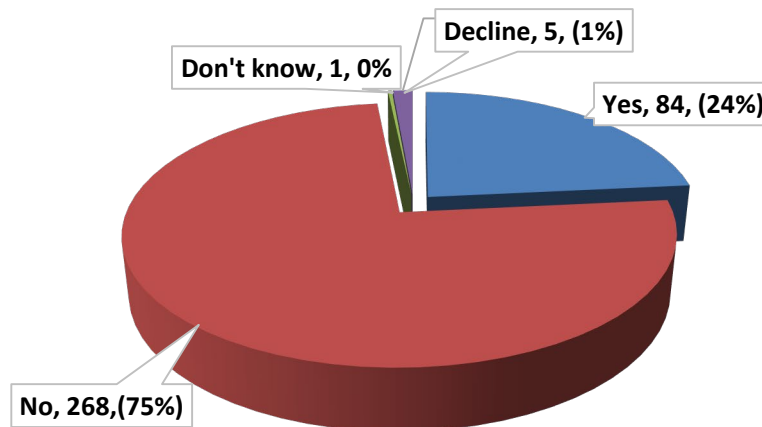
Top Responses	2020	2018	2016
Not Enough Income	122	61	70
Landlord/Tenant Conflict	99	0	0
Conflict: Partner/Spouse	66	40	0
Addiction/Substance Use	64	90	59
Mental health	52	-	-
Unsafe Housing Conditions	50	40	0
Other	47	98	0
Complaint	35	0	0
Conflict Other	24	0	0
Building Sold / Renovated	21	0	0

¹⁹ The question on the 2020 survey concerning respondent’s reasons for losing housing most recently has had a number of options added to it that were not present on the 2018 survey. While this gives a greater breadth of data it also limits solid comparison of data across the years.

In the current survey the major issues that have caused people to lose their housing most recently ²⁰ have been not enough income (34%), conflict with Landlord or other Tenant (27.7%), conflict with Partner/Spouse (18.4%), addictions or substance use (17.9%), mental health issues (14.5%) and unsafe housing conditions (14%). As the data suggests many respondents had multiple issues affecting the stability of their housing. (Respondents were able to give more than one response to this question).

So-called “Renovation Evictions” continue to be a problem for people losing their housing. Many verbally commented that they were evicted for one or more of the reasons above, including conflicts with landlords in relation to a number of issues. It is worth noting that conflict with Partner/Spouse has risen quite dramatically since 2018.

As a child or youth were you ever in foster care or in a youth group home?



Approximately how long after leaving foster care/group home did you become homeless?

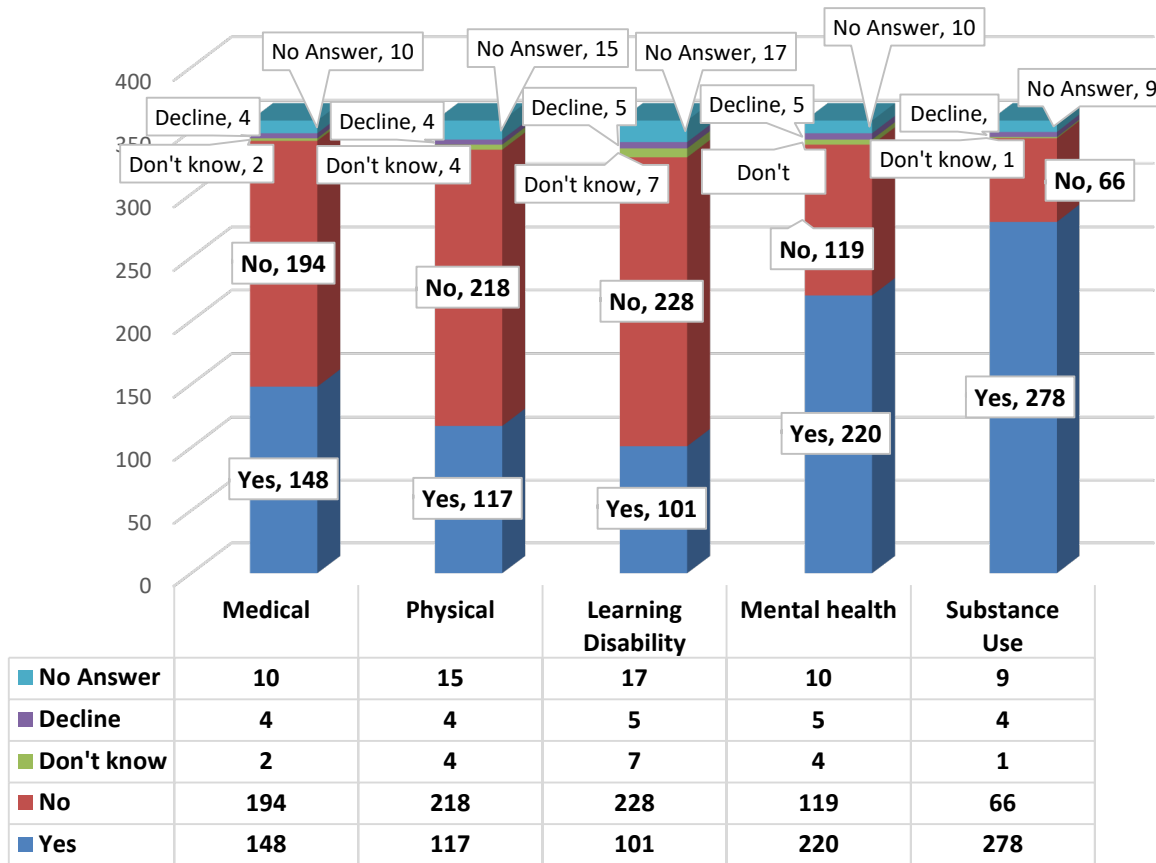
0- 1 year	19
2-5 years	14
5-10 years	8
10 + years	16
blank	27

