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About OfCity Consulting

OfCity Consulting is a community-based participatory research firm. Our goal is to generate awareness, understanding and dialogue that can lead to positive and meaningful change. We value the nuances of each and every community we work with - be it geographically based or interest based. Our work balances the increasing need for innovative recruitment and the engagement of interested participants, with our client's requirements for efficient and accurate project completion.

At OfCity Consulting we believe that good decisions are often those made with all the necessary information. Public engagement and outreach is a necessary step to acquire the right information to support planning and public policy development. We design and develop on-the-ground research that will help our clients make short and long term plans.

OfCity Consulting was contracted by the Oceanside Task Force on Homelessness to conduct the 2013 Homeless Count, which covered areas on Vancouver Island as far south as Nanoose and as far north as Bowser. OfCity Consulting conducted this count using the same methods of the 2011 count, which also reflect the provincial standardized method.

For more information about OfCity Consulting visit: www.ofcityconsulting.com

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1.0 Executive Summary

Over three different days, May 8th, June 1st and June 8th of 2013, *OfCity Consulting* conducted a strategic point-in-time Homeless Count in the Oceanside region of Vancouver Island for the *Oceanside Task Force on Homeless* (OTFH). This was the second homeless count ever conducted by the OTFH. The previous count was conducted on May 31, 2011. Both counts used a similar methodology for the survey-based research. The purpose of the count is to gather information about how many homeless people there are in the area at the given time, to understand what circumstance have lead to a situation of homelessness, and to try to grasp what services or programs might be needed to help these individuals.

Though the number of individuals counted is often the primary focus of this research, the information about situational factors and the commentary on services and programs are perhaps in many ways more important when it comes to thinking about holistic solutions that will help these people transition into safe, secure housing. The results of the homeless count have been interpreted and summarized to provide insight for elected and appointed officials, community leaders, volunteers, organizations, funding agencies and other stakeholders, in order to enable effective change to the homeless services and programs in the area. It is also important to acknowledge that not all homeless individuals get counted using these methods, and thus this number represents the minimum number of homeless people living in the Oceanside area. A second questionnaire was developed for this project to help correct the under-estimation by engaging volunteer service providers about the number of homeless people they work with.

The 2013 Homeless Count was conducted with the help of over 40 community volunteers, as well as the time, knowledge and support from organizations and staff. This report provides information about the Oceanside Homeless Count, including the methodology used, limitations to the research, and the main findings of the count including a summary of results. Some of these key findings include:

- A total number of 49 homeless or at-risk people participated in the survey.
- An additional 18 people appeared to be homeless or at-risk were observed during the count, but did not wish to take part in the survey
- 55% of the survey respondents identified themselves as homeless
- 65% percent of respondents were men; 33% of respondents were women
- More women (71%) than men (45%) indicated they suffer from a physical disability
- More men (50%) than women (14%) suffer from an addiction.
- 73% of respondents indicated they had a disability of some sort
- The largest age bracket of respondents was age 20-34 (36%)
- 35% of respondent's last permanent address was in Parksville
- 86% of respondents suggested they would stay in a shelter
- The largest identified need in the community was affordable housing, as noted by 73% of respondents

2.0 Methodology

The 2013 Oceanside Homeless Count reflects the practices used in the 2011 Oceanside Homeless Count, and utilizes methods recommended by the *BC Housing Homeless Outreach Standardized Program Framework*¹. Several research approaches were taken directly from the previous count, and some of the information that shaped the direction of this count was provided from some of the 2011 sources. However, as many challenges and limitations in the research became apparent, some slight adaptations were made to methodology. This section of the report will explain the methods used in the 2013 count. This section will also briefly provide commentary on some of the limitations of the methodology.

2.1 Definitions

There are various definitions of what homelessness is. Establishing a working definition of homelessness was our first step, as it was a necessary part of the screening process. Volunteers surveying in rural areas may often miss people during the count as it is often challenging to visibly assess if someone is homeless or not, if they are staying with family or friends, or sleeping in cars on rural roads. In order to be consistent with provincial standardized guidelines, *BC Housing's* definitions² of homelessness were used to establish an understanding for the screening process for volunteers working with the survey questionnaire. There are four defined types of homelessness that were considered in this count:

1) Absolute Homeless: Individuals and families who are living in public spaces without legal claim (e.g., on the streets, in abandoned buildings or in tent cities); a homeless shelter; a public facility or service (e.g., hospital, care facility, rehabilitation or treatment centre or correctional facility) and cannot return to a stable residence; or individuals and families who are financially, sexually, physically or emotionally exploited to maintain their shelter.

2) At Risk of Homelessness: Individuals and families who are living in: temporary accommodation where they do not have control over the length and conditions of tenure (e.g., couch surfing or name not on lease) and do not have adequate personal space; time-limited housing designed to help them transition from being homeless to living in a permanent form of housing, e.g., transitional housing or second-stage housing; or accommodation where tenancy will be terminated within three months of application, (e.g., given notice by landlord or pending release from prison).

3) Hidden Homeless: Individuals and families who are living in temporary accommodation where they do not have control over the length and conditions of tenure but have adequate personal space.

4) Homelessness due to crisis: Individuals and families who are homeless because their previous residence became uninhabitable due to a human caused or natural disaster (e.g., fire or earthquake).

¹ BC Housing, Homelessness Outreach Program: Program Framework, March 2011 2nd Edition

² BC Housing, Maintaining Housing Guidebook: for Emergency Shelter & Outreach Service Providers, September 2012, p. 11-19

2.2 Count and Survey Scope

The 2013 Oceanside homeless count was developed primarily from the 2011 methods³, and materials from the 2011 count were provided for review in order to stay as consistent as possible in methodology. First, the 2013 survey (see Appendix A) was developed based off of the 2011 count survey, but was edited to help speed up the enumeration process. Feedback about the previous survey suggested it was too long for respondents, and so a more concise version was prepared.

A volunteer list was provided from the 2011 count. New volunteers were engaged through social media, new releases and radio promotion. The 2011 maps, which contained information from the previous survey, were used in the 2013 count as well. Furthermore, the coordinator of the count worked with local and regional staff people to develop a better understanding of the Oceanside area in order to target certain geographic locations for the day of the count.

The 2013 count, like its predecessor, was conducted in the spring. The count was conducted between 9:00 am and 6:00 pm on Wednesday May 8th, 2013 between Nanoose and Bowser. This enumeration process was done by volunteer groups of three or four people. Each group of volunteers was designated to a specific geographic location. All volunteers started off their shift with a one-hour training session that familiarized them with the enumeration process and provided them with safety information. Volunteers were broken up into groups based on their desire for a morning shift or an afternoon shift, and then were sent to their various locations between Nanoose and Bowser, BC.

Two 'followup' counts were conducted by the OfCity Consulting coordinators on the morning of June 1st and June 8th, 2013 at the Manna Ministry van in Parksville, BC. All respondents who participated in taking the survey were thanked with a complimentary food bag, which included various items. The largest number of people surveyed in one location was at the Manna Ministry van on Saturday morning, June 1st.

