



## Findings from the Winnipeg Street Census 2022



Many community agencies provided support including welcoming volunteers to conduct surveys at their location, having staff do outreach and give information to their participants about the Street Census, allowing staff to volunteer their time, and providing other expertise and resources without which the Street Census would not have been possible. The following stakeholders sat on the Steering Committee and/or four working groups:

**End Homelessness Winnipeg**

**Social Planning Council of Winnipeg**

**Manitoba Metis Federation**

**City of Winnipeg**

**Winnipeg Regional Health Authority**

**St. Boniface Street Links**

**Shawenim Abinoojii Inc.**

**First Nations Family Advocate**

**Siloam Mission**

**Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre Inc.**

**Main Street Project**

**West Central Women's Resource Centre**

**Ka Ni Kanichihk Inc.**

**Mount Carmel Clinic**

**The Link**

**N'Dinawemak**

**Wahbung Abinoonjiiag**

**Spence Neighbourhood Association**

**United Way Winnipeg**

**Magnus Eliason Recreation Centre**

**An Indigenous Elder**

**Those with lived and living homelessness experience**

**Downtown Community Safety Partnership**

**North End Women's Resource Centre**

The following stakeholders offered other contributions:

**Dooley PR and Marketing – helped to plan the report launch**

**Manitoba Blue Cross – staff volunteered on May 25 when the Street Census was conducted, and the company donated water for the volunteers**

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**Thank you to all partners, supporters, volunteers, and participants.**

# 1. Executive Summary

The Winnipeg Street Census 2022 marks the third fulsome attempt to gain a contextualized view of homelessness in Winnipeg. In order to end homelessness we need to understand it. The Street Census is not an attempt to count the total number of people experiencing homelessness but provides a snapshot of who is experiencing homelessness, some of the reasons for it and barriers to exiting it. Between May 24 and May 25, we surveyed or obtained data on over 1250 individuals experiencing homelessness. While this survey provides only an incomplete count of the total unsheltered population in Winnipeg, it offers important information about their experiences. It also points to potential solutions for ending homelessness. The information gathered can be used to improve decision-making for funders, governments, and community organizations.

Staff at four community agencies or institutions provided data about participants in emergency or transitional housing staying with them. Additionally, through the Homelessness Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS), the city's largest shelters, including the Salvation Army, Siloam Mission and Main Street Project provided demographic data about residents on the night of May 24, 2022.

For this large-scale survey, we asked everyone we encountered 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 21-question interview about themselves and their experiences. Winnipeg Street Census 2022 built on the similar surveys done in 2015 and 2018, updating and improving the methods based on what we learned. This means that the results will not be directly comparable with previous years.

## **Outreach during a pandemic**

The 2022 Street Census was the second attempt to update insights into homelessness since the onset of the pandemic. Initially, a street census was planned in 2020, but was postponed with the SARS-COV-2 outbreak that spring. An interim Street Census was conducted in 2021. That project was forced to use limited data collection methods and was not able to use the survey approach of the 2015, 2018 and 2022 projects.

We had hoped that the conditions would allow for a complete street census in 2022. However, the pandemic was still very much a concern. This led to challenges in conducting the surveys again this year. We were only able to recruit just over half of the volunteers that we had in 2018. We also needed to work within best public health practices to ensure that our project did not lead to further spread of Covid-19 for volunteers, and especially for potential participants as their health status is already compromised due to being unsheltered. Fewer hub locations where people receiving services congregate also affected outreach. Moreover, with limited capacity, there is no doubt that many areas were missed, especially considering the increased geographic spread of homelessness since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. A final factor affecting outcomes was that every organization working with unsheltered Winnipeggers had been stretched beyond capacity throughout the pandemic. It is a credit to the sector that they took on the extra work to assist in the project.

As in previous Winnipeg Street Censuses, we must emphasize that the numbers in this report do not account for the full extent of homelessness and should not be regarded as a definitive enumeration of the whole population. We know that many more people are experiencing homelessness in Winnipeg than those we were able to connect with for this report. Rather, the numbers should be read as a snapshot of those we were able to connect with under challenging circumstances of a global health emergency that above all affected people experiencing homelessness more than most groups in our society.

In the end, over a 24 hour period, 166 volunteers and sector staff collected surveys from emergency, domestic violence and youth shelters, transitional housing sites, bottle depots, and community agencies and/or drop-in locations. Surveyors also walked over 100 km of city streets both within the inner city and beyond. As in previous censuses, we excluded those under 16 because they were below the age of consent.

## 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.

Trained volunteers went to Winnipeg's emergency and transitional shelters to survey the individuals and families spending the night. They also surveyed people in places where people who are experiencing homelessness spend their time: breakfast and lunch programs, libraries, resource centres and many other locations.

## Methods, Data & Limitations

The Winnipeg Street Census utilized the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness definition and typology of homelessness and housing exclusion. In addition to survey data, administrative data about bed use on the night of May 24-25, 2022 has been gathered from emergency shelters, youth shelters, shelters for individuals and families affected by domestic violence, and interim housing for people who are unsheltered (transitional housing). Institutional, residential treatment, and community mental health residential programs also provided data for individuals who were experiencing homelessness upon entering the residential setting (including having a 'no fixed address' listed), or exit the program to homelessness.

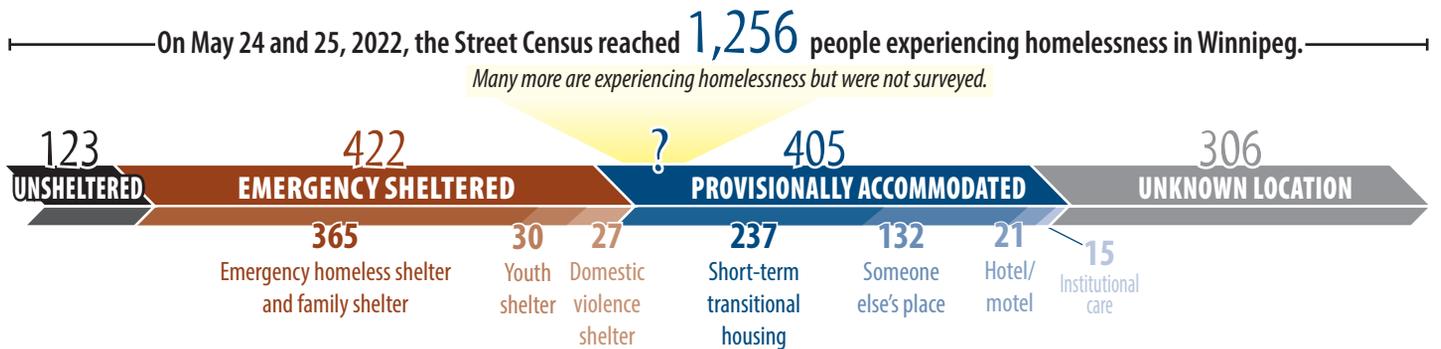
Though the methods used in this project were comprehensive, it is virtually impossible to get an exact count of the homeless population.

Invisibility is a survival strategy for people experiencing homelessness, meaning people may have avoided surveyors or simply not been in a location where surveyors went. 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. Moreover, the survey missed many others staying in hotels who do not have a permanent home. Results should not be seen as an estimate of the hidden homeless population.

