

# 2021 24 Hour Census Report

A One-Day Snapshot of the Transition Housing  
and Support Programs in BC



BC Society of  
Transition Houses

CONTENTS

IN JUST ONE 24 HOUR PERIOD.....3

WOMEN, CHILDREN AND YOUTH SERVED.....5

STANDING BESIDE: SUPPORT AND ADVOCACY .....7

UNMET NEEDS.....12

IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON TRANSITION HOUSING PROGRAMS SERVICE DELIVERY.....17

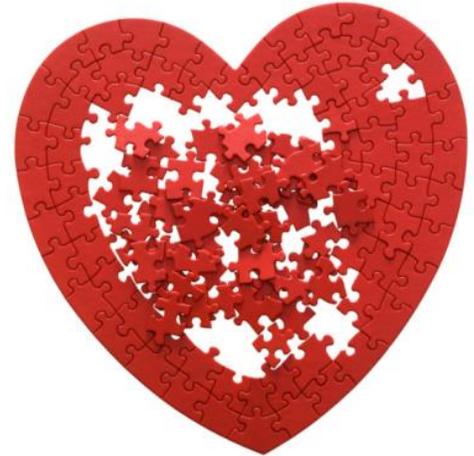
SUPPORTING TRANSITION HOUSING PROGRAMS.....20

APPENDIX: A REGIONAL COMPARISON OF CENSUS RESULTS..... 22

## IN JUST ONE 24 HOUR PERIOD

This snapshot offers some insight into the realities of Women's Transition Housing and Supports Programs (referred to as Transition Housing Programs throughout this report) in BC.

**In just 24 hours, between December 1st & 2nd, 2021  
1116 people were sheltered or supported in-person  
or remotely through Transition Housing Programs  
across BC.**



An additional **109 people were still waiting for services or had to be turned away from these programs.** This was largely due to reduced capacity at transition housing programs, though this strain resulted not just from the need to meet COVID-19 public health mandates, but also the overall physical, mental, and emotional toll that the pandemic has had on frontline workers. In the second year of the pandemic, women were far less apprehensive about living in a communal setting during COVID-19, having grown accustomed to protocols. They were instead met with shortages in services available for an even greater need for emergency shelter as exacerbated by the pandemic, from a sector that was already overstretched prior to COVID-19.

**84 Transition House, Second and Third Stage programs and Safe Homes in BC participated** in the 2021 BC Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH) 24 Hour Census. The Census provides an unduplicated count of how many women, children and youth were helped, and how many more were unable to get help, during just one day in BC.

As with last year, additional questions were added to the 24 hour census survey to assess the impact of COVID-19 on Transition Housing Program service delivery and demand for services.

During the 24-hour period 84 Transition Housing Programs in BC:

- supported and safely sheltered **753** women, children and youth
- supported in-person but did not shelter **160** women, children and youth
- supported remotely, but did not shelter **203** women, children and youth
- responded to **764** calls, emails and texts to provide information and support

**TRANSITION HOUSING PROGRAMS RESPONDED TO 764 CALLS, EMAILS  
AND TEXTS: AN AVERAGE OF 32 CALLS, EMAILS  
AND TEXTS AN HOUR.**

*BCSTH thanks the Transition, Second Stage and Third Stage and Safe Home programs who took time out of their busy pandemic days to participate in the 2021 24 Hour Census. We appreciate all that you do and recognize the difference you are making in thousands of lives each day.*

## WOMEN, CHILDREN AND YOUTH SERVED

In 24 hours, **1116** women, children and youth were helped through Transition House, Second Stage and Third Stage and Safe Home programs in BC (collectively referred to as Transition Housing programs) (table 1).

