

VitalFocus

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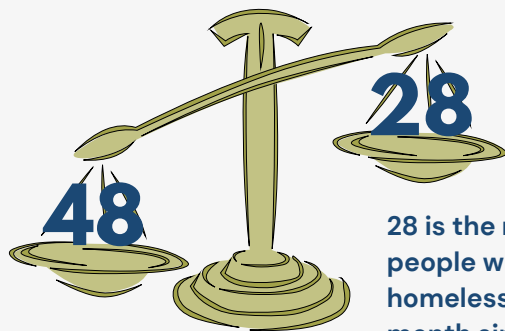
An overview of housing and homelessness in Guelph-Wellington

Homelessness is when an individual or family does not have a permanent address or residence, and they have no immediate housing options, nor the means or ability to secure housing. **Homelessness includes:**

- **Unsheltered homelessness:** living on the streets or in places not intended for human habitation;
- **Emergency sheltered:** staying in overnight shelters;
- **Provisionally accommodated:** when accommodation is temporary or lacks security of tenure;
- **At risk of homelessness:** when a person's current economic and/or housing situation is precarious or does not meet public health and safety standards.¹

In Guelph-Wellington (G-W), we are working toward **Functional Zero**

A **Functional Zero** end to homelessness means that communities have systems in place to prevent homelessness whenever possible. It also means that when someone does become homeless, the experience is rare, brief, and non-recurring.³ In practice, Functional Zero is reached in a community when "homelessness-related resources match or exceed the demand for them from the target population".⁴



48 is the median number of people who entered the homeless-serving system each month since December 2025.

28 is the median number of people who exited the homeless-serving system each month since December 2025.

Service providers use By-Name data to match people experiencing homelessness with the supports and housing that best meet their needs and preferences. The list is also used to monitor when individuals and families move in and out of homelessness, providing accurate, real-time data about how many people are experiencing homelessness.⁶

A person is considered **chronically homeless** if they are currently experiencing homelessness and have experienced at least 6 months of homelessness in the last year, or repeated episodes totalling at least 18 months over the past 3 years.²



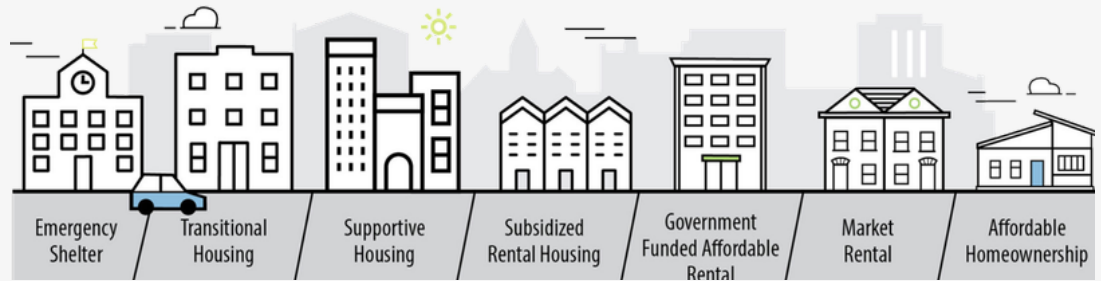
Currently, in G-W, the median number of people that enter the homeless-serving system each month (**inflow**) is greater than the median number of people that exit the homeless-serving system each month (**outflow**).⁵

By-Name data is a real-time list of people experiencing homelessness in Guelph-Wellington.

The Housing Continuum

The Housing Continuum is the range of housing options that should be available for everyone in every community.⁷

Every community needs a range of housing options so that everyone can have a decent and affordable place to call home.



While people experiencing homelessness may access housing across the continuum, **this report highlights the 'left side' of the housing continuum.**



Emergency shelters are immediate crisis accommodations for people experiencing homelessness, fleeing domestic violence, or facing sudden eviction.



Transitional housing is a temporary accommodation that aims to bridge the gap between emergency shelter and more permanent housing.



Supportive housing combines permanent, affordable housing with individualized and flexible support services.

More on supportive housing

Supportive housing can look different depending on people's level of need.

Single-site supportive housing provides each participant with a private unit or bedroom in a shared home or apartment building, with access to 24/7 staffing and support.⁸

Scattered-site supportive housing provides affordable or subsidized access to housing that is scattered throughout the community, where participants can access part-time care.⁸

Every \$10 invested in supportive housing yields roughly \$21.72 in savings across health, social, and justice systems.⁹

Myth: Supportive housing is too expensive.

Reality: Supportive housing can be less costly than ongoing reliance on emergency, health, and justice systems.

Monthly cost comparison⁹

Mental Health & Addictions Supportive housing: \$2,000–\$5,000

Emergency shelter: \$2,600–\$5,000

Correctional facility: \$11,000+

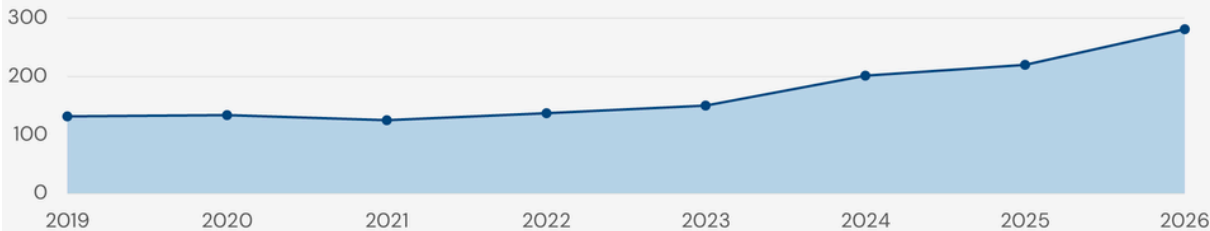
Hospitalization: \$17,000+

Homelessness has been increasing since 2023

Many people at risk of homelessness find solutions without ever coming into contact with formal supports and housing systems. However, many people still experience homelessness in G-W.⁵

The average number of people experiencing chronic homelessness has doubled in recent years, reaching its **highest point in the first half of 2026**.

