



Adult Residential Substance Use and Supportive Recovery Facility Homelessness Count



Introduction

This endeavour has been several years in the making!

For many years, the Surrey Road to Home Society (formerly known as the Surrey Homelessness and Housing Task Force) has been actively engaged in working to build a deeper understanding of the role that licensed residential treatment and registered recovery facilities play in building a bridge between housing and homelessness for individuals who live with the challenge of addictions.

While these facilities offer programs and treatment for people with addictions challenges, they are not 'housing' in the deeper sense of that word. People can self-identify or can at times be mandated by the courts to participate in a program in which they often do not have control over how long they stay.

In spite of continued advocacy for inclusion of this sector, people staying in residential treatment or recovery facilities have never been counted in regional homeless counts. This is despite the count including people staying in emergency shelters, detox facilities, and transition facilities. This policy decision is driven from a historic definition of "homeless" under the count as being "you don't have a place of your own where you pay rent and can stay for at least 30 days".

Those who work with people experiencing problematic substance use as part of the recovery facility system understand the precarious nature of this housing. This, in turn has led to the concern that the exclusion of these clients from the homeless counts provides an incomplete picture of the depth of homelessness in the region, especially in the City of Surrey.

To respond to this gap in knowledge, the Surrey Road to Home Society, in partnership with local licensed residential treatment and supportive recovery providers, engaged in the development and implementation of an initiative called the Surrey Recovery Facilities Homeless Count. This initiative was implemented in March 2020 at the same time as the broader regional homeless count, to help clarify our knowledge and understanding of homelessness within this segment of the population.

The Surrey Recovery Facilities Homeless Count instrument was adapted to include questions reflecting those in the broader regional homeless count. The Surrey Recovery Facilities Homeless Count was administered across 30 licensed residential substance use facilities and registered supportive recovery facilities in Surrey, representing a sample of 350 recovery spaces and generating a total of 192 responses. The findings from the count help to show that:

- Without access to recovery facilities as part of the continuum of supports that are available, the number of individuals experiencing homelessness would be significantly higher.
- These facilities play an important bridging role in helping individuals who have a history of addictions to make the transition back into the community with access to these facilities providing a supportive and positive environment for their recovery.
- Without access to supportive recovery facilities, many individuals who rely on this support would end up living on the streets or cycling through the criminal justice system.

Most importantly, these facilities provide an opportunity for individuals who use their services to regain a sense of dignity. This includes opportunities to rebuild connections with families and friends, to improve or upgrade their skills, and to access education, employment, and other opportunities. In this way, recovery facilities offer people a second chance.

I would like to thank everyone who made this report a reality including:

- Each person who agreed to share their story by participating in this survey to provide a more complete picture of homelessness in Surrey;
- Members of the Surrey Road to Home Society who worked for more than 10 years to draw attention to the specific needs of this population and the importance of this research;
- Keir Macdonald (CEO - Phoenix Drug & Alcohol Recovery and Education Society) and his staff who helped to provide the leadership needed to help advance this work and support the administration of the count;
- Susan Sanderson (Executive Director - Realistic Success Recovery Society) and her staff who are tireless advocates for the sector and who believe in the importance of people in recovery being offered a second chance;
- All of the recovery facilities and staff who participated in this initial survey and who volunteered their time to give a voice to those who are not always heard;
- Lorraine Copas (Executive Director - SPARC BC) and her staff who helped to compile the data and prepare this report as part of SPARC BC's ongoing role in supporting local action and change;
- Natalie Sorenson for her skills in the design of this report and in helping to present the information in a user-friendly way;
- BC Non-Profit Housing Association and staff for providing help in designing the survey instrument in a way that allowed for the questions to align with the 2020 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count survey.

When people choose to make the momentous decision to create positive change in their lives, especially when such changes entail overcoming addictions, we have a responsibility to assist in any way we can. Ensuring that we have sufficient spaces available, as well as the kinds of caring and ethical programs that can support people into wellness is essential in every community.

The members of the Surrey Road to Home Society look forward to working with recovery facilities in Surrey, the provincial and federal governments, Mayor and members of Council and each other as we explore new ways to collaborate together and to create opportunities to allow people to make real and lasting changes in their lives.

