

Vancouver Homeless Count 2010

Off the street and into shelters

Final report

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1 Key Findings

The Vancouver Homeless Count conducted March 23, 2010 showed an increase in the overall number of homeless people counted compared to 2008. The annual growth rate declined slightly as did the share of people being homeless for more than one year. Fewer homeless individuals were found on the street (just over half the number in 2008) and a quarter of the people found on the street had stayed indoors at someone else's place the previous night (were sofa surfing). Three quarters of the homeless were accommodated in shelters, including the new HEAT/Winter Response shelters, and this was up from 2008 when about half were accommodated in shelters.

The count showed that Vancouver's homeless continue to be disproportionately Aboriginal, older and in poor health – many with significant mental health and addictions issues. A greater share of homeless individuals counted received government assistance (e.g., income assistance, employment insurance or Old Age Security/Guaranteed Income Supplement/Canada Pension Plan and fewer reported income from binning and panhandling.

GROWTH AND DISTRIBUTION

- There were 1,715 homeless people counted in Vancouver on March 23, 2010, an increase of 9% or 139 persons since 2008.
- It appears that many homeless people have moved inside from the street to shelters. There was a 70% increase in the number of homeless people counted in shelters on March 23, 2010 and 400 fewer homeless people found on the streets, down by 50% since 2008. Both findings are likely the result of expanded low barrier shelter capacity.
- Homelessness grew at a rate of 4%/year from 2008 to 2010 down slightly from 5%/year between 2005 and 2008. This compares with an estimated annual population growth rate of about 2% for the City as a whole between 2008 and 2009, so the homeless population is growing at roughly twice the rate of the overall population.
- Shelters, including safe houses and transition houses, accommodated 75% of the City's homeless in 2010 compared to 49% in 2008. HEAT/Winter Response shelters accommodated one third of the homeless population on March 23, 2010.

Number of homeless	2005	2008	2010	Change 2005 - 2008		Change 2008 – 2010	
				#	%	#	%
Sheltered homeless	773	765	1,294	-8	0%	529	69%
Unsheltered homeless	591	811	421	220	37%	-390	-48%

Total homeless	1,364	1,576	1,715	212	16%	139	9%
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- Almost 70% of the unsheltered homeless stayed outside or in a place not meant for human habitation on March 23, 2010, like a tent, garage or van. The rest sofa surfed.
- Many sheltered homeless (43%) had stayed at their present shelter for a month or more, with a median length of stayed of three months. Seven percent had stayed for only one night.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

- Men continue to comprise the majority (78%) of homeless people counted.
- Vancouver's homeless are older than the rest of the population. The largest age group (30%) is 45 to 54 years, and the median age of the homeless is 43 years, four years older than Vancouver residents in general (in 2006).
- Fifty-five young people under 19 years of age were counted, most (48) of them in shelters, safe houses or transition houses. Thirty of them were accompanied by their parent(s). Seven individuals under 19 years of age were unsheltered – one was accompanied by an adult and six were unaccompanied.
- Forty-five percent of the homeless have been homeless for a year or more, and this is higher among the unsheltered homeless (59%). The sheltered homeless tend to be homeless for a shorter period, as 17% indicated under one month compared to only 6% of unsheltered homeless.
- More than one third of the homeless report an Aboriginal identity, roughly the same among the sheltered and unsheltered homeless.
- Most homeless people (57%) call Vancouver their home, and their primary income sources include income assistance, disability pensions and employment.
- Over three quarters (79%) of Vancouver's homeless had one or more health conditions. Addiction and medical conditions or illness were most common. The unsheltered homeless had higher incidences of medical conditions and disability.
- Almost 70% of the unsheltered homeless stayed outside or in a place not meant for human habitation on March 23, 2010, like a tent, garage, van etc. The rest sofa surfed.
- Many sheltered homeless (43%) had stayed at their present shelter for a month or longer, with a median length of stay of three months. Seven percent had stayed for only one night.

CHANGES BETWEEN 2008 and 2010

- The share of women has declined from 27% of the homeless population in 2008 to 22% in 2010 and fewer women were counted in 2010 (333) than in 2008 (348).
- The homeless are aging. The largest increase between 2008 and 2010 occurred among those age 55-64 and 65+ years.
- After having risen between 2005 and 2008, the share of the homeless reporting a period of homelessness of a year or more has declined slightly. Forty-five percent had been homeless for a year or more, down from 49% in 2008.
- Income sources changed somewhat. More homeless people reported receiving income assistance, and there was a decline in binning and bottle collecting, panhandling, and income from other sources. There was increased reporting of Employment Insurance, and Guaranteed Income Supplement/Old Age Security/Canada Pension Plan. The latter is consistent with an aging population.
- The homeless' health status appears to be worsening. The share reporting two or more health conditions rose from 35% in 2008 to 47% in 2010. The share reporting mental illness also increased from 28 to 36%.
- In 2010, fewer homeless people reported using virtually all types of health services compared to 2008, except for mental health services, which showed a slight increase.

HEAT/WINTER RESPONSE CLIENTS

- HEAT/Winter Response shelter clients differ in many ways from their counterparts in year round shelters and in some ways are more like the unsheltered homeless.
- In comparison with year round shelter clients, clients of HEAT/Winter Response shelters were more likely to be male, middle aged, Aboriginal, with a partner/spouse or other person, and long term residents of Vancouver.
- HEAT/Winter Response shelter clients had been homeless for a long time. Over half had been homeless for a year or more, compared to 29% of year round shelter clients. Only 6% reported homelessness of less than a month, compared to 26% of year round shelter clients.
- HEAT/Winter Response shelter clients reported Income Assistance as a source of income more frequently than year round shelter clients and were less likely to report Disability Benefits, Old Age Security/Guaranteed Income Supplement/Canada Pension Plan or employment income.

- HEAT/Winter Response clients reported worse health status than year round shelter clients with 52% reporting two or more health conditions, compared to 41% of year round shelter clients. In this they were similar to the unsheltered homeless.

SUB-POPULATIONS

- Homeless **women** were disproportionately Aboriginal. Almost half (49%) of homeless women in Vancouver self-identified as Aboriginal, compared to 36% of the homeless population generally.
- Almost half of the **Aboriginal** homeless population had been homeless for a year or more and women comprised a larger share of this sub-population (33%) compared with the homeless population generally.
- **Youth** (unaccompanied individuals under 25 years of age) had a lower incidence of most health conditions, and most unsheltered youth (60%) stayed with someone else on count night, not outside. Proportionally more homeless youth reported an Aboriginal identity than any other sub-population.
- **Seniors** (individuals 55 and older) were the fastest growing sub-population between 2008 and 2010 and they were in poor health relative to other sub-populations, but they had a lower incidence of addiction (35%) compared to the homeless population generally.
- The **long term homeless** (homeless for one or more years) were the largest sub-population, and they were reported to have higher incidence of all health conditions.

2 Introduction

This document presents the findings of the first Vancouver Homeless Count. It provides an estimate of the Vancouver's homeless population *on one day* - March 23, 2010. It also reviews trends in homelessness in the City since 2005.¹

The City of Vancouver commissioned the count so that it would have up to date information to assist with its ongoing efforts to end street homelessness by 2015. In particular, the City wished to know about the impact on street homelessness of the HEAT and Winter Response shelters. These seven shelters, which sheltered 573 people on the night of the count, were created over the last two years to provide low barrier shelter beds in various areas of the City.²

2.1 Purpose and objectives

The purpose of the count is to provide:

- an updated enumeration of homeless persons in Vancouver;
- a demographic profile of those enumerated on the day of the count; and,
- a comparison with 2005 and 2008 figures for the City of Vancouver.

2.2 Definitions

The count used the same definition of homeless as has been employed in past regional homeless counts. Someone was considered homeless for the purpose of this count if

- they did not have a place of their own where they could expect to stay for more than 30 days and if they did not pay rent.

This included people who:

- had no physical shelter – staying on the street, in doorways, in parkades, in parks and on beaches; or,
- were temporarily accommodated in emergency shelters, safe houses for youth, or transition houses for women and their children fleeing violence; or,
- were staying at a friend's place where they did not pay rent.

For example, someone who stayed in a garage would be considered homeless if they do not pay rent, even if they considered the garage to be their home. Emergency shelters are not considered permanent housing, thus shelter clients are included in the homeless population.

¹ Metro Vancouver provided the consultants with City of Vancouver data from the 2005 and 2008 Regional Homeless counts. 2002 data was unavailable.

² Four of these shelters were closed on April 30th, 2010.

Someone who stayed at a friend's place where they did not pay rent was also homeless for the purpose of this count, because they had no security of tenure.

People who were sofa surfing were included in the count *if we found them* (included as part of the *unsheltered* homeless population). Sofa surfers as a population are significantly undercounted in most homeless counts. Similarly, families staying with other families and not paying rent were not included in the count if they did not visit a place where they would be counted.

2.3 Method

The Vancouver Homeless Count 2010 used the same method as past regional homeless counts in 2002, 2005 and 2008 to ensure comparability and to accommodate a short deadline. It measured homelessness from 12:01 am to 11:59 pm on March 23rd, 2010, and consisted of two components, nighttime and daytime, designed to enumerate the sheltered homeless and the unsheltered homeless. The same survey questions were used for each.

The nighttime component enumerated homeless individuals staying at emergency shelters, transition houses and safe houses overnight on March 22/23rd. These individuals are referred to as the 'sheltered homeless'. Three approaches were used to gather anonymous shelter data.

1. Agency staff in transition houses and safe houses used the nighttime questionnaire and shelter statistics form to gather the necessary data.
2. BC Housing provided aggregate client data for nine shelters that provide regular reports to the agency for the evening of March 22, 2010 and five shelters provided aggregate data to the count team directly.
3. Volunteers conducted interviews in ten large shelters that do not regularly collect and/or provide detailed data to BC Housing. Included in this group are the HEAT and Winter Response shelters. Volunteers visited these shelters on the evening of March 22, and in one case, the morning of March 23, 2010.

In addition, each shelter, transition house and safe house was asked to complete a shelter statistics form to provide the total number of occupants and turnaways on count night. This served as a cross check against the surveys, and helped ensure that all shelter clients were enumerated, including people who were missed by the survey or who refused to participate. Participating nighttime facilities are listed in Appendix B.

The daytime component enumerated homeless people encountered in pre-identified locations such as meal programs, drop in centres, some social services offices, parks, alleys and public spaces, who did not stay in emergency accommodation the night before but who may have slept outside, in a parkade or at someone else's place. People found in the daytime who stayed overnight in these places are referred to as the 'unsheltered homeless'.

In advance of the count, the City’s Tenant Assistance Coordinator created a series of maps marking known homeless locations to guide interviewers in their assigned area.

Beginning early in the morning (5:30 am) on March 23, volunteer interviewers approached people in their assigned areas to request an interview. Individuals at these locations were asked a series of screening questions to determine if:

- a) they had already answered the survey; or,
- b) they had a place they pay rent for; or,
- c) they had stayed in emergency accommodation covered by the nighttime component.³

The interview ended if individuals answered yes to any of the above questions. If the interviewee agreed to participate and qualified for the survey, the interviewer proceeded to complete the questionnaire.

