

Vancouver Homeless Count 2013

Final report

EBERLE PLANNING AND RESEARCH

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1 Key Findings

The Vancouver Homeless Count conducted on March 13, 2013 is the seventh homeless count measuring the number of homeless people in the City of Vancouver. While always an undercount, 1,600 homeless persons were counted, comprised of 273 unsheltered homeless persons and 1,327 sheltered homeless. The total number of homeless people counted in Vancouver has remained stable for three years at approximately 1,600 persons, and the number of unsheltered homeless is down by 33 persons from 2012.

Since the first homeless count in 2002, the number of people found homeless in Vancouver peaked in 2010 at 1,715 people, and has since declined to 1,600 persons in 2013. The count results since 2011 suggest a stabilization of the total number homeless in Vancouver at approximately 1,600 individuals. Especially different since 2005 is the composition of Vancouver's homeless population: fewer are unsheltered, a decline of 54%, and more are sheltered, an increase of 72%.

TRENDS

The count shows that Vancouver's homeless continue to be disproportionately male, Aboriginal, middle aged and older, and in poor health. The homeless are in fact getting older and in worse health with each count.

There are now double the number of homeless persons over age 55 (264) compared to 2005 (121) and seniors age 55+ now represent 19% of the homeless population, up from 2005 when they comprised 10%. A larger share reported income from OAS/GIS/ CPP and other pensions - 6% in 2013, up from 2% in 2008, which may be related to the aging of the homeless population.

The 2013 Count results show that Vancouver's homeless are in poorer health today than in any year prior. A growing share of those who are homeless report two or more health conditions, 56% in 2013, up from 35% in 2005. The incidence of every type of health condition surveyed by the count has been rising since 2008. The incidence of reported and suspected mental illness among Vancouver's homeless continues on an upward trend in 2013 at 46% compared to 2008 when 28% reported mental illness. The incidence of addictions is trending higher, from 51% in 2008 to 63% in 2013.

The share of Aboriginal persons within the homeless population has ranged from a high of 38% in 2008 to a low of 30% this year, an overall declining trend. The number of Aboriginal homeless persons counted in 2013 was 365. However there continues to be a significant overrepresentation of Aboriginal persons among the homeless compared to the population of Vancouver (2%).

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Many homeless people have health issues. More than 80% of the homeless had one or more health conditions. Just over one quarter had one health condition and 56% had two or more health conditions. Only 18% were reported to have no health conditions. Overall the data suggest that both the sheltered and unsheltered homeless are similar in the incidence of health conditions.

Three to six months is the most common length of time homeless reported (which may be linked to the opening period for HEAT and winter shelters), followed by 5 years or longer. Responses vary significantly among the sheltered and unsheltered homeless. Among the sheltered population, 3-6 months was the most common length of time homeless, while over one quarter of people who are unsheltered have been homeless for 5 years or more. Sixty percent of the unsheltered homeless have been homeless for a year or more. The figures also show that 21 people were newly homeless in the week before the count, indicating a substantial flow into homelessness from other precarious housing situations.

The homeless population age 55 and older represents 19% of the total homeless population. In comparison, those age 55 and older represented 26% of the City of Vancouver 2011 population so this age group is under-represented among the homeless.

In 2013 the Aboriginal population is still overrepresented among the homeless, representing 30% of the homeless population and only 2% of Vancouver's population. The incidence of Aboriginal identity is significantly higher among the unsheltered homeless (39%) than the sheltered homeless (27%).

HEAT/Winter SHELTER CLIENTS

Compared with clients staying in year round shelters, individuals counted in the HEAT/Winter Response shelters were more likely to:

- Be male
- Of Aboriginal identity

Their age structure is similar to the year round clients as well as the unsheltered homeless.

Compared to the unsheltered homeless, HEAT/Winter clients:

- had been homeless for a shorter period of time, and
- had similar patterns of health conditions and income sources.

2 Introduction

This report presents the findings of the 2013 Vancouver Homeless Count. It provides an estimate of the Vancouver's homeless population *on one day* - March 13, 2013, describes characteristics of the homeless population and reviews trends in Vancouver since 2005.

The City of Vancouver commissioned the count so that it would have up-to-date information to assist with its priority to end street homelessness by 2015. There has been much effort and resources expended by the City, BC Housing, Streethome Foundation, non-profit housing organizations, the Mental Health Commission and others to tackle the problem of homelessness in Vancouver in recent years and counting the homeless is one way to understand the impact of these actions. In addition, looking ahead, a good understanding of the homeless population is critical for planning purposes.

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,
- an analysis of trends in homelessness since 2005.

2.2 Definitions

The count used the same definition of homelessness used in previous City and 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, etc.; or,
- were temporarily accommodated in emergency shelters, safe houses for youth, transition houses for women and their children fleeing violence or detox facilities; or,
- were staying at someone else's place where they did not pay rent (immediate family excluded), or
- people with no fixed address found at hospitals or jails.

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. Someone who stayed at a friend's place where they did not pay rent was also homeless for the purpose of this count. 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 because they are difficult to find and enumerate. Similarly, families staying with other families and not paying rent would not be included in the count if they did not visit a place where they would be counted. Someone paying rent in an SRO is not considered homeless for the purpose of this count.

2.3 Method

The 2013 Vancouver Homeless Count used the same method as past city and regional homeless counts to ensure comparability. It measured homelessness from 12:01 am to 11:59 pm on March 13th, 2013, and consisted of two components to enumerate the sheltered homeless and the unsheltered homeless. The survey focused on six key variables - age, gender, Aboriginal identity, income source, health conditions and length of time homeless (unsheltered only) and used a simplified data collection approach involving volunteer interviewers and direct data collection from some shelters and other sources. The count was led by City of Vancouver staff. Eberle Planning and Research (which has been involved in a number of City and Regional counts) was hired as a count advisor to provide technical assistance on all aspects of the count, including providing oversight and quality control, to provide assistance with count coordination, data analysis and report writing.

The homeless count is explicitly designed to avoid double counting. Screening questions eliminate those who have already been interviewed, who paid rent, or who stayed in a shelter, safe house, transition house or detox facility where they were included in the sheltered 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.

Sheltered homeless

The sheltered component enumerated homeless individuals staying at emergency shelters, transition houses, safe houses, and detox facilities and people with “no fixed address” staying in hospitals and jails overnight on March 12/13th. These individuals are referred to as the ‘sheltered homeless’. Four approaches were used to gather information from the sheltered homeless.

1. Interviews were conducted in eleven shelters, including HEAT and Winter Response shelters. Volunteers visited these shelters on the evening of March 12th to interview those staying overnight. This is up from nine shelters in 2012 in an effort to improve response rates in shelters where most homeless are found.
2. Transition house, safe house and detox facility staff used the sheltered survey to gather the necessary information from clients.
3. BC Housing provided aggregate client data for the evening of March 13, 2013 for 15 shelters that provide regular reports to the agency.
4. Agencies such as Vancouver Coastal Health, Providence Health Care and the Vancouver Police Department provided anonymous information on individuals

staying in their facilities on count night who have no fixed address (NFA) and who were not discharged after midnight on March 12th.

In addition, staff at 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 ensured that all shelter clients were enumerated, including people who were missed by the survey or who refused to participate.

