

YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IN SAINT JOHN

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of a count of homeless youth 16 to 24 years of age in the city of Saint John during the month of February 2007. It also highlights best practices in Fredericton and Moncton for sheltering their city's homeless young people.

The count highlights are as follows:

A total of 45 homeless youth were counted: 23 females and 22 males.

The most counted age was 18 years, while the least counted was 22 years. Homeless youth 17 to 19 years of age accounted for over half of those counted.

Counted individuals sought shelter in various places including:

- Couch surfing: temporarily staying with friends or relatives (*22 individuals*)
- Emergency shelter arrangements (*10 individuals*)
- Transitional housing (*8 individuals*)
- A place not meant for human habitation (*2 individuals*)
- Not reported (*2 individuals*)
- Temporarily staying in a hotel (*1 individual*)

A total of 89 service providers were approached to participate as a count administrator for their clientele; of these 66 participated. Of these 66 participants, 11 organizations counted homeless youth:

- AIDS Saint John (*counted 3 individuals*)
- Coverdale Centre for Women (*counted 1 individual*)
- First Steps Housing Project (*counted 8 individuals*)
- Homeless Women's Shelter Service (*counted 7 individuals*)
- John Howard Society, Saint John Branch (*counted 5 individuals*)
- ONE Change (*counted 9 individuals*)
- Salvation Army Booth Centre (*counted 3 individuals*)
- Salvation Army Community and Family Services (*counted 2 individuals*)
- The Resource Centre for Youth (TRC) (*counted 4 individuals, including 2 through their outreach work at Romero House and 1 through their outreach work at the Salvation Army Community and Family Services*)
- An organization on the East Side that could not be identified because of privacy issues (*counted 2 individuals*)
- An organization in the South End that could not be identified because of privacy issues (*counted 1 individual*)

A little over half of the homeless young people were counted in Saint John's Village neighbourhood, while a fifth were counted in the North End, and close to a sixth were counted on the West Side. Only a few individuals were counted on the East Side and in the South End.

While double counting is not considered to have had a significant impact on the results, the effects of undercounting are believed to be a factor.

The hope is that this effort will be the first step in establishing an annual count of the entire homeless population in Saint John in order to help gauge progress in this area and improve programs and services for homeless individuals.

Whether Saint John explores the benefits of establishing a response to youth homelessness similar to the best practices found in Fredericton and Moncton, or whether a standalone youth emergency shelter is considered, it is clear the city is in need of a strategy for housing the 45-plus young people who find themselves without a home in Saint John.

1.0 PROJECT BACKGROUND

In the fall of 2005, the Saint John Human Development Council—a local social planning council—brought together service providers who work with homeless youth to discuss challenges faced in this area. The group included representatives from AIDS Saint John, the Church of St. Andrew & St. David, Community Health Centre, Coverdale Centre for Women, First Steps Housing Project, Homeless Women’s Shelter Service, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, John Howard Society, The Resource Centre for Youth (TRC), Salvation Army, UNBSJ, and the YMCA-YWCA. The group agreed there is a lack of facilities—in particular an emergency shelter—to support youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Although Saint John has developed many services and supports over the years, the group noted that the community lacks a comprehensive model: one that moves from emergency to transition to therapeutic. Current emergency shelter arrangements include the Salvation Army Booth Centre for men and the Homeless Women’s Shelter for women. While both organizations serve individuals of any age, approval must be sought from the Department of Family and Community Services for those under 16 years of age.

The group identified the following gaps, which could be filled by a comprehensive model:

- Physical, safe shelter for males age 16 to 18 years, and for non-pregnant females aged 16 to 18 years requiring crisis care.
- A transitional shelter connected to the multitude of already available services.
- Therapeutic homes with a specialized foster parent model for 13 to 16 year olds.
- Prevention programs and interventions for children at risk of homelessness.

As a follow-up to these gatherings, this project was commissioned to identify options for addressing youth homelessness in Saint John by: 1) determining the scope of youth homelessness in the city; and 2) reviewing best shelter practices in Fredericton and Moncton.

This project would not have been possible without the help of the participating service providers who work tirelessly on the front lines of youth homelessness in Saint John.

2.0 YOUTH HOMELESSNESS COUNT IN SAINT JOHN

Enumerating homeless individuals is a challenge, and counting the young among them even more so. The very nature of homelessness makes a count a difficult task.¹ Counting homeless *youth* is further complicated by the fact that they tend not to frequent services aimed primarily at adults, and, as these findings support, are more inclined to couch surf.²

The complexity of gathering numbers has meant a reliance on estimates. National projections indicate up to 200,000 Canadians find themselves homeless at some point during any given year, and of these individuals 50,000 to 66,000 are youth.³ Yet these are estimates. As the National Homelessness Initiative notes, a lack of a reliable method for counting the number of homeless individuals has left Canada without accurate national statistics.⁴

Youth are one of the fastest-growing groups among Canada's homeless population.⁵ A Fredericton study on homelessness heard from service providers—including organizations from Saint John—that the face of poverty is getting younger, which is reflected by national trends.⁶

This project is an initial effort into uncovering the number of young people in Saint John who find themselves without a home. Without these numbers it is difficult to recommend appropriate changes to Saint John's response. Numbers help effectively target limited resources, develop appropriate responses, and serve as a benchmark to gauge progress. The hope is that over time this enumeration will continue—and perhaps be expanded to the entire homeless population—and its data collection methods refined.

2.1 COUNT BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

The youth homelessness count took place throughout the month of February 2007. February was chosen as the data collection period with the hope that more homeless young people would access services (shelter services in particular) during this cold winter month. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recommends a winter count because sheltered individuals are easier to count than the unsheltered.⁷ A month-long data collection period—as opposed to a 24-hour or week-long period—ensured a greater response rate from those homeless youth who access services

¹ National Homelessness Initiative, Reviewing the Numbers, http://homelessness.gc.ca/homelessness/h02_e.asp.

² Golberg, *On Our Streets and in Our Shelters*, 23.