**Figure 1: Where People Stayed**



**“By the Numbers”**

**4** is the number of point-in-time counts on homelessness completed in Winnipeg, including an interim count in 2021. 2022 is the second assessment of homelessness that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The vacancy rate for housing units renting under \$750 in Winnipeg was **5.3%** in October 2021. That is up from recent years, but it still leaves less than 100 units in this price range across the whole city. The average rent for a bachelor unit increased by **3.2%** from 2020. This is despite a 0% guideline in rent increases that the provincial government has maintained since 2020.

Of the people experiencing absolute homelessness surveyed for the Winnipeg Street Health Report in 2018, nearly **1 in 6** (15.5%) reported angina, an early warning sign of heart disease. **1 in 7** (13.6%) reported hepatitis C.

Homeless and street-involved youth are **6 times** more likely to be victims of violent crime than the general population. 85.4% of youth experiencing homelessness have high symptoms of mental health distress.

Experiencing homelessness cuts **7-10 years** off a person’s lifespan.

Those experiencing homelessness are **8-10 times** more likely to experience early death than the general population.

Almost half of the participants in Winnipeg’s At Home/Chez Soi Housing First project had **10 or more** exposures to traumatic events over their lifetime.

In 2018, the Government of Canada unveiled a new National Housing Strategy (NHS) that aims to reduce chronic homelessness by **50%** over the next decade.

**110** – Number of new housing units completed through NHS funding since 2018

**161** – Number of shelter spaces created with NHS funding. Additionally, N’Dinawemak Place, a 150-space warming centre was created through provincial and city funding.

The median age of people experiencing homelessness was **37**.

There were **306** youth and children under the age of 29 experiencing homelessness, of whom **59** were children under 18.

There were at least **47** seniors, aged 65 or older experiencing homelessness, the oldest of whom was age 80.

## 2. Introduction

Between May 24 and May 25, 2022, the Winnipeg Street Census reached 1,256 people who were experiencing homelessness in Winnipeg. These include people we were able to either interview or whom we obtained information about from shelters, transitional housing programs or institutions like addictions treatment facilities and hospitals.

These data are a stark reminder of the depth of the problem of homelessness in Winnipeg. Still, we know many more people experienced homelessness with whom we did not connect. Because of how we conducted our research, we know we missed many people who are staying temporarily with friends, family or strangers, but who have no long-term housing security and nowhere else to go. Sometimes this is called couch surfing, but it is more appropriately termed hidden homelessness. Researchers conservatively estimate that for every person experiencing absolute homelessness, another three people are in hidden homelessness.<sup>1</sup> If this ratio held true in Winnipeg, we have undercounted the hidden homeless population by at least 4,000 people.

Moreover, in 2022 as in previous years, we excluded from our study housing programs where residents stay for one year or longer. Although residents of these programs have longer-term tenancy, they are often precariously housed in provisional accommodation that was originally designed to be short-term. We also did not survey those under the age of 16, as they were below the age of consent. Other individuals lacked capacity to consent, either because they were under the influence of drugs and alcohol or because they were sleeping. Others chose not to participate.

The point-in-time count approach, while useful for comparisons over time or with other jurisdictions, cannot possibly capture the full extent of the problem of homelessness in Winnipeg. We have provided some other contextualizing numbers and information in the 'By the Numbers' section (on page 5).

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<sup>1</sup> Gaetz, Stephen, Jesse Donaldson, Tim Richter; Tanya Gulliver-Garcia. 2013. *The State of Homelessness in Canada*. Toronto: Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press.

### 3. Demographics

#### a. Age and Gender

More men than women participated in the Winnipeg Street Census 2022. Of those for whom we had gender identification, 62.6 percent were male and 35.3 percent female. Previous research shows that women are more likely to experience hidden homelessness, and thus more likely to be excluded from these data.

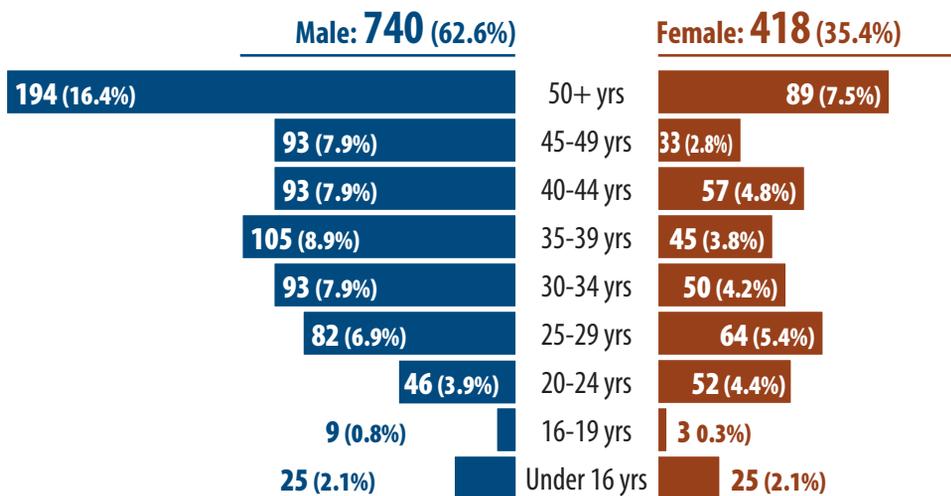
There were 24 individuals (2.0 percent) who provided a non-binary gender identification, most commonly, two-spirited (14 individuals). Other non-binary gender identifications included genderqueer, transgender, transgender male, transgender female, and other responses that were not categorized. Their age breakdown is not included to protect their identity.

The age and gender pyramid does not include those for whom we do not have age or gender. Dependent children who were identified in surveys as experiencing homelessness, but who were not themselves interviewed, are also excluded.

Excluding dependent children, 22.1 percent of those experiencing homelessness were youth under the age of 30. One third of those experiencing homelessness were women. Amongst the youth population nearly half were girls and women: 46.5 percent of youth experiencing identify as female. The median age for women experiencing homelessness was 36. Among males, the median age was 41. The overall median age was 38. Among survey respondents, 47 were seniors over the age of 65, including one respondent age 80.

The age and gender breakdown includes both survey responses and administrative data. No one under the age of 16 was surveyed, though children and youth who were in family, women’s or youth shelters were included where data was available.

**Figure 2: Age and Gender**



### **b. Identify as Two Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, or Questioning (2SLGBTQIA+)**

Overall, 82 participants identified as 2SLGBTQIA+ in their sexual orientation or gender identity. This represented 10.8 percent of the overall surveyed population. This included 24 men, 37 women, and 11 two-spirited individuals. Other gender identities included gender fluid, non-binary and trans-woman. The most common sexual orientation among 2SLGBTQIA+ respondents was bisexual, with 34 respondents. Others identified as gay, queer, pansexual, asexual, questioning or straight/heterosexual. This proportion 2SLGBTQIA+ respondents is similar to that in Canada's overall population. One pan-Canadian study found 13 percent of Canadians are members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Other research has shown that 2SLGBTQIA+ youth in particular are over-represented in poverty and homelessness. "Studies suggest that this is due to rejection from family members during the coming out process. Barriers in housing and education also prevent LGBTQ+ youth from accessing services and support."<sup>2</sup>

Overall 2SLGBTQIA+ survey respondents tended to be slightly younger. Their median age was 37. By contrast, heterosexual respondents who identified as male or female had a median age of 42. Fourteen percent of unsheltered youth identified as 2SLGBTQIA+ (compared with 8 percent of those who were not youth). Women were more likely to be part of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community than men. Approximately one quarter of 2SLGBTQIA+ respondents identified as a non-binary gender.

