

“LET'S MAKE IT COUNT”

“We are committed to the provision and promotion of services that assist individuals in attaining an optimum quality of life and that contribute to the well-being of the community.”



District of Parry Sound Homelessness Enumeration 2018

Background

On December 06, 2016 the Promoting Affordable Housing Act was passed to amend the Housing Services Act, 2011, requiring Service Managers across the province to conduct a homelessness enumeration of their service area every two years beginning in 2018. This task aligns with the Province's efforts to end chronic homelessness by 2025.

The District of Parry Sound's local enumeration was used to measure the number of people experiencing homelessness district wide. This information will enhance our understanding of the scale and nature of homelessness within the District of Parry Sound.

The District of Parry Sound's 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Plan (2013) indicates a strong need for data. We recognize that the need for consistent and accurate data at both the provincial and district level is necessary in order to effectively work toward ending homelessness. With these ideas in mind, we set out to plan and facilitate an inclusive and informational homelessness enumeration aiming to meet the following ministerial objectives:

- “To provide a snapshot of homelessness, including information on the scope and nature of homelessness in the District of Parry Sound;
- To provide a mechanism for tracking progress and trends, including:
 - Establishing a baseline sample that can be used to track progress in reducing homelessness and chronic homelessness over time.
 - Enabling provincial reporting on the problem of homelessness.
 - Providing data that we can use to monitor the impact of local strategies and initiatives.
- To provide information to drive change, spur innovation and enable continuous improvement. Data gathered through enumeration can provide information about whether programs and initiatives are having the desired impact on homelessness.”¹

Methodology: Period Prevalence Count (PPC)

We completed the enumeration process operating under the following definition of homelessness:

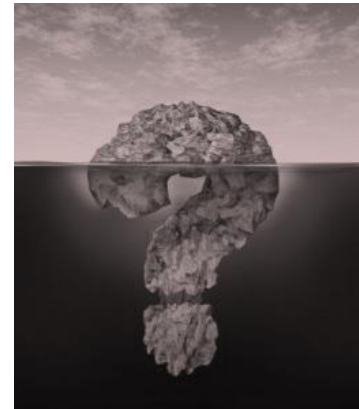
An individual or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. Homelessness describes a range of housing and shelter circumstances, with people being without any shelter at one end and being insecurely housed on the other.



¹ Ministry of Housing. *Guidelines for Service Manager Homeless Enumeration*, p. 3.

Communities in Northern Ontario face additional challenges in the planning and implementation of homelessness enumeration counts. We are less likely to see the typical homelessness patterns of living in open spaces, under bridges or on park benches. Homelessness within the District of Parry Sound is typically hidden, involving couch surfing, transitional housing and utilizing emergency hotel/motel services.

“One study in Vancouver projected that 3.5 homeless people are hidden for every one person on the street and in shelters. It is understood that the vast majority of people experiencing homelessness – up to 80 per cent – are hidden, while the 20 per cent who are visible on streets and in shelters represent only the tip of the iceberg”



-Wellesley Institute. (2010). Precarious housing in Canada. Toronto

For these reasons we made the decision to move forward with a Period Prevalence Count method for our enumeration. Period Prevalence Counts provide a greater opportunity to learn about Northern Ontario’s homelessness than would be possible using a 24 hour Point in Time count. A PPC provides enumeration over a period of seven days. These seven days involve multiple events in different locations across the district, including but not limited to, food banks, community meals and nursing stations. These events are more likely to catch cases of hidden homelessness because people have increased opportunity to participate over the 7 days compared to the 24 hours of a point in time count. The longer period of time allows for word of mouth to spread in the community and encourages additional participation.

The following chart shows our enumeration event schedule for the week of May 23-May 29, 2018. In addition to these locations the Parry Sound Friendship Centre, The Parry Sound and Almaguin Highlands High schools, Parry Sound & South River DSSAB offices and our homelessness prevention team were available to complete surveys daily:

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday
Argyle Nursing Station	Rosseau Nursing Station	Whitestone Nursing Station	Salvation Army Dinner	Orrville Community Centre	Britt Nursing Station	Village of South River
Harvest Share Dinner	Community Hub Powassan	Burks Falls Village Office			Strong Township	South River Arena
		Salvation Army Street Mission Vehicle				Burks Falls Food Bank

The Survey:

This enumeration process would not have been successful without the excellent work from our community partners. We are incredibly lucky to have the support of our community in the battle against homelessness.

