



**United Way**  
Kingston, Frontenac  
Lennox and Addington

**Canada**

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# **Results of the Urban Kingston 2016 Point-in-Time Count**

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# 2016

## Results of the Urban Kingston Point-in-Time Count

*Conducted on Wednesday, April 6 2016*  
7:00 pm - 11:00 pm

### Overview

On April 6, 2016, United Way KFLA, through a grant from Employment and Social Development Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS), conducted a coordinated Point in Time (PiT) Homeless Count in urban Kingston as part of the first nationally coordinated PiT count.

**91**

Number of people experiencing absolute homelessness found in Kingston in 2016

**137**

Number of people encountered who were homeless\* in Kingston in 2016

A total of 91 people were found to be absolutely homeless on April 6, 2016. Absolute homelessness refers to those individuals who are unsheltered or "sleeping rough," and those who are emergency sheltered.

These individuals were staying in an emergency shelter, domestic violence shelter, an institution, or in public spaces on the night of the count. Employment and Social Development Council defines emergency shelters as:

Facilities providing temporary, short-term accommodation for homeless individuals and families. This may or may not include other services such as food, clothing or counselling.<sup>1</sup>

An additional 46 individuals were staying in transitional housing. The HPS defines transitional housing as:

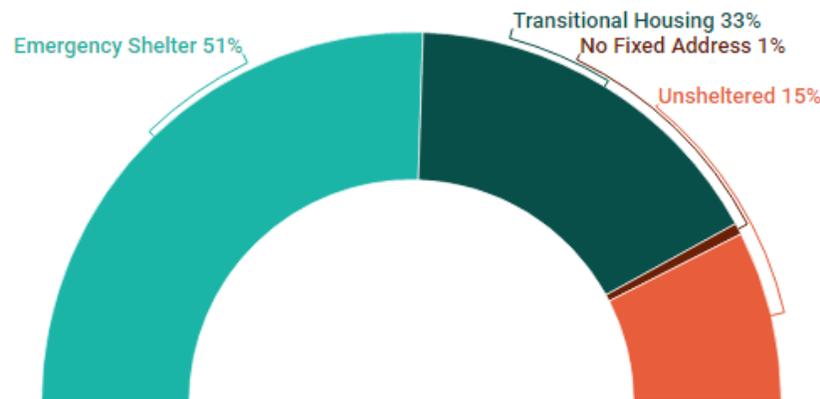
Housing facilities that provide services beyond basic needs and that, while not permanent, generally allow for a longer length of stay than emergency housing facilities (up to three years). These facilities offer more privacy to residents than emergency housing. Transitional housing is targeted to those in need of structure, support, and/or skill-building to move from homelessness to housing stability, and ultimately to prevent a return to homelessness.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Employment and Social Development Canada, "Shelter Capacity Report 2015"

<sup>2</sup> Employment and Social Development Canada, "Homelessness Partnering Strategy Directives 2014-2019"

As is the case with any homeless count, this should be considered the minimum number of people experiencing homelessness on that night. Those who are precariously housed, living in motels, or “couch-surfing” are not captured.

## Where were they found?



Of the 91 people experiencing absolute homelessness, 71 or 78% were sheltered, meaning they slept in an emergency shelter, domestic violence shelter, or an institution such as a detox centre, hospital, or remand centre on the night of the count. 20 or 22% were unsheltered, meaning that they were sleeping in parks, tents, or on the streets on the night of April 6.

### **Survey Results Highlights**

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness defines homelessness as “the situation of an individual or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. Homelessness describes a range of housing and shelter circumstances, with people being without any shelter at one end, and being insecurely housed at the other.”<sup>3</sup>

A total of 137 people were encountered on the night of April 6, 2016 who meet the criteria of the Canadian definition of homelessness. Of these individuals, 96 agreed to complete brief surveys in order to capture demographic and experiential data. The statistics that follow represent those who were surveyed.

<sup>3</sup> Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, “Canadian Definition of Homelessness”

## **50% are women**

Kingston has a much higher rate of female homelessness than other Canadian cities

## **85% are sheltered**

51% were found in emergency or domestic violence shelters, 33% were living in transitional housing, and 1% were in institutions

## **122 days**

The median length of time people spent homeless within the past year

## **131 days**

The average length of time people spent homeless within the past year

## **38 years old**

The average age of people experiencing homelessness

## **33% are chronically homeless**

One third of respondents have been homeless for 6 months or more in the past year

## **15% are episodically homeless**

Almost one sixth of respondents have been homeless 3 or more times in the past year

## **61% receive income assistance**

OW and ODSP are the main sources of income for people experiencing homelessness

## **55% say they don't have enough income to afford housing**

And 47% say rents are too high to be affordable

## **8 families**

8 families were found homeless, including 12 children

Population	Percent
Male	45.9%
Female	49.6%
Transgender	1.5%
Gender unknown	3.0%
Aboriginal identity	12.5%
Veterans	10.4%
Chronically homeless	33.3%
Episodically homeless	14.6%

## **2016 PiT Count Background**

A Point-In-Time (PiT) Homeless Count is a snapshot of individuals and families experiencing homelessness that collects numerical and basic demographical information at a single point in time. There are two primary purposes of conducting a PiT count:

**A count of people experiencing absolute homelessness:** It is intended to identify how many people in a community experience homelessness in shelters and on the streets at a given time. Conducted over several years, PiT Counts can be used by the community to track progress in reducing homelessness.

**A survey of the homeless population:** Through an accompanying survey, the Count gives the community information on the demographics and service needs of their homeless population. This information can be used to target community resources to where they are most needed.<sup>4</sup>

Individuals enumerated include those staying in emergency shelters, domestic violence shelters, transitional housing, police custody, detox programs, and those staying outdoors in parks, makeshift shelters, on the streets, and in other public areas. A PiT Count is the best available method of obtaining an accurate picture of the number of people experiencing homelessness in urban centres, but its limitations must be considered. For example, a PiT Count is unable to capture those persons experiencing hidden homelessness, who may be

<sup>4</sup> Employment and Social Development Canada, "Guide to Point-In-Time Counts in Canada of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy"

staying at a friend's house or living in a motel room. Additionally, the unsheltered count relies on volunteers to find those experiencing homelessness in public areas, and some who may not appear to be homeless, who are well-hidden, or who are actively avoiding being counted may be missed. All PiT counts, due to their inherent limitations, underrepresent the total number of people experiencing homelessness in a given community. The findings from this PiT count should therefore be considered the minimum number of people that were homeless in Kingston on the night of April 6, 2016.