While this is representative of our data gathered, for 71 respondents there was insufficient data either because responses were left blank, or they declined to answer. It is possible that some social settings may not have been safe areas where respondents would have felt comfortable reporting on either of these topics. Expression of sexual orientation and gender identity may be stigmatized and our data may have underestimated how many individuals experiencing homelessness identify as 2SLGBTQIA+.

### **c. Indigenous People**

Indigenous people are vastly over-represented among people experiencing homelessness in Winnipeg. 68.2 percent of the people we surveyed were Indigenous.

Indigenous people also experienced different patterns of homelessness. Indigenous people were more likely to be staying in unsheltered locations. Nearly nine in ten, or 89 percent, of people who slept outdoors, in abandoned buildings, tents, vehicles, encampments or other public locations were Indigenous. By contrast relatively few Indigenous people stayed at emergency, and transitional shelters within the HIFIS system. Despite making up less than one third of the population experiencing homelessness, non-Indigenous people made up nearly 50 percent of people staying in shelters. This does not include N'Dinawemak — Our Relatives' Place warming shelter, where most participants are Indigenous, but which is not included in the shelter system. We included N'Dinawemak as a survey site to help address this gap. This discrepancy points to the importance of collecting data through the Street Census to avoid the potential for skewed data if we only relied on HIFIS shelter data. Further analysis will need to be conducted to understand this discrepancy, whether it is a matter of how people at shelters are identifying, or if there are barriers for Indigenous people to access emergency shelters.

This year we did not obtain adequate data on the location of home communities to assess where from across Canada Indigenous people were coming from to Winnipeg. Most people who filled in the survey did not provide details about home communities in completing the data. For those who did provide a home community, the majority listed a community in Manitoba. 163 Indigenous survey participants came from somewhere in Manitoba, 34 from Ontario, 11 Alberta, 9 from Saskatchewan, 7 from another province, and 2 from the United States. A full list of the home communities of Indigenous people is attached.

**Table 1: List of Communities Respondents Were From Before Moving to Winnipeg**

Community Name	Province
Crandall	Manitoba
Cross Lake	Manitoba
Cross Lake First Nation	Manitoba
Dauphin	Manitoba
Fisher Branch	Manitoba
Garden Hill First Nations	Manitoba
Hollow Water	Manitoba
Lake St. Martin	Manitoba
Little Grand Rapids	Manitoba
Lynn Lake	Manitoba
Manto Sipi Cree Nation	Manitoba
Mathias Colomb	Manitoba
Moose Lake	Manitoba
Morris	Manitoba
Nelson House	Manitoba
Norway House	Manitoba
O-Chi-Chak-Ko-Sipi First Nation	Manitoba
Opaskwayak Cree Nation	Manitoba
Pinaymootang First Nation	Manitoba
Poplar River First Nation	Manitoba
Sandy Bay	Manitoba
Sapotaweyak Cree Nation	Manitoba
Sayisi Dene First Nation	Manitoba
Shamattawa First Nation	Manitoba
Split Lake	Manitoba
St. Theresa Point	Manitoba
Swan River	Manitoba
Tadoule Lake	Manitoba
Thompson	Manitoba
Waywayseecappo First Nation Treaty Four - 1874	Manitoba
The Pas	Manitoba
Vancouver	British Columbia
Regina	Saskatchewan
Montreal	Quebec
Vermilion Bay	Ontario
Toronto	Ontario
Red Lake	Ontario
Rainy Lake First Nation	Ontario
Kenora	Ontario
Fredericton	New Brunswick

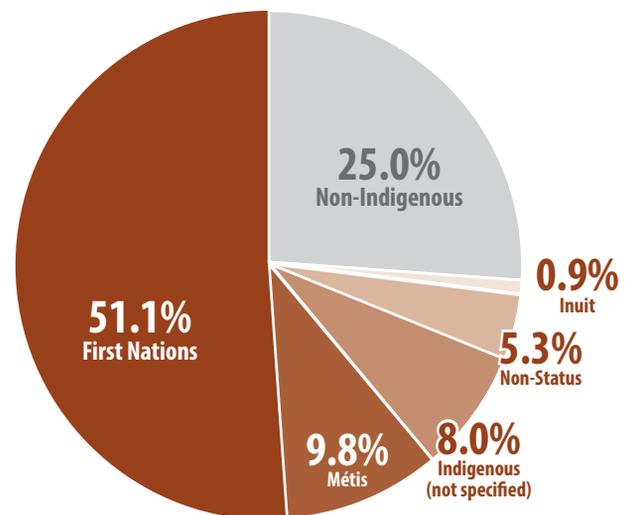
**Status and identity**

The vast majority of people experiencing homelessness in Winnipeg are Indigenous. Three-quarters, or 75 percent of respondents were Indigenous, only 25 percent were non-Indigenous.

Among Indigenous people experiencing homelessness, the majority were First Nations. 51 percent of respondents identified as Status First Nations. 10 percent were Métis including 4 percent who affirmed Métis citizenship and 4 percent self-declared Métis. Because shelter locations do not always differentiate or ask about Métis citizenship, a further 2 percent are listed as Métis, citizenship unknown. Similarly, not all facilities differentiate among Indigenous statuses, and so one percent are listed as Indigenous, not specified.

Many other Indigenous people are in hidden homelessness, or staying temporarily with friends and family. While cultural norms within Indigenous cultures include such supports as extended kin networks, widespread poverty and lack of adequate affordable housing mean that too often, families lack the resources to assist with the transition of family members from home communities to Winnipeg.<sup>3</sup> Without adequate investments in transitional supports, this can become a path into homelessness and is a major cause of the disproportionate rates of Indigenous homelessness in Winnipeg.

**Figure 3: Indigenous Status and Identities of People Experiencing Homelessness**



<sup>3</sup> Josh Brandon and Evelyn Peters. 2015. Moving to the City: Housing and Aboriginal Migration to Winnipeg. Winnipeg: CCPA-Manitoba.

**d. Newcomers to Canada**

The Winnipeg Street Census 2022 found only a small sample of immigrants and refugees experiencing homelessness. Only 19 (3 percent) of the survey respondents came to Canada as an immigrant, refugee, or refugee claimant. This rate is much lower than the overall immigrant and refugee population in Winnipeg. Within the general population, more than one in four Winnipeggers are immigrants or refugees. Of survey respondents, about half had been in Winnipeg for less than 5 years (10 immigrants, refugees, and refugee claimants), while 9 had been in Winnipeg 5 years or longer.

The low number of recent newcomers included in our surveys is partly a positive reflection of the work done by settlement services and ethno-cultural communities in helping refugees and immigrants settle in Winnipeg. However, this does not necessarily reflect the overall size of the newcomer population experiencing homelessness. Several factors make it likely that the newcomer population was underestimated.

