



Hastings County

# Homeless Enumeration Report

November 2021

Prepared by Bridge Street United Church

  
**Hastings County**  
*Supporting People & Our Communities*



# Hastings County Homeless Enumeration Report 2021

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Thank you to the numerous volunteers, staff, and community agencies whose contributions are the reason for the success of this enumeration. Thanks most of all to those who participated in the survey, whose lives and stories are reflected in these pages.

The November 2021 Homeless Enumeration was led by staff of Hastings County Community and Human Services. Data analysis and reporting was completed by Bridge Street United Church.

Report layout and design completed by Redbrick Communications.

# Introduction

Homeless enumeration is a community-level count and survey of people experiencing homelessness at a particular point in time.

As part of the Provincial government's efforts to end chronic homelessness, the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing required Service Managers to conduct local enumeration of people experiencing homelessness in 2021.

Homeless enumeration provides a snapshot of homelessness in Hastings County on a single night. This information can be used to:

- **Improve our understanding of homelessness** in Hastings County, including changes from previous enumerations.
- Inform efforts by community-based organizations, health and social service providers, and municipalities to meet the **immediate needs of people experiencing homelessness**.
- Inform service coordination efforts to **streamline service responses and improve client outcomes**.
- Inform system planning and **development of long-term strategies** to prevent and reduce homelessness in Hastings County.
- **Inform governments and policy makers** about the importance of continued investments from all levels of government to develop the continuum of housing and support services required to prevent and reduce homelessness in Hastings County.

Homeless enumeration was successfully conducted in communities across Hastings County on November 15, 2021, with the participation of numerous Hastings County staff, community agencies, and volunteers. Results of this enumeration of homelessness are presented in this report.



# Key Findings

**237**  
people

were homeless in Hastings County on the night of November 15, 2021.

**98**  
people

were chronically homeless; 69 people had been homeless all year.

**26**  
children

Ten families experiencing homelessness participated in the survey, who collectively were caretakers of 26 children.

**3-4x**

Indigenous people are three to four times more likely to experience homelessness than non-Indigenous people in Hastings County.

**2x**

Respondents in Bancroft were nearly twice as likely to have been homeless all year compared to other communities.

**41%**

of respondents first experienced homelessness as children or youth (aged 0-24).

**76%**

of respondents reported relying on social assistance as their primary source of income.

**95%**

of those surveyed said they want to get into permanent housing.



Housing affordability was identified as a top barrier to finding permanent housing.

# Method

Homeless enumeration using the Point-in-Time (PiT) Count method was completed in communities across Hastings County on November 15, 2021 by Hastings County staff, community agencies, and volunteers. The enumeration measured several types of homelessness:

**Unsheltered:** People staying in public places (e.g. street, park, forest, bus shelter) or places not intended for living in (e.g. car, truck, trailer, abandoned building).

**Emergency sheltered:** People staying in emergency homeless shelters and domestic violence shelters.

**Provisionally accommodated:** People living in temporary accommodations with no guarantee of how long they may stay. This included:

- Transitional housing programs that provide non-permanent, supported housing to assist people in transitioning from unsheltered or emergency sheltered homelessness to permanent housing
- People living temporarily with others, with no guarantee they can stay there and without the immediate prospect of permanent housing (often referred to as hidden homelessness).

Teams of volunteers walked pre-determined routes throughout Belleville, Quinte West, Madoc, Bancroft and Deseronto in the late afternoon and evening of November 15. Community agencies throughout Hastings County served as host locations where people experiencing homelessness could attend in person to participate in the survey. Staff from various community organizations conducted surveys with their clients who were experiencing homelessness, or assisted them in participating in the survey. Administrative data was used to include in the count individuals who were known to be experiencing homelessness but who did not participate in the survey.

Communications were sent to community agencies throughout Hastings County in the weeks leading up to enumeration to spread the word, in an effort to maximize participation. A media release was sent out one week before the count to alert community members that the count was taking place, and to encourage participation. Information and training sessions were held in October for enumeration stakeholders, staff, and volunteers.

The enumeration survey tool included 17 provincially-mandated data points along with several community-defined questions intended to inform local program development and service system planning.

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## Impact of COVID-19

Enumeration was conducted in full compliance with COVID-19 safety protocols. The pandemic has strained staff capacity at many community agencies serving people experiencing homelessness, resulting in fewer staff resources available to assist with planning and implementing enumeration. Online training of staff and volunteers conducting the survey may have affected data quality for questions that are more difficult to administer. Limitations to in-person access to various programs due to COVID-19 safety measures remained in place at the time of enumeration which may have reduced participation in the survey.

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All surveys were completed anonymously. Participants were issued a \$20 Tim Hortons gift card as an honorarium to acknowledge their participation.

Following the enumeration survey, participants were asked if they would like to be included on the newly developed By-Names List, with written informed consent. The By-Names List includes names, contact information, and details about the service needs of people experiencing homelessness who would like to receive assistance to connect with services and supports.

Hastings County staff received support and guidance in planning enumeration from the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, Prince Edward Lennox & Addington Social Services staff, and community organizations in Hastings County with prior experience leading PiT Counts.

## **Comparison of homeless enumeration data**

Point-in-Time Counts were conducted in April 2018 in various communities in Hastings County, and again in April 2021 in the City of Belleville only, in response to provincial and federal government requirements.

In this report, comparison to previous PiT Counts is presented where possible but is limited by a number of variables, including the time elapsed between counts, relatively small sample sizes, communities surveyed, methodological differences, and the impacts of the pandemic. Comparisons should therefore be made with these variables in mind.

Comparisons cannot be made to 2018 enumeration data for North Hastings or Central Hastings, as these were not considered a reliable representation of homelessness in these communities at that time.

A notable difference between the 2018 and 2021 counts is the number of individuals identified and surveys completed in Central and North Hastings. This indicates increased participation by individuals experiencing homelessness in these communities, therefore providing a more realistic snapshot of homelessness than has previously been available.

