

Men's Homelessness in Dufferin County: A Needs Assessment

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Emily Duncan
Jess Furtado
Meghan Wrathall
Gurpreet Bedi

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Introduction

The Men's Homelessness Committee of the Town of Orangeville partnered with the Research Shop to conduct a needs assessment of the social services available to men experiencing homelessness in Dufferin County and identify areas for potential development. Our definition of men encompasses cisgender men, transgender men, genderqueer men, and two-spirit, non-binary, and gender non-conforming people who are man-aligned. We adopt a broad definition of social services that encompasses activities that aim to promote the welfare of others. The central research questions guiding this needs assessment include:

- What general social services exist in Dufferin County to support folks without shelter, and what social services exist with a mandate for supporting men?
- What are the gaps in existing services?
- Could current gaps be addressed with existing services?
- What gaps remain that need to be addressed? What possibilities exist to fill these gaps ?


This report begins with an overview of Dufferin County and is then followed by a literature review and an environmental scan. The literature review outlines the definition of homelessness used in the report and provides an overview of men's homelessness and rural homelessness. The literature review aims to contextualize the issue of men's homelessness in Dufferin County. An environmental scan follows this, outlining the services currently available in Dufferin County, and specifically those which support men experiencing homelessness. Gaps and areas for further growth are discussed.

The literature review and environmental scan informed the methods used for this needs assessment, which included two surveys. One survey gathered perspectives from social services providers working in Dufferin County to address the issue of homelessness. The other survey was distributed to the general community to collect feedback and help inform local strategies for men's homelessness. In the last section of the report, we present our results from these surveys and discuss some conclusions and potential next steps for the county.

Overview of Dufferin County

Dufferin County, located in Southern Ontario, is made up of eight townships: Amaranth, East Garafraxa, Grand Valley, Melancthon, Mono, Mulmur, Orangeville, and Shelburne. The population is 61,735 (2016) and is expected to grow to 85,000 by 2041. Most of the population (65%) live in Grand Valley, Orangeville, and Shelburne. Thirty-five per cent of Dufferin County's population live in rural areas.

Nine percent (9%) of residents are considered low income, with greater proportions in Melancthon (15%), Grand Valley (12%), Mulmur (10%), and Shelburne (10%). Single parents, Indigenous peoples, seniors, and visible minorities in this area have disproportionately higher rates of low income. Dufferin County has an unemployment rate of approximately 6%, similar



to the provincial rate of 5.5%. Of those who are employed, nearly three-quarters travel outside the region for work.¹

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) considers housing affordable if it costs less than 30% of a household's total income, before tax (CMHC, 2018). Approximately 45% of renters and 21% of homeowners spend more than a third of their household income on shelter, indicating housing affordability is an issue in the area.

Literature Review

Defining Homelessness

In this project, homelessness is defined as being (1) unsheltered, (2) emergency sheltered, (3) provisionally accommodated, and (4) at risk of homelessness (Kauppi et al. 2017).


1. Unsheltered: No access to shelter or living in places not intended for human habitation (e.g., in vehicles, in garages, attics, buildings, or other spaces not designed as housing, in makeshift shelters, RVs and trailers, or tents).
2. Emergency sheltered: Living in housing following crisis such as abuse, natural disaster, or damage to current home (e.g., domestic violence, fire, floods)
3. Provisionally accommodated: Insecure housing supports offered by an individual's network for a limited period (e.g., couch surfers, night-to-night motel or hostel rentals, in or transitioning out of institutional care such as release from prison, residential treatment, group home).
4. At risk of homelessness: Precarious living situations that may end at any time (e.g., life crises, inappropriate or substandard housing, other risk factors)

Men's Homelessness

The current project has been specified to consider the needs of man-aligned individuals, given the number of men experiencing chronic homelessness in Dufferin County, and perceived lack of social services and supports. There are discussions about the strengths and limitations in conceptualizing homelessness and offering housing services based on gender, which are beyond the scope of the current report (see Harvey & Streich, 2018, for example, for a Canadian perspective). Within and beyond this discussion is the need to recognize individuals' experiences not only based on their gender but also on their intersecting identities (Parker & Leviten-Reid, 2021).

Intersectionality can be understood as the advantages and disadvantages (or privilege and oppression) that people experience based on their overlapping social and political identities (e.g., sex, gender, race, cultural associations, sexuality, class, ability) (Crenshaw, 1989). For example, men may possess privilege based on their gender and experience oppression based on their social positioning as unhoused and further oppressions if they are disabled and/or have medical and/or mental health issues. Thus, each experience of

¹ All data from Statistics Canada 2016 Census Profile.



homelessness, even among men, is unique and should be understood as such, even where consistencies exist within this group.

Rural Homelessness

"Rural homelessness is thought to be pervasive due to high rates of poverty, unemployment and underemployment, lack of affordable housing and isolation geographically from urban centres" (NHCHC, 2013).

Homelessness in rural areas is less studied and understood than in urban areas (Waegemakers Shiff et al., 2015). Rural homelessness is considered a "hidden" issue, as people living in absolute homelessness are less visible in public spaces (Kauppi et al., 2017). Instead, people without housing may be 'living rough' outdoors, in inappropriate or unstable housing situations, or accessing temporary supports from social networks (Kauppi et al., 2017). In Canada, people identifying as Indigenous, survivors of childhood abuse, and with multiple disabilities are most likely to have histories of hidden homelessness (Rodrigue, 2016). According to the General Social Survey (2016), hidden homelessness is more prevalent in rural than urban areas in Ontario.


The invisibility of homelessness may be exasperated in rural areas where local attitudes reflect an idealism, including denial of issues associated with city living (Milbourne & Cloke, 2006). People with lived experience of homelessness in rural areas have described using strategic ways of maintaining invisibility to avoid being labelled as homeless (Cloke et al., 2000). Additionally, local service providers identified that rural homelessness remains hidden because this group may not themselves identify as being homeless (Kauppi et al., 2017). Moreover, they may not be aware of or feel that they are eligible for local support services (Kauppi et al., 2017).

Even when there is awareness of services, homelessness supports are more accessible and available in urban centres than in rural areas. Transportation is a significant issue for unhoused people in both accessing distanced services as well as remaining connected to the community (Forchuk et al. 2010). When housing supports are not available in rural areas, accessing emergency shelter requires disconnecting from current networks and supports and relocating to a new, potentially unknown area (Cloke et al., 2001). The relocation of homeless people into urban areas reinforces the idea that homelessness is an urban issue and undermines options for local (rural) supports (Cloke et al., 2001). Homelessness in Ontario is known to be a transient experience, with people moving in and out of urban and rural areas (Kauppi et al., 2017), necessitating the need for services across locations.

Service Provision

Overcoming homelessness is not just providing housing or shelter, but a sense of home (Watson, 1998). A home represents a place of belonging, and housing supports should also consider social belongingness as a critical goal (Burns et al., 2018).

Federal Canadian homelessness policy employs a 'housing first' approach, which prioritizes connecting people with stable housing and then continuing to build on their individual strengths



and goals to potentially engage with other supportive services. The Canadian 'housing first' definition is based on the following five principles:

1. Rapid housing with supports
2. Offering clients choice in housing
3. Separating housing provision from other services
4. Providing tenancy rights and responsibilities
5. Integrating housing into the community (Government of Canada, 2019)

Interviews from men with lived experiences of homelessness in Montreal identified that intrusive and rigid rules within supportive housing and discrimination (e.g., racial, religious, sexuality) contributed to feelings of exclusion (Burns et al., 2018). Agency, choice, and meaningful relationships with staff contributed to a sense of belonging (Burns et al., 2018). In urban Canadian settings, unhoused men have described service providers as “faceless”, devoid of relationship, and further reinforcing the need for consistent social groups (Daiski, 2007; Persaud et al., 2010). Even in settings where people are physically present, social disconnection has the same adverse consequences on health and wellbeing as isolation, especially for men (White et al., 2020). Social isolation is worsened by factors such as age, poverty, low levels of education, health concerns, and living in rural areas without a vehicle (White et al., 2020).

Canadian men with lived experiences of homelessness reported that in the absence of community relationships and in the realities of risk and crime committed toward homeless people (e.g., theft, abuse), maintaining routine and close social ties became of greater importance (Persaud et al., 2010). As social services are typically centralized in larger urban areas (Ryser & Halseth, 2012), homeless people from rural areas are often required to leave their routines, supports, and resources. This makes identifying and accessing shelter services more challenging, especially if they do not have contacts in these urban areas.

