



**Edmonton Joint Planning
Committee on Housing**

A collaborative initiative of:

- City of Edmonton
- Province of Alberta
- Government of Canada
- The Community at large

A Count of Homeless Persons in Edmonton

Prepared by:
**Edmonton Homelessness
Count Committee**

October, 2002

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<http://www.gov.edmonton.ab.ca>
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EDMONTON HOMELESSNESS COUNT COMMITTEE

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A Count of Homeless Persons in Edmonton

Conducted October 23, 2002 by the
Edmonton Homelessness Count Committee

SUMMARY

The fifth count of the homeless found 1915 homeless* persons in the City of Edmonton. Of these, 1213 were absolute homeless (having no housing alternative) and 702 were sheltered homeless (living in emergency accommodations).

The Edmonton Homelessness Count Committee organized the count, applying the methodology used in the previous counts (March/November 1999 and March/September 2000), to ensure a consistent 'snapshot' of the homeless population. Employing the same methodology enables the monitoring of changes and trends of the homeless population. October 23, 2002 was selected for the twenty-four hour count period. In order to conduct the count, the Count Committee acquired the active support of approximately 200 volunteers, in addition to the community serving the homeless. Twice as many volunteers participated in this count as compared to the September 2000 count; in addition, the street count areas were expanded based upon the recommendations of community agencies.

- There were 118 families counted, encompassing 267 children under the age of 15 and 141 caregivers. Among the families, 70% were absolute homeless, while 30% were sheltered homeless.
- A majority of the homeless were single - 1507 of the 1915 total. Among them, 61% were absolute homeless compared with 39% who were sheltered homeless.
- From the perspective of observed gender, most of the homeless were male (67% or 1096, not including children in families) and 31% or 513 were female. The gender of the remaining 2%, or 23 individuals, was not known.

***Definition:**

The Edmonton Homelessness Count Committee used the following definition of the homeless for its work:

Absolute Homeless: Individuals and families who are absolutely homeless (having no housing alternatives). During the October 23rd count, this was represented by people who, when asked on the street or within agencies like drop-in centres, bottle depots or food banks, self reported that they had no permanent place to reside. They may have ended up sleeping 'on the street' or in a stairwell that night, or alternatively they may have stayed with a friend or found an emergency shelter space.

Sheltered Homeless: Individuals and families who are the sheltered homeless (living in emergency accommodations or condemned housing and expected to be 'on the street' at the end of their stay). During the October 23rd count, this was represented by people who were registered to stay in approved emergency shelters.



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- The number of Caucasian and Aboriginal individuals counted was evenly split at 43% each. Fourteen percent of those counted were identified as other than Caucasian or Aboriginal.
- Age groups ranged from the majority being adults (1342 or 71% between 19 and 54 years) to the next largest group being children (267 or 14%), with the remaining split between youth 15-18 years of age and seniors 55 years and over.
- A count of people turned away by providers and crisis services identified 148, while an additional 120 individuals were discharged or ready for discharge from facilities but without a permanent residence to return to.

BACKGROUND

The Edmonton Homelessness Count Committee was formed in September 1999 as a working group of The Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing. The Count Committee was created to implement the recommendation detailed in the May 1999 report *Homelessness in Edmonton, A Call to Action* that: “the count be continued on a regular basis so trends of the homeless population can be monitored”.

For the purpose of the count, the Count Committee used the definition of homeless persons as outlined in the report *Homelessness in Edmonton, A Call to Action*:

“1. Individuals and families who are absolutely homeless (having no housing alternatives)”
and

“2. Individuals and families who are the sheltered homeless (living in emergency accommodations or condemned housing and expected to be 'on the street' at the end of their stay).”

The count began at 5:00 AM on October 23, 2002 and continued until 5:00 AM on October 24, 2002. October 23, 2002 was a clear and cool day with temperatures ranging from a high of -0.3°C to a low of -6.7°C. Noon time temperatures were -4.0°C with a wind at 12 km/h (Environment Canada).

The following partners collaborated and actively participated in the organization and implementation of the count: the City of Edmonton, the Province of Alberta, the Government of Canada, the community serving the homeless and many volunteers.

METHOD

Preparations for the count involved contacting all organizations and community agencies who work with those individuals and/or families facing issues of homelessness.

The method included a direct and indirect count to ensure as much thoroughness and accuracy as possible.

