

# **2024 POINT IN TIME COUNT**

## **HAMILTON, ONTARIO**

### **INDIGENOUS RESPONSES**

Submitted: February 5, 2025  
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## Key Findings

**Indigenous People continue to be overrepresented among community members experiencing homelessness in Hamilton.** Indigenous people comprise less than 5% of Hamilton's population (Statistics Canada, Census 2021, Hamilton Census subdivision). Of the 802 2024 Point in Time Count surveys completed in Hamilton, 195 (24%) were completed by community members identifying as Indigenous or having Indigenous ancestry. The overrepresentation of Indigenous homelessness in Hamilton is consistent with our understanding of how the legacies of colonialism have generated contemporary realities for Indigenous Peoples, including systemic barriers, intergenerational trauma, and racial discrimination.

**The majority of Indigenous respondent's first experiences of homelessness were as a child or youth. Almost half of Indigenous respondents had experiences with foster care or a youth group home as a child/youth.** These experiences highlight the ongoing impacts of colonial policies that have separated Indigenous children from families and communities.

**Almost one-third of Indigenous respondents had indicated they had spent or would spend the night in an encampment.** These experiences highlight the need to examine systemic barriers Indigenous Peoples face and explore the availability of Indigenous-led homeless solutions.

**Low income and high rent were the most reported challenges Indigenous respondents experienced in trying to find housing.** Despite high reporting of physical limitations (50%), mental health challenges (78%), and substance use issues (72%), Indigenous respondents indicated the high costs of rent and low income more frequently as challenges to finding housing.

## About the Coalition of Hamilton Indigenous Leadership

The Coalition of Hamilton Indigenous Leadership (CHIL) is the administrative body for federal, provincial, and municipal funding investments in the Indigenous community of Hamilton. The CHIL is a collaboration of six Indigenous agencies in Hamilton, including the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre, De dwa da dehs nyes Aboriginal Health Centre, Sacajawea Non-Profit Housing Inc., the Native Women's Centre, NPAAMB Indigenous Youth Employment and Training, and Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services. Each CHIL member agency's Executive Director sits on the CHIL Board of Directors, contributing their expertise to achieving CHIL's vision, mission, and values.

**Our vision** is a vibrant, healthy, inclusive, and culturally safe community.

**Our mission** is to increase equitable access to services and programs for Indigenous community members of Hamilton.

**Our values** are informed by the Seven Grandfather teachings as we strive to live and work with Ka'nikonhrí:yo (the Haudenosaunee concept of a "good mind").

## Reaching Home: Canada's National Homeless Strategy

Housing, Infrastructure, and Communities Canada (HICC) funds the Coalition of Hamilton Indigenous Leadership as the Indigenous Homelessness Community Entity for Reaching Home. Through Reaching Home, CHIL administers and manages the Indigenous funding stream for Hamilton.

## Indigenous Community Advisory Board

The Indigenous Community Advisory Board (ICAB) supports the CHIL as the Indigenous Homeless Community Entity. The ICAB comprises Indigenous community members who live and/or work in Hamilton. Drawing from their lived, personal, and professional experiences, ICAB members guide a community-wide and holistic response to Indigenous experiences of homelessness in Hamilton. The ICAB's primary responsibilities include:

- Gathering relevant information related to Indigenous homelessness to identify community priorities to address Indigenous homelessness in Hamilton.
- Assessing and recommending projects for funding to the Indigenous Homeless Community Entity (CHIL).
- Supporting the Indigenous Community Entity (CHIL) to plan and coordinate a community-wide effort to prevent and address Indigenous homelessness.
- Developing terms of reference and other policies and procedures central to fulfilling the responsibilities of the Indigenous Community Advisory Board.

## Acknowledgements

The Coalition of Hamilton Indigenous Leadership thanks Indigenous community members who are experiencing homelessness in Hamilton and have shared their experiences through the 2024 Point in Time survey. We also acknowledge the guidance of local Indigenous Elders and Knowledge-Keepers, whose knowledge and leadership guide our understanding of homelessness in relation to Indigenous identity, belonging, and caring for each other. Our work through the Point in Time Count and Reaching Home is made possible through the support of our funders and partners: Housing, Infrastructure, and Communities Canada and the City of Hamilton.

**Chi Miigwetch. Niá:wen. Thank you.**

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Niá:wen to the following agencies and individuals for supporting the 2024 Point in Time Count Magnet Event:

- Hamilton Regional Indian Centre
- De dwa da dehs nye>s Aboriginal Health Centre
- Sacajawea Non-Profit Housing Inc.
- Native Women's Centre Hamilton Chapter
- Lori Harris
- Katelyn Clark and the Indigenous Women's Singing Group
- City of Hamilton

## INTRODUCTION

The Point in Time (PiT) Count is a nationally coordinated effort to capture information about the demographics of community members experiencing homelessness as well as the characteristics and contributing factors to homelessness in Canada. Locally, data collected through PiT initiatives help communities better understand the extent of homelessness in their area and the services and supports needed to prevent and address homelessness. Findings contribute to decision-making, resource allocation, and policy and program development. Nationally, PiT Counts help to identify national and regional trends, which can enhance the impact of Reaching Home.

