



homeward trust
edmonton

What We Didn't Know Before

Using Race-Based Data to Better Understand and Respond to Homelessness in Edmonton.

Alain Ndayishimiye



Land Acknowledgement

Homeward Trust respectfully acknowledges we are gathered, in collaboration, and with joint purpose, on Treaty 6 territory. This territory is the traditional and ancestral lands of many diverse First Nations, Métis and Inuit people. The nêhiyaw (Cree), Niitsitapi (Blackfoot), Dene, Haudenosaunee (Iroquois), Anishinaabe (Saulteaux/Ojibwe), Nakota Isga (Nakota Sioux), Inuit, and Métis, among many others have cared for this land since time immemorial and continue to steward it today. As visitors in this territory, we honour the importance of the Treaty and our responsibility to these communities. Only in partnership can we create the changes necessary to end homelessness.

A composite image showing the Edmonton skyline at sunset in the background and a river scene with a bridge in the foreground. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent red rectangle.

Preventing & Ending Homelessness in Edmonton

Who Are We

Homeward Trust is a community-based organization committed to eradicating homelessness through the power of community, innovation, leadership, and strategically investing resources for the greatest impact.

With a system planning approach, we examine the whole picture behind homelessness in Edmonton and build evidence-based paths to solving its root causes. Our vision is a community where every individual has access to safe, affordable, and secure housing and the support they need to thrive.

Note & Reflection

- **Identity is personal and complex:** Race-based data is self-reported and may not fully reflect the ways people understand or describe themselves, particularly where identities overlap or where race, ethnicity, country of origin, and other identities intersect.
- **Identity and language evolve:** Identity and the language used to describe it also evolve over time and across communities, meaning some categories may not always fully capture how people see or describe themselves

Why Race-Based Data Matters

■ Indigenous Homelessness

The overrepresentation of indigenous people among people experiencing homelessness has been well studied and documented in Canada.

■ Need strong data systems

Without reliable data, people remain remain invisible, planning is less responsive and accountability is limited limited

■ Homelessness does not impact all people equally

Requiring us to tackle systemic barriers and barriers and inequities head-on and tailored tailored to affected populations.

■ Equitable and responsive policy

Good data supports equitable and culturally responsive policies and services.

Previous State

Indigenous identity data collection

- Collected data on Indigenous Identity
- Wide-range of resources on sensitivity related collecting this data respectfully
- High engagement and cultural awareness among staff collecting the data

