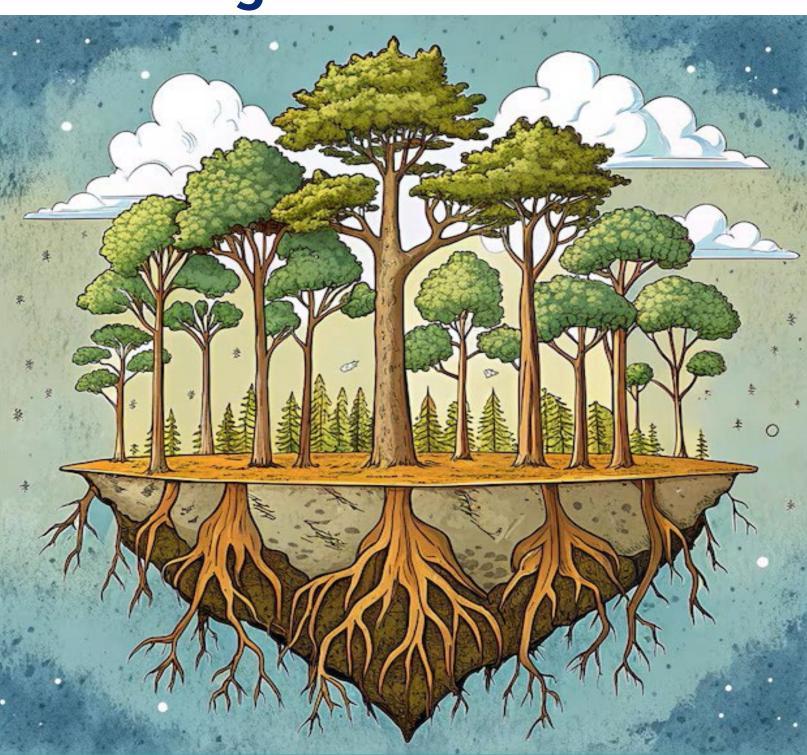
Bridging Belonging: Nothing about us Without us



Researched and prepared by the Nelson Committee on Homelessness (NCOH) & the Report Card Advisory

The 15th Annual Report Card on Homelessness highlights the current state of homelessness in Nelson, and how we can work together to address it. Numbers tell a story that cannot be ignored. Importantly, it raises the voices of community members experiencing homelessness and service providers who need to be heard in the development of meaningful solutions.

The Nelson Committee on Homelessness (NCOH) is a volunteer committee of service agencies, government representatives, and concerned citizens dedicated to leading a collaborative and coordinated response to homelessness. Acting as Nelson's Community Advisory Board for Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy, we make recommendations to our Community Entity (Nelson CARES Society) on the distribution of federal funding aimed at achieving the goals of Reaching Home. NCOH Membership is inclusive and open to any citizen, business and organization interested in taking part in local homelessness solutions. There are lots of opportunities to get involved ~ Together we CAN make a difference! **CONNECT WITH US @ ncohcommunity@nelsoncares.ca**

Before reading the Report Card complete the survey



Scan the QR code to access the survey.



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Canada Homelessness Strategy. The opinions and in reflect those of the Government of Canada. The Report Card is funded in part by the Government of Canada's Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy. The opinions and interpretations in this publication do not necessarily

15th Annual Report Card on Homelessness

Nelson Committee on Homelessness Co-Chair Letter

Dear Citizens of Nelson, the focus of this year's Report Card is on the need for belonging and to hear the voices of those who are experiencing homelessness. Since the publication of our last report card the loss of the HUB due to lack of adequate funding has been a blow to not only those individuals who benefited from this service but also to the agencies that collaborate to provide a one-stop service center of access to food, outreach, overdose prevention, employment services and extreme weather. In response, a temporary drop-in opened at the end of September 2024 one day a week.

The North Shore Inn is providing supportive housing to twenty-eight individuals who had no housing or were precariously housed, and for the past two years, the Anglican Church with ANKORS has provided a space to provide beds for twenty people during extreme weather conditions both are funded by BC housing. The causes of homelessness have not changed substantially: poverty, lack of housing, systemic discrimination, barriers to employment, displacement and intergenerational trauma and addictions. What has changed is the ever-increasing complexity of the issues of those experiencing homelessness.

