

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the 2025 Homeless Count in Merritt took place on the unceded territory of the Nlaka'pamux Nation Tribal Council and the Syilx Okanagan Nation. They have been stewards of this land since time immemorial and we pay our respect to the Elders and Knowledge-Keepers both past and present.

What is a Point-in-Time Homeless Count?

Point-in-Time homeless counts ("PiT counts" or "counts") provide a snapshot of people who are experiencing homelessness over a 24-hour period in a community. Counts include an estimated number of people experiencing homelessness, their demographic characteristics, and other information including service use, income, and reasons for housing loss. On April 3, 2025, a PiT count was conducted in Merritt. This was the fourth count in Merritt, with the next most recent conducted on March 15, 2023.

Limitations & Interpretation

- A PiT count represents the minimum number of people who are experiencing homelessness on a given day in the community.
- The purpose of a PiT count is not intended to be a measure of everyone who experiences homelessness. By focusing on a single day, a count will not include some people who cycle in and out of homelessness and staff and volunteers will not encounter everyone despite best attempts.
- While an accepted methodological tool, PiT counts are likely to be an undercount and represent only those individuals identified and included during a 24-hour period.
- This report details the characteristics of people experiencing homelessness who answered each survey question and percentages are based on the number of respondents to each question. Percentages may not be representative of the total population experiencing homelessness; the number (n) of respondents may vary within each question.
- There are a variety of reasons why a count number will change over time in a community. These include changes in actual homelessness, supportive housing, and/or services available. Caution should be used when making comparisons across time or between communities.
- Given these limitations, decision makers are encouraged to seek complimentary sources of data — such as reports from local service agencies — to corroborate the findings in this report.

How Many People Were "Counted" as Experiencing Homelessness in Merritt in the 2025 Count?

In total, 94 people in Merritt were included in the Count by either staying in a shelter or completing a survey. This total and comparison to the previous count is shown in Figure 1. A comparison of those experiencing sheltered and unsheltered homelessness is shown in Figure 2.

What is Sheltered Homelessness?

Sheltered homelessness includes those who stayed overnight on the night of the Count in homeless shelters, including transition houses and youth safe houses, and people with no fixed address (NFA) staying temporarily in hospitals, local holding cells, or detox facilities. **Note:** shelter capacity can change in a community after the Count, including opening or closure of temporary or year-round shelter programs.

What is Unsheltered Homelessness?

Unsheltered homelessness includes those who stayed outside in alleys, doorways, parkades, parks and vehicles or those who were staying temporarily at someone else's place (couch surfing), a hotel without a place to return to, or with their parents in a temporary situation on the night of the Count. **Note:** the unsheltered count relies on finding individuals on the day of the Count. It may change due to a variety of factors (see Limitations).

Of the 70 respondents experiencing unsheltered homelessness in this community, 52% were staying with others - such as temporarily couch surfing with friends, relatives, their parents, or others.

Figure 1: Total Number of Persons Experiencing Homelessness and Included in the Count

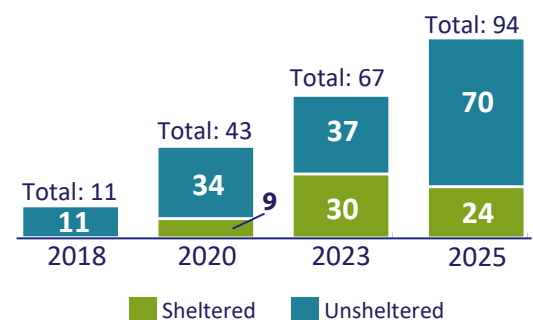
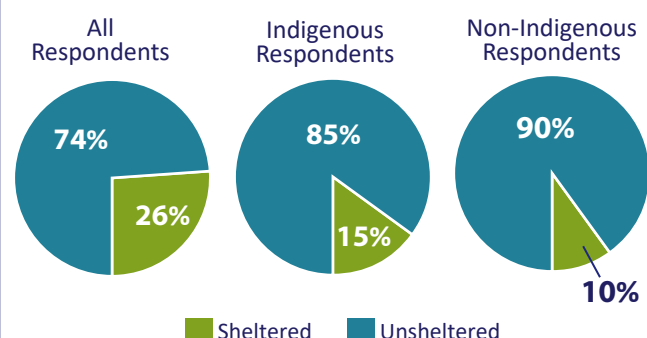


