



District of Port Hardy Poverty Reduction Action Plan



District of Port Hardy Poverty Reduction Action Plan

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District of Port Hardy

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District of Port Hardy – Poverty Reduction Action Plan

We acknowledge that the District of Port Hardy is located on the traditional territory of the Kwakiutl people, Gilakas'la

We would like to send our appreciation to the many community members, District of Port Hardy, Regional District of Mount Waddington, Kwakiutl First Nation, Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nation, Quatsino First Nation, Mount Waddington Health Network, Port Hardy Chamber of Commerce, BC Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, The Tamarack Institute, SPARC BC, and the various local organizations and service providers who provided valuable information and contributions to the Poverty Reduction Action Plan.

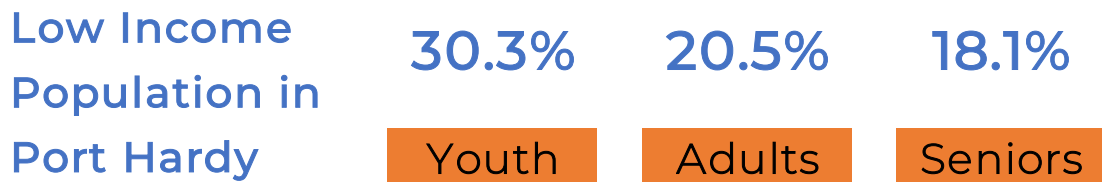
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Executive Summary

Through the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) Poverty Reduction Planning & Action Program, the District of Port Hardy received funding for the development of the *Port Hardy Poverty Reduction Action Plan*. The aim of the Plan is to understand the extent of poverty in the community and formulate actions to address and reduce poverty at the local level, focusing on short- and medium-term actions that may be realistically addressed within a five-year timeframe. The Action Areas identified in the Plan contribute to, or complement, federal and provincial efforts to reduce poverty, while focusing on poverty reduction at the community level.

22.4% of the population of Port Hardy struggle to make ends meet. This includes 30.3% of children and youth (under 18), 20.5% of adults (18-64), and 18.1% of seniors (over 65)¹ The Mount Waddington Region has the second highest lone-parent child poverty rate in BC (67% poverty rate), which is nearly five times higher than the couple-parent child poverty rate in the Region (14% poverty rate), according to the *2021 BC Child Poverty Report Card*².



Statistics Canada, 2016 Census; Low-Income Measure, After Tax (LIM-AT)

35% of low income Port Hardy families and 75% of low income unattached individuals have incomes less than \$20,000³. Meeting basic needs such as shelter, food, transportation and clothing, is a constant struggle for those living in poverty.

¹ Statistics Canada - 2016 Census. Catalogue Number 98-400-X2016127; Low-Income Measure, After Tax (LIM-AT)

² First Call BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition, *2021 BC Child Poverty Report Card* (November 2021)

³ Statistics Canada, 2016 Census, Custom Tabulation. Families represent economic families and unattached individuals represent those persons over 15 years of age who are not in economic families.

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Gathering feedback and insights from the community and stakeholders played a significant role in shaping the Poverty Reduction Study and associated actions. Engagement activities included a survey and key informant interviews.

It was made clear through the study process that there is already great work being done within Port Hardy to address poverty. This Plan serves to highlight some of those initiatives and focuses on actions and recommendations that the District and local community groups can implement and build upon to address poverty. In particular, Section 5 outlines concrete next steps that the District can take to help build local capacity, coordinate, and lead collaborative implementation of the Plan.

The Plan includes **9 Poverty Themes and Action Areas** which have been identified through the study's stakeholder and community engagement process. These include:

- Affordable and Adequate Housing
- Transportation
- Stigma, Racism, and Discrimination
- Access to Affordable and Nutritious Foods
- Access to Mental Health and Addictions Supports
- Access to Health Services and Other Supports
- Education and Early Learning Opportunities
- Employment and Job Training Supports
- Awareness, Advocacy and Education

A series of recommended actions for each of the Poverty Themes have been identified. Addressing the specific actions will require a collaborative effort and creative partnerships, including involvement across all levels of government, non-government, and the community itself. The recommendations within this

study particularly place focus on community level initiatives, including local government.

The following provides a summary of **poverty action area recommendations that specifically involve the District of Port Hardy**. The complete matrices of recommended actions and participants can be found within Section 3 of the report.

District of Port Hardy Involvement

Review federal and provincial housing strategies to identify opportunities for innovative partnerships, funding, and initiatives

Participate in the Regional Housing Coalition

Creation of a Housing Action Plan/Toolkit which investigates how to use bylaws, regulations and incentives to encourage needed forms of housing. This involves identifying creative approaches and zoning incentives to encourage seniors housing, supportive housing, rental housing, Allowances for secondary housing on a residential lot, Carriage homes, and homes on smaller lots

Local Government taking the initiative to develop marketable lots

Advocate for a change to the HPO builder certification requirements in rural communities

Discuss/collaborate with the Vancouver Island Construction Association on ways to alleviate construction challenges

Discuss/collaborate with the development community on ways to alleviate construction challenges

Partner with Federal/Provincial Governments to purchase existing buildings and/or partner with Faith-based organizations who own property to develop supportive housing options through repurposing existing buildings or new development. Ex: Explore potential partnership opportunities with Salvation Army

Advocate for financial institutions to better support financing of non market and rental housing

Transportation

Review the Transportation Needs Assessment prepared by the MWHN in 2020, and strategize how to address regional transportation goals

Stigma, Racism & Discrimination

Introduce cultural competency training requirements and cultural safety, decolonizing and anti-racist policy standards for provincial and local officials, property owners (landlords), private sector employers, social workers, among others. Example: San'yas Indigenous Cultural Safety Online Training

Develop methods to actively engage, educate and inform the community regarding the impacts of colonial history and other systemic factors leading to the cycle of Indigenous specific poverty. Examples: Through community workshops, online forums, social media campaigns, etc.

Continue to collaborate and promote relationship building between Indigenous and non-indigenous community members through events, festivals, activities, etc.

Support the work being undertaken at North Island College in regards to language revitalization which involves a collaborative effort involving elders, knowledge keepers, and youth.

Create strategies (social media campaign, informational handouts, etc.) which highlight common misconceptions about poverty, share stories of those directly with lived experience of poverty, and highlight community organizations and businesses that are working to address and lift people out of poverty.

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Access to Affordable & Nutritious Foods

Explore opportunities for partnerships with North Island College Culinary Arts Program, to provide opportunities for co-op/work experience for students. Example: Community cafeteria preparing meals for those in need

Negotiate community garden space in new developments

Mental Health & Addictions Supports

Explore opportunities, potential partnerships and funding models for a residential program providing housing and support services within a culturally sensitive environment

Review the 2021 Mount Waddington Regional District Substance Use and Recovery Services Plan produced by the MWHN. Further investigate, support and address the objectives and recommended actions of the Plan.

Education & Early Learning Opportunities

Consider opportunities for the enactment of an Early Childhood Development Committee to advocate for and promote the importance of early learning initiatives and education programs

Employment & Job Training Supports

At a Regional level, work with municipalities, economic development departments, Chamber of Commerce, etc. to develop and coordinate worker attraction campaigns and promote the area for targeted employment sectors. Explore the potential to establish a contract position for a regional Resident Attraction and Retention Program Coordinator

Encourage supported employment opportunities for those with mental health or addictions challenges, which would provide work experience in combination with support for healing and recovery. Example: Gardengate Horticulture Program in Kamloops, where participants are able to gain work experience and build skills and confidence, as you grow and harvest food for yourself as well as the wider community.

Continue to seek partnerships and collaborate on community outreach efforts, with such organizations as the North Island Employment Foundation Society, the North Island Aboriginal Training Society, Chamber of Commerce, North Island College, Community Futures Mount Waddington, Port Hardy Library, and other service providers in the community

Support youth employment programs, designed to connect employers and youth in successful job training and employment opportunities

Awareness, Education & Advocacy

Build upon opportunities for collaboration and information sharing amongst various community services providers and agencies through workshops and roundtables. This further enhances abilities to direct clients to appropriate resources.

Continue to build capacity of the Mount Waddington Health Network, which is involved in the areas of mental health and substance use, seniors/elders health, housing and homelessness, food security, and youth leadership.

Continue to support relationship building with neighbouring municipalities and First Nations

Ensure appropriate level of staff time is devoted to further exploring the Action Areas, identifying whether extra supports are needed and if so, what form that would take (ex. Coordinator role to lead implementation of the Plan)

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Include poverty reduction lens when updating District bylaws and policies. Consider equity, diversity, and inclusion principles, and align with local strategies to reduce poverty and reduce stigma associated with poverty. Review and recommend bylaw and policy changes.

Continued consultation/monitoring. It will be important to assess what is working, what can be improved, and what can be added when moving forward with the Action Plan. Periodic consultations with stakeholders, service providers, policy makers and community members, particularly those with lived experience of poverty is recommended.

It is noted that many of these initiatives also involve participation from other levels of Government, and each action area involves the participation of local service providers and community groups.

Building upon the Poverty Action Plan, there is opportunity to prepare an Evaluation Plan, the purpose of which is to outline specific indicators that can be measured over time to assess whether poverty is being reduced in the community. Furthermore, periodic consultations with stakeholders, service providers, policy makers, and community members - particularly those with lived experience of poverty - is recommended in efforts to continue to update and refine the Action Plan and associated recommendations.

Impacts of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has had far reaching impacts in terms of general mental health and wellbeing. There is a complex two-way relationship between both mental health and substance use and poverty, and those living in poverty have been affected the most from the pandemic. As such, it will be important to continue cross-government initiatives to reduce poverty, with particular focus on mental health and addictions supports, addressing the impacts of the pandemic on vulnerable populations.

1. Background

In 2019, the Province of British Columbia (BC) released its poverty reduction strategy: TogetherBC. The strategy sets targets to reduce overall poverty in BC by at least 25%, and the child poverty rate by at least 50%, by 2024.

The Province has provided \$5 million over three years through the Poverty Reduction Planning & Action program to support local governments in helping to reduce poverty. Through this funding, the District of Port Hardy received a grant to develop the Poverty Reduction Action Plan and has retained Urbanics Consultants Ltd. to oversee the study. The aim of the plan is to understand the extent of poverty in Port Hardy and formulate actions to address and reduce poverty at the local level. The Plan represents a starting point for the community to take action.

Indeed, there is already great work being done within Port Hardy to address poverty. This Plan serves to highlight some of those initiatives and focuses on actions and recommendations that the District and local community groups can implement and build upon to address poverty.

1.1 What is Poverty?⁴

Poverty can be defined as “the condition of a person who is deprived of the resources, means, choices and power necessary to acquire and maintain a basic level of living standards and to facilitate integration and participation in society.”⁵

⁴ Canada Without Poverty; Tamarack Institute, *Ending Indigenous Poverty in Cities*

⁵ Government of Canada, *Opportunity for All – Canada’s First Poverty Reduction Strategy* (2018)

It is known that those living in poverty are more likely to have health-related setbacks, face challenges finding and maintaining employment, require access to various social supports and assistance, and are more likely to be incarcerated.

Poverty does not affect everyone equally. At a considerably higher risk are Aboriginal people, recent immigrants and refugees, people with mental and physical disabilities, elderly individuals, single parents (especially single mothers), and racialized communities.

Indigenous poverty is the most prevalent form of poverty in Canada today.⁶ Indeed, the experience of poverty for Indigenous people is complex and underscored by racism, multigenerational trauma, and both historical and current colonial policies. The residential school system, chronic exclusion, marginalization, and oppression has led to indigenous poverty.

While overall child poverty rates have declined, the Indigenous poverty rate of 47% is 2.6 times higher than the Canadian average, and four times that of non-Indigenous, non-racialized children.⁷

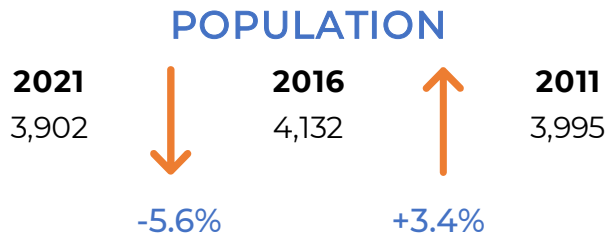
⁶ Tamarack Institute, *The End of Poverty: Eight Pathways That Are Ending Poverty in Canada*

⁷ www.afn.ca, *Towards Justice, Tackling Indigenous Child Poverty in Canada* (July 2019)

1.2 Port Hardy Context

Port Hardy is located at the northern tip of Vancouver Island, within the traditional territory of the Kwakiutl First Nation. Neighbouring First Nations bands include the Quatsino and Gwa’sala-‘Nakwaxda’xw. Port Hardy serves as the gateway to the Central Coast and BC Ferry’s northern terminus for the Discovery Coast run and Prince Rupert. Rich in natural resources, Port Hardy has had a traditional resource-based economy that includes fishing, mining and logging. Emerging industries include the alternative energy sector and new developments in mineral and metal extraction.

The recently released 2021 Census of Population has revealed that Port Hardy’s population has declined by 5.6 percent since the last census was conducted in 2016 (Population of 3,902 in 2021, down from 4,132 in 2016).



Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population

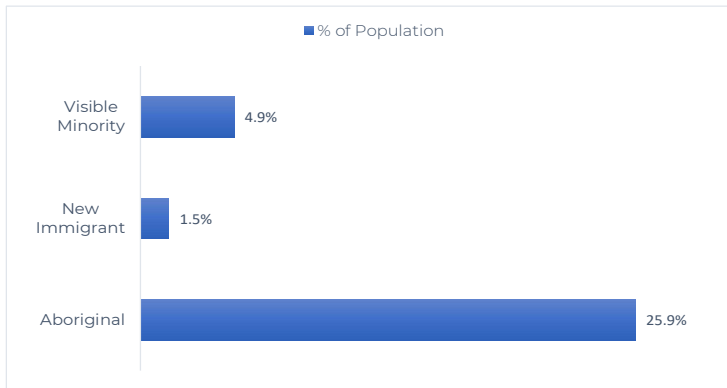
It is noted that errors and omissions can occur at time of the census count. Thus, it is worthwhile to assess the accuracy of the latest census count, as there is the potential that Port Hardy has been undercounted for the 2021 census period. It will also be important to further monitor the implications of this population change and explore the additional 2021 census measures when they are released later in 2022, including age profiles, family and household data, income profiles, education, and labour force data.