Not only is homelessness increasing (see page 7) but the average length of time being homeless has increased, 56% of individuals in Nelson have been without stable housing for a year or more.

In Nelson, 14% indicated that they had been without stable housing for more than 5 years. Almost a quarter of respondents cited discrimination as a factor in their recent loss of housing. Losing one's home is traumatic; compounded by loss of family, loss of social roles, lack of control, inability to meet daily needs, and exposure to violence and stigma. Another factor is the significant increase in the availability of potent, inexpensive synthetic drugs. Not only has the death rate due to overdose increased but the numbers of those experiencing acquired brain injury (ABI) increased by tenfold. These individuals usually retain their intellectual abilities but have difficulty in specific thinking skills which can lead to antisocial behaviors. It is a rectifiable condition, assuming treatment is available and accessible.

The Point in Time Homeless Count also indicated that 65% of those counted in Nelson experienced homelessness for the first time when they were less than 25 years of age and 12% of those surveyed were between twelve and twenty-four. Considering the information in the previous paragraph, the impact of this early experience is significant. Housing options for youth who are unable to live at home in this region is limited to a couple of group homes, Cicada Place and foster homes.

What can you do to help people living in our community feel that they belong and have a voice?

- > Educate yourself as to the causes and the impact of homelessness on those who experience it.
- Challenge discrimination and encourage decision makers to foster an inclusive community.
- > Support harm reduction services as a part of treatment: safe drugs are much better than the alternative!
- > Support food banks NCFC, Nelson Women's Centre, Anglican Church, Salvation Army, Our Daily Bread.
- Support those working with individuals experiencing homelessness they did not create the associated issues and are working extremely hard to mitigate them.
- Support the development of housing Complex Care, Supportive, and Affordable Housing.
- > Be relentless and keep pressure on all levels of government to deliver housing and health services.

With gratitude your Co-Chairs: Phyllis Nash & Cheryl Dowden.

15th Annual Report Card on Homelessness

How is Belonging linked to ending Homelessness?

 Combats Social Isolation to Build Meaningful Lives
 Meaningful relationships offer a sense of purpose within a

community of people.

- ▼ Builds Long Term Resilience
 Knowing you matter inspires
 hope and accountability towards
 life choices.
- ▼ Improves Mental Health
 Feeling accepted and valued can significantly reduce stress, anxiety, and depression.
- ▼ Boosts Self-Esteem Positively impacting self-worth and confidence motivates individuals to seek further improvements in their lives.
- Provides a Support Network Belonging supports individuals to access help, advice, and encouragement from others.
- **▼** Increases Motivation for Change

Feeling valued and connected to a community supports overcoming obstacles to goal achievement.

- Leads to Self-Sufficiency Supporting an individual's pathway towards stability can lead to earning an income to meet their needs.
 - ~ The Bautista Project

Belonging includes feeling valued, respected, accepted, and included. Belonging matters deeply for people who are unhoused. It disrupts the profound sense of isolation and exclusion that often comes with being homeless by offering social connection, support, and dignity. Ultimately this aids an individual on their path towards

"The homeless often feel invisible, allowed to plummet through widening holes in the social safety net, then hidden in doorways from which people avert their eyes."

~ Dawn Foster

stable housing and inclusion, and reduces their risk of a recurrence of homelessness. As individuals become chronically homeless, compounded needs become more complex, contributing to further alienation, stigma and dislocation. Psychological Dislocation is identified as a "lack of attachment, belonging, identity, meaning, [and] purpose". Severe dislocation leads to depression, anxiety, shame, rage, anguish, boredom, addiction, bewilderment, and even suicide.

"Nothing About Us Without Us"

Building belonging requires genuine inclusion, especially for impacted people, that is accessible, equitable and respectful. When we practice meaningful engagement and authentic representation, we can effectively create better futures for our communities, together.

The Canadian Lived Experience Leadership Network
(CLELN) is a group that works to ensure people with lived experience of homelessness are meaningfully included in decisions. Together, they developed a **Lived**Expertise Declaration of Human Rights.

