



City of Merritt
Box 189
2185 Voght Street
Merritt BC V1K 1B8

Dear Mayor Linda Brown:

I am pleased to provide you with preliminary data from the homeless count conducted in Merritt in March 2020. The count was conducted by ASK Wellness in collaboration with the Homelessness Services Association of BC (HSABC). HSABC organized counts on behalf of BC Housing and the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction and is reviewing all of the data from the Merritt count, which will be shared later this year. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, not all communities that scheduled homeless counts were able to complete them. Once all the counts have been completed across BC, the goal will be to create a provincial summary in 2021.

The preliminary data shows the number of people identified as experiencing homelessness, including those identified as sheltered and unsheltered. Key limitations and methodological considerations are also provided.

If you have any questions about the count, you can contact Keri Cooke, at K.Cooke@askwellness.ca. We hope this data will assist you with the work you are doing in your community.

Sincerely,

Shane Simpson
Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

2020 Homeless Count: Merritt

Sheltered and Unsheltered - Merritt

Sheltered and Unsheltered	2018 Total		2020 Total		Change from 2018-2020	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Sheltered	0	0%	9	21%	9	N/A
Unsheltered	11	100%	34*	79%	23	209%
Total	11	100%	43	100%	32	291%

*Includes 19 individuals who indicated that they stayed at someone else's place or were couch surfing on the night of the count

Limitations and Methodological Considerations

Please note the following considerations in reviewing this preliminary data.

In the spring of 2020, the Province of British Columbia provided funding to conduct homeless counts in 16 B.C. communities. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, only 8 of the 16 communities were able to conduct their counts. They completed their counts before March 17, 2020, when British Columbia's Provincial Health Officer declared a public health emergency under British Columbia's *Public Health Act*.

The Homelessness Services Association of BC, BC Non-profit Housing Association and Urban Matters coordinated these counts and prepared this report.

Data from counts in the count communities constitutes a benchmark to measure progress made to reduce homelessness over time.

- Point-in-Time (PiT) homeless counts provide a snapshot of people who are experiencing homelessness in a twenty-four-hour period, their demographic characteristics, service use and other information.
- For the purpose of counts conducted in the provincially funded B.C. communities, an individual was defined as experiencing homelessness if they did not have a place of their own where they paid rent and could expect to stay for at least 30 days. This included people who:
 - › Stayed overnight on the night of the count in homeless shelters, including transition houses for women fleeing violence and youth safe houses, people with no fixed address (NFA) staying temporarily in hospitals, jails or detox facilities (defined as "sheltered"); and,
 - › Stayed outside in alleys, doorways, parkades, parks and vehicles or were staying temporarily at someone else's place (couch surfing) and/or using homelessness services (defined as "unsheltered").
- During the count, we conduct surveys with people who identify as experiencing homelessness. In areas where surveys are not possible, and to support the PiT count, we collect additional information from shelter operators, hospitals, jails and BC Housing.
- PiT counts are an undercount and represent only those individuals identified during a 24-hour period.
 - › This is because not everyone experiencing homelessness can be found and not everyone who is found is willing to be surveyed.
 - › While PiT Counts are an accepted methodological tool, the numbers are understood to be the minimum number of people who are experiencing homeless on a given day in that community.