

Middlesex County

Myth vs. Fact

Homelessness is only an urban problem.

Homelessness exists in rural communities across Canada. It just looks different. While people may be living on the streets, community members may also be couch surfing, sleeping in abandoned buildings, living in vehicles or homes without heat and electricity, or staying in motels and shelters. It is important to consider the entire spectrum of homelessness, as everyone's journeys and experiences are different.

Based on the 2024 Point in Time count, 27 individuals participated in the survey, and an additional 36 individuals were observed to be homeless. With the addition of individuals who report having children sharing their housing situation, there are a minimum of 68 individuals who experience housing precarity.

Rural communities don't have homelessness because everyone knows everyone.

Because of the hidden nature of homelessness, you may not be aware of community members who are experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity. In smaller communities, stigma and anonymity often can prevent community members from reaching out.

Based on the 2024 Point in Time count, only 7% of individuals reported staying with someone they know for the night of the survey, while 72% reported staying at either a hotel/motel through a funded program or a transitional shelter/housing.

There are plenty of affordable housing options in rural areas.

There are few and limited affordable housing options in rural communities. In rural communities, rental housing is often limited, and at times is in poor condition or too expensive for people to afford.

If you're homeless in a rural area, you can just go live off the land.

No one chooses to be homeless. In Canada's harsh climate, many people experiencing homelessness suffer from frostbite, physical health challenges and tragically, some lose their lives.

Sudden and extreme weather situations, such as high temperatures or freezing cold, create greater challenges for those who are unsheltered, as they often do not have the correct provisions to ensure their security.

Rural homelessness isn't as serious or urgent.

Rural communities are facing increasing pressures with limited services. As urban systems become overwhelmed, more rural communities across Canada are taking action to provide prevention programs, housing supports, and develop emergency accommodations and supportive housing, often without sufficient funding or support.

Rural homelessness statistics are low, so it's not a big issue.

Rural homelessness is significantly underreported due to data gaps. However, research is emerging that shows that rural homelessness is occurring at per capita rates that are equal to or greater than some of Canada's largest urban centres (Schiff et al., 2023).

Rural homelessness is mostly caused by addiction or mental illness.

While addiction and mental illness may lead to some people experiencing homelessness, people often develop these challenges as a result of the trauma and instability caused by homelessness. Homelessness is driven by a number of complex factors including poverty, the loss of employment, domestic violence or systemic barriers that disproportionately impact marginalized groups.

Based on the 2024 Point in Time count, the top three reasons reported for housing loss are: conflict with spouse/partner, not enough income for housing, and conflict with a parent/guardian.

Homelessness is easy to spot.

Homelessness and housing insecurity is often less visible in rural communities due to its hidden nature. People may be staying with family or friends, living in RVs/campers or in unsafe living conditions.

As reported in the 2024 Point in Time count, the average age at which someone had their first experience with homelessness was 32 years of age. However, the youngest was 14 years old, and the oldest was 63. This highlights that homelessness can also look different depending on the individual's age.

Homeless people can just move to a city for help.

People experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity have deep ties to their community. Forced migration to access supports in larger cities can disconnect people from their community, social networks and organizations who have meaningful relationships with them. Everyone deserves access to supports without having to leave their home community.

Based on the Point in Time count, 33% of individuals had reported their previous community as London, Ontario, demonstrating a migration pattern away from the city for any number of reasons.

Homelessness does not exist in Middlesex County.

Based on the 2024 Point in Time count, 63 people were found to be experiencing homelessness during one night across Middlesex County.

People experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity should get a job.

A study in rural Alberta showed that 69% of people who were housing insecure were employed in some capacity at the time they responded to a survey. The reality is there are many barriers preventing people who are experiencing housing insecurity from obtaining a job, including housing, transportation, access to Identification, a phone and a bank account.