Most homeless counts includes an enumerating process where homeless people are surveyed at shelters, short-term housing facilities, street counts, out door locations, services agencies, walking routes, bottle depots, and so forth. As there are few resources and services providers in the Oceanside area aimed towards homelessness, a stable point of contact was greatly reduced. The 2013 count mostly focused on targeting outdoor locations, including streets, walking routes, parks and playgrounds, transportation hubs and camp grounds. The Parksville bottle depot, the mobile Manna Ministry van, the Parksville Soup Kitchen, and the Society of Organized Services Thrift Shop are the 'services' provided of the area. These were also the four locations that were the most successful point of contact locations for the count, with the Manna Ministry van connecting enumerators to over 30 respondents. This is important to note, as it indicates the extreme value of services, shelters and temporary housing as a place to engage these essentially transient homeless populations. Without these services, a cyclical issue evolves, where it becomes more and more challenging to generate accurate numbers, and then inaccurate numbers fail to inspire proper action by decision makers to develop services and housing. Thus, the homeless remain predominately unreachable, and underrepresented, specifically those 'at-risk' or 'hidden' homeless people.

³ Jackson, G.A, Oceanside Task Force on Homelessness: Oceanside Homeless Count, August 2011.

2.3 Data Analysis

All surveys were collected at the end of each count session. Each survey was numbered, and all data was entered into the analysis program SPSS software. Open-ended data was reviewed, coded and entered into the SPSS analysis. All data was entered and double-checked by the researchers, and checked by the organizer to ensure the highest level of accuracy. Though the methodology does naturally lead to some inherent limitations for the research, the data itself is sound and has been reviewed by several analysts to ensure that a high quality analysis was achieved.

2.3 Limitations

As noted in the Executive Summary, a homeless count does not provide an exact representation of the current homeless population, but instead a low-estimate of people observed and surveyed. Naturally, people are missed and others do not wish to take part in the survey process. Although the point-in-time count is a well-used method for counting homeless people, both across BC and internationally, rural regions such as the Oceanside area are faced with inherent challenges when using this method, as the point-in-time method is better suited for urban areas where homelessness is often more visible, or where services, programs and shelters act as a point of contact.

Without a main point of contact, or a visual implication of homelessness, generating an accurate number becomes very challenging. As there are no shelters, transition homes, or major service providers in the Oceanside area, using the standardized method becomes reliant on making assumptions about where homeless people may be found and what they should look like. Consequently, the results do not include a number of people, many of which are in temporary housing, but are very much at risk of being homeless without their support network.

Furthermore, the point-in-time counting method fails to recognize fluctuations that happen annually within the area, as homeless people come and go from other cities, or transition from various states of homelessness based on the season (eg: the transition of couch surfing to sleeping outside in a tent). Most notably, the largest limitation is geography. Specifically due to the forested, rural nature of the Oceanside region, homeless populations have the ability to be 'hidden' even if they are sleeping outside in the rough. It is unrealistic to assume that volunteer enumerators will be able to cover all ground in a rural area; therefore, the results do not capture the number of homeless people staying outdoors, even during the spring or summer.

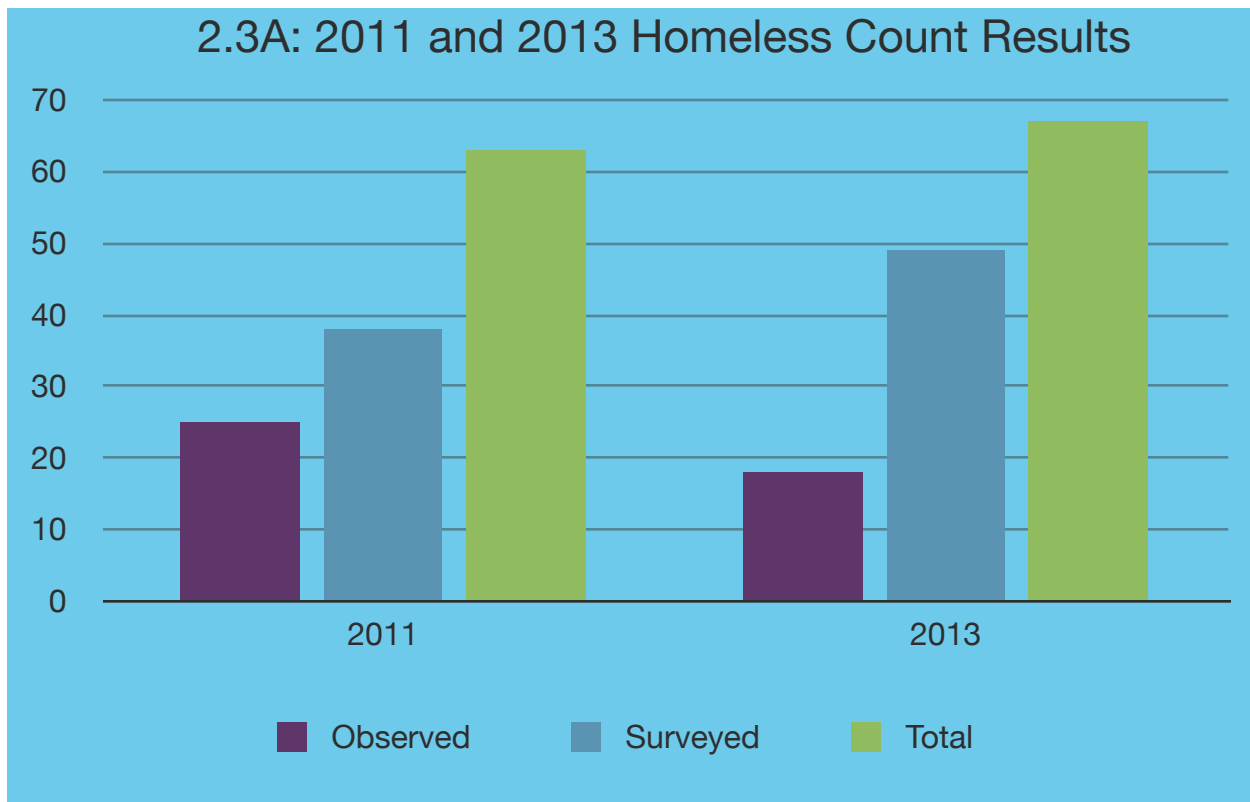
Duplication of results is a typical concern with all survey research, specifically when an incentive is provided to respondents. Screening questions were designed to limit duplication of responses, and the volunteers and organizers were instructed to be mindful of anyone taking the survey twice. Respondents who had already taken the survey were still offered a food bag even if they had taken the survey previously. This method was used to keep respondents from taking the survey again, which would have resulted in unwanted duplications of data.

2.3 Modifications in Method

In order to try to extend the limitations of the research, additional methods were used to produce a more holistic understanding of the homeless population. In addition to the findings from the count, the coordinating

consultant developed an additional open-ended response survey (see Appendix B) that was designed to engage volunteer service providers about their understanding of the homeless population in the region. This survey only included five questions, but added a detailed perspective from those individuals who could provide insight based on their experience and support efforts. The main purpose of this survey was also intended to generate a more realistic number of homeless people living in the area, based on the interpersonal relationships between the homeless people and the volunteers who organize free services for them.

The information from these open-ended surveys has been analyzed separately from the count information, and is explained in the section 4.0 of this report.