In addition, some agencies with outreach workers in frequent contact with sofa surfers, particularly youth and women, were asked to complete interviews with these individuals on count day.

Minor changes were made to the count approach to address implementation issues that had arisen in past regional counts and/or to expedite count organization. Only skilled outreach workers, social service personnel or people with relevant experience were recruited as volunteer interviewers. This helped ensure surveys would be completed as accurately as possible, reduce training requirements, and limited the number of volunteers needed.

The City was divided into three areas with an area coordinator responsible for each, and a nighttime count coordinator. They recruited volunteers, assigned locations, coordinated volunteers on count night/day, and collected and returned completed packages at the end of their shifts. In addition, an “area station” was set up in each area on count day allowing for volunteer sign in, pick up and return of completed

Glossary

Unsheltered homeless - Consists of the street homeless (i.e. people who had no physical shelter, but stayed on the street, in doorways, parkades, parks and on beaches) and people who were staying at a friend’s place where they did not pay rent (sofa surfing). Comparable to the term ‘street/service homeless’ used in the 2008 Metro Count.

Sheltered homeless - Stayed in an emergency shelter, safe house or transition house for women and children fleeing violence.

Children - Young people under the age of 19 who were accompanied by a parent during the count.

Youth - Young people under the age of 25 who were not accompanied by a parent during the count.

Seniors - People aged 55 years and older.

³ People who stayed in an overnight location covered by the nighttime component (shelter, safe house or transition house) were not interviewed.

packages, and the ability to shift volunteers around in case of “no shows”. This system worked well.

Few changes were made to the Metro survey questionnaire due to time constraints in the lead up to the count and to ensure comparability with Vancouver figures derived from previous counts. These are explained in Appendix A.

2.4 Limitations

All homeless counts underestimate the number of people who are homeless at any one time. The Vancouver count is no different. It did not enumerate every homeless person in the city on March 23, 2010. Although every effort was made to enumerate all homeless people, it was not possible to assign volunteers to all parts of the city for an entire day; some would be missed and some homeless people did not wish to be identified. In particular, people who stayed in detox facilities, recovery houses or hospitals without a place to go when they left were not part of the nighttime count, and were included in the count figures only if they were found on the street during the daytime. Nor does this method count all people who were sofa surfing, as they are by their very nature, hidden.

It should also be noted that a point-in-time count, such as this, does not reflect the number of people who move in and out of homelessness over a longer period of time, for example, one year.

The homeless count is explicitly designed to avoid double counting. Screening questions eliminate those who have already been interviewed, who pay rent, or who stayed in a shelter, safe house or transition house where they were included in the nighttime count. People approached are offered a candy or cigarette prior to being asked the three screening questions. This approach ensures there is no incentive for homeless people to complete an interview more than once.

People who refuse to be interviewed are not included in the reported number of homeless people found on the day of the count, as these people may decide to participate later in the day (and would therefore be double counted) or they may not, in fact, be homeless. If they are homeless, then they are missed, emphasizing that the count is an undercount.

There were 285 refusals/people not interviewed on count day. Many people provided no reason, but of those who did, reasons included asleep/couldn't wake, have a home, communication difficulties (language other than English), busy, want payment and doing drugs/alcohol. In some cases the interviewers did not approach the person or the person walked away.

That being said, the count provides the best available information on the size, composition and trends in the homeless population in Vancouver.

2.5 Report organization

Section 3 provides the total number of people identified as homeless, the breakdown by type of homelessness, and overall growth trends in Vancouver. Section 4 describes the characteristics of the sheltered and unsheltered homeless. Section 5 describes changes in characteristics of the homeless population since 2005. Section 6 profiles specific sub-populations of homeless people, such as women and Aboriginal people, and clients of HEAT and Winter Response shelters.

3 Growth and distribution of Vancouver's homeless

There were 1,715 homeless people counted in Vancouver on March 23, 2010, an increase of 9% or 139 persons since 2008.⁴ Table 1 shows the number of homeless in Vancouver in 2005, 2008 and 2010. The homeless population counted grew from 1,576 people in 2008 to 1,715 persons in 2010, an increase of 139 people. The distribution of the sheltered and unsheltered homeless has changed dramatically. The number of unsheltered homeless dropped by almost 50% or 390 persons after a considerable increase between 2005 and 2008. In fact there were fewer unsheltered homeless counted this year than in 2005. At the same time, Vancouver shelters accommodated 529 more homeless persons in 2010 than in 2008.

Table 1 - Homeless trends since 2005

Number of homeless	2005	2008	2010	Change 2005 - 2008		Change 2008 – 2010	
				#	%	#	%
Sheltered homeless	773	765	1,294	-8	0%	529	69%
Unsheltered homeless	591	811	421	220	37%	-390	-48%
Total homeless	1,364	1,576	1,715	212	16%	139	9%

These results were not unexpected. The HEAT and Winter Response beds increased shelter capacity between 2008 and 2010 which enabled a higher proportion of homeless people to be accommodated in shelters. While many of the drivers of homelessness such as the lack of affordable housing, mental illness, and addiction remain, some progress has been made since 2008 in helping street homeless persons gain access to housing through outreach teams and some new housing resources, thereby stemming the growth in homelessness somewhat.

The number of homeless people who were counted in Vancouver in 2005, 2008 and 2010 is shown graphically below. Homelessness grew at a rate of 5%/year from 2005 to 2008, and 4%/year from 2008 to 2010, about two times faster than estimated population growth in the city's population as a whole.

Figure 1 also shows graphically the sharp decline in the number of unsheltered homeless and corresponding rise in the number of sheltered homeless in 2010.

⁴ It is possible that the increased number of homeless persons may be due to greater success in finding homeless people because they are easier to count in shelters. If the people in HEAT/Winter Response shelters were not staying there, but were on the street, it is possible that fewer would have been counted.

Figure 1 - Vancouver homeless population trends 2005 to 2010

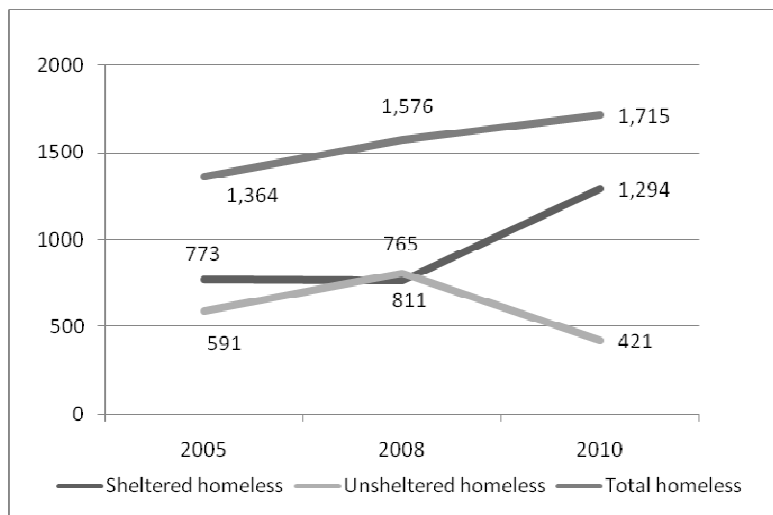
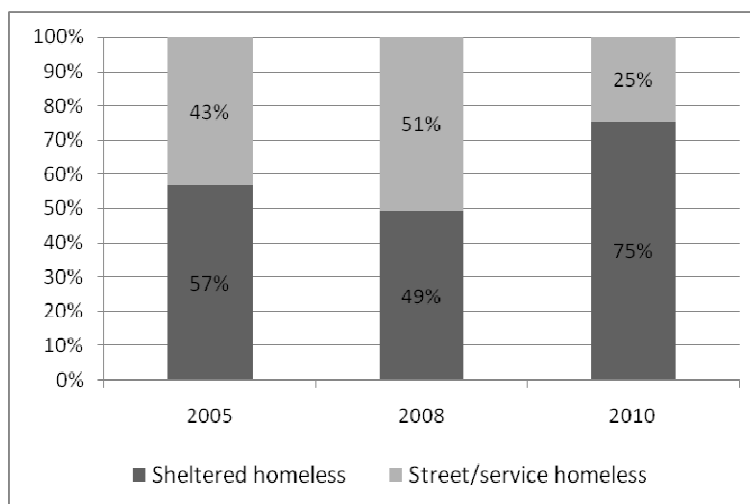


Figure 2 depicts the changing distribution of Vancouver's homeless population. Three quarters of the homeless stayed in shelters, safe houses and transition houses on count night 2010, while only half did in 2008. It appears that many formerly street homeless persons had moved inside to shelters, likely the HEAT and Winter Response shelters, which sheltered 573 individuals on count night, about 33% of the total homeless.

Figure 2- Distribution of homeless 2005-2010



One quarter (420) of the individuals counted slept rough or sofa surfed on the night of March 22/23rd. Most of the homeless were adults and youth (1,685). Few children were counted (30) and they all stayed in emergency accommodation except for one. There were no overnight placements in hotels by the Ministry of Housing and Social Development.⁵

Table 2 – Sheltered and Unsheltered Homeless in Vancouver, March 23, 2010⁶

Homeless category	Adults and youth		Children		Total homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Sheltered homeless	1,265	75%	29	97%	1,294	75%
Shelters	663	39%	16	53%	679	40%
Winter & HEAT shelters	573	34%	0	0%	573	33%
Transition houses	17	1%	13	43%	30	2%
Safe houses	12	1%	0	0%	12	<1%
Unsheltered homeless	420	25%	1	3%	421	25%
Total homeless	1,685		30		1,715	

⁵ Dave Jagpal, Acting Manager, Field Services/Integration Projects, BC Ministry of Housing and Social Development.

⁶ The figures in Tables 1 and 2 include 141 sheltered homeless individuals for whom complete records are not available, but who stayed in a shelter that night, 30 children, again for whom complete records are not available, because they are not interviewed, and 35 clients of Stanley New Fountain, which was missed in the shelter interview component.

Shelter, safe house and transition house providers were asked to report how many people were turned away the night of March 22nd, either because the shelter was full or the individual seeking shelter was not appropriate for their facility. In total they reported there were 64 turnaways. Most of the turnaways were people attempting to access a bed in year round shelters (77%). Individuals turned away are not included in the total count figures, as they may have been enumerated as unsheltered homeless in the daytime component or may have found accommodation in another shelter.

Table 3 - Turnaways, March 23, 2010

Shelter category	Total Turnaways	
	Number	Percent
Year round shelters	49	77%
Winter Response / HEAT shelters	13	20%
Transition houses	2	3%
Safe houses	0	0%
Total turnaways	64	

4 Profile of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons

The following profile presents a demographic picture of the homeless adults and youth counted in Vancouver on March 23rd, 2010. It also describes some pertinent characteristics of their homeless experience, for example, the length of time they have been homeless. Each table shows results for the sheltered and unsheltered homeless as well as for the total homeless population.

