



**homeward trust**  
edmonton

# Homeless Connect

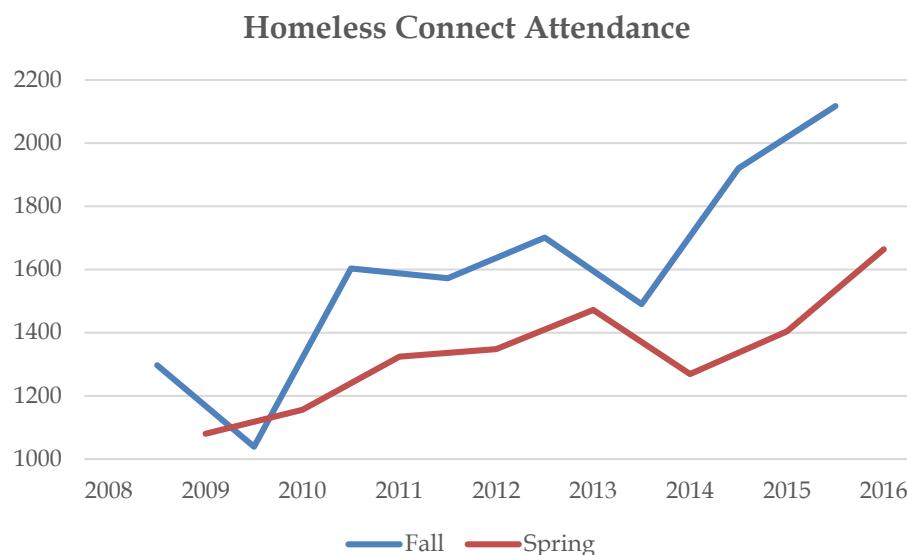
## Spring 2016

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## Brief Overview

Homeless Connect Edmonton is a broad-based community-inspired initiative, providing free appropriate services to people experiencing homelessness and those at risk of becoming homeless, on one day and at one location.

The April 2016 Homeless Connect drew 1,664 independent participants and 238 dependent children – a significant increase from the previous year. Only 5 adults (with 6 children) were displaced by the fire which had caused the evacuation of Fort McMurray and surrounding areas a week before the event.



Based on registration numbers; excludes dependent children, as data not available for all years.

## New Information

This year's survey provided some information not previously available. For people who were not born in Edmonton, a question was added asking whether they had experienced homelessness in their previous location. Half of those who had arrived in the last five years were already homeless when they left their previous community.

More detailed information is also available on where people are arriving from: 54% of recent arrivals experiencing homelessness came from elsewhere in Alberta and only 5% came from other countries. Indigenous participants were asked about what their home community, settlement or nation, to which 62% named an Alberta nation, 12% in Saskatchewan and another 12% did not know their nation of origin.

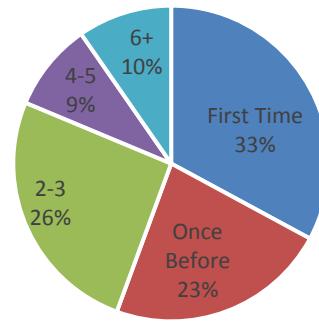
# Who Comes to Homeless Connect

About 55% of participants are presently homeless and 45% have been previously homeless or are otherwise at risk of becoming homeless, excluding those who declined to participate in the survey. The definition of “presently homeless” in this report is somewhat different than at previous events<sup>1</sup>, so a comparison table is shown below, using the present definition for the spring 2015 event.

Year	2015	2016
Total Participants	1481	1902
Homeless Adults and Independent Youth	528	549
Homeless Children (dependents)	14	44
At-Risk Adults and Independent Youth	493	426
At-Risk Children (dependents)	56	106
Did Not Answer Survey	383	689
Did Not Answer Survey (dependents)	7	88

The share of first-time attendees fell from 40% to 33%, while one in five participants has attended at least four times previously.

