



# **On our streets and in our shelters...**

**Results of the 2005 Greater Vancouver Homeless Count**

September 2005

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## On Our Streets and in Our Shelters

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# 1 Highlights

- There has been significant growth in the number of homeless counted region-wide, almost doubling from 1,121 persons in 2002 to 2,174 persons in 2005.
- More homeless people were found on the street on March 15 than in shelters and the number of street homeless has grown by 235% or 800 persons since the last count in 2002.
- People with Aboriginal identity were over-represented among the region's homeless compared to their share of the total population (30% compared to 2%).
- There were proportionally more women among the Aboriginal homeless population (35%) than the non-Aboriginal homeless population (27%).
- The number and share of Aboriginal people was highest among the street homeless (357 people or 34% of the total street homeless) and smallest among the sheltered homeless (158 people or 23% of the total sheltered homeless).
- Forty families with children were enumerated on homeless count day. Most stayed in a shelter or transition house, although some families were among the street homeless.
- Over 600 people or one-third of the homeless population have been homeless for over one year, and are considered the long-term homeless. This characteristic was even more pronounced among the street homeless – 47% were homeless for one year or more.
- Shelters, safe houses and transition houses turned away 169 adults and 6 children on count night. This was higher than the 111 turnaways reported in 2002.
- Less than half of the homeless population (45%) had a steady income source such as income assistance, pension or disability benefits. The remainder survived with no income; income from binning or bottle collecting, panhandling, part-time and casual employment; or illegal activities. The sheltered homeless were more likely to receive income assistance than the street homeless.
- Health conditions were very common among the homeless, with 74% of those counted having one or more health conditions (i.e., addiction, medical condition, mental illness, and physical disability). The street homeless were worse off in terms of health conditions than the sheltered homeless and the street homeless were more likely to report more than one health concern.
- Addiction was the most common health condition. Almost half of the homeless who responded to this question reported problems with addiction. The share of

street homeless reporting addiction (53%) was higher than the share of the sheltered homeless (43%).

- Almost 45% of the street homeless said they did not want to stay in shelters because they do not like them for a variety of reasons, including fear of theft, lack of hygiene, etc.
- The number of youth under age 25 declined as a share of the total homeless from 28% in 2002 to 15% in 2005 although there was a slight increase in the actual number of youth that were homeless from 272 in 2002 to 296 in 2005. There was an actual decline in the number of homeless youth under 19 years old since the last count, from 124 in 2002 to 76 in 2005.
- Homeless youth had the highest rate of addiction (56%) when compared to all homeless persons (49%) or any other sub-group.
- The number of homeless seniors 55 and over enumerated on count day grew significantly from 51 persons in 2002 to 171 persons in 2005.
- 84% of the homeless were found in the Vancouver and South of Fraser (primarily Surrey and the Langleys) sub-regions, although South of Fraser and the Northeast Sector experienced the largest percentage increase in the number of homeless since 2002. The location of their last permanent home reported by the homeless was more evenly distributed around the region.

"I felt a huge sadness realizing that under normal circumstances, I would have walked past this man.... stereotyping him as a homeless person... and moved on with my life. And yet here I was sitting on a curb at 11:00 listening to a very discouraged young man tell me about leaving behind his wife, children and career in the services. He described surviving a fire, losing everything he owned, being ill and needing medical treatment. After the survey was completed ... I went a few blocks away to the comfort of my home, with the memory of this man's sad face etched on my mind..."

—Interviewer



## **2 Introduction**

This document presents the findings of the 2005 Greater Vancouver Homeless Count. It provides an estimate of the region's homeless population on one day in March 2005, demographic information about the homeless population, and a comparison between the 2005 and 2002 count results.

Both the 2001 Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver and the 2003 Update recommended that a regular homeless count be undertaken to obtain current information, identify changes and trends over time, and help monitor the implementation of the homelessness plan.

### **2.1 Purpose and objectives**

The purpose of this project is to provide quality information about the current size and nature of the homeless population in Greater Vancouver. There are three objectives of the research:

- to provide an updated estimate of the number of homeless persons, by sub-region and regionally in Greater Vancouver;
- to provide a demographic profile of this population; and,
- to identify trends in relation to the 2002 homeless count.

### **2.2 Definitions**

Someone was considered homeless for the purpose of this count if they did not have a place of their own where they could expect to stay for more than 30 days and if they did not pay rent. This included people who had no physical shelter – staying on the street, in doorways, in parkades, in parks and on beaches – and those who were temporarily sheltered in emergency shelters, safe houses for youth or transition houses for women and their children fleeing violence. For example, someone who stayed in a garage would be considered homeless, because they do not pay rent, even if they considered the garage to be their home. Someone who stayed in an emergency shelter usually cannot stay for more than 30 days, and was therefore homeless.

Someone who stayed at a friend's place was also homeless for the purposes of this count, because they had no security of tenure, and did not pay rent. Homelessness in smaller or suburban municipalities often takes the form of 'sofa surfing' (especially by youth), partly due to the lack of local services and facilities for homeless people, as well as preferences.<sup>1</sup> To exclude these individuals from the estimate and profile of homelessness in the region would underestimate the extent of homelessness in these areas. People who were sofa surfing were included in the count of homeless persons if we found them. Sofa surfers as a population will be significantly undercounted using this methodology. Additional research on this population is recommended.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Kraus, Deborah et al. 2001. Environmental Scan on Youth Homelessness. CMHC.

This count measured homelessness in the region at a point-in-time – one 24-hour period (from 12:01 am to 11:59 pm) on March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005. A point-in-time count tells us how many people were counted in the one 24-hour period. The number in a 24-hour count is lower than the number of different people who experience homeless over a period of time like one year.

### **2.3 Geographic scope**

The geographic scope of the profile was the area within the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD). For comparative purposes, we have analyzed the information using the six sub-regions established in 2002. These sub-regions are:

“Vancouver” – Vancouver and UBC

“Inner Municipalities” – Richmond, Burnaby, New Westminster<sup>2</sup>

“North Shore” – City of North Vancouver, District of North Vancouver and West Vancouver

“South of Fraser” – Surrey, White Rock, Delta, City of Langley, Township of Langley

“North East Sector” – Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody

“Ridge Meadows” – Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows

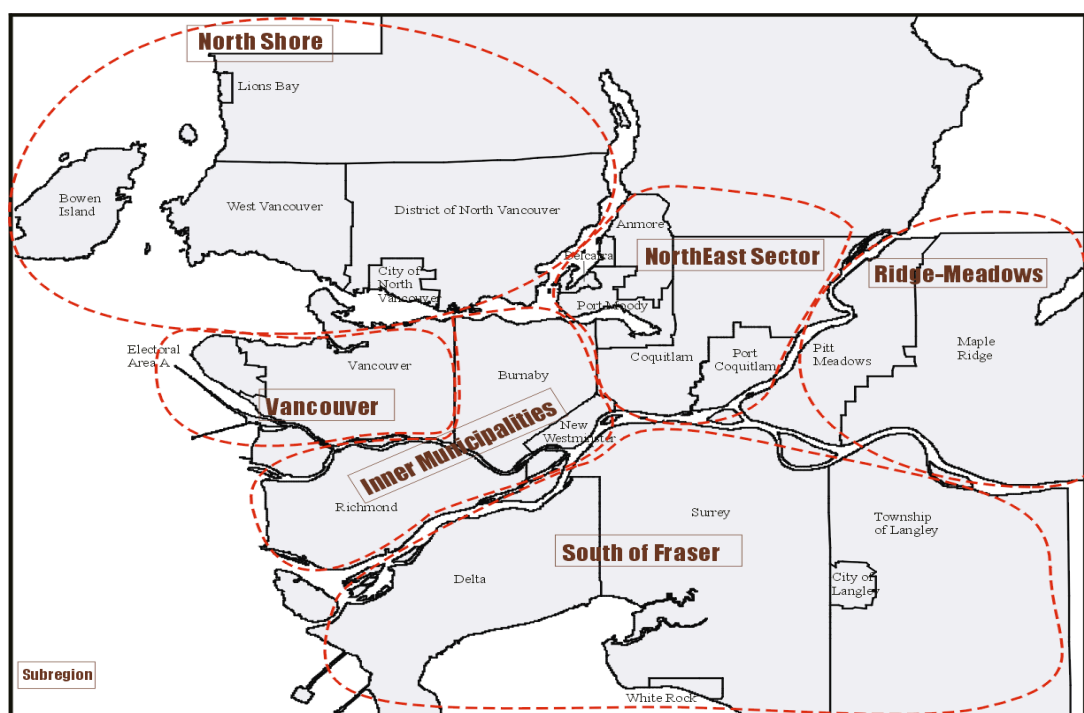
A map of these sub-regions is shown on the following page.