This graph is a visual representation of the 2011 and 2013 Homeless Count Results. It demonstrates both the number of people counted who were surveyed, and those who were observed and considered to be homeless, based on appearance or behavior, but refused to participate in the survey itself. 'Observed' represents the number of people that appeared to be *at least* 'at-risk' of being homeless, 'Surveyed' represents the number of people who participated in the survey, and 'Total' is a sum of both those counted and those observed.

Again, it is important to note that these numbers represent a low-estimate, and are a point-in-time representation. Not all homeless people in the area necessarily engaged during the count process. Furthermore, the numbers tend to fluctuate based on time of day, season, and based on the specific locations used during enumeration.

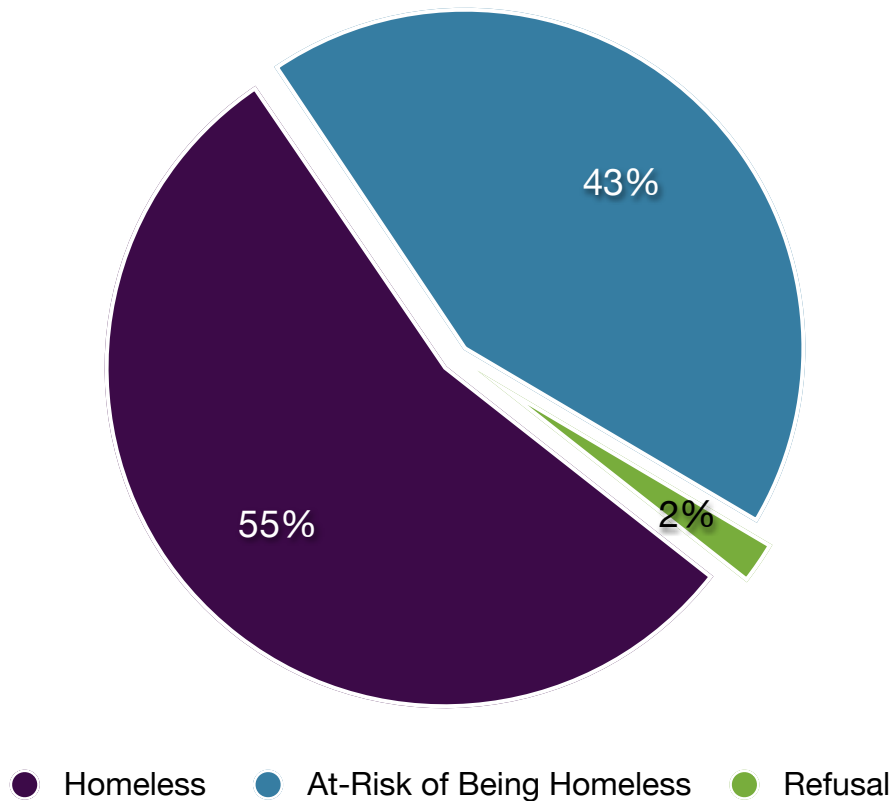
3.0 Count Results

The 2013 Oceanside Homeless Count surveyed 49 homeless individuals, which is up from the 2011 count when only 37 individuals participated in the survey. The 2013 count also considered those observed as either homeless, or potentially homeless based on their location, appearance and associations. This number adds an additional 18 people to the count, bringing the total number to 67, which is 5 more people than counted or observed in the 2011 count.

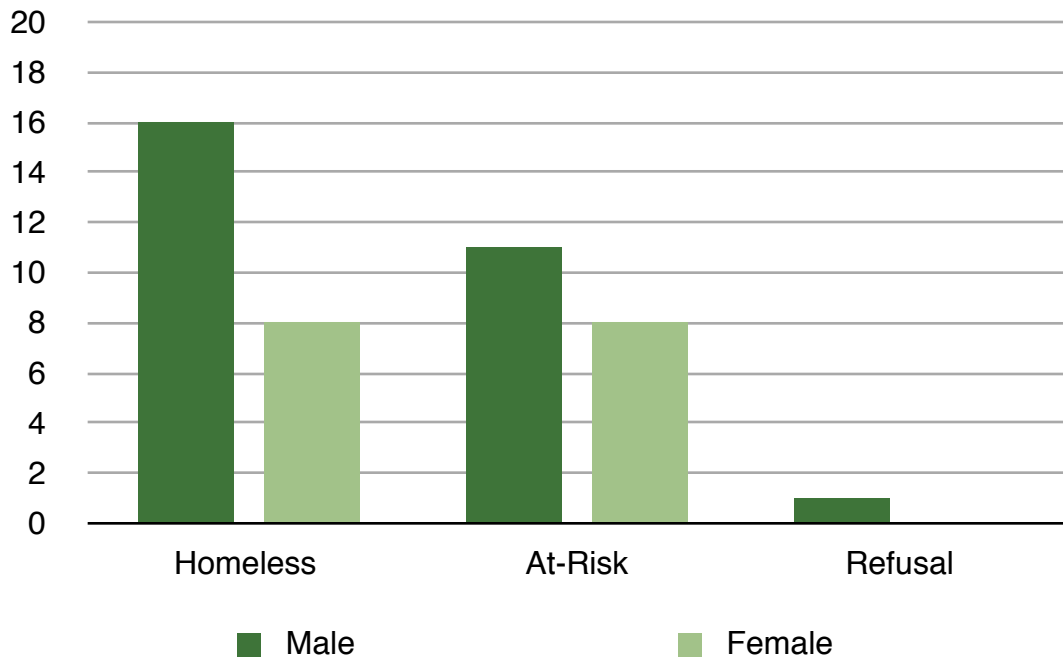
For the purposes of this report, the data is based off of the surveys completed by those 49 respondents. Of those 49 respondents, 55% considered themselves to be homeless, where as 43% considered themselves to be at-risk, or on the verge of being homeless. More men (16) than women (11) identified as being homeless. 16% of those people who identified as being homeless also indicated that they have someone who stays with them.

An analysis of the count results has been generated across the different variables, which has revealed some interesting and important trends based on gender, age, source of income, and geographic considerations. This information is explained below, and the charts and tables are used to represent the the data.

3.0A: % of Respondents Self-Identified as Homeless



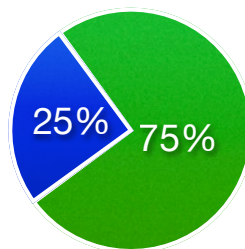
3.0B: Number of Respondents by Sex and Self-Identified Living Situation



Of those respondents who identified as being homeless 45% have been homeless for 1 week to 6 months, 26% have been homeless for 1 to 5 years and 13% have been homeless for five or more years. 53% of homeless respondents indicated not being able to afford a place to live as the main reason why they were homeless. Other significant reasons for homelessness were addiction, indicated by 26% and lack of employment, indicated by 40% respondents.