**TABLE 1: NUMBER OF PEOPLE SHELTERED OR SUPPORTED IN-PERSON OR REMOTELY BUT NOT SHELTERED IN A 24 HOUR PERIOD**

	Sheltered	Supported in-person, not sheltered	Supported remotely, not sheltered	TOTAL
<b>Female older adults (55yrs +)</b>	109	22	18	<b>149</b>
Female adults (19 – 54yrs)	347	94	172	<b>613</b>
Female youth (16-18yrs)	12	7	2	<b>21</b>
Female children/youth (11-15yrs)	35	1	1	<b>37</b>
Female children (6-10yrs)	50	2	3	<b>55</b>
Female children (0-5yrs)	58	6	1	<b>65</b>
<b>Male older adults (55yrs +)</b>	1	1	0	<b>2</b>
Male adults (19 - 54yrs)	4	17	3	<b>24</b>
Male youth (16-18yrs)	9	0	0	<b>9</b>
Male children/youth (11-15yrs)	21	0	0	<b>21</b>
Male children (6-10yrs)	39	1	1	<b>39</b>
Male children (0-5yrs)	59	7	2	<b>68</b>
<b>Trans-identified older adults (55yrs +)</b>	2	1	0	<b>3</b>
Trans-identified adults (19 - 54yrs)	1	0	0	<b>1</b>

# 2021 24 Hour Census Report

Trans-identified youth (16-18yrs)	2	0	0	<b>2</b>
Trans-identified children/youth (11-15yrs)	1	0	0	<b>1</b>
Trans-identified children/youth (6-10yrs)	3	0	0	<b>3</b>
Trans-identified children/youth (0-5yrs)	0	1	0	<b>1</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>753</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>1116</b>

**82 WOMEN SERVED BY TRANSITION HOUSING PROGRAMS DURING THE 24 HOUR CENSUS PERIOD WERE KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN THREATENED BY A FIREARM OR ANOTHER WEAPON.**

**19 WOMEN SERVED BY TRANSITION HOUSING PROGRAMS DURING THE 24 HOUR CENSUS PERIOD WERE KNOWN TO BE PREGNANT.**

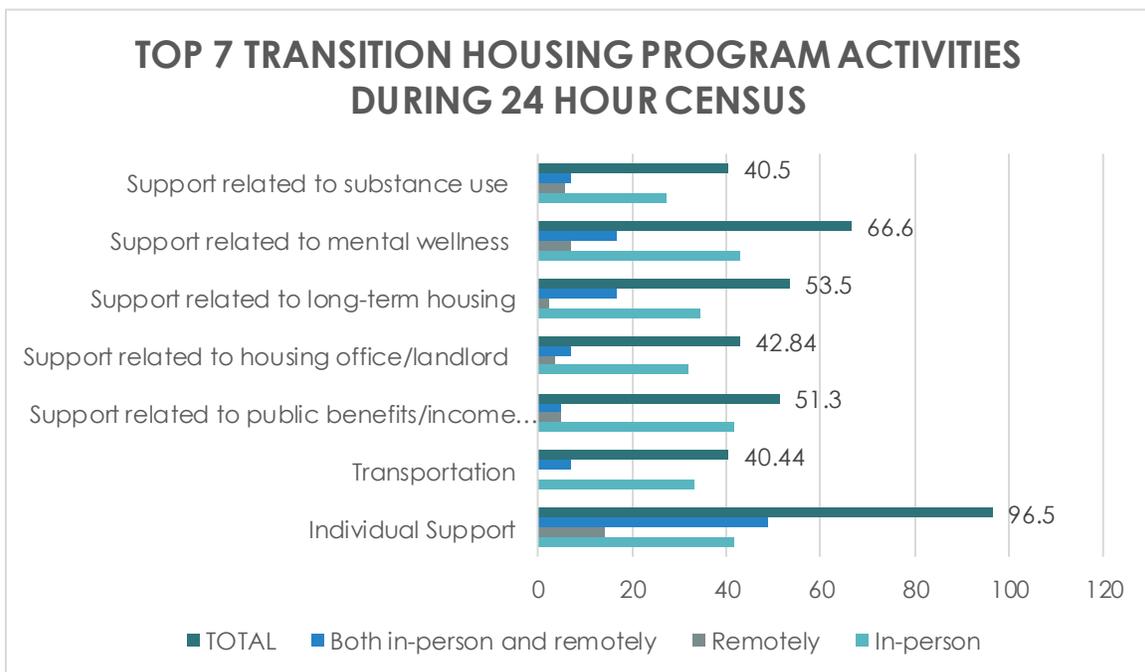
*"Grateful for having shelter, food, support and safety." (Program Participant)*

