

# POINT-IN-TIME COUNT *Toolkit*

## COH LIST OF PIT COUNT SURVEY QUESTIONS

Type of Question	HPS Core Questions	COH Follow-up Questions	COH Additional Questions
Corresponding Question #	1-12	3B, 4B, 4C, 5B, 6B, 7B, 7C, 9B	C1-C10 + one additional

1. **What family members are with you?** [Indicate survey numbers for adults]
  - None
  - Partner
  - Child(ren)/Dependents(s) [Indicate age for child/dependant]
  - Other Adult \_\_\_\_\_
  - Decline to answer
  
2. **How old are you? [OR] What year were you born?** [If unsure, ask for best estimate]
  - Age (in years) \_\_\_\_\_ OR  
Year Born \_\_\_\_\_
  - Don't know
  - Decline to answer
  
3. **What gender do you identify with?** [Do not read options]
  - Male
  - Female
  - Transgender
  - Other response \_\_\_\_\_
  - Don't know
  - Decline to answer

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This resource is part of the *Canadian Observatory on Homelessness' Point-in-Time Count Toolkit*.  
The Toolkit is designed to support communities participating in the HPS led 2016 Coordinated PIT Count.

**3B. If other response is selected, please select:**

- Trans woman
- Trans man
- Two-Spirit
- Genderqueer
- Genderfluid
- Androgynous
- Non-binary
- Intersex
- None of the above

The COH recommends that communities expand on the HPS Core Question about gender to include additional gender response options. While any response may be captured under the “Other response” option, making potential responses explicit on the survey form will prevent common survey pitfalls.

First, volunteers may neglect to record a qualitative response in “Other \_\_\_\_\_,” leading to impartial data. Second, written responses may be illegible or difficult to code during data analysis. Again, this leads to impartial data. Finally, survey participants may feel uncomfortable or unsafe disclosing their gender if they happen to see that the PiT Count Survey prioritizes a binary definition of gender. This is particularly problematic as research suggests that individuals who self-identify as LGBTQ2 are overrepresented in the homelessness population. To address the overrepresentation, we must first understand the extent of the issue. The additional gender options provided by COH encourage accurate data collection and support communities to address LGBTQ2 homelessness.

This will not contradict the minimum requirements of the HPS Coordinated Count. HPS will share further information on how to report this data nationally. At the local level, communities can analyze and report on the data as they see fit.

**4. Do you identify as Aboriginal or do you have Aboriginal ancestry? This includes First Nations, Métis, Inuit, with or without status.** [If yes, please follow-up to specify.]

- Yes
- If Yes, select:
  - First Nations
  - Inuit
  - Métis
  - Non-status / have aboriginal ancestry
- No
- Don't know
- Decline to answer

**4B. Which Aboriginal community are you from?**

- Community/Reserve Name \_\_\_\_\_
- Don't know
- Decline to answer

**4C. Have you ever been in a residential school?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Decline to answer

You may want to consider asking additional questions regarding Aboriginal status to delve into more detailed analysis regarding specific categories especially if your community has an over-representation of Aboriginal people in its homeless population. Knowing what Aboriginal community someone is from affects their access to resources and can shed light on the role of proximity to reserves for example and migration patterns. The impact of residential schooling on Aboriginal communities needs to be considered further to shed light of the over-representation of Indigenous peoples amongst those experiencing homelessness.

**5. Have you ever had any service in the Canadian Military or RCMP?** [Military includes Canadian Navy, Army or Air Force]

- Yes, Military
- Yes, RCMP
- No
- Don't know
- Decline to answer

**5B. How long did you serve?**

- # of months \_\_\_\_\_
- OR # of years \_\_\_\_\_

- Don't know
- Decline to answer

We do not have adequate data on the experiences of homelessness among veterans of recent conflicts has on homelessness among veterans. Over time, Question 5B may help us understand if there is a link and what services are needed to ensure veterans do not fall into homelessness upon discharge from military service.

