A VOICE FOR HOPE

2018 HOMELESS ENUMERATION REPORT

THE COUNTY OF LAMBTON

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The County of Lambton would like to extend a very special thank you
to those individuals experiencing homelessness that took the
time to complete a survey. We appreciate you sharing
your experiences as a contribution to the County of Lambton's
efforts to solve homelessness within our community.

The County of Lambton is proud to have completed the enumeration
guided through a 'people-centered' philosophy; where the first priority
was to the community members and their safety.

The County of Lambton would also like to thank the following community partners
for their efforts with Lambton County's 2018 homeless enumeration:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In December 2016, the *Promoting Affordable Housing Act, 2016* was passed in Provincial Parliament; within this legislation is the requirement that all Service Managers complete a homeless enumeration every two years. It is anticipated that consistent enumerations will provide a better understanding into the extent and nature of homelessness; and will assist Service Managers and the Ministry of Housing with a means to guide policy and program design within communities. [1]

Through the assistance of 10 community partnering agencies, a comprehensive enumeration of Lambton County's homeless population was conducted from May 7-18, 2018. Lead by the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM), the Corporation of the County of Lambton, the enumeration was planned and administered locally within the 11 municipalities of Lambton County. With over 50% of Lambton County's population residing in the city of Sarnia, Sarnia was the primary focus for data collection; however rural communities that have services related to homelessness prevention were enumerated through the agencies that provide services within those communities. Three data collection methods were presented to CMSMs to choose for their data collection; based on the county's low population density, the geographic size and the demographic make-up the County of Lambton opted for the Period Prevalence Count (PPC).

The objectives of the enumeration align with the Province of Ontario's goal to end homelessness in Ontario and to end chronic homelessness by 2025; the objectives of the enumeration were to:

- » Increase comprehensive and targeted data regarding homelessness and those individuals that are experiencing homelessness;
- » Highlight the prevalence of the homeless population;
- » Begin to understand the patterns and prior experiences of homeless persons within Lambton County.
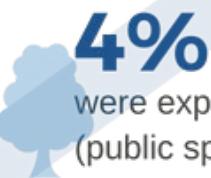
The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the Lambton County enumeration; it provides a summary of methodologies and key findings that were identified through the aggregated data. It includes brief discussions of themes that were identified and provides recommendations that coincide with the County of Lambton Housing and Homelessness Strategic Directions: Housing Stability, Homelessness Prevention and Sustainability. [2] This report is meant to be a snapshot of homelessness within Lambton County at a specific point-in-time. It should be used to help inform service delivery, allocate resources and to assist with the development of community targets toward ending homelessness in our community.

There were 15 core questions which were developed by the Ministry of Housing. The County had opted to complete the three additional questions that were elective for Service Managers completing the PPC method. At this time, there is no comparable data as this was the first homeless enumeration completed within Lambton County; however the results of the 2018 enumeration will serve as a baseline against which biennial enumerations will be measured.

For the purpose of data reporting, the results have been divided into three different themes: patterns of homelessness, demographics of individuals experiencing homelessness and identifying risk factors. Feedback from 123 individuals was obtained through the efforts of the County of Lambton's homeless enumeration. It is important to understand that this is a baseline number for recognizing homelessness within our community, as not all voices representing this vulnerable population were captured. In Lambton County, there were an additional 222 individuals that were either observed to be homeless or are known to agencies to be experiencing homelessness during the enumeration period.

IDENTIFIED HOMELESSNESS PATTERNS WITHIN LAMBTON COUNTY

Derived from the data from the 123 individuals that reported experiencing homelessness, the following homelessness patters were identified for the County of Lambton's:

123

Individuals identified as experiencing homelessness in Lambton County

4%
were experiencing **absolute homelessness** (public space, vehicle, park)

30%
were **emergency sheltered** (homeless shelter, hotel/motel, domestic violence centre)

42%
were **provisionally accommodated** (hospital, jail, treatment centre, staying with someone else temporarily)

18%
were in **transitional housing** and/or shelters (temporary accommodations to bridge people between homelessness and permanent housing)

20%
were identified as **episodically homeless** (experiencing 3 or more episodes of homelessness within a year)

36%
were identified as **chronically homeless** (experiencing homelessness for six or more months)
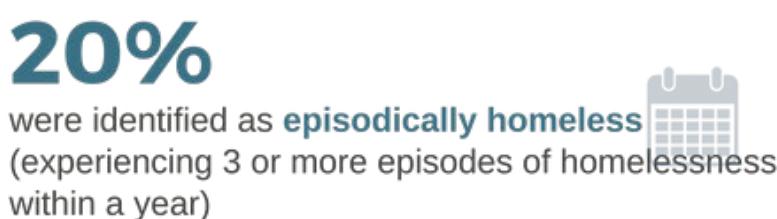
222
additional individuals were observed to be experiencing homelessness using an observational tool
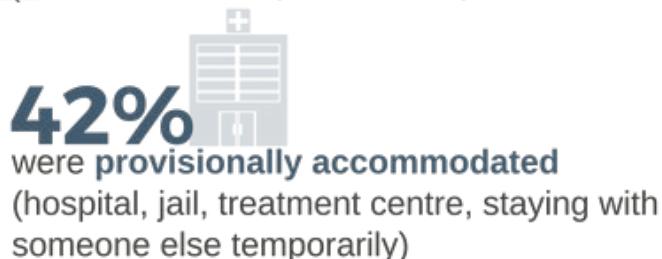
20,207
total days of homelessness reported in Lambton County
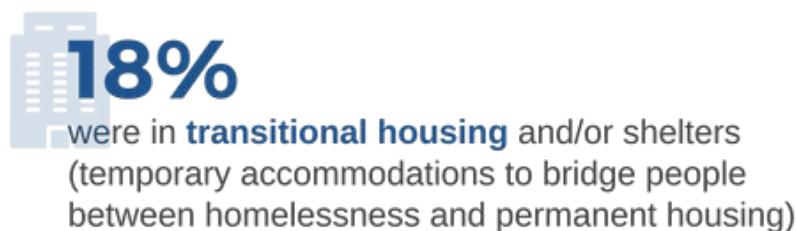
294
episodes of homelessness were reported by individuals

2.6
was the average times of homelessness reported

1.1 THE PURPOSE OF AN ENUMERATION

In *The State of Homelessness in Canada, 2016* report, it was estimated that at least 235,000 Canadians experience homelessness in any given year. However, the actual number is potentially higher, as there are many complexities to distinguishing precise data on individuals that are experiencing hidden homelessness or that do not access homelessness services and supports.[3] Until recently, the reported number of individuals experiencing homelessness in Canada had been based on unreliable data and estimates. However, as of late, communities have been completing enumerations to obtain more accurate data regarding their homeless populations.

A homeless enumeration is the measurement of the number of individuals experiencing homelessness over a specific period of time through counting and gathering information on individuals.
Additionally, an enumeration:

- Provides a snapshot of homelessness within communities;
- Is a way to track progress and trends at a local and provincial level;
- Provides information to drive change to prevent, reduce and end homelessness.

1.2 POPULATIONS INCLUDED IN THE ENUMERATION

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness defines homelessness as "the situation of an individual, family or community without stable, safe, permanent or appropriate housing; or the immediate prospect, means, or ability to acquire it".[4]

For the purpose of the Lambton County enumeration, it was of importance for community members to understand that individuals who are "couch surfing" or at "no fixed address", both common words used within the community, are in fact experiencing homeless.

Homelessness is a broad term that encompasses a range of housing conditions, which are understood on a continuum of shelters:[5]

Absolute Homeless	Emergency Sheltered	Provisionally Accommodated	At Risk of Homelessness

» *Absolute homelessness* is a narrow concept only including those who do not have access to housing.
   » People living in public (sidewalks, parks, forests or a private space and vacant buildings);
   » People living in places not intended for permanent human habitation (vehicles, makeshift shelters, shacks or tents).
» *Emergency sheltered* are individuals that access emergency shelter and system supports as they cannot secure permanent housing on their own.
   » Emergency overnight shelters for people who are homeless;
   » Shelters for individuals/families impacted by family violence;
» *Provisionally accommodated* describes people who are technically homeless however have temporary accommodations.
   » Institutional care (incarcerated, in a hospital or treatment center);
   » Transitional shelters or housing; Those staying with friends/family ("couch surfing," "no fixed address");
   » Short term temporary accommodations (motel/hotel).
» Lastly, *at risk of homelessness* is a broad category that includes those that are housed but who may be at risk of losing their homes due a range of risk factors (employment changes, household breakdown, loss of services or supports).

1.3 INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS

In an effort to continue to build relationships with Lambton County's three Indigenous Communities: Aamjiwnaang First Nation, Kettle & Stony Point First Nation and Walpole Island First Nation, a formal invitation from the County of Lambton's CAO was delivered to these communities. Although initial meetings took place to introduce policy guidelines, no further involvement occurred due to hesitation from the Indigenous Communities regarding the uncertainty of the intentions of the data.