For example, newcomers are more likely to find themselves in situations of hidden homelessness, staying sometimes with family or often with other community connections, than in absolute homelessness. These living situations may be overcrowded and without long-term stability. At the same time, some people who work in the settlement sector have advised that newcomer families staying with family or friends should not generally be considered in a provisional housing situation, since cultural norms would allow them to stay as long as they need until they find permanent accommodations. They also indicated that families who have been staying in refugee camps, often for years prior to their arrival in Canada, may have different perceptions of homelessness than other Canadians that affect their likelihood of identifying as homeless.

We also have less data for newcomers in hidden homelessness because homelessness is stigmatized. Expectations of family and community support may lead newcomers to avoid seeking support from formal institutions and non-profit organizations. As a result, they are less likely to access services where the Winnipeg Street Census conducted surveys. Language barriers may also have limited the ability of surveyors to reach many newcomer participants. Given these limitations, the percentage of newcomers within Winnipeg’s homeless population may be much higher than reported.

**Table 2: Immigration Status**

	Frequency	Percentage
Born in Canada	602	96.9%
Immigrant	14	2.2%
Refugee	5	0.8%

N=621, Missing 134

**e. Income**

Respondents to the survey listed diverse income sources. The majority received assistance through Employment and Income Assistance (EIA), receiving either General Assistance or Disability. Approximately one third had income from either formal employment (9.8 percent) or informal means of making money such as bottle returns, collecting and recycling scrap metal, making art, panhandling, or squeegeeing. Respondents often had multiple income sources with over one third (37.1 percent) of respondents declaring two or more sources of income.

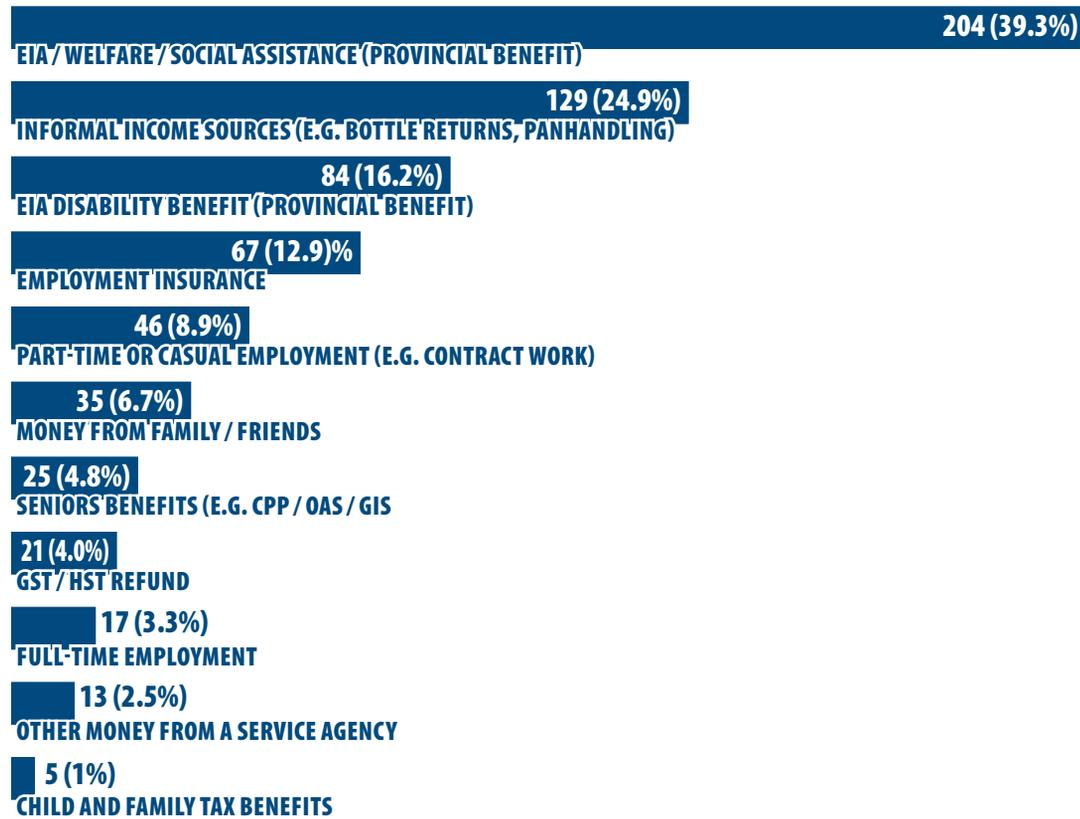
It is likely that many people who are experiencing homelessness are missing income benefits for which they are eligible. For example, only 4 percent of respondents were receiving GST credits that are available to all households with income below \$ 49,166. Virtually all respondents would be eligible. Likewise, most of the respondents not receiving EIA would be eligible for EIA benefits. Many respondents spoke of difficulties or delays in applying for or receiving EIA, or reported that they were waiting to qualify for EIA. One in 10 respondents listed no income source at all. An additional 97 respondents (18.6 percent) only had income from sporadic or informal sources, such as money from family and friends, GST credits, or informal activities such as bottle returns and panhandling.

**g. Education**

Lack of education puts people at greater risk of homelessness. More than half of respondents had not completed high school, only had primary or did not have formal education.

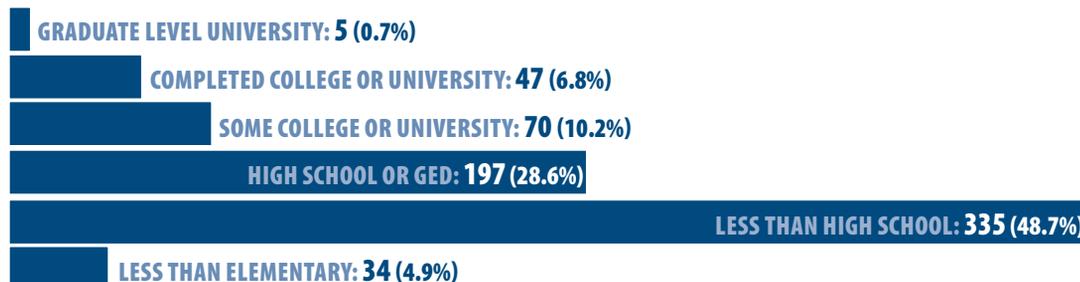
## Figure 4: Income

Sources of Income (respondents could choose more than one)



## Figure 5: Education

Highest Level of Education



N=688

## 4. Experiences

### 4.1 Institutions and Homelessness

#### a. Canadian Military or RCMP Service

- 5.7 percent of survey respondents had Canadian military or RCMP service.
- 28 respondents were Canadian military veterans
- 11 respondents had been in the RCMP
- 4 respondents had both RCMP and Canadian military experience

The Winnipeg Street Census surveyed 43 people experiencing homelessness with Canadian military or RCMP service experience. The survey did not ask about service with other law enforcement or foreign military service. As with other population groups, this is not a complete assessment of the population experiencing homelessness. Given the relatively small number compared to the total number of people surveyed, it is even less likely that any extrapolations leading to a definitive estimate can be made based on the 2022 data.

The Federal government has resources to connect veterans of the military or RCMP to services that can address their homelessness, including a team of volunteers who will meet with them. The Street Census was an opportunity to connect veterans to these resources, and increase awareness of their availability.

