

# 14th Annual Report Card on Homelessness for Nelson, B.C.

Including 2022 Point-in-Time Service Enumeration and Point-in-Time Surveys Report, with Coordinated Access/By-Name List Data



**Nelson Committee on Homelessness (NCOH)**

**October 2022**

**The Nelson Committee on Homelessness (NCOH)  
acknowledges our respect for, and deep gratitude to,  
all the ancestors and keepers of the land on whose traditional  
territories we are honoured to live and work.**



# 14th Annual Report Card on Homelessness for Nelson, B.C.

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## “Who’s Behind the Face?”

The 2022 Report Card on Homelessness was put together with key input from people with lived experience of and expertise on homelessness.

‘Who’s Behind the Face?’ is this report’s theme, proposed by someone who had experienced years of homelessness. He noted, and other people with lived experience of homelessness agreed, that often people they encounter do not see beyond appearances. The trauma that someone has experienced can show in their face, and passers-by may be uncomfortable.

NCOH would like you to **meet people without judgment**. Please understand that someone could be struggling to get through unbelievable challenges.

**‘Behind the face’, each person may be coping with personal and family histories of trauma, including systemic racism, family separation, abuse, discrimination, surviving attempted cultural genocide (i.e. residential schools, the 60’s scoop, and other forms of colonial violence on Indigenous peoples), and much more.**

And homelessness adds additional traumas on to people who are already burdened. Every member of our community is vital, bringing unique experiences. We all need the right opportunities and support.

**“I never did anything wrong to earn this stigma. But when you’re homeless and you have no food, what are your alternatives? Don’t, don’t judge people. You have no right.”**

*Person with lived experience of homelessness*

**“Educate businesses. Educate these people on what leads a person to where they are.”**

*Person with lived experience of homelessness*

**“When you see somebody in the street, don’t snicker, roll your eyes or ignore us. Acknowledge us for who we are as human beings. It’s a simple thing to do. That’s how change happens, when you actually sit down and listen to each other. You’ve got to look at the human side, the factors that led people here.”**

*Person with lived experience of homelessness*

# Ending Homelessness in Nelson

**Homelessness in Nelson is a crisis**, as demonstrated in this report. These complex issues can be resolved with collaboration and innovation. Strategic partnerships for action from across the whole community are vital to end homelessness, including:

- 1) Act urgently to house people with complex needs and low incomes.
- 2) Build supportive and affordable housing.
- 3) Provide ongoing support services to everyone who needs them, like intensive case management, complex care supports and others. Where these are missing or inadequate, advocate for them on a community-wide, systematic basis.
- 4) Consult with people with lived experience and expertise on homelessness as a vital and ongoing planning component.
- 5) Build on successes such as Coordinated Access, The Coordinated Access HUB, and others. Initiatives such as these are steps towards ending homelessness, and much more is needed.
- 6) Recognize that homelessness is a community-wide responsibility. It cannot be solved by service provision or housing alone.

## How does the number of people experiencing homelessness in Nelson compare with other communities?

**Nelson has the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest rate of homelessness in British Columbia's Interior<sup>1, 2</sup>, and this is an undercount.** For every 1,000 people in Nelson, a minimum of 8 people are confirmed to be experiencing homelessness, based on a February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022 Point-in-Time count of service data. Only people in known locations that night were counted, so some people were missed, and no estimate was made of hidden homelessness.

As noted in a recent Province of British Columbia report, "It is commonly accepted that PiT counts are undercounts of the population experiencing homelessness."<sup>4</sup>

## Local Context

**Competition for housing:** Nelson still has a 0% vacancy rate, and high numbers of people needing homes. There is little rental housing, it is costly, and there is competition for it. Vacancy rates continue to be 0.0% for one-bedroom and studio units – as they have been for several years. People already disadvantaged through homelessness and poverty simply cannot compete. Far too little housing is genuinely affordable.

**Complex needs:** Homelessness is more complicated than simply a lack of housing. Many people experiencing homelessness are facing complex issues, and need extra supports to get and keep housing, and to build health and well-being. Nelson now has a small number of supportive housing units. By-Name List data makes it clear that many more are needed, along with dedicated health and well-being resources for people with complex health issues.

**“To have life just taken from you and become homeless in this housing crisis, is totally (*absurd*).”**

*Person with lived experience of homelessness*

**“We need to start building housing and putting money into resources like mental health, substance use treatment, addictions. Get (*people*) support, get them into things.”**

*Person with lived experience of homelessness*



## Data sources about people experiencing homelessness in Nelson:

### Nelson's By-Name List/Coordinated Access (60 people)

In November 2021, Nelson's Coordinated Access system and By-Name List launched to help people experiencing homelessness with housing and other services. This program is supported by the federal Reaching Home program. Communities across Canada are implementing Coordinated Access with multiple local partners working together to provide services and supports, and to house people as units become available. Not only does this program support vulnerable people, it also provides a real-time sources of data about people experiencing homelessness in Nelson, and will do so on an ongoing basis. Data in this report is for 60 people experiencing homelessness who completed intakes for Coordinated Access from the time it launched in November 2021, to May 30, 2022.

### Point-in-Time (PiT) Surveys (30 people)

Point-in-Time (PiT) surveys are developed by the federal government for use in communities across Canada. In Nelson, PiT surveys were completed with people during their intake with Coordinated Access, between November 15, 2021, and March 29, 2022, and the resulting data is provided in this report.

