



The characteristics of shelter residents

A picture of Canadians living at shelters
using the 2016 Census of Population



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The population living in shelters: Who are they?

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Released: 2019-04-15

Access to safe and affordable housing is an important aspect of well-being. Unfortunately, some Canadians are unable to secure stable housing and, for various reasons, may stay in a shelter. This study uses census data to provide an overview of the population living in shelters, one that is often excluded from the target population of surveys.

In 2016, the census counted 995 shelters with 22,190 shelter residents. At the time of the census, almost 7 in 10 of these residents

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Income Research Paper Series

The characteristics of shelter residents

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Release date: April 15, 2019

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Introduction

Access to safe and affordable housing is an important aspect of Canadian well-being. Unfortunately, some Canadians are unable to secure stable housing situations and find themselves facing homelessness.

There are many facets of homelessness and homelessness statistics, such as the incidence and persistence of homelessness. The characteristics of homeless individuals are also important, and are the focus of this paper. Statistics Canada does not measure even

About the study

- Show how the Census can be used to further discussions on homelessness
- Demographic profile of shelter residents that were counted in the 2016 Census
- Income levels and sources from integrated administrative data
- Related aspects of coverage and data quality



2016

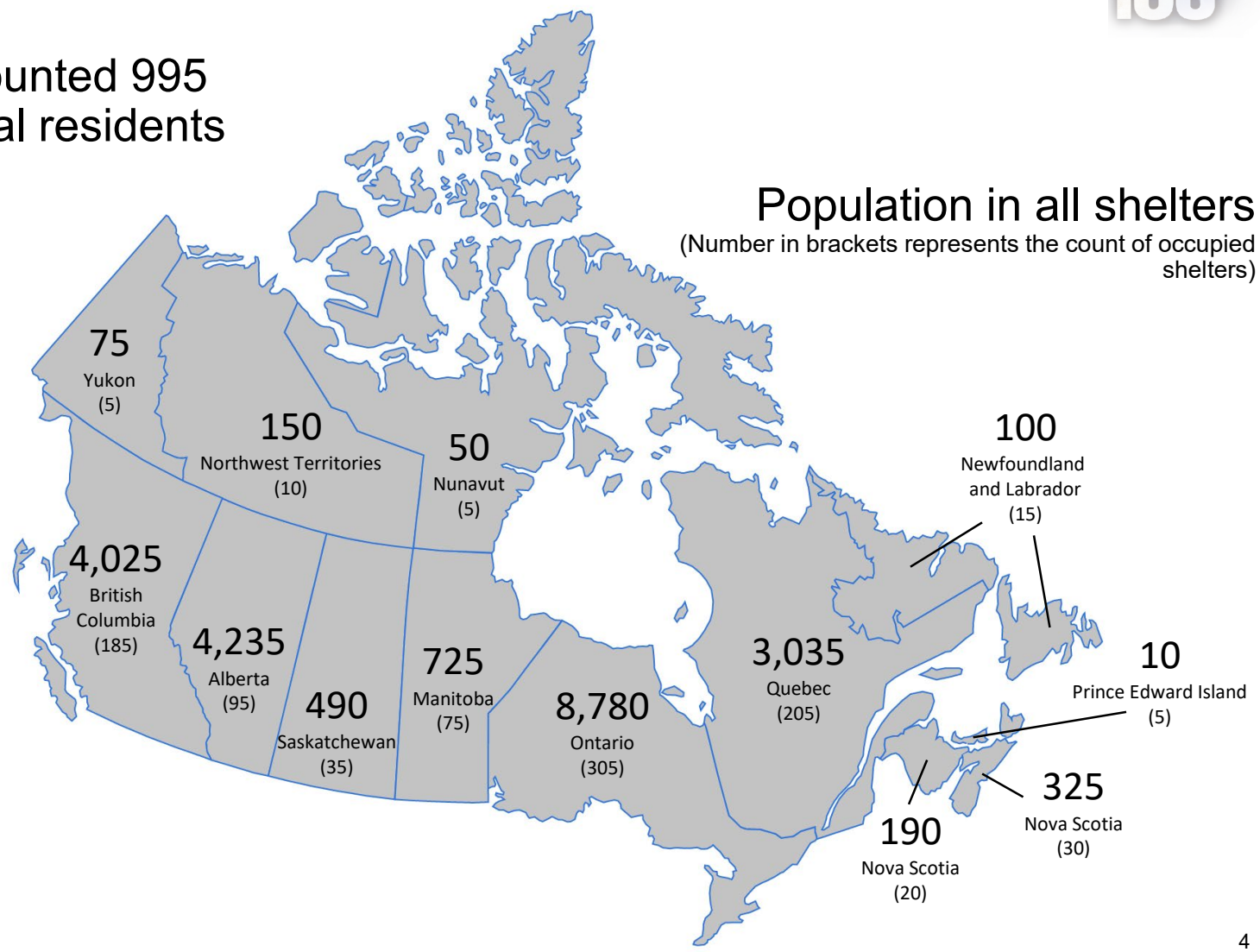
CENSUS • RECENSEMENT

The Census Program provides a statistical portrait of the country every five years

- Snapshot of the population in Canada on May 10th, 2016
- One of few survey programs that collects data at shelters
- Shelters were categorized in three groups
 - For persons lacking a fixed address (e.g. homeless and emergency relief shelters)
