



# EVERYONE COUNTS:

2018 GUELPH-WELLINGTON POINT-IN-TIME COUNT

MAY 2018





## ABOUT THE GUELPH-WELLINGTON 20,000 HOMES CAMPAIGN

20,000 Homes is “a national change movement focused on ending chronic homelessness in 20 communities and housing 20,000 of Canada’s most vulnerable homeless people by July 1, 2020.”<sup>1</sup> The 20,000 Homes Campaign is led by the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH) and encourages local communities to sign on under a set of guiding principles and core elements as part of a commitment to ending homelessness. There are currently 35 participating campaign communities, including Guelph-Wellington. The Guelph-Wellington 20,000 Homes campaign is led in partnership by the Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination and the County of Wellington.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Randalin Ellery is the Coordinator of the Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination. She has held the position since 2009, when the PTF was established. Randalin also serves as the Co-Chair of Guelph-Wellington 20,000 Homes, a local initiative focused on ending homelessness. She holds a Master’s degree in Sociology and International Development from the University of Guelph.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Working in collaboration, organizations and leaders in Guelph-Wellington have come together with a shared commitment to ending homelessness in our community. The 2018 Point in Time Count would not have been possible without the leadership, guidance and support from many agencies, system partners, and community members. The Planning & Partnership Committee’s, including Peer Leaders, in Guelph and Wellington County deserve special recognition for sharing their time and expertise.

The 2018 Guelph-Wellington Point in Time Count was led by the following staff members:

- Lori Richer, Housing Stability Manager, County of Wellington Social Services
- Randalin Ellery, Coordinator, Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination
- Dominica McPherson, Assistant Coordinator, Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination
- Manon Germain, Indigenous Homelessness Community Coordinator

Funding was provided by:

- Government of Canada Homelessness Partnering Strategy
- Indigenous Healing & Wellness Program (Guelph Community Health Centre)

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<sup>1</sup> 20,000 Homes Campaign (2018). 20,000 Homes. Available: [www.20khomes.ca](http://www.20khomes.ca)

## INTRODUCTION

The 2018 Guelph-Wellington Point-in-Time Count included an enumeration of individuals experiencing homelessness living unsheltered, emergency sheltered, temporarily sheltered (i.e. couch surfing), and in unknown locations. The count was conducted over a three-day period in Guelph and over a seven-day period in Wellington County.

Volunteers and staff from the homeless-serving system conducted an in-person survey, the results of which were used to estimate the characteristics of the local population experiencing homelessness. Information collected from the survey is also used to inform local service delivery, target resources, and fulfill provincial reporting requirements.

This report provides important background information, covers the count methodology, including challenges and limitations, and shares the overall findings, as well as findings from specific sub-populations. The information is meant to provide a snapshot of homelessness in our community at a specific point-in-time and should be used to inform service provision, resource allocation, and target setting toward ending homelessness.

## BACKGROUND

In 2016, the Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination and County of Wellington signed on to co-lead a local campaign with 20,000 Homes. 20,000 Homes is “a national change movement focused on ending chronic homelessness in 20 communities and housing 20,000 of Canada’s most vulnerable homeless people by July 1, 2020”<sup>2</sup> To kick off the local campaign, the Poverty Task Force and County hosted the first ever Registry Week in Guelph-Wellington in April 2016. A Registry Week is a “coordinated outreach and triage assessment process to develop actionable data on every person experiencing homelessness.”<sup>3</sup> Over a three-day period in April 2016, 295 individuals were identified as experiencing homelessness.

The data collected during Registry Week 2016 was used to start a By-Name List (BNL). This list identifies individuals experiencing homelessness by name and vulnerability score (captured through a standardized assessment tool) and is used to inform referrals to housing-specific supports and services. Data from the BNL provides a birds eye view of homelessness at any given time and helps to monitor trends, including inflow and outflow of homelessness.

In 2018, an opportunity to conduct a follow up Point-in-Time Count/Registry Week was presented by the Government of Ontario. As part of their efforts to end chronic homelessness by 2025, the Ontario Ministry of Housing required Municipal Service Managers to conduct a

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<sup>2</sup> 20,000 Homes Campaign (2018). 20,000 Homes. Available: [www.20khomes.ca](http://www.20khomes.ca)

<sup>3</sup> 20,000 Homes Campaign (2018). Registry Week. Available: <http://www.20khomes.ca/resources/registry-week-toolkit/>

local enumeration of people experiencing homelessness as part of a Coordinated Count in 2018<sup>4</sup>. The Government of Canada supported this initiative, providing Community Entities, including the County of Wellington, funding through the Homelessness Partnering Strategy. Locally, part of this funding was provided to the PTF to support the 2018 Guelph-Wellington Point-in-Time Count. Other funding was provided by the Indigenous Healing and Wellness Program with the Guelph Community Health Centre to focus on engaging the Indigenous community in the count.

## METHODOLOGY

### OVERVIEW

The purpose of the Guelph-Wellington 2018 Point-in-Time Count was to provide a snapshot of the population experiencing homelessness on one day of the year. The PiT Count method is intended to capture an estimate of the number of people experiencing homelessness, as well as basic demographics, reasons for homelessness, and service use of people experiencing homelessness at a single point in time.

The PiT Count method was implemented in combination with a Registry Week. The Registry Week method is a coordinated, multi-day count of people experiencing homelessness on the streets, in shelters, and in other community-identified spaces frequented by people experiencing homelessness. It also provides a coordinated outreach and assessment process to collect information and create a list of people experiencing homelessness, by name, starting with the most vulnerable, in order to prioritize access to permanent housing and supports.

The combined PiT Count/Registry Week method was carried out from April 23<sup>rd</sup> to April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018 in Guelph and from April 23<sup>rd</sup> to April 29<sup>th</sup> in Wellington County. The longer time period in the County was provided to cover a larger geographical area. In both locations, survey questions focused on the respondents' experiences on April 23<sup>rd</sup>.

### SURVEY METHODS OF THE 2018 POINT-IN-TIME COUNT

The 2018 Guelph-Wellington Point-in-Time Count included two surveys that were conducted by volunteers and service providers from the homeless-serving system with individuals experiencing homelessness:

- 1) Ontario Enumeration Survey - an anonymous survey provided by the Government of Ontario and Government of Canada. A number of optional questions provided by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness were added in Guelph-Wellington.