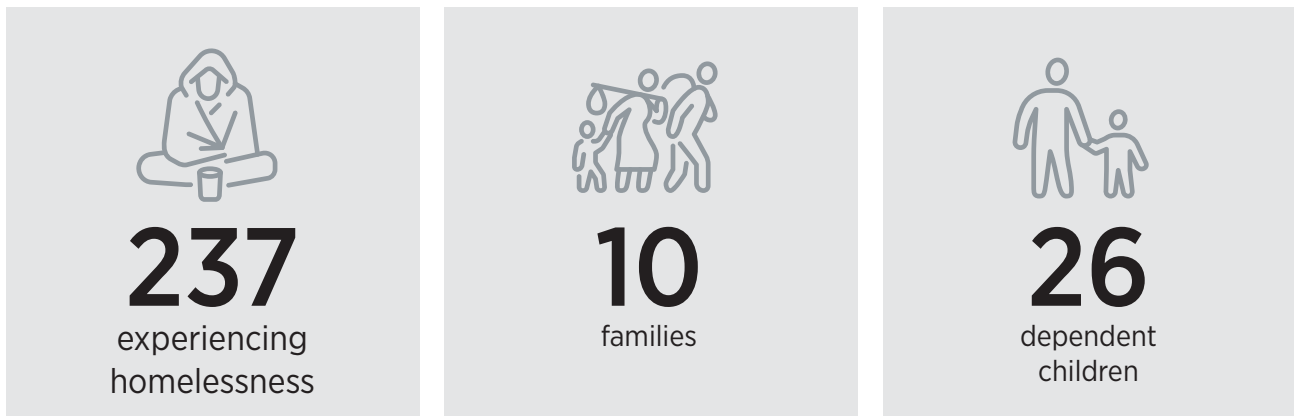
Similarly, the number of surveys completed in Belleville was lower than in April 2021, though information from service providers suggests there has not been a significant change to the unhoused population. The same is true when comparing the number of surveys completed in Quinte West in 2021 and 2018.

The PiT Count method is more likely to survey those experiencing chronic homelessness, and is not designed to accurately estimate the number of people experiencing hidden homelessness. Differences in how the PiT Count method was applied in each count likely accounts for a reasonable amount of the variance between enumeration data sets – that is, differences in results may be due to sampling error rather than representing real changes in the population.

# Results

## Number of people and type of homelessness

A minimum of 237 people were experiencing homelessness in Hastings County during the November 2021 Homeless Enumeration, including 10 families with 26 dependent children.



### Number of people and type of homelessness by community

	Bancroft	Belleville	Madoc	Quinte West	TOTAL
<b>Unsheltered</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>49</b>
- Unsheltered in a public space (e.g. street, park, bus shelter, forest, abandoned building)	4	22	0	4	30
- Encampment (group of tents)	2	3	1	0	6
- Vehicle (e.g. car, van, trailer)	11	1	0	1	13
<b>Emergency Sheltered</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Provisionally Accommodated</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>109</b>
- Transitional Housing	0	29	0	0	29
- Hidden Homeless	30	34	5	10	79
- Institutional	1	0	0	0	1
<b>Undetermined</b> Responses not recorded, or identified through administrative data	<b>0</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>237</b>



## ■ Type of homelessness

**49** people

were unsheltered, staying in outdoor public places or sheltered places not intended for human habitation.

**37** individuals

were staying in emergency shelters (Grace Inn or Three Oaks).

**29** people

were in transitional housing programs.

**79** people

reported staying temporarily with others, commonly referred to as hidden homelessness.

**1** person

reported staying in an institutional setting (e.g. hospital, jail, treatment centre).

**42** individuals

for whom type of homelessness could not be determined because their response was not recorded on the survey.

## ■ Comparing number and type of homelessness

As noted previously, we must exercise caution when comparing data from previous PiT Counts to this one. Differences in the number of people and types of homelessness are likely due to differences in how the counts were implemented.

We know that there are a relatively constant number of emergency shelter and transitional housing program spaces in Hastings County. We also rely on the knowledge and experience of service providers and community members who actively work with individuals and families experiencing homelessness, and of community members with lived experience of homelessness. With this in mind, the higher numbers recorded within the three completed counts are probably the more accurate.

For example, the number of surveys conducted in Bancroft in November 2021 (48) is substantially higher than in 2018 (10). Based on community and service provider knowledge, this likely reflects an increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness in Bancroft over this period of time. However, the 2018 PiT Count results in Bancroft were not considered reliable, therefore the magnitude of this increase in homelessness cannot be determined by comparing enumeration results.



Similarly, the April 2021 PiT Count in the City of Belleville identified a substantial increase in homelessness compared to 2018. The PiT Count method was applied consistently between those counts, notwithstanding the pandemic environment at the time of the April 2021 PiT Count. This likely indicates a real increase in the number of people experiencing unsheltered and emergency sheltered homelessness.

The April 2021 PiT Count is therefore considered more accurate for unsheltered, transitionally housed, and hidden homelessness in the City of Belleville, while the November 2021 Homeless Enumeration is considered more accurate for Emergency Sheltered homelessness. This is likely related to variables like the time of year the PiT was undertaken, the close proximity to the April 2021 PiT Count, and the COVID-19 environment.

In all three enumerations, hidden homelessness made up the largest proportion of those experiencing homelessness. Hidden homelessness is estimated to account for up to 80 percent of all homelessness in Canada, especially in rural and small urban communities. It is therefore an important part of understanding and addressing homelessness in Hastings County, though the PiT Count methodology is not designed to accurately enumerate hidden homelessness. As with previous PiT Counts, the present results are expected to be a significant undercount of those experiencing hidden homelessness in Hastings County.

## ■ Family homelessness

Ten families experiencing homelessness participated in the survey, who collectively identified as caretakers of 26 children.



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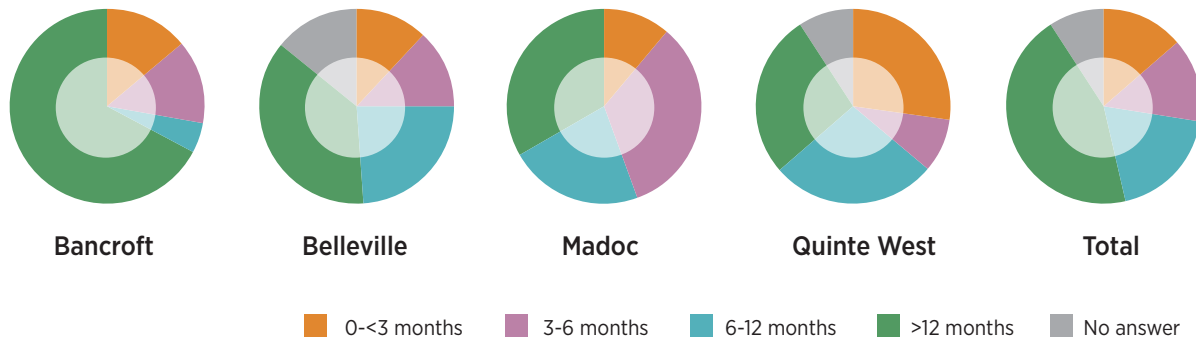
**There is no emergency homeless shelter for families in Hastings County.**

Three Oaks provides shelter and transitional housing for women and families fleeing domestic violence. About half of the families experiencing homelessness were currently staying with others, while the remaining half were in emergency shelter or transitional settings, or were living in a vehicle.