Average number of people experiencing chronic homelessness in Guelph-Wellington from 2019 to 2025 and the first half of 2026⁵



In July 2026, **308 people** were experiencing chronic homelessness in G-W.⁵

Many factors contribute to increasing rates of homelessness:

- **Structural factors**, such as a lack of available affordable housing, inadequate income, and/or hiring and housing discrimination;¹⁰
- **System failures**, such as difficult transitions from child welfare, inadequate discharge planning for people leaving hospitals, corrections, mental health and addictions facilities, a lack of support for immigrants and refugees;¹⁰
- **Relational problems**, such as family breakdowns and gender-based violence.¹⁰

Addiction and mental health challenges can be both a contributing factor and a consequence of homelessness; but are frequently symptomatic of precarious housing and can be made worse by experiences of homelessness.¹⁰

Contributing factors impact populations disproportionately

Indigenous Peoples, racialized communities, members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, and veterans are overrepresented in the Canadian homeless population.¹¹ Our community needs inclusive housing solutions that account for the additional barriers posed by systemic injustice and discrimination.



*"I was in and out of homelessness starting in 2019. I moved between shelters, couches, and short-term spaces. **Without Grace Gardens I wouldn't be here.**"*
– Resident at Grace Gardens

"For the first time in years, I feel safe – I'm not bouncing between hospital, street, and jail anymore."
– Resident at 10 Shelldale

Prevention and diversion

Prevention and **diversion** are both focused on reducing inflow into homelessness.

Prevention addresses upstream structural and system factors that create housing insecurity – for example, rent arrears. **Diversion** helps people who are at immediate risk of homelessness identify safe alternatives to shelter and connect with timely supports in their home community.

This is an essential area of focus as we work toward **Functional Zero** in G–W, where the majority of people experiencing homelessness are either new or returning to homelessness.

In 2025, Stepping Stone and Wyndham House coordinated close to **700 diversions***. Within these 700 diversions, Stepping Stone assisted 459 unique individuals.¹²

**Diversions are instances where a person was diverted from homelessness back to family and natural supports, not the number of people who were diverted.¹²*

Local action spotlights

Wyndham House
opened Bellevue
(8 supported
units for youth) in
May 2023

10 Shelldale*
opened 32
permanent
housing units for
adults in June
2024

Stepping Stone
opened Grace
Gardens (32
permanent
housing units for
adults) in July
2023

Thresholds
Homes and
Supports opened
65 Delhi (28
transitional units
for adults) in
February 2025

Stepping Stone
opened 23 Gordon
Street (12
transitional units
for adults) in
September 2026

Wyndham House
opened Welcome to
Waterloo (10
supported & 3
transitional units for
youth) in October
2026

Guelph Community Health Centre's Integrated Health Services
Team provides mobile primary care and specialized health
services to residents living in permanent or transitional
supportive housing across Guelph.

Taking action together to address homelessness in G–W

The Wellington–Guelph Health and Housing Community Plan identifies three pillars that require intervention and action to address homelessness in our community:

1. Preventing and diverting inflow into homelessness;

2. Improving emergency health and housing responses, and increasing the provision of basic needs for people experiencing homelessness;

3. Advancing (permanent) housing options, and mental health, substance use, and comprehensive health services.

Alongside these three pillars, the framework identifies **Indigenous-led solutions** and **system change as key enablers** to address homelessness.¹³

"Wyndham House didn't just give me housing. It gave me back my voice, my confidence, and my future. And I'll never forget that." – Resident at Wyndham House

**10 Shelldale is a partnership between Kindle Communities, Stonehenge Therapeutic Community and Guelph Community Health Centre*

Reducing chronic youth homelessness

Since 2018, our community has reduced chronic youth homelessness by 71%, decreasing from 51 youth to 15 as of early 2026. This represents a significant achievement, in large part due to Wyndham House's leadership. This success demonstrates the effectiveness of coordinated, housing-focused interventions and has put **Guelph–Wellington on the path to be the first community in Canada to end chronic youth homelessness.**¹⁴

How to help

Stay informed

Visit the [Wellington–Guelph Health and Housing](#) website and get involved by signing up to receive updates.

While you are there, you can read the [Wellington–Guelph Health and Housing Community Plan](#).

Both can be accessed at:

<https://www.wghealthandhousing.ca/>

Donate to Home for Good

The **Home for Good Campaign (HFG)** raises money to build permanent housing solutions for people who are experiencing chronic homelessness. Since 2021, HFG has raised \$2.7 million. This takes some of the fundraising burden off the charities that are running programs and helps coordinate efforts across charities and non-profit organizations.

homeforgoodgw.ca



Join the Yes In My Backyard (YIMBY) campaign

When everyone has a safe, stable, affordable, and accessible place to call home, our whole community benefits.

Join the **YIMBY** campaign, led by the Guelph & Wellington Poverty Elimination Collaborative, to support affordable housing solutions that meet community needs.

Take the **YIMBY** Pledge at:

<https://www.gwpoverity.ca/yimby/>

Dispel myths about homelessness

There are many myths about housing and homelessness. For example, the misconception that supportive housing increases neighbourhood safety concerns. In reality, housing stability reduces crisis events and public system interactions.⁹

For more myths and realities about housing and homelessness, visit:

<https://www.wlu.ca/features/2026/summer/myths-realities-homelessness.html>

Acknowledgements & References

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Toward Common Ground

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