



Document 7

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# **MONTRÉAL'S 2022 POINT-IN-TIME COUNT OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS**

## Indigenous Populations

Québec 

This document was produced by the Direction régionale de santé publique de Montréal (DRSP) and the Direction des services généraux et partenariats urbains (DSGPU) of the Centre intégré universitaire de santé et de services sociaux du Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal, in collaboration with Ville de Montréal.

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### **NOTES**

This document has been drafted using neutral wording as much as possible to ensure terms and phrases do not include gender references to individuals.

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## 2022 POINT-IN-TIME COUNT

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The Point-In-Time Count of Visible Homelessness was carried out simultaneously in 13 regions of Québec the night of October 11, 2022. In Montréal, the CIUSSS du Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal (CCSMTL) was responsible for planning operations and mobilizing the homeless community, the Réseau de la santé et des services sociaux (RSSS) institutions and hundreds of volunteer canvassers to conduct this third point-in-time count exercise in the Montréal area.

Aimed at measuring the extent of the phenomenon of visible homelessness, the process is aligned with the orientations of the *Politique nationale de lutte à l'itinérance (Québec government)*, the *Plan d'action interministériel en itinérance 2021–2026 – S'allier devant l'itinérance (MSSS)*, and the *Plan concerté montréalais en itinérance 2021–2026 – S'unir dans l'action (CCSMTL)*. The point-in-time count exercise is also based on an agreement between the governments of Québec and Canada related to the *Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy* program.

A series of thematic documents has been produced to make the results of Montréal's 2022 point-in-time count accessible. The primary objectives of these documents are to outline the extent and main characteristics of visible homelessness in Montréal, and to draw comparisons with data from the 2018 point-in-time count, where applicable, in order to better address this issue. This document, the seventh in the series, presents an analysis of the results specific to Indigenous populations (First Nations, Inuit and other Indigenous identities, including Métis).

### Acknowledgements

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## CONTEXT

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For several decades, the Indigenous population has been growing in Canada's major cities (Statistics Canada, 2021; Turcotte, 2015). Between 2016 and 2021, the Greater Montréal<sup>1</sup> area was one of the Canadian cities that experienced the greatest rise in this population, with an increase of 32.4% (Statistics Canada, 2021). In 2021, among private households, 16,675 individuals identifying as Indigenous were residing in Montréal, out of a total population of 1,959,360 (Statistics Canada, 2021).<sup>2</sup>

Some Indigenous people leave their communities and settle in the city voluntarily (to pursue post-secondary education or for an employment opportunity, for example) and others involuntarily (those who are unable to return to their communities after a medical stay in the city, for example). This mobility is influenced by many push and pull factors that drive some people to settle in urban areas and others to return to live in their communities. Indigenous people who decide to settle in the city often do so to have more employment opportunities, pursue post-secondary education, have better living conditions (adequate and more affordable housing in Montréal, to escape situations of violence and substance abuse, etc.), or to have access to specialized or long-term health services. Conversely, communities and northern villages are places of strong cultural references, social support, connection with the land and consumption of traditional food—elements that are often lacking in urban environments (Browne et al., 2009; Kishigami, 1999; Lévesque and Cloutier, 2013; Norris and Clatworthy, 2011; Place, 2012; Commission d'enquête, 2019; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1993, 1996).

Montréal's First Nations, Inuit and Métis residents have very diverse cultural, social, economic and demographic profiles (Direction régionale de santé publique de Montréal, 2020). There is therefore huge variability in the realities, perspectives, needs and aspirations of the Indigenous people living in Montréal (Lévesque and Cloutier, 2013; Lévesque and Comat, 2018; Fletcher et al., 2022). Despite this great diversity and mobility, it is crucial to consider, where possible, the uniqueness of each individual's and each people's situation in order to avoid the tendency toward homogenization observed in the literature and in other data sources that too often generalize the situation of "Indigenous people" (Commission d'enquête, 2019; Patrick, 2015).

Indigenous populations experience significant inequalities on various levels (socio-economic, health, etc.), resulting in numerous risk factors that can lead to homelessness (DRSP, 2020). In Montréal, as elsewhere in Canada, the phenomenon of homelessness does indeed affect Indigenous people more than non-Indigenous people, making it a major concern for this population (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2017; Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtone du Québec, 2018). In fact, First Nations, Inuit and people identifying with other Indigenous identities are overrepresented among the homeless population according to the 2022 point-in-time count data, totalling 13% of the homeless population, while representing only 0.85% of the Montréal population (Statistics Canada, 2021). The causes of this overrepresentation are multiple and complex, and attest to the profound structural and systemic inequities faced by Indigenous people as a group (Browne et al., 2009; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015; Place, 2012; NETWORK, 2024). These inequities stem from discriminatory practices in various areas of society (employment, housing, access to public services, etc.), colonial policies and structures, intergenerational trauma and racism, which can increase certain risk factors for homelessness (poverty, housing conditions, violence, health and welfare issues, etc.) (Commission d'enquête, 2019; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015; Loppie and Wien, 2022; NETWORK, 2024). Each people, community and individual has their own experience of colonization and experiences its repercussions differently (Patrick, 2015).

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1. For practical purposes, the term "Montréal" will be used throughout this document. Nevertheless, we would like to acknowledge Indigenous toponymies by mentioning that Montréal also bears the names Tiohtià:ke (Kanien'kehà:ka nation) and Mooniyang (Anishinaabe nation), reflecting the particularly significant (but non-exclusive) presence and contribution of these two Indigenous peoples in this territory.

2. This figure is even higher for the entire Greater Montréal area, at 46,085 (Statistics Canada, 2021).



The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness also acknowledges that this overrepresentation is the “result of colonization and cultural genocide” (Gaetz et al., 2012).

In order to better reflect the uniqueness, complexity and significance of the situation of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness in the context of the analysis of the data from the Montréal 2022 point-in-time count and the drafting of thematic documents, it was deemed necessary to produce a document specific to their situation. The relevance of such a document was also validated by the local Indigenous stakeholders consulted in this regard, and a collaborative approach with them was adopted.