Through a grant from ESDC's Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS), United Way KFLA in consultation with the City of Kingston conducted Kingston's second PiT homeless count as part of the first nationally coordinated count on the evening of April 6, 2016. Shelter and transitional housing occupancy totals were obtained from the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS), a city-wide database used by all homelessness service providers in KFLA to track demographics and services accessed by people experiencing homelessness. A comprehensive outdoor enumeration and surveys were also conducted to capture the most accurate number of people experiencing homelessness possible. Surveys were administered at shelters and transitional housing units to obtain demographic and experiential data on those homeless individuals who are sheltered.

United Way KFLA had a dedicated PiT Count Coordinator who provided support to the planning phase of this initiative, and who was primarily responsible for the implementation of the 2016 Kingston Point in Time Count. United Way facilitated the recruitment and training of over 80 volunteers who canvassed 22 designated (high/medium) areas that were determined based on where homeless individuals are known to be. Two special teams were created to survey the "hot spots" in Kingston such as tent cities, abandoned buildings, forested areas, and public parks where people experiencing homelessness are known to frequent. These teams each included a police officer and front-line service providers. Support workers in 6 emergency shelters and 5 transition houses conducted interviews with clients and residents to provide survey data from these individuals on the night of the count.

All volunteers attended a training session immediately before deploying to their designated areas to conduct surveys on the night of the PiT Count. They were instructed to survey everyone they encountered, using questions from a screening tool to determine whether or not the person they were interviewing was experiencing homelessness. If the person was homeless, volunteers conducted the full survey after obtaining consent. If the person was not homeless, volunteers discontinued the survey process and recorded the interaction on a tally sheet. If any person declined to participate in the survey, but volunteers perceived evidence that the person was experiencing homelessness (i.e. carrying bag of belongings, sleeping bag, blankets), they recorded the person as "observed homeless" on a tally sheet, including their perceived age and gender.

## Housing and Homelessness Updates

Since the last PIT Count was conducted in Kingston in 2013, there have been significant changes to the City of Kingston’s approach to housing and homelessness. These shifts in strategic direction and service provision align with the City of Kingston’s 10-Year Municipal Housing & Homelessness Plan, which was adopted in 2013.

The City has adopted a Housing First approach to address the most vulnerable populations experiencing chronic homelessness. Housing First is defined as:

A specific type of intervention which seeks out homeless people that have complex and co-occurring issues, and serves those with the highest acuity first with minimal pre-conditions, such as “housing readiness”. The only real expectation that the person agrees to before starting the program is to have their support workers visit them in the home, to pay rent on time, and to work hard to avoid disrupting others that might lead to eviction.<sup>5</sup>

In 2015 alone, 95 highly vulnerable homeless households were housed through the Housing First program.

An additional 224 households were housed from the Social Housing Registry wait list in 2015. However, it is important to note that the waiting list for social housing in Kingston continues to grow.<sup>6</sup>

Year	# of households on waitlist	# of eligible applications received	# of applicants housed from waitlist
2013	1110	643	268
2014	1211	648	188
2015	1222	672	224



1,222

Number of households on the social housing waiting list as of 2015

Kingston’s vacancy rate continues to fluctuate significantly. In 2013 the vacancy rate was 2.3%, in 2014 it dropped to 1.9%, and in 2015 it rose to 2.8%. In 2016, the vacancy rate has been forecast at 1.9%.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> City of Kingston Housing and Social Services Department, “10-Year Municipal Housing & Homelessness Plan”

<sup>6</sup> City of Kingston Housing and Social Services Department, “2015 Report on Housing & Homelessness in the City of Kingston & County of Frontenac”

<sup>7</sup> Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, “Housing Market Outlook: Kingston CMA”

The average market rent in Kingston also continues to rise disproportionately to the housing allowances for social assistance.<sup>8</sup>

<b>Year</b>	<b>Average monthly rent for a 2 bedroom apartment</b>	<b>Max shelter allowance for a couple on Ontario Works (OW)</b>	<b>Max shelter allowance for a couple on Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)</b>
2013	\$1,005	\$590	\$753
2014	\$1,054	\$596	\$753
2015	\$1,099	\$609	\$753

There have also been considerable changes to the shelter system since 2013. Dawn House Women’s Shelter closed in September of 2015, and the Salvation Army’s Harbour Light Centre, a 7-bed men’s shelter, ceased operations in July of 2015. The Elizabeth Fry Society of Kingston opened a 6-bed shelter for women involved in or at risk of becoming involved in the justice system in July of 2015, which was expanded to an 8-bed capacity in March 2016. Between 2013 and 2015, there was a decrease in the number of people requiring shelter and the average daily demand for shelter beds.<sup>7</sup>

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total # clients accessing shelter</b>	<b>Average nightly shelter demand by client</b>
2013	864	62
2014	782	71
2015	687	65

Between February and July 2016, the Kingston Youth Shelter was closed due to damages from a fire which dispersed former residents to various locations. On the night of the 2016 PiT Count, many youth were likely couch surfing, while few chose to stay at Ryandale’s overflow shelter. This situation could have affected the number of youth encountered and surveyed on April 6, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> City of Kingston Housing and Social Services Department, “2015 Report on Housing & Homelessness in the City of Kingston & County of Frontenac”

## **Methods**

To ensure a more accurate number and utilize resources most efficiently, the following techniques were used to enhance data quality:

1. Working with the City of Kingston housing staff to prioritize all neighbourhoods based on where people experiencing homelessness are known to frequent, as well as the density of the known homeless population (i.e. high priority [5+ individuals], medium priority [2-4 individuals], and low priority [0-1 individuals]).
2. Engaging with police, shelter staff, and social service agencies to identify specific “hot spots” such as camp sites, abandoned buildings, and forested areas where homeless individuals are known to be. Special teams were assigned to survey these areas.
3. Instructing volunteers to engage with everyone encountered, regardless of appearance (not just those that may “look” homeless).