Summary municipal level data is provided in Appendix A.

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<sup>2</sup> While the sub-region “Inner Municipalities” no longer exists (Richmond and Burnaby/New Westminster are now their own sub-regions), “Inner Municipalities” it has been used in this report to provide comparisons with the findings from the count in 2002.

Map 1 – Sub-regions within the Greater Vancouver Regional District



## 2.4 Method

The 2005 Homeless Count conducted on March 15, 2005 used the same method as the 2002 Homeless Count. It consisted of two components designed to enumerate the sheltered homeless and the street homeless. For the night-time component, staff at emergency shelters, transition houses and safe houses were asked to complete a brief survey form listing anonymously all the people who stayed with them on the night of March 14/15<sup>th</sup>, 2005<sup>3</sup> and provide some basic demographic characteristics for each client. These people are called the ‘sheltered homeless’ for the purposes of this study.

The day-time component enumerated homeless people who did not stay in emergency accommodation the night before but who visited other locations used by homeless people such as meal programs, drop in centres, some social services, and congregating areas such as parks, and certain streets etc. They may have slept outside, in a parkade or at someone else’s place, and were termed the ‘street homeless’.

Beginning early in the morning (5:30 am) on March 15th, interviewers approached people who were using services, such as drop-in centres, and in locations, such as parks frequented by the homeless. Local community agencies and service-providers identified these day-time locations in advance to researchers. Aboriginal organizations were able to

<sup>3</sup> Staff were asked to count the persons who effectively were in the shelter beginning at 12:01 am on March 15th and to add anyone who came to the shelter prior to daylight (around 5:00 am) on March 15th.

identify areas where Aboriginal people who are homeless congregate and this improved the coverage from the count in 2002. Individuals at these locations were asked a series of screening questions to determine if, a) they had already answered the survey, b) they were homeless and c), they did not stay in emergency accommodation covered by the night-time component. If the interviewee qualified, the interviewer would ask the questions and complete the questionnaire.

In addition, outreach workers and service agencies that frequently had contact with sofa surfers were asked to complete interviews with these individuals. To the extent that the method captured sofa surfers, they are included with the street homeless population.

**Hello...oh  
Anybody home?**

The homeless count  
They say  
At 5 in the morning  
So count the homeless  
Hello..oh  
Anybody home?

Down echoing alleys  
Surprisingly tidy, trimmed  
Through motion-detected darkness  
Past iron-gate sentinels  
Looking to count homeless  
Anybody? Home?

—Excerpt of a poem by an interviewer

## 2.5 Limitations

Homelessness by its very nature is difficult to measure. All counts underestimate homelessness, because of the difficulty in finding those who do not use services or spend time where homeless people congregate. This initiative was especially challenging because of the vast geographic scope. ***Thus, the Homeless Count did not enumerate every homeless person in the region on March 15, 2005, and is an undercount.*** It does not include people staying in detox facilities, recovery houses<sup>4</sup> or hospitals who do not have a place to go when they leave. It does not include all people who were sofa surfing. Other limitations were due to time and space. For example, youth safe houses were apparently less busy than usual on count night, because, as one worker reported, youth tend to be on their "best behaviour" just before spring break. In another example it was reported that security personnel roused a number of homeless people from their usual sleeping places in underground parking garages during the two weeks prior to count night.

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<sup>4</sup> A pilot enumeration of recovery houses and detox centres was part of the 2005 count. 201 people were identified out of 311 people enumerated in recovery houses and detox centres on count night who did not have a place to go when they leave. These numbers were not included in the total count figures as they only cover 27 of the detox and recovery houses. Most of the recovery houses participating in this pilot enumeration were in Surrey.

That being said, the information obtained from the count provides the best available current data using established methods. Service based counts tend to provide a better estimate (though still an undercount) of the number of unsheltered homeless people in a community compared to a night-time street count since many people try to hide at night for their own safety and may deliberately avoid a night-time street count.<sup>5</sup>

It should also be noted that the March 15, 2005 day-time service based count was enhanced by the increased number of volunteers that were available compared to 2002. Over 300 volunteers participated in 2005 compared to less than 100 in 2002. Because of the numbers available, volunteers in 2005 were asked to work a three-hour shift compare to the eight-hour shifts requested in 2002. In addition, community services agencies and sub-regional homeless committees were able to identify more locations where homeless people congregate.

"The person who had the biggest impact on me on the day of the count was someone I couldn't even interview. I was at Broadway and Willow at about 8 am and I saw a woman standing on the corner with her hat on the pavement. She looked to be about 40 and was just standing quietly not asking anyone for change. I explained to her that we were doing a questionnaire about people's housing situations and asked her if I could ask a few questions. She spoke in a very soft voice and said that those things are personal, emotional and deeply painful for her, and her eyes welled up with tears... I have no idea why she was homeless, but it was obvious she'd been through something very traumatic. I thought about telling her that the point of the survey was to help get more safe housing for people, but I knew she just couldn't do it.... Before walking away I offered her some chocolate, but she just said "no, thank you."

—Interviewer

A more detailed discussion of the methods, coverage issues and limitations is provided in Appendix B.

## 2.6 Report organization

Section 3 provides the count and profile of the homeless population in the Greater Vancouver region as a whole with Section 4 describing the profiles of the sheltered and street homeless. Section 5 describes trends and changes in characteristics of the homeless population since 2002. Section 6 profiles specific sub-populations of homeless, such as women or Aboriginal people and Section 7 contains sub-regional data. The report concludes with Section 8 that provides the authors' perspectives on the implications from the study. Appendix A contains a summary of municipal level data, Appendix B a detailed description of the method, and Appendix C a list of the volunteers and shelters and transition houses that participated in the study.

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<sup>5</sup> HUD. *A Guide to Counting Unsheltered Homeless People*. October 2004. p. 53.

### 3 Greater Vancouver's homeless

This section presents the findings of the count of homeless people on March 15, 2005 and the growth since the 2002 count. Included are individuals who slept outside or 'on the street', in three types of emergency accommodation, or who stayed with someone else temporarily where they did not pay rent and did not have assured long term accommodation (e.g. sofa surfing) on the evening of March 15, 2005. It is important to note that someone who was among the 'street homeless' on count day does not always sleep rough. They may occasionally stay in an emergency shelter for example. The same holds true for those classified as sheltered homeless on count day, who may occasionally sleep outside.

#### 3.1 Homelessness in 2005

On March 15, 2005 there were 2,174 homeless people counted region-wide. Over half of the individuals were enumerated at day-time locations, meaning they slept rough or sofa surfed on the night of March 15. Among the sheltered homeless, shelter and safe house clients predominated. There were 74 homeless children who were with their parents during the count, 22 of whom were among the street homeless on count day.

Table 1 – Sheltered and Street Homeless in Greater Vancouver, March 15, 2005<sup>6</sup>

Homeless category	Adults and unaccompanied youth		Accompanied children		Total homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Sheltered homeless	995	47%	52	70%	1,047	48%
Shelters/safe houses	915	92%	24	46%	939	90%
Transition houses	80	8%	28	54%	108	10%
Street homeless	1,105	53%	22	30%	1,127	52%
Total homeless	2,100	100% <sup>7</sup>	74	100%	2,174	100%

Shelter, safe house and transition house providers were also asked to note how many people were turned away the night of March 15th, either because the shelter was full or the individual seeking shelter was not appropriate for their facility. They reported that they turned away 175 adults, youth and children, an increase of 58% over the 111 people turned away in 2002. Most of those turned away were from shelters and safe houses. Some of the

<sup>6</sup> The figures in Table 1 include 43 sheltered homeless individuals for whom complete records are not available, but who stayed in a shelter that night. Their numbers are included in the table above, but not in the demographic information reported on the following pages. Accompanied children are also not included in the demographic tables, since individual information for them was not collected.