## Length of time experiencing homelessness

The following charts illustrate the length of time respondents had experienced homelessness in the past 12 months, by community.

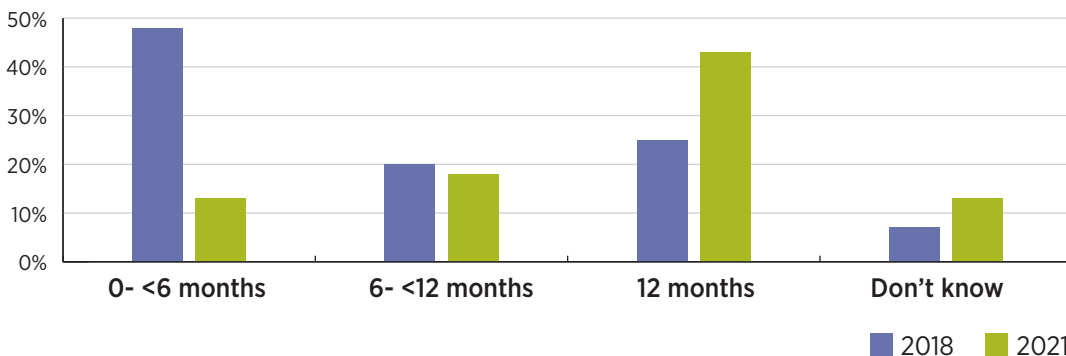


Ninety-eight people, or 60 percent of all respondents, were chronically homeless, meaning they had experienced homelessness for six months or more within the past year. Seventy percent of those experiencing chronic homelessness – 69 people, or 43 percent of all survey respondents – reported being unhoused for at least 12 months. Respondents in Bancroft were more likely to be chronically homeless and were nearly twice as likely to have been homeless all year compared to respondents in other communities.

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

The proportion of survey respondents experiencing chronic homelessness in Hastings County increased from 45 percent in 2018 to 60 percent in 2021. A similar trend was observed by comparing 2018 and April 2021 PIT Count results in the City of Belleville only. This suggests that the present result isn't attributed to a difference in sampling alone (e.g. a greater number of surveys from Bancroft where individuals were more likely to be chronically homeless), and likely reflects a real growth in chronic homelessness in Hastings County.

### Length of time spent homeless, Hastings County 2018 and 2021

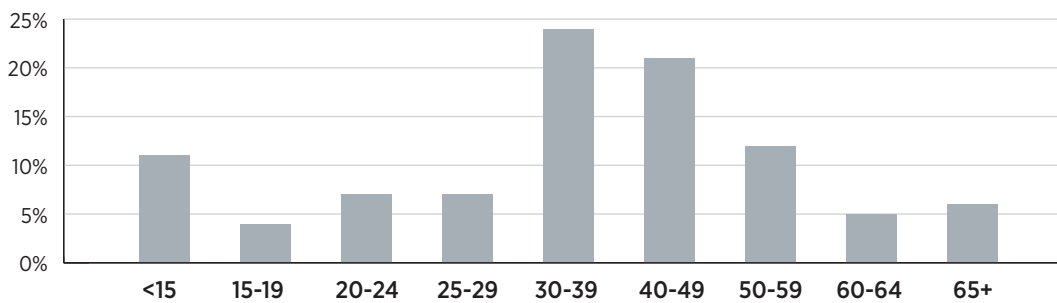


# Demographic characteristics

## ■ Age

The age of respondents ranged from infants experiencing family homelessness to 85 years, with a median age of 37. As in past enumerations, the largest proportion of respondents were adults aged 30-49, making up 45 percent of all respondents. The age distribution is consistent with past PiT Count results and national trends.

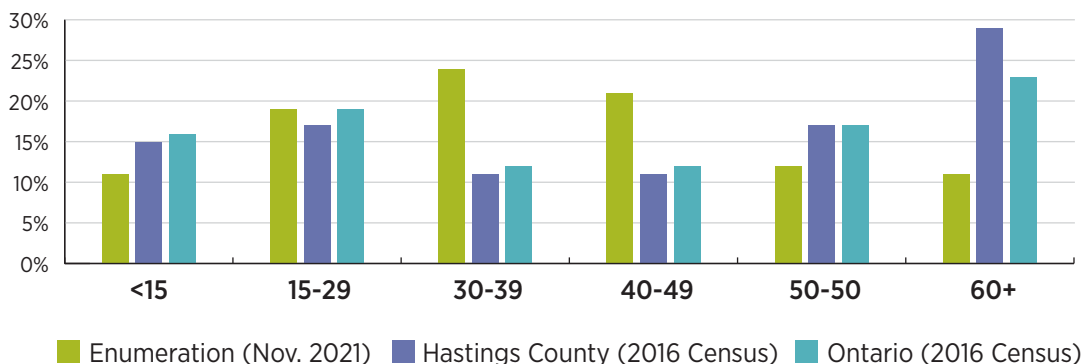
### Ages of individuals experiencing homelessness



Adults aged 30-49 continue to be significantly overrepresented in the population experiencing homelessness in Hastings County, while older adults (50-59 and 60+) are less likely to be experiencing homelessness.

Youth appear to be under-represented compared to the general population of Hastings County. However, it is likely that youth are under-sampled in this enumeration – that is, that youth homelessness is underestimated due to limitations of how the enumeration was conducted. This has been a challenge in past PiT Counts as well. Youth participation may be encouraged in future enumerations through targeted engagement with youth-focused programs (e.g. drop-ins, diversion and early interventions programs) and public systems (e.g. education, children’s services, justice, etc.).

