

COVID-19-RESPONSE EMERGENCY SHELTERS



Reporting Period:
April 2020 – March 2021

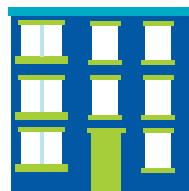
Geographic Area:
British Columbia

Introduction

When the COVID-19 pandemic was declared, BC Housing had been funding approximately 5,100 emergency sheltering spaces around British Columbia (March 31, 2020). These spaces were funded through the Emergency Shelter Program (ESP), temporary shelters, and Extreme Weather Response shelters (EWR). The shelters are operated by non-profit shelter providers around British Columbia.

BC Housing Shelter Information

as of March 31, 2021



Emergency Shelter Type	Emergency Shelter Program	Temp Shelters	Extreme Weather Response Shelters	COVID-Response Emergency Shelters	TOTAL
2020-21 Operating Costs	\$67 million	\$32.2 million	\$1.5 million	\$69.4 million	\$170.1 million
Number of Sites	71	43	30	100	244
Number of Spaces¹	2,300 (1,800 available due to physical distancing)	1,100 (980 available due to physical distancing)	400	2,100	5,900

1. Extreme Weather Response Shelters and COVID-Response Emergency Shelters were set up with physical distancing already in place.

BC Housing's COVID-Response Emergency Shelters

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, BC Housing has been working with regional health authorities, municipal partners and non-profit shelter and housing providers to develop community-based response plans. This includes identifying locations where vulnerable individuals, such as those who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness, would be able to self-isolate and recover from COVID-19. These sites are vital to prevent the spread of COVID-19. They allow shelter providers to maintain safe distances between people in existing emergency shelters, free-up acute care beds in hospitals, and prevent crowding.

BC Housing opened the following types of resources, operated by non-profit partners, in order to create more spaces for people experiencing homelessness to effectively physically distance themselves or self-isolate:

- › Civic spaces (such as community centres and arenas)
- › Hotels leased by BC Housing
- › Extended temporary shelters (temporary shelters that remained open year-round, beyond their typical seasonal use)

BC HOUSING SHELTER SPACES

Year-round (permanent) Emergency Shelter Program (ESP) shelters – permanent shelters, generally operating 24/7.

Temporary shelters – operate for a short period of time, either seasonally or longer, in order to meet a community need.

Extreme Weather Response (EWR) shelters – available only when a community issues an Extreme Weather Alert.

COVID-response emergency shelters – Temporary shelters run by non-profit shelter providers operating in civic spaces, leased hotels, and extended temporary shelters. COVID-response emergency shelters have created additional capacity, provided spaces to self-isolate, and allowed existing emergency shelter providers to maintain safe distances between residents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Purpose of Report

This report summarizes the data provided to BC Housing during the pandemic period by shelter providers operating COVID-response emergency shelters. The time period of this report is April 1, 2020-March 31, 2021, but includes comparisons to existing year round emergency shelters pre-pandemic (2019-20) and during the pandemic period.

Shelter providers operating both existing, and COVID-response emergency shelters enter data about each stay at their sites into the **Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS)**. BC Housing uses this database to collect information about shelter usage for BC Housing-funded shelters.² This information demonstrates accountability to the public in terms of BC Housing's response to the pandemic, as well as for how money is being spent. This data also helps inform current and future pandemic decision-making and emergency planning. The project shows the impact of the pandemic on the emergency shelter sector and how the shelter sector has supported people experiencing homelessness during the pandemic.

HIFIS indicators include:

Occupancy and stays

(e.g. book in and book out date)

Demographic indicators

(e.g. gender, age, Indigenous identity, health indicators)

Accountability indicators

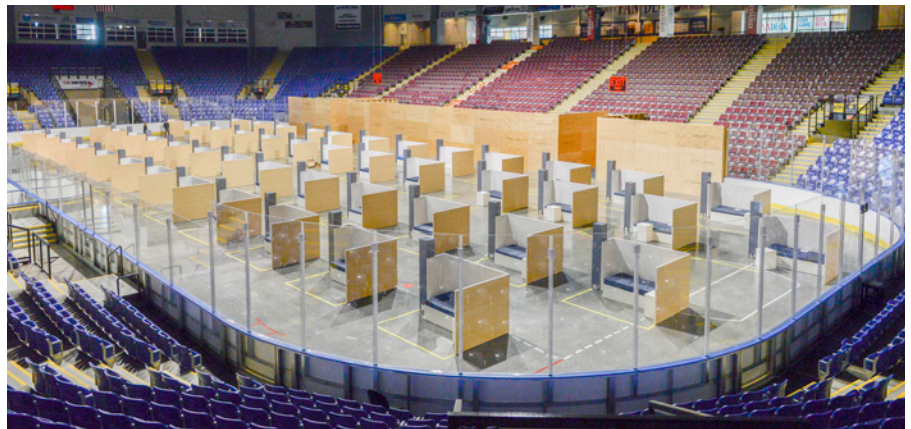
(e.g. reason for stay, referral source)

Outcome indicators

(e.g. reason for discharge)

2. Extended Extreme Weather Response sites were using a different database, called ATS, up to September 30, 2020. Extended EWR sites use HIFIS as of October 1, 2020, but the data collected for Extended EWR sites through ATS and HIFIS does not have as detailed indicators compared to the range of indicators collected for other COVID-response sites.