<sup>7</sup> Percentages may not always add up to 100% due to rounding.

individuals turned away may have been enumerated as street homeless in the day-time component.<sup>8</sup>

Table 2 – Turnaways

Shelter category	Adults and unaccompanied youth		Accompanied children		Total turnaways	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Shelters/safe houses	152	90%	2	33%	154	88%
Transition houses	17	10%	4	67%	21	12%
TOTAL turnaways	169	100%	6	100%	175	100%

### 3.2 Growth in homelessness

The number of homeless people enumerated in the region has almost doubled since the previous count from 1,121 people in 2002 to 2,174 persons in 2005, an increase of 94%. Most of this increase is in the street homeless population, which has more than tripled over the past three years. **There were almost 800 more street homeless counted in 2005 than in 2002.**

Table 3 – Growth in number of homeless since 2002

Number of homeless	2002	2005	Change	% Change
Sheltered homeless	788	1,047	259	33%
Street homeless	333	1,127	794	238%
Total homeless	1,121	2,174	1,053	94%

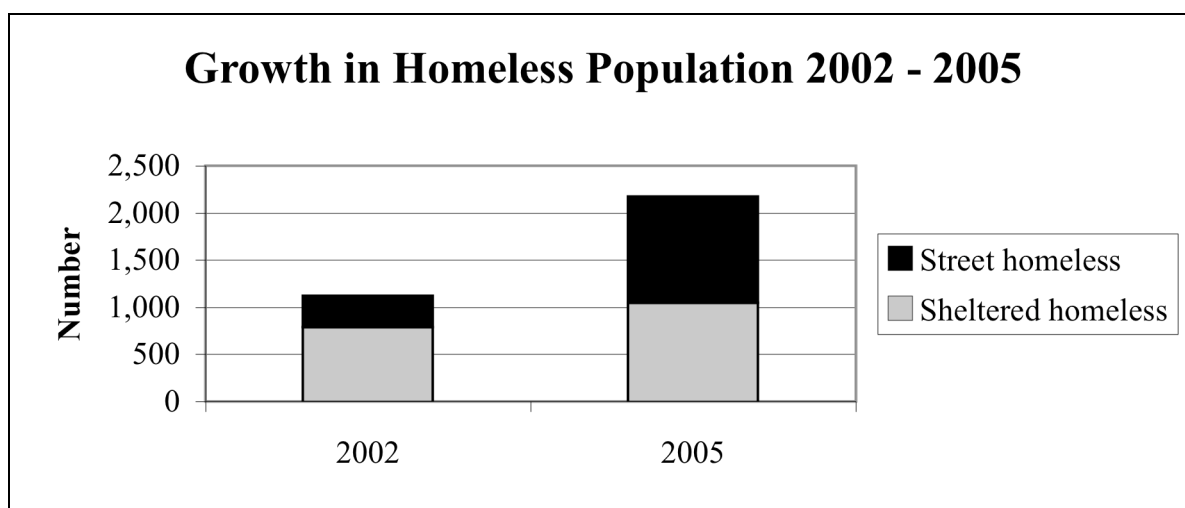
The number of sheltered homeless, which grew by one-third, can only increase by the number of new spaces in shelters, safe houses and transition houses. The number of children counted who were accompanied by an adult has remained roughly the same: 71 children in 2002 and 74 in 2005.

The growth in the number of homeless is shown graphically below.

---

<sup>8</sup> Some of the individuals turned away may have been included in the count as street homeless, if they spent the night somewhere else that meets the definition of homeless for this project and were interviewed on March 15th. (See Section 2.5)

Figure 1 – Growth in Homeless Population 2002–2005



How much of the growth in homelessness reported here is due to an actual increase in the population, and how much is due to improvements in the count method? The research team believes that most of the change is due to an actual increase for the following reasons:

- a) The change in numbers corresponds to the findings of City of Vancouver tenant assistance walkabouts.<sup>9</sup> The Tenant Assistance Program estimated in its February 2004 report to council that approximately 500 to 1,200 people sleep out of doors in the city of Vancouver on any given night, roughly double the number reported in 2001.
- b) The count findings are consistent with anecdotal information provided by agencies and service providers who believe they were seeing more homeless people in 2005, and in places they were not found in 2002.
- c) Only minor modifications were made to the method, although there were changes in the scope of the research, such as significantly more volunteer interviewers, Aboriginal assistance with finding and interviewing the Aboriginal homeless etc. See Appendix B.

<sup>9</sup> City of Vancouver, 2004, Shelterless in Vancouver - 2004, Report to City Council, February 10, 2004.



## 4 A profile of sheltered and street homeless persons

The following profile presents a demographic picture of the homeless adults and unaccompanied youth in the GVRD on March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005. It also describes some pertinent characteristics of their homeless experience, e.g. the length of time homeless. Separate results are presented for the sheltered and street homeless as well as for the total homeless population. Profile data excludes the 74 accompanied children for whom separate demographic information was not collected, and 43 individuals who were enumerated on count night, for whom no corresponding demographic data is available.<sup>10</sup>

There was a high rate of non-response to some parts of the survey questionnaire, particularly for the sheltered homeless. Age and gender questions were well-answered, but other variables had a higher non-response rate, mostly in the 10% to 15% range. In addition, shelter staff tended to complete the form based on their knowledge of an individual, rather than by asking each individual for the information. Together, these two factors may cause the shelter demographic data to be less reliable than the street homeless data.

### 4.1 Gender

Men represented about three quarters of the homeless population counted, and women about one quarter overall. There were more women proportionally among the sheltered homeless population (30%) compared to the street homeless (23%).

Table 4 – Gender

Gender	Sheltered homeless		Street homeless		Total homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Men	653	69%	830	77%	1,483	73%
Women	287	30%	247	23%	534	26%
Transgendered	3	<1% <sup>11</sup>	6	1%	9	<1%
Total respondents	943	100%	1,083	100%	2,026	100%
Not stated <sup>12</sup>	9		22		31	
Total	952		1,105		2,057	

<sup>10</sup> Data for some individuals could not be obtained at a few shelters either because of a rush at registration or because an incident occurred during registration. Nonetheless, the beds were used and the individuals would have reported being in a shelter the night before and thus not interviewed had they been approached during the day-time count.

<sup>11</sup> Less than 0.5%

<sup>12</sup> Interviewers were instructed to record gender based on observation. In cases where they could not ascertain gender, either because of clothing or for other reasons, this was marked as “not stated”.

## 4.2 Age

Adults aged 25 to 54 years comprised three quarters of the region's homeless (76%). Within this group, 35-44 years olds predominate with 32%. There were almost 300 unaccompanied youth under age 25 years enumerated during the count, representing 15% of the total. Of these, 76 people were under age 19. There were more homeless youth under age 24 among the street homeless (193) than among the sheltered homeless (103). Nine percent or 171 people enumerated on count day were age 55 years or over.

"From 1/2 a block away she appeared clean and well dressed. We were going to keep walking, but something drew me to her. Originally from Kelowna, she's 18 and has been homeless and on the streets of Vancouver since she turned 16 and was kicked out of a foster home. She hasn't been able to get a youth agreement, says she had trouble with the paper work. Unable to qualify for social assistance, she's turned to prostitution for income and multiple drugs to forget..."

—Interviewer

Table 5 – Age

Age groups	Sheltered homeless		Street homeless		Total homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under 19 <sup>13</sup>	18	2%	58	6%	76	4%
19-24	85	9%	135	13%	220	11%
25-34	232	25%	203	19%	435	22%
35-44	309	34%	325	31%	634	32%
45-54	202	22%	241	23%	443	22%
55-64	56	6%	83	8%	139	7%
65+	15	2%	17	2%	32	2%
Total respondents	917	100%	1,062	100%	1,979	100%
Not stated	35		43		78	
Total	952		1,105		2,057	

<sup>13</sup> Includes only unaccompanied youth under 19 years.

### 4.3 Aboriginal identity

A new question on the 2005 count survey asked respondents directly if they considered themselves an Aboriginal person. Table 7 shows that 30% of the homeless population identified as Aboriginal. Persons of Aboriginal identity were over-represented among the region's homeless population, compared with their share of the GVRD population, which is 2%.<sup>14</sup>

The number and share of Aboriginal people was highest among the street homeless (357 people or 34%), suggesting that Aboriginal people who are homeless avoid shelters, that shelters do not serve this population well or that they are under-reported in the sheltered homeless data reported here.

Table 6 – Aboriginal identity

Aboriginal identity	Sheltered homeless		Street homeless		Total homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Aboriginal	158	23%	357	34%	515	30%
Not aboriginal	520	77%	685	66%	1,205	70%
Total respondents	678	100%	1,042	100%	1,720	100%
No answer	274		63		337	
Total	952		1,105		2,057	

### 4.4 Accompanying the homeless

The purpose of this question was to determine if family members, pets or others such as a friend, accompanied the homeless while they were in a shelter or on the street. Overall, 82% of the homeless population who responded to this question reported that they were alone. Ten percent reported they were with a partner and 2% reported they were with children. The sheltered homeless were more likely to be alone (90%) compared to the street homeless (76%). The street homeless also more frequently reported being with a partner (12%). This may be due to the limited spaces for families or couples in shelters. The street homeless were also more likely to have pets with them.