Figure 2: Where Respondents Stayed the Night of the Count



Indigenous Homelessness and PiT Counts

Indigenous people are consistently overrepresented in the population of people experiencing homelessness. Disproportionate rates of homelessness are rooted in the ongoing structural violence of settler colonial society that creates hierarchical systems of privilege and oppression. Indigenous people in Canada face racism, discrimination, and the impacts of intergenerational trauma which can limit safe and equitable access to services making it easier to lose, and harder to acquire, safe and stable housing.

Presentation of Indigenous Data

Indigenous refers to the diverse cultures of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people, whether they have legal status, or are living in urban, rural, or remote areas. To inform Indigenous-led service planning, this report presents some Indigenous responses alongside those of non-Indigenous respondents and all respondents combined.

Indigenous respondents tend to report accessing services at a lower rate than non-Indigenous respondents. While the PiT Count methodology does not allow for definitive conclusions, these results align with the well-documented harms of the Canadian health and social service sector towards Indigenous peoples.

Figure 3: Indigenous Identity (n=61)



Figure 4: Indigenous Distinction (n=40)

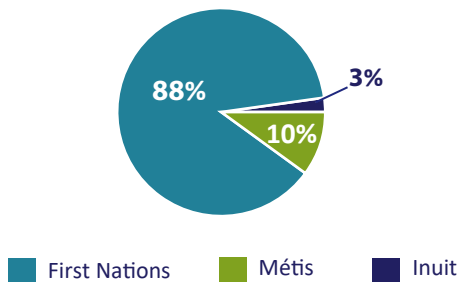


Figure 5: Length of Time in Community All Respondents (n=52)



Figure 6: Length of Time Experiencing Homelessness (n=49)

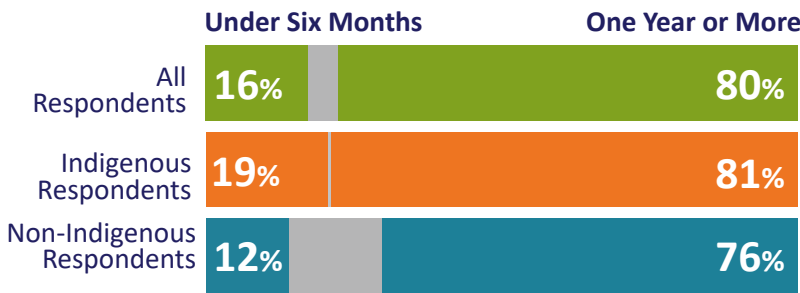


Figure 7: Top Reasons for Housing Loss All Respondents (n=53)



Figure 8: Percentage of Respondents Identifying Eviction as Cause of Most Recent Housing Loss (n=40)



How Long Have Respondents Been in Merritt?

The vast majority of individuals experiencing homelessness are long-time residents of their community, as shown in Figure 5 for Merritt. This is consistent with all other communities in the 2025 PiT Homeless Count in BC.

How Long Have Respondents Experienced Homelessness?