In order to ensure consistency with survey delivery we provided training and workshops to all volunteers and staff involved in the enumeration. The training centred on how to conduct the survey, the importance of collecting the data and protection of the individuals' privacy.



To ensure that the data we were collecting was as accurate as possible, we used a pre-screening question of “Where are you staying tonight?”. We used the answer to this question as a determining factor as to whether the person was ministry eligible to complete the survey. As a Service Manager, we made the decision that people “at-risk of homelessness” also provided relevant information that we wanted to collect. For that reason, we completed the survey with participants who indicated that they were “at-risk” or experiencing homelessness. Our intention was to organize the at-risk data at the Service Manager level.

The survey included many required questions provided by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The following list displays the ministry required data points:

- Type of current housing;
- Chronicity of homelessness;
- Frequency of homelessness;
- Reasons for homelessness/housing loss;
- Age;
- Indigenous identity;
- Racialized identity;
- Gender identity;
- Sexual orientation;
- Language;
- Family homelessness;
- Military service;
- Health;
- Child welfare; and
- Income source.

In addition to the ministry mandated questions, we were able to add some service manager specific questions. We included questions related to occupation, immigrant status and emergency shelter use. Additionally, we provided an opportunity for respondents to tell us their story and have tracked these comments separately from the surveys. These stories help us, as the service manager, to stay connected with our clients and, where possible, modify programs and supports to better assist them.

For completing the survey, we offered a \$10 honorarium to the participants to show our gratitude for providing their personal information. Additionally, we took this opportunity to offer information about resources on services and supports available in the community.

The following chart outlines the communities we enumerated and indicates a short description of why each community was chosen.

Township of Seguin

- Mainly rural & spread over a large area;
- Mixed population of seasonal & permanent residents.

Town of Parry Sound

- Largest urban centre within our district;
- Highest population;
- Home to many services including homeless prevention services, two food banks, a hospital, a high school and Ontario Works.

Municipality of Whitestone

- Central within our District;
- Largely rural.

Township of Strong

- Includes a local high-school, largely rural.

Municipality of Powassan

- Urban/Rural mix;
- Bedroom community to North Bay;

Village of South River

- Small village;
- Includes the Ontario Works office.

Village of Burks Falls

- Small urban community;
- Consisting of many amenities.

Unincorporated Area

- Borders Sudbury;
- Large, rural, remote area, limited access to services.

Considerations:

The enumeration process has provided a great deal of information about the homeless population and their struggles in the District of Parry Sound. However, there are some considerations that one needs to keep in mind while reviewing the data.

- This was the first enumeration of the homelessness in the District of Parry Sound. Upon review we have identified some changes for the 2020 enumeration.
- Education: There is a strong education piece required for the public surrounding homelessness. The understanding that persons who are “couch surfing” or living in transitional housing are considered homeless is important to ensure they are captured in the results. In the District of Parry Sound homelessness takes on different forms and is not always indicated by someone sleeping in a public space.
- Self-identification: Being homeless is sometimes considered a negative stigma which can deter people from accurately identifying themselves.
- Lack of Transportation: Large distances and lack of public transportation presented a challenge for respondents to reach enumeration locations. Our homelessness prevention team did make house calls when possible.