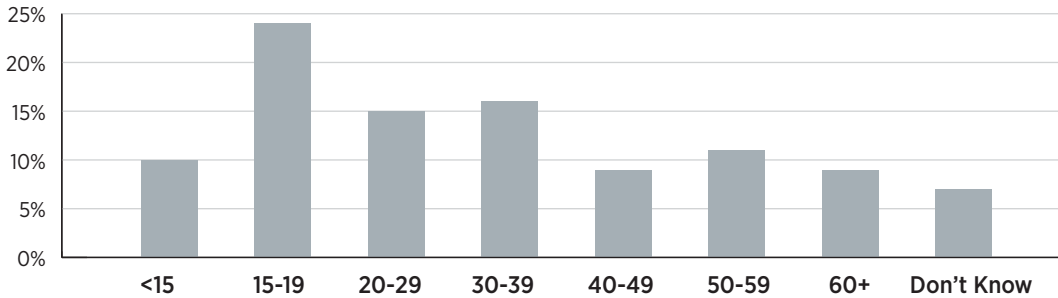
### Age distribution of Enumeration, Hastings County, and Ontario populations



## ■ Age at first experience of homelessness

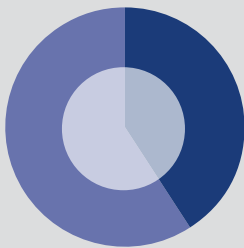
Forty-one percent of respondents first experienced homelessness as children or youth (aged 0-24), 80 percent of whom (34 percent of all respondents) first experienced homelessness as children or teens (0-19). This proportion may be understated, due to presumed under-sampling of youth experiencing homelessness.

### Age at first experience of homelessness



If dependent children identified by survey respondents – who are currently experiencing homelessness – are included, the proportion of those who first experienced homelessness as children or youth increases to 49 percent.

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. Successive PiT Counts in Hastings County have shown that a high proportion of those currently experienced homelessness had their first experience of homelessness as children or youth. This underscores the importance of a targeted strategy to prevent and reduce youth homelessness in Hastings County.



**41%**  
of respondents first experienced homelessness as children or youth.

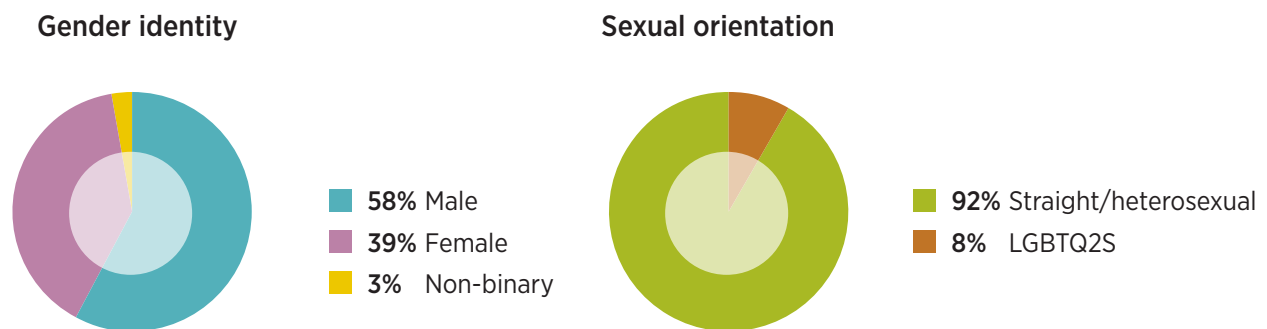


**45%**  
of respondents were aged 30-49, and are significantly overrepresented in the population experiencing homelessness.

## ■ 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.

Fifty-eight percent of respondents identified as male (cis-gender), 39 percent as female (cis-gender), and three percent identified as gender diverse (not cis-gender). Ninety-two percent of respondents identified as straight/heterosexual, and eight percent identified as LGBTQ2S. These results are consistent with previous PiT Counts in Hastings County and national PiT Count statistics.



Understanding gender identity and sexual orientation in the unhoused population provides insight into the diverse needs of people experiencing homelessness in our community.

For example, women often have different pathways into homelessness, and are more vulnerable to mistreatment and exploitation when experiencing homelessness compared to men. Research suggests that women are less likely to access services in the homeless-serving system, 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 or family breakdown. National data show that people who identify as LGBTQ2S, regardless of age, are overrepresented among those experiencing homelessness, and experience discrimination more often than those who identify as heterosexual.<sup>2</sup>

Information about gender identity and sexual orientation from successive PiT Counts in Hastings County show the importance of equitable and appropriate services that address these specific causes and experiences of homelessness.

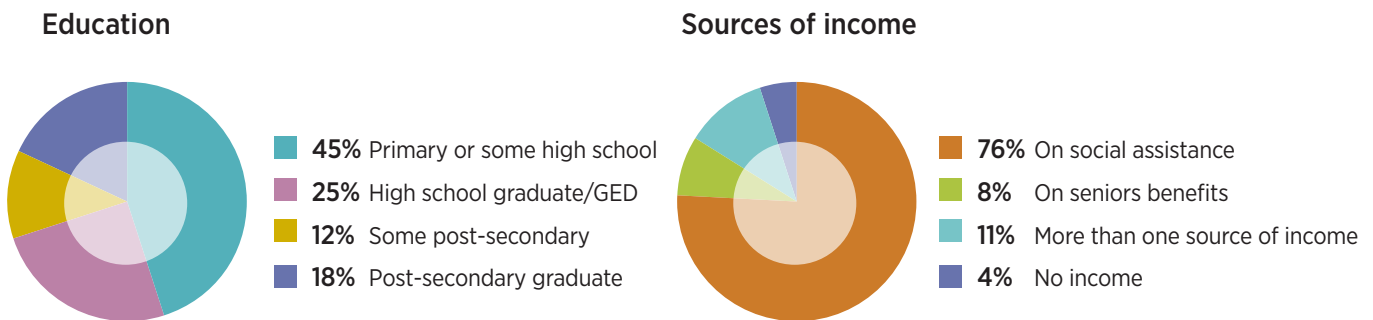
<sup>1</sup> Women’s National Housing and Homelessness Network, “Women & Girls’ Homelessness in Canada.”

<sup>2</sup> Homeless Hub, “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Queer, Questioning and Two-Spirit (LGBTQ2S).”

## ■ Level of education

The figure below shows highest level of education achieved among those experiencing homelessness. Nearly half of respondents (45%) had not completed high school, double that of the general population in Hastings County (22%). One in six individuals currently experiencing homelessness (18%) is a post-secondary graduate. These results are similar to the 2018 homeless enumeration in Hastings County.

Along with the age at first experience of homelessness, educational attainment demonstrates the importance of a targeted approach to prevent and reduce youth homelessness in Hastings County. Primary and secondary schools are important settings to identify and support students who are at risk of homelessness and could become key stakeholders in a youth-focused homelessness prevention and early intervention strategy.



