



	<b>REPORT No.: 2022-02</b>
<b>MEETING DATE: JANUARY 13, 2022</b>	<b>DATE PREPARED: DECEMBER 24, 2021</b>
<b>SUBJECT: HOMELESS ENUMERATION REPORT 2021</b>	

**RECOMMENDATION**

THAT with respect to Report No. 2022-02 (Integrated Social Services Division), we, The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (the Board), accept the 2021 Point in Time Survey report;

AND THAT the Board calls upon the Minister of Health and the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions to provide additional mental health and addiction support services in the District of Thunder Bay;

AND THAT the Board calls upon the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to address the service gaps in the child welfare system that contribute to homelessness;

AND THAT the Board calls upon the Minister of Health, the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for expanded funding to establish appropriate transitional housing and supports to assist a greater number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness;

AND THAT the Board calls upon the federal Minister of Housing Inclusion and Diversity, the federal Minister of Indigenous Services, the federal Minister of Health and the federal Minister of Mental Health and Addictions to establish, in consultation with Indigenous partners, new affordable housing programs and appropriate support services to assist Indigenous people living in urban and rural areas;

AND THAT the Board directs Administration to explore opportunities to continue research partnerships to determine the causes of migratory and transient homelessness, and other issues related to homelessness, in order to inform the development of adequate social policy interventions;

AND THAT a copy of this Resolution and the related reports be circulated to the Prime Minister of Canada, the Premier of Ontario, the relevant Federal and Ontario Ministers, the District of Thunder Bay municipalities, the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, The Metis Nation of Ontario, Ontario Native Women's Association, Anishnabek Nation, Nishnawbe Aski Nation, Matawa First Nations, Nokiiwin Tribal Council, Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre, and Thunderbird Indigenous Friendship Centre.

## **REPORT SUMMARY**

To provide The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB or the Board) with an overview of the findings of the 2021 Point in Time Survey and to seek the Board's endorsement of the recommendations resulting from an analysis of the data.

## **BACKGROUND**

As part of the Province of Ontario's efforts to end chronic homelessness by 2025 and the long-term goal to end homelessness, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, (MMAH) established a provincial requirement to conduct local enumeration of people experiencing homelessness by the end of 2021.

Through an amendment to the *Housing Services Act, 2011* (HSA) and a Ministerial Directive, MMAH required all Service Managers to conduct enumeration of those experiencing homelessness in their communities through the use of a Point in Time (PiT) count.

Local homeless enumeration, which is the measurement of the number of people experiencing homelessness over a specific period of time, assists Service Managers and MMAH to better understand the scale and nature of homelessness across the province, as well as inform current and future policy and program design.

TBDSSAB previously participated in a PiT count on April 21, 2018, to determine the number of people experiencing homelessness across the District. A total of 474 individuals participated in the 2018 PiT count. Since 2018, there has been the addition of a number of programs and services that work towards reducing the number of homeless individuals. For example, TBDSSAB introduced the High Needs Homeless Community Housing waitlist category and the Home for Good program. A PiT count was also conducted in January of 2016 and had 289 participants surveyed.

The PiT Count provides a snapshot of the population experiencing homelessness on one day of the year. It is intended to capture numbers, basic demographics, reasons for homelessness, and service use of people experiencing homelessness at a single point in time. It is not expected to identify all homeless individuals, but to act as a snapshot to establish a picture of homelessness in an area.

The PiT method counts unsheltered and emergency-sheltered populations. PiT count data was collected by trained volunteers at emergency shelters, violence against women (VAW) shelters, service organizations and magnet events.

**COMMENTS**

The 2021 PiT count was conducted on October 2, and continued for a period of 24 hours. The PiT count was conducted in Greenstone, Nipigon, Schreiber, Marathon, Conmee and Thunder Bay. A total of 221 individuals completed the survey, which provides a picture of homelessness across our entire District.

While the number of surveys completed in 2021 (221) was less than those collected in 2018 (474), and 2016 (289), this should not be interpreted as an indication of an overall decrease in the homeless population in the District of Thunder Bay. Due to the presence of COVID-19, the number of locations where the public could drop in and complete the survey was reduced from the 2016 and 2018 PiT Surveys. Further, the PiT count only reflects those individuals who elect to be counted at that particular time.

For the past year, the TBDSSAB has managed a by-name list through the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS). A by-name list is a comprehensive list of every person in a community experiencing homelessness, updated in real time. Using information collected and shared with their consent, each person on the list has a file that includes their name, homeless history, health, and housing needs. At the beginning of October, there were 693 individuals active on the by-name list in the District of Thunder Bay. The by-name list is a much more accurate indicator of the number of people experiencing homelessness in the District of Thunder Bay.

From this analysis of the 2021 PiT survey, the following recommendations have been developed:

***Advocacy: Support for Mental Health and Addictions Treatment***

The PiT count revealed that 78% of participants reported having used substances and 53% reported having a mental health condition. This correlation between addictions, mental health conditions and homelessness is serious cause for concern. It is known, for example, that opioid-related morbidity and mortality rates occur at a rate much higher in the District of Thunder Bay than the provincial average. In order to address homelessness, additional resources must be devoted to mental health and addictions treatment, prevention, and direct supports.

***Recommendation: TBDSSAB will advocate to the Ministry of Health and the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions to encourage additional mental health and addiction support services.***

***Advocacy: Address the Service Gaps in Child Welfare Systems and Individuals Aging out of Foster Care***

Almost half of PiT count participants (45%) responded that they had been in foster care in their youth. That number was significantly higher with participants currently under the age of 25 (59%). For Indigenous participants, experience in the foster care system was higher both in overall responses (54%) and for those under age 25 (61%). Given this correlation between homelessness and a history of foster care – a correlation well-supported by other research into homelessness – additional resources must be devoted to address service gaps in child welfare systems, particularly to those aging out of foster care.

***Recommendation: TBDSSAB will advocate to the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to address the service gaps in the child welfare system that contribute to homelessness.***

***Advocacy: Expansion of the High Needs Homeless and Home for Good systems***

Chronically homeless individuals utilize a disproportionate amount of bed nights at emergency shelters and often require wrap-around supports to ensure successful tenancies when housed. Providing long-term, stable housing options for chronically homeless individuals, along with appropriate supports, is an essential step to relieving pressure on overburdened emergency shelter services. As such, there is a need to explore opportunities to expand the High Needs Homeless and Home for Good systems to assist a greater number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

Through the High Needs Homeless system, emergency shelter resident needs are assessed using the Service Prioritization and Decision Assistance Tool (SPDAT). Individuals are placed in the High Needs Homeless social housing waitlist prioritization category if their SPDAT score is in excess of a predetermined level. Through this, individuals who are placed in the High Needs Homeless category are housed much quicker than if they remained on the chronological waitlist.

The Home for Good program provides intensive case management support for individuals that are placed in the High Needs Homeless waitlist category, in addition to rent supports for housing.

***Recommendation: TBDSSAB will advocate to the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for expanded funding to establish appropriate transitional housing and supports to assist a greater number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness.***

***Advocacy: Over representation of Indigenous Peoples in the Homeless Count***

The data collected in successive PiT counts shows that about 70% of people that participate in these surveys identify as Indigenous. In 1994 the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation cancelled the housing programs that had been established in the 1970s to assist Indigenous people living off reserve, namely, the Urban Native Housing

and the Rural and Native Housing programs. The 2017 National Housing Strategy was to include a housing strategy for Indigenous people living in urban and rural areas; nothing has been established to date.

***Recommendation: TBDSSAB will advocate to the Federal Ministries of Housing, Indigenous Services, Health, and Mental Health and Addictions to establish, in consultation with Indigenous partners, appropriate programs and funding to provide new affordable housing, transitional housing and supports for Indigenous people living in urban and rural areas.***

### ***Research on Migratory and Transient Homelessness***

Data collected in the PiT count demonstrates that a considerable number of homeless individuals migrate to the City of Thunder Bay and surrounding communities from other areas. Only 27.4% of the homeless surveyed in the City of Thunder Bay stated that this was their home community, and 29.2% of respondents surveyed in the other District communities reported being from that community. Little is known about the reasons for migratory and transient homelessness in the District of Thunder Bay beyond anecdotal accounts. As such, partnerships should be formed to research the correlation between migration of individuals from remote communities and the numbers of people experiencing homelessness, to inform solutions to homelessness in the District of Thunder Bay.

In response to a recommendation from the 2018 homeless enumeration report, Administration has established a working relationship with a group of multi-disciplinary researchers from Lakehead University to conduct a study designed to understand the patterns and rationale of homeless migration. This research project received funding through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and is slated for completion in late 2022.

***Recommendation: Administration continue to explore opportunities to establish research partnerships to determine the causes of migratory and transient homelessness, and other issues related to homelessness, in order to inform the development of adequate social policy interventions.***

These recommendations will build upon the various programs, initiatives and funding that TBDSSAB has established to address and prevent homelessness. The following funding, programs, and initiatives impact homelessness within the District of Thunder Bay: Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI), High Needs – Homeless Social Housing Waitlist category, Home for Good (HFG), along with the Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative and the Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative.

TBDSSAB will use the data and analysis from the 2021 PiT Survey to inform ongoing and future strategy development to address and prevent homelessness throughout the District of Thunder Bay.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**



There are no immediate financial implications resulting from this report.

**CONCLUSION**

It is concluded that this report provides the Board with an overview of the findings of the 2021 Homelessness Enumeration and provides detailed recommendations resulting from an analysis of the data.

**REFERENCE MATERIALS ATTACHED**

Attachment #1 [2021 Point in Time Survey Report](#)

<b>PREPARED BY:</b>	Aaron Park, Supervisor, Research and Social Policy The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board
<b>APPROVED / SIGNATURE:</b>	
	Ken Ranta, Director, Integrated Social Services Division The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board
<b>SUBMITTED / SIGNATURE:</b>	
	William (Bill) Bradica, Chief Administrative Officer The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board

REPORT:

# 2021 Point in Time Count

of People Experiencing Homelessness in the  
District of Thunder Bay



**THE DISTRICT OF THUNDER BAY**  
**SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD**

# Contents

Acknowledgements .....	3
Executive Summary .....	4
Background .....	8
Methodology.....	11
Results .....	15
Conclusion .....	34
References.....	35



# Acknowledgements

The 2021 Point-in-Time (PiT) Survey was made possible by the collaboration of multiple community agencies, organizations, and individuals. As the lead for the 2021 PiT Survey, The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) would like to thank the following organizations for their support:

- Lakehead Social Planning Council
- Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre
- People Advocating for Change through Empowerment Inc.
- Shelter House Thunder Bay
- Salvation Army
- John Howard Society
- Lodge on Dawson
- Crossroads Centre Thunder Bay
- Beendigen Inc. Thunder Bay
- Grace Place

TBDSSAB would also like to thank all the volunteers for their invaluable time and input in this project. Most of all, TBDSSAB would like to thank all the participants who took the time to complete a survey and share their stories to help us better understand their experiences of homelessness in the District of Thunder Bay.

Funding was provided by The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board

## Executive Summary

The 2021 PiT Survey began at 6:00 pm on October 2<sup>nd</sup> and continued for 24 hours. The survey was available for completion in the City of Thunder Bay at the Canadian Lakehead Exhibition (CLE) which was the only public drop in site due to COVID-19. Additionally, clients staying at a variety of emergency shelter and transitional housing locations were also invited to participate at those locations. In addition, PiT Surveys were available for completion in Greenstone, Nipigon, Schreiber, Marathon, and Conmee. A total of 221 individuals completed the survey.