The services required by men experiencing homelessness extend beyond those of housing. Ontario studies have found that rates of health issues, including mental health concerns and comorbidities, are very high among homeless folks, especially those who are chronically homeless (Kauppi et al., 2018). The medical and mental health needs of unhoused individuals must be considered and should be integrated into shelter services. On-site clinics not only improve health accessibility and outcomes for mental health, wellbeing, and lifespan, but also reduce hospital admissions (Brown et al., 2019). Reports from men with lived experiences of homelessness also highlight the importance of available psychosocial services, not only to support individuals experiencing homelessness, but also as a strategy to address the mental health concerns that lead people into and perpetuate homelessness (Persaud et al., 2010).

A trans-Canadian study found that individuals in rural areas were, on average, the least willing to invest in homelessness initiatives in comparison with residents from mid-size cities as well as suburban and urban areas (Doberstein & Smith, 2019). As population size increased, so too did willingness to invest; additionally, greater investments were supported by individuals who viewed homelessness more often (Doberstein & Smith, 2019). People from larger cities may migrate to smaller towns, idealizing these places as simpler and without the issues more visible in urban centres (Cloke et al., 2001). Programs designed to address homelessness, threatened such idealism and lost favour with local residents, who perceived programs targeting toward “housing” more palatable than “homelessness” (Cloke et al., 2001).

Estimating Homelessness in Dufferin County

Dufferin County implemented a By Name List (BNL) on May 1, 2019. The BNL is a tool to identify the most vulnerable community members who were experiencing homelessness and connect them to services to find and maintain housing. Dufferin County's progress on the BNL can be publicly accessed online, which demonstrates a trend toward reducing homelessness (Built for Zero, 2021b).


In addition to the BNL, Dufferin County also completes Point-in-Time (PiT) counts biannually. PiT counts are one day outreach events that attempt to count all homeless people in a specific area at a specific time. Teams strategically complete counts of homeless people and request participation through surveys within local agencies (e.g., shelters, food banks, medical centres) and in the community. Given the invisibility of homelessness in rural areas, PiT counts are important to understand the scope of homelessness more accurately (Hall, 2017).

The most recent PiT count occurred in 2018. The COVID-19 pandemic pushed the PiT count scheduled for April 2020 to April 2021, and this data is not yet available. The PiT count completed in 2018 was combined with a Registry Week. The purpose of a Registry Week is to attempt to register all homeless individuals on the by-name list and connect them with local agencies and services (Hall, 2017). A Registry Week is similar in structure to a PiT count, in that local agencies and volunteers systematically plan events and station themselves in places to attempt to interface with all homeless people in a given area over one week (Hall, 2017).

In 2018, 73 individuals were approached by the PiT count team, of which 29 people did not fit the criteria for homelessness. Potential participants were asked (among other questions) where they stayed on the night of the PiT count. They were considered homeless if they were unsheltered, transitionally sheltered, or emergency sheltered. If someone stayed in their own home or were living long term with others, they were screened out of the survey. Additionally, eight people were identified as potential participants, but were not approached to complete the survey, the reasons for which were unknown.

Forty-five (45) people were identified as homeless, 44 of whom consented and completed the survey. Additionally, five minors were identified in the study as homeless but not included given their age. The PiT counts decreased significantly in 2018, as compared to the previous survey in 2016, which included 78 respondents (Dufferin County, 2018). In contrast to this decrease in Dufferin County, the national PiT count averages increased (Canada, 2021). This increase was attributed in part to more effective implementation of enumeration strategies (Canada, 2021).

Of the 44 individuals surveyed in the 2018 PiT count, 4 (9%) reported that they were unsheltered, 19 (43%) were emergency sheltered, and 21 (48%) were temporarily sheltered (i.e., someone else's place [n=9, 21%], motel [n=3, 7%], or transitional shelter [n=9, 21%]) (Dufferin County, 2018). Nearly half (45%) of respondents reported experiencing chronic homelessness, 34% episodic homelessness, and 20% both chronic and episodic homelessness (Dufferin County, 2018). A majority (86%) have stayed in an emergency shelter in the past year (Dufferin County, 2018). Importantly, those at risk of homelessness were not captured by this PiT survey.



The 2018 PiT count recorded 22 (50%) men, 20 (45%) women, and 2 (5%) transgender or gender nonconforming people (Dufferin County, 2018). In comparison to the 2016 PiT count, which reported a majority of women (54%), the most recent counts found greater numbers of men and gender nonconforming people (Dufferin County, 2018). Sixteen percent (16%) identified within the LGBTQ2S+ community, which is also an increase from 2016 (Dufferin County, 2018).

The mean age of respondents was 31 years old, younger than the 43-year-old average in 2016 (Dufferin County, 2018). Nearly half (21) of the respondents were aged 16-24 (Dufferin County, 2018). Most participants (64%) reported that they were homeless for the first time prior to their 18th birthday.

Indigenous people and veterans were overrepresented in the 2018 PiT count (Dufferin County, 2018). Seven percent (7%) of participants reported that they had come to Canada as an immigrant, refugee/claimant; all within this group reported that they have lived in Canada for over ten years (Dufferin County, 2018). Overall, 46% of respondents reported living in Dufferin County for less than one year.

Factors Contributing to Homelessness

The pathways into homelessness are complex and the impressions they create impact perceptions and responses (Frankish et al., 2005). In a study of homeless men in urban Ontario, all participants reported complex psychological trauma in childhood, which the authors reported as consistent with other research suggesting high rates of traumatic history in this group (Woodhall-Melnick et al., 2018). Traumatic events are associated with mental and medical health issues, which can affect housing security; in turn, unstable housing can negatively impact health and wellbeing. Despite this history, the men in the study reported that relationship breakdowns or loss was the reason for their homelessness and difficulty regaining housing (Woodhall-Melnick et al., 2018).

Similarly, within Dufferin County, most participants reported that issues with relationships (e.g., conflict, abuse) as the top reason for homelessness, most often with a parent (perhaps due to the overrepresentation of youth in the sample) and then with a spouse (Dufferin County, 2018). Surveyed men most often reported that conflict with a parent (27%) and addiction (22%) were the reasons for homelessness at the given time (Dufferin County, 2018). 36% of all respondents reported that they had lived in foster care or a group home; this number was over twice as high for people who self-identified as Indigenous (Dufferin County, 2018).

Moreover, in Dufferin County, 82% of people experiencing homelessness reported at least one health condition. Just under three quarters (70%) reported a mental health issue, 55% reported an addiction, 48% an acute or chronic medical condition, and 32% reported a physical disability (Dufferin County, 2018). Comorbidities were also present: 18% reported all four health concerns and 34% reported an addiction as well as a chronic health issue or physical disability (Dufferin County, 2018). The Dufferin County PiT count report suggested that in comparison to the general population, local people experiencing homelessness were:

- Over ten times more likely to visit the emergency room
- Six times more likely to be hospitalized overnight
- Eleven times more likely to use ambulance services (Dufferin County, 2018)


One-fifth of respondents reported that they were homeless because their income could not cover the cost of rent (Dufferin County, 2018). Slightly fewer participants cited job loss, illness/medical condition, and/or unsafe housing as the reason for homelessness (Dufferin County, 2018). Most participants (41%) reported that they received income from social assistance, 30% from disability benefits, 4.5% from child and family tax benefits, 4.5% from GST refunds, and 2% from seniors' benefits (Dufferin County, 2018). 11% were formally employed and 2% were informally employed (Dufferin County, 2018). Eight of 44 people reported that they received no income (Dufferin County, 2018).

Environmental Scan

Several community stakeholders have identified that housing and homelessness have become a critical issue in Dufferin County. A recent survey of residents identified housing and homelessness as the second highest priority to be addressed by Dufferin County's Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan (Dufferin County, 2020). Additionally, in 2018, the Dufferin County Equity Collaborative (DCEC), made up of 26 local agencies, was formed when the Poverty Reduction Task Force and the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) Poverty Sub-Collaborative recognized potential benefits from collaboration. Together, they developed three priority areas, one of them being housing and homelessness. Overall, service providers recognize a need to provide streamlined services that focus on the social determinants of health, including access to safe and stable housing.

Some of the local efforts have been guided by Canada's National Housing Strategy, which has increased funding available directly to communities with the goal to reduce chronic homelessness by 50% by 2028. The program is bilaterally supported by the Ontario provincial government and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. As of 2019, this strategy has employed a 'housing first' approach. Priorities include addressing homelessness for Indigenous Peoples and targeting rural areas, such as those in Dufferin County (Government of Canada, 2018).

