



2016 Alberta Point-in-Time Count of Homelessness

Executive Summary

February 2017



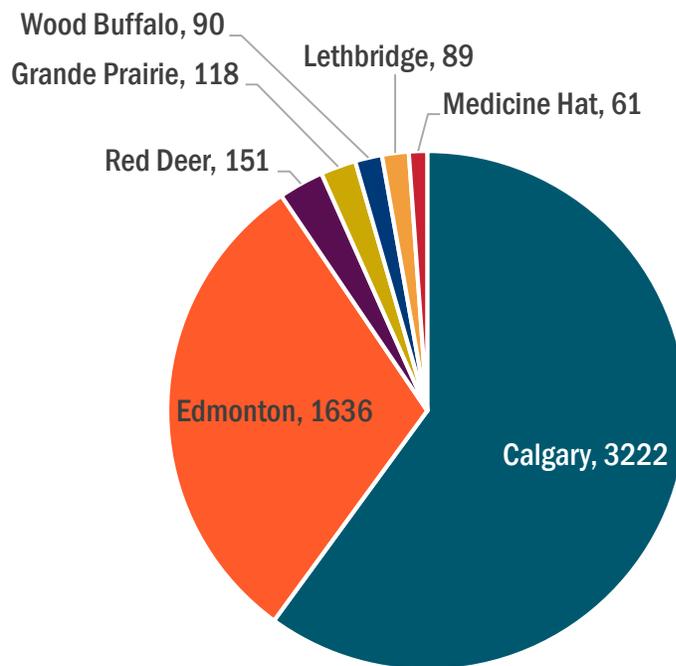
KEY FINDINGS

How Many?

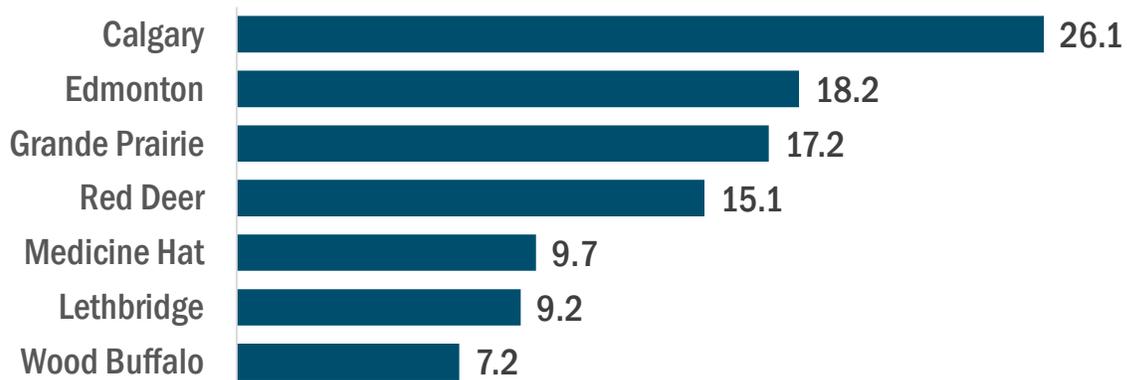
5367

people were counted as experiencing homelessness from the 2016 Alberta Point-in-Time Homeless Count

2016 Homeless Count by City

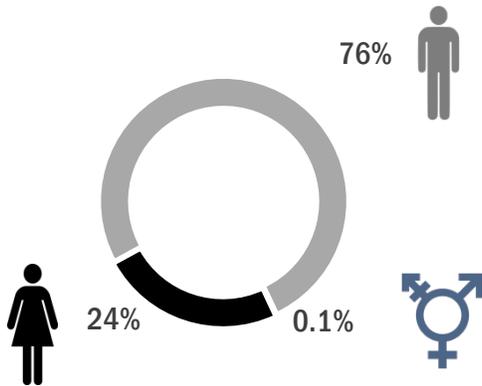


Individuals Experiencing Homelessness per 10,000 Population

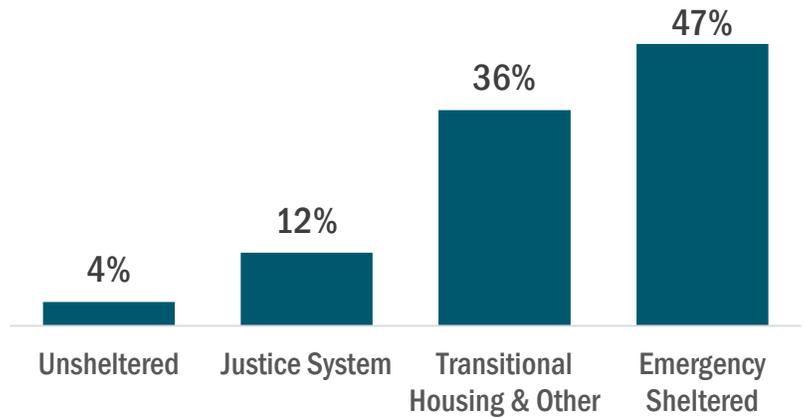


Who and Where?

