



Summary of preliminary findings

Winnipeg Street Census 2015.

The Winnipeg Street Census marks the first ever attempt at a comprehensive view of homelessness in Winnipeg. We sought to ask not only how many people are homeless, but to learn why and to hear their stories. On the night of October 25, 2015, there were at least 1,727 people experiencing homelessness in Winnipeg.

Over 24 hours from October 25-26, 300 volunteers attended, or data was gathered from: 7 emergency, domestic violence and youth shelters, 9 transitional housing sites, 10 bottle depots, and 29 community agencies or drop-in locations for Winnipeg's first ever Street Census. Surveyors also walked almost 140km of inner city streets.

For this large-scale survey, everyone encountered was asked about their housing situation to evaluate the magnitude of homelessness in the city. Everyone whose circumstances fit the definition of homelessness was asked to complete a 19 question interview about them and their experiences.

Where people stayed

On the night of October 25, 2015, there were at least **1,727** people experiencing homelessness in Winnipeg.



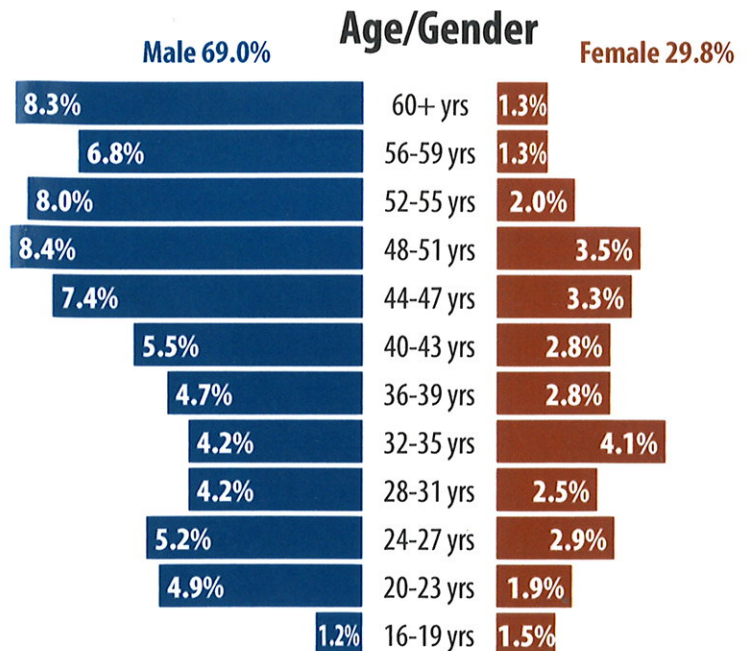
475 people in absolute homelessness

1,252 people provisionally accommodated

The age and gender breakdown is only from survey respondents. No one under the age of 16 was surveyed. Residents of family and women's shelters where children reside were part of this project and data from youth shelters was collected but not yet available.

The median age of people experiencing homelessness was **43**.

There were **86 youth** (12.2%), under the age of 25, and **18 seniors**, aged 65 or older.



4 participants (0.1%) identified as transgender⁴ and 4 (0.1%) identified as two spirit.



Events leading to homelessness

Youth homelessness leads to adult homelessness. The median age at which people first became homeless was **24** years, and the most frequent age was **18** years.

Of those experiencing homelessness for 10+ years, the majority (70%) first became homeless when they were **18** years or younger.

The most common reason people experienced homelessness for the first time was **family conflict or breakdown**. **40%** became homeless for this reason, and **1/4** of them experienced family violence.

Key Circumstances

Almost half, **49.1%** of people spent time in foster care or group homes.