COVID-response emergency shelters are assisting a range of people, including those experiencing homelessness, people without safe spaces to self-isolate, and youth. In addition, some hotels are reserved specifically for people who have COVID-19 and need a place to self-isolate while they recover. Other spaces are for patients being discharged from hospitals who do not have COVID-19 and who do not need emergency care, but still require ongoing health care – freeing up much needed beds in hospitals.



As of March 31, 2021, almost 100 COVID-response emergency shelters provided approximately 2,100 spaces in B.C.



450 spaces

Extended Temporary/Extreme Weather Response Shelters



565 spaces

Civic Spaces



1,055 spaces

Leased Hotel Rooms

COVID-response emergency shelter spaces and sites have been adjusted to reflect needs around the province throughout the pandemic.

The classification of sites was adjusted between September 30, 2020 and March 31, 2021, which may result in some differences between reports. Also, some leased hotels were purchased and subsequently changed from shelters to supportive housing.

Emergency shelters provide a place to sleep, eat and wash. Shelters provide some or all of these basic services:



Some shelters may offer these additional services:

A grid of 12 icons, each with a corresponding text description of an additional service offered by some shelters:

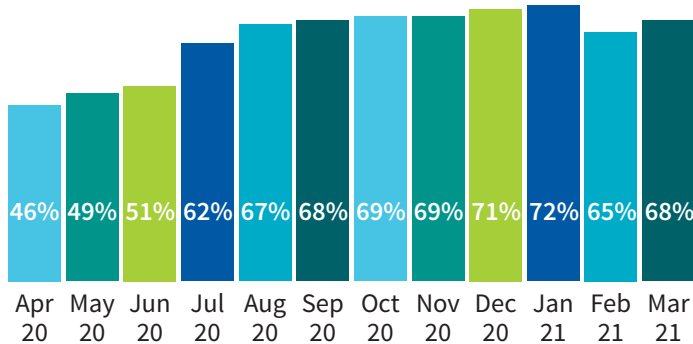
- Separated sleeping areas for men and women:** Icon of two beds with a man and a woman.
- Secure area for storing larger items such as shopping carts:** Icon of a blue padlock.
- Pets allowed:** Icon of a blue dog and a black cat.
- Operating with a curfew to limit late-night arrivals that might disturb sleep:** Icon of a clock with a checkmark and a crescent moon.
- Common area to meet and connect with other people:** Icon of three stylized human figures.
- Medical support such as a nurse or physician visit:** Icon of a person with a plus sign and a person in a white coat.
- Resource room, lounge, library, computers, phone, and/or TV:** Icon of a computer monitor, books, and a stack of papers.
- Kitchen with shared appliances:** Icon of a television, a coffee maker, and a pitcher.
- Clothes, toys, shoes and childcare items:** Icon of a blue t-shirt, a teddy bear, and a baby stroller.
- Indigenous Cultural Supports:** Icon of a circular pattern and a feather.
- Culturally-informed services and connection for people who speak languages other than English:** Icon of speech bubbles with the words "سلام", "नमस्ते", and "你好".
- Access to support staff and individualized help from a case worker:** Icon of two people sitting at a table.
- Harm reduction services and/or supervised consumption services:** Icon of a blue plus sign and a syringe.