Focus on exclusionary program edibility

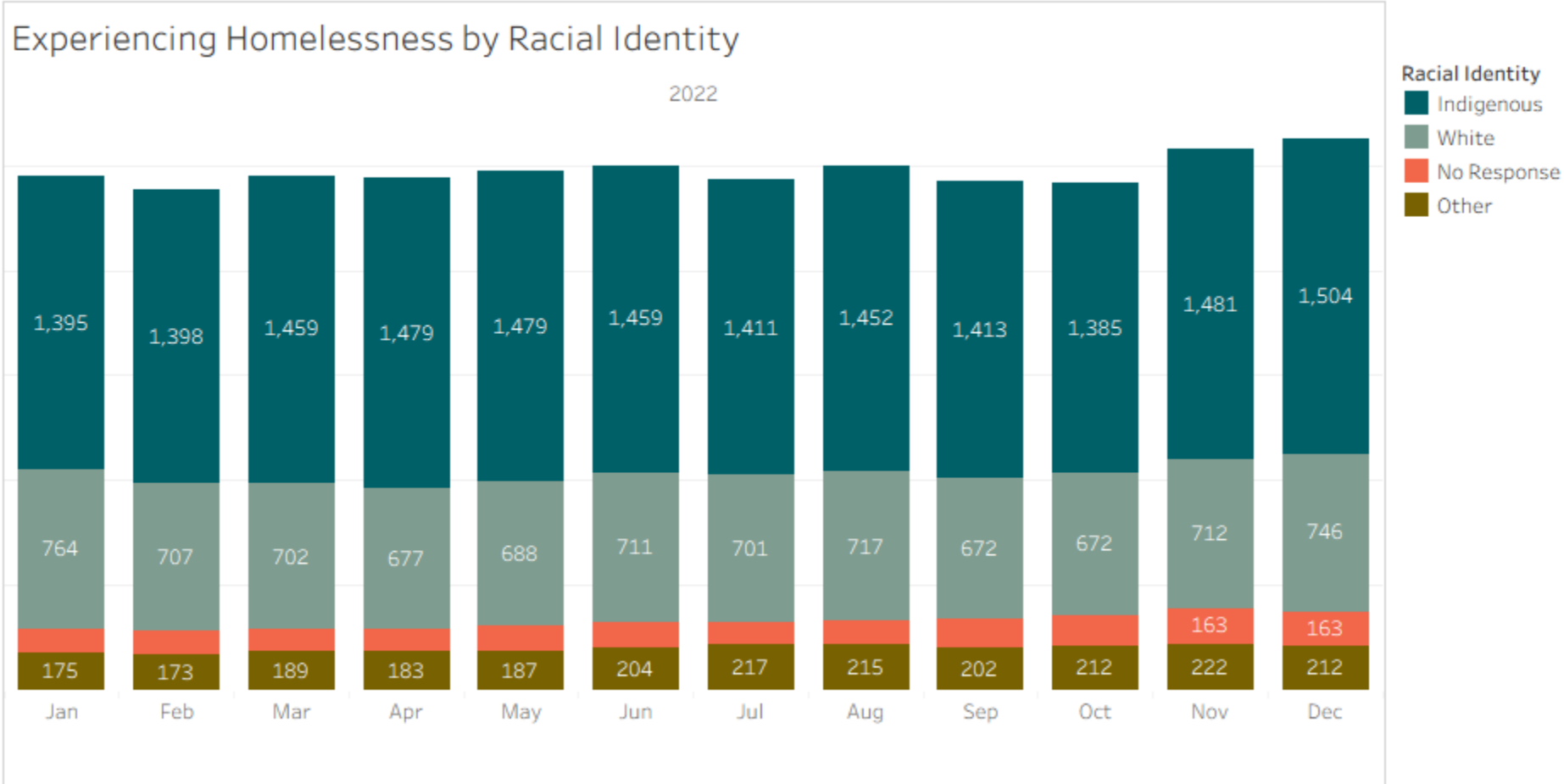
- Citizenship and immigration status
- Chronicity
- Homelessness history
- Service needs

Limited comprehensive racial identity data

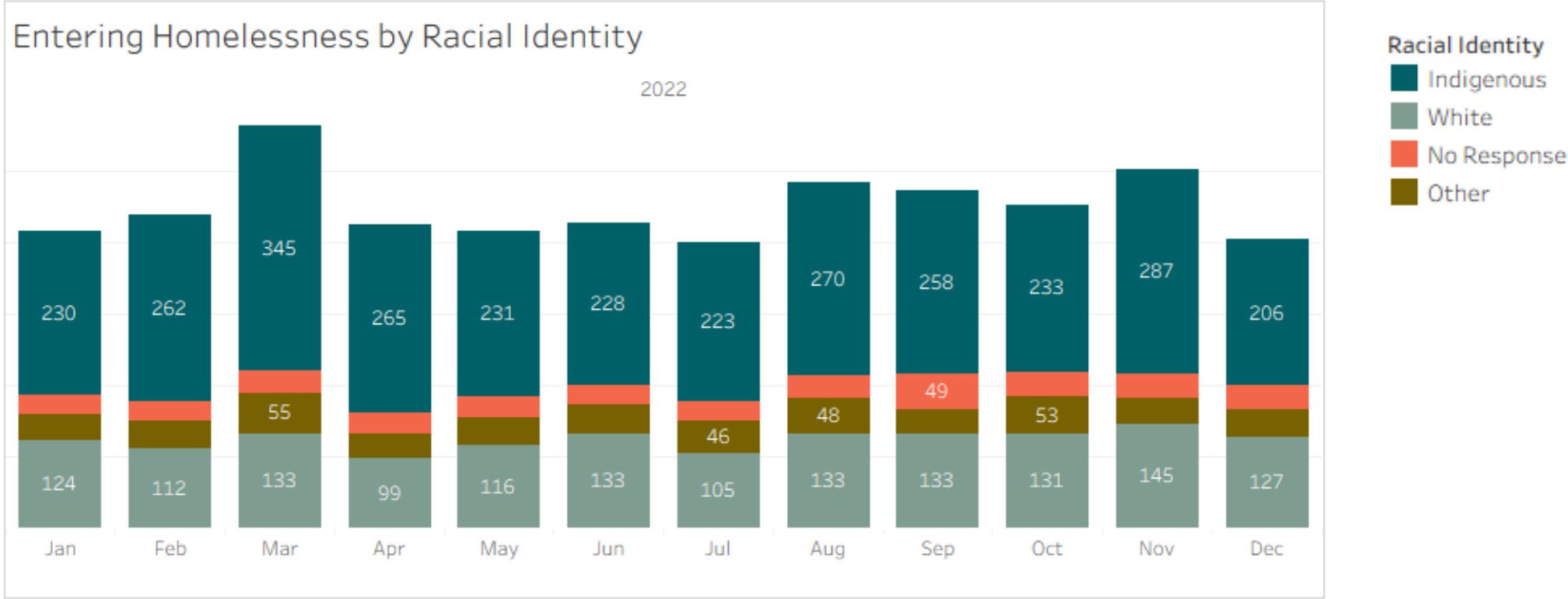
- Point-in-Time count data with a relatively small sample size
- Hidden Homelessness challenging to track



