



**2021**

# **POINT-IN-TIME COUNT**

**BELLEVILLE, ONTARIO**

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**SEPT 2021**

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# ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report has been prepared by Bridge Street United Church to report on the findings from the 2021 Point-in-Time Count.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Thank you to the volunteers, staff, and partners whose skill and dedication assured the success of this project despite the unique pressure and challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you most of all to those who participated in the survey, sharing part of their story for the benefit of all.

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**The 2021 Point-in-Time Count was conducted by Bridge Street United Church. Technical assistance for data analysis and reporting was provided by HelpSeeker.**

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Hastings County

Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy



This project is funded in part  
by the Government of Canada.



# OUR PROJECT

**This report presents results of the 2021 Point-in-Time Count (PiT Count) in the City of Belleville.**

**PiT Counts are conducted every 2 years as part of the Canada-wide Coordinated Point-in-Time Count; this is the second PiT Count conducted in the City of Belleville.**

Point-in-Time Count results provide a snapshot of homelessness on a single night. The data can be used to:

- Improve our understanding of homelessness in Belleville, including changes from year-to-year.
- Inform efforts by community-based organizations, social service providers, and municipalities to meet the immediate needs of individuals experiencing homelessness.
- Inform decisions about the type of services, approaches to service, and coordination of resources that are needed to prevent and reduce homelessness in Belleville.
- Inform governments, policy makers, and community-based organizations about the importance of all levels of government continuing to invest to increase the spectrum of suitable and supported housing and related support services in the community.

**The 2021 PiT Count was implemented successfully despite the unique challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown restrictions in place to protect public health. The PiT Count provides a reliable snapshot of homelessness in Belleville. It also offers valuable information for community efforts to meet the immediate needs of those experiencing homelessness, while working to prevent and reduce homelessness.**

# THERE ARE MORE PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN BELLEVILLE COMPARED TO 2018, AND FOR LONGER PERIODS OF TIME



AT LEAST  
**180**  
**PEOPLE**

WERE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN BELLEVILLE ON THE NIGHT OF APRIL 20, 2021.

**72**

**PEOPLE**

HAD EXPERIENCED HOMELESSNESS FOR AT LEAST 12 MONTHS.



OF THOSE SURVEYED HAD THEIR **FIRST EXPERIENCE** OF HOMELESSNESS AS **CHILDREN OR YOUTH.**



MOST PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN BELLEVILLE HAVE LIVED THERE FOR A LONG TIME, ONLY

**12%** **LIVED IN BELLEVILLE FOR LESS THAN ONE YEAR.**

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE ARE **GREATLY OVERREPRESENTED** comprising



of those experiencing homelessness, compared to



of the City of Belleville's population.



## HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Cited as a top driver of homelessness in Belleville.

# METHODOLOGY

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A Point-in-Time (PiT) Count is a count of the minimum number of people experiencing homelessness in a community over a 24-hour period, and a survey to gather information about demographics, service needs, and experiences of individuals and families experiencing homelessness. The 2021 PiT Count in Belleville was conducted in accordance with the standards set out in *Everyone Counts: A guide to Point-in-Time Counts in Canada for participation in the Canada-wide Coordinated Point-in-Time Count*.

The 2021 PiT Count in Belleville was conducted over a period of 7 days, from April 20 to 26, with noon on April 20 to noon on April 21 serving as the 24-hour reference period—that is, PiT Count participants were screened for whether they were experiencing homelessness on the night of April 20. Extending the duration of the PiT Count enumeration and survey means more people are included. This improves result accuracy while still providing the 24-hour snapshot the PiT Count is designed to measure.

## The PiT Count measures several types of homelessness:



### **UNSHELTERED:**

People staying in public spaces (e.g., street, park, forest, bus shelter) or places not intended for human habitation (e.g., car, truck, abandoned building).

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### **EMERGENCY SHELTERED:**

People staying in emergency homeless shelters and domestic violence shelters.

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### **PROVISIONALLY ACCOMMODATED:**

People living in temporary accommodations with no guarantee of how long they may stay. In the 2021 PiT Count, this includes:

**a:** Transitional housing programs that provide non-permanent, supported housing to assist people to transition from unsheltered or emergency sheltered homelessness to permanent housing.

**b:** People living temporarily with others, with no guarantee they can continue to stay there, and without the immediate prospect of permanent housing (often referred to as hidden homelessness).



Unsheltered, emergency sheltered, and transitionally housed individuals are included in the Government of Canada's Reaching Home Coordinated Point-in-Time Count's core populations. Hidden homelessness is not included in the core populations, since the PiT Count method is not well suited to reaching people in these circumstances. However, hidden homelessness is estimated to account for up to 80% of all homelessness in Canada. It is therefore important for understanding homelessness at the community level, particularly in rural and small urban communities, such as Belleville, that have relatively smaller homeless-serving systems compared to larger cities.

## SURVEY LOCATIONS

Survey locations were set up at daily meal programs hosted by the Salvation Army (supper) and Bridge Street United Church (lunch) during meal service times on each day of the count. Surveys were also conducted at Gleaners' Food Bank and at the John Howard Society's Drop-In program. Surveys were conducted by PiT Count staff and a small number of volunteers to ensure consistency and reduce the chance of duplication.

A walking count was conducted between 6 pm and 10 pm on April 20. Surveys at emergency shelter and transitional home locations were conducted by staff of each organization. Administrative data was used to include residents in the PiT Count who declined to participate in the survey, or when the survey could not be administered. A phone number was set up specifically for the PiT Count to be able to include those who were experiencing homelessness but did not participate through in-person methods. A \$10 cash honorarium was provided to those who participated in the survey.

**Table 1 summarizes the survey locations and type of homelessness identified at each.**



**Table 1: Survey methods, locations, and type of homelessness.**

	UNSHELTERED	EMERGENCY SHELTERED	TRANSITIONALLY HOUSED	HIDDEN HOMELESS
Walking routes & known locations outreach	✓			
Bridge Street United Church Lunch Program	✓			✓
Salvation Army Supper Program	✓			✓
Gleaners' Food Bank	✓			✓
John Howard Society Drop-n Program	✓			✓
Grace Inn Shelter		✓		
Three Oaks Shelter and Services		✓	✓	
Enrichment Centre for Mental Health		✓	✓	
Youthab			✓	
PiT Count phone line				✓
Housing-related service providers	✓			✓

### IMPACT OF COVID-19

The uncertainty of pandemic conditions, responses, and changing restrictions to safeguard public health presented challenges for planning and implementing the 2021 PiT Count.

These challenges had the following effects:

- Fewer service-based survey locations were included, due to restricted access to social services, reducing the breadth of individual responses compared with previous counts. The low representation of youth in the data may be explained by this difference.

- The walking count and outreach methodology was unaffected by the lockdown, though fewer volunteers participated.
- Surveys at emergency shelters and transitional homes proceeded as usual, though there was reduced staff capacity and greater demand on staff time due to pandemic-related safety protocols.
- The addition of phone-based access to the survey helped mitigate reduced in-person access to survey locations, and uncover data on people experiencing hidden homelessness.
- Online training of those conducting the survey may have affected data quality for questions that are more difficult to administer. Instances where this may have occurred have been noted throughout this report.

## COMPARISON OF 2021 AND 2018 PIT COUNT RESULTS

Successive PiT Counts can provide an understanding of changes in homelessness in a community over time. The Reaching Home PiT Count Core Standards support consistent results that can be compared over time. Variations in how the method is applied, expected changes to community services over time, and changes in the number of people experiencing homelessness present challenges for comparing data from year to year. The COVID-19 pandemic created additional challenges, as described above.

How the count methodology is applied affects data reliability and comparability of PiT Count results in successive years. We are confident the 2021 PiT Count provides reliable and valid results for the PiT Count core populations: those who are experiencing unsheltered and emergency sheltered homelessness, and those in transitional housing.

Comparisons of 2018 and 2021 PiT Count results are provided for the core populations in the analysis below, where the comparisons provide valuable insights for understanding and responding to homelessness in Belleville. The 2018 Point-in-Time and Period Prevalence Count was conducted in several communities in Hastings County; only surveys conducted in the City of Belleville in 2018 are used for comparisons to 2021 PiT Count results.

The effects of the pandemic and the limitations of the PiT Count methodology mean the 2021 PiT Count results for hidden homelessness and youth homelessness should be interpreted with caution, particularly in comparison to the previous count.

Explanatory notes urging caution when interpreting certain sections of the data are included in the presentation of the report, where applicable. Further information about the effects of COVID-19 on the PiT Count can be found in Appendix A.

# RESULTS OF THE 2021 PiT COUNT

## NUMBER OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

A minimum of 180 people were experiencing homelessness in Belleville during the 2021 Point-in-Time Count. A total of 153 individuals were surveyed, including 5 families who identified 10 dependent children, collectively. There were 17 individuals staying in emergency shelters (3) and transitional homes (14) who were not surveyed, and were identified using administrative data.

**Figure 1. Total enumeration by type of homelessness, Belleville 2021.**



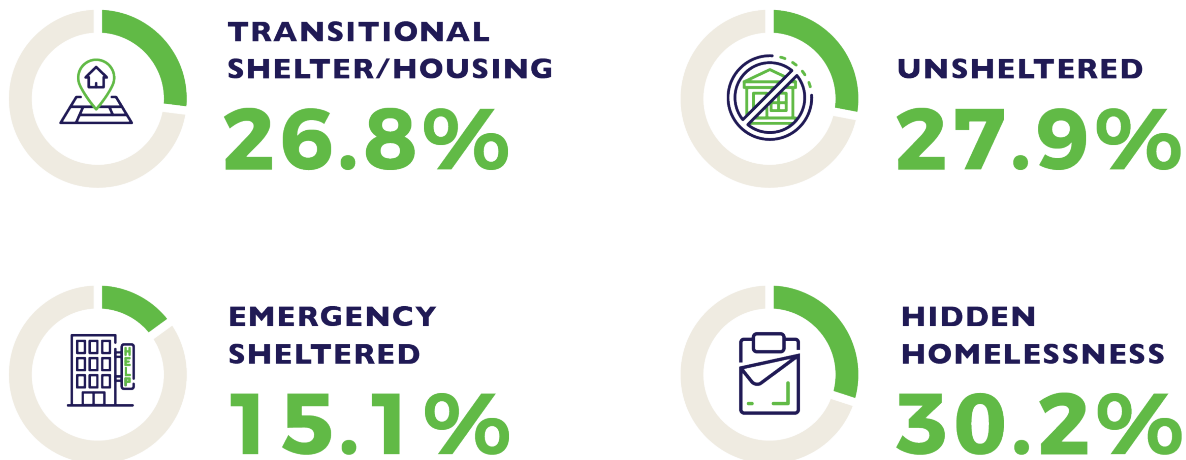
## TYPE OF HOMELESSNESS

Fifty people (28%) were unsheltered, staying in outdoor public spaces or sheltered places not intended for human occupation (e.g., vehicles, garages, abandoned buildings, etc.). Twenty-seven people (15%) were staying in emergency shelters or temporarily in hotels/motels in lieu of shelter beds.

More than half those identified as experiencing homelessness were provisionally accommodated: 48 (27%) were in transitional housing programs and 54 (30%) reported staying with others, a situation commonly referred to as hidden homelessness.

