

EVERYONE COUNTS

Report on the 2018 Halifax Point in Time Count



This report highlights survey results from the visibly homeless population, predominantly engaging with the formal shelter system in the urban core of Peninsula Halifax on the night of April 24, 2018

Acknowledgements

AHANS would like to extend many thanks to:

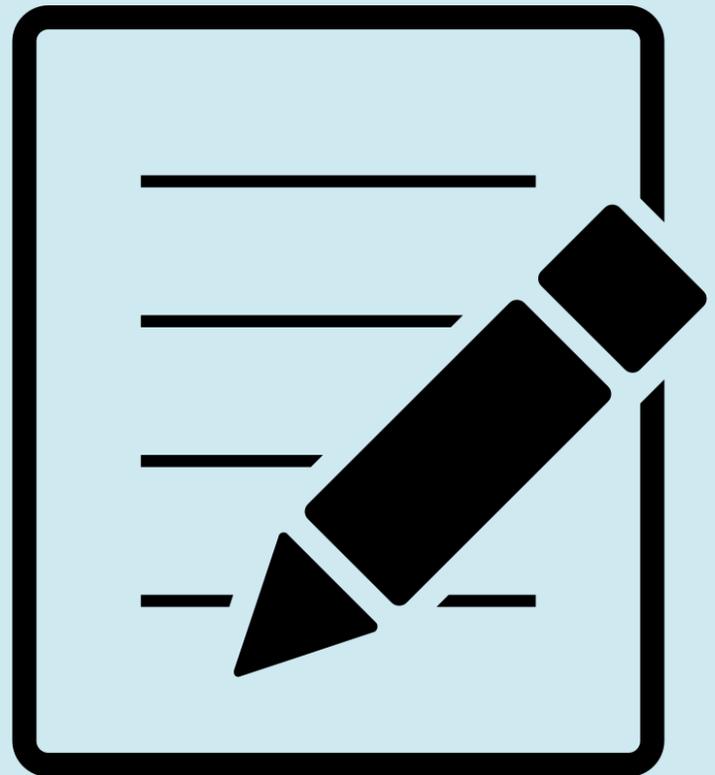
145 individuals who shared their experiences of homelessness with us

22 volunteers and shelter staff who facilitated the interviews

Laurie Dolhan who coordinated the Point in Time Count & Registry Week

Charlene Gagnon for data analysis and report preparation

Surveys were administered verbally, and participants were not required to answer all questions if they did not want to provide a response. Every individual asked to participate was administered two screening questions before they were invited to complete a whole survey. The two screening questions were “Do you have a permanent residence that you can return to tonight?” and “Where are you staying tonight?” Twelve of the survey questions were standardized at the federal level, and the Halifax count included an additional four community specific questions, also supplied by HPS. Three of the twelve questions were two-part questions, making a total of 22 (including screening) individual questions on the survey.



For more information:

www.ahans.ca

KEY FINDINGS

- ⇒ The gap between income and housing affordability is the main barrier to securing housing.
- ⇒ People engaged in the homeless system are also connected to multiple other systems including child protection, justice and healthcare systems. This is particularly relevant for homeless youth.
- ⇒ The pathways into and through the homelessness for men and women are different.
- ⇒ Women in the sample predominantly came into homelessness at a younger age and through either foster care, or domestic breakdown and violence; and reported more barriers in their search for housing than the men in the sample.
- ⇒ Men in the sample predominantly became homeless when they were older; and reported proportionally less access to Income Assistance than women and girls.

“THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS AND WILL CONTINUE TO TAKE A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO INTEGRATING GBA+ THROUGHOUT THE PROGRAM CYCLE OF THE NATIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY.”
Place to Call Home: Canada’s National Housing Strategy



Introduction

The Halifax Point in Time (PiT) count is a Federally-funded data collection initiative held in communities across the country to measure population demographics and involvement in the homeless system using a consistent methodology. The PiT demonstrates the minimum number of homeless individuals on a single night in the community. With the assistance of 22 volunteers, the Halifax PIT took place in seven shelters located within the urban core of the Halifax Peninsula, two non-shelter service providers, the Central Library, and on the street. A total of 220 homeless individuals were counted on the night of the PiT count, and 145 people were surveyed. Also this year, in participation with the 20,000 Homes campaign, a coordinated “registry week” was introduced concurrently with the Point in Time count. Registry week has resulted in the convening of a Coordinated Access Working Group among agencies.

Demographically, there were not many differences overall between the 2018 PiT count and previous years. As the data shows, there is a lot of diversity among the homeless population and black and indigenous people are over-represented in the sample compared to the general population in the HRM.

This year a Gender-Based Plus (GBA+) lens was applied to the analysis. GBA+ “is a process for examining how various intersecting identity factors impact the effectiveness of government initiatives. It involves examining disaggregated data and research, and considering social, economic, and cultural conditions and norms.” For application in this analysis, gender and age categories were compared and those with large differences are discussed and contextualized with existing research and anecdotal knowledge from the service providers.

220 SINGLE NIGHT POPULATION

197 SHELTERED

18 UNSHELTERED

5 IN CELLS WITH POLICE

145 INTERVIEWED IN **11** LOCATIONS

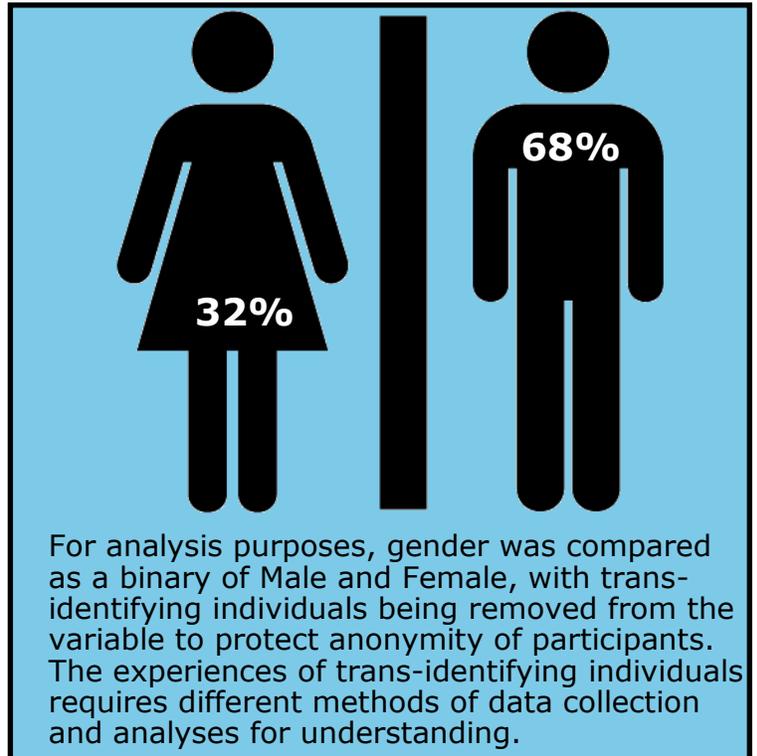
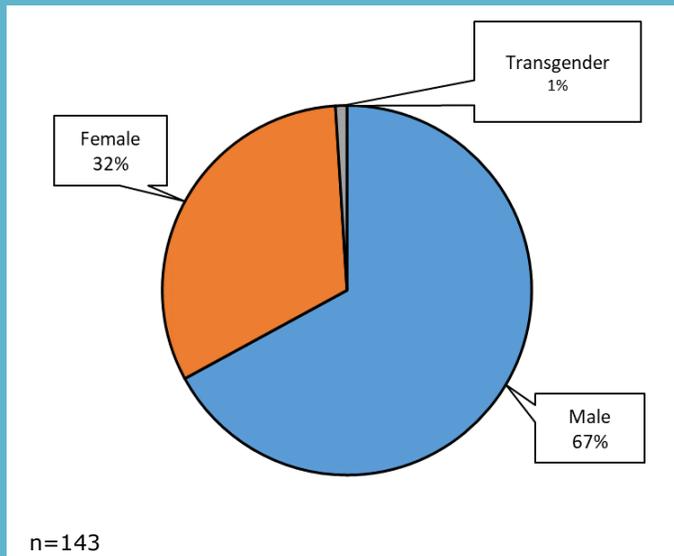
4.763 MARGIN OF ERROR, **95%** CONFIDENCE LEVEL

