

2018 Huron County Homeless Enumeration



2018 marks a historic year for the Province of Ontario in more ways than one. As an element of the Provincial Poverty Reduction Strategy the Province identified ending chronic homelessness in Ontario by 2025 as a priority. In order to successfully achieve that goal a number of initiatives were put forward.

ONE. Develop a consistent definition of what it was to be homeless.

TWO. Take a snapshot of the current state of homelessness to further broaden our understanding of homelessness and what the journey into homelessness looks like.

The latter was more challenging, each person's experience of homelessness is as unique as the individual themselves. However, in taking a look at the numbers, capturing those stories was the next most natural thing to do. In 2018 government, social services agencies, community members and politicians alike took to the streets to engage with, listen to and learn from our neighbours living without a place to call home.

Together, in 2018 Huron County joins voices with the Province in a collective conversation to better understand homelessness and what is needed to see this cruel infliction come to an end.

HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness describes the situation of an individual or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. Most people do not choose to be homeless, and the experience is generally negative, unpleasant, stressful and distressing.

93
individuals

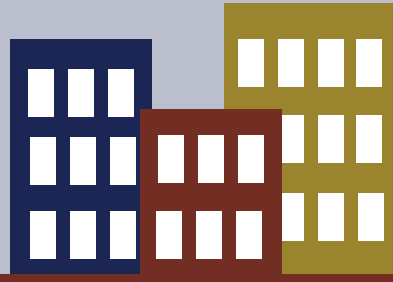
determined homeless
by completed survey results

7
individuals

observed homeless
but not surveyed

100
individuals

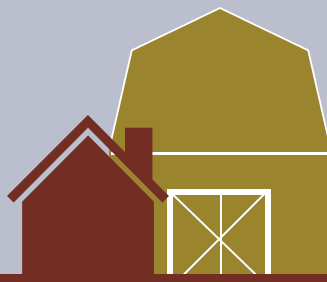
experiencing homelessness in Huron County
during this enumeration period



LONDON
0.10% per capita

VS.

HURON COUNTY
0.16% per capita



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It is important to note that an enumeration is a snapshot in time and due to its methodology the numbers you will see represent a minimum number of individuals experiencing homelessness.

Due to our rural location we accepted recommendations from the Ministry and scholars that a period prevalence count (PPC) would be the most effective tool to engage with and measure homelessness in The County of Huron.

A PPC is conducted over a longer period of time and is typically done in partnership with local social agencies that work with individuals experiencing homelessness. Due to the predominantly hidden nature of homelessness in rural communities a PCC helps us to connect with folks as they access services, in situations where it is safe to reveal (in a trusted relationship) their housing status. We ensured 100% confidentiality. Participants received a small incentive for their participation. We created a unique identifier to enable us to de-duplicate the data prior to formalizing the report.

The count was conducted using the Provincial definition of homelessness, therefore it included people accessing shelters, in transition, couch surfing and those completely unsheltered living in places unfit for human habitation.