Through federal and provincial supports, Dufferin County has joined initiatives led by the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, such as the 20,000 Homes Campaign and Built for Zero (a program to achieve the goal a homelessness rate of zero). These programs use data (i.e., the BNL and the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System) to help understand the scope of the issue and build capacity through Coordinated Access systems. Coordinated Access means that at the service user level, there are 'no wrong doors' to access resources – all needing housing services are served under the same system of collaborative services, reducing barriers to entry and enhancing system collaboration. In Dufferin County, this central agency is the Coordinated Access Table (CAT). Local services (i.e., County of Dufferin Housing staff, Family Transition Place, Choices Youth Shelter, CMHA Peel Dufferin, Salvation Army, The Lighthouse, SHIP, Dufferin Area Family Health Team, White Owl Native Ancestry Association and Central West Local Health Integration Network) come together for weekly meetings at CAT. The role of each of these local services will be discussed in the next section of this report.



The CAT initiated an information campaign in December 2020 to ensure that the community, and men in particular, are aware of the BNL and the availability of Coordinated Access housing supports. Over 3,000 contact cards have been handed out in the community by partners including local shelters, the Canadian Mental Health Association, first responders, medical services, and businesses. The contact cards list seven organizations in Dufferin County that can provide support, their opening hours, websites and phone numbers, as well as the location of public payphones.

Dufferin County has been recognized by Built for Zero for its consistent and strong achievements towards maintaining quality BNL and Coordinated Access metrics and progress toward goals. The County reported that in 2020, chronic homelessness reduced by 50% and this decrease was sustained for at least three months. Despite its relatively small size, Dufferin County has been recognized as a leader by the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness in their efforts to reduce homelessness.


Housing and Homelessness Initiatives in Dufferin County

Dufferin County Community Services: Housing Services and Programs

Dufferin County has offered several funding initiatives for housing, as outlined in their ten-year housing and homelessness plan (Dufferin County, 2020). For low-to-moderate income households, Homeownership Assistance provides a forgivable loan to assist residents with a down payment on a house, up to 10% of the house cost (up to \$45,000). For those renting, the Rent Supplement Program tops up tenants' contribution (i.e., 30% of gross monthly household income) to private landlords at market rental cost. For those on housing waitlists, the Portable Housing Benefit offers qualified households funding for first and last month's rent of their choice in private market rentals. The County reported exploring innovative housing options, such as changing zoning, infill housing, and building policies to increase accessibility and affordability. The Rapid Housing Initiative is one federal funding opportunity in support of accelerated construction of affordable housing. Dufferin County was presented with this opportunity to consider applying in early 2021.

Provincially, the Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI) has provided funding through Housing Allowances to support those on the Housing Access Dufferin waitlist. The province also administers rental assistance funding through the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB). In Dufferin County, 57 Housing Allowances and 17 COHBs were provided (Dufferin County, 2020).

The Homelessness Prevention Program offers several funding supports for low-income households, including people accessing Ontario Works or ODSP (e.g., Ontario Electricity Support Program, Low Income Energy Assistance Programs). Within this larger program, urHome offers funding for local community partners (i.e., Choices Youth Shelter, Family Transition Place, and The Salvation Army) based on quarterly agency-determined "Units of Service", such as bed stays and support services. These contracts are funded by the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI, provincial). Finally, the Chronic Homeless Housing Allowance Program (CHHAP) is an allowance of up to \$821.00 per month to those who are chronically homeless and qualifies these individuals for direct support through Housing Services Workers.



As of 2020, a total of 688 social housing units were available in Orangeville, Shelburne, and Grand Valley. Of these, Dufferin County (2020) reported the following:

- 278 are housing provider units (e.g., non-profits, co-operatives)
- 225 are rent-geared-to-income (RGI) units
- 90 units are covered by rent supplement agreements
- 65 are affordable units
- 22 are supported units at McKelvie Burnside Village (a complex for specifically for seniors aged 60 and over)
- 8 are market units


Dufferin County (2020) reported that 334 households were housed within these units from 2013 to 2016. Despite this success, the housing waitlist is the highest it has ever been with an average of 643 households waiting. Time spent on the waiting list also increased to an average of four to eight years. The largest group waiting for services are seniors, as the population of Dufferin County is aging. Priority access to housing is given to individuals leaving abusive situations, including domestic violence, under Ontario Regulation 367/11. All on the waitlist for housing in Dufferin County can access an education program, *RentSmart*, about how to find and maintain good housing and relationships with landlords, with the intent to increase housing stability.

Dufferin County has committed to a Housing Allowance Program distributed by Family Transition Place and Choices Youth Shelter from April 2018 for up to five years (2023). The \$267,640 budgeted for this program is to be used to support individuals in finding and obtaining housing. This program also provides life skills education. Unfortunately, unhoused men are unable to benefit from these programs because these agencies prioritize services for women and youth.

To facilitate coordinated access, Dufferin County has contracted with the Dufferin Area Family Health Team (DAHFT) to fund two Housing Support Workers who directly work with individuals who are chronically homeless, as well as one Landlord Liaison who works directly with local landlords. Together, these workers implement and support the Coordinated Access Transitional Housing program, which began in December 2020 and will remain funded for two years. This initiative offers individuals identified as chronically homeless access to transitional units for up to three months. There are fourteen units available: ten in local motels and four through the Lighthouse. In putting together this report, a contact from the Lighthouse confirmed that these beds are no longer available.

Central West Local Health Integration Network (LHIN)

Under the umbrella of services offered by the LHIN are hospitals, home and community care, community support services (including assisted living), long-term care homes, and mental health and addictions services. Most relevant to the issue of men's homelessness are the satellite offices of Supportive Housing in Peel. One is in Orangeville at the Edelbrock Centre and the other is in Shelburne at the Mel Lloyd Centre. The Mel Lloyd centre offers users case management support. Additionally, this population may interface with the local hospital in Orangeville, Headwaters Health Care Centre, which is the only hospital in Dufferin County.



The Central West LHIN, along with all the above services, is represented at the CAT in keeping with the National Housing Strategy guidelines. Additionally, they are represented in the DCEC. This committee was developed from the local Poverty Reduction Task Force when the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) and the Poverty Sub-Collaborative joined together to address poverty in Dufferin County. There are 26 local agencies involved in the DCEC, including the United Way, Dufferin County Housing Services, Dufferin County- Managing Organizing Validating Engagement Strategy (DC-MOVES), SHIP, as well as community members.

CHOICES Youth Shelter

CHOICES Youth Shelter offers several services for youth and young adults who are 16-24 years old in Orangeville, including: emergency shelter, targeted independent living options, life skills, food and nutrition programs, wellness, and outreach programs. CHOICES Youth Shelter receives funding from Dufferin County to run the shelter.

Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Peel Dufferin

CMHA Peel Dufferin offers a continuum of mental health care for the Peel and Dufferin service areas. For individuals with mental health concerns, the McEvenue Home Works is a fund through CMHA that offers emergency financial assistance (up to \$2000) to individuals (16+) living with mental health concerns who are experiencing a housing crisis, to help secure or maintain housing in Peel and Dufferin. Further, there are supported housing programs for individuals (16+) with mental health concerns.

In general, the services offered to Peel Region are more robust than those offered in Dufferin. For example, CMHA services in Peel include an outreach service, which is not offered in Dufferin County. Further, for individuals who are experiencing both a mental health challenge and are charged with a criminal offense, Dufferin Court Support Services offers resources; however, this does not include housing supports, as Peel Region Mental Health and Justice Services offers.

Dufferin Area Family Health Team


The Dufferin Area Family Health Team (DAFHT) is a collaboration of medical and allied health professionals working together to support health and wellbeing in the community. DAFHT has five locations across Dufferin County in Orangeville, Shelburne, and Grand Valley, as well as multiple family physician sites. As mentioned above, Dufferin County and DAFHT collaboratively fund two local Housing Support Workers and a Housing Placement Worker.

The Edelbrock Centre & The Mel Lloyd Centre

The Edelbrock Centre in Orangeville is a hub for social services in Dufferin County. There is an intake clinic housed here in which SHIP staff assess and link individuals 16 years old and above who are at risk of homelessness to services and supports. This centre also provides mental health and addictions supports, which are delivered by William Osler Health Services. Orangeville Employment Resource Centre, jointly run with Georgian College, is also located here. Similarly, the Mel Lloyd Centre located in Shelburne offers an Employment Resource Centre and case management housing supports.