### Point-in-Time Service Enumeration (88 people = undercount)

In 2022, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and other pressures, there was no community capacity for a full Point-in-Time count, in which community volunteers and staff survey everyone encountered at targeted locations on a specific date. Instead, the numbers of homeless people known to service providers were recorded and are reported here for the night of February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022.

The numbers of people who stayed indoors in shelters, Supported Recovery beds, and temporary transitional beds that night are provided. In addition, the number of people known to Street Outreach to be sleeping outdoors, and the number of people turned away from shelters was recorded; there is no duplication between these numbers. While 88 people were found to be experiencing homelessness on Feb. 1, 2022, this is an undercount as we know others were missed.



88 People were confirmed to have no home in Nelson on the night of February 1, 2022 - a definite undercount.

On the night of February 1, 2022, service providers reported 72 people (81%) who were homeless, staying in shelters, temporary/transitional housing, and Supported Recovery beds. In addition, 16 people (18%) were confirmed to be staying outdoors.

Services that provided data for February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022:

- Aimee Beaulieu Transition House, Nelson Community Services
- Street Outreach Program, Nelson Community Services
- Stepping Stones Shelter, Nelson CARES Society
- Winter Emergency Beds, Nelson CARES Society
- North Shore Inn, Nelson CARES Society
- Transition Accommodation Program (TAP), Ward Street Place, Nelson CARES Society
- Cicada Place, Nelson Community Services
- Kootenay Boundary Adult Supported Recovery Program, ANKORS

No estimate was made of the number of people living in ‘hidden homelessness’ circumstances. **Even with this undercount, Nelson still has the 2nd highest rate of homelessness per 1,000 people in B.C.’s Interior<sup>1,2</sup>. (Only Quesnel had a higher rate.)**

Table 1: Locations where people slept on the night of February 1, 2022

Locations of people experiencing homelessness stayed on the night of February 1, 2022	Pit Service Enumeration (N=88)
	%
Known Unsheltered	18%
Temporary/Transitional Housing	20%
Shelters	53%
Supported Recovery beds	8%
<b>Total Known to Service Providers</b>	<b>100%</b>
People whose location was not known on Feb. 1, 2022, or who themselves were not known to service providers (‘hidden homelessness’)	??

**The February 1st count did not include hidden homelessness.** When someone's homelessness is 'hidden', they are not known to services, often staying in unstable, inadequate or dangerous conditions. In 2018, the full Point-in-Time Count found 43 people experiencing hidden homelessness in Nelson and the housing crisis has since worsened. Service workers continually hear from people living in hidden homeless circumstances, or supporting others who are. Real-life examples include a couple staying in an unheated garage with no water or power, a son staying in a relative's truck, and an elderly mother-in-law staying on the couch in a small apartment after not being able to find anything affordable.

In 2016, Statistics Canada reported<sup>3</sup> that 8% of Canadians over 15 years of age had at some point in their lives, experienced 'hidden homelessness' - temporarily staying with friends, family, in a vehicle, or anywhere else because they had nowhere else to go. When extrapolated to Nelson's population (11,198 in the 2021 census), then **896 current Nelson residents have at some point in their life been without a place to live.**

## Where are people who asked for help with housing staying?

Between November 15, 2021, and May 30, 2022, 60 people experiencing homelessness registered for assistance from Coordinated Access. Since that time, 11 of those people have been housed, either through Coordinated Access or on their own.

**Table 2: Current sleeping arrangements among people who registered for Coordinated Access (CA)**

Where people who registered for Coordinated Access are staying (Nov. 2021-May 30, 2022)	By-Name List /CA registrants (N=60)
	%
Unsheltered/Outdoors	25%
Shelters (incl. motel)	32%
Temporary/Transitional Housing	8%
Supported Recovery beds	3%
Couch surfing/staying at someone else's place temporarily	10%
Unknown	
<b>Total still unhoused</b>	<b>82%</b>
<b>Permanent long-term housing (found after registration)</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

How many people are without shelter? Too many...

Too many people have no place to live, and there are too few temporary indoor options.

- One third (33%) of people who completed PiT surveys between November and March, and one quarter (25%) of people registering for the By-Name List between November and May were sleeping outside.
- On the night of February 1<sup>st</sup>, 16 people were known to be outdoors, and this is only people that service providers were aware of – so the numbers must be higher. And as noted, there was no count of people in ‘hidden homelessness’ in 2022, which would likely have increased the ‘no shelter’ numbers further.

How many people experience long-term ‘chronic’ homelessness?

- In 2022, 65% of people on Nelson’s By-Name List, and 60% who completed PiT surveys had been homeless for six months or more.
- These numbers are higher than in 2018, when PiT surveys found 39% were homeless for six months or more.
- They are also higher than the whole of B.C., for which 48% of people experience homelessness for longer than six months<sup>4</sup>.

Table 3: Long-term homelessness/past year

Long-term homelessness: Coordinated Access registrants (Nov. 2021-May 30, 2022)	By-Name List /CA registrants (N=60)	PiT Survey Participants (N=30)
	%	%
Six months or longer	65%	62%
1-5 months	35%	38%
Total	100%	100%

“Being homeless, nobody wants you.  
It takes away who you are.”

Person with lived experience of homelessness

# Point-in-Time (PiT) Service Enumeration, Point-in-Time Surveys,

## What are the demographics of homelessness in Nelson?

**Age:** About one third (27-30%) of people are over 55 years of age, per the chart below. The average age was 43 years (among people registering for Coordinated Access/By-Name List). The number of youth aged 18-24 years ranged from 3-18%. In the enumeration of service data on February 1<sup>st</sup>, there were four dependent children staying with parents.