On behalf of the Surrey Road to Home Society,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'jhallgate', written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jonquil Hallgate

Executive Summary

Point-in-time counts have been conducted in Metro Vancouver every 3 years since 2002 and annually in the City of Vancouver since 2010. While it is fully understood that the information captured through a point-in-time count will always be an 'undercount', it is also recognized that point-in-time counts provide a valuable tool for building a more complete understanding of the social and demographic profile of those who are experiencing homelessness.

Information collected through the various point-in-time counts provide an important tool for planning for the needs of the community and in identifying the types of services and supports that could help to make a difference.

The 2020 Homeless Count in Metro Vancouver took place in early March. The Count was designed to provide a 24-hour snapshot of individuals experiencing homelessness and has traditionally been designed to include people who did not have a place of their own where they could expect to stay for more than 30 days and where they did not pay rent. In the past the Count has included:

- Individuals staying overnight in an emergency shelter;
- Women and children who have experienced violence and who are staying in a transition house;
- Youth staying in a safe house;
- Individuals living with "no fixed address" and who are staying temporarily in hospitals, jails, detox facilities and other institutional settings; and,
- Individuals who are living outside or staying temporarily with others (couch surfing) and/or using other homelessness services.

At the time of the 2020 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count there were 3,634 people in the Metro Vancouver region who were without a place to live, including 644 individuals in Surrey. The results for the 2020 Count are up from 3,605 individuals region-wide identified in 2017 and 602 individuals in Surrey.

Those who work in recovery facilities have continued to seek to have persons residing in licensed residential substance use programs or supportive recovery homes included in the Count as their housing situation both prior to entering and upon leaving the program can be precarious. However, in the interest of maintaining continuity with previous counts, recovery facilities have been consistently excluded.

In planning for the 2020 Count, the Surrey Road to Home Society worked with the BCNPHA and developed a strategy to adapt the Regional Homeless Count Survey to create the Surrey Recovery Facilities Homeless Count which was administered across the different licensed and registered residential substance use programs and supportive recovery facilities in Surrey.

The findings show that, of the 192 individuals who responded to the Surrey Recovery Facility Homeless Count, 68% reported that they had experienced homelessness in their past including 25% who had been homeless in the previous 12 months. The research also found that 39% of respondents reported that they would not have a place to stay if they were to leave the facility.

These findings draw attention to the precarious nature of the housing situation of individuals using recovery facility services as well as the importance of the role that these services play in helping to break the cycle of poverty, addictions and homelessness among recovery facility clients.

While the more detailed results from the 2020 region-wide homeless count have not yet been released including information on the general social, demographic and health profile of respondents, it is worth remembering that the findings from the 2017 Count indicate that 53% of respondents experienced addictions-related challenges with this being the case for 47% of the sheltered homeless and 60% of the unsheltered homeless. The previous Count also reported that 30% of those identified on the night of the Count had at least one (1) health condition while 52% of respondents identified two (2) or more conditions. Similarly, 19% of the respondents reported that their substance use-related challenges contributed to their homelessness and continued to be a barrier to finding housing.

In communities such as the City of Surrey, where licensed residential substance use treatment beds and supportive recovery homes play an important part of the continuum of services and supports available to those who are homeless or 'at risk' of homelessness, information pertaining to recovery facility clients can help to address significant gaps in information and help draw attention to those who are dealing with their substance use challenges while facing a precarious and uncertain housing situation when they leave.

Services provided through the residential treatment and supportive recovery home system include structured activities, group work and peer mentoring which help clients in their recovery from substance use while also offering the supports they need to move back to independent settings in their community. Additionally, it is worth noting that most of the supportive recovery homes were created as a community-based response to a shortage of publicly funded treatment beds.

The findings set out in this report, highlight the diversity of individuals served through the recovery system. This report also seeks to offer an enhanced framework for better understanding the specific needs of individuals living with addictions while highlighting the different ways that access to recovery facilities and the services they offer can help to break the cycle of addictions and homelessness.

Findings:

This section provides information on the responses received by participants in the Surrey Recovery Facilities Homeless Count which was completed in March 2020.