This question was added to the National Survey in 2020 as it has been demonstrated that involvement with foster care is a precipitating factor and highly correlated to ending up in homelessness. Of those who were involved with foster care 33 of 84 respondents were homeless within five years or less of leaving. In the first pan-Canadian study on youth homelessness, *Without a Home: The National Youth Homelessness Survey* (2016), it was reported that 57.8% of homeless youth have histories of child welfare

²⁰ See Appendix D for full list.

involvement; 73.3% of youth who became homeless before the age of 16 reported child protection involvement; and homeless youth were 193 times more likely to have been involved with the child welfare system than the general public.²¹ The number of respondents in the youth age cohort continues to be comparatively low in Nanaimo and service providers suggest that this is so because many youth are wary of engaging with social service systems.

Do you identify as having any of the following health challenges at this time?



While there is a high level of reported mental health and substance use challenges we do not have data on the severity or types of issues being reported. Nor do we have any evidence of how these issues may or may not affect respondent’s everyday life. As noted above relatively few respondents report that mental health or substance use issues are the greatest barriers to finding or maintaining housing. The greatest barrier to finding housing, not surprisingly is low income and high rents.

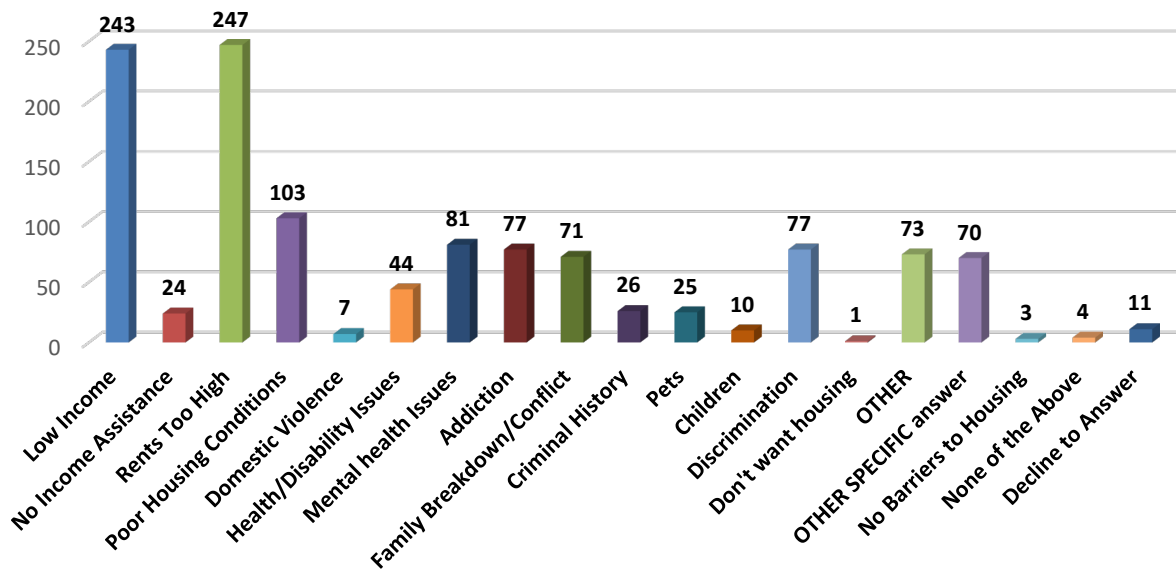
²¹ Nichols, N., Schwan, K., Gaetz, S., Redman, M., French, D., Kidd, S., O’Grady, B. (2017). *Child Welfare and Youth Homelessness in Canada: A Proposal for Action*. Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press.

What the data for all of these health issues points to is the considerable range of health needs that those experiencing homelessness face. Also we do not know from this data if the health problems occurred before or after respondents became homeless. As has been noted in research, homelessness and health is complex and one does not necessarily precede the other. It has, however, been demonstrated that homelessness does have direct impacts on health. For example, crowded shelters can expose individuals to communicable diseases and long periods of walking or standing and prolonged exposure of feet to moisture and cold can lead to infections. Additionally, obtaining medication and adhering to medical recommendations for physical or mental illness (e.g., dietary restrictions or rest requirement) is often difficult. Treatment and prevention of health issues are often neglected due to competing needs for food and shelter. Overall, individuals who are homeless are at risk for a range of adverse health outcomes.²²

²² Page 2, Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario), Berenbaum E. *Evidence Brief: homelessness and health outcomes: what are the associations?* Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2019. Accessed at: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/E/2019/eb-homelessness-health.pdf?la=en>

Survey Results Section 2: Responses to Optional Community specific questions

What challenges or problems have you experienced when trying to find housing?