As the majority of the 2021 Census has not yet been released at the time of this study, a noted limitation is that the statistics are largely based off of the 2016 Census, of which data is now quite dated.

In terms of 2016 age profiles, Port Hardy residents are slightly younger than the median age found in the Mount Waddington Regional District, with the median age in Port Hardy increasing from 38.9 in 2006 to 40.8 in 2016.

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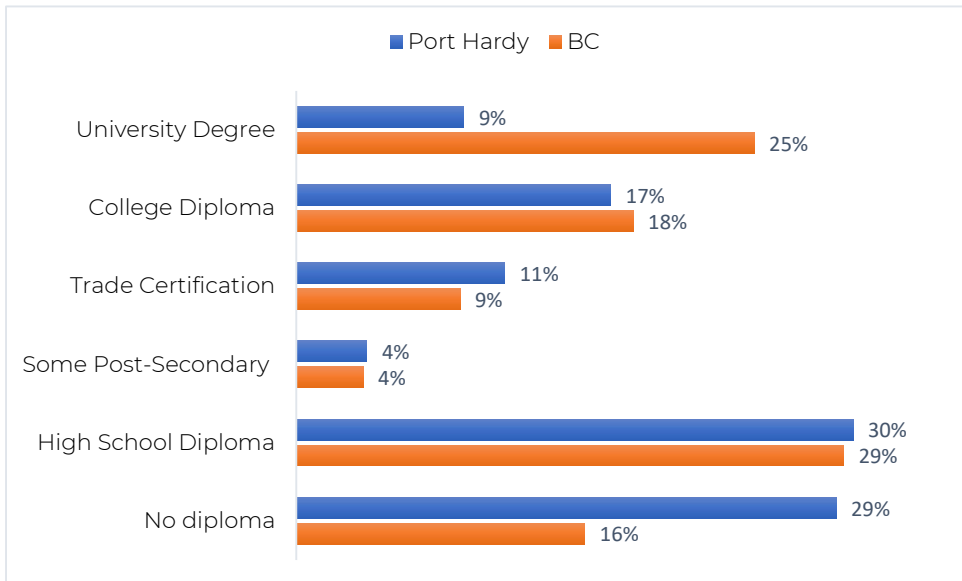
26% of Port Hardy's population are Aboriginal, 5% are identified as visible minority, and 1.5% are identified as new immigrants in the 2016 Census. As Aboriginal people and new immigrants often face barriers in terms of access to healthcare, education, and employment, it will be particularly important to focus on the needs of these vulnerable population groups.



26% of Port Hardy's population are Aboriginal
Statistics Canada, 2016 Census

Statistics Canada, 2016 Census

As compared to the province, Port Hardy residents are more likely to have a trade certification and less likely to have a university degree. 29% of Port Hardy residents do not have a diploma.



Statistics Canada, 2016 Census

In 2016, the median before-tax household income in Port Hardy was \$54,981, slightly lower than the Regional District at \$58,113. In terms of household incomes by tenure, renter households contain significantly lower incomes than owner households.

	Port Hardy	Regional District
Owner	\$76,087	\$74,114
Renter	\$29,903	\$35,727
All Households	\$54,981	\$58,113

Statistics Canada, 2016 Census

In Port Hardy, 22.4% of the population struggle to make ends meet. This includes 30.3% of children and youth (under 18), 20.5% of adults (18-64), and 18.1% of seniors (over 65) ⁸

Low Income Population in Port Hardy	30.3%	20.5%	18.1%
	Youth	Adults	Seniors

Statistics Canada, 2016 Census

It is important to note that Statistics Canada does not include income data for First Nations Reserves. Statistics Canada identifies that “the existence of substantial in-kind transfers (such as subsidized housing and First Nations band housing) and sizeable barter economies or consumption from own production (such as product from hunting, farming or fishing) could make the

⁸ Statistics Canada - 2016 Census. Catalogue Number 98-400-X2016127; Low-Income Measure, After Tax (LIM-AT)

interpretation of low-income statistics more difficult in these situations.”⁹ As such, low income data for the on-reserve populations are not incorporated in the data for the Mount Waddington Region.

18% of families in Port Hardy (as defined by economic family), are in low income, as compared to 13% in the Regional District¹⁰. 52% of the region’s economic families in low income reside in Port Hardy, with 48% of low income families residing in other areas of the Regional District. While 37% of all economic families in the region reside in Port Hardy, the District contains approximately half of the low income economic families found in the region.

Approximately half of all low income economic families in the Regional District reside in Port Hardy

Statistics Canada, 2016 Census

	Port Hardy	Mount Waddington	Port Hardy as % of RD
Economic Families in Low Income	210 18.0%	405 12.9%	52%

Statistics Canada, 2016 Census, Custom Tabulation; Below Low-Income Measure After Tax (LIM-AT)

The rate of persons over 15 years of age that are not within economic families (unattached individuals), living in low income in Port Hardy is 37% as compared to 34% in the Regional District. 32% (or 95) of the unattached individuals living in low income in Port Hardy are over 65 years of age. Considering the high rate of

⁹ Statistics Canada, *Dictionary Census of Population 2016 Low-Income Measure, After Tax (LIM-AT)*

¹⁰ Statistics Canada, 2016 Census, Custom Tabulation; Low-Income Measure, After Tax (LIM-AT); Economic Family refers to a group of two or more persons who live in the same dwelling and are related to each other by blood, marriage, common-law union, adoption or a foster relationship.

single persons living in low income, it will be important to address the needs and concerns of this population group, particularly lone seniors living in low income.

	Port Hardy	Mount Waddington	Port Hardy as % of RD
Unattached Individuals Over 15 in Low Income	295 37.1%	585 33.6%	50%

Statistics Canada, 2016 Census, Custom Tabulation; Below LIM-AT

According to Statistics Canada data, 12% of elderly economic families in Port Hardy (as defined by elderly spouse or reference person - aged 65 years and over), are living in low income. This is slightly higher than the rate found at the Regional District level, at 10%. While 34% of all elderly economic families in the Region reside in Port Hardy, the District contains 43% of all low income elderly economic families in the Region.

	Port Hardy	Mount Waddington	Port Hardy as % of RD
Elderly Economic Families in Low Income	30 12.2%	70 9.7%	43%

Statistics Canada, 2016 Census, Custom Tabulation; Below LIM-AT

40% of Aboriginal economic families in Port Hardy are in low income
 Statistics Canada, 2016 Census

In terms of Aboriginal families (as defined by economic family), 40% are living in low income in Port Hardy, as compared to 20% of Aboriginal families in the Regional District. While 36% of Aboriginal economic families in the Region reside in Port Hardy, the District contains nearly three-quarters of all Aboriginal economic families in the region living in low income. It is important to note that Statistics Canada does not include income data from each of the First Nations Reserves found in the Region.¹¹

	Port Hardy	Mount Waddington	Port Hardy as % of RD
Aboriginal Economic Families in Low Income	160 40.0%	220 19.8%	73%

Statistics Canada, 2016 Census, Custom Tabulation; Below LIM-AT

The rate of unattached individuals over 15 years of age of Aboriginal identity that are living in low income in Port Hardy is 37%, roughly in line with the Regional District rate of 40%. Half of the Region's unattached individuals over 15 of Aboriginal identity living in low income reside in Port Hardy.

	Port Hardy	Mount Waddington	Port Hardy as % of RD
Aboriginal Identity - Unattached Individuals Over 15 in Low Income	50 37.0%	100 40.0%	50%

Statistics Canada, 2016 Census, Custom Tabulation; Below LIM-AT

¹¹ Statistics Canada, *Dictionary Census of Population 2016 Low-Income Measure, After Tax (LIM-AT)*

In terms of visible minority families (as defined by economic family), 11% are living in low income in Port Hardy, which is in line with the Regional District rate. Port Hardy contains 50% of visible minority families living in low income in the Region.

	Port Hardy	Mount Waddington	Port Hardy as % of RD
Visible Minority Economic Families in Low Income	10	20	50%
	11.1%	10.8%	

Statistics Canada, 2016 Census, Custom Tabulation; Below LIM-AT

The rate of unattached visible minority individuals over 15 living in low income is 60% in Port Hardy, particularly higher than the rate found in the Region at 31%. Port Hardy contains 60% of all visible minority unattached individuals living in low income in the Region.

	Port Hardy	Mount Waddington	Port Hardy as % of RD
Visible Minority - Unattached Individuals Over 15 in Low Income	15	25	60%
	60.0%	31.3%	

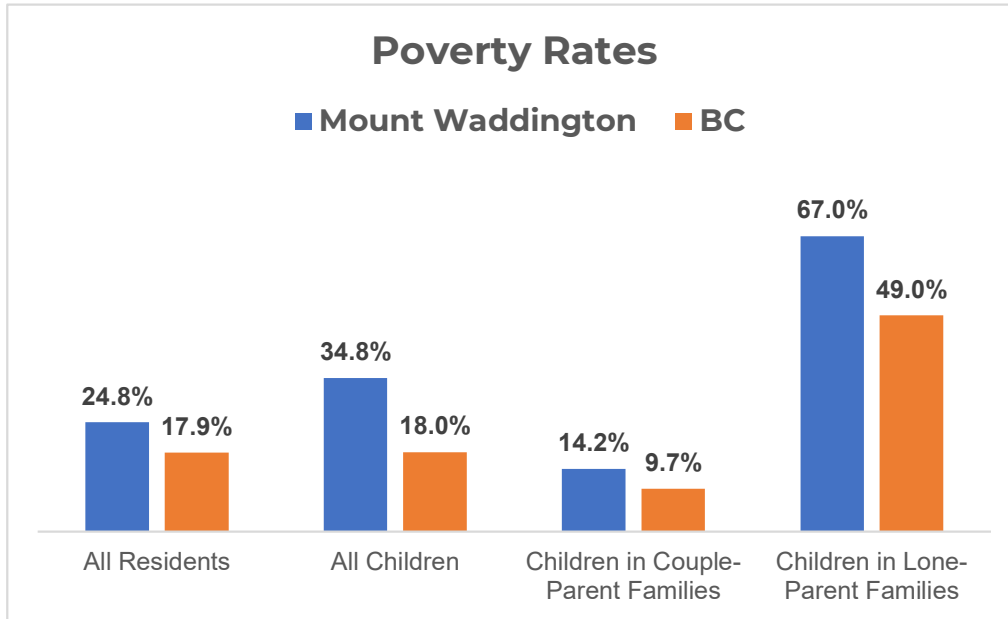
Statistics Canada, 2016 Census, Custom Tabulation; Below LIM-AT

The Mount Waddington Regional District has the second highest rate of child poverty in the province¹². According to the 2021 BC Child Poverty Report Card, 800, or 34.8% of children live in poverty. This is second only to the Central Coast

¹² First Call BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition, *2021 BC Child Poverty Report Card* (November 2021); Based on 2019 data; Census Family Low Income After Tax Measure; Children aged 0-17 years old

Regional District which has the highest rate of child poverty in the Province at 36.8%.

The Mount Waddington Region has one of the highest lone-parent child poverty rates in BC, nearly five times higher than the couple-parent child poverty rate in the region.



First Call BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition, *2021 BC Child Poverty Report Card* (November 2021); Based on 2019 data; Census Family Low Income After Tax Measure

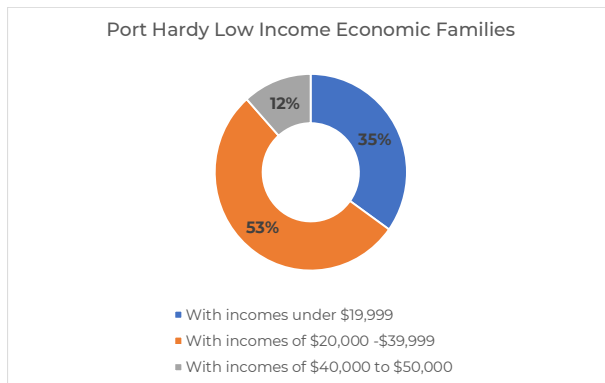
Looking at incomes, **35% of economic families living in low income in Port Hardy have incomes less than \$20,000.** Just over half of low income economic families earn between \$20,000 and \$39,999 while the remaining 12% have incomes of \$40,000 to \$50,000.

In terms of persons over 15 years of age that are not in economic families (unattached individuals), **three-quarters have incomes less than \$20,000**. The remainder have incomes between \$20,000 and \$30,000.

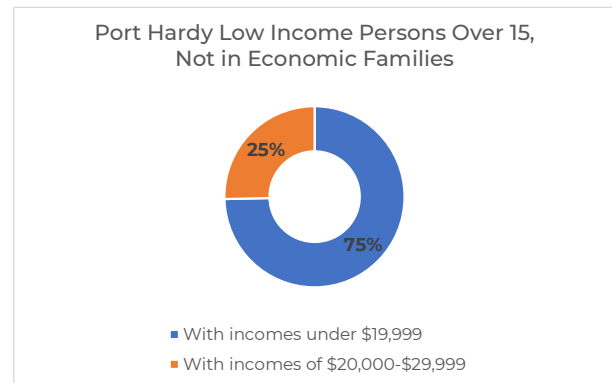
75% of low income unattached individuals in Port Hardy have incomes less than \$20,000

Statistics Canada, 2016 Census, Custom Tabulation

This highlights the struggles that low income individuals and families face on a daily basis to meet basic needs such as shelter, nutritious food, transportation and clothing.



Statistics Canada, 2016 Census, Custom tabulation



Statistics Canada, 2016 Census, Custom tabulation



I make 18.25/hr as a single parent I can not afford 1200-1400 month for a 2 bedroom house or duplex. Which is why I had to move to coal harbour

-Poverty Reduction Action Plan Survey Respondent



Higher costs of goods, have to really scrimp and save

-Poverty Reduction Action Plan Survey Respondent

2. Community & Stakeholder Engagement

Gathering feedback and insights from the community and stakeholders played a significant role in shaping the Poverty Reduction Study and associated actions. Engagement activities included a survey and key informant interviews.

The purpose of the **Community Survey** was to gather input in terms of the current and emerging needs of Port Hardy residents, particularly the needs and experiences of those living in poverty. The survey was conducted over a 7 week period in December 2021 and January 2022. It was made available online through the District of Port Hardy websites and the link was shared with a number of local organizations for distribution throughout their networks. Hard copies of the survey were also available at Municipal Hall. The survey was completed with 70 wholly or partially completed surveys. This is out of a raw count of 224 surveys which were opened, but for which no questions were answered.

Please refer to *Appendix 1* which provides a summary of the Survey Findings.