### Indigenous populations in Montréal

Indigenous populations living in Montréal are highly diverse. They include individuals who identify with the 11 distinct peoples of Québec: 10 First Nations (Abenaki, Algonquin, Attikamek, Cree, Wolastoqiyik [Maliseet], Mi'gmaq, Innu, Naskapi, Huron-Wendat, Kanien:keha'ka [Mohawk]) and Inuit. A number of individuals identify themselves as belonging to the Métis Nation, a distinct cultural group that lives mainly in Ontario and the western provinces. Although this Indigenous identity is legally recognized by the Canadian government, the Métis communities' claims in this regard have been rejected by the Québec government to date. In addition, there are also individuals who identify with other Indigenous nations from across Canada and around the world residing in Montréal.



#### NOTE

The point-in-time count is a non-probabilistic cross-sectional study. The data presented in this document comes from responses to a questionnaire administered to 1,704 people experiencing homelessness in Montréal. As these individuals were not randomly selected, it may be difficult to generalize the results beyond this specific group of individuals. However, the results of the point-in-time count allow us to conduct descriptive analyses to facilitate our understanding of homelessness and the people living in this situation.

## METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The “[Methodology](#)” document (in French only), from the same series, deals in more detail with logistical and methodological considerations related to the 2022 point-in-time count in Montréal.

Certain methodological limitations specific to the data collected among people identifying as Indigenous in the 2022 point-in-time count should be noted:

- Certain issues related to the data collection method have resulted in incomplete or insufficient data being collected for this population, specifically:
  - people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in the key area of Milton-Parc were not surveyed;
  - few people identifying as Inuit took part in the point-in-time count, which limits the interpretation of the results for this population.
- We observed statistical inconsistencies, contradictions and unclear data in responses to questions relating to ethnicity, Indigenous identity and Indigenous ancestry, particularly for Métis people and those with an Indigenous identity other than First Nation or Inuit. In view of these methodological limitations, additional information based on the literature and the knowledge of the partners consulted has been added in the conclusion of this document in order to contextualize and nuance the data collected during the 2022 point-in-time count. Additional data is needed to provide a more comprehensive and accurate

picture of the situation of Indigenous people who are experiencing homelessness, enabling a detailed analysis based on a clear distinction between the various Indigenous identities (First Nations, Inuit, Métis and other Indigenous identities).

- Where relevant and feasible, data from the 2022 point-in-time count was compared with data from 2015 and 2018. However, these comparisons were often limited by the small size of the sample population, or by too much variability in the questions asked in the different point-in-time counts. For example, the questions on Indigenous identity changed between 2015, 2018 and 2022.<sup>3</sup> As a result, comparative findings (increases, decreases, trends, etc.) should be considered with caution.

**Methodological and terminological clarification:** When the term “Indigenous” is used, this includes data collected among First Nations, Inuit, Métis and people reporting other Indigenous identities. Where relevant and possible, additional clarifications may be made regarding distinctions between the data collected among First Nations and Inuit. As the sample for Métis and other Indigenous people is too small, no distinction will be made in this document.



**NOTE**

The percentages shown in the tables may not always add up to 100% due to rounding.

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3. The question asked about Indigenous identity varies from one point-in-time count to the next. In 2015, the question asked did not capture Indigenous ancestry. In 2018, the question asked captured this information, and in 2022, the question asked was even more specific as regards Indigenous ancestry. However, there were no questions on ethnic identity in 2015 and 2018. In 2022, a question on ethnic identity was added, which included the “Indigenous only” category.

## 1. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

### Indigenous identity

On the night of the 2022 point-in-time count, 8% of respondents identified as First Nations, 3% as Inuit, and 2% as having other Indigenous identities (including Métis). Therefore, 13% of the sample of respondents self-identified as having an Indigenous identity.



#### NOTE

#### Comparison with the 2018 point-in-time count exercise

Data from the 2022 point-in-time count suggests that the number of homeless individuals identifying as Indigenous has declined by 3 percentage points since the 2018 point-in-time count (13% vs. 16%). However, this is most likely not a real decline, but rather a bias caused by methodological limitations, as explained in the “Methodological considerations” section. In fact, community organizations are reporting an increase in the number of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness in Montréal.

### Age groups

At the time of the 2022 point-in-time count, more than one in two (53%) Indigenous people experiencing visible homelessness was aged 30 to 49. Few were under 30 (16%) and less than one-third were 50 or over (31%).

**TABLE 1: Distribution of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people by age group**

Age group	Indigenous* (n=205)	Non-Indigenous (n=1,362)	Total (n=1,654)
<b>Under 30</b>	16%	17%	<b>17%</b>
<b>30 to 49</b>	53%	38%	<b>40%</b>
<b>50 and over</b>	31%	45%	<b>44%</b>

\* First Nations, Inuit, Métis and other Indigenous identities



#### NOTE

#### Comparison with the 2015 and 2018 point-in-time count exercises

- In 2022, we observed an increase of 3 percentage points in the 30 to 49 age group of people identifying as Indigenous compared to the 2018 point-in-time count (53% vs. 50%).
- The under-30 age group has continued to decline since the 2015 point-in-time count (16% in 2022 vs. 25% in 2015), which is also the case for non-Indigenous people experiencing visible homelessness.
- Few Indigenous people experiencing homelessness were 65 and over, despite a slight increase from the 2018 point-in-time count (4% vs. 2%—data not shown). This proportion is well below that of the non-Indigenous homeless population (11% vs. 4%—data not shown).