Key Findings

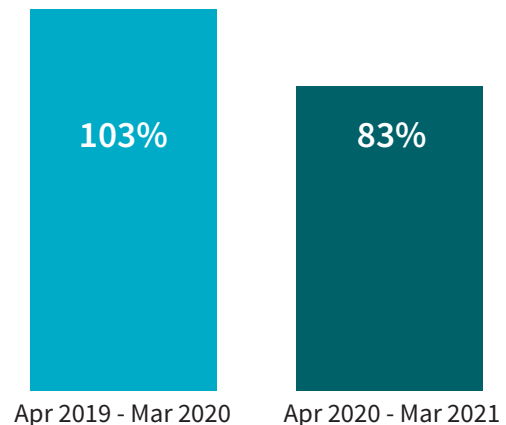
Occupancy

- › Occupancy for COVID-response emergency shelters increased between April and July 2020 and remained steady at about 70 per cent during the remainder of 2020-21.
 - Occupancy for COVID-response emergency shelters was highest in the Vancouver Island and Fraser regions over the reporting period.
 - Occupancy at COVID-response emergency shelters ranged between sites with some having low occupancy and others reaching capacity during the reporting period.
 - Different COVID-response emergency shelters had different operating models (e.g. some being referral only through our health partnerships), which may have impacted occupancy.
- › Existing emergency shelters were operating at over 100 per cent occupancy in 2019-20³.
 - By comparison, during the first year of the pandemic, existing emergency shelters, after factoring in physical distancing were operating at about 80 per cent occupancy.
 - Each emergency shelter has different square footage and layouts, so changes in the availability of beds differs from shelter to shelter.
- › There was lower occupancy at the existing emergency shelters due to physical distancing between April to September 2020, which is expected, but the COVID-response emergency shelter spaces were making up the difference.
- › Occupancy at the COVID-response shelters is not intended to reach 100 per cent, as surge capacity is required.

BC Housing Funded **Occupancy at COVID-Response Emergency Shelters** in B.C. by Month



BC Housing Funded **Occupancy at Existing Emergency Shelters** in B.C. Pre-Pandemic (2019-20) and 2020-2021



3. Throughout the report, existing emergency shelters refers to Emergency Shelter Program (ESP) shelters.



BC Housing Funded **Occupancy** by Region and Shelter Type

April 2020 and March 2021

At COVID-Response Emergency Shelters in B.C.

At Existing Shelters in B.C.

