

Survey Results: COVID-19 & Homelessness

August 17th - August 31st

About the survey

Each week, communities who work directly with CAEH, through Built for Zero Canada or the Training & Technical Assistance program, are invited to participate in a survey about COVID-19 and homelessness.

The results inform our advocacy efforts, as well as resources offered by CAEH. We are grateful to communities for taking the time to share these insights and for all they are doing to support the health and wellbeing of our homeless neighbours.

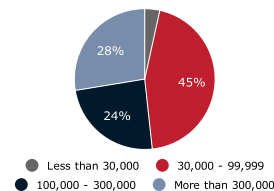


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Communities participated from across Canada

Atlantic Region	14%
Central Canada	55%
Prairie Provinces	24%
West Coast	3%
Northern Territories	3%

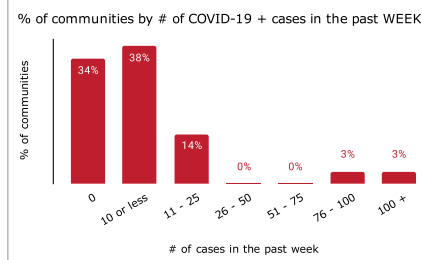
% of participating communities, by population size



General community trends

With the number of active COVID-19 cases slowing across Canada, many communities have responded by loosening restrictions and re-opening businesses and services. In some provinces, this has resulted in a resurgence of cases, while others have continued to maintain low numbers. These trends among the general population have the potential to impact those experiencing homelessness, including the services and supports they access. Overall, communities report that re-opening has provided people experiencing homelessness with greater access to services to meet their basic needs (e.g. food services, washrooms).

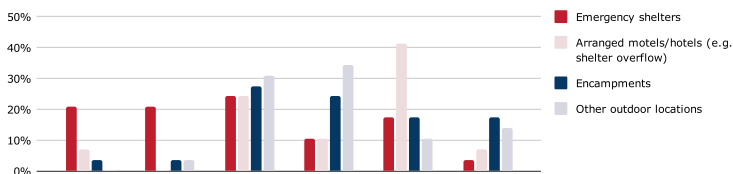
Survey participants with 75 or more active cases in the past week are from large cities (more than 300,000) in Alberta and Ontario.



Homelessness Trends

Comparison of Mar. - Aug. 2019 to Mar. - Aug. 2020

Changes in sleeping location of people experiencing homelessness, by % of survey participants

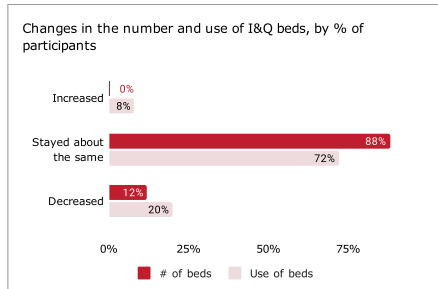


Survey participants were asked to indicate changes in the sleeping locations of people experiencing homelessness from March 2020 to present, compared to the same time period last year. Around 30% of survey participants noted that sleeping arrangements have not changed much. Over 40% noted that 'far more' people have moved to arranged motels/hotels, which reflects the shift of operations from emergency shelters to isolation and quarantine spaces during the pandemic to allowing for increased physical distancing. Encampments and other outdoor locations have also seen an increase.

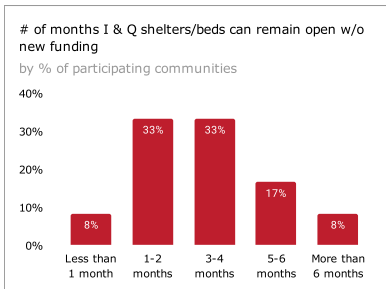
Nearly 90% of large cities (pop. 300,000+) indicated decreases in their emergency shelters, making up 70% of all respondents indicating 'far fewer' or 'somewhat fewer.' While many participants from large cities noted that those sleeping in encampments or other outdoor locations has increased, they were joined by other respondents from communities with varying population sizes.

Isolation and Quarantine Shelters / Beds

86% of participating communities continue to operate isolation and quarantine shelters or beds.



Survey participants reporting an increase in the use of beds noted that it was the result of an increase in symptomatic or COVID-19+ cases. Decreases in the number of beds was primarily due to lack of need, although funding and the need to reallocate staff were also factors.



Outbreaks & Testing

0 Number of communities with a COVID-19 outbreak in an **emergency shelter** in the past two weeks

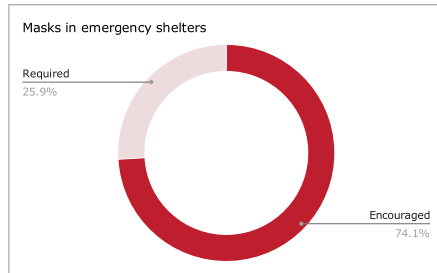
0 Number of communities with a COVID-19 outbreak in an **encampment** in the past two weeks

3 Number of communities that have conducted universal testing in **emergency shelters** in the past two weeks

0 Number of communities that have conducted universal testing in **encampments** in the past two weeks

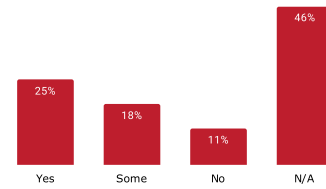
While no communities reported outbreaks, 3 participants reported COVID-19 positive cases among those experiencing homelessness in their community.

Emergency Shelters

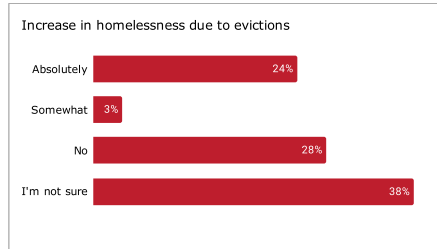


When the pandemic began in early Spring 2020, many communities closed emergency shelters and opened isolation and quarantine shelters to allow for increased physical distancing. As the number of active cases slows, communities are beginning to re-open emergency shelters. Those that remain closed indicated that a lack of ability to distance in the emergency shelters is the primary reason, although lack of staff capacity and recommendations from local health authorities are also contributing factors.

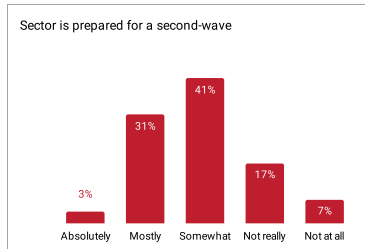
Re-opening emergency shelters (if closed in response to pandemic)



Evictions



Second-wave



Many communities indicated that they've already put measures in place to help avoid a spike in cases among those experiencing homelessness in the event of a second-wave (e.g. dividers between beds, increased screening, etc.). Others are actively planning a response with community partners, including local health authorities. Several communities noted that they are working on a dual-plan - one that addresses a second-wave, but also for their regular winter response.