

Everyone Counts Peel

2024 Community Report



March 2025



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**.
55% of respondents indicated
they **first experienced**
homelessness as an **adult**,
21% were **youth**,
11% were older **adults**,
and **4%** were **children**.



Executive summary

Peel Region conducted the 2024 Point-in-Time (PiT) Count from November 13 – November 15, 2024. As the Service Manager for housing and homelessness, Peel Region is required to participate in the PiT Count every two years.

The PiT Count is a key tool used to understand the nature and extent of homelessness at a specific point in time. It includes two main components: an administrative occupancy count of individuals who are unsheltered, staying in emergency shelters or transitional housing, and the administration of an anonymous housing needs survey, which collects demographic and service needs information. This data offers a snapshot of homelessness that can help track progress, inform resource allocation, enhance system planning, and improve services across Peel Region.

The findings from the 2024 PiT Count provide valuable insights into the characteristics of the homeless population in Peel. This year's data highlights the continuing challenges faced by adult single males, Indigenous communities, racialized populations, LGBTQIA2S+ individuals, and women fleeing violence. A key addition to this year's Count was the inclusion of asylum claimants within Peel's homelessness data, marking a critical shift in addressing the needs of this vulnerable population within the broader homelessness system.

Results from the Count will help identify gaps in services, highlight emerging trends in homelessness, and support efforts to address systemic barriers and improve homelessness services in Peel Region.





Key findings

Growth in local homeless population

In our local homeless count (excluding occupancy in Peel's asylum claimant response shelters), a total of **1,674** in 2024 people were found to be experiencing homelessness on the night of the count. This represents a **93% increase** compared to the 2021 PIT Count. This sharp rise highlights the growing demand for shelter and support services, highlighting the need for coordinated community and policy responses.

Overall growth including asylum claimants

When including Peel's asylum claimant response shelters, a total of **2799** people were found to be experiencing homelessness on the night of the count. The significant increase in the PIT Count (**223% increase**) reflects that homelessness is a growing concern in Peel Region with several factors, including rising unaffordability and increase in asylum claimants. This underscores the importance of targeted interventions and collaborative efforts to address the evolving needs of Peel's homeless population.



There were 1035 participants that completed the PiT Count Housing Needs Survey. While most PiT Count survey participants are single, adult males, homelessness occurs across all demographics



Factors that contributed to housing loss

For asylum respondents, the primary reason contributing to housing loss was the need to flee/relocate from their community.

For non-asylum respondents, 40% of women and 22% of men reported abuse or conflict with a partner/spouse or parent as one of the reasons for their housing loss.

Barriers to housing

The top barriers to securing housing include low income (65%) and high rent costs (64%), which highlights rising unaffordability in Peel.

Additional obstacles include credit history (28%), transportation (19%), and discrimination (18%).



Introduction

Homelessness remains a pressing issue across Canada, with thousands of individuals experiencing housing instability daily. The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness reports that approximately 35,000 Canadians experience homelessness on any given night, and over 235,000 individuals face homelessness annually (*Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, n.d.*). Contributing factors include a shortage of affordable housing, economic challenges, and systemic barriers that disproportionately affect vulnerable populations.

In response to this crisis, the Federal Government enacted the National Housing Strategy Act in 2019, recognizing housing as a fundamental human right and committing to the ongoing effort for adequate housing for all Canadians. The National Housing Strategy, a decade-long initiative, has allocated over \$57 billion as of September 30, 2024, aiming to provide safe, affordable, and inclusive housing nationwide (*Government of Canada, n.d.*).

In compliance with both Federal and Provincial requirements, Peel Region participates in a Point-in-Time (PiT) Count. The PiT Count is a community-level measure of homelessness at a single point in time that provides both local and national insights. It consists of:

1. **Enumeration:** Estimate of the number of people experiencing homelessness on a single night, identifying where they stayed (such as shelters, transitional housing and unsheltered locations)
2. **Housing Needs Survey:** A survey that is completed in-person with individuals experiencing homelessness to gather key information on demographics and experiences.

This report presents the results from Peel's PiT Count, including the enumeration on November 13th and findings from the Housing Needs Survey completed between November 13th–15th, 2024.

How homelessness is measured in Peel

The PiT Count is a federally and provincially mandated tool conducted every two years to estimate homelessness on a single night. However, the PiT Count alone does not provide a full picture of homelessness in Peel. It serves as one method among several used to track trends and identify service needs but does not capture all individuals experiencing homelessness—especially those in hidden homelessness situations such as couch-surfing or temporarily staying with friends or family.

To ensure consistent and accurate tracking of homelessness, Peel relies on multiple sources of data, including:

- **The By-Name List (BNL):** A real-time, continuously updated list of individuals experiencing homelessness in Peel.
- **Administrative Shelter Data:** Collected from Peel's emergency shelters, transitional housing, and overflow sites.
- **Outreach and Encampment Data:** Capturing information from unsheltered individuals not accessing the shelter system.
- **The PiT Count:** Conducted every two years to provide a snapshot of homelessness and demographic insights.

Peel Region takes a comprehensive, year-over-year approach to homelessness data collection, ensuring that the PiT Count is used as a complementary tool rather than a standalone measure.

This multi-method approach allows Peel to track changes in homelessness over time, allocate resources effectively, and advocate for appropriate funding.

Peel's homelessness response: A dual system approach

Peel Region has witnessed a significant increase in homelessness (*Kelly, 2023*). Peel's shelter system has been operating at 350% capacity, and the number of known encampments has more than doubled in the past year (*Region of Peel, 2024*). The crisis is further compounded by rising living costs, a lack of affordable housing, and an increase in asylum claimants requiring emergency shelter.

Recognizing these distinct challenges, Peel Region has adopted a dual-system approach to differentiate the local homelessness system from the asylum claimant response. Peel Region has taken steps to differentiate between local homelessness and the unique needs

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of asylum claimants due to rising pressures on the homelessness system (*Region of Peel, 2024*). While both populations require emergency housing and support services, their pathways, service needs, and long-term housing strategies differ.

Homelessness Response System: Peel’s homelessness response focuses on individuals and families who have lost housing due to financial hardship, domestic violence, mental health challenges, or systemic barriers. Services include emergency shelters, transitional housing, supportive housing, and eviction prevention programs (*Region of Peel, 2024*).

Asylum Claimant Response System: Canada has seen an unprecedented rise in asylum claimants due to geopolitical instability. Peel Region’s emergency shelters became overburdened, operating at over 350% capacity to accommodate the surge. In response, Peel has recently opened the Peel Reception Centre, with capacity for 680 asylum claimants (*Region of Peel, 2025*). The Centre offers immigration services, legal aid, employment and settlement supports, and transitional housing to facilitate long-term integration (*Region of Peel, 2025*).

This is the first PiT Count in Peel to include the asylum claimant response system, as this system was not in place during the 2021 count. The emergence of this system in 2023 has led to significant shifts in homelessness trends, particularly in demographics, service needs, and shelter utilization rates. The inclusion of asylum claimant data in the 2024 PiT Count provides a more comprehensive picture of homelessness in Peel, highlighting the distinct challenges faced by each group and the need for targeted responses.