Stakeholder interviews and discussions were held with 27 individuals from a range of community service organizations, public departments, Kwakiutl First Nation, Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nation, Quatsino First Nation, health and social services, and institutions. Interviews were held predominately over the months of November 2021 to January 2022. Interviewees were asked about specific issues, challenges and concerns related to poverty in the community.

Common themes surrounding poverty were identified throughout the engagement process. These themes will be further explored in the context of Port Hardy, and recommended areas of action will be developed for each poverty theme.

3. Poverty Themes & Action Areas

It is recognized by various levels of Government, service providers, and community groups that in order to reduce poverty there needs to be a collective effort. By working together, a greater impact can be realized. All members of the community have a role in ensuring that the community is a place where everyone is welcome and everyone can thrive.

Through the study's stakeholder and community engagement process, 9 common themes were identified. In no particular order, these include:

Affordable and Adequate Housing

Transportation

Stigma, Racism, and Discrimination

Access to Affordable and Nutritious Foods

Access to Mental Health and Addictions Supports

Access to Health Services and Other Supports

Education and Early Learning Opportunities

Employment and Job Training Supports

Awareness, Advocacy and Education

Indeed, many of the challenges are interrelated, as the issue of poverty is highly complex and multi-dimensional. Thus, it requires collective action, including public, private, non-profit and individuals, to address the complexity of poverty. This also includes an integrated and cooperative involvement by each level of government.

A selection of government jurisdictions related to poverty and social planning can be found below:

Federal: Benefit payments (ex: Canada Child Benefit, Canada Workers Benefit); Canada Pension Plan; Funding for various programs such as housing (CMHC) and infrastructure

Provincial: Income and disability assistance; Minimum wage; Post-secondary tuition; Funding for various programs (housing, child care, transit, employment)

Regional: Regional transit; Regional Parks; Economic Development

Municipal: Development and Zoning (Bylaws); Police and Fire; Municipal Parks and Recreation; Economic Development; Community Development and Social Planning

First Nations: Largely self-governed

Island Health and First Nations Health Authority: Health

In 2018, the Federal and Provincial Governments each released their first poverty reduction strategies with specific targets. The Federal Government released *Opportunity for All* – Canada’s First Poverty Reduction Strategy, which includes a commitment to reducing poverty by 50% by 2030.

The BC Government released *TogetherBC*, British Columbia’s first-ever Poverty Reduction Study, with the goal to reduce poverty by 25% overall and by 50% for children by 2024. The Provincial strategy outlines four guiding principles: 1) Affordability, 2) Opportunity, 3) Reconciliation, and 4) Social Inclusion.

The Action Areas identified within the *Port Hardy Poverty Reduction Action Plan* contribute to, or complement, federal and provincial efforts, while focusing on reducing poverty at the community level.

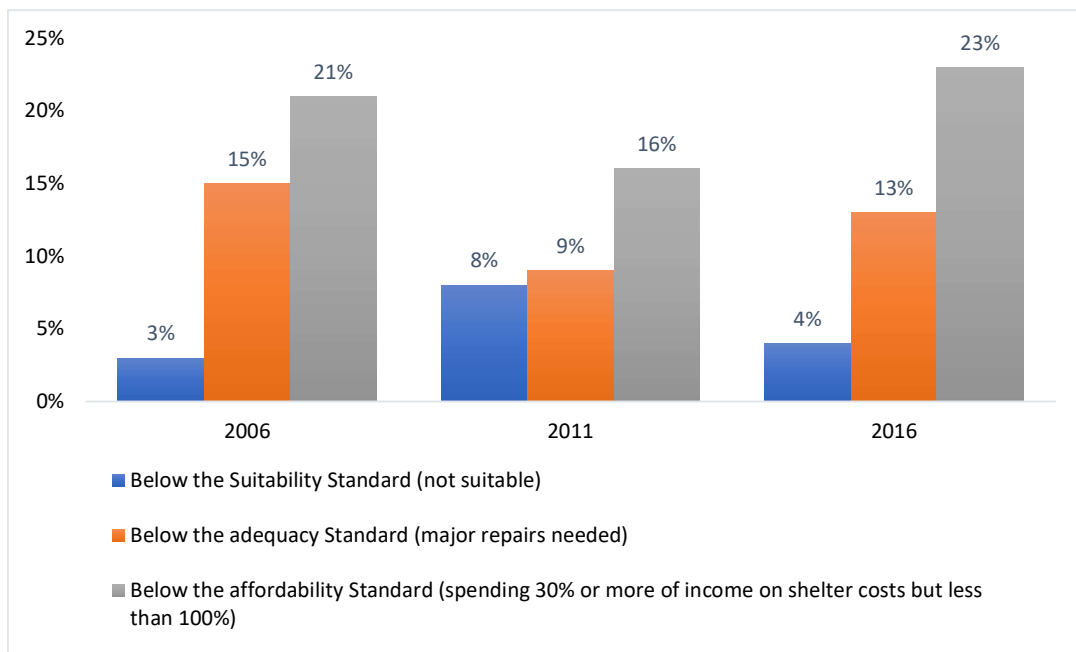
The following sections serve to identify a series of recommended actions for each of the identified Poverty Themes. Again, it is noted that there are existing initiatives, facilities and programs that have been making a significant difference for those in need in the community. Some of the recommendations serve to enhance or build upon these existing initiatives. Focus has been placed on actions that may be realistically addressed within a five-year timeframe.

Furthermore, it is recommended that the Actions and overall Plan be continually monitored and updated over time to reflect the community's needs as they evolve. There is opportunity to prepare an *Evaluation Plan*, the purpose of which is to outline specific indicators that can be measured over time to assess whether poverty is being reduced in the community. This could include a matrix with an indication of the data to collect and monitor for each of the identified core Action Areas.

3.1 Affordable and Adequate Housing¹³

The *Mount Waddington Regional Housing Needs Report* was completed in October 2020, and the *Mount Waddington Regional Housing Strategy* was completed in 2019. Some of the critical issues uncovered in these reports, as well as within the Poverty Study community engagement sessions, include:

- **Housing indicators show that affordability has been the most significant issue across the region from 2006 to 2016.** This is particularly prevalent in Port Hardy, which has the highest rate of households spending 30% or more of income on shelter costs in the Region (23% of households, a figure which has increased from 16% of households in 2011). This rate is even higher for Indigenous households in Port Hardy, whereby 33% of housing is below the affordability standard.



Statistics Canada Census 2006, 2011, 2016 - Custom information for BC Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

¹³ Mount Waddington Regional Housing Needs Study (2020); Statistics Canada, 2016 Census

- In Port Hardy, households making the median income would need to spend an estimated 37 – 40% of their monthly income to afford the average cost of rent for a two- or three-bedroom unit in the secondary rental market.¹⁴ The secondary market includes rental units such as secondary suites, condominiums, or entire homes that are rented. It excludes purpose-built rental units.
- **The housing stock throughout the region is aging and may require repairs and maintenance**, which can be expensive, creating added affordability challenges as well as creating unsafe or unhealthy living conditions. Furthermore, the cost of construction is much higher on the north island than in other areas of the province, creating an even greater challenge in the provision of affordable housing options.
- **14% of all households in Port Hardy are in core housing need – in line with the Provincial rate¹⁵**. When broken down by tenure, 31% of renter households are identified as in core housing need with 4% of owner households in core housing need.
- **Increasing home prices** - The North Island Benchmark Price of a single family home has increased by 46% in 1 year (July 2020-July 2021), and increased by 74% over a 3 year period.¹⁶
- Stakeholders indicated that **hidden homelessness appears to be more prevalent in the region** and that individuals experiencing homelessness may be living in tents, accessing shelter beds when possible, and/or living in their cars or RVs.
- We heard during engagement exercises that RV parks and campgrounds have been filling up with residents residing year-round in RVs. While some are living there by choice, others are residing in RV parks and campgrounds as a result of the housing crisis. Many of these residents are

¹⁴ Mount Waddington Regional Housing Needs Study (2020)

¹⁵ Mount Waddington Regional Housing Needs Study (2020). A household is in core housing need when it does not meet one or more of the affordability, adequacy, and suitability standards and could not afford alternative suitable and adequate housing in their community.

¹⁶ Vancouver Island Real Estate Board

worried about the security of their housing situation and are unsure on their rights and status as tenants.

- **There is a need for a greater variety of housing types.** What is available is not adequate or affordable for those who are in need. The largest barrier to resident attraction and employee recruitment is lack of housing options. A key theme that emerged from the Housing Needs study is that there are not enough options for older adults looking to downsize out of large, single-detached homes. This is creating a strain in the housing supply, preventing these units from being available for young families who are moving to the region.
- Finding **suitable rental housing** was also identified as a severe challenge throughout the region.
- There is **need for more accessible units** to meet the needs of people with limited physical mobility and seniors as they age.
- Overall, there is a **shortage of housing** in Port Hardy across **all tenures and typologies**.
- There has been limited development in recent years, as **development is challenging with high costs of construction**.

District of Port Hardy – Poverty Reduction Action Plan

Recommended Action

Recommended Actions	Who Should Participate?				
	Federal	Provincial	Local First Nations	District of PH; SD85; RDMW	Community (Individuals/Organizations)
Review federal and provincial housing strategies to identify opportunities for innovative partnerships, funding, and initiatives	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participate in the Regional Housing Coalition – work collaboratively with the aim of identifying the right mix of housing and ways to pursue recommended housing types. Involves enhanced communication and collaborations between communities, local councils, First Nations, MWHN			✓	✓	✓
Creation of a Housing Action Plan/Toolkit which investigates how to use bylaws, regulations and incentives to encourage needed forms of housing. This involves identifying creative approaches and zoning incentives to encourage seniors housing, supportive housing, rental housing, Allowances for secondary housing on a residential lot, Carriage homes, and homes on smaller lots		✓	✓	✓	✓
Local Government taking the initiative to develop marketable lots				✓	
Advocate for a change to the HPO builder certification requirements in rural communities				✓	
Discuss/collaborate with the Vancouver Island Construction Association on ways to alleviate construction challenges				✓	✓
Discuss/collaborate with the development community on ways to alleviate construction challenges				✓	✓
Sustain and enhance housing stability strategies such as the BC Rent Bank		✓			✓
Partner with Federal/Provincial Governments to purchase existing buildings and/or partner with Faith-based organizations who own property to develop supportive housing options through repurposing existing buildings or new development. Ex: Explore potential partnership opportunities with Salvation Army	✓	✓		✓	✓
Advocate for financial institutions to better support financing of non market and rental housing	✓	✓		✓	✓

3.2 Transportation

- Transportation is often a barrier for people needing to access services. Being that many of the services, including vital health care services, are located in larger population centres down island, the distance needed to access such services is a core challenge.
- Through the engagement exercises we heard that transportation can be a particular barrier for seniors and those with disabilities to access services, amenities, and programs within the community.
- While there is bus service operated through BC Transit, including routes to Port McNeill and Fort Rupert, service is limited. A private company offers trips to Campbell River making three trips per week in each direction, but at \$100 for an adult ticket many cannot afford this option.
- There is also the need to enhance understanding of the existing transportation options, as identified in the Regional Transportation Needs Assessment. Increasing signage at bus stops and simplifying information for bus schedules are noted recommendations.
- While programs such as Wheels for Wellness are making a difference in the community, it has been operating at limited capacities in response to COVID-19.
- The Volunteer Transportation Network (VTN) operates in Port Hardy and surrounding communities in the Region. The VTN is a valuable service for the community as it is a donation-based transportation service for clients who do not have access to any alternative means of transportation, or those who have a physical infirmity or disability. The service is integrated with the HandyDART program and the overall transit system in the Region. The primary challenge in Port Hardy has been acquiring volunteer drivers for the service.
- Results of the community survey revealed that 40% of respondents would not have enough money to cover unexpected costs should they arise, such as car repairs. This highlights the financial vulnerabilities within the

District of Port Hardy – Poverty Reduction Action Plan

community, and the stresses that come with living pay cheque to pay cheque. Households in Port Hardy spend an average of \$11,830 on transportation-related expenditures per year (\$986/month).¹⁷ And being a largely car dependent community (80% of the labour force commutes to work by a car, truck or van as a driver or passenger¹⁸), having little extra income to pay for unexpected costs, such as car maintenance and repair can be extremely challenging for those trying to lift themselves out of poverty.

Recommended Actions

Recommended Actions	Who Should Participate?					
	Federal	BC Transit	Local First Nations; FNHA	Island Health	District of PH; SDBS; RDMW	Community (Individuals/Organizations)
Review the Regional Transportation Needs Assessment, prepared by MWHN in 2020. Strategize on how to work towards specific goals and explore potential solutions to create connectivity between communities. Involves collaborating with MWHN, local municipalities, Regional District, First Nations, BC Transit, Island Health, and interested community members.		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Explore options to build awareness and attract volunteer drivers to the Volunteer Transportation Network (VTN) program. This could include providing support to the Transit Coordinator in the creation of business, marketing, and communications plans					RDMW	✓
Explore options for car share services						✓
Work on making sure BC Bus Pass is readily available for low income seniors and those with disabilities		✓			RDMW	✓

¹⁷ 2021 Canada Consumer Spend Potential Expenditures Summary

¹⁸ Statistics Canada, 2016 Census

3.3 Stigma, Racism and Discrimination

- Poverty is closely associated with racism. Combating stigma, discrimination and racism is essential in efforts to reduce poverty.
- Racialized persons are disproportionately affected by poverty, and the lack of education, adequate housing and health care can continue across generations.
- Nearly 40 percent of people with mental health issues report experiencing stigma, almost three times the rate of stigma experienced by those without mental health issues. People with substance use problems experience higher rates of stigma than those with any other health condition. Stigma not only undermines self-worth and health, but it also creates additional barriers to accessing services, employment, housing, and community/social supports.¹⁹
- Indigenous poverty is the most prevalent form of poverty in Canada today.²⁰ In Port Hardy, 40% of Aboriginal economic families are living in low income and approximately three-quarters of total economic families in low income identify as Aboriginal.²¹ The experience of poverty for Indigenous people is complex and underscored by racism, multigenerational trauma, and both historical and current colonial policies. For Indigenous people, systemic racism affects all aspects of daily life. And studies have found that systemic racism within the healthcare system is a significant contributor to Indigenous peoples' lower health outcomes.
- The impacts of stigma, discrimination, cultural interference and poverty are deeply entrenched.
- It is necessary to educate and build awareness to address stigma and counter common misconceptions about poverty.

