

# Everyone Counts Peel

## 2021 Community Report



Report by:  
**Region of Peel and  
Peel Alliance to End Homelessness**

**March 2022**



**Homelessness** is often  
the result of what are known as  
**systemic or societal barriers,**  
including a **lack of affordable**  
and appropriate **housing,**  
the individual/household's **financial,**  
**mental, cognitive, behavioural**  
or **physical challenges,** and/or  
**racism and discrimination.**



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**Homelessness**  
can happen at **any age**.  
**39%** of respondents indicated  
they **first experienced**  
**homelessness** as an **adult**,  
**27%** were **youth**,  
**6.5%** were older **seniors**,  
and **6%** as a **child**.



# Executive Summary

The Region of Peel, in collaboration with the Peel Alliance to End Homelessness Committee (PAEH) and other local homeless serving agencies, conducted a modified Point-in-Time Count from October 13th to October 15th, 2021. The Region of Peel, as the Service Manager for housing and homelessness, is required to participate in the Count every two years. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, a modified Count was required in 2021 to ensure provincial and public health measures were followed and enhanced safety protocols were in place.

A Point-in-Time Count (Count) is one of the methods communities can use to understand the nature and extent of homelessness at a single point in time.

The Count consists of two components: an administrative occupancy count for those who are considered unsheltered or provisionally accommodated and the administration of an anonymous housing needs survey regarding demographic and service needs information. When conducted over time, the Count can measure and track progress towards ending homelessness. Results from the Count will be used to help target resources, enhance system planning, improve services and to measure our progress in reducing homelessness.



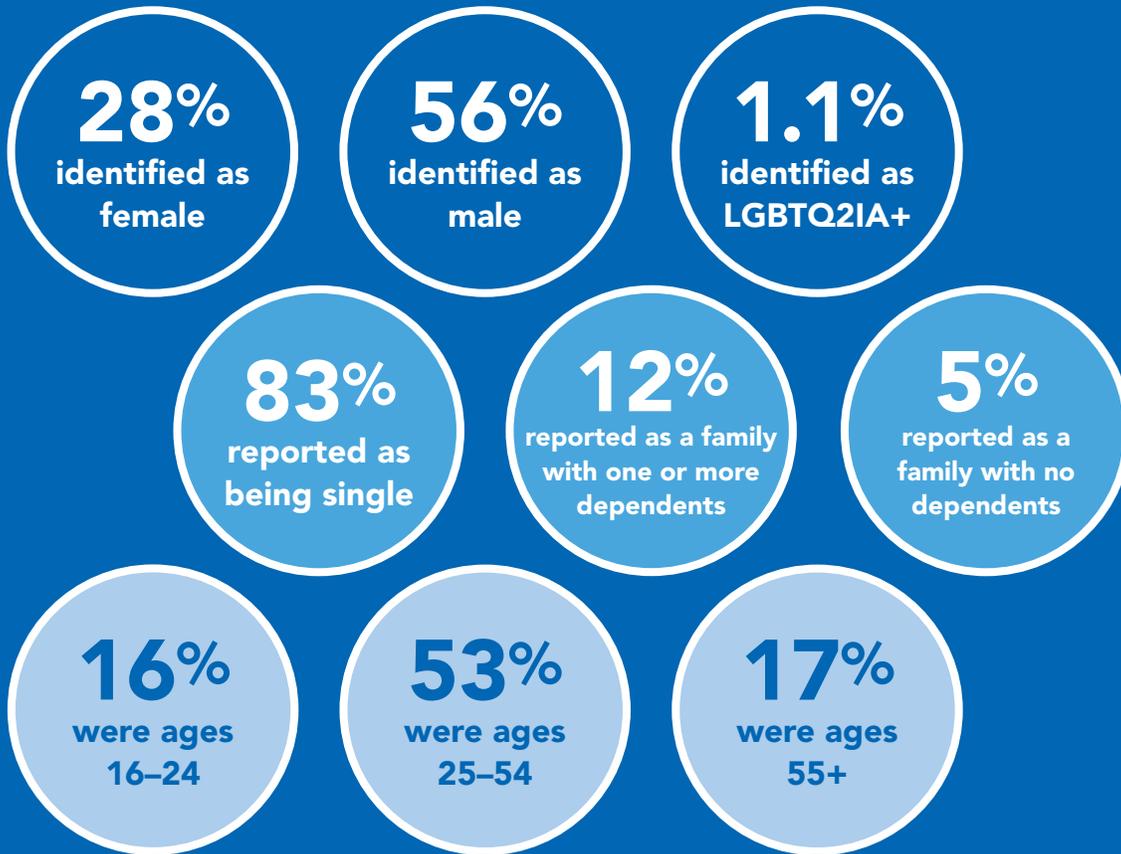


# Key Findings

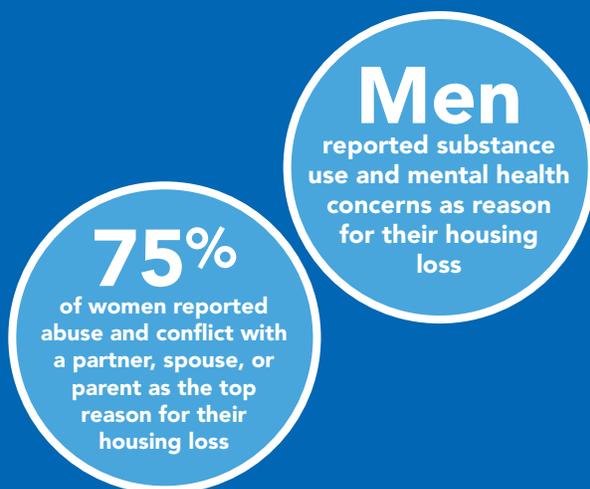
A total of **866** people were found to be experiencing homelessness on the night of the count, and **519** households completed the PiT Count Housing Needs Survey. Despite conducting a modified PiT Count, the numbers for the administrative count and the homelessness survey has increased in 2021 when compared to previous Counts, showing homelessness continues to be a growing concern in Peel.



## While most PIT Count participants are single, adult males, homelessness occurs across all demographics



## Factors that contribute to housing loss



## A Glance into Chronic Homelessness







# Introduction

According to the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 35,000 Canadians experienced homelessness on any given night and 235,000 Canadians experienced homelessness in 2016.<sup>1</sup> Safe, affordable, permanent housing is an unattainable goal for a growing number of Canadians, and more so for vulnerable populations. The rapid rise of housing market prices and rents makes it increasingly difficult to purchase or rent an affordable home.