The separation of the asylum claimant response system has allowed Peel to enhance service delivery by tailoring supports to the distinct needs of each population. By streamlining asylum-related services, asylum claimants now receive specialized immigration case management, employment services, settlement supports, and legal aid—resources that were previously unavailable in traditional homelessness shelters (*Region of Peel, 2025*). This person-centered approach has improved system navigation, facilitated faster transitions into housing, and enhanced coordination between Peel Region, federal agencies, and community partners. At the same time, local homelessness services are better protected from additional strain, ensuring that residents experiencing homelessness receive the focused support they need (*Region of Peel, 2025*).

This dual-system approach ensures that asylum claimants receive culturally and legally appropriate services while protecting existing homelessness prevention resources for residents. By tracking data separately, Peel Region can advocate for sustainable funding and policy solutions that address the unique needs of both populations.



Peel Region and housing affordability

Peel Region, which includes the City of Mississauga, City of Brampton, and Town of Caledon, is one of Ontario's fastest-growing and most diverse areas, with a mix of urban and rural communities. While Peel continues to expand, it faces housing affordability and homelessness challenges due to rising living costs, an increasing population, and demand for housing that outpaces supply.

As the Service Manager for the affordable housing system, Peel Region provides a range of supports, including eviction prevention, emergency shelters, transitional and supportive housing, subsidized housing, and affordable rental housing. Despite these efforts, housing affordability and homelessness remain pressing issues.

Population growth

- As of the 2021 Census, Peel's population reached 1,451,022, marking a 5.0% increase from 2016 (*Region of Peel, 2021*).
- More recent estimates indicate that as of July 1, 2023, Peel's population grew to approximately 1,585,424, reflecting continued expansion (*City Population, n.d.*).
- Peel's three local municipalities have experienced notable growth (*City Population, n.d.*):
 - City of Brampton: Estimated population of 744,041 (2023).
 - City of Mississauga: Estimated population of 756,453 (2023).
 - Town of Caledon: Estimated population of 84,930 (2023).

Housing characteristics and affordability

Housing affordability remains a critical issue in Peel, particularly for low- and moderate-income households struggling to secure stable, affordable housing.

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- In 2021, there were 450,746 occupied private dwellings in Peel, with 75% owner-occupied and 25% rented, the second-highest rental proportion in the Greater Toronto Area (*Region of Peel, 2021*).
- Affordability by Income Group:
 - Low-Income Households (up to \$54,100 annually): Can afford rents up to \$1,350 and home purchases up to \$264,100, yet most market prices exceed these thresholds (*Region of Peel, 2023*).
 - Moderate-Income Households (\$84,301 – \$144,500 annually): Can afford homes between \$264,101 and \$452,700, but many homes remain unaffordable (*Region of Peel, 2023*).
 - High-Income Households (\$96,301 – \$173,101 + annually): Can afford monthly rents from \$2,411 to \$4,331+, though availability remains limited (*Region of Peel, 2023*).

Housing challenges and homelessness

The cost of housing in Peel has risen sharply in recent years, making it increasingly difficult for low- and moderate-income households to secure stable housing. The average rent for a one-bedroom apartment is now \$2,173, which far exceeds the shelter allowance provided by Ontario Works (\$390 per month), leaving many residents unable to afford basic housing costs (*Jacques, 2024*).

Wait times for subsidized housing remain among the longest in Ontario, with over 32,000 households on the centralized waiting list and wait times ranging from 12 to 20 years depending on family size and unit availability (*Jacques, 2024*).

Homelessness in Peel has increased significantly due to a combination of factors, including rising living costs, underfunded social services, and a growing number of asylum claimants in need of emergency shelter (*Jacques, 2024*).

Despite Peel's ongoing effort to expand housing and homelessness services, demand continues to outpace supply, increasing the need for strategic planning and investment in affordable housing.



Point-in-Time Count approach

In compliance with both Federal and Provincial requirements, Peel conducted a PiT Count on November 13th as well as a Housing Needs survey between November 13th–15th, 2024.

The 2024 PiT Count was comprised of two sets of data:

- **Administrative Data:** An occupancy count of everyone staying at an emergency shelter, victim of violence shelter, and transitional housing facility.
- **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.). In addition, a couple of Peel-specific questions were added into the survey to inform system planning efforts.

The survey was administered over a three-day period, allowing staff greater flexibility and time to administer the survey. Both sheltered and unsheltered individuals were surveyed. Sheltered surveys were administered at shelters, transitional housing facilities, and drop-in centres. Unsheltered surveys were administered at all known homelessness hotspots through the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Peel Dufferin Outreach Team.

The PiT Count enumeration relied heavily on Peel’s administrative data of shelter occupancy. In addition, unsheltered surveys that were completed on November 13th counted towards the enumeration if individuals confirmed they were not spending the night at a sheltered location.

Stakeholder engagement and planning

The success of Peel’s 2024 PiT Count was made possible through the collective efforts of various community partners, service providers, municipal stakeholders, and individuals with lived experience. Peel Region remained committed to ensuring an inclusive and collaborative approach by engaging stakeholders throughout the planning and implementation process.

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To effectively engage and inform key stakeholders, a series of targeted sessions were conducted to finalize the enumeration plan, define data collection approaches, and provide necessary resources for participation. Presentations and consultations were held with:

- Community Advisory Board (CAB)
- Housing Services (Housing Huddle)
- Housing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee
- Homelessness Provider Table
- Lived Experience Table

To ensure broad awareness and participation, a comprehensive engagement approach was implemented leading up to the PiT Count. This included:

- Ongoing communications, including a PiT Count Kick-Off Email, periodic updates, and reminders to internal and external stakeholders.
- Targeted planning meetings for the unsheltered street count and encampments.
- Engagements with shelter and transitional housing staff, Indigenous lead, and non-profit service organizations.
- Consultation on survey customization to ensure alignment with community needs.

Peel Region staff, community partners and supporting organizations

Peel Region extends gratitude to those that contributed to the planning and execution of the 2024 PiT Count. Key contributors included:

- Peel Region Emergency Shelters, Asylum Claimant Response Sites, and Transitional Housing Programs
- CMHA Peel Dufferin Outreach Team
- Regeneration
- The Compass
- Open Window Hub
- Knights Table
- Sacred Hands Shelter

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- John Howard Society
- Bonnie McPhee Safe House
- Women and Children Precious Shelter
- Cuthbert House (Corrections System Participant)

Through these partnerships, the 2024 PiT Count aimed to capture a comprehensive snapshot of homelessness in Peel.

Training

To ensure the effectiveness and consistency of data collection, all surveyors participated in structured training sessions. The training sessions equipped surveyors with the knowledge and tools required to conduct surveys accurately and engage respectfully with individuals experiencing homelessness.

Seven training sessions were held on November 5, 6, and 7, with an additional overflow session on November 12, 2024, attended by over 150 participants, including project staff and community partners.

The training covered key topics such as the PiT Count methodology, administration of the Housing Needs Survey, guidelines for engaging with survey participants, safety protocols for field enumeration, and the use of the online survey tool. Each session was supported by a member of the Strategic Planning and Measurement Evaluation (SPME) team to address questions related to the survey.

Honorarium for survey participants

To acknowledge the time and participation of individuals experiencing homelessness, an honorarium was provided to all survey participants. In consultation with agencies and individuals with lived experience, the following honorarium items were included:

- Winter essentials: Hats, mittens, socks
- Gift cards: \$15 to either Tim Hortons or Walmart
- Resource materials: Information on housing and homelessness services

These engagement and training efforts ensured that the 2024 PiT Count was conducted with accuracy, inclusivity, and respect for the experiences of those surveyed. Peel Region

remains grateful for the contributions of all staff, partners and participants who made this initiative possible.