Unsheltered Homeless

The unsheltered count took place in the daytime hours on March 13. Trained volunteers interviewed homeless people at pre-identified locations such as meal programs, drop in centres, parks, alleys and public spaces. People found in the daytime who stayed overnight in these places are referred to as the ‘unsheltered homeless’. People who stayed in emergency accommodation the night before were screened out from completing the survey. In addition, some service agencies completed the survey with their clients using count materials.

In advance of the count, the City’s Homeless Advocate, in consultation with local advocacy groups, outreach staff and others knowledgeable about where the homeless may be found, identified locations and created a series of maps marking known homeless locations to guide interviewers in their assigned area.

Beginning early in the morning on March 13th, volunteer interviewers approached people in their assigned areas to request an interview. If they agreed to participate, 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 paid rent for; or,
- c) they had stayed in emergency accommodation covered by the sheltered component, including hospitals, jails etc.¹

Glossary

Unsheltered homeless - People who had no physical shelter, but stayed outside, on the street, in doorways, parkades, parks and on beaches and people who stayed at a someone’s place where they did not pay rent (sofa surfing).

Sheltered homeless - Stayed in an emergency shelter, safe house, and transition house for women and children fleeing violence. Includes one recovery house and people with no fixed address staying overnight in hospitals or jails or detox facilities.

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.

¹ People who stayed in an overnight location covered by the sheltered component (shelter, safe house or transition house or participating NFA facility) were not interviewed.

The interview ended if individuals answered positively to any of the above questions. If the interviewee qualified for the survey, the interviewer proceeded to complete the survey with the interviewee.

Like in all previous years except 2011, volunteers were asked wake people to interview them.

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

Volunteers and count coordination

Volunteer interviewers recruited by the City were comprised mainly of experienced and skilled outreach workers, social service personnel or people with relevant experience, including previous counts.

The City was divided into three areas with an Area Coordinator responsible for each. A Shelter Coordinator was responsible for determining which shelters to send volunteers, coordinating with shelter staff to ascertain the best time/locations for interviews to take place, and managing volunteer shelter interviewers.

The City recruited all volunteers and the count team managed training registration, assigned locations, coordinated volunteers on count night/day, and collected and returned completed packages at the end of their shifts. An “area station” was set up in each area on count day allowing for volunteer sign in, pick up and return of completed packages, and the ability to shift volunteers around in case of “no shows”.

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 13, 2013. 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. This method does not count all people who were homeless and sofa surfing, as they are by their very nature, hidden. That being said, the count provides the best available information on the size, composition and trends in the homeless population in Vancouver.

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. It counts only those people who had no place of their own on March 13, 2013. If an individual had a place on March 12 or March 14 they would not be included in this total. The point in time approach is consistent with past counts and allows for comparisons.

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 138 people who were observed to be homeless but who were not interviewed on March 13, 2013.

2.5 Report organization

Section 3 provides the total number of people identified as homeless, and the distribution by type of homelessness (sheltered and unsheltered). Section 4 describes trends in the characteristics of the homeless population since 2005. Section 5 shows detailed demographic and other characteristics of the homeless population in 2013, both sheltered and unsheltered. Section 6 profiles the clients of HEAT and Winter Response shelters.

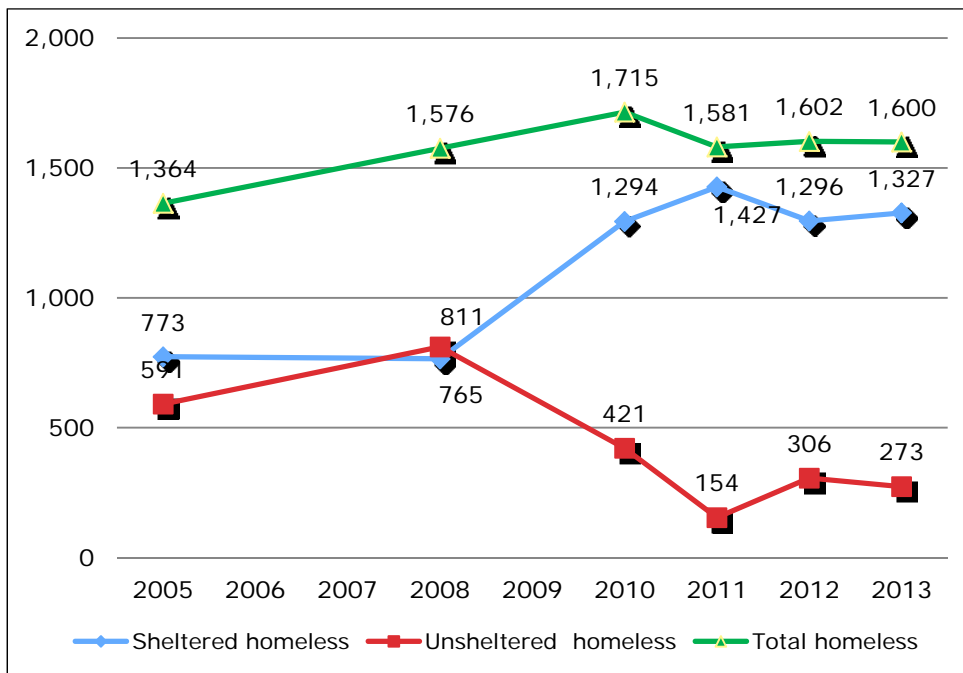
3 Number and distribution of Vancouver's homeless

There were 1,600 homeless people counted in Vancouver on March 13, 2013, virtually the same number as in 2012 and 2011.

Figure 1 and Table 1 show the number of homeless counted in Vancouver in 2005, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013.² After increasing each year since 2005, and reaching a high point in 2010 of 1,715 homeless persons, the total number of homeless people in Vancouver has declined and stabilized at about 1,600 persons in each of the last three years.

Figure 1 also shows the sharp decline in the number of unsheltered homeless counted from over 800 persons in 2008 to approximately 300 persons in 2012 and about 270 persons in 2013, suggesting a stabilization of the number of unsheltered homeless in Vancouver.

Figure 1 - Vancouver homeless population trends 2005 to 2013



² The 2005 count is used in this report as the comparative baseline because significant policy changes were made in 2005 which significantly impacted future counts. Examples of these significant policy changes includes changes to the shelter system such as increasing operating hours to 24 hours and providing healthy meals by BC Housing and decreasing barriers to access for income assistance by the former Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance.