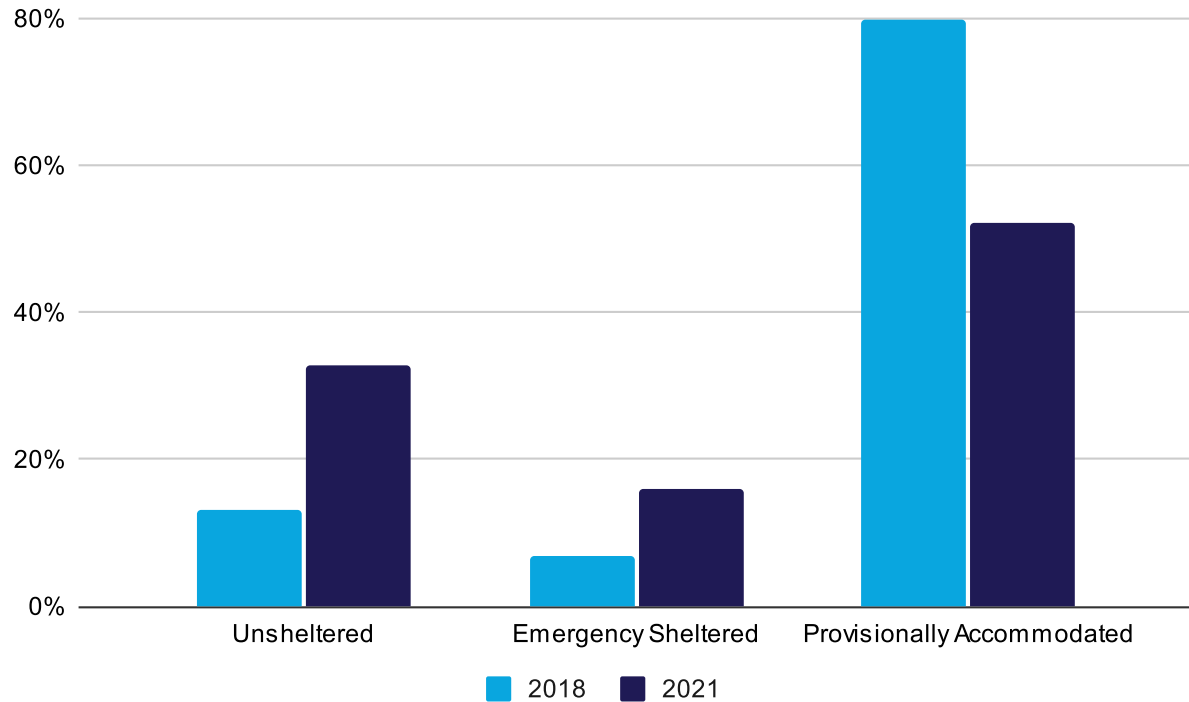
One person who was in a jail/remand centre on the first night of the count was discharged into homelessness in Belleville the following day, within the period of the Point-in-Time Count.

**Figure 2. Type of Homelessness, Belleville 2021.**



The number of people experiencing unsheltered and emergency sheltered homelessness in Belleville increased substantially from 2018 to 2021 (Figure 2). The observed increase in unsheltered homelessness may represent a proportionate increase in homelessness in the community, though this year’s methodological differences may have affected the results. The increase in emergency sheltered homelessness can be attributed to Grace Inn Shelter opening in 2019, resulting in a net increase in shelter beds. With no corresponding decrease in unsheltered homelessness, this still represents increased need in the community.

**Figure 3: Types of Homelessness, Belleville 2018 & 2021.**



### *Hidden Homelessness*

Hidden homelessness is estimated to account for up to 80% of all homelessness in Canada, especially in rural and small urban communities, and is therefore an important part of understanding and addressing homelessness in Belleville. The PiT Count methodology is not designed to accurately enumerate hidden homelessness. Thus, both the 2018 and 2021 PiT Count results are expected to represent a significant undercount of those experiencing hidden homelessness in Belleville. The 2021 PiT Count was also affected by the challenges of conducting the PiT Count during a lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Accordingly, the lower number of people experiencing provisionally accommodated homelessness in 2021 compared to 2018 (Figure 3) is likely a result of methodological limitations rather than a real decrease in the number of people experiencing hidden homelessness. Nevertheless, the PiT Count provides useful information about the experiences and service needs of a segment of the hidden homeless population.

## LENGTH OF TIME EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Figure 4 shows the length of time respondents had experienced homelessness in the previous 12 months. More than two-thirds of respondents (68%, n=104) had experienced homelessness for more than 6 months in the previous year. Nearly half of all respondents (47%, n=72) reported experiencing homelessness all year, and another 22% (n=32) for 6-11 months. Since PiT Counts are conducted over a brief period of time, they are more likely to identify those experiencing homelessness for longer periods of time during the year.

**Those experiencing chronic homelessness often have other concurrent needs that make it harder to find and maintain housing, which require support from multiple health and social services.**

**Figure 4. Duration of time spent homeless in the previous 12 months, Belleville 2021.**

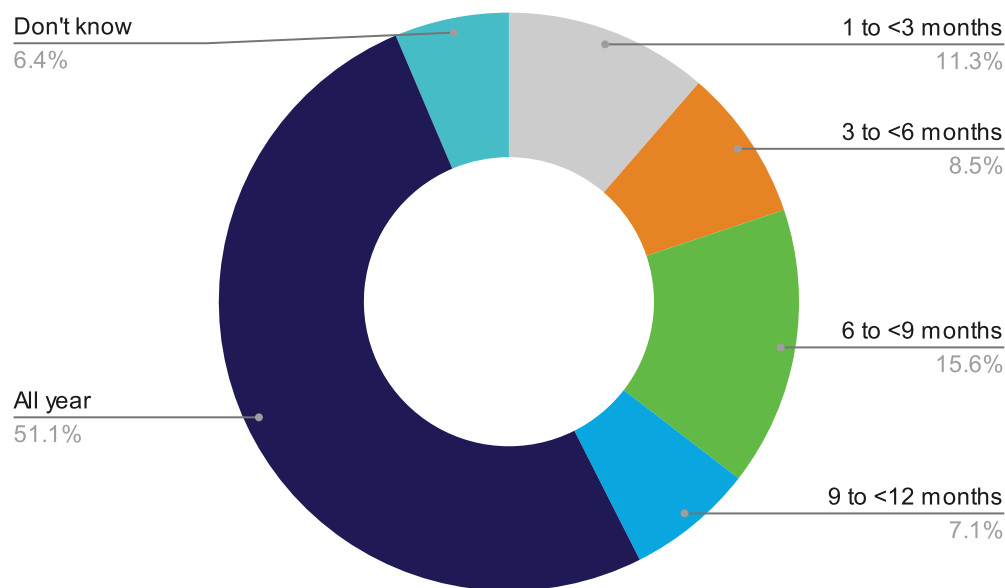
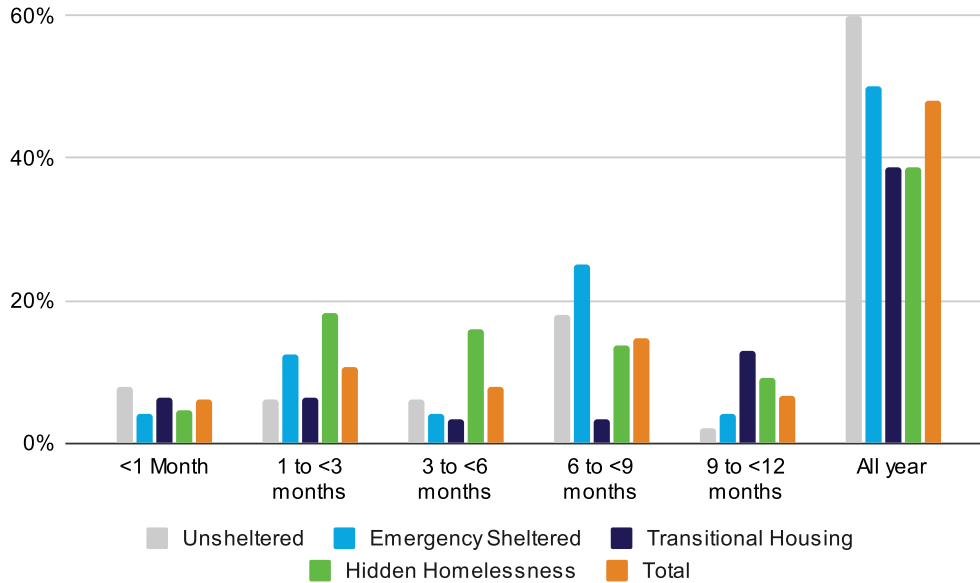


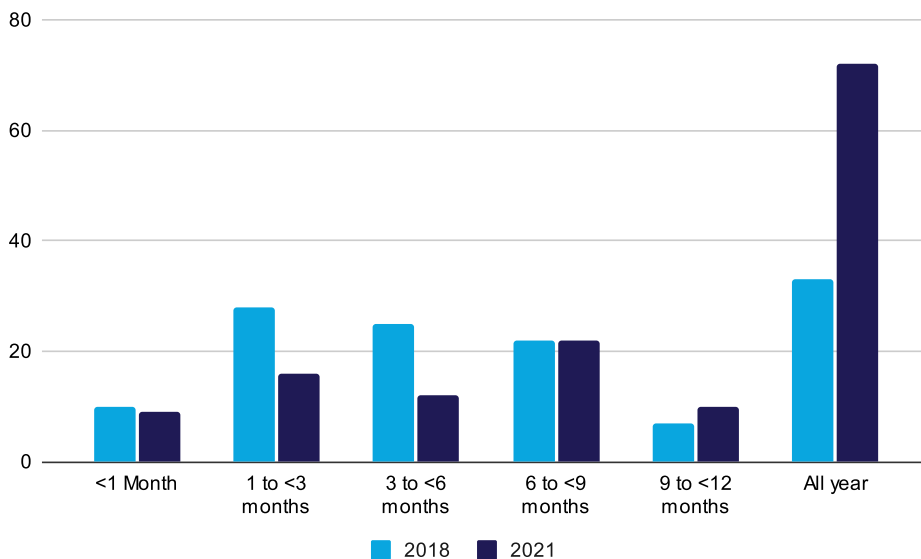
Figure 4 shows that 60% (n=30) of those experiencing unsheltered homelessness (n=50), had been homeless for 12 months or more. Similarly, 50% of those currently in emergency shelters (n=24) had been homeless for 12 months or more.

**Figure 5. Length of time spent homeless in the previous 12 months and Type of Homelessness, Belleville 2021.**



The number of PiT Count respondents who were experiencing homelessness in Belleville for six months or more increased substantially from 62 in 2018 to 104 in 2021 (Figure 6); 92% of this increase is attributed to the number of people who had been homeless all year. The 2021 PiT Count results therefore show there was more homelessness in Belleville in 2021 compared to 2018, and of longer duration.

**Figure 6. Duration of time spent homeless in the past 12 months, Belleville 2018 & 2021.**





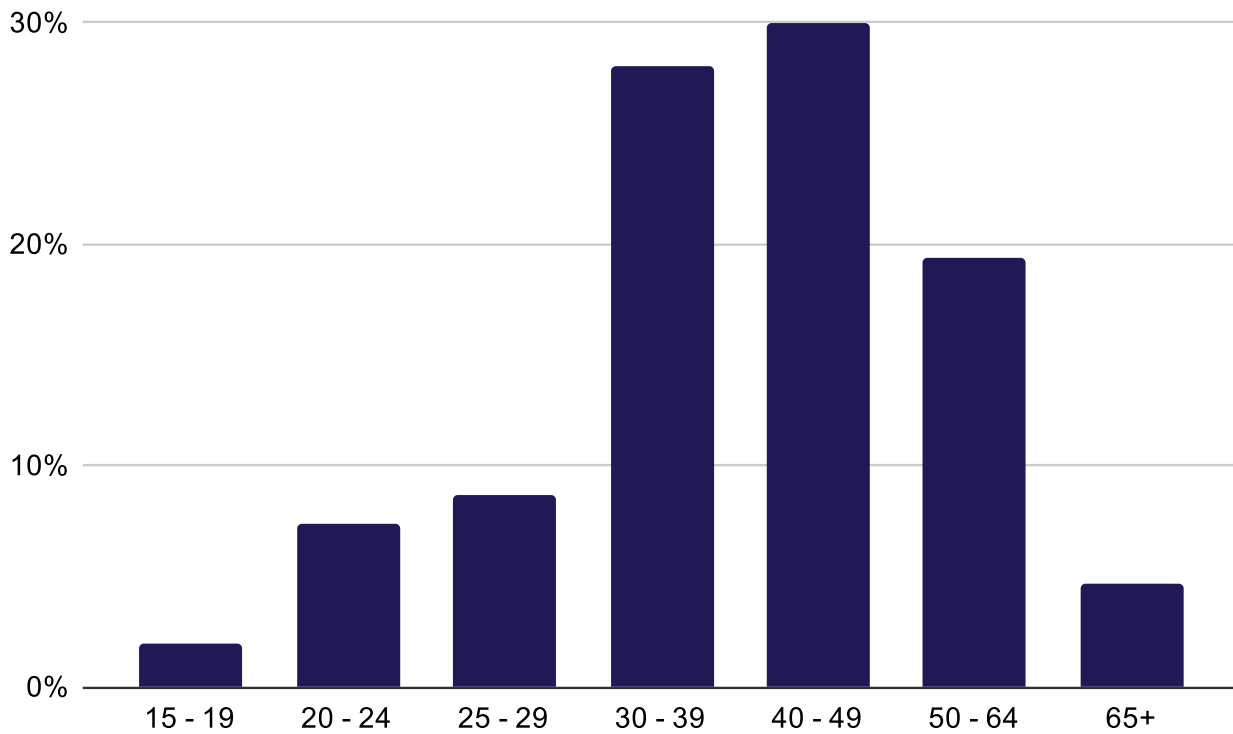
## DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