**6. Did you move to [COMMUNITY NAME] in the past year?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Decline to answer

**6B. If you moved to [COMMUNITY] in the last year, where were you living prior to coming here?**

- Community name \_\_\_\_\_ AND Province \_\_\_\_\_
- OR Country \_\_\_\_\_
- Don't know
- Declined to Answer

Question 6B can assist you in understanding where homeless migrants are arriving from within Canada or internationally.

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

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Decline to answer

**7B. If not born in Canada - are you a:**

- Canadian Citizen
- Permanent Resident
- Refugee Claimant
- Temporary Foreign Worker
- International student
- Other – please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- Don't know
- Decline to answer

**7C. What is your country of origin/birth?**

- Country name \_\_\_\_\_
- Don't know
- Decline to answer

Citizenship status can be a sensitive question. Nevertheless, Citizenship status can affect access to services and supports. Refugee Claimants have very different access to social supports compared to Permanent Residents. Similarly, in communities where high numbers of Temporary Foreign Workers reside, monitoring their presence in the homeless population can help with your understanding of which social supports are needed for this group and whether policy work is needed at provincial/territorial or federal levels.

To better gauge the role of immigration, you can ask about participants' country of origin (Question 7C), particularly if your community has over-representation of particular ethnic groups in the homeless population and you want to understand this issue better, especially over time.

**8. Over the past year, how much of the time have you been homeless? [Best estimate]**

- Length \_\_\_\_\_ DAYS/ WEEKS/ MONTHS
  - If Unsure:
    - 0-2 Months
    - 3-5 Months
    - 6-12 Months
- Don't know
- Decline to answer

**9. Over the past year, how many different times have you experienced homelessness?**

[Includes this time. Best estimate.]

- Number of Times \_\_\_\_\_
  - If Unsure:
    - 1 time (Current Episode)
    - 2 times
    - 3 or more times
- Don't know
- Decline to answer

**9B. How old were you when you first became homeless in your life?**

- Age \_\_\_\_\_
- Don't know
- Decline to answer

Research suggests that homelessness during one's youth is associated with a higher likelihood of homelessness in adulthood. Capturing the age when the respondent first became homeless can assist you with your youth homelessness service planning approach, particularly prevention.

**10. Have you stayed in an emergency shelter in the past year?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Decline to answer

**11. What happened that caused you to lose your housing most recently?** [Do not read the options. Select all that apply. "Housing" does not include temporary arrangements (e.g., couch surfing) or shelter stays.]

- Illness or Medical Condition
- Addiction or Substance Use
- Job Loss
- Evicted: unable to pay rent
- Evicted: other reason
- Domestic Abuse: Spouse or Partner
- Domestic Abuse: Parent or Guardian
- Family Conflict: Spouse or Partner
- Family Conflict: Parent or Guardian
- Left Care [Child Protection]/*Insert Provincial Terminology*
- Incarcerated (Jail or prison)
- Hospitalization or treatment program
- Unsafe housing conditions
- Don't know
- Decline to answer

**12. Where do you get your money from?** [May provide examples. Select all that apply]

- Employment
- Informal/Self-Employment (E.G., bottle returns, panhandling)
- Employment Insurance
- Welfare/Income Assistance
- Disability Benefit
- Seniors Benefits (E.G., CPP/OAS/GIS)
- Child and Family Tax Benefits
- Money from Family/Friends
- Other Source \_\_\_\_\_
- No Income
- Decline to answer

**C1. Do you identify as part of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two-Spirited or Queer, community?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Decline to answer

Asking about sexual orientation can be sensitive. Enumerators should receive ethics training to ensure they give participants full information regarding informed consent and the right to decline to answer any questions they are uncomfortable with. Nevertheless, understanding the proportion of those who identify as LGBTQ can provide very useful information regarding service provision for this group, particularly young people. Research suggests that a significant proportion of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ2; understanding this in your community and at the national level can significantly shape our approach to youth homelessness.

**C2. What is the highest level of education you completed?**

- Primary school
- Secondary school
- High school graduate
- Post secondary
- Don't know
- Decline to answer

Research suggests that the completion of high school mitigates the risk of homelessness; understanding this in your local homeless population can shape prevention responses and give you a deeper understanding of the role of education. You may need to customize the answers to this question to ensure alignment to your jurisdiction, particularly in Quebec.