# of Times Previously Attended Homeless Connect

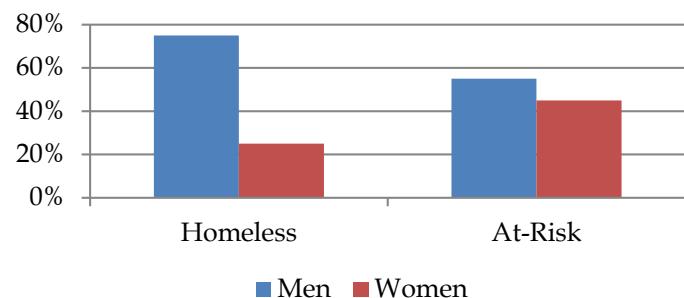


The characteristics of Homeless Connect participants generally matched those of the broader homeless population, as reported in the Homeless Count, with a couple of exceptions, noted below. For instance, people who identified as aboriginal made up 49% of Connect participants and 47% of those in the Homeless Count. There is also some additional information from the Connect event not available in the Homeless Count, for example, differences between those experiencing homelessness and those at-risk of homelessness (as people at-risk of homelessness are not interviewed in the Homeless Count).

## Gender

Women comprised 34% of participants, but were more likely to be at risk of homelessness than presently homeless. Just under a quarter of those presently experiencing homelessness were female (similar to results in the count), compared to 40% of at-risk participants.

## Homeless Status by Gender



<sup>1</sup> Experiencing homelessness is now based solely on the response to “Where are you currently staying”. Previously “Do you have a permanent residence that you can return to tonight?” was also considered, but further analysis revealed that this question was not being interpreted consistently and many people who should be considered homeless were being screened out.

## LGBTQ2S

7% of participants identified as members of the LGBTQ2S community, though this is likely a low estimate as this characteristic is typically under-reported. Women and youth were much more likely to identify with this group (12% of women, 27% of youth under 24, and 43% of women under 24).

## In-Migration

Participants at the event who had been in Edmonton for less than three years (15% of the total) were more likely to be homeless than participants who had been in the community for more than three years, with probability of homelessness being highest for those who had arrived within the last six months. Of those who had arrived in the last six months, 60% were experiencing homelessness before they came to Edmonton. This figure drops to 49% for those who arrived in the last five years and 27% for those who have been in Edmonton more than five years.

Approximately one quarter of participants were born in Edmonton, one third moved from elsewhere in the province and one third came from other parts of the country (primarily BC, Ontario and Saskatchewan). Just under 10% came from other countries, though many had lived here for a long time. Prior to being in Edmonton, the most common locations for participants were:

Calgary	38	Red Deer	13
Saskatoon	26	Maskwacis	12
Vancouver	23	Yellowknife	12
Grande Prairie	21	Thunder Bay	11
Toronto	21	Regina	10
Fort McMurray	19	Slave Lake	10
Saddle Lake	14	Rural Alberta <sup>2</sup>	49
Winnipeg	14	Canada – Other <sup>2</sup>	87
Montreal	13	International	67

Taking a closer look at people who are presently homeless and arrived in the last five years, the list is similar:

Calgary	9	Yellowknife	4
Fort McMurray	8	Regina	3
Red Deer	8	Toronto	3
Grande Prairie	7		
Maskwacis	5	Rural Alberta <sup>2</sup>	15
Slave Lake	5	Canada – Other <sup>2</sup>	21
Saskatoon	4	International	8

<sup>2</sup> Rural Alberta refers to places with population less than 5,000 that are not reserves or Metis settlements. Canada – Other refers to places outside Alberta with population less than 50,000 (excluding capital cities).

## Chronic Homelessness

Of those presently experiencing homelessness, 68% reported being chronically homeless: either being without a permanent residence for all of the last year or having had four spells of homelessness in the last three years.

## Age

Youth and children experiencing homelessness were underrepresented at Connect, compared to the results of the Homeless Count. However, there were a large number of children at risk of homelessness present. Seniors and older adults were much more likely to be at-risk than homeless: this is likely due to a combination of increased income around age 65 (OAS, GIS, pensions)

and a shortened life expectancy for older people on the street.

Age	Homeless Connect		Homeless Count
	At-risk	Homeless	Homeless
<18	21%	8%	15%
18-24	4%	9%	13%
25-30	5%	9%	7%
31-44	19%	26%	23%
45-54	23%	28%	25%
55-64	20%	16%	13%
65+	9%	4%	4%

## Age When First Homeless

The median age of first homelessness was 30 for participants presently experiencing homelessness, but fully 25% had their first experience of homelessness by the age of 19. While the number of youth attending was relatively low, many of the adults started their cycle of homelessness as youth or children.