## ■ Sources of income

Seventy-six percent of respondents reported relying on social assistance as their primary source of income. Fifteen individuals (9%) reported employment income and 12 individuals (8%) reported relying on seniors benefits. All other responses were selected by fewer than 10 respondents. Eighteen respondents (11%) identified more than one source of income; seven individuals (4%) reported having no income.

The high proportion of respondents who rely on social assistance reinforces the importance of these programs for supporting vulnerable populations. It also demonstrates that current social assistance amounts are too low to support sustained exits from homelessness.

Social assistance refers to both Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). A number of surveys had both OW and ODSP selected, despite the fact that individuals cannot receive both. This may have been due to confusion in how the response options were worded. Previous PiT Counts in Hastings County show that more respondents who relied on social assistance were in receipt of ODSP than OW.

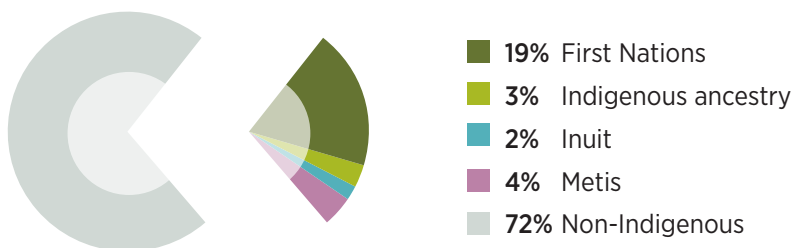
## ■ Indigenous people/Indigenous identity

Twenty-eight percent of respondents experiencing homelessness in Hastings County identified as Indigenous. People experiencing homelessness in Bancroft were twice as likely to identify as Indigenous (44%) than those in other communities in Hastings County (22%).

The proportion of respondents identifying as Indigenous is higher than previous PiT Counts, in which 20-25 percent of respondents identified as Indigenous. This is due to the higher number of surveys completed in Bancroft compared to the 2018 enumeration, and is therefore a more reliable result.

In the 2016 Census, seven percent of the population of Hastings County identified as Indigenous (13% in North Hastings). It is clear from successive homeless enumerations that Indigenous people are significantly overrepresented among those experiencing homelessness in Hastings County: Indigenous people are three to four times more likely to experience homelessness than non-Indigenous people in Hastings County.

### Indigenous identity



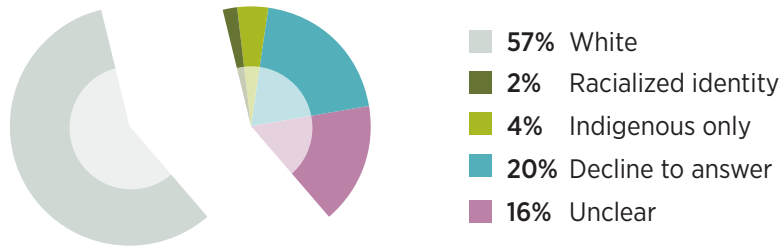
The April and November 2021 counts show that Indigenous people experiencing homelessness in Hastings County are not only from nearby First Nations, or the Huron-Wendat, Anishnaabe, and Haudenosaunee peoples whose traditional lands overlap with the colonial boundaries of Hastings County.

These findings demonstrate the importance of providing programs and services that are informed by the cultural protocols and practices of the traditional land keepers and the diverse Indigenous peoples living in Hastings County, with leadership from Indigenous people. In developing a meaningful response to Indigenous homelessness, it is important to consider the ongoing legacy of colonialism and the impact of intergenerational trauma on Indigenous communities, and to understand why some Indigenous people may feel cautious when engaging with institutions.



## ■ Racialized identity

### 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 (89%), while 11 percent indicated a racialized or Indigenous-only identity.

A large proportion of survey participants did not provide a response: 20 percent of respondents indicated “Don’t know” or “Decline to answer”, and another 16 percent of surveys had a blank response. This is consistent with the April 2021 PiT Count, and is likely due to the confusing wording and presentation of the Reaching Home-mandated question.

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 risk factors for housing instability and homelessness in Canada. Collecting race-based data among people experiencing homelessness helps promote responses to homelessness that are equitable and meet the diverse needs of individuals.

Continuing to collect race-based data within the homeless-serving system in Hastings County will help to address these data gaps and promote equitable responses to homelessness.

## ■ Foster care and youth group home experience

Nearly one-third of respondents had experience in the foster care system and/or a youth group home. This is consistent with the 2018 enumeration (29%) and somewhat higher than the April 2021 PiT Count in Belleville (21%).

Evidence shows that youth with foster care or group home experience have a higher risk of homelessness than youth without such experience.<sup>3</sup> Youth with foster care or group home experience are therefore an important target population to consider in a youth-focused homelessness prevention and early intervention strategy for Hastings County.

## ■ Veteran homelessness

Eight respondents reported having served in the Canadian military or RCMP, all of whom were surveyed in Belleville. This supports the April 2021 PiT Count results which identified 12 veterans experiencing homelessness in Belleville.

Those who have served in the Canadian military or RCMP may be entitled to specific benefits. Targeted interventions to address veteran homelessness are an increasingly important part of efforts to prevent and reduce homelessness in Canada.

## ■ Immigrants, refugees, and newcomers

Fewer than five individuals experiencing homelessness reported that they had come to Canada as immigrants or refugees; all had been in Canada for more than 25 years.

As with previous PiT Counts in Hastings County, these results suggest that immigrants, refugees, and newcomers may be underrepresented in the unhoused population, or that they were not identified by the PiT Count methodology. Future enumerations of homelessness should ensure the survey methodology is appropriate to reach immigrant, refugee, and newcomer populations, to ensure accurate results.



<sup>3</sup> Canadian Observatory on Homelessness & A Way Home Canada, Child Welfare and Youth Homelessness in Canada: A Proposal for Action, 2017.

## ■ Length of time in Hastings County

Most respondents had lived in Hastings County for a long period of time; two-thirds indicated that they had lived in Hastings County for more than ten years (23%) or had always lived here (43%).



