

SURVEY RESULTS

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS: A SERVICE NEEDS ESTIMATION



MOUNT WADDINGTON REGION
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MOUNT WADDINGTON HEALTH NETWORK HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS NEEDS SURVEY RESULTS 2021

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Housing insecurity in Mt. Waddington is experienced by many survey respondents and is related to multiple factors including affordability, lack of housing stock and health conditions. Extreme housing insecurity was experienced by a small but significant number of participants, while food insecurity was experienced by nearly half of respondents. Use of the Framework for Assessing Rural Homelessness was new for providers in the region and results can be considered a “first draft” of a repeating community assessment tool.

BACKGROUND

The Mount Waddington Regional Housing Strategy (2019) was created through partnerships of local, regional, First Nations and provincial government. The report noted missing data related to homelessness estimation and suggested using the Framework for Assessing Rural Homelessness written by the Alberta Rural Development Network. The Mount Waddington Health Network spearheaded homelessness estimation through engagement of local government, First Nations government and health and social service providers. Administration of the survey was impacted by considerations related to COVID-19 related public health measures, in particular the ability to directly engage persons experiencing housing insecurity and support their participation. Further, the impact of the opiate overdose epidemic, high levels of death and loss in community and associated grief have created competing priorities for community members, families and organizations. The homeless survey is intended to be a repeating tool to track and trend housing insecurity across a multi year span, and this first “trial run” has provided an opportunity to build community comfort and knowledge of this process and conduct further estimations into the future.

ANALYSIS

Review of the above data takes into consideration that this was a “trial run” of the Housing Insecurity Survey in which numerous barriers to participation related to COVID and existing community knowledge and comfort related to the same.

Key points from the include:

1. In terms of community composition Port Hardy, Port Alice and Sointula were well represented in the survey. There were limited rates of participation in Port McNeill. Alert Bay had very little representation despite anecdotal reports indicating that housing insecurity needs are high in that community.
2. Ethnic composition of the survey respondents was roughly in line with census data for the community. However, there are multiple indicators that Indigenous people in the region have higher rates of housing insecurity and therefore would be considered underrepresented in this survey.
3. With regards to gender of respondents a large majority identified as female. Conversation with key informants indicated that this bias indicates that men are underrepresented.

4.A key finding is the prevalence of food insecurity in which a large percentage 44% indicated that they experience some type of food security stressor and/or access food programs. Food and housing security are related with many respondents noting in comments that they chose amongst essential life priorities with limited financial resources.

5.Housing insecurity was identified by 36% of respondents as part of their current experience. Housing insecurity was driven by a broad range of factors including lack of affordability, lack of housing availability, low income, fear of eviction for use by landlords, lack of maintenance and a variety of health conditions.

6.A small but significant number (14%) of participants identified using the emergency shelter in the last year which is associated with very unstable housing situations.

7.Large number of people who completed the survey did not have housing insecurity and a relatively large proportion had advanced education.In discussion with community partners, it was identified that many service providers completed the survey to support participation.However, this population was not the target audience.

8.A clear majority of respondents indicated there are inadequate housing options in the region (62%) and not enough access to employment (55%).This was the most clearly articulated need in relation to recreation/ leisure needs (42%) and health needs (28%).

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.Ongoing assessment of housing insecurity needs every two years to inform local and regional planning using existing methodology.This will allow for a more fulsome capture of data and long-term comparison.Specific recommendations about future surveys will be listed separately.

2.Support and activation for local, regional, provincial and First Nations governments to engage in multiple strategies to enact greater housing security as outlined in the Mt Waddington Housing Strategy (2019).This is necessary to address the varied reasons for housing insecurity.

3.Ongoing support for economic development and employment creation and connecting economic development and housing priorities and strategies.

4.Engagement of food security assessment and strategies alongside housing security work.

5.Engagement of health needs assessments to inform and bolster housing work as a significant reason for housing insecurity.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE HOUSING INSECURITY SURVEY OPERATIONS

1. More engagement of Indigenous organizations and supports to increase participation of Indigenous people.
2. Strategies to increase participation of men in completing the survey including increase in direct supports in completing the paper survey and recruitment of more men in support roles.
3. Reduction in the total number of questions for the survey while keeping within the best practices guidelines.
4. Use of a wider range of engagement practices that will be available provided ongoing public health approaches.

APPENDIX 1

METHODOLOGY

A total of 171 respondents consented to start the survey. As per guidelines, a unique identifier was created that allows surveys to be anonymous and be able to trend individuals across multiple years of surveys. Respondents had the option to use an online format or a paper format and if accessing at a service agency would be supported in completing the survey. Respondents were able to skip questions and therefore the number of responses varies across questions. As such results will include the total number of respondents (n) to that particular question. Responses that garnered less than 3% of the total respondents are typically not included in the results. Some questions allowed for multiple answers to be chosen.

