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# FACT sheet

Facts on Homelessness



**edmonton**  
SOCIAL PLANNING COUNCIL



Photo: Ryoko Yagi

## Background

This fact sheet contains a variety of statistics and related facts on homelessness in Canada, Alberta and Edmonton.

## Homelessness in Canada

The Canadian Housing and Renewal Agency (2011) conservatively estimates that between 150 000 and 300 000 people are homeless in Canada.

One third of those who are homeless suffer from some form of mental illness that is either improperly treated or not treated at all, due to a lack of access to proper community supports (Pollack, 2012).

Youth Homelessness is on the rise. Raising the Roof (2009) estimates that approximately 65 000 youth between the ages of 16-24 are either on the streets or living in homeless shelters.

## Homelessness in Alberta

Through the Housing First Program, a total of 5926 Albertans experiencing homelessness have been provided with permanent housing and individualized supports to help them break the cycle of homelessness (Alberta, 2013).

80% of Housing First participants have remained stably housed (Alberta, 2013).

In 2011-12, use of provincially funded temporary shelter

spaces decreased provincially by 10% compared to the year before Alberta's 10 year plan to end homelessness came into effect (2008-09) (Alberta, 2013).

On a given day Alberta shelters helped 1281 women and 1481 children, and of the women helped, 39 were known to be pregnant (Alberta Council of Women's Shelters, 2013).

## Homelessness in Edmonton

### Review of the 2012 Edmonton Homeless Count

On October 16th, Homeward Trust Edmonton conducted the 2012 Edmonton Homeless Count, a point-in time count of homeless individuals in our city. Overall, enumerators identified 2,174 individuals as homeless. This number includes (a) individuals approached the day of the count who lacked a permanent place to stay that evening and (b) individuals who stayed at a shelter the night before the count. The number also includes children staying with a caregiver the evening of the count (Sorensen, 2012).

The 2012 homeless count identified a higher proportion of men (1,446) compared to women (487) (Sorensen, 2012).

Of the 2,174 individuals counted as homeless, about half (1,104) were identified as sheltered, meaning that they were counted at an emergency shelter or hotel. The other half (1,070) identified as unsheltered as they were counted on the street or at an agency. In terms of gender, men were more likely to be sheltered than unsheltered (79% compared to 70%). Women, in contrast, were more likely to be unsheltered than sheltered (30% compared to 21%) (Sorensen, 2012).

Overall, the count reported ethnicity for 1,912 adults. Based on this, 44% of individuals were identified as Caucasian, 46% as Aboriginal and 10% as visible minorities (Sorensen, 2012).

During the 2012 homeless count, enumerators identified 279 individuals younger than 18 years-old. Of this number, 223 individuals were dependent on a caregiver and 56 identified as independent (Sorensen, 2012).

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## Edmonton's Plan to End Homelessness

In 2009, Edmonton adopted a 10-year plan to end homelessness. At its core, the plan focuses on the housing first approach. This approach recognizes that the first step in solving homelessness is to provide individuals with permanent homes and the supports necessary to stay and succeed in those homes (Edmonton Committee to End Homelessness, 2009).

By the end of year three, significant progress has been made in the plan to end homelessness. For example, 1,237 permanent homes have been secured for 1,789 individuals who were previously homeless. In addition, 85% of individuals who have been housed have kept their housing (Edmonton Homeless Commission, 2012).

## Long Term Impacts of Homelessness

The presence of 'turbulence' in a family is indicated by two or more changes in residence, school, health, or parents' employment within a period of 12 months. Childhood

turbulence positively correlates with high levels of emotional and behavioural problems (Moore, Vandivere, & Macomere, 2000).

Some families end up in a cycle whereby they return to the shelter system after a period of absence. Several factors act as determinants for a return to the shelter system for families, the most common including a lack of housing subsidization, and low attainment of education or work history for the head of the household (Culhane, Metraux, Park, Schretzman, & Valente, 2007).

In a longitudinal study of poor children, statistics demonstrated that homeless children frequented more school locations and repeated more grades than any of their housed peers. These common attributes of homelessness were strongly suspected to be indicators of poorer academic performance, as the level of child academic success coincided with the degree to which adequate housing was retained (Rafferty, Shinn, & Weitzman, 2004).

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