

Out in the Cold

A Count of Homeless Persons in Edmonton



October 2006



**Edmonton Joint Planning
Committee on Housing**



THANKS TO THE COMMITTEE & COMMUNITY

The Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing would like to express it's appreciation to the members of the Homeless Count Committee and the many agencies and volunteers who donated their time to complete the seventh homeless count. We would like to recognize the efforts of Constables Steve Horchuk and Serge Soucy and the Edmonton City Police Service and the City of Edmonton Park Rangers who provided valuable assistance to the Count Committee and volunteers. In addition, our appreciation is extended to Mr. Terry Ford, who once again provided the volunteers with insight about street life.

We would also like to extend our appreciation to Tim Horton's, the Funky Pickle Pizza Company, Second Cup, Bee Bell Bakery, Rosslyn IGA and Native Counseling Services of Alberta for their generous support.

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*This report is available at
<http://www.moresafehomes.net>*

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A Count of Homeless Persons in Edmonton

Conducted October 17, 2006 by the
Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing
Homeless Count Committee

SUMMARY

The seventh count of the homeless found 2618 homeless* persons in the City of Edmonton. Of these, 1774 were absolute homeless (having no housing alternative) and 844 were sheltered homeless (living in emergency accommodations).

The Homeless Count Committee organized the count, applying the methodology used in the previous counts (March/November 1999, March/September 2000, October 2002 and October 2004), 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 17, 2006 was selected for the twenty-four hour count period. In order to conduct the count, the Count Committee acquired the active support of approximately 300 volunteers, in addition to the community serving the homeless. In addition, the street count areas were expanded based upon the recommendation of community agencies.

Major Findings were:

- There has been a substantial increase in the number of homeless in Edmonton. There was an overall increase of more than 19% in the total homeless counted. The number of absolute homeless increased the most substantially (approximately 22%) and the number of sheltered homeless increased by approximately 14%.
- In terms of gender, 70% or 1,820 of the homeless were observed to be male and 23%, or 608 were female. Of the remaining 7% (190), 151 were children and caregivers in families whose gender was not observed. The gender of the remaining 39 was not recorded or was unknown. The relative proportion of the number of men to women is comparable to the 2004 count results, however in total there was an increase of 523 males and 100 females.
- There was a significant increase in the number of turnaways in 2006. Approximately 2.4 times as many individuals were turned away in 2006 than in 2004 (256 compared to 108). In addition, the number discharged with no home to return to increased to 113 over the previous count of 54. Turnaways are not included in the homeless tally.
- There was a significant reduction in the number of families enumerated in 2006 over 2004 (79 compared to 120). This is attributable to improvements in the survey forms, which clarified the definition of dependants, caregivers, and their housing status, as well as focused training of volunteers.

***Definition of Homeless**

The Homeless Count Committee used the following definition of the homeless for the purpose of this count:

- **Absolute Homeless:** Individuals and families who have no housing alternatives. During the October 17th count, this was represented by people who, when asked on the street or within agencies like drop-in centres, self reported that they had no permanent place to reside. They may have slept “on the street”, in a park or stairwell or may have stayed with a friend that night.
- **Sheltered Homeless:** Individuals and families who are living in emergency accommodations and do not have a permanent place to live. During the October 17th count, this was represented by people who were registered to stay in approved emergency shelters.

BACKGROUND

The Homeless Count Committee is a working group of the Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing. Membership includes the community serving the homeless, the City of Edmonton, the Province of Alberta and the Government of Canada. 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 and expected to be 'on the street' at the end of their stay).”

The count began at 5:00 am on October 17, 2006 and continued until 5:00 am on October 18, 2006. October 17, 2006 was a clear and cool day with temperatures ranging from a high of 2.9°C to a low of -2.2°C. Noon time temperatures were 0.8°C with the wind at 15km/h and a wind chill factor of -4.0°C (Environment Canada).

The following partners collaborated and actively participated in the organization and implementation of the count: the community serving the homeless, individual volunteers, the City of Edmonton, the Province of Alberta, and the Government of Canada. Other agencies such as hospitals, health centres, correctional facilities, community serving agencies and housing providers and registries also participated. These partners were involved in all the previous counts.

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 tally 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 and recording the number that did not.
- **agency count**, asking people at agencies (such as food banks, drop-in centres and bottle depots) if they have a permanent residence for that night and recording the number that did not.