### Indigenous Homelessness

Indigenous homelessness is a legacy of colonialism. Historical and ongoing social and economic policies and practices have violently disrupted the health and well-being of Indigenous communities. As acknowledged in the directives of Reaching Home: Canada's National Homelessness Strategy (2025) and articulated by Jesse Thistle (2017), Indigenous experiences of homelessness are distinct from the experiences of non-Indigenous peoples. Addressing and preventing Indigenous homelessness requires acknowledging the historical legacies of colonialism and the ongoing impacts of colonialism, systemic discrimination, and intergenerational trauma. Wholistic, Indigenous-led approaches grounded in Indigenous self-determination are essential to ensuring that homeless solutions are not only accessible but also healing and empowering for Indigenous Peoples experiencing homelessness.

### Indigenous Magnet Event

Since 2015, Indigenous leaders in Hamilton have successfully demonstrated the need for Indigenous methodologies when conducting PiT Counts. Indigenous ways of knowing and doing enhance the ability of PiT initiatives to capture and understand Indigenous experiences of homelessness.

Guided by the principle "For Indigenous, By Indigenous," the Indigenous Magnet Event in Hamilton is developed by local Indigenous urban leaders to create a highly visible and culturally supportive space for Indigenous community members experiencing homelessness to complete the PiT Survey and share the contributing factors and characteristics of Indigenous homelessness.

The 2021 and 2024 PiT Count Indigenous Magnet Events for Hamilton were held in Beasley Park. In addition to completing a survey, Indigenous community members had space to enjoy traditional foods, receive bundles of traditional medicines, engage in teachings with local Indigenous Elders and Knowledge-Keepers, and participate in drumming and singing.

**Of the 807 PiT surveys completed in Hamilton<sup>1</sup>, 195 were completed by community members identifying as Indigenous or having Indigenous ancestry.**

### Indigenous Identity

The 2024 PiT Count survey responses analyzed in this report are from respondents who identified as Indigenous or having Indigenous ancestry.

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<sup>1</sup> There were 807 valid PiT Count surveys completed between November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024 and November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024.



# FINDINGS

## Demographics

### Gender

Among the 195 Indigenous respondents in the 2024 PiT Count survey, 106 identified as “Man,” accounting for 54% of the Indigenous respondents. Seventy-five (75) identified as “Woman,” seven (7) as “Non-Binary,” one (1) as “Two-Spirit,” and six (6) respondents did not provide a response to this question.