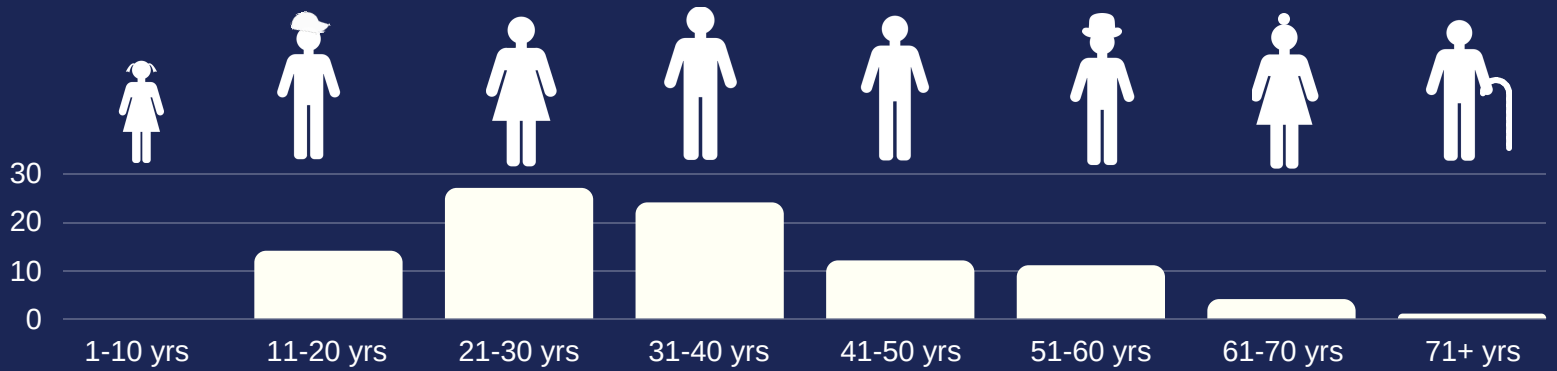
THE FINDINGS

We cannot express enough that these results should be considered a minimum number of people experiencing homelessness in our community. A PPC cannot reach all individuals who are homeless and many people can feel very uneasy, for a variety of reasons, in revealing their homelessness. This is particularly true for women with children, so we were very mindful during the enumeration that our approach attempted to not drive people further in to hiding or dangerous situations in order to remain unbound. We tried to send a gentle message that we were looking only to learn and understand, not to report.

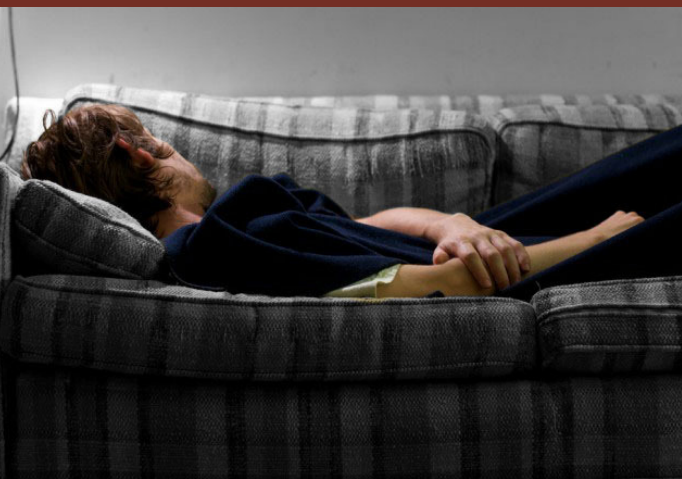
The other thing to keep in mind is that people often cycle in and out of homelessness so folks might not be homeless the week of the count but may have been the day before or the day following.

These numbers are a snapshot in time – they do not represent the number of people struggling with homelessness in a year in our community. The final count of 100 individuals experiencing homelessness one week in March is a stark reminder that we need to push hard to end homeless and develop services that can prevent and respond to homelessness.