Implications



Implications





Edmonton Approach

- Review national standards and best practices
- Engage in community and service providers (Edmonton Race-Based Data table)
- Comprehensive Data and Privacy Management framework
 - Purpose of collection and use
 - Privacy and access
 - Standard training
 - Enhanced data standards and data collection
- Analyzed, monitored and used the data responsibly.

Data We Collect

What racial identity do you primarily identify with?	
First nations (Treaty)	Black African (e.g., Ghanaian, Ethiopian, Nigerian)
Non-status (Treaty)	Black-Afro-Caribbean OR Afro-Latinx (e.g., Jamaican, Haitian, Afro-Brazilian)
Metis	Black-Canadian/American
Inuit	Latin American (e.g., Brazilian, Mexican, Chilean, Cuban)
Arab (E.g. Syrian, Egyptian, Yemeni)	White (e.g., European, French, Ukrainian, Euro-Latinx)
Asian – East (e.g., Chinese, Korean, Japanese)	No response
Asian – Southeast (Filipino, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Malaysian, Laotian)	Response Not on the list, please specify below
Asian-West (e.g., Iranian, Afghan)	

Current State – Housing and Homelessness System KPIs

Housing and Homelessness Overview

as of 5/10/2026

Period Ending
Apr 2026

Months to Show
6

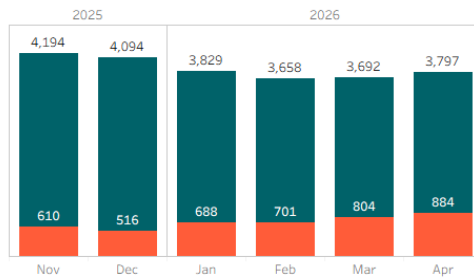
Variance to Show
MoM

ETOLocation
All

Program Name
All

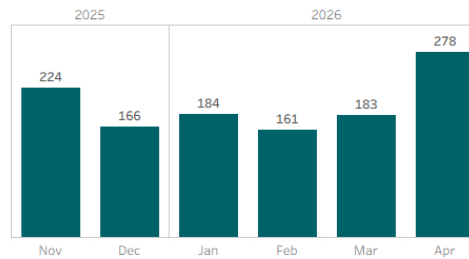
Apr 2026	Active on the BNL 3,797 ▲ 2.8%	Entering the BNL 884 ▲ 10.0%	Caseload *SR excluded, clients only 2,464 ▲ 4.3%	Newly Housed (Individuals, clients only) 278 ▲ 51.9%	Exit to Stable Housing 95 ▼ 30.1%	Exit to Absolute Homelessness 5 ▲ 25.0%
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Active on the BNL and Entering the BNL