While the number of surveys completed in 2021 (221) was less than those collected in 2018 (474), and 2016 (289) this should not be interpreted as an indication of a decrease in the homeless population in the District of Thunder Bay. Due to the presence of COVID-19, the number of locations where the public could drop in and complete the survey was reduced from the 2016 and 2018 PiT Surveys.

Since 2018, there has been the addition of a number of programs and services that work towards reducing the number of homeless individuals. For example, The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) has introduced the High Needs Homeless Community Housing waitlist category and the Home for Good program. Since 2018, 298 homeless individuals have been housed through these initiatives. Further, a number of organizations, including TBDSSAB, have come together to develop and implement a Coordinated Housing Access Table that was successfully launched in 2019.

For the past year, TBDSSAB has managed a by-name list through the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS). At the beginning of October, there were 693 individuals active on the by-name list in the District of Thunder Bay. The by-name list is a much more accurate indicator of the number of people experiencing homelessness in the District of Thunder Bay.

## Key Results from the 2021 PiT Survey:

- 68.3% of respondents identified as Indigenous - rural communities (79%) – City of Thunder Bay (67%)
- 7% of respondents identified as LGBTQ+ - rural communities (20.8%) – City of Thunder Bay (5.6%)
- 43% of respondents were planning to stay in an emergency shelter that night
- 58% of respondents are chronically homeless - rural communities (20.8%) - City of Thunder (62.9%)
- 45% of respondents had been in foster care - rural communities (45%) – City of Thunder Bay (45%)
- 78% of respondents reported having used substances - rural communities (87.5%) – City of Thunder Bay (76.7%)
- 53% of respondents reported having a mental health condition - rural communities (62.5%) – City of Thunder Bay (52.3%)
- 70% of respondents have social assistance benefits (Ontario Disability Support Payment/Ontario Works) as their main source of income - rural communities (37.5%) – City of Thunder Bay (73.1%)
- 27.4% of respondents reported originally being from the City of Thunder Bay, and 29.2% of respondents surveyed in rural communities reported being from that community

The PiT Survey focuses on those who are experiencing absolute homelessness on the day of the count, such as those experiencing unsheltered and emergency sheltered homelessness as well as the hidden homeless such as those that are couch surfing.

The information collected through the PiT Survey provides an understanding of the demographics of the homeless population in the District of Thunder Bay at that point in time, as well as local information associated with homelessness, including the child welfare system, substance use and mental health.

# The District of Thunder Bay Point in Time Count

October 2021

A Point in Time Count of people experiencing homelessness attempts to create a snapshot of the number of people experiencing homelessness in a community during a 24 hour period using a mix of surveys and counting people. The District of Thunder Bay's Point in Time Count was conducted on October 2nd and 3rd, 2021.



**221**  
Surveys Completed with People Experiencing Homelessness

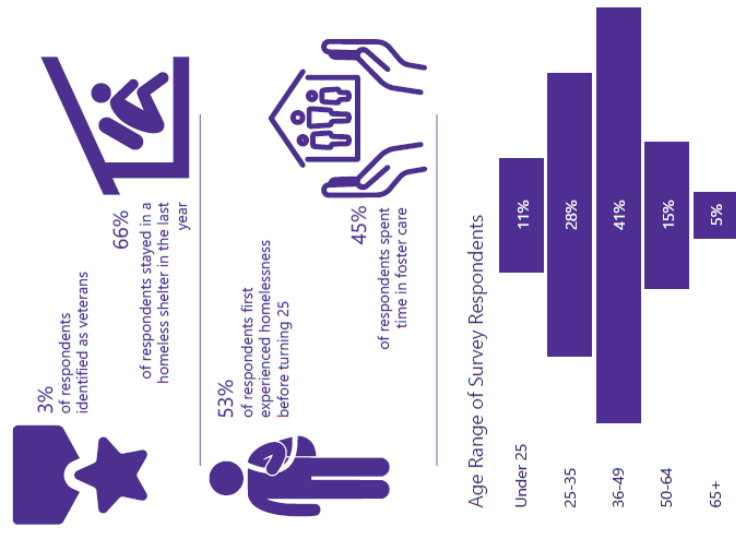
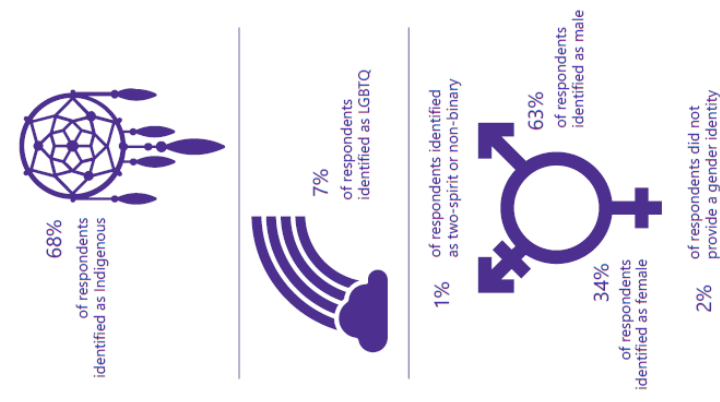
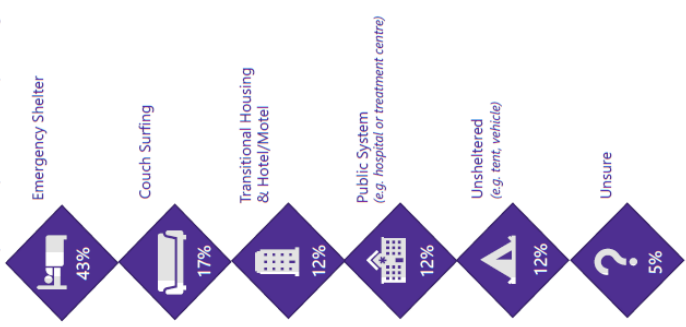
**410**  
People Counted by Community Agencies (including surveys)

**693**  
Active Clients on the By-Name List of People Experiencing Homelessness

26.67 x 15.21 in

## Highlights from the PIT Surveys

Where respondents planned to sleep that night:





# The District of Thunder Bay Point in Time Count

October 2021

A point in Time Count of people experiencing homelessness attempts to create a snapshot of the number of people experiencing homelessness in a community during a 24 hour period using a mix of surveys and counting people. The District of Thunder Bay's Point in Time Count was conducted on October 2nd and 3rd, 2021.

## Highlights from the PIT Surveys

**221**  
Surveys Completed with People Experiencing Homelessness

—

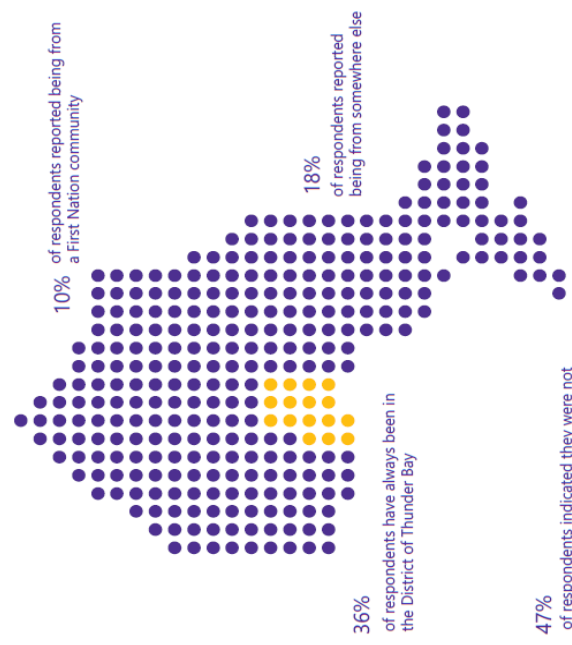
**410**  
People Counted by Community Agencies (including surveys)

—

**693**  
Active Clients on the By-Name List of People Experiencing Homelessness



- 58% of respondents were experiencing chronic homelessness — homeless for 6 months or more in the past year
- 20% of respondents were experiencing episodic homelessness — homeless 3 or more times in the past year
- 10% of respondents were experiencing both chronic and episodic homelessness



The most reported sources of income by respondents include:

- 69% were in receipt of Social Assistance
- 13% Had no Income
- 7% were participating in Employment

The most reported factors contributing to recent housing loss include:

- 20% Low Income
- 19% Substance Use
- 12% Unfit or Unsafe Housing

# Background

Housing is a basic human necessity and right, yet for many people, adequate and affordable housing is out of their reach. Having a home has significant meaning – belonging, comfort, security, and stability - and is the foundation for a decent standard of living. The loss of this foundation is caused by a complex interaction between structural factors (economic and societal issues), system failures (inadequate policy and services), and individual circumstances (e.g., mental health and addictions challenges). As a result, homelessness can lead to poor health, barriers to education and jobs, and social isolation.<sup>1</sup>

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH) defines homelessness as “the situation of an individual, family or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it”.<sup>2</sup> This definition categorizes homelessness in a typology that includes:

1. Unsheltered, or absolute homelessness: living on the streets or in places not intended for human habitation;
2. Emergency sheltered: staying in overnight shelters for people who are homeless, as well as shelters for those impacted by family violence;
3. Provisionally accommodated: accommodation is temporary and lacks security of tenure; and,
4. At risk of homelessness: people who are not homeless, but whose current economic and/or housing situation is precarious or does not meet public health and safety standards.<sup>3</sup>

The overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples in the homeless population is well documented,<sup>4</sup> therefore it is important to consider the colonization and cultural genocide of Indigenous Peoples that has allowed for this disparity. Moving forward, this

knowledge and understanding needs to be at the forefront of efforts to end homelessness. As such, the definition of Indigenous homelessness is:

A human condition that describes First Nations, Metis and Inuit individuals, families or communities lacking stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means or ability to acquire such housing. Unlike the common colonialist definition of homelessness, Indigenous homelessness is not defined as lacking a structure of habitation; rather, it is more fully described and understood through a composite lens of Indigenous worldviews. These include: individuals, families and communities isolated from their relationships to land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages and identities. Importantly, Indigenous people experiencing these kinds of homelessness cannot culturally, spiritually, emotionally or physically reconnect with their Indigeneity or lost relationships. <sup>5</sup>

The 2021 PiT Survey began at 6:00 pm on October 2<sup>nd</sup> and continued for 24 hours. The survey was available for completion in the City of Thunder Bay at the Canadian Lakehead Exhibition (CLE) which was the only public drop in site due to COVID-19. Additionally, clients staying at Shelter House Thunder Bay, the Salvation Army Journey to Life Centre, The Lodge on Dawson, Crossroads Centre, Beendigen, the John Howard Society of Thunder Bay and District, and Grace Place were provided the opportunity to participate in the survey. In addition, PiT Surveys were available for completion at the Greenstone PACE Office, Nipigon PACE Office, Schreiber PACE Office, Marathon PACE Office and at the Rural Cupboard Food Bank in Conmee. A total of 221 individuals completed the survey.

