



## **Homelessness in Edmonton**

A collaborative initiative of:

- The Edmonton Coalition on Homelessness
- City of Edmonton
- Alberta Human Resources and Employment
- Alberta Community Development
- Government of Canada

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# A Count of Homeless Persons in Edmonton

Prepared by:  
**Edmonton Homelessness  
Count Committee**

September, 2000

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## **EDMONTON HOMELESSNESS COUNT COMMITTEE**

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# A Count of Homeless Persons in Edmonton

conducted September 14, 2000 by the  
Edmonton Homelessness Count Committee

## SUMMARY

The fourth count of the homeless found 1160 homeless\* persons in the City of Edmonton. Of these, 650 were absolute homeless - having no housing alternative - and 510 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 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. September 14, 2000 was selected for the twenty-four hour count period. In order to conduct the count, the Count Committee acquired the active support of approximately 100 volunteers, in addition to the community serving the homeless.

- There were 64 families counted, encompassing 146 children under the age of 15 and 78 caregivers. Among the families, 69% of the individuals were absolute homeless, while 31% stayed at shelters.
- A majority of the homeless were single - 936 of the 1160 total. Among them, 53% were absolute homeless compared with 47% staying at shelters.
- From the perspective of observed gender, most of the homeless were male (69% or 638, not including children in families) and 30% or 278 were female. The percentage of males and females was almost equally divided between the sheltered and absolute homeless.

### \* **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 September 14<sup>th</sup> count, this was represented by people who, when asked on the street or within agencies like drop-in centres, bottle depots or food bank(s), 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 September 14<sup>th</sup> count, this was represented by people who were registered to stay in approved emergency shelters.



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- Fifty-four percent were observed to be Caucasian followed by 40% Aboriginal and 7% "other." Most Caucasians were sheltered, whereas 77% of Aboriginal people were absolute homeless.
- Age groups ranged from the majority being adults (711 or 66% between 19 and 54 years) to the next largest group being children (146 or 14%), 108 youth (10%) and 108 seniors (10%) age 55 years or over.
- A count of people turned away by providers and crisis services identified 139, while an additional 41 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)."

September 14, 2000 was count day - a summer weekday.

The following partners collaborated and actively participated in the organization and implementation of the count: the City of Edmonton, Alberta Human Resources and Employment, Alberta Community Development, 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 the next day, September 15, 2000.

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 September 14<sup>th</sup> count used the same methodology of that used for the March/November 1999 and March 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
- housing registries
- aboriginal agencies and housing
- malls (outreach programs)
- bottle depots
- library
- food banks
- other miscellaneous crisis and assistance services

## COUNT RESULTS

A total of 1160 homeless persons were counted on September 14, 2000 in Edmonton: 650 absolute homeless (56%) and 510 sheltered homeless (44%). This includes singles as well as the adults and children within families.

<b>TOTAL HOMELESS*</b>		
	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Absolute Homeless</b>	<b>650</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Sheltered Homeless</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Total Homeless</b>	<b>1160</b>	<b>100</b>

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

### Family Status

A majority of individuals counted were single. Among the single homeless, 495 (53%) were absolute homeless compared with 441 (47%) who were staying at shelters.

<b>SINGLE HOMELESS*</b>		
	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Absolute Homeless</b>	<b>495</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Sheltered Homeless</b>	<b>441</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Total Homeless</b>	<b>936</b>	<b>100</b>

\* Includes - Singles Without Children

There were 64 families counted, encompassing 146 children under the age of 15 and 78 caregivers. Among families, 67% of the individuals were absolute homeless, while 33% stayed at shelters. There were 98 children and 57 caregivers among the absolute homeless; 48 children and 21 caregivers among the sheltered homeless families.

Families having one caregiver totaled 50, while 14 had two-or-more caregivers. Among the absolute homeless, 29 families had one caregiver while approximately 14 had two-or-more caregivers. At shelters, 100% of the families had one caregiver, therefore no families having two-or-more caregivers were identified. Caregivers includes men, women and seniors (55 years and over).