Age of Respondents



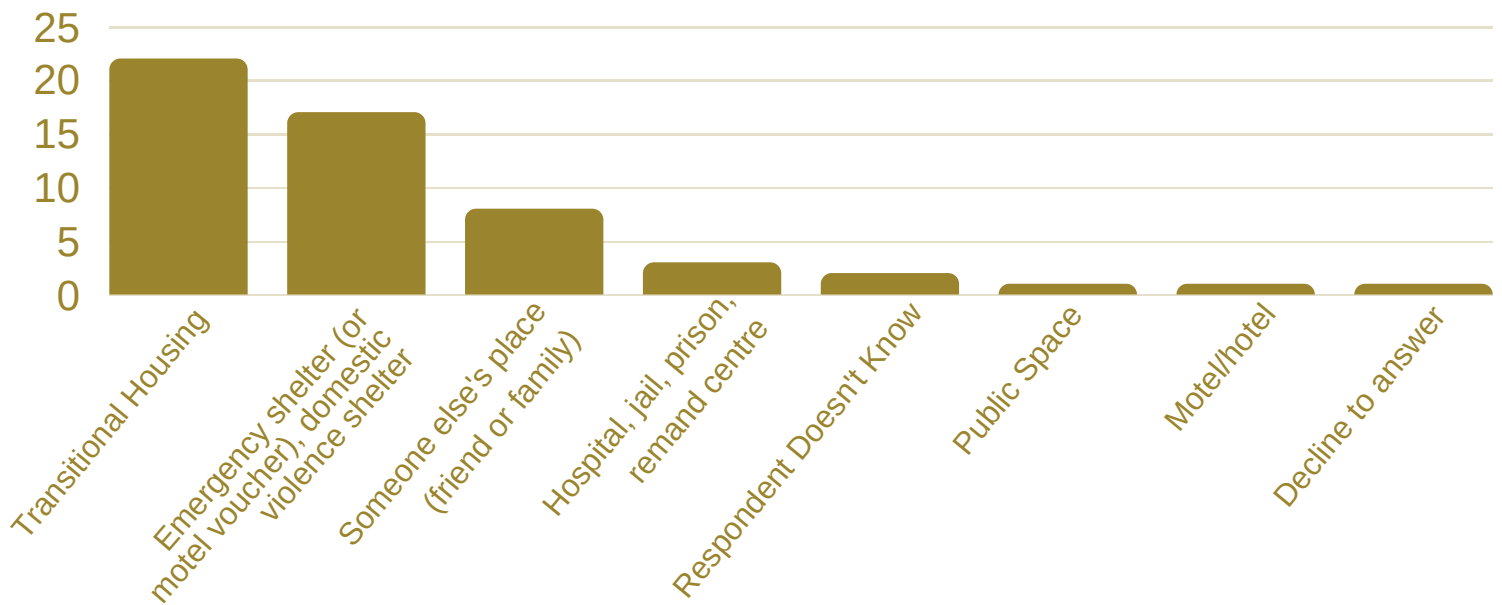
Nearly 15% of respondents were under the age of 20. This is a critical number because we are learning that youth homelessness can often be a precursor to chronic homelessness and the longer the episode of homelessness the worse the prognosis becomes.



Hidden Homelessness

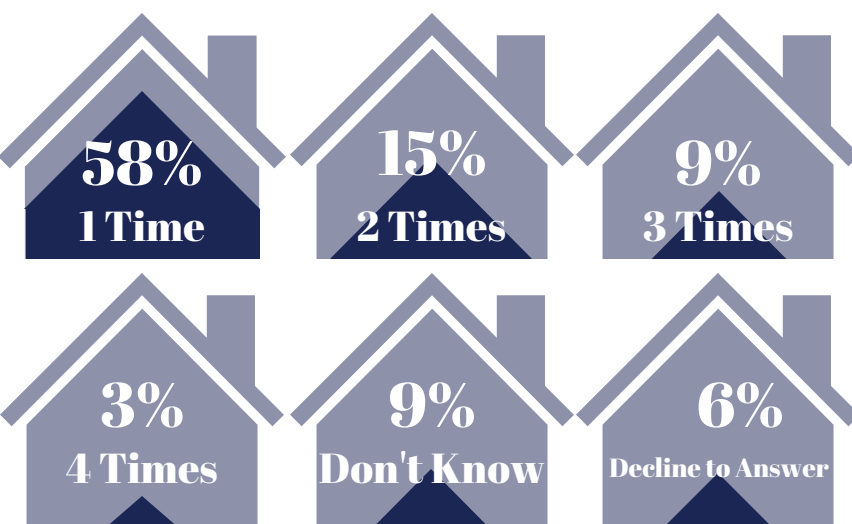
14% indicated they were couch surfing. This number is the most elusive as there is a high probability that those who are staying with friends or family temporarily, moving from one friend's couch to another, may not see themselves as homeless believing that homelessness is a term that belongs only to those sleeping outdoors. It is believed that nearly 80% of homelessness is hidden with only the 20% visible in shelters on the street representing the tip of the iceberg.*

