

2012

Edmonton

Homeless

Count

The 2012 Edmonton Homeless Count was organized by Homeward Trust under the direction of the Homeless Count Committee.* This highly collaborative endeavor would not have been possible without the dedicated support of a wide range of individuals and groups.

Homeward Trust would like to thank the Homeless Count Committee, the numerous agencies that took part in the count, and the nearly 300 committed volunteers and Base Site coordinators who donated their time to complete the 10th Edmonton Homeless Count.

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ABOUT HOMEWARD TRUST

Homeward Trust is a community-based, comprehensive housing organization that provides leadership and resources toward ending homelessness in Edmonton. Our mandate is fulfilled by leading initiatives and programs, engaging community stakeholders and partners, conducting research, creating awareness, and funding housing and support projects.

Between 2001 and 2012, we have disbursed over \$100 million in funds for 80 capital and 75 support projects. During the same period, we have been able to leverage those funds to attract an additional \$122 million in funds from other groups and created over 1,900 new housing units.

Homeward Trust is one of seven community-based organizations in Alberta working with the Government of Alberta to implement strategies set out in the province's ten year plan to end homelessness. Homeward Trust embraces the principle of 'housing first' — that every person has the right to a safe, secure home. This principle is at the core of both the municipal and provincial ten year plans to end homelessness, and the Housing First Support Program. In this program, the focus is on ending homelessness by providing permanent housing and follow-up support.

From the Housing First Support Program's inception in April 2009 to November 2012, 2,300 individuals have been housed and provided support to help them achieve stability and self-sufficiency.

Visit: <http://www.homewardtrust.ca>

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Total Count Results

- On October 16th, 2012, 2,174 homeless Edmontonians were counted. Compared to 2010, 247 fewer homeless individuals were counted in 2012.
- Comparisons across counts must acknowledge that important changes were made to the methods used in conducting the 2012 Count.

Sheltered Versus Unsheltered Homeless

- Roughly half of the total homeless people encountered were counted on the street or at an agency (Unsheltered: 1,070) and half were staying at a shelter (Sheltered: 1,104).
- Between 2010 and 2012, the Unsheltered Homeless decreased by 30% (463 individuals), but the Sheltered Homeless increased by 24% (216 individuals). Thus, the 2010 to 2012 reduction in the total number of homeless people counted appears to be a reduction in the Unsheltered Homeless.

Demographic Characteristics of Adults (and Independent Youth)

- Three-quarters (1,446) of all the homeless people counted were male and one-quarter (487) were female.
- The mean age of all homeless adults and independent youth counted in Edmonton was 42 and the majority were between 31 and 54 years of age (57%).
- Edmonton's female and Aboriginal homeless populations are, on average, younger than other groups.
- Among adults and independent youth, 849 (44%) were Caucasian, 878 (46%) were Aboriginal, and 185 (10%) were Visible Minorities.

Children and Youth

- The total number of independent and dependent children and youth less than 18 years of age was 279 (223 dependent + 56 independent). Together, all children and underage youth comprised 13% of the total homeless counted in 2012.
- There were 698 individuals counted aged 30 or younger (including dependent children), equating to approximately 32% of the total. 258 of these individuals were independent youth between the ages of 14 and 24.

Homeless Families

- There were 119 caregivers taking care of 223 dependent children less than 18 years of age on count night.
- The majority of caregivers were single parents (82%) and they were much more likely to be female than male (76% compared to 24%).

- With a mean age of 32, caregivers were, on average, younger than the total adult and independent youth homeless population (mean age of 42).
- While 46% of the adults counted were Aboriginal, 61% of all caregivers were Aboriginal.

Street Count Geographic Location and Type of Location

- The majority of the Unsheltered Homeless individuals were counted in the downtown region of the city (56%) and at services and agencies (53%).

Institution Discharges and Sheltered Homeless

- On October 15, 2012, 974 individuals were staying at shelters that had a combined operational capacity of 1,252 spaces for an overall occupancy rate of 78%, very close to the 2010 occupancy rate of 77%.
- On October 15, 2012, 24 individuals were turned away from a shelter because the facility was full, the client did not meet the entrance criteria, or because of inappropriate client behaviour.
- 101 individuals, including 39 adults and 62 children, were staying in hotel rooms paid for by Alberta Human Services on the night of October 15, 2012.
- 19 individuals were discharged into homelessness from hospitals, provincial corrections centres, and one treatment centre in Edmonton on count day, 14 of whom were male and 5 of whom were female.

Definitions of Terms

Adults: Individuals 18 years of age or older.

Caregivers: Individuals indicating that their own dependent children would be staying with them on the night of the count.

Dependent Children: Individuals less than 18 years of age who a caregiver indicated would be staying with them on the night of the count.

Discharges: Individuals who had been discharged from an institution (e.g., hospital, treatment centre or corrections facility) on count day and who had no permanent residence.

Emergency Shelters: Overnight accommodation for individuals who have no permanent address.

Homeless Count: The total number of individuals approached who reported not having a permanent place to stay on the night of count day plus the total number of individuals staying at a shelter on the previous night. Both figures also include the number of children staying with an adult caregiver on the night of the count.

Independent Youth: Individuals less than 18 years of age who were unaccompanied by an adult caregiver when counted.

Interim Housing: Similar to Short-Term Supportive Housing, but with a goal of stays lasting less than 30 days while finding permanent housing and connected to a Housing First team.

Occupancy Rate: The ratio of the number of individuals registered in a shelter to the total number of available spaces at that shelter.

Operational Capacity: The total number of available spaces in an emergency shelter or short-term housing facility.

Sheltered Homeless: Homeless individuals counted at a shelter or in a hotel (funded by the province) on an emergency basis on the night prior to count day.

Short-Term Supportive Housing: Temporary housing with support to assist client movement into permanent housing.

Turnaways: Individuals not provided with a bed in an emergency shelter because of ineligibility, client behaviour, or because no spaces were available that night.

Turnaway Rate: The ratio of the number of turnaways to the operational capacity of emergency shelters and short-term housing facilities.

Unsheltered Homeless: Homeless individuals counted in the Street Count (at an agency or service, on a walking route, at a bottle depot, or by outreach teams and mobile vans). Individuals enumerated in this category may be couch-surfing, staying with friends or family, in motels/hotels on their own, or sleeping in a car, a tent or outside¹.

¹

The term "Absolute Homeless", used in the 2010 Edmonton Homeless Count, was changed to "Unsheltered Homeless" in 2012. The term and its definition were modified in 2012 to better reflect their operationalization in survey instruments, which remains consistent between 2010 and 2012.

2,174

Background

Homeward Trust Edmonton (and its predecessor organizations) has conducted counts of the number of homeless individuals in the City of Edmonton since 1999. This report presents the results of the 10th Edmonton Homeless Count conducted on October 15th – 16th, 2012, representing, along with the City of Calgary, the largest number of homeless counts conducted in any one Canadian city².

A point-in-time count of Edmonton's homeless population is an essential starting position from which to attempt to understand the experiences of each homeless individual and from which to develop evidence-based policy. Homeless count data are useful in advocating for needed resources and for raising awareness among policymakers and the general population about the scope of homelessness. In addition to capturing the magnitude of homelessness, mapping the number of homeless individuals and their demographic characteristics across time allows the community to track trends in the relative size of the homeless population and provides one way of measuring the impact of the many housing initiatives that have been undertaken by Homeward Trust Edmonton, by all three orders of government, and by many other dedicated groups and individuals in the community. Insofar as homelessness is rooted in a wide range of often interconnected causes, tracking the number of homeless individuals also provides an indication of the impact of other related social programs such as those designed to address poverty, mental and physical illness, addiction, and domestic violence. In gathering basic demographic information about homeless people in Edmonton, the count also provides data to inform programs designed for specific populations (e.g. women, Aboriginal people, youth).

Edmonton's Homeless Count includes both a Shelter Count, enumerating "Sheltered Homeless" at emergency shelters and short-term housing facilities, as well as a Street Count, enumerating "Unsheltered Homeless" at a variety of locations city-wide, including agencies and services, walking routes, bottle depots, and the utilization of outreach teams and mobile vans. This undertaking is noteworthy since it attempts to enumerate the typically hard to reach "hidden homeless" who include individuals that tend to not use homeless-related services or are temporarily staying in another household (e.g. couch surfing) or in temporary camps. Even so, since the hidden homeless are by definition hard to locate, the count is a more accurate representation of the number of sheltered and visible homeless than it is of the hidden homeless. The count does not represent the spectrum of individuals in core housing need or those at-risk of homelessness.

² Edmonton's first count was conducted in 1999 whereas Calgary began counting their homeless populations in 1992. Nationally, homeless counts are more common in Alberta and B.C.—Vancouver has conducted four counts since 2005, Kamloops conducted two counts in 2005 and 2012, and Grande Prairie three counts since 2006. The City of Red Deer just completed their first count on October 16, 2012. The only city outside of these two provinces to conduct a count is Toronto, which conducted two counts in 2006 and 2009.

2012 Homeless Count Methodological Modifications

Though incremental improvements in the count methodology have been made from time to time, a concerted effort has previously been made to ensure that the design is replicated across count years. This methodological consistency permits comparability of counts over time. Such consistency also means that any problems with the design are replicated across count years as well, suggesting that if there are errors of under-representation (or duplication of counts), these are likely to be present in every year. As a result, interpretation of the counts is best made relative to each other (e.g., as a time series).

In contrast to these previous minor changes, however, several noteworthy improvements were made to the current 2012 Count methodology. Details of these modifications can be found in the concluding section of this report. When comparing the 2012 Count results to previous count results presented in this report, it is important to keep in mind the following three changes that have had the greatest impact on the reliability of the 2012 Count in comparison to previous years:

1. Counting in Shelters the Night Before: Chief among all the modifications was the change to conducting the shelter count the night *before* rather than the night *of* the daytime street and agency count. A qualifying question was then added to the Street Count to identify those who stayed in shelter the previous night. This change was made to facilitate smoother participation by shelters and to reduce potential duplication between the Street and Shelter Counts. In previous counts, shelters were requested to ask individuals whether they had already been approached on the street by an enumerator, but evidence suggests that various barriers prevented this screening question from being applied uniformly during the shelter counts. The 2012 Count reduced this source of duplication by asking those counted on the street (Unsheltered Homeless) if they had stayed at a shelter the previous night and these individuals were not included in the Street Count.
2. Removal of Secondary Caregiver: A second but less numerically significant change to the 2012 Count was the removal of secondary caregivers of dependent children from the count. In previous counts, respondents were asked if there were any other adults helping them care for their children and these individuals were then included in the total counts. This change, however, does not affect the demographic results since secondary caregivers were never included in these results because their characteristics were not observable.
3. Asking Age and Aboriginal Identity (rather than observing): Finally, the survey instrument itself was modified several ways. Most important among these changes was the shift from observing the age and Aboriginal identity of respondents to asking for age and Aboriginal identity directly for the majority of cases (gender and Caucasian and Visible Minority ethnicities are observed for all counts).

The three changes are highlighted on the following page. Further details of the methodology used to conduct the 2012 Edmonton Homeless Count can be found under Appendix A: 2012 Count Methodology.