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<sup>4</sup> Government of Ontario. Guidelines for Service Manager Homeless Enumeration. Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Ministry of Housing. Available: <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page15239.aspx>

- 2) VI-SPDAT - a Common Assessment Tool that uses a standardized scoring system to assist communities in determining the appropriate level of intervention for the homeless individual or family.

Individuals experiencing homelessness were invited to complete one or both of the surveys. Responses from the Ontario Enumeration Survey are included in this report. Families and individuals that completed the VI-SPDAT were added to the Guelph-Wellington By-Name List, which informs referrals to housing supports and services. Responses from the VI-SPDAT's will be included in a future report.

## THE PLANNING PROCESS

To ensure the success of the Guelph-Wellington 2018 PiT Count, many community agencies collaborated in community outreach, volunteer recruitment, logistical planning, methodological decision-making, and interagency coordination efforts. Two planning committees were developed - one focused on Guelph, supported by staff from the Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination, and one focused on Wellington County, supported by staff from the County of Wellington. An additional staff member was hired through the Welcome In Drop In Centre and the Indigenous Healing & Wellness Program to focus on engaging the Indigenous community. All staff members worked together to ensure consistency across the project.

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Representatives from the homeless-serving system, local service providers, and system partners were active and valued partners in the planning and implementation of the 2018 PiT Count. In addition, six Peer Leaders with lived experience of homelessness were selected and compensated to participate in the planning process and to help implement logistical elements of the count.

## VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

Approximately 100 volunteers conducted surveys during the PiT Count. Some volunteers were service providers, while others were general community members. Recruitment of community volunteers in Guelph included outreach by the Poverty Task Force (PTF) to prior count participants, local service provider organizations, and other community stakeholders. Volunteers were directed to register online and to indicate their availability and which survey sites they would like to volunteer at.

In the County, survey volunteers were all service providers and recruited through the County planning committee.

All volunteers were asked to participate in training in advance of the count. Training covered the purpose of the count; the definition of homelessness; Indigenous homelessness awareness; naloxone training; and a review of the survey tools.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design was slightly different in Guelph and Wellington County. In Guelph, teams of three to four volunteers were assembled to conduct surveys in designated areas. These areas included: Guelph Community Health Centre, Welcome In Drop In Centre, Lakeside HOPE House, Royal City Church (dinner program), and Shelldale Family Gateway. In addition, internal staff administered surveys with clients at Wyndham House Youth Resource Centre and Youth Emergency Shelter, Stepping Stone (men's shelter), Dwelling Place (women's shelter), Marianne's Place (domestic violence shelter), County of Wellington Social Services, emergency shelter overflow (motels), Discovery House, Stonehenge Therapeutic Community programs (Supported Recovery Room, Specialized Outreach Services, Supportive Addiction & Mental Health Housing), and Family & Children's Services of Guelph & Wellington County.

In addition to survey sites, street teams canvassed the downtown core in Guelph. Street teams navigated the count area, identifying locations where individuals experiencing homelessness were likely to be encountered. Street teams operated from 1pm - 2am on Monday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 1pm - 5pm on Tuesday, April 4<sup>th</sup>.

In Wellington County, all surveys were administered by internal staff from the following organizations: Women in Crisis, East Wellington Community Services, Family & Children's Services of Guelph & Wellington, Community Resource Centre of Centre and North Wellington, and the Rural Wellington Community Team.

## DATA COLLECTION

Surveys administered by volunteers were conducted with individuals currently experiencing homelessness. A screening tool was administered to determine eligibility, which included persons who are currently sheltered, emergency sheltered, or temporarily sheltered. Some respondents did not know where they were staying, but were deemed to be homeless due to a lack of housing. Survey responses were recorded on paper and hardcopies were submitted to PTF and County staff.

Care was taken by all volunteers to ensure that people felt comfortable, regardless of the location where the survey occurred. During the interviews, volunteers reminded participants that they could skip any questions or withdraw from the survey at any time, without repercussions. All participants were provided a \$5 Tim Horton's gift card for their participation.

To ensure participants remained anonymous, no identifying information was collected for the Ontario Enumeration Survey. Participants were asked to provide their name and birthdate for

the VI-SPDAT, but the surveys were not connected in any way. This strategy did create opportunities for duplicates. Participants could complete the Ontario Enumeration Survey more than once, if they approached different volunteers at different survey sites. Efforts were made to mitigate this, including consistency of volunteers at most sites and with the street team, as well as leniency with the gift cards for those that admitted they had already completed the survey. While it is assumed that some duplicates have been included in the results, this is balanced by the understanding that a Point-in-Time Count provides a conservative estimate of the homeless population that is likely undercounted.

## SPECIAL OUTREACH STRATEGY: INDIGENOUS HOMELESSNESS

The need to develop a specialized outreach strategy to connect with Indigenous peoples experiencing homelessness was identified during the planning process. Funding from the Indigenous Healing & Wellness Program supported the hiring of an Indigenous Homelessness Community Coordinator to focus on the engagement of Indigenous communities.

An event, *Welcoming Communities - Indigenous Ties*, was hosted on the second day of the count at the Welcome In Drop In Centre. While the event was open to everyone, outreach and invitations focused on identifying Indigenous community members experiencing homelessness. Participants of the event shared stories, created art and made music together and were invited to participate in the Ontario Enumeration Survey.

## CHALLENGES & LIMITATIONS

There are many challenges in any homeless count. The 2018 Guelph-Wellington Point in Time Count is intended to provide a “snapshot” that quantifies the size of the population experiencing homelessness at a given point during the year. Hence, the count may not be representative of fluctuations and compositional changes in the population either seasonally or over time. It does not calculate the number of unique persons who experience homelessness over a calendar year, which is much higher than those who are experiencing homelessness at any given time<sup>5</sup>.

For a variety of reasons, some individuals experiencing homelessness generally do not want to be located, and make concerted efforts to avoid detection. Regardless of how successful outreach efforts are, an undercount of those experiencing homelessness will persist, especially with hard-to-reach subpopulations such as unsheltered families and unaccompanied youth<sup>6</sup>.