*"Gratefulness for the support ... to help... with household items, a gift card along with transportation and moral support." (Program Participant)*

## STANDING BESIDE: SUPPORT AND ADVOCACY

Individual support was the activity most frequently engaged in by Transition Housing Programs on December 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021, with a high rate of 96.5 % of respondents engaging in this work. The majority were using a mixed service delivery model (i.e., providing support both in person and remotely) due to COVID-19 (table 2). This represents an 11.5% increase from 2020 when 85% of the respondents engaged in individual support work and the majority were also using a mixed service delivery model.

### TOP 7 TRANSITION HOUSING PROGRAM ACTIVITIES DURING 24 HOUR CENSUS



**TABLE 2: PERCENTAGE OF TRANSITION HOUSING PROGRAMS WHO REPORTED PROVIDING EACH ACTIVITY DURING THE CENSUS PERIOD**

Providing support relating to mental health was the next most common activity identified by census respondents, with more than 66.6 % reporting having engaged in this activity during the 24 hour census period. This represents another increase from last year's results with 61.5 % of respondents reporting support related to

mental health. The impacts of COVID-19 on mental health are undeniable, and this phenomenon had spared no one, let alone survivors of violence against women who are often the most systemically marginalized in society.

*"I've tried calling every single place (TH). There is no space available anywhere. There is no space for single women." (Transition Housing Program Worker)*

Support related to long-term housing was identified as the third most frequently engaged in activity at 53.5% an increase from last year's result which was 51.5%. Many workers across the province have shared about the impact of the housing crisis throughout 2021 via various BCSTH engagements, often describing the pressure they experience with finding suitable arrangements for women within a dearth of options.

*"There is no affordable option for housing for the women we work with. The wait for BC Housing is too long." (Transition Housing Program Worker)*

*"Due to lack of housing, clients are staying longer in second stage and we're unable to house other clients. Our second*

*stage has been over capacity for nine months." (Transition Housing Program Worker)*

*"Women and children have different individual needs. It is challenging for the staff to fully address and provide their needs. Sometimes it is also fulfilling to learn that you were able to help find ways to help and support them in the moment." (Transition Housing Program Worker)*



While respondents noted that they are grateful to be able to provide refuge to women, children and youth fleeing violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, they emphasized in their survey comments how the ongoing and cumulative effects of the pandemic have stretched everyone's capacity. Whereas experiences of the pandemic in 2020 were reported to include a substantial focus on preventative measures and sanitization requirements and how these measures reduced respondents' capacity to provide direct support to women in children, in 2021 the resounding impact was on the overall health – whether physical or psychological – of everyone associated with transition houses. Women, youth, children, and the support workers alike were experiencing sickness from the virus, while even greater numbers struggled with the mental health effects of this prolonged situation. As a result, the transition house sector has encountered challenges in recruitment and retention of staff and in particular casual/relief staff. Across the province, transition houses report being under-staffed and workers often work beyond their job description and scope. There is significant concern about the sustainability of these conditions heading into a third pandemic year.

*“We need safe, affordable housing. Women have to stay much longer than 30 days in our transition house because there are so few options for them to move to. This keeps our wait list long and women staying in unsafe situations. Also, staff wages are inadequate and create huge challenges in recruitment and retention.”*  
*(Transition Housing Program Worker)*

*“Covid has made it more difficult to serve women e.g. cannot drive women. Also we are using one of our suites to isolate Covid families/singles.”(Transition Housing Program Worker)*

The next most frequently engaged in activity during the 24 hour census period was providing support related to public benefits, income assistance, and employment insurance at 51.3%, which is a significant increase from last year at 41.2%.

Effectively supporting women with accessing funds to make ends meet during a time of emergency is highly resource intensive, and the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the need for these resources, as well as the hardship associated with navigating what were already complex processes punctuated by multiple barriers to access.