Community Recommendation Based On Enumeration :
Continue to develop relationships with Indigenous communities to better understand these communities unique housing and homelessness needs.
Housing and Homelessness Strategic Direction: Housing Stability

1.4 AREAS WITHIN LAMBTON COUNTY ENUMERATED

In accordance to provincial guidelines, Service Managers were to survey at least 30% of their catchment area. Lambton County is comprised of 11 municipalities, the largest being the city of Sarnia where 50% of the population resides. Therefore the majority of data collection was completed within Sarnia limits. As a strategy to reach participants that reside in the rural municipalities, rural based agencies that have programs and services related to homelessness prevention were invited to assist with the data collection.

## 1.5 ORGANIZATIONS THAT PARTICIPATED IN DATA COLLECTION

Throughout the planning stages, assistance was sought from organizations that provide housing and homelessness services and supports to individuals. Once participation was confirmed, the Social Planning Department met with management from each participating organization to provide an enumeration overview and supports to effectively administer data collection within their agency. It was important for the County of Lambton to provide organizations with the

flexibility to administer the data collection based on their organization's policies and procedures. Supports from the Social Planning department continued throughout the duration of the enumeration events.

FIGURE 2: PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Figure 2 is a map of Lambton County and shows the locations where participating agencies are located; it can be identified from the map that the bulk of the agencies Are located within Sarnia. There are 6 municipalities within Lambton County that did not have a data collection access point.

A total of 10 partnering agencies assisted in the enumeration data collection. As shown in Figure 2, the majority of services that assisted with the homeless enumeration are located within the city of Sarnia. Though outreach services are available within rural municipalities, homelessness services and supports are limited.
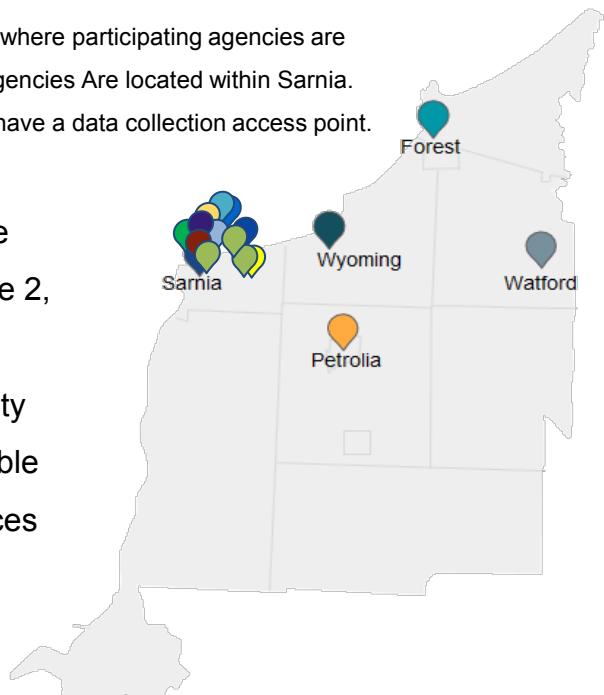
Community Recommendation Based On Enumeration :
Develop a rural homelessness strategy to address homelessness and housing needs and supports for individuals that reside within these communities.
Housing and Homelessness Strategic Direction: Housing Stability

1.6 THE ENUMERATION METHOD

The County of Lambton opted to follow the Period Prevalence Count (PPC) Method as a means to obtain data. A PPC is a service-based approach that connects with individuals experiencing homelessness through the services they frequently use.[6] A PPC method works well for communities in which populations are spread out over a large geographic area as this method relies strongly on partnership organizations to assist in collecting data.

PPC methods are typically completed over a one week period; however based on Lambton County's low population density and geographical size the enumeration took place over the course of two weeks. As people move in and out of homelessness at different times, a two week enumeration count provided the opportunity for more individuals to be counted as they face homelessness.

In order to effectively include all populations of those experiencing homelessness three methods of data collection were available to agencies and participants. By doing so, members from all areas of the county were able to participate regardless of their location or ability to access a data collection site.

Paper surveys were provided to agencies to be administered by front line staff as clients were seeking services.

A 24 hour toll free number was created for participants to contact regardless of their location or time of day.

Individualized links were provided to each agency for staff to administer surveys electronically on the platform of their choice.

During the data collection period, partnering agencies were provided with materials and supplies to conduct data collection at their specific sites. As individuals sought services and supports from these agencies, they were invited to participate in pre-screening questions to determine eligibility for the complete survey. Individuals that appeared to be experiencing homelessness who either declined to participate or were unable to participate were counted in an observational tool. Participants received a $5 honorarium gift card for participating in the survey. Going forward, the process in which participants are acknowledged for their valuable contribution will be increased as this amount seemed too small of a gesture for such a large crisis; considerations will include: bus tickets, information on community resources, essential necessities, and/or a hot meal voucher.

It was expected that all individuals who completed a survey identifying as homeless received housing and homelessness supports; however, the housing and homelessness services and supports that participants received at the time of the survey were not a component of the survey process, rather, were based on each agency's specific emergency policies and procedures.

Upon completion, data was analyzed by the Social Planning Department and was submitted to the Ministry within the allotted six month time period. A follow up report was completed for internal use and a preliminary report was submitted to County Council in October 2018, at which point it was also made available to the public. Additionally, organizations were provided with a tabulated spreadsheet of their specific data collection as a resource to better understand the individuals that access their services.

1.7 LIMITATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

As this was the first homeless enumeration completed within Lambton County, an evaluation of the enumeration methods and implementation was completed. This provided an opportunity to develop methods for improvement and enhancements for the 2020 homeless enumeration. Identified limitations and considerations have been identified and will be used for planning the 2020 enumeration:

» VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

There was no official participation from Lambton County's three Indigenous communities, however as 26% of the individuals that participated identified as Indigenous there is an imperative need going forward to receive input on Indigenous-led understandings and solutions to end homelessness for these unique communities and their peoples.

Participation from local agencies that offer supports specific to vulnerable populations were under represented. Going forward, more participation will be requested from additional agencies to include domestic violence shelter, health services and programs, law enforcement and children's aid services.

» HIDDEN HOMELESSNESS

Data collection was limited to individuals who utilized services within the homelessness system and to those who had sought out services during the two week period. This resulted in a challenge for the homeless count to capture the hidden homeless, or those that do not access supports and services. Alternate data collection capabilities will be considered to reach these individuals going forward.

» LIMITED RURAL POPULATION

Similarly, there were challenges present in identifying those experiencing homelessness in rural municipalities; as the process in which surveys were administered relied heavily on those experiencing homelessness to come forward to a survey location. A barrier was posed for individuals residing within rural communities where a designated survey location was not present. The process in which data collection in rural municipalities is enumerated will be re-evaluated to strategize solutions to include all 11 municipalities.

» DATA COLLECTION

The capacity that agencies were able to commit to administering surveys was a limitation. It was common feedback from organizations that they were not able to provide an adequate amount of time for the data collection; reporting factors such as lack of time, staffing issues, or more pressing issues for their organizations. From this, it can be assumed that not all individuals seeking services were provided an opportunity to be surveyed. In addition, relying heavily on agencies to

administer the surveys resulted in inconsistencies among data collection. For future Enumerations, a specific enumeration team is recommended. This would invite an opportunity for further training and would result in more consistent data. Ideally, an enumeration team would comprise of a multitude of positions from the housing and homelessness sector and would include an individual(s) with lived experience.
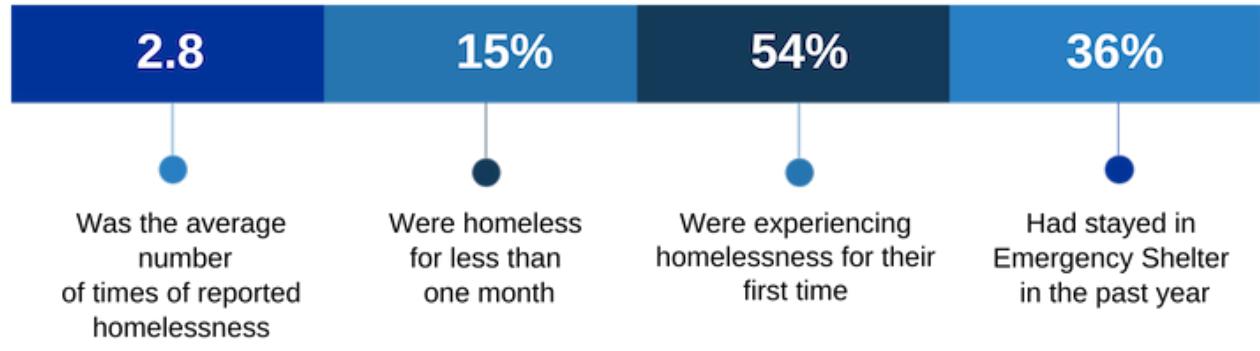
» **VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT**

Rather than a limitation, but potentially a missed opportunity, the 2018 enumeration would have been an ideal time to have introduced the use of a vulnerable assessment, such as the *Vulnerability Index- Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT).* VI-SPDAT is a triage tool used to examine factors of current vulnerability and can assist to better highlight supports and housing interventions that may benefit and improve long term housing outcomes.[7] Numerous cities among Ontario reported using the VI-SPDAT tool during their enumeration efforts to assess and prioritize vulnerability within their community.