The federal government has recognised housing as a human right through the National Housing Strategy Act. The federal government has committed more than \$3 billion nationally to address homelessness for Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy, and a commitment to eliminate chronic homelessness by 2030.<sup>2</sup>

As the Service Manager for the Affordable Housing System, the Region of Peel is required by the federal and provincial governments to conduct a Point-in-Time Count (Count) every two years. A Point-in-Time Count is one of the methods communities can use to understand the nature and extent of homelessness at a single point in time.

The Count consists of two components:

1. an administrative occupancy count for those who are unsheltered or residing in an emergency shelter or a transitional housing facility and
2. the administration of an anonymous housing needs survey for individuals and families experiencing homelessness regarding demographic and service needs information.

Through the anonymous survey, the count gathers information on both the number of people and families experiencing homelessness, as well as information on demographics, characteristics, and service needs. The results offer a snapshot of homelessness, and when conducted consistently over time, can help communities assess their progress in reducing homelessness.

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The Point-in-Time Count is one of the tactics used to understand homelessness at the national level. At a local level, this work is supported through By-Name Lists. A By-Name List is a real-time list of all known people experiencing homelessness in a community.<sup>1</sup> Individuals are referred to Peel’s By-Name List through various homelessness agencies in the community (i.e shelters, outreach program). This information is used to complement the PiT Count. It is used to understand local level homeless data and to allocate resources to where they are needed most. The information is also used to improve services and to inform Peel’s 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan.

This report provides an overview of the results from the Point-in-Time Count and Housing Needs survey for the Region of Peel, conducted in October 2021.



# Definitions

To understand homelessness, we must define it so that we can have a clear understanding of how homelessness affects our community.

## Unsheltered Homelessness

Includes people who are sleeping in places unfit for human habitation, including the following locations: streets, alleys, parks and other public locations, transit stations, abandoned buildings, vehicles, ravines, and other outdoor locations where people experiencing homelessness are known to sleep.<sup>3</sup>

## Sheltered Homelessness

Includes people sleeping in the following locations: emergency shelters (general and specific to men, women, youth, etc.), extreme weather shelters, Violence Against Women (VAW) shelters, and transitional shelters. It may include people who receive hotel/motel vouchers in lieu of shelter beds. It does not include people who have security of tenure, who are in Housing First programs or in social or subsidized housing.<sup>3</sup>

## Homelessness

The situation of an individual or family who does not have a permanent address or residence; the living situation of an individual or family who does not have stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. It is often the result of what are known as systemic or societal barriers, including a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household's financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination.<sup>3</sup>

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## Chronic Homeless

Refers to individuals who are currently experiencing homelessness AND who meet at least 1 of the following criteria:

- they have a total of at least 6 months (180 days) of homelessness over the past year
- they have recurrent experiences of homelessness over the past 3 years, with a cumulative duration of at least 18 months (546 days)<sup>2</sup>

## Transitional Housing

refers to those whose accommodation is temporary or lacks security of tenure, including staying with family or friends, staying in correctional institutions, hospital or residential treatment centre.<sup>3</sup>

## Hidden Homelessness

refers specifically to people who live “temporarily with others but without guarantee of continued residency or immediate prospects for accessing permanent housing.” Often known as “couch surfing,” this describes people who are staying with relatives, friends, neighbors, or strangers because they have no other option.<sup>3</sup>



# Overview of Region of Peel

Peel Region is home to approximately 1,381,740 residents and is comprised of three local municipalities: City of Brampton, Town of Caledon and City of Mississauga, with a mixture of both urban and rural areas.

The Region of Peel is the Service Manager for the affordable housing system, providing eviction prevention services and emergency, transitional, supportive, subsidized, and affordable rental housing to residents of Peel.

According to the "Broadening Advocacy Priorities to Improve Housing Affordability In Peel" Council Reported dated May 26, 2022, it is estimated that 70,000 low- and moderate-income Peel households live in core housing need. By the end of 2021, average resale prices in Peel neared \$1.2M, while monthly rates for purpose built rental units reached \$1,835. Condominium rental rates exceeded \$2,390. Staff estimates that, at these prices, it would take the average household in Peel up to 30 years to save for a down payment and closing costs to ensure affordable monthly mortgage costs on a 25-year mortgage. A dual minimum wage income household would need 53 years of saving while spending half (purpose-built) to two-thirds (secondary market) of their income on rental housing. Additionally, households identifying as Black, Filipino, Arab/West Asian, or Latin American, are approximately 1.5 to 2.5 times less likely to own as compared to non-visible minority households in Peel.

Between 2011 and 2016 Peel had a growth rate of 6.5 percent.