Results including above analysis and recommendations were reviewed with key informants who are familiar with the survey and methods, housing insecurity issues in the region and affected populations. Feedback from this group informed analysis and validated data.

DEMOGRAPHIC

The age categories of respondents were (n-166) 5% aged 18-24, 16% aged 25-34, 22% aged 35-44, 16% aged 45-54, 17% aged 55-64, 19% aged 65-75 and 4% aged 75 and over.

Of respondents (n-168) 89% were born in Canada or in Indigenous Nation located within Canada, while 11% were born outside of Canada. Of people who migrated to Canada (n-19) 47% reported coming to Canada as a permanent resident, 21% as an economic migrant, 10% citizens born outside of Canada, 5% as refugees, 5% with temporary work permits and 10% preferred not to answer. Survey respondents born outside of Canada current resident status (n-18) are 72% Canadian resident, 11% work permit, 5% landed immigrant, 5% temporary work permit and 11% prefer not to answer.

Ethnic group identify of survey respondents (n-166) were 66% Caucasian, 24% Indigenous First Nation, 3% Indigenous Metis, 4% African, 3% Asian, 3% Hispanic and 5% not listed. Respondents were able to choose from more than one ethnic identity. Census data (2016) indicated that 66% of residents in Mt Waddington were of European descent and 31%

Indigenous.

With regards to gender (n-167) 68% identified as women, 29% as men, and 2% in the categories of transmen, nonbinary and two spirited. In relation to sexual orientation (n-163) 89% percentage listed as straight/heterosexual, 7% under LGBTIIQQI categories and 4% as preferred not to answer.

HOUSING SECURITY AND CHARACTERISTICS

The current housing status of participants (n-154) was that 47% report owning their own home, 29% indicate that they rent and 15% live with family and dependents, 6% indicated that their housing situation varied, 4% are currently homeless and 2% currently live in a shelter. Nine percent of respondents indicated "other" with comments such as "live in a trailer /RV", housing search or temporary housing arrangements.

When asked about the security of maintaining their housing (n-152), 36% indicated that they may have to lose housing, change locations, or be forced out, 49% indicated that this was not the case and 12% indicated that they were uncertain. When asked about reasons why their housing is at risk (n-95), 36% indicated their income was not enough, 25% illness/ medical condition, 21% identified disability mental/physical, 19% indicated their housing needs major repairs, 15% indicated mental health issues, 12% addiction issues, 12% cited job loss for themselves or their spouse, 8% rent increases, 7% lack of transport, 7% conflict with landlord, 5% racism / discrimination, 13% stating prefer not to answer. Also 22% indicated other, with the predominate reason being sale or potential sale of the rental unit. Respondents could choose from multiple answers for these questions.

When asked to describe one main reason their housing is a risk (n-75) 36% of respondents indicated affordability, 16% issues related to health issues (physical, mental health, substance use, mobility), 7% lack of housing availability, 7% due to repairs needed, 5% each related to sale of unit/repurposes by owner, local regulations, employment and income concerns and lack of supports with health and housing, 3% due to conflict and 15% due to various other reasons.

With regards to emergency shelter (n-149), 14% stated they had accessed shelter services in the past year. Identified barriers to accessing emergency shelter in the past year (n-27) included 33% shelter was full, 26% no shelter in my area, 11% lack of transportation, 11% no pets allowed, 11% my family does not fit into the shelter model, and 30% other reasons which are not easily categorized.

With housing affordability (n-147), 29% of respondents spend more than 30% of income on housing, 22% more than half of income on housing, 31% are on a fixed income, 22% worry about paying bills, 16% sometimes have trouble paying bills, 6%, depend on housing subsidies, 5% unemployed, 3% with often have trouble paying bills and 3% cannot afford bills. Responses under other (10%) include concerns about ongoing financial viability, accumulating debt and various economic vulnerabilities.

With regards to comfort in current housing situation (n-144), 64% indicated they are comfortable, 16% often or sometimes uncomfortable, 9% overcrowding, 6% that house is too big and has empty rooms, 18% have trouble maintaining their house, 18% live in a house that

requires major repairs, 5% who have stayed in a jail/prison/remand centre in the past month, 5% have been sleeping outdoors, 6% live in a vehicle or camper, 4% stayed in a shelter recently, 3% have used supportive housing recently, 3% stayed in a detox or rehabilitation centre recently and 2% have stayed in a women's domestic violence shelter.

