

Updating the National Homelessness Estimate

Infrastructure Canada
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National Estimate of Homelessness Project

This project aims to develop an estimate of how many people experience homelessness in Canada each year. This will allow us to better align our reporting to our definition of homelessness

It has two components:

1. **Use existing national data to estimate the number people experiencing absolute homelessness** in shelters and in unsheltered areas. If possible, it will identify the communities with high concentration of homelessness overall, Indigenous homelessness and of chronic homelessness.
2. **Develop a methodology for estimating hidden homelessness**, which will then be used to generate a national estimate of homelessness that includes both absolute and hidden homelessness.

Objectives:

1. To establish the framework for calculating the national homeless population **that can be tracked over time**;
2. To map the extent and geographical distribution of absolute homelessness;
3. To create the foundation for a national estimate on homelessness that includes hidden homelessness.

Reaching Home Definitions of Homelessness



Homelessness:

- Homelessness is the situation of an individual or family who does not have a permanent address or residence; the living situation of an individual or family who does not have stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it.
- It is often the result of what are known as systemic or societal barriers, including a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household's financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination.

Indigenous Homelessness:

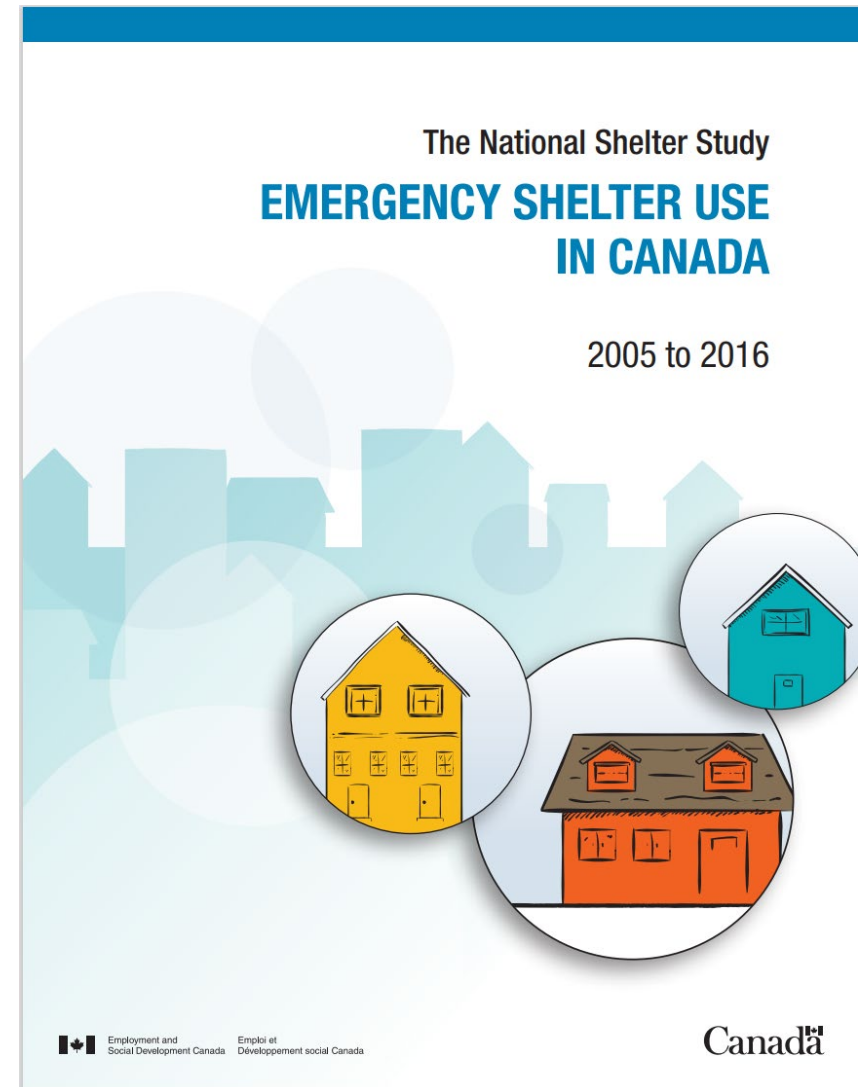
- Recognizing the diversity of Indigenous Peoples in Canada, and that Indigenous Peoples may choose to refer to themselves in their own languages, the following definition of Indigenous homelessness is inclusive of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, status and non-status persons, regardless of residency or membership status.
- For the purposes of Reaching Home, and subject to revision based on ongoing engagement and consultation with Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous homelessness refers to “Indigenous Peoples who are in the state of having no home due to colonization, trauma and/or whose social, cultural, economic, and political conditions place them in poverty. Having no home includes: **those who alternate between shelter and unsheltered, living on the street, couch surfing, using emergency shelters, living in unaffordable, inadequate, substandard and unsafe accommodations or living without the security of tenure; anyone regardless of age, released from facilities** (such as hospitals, mental health and addiction treatment centers, prisons, transition houses), **fleeing unsafe homes** as a result of abuse in all its definitions, and **any youth transitioning from all forms of care**”