³ Beyond the Street: Youth and Communities Taking Action on Homelessness, <http://youthhomelessness.ca/english.html>.

⁴ National Homelessness Initiative, Reviewing the Numbers.

⁵ Beyond the Street, Conference Program, 7, <http://youthhomelessness.ca/programEN.pdf>.

⁶ Coates and Neate, *No Place at the Table*, 51.

⁷ HUD's Homeless Assistance Programs, *A Guide to Counting Unsheltered Homeless People*, 43.

sporadically. An extended data collection period is useful for counting homeless people who access services infrequently, in particular service-resistant individuals.⁸

HUD cautions that gaining cooperation from participating service providers and ensuring the count is administered correctly and consistently can present a challenge, which proved true in this case. HUD suggests maintaining contact with agencies throughout the data collection period as one strategy, which was adopted for this count.⁹

A count sheet was chosen as the survey instrument and the count was conducted by service providers who are in contact with homeless youth. A street count was not used for this initial effort because it was anticipated that there would not be a significant number of young people on the streets who would not be counted through a service provider. As HUD indicates, a public places count is suited to jurisdictions that are believed to have many homeless people living in a place not fit for human habitation who rarely access services.¹⁰

The initial hope was that a point-in-time count could be achieved by asking respondents where they stayed on the night of January 31st, 2007 (the day before the data collection began).¹¹ This was not realistic for this effort because those counted may not have been able to recall where they had stayed up to a month earlier.

Service providers (rather than the count designer) administered the count to ensure individuals could be counted as soon as they were encountered and that there was a level of trust and familiarity between the administrator and respondent. The count was not self-administered to increase the reliability of the data and avoid problems for those respondents who cannot read and/or write.

The count sheet was distributed to the following 66 participating service providers who serve, or are on occasion in contact with, homeless youth. In addition to these organizations, 24 others not listed below were contacted, but did not participate either because they do not serve homeless youth or direct contact could not be made after several attempts.

⁸ HUD's Homeless Assistance Programs, *A Guide to Counting Unsheltered Homeless People*, 44.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 44.

- AIDS Saint John
- Alcoholics Anonymous, Saint John
- Boys and Girls Club
- Canadian Mental Health Association, Saint John Branch
- Centracare
- Church of St. Andrew & St. David
- Church of the Good Shepherd
- Community Information Centre
- Community Mental Health Services
- Corner Stone Baptist Church
- Coverdale Centre for Women
- Crescent Valley (through Vibrant Communities)
- Domestic Violence Outreach
- Family and Community Services, Saint John
- Family Plus/Life Solutions
- Family Resource Centre
- First Steps Housing Project
- Forest Glen Community Centre
- Forest Hills Baptist Church
- Fundy Crisis Pregnancy Center
- Gentle Path Counselling Services
- Greater Saint John Ministerial Association
- Harbour View High School, Guidance Department
- Hillcrest United Baptist Church
- Homeless Women's Shelter Service
- Housing Alternatives
- Immigrant and Refugee Support Centre
- Inner City Youth Ministry
- John Howard Society, Saint John Branch
- Main Street Baptist Church
- North End Community Centre
- ONE Change
- Open Door Club
- Options Employment Outreach
- Ridgewood Addiction Services
- River Valley Food Bank
- Romero House Soup Kitchen
- Safe Spaces Fundy Region
- Saint John Community Chaplaincy
- Saint John East Food Bank
- Saint John High School, Guidance Department
- Saint John Learning Exchange
- Saint John Nonprofit Housing
- Saint John Police Force
- Saint John Public Health Office
- Salvation Army Booth Centre
- Salvation Army Community and Family Services
- Second Stage Safe Haven
- Sexual Health Centre
- SHARE Activity Centre
- Simonds High School, Guidance Department
- Somerset Community Centre
- South End Area Community Action Team (SEACAT)
- St John's Stone Church
- St Mark's United Church
- St Vincent de Paul Society
- St. Luke's Anglican Church
- St. Malachy's Memorial High School, Guidance Department
- The Resource Centre for Youth in Greater Saint John (TRC)
- United Church Clothing Depot
- University of New Brunswick Saint John, Student Services
- Urban Core Support Network
- Village Association
- West Side Food Bank
- Woodlawn Learning Centre
- Youth Choices

Service providers were initially contacted by phone starting January 18th (2 weeks prior to the data collection period) to secure their participation. Count sheets were distributed by e-mail, fax, postal mail, and in person, depending on the organization's preference. (A flyer for the TRC's interview series with homeless youth was also distributed with the count sheets because it had the same distribution list.)

Email reminders were sent to participating organizations after the count's halfway point to remind them about the count and address any questions or concerns.

Participating organizations were contacted after the data collection period (starting March 1st) to make arrangements to collect completed count sheets. Of the 66 participating organizations, 11 submitted count sheets. (In fact, 13 organizations submitted completed count sheets; however, two entries were not included in the count because they were duplicates.)

2.1a YOUTH HOMELESSNESS COUNT SHEET

A one-page count sheet was designed with count information on the front and instructions for count administrators on the back (see Appendix). The count sheet was intentionally kept brief for the benefit of both the administrator and respondent. While it would have been beneficial to collect more in-depth information on individuals' needs and characteristics, the increased time commitment would have increased the likelihood of undercounting. The following is an explanation of each section of the count sheet:

ORGANIZATION'S INFORMATION

The top of the count sheet gathered information on the count administrator (contact name, organization, and location if different from the organization), as well as the date and time of the count, which was useful for preventing duplication and ensuring that counting occurred during the data collection period. Administrators were also asked to indicate the average number of homeless youth they serve per month (see page 11).

PRE-COUNT INFORMATION

Prior to counting an individual, the administrator was asked to: introduce her or himself if necessary, explain that the count was being conducted to improve programs and services for homeless youth, and assure the individual they would remain anonymous.

QUESTION 1

The respondent was asked if they had previously been counted in the survey as one safeguard against duplication. If they were, the administrator was instructed to discontinue the count. The administrator was also asked to ensure the individual knew they were being counted to avoid being counted elsewhere.