 - For abused women and their children
 - Other shelters and lodgings with assistance (e.g. halfway houses)
- Enumerators made in-person visits to across the country to count shelters and their residents

The 2016 Census of Population counted 995 occupied shelters with 22,190 usual residents

	Population in shelters		
	Shelters for persons lacking a fixed address	Shelters for abused women and their children	Other shelters and lodging with assistance
Canada	15,505	5,365	1,320
Newfoundland and Labrador	35	50	10
Prince Edward Island	0	10	0
Nova Scotia	165	115	50
New Brunswick	95	45	50
Quebec	1,725	745	560
Ontario	6,475	2,075	235
Manitoba	520	190	15
Saskatchewan	250	160	80
Alberta	3,240	840	155
British Columbia	2,820	1,055	145
Yukon	30	40	5
Northwest Territories	110	35	0
Nunavut	40	0	10



Men and single persons were most common in shelters, seniors and children less so

The population aged 15 years and over in shelters were more than twice as likely to report being single

- All shelters (89.1%),
- Private households (41.6%).

The share of males depended on the type of shelter

- All shelters (60.8%),
- Shelters for abused women and their children (19.1%)

Seniors were less common in shelters than in private dwellings

- All shelters (5.9%),
- Private dwellings (15.9%).

Young children aged 0 to 4 years of age were also less common

- All shelters (5.5%),
- Private dwellings (16.9%).



The Census Program, for the first time in 2016, gathered income information solely from administrative data sources.

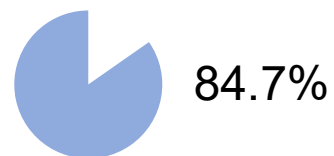
- The integration of income data from Canada Revenue Agency's tax and benefits records into the short-form census allows for the compilation of income statistics for people in shelters
- The reference period for income data is the calendar year 2015
- Place of residence, type of dwelling and other demographic variables collected on the questionnaire reflect respondent characteristics on May 10th, 2016



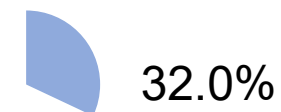
Lower incomes were prevalent among shelter residents

Low income for shelter residents aged 15 years and over was determined using the after-tax Low Income Measure (LIM) for one-person households in 2015 (\$22,133)

