

# Homelessness in Canada and NL

## Objective

To describe the extent of homelessness in Canada and in St. John's, NL.

## Practice Points

1. The Institute of Global Homelessness defines homelessness as people without accommodation, people living in temporary or crisis accommodation, or people living in severely inadequate and insecure accommodation.
2. Data in Canada arises from stays in emergency shelters and is limited by not including those using violence against women shelters, transitional shelters or refugee shelters. Thus, it underestimates the size of the problem.
3. In 2014, 8% of Canadians previously experienced hidden homelessness.
4. The hourly wage needed to rent an average two-bedroom apartment without spending >30% earnings is \$18.48.

## Data

Data were obtained from the National Shelter Study 2005–2016 and for St. John's from a point-in-time count on 11 Apr 2018.

## Results

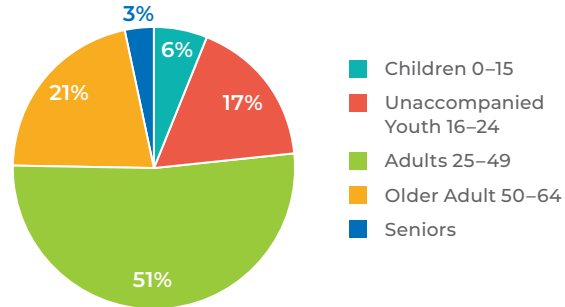


Figure 1. Age Distribution of Bed Nights (N=5,121,681) in Emergency Shelters in Canada in 2016

- Occupancy rate of shelters was 91%.
- In all age groups and families, the number of days in shelters is increasing.
- 70% were male. Male shelter use increases with age, whereas female use decreases.
- Indigenous people comprised 31% of shelter users, over six times more than their representation in the population (5%).

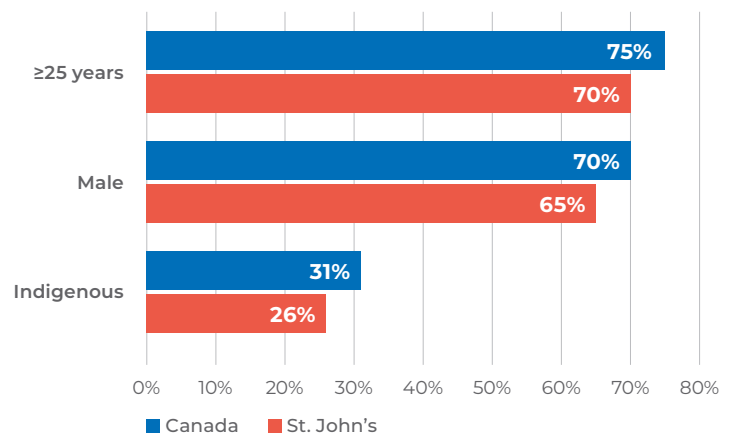


Figure 2. Comparison of Characteristics of Homeless People in St. John's on 11 Apr 2018 (N=165) to Homeless People in Canada in 2016

- St. John's homeless people were similar to those in Canada, with the majority being ≥25 years of age and male, and over representation of Indigenous people relative to the number in the population.
- 64% of homeless people in St. John's migrated to the city from outside or around the province.

**Table 1. Monthly Cost of Homelessness in St. John's**

Setting	Monthly Cost
Hospital	\$10,900
Provincial jail	\$4,333
Shelter bed	\$1,932
Rental supplement	\$701
Social housing	\$200

- Hospital costs comprise by far the biggest cost of homelessness.

**Table 2. Factors Impacting or Influenced by Homelessness**

Affordability/availability	Un/underemployment
Substance use	Mental illness
High comorbidity	Poor health care
Violence	Law enforcement
LGBTQ youth	Ethnicity
Elderly	Single mothers

- For more detail, visit <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/homelessness/reports-shelter-2016.html>.

## Conclusions

1. Homelessness is underestimated and a frequent social determinant of health in Canada and in St. John's.
2. The demographic characteristics of the homeless in St. John's are similar to those in Canada.
3. Hospitalization comprises by far the biggest cost of homelessness.
4. Risk factors for homelessness cross social, health and societal domains.
5. Strategies to reduce homelessness are urgently needed and could provide health benefits to homeless people (who do not have a voice) and reduce health costs.