¹⁹ Canadian Mental Health Association, *Poverty Reduction Strategy Submission* (2018)

²⁰ Canada Without Poverty; Tamarack Institute, *Ending Indigenous Poverty in Cities*

²¹ Statistics Canada, 2016 Census, custom data table



Reconciliation is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country. In order for that to happen, there has to be awareness of the past, an acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour.

-Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

Recommended Actions

Recommended Actions	Who Should Participate?					
	Federal	Provincial	FNHA	Island Health	District of PH; Local First Nations; SDBS; RDMW	Community (Individuals/Organizations)
Introduce cultural competency training requirements and cultural safety, decolonizing and anti-racist policy standards for provincial and local officials, property owners (landlords), private sector employers, social workers, among others. Example: San'yas Indigenous Cultural Safety Online Training		✓		✓	✓	✓
Develop methods to actively engage, educate and inform the community regarding the impacts of colonial history and other systemic factors leading to the cycle of Indigenous specific poverty. Examples: Through community workshops, online forums, social media campaigns, etc.		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Continue to collaborate and promote relationship building between Indigenous and non-indigenous community members through events, festivals, activities, etc.			✓	✓	✓	✓
Support the work being undertaken at North Island College in regards to language revitalization which involves a collaborative effort involving elders, knowledge keepers, and youth.					✓	✓
Create strategies (social media campaign, informational handouts, etc.) which highlight common misconceptions about poverty, share stories of those directly with lived experience of poverty, and highlight community organizations and businesses that are working to address and lift people out of poverty.			✓	✓	✓	✓

3.4 Access to Affordable and Nutritious Foods

- Access to nutritious and affordable foods is a growing challenge for low income households. **Food insecurity** is defined as inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints.²²
- Food prices continue to increase, with an average Canadian family of four expected to pay an extra \$966 for food in 2022. This amounts to nearly \$15,000 in groceries in 2022 for an average family, with prices in BC estimated to be above that average. Nationally, the cost of food is expected to go up five to seven per cent, with B.C. among the provinces set to see food on the higher end of that.²³ This places continued strain on families, particularly when wages are not increasing at the same rate as food and other household costs.
- There is consistent evidence that household food insecurity is associated with lower diet quality and a variety of physical health problems, including elevated risk of diabetes and cardiovascular disease. A growing number of studies have also documented links between food insecurity and adverse mental health outcomes, such as higher rates of depression, stress and anxiety, and poor self-perceived mental health.²⁴



Poverty is the key driver of food insecurity, and food insecurity is the key driver of food bank use.

-Food Banks Canada, 2016

- In Port Hardy there is an existing network of services and programs providing groceries and meals to those in need. A selection of those include Loaves and Fishes Food Bank; Harvest Food Bank; the Zero Waste Program; Salvation Army; Hardy Bay Seniors Centre, various food programs and backpack buddies as part of the school system; as well as the meal

²² Community Food Centres of Canada

²³ Canada's Food Price Report, 2022

²⁴ Statistics Canada, *Food Insecurity and Mental Health During the COVID-19 Pandemic* (2020)

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services that many of the service providers and community organizations offer as part of their programs.

- Stakeholder discussions emphasized that there is a need for local food production to be expanded, including community gardens and educational programs centred on growing and harvesting produce that is conducive to growing conditions of the area.

Recommended Actions

Recommended Actions	Who Should Participate?				
	Federal	Provincial	Local First Nations	District of PH; SD85; RDMW	Community (Individuals/Organizations)
Research trends, best practices and current programs/initiatives for food security in other comparable municipalities					✓
Continue to support school breakfast/food programs, backpack buddies, etc. Work with local organizations to provide meals to vulnerable children during the summer months when school is not in session.			✓	SD85	✓
Explore opportunities for a community kitchen with community refrigerators/freezers, providing both a place to prepare food, cook in bulk, and also provide fridge/freezer space for those that need a place to store food.					✓
Provide workshops/classes to learn about meal planning, seasonal foods, nutrition, traditional food, etc. and help to plan and cook nutritious and budget friendly meals					✓
Provide workshops/classes to learn about gardening, and how to grow and harvest your own food					✓
Explore opportunities for partnerships with North Island College Culinary Arts Program, to provide opportunities for co-op/work experience for students. Example: Community cafeteria preparing meals for those in need			✓	✓	✓
Explore potential for a food box program, where community members can purchase boxes of fresh fruit and vegetables at an affordable price. Example: The Good Food Box Program under the Community Kitchen Program of Calgary					✓
Negotiate community garden space in new developments			✓	✓	✓

3.5 Access to Mental Health and Addictions Supports

- There is a complex two-way relationship between both mental health and substance use and poverty. Those with mental illness and/or substance use issues are at an increased risk of living in poverty because of stigma, discrimination, social exclusion, additional healthcare costs, and barriers to employment. Conversely, those living in poverty can lead to increased stress and trauma, which has a strong correlation with poor mental health and problematic substance use.²⁵
- There are further complexities as a result of the impacts of intergenerational trauma and colonial policies, leading to disproportionate rates of poverty, mental illness and addiction issues.
- Economic security is a key determinant of mental health and wellbeing. In addition, an adequate standard of living is a critical necessity to support the recovery of a person experiencing mental health or substance use-related illness. The Canadian Mental Health Association's Framework for Support document affirms that income, education, housing and work are vital to the recovery of persons with a serious mental illness.²⁶
- As measured against the BC average, Northern Vancouver Island residents are²⁷:
 - 3.2 times more likely to have an alcohol-related death
 - 36 percent more likely to have a drug-related death
 - 48 percent more likely to have a smoking-related death

²⁵ Canadian Mental Health Association, *BC Poverty Reduction Strategy Submission* (2018)

²⁶ Canadian Mental Health Association

²⁷ Provincial Health Services Authority, 2015 Stats; Vancouver Island North Public Health Authority, which includes Port Hardy. Likelihood is measured against the BC average.

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Recommended Actions

Recommended Actions	Who Should Participate?					
	Federal	Provincial	Local First Nations; FNHA	Island Health	District of PH; SD85; RDMW	Community (Individuals/Organizations)
Focus on ensuring the community knows what mental health and addictions services, programs and resources are available locally, explaining how each service and program can help, and do so in a holistic and compassionate way. This could be done through outreach work and informational sources (resource booklets, information sheets, etc.)		✓	FNHA	✓	SD85	✓
Review the 2021 Mount Waddington Regional District Substance Use and Recovery Services Plan produced by the MWHN. Further investigate, support and address the objectives and recommended actions of the Plan.		✓	FNHA	✓	✓	✓
Work to fill gaps in mental health and addictions services and supports in the community. Explore opportunities to set up satellite offices/programs from larger centres, to extend mental health services to Port Hardy on a regular basis.		✓	FNHA	✓		✓
Monitor the success of, and support the work of the Gwa'dzi Managed Alcohol Program			✓	✓		✓
Explore opportunities, potential partnerships and funding models for a residential program providing housing and support services within a culturally sensitive environment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Improve transportation options/connections to access services found in larger population centres down island		✓			✓	✓

3.6 Access to Health Services and Other Supports

- As previously identified, many of the services and specialized health care facilities are located in larger communities to the south. As such, the distance needed to access such services is a core challenge, particularly those with limited incomes and those who rely on public transportation.
- A limited income and lack of extended benefits makes it difficult to afford specialized or alternative health options.
- People living in poverty face more barriers to accessing health care which can result in increased emergency visits and undiagnosed, untreated or prolonged medical issues.
- We heard from stakeholders that it can be hard for service providers to reach and serve clients when many services have been moved to virtual methods since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. For those who can't afford internet or face challenges with using a computer, this places a barrier to accessing vital programs and services that have been largely moved online during the pandemic.

Recommended Actions

Recommended Actions	Who Should Participate?					
	Federal	Provincial	Local First Nations; FNHA	Island Health	District of PH; SDBS; RDMW	Community (Individuals/Organizations)
Identify the gaps in local medical services and explore potential of opening up satellite offices or providing travelling health care services to those in need on an occasional basis. Example: Optometry services; physiotherapy; alternative medicine; etc.		✓	✓	✓		✓
Living on limited incomes and with a lack of extended benefits presents challenges for those to afford specialized or alternative health services. Advocate for subsidized medical services for low-income residents that are not covered under the Medical Services Plan.		✓	✓	✓		✓
Improve transportation options/connections to access services found in larger population centres down island		✓			✓	✓
Support initiatives and partnerships to distribute laptops, funding for wifi, etc. for low-income individuals and households. This is particularly important as programs/services have been largely moved online in response to COVID-19. Example: Laptop lending pilot program between North Island Employment Foundation Society and the library.						✓

3.7 Education and Early Learning Opportunities

- The Mount Waddington Region has one of the highest rates of child poverty in the province, and poverty rates have seen an increase in recent years. The BC Child Poverty Report Card reports that between the 2020 and 2021 Reports, child poverty rates in the Mount Waddington Region have increased from 31.1% to 34.8%.²⁸
- Children of lone-parent families are particularly susceptible to living in poverty. Indeed, lone parent families in Port Hardy have median before-tax household incomes below \$40,000.²⁹, and 67% of children in lone-parent families are living in poverty in the Mount Waddington Region.³⁰
- Living in poverty places additional challenges in providing an environment that supports positive child and youth development. Limited access to enrichment activities, proper nutrition, and other basic everyday needs has an adverse impact on children’s social, emotional, and cognitive development. It creates barriers to educational attainment leading to additional challenges later on in life, which furthers the cycle of poverty.³¹

Recommended Actions

Recommended Actions	Who Should Participate?				
	Federal	Provincial	Local First Nations	District of PH; SD85; RDMW	Community (Individuals/Organizations)
Continue to support, develop and promote early learning initiatives and educational programs in the community including Mother Goose programs, Strong Start, Mount Waddington Family Literacy Society and tutoring programs, library story times and class visits to the library, promote early literacy resources at library, and other early learning activity and resources in the community		✓	✓	SD85	✓
Consider opportunities for the enactment of an Early Childhood Development Committee to advocate for and promote the importance of early learning initiatives and education programs			✓	✓	✓
Encourage employers to value and accommodate family needs, including flexible working arrangements and family leave of absences.		✓			✓

²⁸ BC Child Poverty Report Card (2020 and 2021); Based on Census Family Low Income After Tax Measure (CFLIM-AT), 2018 and 2019 data sources.

²⁹ Statistics Canada, 2016 Census

³⁰ BC Child Poverty Report Card (2021)

³¹ Pathways to Education, *The Impacts of Socioeconomic Status and Educational Attainment on Youth Success*

3.8 Employment and Job Training Supports

- Those living in poverty face significant barriers and challenges in gaining the skills, education and experience to access and maintain secure employment options. Learning can be a struggle for those living in poverty, which leads to additional stress, lack of confidence, lower self-esteem and absenteeism.
- The availability of secure equitable, employment opportunities offering good wages and benefits are necessary to support and lift people out of poverty.
- Residents who are on social assistance, disability assistance, government pensions or making minimum wage are living near or below the poverty line. Income supports and minimum wage are not enough to make ends meet or keep up with the rising costs of living. We heard that often times residents often face challenges meeting their basic needs (housing, food, clothing, etc.).
- Employers have the opportunity to help alleviate poverty by developing inclusive employment practices and paying livable wages. Employers can foster approaches that reduce barriers for low income job seekers such as on the job training, flexible work schedules and assistance to manage transportation challenges.
- Employment retention and recruitment is a noted challenge in Port Hardy, including positions that are vital in assisting those living in poverty, such as outreach workers and nurses. It will be important to develop and coordinate worker attraction campaigns and promote the area for targeted employment sectors. However, there is a need to address the lack of housing options, which serves as the largest barrier to resident attraction and employee recruitment in the area.

District of Port Hardy – Poverty Reduction Action Plan

Recommended Actions

Recommended Actions	Who Should Participate?					
	Federal	Provincial	Local First Nations; FNHA	Island Health	District of PH; SD85; RDMW	Community (Individuals/Organizations)
Calculate the living wage rate for Port Hardy through partnership with Living Wage For Families BC and the Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives. Encourage living wage employment opportunities. Educate employers on the benefits and costs of enacting a living wage for employees.	✓	✓				✓
At a Regional level, work with municipalities, economic development departments, Chamber of Commerce, etc. to develop and coordinate worker attraction campaigns and promote the area for targeted employment sectors. Explore the potential to establish a contract position for a regional Resident Attraction and Retention Program Coordinator		✓	✓		✓	✓
Educate employers and provide supports to break down barriers to recruit, hire and retain low-income individuals seeking employment opportunities.	✓	✓				✓
Encourage supported employment opportunities for those with mental health or addictions challenges, which would provide work experience in combination with support for healing and recovery. Example: Gardengate Horticulture Program in Kamloops, where participants are able to gain work experience and build skills and confidence, as you grow and harvest food for yourself as well as the wider community.		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Introduce cultural competency training requirements and cultural safety, decolonizing and anti-racist policy standards for provincial and local officials, property owners (landlords), private sector employers, social workers, among others. Example: San'yas Indigenous Cultural Safety Online Training		✓		✓	✓	✓
Continue to seek partnerships and collaborate on community outreach efforts, with such organizations as the North Island Employment Foundation Society, the North Island Aboriginal Training Society, Chamber of Commerce, North Island College, Community Futures Mount Waddington, Port Hardy Library, and other service providers in the community			✓		✓	✓
Support initiatives and partnerships to distribute laptops, funding for wifi, etc. for low-income individuals and households. Example: Laptop lending pilot program between North Island Employment Foundation Society and the library, where community members are able to check-out laptops for a week at a time. This has been made possible through a grant from United Way.						✓
Outreach to inform the community of the places where access to computers, internet, printing, faxing, etc. is available free of charge. Furthermore, support programs and initiatives that provide basic training/supports for using technology.						✓
Provide guidance and information sources for secondary school students on education/career paths, including growing and in-demand job sectors, trades programs, and other areas of opportunity.			✓		SD85	✓
Support youth employment programs, designed to connect employers and youth in successful job training and employment opportunities			✓		✓	✓

3.9 Awareness, Education and Advocacy

- Overall, what we heard through the study process, is that Port Hardy is a close-knit and supportive community. There is a strong sense of community between service providers with room for opportunity to enhance information sharing and partnerships.