During the planning stages, the PiT Count Coordinator worked to engage the local community and the homelessness services sector. The United Way Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) Community Advisory Board (CAB) acted as the oversight committee. The Coordinator developed plans and organized logistics for survey development, community engagement, and volunteer recruitment.

The PiT Coordinator engaged in the creation and review of the survey with input from social service agencies, community stakeholders, and key informants. The unsheltered count locations were defined, logistics for the day of the count were determined, and volunteers were recruited from a variety of sources. The Coordinator then reviewed volunteer applications and assigned volunteers to appropriate teams. On the night of April 6, the PiT Count Coordinator led volunteer training and managed the base command centre, accounting for all documentation and returning volunteers. Following the Count, the Coordinator oversaw data cleaning, data entry into HIFIS, and the analysis of results.

The PiT Count survey was developed in consultation with the City of Kingston, which coordinated the previous PiT Count in 2013. The 12 core questions recommended by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH) were used, as well as several of the sub-set questions from the same source. The COH survey was compared with the 2013 PiT Count questions to identify where sensitivities had arisen previously. Follow-up meetings were scheduled with shelter and transitional housing providers and community agencies to seek their feedback on questions and methodology, and engage them in the PiT Count process. As a result, many front line staff volunteered to take part in the PiT Count. This facilitated the implementation of the plan and ensured that every survey team had at least one person with experience or knowledge in working with this population.

In addition to inviting volunteers from organizations and the community at large, the process included targeting individuals from specific groups such as City of Kingston Housing and Social Services department staff, Queen's University and St. Lawrence College students (i.e. urban planning, policy studies, police foundations, behavioural science, community & justice, psychology, public health, medicine, nursing, social services, etc.), shelter and transitional housing staff, service providers, community police volunteers, HPS CAB members, United Way board members and volunteers.

Volunteers were assigned to teams of 3-4 people, with at least one individual having experience working with homeless populations, and ensuring a mix of male and female volunteers. Two special teams were created that each included a police officer and experienced front line staff to survey areas that had been identified as "hot spots." All high and medium priority neighbourhoods were thoroughly canvassed and surveyed. The majority of low priority neighbourhoods are suburban and geographically widespread. During Kingston's 2013 PiT Count, few to no individuals experiencing homelessness were encountered in these areas. As such, low priority neighbourhoods were not surveyed in 2016.

Each volunteer was given a tally sheet on which they listed their name and indicated the survey zone number they were responsible for. Surveys were numbered so that they could be matched with the corresponding volunteer and tally sheet. These were reviewed to detect and correct omissions and inaccuracies (i.e. if the question "Where are you staying tonight?" was left blank, but the survey was conducted at an emergency shelter, "Emergency Shelter / Domestic Violence Shelter" was assumed during the data cleaning process).

Individuals who elected to participate in the survey were offered an honorarium consisting of a string backpack that contained a pair of socks, Tim Hortons gift card, 2-ride bus transit pass, granola bar and juice box, 211 card and other information pamphlets about community housing and homelessness services including services geared toward specific populations such as Aboriginal peoples and veterans.

Of the 137 people encountered, 96 consented to complete the survey. The experiential results in this report reflect the data collected through the 96 survey respondents.

## **Limitations**

Though a Point-in-Time Count is the most comprehensive methodology for enumerating and facilitating the collection of data on people experiencing homelessness, its limitations must be considered in full. When conducted over several years, PiT Counts can be used to measure community progress in reducing homelessness.

By focusing on a single day, the count will not include some people who cycle in and out of homelessness. What it will do, is provide an estimate of how many of these people are homeless at a given time.<sup>9</sup>

It is important to note that any PiT Count under-represents the number of people experiencing homelessness, and that the results should therefore be taken as the minimum value. There are likely to be additional people experiencing homelessness who were not counted. However, through this process we know that there were at least 91 people who were homeless and an additional 47 people living in time-limited transitional housing on the night of April 6, 2016.

Homeless persons enumerated in outdoor spaces were only counted if they were encountered on public property, or in participating indoor locations (such as Kingston Street Mission). If people who are homeless are indoors in non-participating locations, they are not counted. This includes those who are couch-surfing, living in a motel, sleeping in ATM foyers, or other comparable arrangements.

Finally, it is also important to note the weather on the night of the count. On April 6<sup>th</sup> there was heavy precipitation including snow and rain prior to and during the time of the count which may have reduced the number of homeless people who were outdoors in public spaces. It is possible that some individuals took shelter in alternate locations to avoid the inclement weather. Therefore, it is also possible that some people who would typically be “sleeping rough” were not counted on the night of April 6, 2016.

## **Results**

### **Homeless Populations**

137 homeless individuals were encountered during the Point in Time Count process. This total includes those who were unsheltered and those staying in emergency or domestic violence shelters (absolute homelessness) as well as individuals living in time limited transitional housing.

2016	Adults	Youth	Accompanied Children	Total	% of Total
Emergency Shelter	58	4	8	70	51%
Transitional Housing	21	17	8	46	33%
No Fixed Address	1	0	0	1	1%
Unsheltered	18	2	0	20	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>% of Total</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>100%</b>	

<sup>9</sup> Employment and Social Development Canada, “Guide to Point-In-Time Counts in Canada of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy”

### Absolute Homelessness

A total of 91 people were found to be absolutely homeless on April 6, 2016, with an additional 46 living in transitional housing. Of the 91 people, 70 or 77% were sheltered, meaning that they slept in an emergency shelter or a domestic violence shelter on the night of the count. One additional person (1%) was found in a hospital, detox centre, or remand centre on the night of the count, and stated that they had No Fixed Address (NFA). 20 people, or 22%, were unsheltered, meaning that they were found in parks, on the streets, or in other public spaces.