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The Rural Empowered Drug Users Network (REDUN) is a

group of people with lived and living experience of substance use (PWLLE) in the West Kootenay region offering support, education, and advocacy that supports the dignity, respect, health, safety, and human rights of current and former drug users.

"If engagement and representation isn't meaningful and authentic, why invite us at all?"

~ Amber Streukens, REDUN

REDUN estimates that \(\frac{1}{2} \) of

their membership is housed, ¼ reside in unstable housing, ¼ stay in shelters or temporary housing, and ¼ are living rough. Local data estimates that about ¾ of unhoused people experience challenges with substance use, because of the trauma homelessness creates. The BC

Coroner's "Deaths of Individuals
Experiencing Homelessness in BC"
reveals fatality rates rising

CLELN: LIVED EXPERTISE DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

- ❖ I am not a box-checking exercise. I am revolutionary.
- My voice, and my experiences should be amplified to disrupt the status quo.
- Including people with lived experience should not create new ways for the system to harm me or exploit communities I'm a part of.
- Creating change should make powerholders uncomfortable. I am always uncomfortable when I move through your spaces.
- ❖ I should have access to information about me and be part of conversations that will impact me and my community.
- Recognize that we may or may not have the same education, training, or background but our lived experience is equal to other kinds of expertise.
- ❖ Lived experience leadership is tied to other struggles for justice and equity: find ways to build solidarity across our movements and always seek to diversify your tables.

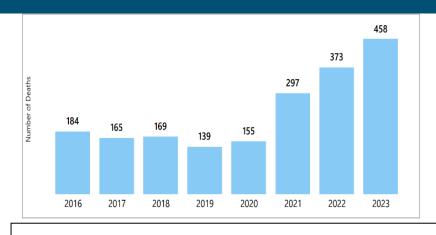


Figure 4: Deaths of Individuals Experiencing Homelessness in BC (2016-2023)

significantly, mainly due to overdose. Nelson saw a slight decrease in deaths due to drug poisoning in 2024, however the <u>drivers behind the decline</u> are not readily evident. While supervised consumption, OPS, naloxone distribution, and drug checking continue to save many lives, PWLLE and service providers have suggested that this reduction could be because so many people have already died.

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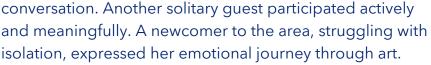
Meeting the Longing for Belonging



In an art therapy session facilitated by therapist Cheryl Price at the Drop-In, individuals with lived and living experience (PWLLE) of homelessness were invited to express their perspectives on belonging, prioritizing emotional safety, trust, and inclusivity–key conditions for authentic expression and connection.



Drop-in centre guests were impacted in profound ways. One typically silent participant engaged in deep



One participant reflected, "That's why we're all here, right? To create something together. It gives me more purpose than sitting alone in my room."

Connections emerged from being

seen, heard, and validated in a space free of expectations or power dynamics. The art table became a temporary "family," echoing participants' yearning for connection and shared experience. This session highlighted the healing potential of creative expression—

highlighted the healing potential of creative expression-how

art opens hearts, fosters self-recognition, and builds interpersonal bridges of belonging.

The outcomes reveal a simple but transformative truth: when provided with space, time, and care, PWLLE respond with trust, creativity, and hope. For communities addressing homelessness, inclusive, culturally safe, and co-created experiences like this are vital. Belonging begins with welcoming people

"Let's talk about internal belonging; about whether we have worth and value. Oftentimes, what we've been taught to measure these with has been impacted by what others have measured us by."

~ Nelson Drop-In Client



just as we are. Contributed by fourth year UVic social work practicum student, Jen Arrowsmith.

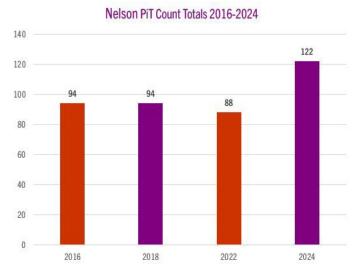
15th Annual Report Card on Homelessness

Point-in-Time Homelessness Count Survey 2024

On November 7th, Nelson conducted its fourth Point-In-Time Count, part of a national effort, led by Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy, to measure homelessness in Canada.