3.1 Demographic Profile

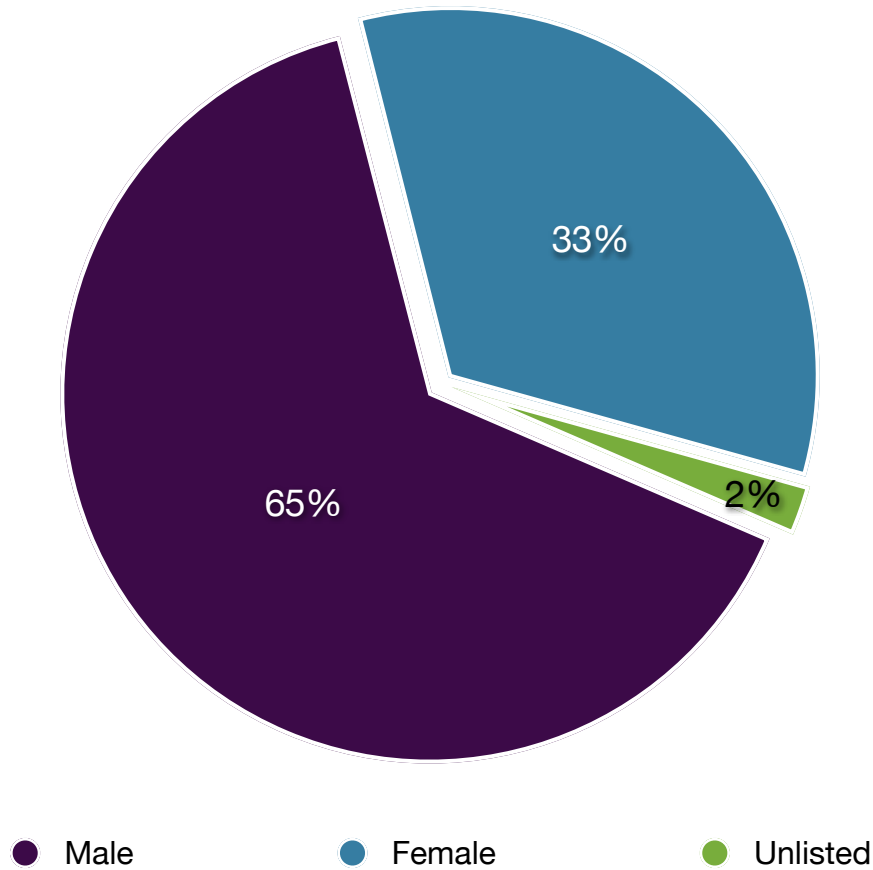
3.1A: % Self-Identified as Aboriginal and Other Minority



● Aboriginal/Other Minority ● Non-Aboriginal/ Ethnic Minority

Of the respondents 12% identify themselves as being both homeless and Aboriginal, and 9% of people surveyed identified themselves as both homeless and belonging to an ethnic minority. Of all the respondents 10 (21%) identified as being an Aboriginal person, and only 3 (6%) noted identifying with another ethnic minority.

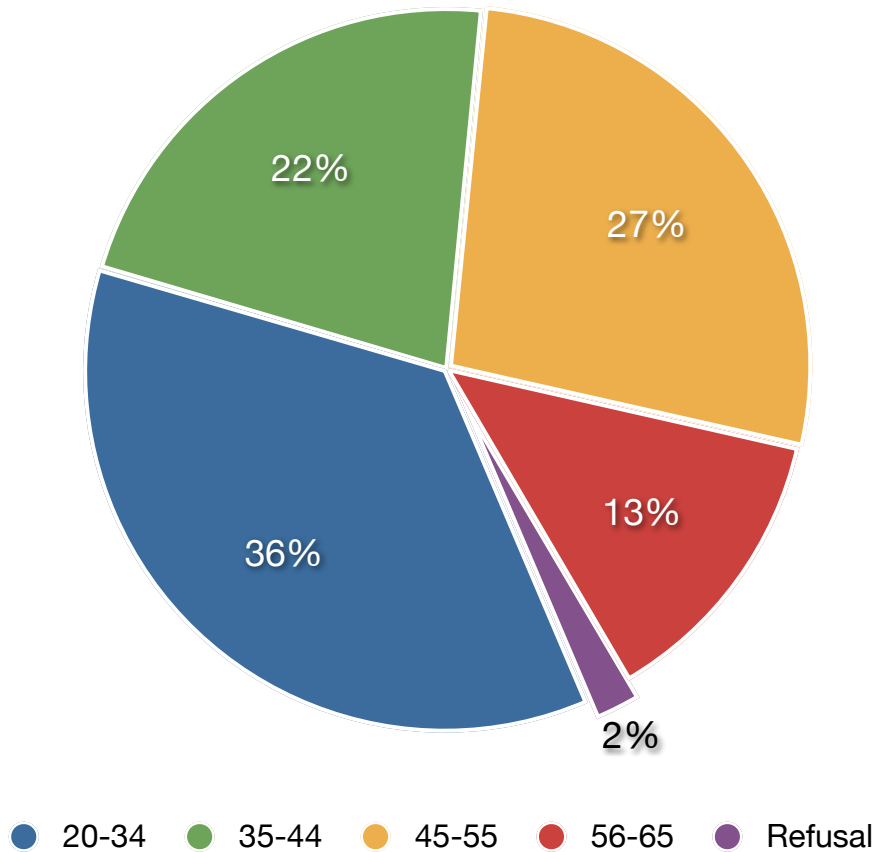
3.1B: Respondent's Sex (Observed)



The majority of respondents were observed to be male (65%) compared to female (33%) and only 2% of surveys were returned without any indication of sex. When compared with other question responses, some interesting and telling trends around sex appeared. More men (33% of men) than women (10% of women) indicated a lack of employment as their main reason for being homeless, whereas more women (71%) than men (45%) suffer from a physical disability. Comparatively, more men (50%) than women (14%) suffer from an addiction.

There are some differences in regards to the resources requested as well. More women (40%) than men (7%) indicate social/emotional problems as a reason for being homeless, which is perhaps why 43% of women (compared to 24% of men) indicated mental health services as a need in the community. 50% of women compared to 37% of men indicated a need for improved information services, and 50% of women compared to 34% of men indicated transportation as a need for the community.

3.1C: % of Respondents by Age Category



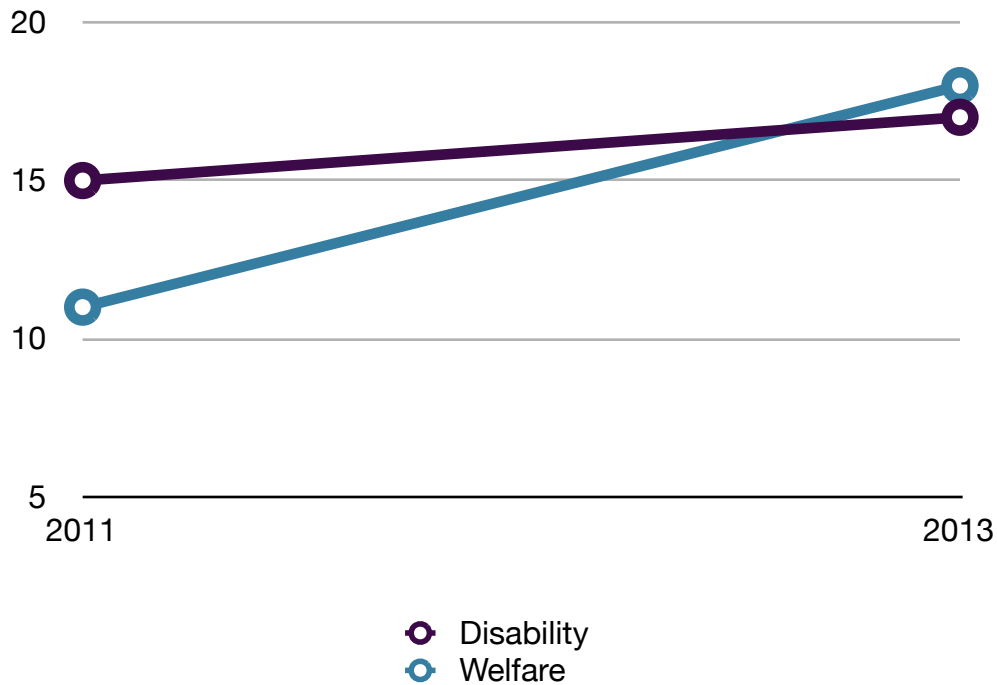
Similar to the 2011 results, the largest proportion of respondents are under the age of 60. In 2011, 68% of respondents marked themselves as being under the age of 49. In 2013, 58% of respondents noted being under the age of 55.

