

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

November 21, 2014. The 2014 provincial count of people experiencing homelessness shows that since efforts to end homelessness started in 2008, homelessness has decreased by 16% across the Alberta's seven cities.

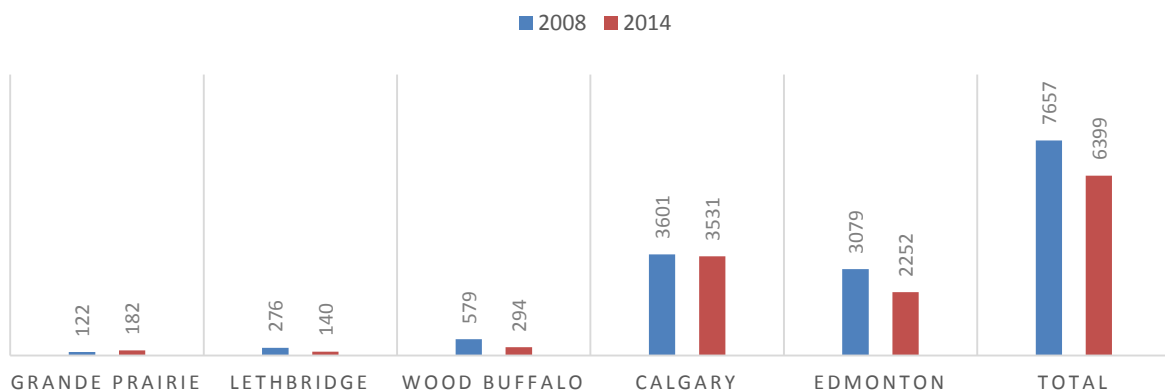
Working with the Government of Canada, the Government of Alberta, and with support from civic leadership, the seven cities have collectively housed nearly 10,000 people since 2009. The impact of these efforts have stemmed the growth in homelessness despite the pressures added by a growing economy and housing crunch. 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*.

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.

Overall Decline. Conducted in October 2014 in Calgary, Edmonton, Grande Prairie, The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat and Red Deer, the provincial count found **6,600** individuals experiencing homelessness in the province.

Comparing communities who conducted counts at different times of the year in 2008 to the 2014 count, this represents a **16%** reduction in homelessness. These figures do not include Medicine Hat and Red Deer as they did not conduct counts in 2008.

HOMELESS COUNTS IN 2008-2014



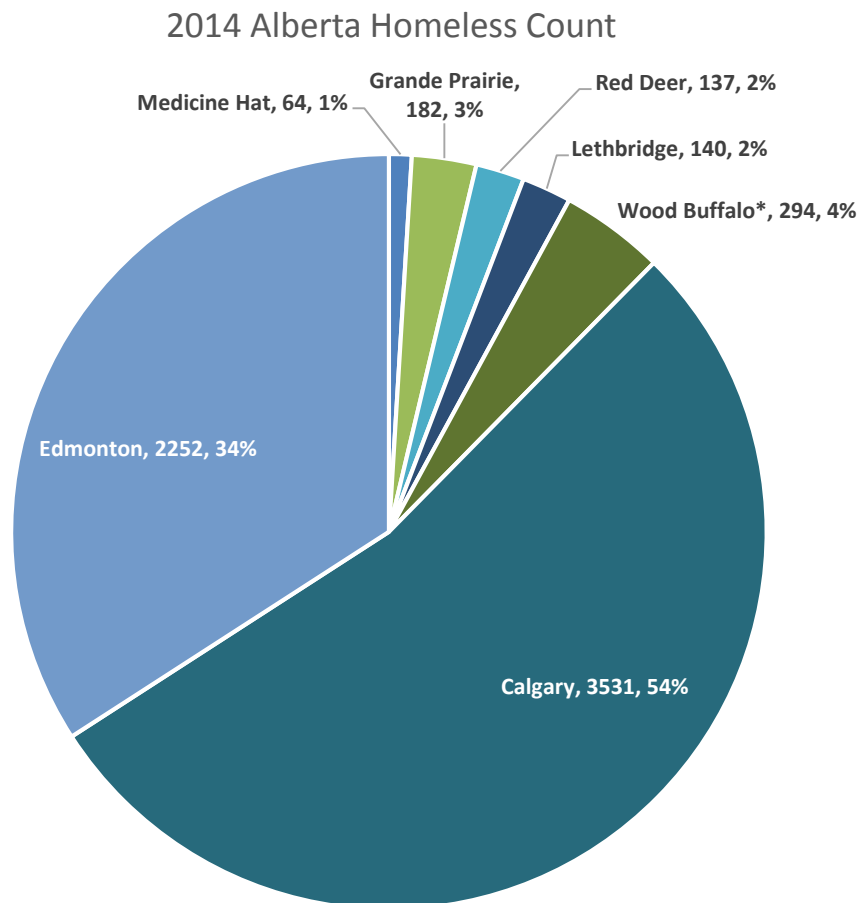
**Note the comparison only includes cities with counts in 2008.*

Note that major methodological changes occurred in 2014; however, the overall trend shows a decrease in homelessness from 2008-2014. Comparing results from the most recent 2012-2013 counts in communities (without Medicine Hat) show an overall stabilization trend with little change (less than 1% decrease) despite considerable economic growth during this period.