While the total number of homeless enumerated in Vancouver on count day was 1,715 persons, the demographic profile provides information on 1,544 people for whom we obtained survey data. Profile data in the following tables excludes the children (under 19 years of age) for whom separate demographic information was not collected,⁷ and 141 individuals who were enumerated on count night, for whom no corresponding demographic data is available.⁸ Table 6, which presents age data, is the only exception as it includes 30 children under 19 for whom age was collected but no other demographic information.

Table 4 - Difference between total homeless and demographic totals

Type of data	Sheltered homeless	Unsheltered homeless	Total homeless
Demographic data (Completed surveys or database records)	1,124	420	1,544
Occupied shelter bed (No survey or database record)	141	0	141
Accompanied children (No survey or database record)	29	1	30
Total homeless	1,294	421	1,715

As in past counts, there was a relatively high non-response rate to some questions, particularly among the sheltered homeless. Age and gender questions were well-answered, but other variables had higher non-response rates, ranging from 13 to 34%. For example, BC Housing does not collect information on ethnicity, reason homeless, or where do you call home, so this data is treated as missing (for those shelters where data was provided by BC Housing). Some directly reporting shelters provided very comprehensive data covering most questions, while others provided information on only one or two variables.

⁷ Interviews were not conducted with children under the age of 19 years if they were with a parent on count day. Demographic information is available for youth, and is included in the demographic profile.

⁸ This occurs for many reasons, including individuals who refused to be interviewed, or were not present when interviewing took place. Nonetheless, as the shelters provide occupancy statistics for that evening, we know that beds were used and the individuals would have reported being in a shelter the night before and thus not interviewed had they been approached during the daytime count. Included in the demographic data are clients of a 35 bed HEAT shelter, where no interviewers were assigned but limited demographic information was obtained from BC Housing.

4.1 Gender

Men represented over three quarters of the homeless population counted in Vancouver, and women less than one quarter. One transition house with a capacity of 10 persons did not participate in the count, resulting in an underestimate of the number of homeless women.⁹ The gender breakdown for the *sheltered and unsheltered homeless* is remarkably similar. Women comprise a slightly larger share of the sheltered homeless population (23%) compared to the unsheltered homeless (21%).

Table 5 - Gender¹⁰

Gender	Sheltered homeless		Unsheltered homeless		Total homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Men	863	77%	322	79%	1,155	78%
Women	253	23%	85	21%	333	22%
Total respondents	1,116		407		1,488	
Not known	8		13		21	
Total	1,124		420		1,544	

4.2 Age

Adults aged 45-54 years comprised the largest group of the homeless counted (30%) followed by those age 35-44 years (24%). Overall, adults age 25-54 years represented about three quarters of the city's homeless. There were 214 children and youth under age 25 years enumerated during the count, representing 15% of the total. Fifty-five of these young people were under age 19. Over 200 homeless people enumerated on count day were age 55 years or older and most of them were between the ages of 55 and 64 years.

Impressed by how courteous the homeless people were, even for those who refused to participate. Those that did were generous in sharing their stories.

- Interviewer

The *unsheltered homeless* were somewhat older than the *sheltered homeless*. Fifty percent of the unsheltered homeless were age 45 or older, compared to 41% of the sheltered homeless.

⁹ This transition house has never participated in the region-wide count.

¹⁰ Interviewers were instructed to record gender based on observation.

Table 6 - Age

Age groups	Sheltered homeless		Unsheltered homeless		Total homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under 19 ¹¹	48	4%	7	2%	55	4%
19-24	122	11%	37	10%	159	11%
25-34	204	19%	60	15%	264	18%
35-44	274	25%	89	23%	363	24%
45-54	308	28%	137	35%	445	30%
55-64	115	10%	48	12%	163	11%
65+	30	3%	11	3%	41	3%
Total respondents	1,101		389		1,490	
Not stated	52		32		84	
Total	1,153		421		1,574	

The median age of Vancouver's homeless population was 43 years (half are younger, half are older), four years older than Vancouver residents in general (with a median age of 39 years according to the 2006 Census).

4.3 Aboriginal identity

Table 7 shows that more than a third (36%) of Vancouver's homeless population identified as Aboriginal. Persons of Aboriginal identity are over-represented among the city's homeless population, compared with the Vancouver population (2%).¹² The incidence of Aboriginal identity is the same for both the *sheltered and unsheltered homeless*, however, the rather large non-response to this question among the sheltered homeless suggests that the results should be viewed with caution.

Table 7— Aboriginal identity

Aboriginal identity	Sheltered homeless		Unsheltered homeless		Total homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Aboriginal	308	36%	140	36%	448	36%
Not Aboriginal	559	64%	246	64%	805	64%
Total respondents	867		386		1,253	
No answer	257		34		291	
Total	1,124		420		1,544	

¹¹ Includes 30 children.

¹² Statistics Canada. Community Profile. City of Vancouver. 2006 Census.

4.4 Accompanying the homeless

The purpose of this question was to determine if homeless people are alone or accompanied by others on count day or night. It is not used to determine marital status or family status. Overall, 85% of the Vancouver homeless population who responded to this question reported that they were alone. Eight percent reported they were with a partner, and very few reported they were with children,¹³ or a pet.

The *sheltered homeless* were more likely to be alone (87%) compared to the *unsheltered homeless* (81%) or with a partner or spouse. Although most unsheltered homeless were also alone, a significant share (10%) reported being accompanied by other persons, such as friends or non-immediate family members. The comparative figure for the sheltered homeless was 3%.

Table 8 - Accompanying the homeless

Family Status (more than 1 possible)	Sheltered homeless		Unsheltered homeless		Total homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Alone	810	87%	307	81%	1,117	85%
With Partner/spouse	80	9%	28	7%	108	8%
With children ¹⁴	8	1%	1	<1%	10	1%
With pet	5	1%	8	2%	13	1%
With other	29	3%	38	10%	66	5%
Total respondents	930		379 ¹⁵		1,309	
Not stated	194		41		235	
Total	1,124		420		1,544	

4.5 Ethnicity

Table 9 below displays the ethnic identity of the *unsheltered homeless* population *only* as there was a low response rate to this question among the *sheltered homeless*. It shows that the unsheltered homeless population is primarily of European/Caucasian ethnicity, followed by Aboriginal and Canadian. Seven percent noted Francophone ethnicity and 5% identified as African Canadian.

¹³ BC Housing does not match children with adults in their database, so for data provided by BC Housing, individuals staying at shelters where children were reported were excluded from the analysis. Others staying at shelters where data was provided by BC Housing were assumed alone on count night. Responses “with partner”, “with children”, “with pet” may be underrepresented.

¹⁴ Some had two or more children.

¹⁵ Numbers exceed total because respondents could select more than one answer.

Table 9 - Ethnic identity

Ethnicity (more than 1 possible)	Unsheltered homeless	
	Number	Percent
Canadian	50	16%
European/Caucasian	152	49%
Aboriginal	93	30%
Francophone	21	7%
Asian	9	3%
African-Canadian	15	5%
Other	11	4%
Total respondents ¹⁶	310	
No answer	110	
Total	420	

4.6 Reason for being homeless

Isolating the cause of homelessness is difficult, given its complex and multi-dimensional nature. It is particularly difficult to capture a meaningful response in a count setting. Nonetheless, the count survey asked respondents for the main reasons why they did not have a place of their own. The question was open-ended; interviewers could write a brief response in their own words. It was coded by the research team using the same codes as previous counts.

As expected, survey participants cited a range of reasons. The largest share reported that their homelessness was due to lack of income (23%), followed by the cost of housing (18%) and addictions (16%). The homeless also noted lack of availability of housing (11%) and poor housing conditions/infestation (9%) as the cause of their situation. An additional 9% gave health issues as the reason they are homeless. Examples of the thirteen percent of responses categorized as “other” include: no ID, ripped off for rent, fire, no references, traumatic events, dog, racial stereotype, and don’t get along with people.

We had trouble finding people to interview. Only got to interview a couple, and had a few refusals. Overall it was a good experience.

- Interviewer

Some key differences between the *sheltered* and *unsheltered homeless* are:

- The sheltered homeless were more likely to identify addiction as a reason for their homelessness (18% of sheltered compared to 11% of the unsheltered homeless).

¹⁶ BC Housing funded shelters do not record ethnicity. The figures in this table do not include ethnicity data for shelters for which BC Housing provided data - it is treated as missing.

- The sheltered population was also more likely to point to abuse or family breakdown, possibly because they include women staying in transition houses while they flee abusive relationships.

Table 10 - Reason homeless

Reason homeless (more than 1 possible)	Sheltered homeless		Unsheltered homeless		Total homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Lack of / low income	180	24%	79	22%	259	23%
Cost of housing	140	19%	65	18%	205	18%
Addiction	136	18%	40	11%	176	16%
Availability of housing	75	10%	49	14%	124	11%
Poor condition/infested housing	63	8%	40	11%	103	9%
Health	76	10%	21	6%	97	9%
Abuse, Family Breakdown, Conflict	53	7%	19	5%	72	6%
Don't want a home	33	4%	38	11%	71	6%
Evicted	50	7%	16	4%	66	6%
Moving/ Stranded	32	4%	5	1%	37	3%
No income assistance	4	1%	11	3%	15	1%
Other	126	17%	54	15%	180	16%
Total respondents	755		359		1,114	
No answer ¹⁷	369		61		430	
Total	1,124		420		1,544	

¹⁷ BC Housing funded shelters track barriers to housing rather than reasons homeless. The figures in this table do not include reasons homeless data for shelters for which BC Housing provided data - it is treated as missing.

4.7 Length of time homeless

Almost 600 people or almost one half (45%) of those who responded to this question had been homeless for a year or more.¹⁸ Only 13% of the homeless people who responded to this question had been without a home for less than a month. The *sheltered homeless* tended to be homeless for a shorter period than the *unsheltered homeless*. Almost one fifth (17%) of the sheltered homeless were newly homeless (less than one month) compared to only 6% of the unsheltered homeless. Similarly, 39% of the sheltered homeless reported homelessness of one year or more, compared to 59% of the unsheltered homeless.

Table 11 – Length of time homeless

Length of time homeless	Sheltered homeless		Unsheltered homeless		Total homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under 1 month	154	17%	23	6%	177	13%
1 month to under 6 months	288	31%	83	21%	371	28%
6 months to under 1 year	122	13%	51	13%	173	13%
1 year or more	365	39%	230	59%	595	45%
Total respondents	929		387		1,316	
Not stated	195		33		228	
Total	1,124		420		1,544	

4.8 Length of time in Vancouver

Vancouver's homeless are long-term residents of the city. Almost half had lived in the city for more than 10 years, while 24% had lived in Vancouver for less than a year. The *unsheltered homeless* population appears to be more settled than the *sheltered homeless* population. The former were more likely to have lived in Vancouver for five years or more (75%) compared to the sheltered homeless (49%). Almost one third of the sheltered homeless had lived in Vancouver for less than one year (compared to 11% for the unsheltered homeless).