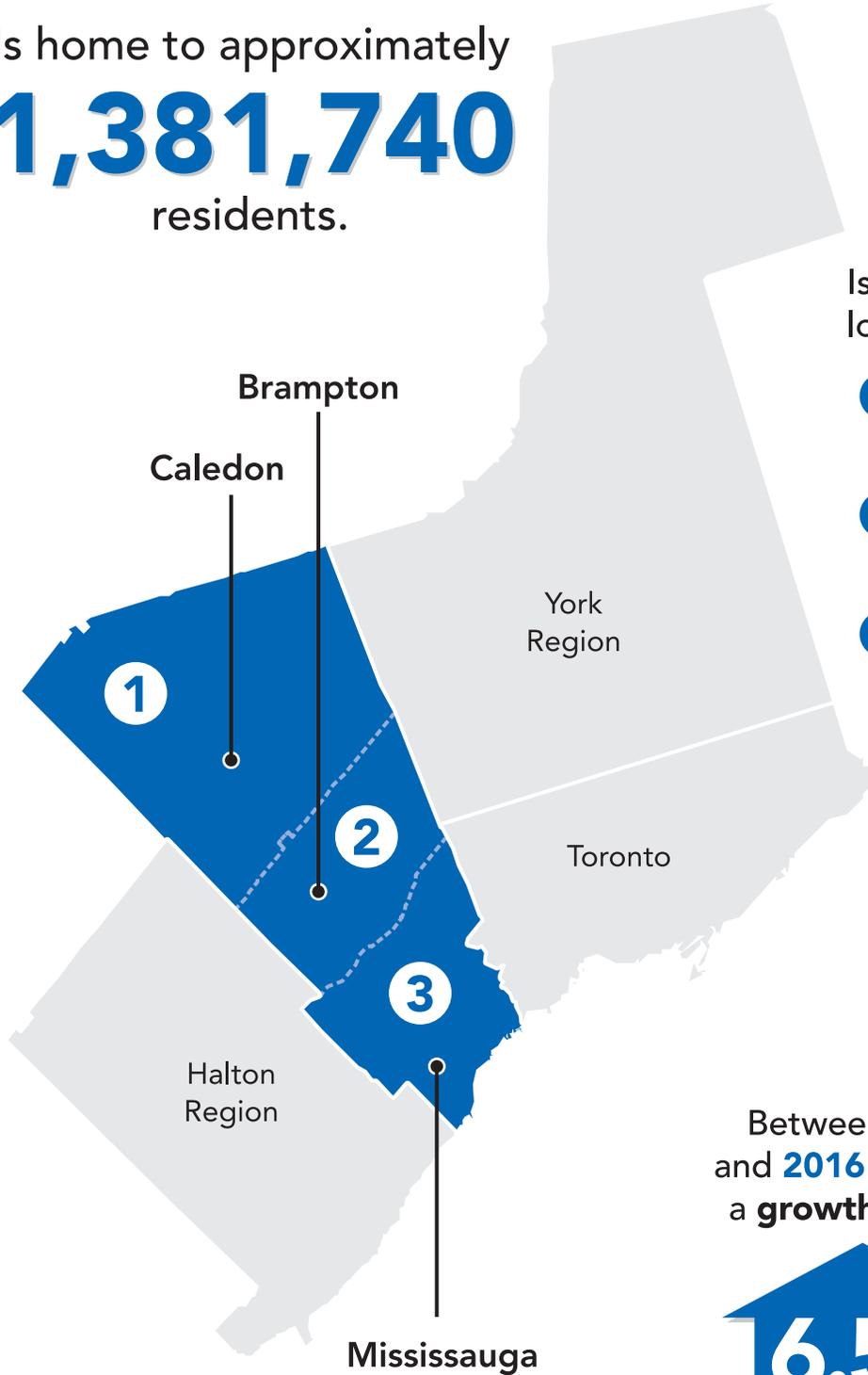
Region of Peel

## Peel Region:

Is home to approximately  
**1,381,740**  
residents.

Is comprised of **3**  
local municipalities:

- 1 Town of Caledon
- 2 City of Brampton
- 3 City of Mississauga



Between **2011**  
and **2016** Peel had  
a **growth rate** of





# Point-in-Time Count Methodology

In compliance with both federal and provincial requirements, the Region conducted a Point-in-Time Count on October 13th followed by the administration of a Housing Needs survey on October 14th and 15th, 2021. Recognizing COVID-19 restrictions continued to be in place for some sectors and that not all community agencies were offering on-site services, the Region of Peel, together with PAEH and homelessness serving agencies conducted a modified PiT Count this year, in accordance with options provided by both the federal and provincial governments.

Peel's modified PiT Count included:

- A reduction on the size of the enumeration teams, to include a total of 43 surveyors comprised of Regional Staff and community service providers already delivering client facing homelessness services.
- Funding for extra staffing for organizations to safely maintain social distancing
- Counting individuals who were unsheltered (sleeping rough on the street, in parks, camps, vehicles or abandoned buildings and other outdoor locations where people experiencing homelessness are known to sleep.), sheltered (emergency shelters, Violence Against Women (VAW) shelters, Human Sex Trafficking Shelter) and provisionally accommodated (transitional housing facilities).
- A one-night administrative count followed by the administration of the PiT survey over two days immediately after count to minimize the exposure and impact to survey respondents and staff.
- Not using volunteers or hosting magnet events or widespread public engagement
- Full Protective Personal Equipment (PPE) including masks, hand sanitizers, sanitizing wipes for all staff conducting the PiT Count.
- Virtual training for staff
- Online survey administered through a SurveyMonkey link to minimize paper surveys and cross contamination



## Data Collected

The 2021 PiT Count was comprised of two sets of data:

- **Administrative Data:** an occupancy count and basic demographic information of everyone staying at an emergency shelter, victim of violence shelter, transitional housing facility, and those that were street homeless.
- **Housing Needs Survey:** a confidential and anonymous core set of screening questions on the homeless population and their needs (e.g., age, gender, Indigenous identity, veteran status, income sources, reasons for housing loss, etc.)

## Housing Needs Survey

The PiT Count Housing Needs Survey is a confidential and anonymous core set of screening questions that incorporates the requirements of both the federal and provincial governments and was administered to everyone that agreed to partake in the survey. The Region of Peel added additional questions to the survey pertaining to local housing preferences and needs as well as migration questions, as identified by the 2020 PiT Count Planning Committee.

The survey was administered on October 14th and 15th, 2021, allowing staff greater flexibility and time to administer the survey. Both sheltered and unsheltered individuals were surveyed. Sheltered surveys were administered at locations such as shelters, transitional housing facilities, drop-in centres and unsheltered surveys were administered at all known homelessness hotspots through the Peel Street Outreach team.

The survey was available online through Survey Monkey. To minimize transmission of COVID-19, Surveyors were able to administer the survey with their own devices (tablets, laptops, cellphones). For those with connectivity issues, staff were also provided with paper copies of both the sheltered and unsheltered surveys.

## Data Entry & Analysis

Information from paper surveys were entered onto Survey Monkey by administrative staff. Once all data was in Survey Monkey, information was extracted onto Excel for analysis, where incomplete entries, duplicates and errors were removed. A second data analysis was performed, to ensure data integrity and information was as accurate as possible.

## Honorarium

All individuals and families screened into the survey and agreed to participate, received an honorarium as a recognition for their time and participation in the questionnaire.

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The honorarium for singles included a drawstring bag with housing and homelessness resources, socks, granola bar, hand sanitizer and a \$10 Tim Hortons Gift Card. The honorarium for families included a \$25 Grocery Gift Card and Thank You note.

### Peel's By-Name List

The Region has consistently maintained a Quality By-Name List since 2016, as defined by the Built for Zero Campaign and led by the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, therefore we did not complete an Enumeration/Registry Week during this year's Count.

In reviewing By-Name List data for the month of October 2021, 686 individuals were active on Peel's By-Name List, of which 505 (74%) were chronically homeless. Agencies referring to Peel's By-Name List encompass a greater number than those who participated in this year's count, resulting in higher numbers than those surveyed in this year's PiT Count. Therefore, data from Peel's By-Name list can be used in conjunction with the findings of the 2021 PiT Count to help tell the story of homelessness in Peel.

### Data Comparison Limitations

Changes in PiT Count methodology due to the modified Count this year may not allow for a direct comparison between the 2016, 2018 and 2021 Point-in-Time Counts. Additionally, sample sizes, changes to survey questions, terminology and pick lists may not allow for direct comparison.