**Table 4: Age groups - PiT Survey participants (Nov.-Mar. 2022), PiT Service Enumeration – sheltered (Feb. 1, 2022), and Coordinated Access registrants (Nov.-May 2022)**

	PiT Survey participants (N=30)	PiT Service Enumeration – sheltered popn. On Feb. 1, 2022 (N=72)	By-Name List /CA registrants (N=60)
Age groups	%	%	%
55 years and older	30%	28%	27%
25-54 years	57%	46%	65%
18-24 years	3%	18%	8%
Dependent children staying with parents	n/a	6%	n/a
Anonymous/declined	10%	3%	0
	100%	100%	100%

**Gender:** In PiT surveys and among By-Name List/Coordinated Access registrants, about half of Nelson’s homeless population identifies as men, 37-40% as women, and 7-12% as other genders.

**Table 5: Gender – PiT Survey participants, Coordinated Access registrants**

Genders	PiT Survey Participants (N=30)	By-Name List /CA registrants (N=60)
	%	%
Man	50%	50%
Woman	40%	37%
Transgender/non-binary/two-spirit	7%	12%
Anonymous/declined	3%	0%
Total Participants	100%	100%

# and Coordinated Access By-Name List Data

**Indigenous Ancestry:** Nelson continues to have high numbers of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness. As noted below, 37% of people who completed PiT surveys, and 30% of people seeking help through the Coordinated Access/By-Name List process noted Indigenous identities. The 2018 full Point-in-Time Count found 31% of people with Indigenous identities. These numbers are slightly lower than British Columbia as a whole, in which 39% of people reported Indigenous identities in PiT Counts across other communities<sup>2</sup>.

Table 6: Indigenous identity, PiT Survey participants, Coordinated Access registrants

	PiT Survey Participants (N=30)	By-Name List /CA registrants (N=60)
Indigenous identity	%	%
Indigenous identity	37%	30%
Non-Indigenous	63%	70%
Total Participants	100%	100%

## People experiencing homelessness are local.

The PiT Surveys asked about the communities that people had been in previously. Half of people (50%) were from Nelson or elsewhere local in the Kootenays. (10% specified that they had been born right in Nelson.) Of the people who had come from elsewhere, 10% had been here for 10 years or longer. Of those who had been in Nelson less than a year, 70% were from near-by local communities, e.g., Slocan Valley.

## Fleeing violence or conflict

Many people experiencing homelessness have also experienced trauma and violence, and post-traumatic stress disorder is common<sup>5</sup>. Among people who completed Point-in-Time surveys in Nelson, some noted that they had to leave their previous housing because of violence or conflict at home.

- Among people who registered for Coordinated Access/the By-Name List, 18% were fleeing violence or abusive situations. Among people who completed PiT surveys, abuse from a spouse/partner was a factor in the loss of their most recent housing situation for 7%; abuse from a parent/guardian was also a factor for 7%.
- Conflict with a spouse/partner was a factor in the loss of their most recent housing for 17%, and conflict with a parent/guardian for 10% of survey participants.

## What about health impacts?

Homelessness has severe impacts on people’s mental and physical health and well-being. PiT surveys asked about general conditions from mental health to disabilities. Most people reported multiple concurrent challenges. In 2022 PiT surveys, only 10% reported no health issues.

- Health and well-being challenges were more frequently reported in 2022 than in 2018. In 2022, 63% reported health conditions, and in 2018, 50% had reported health issues.
- The most common co-occurring issues were disabilities, mental health, substance use challenges, as noted in Table 8.
- Everyone who reported a learning disability also reported mental health challenges.
- One third of participants reported 4 or 5 challenges together (34%).

**Table 7: Health challenges and/or disabilities reported by PiT survey participants**

*(Participants chose multiple options.)*

Health challenges/disabilities	PiT Survey Participants (N=30)
	%
Mental health	63%
Substance use	57%
Learning disability	50%
Physical disability	43%
Illness or medical condition	30%

**People commonly reported facing multiple challenges.** The frequency of particular challenges in combination is noted in Table 8. For example, everyone who reported a learning disability also reported mental health challenges (50%). The more challenges people face, the more complex their situation is, and the more they could benefit from support and assistance.

**Table 8: Most frequently co-occurring health challenges/disabilities reported by PiT survey participants**  
*(Participants chose multiple options).*

Co-occurring health challenges/disabilities	PiT Survey Participants (N=30)
	%
Mental health + learning disability	50%
Mental health + substance use	47%
Mental health + substance use + learning disability	43%
Mental health + learning disability + physical disability	27%
Substance use + physical disability	27%
Mental health + substance use + physical disability	23%
Medical condition + physical disability	17%
Medical condition + physical disability + mental health	13%

What about Foster Care experience?

Foster care has been referred to as a ‘pipeline’ to homelessness<sup>6</sup>, as a history of child welfare system involvement is common among people experiencing homelessness , and Nelson is no exception.

- Over a third (37%) of people who completed PiT surveys had been in foster care in their childhood or youth. The 2018 PiT surveys recorded 40% of participants with a history of foster care. Across B.C., 36% of people experiencing homelessness reported a history of foster care<sup>2</sup>.

“Community is only as strong as its weakest link? No, the community will only be strong if it takes the entire weight of the chain off the back of its most vulnerable.”