### AGE

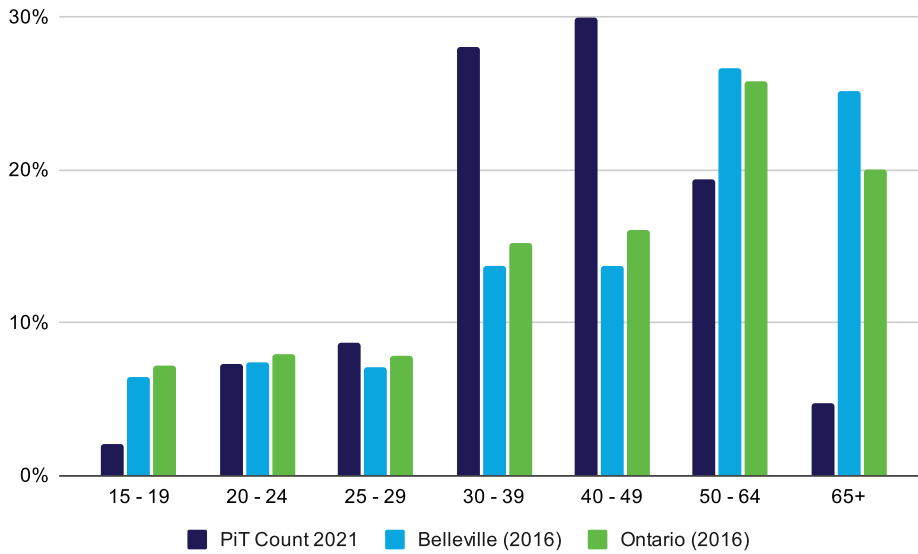
The age of respondents ranged from 17 to 84 years, with both an average and median age of 41 years (Figure 7). Adults aged 30-39 and 40-49 made up the largest age groups of those experiencing homelessness, together comprising more than half (56%) of all respondents. These age groups are significantly overrepresented compared to the general population of Belleville (Figure 7).

Youth (age 15-24) are almost certainly underrepresented in the 2021 PiT Count, due to limitations of the PiT Count methodology associated with the pandemic. However, they are a key demographic to consider in a community response to homelessness, based on the age at first experience of homelessness, presented below.

**Figure 7: Age Groups, Belleville 2021.**



**Figure 8: Age distribution of PiT Count (2021), City of Belleville (2016), and Ontario (2016) populations**



The 2021 PiT Count results are similar to the 2018 enumeration of those experiencing homelessness in Belleville: adults aged 30-49 continue to be the highest percentage of those experiencing homelessness. The number of adults aged 40-49 increased sharply from 15% of respondents in 2018 (n=20) to 30% of respondents in 2021 (n=45). The inverse was true for adults aged 50-64, representing 31% of respondents in 2018 (n=43) and 19% of respondents in 2021 (n=29). Slight decreases were observed in the number of youth (aged 15-24), though this is likely due to pandemic-associated methodological limitations in 2021.

**Figure 9: Age groups, Belleville 2018 & 2021.**

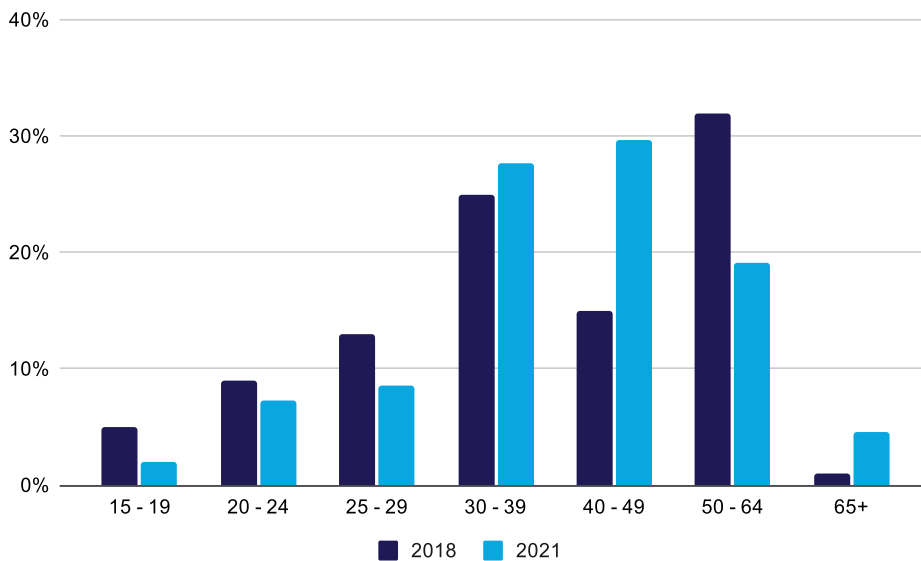


Table 2 shows the type of homelessness experienced in each age category, which may be helpful in prioritizing specific populations for service.

**Table 2: Age Groups and Location, Belleville 2021.**

Age Group	Unsheltered	Emergency Sheltered	Transitionally Housed	Hidden Homeless	Jail, Prison, Remand Centre	Total
15 - 19	0	0	3	0	0	3
20 - 24	0	0	9	2	0	11
25 - 29	7	2	3	1	0	13
30 - 39	21	2	4	14	1	42
40 - 49	15	9	5	16	0	45
50 - 64	5	8	5	11	0	29
65+	1	1	3	2	0	7
Don't know / Decline / Blank	1	2	0	0	0	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>153</b>

### First Experience of Homelessness

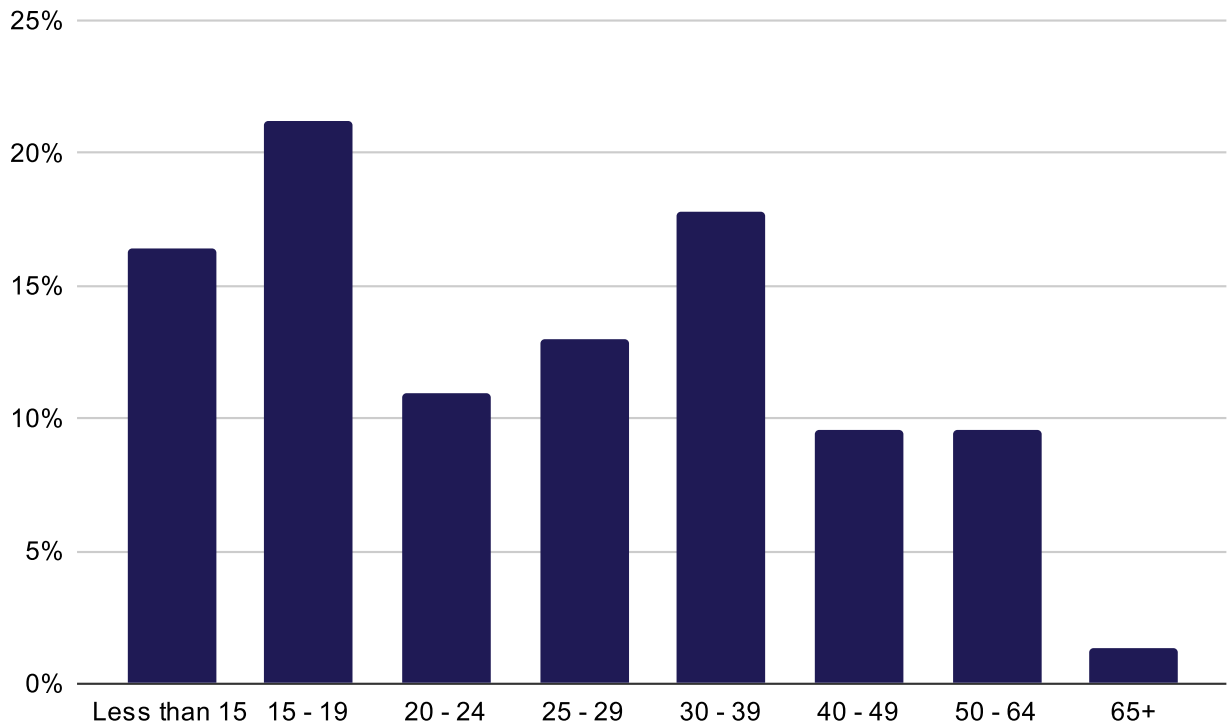
Nearly half of all respondents (48%) first experienced homelessness as children or youth (aged 0-24), with three-quarters of these (36% of all respondents) first experiencing homelessness as teens or pre-teens (Figure 10). This percentage may be understated, due to the presumed undersampling of youth experiencing homelessness in the 2021 PiT Count.

These results are consistent with results from the 2018 enumeration and national Point-in-Time Count statistics.

## WHY DOES IT MATTER?

**Supporting youth who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness can help them to develop the necessary skills and relationships to prevent homelessness later in life. These results therefore illustrate the importance of targeting prevention and early intervention activities to mitigate youth homelessness as part of a community strategy to prevent and end homelessness.**

**Figure 10. Age at first experience of homelessness, Belleville 2021.**



## GENDER IDENTITY AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Gender identity is defined as a person's subjective experience of their own gender (an internal feeling of where they identify along the gender spectrum), while sexual orientation refers to the way a person identifies to whom they are sexually and/or romantically attracted.

Of the 2021 respondents, 69% identified as male, 29% identified as female, and 3% identified as gender diverse. Only two people did not provide a response. A total of 90% of respondents identified as heterosexual or straight, 8% identified as non-heterosexual, and 3% declined to answer. These results are consistent with the 2018 homeless enumeration results in Belleville, and with national Point-in-Time Count statistics.

Table 3: Gender Identity, Belleville 2021.

