

An Update on Homelessness in Newfoundland and Labrador

Objective

To describe the extent of homelessness in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador (NL).

Practice Points

1. Homelessness significantly impacts both physical and mental health. Across all forms of health care needs, people experiencing homelessness report poorer diagnoses and greater barriers to health care than the general population.
2. A Point-in-Time (PiT) Count is a coordinated community effort to estimate the number of people experiencing homelessness in a community on a given night, or at a single point in time. A PiT count allows a community to better understand the nature and extent of homelessness and the characteristics of the homeless population through information collected in a detailed survey. Such counts support better planning, program, and service efforts, when conducted over subsequent years, allow communities to assess their progress in reducing homelessness.
3. End Homelessness St. John's (EHSJ) exists to prevent and end homelessness in St. John's. EHSJ, along with its partners and volunteers, conducted 4 homeless PiT counts between 2016 and 2024. EHSJ also created a monthly dashboard that provides information on how people are flowing into, remaining or flowing out of homelessness on a community-wide level.

Methods

1. PiT Count data was obtained from the St. John's Homeless PiT Counts conducted by EHSJ (2016, 2018, 2022 and 2024).
2. Data on the number of individuals experiencing homelessness and chronic homelessness was obtained from EHSJ's monthly dashboard.

Results

Table 1. Characteristics of Those Experiencing Homelessness in St. John's: PiT Count Data (2016–2024)

	30 Nov 2016	11 Apr 2018	24 Nov 2022	18 Nov 2024
Total Number of People Experiencing Homelessness (On the Day of the Count)¹	166	165	183	313
Minimum Estimate of People Experiencing Homelessness in St. John's (Annually)	800	-	900	1,400
Staying in Emergency Shelters	81 (48.8%)	98 (59.4%)	145 (79.2%)	-
Staying in Sheltered Housing²	-	-	-	64.0%
Staying in Transitional Housing³	-	-	-	33.0%
Individuals Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness²	3	4	3	6
Individuals Experiencing Chronic Homelessness⁴	38.3%	36.6%	32.0%	59.0%
Individuals Identifying as Youth (Ages 16-24)⁵	22.9%	23.2%	38.0%	22.0%
Individuals Identifying as Indigenous	19.2%	25.9%	13.0%	14.0%
Individuals Identifying as 2SLGBTQIA+	21.7%	9.4%	13.0%	13.0%
Individuals Identifying as Female	38.9%	32.7%	35.0%	31.0%
Individuals Identifying as Veterans	-	-	4.0%	3.0%
Individuals Identifying They Live With a Disability/Health Issue	-	-	-	92.0%
Mental Health Related Issues	-	-	74.0%	69.0%
Substance Use Challenges	-	-	56.0%	54.0%
Learning/Developmental/Cognitive Disability	-	-	47.0%	51.0%

Table 1 Continued

Physical/Mobility Related Issues	-	-	35.0%	40.0%
Illness/Medical Issues	-	-	-	41.0%
Vision	-	-	-	22.0%
Brain Injury	-	-	-	12.0%
Individuals Identifying They Had Visited an Emergency Room in the Last 12 Months	59.5%	61.2%	55.0%	-
Individuals Identifying They Had Been Admitted to a Hospital at Least Once in the Last 12 Months	31.3%	32.9%	26.0%	28.0%

¹Minimum estimate of people experiencing homelessness.

²Sheltered homelessness includes people sleeping in the following locations: emergency shelters, extreme weather shelters and Domestic Violence shelters, and, where applicable, also includes hotel or motel rooms provided to people experiencing homelessness in lieu of shelter beds (e.g., through a voucher or arrangement with the operator).

Unsheltered homelessness (e.g., rough sleeping) includes people who are staying outside, in a place not intended for human habitation and/or in a public or private space without consent or contract. This can include sleeping in a vehicle, tent, makeshift shelter, or abandoned building.

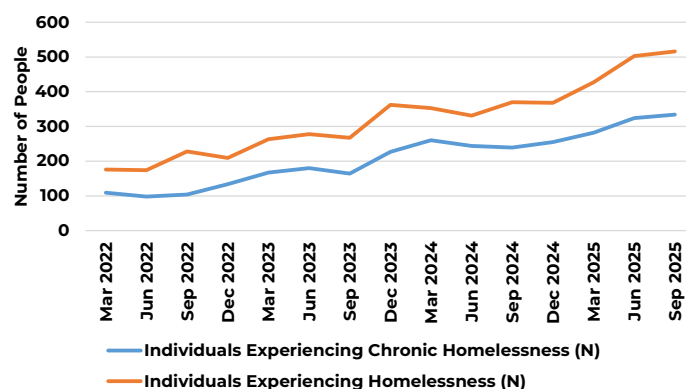
³Transitional housing programs typically provide longer-term housing solutions with supports intended to help individuals transition from homelessness to secure housing.

⁴For this table, chronic homelessness refers to a period of six or more months of homelessness in the past year.

⁵In 2024, youth included those aged 16 to 29 years (Choice's for Youth's service definition of youth).

NOTE: Due to changes in methodologies between PiT Count years comparisons should be done with caution.

- The annual estimate of people experiencing homelessness in St. John's has increased by 75% from 2016 to 2024.
- Approximately three out of four people experiencing homelessness self-report having a mental health disability and more than half report substance use issues.
- More than 25% of people experiencing homelessness report being admitted to hospital in the past 12 months and more than 55% report visiting an emergency room during that same time frame.



*When someone has been homeless for six months or more of the last year, or 18 months or more of the last 3 years, they are considered chronically homeless.

**Some of the jump in numbers after Mar 2025 may be due to the methodology change in Apr 2025.

Figure 1. Number of Individuals Experiencing Homelessness in St. John's: EHSJ Dashboard (Mar 2022–Sep 2025)

- From Mar 2022 to Sep 2025, the number of individuals experiencing homelessness increased by nearly 190%, while chronic homelessness increased by 208%.
- Each month, anywhere from 45%-75% of individuals experiencing homelessness are experiencing chronic homelessness.

Conclusions

1. PiT count data highlight the relationship between homelessness and health/disability. Nine in ten individuals experiencing homelessness report living with at least one disability, and more than half report visiting an emergency department in the past 12 months. Approximately one in three to four individuals reported being admitted to hospital in the past 12 months.
2. The rate of homelessness continues to increase in St. John's and has nearly tripled in the past three years.