While the number of surveys completed in 2021 (221) was less than those collected in 2018 (474) and 2016 (289), this should not be interpreted as an indication of a decrease in the homeless population in the District of Thunder Bay. Due to the presence of COVID-19, the 2021 PiT Survey was forced to reduce the number of locations where the public could drop in and complete the survey within the City of Thunder Bay. In 2018, any person wanting to complete a survey could attend any of the nine locations available. However, in 2021 only one central location in the City of Thunder Bay was available for everyone and the other participating organizations were only available to individuals staying at those locations on that night. The locations in Greenstone, Nipigon, Schreiber, Marathon and Conmee were available for drop in.

Of the 221 surveys completed, 24 valid surveys were from outside of the City of Thunder Bay. As no one community outside of the City of Thunder Bay collected more than 20 surveys, to maintain anonymity these surveys are aggregated into Rural Communities for this report. A total of 35 surveys were deemed ineligible based on where respondents were planning to sleep the night of the PiT Count. 28 of the ineligible surveys were from rural communities.

For the past year, TBDSSAB has managed a by-name list through the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS). A by-name list is a comprehensive list of every person in a community experiencing homelessness, updated in real time. Using information collected and shared with their consent, each person on the list has a file that includes their name, homeless history, health, and housing needs. At the beginning of October, there are 693 individuals active on the by-name list in the District of Thunder Bay.

The by-name list is a much more accurate indicator of the number of people experiencing homelessness in the District of Thunder Bay, however the data collected through the PiT Survey will be used to understand the characteristics of the homeless population, improve services and programs for them, and increase public awareness of homelessness. The information will also be used to study demographic changes, prioritize service needs, and to continue the dialogue about homelessness with organizations, government and community members.



# Methodology

## Data Collection

During the 24-hour period beginning on October 2<sup>o</sup>, 2021 at 6:00pm, approximately 100 trained volunteers administered surveys at 11 locations throughout the District of Thunder Bay.

Volunteers were trained to treat everyone with respect, informing those surveyed that they could refuse to answer questions or stop the survey at any time. Participants' safety and comfort were a priority. Consideration was taken to minimize any risks of harm from the survey questions. All COVID-19 precautions were taken, as per public health guidelines. At the end of the survey, all individuals were given an honorarium for their participation.

## Surveys

Before conducting the survey, several screening questions were asked to determine whether participants were eligible to continue. These questions were:

1. Have you already completed this survey with another volunteer?
2. Are you willing to participate in the survey?
3. Where are you staying tonight?
4. Do you have your own house or apartment you can safely return to?

These questions were used to control duplication and to ensure that participation was completely voluntary. If found to be ineligible, the survey interaction ends and data

collection does not continue. In the case of a paper survey with these questions incomplete, the surveys are ineligible.

The PiT Survey focuses on those who are experiencing absolute homelessness on the day of the count, such as those experiencing unsheltered and emergency sheltered homelessness as well as the hidden homeless such as those that are couch surfing.

The information collected through the PiT Survey provides a better understanding of the demographics of the homeless population in the District of Thunder Bay at that point in time, as well as local information associated with homelessness, including the child welfare system, substance use and incarceration.

## **Volunteers**

The PiT Survey would not have been possible without volunteers who contributed their time to the event. Approximately 100 people registered to volunteer. All volunteers were required to attend a training session before the enumeration event. Training topics included safety, background information about the PiT Survey, cultural awareness, roles and responsibilities of volunteers, and the survey tools.

## **Data Entry and Analysis**

Survey data from the PiT Survey was entered into the Government of Canada's Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS). A data quality check was done to ensure that the survey responses were entered correctly into HIFIS.

The final results went through a data quality check to ensure that calculations were free of errors. For the PiT results, percentages were rounded, so the total may not add up to 100%.

The analysis looked at all of the survey participants as a whole and chose a few key subcategories to compare. The categories included demographic categories and some based on where the respondent was planning to sleep that night:

- people who reported couch surfing;
- people who reported shelter use;
- people experiencing absolute homelessness (unsheltered/living on the street);
- people experiencing chronic homelessness (180+ days of homelessness in 12 months);
- youth (people under 25 years old);
- people who reported Indigenous identity.

Most of these subcategories are not mutually exclusive; someone may fall into all five demographic categories and one based on their sleeping arrangements. The only categories that would be mutually exclusive from one another are those who reported couch surfing, shelter use or absolute homelessness as these categories are based on the answer to a single question.

This report will outline the main responses for the survey participants, as well as any significant deviations seen within the subcategories outlined above.

## Limitations

Although the PiT Survey is a useful tool to gather information about those experiencing homelessness, it is not a reliable tool for the enumeration of people experiencing homelessness.

**Statistical Significance** – Due to the difficulties in reaching people experiencing homelessness, a number of methodological issues arise in obtaining a statistically significant sample. The survey results are not random, only represent a single point in time, and are not large enough to be considered statistically significant to extrapolate to a larger population. Any comments herein about the population of people experiencing homelessness are only applicable to the group surveyed at a specific point in time.

**Minimum Count** – The PiT Survey is only a snapshot of homelessness; it is impossible to enumerate everyone experiencing homelessness in a community. It does not give a complete picture of people at risk of housing loss, people who are couch surfing, and people who cycle in and out of homelessness.

**Self-Reporting** – As the survey responses are self-reported, the results are dependent on the honesty of the participants. This issue is greater for sensitive topics such as Indigenous identity, sexual orientation and substance use, which participants may not be comfortable sharing with volunteers.

# Results

## Completed Surveys

A total of 221 people completed the 2021 PiT Survey. TABLE 1 shows the totals according to the typology of homelessness.

Communities outside of the City of Thunder Bay collected 24 valid surveys. As no one community collected more than 20 surveys, to maintain anonymity, these surveys are aggregated into Rural Communities for this report.

35 surveys were deemed ineligible based on where respondents were planning to sleep the night of the PiT Count (FIGURE 2). 28 of the ineligible surveys were from rural communities.

Table 1

Typology of Homelessness	
Unsheltered and Unknown	33
Emergency sheltered	95
Provisionally accommodated	93
Total	221

Figure 1: Valid Surveys by Area

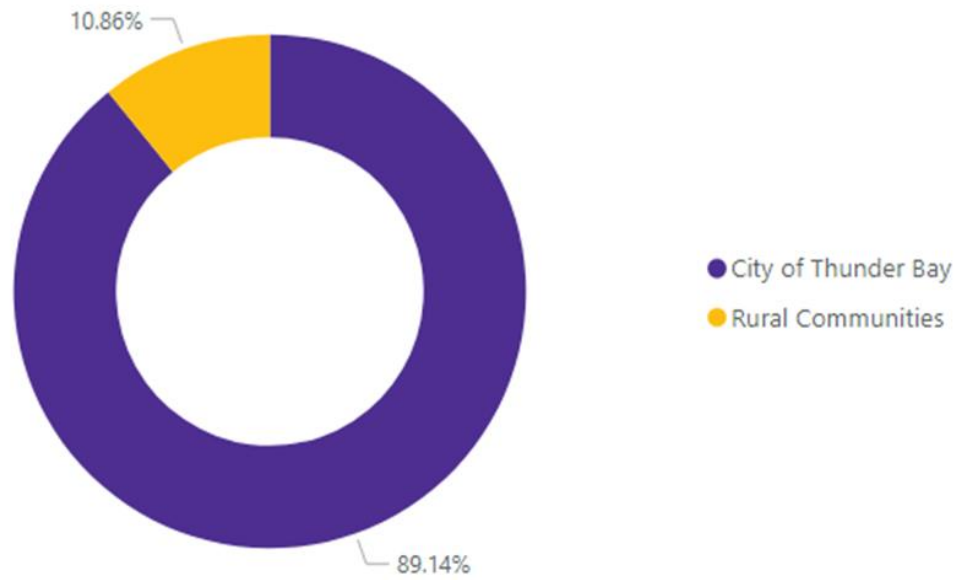
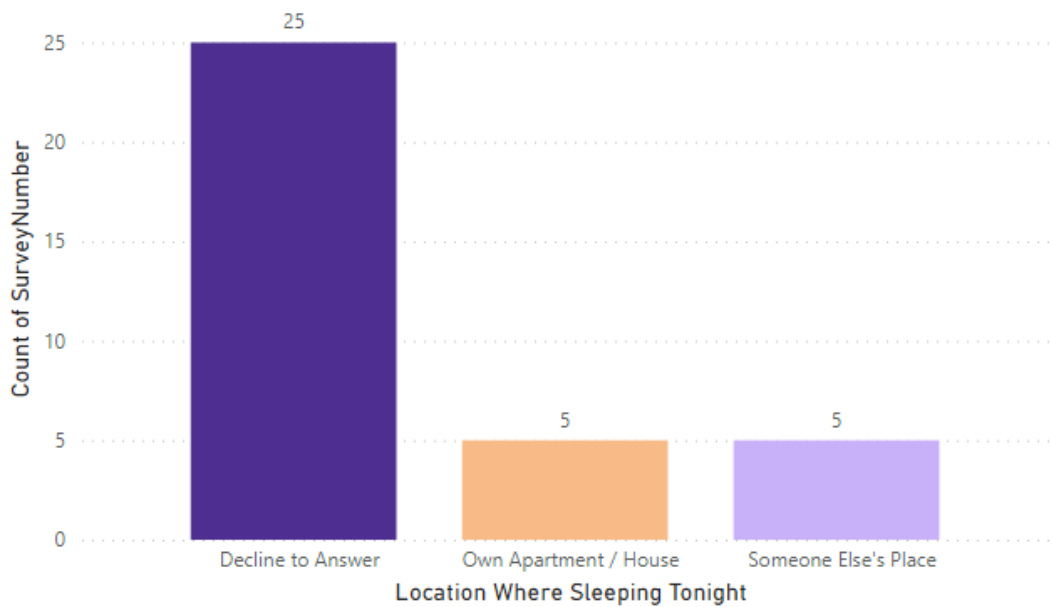


Figure 2: Where Screened Out Respondents Stayed That Night



## Demographics

### Indigenous Participants

Participants were asked if they identify as having indigenous ancestry, as First Nations with or without status, or as Métis. The combined total of respondents that identified as Indigenous is 68.3%.

For the rural communities 79.2% identified as Indigenous and 81.8% of youth identified as Indigenous (FIGURE 4). For the City of Thunder Bay, 67% identified as Indigenous and 57% of youth identified as Indigenous.