Increasingly high rents and low income were the most frequently cited *barriers to finding housing*. Also, the things that *cause* a loss of housing, such as substance use, and unsafe or poor housing conditions, were also reported as barriers to finding housing. These trends are consistent with the 2018 Survey where high rents and other financial reasons were barriers for a very high proportion of respondents.²³

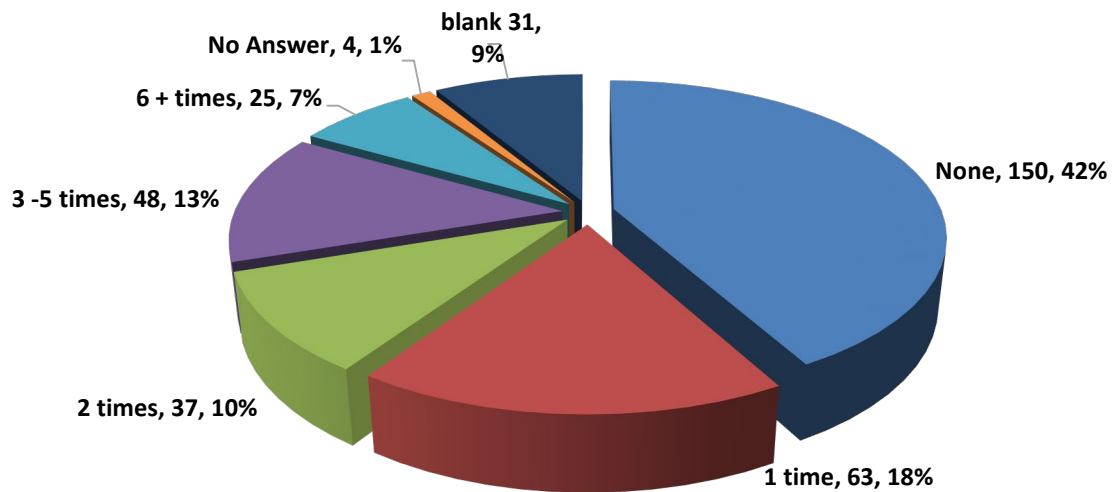
In the “Other” reasons category a high number of people surveyed also reported that they had difficulty getting references from previous landlords, and or had trouble with credit checks. There is a notable increase in the Discrimination category for 2020. This includes both racial discrimination and or discrimination from landlords based on bias against anyone with prior housing challenges.

People also said that conflict with *previous* landlords were barriers to housing. These finding are largely consistent with the data from the previous two surveys. It is worth noting that while a high number of respondents reported (see above) ongoing mental health issues (220/358) or substance use issues (278/358) a comparatively low number report these as a perceived barrier to finding housing. For example, 81/358 reported mental health issues and 71/358 reported substance use issues as barriers to finding housing.

²³ Op.Cit. Defriend, 2016

It is the interaction between variables that makes it challenging to find housing. A closer look at the specific individual histories of those experiencing homelessness would reveal much in this regard. The data presented here suggests that greater support for both landlords and tenants might help resolve or ameliorate many of these issues.

Have you accessed the Emergency Room in the last 12 months / How many times?



Have you accessed the hospital in the last 12 months?

Yes	No	Blank
112	229	17

How many Times?

One x	49
Two x	13
Three x	12
Four x	5
Five x	2
6 x +	4
Blank	27

Number of days in hospital

1 day or less	14
1 -2 days	1
2 days	11
3 days	8
4 days	4
5 days	8
6 days	2
7 days	4
8-14 days	10
14 days +	20
Blank	1
Unknown	1

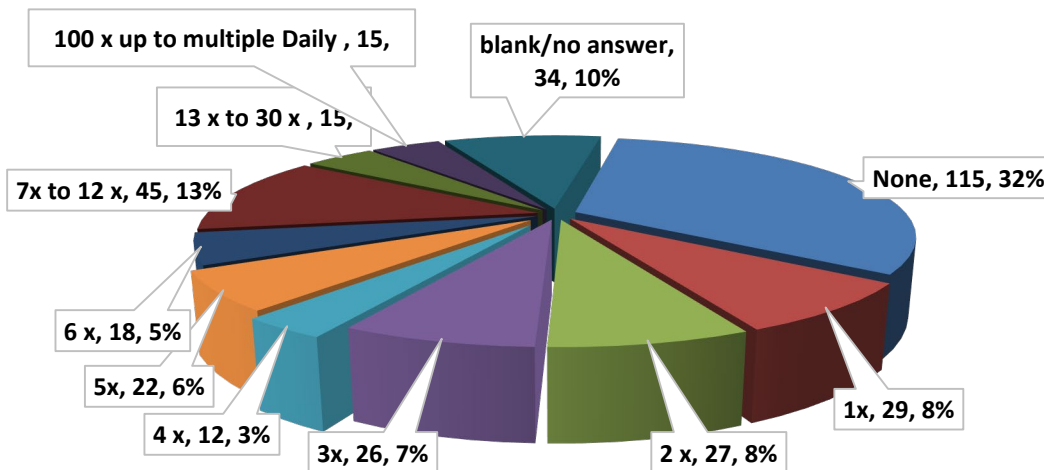
A high percentage of people experiencing homelessness in Nanaimo make use of some or most of the health and community services available to them. However, it seems evident that the highest number of visits to hospitals and emergency room visits are made by relatively few individuals. This repeats the

pattern of engagements with police (see below) in that it is a comparatively small proportion of the population that uses these resources most intensively.

Indeed, only about 21% of respondents reported having visited the emergency room more than twice in the last year. And the majority of stays in hospital were less than seven days, but there were 30 of the 112 who reported staying eight days or more in hospital.

The chart on health conditions above shows almost half (148/358) have an ongoing medical condition and about one-third (117/358) report a serious physical condition that requires regular attention. In the context of the data presented here and given the generally poor health outcomes it is reasonable to suggest that those experiencing homelessness *under use these systems* compared to their actual need and not entirely different from the rest of the general public.

In the past 12 months have You Interacted With Police (Tickets, arrests, searches)?



Police report that most people experiencing homelessness do not ‘cause trouble’ or engage in a negative fashion with them. This is an important rejoinder to the populist myth that those experiencing homelessness as a group are ‘criminals’ and troublemakers. If we add together the categories of responses with the two highest number of interactions (13 to 30 times, and 100 times plus) we end up with a total of 30 respondents out of 358. This data suggests that less than 10% of the respondents have regular (or negative) interactions with police.