I. Have you previously been homeless?

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they had previously been homeless. More than 2 in 3 respondents (68%) indicated that they had previously experienced homelessness while 29% had never been homeless. An additional 3% either did not know or did not provide a response.

Table I.1 Previously homeless

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	131	67.9
No	56	29.0
Unsure/no answer	6	3.1
Total	192	100.0

68%
had previously
been homeless

2. Do you have a place where you pay monthly rent?

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they currently have a place to stay where they pay a monthly rent. One in 5 respondents (20%) indicated that they have a place to stay where they pay a monthly rent. At the same time, 78% of respondents reported that they did not pay any rent. There was a small number of respondents (2%) who either did not know or did not answer the question.

Table 1.2 Place where they pay rent

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	39	20.2
No	150	77.7
Unsure/no answer	4	2.0
Total	192	100.0



3. Where Will You Live When You Leave This Recovery Facility?

Respondents were asked to indicate where they expected to live when they left the recovery facility. One in 3 respondents (34%) indicated that they expected to rent a place of their own while 16% of respondents said that they would stay with a friend or family member. Two in 5 respondents (39%) indicated that they were not sure or did not know where they would live after leaving the recovery facility. The full range of responses is provided in the table below.

Table 1.3 Place to live after leaving this recovery facility

	Frequency	Percent
Stay with family member at their place	22	11.4
Stay with friend at their place	9	4.7
Rent place of my own	65	33.7
Stay at another treatment facility	6	3.1
Not listed	11	5.7
Not sure/don't know	75	38.9
No answer	4	2.6
Total	192	100.0

39%
did not know
where they
would stay

4. How Long at this Recovery Facility

Respondents were asked to indicate how long they had been staying at a recovery home facility. Twenty-one respondents (11%) reported that they had been staying at a recovery home facility for less than 2 weeks while 34 respondents (18%) reported that they had been staying at a recovery home facility for 2 to 4 weeks. There were an additional 30 respondents (16%) who indicated that they had been staying at a recovery home facility for 1 to 2 months while 57 respondents (30%) reported that they had been staying at a recovery home facility for 2 to 6 months. There were also 46 respondents who reported that they had been staying at a recovery home facility for more than 6 months. Four respondents either did not know or did not provide a response.

Table 1.4 Time at this recovery facility

	Frequency	Percent
1-6 days	8	4.2
7-13 days	13	6.8
2 to 4 weeks	34	17.7
1 to 2 months	30	15.6
2 to 6 months	57	29.7
More than 6 months	46	24.0
Unsure/no answer	4	2.1
Total	192	100.0

54%
had been in
the program
for 2 months
or more

5. Time lived in the community

Respondents were asked to indicate how long they had lived in Surrey. Of those who responded, 38% reported that they had lived in Surrey for less than 1 year while 26% of respondents reported that they had lived in Surrey for at least 5 years. An additional 7% of respondents reported that they had always lived in Surrey. There were also 1 in 4 respondents (25%) who indicated that they had lived in Surrey for between 1 and 5 years. One in 9 respondents (11%) either did not know or did not answer.

Table 1.5 Time lived in the community

	Frequency	Percent
1 month or less	23	11.9
1-5 months	36	18.7
6-11 months	14	7.3
1-2 years	24	12.4
2-5 years	22	12.4
More than 5 years	35	19.7
Always been here	13	6.7
Don't know/no answer	20	10.9
Total	192	100.0

51%
had lived in
Surrey for
more than
1 year

6. Time homeless in past year

Respondents were asked if they had been homeless in the previous 12 months. There were 63 respondents (33%) who indicated that they had never been homeless while 63 respondents (33%) indicated that they had experienced homelessness at least once in the past 12 months, with 1 in 4 respondents indicating that they had been homeless for at least one month or more.

Table 1.6 Time spent homeless in past year

	Frequency	Percent
1 week or less	7	3.6
1-4 weeks	8	4.1
months	39	20.2
6 months or more	9	4.7
Never homeless in past year	64	33.2
Don't know/no answer	66	34.2
Total	193	100.0

33%
had been
homeless in
the past year

7. Age

Respondents were asked to indicate their age. There were 54 respondents (28%) who indicated that they under 30 years of age while 63 respondents (33%) were between 30 and 39 years old. There were an additional 38 respondents (20%) who were between 40 and 49 years old. The survey also found that 1 in 5 respondents (19%) were 50 years of age or older.

