# Homelessness in Province Continues Downward Trend. Drops 19.2%

**EDMONTON, ALBERTA – Nov. 29, 2016.** In the second province-wide Point-in-Time Count of Homelessness (Count), Alberta's one night Count dropped by 19.2% from 6663 on October 16th, 2014 to 5378 on October 19, 2016.

## Homelessness is impacted by socio-economic factors unique to each municipality

As with the first Count, the data shows that homelessness is impacted by unique socio-economic factors within each of the cities who participated in the Count. The Count was undertaken by the 7 Cities on Housing and Homelessness which are Calgary, Edmonton, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, and Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. The 7 Cities represent the lead organizations responsible for the implementation of local Plans to End Homelessness within each city. They coordinate at a systems level and align funding resources for greater impact and progress towards a shared vision of ending homelessness in Alberta.

This year's Count was the second province-wide Count of Homelessness to be held in the province. It involved over 1000 volunteers, more than one hundred agencies, and public service providers. As in 2014, the Count was conducted on the street with facilities providing emergency shelter, short-term supportive housing, and other forms of emergency shelter providing data. In addition, to further align methodology, all 7 Cities conducted the Count on the same night (October 19th) utilizing similar methodology. Provincial government ministries also provided administrative data across the province for people experiencing homelessness who were institutionalized. This preliminary report includes data from correctional facilities. Health facilities data will be included in the final report.

This Count serves two important functions: it provides a current snapshot of the demographics and number of people experiencing homelessness in the province and enables us to examine changes in homelessness over time. By aligning methods across Alberta's cities, we can examine trends using similar definitions. Ultimately, this helps us inform solutions to support the goal of ending homelessness in our province.

Preliminary results for each of the 7 Cities may be found here:

**7 Cities Preliminary Numbers**

**About 7 Cities:**

Alberta's 7 Cities on Housing and Homelessness ("7 Cities") is made up of the lead organizations responsible for the implementation of local Plans to End Homelessness in the province. Since 2009, nearly 10,000 Albertans experiencing homelessness have been provided housing and supports. Our progress is grounded in community-level system planning and implementation, supported by government.

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# 7cities
## on housing and homelessness

# Alberta

## HOW MANY?

# 5373

people were counted as experiencing homelessness in Alberta

**31% decrease***
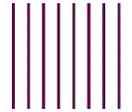in the number of people counted experiencing homelessness from 2008 to 2016

| 2008 | ... | 2014 | 2016 |
|------|-----|------|------|
| 7827 |     | 6663 | 5373 |

## WHERE?

| UNSHELTERED | EMERGENCY SHELTERED | JUSTICE SYSTEM | INTERIM HOUSING & OTHER |
|-------------|---------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| **241** | **2537** | **650** | **1945** |

## WHO?

Indigenous 28%
Non-Indigenous 72%

65+ 4%
45-64 37%
25-44 39%
18-24 9%
<18 11%

76%
24%
0.1%
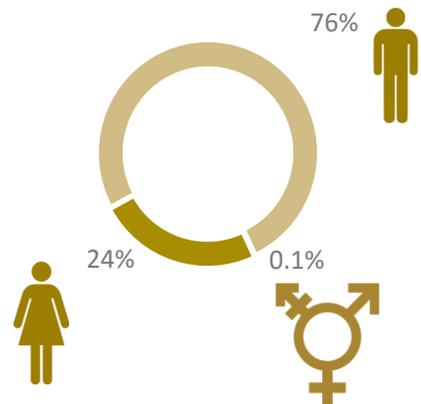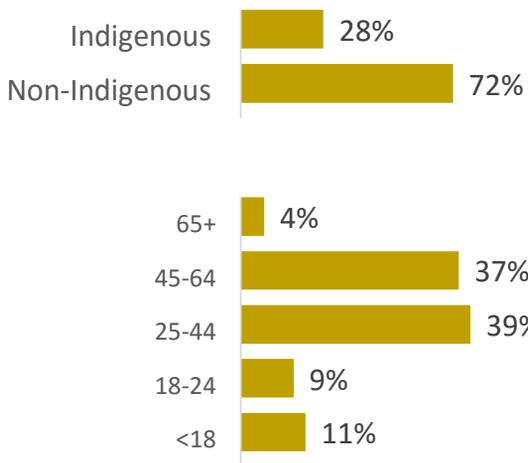
*Red Deer did not complete a count in 2008 but has used 200 as a baseline number. Counts were not completed in enough cities in 2010 or 2012 to present a comparison; there have also been methodological changes over this time period, so comparisons should be treated with caution.