Total Count Results

Important 2012 Methodological Modifications

The following methodological changes to the 2012 Count are important to keep in mind when comparing the 2012 Count to all previous Counts (See Appendix A: 2012 Count Methodology for details of these and other methodological modifications):

1. Conducting the Shelter Count the night before, resulting in a reduction in duplicate counts
2. Removal of secondary caregivers
3. Age and Aboriginal Identity asked (whereas previously observed)

Table 1: Total Count by Type of Homelessness, 2012

	Total	Unsheltered	Sheltered
Total	2,174	1,070	1,104
(Percent)	(100%)	(49%)	(51%)
Adults and Independent Youth ¹	1,951	954	997
(Percent)	(100%)	(49%)	(51%)
Dependent Children ²	223	116	107
(Percent)	(100%)	(52%)	(48%)

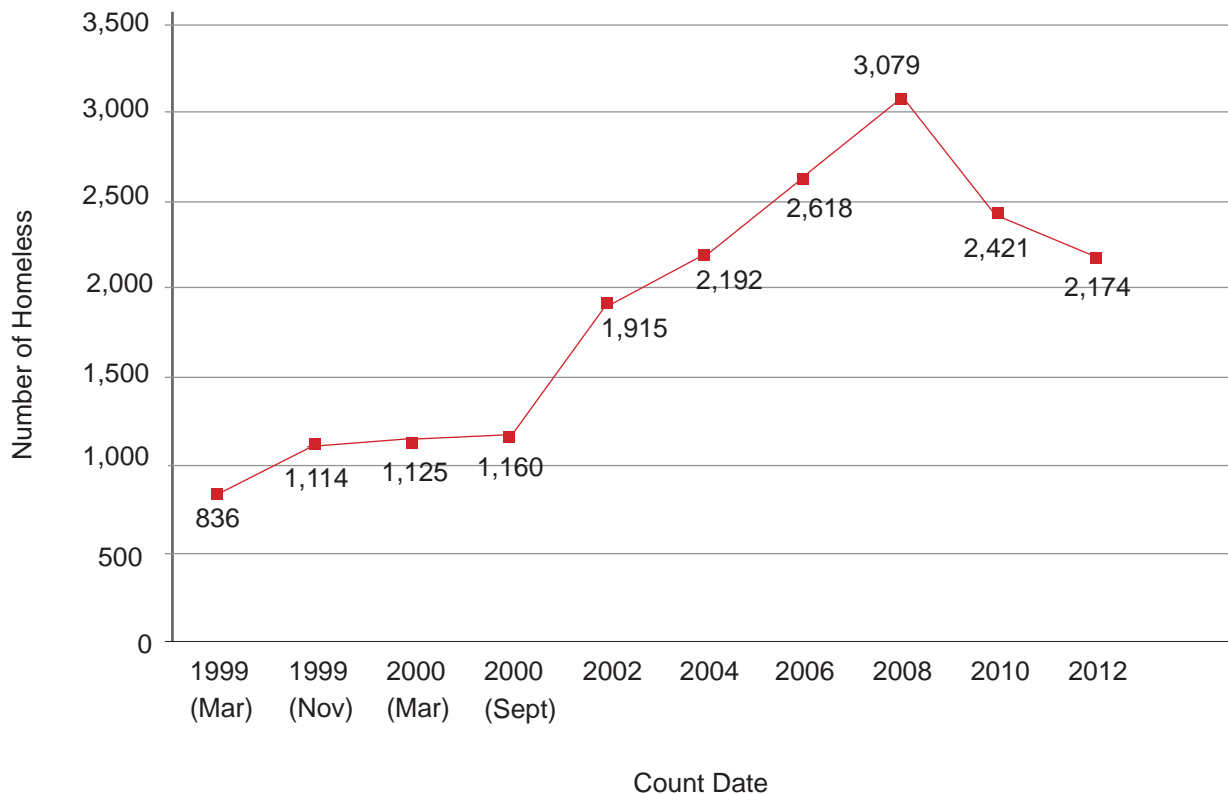
Source: 2012 Edmonton Homeless Count

¹There were 56 Independent Youth (less than 18 years of age) who were unaccompanied by an adult caregiver on count day.

²Dependent Children only include those less than 18 years of age who were accompanied by an adult caregiver on count day.

- 2,174 homeless individuals were counted on October 16, 2012.
- Roughly half of the total homeless were counted on the street or at an agency (Unsheltered: 1,070) and half were counted at a shelter (Sheltered: 1,104).
- The total number of independent and dependent children and youth less than 18 years of age was 279 (223 dependent + 56 independent). Together, all children and youth comprised 13% of the total homeless counted in 2012.
- 258 individuals counted were between the ages of 14 and 24, not including dependent children.

Figure 1: Total Number of Homeless¹ by Count Date

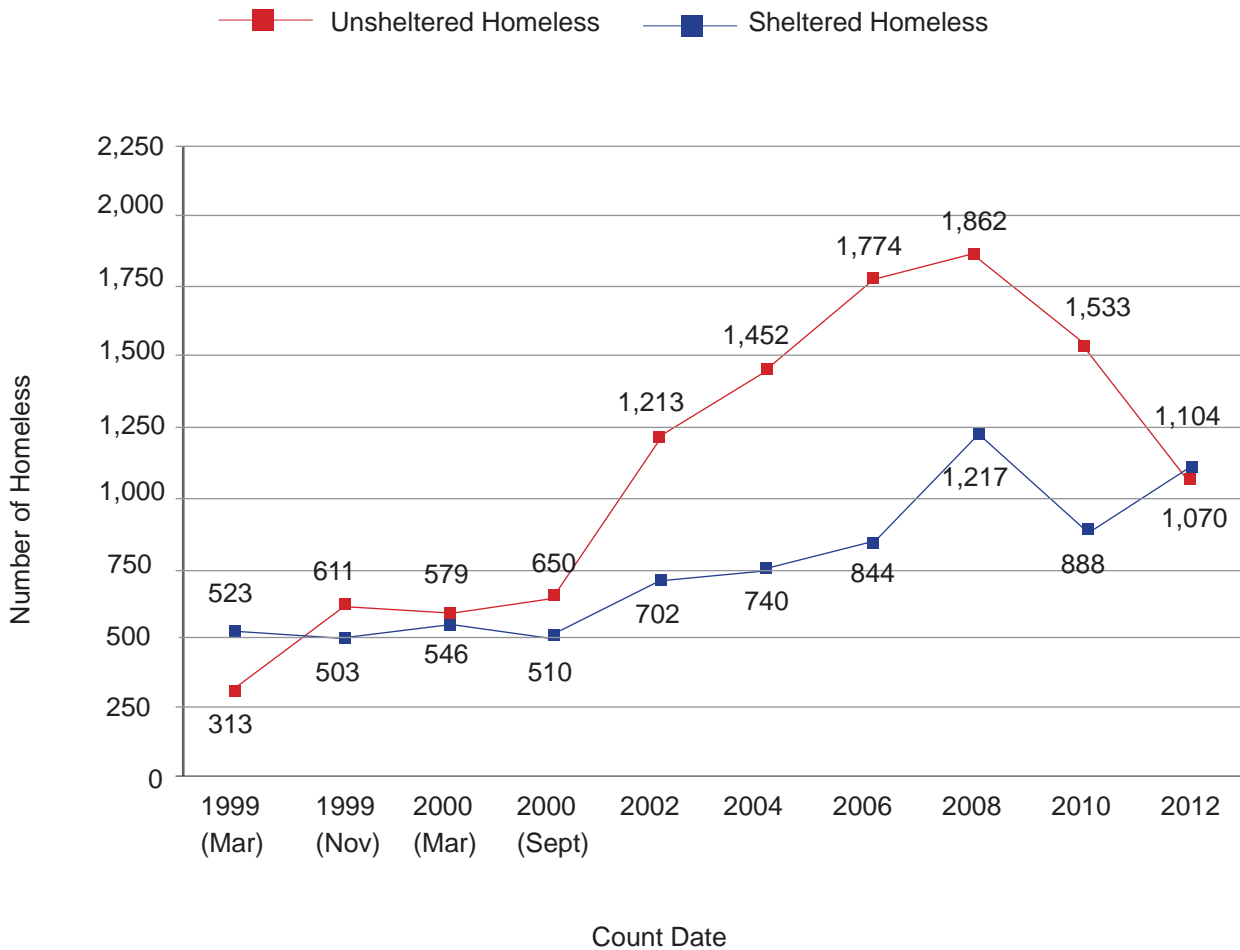


Source: 2012 Edmonton Homeless Count

¹The number of homeless is defined as the total number of individuals approached who reported not having a permanent place to stay on the night of count day.

- Compared to 2010, 247 fewer homeless individuals were counted in 2012; compared to 2008, 905 fewer individuals were counted.
- Trends must be interpreted by keeping in mind that important methodological changes were made in 2012. For example, counting in shelters the night before likely resulted in a reduction in duplicate counting in 2012. Whereas all counts previous to 2012 include secondary caregivers, the 2012 Count does not include these individuals (see Appendix A: 2012 Count Methodology for a detailed presentation of these modifications).

Figure 2: Type of Homeless by Count Date



- Whereas both the number of Unsheltered and Sheltered Homeless decreased between 2008 and 2010, between 2010 and 2012, the Unsheltered Homeless decreased by 30% (463 individuals), but the Sheltered Homeless increased by 24% (216 individuals).³ Thus, the 2010 to 2012 reduction in the total number of homeless counted appears to be due to a reduction in the Unsheltered Homeless.
- Over the 1999 to 2012 time period, the Unsheltered Homeless number more than tripled in size (from 313 to 1,070) whereas the Sheltered Homeless number doubled (from 523 to 1,104).

³ Between the 2010 and 2012 counts, 35 new spaces were added to shelters and short-term housing providers included in the count.

Characteristics of Homeless Adults and Independent Youth

The following sections present the gender, age, and ethnicity of adults and independent youth (individuals less than 18 years of age who were not with a caregiver). Dependent children who were accompanied by an adult are excluded from this section since their characteristics were not recorded. This reduces the sample size to 1,951 (2,174 – 223). Sub-sample sizes are further reduced due to missing data, which is noted in the footnotes accompanying each table and figure.

Gender

Table 2: Gender by Type of Homelessness, 2012

(Adults and Independent Youth; n=1,933)¹

Type of Homelessness	Total	Gender	
		Males	Females
Total	1,933	1,446	487
(Percent)	(100%)	(75%)	(25%)
Unsheltered Homeless	942	660	282
(Percent)	(100%)	(70%)	(30%)
Sheltered Homeless	991	786	205
(Percent)	(100%)	(79%)	(21%)

Source: 2012 Edmonton Homeless Count

¹ Gender is presented for adults and independent youth only. The data exclude 223 children for whom gender was not recorded, 16 cases for which gender was unknown, and 2 cases for which gender was "other", for a total reduction of 241 cases (2,174 – 241 = 1,933).