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<sup>14</sup> GVRD. Aboriginal Population in the GVRD, 2001 Census.  
<http://www.gvrd.bc.ca/growth/keyfacts/aboriginal.htm>

Table 7 – Accompanying the homeless

Family Status	Sheltered homeless		Street homeless		Total homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Alone	716	90%	786	76%	1,502	82%
With Partner/spouse	50	6%	128	12%	178	10%
With children <sup>15</sup>	20	3%	20	2%	40	2%
With pet	2	<1%	32	3%	34	2%
With other	10	1%	66	6%	76	4%
Total respondents	798	100%	1,032	100%	1,830	100%
Not stated	154		73		227	
Total	952		1,105		2,057	

#### 4.5 Ethnic or cultural group

Homeless people enumerated during the count were also asked to report to which ethnic or cultural group their ancestors belonged. This is a difficult question to answer, given that many people are of mixed ethnicity or identify themselves as “Canadian”. In cases where more than one ethnicity was reported, only the first was coded. If they answered “Canadian”, they were coded as “Canadian” unless another identity was also mentioned (e.g., Canadian and British would have been classified as “Caucasian/European”. The findings from this question need to be treated with caution given a high non-response rate, especially for the sheltered homeless.

Only a small percentage (8%) of the homeless adults who responded to this question identified an ethnic group that was not first listed as Caucasian (includes European origin), Aboriginal, or “Canadian”. Only 3% indicated Asian ethnicity, despite people of Asian ancestry having a much higher proportion within the overall regional population (26%).<sup>16</sup> This finding corresponds with the results of a study of homelessness among immigrants in the GVRD.<sup>17</sup>

#### 4.6 Reason for being homeless

Isolating the cause of homelessness is difficult, given its complex and multi-dimensional nature. It is particularly difficult to capture in a brief questionnaire such as the one used for the count. A qualitative interview method would be more successful in eliciting meaningful information of this nature.

<sup>15</sup> Some had two or more children.

<sup>16</sup> GVRD. 1998. Greater Vancouver’s “Roots”: Defining Our Ethnic Origins. (Based on 1996 census data) <http://www.gvr.bc.ca/growth/pdfs/Census1996-EthnicOrigins.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Sherman Chan et al. 2005. The profile of absolute and relative homelessness among immigrants, refugees, and refugee claimants in the GVRD. MOSAIC.

Nonetheless, the count asked respondents for the main reasons why they did not have a place of their own. As expected, survey participants cited a range of reasons. The largest share reported that their homelessness was due to lack of income (44%), health or addictions (25%), and cost of housing (22%). Economic reasons, consisting of lack of income and cost of housing, comprised at least 66% of the reasons stated. Evictions may also occur for economic or other reasons. The street homeless were more likely to identify lack of income as the main reason for being homeless, while health reasons or addiction were somewhat more frequently cited among the sheltered homeless.

"I'd heard people talk about 'the funky chicken', but had never spoken with anyone so high for so long that they 'danced' uncontrollably... We...offered him a cigarette. Surprisingly, the arm he reached out was amazingly steady while the rest of his body danced around it. I wasn't sure he'd be able to take it his dance was so frantic, but he did and he agreed to answer some of our questions. He's homeless and about 35, but looks more like 45. According to him, he's homeless because he was released from jail with no job, no place to stay, and had to wait several weeks before welfare would kick in. This wasn't the first time we'd heard someone say they were homeless because they were released from jail..."

—Interviewer

**Table 8 – Reason homeless**

Reason homeless (more than 1 possible)	Sheltered homeless		Street homeless		Total homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Lack of income	357	38%	480	50%	837	44%
Health/addiction	258	27%	224	23%	482	25%
Cost of housing	176	19%	241	25%	417	22%
Abuse, Family Breakdown, Conflict	185	20%	128	13%	313	16%
Evicted	153	16%	123	13%	276	14%
Other	132	14%	137	14%	269	14%
Moving/ Stranded	146	15%	77	8%	223	12%
Total respondents	945		964		1,909	
No answer	7		141		148	
Total	952		1,105		2,057	

## 4.7 Length of time homeless

**More than 600 people, or over one third of those enumerated, were homeless for a year or more (35%).** In fact, some individuals indicated that they had been homeless for 10 or more years. Only 24% of the homeless people who responded to this question had been without a permanent home for less than one month, what might be considered the 'newly homeless'.

The *sheltered homeless* tended to be homeless for a shorter period than the *street homeless*, suggesting that there may be a tendency to move outside the longer they remain homeless. It could also mean that people in shelters get more help exiting homelessness. Forty-one percent of the sheltered homeless were 'newly homeless' compared to only 12% of the *street*

*homeless*. In contrast, 19% of the *sheltered homeless* were the long-term homeless, compared to 47% of the *street homeless*.

Note that the long-term homeless tend to be over-represented in point in time counts because they are more likely to be enumerated on any given day.<sup>18</sup>

**Table 9 – Length of time homeless**

Length of time homeless	Sheltered homeless		Street homeless		Total homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Less than 1 week	119	16%	30	3%	149	8%
1 week to under 1 month	189	25%	86	9%	275	16%
1 month to 6 months	224	30%	236	23%	460	26%
6 months to under 1 year	80	11%	182	18%	262	15%
1 year or more	145	19%	483	47%	628	35%
Total respondents	757	100%	1,017	100%	1,774	100%
Not stated	195		88		283	
Total	952		1,105		2,057	

## 4.8 Last permanent home

When asked which municipality they considered their last permanent home, the majority of homeless individuals (75%) who responded to this question reported somewhere in the GVRD. Another 8% considered home a location elsewhere in BC, 15% reported their last permanent home was elsewhere in Canada, and 1% reported their last permanent home outside of Canada. There were no significant differences between the sheltered and the street homeless populations.

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<sup>18</sup> Martha Burt. "Demographics and Geography: Estimating Needs." P. 1-6. In Linda B Fosburg and Deborah Dennis (eds.) *Practical Lessons: 1998 National Symposium on Homeless Research*. Period data shows that the vast majority of homeless people using shelters are first-time or short-term clients.

Table 10 – Last permanent home

Last permanent home	Sheltered homeless		Street homeless		Total homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
GVRD	565	77%	756	75%	1,321	75%
Rest of BC	54	7%	92	9%	146	8%
Elsewhere in Canada	105	14%	154	15%	259	15%
Outside Canada	14	2%	10	1%	24	1%
Total Respondents	738	100%	1,012	100%	1,750	100%
Not stated / not known	214		93		307	
Total	952		1,105		2,057	

#### 4.9 Major source of income

The major income source of the homeless adults and unaccompanied youth enumerated in the homeless count was income assistance or a related training program (30%). The next most frequently reported response was “no income” (23%) followed by full, part-time or casual employment (14% or almost 250 respondents), although this was mostly casual or part-time work.

The sheltered homeless were much more likely to receive income assistance (43%) compared to the street homeless (20%). The same was true for disability benefits. While part of this may be a function of Ministry-funded shelters requiring income assistance eligibility for shelter stays over 3 days, the findings show that two-thirds of the street homeless have very insecure sources of income. Finally, 10% of the street homeless reported binning or bottle collecting to earn income, and 9% used illegal means such as drug sales, prostitution and theft.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> The day-time questionnaire provided space for the interviewer to specify ‘other’ income source, while the night-time did not. The sheltered homeless may also use these methods to obtain income.

Table 11 – Major Source of Income

Major source of income	Sheltered homeless		Street homeless		Total homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>"Secure" Source</b>						
Welfare or training program	352	43%	199	20%	551	30%
Disability benefit	107	13%	94	9%	201	11%
Federal income source	31	4%	37	4%	68	4%
Sub total "secure" source		60%		33%		45%
<b>"Insecure" source</b>						
No income	175	22%	237	23%	412	23%
Employment	104	13%	144	14%	248	14%
Binning, bottle collecting	n/a		98	10%	98	5%
Panhandling	n/a		48	5%	48	3%
Illegal	n/a		93	9%	93	5%
Other	42	5%	70	7%	112	6%
Sub-total "insecure" source		40%		68%		56%
Total Respondents	811	100%	1,020	100%	1,831	100%
Not stated	141		85		226	
Total	952		1,105		2,057	

#### 4.10 Health conditions

The 2005 Homeless Count survey asked about people's health, specifically whether they had a medical condition, physical disability, addiction, and/or mental illness. Medical condition refers to chronic problems like asthma and diabetes, and physical disability refers to an impairment affecting mobility or movement. This information relies either on the homeless individual's willingness to self-report or on the subjective opinions of shelter providers. In a few cases, interviewers during the day-time count noted a condition that had not been self-reported by the individual, explaining the reason for making such a note. In these cases, the interviewer's information was coded for the homeless individual. While self-reported information needs to be treated with some caution, in our judgment the under-reporting of some health conditions such as addiction and mental illness would be the most likely bias.

In all, almost 40% of the homeless reported one health condition and 35% reported two or more, so that almost 75% of those counted had one or more health conditions. The street homeless were somewhat more likely to report more than one health concern.