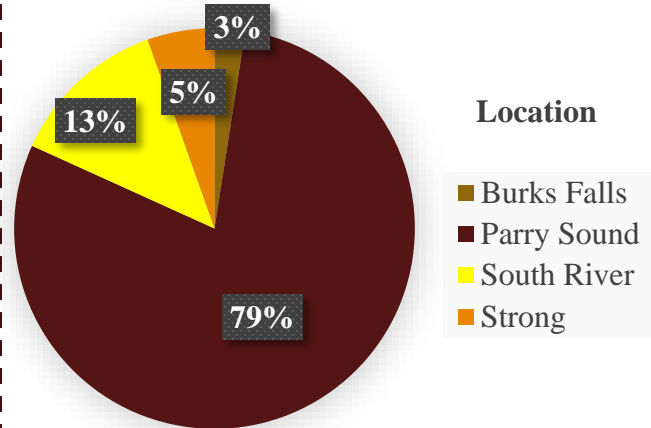
The Results:

The first section of our results provides an understanding of our entire enumeration dataset (203 total respondents). It is important to note that these results include those “at-risk of homelessness” as well as those experiencing homelessness.

The Communities

Four of eight locations did not have any respondents. We experienced last minute scheduling issues with some of our enumeration events and sites and believe that this may have impacted our response level in these communities. For the enumeration in 2020, we will look at other sites and a different kind of event within those four communities to see if we have different results.

Additionally, in Parry Sound we will try to identify if respondents have any connections with surrounding municipalities, and determine if they enumerated in Parry Sound because they were there for services.



The People

The following info-graph shows the age breakdown of all respondents. The District of Parry Sound had a high number of respondents aged 16-19. These youth and young adults are more likely to have difficulties finding adequate and affordable housing due to lack of programs and services and the reluctance of landlords to rent to this age group.

27

Between
16-19



16

Single
Mothers



90

Between
20-39



70

Between
40-64



13

Over 65

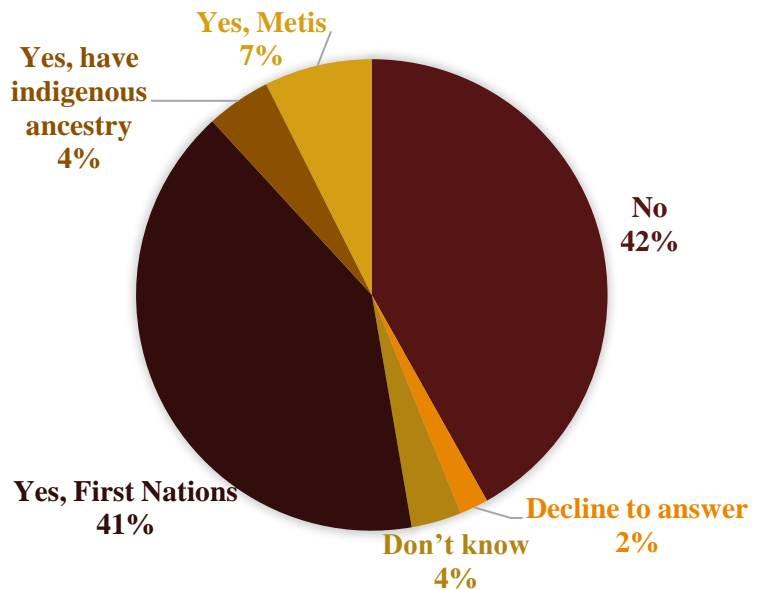


District wide, we typically see a higher number single mothers over single fathers in the district demographics. Within the enumeration data there were 16 single mothers and 4 single fathers who responded to our survey which mirrors the district census data.

It is interesting to note that the census data for the District of Parry Sound there are proportionally a higher number of seniors to non-seniors. However, our enumeration data highlights the younger generation is struggling with maintaining or having access to a home.

Do you identify as being Indigenous?

Just over half of our respondents identified as being indigenous or having an indigenous background. Most of these respondents were surveyed in Parry Sound, which is our largest urban area. The Parry Sound Friendship Centre partnered with us and held a dinner event to start their enumeration which continued all week at their various events and programs.