The **direct count** involved a count of people in emergency shelter beds.

The **indirect count** attempted to capture the invisible homeless through:

- **street count**, asking people on the street if they have a permanent residence to return to that night
- **agency count**, asking people at agencies (such as the food bank, drop-in centres and bottle depots) if they have a permanent residence for that night
- **turnaway count** of people turned away by providers and crisis services because no appropriate housing was available
- **discharge count** of people either discharged or ready for discharge from facilities but with no permanent residence to go to.

Demographics gathered during the count included observed gender, race and age. Family status was also documented; including the number of caregivers, and the number of dependent children. Forms documenting count results were faxed to a central number on October 24, 2002.

The Count Committee acknowledges that the count methodology has inherent limitations and that the results reflect only a point-in-time. However, in order to report the count findings in a consistent manner that would allow for comparison, the October 23rd count used the same methodology of that used for the March/November 1999 and March/September 2000 counts.

Implementation of the count relied on the cooperation and involvement of the community serving the homeless and a team of volunteers. The community was divided into the following groups, with a coordinator assigned to organize and implement the count:

- institutions (hospitals/jails)
- inner-city agencies
- streets
- shelters (youth, adult and families)
- Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission
- adult group homes
- youth group homes
- seniors facilities
- subsidized housing registries
- housing registries
- aboriginal agencies and housing
- malls (outreach programs)
- bottle depots
- downtown library
- food banks
- other miscellaneous crisis and assistance services

COUNT RESULTS

A total of 1915 homeless persons were counted on October 23, 2002 in Edmonton: 1213 absolute homeless (63%) and 702 sheltered homeless (37%). This includes singles as well as the adults and children within families.

TOTAL HOMELESS*		
	No.	%
Absolute Homeless	1213	63
Sheltered Homeless	702	37
Total Homeless	1915	100

* Includes - Singles, Adults in Families and Children in Families

Family Status

A majority of individuals counted were single (1507). Among the single homeless, 926 (61%) were absolute homeless compared with 581 (39%) who were staying at shelters.

SINGLE HOMELESS*		
	No.	%
Absolute Homeless	926	61
Sheltered Homeless	581	39
Total Homeless	1507	100

* Includes - Singles Without Children

There were 118 families counted, encompassing 267 children under the age of 15 and 141 caregivers. Among families, 70% of the individuals were absolute homeless, while 30% stayed at shelters. There were 189 children and 98 caregivers among the absolute homeless; 78 children and 43 caregivers among the sheltered homeless families.

Families having one caregiver totaled 97, while 21 had two-or-more caregivers. Among the absolute homeless, 68 families had one caregiver while 14 had two-or-more caregivers. At shelters, 29 families had one caregiver while 7 had two-or-more caregivers. Caregivers include men, women and seniors (55 years and over).

HOMELESS IN FAMILIES								
	Caregivers By Category				Children		Total	
	2 or more	%	Single	%	No.	%	No.	%
Absolute Homeless	30	7	68	17	189	46	287	70
Sheltered Homeless	14	4	29	7	78	19	121	30
Total Homeless	44	11	97	24	267	65	408	100

Gender

Sixty-seven percent of the homeless were male, totaling 1096 compared to 513 females. Twenty-three of those counted as absolute homeless were not identified by gender.

HOMELESS BY OBSERVED GENDER*								
	Males		Females		Other		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Absolute Homeless	671	41	314	19	23	2	1008	62
Sheltered Homeless	425	26	199	12	0	0	624	38
Total Homeless	1096	67	513	31	23	2	1632*	100

* Does not include children and additional caregivers in families.

Race

Through observations, 14% of the homeless were not classified as being either Caucasian or Aboriginal. The numbers of Caucasian and Aboriginal homeless were very similar at 43% each. More Caucasians than Aboriginals were sheltered, whereas more Aboriginals than Caucasians were absolute homeless.

HOMELESS BY OBSERVED RACE*								
	Caucasian		Aboriginal		Other		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Absolute Homeless	409	25	500	31	99	6	1008	62
Sheltered Homeless	285	18	198	12	141	8	624	38
Total Homeless	694	43	698	43	240	14	1632*	100

* Does not include children and additional caregivers in families.

Age

Adults between 19 and 54 years old were the predominant age group among the homeless, at 1342 or 71%. The next largest group was children (267 or 14%), with the remaining split between seniors and youth.