*Person with lived experience of homelessness, REDUN*



# Poverty in Nelson: Food banks and meal programs

Local organizations experienced a high demand for food support in 2021. Many services were not at full capacity because of safety restrictions related to Covid-19, and numbers are lower than pre-pandemic levels as a result.

**Table 9: Food and meals provided by local services providers in 2021**



## **Food Provided : 17,172 food bank visits/occasions when food was given out to people in need in 2021**

Nelson Community Food Centre	9,500 Food Bank Visits
St. Saviours Food Pantry, Kokanee Anglicans	2,221 Food Bank visits
Salvation Army Nelson	4,227 people served at the Food Bank (not unique individuals)
Nelson & District Women's Centre	288 visits with food provided
Neighbours United ( <i>formerly West Kootenay Eco-Society</i> ) Farms to Friends Program	936 bags of locally grown/produced food to Nelson & area households ( <i>out of a total 3,967 bags to households in 9 West Kootenay communities</i> )



## **Meals Provided : 15,884 meals for hungry people in 2021**

Our Daily Bread, Kootenay Christian Fellowship	10,686 meals served (about 43 people each day)
Salvation Army Nelson	5,198 meals served in the Drop-In

# Poverty in Nelson: Shelter and temporary housing stays

Local shelters and temporary beds were very busy in 2021. However they could not operate at full capacity because of safety restrictions related to Covid-19, and numbers are lower than pre-pandemic levels as a result. In addition, stays in shelters and temporary housing were often extended to serve people with complex needs.

**Table 10: Shelters and transitional housing, unique individuals and bed stays, April 2021-March 2022**

Emergency Shelters	Unique	Bed Stays (shelters)
Stepping Stones	140	3441
North Shore Inn	56	8867
Winter Emergency Beds	86	945
<b>Domestic Violence Shelter</b>		
Aimee Beaulieu Transition House	33 (incl. 13 dependent children)	2008
<b>Temporary/Transitional Housing</b>		
Cicada Place (10 units for youth, stay up to 2 years)	18 (incl. 4 dependent children)	Full
Ward Street Place Transition Accommodation Program (TAP), (6 units for adults, 6 month stay)	16	Full

In 2021, there were 219 times when someone asked for a shelter bed, and staff had to turn them away as none were available — even with extra capacity added in Nelson and surrounding communities. During Covid-19, the North Shore Inn opened as a year-round shelter. Shelters also opened elsewhere in the region, e.g. Castlegar (13 beds), Trail (8 beds) and Grand Forks (15 beds). However the demand is still very high in Nelson.

219  
Turnaways



## 0% Vacancy Rate - Heated Market + Intense Competition = Discrimination

Nelson’s vacancy rate is still near **0%** - as it has been for years<sup>7</sup>, so discrimination is built in. Everyone competes. Rental postings request personal information in addition to employment details, references and more. Appealing to landlords in this market doesn’t just mean being articulate and resourceful, you need a moderate to high income, and lots of ‘social capital’.

**Table 11: Nelson’s vacancy rates by unit type, 2013-2021**

Year	Total (all types)	Studio (bachelor)	1-bedroom	2-bedroom
<b>2021</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>1.1%</b>
<b>2020</b>	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%
<b>2019</b>	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>2018</b>	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>2017</b>	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>2016</b>	0.7%	-	0.0%	0.8%
<b>2015</b>	0.4%	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>2014</b>	0.6%	0.0%	0.6%	0.8%
<b>2013</b>	1.9%	5.7%	0.5%	2%



**In Nelson, a living wage is \$19.56 per hour<sup>8</sup> —  
a 6% increase since 2019...**

## Local social media is full of 'ISOs', postings by individuals and families desperately 'In Search Of' housing.



- People try and appeal to landlords by stating their employment situations and posting pictures.
- There are often more ISOs posted than rentals.
- Landlords do not need to advertise units - tenants can be 'cherry picked' from ISO posts.

### Facts About Nelson Renters:

#### 1 It's a lot of us. 37% of Nelson rents<sup>9</sup>.

Over one third (37%) of Nelson's population rents their home, more than the B.C. average (33%)<sup>9</sup>.



#### 2 36% spend more than they can afford on housing<sup>9</sup>.

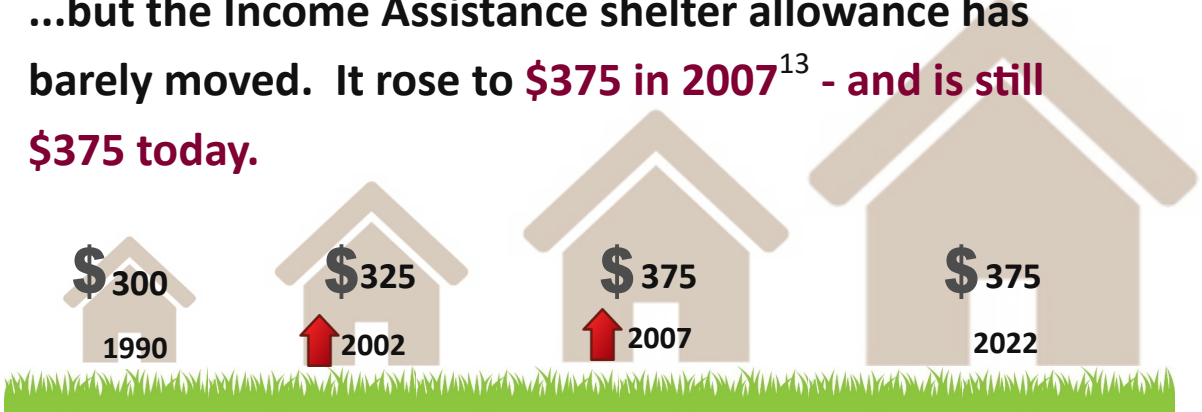
Over a third (36%) of Nelson's population spends more than 30% of their income on housing, higher than in the 2016 census, and the highest in the Columbia Basin<sup>10</sup>.