Plans are currently underway for the construction of affordable housing geared towards veterans experiencing homelessness. The Winnipeg Kinsmen Veterans' Village in Transcona will consist of 20 tiny homes along with supports including a resource centre, two on-site counsellors, community gardens and recreation spaces. Funding for the project is coming from the three levels of government with support of private fundraising. The completion of this project will partially alleviate the number of veterans experiencing homelessness. However, further resources will be needed for all groups experiencing homelessness.

#### b. Child and Family Services

One of the most common pathways into homelessness is through having experience in the care of Child and Family Services (CFS). Out of those who responded, 50.2 percent indicated they had spent time in foster care, group homes, or another CFS placement. Of these, many first became homeless immediately after leaving the care of CFS (sometimes called 'aging out of care'). Over half (54.0 percent) had their first experience of homelessness at age 18 or earlier.

**Figure 6: Spent Time in CFS Care**

#### Spent Time in CFS Care



#### Spent Time in CFS Care



#### Spent Time in CFS Care



**Table 3: Respondents' with Experience in Foster Care, Group Homes, or Another CFS Placement**

	Frequency	Percentage
Not Indigenous	27	7.7%
First Nations-Status	244	69.5%
First Nations-Non Status	31	8.8%
Metis-Self Declared	29	8.3%
Metis-Citizenship/Membership Card	18	5.1%
Inuit	2	0.6%
Total	351	100.0%

**Table 4: Stayed in an Emergency Shelter in the Previous Year**

	Female		Male		Non-Binary	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	164	64.3%	295	70.7%	13	56.5%
No	91	35.7%	122	29.3%	10	43.5%
Total	255	100.0%	417	100.0%	23	100.0%

### c. Use of Emergency Shelters

The majority of respondents had used an emergency shelter over the past year. This was especially true of men, 70.7 percent of whom had relied on shelter spaces. Just 64.3 percent of women and 56.5 percent of non-binary respondents had used emergency shelters in the past year.

### d. Institutional Settings and Homelessness

Absence of a discharge plan for patients from hospitals or correctional facility inmates can also be a pathway to homelessness. This year Manitoba Corrections did not provide data to the Street Census. We did obtain limited data from the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority (WRHA). These data showed that 11 of their patients in acute care or crisis stabilization settings on May 24 would otherwise be unsheltered, in emergency shelter or provisionally accommodated (that is, they were identified in the data as having “no fixed address”).

## 4.2 Pathways into Homelessness

### a. Mobility

Most survey respondents were long time residents of Winnipeg. Three quarters had lived in Winnipeg ten or more years (78.4 percent), including 45 percent who had always lived in Winnipeg. However, 8 percent had moved to Winnipeg within the last year. Eight respondents, 1.1 percent, had moved to Winnipeg within the last month.

Among those who had moved to Winnipeg within the last year, the majority came from other communities in Manitoba. Most others came from other Western Canadian provinces or Ontario. Only one moved from outside of Canada. Most were Indigenous and grew-up in Indigenous communities.

### b. Age of First Experience of Homelessness

The most common age that people first experienced homelessness was 18. One in ten respondents first became homeless at age 18 (7.5 percent). Over one third, 37.6 percent, first became homeless between the ages of 12 and 20. Among those whose first experience of homelessness was at age 18, more than 60 percent had spent time in foster care, group homes, or another CFS placement. Most children in the care of CFS lose support, including financial resources and other help from their former guardian (CFS social work staff) at the age of 18. For some, this is extended to age 21, but this usually requires participation in employment or education, which youth who have experienced major trauma may not be prepared for.

For those who said they first became homeless as a young child, details on the surveys suggest that they were often accounting for either their initial entry into the care of CFS or their family’s experience of homelessness. In other cases, children are forced into homelessness at very young ages, often due to family breakdown.

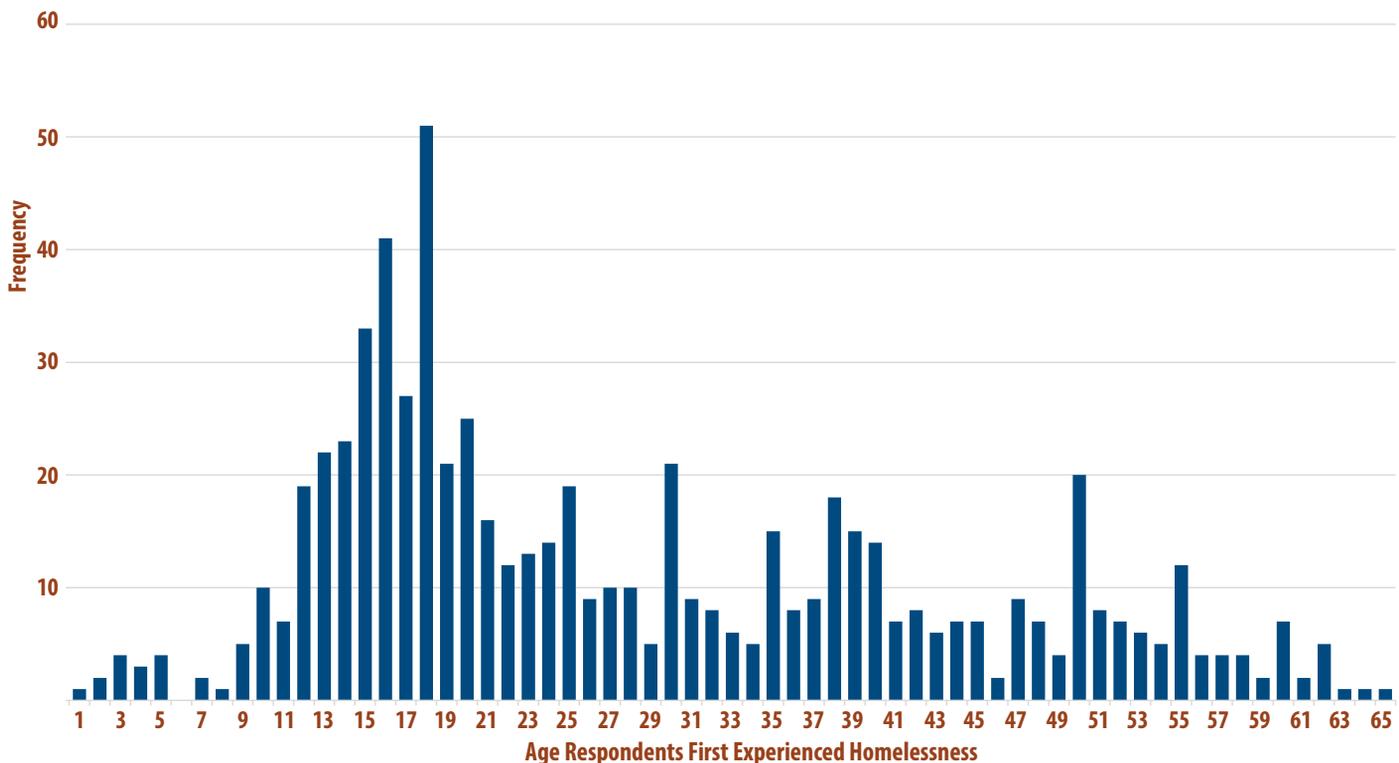
### c. Causes of Homelessness

The reasons why people become homeless are unique to each individual. It is not always possible to summarize the reasons people provided for this initial experience into a single category. In the 2022 survey we ask people to give reasons why they became homeless most recently. Respondents were encouraged to list all the causes, rather than only the main cause for their first experience of homelessness.

