

Saskatoon's

VitalSigns[®]

2023

VitalFocus.

Homelessness in Saskatoon

Homelessness

Vital Focus on Homelessness in Saskatoon

This report is part of Saskatoon Community Foundation's Vital Signs program. Through a data snapshot, it takes a closer look at the issues and realities impacting homelessness in Saskatoon.

Housing is a human right. Every person deserves a home and support to be included in a community. In Saskatoon, hundreds of people, including women and their children, experience ongoing or repeated periods of homelessness.

Successfully housing people who face social, economic, and mental health challenges requires assistance with these challenges and change to the social systems in place. Addressing the underlying causes of homelessness involves much more than providing a dwelling.

People living on low income can access only a small part of the available housing market, with limited options, often in areas that experience poverty, crime, and drugs.

In addition to these barriers is the hard reality: there is not enough available housing in our community, and not nearly enough affordable housing.

The evidence of homelessness is readily visible: the growing numbers of people sleeping rough and the many tent encampments. Saskatoon needs a coordinated strategy for a continuum of housing services and supports, so people can get the help they need when they need it.

What does "homelessness" mean?

The Canadian Homelessness Hub defines homelessness as "the situation of an individual, family, or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect means and ability of acquiring it."

Homelessness occurs due to complex social and personal factors and is impacted by many connected systems, sectors and services. Any response toward ending homelessness must be aware of these complexities.

Chronic Homelessness

In 2022, **59%** of people experiencing homelessness reported they had no permanent address for more than six months (up from 55.3% in 2018), and **41%** reported non-chronic homelessness.

SOURCE: CUISR



Functional zero homelessness in a community means that episodes of homelessness are RARE, BRIEF and DO NOT REOCCUR.

SOURCE: Canadian Homelessness Hub

In Saskatoon, achieving this would require coordination of community services, public policy and the full array of the available housing options through many providers, including government, community organizations, property managers, and private landlords.

WHO is homeless?

550

people experiencing homelessness on April 28, 2022



48.2%
first experienced homelessness as adults



42.6%
as youth



8.3%
as children



In Saskatoon, **90%** of people experiencing homelessness are Indigenous. Solutions need to embrace Indigenous worldviews and involve Indigenous leadership.



“Indigenous homelessness is a human condition that describes First Nations, Métis and Inuit individuals, families or communities lacking stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means or ability to acquire such housing. Unlike the common colonialist definition of homelessness, Indigenous homelessness is not defined as lacking a structure of habitation; rather, it is more fully described and understood through a composite lens of Indigenous worldviews. These include: individuals, families and communities isolated from their relationships to land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages and identities. Importantly, Indigenous people experiencing these kinds of homelessness cannot culturally, spiritually, emotionally or physically reconnect with their Indigeneity or lost relationships”.

Jesse Thistle/Aboriginal Standing Committee on Housing and Homelessness, 2012

90.1%
are Indigenous

50% male

20% children and youth

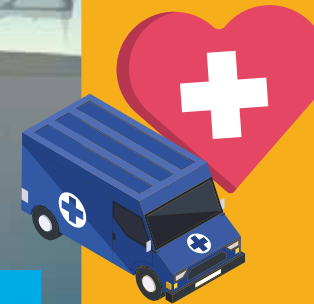


47% adult

SOURCE: CUISR
No age was given for 32% of participants.

Health Challenges

Providing housing/homes for vulnerable people is no simple matter of finding an affordable dwelling. Many people who have experienced chronic homelessness have complex health needs.



