Everyone Counts 2021

4 Key Decision Points for Proceeding with Plans for a 2021 PiT Count

The Reaching Home standards for participating in the 2021 Canadian Coordinated Point-in-Time (PiT) Count provide flexibility for communities to adapt their approach in light of the local effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Below is a list of four key decisions to support local implementation, along with some considerations. For any questions related to these decision points, contact [hpsr@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca](mailto:hpsr@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca).

There are 4 components to the Count. Each must be considered independently so that you can decide which one(s) you are going to proceed with in the spring, and which one(s) you will postpone until the fall.

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| --- | --- |
| Unsheltered Enumeration | Unsheltered Survey |
| Sheltered Enumeration | Sheltered Survey |

Each key decision point below corresponds to one of the 4 elements. We begin on the bottom left and proceed clockwise.

**Key Decision 1: Can you collect administrative data on sheltered individuals for the sheltered enumeration?**

Collecting the data for the sheltered enumeration will likely be the element least affected by the pandemic.

* Do you collect this administrative data directly from databases or through contacts at each organization?
* What has changed since your preparations a year ago?
  + Both your organization and your partners may have had significant staff/role changes in the last year. If you collect data via a contact at each organization, ensure that your contacts are up-to-date and that each contact understands the data requirements and timelines.
  + Are there additional shelters or transitional housing programs to include? These could be temporary overflow or COVID-19 isolation sites as well as other new permanent programs.
* Will you include data from health and correctional systems? Do you have sufficient lead time to gather this data? This data is not required by ESDC, but if you have collected it in past counts, you may want to continue to do so for consistency.
  + Both your organization and your partners may be dealing with strained staffing resources. Aim to reduce the administrative burden as much as possible.

**Key Decision 2: Can you enumerate unsheltered individuals in your community?**

This data will be more challenging to collect than the sheltered data, but it is key to completing the picture for your community’s enumeration of core populations. This data is especially relevant during the pandemic because of multiple anecdotal reports of increases in this population.

* Refers to administering screening questions OR the observational tally sheet ONLY – not the full survey.
* Do you and your count partners have the resources to implement the planning? Coverage areas will need to be determined.
* You may need to re-consider who will survey all coverage areas, as community volunteers often carried out this part of the count, and that may not be possible in 2021. Can you engage staff from the homeless-serving sector to fill this role? Do you/your local outreach teams have the resources to do this? You will want your coverage to be comparable to the 2018 count.
* Can you cover comparable ground by spreading out the enumeration among several shifts of enumerators over a full 24 hours? You would need to implement procedures to limit double counting, such as clear coverage areas and collecting identifying data to aid in de-duplication.
* Can you cover less ground by using a sampling approach? If you are considering this, you should consult with a statistics expert.

**Key Decision 3: Can you survey unsheltered individuals in your community?**

Characteristics of unsheltered individuals are lesser known, especially for those who do not ever access services. Surveying this group in your PiT Count is important because data about these individuals may not be collected anywhere else.

* If your community will be carrying out an unsheltered enumeration, how much added work/time will it take to administer the survey? It may be easier to enumerate and survey at the same time, rather than postpone the survey to a later date.
* Will you be able to cover as much ground as you have in past counts? Will administering the survey change that? Prioritize covering similar ground in order to carry out a robust enumeration over administering surveys. If administering surveys will hamper your enumeration, postpone the surveys.
* Keep in mind that you may administer surveys to unsheltered individuals over a 72 hour period.

**Key Decision 4: Can you survey sheltered individuals in your community?**

The bulk of surveys are administered in facilities and this may be the most time consuming portion of the count in your community.

* Remember, rather than administering these surveys in one day, you can administer them over 2 weeks.
* Are outsiders allowed into your local shelters? Who will administer the surveys? Be sure to calculate how much time is truly required for this project. Allow for approximately 15 minutes per survey.
* Are your count partners – shelter providers, etc – on board for administering surveys if outsiders are not allowed in facilities? Partners may be strained, and the ask is bigger than usual (if their staff have to administer all the surveys), so their engagement and buy-in is more important than ever.

Each of these 4 core elements of your account should be considered independently and can be planned or postponed separately. The data that you collect this year will be critical in updating your local and provincial/territorial understanding of homelessness, and crucial in updating the national picture on homelessness. These data will be used to inform policies going forward.