The largest cause of homelessness was a lack of money for housing. Nearly 3 in 10 listed lack of income as a cause. Family breakdown, issues with addiction, issues with housing, and physical and mental health issues were also dominant responses. Family breakdown included conflicts with parents, partners, family violence, or having children go into the care of CFS. Issues of addiction or abuse of drugs or alcohol were listed. Housing issues including eviction or poor housing conditions including unsafe housing or housing in need of major repairs. Despite some protections against landlords using renovations as a cause to evict tenants, 104 respondents listed renovations or the building being sold as a cause of their homelessness. Many people had a difficult time summarizing the cause of their homelessness, as a combination of a range of factors led to the experience.

	Frequency	Percentage
Not Enough Income for Housing	175	29.2%
Mental Health Issue	38	6.3%
Physical Health Issue	20	3.3%
Substance Use Issue	110	18.3%
Conflict with: Partner, Friend, Family, CFS, other	153	25.5%
Conflict with: Roommate, Landlord / Complaint / Building Sold, Renovation	104	17.3%
Experienced Abuse By: Partner, Family	16	2.7%
Experienced Discrimination/Intergenerational Effects of Residential School	9	1.5%
Unsafe Housing	46	7.7%
Incarceration	36	6.0%
Left the Community/ Relocated/My Choice/ End of Lease	36	6.0%
Pandemic	15	2.5%
Hospitalization / Treatment program	10	1.7%

### Figure 7: Age Respondents First Experienced Homelessness

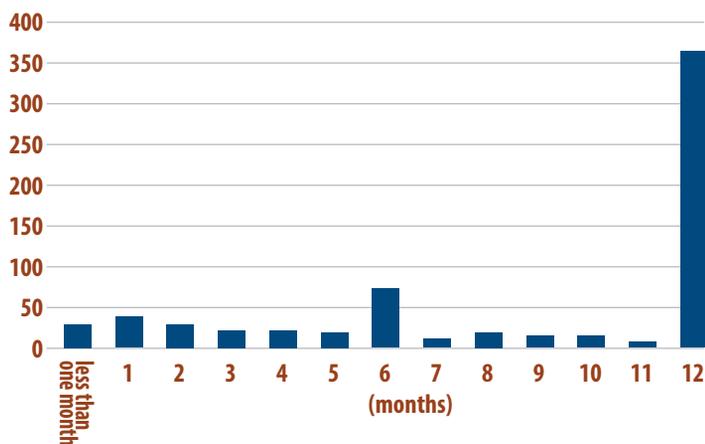


**d. Experiences**

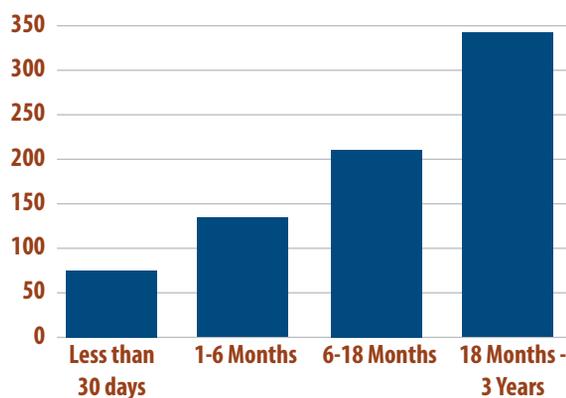
Youth homelessness led to adult homelessness. The median age at which people first became homeless was 24 years and the most frequent age was 18 years. Nearly one in three (32 percent) first became homeless as teenagers.

Unfortunately, for most people experiencing homelessness, it is not a short temporary transition to better housing. More than half of survey respondents indicated that they had experienced homelessness for 12 months of the past year. Nearly half had experienced homelessness for more than 18 months of the past three years. These data indicate that chronic homelessness is a severe problem affecting more than half the Winnipeg Street Census survey respondents.

**Figure 8: Length of Time Experiencing Homelessness Over the Past Year**



**Figure 9: Time Spent in Homelessness in Past Three Years**



**4.3 Finding Permanent Housing**

Participants were also asked an open-ended question inviting them to reflect on what their ideal housing would look like, and what would help them achieve it. Most people had simple and direct aspirations to safe and clean affordable housing. “A one-room apartment, to call home and be safe,” one respondent said. Many called for more affordable housing and better income supports. “Raise EIA,” one respondent told an interviewer. “Not enough affordable housing” said another. Some wished for better housing so that they could be reunited with family members. One talked about wanting to have a place with a room for his son. Another mentioned needing space for her grandchild.

The other common responses were having someone to help advocate for them or directly support to help them navigate various support systems or find housing. Others said they needed employment, a higher or more stable income, or addiction treatment to help them find stable permanent housing. “A helping hand would be great. I’m waiting for detox - 4 months.” Long waits for assistance getting into programs were common. One respondent had been working with EIA for several months to start receiving benefits, but difficulties with documents meant that her benefits had been delayed. “My worker is jumping through hoops to help me, and still I have been homeless since January.”

Many respondents found this to be a difficult question to answer. Some were in the process of finding housing but were just waiting or in a transition period. Others could not think of a specific thing that could help, with responses such as “I’ve been homeless my whole life. It’s all I’ve known.”

#### 4.4 Homelessness and the Pandemic

Respondents were asked for the first time how the COVID-19 pandemic affected their housing. More than four hundred people provided qualitative responses. Some had lost work or income during the pandemic. A few noted higher rent costs as a result. Food is harder to get, and fewer services were open.

Like most Winnipeg residents, respondents experienced illness and loss of friends or family during the pandemic. Some mentioned lack of mental health services and difficulty coping with loss. Some regretted the loss of contact with family during the pandemic.

A handful of respondents also noticed barriers like vaccine mandates or masking requirement affected their ability to access services. The pandemic also exacerbated the difficulties of getting needed services. When one is dependent on coordinating multiple supports to get services, the pandemic introduced new complications. "I didn't have housing so it made a difference. I needed to get ID for vax status. Needed counselor to help get documentation. Counselors had unclear office hours. Had to call and arrange drop off of bus tickets and gift cards. Shelters had strict hours." The Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), clawbacks and the interaction, or failure thereof, between CERB and EIA were also listed as major concerns during the pandemic. "When CERB was cut off, I became homeless".

Some recognized the important work shelters and other agencies did during the pandemic: "It's been difficult, but the shelters stepped up. For me, the homeless shelters did exceptional work." A few respondents felt they became better off during the COVID-19 pandemic, due to higher benefits through CERB, and more shelter spaces opening.

## 5. Methodology

### 5.1 Methodology

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 can 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.

Trained volunteers went to Winnipeg's emergency and transitional shelters to survey the individuals and families spending the night. They also surveyed people in places where people who are homeless spend their time: breakfast and lunch programs, libraries, resource centres and many other locations. Some agencies chose to have their employees conduct interviews with participants. Volunteers also walked 24 routes to survey everyone they encountered about their housing circumstances. If the person they encountered was deemed to be experiencing homelessness through an eligibility screening tool, they continued on with the longer, 21 question survey. In total, 755 surveys were completed with individuals experiencing homelessness.