Recommended Actions

Recommended Actions	Who Should Participate?					
	Federal	Provincial	FNHA	Island Health	District of PH; Local First Nations; SD85; RDMW	Community (Individuals/Organizations)
Build upon opportunities for collaboration and information sharing amongst various community services providers and agencies through workshops and roundtables. This further enhances abilities to direct clients to appropriate resources.		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Continue to build capacity of the Mount Waddington Health Network, which is involved in the areas of mental health and substance use, seniors/elders health, housing and homelessness, food security, and youth leadership.		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Continue to support relationship building with neighbouring municipalities and First Nations			✓	✓	✓	✓
Ensure appropriate level of staff time is devoted to further exploring the Action Areas, identifying whether extra supports are needed and if so, what form that would take (ex. Coordinator role to lead implementation of the Plan)					✓	✓
Include poverty reduction lens when updating District bylaws and policies. Consider equity, diversity, and inclusion principles, and align with local strategies to reduce poverty and reduce stigma associated with poverty. Review and recommend bylaw and policy changes.					✓	
Continued consultation/monitoring. It will be important to assess what is working, what can be improved, and what can be added when moving forward with the Action Plan. Periodic consultations with stakeholders, service providers, policy makers and community members, particularly those with lived experience of poverty is recommended.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

4. Impacts of COVID-19

COVID-19 has had far reaching impacts in terms of general mental health and wellbeing. The pandemic has led to increased risk factors associated with poor mental health, including financial insecurity, job loss, social isolation, disruptions to education and job training, disruptions to daily routines, fear and uncertainty of personal health and the health of loved ones, and strained access to health care services. We know there is a complex two-way relationship between both mental health and substance use and poverty, as such it is important to continue to focus on mental health and addictions supports as a top priority.

A September 2021 Statistics Canada Survey found that one in four (25%) of Canadians aged 18 and older screened positive for symptoms of depression, anxiety or posttraumatic stress disorder in Spring 2021, up from one in five (21%) in fall 2020.³² Substance use is also on the rise in Canada. A 2020 poll found that 25% of Canadians aged 35-54 and 21% of those aged 18-34 have increased their alcohol consumption since social distancing and self-isolation due to COVID-19 began.³³

25% of Canadians aged 18+ screened positive for symptoms of depression, anxiety or posttraumatic stress disorder²²

When asked whether the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted financial security and/or quality of life, respondents of the *Port Hardy Poverty Reduction Online Survey*, revealed that **an increasing cost of living, loss of social connections and impacts to mental health** were the top responses. And when asked to rate their mental health and wellbeing on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is suffering and 10 is fully thriving, **39% of respondents rated their mental health and wellbeing between a 1 and 5**. Please refer to *Appendix 1* for the complete Poverty Reduction Online Survey Summary.

This highlights the fact that it is imperative to continue to focus on mental health, and for all levels of Government to be involved in making a range of mental health resources, supports and care available. This includes expanding

³² Statistics Canada, *Symptoms of mental health disorders over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic* (September 27, 2021)

³³ Camh, *Mental Health in Canada: COVID-19 and Beyond* (July 2020)

services to meet the needs of those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic to cope with stress, anxiety and grief.

Other issues that the Pandemic shed light on was the inadequate and overcrowded living conditions faced by some members of the community. We heard that the inadequate and unaffordable housing has led to overcrowded living conditions, which made following the physical distancing protocols challenging for some, leading to an increased risk of COVID-19 exposure.

Furthermore, the shutdown, and the move to virtual supports and services as a result of the pandemic has affected many, particularly those low income and vulnerable populations. **27% of the Online Survey respondents noted that accessing technology/internet is a somewhat, moderate, or extreme barrier.** While the digital divide has been there long before the COVID-19 pandemic, being connected online is ever more important over these past two years. “Technology poverty” is broadly definable as an absence of sufficient technology causing wealth and lifestyle inequalities that lead to detrimental impacts on society. These include physical and mental health issues, lost education opportunities, reduced income-earning abilities, food insecurity, compromised personal safety, and more.³⁴

Those living close to, or below the poverty line have been affected the most from COVID-19. It will be important to continue cross-government initiatives to reduce poverty and address the impacts of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations.

³⁴ Technologyhelps.org

5. Implementation Recommendations

This section will focus on the next steps required to move the Plan forward.

The Tamarack Institute and Cities Reducing Poverty often refer to **Collective Impact** when addressing poverty reduction. Collective Impact is defined as the commitment of a group of actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving complex social problems, such as poverty reduction³⁵. There are five conditions of the Collective Impact approach that must be established in order to work towards the identified goals. These are: a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and backbone support organizations:

Common Agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Shared vision ■ Common understanding of the problem ■ Joint approach and agreed upon actions
Shared Measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All participants collect data and measure results consistently ■ Participants share data and results
Mutually Reinforcing Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Participants take on different activities which support the shared plan ■ Activities are coordinated and support each other
Continuous Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consistent and open communication to build trust, keep focused on shared goals, and appreciate common motivation.
Backbone Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A dedicated staff with specific skills will serve as the ‘backbone’ and play a coordination role to support participants

Source: Tamarack Institute, Five Conditions of Collective Impact

³⁵ Tamarack Institute, *Five Conditions of Collective Impact*

This Plan serves as a starting point for a shared vision. It provides data on the extent of poverty in Port Hardy, while providing potential actions to share a common agenda for reducing poverty in the community.

As such, moving the Strategy forward will require a coordinated, collaborative and shared approach among all participants. Continuing to increase awareness and understanding of poverty in the community is a priority.

Furthermore, as identified within *Section 3.9, Awareness, Education and Advocacy*, moving the Action Areas forward involves ensuring there is appropriate level of time and experience to do so effectively. Increased capacity (Backbone Support) will be needed in order to implement the action items and overall strategy. This could involve exploring options for a paid position, in the form of a targeted Coordinator role to foster municipal led social and community development. It will be important for the District to assess various options which may include a one-year pilot position to get the Strategy kick-started, or possibly a part-time contract position to lead implementation of the Plan, facilitate communication, and monitor progress. There may also be opportunities for a Coordinator to work directly with or through the Mount Waddington Health Network table.

A Coordinator would take on the following roles and responsibilities:

- Conduct research and project oversight
- Leveraging and acquiring funding to support activities
- Building relationships (e.g. with Indigenous communities and other levels of Government)
- Enhancing communication and advocacy
- Continued periodic consultation with stakeholders, service providers, policy makers, and community members – particularly those with lived experience of poverty
- Creating an Evaluation Plan and monitoring progress – collect data, measure and share results

Potential Next Steps

- Explore potential options for a targeted support role to facilitate implementation of the Plan
- Building upon the Action Plan, identify specific stakeholder roles and responsibilities for each of the priority action items
- Ensure that there are opportunities for information sharing and continuous consultation and collaboration amongst stakeholders, service providers, policy makers, and community members
- Ensure that those with lived and living experience of poverty are represented in the decision making
- Include a poverty reduction lens when updating District bylaws and policies. Consider equity, diversity, and inclusion principles

Appendix 1 – Community Survey Summary Results

POVERTY REDUCTION ACTION PLAN COMMUNITY SURVEY SUMMARY

DISTRICT OF PORT HARDY
FEBRUARY 2022

·VRBANIC·



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Urbanics Consultants conducted a 7 week online community survey in December 2021 and January 2022 to gather input in terms of the current and emerging needs of Port Hardy residents, particularly the needs and experiences of those living in poverty. The survey has been completed with 70 wholly or partially completed surveys. This is out of a raw count of 224 surveys which were opened, but for which no questions were answered. Not all survey questions were answered by all respondents.

The following provides a summary of survey findings:

DEMOGRAPHICS

Respondents were asked a series of demographic questions. The respondents were predominately female (Figure 1) and between the ages of 30 to 59 (Figure 2). 16% of respondents identified as First Nations, Metis, or Inuit (Figure 3). 57% of respondents have lived in Port Hardy for longer than 10 years (Figure 4). Furthermore, 3 of the 'Other' responses cited they have lived in the community for longer than 10 years.

Figure 1 - How do you define your gender?

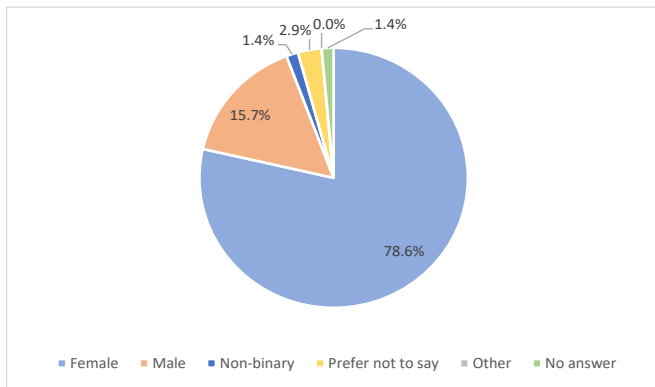


Figure 2 - How old are you?

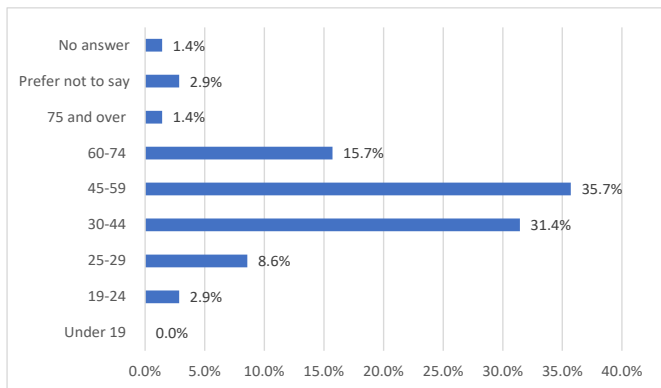


Figure 3 - Do you identify as First Nations, Metis, or Inuit?

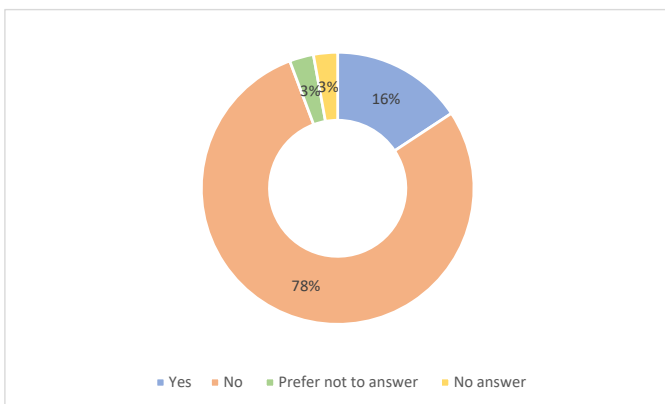
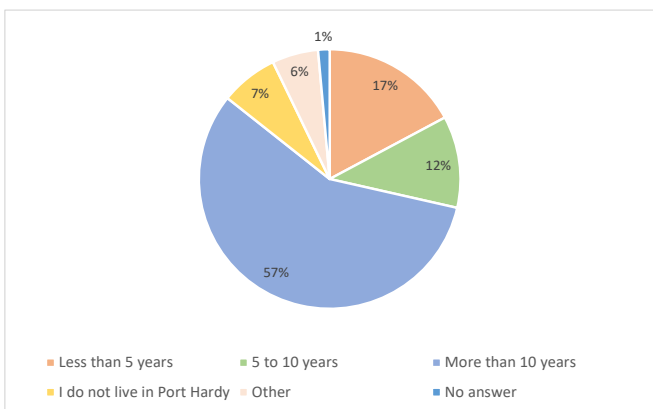


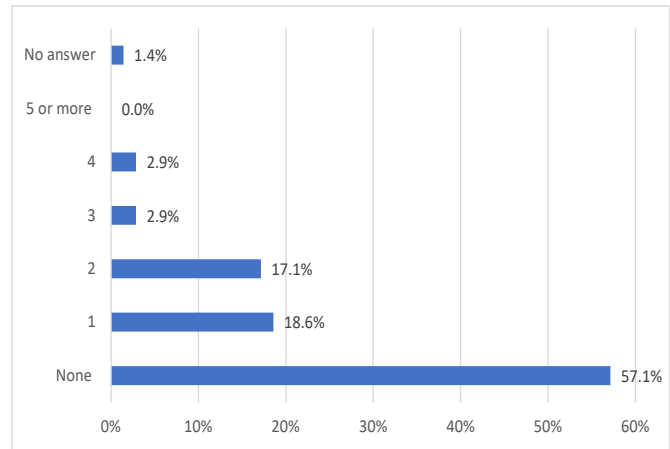
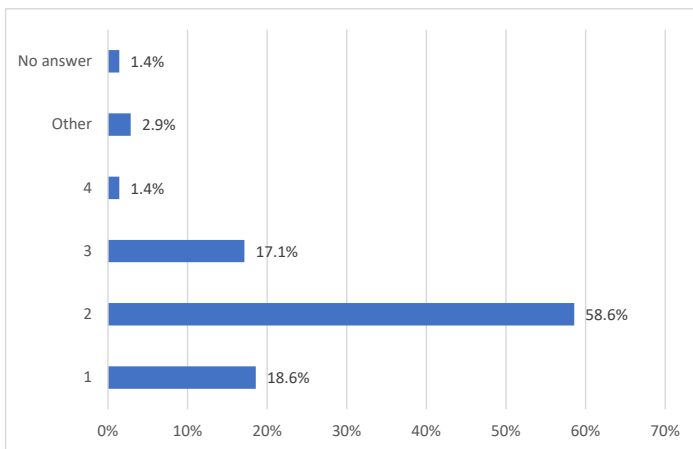
Figure 4 - How long have you lived in Port Hardy?



Most of the respondents live in a household with 2 adults (Figure 5) and just over 40% of households live with children under the age of 18 (Figure 6). 19% of respondents have more than 3 adults living in one household. This may be telling of the high cost of living with adult children living at home due to a lack of affordable housing.

Figure 5 - How many adults live in your household?

Figure 6 - How many children live in your household? (18 years old and under)



Most respondents reside in single detached homes (Figure 7) with 71% of respondents owning the dwelling unit (Figure 8). 6% of respondents stated they reside in a mobile home or recreational vehicle, and 3% stated they live in a room in someone else's home or rent a room in a hotel. There was one homeless respondent.

Figure 7 - Which of the following best describes your current dwelling type?