Those aged 20-34 are both more likely to be employed (67%) than other any other age groups (35-44 at 36%, 45-55 at 19%, 56-65 at 0%), but young people are also more likely to identify themselves as homeless (89%). Although those aged 20-34 are more likely to be employed, they are also the age bracket that is more likely (56%) than other age groups to indicate the lack of employment as a main reason for being homeless, whereas 42% of respondents aged 45-55 indicated that addiction was the main reason for being homeless, compared to other age groups (20-34 at 11%, 35-44 at 30%, 56-65 at 17%).

Older age brackets are more likely to indicate a physical disability as an issue; 80% of people age 56-65 indicated they have a physical disability, and 64% of people age 45-55 indicated they have a physical disability. Comparatively, 67% of people aged 20-34 indicated they have some sort of mental illness. However, those aged 45-55 were more interested in mental health (44%) than age 20-34 (22%). Age 20-34 group was more interested in transportation (89%) than any other age group.

3.2 Income

3.2A: # of Respondents with Welfare and Disability as main Source of Income

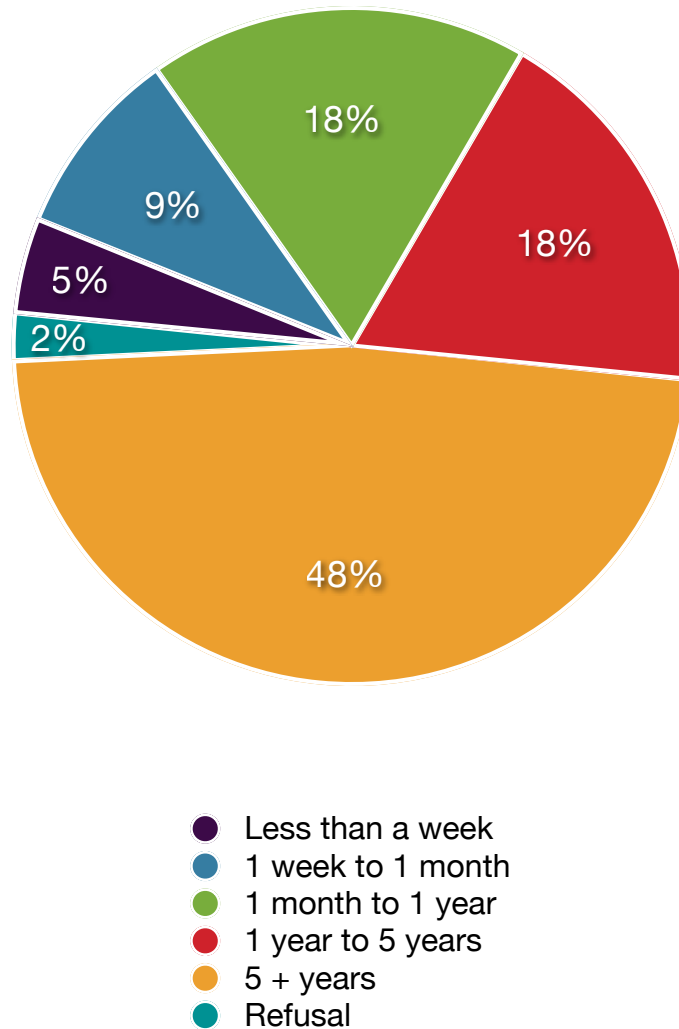


Again, similar to the 2011 count, the 2013 numbers haven't shifted too much around main sources of income. Disability and welfare were indicated as the two main sources of income for both counts. Figure 3.2A shows the number of respondents living off of disability and welfare as their main source of income in 2011 (15 and 11) compared to those in 2013 (17 and 18). It also indicates that welfare has jumped slightly ahead as the main source of income. This may be because only 53% of respondents who identified being disabled also indicated disability as a source of income, but 40% of those disabled indicated welfare as their primary source of income.

The largest non-government sources of income for disabled people were employment and bottle collecting both listed by 25% of respondents. Of the respondents, those age 20-34 are more likely to panhandle (56%) than other age groups (35-44 at 18%, 45-55 at 7%, 56-65 at 13%) and those age 20-34 are more likely to be employed (67%) than other age groups (35-44 at 36%, 45-55 at 19%, 56-65 at 0%).

3.3 Duration and Geography

3.3A: Length of Time Having Lived In Oceanside Region

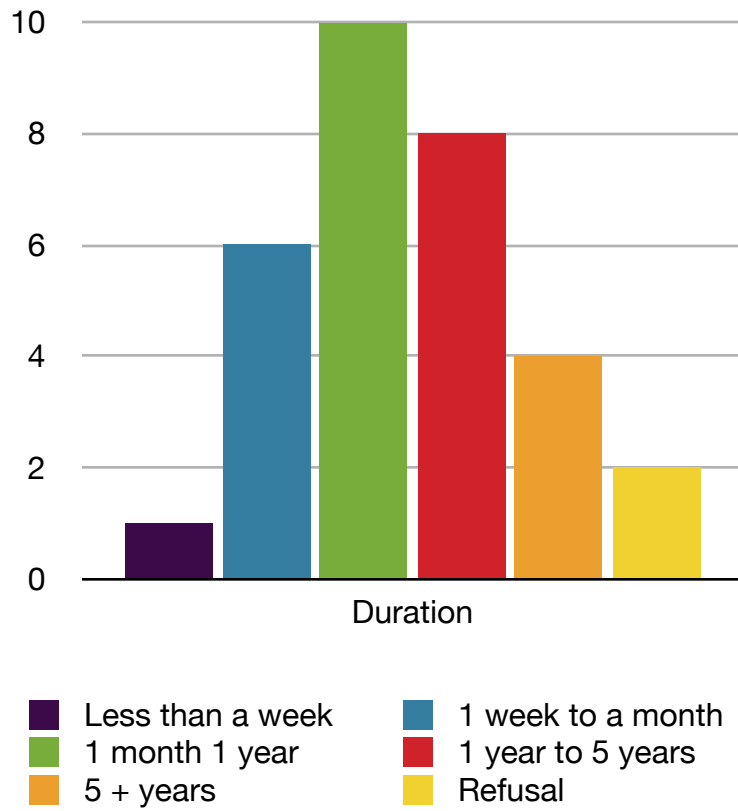


Though a few respondents indicated that they had come from places across Canada as far as Halifax and St. John, most of the respondents indicated that they had been living in cities in British Columbia. Within the Oceanside area 35% of respondent's last permanent residence was in Parksville, 9% was in Errington, and 7% in Qualicum Beach. Outside of the Oceanside area 9% of respondent's last permanent residence was in Victoria, 7% was in Vancouver, and 7% also listed Nanaimo.