The methods employed have inherent biases and shortcomings. Even with the assistance of dedicated homeless service providers and individuals with lived experience, the methodology

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<sup>5</sup> Applied Survey Research (2017). Count Us In: Seattle/King County Point-in-Time Count of Persons Experiencing Homelessness. Available: [allhomekc.org](http://allhomekc.org)

<sup>6</sup> Applied Survey Research (2017).



cannot guarantee 100% accuracy. Many factors may contribute to missed opportunities, including<sup>7</sup>:

- It is difficult to identify persons who may be sleeping in cars, abandoned buildings, or structures unfit for human habitation.
- Individuals residing in isolated rural areas that are difficult to access or otherwise identify for the purposes of the count.
- Individuals whose physical appearance differs from traditional visual cues associated with people experiencing homelessness can be mistaken for housed individuals. This is especially true for unaccompanied youth, who often “hide in plain sight” and present similarly to their stably housed peers.
- Families experiencing homelessness with children often seek opportunities to stay with friends or family and are deliberate about not accessing services that could reveal their housing situation.

As a result of these challenges and limitations, the results reported from the 2018 Point-in-Time Count should always be considered a conservative estimate.

## EVERYONE COUNTS: 2018 POINT-IN-TIME COUNT FINDINGS

### NUMBER AND CHARACTERISTICS OF INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN GUELPH-WELLINGTON

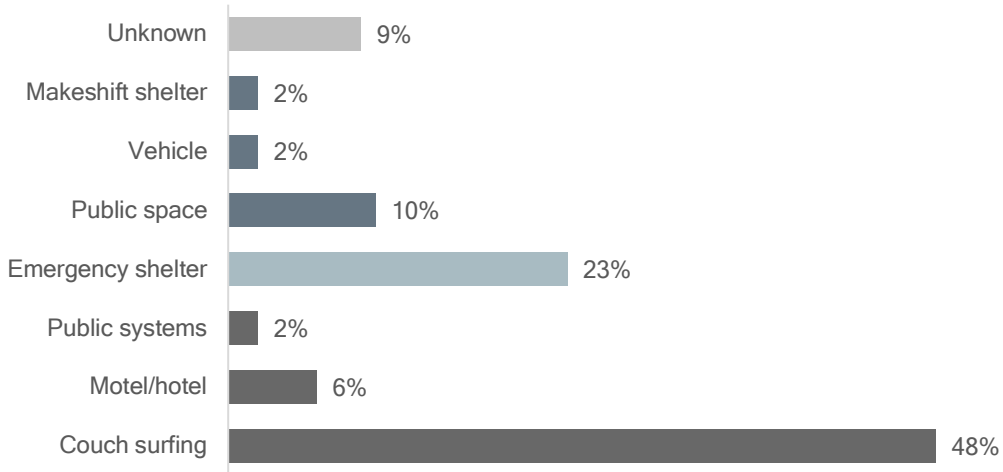
A total of 325 individuals were counted in Guelph-Wellington on April 23, 2018.

Fifty-six percent (56%) of the population was temporarily sheltered, including couch surfing, staying a motel/hotel, and in public systems, such as a hospital or jail. Twenty-three percent (23%) was emergency sheltered, including shelters for individuals/families impacted by family violence. Fourteen percent (14%) were unsheltered, sleeping in public or private spaces without consent or contract and in places unfit for human habitation, such as a makeshift shelter or vehicle. Finally, nine percent (9%) had an unknown location, either because the participant did not wish to share their location or because they did not know where they were going to stay at the time of the survey.

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<sup>7</sup> Applied Survey Research (2017).

FIGURE 1. TOTAL NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS



*n=322.*

*Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.*

Eighty-one percent (81%) of the participants were residing in Guelph on the night of the count and the remaining nineteen percent (19%) were residing in Wellington County.

Of the individuals experiencing homelessness in Wellington County, the majority (67%) were temporarily sheltered, three percent (3%) were emergency sheltered, eight percent (8%) were unsheltered, and twenty-one percent (21%) were in an unknown location.

Of those experiencing homelessness in Guelph, fifty-two percent (52%) were temporarily sheltered, twenty-seven percent (27%) were emergency sheltered, fifteen percent (15%) were unsheltered, and six percent (6%) were in an unknown location.

FIGURE 2. NUMBER OF PERSONS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS, BY AREA AND SHELTER STATUS

	GUELPH	WELLINGTON
TEMPORARILY SHELTERED	136	41
EMERGENCY SHELTERED	71	2
UNSHELTERED	39	5
OTHER	15	13
TOTAL	261	61
PERCENT	81%	19%

*n=322.*

There were 20 family households experiencing homelessness during the count. These households included at least one parent or guardian and one or more dependent children under the age of 18. In total, there were 34 dependent children included in the family households, representing eleven percent (11%) of the overall number of individuals experiencing homelessness.

Of the overall number of individuals identified as experiencing homelessness (including dependent children who were not directly surveyed), twenty-nine percent (29%) were unaccompanied youth between 16 and 24 years, and sixty-one percent (61%) were adults 25 years and older.

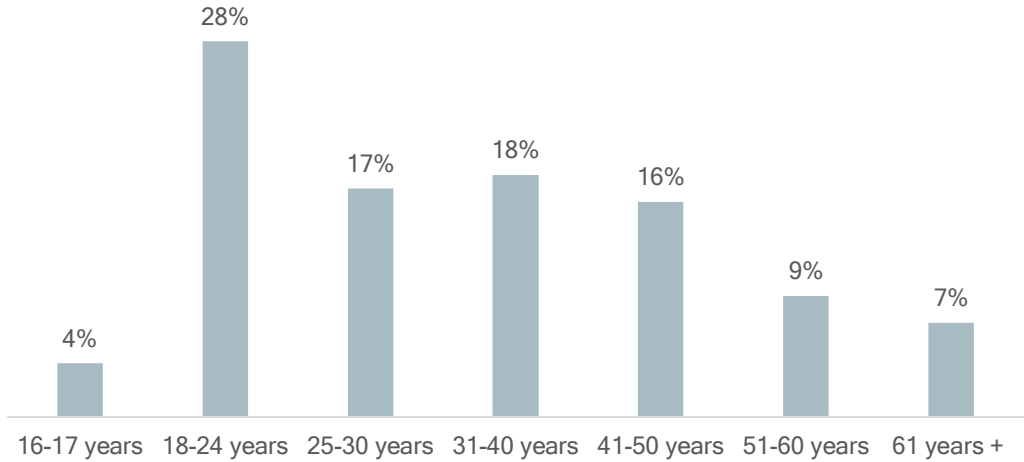
FIGURE 3. TOTAL NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY HOUSEHOLD TYPE AND SHELTER STATUS