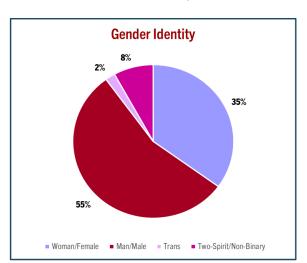
The two key takeaways are:

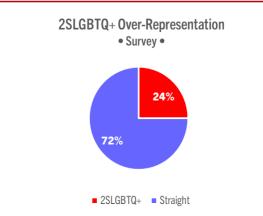
- 1) Homelessness is on the rise, up from a high of 94 people in 2018 to 122 this year.
- 2) Unsheltered homelessness is on the rise, significantly outpacing all forms of



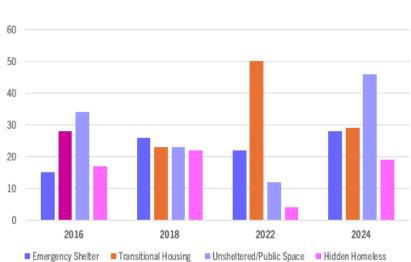
homelessness. Fewer than 20 people stayed outdoors during the 2018 & 2020 years, whereas this year it doubled to 40 sleeping rough.

An additional 4 people were found to be staying in vehicles, while 59 people were provisionally housed. 19 people, primarily youth, were found to be "couch-surfing" or staying at someone else's place because they didn't have a safe home of their own.





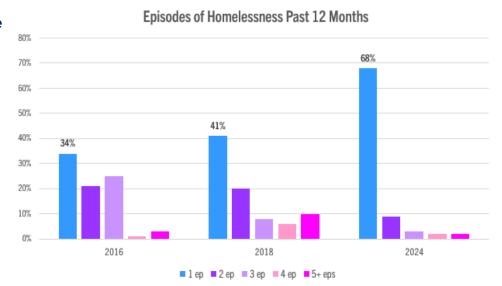
Where did you stay last night?



It is important to consider when reading the #'s that the PiT Survey is an undercount, because of the ongoing impacts of colonialism, racism, and gender-based violence alongside the iceberg of "hidden homelessness". Notably, there is an overrepresentation of 2SLGBTQ+, predominantly amongst youth due to discrimination and marginalization.

15th Annual Report Card on Homelessness

Homelessness is on the rise in Nelson, and across BC, with 56% of those currently experiencing homelessness in our community having been without stable long-term housing for a year or longer, compared to just 24% in 2018. The numbers are even higher for BC, with 70% of those experiencing



homelessness without safe,

permanent housing for more than one year, up from 53% in 2018. On average, someone currently experiencing homelessness in Nelson has been without proper housing for 26 months, just over 2 years. We also see a corresponding decrease in the number of distinct episodes of homelessness people are experiencing, which suggests that people are no longer cycling in and out of homelessness. Once in, it is increasingly difficult to find a viable pathway out.

26 Months = Average time without stable, long-term housing in Nelson

14% indicated more than 5 years without proper housing

"We have seen trends of women who are experiencing homelessness trying to access Aimee Beaulieu services, as they do not feel safe going to a shelter or cannot be accommodated there. Nelson could really benefit from a low barrier women's shelter, as there is a gap in services for these women." ~ Milena Bieri

Program Manager, Aimee Beaulieu Transition House

"There is rarely space for people to feel that they have autonomy and opportunity to be and do more than we have been. Belonging, community, and purpose bring stability."

~ Drop-In Guest

15th Annual Report Card on Homelessness

Demographics: Indigenous people

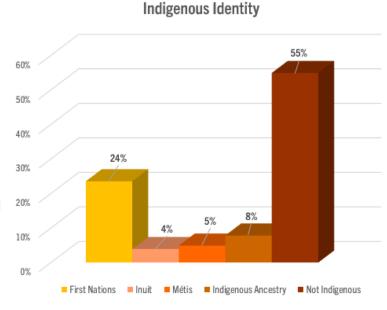
The most over-represented population in Homeless Counts all over Canada, continues to be Indigenous peoples. 41% of Nelson's point in time count identify as either First Nations, Metis, or Inuit or having Indigenous ancestry. These four groups combined make up only 6% of BC's total population. We need to recognize the 12 dimensions of indigenous houselessness and that Indigenous people do not choose to be homeless. The experience is negative, stressful and traumatic.