QUESTION 2

The individual was asked if they were homeless at the time they were counted, and space was provided for an explanation of their shelter situation. If respondents did not see themselves as homeless, but the administrator determined they met the count's criteria, they were instructed to count the youth as homeless.

QUESTION 3

The respondent was asked for their date of birth, which was also useful in preventing duplication. If they declined, they were asked their age, and if they declined to give their age, the administrator was instructed to provide an estimate.

QUESTION 4

This question provided space to record the respondent's sex.

QUESTION 5

The respondent was asked to give as much identifying information as they were comfortable relaying, with the understanding that it would be used to prevent duplication only and would not be used to identify them. This information included the respondent's first three letters of their first name, middle initial, last three letters of their last name, as well as notable identifiers: build, clothing, ethnicity, facial hair, length/colour of hair, scars, tattoos, etc.

QUESTION 6

The last question asked whether the respondent could identify other homeless youth for the count and, if so, the best way to make contact with them.

INSTRUCTIONS

The instructions were included on the back of the count sheet for administrators to reference during the count. Instructions were also included on the front in *[square brackets]* for most questions. Administrators were asked to familiarize themselves with the sheet before conducting the count. The count was designed for the administrator to ask respondent questions and write down their answers.

Administrators were asked to count homeless youth they were in contact with through their organization in the city of Saint John (whether the youth accessed their services or not) by completing a sheet for each individual. Service providers were also able to count individuals they were in contact with through their outreach work or by phone.

Administrators were reminded that counting was only to take place between February 1 and 28, 2007. They were urged to count individuals as they came into contact with them, rather than wait until the end of the data collection period. They were also instructed to prioritize questions 2 and 3 if they were not able to get answers to all questions, and to return all count sheets including those partially completed.

A space was provided following the instructions for the administrator to include comments on the count.

DEFINITION OF HOMELESS YOUTH

The definition of *homelessness* and *youth* differs widely. For these purposes the following definitions were used:

Youth was defined as those between 16 and 24 years of age. Young people under 16 years were excluded from this effort because they fall under the care of the New Brunswick Department of Family and Community Services.

Homeless individuals were defined as those who are:

- living in a place not meant for human habitation: abandoned building, bus or bus stop, commercial establishment (ex: ATM), outdoors (ex: alley, bench, bridge, doorway, forest, park, sidewalk, tent, etc.), stairwell, vehicle, etc.
- staying at an emergency shelter or temporarily living in a hotel/motel
- temporarily staying with friends or relatives (i.e. “couch surfing”)
- a resident of a transition house who was admitted because they were homeless

Examples of individuals who did not meet the count criteria include those who are:

- at-risk of homelessness (i.e. those who were one step away from homelessness because of a lack of affordable, healthy, safe, or stable housing, etc.)
- living in permanent supportive housing

Those at-risk of homelessness were excluded because identifying precursors to homelessness was thought to be too complicated for this initial effort.

2.1b PREVENTING DUPLICATION

HUD notes that duplication is a major challenge for all homeless counts, particularly when there is the possibility of counting the same individual at separate locations on different days. To help prevent duplication HUD recommends gathering information on individuals’ unique identifiers.¹²

The safe guards used in this count to prevent and identify duplicate entries were: the date and time of the count, asking the individual whether they were previously counted, the individual’s date of birth, as well as the first three letters of their first name, middle initial, last three letters of their last name, and notable identifiers (build, clothing, ethnicity, facial hair, length/colour of hair, scars, tattoos, etc.).

While there was concern that including identifying information would deter respondents, it was incorporated because the count took place over such a relatively long period, involved numerous administrators, and there were not enough questions to easily identify duplicate entries. Administrators could count individuals without listing identifying information (as one organization opted to do), which was a safeguard against undercounting.

¹² HUD’s Homeless Assistance Programs, A Guide to Counting Unsheltered Homeless People, 50-51.

All 47 completed count sheets were analyzed for duplication. Two were identified as duplicates, and the remaining 45 were accepted as unique. A small risk of duplication—insufficient to exclude the entries from the count—was noted as follows:

- 16 youth who were homeless during February were recorded after the data collection period. These entries present a risk for duplication because the individual could not indicate if they had previously been counted. (In fact, the two duplicate entries were submitted for individuals counted post-data collection period.)
- Three count sheets did not include any identifying information—date of birth, portions of their name, or notable identifiers—which also presents a risk for duplication.
- There were some inconsistencies in the completed count sheets, for example the age and date of birth did not match in several entries, and in one case the *first* three letters of the individual's last name were recorded rather than the *last* three letters. Mistakes that were identified were corrected, but the potential for other errors of this kind also presents a risk for duplication.

A summary of information recorded to safeguard against duplication is as follows:

Date and time

All 45 entries included a date, while 26 included a time.

Previously counted

16 sheets were completed by 5 service providers post-data collection period, and so for these entries the first question, on whether the individual had already been counted, could not be answered. The remaining 29 indicated that the individual had not been previously counted.

Date of birth

35 entries included a date of birth. Outside the two duplicate entries, no two entries were the same date.

Portion of name

40 entries included the first three letters of the individual's first name, while two indicated the first letter of the individual's first name.

17 entries included the individual's middle initial.

41 entries included the last three letters of the individual's last name, while one indicated the last two letters of the individual's name.

Outside the two duplicate entries, no two entries had the same letter combinations.

Notable identifiers

5 entries included 1 notable identifier; 2 entries included 2 notable identifiers; 1 entry included 3 notable identifiers; and 1 entry included 5 notable identifiers.

2.1c UNDERCOUNTING

While there was not much likelihood of over-counting, there was a strong prospect undercounting occurred.

Homeless youth tend to fly under the radar and therefore are very difficult to count. Because the count was conducted through service providers, it missed those homeless youth who do not access services, as well as those who do use services but did not during the data collection period.

One hope was that homeless young people would be able to identify others for the count. The count sheet asked just that, and although some respondents indicated they could, none indicated a means of contacting the individuals.

