



Summary of key findings

Official Statistical Definition of homelessness (Table 1.CAN)

The Government of Canada's Homelessness Strategy defines homelessness as 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. Canada also has an official definition for chronic homelessness, and Indigenous homelessness.

Latest national estimates of homelessness (Table 2.CAN)

- 40 713 individuals, representing 0.11% of the total population (2020-2022)
- 63% are men, 35% are women
- Point-in-time count, based on Everyone Counts 2020-2022 – Third Nationally Coordinated PIT Counts
- ETHOS Light groups included:
 - ETHOS 1: Living on the streets, in public spaces
 - ETHOS 2: Emergency accommodation (e.g., shelters)
 - ETHOS 3: Accommodation for the homeless (e.g., hostels and women's refuges)
 - ETHOS 4: People in institutions
 - ETHOS 5: People in non-conventional dwellings (e.g., caravans, cars or tents)
 - ETHOS 6: Living temporarily with others in conventional housing (e.g., sofa-surfing)

Legal framework to collect data on homelessness (Table 3.CAN)

Data collection, for example through participation in the nationally coordinated PIT Counts, is typically mandated through community funding agreements. Funding agreements include requirements related to carrying out projects in compliance with all applicable federal, provincial and municipal laws, by-laws and regulations, including any environmental legislation and legislation related to protection of information and privacy. At the federal level, this would include the [Privacy Act](#), which provides for the protection of privacy of individuals with respect to personal information about themselves held by a government institution and that provide individuals with a right of access to that information.

National homelessness strategy (Table 4.CAN)

[Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy](#)

Approaches to collect data on homelessness (Table 5.CAN)

- Everyone Counts: Coordinated point-in-time counts of rough sleepers and people staying in shelters or other accommodation for the homeless (Table 5.1.CAN)
- National Shelter Study: Longitudinal, or flow (period), estimate of the number of emergency shelter users (Table 5.2.CAN)
- Shelter Capacity Report: Annual report updating to the capacity of emergency homeless shelters (Table 5.3.CAN)
- Canadian Housing Survey: Survey on housing needs and households' experiences (Table 5.4.CAN)
- National Census: Census records information from people living in shelters (Table 5.5.CAN)
- Homeless Individuals and Families Information System: Web-enabled case management system for service providers (Table 5.6.CAN)

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Table 1.CAN. Official statistical definition of homelessness

Homelessness	<p>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.</p> <p>In studies like the National Shelter Study, a narrower definition of homelessness is used due to limitations in data collection and availability. Homelessness, for statistical purposes, is defined as an individual who spends one or more nights in an emergency homeless shelter. This definition is the best estimate we have for homelessness in Canada, though it is recognised that it is likely an underestimate as it is not able to count those experiencing homelessness outside of emergency homeless shelters.</p>
Chronic homelessness	<p>Individuals who are currently experiencing homelessness and who meet one of the following criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. They have a total of at least 6 months (180 days) of homelessness over the past year; 2. They have recurrent experiences of homelessness over the past 3 years, with a cumulative duration of at least 18 months (546 days). <p>Individuals who are chronically homeless have spent time in the following contexts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Staying in unsheltered locations, that is public or private spaces without consent or contract, or places not intended for permanent human habitation; 2. Staying in emergency shelters, including overnight shelters for people experiencing homelessness (including those for specific populations, such as youth, families, and newcomers), shelters for people impacted by family violence, and emergency shelters for people fleeing a natural disaster or destruction of accommodation; 3. Staying temporarily with others without guarantee of continued residency or the immediate prospects for accessing permanent housing, or short-term rental accommodations (for example, motels) without security of tenure.
Indigenous homelessness	<p>Indigenous Peoples who are in the state of having no home due to colonisation, 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.</p>

Source: [Government of Canada's Homelessness Strategy Directives \(the Directives\)](#)



Table 2.CAN. Data on people experiencing homelessness

National data, presented according to [ETHOS Light Typology](#)

