

Point-in-Time (PiT) Count Peterborough - Backgrounder

What is a Point-In-Time Count?

- A Point-in-Time (PiT) Count is used to help determine the extent and nature of homelessness in a community on a given night, or at a single point in time.
- Peterborough's PiT count is part of the first coordinated national count designed to align timing and methodology for counts in different communities across the country.
- The PiT count is part of the Federal Government's Homelessness Partnering Strategy aimed at reducing homelessness by helping to move people who are chronically or episodically homeless from the streets or homeless shelters into permanent housing.
- The results of the PiT count will be shared with the different parties concerned with homelessness in our community.
- The information collected through the PiT count is especially useful in assisting our most vulnerable citizens who are homeless.

How will we do it?

There are three parts to this Point-in-Time count:

1. **Survey** Volunteers will conduct a needs assessment surveys with people who are homeless and willing to be surveyed (outdoors and indoors).
2. **Census: Unsheltered (outside)** Teams stop every person they encounter in outdoor study areas in public places. This information is used to calculate an estimate of the number of people sleeping outdoors on the night of the survey.
3. **Census: Sheltered (inside)** Staff will collect the actual number of people who are homeless and staying in temporary shelter.

Who are we counting?

The focus of the count is on those who are absolutely homeless (e.g., sleeping in shelters or on the street) on the day of the count. Our count will also seek to survey the hidden homeless population in order to provide some information on their service needs.

1. **Unsheltered homelessness** includes people who are sleeping in places unfit for human habitation, including the following locations: streets, alleys, parks and other public locations, transit stations, abandoned buildings, vehicles, ravines and other outdoor locations
2. **Sheltered homelessness** includes people sleeping in locations such as emergency shelters (general and specific to men, women, youth, etc.) and/or extreme weather shelters.

Will we count everyone who is experiencing homelessness?

Short answer, no. It's a snapshot of one night.

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Much like an iceberg, we will only observe what's visible. Most homeless people are hidden. Especially in cold weather, they could be "couch surfing" by sleeping temporarily at someone's place or in another non-visible location. Some homeless cannot be found on the particular day of the count either.

- A PiT Count captures the *minimum* number of people experiencing absolute homelessness in a community on a particular day (or night). With help from you and other local stakeholders the accuracy of our PiT Count will improve.
- We recognize there is a population that may not be included such as people who are couch-surfing, however, if these people are encountered, their experience will be captured to shed light on the complexities of this situation.

How will we protect the privacy of those we survey?

- To respect the confidentiality of all participants, we will not be gathering any identifiable information (example: names). The surveys do collect specific information about each individual who is surveyed (example gender/date of birth). This information will be used to cross-reference and estimate duplication across surveys.
- The surveyors will be wearing identifiable buttons on their clothing and ask people if they have already taken part in the survey. No one is obligated to take part in the survey when approached.
- We will conduct the count in as short amount of time as possible to decrease likelihood of duplication and to reduce the invasiveness of the count.

How will we ensure that highly vulnerable populations are not put at further risk?

- Training: all PiT Count volunteers are trained to deliver the survey respectfully and safely.
- The privacy and confidentiality of survey participants is our utmost priority. Participation in the survey is completely *voluntary* and every effort will be taken to maintain the confidentiality of homeless people. Data obtained from the surveys are aggregated so that the published results cannot be used to identify people.
- **Resource Cards:** We will use the PiT count as an opportunity to provide information on available services. Resource cards will be provided to those who show interest, regardless of their participation in the survey.

Why is a National Count taking place?

- Historically, it has been difficult to compare data on homelessness across Canadian communities.
- One of the greatest barriers to comparability is the difference in data collection processes used across the Country.

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- As such, HPS requires that all participating communities ask a set of Core Survey Questions. The Core Questions include items intended to identify whether the respondent is homeless for the purpose of the PIT Count, to provide some demographic information about the homeless population and to highlight potential service needs.
- Communities can now compare their data with other communities regionally, provincially and nationally.
- A coordinated survey puts us one step closer to a national picture of homelessness!

What's included in the PiT Count survey?

- The methodology and survey design were developed through extensive research and consultation with experts along with feedback from Canadian communities that have previously conducted counts.
- The survey method used is that recommended for use by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to ensure a statistically valid survey methodology.
- A widely endorsed quality assurance method is in place to aid in ensuring that the outdoor estimate is as accurate as possible.

A PiT Count Survey Form has three distinct components:

1. The *opening script*, used by volunteers to obtain consent from potential participants;
2. The *screening questions*, used by volunteers to determine who is eligible to participate in the survey;
3. The *survey questions*, asked by volunteers to gather data on people who are experiencing homelessness.

What will we do with the results?

- A report that includes an estimate of the number of homeless people (both inside and outdoors) in Peterborough and the key findings from the survey questionnaire will be released in early July.
- We will submit our results to the HPS and the data will contribute to a cross-Canada picture of homelessness.
- It will deepen our understanding of the population affected by homelessness, and the supports that may be needed to help them find secure housing.

Why is it important to Peterborough; why should we participate?

- It will allow Peterborough to better understand the nature and extent of homelessness and the characteristics of our homeless population.

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- This PiT count information can be used to better allocate resources and supplement effective programming.
- It will provide a baseline of information and allow us to measure progress towards ending homelessness.
- It will increase public awareness about homelessness.
- Our count is part of a cross-Canada initiative. The results of our PiT Count will contribute to a better understanding of homelessness regionally, provincially/territorially and nationally.
- It is not simply about enumerating homeless persons; it's about catalyzing change at the local and national levels to end homelessness.

How can I participate in the PiT Count?

- We need volunteers to help conduct the survey on the night of the count.
- Volunteer training will take place on March 10th from m 2-4pm and March 15th from 6:30-8:30pm
- Contact Erica Richmond to volunteer

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For more information:

- Sign up for our PiT update email list
- Visit our website www.uwpeterborough.ca
- Coordinator Contact information:

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