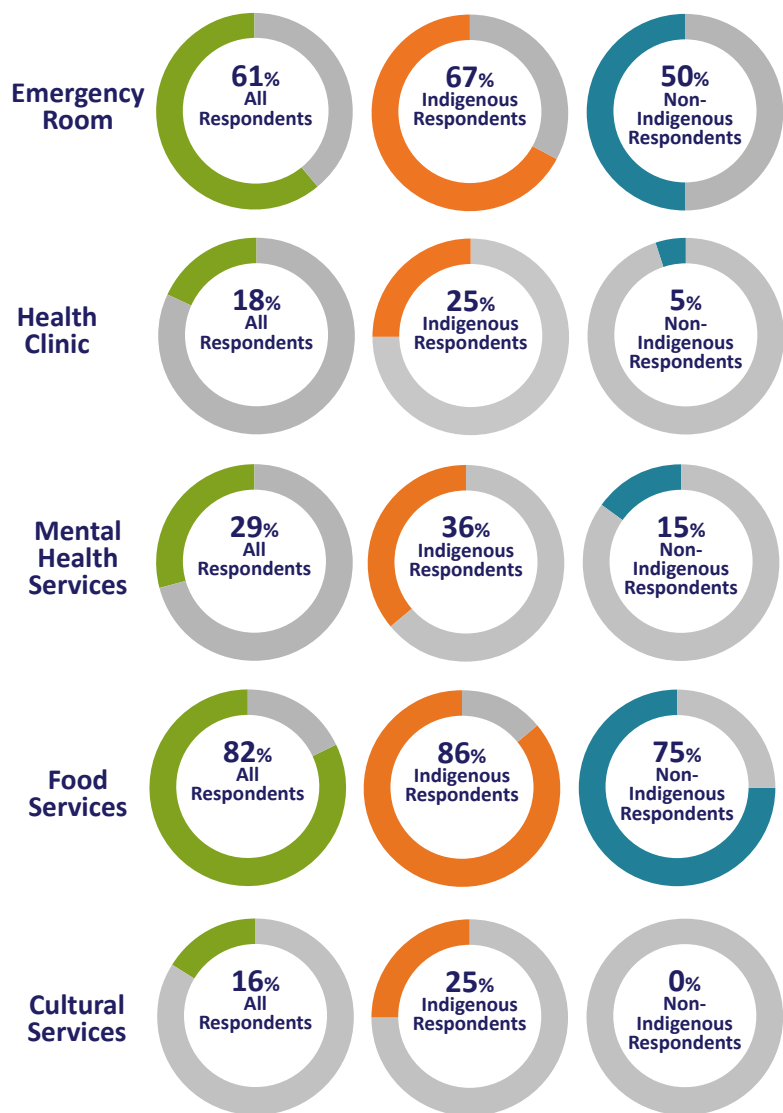
Figure 6 shows the duration of respondents' experiences of homelessness. Those who have experienced homelessness for longer can require different services, and may face different barriers in accessing housing than those with shorter experiences of homelessness.

What Causes a Loss of Housing?

An experience of homelessness is almost always the result of more than one event. Often, income challenges are pushed to a crisis by an event, such as a health challenge, relationship change, or eviction. The top three reasons for housing loss identified by respondents in Merritt are shown in Figure 7.

For the first time in the Provincial Count, respondents were asked if their most recent experience of homelessness was the result of an eviction. Results for Merritt are shown in Figure 8.

Figure 9: Services Accessed in the Past Year (n=56)



What Services do People Access?

Respondents were asked to check all that apply in a list of services on the survey. Figure 9 shows the percentage of respondents who accessed commonly used services. Service access is often a reflection of service availability and perceived safety.

What Sources of Income do People Have?

A majority of respondents report receiving income assistance (including Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers benefits) or disability assistance (Figure 10).

Many respondents have other sources of income (Figure 11), and 6% in Merritt report having a part-time job.

Figure 10: Percentage of Respondents Who Report Being On Income Assistance (n=58)



Figure 11: Top Sources of Income Other Than Income Assistance for All Respondents (n=56)