Figure 3: Respondents Identifying as Indigenous

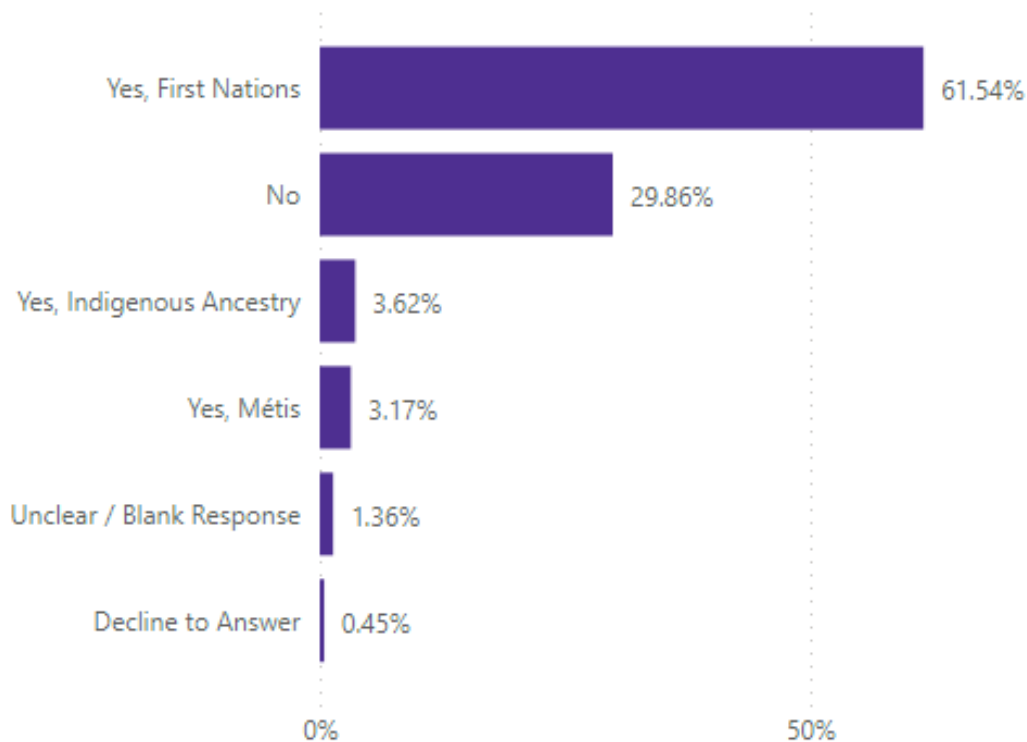


Figure 4: Proportion of Respondents Identifying as Indigenous – Rural Communities

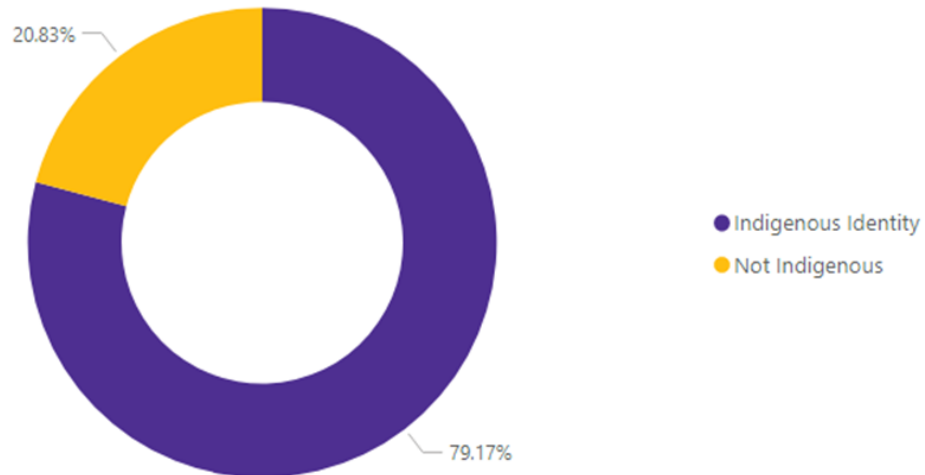
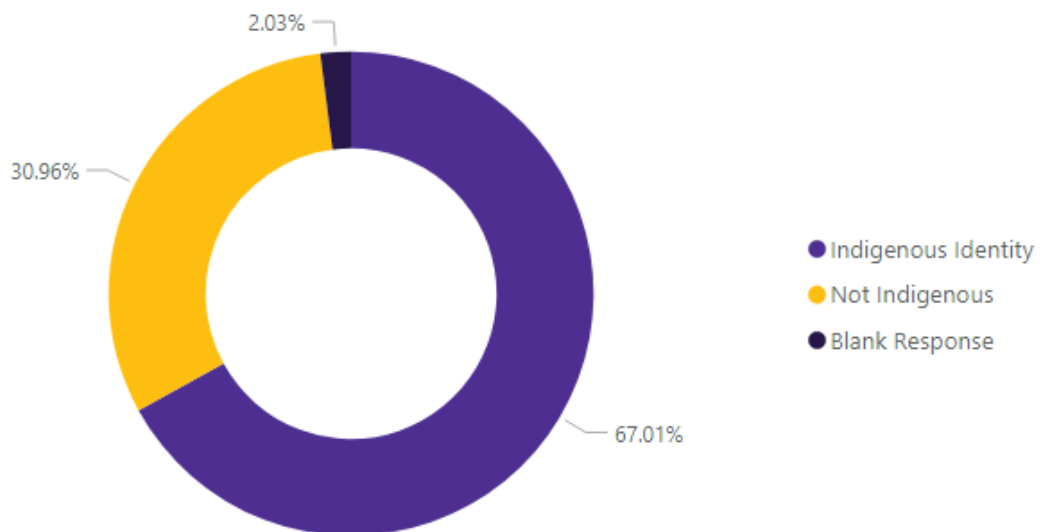


Figure 5: Proportion of Respondents Identifying as Indigenous – City of Thunder Bay



## Age Range

The average age of all participants was 40. The average age for youth (under 25) was 18, with the youngest participant 16 and the oldest participant 73. The average age of



the first homeless episode for survey respondents was 27 years old. For the rural communities the average age was 33 and the average age for youth was 20. The average age in the City of Thunder Bay was 41 and the average age for youth was 16.

Figure 6: Respondent Age Range

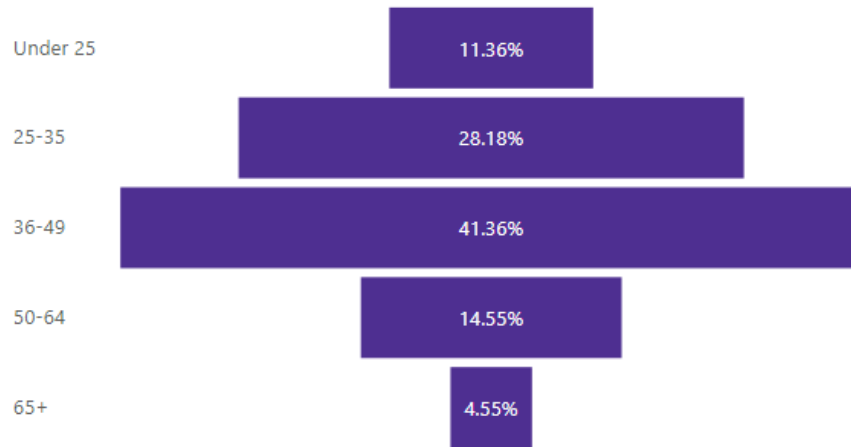


Figure 7: Respondent Age Range - Rural Communities

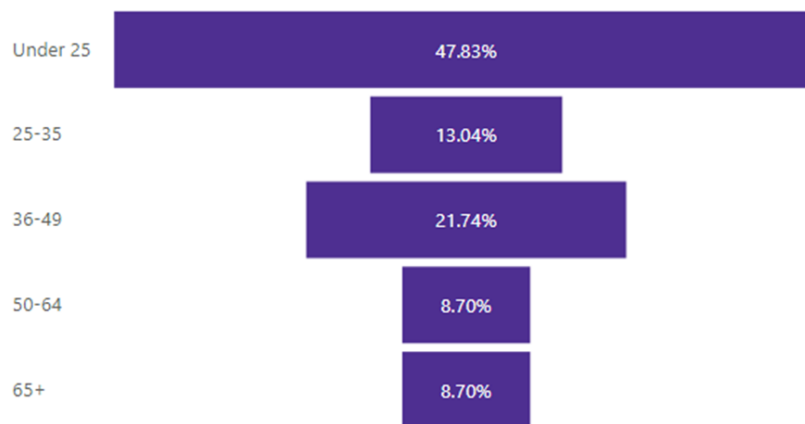
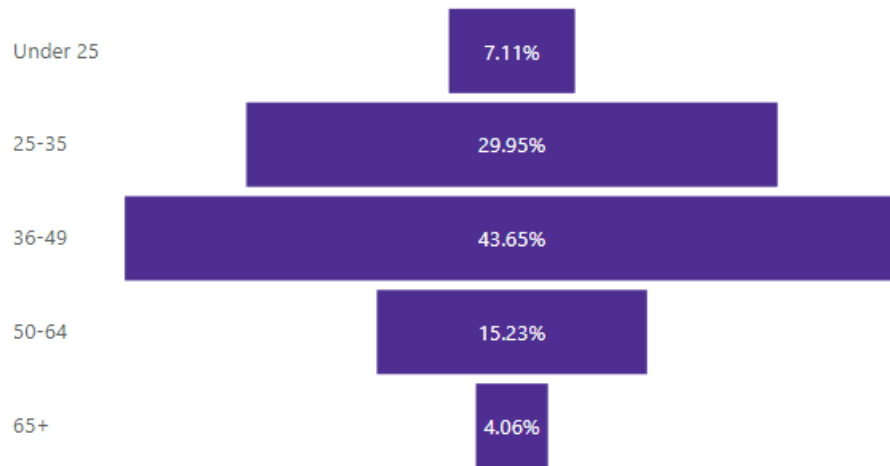


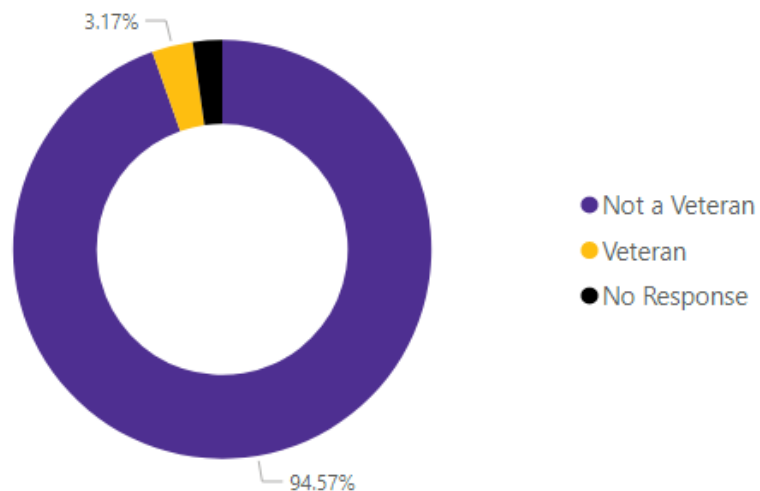
Figure 8: Respondent Age Range - City of Thunder Bay



## Veteran Status

When asked if they identified as veterans, 3% of participants responded “yes”. Of those who identified as veterans, 86% identified as Indigenous and 100% identified as male. There were no respondents who identified as veterans in the rural communities.

Figure 9: Veteran Status



## Sexual Orientation

When asked about their sexual orientation, 7% of respondents identified as LGBTQ+. Of the youth surveyed, 2% identified as LGBTQ+. Of all the survey respondents 89.59% identified as straight/heterosexual, 4.07% identified as bisexual, 1.36% as gay, .9% questioning, .45% as lesbian and .45% as two-spirited.

For respondents in the rural communities 20.8% identified as LGBTQ+, 79.2% as straight, 12.5% as bisexual, 4.2% as lesbian, and 4.2% questioning. 5.6% of respondents in the City of Thunder Bay identified as LGBTQ+, 90.9% as straight, 3.1% as bisexual, 0% as lesbian, 0.5% as questioning, 0.5% as two-spirit, and 1.5% as gay.