Another hope was to get a ballpark figure of the average number of homeless youth participating service providers serve per month, to help gauge the extent of undercounting. Only three organizations gave this information, so these results could not be analyzed.

In theory, the count sheet was designed so that as long as an administrator indicated an individual was homeless and provided an estimate of their age, the individual could be counted. In practice, some individuals were not counted because they did not wish to identify their personal information. In one case a service provider encountered two young people sleeping in a bank ATM area, but these individuals were not counted because they declined to give information to the administrator. Another service provider also encountered a few homeless youth who declined to participate because they did not want to impart personal information. Some service providers indicated they may have undercounted for other reasons including: cancelled appointments with homeless youth, understaffing, a reluctance of homeless youth to identify themselves to organizations, and in a few cases, administrators' extended absences during the time of data collection.

An address is required to access food banks and social assistance benefits, and so individuals could have been missed by participating food banks and the New Brunswick Department of Family and Community Services if they avoided identifying themselves as homeless by providing an address.

Another contributing factor to the likelihood of an undercount was that after agreeing to participate, a couple of organizations—including a key group that serves the target population—did not participate because they did not want to complete the count sheets or were too busy during the count period.

As mentioned, a flyer for the TRC's youth homelessness project was distributed with the count sheet. This caused confusion for a service provider who believed the two projects were one in the same and opted to distribute the flyers rather than complete the count paperwork. This may also have resulted in undercounting.

2.2 REVIEW OF FINDINGS

A total of 45 homeless youth aged 16 to 24 years were identified through the count, representing roughly 0.5% of the population of young people in this age range in the city.¹³ This figure is believed to be an undercount, but the degree is uncertain. The number could be as high as 100, as estimated during the HDC's meeting with service providers who work with homeless youth in the city.

Slightly more females (23 individuals; 51.1%) than males (22 individuals; 48.9%) were identified through the count.

Homeless youth were counted by the following organizations:

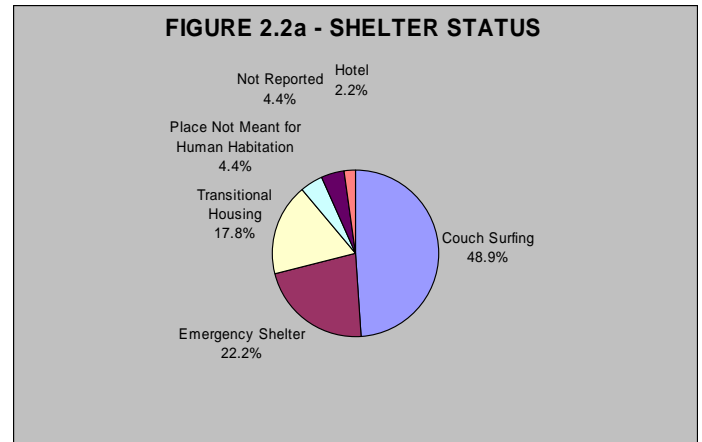
- AIDS Saint John (*counted 3 individuals; 6.7%*)
- Coverdale Centre for Women (*counted 1 individual; 2.2%*)
- First Steps Housing Project (*counted 8 individuals; 17.8%*)
- Homeless Women's Shelter Service (*counted 7 individuals; 15.6%*)
- John Howard Society, Saint John Branch (*counted 5 individuals; 11.1%*)
- ONE Change (*counted 9 individuals; 20.0%*)
- Salvation Army Booth Centre (*counted 3 individuals; 6.7%*)
- Salvation Army Community and Family Services (*counted 2 individuals; 4.4%*)
- The Resource Centre for Youth (TRC) (*counted 4 individuals; 8.9%—including 2 through their outreach work at Romero House and 1 through their outreach work at the Salvation Army Community and Family Services*)
- An organization on the East Side that could not be identified because of privacy issues (*counted 2 individuals; 4.4%*)
- An organization in the South End that could not be identified because of privacy issues (*counted 1 individual; 2.2%*)

Two duplicate entries were received from Community Mental Health Services and an organization in the North End that cannot be identified because of privacy issues.

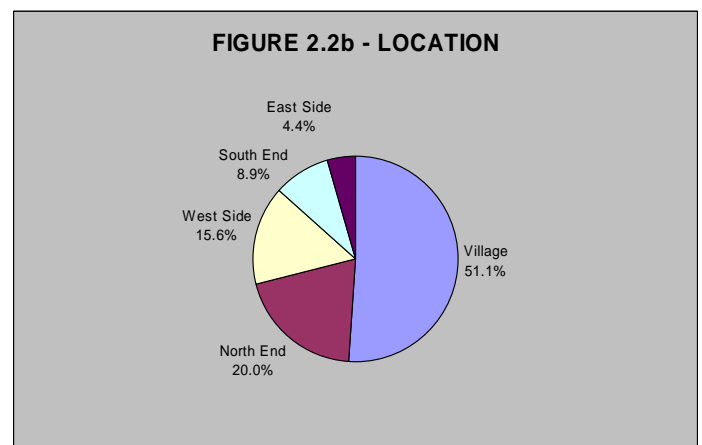
¹³ Statistics Canada, Saint John (City) Community Profile 2001, <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/Profil01/CP01/Index.cfm?Lang=E>.

Counted individuals sought shelter in various places including:

- Couch surfing: temporarily staying with friends or relatives (22 individuals)
- Emergency shelter arrangements (10 individuals)
- Transitional housing (8 individuals)
- A place not meant for human habitation (2 individuals)
- Not reported (2 individuals)
- Temporarily staying in a hotel (1 individuals)



A little over half (23 individuals) of the homeless youth were counted in Saint John’s Village neighbourhood, while a fifth (9 individuals) were counted in the North End, and close to a sixth (7 individuals) were counted on the West Side. Only a few individuals were counted in the South End (4 individuals) and on the East Side (2 individuals).



The most counted age was 18 years (10 individuals; 22.2%); while only one 22 year old was counted. Over half of those counted were 17 to 19 years of age (25 individuals; 55.6%).