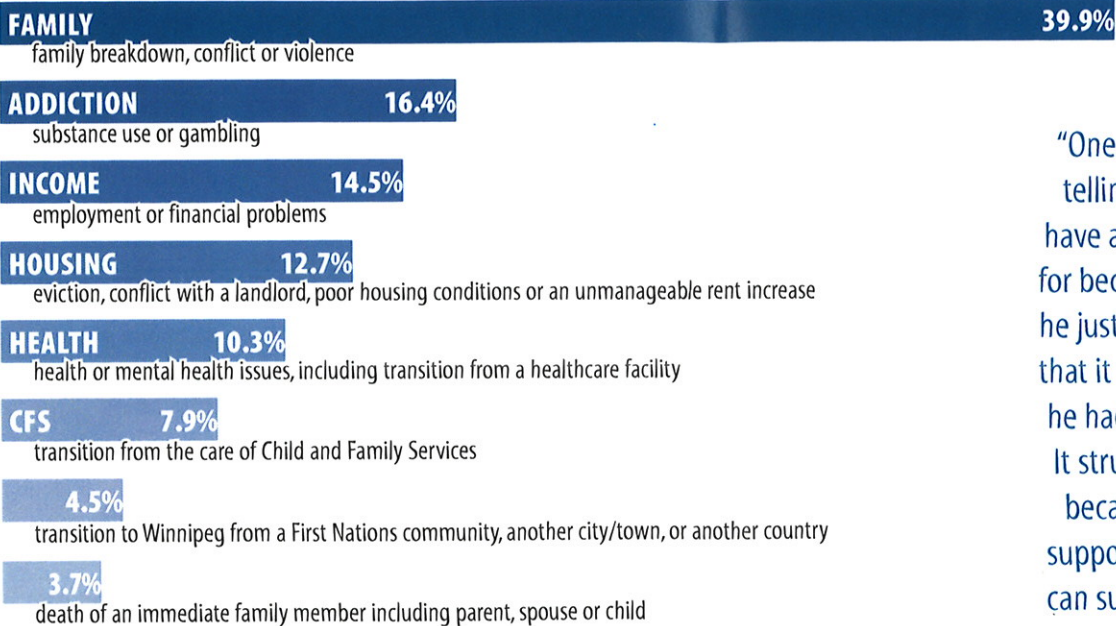
6.0% have served in the military or RCMP.

10.9% are part of LGBTQ community overall. 24.7% of youth (age 24 or under) are part of the LGBTQ community.

1.8% are recent immigrants or refugees (in Canada for 5 years or less).

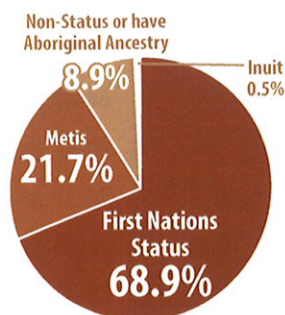
Reasons for first experience of homelessness

(Participants could select more than one reason)



“One gentleman was telling me he didn’t have a concrete reason for becoming homeless, he just realized one day that it was cold out and he had nowhere to go. It struck me how, just because of a lack of support, homelessness can suddenly happen.”

75.8% of respondents identify as **Indigenous**.



Indigeneity

49.9% of First Nations people grew up in a First Nations community.

57.8% of Indigenous people surveyed have been in foster care or group homes.

“He told his story simply even though it was filled with tragedy. From the 60’s scoop, residential school, and foster homes until CFS said “good-bye” at age 18, when he first became homeless. He had a family but it fell apart. They stayed in communication until his son was murdered and he lost it all... having his own place means he would live alone – he talked a while about how lonely that would be.”

Length of Time Homeless

People move in and out of homelessness as their life circumstances and supports change.

The average length of most **recent time** homeless was **9** months.

349 people experienced homelessness for **6 months or longer**.

The average cumulative length of time spent homeless over a **lifetime** was **36** months.

182 people experienced homelessness **3 or more times** in the past three years.

"I spoke with someone who was homeless for the first time when he was two. His mother struggled with alcoholism and as a result he struggles with FASD. His income of EIA disability isn't enough for him to get a place of his own on a permanent basis but he periodically has a stable home thanks to the help of his siblings."

Income

Income sources (respondents could choose more than one)

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE 34.3%

SELF / INFORMAL 17.2%

self or informal employment: busking, panhandling, squeegeeing, selling art, etc.

DISABILITY ASSISTANCE 16.3%

EMPLOYMENT 16.0%

formal, including temporary and part-time

FAMILY 6.4%

money from family or friends

SENIOR 5.2%

senior's benefits

2.7%

Employment Insurance or Workers' Compensation

NO INCOME 7.1%

48.6% said that **low income** is a barrier to finding housing.