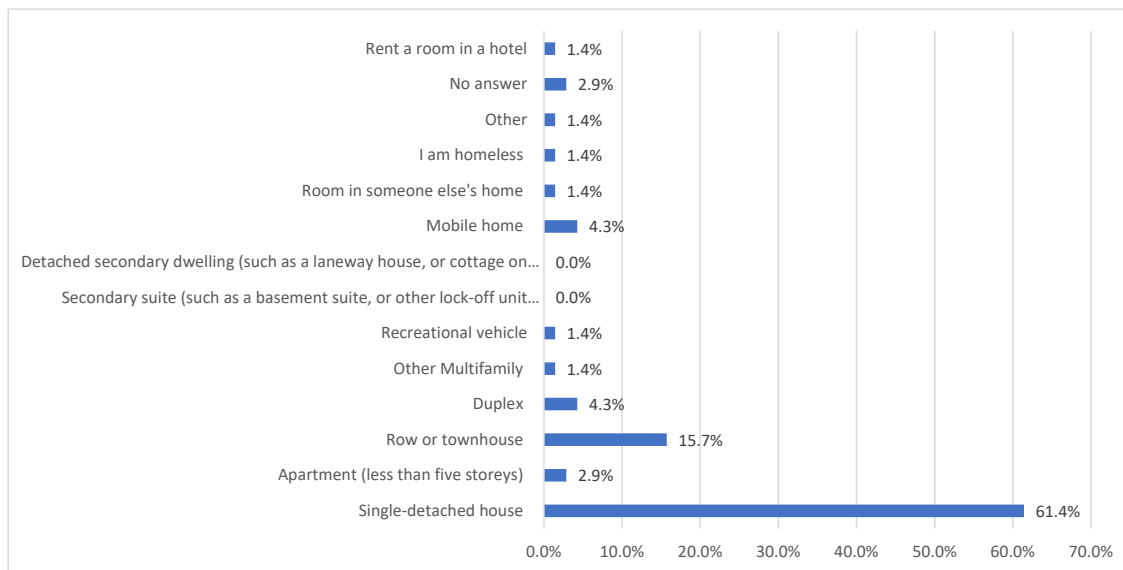
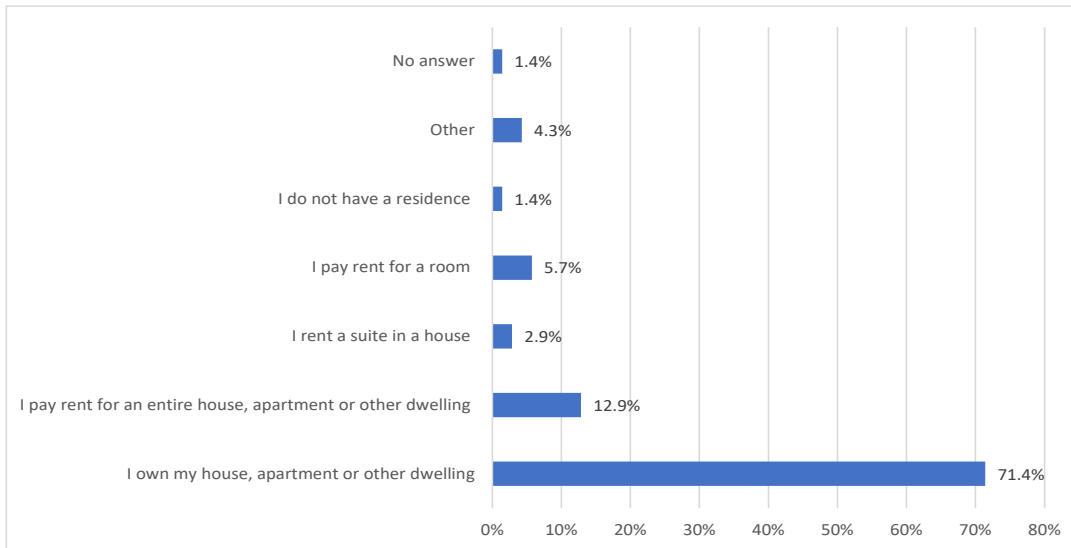
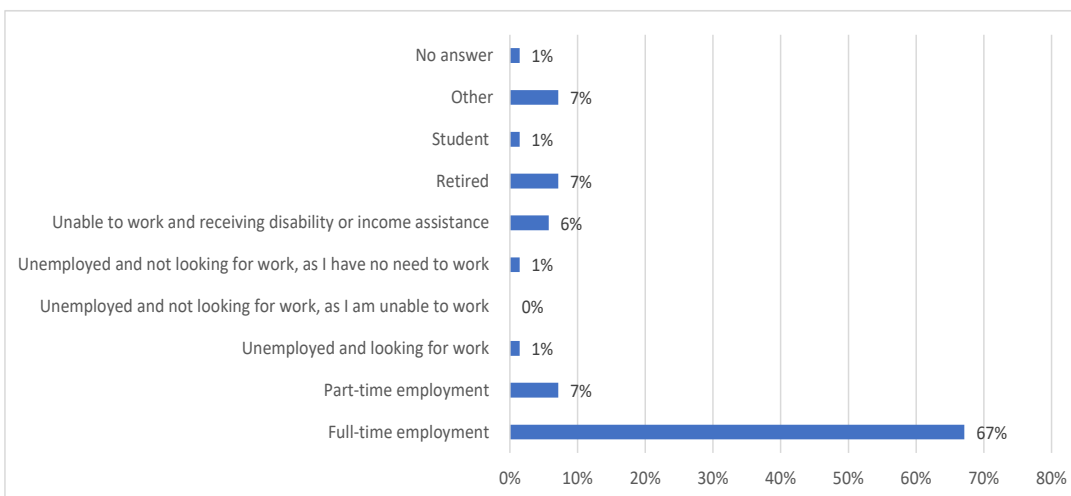


Figure 8 - Do you own or rent the place where you live?



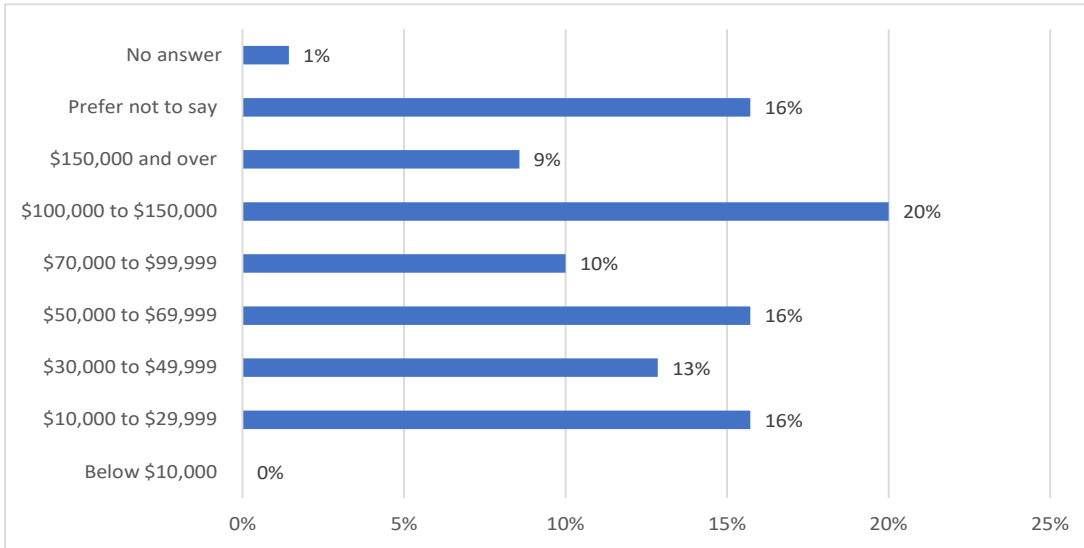
The majority of respondents are employed with 67% of respondents stating they are employed full-time with 7% employed part-time. 6% of respondents stated they are unable to work and are receiving disability or income assistance. 1.4% stated they are unemployed and not looking for work with another 1.4% noting they are unemployed and looking for work. In terms of the 'Other' responses, two (2) stated they are self employed and two (2) stated they are working several part-time jobs.

Figure 9 - What is your employment status?



In terms of household incomes, 29% stated they have before tax household incomes between \$10,000 and \$49,999, 16% of which are in the \$10,000 - \$29,999 household income category. A further 29% of respondents noted they have household incomes \$100,000 and over.

Figure 10 - What is your annual household income before taxes?



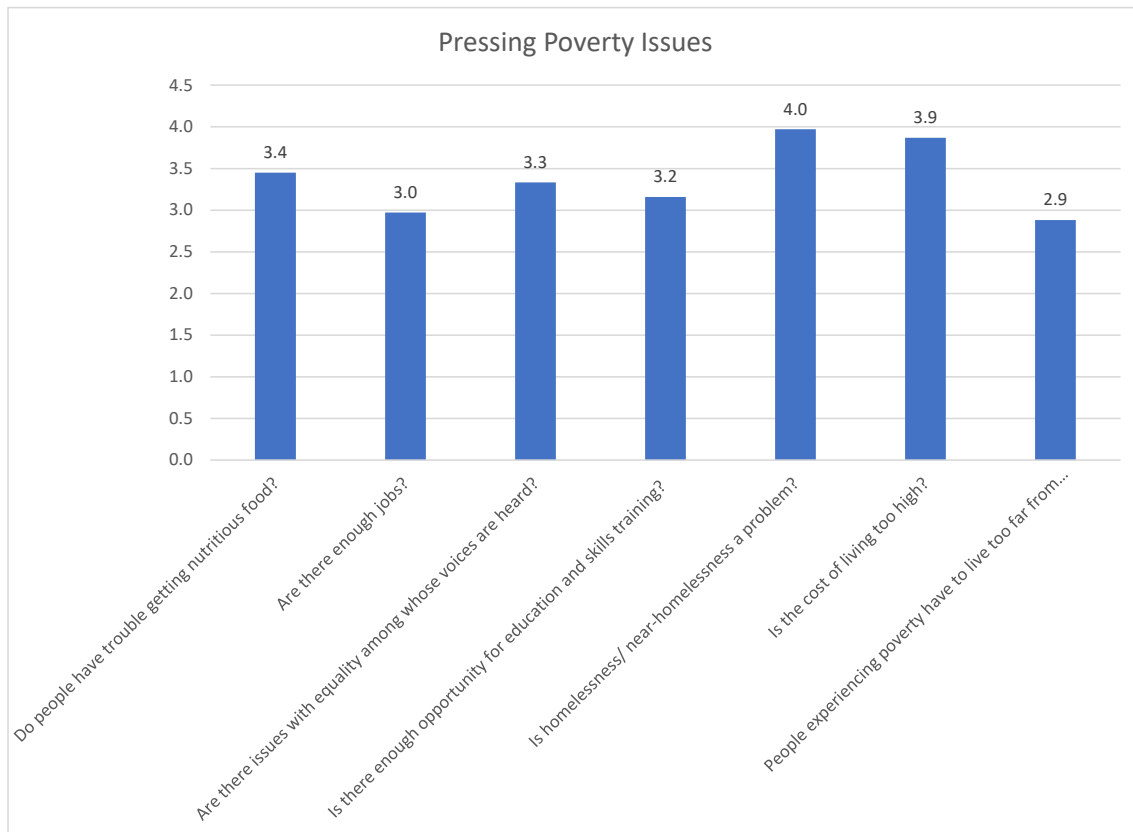
ISSUES SURROUNDING POVERTY

Respondents were asked what they feel are the pressing issues surrounding poverty in Port Hardy on a 5 point scale, with 1 being not a problem to 5 being a major problem (Figure 11). Homelessness/ near-homelessness and the cost of living were identified as the most pressing problems.

The average results were as follows:

- Do people have trouble getting nutritious food? (3.4)
- Are there enough jobs? (3.0)
- Are there issues among equality of whose voices are heard? (3.3)
- Is there enough opportunity for education and skills training? (3.2)
- Is homelessness/near-homelessness a problem? (4.0)
- Is the cost of living too high? (3.9)
- People experiencing poverty have to live too far from employment and/or community services? (2.9)

Figure 11 - In your opinion, what are some of the pressing issues around poverty in Port Hardy on a scale from 1 to 5?



Indeed, the rising cost of living exasperates the challenges for low-income households, placing further strains on physical and mental health, food insecurity, and places those facing financial challenges at risk of homelessness.

MEETING NEEDS

While over 60% of respondents noted they rarely or never face challenges meeting their needs (housing, food, clothing, etc.), there were 16% of respondents stating they always or often face challenges meeting their needs. A further 19% stated that they sometimes face challenges meeting their needs.

For those who answered they always, often, or sometimes face challenges, 63% stated they have been facing these challenges for less than 5 years. 17% of respondents stated they have faced challenges meeting their needs for over five years, 10% of which have been 10 years or over.

Figure 12 - Do you face challenges meeting your needs (Housing, food, clothing)?