66%

**had lived in Hastings County for more than 10 years.**

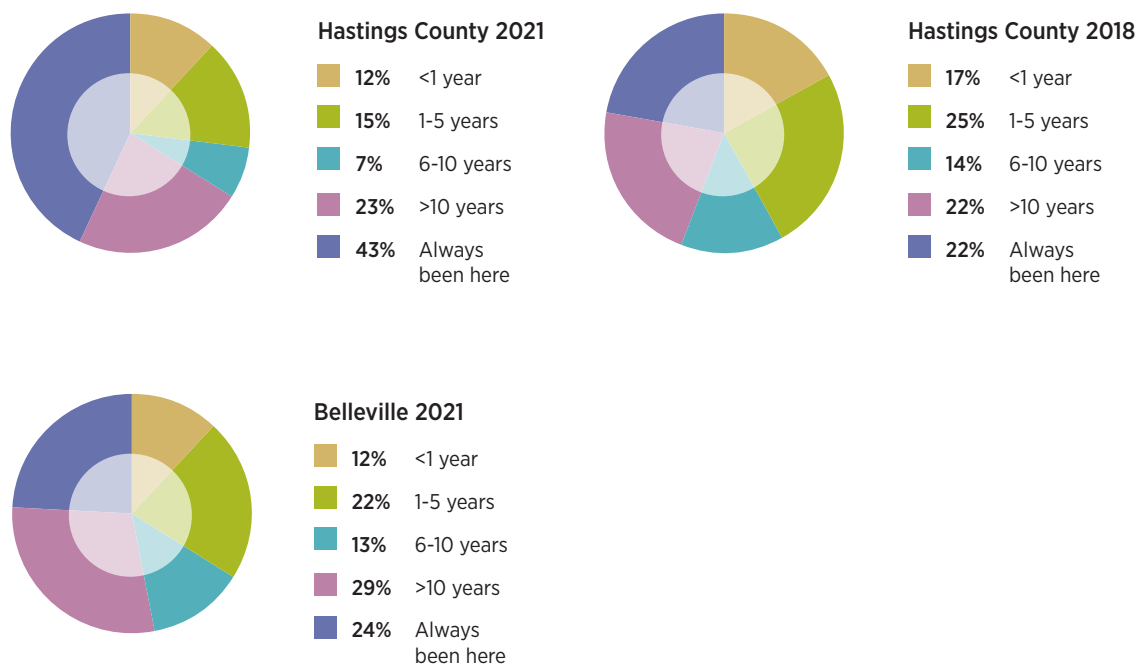
A large proportion of survey participants reported having been in Hastings County for a decade or more, consistent with previous PiT Counts.

The proportion of respondents who had lived in Hastings County for less than one year is similar across all Counts.

The proportion of respondents who said they had always lived in Hastings County increased substantially from past enumerations. This change is not explained by differences between communities in Hastings County, nor the increased number of surveys completed in Bancroft; the length of time distributions for Belleville and Bancroft are very similar (Madoc and Quinte West were excluded from community-level analysis due to small numbers). It is possible that the difference is due to the PiT Count method: those who have been in Hastings County a longer time were much more likely to be chronically homeless, and PiT Counts are known to oversample chronic homelessness.



## Length of time living in Hastings County and Belleville, 2018 and 2021



Thirty-four respondents who had been in Hastings County for five years or less identified the community in which they lived prior to coming to Hastings County. Half of respondents came from an adjacent municipality (24%) or nearby city (Kingston or Peterborough; 26%), and one third (35%) came from other locations within Ontario. The remainder had previously lived outside of Ontario (12%) or had moved within Hastings County, as indicated by three percent of those surveyed.

## Reasons for coming to Hastings County

The most common reasons given for coming to Hastings County, regardless of how long an individual had lived here, were to be near family or because of historical connections to the area (59%). Fourteen percent of respondents reported they came looking for services or supports, and 15 percent said they came to find housing or employment. Five respondents (6%) reported coming for personal reasons (e.g. because they liked the area, to attend school, etc.). These results are very similar to previous PiT Counts, suggesting that reasons for coming to Hastings County are unrelated to changes in the homeless-serving system between 2018 and 2021.

# Experiences of homelessness

## ■ Emergency Shelter Use

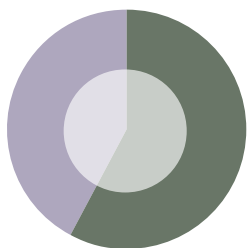
Forty-one percent of respondents said that they had used an emergency homeless shelter in the past 12 months; this applies to shelters in any community within or outside of Hastings County. This is similar to the April 2021 PiT Count in Belleville, where 49 percent of respondents reported that they had used an emergency shelter. There was no emergency homeless shelter in Hastings County in 2018.

### Reasons for not using shelter

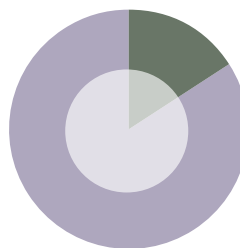


Not surprisingly, those in Belleville were twice as likely to have used an emergency shelter than those outside of Belleville, indicating that geographic proximity to an emergency shelter is directly related to use. A number of individuals identified geographic access or lack of transportation as reasons for not accessing an emergency shelter in the past 12 months.

### Shelter use by Community



**Shelter use in Belleville**  
 ■ 58% Yes  
 ■ 42% No



**Shelter use outside of Belleville**  
 ■ 16% Yes  
 ■ 84% No

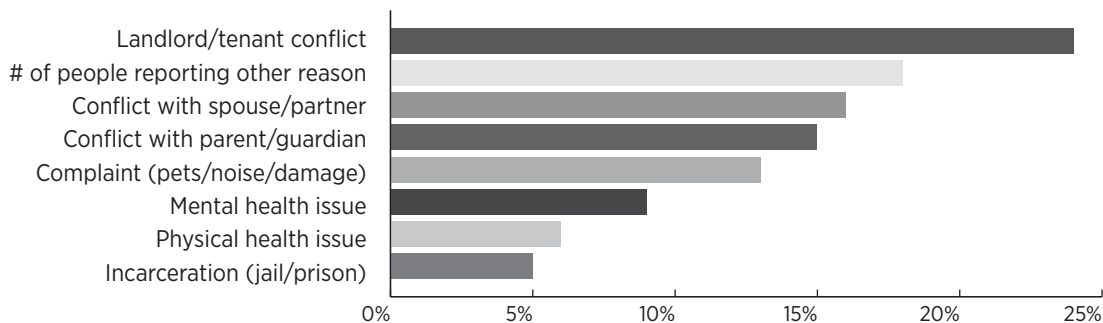
## Reasons for housing loss and barriers to housing

A range of reasons were given for most recent loss of housing, with no single reason being identified by more than 24 percent of respondents. The most common reasons were housing and financial issues (57%), followed by interpersonal and family issues (30%) and health or corrections issues (13%).