The majority of children (189 of 267) were absolute homeless. More adults were absolute homeless than sheltered (831 compared to 511).

HOMELESS BY OBSERVED AGE*										
	Children		Youth		Adult		Senior		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Absolute Homeless	189	10	88	5	831	44	89	5	1197	63
Sheltered Homeless	78	4	45	3	511	27	68	3	702	37
Total Homeless	267	14	133	7	1342	71	157	8	1899**	100

* CHILDREN = under 15 years old and in families YOUTH = 15 - 18 Years ADULT = 19 - 54 Years
SENIOR = 55+ Years

** Does not include 16 additional caregivers in two or more caregiver families.

Turnaways & Discharges

A tally was also taken of the number of people denied a bed because the facility was full or the client didn't meet entrance standards (by, for example, exhibiting violent behavior) and who declared having no home to return to. On count day, 103 individuals were turned away from housing providers and treatment centres (70%) and 45 from shelters (30%). Discharges totaled 120 people, including 82 from jails, hospitals and/or group homes. These people were not included in the reported number of absolute or sheltered homeless.

COUNT OF TURNAWAYS & DISCHARGES*				
	Turnaways		Discharges	
	No.	%	No.	%
Housing Providers/Treatment Centres	103	70	38	32
Jails/Hospitals/Group Homes	n/a	n/a	82	68
Shelters	45	30	n/a	n/a
Total	148	100	120	100

*Turnaways and discharges declaring no home to return to.

Shelter-by-Shelter Numbers: Registered and Turnaways

The number of homeless who were housed or turned away by each participating shelter on October 23, 2002 is outlined in the table below. Herb Jamieson Centre housed the highest number, at 231 (33%).

REGISTERED AND TURNAWAYS FROM SHELTERS						
Shelter Name	Available Spaces	No. Registered	% Occupancy	Percentage of Total Registered	No. Turned Away	Percentage of Total
Herb Jamieson	265	231	87	33	0	0
WEAC	75	97	129	14	0	0
Elizabeth House	24	26	108	4	0	0
George Spady	72	88	122	12	31	69
Urban Manor	75	74	99	10	0	0
WIN 1	21	6	29	1	0	0
WIN 11	30	22	73	3	0	0
Lurana	25	21	84	3	10	22
Safe House	8	5	63	1	3	7
Protective Safe House	5	5	100	1	0	0
Inner City Youth Housing	27	24	89	3	1	2
Youth Emergency Shelter	28	12	43	2	0	0
SFI Hotels	0*	82	0	12	0	0
Youth Receiving	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other**	0	9	0	1	0	0
Total	655	702	107	100	45	100

*On an as need basis – no set number of spaces.

**Number of individuals sheltered on an emergency basis by the Edmonton People in Need Shelter Society (Bridgeway program).

COUNT COMPARISON

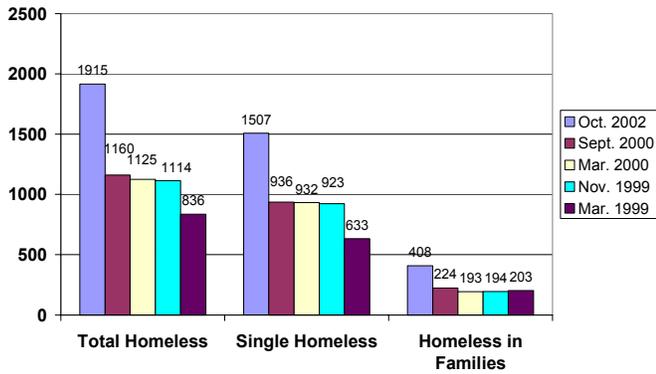
The October 23, 2002 count is the latest of five counts to be conducted as recommended in the May 1999 report “*Homelessness in Edmonton, A Call to Action*”. The Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing is currently reviewing count methodologies with a view to developing a more statistically accurate methodology for future counts.

Since the last count on September 14, 2000, 106 more shelter beds have been created in the City of Edmonton (655 compared to 549). While the number of available spaces has increased, so has the number of individuals who access these facilities (702 compared to 510).

Although significant progress has been made towards addressing the needs of the homeless in Edmonton (reference *Review and Update of the Edmonton Community Plan on Homelessness 2000-2003, April 2002*), the recent economic boom has accelerated the homelessness and affordable housing crisis in Edmonton. The October 23, 2002 count results clearly show that homelessness continues to be a significant and growing issue in Edmonton. With this in mind, the following graphs (page 8) illustrate the numeric differences between the five counts.