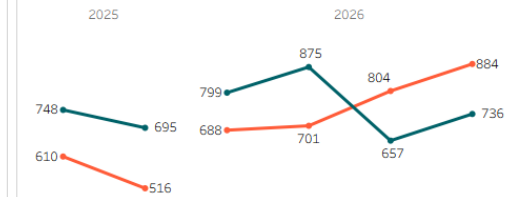


Newly Housed

*clients only

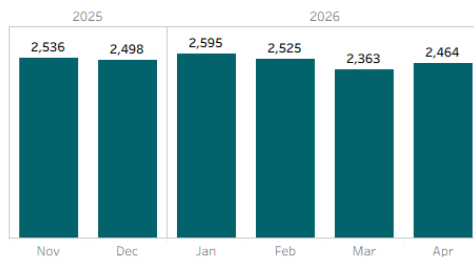


BNL Inflow/Outflow



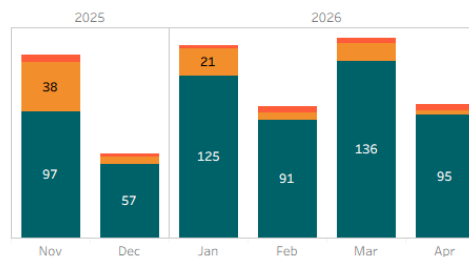
Caseload

*SR are excluded, clients only

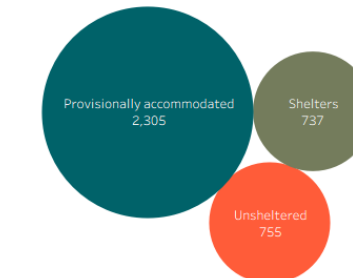


Exit to Stable Housing and to Abs Homelessness