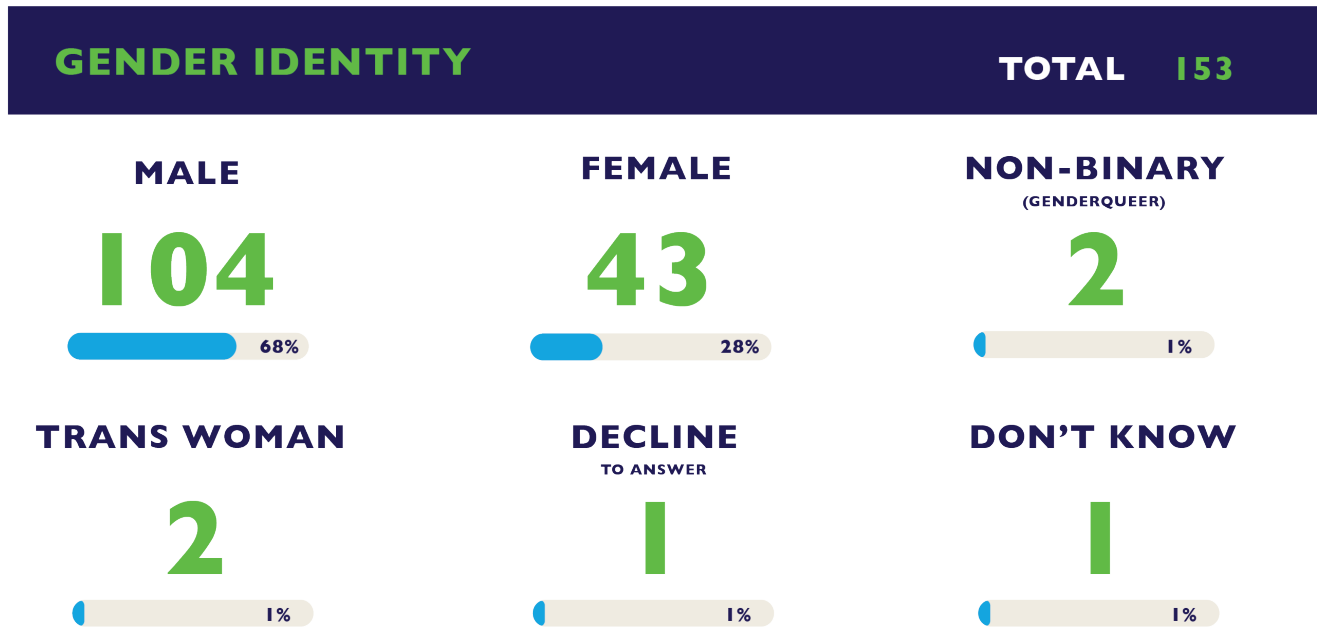
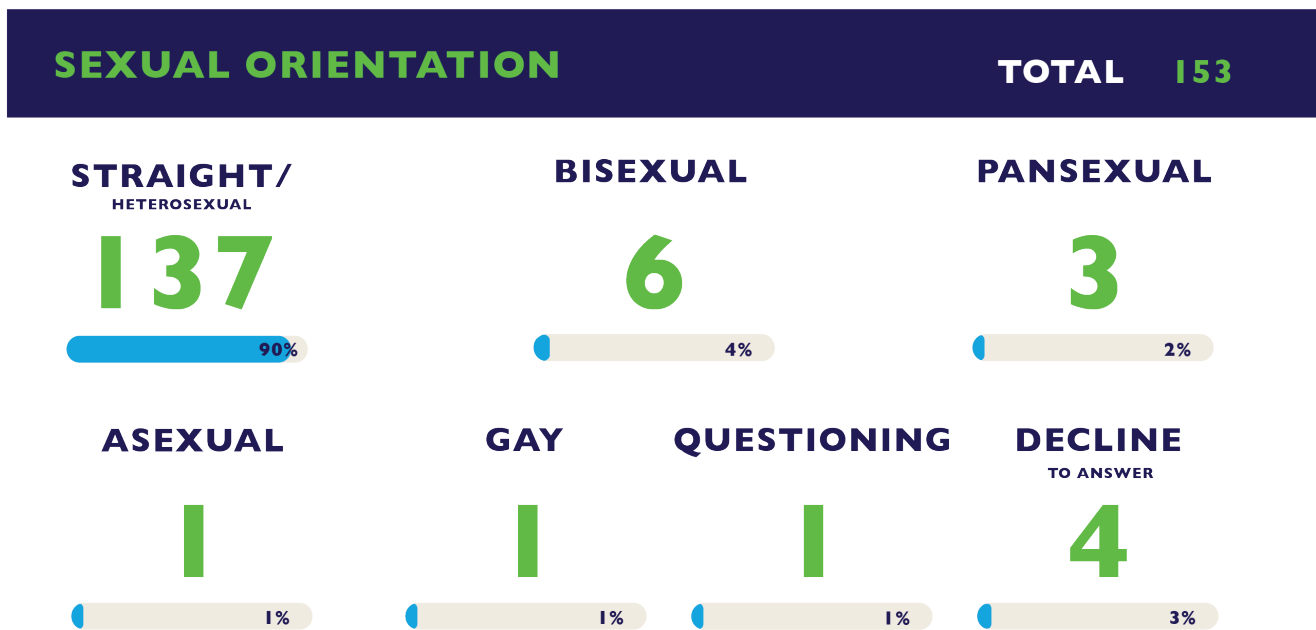


Table 4: Sexual Orientation, Belleville 2021.





## WHY DOES IT MATTER?

**Understanding gender identity and sexual orientation in the population experiencing homelessness provides insights into different needs in our community, and the different ways people experience homelessness.**

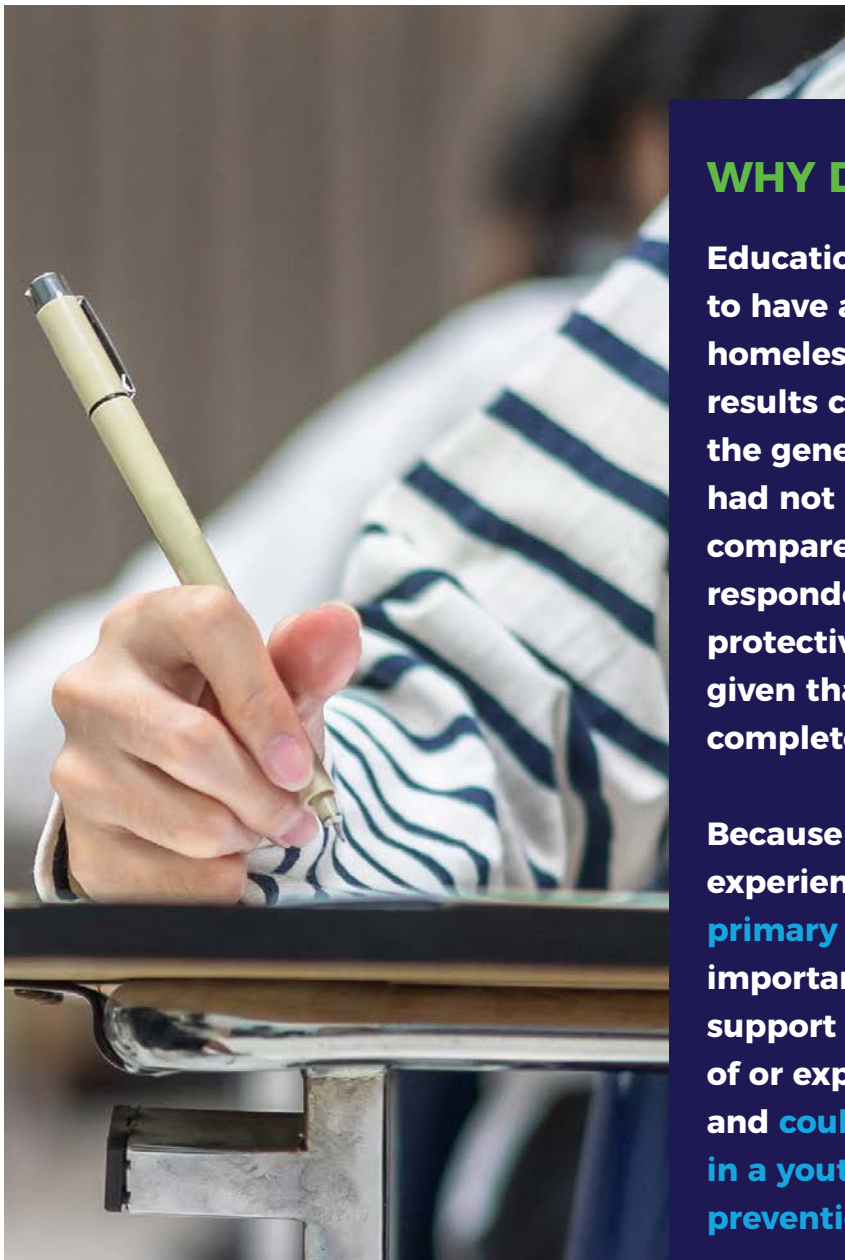
**For example, women often have different pathways into homelessness, and are more vulnerable to mistreatment and exploitation when experiencing homelessness as compared to men. Research suggests women are less likely to access traditional homeless-specific services, relying instead on informal supports and relational strategies to access housing <sup>1</sup>.**

**LGBTQ2S youth are more likely to experience homelessness due to discrimination and/or family breakdown. **People who identify as LGBTQ2S, regardless of age, are overrepresented in the homeless population, and are at increased risk of discrimination and adverse experiences when homeless.****

**Information about gender identity and sexual orientation in those experiencing homelessness in Belleville underscores the need for equitable and appropriate services that address these specific causes and experiences of homelessness <sup>2</sup>.**

## LEVEL OF EDUCATION

Nearly one-third of respondents (31%) reported they had not completed high school. Another third (34%) reported completing high school or an equivalent, with the remaining third (33%) reporting some post-secondary education or being post-secondary graduates.

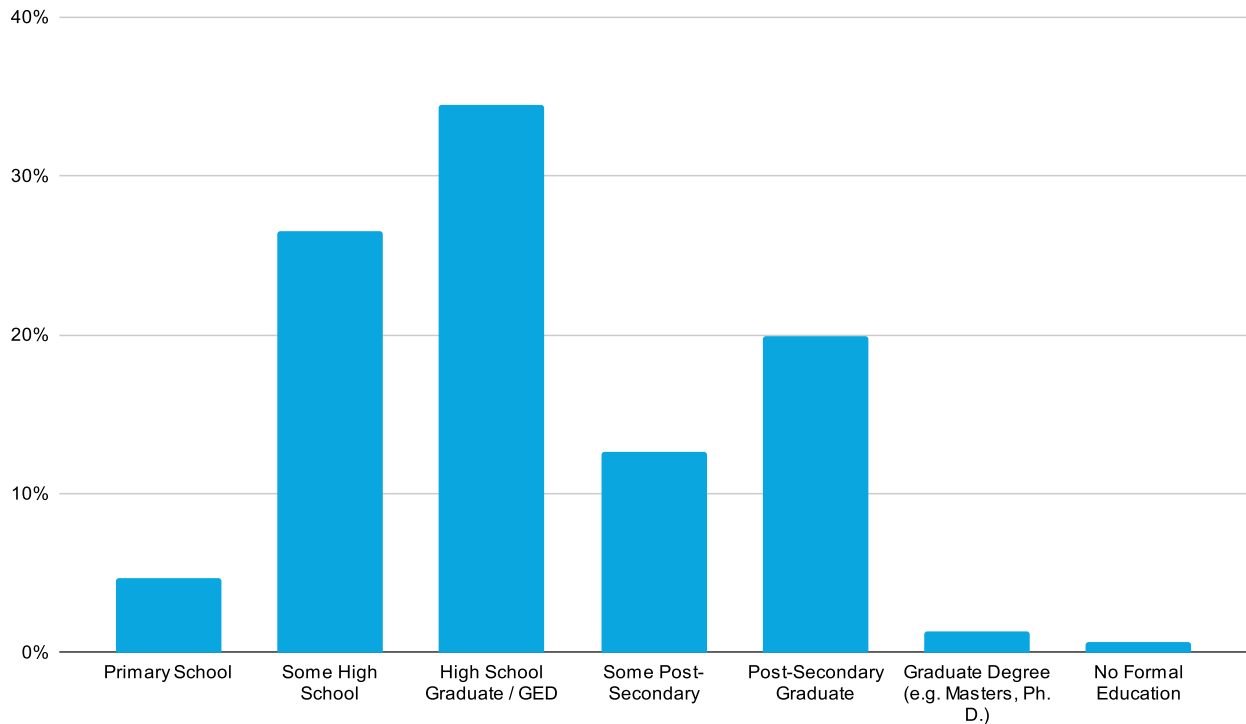


### WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Educational attainment is expected to have a protective effect against homelessness. While the PiT Count results confirm this—only 13% of the general population in Belleville had not completed high school, compared to 31% of PiT Count respondents—they also show this protective effect is not absolute, given that 67% of respondents had completed high school.

Because of the age of first experience of homelessness, **primary and secondary schools** are important settings to identify and support students who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness, and **could become key stakeholders in a youth-focused homelessness prevention strategy.**

**Figure 11. Highest level of education completed, Belleville 2021.**



## SOURCES OF INCOME

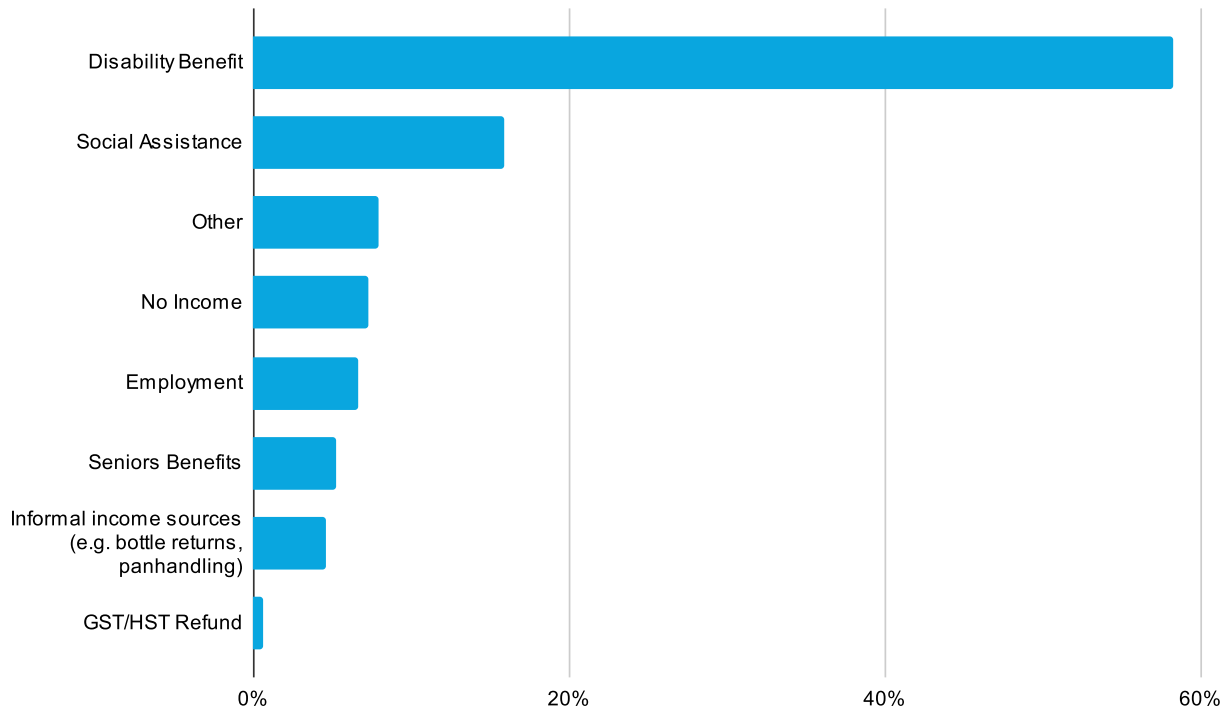
The Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) was the most common source of income (58%, n=88), followed by social assistance through Ontario Works (16%, n=24). Other sources of income such as employment, seniors benefits, informal income, GST/HST refunds, and other, accounted for 24% of responses to this question. Of note, 14% (n=20) of all respondents identified more than one source of income.