*“Staff challenges are huge, staff want more pay. Clients need affordable housing. Income assistance rates need to go up -- not enough to sustain living in BC with current amount.” (Transition Housing Program Worker)*

Approximately the same amount of service providers reported engaging in support for those who use substances and support with transportation (~40.5%). We know that many women who reside in rural and remote communities have no choice but to leave their home communities when accessing transition house services because there are no facilities or services immediately available in their town, or else because all proximate services are full. They will very often have to travel to the next town or else to a larger city in order to be safely sheltered. Transportation often presents its own barrier to service, as many women do not have the financial means to own cars or pay for the fuel required to make a long trip, while public transportation is limited and not coordinated, particularly outside of city centers. Some Transition Houses have funds to pay for women's transport by taxi or to transport them in organizational or staff's personal vehicles (if appropriate COVID-19 arrangements can be made), but this places an additional burden on the agency and the already full work schedules.

Not only are Transition Housing Program staff busy meeting the immediate needs of the women, children and youth they serve, but they also conduct training and public education sessions. In this 24 hour period, Transition Housing Programs delivered **16** trainings or public education sessions (nine in-person and seven remotely). Attendance at these trainings notably dropped from last year where 17 trainings were provided to 595 people – yet another sign of the isolation and strain on those experiencing violence and at risk of violence.

## UNMET NEEDS

**ALMOST HALF OF TRANSITION HOUSING PROGRAMS** (48%) REPORTED THAT THEIR SHELTER **WAS FULL** DURING THE 24-HOUR CENSUS PERIOD (AS COMPARED TO 29% IN 2020).

*“We are still at half capacity for bed space as we are not doing room shares. This means we have had to turn away numerous clients each week and refer them to other resources.” (Transition Housing Program Worker)*

*“As a second stage in a larger BC Housing complex our program has big concerns with privacy and confidentiality for the women. They are under a microscope from the large building which makes our program higher barrier and not safe for high risk women, women with mental health and substance use concerns.” (Transition Housing Program Worker)*

In just one day, **109** people seeking support were unable to be served. This was due in large part to reduced capacity at transition housing programs as the result of COVID-19. The top reasons for why transition housing programs were unable to serve women and their children included a lack of available beds or suites; waitlists for programs; limited or no space for women with companion animals; insufficient resources to support women, children and youth with varying levels of mental wellness and/or substance use needs; not enough space for larger families; and limited accessibility as services or spaces are not universally accessible to all (table 3).

*“In our program we had 2 spaces [but] unfortunately we could not take in new clients due to only having two bathroom[s] and 3 families already.” (Transition Housing Program Worker)*

*“A woman called and we could not house her because she was 54 years old and we only house women 55+. Another woman called and we could not house her because our house is not wheel chair accessible.” (Transition Housing Program Worker)*

**TABLE 3: TOP 6 REASONS TRANSITION HOUSING PROGRAMS WERE UNABLE TO SERVE WOMEN, YOUTH & CHILDREN**

	<b>Very Relevant</b>	<b>Somewhat Relevant</b>	<b>Not Relevant</b>	<b>Unanswered</b>
No available beds/suites	22 (26%)	6 (7.1%)	31 (36.9%)	26 (31%)
Insufficient resources to support women, children or youth with varying levels of mental wellness and/or substance use needs	9 (10.7%)	9 (10.7%)	34 (40.5%)	32 (38.1%)
Not enough space for larger families	6 (7.1%)	10 (11.9%)	37 (44%)	31 (37%)
Limited accessibility as not universally accessible to all	6 (7.1%)	7 (8.3%)	40 (47.6%)	31 (37%)
Waitlist for programs	8 (9.5%)	3 (3.6%)	43 (51.2%)	20 (23.8%)
Limited or no space for women with companion animals	8 (9.5%)	3 (3.6%)	42 (50%)	31 (37%)

Over one quarter of respondents (25.8%) indicated that it was an outright lack of beds for women that led to their service not being able to meet the needs of those who reached out for their support. This figure stands apart from the way in which COVID-19 impacted the availability of beds, instead pointing to a systemic shortage that would have been in place regardless of pandemic conditions.