Table 12 – Incidence of health conditions

Health condition	Sheltered homeless		Street homeless		Total homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
No health conditions	228	31%	217	22%	445	26%
One health condition	285	39%	381	39%	666	39%
More than one condition	226	31%	382	39%	608	35%
Total respondents	739	100%	980	100%	1,719	100%
Not stated	213		125		338	
Total	952		1,105		2,057	

**More than 800 people, or almost half the homeless people who responded to this question, reported that they have an addiction problem (49%).** The next most common health problem was a medical condition (35%). These trends were even more pronounced among the street homeless, where 53% reported an addiction and 38% a medical condition. The street homeless were generally worse off than the sheltered homeless for all types of health conditions. The only exception was mental illness. A larger share of the sheltered homeless reported mental illness, (25%) although there were more persons with mental illness among the street homeless. This may be because there are several specialized shelters for persons with a serious and persistent mental illness in Greater Vancouver.

“A fellow we met at the Station Skytrain station told us he was sleeping rough and trying to get his life back together. He was in his mid fifties. He told us about his career as a construction worker. He pointed to several tall buildings in the area and told us how he had worked on each of them. Addictions eventually lead to job loss and then to eviction...”

—Interviewer

Table 13 – Type of health conditions

Health condition (more than 1 possible)	Sheltered homeless		Street homeless		Total homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Addiction	321	43%	517	53%	838	49%
Medical condition	226	31%	375	38%	601	35%
Mental illness	183	25%	206	21%	389	23%
Physical disability	117	16%	247	25%	364	21%
Total respondents	739		980		1,719	
Not stated	213		125		338	
Total	952		1,105		2,057	

The majority of those who reported they had a mental illness also reported that they had an addiction (60% of the sheltered and 70% of the street homeless so reported). Another way of thinking about those with concurrent disorders (mental illness and addiction) is that approximately one-third of homeless people with an addiction also reported having a mental

illness. Thus 231 of the 1,464 people reporting on their health conditions (16%) said they had both a mental illness and an addiction. These findings are consistent with other reports on homeless persons with concurrent disorders.<sup>20</sup> These reports estimate that one-third of the homeless people have a mental illness and that 50%-70% of these have a concurrent disorder. In the US, it is estimated that 10%-20% of the homeless have a concurrent disorder.

## 4.11 The street homeless

### 4.11.1 Where they stayed last night

The survey asked some specific questions of the street homeless. Individuals approached by interviewers in the daytime were asked where they stayed the previous night in order to determine if they qualified for the survey. Of the 1,105 street homeless, the largest share (51%) or 566 individuals reported staying outside and another 25% reported staying in cars, garages, squats, etc. – places that are not considered fit for human habitation. The remaining 24% or 266 people stayed temporarily at someone else's place, where they did not pay rent and had no security of tenure, were sofa surfing and were therefore homeless.

Table 14 – Where street homeless stayed

Location	Number	Percent
Outside	566	51%
Someone else's place	266	24%
Car/garage/public building	78	7%
Other - squat, etc	195	18%
Total Respondents	1,105	100%

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<sup>20</sup> See *Innovative Approaches for Providing Services to Homeless People with Concurrent Disorders: A Review of the Literature*. 2005. [http://www.homelessness.gc.ca/research/toolkit/index\\_e.asp](http://www.homelessness.gc.ca/research/toolkit/index_e.asp)

#### 4.11.2 Reasons for not staying in a shelter

Most street homeless said they did not stay in a shelter on count night because they do not like them – 44%. They were concerned about cleanliness, rules, noise, theft, restrictions on length of stay and other issues. Seventeen percent were able to stay with a friend for the evening and therefore did not need to stay in a shelter. However, a significant number (153 or 17%) did try to stay in a shelter, but were turned away either because it was full, because they were inappropriate for the shelter, or because they were barred from staying there. An individual is considered ‘inappropriate’ for a shelter if they are too young to stay in an adult shelter, or there were no beds available for their gender. Interestingly, shelters and safe houses reported virtually the same number of turnaways (152 adults) on count night.<sup>21</sup>

“I approached the sleeping bag under the Cambie St. Bridge at 5:30 am and said hello. The man inside was startled, but calmed down very quickly once he woke up. He was in his 60’s and said he’d always slept outside. He didn’t stay in shelters because of the rules and the other people that stay there. It can be noisy. He also wanted to stay away from the Downtown Eastside. He said he didn’t have any problems with mental illness and wasn’t addicted to anything, except maybe a bit of alcohol. Pension and Old Age Security were his main sources of income...”

—Interviewer

About 9% of the street homeless did not stay at a shelter because there was none close by or they could not get there. Although there were many homeless people who did not stay in emergency accommodation on count night and who are called the street homeless in this profile, many have clearly had experiences with the shelter system and indeed tried to stay at a shelter on count night.

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<sup>21</sup> While the closeness of these two figures suggests that the day-time component of the count had good coverage, the fact that the two numbers *match* is considered a coincidence.

**Table 15 – Why street homeless did not use a shelter**

<b>Reason</b> (can state more than 1)	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Dislike shelters	412	44%
Able to stay with friend	162	17%
Turned away – full	110	12%
Turned away - inappropriate or barred	43	5%
Couldn't get there	80	9%
Didn't know about	50	5%
Have pets	9	1%
Not eligible for welfare	12	1%
Other	164	15%
Total respondents	931	
No answer	174	
Total	1,105	

## 5 Homeless trends 2002 - 2005

The following tables compare the demographic and other characteristics of homeless individuals in Greater Vancouver in 2002 and 2005.<sup>22</sup>

### 5.1 Gender

Men made up a larger share of the region's homeless population in 2005 compared to 2002, although absolute numbers of both men and women increased over 2002. The increased number of women who were in shelters in 2005, (from 207 to 287), reflects a growth in the number of shelter beds available for women since 2002.

Table 16 – Gender

Gender	Total homeless 2002		Total homeless 2005		Change	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Men	700	68%	1,483	73%	783	112%
Women	333	32%	534	26%	201	60%
Transgendered	n/a		9	<1%	9	n/a
Total respondents	1,033	100%	2,026	100%	993	
Not stated <sup>23</sup>	17		31		14	
Total	1,050		2,057		1,007	

### 5.2 Age

The homeless population was generally older in 2005 than in 2002, with a larger share of seniors age 55 or older (9% compared to 5%). While the proportion that is under 25 decreased from 18% to 15%, the absolute number of homeless youth was actually higher, at almost 300. The number of homeless youth under 19 years declined in 2005, from 124 to 76. This may be a reflection of an observable aging trend between 2002 and 2005, or it may reflect the difficulty counting homeless youth, as they tend not to use services which cater primarily to adults and they are more likely to couch surf or stay in squats.

<sup>22</sup> See GVRD. 2002. *Research Project on Homelessness in Greater Vancouver*. Jim Woodward and Associates et al.

<sup>23</sup> Interviewers were instructed to record gender based on observation. In cases where they could not determine gender, either because of clothing or for other reasons, this was marked as "not stated".

Table 17 – Age groups

Age groups	Total homeless 2002		Total homeless 2005		Change	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under 19 <sup>24</sup>	124	13%	76	4%	-48	-39%
19-24	148	15%	220	11%	72	49%
25-34	216	22%	435	22%	219	101%
35-44	299	30%	634	32%	335	112%
45-54	151	15%	443	22%	292	193%
55-64	37	4%	139	7%	102	276%
65+	14	1%	32	2%	18	129%
Total respondents	989	100%	1,979	100%		
Not stated	61		78			
Total	1,050		2,057			

### 5.3 Accompanying the homeless

In 2005, Greater Vancouver's homeless were somewhat less likely to be homeless by themselves and somewhat more likely to report being accompanied by a partner or spouse. We also know that 2% were with their children and 2% had pets; options that would have been captured in the 'other' category in 2002.

Table 18 – Accompanying the homeless\*

Accompanying the homeless	Total homeless 2002		Total homeless 2005	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Alone	743	90%	1,502	82%
With Partner/spouse	60	7%	178	10%
With Children <sup>25</sup>	n/a		40	2%
With pet	n/a		34	2%
With other	23	3%	76	4%
Total respondents	826	100%	1,830	100%
Not stated	170		227	
Total	996		2,057	

\* Excludes transition house clients.

<sup>24</sup> Includes only unaccompanied youth under 19 years old

<sup>25</sup> Some adults were with two or more children

## 5.4 Length of time homeless

**The share of the region's homeless that was homeless for 1 year or more has grown from 20% in 2002 (166 people) to 35% in 2005 (628 people), an increase of 462 people.** The number of people homeless between six months and one year has also more than doubled. While a smaller share reported homeless periods of less than one week, one month and six months, the actual number of people who were homeless for these shorter time periods grew from 573 people in 2002 to 884 in 2005.