## WHY DOES IT MATTER?

**The high proportion of individuals who rely on social assistance (Ontario Works and ODSP) as their primary source of income in both the 2018 and 2021 PiT Counts illustrates that current social assistance amounts are not sufficient to support exits from homelessness.**



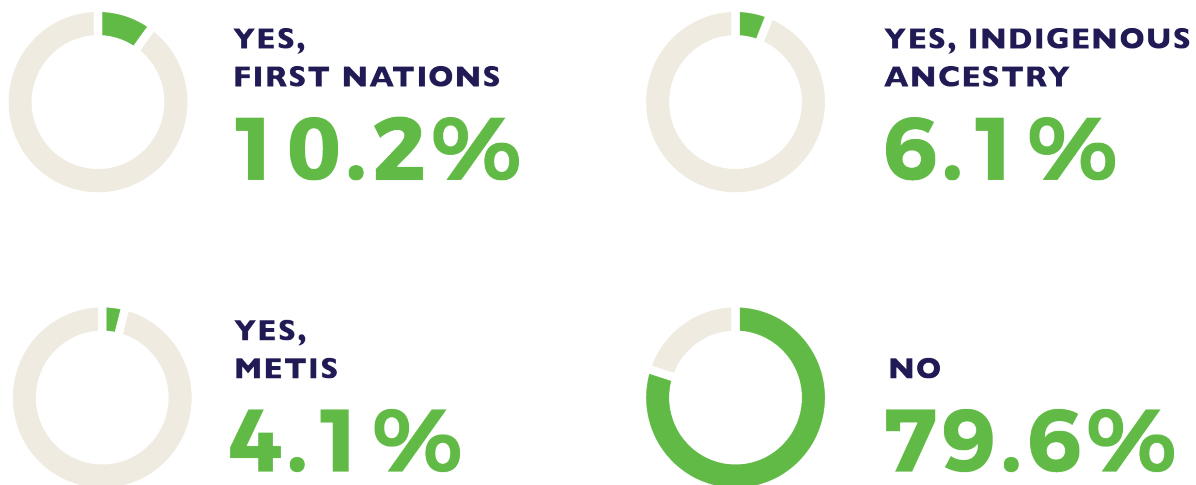
**Figure 12. Sources of income, Belleville 2021.**



### INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

One-fifth (20%) of respondents identified as Indigenous, which includes First Nations (10%) and Métis (4%) people, and those who identify as having Indigenous ancestry (6%).

**Figure 13. Indigenous Identity, Belleville 2021.**



Respondents' answers identifying their community of origin (Table 5) illustrate the different ways Indigenous people identify where they are from or their original home location. The Definition of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada<sup>3</sup> explains that being house-less or homeless can mean different things to Indigenous people who are displaced from their home communities.

**Table 5. Indigenous Community, Belleville 2021.**

Indigenous Community From	Count	
Algonquin	1	
Blackfeet	1	
Blackfoot	1	
Cree	2	
Mohawk	5	
Métis	1	
Mohawk First Nation (Tyendinaga)	1	
Ojibway	2	
Stoney Creek	1	
Tyendinaga	5	
Tyendinaga Mohawk	1	
Total	21	

The 2021 PiT Count data are consistent with 2018 PiT Count results in identifying a large overrepresentation of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness in Belleville: 20% of 2021 PiT Count survey respondents identify as Indigenous compared to 5% of the population of the City of Belleville who self-identified as Indigenous in the 2016 Census (Figure 14).

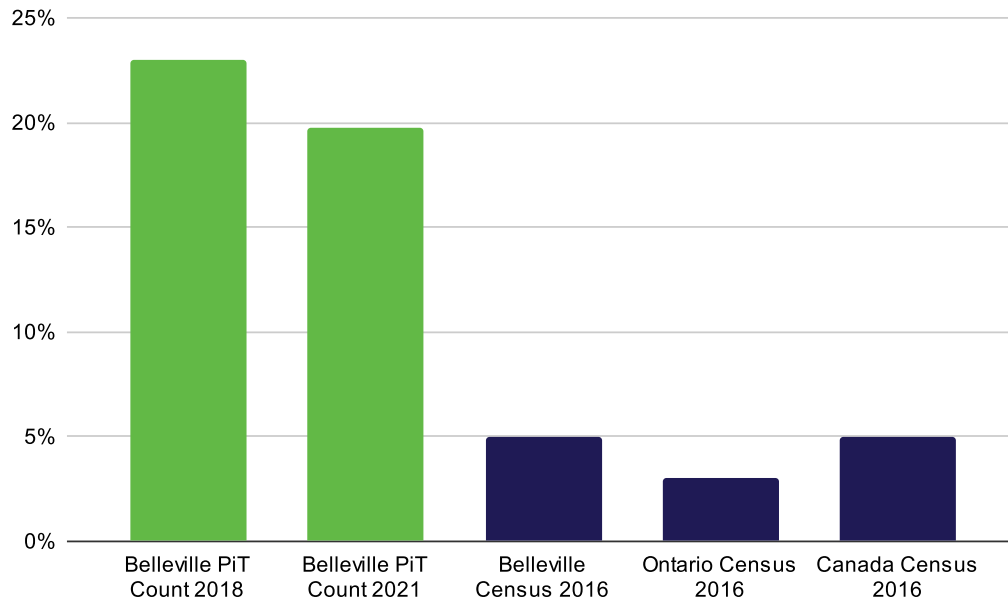
## WHY DOES IT MATTER?

**Collaborative partnerships are needed to ensure culturally appropriate ways to meet the needs of Indigenous people. Note also that Indigenous people in Belleville are not only from nearby Indigenous communities or the Huron-Wendat, Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Peoples whose traditional territories overlap with the colonial boundaries of Hastings County.**

**Ensuring that programs and services are informed by cultural protocols and practices of the traditional land keepers and the diverse Indigenous peoples living in Belleville can be a challenge that requires understanding what it means to self-identify a certain way.**

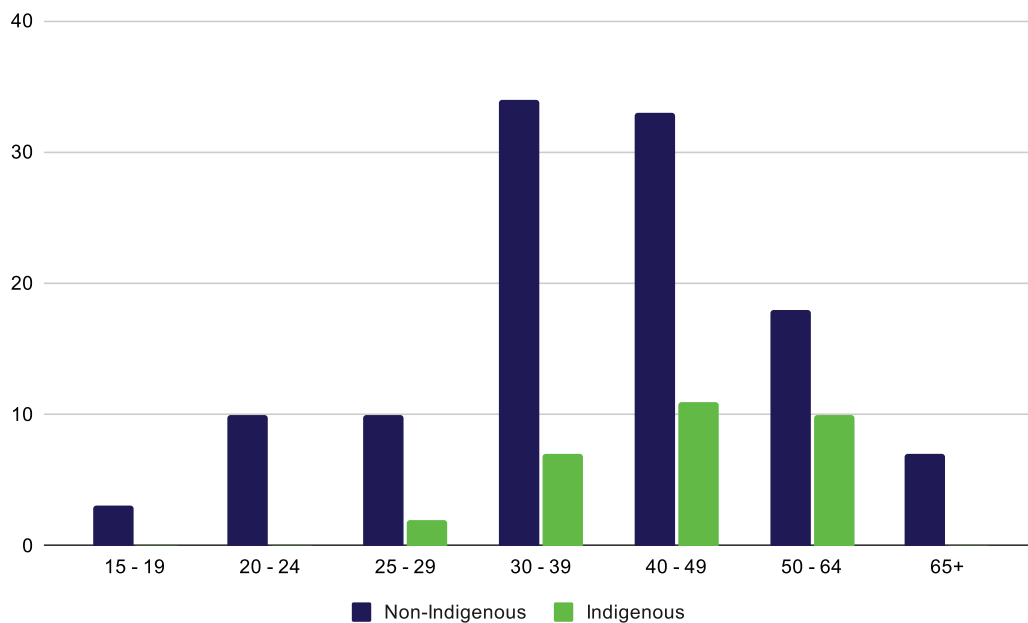
**It is important to consider the ongoing legacy of colonialism and the impact of intergenerational trauma on Indigenous communities when providing resources, and to understand why some Indigenous people may feel cautious when engaging with institutions.**

**Figure 14: Self-reported Indigenous identity, Belleville PiT Counts (2018 & 2021), and Census (2016).**



The majority (70%, n=21) of respondents who identified as Indigenous (inclusive of ancestry) in the 2021 PiT Count were between the ages of 40 and 64, somewhat older than non-Indigenous respondents.

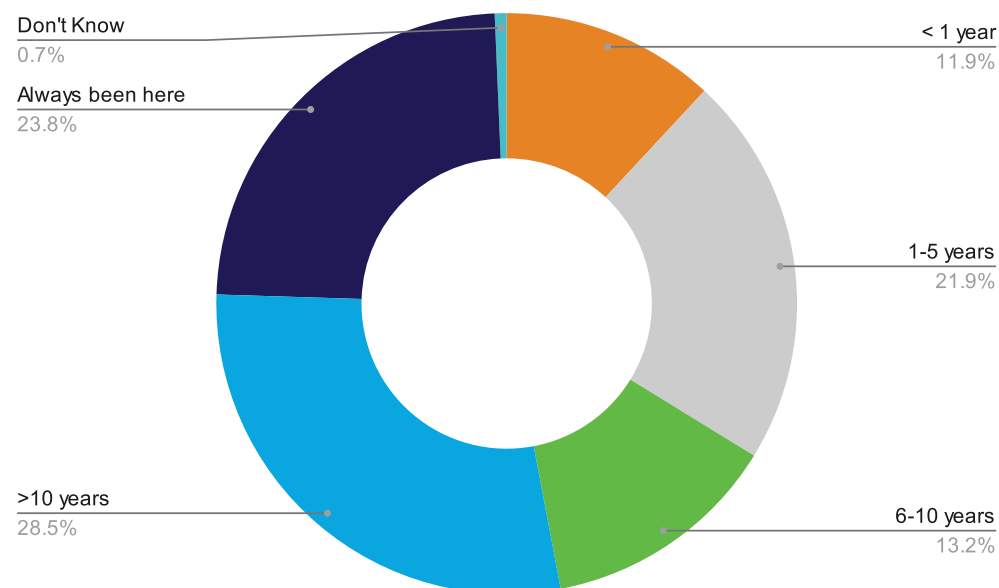
**Figure 15: Indigenous Identity and Age, Belleville 2021.**



## LENGTH OF TIME IN BELLEVILLE

Most respondents had lived in Belleville for a long time: 24% (n=36) reported they had always lived in Belleville, 29% (n=43) for 10 years or longer, 13% (n=20) for 6-10 years, and 22% for 1-5 years. Only 12% (n=18) had lived in Belleville for less than a year.