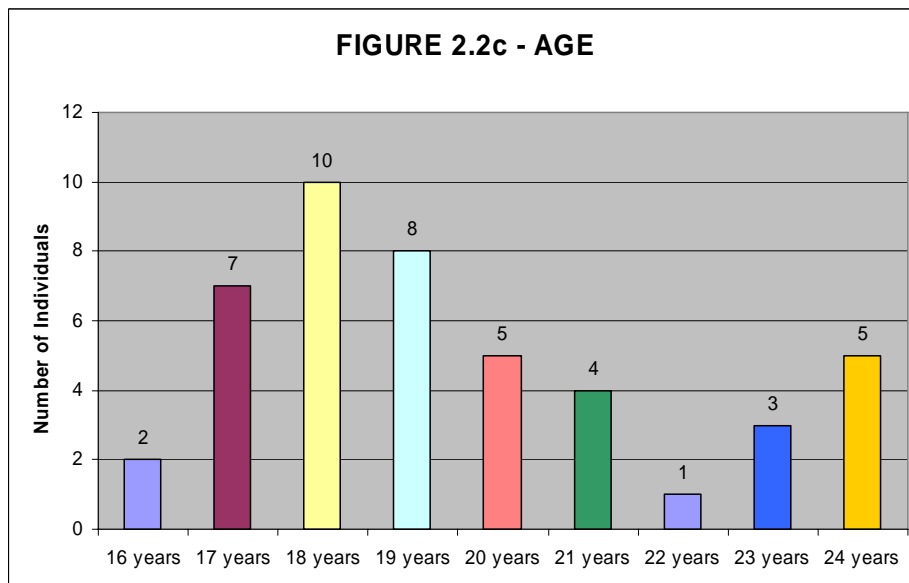


TABLE 2.2a – COMPLETE COUNT RESULTS (EXCLUDING IDENTIFYING INFORMATION)

#	DATE	TIME	LOCATION	PREVIOUSLY COUNTED	HOMELESS	SHELTER STATUS	AGE	SEX	IDENTIFYING INFORMATION
1	31/01/07 *	11:00am	Salvation Army Community and Family Services	No	Yes	Temporarily with friends	17	Female	Date of birth First 3 letters of first name Last 3 letters of last name
2	31/07/07 *	11:00am	Salvation Army Community and Family Services	No	Yes	Temporarily with friends	19	Male	Date of birth First 3 letters of first name Last 3 letters of last name
3	01/02/07**		Homeless Women's Shelter Service		Yes	Homeless Women's Shelter resident	18	Female	Date of birth First 3 letters of first name Last 3 letters of last name
4	01/02/07**		Homeless Women's Shelter Service		Yes	Homeless Women's Shelter resident	21	Female	Date of birth First 3 letters of first name Last 3 letters of last name
5	01/02/07	3:00pm	First Steps Housing Project	No	Yes	First Steps resident	20	Female	Date of birth First 3 letters of first name Middle initial Last 3 letters of last name
6	01/02/07	3:05pm	First Steps Housing Project	No	Yes	First Steps resident	19	Female	Date of birth First 3 letters of first name Middle initial Last 3 letters of last name
7	01/02/07	3:30pm	First Steps Housing Project	No	Yes	First Steps resident	17	Female	Date of birth First 3 letters of first name Middle initial Last 3 letters of last name
8	01/02/07	3:35pm	First Steps Housing Project	No	Yes	First Steps resident	17	Female	Date of birth First 3 letters of first name Middle initial Last 3 letters of last name
9	01/02/07	3:39pm	First Steps Housing Project	No	Yes	First Steps resident	24	Female	Date of birth First 3 letters of first name Middle initial Last 3 letters of last name

#	DATE	TIME	LOCATION	PREVIOUSLY COUNTED	HOMELESS	SHELTER STATUS	AGE	SEX	IDENTIFYING INFORMATION
10	02/02/07**	8:30am	Coverdale Centre for Women		Yes	Couch surfing	24	Female	Date of birth First 3 letters of first name Middle initial Last 3 letters of last name 1 Notable identifier
11	04/02/07**		Homeless Women's Shelter Service		Yes	Homeless Women's Shelter resident	18	Female	Date of birth First 3 letters of first name Last 3 letters of last name
12	07/02/07**		Homeless Women's Shelter Service		Yes	Homeless Women's Shelter resident	24	Female	Date of birth First 3 letters of first name Last 3 letters of last name
13	09/02/07	10:15am	Salvation Army, Community and Family Services***	No	Yes	With friends (couch surfing)	19	Female	Date of birth First 3 letters of first name Middle initial Last 3 letters of last name
14	13/02/07**		Homeless Women's Shelter Service		Yes	Didn't indicate, called organization seeking shelter	17	Female	Date of birth First 3 letters of first name Last 3 letters of last name
15	13/02/07**		Homeless Women's Shelter Service		Yes	Didn't indicate, called organization seeking shelter	17	Female	Date of birth First 3 letters of first name Last 3 letters of last name
16	13/02/07		ONE Change	No	Yes	Couch surfing	18	Female	First 3 letters of first name Last 3 letters of last name
17	13/02/07	7:20pm	Salvation Army Booth Centre	No	Yes	Salvation Army Booth Centre resident	20	Male	Date of birth First 3 letters of first name Last 3 letters of last name
18	14/02/07	11:17am	Romero House***	No	Yes	Temporarily with aunt	21	Male	Date of birth First 3 letters of first name Last 3 letters of last name
19	15/02/07**		Homeless Women's Shelter Service		Yes	Couch surfing	24	Female	First 3 letters of first name Last 3 letters of last name
20	15/02/07		ONE Change	No	Yes	Couch surfing	18	Male	First 3 letters of first name Last 3 letters of last name

