



Alberta Point-in-Time Homeless Count: Final Provincial Report

Jan. 30, 2015

Progress in Ending Homelessness

The 2014 Alberta Point-in-Time Homeless Count enumerated **6,663**¹ individuals experiencing homelessness across seven cities.

The 2014 provincial count of people experiencing homelessness shows that since efforts to end homelessness started in 2008, homelessness has decreased by about **15%** across the Alberta's seven cities. This confirms the preliminary report released November 21, 2014.

Working with the Government of Canada, the Government of Alberta, and with support from civic leadership, the seven cities have collectively housed nearly 10,000 people since 2009. In 2014/15, the Government of Alberta has committed more than \$82.6 million to support Housing First programs in the province's seven major centres as part of *A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in 10 years*.

The impact of these efforts have stemmed the growth in homelessness despite the pressures added by a growing economy and housing crunch. The economic downturn we may be experiencing on the heels of decreasing oil prices means that our efforts are needed more than ever before. Community leadership and government support continue to be essential to ending homelessness.

Moving towards a Harmonized Count

The count was part of an initiative led by the 7 Cities on Housing & Homelessness (7 Cities) in collaboration with the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness to develop a harmonized approach to homeless counts nationally.

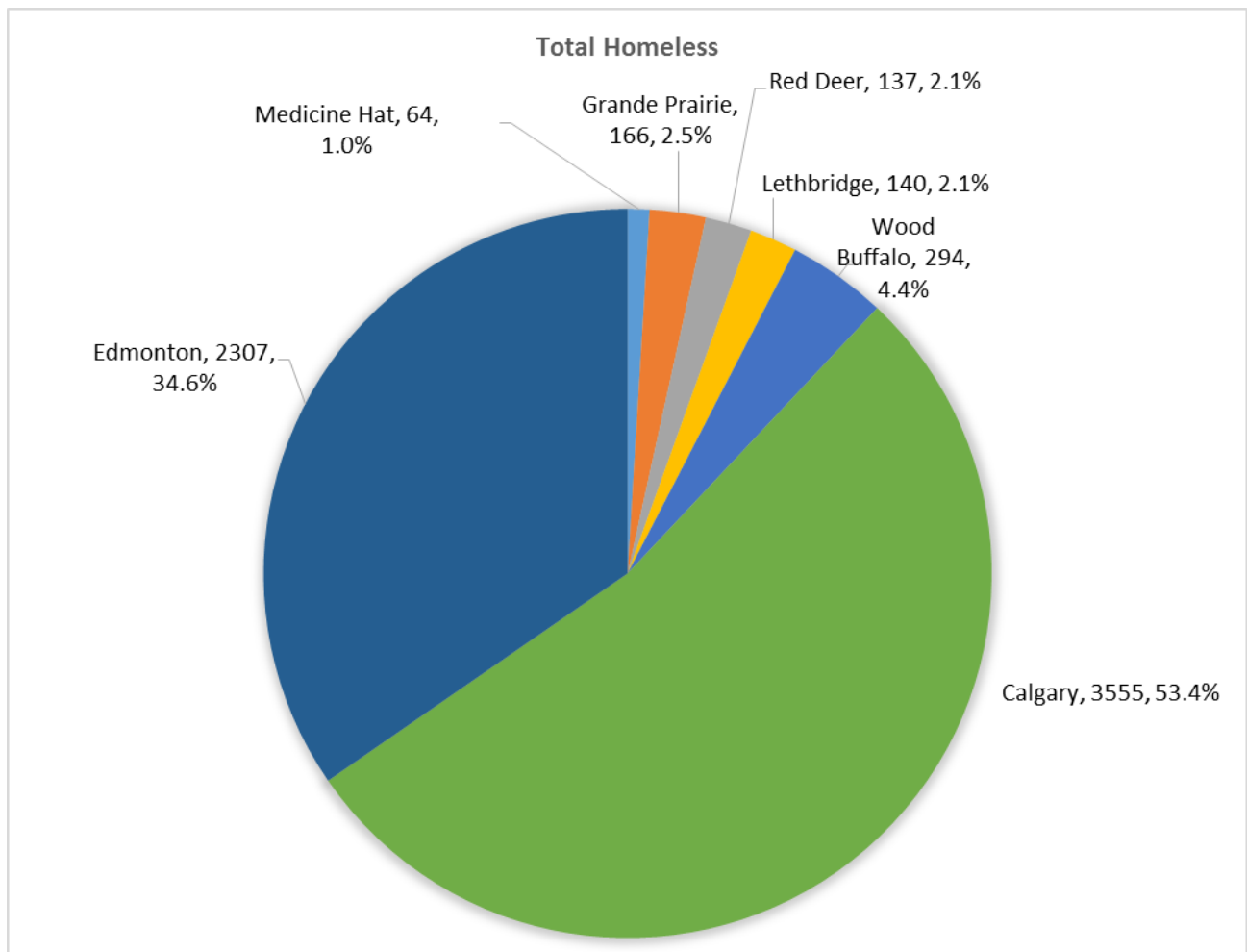
Alberta is the first jurisdiction to implement measures towards a more standardized methodology, leading the way in Canada. Though counts across Alberta are becoming more aligned, this is the first time this effort has been undertaken.