Family Transition Place

Family Transition Place (FTP) offers supports, including housing (e.g., emergency shelter, second stage housing) for individuals affected by gender-based violence, specifically



women and children. Their mission includes offering referrals to all who reach out for support, including men who have experienced sexual assault, who can access their crisis line and brief counselling. However, FTP does not provide housing supports to man-aligned individuals. FTP receives financial support from Dufferin County to support their housing initiatives.

Salvation Army

The Salvation Army is in Orangeville at New Hope Community Church and Family Services. Emergency support for basic needs is offered to people of all ages. If emergency shelter is required, the Salvation Army will arrange accommodation in a motel for up to a few days, depending on need. The Salvation Army receives funding for operations from Dufferin County specifically for housing supports.

In nearby Glencairn (Simcoe County), The Salvation Army runs Hope Acres, a mental health and addictions support programs for men over the age of 18 (The Salvation Army in Canada, 2021). The residential treatment program offers supports for substance misuse issues that may or may not also have mental health concerns. The program uses a trauma-informed lens. Programs are offered for up to six months and include individual and group counselling, psychoeducational supports, individual care planning, life skills and employment supports. Additionally, Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous programs are open to the public through Hope Acres.

Services and Housing in the Province (SHIP)

SHIP offers supportive housing services across Ontario, including housing support, tenancy support, rental assistance, property services, and conflict resolution. Within Dufferin County, SHIP supports seniors in 'aging in place', meaning that individuals have the health and social supports required to live safely in their homes and communities for as long as they wish and are able. This Assisted Living Program is offered in partnership with Dufferin County, out of Orangeville. As stated above, intake and referral supports, as well as case management, are offered through the Edelbrock Centre and the Mel Llyod Centre, community services hubs. SHIP seems to be leading the creation of short-term housing options from a motel to increase transitional housing spaces.

Like CMHA Peel Dufferin, there tends to be greater support available in Peel than in Dufferin County. In Peel Region, SHIP offers transitional housing, a Youth Village, Recovery Residence, Peace Ranch, and affordable market rent programs. In addition, they offer a Short Stay Crisis Support Program for individuals with mental health concerns in crisis and involved with the criminal justice system.

The Lighthouse

The Lighthouse offers a community meal program in Orangeville every weekday at lunchtime, which is sponsored by Good Friends Church. A contact at The Lighthouse reported that from November 2020 to May 2021 they were running a program through Teen Ranch to house men over 24 years of age.

White Owl Native Ancestry Association

The White Owl Native Ancestry Association offers holistic services for people who self-identify as First Nation, Inuit, or Métis, including outreach programs to connect families to services, such as housing.



Environmental Scan Summary

To summarize, we found that the majority of services supporting those experiencing homelessness is geared towards women and children. We reviewed the government programs and policies that have attempted to address the issue of homelessness at the federal, provincial, and county level. In addition, we identified 11 agencies within Dufferin County that are available to provide support to men experiencing homelessness. The main services provided include emergency shelter, mental health and other health services, and a community meal program. Some services are geared towards specific demographics, for instance, Choices Youth Shelter prioritizes youth ages 16-24 and the White Owl Native Ancestry Association aids individuals who identify as Indigenous. Overall, the environmental scan demonstrates a lack of services for men and that supports are centered in population centres like Orangeville.

Research Methods

The key research method used in this needs assessment was a survey. Using an online survey was an effective way to reach a wide range of participants in Dufferin County and to conduct research virtually due to pandemic restrictions. The project consisted of two separate surveys for different groups of participants. The first survey was specifically for social service providers working in Dufferin County who had experience addressing the needs of homeless individuals. Participants were recruited through email and included service providers that were identified through the environmental scan and who were recommended by the Men's Homelessness Committee of the Town of Orangeville. This survey was estimated to take no more than fifteen minutes. Twenty-nine (29) organizations were contacted to participate, sent one reminder email to encourage participation, with a total of 26 surveys completed.

The second survey was specifically for residents of Dufferin County to gather local perspectives and understandings about men's homelessness in the community. The survey was estimated to take no more than ten minutes. Participants were recruited by the Men's Homelessness Committee by sharing the link to the survey in the community and on social media. The Committee sent out a news release in the community to draw attention to the survey. Forty-four (44) Dufferin County residents completed the survey.

The research team designed the survey with feedback from the community partner. The survey was administered through Qualtrics. Ethical research protocols were followed, and a consent form preceded the survey. Data was collected in September 2021. Both surveys included a combination of closed and open-ended questions. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics in Qualtrics and Excel. Qualitative data from open-ended questions were analyzed with an open coding method to determine prominent themes. Then codes amalgamated into a codebook using Excel to determine similarities in responses and identify exemplifying quotes.



Results

Community Perspectives

Description of Respondents

Participants in the community survey were from the following areas:

Orangeville (77%, n=34)

Mono (9%, n=4)

Melancthon (5%, n=2)

Amaranth (5%, n=2)

East Garafraxa (2%, n=1)

Grand Valley (2%, n=1)

No individuals from Mulmur or Shelburne took part in the survey.

It was important to understand the ways that respondents had encountered homelessness within their lifetime because this information provides context for how respondents have developed their perspectives about homelessness.

- Two of the 44 respondents (5%) had experienced homelessness.
- Others had been involved with the issues of homelessness more indirectly, with seven respondents (16%) reporting that they had been involved with others experiencing homelessness and eight respondents (18%) stating that they had been indirectly involved with others experiencing homelessness such as through work or volunteering.
- The most common response to this question was that respondents had observed others experiencing homelessness (48%, n=21).
- Only six respondents (14%) reported that they had no experience with homelessness.

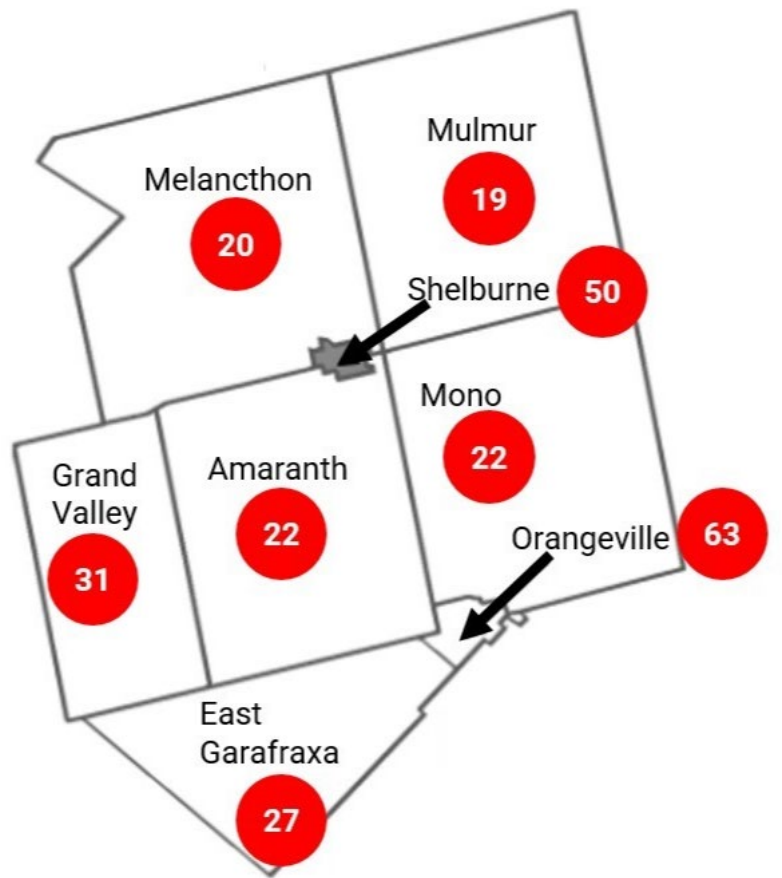
Awareness of Homelessness and Support Services

When participants were asked “In which regions in Dufferin County do you believe that men’s homelessness is an issue?”, their responses varied (Figure 1).

- All participants believe that men’s homelessness is an issue in Orangeville.
- Most participants (68%, n=30) believe it is an issue in Shelburne.
- Just over half (59%, n=26) believe men’s homelessness is an issue in Grand Valley
- The remaining five municipalities had similar perspectives, with 16 participants indicating that men’s homelessness is an issue in Mulmur, Mono and East Garafraxa and 15 for Amaranth and Melancthon.