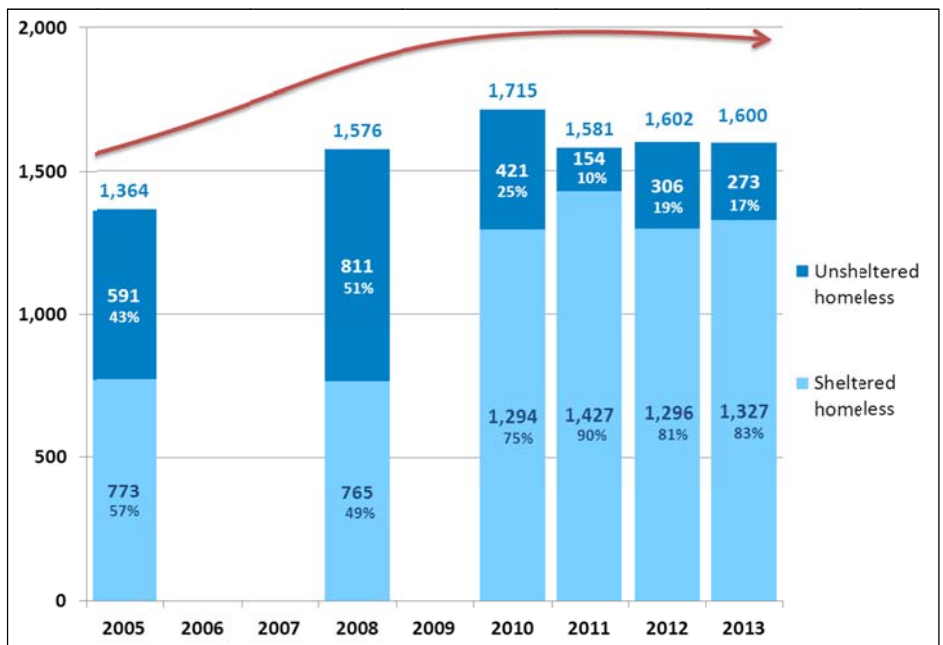
Table 1 - Vancouver homeless population trends 2005 to 2013

| Number of homeless | Sheltered homeless | Unsheltered homeless | Total homeless |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| 2005 | 773 | 591 | 1,364 |
| 2008 | 765 | 811 | 1,576 |
| 2010 | 1,294 | 421 | 1,715 |
| 2011 | 1,427 | 154 | 1,581 |
| 2012 | 1,296 | 306 | 1,602 |
| 2013 | 1,327 | 273 | 1,600 |
| Change (2005-2013) | 554 | -318 | 236 |
| % Change (2005-2013) | 72% | -54% | 17% |

There were fewer unsheltered homeless persons counted this year than in all previous years except 2011. In 2011, 154 people were counted who were unsheltered the evening of the count, whereas in 2012 and 2013 this figure is higher, at 306 people and 273 respectively. Whether 2011 was an anomaly or a greater undercount than usual is unknown.

Figure 2 depicts the changing distribution of Vancouver’s homeless population in terms of their sheltered and unsheltered status. In 2013, like in 2012 (1,296), over 80% (1,327) of the homeless were accommodated indoors in shelters, safe houses, transition houses, detox facilities or hospitals or jails on count night, compared with 90% (1,427) in 2011, 75% (1,294) in 2010 and only 49% (765) in 2008.

Figure 2- Distribution of the homeless population 2005-2013



Trends show the number staying in shelters from one year to the next is variable and can fluctuate based on the number of shelter beds available at any one time and on the weather.

Longer-term changes are more indicative of overall trends than year-to-year figures. From 2005 to 2013 the number of homeless people in Vancouver has increased by 17% or by 236 people. The City’s population increased by 13% (from 2005 to 2012) so the number of people homeless has grown at a faster rate.

Table 2 shows the changes that have occurred within two time periods - 2005 to 2008, and 2008 to 2013. In the first period, the three years from 2005 to 2008, there was an increase in the total number homeless of 16% (over 5% per year) and this included a significant increase in the number of unsheltered homeless (37%) while the sheltered population remained constant (there was a relatively constant supply of shelter beds). The second period, from 2008 to 2013, reveals a different picture. In the five years from 2008 to 2013, the total number of people counted as homeless has been relatively stable, for a total increase of 24 persons - 2% over the five years or 0.4% per year. In that same period, 538 fewer individuals were unsheltered, with a roughly equal change (in the opposite direction) in the number of sheltered individuals (again due to an increase in shelter beds beginning in 2008).

Table 2 - Change in homelessness by time period

| Time Period | Change 2005-2008 | | Change 2008-2013 | |
|----------------------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| | Number | Percent Change | Number | Percent Change |
| Homeless Population | | | | |
| Sheltered homeless | -8 | -1% | 562 | 73% |
| Unsheltered homeless | 220 | 37% | -538 | -66% |
| Total homeless | 212 | 16% | 24 | 2% |

Most of the homeless on March 13, 2013 were adults and unaccompanied youth (1,574 persons or 98%). Twenty-six accompanied children and youth (under 25 years) were counted. Of these, 17 stayed in a year round shelter, 8 stayed in transition houses and one was staying in hospital.

Most homeless persons stayed in a year round shelter (51%), followed by Winter and HEAT shelters (24%). Detox facilities reported 48 individuals with NFA. There were no overnight placements in hotels by the Ministry of Social Development.³

³ Dave Jagpal, Manager, Integration Services, Ministry of Social Development, Vancouver Coastal Region, BC Ministry of Social Development.

Table 3 - Homeless by Shelter Type and Accompanied Status, March 13, 2013

| Homeless category | Adults and youth | | Children | | Total homeless | |
|------------------------|------------------|---------|----------|---------|----------------|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Sheltered homeless | 1,301 | 83% | 26 | 100% | 1,327 | 83% |
| Year-round Shelters | 792 | 50% | 17 | 65% | 809 | 51% |
| Winter & HEAT shelters | 381 | 24% | 0 | 0% | 381 | 24% |
| Detox facilities | 48 | 3% | 0 | 0% | 48 | 3% |
| Transition houses | 18 | 1% | 8 | 31% | 26 | 2% |
| Safe houses | 13 | 1% | 0 | 0% | 13 | 1% |
| Recovery house | 17 | 1% | 0 | 0% | 17 | 1% |
| No fixed address | 32 | 2% | 1 | 4% | 33 | 2% |
| Unsheltered homeless | 273 | 17% | 0 | 0% | 273 | 17% |
| Total homeless | 1,574 | 98% | 26 | 2% | 1,600 | 100% |

Youth - under 25 and unaccompanied

Children - under 19 and accompanied

Shelter, safe house and transition house providers were asked to report how many people were turned away the night of March 12/13th, 2013 either because the shelter was full or the individual seeking shelter was not appropriate for their facility. Table 4 shows that 124 total turnaways were reported in 2013 on count night, compared to 112 turnaways in 2012. Most turnaways occurred at year round shelters (87). 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 4 - Turnaways, March 12/13, 2013

| Shelter category | Turnaways | |
|---------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| | Number | Percent |
| Year round shelters | 87 | 70% |
| Winter Response / HEAT shelters | 25 | 20% |
| Transition houses | 10 | 8% |
| Safe houses | 2 | 2% |
| Total turnaways | 124 | 100% |

Explanation of difference between total homeless and demographic totals

As in previous years, detailed survey or demographic information is not available for each individual. While the total number of homeless people counted in Vancouver on count day 2013 was 1,600 persons, the demographic profile and trends analysis that follow provide information on 1,425 people for whom some demographic data was obtained either via the survey or through direct data transfer, representing 89% of the homeless counted in 2013. The remainder did not complete the shelter survey (but were counted). Table 5 shows the breakdown for 2013. Profile data in the following tables excludes 149 individuals who were enumerated on count night, for whom no corresponding demographic data is available⁴ and

⁴ This occurs for many reasons, including individuals who did not wish to be interviewed, or were not present when interviewing took place. Nonetheless, as the shelters provide occupancy statistics for

26 accompanied children under 19 years of age with a parent or guardian for whom separate demographic information was not collected.⁵ This is an improvement in the global response rate from 2012, when 83% of homeless persons were completely enumerated.