*“There are never enough beds. There is always a need for more help and resources. Especially for women and children. We can't keep up with the demand unfortunately.” (Transition Housing Program Worker)*

In connection to what was reported already about the most frequently performed activities during the 24 hour census period, supports for women, children, and youth with varying levels of mental wellness and/or substance use needs were pronounced during 2021. At the same time, insufficient resources to meet these needs meant that this was one of the top reasons (21.4%) why transition housing programs were unable to serve women, children, and youth.

Additional concerns revolved around accessibility – spaces or services were generally inaccessible (15.4%); there was not enough space for larger families (19%); or there was limited or no space for women with companion animals (13.1%).

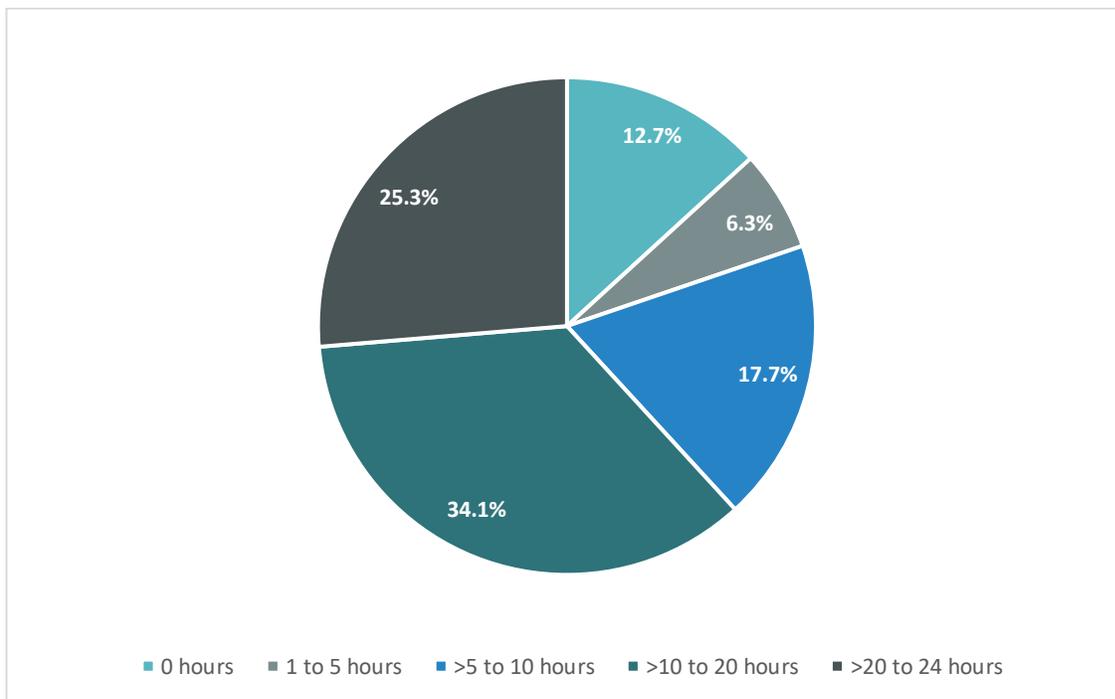
*“Having [a] difficult time managing resident with mental health issues [in] communal living. Causing stress for another resident and asking us to kick out the other resident.” (Transition Housing Program Worker)*

*“A woman was unable to access our programming due to her companion animals; our facility is pet-free.” (Transition Housing Program Worker)*

Notably, these reasons differ greatly from those reported in 2020, which largely revolved around COVID-19 related complications. While the results in 2020 showed that about 21.2% of respondents had worked with women who were concerned about living in a communal setting during COVID-19, just 3.5% held this concern in 2021, while this year 59.5% found this not to be relevant. These statistics show how rapidly the sector has adjusted and adapted to providing services within a new norm while simultaneously containing the spread of COVID-19.