47% | 54%
Apr 2020 | Mar 2021

82% | 81%
Apr 2020 | Mar 2021

Northern

60% | 69%
Apr 2020 | Mar 2021

58% | 91%
Apr 2020 | Mar 2021

Interior

50% | 74%
Apr 2020 | Mar 2021

86% | 88%
Apr 2020 | Mar 2021

Fraser

44% | 76%
Apr 2020 | Mar 2021

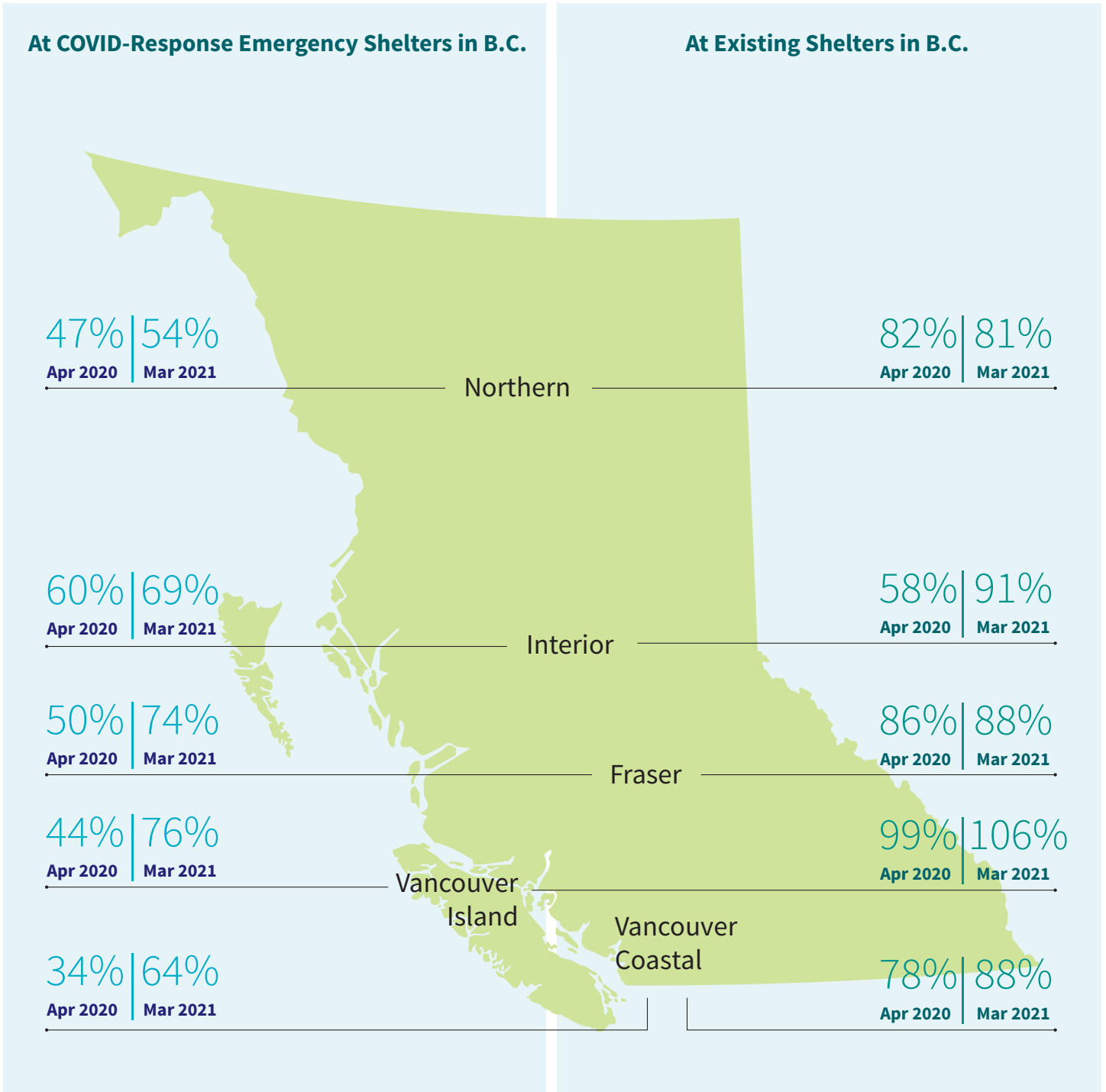
99% | 106%
Apr 2020 | Mar 2021

Vancouver
Island

Vancouver
Coastal

34% | 64%
Apr 2020 | Mar 2021

78% | 88%
Apr 2020 | Mar 2021

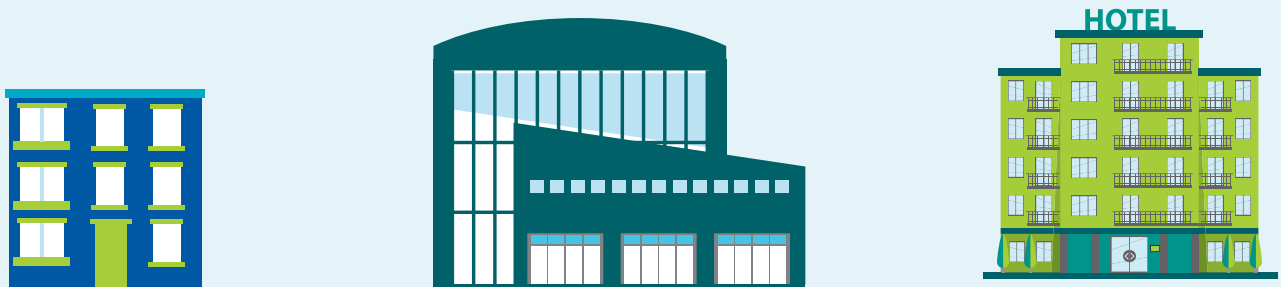


Stays

- › Stays are at least one night and may be longer stays of consecutive nights. A person may have more than one stay at the same site or different sites within the reporting period. For example, if a person leaves and comes back to the same shelter, that would be two separate stays. A stay does not represent unique individuals.
- › There were almost 11,000 stays in 2020-21 at COVID-response emergency shelter sites.
 - Some sites are not yet reporting or are behind in reporting, so this is an under-estimate of the stays.

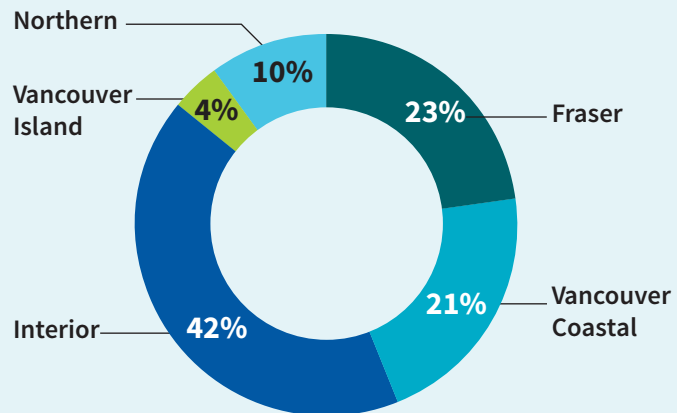
10,870 Total Stays
at COVID-Response Emergency Shelters in B.C.