In addition to survey data, administrative data about bed use on the night of May 24, 2022 has been gathered from emergency shelters, youth shelters, shelters for individuals and families affected by domestic violence, and interim housing for people who are unsheltered (transitional housing). Institutional, residential treatment, and community mental health residential programs provided data for individuals who were homeless upon entering the residential setting, or will exit the program to homelessness, depending on their organization's method of tracking this information. This administrative data set included age, gender, and Indigenous identity. A full list of administrative data and survey locations is included below.

This report combines administrative and survey data for age, gender, and Indigenous identity. All other data comes from the survey only. At the end of their shift, volunteers were asked to write down stories or comments they heard that were meaningful for them. These are the sources of the quotes included throughout the report.

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, meaning people may have avoided surveyors or simply not been in a location where surveyors went at the time they were there. This was a voluntary survey and data is self-reported. Additionally, it is important to note that homelessness changes daily. Volunteers encountered people who were going to be homeless the day after the survey due to an eviction notice, but they were not included in our definition. They spoke to people living in unsafe housing, in poor conditions, who were also not included. The data in this project should be seen as an indication of the need, and a call to action for all of us.

## 5.2 Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the Winnipeg Street Census is to obtain a demographic profile of the unsheltered population in Winnipeg and identify trends over time of who are experiencing homelessness. Winnipeg Street Census 2022 was the third conducted in Winnipeg. Additionally, much of the methodology built on the previous reports conducted in 2015 and 2018. However, because of significant changes in methodology, as well as significant changes due to the pandemic and other community factors, we do not believe the results to be directly comparable to those of previous reports.

Additionally, the Winnipeg Street Census Partnership Committee established the following objectives:

1. Utilize the community sanctioned methodology integrated with required and promising practices of other Canadian jurisdictions for the National Point-in-Time Count, for conducting regular Street Censuses in Winnipeg
2. Implement the Street Census methodology in a 24-hour period and evaluate the methodology for future years
3. Increase knowledge about homelessness in Winnipeg to inform decision-making and further areas of research. Information disseminated will include particular attention to sub-populations experiencing homelessness in Winnipeg and recognition of the root causes of homelessness
4. Provide baselines of homelessness and comparisons from previous Street Census where applicable for efforts working to end or reduce homelessness in Winnipeg
5. Enhance partnerships between those who serve people experiencing homelessness, including outreach teams, emergency shelters, resource centres, Indigenous community-based organizations, and representatives from health, addictions, mental health and justice programs

## 5.3. Definitions of terms

*Absolute homelessness:* staying in an unsheltered circumstance or in an emergency shelter.

*Administrative Data:* information collected systematically by an organization providing services. Only services with a residential function requested to provide data.

*Base Site:* a volunteer coordination hub where volunteers met prior to going to their survey locations and returned to after completing surveys.

*Chronic homelessness:* the experience of a person who is currently homeless and has been homeless for 6 months or longer.

*Dependent children:* those aged 17 or under who were residing with their parents or guardians. Dependent children were not included in the overall proportion of youth and were not surveyed and therefore not included in the other data on youth.

*Emergency sheltered:* staying in an emergency homeless shelter (youth, adult or family), emergency housing for new immigrants or refugees, or shelter for individuals and families impacted by family violence.

*Episodic homelessness:* for the purpose of the Winnipeg Street Census, those experiencing episodic homelessness have met the definition of homelessness for three or more periods of time over the previous three years. This is slightly different from the HRSDC definition of episodic homelessness, which is to have three or more periods of homelessness over the previous one year.

*Family group:* those who responded that they were staying with family members the night of May 25. Family members could include children under age 18, children over age 18, siblings, spouse/partner or another adult.

*Headquarters:* the main volunteer coordination site throughout the Street Census.

*Hidden homelessness:* living temporarily with others without legal protection, guarantee of continued residency, or prospects of permanent housing. This includes any of the respondents who said they are staying with friends, family, or strangers/acquaintances temporarily. Sometimes this is referred to as "couch surfing."

*Institutional care:* staying in a penal institution, medical/mental health facility, residential treatment/withdrawal management centre, or emergency placement while in the care of Child and Family Services. Those who met the definition of homelessness in institutional care either:

- were homeless prior to admittance and have no plan for permanent accommodation after release;
- had housing prior to admittance but lost housing while in institutional care; or
- had housing prior to admittance but cannot return due to changes in need.

*Long-term provisional accommodation:* interim or transitional housing that has average stays or program models designed to be more than one year in length.

*Missing:* missing data includes all of the “don’t know” or “declined to answer” responses, as well as data never entered by the surveyor or removed during cleaning because it was deemed invalid/unreliable.

*Provisionally accommodated:* staying in any of the following locations:

- Short-term (1 year or less) transitional housing for individuals and families who have been homeless or who exited from a government system (CFS, justice, health or mental health facility) and would otherwise be homeless;
- Living temporarily with others without legal protection, guarantee of continued residency, or prospects of permanent housing. This includes any of the respondents who said they are staying with friends, family, or strangers/acquaintances temporarily;
- Staying in a hotel or motel without permanent accommodation to return to after the stay; or
- Staying in institutional care and lacking a permanent housing arrangement.

*Single location:* a location where people experiencing homelessness access services or spend their time during the day, attended by volunteer surveyors on May 25.

*Street location:* a location on a route walked by volunteer surveyors on May 25. These were all outdoor routes with the exception of a route through the walkway system downtown.

*Transitional housing:* housing with no prospect of permanence for individuals and families who have experienced homelessness or who exited from a government system (CFS, justice, health or mental health facility) and would otherwise be homeless.

*Unsheltered homelessness:* staying outside or in a place unfit for human habitation in a public or private place. This includes a vehicle, in a tent or makeshift shelter, a bus shelter, or a private business like a coffee shop.

*Youth:* includes those aged 29 or under at the time of the survey. Dependent youth or children who were residing with their parents or guardians were not included in the overall proportion of youth and were not surveyed and therefore not included in the other data on youth.

#### 5.4 Definition of Homelessness and Scope of Census

The Winnipeg Street Census 2022 applied the Canadian Definition of Homelessness.<sup>4</sup> According to this definition, homelessness encompasses a range of physical living situations including 1) unsheltered, 2) emergency sheltered 3) provisionally accommodated, and 4) at risk of homelessness. Due to limitations of resources and consistent with the point-in-time methodology, the Winnipeg Street Census did not include this full range of homelessness; specifically we excluded those at risk of homelessness. As in 2015, those staying in rooming houses were not part of the research, as their tenancies are protected under the Residential Tenancy Act in Manitoba. Additionally, we did not include transitional housing or reception/welcoming centres for refugees as part of the study, where average stay was one year or longer, or where the centre arranges permanent housing for residents prior to departure.

Table 6 outlines the types of homelessness included in the study as well as the methodologies applied to include them. Appendix includes a complete list of administrative data providers.

