

2020 Homeless Count: Merritt

Sheltered and Unsheltered - Merritt

Sheltered and Unsheltered	2018 Total		2020 Total		Change from 2018-2020	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Sheltered	0	0%	9	21%	9	N/A
Unsheltered	11	100%	34*	79%	23	209%
Total	11	100%	43	100%	32	291%

*Includes 19 individuals who indicated that they stayed at someone else's place or were couch surfing on the night of the count

Limitations and Methodological Considerations

Please note the following considerations in reviewing this preliminary data.

In the spring of 2020, the Province of British Columbia provided funding to conduct homeless counts in 16 B.C. communities. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, only 8 of the 16 communities were able to conduct their counts. They completed their counts before March 17, 2020, when British Columbia's Provincial Health Officer declared a public health emergency under British Columbia's *Public Health Act*.

The Homelessness Services Association of BC, BC Non-profit Housing Association and Urban Matters coordinated these counts and prepared this report.

Data from counts in the count communities constitutes a benchmark to measure progress made to reduce homelessness over time.

- Point-in-Time (PiT) homeless counts provide a snapshot of people who are experiencing homelessness in a twenty-four-hour period, their demographic characteristics, service use and other information.
- For the purpose of counts conducted in the provincially funded B.C. communities, an individual was defined as experiencing homelessness if they did not have a place of their own where they paid rent and could expect to stay for at least 30 days. This included people who:
 - › Stayed overnight on the night of the count in homeless shelters, including transition houses for women fleeing violence and youth safe houses, people with no fixed address (NFA) staying temporarily in hospitals, jails or detox facilities (defined as "sheltered"); and,
 - › Stayed outside in alleys, doorways, parkades, parks and vehicles or were staying temporarily at someone else's place (couch surfing) and/or using homelessness services (defined as "unsheltered").
- During the count, we conduct surveys with people who identify as experiencing homelessness. In areas where surveys are not possible, and to support the PiT count, we collect additional information from shelter operators, hospitals, jails and BC Housing.
- PiT counts are an undercount and represent only those individuals identified during a 24-hour period.
 - › This is because not everyone experiencing homelessness can be found and not everyone who is found is willing to be surveyed.
 - › While PiT Counts are an accepted methodological tool, the numbers are understood to be the minimum number of people who are experiencing homeless on a given day in that community.