#### 3 19% of renting households are in 'Core Housing Need'<sup>9</sup>.

This means they are paying more than they can afford in Nelson, and/or they are living in sub-standard conditions (e.g. major repairs needed, overcrowded).

...A 'Living Wage' is the amount that a typical household of two working adults and two kids needs just for basics<sup>8</sup>.

Since 1990, BC rental costs have increased 250%<sup>12</sup> ...  
...but the Income Assistance shelter allowance has barely moved. It rose to **\$375 in 2007<sup>13</sup>** - and is still **\$375 today.**



### Income Assistance<sup>14</sup> provides:

- \$560/month + max. shelter allowance \$375 ('employable' single under 65),
- \$610/month + max. shelter allowance \$375 (single person meeting 'Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers' criteria).

### Seniors' incomes:

- Old Age Security pension: \$666.83<sup>15</sup> (plus 10% as of July 1, 2022 for ages 75+)
- Guaranteed Income Supplement for low income single seniors: \$995.99 max<sup>15</sup>.
- Canada Pension Plan?: Depends what you contributed.

**"I am university educated. A lot of us are educated. We didn't grow up wishing to be homeless."**

*Person with lived experience of homelessness*

## **'Affordability Gap': \$529**

The 'Affordability Gap' is the difference between the average cost of a 1-Bedroom unit, and what someone making minimum wage can afford to pay.

Housing is 'affordable' if it's 30% of your income or less; if you're a single person making minimum wage, the most you can pay for housing is \$712/month<sup>16</sup>. However:

- The average 1-Bedroom in Nelson costs \$1241, so you need an extra **\$529** every month to pay rent. Plus you will have utility costs.
- Want a room? The average advertised rent is \$774 in Nelson. Plus extra to share internet and utilities.

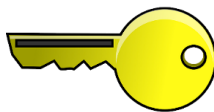


## **Rent Supplements: BC Housing**

As noted earlier, high numbers of people renting in Nelson are in Core Housing Need. BC Housing continues to provide rent supplements for people with low incomes who fit particular criteria (which varies by program). On March 31, 2022, 1.5% of Nelson's population were receiving a rent supplement, and 2/3 of recipients were seniors.

The **167** rent supplements<sup>17</sup> being provided in Nelson on that date were:

- SAFER (Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters), monthly support for eligible seniors: **97**
- RAP (Rental Assistance Program), monthly support for eligible working families): **40**
- HPP/HOP (Homelessness Prevention Program/Homelessness Outreach Program), short-term support for eligible adults at risk of homelessness: **30**



## 2022 Advertised Rental Costs

The average cost of a 1-Bedroom unit in Nelson is now **\$1241** per month....

Table 12: Average advertised costs of rental units by type and community, April-May2022

Type of Unit	Nelson	Rural Nelson
Room	\$774	\$702
Studio	\$1,083	\$1,100*
1 Bdrm.	\$1,241	\$1,260
2 Bdrm.	\$1,861	\$1,550
3 Bdrm.	\$2,746	
4+ Bdrm	\$3,300	\$2,600*

Every year, NCOH compiles information from local rental postings in the spring (April & May). We calculate the average costs to rent each type of unit, by region.

Type of Unit	Salmo & Area	Castlegar & Area	Slocan Valley	Trail & Area	Rossland	Kaslo
Room	\$547	\$669	\$721	\$738	\$675	\$700
Studio		\$1,000*	\$1,225	\$1,000		
1 Bdrm.		\$1,143	\$950*	\$972	\$1,000	
2 Bdrm.		\$2,200	\$1,690	\$1,599	\$1,950	\$2000
3 Bdrm.	\$1600*	\$2,360		\$1,867		
4+ Bdrm	\$2500*	\$2,200*		\$2,500*	\$2,800	

A) Not a scientific survey - estimates only. B) Blanks = none found

C) \*= only one posting found in that region of that type.