¹⁸ Note that the long-term homeless tend to be over-represented in point in time counts because they are more likely to be enumerated on any given day. Martha Burt. "Demographics and Geography: Estimating Needs." P. 1-6. In Linda B. Fosburg and Deborah Dennis (eds.) *Practical Lessons: 1998 National Symposium on Homeless Research*. Period data shows that the vast majority of homeless people using shelters are first-time or short-term clients.

Table 12 - Length of time in Vancouver¹⁹

Length of time here	Sheltered homeless		Unsheltered homeless		Total homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Less than 1 year	237	30%	40	11%	277	24%
1 year to under 5 years	166	21%	54	14%	220	19%
5 years to under 10 years	67	8%	65	17%	132	11%
10 years or more	326	41%	217	58%	543	46%
Total respondents	796		376		1,172	
Not stated	328		44		372	
Total	1,124		420		1,544	

4.9 Where do you call home?

Table 13 shows where the homeless individuals enumerated in the count “call home”. This question was meant to shed some light on where people consider their home, which might be related to where they were born or where they last had a permanent home. Over half (57%) said the City of Vancouver and another 5% said elsewhere in Metro Vancouver. Eleven percent indicated a location outside of Metro in the rest of BC, and 23% reported that they considered their home elsewhere in Canada.

There was a small difference between the two homeless populations in that 61% of the *unsheltered homeless* called Vancouver home compared to 55% of the *sheltered homeless*.

Table 13– Where do you call home

Call Home	Sheltered homeless		Unsheltered homeless		Total homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
City of Vancouver	361	55%	232	61%	593	57%
Other Metro Vancouver	44	7%	11	3%	55	5%
Rest of BC	76	12%	38	10%	114	11%
Elsewhere in Canada	150	23%	88	23%	238	23%
Outside Canada	21	3%	12	3%	33	3%
Total Respondents	652		381		1,033	
Not stated / not known ²⁰	472		39		511	
Total	1,124		420		1,544	

¹⁹ Some shelters reported data for 3 + yrs which is inconsistent with the count survey. In this table, those records are treated as missing. This has the effect of potentially over-representing the share who spent a longer time in community.

²⁰ BC Housing funded shelters do not track where clients call home. The shelter figures in this table do not include data for shelters for which BC Housing provided data - it is treated as missing.

4.10 Sources of income

Respondents were asked to identify their sources of income, with more than one being possible. Income assistance was the most frequent response (47%), followed by disability benefit (21%). Other common income sources were employment, binning and bottle collecting and “other”. Examples of other income sources include sex work, selling drugs, Workers Compensation, busking, theft, selling things and window cleaning. Ten percent of Vancouver’s homeless population reported no income at all.

- The *sheltered homeless* were somewhat more likely to report income assistance (48%) compared to the *unsheltered homeless* (45%) and disability benefits (22% versus 18%).
- Employment (full, part time and casual) was a source of income for 119 people or 13% of the *sheltered homeless* enumerated, compared to only 8% of the *unsheltered homeless*.
- Conversely, binning and bottle collecting (22%) and panhandling (13%) were more likely to be reported by the unsheltered homeless population than the sheltered population (5% and 3% respectively).

Table 14–Sources of Income

Sources of income (more than 1 possible)	Sheltered homeless		Unsheltered homeless		Total homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Government transfers						
Income assistance or training program	452	48%	180	45%	632	47%
Disability benefit	213	22%	73	18%	286	21%
Employment Insurance	29	3%	6	2%	35	3%
OAS/GIS/CPP	44	5%	4	1%	48	4%
Other sources						
No income	110	12%	20	5%	130	10%
Employment	119	13%	32	8%	151	11%
Binning, bottle collecting ²¹	50	5%	88	22%	138	10%
Panhandling	28	3%	53	13%	81	6%
Financial support from family	19	2%	9	2%	28	2%
Other	93	10%	77	19%	170	13%
Total Respondents	948		396		1,344	
Not stated	176		24		200	
Total	1,124		420		1,544	

²¹ Binning/bottle collection, panhandling, and financial support from family may be under represented in the shelter population because individuals at BC Housing’s funded shelters and for which data was provided by BC Housing are not asked about these sources of income, although they can specify under “other”.

4.11 Health conditions

The Vancouver Homeless Count 2010 survey asked about people's health, specifically whether they had a medical condition or illness, physical disability, addiction, and/or mental illness. Medical condition refers to chronic problems like asthma and diabetes, and physical disability refers to an impairment affecting mobility or movement. The numbers presented in Tables 15 and 16 include both self-reported health conditions, as well as the health conditions identified by interviewers.²² In these cases, the interviewer's perception was coded for the homeless individual. While perceived health conditions need to be treated with some caution, their inclusion may counterbalance the potential for under-reporting of some health conditions such as addiction and mental illness.

More than three quarters of the homeless had one or more health conditions. Table 15 shows that 32% of the homeless population had one health condition and 47% had two or more health conditions so that 79% of those counted had one or more health conditions. Only 21% were reported to have no health conditions.

The *unsheltered homeless* had more health conditions than the *sheltered homeless*. As many as 84% of the unsheltered homeless had one or more health conditions and they were less likely to have no health concerns (16%).

Table 15– Incidence of health conditions

Health condition	Sheltered homeless		Unsheltered homeless		Total homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
No health conditions	213	23%	64	16%	277	21%
One health condition	287	31%	128	33%	415	32%
Two or more conditions	422	46%	200	51%	622	47%
Total respondents	922		392		1,314	
Not stated	202		28		230	
Total	1,124		420		1,544	

Addiction was the most common health issue. Over half or 55% of the homeless people interviewed had an addiction. The next most common health problem was a medical condition or illness (38%).

The incidence of specific health conditions was more pronounced among the *unsheltered homeless*, where 58% had an addiction and 43% a medical condition. The exception was mental illness. About one third of both populations either self identified or were perceived to have a mental illness.

²² Perceived conditions account for a small share of total positive answers, mostly among unsheltered homeless.

Table 16– Type of health conditions

Health condition (more than 1 possible)	Sheltered homeless		Unsheltered homeless		Total homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Medical condition	333	36%	170	43%	503	38%
Physical disability	247	27%	121	31%	368	28%
Addiction	492	53%	229	58%	721	55%
Mental illness	334	36%	137	35%	471	36%
Total respondents	922		392		1,314	
Not stated	202		28		230	
Total	1,124		420		1,544	

4.12 Health services used

Table 17 shows that clinics were the health service used most frequently and they were used by 46% of the respondents. This was followed by a hospital emergency department (39%). Over one quarter (27%) of respondents had visited the hospital as an inpatient or outpatient. Addictions services were used by about one quarter of the respondents. Many homeless people reported using no health services at all (200 or 20%).

The *sheltered homeless* were more likely to report using each of the health services listed, including a health clinic (50%), addictions service, dental care, ambulance and mental health. Relatively more *unsheltered homeless* reported using no health services at all (27% compared to 16%).

Table 17 - Health services used in the past year

Health service (more than 1 possible)	Sheltered homeless		Unsheltered homeless		Total homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Health clinic	321	50%	147	40%	468	46%
Emergency department	260	40%	139	37%	399	39%
Hospital (non-emergency)	180	28%	94	25%	274	27%
Ambulance	159	25%	65	17%	224	22%
Addiction services	168	26%	70	19%	238	23%
Dental clinic or dentist	135	21%	48	13%	183	18%
Mental health services	138	21%	43	12%	181	18%
Other services	53	8%	26	7%	79	8%
None	102	16%	100	27%	202	20%
Total respondents	647		372		1,019	
Not stated	477		48		525	
Total	1,124		420		1,544	

4.13 The unsheltered homeless

4.13.1 Where they stayed last night

One of the screening questions asked where the individual stayed the previous night. Of the 420 respondents who qualified as unsheltered homeless in Vancouver, the largest share (64% or 263 individuals) reported staying outside. Another 5% reported staying in cars, garages, public buildings, vehicles and other places that are not considered fit for human habitation. In total, 69% are considered to have slept rough. One quarter of the unsheltered homeless (just over 100 people) stayed temporarily at someone else's place (where they did not pay rent and had no security of tenure). Other places reported included recovery houses, detox facilities, jail, hospital or a hostel. Some people did not sleep the night of the count, but just wandered around or worked (prostitution or binning).

"Many comments about not wanting to be in the eastside in order to avoid people with drug addictions. It was very fulfilling to help out. Also didn't see as many people as expected."

- Interviewer

Table 18 - Where the unsheltered homeless stayed

Location	Number	Percent
Outside	263	64%
Someone else's place	101	25%
Car/garage/public building/camper/truck/shed	21	5%
Other	24	6%
Total respondents	409	
No answer ²³	11	
Total	420	

4.13.2 Reasons for not staying in a shelter

Some unsheltered homeless did not stay in a shelter because they dislike them (37%). Fourteen percent said were able to stay with a friend for the evening and therefore did not need to stay in a shelter. However, 34 individuals noted that they did try to stay in a shelter, but were turned away either because it was full or because they were considered inappropriate for the shelter.²⁴ Shelter facilities reported 64 turnaways on count night.

²³ 11 surveys were included despite not responding to the third screening question because they said they didn't pay rent in question 2 and they responded to the question about why they did not stay in a shelter the night before.

²⁴ An individual is considered 'inappropriate' for a shelter for example, if they are too young to stay in an adult shelter, or there were no beds available for their gender. Someone can also be considered inappropriate if they are intoxicated.

“Other reasons” was selected by 35% of street homeless. Reasons provided included: they stayed elsewhere, such as jail, hospital, or recovery house; and others had a sheltered place to stay outside, such as a camper, car, van or parking garage. However, many of the reasons mirror those provided for “dislike” such as “noisy”, “things get stolen”, and “smells.”

Table 19 – Why unsheltered homeless did not use a shelter

Reason (select only one)	Number	Percent
Dislike shelters	131	37%
Able to stay with friend	49	14%
Turned away – full	29	8%
Couldn’t get there	10	3%
Didn’t know about	6	2%
Turned away - inappropriate	5	1%
Other	123	35%
Total respondents	353	
No answer	67	
Total	420	

4.13.3 Previous use of shelter

Table 20 shows that over half (56%) of the unsheltered homeless had stayed in a shelter at some point in the preceding year.

Table 20 – Unsheltered homeless stayed in shelter in past 12 months

Shelter past year	Number	Percent
Yes	220	56%
No	176	44%
Total respondents	396	
No answer	24	
Total	420	

4.14 The sheltered homeless - length of time in shelter

This was a new question. Many sheltered homeless had stayed at their present shelter for more than one month (43%). Although there is no comparative data from previous years, clients are likely staying in shelter longer because maximum stays are no longer used. In the past, a 30 day maximum in place. It was the first night in a shelter for 76 people or only 7% of shelter respondents. Of those who stayed longer than one month, the median length of stay was three months, roughly the period the Winter Response shelters had been open.