“Landlord/tenant conflict” (24%) was the most common reason for loss of housing, followed by “Not enough income for housing” (19%). This is somewhat different than previous enumerations: “Not enough income for housing” was cited most frequently, and by slightly higher proportions of respondents, in both the April 2021 PiT Count (26%) and 2018 PiT Count (25%). “Landlord/tenant conflict” was cited by only 12 percent of respondents in April 2021, and by two percent in 2018.

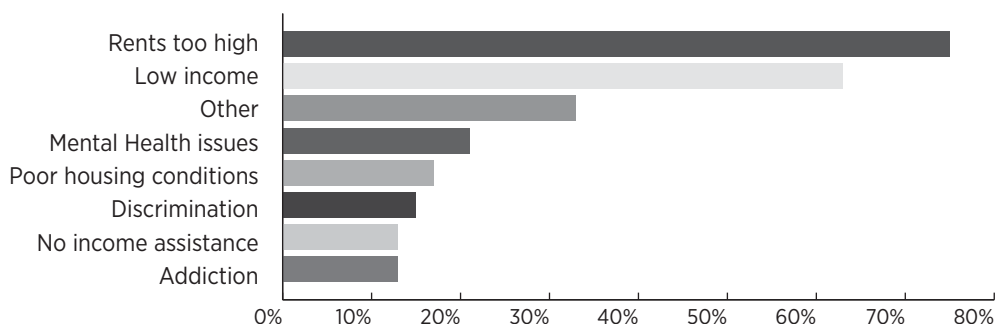
Possible reasons for these differences are unclear from the data. It is not surprising that the intertwined issues of income and housing affordability would continue to be significant factors in reasons for housing loss; this has been a consistent theme in issues of housing and homelessness in Hastings County for many years. Landlord/tenant conflict may indicate an increased need for prevention and early intervention activities, including legal remedies where indicated, to prevent loss of housing.

### Reasons for most recent housing loss



Housing affordability was the most commonly identified barrier to finding housing. Lack of housing available was similarly high in the 2018 PiT Count, but was not included as a regular response option in 2021.

### Barriers to finding permanent housing



## ■ How might someone become homeless?

Homelessness sometimes occurs when a person experiences an “individual factor” within the context of a “structural factor”.

<b>Individual Factors</b>	<b>Structural Factors</b>
<b>personal crisis</b> <b>interpersonal conflict</b> <b>education</b> <b>employment barriers</b> <b>health issues</b> <b>history of trauma</b>	<b>affordable housing</b> <b>job market trends</b> <b>poverty</b> <b>social assistance amounts</b> <b>racial discrimination</b>

Often, structural factors are beyond a person’s control, but have a huge impact in either preventing or causing homelessness.

It is important to understand and respond appropriately to the varied pathways into and experiences of homelessness through person-centred services and service systems. Community efforts must simultaneously address both individual and structural factors in order to successfully prevent and end homelessness.

### **COVID-19 and housing loss**

Nineteen respondents (12%) said that they lost their housing most recently as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Responses to this question confirm that homelessness is a persistent issue in Hastings County that has been made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic.

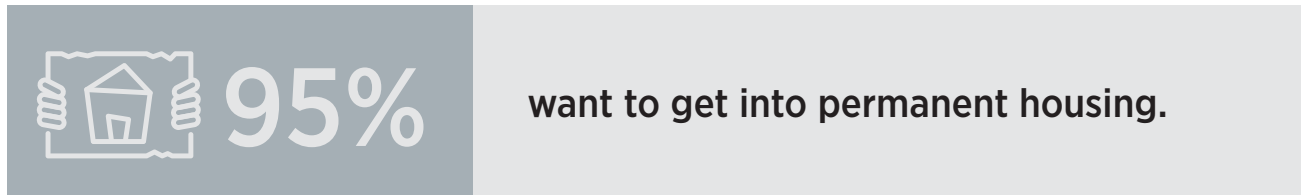
The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate effect on those experiencing homelessness, including a higher risk of COVID-19 infection, fewer options for finding shelter during the day, increased difficulty in meeting basic needs, and inequitable access to pandemic-related health information and testing.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Hastings Prince Edward Public Health, “Health Equity Impacts of COVID-19 on People Experiencing Homelessness,” 2021.



## ■ Desire for permanent housing

Nearly all respondents (95%) indicated that they want to get into permanent housing. This is consistent with previous PiT Count results, and contradicts the popular myth that many people choose to be homeless.

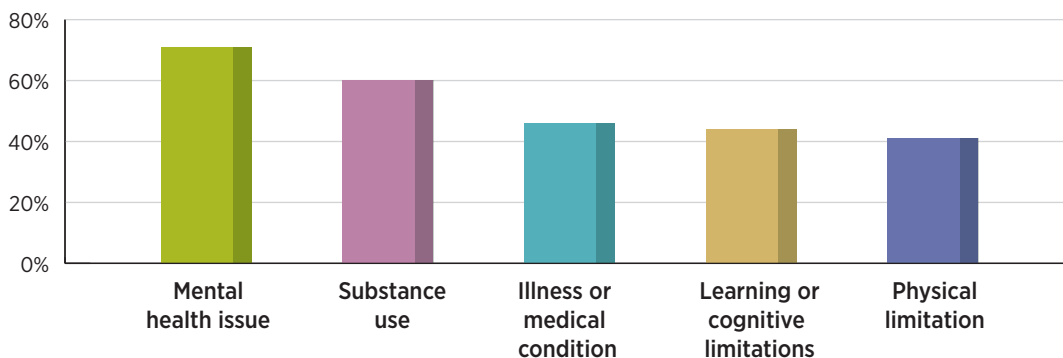


## ■ Self-reported health conditions

Survey respondents were asked whether they identified as having any of several types of health challenges. A majority of respondents (71%) identified having a mental health issue, and 60 percent reported having substance use issues. Approximately the same proportion of respondents identified as having an illness or medical condition (46%), learning or cognitive limitations (44%), and a physical limitation (41%). These proportions are slightly higher than previous PiT Counts, though the distribution by type of health condition is similar.

Health challenges, including mental health and addictions issues, 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. The results from successive homeless enumerations in Hastings County illustrate the importance of wraparound health and social supports for those who are experiencing homelessness to address immediate issues and to promote sustained exits from homelessness.