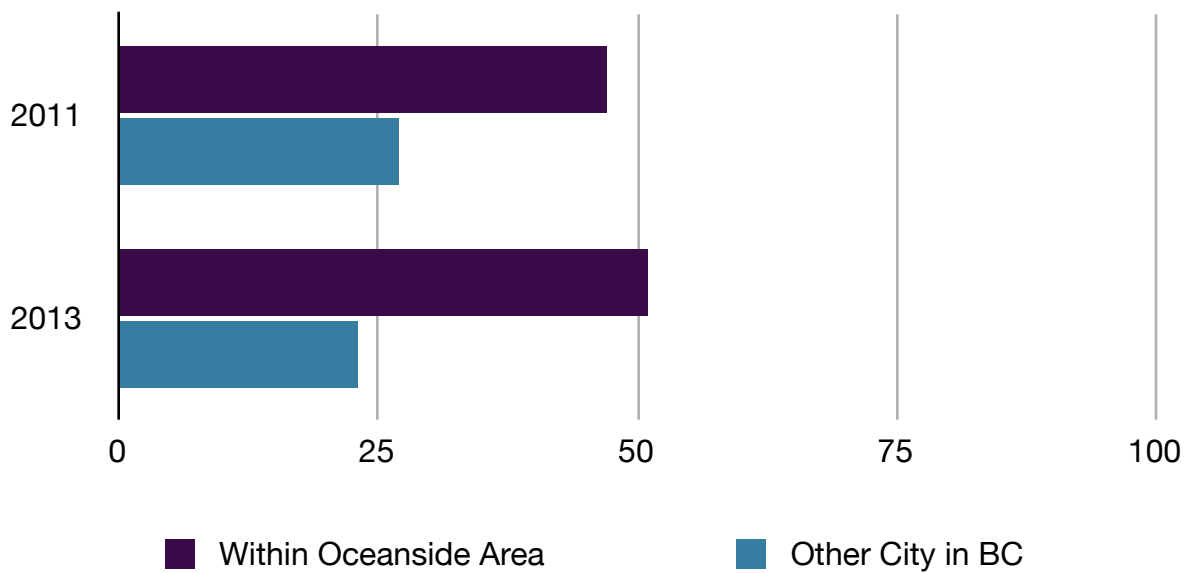
Figure 3.3A highlights that 48% of respondents lived in the Oceanside area for 5 or more years, and 18% had been living there for 1 to 5 years. Figure 3.3B provides a comparison demonstrating the duration of homelessness indicated by the number of respondents that identified as homeless.

Figure 3.3C shows a comparison between the 2011 and 2013 counts, based on those who listed the Oceanside area as their last place of residence versus other cities in BC. The 2011 and 2013 counts show similar results.

3.3B: # of Homeless Respondents by Duration of Homelessness



3.3C: % of Respondents by Place of Last Permanent Address



3.4 Mental Illness, Disability and Addiction

3.4A: % of Respondents Identifying a Physical or Mental Health Problem

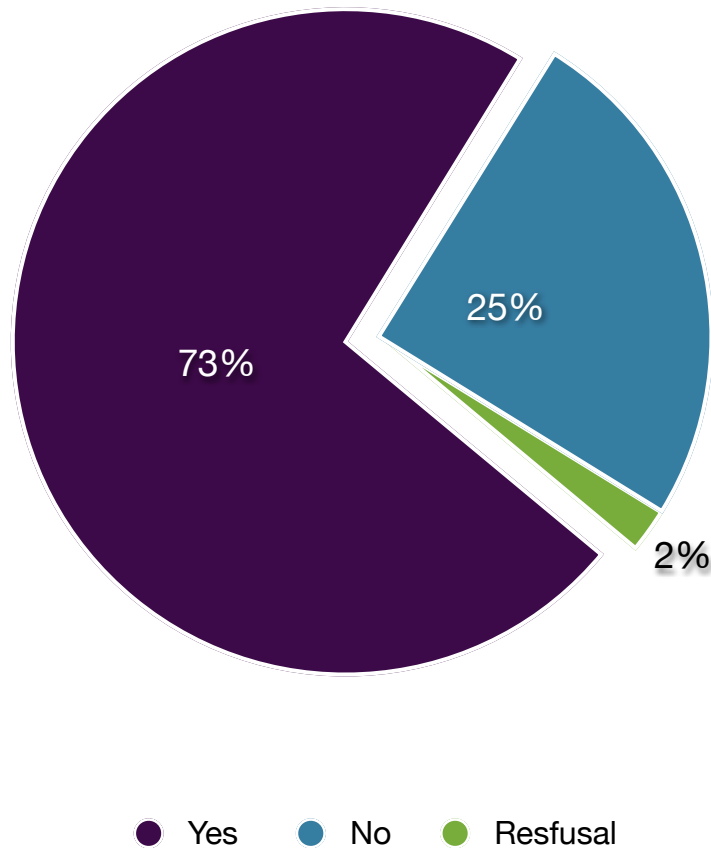


Figure 3.4A demonstrates that 73% of respondents indicated having a disability of some sort, which is up from 63% in the 2011 results. Of those 73%, only 53% indicated disability as a source of income. More women (71%) than men (45%) suffer from a physical disability, whereas more men (50%) than women (14%) suffer from an addiction. 80% of people age 56-65 indicated they have a physical disability and 64% of people 45-55 indicated they have a physical disability. 67% of people aged 20-34 indicated they have some sort of mental illness. 42% of people age 45-55 indicated addiction as a reason for being homeless, compared to other age groups (20-34 at 11%, 35-44 at 30%, 56-65 at 17%). Of the respondents who indicated a need for improved detox services in the area, 60% also indicated addiction as being the main reason as to why they were homeless.