Figure 1: Areas in Dufferin County Where Men's Homelessness is Perceived as an Issue

In which regions do you believe men's homelessness is an issue?
On a sliding scale of 1-100, where 1 is 'not an issue at all' and 100 is 'a significant issue', this is how the following regions measured on average:



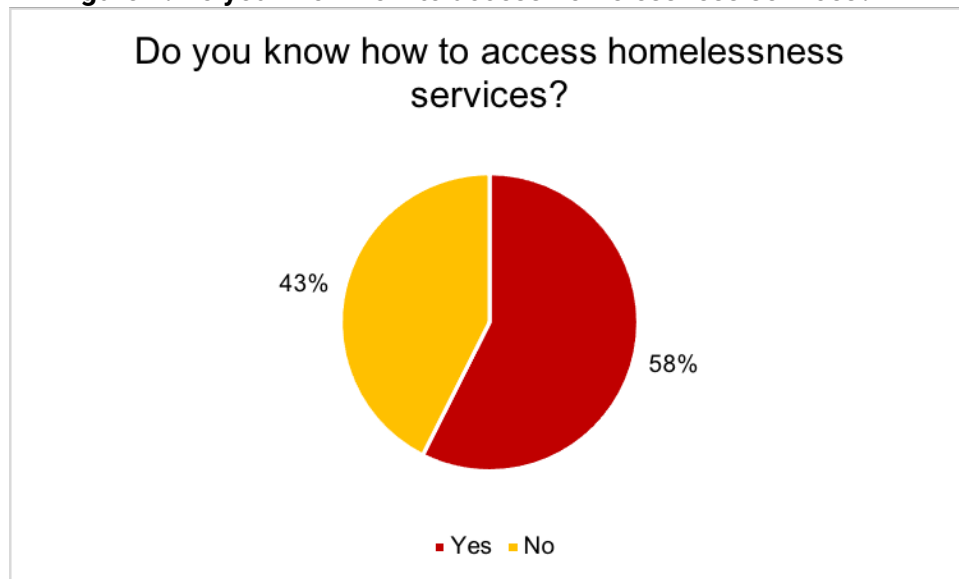
Participants were then asked, "In which regions of Dufferin County do you believe that men's homelessness is a visible issue?"

- 43 participants indicated that men's homelessness is a visible issue in Orangeville
- 19 indicated Shelburne
- 13 indicated Grand Valley
- 10 indicated Mono
- 8 indicated Mulmur and Amaranth
- 6 indicated East Garafraxa and Melancthon.

Next, participants were asked "Did/would you know how to access services to support someone experiencing homelessness?" A total of 40 participants responded (Figure 2)

- Just over half (58%, n=23) responded yes, they would know how to access services.
- 43% (n=17) responded that they would not know how to access services if they, or someone they knew, were experiencing homelessness.

Figure 2: Do you know how to access homelessness services?



Participants were then asked, "Are you aware of services (formal or informal) in Dufferin County that support men who are experiencing homelessness?" Response rates were similar to the previous question. 36 participants responded.

- 53% (n=19) stating yes, they would know how to access services.
- 47% (n=17) stating no, they would not know how.

The second part of this question asked respondents who answered yes, to list services they were aware of in an open-ended question. All 19 yes-respondents provided written examples.

- The most referenced service was the new men's shelter at Choices Youth Shelter (n=7).
- The following three services were referenced several times: Salvation Army (n=5), Dufferin County Services (n=4), and SHIP (n=3). In relation to Dufferin County, two participants noted that the "voucher/chit" system for motel stays were inadequate, however.
- The Lighthouse, Orangeville Foodbank, By-name-list, OPP, and CATH were each referenced two times.
- Edelbrock Centre, DAFHT, CHAP, FTP, Doormen's Shelter, and Churches were each referenced once.

Dufferin County and Homelessness

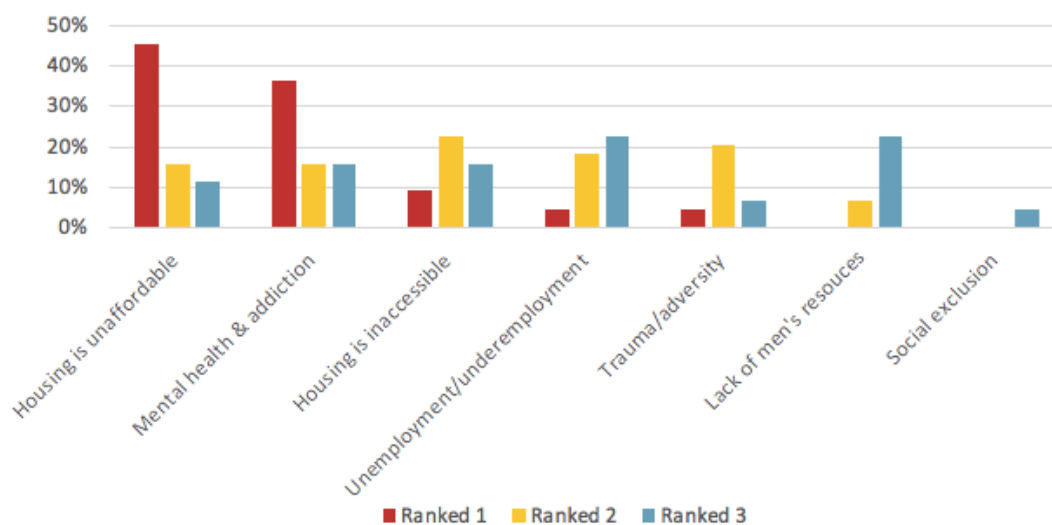
Respondents were asked to rank the order of what they believed were the main causes contributing to men's homelessness in their community (Figure 3).

1. The main cause reported was that housing is unaffordable, with approximately 45% (n=20) of respondents ranking this reason first. Another leading cause was mental health and addiction, with approximately 36% (n=16) of respondents ranking this reason as the primary cause.

2. Secondary causes were inaccessible housing (23%, n=10), unemployment and underemployment (18%, n=8), and exposure to trauma/adversity (20%, n=9).
3. Social exclusion was identified at the lower end of paths into homelessness with 66% (n=9) ranking it in seventh place, and other (91%, n=40) in the eighth place of the ranking.

Figure 3: Causes of Homelessness in Dufferin County

What do you believe are the main causes of homelessness in Dufferin County?



We wanted to learn from the community perspective if there were any unique circumstances in Dufferin County which would specifically affect men's access to housing.


- 44% (n=8) of respondents did not consider there to be any circumstances unique to Dufferin County.
- 56% (n=10) agreed that there was context specific to Dufferin County in understanding experiences of homelessness in their community.

When invited to further explain this context, respondents most often cited that Dufferin County lacked:

- A men's shelter in the area
- Addiction treatments
- Mental health resources

Other circumstances facing Dufferin County that were noted included:

- A lack of affordability/high cost of living in the area
- Fewer employment opportunities
- A lack of access to transportation



When asked about the strengths and challenges of the services offered to address men's homelessness in Dufferin County, most respondents stated that wait times were a critical challenge that needs to be addressed. Below is a list of key quotes from respondents regarding this issue:

- *"Services are offered during regular business hours - homelessness can occur at all hours of the day".*
- *"Having men wait two weeks before being placed on the Dufferin BNL is problematic. People have to fall into absolute homelessness before being able to access supports which is not preventative work."*
- *"To be added to the By Name List at the County, you have to already be homeless for a certain amount of time - it's not proactive at all."*
- *"Lack of public subsidized housing, wait lists for housing of 8 to 12 YEARS is unacceptable. A waitlist should be 3-6 months maximum."*
- *"The need for more social services in our community, not limited to affordable housing, decreased wait lists for supports including addiction/mental health."*

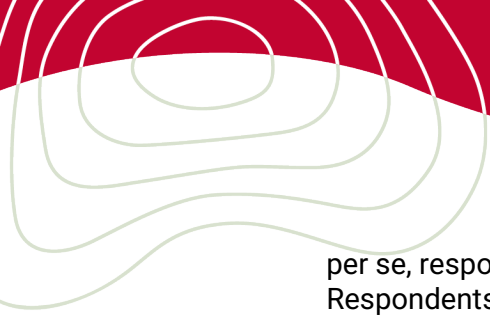
Additionally, there were several mentions of addressing the root causes of homelessness as a key challenge.