"The most recent PiT Count results are sadly not shocking; however, at the same time this data and information continues to create significant concerns about the wellness of Indigenous people living in the Nelson area. The obvious over-representation of Indigenous people in the homeless/houseless community in our area needs to be addressed and must include culturally

Kris Salkin, Executive Director for Circle of Indigenous Nations (COINS)

safe services and supports that are

easily accessible."



The 12 dimensions of Indigenous Homelessness as articulated by Indigenous Peoples across Canada:

Historic Displacement Homelessness

Contemporary Geographic Separation Homelessness

Mental Disruption & Imbalance Homelessness

Nowhere to Go Homelessness

Firitual Disconnection Homelessness

Cultural Disintegration & Loss Homelessness

Emergency Crisis Homelessness

Climatic Refugee Homelessness

Climatic Refugee Homelessness

Understanding that homelessness is racialized by design means that we will need to change the design if we want to change the results. We need

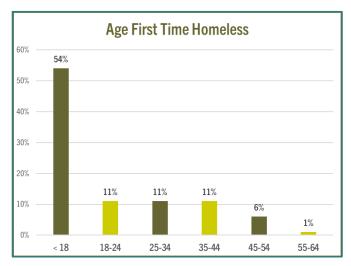
to make space for Indigenous led solutions and work together to dismantle systemic housing barriers and heal historical injustices. This means that responding strictly in terms of housing without addressing the need for cultural and spiritual connection is inadequate and may even reproduce colonial dynamics and harms.

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Demographics: Youth

"Young adults are two hundred times more likely to experience homelessness if they have a child welfare experience. That is why it is important and that is why we need to shift the outcomes."

~ Catherine Talbott, Strategic Initiatives, MCFD



"We know that we need to prevent youth entering homelessness to prevent a lifelong pattern of being unhoused, and in Nelson we desperately need more dedicated youth housing".

~ Joyce Dahms-Whiffen, Program Director for Nelson Community Services

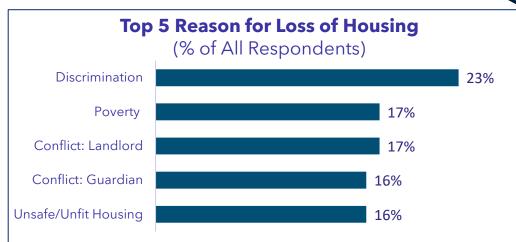
During the Point-in-Time Count surveys across eighty-seven communities from 2020-2022 in Canada, **12% of respondents experiencing homelessness were youth, aged 13 to 24**.

The representation of women and 2SLGBTQI+ respondents was higher among

youth than among older age groups. Importantly - 65% experienced homelessness for

the first time when they were less than 25 years of age. Over half of youth reported interpersonal reasons as the source of their most recent housing loss, particularly conflict with a parent or guardian. Youth were also more likely to report challenges related to learning or cognitive limitations, and mental health.

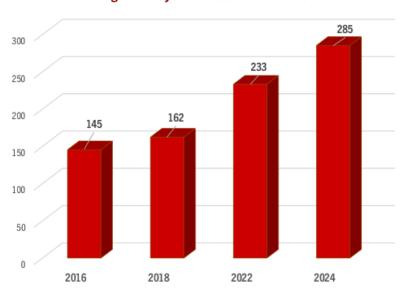
Pathways into Homelessness



Breaking down this data by sub-groups, we see a greater frequency of housing loss due to discrimination, interpersonal conflict, and intimate partner/family abuse among women and Indigenous, and even more strikingly among youth, almost half of whom cited conflict with parents/guardians as the primary cause of their most recent loss of housing.

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Average # of Days Homeless in Past 12 Months



While Nelson is very much in line with provincial trends, one of the things that stood out is individuals' perceptions of stigma and discrimination. Almost a quarter (23%) of survey respondents indicated that discrimination contributed to their most recent loss of housing, compared to just (6%) in BC, while over a third identified stigma and discrimination as barriers to accessing both housing (32%) and services (31%).