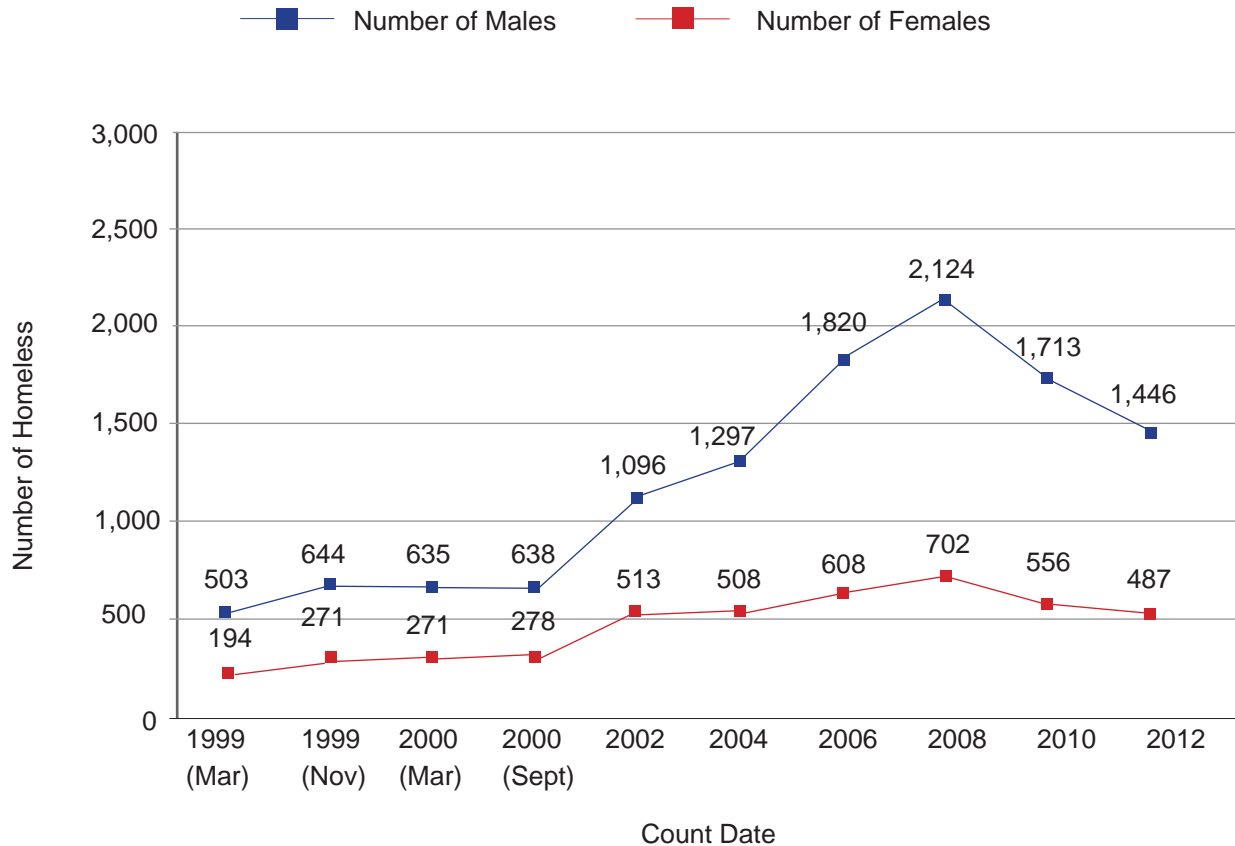
- Three-quarters (1,446) of all the homeless counted were male and one-quarter (487) were female. Hence, whereas gender parity is observed in the total Edmonton population, the gender distribution of the homeless population counted was heavily weighted towards males.⁴
- As was the case in 2010, the 2012 Count results reveal that males were more likely to be residing in a shelter (79%) than elsewhere (70%), whereas females were more likely to be unsheltered (30%) than sheltered (21%).⁵

⁴ Within the City of Edmonton, 50% of the total population is male and 50% female (Statistics Canada, 2011 Census).

⁵ The Women's Emergency Accommodation Centre (WEAC), Edmonton's single largest women's shelter (capacity 75), was temporarily closed on October 15th. As far as possible, the women who were staying at this shelter were referred to Hope Mission, Elizabeth House, and E4C Crossroads.

Figure 3: Gender by Count Date

(Adults and Independent Youth)¹



Source: 2012 Edmonton Homeless Count

¹ Gender is presented for adults and independent youth only. The data exclude children for whom gender was not recorded and respondents for whom gender was unknown.

- Since 2006, males have outnumbered females by a ratio of roughly 3 to 1.
- Between 2008 and 2012, though the number of males decreased by a much wider margin than females (678 compared to 215), the rate of decrease in this 4-year timeframe was roughly equivalent at 32% and 31%, for males and females, respectively.

Age

Table 3: Mean Age Distribution by Type of Homelessness, 2012

(Adults and Independent Youth; n=1,939)¹

	Type of Homelessness		
	Total	Unsheltered	Sheltered
Total	1,939	945	994
	(100%) ²	(100%) ²	(100%) ²
Mean Age	42	40	44
Age Category			
14 – 17	56	30	26
(Percent)	(3%)	(3%)	(3%)
18 – 24	202	120	82
(Percent)	(10%)	(13%)	(8%)
25 – 30	217	134	83
(Percent)	(11%)	(14%)	(8%)
31 - 44	552	275	277
(Percent)	(28%)	(29%)	(28%)
45 - 54	549	259	290
(Percent)	(28%)	(27%)	(29%)
55 - 64	295	107	188
(Percent)	(15%)	(11%)	(19%)
65+	68	20	48
(Percent)	(4%)	(2%)	(5%)

Source: 2012 Edmonton Homeless Count

¹ Age is presented for adults and independent youth only. The data exclude 223 dependent children for whom age was not recorded and 12 cases for which age was unknown for a total reduction of 235 cases (2,174 – 235 = 1,939).

² Percentages do not always add up to 100% due to rounding.

- For age distribution across counts, please refer to Figure 4 on page 13.
- The mean age of all homeless adults and independent youth counted in Edmonton was 42.
- The majority of the homeless were between 31 and 54 years of age (57%).
- Though the upper age limit for the definition of 'youth' varies considerably, some definitions include those up to 30 years of age. 24% of the total population of adult and independent youth were less than 31 years of age. When dependent children are included in the calculation, the total number of children and youth (under 31 years of age) is 698, comprising 32% of the total count.

- Unsheltered Homeless individuals were, on average, slightly younger than Sheltered Homeless (mean age of 40 years compared to 44 years). The younger age profile of the Unsheltered Homeless is also reflected in their greater representation among 18 to 30 year olds (27% compared to 16%) and their corresponding lower proportions among those over 54 years of age (12% compared to 24%).

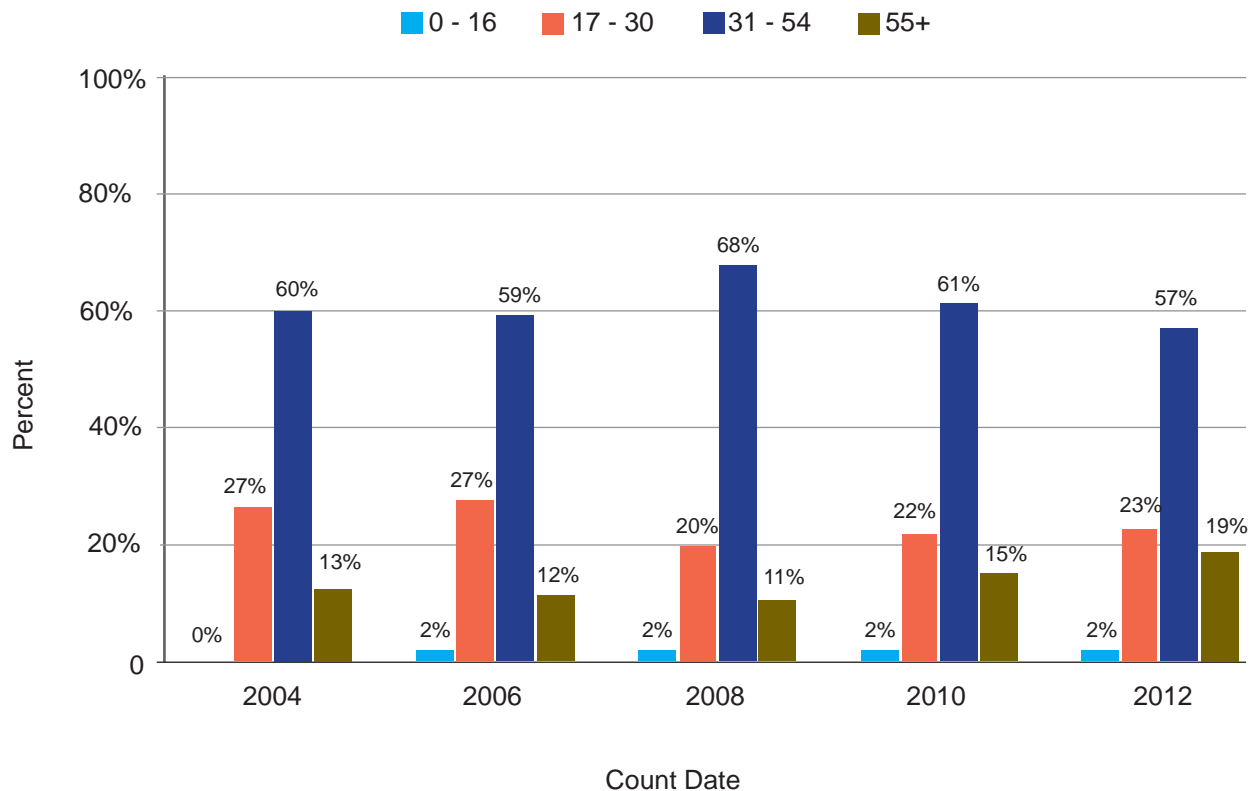
Age Distribution

If dependent children (defined as those less than 18 years of age who were accompanied by an adult caregiver on the night of the count) are included in the age distribution calculations, the age distribution was:

0 – 17:	13%
18 – 24:	9%
25 – 30:	10%
31 – 44:	26%
45 – 54:	25%
55 – 64:	14%
65+:	3%

Figure 4: Age Percent Distribution by Count Date¹

(Adults and Independent Youth)²



Source: Edmonton Homeless Counts

¹ Age data are not presented for counts conducted prior to 2004 since the age categories for these earlier years are significantly different and are therefore not comparable. In addition, all but the 2004 count include independent youth who are defined as individuals less than 18 years of age who were not accompanied by a caregiver on count day. In contrast, the 2004 data do not likely include independent youth due to differences in calculation methods and do not necessarily indicate that there were no independent youth in that count year. Furthermore, the vast majority (91%) of age data for 2012 are a result of respondents being asked their age directly, whereas in previous counts age was observed in all instances.

² The age data for all counts are presented for adults and independent youth only and exclude dependent children for whom age was not recorded and respondents for whom age was unknown.

- Since 2008, there has been a trend of increasing polarity in the distribution across age categories as the younger (17 to 30 year olds) and older (greater than 54 years old) populations have increased and as the middle-age homeless population (31-54 year olds) contracted. For example, while the proportion of those aged 55 years and over has increased from 11% to 19% between 2008 and 2012, the proportion of those between the ages of 31 to 54 has decreased from 68% to 57%. The change from observing age categories in earlier counts to asking for age in the 2012 Count may have affected the age distribution by increasing the accuracy of age data, particularly for people at the lower and higher ends of each age category.