- These root causes were identified as mental health, addiction, poverty, and disabilities.
- The obstacles of lack of housing and affordability were also identified.
- One respondent had a keen observation about how the current Motel Voucher System was serving homeless men stating: *"The Motel Voucher System has gaps in it and as a result men are falling through the cracks. There needs to be a combination of a Men's Emergency Shelter plus a Transition Housing Program to help men to get back on track. This is similar to what the community has done for women and children with Family Transition Place."*
- Respondents identified the need for programs specifically for men, moral support for men, and a reduction of stigma for men and Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) to accessing services.
- As a final note, the COVID-19 pandemic was cited as an issue that magnified the problems to accessing support for the homeless because many places (such as the Edelbrock Centre, the library, and many restaurants) were closed which limited access to phones, computers, and Wi-Fi (see Schiff et al. 2020 for more information on the effect of the pandemic on homelessness).

Community Benefits

When asked about how the community could benefit from addressing the issue of men's homelessness, there were two key benefits identified by this open-ended question.

1. The first advantage of addressing this issue was the overall impression that everyone benefits from living in a caring community.
2. Secondly, there was the benefit that by addressing men's homelessness, the other underlying issues contributing the homelessness could also be simultaneously addressed to provide a wide range of benefits.
3. Programs to address mental health challenges, addiction, and unaffordable housing would all serve as preventative measures to address homelessness. While not a benefit



per se, respondents reiterated the fact that more should be done to help men specifically. Respondents reported that this was an underserved demographic in a community where there were strong resources already for women and children.

Finally, we asked respondents if there was anything else they would like to share. Overall, the results that have already been presented were reiterated in the responses to this question. These results included:

- Investing in social services (particularly for those with disabilities)
- Programs to deal with mental health and addiction
- The need for a more specific focus on services for men

There were some thoughts on the models for housing options that were notable. As reported by one respondent, *"We need emergency beds for homeless men; however, the model needs to be more transitional housing. Government funds housing first programs, not shelter or emergency beds. The transitionally housed men should also be attached to a case worker. More portable housing allowances and affordable housing."*

Another respondent elaborated on an example of such a model stating: *"Other similar sized communities, like Orillia and Cambridge have tackled the issue of Men's Homelessness with purpose-built facilities for both short term emergency shelters and long-term transition facilities. The County of Dufferin needs to do the same thing and to locate it in the Town of Orangeville as well."*

Some respondents also noted that they were pleased with the forward movement on this issue by the committee.

Service Provider Perspectives

Description of Service Providers

Twenty six (26) service providers in Dufferin County participated in this survey. Just under half (n=12, 18%) are in Orangeville, 12% (n=8) are in East Garafraxa, Grand Valley, Mono and Shelburne respectively, while 11% (n=7) programs are in Amaranth, Melancthon and Mulmur respectively.

Service providers were asked "does your service or agency have a specific mandate for supporting men experiencing homelessness?" 12 service providers responded.

- 75% (n=9) answered no, they do not have a specific mandate for supporting men experiencing homelessness.

When asked, "does your service agency have capacity to address any of the required services that you identified?" Four service providers responded.

- 75% (n=3) stated maybe
- Only 25% (n=1) reported yes

To understand how many men are typically accessing these services, we asked service providers how many homeless men they had interacted with during the past three months.

- Two service providers answered that they had not seen any clients.
- The average response was five.
- One service provider reported that they never saw less than ten men.
- Another reported interaction with 15-18 men, with both being well above average.

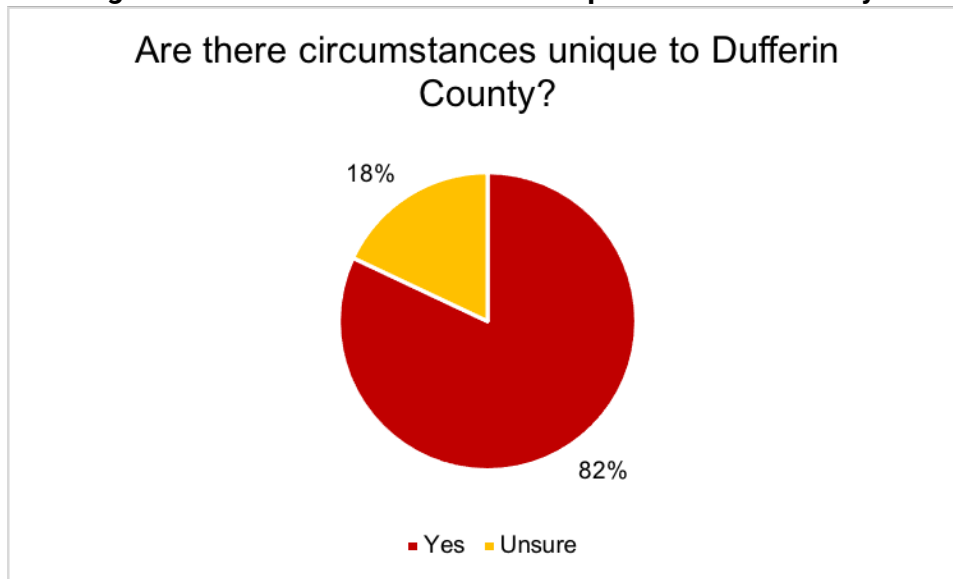
Overall, half of all service providers who responded to this question (n=6) reported that they had consistently interacted with the same number of men accessing their services over a three-month period. Of those who reported a varying rate, two respondents reported that it is typically a bit lower, two reported it was typically a bit higher, one reported it being typically much higher, and one reported that it varies higher and lower considerably. It appears the consistency of the number of men accessing each service provider is unique to each organization.

Dufferin County and Homelessness

Next, respondents were asked, “Are there circumstances unique to Dufferin County that need to be considered in understanding the context of men’s access to housing?” (Figure 4).

- 11 participants responded to this question. The majority (82%, n=9) indicated that Dufferin County has unique circumstances that need to be considered in understanding the context of men’s housing and 18% (n=2) were unsure.

Figure 4: Are there circumstances unique to Dufferin County?



Of the nine participants who responded yes, many circumstances were connected to the rural setting of Dufferin County.

- Three people referred to a lack of public transportation, with one suggesting that neighbouring areas may have more available housing.
- Another participant also pointed out that the communities within Dufferin County being spread out and that it is hard to travel between them.

- Three participants explained that because Dufferin County includes smaller communities, there are fewer services and resources available.
- Two of these participants explicitly stated that there were no men's shelters or men's services. Lastly, one participant pointed to the connection to the community in that *"those in Dufferin prefer to stay in Dufferin"*.

The other main theme that arose in relation to Dufferin-specific contexts was a shortage of housing, which was identified by three participants.

- Two participants points to the high cost of housing in the areas and one participant explained that *"a small network of for-profit housing providers limit access to this population [homeless men]."*

Service providers were asked if they are aware of any other local services or agencies that have a specific mandate for supporting men experiencing homelessness. Nine service providers responded to the question.

- 67% (n=6) stated that they were aware of other services
- 33% (n=3) stated that they were unaware of other services with a mandate for supporting men experiencing homelessness.

Of those aware of other services with a mandate for supporting men experiencing homelessness, all service providers (n=6) listed Choices Youth Shelter, although one of these service providers only referred to *"I believe we have a new men's shelter in Orangeville."* Two participants named Dufferin County and SHIP. The Salvation Army and the Lighthouse were each referenced once.

Twelve service providers responded to the question "How well does Dufferin County implement a 'housing first' approach?" Respondents were given a scale of not well at all, slightly well, moderately well, very well, and extremely well to choose from.

- 25% (n=3) answered very well and moderately well respectively
- 17% (n=2) answered slightly well
- 33% (n=4) said not well at all

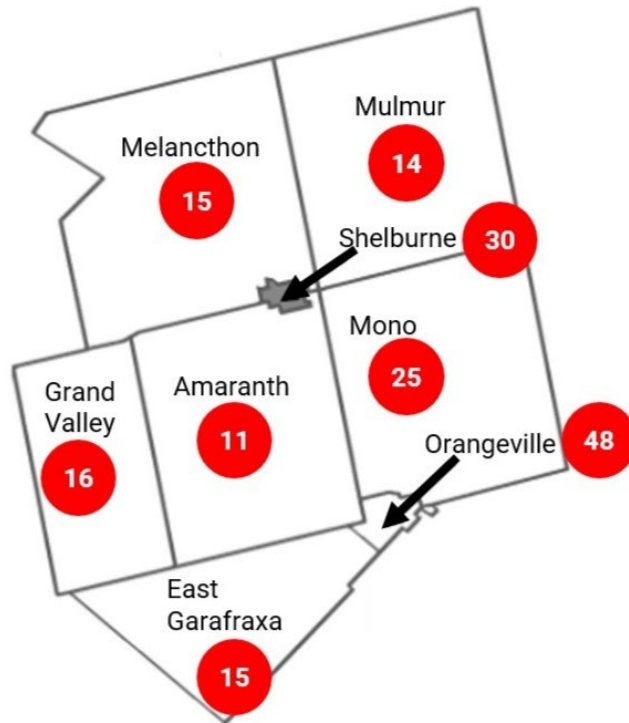
The final question in this section asked service providers how well unhoused men are supported in each region in Dufferin County (Figure 5). The response was gaged from a sliding scale, where 1 is 'no access to services' and 100 is 'compressive access to services. The average rating per region is as follows:

- Orangeville: 48
- Shelburne: 30
- Mono: 25
- Grand Valley: 16
- East Garafraxx: 15
- Melancthon: 15
- Mulmur: 14

- Amaranth: 11

Figure 5: Access to services in the Dufferin County regions

How well served are unhoused men in each of the following locations?
On a sliding scale of 1-100, where 1 is 'no access to services at all' and 100 is 'comprehensive access to services', this is how the following regions measured on average:




Perceptions of Homelessness

Our findings through the literature review demonstrate that there are certain factors that make men more vulnerable to homelessness. Based on their experiences, service providers were asked to rank a group of influential factors from no risk to high risk.