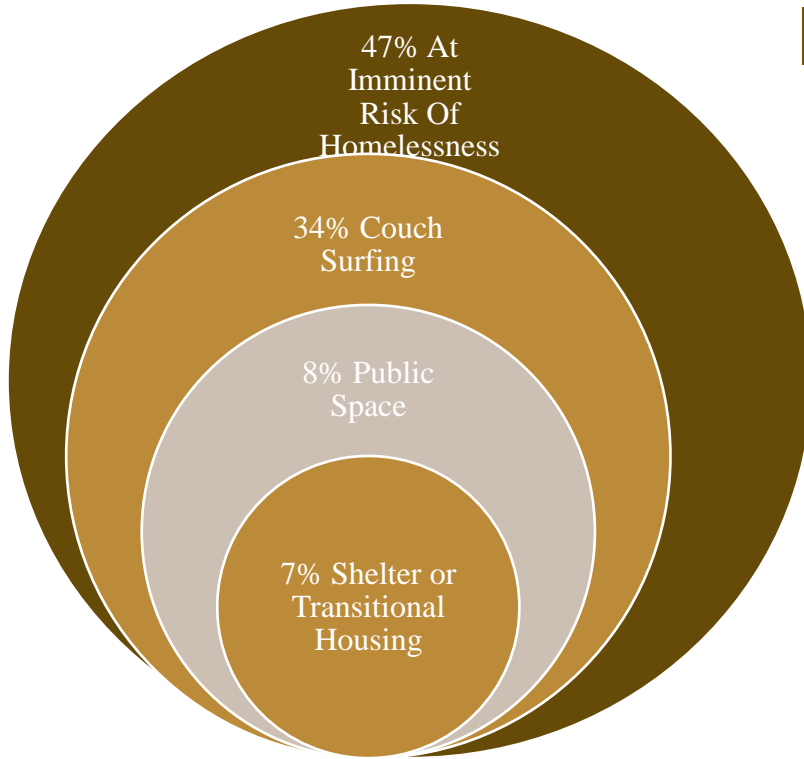


Length Spend Homeless (past year)

The following graphic indicates the period of time spent homeless within the past year. 57% of our respondents indicated that they had experienced short term homelessness from 0-3 months.



**19% didn't know or declined to respond



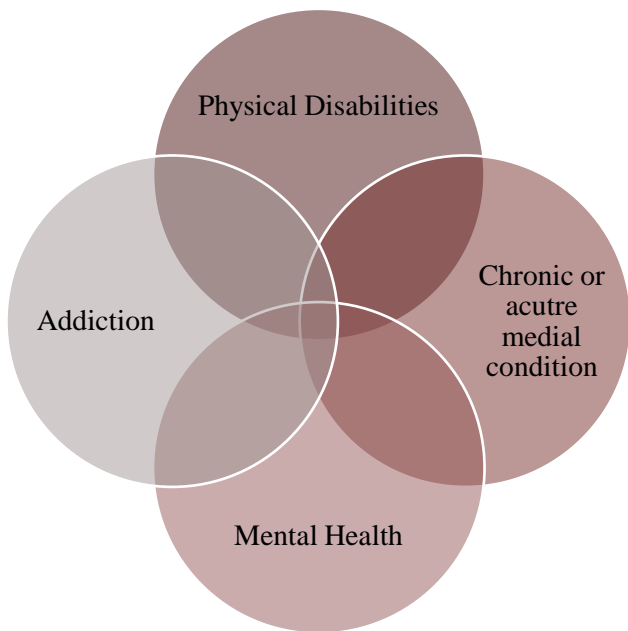
Where did you stay last night?

49% of our respondents are considered to be experiencing absolute homelessness and fall within the inner three circles.

47% indicated that they were staying at their own home or apartment but consider themselves at risk of homelessness.

In response to “where will you stay tonight?”
 “Go day by day to sort out a place to stay.”
 -Respondent, 2018

Health Indicators



54% identified themselves as experiencing mental health issues.

38% identified as they have addictions issues.