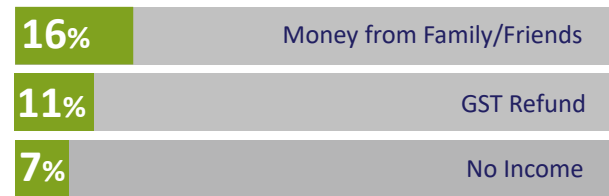
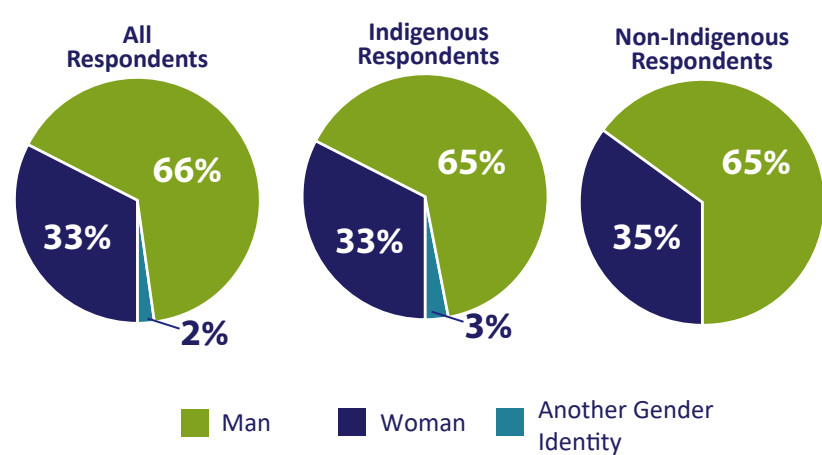


Figure 12: Gender Identity of Respondents (n=61)



What are the Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation of Respondents?

Homelessness services that are safe are needed for all identities and orientations. This includes sheltering options, residential supports, and outreach services.

Respondents' gender identity is shown in Figure 12, those who identified as having a transgender experience in Figure 13, and those who identified as asexual, bisexual, gay, lesbian, pan-sexual, Two-Spirit, questioning and/or queer are shown in Figure 14.

Figure 13: Transgender Experience (n=51)

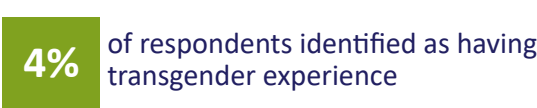


Figure 14: Sexual Orientation (n=58)

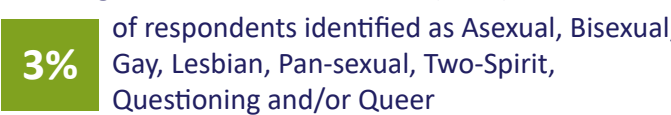
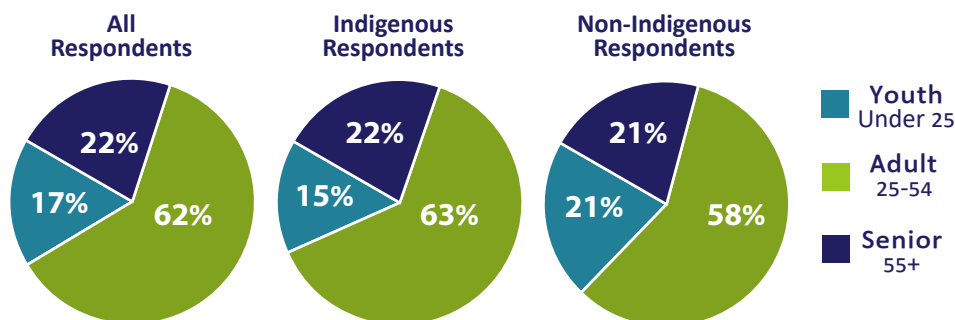


Figure 15: Age of Respondents (n=60)



What Are the Ages of Respondents?

Age groups of respondents are shown in Figure 15. Fifty-five years of age or older is used as the benchmark for “senior” in this report as it aligns with the eligibility for BC Housing’s Seniors’ Supportive Housing program.

What Percentage of Respondents Experience Homelessness as Youth and the Foster Care System?

Figure 16 shows the percentage of respondents who experienced homelessness for the first time as a youth, and those who reported being in foster care, a youth group home, or on an Independent Living Agreement as a youth.