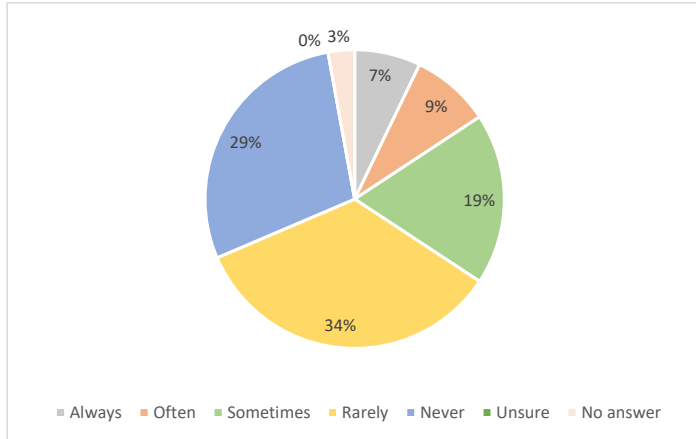
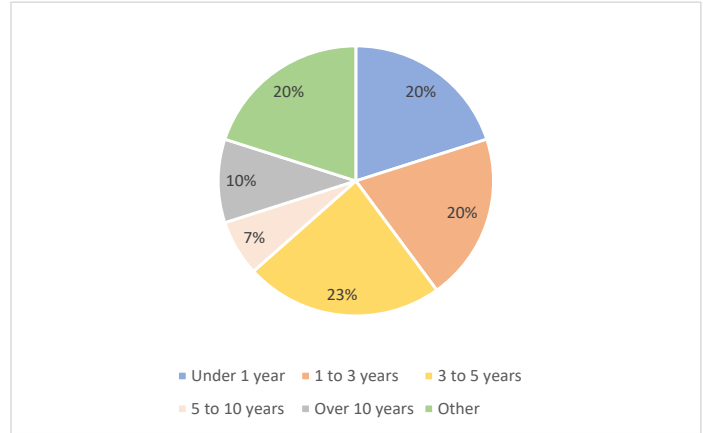


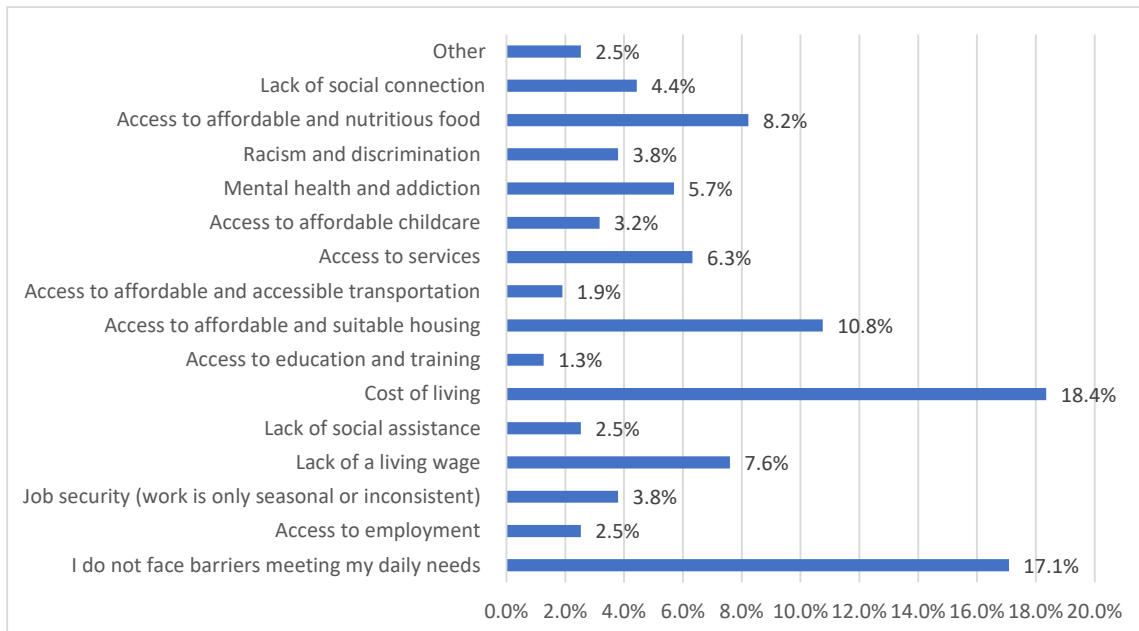
Figure 13 - If you answered always, often or sometimes, over how long a period have you been met with these challenges?



The top barriers include:

- Cost of living (18%)
- Access to affordable and suitable housing (11%)
- Access to affordable and nutritious food (8%)
- Lack of a living wage (8%)

Figure 14 - What are the greatest barriers you face to accessing your daily needs? (Select top 5)



Respondents were asked whether in the last year they have been in the position of having to choose between paying for nutritious foods or paying for other household costs (Figure 15). 10% stated they have always or often been in that position, with an additional 23% stating they sometimes have been in that position.

In terms of having enough money to pay for one-time unexpected costs (car repair, medical bills, etc.) without impacting the ability to pay for other monthly expenses (housing, food, transportation, etc.), 40% of respondents said they would not have enough money to cover unexpected costs (Figure 16).

This highlights the financial vulnerabilities within the community, and the stresses that come with living pay cheque to pay cheque. Being a largely car dependent community, having little extra income to pay for unexpected costs, such as car maintenance and repair can be extremely challenging for those trying to lift themselves out of poverty.

Figure 15 - During the last year, have you been in the position of having to choose between whether to purchase nutritious foods or paying for other household costs?

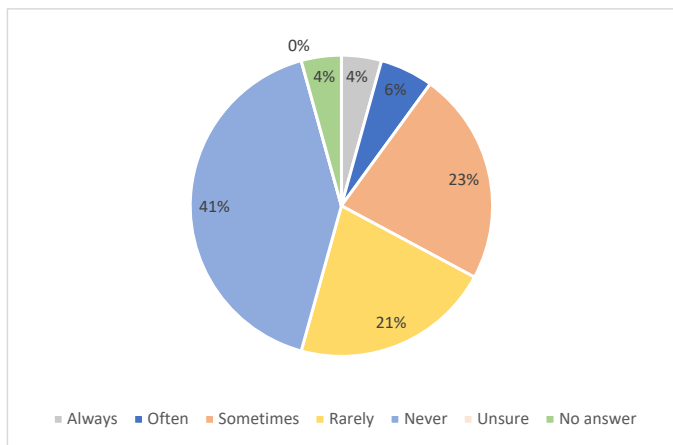
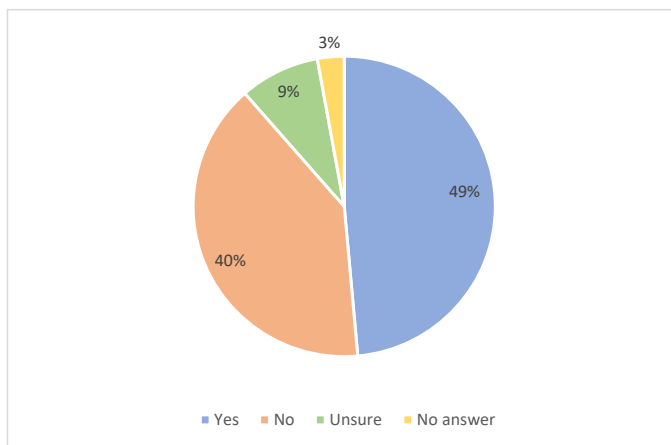


Figure 16 - Do you have enough money to pay for one-time unexpected costs (such as car repair, medical bills, etc.) in a month without impacting your ability to pay for other monthly expenses (housing, food, transportation, etc.)?



The survey asked those who are not currently working, or are working but not earning a living wage, to provide details on their specific situation. The responses (as received and unedited) are as follows:

“Retired and make do”

“I make 18.25/hr as a single parent I can not afford 1200-1400 month for a 2 bedroom house or duplex. Which is why I had to move to coal harbour”

“School district refusing to call qualified teachers to hire.”

“Reagardless of me working 3 jobs and my other half working 1 job rent is far 2 high that we have to live with multiple family members in a 3 bedroom trailer . It’s hard on everyone mentally. If a 2 bedroom apartment was under 900 it would be affordable for us but now a days they are 1100 to 1200\$ a month if not more.”

“Minimum wage or slightly above makes for payday to payday survival and savings is impossible and unexpected costs are deadly”

“nobody paying a living wage. In victoria a living wage is 24 a hour minimum wage is not a living wage”

“Good part-time job. Husband's pension doesn't cut it. Still dipping into savings way too early.”

HOUSING

Having access to adequate housing is a basic human right. Having suitable, safe, and affordable housing is critical for the health and wellbeing of individuals. Without appropriate housing, it is hard to maintain a stable and functioning standard of living.

The majority of survey respondents stated that they received no rent or housing cost subsidies (Figure 17). Respondents were also asked whether they have had difficulty or challenges in accessing housing/housing supports (Figure 18). 24% of respondents stated they have had challenges in regards to accessing rental housing access/supports with an additional 11% stating they have had challenges in regards to homeownership.

Figure 17 - Is your rent or housing cost subsidized in any way or reduced by a government or charitable organization?

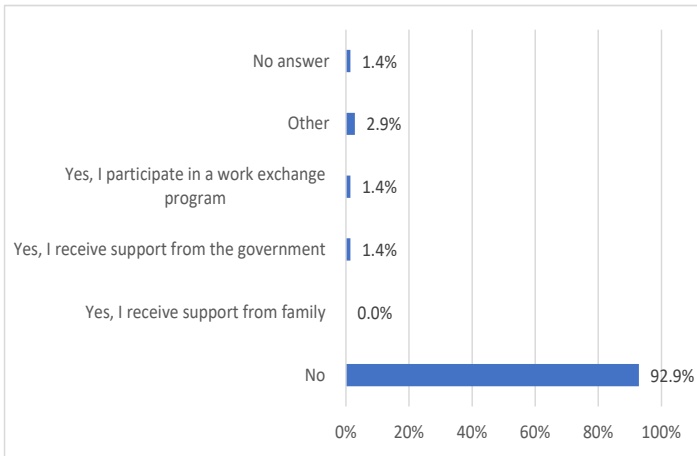
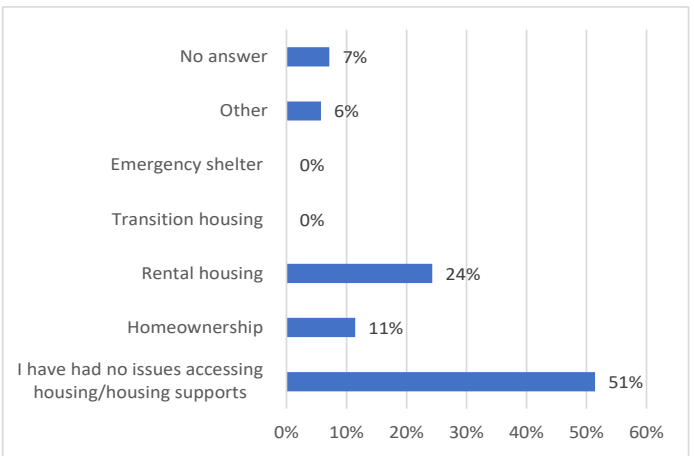


Figure 18 - While living in Port Hardy, have you had difficulty/challenges accessing housing/housing supports?

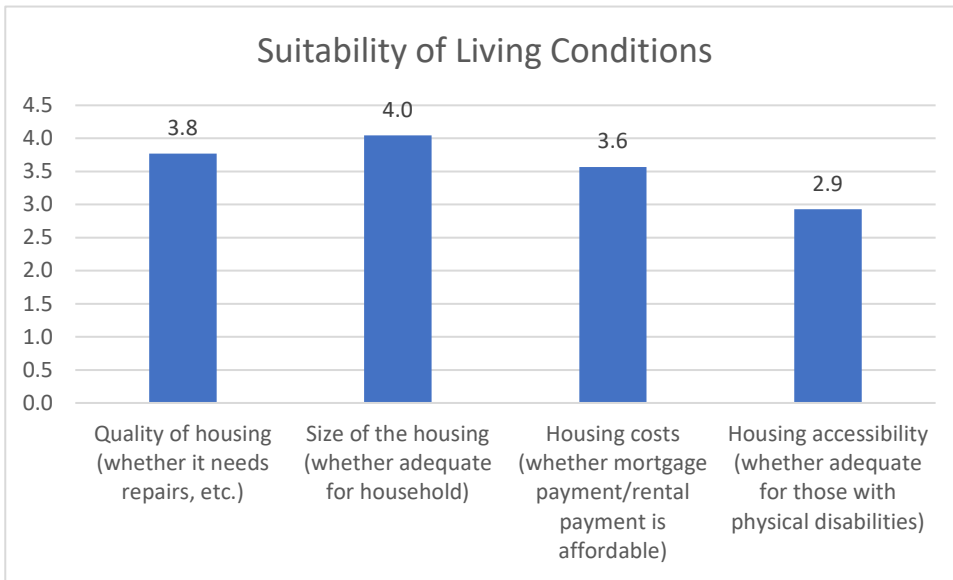


In terms of residents' satisfaction with their current living conditions, respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction on a 5 points scale, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest level of satisfaction (Figure 19). The Average results were as follows:

- Satisfaction with the quality of housing (whether housing needs repairs, etc.) (3.8)
- Satisfaction with the size of housing (4.0)
- Satisfaction with the cost/affordability of housing (3.6)
- Satisfaction with accessibility of housing (whether adequate for those with physical disabilities) (2.9)

Based on the survey results, residents placed particular concern over the accessibility of their housing units. Indeed, seniors and those with disabilities can face challenges in finding accessible and affordable homes. Furthermore, the cost/affordability of housing was also noted as an area of concern, followed by the quality of housing.

Figure 19 - How satisfied are you with your current living conditions?



A selection of the 'Other' comments included:

"I live in Port McNeill because I could not find housing in Port Hardy"

"There is a huge need for clean apartments,affordable prices for young adults,who are just starting out. Snd safe housing."

"Repairs"

"Because I'm above the poverty line in the governments eyes I don't qualify for anything at this point"

COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

Respondents were asked whether they felt there was adequate supports in the community when they have needed them for Mental health and/or addictions issues and Employment and life skills training. While approximately half of respondents have not had to access these services/programs, 43% of respondents stated that there were not adequate mental health/addiction supports and 33% said there were not adequate supports/programs for employment and life skills training.

Figure 20 - Have you found there are adequate supports for mental health and/or addiction issues in the community when you have needed them?

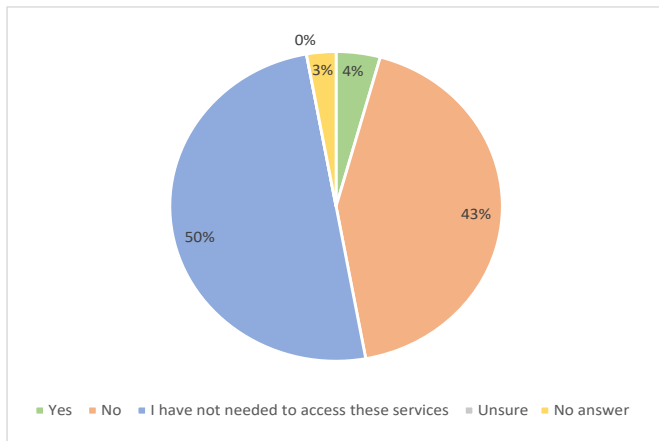
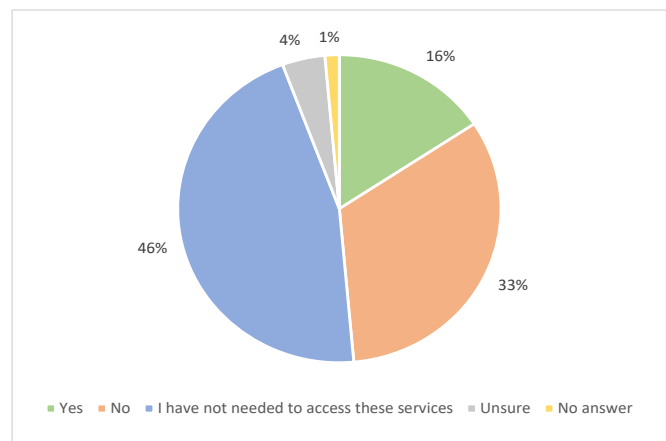


Figure 21 - Have you found there are adequate supports and programs for employment and life skills training when needed?