Figure 10: Sexual Orientation of Respondents

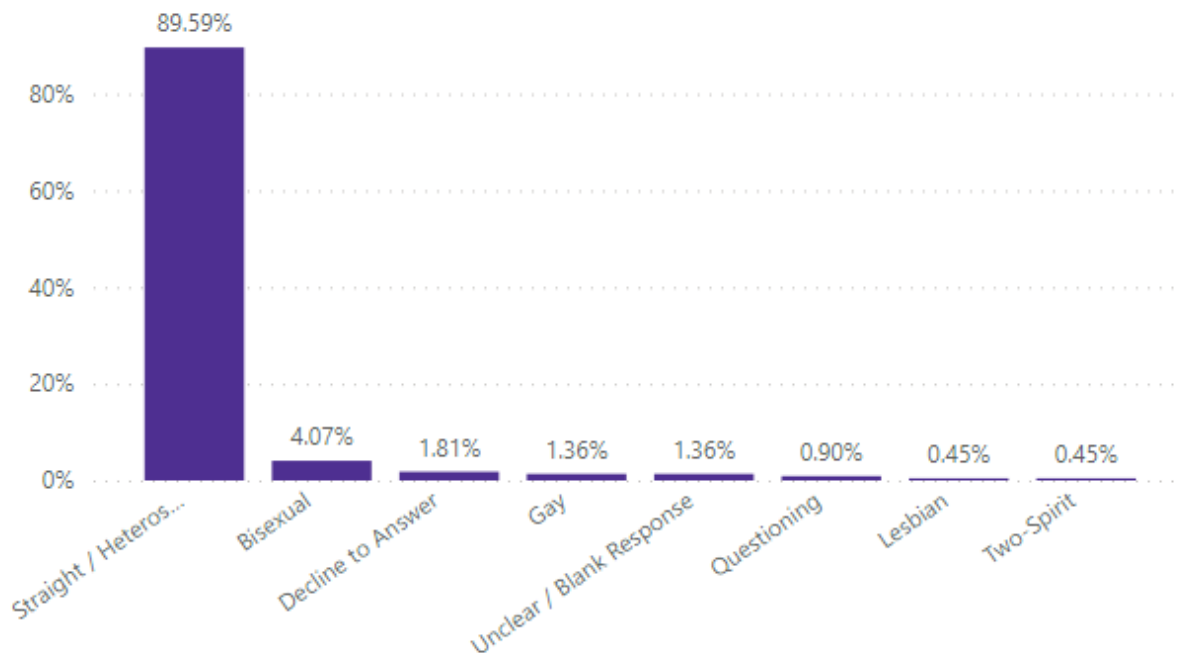


Figure 11: Sexual Orientation of Respondents - Rural Communities

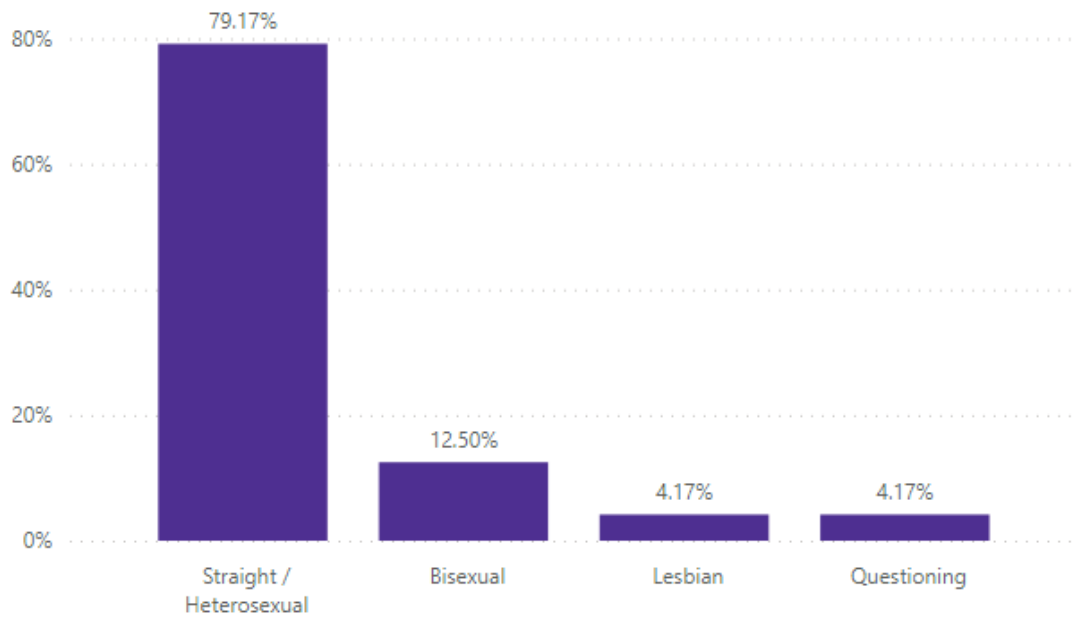
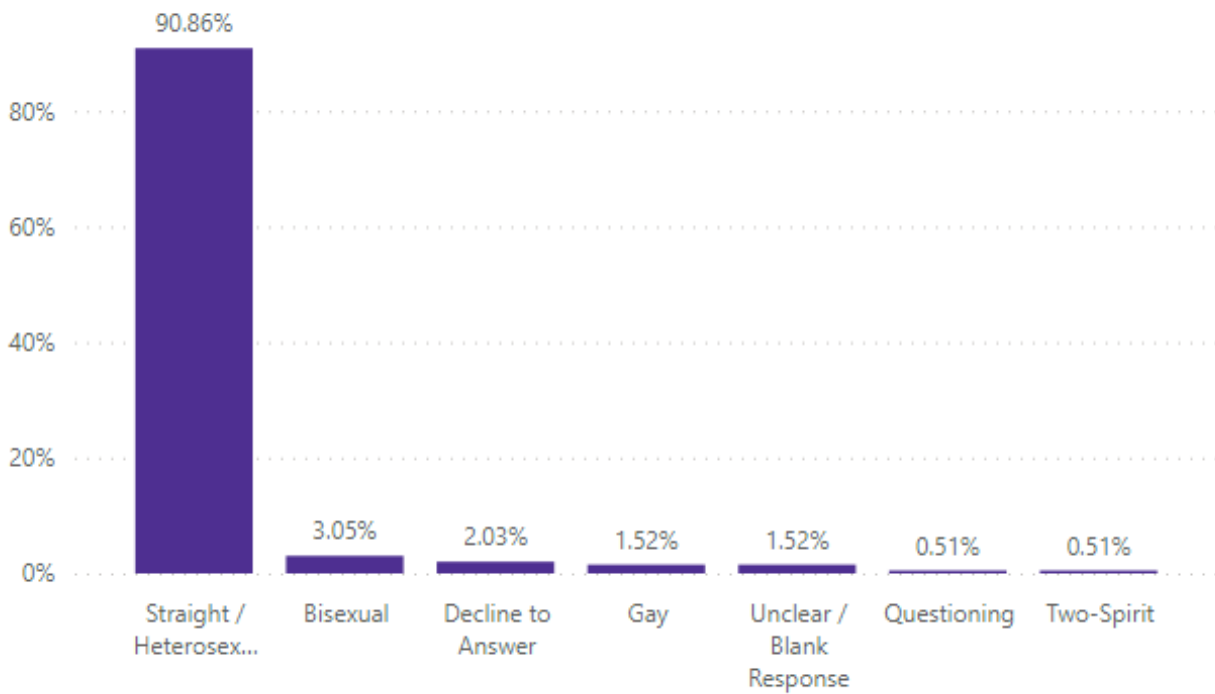


Figure 12: Sexual Orientation of Respondents - City of Thunder Bay



## Place to Stay at Night

When asked where they were planning to stay that night, 17% of respondents planned to couch surf (stay at someone else's place), 43% of survey participants were planning to stay in an emergency shelter, 10% unsheltered, 1% in their car, 12% in a treatment program/hospital, 8% in transitional housing, 4% in motel/hotel, and 5% were unsure.

Respondents in rural communities identified couch surfing (45.8%), transitional shelter/housing (20.8%), and hotel/motel (12.5%) as the top three places. In the City of Thunder Bay, emergency shelter (47.7%), couch surfing (13.7%), and treatment centre/hospital (13.7%) were the top three places identified.