# Introduction

Alberta's 7 Cities on Housing and Homelessness are the lead organizations responsible for the implementation of local Plans to End Homelessness in Calgary, Edmonton, Wood Buffalo, Grand Prairie, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat and Red Deer. The 7 Cities coordinate local plans at a systems level and align funding resources for greater impact and progress toward ending homelessness.

On October 19, 2016, the second provincially-coordinated Point-In-Time Homelessness Count was conducted in each community. This count serves two important functions: it provides a current snapshot of our overall homeless population and enables us to examine how this population changes over time. By aligning methods across Alberta's cities, we can examine trends using similar definitions. Ultimately, this helps us inform solutions to support the goal of ending homelessness in our communities.

In 2014, Alberta was the first jurisdiction in Canada to implement measures toward a more standardized point-in-time count methodology. In collaboration with the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness and federal government partners, there is now movement toward a harmonized approach to homeless counts nationally.

This report presents initial findings of the Homeless Count; a more detailed analysis will be released early next year.

# Methods

All 7 Cities conducted a count on the night of Wednesday, October 19, within the bounds of 7pm and midnight; in specific areas where it was unsafe to count at night, surveys were conducted the following morning before 9 am. Each city used the same set of core survey questions and also had the option to add locally relevant questions.

Following on the successes and learnings from 2014, the 7 Cities increased methodological alignment across the province. The cities agreed to conduct the count on the street and in facilities accommodating the homeless (emergency shelters, short term supportive housing and hotels used as emergency shelters). Edmonton and Wood Buffalo conducted day counts on October 20 and Calgary used tally sheets to record people they could not speak to but who appeared to be homeless – those results are not included here, as this report presents only what is comparable across cities.

For the first time, provincial government ministries also provided administrative data across the province for people experiencing homelessness who were institutionalized. This information is available for correctional facilities in this report, but comparable data across cities is not yet available for health facilities.  When available, administrative data from Justice and Solicitor General, Human Services, emergency shelters and transitional housing replaced survey responses. This resulted in a more accurate breakdown of where individuals planned on staying on the night of the count, as well as gender and age.

For the overall trend, 2008 counts for Medicine and Red Deer were unavailable. Red Deer provided a 2008 estimate based on the task force report, *Red Deer's Vision and Framework on Ending Homelessness by 2018*, which identified 200 as a baseline to estimate the number of individuals experiencing homelessness.

This report presents numbers that are comparable across cities. However, moving from separate to aligned methodologies presents challenges for tracking changes over time in local communities, which is one of the major goals of a Point-in-Time count. In order to maintain comparability locally, several cities excluded data that is used in this report or included additional data. As such, the numbers reported by cities locally may not match exactly those presented here. Examples of additional data included in some cities are: counts of the hidden homeless, an extended street count conducted the following day or use of tally sheets to count sleeping or non-responsive individuals.

# Broader Trends

## Population Growth

Alberta's population continues to increase. Alberta's population was 4,108,283 in 2014 and grew to 4,252,879 in 2016 – a 3.5% increase. Alberta is ranked first in the country for year-over-year population growth rate [1]. All 7 cities are experiencing population growth at various levels; however It is difficult to compare rates as some cities complete censuses more frequently than others.

## Unemployment

There has been an upward trend in the unemployment rate in Alberta since 2014. In October 2016, Alberta's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 8.5%, up from the 4.7% rate two years earlier. The national unemployment rate was 7.0% in October [3]. There has been an increase in unemployment across all seven cities, with the rate ranging from 5.7% in Lethbridge and Medicine Hat to 10.2% in Calgary. Calgary's unemployment rate is one of the highest of any major Canadian city [1] and Wood Buffalo also has a relatively high unemployment rate of 9.3%.

## Housing

The average apartment vacancy rate in Alberta's urban centres was 3.4% in April 2015 compared to 1.8% in April 2014 [4]. The vacancy rate rose in six cities and was stable for Medicine Hat. Among the seven cities, Wood Buffalo's vacancy rates were the highest, and one of the highest in Alberta, at 22.3%. Average rent increased 5.3% across Alberta's urban centres; six out of the seven cities had an increase in rental rates. Rents in Wood Buffalo decreased by about 8%, but continue to be the highest in the province.  According to the 2011 National Household Survey, approximately 18-25% of Albertans are experiencing housing affordability challenges.

## Indigenous status

Information from the 2016 census is not yet available on the share of people who identify as Indigenous, but there is no doubt that people identifying as Indigenous continue to be overrepresented among those experiencing homelessness. Across the 7 Cities, they make up 28% of those counted while in 2011 they made up only 4% of the general population.