<sup>4</sup> Canadian Observatory of Homelessness. 2012. Canadian Definition of Homelessness. Homelessness Hub: <http://homelesshub.ca/homelessdefinition/>

**Table 6. Scope of the Winnipeg Street Census 2022**

Types	Living Situation	Examples	Method	Included
Unsheltered	1.1 People living in public or private places	Vehicles, tents, bus shelters, other public places	Survey	Yes
	1.2 People living in places not intended for permanent human habitation	Abandoned or vacant buildings	Survey	Yes
Emergency sheltered	2.2 Emergency overnight homeless shelters (adult youth and family)	Emergency shelters	Survey, Administrative Data	Yes
	2.2 Shelters for individuals and families affected by domestic violence	Women's shelters, youth shelters	Survey, Administrative Data	Yes
Provisionally accommodated	3.1 Interim (transitional) housing	Short or longer-term housing (less than one year)	Survey, Administrative Data	Yes
	3.2 People living temporarily with friends, family or strangers	"Couch surfing", "Staying with my friend"	Survey	Yes
	3.3. People accessing short-term, temporary housing	Hotels or motels without tenancy agreement	Survey	Yes
	3.4 People in institutional care, without permanent housing arrangements for their release	Hospitals, Manitoba Corrections, Addiction treatment programs	Administrative Data	Yes
At Risk of Homelessness	4.1 People at imminent risk of homelessness	People experiencing one or more risk factors that increase the likelihood of falling into homelessness, eg. Financial stress, addiction		No
	4.2 People in core housing need or precariously housed	People paying unaffordable rents, or in housing that is overcrowded or in poor repair		No

## 5.5 The Point-in Time Approach

The methodology for the Winnipeg Street Census is based on a model recommended by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness and will be used by cities participating in the Homeless Partnering Strategy of Economic and Social Development Canada's (HPS) National Point-in-Time Count of Homelessness. This will allow for comparisons between Winnipeg's data and other Canadian cities. The Winnipeg Street Census was designed to provide a snapshot of as wide a range of circumstances as feasible. As a result, the following methods were used:

- a. Surveys
- b. Administrative data from service providers
- c. Bed counts from shelters through Homelessness Partnership Winnipeg
- d. Tally Sheet

The Winnipeg Street Census 2022 was conducted the night of May 24 at shelters and other housing locations. Throughout the day on May 25, surveys were conducted at single locations where people experiencing homelessness access services. Single site surveys were also conducted at five base sites throughout the day:

- Magnus Eliason Recreation Centre – 430 Langside Street
- N'dinawemak – 190 Disraeli Street
- Social Planning Council of Winnipeg – 432 Ellice Ave
- The Link (Formerly Macdonald Youth Services) - 175 Mayfair Ave
- Wabhung Abinoonjiiag – 225 Dufferin Avenue

Street Surveys were conducted between 8 am and 8 pm along walking routes within the Inner City and by outreach teams in other parts of the city. Additionally, administrative data was collected from 13 emergency and transitional housing providers.

### a. The Survey

A 21 question survey was delivered to people experiencing homelessness at 53 locations throughout Winnipeg over the course of May 24 and 25. (The survey instrument is provided as appendix n). These included interviews at shelters where people had stayed the night, at service locations such as food banks, bottle depots and drop in centres or other locations people experiencing homelessness spend time such as libraries, churches or malls. Other volunteers conducted surveys with people they encountered along walking routes throughout the inner city. Outreach teams also conducted surveys at locations outside the inner city.

### b. Administrative Data

Service providers provided demographic data about the people staying the night of May 24 (the Administrative tally sheet is provided as appendix n). These included youth, women's and domestic violence shelters, transitional housing locations and treatment programs. Winnipeg Regional Health Authority provided demographic data about patients in acute care hospital settings as well as crisis stabilization and crisis response who were likely to be experiencing homelessness.

### c. Homelessness Partnership Winnipeg (HPW) Data

Shelters and transitional housing programs which track their participants using HIFIS provided demographic data through the HPW. Siloam Mission, Main Street Project and Salvation Army provided data on age, gender and Indigenous identification for participants staying the night of May 24.

### d. Tally Sheets

Volunteers filled out tally sheets indicating people who they encountered but were unable to interview, were ineligible or otherwise chose not to participate. This data will give future researchers a better understanding of where and how to best deploy resources in subsequent point-in-time counts. At this stage, we have not conducted an analysis of the tally sheets.

## 5.6 Weather

The weather on May 25 during the Street Census was warm and dry with a low of 10C. Weather conditions were favourable and were unlikely to have posed limitations on the project. However, the late spring in 2022, may have affected the number of people who were sleeping outdoors. Patterns of homelessness vary throughout the year, and no season should be seen as providing a snapshot of "typical homelessness" in Winnipeg.

## 5.7 Limitations

The Winnipeg Street Census followed methodology developed in partnership with the federal government's Homelessness Partnering Strategy. A point-in-time methodology is the most common and, many would argue, best way to gain an accurate picture of the number of people experiencing unsheltered and emergency sheltered homelessness; however, the method has limitations. First, it is inherently an undercount of homeless populations. Despite significant efforts by the Winnipeg Street Census Partners to be as comprehensive as possible, individuals were missed and some declined participation. Important limitations to keep in mind are:

1. The method is unable to provide a reliable estimate of the hidden homeless population (those staying with friends, family, or strangers) and those staying temporarily in hotels.
2. Results only provide a snapshot of homelessness in Winnipeg and cannot capture information on seasonal variation. There are significant differences in patterns of homelessness in fall and spring. This is one reason that the results of this survey are not comparable to the earlier Winnipeg Street Census.
3. Incomplete data from some government departments contributed to an underestimation of individuals experiencing homelessness in institutional settings. This year we did not receive information from Manitoba Justice concerning individuals released from adult correctional centres. We did not receive information concerning youth or those being released from federal correctional centres. We also did not receive data from Child and Family Services on how many youth in their care were on emergency placements and therefore without a long-term home.
4. While we had outreach teams collecting data outside the inner city and core areas of Winnipeg, it is likely that these data were incomplete due to the difficulties in reaching people in these locations. Fewer resources and services in non-core areas of the city make outreach to people experiencing homelessness more challenging.
5. Lack of resources and stretched capacity made it difficult for some service providers to participate. In some cases, service providers were not open and intended to provide data from a different day the same week, but it proved not possible to coordinate. It is likely that we missed data from some potential locations as a result.
6. Invisibility is often a survival strategy when people experience homelessness. Simply having large numbers of surveyors out on the streets may cause people to move to more isolated locations.
7. By deploying multiple methodologies over a 24-hour period, the Street Census increased the potential for duplication. We carefully examined each set of surveys with duplicate dates of birth to determine if they were likely to represent the same individual. In cases where there were similar responses on several other questions, we determined that the surveys were matches and we excluded one survey. However, in almost all these cases, responses differed for some questions. The authors used their subjective judgement in determining which responses to include.
8. Although the volunteers were trained to deliver the questionnaire as consistently as possible, responses could vary based on the time and circumstances under which the survey was delivered. As much as possible, we let people experiencing homelessness tell their own stories. Like everyone's, their stories are partial and relational. The quantitative form of the data presented here obscures the many ways in which they continually and creatively construct their identities. Behind the numbers identified in this report are more than 1200 lives of individuals who each have multiple identities. They are each at times mothers, fathers, children and siblings, elders and youth, workers, consumers or members of various intersecting communities. We have done our best to honour and respect them, while presenting data as accurately as possible.





WINNIPEG STREET CENSUS 2022

We matter.  
We count.