#	DATE	TIME	LOCATION	PREVIOUSLY COUNTED	HOMELESS	SHELTER STATUS	AGE	SEX	IDENTIFYING INFORMATION
21	15/02/07		ONE Change	No	Yes	Couch surfing	16	Male	First 3 letters of first name Last 3 letters of last name
22	15/02/07	11:42am	Romero House***	No	Yes	Salvation Army Booth Centre resident	18	Male	Date of birth First 3 letters of first name Middle initial Last 3 letters of last name
23	19/02/07		ONE Change	No	Yes	Living in a place not meant for human habitation	16	Male	First 3 letters of first name Last 3 letters of last name
24	19/02/07	5:17pm	The Resource Centre for Youth (TRC)	No	Yes	Staying temporarily with a friend	19	Male	Date of birth First 3 letters of first name Middle initial Last 3 letters of last name
25	20/02/07	3:00pm	AIDS Saint John	No	Yes	Couch surfing	~18	Female	Organization's client code
26	20/02/07	3:00pm	AIDS Saint John	No	Yes	Living in a place not meant for human habitation	19	Male	Organization's client code
27	20/02/07	3:00pm	AIDS Saint John	No	Yes	Couch surfing	~21	Male	Organization's client code
28	21/02/07		ONE Change	No	Yes	Couch surfing	18	Male	First 3 letters of first name Last 3 letters of last name
29	21/02/07		ONE Change	No	Yes	Couch surfing	19	Male	First 3 letters of first name Last 3 letters of last name
30	21/02/07	3:00pm	ONE Change	No	Yes	Staying in a hotel temporarily	18	Female	Date of birth First 3 letters of first name Last 3 letters of last name
31	22/02/07		ONE Change	No	Yes	Couch surfing	19	Male	Date of birth First 3 letters of first name Last 3 letters of last name
32	23/02/07**	11:30am	Anonymous organization on the East Side****		Yes	Couch surfing	18	Male	Date of birth First letter of first name Middle initial Last 3 letters of last name 5 Notable identifiers

#	DATE	TIME	LOCATION	PREVIOUSLY COUNTED	HOMELESS	SHELTER STATUS	AGE	SEX	IDENTIFYING INFORMATION
33	23/02/07	2:30pm	Salvation Army Booth Centre	No	Yes	Couch surfing	20	Male	Date of birth First 3 letters of first name Middle initial Last 3 letters of last name
34	23/02/07	3:00pm	ONE Change	No	Yes	Couch surfing	20	Male	Date of birth First 3 letters of first name Last 3 letters of last name
35	27/02/07	10:00am	Salvation Army Booth Centre	No	Yes	Salvation Army Booth Centre resident	17	Male	Date of birth First 3 letters of first name Middle initial Last 3 letters of last name
36	27/02/07**	11:00am	Anonymous organization in the South End****		Yes	Couch surfing	17	Female	Date of birth First 3 letters of first name Middle initial Last 3 letters of last name 2 Notable identifiers
37	27/02/07**	2:45pm	Anonymous organization on the East Side****		Yes	Couch surfing	18	Male	Date of birth First letter of first name Middle initial Last 2 letters of last name 3 Notable identifiers
38	28/02/07**		John Howard Society		Yes	Living in emergency shelter arrangements at John Howard	19	Female	Date of birth First 3 letters of first name Last 3 letters of last name 1 Notable identifier
39	28/02/07**		John Howard Society		Yes	Living in emergency shelter arrangements at John Howard	20	Male	Date of birth First 3 letters of first name Last 3 letters of last name 2 Notable identifiers
40	28/02/07**		John Howard Society		Yes	Temporarily with friends	22	Male	Date of birth First 3 letters of first name Last 3 letters of last name 1 Notable identifier

#	DATE	TIME	LOCATION	PREVIOUSLY COUNTED	HOMELESS	SHELTER STATUS	AGE	SEX	IDENTIFYING INFORMATION
41	28/02/07**		John Howard Society		Yes	Living in emergency shelter arrangements at John Howard	23	Male	Date of birth First 3 letters of first name Last 3 letters of last name 1 Notable identifier
42	28/02/07**		John Howard Society		Yes	Temporarily with friends or relatives	24	Male	Date of birth First 3 letters of first name Last 3 letters of last name 1 Notable identifier
43	28/02/07	4:15pm	First Steps Housing Project	No	Yes	First Steps resident	23	Female	Date of birth First 3 letters of first name Middle initial Last 3 letters of last name
44	28/02/07	4:20pm	First Steps Housing Project	No	Yes	First Steps resident	23	Female	Date of birth First 3 letters of first name Middle initial Last 3 letters of last name
45	28/02/07	4:25pm	First Steps Housing Project	No	Yes	First Steps resident	21	Female	Date of birth First 3 letters of first name Middle initial Last 3 letters of last name

* *These individuals were counted prior to the start of data collection; however, the count administrator believes they were homeless into February*

** *These individuals were counted post-data collection period in March because the organization was not able to count them during February, which is why question 1 could not be answered. The date given is a date during February the service provider was in touch with the individual.*

*** *These individuals were counted off-site by staff at The Resource Centre for Youth (TRC)*

**** *These organizations cannot be identified because of privacy issues*

~ *These ages are an estimate*

TABLE 2.2b - LOCATION

NEIGHBOURHOOD	#	%
East Side	2	4.4%
North End	9	20.0%
South End	4	8.9%
Village*	23	51.1%
West Side	7	15.6%
<i>Total</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

* Area bordered by Union Street, Crown Street, City Road, Station Street & Smythe Street

TABLE 2.2c - SEX

SEX	#	%
Female	23	51.1%
Male	22	48.9%
<i>Total</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

TABLE 2.2d - AGE

AGE	#	%
16 years old	2	4.4%
17 years old	7	15.6%
18 years old	10	22.2%
19 years old	8	17.8%
20 years old	5	11.1%
21 years old	4	8.9%
22 years old	1	2.2%
23 years old	3	6.7%
24 years old	5	11.1%
<i>Total</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

TABLE 2.2e – AGE & SEX COMPARISON

AGE RANGE	FEMALE	MALE	#	%
Homeless youth 16-18 years old	11	8	19	42.2%
Homeless youth 19-21 years old	6	11	17	37.8%
Homeless youth 22-24 years old	6	3	9	20.0%
<i>Total</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

TABLE 2.2f – SHELTER STATUS

SHELTER SITUATION	FEMALE	MALE	#	%
Couch surfing (temporarily staying with friends or relatives)	7	15	22	48.9%
Emergency shelter arrangements	5	5	10	22.2%
Transitional housing	8	0	8	17.8%
Living in a place not meant for human habitation	0	2	2	4.4%
No reported	2	0	2	4.4%
Temporarily staying in a hotel	1	0	1	2.2%
<i>Total</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

3.0 HOMELESS SHELTERS IN FREDERICTON AND MONCTON

Shelter services available to homeless youth in the cities of Fredericton and Moncton are reviewed below as examples of best practices in these areas. Shelter services in Fredericton include the Fredericton Emergency Shelters (Men's Shelter and Grace House) and Chrysalis House. Moncton's shelter services include Harvest House, House of Nazareth, and Moncton Youth Residences. All except one are only available to those 16 years and older.