## Gender

The distribution of groups by gender is relatively stable for Indigenous people experiencing homelessness, with the majority of individuals (61%) identifying as cisgender males. Compared to the non-Indigenous population in the same situation, Indigenous people appear to be more likely to have reported other gender identities (8% vs. 4%). This is particularly the case for First Nations experiencing homelessness, 10% of whom reported a gender identity other than cisgender man or woman.<sup>4</sup>

**TABLE 2: Distribution of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people by gender**

Gender	Indigenous* (n=204)	Non-Indigenous (n=1,356)	Total (n=1 628)
Cisgender women	30%	29%	<b>29%</b>
Cisgender men	61%	67%	<b>66%</b>
Other gender identities	8%	4%	<b>5%</b>

\* First Nations, Inuit, Métis and other Indigenous identities

**TABLE 3: Distribution of First Nations and Inuit by gender**

Gender	First Nations (n <sub>estimate</sub> =123)	Inuit (n <sub>estimate</sub> =49)
Cisgender women	27%	35%
Cisgender men	63%	57%
Other gender identities	10%	8%



### NOTE

#### Comparison with the 2018 point-in-time count

- Six out of ten Indigenous people experiencing homelessness identify as cisgender men, which is comparable to the 2018 point-in-time count (61% in both cases).
- Three out of ten Indigenous people experiencing homelessness identify as cisgender women, which represents a slight decrease since 2018 (30% vs. 32%).
- Other gender identities are up one percentage point among Indigenous people experiencing homelessness compared to 2018 (8% vs. 7%), representing nearly 1 in 10 people in 2022.
- It is possible, however, that the absence of significant differences between the 2018 and 2022 point-in-time counts with regard to gender questions is due to a bias caused by the difference in sample size and composition, as well as the sampling contingencies specific to each point-in-time count.

4. The term "cisgender" is used when an individual's gender identity corresponds to their sex at birth.

## Sexual orientation

The proportion of Indigenous people identifying as having a sexual orientation other than heterosexual in the 2022 point-in-time count has increased compared to 2018, although the vast majority of Indigenous people still identify as heterosexual. Just over 7 out of 10 First Nations (72%) and 9 out of 10 Inuit (91%) people reported being heterosexual.

The proportion of Indigenous people identifying with a sexual orientation other than heterosexuality is higher than for non-Indigenous respondents (23% vs. 15%). Compared to Inuit, a higher proportion of First Nations participating in the point-in-time count reported a sexual orientation other than heterosexuality (27% vs. 9%).

**TABLE 4: Distribution of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people by sexual orientation**

Sexual orientation	Indigenous* (n=188)	Non-Indigenous (n=1,296)	Total (n=1,541)
<b>Heterosexual</b>	77%	85%	<b>84%</b>
<b>Homosexual</b>	5%	4%	<b>4%</b>
<b>Bisexual</b>	8%	6%	<b>6%</b>
<b>Other</b>	10%	5%	<b>5%</b>

\* First Nations, Inuit, Métis and other Indigenous identities

**TABLE 5: Distribution of First Nations and Inuit by sexual orientation**

Sexual orientation	First Nations (n <sub>estimate</sub> =123)	Inuit (n <sub>estimate</sub> =49)
<b>Heterosexual</b>	72%	91%
<b>Homosexual</b>	6%	2%
<b>Bisexual</b>	11%	0%
<b>Other</b>	10%	7%



### NOTE

#### Comparison with the 2018 point-in-time count

- The data from the 2022 point-in-time count suggests a slight increase in the proportion of Indigenous individuals who do not identify as heterosexual compared to the 2018 point-in-time count (23% vs. 17%).
- Although this has been trending downward since 2018, over three quarters (77%) of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness who took part in the 2022 point-in-time count identify as heterosexual.

## Education

Half of Inuit (50%) and more than one-third of First Nations (37%) who took part in the 2022 point-in-time count had a high school diploma.

Indigenous people experiencing homelessness are less likely to hold a post-secondary diploma than the rest of the population experiencing visible homelessness.

**TABLE 6: Distribution of First Nations, Inuit and non-Indigenous people by level of education**

Level of education	First Nations (n=121)	Inuit (n=44)	Non-Indigenous (n=1,386)	Total (n=1,597)
No diploma	7%	5%	4%	4%
Primary school	26%	32%	19%	19%
High school	37%	50%	33%	33%
Vocational training	12%	5%	12%	12%
CEGEP/college	8%	5%	13%	13%
University	9%	5%	15%	15%
Other	1%	0%	1%	1%



### NOTE

This question was an addition to the 2022 point-in-time count questionnaire. No data was collected on this subject in the 2015 and 2018 point-in-time counts.

## Income sources

For two-thirds of First Nations (65%) and Inuit (67%) who took part in the 2022 point-in-time count, the social assistance/social solidarity program was the main source of income reported, as was the case for non-Indigenous people in the same situation. Compared to the non-Indigenous population experiencing visible homelessness, fewer Indigenous people received income from retirement or programs for seniors (6% vs. 13%), and more obtained income by collecting and selling empty bottles, panhandling, sex work or selling drugs (18% vs. 10%).



**TABLE 7: Distribution of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people by source of income\***

Source of income	Indigenous** (n=203)	Non-Indigenous (n=1,354)	Total (n=1,624)
Social assistance/Social solidarity programs	61%	58%	<b>58%</b>
Job	16%	17%	<b>17%</b>
Retirement/Programs for seniors	6%	13%	<b>12%</b>
Benefits (unemployment or disability)	13%	11%	<b>11%</b>
Empty bottles, panhandling, sex work, selling drugs	18%	10%	<b>11%</b>
Donations	12%	7%	<b>8%</b>
Child benefit	3%	2%	<b>2%</b>
Other	6%	7%	<b>7%</b>
No income	7%	6%	<b>6%</b>

\*Respondents could choose several answers.

\*\*First Nations, Inuit, Métis and other Indigenous identities

For the 2022 point-in-time count, the proportions for each source of income are similar for First Nations and Inuit experiencing homelessness.

**TABLE 8: Distribution of First Nations and Inuit by source of income**

Sources of income*	First Nations (n=125)	Inuit (n=45)
Social assistance/Social solidarity programs	65%	67%
Job	14%	16%
Retirement/Programs for seniors	9%	2%
Benefits (unemployment or disability)	11%	11%
Empty bottles, panhandling, sex work, selling drugs	20%	18%
Donations	12%	11%
Child benefit	2%	2%
Other	7%	4%
No income	5%	4%

\*Respondents could choose several answers.