Data entry & analysis

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

Limitations

While the PiT Count is a valuable tool for assessing trends in homelessness, several limitations must be considered. Differences in methodology, survey structure, and sample sizes can affect the ability to compare results across years. Changes in PiT Count methodology, including approach and survey questions, may not allow for a direct comparison between the 2016, 2018 and 2021 PiT Counts.

Notably, the 2024 survey results may reflect changes driven by a significant increase in asylum claimants in Peel, alongside ongoing efforts to address homelessness. To better understand these distinct populations, overall findings are supplemented with separate snapshots highlighting responses from individuals identifying as asylum claimants or refugees. This distinction provides deeper insight into their unique demographic profiles and needs, supporting the development of targeted response in addressing both the local homelessness system and asylum claimant response.

There are also limitations related to data accuracy and interpretation. While a screening process is in place, some individuals may complete the survey more than once, potentially leading to duplicate responses. Additional limitations that may impact the accuracy of responses includes human error and language comprehension. Participants with limited proficiency in the survey language may misinterpret questions or provide incomplete information. Additionally, because the survey is anonymous, responses were not linked, meaning household data was not captured together, which limits insights into family homelessness.

Trust in surveys and comfort in self-identifying can significantly impact data accuracy, especially for marginalized groups such as LGBTQIA2S+, Indigenous, and racialized individuals. Mistrust in institutions, fear of stigma, and the complexity of personal identity may lead to underreporting, resulting in data that fails to reflect the true representation of these populations.

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Indigenous individuals face historical and systemic barriers that complicate identification processes. In Canada, the impacts of forced assimilation severed cultural and familial ties, resulting in disconnection from traditional knowledge and community structures that historically reinforced identity. Urban migration further distanced many Indigenous people from cultural practices and kinship networks. In Peel, with its significant immigrant, permanent resident, and asylum claimant populations, it is also important to note that standard identity classification systems often fail to incorporate options that recognize the diverse identities of both Canadian Indigenous people and international Indigenous people. As a result, these individuals are often underrepresented in survey data and continue to face challenges in accessing culturally responsive services that support their unique needs.

Addressing these limitations requires ongoing efforts to develop more culturally sensitive and inclusive data collection methods. Inaccurate representation of marginalized populations, especially those experiencing homelessness, can affect funding allocations and the development of targeted support services, underscoring the need for more comprehensive approaches.

Another limitation is the nature of the PiT Count itself. A PiT Count cannot capture everyone who experiences homelessness over time. By focusing on a single day, it may miss individuals who cycle in and out of homelessness. However, it does provide an estimate or snapshot of how many people are homeless on a given night. Additionally, the PiT Count may not fully capture those experiencing hidden homelessness (e.g., couch surfing), as it primarily focuses on individuals experiencing absolute homelessness (e.g., staying in shelters or sleeping on the street). **Given these factors, the 2024 PiT Count should be considered a minimum estimate of the number of people experiencing homelessness on any given night.**



Findings

2024 PiT Count enumeration and survey participation

A total of 2799 individuals were found to be experiencing homelessness on the night of the count, November 13, 2024. This includes 2593 from our administrative data, 141 from our unsheltered surveys and 65 individuals that declined the survey and/or were observed homelessness. Overall, this is a 223% increase compared to 2021 enumeration count.

Both administrative data and homelessness survey numbers have consistently increased from the previous PiT Counts, illustrating the fact that homelessness in Peel continues to be on the rise.

Data source	2024 data	% increase in 2024	2021 data	% increase in 2021	2018 data	% increase in 2018	2016 data
Administrative data	2593	200% ↑	866	48.0% ↑	584	N/A	N/A
Homeless survey participation	1035	99% ↑	519	53.5% ↑	338	29% ↑	262

Given recent developments, Peel's asylum claimant response system has emerged to address the surge in asylum claimants. Breaking down the administrative data provides additional insight. Since the asylum claimant response was not a significant factor in earlier years, the enumeration of the local homeless population—excluding asylum claimants—was **1,674** in 2024 including unsheltered and observed homelessness. This represents a **93% increase** in the local homelessness count compared to the 2021 PiT Count.

Administrative data	Number of individuals
Asylum claimant response shelters	1125
Emergency shelters	1278
Domestic violence shelters *	7
Transitional housing programs	174
System (correctional)	9

* Note: The domestic violence shelter occupancy count does not fully represent the actual occupancy in these shelters across Peel, as some key providers did not participate in the 2024 PiT Count.

PiT Count Housing Needs survey findings

The overall survey findings are presented first, followed by an exploration of the unique profiles and needs of asylum claimants and refugees (“asylum respondents”) and the local homeless population. This analysis responds to the shifting demographics of homelessness in Peel, driven by a surge in asylum claimants since the last survey in 2021, and informs Peel’s dual approach to addressing the needs of each group.

A total of 1,035 individuals completed the Housing Needs Survey, though response rates varied across questions. While direct comparisons to previous PiT Counts are not possible, relevant comparisons are provided in tables where applicable (* indicates no comparisons were possible).

Notably, this year saw fewer blank or non-responses, likely due to improved survey administration and data auditing. This strengthens the reliability of the reported percentages, offering a more accurate reflection of those surveyed.

Note

The data on the following pages may not add up to 100% due to rounding or because only the most common responses are included.

Overnight location

In total, 44% of respondents reported staying in an emergency shelter, followed by 29% who reported staying in a motel/hotel funded by Peel Region. When combined, 73% of respondents reported staying within Peel's local homelessness shelter system or asylum claimant response system shelter.

Additionally, when looking at responses by gender identity, males reported a higher percentage of their overnight location as unsheltered in a public space (10%) compared to females (4%).

Overnight location	2024 (n=1035)	2021 (n=519)	2018 (n=338)	2016 (n=262)
Emergency Shelter (includes Victims of Violence Shelters)	44%	37%	49%	52.70%
Motel/Hotel Funded by Peel	29%	23%	N/A	1.53%
Transitional Housing	11%	16%	27%	*
Unsheltered in a public space (e.g., encampment, street, park, bus shelter, abandoned building)	10%	11%	11%	15.65%
Someone else's place	3%	3%	14%	3.44%
Don't know	>1%	10%	*	*
Motel/Hotel (self-funded)	2%	*	*	*
Other (e.g., jail, prison, treatment centre)	>1%	*	*	*
Couch surfing	*	*	*	20.23%

* Not a pick option in that year.

Age

The average age of respondents was 39 years old, with reported ages ranging from 15 to 78 years old. When looking at data from the earlier PiT Counts, adults aged 25–54 continue to represent most of Peel's homeless population.

Age	2024 (n=1035)	2021 (n=519)	2018 (n=338)	2016 (n=262)
Age 15	>1%	*	*	*
Ages 16–24	17%	16.0%	24%	*
Ages 25–54	62%	53.0%	60%	*
Age 55+	16%	17.0%	16%	*
Blank/Did not respond	5%	13.8%	*	*

* Not a pick option in that year.

Gender

While males continue to be the larger portion of respondents, there was a significant increase in respondents identifying as female (40%) compared to 2021. These findings challenge traditional assumptions about gender in homelessness, emphasizing the need for gender-responsive services that address the unique vulnerabilities of women experiencing displacement and homelessness.