	DEPENDENT CHILDREN UNDER 18	UNACCOMPANIED YOUTH 16 - 24	ADULTS 25 +
TEMPORARILY SHELTERED	21	61	95
EMERGENCY SHELTERED	13	23	37
UNSHELTERED	--	6	38
OTHER	--	3	25
TOTAL	34	93	195
PERCENT	11%	29%	61%

*n=322*

Nearly two-thirds (67%) of survey respondents\* were over 24 years of age. Unaccompanied youth between 16 - 24 years represented one-third (32%) of all survey respondents. The oldest individual surveyed during the 2018 Point in Time Count was 75 years old.

FIGURE 4. AGE OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS



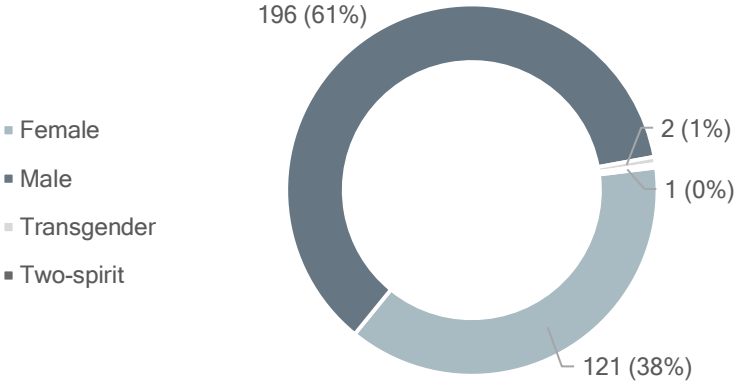
n=288

*\*Note: 'Survey respondents' includes persons who completed a survey during the 2018 Point in Time Count. It does not include dependent children, who were not directly surveyed.*

*Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.*

The majority of individuals experiencing homelessness identified as male (61%). Thirty-eight percent (38%) of individuals identified as female, 1% identified as transgender, and less than 1% identified as two-spirit.

FIGURE 5. TOTAL NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS, BY GENDER

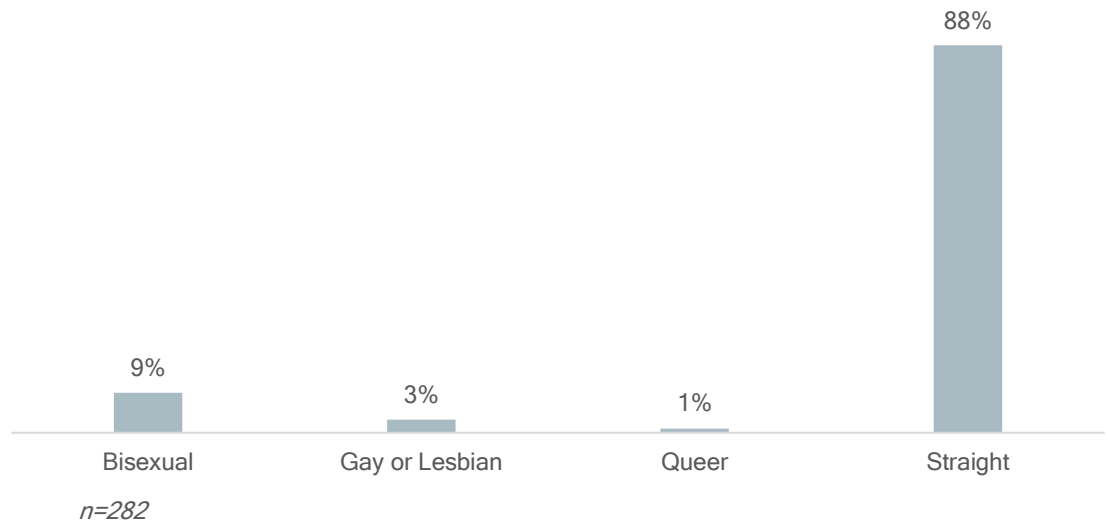


n=320

Thirteen percent (13%) of survey respondents across Guelph-Wellington identified their sexual orientation as either bisexual (9%), gay or lesbian (3%), or queer (1%). The percentage of LGBTQ youth (16 - 24 years) was slightly higher (16%) than adults (25 years +) (11%).

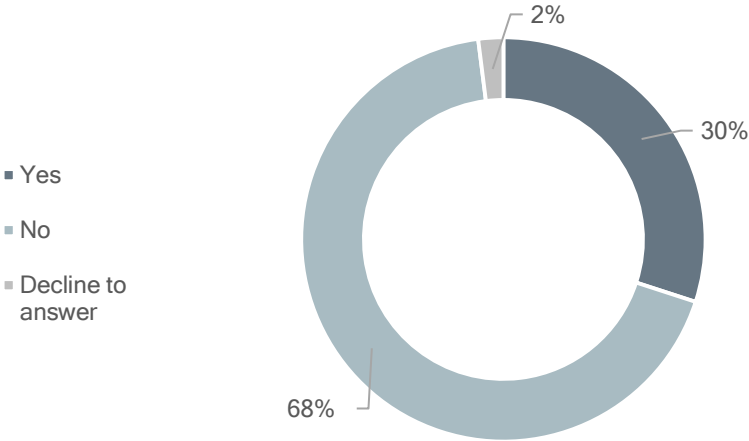
Survey respondents who identified as LGBTQ reported experiencing chronic homelessness (6 months or more in the past year) at lower rates than their non-LGBTQ peers (46% compared to 59%). However, survey respondents who identified as LGBTQ reported experiencing episodic homelessness (3 periods of homelessness within the past year) at *higher* rates than their non-LGBTQ peers (34% compared to 22%).