April 2020 - March 2021



% of Stays at
COVID-Response
Emergency Shelters
in B.C. by Region

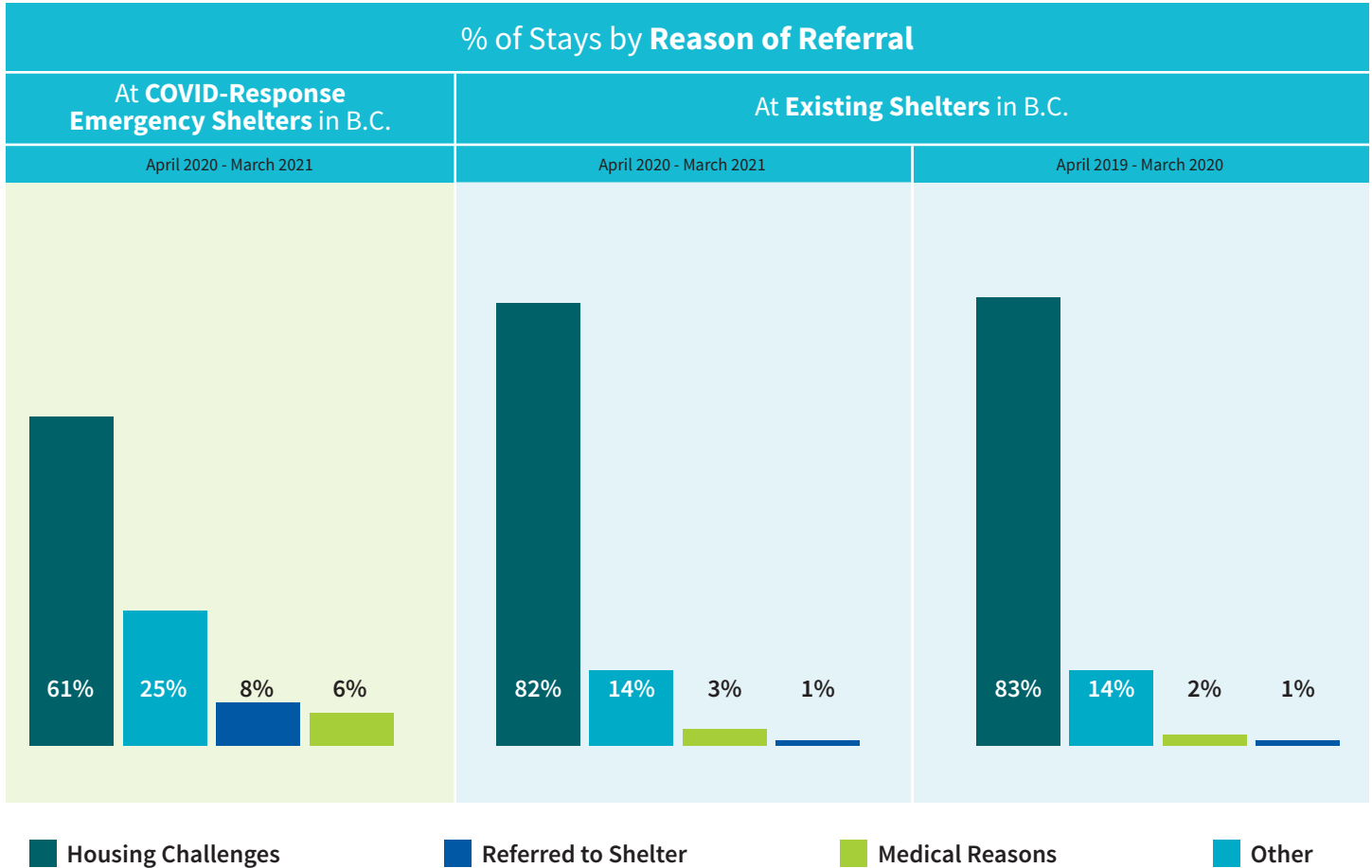
2020-2021



Stays at extended Extreme Weather Response shelters are not recorded in HIFIS, so are not included in the data related to stays, including demographic information, duration of stays, and outcome data. Stays at COVID-response leased hotels, civic spaces, and extended temp shelters are included.