Table 19 – Length of time homeless

Length of time homeless	Total homeless 2002		Total homeless 2005		Change	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Less than 1 week	98	12%	149	8%	51	52%
1 week to under 1 month	222	26%	275	16%	53	24%
1 month to 6 months	253	30%	460	26%	207	82%
6 months to under 1 year	100	12%	262	15%	162	162%
1 year or more	166	20%	628	35%	462	278%
Total respondents	839	100%	1,774	100%		
Not stated	211		283			
Total	1,050		2,057			

## 5.5 Income

The principal changes in the source of income reported by homeless individuals in 2005 compared to 2002 were less reliance on income assistance and more illegal activities such as drug sales, theft and prostitution. Income assistance and employment remained the most common income sources for homeless people, and a significant share still had no source of income to report. Binning, bottle collecting and panhandling were a source of income for a growing share of the homeless population.

Table 20 – Major source of income

Major source of income	Total homeless 2002		Total homeless 2005		Change	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>"Secure" sources</b>						
Welfare or training program	344	40%	551	30%	207	60%
Disability benefit	77	9%	201	11%	124	161%
Federal income source	40	5%	68	4%	28	70%
<b>"Insecure" sources</b>						
No income	167	20%	412	23%	245	147%
Employment	98	12%	248	14%	150	153%
Binning, bottle collecting, panhandling	48	6%	146	8%	98	204%
Illegal	12	1%	93	5%	81	675%
Other	66	8%	112	6%	46	70%
Total respondents	852	100%	1,831	100%		
Not stated	192		226			
Total	1,050		2,057			

## 5.6 Health

Table 21 shows an increase in the share of the homeless reporting a variety of health conditions in 2005, compared to 2002. The incidence of reported health conditions increased for all health conditions except mental illness. The largest *absolute* increase occurred in the number of homeless reporting addiction, while the largest *relative* increase occurred for physical disabilities. The higher incidence of physical disabilities could be related to the aging of the homeless population and/or the increase in long-term homelessness reported earlier.

Table 21 – Health conditions

Health condition (more than 1 possible)	Total homeless 2002		Total homeless 2005		Change	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Addiction	337	39%	838	48%	501	149%
Medical condition	256	30%	601	35%	345	135%
Mental illness	195	23%	389	22%	194	99%
Physical disability	132	15%	364	21%	232	176%
Total respondents	864		1,731			
Not stated	186		338			
Total	1,050		2,069			



## **6 Homelessness among sub-populations**

The findings for five sub-groups of homeless individuals are provided in Table 22 below. The sub-populations include: women, Aboriginal people, unaccompanied youth aged 24 or younger, seniors (persons aged 55+), and the 'long-term homeless'. Note that these groups are not mutually exclusive – someone could be a member of two or more groups for example, an Aboriginal senior.

### **6.1 Women**

534 homeless women were included in the count this year. Most were adults between the ages of 25 and 54 years, and reported being alone (71%). However, a significant share was with a partner (16%), the highest of any sub-population, and this was mainly among the street homeless. Six percent were accompanying their children. Compared to other sub-groups within the homeless population, women were more likely to identify as having an Aboriginal identity (36%).

Homeless women tended to be homeless for a shorter time period than all other sub-groups. Thirty-four percent of women had been homeless for less than one month compared to 24% for all homeless persons. Their major source of income was income assistance or a training program (34%) or disability benefit (13%); although a large share reported they have no income (20%). Their rate of addiction (49%) was similar to the homeless population as a whole.

### **6.2 Persons with Aboriginal identity**

The sub-population of homeless people with Aboriginal identity made up 30% (515 persons) of the total homeless population where Aboriginal identity was known. When the findings on Aboriginal homeless persons were compared to the general homeless population, some similarities were apparent. For example, proportionately, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal persons reported 'the Greater Vancouver area' as their last permanent home (75%), and 'employment' as a source of income (14%).

Findings in this report also indicate that some characteristics of the Aboriginal sub-population are different to the general homeless population, specifically: street homelessness, where they stayed the previous night, and gender. There were also some slight differences in the length of homelessness and health condition.

The most prevalent difference is the proportion of street homeless. Approximately 70% of those with Aboriginal identity were street homeless (357 persons) compared with 57% of the "non-Aboriginal" homeless population (685 street homeless). Among the street homeless, Aboriginal persons were more likely to be staying temporarily at someone else's place (32%) compared to the non Aboriginal street homeless (22%).

There were proportionately more women among the total Aboriginal homeless population (35%) than among the total non-aboriginal homeless (27%).

Aboriginal persons were also slightly more likely to have been homeless for a year or more when compared to the total homeless population and were somewhat more likely to be accompanied by a partner or spouse compared to the non-aboriginal homeless population.

There were also some minor differences related to health issues (addiction, medical condition, mental illness and physical disability). The Aboriginal sub-population reported somewhat higher rates of addiction and a medical condition, slightly less likely to report having a mental illness, and there were no differences in the percentage reporting physical disabilities.

### 6.3 Unaccompanied youth

296 unaccompanied homeless youth under age 25 were enumerated during the 2005 count. A somewhat higher proportion of the youth fell within the medium-term length of homeless category, between 1 and 12 months (47% compared to 41% for all homeless). Many reported no source of income (31%) or 'other' income (30%), rates higher than other sub-populations. More unaccompanied homeless youth proportionally reported a last permanent home elsewhere in Canada (24%) than the total homeless population (15%).

Of the homeless youth who did not use emergency accommodation the night of the count, the majority reported staying with someone else, i.e. sofa surfing (33%) or elsewhere, unspecified (30%). The good news is that a smaller share actually slept outside (33%) compared to other sub-populations. **Homeless youth had the highest rate of addiction (56%) when compared to all homeless persons (49%) or any other sub-group.**

### 6.4 Seniors

For the purposes of this profile, seniors are defined as persons aged 55 and over. There were 171 homeless seniors counted in 2005, up significantly from 51 persons in 2002. Homeless seniors were mostly men (82%) and 81% were alone. They were less likely to report Aboriginal identity (26%) than all other sub-groups.

The largest share of homeless seniors had been homeless for more than one year (46%), a change from 2002 when most seniors had been homeless for less than one month (59%). Income from federal sources such as pension income (23%) was the primary income source. Seniors were more likely to report disability benefit income, and they were the least likely of all sub-groups to report employment income. Homeless seniors reported higher incidences of medical conditions (47%) and physical disability (35%) than other sub-populations, but a lower incidence of addiction (31% compared to 49% among the entire homeless population). *Street homeless* seniors were more likely to report having stayed outside or in a public building (74%) on count night, as opposed to staying with someone else (12%).

## 6.5 The long-term homeless

The long-term homeless are individuals who have been homeless for one year or longer. It is the largest sub-population described here, consisting of 628 people in 2005. As a group, they tended to be mostly adult men (82%), and alone. Most of the long-term homeless were non-Aboriginal (68%) and viewed a municipality in the GVRD as their last permanent home (73%). They were less likely to report income assistance as their major source of income (21% compared to 30% of the total homeless). Many of the long-term street homeless reported binning, bottle collecting, panhandling and illegal activities (23%) as a major income source, which is higher than the street homeless population overall (15%). The long term *street* homeless were more likely to have stayed outside on count night, as opposed to staying at someone else's place or in a public building, than all street homeless. There were no significant differences in the number or type of health problems based on the length of time homeless.