**C3. Have you ever been in foster care and/or group home?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Decline to answer

We know that those who have interacted with the child welfare system are at higher risk for experiencing homelessness, particularly when transitioning from care. Question C3 can give you a sense of how this link plays out in your community, further, it can be the basis for program and policy responses to reduce discharging into homelessness from this public system.

**C4. Are you most comfortable receiving services in English or French?**

- English
- French
- No Preference
- Neither (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- Don't know
- Decline to answer

**C5. People are often described as belonging to a particular racial group. For example, some people may be seen as black or African-Canadian, other people may be seen as Asian or South Asian and other people may be seen as white. What racial group do you feel that you belong? [Do not list categories. Select all that apply.]**

- Aboriginal or Indigenous
- Arab
- Asian (Chinese, Korean, Japanese, etc.)
- South-East Asian (e.g., Vietnamese, Cambodian, Malaysian, Laotian, etc.)
- South Asian (e.g., East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, etc.)
- West Asian (e.g., Iranian, Afghan, etc.)
- Black or African Canadian
- Filipino
- Hispanic or Latin American
- White (European-Canadian)
- Other (please specify)
- Don't know
- Decline to answer



**C6. In the past year (12 months), how many:** [Ask respondents to give their best estimate]

- Times have you been hospitalized \_\_\_\_\_
- Days in total have you spent hospitalized \_\_\_\_\_
- Times have you used Emergency Medical Service \_\_\_\_\_
- Times have you been to a hospital Emergency Room \_\_\_\_\_
- Times have you had interactions with the police \_\_\_\_\_
- Times have you been to prison/jail \_\_\_\_\_
- Days in total have you spent in prison/jail \_\_\_\_\_

We encourage you to ask about the use of hospitals, EMS, ER, police interactions, jail and prison as these provide a better picture of system interactions at various levels and can also point to solutions regarding prevention and discharge planning. You may find that many homeless people in your community have high levels of interaction with the health system; in this case, collaborative planning with the health system to develop targeted housing initiatives may be a key strategy to end homelessness.

**C7. I'm going to read a list of services that you may or may not need. Let me know which of these apply to you. Do you have a need for services related to...** [Read categories, select all that apply]

- Serious or ongoing medical condition
- Physical disability
- Learning disability
- Addiction or substance use
- Mental illness
- Brain injury
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)
- Pregnancy (if respondent is female)
- None of the above
- Decline to answer

**C8. Do you want to get into permanent housing?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Decline to answer

A common myth about homeless persons is that they do not want to be housed. This is most often not the case, and by asking Question C8 you can help dispel this myth in your community and nationally.

**C9. What would help you find permanent, stable housing?**

- \_\_\_\_\_
- Don't know
- Decline to answer

**C10. What do you think is keeping you from finding a place of your own? [Select all that apply]**

- Low income
- No income assistance
- Rents too high
- Poor housing conditions
- Family breakdown/conflict
- Domestic violence
- Health/disability issues
- Mental health issues
- Addiction
- Criminal history
- Pets
- Children
- Discrimination
- Don't want housing
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- No barriers to housing
- Don't know
- Decline to answer

Question C10 can provide you with information to build you community response. For example, if a lack of affordable rental is consistently pointed to as a barrier, you can take this into account as you develop a community plan to end homelessness.

### Contact Information for Housing

In case we want to get in touch with you for housing opportunities at some point in the future, we need some basic information and the best way to get in touch with you (Prompt for cellphone, email, relative contact, etc., remember - we cannot guarantee housing as result of this survey):

- First Name \_\_\_\_\_
- Last Name \_\_\_\_\_
- Best way to connect with you: \_\_\_\_\_
- Don't know
- Decline to answer

You can use the PiT Count Survey to begin rehousing interventions. Consider whether your community can take this on and take stock of available resources to support this goal. To manage expectations, be clear that participation in the survey does not guarantee housing. **As you are asking participants for their names, you must take extra precautions to ensure confidentiality and data security is maintained. We strongly recommend that you provide volunteers with a separate sheet of paper, not attached to the survey, to record contact information. You can assure participants that the survey is kept separate from any contact details they provide.**

