

# The 2000 Count of Homeless Persons



THE CITY OF  
**CALGARY**  
COMMUNITY STRATEGIES

## **Homeless Persons, 2000**

The City of Calgary has completed the fifth in a series of biennial surveys of various downtown shelter and non-shelter service providers on a designated night to determine both the numbers of homeless persons who were served by such services and observed sleeping on the street. Data is now available for the years 1992, 1994, 1996, 1998, and 2000. For the purpose of these studies, homeless persons are considered to be those who do not have a permanent residence to which they can return whenever they so choose.

It is important to recognize that the counts tend to underestimate the actual number of homeless persons in downtown Calgary. For example, they do not include those who stayed with friends or family on the night of the count, those who slept in vehicles or abandoned buildings where they would not have been seen and those outside of the observation catchment area. The counts do serve two very useful functions however. They provide a current snapshot of our homeless population, its size and characteristics. And, they enable us to examine how this population changes over time.

### **Method**

The night chosen for the 2000 count was Wednesday, May 17. This night was selected as it fell close to the dates of previous counts and fell on a day that was both mid-week and mid-month - when the spike and trough effects of income receipt on the number of homeless persons are minimized. There are two separate methodologies used to obtain the count. The first is a survey of shelters and services, the other is a count of individuals found spending the night outdoors or on the streets by teams of volunteers.

Temperatures were warm and seasonable on the night of 2000 May 17, with showers in the later part of the evening.

It should be noted that on the morning of 2000 May 16 one day prior to the count, the Calgary Police conducted an operation to relocate several homeless individuals who were believed to have been living in Edworthy Park. Although only one person was identified and relocated, this operation attracted a significant amount of media attention and it is therefore difficult to determine what impact this may have had on the results of the street count.

### **Shelter and Services Count**

Twenty-three organizations were invited and participated in the survey including men's hostels, women's shelters, emergency services (e.g., Red Cross), police services, and hospitals. The number of agencies participating in the count was expanded in 2000 to include Centre 2032, an emergency shelter that was opened in 1999 to meet the growing demands for emergency shelter beds. As it did in 1998, the 2000 count also includes transitional shelter beds at the Mustard Seed, Anchorage, and Booth Centre. Inclusion of these beds better represents the reality of the shelter network in downtown Calgary.

Participating organizations were asked to record the total number of homeless persons spending the night of 2000 May 17, in their facility. Information was gathered on the number of families (defined as a couple, a couple with children or a single adult with children) and clients' observed age, sex, and racial characteristics (i.e., Aboriginal, Visible Minority or Caucasian).

Agencies were also asked to note their maximum capacity; the number of persons to whom shelter was refused that evening, the reason for shelter refusal; and any unusual events or circumstances which may have affected the count (e.g., inclement weather, unusual numbers, etc.). The agencies returned their results to the City of Calgary.

## Street Count

In addition to the shelter count, fifteen teams of volunteers (three per team) were assigned to various geographic areas in the city - with a focus on the downtown core - from nine p.m. until midnight to count the number of people whom they had observed spending the night on the streets. Volunteers were asked to observe and record the sex and racial characteristics of the homeless persons they encountered. An effort was made to include an Aboriginal volunteer on each team to enhance the team's ability to identify Aboriginal homeless individuals.

## Results of the 2000 Count

A total of 1,296 homeless persons were counted on the night of 2000 May 17. 1,128 individuals were counted using shelters and services, while 168 were counted on the streets. Of the total individuals counted, 20% were females (n= 256) and 80% were males (n=1040) (Table 1). It should be noted that while women made up only 20% of the total count, they accounted for 33% (n=55) of the street count. Several areas outside of the downtown core were added to the street count in 2000, however, no homeless individuals were found in these new areas.

The majority (43%) of persons were observed to be males between 25 and 44 years of age (n=556). Of the total number of homeless individuals counted, 51% (n=656) were between 25-44 years of age and 23% (n=294) were between 45-64 years of age, while 1.5% (n=20) were seniors 65 years or older.

**Table 1. Age and Sex Distribution of Homeless Persons**

Age Group	Female		Male		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
0-5	11	0.8	15	1.2	26	2.0
6-12	13	1.0	13	1.0	26	2.0
13-18	32	2.5	45	3.5	77	5.9
19-24	52	4.0	136	10.5	188	14.5
25-44	100	7.7	556	42.9	656	50.6
45-64	36	2.8	258	19.9	294	22.7
65+	3	0.2	17	1.3	20	1.5
Unknown	9	0.7	0	0.0	9	0.7
Total	256	19.7	1,040	80.3	1,296	99.9

Thirty homeless families were counted in shelters on the night of 2000 May 17. These families included 26 children under the age of six and 25 children aged six to twelve. Seventy-seven youth (aged 13-17) were counted in total with 41 counted in the shelters and 36 counted on the streets. A total of 188 young adults (19-24 years) were counted either in shelters and services or on the streets.