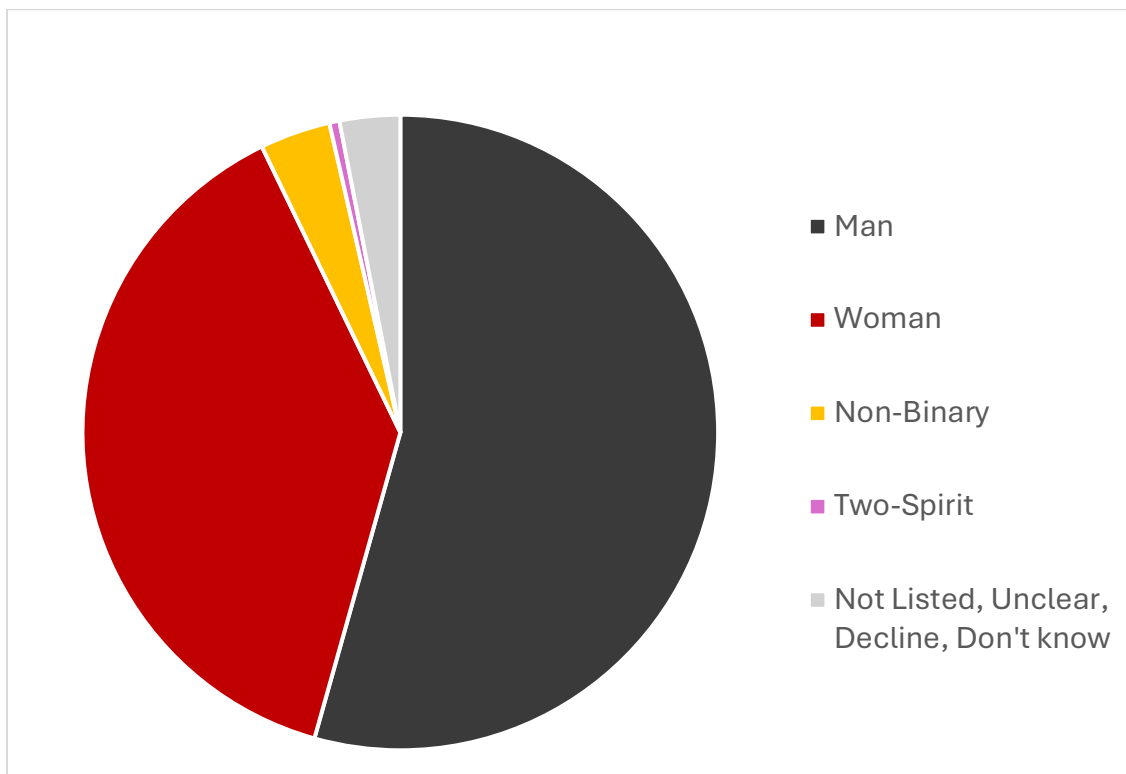


Figure 1. The gender identity of Indigenous respondents, 2024 Point in Time Count (Hamilton, Ontario).

### Age<sup>2</sup>

The average age of Indigenous respondents to the 2024 PiT Count survey was 40 years old. Most indicated that they are middle-aged, with 77% identifying as between the ages of 31 and 64. Five Indigenous respondents (3%) reported being over 65 years old, and thirty-six (20%) identified as youth (thirty years or younger).

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<sup>2</sup> Eighteen Indigenous respondents did not identify their age. (n=177)

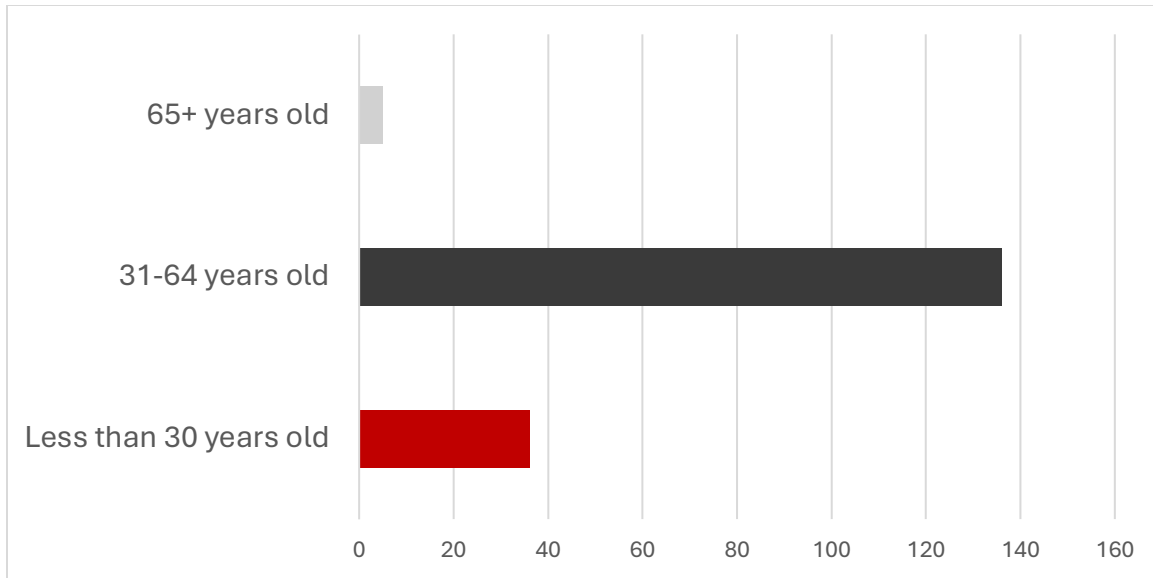


Figure 2. Age of Indigenous respondents, 2024 Point in Time Count (Hamilton, Ontario).

**The youngest Indigenous respondent identified as 16 years old, and the oldest was 79 years old.**

### Child and Youth Experiences of Homelessness<sup>3</sup>

Of Indigenous respondents, forty percent (40%) reported experiencing homelessness for the first time when they were 18 years of age or younger. Overall, 62% of Indigenous respondents' first experience of homelessness was as a child or youth (30 years old or younger). Thirty-seven percent (37%) of Indigenous respondents first experienced homelessness as an adult (aged 31 to 65 years old), and one Indigenous respondent identified first experiencing homelessness as a senior (older than 65 years old).

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<sup>3</sup> Twenty-four Indigenous respondents did not identify their age when they first experienced homelessness (n=171).