Residency

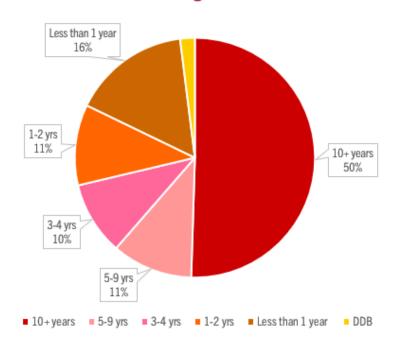
Who gets to call Nelson Home? residents have lived here for a decade or more. Family connections in Nelson and the surrounding area remain the #1 reason people have moved here.

"The stigma on the visible vulnerable folks in this town, like the hate and rumors spread by the Neighborhood Network, treating opinions like facts, creates a false reality and puts a target on our backs. It is harder and harder to feel safe when it seems like everyone is afraid of me for something I had nothing to do with" ~ Unhoused resident.

Years Living in Nelson

"Everyone has a story. Without kindness and compassion, we are all vulnerable. I want to encourage my community to have more reason, intelligence, and caring. I want to be proud of our ability to look after each other. We must do better; we must care more."

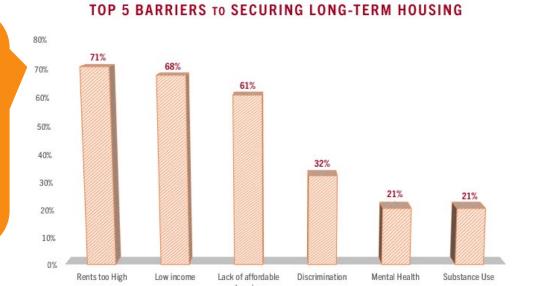
∼ Paula Kiss, Business Owner & former Nelson City Councillor



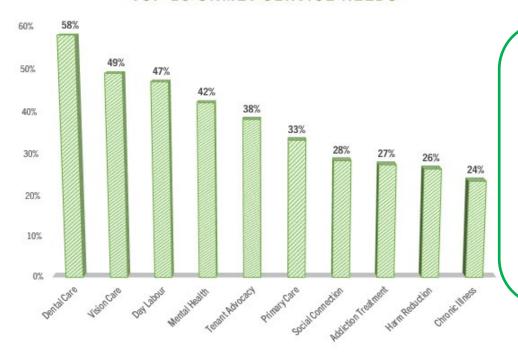
15th Annual Report Card on Homelessness

Barriers to Access & Service Needs

High rents, low incomes, and the lack of affordable housing options were the most often cited barriers to securing stable, long-term housing across all demographics, as they were in 2018.



TOP 10 UNMET SERVICE NEEDS



"The majority of people who are homeless are children we fail, and they have been failed by systems of support all along the way. And we have a situation now where what we're seeing is people are entering homelessness more easily and having much, much more difficulty getting out."

~ Dylan Griffith,

Point In Time Survey Coordinator

The services most needed but were unavailable to access are dental care, eye care, mental health supports, and tenant advocacy. Services for which (unmet) demand increased the most in 2024 were for day work and primary care & programs supporting community connection.

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Community Indicators

Housing

Community Indicators are a standardized method to document the context of homelessness, housing, and health in Nelson and monitor changes over time.

In 2024 the City of Nelson completed a <u>Housing Needs Report</u> with the goal of projecting housing needs through to the year 2043. The report suggests Nelson may need to add 3,104 new homes over the next two decades, and that addressing demand would require **nearly 43% of new rental units to be affordable** or below market rates. In a

"Rental options remain scarce, expensive, and highly competitive, with vacancy rates for one-bedroom and studio units lingering at 0.0% for several years. This leaves individuals already marginalized by homelessness and poverty at a severe disadvantage."

Housing Needs Report

2020 study, researchers estimated that "a \$100 increase in median rent was associated with a 9% increase in the homelessness rate". When looking at the average rents from CMHC, the rates include non-vacant units that have been controlled under the Residential Tenancy Act. This act regulates rent increases for current tenants but does not apply to new tenants. The advertised rates below may give a better picture of the rent prices new tenants can expect to pay. Notably, there was an increase in rents over the past two years.