Those with mental health and addiction challenges often live in chronic poverty. Furthermore, living in poverty places particular strain on the mental health and well being of individuals. Depression and anxiety (in particular) often follow the stresses and strains of living in economic hardship¹.

Those with severe mental illness often face numerous barriers including stigma and discrimination, inhibiting educational opportunities and securing stable employment.

Indeed, those with disabilities, those with mental and substance use challenges, and older adults can face significant barriers to accessing stable employment. Providing assistance and support in accessing programs for employment and life skills training can serve to break down barriers for those in need.

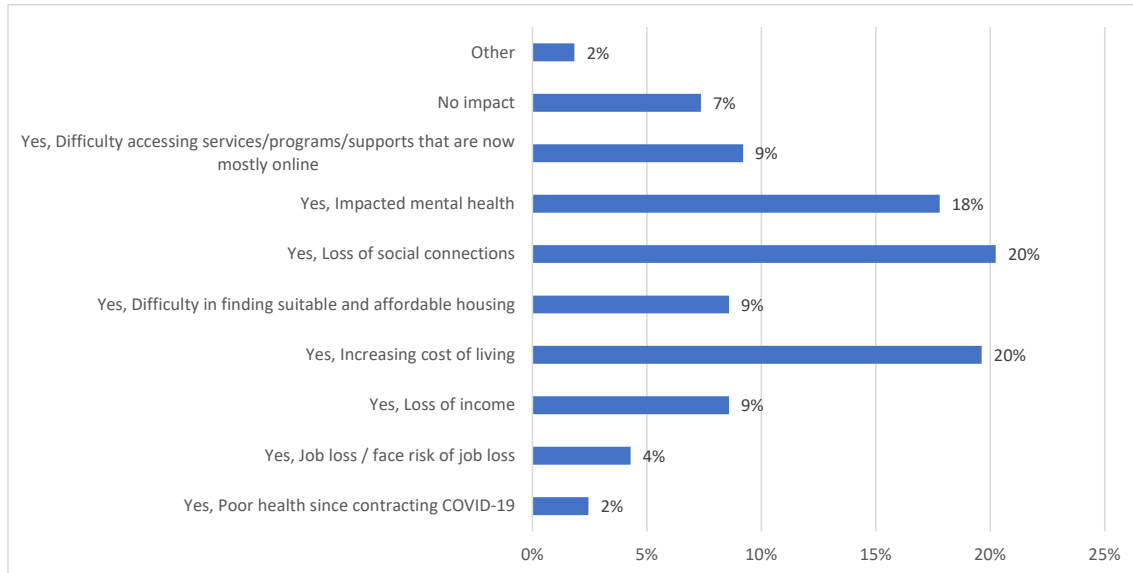
The Canadian Mental Health Association's Framework for Support document affirms that income, education, housing and work are vital to the recovery of persons with a serious mental illness¹.

¹ Canadian Mental Health Association

IMPACTS OF COVID-19

An increasing cost of living, loss of social connections and impacts to mental health were the top responses to the question of whether the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted your financial security and/or quality of life (Figure 22).

Figure 22 - Has the COVID-19 Pandemic impact your financial security and/or quality of life? (Choose all that apply)



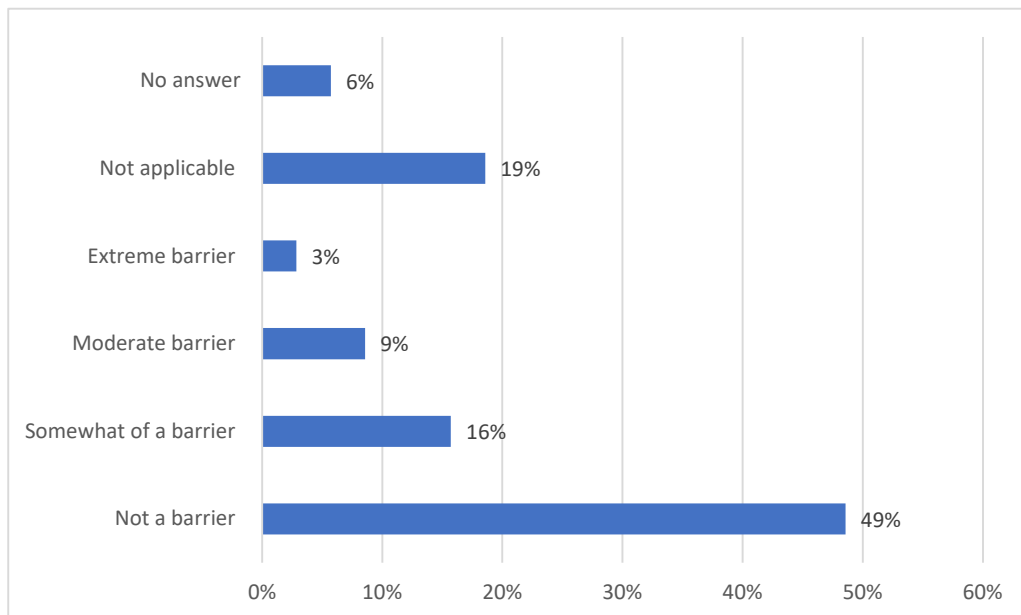
Respondent comments (as received and unedited) include:

Doctor clinics hard to work around
 Unable to go places, due to Covid! Less active, hard on my body and my mental health
 lack of doctor appts only phone appts
 If forced to be vaccinated to keep job
 Job loss in Healthcare sector
 Island Health, Vaccinated mandates for COVID-19
 Spouse has limited work as a contractor
 Businesses slow
 Less tourism
 Income loss
 Food n bill increases
 Food and gas are very expensive
 Higher costs of goods, have to really scrimp and save
 Everything cost a lot more not just \$1 or \$2 but \$4 and \$5 and the higher the price the higher the increase.
 Can't afford to eat at this rate.
 Prices of everything is greater
 Groceries are expensive
 I can't find a reasonable priced 1 story place! I suffer with chronic back pain, arthritis in neck, shoulders, knees and hands
 Unable to repair or maintain home. Almost doubled grocery bill.
 Groceries gas and utilities have gotten much higher
 Tax increase, commodities increase, utilities increase
 being fuel prices are going up, house assessments went up show rent increases but income stays the same, food has gone up but income stays the same
 Fuel and food
 Yes, inflation and taxation eating away at savings
 Cost of living up 22% but Pension has not changed

The price of everything has gone up and wages haven't.
 Lack of rentals .
 costs have gone beyond ability to pay since the pandemic
 Unable to afford to move to a one story place
 I am lucky to have a decent place, however it is 50% or better of my living wage to maintain it
 There's a housing crisis
 Stupid vaccine passports/ mandates
 Now an "other" - considering leaving Canada for more freedom
 Lack of social connections
 Stupid vaccine passports/ mandates
 Over the fake pandemic
 I get extremely depressed not being able to be more active and see my family
 Loneliness,
 Developed anxiety
 Anxiety
 Needing to see a doctor in person
 Access to Doctors
 Life is the same
 "
 Definitely feel sad from time to time. I don't visit or see my family very much. Only my immediate family. I miss them. Due to covid ,i just go to work &!home. Our family is germaphobes.
 Pivoting concerns throughout the pandemic and the various responses needed to address such concerns.
 Trouble finding affordable family units under 900\$ as the price has gotten much higher

In terms of technological barriers, 27% of respondents noted that accessing technology/internet is a somewhat, moderate, or extreme barrier. While the digital divide has been there long before the COVID-19 pandemic, being connected online is ever more important over these past two years. "Technology poverty" is broadly definable as an absence of sufficient technology causing wealth and lifestyle inequalities that lead to detrimental impacts on society. These include physical and mental health issues, lost education opportunities, reduced income-earning abilities, food insecurity, compromised personal safety, and more².

Figure 23 - Have you experienced any barriers in accessing technology/internet and community services/supports/programs which are now only largely accessible online?



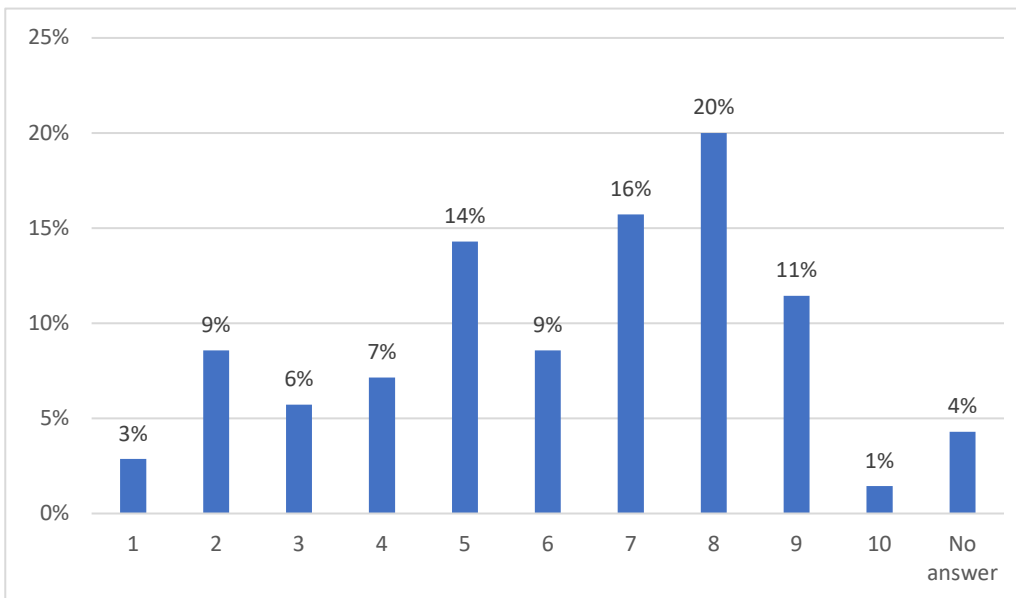
² Technologyhelps.org

Respondent comments included:

repeated power outages
Many stores and services do not have a website, only a facebook page or no online presence. Makes it difficult to support local businesses.
But annoying to deal with
Barely afford internet! I ca t afford a tablet or computer
It sad knowing that no one cares about people who can't read or write. If someone can't read chances are they will not be able to access anything online

Respondents were asked to rate their mental health and wellbeing on a scale of 1 to 10 (Figure 24). This question has particular significance when considering the impacts the COVID-19 pandemic has had on overall mental health and well being. Indeed, 39% of respondents rated their overall mental health and well being between a 1 and a 5. 24% rated themselves as a 6 or a 7, with 33% rating themselves as an 8 to 10.

Figure 24 - How would you rate your overall mental health and wellbeing on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is suffering and 10 is fully thriving?



GENERAL COMMENTS

The survey closed by asking respondents to provide any additional comments, questions, or concerns in regards to addressing and alleviating poverty in Port Hardy. A selection of comments included:

Addiction. Addiction. Addiction. More resources needed, as well as for mental health

Basically is shouldn't be more expensive for people to eat healthier than eat junkie filler foods.

Alcohol abuse is the biggest problem affecting Port Hardy. Take that away or control it and you don't have to worry about spending money on other programs.

Housing prices need to be capped and regulated. It should have been done 20 years ago before real estate, lawyers and the black market (laundry in of illegal gains) took over.

Our town definitely needs more apartments. I have young adults. It is expensive to rent. Can't because of that. They have tried. Aren't well maintained buildings. More work experiences, and skills training. More opportunities at NIC. Public intoxication is a major issue. I don't feel safe . Or don't like to bring my family shopping. And they hang outside of businesses. Asking for money, fighting and intoxicated. We are worried about our child walking down town at lunch. Please address this issue. ????? This was a good survey

Public drunkenness Won't bring my kids to town to go for a walk , to many people drinking in public. Arguing, fighting, passed out , staggering down the street all day everyday.

Homelessness is on the rise in Port Hardy. There was a man living in the woods at the end of our street for months. I believe he found winter shelter. But right as home taxes go up we have homeless people living behind our houses. Great selling feature. Nothing has changed in this street since we have bought here except the taxes. Up every year. No younger generation are going to be able to buy here. Sad.

I don't live in Hardy but live nearby. I see A LOT of racism in Hardy, and a general sense of entitlement amongst my fellow white settlers. They don't like seeing addiction on the streets, but they won't do the bare minimum to understand why there are addiction problems ie inter generational trauma, ongoing racism, etc. I think the whole community, and the whole north island, needs A LOT of education in the impacts of colonialism we live with and see daily.

What is enough to live on?

Too many barriers for those looking for treatment for alcohol or substance dependency. Need improved access to support for those struggling with mental health conditions.

I used to live in old horizon apartments until one night a rat came through my oven fan I started looking for a new place to live but had no luck that was within my budget. I am born and raised in port hardy and hate that I no longer live within the municipality. The commute everyday is in convenient and some time treacherous come winter time. I would move back at any time if I found a decent place.

Job training needs to address the work available here ie driver training, trades training

Beautify Port Hardy. It has so much potential, but the drunks are taking away from it

I'd like to see more affordable housing for single, people with disabilities

We have inadequate medical care .. even basic dr appts can take up to 3 weeks of waiting. We lack competition in the grocery store area. Costs are ridiculous and no other option. We need our swimming pool issue addressed it is greatly missed by all ages.

I recognize I am very fortunate, I am aware of many others who face more challenges than I do. If I struggle even though I have privilege I worry about those who don't have the same resources that I do.

I acknowledge that being an o single grannie has contributed to the fact I was easily able to find safe suitable housing. I am blessed every day to not be stuck in one of the horrible mould ridden buildings in town. Please prioritize subsidized housing units for those that are not as blessed.

in the triport area there isn't any homeless people yet but with the latest house assessments the landlord will probably raise the rent to the tenant being his taxes will probably go up with the town with will cost homelessness with people as their income stays the same.

I consider myself better off than a lot of people although I do struggle. There are so many homeless or near it.

Family homes are not accessible for most. If there is the cost is outrageous. Many end up leaving town.

I do not think we can rebuild our connections or friendships following COVID. I fear for what comes next. Trudeau's question of "How long do we put up with them (in our midst)?" Is very concerning.

We keep doing these survey when Election time and we keep paying for survey while many still have no place to sleep. The District is CEO is and some Council members abuse their power on those that are Black like myself and that's a reality I live on a Daily Day.

Low income people need places in port hardy that are free and safe places to just hang out, and exist where they feel like they belong.

More rental options that are newer and better quality. It's difficult to find a rental that is not an old run down apartment building.

HOUSING CRISIS