

State of Homelessness in Hamilton March 2023

This appendix describes the current level of need within the homelessness system by outlining information on the number of people experiencing homelessness through 2022, services and programs accessed, and type of needs identified.

As of the end of December 2022, there were 1536 individuals considered to be actively homeless in Hamilton, defined by having connected with the homeless-serving system in the previous 90 days. This is an increasing trend. The number of people known to be experiencing homelessness on average in 2020 was 1024 and in 2021 it was 1202. However, expanded services and improved data collection capabilities also occurred during this time and may account for some of the increased reporting.

In 2022, a total of 4037 individuals accessed homeless-serving programs funded by the City of Hamilton. Of those who accessed the homeless-serving system in 2022, 3441 accessed supports offered through a shelter, and 3096 spent at least one night in a shelter. The number of individual shelter stayers per year has been relatively stable with 2810 in 2020 and 3112 in 2021. However, average length of stay increased from 80 days in 2021 to 88 days in 2022.

Chronicity: Of the 1536 individuals on the By-Name List (BNL) at the end of December 2022, 488 were experiencing chronic homelessness of six months or more and 1048 were experiencing a duration of homelessness less than six months. Of all the individuals who accessed a service in 2022, a total of 26% were chronically homeless (experiencing homelessness for 6 months or more). For populations served by each system (Men, Women, Youth, and Families) the total number of individuals who were chronically homeless ranged from 8% for youth to 46% for families. Additionally, 29% of seniors and 25% of Indigenous individuals were experiencing chronic homelessness. While the chart below defines chronicity by duration of homelessness over six months, Hamilton’s homeless-serving sector considers all Indigenous people to be experiencing chronic homelessness due to displacement from culture, spirituality, family, land, and community as a result of ongoing colonial violence. The overall proportion of people experiencing chronic homelessness has been consistent over the past three years. However, data reporting methods were changed in April 2022 to align with national standards so direct comparison before that date is not possible. Additionally, the number and proportion of families experiencing chronic homelessness is a concerning trend that has increased during the pandemic. Lack of affordable and suitable units for families is an enormous pressure in the system as well as inadequate financial resources to prevent family homelessness through payment of arrears.

Table 1: Total Number of Individuals Served Through the Homeless-Serving System in 2022 Broken Down by Sector and Chronic/Non-Chronic Status

	Non-Chronic	Chronic	Unknown	Total
Total Reached	2778 (69%)	1046 (26%)	213 (5%)	4037
Seniors	134 (68%)	57 (29%)	7 (3%)	198

Indigenous		310 (66%)	118 (25%)	40 (9%)	468*
Sectors (non- discreet)	Men	1680 (76%)	407 (19%)	114 (5%)	2201
	Women	655 (60%)	343 (31%)	92 (8%)	1090
	Youth	141 (90%)	13 (8%)	3 (2%)	157
	Families	423 (54%) individuals 112 households	355 (46%) individuals 94 households	0	778 individuals 206 households

*Although people who identify as having Indigenous ancestry represent 11% of people who accessed the homeless-serving system in 2022, this is expected to be an undercount. Many Indigenous people may choose not to self-identify when accessing non-Indigenous programs. Additionally, Indigenous-led housing support programs, such as Hamilton Regional Indian Centre and Native Women’s Centre, are not using HIFIS and they may be seeing individuals who have not accessed shelters or non-Indigenous drop-in programs. The Point-in-Time Connection survey conducted in 2021 and utilizing Indigenous methodologies found that 23% of 545 people surveyed identified as Indigenous or as having Indigenous ancestry.

Shelter Trends: Emergency Shelters are designed to provide short-term emergency shelter and housing supports, ideally for a duration less than 30 days. Early Intervention programs within shelters are designed to provide supports for up to 14 days to help people quickly end experiences of homelessness. Using those benchmarks, 32% of all shelter stayers in 2022 had a shelter stay of 14 days or less and 11% had a shelter stay between 15-30 days, for a total 43% of individuals with a shelter stay less than 30 days. A total of 58% spent more than 30 nights in shelter, meaning that almost 60% of all shelter stayers were in need of shelter and supports beyond the intended design of the Emergency Shelter System. This is comparable to 2021 data. There is variation in the cumulative length of stay by system. A total of 44% of youth, 46% of men, and 59% of women spent more than 30 nights in a shelter in 2022, while 84% of families spent more than 30 nights.

In 2022 Hamilton’s homeless-serving system connected with 272 individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness, with an average of 36.5 individuals living unsheltered per month engaged through outreach activities. In the last three months of 2020, the housing focused street outreach team saw an average of 144 unique individuals per month and an average of 85 per month throughout 2021. While the monthly data has been variable, this indicates a downward trend in people experiencing unsheltered homelessness from 2021 through 2022.