While PiT Counts can be a valuable source of information for communities to utilize in their response to homelessness, there are several limitations that must be noted. A PiT Count cannot be a measure of everyone who experiences homelessness in a community over time. By focusing on a single day, the PiT Count will not include some people who cycle in and out of homelessness. It will, however, provide an estimate or a snapshot of how many people are homeless on a given night. Additionally, the PiT Count may not measure those experiencing hidden homelessness (i.e., couch surfing), as the focus of the count is on those experiencing absolute homeless (e.g., sleeping in shelters or on the street).

Due to Public Health restrictions and many service locations closed, some actively homeless individuals may not have been captured during the PiT Count. Because this year's count was less publicized as in previous years and that fact that we did not host any magnet events, survey numbers may be lower.

Recognizing these limitations, the 2021 PiT Count data should be considered the minimum number of people experiencing homelessness on any given night.

## PiT Planning Team

We gratefully acknowledge the support and contribution of our community partners and persons with lived experience for this year's PiT Count:

- Canadian Mental Health Association-Peel (CMHA)
- Town of Caledon
- City of Brampton
- City of Mississauga
- Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Toronto
- Embrave Agency to End Violence
- John Howard Society of Peel Halton Dufferin
- MOYO Health and Community Services
- Our Place Peel
- Regeneration Outreach Community
- Services and Housing In the Province (SHIP)
- The Governing Council of the Salvation Army in Canada
- Peel Alliance to End Homelessness (PAEH)
- Homeless Health Peel
- Region of Peel Communications
- Region of Peel Housing Client Services

## Training

A total of 43 staff were involved in this year's PiT Count. Staff were comprised of homeless-serving agencies in the community from emergency shelters, victim of violence shelters, human sex-trafficking shelters, transitional housing, drop-in centres, and street outreach.

Peel remained under public health restrictions and closures during the 2021 PiT Count, therefore all training was administered virtually. PiT committee staff held several virtual training sessions on how to administer the survey and to address any questions, challenges or concerns.



# Findings & Results

A total of 866 people were found to be experiencing homelessness on the night of the count on October 13, 2021.

Based on the 2021 PiT Count data, both administrative data and homelessness survey numbers have consistently increased from the previous PiT Counts, illustrating the fact that homelessness in Peel is on the rise. Below is a summary of the percentage increases over time:

Data source	2021 Data	% Increase in 2021	2018 Data	% Increase in 2018	2016 Data
Administrative Data	866	48% ↑	584	-	*
Homeless Survey Participation	519	53.5% ↑	338	29% ↑	262

\* Administrative Data not included in the 2106 count

The increase in both administrative data and homelessness survey numbers in 2021, can be attributed to COVID-19, as there were limited housing options available for individuals and there was an increased need for shelters beds. The exponential growth of the housing market has also made housing unaffordable for many individuals and families in Peel.

A total of 519 households completed the Housing Needs Survey on October 14th, and 15th, 2021.

Sources used for data chart comparisons from previous counts were from the 20,000 Homes Peel Registry Week Data report in 2016 and the Everyone Counts Peel 2018 Joint Point-in-Time Count and Registry Week Results report.

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**Note**

The data below may not add up to 100% as the information below only provides the top overall responses and blank responses may not be included in the data and charts.

**Overnight Location**

During COVID-19, capacity was reduced at emergency shelters, and individuals in need of emergency shelter were referred to hotels. In total, 37% of respondents reported staying in an emergency shelter, followed by 23% who reported staying in a motel/hotel funded by the Region. Therefore, data from emergency shelters and motel/hotels can be combined for a more accurate picture. When combined, 60% of respondents reported staying in an emergency shelter.

The remaining 16% of respondents were residing in Transitional Housing, 11% were unsheltered, 10% did not know or did not respond and 3% were staying with others.

Although we cannot complete a direct comparison between previous PiT Counts, the table below provides information reported in prior years.

Overnight Location	2021 (n=519)	2018 (n=338)	2016 (n=262)
Emergency Shelter (VOVS)	37 %	49 %	52.70 %
Motel/Hotel Funded by Region	23 %	n/a	1.53 %
Transitional Housing	16 %	27 %	*
Unsheltered	11 %	11 %	15.65 %
Don't Know	10 %	*	*
Someone Else's Place	3 %	14 %	3.44 %
Couch Surfing	*	*	20.23 %

\* Not a pick option in that year.

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## Age (n=519)

According to the PiT Count survey, 53% of respondents experiencing homelessness reported being between the ages of 25–54 years, followed by 17% for those 55+ and 16% for youth ages 16–24.

Age	2021	2018	2016
Ages 16–24	16%	24%	*
Ages 25–54	53%	60%	*
Ages 55+	17%	16%	*
Blank/Did not respond	13.8%		

\* Not a pick option in that year.

When looking at data from the 2018 PiT Count, adults continue to represent most of our homeless population.

## Gender

Of the total number of homeless who participated in the PiT Count, 56% identified as Males, 28% identified as Females, 0.3% identified as Transgender, 0.3% identified as Two-Spirit, 0.3% identified as Genderqueer and 0.2% identified the category was not listed.

Gender identity	2021 (n=519)	2018 (n=338)	2016 (n=262)
Male	56%	64%	58%
Female	28%	34%	41%
Transgender	0.3%	1%	0.004%
Two Spirit	0.3%	*	*
Genderqueer (non-binary)	0.3%	1%	*
Decline to answer	0.7%		
Did not know	0.5%	*	*
Not listed	0.2%	1%	*
Blank/Did not respond	13.8%		