<b>HOMELESS IN FAMILIES</b>								
	<b>Caregivers By Category</b>				<b>Children</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<b>2 or more</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Single</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Absolute Homeless</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Sheltered Homeless</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Total Homeless</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>100</b>

## Gender

Sixty-nine percent of the homeless were male, totaling 638 compared to 278 females. Eleven of those counted as absolute homeless were not identified by gender. The percentage of males and females was almost equally divided between sheltered and absolute homeless.

One shelter did not report observed gender, therefore, these numbers were not recorded.

HOMELESS BY OBSERVED GENDER*								
	Males		Females		Other		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Absolute Homeless</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Sheltered Homeless</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Total Homeless</b>	<b>638</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>927</b>	<b>100</b>

\* Does Not Include Children in Families

## Race

Through observations, 7% of the homeless were not classified as being either Caucasian or Aboriginal. Caucasians formed the highest percentage (54%), while 40% were observed as Aboriginal. More Caucasians were sheltered (274 compared to 223 absolute homeless), whereas 30% of all Aboriginal individuals were absolute homeless (282 compared to 86 sheltered).

One shelter did not report observed race, therefore, these numbers were not recorded.

HOMELESS BY OBSERVED RACE*								
	Caucasian		Aboriginal		Other		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Absolute Homeless</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Sheltered Homeless</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Total Homeless</b>	<b>497</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>927</b>	<b>100</b>

\* Does Not Include Children in Families

## Age

Adults between 19 and 54 years old were the predominant age group among the homeless, at 711 or 66%. The next largest group was children (146 at 14%), then youth 15 to 18 years (108 at 10%) and seniors 55 years and over (108 at 10%).

The majority of children (98 of 146) were absolute homeless compared to 48 sheltered. Among seniors, the majority were absolute homeless. More adults were absolute homeless than sheltered homeless (418 compared to 293). Of the youth captured the percentage was equally divided between absolute and sheltered homeless.

One shelter did not report observed age, therefore, these numbers were not recorded.

<b>HOMELESS BY OBSERVED AGE*</b>										
	<b>Children</b>		<b>Youth</b>		<b>Adult</b>		<b>Senior</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Absolute Homeless</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>636</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Sheltered Homeless</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>437</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Total Homeless</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>711</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1073</b>	<b>100</b>

\* CHILDREN (in Families) YOUTH = 15 - 18 Years ADULT = 19 - 54 Years SENIOR = 55+ Years

## 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, 139 individuals were turned away from housing providers (68%) and shelters (32%). Discharges totaled 41 people, including 24 from jails, hospitals and/or group homes. These people were not included in the reported number of absolute or sheltered homeless.

<b>COUNT OF TURNAWAYS &amp; DISCHARGES*</b>				
	<b>Turnaways</b>		<b>Discharges</b>	
	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Housing Providers</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Jails/Hospitals/Group Homes</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Shelters</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100</b>

\* Turnaways & 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 September 14<sup>th</sup> is outlined in the table below. Herb Jamieson Centre housed the highest number, at 175 (34%).

REGISTERED AND TURNAWAYS FROM SHELTERS						
Shelter Name	Available Spaces	No. Registered	% Occupancy	Percentage of Total Registered	No. Turned Away	Percentage of Total
Herb Jamieson	215	175	81	34	4	5
WEAC	62	79	127	16	32**	42**
Sally-Ann - Mats	10	0	0	0	0	0
George Spady	72	73	101	14	16	21
Urban Manor	62	60	97	12	0	0
WIN 1	21	19	90	4	5	7
WIN 11	30	27	90	5	17	22
Lurana	25	26	104	5	0	0
Safe House	6	??	??	??	??	??
Protective Safe House	5	??	??	??	??	??
SFI Hotels	-	2	??	0	0	0
Inner City Youth	13	15	115	3	2	3
Youth Emergency	28	34	121	7	0	0
Youth Receiving	??	??	??	??	??	??
<b>Total</b>	<b>549</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100</b>

\*\* Number of additional women who visited the Centre but chose not to stay; and are therefore not reflected in total number of Turn Aways.

