

Point-in-Time Count, 2021

John Howard Society PEI

Reaching Home

In April, Charlottetown & Summerside took part in a nationally coordinated effort, led by the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy, to measure homelessness in Canada. The third PiT count was scheduled to take place in 2020 but due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it was postponed. Some communities have opted to postpone until the fall of 2021 or even into 2022 depending on the situation in their region. In the interest of protecting everyone's health and safety during the ongoing COVID pandemic, we did not engage community volunteers. Instead, staff from the John Howard Society of PEI conducted the street surveys and staff from various departments, agencies, health institutions and housing programs were asked to do a file review one day during this week to identify clients housing situation. Shelters were asked to count numbers on one day during the week and were given surveys for guests to complete, on a voluntary basis.

The other change was the Magnet event, held in previous years, could not take place due to capacity restrictions and health regulations. This was unfortunate, this event provides a connection opportunity for service providers to have attendees to complete surveys and for the attendees to access a variety of services such as free hair cuts, free clothing and supplies, income tax preparation, health services such as blood pressure, blood sugar, etc. as well as a delicious hot meal.

The count offers a "snapshot" of homelessness in Charlottetown & Summerside. The results of the count will produce the *minimum* number of people experiencing unsheltered and sheltered homelessness in our community. In addition to a count of absolute homelessness, individuals who were couch-surfing, staying temporarily with friends or family, were given the option to participate in the survey. The results also offer insights to possible ways improve our understanding of the needs and circumstances of the people who are affected by homelessness in our community. The PIT Count is an essential element in our effort to end homelessness, as the data gathered shows us so much more than how many people are homeless in our community – we also learn more about who is homeless and why. The PIT Count presents a great opportunity to raise awareness of the myriad challenges our homeless citizens face, hear personal experiences from those experiencing homelessness, and demonstrate the compassion and generosity of our community!

Results

Number of people identified through street count, file review and voluntary surveys:

Total 147

Surveys completed: 59

- 4 people were identified as being unsheltered.
- A total of 59 people were surveyed, all were presently sheltered in either emergency shelters, transitional housing, health institutions, correctional institutions.
- Of surveys completed, 57% reported as male (53% in 2018) and 41% as female (47% in 2018), 2% as Two-Spirit.
- 93% of people surveyed fall between the ages of 18-54, (86% in 2018) 2% between 16-18 years of age (7% in 2018) 5% in the 55+ category, (7% in 2018). Of the 93% in the 18-54 age group, 33% were between the ages of 20-29.
- There was a mixed demographic inclusive of people who identified as Indigenous (9%), immigrant or refugee (1%) and veterans (1%).

From the surveys completed and file reviews completed: (147)

- 52 % were staying in transitional housing, (2018- 49%)
- 18% were staying in an emergency shelter, (2018 -15%)
- 13% were staying in systems (hospital, jail, etc.) (2018- 13%)
- 17% were considered hidden homeless (people staying with a friend, couch surfing, etc. (2018 23%)

Homelessness is an ongoing problem in PEI and is not typically resolved in the short term. 52% of participants experiencing homelessness indicated they have been homeless for more than 3 months total. This number was 59% in 2018. Further statistics showed that 32% indicated being homeless for a total of 6+ months.

30 out of the 59 individuals who completed the surveys had stayed in an emergency shelter in the past year.

Factors that led to homelessness

- 52 % of participants that completed surveys indicated issues with addictions and mental health
- 19 % experienced domestic violence
- 17 % indicated landlord/ tenant issues
- 9% had been incarcerated
- 3 % indicated lack of income/ not suitable housing

The question was asked, “Was your most recent housing loss related to the Covid – 19 pandemic?” *8 % responded YES (there were no further information provided as to the specific reason related to Covid 19)

In the future, successive counts will allow us to measure progress towards our goal of ending homelessness in Prince Edward Island. The As of April 1, 2023, we will have fully implemented Coordinated Access and HIFIS, (Homeless Individuals and Families Information System) which will give us real time data and a more comprehensive systems-based approach to addressing homelessness.