With regards to longevity of currently housing arrangements (n-143) 9% reported under 30 days, 13% under 6 months, 7% under one year, 24% 1-2 years, 46% long term and 1% prefer not to answer.

CHARACTERISTICS OF HOUSEHOLD

Foster care status of respondents (n-142) indicated that 11% had been in foster care, a youth group home, or a youth agreement, 14% has a household member who had the same, 6% that respondent and others had been, 67% indicated that nobody in the household had been in foster care. Pregnancy of respondents or others in the household (n-145) 5% indicated yes. Single parent households (n-145) were reported with 17% of respondents, 80% not single parent and 3% prefer not to answer.

The number of dependants under 18 (n-144) were 69% none, 13% had 2, 8% had 2, 5% had 3 and 3% had 4 or more. The adults staying with respondents (n-115) 32% none, 16% parents, 49% partners, 20% adult children, 11% extended family, 8% coworkers, 7% not listed and 7% prefer not to answer and 12% other.

With regards to food security (n-142) 56% indicated they can afford food, 16% occasionally must chose between food and primary bills, 12% often must chose between buying food and primary bills, 18% use a food bank, 9% use a hot meal program, 18% grow some of their own food, 8% get food from services they use, 8% are short of food every month and 5% indicated they do not know.

GEOGRAPHIC COMMUNITY AND MOVEMENT

The geographic community where respondents reside (n-142) include 50% in Port Hardy, 12% Port Alice, 22% Sointula, 7% Port McNeill, 2% Hyde Creek/ Nimpkish Heights.

With regards to how long respondents have lived in their community (n-142), 15% have always lived in their home community, 19% under a year, 64% over a year and 3% preferred not to answer. When asked where respondents lived prior to coming to this community (n-137) 44% from another community in BC, 6% a First Nations community, 11% another province, 3% another country and 8% does not apply to me.

Reasons why people came to their community (n-137) were 26% for family, 22% found work, 9% to find housing, 6% looking for work, 7% to be close to family or friends, 4% for safety, 6% prefer not to answer and 14% other reasons. Other reasons included responses such as wanting to be close to nature, family reasons and forced government relocation. When asked if they would have stayed in previous community if there was access to better service/program or supports (n-135) 54% indicated no, 17% yes, 22% not sure and 3% prefer not to answer. Number of households moves (n-138) 15% 1-2 times this year, 4% 3-6 times this year, 3% more than 6 times, 7% have moved in the last year but will not need to move

again, 15% within the last two years, 17% in the last five years, 24% have been in the same household 10 or more years, 3% not sure and 9% does not apply to them.

EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION

With regards to employment (n-140) 50% are currently employed and 48% are not employed. Employed respondents (n-69) indicated 55% full time work, 30% part time work, 15% self employed, 7% casual and 3% not listed. In terms of sector (n-69) 19% in human or social services, 13% in health care, 12% in education, 9% office/ administration, 9% in retail, 7% restaurant, 3% each with fishing, finance and tourism, 10% other and 4% prefer not to say. Respondents' education level (n-137) were 18% some high school, 20% high school graduate/GED, 7% apprentice/trades, 17% college certificate, 12% some post secondary, 15% post secondary degree and 7% post graduate degree.

SERVICES IN COMMUNITY

While taking the survey (n-137) 31 % were accessing other services while 69% took the survey online at home. Of the main reasons for accessing services (n-43), 59% for basic needs of food/shelter /clothing, 28% health, 21% for employment or financial planning, 14% to access transportation, 12% crisis financial support, 11% legal, 9% family / parenting support, 5% all services, 9% prefer not to answer and 5% other. When asked to describe what respondents needed most support with (n-16), 56% indicated financial and basic needs of food and shelter, 25% support with family and 19% support services with health and housing.

Respondents were asked about the availability and comfort of existing opportunities related to employment, housing and social services. With employment opportunities (n-137) 55% indicated not enough, 27% enough and 19% not sure. With comfort accessing employment (n-135), 58% indicated comfort, 16% no, 15% felt discriminated against and 8% prefer not to answer. With access to free or low-cost recreation/ social opportunities (n-136), 28% indicated there were enough, 42% indicated not enough, 23% not sure and 8% preferred not to answer. Narrative responses (n-11) focused on social, recreation and youth services.

With provision of enough social services (n-136), 30% indicated yes enough, 32% not enough, 30% not sure. Narrative responses (n-12) focused on mental health services, youth services and gender specific services for men and women.

With enough access to affordable housing (n-136), 14% indicated yes, 63% indicated no and 10% not sure. Narrative responses (n-12) focused on affordable housing for families, seniors, and general population.