?? Numbers Not Obtained

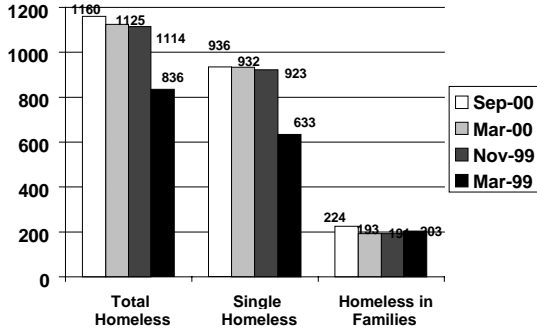
## COUNT COMPARISON

It is not appropriate to suggest that a trend(s) can be observed by comparing the results from the four counts (March/November 1999 and March/September 2000) or to speculate as to why a particular number is up or down. The September 2000 count is the last of the four counts to take place every six months, as recommended in the May 1999 report *Homelessness in Edmonton, A Call to Action*. It is recommended that future counts occur every two years. As additional counts are conducted we will begin to get a picture of the trend(s) year after year.

Unfortunately the September 2000 count results clearly show that homelessness continues to be a significant issue in Edmonton. With this in mind, the following graphs (page 8) illustrate the numeric differences between the four counts.

# COUNT COMPARISONS

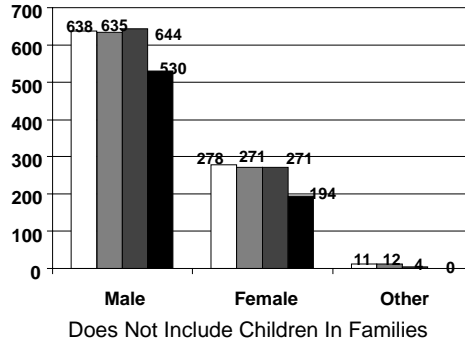
## Total Homeless in Edmonton



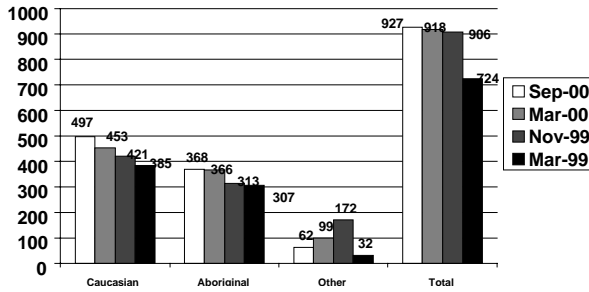
Includes:  
Singles,  
Adults in  
Families &  
Children in  
Families

Includes:  
Singles  
Without  
Children

## Total Homeless By Observed Gender

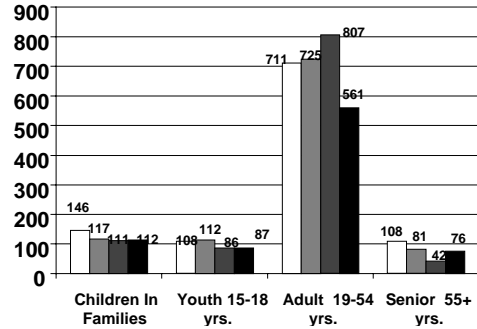


## Total Homeless By Observed Race

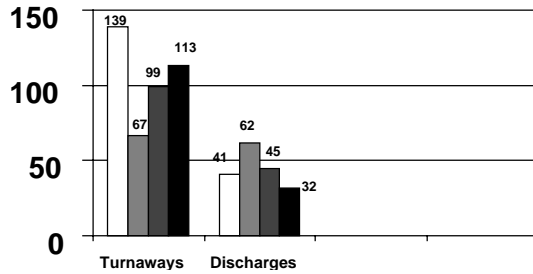


Does Not Include Children In Families

## Total Homeless By Observed Age



## Total Turnaways & Discharges



Turnaways & Discharges Declaring No Home To Return



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**THANKS TO THE COMMUNITY:**

*The Count Committee would like to express their sincere appreciation and thank the many agencies and volunteers who donated their time to complete the fourth homeless count. Particularly we would like to recognize the efforts of The Edmonton City Police Service, and to Gary Trudel who again provided insight about street life to the volunteers prior to the count.*