SURVEY LOCATION

METRO TURNING POINT	30%
SALVATION ARMY	24%
ADSUM HOUSE	10%
PHOENIX YOUTH	9%
BARRY HOUSE	8%
CENTRAL LIBRARY	6%
OUT OF THE COLD	5%
BRYONY HOUSE	3%
MAINLINE	2%
STREET	1%
DARTMOUTH FOOD CENTRE	1%

WHAT GENDER DO YOU IDENTIFY WITH?

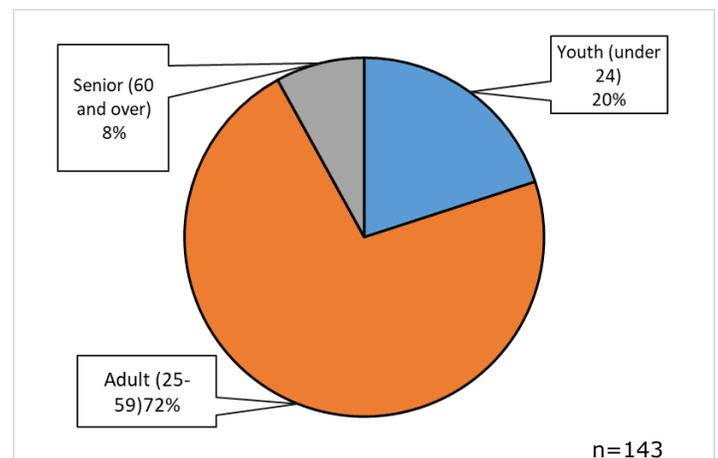
In total, 67% of the sample was male-identifying, 32% were female-identifying and 1% was trans-identifying.



In HRM there are:
64 emergency shelter beds for women & children
140 emergency shelter beds for men

HOW OLD ARE YOU?

People were asked how old they were (or the year they were born), the age range of respondents was 16-80, with an average of 40 years old. Age was recoded into three categories: Youth - under 24 years (20%), Adult - 25-59 years (72%), and Senior - 60 and older (8%).

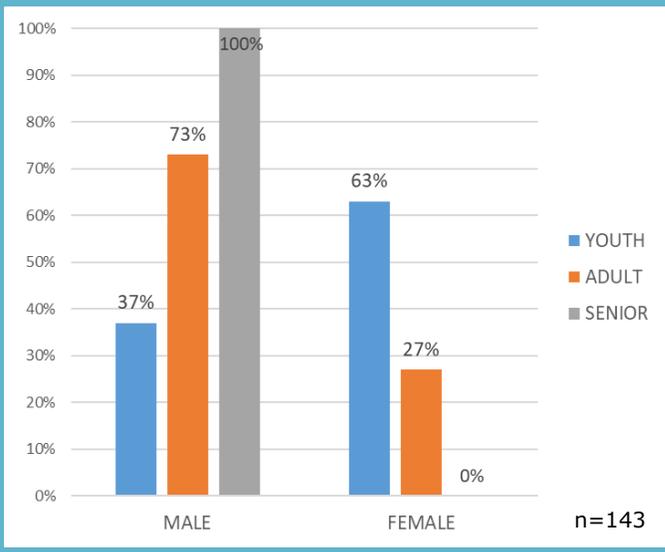


Age range: **16– 80 years old**
Average age: **40 years old**

Overall, men in the sample were older, and females were younger. As shown, 100% of those over the age of 60 were male; and a higher proportion of those under the age of 24 were female (63% compared to 37% male). The average age of women was 33 years old, compared to the average age of men at 44 years old

Average Age of Females: **33 years old**

Average Age of Males: **44 years old**

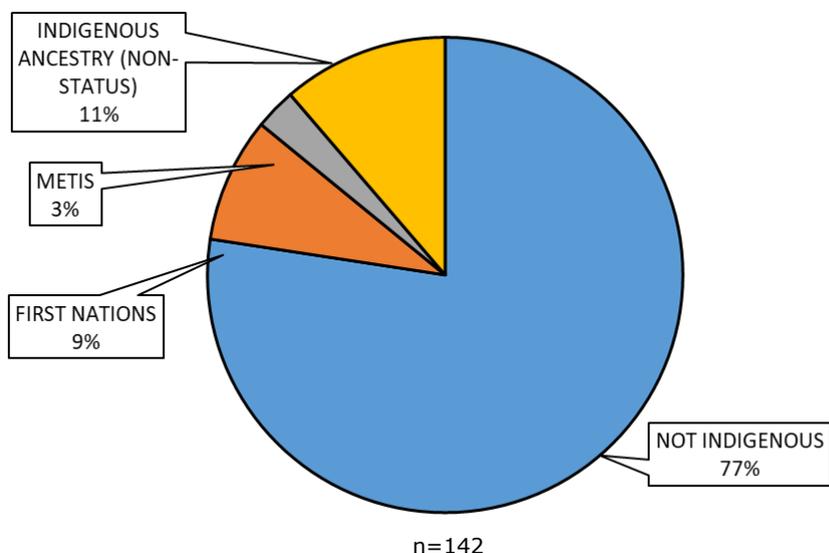


DO YOU IDENTIFY AS BEING INDIGENOUS OR DO YOU HAVE INDIGENOUS ANCESTRY?

78% said they did not identify as having Indigenous ancestry or status

22% said they did (9% First Nations, 3% Metis, and 11% non-status indigenous identification).

Indigenous identification was based on self-reporting.