THE COUNTY OF LAMBTON
2018 HOMELESS ENUMERATION

The County of Lambton completed its first homelessness enumeration May 7-18, 2018. From the efforts of the enumeration, 123 individuals identified with experiencing homelessness. Individuals that were experiencing homelessness identified the following data regarding their experiences with homelessness.
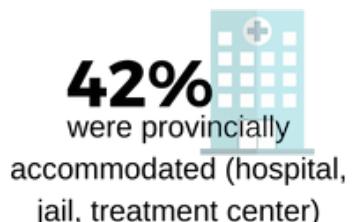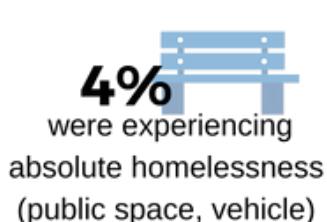
HOMELESSNESS PATTERNS IDENTIFIED

2.8	15%	54%	36%
Was the average number of times of reported homelessness	Were homeless for less than one month	Were experiencing homelessness for their first time	Had stayed in Emergency Shelter in the past year

REPORTED CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS

Individuals that were experiencing homelessness identified the following contributing factors to their homelessness.

Addictions and/or substance abuse issues — 14%

Could not afford their rent/ mortgage — 13%

Evicted for non-financial reasons — 10%
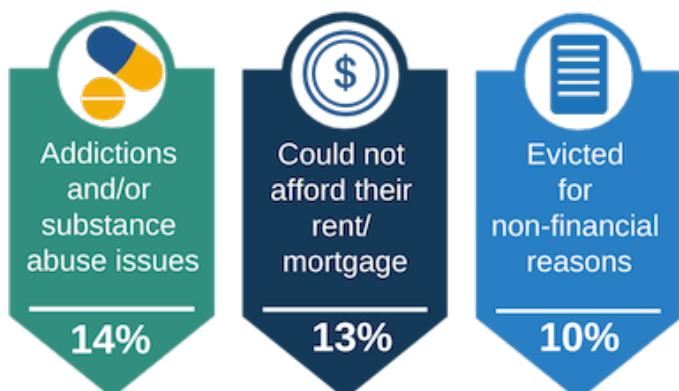
Additional reported causes of homelessness were: unsafe living conditions (9%), institutionalized (10%), job loss (6%), conflict and/or abuse at home (16%)

WHERE INDIVIDUALS WERE SEEKING SHELTER

Individuals reported on their typology of homelessness. 18% were staying in transitional shelters and/or housing, 39% of those experiencing homelessness were staying with friends and family, 21% were staying in emergency shelters, 9% were staying in a motel, 3% were institutionalized and 5% did not know where they would be staying.
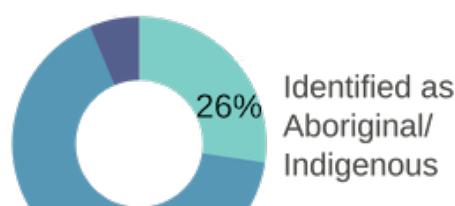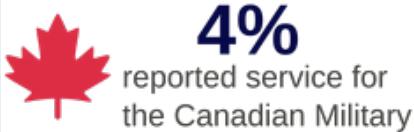
4%
were experiencing absolute homelessness (public space, vehicle)

30%
were emergency sheltered (emergency shelter, women's shelter, hotel/motel)

42%
were provincially accommodated (hospital, jail, treatment center)

RISK FACTORS IDENTIFIED BY INDIVIDUALS

The following risk factors were identified by individuals that were experiencing homelessness:

29%
reported a physical disability

48%
had addiction and/or substance abuse issues

48%
reported mental health concerns

37%
identified a chronic and/or acute medical condition
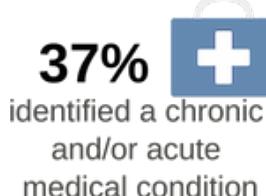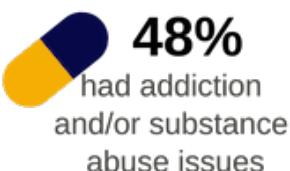
DEMOGRAPHICS OF THOSE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Participants reported on questions regarding their sociodemographics. The following are demographics reported by individuals that were experiencing homelessness:

36
was the average age

85%
Identified their sexual orientation as straight

4%
reported service for the Canadian Military

26%
reported Indigenous Ancestry

99%
Identified they best express themselves in English

26%
Identified as Aboriginal/ Indigenous

63%
67%
Identified as Male

Identified as White

56%
were in receipt of Ontario Works

4%
identified as families with dependents

9%
were employed
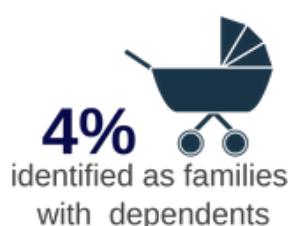
PATTERNS OF HOMELESSNESS

2.1 DURATION OF HOMELESSNESS

15% of participants reported being homeless for less than one month, 14% had been homeless between 1-3 months, 20% had been homeless for 4-6 months and 25% reported being homeless between 7-12 months. 10% reported being homeless for 1 or more years. 7% did not know the duration and 4% declined to answer.

FIGURE 4: QUESTION 2- IN TOTAL, HOW MUCH TIME HAVE YOU BEEN HOMELESS OVER THE PAST YEAR?
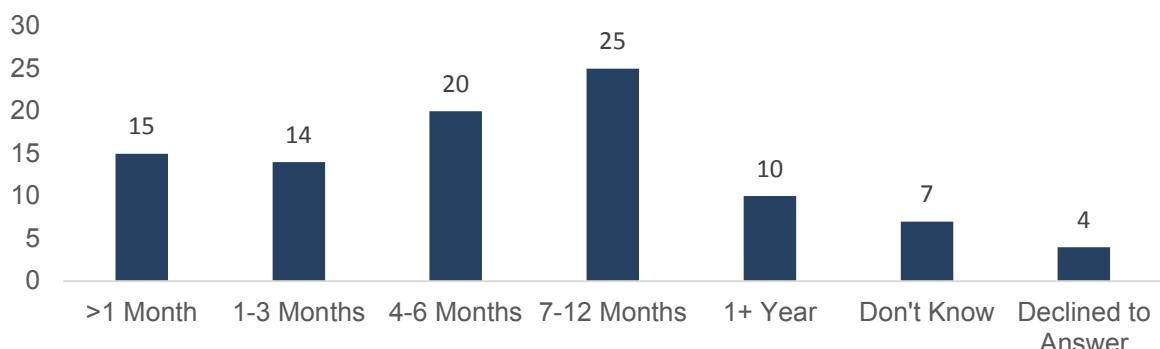
2.2 FREQUENCY OF HOMELESSNESS

54% identified as being homeless for their first time, 12% are experiencing homelessness for their second time, 8% are homeless for their third time, 2% are homeless for their fourth time, and 11% have been homeless five or more times.

FIGURE 5: QUESTION 3- HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU BEEN HOMELESS IN THE PAST YEAR?

2.8 was the average number of times of homelessness reported
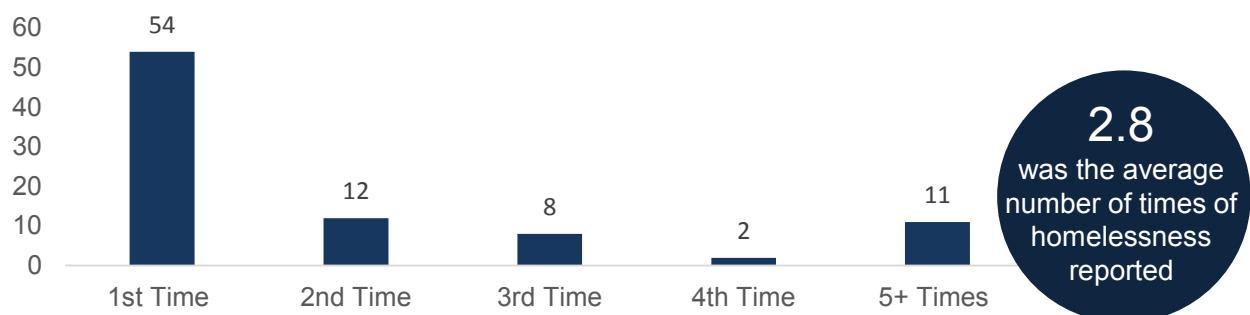
2.3 SHELTER AVAILABILITY

42% of participants were provisionally accommodated, 4% were absolute homeless (stayed in either a public space or vehicle), 30% were emergency sheltered and 18% were in transitional housing. 5% of respondents were unsure of where they were going to stay the night of data collection. 1% declined to answer.