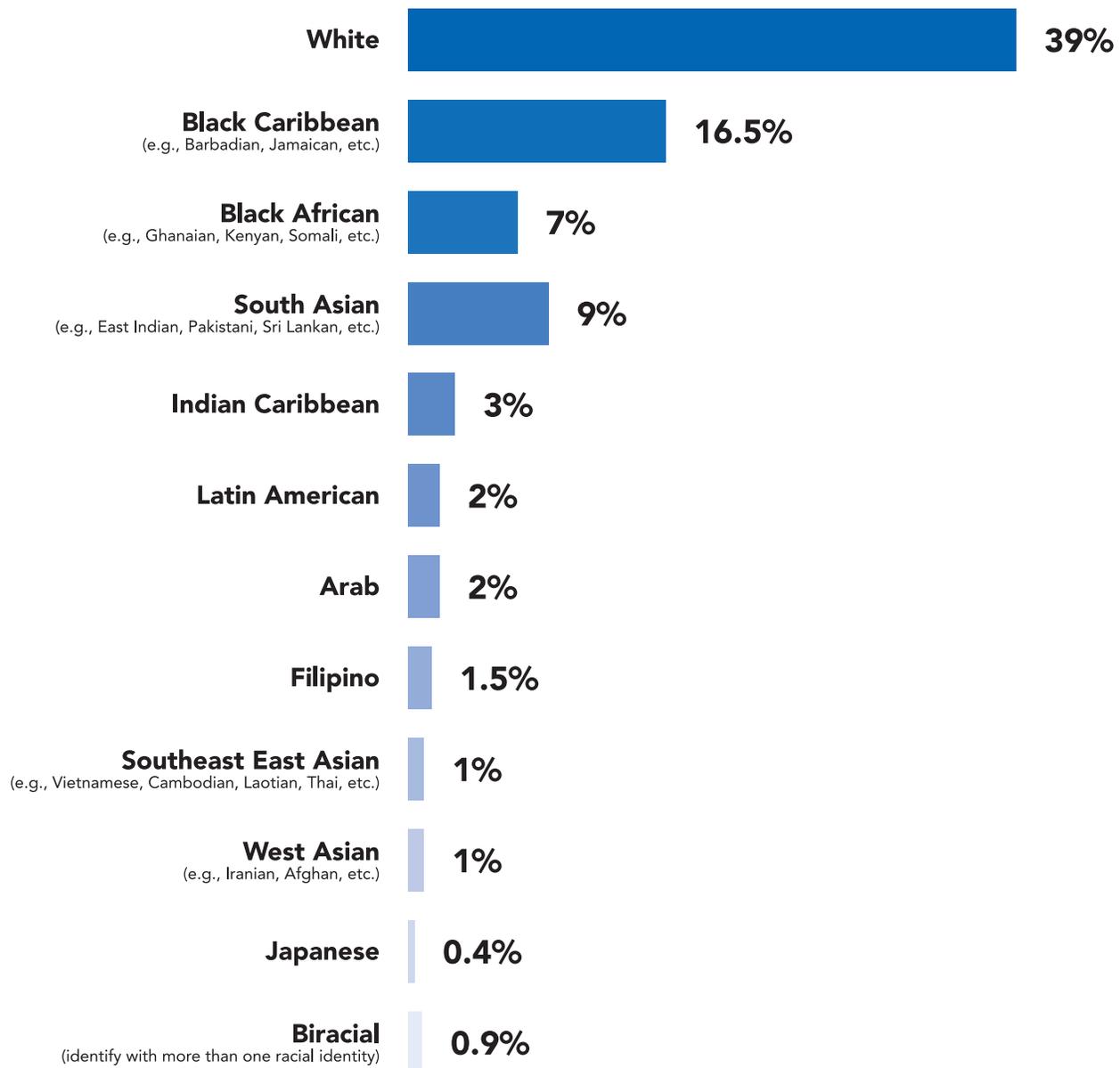
\* Not a pick option in that year.

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## Sexual Orientation

76% of respondents identified as being Heterosexual/Straight, 3% identified as Bi-Sexual, 1.5% identified as Pan-Sexual, 0.8% identified as A-Sexual, 0.4% identified as Queer, 0.2% identified as Gay and 0.2% identified as Lesbian, 2.7% declined to answer, 0.4% don't know, 0.4% Not listed and 13.8% did not respond.

## Racial Identity (n=519)



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## Indigenous Status

In the survey question *Do you identify as First Nations (with or without status), Métis, or Inuit, or do you have North American Indigenous ancestry*, 3% of respondents identified as First nations without status, 1% identified as Métis, 1% identified as Non-Status & Indigenous Ancestry, 0.4% identified as First Nations with status and 0.2% identified as Inuit. There was a 95% no response rate for this question.

Indigenous status	2021 (n=519)	2018 (n=338)	2016 (n=262)
Indigenous	*	9%	
First Nations with Status	0.4%	39%	12% identified as Aboriginal/Aboriginal Ancestry (First Nations, Metis, Inuit) with or without status
First Nations without Status	3%	*	
Métis	1%	16%	
Inuit	0.2%	3%	
Non-Status/Indigenous Status	1%	42%	
No Response/Blanks	95%	*	

\* Not a pick list option in that year.

## Household Composition (n=519)

In the 2021 PiT Count, 83% of respondents reported as being single, 12% reported as being homeless as a family (with one or more children) and 5% reported being homeless as a family with no children.

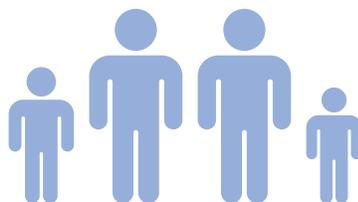
Data from the 2018 PiT Count indicated that 13% of the respondents reported to be experiencing homelessness with a child.

83%



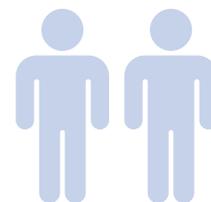
Single

12%



Family  
(one or more children)

5%



Family  
(no children)

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## Immigration Status

When asked, *did you come to Canada as an immigrant, refugee or a refugee claimant (i.e. applied for refugee status after coming to Canada)*, 24% indicated they were landed immigrants, 4% indicated they were Refugees/Refugee claimants, and 1% indicated they were undocumented.

Immigration status	2021 (n=519)	2018 (n=338)	2016 (n=262)
Landed Immigrant	24%	21%	12% responded as coming to Canada as an immigrant or refugee in the past 5 years
Refugee/Refugee Claimant	4%	3%	
Canadian Citizen	*	72%	
Undocumented	1%	*	
Declined to answer	2%		
No	57%		
Blanks	12%		

\* Not a pick list option in that year.

## Length of Time in Peel

Majority of respondents indicated they have either been here for over 10 years (37%) or they have always been here (20%).