In addition to the count of homeless the following information was collected the same day but these figures are not included in the homeless tally:

- **Number of Turnaways:** people turned away by providers and crisis services because no appropriate housing was available
- **Number of Discharges:** people either discharged or ready for discharge from facilities but with no permanent residence to go to.

Demographic data gathered during the count included observed gender, race and age. Family status was also documented, including the number of dependent children up to 16 years of age and the number of caregivers 17 years of age and older.

Forms documenting count results were faxed to a central number on October 18, 2006.

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 17th count followed the same methodology used in all previous counts. The count forms and instruction sheets were revised to better reflect the information to be gathered while at the same time maintaining the integrity of the methodology. Additional emphasis was also placed on the training of volunteers with respect to the completion of the count forms. It was also stressed to volunteers that only those children up to 16 years old, who were physically in the care of a parent on the night of October 17th, were to be recorded in the family status section.

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 sectors, with a coordinator assigned to organize and implement the count:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• institutions (hospitals/correctional facilities)• inner-city agencies• streets• shelters (youth, adult and families)• adult group homes• youth group homes• seniors facilities• treatment centres• Edmonton Transit and LRT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• housing providers and registries• aboriginal agencies and housing• immigrant serving agencies• outreach programs• bottle depots• Stanley Milner Library• food banks• River valley park system• Edmonton Emergency Medical Services• crisis and assistance services
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COUNT RESULTS

A total of 2618 homeless persons were counted on October 17, 2006 in Edmonton: 1774 absolute homeless (68%) and 844 sheltered homeless (32%). This includes adults and children.

TOTAL HOMELESS		
	No.	%
Absolute Homeless	1774	68
Sheltered Homeless	844	32
Total Homeless	2618	100

Family Status

A majority of individuals counted were single (2366). Among the single homeless, 1650 (70%) were absolute homeless compared with 716 (30%) who were staying at shelters.

SINGLE HOMELESS*		
	No.	%
Absolute Homeless Singles	1650	70
Sheltered Homeless Singles	716	30
Total Homeless Singles	2366	100

* Includes - Singles Without Children

There were 79 families counted, encompassing 151 children up to the age of 16 years and 101 caregivers 17 years of age and older. Among families, 49% (39) identified themselves during the street count as absolute homeless, while 51% (40) stayed at shelters. There were 72 children and 52 caregivers identified as absolute homeless; 79 children and 49 caregivers stayed at emergency shelters.

Families having one caregiver totaled 62, while 17 had two or more caregivers. Among the absolute homeless, 30 families had one caregiver while nine had two or more caregivers. At shelters, 32 families had one caregiver while eight had two or more caregivers. Caregivers include men & women 17 years of age and older.

HOMELESS IN FAMILIES								
	Families By # of Care Givers				Total Families		Children	
	2 or more	%	One	%	No.	%	No.	%
Absolute Homeless Families	9	11	30	38	39	49	72	48
Sheltered Homeless Families	8	10	32	41	40	51	79	52
Total Homeless Families	17	21	62	79	79	100	151	100

Gender

70% of the homeless adults counted were male, totaling 1820 compared to 23% female adults. There were 190 persons counted as “Other/Unknown”, including dependent children up to 16 years of age and additional caregivers as their gender was not observed.

HOMELESS BY OBSERVED GENDER								
	Males		Females		Other/Unknown		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Absolute Homeless	1268	49	404	15	102	4	1774	68
Sheltered Homeless	552	21	204	8	88	3	844	32
Total Homeless	1820	70	608	23	190	7	2618	100

Race

The percentage of Caucasian homeless identified by observation was 47% and Aboriginal homeless was 38%. The race of the remaining 15% was “Other/Unknown” and may include Caucasians, Aboriginals and others. Dependent children up to 16 years of age and additional caregivers were recorded as “Other/Unknown” as their race was not observed.

HOMELESS BY OBSERVED RACE								
	Caucasian		Aboriginal		Other/Unknown		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Absolute Homeless	797	30	744	29	233	9	1774	68
Sheltered Homeless	439	17	242	9	163	6	844	32
Total Homeless	1236	47	986	38	396	15	2618	100

Age

Those between 31 and 54 years old were the predominant age group, at 1460 or 56%. The next largest was the 17 to 30 age group, at 678 or 26%.