**Figure 16. Length of time in Belleville, Belleville 2021.**



Of the 51 respondents who had been in Belleville for 5 years or less, 20 (39%) had come from other communities in Hastings County, and 11 (22%) had come from adjacent municipalities. The remaining 20 came from other communities in Ontario, other provinces, or other countries.

**Table 6. Community of origin before coming to Belleville, Belleville 2021.**

Community of origin	Duration in Belleville		Count	Percentage
	<1 year	1-5 years		
Hastings County	5	15	20	39%
Lennox and Addington County	1	2	3	6%
Northumberland County	1	2	3	6%
Prince Edward County	1	4	5	10%
Other communities in Ontario	9	6	15	29%
Other province	1	3	4	8%
Other country	0	1	1	2%
Total	18	33	51	100%

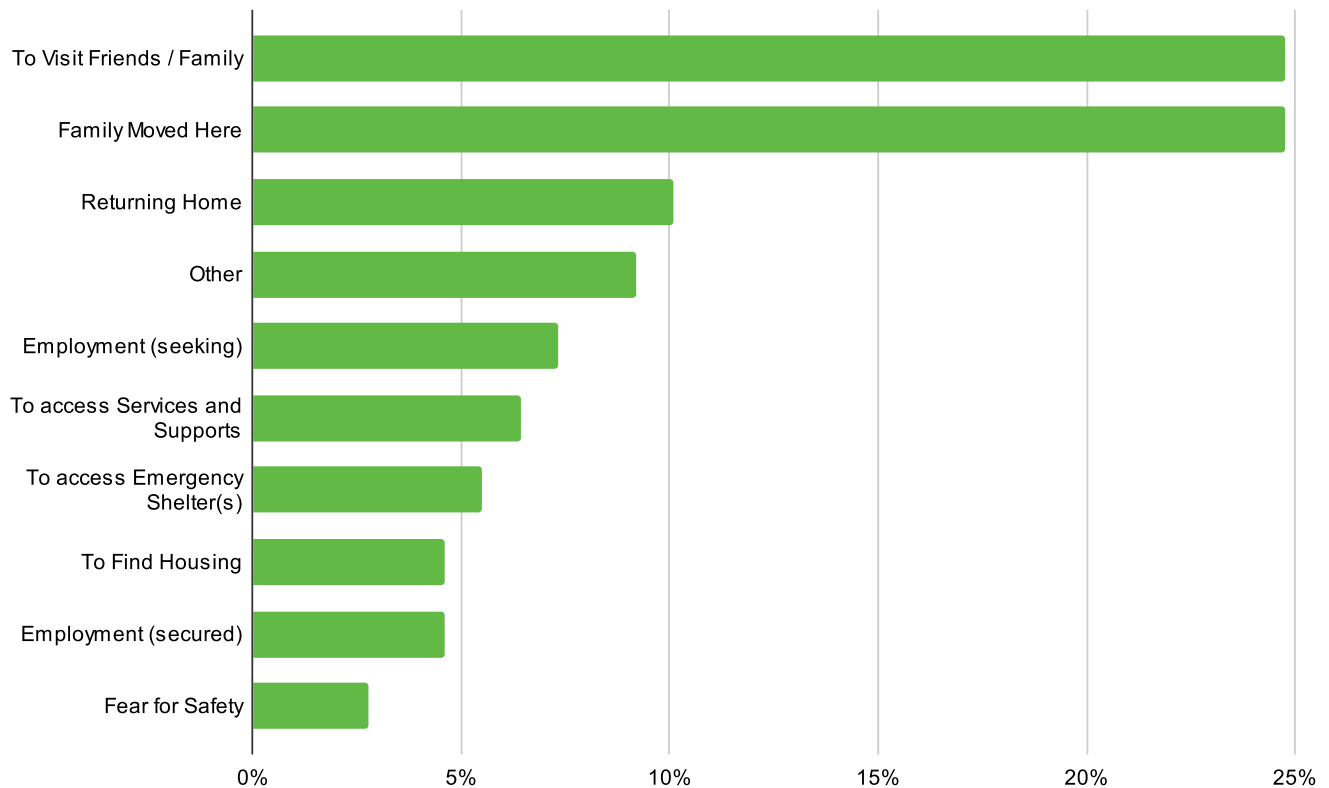
### Reasons for Coming to Belleville

The most common reasons respondents gave for coming to Belleville, regardless of the how long they had lived there, were to visit or be near friends or family (25%, n=27), because family had moved to Belleville (25%, n=27), and to return home (10%, n=11).

Relatively few respondents reported coming to Belleville to seek social services or to access emergency shelters. It is common for people in communities in Hastings County and the Quinte region to come to Belleville to seek services and support that may not be available in smaller communities, since Belleville serves as a hub for social services in the region.

Only 9% of respondents cited “other” reasons for coming to Belleville. Some of the most common “other” responses included a “fresh start,” and a “change of scene.”

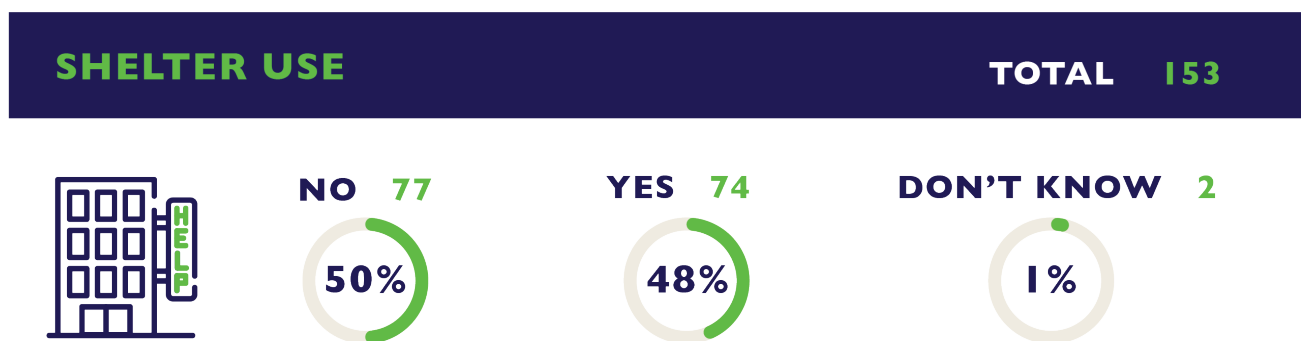
**Figure 17. Reasons for coming to Belleville, Belleville 2021.**



## SHELTER USE

Half of the respondents (49%) said they had used an emergency homeless shelter within the past year, while half (51%) said they had not. This included shelter stays in any community in the past year, not just in Belleville. Sixty respondents who had not stayed at a homeless shelter provided a variety of reasons why they had not, including being turned away, staying instead with family or friends, or not wanting to stay in a shelter. Each of these reasons was given by 12 or fewer respondents (i.e., less than 8% of all respondents).

**Table 7. Shelter Use, Belleville 2021.**



## RACIALIZED IDENTITY

Survey respondents were asked whether they identified with a particular racialized identity from a list provided. Most of those who provided a response identified as white (96%, n=103). One person for each of the following groups identified as Asian-South/Indo-Caribbean, Asian-West, Black Canadian/American, or Black-African, for a total of four people.

### WHY DOES IT MATTER?

**Discrimination and racism in the community, in the housing continuum, in the labour market and in social and health service provision and other areas are known causes of housing instability and homelessness. The 2020/2021 Coordinated PiT Count marks the first year the Government of Canada’s Reaching Home mandated the question as part of the common PiT Count survey used in all Designated Communities across Canada. Collecting race-based data among people experiencing homelessness helps promote responses to homelessness that are equitable and meet the diverse needs of individuals.**

**Racialized identity and ethnicity/ancestry are different, and are interpreted in different ways by individuals. Note that this question was structured for respondents to identify Indigenous identity separately from racialized identity, and so this information is also reported separately.**

**Table 8. Racialized Identity, Belleville 2021.**

Racial Identity	Count	Percentage
White	103	96%
Asian-South/Indo-Caribbean (e.g., Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Indo-Guyanese)	1	1%
Asian-West (e.g., Iranian, Afghan)	1	1%
Black-Canadian/American	1	1%
Black-African (e.g., Ghanaian, Ethiopian, Nigerian)	1	1%
Total	107	100%

## IMMIGRANTS, REFUGEES AND NEWCOMERS

Fewer than 5 individuals in Belleville were immigrants living in Canada for more than 5 years; no other respondents indicated they were immigrants, refugees, or newcomers.

Belleville's immigrant population was reported to be about 8% in the 2016 Census; only 2% of the population were recent immigrants.



### WHY DOES IT MATTER?

**This suggests the 2021 PiT Count results had either an underrepresentation of immigrants among people experiencing homelessness, or immigrants experiencing homelessness were not identified by the 2021 PiT Count methodology.**

**Future PiT Counts should ensure the survey methodology is appropriate to reach immigrant, refugee, and newcomer populations, to ensure accurate results.**



## VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

Twelve respondents identified having served in the Canadian military or RCMP, a notable increase from 2018, with only 1 respondent so identifying. Pandemic-related disruptions to the PiT Count implementation, including volunteer training, may have influenced these results. It is unclear if this finding is accurate, but it is considered likely that confusion over the wording of the question created an error in the results. Future PiT Counts will help to clarify this.

### WHY DOES IT MATTER?

**Those who have served in the military or RCMP may be entitled to specific benefits that could support housing and basic needs. PiT Counts offer an important snapshot of the number of veterans experiencing homelessness, so that targeted efforts can connect these individuals to purpose-built supports.**

## FOSTER CARE AND YOUTH GROUP HOME EXPERIENCE

About 21% of respondents (n=32) reported having experience in the foster care system and/or a youth group home. Pathways into the child welfare system and pathways into homelessness share some of the same risk factors, such as difficulties at home and/or mental health issues.

### WHY DOES IT MATTER?

**Evidence shows that youth with foster care or group home experience have a higher risk of homelessness than youth without such experience<sup>4</sup>. Youth with foster care or group home experience are therefore a key target population to consider for housing resources and outreach programs that support at-risk populations. The Coordinated PiT Count also provides data to better understand, at a national level, the relationship between homelessness and previous foster care or youth group home experience.**

## EXPERIENCES OF HOMELESSNESS

### *Reasons for Most Recent Housing Loss and Barriers to Housing*

Respondents were asked to identify the cause(s) of their recent loss of housing. Response options were coded as a) housing and financial issues, b) interpersonal and family issues, and c) health or corrections. Multiple reasons for housing loss were permitted, though response options were not provided.

Not having enough income for housing was the most commonly identified reason for housing loss (Figure 18), identified by 26% (n=39) of all respondents (n=148). Conflict with various parties was the next most common reason, identified by 10-18% of respondents. All other reasons for housing loss were identified by less than 10% of respondents.

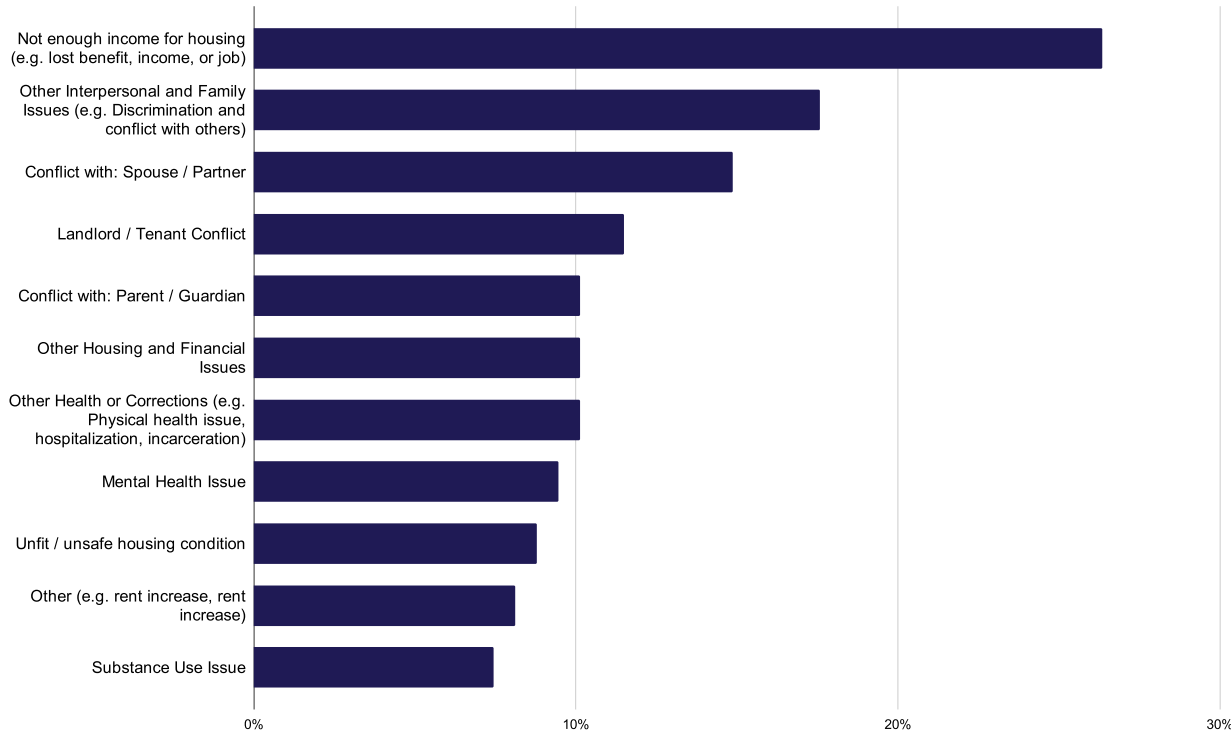
Similarly, “rents too high” (85% of respondents, n=116) was the most commonly identified barrier to finding housing (Figure 19), followed closely by “low income” reported by 74% (n=102) of all respondents (n=137). These findings are consistent with the results of the 2018 homeless enumeration, where insufficient income and lack of affordable housing were identified as the most common reasons for homelessness and barriers to finding housing, followed by various individual reasons and challenges.