This data seems to reflect what is reported by police in Nanaimo and elsewhere. It is precisely this small group that absorbs the vast majority of the police’s energies. Just as importantly this 10% becomes the most visible face of homelessness in the media and the popular imagination. At a policy and practice level this data suggests that attention needs to be paid specifically to this 10% as they are most likely to have the greatest support needs. If these needs were better met, engagements with police would drop and police could deploy their resources elsewhere.

In the past 12 months have you: been to prison or jail?

YES	57
No	288
Blank	13

How many times?

<i>How many times ?</i>	<i>Number of respondents</i>
1 x	24
2x	8
3x	5
4x	1
5x	2
20x	1
31x	1
Blank	15

Number of days in jail?

Zero Days	4
0-1 Days	8
2 to 7 days	12
8-60 days	8
61-179 days	8
180-365 +	11
blank	6

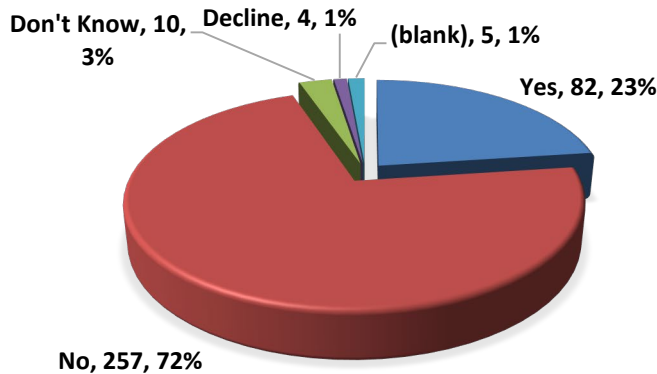
Again the data from the survey respondents suggests it is a small group of individuals who have the heaviest engagements with corrections. However, this is not to suggest that ‘it is a few bad apples’ that are most responsible. Rather as many observers have pointed out it is the criminalization of homelessness and its relationship with the justice system as a whole that needs to be examined²⁴.

Young and De Jong point out that people who are homeless are often inappropriately criminalized, especially those with a lack of mental wellness, a history of substance use and with a dual diagnosis. This occurs most often in two forms, hospitalization and incarceration.²⁵ Shelters, prisons and jails may act as an institutional circuit in place of a stable living situation.

²⁴ Page 14, Young, L. and De Jong, I. (2015) *A Research and Discussion Paper: How Involvement in the Criminal Justice System Affects Stable Housing*, Accessed at: <https://d3n8a8pro7vnm.cloudfront.net/orgcode/pages/293/attachments/original/1478810207/How-legal-issues-impede-access-to-housing-FINAL.pdf?1478810207>

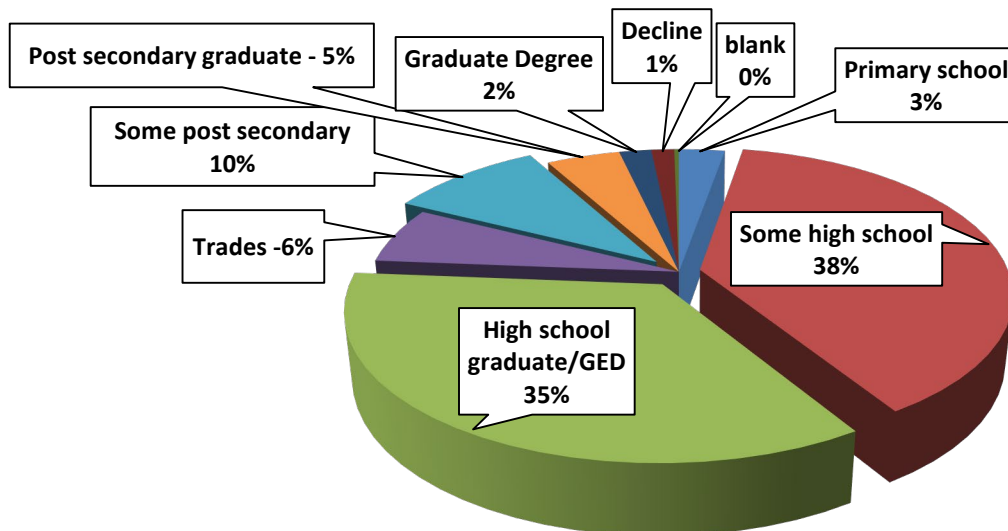
²⁵ Ibid, Page 14

Do you identify as having an acquired brain injury that happened after birth?



This is a new question that was added to the questions in the Reaching Home PiT Count Survey.²⁶ In the 2020 PiT Count data 24% reported having an acquired brain injury. There is mounting evidence that those experiencing homelessness have a high incidence of acquired traumatic brain injury. Recent studies have reported that up to 50% of those experiencing homelessness have an acquired brain injury.²⁷ This study also suggested that acquired traumatic brain injury is consistently associated with poorer self-reported physical and mental health, suicidality and suicide risk, memory concerns, increased health service use and higher criminal justice system involvement.

What is the highest level of education you completed?