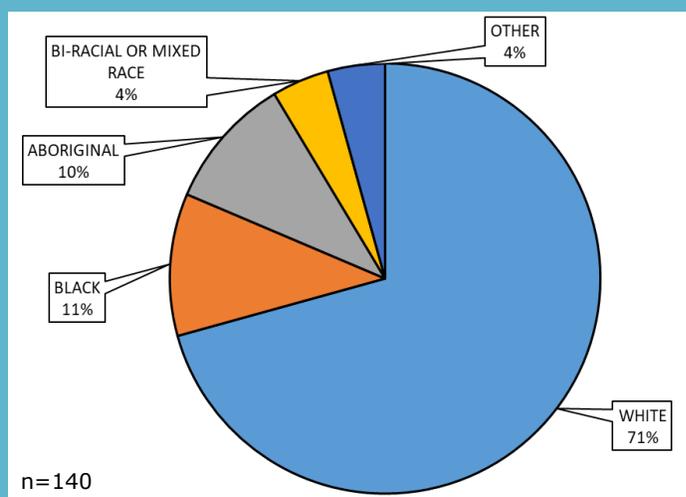


WHAT RACIAL GROUP DO YOU FEEL YOU BELONG TO?

71% of the sample identified as white.

Compared to the general population of HRM, a disproportionate percentage of black (11%) and Indigenous (10%) individuals were represented in this sample. Those who identified as being bi-racial or mixed race also had black and indigenous racial identities.

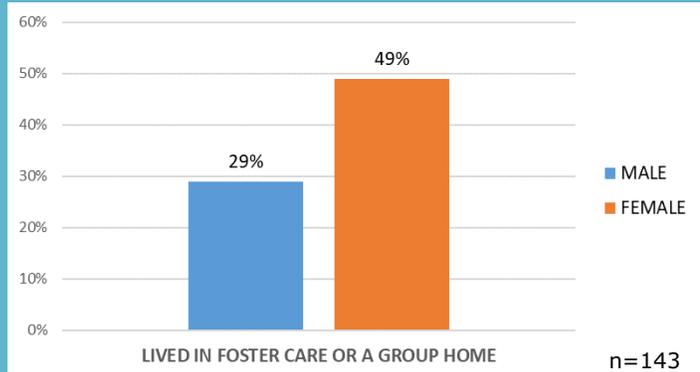
Those who identified as having "Other" racial identities included Asian, Hispanic and Arab backgrounds.



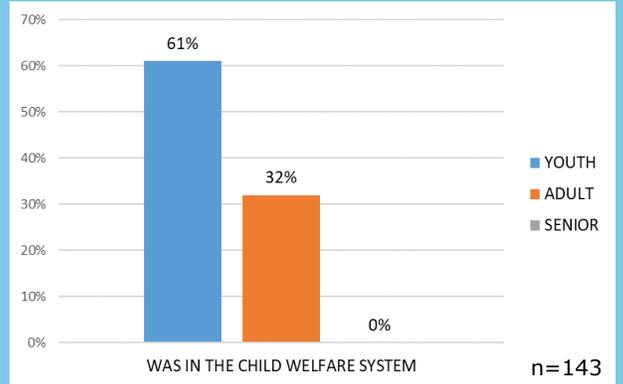
HAVE YOU EVER BEEN IN FOSTER CARE AND/OR GROUP HOME?

35% (50 people)
LIVED IN FOSTER CARE OR A GROUP HOME AT SOME POINT IN THEIR LIVES

49% of females indicated that they had been in Foster Care, or lived in a group home at some point in their lives, compared to 29% of males in the sample



61% of all youth in the sample indicated that they had lived in foster care or group homes at some point in their lives compared to 32% of adults, and 0 seniors.

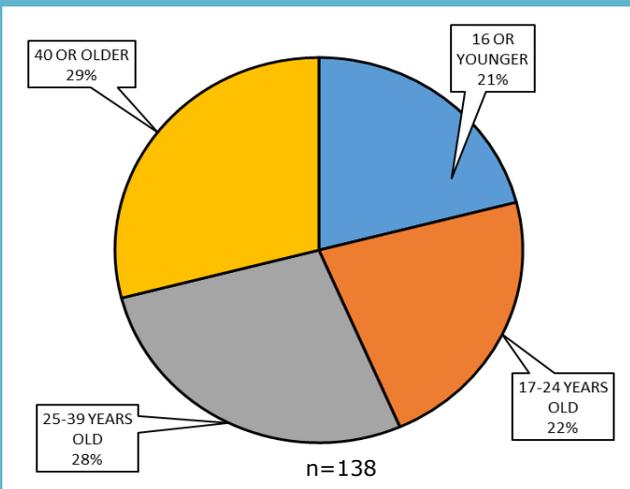
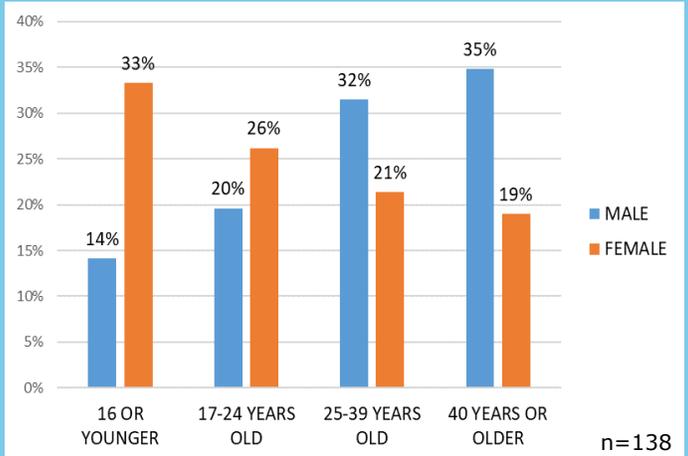


HOW OLD WERE YOU WHEN YOU FIRST BECAME HOMELESS IN YOUR LIFE?

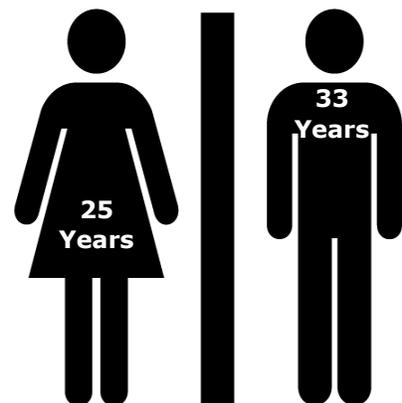
A higher proportion of females indicated they were under the age of 16 when they first became homeless; 33% compared to 14% of males. On the other side, 35% of males said they became homeless when they were 40 years or older.

AVERAGE AGE FIRST HOMELESS
30 YEARS OLD

21% said they were 16 or under the first time they were homeless, 23% said they were 17-24 years old, 28% said they were 25-39 years old and 29% said they were 40 years or older.