Gender	2024 (n=1035)	2021 (n=519)	2018 (n=338)	2016 (n=262)
Male (Man)	53.0%	56.0%	64%	58.000%
Female (Woman)	40.0%	28.0%	34%	41.000%
Transgender	0.9%	0.3%	1%	0.004%
Two Spirit	0.0%	0.3%	*	*
Genderqueer (non-binary)	0.4%	0.3%	1%	*
Decline to Answer	1.5%	0.7%	*	*
Did not Know	0.1%	0.5%	*	*
Not Listed	0.3%	0.2%	1%	*
Blank/Did not respond	5.0%	13.8%	*	*

* Not a pick option in that year.

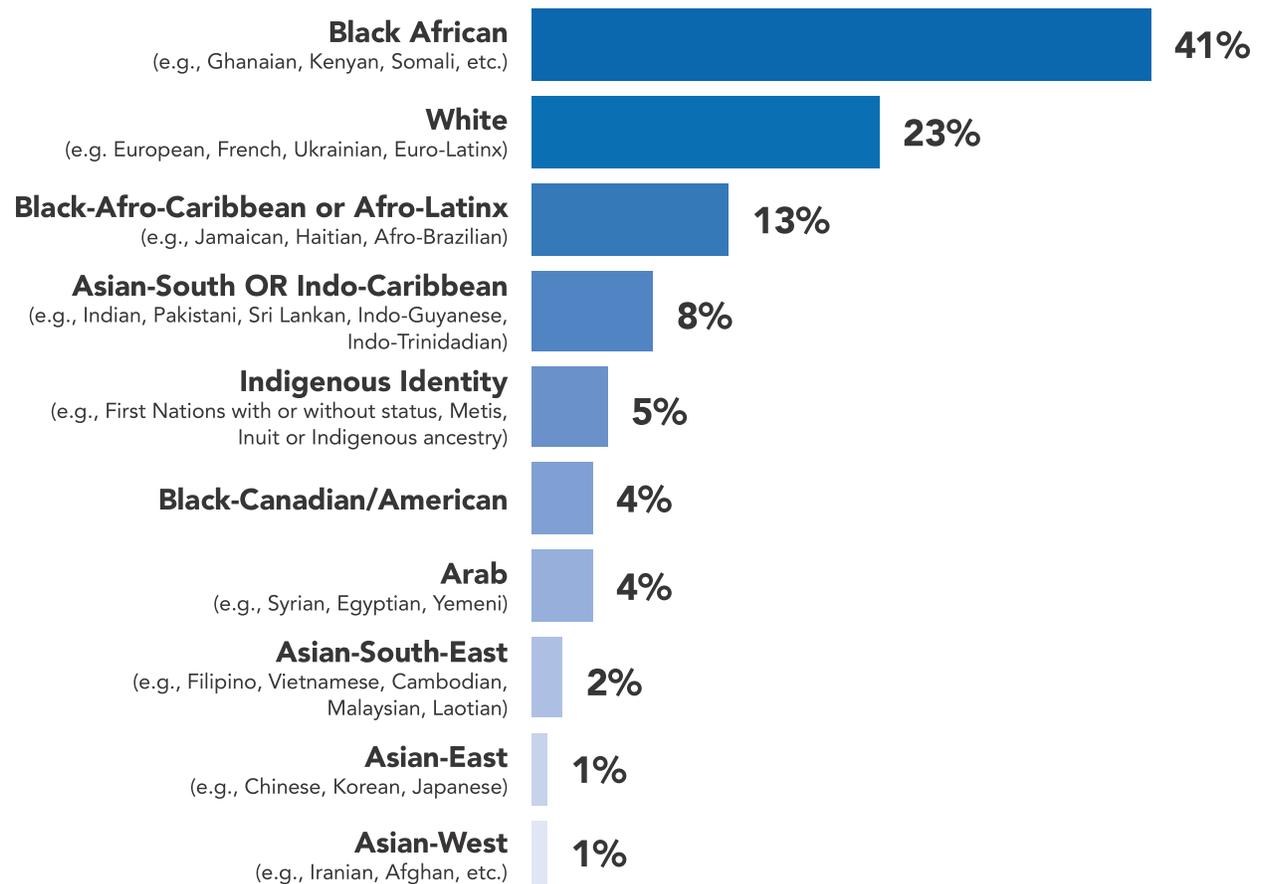
Sexual orientation

The majority of respondents (69%) identified as heterosexual/straight, while 16% identified as bisexual. Smaller percentages identified as gay (2%), lesbian (2.5%), pansexual (0.5%), asexual (0.1%), queer (0.4%) or another identity note listed (0.1%). Combined with bisexual responses, there were 22% of respondents that identified as LGBTQ2S+. Additionally, 4.3% declined to answer, 1% were unsure, 0.1% selected “not listed,” and 5% did not respond.

Compared to the 2021 PiT Survey, more respondents identified their sexual orientation, with an 8% decrease in those identifying as heterosexual/straight and a 14% combined increase across other sexual orientation categories.

Racial identity

There were 967 respondents that identified in one or more racial categories; therefore, the responses are not unique counts. Compared to the 2021 PiT Count, there was a significant increase (34%) in respondents identifying as Black African. These demographic shifts are related to Peel’s increase in asylum claimant response efforts.



Indigenous identity

The 2024 PiT Count included an updated survey question on Indigenous identity, resulting in different response options than previous counts, making direct comparisons difficult. The survey results show that 5% of respondents experiencing homelessness identified as Indigenous, which represents a significant overrepresentation compared to Peel's population statistics of 0.52% (*Region of Peel, 2021. Indigenous Peoples 2021*). This overrepresentation may be driven by systemic factors such as: disparities in health, education, and social outcomes; inequitable access to employment and housing opportunities; experiences of racism and discrimination; intergenerational trauma; and a lack of culturally safe support services. These factors collectively point to a broader need for culturally responsive support to address the unique challenges faced by Indigenous people experiencing homelessness.



It is important to recognize that urban Indigenous populations are often underrepresented in statistical data and surveys due to a combination of mistrust in data collection, systemic barriers, and the lasting impacts of colonialism. Many Indigenous individuals living in urban centres have experienced historical and ongoing marginalization, leading to a lack of confidence in governmental systems, including data collection processes. This mistrust can result in underreporting or reluctance to participate in surveys, which skews the accuracy of demographic information and can have negative implications on the allocation of resources and services intended to support these populations.

Education

The survey results on the highest level of education among the homeless population reveal diverse educational backgrounds. Nearly 29.2% of respondents reported completing high school or a GED, while 25.2% had graduated from a post-secondary institution. Additionally, 11.9% held a graduate degree (e.g., Master's or Ph.D.), and 11.3% had some post-secondary education.

In addition, 12.6% had only completed some high school, 3.0% had only attended primary school, and 0.9% reported having no formal education. A small percentage either declined to answer (1.1%), were unsure (1.0%), or provided unclear responses (4.0%). These findings highlight the varying educational levels within the homeless population, including a notable proportion with higher education credentials.

Difficulties related to health and mental health

Respondents were asked to share if they were experiencing difficulties in any of following areas related to health and mental health.