*“All frontline workers should receive self-care/ burnout pay. Our support normally goes beyond our mandates, in which staff feel burnout more.”*

*(Transition Housing Program Worker)*



**TABLE 4: PERCENTAGE OF TRANSITION HOUSING PROGRAMS OPERATING WITH JUST ONE STAFF FOR DIFFERENT LENGTHS OF TIME WITHIN A 24 HOUR PERIOD**

## 2021 24 Hour Census Report

The staffing results above are significant – a quarter of all responding shelters were operating with just one staff for 20-24 hours during the day of the census. It is reasonable to assume that this is typical on other weekdays as well. This low number of working staff has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Last year, single staffing for 20 – 24 hours was one fifth or 18.8% and the 2021 percentage reflects an increase of roughly 8%.

*“There is a serious staffing shortage and I am deeply concerned about existing staff burnout. We will not have the coverage if any of them go away or need to take a leave and that will leave us having to skeleton staff even more.” (Transition Housing Program Worker)*

## IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON TRANSITION HOUSING PROGRAM SERVICE DELIVERY

*“A guest in our program commented that because of Covid-19 protocols she feels as though she is not able to go out as she pleases. She feels restricted.” (Transition Housing Program Worker)*

*“People are needing greater text support and unfortunately our house is in a cell phone dead zone at times and this impacts our capacity to respond promptly.” (Transition Housing Program Worker)*

It is clear from the 24-hour census survey responses that there are many impacts of COVID-19 on service delivery amongst Transition Housing Programs in BC.

Routinely, BCSTH hears from our members that women, children and youth have more complex needs than ever before, which is challenging for frontline workers when other health, legal and social service supports are not readily accessible in their community and the transition house is used as the “catch-all” for women and their families who have a myriad of needs.

Rates of domestic violence have spiked globally since the outbreak of COVID-19<sup>1</sup>. In Canada and BC, anecdotal evidence of this reported by transition houses and women’s shelters includes increased calls for support, increased severity of violence, or being eerily quiet as women have fewer opportunities to contact shelters when they are sheltering at home with their abuser. Women have also been navigating a vast array of viewpoints as well as misinformation regarding

---

<sup>1</sup> Bradley, N.L. et al. (2020): [Health care practitioners’ responsibility to address intimate partner violence related to the COVID-19 pandemic](#), *CMAJ*, 192 (22)

COVID-19, which has caused friction in their family relationships and in pending family court matters.

*“Always a challenge with information sharing; hard to compete against social media/friends/family.” (Transition Housing Program Worker)*

Programs are operating with reduced staff numbers due to Covid-19 and medical leaves and recruiting additional staff to account for this shortage presents its own set of challenges. Fewer candidates are applying for positions, which have transformed into far more demanding jobs than how they looked pre-pandemic, or to enter newly into frontline service at a widely recognized crisis point.

*“It has been difficult to get new hires as we have posted several positions with limited applicants. Prior to COVID this was not an issue.” (Transition Housing Program Worker)*

*“Before COVID my manager was on site 2-3 days per week. Now she comes 2-3 times per month.” (Transition Housing Program Worker)*

Regarding this census, unlike in previous years, the BCSTH team spent significantly more time and effort following up with our member programs to see if they were able to participate in the 24 hour census, following what was initially a record low number of survey submissions from our members. Many programs were given opportunities to submit their data later than the official and late deadlines, and many of the staff with whom we spoke directly alluded to their immense workloads and the reduced amounts of available or healthy staff to cover all obligations.

*“News of the new variant is creating extra stress on our people who are already in periods of uncertainty in their lives.” (Transition Housing Program Worker)*

*“It is hard to connect with each other when masks are required at all times except when eating or in private bedroom. Staff are put into a role of policing residents to ensure masks and gloves are being used as prescribed by BC Housing.” (Transition Housing Program Worker)*

## SUPPORTING TRANSITION HOUSING PROGRAMS

Despite these ongoing challenges, every day, Transition Housing Program staff develop creative and resourceful ways to support and ensure the safety of women, children and youth who have experienced violence. Their work is tremendous and purposeful – while they are too often unrecognized for the feats that they accomplish with so few resources.