Headline estimate of homelessness (Individuals)	% of total population	ETHOS 1 People living rough	ETHOS 2 People in emergency accommodation	ETHOS 3 People in accommodation for the homeless	ETHOS 4 People living in institutions	ETHOS 5 People living in unconventional dwellings	ETHOS 6 People staying with family/friends
40 713 63% men 35% women	0.11%	9 301	24 969	6 443	Not included	Included under ETHOS 1	Not included

Type of count: Point-in-time Flow

Year: 2020-2022

Included in headline estimate: Children (<18)

Temporary accommodation for: Asylum seekers Refugees Victims/survivors of domestic violence

Notes: Gender-disaggregated data correspond to survey results from the same night of people experiencing homelessness in unsheltered locations, shelters, transitional housing, staying with others, hotel or motels, health or correction systems, and in unknown locations. The people surveyed do not necessarily correspond to the people enumerated (40 713 people were enumerated, while over 25 000 people responded to the survey). The enumeration only included ETHOS 1,2,3 and 5, while the survey included ETHOS 1,2,3,4,5 and 6. For federal reporting purposes, ETHOS 1 and 5 are both considered part of unsheltered homelessness. As such, the 9 301 people enumerated in unsheltered locations also includes those in unconventional dwellings, but cannot be broken down further. The gender breakdown does not sum to 100%, since gender diverse people make up roughly 2-3% of survey respondents.

Source: OECD Questionnaire on Affordable and Social Housing (QuASH), 2023; Infrastructure Canada (2020-2022), Everyone Counts

Table 3.CAN. Legal framework to collect data on homelessness

Law that governs data collection on homelessness	Privacy Act National Housing Strategy Act (2019)
Legal obligations	<p>At the national level, there is no legal obligation to conduct regular homeless counts; for instance, participation in the nationally coordinated PIT count is not mandatory for all Canadian communities, although participation is required under funding agreements for most communities receiving federal funding.</p> <p>Funding agreements include requirements related to carrying out projects in compliance with all applicable federal, provincial and municipal laws, by-laws and regulations, including any environmental legislation and legislation related to protection of information and privacy.</p> <p>At the federal level, this would include the Privacy Act, which provides for the protection of privacy of individuals with respect to personal information about themselves held by a government institution and that provide individuals with a right of access to that information.</p>

Table 4.CAN. National homelessness strategy

National homelessness strategy in place	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes: Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy <input type="checkbox"/> No, but regional and/or local strategies exist <input type="checkbox"/> No
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Table 5.CAN. Approaches to collect data on homelessness

5.1.CAN. Coordinated Point-in-Time Counts – “Everyone Counts”	
Description	
<p>Enumeration of people experiencing homelessness in shelters, unsheltered locations, non-conventional dwellings (e.g. tents, cars and makeshift shelters), and transitional housing on a single night. A survey is conducted at the same time with people staying in these locations, in addition to those staying in hotels/motels, institutions, and non-conventional dwellings, as well as hidden homelessness. The count is led by the designated Reaching Home Community Entity, Indigenous Homelessness Community Entity, a collaboration by the two or by a third-party contracted to lead the count.</p> <p>The official statistical data on homelessness in Canada are drawn from the results of these counts.</p>	
Type of count generated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Point-in-time <input type="checkbox"/> Flow (period) 	Methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Street count • Service-based method
Lead authority(ies) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure Canada (INFC) 	Source(s) of information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The results of the point-in-time count are reported to INFC.
Scope <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varies depending on the count • 87 communities (2020-2022), mostly in urban centres, but including some more remote areas 	Depth of data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key demographic characteristics (age, gender identity, sexual identity, racial identity, current health challenges, duration of homelessness etc.)
Frequency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Enumeration • Triennial Survey 	
ETHOS Light groups included <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ETHOS 1: Living on the streets, in public spaces <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ETHOS 2: Emergency accommodation (e.g., shelters) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ETHOS 3: Accommodation for the homeless (e.g., hostels and women’s refuges) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ETHOS 4: People in institutions <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ETHOS 5: People in non-conventional dwellings (e.g., caravans, cars or tents) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ETHOS 6: Living temporarily with others in conventional housing (e.g., sofa-surfing) <p>Note: Each ETHOS Light group includes one or more sub-categories of living situations. ETHOS Light groups are considered as “included” in the data collection approach if at least one of the sub-categories is counted</p>	
Notes <p>In recognition of the unique challenges of indigenous communities, the federal government has adopted a separate definition of homelessness for indigenous peoples and consults with indigenous peoples and communities to ensure that the PIT accounts for the underrepresentation of indigenous peoples in homelessness figures.</p> <p>Shelter-based surveys provide more in-depth information on the sheltered population, but are not used for the official enumeration.</p> <p>Infrastructure Canada - Everyone Counts 2020-2022- Full report</p>	