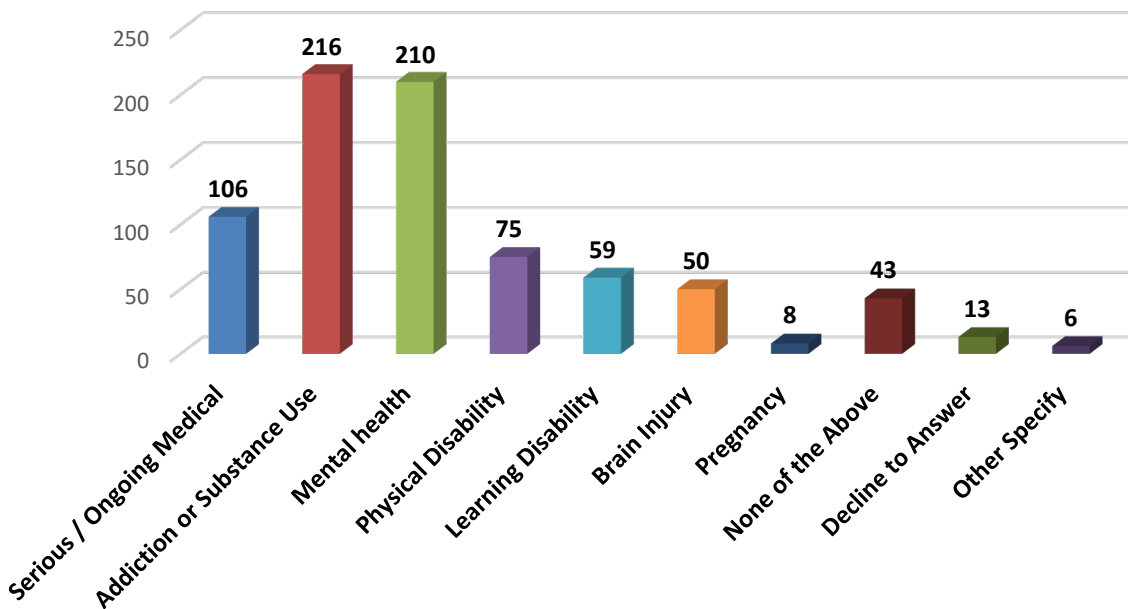
²⁶ Thanks to Kix Citton, Executive Director of the Nanaimo Brain Injury Society for being the driving force behind inclusion of this important question on the national survey.

²⁷ Stubbs, Jacob & Thornton, Allen & Sevic, Jessica & Silverberg, Noah & Barr, Alasdair & Honer, William & Panenka, William. (2019). *Traumatic brain injury in homeless and marginally housed individuals: a systematic review and meta-analysis*. 10.1016/S2468-2667(19)30188-4.

This is the first time a question about education level has appeared on the Nanaimo PiT Count Survey. If we add together all respondents who have completed high school or higher and include trades, we get a figure of 205 (of 358 responses) which equals 57%. This is substantially below provincial and national rates. High school completion rates are about 77% in Canada as a whole and approximately 86% in British Columbia.²⁸ In 2016, Statistics Canada found that 54% of Canadians (aged 25–64) were college or university graduates.²⁹ The number of respondents who had graduated from university or had some post-secondary education was 79/358 or approximately 22% (if we include trades). Again this is substantially below national averages.

While it is only one measure, individuals who do not have formal education are at a higher risk for unemployment or underemployment than their counterparts with higher educational attainment. Barriers are often created in obtaining employment, or even accessing services, for those with low levels of literacy or who speak English/French as a second language. For many people (especially youth) their homelessness caused them to leave the educational system.

What other services would be helpful to you? (More than one Answer possible)



²⁸ BC Schools - Six Year Completion Rate (2019) Accessed at: <https://catalogue.data.gov.bc.ca/dataset/bc-schools-six-year-completion-rate>

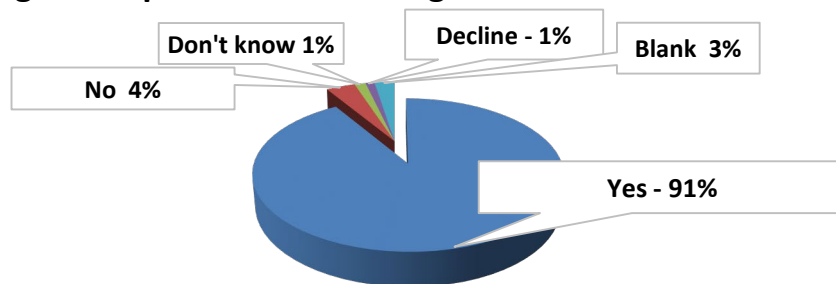
²⁹ Government of Canada, Statistics Canada (2017-11-29). "The Daily — Education in Canada: Key results from the 2016 Census". www150.statcan.gc.ca. Accessed at <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/171129/dq171129a-eng.htm>

The options in this question have been reduced from the ones available on the 2018 survey. But the overall pattern of responses remains the same.³⁰

When asked what additional types of services would be useful to respondents, the patterns described in the health questions are repeated as demonstrated by the graphic above. In essence what emerges from this report and from much research on homelessness is that health and housing are intricately connected. The now widely accepted principle of Housing First illustrates that safe and secure housing is the basis of physical and mental well-being.

