Preventing & Reducing Homelessness:
An Integrated Data Project

2020 Homeless Cohort Update

BC HOUSING

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Acknowledgements

TOPIC: 2020 Homeless Cohort – An Annual Population Estimate of the number of people experiencing homelessness in B.C.

DATA INNOVATION PROGRAM PROJECT: Preventing and Reducing Homelessness

Background

- The Preventing & Reducing Homelessness Integrated Data Project was initiated to create a comprehensive, robust and reliable dataset, to help the Provincial Government better understand, respond to, and prevent homelessness in B.C.

- Phase one of this project estimated the population who experienced homelessness in B.C. by building an analytical definition of homelessness defined by SDPR's Employment and Assistance Program with No Fixed Address and BC Housing's Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) shelter use, and integrating BCH's definition of homelessness, defined by Emergency Shelter Program usage. Several attribute variables were defined that address the demographic and geographic characteristics of this population. This is a novel approach and represents a new method, using administrative data, of estimating homelessness for British Columbia.

- The project is enabled by the Data Innovation Program. Data science methods and implementation are being conducted by the Data Science Partnership program—a service provided through the Digital Platform and Data Division of the Office of the Chief Information Officer, Ministry of Citizens' Services.

Results

- The 2020 Homeless Cohort is estimated to be comprised of 23,400 people who experienced homelessness at some point between January and December 2020.

- In 2020, an average of 10,300 people experienced homelessness each month.

- 55% of the 2020 Homeless Cohort experienced chronic homelessness (six months or more).

- 45% of the 2020 Homeless Cohort experienced non-chronic homelessness.

- The age distribution of the 2020 Homeless cohort estimates:

  - 18% are 24 years old or younger
  - 70% are between the ages of 25 and 54
  - 12% are 55 years old or older

- Males make up the majority of the 2020 homeless cohort,

  - 69% Male
  - 31% Female

- Males 25 to 54 are almost half of the total Homeless cohort in 2020.

- The majority of the 2020 homeless cohort resided in Great Vancouver, the Capital region and the Fraser Valley.

- Fraser-Fort George, Alberni-Clayoquot and Skeena-Queen Charlotte have the highest proportion of the 2020 Homeless Cohort, based on their population.

- 90% of the 2020 Homeless Cohort did not move between Census Divisions between January and December 2020.

- The interaction between the 2019 & 2020 homeless cohorts provides an overview of people entering and leaving the homeless cohort by calendar year;

Entering the Cohort

  - 13,000 of the 2020 Cohort had a previous experience with homelessness from 2019,
  - 10,400 were newly identified in the 2020 Cohort who did not experience homelessness in 2019 and;

Leaving the Cohort

  - 10,600 of the 2019 Cohort did not experience homelessness in BC in 2020.

- COVID-19: On average, the 2020 Homeless Cohort was tested at a higher rate and experienced fewer positive COVID results compared to the BC population.

- The 2019 Homeless Cohort population estimates have changed from the original analysis conducted in 2019. This was expected due to better linkage and updates to data, which comes with maturity of the project and as data quality improves.

- The 2019 Homeless Cohort population estimate has been updated to 23,600.

Methodology & Limitations

Methodology

Please see the [Homelessness Technical Documentation for the 2020 Report](#) for a comprehensive overview of analytics methods used.

Overview of Limitations

- If a person did not access services (shelter and/or BCEA), they're not included in the cohort.

- A person's location is determined by the place they accessed services, which may not always align with the community they identify with.

- The 2020 Homeless Cohort is limited in capturing those under 19 and those above 65. Services used for the definition of homelessness have age requirements: BCEA program eligibility is 19-65 and most shelters are for adults age 19+.

- Gender is identified as 'male' or 'female' in the BC Central Demographic file. This reflects available data and aligns with safe disclosure practices where non-binary data were available.

- The 2020 cohort does not describe Indigenous homelessness. By working with Indigenous partners, future phases will include an exploration of Indigenous homelessness.

References

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2. Emergency Shelter Program (BCH) (Shelter Stays data + Client's data):

- British Columbia Housing Corporation [creator] (2021): Housing Shelter Program V02a. Data Innovation Program, Province of British Columbia [publisher]. Data Extract. (2020)

3. Emergency Shelter Program (BCH) (Shelter Attributes data):

- British Columbia Housing Corporation [creator] (2021): Housing Shelter Program V02_ Shelter Attributes data table. Data Innovation Program, Province of British Columbia [publisher]. Data Extract. (2020)

4. Health data (COVID Test Results):

- British Columbia Ministry of Health [creator] (2021): COVID Test Results V01. Data Innovation Program, Province of British Columbia [publisher]. Data Extract. (2020)

5. Health data (B.C. Central Demographics data):

- British Columbia Ministry of Health [creator] (2021): Census Geodata V03. Data Innovation Program, Province of British Columbia [publisher]. Data Extract. (2020)

- British Columbia Ministry of Health [creator] (2021): Health Registry and Demographics V02. Data Innovation Program, Province of British Columbia [publisher]. Data Extract. (2020)

6. Statistics Canada Tables

- Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0005-01 Population estimates on July 1st, by age and sex DOI:https://doi.org/10.25318/1710000501-eng

- Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0139-01 Population estimates, July 1, by census division, 2016 boundaries DOI:https://doi.org/10.25318/1710013901

- Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0137-01 Population estimates, July 1, by economic region, 2016 boundaries DOI:https://doi.org/10.25318/1710013701-eng