*includes ICM, SH, RRH, YHF programs only

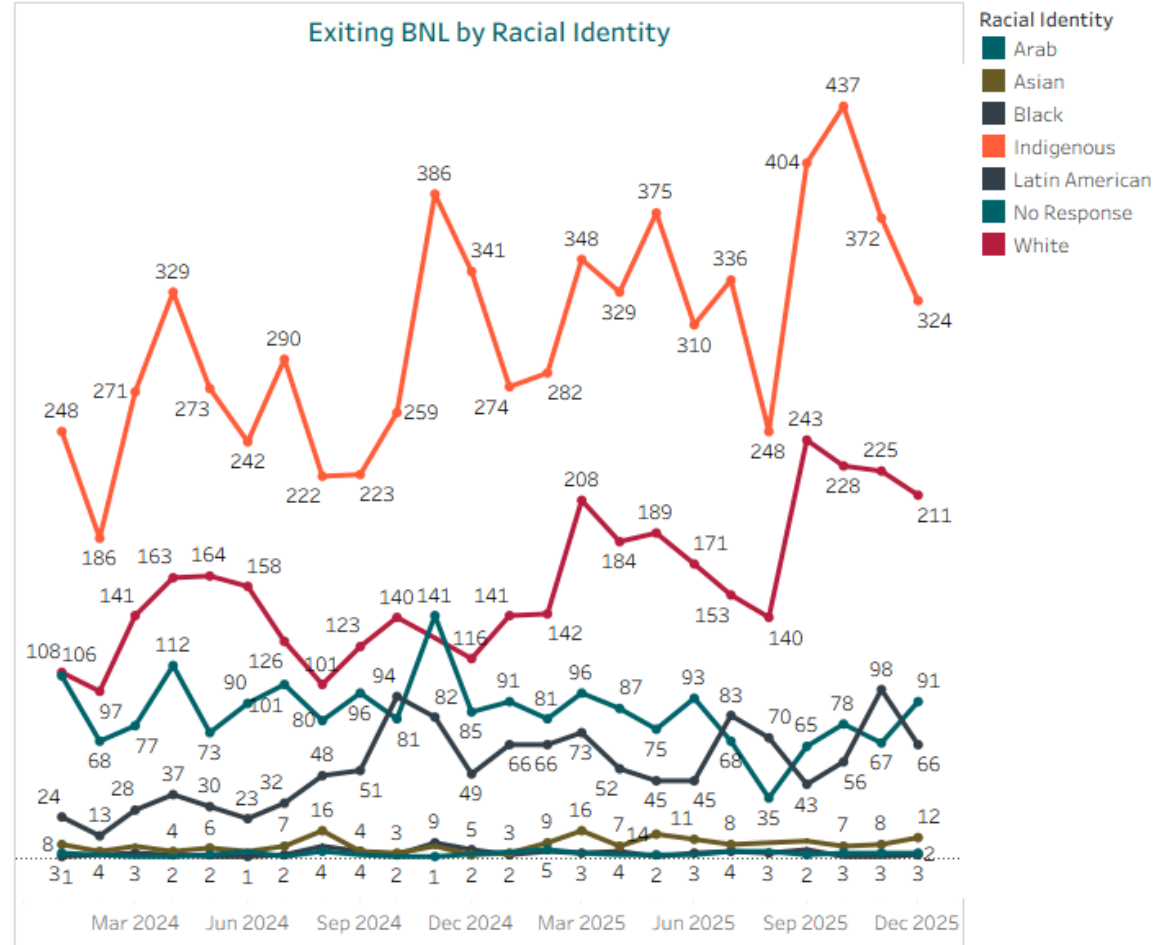
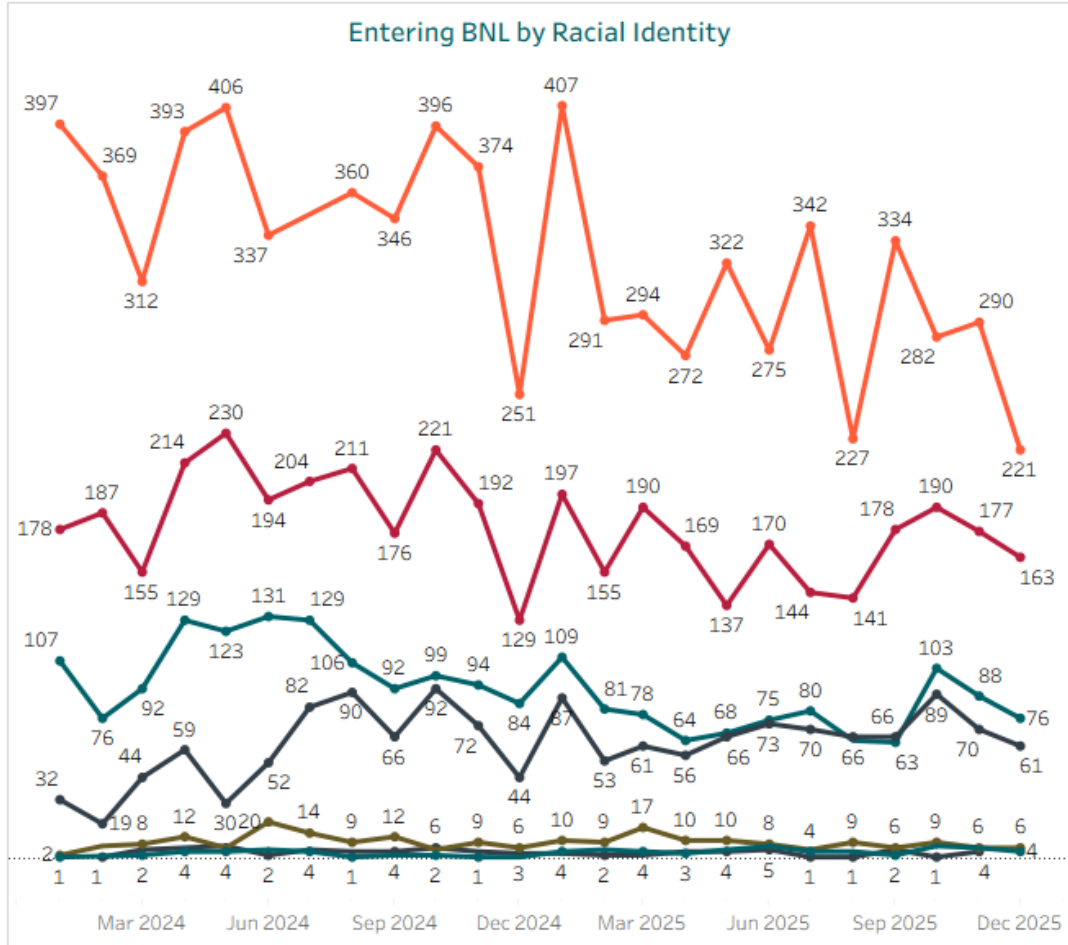


Active on the BNL by Location of Frequent Stay



* All counts are unique individuals

Current State – BNL Inflow & Outflows



* All counts are unique individuals



What have we learned?