Table 21 – Sheltered homeless length of time at this shelter

Time at this shelter	Number	Percent
1 night	76	7%
Up to 1 week	188	18%
Up to 1 month	314	31%
Longer than 1 month	441	43%
Total respondents	1,019	
No answer	105	
Total	1,124	

5 Homeless trends 2005 - 2010

This section reports on the demographic and other trends of homeless individuals in Vancouver as enumerated in the 2005 and 2008 Metro Vancouver counts and the Vancouver Homeless Count 2010.²⁵ Where questions are comparable, data from all three surveys is displayed.

5.1 Gender

Men continue to comprise the majority of homeless persons counted. While the share of men and women was similar in 2005 and 2008 (73-72%), in 2010 the number and share of men counted increased by 207 persons to 78% of the total homeless. Fewer homeless women were counted in 2010 (333) than in 2008 (348).

Table 22 – Gender trends

Gender	Total homeless 2005		Total homeless 2008		Total homeless 2010	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Men	928	73%	948	72%	1,155	78%
Women	330	26%	348	27%	333	22%
Transgendered	8	1%	15	1%	n/a	n/a
Total respondents	1,266	100%	1,311	100%	1,488	
Not known ²⁶	25		61		21	
Total	1,291		1,372		1,544	

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5.2 Age

Vancouver's homeless population is aging. In terms of absolute numbers, the biggest increase was in the 45-55 year age group, followed by those age 55-64 years. In 2005, 45-54 year olds accounted for 21% of the total homeless population and today they account for 30%. Seniors age 55 and over now represent 14% of the total homeless population compared to 8% in 2008.

The number and proportion of children and youth among the homeless has remained relatively constant over the past five years, approximately 12 to 14% of total. As usual, the count may have been less successful in finding youth who tend to sofa surf and avoid services, thus remaining hidden.

²⁵ SPARC. 2005. *On our streets and in our shelters: Results of the 2005 Greater Vancouver Homeless Count* and RSCH. 2008. *Still on our streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count*.

²⁶ Interviewers were instructed to record gender based on observation. "Not known" was used in cases where they could not determine gender, either because of clothing or for other reasons.

Table 23 – Age groups trends

Age groups	Total homeless 2005		Total homeless 2008		Total homeless 2010	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under 19 ²⁷	30	2%	19	2%	25	2%
19-24	149	12%	135	10%	159	11%
25-34	273	22%	258	20%	264	18%
35-44	402	33%	425	32%	363	25%
45-54	260	21%	361	28%	445	30%
55-64	98	8%	95	7%	163	11%
65+	23	2%	19	1%	41	3%
Total respondents	1,235	100%	1,312	100%	1,460	
Not stated	56		60		84	
Total	1,291		1,372		1,544	

5.3 Aboriginal identity

Table 24 shows the results from the Aboriginal identity question for 2005, 2008 and 2010. The share of homeless people with Aboriginal identity has remained relatively constant since 2005, in the range of 35 to 38%.

Table 24 - Aboriginal Identity trends

Aboriginal ID	Total homeless 2005		Total homeless 2008		Total homeless 2010	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Aboriginal	352	35%	456	38%	448	36%
Not aboriginal	658	65%	749	62%	805	64%
Total respondents	1,010	100%	1,205	100%	1,253	
Not stated	281		167		291	
Total	1,291		1,372		1,544	

²⁷ Does not include 30 children so that the data in the table is comparable to previous counts. Includes unaccompanied youth under 19 years old.

5.4 Accompanying the homeless

The share of homeless people on their own in 2010 is roughly the same as in 2005, but up since 2008. The data in this table should be treated with caution as BC Housing doesn't ask specifically whether clients are with a partner, child(ren) or a pet and thus these categories may be under-reported.

Table 25 – Accompanying the homeless trends

Accompanying the homeless (more than 1 possible)	Total homeless 2005		Total homeless 2008		Total homeless 2010	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Alone	958	86%	973	79%	1,117	85%
With Partner/spouse	91	8%	111	9%	108	8%
With Children ²⁸	22	2%	25	2%	10	1%
With pet	27	2%	30	2%	13	1%
With other	30	3%	119	10%	66	5%
Total respondents	1,118		1,227		1,309	
Not stated	173		145		235	
Total	1,291		1,372		1,544	

5.5 Length of time homeless

The 2010 count results for length of time homeless show a modest decrease in the share reporting a homeless period of one year or more from 49% to 45% between 2008 and 2010. Between 2005 and 2008 the share of those who were homeless for one year or more rose significantly from 36% to 49%.

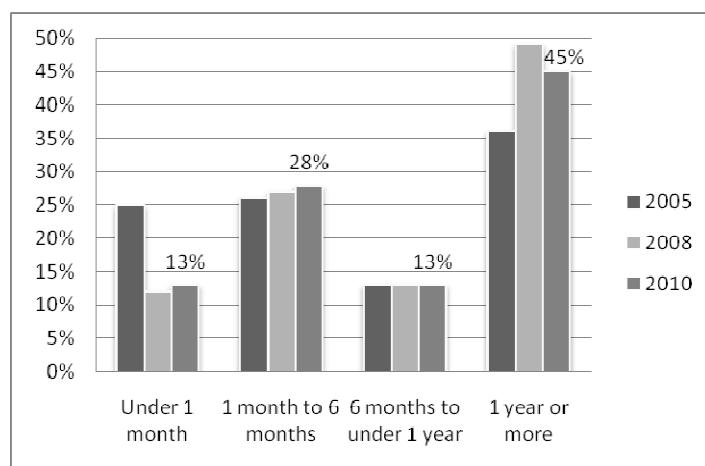
²⁸ Some adults were with two or more children.

Table 26 – Length of time homeless trends

Length of time homeless	Total homeless 2005		Total homeless 2008		Total homeless 2010	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under 1 month	253	25%	145	12%	177	13%
1 month to 6 months	271	26%	319	27%	371	28%
6 months to under 1 year	134	13%	152	13%	173	13%
1 year or more	376	36%	585	49%	595	45%
Total respondents	1,034	100%	1,201		1,316	
Not stated	257		171		228	
Total	1,291		1,372		1,544	

Figure 3 displays this graphically.

Figure 3 - Length of time homeless trends



5.6 Income

Table 27 displays the results for income sources for the 2008 and 2010 counts. There have been some changes since 2008. More people reported income assistance as a source in 2010 (47%) up from 43% in 2008. The portion reporting disability benefit was about the same. Fewer people reported income from employment, either full or part time or casual, and the number of Employment Insurance recipients almost tripled, although the number of people affected is still small. The number and share reporting income from OAS/GIS/CPP also increased, which may be related to the aging of the homeless population.

The table shows two other trends which may be less reliable, namely a drop in income from binning and bottle collecting, and panhandling, as well as “other” income sources (including illegal activities).²⁹

Table 27 - Income source trends

Sources of income (more than 1 possible)	Total homeless 2008		Total homeless 2010	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Government transfers				
Income assistance or training program	533	43%	632	47%
Disability benefit	258	21%	286	21%
Employment Insurance	13	1%	35	3%
OAS/GIS/CPP	21	2%	48	4%
Other sources				
No income	83	7%	130	10%
Employment	242	19%	151	11%
Binning, bottle collecting	212	17%	138	10%
Panhandling	163	13%	81	6%
Financial support from family	23	2%	28	2%
Other	213	17%	170	13%
Total Respondents	1,242		1,344	
Not stated	130		200	
Total	1,372		1,544	

5.7 Health

The 2010 count results show that Vancouver’s homeless are in poorer health today than they were in 2005 or 2008. This trend is consistent with an aging homeless population. Over 1,000 homeless people (80% of total) reported one or more health conditions in 2010, up from 74% in 2005. Similarly, the incidence of no reported or perceived health conditions dropped to 21% in 2010 from 29% in 2008.

²⁹ BC Housing does not offer these as selections for income source in its database although the client may specify.

Table 28 – Incidence of health conditions trends

Health condition	Total homeless 2005		Total homeless 2008		Total homeless 2010	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
No health conditions	263	26%	369	29%	277	21%
One health condition	396	39%	329	26%	415	32%
2 or more health conditions	349	35%	556	44%	622	47%
Total respondents ³⁰	1,008	100%	1,254	100%	1,314	
Not stated	283		118		230	
Total	1,291		1,372		1,544	

Table 29 reports on trends in specific types of health conditions. It shows that the incidence of reported and suspected mental illness has risen significantly since 2008, from 28% of total homeless to 36%. The reasons for this are not known, but could be related to experienced interviewers who reported 105 suspected instances of mental illness in 2010, and/or improved diagnosis with the increased outreach and access to mental health professionals in the shelters. The incidence of addictions also appears to be on the rise, while the incidence of physical disability or medical conditions has remained at close to 2008 levels.

Table 29 – Type of health conditions trends

Health condition (more than 1 possible)	Total homeless 2008		Total homeless 2010	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Addiction	643	51%	721	55%
Physical disability	324	26%	368	28%
Medical condition	495	39%	503	38%
Mental illness	354	28%	471	36%
Total respondents	1,254		1,314	
Not stated	118		230	
Total	1,372		1,544	

³⁰ Represents the number who reported on health conditions. Many respondents reported more than one health condition.

5.8 Reasons for homelessness

Lack of income or low income remains the top reason stated by respondents, followed by the cost of housing, and addictions. Fewer respondents, both in terms of absolute number and proportion, reported poor quality or bug infested housing. While 14% of respondents in 2008 said this was a reason for being homeless, only 9% said so in 2010.

Table 30 - Reason homeless trends

Reason homeless (more than 1 possible)	Total homeless 2008		Total homeless 2010	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Lack of/low income	262	22%	259	23%
Cost of housing	215	18%	205	18%
Addictions	190	16%	176	16%
Availability of housing	105	9%	124	11%
Poor condition/infested housing	161	14%	103	9%
Health	79	7%	97	9%
Abuse, Family Breakdown, Conflict	112	10%	72	6%
Don't want a home	58	5%	71	6%
Evicted	65	6%	66	6%
Moving/ Stranded	30	3%	37	3%
No income assistance	56	5%	15	1%
Other ³¹	220	19%	180	16%
Total respondents	1,178		1,114	
No answer ³²	194		430	
Total	1,372		1,544	

5.9 Where the unsheltered homeless stayed

As in 2005 and 2008, most of the street homeless on March 23, 2010 stayed outside or in a car/garage or public place (almost 70%). However proportionately more reported staying at someone else's place (25%) and fewer reported staying at "other" places (6%) compared to other years. Examples of other locations reported include jails, hospitals, hostels, walking, working, recovery or detox.

³¹ The reason "from jail" was merged with other to allow for comparisons to 2008, when these two categories were collapsed.

³² BC Housing funded shelters do not collect reasons for homelessness. Instead the BC Housing funded shelters collect data about barriers to accessing housing. Shelter clients reported by BC Housing are treated as not stated in the trend table.