## Indigenous Identity

49% of respondents identified as Indigenous. While just under one quarter of non-Indigenous participants were female, 43% of Indigenous respondents were. Indigenous participants were asked what settlement, reserve or home community they came from, regardless of current membership. Of 476 respondents, 56 did not know their community of origin, 125 identified communities outside of Alberta – including 55 from Saskatchewan, 19 from the Northwest Territories and 12 each from BC and Manitoba. The communities and nations most commonly named were:

Saddle Lake Cree	35	Buffalo Lake Metis	7
Bigstone Cree	24	Dene Tha'	7
Samson Cree	16	Ermineskin Cree	7
Cold Lake	16	Fort McMurray	7
Mikisew Cree	15	Gift Lake Metis	7
Sturgeon Lake	10	Kehewin Cree	7
Enoch Cree	8	Paul	7

# About the Event

## Transportation

The vast majority of participants (90%) arrived by foot or by public transit. Of those presently experiencing homelessness, walking was significantly more likely than taking transit – the opposite was true for those not presently experiencing homelessness.

## Advertising

60% of participants noted hearing about the event by word of mouth and 30% from posters or advertisements. Drop-in centres (12%), Service providers (9%), and Media (5%) were less common methods.

## Services Used

On the exit survey, half of respondents mentioned accessing clothing and three-quarters ate food. These were the most common services named (282 respondents):

Food	205	Foot Care	26
Clothing	142	Dental	24
Haircut	93	Tax Returns	23
Eye Care/Glasses	52	Employment	22
Housing Resources	51	Library	19
Photos	33	Legal Assistance	18
Books	30	Child Care	13
Medical Care	29	Aboriginal Services	10

## Unmet Demand

Clothing was the service most named that people did not get access to – many cited specific things that were not available (shoes, jeans, work boots, children's clothing, underwear, large sizes). Haircuts and dental work were the next most desired services that were booked up before the end of the day. A handful of people expressed a desire for more employment information.

## Suggestions for Improvement

A reasonable number of participants agreed with the statement that events should happen more often (58) and there should be more advertising (61). A full list of participant suggestions for improvement follows. The larger open comment section is not included here.

- (x16) Reduce/eliminate registration lineup: start earlier, separate line for families, fill out own entrance forms, go back to paper

- (x10) Advertising: earlier – one month in advance, ETS, Facebook, free newspapers, local news, radio, street, recovery houses, different languages, inner city agencies
- (x8) Food: People with mobility issues can't stand in line; have childcare and food closer together; reduce line; have two serving areas; start serving earlier, more of it, "should be placed by a door instead of everywhere"
- (x8) Clothing (see list above): organize clothing by kids/women's/men's
- (x5) Children: safety, bigger unit for childcare, language issues, more kids resources + educational activities, video
- (x4) Reduce lineups for activities: nails, hair. Hair dressers should have flags to notify when they are ready for the next person
- (x2) CRHC representative
- (x2) Homeless people need to be identified as homeless so they are prioritized above the rest for agencies.
- (x2) More volunteers
- (x2) Volunteers need to have more (employment and housing) info
- (x2) Takeout containers (hard ones)
- (x2) Better parking
- Accessible haircuts (walker was difficult to manage with haircut chairs)
- Basic income (BIG)
- Better directions to services
- Better health booths
- Better photographer
- Clean washroom – it got nasty
- Colour code name tags according to needs
- Complete ID form and mail it right here
- Date should be backed up
- Down escalator/ elevator
- Family services / development and supports
- Gift cards
- Give priority to homeless people
- Listerine
- Make-up
- More advertisements for rental properties
- More advocacy boards
- More beverage options
- More chocolate
- More communication within the city of Edmonton
- More extensive services, not just pamphlet handouts
- More eye care
- More hours
- More laundry machines
- More legal stuff
- More lighting/ better lighting for nurses
- More security
- More shoes
- More smudging times
- More snacks
- Part-time employment for 65 or over
- Scooter services (fixing + parts)
- Smaller events

- Use tablets for exit survey
- Watch repair
- Whole weekend
- Writing prescriptions
- Writing resume

## Additional Comments

- A few intoxicated people
- Aggressive dogs
- Drinking and drugs
- Expected the event to be organized outdoors
- Limited access to services
- Put check mark on people's bracelets once they receive food
- Saw much food being wasted by homeless
- Security not friendly
- Some volunteers (optometry) very rude and abrupt
- Too crowded
- Transportation: rude bus driver
- Volunteer offered leftovers to homeless person off their plate
- Well-organized