- None of the factors were considered no-risk.
- The main factors considered high risk for vulnerability to homelessness, in descending order of risk level, included: substance abuse issues, disabilities, identifying as Indigenous, and a history in the foster care systems.
- In the moderate risk category, factors included: identifying as LBTQ2SIA+, refugees, immigrants, visible minorities, senior men, and single fathers. Veterans and men without children were considered low risk factors.

We asked service providers to rank what they thought were the main causes of men's homelessness in their community. Their responses from leading causes to lesser causes were ranked:

1. Unaffordable housing
2. Mental health and addiction
3. Inaccessible housing
4. Lack of resources to support men's needs
5. Exposure to trauma or adversity

- 
6. Unemployment and underemployment
 7. Social exclusion

There is a range of ways that people with lived experiences of homelessness are involved in shaping the services and supports available by service providers in Dufferin County.

- Some service providers described having service users on their boards or advisory committees.
- Others actively collected feedback through surveys, focus groups, and interviews. Additionally, feedback forms were another mechanism for providing insight. Informal feedback through using services and concerns reported to staff cited as important. However, including voices in a formal way was seen as ideal.
- One service provider noted that people with lived experiences of homelessness were not involved in shaping their services, while another did not know if they were.

Service Provision Gaps

Unique Benefits and Challenges for Men's Services

Service providers were asked what the unique benefits and challenges would be in providing services specifically for men. Several service providers agreed that the main benefit would be to be able to provide men services in their own community, which would eliminate the need to travel to be housed and offer more stability in their lives. Additionally, being able to provide these services to men would benefit the whole social service system by reducing the need for hospitalization, other medical supports, policing, and jail time.


Challenges identified by service providers pertained to three different barriers.

1. The first was gaining community support for this type of service to be provided, as one provider pointed out there is NIMBYism (not in my back yard) perspectives in the community.
2. The second challenge included the ability to provide supports to men, where service providers pointed out that this would require higher staff and support needs, and even that there might be some fear from service providers in working with men.
3. The final challenge was the stigma associated with men accepting these types of services. Respondents were not sure that they could engage men into the service, with one stating that "men don't want to come in off the street".

A few service providers shared other comments beyond the benefits and challenges. One respondent noted that they would rather see a system supporting everyone with a subset of services to support people facing specific issues. Another respondent felt that offering services specifically for men may exclude non-binary/genderqueer folks and further marginalize them.

Current Success and Challenges

Service providers summarized the success and challenges that they had experienced when referring to or accessing the various services and supports in the community. **The most common success stated was the perspective that these services were very collaborative and worked well together.** Descriptions of this success included effective communication, wrap around services, sharing resources, and small town/team approaches. For instance, one respondent stated: "no wrong door is a vision that is implemented in Dufferin," implying that



someone could receive support no matter which organization that they turned to because they work together so well.

Regarding challenges, 7 out of 10 responses to this question mentioned wait times and wait lists as a limitation to providing services. Some responses described various organizations leaving people on hold, always being full, and having to wait two weeks to be considered for the By Name List. Other challenges that were mentioned included eligibility criteria, no affordable housing, funding, transportation, accessibility, and the need for more robust mental health supports.

Current Gaps in Services

Service providers reported several gaps that remain in service provision in Dufferin County. Some of these gaps could be filled by service providers, however most of them require additional policies and funding.

The most cited gap was the lack of affordable housing. This gap is compounded by additional factors such as the high cost of housing and living, that Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program payments are too low, landlord discrimination, and financialization of the rental and housing markets.

The second most cited gap was the lack of services specifically for men, including the fact that there is no men's shelter, lack of men's shelter and transitional beds, and specific outreach programs for men that are always available.

Similarly, a gap around men's street outreach was identified, stating that homeless individuals do not have access to the requirements to access service providers such as cell phones, transportation, and health cards or other documents; therefore, it would be better to meet individuals where they are to work with them.

Eligibility criteria and long wait lists and times were another identified gap in service provision.


Finally, a key gap is also the **provision of mental health and addiction case management.** One respondent cited that this may be caused by the high turnover of staff working in service provision.

Services that were not offered or only sometimes offered by providers included:

- Clothing banks
- Emergency warmth/cooling services
- Emergency shelter
- Transitional housing
- Repair or replacement services

Of the services most likely to be offered on a regular basis by various service providers, these include:

- Outreach services

- 
- Food bank
 - Legal/court assistance
 - Mental health care services

Preventing, Reducing, and Eliminating Men's Homelessness

In determining the efficacy of Dufferin County in three scenarios related to men's homelessness, service providers who responded to the survey determined that the county is neither extremely effective nor very effective in preventing, reducing, or eliminating men's homelessness. Respondents were given the choices of not effective at all, slightly effective, moderately effective, very effective, and extremely effective to answer this question.

In receiving feedback from service providers about their needs to provide additional services, the results showed that increases in funding, changes in policy, and a greater understanding from those with lived experiences would be important requirements. However, two of the twelve respondents acknowledged that they would need a change in mandate and mission to provide services to men because they are funded to support women so many changes would be required.

The final question of the survey asked service providers what could be done to better serve homeless men. There was a wide range of suggestions, including:

- Provide emergency shelter
- Provide supported transitional housing
- Provide range of harm reduction service
- Anger management/life skills workshops
- Mental health and addiction support
- Men's drop in center
- Permanent, affordable housing (including affordable rent or rent subsidies)
- Assistance with transportation
- Community medical supports
- Outreach strategies for at-risk individuals
- More funding for service providers who are addressing the issue of homelessness

In addition to these suggestions, there was a particularly interesting perspective by one respondent who recognized the structural constraints that limit how service providers can serve homeless men in the community. They felt that although that their organization was taking a housing first approach, they were not able to provide true housing first programming because they were not able to control factors such as low vacancy rates, high market rentals, and private landlords. Even with the supports that service providers can offer, choices for those facing homelessness are limited by their finances and the type of housing available in the market.

Finally, there was one response that commended the County on their efforts to address the issue of men's homelessness with the limited resources that it has at its disposal. This comment was an outlier amongst the suggestions to better serve homeless men, however we thought it was a perspective the committee should be aware of.



Considerations for Future Planning

Opportunities and Next Steps

In 2020, Dufferin County released a report at the halfway mark of their ten-year plan to address housing and homelessness, which set a goal to end (chronic) homelessness by 2021. A goal of this program is to consult with those who have lived experience with homelessness, which the DCEC had been working toward. The following section will discuss some of the main results from the literature review, environmental scan, and survey results to outline some of the opportunities and next steps for the Men's Homelessness Committee. The opportunities identified include expanding the reach of current homelessness services, making decisions informed by those with lived experiences by both engaging more effectively and considering their unique needs, improving awareness of homelessness services, and finally creating affordable housing. These goals are not isolated, but interconnected, to address the issue of homelessness in Dufferin County.

Expanding the Reach of Current Homelessness Services

According to the national Shelter Capacity Report (2019), across Canada, the majority of shelter services support the general population (37%) and men (31%); fewer serve women (12%), families (11%), and youth (9%) (Statistics Canada, 2019). Dufferin County has one youth shelter (i.e., Choices Youth Shelter) with 20 beds. This number is slightly above the mean (19) and median (15) number of beds in small communities. However, in both the community perspectives survey and the service provider survey, there is the suggestion that there needs to be more services in areas outside of Orangeville. Parts of Dufferin County are rural and there is a lack of public transportation making it difficult for men experiencing homelessness to travel to city centres to receive support.