Table 22 – Sub-group profiles

Gender	Women n=534				Aboriginal Identity n=515				Youth (24 and under) n=296				Seniors n=171				Long-term homeless n=628			
	street	shelter	total	%	street	shelter	total	%	street	shelter	total	%	street	shelter	total	%	street	shelter	total	%
Men					253	72	325	64%	127	64	191	66%	84	51	135	82%	377	128	505	82%
Women					98	81	179	35%	62	36	98	34%	13	17	30	18%	97	14	111	18%
Total respondents					355	153	508	100%	189	100	289	100%	97	68	165	100%	474	142	616	100%
Age groups																				
	street	shelter	total	%	street	shelter	total	%	street	shelter	total	%	street	shelter	total	%	street	shelter	total	%
Youth																				
Adult (25-54)	62	36	98	19%	58	29	87	18%									79	12	91	15%
Senior (55 plus)	166	211	377	75%	259	108	367	75%									343	120	463	75%
Total respondents	13	17	30	6%	28	7	35	7%									55	9	64	10%
	241	264	505	100%	345	144	489	100%									477	141	618	100%
Accompanied by																				
	street	shelter	total	%	street	shelter	total	%	street	shelter	total	%	street	shelter	total	%	street	shelter	total	%
Alone	144	218	362	71%	249	119	368	76%	135	77	212	79%	72	49	121	81%	349	120	469	81%
With partner/spouse	50	31	81	16%	53	12	65	13%	25	6	31	12%	12	1	13	9%	58	1	59	10%
With children	14	17	31	6%	5	6	11	2%	1	1	2	1%	1	0	1	1%	4	0	4	1%
With pet	10	1	11	2%	11	0	11	2%	7	0	7	3%	3	1	4	3%	13	0	13	2%
With other	21	4	25	5%	25	4	29	6%	17	0	17	6%	6	4	10	7%	29	3	32	6%
Total respondents	239	271	510	100%	343	141	484	100%	185	84	269	100%	94	55	149	100%	453	124	577	100%
Aboriginal identity																				
	street	shelter	total	%	street	shelter	total	%	street	shelter	total	%	street	shelter	total	%	street	shelter	total	%
Aboriginal	98	81	179	36%					58	29	87	32%					150	31	181	32%
Not Aboriginal	142	183	325	64%					129	52	181	68%	66	36	102	74%	307	75	382	68%
Total respondents	240	264	504	100%					187	81	268	100%	94	43	137	100%	457	106	563	100%
Length of time homeless																				
	street	shelter	total	%	street	shelter	total	%	street	shelter	total	%	street	shelter	total	%	street	shelter	total	%
mo)																				
Medium term (1-12 mos)	28	117	145	34%	31	57	88	19%	23	32	55	20%	13	19	32	23%				
Long-term (1 yr or more)	107	67	174	40%	146	44	190	41%	88	39	127	47%	22	20	42	30%				
Total respondents	97	14	111	26%	150	31	181	39%	79	12	91	33%	55	9	64	46%				
	232	198	430	100%	327	132	459	100%	190	83	273	100%	90	48	138	100%				

<b>Major source of income</b>	program	<b>Women</b> n=534			
		street	shelter	total	%
		45	121	166	34%
	Disability benefit	17	45	62	13%
	Federal income source	10	17	27	6%
	No income	54	44	98	20%
	Employment	30	10	40	8%
	Binning, panhandling, etc.	21		21	4%
	Illegal	28		28	6%
	Other	25	18	43	9%
Total respondents		230	255	485	100%
<b>Last permanent home</b>					
	GVRD	174	217	391	78%
	Rest of BC	24	19	43	9%
	Elsewhere in Canada	29	33	62	12%
	Outside Canada	1	4	5	1%
	Total respondents	228	273	501	100%
<b>Health condition (more than 1 possible)</b>					
	Addiction	120	123	243	49%
	Medical condition	90	111	201	40%
	Mental illness	42	95	137	28%
	Physical disability	53	52	105	21%
	Total respondents	219	278	497	
<b>Where stayed last night</b>					
	Outside	98			40%
	Someone else's place	86			35%
	Car/garage/public building	13			5%
	Other	50			20%
	Total respondents	247			100%
<b>Aboriginal Identity</b> n=515					
		street	shelter	total	%
		69	66	135	28%
		28	20	48	10%
		13	6	19	4%
		80	30	110	23%
		46	21	67	14%
		19		19	4%
		34		34	7%
		24	9	33	7%
		327	152	479	100%
		237	121	358	75%
		35	19	54	11%
		47	15	62	13%
		4	1	5	1%
		323	156	479	100%
		165	87	252	54%
		125	50	175	37%
		58	33	91	19%
		70	24	94	20%
		312	158	470	
		176			49%
		114			32%
		18			5%
		49			14%
		357			100%
<b>Youth (24 and under)</b> n=296					
		street	shelter	total	%
		33	32	65	23%
		2	6	8	3%
		0	2	2	1%
		55	32	87	31%
		18	17	35	12%
		20		0	0%
		29		0	0%
		33	4	86	30%
		190	93	283	100%
		123	57	180	65%
		18	6	24	9%
		42	24	66	24%
		2	3	5	2%
		185	90	275	100%
		106	42	148	56%
		46	26	72	27%
		41	27	68	26%
		26	6	32	12%
		174	91	265	
		64			33%
		63			33%
		9			5%
		57			30%
		193			100%
<b>Seniors</b> n=171					
		street	shelter	total	%
		11	15	26	19%
		15	5	20	14%
		19	13	32	23%
		20	11	31	22%
		8	2	10	7%
		10		10	7%
		1		1	1%
		5	4	9	6%
		89	50	139	100%
		58	38	96	72%
		9	2	11	8%
		19	6	25	19%
		0	2	2	1%
		86	48	134	100%
		21	15	36	31%
		39	16	55	47%
		23	9	32	27%
		30	11	41	35%
		70	47	117	
		58			58%
		12			12%
		16			16%
		14			14%
		100			100%
<b>Long-term homeless</b> n=628					
		street	shelter	total	%
		77	54	131	21%
		37	15	52	8%
		19	6	25	4%
		101	42	143	23%
		57	19	76	12%
		94		94	15%
		52		52	8%
		34	8	42	7%
		471	144	615	100%
		324	98	422	73%
		41	12	53	9%
		82	12	94	16%
		9	0	9	2%
		456	122	578	100%
		232	61	293	51%
		170	44	214	38%
		101	34	135	24%
		106	12	118	21%
		449	121	570	
		273			57%
		95			20%
		29			6%
		85			18%
		482			100%

## Homelessness by sub-regions

This section presents the homeless count results by sub-region within the GVRD. Municipal level data is presented in Appendix A.

### 6.6 By sub-region found

Table 23 presents the distribution of the homeless population according to the sub-region in which they were enumerated on count day. Most homeless people were located in Vancouver (63%), followed by South of Fraser (21%) and the Inner Municipalities (8%). It is important to note that virtually all of the homeless in the South of Fraser sub-region were found in Surrey and the City and Township of Langley.

The distribution of the street homeless population differs from the sheltered homeless. The *street homeless* were more evenly distributed throughout the region, with the largest number located in Vancouver (591 or 53%) followed by South of Fraser (318 or 29%). The *sheltered homeless* were concentrated in Vancouver (74%) where the majority of shelter, transition houses and safe house beds are located.

Table 23 – Homelessness by sub-region found 2005

Sub-region found	Sheltered homeless		Street homeless		Total Homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Vancouver	700	74%	591	53%	1,291	63%
Inner Municipalities	56	6%	109	10%	165	8%
North Shore	58	6%	27	2%	85	4%
South of Fraser	118	12%	318	29%	436	21%
North East Sector	8	1%	30	3%	38	2%
Ridge Meadows	12	1%	30	3%	42	2%
Total Region	952	100%	1,105	100%	2,057	100%

Compared with 2002, the number of homeless persons counted grew in all regions with the exception of Ridge Meadows, where both the sheltered and street homeless population declined. The largest increase in numbers occurred in Vancouver (663 persons or 106%), but the largest percentage change occurred in South of Fraser (249 persons or 133%). (The Northeast Sector showed a large relative increase between 2002 and 2005, but it represents a small number – 25 persons.)

Table 24 – Growth in homelessness by sub-regions found 2002 - 2005

<b>Sub-region found</b>	<b>Total homeless 2002</b>	<b>Total homeless 2005</b>	<b>Change 2002 - 2005</b>	<b>% Change 2002-2005</b>
Vancouver	628	1,291	663	106%
Inner Municipalities	116	165	49	42%
North Shore	44	85	41	93%
South of Fraser	187	436	249	133%
North East Sector	13	38	25	192%
Ridge Meadows	62	42	-20	-32%
Total region	1,050	2,057	1,007	96%

## 6.7 By sub-region last permanent home

Table 25 shows the distribution according to the respondent's answer to "What city do you consider your last permanent home?" The largest share of respondents viewed Vancouver as their last permanent home (36%), followed by locations outside the GVRD (25%) and South of Fraser (23%). The sheltered homeless were more likely to call Vancouver home (41%) compared to the street homeless (32%) and the street homeless were more likely to call South of Fraser home (26%) compared to the sheltered homeless (18%).

Table 25 – Homeless by sub-region of last permanent home 2005

<b>Last permanent home</b>	<b>Sheltered homeless</b>		<b>Street homeless</b>		<b>Total homeless</b>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Vancouver	305	41%	328	32%	633	36%
Inner Municipalities	60	8%	87	9%	147	8%
North Shore	44	6%	22	2%	66	4%
South of Fraser	130	18%	265	26%	395	23%
North East Sector	20	3%	31	3%	51	3%
Ridge Meadows	6	1%	23	2%	29	2%
Outside GVRD	173	23%	256	25%	429	25%
Total respondents	738	100%	1,012	100%	1,750	100%
No answer	214		93		307	
Total	952		1,105		2,057	

Where someone was located on count day 2005 is not necessarily the place they viewed as their permanent home. This was particularly true for homeless people found in Vancouver. While 63% of homeless persons enumerated were located in Vancouver, a much smaller proportion (36%) viewed Vancouver as their last permanent home. In other sub-regions, there was a closer relationship between the number found and the number viewing it as their last permanent home. The difference seemed to be those persons whose last

permanent home was outside the GVRD. It appears as if their choice upon moving to the region was to "settle" in Vancouver.