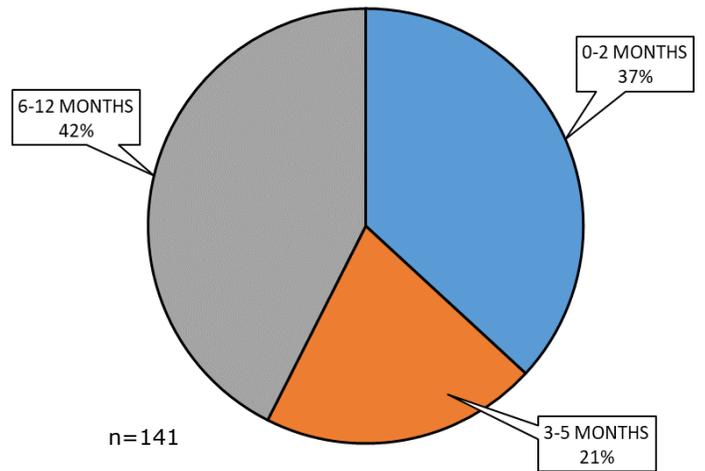


AVERAGE AGE FIRST HOMELESS BY GENDER



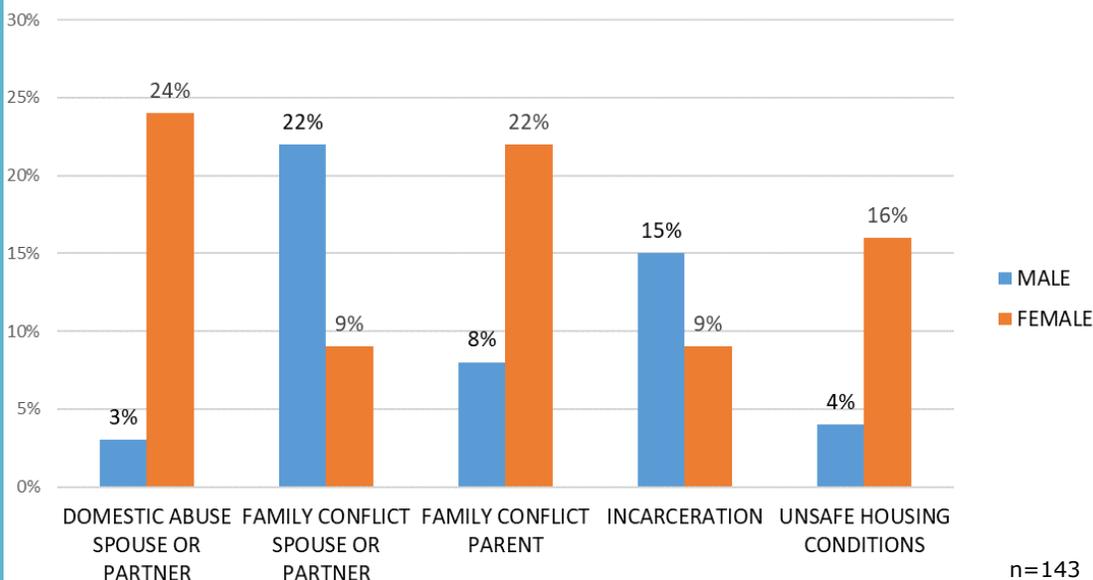
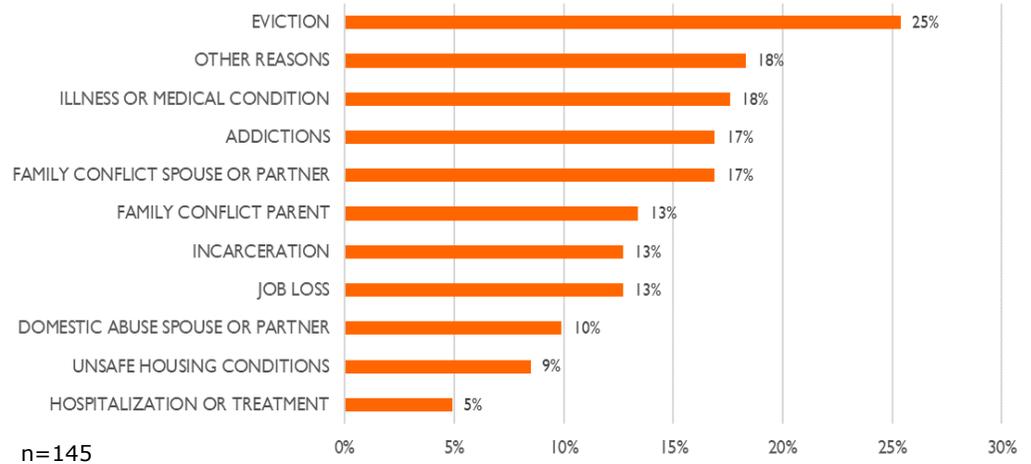
OVER THE PAST YEAR, HOW MUCH OF THE TIME HAVE YOU BEEN HOMELESS?

43% had been homeless for more than half of the 12 months prior to being surveyed, compared to 37% who reported being homeless for 0-2 months, and 21% for 3-5 months of the past year. There were no notable differences in relation to the gender or age of respondents.



WHAT HAPPENED THAT CAUSED YOU TO LOSE YOUR HOUSING MOST RECENTLY

People were asked about all the reasons why they lost their most recent housing. Most (25%) said that they had been evicted from their housing for a variety of reasons. 18% indicated "other" individualized and complex reasons that did not fall into any of the provided categories.

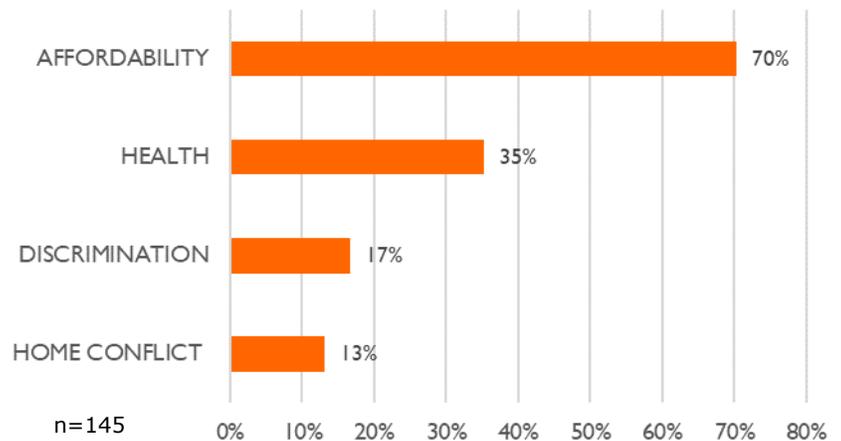


24% of females said their reason for losing housing was related to domestic "abuse" and 22% of males said that domestic "conflict" was their reason for homelessness. A higher proportion of females (22%) indicated that family conflict was their reason for homelessness, and 16% said that they left unsafe housing conditions, compared to 4% of men.