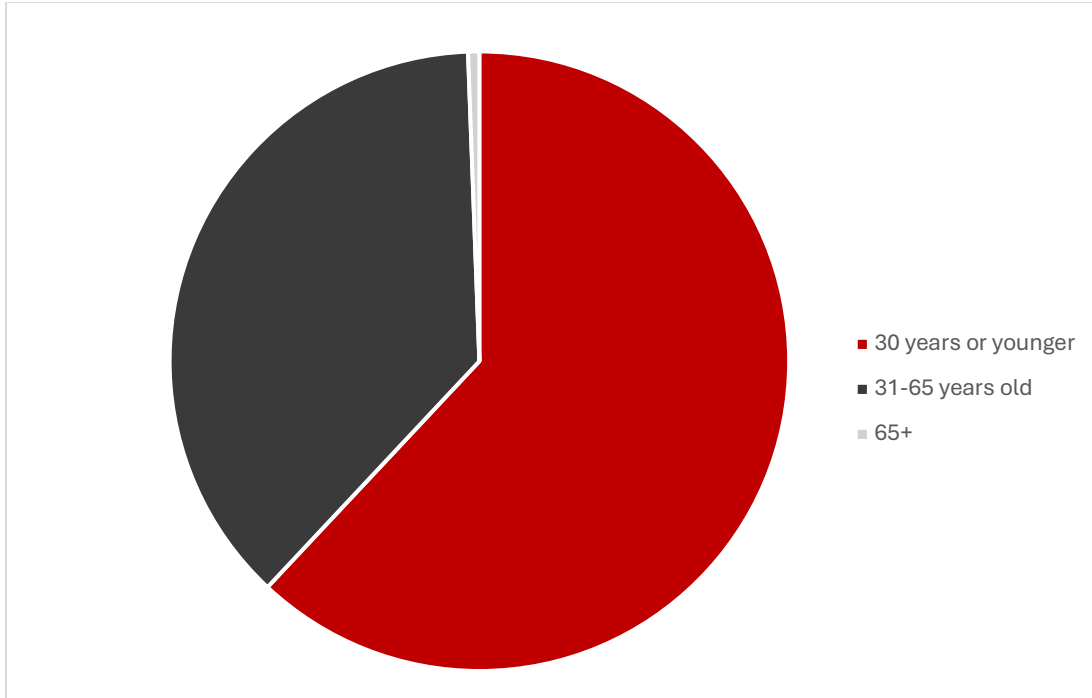


Figure 3. Age of first experience of homelessness - Indigenous respondents, 2024 Point in Time Count (Hamilton, Ontario).

**The average age at which Indigenous respondents first experienced homelessness was 28 years old.**

### Experiences with Foster Care and/or Youth Group Homes

Almost half of Indigenous respondents (47%) reported experiences with foster care or being in a youth group home as a child or youth.

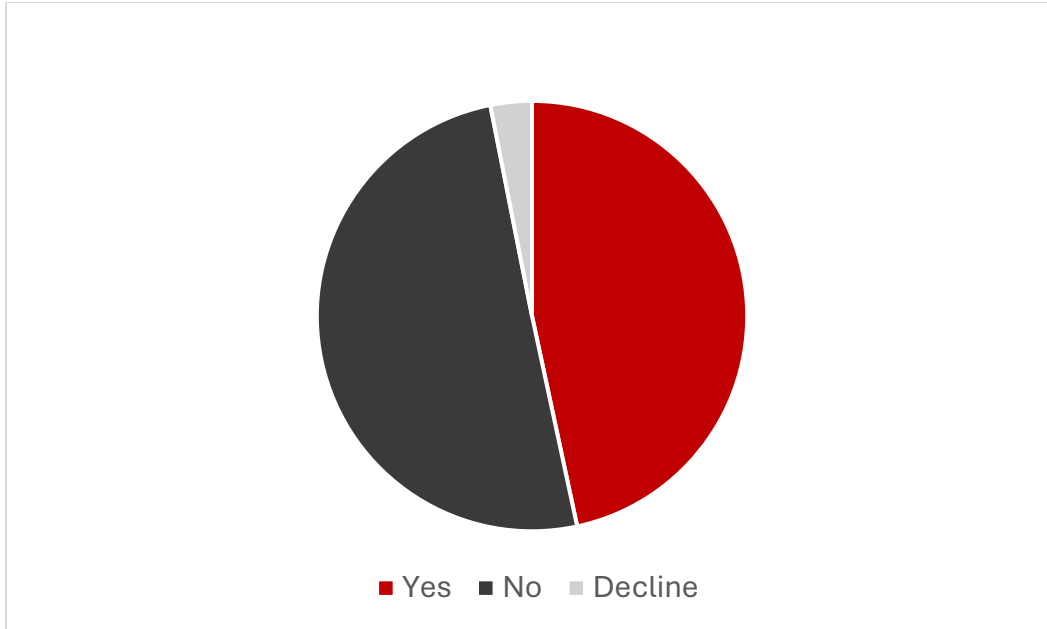


Figure 4. Experiences with foster care or youth group home - Indigenous respondents, 2024 Point in Time Count (Hamilton, Ontario).