Length of time	2021 (n=519)	2018 (n=338)	2016 (n=262)
Less than a year	11%	17%	–
1–5 years	13%	15%	–
6–10 years	3%	9%	–
10+ years	37%	24%	–
Always been here	20%	26%	–
Declined to answer	2%		
Blanks	13%		

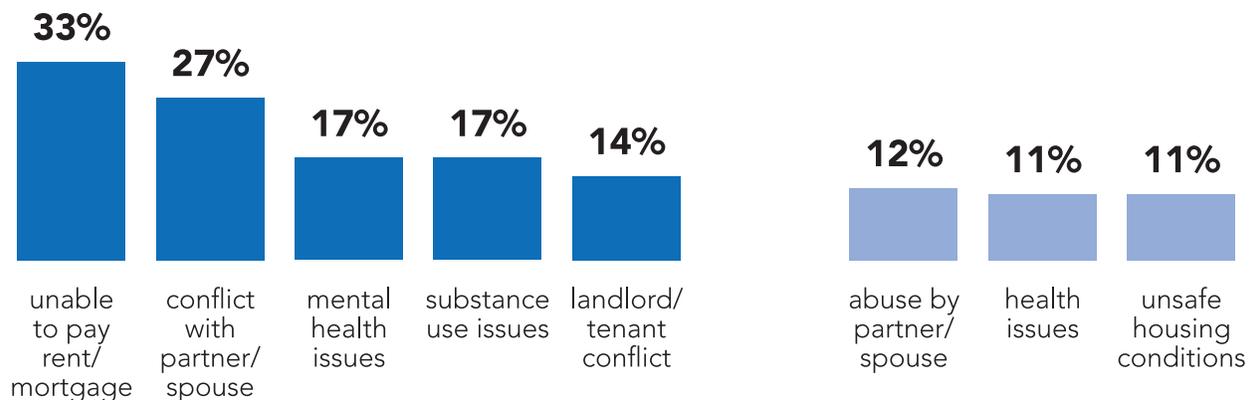
## First Experience of Homelessness

As reported in the 2018 PiT Count, we continue to see that homelessness can happen at any age. 39% of respondents indicated they first experienced homelessness as an adult (ages 25–54), 27% were youth (ages 16–24, 6.5% as older adults (ages 55+) and 6% as a child (ages 0–15).

Age range	2021 (n=519)	2018 (n=338)	2016 (n=262)
Child 0–15	6%	11%	–
Youth 16–24	27%	35%	–
Adult 25–54	39%	40%	–
Older Adult 55+	6.5%	6%	–
Don't Know	–	8%	–
Blanks	21.5%		

## Causes of Housing Loss (n=519)

Among the top five reasons for housing loss were: unable to pay rent/mortgage (33%), conflict with a partner/spouse (27%), mental health issues (17%), substance use issues (17%) and landlord/tenant conflict (14%). Additionally, 12% reported abuse by partner/spouse as the reason for their housing loss, 11% reported health issues and 11% reported unsafe housing conditions.



The reasons noted above were also the top reported reasons for housing loss in the 2018 PiT Count report.

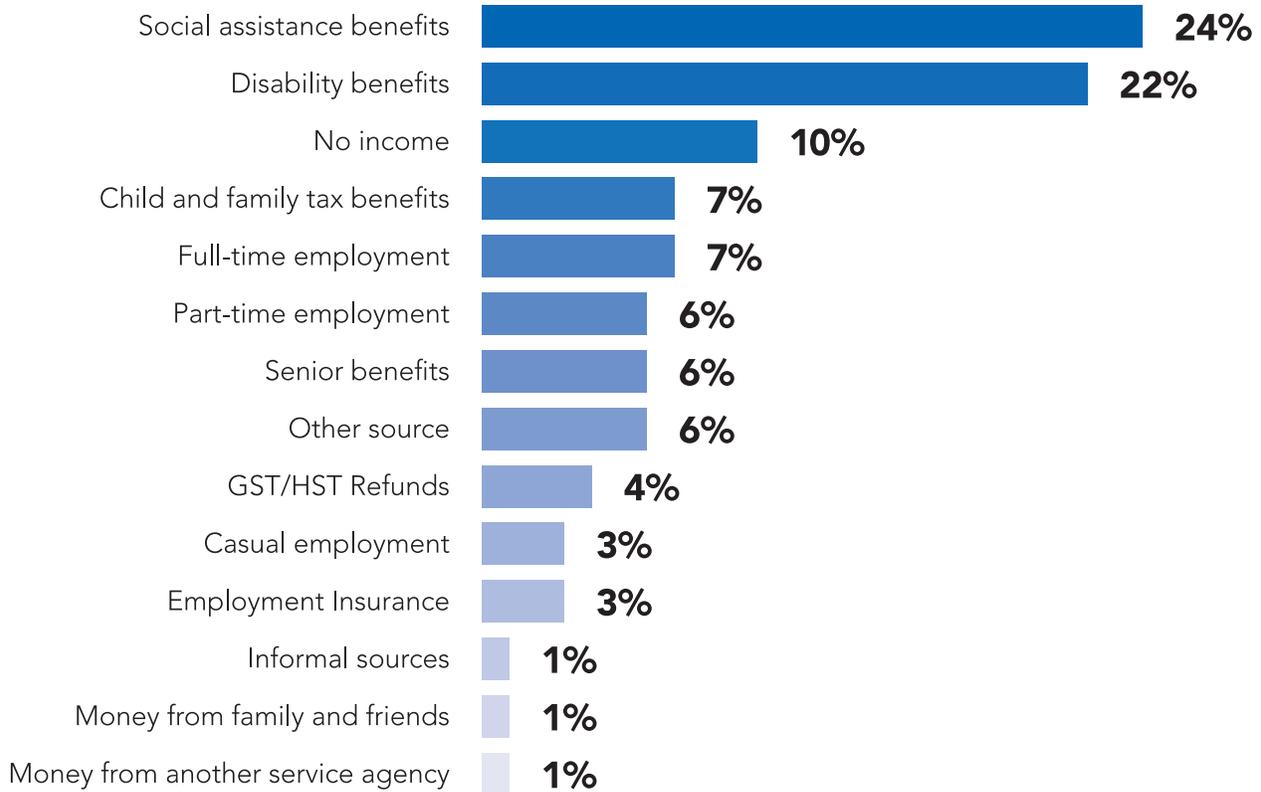
When asked if housing loss was related to COVID-19, 73% of respondents indicated “no”, 10% responded “yes” and 2% did not know. The lower numbers in this category could

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be attributed to the provincial changes to the evictions during the lockdown, as well as increased income due to COVID benefits.

### Income Source (n=519)

Most respondents reported having some form of income at the time of the survey.



### Length of Homelessness

Length of homelessness	2021 (n=519)	2018 (n=338)	2016 (n=262)
Homeless (0–5 months)	42%	-	58%
Chronic Homelessness (6+ months)	39%	32%	41%
Blanks	18%	-	1%

42% of individuals reported being homeless for up to 5 months at the time of the survey, while 39% reported being chronically homeless.

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While chronic homelessness appears to have increased in 2021, a true comparison cannot be conducted at this time due to differences in methodology and survey response numbers.

### Foster Care (n=519)

13% of respondents indicated they were in foster care or a group home as a child. 17% are currently between the ages of 16-24, 52% are ages 25-54 and 17% are ages 55+.