Ethnicity

Table 4: Ethnicity by Type of Homelessness, 2012

(Adults and Independent Youth; n=1,912)¹

Type of Homelessness	Total	Ethnicity		
		Caucasian	Aboriginal	Visible Minority
Total	1,912	849	878	185
(Percent)	(100%)	(44%)	(46%)	(10%)
Unsheltered	927	316	537	74
(Percent)	(100%)	(34%)	(58%)	(8%)
Sheltered	985	533	341	111
(Percent)	(100%)	(54%)	(35%)	(11%)

Source: Edmonton Homeless Counts

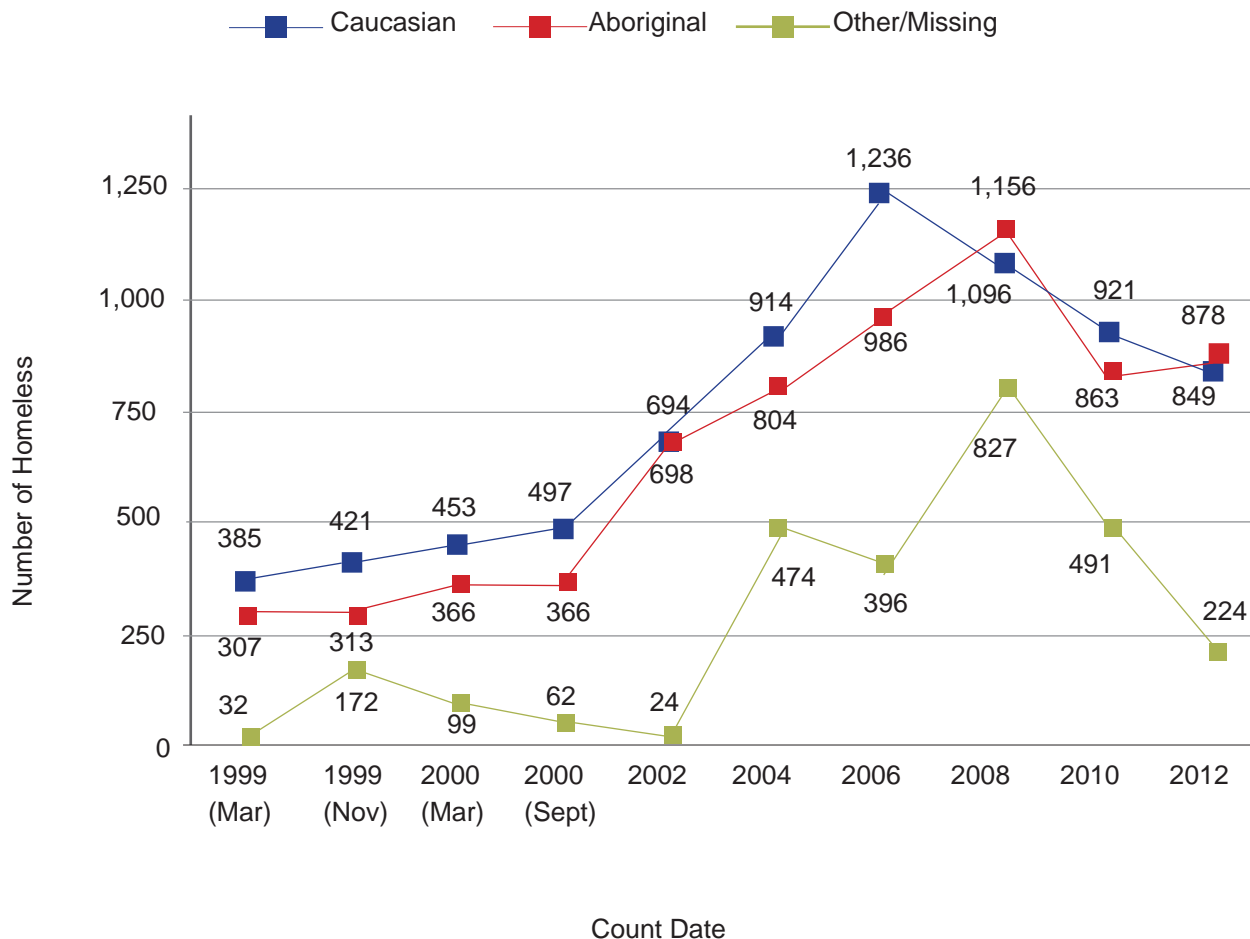
¹ Ethnicity is presented for adults and independent youth. The data exclude 223 children for whom ethnicity was not recorded and 39 individuals for whom ethnicity was unknown, for a total reduction of 262 cases (2,174 – 262 = 1,912).

- Among the 1,912 adults for whom ethnicity was reported, 849 (44%) were Caucasian, 878 (46%) were Aboriginal, and 185 (10%) were Visible Minorities.
- Whereas the Aboriginal population accounted for 46% of the homeless people counted in 2012, it comprises 5% of the total Edmonton population.⁶
- Both Caucasians and Visible Minorities were more likely to be staying at a shelter. Aboriginal people were more likely to be counted elsewhere (e.g. on the street or at an agency): 58% of the Unsheltered Homeless were Aboriginal but they comprised just 35% of the Sheltered Homeless population.

⁶ Statistics Canada 2006 Census of Population.

Figure 5: Ethnicity by Count Date¹

(Adults and Independent Youth)²



Source: Edmonton Homeless Counts

¹ To enable comparisons between 2012 and previous counts, visible minorities and missing cases are combined and presented as "other/missing" for the 2012 Count. The majority (58%) of Aboriginal data for 2012 are a result of respondents being asked their Aboriginal identity directly, whereas in previous counts Aboriginal identity was observed in all instances. Caucasian and Visible Minority ethnicities are observed for all count years.

² The ethnicity data for all counts is presented for adults and independent youth only and exclude dependent children for whom ethnicity was not recorded.

- While the trend of decreasing counts since 2008 continued for Caucasian and "Other / Missing" homeless, this same trend did not continue to 2012 for Aboriginal homeless: 863 Aboriginal individuals were counted in 2010 and 878 in 2012. Part of this increase might be explained by the more rigorous methods used in the 2012 Count to determine Aboriginal identity (i.e. asking versus observing).
- For the entire 1999 to 2012 time period, the Aboriginal homeless population increased by nearly 2.9 times whereas the Caucasian homeless population increased by 2.2 times.
- The erratic nature of the over-time change in the "other / missing" category may be partially explained by changes to the count methodology over time. Nonetheless, a 7-fold increase in this category since 1999 and a 45% decrease between 2010 and 2012 warrant further exploration.

Table 5: Age by Gender and Ethnicity, 2012

(Adults and Independent Youth)¹

	Gender ²			Ethnicity ³		
	Total	Male	Female	Caucasian	Aboriginal	Visible Minority
Total	1,939	1,438	483	847	876	184
	(100%) ⁴	(100%) ⁴	(100%) ⁴	(100%) ⁴	(100%) ⁴	(100%) ⁴
Mean Age	42	44	37	45	39	41
Age Category						
14 – 17	56	32	23	18	32	5
(Percent)	(3%)	(2%)	(5%)	(2%)	(4%)	(3%)
18 – 24	202	124	77	83	103	12
(Percent)	(10%)	(9%)	(16%)	(10%)	(12%)	(7%)
25 – 30	217	137	75	64	114	28
(Percent)	(11%)	(10%)	(16%)	(8%)	(13%)	(17%)
31 - 44	552	394	152	183	295	67
(Percent)	(28%)	(27%)	(31%)	(22%)	(34%)	(36%)
45 - 54	549	438	108	260	243	41
(Percent)	(28%)	(30%)	(22%)	(31%)	(28%)	(22%)
55 - 64	295	252	41	192	76	25
(Percent)	(15%)	(18%)	(8%)	(23%)	(9%)	(14%)
65+	68	61	7	47	13	6
(Percent)	(4%)	(4%)	(1%)	(6%)	(1%)	(3%)

Source: Edmonton Homeless Counts

¹ All data are presented for adults and independent youth only. The data exclude 223 children for whom gender, age, and ethnicity was not recorded and 11 cases for which age was unknown for a total reduction of 235 cases (2,174 – 235 = 1,939).

² Excludes a further 18 cases for which gender was unknown (1,939 – 18 = 1,921). The table includes only cases for which both gender and age were recorded.

³ Excludes a further 32 cases for which ethnicity was unknown (1939 – 32 = 1,907). The table includes only cases for which both ethnicity and age were recorded.

⁴ Percentages do not always add up to 100% due to rounding.

- Edmonton's female homeless population is, on average, younger than its male homeless population:
 - The mean age for female adults and independent youth is just 37 years compared to 44 years of age for males.
 - A greater proportion of females than males were less than 31 years of age (37% compared to 21%).
 - A smaller proportion of females than males were over the age of 44 (31% compared to 52%).

- Edmonton's Aboriginal homeless population is, on average, younger than its Caucasian and Visible Minority homeless populations:
 - The mean age of the Aboriginal homeless population is the lowest among the three ethnic groups (39 compared to 45 for Caucasians and 41 for Visible Minorities).
 - A greater proportion of Aboriginal individuals than Caucasians and Visible Minorities were less than 25 years old (16% compared to 12% and 10% of Caucasians and Visible Minorities, respectively).
 - A smaller proportion of Aboriginal individuals than Caucasians and Visible Minorities were over the age of 54 (10% compared to 29% and 17% of Caucasians and Visible Minorities, respectively).

Homeless Families

Table 6: Dependent Children and Caregivers by Type of Homelessness, 2012

	Total	Unsheltered	Sheltered
# of Dependent Children	223	116	107
(Percent)	(100%) ⁴	(52%)	(48%)
# of Caregivers	119	64	55
(Percent)	(100%) ⁴	(54%)	(46%)
Average # of Children Per Caregiver	1.9	1.8	1.9
Caregivers by Family Structure¹	107	54	53
Single Caregiver	88	37	51
(Percent)	(82%)	(69%)	(96%)
Multiple Caregiver	12	10	2
(Percent)	(11%)	(19%)	(4%)
Other²	7	7	0
(Percent)	(7%)	(13%)	(0%)
Caregivers by Gender	119	64	55
Male	28	24	4
(Percent)	(24%)	(38%)	(7%)
Female	91	40	51
(Percent)	(76%)	(63%)	(93%)
Caregivers by Age	119	64	55
Mean Age	32	31	34
< 25	29	23	6
(Percent)	(24%)	(36%)	(11%)
25 - 34	46	19	27
(Percent)	(39%)	(30%)	(49%)
35+	44	22	22
(Percent)	(37%)	(34%)	(40%)
Caregivers by Ethnicity³	114	60	54
Caucasian	30	16	14
(Percent)	(26%)	(27%)	(26%)
Aboriginal	70	38	32
(Percent)	(61%)	(63%)	(59%)
Visible Minority	14	6	8
(Percent)	(12%)	(10%)	(15%)

Source: Edmonton Homeless Counts

¹ Excludes 12 cases for which family structure is unknown.

² Includes any other family formations not captured by Single Caregiver or Multiple Caregiver.