Current situation



National Shelter Study

The National Shelter Study captures the majority of people who experience homelessness in shelters each year, and provides a longitudinal picture going back 15 years.



Reaching Home's National Shelter Study annual estimate of homelessness includes only the total number of individuals using homeless shelters in Canada. This methodology excludes several key locations.

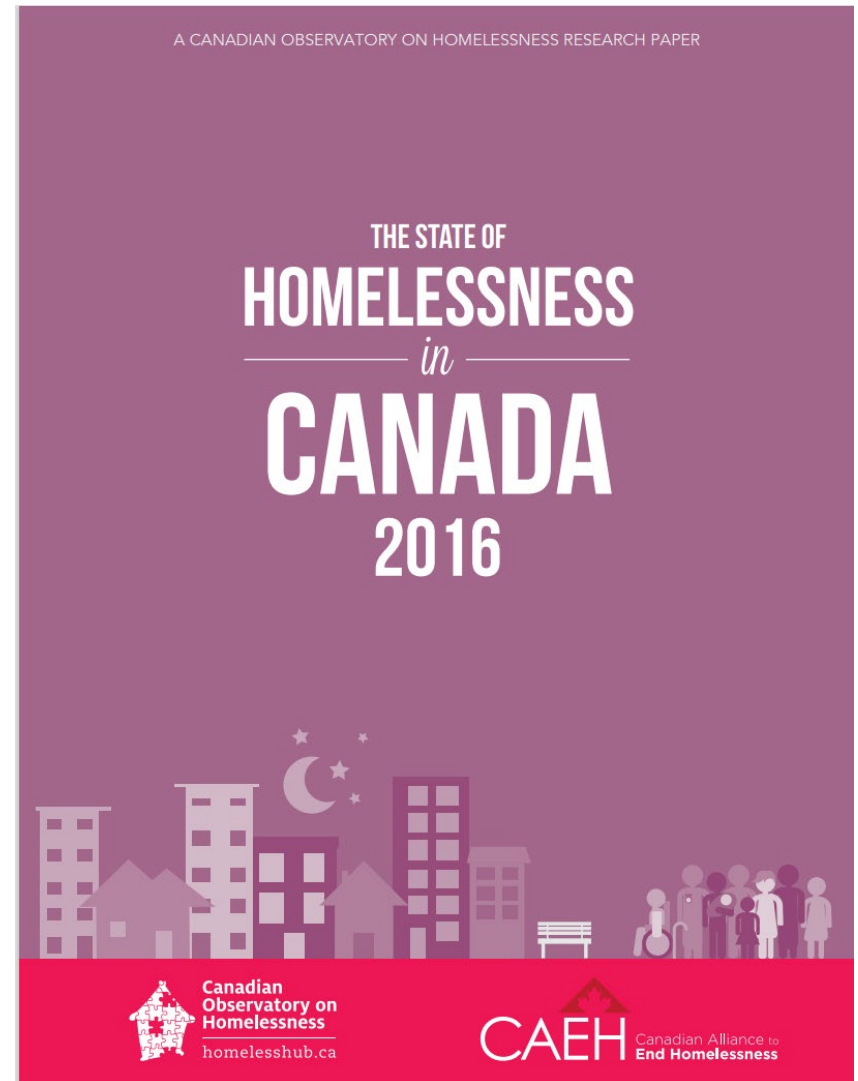
- ✓ Year-round emergency shelters
- ✗ Seasonal/Temporary/Emergency response sites
- ✗ Domestic Violence shelters
- ✗ Transitional housing/provisional housing
- ✗ Unsheltered locations
- ✗ Hidden homelessness

HOW can we improve?