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 and future counts will improve from ongoing learnings.

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 a third. The remaining 12% were distributed between the 5 smaller centres of Medicine Hat (1%), Grande Prairie (3%), Red Deer (2%), Lethbridge (2%) and Wood Buffalo (4%).



**Note that Wood Buffalo enumerated those surveyed only.*

Contextualising the Trends

Population Growth. It is important that results of the counts must be contextualized in the broader economic trends impacting Alberta. All 7 cities are experiencing population growth at various levels. Medicine Hat remains relatively stable, while Calgary, Edmonton, and Wood Buffalo grew by more than 3% per year. This is in part related to the economic opportunities presented by Alberta cities.

Mobility in the homeless population. We see a considerable level of mobility among the homeless population surveyed – as many as 45% reported being new to the city within the past year – this is notably higher than the general population reported in the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS).

Mobility		
	General Population (<1yr) (NHS 2011)	Homeless 2014 PIT (<1yr)
Medicine Hat	5.0%	45%
Grande Prairie	10.5%	14%
Red Deer	19.2%	44%
Lethbridge	16.1%	27%
Wood Buffalo (0-6mns only)	25.9%	24%
Calgary	6.1%	18%
Edmonton	6.1%	13%
*Note the PIT figures represent responses as % of total valid surveys, as a result may not add to 100% due to other response categories or non-responses. The full report will include the full breakdown and figures may change as a result.		

Housing Market. Though vacancy rates increased marginally in some communities in 2014, they remain low and the average rental costs grew across the province, with the exception of Wood Buffalo, according to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC, 2014). With average rents being ranging from \$707 in Medicine Hat to \$1,969 in Wood Buffalo, they are beyond the means of low income Albertans.

Housing Affordability. In fact, about one-quarter of Albertans are experiencing housing affordability challenges (Statistics Canada, 2011), thereby impacting their housing stability and risk for homelessness.

	Housing Affd - Overspending on shelter >30% income (NHS 2011)
Medicine Hat	21.9%
Grande Prairie	22.6%
Red Deer	26.5%
Lethbridge	24.5%
Wood Buffalo	18.5%
Calgary	25.0%
Edmonton	24.6%

Over-representation of Indigenous Peoples. The over-representation of Indigenous Peoples in the homeless population remains an ongoing concern across the province. It is as high as 67% of those enumerated in Lethbridge, and consistently over 25% of the homeless population in the other communities.

	Aboriginal Population General Pop. (NHS 2011)	Aboriginal Homeless Population (2014 PIT)
Medicine Hat	4.6%	28%
Grande Prairie	9.7%	42%
Red Deer	5.2%	24%
Lethbridge	4.3%	67%
Wood Buffalo	11.3%	37%
Calgary	2.8%	32%
Edmonton	5.4%	40%
*Note the PIT figures represent responses as % of total valid surveys, as a result may not add to 100% due to other response categories or non-responses. The full report will include the full breakdown and figures may change as a result.		

Immigrants. Notable proportions of the surveyed population self-identified as having been born outside Canada. In Medicine Hat and Grande Prairie, immigrants were even over-represented compared to the general population.

	Immigrant Population General Pop. (NHS 2011)	Immigrant Homeless Population (2014 PIT)
Medicine Hat	7.2%	10%
Grande Prairie	6.6%	17%
Red Deer	10.6%	10%
Lethbridge	12.1%	11%
Wood Buffalo	15.4%	11%
Calgary	26.2%	20%
Edmonton	20.4%	9%
*Note the PIT figures represent responses as % of total valid surveys, as a result may not add to 100% due to other response categories or non-responses. The full report will include the full breakdown and figures may change as a result.		

Full Report

The data from the count will then be tabulated, and analyzed with the assistance of the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. A full report on the provincial count will be produced in January 2015, which will show the data trends, and break down the results. As the data presented here is preliminary, final results may change in the full report.

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 .

Contact

Susan McGee, Chair, 7 Cities; CEO, Homeward Trust Edmonton, at 780-905-1232 or smcgee@homewardtrust.ca.