FIGURE 6. SEXUAL ORIENTATION OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS



An estimated 30% of survey respondents reported as having been in foster care and/or a group home. Survey respondents with experiences in foster care and/or a group home were higher among youth (16 - 24 years) than among adults (25 years +) (46% compared to 23%).

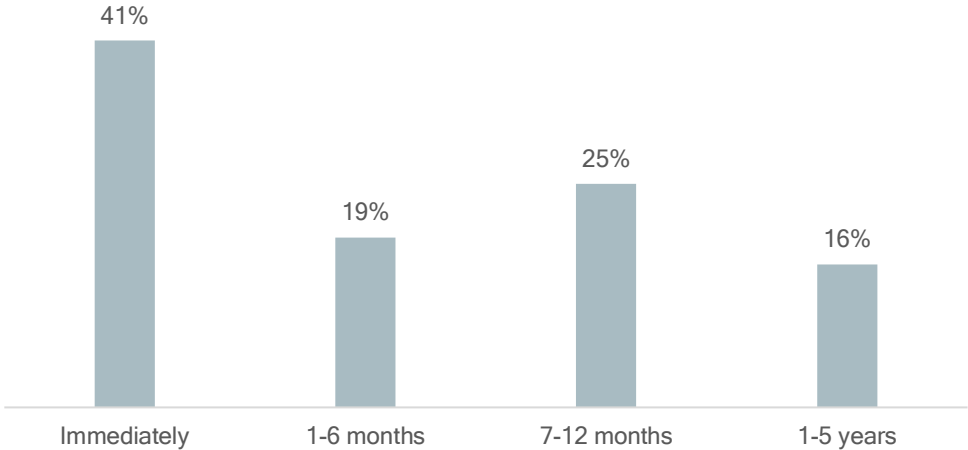
FIGURE 7. HISTORY OF FOSTER CARE AMONG SURVEY RESPONDENTS



n=287

Survey respondents with experiences in foster care and/or a group home were asked to share how long after leaving care that they experienced homelessness. Over half (60%) indicated that it was 6 months or less, with forty-one percent (41%) reporting that it occurred immediately. Overall, eighty-one percent (81%) of survey respondents with experiences in foster care and/or a group home felt that Child Protection Services was not helpful in transitioning them to independence after leaving care.

FIGURE 8. LENGTH OF TIME AFTER LEAVING FOSTER CARE AND/OR GROUP HOME AND EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

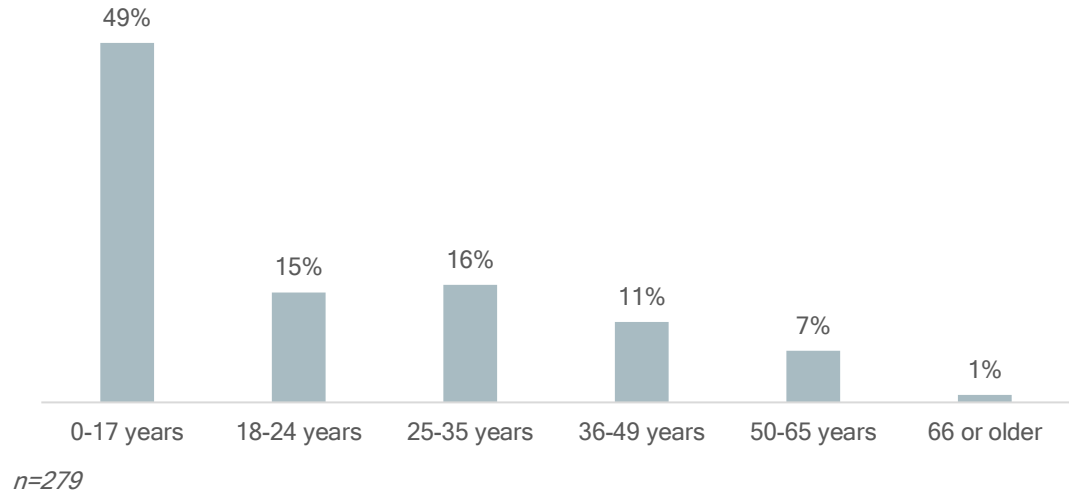


n=86

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Nearly half (49%) of survey respondents first experienced homelessness as a child under the age of 18. Overall, twenty-four percent (24%) of survey respondents indicated that they first experienced homelessness in the past year. Most (76%) of these respondents were youth (16 - 24 years).

FIGURE 9. AGE AT FIRST EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG SURVEY RESPONDENTS

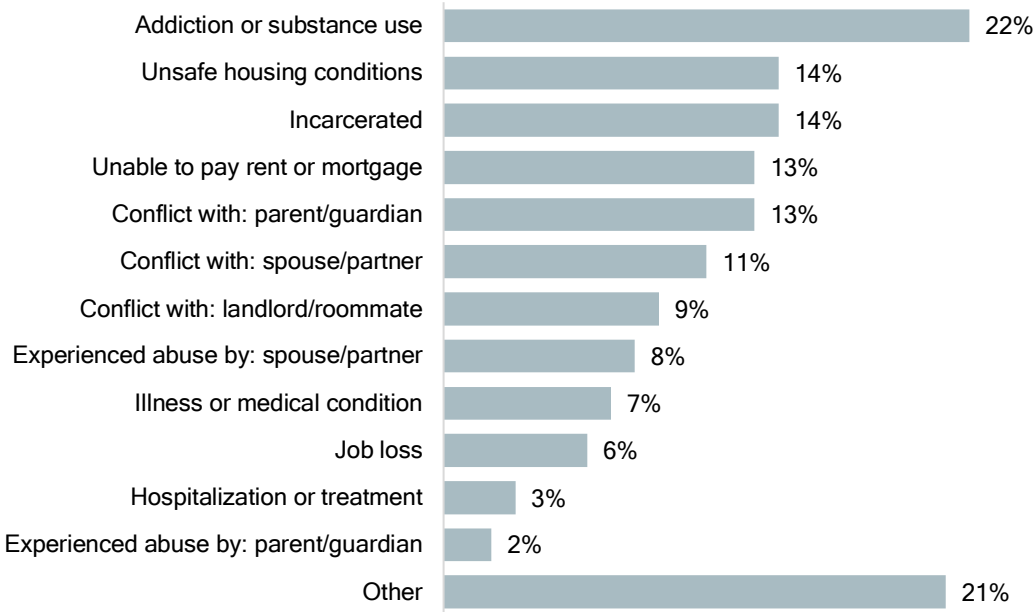


*Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.*

When asked what happened that caused them to lose their housing most recently, nearly one-quarter (22%) of respondents reported addiction or substance use. Other top responses included unsafe housing conditions (14%), incarceration (14%), inability to pay rent or mortgage (13%), and a conflict with a parent or guardian (13%).