FIGURE 6: QUESTION 1- WHERE ARE YOU STAYING TONIGHT?
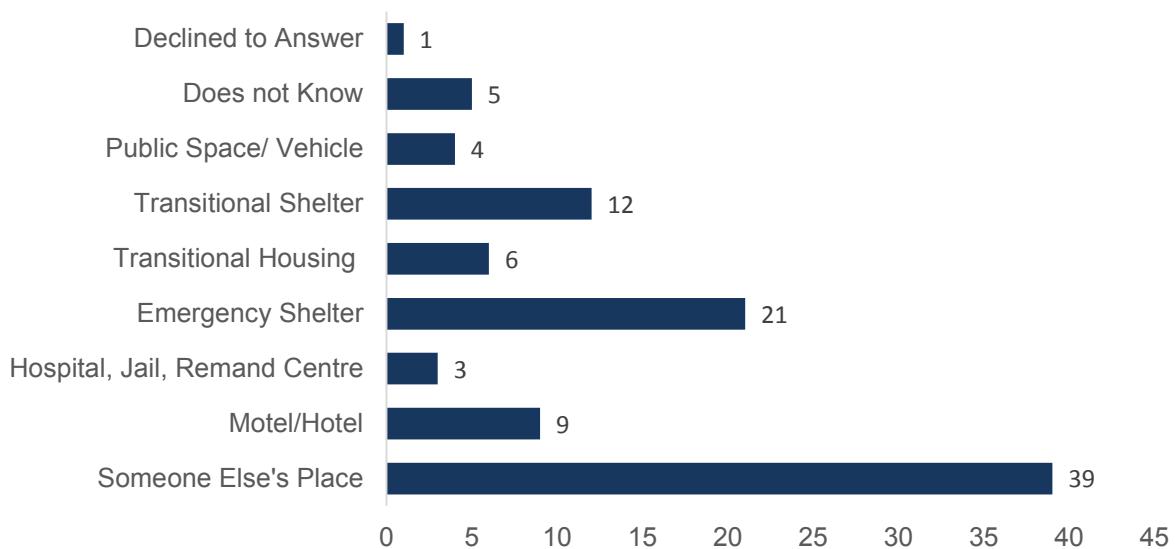
Within the County of Lambton, 39% of participants reported that they were "staying at someone else's place", categorizing these individuals as experiencing hidden homelessness. These findings are concerning as, contrary to the presumption that those that are "couch surfing", especially in adolescence, are managing their living situations, this form of homelessness typically is an inaugural process to becoming more susceptible to socioeconomic vulnerability.[8] Another component of those that are couch surfing is that these living situations do not remain sustainable as the general public does not have the capacity nor the resources to house those affected by homelessness in the long term.

Community Recommendation Based On Enumeration :
Consider the development of an innovative solution to provide resources for homeowners that are housing those affected by homelessness.
Housing and Homelessness Strategic Direction: Sustainability

2.4 CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS

The largest reported factor of homelessness was addictions and/or substance abuse, 14%; where 13% reported that they were unable to pay their rent/mortgage, 10% were evicted as they had been institutionalized (jail, treatment center and/or hospital), 8% reported an illness/medical condition and 6% had lost their employment. 11% reported having conflict within their home and an additional 5% were experiencing abuse. "Other reasons" which accounted for 13% were due to landlord issues, housing loss due to an occurrence (fire, break and enter) and living arrangements (breakups, roommate moved). 1% declined to answer and 2% indicated that they did not know.

10% reported that they were evicted for reasons that were not related to finances and another 9% reported unsafe living conditions. Both of these factors potentially could have been preventable with eviction planning and/or prevention services.

FIGURE 7: QUESTION 4- WHAT HAPPENED TO CAUSE YOU TO LOSE YOUR HOUSING MOST RECENTLY?
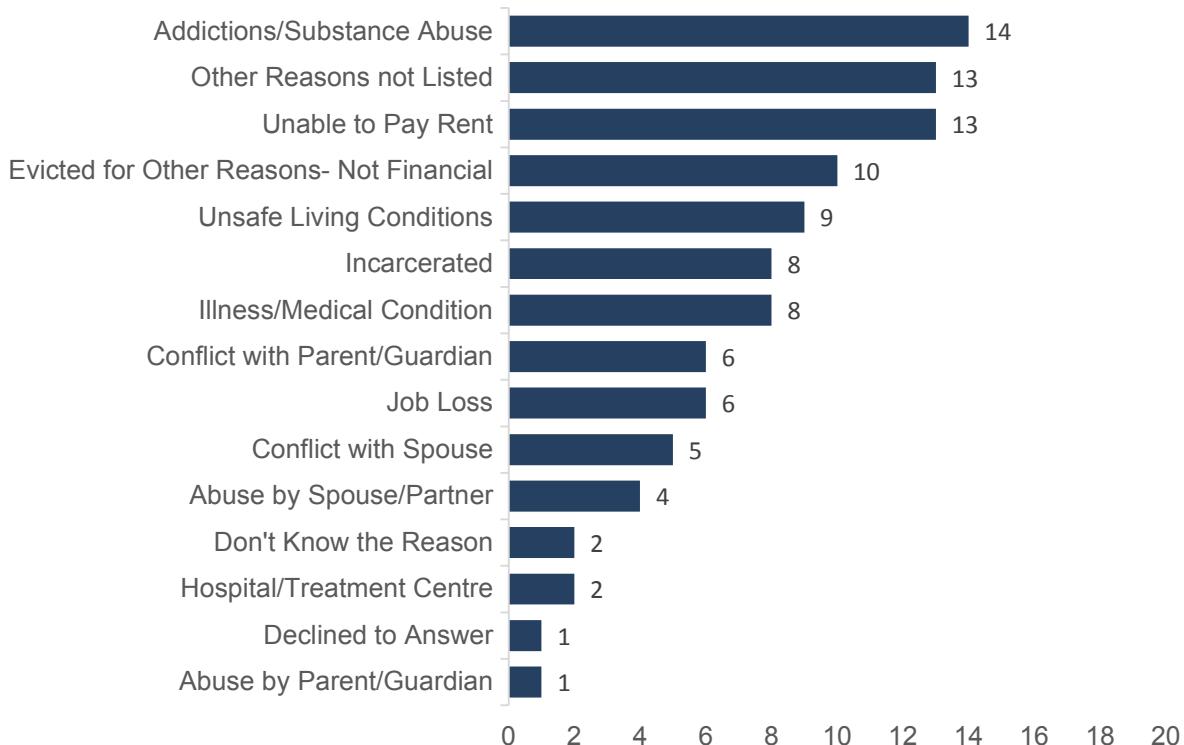
2.5 SHELTER USE

54% of participants reported utilizing emergency shelter services within the past year. 45% had not used a shelter and 1% declined to answer.

FIGURE 8: QUESTION 18- HAVE YOU STAYED IN EMERGENCY SHELTER WITHIN THE LAST YEAR?
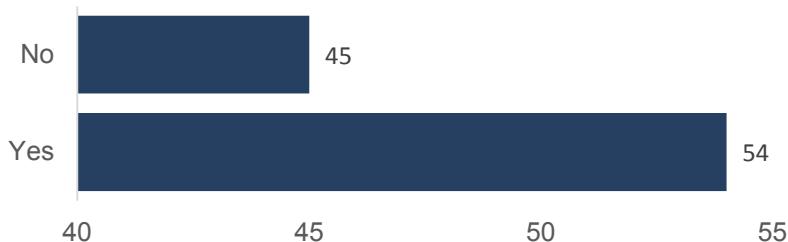
Lambton County has two adult homeless shelters and one shelter for youth aged 16-21. Additionally, there is one emergency shelter for women and children who are fleeing domestic abuse.

Specific statistics regarding the population that had used emergency shelter within the past year:

- » 50% were white males;
- » 38.7 was the average age;
- » 27% were homeless for their first time and
- » 30% were homeless at the time of the survey due to addictions or substance abuse issues.

2.6 FAMILY COMPOSITION

76% indicated they were a single person staying alone, 8% were staying with a partner, 11% were staying with another adult and 4% of those experiencing homelessness were families with dependents. 2% had declined to answer.

FIGURE 9: QUESTION 11- WHAT FAMILY MEMBERS ARE STAYING WITH YOU TONIGHT?

