Research Objectives:
Individuals experiencing absolute homelessness, defined as living in places not intended for human habitation, have limited access to services which contributes to high rates of morbidity and mortality. The aim of this presentation is to describe the perceived unmet service needs among such a marginalized group and examine the factors associated with specific perceived unmet service needs.

Methods:
Using a cross-sectional survey, 150 individuals experiencing absolute homelessness were recruited from Edmonton’s inner city and adjoining areas. The majority of participants were male (71.3%) and self-identified as Indigenous (74.0%). An adapted version of the Perceived Need for Care Questionnaire was used to measure past-year unmet needs for 4 types of services: hospital care, counselling, skills training, and harm reduction.

Results:
Overall, 89.3% of participants perceived a need for care for one or more general health and social services during the past year regarding their substance use and/or mental health problems; participants reported the highest levels of unmet need for counselling (42.9%) and skills training (39.2%). Though 73.3% of participants reported receiving any service, only 8.0% of participants reported having their perceived needs fully met.

Conclusions:
In this study, individuals reported a high percentage of unmet needs. High psychological distress was found to increase the perceived need of all services, while other factors such as stimulant use, opioid use, housing instability, and physical health were associated with specific perceived needs. Better patient-centred care, housing and supports for this neglected and underserved population is needed to serve these difficult to reach patients.