Of those up to 16 years of age, 79 of 194 were sheltered with a caregiver. For those over 17 years of age, more were in absolute homelessness than sheltered (1682 compared to 742).

HOMELESS BY OBSERVED AGE												
	0-16*		17-30		31-54		55-65		Over 65		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Absolute	92	3	497	19	988	38	180	7	17	.5	1774	67.5
Sheltered	102	4	181	7	472	18	72	3	17	.5	844	32.5
Total	194	7	678	26	1460	56	252	10	34	1	2618	100

* Includes 151 children in families and 43 children on their own.

THE FOLLOWING FIGURES ARE NOT INCLUDED IN THE HOMELESS TALLY.

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, 128 individuals were turned away from housing providers and treatment centres (50%) and 128 from shelters (50%). Discharges totaled 113 people, including 96 from correctional facilities, 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	128	50	17	15
Correctional Facilities/Hospitals/Group Homes	-	-	96	85
Shelters	128	50	-	-
Total	256	100	113	100

*Turnaways and discharges declaring no home to return to.

Shelter-by-Shelter Numbers: Registered and Turnaways

The number of persons who were housed or turned away by each participating shelter on October 17, 2006 is outlined in the table below. Herb Jamieson Centre housed the highest number, at 267 (107% occupancy). The number registered are included in the homeless tally, the turnaways are not.

REGISTERED AND TURNAWAYS FROM SHELTERS						
Shelter Name	Available Spaces	No. Registered	% Occupancy	Percentage of Total Registered	No. Turned Away	Percentage of Total
Herb Jamieson Youth Shelter	249	267	107	32	16	13
Intox Shelter	30	33	110	4	7	5
WEAC	70	70	100	8	27	21
Elizabeth House	75	78	104	9	7	5
George Spady	24*	23	96	3	5	4
Urban Manor	80	79	99	9	37	29
WIN 1	75*	74	99	9	3	2
WIN 11	30	11	37	1	0	0
Lurana	30	17	57	2	11	9
CSS Safe House	25	31	124	4	0	0
Protective Safe House	8	5	62	1	0	0
Inner City Youth Housing	5	2	40	0	0	0
Youth Emergency Shelter	29	13	45	2	0	0
START HOUSE	28	23	82	3	4	3
Seniors Safe House (SAGE)	10	6	60	1	0	0
Emergency Hotels**	7	4	57	0	0	0
Total	0	108	-	13	11	0
Total	775***	844	109	100	128	100

* Elizabeth House has 24 long-term transitional spaces; information captured for comparison purposes to earlier counts.

*Urban Manor has 23 emergency spaces and 52 long-term transitional spaces; information captured for comparison purposes to earlier counts.