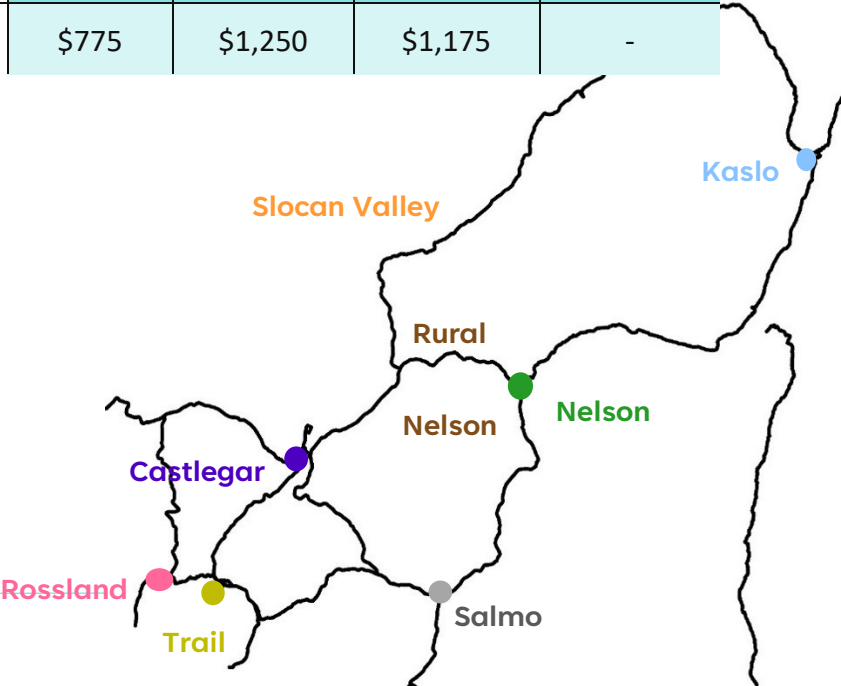


# for Nelson and Area

...an increase of \$54 from 2021, when the average 1-bedroom cost \$1,187/month.

Table 13: Average advertised costs of 1-Bedroom units by year and community, 2019-2022

Community	2019	2020	2021	2022
Nelson	\$1,068	\$1,176	\$1,187	\$1,241
Rural Nelson	\$1,043	\$1,215	\$1,313	\$1,260
Castlegar & Area	\$835	\$1,014	\$1,490	\$1,143
Slocan Valley	\$1,005	-	\$1,300	\$950*
Trail & Area	\$807	\$885	\$914	\$972
Rossland	\$823	\$1,350	\$1,030	\$1,000
Salmo & Area	\$700	\$750	-	-
Kaslo & Area	\$775	\$1,250	\$1,175	-



# Nelson has more Secondary Suites

The City of Nelson permits the construction of secondary suites in existing buildings, to boost the housing supply. The number of these units has risen each year, and these are mostly long-term rentals (82% in 2021). In 2021, Nelson had 75 approved short-term rental licenses.

Table 14: City of Nelson Secondary Suites and Short-term rental licences

City of Nelson Statistics <sup>18</sup>	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Full Secondary Suites Reported:	468	509	533	565	577
Short-Term Rental	4%	4%	6%	4%	5%
Waivers for Secondary Suites (not for rent)	12%	12%	12%	13%	13%
Long-Term Rental	84%	84%	82%	83%	82%
Approved Short-Term Rental Licences:	54	76	84	64	75

## ‘What about AirBnB?’

In the current housing crisis, the question of how many short-term rentals exist has arisen. Residents need housing, however accommodation is also needed for visitors, as tourism is important to Nelson’s economy. A quick search of the vacation property website AirBnB showed **88 rentals** available within the City of Nelson, and more in the surrounding area. These may be rooms or whole units.

“People force me to define my level of homelessness. I get told ‘things could be so much worse’...”

*Person with lived experience of homelessness*

# Nelson's Affordable Housing is Full.

From 2019 to 2021, Nelson had 123 independent social housing units<sup>19</sup> each year . These units are subsidized, e.g. through BC Housing. Housing providers report very little turnover (*when one tenant leaves and a new one replaces them*), with high numbers of people waiting for units.

As BC Housing now manages wait lists for most Nelson housing providers, the exact numbers are unknown—but it's a long list. Across B.C. in 2021, there were 26,800 households on wait lists for affordable housing<sup>20</sup>. Of these, over half (51.4%) had been on wait lists for 2 years or longer.



Most affordable housing is for dedicated populations, e.g. seniors, families or people with disabilities. These buildings are vital, and more options are needed community-wide.

**“Being homeless undermines your sense of self. It’s hard to recover self-confidence.”**

*Person with lived experience of homelessness*

**“People look at us and think ‘they have always been homeless; they have no way of being anything else.’ But I wasn’t always homeless.”**

*Person with lived experience of homelessness*

# What does the data in this report demonstrate?

## **Nelson needs many more affordable, supportive and complex care options.**

Nelson's housing crisis is acute, with a near 0% vacancy rate since 2014. There is a huge demand for units population-wide as 37% of the population rents their home<sup>9</sup>. Of this number, 36% are spending more than 30% of their income on housing, and 19% are in 'Core Housing Need'<sup>9</sup>. Emergency shelters are consistently full and are only intended for short stays. Further, there is no complex care housing and very few supportive housing units.

In 2022, the average advertised rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Nelson is \$1,241 – for the few units that become available. Not only is this price out of range for people with low incomes, there is significant competition for units. People experiencing multiple challenges and complex issues simply cannot compete in this market.

## **Support services are required.**

Housing people whose needs are complex is not just about providing walls and a roof – many people need extra support to stabilize after homelessness and to maintain their housing situation. People who have experienced homelessness are also likely to have experienced trauma, violence, discrimination and more, and to have higher rates of mental health and physical health challenges. Models like complex care or supportive housing, ongoing health care assistance, trusteeships and more are needed so that people facing multiple challenges may regain health and well-being, and stay housed. Nelson's critically limited housing and support options are a key reason for increased homelessness.

## **Many older people are experiencing homelessness.**

Homelessness is a dire situation for people of any age, and it is particularly difficult for older people. In Nelson, 27-30% of people experiencing homelessness are 55 years of age or older. This proportion is higher than British Columbia as a whole, which saw 19% of people aged 55 or more<sup>4</sup>.