2016	Adults	Youth	Accompanied Children	Total	% of Total
Sheltered	58	4	8	70	77%
No Fixed Address	1	0	0	1	1%
Unsheltered	18	2	0	20	22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100%</b>
% of Total	85%	6%	9%	100%	

### Transitional Housing

46 of the 137 people encountered on April 6, 2016 were living in transitional housing. According to the Canadian definition of homelessness, these individuals are considered to be homeless. Their tenure in transitional housing is time limited, and thus they cannot be considered to have attained stable, permanent housing.

2016	Adults	Youth	Accompanied Children	Total
Transitional Housing	21	17	8	46
Percent of Total	46%	37%	17%	100%

## Demographics

### Gender

On the night of April 6<sup>th</sup>, 50% of people experiencing homelessness in Kingston were women. This is atypical to the national rate of the proportion of women experiencing homelessness, based on the results of PiT Counts elsewhere in Canada. Women are more likely to report domestic abuse and family breakdown or conflict as the reason they became homeless compared to men.

**1 in 4****Average proportion of people experiencing homelessness who identify as women****50%****Kingston's proportion of people experiencing homelessness who identify as women**

Of the 96 surveys completed, 49 of the respondents were women. Of these 49, the most common length of time women were homeless was 0-2 months (37%). 90% of all female survey respondents had stayed in an emergency shelter within the past year.

The average age of female survey respondents was 40 years.

### Age

The average age of people experiencing homelessness on the night of the PiT Count was 38 years. The most common age range was 25-44. The majority of people encountered were adults (55%).

**69****Age of the oldest person who was homeless****38****Average age****0****Age of the youngest person who was homeless**



14% of respondents' ages were unknown

### Aboriginal Status

During the data collection process, individuals who were experiencing homelessness were asked, "Do you identify as Aboriginal or do you have Aboriginal ancestry?" Respondents self-reported whether or not they were aboriginal, or could opt not to answer the question. 12.5% indicated that they were First Nations, Métis, or Inuit. A further 7% said that they had Aboriginal ancestry, and 6% were unsure whether they were Aboriginal.

### Veteran Status

A total of 10.4% of respondents indicated that they were veterans. 9 individuals had served in the Canadian Armed Forces, and 1 individual had served in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Less than 2% of Canadians are veterans, which tells us that the number of people experiencing homelessness within this population in Kingston is disproportionately high.<sup>10</sup> However, in both Canada and the United States, veterans are known to be at higher risk of homelessness than the general population.

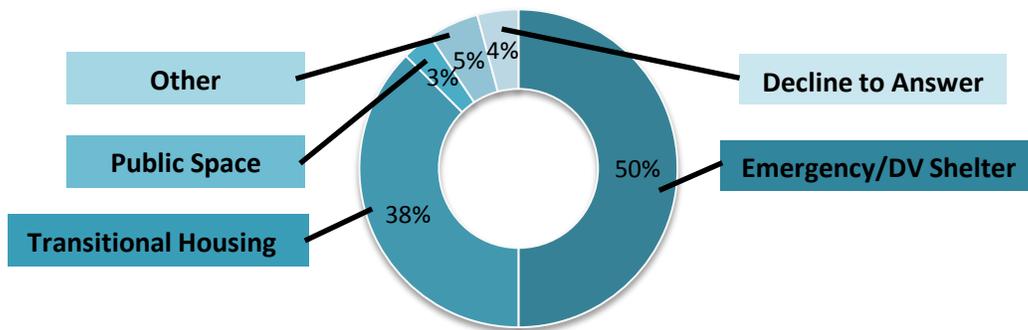
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<sup>10</sup> Veterans Affairs Canada, "General Statistics"

## Sleeping Arrangements

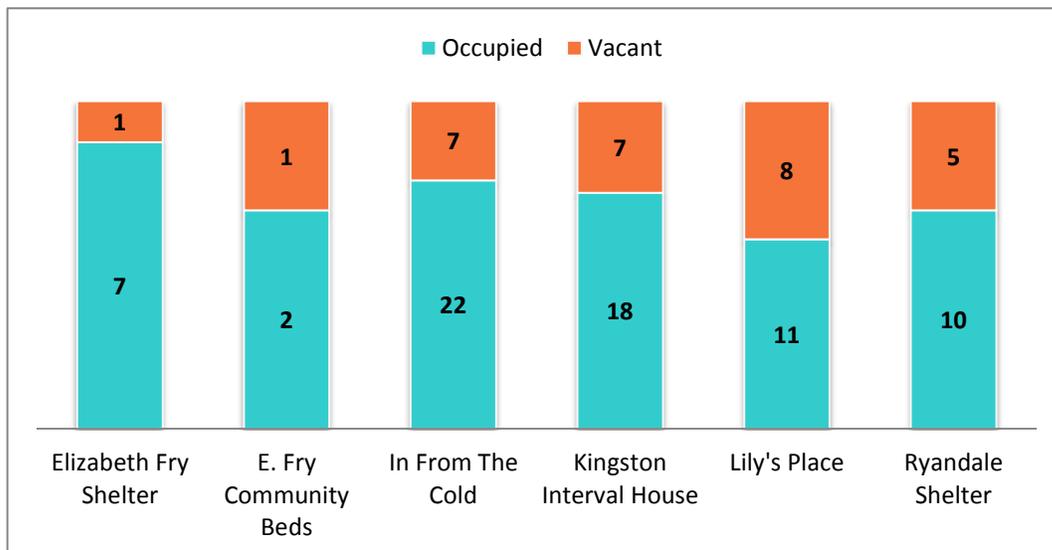
The 2016 PiT Count found that the majority of individuals experiencing homelessness in Kingston are sheltered. Of the 96 people who completed surveys, the majority indicated that they were sleeping in an emergency shelter, domestic violence shelter, or transition house on the night of April 6, 2016. 50% of respondents indicated that they would be sleeping in an emergency or domestic violence shelter, and 38% were staying in transitional housing. 12.5% of those who chose to complete a survey were unsheltered. Of these individuals, 25% reported that they would be sleeping in a public space, 42% in an other unsheltered location, and 33% declined to answer.