Figure 13: Locations Participants Planned to Sleep on October 2, 2021

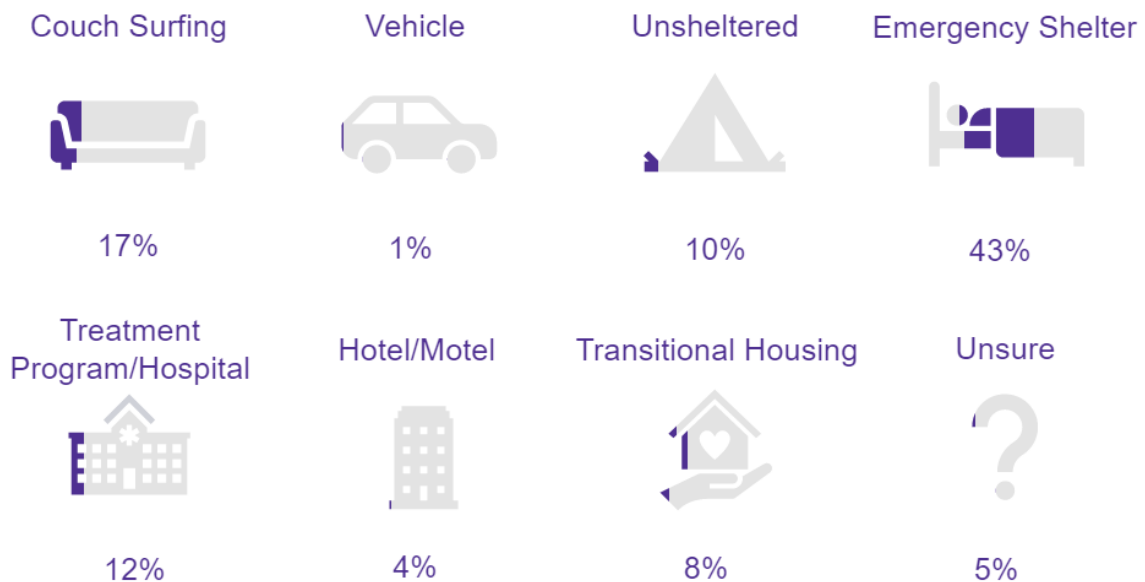


Figure 14: Where Respondents Planned to Stay October 2, 2021 – Rural Communities

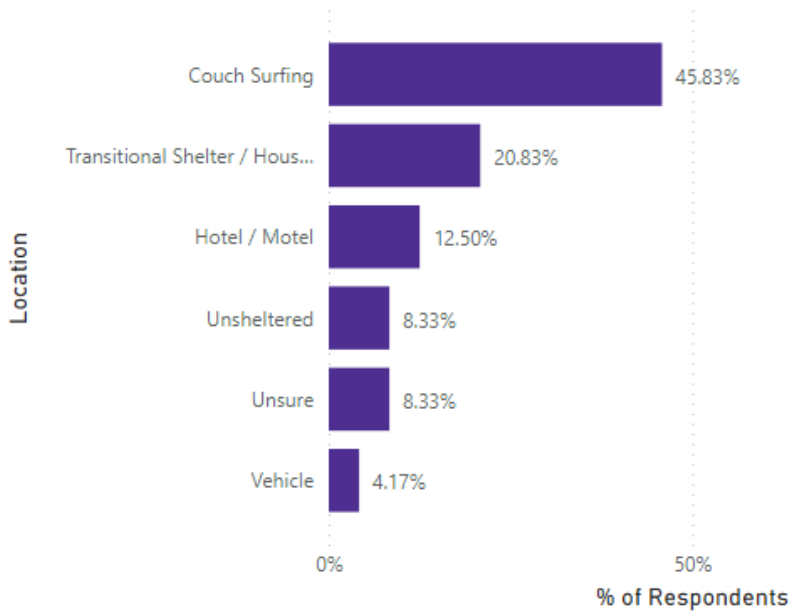
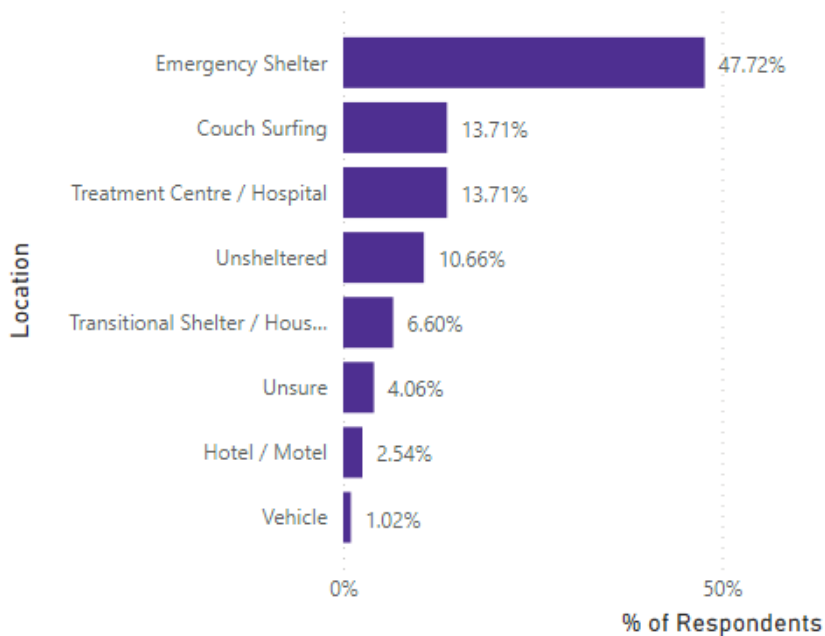


Figure 15: Where Respondents Planned to Stay October 2, 2021 - City of Thunder Bay



## Chronic and Episodic Homelessness

Chronic homelessness is defined as experiencing homelessness for 180 days or more in a 12-month time period. 58% of survey participants reported being homeless for more than 6 months and are classified as chronically homeless. 20.8% of respondents from rural communities and 62.9% from the City of Thunder Bay are chronically homeless.

Episodic homelessness is defined as experiencing 3 or more homelessness events in a 12-month period. These periods of homelessness have a time gap between them. 20% of survey respondents are classified as episodically homeless. In rural communities, 25% identified as episodically homeless and 19.8% of respondents in the City of Thunder Bay identified as episodic.

Figure 16:  
Chronic  
Homelessness -  
Rural Communities

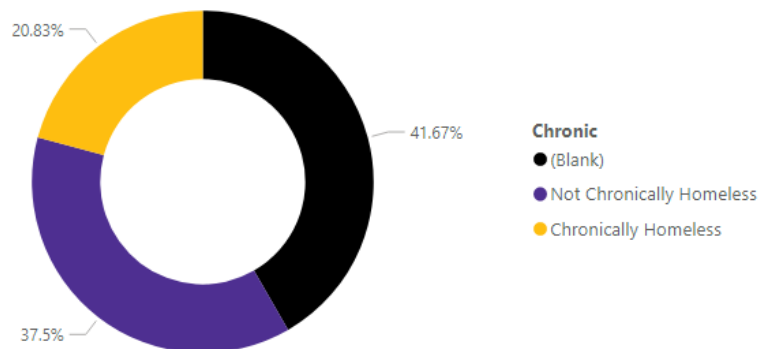


Figure 17:  
Chronic Homelessness -  
City of Thunder Bay

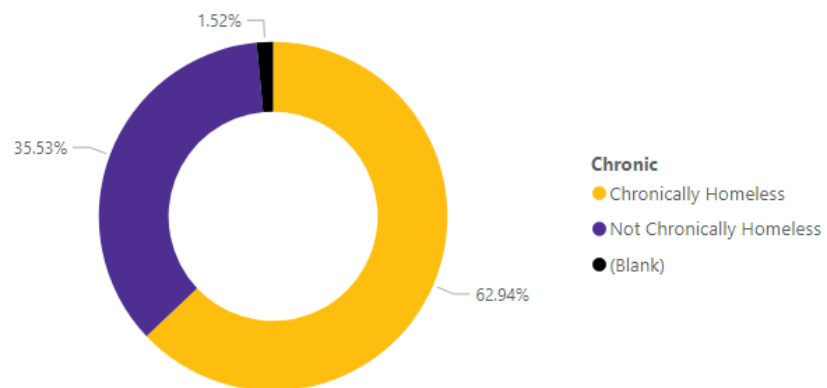


Figure 18: Respondents Experiencing Episodic Homelessness – Rural Communities

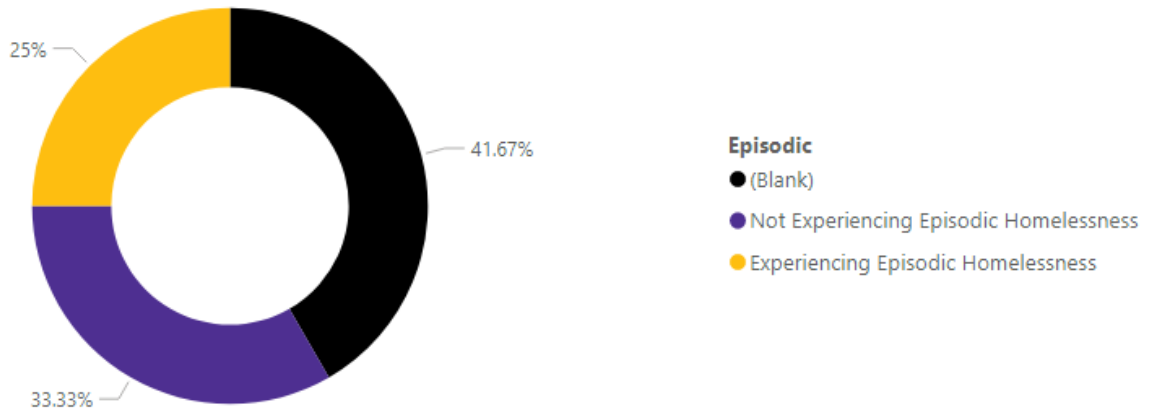
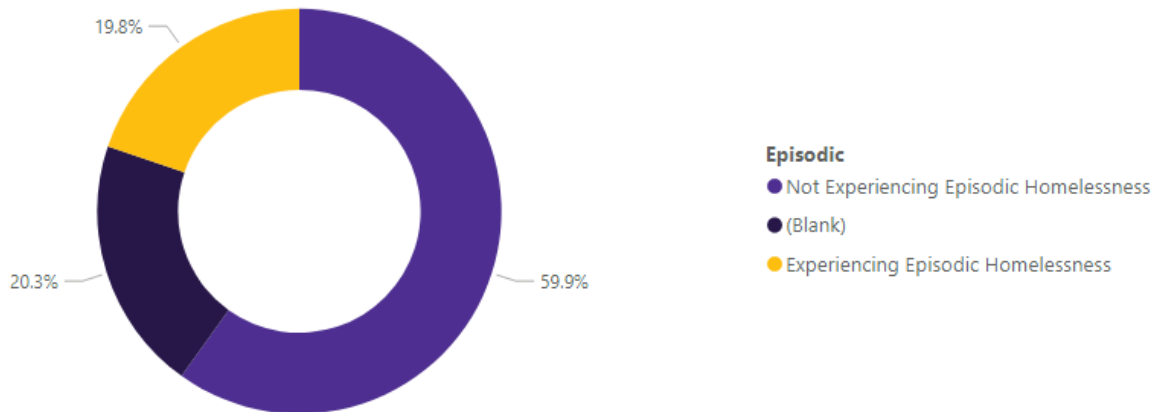


Figure 19: Respondents Experiencing Episodic Homelessness - City of Thunder Bay



\*Blank denotes no answer to the questions of how long and how many times in the last year have you experienced homelessness



## Foster Care

Respondents were asked if they were ever in foster care; 45% of participants responded yes. That number jumped to 59% when looking only at youth under 25; a statistically significant difference from the total surveyed group. Indigenous survey participants also had a higher rate of experience in the foster care system than the rest of the respondents at 54%. When focusing on Indigenous youth, 61% had experience with foster care.

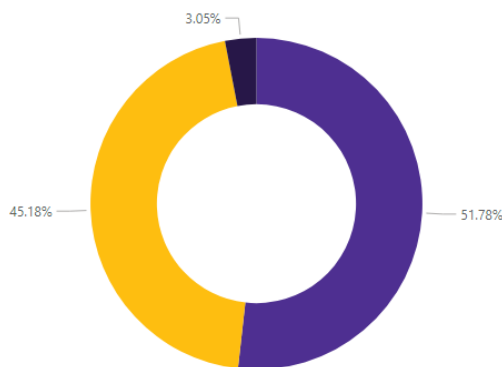
In rural communities, 54% responded that they had been in foster care. This number increased to 66.7% for youth under 25. Indigenous survey participants with experience in the foster care system was 52.6%, whereas 30% of Indigenous youth had foster care experiences. In the City of Thunder Bay 45% responded that they had been in foster care. This number increased to 64.3% for youth under 25. Indigenous survey participants with experience in the foster care system was 53.8% and 100% of Indigenous youth had foster care experiences.

Figure 20:  
Respondents with history in  
the foster care system –  
Rural Communities



Figure 21:  
Respondents with history in  
the foster care system –  
City of Thunder Bay

- No
- Yes
- Decline to Answer



## Mental Health and Substance Use

Substance Use was the second most reported reason for homelessness. 78% of participants reported having used substances and 53% reported having a mental health condition. In rural communities, 87.5% reported having used substances and 62.5% reported having a mental health condition. In the City of Thunder Bay 76.7% reported having used substances and 52.3% reported having a mental health condition.