Other reasons that were not captured in the categories provided, were mental health issues, criminal activity, changes in the number of household members, and evictions.

FIGURE 10. REPORTED CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS BY SURVEY RESPONDENTS



*n=280*

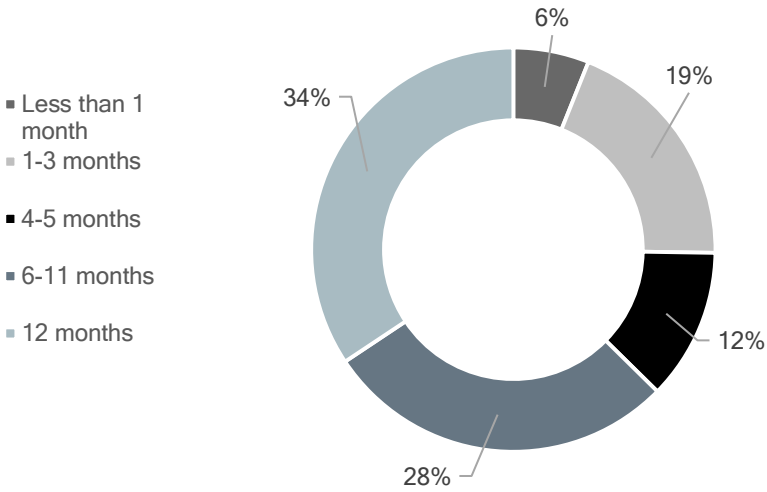
*Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100%.*

Chronically homeless refers to individuals who are currently homeless and have been homeless for six months or more in the past year<sup>8</sup>. The majority (62%) of survey respondents reported that they are chronically homeless.

<sup>8</sup> Government of Canada (2014). Homelessness Partnering Strategy Directives 2014-2019. Available: [www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/funding/homeless-directives.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/funding/homeless-directives.html)



FIGURE 11. NUMBER OF MONTHS HOMELESS IN PAST 12 MONTHS AMONG SURVEY RESPONDENTS

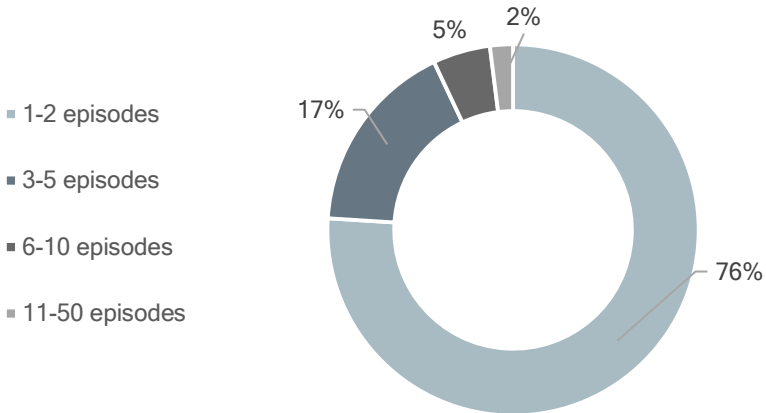


n=278

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Episodically homeless refers to individuals who are currently experiencing homelessness and have experienced three or more episodes of homelessness in the past year<sup>9</sup>. Just under one-quarter (24%) of respondents reported that they have experienced 3 or more episodes of homelessness in the past year.

FIGURE 12. NUMBER OF EPISODES OF HOMELESSNESS IN THE PAST YEAR AMONG SURVEY RESPONDENTS

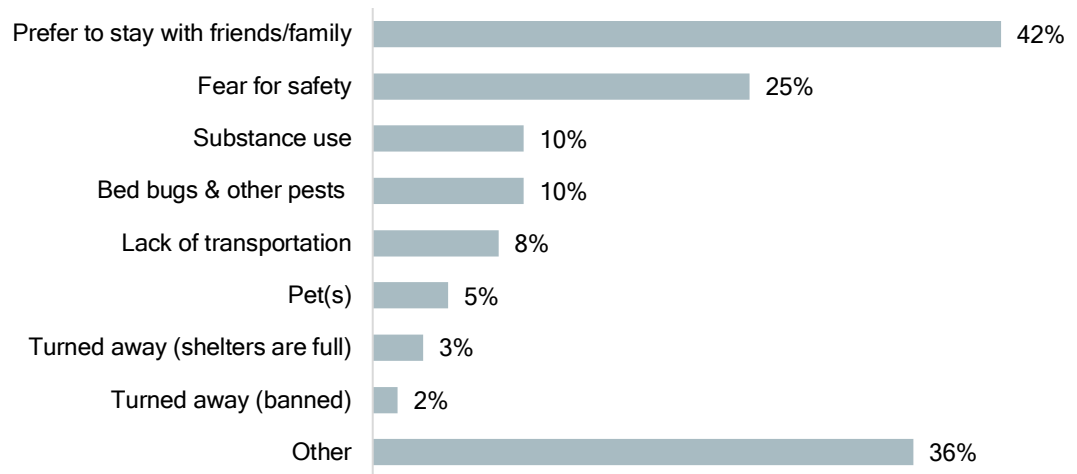


n=272

<sup>9</sup> Government of Canada (2014).

An estimated 23% of individuals experiencing homelessness in Guelph-Wellington were staying at an emergency shelter on the night of the count. However, 42% of survey respondents indicated that they have stayed at an emergency shelter at some point in the past year.