### Veteran Status (n=519)

4% of respondents identified as a Veteran (served in the Canadian Armed Forces). This figure is higher than the 2018 PiT Count illustrating the need for continued services for veterans.

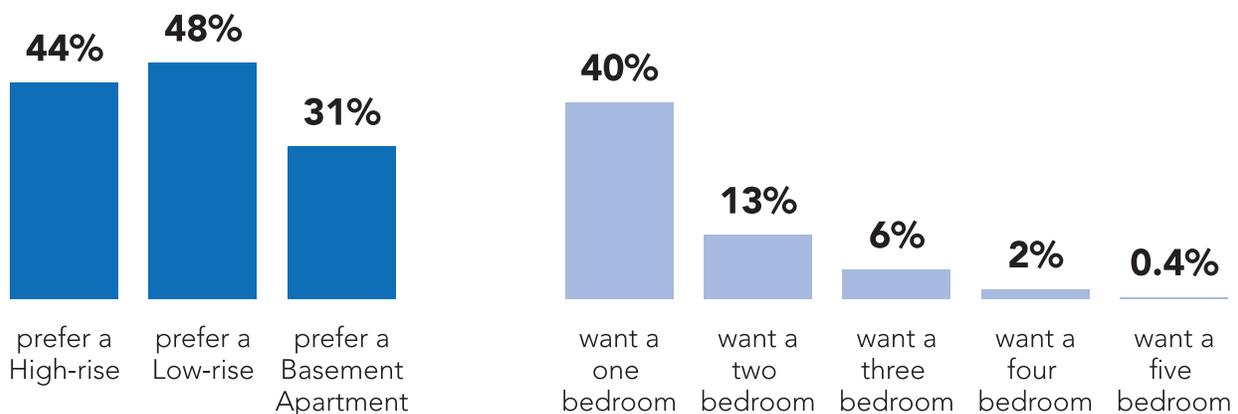
### Housing Needs

The top three responses when asked “what would help you find housing?”

- 36% respondents would like the help of a Housing/Support Worker to help them look for housing
- 23% respondents indicated they need first and last month’s rent to secure housing
- 11% need more affordable housing

### Housing Preferences

Majority of respondents indicated they prefer a one-bedroom unit, which is consistent with the data reported in family composition, where singles accounted for 83% of the total homeless population.



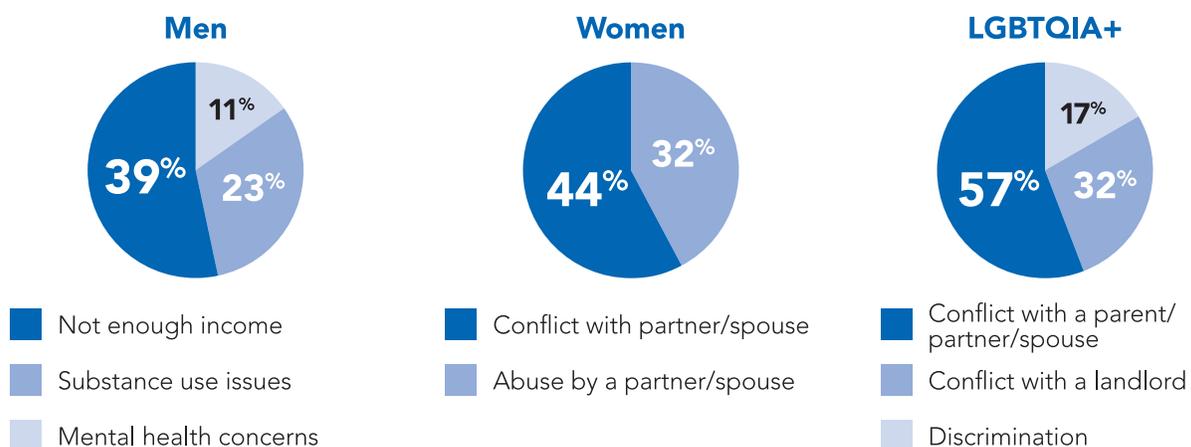


# Discussion and Recommendations

Homelessness is a complex issue that requires system-level changes, with supports tailored to an individual’s needs. Gender, age, social and economic background, race and sexual orientation all impact the experience of homelessness. For this reason, it is important that we understand who is experiencing homelessness and find solutions appropriate to their specific needs. Below are some highlights of the findings from the 2021 Point-in-Time Count and Housing Needs Survey: It is important to note that the Point-in-Time Count only offers a snapshot of homelessness at a given point and time and does not represent the entire homeless population in Peel.

Housing loss differs according to gender and sexual orientation. Reported reasons for housing loss for men were not having enough income (39%), substance use issues (23%) and mental health concerns (11%). Women reported higher rates of conflict with a partner/spouse (44%) and abuse by a partner/spouse (32%) as reasons for their housing loss. Of the respondents who identified as LGBTQIA+, the top reasons for their housing loss were conflict with a parent/spouse/partner (57%), conflict with a landlord (28.5%) and discrimination (17%). For vulnerable populations, relationships have a great impact on their housing stability. The majority of PIT Count respondents identified as adult single males, signaling, that the Region

## Reasons for Housing Loss



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of Peel must continue in its effort to provide tailored supports for this population group in order to reduce or eliminate homelessness in Peel.

### Income Supports

In order to adequately address housing affordability, changes to Social Assistance and Ontario disability support benefits must reflect the realities of the current cost of living. Policy changes are needed at all levels of government to address these issues i.e., basic guaranteed income, living wages.

Employment supports are required to assist individuals in ladder up their employment, which includes skills training, employment programs and employer incentives.

### Mental Health and Substance Supports

The COVID-19 Pandemic has illustrated the importance of mental health in one's overall wellness. The 2021 PIT Count shows that mental health issues can be a factor for homelessness or be exacerbated without adequate supports. More investments in mental health and substance use counselling and programs are needed, and they must be accessible and affordable for those experiencing homelessness and limited income.

### Homelessness for BIPOC

Policies in homelessness are often colour blind. The 2021 Count data shows that approximately 45% of homeless individuals are racialized. Within the BIPOC homelessness population in Peel, Black identifying individuals represented the largest number, therefore, it is important to adopt an Anti-Black racism lens to create policies that will prevent further homelessness and adequately support the Black community in Peel.

### Indigenous Homelessness

Peel does not have a shelter or many services for Indigenous residents which is highly important to decolonize not only homelessness but also the way Indigenous, First Nations, Inuit and Métis are currently being served.