**On an as needed basis provided by Alberta Human Resources and Employment – no set number of spaces.

***Includes 76 long-term transitional spaces at Elizabeth House and Urban Manor.

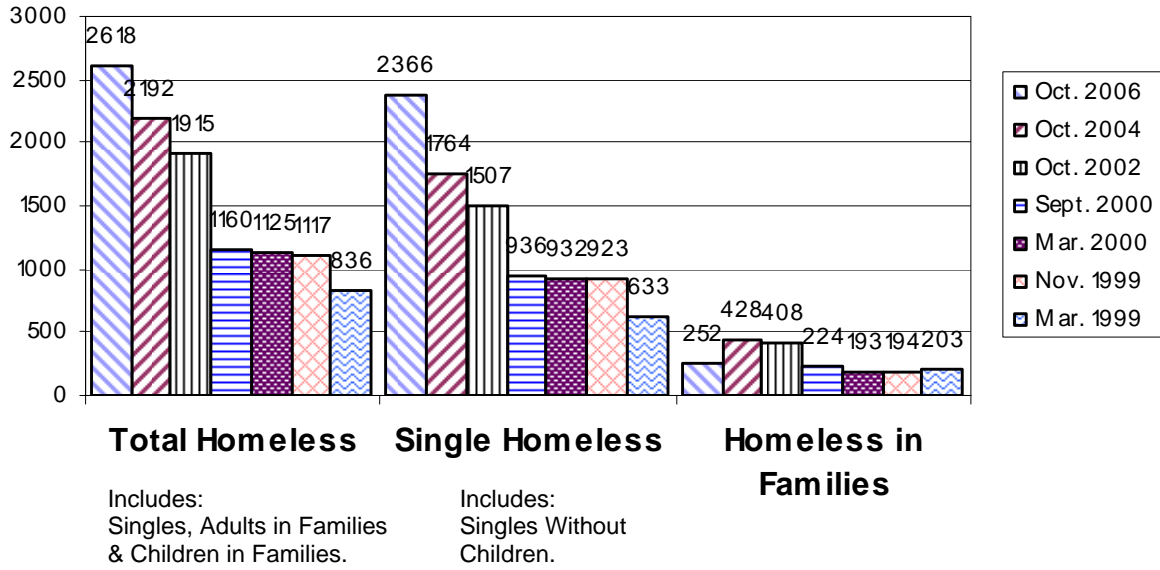
COUNT COMPARISON

The October 17, 2006 count is the latest of seven counts to be conducted as recommended in the May 1999 report “*Homelessness in Edmonton, A Call to Action*”.

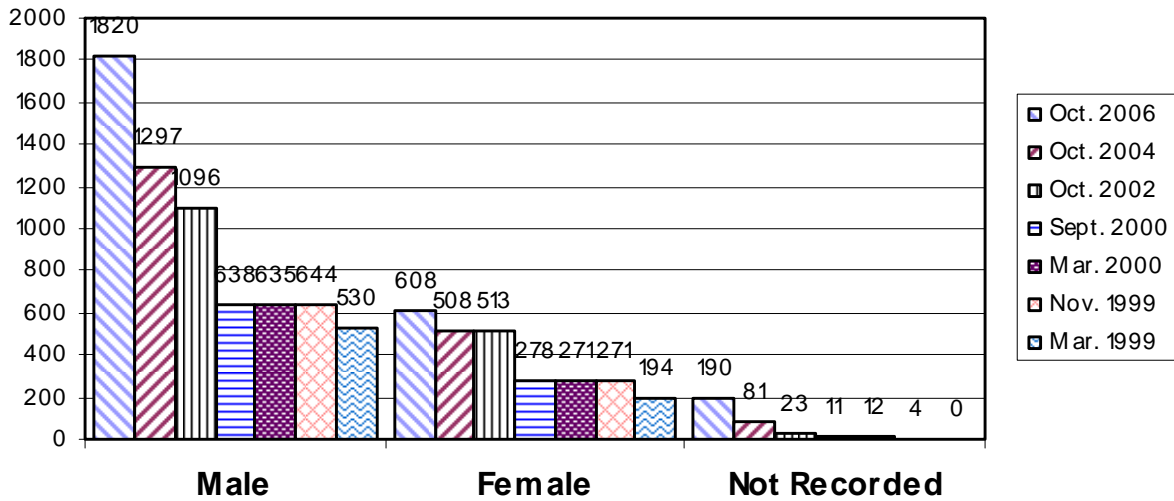
Since the last count on October 19, 2004, there was a net gain of 83 more shelter beds created in the City of Edmonton (775 compared to 692). While the number of available spaces has increased, so has the number of individuals who access these facilities (844 compared to 740).

Although significant progress has been made towards addressing the needs of the homeless in Edmonton, the recent economic boom has accelerated the homelessness and affordable housing crisis in Edmonton. The October 17, 2006 count results clearly show that homelessness continues to be a growing issue in Edmonton. With this in mind, the following graphs (pages 9-11) illustrate the numeric differences between the six counts.