FIGURE 13. REASONS FOR NOT STAYING IN EMERGENCY SHELTER AMONG SURVEY RESPONDENTS



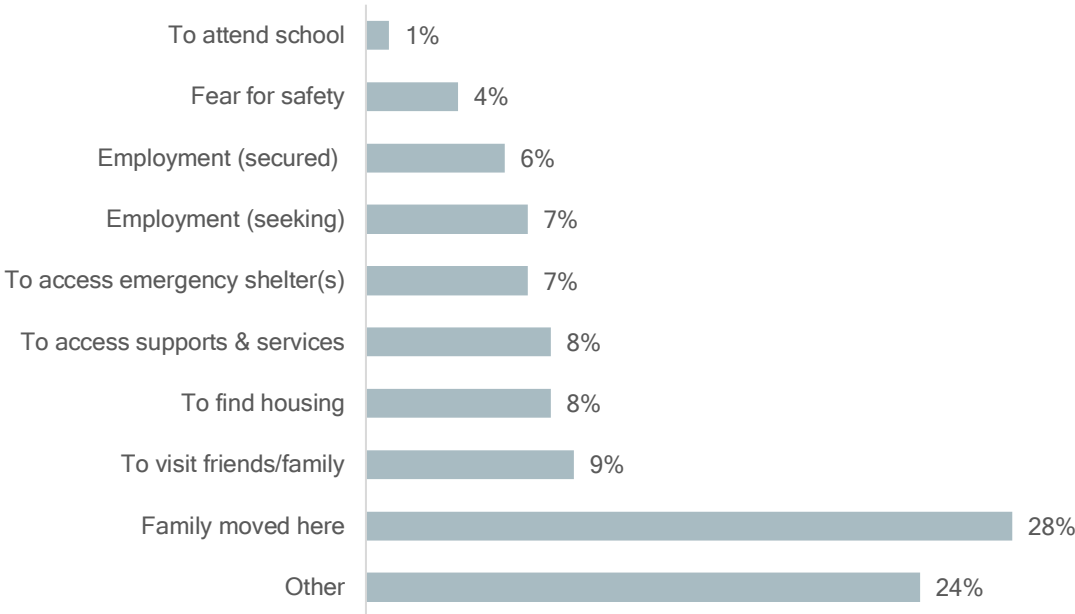
*n=168*

*Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100%.*

Survey respondents were asked to indicate how long they had been in the community that the survey was being completed in. Twenty-six percent (26%) of respondents reported that they had always been there and twenty-two percent (22%) said they had moved there in the past year. The remaining respondents moved to the community over a year ago.

Of those that lived in a different community before the one they completed the survey in, the majority (63%) of respondents reported they came from another community in Ontario (outside of Guelph-Wellington). Just over one-quarter (26%) noted they came from a community within Guelph-Wellington, while eight percent (8%) came from a province other than Ontario (8%), and four percent (4%) came from outside of Canada.

FIGURE 14. MAIN REASON THEY CAME TO GUELPH-WELLINGTON REPORTED BY SURVEY RESPONDENTS

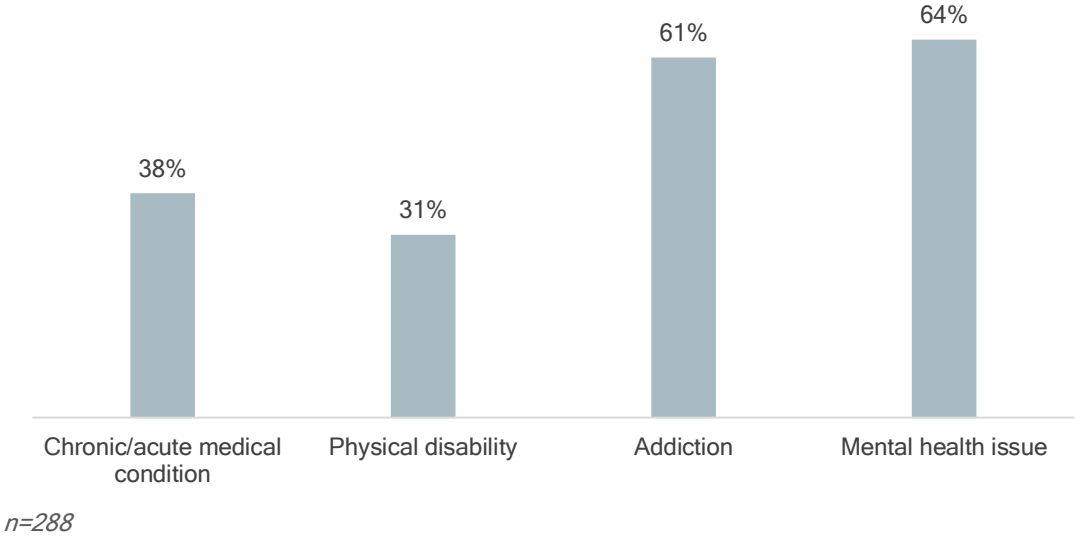


*n=166*

*Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.*

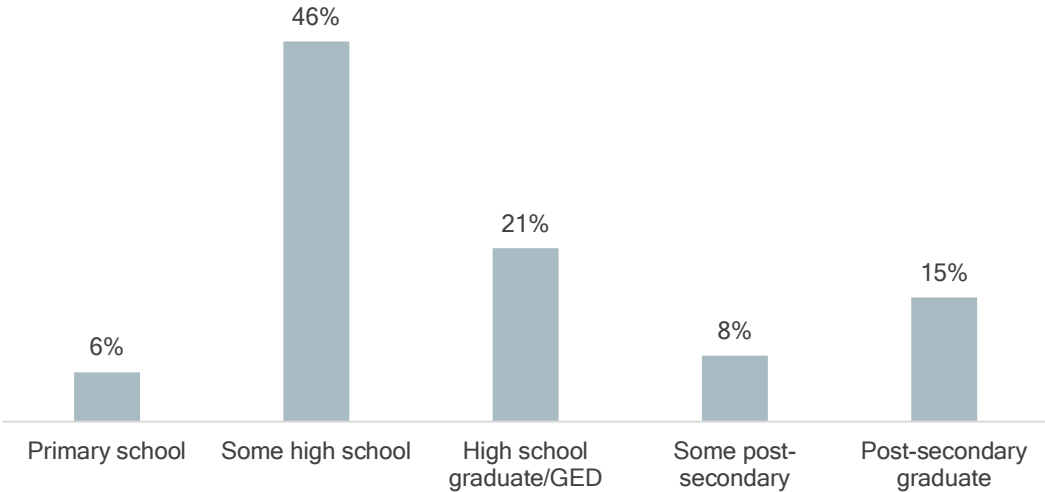
Respondents were asked if they have chronic/acute medical conditions, physical disabilities, addictions, or mental health issues. A high number of participants reported they have addictions (61%) and mental health issues (64%). Nearly half of all respondents (45%) have both addiction and mental health issues. A small, but significant, number of respondents (12%) reported having all four health issues.