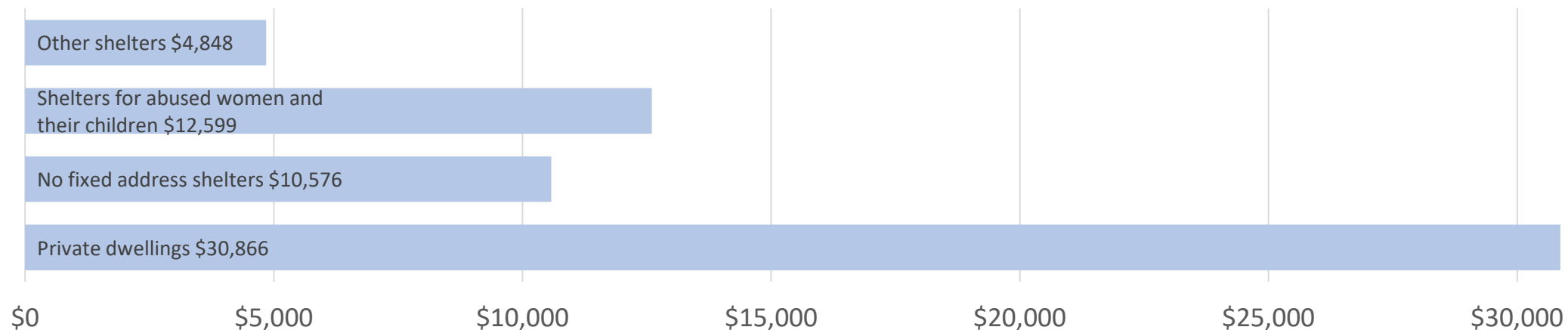
All shelter residents



One-person private households



2015 median after-tax income for shelter residents was less than half that of the population who lived in private dwellings



While income was generally lower in shelters, the sources of income also varied for shelter residents when compared to the population in private dwellings

Presence of selected income sources for the population age 15 years and over by shelter type, Canada, 2016

	Private dwellings	All shelters	Shelters for persons lacking a fixed address	Shelters for abused women and their children	Other shelters and lodging with assistance
	count				
Persons 15 years of age and older	28,642,980	19,160	14,185	3,655	1,320
	%				
Persons 15 years of age and older	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
with total income	96.0	96.0	96.1	96.0	94.3
with market income	85.8	46.9	46.5	47.2	49.6
with employment income	71.3	41.2	41.1	40.2	45.5
with investment income	29.7	4.9	4.6	6.2	4.9
with private retirement income	14.6	2.5	2.7	2.1	1.5
with market income not included elsewhere	15.4	7.2	6.5	9.6	7.6
with government transfers	68.9	90.4	90.6	90.8	87.9
with OAS ¹ and GIS ²	17.5	5.9	6.6	4.7	3.0
with CPP ³ and QPP ¹ benefits	23.2	11.5	12.5	8.3	8.3
with CPP ³ /QPP ⁴ - disability benefits	1.4	3.1	3.4	2.6	1.5
with other government transfers	47.4	88.7	89.1	88.0	86.0
with social assistance	4.6	54.1	57.0	54.7	22.0
with GST ⁵ Credit and HST ⁶ Credit	37.2	66.4	66.8	73.1	43.6
with government transfers not included elsewhere	33.3	70.2	69.2	72.1	75.8

Source: 2016 Census of Population

The Census was not designed to measure all aspects of homelessness in Canada...

- However, the Census can provide a reasonable overview of certain homeless sub-populations that are not normally included in the target population of surveys, due to their more transient circumstances
- High imputation rates were present among shelter residents for some variables
- Enumeration in the territories was conducted earlier in the year
- Collective dwellings were not in-scope for the long-form questionnaire
- Wildfire in Wood-Buffalo, Alberta may have affected shelter occupancy patterns in western Canada

Thank you!

Jeff Randle

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Daily article:

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/190415/dq190415a-eng.htm>

Report: (HTML)

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<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/75f0002m/75f0002m2019004-eng.pdf>

Merci!

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A NEW SPP-STATISTICS CANADA JOINT PROJECT

- A number of people in this room – in particular Jeff, Ali Jadidzadeh, Diane Dennis, and myself – are working on a new large data project.
- It will link three large, anonymized, administrative datasets
 - CRA tax-filer data
 - Alberta shelter use data
 - Alberta HMIS program data

A NEW SPP-STATISTICS CANADA JOINT PROJECT

- Our goal is to identify, using tax data, the pre-shelter characteristics of people who end up being chronic, transitional, or episodic users of shelters
- Future efforts will also link health data to give a more complete picture of the health and income characteristics of people forced into homelessness
- Ultimate goal is to identify effective early interventions to halt the flow into homelessness.