Rents	Room	Studio	1 Bdrm	2 Bdrm	3+	4+	ISO Listing
Advertised Nelson 2025	\$890	\$808	\$1716	\$2279	\$2812	\$3300	84 of 113
Housing Report Avg.	\$774	\$1083	\$1,241	\$1681	\$2746		
CHMC 2024	**	\$763	\$1004	\$1278	**		
CHMC 2023	**	\$750	\$990	\$1255	**		
Rural Nelson	\$918	\$1350	\$1700	\$1900	\$2633	N/A	6 of 24
% Increase from CHMC 2023 to Advertised 2025	**	+7.18%	+42%	+45%	**		

Despite new initiatives to build affordable and workforce housing, many individuals experiencing homelessness confront complex challenges requiring additional supports to secure and maintain housing. While Nelson has introduced a limited number of supportive housing units at the North Shore Inn, data from the Nelson Coordinated Access By-Name List and Point-in-Time Count underscores the pressing need for more supportive housing, complex-care housing, and youth supportive and transitional Housing.

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Health

Homelessness & Housing Instability:

Improved housing conditions can save lives, reduce poverty, and help mitigate climate change. Affordable housing has proven to contribute significantly to lowering stress and quality of life.

Lack of Access to Health Services:

What is preventing unhoused people from accessing health services? Similar consistency in the responses from 2018 & 2024 PiT Counts, 43% said lack of transportation and cost, and physical health/disabilities being the most cited barriers.



Marginalization, Racism & Discrimination: the percentage of respondents citing discrimination as a barrier more than doubled this year. Twenty-two percent of respondents this year reported being unable to access essential services due to being banned, with many individuals expressing frustrations at the lack of appeal and/or restorative options and a perceived lack of transparency where such options might exist.

Health & Wellbeing: Without adequate housing and income, people who are homeless are at a much higher risk for illness and death than those stably housed. In Nelson, 68% of the PiT Count respondents in Nelson identified challenges with mental health, 62% with substance-use, 48% with cognitive function impairment, 46% with physical mobility limitations. Notably, 40% have suffered a brain injury.

15th Annual Report Card on Homelessness

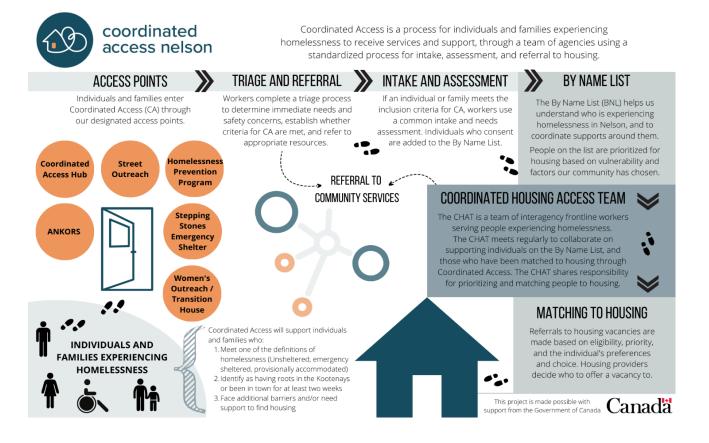
Bridges to Housing: What is Coordinated Access?

Nelson is one of 61 designated communities in Canada to receive support to tackle homelessness through **Reaching Home: Canada's Homeless Strategy.**

Housing First is an evidence-based program designed to eradicate homelessness among individuals with mental illness and addiction who are experiencing chronic



homelessness. "The underlying principle of Housing First is that people are more successful in moving forward with their lives if they are first housed." Building on the successful adoption of Housing First, Nelson began implementing Coordinated Access in 2021. The goal of Coordinated Access is to help communities ensure equity of access to resources, prioritize people most in need of assistance and connect people to services in a more streamlined way. Since 2021, 56 individuals have secured housing through Coordinated Access.



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Bridges to Belonging: Service Impacts

Street Outreach is rooted in a belief that all individuals have the right to receive support in a manner that respects their dignity, their strengths, and their right to choose. Their mission is to work in collaboration, assess individuals experiencing homelessness immediate and long-term needs for health, safety, and basic needs, and offer a range of supports and services.