### Where are you sleeping tonight?



## Shelter Capacity

On the night of April 6, 2016, emergency and domestic violence shelters were operating at 71% capacity. This means that no one who was seeking shelter would need to be turned away due to lack of available beds. In early 2016, the Kingston Youth Shelter was closed for several months as a result of damages from a fire. The PiT Count overlapped this period of closure, and key informants reported that many youth preferred to couch surf rather than stay in adult shelters.



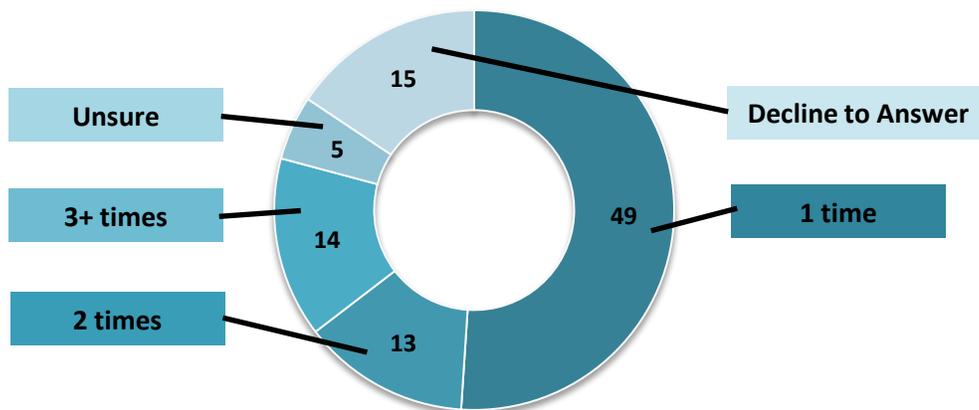
## Duration of Homelessness

Kingston's 2016 PiT Count found that a slight majority (35%) of survey respondents had been homeless for 0-2 months. However, 33% had been homeless for 6 months or longer. The average length of time respondents had spent homeless in the past year was 131 days.



Over half (51%) of survey respondents reported that they had been homeless only once within the past year. 14% said they had been homeless twice, and 16% said they had been homeless three or more times. 5% of respondents had been homeless for 6 months or longer *and* had been homeless three or more times within the past year.

## Number of Times Homeless



Those who completed surveys were asked at what age they first became homeless in their lives. An alarming proportion of people experiencing homelessness as adults first became homeless as youth, which provides further evidence of the need to focus on both preventative and intervention-based solutions to end youth homelessness. 35% of those surveyed said they were under 25 the first time they were homeless.