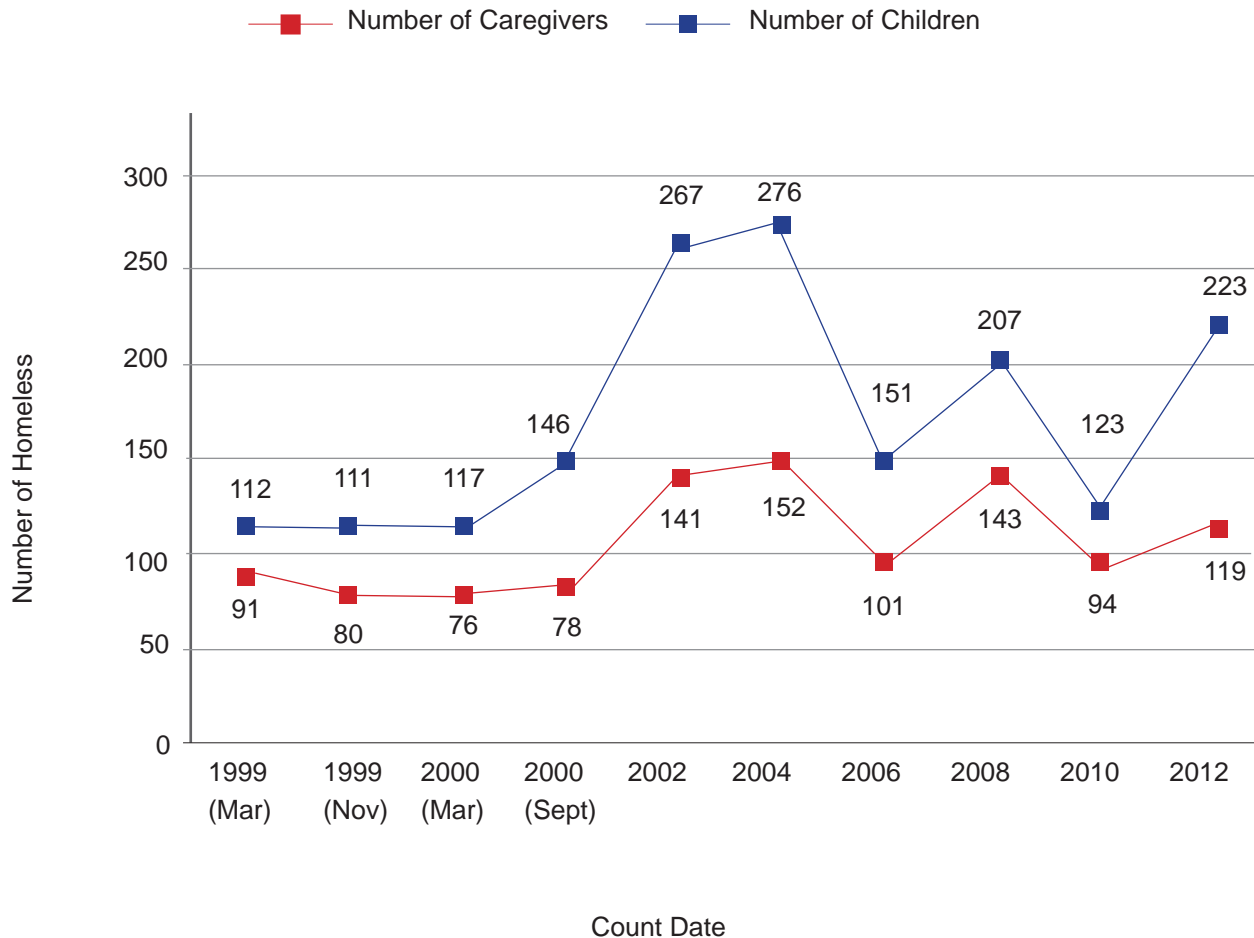
³ Excludes 5 cases for which ethnicity is unknown.

⁴ Percentages do not always add up to 100% due to rounding.

- For the number of reported homeless caregivers and dependent children across counts, please refer to Figure 6 on page 21.
- 82% of caregivers were single parents with virtually all (96%) Sheltered caregivers being single parents.⁷
- Caregivers were much more likely to be female than male (76% compared to 24%) and this is especially the case among the Sheltered caregivers, 93% of whom were female.
- These findings should be interpreted by keeping in mind that the only shelters that allow dependent children to accompany an adult in Edmonton are those specifically designed to accommodate women and their children fleeing violence. Emergency hotels/motels accessed through Alberta Works are used as a way of accommodating families in need of emergency shelter in Edmonton. Thus multiple caregiver families or male-headed single parent families will be included in emergency hotel/motel data, not data collected from emergency shelters.
- The mean age of caregivers was 32, compared to 42 for the total adult and independent youth population.
- Aboriginal homeless individuals are the most likely to be caregivers. 61% of all caregivers were Aboriginal, whereas they comprised just 46% of the total adult count.

⁷ This compares to just 18% of all Edmonton families that are lone parent families (2012 Census Profile, Statistics Canada).

Figure 6: Caregivers and Dependent Children¹ by Count Date



Source: Edmonton Homeless Counts

¹In 2012, Dependent Children were defined as those less than 18 years of age who were staying with an adult caregiver on the night of the count. For all previous counts, Dependent Children were defined as those less than 17 years of age who were staying with an adult caregiver on the night of the count.

- Between 2010 and 2012, the number of dependent children increased by 100 individuals (from 123 to 223), to a figure nearly two times higher than in 2010. At the same time, the number of caregivers increased by just 25 individuals (1.2 times higher), suggesting that 2012 caregivers were more likely to be looking after more than 1 child than were 2010 caregivers.
- Some of the erratic changes over time in the number of children may be due to changes to the question in the survey. A small portion of the increase may also be due to an increase in the upper age limit for dependent children from less than 17 years of age for all previous counts to less than 18 years of age for the 2012 Count.

Street Count Locations

The geographic location of individuals enumerated in the street portion of the count (representing the Unsheltered Homeless) for both 2012 and 2010 is presented in Table 7. These data provide an indication of where, other than shelters, Edmonton's homeless population tends to be found. Please see Appendix A: 2012 Homeless Count Methodology for a complete list of sites and bottle depots associated with each geographic area and Appendix B for a map of count locations.

Table 7: Street Count Locations; 2012 and 2010

(Unsheltered Adults and Independent Youth)¹

	2012		2010
	Count	Percent	Percent
Total	954	100%	100%
Downtown	537	56%	62%
Northeast	136	14%	16%
South	86	9%	10%
West End	73	8%	4%
West Central	24	3%	3%
Northwest	7	1%	1%
Outreach Teams & Mobile Vans	91	10%	4%

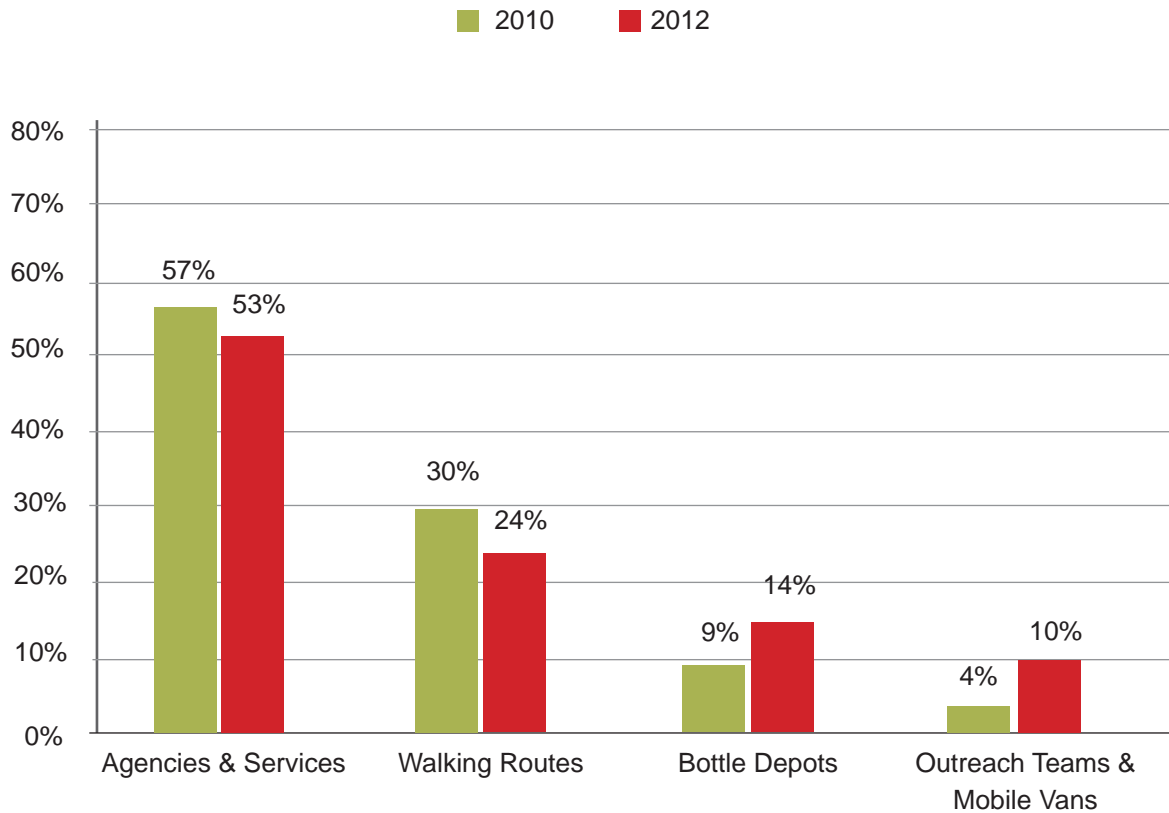
Source: Edmonton Homeless Counts

¹ Count Locations are presented for adults and independent youth only. The data exclude 116 dependent children in 2012 (n=954), for 2010, as well as 13 individuals for whom location was unknown (n=1,435).

- In 2012, the majority of Unsheltered Homeless individuals were counted in the downtown region of the city (56%). Nonetheless, this figure decreased by 6 percentage points from 2010 (62%).
- Outside of downtown, the Northeast and South experienced nominal decreases of 2 and 1 percentage points respectively, and the West Central area remained at 3%. This contrasts with a 4 percentage point increase in those counted in the West End.
- People counted by Outreach Teams and Mobile Vans, some of which cover undeveloped or industrial areas in the outskirts of the city, increased by 6 percentage points. This may be due to a more rigorous and inclusive outreach count in 2012 (See Appendix A: 2012 Count Methodology for details of this portion of the count).

Figure 7: Type of Street Count Site, 2012 and 2010

(Unsheltered Adults and Independent Youth)¹



Source: Edmonton Homeless Counts

¹Type of Street Count Site is presented for adults and independent youth only. The data exclude 116 dependent children in 2012 (n=954) and 62 independent children as well as 13 individuals for whom location was unknown in 2010 (n=1,435).

- In 2012, 53% (477 out of 954) of the Unsheltered Homeless adults and independent youth were counted at an agency or service. Still, with 24% counted on a walking route, 14% at a bottle depot, and 10% counted by outreach teams and mobile vans, the adoption of a methodology that includes enumerating the Unsheltered Homeless in locations other than agencies and services is clearly substantiated.

Institution Discharges and Sheltered Homeless

The following tables and figures present the results of the data collected from shelters on the number of occupants and the number of individuals turned away. Also examined are the number of individuals discharged into homelessness from hospitals, treatment centres, and corrections facilities. These data represent a 'snapshot' of information, as they were collected on count day only.

Table 8 displays the number of registered individuals at each shelter, the shelter operational capacity, and the corresponding occupancy rate for each shelter participating in the 2012 Count. The table also presents the occupancy rate for comparable shelters participating in the 2010 Count. For a summary of the shelters participating in the 2012, 2010, and 2008 Counts, respectively, please see Appendix A: 2012 Count Methodology.