36%
reported learning or cognitive challenges

48%
had a physical limitation

53%
experienced residential school/intergenerational trauma

53%
managed an illness or medical condition

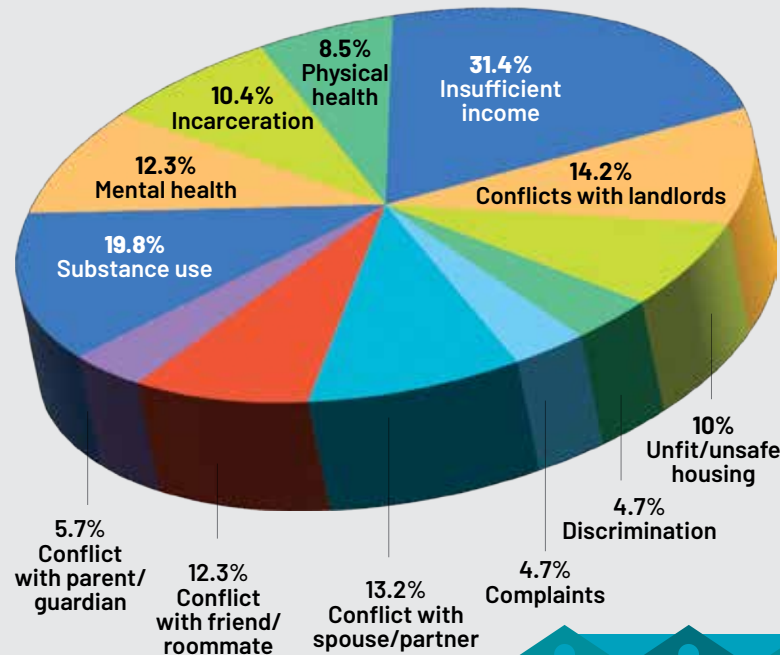
67%
had a mental health issue

86%
reported dealing with a substance abuse issue

SOURCE: CUISR

Can People Find Housing?

Causes of Housing Loss

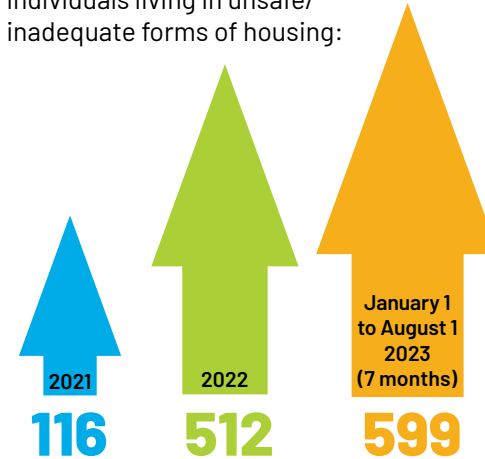


SOURCE: CUISR

Growing Number of Encampments

With shelters at capacity and affordable rental vacancies at the lowest levels in years, many are turning to unsafe alternatives.

Saskatoon Fire Department (SFD) interactions involving unhoused individuals living in unsafe/inadequate forms of housing:



Of Saskatoon's 67 neighbourhoods, 56 contained encampments as of August 1. In 2022, 53 neighbourhoods hosted at least one encampment.

Affordability and Core Housing Need



For households earning the lowest 20% of income, only 7% of properties in Saskatoon are affordable to rent. These units are mostly 1-bedroom or smaller—unsuitable for families.

Saskatoon's Rental 2023 Vacancy Rate

3.4%

(Lowest since 2014)

SOURCE: CMHC

Finding an affordable dwelling space is a major challenge in 2023. Across Canada, low rental vacancy rates, particularly for affordable housing stock, are concerns for local communities. In Saskatoon, wait times for affordable housing are rising sharply as stock becomes harder and harder to secure.

According to Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP), modeling shows the investment in new affordable rental housing in Saskatoon needs to be at least **178 units annually**. Over the past eight years, the average new investment has been **81 new units per year**.

Saskatoon collectively needs to be doing more, including testing new housing models, renovating existing stock and attracting new partners to the affordable housing sector. Significant resources must be mobilized to improve the situation, and there is no fast or easy solution.

SOURCE: SHIP, 2021

The "Housing Continuum"



SOURCE: United Way Halifax, modified from CMHC

Affordability

Saskatoon population in **unaffordable** housing:

- 16.6%** of total population (1 in 6)
- 11.2%** of owners
- 30.7%** of renters

3x

as many renters live in housing they cannot afford.

SOURCE: StatsCan, 2021, Census Metropolitan Area, based on proportion of household total income spent on shelter costs.



Core Housing Need

Saskatoon population living in **unaffordable** (shelter costs more than 30% of income), **unsuitable** (overcrowded), **inadequate** (major repairs needed), or all three indicators:

- 8.1%** of total population (1 in 12 people)
- 3.2%** of owners
- 20.8%** of renters

7x

as many renters live in unaffordable, unsuitable or inadequate housing.

SOURCE: StatsCan, 2021, Census Metropolitan Area.

Can People Find Housing?