Figure 16: Youth Homelessness and Foster Care

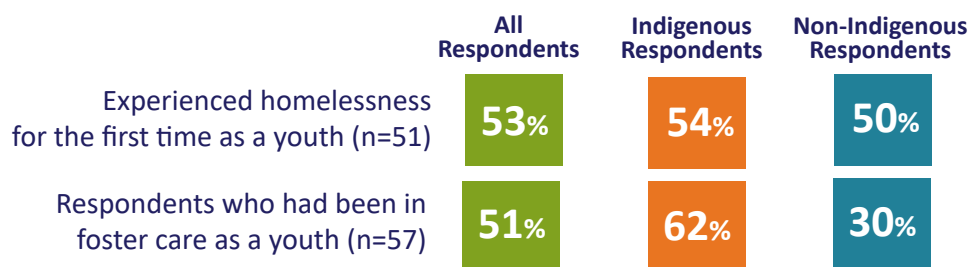


Figure 17: Percentage of Respondents Identifying As Having a Challenge with Their Health - By Category (n=58)

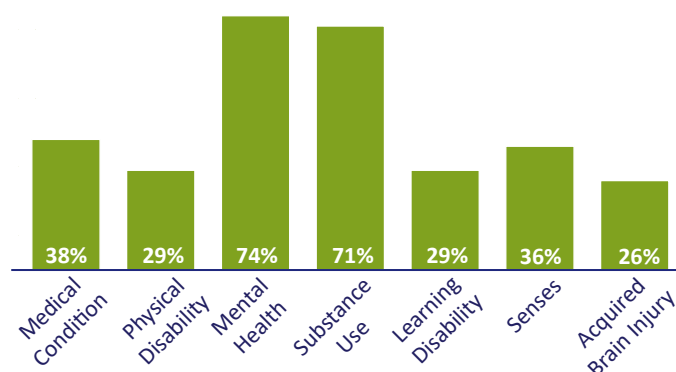
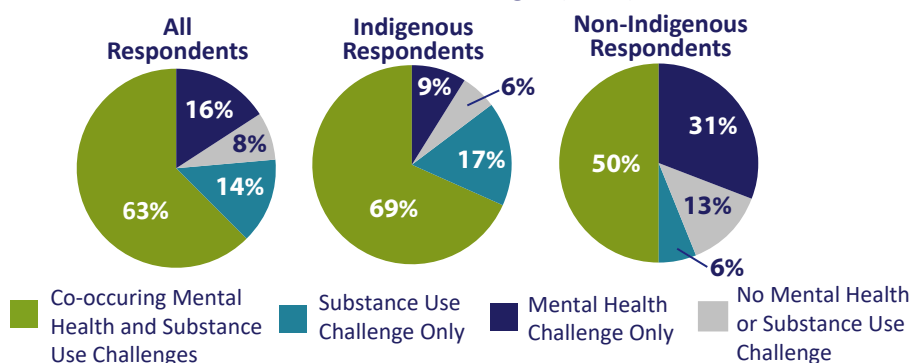


Figure 18: Percentage of Respondents with Co-occurring Mental Health Challenges (n=51)



What Health Challenges do Respondents Face?

Respondents were asked if they identify as currently having a challenge with a series of types of health conditions, which is shown in Figure 17. In this figure, the number of respondents who identified as having each health challenge ranged from 15 to 43. Those with co-occurring mental health and substance use challenges are shown in Figure 18.

What Substances do People Use?

Not all people experiencing homelessness use substances, and those who use substances do not all use one type. This is important when considering what health services might be needed in a given community. Respondents in Merritt reported using (n=59): nicotine (85%), alcohol (64%), cannabis (58%), stimulants (54%) and opiates (49%).

With Gratitude

We would like to thank all those who participated in the Count process in Merritt this year, including;

- All the people currently experiencing homelessness who gave their time to respond to our survey and share their stories.
- All persons with lived and living experience of homelessness who formed part of survey teams.
- All staff and organizations who spent time on this project. For a complete list of agencies, please see the final report.
- Jonathan Winsor and the entire team at ASK Wellness Society - Merritt, who served to coordinate the Count in Merritt.