Table 5 - Difference between total homeless and demographic totals 2013

| Type of data | Sheltered homeless | Unsheltered homeless | Total homeless | Percent |
|--|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| Demographic data total (Survey or database records) | 1,152 | 273 | 1,425 | 89% |
| Occupied shelter bed (No survey or database record) | 149 | 0 | 149 | 9% |
| Accompanied children (No survey or database record) | 26 | 0 | 26 | 2% |
| Total homeless | 1,327 | 273 | 1,600 | 100% |

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.

⁵ 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 unaccompanied youth (< 19 years), and is included in the demographic profile.

4 Homeless trends 2005 - 2013

This section reports on the demographic and other trends of homeless individuals in Vancouver as enumerated in homeless counts since 2005.⁶ Age, gender and Aboriginal identity have higher response rates, while other variables have higher item non-response rates. With the exception of age, gender and Aboriginal identity, this analysis focuses on the incidence or share of respondents reporting a certain characteristics, not the total number.

4.1 Gender

Men continue to comprise the majority of homeless persons counted, accounting for almost three quarters of the homeless population. The share of men among the homeless has been similar in all counts (73-72%) except in 2010 when the share of men counted was 78% of the total homeless. Women have comprised about 26-27% of the homeless counted each year. The number of homeless women counted has ranged between 330 and 360. More homeless women were counted in 2013 (361) than in any preceding year. Homeless counts are generally viewed as less successful in counting homeless women as women tend to stay with others to avoid absolute homelessness.

Table 6 - Gender trends

| Gender | 2005 | | 2008 | | 2010 | | 2011 | | 2012 | | 2013 | |
|-------------------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Men | 928 | 73% | 948 | 72% | 1,155 | 78% | 901 | 73% | 960 | 73% | 1,017 | 73% |
| Women | 330 | 26% | 348 | 27% | 333 | 22% | 327 | 27% | 347 | 26% | 361 | 26% |
| Transgendered | 8 | 1% | 15 | 1% | n/a | n/a | 5 | <1% | 6 | <1% | 7 | <1% |
| Total respondents | 1,266 | 100% | 1,311 | 100% | 1,488 | 100% | 1,233 | 100% | 1,313 | 100% | 1,385 | 100% |
| Not known | 25 | | 61 | | 21 | | 264 | | 21 | | 40 | |
| Total | 1,291 | | 1,372 | | 1,544 | | 1,497 | | 1,334 | | 1,425 | |

4.2 Age

The largest share of Vancouver's homeless population continues to be between the ages of 35 and 54 years (50%). The biggest shift occurring is the aging of the homeless population. People age 55 and over now represent 19% of the homeless population, up significantly from 2005 when they comprised 10% of the homeless. In absolute terms, in 2005 there were 121 homeless persons age 55+ counted compared to today, with 264 persons age 55+, representing a more than doubling of this population.

Since 2005, the number of homeless children and youth counted has ranged between 175 and 200, representing approximately 12 to 14% of the total homeless population. The highest figure was in 2012 with 194 children and youth. The most children counted was in 2012 (57), while the largest number of homeless youth age 19-24 years counted was 159, in

⁶ SPARC. 2005. *On our streets and in our shelters: Results of the 2005 Greater Vancouver Homeless Count*. RSCH. 2008. *Still on our streets: Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count*. City of Vancouver. 2010. *Vancouver Homeless Count 2010. Off the street and into shelters*. RSCH 2011 *One step forward: Results of the 2011 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count*. City of Vancouver. 2012. *Sixth Homeless Count in City of Vancouver - March 2012. Significant changes since 2005*.

2010. Counts may also be less successful in finding youth who tend to sofa surf and avoid services, thus remaining hidden. In 2013 there were 36 homeless children under age 19 years, down from 57 in 2012 and about the same number of 19-24 year olds (139).

Table 7 - Age groups trends

| Age groups | Total homeless 2005 | | Total homeless 2008 | | Total homeless 2010 | | Total homeless 2011 | | Total homeless 2012 | | Total homeless 2013 | |
|-------------------|---------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Under 19 | 30 | 2% | 19 | 2% | 25 | 2% | 44 | 4% | 57 | 4% | 36 | 3% |
| 19-24 | 149 | 12% | 135 | 10% | 159 | 11% | 146 | 13% | 137 | 10% | 139 | 10% |
| 25-34 | 273 | 22% | 258 | 20% | 264 | 18% | 197 | 17% | 267 | 20% | 256 | 19% |
| 35-44 | 402 | 33% | 425 | 32% | 363 | 25% | 251 | 22% | 316 | 24% | 358 | 26% |
| 45-54 | 260 | 21% | 361 | 28% | 445 | 30% | 250 | 22% | 339 | 26% | 324 | 24% |
| 55-64 | 98 | 8% | 95 | 7% | 163 | 11% | 122 | 11% | 163 | 12% | 195 | 14% |
| 65+ | 23 | 2% | 19 | 1% | 41 | 3% | 33 | 3% | 40 | 3% | 69 | 5% |
| Total respondents | 1,235 | 100% | 1,312 | 100% | 1,460 | 100% | 1,133 | 100% | 1,319 | 100% | 1,377 | 100% |
| Not stated | 56 | | 60 | | 84 | | 114 | | 45 | | 48 | |
| Total | 1,291 | | 1,372 | | 1,544 | | 1,176 | | 1,364 | | 1,425 | |

4.3 Aboriginal identity

Table 8 shows the results from the Aboriginal identity question for 2005 to 2013. The share of Aboriginal persons within the homeless population has ranged from a high of 38% in 2008 to a low of 30% this year, an overall declining trend. The largest number of homeless persons with Aboriginal identity was counted in 2008 at 456 persons, and in 2012 and 2013 this figure is down to approximately 365 persons.

Table 8 - Aboriginal Identity trends

| Aboriginal ID | Total homeless 2005 | | Total homeless 2008 | | Total homeless 2010 | | Total homeless 2011 | | Total homeless 2012 | | Total homeless 2013 | |
|-------------------|---------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Aboriginal | 352 | 35% | 456 | 38% | 448 | 36% | 268 | 31% | 362 | 32% | 369 | 30% |
| Not aboriginal | 658 | 65% | 749 | 62% | 805 | 64% | 594 | 69% | 768 | 68% | 867 | 70% |
| Total respondents | 1,010 | 100% | 1,205 | 100% | 1,253 | 100% | 862 | 100% | 1,130 | 100% | 1,236 | 100% |
| Not stated | 281 | | 167 | | 291 | | 290 | | 204 | | 189 | |
| Total | 1,291 | | 1,372 | | 1,544 | | 1,157 | | 1,334 | | 1,425 | |

4.4 Income

Table 9 displays the results for income sources for the 2008 to 2013 counts.⁷ There have been some changes since 2008 and note the significant item non-response to this question, particularly in more recent years including 2013, which may affect its representativeness.

The share of the homeless population reporting income assistance as an income source was 38% in 2013, the lowest percentage reported since 2008. At the same time, the portion reporting disability benefit in 2013 rose to 24% from around 20% in previous years, so that combined, these income sources were reported by 62% of the homeless, down from 68% in 2011. A larger share reported income from OAS/GIS/ CPP and other pensions - 6% in 2013, up from 2% in 2008, which may be related to the aging of the homeless population. The share reporting income from employment has fluctuated over time showing no discernable trend. The share reporting no income has generally been trending upward from 7% in 2008 to 14% in 2013.