There remain key methodological variances which have been identified as having a high likelihood of impacting the comparability of results across the province. As a result, this report recommends action to improve the Alberta methodology in future counts.

¹ Note that the Preliminary Report total homeless figure is different from this total. A total of 6,600 was reported initially. The difference of 63 is the result of 16 people being double counted in the street and in emergency shelter counts in Grande Prairie, an additional 24 people who were initially missed in data entry in Calgary's street count, and an additional 55 people in Edmonton as result of additional reports from shelters, which arrived after the initial release.

Distribution across Alberta's Cities

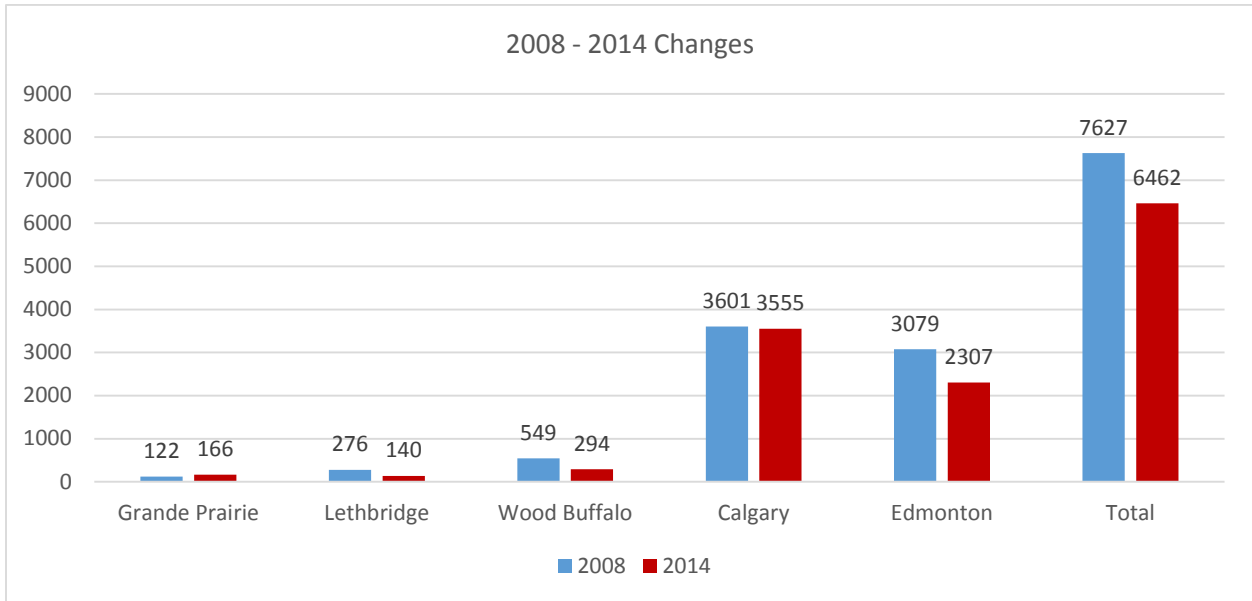
Most of the homeless enumerated were in the two major urban centres: Calgary had about half of the total population and Edmonton over a third. The remaining 12% were distributed between the five smaller centres of Medicine Hat (1.0%), Grande Prairie (2.5%), Red Deer (2.1%), Lethbridge (2.1%) and Wood Buffalo (4.4%).



Overall Decline

Notable methodological changes occurred in 2014; however, comparing communities who conducted counts at different times of the year in 2008 to the 2014 count, suggests an overall reduction of **15.3%**.

Comparing results from the most recent 2012-2013 counts in communities (excluding Medicine Hat) show an overall stabilization trend with a decrease of 3.7% despite considerable economic growth during this period. Each community's local report assess methodological changes and their impact on comparability in fuller detail.