3.1 FREDERICTON SHELTERS

3.1a FREDERICTON EMERGENCY SHELTERS

Fredericton Emergency Shelter Inc. is a nonprofit organization that operates two shelters: the Men's Shelter and Grace House for Women, which provide 14,000 bed nights a year for homeless individuals.

The Men's Shelter (opened in 1983) serves men *16 years and older*. It can accommodate up to 40 individuals (if they use cots and couches) and often runs at capacity during the winter. Grace House (opened in 2001) serves women *16 years and older*, and can accommodate up to 11 residents at a time, and also often runs at capacity.

Residents at both shelters can be admitted without a referral and the length of stay depends on the individual's situation. While clients of the shelters are admitted free of charge, if they are receiving income they are charged a fee (prorated according to their income).

The shelters run 23 hours a day, seven days a week with a curfew of 10pm in the summer, and 8pm in the winter.

3.1b YOUTH IN TRANSITION: CHRYSALIS HOUSE

Youth in Transition is a nonprofit organization that addresses the needs of at-risk and homeless *females* between *16 and 19 years of age* by providing supportive living arrangements coupled with programming aimed at imparting independent living skills and improving self-esteem. Their residence, Chrysalis House, is a family-like setting that offers safety along with assistance with education, employment, and health care. Youth in Transition was incorporated in 1990, and Chrysalis House opened its doors six years later.

Young women may be referred by service providers or by self-referral. Prior to admission, the New Brunswick Department of Family and Community Services conducts a home assessment for potential residents to determine whether their home is unsuitable or unsafe. While the home is not specifically designated as a shelter (it focuses on

transition), they will take in homeless female youth off the street provided they meet their admission criteria. Youth living in abusive situations are given priority.

Chrysalis House can accommodate up to eight residents at a time, and usually houses between six and eight. There is no limit on the length of time a resident may stay—if they come to Chrysalis House on their 16th birthday, they could stay until their 20th.

Youth in Transition is the only organization in Fredericton that focuses exclusively on the needs of female youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. There is no complimentary organization in the city for males.

3.2 MONCTON SHELTERS

3.2a HARVEST HOUSE

Harvest House is a nonprofit organization that runs a drop-in centre; men's, women's and apartment-style family residences; as well as an emergency shelter.

Their emergency shelter serves men and women *of any age* and can accommodate up to 20 individuals. Between noon and 4pm it serves as a drop-in centre and opens again as a shelter after that. Residents have access to showers and a washer and dryer, as well as breakfast. There is no limit on the length of stay (the average is one month). Clients are admitted free of charge, unless they are receiving income, in which case they are charged a fee (prorated according to their income).

3.2b HOUSE OF NAZARETH (MAISON NAZARETH)

The House of Nazareth, established in 1979, is a nonprofit shelter that serves men, women, and families. This shelter can accommodate up to 30 individuals and as a rule does not run at capacity (the average is 16 residents a night). *The shelter accepts all ages, except in the case of an unaccompanied young person who must be 16 years or older.* Individuals can be admitted without a referral, and the length of stay depends on the individual's situation. There is no cost to stay at the shelter regardless of income.

3.2c MONCTON YOUTH RESIDENCES

Moncton Youth Residences (MYR), founded in 1985, provides services for at-risk youth and their families within an integrated, multi-component continuum of care to help them change or eliminate obstacles to their success. MYR provides care to youth between 10 and 24 years of age who have behavioural, emotional, or social problems. In addition to MYR's outreach programs and residential services, their Youth Q.U.E.S.T. program offers the following to homeless youth:

Transitional Housing Program

This program (coupled with a four-month after-care program) is used by *youth aged 16 to 20* who are homeless (or potentially homeless) to stabilize and change their lives by residing in a secure environment that offers the opportunity to learn skills—anger management, budgeting, employment, nutrition, social and life skills, and self-esteem—that will lead to greater self-sufficiency.

Youth Quest Central

This multi-resource centre for *youth aged 16 to 24* who are homeless or at risk of homelessness includes academic upgrading, counselling, directional planning, laundry and shower facilities, information sessions, a media and communication centre, vocational and job-readiness training, and artistic and recreational programming.

Although both Fredericton and Moncton have shelter arrangements for homeless youth, both are lacking a non-transitional emergency shelter designated specifically for youth (both female and male).

4.0 DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

As with most initial efforts, this count had limitations including the prospect of double-counting and undercounting.

This effort did however lay the ground work for future counts on the homeless youth population in Saint John. The community would benefit from an annual count that is expanded to the entire homeless population of the city (and perhaps the outlining areas). Data collection methods for an annual count should be refined over time to increase reliability.

For the reasons discussed earlier, a month-long data collection period was used for this effort. A shorter period that could provide a point-in-time count is something to work towards. Of note is that this month-long collection period saw many individuals change shelter arrangements. A few were couch surfing at the beginning of the month until they were admitted into an emergency shelter. Others' shelter status changed daily, often dependent on the weather or their ability to find a safe place to lay their head.

There would also be a benefit to extending research beyond quantitative work to a qualitative assessment of the needs and characteristics of homeless youth.