- 39% reported a mental health challenge
- 28% reported illness or medical condition
- 24% reported physical mobility challenges
- 16% reported challenges with senses, such as seeing or hearing
- 14% reported a learning, intellectual/development of cognitive function challenges
- 8% reported acquired brain injury

In the past year, 40% of the homeless population surveyed accessed services at a hospital emergency room, with the majority requiring multiple visits. Additionally, 28% of respondents experienced hospitalization during this period.

Overnight household composition

The majority of respondents (**70%**) reported being **alone** on the night of enumeration. Others reported being with:

- One or more children (no partner/other adult): 10%
- Partner and one or more children: 6%
- Partner (no children): 4%
- Another adult (e.g., family or friends): 4%
- Another adult and children: 1%

Overall, **18% of respondents** reported experiencing homelessness with a child.

Peel Region

A total of **180 respondents** provided details on their children, reporting **383 children** in total. The number of dependent children per respondent ranged from **1 to 5**. However, these are not unique counts, as some family members may have completed separate surveys listing the same children.

Additionally, as noted in the limitations, this number is likely underreported, as it only includes those who completed the survey and does not account for administrative data on children staying in shelters.

Breaking down the reported children's ages highlights the need for age-specific supports and services:

- **6%** were under **1 year old**
- **40%** were between **1–6 years old**
- **37%** were between **7–12 years old**
- **6%** were between **13–18 years old**
- **11%** were **19 years or older** (adult children)

This data helps inform service planning to better support families experiencing homelessness. For example, the majority of children (83%) are between the ages of 0–12 years and families may benefit from access to licenced childcare and before and after school programs.



Immigration status

When asked, *did you come to Canada as an immigrant, refugee or an asylum claimant (i.e. applied for refugee status after coming to Canada)*, survey responses reflect a surge in asylum claimants in Peel. Compared to 2021, there was a 33% increase in respondents identifying as asylum claimants or refugees. This shift has changed the overall representation, leading to a notable decrease in the proportion of respondents who reported being born in Canada or immigrating through other pathways.

For the 605 respondents who provided information about their duration in Canada, the average length of stay was 7.5 years, with individual responses ranging from as little as one day to as long as 60 years. This broad range highlights the diverse experiences and needs within the homeless population, as individuals who have recently arrived in Canada may face different challenges compared to those who have lived in the country for decades.

Immigration status	2024 (n=1035)	2021 (n=519)	2018 (n=338)	2016 (n=262)
No (implies born in Canada)	34.0%	57%	72%	*
Immigrant	15.0%	24%	21%	12% responded as coming to Canada as an immigrant or refugee in the past 5 years
Asylum claimant or refugee	37.0%	4%	3%	
Study permit	4.0%	*	*	
Temporary foreign worker	0.2%	*	*	*
Other work permit	1.0%	*	*	*
Temporary resident	2.0%	*	*	*
Other (including undocumented)	3.0%	1%	*	*
Declined to answer	1.0%	2%	*	*
Unclear/Blank response/ Don't know	5.0%	12%	*	*

* Not a pick option in that year.

Additionally, 45% identified as Canadian citizens, which would include individuals that were born in Canada and immigrants who have obtained citizenship.

Length of time in Peel

Most of the respondents indicated they have either been in Peel for less than a year (32%), closely followed by respondents indicating they have always been in Peel (31%).

Length of time	2024 (n=1035)	2021 (n=519)	2018 (n=338)	2016 (n=262)
Less than a year	32%	11%	17%	*
1–5 years	13%	13%	15%	*
6–10 years	6%	3%	9%	*
10+ years	13%	37%	24%	*
Always been here	31%	20%	26%	*
Declined to Answer	1%	2%	*	*
Blank	4%	13%	*	*

* Not a pick option in that year.

The top reasons for coming to Peel include: to access emergency shelters (27%), because family moved to Peel (17%), fear for safety (12%), to find housing (9%) and to access services and supports (7%).

First experience of homelessness

Compared to the 2021 PiT Count, there is a higher proportion of individuals that first experienced homelessness as an adult between 25–54 years old.

Age range	2024 (n=1035)	2021 (n=519)	2018 (n=338)	2016 (n=262)
Child 0–15	4%	6.0%	11%	*
Youth 16–24	21%	27.0%	35%	*
Adult 25–54	55%	39.0%	40%	*
Older Adult 55+	11%	6.5%	6%	*
Don't Know	3%	*	8%	*
Declined to answer/Blank	6%	21.5%	*	*

* Not a pick option in that year.

Causes of housing loss (n=1035)

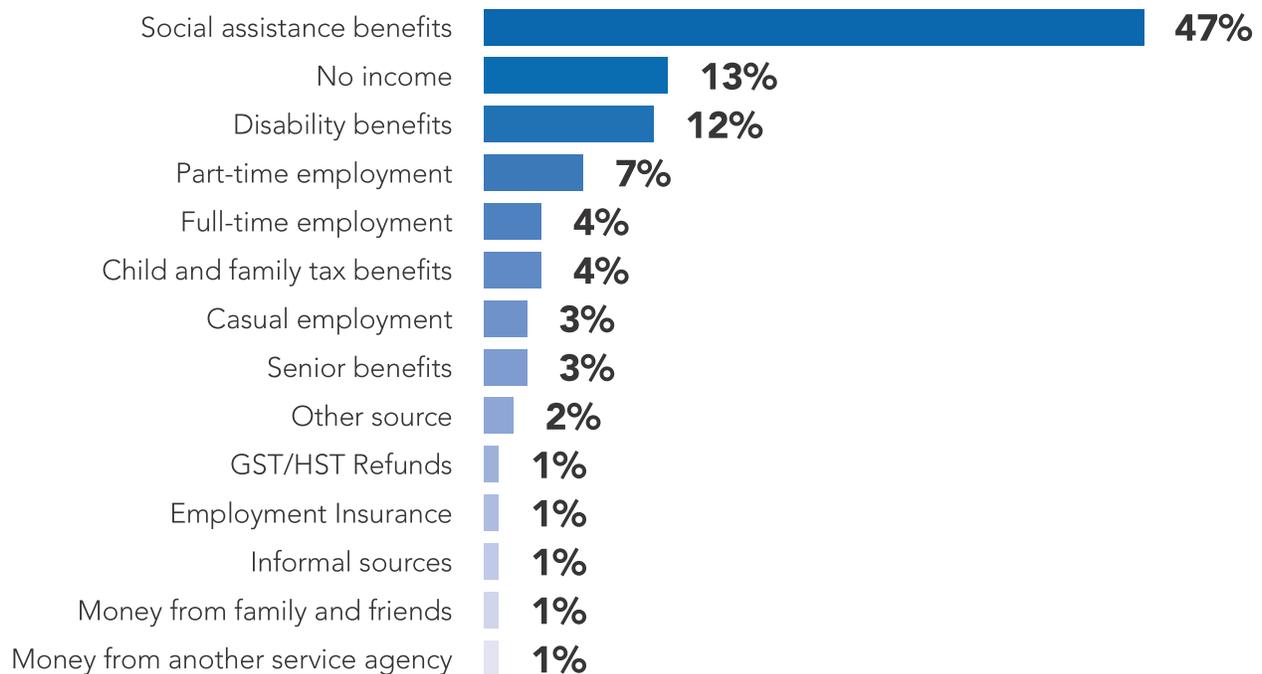
The majority of respondents (91%) identified one or more challenges that caused them to lose their housing. From those who responded, the top reasons for housing loss were: not enough income (34%), other reasons not listed (24%), relocated/left community (17%), conflict with a partner/spouse (11%), conflict with parent/guardian (10%) and landlord/tenant conflict (6%). Additionally, 4% reported abuse by partner/spouse, 3% reported abuse from parent/guardian and 1% reported abuse from their landlord.