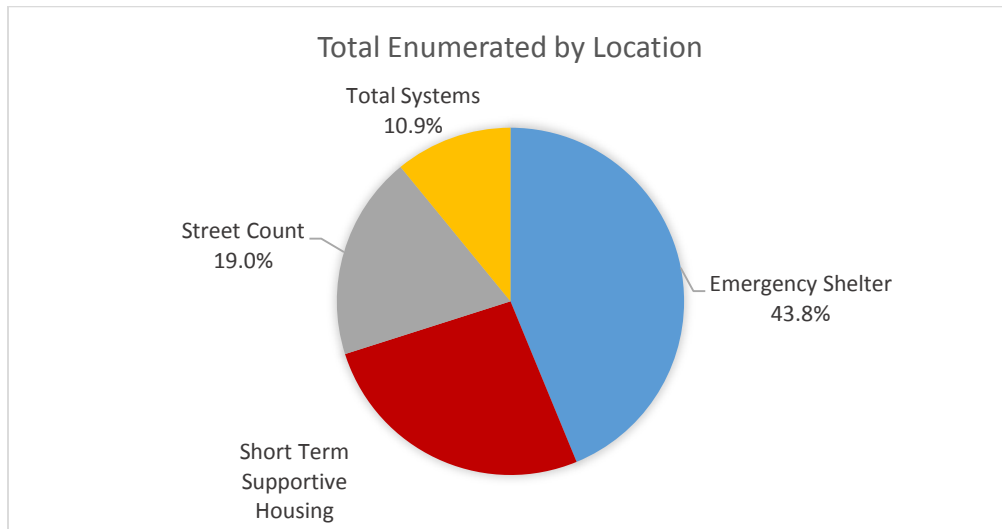


**Note these figures do not include Medicine Hat and Red Deer as they did not conduct counts in 2008.*

Enumeration Locations

As the figure below suggests, most of those enumerated across the province were in emergency shelter (2,917) on the night of the count or in short term supportive housing (1,753). A total of 1,266 were enumerated during the street count, though they were not necessarily sleeping rough.

As many of the communities did not include all public systems in enumeration, the number of people enumerated in systems, at 727, is an under-representation of the total on the night of the count.



Unique Local Dynamics

The prevalence of homelessness, while not unique to any Canadian city, is impacted by geographic-specific socio-economic factors that affect the number of people experiencing homelessness within each Albertan community. The unique dynamics impacting each local context reinforce the importance of community-based planning and delivery in our efforts to end homelessness.

Key Demographics in Brief

The report provides the full analysis across each community regarding key demographics. The following is a brief overview at the provincial level.

These demographics reflect the samples surveyed rather than those enumerated as homeless (n=6,663). To provide a more accurate picture, survey and administrative data is specifically reported for age, gender, and Aboriginal status from Calgary, Red Deer and Lethbridge. Percentages will not add to 100% as not all categories of responses are included in the table; see full report for the breakdown.

- While demographic breakdowns varied from community to community, overall there were more males (73.0%) than females (25.8%) in the sample. There was a consistent under-representation of women across the province.
- About 6.7% of respondents had children with them at the time of the count.
- The proportion of youth under the age of 24 was 20.2%.
- Seniors 65 and over accounted for 3.6% of the population in the sample.
- Both seniors and youth are under-represented relative to the general population.
- Aboriginal people were consistently over-represented relative to the general population, averaging 30.1%. Some communities showed considerably higher rates of over-representation.
- Further, 11.4% were immigrants, and some communities showed over-representation of this group relative to their general population.
- About 18.4% had been in the community for less than 1 year, which is considerably higher than rates reported in the general population.
- Those whose most recent homelessness episode was longer than 1 year accounted for 37.6%; those homeless less than 1 month accounted for 11.3%.
- Respondents who reported serving in the Canadian Forces totaled 6.3%, which is about 3 times higher than the national average for veterans in the general population.