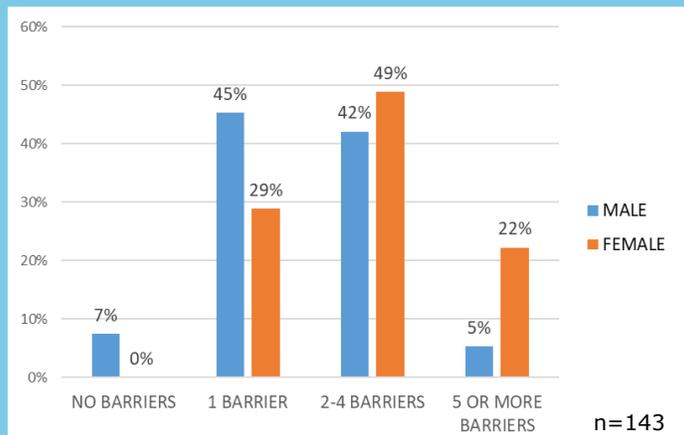
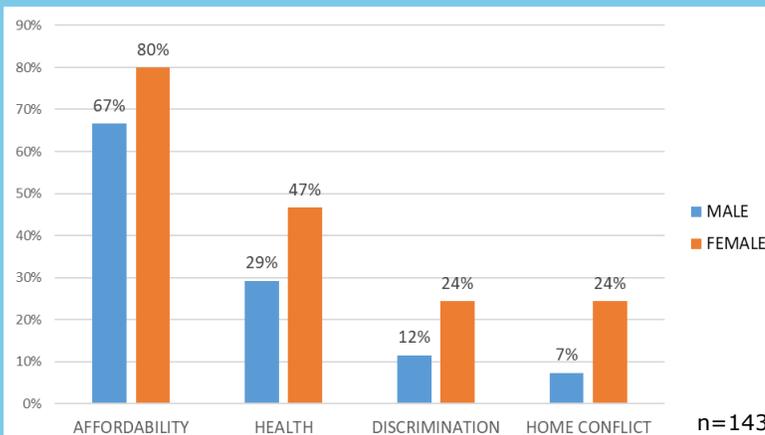
WHAT DO YOU THINK IS KEEPING YOU FROM FINDING HOUSING

People were asked what was preventing them from finding housing from a list of 15 different potential barriers.

Issues related to affordability were pervasive with the sample; 70% of all participants said things like low income and unaffordable rents in well-maintained units were barriers to finding housing.

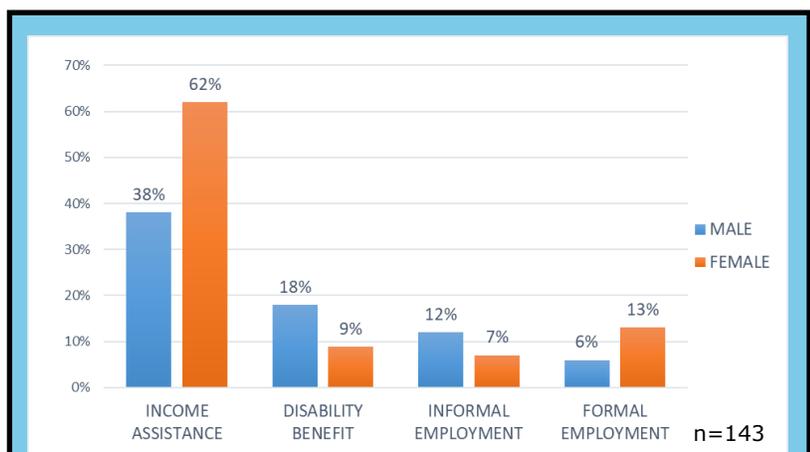
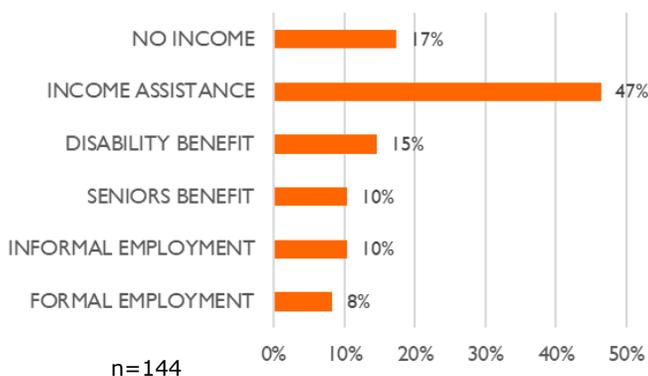


A higher proportion of females indicated affordability issues were barriers (80%) than males (67%). As shown in Figure 13, Gender differences were seen across with all categories of housing barriers. And overall women encountered more barriers to housing than men.



WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR INCOME FROM?

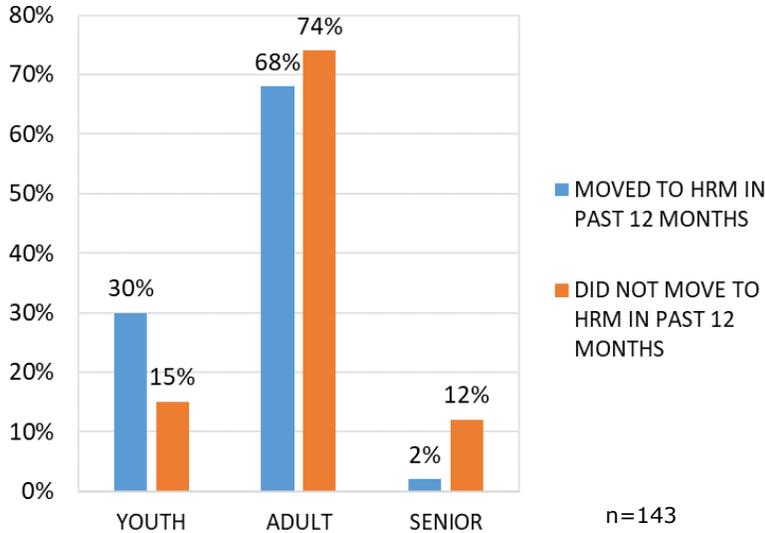
17% of the sample indicated that they had no sources of income and 47% that they were on provincial income assistance. Some people were employed both formally (8%) and informally (10%) by engaging in things like binning, sex work and panhandling.



A larger proportion of females indicated that they were on provincial income assistance (62%) compared to males (38%) and engaged in formal employment – 13% compared to 6% of men.

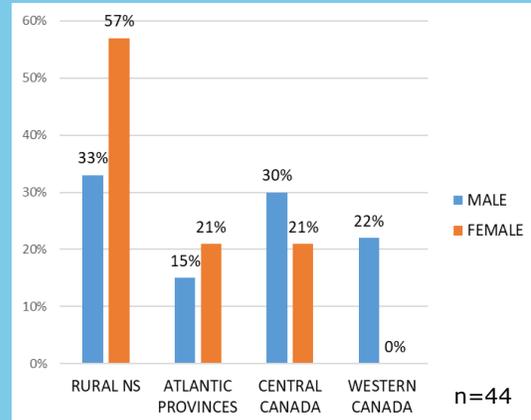
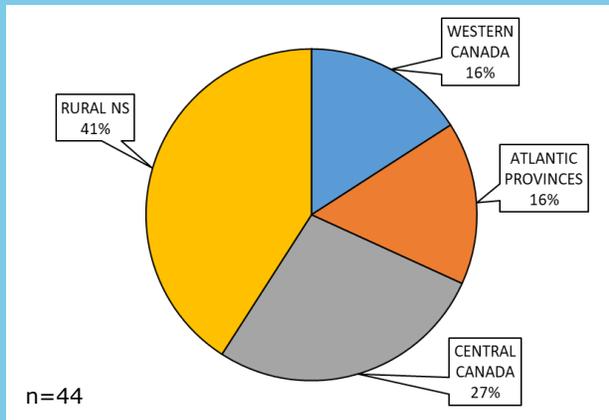
DID YOU MOVE TO HRM IN THE PAST YEAR?

Overall 32% (47 people) said that they had moved to Halifax in the past year; 30% of those who moved to HRM in the past 12 months were youth, 68% were adults and 2% were seniors.