Table I.7 Age

	Frequency	Percent
Under 30	54	28.0
30-39	63	32.6
40-49	38	19.7
50-59	28	14.5
60 or older	8	4.1
No answer	1	1.0
Total	192	100.0

1 in 5
were 50 years
of age or
older

8. Indigenous Status

Respondents were asked to identify if they had any Indigenous ancestry. Thirty-two respondents (17%) self-identified as being Indigenous while 82% of respondents did not identify as Indigenous

Table 1.8 Indigenous status

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	32	16.6
No	157	81.3
No answer	4	2.1
Total	192	100.0



9. Gender

Respondents were asked to indicate their gender. Of those who responded, 87% identified as male while 12% identified as female. One respondent identified as non-binary.

Table 1.9 Gender

	Frequency	Percent
Woman	23	11.9
Non-binary	1	.5
Two-spirit	0	0.0
Man	167	86.5
No answer	1	1.0
Total	192	100.0

12%
identified
as female

10. Sources of Income

Respondents were asked to indicate their different sources of income. Sixty-one percent of respondents indicated that they received provincial income assistance (IA) while 24% of respondents reported that they received assistance through the provincial Persons with Disabilities Benefits (PWD). An additional 11% of respondents reported that they had a full-time job. The table below provides information on the full range of responses received.

Table I.10 Sources of Income

	Frequency	Percent
Welfare/Income Assistance	118	61.1
Disability benefit (e.g. PWD, PPMB)	47	24.4
GST/HST refund	21	10.9
Full time job	22	11.4
Employment Insurance	12	6.2
Money from family, friends	9	4.7
Part time job	7	3.6
Job casual (e.g. contract work)	7	3.6
CPP or other pension	6	3.1
Other source(s)	3	1.6
Panhandling	2	1.0
Old age security (OAS)/guaranteed income supplement (GIS)	2	1.0
No income	2	1.0
Child and family tax benefits	1	0.5
Binning, bottle collecting	1	0.5
Youth agreement	0	0.0
Veteran/VAC benefits	0	0.0
Vending	0	0.0
Don't know/no answer	2	1.0

Note: Participants could provide more than one choice

85%
received
income assistance
or disability
supports

II. Existing health conditions

Respondents were asked to identify whether they had any health challenges. Of those who responded, 80 individuals (42%) reported that they had a mental health issue in addition to their addictions. As well, 39 respondents (20%) indicated that they had a medical condition or other type of health-related challenge while 31 respondents (16%) reported that they had a physical disability. There were also 30 respondents (16%) who indicated that they had a learning disability or cognitive challenge.

Table I.11 Existing Health Conditions

	Frequency	Percent
Addiction	173	89.6
Mental health issue	80	41.5
Medical condition or illness	39	20.2
Physical disability	31	16.1
Learning disability or cognitive impairment	30	15.5

42%
had concurrent
health challenges

Conclusions

This initiative helps to make clear the precarious nature of the housing situation of many of those who are clients in the supportive recovery system while drawing attention to the need to represent these individuals within the population of those who are considered homeless. It has also helped to respond to a gap in knowledge in terms of the depth of need of this population.

The findings set out in this report, highlight the diversity of individuals served through the recovery home system. This report also seeks to offer an enhanced framework for better understanding the specific needs of individuals living with addictions while highlighting the different ways that access to supportive recovery facilities and the services they offer can help to break the cycle of addictions and homelessness while offering those who rely on these services opportunities to get their lives back on track.