COUNT COMPARISONS

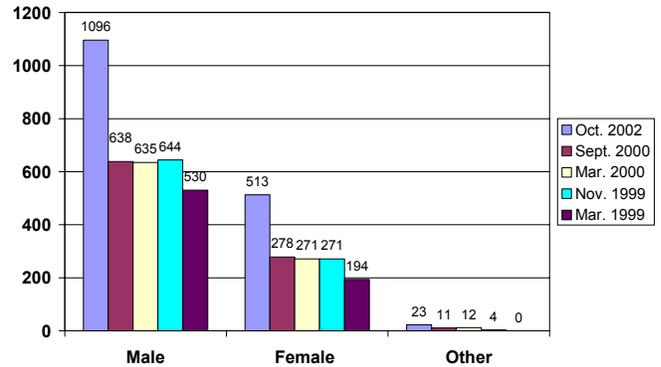
Total Homeless in Edmonton



Includes Singles, Adults in Families & Children in Families.

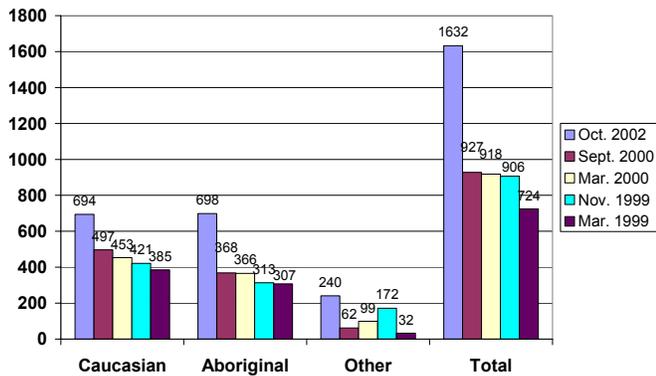
Includes: Singles Without Children.

Total Homeless by Observed Gender



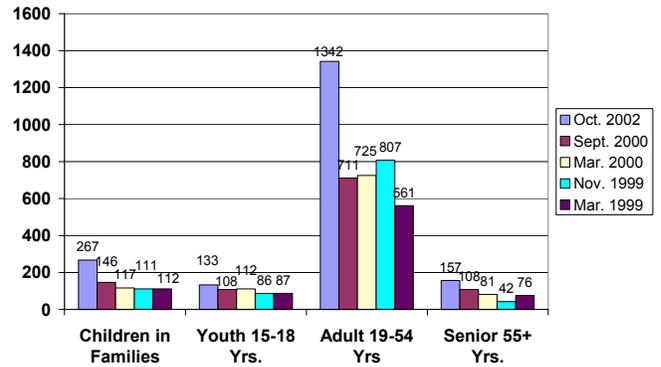
Does Not Include Children in Families

Total Homeless by Observed Race

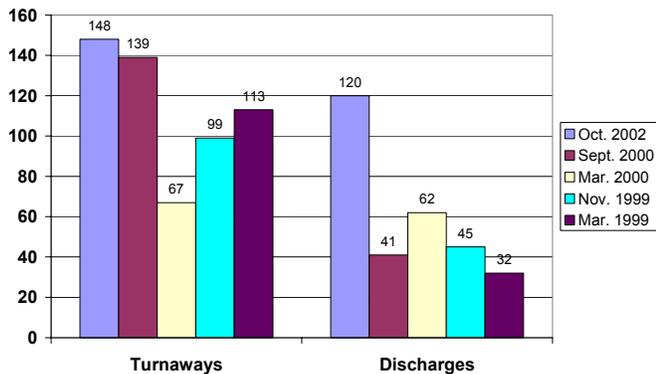


Does Not Include Children in Families

Total Homeless by Observed Age



Total Turnaways & Discharges





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THANKS TO THE COMMUNITY:

The Count Committee would like to express their sincere appreciation and thanks to the many agencies and volunteers who donated their time to complete the fifth homeless count. We would like to particularly recognize the efforts of the Edmonton City Police Service who provided valuable assistance to the Count Committee and volunteers. In addition, our appreciation is extended to Gary Trudel, who once again provided the volunteers with insight about street life.