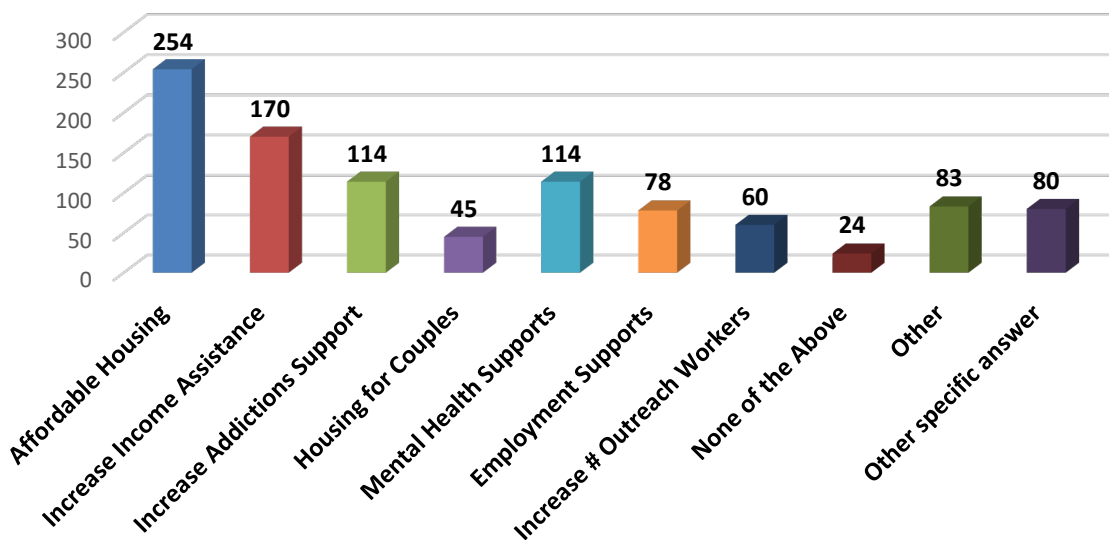
The results show that respondents are well of aware of what would help them find housing, but the figures also point to a lack of adequate services given that demand for these supports is so high.

Do you want to get into permanent housing?



91% of respondents reported they do want to get into permanent housing and only 4% said they do not. This piece of data alone rebuffs myths that “a lot homeless people do not want housing.”

What are some of the ways we can solve homelessness? (more than one answer possible)



³⁰ See Appendix F for chart with 2016 and 2018 Responses to this question.

The responses to this question suggest that respondents are aware that there is a range of efforts required in order to effectively address homelessness in Nanaimo.

Not surprisingly respondents were well aware that income assistance rates are largely inadequate to secure and maintain housing. When asked how to solve homelessness, 71% of respondents agreed that it was necessary to have more affordable housing. Comments suggested that it is not just affordable housing that is needed, but access to housing of any kind. Homelessness exists on a continuum and as such will require a continuum of responses. As is reflected in the health question many report the desire for more substance use/addictions and mental health supports including outreach workers.

Summary & Conclusions of The Nanaimo 2020 Pit Count

The increasing spread and high visibility of homelessness since the 2018 Point-in-Time Count has no doubt been a major reason why it has become *the* major topic of concern for all community members in Nanaimo.

The results of the Nanaimo 2020 PiT Count suggest that homelessness is worsening. Even though the Count collected fewer respondents than expected by police and service providers and even though some 150 people from Nanaimo's 'Tent City' were housed in December 2018, the number of homeless in Nanaimo continues to rise.

As in 2018, the numbers of people experiencing homelessness are increasing, the length of their homelessness experience is getting longer and lack of access to affordable housing and adequate supports is *keeping people on the streets*. Many respondents noted that there is intense competition for existing vacancies, and they are last to be considered because of the way they present, and the absence of references and poor credit histories. Addictions and mental health are widely attributed as an additional barrier.

Worryingly, upwards of 75% of our survey respondents have been homeless for at least 6 months if not the entirety of the past year or longer. While homelessness affects individuals in a very personal fashion, it is caused by a set of systemic forces. It bears repeating that it is these systematic forces that the final figures in this report should draw the most attention to: *Homelessness is a local effect of the actions of higher level political and economic systems*. While much has been done and local service providers are working beyond their capacities they can only work with the resources they are provided with.

A key to responding to homelessness is the construction of the 'problem' which needs to be rethought. The problem does not lay in what the homeless are or are not doing, the problem lies with what every level of government is or is not doing. No doubt much has been done to respond to homelessness and COVID19 has surely made matters worse. However, it also appears that COVID19 has spurred considerable action to address homelessness that otherwise may have taken years to accomplish.

The solution to homelessness, to quote Ian DeJong of OrgCode.com and most of this year's survey respondents, "is to provide housing for those who need it".

Appendix A: Definitions of Homelessness

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness³¹ defines variations of homelessness as the following:

Absolute Homelessness: Individuals who are living in public spaces, emergency shelters or public facilities and do not have a stable residence to return to.

The Nanaimo PiT Count included those who were considered unsheltered as well as emergency sheltered. In both cases, persons are considered to be absolutely homeless, as they do not have secure or permanent housing:

Unsheltered: Includes people who lack housing and are not accessing emergency shelters or accommodation, except during extreme weather conditions. In most cases, people are staying in places that are not designed for or fit for human habitation.

a. People living in public or private spaces without consent or contract.

b. People living in places not intended for permanent human habitation.