Table 9 - Income source trends

| Sources of income (more than 1 possible) | Total homeless 2008 | | Total homeless 2010 | | Total homeless 2011 | | Total homeless 2012 | | Total homeless 2013 | |
|---|------------------------|---------|------------------------|---------|------------------------|---------|------------------------|---------|------------------------|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Government transfers | | | | | | | | | | |
| Income assistance or welfare | 533 | 43% | 632 | 47% | 286 | 44% | 339 | 41% | 381 | 38% |
| Disability benefit | 258 | 21% | 286 | 21% | 132 | 20% | 176 | 21% | 239 | 24% |
| Employment Insurance | 13 | 1% | 35 | 3% | 17 | 3% | 16 | 2% | 15 | 2% |
| OAS GIS and CPP | 21 | 2% | 48 | 4% | 28 | 4% | 38 | 5% | 56 | 6% |
| Other sources | | | | | | | | | | |
| Employment | 242 | 19% | 151 | 11% | 97 | 15% | 96 | 12% | 135 | 14% |
| No income | 83 | 7% | 130 | 10% | 71 | 11% | 135 | 16% | 157 | 16% |
| Other | 611 | 49% | 409 | 30% | 329 | 50% | 160 | 19% | 148 | 15% |
| Total Respondents | 1,242 | 100% | 1,344 | 100% | 655 | 100% | 834 | 100% | 999 | 100% |
| Not stated | 130 | | 200 | | 506 | | 500 | | 426 | |
| Total | 1,372 | | 1,544 | | 1,157 | | 1,334 | | 1,425 | |

4.5 Health

The 2013 count results show that Vancouver's homeless are in poorer health today than they have been in any count prior to this year. This trend is consistent with an aging homeless population and may be linked with the successful housing of a substantial number of homeless people (those who have not been housed may have more complex needs or are becoming less well over time and/or are aging). A growing share of those who remain homeless report two or more health conditions, 58% in 2013, up from 35% in 2005. The share with one health condition has been declining over time. The incidence of no reported or perceived health conditions has been steady in 2012 and 2013 at 16-17%, but down from 26% in 2005.

⁷ The 2005 income question was asked differently and cannot be compared.

Table 10 - Incidence of health conditions trends

| Health condition | Total homeless 2005 | | Total homeless 2008 | | Total homeless 2010 | | Total homeless 2011 | | Total homeless 2012 | | Total homeless 2013 | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| No health conditions | 263 | 26% | 369 | 29% | 277 | 21% | 55 | 10% | 156 | 17% | 179 | 16% |
| One health condition | 396 | 39% | 329 | 26% | 415 | 32% | 208 | 38% | 290 | 32% | 289 | 26% |
| 2 or more health conditions | 349 | 35% | 556 | 44% | 622 | 47% | 289 | 52% | 451 | 50% | 636 | 58% |
| Total respondents | 1,008 | 100% | 1,254 | 100% | 1,314 | 100% | 552 | 100% | 897 | 100% | 1,104 | 100% |
| Not stated | 283 | | 118 | | 230 | | 605 | | 437 | | 321 | |
| Total | 1,291 | | 1,372 | | 1,544 | | 1,157 | | 1,334 | | 1,425 | |

Table 11 reports on trends in specific types of health conditions, and mirrors the trend described above. It shows that the incidence of every type of health condition surveyed by the count has been rising since 2008. Reported and suspected mental illness among Vancouver’s homeless continues on an upward trend in 2013 at 46% compared to 2008 when 28% reported mental illness. The incidence of addictions is trending higher, from 51% in 2008 to 63% in 2013, as is the incidence of physical disability. The incidence of medical conditions has remained largely stable.

Table 11 - Type of health conditions trends

| Health condition (more than 1 possible) | Total homeless 2008 | | Total homeless 2010 | | Total homeless 2011 | | Total homeless 2012 | | Total homeless 2013 | |
|--|---------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Addiction | 643 | 51% | 721 | 55% | 344 | 56% | 532 | 59% | 694 | 63% |
| Physical disability | 324 | 26% | 368 | 28% | 157 | 25% | 265 | 30% | 375 | 34% |
| Medical condition | 495 | 39% | 503 | 38% | 186 | 30% | 325 | 36% | 469 | 42% |
| Mental illness | 354 | 28% | 471 | 36% | 251 | 41% | 361 | 40% | 512 | 46% |
| Total respondents | 1,254 | 100% | 1,314 | 100% | n/a | 100% | 897 | 100% | 1,104 | 100% |
| Not stated | 118 | | 230 | | n/a | | 437 | | 321 | |
| Total | 1,372 | | 1,544 | | 1,157 | | 1,334 | | 1,425 | |

4.6 Length of time homeless

The 2013 count results for length of time homeless show that people reporting a homeless period of one year or more have consistently formed the largest share of the homeless population, varying between 45% and 49% since 2008. A smaller share reported under 1 month as their length of time homeless, 10%, the smallest share since 2005. Proportionally more homeless people reported 1-6 months as the length of time homeless in 2013 at 34% compared to 27% in 2011. A question about the length of time homeless was not asked in 2012.

Table 12 – Length of time homeless trends

| Length of time homeless | Total homeless 2005 | | Total homeless 2008 | | Total homeless 2010 | | Total homeless 2011 | | Total homeless 2013 | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Under 1 month | 253 | 25% | 145 | 12% | 177 | 13% | 145 | 12% | 76 | 10% |
| 1 month to 6 months | 271 | 26% | 319 | 27% | 371 | 28% | 319 | 27% | 268 | 34% |
| 6 months to under 1 year | 134 | 13% | 152 | 13% | 173 | 13% | 152 | 13% | 93 | 12% |
| 1 year or more | 376 | 36% | 585 | 49% | 595 | 45% | 585 | 49% | 363 | 45% |
| Total respondents | 1,034 | 100% | 1,201 | | 1,316 | | 1,201 | 100% | 800 | |
| Not stated | 257 | | 171 | | 228 | | | | 52 | |
| Total | 1,291 | | 1,372 | | 1,544 | | | | 852 | |

4.7 Where the unsheltered homeless stayed

As in most counts from 2005 to 2012, two thirds of the unsheltered homeless stayed outside including in a car/garage or public place on March 13, 2013. About one third stayed at someone else's place, a share that has been fluctuating over time. The year 2011 was an unusual year with a high proportion staying at someone else's place, and a small proportion outside. A declining share reported staying at "other" places (2%) in 2013 compared to other years (5-20%).

Table 13 - Where unsheltered homeless stayed trends

| Location | 2005 | | 2008 | | 2010 | | 2011 | | 2012 | | 2013 | |
|---|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Combined outside and car/garage and public bldg | 411 | 70% | 548 | 71% | 284 | 69% | 49 | 33% | 205 | 69% | 180 | 66% |
| Someone else's place | 111 | 19% | 129 | 17% | 101 | 25% | 69 | 47% | 74 | 25% | 87 | 32% |
| Other | 69 | 12% | 90 | 12% | 24 | 6% | 29 | 20% | 17 | 6% | 6 | 2% |
| Total Respondents | 591 | 100% | 767 | 100% | 409 | 100% | 147 | 100% | 296 | 100% | 273 | 100% |

5 Demographic profile

The following profile presents a demographic picture of the homeless adults and youth counted in Vancouver on March 13th, 2013. Each table shows results for the sheltered and unsheltered homeless as well as for the total homeless population.