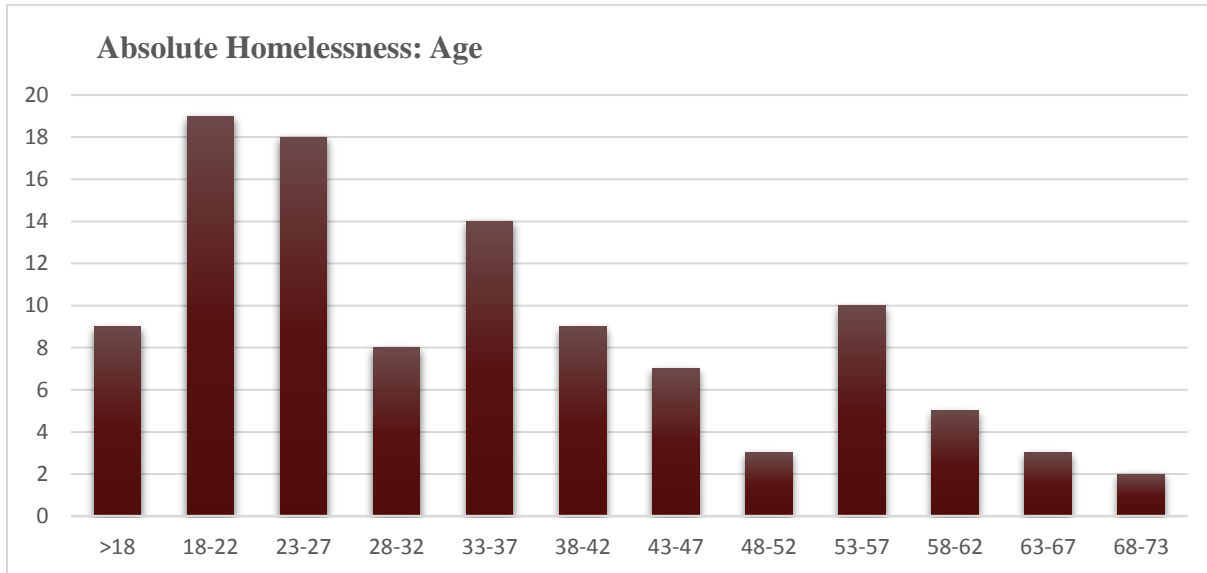
27% indicated that they have a physical disability.

30% suffer from chronic or acute medical conditions.

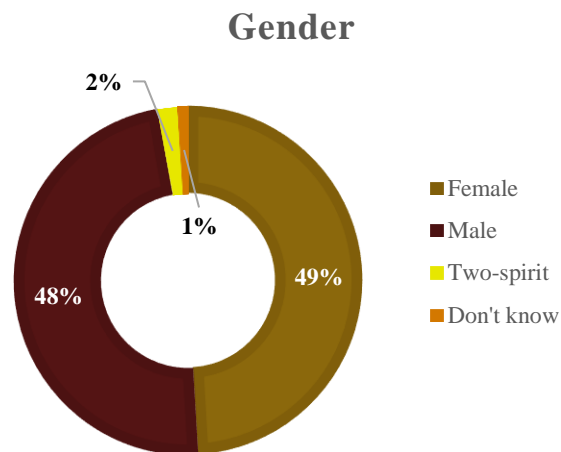
Absolute Homelessness Results:

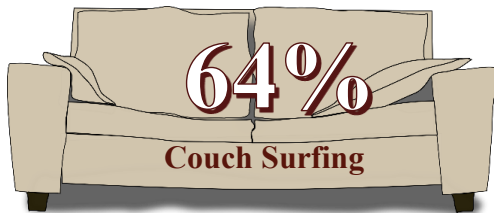
The following section of results refers to those experiencing absolute homelessness. Of our total respondents (203) we had 108 respondents indicate that they were staying somewhere other than in their own home or apartment. The following section focuses on their information.

The following chart indicates the age breakdown of our absolute homeless population. The age of this group is weighted heavily toward youth and young adults. In the District of Parry Sound the majority (87%) of our homes are detached family dwellings. Our youth and young adults require affordable bachelor units which are in short supply.

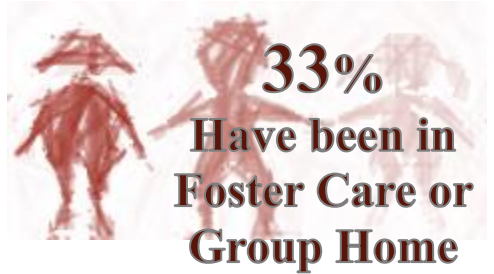


The gender breakdown of our absolute homelessness respondents is fairly even with 49% identifying as female and 48% identifying as male.