**NOTE**

**Comparison with the 2015 and 2018 point-in-time count exercises**

For the 2015, 2018 and 2022 point-in-time counts, the main source of income for Indigenous people experiencing homelessness is benefits received through social assistance and social solidarity programs. However, in 2022, the proportion of people with these sources of income was lower than in 2015 (61% vs. 72%). It is possible, however, that this difference between the 2015 and 2022 point-in-time counts is due to a bias caused by the difference in sample size and composition, as well as the sampling contingencies specific to each point-in-time count.

## 2. HOMELESSNESS TRAJECTORIES

### Loss of most recent home

In the 2022 point-in-time count, the main reasons Indigenous people gave for the loss of their most recent home were eviction (20%), substance use problems (15%), abuse (14%), conflict with others (14%) and insufficient income (14%). The first three reasons also correspond to the main reasons cited by non-Indigenous (eviction, insufficient income and abuse).

**TABLE 9: Distribution of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people by reasons cited for loss of most recent home**

Reasons cited for loss of home*	Indigenous** (n=189)	Non-Indigenous (n=1,294)	Total (n=1,553)
Eviction	20%	23%	<b>23%</b>
Insufficient income	14%	18%	<b>18%</b>
Substance use problem	15%	13%	<b>13%</b>
Abuse	14%	12%	<b>12%</b>
Conflict with spouse	12%	12%	<b>12%</b>
Conflict with others	14%	11%	<b>11%</b>
Mental health problem	6%	10%	<b>10%</b>
Job loss	11%	8%	<b>9%</b>
Conflict with owner/concierge/co-tenant	5%	8%	<b>8%</b>
Dangerous or unhealthy conditions/unsafe neighbourhoods	6%	7%	<b>7%</b>
Physical health problem	6%	6%	<b>6%</b>
Hospitalization/treatment program	3%	5%	<b>5%</b>
Incarceration	5%	5%	<b>4%</b>
Victim of discrimination	4%	3%	<b>3%</b>
Other	21%	21%	<b>21%</b>

\*Respondents could choose several answers.

\*\*First Nations, Inuit, Métis and other Indigenous identities

While eviction is the leading cause of the loss of their most recent home for all Indigenous people experiencing homelessness, the picture is different when we look at the data for First Nations and Inuit separately. More specifically, one Inuk out of four said they had lost their home because of eviction (26%), while approximately the same proportion of First Nations cited a reason other than those suggested in the questionnaire (24%). In the “Other” category, we find several reasons, including (in no particular order): nomadic lifestyle choice, death of a loved one, eviction by a loved one, non-renewal of lease or refusal to transfer the lease, building fire, water damage, sexual assault, victim of a criminal act, departure or banishment from an Indigenous community, work accident, possession of a pet, overcrowded housing, strict rules of the Direction de la protection de la jeunesse when turning 18, etc.

**TABLE 10: Distribution of First Nations and Inuit by reasons cited for loss of most recent home**

Reasons cited for loss of home*	First Nations (n=117)	Inuit (n=39)
Eviction	16%	26%
Insufficient income	12%	18%
Substance use problem	15%	13%
Abuse	15%	5%
Conflict with spouse	14%	10%
Conflict with others	15%	5%
Mental health problem	8%	5%
Job loss	7%	13%
Conflict with owner/concierge/co-tenant	7%	3%
Dangerous or unhealthy conditions/unsafe neighbourhoods	9%	0%
Physical health problems	7%	3%
Hospitalization / treatment program	8%	5%
Incarceration	4%	8%
Victim of discrimination	3%	0%
Other	24%	15%

\*Respondents could choose several answers.

For most First Nations (38%) and Inuit (53%) experiencing homelessness, the loss of their most recent home was between one and five years ago. Around 3 in 10 First Nations (32%) and 1 in 4 Inuk (25%) had lost their most recent home in the past year.



**TABLE 11: Distribution of First Nations, Inuit and non-Indigenous people by time since loss of most recent home**

Time since loss of most recent home	First Nations (n=108)	Inuit (n=32)	Non-Indigenous (n=1,222)	Total (n=1,442)
Less than 3 months	6%	3%	12%	12%
3 months to less than 6 months	7%	13%	14%	13%
6 months to less than 12 months	19%	9%	15%	14%
1 year to less than 5 years	38%	53%	38%	39%
5 years to less than 10 years	16%	6%	11%	11%
10 years and over	15%	16%	10%	10%



**NOTE**

**Comparison with the 2015 and 2018 point-in-time count exercises**

There are variations in the main reasons reported by the Indigenous people who took part in the three point-in-time count exercises for the loss of their most recent home. In 2015, the main reason was personal choice (24%); in 2018, it was due to addiction or substance abuse problems (18%); and in 2022, due to eviction (20%). However, it is possible that these variations are partly attributable to the response categories offered, which varied in the different point-in-time count questionnaires.

**Types of shelter**

A large majority of First Nations (83%) and Inuit (90%) who took part in the 2022 point-in-time count said they had spent at least one night in an emergency shelter in the last 12 months.

Around half of First Nations (45%) and Inuit (51%) were in an emergency shelter at the time of the point-in-time count, while this was only the case for just over a quarter of the non-Indigenous people experiencing homelessness (28%). Therefore, proportionally, there were more First Nations and Inuit using emergency shelters on the night of the point-in-time count. The other most used spaces were transitional housing and unsheltered locations.

**TABLE 12: Distribution of First Nations, Inuit and non-Indigenous people by shelter location**

Shelter location	First Nations (n=115)	Inuit (n=45)	Non-Indigenous (n=1,386)	Total (n=1,597)
Emergency shelters	45%	51%	28%	30%
Transitional housing	22%	6%	31%	29%
Unsheltered locations	17%	8%	14%	14%
Hidden homelessness	8%	2%	10%	9%
Mixed organizations	7%	2%	8%	8%
Domestic violence shelters	2%	1%	4%	4%



**NOTE**

**Comparison with the 2018 point-in-time count**

In the 2022 point-in-time count, there was a slight increase in the number of First Nations spending the night in emergency shelters (11% vs. 7%) and in unsheltered locations (9% vs. 6%) (data not shown). This increase may be attributable to the increased efforts to develop emergency shelter services for Indigenous people experiencing homelessness after 2018 (creation of around one hundred additional places in 2020).

