

Population-at-Risk Profile

A *Homeless Needs Survey* taken in February 2007 identified 1,242 homeless or unstably housed individuals in the Capital Regional District. The survey report stated that the homeless resident count was most likely an undercount of the total homeless population. The precise number of homeless people in the City of Victoria is unknown. The following is a breakdown of the survey results based on homeless residents in the Capital Regional District.

- Within the Capital Regional District, 1,242+ residents are homeless, which includes residents of all ages, including children and seniors, with a peak age for men between 31 and 49
- 75 per cent of homeless residents are male
- Two-thirds of homeless residents are absolutely homeless
- 30 per cent of homeless residents are high risk for health needs; 70 per cent are low to moderate risk for health needs
- Mental illness and substance use are the norm with at least 40 per cent suffering from diagnosable mental illness
- At least 50 per cent of homeless residents are struggling with problematic substance use, including alcohol, drugs that are injected (most commonly heroin and cocaine), and drugs that are smoked (including crack cocaine and crystal methamphetamines)
- There are an estimated 1,500 to 2,000 injection drug users in Victoria, of which at least 40 per cent are homeless or unstably housed
- The injection drug population is relatively young; 75 per cent are male and 20 per cent are Aboriginal
- One survey found that 13 per cent are infected with HIV and 74 per cent are infected with Hepatitis C virus
- Victoria has a problem with public injection; 30 per cent of injection drug users report that the street is the place they most commonly inject drugs
- 25 per cent of homeless residents have co-occurring disorders (mental illness and substance use problem)

Homeless residents are heavy users of emergency and acute care health services—66 per cent of all homeless individuals admitted to hospital by Vancouver Island Health Authority have a mental health or substance use related condition

Adolescent and Emerging Adult

- An estimated 250-300 adolescents and emerging adults between 14 to 25 years of age are street youth
- Many have childhood maladjustment associated with conflict, violence and neglect by family or caregiver (cited as the primary reason for homelessness)
- Majority are using alcohol and/or drugs on a regular basis (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder—FASD—is common)
- One-third of homeless youth are aboriginal (it is noteworthy that over half of the children who are growing out of the foster care system are also aboriginal)

Women

- 25 per cent of homeless are young women ages 21 to 30
- 10 per cent earn their primary income from the sex trade
- Many are fleeing domestic violence or unsafe housing—25 per cent have children with them
- Some of these families are absolutely homeless, as opposed to unstably housed

Aboriginal

- 20-25 per cent of homeless are aboriginal—aboriginal residents make up 2.8 per cent of the population of the Capital Regional District
- Loss of cultural identity associated with systematic discrimination has led to societal breakdown, loss of family supports, widespread FASD, unemployment and substance use disorders

Poor/ Working Poor

- Adults who have become homeless because of loss of income associated with redundancy, poor cognitive capacity, unemployment, lack of skills, divorce, and/or physical disability, but do not have issues of severe addiction, a severe mental illness or chronic antisocial behaviour
- Lack of affordable housing extends to their children