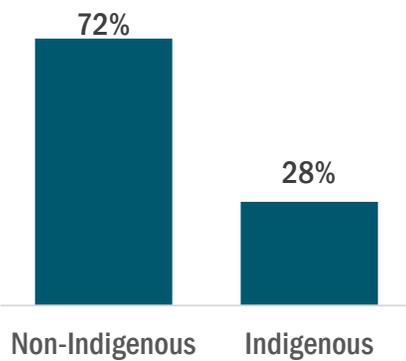
Gender



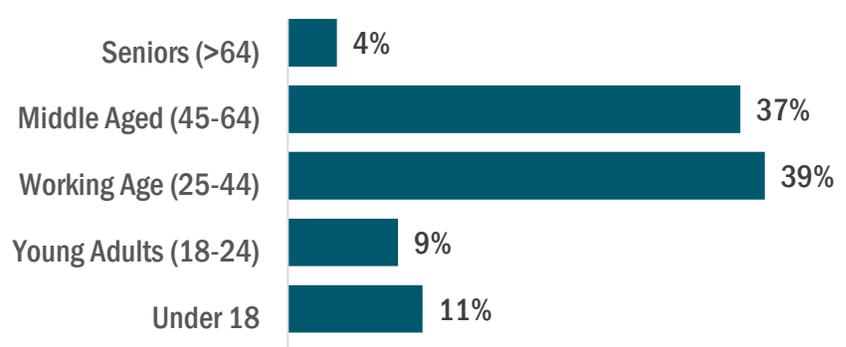
Sheltered Status of Homeless Population



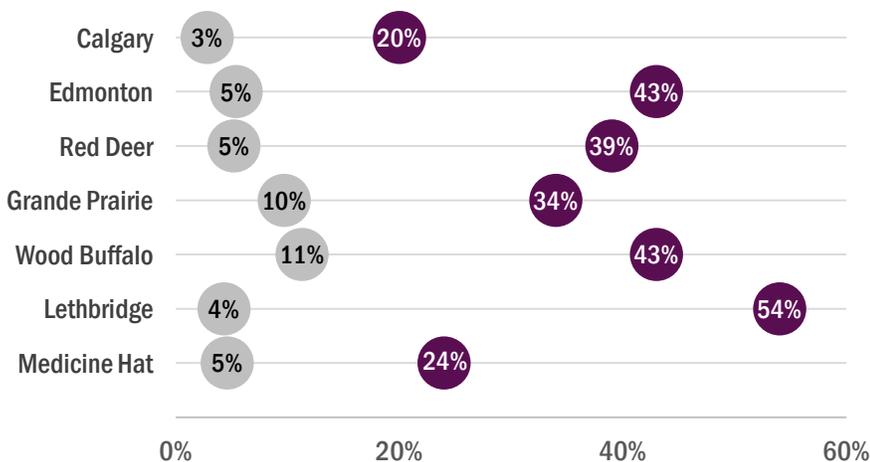
Indigenous Status



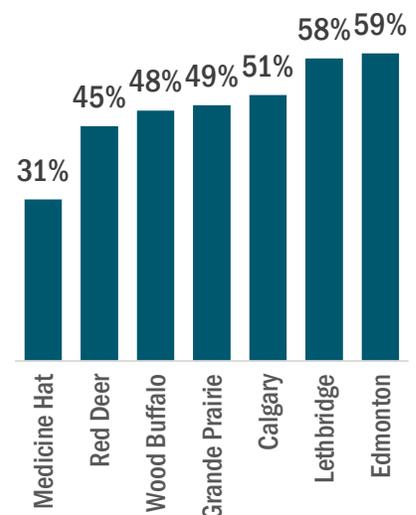
Age



Indigenous People in the General Population Indigenous People in the Homeless Count



Chronic Homelessness



INTRODUCTION

On October 19, 2016, the 7 Cities held its second provincially-coordinated Point-in-Time Count ("Count") of homelessness, with implementation being completed locally by a lead organization representing each member municipality. The 7 Cities coordinates biennial Point-in-Time Counts in order to provide a current snapshot of the overall homeless population in Alberta and to enable examination of how homelessness might change over time. Using aligned methods across the cities, trends can be identified using similar definitions. Ultimately, the information gained from Alberta's coordinated Point-in-Time Count helps to inform solutions to support the goal of ending homelessness in our communities.

Compared to 2014, the 2016 Count allows for better comparison between cities but has challenges comparing across time. This is due to aligning methodologies across the cities, which resulted in significant changes from the 2014 Count. The aligned methodology will allow for more comparable counts in the future. Moving from separate to aligned methodologies presents challenges for tracking changes over time in local communities, which is one of the major goals of a Point-in-Time Count. In order to maintain comparability locally, cities may exclude data used in this report or include additional data in their local reports (see Appendix A of the final report for details).