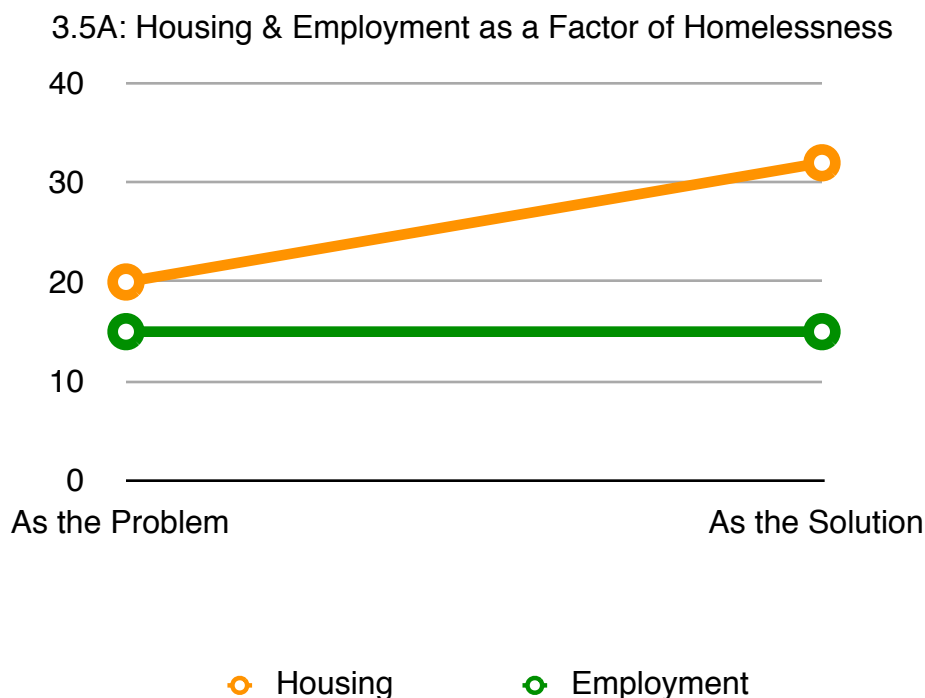
Of the respondents 43% of women compared to 24% of men indicated mental health services as a major need in the community to improve their quality of life. Also, 50% of women compared to 37% of men indicated a need for improved information services regarding things such as housing, addiction and mental or physical health. Those aged 45-55 were also significantly more interested in mental health (44%) than other age groups (20-34 at 22%, 35-44 at 27%, 56-65 at 14%).

3.5 Housing, Shelter and other Services

The largest identified need of respondents was affordable housing (73%). 64% of people who indicated they could not afford a place to live also indicated they felt a need for affordable housing in the community. When respondents were asked to list places they had stayed over the past month, 41% listed that they have been staying with a friend, 35% listed staying with family or relatives and 32% listed living outside on street. 21% of respondents listed 'other' with the most common response in that category being camping outdoors.

When asked about temporary or emergency shelter services, 86% of respondents indicated they would stay in a shelter. Furthermore, 31% of respondents who have already stayed at a shelter have been turned away before, and 73% of respondents who were turned away from a shelter indicated that it was due to the fact that the shelter was full.

Figure 3.5A demonstrates a relationship between the number of people who listed housing and employment as a main factor for being homeless compared with the number of people who also listed it as a solution for improving their quality of life. The same number of people (15) who considered employment to be a problem also listed it as a solution. However, more people (33) considered housing (supported/ low-income) to be a solution for improving the quality of life compared to only 20 people who indicated it was the main reason why they were homeless.



Other services that were desired by the respondents to improve their quality of life were bus passes (46%), regular income (46%) and information about housing services and support (41%). Only 22% of respondents suggested services in the "other" category, and of those responses the largest answer was food services (36%), followed by financial support (27%).

4.0 Qualitative Interview with Service Organizers

4.1 Introduction

As mentioned in the methodology, in order to try to counter balance limitations and to generate a more accurate number of homeless people in the Oceanside area, a second open-end survey questionnaire was developed to engage key volunteers that work with these people on a regular on-going basis. This survey is attached in Appendix B. Though this data is qualitative and based on perception instead of quantitative figures, it is still valuable information to include. This data provides some correction to the limitations of the standardized method.

4.2 Comparative Results

4.2.1 Volunteer Background

Three volunteer service organizers were consulted on their understanding of the homeless population in the Oceanside area. These three people were recommended by the Executive Director of the Society of Organized Services as people that could indicate where to set volunteers up for the May 8th count. However, it also seemed valuable to capture some of their personal information, which is based on their intimate relationship with the homeless people in the Oceanside community. Each of these volunteers provide free, self-organized services for homeless people. Two of them are the founders of Manna Ministry, which is a well-known service in the community that provides food, sleeping bags, tents, clothes, blankets, toiletries and other supplies to homeless people every Saturday, in Parksville. This service has been provided for the past five years. The other respondent had worked with Manna Ministry and now provides her own “free box” of supplies to homeless people living in the Errington community.

4.2.2 Estimate of Homeless People

The three volunteers were asked to give an estimate of how many homeless people they thought to be living between Nanoose and Bowser. The number was considered to range from a minimum of 50 to a maximum of 200, depending on the time of year. Though this is number is an observed estimate, it is based on years of experience and observation. One of the volunteers also noted that this number was based on the weekly call-out done by SOS, Vancouver Island Health Authority, Parksville Mental Health and Addictions, local churches and by word of mouth. One of the respondents indicated that the definition of homeless is “loose” as many of these individuals sleep on other people’s couches, or on back roads in cars.

4.2.3 Observed Trends

The most common observed trend regarding the homeless population was that the number of homeless people fluctuates greatly, specifically with more people being around during the summer time. One person explained that many people travel up from Victoria only to find that there are not enough services offered to help them live in the Oceanside area. Another noted that many tend to move south to Nanaimo during the winter, and that there is increased amount of couch surfing and sex trade work in the winter as well. It was also suggested that there are more at-risk and elderly homeless people in the area that have been accessing the volunteer’s services.

4.2.4 Services

The three volunteers were also asked to comment on why services they thought were needed to improve the quality of life of homeless people in the Oceanside area. Similar to the count results, supported/low-cost housing was thought to be a major priority, as recommended by all three of the volunteers. This housing would be a huge benefit, as suggested, as it could provide basic bathroom and shower services to improve cleanliness.

Another key suggestion was services related to physical and mental health, including addiction and detox services, as well as having more doctors available. Improved transportation was also suggested as a basic necessity that would link to the accessibility of services. One person commented and said “the City needs to stop dragging out the process and take action”. Overall, everyone seemed to agree that services simply needed to be consistent and regular to help create some sense of stability in these people’s lives. There was also a general consensus that the community needed to develop greater compassion and understanding towards these individuals living situations.

5.0 Summary

The 2013 Oceanside Homeless Count enumerated 67 individuals - 49 that were surveyed and 18 that were observed as likely being homeless. This point-in-time count is only a low-estimate of the number of homeless people are living in the Oceanside area. As mentioned in one of the qualitative interviews with a volunteer service provider there is thought to be up to 200 homeless people living in the Oceanside area, specifically as numbers peak in the summer.

The survey used for the 2013 count was adapted, and shortened based of the 2011 survey, which makes it challenging to indicate direct comparisons between the two counts. However, when compared to the 2011 Oceanside Homeless Count there are some general consistencies found between the two. First, the number of homeless people has not changed significantly, with four more people being counted in 2013. Similar to the 2011 results, more of the respondents are under the age of 50. Also, men still outnumber women respondents by almost double.

In both counts, affordable housing, employment and transportation all come up as the main responses to the question about what homeless people need as key resources for improving quality of life. Similar to the 2011 count, about the same percent of people indicated that they would stay in a shelter, and nearly the same percentage of people also indicated that they have been turned away from a shelter. Again, most respondents indicated their last permanent address being in the Oceanside area, specifically Parksville.

However, the 2013 count brought forth some new emerging trends. For example, the number of respondents indicating welfare as a main source of income has nearly doubled since the last count. Though the lack of affordable housing is still the main answer when asked about the reasons why respondents are homeless, lack of employment and addiction are now the next most common responses amongst homeless individuals, surpassing “social and emotional problems” which was the second most common response in the 2011. However, this may merely be a reflection of the survey tool itself.