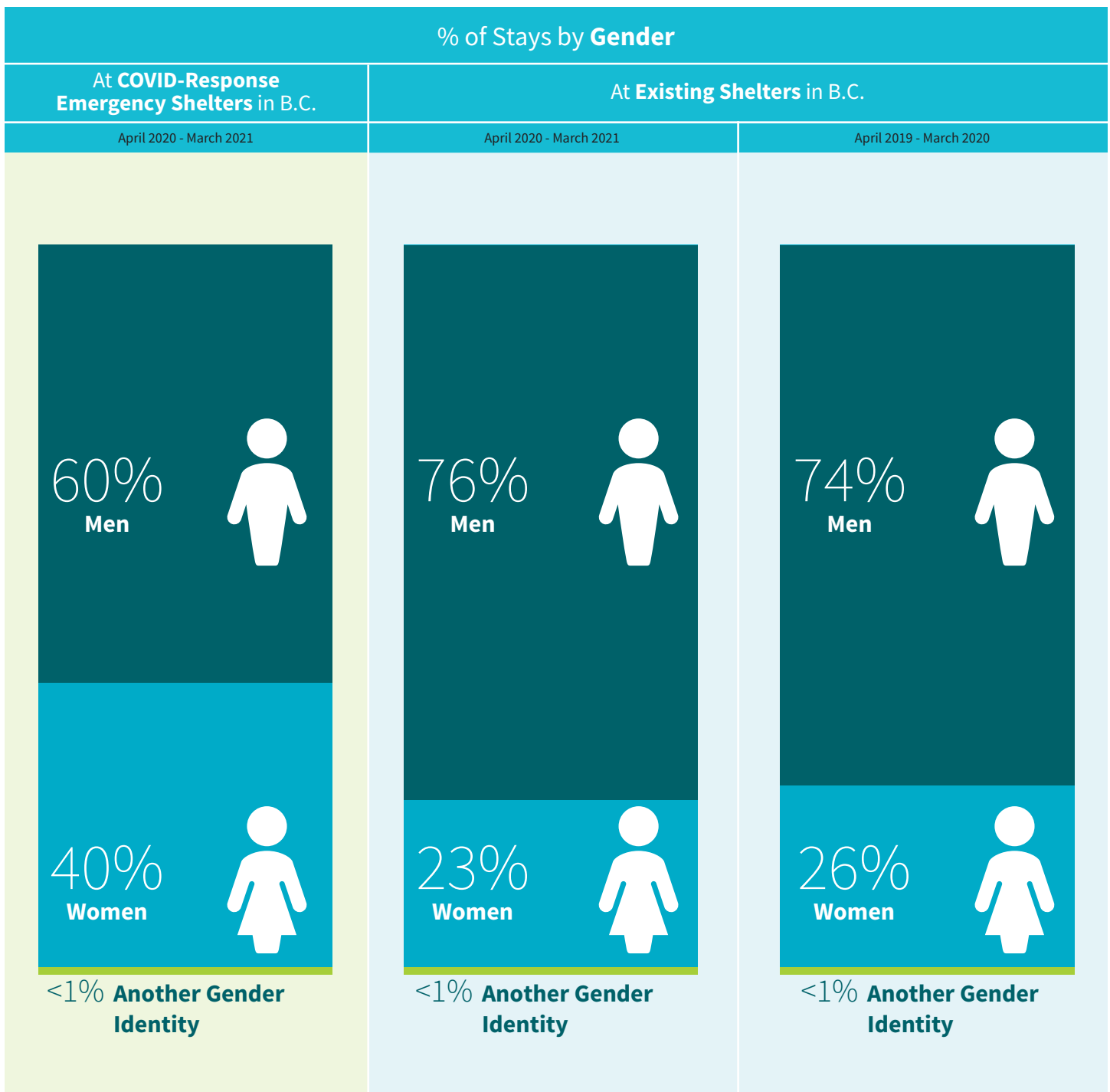
Reasons for Stays

- › COVID-response emergency shelters have different operating models, with many set up as expansion spaces for the existing emergency shelters or to provide spaces for people to self-isolate/quarantine.
 - Some COVID-response emergency shelters were set up in partnership with health authorities to provide spaces for people experiencing homelessness to self-isolate, quarantine, or for other medical reasons. Compared to the existing emergency shelters, the data shows COVID-response emergency shelters were being used more for medical reasons in 2020-21, but more so between April 1 and September 30, 2020.
 - Some COVID-response emergency shelters were set up to create physical distancing for existing emergency shelters. Many stays were due to the person being referred by another shelter or service compared to existing emergency shelters. This shows COVID-response emergency shelters were being used for physical distancing in 2020-21, but more so between April 1 and September 30, 2020.
 - Some COVID-response emergency shelters were set up to increase shelter capacity to give people experiencing homelessness a safe space to stay in a pandemic. Many people are still accessing the COVID-response spaces due to housing challenges. This suggests these spaces are being used to provide a safe space to people experiencing homelessness, but not necessarily accessing the sites for self-isolation, quarantine or other medical reasons in 2020-21.



Gender

- › Most stays were for men at COVID-response emergency shelters in 2020-2021.
- › There was a higher proportion of women at the COVID-response emergency shelters compared to existing emergency shelters in 2020-21 and compared to existing emergency shelters pre-pandemic (2019-20).
- › Service providers who work closely with youth and/or women have highlighted that those they serve may be disproportionately underrepresented as these demographics are more likely to couch-surf.