## **Dedicated Indigenous supports are needed.**

The high proportion of people experiencing homelessness whose ancestry is Indigenous is consistent with informal reports from the Circle of Indigenous Nations Society (COINS) about the needs of community members. COINS is the sole organization dedicated to providing services to Indigenous peoples in the West Kootenays and their staff and programs are in great demand. Consultation with COINS about increasing dedicated Indigenous supports is needed, including housing options. Nelson and the West Kootenay region would benefit if COINS was resourced to consult about community needs and planning, and build on the results.

## **Critical health impacts must be addressed.**

“Homeless individuals may be traumatized at an early age, put into foster care, rendered homeless, initiated into substance use and re-traumatized on repeated occasions in adult life, rendering them vulnerable to incarceration and mental illness.”<sup>21</sup>

As noted above, homelessness takes a heavy toll on physical and mental health and well-being. People experiencing homelessness are at much higher risk of violence, illness, trauma, and death. These are likely to have been contributing factors when someone becomes homeless, and to occur repeatedly during homelessness. For example, a Canadian study of 825 people experiencing homelessness over three years found that 37.2% of participants had experienced at least one traumatic brain injury incident during the three-year period.<sup>22</sup>

An array of health and community supports and resources are needed for people as they step out of homelessness and into housing. Many resources are just not available in Nelson.

## Progress made over the past year in Nelson

**The HUB** is a multi-service, multi-partner drop-in open every day of the year for people experiencing homelessness. It's busy, with **9000+ visits** from opening on June 15, 2021 to June 30, 2022.

Multiple agencies provide services onsite. People come in to meet basic needs, access harm reduction, health care, housing help, referrals and much more. The Coordinated Access HUB has been supported by the City of Nelson and the Union of BC Municipalities, and the federal Reaching Home program.

### People who use the HUB say:

"I come here because these people always have some good advice... And they'll help anybody. They don't judge you, which is hard to find around here."

"I came here cause it was a place to get out of the rain and get out of the stigma, how the city treats people that are homeless... And I've been able to get into programs, learn...it's been very helpful."

"...Most of the reason why the city and the streets are turning around is because of the Hub. And these people, all they do is help. And they don't care who they help."

"Food, clothes, good people...if you're going through a mental breakdown, they will help you."

**The North Shore Inn (NSI)** was bought by BC Housing, to be operated by the Nelson CARES Society. It opened as an emergency shelter during the pandemic, and has now transitioned into Supportive Housing. The NSI is Nelson's only supportive housing site providing 30 beds for people experiencing homelessness who need extra help to stay housed.



**Nelson's Coordinated Access service** launched in November 2021, with partner organizations working together to support people experiencing homelessness to find housing and access other support. Coordinated Access is funded by the federal Reaching Home program.

The demand for housing and supports is high. The gap in the program is that there is very limited housing to refer people into.

If you know someone experiencing homelessness who is interested in Coordinated Access, reach out to: [coordinatedaccess@nelsoncares.ca](mailto:coordinatedaccess@nelsoncares.ca), 778-463-5477.

**On the next page, see how Coordinated Access works...**



**"I was housed by sheer luck, after a period of having to move 17 times in a single year due to one precarious housing situation after the next... I am so afraid to have to move again that my life remains in boxes. ."**

*Person with lived experience of homelessness*







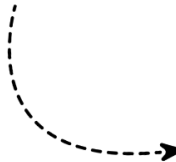
# coordinated access nelson

## ACCESS POINTS



## TRIAGE AND REFERRAL

Determining immediate needs and safety concerns



**Stepping  
Stones  
Emergency  
Shelter**

**Street  
Outreach**

**Coordinated  
Access Hub**

**Homelessness  
Prevention  
Program**

**ANKORS**

**Women's  
Outreach /  
Transition  
House**



**INDIVIDUALS AND  
FAMILIES EXPERIENCING  
HOMELESSNESS**



### **Coordinated Access supports individuals and families who:**

- Are experiencing homelessness (Unsheltered, emergency sheltered, provisionally accommodated) AND
- Face additional barriers/need support to find and/or maintain housing

Coordinated Access is a process for individuals and families experiencing homelessness to receive services and support, through a team of agencies using a standardized process for intake, assessment, and referral to housing.



## Letter from NCOH Co-Chairs

The Nelson Committee on Homelessness (NCOH) is currently releasing our 14<sup>th</sup> annual Report Card. It has been a year with much to celebrate. We have seen the opening of three new affordable apartment blocks including Herridge Place with thirty-nine (39) affordable rent-geared-to-income housing units; Hall St. Place with forty-three (43) affordable units serving families, individuals with disabilities and seniors; and Lakeside Place with forty-one (41) affordable units for seniors and adults with disabilities. BC Housing bought the North Shore Inn to serve as a **supportive** housing resource for thirty (30) adults experiencing homelessness. The motel was used to successfully provide emergency housing for homeless and street entrenched individuals throughout the Covid epidemic. Finally, the Coordinated Access **HUB** was opened in March of 2022 to provide many of the supports and services needed by people who may be at risk of or are experiencing homelessness, including drop-in, personal support, employment services, harm reduction services and health services. These five important resources were projects carried out by the member agencies of NCOH for several years and came to fruition this year.