**Number of years since first episode of homelessness**

Few First Nations and Inuit who participated in the 2022 point-in-time count reported that their first episode of homelessness occurred in the past year (9% for First Nations and 10% for Inuit). The majority of first episodes of homelessness were between 1 and 5 years ago (38% for First Nations and 40% for Inuit), or 10 years or more (40% for First Nations and 38% for Inuit).

Compared to the non-Indigenous population experiencing homelessness, members of the Indigenous population were proportionally more likely to have experienced their first episode of homelessness 10 years ago or more (39% vs. 30%).

**TABLE 13: Distribution of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people by time since first episode of homelessness**

Time since first episode of homelessness	Indigenous* (n=190)	Non-Indigenous (n=1,256)	Total (n=1,509)
Less than 365 days	12%	20%	19%
1 year to less than 5 years	38%	36%	36%
5 years to less than 10 years	12%	14%	14%
10 years and over	39%	30%	31%

\*First Nations, Inuit, Métis and other Indigenous identities

**TABLE 14: Distribution of First Nations and Inuit by time since first episode of homelessness**

Time since first episode of homelessness	First Nations (n=120)	Inuit (n=40)
Less than 365 days	9%	10%
1 year to less than 5 years	38%	40%
5 years to less than 10 years	13%	13%
10 years and over	40%	38%

 <b>NOTE</b>	<p><b>Comparison with the 2018 point-in-time count</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The number of Indigenous people reporting their first episode of homelessness in the past year is down by seven percentage points in 2022 compared to 2018 (12% vs. 19%).</li> <li>There has been an 18 percentage point increase in Indigenous people reporting their first episode of homelessness between one and five years ago in 2022 compared to 2018 (38% vs. 20%).</li> </ul>
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**Number of months homeless in the past year**

In the 2022 point-in-time count, 62% of First Nations and 66% of Inuit who took part reported having spent the entire year homeless.

Compared to the non-Indigenous people who took part in the point-in-time count, Indigenous people were proportionally more likely to have spent the entire year homeless (62% vs. 53%).

**TABLE 15: Distribution of Indigenous and non-Indigenous by number of months homeless in the past year**

Number of months homeless in the past year	Indigenous* (n=179)	Non-Indigenous (n=1,194)	Total (n=1,426)
Less than one month	2%	6%	5%
1 month to less than 3 months	7%	9%	9%
3 months to less than 6 months	7%	14%	13%
6 months to less than 9 months	16%	12%	12%
9 months to less than 12 months	7%	6%	6%
1 full year or more	62%	53%	54%

\*First Nations, Inuit, Métis and other Indigenous identities

**TABLE 16: Distribution of First Nations and Inuit by number of months homeless in the past year**

Number of months homeless in the past year	First Nations (n=114)	Inuit (n=38)
Less than one month	0%	5%
1 month to less than 3 months	5%	5%
3 months to less than 6 months	8%	5%
6 months to less than 9 months	18%	11%
9 months to less than 12 months	6%	8%
1 full year or more	62%	66%



**NOTE**

**Comparison with the 2018 point-in-time count exercise**

There is an upwards trend in Indigenous people experiencing homelessness who have spent the entire year homeless. In 2018, more than half of the Indigenous people who participated in the point-in-time count had been experiencing homelessness for an entire year (55%), and this proportion appears to have increased (62%) in the 2022 point-in-time count.

**Length of time since arrival in Montréal**

At the time of the 2022 point-in-time count, two out of five (40%) First Nations and more than one out of two (54%) Inuit experiencing homelessness had been living in Montréal for less than five years. Moreover, a quarter of Inuit (26%) experiencing homelessness arrived in Montréal within the last year. However, it is not possible to know if this is their first time in Montréal.

Compared to Inuit, First Nations experiencing homelessness were more likely to have lived all their lives in Montréal (22% vs. 5%).

**TABLE 17: Distribution of First Nations, Inuit, Indigenous and non-Indigenous people by length of time since arrival in Montréal**

Time since arrival in Montréal	First Nations (n=120)	Inuit (n=43)	Indigenous* (n=193)	Non-Indigenous (n=1,302)	Total (n=1,553)
Less than one year	18%	26%	21%	12%	13%
1 year to less than 5 years	22%	28%	23%	13%	14%
5 years to less than 10 years	10%	9%	8%	8%	8%
10 years and over	28%	33%	29%	32%	32%
Always lived in Montréal	22%	5%	19%	34%	32%

\*First Nations, Inuit, Métis and other Indigenous identities



**NOTE**

**Comparison with the 2018 point-in-time count**

- There was a slight decrease in the proportion of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness who have always lived in Montréal (19%) in 2022 compared to 2018 (21%).
- There was a slight increase in the proportion of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness who have been living in Montréal for less than a year in 2022 (21%) compared to 2018 (16%).
- There was a significant increase in the proportion of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness who have been living in Montréal for less than five years in 2022 (44%) compared to 2018 (33%).

### 3. YOUTH PROTECTION

Among all the Indigenous people experiencing homelessness who took part in the 2022 point-in-time count, 39% indicated they had been in the youth protection system. In comparison, for all non-Indigenous people experiencing homelessness who participated in the 2022 point-in-time count, 24% indicated they had been in the youth protection system.

Among all those who reported having been in the youth protection system, First Nations (40%) were proportionately more likely than Inuit (30%) and non-Indigenous people (32%) to have been placed in a foster home.

**TABLE 18: Distribution of First Nations, Inuit and non-Indigenous people by type of placement**

Type of placement (settings)	First Nations (n=55)	Inuit (n=10)	Non-Indigenous (n=296)
Foster homes	40%	30%	32%
Foster homes or other settings	38%	40%	34%
Other institutional settings	22%	30%	33%



**NOTE**

No data was collected on this subject during the 2015 and 2018 point-in-time counts. However, information on the types of placements was gathered by the 2015 supplementary survey, the results of which are available [here](#) (in French only).