## Experiences of Homelessness

### Where are you staying tonight/last night?

Of Indigenous respondents, fifty-six (29%) indicated “Encampment” as where they had spent the previous night or planned to spend the following night. Eighty-three respondents (43%) had stayed or intended to stay in a homeless shelter. Thirty-six (18%) indicated an unsheltered public space, and 12 (6%) indicated “Someone else’s place” as where they had spent the previous night or would spend the following night.

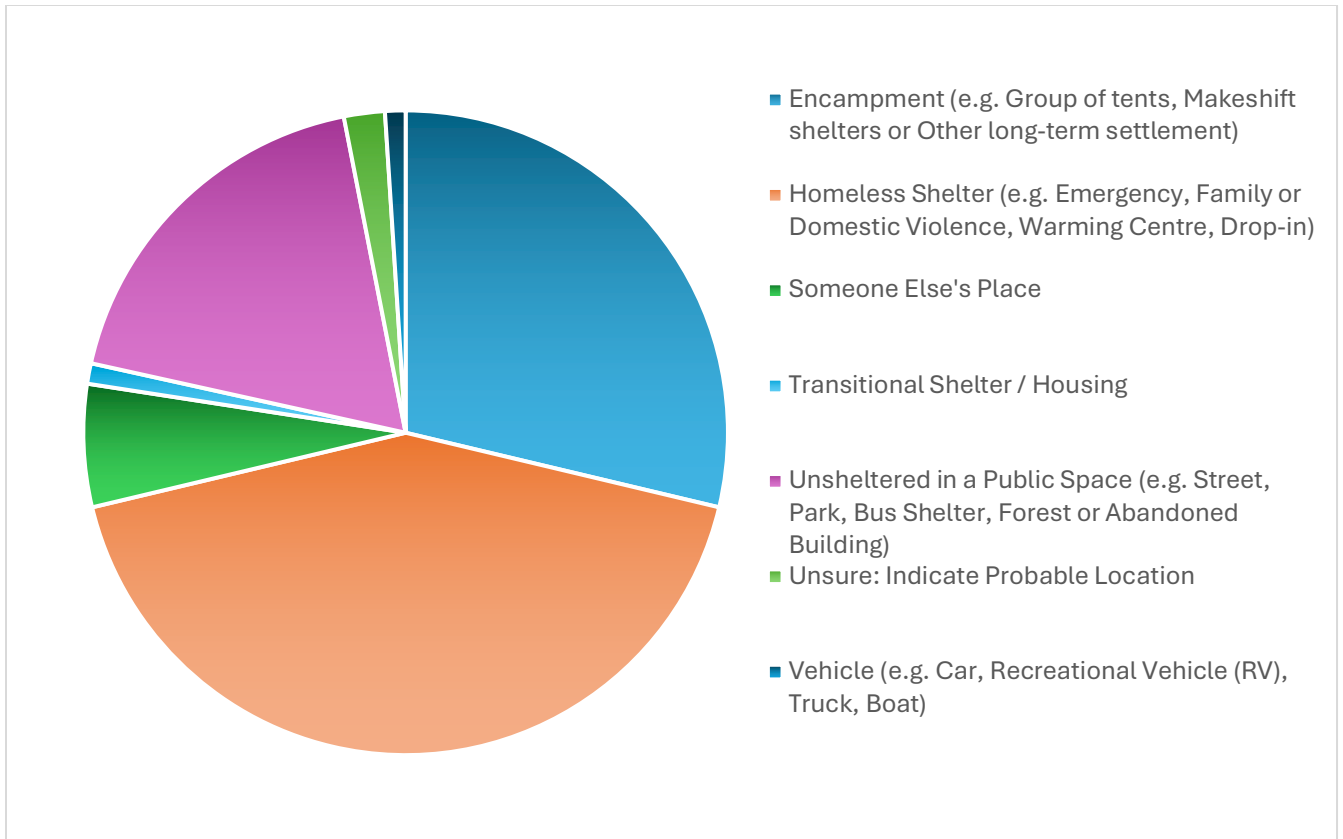


Figure 5. "Where did you say last night/tonight?" – Indigenous respondents, 2024 Point in Time Count (Hamilton, Ontario).

### How much time over the past year have you experienced Homelessness?<sup>4</sup>

The majority of Indigenous respondents (78%) indicated over the past year; they have experienced homelessness for six months to a year.

### Experiences of Homelessness Over the Last Three Years

Over half of Indigenous-identifying respondents (61%) reported experiencing about half or more of the last three years homeless. Sixty-four (33%) Indigenous respondents had spent less than half of the last three years homeless.