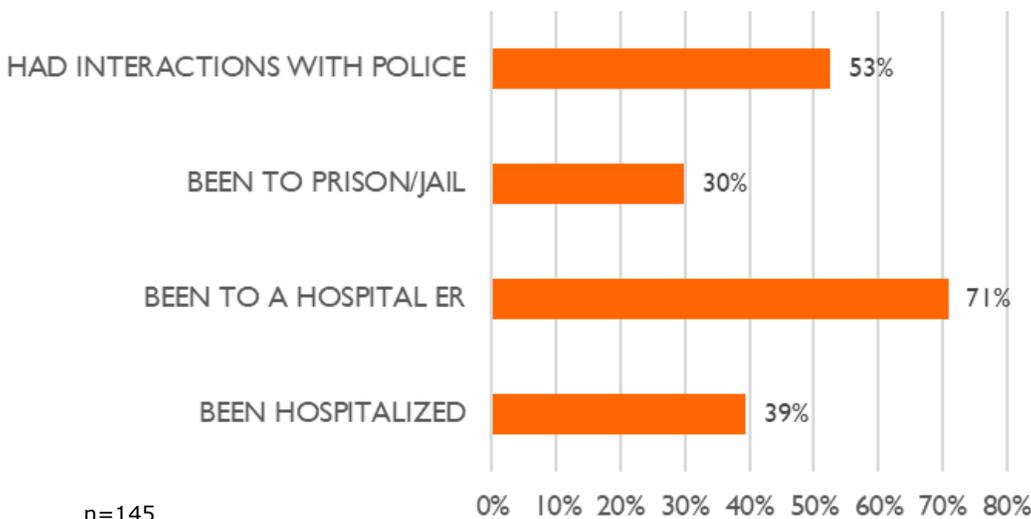


3%
CAME TO CANADA
AS AN IMMIGRANT
OR REFUGEE IN
PAST 5 YEARS

Of those 47 people, 44 told us where they came from; 41% (20 people) came from rural NS. A larger proportion of females came from rural NS (57% compared to 33% of males), and 22% of males came from Western Canada compared to 0 females.

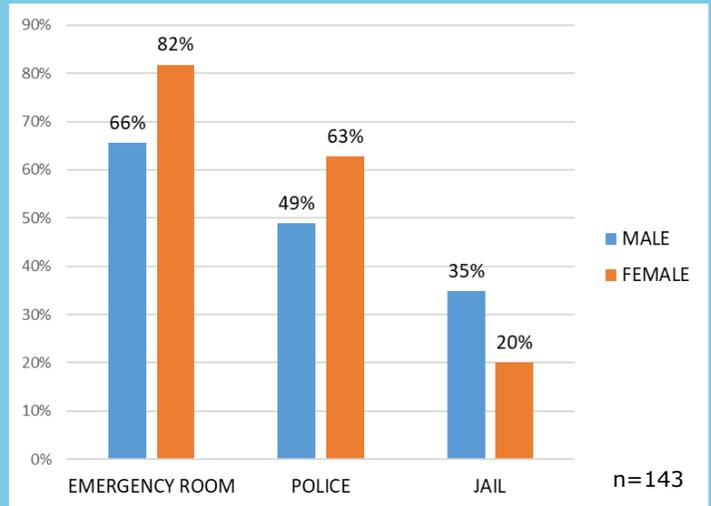


IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS HAVE YOU...

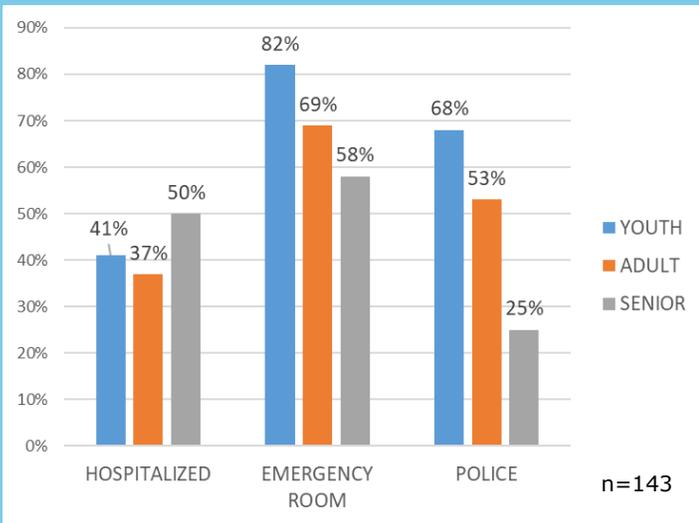


53% indicated that they had interactions with the police, 30% had been to prison or jail, 71% had been to a hospital emergency room, and 39% had been hospitalized at least once in the previous year. Many indicated more than one interaction over a 12-month period.

82% of females had used an emergency room compared to 66% of males. And although a larger proportion of females indicated police interactions (63% compared to 49% of males) a larger proportion of males reported going to prison or jail in the previous 12 months. There were no gender differences in relation to hospitalizations.

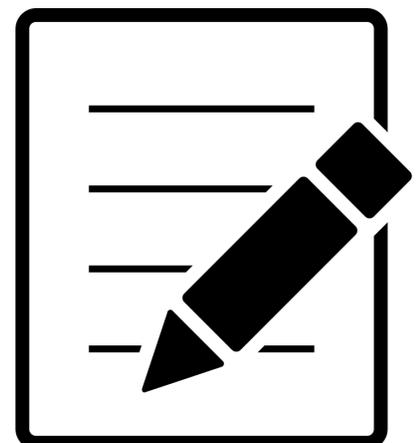


A higher proportion of youth reported emergency room use (82%) and interactions with the police (68%) than both adults and seniors. And 50% of seniors reported being hospitalized compared to 41% of youth and 37% of adults. There were no age differences in relation to going to prison or jail.



THE IMPORTANCE OF DATA-DRIVEN RESPONSES

- ◆ Homelessness is a complex issue that cannot be solved with a one size fits all approach.
- ◆ Homeless systems need to be designed in a way that are responsive to the needs of the individuals experiencing them.
- ◆ Understanding and acting on the issues and barriers individuals face can reduce harm and risk, and find housing solutions that will work in the context of their lives.



GENDERED PATHWAYS THROUGH HOMELESSNESS

While it is true that the homeless system is dominated by men, a system designed to accommodate that experience only will create gender inequities in housing opportunities and outcomes.

Not represented in this report are the experiences of trans-identifying individuals, which requires different methods of data collection and analyses for understanding.

It is generally accepted that homeless trans-identifying people, women with children, youth who are not in care, and people of colour do not engage with formal homeless systems due to issues of mental health issues, safety, cultural inappropriateness, and fear of systems involvement in their lives.

Men and women surveyed came into, and experienced homelessness in different ways.