Type of Current Housing/Lodging



Frequency of Homelessness

Number of Times Homeless in Past 6 Months



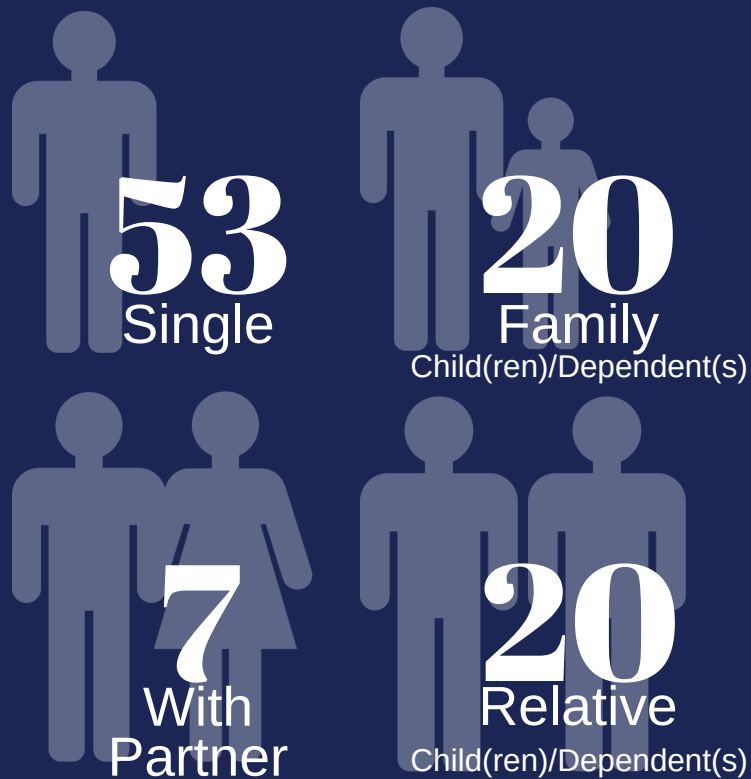
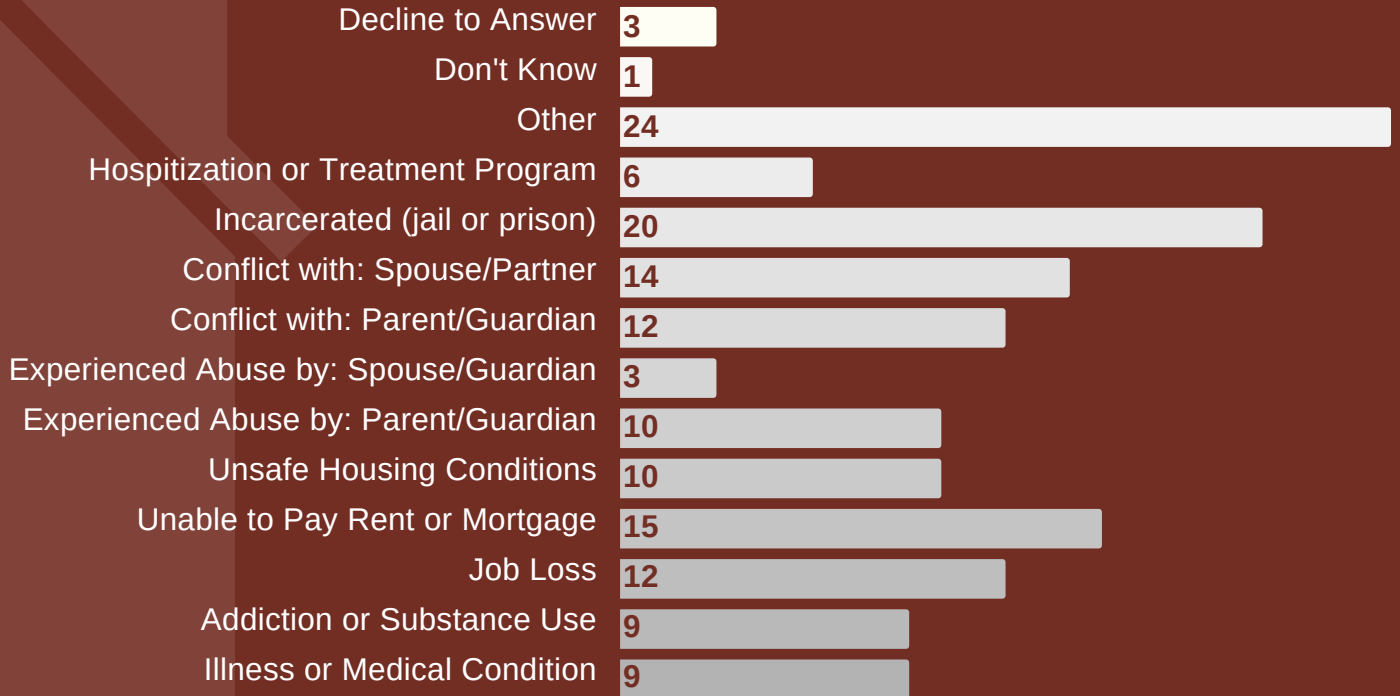
While homelessness is difficult for anyone who experiences it, the length and frequency amplifies that but it does enable us to understand the differences between episodic and chronic homelessness. Increased frequency is generally directly connected to an elevated chance of slipping into chronic homelessness. Chronic homelessness in Canada is estimated to take up about 2-4% of the homeless resources.