It also appears that more people in the 2013 count have been homeless for over a year (39% up from 32%) and that less people have been homeless for under a year (55% which is down from 68%) when compared to the 2011 results. Perhaps indicating that more people are staying homeless longer.

More people listed their last permanent address as being from within the Oceanside area or BC, and though few respondents indicated that they were from outside BC, the proportion was negligible compared to the 26% which indicated as being from outside of BC in the 2011 count. Also up from 2011 is the total number of homeless people indicating that they have been staying on the street, which is up from 24% to 32% in 2013. These trends are important to note as they highlight trends in the Oceanside area, but also speak to larger systemic issues that may be a reflection of provincial and national governance.

To close, we would suggest that a revision of the standardized method be implemented, either locally or provincially. The limitations in the research is a direct product of the methodology and not the volunteers, participants, or organizers of the count. The practice of identifying homelessness using this particular standardized methodology does not bode well in rural areas, unless there are well established services set up. A methodology that is designed for enumerating urban homeless people does not necessarily work as well in large, rural areas such as the Oceanside region⁴. Consequently, a cyclic issue develops where generating a low-estimate of the true population results in less funding and resources than is required. Then without proper support or services many rural homeless people, or at-risk people, continue to go uncounted as there fails to be a stable point of contact to engage them.

⁴ Sparc BC, Metro Vancouver Homeless Count Assessment, January 2011

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3. Jackson, G.A, Oceanside Task Force on Homelessness: Oceanside Homeless Count, August 2011.
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6.0 Appendix

Appendix A:
2013 Oceanside Homeless Count Survey

Oceanside Task Force on Homelessness Homeless Count SURVEY QUESTIONS

Introduction: *The Oceanside Task force on homelessness is surveying all youth and adults in the Oceanside area who are homeless. The answers you provide will be used to assist homeless advocates, service providers and governments in better serving the needs of the homeless population. The survey is composed of 19 questions and will take approximately 5 minutes to complete. You may decide to not participate in the survey at any time. You may also request to skip any questions we ask. The answers you provide will remain anonymous and will not be used as means of identifying you as an individual.*

Note to interviewer: Information obtained through the screening process will be used, please keep all information obtained.

Initial Screening

1. Have you already been asked to answer this survey already today?

- Yes (Thank you, end survey)
- No
- Refusal

2. Do you currently own or rent a place of residence?

- Yes (Thank you, end survey)
- No

- Refusal

3. Do you currently consider yourself to be homeless?

- Yes

- No
(Thank you; end survey)
- Refusal

4. The survey will take about 5 minutes. May I ask you a few questions?

- Yes

- No (Thank you, end survey)
- Refusal (Thank you, end survey)

Initial screening ends

5. What is your age?

- Under 19
- 20 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 to 55
- 56 to 65
- Over 65
- Refusal

6. Do you identify yourself an Aboriginal person?

- Yes
 - Metis
 - First Nations
 - Other: _____
- No
- Refusal

7. Do you identify with any other ethnic or cultural minority group?

- Yes
- No
- Refusal

8. What city is/was your last permanent address?

9. How long have you been in this area?

- Less than 1 week
- 1 week - less than 1 month
- 1 month - less than 6 months
- 6 months - less than 1 year
- 1 year - under 5 years
- 5 years or more
- Refusal

10. Can you please list all the places you have stayed overnight within the last month? [check all that apply]

- Extreme Weather Shelter
- Shelter
- Safe house
- Transition house
- Detox facility or recovery house
- On the street or outside (park, doorway, tent)
- Hospital
- With a friend

- With relative/family
- Car/garage
- Public building
- Foster care
- Jail or prison
- Rental home/apartment
- Subsidized/social housing
- Own a home
- Other: _____
- Refusal

11. Would you stay at a shelter if you needed to?

- Yes
- No - If no, can you briefly tell me why?

12. Have you ever been turned away from a shelter?

- Yes;
 - If yes, was it due to a lack of availability or space at the shelter?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Refusal
- No
- Refusal

13. What are the main reasons you are without your own place to live?

- Can't find a place (rental availability)
- Can't afford a place
- Evicted
- Moving or Stranded
- Abuse
- Addiction

- Relationship breakdown
- Family Conflict
- Transitioning from corrections and/or treatment facility
- Lack of employment
- Low wage
- No ID/ references
- Social/emotional challenges
- Medical problems

- By Choice
- Other: _____
- Refusal

14. How long have you been without a place of your own?

- Less than 1 week
- 1 week - less than 1 month

- 1 month - less than 6 months
- 6 months - less than 1 year
- 1 year - under 5 years
- 5 years or more
- Refusal

15. Do you have somebody who stays with you?

- Yes;
 - If yes, who?
 - partner/spouse
 - dependent (under 19)
 - pet
 - Other _____
 - Refusal
- No
- Refusal

16. What is your main, if any, source(s) of income? (Check all that apply)

- No income
- Welfare / Income assistance
- Disability benefits
- Employment Insurance (EI)
- Family/friends
- Pension
- Inheritance
- Employment
 - Casual
 - Part-time
 - Full-time
- Panhandling
- Busking/ Street performance
- Sex trade work
- Illegal income/ activities
- Recycling (binning, bottle collecting)
- Other: _____
- Refusal

17. Do you currently have any physical or mental health problems?

- Yes;
 - If yes, which of the following health problems do you have?
 - Medical condition
 - Physical disability
 - Addiction
 - Mental illness
 - Refusal
- No
- Refusal

18. What resources, if any, would you need to help improve you quality of life?

- Does not need to improve quality of life (currently content)

- Affordable housing (housing)
- Bus passes
- Computer skills training
- Literacy
- Education
- Detox services
- Information about housing services and support
- Internet access
- Employment
- Mental health support
- Phone and/or voice mailbox
- Less discrimination due to:
 - Pets
 - Children
 - Ethnicity/race
 - Criminal record
 - Other _____
- Regular income
- Shower/laundry facilities
- Transportation
- Other _____

- Refusal

19. Do you have any other questions or comments about this survey?

Thank you for participating in our survey. We will be providing the results to decision makers in our region to better plan programs and services.

Here is a token of our appreciation [provide care package] and our contact information in case you have any questions or would like further information in regards to this survey.

Thank you again for your assistance.

Survey completed by: _____

Date and Time: _____

Location: _____

*** (Observed: Do not ask) What is the observed gender of the respondent?**

- Male
- Female

- Unknown

Appendix B:
Survey for Service Organizers

Qualitative Interview Questions for Volunteers:

Respondent's Name:

Occupation:

Can you please describe briefly how you are involved/ the work you do with the homeless population in the Oceanside area?

How many homeless people do you estimate there to be living in the region (between Nanoose - Bowser)?

Can you describe any trends you may have observed in regards to the homeless population? (eg: more people homeless in the summer, more couch surfing in the winter, etc)

Based on the conversations you have had with any at risk or homeless people, what services do you think are needed to help these individuals improve their quality of life?

Can you describe the places where you think/know most of the homeless live? (eg in the woods, in the streets, on peoples couches, under bridges, etc)