Table 8: Shelter Occupancy Rates, 2012 and 2010

(Ratio of Registrations to Capacity)

	2012			2010	
	Number Registered ¹	Operational Capacity ²	Occupancy Rate	Operational Capacity ³	Occupancy Rate
Total Shelters	974	1,252	78%	1,217	77%
Total Men's Shelters	344	419	82%	450	70%
Hope Mission: Herb Jamieson Centre	201	249	81%	250	76%
Hope Mission: Mat Program ⁴	143	170	84%	200	63%
Total Women's (and Children) Shelters⁵	98	220	45%	216	67%
Hope Mission: Women's Emergency Shelter	62 ⁶	70	89%	70	61%
Women in Need I	10	34	29%	30	110%
Lurana Shelter	17	32	53%	32	44%
La Salle	9	9	100%	9	100%
Women's Emergency Accommodation Centre	0	75	0%	75	61%
Total Youth Shelters	80	106	75%	106	92%
Hope Mission: Youth Shelter	46	60	77%	60	97%
YESS: Shelter Program / SkY	20	28	71%	28	89%
YESS: START House	8	10	80%	10	80%
Catholic Social Services Safe House	6	8	75%	8	88%
Total Senior's Shelters	8	9	89%	7	86%
Seniors Safe House (SAGE) ⁷	8	9	89%	7	86%
Total Addiction-Related Shelters	182	177	103%	130	98%
Hope Mission: Intox Centre	72	70	103%	70	100%
George Spady Detox	26	27	96%	0	--
George Spady Shelter ⁸	84	80	105%	60	95%
Total Short-term Supportive Housing⁹	249	302	82%	299	81%
Urban Manor Housing Society ¹⁰	63	75	84%	75	99%
Salvation Army Addictions & Residential Centre	139	148	94%	154	69%
Elizabeth House	23	24	96%	24	92%
Women in Need II	13	37	35%	30	90%
Women in Need III	7	12	58%	10	60%
Valeda House	4	6	67%	6	100%
Total Interim Housing¹¹	13	19	68%	9	56%
E4C Crossroads - Interim House	4	10	40%	9	56%
John Howard Society Satellite House	6	6	100%	--	--
YMCA Interim Housing	3	3	100%	--	--

- On October 15, 2012, 974 individuals were staying at shelters that had a combined operational capacity of 1,252 spaces for an overall occupancy rate of 78%. This occupancy rate is very close to the 2010 occupancy rate of 77%.
- E4C's Women's Emergency Accommodation Centre (WEAC) was temporarily closed on the night of the count. As far as possible, the women who were staying at this shelter were referred to Hope Mission, Elizabeth House and E4C Crossroads. WEAC's regular operational capacity of 75 was included in the occupancy rate calculations presented in Table 8 for women's shelters and overall. If WEAC were excluded from these calculations for the night of the count, then the operational capacities and occupancy rates would change as follows: Women's (and Children) Shelters would have an operational capacity of 145 and an occupancy rate of 68%; and, the total shelter operational capacity would be 1177, with an occupancy rate of 83%.

Source: Edmonton Homeless Counts

¹ The total number of individuals registered at the shelters of 974 is less than the total Shelter Count of homeless individuals of 1,104 because the former does not include 39 adults and 62 children (total 101) who stayed at an emergency hotel since there is no set capacity for this type of temporary accommodation. The total registered also excludes children staying at La Salle and Valeda House because the capacities for these two women's shelters are for number of bedrooms for families, not for individuals.

² 2012 operational capacities were confirmed with the operator of each shelter/housing facility. In instances where the operator's stated operational capacity differed from that listed by the Government of Alberta, this report presents the capacity confirmed by the shelter/housing facility operator.

³ 2010 capacity and rates are only provided for shelters/housing facilities comparable to 2012. George Spady Detox, John Howard's Satellite House, and YMCA's Interim Housing are new since the 2010 Count. Based on the shelters and housing facilities included in this table, 35 additional spaces have been added since the 2010 Homeless Count.

⁴ Provides shelter for men and couples.

⁵ E4C's Women's Emergency Accommodation Centre was temporarily closed on the night of the count. As far as possible, the women who were staying at this shelter were referred to Hope Mission, Elizabeth House and E4C Crossroads. The impact of this closure on operational capacity and occupancy rates is explained above.

⁶ The number of women registered at the Hope Mission's Women's Emergency Shelter includes 2 women who were waiting for admission to Hope Mission's Well Spring Recovery Program.

⁷ SAGE has 7 suites, 2 of which are equipped for couples. Therefore, maximum capacity is 9.

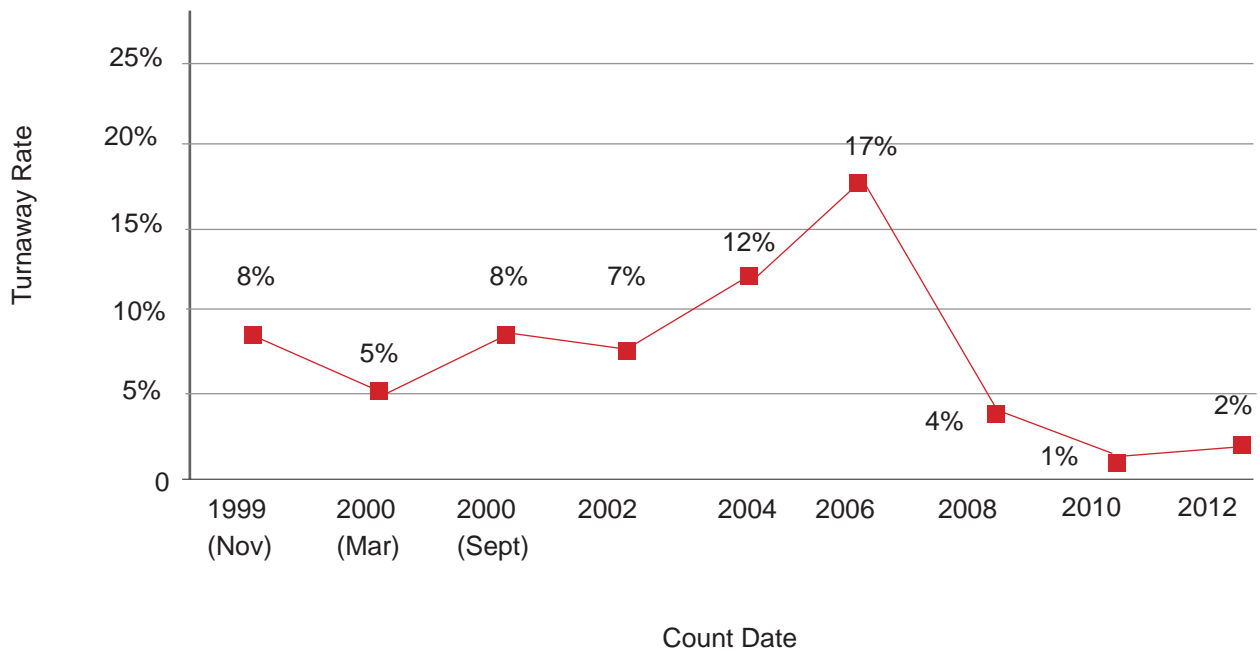
⁸ At George Spady Shelter, new registrations continue through the night as previously registered individuals leave the shelter, meaning that multiple individuals may occupy a single shelter space consecutively over the course of a night.

⁹ The short-term supportive housing facilities listed here are included because they have been included in past counts.

¹⁰ Capacity for Urban Manor is provided for the entire facility, which includes the provision of both emergency sheltered and non-emergency sheltered accommodations (i.e., residents pay rent). There is no set number of beds assigned to emergency versus non-emergency shelter situations.

¹¹ Interim housing is funded by the Government of Alberta's Outreach Support Services Initiative. Residents of interim housing are formerly homeless people who are connected to a Housing First team and waiting for permanent housing.

Figure 8: Shelter Turnaway Rates by Count Date¹
 (Ratio of Shelter Turnaways to Shelter Capacity)

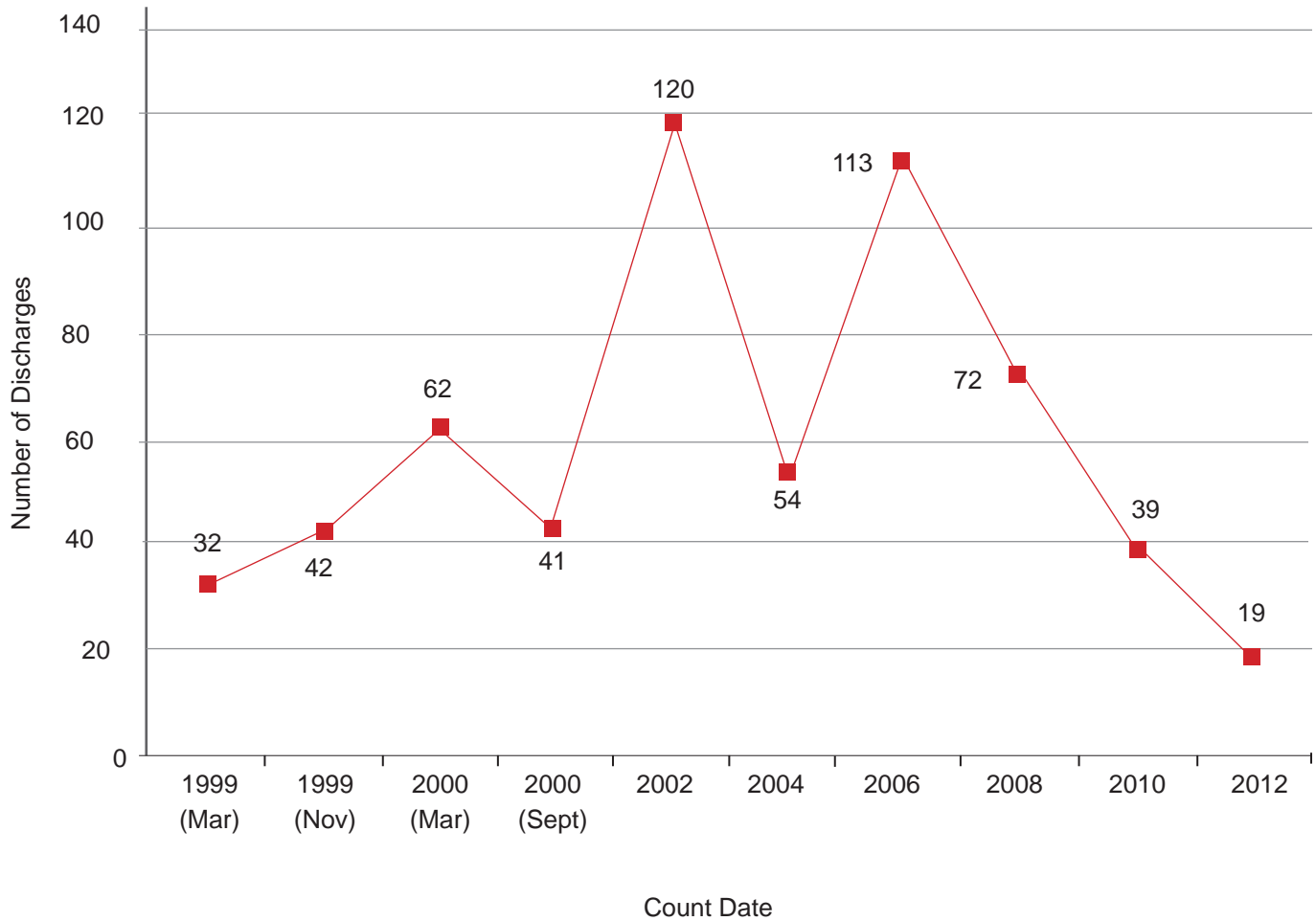


Source: Edmonton Homeless Counts

¹ Turnaways include the number of individuals not provided with a bed because of ineligibility, client behaviour, or because no spaces were available that night. Individuals turned away from a shelter are not included in the Shelter Count since they may have been included in the Street Count.