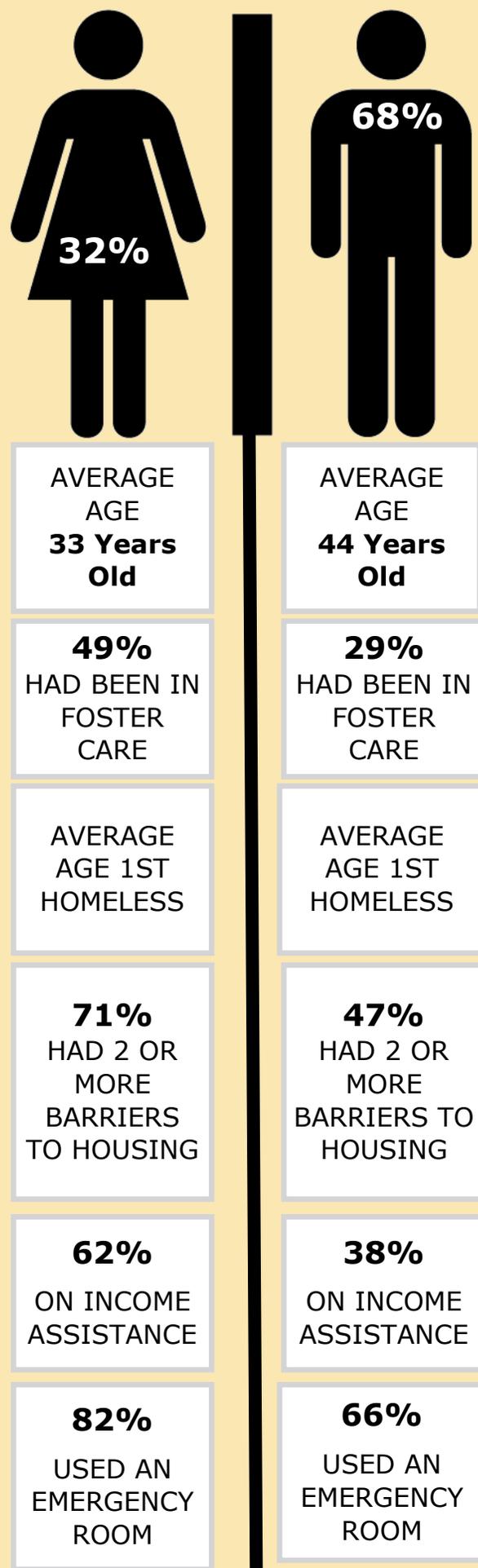
Women tended to become homeless at a younger age than men, and the reasons they became homeless were largely related to domestic breakdown and violence.

These factors speak to the vulnerability of the women surveyed, and are demonstrated in the high levels of emergency room use. Such vulnerability in women are also often factors in sex trade involvement and domestic violence.

Women faced more barriers to getting housing than men, and included health-related issues, discrimination and safety.

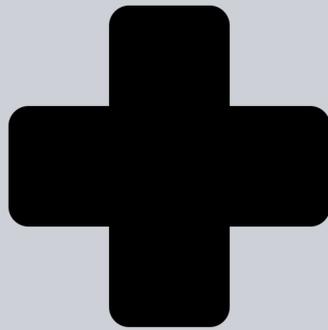
Men tended to be older, and came into homelessness at an older age. Their reasons for homelessness also included domestic conflict, however economic and employment reasons seemed to play a bigger factor with men.

Men also interacted with the criminal justice system more than women, they had higher rates of incarceration.



SYSTEMS INVOLVEMENT

35%
HAD BEEN IN
FOSTER CARE



30%
HAD BEEN TO
PRISON/JAIL IN
PAST YEAR

47%
RECEIVED
INCOME
ASSISTANCE

53%
HAD
INTERACTIONS
WITH POLICE IN
PAST YEAR



71%
USED AN ER IN
THE PAST YEAR

39%
HOSPITALIZED IN
THE PAST YEAR



The experience of homelessness intersects with experiences of the Community Services, Justice and Healthcare systems.

The homelessness system is not a single system at all, rather a patchwork of policies and services offered by a variety of disconnected agencies and service providers.

The majority of youth had interactions and involvement with a variety of systems including child welfare, justice and healthcare.

YOUTH HOMELESSNESS



61%
OF YOUTH HAD
BEEN IN FOSTER
CARE

64%
OF YOUTH DID NOT
HAVE INCOME
ASSISTANCE

82%
OF YOUTH HAD
USED AN ER IN THE
PAST YEAR

68%
OF YOUTH HAD
INTERACTIONS
WITH POLICE IN
PAST YEAR

COUNTING HOMELESSNESS

Measuring homelessness is always difficult: population transience, weather/time of year, informal social systems and engagement methods are persistent issues which make capturing data problematic regardless of the community it occurs in. The PIT Count is intended to offer a snapshot of the visibly homeless population on a particular night of the year. The following section reviews some of the important, contextual considerations to make while reading the data contained within this report, as identified in consultation with the service providers who work with the population.

Visible vs. Hidden Homelessness - Many people who experience homelessness do not engage with the formal social systems created to assist them. Within Halifax, this issue has been identified anecdotally by service providers every time we attempt to measure basic demographic information about the population. This is of particular concern when looking at the gendered, age-based and racial aspects of the data.

It is generally accepted that homeless trans-identifying people, women with children, youth who are not in care, and people of colour do not engage with formal homeless systems due to issues of mental health issues, safety, cultural inappropriateness, and fear of systems involvement in their lives. In Halifax, there has never been an evidence-based assessment of what the hidden homeless population looks like so while we cannot make statements or claims about the general characteristics associated with it, we can make note when we see segments of the population missing from homeless counts, based on other types of interactions within the food banks, mental health/addictions and justice systems.

Additionally, it is accepted that a systemic count of homeless individuals in shelter, will be immediately skewed by the number of male vs female, and culturally inappropriate shelter beds in the system.

Population Transience - People who have a chronic history or have chosen/prefer a lifestyle of homelessness tend to be transient and move through communities based on a lot of different individualized factors like following employment, access to services, and climate. Access to services can also influence those who become newly homeless in rural communities, particularly when they are fleeing violence or trauma that occurred in their home communities.

Engaging Respondents - There are a number of reasons why people do not want to participate in surveys about their lives, especially ones which ask questions about an individual's deficiencies in being able to secure and maintain shelter, one of the most basic necessities of life. Issues of trust and power differentials can also influence response rates and participation. The PIT Count has always relied on shelter staff and community volunteers for survey administration. While all volunteers have received the same basic training for surveying people, it is difficult to standardize engagement, particularly with volunteers who have very little understanding of the issue of homelessness. Trust is an important element of survey administration. However, there is also a power differential between shelter staff and their clients, who rely on services for survival. Clients may not be wholly truthful or forthcoming about their responses to questions which could get them in trouble or jeopardize their already precarious living arrangements, such as engagement in informal employment, or desire to attain housing.

Self-Reporting - The issues of self-reporting are closely related to how respondents interpret the questions being asked of them, and the response categories to select from. This is particularly relevant in relation to variables that are less straight-forward such as gender and indigeneity; some trans-gendered individuals may not be trans-identifying and there is currently public debate as to how individuals identify indigeneity with regards to being Metis or having DNA linked to Indigenous ancestry.