Category	Value
Alone	76
Partner	8
Declined to Answer	2
Other Adult	11
Child(ren)/Dependents	4
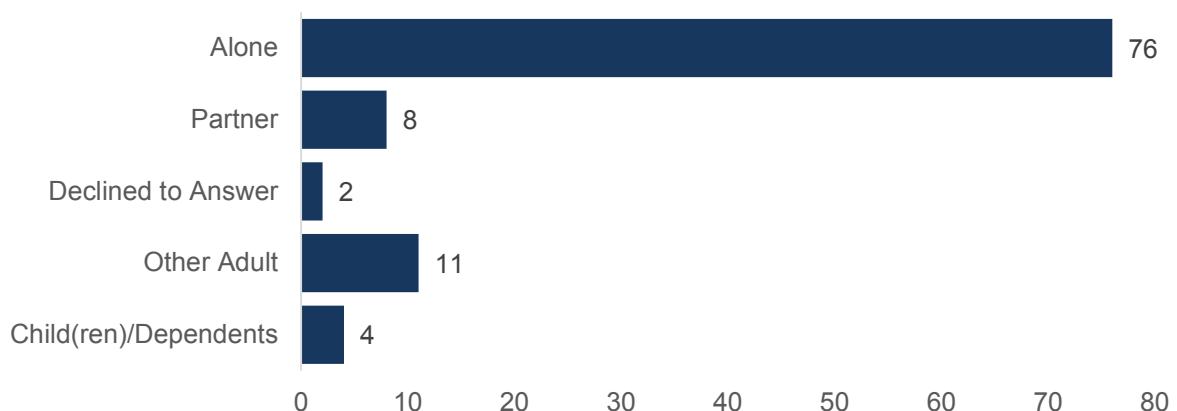
Though the following statistics were not captured in a survey question, the County of Lambton identifies the importance of comprehending homeless patterns amongst families within the community. The following data was identified for the 4% of individuals reported being homeless *and* have dependents:

FIGURE 10: REASONS FOR FAMILY HOMELESSNESS

20% Unable to Pay Rent
40% Abuse by Partner
20% Evicted- Not Financial
20% Unsafe Living Conditions

60% of families were homeless for their first time
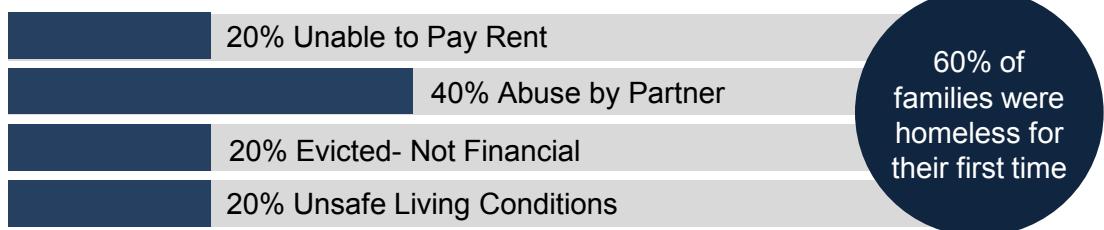
FIGURE 11: FAMILY INCOME SOURCES

20% No Income
40% Employed
20% Ontario Works
20% Employment Insurance
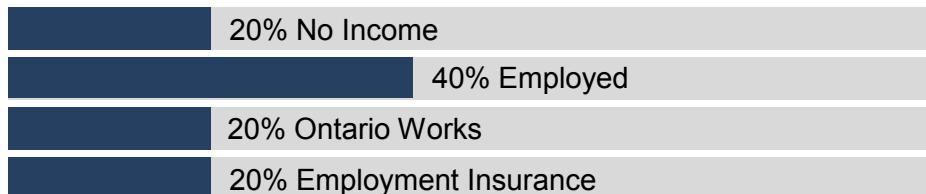
FIGURE 12: WHERE FAMILIES WERE STAYING

20% Motel/Hotel
40% Someone Else's Place
40% Transitional Shelter
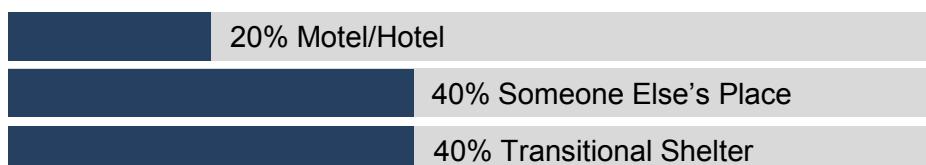
DEMOGRAPHICS OF INDIVIDUALS

3.1 AGE OF PARTICIPANTS

28% of the individuals surveyed were youth (16-24) and an additional 28% adults (35-49). Those aged 25-34 accounted for 18%, while individuals that identified between 50-64 made up 22% of the population. Seniors 65 and over accounted for 2%. An additional 2% declined to answer.

FIGURE 13: QUESTION 5- HOW OLD ARE YOU?
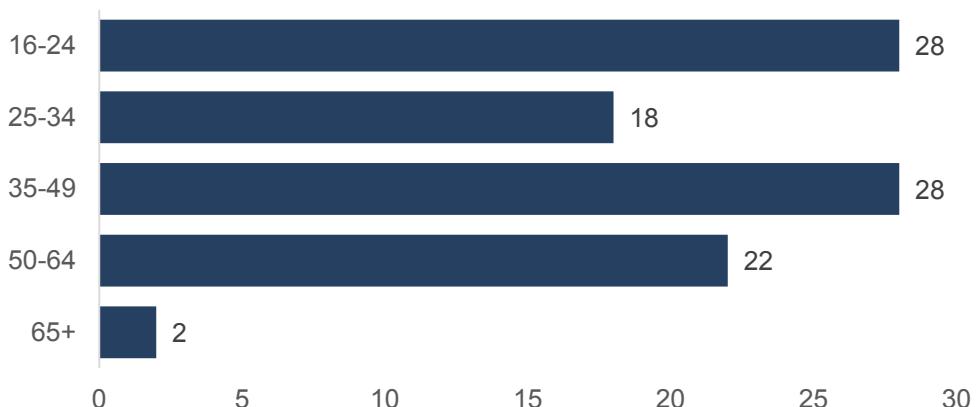
3.2 SEXUAL ORIENTATION

85% of individuals identified their sexual orientation as straight or heterosexual, 3% identified as gay, 8% identified as Bisexual, and 1% identified as Queer. 2% reported that their sexual orientation was not listed and 1% declined to answer.

FIGURE 14: QUESTION 9- HOW DO YOU DESCRIBE YOUR SEXUAL ORIENTATION
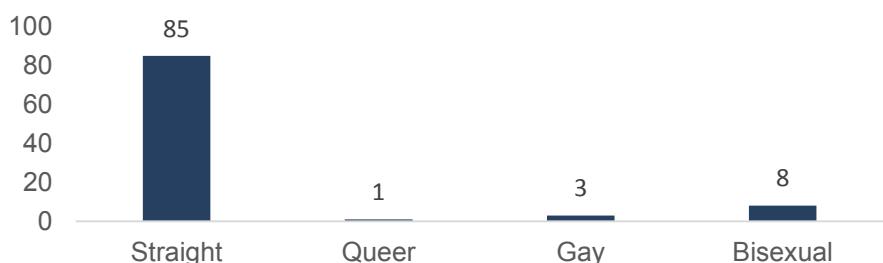
3.3 GENDER IDENTITY

67% of the participants identified as male, 29% identified as female, 2% Trans Female and 1% Gender Queer. 1% identified as a gender that is "not listed" and another 1% declined to answer.

FIGURE 15: QUESTION 8- WHAT GENDER DO YOU IDENTIFY AS?
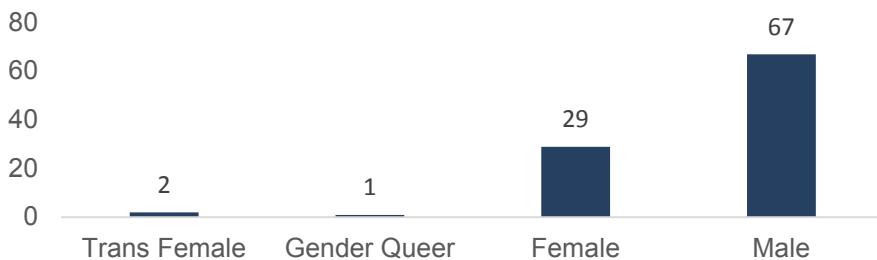
3.4 SOURCES OF INCOME

56% of participants were in receipt of Ontario Works, 22% were collecting ODSP benefits and an additional 6% were receiving other government benefits. 9% of those experiencing homelessness reported that they were employed and 5% have no income. Other sources of income included: exhausting savings and spouse's government assistance.

FIGURE 16: QUESTION 15- WHAT ARE YOUR SOURCES OF INCOME?
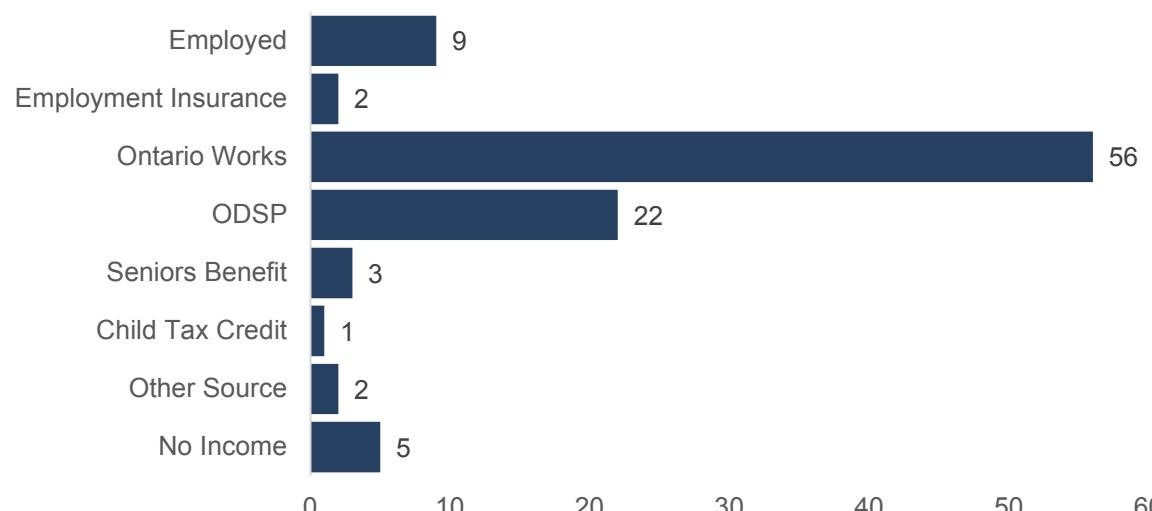
3.5 NEWCOMERS TO LAMBTON COUNTY

13% of the respondents had moved to Lambton County within the past year; 86% reported that they have resided in Lambton County for more than one year and 1% declined to answer.