In addition to increasing the locations for services, it is also an important future step to increase accessibility of services by addressing the long wait times. There is also potential for the eligibility criteria to access services to be reconsidered. Men experiencing homelessness face many barriers in accessing services especially if they do not have access to a phone, internet, transportation, or identification. Increasing accessibility for emergency and transitional housing will help to ensure that these services are efficient and effective.

While service providers noted that there might be some resistance from the community to adding more social services for homeless individuals (referred to as NIMBYism in one response), community perspectives do not seem to support this conclusion. Rather, they focus on addressing the issue to be a caring community. It should be noted that both increasing availability and accessibility of services will require increased funding. Service providers acknowledged that they would like to be able to expand services and address staff turnover rates with increased funding.

Overall, there is a lack of social services supporting men experiencing homelessness.



Engaging More Effectively with Those with Lived Experience

Consultation (with fair compensation) for individuals with lived experiences is a stated priority in all housing and homelessness initiatives in Dufferin County. Importantly, the recently implemented strategy creating a forum for individuals to anonymously share feedback is an important start and opportunity for further engagement, which is part of the work from the DCEC.

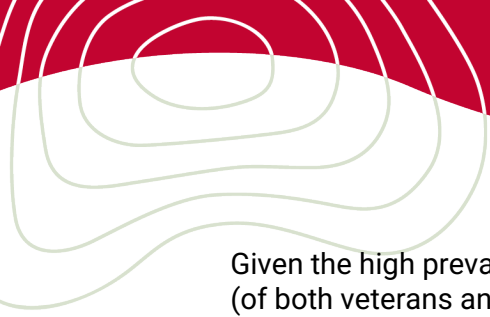
This report has found that the current engagement to understand lived experience mostly involves PIT count questions and personal information collected during Registry Week. This type of data collection provides little in the way of engagement and collaboration with those with lived experiences of homelessness. However, there was a range of engagement with those with lived experiences of homelessness. Not every service provider in the survey engaged those with lived experiences, and with those that did, most engagement was informal rather than formal.

In considering how to effectively engage unhoused people in collaborative dialogue, Dufferin County may consider more participatory approaches, such as participatory mapping. This method has been used in other Canadian studies, which invites participants to visually represent spaces around them and their experiences of them, though this was found to be a more successful strategy in their groups of women than with men (see Cook & Corbett, 2019). As such, we suggest involving current/past homeless men in the process of decision making.

Considering the Unique Needs of People with Lived Experience of Homelessness

The literature review revealed significant differences between homelessness as experienced by people of different genders. Harvey and Streich (2018) investigated a gendered-lens to homelessness in Canada and based on service provider perspectives, there was justification for gender-based services given diverse needs of these groups. As discussed above, Indigenous people and LGBTQ2S+ people are overrepresented in the homelessness population. Veterans, immigrants, and refugees seemed to be overrepresented or populations at risk as well. Built for Zero (2021a) has a partner initiative specifically designed for veterans that Dufferin could consider implementing. The DC MOVES collaboration is a strong vehicle for which community collaboration can take place.

When considering solutions to homelessness in rural areas of Ontario, interviews with people with lived experience, as well as service providers and service managers, mutually offered two suggestions: (1) increase access to affordable housing and supportive housing, and (2) increase the amount of social assistance to current costs of living, including housing (Kauppi et al., 2017). In addition, both the literature and our data revealed that mental health and addiction are issues that are a pathway to homelessness. Social services that seek to address the issue of homelessness must simultaneously provide support for mental health and addiction to be effective. For instance, Housing First with Case Management has been effectively implemented in Toronto (Stergiopoulous et al., 2019). Reviews of housing first have consistently found that this increased access to stable housing and does not appear to consistently benefit or pose harm in other outcomes such as increased substance use or mental and physical health outcomes (Aubry et al., 2020; Baxter et al., 2019). The most recent Campbell systematic review supported the above and added that case management and income supplements were found to contribute to housing stability (Moledina et al., 2021).



Given the high prevalence of trauma exposure of men with lived experiences of homelessness (of both veterans and non-veterans) in the literature, it would be logical to infer this could be true of this population within Dufferin County. Recent Canadian literature has highlighted how a trauma history create contexts and impact individuals in long-term ways that can make stable housing more challenging (Bennet et al., 2021). There have been calls for trauma-informed care in unhoused populations for this reason, to help support mental health and wellbeing, as well as stable housing status; however, interventions are limited (Bennet et al., 2021).

To conclude, homeless individuals have unique needs that are shaped by their gender, identity, past experiences, mental health, and experiences with trauma. Any programs that seek interventions into homelessness in Dufferin County should be cognizant of these unique needs and engage effectively with individuals experiencing homelessness.

Improving Awareness of Homelessness Services

According to this data, there appears to be a strong awareness/collaboration of services available between the service providers. There are additional opportunities to build out stronger connections with current services in Dufferin County which provides services mandated for men, like the John Howard Society, a non-profit which aids people who have been affected by the justice system.


As demonstrated in the community, improving community awareness of services and supports for those experiencing homelessness should also be a targeted area moving forward, given the high rates of respondents who said that they would not know how to access services and who said that they were not aware of services. Additionally, respondents from the community primarily reported not having first-hand experience with the issue of homelessness while the majority related to the issue via observing others. It can be difficult to be aware of services for an issue that is not directly affecting you. Dufferin County should work to improve accessibility and awareness of available services for the homeless.

Create affordable housing

Finally, the most crucial step identified in this needs assessment is to create more affordable housing within Dufferin County. The literature shows that housing prices are rising, and that community members and service providers considered it to be a significant contributor to homelessness.

Emergency housing and shelters are just a stop gap measure when the bigger issue that needs to be addressed is housing affordability. These supports are only offered for up to three months, which fits with the County's definition of measuring homelessness in three-month increments. Dufferin County is working toward achieving Functional Zero, defined as a BNL with three or less chronic homelessness households for three consecutive months. Given the long housing waitlists and limited accessibility and affordability of housing stock, three months may be insufficient in providing the stability needed to move out of homelessness. One measure that was not available in the reports were the rates of maintaining housing, which is an important indicator of success toward this goal. Affordable housing policies can help individuals to maintain housing.

The issue of affordable housing is not unique to Dufferin County, but a pervasive issue across Canada. Dufferin County (2020) reported that changing bilateral funding agreements between



federal and provincial governments has meant the end of some financial streams to current housing providers. The County will continue to be responsible for providing funding subsidies to four non-profit and two co-operative housing resources; there is concern about whether Dufferin County will need to account for these funding changes from the municipal budget. The County reported connecting with these providers to continue to build effective relationships. There have been several government initiatives offered through the County providing funding to low-income families to improve energy efficiency, accessibility, as well as affordability. Further funding for housing may come from initiatives from other sectors with shared goals, which may aid in affordability. Educational programs about sustainability for tenants also appeared to make effective progress toward sustainability targets.

Limitations

The Canadian definition of homelessness is consistent with the one used in this report, which includes people who are unsheltered, emergency sheltered, and provisionally accommodated (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2012; Gaetz et al. 2012). A critical issue with definitions used by Dufferin County is that temporary housing is still considered homeless. The PiT count and Registry Week information may be missing counting people who are provisionally accommodated. Importantly, there is a lack of information about people who are housed, defined as in safe, permanent, and stable in keeping with Housing First definitions (Built for Zero Canada, 2021).

One community group that interfaces regularly with homeless individuals that was not clearly located within the environmental scan is first responders such as paramedics, police, and firefighters. Future studies should consider this group as a potential source of key information on the issue of homelessness. Regarding survey limitations, we did receive some partial responses from respondents. Online surveys were the most appropriate method for data collection at this time due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however future studies should attempt to incorporate perspectives from those with lived experiences of homelessness.

Finally, a significant question that remains is how unhoused people are faring over time. There are currently no metrics to represent patterns in and out of homelessness and particularly, those at risk of homelessness. More information about this issue could help the Men's Homelessness Committee determine measures that can prevent homelessness, as this was identified by service providers in the survey as an area where the County could be more effective.

Conclusions

The environmental scan and literature review were perhaps most successful in scoping the current scale of the issue. The literature surrounding solutions to homelessness highlights the complexity of the issue. Time is required to truly understand outcomes, and perhaps most importantly, solutions need to be developed locally and in partnership with stakeholders. Taken together with the data collected by the two surveys, this report sets the foundation for further engagement with the community of Dufferin County to propose solutions for homelessness.

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