Those with no income spoke about being cut-off, waiting for, or unable to receive income assistance. Some lacked the necessary identification. Others said they were eligible but felt too proud to ask for assistance.

Barriers and Challenges

The main challenges people faced in finding housing were:

INCOME 48.7%

low income, no income, lack of employment

HOUSING 37.6%

low vacancies, poor housing conditions, high rents and long waiting lists

ADDICTION 13.6%

SUPPORT 12.1%

lacking resources like transportation / damage deposit, and lacking support with life skills / finding housing

HEALTH 11.2%

health or mental health challenges

6.4%

family breakdown, conflict or violence

3.5%

criminal record

3.2%

discrimination

"The individual and their wife and three children moved to Winnipeg.

Depressed, he turned to drugs and had his kids taken into CFS like he was as a child. He felt like a failure and wanted to end his life by jumping off a bridge. A woman talked him down and got him help at a hospital. He was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and kept returning to drugs without knowing why."





WINNIPEG STREET CENSUS 2015

**We matter.
We count.**

StreetCensusWpg.ca

The Winnipeg Street Census

The Winnipeg Street Census is a survey conducted over a 24 hour period to gather information about the extent and nature of homelessness in Winnipeg. This information can be used to improve decision-making for funders, governments, and community organizations. Over time, it will be used to track progress on ending homelessness.

The Street Census follows an approach used by cities around the world. The method has been adapted to Winnipeg's local context based on input from local researchers, service providers, outreach teams, police and safety patrols, and people with experience of homelessness. On the night of October 25, trained volunteers went to Winnipeg's emergency and transitional

shelters to survey the individuals and families spending the night. The next day, volunteers surveyed people in places where people who are homeless spend their time: breakfast and lunch programs, libraries, resource centres, and more. From 4pm-7pm they walked 27 different routes to survey everyone they encountered about their housing circumstances.

Methods, Data & Limitations

The Winnipeg Street Census utilized the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness definition and typology of homelessness and housing exclusion⁵. In addition to survey data, administrative data about bed use on the night of October 25th has been gathered from emergency shelters, youth shelters, shelters for individuals and families impacted by domestic violence, and interim housing for people who are homeless (transitional housing). Some data has been provided by institutional, residential treatment, and community mental health residential programs for individuals who were homeless upon entering the residential setting, lost housing while in the setting, or will exit the program to homelessness. More data from these residential settings is still being gathered and analyzed.

Though the methods used in this project were comprehensive, it is virtually impossible to get an exact count of the homeless

population. Invisibility is a survival strategy for people experiencing homelessness. This was a voluntary survey and data is self-reported. The locations and routes where surveys took place were concentrated in the inner city and decided based on feedback from outreach teams, community agency staff and people who have experienced homelessness, however people experience homelessness and spend their time in other neighbourhoods too. The method vastly undercounts those who are staying temporarily with family, friends, or strangers and efforts were not made to identify overall numbers of those staying in hotels who do not have a permanent home. **Results should not be seen as an estimate of the hidden homeless population.**

More details about methodology, limitations and definitions will be available in a comprehensive report December 15, 2015.

Notes

¹This is the number of survey respondents staying temporarily at someone else's place with no guarantee of returning each night. Because people stay in these circumstances throughout Winnipeg and often do not utilize any services, this SHOULD NOT be seen as an estimate of the population in this circumstance.

²This is the number of survey respondents staying in a hotel or motel without a permanent home to return to. People staying monthly in hotels do not have tenancy agreements or legal protection. We did not include surveys from respondents staying at the Bell Hotel because it is considered to be permanent housing.

³Data from all healthcare and addictions treatment programs has not yet been received. Requests have also been made for data on people experiencing homelessness in the Corrections system, youth and children in emergency placements through Child and Family Services, and people receiving hotel vouchers due to flooding or fires. Therefore, this number will likely grow.

⁴Some respondents were transgender and chose to identify as the gender they have transitioned to. This number is therefore an underestimate.

⁵Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (2012) Canadian Definition of Homelessness. Homeless Hub: www.homelesshub.ca/homelessdefinition/