People Experiencing Homelessness In Edmonton By Racial Identity

	2023	2024	2025
Indigenous	55.1%	52.0%	50.6%
White	25.7%	26.2%	27.9%
Black	2.4%	5.8%	6.5%
Asian	0.7%	1.1%	1.4%
Latin American	0.3%	0.4%	0.5%
Arab	0.2%	0.3%	0.4%
No response	15.6%	14.1%	12.8%
Grand Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

People Experiencing Homelessness In Edmonton By Racial Identity

	2023	2024	2025
Indigenous	55.1%	52.0%	50.6%
White	25.7%	26.2%	27.9%
Black	2.4%	5.8%	6.5%
Asian	0.7%	1.1%	1.4%
Latin American	0.3%	0.4%	0.5%
Arab	0.2%	0.3%	0.4%
No response	15.6%	14.1%	12.8%
Grand Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

People experiencing Homelessness (2025)

42.8%

of people in
Edmonton identify as
Racialized according
to the 2021 census.

8.7%

Of people experiencing homelessness identify as Racialized.

People experiencing Homelessness (2025)



3%

Increase in the number of people who identify as non-racialized.



18%

Increase in the number of people who identify as racialized

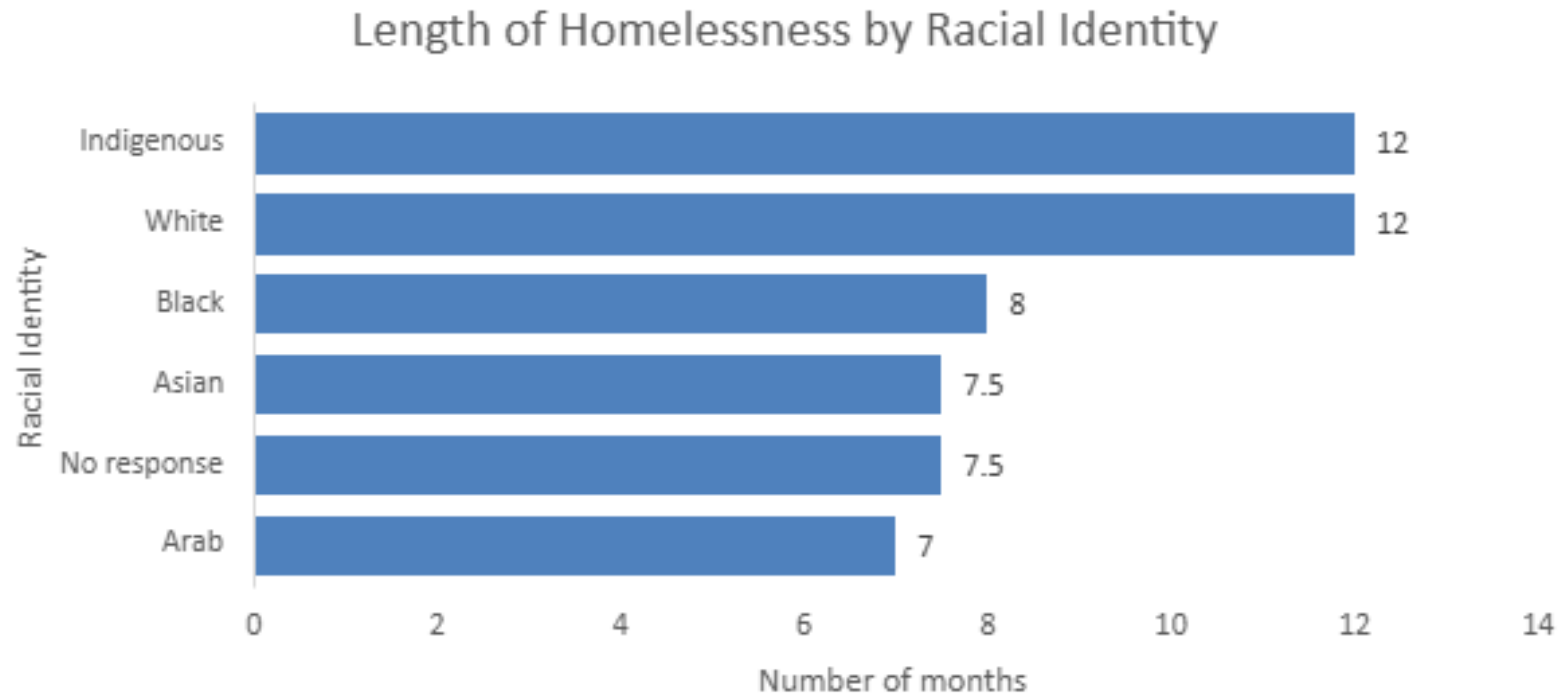
Shelter Use and Racial Identity

 **0.32%**
Increase in the
number of people
who identify as non-
racialized

 **34.5 %**

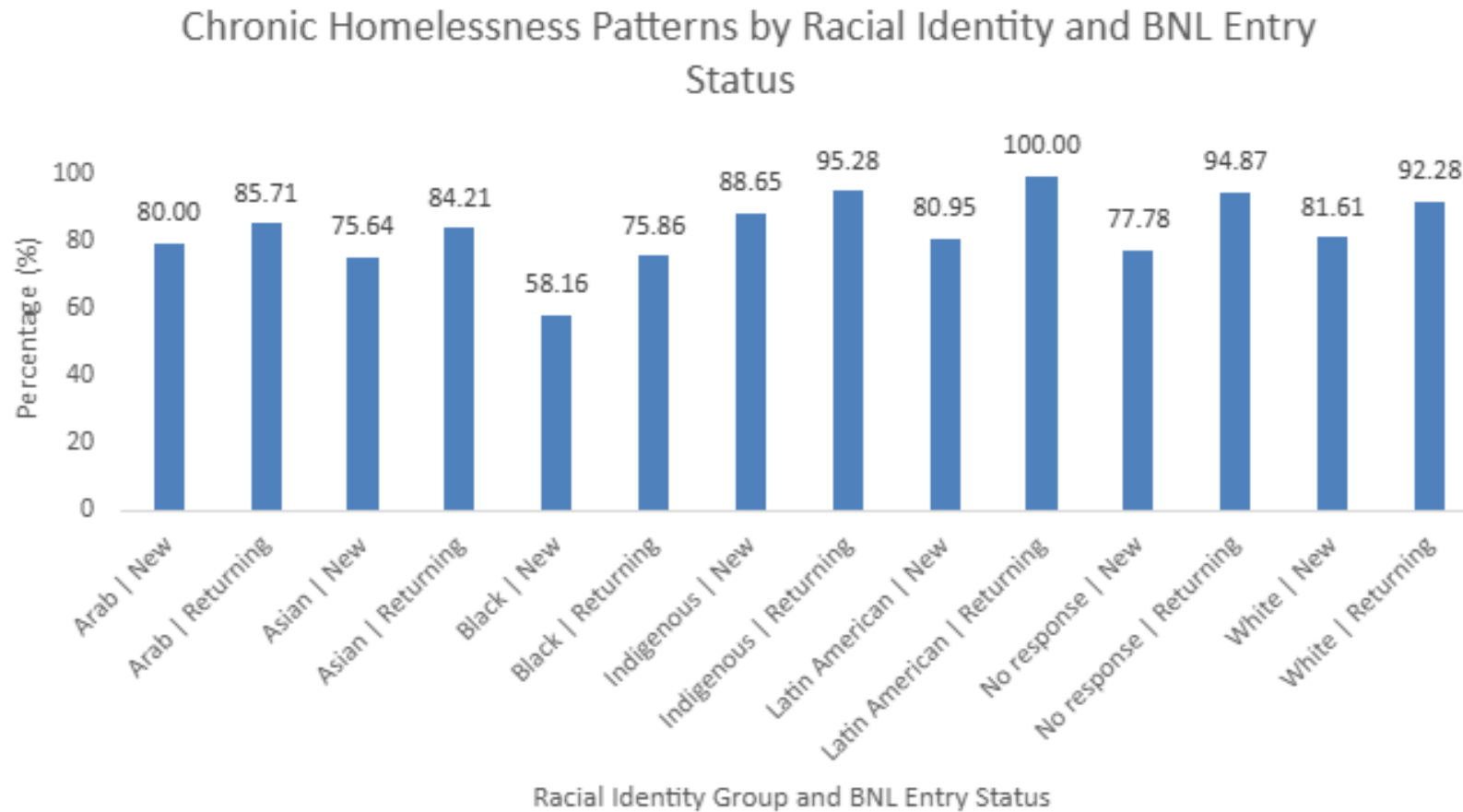
Increase in the number of people who identify as racialized