NCOH also initiated the Coordinated Access Program this year. The coordinated process brings together service agencies regularly to develop a **by-name list** of individuals (with their permission and input) in need of housing and other social services. It is a collaborative project (various agencies serving homeless people make up the team) that uses a standardized intake, assessment, and referral approach to housing. At the time of writing this letter there are currently fifty (50) individuals on the by-name list in need of permanent housing. Of the ninety-one (91) names that have been on the list, only six (6) have been placed in appropriate housing. **The flaw in the system is that we do not have the required housing.**

Housing availability is a problem for **all** renters and buyers in Nelson but for many reasons it is a much greater problem for the homeless population. Many have histories that include mental illness and addictions or marginalization because of poverty, racism, chronic health issues, involvement in the justice system and/or trauma leading to discrimination and stigmatization. Stigma is an enormous issue and often creates such shame that it keeps people in the shadows of their addictions and mental health issues. The opioid poisoning crisis, while not limited to the homeless population, has certainly impacted it. The relationship between homelessness and substance use is complex. Use of substances does not necessarily lead to homelessness but once you are homeless your chances of finding and maintaining housing are often insurmountable for all the reasons listed above. Barriers not only include obtaining housing but also obtaining health care that includes getting treatment and recovery supports. Often when they do receive health care, they are discharged back to the very environments that supported their substance use.

NCOH has identified the following gaps that it will continue to address in the coming year. There is a need for more supportive housing. The By-Name List demonstrates that there are still a substantial number of people who need this level of housing.

“Supportive housing is **subsidized housing with on-site supports for single adults, seniors and people with disabilities at risk of or experiencing homelessness**. These supports help people find and maintain stable housing.” (BC Housing definition) There is also a need for Complex-Care Housing, a level of housing more appropriate for those with significant mental health and substance use challenges that require 24/7 support that includes treatment options to address their health needs. A further requirement is a more robust system of mental health care that is available to support and treat individuals who are experiencing severe, persistent symptoms of mental illness and/or substance use, often together with worsening of symptoms.

The BC Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions has recognized these needs but as yet have not provided the resources necessary to address these issues. The Ministry’s paper Complex Care Housing: Draft Strategic Framework (February 2022) recommends approaches based on the principles of accessibility, cultural responsiveness, holistic, respecting [free] agency and equitability. NCOH wholeheartedly endorses these principles. We agree that they are necessary to achieve the outcome identified by the Ministry of individuals experiencing homelessness to “improved community functioning /inclusion” (p.13)

How can you help? The most **impactful** way of helping is to **keep the pressure** on all levels of government to deliver a continuum of housing and appropriate supports for those who require it. The federal government established the National Housing Strategy, and it provides fifty percent (50%) split with the provinces for funding affordable housing initiatives as well as funding Reaching Home programs. The provincial government not only pays fifty percent (50%) of affordable housing but is responsible for how housing is developed and managed. In BC that function is conducted by the BC Housing Corporation reporting to the Minister responsible for Housing. The provincial government is also responsible for all health and welfare programs. Municipal governments are responsible for local taxation, zoning, and development. You can influence all these levels of government by writing letters to appropriate federal Members of Parliament (MPs), provincial Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), and municipal Council members and Mayors. As a voter you have influence and power. All of these representatives are responsive to public pressure.

**Secondly, and perhaps most importantly**, do not forget “**Who’s behind the face?**” These individuals we see on our streets are our children, our neighbours, our work mates that have experienced histories of trauma and exclusion, often from incredibly young ages. We believe they have a **right** to housing and opportunities that support can bring.

Sincerely,



Phyllis Nash,



Cheryl Dowden

Co-Chairs, Nelson Committee on Homelessness (NCOH)

## And in other good news...

**Affordable housing projects that had been in development were completed in 2021 and 2022.**

- 2021: SHARE Nelson/Kootenay Christian Fellowship opened Herridge Place, with 39 units for low-income adults.
- 2021: Nelson CARES Society opened 205 Hall Street, with 41 units for low-moderate income families and seniors.
- 2022: Nelson CARES Society opened Lakeside Place, with 47 units for seniors and people with disabilities.

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**The Government of Canada continues to see housing affordable housing as a priority in the 2022 budget**, with significant funds dedicated to these critical issues. Full details: <https://caeh.ca/budget-2022/>



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**The BC Government announced new supports for youth in care** to prevent homelessness when they 'age out'. Full details: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2022CFD0009-000353>



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**Nelson now has a Community Action Strategy to Reduce Poverty.**

It was developed by Together Nelson with substantial community input. The goal is to lift 500 people out of poverty by 2026 through a range of priority community actions. <https://www.bestnelson.org/together-nelson/>



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## About the Nelson Committee on Homelessness (NCOH)



The Nelson Committee on Homelessness (NCOH) is a coalition of service providers, people with lived and living experience of homelessness, and other community members. NCOH is committed to ending homelessness and poverty in Nelson. NCOH formed in 2001 to bring together diverse sectors and stakeholders seeking solutions, including people with lived experience. NCOH's mission is to lead a collaborative and coordinated response to homelessness in our region. We work to eliminate homelessness in Nelson through the full implementation of our Reaching Home Community Plan. Safe, affordable, and sustainable housing is a human right for every person.

NCOH is the Community Advisory Board (CAB) for federal Reaching Home funding for Nelson. NCOH projects are administered through the Nelson CARES Society, as decided by the CAB. NCOH projects are funded in part by the Government of Canada's Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy.

Canada 

The 14th Annual Report Card on Homelessness for Nelson was prepared by Jayne Caldwell, Coordinator for NCOH, with input on content, edits and support from NCOH Committee members who volunteered their time. They are:

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