As in past counts, response rates varied by question, particularly among the sheltered homeless. Age and gender questions had high response rates allowing for reporting of actual numbers. Other variables including income source and health conditions had lower response rates, ranging from 85% to 63%, and only shares or proportions are reported.

5.1 Gender

Men represent almost three quarters of the homeless population counted in Vancouver in 2013, and women about one quarter. Most homeless women stayed in a shelter of some kind (316) - only 45 women were counted as unsheltered homeless representing 12% of homeless women. Men comprised the largest number (222) and share (82%) of the unsheltered population. Only seven transgendered homeless persons were counted and they were found in both sheltered and unsheltered locations.

Table 14 - Gender⁸

| Gender | Sheltered homeless | | Unsheltered homeless | | Total homeless | |
|-------------------|--------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|----------------|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Men | 795 | 71% | 222 | 82% | 1,017 | 73% |
| Women | 316 | 28% | 45 | 17% | 361 | 26% |
| Transgender | 4 | 0% | 3 | 1% | 7 | 1% |
| Total respondents | 1,115 | 100% | 270 | 100% | 1,385 | 100% |
| Not known | 37 | | 3 | | 40 | |
| Total | 1,152 | | 273 | | 1,425 | |

5.2 Age

Half of the homeless people counted on March 13, 2013 were between the ages of 35 and 54 years. Overall, adults aged 25-54 years represented slightly just over two thirds of the city's homeless population (69%). There were 175 children and youth under age 25 years enumerated during the count, representing 13% of the total, with most age 19-24 years. Thirty six of these young people were under age 19, and all but five were sheltered. The largest number of unsheltered homeless persons (77) was between the ages of 35 and 44 years.

Over 260 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. Most of them were sheltered (222) with only 42 being unsheltered. The population age 55 and older represents 19% of the total homeless population. In comparison, those age 55 and older represented 26% of the City of Vancouver 2011 population so this age group is under-represented among the homeless.

⁸ Interviewers were instructed to record gender based on observation.

Table 15 - Age

| Age groups | Sheltered homeless | | Unsheltered homeless | | Total homeless | |
|-------------------|--------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|----------------|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| 0-18 | 31 | 3% | 5 | 2% | 36 | 3% |
| 19-24 | 112 | 10% | 27 | 10% | 139 | 10% |
| 25-34 | 201 | 18% | 55 | 21% | 256 | 19% |
| 35-44 | 281 | 25% | 77 | 30% | 358 | 26% |
| 45-54 | 269 | 24% | 55 | 21% | 324 | 24% |
| 55-64 | 162 | 15% | 33 | 13% | 195 | 14% |
| 65+ | 60 | 5% | 9 | 3% | 69 | 5% |
| Total respondents | 1,116 | 100% | 261 | 100% | 1,377 | 100% |
| Not stated | 36 | | 12 | | 48 | |
| Total | 1,152 | | 273 | | 1,425 | |

The median age of Vancouver's homeless population⁹ was 42 years (half are younger, half are older), so they are somewhat older than Vancouver residents in general (with a median age of 39.7 years according to the 2011 Census). The youngest person counted in 2013 was under 1 year old and the oldest person counted was 84 years of age.

5.3 Aboriginal identity

Table 16 shows that 30% of Vancouver's homeless population in 2013 self identified as Aboriginal. Persons of Aboriginal identity continue to be over-represented among the city's homeless population, compared with the Vancouver population (2%).¹⁰ The incidence of Aboriginal identity is significantly higher among the unsheltered homeless (39%) than the sheltered homeless (27%).

Table 16 - Aboriginal identity

| Aboriginal identity | Sheltered homeless | | Unsheltered homeless | | Total homeless | |
|---------------------|--------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|----------------|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Aboriginal | 264 | 27% | 105 | 39% | 369 | 30% |
| Not Aboriginal | 702 | 73% | 165 | 61% | 867 | 70% |
| Total respondents | 966 | 100% | 270 | 100% | 1,236 | 100% |
| Not stated | 186 | | 3 | | 189 | |
| Total | 1,152 | | 273 | | 1,425 | |

⁹ Excludes approx 600 clients reported by BC Housing.

¹⁰ Statistics Canada. Community Profile. City of Vancouver. 2011 National Household Survey.

Table 17 displays the results for length of time homeless for the people staying at shelters where interviews took place (HEAT/Winter response and a couple of others) and the unsheltered homeless.¹¹ Responses vary significantly among the sheltered and unsheltered homeless. It shows that 3-6 months is the most common length of time homeless reported (which may be linked to the opening period for HEAT and winter shelters), followed by 5 years or longer. Among the sheltered population, 3-6 months was the most common length of time homeless, while over one quarter of people who are unsheltered have been homeless for 5 years or more. Sixty percent of the unsheltered homeless have been homeless for a year or more.

The table also shows that 21 people were newly homeless (became homeless in the week before the count), suggesting a substantial flow into homelessness from other precarious housing situations.

Table 17 - Length of time homeless

| Time Homeless | Sheltered | | Unsheltered | | Total Homeless | |
|--------------------------|-----------|------------|-------------|------------|----------------|------------|
| | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage |
| Under 1 week | 15 | 3% | 6 | 2% | 21 | 3% |
| 1 week to under 1 month | 46 | 9% | 9 | 3% | 55 | 7% |
| 1 month to under 3 mos | 91 | 17% | 32 | 12% | 123 | 15% |
| 3 months to under 6 mos | 116 | 22% | 29 | 11% | 145 | 18% |
| 6 mos to less than 1 yr | 64 | 12% | 29 | 11% | 93 | 12% |
| 1 yr to less than 2 yrs | 76 | 14% | 37 | 14% | 113 | 14% |
| 2 yrs to less than 5 yrs | 64 | 12% | 51 | 19% | 115 | 14% |
| 5 years and longer | 64 | 12% | 71 | 27% | 135 | 17% |
| Total Responses | 536 | 100% | 264 | 100% | 800 | 100% |
| Not Stated | 43 | | 9 | | 52 | |
| Total | 579 | | 273 | | 852 | |

¹¹ BC Housing does not provide data for this variable.

5.4 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 (38%), followed by disability benefit (24%) for a combined total of 62%. Roughly equal proportions reported no income (16%), employment (14%) and other sources (15%). Examples of other income sources include sex work, selling drugs, theft, Workers Compensation, selling things and window cleaning. OAS/GIS/ CPP and other pensions were reported by 56 individuals (out of 69 people that were age 65 or older).

Table 18 - 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 welfare | 269 | 36% | 112 | 43% | 381 | 38% |
| Disability benefit | 193 | 26% | 46 | 18% | 239 | 24% |
| Employment Insurance | 14 | 2% | 1 | 0% | 15 | 2% |
| OAS/GIS/ CPP and other pensions | 42 | 6% | 14 | 5% | 56 | 6% |
| Other sources | | | | | | |
| No income | 119 | 16% | 38 | 15% | 157 | 16% |
| Employment | 115 | 16% | 20 | 8% | 135 | 14% |
| Other | 65 | 9% | 83 | 32% | 148 | 15% |
| Binning, bottle collecting | 9 | | 25 | | 34 | |
| Panhandling | 7 | | 22 | | 29 | |
| Sex work | 0 | | 4 | | 4 | |
| Criminal activity | 1 | | 8 | | 9 | |
| Other | 55 | | 28 | | 83 | |
| Total Respondents | 737 | | 262 | | 999 | |
| Not stated | 415 | | 11 | | 426 | |
| Total | 1,152 | | 273 | | 1,425 | |

The unsheltered homeless were more likely to report income assistance (43%) compared to the sheltered homeless (36%) and less likely to report disability benefits (18% versus 26%).