FIGURE 15. HEALTH ISSUES AMONG SURVEY RESPONDENTS



Nearly half (46%) of respondents reported having at least some high school education. Others reported having completed high school/GED (21%), being a post-secondary graduate (15%), having some post-secondary (8%), having completed primary school (6%), or having a graduate degree (3%).

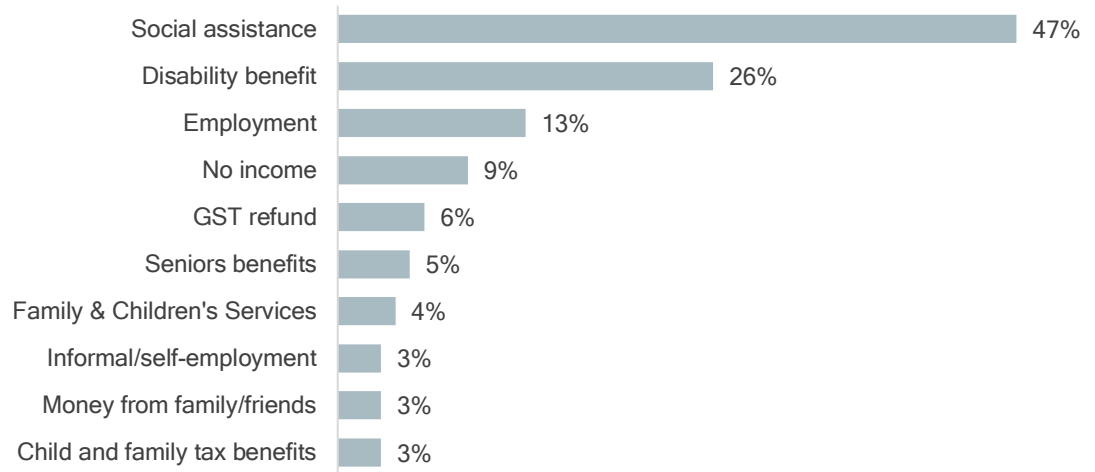
FIGURE 16. HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION AMONG SURVEY RESPONDENTS



Respondents were asked to identify their sources of income from a list that was read by the survey administrator. Nearly half (47%) reported receiving income from social assistance (including Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program). Over one-quarter (26%) of

respondents indicated they receive income from a disability benefit. It is assumed that some that receive income from ODSP may have selected this option instead of social assistance.

FIGURE 17. SOURCES OF INCOME AMONG SURVEY RESPONDENTS

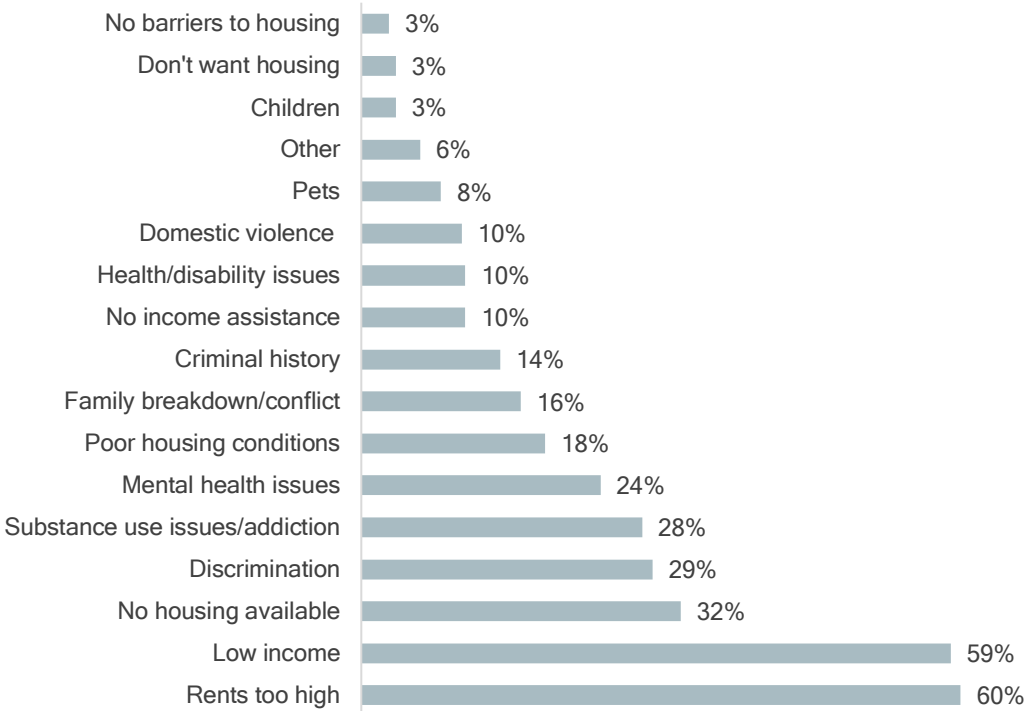


*n=288*

*Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.*

The majority of respondents indicated that high rental rates (60%) and/or low income (59%) were barriers to finding housing. Other barriers with a high response rate include 'no housing available' (32%), 'discrimination' (29%), 'substance use issues/addiction' (28%) and 'mental health issues' (24%).

FIGURE 18. CHALLENGES OR PROBLEMS FINDING HOUSING AMONG SURVEY RESPONDENTS



*Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.*