5.2.CAN. National Shelter Study

Description

Estimate of the number of users of emergency shelters across Canada. The most recent study covers the period 2005 to 2021. Domestic violence shelters, temporary shelters and transitional housing are excluded from the analysis.

<p>Type of count generated</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Point-in-time</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Flow (period)</p>	<p>Methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service-based method
<p>Lead authority(ies)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure Canada (INFC) 	<p>Source(s) of information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) and provincial and municipal partners that have data sharing agreements with the Government of Canada
<p>Scope</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National estimates, using data from 207 Emergency shelters across Canada (2021), covering approximately 70% of all shelter beds in Canada 	<p>Depth of data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key demographic characteristics of shelter clients (age, gender, geographic location etc.)
<p>Frequency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually 	

ETHOS Light groups included

- ETHOS 1: Living on the streets, in public spaces
- ETHOS 2: Emergency accommodation (e.g., shelters)
- ETHOS 3: Accommodation for the homeless (e.g., hostels and women’s refuges)
- ETHOS 4: People in institutions
- ETHOS 5: People in non-conventional dwellings (e.g., caravans, cars or tents)
- ETHOS 6: Living temporarily with others in conventional housing (e.g., sofa-surfing)

Note: Each [ETHOS Light group](#) includes one or more sub-categories of living situations. ETHOS Light groups are considered as “included” in the data collection approach if at least one of the sub-categories is counted

Notes

Exclusion of domestic violence shelters from the count may lead to an underrepresentation of women in the count.

[Infrastructure Canada - Homelessness Data Snapshot: The National Shelter Study 2021 Update](#)



5.3.CAN. Shelter Capacity Report

Description

Capacity report for emergency homeless shelters. Includes data on the number of emergency shelters, transitional housing and domestic violence shelters. It excludes shelters that do not primarily target people experiencing homelessness (such as shelters for immigrants/refugees or pregnant women), as well as motel/hotels, supportive housing and correctional shelters.

<p>Type of count generated</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Point-in-time</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Flow (period)</p>	<p>Methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service-based method
<p>Lead authority(ies)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure Canada 	<p>Source(s) of information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Service Provider List (NSPL)
<p>Scope</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All emergency homeless shelters in Canada 	<p>Depth of data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of beds by province, territory, community size and by clientele served • Disaggregated by emergency shelters, transitional housing and domestic violence shelters. • Disaggregated by number of shelters and beds serving exclusively men; exclusively women; both men and women; families; and exclusively youth.
<p>Frequency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual 	

ETHOS Light groups included

No groups directly counted, but provides information on the availability of various types of shelter resources

Notes

[Infrastructure Canada - Shelter Capacity Report 2021](#)



5.4.CAN. Canadian Housing Survey

Description

The Canadian Housing Survey (CHS) is a household survey that samples from the population and households living in private dwellings. It provides information on how Canadians feel about their housing and how housing affects them. Information is collected on core housing need; dwelling characteristics and housing tenure; perceptions of economic hardship from housing costs; support and childcare payments; dwelling and neighbourhood satisfaction; perceptions of neighbourhood issues and safety; housing moves including forced moves; community engagement; life and community satisfaction; self-assessed health; experience with homelessness; socio-demographic characteristics; and access to transportation.

Individuals who are unsheltered or living in collective dwellings like emergency relief shelters at the time of the survey are not in scope. However, the survey asks about past experiences with homelessness that include sheltered and unsheltered homelessness. The CHS can be used to do analysis on people who were unsheltered at one point in their lives, but not to inform the current count of homeless individuals and families.