<sup>4</sup> Seven Indigenous respondents did not answer this question. (n=188)

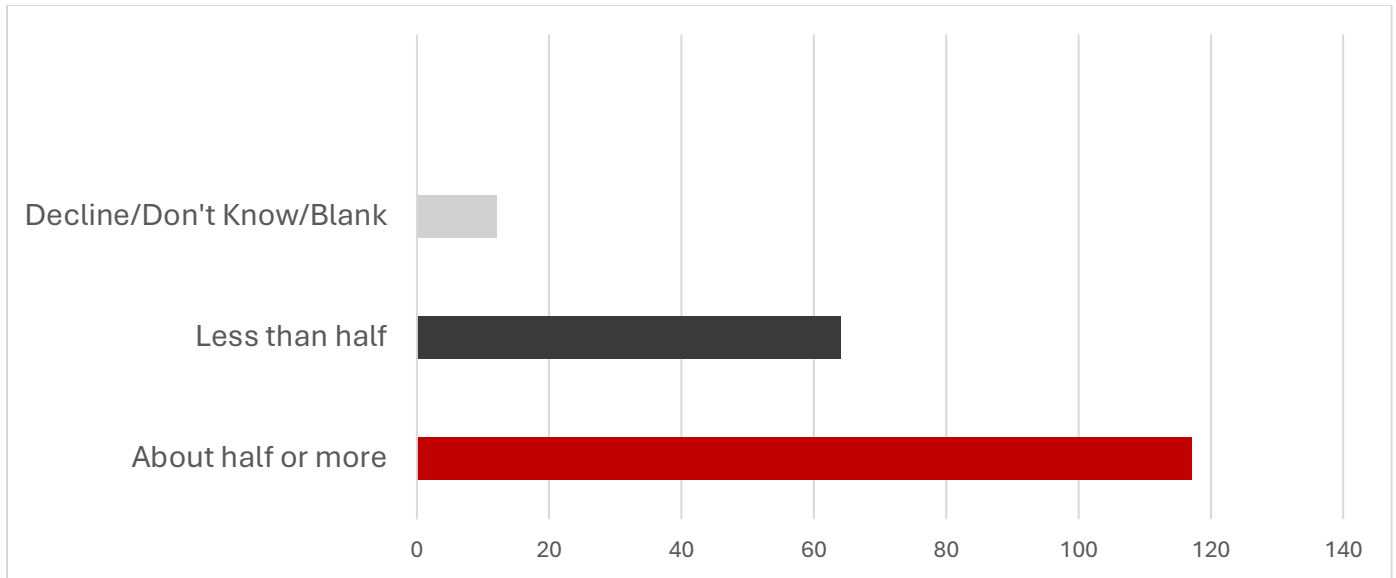


Figure 6. How much time have you experienced homelessness over the past 3 years? - Indigenous Respondents, 2024 Point in Time Count (Hamilton, Ontario).

### Cause of Most Recent Housing Loss<sup>5</sup>

Of Indigenous-identifying respondents to the 2024 PiT Count survey, eighty-three respondents (44%) indicated eviction was the cause of their most recent housing loss.

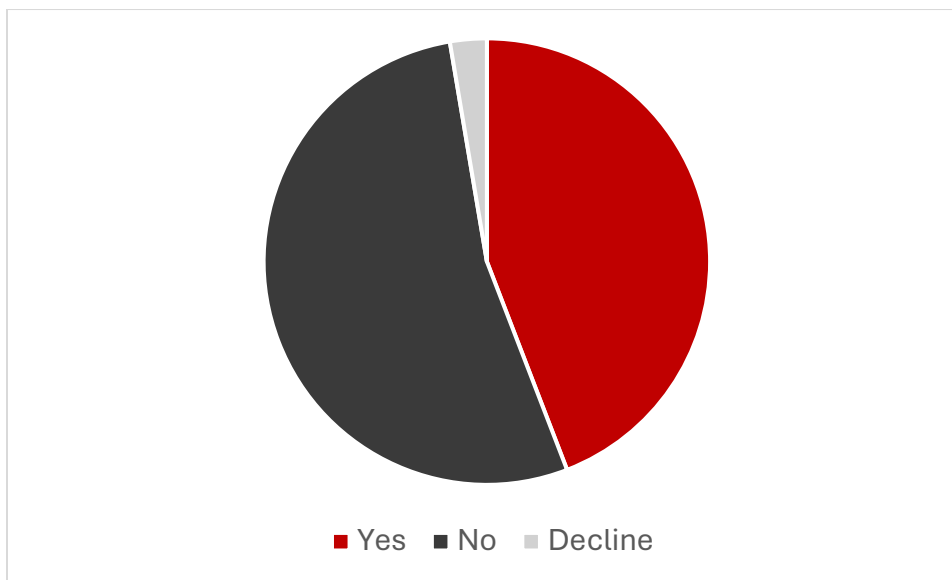


Figure 7. Eviction as Cause of Most Recent Housing Loss – Indigenous Respondents, 2024 Point in Time Count (Hamilton, Ontario).

<sup>5</sup> Of the surveys completed by Indigenous respondents, 188 responded to whether eviction was the cause of their most recent housing loss. (n=188)

## Challenges in Finding Housing

When asked about challenges experienced when trying to find housing, Indigenous respondents reported low income (59%) and high cost of rent (63%) as more common challenges in finding housing than poor housing, mental health issues, and discrimination.