The data from the 2021 Count might not reflect the actual number of Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness, as the modified Count did not include any magnet events or

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culturally specific locations. However, the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness research shows that Indigenous communities are overly represented in the homelessness population with 1 in 15 Indigenous people in urban centres experiencing homelessness at the provincial level.<sup>4</sup> To understand homelessness for Indigenous communities, it is important to consider historical events that have caused high numbers and overrepresentation of Indigenous homelessness. The historical trauma of Indigenous communities is rooted in oppression, racism, discrimination, and colonization. The perpetuation of this history, that is currently happening with the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in the child welfare system, are key to explaining unstable history and intergenerational trauma of Indigenous communities.<sup>5</sup> For instance, 46% of respondents that identified as Indigenous, First Nations, Inuit and Métis are chronically homeless. For Indigenous communities decolonization is a key part of the intervention and policies. This must be done by working in collaborations with Indigenous services. The voices of Grandmothers and Elders are sacred, and the Region must work in partnership with the Indigenous community in efforts to decolonize homelessness. The intersectional feminist lens is also crucial for Indigenous women that are homeless due to colonial history.

## LGBTQ2IA+ Homelessness

Services for LGBTQ2IA+ homeless must be more accessible, safe, and inclusive. It requires a change in the culture for shelters by developing appropriate tools that would entail having inclusive intake forms and processes, learning tools about LGBTQ2IA+ and posters on the walls so they can feel represented and reflected and allow them to feel safe.

The 2021 PIT data showed that LGBTQ2IA+ individuals lost their housing due to a conflict with a parent, discrimination, and conflict with landlord. Homophobia can be linked to their homelessness, therefore creating safe spaces for LGBTQ2IA+ is imperative to support them effectively in a time that is traumatizing and that will have an effect on their length of homelessness and safety.

It would be important to implement prevention programs in schools for youth and LGBTQIA+ to address youth homelessness (i.e., mental health, substance use, healthy relationships, budgeting, homophobia).

## Women's Homelessness

Data from both the 2021 PIT Count and research shows that women's homelessness can be invisible. Women lose their housing due to conflict or abuse and when there is lack of

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appropriate services, 1 in 5 women will return to their abusers.<sup>6</sup> More funding is needed to provide women with resources and services to secure affordable and safe housing.

The 2021 count did not include all those who were couch surfing or in overcrowded apartments. Therefore, women and LGBTQ2IA+ may have been significantly undercounted. Women often stay in abusive and/or exploitative relationships and exhaust their resources prior to becoming street homeless or accessing shelters.<sup>6</sup> Thus, to prevent women's homelessness, services targeting gender-based violence is essential.

Pan-Canadian studies report that 90% of families using emergency shelters are led by single mothers.<sup>7</sup> The 2021 Count provided limited data on sole support families, however research shows that housing stability is more complex for single mothers, as they must consider multiple factors such as affordability, neighborhood safety, transportation, and proximity to schools amongst many other aspects when considering housing. It is also imperative to consider the barriers for BIPOC and/or LGTBQIA+ single mothers, as they may face higher rates of discrimination and racism when they try to access housing.<sup>6</sup>

Racialized women face double marginalisation by being a woman and a person of colour. Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term "intersectionality," which involves how different identities overlap according to privileges or discrimination. When considering policies around homeless women, it is also important to consider the realities of women of colour.

## Prevention Programs

The precarity of their situation is often due to their family instability. A large portion of homeless youth have been involved with child protection services or have left home due to a strained relationship with their parents.<sup>8</sup> Preventing youth homelessness must continue to be a priority in Peel.

**Youth homelessness looks different than adult homelessness. Youth require early intervention to support them into transitioning to independent living.**

Increased funding and supports for homelessness prevention are needed. A more proactive approach is needed to ensure once individuals leave the shelter, they have the supports they need to remain housed. Often, individuals contact Housing Services when they are at imminent risk of homelessness, however their situation could have been avoided with the support of a worker.



# What We Have Accomplished so Far

## Outreach Expansion

Due to the complex needs of the homeless population in Peel, Peel's service program levels were enhanced to include additional staffing (from 12-18), increased program hours (from 57 to 84 hours per week), increased number of outreach vans from 1 to 3, which includes the addition of mobile medical care, Street Helpline available 24/7 and a better coordinated street support system.

## Improvements to Shelter Operations

The Region of Peel emergency services have been redesigned to improved service quality and outcomes such as the increase of shelter beds at Peel Family Shelter from 60 to 110 units, and changes in shelter operating model to improve client outcomes with the focus on diversion.

## More Needs-based Portable Subsidies

The Region has adopted a needs-based approach to administering housing subsidies to ensure that limited resources are used to help those with the highest needs for housing such as portable housing benefits, and Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB).

## More Case Management Supports

The Region of Peel has transformed Housing and Homelessness services by taking a modernized approach to service delivery that is adaptable, coordinated and client-centred. To meet the everchanging needs and demands for supports, the Region has increased the number of Housing Support Workers (from 16 to 22) to support Peel residents.

## Increase in Shelter and Transitional Beds for Women, including Survivors of Human Sex Trafficking

Regional Council endorsed 'A Strategy to Address Human Sex Trafficking in Peel Region' which includes a three-year pilot for the implementation of a safe/emergency house, a transitional house, and an integrated services hub to directly address core service needs of human sex trafficking victims/survivors in Peel Region.

The need for affordable housing in Peel has resulted in more households not being able to afford their housing or becoming homeless. The opening of Ellen House in 2020 provides emergency shelter supports for women in Brampton.

### Our Next Steps

The information collected and insights gleaned through the 2021 PiT Count will be used to help guide local-level planning and resource allocation. The recommendations will be used to improve services while informing the ongoing implementation of Peel's Housing and Homelessness Plan. Several actions have been implemented since the plan was approved by Regional Council in 2018.

Finally, Information from the PiT Count will also be used to:

- Support Reaching Home's Community Advisory Board to help coordinate efforts to address homelessness in Peel
- Provide local homelessness committees and community organizations with an understanding of the extent and needs of our homeless population
- Inform future iterations of the Point-in-Time Count, from feedback received from the planning committee, homeless-serving agencies, and those with lived experience
- Support the work of Coordinated Access
- Support advocacy, which is a key part in reducing barriers, creating equity in policies and achieving social justice. The Region of Peel is committed to work with all organizations and levels of government to support the work of advocacy and be part of the changes that need to be made to better serve the community.



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Peel's **Housing and Homelessness Plan** (2018 – 2028) outlines the work that the **Region of Peel**, in collaboration with community partners, is **committed** to completing over the next ten years **to eliminate homelessness** in our community.



[peelregion.ca](http://peelregion.ca)

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