<p>Type of count generated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Point-in-time <input type="checkbox"/> Flow (period) 	<p>Methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household survey • Administrative data
<p>Lead authority(ies)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistics Canada 	<p>Source(s) of information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative data on income and immigration • Respondents provide information
<p>Scope</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population and households living in private dwellings 	<p>Depth of data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographic characteristics for identifying population groups (age, gender, immigration, visible minority, Indigenous identity) and socioeconomic information on income, poverty, housing affordability and financial hardship.
<p>Frequency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biennial 	

ETHOS Light groups included

- ETHOS 1: Living on the streets in public spaces
- ETHOS 2: Emergency accommodation (e.g., shelters)
- ETHOS 3: Accommodation for the homeless (e.g., hostels and women’s refuges)
- ETHOS 4: People in institutions
- ETHOS 5: People in non-conventional dwellings (e.g., caravans, cars or tents)
- ETHOS 6: Living temporarily with others in conventional housing (e.g., sofa-surfing)

Note: Each [ETHOS Light group](#) includes one or more sub-categories of living situations. ETHOS Light groups are considered as “included” in the data collection approach if at least one of the sub-categories is counted

Notes

[Surveys and statistical programs - Canadian Housing Survey \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/99-011-x/2019001/article/00001-eng.htm)



5.5.CAN. National Census

Description

National Census collecting information from all Canadian households through online or paper questionnaires. The census asks questions about collective dwellings, which includes shelters.

Type of count generated <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Point-in-time <input type="checkbox"/> Flow (period)	Methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population Census
Lead authority(ies) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistics Canada 	Source(s) of information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population living in collective dwellings, including shelters
Scope <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National coverage 	Depth of data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key demographic characteristics of census respondents
Frequency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every five years 	

ETHOS Light groups included

- ETHOS 1: Living on the streets in public spaces
- ETHOS 2: Emergency accommodation (e.g., shelters)
- ETHOS 3: Accommodation for the homeless (e.g., hostels and women’s refuges)
- ETHOS 4: People in institutions
- ETHOS 5: People in non-conventional dwellings (e.g., caravans, cars or tents)
- ETHOS 6: Living temporarily with others in conventional housing (e.g., sofa-surfing)

Note: Each [ETHOS Light group](#) includes one or more sub-categories of living situations. ETHOS Light groups are considered as “included” in the data collection approach if at least one of the sub-categories is counted

Notes

[Census of Population \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www.statcan.gc.ca)



5.6.CAN. Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS)

Description

Developed by the Government of Canada, and in collaboration with communities across Canada, HIFIS is a comprehensive data collection and case management system designed to support the day-to-day operational activities of Canadian homeless service providers. HIFIS enables participating communities to collect, access, and share reliable real-time homelessness data on homeless individuals within the same community through web-enabled devices, such as laptops, smartphones, and tablets, in order to ensure homeless individuals are effectively prioritized and referred to appropriate services at the correct time.

<p>Type of count generated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Point-in-time <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Flow (period) 	<p>Methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information management system on individuals experiencing homelessness
<p>Lead authority(ies)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure Canada (INFC) 	<p>Source(s) of information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating communities across Canada
<p>Scope</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used by over 50 communities and by over 4500 service providers (2023) 	<p>Depth of Data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key demographic characteristics (age, gender, geographic location, etc.) • Services provided to client • Circumstances and outcomes of the client
<p>Frequency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing 	

ETHOS Light groups included

- ETHOS 1: Living on the streets in public spaces
- ETHOS 2: Emergency accommodation (e.g., shelters)
- ETHOS 3: Accommodation for the homeless (e.g., hostels and women’s refuges)
- ETHOS 4: People in institutions
- ETHOS 5: People in non-conventional dwellings (e.g., caravans, cars or tents)
- ETHOS 6: Living temporarily with others in conventional housing (e.g., sofa-surfing)

Note: Each [ETHOS Light group](#) includes one or more sub-categories of living situations. ETHOS Light groups are considered as “included” in the data collection approach if at least one of the sub-categories is counted

Notes

[Infrastructure Canada - Homeless Individuals and Families Information System](#)