**8 years**

Lowest age first homeless

**68 years**

Highest age first homeless

**35%**

Were under the age of 25 the first time they were homeless

**50%**

Were between 25 and 55 the first time they were homeless

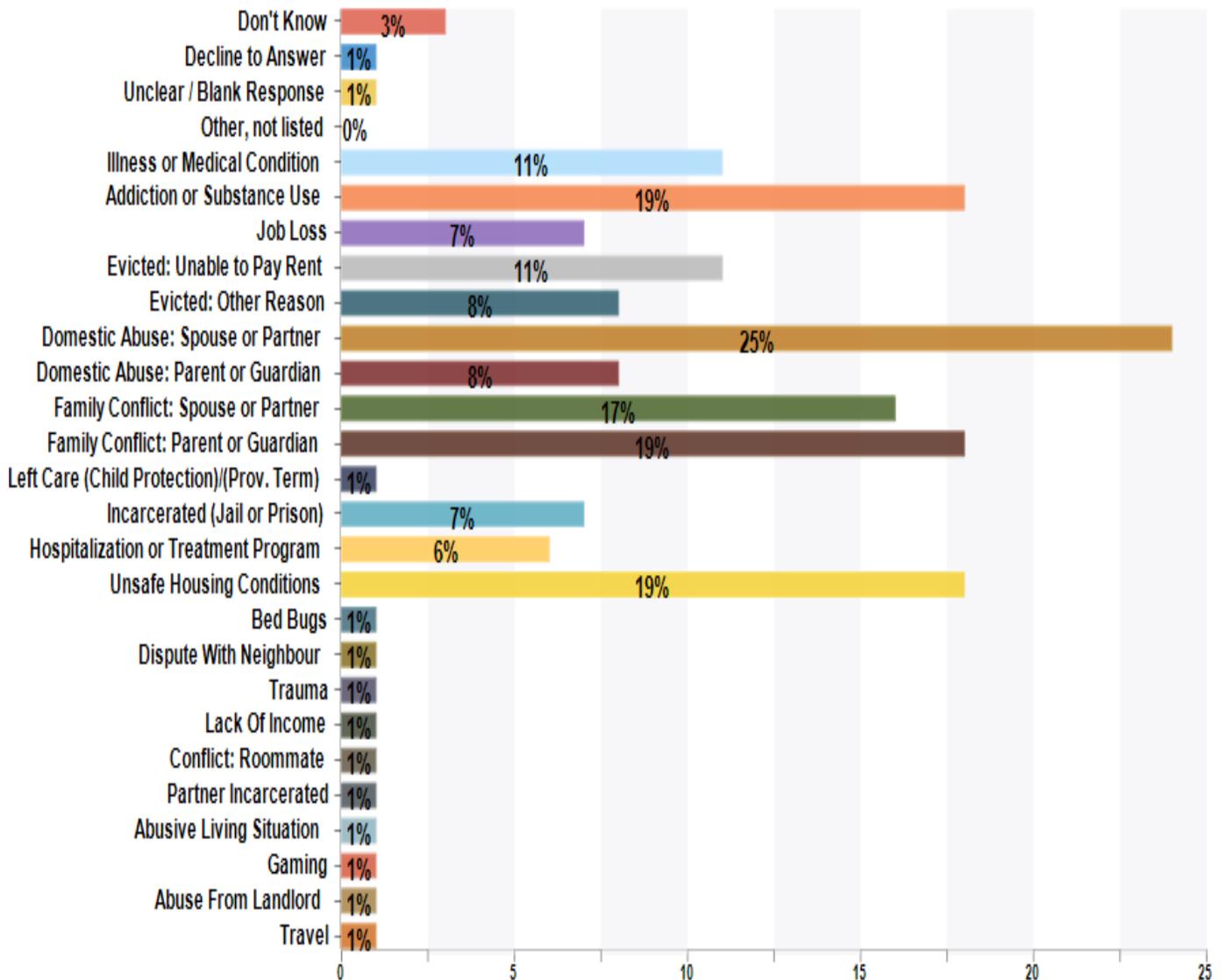
**5%**

Were over the age of 55 the first time they were homeless

The City of Kingston's 10-Year Housing & Homelessness Plan hopes to address chronic homelessness. In January of 2015, the City began implementing changes to end chronic homelessness by moving toward a Housing First model through collaboration with community partners in both the public and private sectors in order to better address the housing needs of the chronically homeless population. The City has prioritized an integrated system of housing and individualized supports with coordinated access and service provision in an attempt to move people out of chronic homelessness.

## Reasons for Housing Loss

The most common reasons that survey respondents said they became homeless were family conflict (36%), domestic abuse (33%), unsafe housing conditions (19%), and addictions or substance use issues (19%).

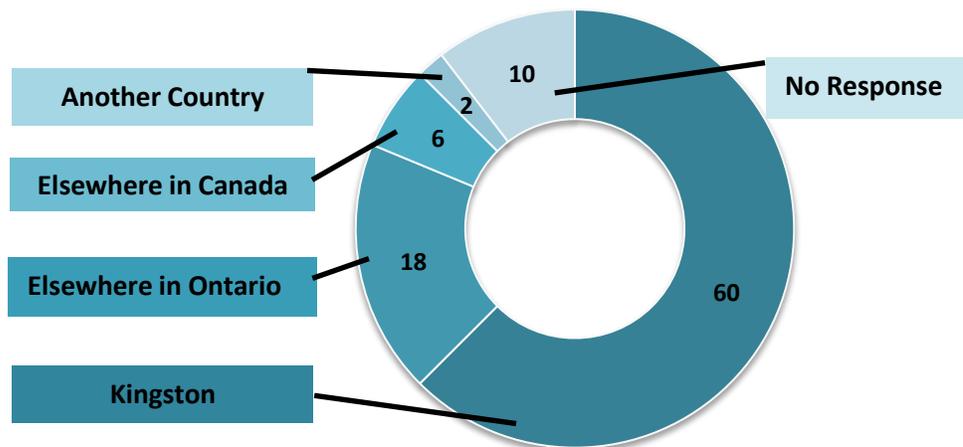


## Geography

When individuals were asked where they lived during the past year, the majority indicated they had been living in the City of Kingston for at least one year.

62% lived in Kingston, 19% came from elsewhere in Ontario, 6% had lived elsewhere in Canada, and 2% lived in another country one year ago.

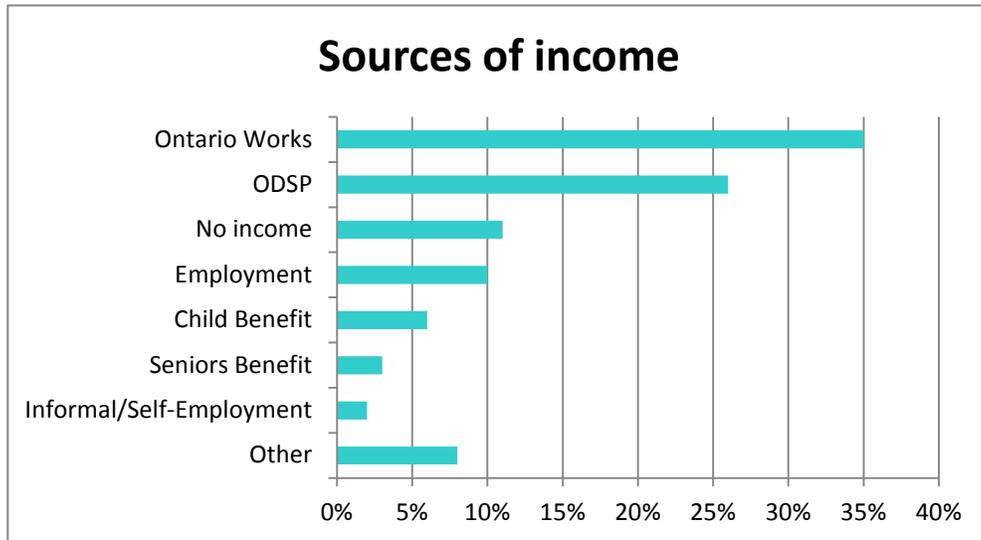
### **If you moved to Kingston in the past year, where were you living prior to coming here?**



## Sources of Income

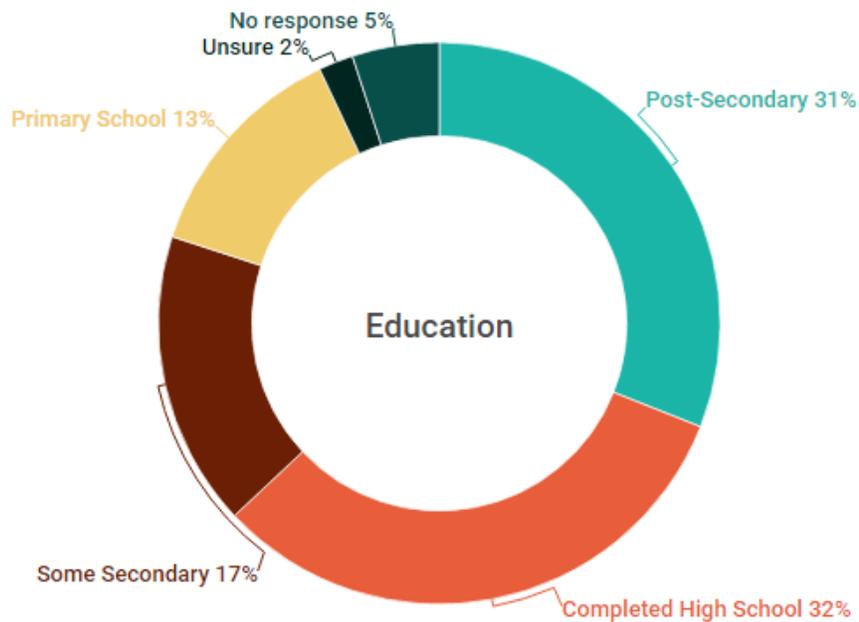
The most common method through which people experiencing homelessness obtain money is social assistance such as Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program.