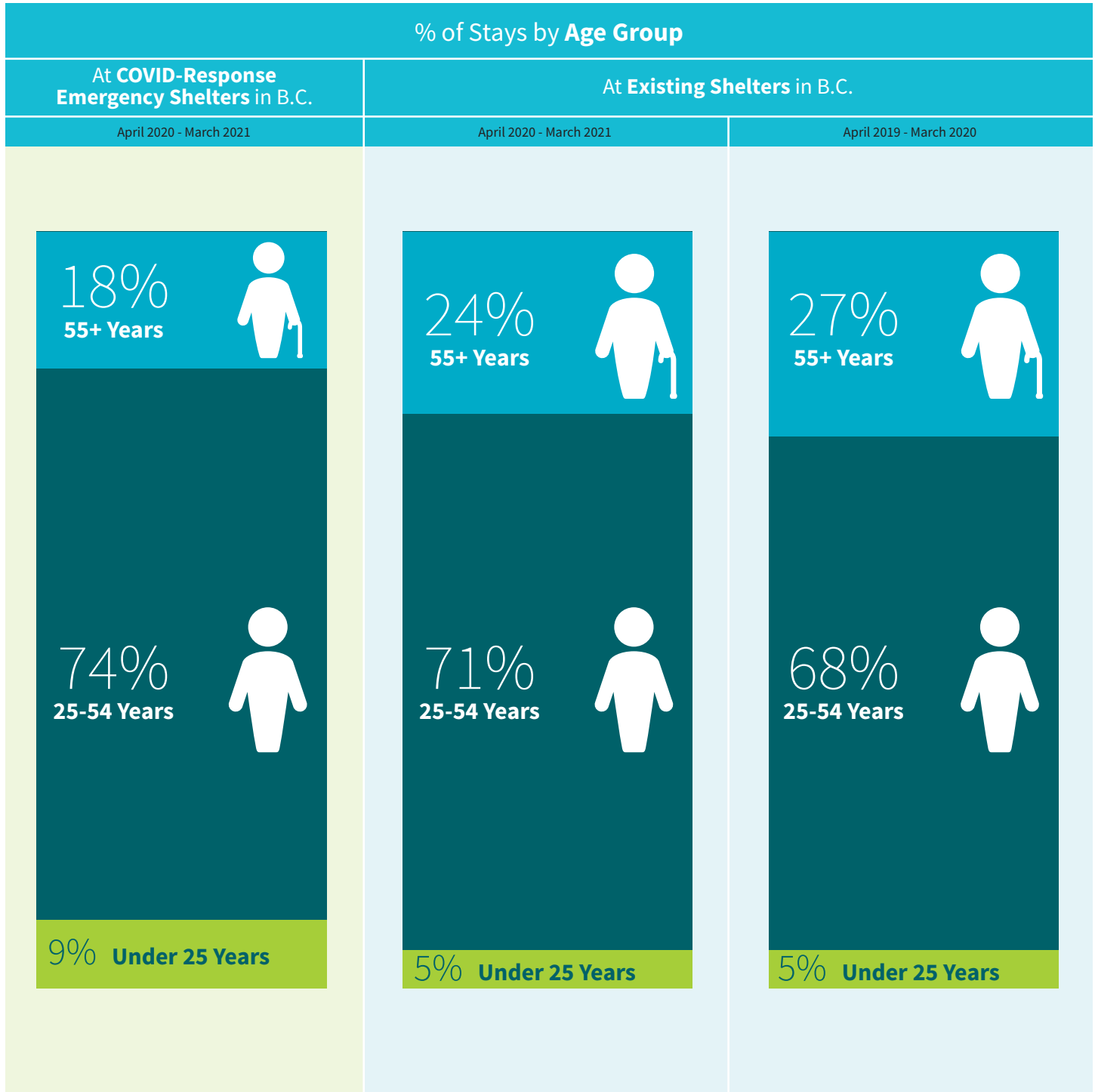
Indigenous Identity

- › For over one third of the stays at COVID-response emergency shelters, the person self-identified as Indigenous in 2020-21.
 - This is a lower proportion compared to existing emergency shelters during the same reporting period and pre-pandemic (2019-20).



Age Groups

- › Almost one fifth of stays at COVID-response emergency shelters were for people aged 55 years and over in 2020-21, a lower proportion compared to existing shelters during the pandemic period and pre-pandemic (2019-20).
- › About 10 per cent of stays at COVID-response emergency shelters were youth under the age of 25 years in 2020-21.



Health Conditions

- › Two thirds of stays at COVID-response emergency shelters were reported to be people who had an addiction issue and over half were for someone with a mental health issue in 2020-21.
- › About one quarter of stays at COVID-response emergency shelters were reported to be people who had a medical issue and over 40 per cent reported having a physical health issue in 2020-21.
- › Comparison to existing emergency shelters is not available.

% of Stays by **Health Conditions** at COVID-Response Emergency Shelters in B.C.

April 2020 - March 2021



66%

Addiction Issue



55%

Mental Health Issue



26%

Medical Issue



42%

Physical Issue

Duration of Stay

› Almost one third of completed stays at COVID-response emergency shelters were two or more weeks in 2020-21. This is a much higher proportion compared to existing emergency shelters during the same reporting period and pre-pandemic (2019-20).



Why People Leave

- › At least 10 per cent⁴ of completed stays at COVID-response emergency shelters went on to housing in 2020-21.
- › Almost 20 per cent of completed stays at COVID-response emergency shelters transferred to another program or shelter in 2020-21.
- › Comparison to existing emergency shelters is not available.

% of Stays by Reason for Discharge at COVID-Response Emergency Shelters in B.C.