## 4. HEALTH PROBLEMS

For the 2022 point-in-time count, a new question on health problems (with or without a diagnosis) was added to the questionnaire.

**TABLE 19: Proportions of First Nations, Inuit and non-Indigenous people reporting a health problem (with or without a diagnosis)**

Health problem	First Nations ( <i>n</i> <sub>estimate</sub> =123)	Inuit ( <i>n</i> <sub>estimate</sub> =49)	Non-Indigenous ( <i>n</i> =1,386)	Total ( <i>n</i> =1,597)
Medical condition or physical illness	54%	27%	42%	<b>42%</b>
Physical limitations	33%	20%	29%	<b>29%</b>
Learning or cognitive limitations	41%	16%	32%	<b>32%</b>
Mental health problem	61%	29%	57%	<b>56%</b>
Gambling or money-related problem	11%	12%	8%	<b>8%</b>
Tobacco use problem	57%	71%	51%	<b>52%</b>
Substance use problem	67%	90%	49%	<b>52%</b>

### Physical health

More than half of the First Nations (54%) who took part in the 2022 point-in-time count reported living with a medical condition or physical illness, double the proportion of Inuit (27%). One in three First Nations (33%) reported living with a physical limitation (difficulty moving around, or limited physical abilities or manual skills), whereas one in five Inuit (20%) reported experiencing these problems.

Tuberculosis is an issue that disproportionately affects First Nations (two cases) and Inuit (one case) compared to the other people experiencing homelessness who reported having tuberculosis out of the 10 cases identified.

### Mental health

Among the First Nations who took part in the 2022 point-in-time count, six out of ten (61%) reported living with a mental health problem (particularly anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder). In comparison, 5 out of 10 (50%) non-Indigenous people experiencing homelessness reported living with a mental health problem. In addition, around 4 out of 10 First Nations (41%) reported living with learning or cognitive limitations.

Among Inuit experiencing homelessness, few reported living with a mental health problem (29%) or learning and cognitive limitations (16%).

### Substance and tobacco use problems

For First Nations and Inuit who took part in the 2022 point-in-time count, alcohol use was the most frequently reported issue.

More specifically, for First Nations, two-thirds of individuals (67%) reported a substance use problem (particularly alcohol, cannabis and cocaine/crack), and over half (57%) mentioned tobacco use problems.



As for the Inuit, 9 out of 10 (90%) said they had a substance use problem (particularly alcohol, cannabis and cocaine/crack), and 7 out of 10 (71%) said they had a tobacco use problem.

**TABLE 20: Distribution of First Nations and Inuit by health problem (with or without diagnosis), in descending order**

Health problem	First nations ( <i>n</i> <sub>estimate</sub> = 123)	Inuit ( <i>n</i> <sub>estimate</sub> = 49)
<b>Medical condition or physical illness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arthritis (20%)</li> <li>• Hypertension (18%)</li> <li>• Heart failure (17%)</li> <li>• Diabetes (15%)</li> <li>• Cancer (7%)</li> <li>• Hepatitis C virus (7%)</li> <li>• Human immunodeficiency virus (4%)</li> <li>• Tuberculosis (2%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arthritis (8%)</li> <li>• Heart failure (6%)</li> <li>• Hypertension (4%)</li> <li>• Diabetes (4%)</li> <li>• Tuberculosis (2%)</li> <li>• Human immunodeficiency virus (2%)</li> <li>• Hepatitis C virus (2%)</li> <li>• Cancer (0%)</li> </ul>
<b>Physical limitations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (33%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (2%)</li> </ul>
<b>Learning or cognitive limitations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head trauma (28%)</li> <li>• Attention deficit disorder (22%)</li> <li>• Intellectual disability (7%)</li> <li>• Autism spectrum disorder (5%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head trauma (10%)</li> <li>• Intellectual disability (2%)</li> <li>• Attention deficit disorder (2%)</li> <li>• Autism spectrum disorder (0%)</li> </ul>
<b>Mental health problem</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anxiety (41%)</li> <li>• Depression (37%)</li> <li>• Post-traumatic stress disorder (28%)</li> <li>• Bipolar disorder (16%)</li> <li>• Borderline personality disorder (15%)</li> <li>• Psychotic disorder (14%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depression (20%)</li> <li>• Post-traumatic stress disorder (10%)</li> <li>• Anxiety (6%)</li> <li>• Psychotic disorder (2%)</li> <li>• Borderline personality disorder (2%)</li> <li>• Bipolar disorder (0%)</li> </ul>
<b>Gambling problem</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (10%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (5%)</li> </ul>
<b>Tobacco use problem</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (57%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (71%)</li> </ul>
<b>Substance use problem</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alcohol (46%)</li> <li>• Cannabis (46%)</li> <li>• Cocaine/Crack (31%)</li> <li>• Speed (21%)</li> <li>• Crystal meth (12%)</li> <li>• Heroin (4%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alcohol (59%)</li> <li>• Cannabis (51%)</li> <li>• Cocaine/Crack (37%)</li> <li>• Speed (10%)</li> <li>• Heroin (2%)</li> <li>• Crystal meth (2%)</li> </ul>



#### NOTE

#### Comparison with the 2015 and 2018 point-in-time count exercises

- No data was collected on this subject in 2015 or 2018. It should be noted, however, that data from the 2018 point-in-time count indicated that many Indigenous people experiencing homelessness wanted access to physical health services (49%), mental health services (38%) and addiction/substance abuse services (35%), which is reflected in the most important health issues identified in 2022.
- Information on overall community health was gathered by the 2015 supplementary survey, the results of which are available [here](#) (in French only).

## CONCLUSION

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### 1. Socio-demographic characteristics

#### Indigenous identity

The point-in-time counts conducted in recent years have shown that Indigenous people are overrepresented among the homeless population in Montréal.