61% of survey respondents reported that they rely on these programs, with 35% receiving support from OW and 26% from ODSP. 11% said they had no sources of income whatsoever. 10% said they obtain money through employment. It is important to note that some respondents indicated more than one source of income, as represented in the data below.



## Level of Education

Of the 96 survey respondents, the majority (63%) had completed high school or post-secondary school.



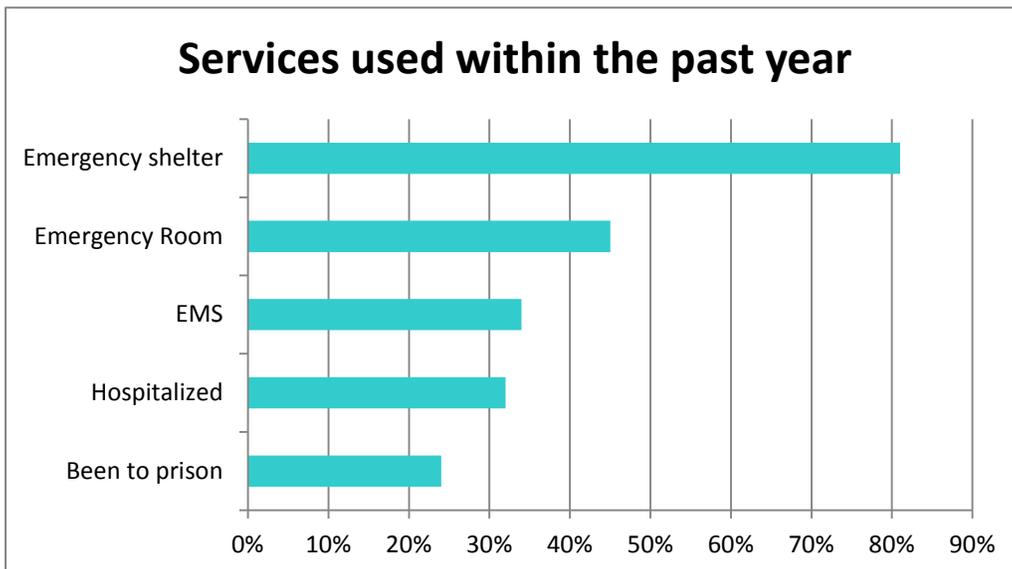
## Service Usage

The programs/and or services most frequently used by people experiencing homelessness in Kingston include emergency shelters and emergency health services. In the past year, 81% of those surveyed had stayed in an emergency shelter at least once, 45% had been to the Emergency Room, and 34% had used Emergency Medical Services (EMS).



81%

Proportion of respondents who had stayed in an emergency shelter in the past year



## Barriers to Housing

People who have become homeless face many barriers to obtaining and maintaining affordable permanent housing. Survey respondents were asked what they felt was preventing them from finding a permanent place to live, and could provide as many answers as necessary to represent their situation. The most common responses were overwhelmingly that they did not have enough income and that rents were too high for them to afford.

About 58% of respondents reported that they were homeless because they did not have enough income to afford rent, 47% because rents were too high to be affordable, and a further 30% indicated that housing was not available. There are a number of factors that could have contributed to these results.