All cities conducted a count on the night of Wednesday, October 19, 2016 within the bounds of 7 pm and midnight. In areas where it was unsafe to count at night, surveys were conducted either earlier that day or the following morning before 9 am. For the first time, provincial government ministries also provided administrative data across the province for people experiencing homelessness who were institutionalized.

2016 COUNT RESULTS

The majority of the 2016 Point-in-Time Homeless Count came from Alberta's major urban centres, Calgary and Edmonton. Over 60% of the population counted as experiencing homelessness were in Calgary, followed by close to a third from Edmonton. The remaining five cities made up close to 10% of the Count: 151 from Red Deer, 118 from Grand Prairie, 90 from Wood Buffalo, 89 from Lethbridge, and 61 from Medicine Hat. Per capita, Calgary was at 26.1 per 10,000 followed by Edmonton at 18.2 per 10,000.

Almost half of the population counted as experiencing homelessness were reported to have stayed at an emergency shelter (47%), followed by transitional housing (36%), within a justice system facility (12%), or were unsheltered (4%). The remaining 1% of the counted homeless population was missing a location.

In early May 2016, a wildfire spread through the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. The impact of the fire on the homeless population of Fort McMurray has yet to be seen. There is the possibility that some have not returned and have chosen to stay in another city. There is also an influx of support from Red Cross which has resulted in some individuals and families being supported by the Red Cross in hotels - this was still in place during the 2016 Count and may have resulted in a lower count.

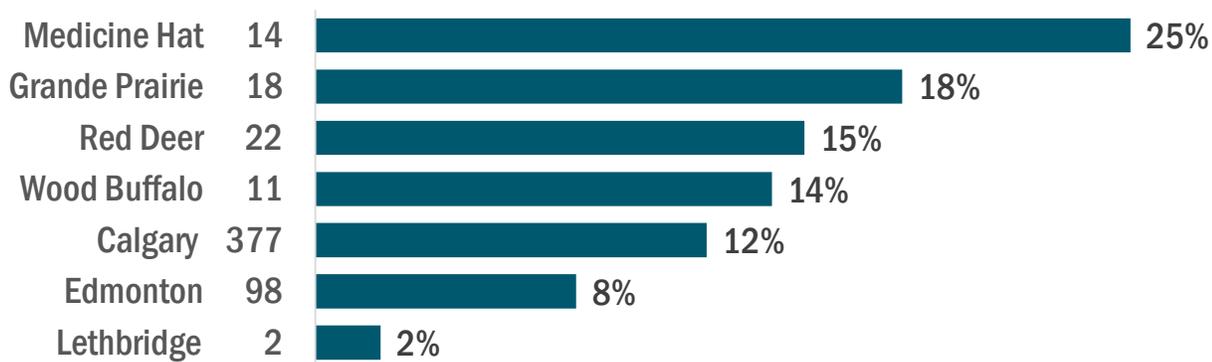
2016 KEY DEMOGRAPHICS AND CHARACTERISTICS

Males were more prevalent in the homeless population than females across all cities for 2014 and 2016. Consistent with previous years, women continue to be significantly underrepresented in the Count as compared to the general population, in spite of the fact that poverty affects more women than men. Women are more likely to be part of the hidden homeless population - tapping into stronger social networks to couch surf or double up and have greater motivation to avoid rough sleeping and emergency shelter because of the astounding rates of physical and sexual violence against women experiencing homelessness and threat of losing custody of children.

People identifying as Indigenous continue to be overrepresented among those experiencing homelessness. Across Alberta, people who identify as Indigenous make up 28% of those counted while making up only 4% of the general population.

There were 542 children or youth under 18 enumerated experiencing homelessness. The graph below presents the total for each city and the proportion that made up of all individuals experiencing homelessness.

Number and Proportion of Enumerated Individuals Under 18 Years of Age (Including Dependents)



Of those surveyed, 31% (Medicine Hat) to 59% (Edmonton) reported being chronically homeless, defined as either having been homeless for at least the past year or having four episodes of homelessness within the last three years. This is the proportion on a given night; when measured over time, the share experiencing chronic homelessness is much smaller, since there are many people who become homeless for a short period and then are rehoused.

Combining survey responses across all cities it was found that 73 out of 1197 (6%) individuals self-reported as having served in the Canadian military and/or the RCMP.

The most common reasons cited for loss of housing were addiction, job loss, "other" reasons, family conflict, eviction or illness. However, no options around housing unaffordability or insufficient benefit levels were given, despite these often being cited as the biggest contributors to homelessness in other studies. Respondents reported income assistance, formal employment, and informal employment or self-employment (such as returning bottles or panhandling) as their most common sources of income.