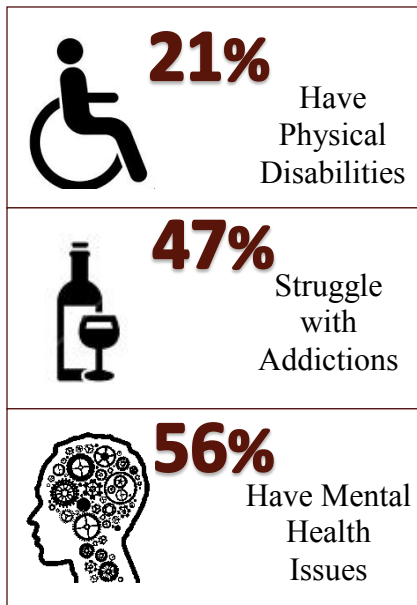




An interesting element of our enumeration data is the high proportion of absolute homeless individuals couch surfing. Of the 108 respondents, 64% indicated that they were staying with someone else.



One third of our respondents indicated that they had previously been in foster care or a group home.



Health Indicators

Physical disabilities, addictions and mental health issues pose additional challenges in finding and maintaining adequate housing. People with disabilities have the challenge of finding a home with accessible solutions in addition to battling the issues of affordability and limited stock within the District of Parry Sound.

50% of those experiencing absolute homelessness and struggling with addictions are 30 years of age or younger.

Slightly more than half of those experiencing absolute homelessness and identifying mental health issues are 30 years of age or younger.