There may also be cognitive, language or cultural barriers which results in incorrect categorizing of responses, such as the differences between Income Assistance and Disability Benefits; or family "conflict" versus family "violence." Further, as noted above, some homeless individuals may not be forthcoming with responses that reflect the reality of their lives. Participation in the informal economy with "under-the-table" or sex work may be masked if respondents perceive a risk to their Income Assistance or shelter admittance.

SHELTER LOCATION	#	%
METRO TURNING POINT	44	30.3%
SALVATION ARMY	35	24.1%
ADSUM HOUSE	14	9.7%
PHOENIX YOUTH SHELTER	13	9.0%
BARRY HOUSE	11	7.6%
CENTRAL LIBRARY	9	6.2%
OUT OF THE COLD	8	5.5%
BRYONY HOUSE	4	2.8%
MAINLINE STREET	3	2.1%
STREET	2	1.4%
DARTMOUTH FOOD CENTRE	2	1.4%
TOTAL	145	100%

GENDER IDENTIFICATION	#	%
MALE	96	66.2%
FEMALE	45	31%
TRANSGENDER	2	1.4%
TOTAL	143	100%

AGE	#	%
YOUTH (24 years or younger)	28	19.6%
ADULT (25-59 years old)	103	72%
SENIOR (60 years or older)	12	8.4%
TOTAL	143	100%

INDIGENOUS STATUS	#	%
NOT INDIGENOUS	110	77.5%
FIRST NATIONS	12	8.5%
METIS	4	2.8%
INDIGENOUS ANCESTRY	16	11.3%
TOTAL	142	100%

RACIAL IDENTITY	#	%
WHITE	99	70.7%
BLACK	15	10.7%
ABORIGINAL	14	10.0%
BI-RACIAL OR MIXED RACE	6	4.3%
OTHER	6	4.3%
TOTAL	140	100%

ARMED FORCES SERVICE	#	%
NO	132	93.0%
YES	10	7.0%
TOTAL	142	100%

LIVED IN FOSTER CARE	#	%
NO	94	65.3%
YES	50	34.7%
TOTAL	144	100%

IMMIGRANT OR REFUGEE IN LAST 5 YEARS	#	%
NO	141	97.2%
YES	4	2.8%
TOTAL	145	100%

MOVED TO HRM IN PAST 5 YEARS	#	%
NO	98	67.6%
YES	47	32.4%
TOTAL	145	100%

PREVIOUS COMMUNITY LOCATION	#	%
RURAL NS	18	40.9%
ATLANTIC PROVINCES	7	15.9%
CENTRAL CANADA	12	27.3%
WESTERN CANADA	7	15.9%
TOTAL	44	100%

TIME HOMELESS IN PAST YEAR	#	%
0-2 MONTHS	52	36.9%
3-5 MONTHS	29	20.6%
6-12 MONTHS	60	42.6%
TOTAL	141	100%

# OF TIMES HOMELESS IN PAST YEAR	#	%
1 TIME	85	61.6%
2 TIMES	26	18.8%
3 OR MORE TIMES	27	19.6%
TOTAL	138	100%

HOW OLD WERE YOU WHEN YOU FIRST BECAME HOMELESS IN YOUR LIFE?	#	%
16 OR YOUNGER	29	21%
17-24 YEARS OLD	31	22.5%
25-39 YEARS OLD	38	27.5%
40 OR OLDER	40	29%
TOTAL	138	100%

WHAT HAPPENED THAT CAUSED YOU TO LOSE YOUR HOUSING MOST RECENTLY? (Select all that apply)	#	%
EVICITION	36	25.4%
OTHER REASONS	26	18.3%
ILLNESS OR MEDICAL CONDITION	25	17.6%
ADDICTIONS	24	16.9%
FAMILY CONFLICT SPOUSE OR PARTNER	24	16.9%
FAMILY CONFLICT PARENT	19	13.4%
JOB LOSS	18	12.7%
INCARCERATION	18	12.7%
DOMESTIC ABUSE SPOUSE OR PARTNER	14	9.9%
UNSAFE HOUSING CONDITIONS	12	8.5%
HOSPITALIZATION OR TREATMENT	7	4.9%
DOMESTIC ABUSE PARENT	1	.7%

WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR INCOME FROM? (Select all that apply)	#	%
INCOME ASSISTANCE	67	46.5%
DISABILITY BENEFIT	21	14.6%
INFORMAL EMPLOYMENT	15	10.4%
SENIORS BENEFIT	15	10.4%
FORMAL EMPLOYMENT	12	8.3%
EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE	4	2.8%
OTHER SOURCES	4	2.8%
CHILD TAX BENEFITS	2	1.4%
FAMILY AND FRIENDS	2	1.4%
NO INCOME SOURCES	25	17.4%

IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS HAVE YOU EVER...	#	%
BEEN HOSPITALIZED	56	39.4%
BEEN TO A HOSPITAL ER	100	70.9%
HAD POLICE INTERACTIONS	72	52.6%
BEEN TO PRISON/JAIL	42	29.8%

WHAT DO YOU THINK IS KEEPING YOU FROM FINDING HOUSING? (Select all that apply)	#	%
LOW INCOME	80	55.6%
RENTS TOO HIGH	56	38.9%
MENTAL HEALTH	37	25.7%
OTHER	35	24.3%
HEALTH/DISABILITY	22	15.3%
NO IA	19	13.2%
FAMILY BREAKDOWN/ CONFLICT	18	12.5%
POOR HOUSING CONDITIONS	17	11.8%
ADDICTION	16	11.1%
DISCRIMINATION	12	8.3%
CRIMINAL HISTORY	11	7.6%
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE	6	4.2%
PETS	4	2.8%
DOESN'T WANT HOUSING CHILDREN	4	2.8%
	2	1.4%

RECODED VARIABLES

BINARY GENDER (For comparative gender analysis)	#	%
MALE	96	68.1%
FEMALE	45	31.9%
TOTAL	141	100%

NUMBER OF INCOME SOURCES (Count number of income sources)	#	%
NO INCOME SOURCES	25	17.4%
1 INCOME SOURCE	97	67.4%
2 + INCOME SOURCES	22	15.3%
TOTAL	144	100%

NUMBER OF REASONS FOR MOST RECENT HOMELESSNESS (Count number of reasons)	#	%
NO REASONS INDICATED	4	2.8%
1 REASON INDICATED	87	60%
2 REASONS INDICATED	33	22.8%
3 + REASONS INDICATED	21	14.5%
TOTAL	145	100%

NUMBER OF REASONS FOR MOST RECENT HOMELESSNESS (Count number of reasons)	#	%
NO BARRIERS IDENTIFIED	7	4.9%
1 BARRIER IDENTIFIED	58	40.3%
2-4 BARRIERS IDENTIFIED	62	43.1%
5 + BARRIERS IDENTIFIED	17	11.8%
TOTAL	144	100%

TYPES OF HOUSING BARRIERS RECODED	#	%
AFFORDABILITY (Low Income; No IA; Rents too high; Poor housing)	102	70.3%
HEALTH (Health/Disability issues; Mental Health issues; Addiction)	51	35.2%
HOME CONFLICT (Domestic violence; Family breakdown/ conflict)	19	13.1%
DISCRIMINATION (Discrimination; Criminal history; Pets; Children)	24	16.6%