Table 31 – Where unsheltered homeless stayed trends

Location	Total homeless 2005		Total homeless 2008		Total homeless 2010	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Outside	381	64%	512	67%	263	64%
Someone else's place	111	19%	129	17%	101	25%
Car/garage/public building	30	5%	36	5%	21	5%
Other	69	12%	90	12%	24	6%
Total Respondents	591	100%	767	100	409	100

5.10 Where the homeless call home

Table 32 shows that there was no change in where the homeless called home in 2010 compared to 2008. Most homeless people in Vancouver continue to view Vancouver as their home (57%).

Table 32 - 2008 and 2010 adult homeless population by where call home

Homeless population by where call home	Total homeless 2008		Total homeless 2010	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
City of Vancouver	694	59%	593	57%
Other Metro Vancouver	65	5%	55	5%
Rest of BC	103	9%	114	11%
Elsewhere in Canada	279	24%	238	23%
Outside Canada	41	3%	33	3%
Total respondents	1,182		1,033	
No answer ³³	190		511	
Total	1,372		1,544	

5.11 Health service use

This is the first time trends in health service use can be examined, as it was a new question in the 2008 count. In 2010, proportionally fewer homeless people reported using virtually all types of health services than in 2008. The only exception is use of mental health services, which increased slightly between 2008 and 2010 from 14% of respondents to 18% of

³³ BC Housing does not collect data on where homeless view their home so respondents reported through the BC Housing database are treated as not stated in the table.

respondents. This would be consistent with the increased incidence of mental illness among the homeless reported in Table 29.

Table 33 - Health services used

Health service (more than 1 possible)	Total homeless 2008		Total homeless 2010	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Health clinic	659	55%	468	46%
Emergency department	512	43%	399	39%
Hospital (non-emergency)	392	33%	274	27%
Ambulance	325	27%	224	22%
Addiction services	305	26%	238	23%
Dental clinic or dentist	225	19%	183	18%
Mental health services	172	14%	181	18%
Other services	120	10%	79	8%
None	217	18%	202	20%
Total respondents	1,196		1,019	
Not stated	176		525	
Total	1,372		1,544	

6 Sub-populations

This section provides a profile of the different populations within the homeless population: HEAT and Winter Response shelter clients, women, Aboriginal people, youth, seniors (persons aged 55+) and the long-term homeless (homeless one year or longer). These sub-populations are not mutually exclusive, since a person could be a member of two or more groups, for example, an Aboriginal senior.

6.1 Profile of HEAT/Winter Response Clients

Clients of two different groups of shelters operating in Vancouver at count time: low barrier shelters operated on a temporary basis beginning in 2009 and 2010, called HEAT and Winter Response shelters, and year round shelters are profiled in the following tables.³⁴ The unsheltered homeless are included for comparison. This information has been included in this report to obtain a better understanding of the significant population using the HEAT and Winter Response shelters. The operators of the HEAT and Winter Response shelters have been successful in bringing entrenched homeless individuals inside. The unique low-barrier approach of the shelters, including allowing people to bring their pets and belongings inside and providing two nutritious meals per day, has also contributed to their success.

On March 23, 2010, 573 people stayed in HEAT and Winter Response shelters, but only 483 completed interviews providing demographic information, so the following tables are based on 483 clients.

Table 34 shows that HEAT and Winter Response shelter clients were more likely to be male than year round shelter clients. Year round shelters accommodated a greater proportion of homeless women than HEAT/Winter shelters. There were more women proportionally among the unsheltered homeless than in the HEAT/Winter shelters.

Table 34 - Gender

Gender	HEAT/Winter		Year round shelters		Unsheltered homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Men	413	86%	449	71%	322	79%
Women	68	14%	185	29%	85	21%
Total respondents	481		634		407	
Not known	2		6		13	
Total ³⁵	483		640		420	

³⁴ In some tables year round data is unavailable due to poor response rates.

³⁵ One individual is missing from the HEAT/Winter and other shelter comparison, as it is unknown which type of shelter this person stayed in on count night. The total in this analysis is one less than the shelter total in other tables.

HEAT/Winter Response shelter clients tended to be middle aged. Fewer young and older homeless persons stayed at these shelters on count night (and likely on other nights given that a significant share tend to stay in these shelters for more than a month - see Table 46). The share of women among the unsheltered homeless was somewhere in between.

Table 35 – Age

Age groups	HEAT/Winter		Year round shelters		Unsheltered homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under 19 ³⁶	0	0%	19	3%	6	2%
19-24	38	9%	84	13%	37	10%
25-34	88	20%	115	18%	60	15%
35-44	113	26%	161	26%	89	23%
45-54	150	34%	158	25%	137	35%
55-64	41	9%	74	12%	48	12%
65+	11	2%	19	3%	11	3%
Total respondents	441		630		388	
Not stated	42		10		32	
Total	483		640		420	

HEAT/Winter Response shelter clients were more likely to be of Aboriginal identity (39%) compared to year round shelter clients (32%). Again Aboriginal identity was 36% among the unsheltered homeless, lower than for HEAT/Winter response clients, but higher than in year round shelters.

Table 36 -Aboriginal identity

Aboriginal identity	HEAT/Winter		Year round shelters		Unsheltered homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Aboriginal	171	39%	137	32%	140	36%
Not aboriginal	264	61%	294	68%	246	64%
Total respondents	435		431		386	
No answer	48		209		34	
Total	483		640		420	

³⁶ Children are not included in this table.

HEAT/Winter Response shelter clients were more likely to be with a partner or spouse (15%) compared to year round shelter clients (3%). They were also more likely to be with another person such as a friend or brother (5%). The unsheltered homeless were like HEAT/Winter response clients in that they were less likely to be alone (81%). However, they were more likely to be with another person (10%) than the other two populations.

Table 37 – Accompanying the homeless

Family Status (more than 1 possible)	HEAT/Winter		Year round shelters		Unsheltered homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Alone	354	80%	455	94%	307	81%
With Partner/spouse	67	15%	13	3%	28	7%
With children	0	0%	8	2%	1	<1%
With pet	2	<1%	3	1%	8	2%
With other	23	5%	6	1%	38	10%
Total respondents	444		485		379 ³⁷	
Not stated	39		155		41	
Total	483		640		420	

The ethnic identity of HEAT/Winter response clients is shown in Table 38 and compared with the unsheltered homeless. HEAT/Winter response clients are more likely to have identified as Aboriginal and Francophone compared to the unsheltered homeless.

Table 38 – Ethnic or cultural group

Ethnicity (more than 1 possible)	HEAT/Winter		Unsheltered homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Canadian	44	11%	50	16%
European/Caucasian	169	42%	152	49%
Aboriginal	132	33%	93	30%
Francophone	48	12%	21	7%
Asian	16	4%	9	3%
African-Canadian	20	5%	15	5%
Other	20	5%	11	4%
Total respondents	399		310	
No answer	84		110	
Total	483		420	

³⁷ Numbers exceed total because respondents could select more than one answer.

The primary reasons homeless reported by HEAT/Winter clients were cost of housing, low income and addictions. In contrast, the unsheltered homeless were much more likely to cite abuse/family breakdown or conflict as a reason homeless, and less likely to cite addiction or eviction.

Table 39 – Reason homeless

Reason homeless (more than 1 possible)	HEAT/Winter Response clients		Unsheltered homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Lack of / low income	89	21%	79	22%
Cost of housing	96	22%	65	18%
Addiction	73	17%	40	11%
Abuse, Family Breakdown, Conflict	24	6%	49	14%
Poor condition/infested housing	54	13%	40	11%
Health	24	6%	21	6%
Availability of housing	58	13%	19	5%
Evicted	17	4%	38	11%
Don't want a home	27	6%	16	4%
From jail	17	4%	5	1%
Moving/ Stranded	2	<1%	11	3%
Other	51	12%	54	15%
Total respondents	430		359	
No answer	53		61	
Total	483		420	

Over half of HEAT/Winter shelter clients had been homeless for one year or more compared to 29% in the year round shelters. In this respect, the HEAT/Winter shelter clients are similar to the unsheltered homeless. Few people in both populations had been homeless for less than one month (6%) in contrast to year round shelter clients (26%).

Table 40 – Length of time homeless

Length of time homeless	HEAT/Winter		Year round shelters		Unsheltered homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under 1 month	27	6%	127	26%	23	6%
1 month to under 6 months	120	27%	167	34%	83	21%
6 months to under 1 year	67	15%	55	11%	51	13%
1 year or more	224	51%	141	29%	230	59%
Total respondents	438		490		387	
Not stated	45		150		33	
Total	483		640		420	

Proportionally more HEAT/Winter Response shelter clients had lived in Vancouver for three or more years than year round shelter clients. Almost 70% of HEAT/Winter shelter clients had lived in Vancouver for three or more years. The unsheltered homeless had lived in Vancouver the longest. Over 80% of the unsheltered homeless had lived in Vancouver for three or more years.

Table 41 - Length of time in Vancouver

Length of time here	HEAT/Winter		Year round shelters		Unsheltered homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Less than 1 year	82	19%	156	33%	40	11%
1 to under 3 years	53	12%	67	14%	24	6%
3+ years	305	69%	255	53%	312	83%
Total respondents	440		478		376	
Not stated	43		162		44	
Total	483		640		420	

Over half of HEAT/Winter shelter clients called Vancouver home but they were more likely to identify a home elsewhere in BC or Canada compared to the unsheltered homeless. No comparison with year round shelters is possible.

Table 42 – Where do you call home

Call Home	HEAT/Winter		Unsheltered homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
City of Vancouver	222	52%	232	61%
Other Metro Vancouver	19	4%	11	3%
Rest of BC	60	14%	38	10%
Elsewhere in Canada	117	27%	88	23%
Outside Canada	13	3%	12	3%
Total Respondents	431		381	
Not stated / not known	52		39	
Total	483		420	

HEAT/Winter shelter clients were more likely to identify Income Assistance as a source of income, and less likely to report Disability Benefit or Old Age Security/Guaranteed Income Supplement/Canada Pension Plan. The latter is consistent with a middle aged population. Employment income was also not as prevalent among HEAT/Winter shelter clients at 10% compared to 15% for year round shelter clients. Binning, panhandling and other income sources were more common among the unsheltered homeless and HEAT/Winter shelter clients (although this could be under-reported in year round shelters).

Table 43 –Sources of Income

Sources of income (more than 1 possible)	HEAT/Winter		Year round shelters		Unsheltered homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Government transfers						
Income assistance or training program	248	56%	204	41%	180	45%
Disability benefit	90	20%	123	24%	73	18%
Employment Insurance	16	4%	13	3%	6	2%
OAS/GIS/CPP	12	3%	32	6%	4	1%
Other sources						
No income	33	7%	76	15%	20	5%
Employment	44	10%	75	15%	32	8%
Binning, bottle collecting	37	8%	13	3%	88	22%
Panhandling	23	5%	5	1%	53	13%
Financial support from family	12	3%	7	1%	9	2%
Other	72	16%	21	4%	77	19%
Total Respondents	443		504		396	
Not stated	40		136		24	
Total	483		640		420	

HEAT/Winter shelter clients and the unsheltered homeless were in poorer health than clients of year round shelters according to Table 44. Only 16% had no health conditions, compared to almost 30% of year round shelter clients. The health profile of HEAT/Winter shelter clients is similar to the unsheltered homeless.