*“I really like the residents. Some things can be difficult [to access] but team work makes the dream work.” (Transition Housing Program Worker)*

*“A staff member expressed that she was excited for a resident to be moving out and took extra care to prepare items for her move out.” (Transition Housing Program Worker)*

*“Clients shared they felt supported by staff, valued, empowered and stronger. They shared they felt safe during their time.” (Transition Housing Program Worker)*

Transition Housing Program staff and the BCSTH are ever grateful for the valuable funding from BC Housing and the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General. Still, much work remains to be done collaboratively to ensure that every woman, child and youth who has experienced violence has access to safe shelter and appropriate supports, especially during the current pandemic times. This includes systemic remedies for improving recruitment and retention of skilled, empathetic, trauma and violence informed staff, along with livable wages, adequate benefits and access to professional development.

*“Caring for those in need changes me every day and motivates one to persistently support and inspire women and children to grow to their fullest potential.”  
(Transition Housing Program Worker)*

*“Our women face lots of barriers ... but we will work ... one on one. I love my job.”*  
*(Transition Housing Program Worker)*

Please visit the [BCSTH directory of members and programs](#) or the [BC Housing List of Transition Housing Programs](#) to find out more about support offered in your community.

## Appendix A: Regional Comparisons of Census Results

### Response rates

	Programs in region	Programs who responded	Programs who responded (%)
<b>Region 1: Vancouver Island and Powell River</b>	20	19	22.6%
<b>Region 2: Lower Mainland</b>	24	22	26.2%
<b>Region 3: Fraser Valley</b>	12	10	11.9%
<b>Region 4: Kootenays</b>	16	10	11.9%
<b>Region 5: Okanagan</b>	15	6	7.1%
<b>Region 6: Cariboo</b>	12	4	4.8%
<b>Region 7: Northern BC</b>	19	13	15.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>84</b>	

No respondents reported that their program was closed during the 24-hour census period, but 11 respondents omitted answering this question as follows:

Region	Programs who omitted answering question
<b>Region 1: Vancouver Island and Powell River</b>	4
<b>Region 2: Lower Mainland</b>	2
<b>Region 3: Fraser Valley</b>	1
<b>Region 4: Kootenays</b>	1
<b>Region 5: Okanagan</b>	0
<b>Region 6: Cariboo</b>	0
<b>Region 7: Northern BC</b>	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>

## People Served

Region	Housed	Supported In-person	Supported Remotely	TOTAL
<b>Region 1: Vancouver Island and Powell River</b>	264	15	43	322
<b>Region 2: Lower Mainland</b>	239	30	73	342
<b>Region 3: Fraser Valley</b>	60	5	25	90
<b>Region 4: Kootenays</b>	44	19	16	79
<b>Region 5: Okanagan</b>	65	41	12	118
<b>Region 6: Cariboo</b>	5	6	6	17
<b>Region 7: Northern BC</b>	76	44	28	148
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>753</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>1116</b>

## Service related calls, emails or texts received

Region	Service related calls, emails or text messages
<b>Region 1: Vancouver Island and Powell River</b>	164
<b>Region 2: Lower Mainland</b>	293
<b>Region 3: Fraser Valley</b>	54
<b>Region 4: Kootenays</b>	95
<b>Region 5: Okanagan</b>	33
<b>Region 6: Cariboo</b>	34
<b>Region 7: Northern BC</b>	91
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>764</b>

People unable to be served

<b>Region</b>	<b>Unable to serve</b>
<b>Region 1: Vancouver Island and Powell River</b>	46
<b>Region 2: Lower Mainland</b>	29
<b>Region 3: Fraser Valley</b>	25
<b>Region 4: Kootenays</b>	2
<b>Region 5: Okanagan</b>	1
<b>Region 6: Cariboo</b>	1
<b>Region 7: Northern BC</b>	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>109</b>