- 35,000 people experience homeless in Canada on any given night
- 235,000 people experience homelessness on average per year in Canada**

* Wellesley Institute. (2010). Precarious housing in Canada. Toronto: The Wellesley Institute

**The State of Homelessness in Canada 2016 Stephen Gaetz, Erin Dej, Tim Richter, Melanie Redman COH Research Paper #12

Reason for Homelessness



Family Homelessness

The largest percentage of folks experiencing homelessness were single but we do have some in partners and some with children. In this survey we suspect the bulk of respondents who would be comfortable to share they w homeless with children were at the Woman's shelter – and those with children not at the shelter would have not felt safe in disclosing to us they had dependents.

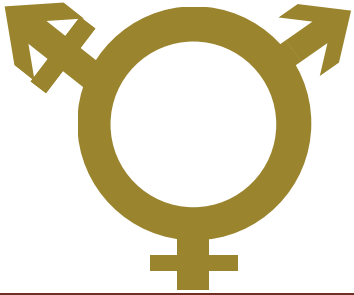


Indigenous Identity

14 of the 93 participants identified themselves as Indigenous

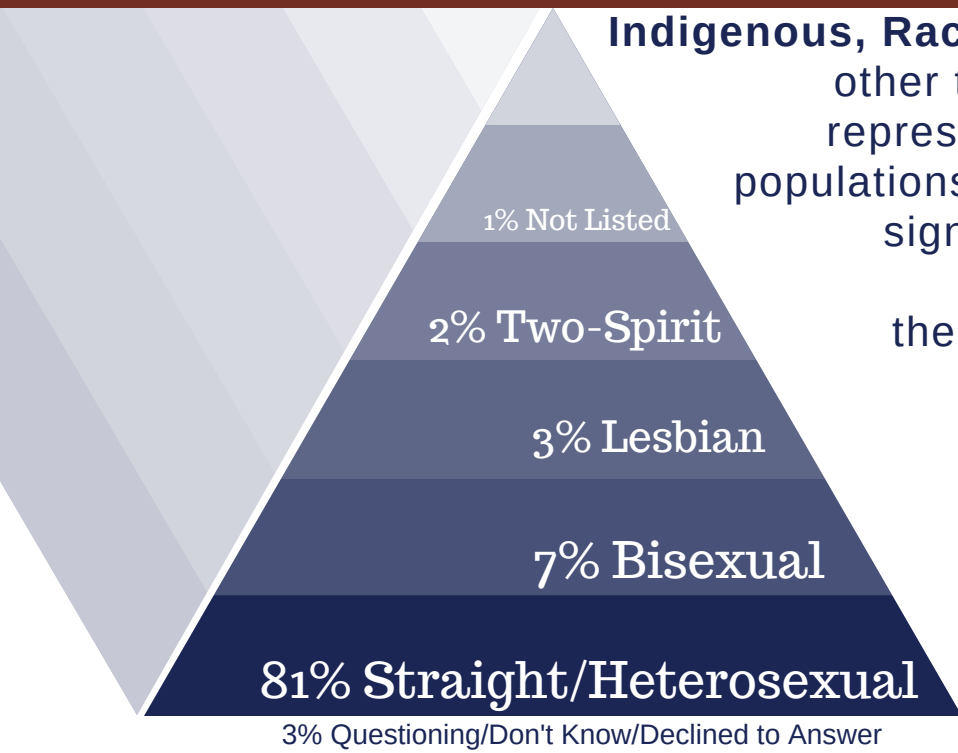
5 of the 93 participants identified themselves as racialized