Figure 22: % Respondents Reporting Substance Use

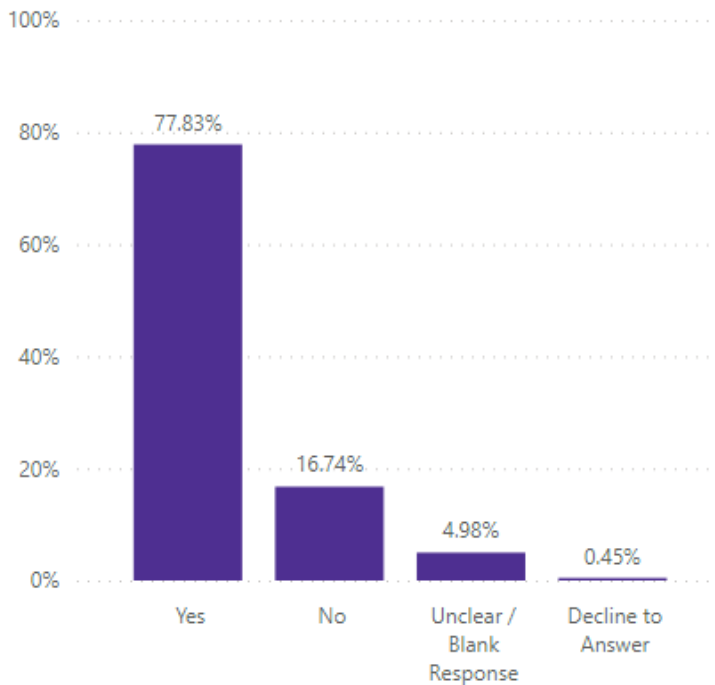


Figure 23: % Respondents Reporting Substance Use - Rural Communities

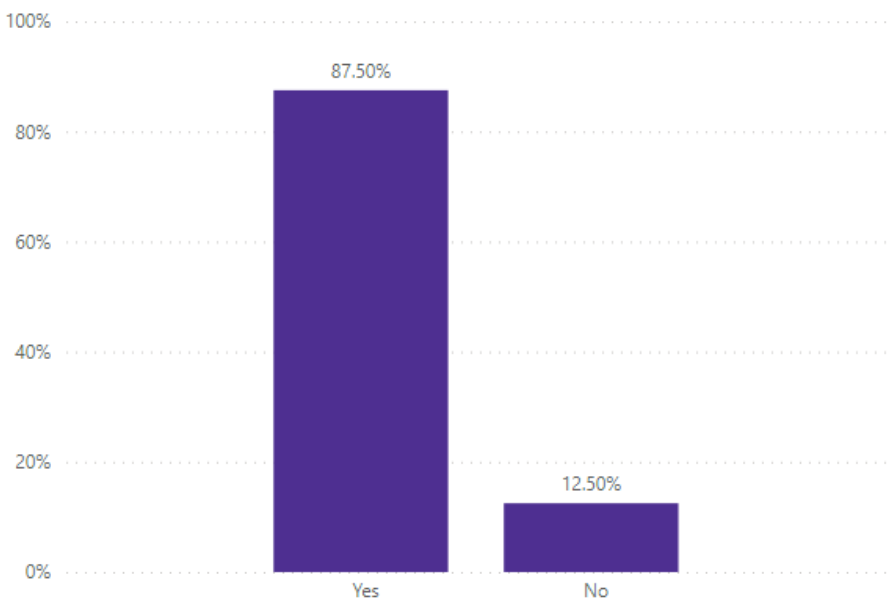


Figure 24: % Respondents Reporting Substance Use – City of Thunder Bay

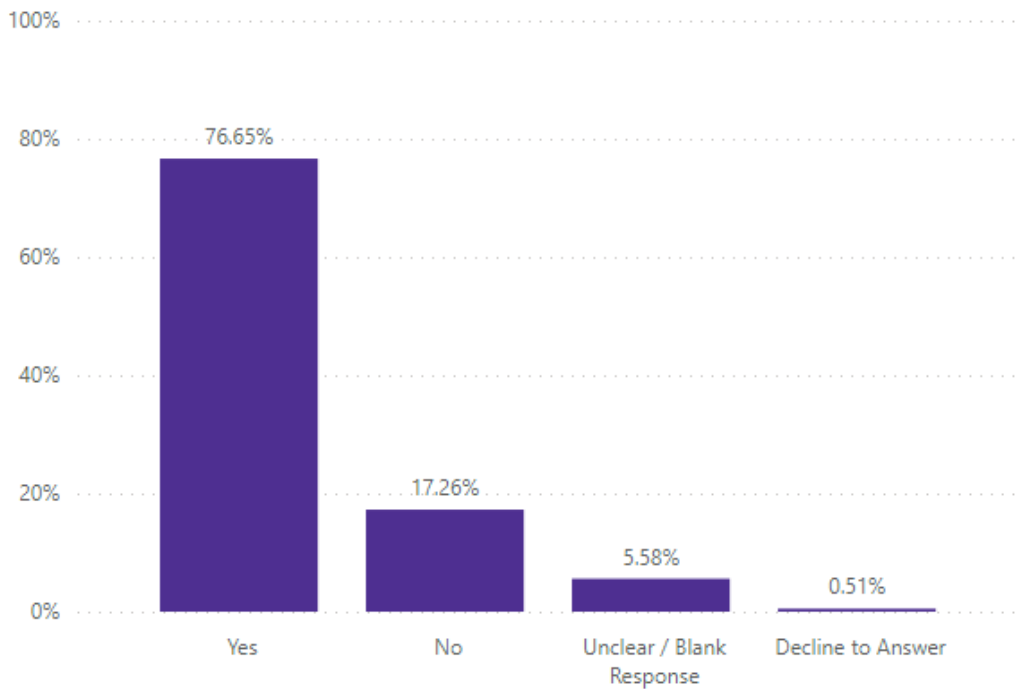


Figure 25: % Respondents Reporting a Mental Health Issue

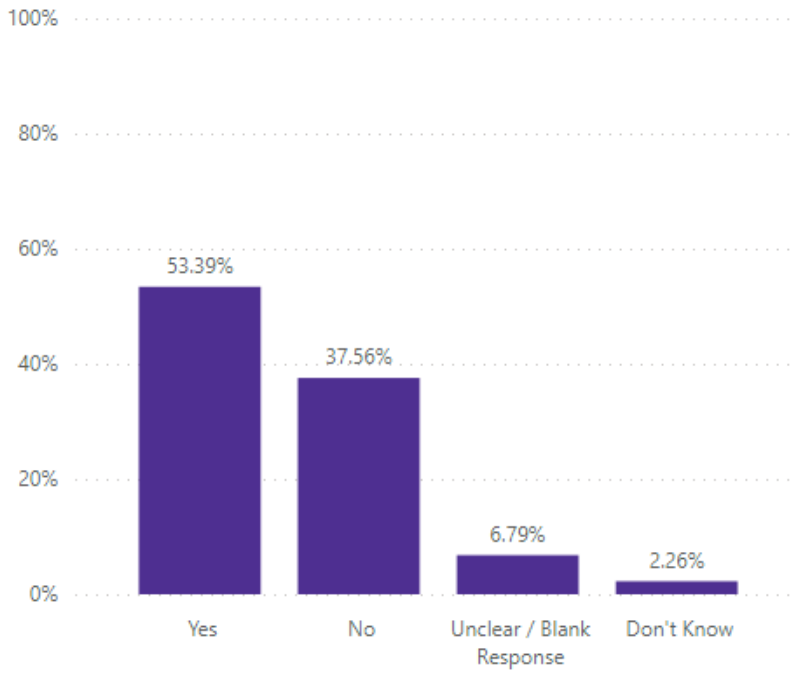


Figure 26: Respondents Reporting a Mental Health Issue – Rural Communities

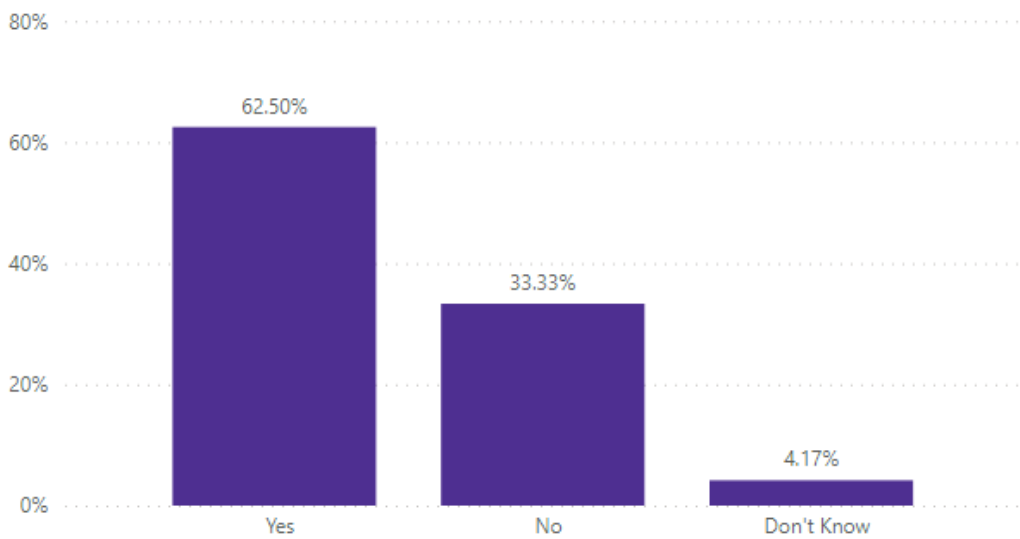
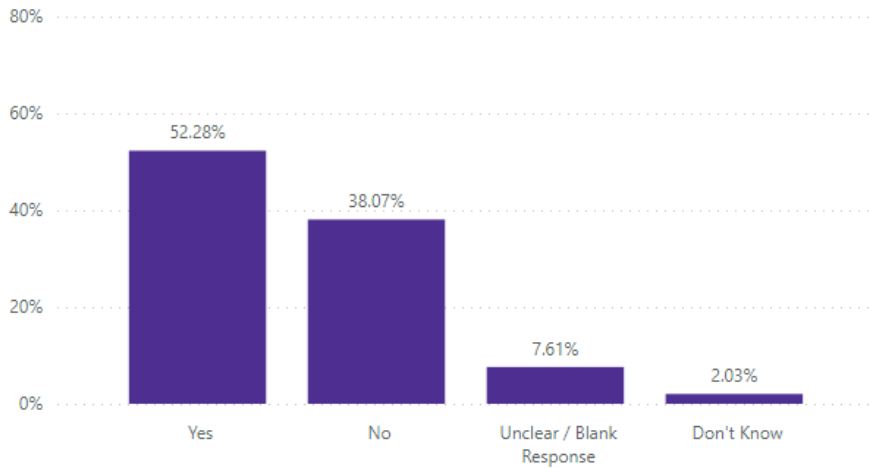


Figure 27: Respondents Reporting a Mental Health Issue – City of Thunder Bay



## Reasons for Homelessness

Participants were asked what they believe are the reasons for their homelessness. If the participant could not freely give reasons, the volunteer provided a list of examples, and the participant chose as many of those options as they felt applicable. The top five self-reported reasons for homelessness were low income (20%), substance use (19%), unfit or unsafe housing (12%), conflict with spouse or partner (11%), and conflict with landlord (9%). Low income and substance use were the first and second reason provided in both rural communities and in the City of Thunder Bay.