- As a group, Indigenous people have a number of risk factors that can lead to homelessness. These factors are complex and mainly structural in nature (precarious housing conditions, systemic barriers to employment and education, experiences of racism and discrimination, intergenerational effects of colonization, etc.). (Belanger et al., 2012; NETWORK, 2024).
- Homelessness is particularly prevalent among Inuit, although the sample of Inuit who participated in the 2022 point-in-time count is too small to provide an accurate and comprehensive picture of the situation (Fletcher et al., 2022; NETWORK, 2024; Ville de Montréal, 2020). Some research has shown that the recent experience of colonization in northern villages, which disrupted the Inuit way of life and the organization of the community and families, has had significant impacts on identity, cultural transmission, diet, mental health, interpersonal relationships, substance use, education and living conditions (violence, housing crisis, etc.) in the Arctic (Fletcher et al., 2022; Kishigami, 1999; Ville de Montréal, 2020). This situation forces many Inuit to leave their communities and settle in Montréal under sub-optimal conditions (urgently, without planning, without resources or support, etc.), which can lead to homelessness (Fletcher et al., 2022; Ville de Montréal, 2020).
- The data from the 2022 point-in-time count does not give a clear picture of the situation of Métis people experiencing homelessness due to the difficulties in identifying people with this identity (lack of legal status in Québec, multiple ways of identifying as Métis at the individual level, confusion between Métis and mixed ethnicities, etc.).

#### Age groups

According to data from the 2022 point-in-time count, the majority of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness were between the ages of 30 and 49, with fewer young people aged 30 and under, and fewer people aged 65 and over.

- The partners consulted noted that homelessness in later life is a new phenomenon among Indigenous people experiencing homelessness, and that the current services are not adapted to this population. In contrast, Indigenous people who are not experiencing homelessness are younger than their fellow Montréalers (DRSP, 2020).

#### Gender and sexual orientation

In the 2022 point-in-time count, the distribution of cisgender women and men was similar for the Indigenous and non-Indigenous population experiencing homelessness (approximately one-third of cisgender women for two-thirds of cisgender men). The proportion of Indigenous people who identify as another gender identity is higher than for non-Indigenous people.

Furthermore, a slight increase in the number of people identifying as another gender identity among the Indigenous population experiencing homelessness was observed in 2022, and a greater diversity of sexual orientations was observed among First Nations in particular.

- Studies have shown that Indigenous cisgender women, particularly Inuit, and LGBTQ2S+ people experiencing homelessness are particularly likely to be targets of domestic, economic, physical, psychological and sexual violence and exploitation (Commission d'enquête sur les relations entre les Autochtones et certains services publics, 2019; NETWORK, 2024). The pathways of cisgender Indigenous women and LGBTQ2S+ people are among the most vulnerable trajectories out of all people experiencing homelessness (Conseil des Montréalaises, 2020).

### **Education and sources of income**

Data from the 2022 point-in-time count showed that many Indigenous people experiencing homelessness, particularly Inuit, had a low level of education (high school, primary school or no diploma). Furthermore, the main source of income for Indigenous people experiencing homelessness was social assistance and social solidarity.

- As a group, Indigenous people face many barriers to education (intergenerational trauma linked to residential schools, lack of follow-up, lack of Indigenous-specific support and resources specifically for them, forced relocation of people wishing to pursue post-secondary studies, etc.), which can result in a low level of education.
- This reality can lead to a cycle of socio-economic deprivation (underemployment, unemployment, poverty, etc.), with major impacts on their living conditions and state of health. The accumulation of these risk factors can lead to homelessness (DRSP, 2020; NETWORK, 2024).

## **2. Homelessness trajectories**

### **Loss of most recent home**

In the 2022 point-in-time count, the main reason cited by Indigenous people experiencing homelessness for the loss of their most recent home was eviction, which was also the case for non-Indigenous people.

- There is some variability in the reasons given in recent point-in-time counts, most likely due to the changing realities of people experiencing homelessness, but also to the fact that questions have been asked differently from one point-in-time count to the next.
- Several studies have highlighted the importance of supporting the implementation of Indigenous-specific housing, both in Indigenous communities (building more housing, quality housing, etc.) and in Montréal (affordability of rental housing, culturally adapted housing strategy for Indigenous people, etc.) (DRSP, 2020; Fletcher et al., 2022; Lévesque and Comat, 2018; NETWORK, 2020).

### **Types of shelter**

The spaces most used by Indigenous people experiencing homelessness in the 2022 point-in-time count were emergency shelters, transitional housing and unsheltered locations.

- While it's encouraging to observe an increase in the transitional housing use, emergency shelters and unsheltered locations remain the places most frequented by Indigenous people experiencing homelessness.

### **Number of years since first episode of homelessness and number of months homeless in the past year**

The majority of Indigenous people who took part in the 2022 point-in-time count had experienced their first episode of homelessness between 1 and less than 5 years ago. In addition, the phenomenon of continuous homelessness (for 12 consecutive months) was on the rise in 2022 compared to the previous point-in-time count.

- Most Indigenous people experiencing homelessness seem to experience chronic homelessness, a trend that must be closely monitored in the next few years. In fact, according to the NETWORK, [translation] “chronic homelessness is the most visible form of homelessness, and refers to a person who has experienced homelessness for a minimum of one year or on a repeated basis. People experiencing chronic homelessness are typically older, and/or struggling with other underlying issues such as mental health, addiction(s), physical and/or mental disabilities.” (NETWORK, 2024: 13)

### **Length of time since arrival in Montréal**

Data from the 2022 point-in-time count shows that approximately half of First Nations (40%) and Inuit (54%) experiencing homelessness had been living in Montréal for less than five years. First Nations were more likely than Inuit to have lived in Montréal all their lives. A quarter of the Inuit who took part in the 2022 point-in-time count had been in Montréal for less than a year.

- The partners consulted noted that the fact that many First Nations have lived all their lives in Montréal is a phenomenon that needs to be studied in greater depth in order to better understand it, given that these individuals face difficulties that are unique to them and that are probably different from those experienced by people who have recently arrived in Montréal.
- Having arrived in Montréal less than a year ago doesn't necessarily mean it's their first visit to the city. For example, specifically for Inuit who have been experiencing homelessness in Montréal for less than a year, the partners consulted note that this may be a return to the city after having left it for a certain length of time, a return that can be explained in particular by a lack of housing or services in their community.