Table 44 – Incidence of health conditions

Health condition	HEAT/Winter		Year round shelters		Unsheltered homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
No health conditions	73	16%	139	29%	64	16%
One health condition	142	32%	145	30%	128	33%
Two or more conditions	229	52%	193	41%	200	51%
Total respondents	444		477		392	
Not stated	39		163		28	
Total	483		640		420	

HEAT/Winter Response clients and the unsheltered homeless had a higher incidence of every type of health condition than the year round shelter clients, except mental health. HEAT/Winter Response clients had double the incidence of physical disability (36%) compared to year round shelter clients (18%) and a higher rate of addiction. Again, it is clear that the health issues of HEAT/Winter Response shelter clients are similar to those of the unsheltered homeless population.

Table 45 – Type of health conditions³⁸

Health condition (more than 1 possible)	HEAT/Winter		Year round shelters		Unsheltered homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Medical condition	181	41%	152	32%	170	43%
Physical disability	159	36%	88	18%	121	31%
Addiction	272	61%	220	46%	229	58%
Mental illness	148	33%	186	39%	137	35%
Total respondents	444		477		392	
Not stated	39		163		28	
Total	483		640		420	

Health service use among HEAT/Winter Response shelter clients is similar to that reported for all homeless persons. This population appears to be accessing more health services than the unsheltered homeless.

³⁸ Health conditions include self-reported and perceived figures.

Table 46 - Health services used in the past year

Health service (more than 1 possible)	HEAT/Winter		Unsheltered homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Health clinic	202	48%	147	40%
Emergency department	164	39%	139	37%
Hospital (non-emergency)	122	29%	94	25%
Addiction services	113	27%	65	17%
Ambulance	107	25%	70	19%
Dental clinic or dentist	85	20%	48	13%
Mental health services	65	15%	43	12%
Other services	40	10%	26	7%
None	73	17%	100	27%
Total respondents	421		372	
Not stated	62		48	
Total	483		420	

The majority of HEAT/Winter Response shelter clients (64%) had stayed for longer than one month at the shelter where they were found. The comparable figure for year round shelter clients was only 28%. One third of year round shelter clients had stayed for less than a week, compared to only 17% of HEAT/Winter shelter clients.

Table 47 – Length of time at this shelter

Shelter past year	HEAT/Winter		Year round shelters		Sheltered homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1 night	17	4%	59	10%	76	7%
Up to 1 week	55	13%	133	23%	188	18%
Up to 1 month	85	20%	228	39%	314	31%
Longer than 1 month	278	64%	163	28%	441	43%
Total respondents	435		583		1,019	
No answer	48		57		105	
Total	483		640		1,124	

In summary, compared with year round shelter clients, individuals counted in the HEAT/Winter Response shelters were more likely to have been:

- Male
- Middle-aged
- Aboriginal and Francophone
- Staying with a partner
- Homeless for more than one year
- Living in Vancouver for more than three years
- On income assistance
- Concerned/diagnosed with a health condition, except mental illness

Individuals counted in the HEAT/Winter response shelters were less likely than those counted in year round shelters to have been homeless for less than a month or employed.

6.2 Women

Table 48 displays the figures for the women, Aboriginal and youth sub-populations. In Vancouver 333 women were enumerated in the 2010 count, representing 22% of the homeless population.³⁹ Fewer homeless women were counted this year compared to 2008 (348 women), and the proportion of women also dropped from 27%. Almost three quarters of the women were adults between the ages of 25 and 54 years (72%) and 19% were youth. A disproportionate share of homeless women in Vancouver self-identified as Aboriginal; almost half (49%), compared to 36% among the total homeless population. Only youth had a higher share of persons with an Aboriginal identity.

About two thirds of the women (63%) were alone, although they were less likely to be alone compared to the total homeless population (85%). Nearly one quarter (24%) was with a partner/spouse and 4% were with children.

As a group, the women had been homeless for a shorter period of time compared to the total homeless population. About one third of the women (35%) were long-term homeless (i.e. homeless for one year or more), compared to 45% of the total homeless population. As well, 19% were short term homeless, compared to 13% of the total homeless population. The most common source of income for women was income assistance (52%) or disability benefit (28%). Ten percent reported that they had no income.

³⁹ Total numbers in the sub-populations table may differ from the numbers provided in sections 4 and 5. This happens because the information provided in this table is a cross-tabulation and only includes the number of people who are part of the sub-population and answered the particular question being analyzed. For instance, there were 333 women enumerated in the count, but the total number of women in the section on age is only 324. The total number of women is lower because not all women responded to the question asking about their age. It should also be noted that BC Housing did not have data for every indicator.

About two thirds of the women (62%) called Vancouver “home”, while another 11% reported that they considered their home to be elsewhere in Metro Vancouver.

More than half the women (57%) were identified as having an addiction, which is similar to the total homeless population (55%). The percentage of women with a reported mental illness and medical condition was higher than the total homeless population: 44% were identified as having a mental illness, compared to 36% of the total homeless population and 41% as having a medical condition, compared to 38%. Less than one third (29%) were identified as having a physical disability, similar to the total homeless population.

Unsheltered women (and youth) were more likely to sleep at someone else’s place than other sub-populations. Close to half the women enumerated during the daytime portion of the count said they stayed at someone else’s place on the night of the count (46%), compared to 25% for the total homeless.

Table 48 - Sub-populations - Women, Aboriginal and Youth

	Women				Aboriginal identity				Youth (24 and under)				Total homeless			
	Street/ service	Shelter	Total	%	Street/ service	Shelter	Total	%	Street/ service	Shelter	Total	%	Street/ service	Shelter	Total	%
Gender																
Men					93	199	292	67%	23	96	119	66%	322	863	1,155	78%
Women					40	107	147	33%	20	42	62	34%	85	253	333	22%
Total respondents					133	306	439	100%	43	138	181	100%	407	1,116	1,488	100%
Age Groups																
Youth	20	42	62	19%	17	42	59	13%					44	156	200	14%
Adults (25-54)	51	182	233	72%	105	246	351	80%					286	786	1,072	73%
Seniors (55+)	10	19	29	9%	14	16	30	7%					59	145	204	14%
Total respondents	81	243	324	100%	136	304	440	100%					389	1,087	1,476	100%
Accompanied By																
Alone	57	66	123	63%	102	178	280	75%	23	46	69	70%	307	810	1,117	85%
With partner/spouse	11	36	47	24%	14	44	58	15%	3	10	13	13%	28	80	108	8%
With children	1	7	8	4%	0	3	3	1%	1	0	1	1%	1	8	10	1%
With pet	1	2	3	2%	3	0	3	1%	1	2	3	3%	8	5	13	1%
With other	11	6	17	9%	20	17	37	10%	7	7	14	14%	38	29	66	5%
Total respondents	79	116	195		136	239	375		35	64	99		379	930	1,309	
Aboriginal Identity																
Aboriginal	40	107	147	49%					17	42	59	51%	140	308	448	36%
Non-Aboriginal	39	113	152	51%					21	36	57	49%	246	559	805	64%
Total respondents	79	220	299	100%					38	78	116	100%	386	867	1,253	
Length of Time Homeless																
Short-term	6	48	54	19%	9	44	53	13%	4	24	28	25%	23	154	177	13%
Medium term	35	91	126	45%	45	122	167	40%	18	27	45	39%	134	410	544	41%
Long term	37	61	98	35%	79	123	202	48%	19	22	41	36%	230	365	595	45%
Total respondents	78	200	278	100%	133	289	422	100%	41	73	114	100%	387	929	1,316	
Source of Income																
Welfare	47	103	150	52%	72	170	242	56%	19	41	60	50%	180	452	632	47%
Disability	16	64	80	28%	34	56	90	21%	4	7	11	9%	73	213	286	21%
OAS/GIS/PPP/EI	1	8	9	3%	2	15	17	4%	0	2	2	2%	10	73	83	0.07
No income	3	26	29	10%	5	22	27	6%	5	16	21	17%	20	110	130	10%
Employment	1	9	10	3%	8	36	44	10%	3	11	14	12%	32	119	151	11%
Binning and panhandling	15	2	17	6%	48	29	77	18%	11	7	18	15%	141	78	219	0.16
Financial support from family	3	11	14	5%	2	9	11	3%	3	8	11	9%	9	19	28	2%
Other	29	22	51	18%	26	40	66	15%	11	11	22	18%	77	93	170	13%
Total respondents	81	206	287		139	295	434		42	79	121		396	948	1,344	
Last Permanent Home																
City of Vancouver	55	65	120	62%	85	119	204	57%	23	29	52	55%	232	361	593	57%
GVRD	4	17	21	11%	5	13	18	5%	1	4	5	5%	11	44	55	5%
Rest of BC	8	16	24	12%	11	43	54	15%	5	9	14	15%	38	76	114	11%
Elsewhere in Canada	12	15	27	14%	30	49	79	22%	6	15	21	22%	88	150	238	23%
Outside Canada	0	1	1	1%	0	2	2	1%	2	1	3	3%	12	21	33	3%
Total respondents	79	114	193	100%	131	226	357	100%	37	58	95	100%	381	652	1,033	
Health Condition																
Addiction	56	109	165	57%	97	192	289	67%	22	37	59	49%	229	492	721	55%
Physical	36	48	84	29%	47	83	130	30%	7	10	17	14%	121	247	368	28%
Medical	46	74	120	41%	72	102	174	40%	9	12	21	17%	170	333	503	38%
Mental health	33	94	127	44%	42	102	144	33%	11	24	35	29%	137	334	471	36%
Total respondents	80	210	290		136	295	431		40	81	121		392	922	1,314	
Where Stayed Last Night																
Outside	38		38	45%	164		78	57%	15		15	35%	263		263	64%
Someone else's place	39		39	46%	48		49	36%	26		26	60%	101		101	25%
Garage/public building	2		2	2%	17		3	2%	2		2	5%	21		21	5%
Other	5		5	6%	11		7	5%	0		0	0%	24		24	6%
Total respondents	84		84	100%	240		137	100%	43		43	100%	409		409	