In the category of "other" most respondents shared the need to seek asylum, fleeing from country due to safety issues and discrimination. Additionally, the survey asked if recent housing loss was related to an eviction, 22% of respondents indicated "yes".

When comparing responses by gender identity, women had a higher percentage (27%) reporting housing loss due to conflict or abuse with partner/spouse or parent/guardian compared to males (16%). Note that when exploring local homelessness (non-asylum respondents), this percentage for women increases to 40%.

Income source (n=1035)

Most respondents (80%) reported having some form of income at the time of the survey and were able to select more than one income source. The top selected source of income was social assistance (47%).



Length of homelessness

Length of homelessness	2024 (n=1035)	2021 (n=519)	2018 (n=338)	2016 (n=262)
Homeless (0–5 months)	39%	42%	*	58%
Chronic homelessness (6 months+)	49%	39%	32%	41%
Don't know	6%	*	*	*
Declined to answer/Blank	6%	18%	*	1%

* Not a pick option in that year.

There is an increase in the proportion of respondents identifying that they have been homeless for six months or longer (chronic homelessness).

Foster care (n=1035)

Among survey respondents, 9% reported having spent time in foster care or a group home as a child. This highlights the connection between involvement in the child welfare system and later experiences. The current age distribution of those who have been involved in foster care is: 33% are 16-24 years old, 48% are between 25-54 years old and 17% are 55 years or older.

Notably, there has been an increase in the proportion of younger individuals (16–24 years old) reporting a history of foster care, suggesting that youth aging out of care continue to face significant challenges in securing stable housing.

Of the 64 respondents who provided details on how long it had been since their time in care:



These findings underscore the immediate vulnerability of youth transitioning out of care, with a significant portion experiencing homelessness within one year of exiting the system. This highlights the need for targeted housing and support programs to prevent youth from entering homelessness after leaving foster care.

Veteran status (n=1,047)

1% of respondents identified as serving in the Canadian Military or RCMP.

Barriers to housing

The top responses when asked “*what challenges or problems have you experienced when trying to find housing?*” are related to low income and rising unaffordability:

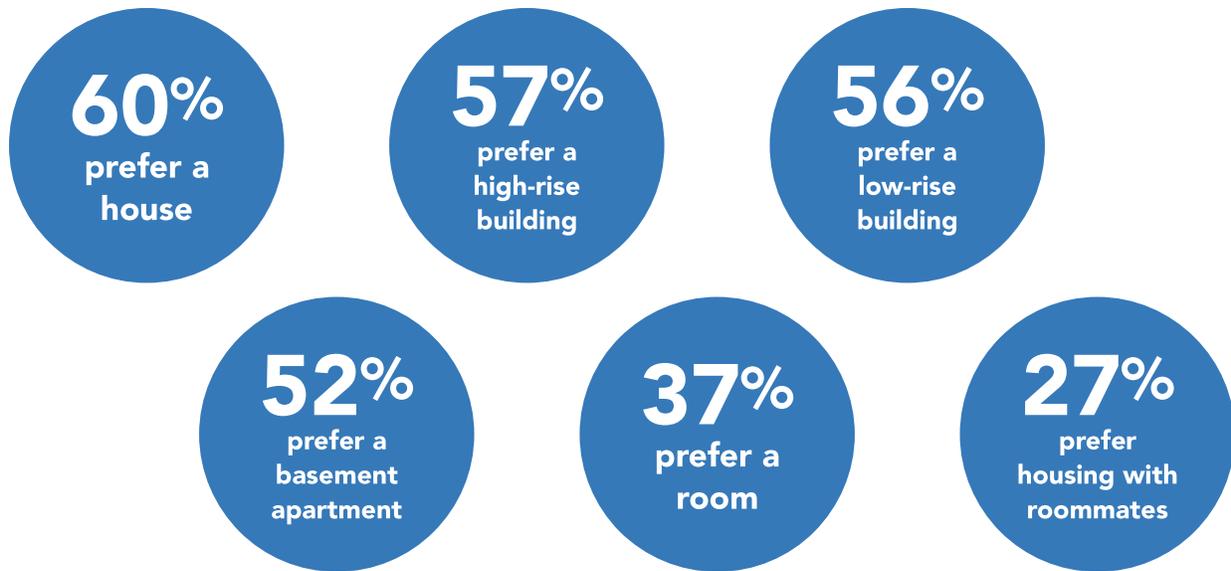
- Low income (65%)
- Rent too high (64%)
- Credit history (28%)
- Transportation (19%)
- Discrimination (18%)
- Lack of documentation (13.8%)
- Family breakdown and conflict (10%)
- Mental health issues (9%)



Housing preferences

The majority of respondents (90%) identified that they want to get permanent housing, with only 2% responding “no” and the remaining responses were “don’t know” or blank responses.

Respondents were also asked about their housing preferences and were able to select all that applied to them.



In addition, 6% also identified other preferences. Respondents shared the need for accessible environments, safe environments, their desire for affordable or subsidized housing and comments sharing that they would be happy with anything.

Support services

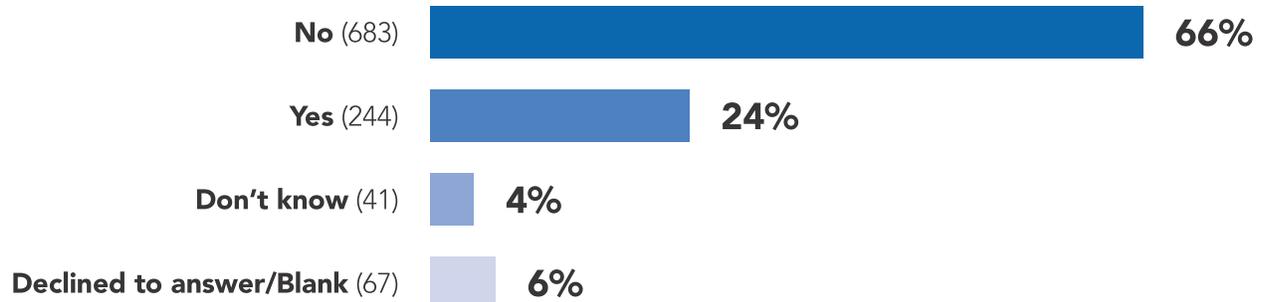
Respondents were invited to identify as many services or supports that they may need from a list. The top responses are:

- Housing service and homelessness supports (88%)
- Financial supports (87%)
- Employment supports (77%)
- Transportation (69%)
- Cultural or spiritual supports (51%)

Social support

Social connections play a crucial role in the well-being of individuals experiencing homelessness. Having supportive family or friends can provide emotional encouragement, resources, and a pathway to stability.

The below graph indicates responses on whether individuals feel they have friends or family that can be depended on for help if needed.



Areas of improvement

More than 700 respondents responded to the open-ended question *“Peel Region wants to make the shelters a better place to stay while you look for housing. What can we do to support this?”* Their feedback provides valuable direction on how Peel Region can enhance shelter services and better meet the needs of those seeking housing stability. Several key themes emerged that identified key strengths and opportunities to further improve shelter services.