- In 2012, 24 individuals (equal to 2% of all shelter and short-term housing spaces) were denied a bed because the shelter facility was full, the client did not meet the entrance criteria, or because of inappropriate client behaviour.
- Turnaway rates have been consistently lower since the highest turnaway rate of 17% in 2006.

Figure 9: Number of Discharges from Institutions¹ by Count Date



Source: Edmonton Homeless Counts

¹ Discharges include the number of individuals who had been discharged from a hospital, treatment centre, correctional facility, housing provider, or group home and who had no permanent residence to go to on count day. In 2012 no data were provided from housing providers or group homes.

- 19 individuals were discharged into homelessness from all hospitals, provincial corrections centres, and one treatment centre in Edmonton on count day, 14 of whom were male and 5 of whom were female. In every count since 2006, there has been a considerable decline in institutional discharges into homelessness, with a cumulative decrease of 83% between 2006 and 2012.

Appendix A:

2012

Count

Methodology

Introduction

It is important to understand that since the Homeless Counts are a snapshot of the number of homeless on a given day, the overarching goal is to count as many homeless individuals and families in as inclusive yet efficient manner as possible. The goal of inclusiveness is met by counting the homeless on the street, at agencies, and in shelters. The goal of efficiency is met by keeping enumerators' questions to a minimum and by asking the questions in a simple and clear manner.

The 2012 Homeless Count was conducted on the night of October 15th by the shelter operators, and by volunteer enumerators and agencies on October 16th between 5:00am and 10:00pm.⁸ The weather on the 16th was clear with temperatures in the city centre ranging from a low of 7 degrees at 5:00am to a high of 16 degrees by 1:00pm with a 30 mph wind.

A Street Count and a Shelter Count were used to capture as many homeless individuals as possible from as wide a range of circumstances as workable. The Street and Shelter Counts represent the "Unsheltered" and "Sheltered" homeless, respectively.

Street Count (Unsheltered Homeless)

Preparations for the Street Count included recruiting and training volunteer enumerators, selecting and coordinating base sites and walking routes, and working with homelessness-related agencies and organizations to ensure that counts could be conducted at their locations on the specified date.

Volunteer Enumerators

Just under 300 volunteer enumerators were recruited to conduct the Street Count, totaling 417 shifts. This figure meets the volunteer target deemed to adequately cover the Edmonton region and exceeds the number of shifts in 2010 by nearly 50. Enumerators were not required to have any previous experience working with the homeless, but were encouraged to attend a 3-hour orientation session on either October 2nd or October 9th. A video explaining how to conduct the count was also disseminated to volunteers (see : http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GOQHmJoml_Q). Enumerators who did not attend the orientation received methodological, safety, and sensitivity orientation at their Base Site on count day. Each of the 12 Base Sites was managed by a coordinator with previous experience working with homeless people or who had worked on earlier Homeless Counts. For safety purposes, enumerators traveled in groups (minimum of 2 people) and were strongly encouraged to stick together on their route. Protocols were also in place for debriefing volunteers after their 2-hour shift should they feel the need to talk about the personal impact of their count experience.

Site and Walking Route Coverage

Before every Homeless Count, all street sites and walking routes are reviewed to determine if they are still areas where homeless people tend to be seen and if there are new sites that fit this criteria. In addition to reviewing the effectiveness of enumeration routes and sites that were used in previous counts, the Homeless Count Committee identified new routes and sites based on their own knowledge of the homeless community and in consultation with agencies. Typically, these site and walking routes change only incrementally between counts.

⁸ All Edmonton Homeless Counts have been conducted in the fall with the exception of the 1999 and 2000 Counts when two counts were conducted in each of these years, one in the spring and one in the fall.

Appendix table 1 presents the base sites, single locations, and bottle depots where volunteer enumerators were assigned for the 2012 Street Count. Walking routes are not included in the table because no walking routes were added to the 2012 Count, though several routes were modified and clarified (see the Appendix B: Map detailing the count sites). Also, more agencies volunteered to conduct their own count at their site over the course of the entire day (as opposed to having volunteer enumerators drop by throughout the day), thus adding to the comprehensive of the homeless count agency coverage. These agencies are not included in the table. Also not included in the table are the four Edmonton Library Branches that were covered by enumerators in 2012 as special individual sites not associated with a Base Site.

APPENDIX TABLE 1: 2012 STREET COUNT VOLUNTEER ENUMERATOR COVERAGE

Downtown	
Base Site	NCSA Cunningham Place
Single Locations	Bissell Centre Drop In
	Bissell Centre Intake
	Boyle McCauley Health Centre
	Mustard Seed Church
	Operation Friendship Seniors Society
	Prime Staffing
	House of Refuge
	Marian Centre
	Churchill LRT Station
	Central LRT Station
	Bay LRT Station
	Corona LRT Station
	Bottle Depots
	UniverBottle Depot
Base Site	Boyle Street Community Services
Single Locations	Hope Mission Main Building
	Labour Ready

APPENDIX TABLE 1: 2012 STREET COUNT VOLUNTEER ENUMERATOR COVERAGE (Cont'd)

Northeast	
Base Site	Candora Society
Bottle Depot	Beverly Bottle Depot
Base Site	Mosaic Centre
Single Locations	Clareview LRT Station
	Belvedere LRT Station
	Stadium LRT Station
Bottle Depots	Clareview Bottle Depot
	Fort Road Bottle Depot
Base Site	Edmonton Inner City Housing Society
Single Locations	Rock Lutheran Inner City Breakfast
	Giovanni Caboto Park
Base Site	Catholic Social Services
Single Locations	Coliseum LRT Station
South	
Base Sites	Strathcona Baptist Church
	Old Strathcona Youth Society
Single Location	Labour Ready
Bottle Depots	Strathcona Bottle Depot
	Millwoods Bottle Depot
	Triple H Southside Bottle Deopt
	Capilano Bottle Depot

APPENDIX TABLE 1: 2012 STREET COUNT VOLUNTEER ENUMERATOR COVERAGE (Cont'd)

West Central	
Base Site	United Nurses of Alberta
Single Locations	Grandin LRT Station
Bottle Depots	City Centre Bottle Depot
Base Site	Native Counselling Services of Alberta Head Office
West End	
Base Site	Jasper Place Health & Wellness Centre
Single Locations	Christian Care Centre
	West Edmonton Mall Transit Centre
Bottle Depots	Bottle King
	Callingwood Bottle Depot
	Centennial Bottle Depot
Northwest	
Base Site	Central Lions Seniors Centre

In addition, Homeward Trust collaborated with a range of Outreach Teams and Mobile Van services in the city that are in daily contact with homeless individuals to determine their coverage of these known locations. These units spanned the River Valley, ravines, and the outskirts of Edmonton. As a result, the count of homeless people who do not frequent walking routes or key services may be more reliable this year.

Below is a list of all Outreach Teams and Mobile Vans utilized in the 2012 Count:

Outreach Teams & Mobile Van 2012 Street Count Coverage

Outreach Teams & Mobile Vans	Area Coverage
Boyle Street Assertive Outreach Team	7 regions of the River Valley
Downtown Outreach	97 Street to 109 Street, 104 Avenue to the River Valley
EPL Outreach Workers	Stanley Milner Library area
YOUCAN	Known locations of youth
Crossroads Van	118th Avenue, 95 Street, 107 Avenue and Stony Plain Road during day time
Hope Mission Van	Outskirts of the city- Manning, 184 Street, etc., Inner City during meal times
Streetworks Van	118th Avenue, 95 Street, 107 Avenue and Stony Plain Road during evening
Mosaic Centre staff	Known encampments in northeast Edmonton

Enumeration Process

The Street Count involved approaching all individuals along predetermined walking routes and at individual sites during peak hours of the day.

To avoid double counting and to determine homelessness status, each individual encountered by enumerators was asked three qualifying questions. The first question asks if the individual had already been asked about their housing situation that day. Determination of homelessness was done by asking individuals the second question: "Do you have a permanent residence to return to tonight?" Those indicating that they did not have a permanent residence to return to that night were then asked the third qualifying question about whether or not they stayed at a shelter the previous night, in order to avoid double counting. Only those individuals who had not already been asked about their housing situation, did not have a permanent residence to return to that night, and who did not stay at a shelter the previous evening were counted as homeless in the street count.

Homeless individuals were further asked whether they had children under the age of 18 years old staying with them that evening. Respondents were then asked their age and Aboriginal identity. In instances where enumerators were not able to ask these questions, they were observed. Caucasian and Visible Minority ethnicities were observed if the participant did not identify as Aboriginal. Gender was asked only in instances when the enumerator was unsure of the respondent's gender.

Staff members of shelters and short term housing facilities counted the number of homeless staying at their shelters on the night of October 15th, 2012, the night before the Street Count. A qualifying question was then asked in the Street Count to identify those who stayed in shelter the previous night.

APPENDIX TABLE 2: PARTICIPATING SHELTERS, 2012, 2010, AND 2008

SHELTERS	2012	2010	2008
Emergency Hotels	√	√	√
Men's Shelters			
Hope Mission: Herb Jamieson Centre	√	√	√
Hope Mission: Mat Program	√	√	√
Women (and Children) Shelters			
Women's Emergency Accommodation Centre ¹	√	√	√
Hope Mission: Women's Emergency Shelter	√	√	√
Women in Need I	√	√	√
Lurana Shelter	√	√	√
La Salle	√	√	√
Wings of Providence ³			√
Youth Shelters			
Hope Mission: Youth Shelter	√	√	√
YESS: Shelter Program / SkY	√	√	√
YESS: START House	√	√	√
Catholic Social Services Safe House	√	√	√
Inner City Youth Housing Project ⁴			√
Protective Safe House			√
Seniors Shelters			
Seniors Safe House (SAGE)	√	√	√
Addictions-Related Shelters			
Hope Mission: Intox Centre	√	√	√
George Spady Detox	√		
George Spady Shelter	√	√	√
SHELTERS	2012	2010	2008
Short-term Supportive Housing			
Urban Manor Housing Society	√	√	√
Salvation Army: Addictions & Residential Centre	√	√	√
Elizabeth House	√	√	√
Women in Need II	√	√	√
Women in Need III ²	√	√	
Valeda House ²	√	√	
Interim Housing⁵			
E4C Crossroads Interim Housing	√	√	
John Howard Society Satellite House	√		
YMCA Interim Housing	√		

Source: Edmonton Homeless Counts

¹ E4C's Women's Emergency Accommodation (WEAC) was temporarily closed on the night of the count. The women who were staying at this shelter were relocated to Hope Mission, Elizabeth House, and E4C Crossroads.