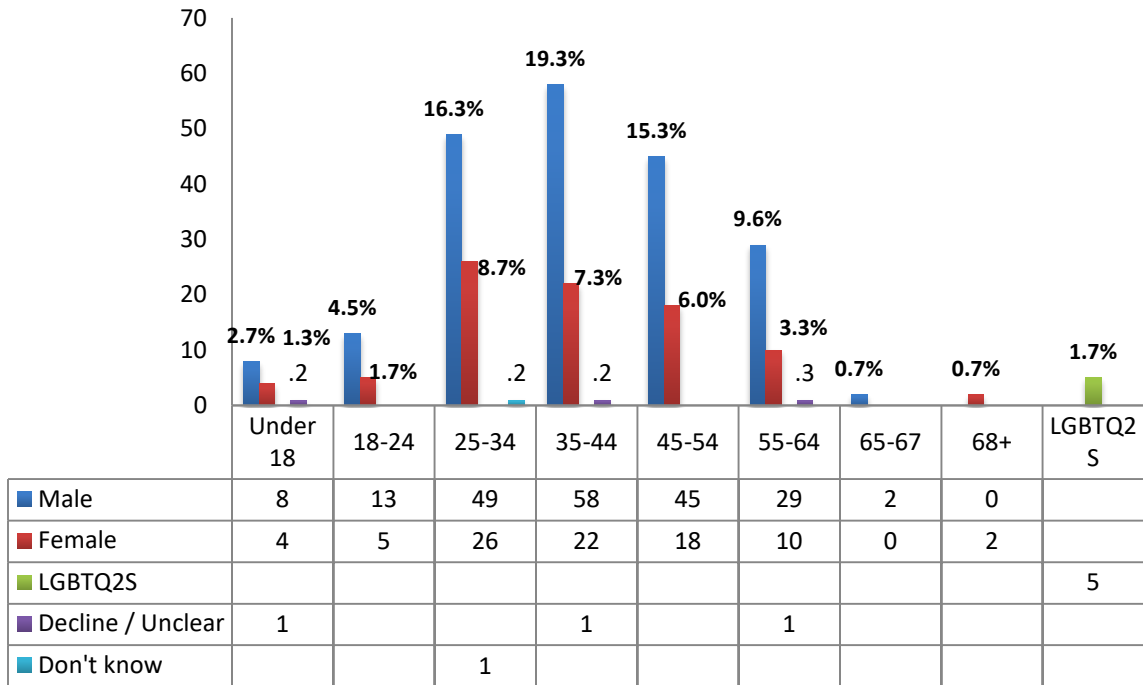
Emergency Sheltered: This refers to people who, because they cannot secure permanent housing, are accessing emergency shelter and system supports, generally provided at no cost or minimal cost to the user. Such accommodation represents a stop-gap institutional response to homelessness provided by government, non-profits, faith based organizations and / or volunteers.

Often referred to as the Hidden Homeless the 'Enumeration' does not, but the Survey Data and analysis does, include those who are temporarily or uncertainly housed at the time of the PiT Count:

Hidden Homelessness: includes those who are living in temporary accommodations, time-limited housing or whose tenancy is to be terminated. This describes situations in which people, who are technically homeless and without permanent shelter, access accommodation that offers no prospect of permanence. Those who are provisionally accommodated may be accessing temporary housing provided by government or the non-profit sector, or may have independently made arrangements for short-term accommodation.

³¹Canadian Definition Of Homelessness Accessed At:
[Http://Homelesshub.ca/Sites/Default/Files/Cohhomelessdefinition.Pdf](http://Homelesshub.ca/Sites/Default/Files/Cohhomelessdefinition.Pdf)

Appendix B: 2018 Age and Gender Distribution



Appendix C: Year-on-Year comparison: What are your sources of income?

Sources of Income	2020	2018	2016
Social Assistance	203	137	92
Disability Benefit	106	93	35
Informal (Bottle Returns etc.)	70	49	37
Money from Family Friends	24	12	9
No Income	24	19	12
Other	17	44	0
Contract Work	13	0	0
Seniors Benefits	11	11	3
F/T Employment	6	0	0
P/T Employment	5	0	0
Employment	0	15	10
Child Benefit	5	0	0
GST/HST Refund	5	0	2
EI	4	4	3
Decline	3	6	9
Veterans/VAC Benefits	1	0	0
Service ?	1	0	0

Appendix D: What happened that caused you to lose your housing most recently? Full List

	2020	2018	2016
Not Enough Income	122	61	70
Landlord/Tenant Conflict	99	0	0
Conflict: Partner/Spouse	66	40	0
Addiction/Substance Use	64	90	59
Mental health	52	-	-
Unsafe Housing Conditions	50	40	0
Other	47	98	0
Complaint	35	0	0
Conflict Other	24	0	0
Building Sold / Renovated	21	0	0
Conflict: Parent	14	12	3
Abuse: Partner/Spouse	11	14	10
Discrimination	9	-	-
Left the Community	8	-	-
Hospitalization	8	9	16
Departure of Family Member	7	-	-
blank	7	0	0
Physical Health Issue	5		
Don't Know	4	3	5
Jail or Prison	3	26	17
Abuse: Other	1		
Owner Moved in	1		
Abuse: Parent	0	5	5
Illness/Medical		26	49
Job Loss		32	42
Decline		9	2

Appendix E: Data from 2016 and 2018 Health and Community Services

What Community Services have you used in the last 12 months? (More than one answer possible)

	Shelter	Food Bank	Hot Meal Program	7-10 Club	Library	Police	Other	None	Blank
2018 (n=289)	122	84	91	156	87	21	13	12	31
2016 (n=174)	128	103	85	125	98	28	45	n/a	n/a

What Health Services have you used in the last 12 months? (More than one answer possible)

	Doctor	Dentist	Optometrist	Emergency	Mental Health Worker	Mental Health Services	Decline to answer
2018 (n=289)	112	22	4	91	65	94	31
2016 (n=174)	100	24	7	69	72	50	n/a

Mental and Physical health

How would you rate your:

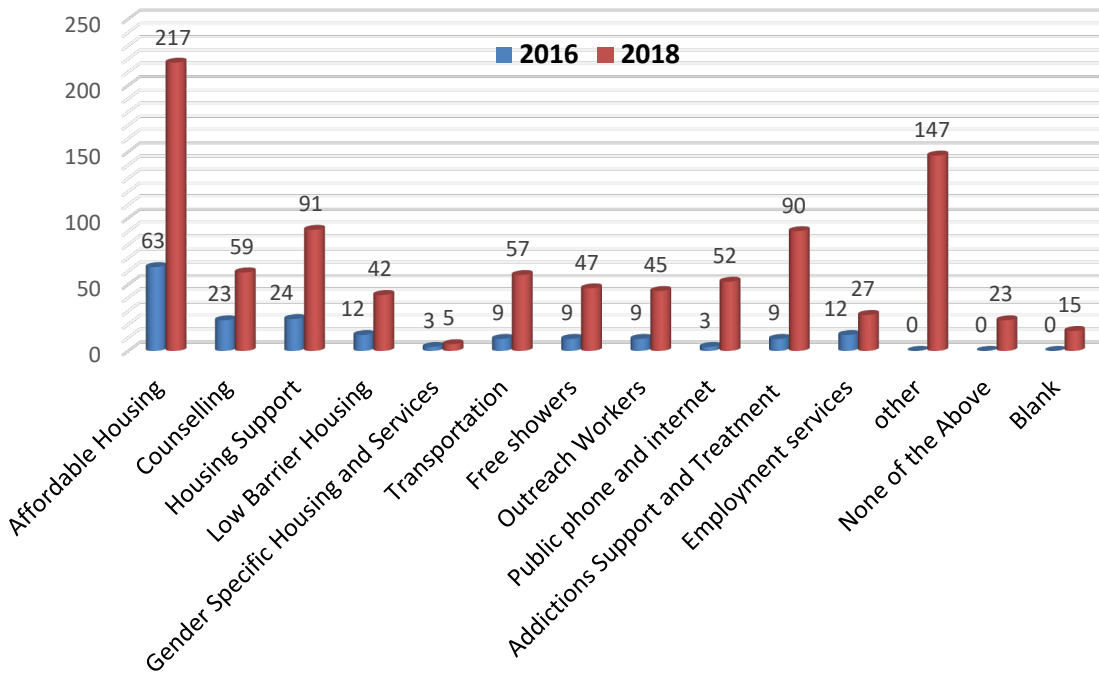
Physical Health

	Very Poor 1	Poor 2	Average 3	Good 4	Excellent 5	No answer blank
2018 (n=287)	7.3%	11.1%	32.8%	28.2%	19.9%	0.7%
2016 (n=174)	5.9	14.6	35.7	27.0	17.0	n/a

Mental Health

	Very Poor 1	Poor 2	Average 3	Good 4	Excellent 5	No answer
2018 (n=286)	8.0%	17.6%	32.5%	21.5%	19.0%	1.4%
2016 (n=174)	5.9%	16.6%	36.1%	25.4%	16.0%	n/a

Appendix F: What other services would be helpful to you? 2016 and 2018 Responses



Appendix G: What are the main reasons (you do not stay in shelters)?

Shelter Full	9
Banned from Shelter	3
No transportation to Shelter	4
Fear for safety	29
Shelter not clean	5
Shelter too noisy	22
Don't know	2
Decline to Answer	4
OTHER	63

Appendix H: Where did you live before you came here? Full list (n = 186)

Abbotsford	3
Ahousat	2
Aldergrove	1
All over	2
Barrie	1
Barrier	2
Bowser	1
Burnaby	2
Cal-Edm	1
Calgary	8
Campbell River	2
Castlegar	1
Chemanius	1
Chilliwack	1
Comox	2
Courtenay	1
Cowichan Lake	1
Cranbrook	1
Cremona	1
Cumberland	2
DTES	1
Duncan	8
East Van, Ladysmith	1
Edmonton	14
Ft St John	1
Gabriola	2
Gabriola island	1
Grand Prairie	1

Greater Vancouver	1
Haida Gwaii	1
Halifax	1
Hazelton	2
Island	1
Kamloops	4
Kelowna	6
Kootenays	1
Ladysmith	6
Leduc	1
Lindsay	1
London	1
Lower Mainland	1
Maple Ridge	4
Courtenay	1
McBride	1
Mill Bay	2
Nanaimo	6
Nanaimo/Edson	1
North Burnaby	1
Ottawa	1
Parksville	7
Pembroke	1
Penticton	1
Port Alberni	3
Port Coq	1
Port Hardy	3
Port Renfrew	1

Prince George	1
Qualicum	3
Regina	1
Reserve Cooper Isle	1
Richmond	2
Saltspring Isl	1
Saskatchewan	1
Scarborough	1
Sooke	1
Spider Lake	1
Surrey	1
Tofino	2
Toronto	3
Ucluelet	2
Van, Utah, Texas	1
Vancouver	14
Vernon	2
Victoria	14
Victoria, Kimberly	1
West Van	1
Weyburn	1
White Rock	1
Windsor	1
Winnipeg	1
WPG	1
Yellowknife	1

Appendix I: Which nation / community do you belong to?

Adams Lake	1
Ahousat	1
Alert Bay	1
Apache/Chibnowa (New Mexico)	1
Barrows River MB	1
Bella Bella	1
Blackfoot	1
Chamainus	1
Chemanus Bay	1
Cherokee	1
Coast Salish	1
Cold Lake	1
Cowichan Tribes	1
Cowichian	1
Cree	2
Dittidat	1
Dotwood (NF)	1
Duncan	2
Eastern Wealland Metis	1
Ehatis	1
Fort Mckay	1
Malahat	1
Manitoba	1
Mohawk	1

Muskowawan	1
Nanaimo	2
Nuchanuth	1
Oaujce	1
O'Hauunil	1
Prince George	2
Quijibway Mohawk Ste St Marie	1
Rama, ONT	1
Saddle Lake Alta	1
Senemux	1
SFM Mohawk	1
Shim Sham Klatz	1
Shuswap	4
Shxw'ow'hamel	1
Sioux, MB	1
Snuneymuxw	8
St'zminos	1
Stzumiius	1
Tache	1
Treaty 6	1
Tsheataht	1
Tsim Tsam	1
Williams Lake	1