High lengths of stay in the emergency shelter system is a result of there being inadequate opportunities for people to move quickly from the shelter system into stable housing. This creates blockages in the emergency system where people are getting stuck in homelessness and in shelters with limited space available for those newly experiencing homelessness to access this support.

Table 2: 2022 Shelter Stayers Length of Stay by Sector

System	Length of Stay (<= 14 days)	Length of Stay (15-30 days)	Length of Stay (31-179 days)	Length of Stay (>=180 days)	Total Number 1 st Time Shelter Stayers (Inflow)	Average Stay Length	Total
MEN	657 (42%)	195 (12%)	594 (38%)	128 (8%)	764	118	1574
WOMEN	202 (30%)	71 (11%)	265 (40%)	125 (19%)	338	100	663
YOUTH	37 (36%)	21 (20%)	45 (43%)	1 (1%)	77	40	104
FAMILY	81 (11%)	37 (5%)	352 (47%)	281 (37%)	452	150	751

*Total does not equal total unique shelter stayers as some individuals had a shelter stay in more than one system within the year.

*Length of stay depicted is a sum of all stays for each client that spent at least one night in a shelter within the year. It includes dates that fall outside of 2022 if it was part of a 2022 stay.

* For certain hotel locations, gender was used to determine if the individual should be assigned to the men or women system.

*A comparison of the number of households served in the family sector is unavailable due to data quality in 2020.

Table 3: 2021 to 2022 Comparison of Shelter Stayer Length of Stay

	Length of Stay (<= 14 days)	Length of Stay (15-30 days)	Length of Stay (>30 days)	Minimum Stay Length	Maximum Stay Length	Average Stay Length	Total
2022	977 (32%)	326 (10%)	1793 (58%)	1	738	88 nights	3096
2021	913 (29%)	361 (12%)	1838 (59%)	1	651	80 nights	3112

Acuity: Acuity is a term used in health and social services to refer to the level of need an individual presents with, it is often used interchangeably with a description of complex co-occurring needs. Individuals accessing the homeless-serving system are engaged to complete a common triage assessment to help identify unique needs and to ensure staff appropriately support them with their housing plan and coordination of additional supports. Recognizing that needs are dynamic and cannot be wholly captured through a single tool, mechanisms such as further staff assessment and case conferencing allows individual circumstances and need to be identified in depth, to ensure appropriate match to available resources. These supports address needs such as mental health, addictions, housing preferences.

A total of 66% of people who stayed in shelter for less than 30 days did not complete a common triage tool and therefore would be represented as having an unknown level of acuity. This is consistent with expectations and best practices to allow a 14-day window for people to resolve their homelessness before completing a triage assessment.

Indigenous peoples are also not required to complete a common triage or assessment tool, however are welcome to do so if they feel comfortable. Work is underway through CHIL to develop a culturally appropriate process for understanding the needs of Indigenous community members that will be implemented across all non-Indigenous providers within the homeless-serving system.

The number of individuals with low acuity who accessed services was consistently low within each system. It ranged from 6% of households in the family system to 10% of youth. While acuity was not known for everyone who accessed services, within each system and for seniors and Indigenous individuals, approximately half of individuals had mid to high acuity. This points to a need for wholistic supports to help individuals access and retain housing. Individuals with mid acuity are the target population for City-funded Rapid Rehousing case management programs, while individuals with high acuity are the target population for Intensive Case Management supports. Typically, people with lower acuity or unknown acuity who stay in the system for a short period are successful at resolving homelessness without ongoing case management supports. A total of 179 (4%) individuals who accessed a service in 2022 (including 122 shelter stayers) had acuity that was very high. At any given time, there are approximately 100 people with very complex co-occurring needs represented on the By-Name List of people who have interacted with the homeless-serving system in the past 90 days. It is expected that individuals with very high acuity and a proportion of those with a high acuity require specialized health supports, including options for permanent supportive housing, that are not available through the homeless-serving system.

Table 4: Total Number of Individuals Reached in 2022 Broken Down by Acuity

		Low	Mid	High	Very High	Unknown	Total
Total Reached		310 (8%)	862 (21%)	940 (23%)	179 (4%)	1746 (43%)	4037
Seniors		36 (18%)	67 (33%)	30 (15%)	6 (3%)	59 (30%)	198
Indigenous		22 (5%)	78 (16%)	150 (32%)	36 (8%)	182 (39%)	468
Sector s (non- discre et)	Men	208 (9%)	506 (23%)	644 (29%)	115 (5%)	728 (33%)	2201
	Wome n	66 (6%)	245 (22%)	287 (26%)	68 (6%)	424 (39%)	1090
	Youth	15 (10%)	33 (21%)	54 (34%)	7 (4%)	48 (31%)	157
	Famili es	18 (2%) 13 househol ds (6%)	116 (15%) 102 househol ds (50%)	37 (5%) 28 househol ds (14%)	10 (1%) 7 househol ds (3%)	597 (77%) 56 househol ds (27%)	778 206 househol ds