² Opened in 2010.

³ Changed mandate to a transitional program that provides second-stage, long-term housing support and therefore no longer qualifies as an emergency shelter.

⁴ Changed mandate to transitional housing program for youth and therefore no longer qualifies as an emergency shelter.

⁵ Interim Housing, as a program classification, did not exist at the time of the 2010 Count.

Appendix Table 2 presents the shelters included in each of the 2012, 2010, and 2008 Counts. A quick glance at the table reveals that there has been a fair amount of consistency in the participating shelters across count years. Otherwise, most of the changes over time reflect the opening and closing of shelters or the reclassification of shelters from emergency to transitional accommodations. Between 2008 and 2010, there was a reduction of 139 spaces in facilities included in the Shelter Count. The 2012 Count saw the inclusion of an additional 35 spaces compared to 2010. The net result of these changes in shelter participation between 2008 and 2012 is a reduction of 104 shelter spaces.

Shelter Turnaways and Institution Discharges Data

As has been the practice in previous count years, shelter staff were asked to note the number of individuals turned away from the shelter because of ineligibility, client behavior, or because no spaces were available that night. These data, along with the total number of registrations and the operational capacity of each shelter, are used to provide turnaway and occupancy rates for shelters presented in Figure 8 and Table 8. In addition, institutions (e.g. treatment centres, correctional facilities, hospitals) were asked to report on the number of individuals discharged on count day to no fixed address.

2012 Homeless Count Methodology Changes

One of the guiding principles of this initiative is to ensure methodological consistency across counts. However, the cumulative experience of conducting the count can reasonably warrant measured changes to how the count is conducted. The decision to make these changes is determined by carefully weighing the improvement in the reliability of the results against the loss of comparability between counts.

Reduction in Duplicate Counting

It is well known that point-in-time homeless counts suffer from under-counting. However, less well understood is the problem of duplicate counting; that is, counting the same person twice. An examination of previous counts revealed that one potential source of duplication was from sheltered respondents being counted both at a shelter and on the street. In previous counts, shelter staff were instructed to ask individuals whether they had already been approached on the street by an enumerator, but evidence suggests that various barriers prevented this screening question from being applied uniformly during the shelter counts. Many shelters completed the count questionnaires based on their intake records and were therefore not always able to ask each client whether they had been counted on the street. To more definitively eliminate this source of duplication and to make data collection easier for shelter staff, shelter data were gathered for the night prior to the count (October 15th, 2012), and a screening question was added to the Street Count asking the respondent if they had stayed at a shelter the previous night.

This change in the methodology has likely resulted in a reduction of duplicates in the results of the 2012 Count. As recorded by Street Count enumerators, approximately one-third of those encountered (but not counted) stayed at a shelter the night before. This is substantially more than the percentage of shelter users in 2010 who reported they had been counted earlier in the day. If the pattern in 2012 can be applied to past counts, it would suggest that there may have been double-counting of people encountered on the street who also stayed at a shelter. Various factors will have affected the extent to which such double counting took place in each of the previous counts, including how consistently shelters were able to screen people who had already been counted.

Removal of Secondary Caregivers

Prior to 2012, respondents who had dependent children were asked if they were with any other adults helping them to take care of their children that night. These “secondary caregivers” were included in the homeless counts and typically amount to fewer than 40 individuals (for the 2010 Count, for example, there were 23 secondary caregivers). Since this question was eliminated for the 2012 Count, a second, albeit minor, source of reduction was introduced to the 2012 Count. This change, however, does not affect the demographic results since secondary caregivers were never included in these results because their characteristics were not observable.

Survey Instrument Changes

All of the survey instrument questions were carefully reexamined in 2012 resulting in several changes to the wording or formatting of the questions designed to increase the reliability of responses for the 2012 Count. Other than changing the Shelter Count to the night before the Street Count, perhaps chief among these was the shift from observing all of the demographic characteristics to asking for age and Aboriginal identity directly. For those occasions when an enumerator was unable to ask for age or Aboriginal Identity, they would observe these characteristics. Either way, enumerators noted if the characteristic was asked or observed. Age was asked for 91% of the cases, observed for 8% of the cases, and whether asked or observed was unknown for 1% of the cases. Aboriginal identity was asked for 58% of the cases, observed for 21% of cases, and whether asked or observed was unknown for 21% of the cases. Gender, Caucasian, and Visible Minority status were predominantly observed for 2012, as they were for all previous counts, although enumerators were given the option of asking about gender if observation was ambiguous.

In addition to significantly simplifying the wording of the question about children and making it into one question instead of two questions, the qualifying age for dependent children increased from less than 17 years of age to less than 18 years of age for the 2012 instrument. Furthermore, the exact age of respondents was asked in 2012, whereas enumerators simply observed the respondent's age category in previous counts. The survey instrument was also reformatted for clarity.

The 2012 survey instrument questions are presented in the chart below along with the related questions for previous counts. A review of the chart reveals that these changes have resulted in greater reliability of the 2012 Count.

2012 Count

Previous Counts

Have you been asked about your housing situation today?

Have you been asked about your housing situation today?

Do you have a permanent residence to return to tonight?

Do you have a permanent residence to return to tonight?

Did you stay at a shelter in Edmonton last night?

Not asked

How many of your own children under the age of 18 are staying with you tonight?

Do you have any children aged 16 or younger who will be staying with you tonight?

[If yes] How many children will be with you?

Are you a single parent or do you have other adults helping take care of the children?

Are there other adults who will be with you to help you take care of the children tonight?

[If yes] How many other adults will be with you?

How old are you?

Age category observed

Do you identify as First Nations, Metis or Inuit? Caucasian / Non-Caucasian observed

Ethnicity observed: Aboriginal, Caucasian, other/unknown

Gender observed

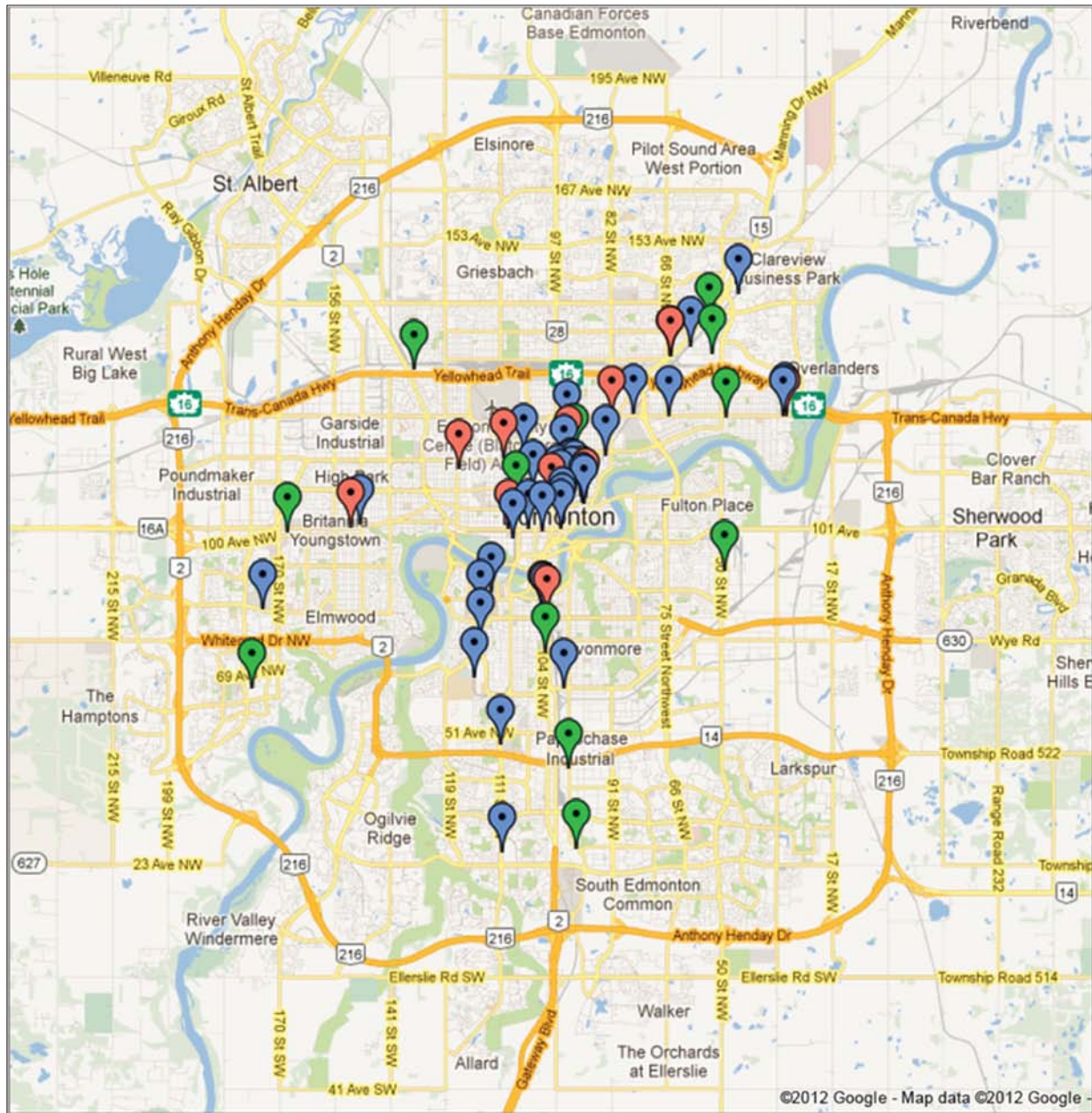
Gender observed

Despite the many improvements to the 2012 survey instrument, the 2012 Count still suffers from some missing data, most notably for the question on dependent children, a perennial concern for all counts. Though follow ups with some enumerators suggests that the question was asked, but not noted on the survey instrument, it is impossible to decipher every instance where this was the case. As a result, there are 122 cases with missing data for children in the 2012 Count; however, it can be relatively safely assumed that the majority of these cases did not have children with them the night of the count.

Appendix B Map:

Street Count Coverage

Appendix B Map: Street Count Coverage¹



Legend:

Red: Base Site Location

Blue: Single Location

Green: Bottle Depot Location

Source: Edmonton Homeless Counts

¹ Excludes walking routes and park land area coverage.

Thank You!

Homeward Trust Edmonton would like to thank the following organizations for providing our volunteers with materials and snacks for the count day and volunteer orientation. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Bee Bell Bakery

City of Edmonton Transportation Department

Mac's Convenience Stores

Native Counselling Services of Alberta

Second Cup, Stanley Milner Library Location

Stanley Milner Library, Edmonton Public Library

Supreme Office Products Limited

Tim Hortons, 12820 82nd Street N.W Location

Upper Crust Café and Caterers

Thank You!

Thank you to the following organizations for allowing us to use their offices as Base Sites for the Homeless Count volunteers. Without your support we would not have been able to mobilize volunteers across the city.

Boyle Street Community Services

Candora Society

Catholic Social Services

Central Lions Recreation Centre

Edmonton Inner City Housing Society

Jasper Place Health and Wellness Centre

Native Counselling Services of Alberta

Old Strathcona Youth Society

Strathcona Baptist Church

The Mosaic Centre

United Nurses of Alberta



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