Key Demographic	Percent of Total	Sample (n=)	Data
Male	73.0%	5,627	Survey and Admin data from Calgary & Lethbridge
Female	25.8%	5,627	Survey and Admin data from Calgary & Lethbridge
Respondents with Accompanying Children	6.7%	2,495	Survey
Youth (up to 24)	20.2%	5,790	Survey and Admin data from Calgary & Red Deer
Seniors (65+)	3.6%	5,790	Survey and Admin data from Calgary & Red Deer
Aboriginal	30.1%	5,627	Survey and Admin data from Calgary & Lethbridge
Immigrant	11.4%	2,201	Survey (without Wood Buffalo)
New to Community (<1 year)	18.4%	2,495	Survey
Canadian Forces	6.1%	2,495	Survey
Duration of most recent homelessness episode is longer than 1 year	37.6%	1,034	Survey (without Edmonton)
Duration of most recent homelessness episode is less than 1 month	11.3%	1,034	Survey (without Edmonton)

Contextualizing the Findings

Population Growth

It is important that results of the counts are contextualized in the broader economic trends impacting Alberta. All 7 Cities are experiencing population growth at various levels. Though Medicine Hat remained relatively stable, the rest of the cities grew significantly between 2008 and 2013 – an average of 10% across the 7 Cities. ²

Municipality	Municipal Census Date	Municipal Census Date	2008 Population	2013 Population	Change
Medicine Hat	01-Jun-12	01-May-08	60,426	61,180	1.2%
Grande Prairie	10-May-11* Federal Census	01-Apr-07	50,227	55,032	9.6%
Red Deer	01-Apr-13	04-Apr-08	87,816	97,109	10.6%
Lethbridge	01-Apr-13	01-Apr-08	83,960	90,417	7.7%
Wood Buffalo	09-May-12	01-Apr-07	88,131	116,407	32.1%
Calgary	01-Apr-13	01-Apr-08	1,042,892	1,149,552	10.2%
Edmonton	01-Apr-12	01-Apr-08	752,412	817,498	8.7%
Total			2,165,864	2,387,195	10.2%

² Municipals Affairs (2013) Municipal Census and Population Lists 2008, 2013. Retrieved from: http://municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/mc_official_populations.cfm

This growth is in part related to the economic opportunities presented in Alberta, as indicated by low unemployment rates. Though the recent decreases in oil prices is already beginning to have an impact on the ground, the overall growth experienced across the province has created an environment of high rents and low vacancies at the time of the count.

Housing Affordability

Though vacancy rates increased marginally in some communities in the Fall of 2014, the average rental costs across all units grew across the province, with the exception of Wood Buffalo, according to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. With average rents being ranging from \$761 in Medicine Hat to \$2,013 in Wood Buffalo, they are beyond the means of low income Albertans.

	Rental Vacancy Rate in Private ³ Apartments			Rental Costs		
	Vacancy Rate Oct. 2013	Vacancy Rate Oct. 2014	Change Vacancy Rate	Average Rental Cost Oct 2013	Average Rental Cost Oct 2014	Change in Rental Costs
Medicine Hat	3.9%	4.1%	0.2%	\$ 695	\$ 761	\$ 66
Grande Prairie	1.3%	1.2%	-0.1%	\$ 1,063	\$ 1,094	\$ 31
Red Deer	1.9%	2.2%	0.3%	\$ 876	\$ 906	\$ 30
Lethbridge	4.8%	4.8%	0.0%	\$ 815	\$ 847	\$ 32
Wood Buffalo	5.4%	11.8%	6.4%	\$ 2,046	\$ 2,013	\$ -33
Calgary	1.0%	1.4%	0.4%	\$ 1,118	\$ 1,213	\$ 95
Edmonton	1.4%	1.7%	0.3%	\$ 1,028	\$ 1,103	\$ 75

In fact, about one-quarter of Albertans are experiencing housing affordability challenges (Statistics Canada, 2011), thereby impacting their housing stability and risk for homelessness. Further, more than 1 out of 10 people were reported to be in low income across Alberta cities.

Full Report

The full report on the provincial count is available at: www.7Cities.ca

Each community is developing and releasing their own comprehensive local report as well.

³ CMHC (2014) CMHC Rental Market Statistics Fall 2014. Retrieved from: <https://www03.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/catalog/productDetail.cfm?lang=en&cat=59&itm=17&fr=1415816805835>.

About 7 Cities on Housing & Homelessness

Alberta's 7 Cities on Housing and Homelessness are the lead organizations responsible for the implementation of local Plans to End Homelessness, working together since 2001. The 7 Cities coordinate local plans at a systems level and align funding resources for greater impact and progress towards ending homelessness.

The 7 Cities provides a forum for dialogue with the federal and provincial representatives on housing and homelessness. The 7 Cities have long-standing histories of delivering strategic planning and service delivery in communities, along with administering and aligning funds, with accountabilities to several provincial or federal funders, including Alberta Human Services and the federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy.

Visit www.7cities.ca .

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