Median Time Since Permanent Housing



Median Length of homelessness prior to connection to service

Chronicity & Racial Identity



Service Needs

Racial Identity	ACT	DIV	ICM	RRH	SH	SR	YHF	TOTAL
Arab	0%	15%	27%	39%	3%	6%	9%	100%
Asian	0%	24%	19%	42%	4%	6%	4%	100%
Indigenous	0%	9%	52%	26%	3%	3%	7%	100%
White	0%	16%	41%	32%	5%	2%	4%	100%
White	0%	16%	41%	32%	5%	2%	4%	100%
Black	0%	39%	14%	24%	2%	16%	5%	100%
Latin American	0%	15%	45%	35%	0%	5%	0%	100%
No response	0%	18%	39%	30%	2%	6%	4%	100%

Service Needs

Racial Identity	ACT	DIV	ICM	RRH	SH	SR	YHF	TOTAL
Arab	0%	15%	27%	39%	3%	6%	9%	100%
Asian	0%	24%	19%	42%	4%	6%	4%	100%
Black	0%	39%	14%	24%	2%	16%	5%	100%
Indigenous	0%	9%	52%	26%	3%	3%	7%	100%
Latin American	0%	15%	45%	35%	0%	5%	0%	100%
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Asian	0%	24%	19%	42%	4%	6%	4%	100%
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Policy and Program Implications

- **Prevention and diversion matters more than ever for people experiencing homelessness who identify as racialized.**
- **Prevention and diversion efforts and resource allocation must be evidenced-based.**

Edmonton Response:

1. Shelter Embedded Housing Teams that house people at front-end of shelter access
2. Supported Referral programs that support people whose primary barrier to housing is financial
3. Diversion program in collaboration with CMHA Edmonton

1. Shelter Embedded Housing Teams

- Shelter Embedded Housing Teams support individuals experiencing homelessness to transition from emergency shelter environments into stable housing.
- Depending on individual needs, supports may include diversion and light-touch interventions or direct housing placement followed by transition to other programs for ongoing case management and wrap-around supports.

Racial Identity	% Housed
Arab	0.4%
Asian	0.6%
Black	38.6%
Indigenous	24.4%
Latin American	0.2%
No response	5.0%
White	30.8%
TOTAL	100%

Over
500 people
housed in
2025.

2. Supported Referral Program Impact

Over
327 people
housed in
2025.

- A low intensity housing intervention that is intended to assist individuals who have low barriers to accessing housing on their own, and the main barrier is financial.
- Participants benefit from accessing **one-time** financial assistance through a “client start-up” fund with the purpose of restoring housing stability and participant independence.

Racial Identity	% Housed
Arab	0.6%
Asian	1.5%
Black	33.6%
Indigenous	35.8%
Latin American	0.9%
No response	5.2%
White	22.3%
TOTAL	100%

3. CMHA Diversion Program

Over 240 people supported.

- Provides housing prevention services that aim to connect individuals living with mental health challenges and their dependents with housing stabilizing resources, advocacy, and work to increase their ability to remain housed.

Racial Identity	% Supported
Arab	0.8%
Asian	3.3%
Black	11.5%
Indigenous	26.7%
Latin American	1.2%
No response	3.3%
White	53.2%
TOTAL	100%

Challenges In Collecting and Analyzing Race-Based Data

Building Trust with Communities

- Communities may have concerns about how data is be used due to experiences of racism, discrimination , or exclusion, particularly in the context of homelessness.

Data Completeness and Quality

- Data completeness, quality and consistency as well as definitions and groupings affect comparability, reliability, and ability to derive meaningful insights.

Privacy and Governance concerns

- Race-based data is sensitive and requires strong safeguards, governance frameworks, and clarity around access and use.
- Engagement with affected communities in a meaningful way can be challenging due to capacity.

Analytical Challenges

- Small sample sizes can limit analysis for some populations.

Next Steps

Strengthen Governance

- Strengthen policies on privacy, access, reporting, and accountability
- Review and update data dictionary, definitions and update data collection as needed.

Engagement with Communities and Lived Experience

- Ensure collection, use and dissemination centers voices of people with lived experience.

Commit to ongoing systemic improvement

- Commitment to being challenged and listening that moves beyond engagement checklist
- Use insights to inform program strategies, resource allocation, and equity-focused system planning

Thank You

— Alain Ndayishimiye

Manager, Data & Analytics

Homeward Trust

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