### **3. Youth protection**

Data from the 2022 point-in-time count shows an overrepresentation of First Nations experiencing homelessness who have been placed in foster homes or other settings by youth protection.

- Being placed in foster homes or other settings by youth protection is a major risk factor that can lead to homelessness, particularly for Indigenous people (Goyette et al., 2022; NETWORK, 2024; Seltz and Roussopoulos, 2020). In fact, the negative experiences of Indigenous children and their families (birth alerts, discriminatory targeting of Indigenous people, lack of culturally appropriate and safe support and guidance for parents and children, etc.) can generate or reignite certain traumas (for example, a disconnection in terms of identity, culture, family, community and territory) (Guay and Ellington, 2019; NETWORK, 2024).

## 4. Health problems

Data from the 2022 point-in-time count shows that Indigenous people experiencing homelessness are more affected by mental health, physical health and substance use problems than their non-Indigenous counterparts. Many First Nations experiencing homelessness reported mental health problems, medical conditions, learning or cognitive limitations, and substance use problems (alcohol, cannabis, cocaine/crack and speed). A smaller proportion of Inuit than First Nations reported physical health problems (which may be attributable to the smaller proportion of elderly people) and mental health problems, but almost all Inuit respondents reported substance use problems (alcohol, cannabis, cocaine/crack and tobacco).

- It has been documented that substance use is intimately linked to the experience of colonialism. In fact, alcohol and drug use is often a compensatory mechanism used to deal with negative, troubling or painful emotions caused by various traumas (repeated bereavements, identity or cultural crisis, residential school experience, territorial dispossession, negative experiences within the health or youth protection systems, etc.) (Fletcher et al., 2022; NETWORK, 2024). There is therefore a strong correlation, often bidirectional, between mental health problems and substance use. Both are significant risk factors that can lead to homelessness.
- The case of Inuit experiencing homelessness is of particular concern and remains poorly understood: data from the 2022 point-in-time count shows a low number of self-reported physical and mental health problems, which seems inconsistent with the strong trend toward substance use that has been self-reported.

### How to interpret the notations “N” and “n” used in the text to represent sample size

**N:** This symbol is used to represent the total size of the study population. The population is the complete set of individuals who participated in the point-in-time count, i.e.,  $N=1,704$ .

**n:** This symbol represents the size of the study sample, i.e., the number of individuals selected from the total population. The sample is a sub-section of the population that is studied in order to draw conclusions about the population as a whole. For example, in the point-in-time count, if we want to know the distribution of individuals by gender, we would show  $n=477$  for women,  $n=1,073$  for men and  $n=78$  for gender-diverse individuals, i.e.,  $n=1,628$ . As you can see, there is a difference of 76 between the total population size ( $N=1,704$ ) and the sample size ( $n=1,628$ ). This discrepancy is due to individuals who refused to answer the gender question. The analysis is therefore based on 1,628 individuals, not 1,704.

In the text, the **n** numbers presented are derived from the analysis of the point-in-time count data. They correspond to the number of individuals who answered the questions relating to Indigenous populations, which were in some cases cross-referenced with other questions to provide as complete a picture as possible of people experiencing homelessness. As a result, some individuals may have refused to answer the question, may not have known what to answer, or the question did not apply, which would consequently reduce the **n** value.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

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### 1. Areas for improvement for future point-in-time counts

- It is necessary to engage more effectively with Indigenous people experiencing homelessness in future point-in-time counts in order to obtain a greater quantity and quality of data, and thereby a more accurate and complete picture of their realities. Greater efforts should be made to reach out to Inuit, cisgender Indigenous women and LGBTQ2S+ people living in specific situations that are under-documented. Below are some concrete suggestions:
  - Maximize the involvement and use of expert resources (Indigenous organizations and their stakeholders) in the planning and execution of the point-in-time count, since they already have a relationship of trust and in-depth knowledge of the realities of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness;
  - Before the point-in-time count, map out the spaces most frequented by Indigenous people experiencing homelessness;
  - Train volunteers administering the questionnaire to work with Indigenous people experiencing homelessness in order to facilitate the initial contact and administration of the questionnaire;
  - Always ensure that the questionnaire can be answered in English, as this language is widely used by many Indigenous people, particularly Inuit.
- Questions designed to survey ethnicity and Indigenous identity (particularly the Métis identity) should be revised to better ascertain Indigenous identities, in order to provide a more accurate picture of the situation for each identity (First Nations, Inuit and Métis).

### 2. Addressing residual data needs specific to Indigenous people experiencing homelessness

Generally speaking, and for all populations, measuring the extent of homelessness is a particularly difficult exercise. At present, there is no single method that can capture the complexity of this phenomenon. As such, it is essential to draw on several methods and data sources to provide a portrait that is as close to reality as possible. More specifically, there is an important knowledge gap regarding Indigenous people experiencing homelessness.

- It would be helpful to collect additional data and/or conduct a needs assessment to meet the residual data requirements for this population, which would supplement and contextualize the data for future point-in-time counts.
- Certain groups in particular should be targeted (Inuit, cisgender women—particularly Inuit women—LGBTQ2S+ and Métis) and certain issues should be better documented (situation of First Nations in relation to youth protection placements, trajectories leading to homelessness for Inuit cisgender women, safety of cisgender women and LGBTQ2S+ people, substance use and health problems, specific situation of Inuit, etc.).

### **3. Adapting programs, services and care to the needs and realities of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness**

- More resources, programs and tools specific to Indigenous people experiencing homelessness should be put in place, particularly with regard to physical and mental health needs, housing, education, employment and addiction treatment programs.
- The needs and realities of the aging portion (30–49 years) of the Indigenous population who are experiencing homelessness and those who have been homeless for several years should be taken into consideration to find innovative, effective and adapted solutions.
- Reinforcing protective factors, such as social support networks, a sense of belonging to a community and cultural pride, and adopting a strength-based approach, are key elements to consider when adapting programs and services by and for Indigenous people experiencing homelessness (NETWORK, 2024).

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