4%

Have served in the Military or RCMP

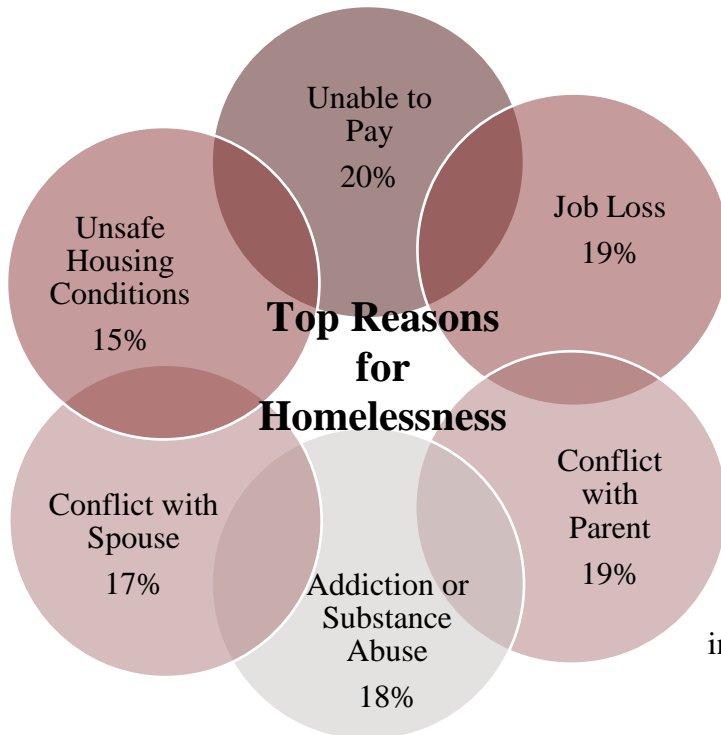
17%

Have children/dependents staying with them

36%

Have experienced homelessness **three or more times** in the last year

“Been homeless here and there in life. I’ve lost count.”
-Respondent, 2018

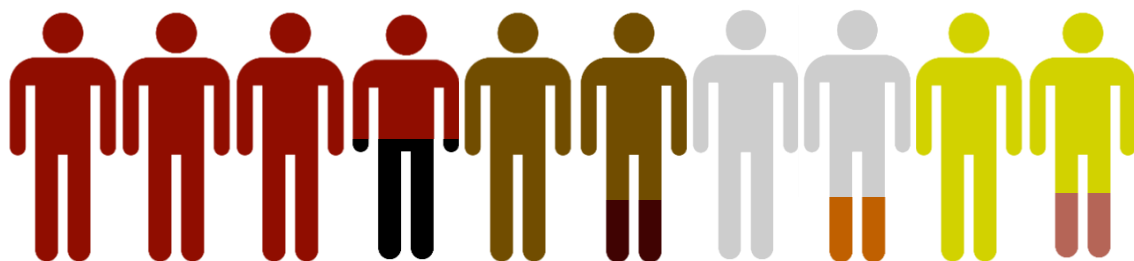


Here are the top six reasons provided for homelessness. Respondents were asked to indicate all of the reasons for homelessness.

Affordability in the District of Parry Sound is a large challenge. 20% of the reasons for homelessness were inability to pay. The average market rent within the District is high and with challenges of limited rental stock there are few options for those with the lowest incomes.

The following information graphic shows sources of income from our absolute homeless respondents. Welfare/ income assistance was the main source of income among the respondents with 35%.

Sources of Income



- Welfare/ Income Assistance (35%)
- Informal/ Self Employed (5%)
- Tax Benefits (17%)
- Money from Family & Friends (3%)
- (17%) Disability Benefits
- (3%) No Income
- (17%) Employment
- (3%) Seniors Benefit

Youth

Youth and young adults are highly represented in our absolute homeless population. 47% of our respondents are 30 years of age or younger.

- 57% of our respondents population are female;
- 59% identified as being indigenous;
- 39% indicated that they had been in foster care or a group home;
- 63% identified as having mental health issues.

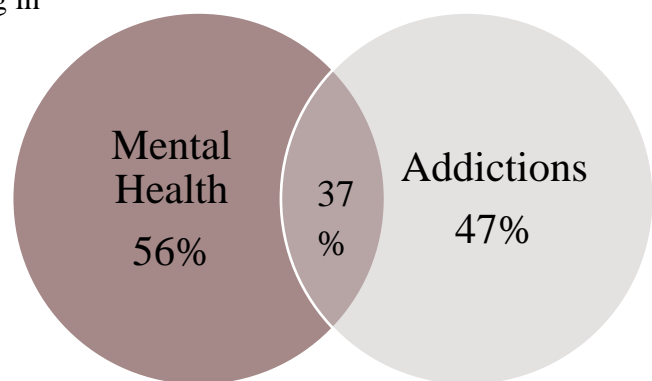
Indigenous

48% of our absolute homelessness respondents identified as being indigenous or having indigenous ancestry.

- 54% of the indigenous respondents were female;
- 7% identified that they had a child/dependent staying with them;
- 31% indicated they had chronic or acute medical conditions;
- 21% indicated they had a physical disability;
- 65% indicated they struggle with addictions;
- 62% identified as having mental health issues.

Mental health and addictions

Mental health and addictions issues are underlying in many cases. 56% of the absolute homelessness respondents indicated that they have mental health issues, 47% identified as struggling with addictions. 37% of our absolute homelessness respondents indicated struggling with addictions and mental health challenges. It is important to note that these questions are all based on self-identification.



Our first enumeration process enabled us to make connections with new community partners, develop a data base of the homeless population in our district and provide information on community resources to all respondents. The data we have received will be used as we develop our Housing and Homelessness Plan Update for the next five years.

We would like to express our sincerest thanks to our community partners who assisted the DSSAB with the first enumeration.



- Argyle Nursing Station
- Britt Nursing Station
- Burks Falls Food Bank
- Dana Smith
- Esprit Place Family Resource Centre
- Harvest Share
- Housing Services
- Municipality of Powassan
- Near North District School Board
 - Parry Sound High School
 - Almaguin Highland High School
- Ontario Works
- Parry Sound Friendship Centre
- Rosseau Nursing Station
- Salvation Army
- Township of Seguin
- Township of Strong
- Victim Services
- Village of Burks Falls
- Village of South River
- Whitestone Nursing Station
- Women's Own Resource Centre