With respect to observed racial characteristics (see Table 2), the majority of persons counted were observed to be Caucasian (74%, n=964), followed by Aboriginal persons (20%, n=251), and visible minorities (7%, n=85). The observed racial characteristics of 26 persons were unknown. Of the total number of Aboriginal persons counted, a disproportionate number were found to have been on the streets (20%, n=51) as compared to Caucasian persons (10%, n=92). This study found that one third (n=51) of all individuals counted on the streets were Aboriginal.

**Table 2. Observed Race of Homeless Persons**

	Aboriginal		Visible Minority		Caucasian		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Street Count	51	4.0	3	0.2	92	7.2	146	11.5
Shelter Count	200	16.0	82	6.5	842	66.3	1124	88.5
Totals	251	20.0	85	6.7	934	73.5	1270	100

**Table 3. Percentage of Observed Race by Location Counted of Homeless Persons**

	Street Count		Shelter Count		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aboriginal	51	20.32	200	79.68	251	100
Visible Minority	3	3.53	82	96.47	85	100
Caucasian	92	9.85	842	90.15	934	100
Total	146	11.50	1,124	88.50	1,270	100

On 2000 May 17, most shelters were filled or nearly filled to capacity and a few were over capacity. Agencies reported that ninety-eight homeless persons were refused shelter that night because the shelters were full. Another nine persons were refused because of alcohol/drug use; two people were refused for other reasons (behavior/hygiene) and five because they fell outside the shelter's target group. Agencies reported that they had referred the majority of persons refused shelter to other agencies, however it is not know if those individuals were successful in obtaining shelter that evening. Persons refused shelter were not included in the total count for May 17; however, some of them may have been counted as part of the street count. Of the ninety-eight persons refused shelter, some of these individuals may have been counted more than once if they were refused shelter by more than one agency or counted as part of the street count.

### **Trend Analysis**

In comparing the 1998 (n=988) and 2000 (n=1,296) total counts, there has been an increase of 308 homeless persons counted, representing a 31% increase over two years.

The street part of the count in 1998 found 38 homeless individuals, whereas the 2000 count, identified 168 homeless individuals, a 342% increase. For the 2000 street count, the methodology was expanded geographically, making it difficult to determine whether the number of homeless people on the street has increased, or whether the means of counting them was more effective. The weather may also have contributed to a higher count in 2000, as there was a considerable amount of rain the evening of 1998 May 21, and homeless persons may have been in less visible street accommodations.

In 1998, the shelter and services part of the count identified 910 homeless individuals. In the 2000 count, 1,091 homeless individuals were identified in emergency shelters, shelters for victims of family violence and in hospitals and police services. This represents an increase of 20% increase (n=181). Part of this increase (n=150) can be attributed to the inclusion of a shelter facility (Centre 2032) which did not exist in 1998. This shelter facility was added in 1999 to meet the increased demand for emergency shelter beds.

A further 25 individuals were counted at Inn from the Cold, an agency that did not operate on the night of 1998 May 21.

An historical analysis of the percentages of homeless individuals by age, sex and racial characteristics indicates that there have been a few changes in the composition of the total population from previous counts. The following outlines some of the variances observed between previous counts and 2000 May 17.

- In 1996, males accounted for 76% of the total number of homeless individuals counted. In 1998, that number increased to 86% and this year has decreased slightly to 80%.
- Females made up 24% of the total homeless count in 1996. In 1998, that number dropped to 14%. In the 2000 count, the percentage of females counted increased to 20% (n=256)
- Males (age 25-64) represented 60% of the counted homeless population in 1996. In 1998, this group increased to 71%. This percentage decreased in 2000 to 63%.
- In 1996, children and youth (age 0-24) accounted for 23% of the total number of homeless individuals counted. In 1998, that percentage decreased to 19% and this year has increased to 24%.
- 1.5% of individuals were observed to be seniors (65 years and over) in 2000, this number has continued to increase very slightly from 1.3% in 1998 and 0.2% in 1996.
- In 1994, 22% of persons counted were observed to be Aboriginal. This number decreased to 20% in 1996, increased in 1998 to 18% and increased again in 2000 to 19%.
- Visible minorities accounted for 4% of persons counted in 1994 and increased in 1996 to 6%. In 1998 visible minorities decreased to 3% of the total number of persons counted and in 2000, they increased to 7%.
- The number of Caucasian persons counted in 1996 was 73%, this number increased in 1998 to 77% and in 2000, decreased to 72%.
- In 1996, there were 28 families on the night of the count using emergency shelters. This count found 30 families using an emergency shelter, a decrease from the number (n=36) counted in 1998.