## WHY DOES IT MATTER?

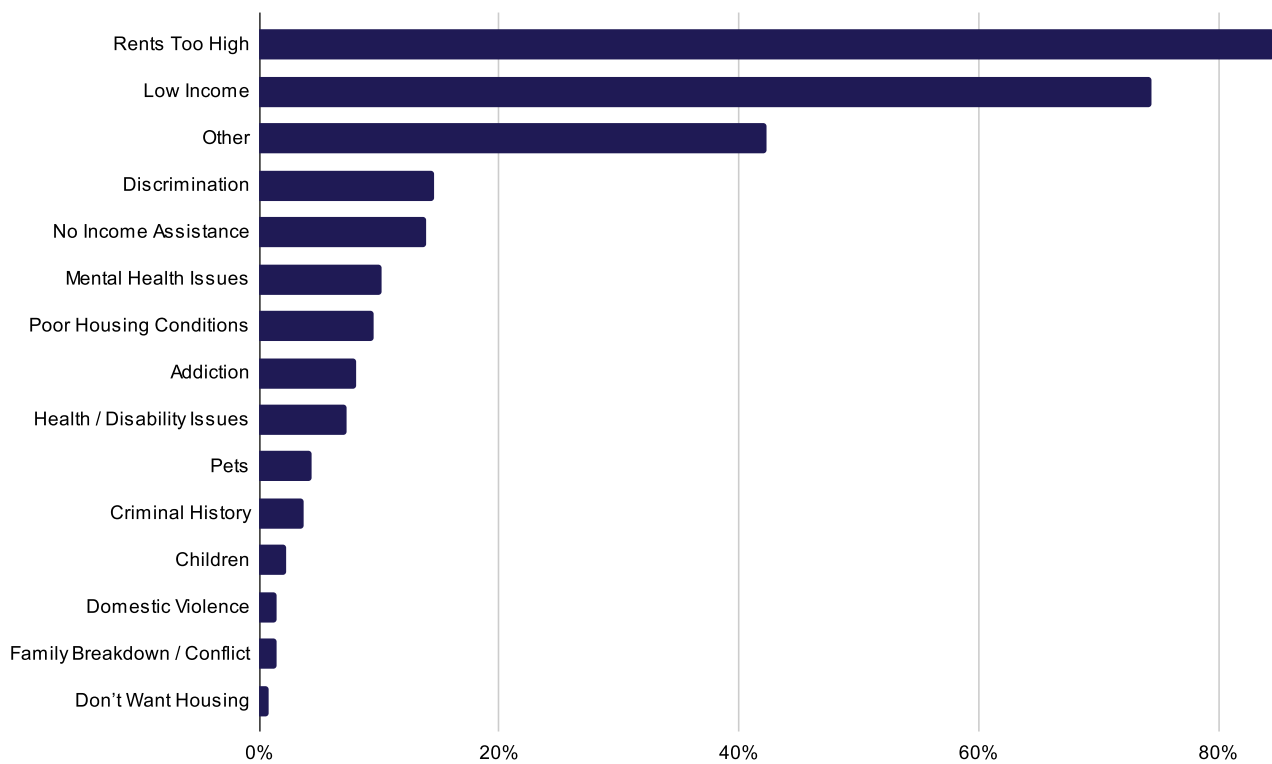
**Homelessness is the result of complex interactions between individual factors in the context of structural factors. Individual factors (e.g., personal crises, interpersonal conflict, education and work experience, health issues, history of trauma) make each person’s pathway into and out of homelessness unique, and it is important to understand and respond appropriately to each person’s experience of homelessness.**

**Structural factors (e.g., availability of housing that is affordable, job market trends, poverty, social assistance amounts, racialized discrimination) are beyond a person’s control, yet they change the impact of individual factors and can either help or restrict opportunities to address homelessness by both individuals and communities. Community efforts to prevent and end homelessness must simultaneously address both individual and structural factors to succeed.**

**Figure 18. Reasons for most recent homelessness/housing loss, Belleville 2021.**



**Figure 19. Challenges when trying to find housing, Belleville 2021.**



## DISCRIMINATION AND STIGMA

Discrimination and being treated differently when looking for housing was identified by a number of respondents as an experience of the stigma associated with homelessness, poverty, or mental health or addiction issues. This has been an important theme in past community reports<sup>5</sup>. Other forms of discrimination may be based on racial identity, gender, or sexuality.

Numerous respondents reiterated the impact that stigma and negative stereotypes about homelessness have had on them in their responses to the final, open-ended survey question: "Is there anything else that you would like to tell us, or that you want others in the community to know about homelessness?" Respondents observed that "[homelessness] can happen to anybody;" "we're not bad people; life happens;" and "just because you're homeless doesn't mean you are mean, criminal, or not nice." Others noted that "[the] stigma of being homeless leads to discrimination" and "homeless [people] should be treated with respect." One response aptly summarized these comments: "Don't look down on [the] homeless; it's a hard life to live."

### *COVID-19 and Housing Loss*

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate effect on those experiencing homelessness, including a higher risk of COVID-19 infection, fewer options for finding shelter during the day, increased difficulty in meeting basic needs, and inequitable access to pandemic-related health information and testing<sup>6</sup>. However, most respondents (88%, n=135) reported their most recent housing loss was not a result of the COVID-19 pandemic; only 8% (n=12) said they lost their housing because of COVID-19.

## WHY DOES IT MATTER?

**The COVID-19 pandemic was associated with an 8% increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness in Belleville, though the long-term impact of the pandemic on housing stability and homelessness is yet to be fully understood.**

**Responses to this question confirm that homelessness is a persistent problem in Belleville, and that the increase in homelessness observed in the 2021 PiT Count is only partly a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.**

Figure 20. COVID-related housing loss, Belleville 2021.

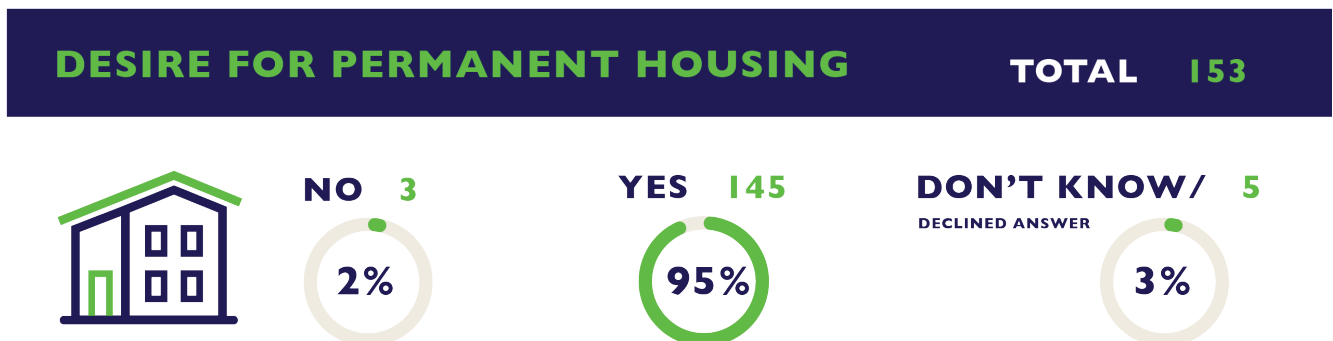


*Desire for Permanent Housing*

An overwhelming majority (95%, n=145) of respondents indicated they want permanent housing. Only 3 people said they did not want permanent housing and 3 said they did not know.

This is consistent with 2018 results, where 95% of respondents said they wanted permanent housing. This shows that people experiencing homelessness most often do not choose to be homeless.

Figure 21. Desire for permanent housing, Belleville 2021.



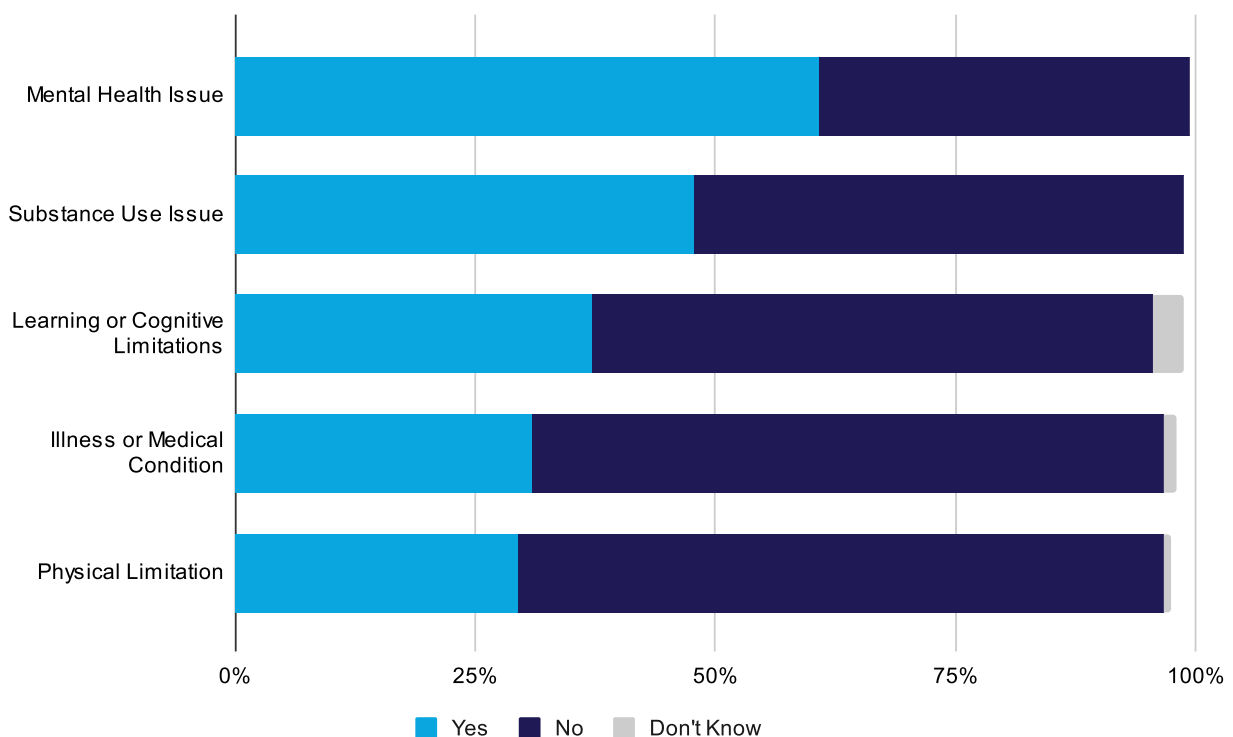
## SELF-REPORTED HEALTH CONDITIONS

A total of 61% of respondents reported experiencing some form of mental health issue, and 48% reported having substance use issues. Additionally, 37% reported having learning or cognitive limitations, 31% reported having an illness or medical condition, and 29% said they had physical limitations.

