
Memorandum

COM-C 2-2025

Subject: Homelessness Point-in-Time Count

Date: January 7, 2025

To: Public Health and Social Services Committee

From: Jeffrey Sinclair, Manager, Homelessness Services

The purpose of this memorandum is to share initial findings of the 2024 Point-in-Time (PiT) Count in Niagara with Regional Council and the community. A PiT Count is a provincial and federal requirement conducted every two years, providing a snapshot of homelessness at a single point in time. It supports the objectives of Built for Zero-Canada (BFZ-C) and Niagara's 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Action Plan (HHAP).

Niagara Counts 2024, the Region's fourth PiT Count, was conducted in late October. The count was supported by 81 community volunteers and 65 staff from 24 agencies. Two magnet events were hosted by the RAFT and Niagara Regional Native Centre to capture the experiences of youth and Indigenous populations.

The PiT Count was developed collaboratively with a steering committee representing emergency shelters, homelessness prevention providers, transitional housing programs, VAW Shelters, Niagara Region Native Centre, Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre, CORE Police Team, and the Niagara Assertive Street Outreach team.

Although Niagara's Point-in-Time (PiT) Count number, reflecting the minimum number of people experiencing homelessness on October 22, 2024, is under analysis, the most accurate real-time data can be accessed through Niagara's robust By-Name Data. In total, 460 surveys were completed, offering valuable insights into the demographics, experiences, and service needs of Niagara's homeless population. A major trend identified in the 2024 survey is the rise in chronic homelessness. 61% of respondents reported being homeless for six or more months in the past year, a significant increase from 42% in the 2021. This increase highlights the growing need for long-term solutions and intensive support for individuals with higher acuity and complex needs. Self-identified health-related issues were also reported by an increasing number of respondents. The conditions with the greatest increase from year 2021, in order, include substance use issues, acquired brain injuries, physical disabilities, and mental health

concerns. This trend underscores the need for specialized health and social services to address the complex needs (or higher acuity) of the population experiencing homelessness.

The survey also revealed a shift in age demographics. Youth (16–24) represented only 8% of respondents, which reflects a decline from their contribution of over 10% in 2021. This decrease contrasts with the upward trend seen in other communities and reflects the success of diversion efforts and strategies aimed at preventing youth homelessness. Early intervention remains critical, as 28% of respondents reported experiencing homelessness for the first time before adulthood, an increase by 16.7% compared to 2021.

Rent affordability continues to be a significant barrier to securing housing in 2024, mirroring the challenges identified in 2021. The top two reasons for not obtaining housing are high rents and low income, which remain unchanged from the 2021 PiT Count. These ongoing challenges highlight a need for increased rent subsidies and affordable housing initiatives. The data also revealed a growing need for housing solutions targeted at older adults. The 65+ age group saw the largest increase in homelessness, rising by 19.6%. This trend points to the need for specialized housing options and support systems for this aging population. The Indigenous population, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, accounted for 28% of the population experiencing homelessness in Niagara. This highlights the need for culturally sensitive, community-driven solutions to homelessness within these communities.

Finally, the most common reasons for housing loss include, in order, landlord/tenant conflict, financial hardship, conflict with a spouse/partner, and experienced abuse by spouse/partner. Notably, landlord/tenant conflict became the leading cause of housing loss, a shift from its previous ranking within top three. This points to the need for stronger eviction prevention strategies, and support services for individuals at risk of housing instability.

A full report on Niagara's 2024 PiT Count will be forthcoming in Q2 of 2025

Respectfully submitted and signed by

Jeffrey Sinclair
Manager Homelessness Services