### Self-reported health conditions

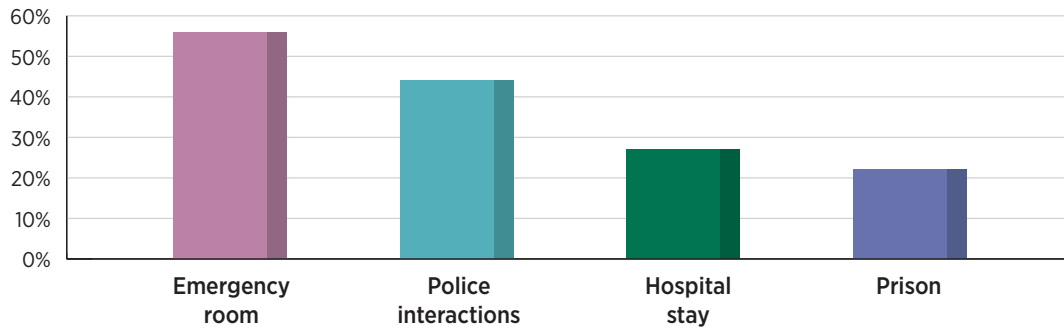


## ■ Systems use (police, hospital, corrections)

Survey respondents were asked about their use of various public systems over the past 12 months. Emergency room use (56%) and interactions with police (44%) were more common than hospital stays (27%) and incarceration (22%).

Coordination between public systems is necessary to effectively meet the needs of people experiencing homeless, and to prevent and reduce homelessness. Evidence in Canada demonstrates that providing housing with coordinated, wraparound services and supports – the Housing First model – is effective at reducing homelessness and at reducing the cost of providing emergency services to unhoused individuals through public systems. Various coordination and service integration initiatives are underway in Hastings County (e.g. Coordinated Access, Ontario Health Teams).

### Systems use by type



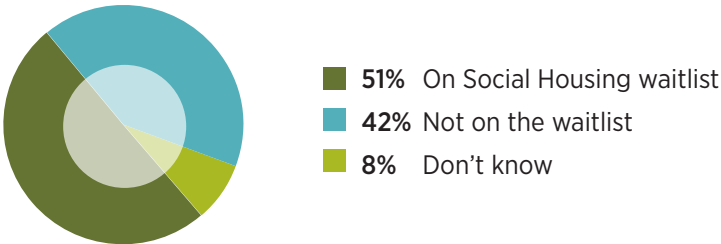
# Hastings County Social Housing

## ■ Social Housing Waitlist (status)

Half of respondents (51%) indicated that they are on the Hastings County Social Housing Waitlist; 42 percent that they are not, and eight percent did not know.

Social housing provides low-cost housing to people with low incomes at rates that are appropriate to their level of income. Social housing is one type of housing that is affordable, but it is not synonymous with “affordable housing.”

### Individuals seeking permanent housing



**2,330**  
**households**

Currently on the Centralized Social Housing Waitlist in Hastings County.

**5**  
**years**

The average wait time for all housing.

**14**  
**months**

The average wait time for those on the Priority List for housing.

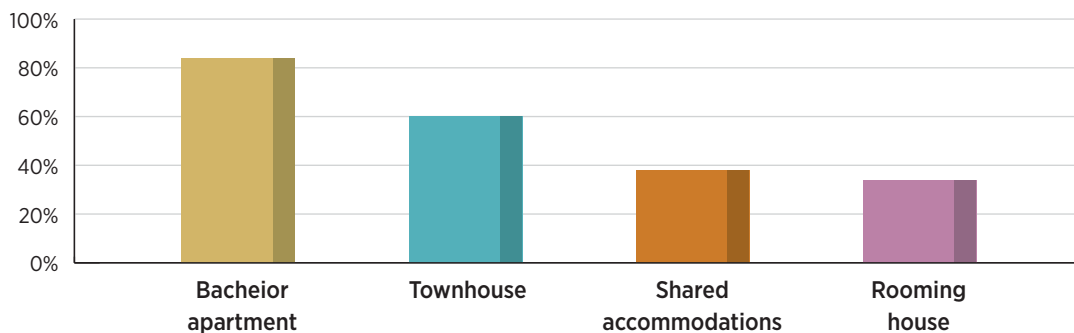
Source: Data provided by Hastings County Community and Human Health Services

## ■ Types of housing accepted

Respondents said that they would accept a variety of housing options, with bachelor apartments being the most common. This is expected, since a large proportion of respondents said they are staying alone, that is, as a one-person household. Shared accommodations and rooming houses were less preferred.

Thirty-eight people (25%) provided more than one response, and 19 people (12%) who provided “other” responses said that they would take any type of housing. As one respondent put it, “Anything to get me off the street.”

### Types of housing



## ■ Location of housing accepted

As expected, respondents preferred to accept housing in the community in which they currently live:

- 71 percent of respondents in Bancroft would prefer housing in Bancroft
- 68 percent of respondents in Belleville would prefer housing in Belleville
- 82 percent of respondents in Quinte West would prefer housing in Quinte West.

It is possible that these responses are influenced to some degree by where respondents thought it likely that they could get housing. Notably, 15 percent of all respondents said that they would accept housing in any community.

**OVER 2/3** prefer housing in their own community.

# Conclusion

The data presented in this report provides a snapshot of homelessness in Hastings County that contributes to our understanding of homelessness in our communities.

We know that at least 237 people were experiencing homelessness on the night of the survey, that 68 percent of those surveyed were chronically homeless, and that Indigenous people are greatly over-represented in the unhoused population. Almost three-quarters of respondents said they are living with a mental health issue.

In just one night, we surveyed 10 families with 26 children living unsheltered or in a house that is not their own. We understand that many adult respondents first experienced homelessness as children.

Ninety-five percent of those surveyed wish for permanent, stable housing, but a persistent lack of affordable housing is the biggest barrier. These trends are consistent across several homeless enumerations in Hastings County.

With this in mind, there are several areas where action may be considered:

- A targeted strategy to **prevent and reduce youth homelessness**.
- **Indigenous-led development of services and supports** to meet the unique needs of Indigenous people who are experiencing homelessness.
- **Action to prevent and reduce chronic homelessness**, including continued development of a continuum of housing resources and strategic coordination of wraparound supports.
- **Action to reduce hidden homelessness**, which makes up a significant proportion of all homelessness in Hastings County.
- Continued attention to the **housing affordability and availability** as primary barriers to housing stability.

Communities across Canada are seeing success in their efforts to address homelessness through collective community action, with support from multiple levels of government. Preventing, reducing, and even ending homelessness in Hastings County is possible. Our hope is this enumeration will support efforts toward achieving these goals.



Housing affordability was identified as a top barrier to finding permanent housing.