FIGURE 17: QUESTION 16- DID YOU MOVE TO THIS COMMUNITY IN THE PAST YEAR?

13%	Were new to Lambton County
86%	Have resided here for more than 1 year

Additionally, 1% had migrated to Canada as an Immigrant within the past 5 years. There was no reporting on refugee status. 1% declined to answer.

1% came to Canada as an Immigrant in the past 5 years

3.6 VETERAN STATUS

94% reported that they have not served for the Canadian Military or RCMP. 4% identified that they have served in the Canadian Military. An additional 2% declined to answer this question.

3.7 LANGUAGE PREFERENCE

99% of individuals identified that they best express themselves in English and the remaining 1% identified that neither English nor French as their preferred language.

3.8 RACIAL IDENTIFICATION

63% of individuals identified as white, 26% of the individuals identified as Aboriginal or Indigenous, 1% identified as South Asian, 1% identified as Latin American and 1% identified as African Canadian. Other racial identities that were not listed were South-East Asian (1%), Hispanic/Latin American (1%), Irish (1%), French (1%). 2% do not know their race and 3% declined to answer.

FIGURE 18: QUESTION 7- WHAT RACIAL IDENTITY DO YOU IDENTIFY WITH?
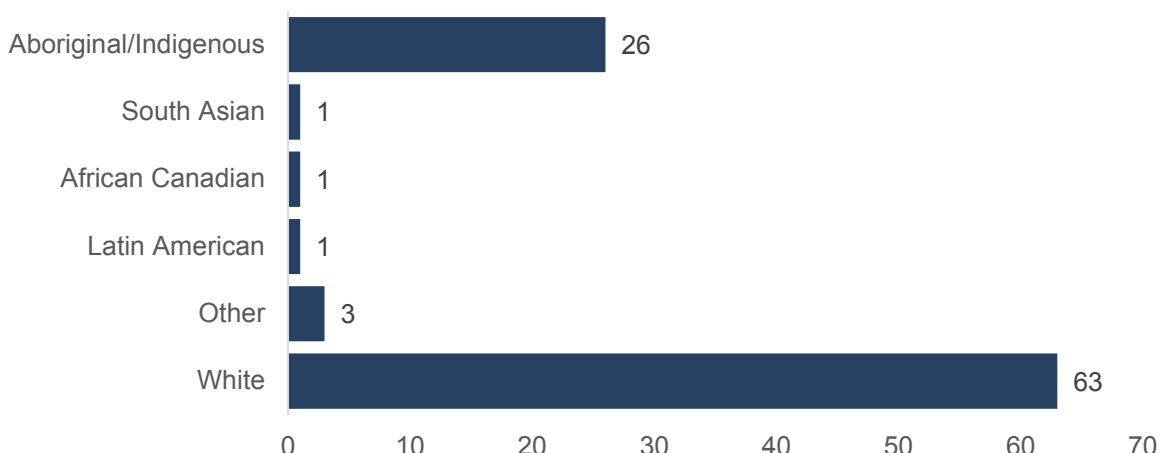
3.9 INDIGENOUS ANCESTRY

As indicated, 26% of the individuals that participated in the survey identified their race as Aboriginal or Indigenous, however, 33% of the participants reported Indigenous or Indigenous Ancestry, an 8.6% difference. It can be assumed that the variation in data is due to the additional participants identifying as having Indigenous Ancestry. 4% reported they don't know if there is Indigenous ancestry in their family, and 2% declined to answer.

FIGURE 19: QUESTION 6- INDIGENOUS ANCESTRY
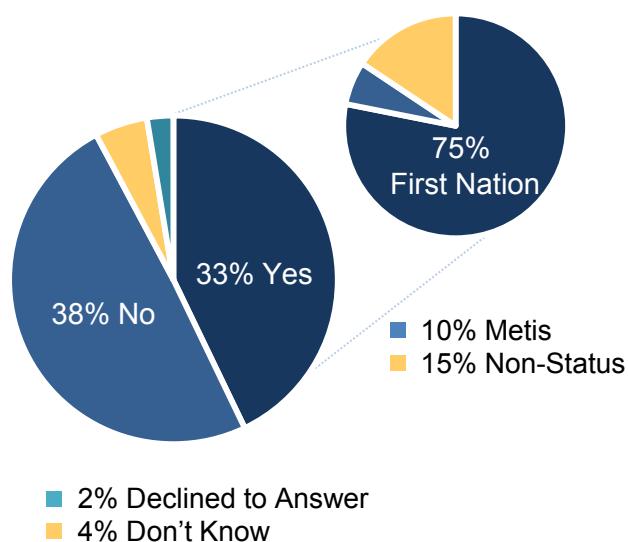
IDENTIFYING RISK FACTORS

4.1 EPISODES OF HOMELESSNESS

When looking to understand homelessness within a community, it is imperative to identify and distinguish an individual's homeless patterns. Typically, these patterns are differentiated by the length and number of episodes of homelessness[9]

» *Chronically homeless* which refers to individuals who experience homelessness for six months or more within one year.

» *Episodically homeless* refers to individuals who experience three or more episodes of homelessness in one year.

Through the County of Lambton enumeration events, it was identified that 36% of individuals identified as being chronically homeless, while 20% of participants identified as episodically homeless. Though these populations are not vast, the personal struggles these particular individuals face are typically momentous. For those that identify as chronically homeless, mental health concerns *and* addiction issues were prevalent in 67% of the individuals. Comparatively, for the population sample that identified as episodically homeless, addiction issues were a concern for 63% while mental health was concerning for 58% of the individuals. This collected data denotes that though the population sizes of those that are chronically or episodically homeless are small, the magnitude of their personal struggles are large.

Homelessness is a complex issue involving a multitude of barriers and issues for those who are experiencing homelessness. Those who become entrenched in homelessness are more likely to suffer from disabilities, mental and physical health problems and/or addiction issues. As a result, these individuals suffer acute deterioration of health and require more frequent and/or intense health services. It

is reported that chronically homeless individuals obtain care from emergency departments up to five times more often than the general public and typically report much longer stays in hospital or treatment centres.[10]

4.2 ADDICTIONS AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

In Lambton County, 48% of participants reported experiencing addictions or substance abuse issues, 47% reported they did not, 1% did not know and 3% declined to answer.

FIGURE 20: QUESTION 13- DO YOU IDENTIFY AS HAVING ADDICTION/SUBSTANCE ABUSE ISSUES?
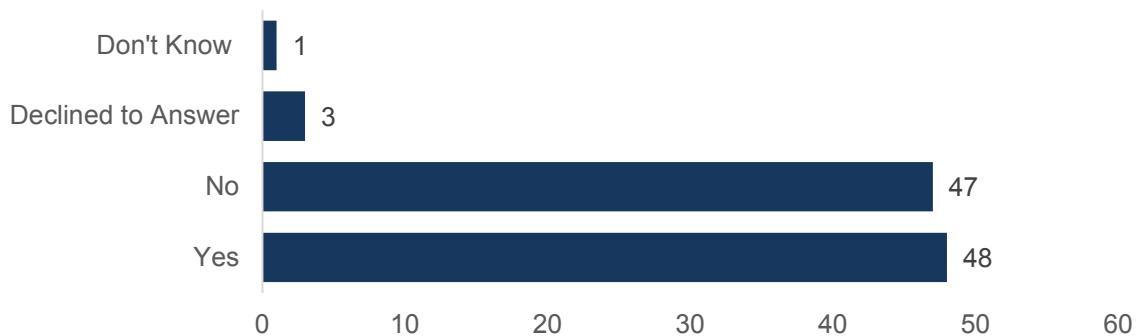
Additional findings regarding addiction/substance abuse issues are:

» 78% were male;

» 38.5 was the average age;

» 44% of youth reported addictions issues;

» 34% reported losing their housing, at the time of the survey, as a result of their addictions or substance abuse issues.

4.3 CHRONIC/ACUTE MEDICAL CONDITION

37% of the individuals identified with having a chronic or acute medical condition. 59% reported they did not, 3% declined to answer and 1% did not know.