- About one third of the unsheltered homeless reported other income sources including binning, bottle collecting or panhandling.
- Employment (full, part-time and casual) was a source of income for 16% of the sheltered homeless enumerated, compared to only 8% of the unsheltered homeless.
- The incidence of pension income was the same for both the sheltered and unsheltered homeless.

5.5 Health conditions

The 2013 Vancouver Homeless Count 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 Table 19 and Table 20 include both self-reported health conditions, as well as the perceived health conditions identified by interviewers.¹² In these cases, the interviewer's perception was coded for the homeless individual.

Table 19 shows that more than 80% of the homeless had one or more health conditions. 26% of the homeless population had one health condition and 58% had two or more health conditions, meaning that 84% of those counted had one or more health conditions. Only 16% of the homeless were reported to have no health conditions.

Table 19 - Incidence of health conditions

| Health condition | Sheltered homeless | | Unsheltered homeless | | Total homeless | |
|------------------------|--------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|----------------|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| No health conditions | 129 | 15% | 50 | 19% | 179 | 16% |
| One health condition | 230 | 27% | 59 | 22% | 289 | 26% |
| Two or more conditions | 480 | 57% | 156 | 59% | 636 | 58% |
| Total respondents | 839 | 100% | 265 | 100% | 1,104 | 100% |
| Not stated | 313 | | 8 | | 321 | |
| Total | 1,152 | | 273 | | 1,425 | |

Includes self identified and perceived

Note: High non-response rate amongst sheltered homeless may limit representativeness.

The unsheltered homeless were somewhat more likely to have two health conditions (59%) than the sheltered homeless (57%) although the difference was not large. Overall the data suggest that the two populations are similar in the incidence of health conditions.

Table 20 shows that addiction was the most common health issue among the homeless counted. Sixty three percent of those counted and who answered this question had a self identified or perceived addiction. The incidence of addiction was similar among both the sheltered and unsheltered homeless at 62-63%. The next most common health problem was mental illness (46%). Reported and perceived mental illness was more prevalent among the sheltered homeless (49%) compared to the unsheltered homeless (39%). However, the unsheltered homeless were more likely to have a medical condition.

¹² Perceived conditions account for a small share of total positive answers, mostly among unsheltered homeless.

Table 20 - Type of health conditions

| Health condition (more than 1 possible) | Sheltered homeless | | Unsheltered homeless | | Total homeless | |
|--|--------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|----------------|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Medical condition | 341 | 41% | 128 | 48% | 469 | 42% |
| Physical disability | 288 | 34% | 87 | 33% | 375 | 34% |
| Addiction | 529 | 63% | 165 | 62% | 694 | 63% |
| Mental illness | 409 | 49% | 103 | 39% | 512 | 46% |
| Total respondents | 839 | 100% | 265 | 100% | 1,104 | 100% |
| Not stated | 313 | | 8 | | 321 | |
| Total | 1,152 | | 273 | | 1,425 | |

Includes self identified and perceived

5.6 The unsheltered homeless

5.6.1 Where stayed last night

One of the screening questions asked the unsheltered homeless where the individual stayed the previous night. Of the 273 unsheltered respondents, the largest share (66%) reported staying outside including in cars, garages, public buildings, vehicles and other places that are not considered fit for human habitation. Almost one third of the unsheltered homeless (87 people) stayed temporarily at someone else's place (where they did not pay rent and had no security of tenure).

Table 21 - Where the unsheltered homeless stayed

| Location | Number | Percent |
|----------------------|--------|---------|
| Outside | 180 | 66% |
| Someone else's place | 87 | 32% |
| Other | 6 | 2% |
| Total respondents | 273 | 100% |

5.6.2 Reasons for not staying in a shelter

Those who stayed outside were asked why they did not stay in a shelter. The most common reason stated was that they dislike shelters (42%). When asked to specify further, reasons for this included bedbugs, crime, overcrowded conditions, and the presence of drugs and alcohol. Thirteen percent said they were turned away from a shelter because it was full; an additional eight individuals (3%) noted that they did try to stay in a shelter, but were turned away because they were considered inappropriate for the shelter.¹³ Sixteen percent said they were able to stay with a friend for the evening and did not need to stay in a shelter.

¹³ 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.

Table 22 - Why unsheltered homeless did not use a shelter

| Reason (select only one) | Number | Percent |
|---------------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Dislike | 109 | 42% |
| Bedbugs and other pests | 18 | 7% |
| Noise | 1 | 0% |
| Crime | 10 | 4% |
| Drugs and alcohol are present | 6 | 2% |
| Overcrowded | 11 | 4% |
| Other dislike | 35 | 13% |
| Turned away – full | 33 | 13% |
| Able to stay with friends | 42 | 16% |
| Turned away - inappropriate | 8 | 3% |
| Didn't know them | 2 | 1% |
| Couldn't get to it | 12 | 5% |
| Other reasons | 56 | 21% |
| Total respondents | 262 | 100% |
| No answer | 11 | |
| Total | 273 | |

6 Profile of Heat and Winter Response shelter clients

Clients of two different groups of shelters operating in Vancouver at count time are profiled: low barrier shelters operated on a temporary basis beginning in the winter of 2008 called HEAT shelters and Winter Response shelters, and Other Shelters (composed of year-round and seasonal shelters).¹⁴ ¹⁵ The unsheltered homeless are included for comparison.

On March 13, 2013, 381 people stayed overnight in HEAT and Winter Response shelters, but only 289 completed interviews providing demographic information, so the following tables are based on 289 clients (76% of all HEAT/Winter Response clients). There was a low response rate for Other Shelters on certain questions, including income and medical conditions, so these are excluded from some tables.

GLOSSARY

HEAT Shelters

Homeless Emergency Action Team shelters are temporary low barrier shelters in place until planned permanent supportive housing is opened.

Winter Response Shelters

Winter Response shelters are temporary low barrier winter shelters operating in the City of Vancouver from November to April each winter.

Year-round Shelters

Permanent shelters funded by BC Housing and others, open year-round. Offer 24/7 service, meals and other services including case management.

Seasonal Shelters

Formerly known as 'cold/wet weather' services, these beds and mats typically open from November through March. Support services are on a more limited basis than in year-round service.

Extreme Weather Response (EWR) Shelters

EWR shelters provide extra overnight shelter spaces during periods of extreme weather, often mats. They are dependent on volunteers and have limited support services.

¹⁴ In some tables Other Shelter data is unavailable due to poor response rates.

¹⁵ There were no EWR shelters operating on count night.

6.1 HEAT/Winter compared with Other Shelters and Unsheltered

Table 23 shows that HEAT and Winter Response shelter clients were more likely to be male (82%) than Other Shelter clients (68%). Other Shelters accommodated more homeless women (265) than HEAT/Winter shelters (51) or compared to the unsheltered population (45). Overall the gender distribution in HEAT/Winter shelters more closely resembled the unsheltered population.