**Table 4. Observed Racial Characteristics of Homeless Persons Counted, 1994, 1996, 1998 and 2000**

	1994		1996		1998		2000	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aboriginal	101	21.9	121	19.7	182	18.4	251	19.4
Visible Minority	20	4.3	37	6.0	28	2.8	85	6.6
Caucasian	331	71.8	448	72.8	760	76.9	934	72.1
Unknown	9	2.0	9	1.5	18	1.8	26	2.0
Total	461	100	615	100	988	100	1296	100

**Table 5. Number of Homeless Persons Counted by Surveyed Agencies, 1992, 1994, 1996, 1998, and 2000**

Agencies	Number of Persons				
	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000
General Shelters					
Alberta Safe House Society	4	8	8	10	9
Avenue 15	13	15	16	10	9
Calgary Alpha House Society **	26	41	50	82	58
Calgary Drop-In Centre	120	110	182	139	159
Calgary Drop-In Centre 110 /Mayland				54	72
Calgary Drop-In Centre/Centre				88	48

110					
Calgary Drop-In Centre/Centre 2032					150
Connection Housing (no longer in operation)			18		
Harbour Light (no longer in operation)	38				
Inn From The Cold					25
Mustard Seed		5	14	103	111
Salvation Army - Anchorage			18	62	49
Salvation Army - Booth Centre	139	160	176	269	256
Salvation Army - House				13	17
<b>Women's Shelters</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>2000</b>
Calgary Native Women's Shelter			20	23	20
Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter	27	32	28	24	37
YWCA - Mary Dover House			26	8	54
YWCA - Sheriff King ***	30	21	20	25	17
Subtotal	397	392	576	910	1,091
<b>Non Shelter Agencies</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>2000</b>
Alberta Family & Social Services	2	2	0	9	6
Calgary Police Service*	16	5	9	25	11
Calgary Urban Projects Society (CUPS)*	0	34	15	0	
Foothills Hospital		0	0	4	1
General Hospital (no longer in operation)	3	0	0		
Holy Cross Hospital (no longer in operation)	0	0			
Latour Centre		3			
Peter Lougheed Hospital		0	0	0	0
Red Cross				2	19
Rockyview Hospital		0	0	0	0
Sonshine Centre	24	18			
Subtotal	45	62	24	40	37
<b>Street Count</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>2000</b>
Community Vitality And Protection *	5	7	15	38	168
Total	447	461	615	988	1,296
* These agencies participated in the street count, an outdoor sweep of the downtown and other identified areas outside of the core.					
** Alpha House admitted 58 individuals on May 17, 2000, however, not all stayed all night.					
*** YWCA Sheriff King reported that they were undergoing renovations and were operating under capacity.					

**Table 6. Age and Sex of Homeless Persons, 1994, 1996, 1998, and 2000\***

Age Group		1994		1996		1998		2000	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
0-24	Female	32	6.9	59	9.6	59	6.0	108	8.3

	Male	87	18.9	84	13.7	130	13.2	209	16.1
25-64	Female	41	8.9	87	14.1	75	7.6	136	10.5
	Male	240	52.1	369	60.0	705	71.4	814	62.8
65+	Female	0	0.0	1	0.2	3	0.3	3	0.2
	Male	11	2.4	15	2.4	13	1.3	17	1.3
Unknown	Female	2	0.4	0	0.0	1	0.1	9	0.7
	Male	7	1.5	0	0.0	2	0.2	0	0.0
Total	Female	75	16.3	147	23.9	138	14.0	256	19.8
	Male	345	74.8	468	76.1	850	86.0	1040	80.2
	Both Sexes	420	91.1	615	100	988	100	1296	100
* In 1992 no data was collected on age, sex or racial characteristics									

## Conclusion

Findings from the 2000 Count of Homeless Persons suggest that the numbers of homeless people in downtown Calgary continue to increase, however the rate of increase has slowed somewhat from that observed between 1996 and 1998.

When comparing the total homeless population by observed age, sex and racial characteristics to previous counts, the most notable trends observed were the decrease in the total percentage of men aged 25-64 sleeping in the shelters or on the streets, the increase in the total percentage of females counted and the increase in the percentage of children and youth counted.

The number of Aboriginal persons found on the street portion of the count was disproportionately higher than in the total count, with one third of the total street population counted being identified as Aboriginal.

It was also observed that women were over-represented on the street count as compared to the shelter and services count.