Table 49 - Sub-populations - Seniors and long-term homeless

	Seniors				Long-term homeless				Total homeless			
	Street/ service	Shelter	Total	%	Street/ service	Shelter	Total	%	Street/ service	Shelter	Total	%
Gender												
Men	49	126	175	86%	187	302	489	83%	322	863	1,155	78%
Women	10	19	29	14%	37	61	98	17%	85	253	333	22%
Total respondents	59	145	204	100%	224	363	587	100%	407	1,116	1,488	100%
Age Groups												
Youth					19	22	41	7%	44	156	200	14%
Adults (25-54)					169	288	457	79%	286	786	1,072	73%
Seniors (55+)					29	49	78	14%	59	145	204	14%
Total respondents					217	359	576	100%	389	1,087	1,476	100%
Accompanied By												
Alone	47	94	141	91%	175	278	453	85%	307	810	1,117	85%
With partner/spouse	2	4	6	4%	14	25	39	7%	28	80	108	8%
With children	0	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0%	1	8	10	1%
With pet	2	0	2	1%	5	3	8	2%	8	5	13	1%
With other	3	2	5	3%	19	16	35	7%	38	29	66	5%
Total respondents	54	101	155	100%	211	321	532		379	930	1,309	
Aboriginal Identity												
Aboriginal	14	16	30	19%	79	123	202	38%	140	308	448	36%
Non-Aboriginal	40	92	132	81%	135	201	336	62%	246	559	805	64%
Total respondents	54	108	162	100%	214	324	538	100%	386	867	1,253	
Length of Time Homeless												
Short-term	4	15	19	10%					23	154	177	13%
Medium term	22	63	85	47%					134	410	544	41%
Long term	29	49	78	43%					230	365	595	45%
Total respondents	55	127	182	100%					387	929	1,316	
Source of Income												
Welfare	18	37	55	30%	102	195	297	53%	180	452	632	47%
Disability	9	29	38	21%	41	78	119	21%	73	213	286	21%
OAS/GIS/CPP/EI	3	37	40	22%	3	25	28	5%	10	73	83	0.07
No income	3	16	19	10%	10	23	33	6%	20	110	130	10%
Employment	6	11	17	9%	19	37	56	10%	32	119	151	11%
Binning and panhandling	16	9	25	14%	96	49	145	26%	141	78	219	0.16
Financial support from family	1	0	1	1%	3	7	10	2%	9	19	28	2%
Other	14	16	30	16%	37	44	81	15%	77	93	170	13%
Total respondents	55	130	185		220	338	558		396	948	1,344	
Last Permanent Home												
City of Vancouver	37	55	92	68%	130	166	296	60%	232	361	593	57%
GVRD	1	5	6	4%	4	9	13	3%	11	44	55	5%
Rest of BC	7	4	11	8%	19	35	54	11%	38	76	114	11%
Elsewhere in Canada	8	14	22	16%	54	64	118	24%	88	150	238	23%
Outside Canada	2	3	5	4%	5	5	10	2%	12	21	33	3%
Total respondents	55	81	136	100%	212	279	491	100%	381	652	1,033	
Health Condition												
Addiction	21	41	62	35%	127	214	341	61%	229	492	721	55%
Physical	15	39	54	31%	66	121	187	33%	121	247	368	28%
Medical	29	54	83	47%	99	157	256	46%	170	333	503	38%
Mental health	19	42	61	34%	71	140	211	38%	137	334	471	36%
Total respondents	55	122	177		218	341	559		392	922	1,314	
Where Stayed Last Night												
Outside	40		40	71%	156		156	70%	263		263	64%
Someone else's place	7		7	13%	41		41	18%	101		101	25%
Garage/public building	4		4	7%	16		16	7%	21		21	5%
Other	5		5	9%	11		11	5%	24		24	6%
Total respondents	56		56	100%	224		224	100%	409		409	

6.3 Persons with Aboriginal identity

There were 439 Aboriginal people enumerated on count day. Women comprised a higher proportion of the Aboriginal homeless population (33%) than the total homeless population (22%). There were relatively fewer seniors compared to the other sub-groups - 7% were seniors, compared to 14% of the total homeless population. Like the total homeless population, most Aboriginal respondents were between the ages of 25 and 54 years (80%), and 13% were under the age of 25 years.

Three quarters of Aboriginal people identified during the count said they were alone (75%), while 15% said they were with a partner/spouse, and 10% said they were with someone else, such as a friend.

Nearly half the Aboriginal population said they were long-term homeless (48%), a proportion that was slightly higher compared to the total homeless population (45% long-term homeless).

Income assistance as a source of income for more than half of the Aboriginal homeless (56%) compared to 47% of the total homeless population. Similar to the total homeless population, binning was a source of income for 11% of the Aboriginal homeless population.

More than half the Aboriginal homeless population (57%) called Vancouver home - which is the same as the total homeless population. Another 22% said they were from elsewhere in Canada, which is similar to the total homeless population (23% reported being from elsewhere in Canada). Slightly more Aboriginal people said they were from other parts of BC (15% of the Aboriginal homeless compared to 11% of the total homeless population).

The Aboriginal homeless reported similar rates of health conditions as the total homeless population, although addiction was more prevalent as 67% of the Aboriginal homeless were identified as having an addiction compared to 55% of the total homeless population. The unsheltered Aboriginal homeless were less likely to have reported sleeping outside on the night of the count (57%) compared to 64% of the total homeless population.

6.4 Youth

During the 2010 count, 184 homeless youth were enumerated.⁴⁰ This is an increase compared to 2008 when 154 youth were enumerated, but similar to 2005 when 179 youth were enumerated. The following is a description of the unaccompanied youth who were enumerated on the day of the count.

⁴⁰ As noted in the glossary, this includes young people under the age of 25 who were not accompanied by a parent.

Homeless youth were more evenly split between men and women compared to the total homeless population, although two thirds (66%) were men. Youth were less likely to be alone (70%) compared to the total homeless population (85%). Of all the sub-populations, youth reported the highest incidence of being with someone else (14%), such as a friend. About half the youth reported an Aboriginal identity (51%), the highest incidence of all sub-populations and significantly higher than the total homeless (36%).

Homeless youth had been homeless for less time than the total homeless population. One quarter were short term homeless, compared to 13% of the total homeless population. As well, about one third of the youth (36%) were long-term homeless (i.e. homeless for one year or more), compared to 45% of the total homeless population.

Half the homeless youth reported income assistance as a source of income, similar to the total homeless population (47%). However, 17% reported no source of income, which is higher than the total homeless population (10%). Nine percent reported receiving financial support from their families, compared to 2% of the total homeless population.

More than half of homeless youth (55%) called Vancouver home – which is the same as the total homeless populations. Twenty-two percent (22%) reported that they were from elsewhere in Canada (similar to the homeless population – 23%). Slightly more youth (15%) reported being from elsewhere in BC, compared to 11% of the total homeless population.

Youth had lower rates of health conditions compared to the total homeless population. For example, 14% had a physical disability, compared to 28% of the total homeless population. The share of youth with an addiction (49%) approached that of the total homeless population (55%).

Unsheltered youth were the least likely of the sub-populations to have slept outside on the night of the count. Most of the youth (60%) were able to stay at someone else's place that night, compared to 25% of the total homeless population. This figure confirms the prevalence of sofa surfing among homeless youth.

6.5 Seniors

For the purposes of this profile, seniors are defined as persons aged 55 and over. There were 204 homeless seniors counted in Vancouver in 2010, roughly double that in 2008 when 114 seniors were enumerated. Homeless seniors were mostly men (86%) and most likely to be alone (91%). They were less likely to report Aboriginal identity (19%) compared to the total homeless population (36%).

The largest share of seniors (47%) had been homeless for one month to just under one year, while 43% were considered long-term homeless. This is similar to the total homeless

population (45% long-term homeless). Seniors were least likely to have been homeless for less than one month (10%) compared to 13% of the total homeless population.

About one third of seniors (30%) reported income assistance as a source of income, compared to 47% for the total homeless population. However, similar to the total homeless population, 21% reported disability benefits. Not surprisingly, another 20% reported income from OAS/GIS or CPP, compared to 4% of the total homeless population.

Seniors were more likely than other sub-populations to call Vancouver their home. More than two thirds of the seniors said that Vancouver was their home (68%) compared to the 57% of the total homeless population.

Seniors were more likely than other sub-populations to be identified as having health conditions such as a medical condition (47% of seniors compared to 38% of the total homeless population) and physical disability (31% of seniors compared to 28% of the total homeless population). However, they were less likely to be identified as having an addiction, with only 35% of the seniors identified as having an addiction compared to 55% of the total homeless population. The incidence of mental illness among seniors (34%) was similar to that of the total homeless population (36%).

Among all the sub-populations, unsheltered seniors were most likely to have slept outside on the night of the count. Most of the homeless seniors (71%) slept outside that night, compared to 64% of the total homeless population.

6.6 The long-term homeless

The long term homeless are defined as people who have been homeless for one year or longer. It was the largest sub-population of Vancouver's homeless counted in March 2010 consisting of 595 people. Men are over-represented in this sub-group as 83% of the long-term homeless were men compared to 78% of the total homeless population.

Similar to the total homeless population, most of the long-term homeless (79%) were adults aged 25 to 54 years. As with the total homeless population, 14% were seniors. Youth however, were under-represented among the long-term homeless, comprising only 7% compared to 14% of the total homeless population.

Eighty-five percent of the long-term homeless were alone, which is the same as for the total homeless population.

Like the total homeless population, 53% of the long-term homeless reported income assistance as a source of income, while 21% reported disability benefits. The long-term homeless were more likely to report binning as a major source of income (18%) compared to the total homeless population (10%).

Vancouver was reported as home by 60% of the long-term homeless again, similar to the total homeless.

The long-term homeless had higher incidences of all types of health conditions compared to the total homeless population. For example, 61% of the long-term homeless were identified as having an addiction, compared to 55% of the total homeless population; 33% were identified as having a physical disability compared to the total homeless population (28%); and 46% as having a medical condition compared to the total homeless population (38%).

The long-term unsheltered homeless were more likely than the total homeless population to have slept outside on the night of the count: 70% of the long-term unsheltered homeless slept outside compared to 64% of the total unsheltered population.

APPENDIX A - Changes to survey questionnaire

Daytime

Q 11 a) regarding how many different times an individual had stayed in shelter in the past year was removed. It was not answered correctly in 2008 and consequently was not reported.

Q 18 was added for the interviewer to note the nearest intersection or facility, to improve the response rate. It was removed from the top of the Qnaire where it had appeared on previous surveys.

Nighttime

Changed Q 7 to: How long have you stayed at this shelter?

Removed Q 8. How many different times in the past 12 months have you stayed at this or another shelter in Metro Vancouver? Same as Q 11 in daytime survey.

APPENDIX B - Participating facilities

Shelters

Anchor of Hope
Belkin House
Aboriginal Shelter
Crosswalk
First United Church
First Baptist Church
Lookout Downtown
MPA Shelter
New Fountain
10th Avenue Alliance
Raincity Cardero
RainCity East Broadway
RainCity Granville
Triage
Helping Spirit Lodge
Vineyard
Yukon
Aboriginal Safe House
Covenant House
Marc's Place
Walden Safe House
The Beacon
Catholic Charities
The Haven
Union Gospel Mission
Bridge
412 Women's Emergency Shelter
Kate Booth House
Powell Place
St. Elizabeth Home
Umbrella
Peggy's Place
Belikin
Vi Fineday