Table 23 - Gender

| Gender | HEAT/Winter | | Other Shelters | | Unsheltered homeless | |
|-------------------|-------------|---------|----------------|---------|----------------------|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Men | 236 | 82% | 559 | 68% | 222 | 82% |
| Women | 51 | 18% | 265 | 32% | 45 | 17% |
| Transgender | 0 | 0% | 4 | 0% | 3 | 1% |
| Total respondents | 287 | 100% | 828 | 100% | 270 | 100% |
| Not known | 2 | | 35 | | 3 | |
| Total | 289 | | 863 | | 273 | |

The age profile of the three populations is similar. About half were between 25 and 44 years and slightly fewer clients (proportionately) under 25 used the HEAT/Winter shelters (11%), while they accounted for 13% of the Other Shelter clients (excluding accompanied children) and 12% of unsheltered homeless. More older homeless persons (55 and over) stayed in the Other shelters (330 people) compared to Heat/Winter (54) although the proportions among their total clienteles are similar - approximately 20%.

Table 24 - Age

| Age groups | HEAT/Winter | | Other Shelters | | Unsheltered homeless | |
|-------------------|-------------|---------|----------------|---------|----------------------|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Under 19 | 3 | 1% | 28 | 3% | 5 | 2% |
| 19-24 | 28 | 10% | 84 | 10% | 27 | 10% |
| 25-34 | 70 | 25% | 131 | 16% | 55 | 21% |
| 35-44 | 71 | 25% | 210 | 25% | 77 | 30% |
| 45-54 | 58 | 20% | 211 | 25% | 55 | 21% |
| 55-64 | 43 | 15% | 119 | 14% | 33 | 13% |
| 65+ | 11 | 4% | 49 | 6% | 9 | 3% |
| Total respondents | 284 | 100% | 832 | 100% | 261 | 100% |
| Not stated | 5 | | 31 | | 12 | |
| Total | 289 | | 863 | | 273 | |

HEAT/Winter Response shelter clients were more likely to self identify as Aboriginal (34%) compared to Other Shelter clients (25%). However, more Aboriginal homeless persons stayed in Other Shelters on count night in absolute terms (168 compared to 96 in

HEAT/Winter shelters). The incidence of Aboriginal identity was highest among the unsheltered homeless (39%).

Table 25 - Aboriginal identity

| Aboriginal identity | HEAT/Winter | | Other Shelters | | Unsheltered homeless | |
|---------------------|-------------|---------|----------------|---------|----------------------|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Aboriginal | 96 | 34% | 168 | 25% | 105 | 39% |
| Not Aboriginal | 186 | 66% | 516 | 75% | 165 | 61% |
| Total respondents | 282 | 100% | 684 | 100% | 270 | 100% |
| No answer | 7 | | 179 | | 3 | |
| Total | 289 | | 863 | | 273 | |

6.2 HEAT/Winter compared with Unsheltered

Responses from Other Shelters are excluded from the next set of tables due to the low number of responses.

A distinct pattern is distinct with respect to length of time homeless. HEAT/Winter clients have been homeless for a shorter period of time than the Unsheltered homeless population. Only 12% of the Heat/Winter clients reported a length of time homeless 5 years or longer, compared over one quarter among the Unsheltered. Similarly, 8% of HEAT/winter clients had been homeless for under 1 month, compared to 5% among the unsheltered. The most frequent length of time homeless among the HEAT/winter clients was 3-6 months.

Table 26 - Length of time homeless

| Time Homeless | HEAT/Winter | | Unsheltered homeless | |
|---------------------------|-------------|------------|----------------------|---------|
| | Number | Percentage | Number | Percent |
| Under 1 week | 2 | 1% | 6 | 2% |
| 1 week to under 1 month | 19 | 7% | 9 | 3% |
| 1 month to under 3 months | 40 | 14% | 32 | 12% |
| 3 months to under 6 mos | 72 | 25% | 29 | 11% |
| 6 mos to less than 1 yr | 38 | 13% | 29 | 11% |
| 1 yr to less than 2 yrs | 41 | 14% | 37 | 14% |
| 2 yrs to less than 5 yrs | 41 | 14% | 51 | 19% |
| 5 years and longer | 35 | 12% | 71 | 27% |
| Total Responses | 288 | 100% | 264 | 100% |
| Not Stated | 1 | | 9 | |
| Total | 289 | | 273 | |

The incidence of income assistance as a source of income was the same for both the HEAT/Winter and Unsheltered populations, however, a larger share of HEAT/Winter Shelter

clients reported disability benefit as an income source (26%) than the unsheltered population (18%). The only other difference was that the unsheltered homeless were more likely to report “other income sources” which include sex work, selling drugs, selling things, theft etc.

Table 27 - Sources of Income

| Sources of income (more than 1 possible) | HEAT/Winter | | Unsheltered homeless | |
|--|-------------|---------|----------------------|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Government transfers | | | | |
| Income assistance or welfare | 128 | 44% | 112 | 43% |
| Disability benefit | 76 | 26% | 46 | 18% |
| Employment Insurance | 6 | 2% | 1 | 0% |
| OAS/GIS/ CPP and other pensions | 10 | 3% | 14 | 5% |
| Other sources | | 0% | | 0% |
| No income | 43 | 15% | 38 | 15% |
| Employment | 35 | 12% | 20 | 8% |
| Other | 28 | 10% | 83 | 32% |
| Total Respondents | 289 | 100% | 262 | 100% |
| Not stated | 0 | | 11 | |
| Total | 289 | | 273 | |

HEAT/Winter shelter clients and the Unsheltered homeless were equally likely to report having two or more health conditions. HEAT/Winter clients were more likely to report one health condition, and less likely to report no health conditions, suggesting they are in poorer health than the Unsheltered Homeless.

Table 28 - Incidence of health conditions

| Health condition | HEAT/Winter | | Unsheltered homeless | |
|------------------------|-------------|---------|----------------------|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| No health conditions | 36 | 13% | 50 | 19% |
| One health condition | 77 | 27% | 59 | 22% |
| Two or more conditions | 173 | 60% | 156 | 59% |
| Total respondents | 286 | 100% | 265 | 100% |
| Not stated | 3 | | 8 | |
| Total | 289 | | 273 | |

There is no discernable difference in the responses to type of health condition reported among the two populations, suggesting a very similar health profile, with the exception of physical disability, which appears to be disconcertingly high among the unsheltered homeless (60%) compared to the HEAT/Winter clients (39%).

Table 29 - Type of health conditions¹⁶

| Health condition (more than 1 possible) | HEAT/Winter | | Unsheltered homeless | |
|--|-------------|---------|----------------------|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Medical condition | 144 | 50% | 128 | 48% |
| Physical disability | 111 | 39% | 87 | 33% |
| Addiction | 200 | 70% | 165 | 62% |
| Mental illness | 118 | 41% | 103 | 39% |
| Total respondents | 286 | 100% | 265 | 100% |
| Not stated | 3 | | 8 | |
| Total | 289 | | 273 | |

In summary, compared with Other Shelter clients, individuals counted in the HEAT/Winter Response shelters were more likely to:

- Be male
- Of Aboriginal identity

Their age structure is similar to the Other Shelter clients (and the unsheltered homeless).

Compared to the Unsheltered homeless, HEAT/Winter clients:

- had been homeless for a shorter period of time than the unsheltered homeless, and
- had similar patterns of health conditions and income sources.

¹⁶ Health conditions include self-reported and perceived figures.