FIGURE 21: QUESTION 13- DO YOU IDENTIFY AS CHRONIC/ACUTE MEDICAL CONDITION?
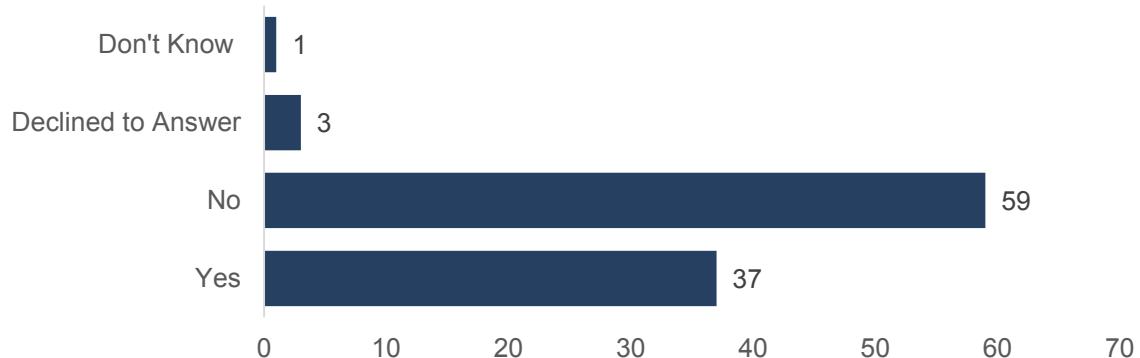
4.4 PHYSICAL DISABILITY

29% of participants identified that they have a physical disability, 65% indicated they did not, 3% declined to answer this question and 2% did not know.

FIGURE 22: QUESTION 13- DO YOU IDENTIFY AS HAVING A PHYSICAL DISABILITY?
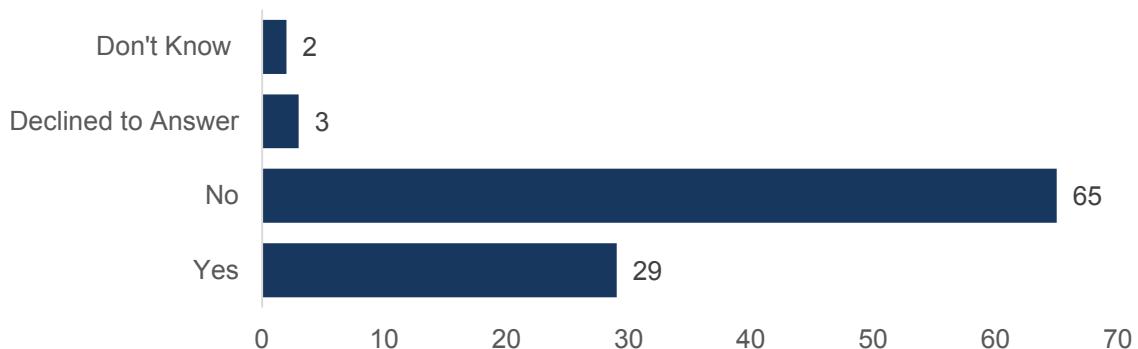
4.5 MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

48% of participants reported experiencing mental health concerns, 44% reported they did not, 7% did not know and 1% declined to answer.

FIGURE 23: QUESTION 13- DO YOU IDENTIFY AS HAVING MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS?
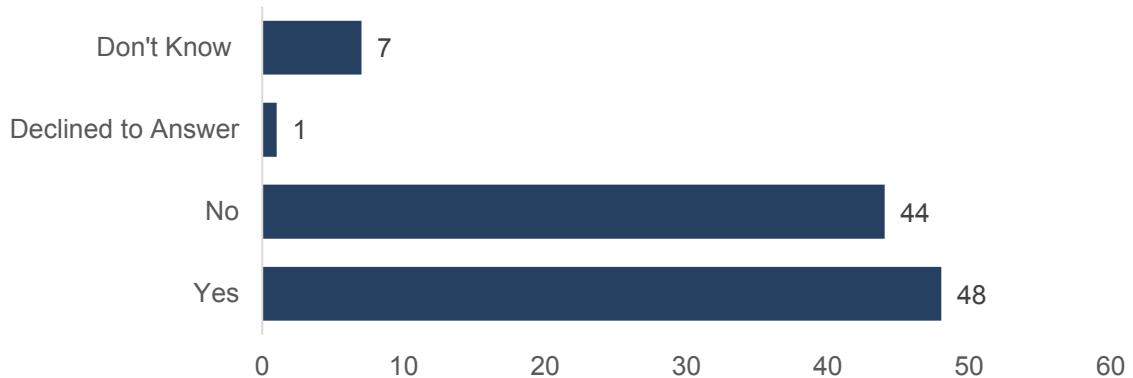
Specific populations that reported mental health concerns are as follows:

» 81% of individuals that reported having lived in a group home or foster care setting identified as having mental health issues or concerns;

» 80% of those that served in the Canadian Military identified as having mental health issues or concerns;

» 73% of the respondents that identified their sexual orientation as gay, queer or bisexual reported that they suffer from mental health concerns;

» 67% of the youth identified having mental health concerns.

4.6 YOUTH UNACCOMPANIED BY ADULTS

Youth, aged 16-24, comprised 28% of Lambton County's homeless population. This is of concern as According to *Without a Home: The National Youth Homelessness Survey*, youth, aged 13-24 make up approximately 20% of homelessness within Canada, an 8% difference.[11]

An exhaustive analysis of youth homelessness was completed to determine how Lambton County compares on a national level. This following data will serve as a benchmark in order to further understand trends in youth homelessness; specifically if changes made within the community are impacting the prevalence of homelessness in youth.

» The largest factor to youth homelessness (33%) had less to do with structural factors but rather occurred as a result of family conflict or family breakdown. 36% of these youth reported they have experienced homelessness more than once.

» 2.6 was the average number of episodes of youth homelessness; though there is no precise statistic to showcase a reported average number of times of homelessness is experienced for the youth population within Canada, this can be presumed to be relatively high for this specific age group, particularly when the average times of homelessness reported in Lambton County was 2.6 times for all individuals experiencing homelessness.

» 3.9 months was the average duration of homelessness reported amongst youth. Typically, the length of homelessness episodes increases economic hardships, experiences of trauma, risk of addiction issues and an overall decline in physical and mental health. As youth tend to lack the necessary skills and resources to navigate the homelessness sector, this is particularly prevalent for youth.[12]

Community Recommendation Based On Enumeration :
Develop a Youth Homelessness Strategy that focuses on early intervention strategies and homelessness prevention for this targeted age group.
Housing and Homelessness Strategic Direction: Homelessness Prevention

4.7 CHILD WELFARE

Within Lambton County, 22% of individuals that reported experiencing homelessness indicated they, at some point, had been in foster care or a group home setting.

FIGURE 24: QUESTION 14- HAVE YOU BEEN IN FOSTER CARE OR A GROUP HOME?
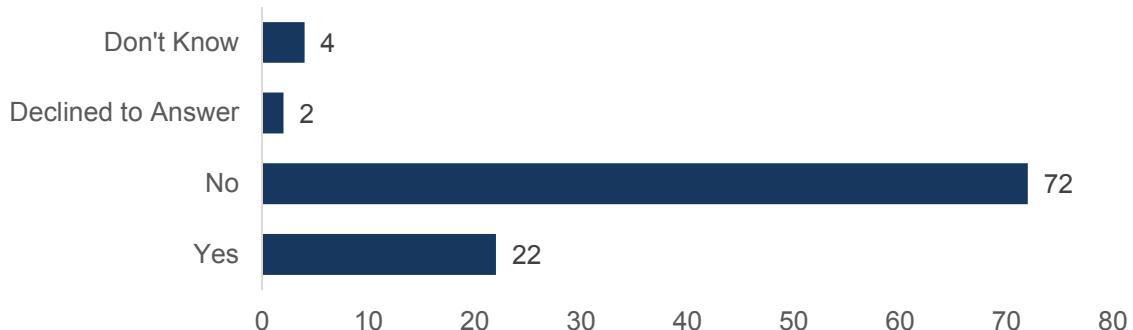
In Lambton County, 32% of the youth that were facing homelessness identified with lived experience in foster care or a group home setting. Homelessness is often a ramification for youth with familiarity in the foster care system; the most obvious explanation being that child welfare systems often fail to help youth with the underlying problems that caused them to be removed from their homes in the first place. Additionally, these particular youth typically lack essential life skills and/or resources due to the early age at which youth are permitted to exit foster care systems.[13]

It is perceived that the most vulnerable period for youth exiting the foster care system is within the first year; it is during this transitional phase that they are most seen as susceptible to experiencing homelessness. This is particularly true if there are not enough community resources or supports in place.

Community Recommendation Based On Enumeration :
Continue to enhance rapid rehousing for youth that are exiting child welfare systems.
Housing and Homelessness Strategic Direction: Homelessness Prevention

COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON ENUMERATION

Community recommendations have been identified and are highlighted throughout this report; these recommendations align with the County of Lambton's Housing and Homelessness Strategic Directions, and will provide insight and guidance on the County of Lambton's Housing and Homelessness Plan, going forward.