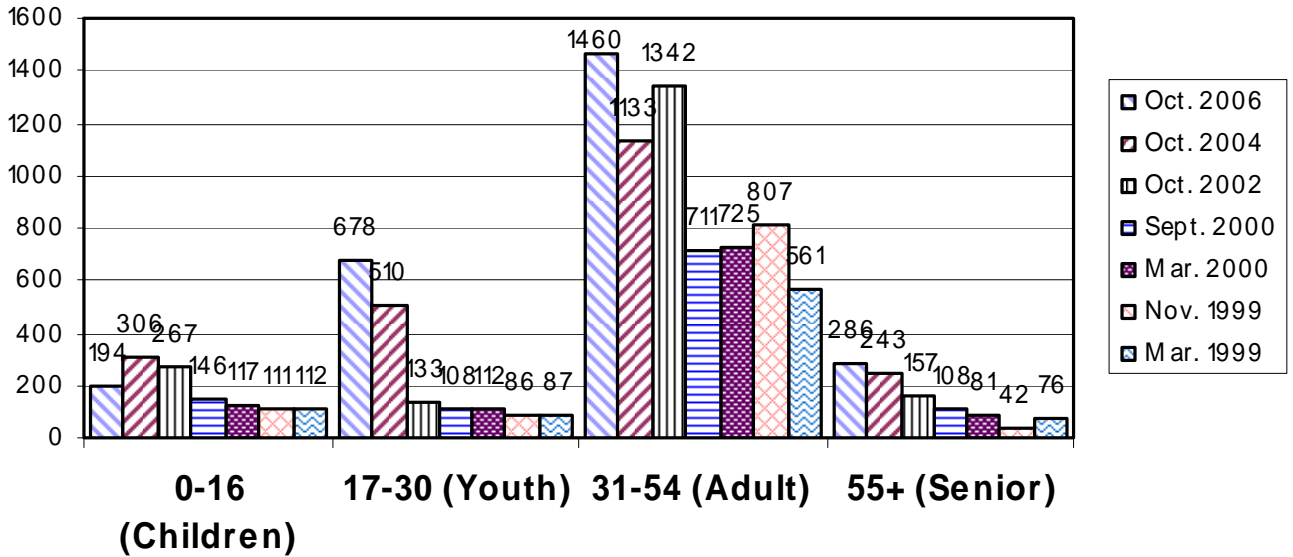
Total Homeless in Edmonton



Total Homeless by Observed Gender



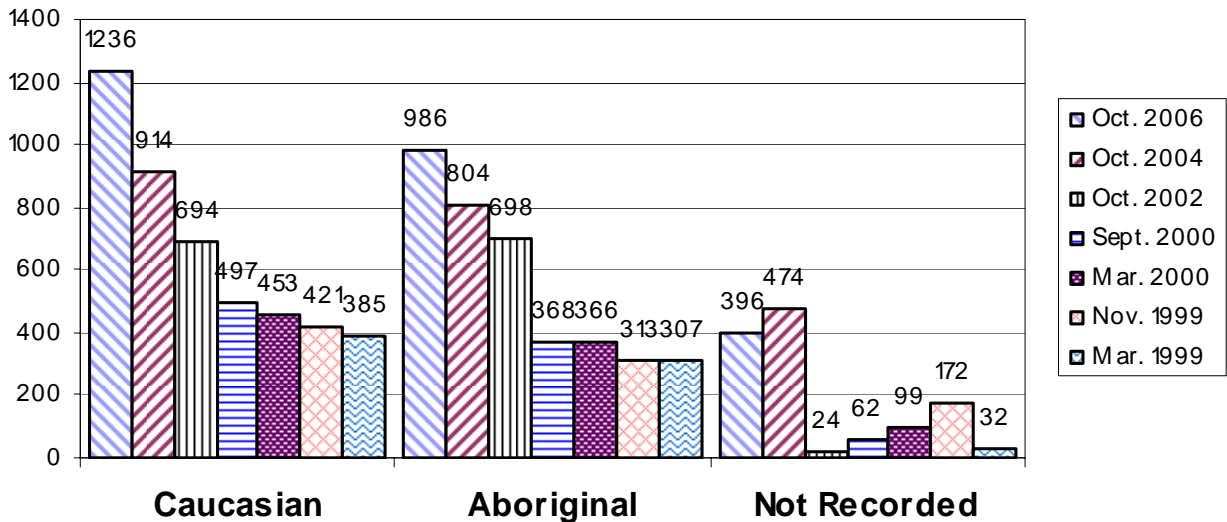
Total Homeless by Observed Age*



*Age Categories in the 2006 Count are comparable to those in the 2004 Count. Age categories were changed in 2004 from previous counts, creating discrepancies in the Youth and Adult categories. Previous age categories are now reported as follows:

Graph Labels	2004 & 2006:	Previous Counts:
0-16 (Children)	0-16	Children (in families or age 0-15)
17-30 (Youth)	17-30	15-18
31-54 (Adult)	31-54	19-54
55+ (Senior)	55-64	55+
55+ (Senior)	65+	Not Applicable

Total Homeless by Observed Race



Total Turnaways & Discharges