Recommendations:

- That city staff and recovery facility operators work together to create a recovery continuum of care in a Made in Surrey response for people indicating that they are ready to enter treatment – ie: a variety of models of recovery are available to meet different needs of people seeking recovery
- That the city work with recovery facility operators and different levels of government to ensure funding for adequate spaces, resources and support services required to meet the need in our community
- That the provincial government increase the number of staff at the Assisted Living Registry for Supportive Recovery to enforce the provincial regulations and that inspections take place to ensure that expected standards are in place
- That the provincial government policy ensures that people with substance use disorders are made aware of all care pathways available to them when they access health care services
- That the City of Surrey staff work with the Surrey Road to Home Society which includes members of the Recovery Facility Community to ensure that adequate housing is available for people who have completed their treatment and are moving onto the next stage of their life by advocating for funding to increase housing options in the city
- That all homeless counts conducted in Surrey include counts of people in licensed/regulated support recovery facilities

—Surrey Road to Home Society and the Surrey Recovery Facilities

Appendix A:
Survey Instrument

RECOVERY HOUSE SURVEY

Interviewer/Staff Name: _____ Location: _____

PART 1: SCREENING**1. Are you willing to participate in the survey?**

- ☐ Yes (**Go to Q.2**)
- ☐ No (**END**)
- ☐ Not sure/No answer (**END**)

2. Have you already answered this survey today?

- ☐ Yes (**END**)
- ☐ No (**Go to Q.3**)
- ☐ Not sure/No answer (**END**)

3. Are you currently a resident of this recovery house?

- ☐ Yes (**Go to Q.4**)
- ☐ No (**END**)
- ☐ Not sure/No answer (**END**)

4. Will you be sleeping here tonight?

- ☐ Yes (**Go to Q.5**)
- ☐ No (**Go to Q.5**)
- ☐ Not sure/No answer (**Go to Q.5**)

PART 2: SURVEY**5. Do you currently have a place where you pay monthly rent? (i.e. not at this facility)**

- ☐ Yes. **Specify:** _____
- ☐ No
- ☐ I am not sure/don't know
- ☐ No answer

6. Where will you live when you leave this recovery house?**Choose one:**

- ☐ Stay with a family member at their place
- ☐ Stay with a friend at their place
- ☐ Rent a place of my own
- ☐ Stay at another treatment facility. **Specify:** _____
- ☐ Not listed. **Specify:** _____
- ☐ I am not sure/don't know
- ☐ No answer

7. How long have you been at this recovery house?

_____ Days _____ Weeks _____ Months _____ Years

- ☐ I am not sure/don't know
- ☐ No answer

8. Have you previously been homeless? (e.g. without a place of your own where you pay rent)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I am not sure/don't know
- ☐ No answer

9. How old are you (OR**) what year were you born?**

Age _____ Year born _____

- ☐ I am not sure/don't know
- ☐ No answer

10. Do you identify as First Nations (with or without status, Treaty or Non-Treaty), Métis, Inuit, or do you have other North American Indigenous ancestry?

- ☐ Yes. **Specify:** _____
- ☐ No
- ☐ I am not sure/don't know
- ☐ No answer

11. How long have you been in Surrey?

days # weeks # months # years

- ☐ Always been here
- ☐ I am not sure/don't know
- ☐ No Answer

12. What gender do you identify with?

- ☐ Woman
- ☐ Non-binary
- ☐ Two-spirited
- ☐ Man
- ☐ Not listed. **Specify:** _____
- ☐ I am not sure/don't know
- ☐ No Answer

13. What are your sources of income?**(Read list & Check all that apply)**

- ☐ Welfare
- ☐ Job full time
- ☐ Job part time
- ☐ Job casual (e.g. Contract work)
- ☐ Binning, Bottle collecting
- ☐ Panhandling
- ☐ Vending
- ☐ Money from family/friends
- ☐ Employment insurance
- ☐ Disability benefit (e.g. PWD, PPMB)
- ☐ Old age security (OAS)/ guaranteed income supplement
- ☐ CPP or other pension
- ☐ Youth agreement
- ☐ Veteran/VAC benefits
- ☐ Child and family tax benefits
- ☐ GST/HST refund
- ☐ Other source(s): _____
- ☐ No income
- ☐ Don't know/No answer

14. In total, for how much time have you experienced homelessness over the PAST YEAR (the last 12 months)? (Best Estimate.)

_____ Days _____ Weeks _____ Months

- ☐ I am not sure/don't know
- ☐ No answer

15. Do you identify as having the following health challenges at this time? (Read list & Check all that apply)

	Yes	No	Don't know/ No Answer
Medical Condition/Illness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Physical Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mental Health Issue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Addiction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning Disability or Cognitive Impairment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>