## WHY DOES IT MATTER?

**Health issues, including those relating to mental health and addictions, are common among people experiencing homelessness. The relationship between homelessness and health is complex: health issues can be a cause of homelessness, and homelessness can create health issues or make existing issues worse. These results illustrate the importance of wraparound health and social supports to address the immediate needs of those experiencing homelessness and to help maintain housing after the experience of homelessness.**

**Figure 22. Health Conditions, Belleville 2021.**

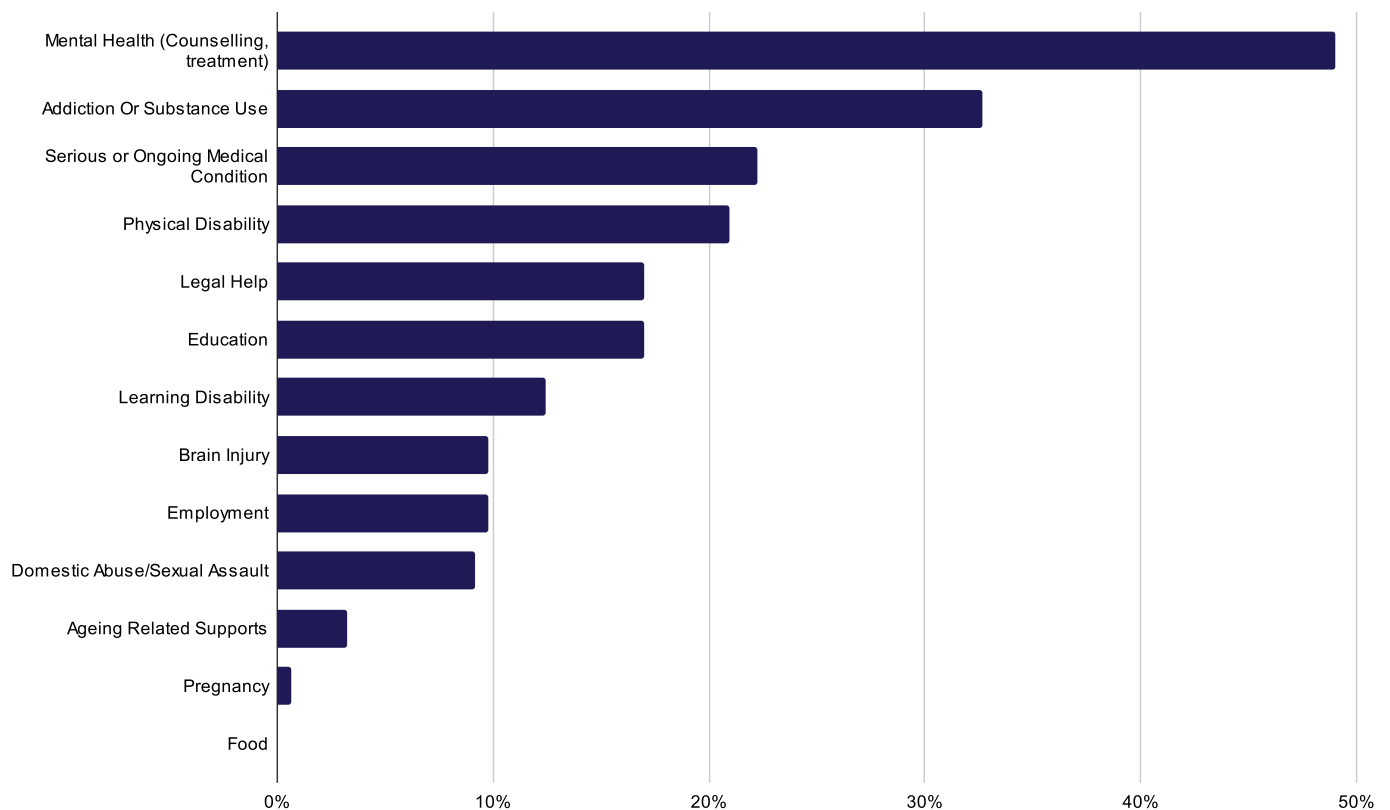


## SELF-DESCRIBED SERVICE NEEDS

Survey respondents were asked to identify whether they needed services from a list provided. Their answers offered insight into the resources necessary to support people who are experiencing homelessness. At least one of the listed services was selected by 72%, (n=110), while 14%, (n=21) indicated “none of the above,” and the remaining 14% did not provide a response.

These results aligned with self-reported health conditions. Mental health and addiction services were the most commonly identified service needs, selected by 49% and 33% of all respondents, respectively. About one-fifth of respondents identified a need for services related to either a serious or ongoing medical condition or physical disability, followed by 17% who required education support or legal help. All other services were identified by less than 15% of respondents.

**Figure 23. Service Needs, Belleville 2021.**



## SYSTEMS USE

Survey respondents were asked about their use of public systems over the past 12 months. Half of respondents (52%) indicated they had been to a hospital emergency department in the previous year, and one-quarter (25%) reported being hospitalized for at least one day. Fewer than half of respondents (43%) reported having a regular health care provider or clinic. Over one-third (36%) of respondents reported having had at least one interaction with the police over the previous year, and 14% reported having been to prison or jail.

While this question can garner inaccurate responses that are subject to recall error and self-reporting bias, the data does demonstrate that people experiencing homelessness in Belleville interact with public systems more often than the general population, as is the case across Canada.



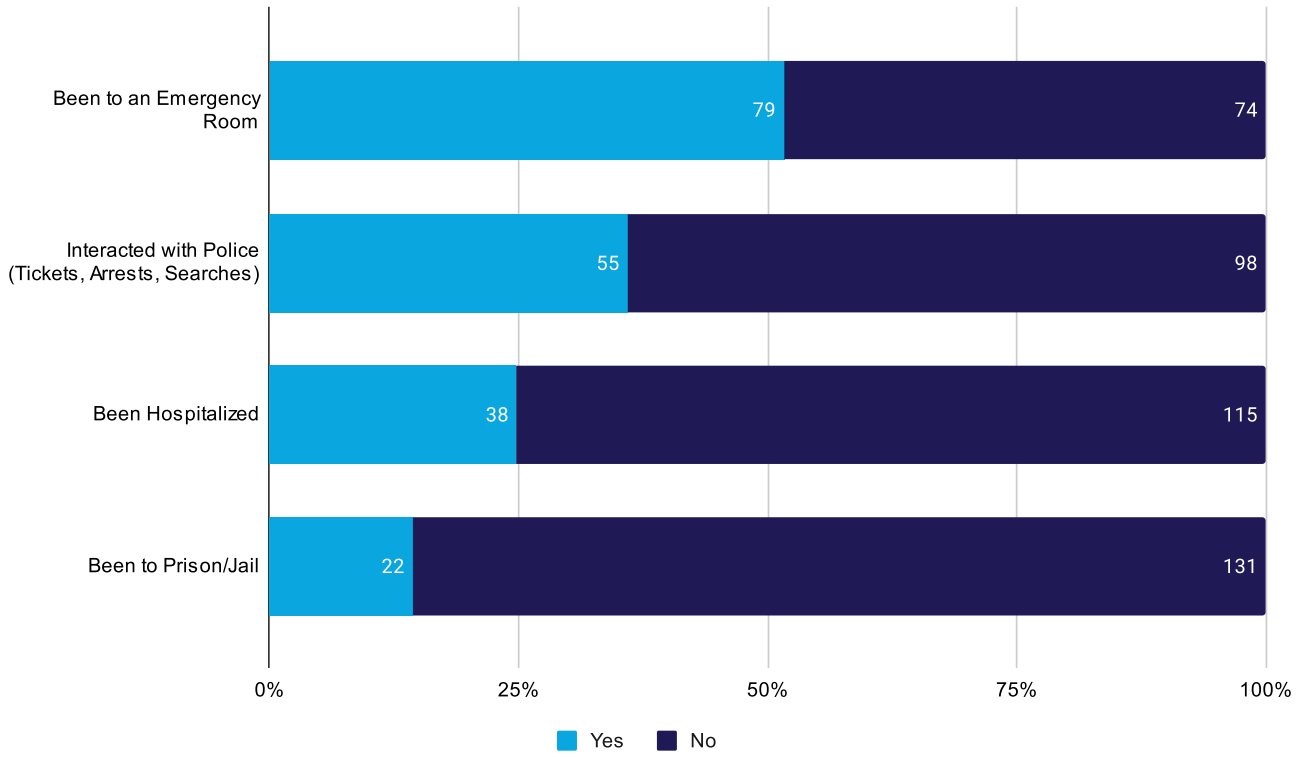
### WHY DOES IT MATTER?

**Coordination between public systems, and between these systems and community-based service providers (e.g., through coordinated service provision and information sharing), will more effectively help provide services to meet the immediate needs of people experiencing homelessness.**

**Evidence and community experience across Canada demonstrate that moving away from managing homelessness—addressing the immediate needs of those experiencing homelessness—and toward preventing homelessness—providing permanent housing along with wraparound supports to maintain housing—is a much more cost-effective response to homelessness, to say nothing of the moral and ethical imperatives for ending homelessness<sup>7</sup>.**



Figure 24. Systems usage over the past 12 months, Belleville 2021.



# APPENDIX A: IMPLICATIONS OF COVID-19

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## ACCESS TO PHYSICAL LOCATIONS

During the COVID-19 pandemic, physical access to many social services locations and public spaces where survey locations would otherwise have been hosted was significantly reduced—this was especially true during the lockdown in place at the time of the 2021 PiT Count. Remote access to social and health services became widespread in response to the pandemic, with some services transitioning almost completely to providing services by phone or other virtual means.

## PHONE-BASED SURVEYING

The validity and reliability of phone-based surveys in a PiT Count has not been tested, though it has been used in Period Prevalence Counts. Nevertheless, for the 2021 Count, phone access provided a useful supplement to traditional location-based and outreach methods, extending access to people who might otherwise not have participated, especially given the pandemic lockdown restrictions.

The PiT Count phone number was included in all promotional materials, including Facebook advertisements. The phone line was staffed by the same person for the duration of the count, to ensure continuity and reduce the risk of survey duplication.

Several organizations that provide housing and health services to those experiencing homelessness identified people on their client lists they knew to be experiencing homelessness, who were unlikely to participate by a traditional method. After seeking consent from those clients, staff from the organizations conducted the survey by phone, or provided the clients' contact information to PiT Count staff, who reached out by phone to conduct the survey.

## VOLUNTEERS AND SAFETY

The number of volunteers participating in the PiT Count was limited, to reduce the risk of potential COVID-19 exposure. All public health COVID-19 safety protocols were followed, including physical distancing where possible, and wearing face masks and eye protection. Training for volunteers and organizational staff was provided via Zoom. Limited staff capacity and truncated timelines for adapting to pandemic restrictions resulted in less thorough training than originally intended, which affected data quality for certain questions; these questions are noted in the presentation of results where applicable.

## UNSHelterED AND SHelterED HOMELESSNESS

Lockdown restrictions in place at the time of the 2021 PiT Count may have increased access to those experiencing unsheltered homelessness, an unanticipated but useful effect. Lockdown

restrictions significantly reduced physical access to social services, public spaces, and businesses where people experiencing homelessness might otherwise have attended during the day. At the same time, daily meal programs and drop-in services that continued operating during the pandemic provided regular, predictable, and well-known places for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness to attend to meet their basic needs. The combination of these factors may have concentrated attendance at the relatively few available service locations offering physical access during the lockdown, and these locations were where the 2021 PiT Count was conducted.

Access to those experiencing emergency sheltered and provisionally accommodated homelessness in transitional housing was unaffected, though administrative data had to be used in some cases where it might otherwise have been possible to conduct surveys. We are therefore confident the 2021 PiT Count results for unsheltered, emergency sheltered, and transitionally housed homelessness are valid and reliable.

## HIDDEN AND YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

In contrast, the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions dramatically reduced access to those experiencing hidden homelessness, access that would normally have been achieved through widespread service-based PiT Count survey locations or access points.

Similarly, youth-focused programs were limited or not operating during the lockdown, and school-based outreach was not possible. Since these are key methods to reach youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness, who are unlikely to access programs or services targeted to adults, we expect the number of youth experiencing homelessness is underrepresented in the 2021 PiT Count.

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**2021**

# **POINT-IN-TIME COUNT**

**BELLEVILLE, ONTARIO**

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**SEPT 2021**