# SAMPLE SURVEY *[Screening questions & tally sheet not included]*

**1. What family members are with you today?** [Indicate survey numbers for adults]

<input type="checkbox"/> NONE											<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER ADULT - Survey #: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> PARTNER - Survey #: _____											<input type="checkbox"/> DECLINE TO ANSWER
<input type="checkbox"/> CHILD(REN)/DEPENDENT(S) [indicate age for child/dependent]											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
GENDER											
AGE											

**2. How old are you? [OR] What year were you born?** [If unsure, ask for best estimate]

<input type="radio"/> AGE (in years) _____	<input type="radio"/> DON'T KNOW	<input type="radio"/> DECLINE TO ANSWER
<input type="radio"/> OR YEAR BORN _____		

**3. What gender do you identify with?** [Do not read categories]

<input type="radio"/> MALE	<input type="radio"/> TRANSGENDER	<input type="radio"/> DON'T KNOW
<input type="radio"/> FEMALE	<input type="radio"/> OTHER RESPONSE _____	<input type="radio"/> DECLINE TO ANSWER

→ **3B. If "other response is selected", please select:<sup>1</sup>**

<input type="radio"/> TRANS WOMAN	<input type="radio"/> GENDERFLUID	
<input type="radio"/> TRANS MAN	<input type="radio"/> ANDROGYNOUS	<input type="radio"/> NONE OF THE ABOVE
<input type="radio"/> TWO-SPIRIT	<input type="radio"/> NON-BINARY	
<input type="radio"/> GENDERQUEER	<input type="radio"/> INTERSEX	

<sup>1</sup> Clearly identify follow-up questions with an arrow, indentation or other visual cues. Follow-up questions *must* be labeled with the number of the related question and a letter (ex. 3B, 3C, 4B).

4. Do you identify as Aboriginal or do you have Aboriginal ancestry? This includes First Nations, Métis, Inuit, with or without status. **[If yes, please follow-up to specify.]<sup>2</sup>**

<input type="radio"/> YES ----->	<b>If YES:</b>	<input type="radio"/> FIRST NATIONS
<input type="radio"/> NO		<input type="radio"/> INUIT
<input type="radio"/> DON'T KNOW		<input type="radio"/> MÉTIS
<input type="radio"/> DECLINE TO ANSWER		<input type="radio"/> NON-STATUS / HAVE ABORIGINAL ANCESTRY

5. Have you ever had any service in the Canadian Military or RCMP?

[Military includes Canadian Navy, Army, or Air Force]

<input type="radio"/> YES, MILITARY	<input type="radio"/> NO	<input type="radio"/> DON'T KNOW	<input type="radio"/> DECLINE TO ANSWER
<input type="radio"/> YES, RCMP			

6. Did you move to [community name] in the past year?

<input type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO	<input type="radio"/> DON'T KNOW	<input type="radio"/> DECLINE TO ANSWER
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7. Did you come to Canada as an immigrant or refugee within the past 5 years?

<input type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO	<input type="radio"/> DON'T KNOW	<input type="radio"/> DECLINE TO ANSWER
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8. Over the past year, how much of the time have you been homeless? [Best estimate]

<input type="radio"/> LENGTH _____ DAYS / WEEKS / MONTHS	IF UNSURE:	<input type="radio"/> 0-2 MONTHS
<input type="radio"/> DON'T KNOW		<input type="radio"/> 3-5 MONTHS
<input type="radio"/> DECLINE TO ANSWER		<input type="radio"/> 6-12 MONTHS

9. Over the past year, how many different times have you been homeless in the past 3 years? [Includes this time. Best estimate.]

<input type="radio"/> NUMBER OF TIMES _____	IF UNSURE:	<input type="radio"/> 1 TIME (current episode)
<input type="radio"/> DON'T KNOW		<input type="radio"/> 2 TIMES
<input type="radio"/> DECLINE TO ANSWER		<input type="radio"/> 3 TIMES

<sup>2</sup> Provide context and explanatory notes to volunteers. Ensure that volunteer instructions are visually distinct from the survey question.