- **Safety and security:** Many highlighted the importance of safety and security, requesting better security measures, staff training, and separation of vulnerable individuals from those with substance use issues.
- **Food quality and options:** Food services were also a focus, with suggestions for more nutritious, culturally inclusive, and accessible meal options.
- **Housing support and financial assistance:** Housing support and affordability remained a critical priority, with calls for increased financial assistance, streamlined application processes, and clearer guidance to help individuals secure stable housing. Several respondents also requested additional supports in finding employment and skill-building programs.
- **Staff:** There were differing experiences and feedback related to staff they have interacted with in the shelter system. Some expressed appreciation for positive staff

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interactions, some identified this as an area of improvement and recommended ongoing training to ensure compassionate and professional care.

- **Shelter conditions and capacity:** Responses highlighted the importance of shelter conditions, advocating for improved cleanliness, increased privacy, and access to essential amenities such as showers and lockers.
- **Mental health and additional support:** Some respondents emphasized the need for mental health professionals, addiction services, and better separation of individuals with different needs to reduce safety concerns (such as exposure to drugs) and provide specialized supports.

This valuable input underscores the strengths of Peel Region’s shelter system while highlighting opportunities for continued enhancement, ensuring shelters remain safe, inclusive, and supportive spaces for individuals seeking housing stability.

In-depth look at Survey findings: Understanding the unique needs of Peel’s Homeless System and Asylum Claimant Response System

Homelessness in Peel is shaped by a range of complex factors, including economic instability, housing affordability, systemic barriers, and displacement due to migration. The 2024 PiT Count highlights key differences between individuals accessing Peel’s homeless system and those seeking shelter through the asylum claimant response system. Understanding these distinctions is critical for developing targeted support services that meet the unique needs of each group.



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In the survey, 379 individuals identified as asylum claimants or refugees (referred to as “asylum respondents”). These individuals represent a distinct population within Peel’s homelessness landscape, requiring specific supports related to immigration status, settlement services, and housing access.

All other respondents (656 individuals) were categorized under Peel’s local homelessness system. This group includes Canadian-born individuals, permanent residents, and other non-permanent residents (e.g., those on study permits or work permits). Some respondents did not specify their immigration status, but for the purposes of this analysis, they were included in the general homelessness population.

Overnight location

Patterns in where individuals spent the night highlight differences between asylum claimants and other homeless individuals:

- 52% of asylum respondents reported staying in a hotel, compared to only 15% of non-asylum respondents.
- A significantly lower percentage of asylum respondents (0.8%) reported being unsheltered in a public space, compared to 16% of non-asylum respondents.
- 6% of asylum claimants were in transitional shelters/housing, indicating lower access to longer-term housing solutions compared to non-asylum respondents.

Demographic differences

Age distribution

Age demographics varied between the two groups:

- 79% of asylum respondents were between the ages of 25–54, compared to 53% of non-asylum respondents.
- This suggests that the asylum claimant population is predominantly working-age adults, whereas Peel’s broader homeless population includes a wider age range.

Gender identity

- Among asylum respondents, 48% identified as women, slightly higher than the 47% who identified as men.
- In contrast, non-asylum respondents were slightly more likely to identify as men (55%), while 36% identified as women.

Sexual orientation

A lower proportion of asylum respondents (49%) identified as heterosexual, compared to 79% of non-asylum respondents.

The higher proportion of asylum claimants identifying as LGBTQIA2S+ may reflect individuals fleeing persecution based on sexual orientation in their home countries. This underscores the importance of culturally competent services that provide safety and support for LGBTQIA2S+ asylum claimants.

Education levels

Educational attainment levels highlight important differences between asylum claimants and other homeless individuals:



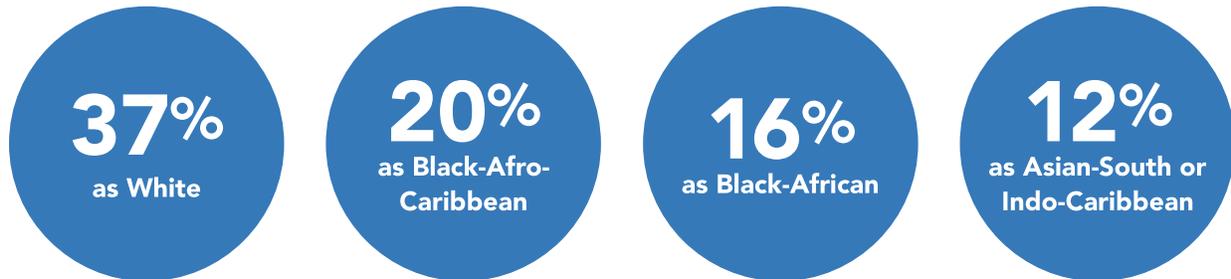
Among non-asylum respondents:



These findings reveal that asylum claimants tend to have higher levels of formal education, suggesting that barriers to employment—such as credential recognition, work permits, and language proficiency—may contribute to their housing instability rather than lack of education or job skills.

Racial identity

- The majority of asylum respondents (81%) identified as Black-African.
- Non-asylum respondents had a more diverse racial distribution, with the below identifying as:



When combining those who identified as Black (Black-African, Black-Afro-Caribbean, and Black-Canadian/American), Black individuals were overrepresented in both the homeless system and asylum claimant response system when compared to the Peel population statistics (Region of Peel, 2021). This reflects broader racial disparities in housing access, systemic discrimination, and economic opportunities—particularly for Black communities in Peel.

Factors that contributed to housing loss

For asylum claimants, the primary reason for housing loss was the need to flee or relocate from their home community in search of safety. While high rental costs and low income also affect this group, their initial entry into homelessness is often tied to limited settlement support upon arrival, rather than formal evictions.

In contrast, within the local homelessness response, in addition to low income and rising unaffordability, conflict with a partner, spouse, or parent are reasons contributing to their housing loss. Additionally, 30% of non-asylum respondents identified eviction as the primary cause of their most recent housing loss, compared to just 7% of asylum claimants. This suggests that non-asylum individuals in the local homelessness system are more likely to experience housing insecurity due to rising rent costs, lack of affordable housing, and landlord-tenant disputes, whereas asylum claimants face homelessness primarily due to displacement and the challenges of securing immediate housing upon arrival.



Discussion and recommendations

Homelessness continues to be a multifaceted issue that demands systemic interventions and tailored solutions. The 2024 PiT Count data highlights critical trends and gaps in services, particularly among vulnerable populations such as racialized groups, youth, and asylum claimants. The findings from this count emphasize the need for continued investment in targeted supports, while also addressing the structural causes of homelessness such as income disparity, discrimination, and systemic barriers to housing access. Below are key recommendations based on the 2024 PiT Count data.

Housing loss and vulnerable populations

The data from the 2024 PiT Count indicates that certain demographic groups experience homelessness in distinct ways. The majority of respondents identified as adult single males, followed by a significant number of youth, women, and racialized individuals. Similar to previous years, housing loss was primarily linked to income instability, interpersonal violence, and substance use, though new patterns around migration and asylum claimants have also emerged.