Cross-Canada learning and networking opportunities are important for strengthening the community's capacity to tackle youth homelessness. Beyond the Street in St. John's, NL was Canada's first national youth homelessness conference, held at the end of September of this year. This gathering focused on three priorities: 1) strengthening existing partnerships and developing new ones; 2) highlighting successful Canadian homelessness initiatives that provide youth a role; and 3) developing action plans and strategies for delegates to take back to their communities. This conference was instrumental in informing the work of this project and creating important national connections for the eight Saint John delegates in attendance. It is important that Saint John continue to be well represented at such national gatherings.

The stakeholders brought together by the HDC voiced the need for an emergency shelter for youth. Whether Saint John explores the benefits of a standalone youth emergency shelter or establishing a response to youth homelessness similar to the best practices found in Fredericton and Moncton, it is clear the city is in need of a means of housing the 45-plus young people who find themselves without a home in Saint John. Finally, it is important to note that in addition to these homeless youth, many young people remain in at-risk situations at home.¹⁴ An alternative, such as a youth shelter, could be the opportunity they need to leave these unsafe conditions.

¹⁴ Kraus, Eberle, and Serge, *Environmental Scan on Youth Homelessness*, 12.

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APPENDIX: YOUTH HOMELESSNESS COUNT SHEET
COUNT OF HOMELESS YOUTH IN THE CITY OF SAINT JOHN
FEBRUARY 2007

ORGANIZATION: _____ **CONTACT PERSON:** _____

LOCATION OF COUNT (IF NOT AT ABOVE ORGANIZATION): _____

DATE: ____/____/____ **TIME COUNTED:** ____:____ am/pm
 dd mm yy

ESTIMATE OF THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF HOMELESS YOUTH (BASED ON THE DEFINITION ON THE BACK OF THIS SHEET) YOUR ORGANIZATION SERVES PER MONTH: _____

1) Introduce yourself to the individual if necessary; 2) explain that the count will help improve programs/services for homeless youth; and 3) indicate that they will remain anonymous.

1. HAS THE INDIVIDUAL ALREADY BEEN COUNTED IN THIS SURVEY (HERE OR ELSEWHERE)?

[Ensure the individual knows they are being counted by you to avoid being counted again elsewhere.]

Yes *[if yes, discontinue the count]* No Do not Know

2. IS THE INDIVIDUAL HOMELESS AS OF TODAY? [as defined on the back on this sheet]

Yes No *[if no, discontinue the count]*

[If the individual does not see themselves as homeless, but you have determined they are according to the criteria on the back of this sheet, please count them as homeless.]

Explain their shelter status in the space below, example, living: in a place not meant for human habitation (abandoned building, alley, tent, under a bridge, vehicle, etc.), in a shelter, temporarily with friends or relatives (i.e. "couch surfing"), etc.

3. AGE?

DATE OF BIRTH: ____/____/____ **→ AGE:** ____ years old **→ ESTIMATE OF AGE:** ____ years old
 dd mm yy *[if declined to give date of birth]* *[if declined to give age]*

4. SEX?

Female Male

5. INFORMATION TO PREVENT DUPLICATION

[Explain that this information will be used to prevent double counting only, and will not be used to identify them. Gather as much information as the individual will provide.]

First 3 letters of first name: Middle initial: Last 3 letters of last name:

Notable identifiers (build, clothing, ethnicity, facial hair, length/colour of hair, scars, tattoos, etc.):

6. CAN THE INDIVIDUAL PUT US IN TOUCH WITH OTHER HOMELESS YOUTH FOR THIS COUNT?

Yes No If yes, indicate in the space below the best way to make contact with them.

INFORMATION FOR COUNT ADMINISTRATOR

Thank you for participating in the Human Development Council's count of homeless youth in the city of Saint John. The study is being conducted to estimate the number of young people in the city who are homeless, to help strengthen the community's response.

Please count homeless youth you are in contact with through your organization (whether they access your services or not) by completing a sheet for each individual. If your agency has an outreach program, you may count those you come into contact with on the street. You may also count those you speak with by phone.

This count will take place in the city of Saint John during the month of February: February 1 to 28, 2007. Please complete a sheet for each individual as you come into contact with them (so long as schedules provide), rather than wait until the end of the data collection period.

Those who fit the count criteria are youth between 16 and 24 years of age who are homeless and living within city limits on the day they are counted (during the month of February only). *Only those who meet these criteria are eligible to be counted.* For these purposes, homeless youth include those who are:

- living in a place not meant for human habitation: abandoned building, bus or bus stop, commercial establishment (ex: ATM), outdoors (ex: alley, bench, bridge, doorway, forest, park, sidewalk, tent, etc.), stairwell, vehicle, etc.
- staying at an emergency shelter or temporarily living in a hotel/motel
- temporarily staying with friends or relatives (i.e. "couch surfing")
- a resident of a transition house who was admitted because they were homeless

Examples of individuals who do not fit the count criteria include those who are:

- at-risk of homelessness (i.e. those who are one step away from homelessness because of a lack of affordable, healthy, safe, or stable housing, etc.)
- living in permanent supportive housing

If you have any questions about whether a respondent is homeless, please contact us to verify, or write down as much about their shelter situation as possible under question 2. Question 2 & 3 are the most important, so please prioritize them if you are not able to get answers to all questions for some individuals. Please return all count sheets, including those that are partially completed.

The count is designed for you to write down the individual's answers. Please read through the sheet so you are familiar with its contents before administering it, and contact us for clarification if necessary. Additional instructions for you as the administrator are included in *[square brackets]* for most questions. Please contact us if you require additional count sheets. Thank you again for your participation!

USE THE SPACE BELOW TO SHARE ANY COMMENTS YOU HAVE ABOUT THIS COUNT:

CONTACT KATHRYN ASHER TO ARRANGE PICKUP OF THIS SHEET

Tel: 506.636.8544 or Email: coordinator@sjyc.ca

Or return by mail or fax to:

Human Development Council, 3rd floor City Market

47 Charlotte Street, PO Box 6125 Station A

Saint John, NB E2L 4R6

Fax: 506.636.8543