Racialized Identity



Gender Identity

38 males
53 females
1 two-spirited
1 declined to answer

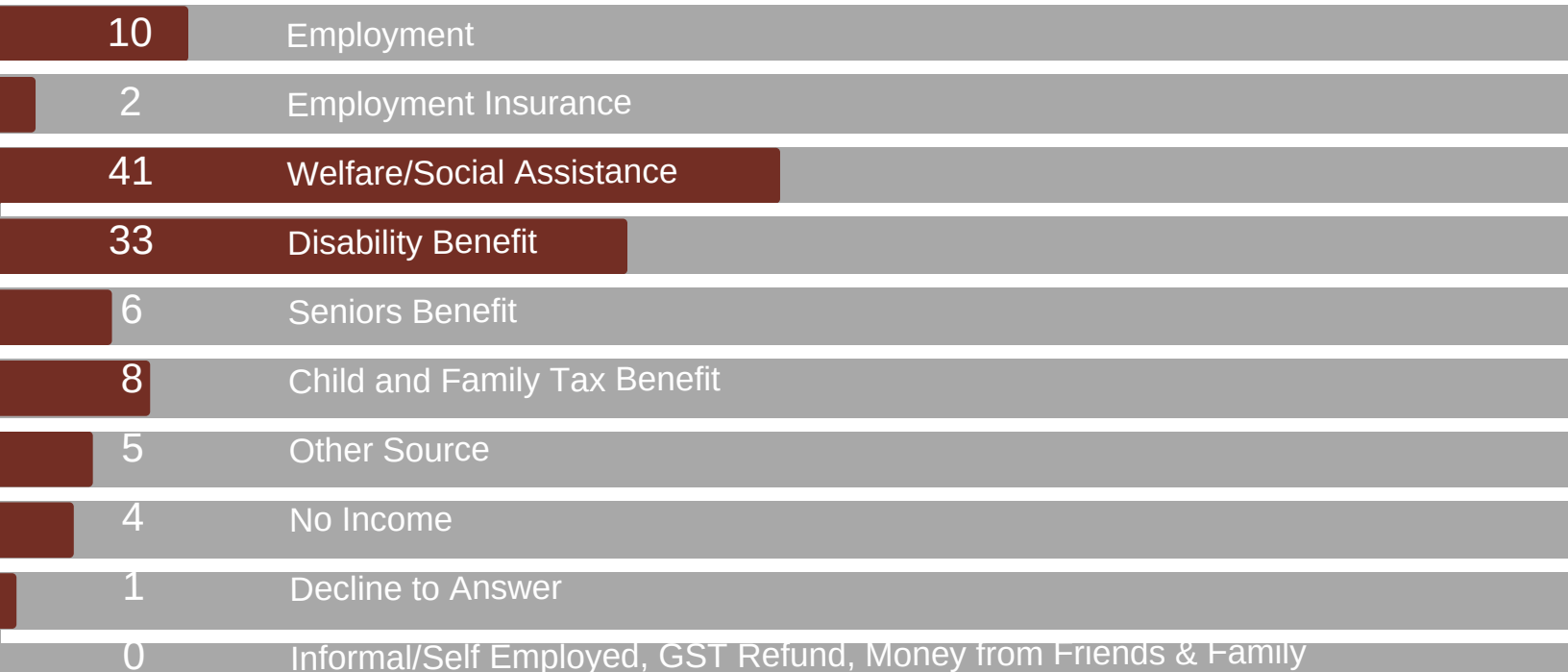


Indigenous, Racialized and those Unique other than heterosexual are over represented in broader homeless populations which was why there was significant interest in the data.

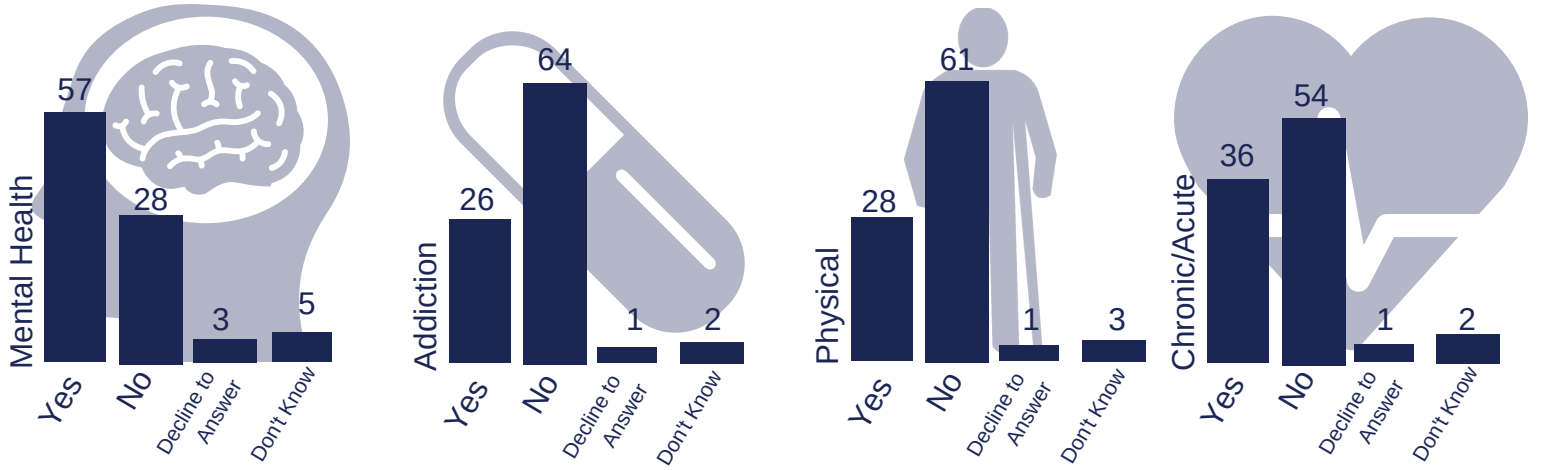
Here in Huron we can see these groups certainly are not absent from the numbers and so there is opportunity to be aware of appropriate and specific services.

The Province will be keeping a close eye on newcomers.

Income Source



Health



The respondents were asked to indicate if they had any of the following health issues;

- Mental health
- Addictions
- Physical health issues
- Chronic or acute health issues

Notably mental health is a significant issue among those experiencing homelessness. What is hard to understand is “what comes first” does the crisis of the homelessness cause the mental health issues or does the mental health lead to homelessness? We have learned, again in broader forums, that many people in chronic homelessness have experienced a fair bit of trauma in their lives.

We do want to draw your attention to the number of people with health issues living homeless.

This number reminds us that homelessness is not strictly a housing issue but a health one also, and when we have people suitably housed we create the potential to reduce the drain on many systems including health care for example.



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