Outreach	Unique	Basic Needs	Housing Supports	Transportat ion	Addiction Supports
2024	720	6197	1311	1261	537

"When individuals are met with dignity and given opportunities for meaningful participation, the cycle of exclusion is disrupted. Inclusion fosters belonging. Belonging inspires action. Participation strengthens our community. This creates a transformative cycle. We are responsible for bridging belonging, and one of the most powerful tools to do this is through food." Alex Hawes, Executive Director of NCFC.



ANKORS provides confidential Harm Reduction services throughout the Kootenay Region, including an overdose prevention site, Naloxone kits & training, drug checking & Fentanyl test strips, harm reduction supplies, safer sex supplies and crisis counselling.

ANKORS	Total Visits	Unique	New	OPS	OAT	Food	Referral Visits	Primary Care	Overdose Events	Other
2023	2,470	114	47	2,463	31	N/A	507	5	11	224
2024	1,785	95	33	1,858	19	518	752	7	6	42



Nelson CARES Society opened a temporary drop-in 1-2 days at the bottom of the Salvation Army to support vulnerable community members. The former Hub Drop-In from 2023 - 2024 saw 13,279 visits, 68 of which were unique.

Sept - March 2025	New Guests	Food Served	Clothes	Nurse/Dr.	Laundry	Shower	Advocacy	Supplies	Food Hamper	Service providers on site
2422	76	3619	1278	171	169	263	169	494	176	349



Nelson Community Food Center is a proud partner of Community Food Centers Canada (CFCC), a national non-profit that builds health, belonging, and social justice in communities through the power of food.

*Please note the list of service impacts above is not exhaustive, these numbers are accessible due to the coordination of data as part of Reaching Home.

NFCC	Visits	Nutrition Boxes	Grocery Bags	No Cook Hampers	Meals
2024	8,115	744	12,156	1,920	4,900

15th Annual Report Card on Homelessness

After reading this Report On a Scale from 1-10

- How would you rate your understanding about the issues and causes around homelessness in our community?
- How equipped do you feel to respond to the impacts of homelessness in your community and/or place of work? _____

We are immensely grateful for the contributions of the Report
Card Committee: Phyllis Nash, Cheryl Dowden, Councillor Leslie
Payne, Councillor Kate Tait, Melissa Cline, Kelly Mccafferty,
Amber Streukens, Jonathan Allen, Jayme Jones, Jen
Arrowsmith, Alex Hawes, Katie McEwen, Cheryl Price. We would
also like to extend a special thank-you to Dylan Griffith who
organized and prepared the results of the PiT Count and held
space for people to complete these surveys with dignity.

Ending homelessness requires collaboration and bridges across several agencies, levels of government, and individuals. There are many organizations below who sit at the NCOH table and are working to end homelessness in our community.

ANKORS

BC Community Response Network (BCCRN)

Circle of Indigenous Nations Society (COINS)

The City of Nelson

City of Nelson, Emergency Management

Community Integration, Ministry of Soc. Dev. & Pov.

Red. (MSDPR)

Freedom Quest Youth Services

The Foundry

Housing Infrastructure Communities Canada - HICC

Kootenay Career Development Services (KCDS)

People with Lived Experience/Expertise

MLA Britney Anderson

Nelson & District Women's Centre

Nelson at its Best

Nelson CARES Society

Nelson Community Food Centre

Nelson Community Services

Nelson Fire and Rescue Services

IH: Mental Health and Substance Use

Nelson Police Department

Nelson Public Library

REDUN BC

The Salvation Army

SHARE - Our Daily Bread

Selkirk College Students' Union

SRSP Program, Nelson Community Services

St. Saviour's/Kokanee Parish Anglican Church

Street Outreach, Nelson Community Services

Learn More - Resources & References

- A Canada-wide Strategy for Belonging
- The Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness
- The Homeless Hub
- Bridging Rural Homelessness and Well-being: A Sustainable and Collaborative Regional Response
- ❖ State of the Basin well-being in the Columbia Basin-Boundary Region.
- Youth Mental Health and Wellness Resources

15th Annual Report Card on Homelessness