Figure 28: Five Most Frequently Reported Reasons for Housing Loss

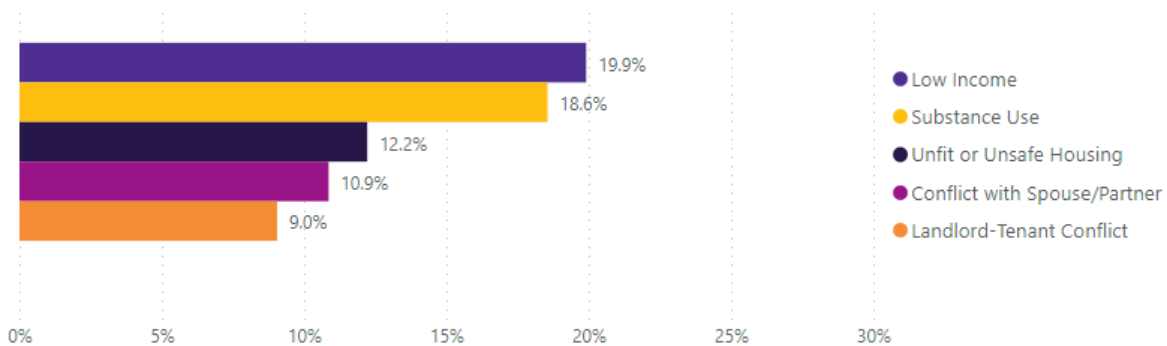


Figure 29: Five Most Reported Reasons for Housing Loss – Rural Communities

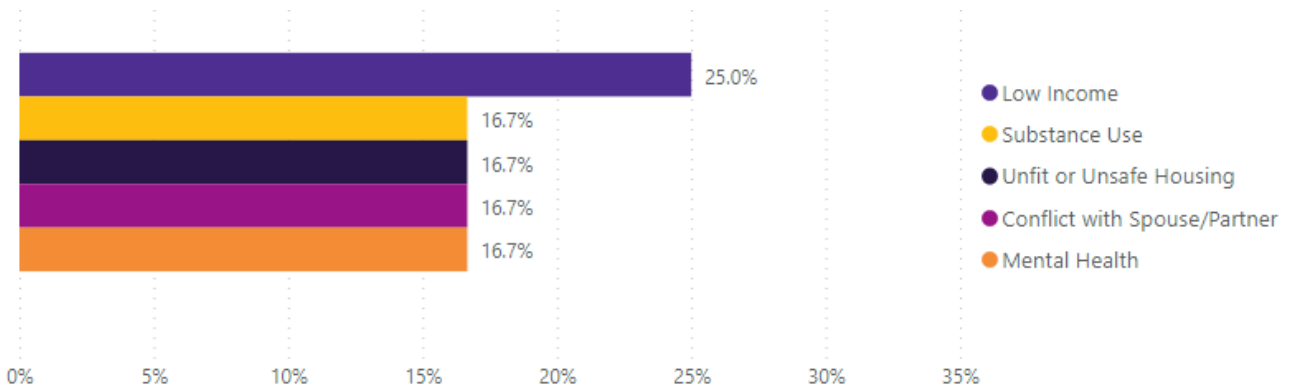
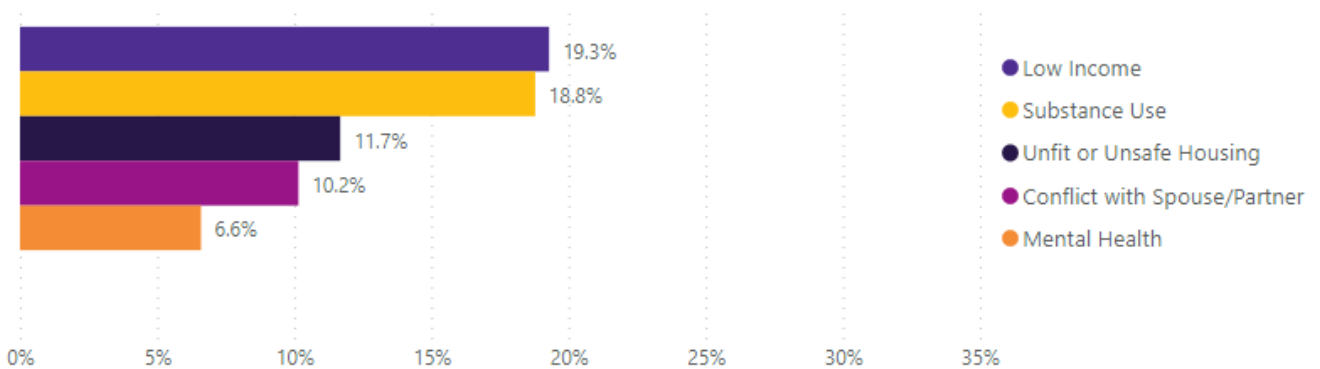


Figure 30: Five Most Frequently Reported Reasons For Housing Loss – City of Thunder Bay



## Sources of Income

Social assistance benefits (Ontario Disability Support Payment/Ontario Works) were the main source of income for 70% of people who participated in the survey. The third most reported source of income was “No income” with 13% of respondents.

For respondents in rural communities, ODSP was the main source of income for 25%, no income for 20.8% and employment for 20.8%. In the City of Thunder Bay 42.6% of respondents received ODSP, 30.5% OW and 12.2% had no income.

Figure 31: Most Reported Income Sources

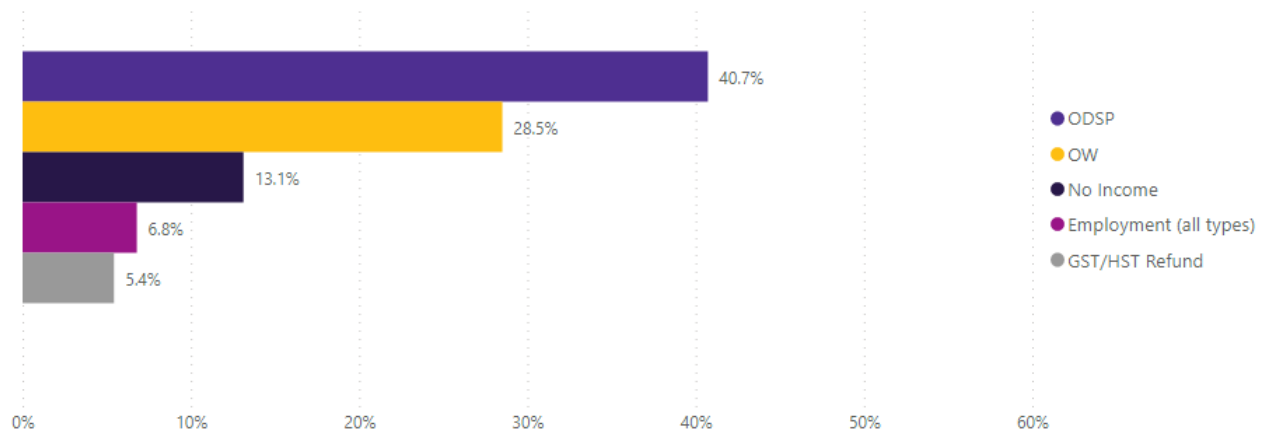


Figure 32: Most Reported Income Sources – Rural Communities

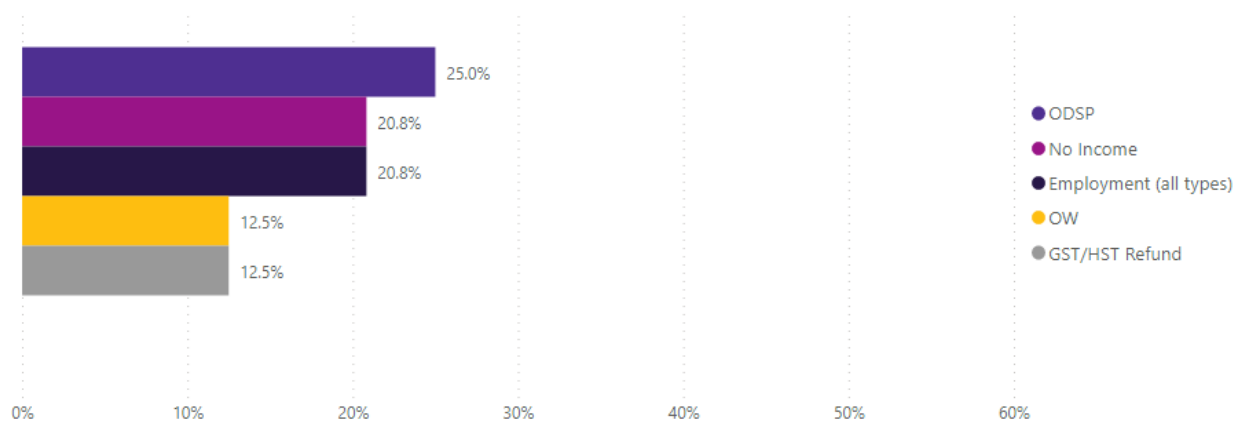
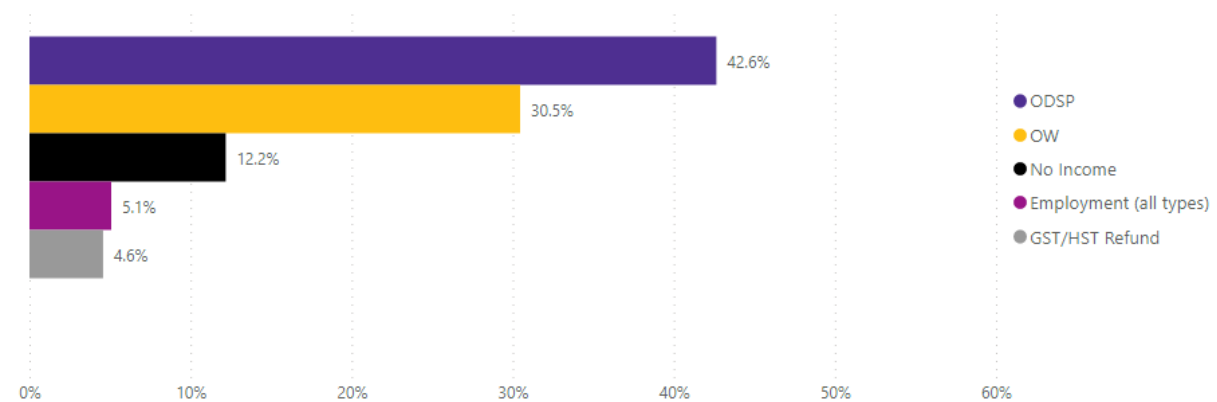


Figure 33: Most Reported Income Sources – City of Thunder Bay



## Respondents not originally from the community surveyed

Survey participants were asked if they have always been in the current community. 27.4% of respondents that were surveyed in the City of Thunder Bay reported originally being from the City of Thunder Bay, and 29.2% of respondents surveyed in rural communities reported being from that community.

Of the people surveyed in the City of Thunder Bay, 14.2% came from a First Nation community, 7.6% came from another community in the District of Thunder Bay, and 20.8% reported being from outside the District. The respondents surveyed in rural communities chose not to provide an answer to this question.

## Conclusion

The PiT Survey focuses on those who are experiencing absolute homelessness on the day of the count, such as those experiencing unsheltered and emergency sheltered homelessness as well as the hidden homeless such as those that are couch surfing.

The information collected through the PiT Survey provides a better understanding of the demographics of the homeless population in the District of Thunder Bay at that point in time, as well as local information associated with homelessness, including the child welfare system, substance use and mental health.



## References

1. Gaetz S., Donaldson, J., Richter T., and Gulliver, T. "The State of Homelessness in Canada 2013," Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press 2013.  
<http://homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/SOHC2103.pdf>.
2. Gaetz, S., Barr, C., Friesen, A., Harris, B., Hill, C., Kovacs-Burns, K., Pauly, B., Pearce, B., Turner, A., Marsolais, A. "Canadian Definition of Homelessness," Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press 2012.  
<http://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/COHhomelessdefinition.pdf>.
3. Ibid.
4. Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. "Indigenous Peoples." Homeless Hub. 2017. <http://homelesshub.ca/about-homelessness/population-specific/indigenous-peoples>.
5. Thistle, J. "Indigenous Definition of Homelessness in Canada," Canadian Observatory on Homelessness 2017.