**10. Have you stayed in an emergency shelter in the past year?<sup>3</sup>**

<input type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO	<input type="radio"/> DON'T KNOW	<input type="radio"/> DECLINE TO ANSWER
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**11. What happened that caused you to lose your housing most recently?** [Do not read the options. Select all that apply. "Housing" does not include temporary arrangements (e.g., couch surfing) or shelter stays.]

<input type="radio"/> ILLNESS OR MEDICAL CONDITION	<input type="radio"/> FAMILY CONFLICT: SPOUSE OR PARTNER
<input type="radio"/> ADDICTION OR SUBSTANCE USE	<input type="radio"/> FAMILY CONFLICT: PARENT OR GUARDIAN
<input type="radio"/> JOB LOSS	<input type="radio"/> LEFT CARE (CHILD PROTECTION)/(PROV. TERM)
<input type="radio"/> EVICTED: UNABLE TO PAY RENT	<input type="radio"/> INCARCERATED (JAIL OR PRISON)
<input type="radio"/> EVICTED: OTHER REASON	<input type="radio"/> HOSPITALIZATION OR TREATMENT PROGRAM
<input type="radio"/> DOMESTIC ABUSE: SPOUSE OR PARTNER	<input type="radio"/> UNSAFE HOUSING CONDITIONS
<input type="radio"/> DOMESTIC ABUSE: PARENT OR GUARDIAN	<input type="radio"/> DON'T KNOW
<u>Other reason/Notes:</u>	<input type="radio"/> DECLINE TO ANSWER

<input type="radio"/> EMPLOYMENT	<input type="radio"/> SENIORS BENEFITS (E.G., CPP/OAS/GIS)
<input type="radio"/> INFORMAL/SELF-EMPLOYMENT (E.G., BOTTLE RETURNS, PANHANDLING)	<input type="radio"/> CHILD AND FAMILY TAX BENEFITS
<input type="radio"/> EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE	<input type="radio"/> MONEY FROM FAMILY/FRIENDS
<input type="radio"/> WELFARE/INCOME ASSISTANCE	<input type="radio"/> OTHER SOURCE _____
<input type="radio"/> DISABILITY BENEFIT	<input type="radio"/> NO INCOME
	<input type="radio"/> DECLINE TO ANSWER

**12. Where do you get your money from?** [May provide examples. Select all that apply]

**13. (C1)<sup>4</sup> Do you identify as part of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two-Spirited or Queer, community?**

<input type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO	<input type="radio"/> DON'T KNOW	<input type="radio"/> DECLINE TO ANSWER
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<sup>3</sup> To facilitate accurate data input into HIFIS, the 12 HPS Core Questions should be asked as written, in the order above. COH Follow-Up Questions can be added, provided that they are formatted as indicated in Footnote 1.

<sup>4</sup> Number your survey questions sequentially; however, when using a COH question be sure to include the COH Question Code (ex. C1, C2, C3) in the question, as shown here. This information will be required when you input the survey data into HIFIS. Do not modify COH questions. If you choose to modify a COH question, it becomes a "local question" and should be reflected as such in HIFIS.

14. (C3) Have you ever been in foster care and/or group home?

<input type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO	<input type="radio"/> DON'T KNOW	<input type="radio"/> DECLINE TO ANSWER
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15. (C8) Do you want to get into permanent housing?

<input type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO	<input type="radio"/> DON'T KNOW	<input type="radio"/> DECLINE TO ANSWER
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16. Are you on a waiting list for housing?<sup>5</sup>

<input type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO	<input type="radio"/> DON'T KNOW	<input type="radio"/> DECLINE TO ANSWER
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<sup>5</sup> Unlike COH Questions, local questions do not require a **Question Code (ex. 1, C2)**. Local questions can go in any order (with COH questions mixed-in) provided that the local questions come *after* the 12 HPS Core Questions.