- ✓ Use multiple data sources
- ✓ Improved methodologies and data collection practices

State of Homelessness in Canada

The State of Homelessness report captures homelessness in a wider range of contexts by combining data from various sources.



Updated/additional data sources



New National Shelter Study estimates (2017-2020)

The methodology for the National Shelter Study has been updated to respond to changes to the shelter system throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The study now includes estimates of homelessness from temporary shelters as well as permanent emergency shelters.

Updated and more nuanced Point-in-Time Count data (2020-2022)

Recent Point in Time Count surveys include additional questions about history of homelessness and service access to help refine estimates. It is one of the only surveys that asks about temporary and institutional accommodation.

Canadian Residential Facilities for Victims of Abuse (2017-2018)

This survey collects aggregate information from domestic violence shelters from across the nation including the total number of shelter admissions.

By Name List Data (to come)

This data source will include information on sheltered and unsheltered homelessness. It may give insight into historic hidden homelessness as well.

National Estimate of Homelessness Proposal

Homelessness context	Calculation	Data Source
Emergency Shelter	Total number of clients who accessed the permanent emergency and temporary shelter system	National Shelter Study: Emergency shelter Use in Canada. Reaching Home
Violence Against Women shelters (women)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0.77= adjustment factor to de-duplicate 0.60 = adjustment factor to count only the people who do not return home 60% of shelter users were adult women Total number of female adult shelter admissions in 2017/2018 $*(0.60)*(0.77)*(0.60)$ 	Moreau, Greg (2019). "Canadian Residential Facilities for victims of Abuse, 2017/2018). The Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. Catalogue no. 85-002-X, ISSN 1209-6393 adjusted based on 2015-2020 domestic violence shelter stays (see domestic violence deduplication estimates)
Violence Against Women shelters (children)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0.77= adjustment factor to de-duplicate 0.60 = adjustment factor to count only the people who do not return home 40% of shelter users were children Total number of child shelter admissions in 2017/2018 $*(0.40)*(0.77)*(0.60)$ 	Moreau, Greg (2019). "Canadian Residential Facilities for victims of Abuse, 2017/2018). The Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. Catalogue no. 85-002-X, ISSN 1209-6393 adjusted based on 2015-2020 VAW shelter stays (see VAW deduplication estimates)
Unsheltered	Number of nightly emergency shelter users *proportion of unsheltered persons who did not use shelters in the past year according to PIT $*(1+2/3)$	Estimated from PIT count results (national) and adjusted based on logic presented in Londerville & Steele (2014)
Temporary/ institutional accommodation	Number of annual emergency shelter users*proportion of temporarily accommodated persons who did not use shelters in the past year according to PI	Estimated from PIT count results (national). No adjustment to scale up nightly estimate to year.
Hidden Homelessness		TBD

Next Steps



Improved data collection and methodologies

- In the immediate term, focus on improving absolute homelessness measures.
 - E.g. explore the role of BNL data to improve and enhance national estimate.
- Continue to explore alternative approaches to estimating the prevalence of hidden homelessness.
 - Looking at international examples, such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics approach to measuring hidden homelessness using the national census

Challenges: Hidden Homelessness



- Need an annual measurement for our estimate but external data sources often measure over different time periods (lifetime, single night, etc.)
 - Lifetime measures will overestimate annual homelessness
 - Single night estimates will underestimate annual homelessness
- Alignment of definitions between Reaching Home and other researchers
 - Not everyone uses the same definitions for homelessness. The end goal is to align with Reaching Home definitions as much as possible.
- Duplication of people between homelessness contexts.
 - When using multiple datasets, it is possible that people are counted more than once because they experience homelessness in a variety of contexts throughout the year. Deduplication strategies must be employed to avoid over-estimation.
- No one internationally has truly achieved this yet.
 - There is no particular place that we can use to model our approach.

Comments/Questions



Thank you!

If you have any
additional questions,
please contact:
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Homelessness Data Advisory
Committee

National Estimate Working Group

Canadian Observatory on
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INFC's Information Management
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