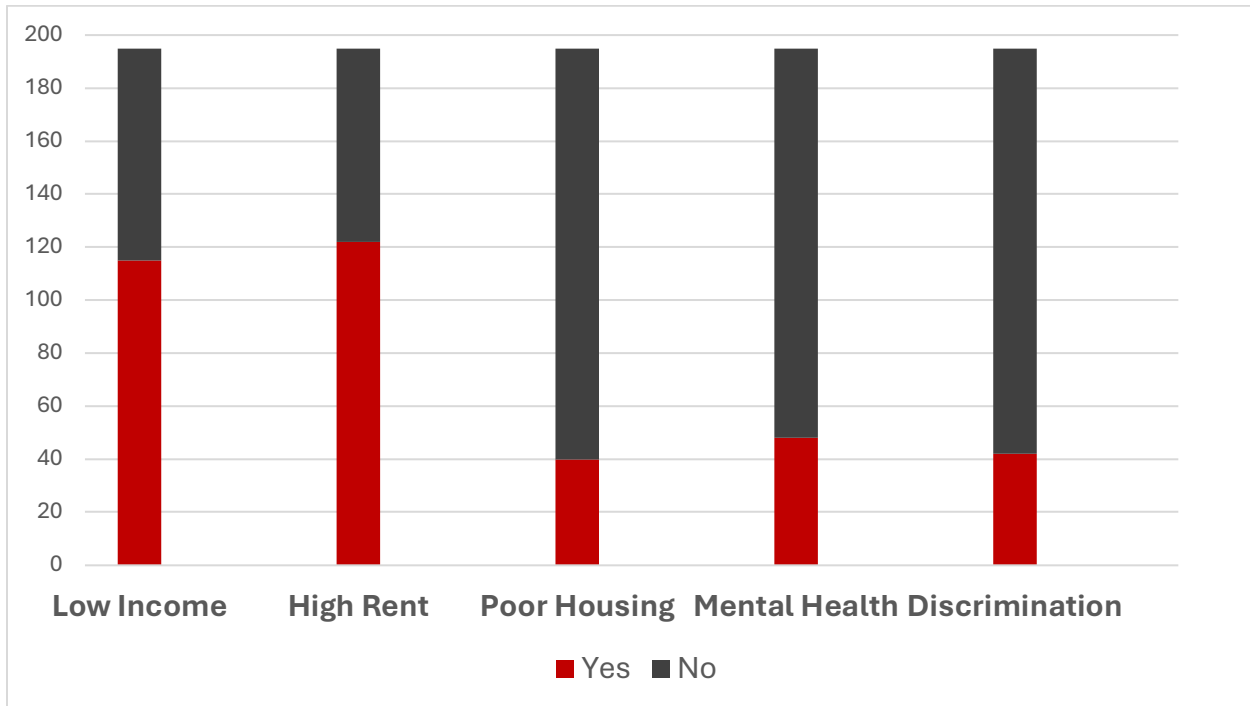


Figure 8. Challenges in Finding Housing – Indigenous Respondents, 2024 Point in Time Count (Hamilton, Ontario)

## Health Challenges

### Physical Limitations<sup>6</sup>

An equal proportion of Indigenous-identifying respondents to the 2024 PiT Count survey reported living with physical limitations (e.g. challenges with mobility). Ninety-four Indigenous respondents (50%) reported living with physical limitations, and ninety-five respondents (50%) indicated no physical limitations.

<sup>6</sup> Of the 195 2024 PiT Count surveys completed by Indigenous-identifying respondents, 189 responded to the Physical Limitations question.

### Mental Health Challenges<sup>7</sup>

Over three-quarters of Indigenous respondents (78%) identified as living with mental health challenges (diagnosed or undiagnosed) such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, etc.). Of the remaining respondents, thirty-seven (19%) indicated no mental health challenges and four respondents (2%) declined to answer this question.

### Substance Use Issues<sup>8</sup>

Of Indigenous-identifying respondents to the survey, one hundred thirty-seven (72%) identified having substance use issues, such as tobacco, alcohol, or opiates. Fifty respondents reported no substance use issues and 2 respondents declined to answer this question.