Barriers to Housing

People experiencing homelessness face many barriers and have overlapping needs for support:

- 68.1%** Money
- 60.3%** Help to find affordable places
- 52.6%** Assistance with housing applications
- 50.9%** Help with transportation to see housing
- 48.3%** Help getting I.D.
- 37.1%** Mental health support
- 31.0%** Help in addressing health needs
- 31.9%** Harm reduction support
- 22.4%** Help managing alcohol issues
- 20.7%** Disability accessibility

SOURCE: CUISR

Homelessness, Poverty and Income

Percentage of Income Spent on Housing



An affordable dwelling is one where the renter household is spending **no more than 30% of its gross income on rent.**

SOURCE: CMHC

YXE Average Two-Bedroom Rent, January 2023:

\$1,243

SOURCE: CMHC



Market Basket Measure

Canada's official poverty line for a family of four in Saskatoon, 2022:

\$52,018

 (\$4,335/month)

SOURCE: StatsCan

% of income Spent on Rent (at \$1,243): **28.7%**

Social Assistance

For a couple with two children in Saskatchewan in 2022, includes basic social assistance, federal child benefits, and federal and provincial tax credits:

\$35,089

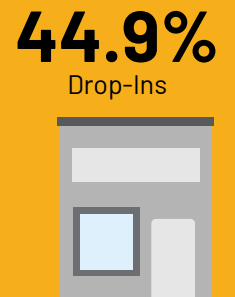
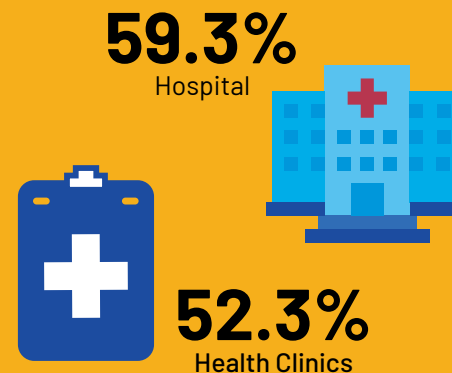
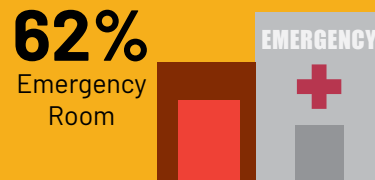
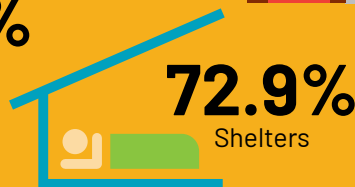
 (\$2,924/month)

SOURCE: Maytree

% of income Spent on Rent (at \$1,243): **42.5%**

Many people experiencing homelessness will not receive all of the benefits and tax credits included above, so they essentially receive even less assistance. Many employed people in Saskatoon cannot afford adequate and suitable housing.

Where do they seek help?



SOURCE: CUISR

Community Voices

"I was once there because of domestic violence, it's hard. You feel like a dog when you are running around. When you are homeless, you walk and walk, somewhere different every day."

Saskatoon Point-in-Time Homeless Count participant, 2022

"As homelessness primarily affects First Nation and Métis people in Saskatchewan, First Nations and Métis governments and organizations need to be funded and supported to lead the response; otherwise, we are repeating colonial cycles."

Jason Mercredi – Director of Social Infrastructure Métis Nation – Saskatchewan

"Every day, we help people who are looking for somewhere to stay. Our Drop-In is always full because people have nowhere to go. The community desperately needs more resources, both housing and supports."

Kayla DeMong – Executive Director
Prairie Harm Reduction

"Social assistance doesn't even cover rent."

Saskatoon Point-in-Time Homeless Count participant, 2022

"The YWCA welcomes women and children for any reason, but we're always full. Our rooms are only open as long as it takes to clean them. In 2022, YWCA Saskatoon turned away 4,253 women and children."

YWCA Saskatoon CEO Cara Bahr

Ending Homelessness: From Awareness to Action

In the face of so many challenges, what can the community do?

1. Advocate for policies that create lasting solutions to reduce homelessness.
2. Insist all levels of government, ministries, and departments act with a coordinated response.
3. Work in partnership with governments, community organizations and the private sector.

Make a donation to the **Give YXE Homelessness Fund at Saskatoon Community Foundation.**

Housing is a human right.



We would like to acknowledge the many community partnerships that inform and impact the data collected in this Vital Focus Report. Special thanks to Community University Institute on Social Research (CUISR), and Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP).



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saskatooncommunityfoundation.ca



saskatooncommunityfoundation.ca/homelessness