## Not enough income

58% said they do not have enough income to afford permanent housing



## Rents are too high

47% identified the cost of rent as a barrier to ending their homelessness



## Affordable housing is not available

30% said that affordable housing is not available in Kingston

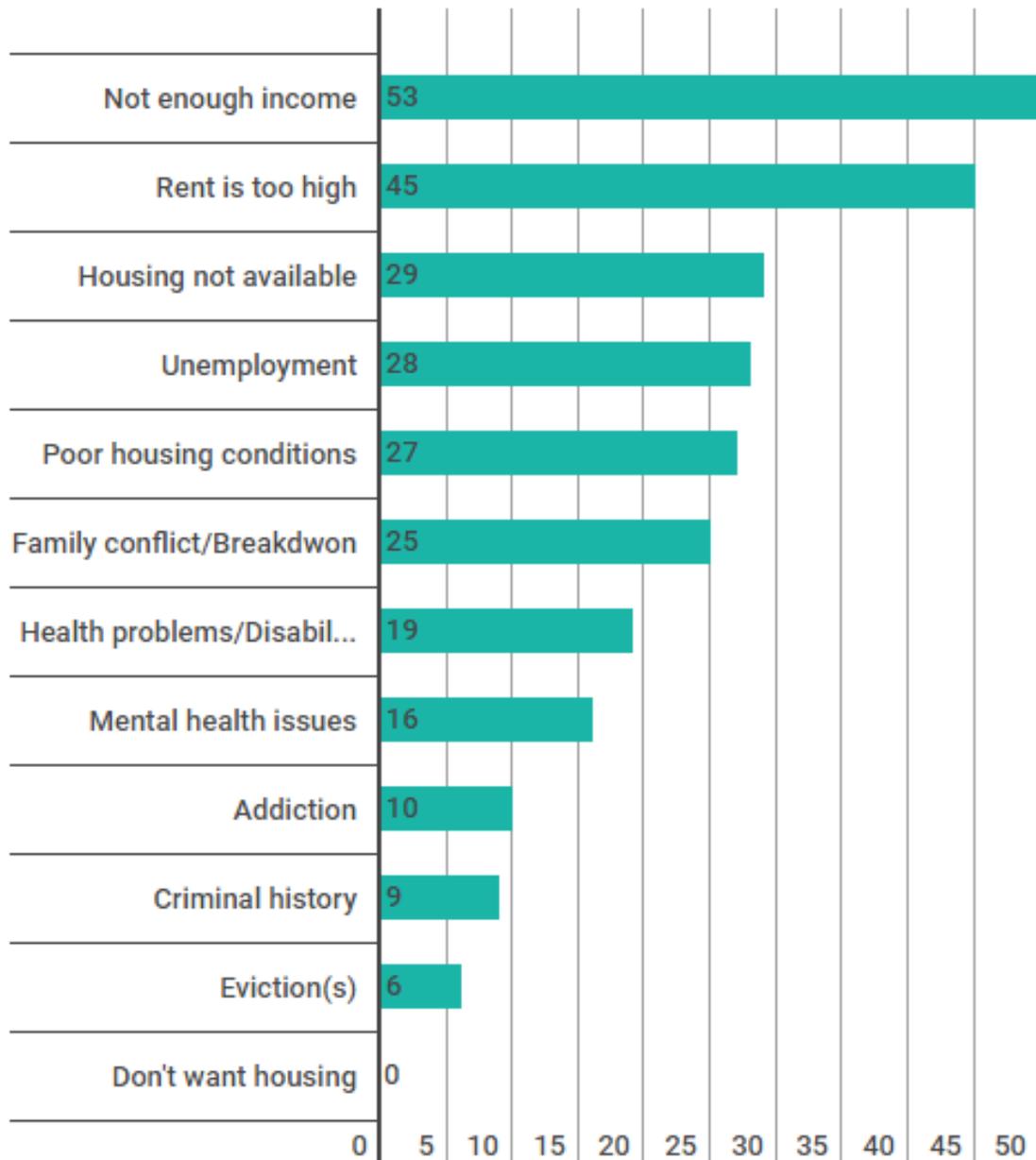
It is important to note that neither Ontario Works nor Ontario Disability Support Program (the two most commonly reported sources of income) provides a housing allowance that is adequate to cover the average cost of rent in Kingston. In addition, the rental vacancy rate in Kingston remains low and has been forecast at 1.9% for 2016,<sup>11</sup> making it even more difficult for low-income individuals and families to secure affordable permanent housing.

Women face specific barriers in comparison with the general population of people who are homeless. Nearly 50% of women reported that the reason for their housing loss was domestic abuse inflicted by a spouse or partner. 24% of women lost their housing due to conflict with a spouse or partner, and a further 20% reported unsafe housing conditions. As with the general population, women cited a lack of financial resources and the cost of rent as their most immediate barriers to housing.

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<sup>11</sup> Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, "Housing Market Outlook: Kingston CMA"

The most common barrier to housing was low household income.



The following excerpt was handwritten on the back of one of the surveys completed on the night of the PiT count, and speaks volumes about the unique challenges faced by those who are experiencing homelessness.

” I think housing (affordable) has become a secondary issue. There is far too much money to be made doing things other than renting to those with not a lot to spend on housing. It has to become an issue with those with money. Without them it will stay as is (dumps). Where I live now is a suitable place but there is a time limit and a day will come to vacate and that sucks.

*A survey respondent on the night of April 6, 2016*

The above respondent suggests that in order to end homelessness, systemic change will need to occur to address the disparity between the resources of low-income people and the average market rate of basic accommodation.

## **Conclusion**

The Point in Time Count conducted on April 6, 2016, marks the second community-wide urban PiT Count that has taken place in the city of Kingston. This count is an important milestone for Kingston as it allows us to compare the state of homelessness in 2013 when the last PiT Count was conducted with the present situation. Additionally, Kingston's results will contribute to the first nationally coordinated PiT Count in order to gain better insight into the realities of homeless populations across Canada. A second nationally coordinated PiT Count is scheduled to take place in 2018 to measure national and community-level progress towards the goal of ending homelessness.

As compared with the results of the 2013 PiT Count, the data collected in 2016 shows some improvements in the state of homelessness in Kingston. The average age of the total population is 38 years, which is comparable to the 2013 average age of 33 years. While the number of

youth who are homeless is lower in 2016, it is important to note that the Kingston Youth Shelter was closed at the time of the 2016 count.

The number of people who identify as Aboriginal has increased since the last PiT Count in Kingston. In 2016, 12.5% of survey respondents identified themselves as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit, as compared with 9% in 2013. This overrepresentation of Aboriginal peoples is consistent with results from across Canada, and suggest that there is work to be done in meeting the housing needs of these populations.

The majority of individuals experiencing homelessness in Kingston on April 6, 2016 are sheltered, with a total of 51% staying in emergency shelters and 34% living in transitional housing, compared with 77% staying in emergency shelters in 2013. Emergency shelter usage has decreased since the last PiT Count was conducted. In 2016, 81% of respondents had used an emergency shelter within the past year, compared with 93% in 2013. The shelter occupancy rate on the night of the PiT Count has decreased slightly from 73.9% in 2013 to 70.9% in 2016. These reductions in shelter usage and occupancy rate are consistent with the objectives of the City of Kingston's 10-Year Municipal Housing & Homelessness Plan.

Service usage also decreased among those surveyed since 2013. In 2016, 45% had been to the Emergency Room, compared with 72% in 2013. In 2016, 34% had used EMS (Emergency Medical Services), compared with 48% in 2013. Finally, in 2016, 32% had been hospitalized at least once, compared with 37% in 2013.

The most common barriers to housing have remained consistent between 2013 and 2016. The majority of respondents in both years stated that they do not have enough income and rents are too high for them to afford permanent housing.

Overall, the Point in Time Count conducted on April 6, 2016 was a success, and the results reflect the first stages of the implementation of the City of Kingston's 10-Year Municipal Housing & Homelessness Plan. The data obtained through the PiT Count will be well-utilized by the community in planning, implementing, and monitoring service provision for individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness in Kingston.

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The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.