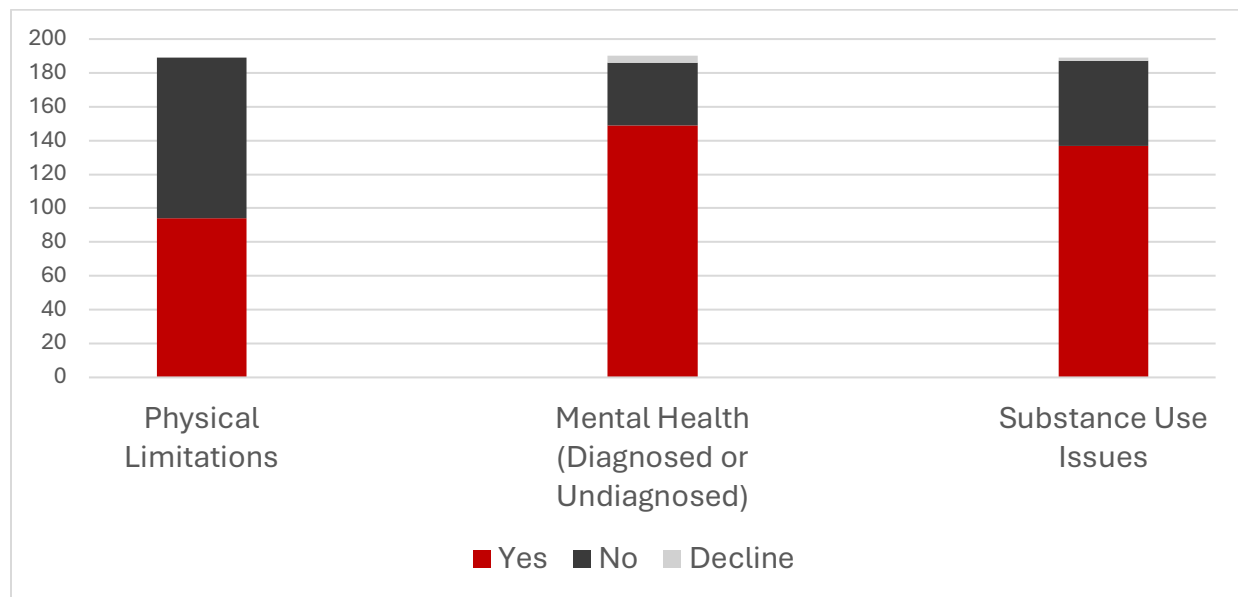


Figure 9. Indigenous Respondents Experiencing Health Challenges – Indigenous respondents, 2024 Point in Time Count (Hamilton, Ontario).

### Accessing Emergency Room Services

Of Indigenous respondents to the 2024 Point in Time Count survey, 83 (43%) indicated they had not accessed emergency room services with the past year. A roughly equal proportion (43%) had accessed emergency room services one to four times over the past twelve months. Nineteen Indigenous respondents (10%) reported accessing emergency room

<sup>7</sup> Of the 195 2024 PiT Count surveys completed by Indigenous-identifying respondents, 190 responded to the Mental Health Challenges question.

<sup>8</sup> Of the 195 2024 PiT Count surveys completed by Indigenous-identifying respondents, 189 responded to the Substance Use Issues question.



services five to ten times within the past year. Eight Indigenous respondents (4%) reported accessing emergency room services more than 10 times within the past year.

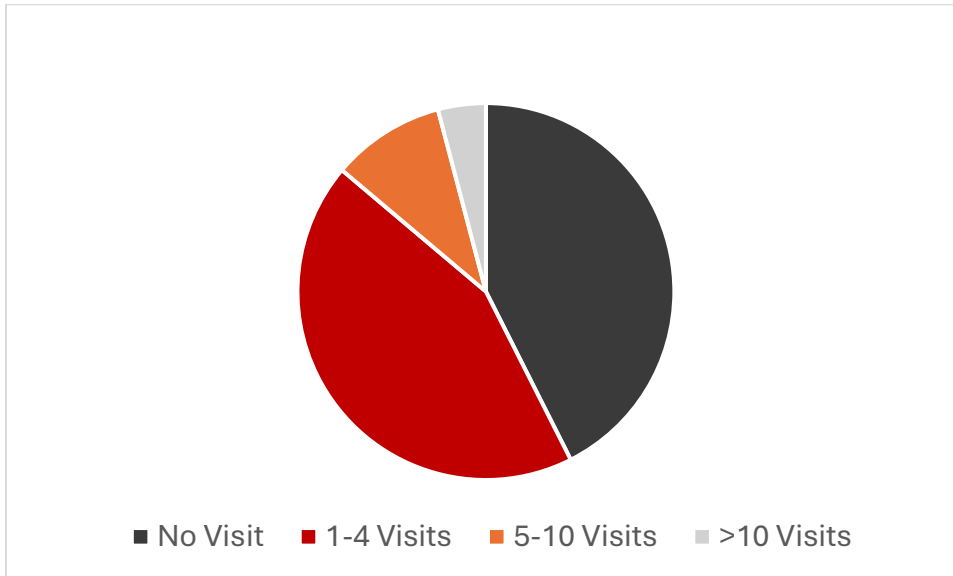


Figure 10. Number of Emergency Room Visits Within the Past 12 Months Challenges – Indigenous respondents, 2024 Point in Time Count (Hamilton, Ontario).

**The average number of emergency room visits among Indigenous respondents was twice per year.**