April 2020 - March 2021



10%
Housing



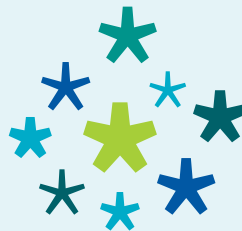
17%
Went to another
program/shelter



12%
Returned to
Street/Camping



3%
Admitted to
hospital/treatment



37%
Other



21%
Whereabouts
Unknown

4. The number of people who left to housing may be higher because the question does not ask specifically where people went, but why they left.



Outcomes

Almost 6,500 unique individuals were provided with a **safe space** at COVID-response emergency shelters in B.C. in April 2020 - March 2021.

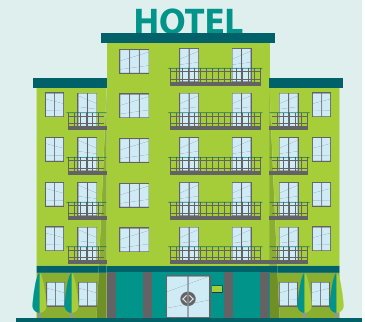


This was in addition to all those served through extended EWR and other COVID-response emergency shelters not reporting in HIFIS, as well as those served in existing emergency shelters and other non-COVID funded temporary or seasonal shelters.

At least 10% of completed stays at COVID-response emergency shelters in B.C. **went on to housing** in April 2020 - March 2021.

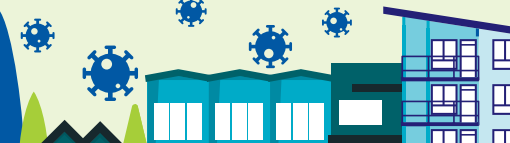


Almost 900 leased hotel spaces have been purchased by BC Housing and have become **permanent supportive housing spaces** since April 1, 2020.



Physical distancing was created at existing emergency shelters without reducing capacity.





Occupancy

Source: BC Housing, HIFIS, Occupancy Report – July 8, 2021 snapshot and ATS Shelters Detailed Report - July 8, 2021

NOTES:

1. Data accuracy is dependent on quality of data entry by providers.
2. Occupancy is calculated by dividing the total number of beds/nights used by the total number of beds/nights available for the reporting period.
3. Not all shelters became operational on the same date and some may have closed during the reporting period. Occupancy reflects the period for which the site operated within the reporting period.
4. This report only includes sites reporting in BC Housing's shelter databases - HIFIS and ATS. There are BC Housing-funded emergency shelters not reporting in HIFIS and ATS. Others will be trained and added. Some were not operational during reporting period (i.e. may have opened after the reporting period).
5. This report is based on a snapshot of a live database. Providers may change data at anytime, resulting in changes to data previously reported for a particular time period.
6. Sites may have additional beds not funded by BC Housing. Stays may include stays in non-BC Housing funded beds, but occupancy is based on the number of BC Housing funded beds.
7. Some sites may not be up to date on data entry, so may have higher occupancy than what is appearing in this report.
8. HIFIS was adjusted August 1, 2020 to reflect only shelter beds available after physical distancing at year-round and temporary shelters. Number of beds pre-August reflect total shelter beds available. Number of beds from August onwards reflect beds available after physical distancing. COVID-response emergency shelter spaces always reflected physical distancing, so any adjustments to COVID-response emergency shelter spaces are actual adjustments to spaces.

Stays Data

Source: BC Housing, HIFIS, SSAS Snapshot for July 8, 2021

NOTES:

1. Data accuracy is dependent on quality of data entry by providers.
2. HIFIS is a live database, so providers can go back and correct data at any time, which could change results for the same period depending on snapshot date.
3. Stays do not represent unique individuals as it is possible someone stayed at more than once at the same shelter or more than one shelter within the reporting period.
4. Not all emergency shelters are reporting to HIFIS.
5. Not all emergency shelters became operational on the same date.
6. Unless otherwise noted, proportions are based on those who provided a response.
7. A stay includes consecutive nights at the shelter (a minimum of one night); i.e. regardless of the number of consecutive night(s) an individual stays at the shelter, it would be counted as one stay.
8. Stays may be for non-BC Housing funded beds at the emergency shelter.
9. Unless otherwise noted, data includes stays that are completed and those that are ongoing at the snapshot date.
10. Not all emergency shelters are up to date on data entry.
11. Stay data does not include sites reporting in ATS rather than HIFIS, nor Capacity Expansion Shelters once they migrated to HIFIS.
12. Some sites log multi-day stays with one book in and one book out date while others book individuals out daily. The latter would be counted as multiple unique stays while the former is only counted as a single stay.

Unit Count/Financial Data.

Source: BC Housing, Central Property System, March 31, 2021 and Finance Department March 31, 2021

NOTES:

1. Emergency shelter sites/spaces reflect only those funded by BC Housing.

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To find more Information, visit our website at: www.bchousing.org