

HOMELESSNESS IN CANADIAN CITIES.



On any given night in Toronto, about 5,000-6,500⁽³⁾ people are homeless. 32,000 people use Toronto shelters every year⁽²⁾.

Large numbers of people who are homeless in Canada do not use shelters. 12% of people who are homeless in Calgary⁽⁴⁾, and 16% of people who are homeless in Toronto sleep on the street. In Vancouver, where the weather is milder, as many as 53% of homeless people sleep on the street each night⁽⁵⁾. Many more people in Canada “couch surf” or stay with friends, and are at high risk of homelessness.

Social housing is extremely difficult to obtain. Many people on the social housing wait list in Toronto will wait over seven years – the list is over 70,000 people long⁽²⁾.

- **The majority of people who are homeless in Toronto are single, white males, aged 25 to 49⁽¹⁰⁾.**
- **Single women make up about 10-25% of the homeless population** in various Canadian cities⁽¹⁾.
- A recent CRICH study found that about **one-third of homeless people in Toronto are immigrants⁽¹²⁾**. 10% of homeless people in Toronto are *recent* immigrants, meaning that they have lived in Canada for 10 years or less. Homeless recent immigrants are much more likely to be “economically” homeless - when newcomers to Toronto become homeless, it is often because they simply can’t find a job or make enough money to support themselves⁽¹²⁾.
- **Aboriginal Peoples are greatly over-represented among homeless groups in Canada⁽¹⁾.**
In Hamilton, Aboriginal Peoples comprise:
 - **1.3%** of the total population
 - **20%** of the homeless population⁽⁸⁾
 In Vancouver, Aboriginal Peoples comprise:
 - **2%** of the total population⁽⁹⁾
 - **30%** of the homeless population⁽⁷⁾
 In Toronto, Aboriginal People comprise:
 - **0.5%** of the total population⁽¹¹⁾
 - **15%** of the homeless population, and **26%** of homeless people sleeping on the street⁽¹⁰⁾
- Half of homeless people in Toronto have not completed high school, but **12% have completed some kind of vocational, college, or other higher education⁽¹⁰⁾.**
- **5,000 children use homeless shelters in Toronto every year⁽²⁾.** In 2002, more than half of homeless children were school aged (aged 5-14), and one-third were under the age of four⁽²⁾. **For families, the three most frequently-cited reasons for becoming homeless are abuse, eviction and being a newcomer to Canada^(2,15).**

PATTERNS OF HOMELESSNESS IN TORONTO

In 2007, a Street Health survey of homeless adults in downtown Toronto⁽¹⁰⁾ found:

Main reasons given for becoming homeless:

- 52%** Economic reasons (cost of rent, low income, unemployment)
- 31%** Unsafe or poor living conditions
- 25%** Eviction or conflict with landlord
- 23%** Respondent’s own drug or alcohol use
- 20%** Relationship or family breakdown
- 13%** Institutionalization (went to hospital, substance treatment program, jail)
- 3%** Neighbourhood was inappropriate or too isolated
- 2%** Lack of support to keep housing

To view the full report, visit: www.streethealth.ca.

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The Centre for Research on Inner City Health (CRICH) is part of the Keenan Research Centre in the Li Ka Shing Knowledge Institute of St. Michael's Hospital.

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