Recommendation 1: Tailored supports for vulnerable groups

- **Youth:** Continued focus on prevention and early intervention for youth homelessness is critical. Many youth report strained relationships with family and involvement in child protection services. Programs should be expanded to provide housing stabilization, mentorship, and life skills development.
- **Women and LGBTQIA2S+ populations:** Given the high rates of domestic violence and abuse reported among women, shelters and services need to be more inclusive and trauma informed. Establishing more LGBTQIA2S+ specific safe spaces and integrating inclusive intake practices will also improve safety and accessibility.
- **Racialized populations:** Targeted interventions are necessary for Black, Indigenous, and other racialized groups, particularly given the disproportionate representation of

these groups in the homeless population. Policies should be developed through an Anti-Black Racism lens and include partnerships with community organizations serving racialized individuals.

Asylum claimants and the Dual System

A notable finding in the 2024 PiT Count is the number of individuals in Peel experiencing homelessness due to their status as asylum claimants. These individuals often face unique barriers to stable housing, compounded by their legal and economic challenges.

Recommendation 2: Continued tailored support for Asylum Claimants

Given the opening of the Peel Reception Centre, it is clear that Peel Region is committed to providing specialized services for this vulnerable population. The focus should remain on maintaining a separate system for asylum claimants to ensure their unique needs are met with targeted support.

Key actions

- **Expansion of Pilot Programs:** Continue piloting the integration of essential wrap-around services at the Peel Reception Centre, including immigration case management, settlement services, housing support, and employment programming. These services should remain centralized to avoid confusion and ensure streamlined access for asylum claimants.
- **Long-term federal and provincial support:** Secure additional funding from both federal and provincial governments to ensure that the Peel Reception Centre can continue to operate effectively. This will allow the center to expand its capacity and further develop its program offerings, such as legal support and public health services.
- **Strengthen coordination among municipalities:** Expand partnerships with key stakeholders to ensure that asylum claimants receive comprehensive, culturally appropriate, and timely services. This will be vital to meeting both short-term needs and facilitating long-term integration.

Mental health and substance use supports

The intersection of homelessness with mental health and substance use continues to be a significant challenge. The 2024 PiT Count data reaffirms that many individuals experiencing homelessness also face complex mental health and substance use issues, often without sufficient access to care.

Recommendation 3: Increase mental health and substance use support

- **Crisis services:** Expand crisis intervention teams that provide immediate mental health support, especially for those on the street or in shelters.
- **Accessible treatment options:** Develop more affordable and accessible mental health and addiction recovery services, ensuring that they are integrated with homelessness services. This includes building partnerships with local health providers to ensure wraparound services for individuals facing co-occurring issues.

Affordable housing and prevention programs

The shortage of affordable housing remains a critical issue. The 2024 PiT Count data highlights the pressing need for increased housing stock, particularly for low-income and vulnerable individuals. Prevention efforts must also be scaled to ensure that individuals at risk of homelessness receive timely support before reaching crisis levels.

Recommendation 4: Expand affordable housing initiatives

- **Increase housing supply:** There is a need for a concerted effort to increase the availability of affordable, permanent housing in Peel. Investments from all levels of government are required to address this shortage.
- **Prevention programs:** Expand housing prevention initiatives that intervene before individuals become homeless. These programs should provide rental subsidies, eviction prevention services, and legal support to ensure that individuals at risk of homelessness are kept housed.

Indigenous homelessness

While Indigenous homelessness continues to be an area of concern, the 2024 PiT Count data highlights that the Indigenous community is still underrepresented in homelessness counts due to gaps in data collection, particularly within rural or remote areas.

Recommendation 5: Focused support for indigenous communities

- **Culturally appropriate services:** Peel should work to decolonize homelessness by developing culturally specific services and shelter options for Indigenous individuals. This includes partnerships with Indigenous organizations to ensure services are designed with Indigenous perspectives in mind.

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- **Data inclusion:** To better understand and address Indigenous homelessness, future PiT Counts should work closely with Indigenous communities to ensure accurate data collection that reflects their unique experiences.

Conclusion and next steps

The 2024 PiT Count has provided invaluable data that will inform ongoing efforts to address homelessness in Peel. By focusing on systemic solutions, targeted support for vulnerable populations, and improving integration across housing and asylum systems, we can work toward reducing homelessness in Peel. The recommendations presented here should serve as a guide to strengthen local-level planning, resource allocation, and advocacy efforts.

These recommendations will be used to:

- Guide local-level planning and resource allocation to improve services for those experiencing homelessness
- Support the work of Coordinated Access to ensure that individuals in need of support are not lost in the system
- Inform future iterations of the PiT Count to improve data collection, including targeted outreach to underserved populations such as Indigenous and asylum-seeking individuals
- Advocate for increased funding for housing and homelessness prevention programs, including those that specifically address the unique needs of racialized groups, women, LGBTQIA2S+ individuals, and youth

Peel's Housing and Homelessness Plan should continue to evolve to meet the needs of the community, and these recommendations represent an essential step in that process.



Appendix A: Definitions

To understand and address homelessness, it is important to utilize the most current definitions. The definitions provided in the 2021 PiT Count Community Report were based on the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness's (COH) typology. Since then, updates have been made, particularly under Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy.

Combining the definitions from Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy and the COH provides a comprehensive understanding of homelessness and how it affects our community. Below is an integrated overview of key terms:

Homelessness

Refers to the situation of individuals, families, or communities without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means, and ability to acquire it. This condition often results from systemic or societal barriers, a lack of affordable and suitable housing, and/or individual financial, mental, cognitive, behavioral, or physical challenges. Homelessness encompasses a range of living situations, including:

- **Unsheltered homelessness:** refers to individuals or families living in public or private spaces without consent or contract and in places not intended for permanent human habitation, such as streets, alleys, parks, transit stations, abandoned buildings, vehicles, ravines, and other outdoor locations.
- **Sheltered homelessness:** refers to individuals or families staying in overnight shelters designated for people experiencing homelessness, including general emergency shelters and those specific to populations like men, women, youth, or individuals affected by family violence. This category may also include extreme weather shelters and shelters for those impacted by family violence.

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- **Provisionally accommodated (Encompasses transitional housing and hidden homelessness):** refers to individuals or families whose accommodation is temporary or lacks security of tenure. This includes those staying with friends or family without guarantee of continued residency (“couch surfing”), individuals in institutional settings like hospitals, correctional facilities, or residential treatment centers without permanent housing arrangements, and those in transitional housing programs.
- **At risk of homelessness:** refers to individuals or families whose current housing situations do not meet public health and safety standards, placing them at imminent risk of homelessness. Factors contributing to this risk include precarious employment, sudden unemployment, significant life events, and living in accommodations that are unaffordable, overcrowded, or substandard.

Chronic homelessness

Refers to individuals who are currently experiencing homelessness and have been homeless for six months or more within the past year (i.e., have spent at least 180 cumulative nights in a shelter or place not fit for human habitation). This definition also includes those with recurrent experiences of homelessness over the past three years, with a cumulative duration of at least 18 months (546 days).





Appendix B: References

Definitions references

Definitions are captured in the below references:

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Previous Point in Time editions references

The previous Point in Time Community Reports below are referenced throughout this year's Point in Time Community Report, Everyone Counts Peel 2024:

Region of Peel & Peel Alliance to End Homelessness. (2019, March). *Everyone counts Peel: 2018 Joint point-in-time count and registry week results report*. Region of Peel. homelesshub.ca/resource/everyone-counts-peel-2018-joint-point-time-count-and-registry-week-results

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