DIRECTION ONE: HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION

» Develop a Rural Homelessness Strategy to address specific homelessness needs for individuals that reside within these municipalities.

» Develop a Youth Homelessness Strategy that focuses on early intervention strategies and homelessness prevention for this targeted age group.

» Continue to enhance rapid rehousing specifically for youth that are exiting child welfare systems.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION TWO: HOUSING STABILITY

» Continue to develop relationships with Indigenous Communities to better understand these communities unique housing and homelessness needs.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION THREE: SUSTAINABILITY

» Consider the development of an innovative solution to provide resources for homeowners that are housing those affected by homelessness.

As the complexities of homelessness continue to increase, the development of a homelessness vision for Lambton County is recommended. A collective vision for homelessness would increase the opportunity of participation among service delivery partners and stakeholders to achieve specific targets for reducing homelessness within the community.

The Province of Ontario has mandated that a homelessness enumeration be conducted every two years which will provide consistent data points that can be compared over time to identify trends and measure progress. To assist with the measurement of progress within Lambton County, the development of an evaluation matrix will be considered for subsequent enumerations.

The 2018 homeless enumeration is the most current representation of the homelessness situation in Lambton County. The results of the enumeration provided the County of Lambton with evidence based data that there is a need to work on preventing homelessness and a need to focus on ensuring that practices are in place to move people into appropriate housing when homelessness occurs.

The collected data serves the purpose of a collective community voice for the most vulnerable populations; with the collected data comes a responsibility to drive change and provides an opportunity to focus on proactive solutions to this escalating community crisis. It is hoped that through the efforts of the enumeration more effective approaches to the complexity of homelessness can be incorporated into Lambton County's goals to prevent homelessness, provide housing stability and sustainability.

REFERENCES

1. http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/AssetFactory.aspx?did=15968
2. https://www.lambtononline.ca/home/residents/housingservices/Documents/Housing%20and%20Homelessness%20Plan%202014-2023.pdf
3. https://www.homelesshub.ca/SOHC2016
4. https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/COHhomelessdefinition.pdf
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11. https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/WithoutAHome-final.pdf
12. https://www.cbc.ca/shortdocs/shorts/red-button-homeless-youth
13. https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/Pilot_Study_The_Child_Welfare_System_and_Homelessness.pdf

The data collection of the enumeration results were compiled into three different categories to better summarize underlying themes and key findings:

1) Homelessness patterns within Lambton County- Provides a snapshot of what participants experience homelessness has been like over the past year in Lambton County.

2) Who is experiencing homelessness within Lambton County- Reports on participant's personal demographics; such as family structure, age, sexual orientation, and immigration status.

3) Identifying Risk Factors- Reports on individuals facing homelessness and their risk factors in relation to health and wellbeing.

Organization Breakdown of Data Collection		
	NUMBER	PERCENT
CMHA	1	1
The Haven	5	4
Housing Services	8	7
The Hub, Rebound	6	5
Inn of the Good Shepherd	2	2
John Howard Society	3	2
Lambton Elderly Outreach	4	3
Good Shepherds Lodge	21	17
North Lambton Community Health Centre	11	9
Ontario Works	42	34
River City Vineyard	5	4
Salvation Army	5	4
St Vincent De Paul	10	8

1. HOMELESSNESS PATTERNS WITHIN LAMBTON COUNTY

Where are you staying tonight?	NUMBER	PERCENT
Someone else's place	48	39
Motel/Hotel	11	9
Hospital, jail, prison, remand centre	4	3
Emergency shelter	26	21
Domestic violence shelter	-	-
Transitional shelter	15	12
Transitional housing	7	6
Public space	3	2
Vehicle	2	2
Abandoned building	-	-
Other	-	-
Respondent doesn't know	6	5
Declined to answer	1	<1

In total, how much time have you been homeless over the past year?	NUMBER	PERCENT
>1 Month	19	15
1-3 Months	17	14
4-5 Months	12	20
6-12 Months	42	34
1+ Year	12	10
Declined to answer	5	4
Don't know	9	7
Chronically homeless	44	36

What happened to cause you to lose your housing most recently?	NUMBER	PERCENT
Illness or medical condition	14	8
Addiction, substance abuse	25	14
Job loss	11	6
Unable to pay rent/mortgage	23	13
Evicted other reason (not financial)	18	10
Experience abuse by parent/guardian	1	<1
Experience abuse by spouse/partner	7	4
Conflict with parents/guardian	12	6
Conflict with spouse/partner	9	5
Incarcerated (jail/prison)	15	8
Hospitalization or treatment program	3	2
Unsafe housing conditions	17	9
Other reason	24	13
Don't know	4	2
Declined to answer	2	<1

In total, how many times have you been homeless over the past year?	NUMBER	PERCENT
1st Time	66	54
2nd Time	15	12
3rd Time	10	8
4th Time	2	2
5+ Times	13	11
Declined to answer	2	2
Don't know	9	6
Average number of times	2.8	
Episodically homeless	25	20

Have you stayed in emergency shelter in the past year?

	NUMBER	PERCENT
Yes	66	54
No	56	46
Don't know	0	-
Declined to answer	1	<1

Did you come to Canada as an immigrant or refugee within the past 5 years?

	NUMBER	PERCENT
Yes, Immigrant	1	<1
Yes, Refugee	0	-
No	120	98
Don't know	1	<1
Declined to answer	1	<1

Did you move to this community in the past year?

	NUMBER	PERCENT
Yes	16	13
No	106	86
Don't know	0	<1
Declined to answer	1	<1

2. WHO IS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS WITHIN LAMBTON COUNTY

How old are you?		
	NUMBER	PERCENT
16-24	34	28
25-34	22	18
35-49	35	28
50-64	27	22
65+	2	2
Declined	3	2
Minimum age	16	-
Maximum age	72	-
Average age	36.4	-
Youth aged 16-24	34	28

What gender do you identify with?		
	NUMBER	PERCENT
Male	82	67
Female	36	29
Trans female/ trans woman	2	2
Trans male/ trans man	0	-
Two-spirit	0	-
Genderqueer/ Gender non-conforming	1	<1
Not listed	1	<1
Don't know	0	-
Declined to answer	1	<1

How do you describe your sexual orientation?	NUMBER	PERCENT
Straight/heterosexual	105	85
Gay	4	3
Lesbian	0	-
Bisexual	10	8
Two-spirit	0	-
Queer	1	<1
Questioning	0	-
Not listed	2	2
Don't know	0	-
Declined to answer	1	<1

Do you identify as Indigenous or have Indigenous Ancestry?	NUMBER	PERCENT
Yes	41	33
First Nation	31	75
Inuit	0	-
Metis	4	10
Non-status or have Indigenous ancestry	6	15
No	74	60
Don't know	5	4
Declined to answer	3	2

What racial identity do you identify with?

	NUMBER	PERCENT
Aboriginal/ Indigenous	32	26
Arab	0	-
Asian	0	-
South East Asian	0	-
South Asian	1	<1
West Asian	0	-
Black or African Canadian	1	<1
Filipino	0	-
Hispanic or Latin American	1	<
White	78	63
Other	4	3
Don't know	2	2
Declined to answer	4	3

What language do you best express yourself?

	NUMBER	PERCENT
English	122	99
French	0	-
No preference	0	-
Neither	1	<1
Don't know	0	-
Declined to answer	0	-

Have you ever served in Canadian military or RCMP?

	NUMBER	PERCENT
Yes, Military	5	4
Yes, RCMP	0	-
No	115	93
Don't know	1	<
Declined to answer	2	2

What are your sources of Income?

	NUMBER	PERCENT
Employment	12	9
Informal/ self-employment	0	-
Employment insurance	2	2
Welfare/ OW	73	56
ODSP	28	22
Seniors benefits	4	5
Child and family tax benefit	1	<1
Money from friends and family	0	-
Other source (1 savings, 1 spouse on ODSP)	3	2
No income	7	5
Declined to answer	0	-

What family members are you staying with tonight?

	NUMBER	PERCENT
None	93	76
Partner	10	8
Child(ren)/dependents	5	4
Other adult	13	11
Declined to answer	2	2

3. IDENTIFYING RISK FACTORS

Do you identify as having a Chronic/Acute Medical Condition?	NUMBER	PERCENT
Yes	45	37
No	73	59
Don't Know	1	<1
Declined to answer	4	3

Do you identify as having a Physical Disability?	NUMBER	PERCENT
Yes	36	29
No	80	65
Don't Know	3	2
Declined to answer	4	3

Do you identify as having any Addiction Issues?	NUMBER	PERCENT
Yes	59	48
No	60	47
Don't Know	1	<1
Declined to answer	4	3

Do you identify as having a Mental Health Concerns?	NUMBER	PERCENT
Yes	59	48
No	54	44
Don't Know	9	7
Declined to answer	1	<1

Have you ever been in foster care/ group home?		
	NUMBER	PERCENT
Yes	27	22
No	89	72
Don't know	5	4
Declined to answer	2	2
If yes, how long ago? N=20		