The last permanent home for homeless persons grew in all sub-regions except Ridge Meadows. As shown in table 26, the growth in the proportion of homeless people who reported that their last permanent home was outside the GVRD was significantly smaller than the growth in the homeless population overall.

Table 26 – Growth in homelessness by sub-region of last permanent home 2002 - 2005

<b>Sub-region last permanent home</b>	<b>Total homeless 2002</b>	<b>Total homeless 2005</b>	<b>Change 2002 - 2005</b>	<b>% Change 2002-2005</b>
Vancouver	234	633	399	171%
Inner Municipalities	78	147	69	88%
North Shore	28	66	38	136%
South of Fraser	178	395	217	122%
North East Sector	24	51	27	113%
Ridge Meadows	45	29	-16	-36%
Outside GVRD	239	429	190	79%
Total respondents	826	1,750		
No answer	224	307		
Total region	1,050	2,057	1,007	96%

An analysis was also undertaken to see if there were any important differences in the sub-regions based on gender, age, Aboriginal identity, and length of time homeless. The sub-region where the homeless person had their last permanent home was used, given that so many of the night time facilities are concentrated in the Vancouver and South of Fraser sub-regions.

There were no significant differences based on gender by sub-region. A slightly higher percentage of men reported that the North Shore was their last permanent home and a slightly higher percentage of women reported the North East Sector as their last permanent home.

There were virtually no youth under 25 who reported that Ridge Meadows was their last permanent home and there was a slight over-representation of youth who reported their last permanent home as outside of the GVRD.

There were no significant differences in those identifying as Aboriginal and the sub-regions they reported as their last permanent home, although a significantly larger proportion of the street homeless identifying as aboriginal were enumerated in Vancouver on the day of the actual count.

A slightly higher proportion of the short-term homeless (less than 1 month) reported that the inner-municipalities were the sub-region of their last permanent home.



## 7 Implications

In reflecting on the study, the team members identified implications for possible next steps, including suggestions for improving on the methodology of the count, future research, and issues to consider in planning for future services to address homelessness in the Greater Vancouver Region.

### 7.1 Methodology

- There is a need to seek ways to further identify the undercount and to improve the coverage of the homeless count. For example, prior to the next count, it should be determined if there is a fairly simple way to obtain information from recovery houses, hospitals, and jails about people who are not released because they do not have a place to go. Such an approach should be cost efficient and should not violate privacy issues.
- The night-time count of sheltered homeless had a higher non-response rate than the day-time count results for many of the demographic questions. This occurred because many shelters do not have the time or resources to ask each client these questions. There is a need to explore alternate ways of obtaining sheltered homeless data including HIFIS<sup>26</sup> or a similar data sharing arrangement, and/or by placing volunteers in shelters on count night to conduct the survey questionnaire with clients. The high non-responses rate was particularly noticeable for the question on Aboriginal identify. Consequently, it is not possible to determine in the smaller proportion of the sheltered homeless who identified as Aboriginal was due to the very high non-response rate in the night-time count or if the findings accurately reflect a smaller proportion of the Aboriginal homeless using the shelter system. Cost could be a factor to ameliorate the non-response rate in the night-time count.

### 7.2 Future Research

- The presence of families with children among the homeless, especially those on the street and in shelters (not transition houses), is especially alarming. While this is a relatively small group among the homeless, we believe that this population warrants further study to ascertain the reasons why some families with children are homeless.
- A great deal of information was obtained from both this study and from the study on the Hidden Homeless (see *Hidden Homelessness: Lessons form Experience*, forthcoming). The data from these studies provides a "rich vein" that should be further mined to better understand the incidence and causes of homelessness in the Greater Vancouver region.
- The Homeless Count should be repeated every 2-3 years to continue to track changes and trends (with modifications described above).

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<sup>26</sup> Homeless Individuals and Families Information System

- The count does not accurately reflect the number of homeless people who sofa surf. There is a need to find alternate approaches to counting sofa surfers, which do not put renters who reveal the presence of sofa surfers at risk of losing their tenancy. One starting point could involve BC Housing, Greater Vancouver Housing Corporation and Aboriginal housing providers to test a method involving those in social housing.

### 7.3 Planning Issues

- The results clearly show that alternative approaches need to be developed to address the issue of homelessness among people with addictions. Other research demonstrates a variety of approaches that could be considered (see *Homelessness, Housing, and Harm Reduction: Stable Housing for Homeless People with Substance Use Issues* - CMHC forthcoming)
- The results show that a significant number of homeless people did not access income assistance either because they are not eligible or perceive they are not eligible. Having access to income assistance may be a critical step in stemming the tide of an increasing number of homeless people in the Greater Vancouver region.
- Interviewees commented that the cost of housing contributed to their homelessness. In addition to eligibility for income assistance, additional options to consider include increasing the shelter component of income assistance so that the rates are more consistent with the actual cost of rents at the lower end of the available market, and increasing the supply of rent-geared-to-income housing.
- The over representation of Aboriginal people among the homeless is not reflected in the existing distribution of Aboriginal run homeless services and emergency accommodations. Consideration should be given to increasing the capacity of Aboriginal organizations to address this issue. This could include increasing the amount of funding provided to Aboriginal organizations.
- While there has been an improvement in the number of services and facilities for homeless people that are available in most of the sub-regions and municipalities, there is still a preponderance of services in Vancouver. The findings show that the overwhelming majority of homeless people had their last permanent home in the various municipalities throughout the Greater Vancouver region and services and facilities should be delivered in these areas.
- The apparent "ageing" of the homeless population could have important implications for homeless service provision, including housing and shelters, and for costs to the health care system.

## APPENDIX A - Municipal data

Table A1 - Homeless population by municipality found – March 15, 2005

Homeless population by municipality found	Sheltered homeless		Street homeless		Total homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Burnaby	2	<1%	38	3%	40	2%
Coquitlam	0		3	<1%	3	<1%
Delta / White Rock	8	1%	3	<1%	11	1%
Langley (City and Township)	2	<1%	52	5%	54	3%
Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows	12	1%	30	3%	42	2%
New Westminster	45	5%	47	4%	92	4%
North Vancouver District and City	58	6%	25	2%	83	4%
Port Coquitlam	8	1%	27	2%	35	2%
Port Moody	0		0		0	
Richmond	9	1%	24	2%	33	2%
Surrey	108	11%	263	24%	371	18%
Vancouver	700	74%	591	53%	1,291	63%
West Vancouver	0		2	<1%	2	<1%
Total Respondents	952	100%	1,105	100%	2,057	100%

Note: Percent columns do not always add up to 100% due to rounding. Also note that two sheltering facilities involving 24 beds did not participate in the count on March 15, 2005.

Table A2 – Homeless population by last permanent home – March 15, 2005

Homeless population by last permanent home	Sheltered homeless		Street homeless		Total homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Burnaby	34	5%	36	4%	70	4%
Coquitlam	7	1%	13	1%	20	1%
Delta	10	1%	7	1%	17	1%
Langley (City and Township)	13	2%	36	4%	49	3%
Maple Ridge	6	1%	23	2%	29	2%
New Westminster	23	3%	38	4%	61	3%
North Vancouver City and District	41	6%	20	2%	61	3%
Pitt Meadows	0		0		0	
Port Coquitlam	13	2%	18	2%	31	2%
Port Moody	0		0		0	
Richmond	3	<1%	13	1%	16	1%
Surrey	107	14%	222	22%	329	19%
Vancouver	305	41%	328	32%	633	36%
West Vancouver	3	<1%	2	<1%	5	<1%
White Rock	0		0		0	
Rest of BC	54	7%	92	9%	146	8%
Elsewhere in Canada	105	14%	154	15%	259	15%
Outside Canada	14	2%	10	1%	24	1%
Total respondents	738	100%	1,012	100%	1,750	100%
No answer	214		93		307	
Total	952		1,105		2,057	

Table A3 - 2002 and 2005 adult homeless population by municipality found

Municipality found	Total homeless 2002		Total homeless 2005		Change 2002-2005	Change 2002-2005
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Burnaby	17	2%	40	2%	23	135%
Coquitlam	3	<1%	3	<1%	0	0%
Delta / White Rock	10	1%	11	1%	1	10%
Langley	17	1%	54	3%	37	218%
Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows	62	6%	42	2%	-20	-32%
New Westminster	69	7%	92	4%	23	33%
North Vancouver District/City	31	3%	83	4%	52	168%
Port Coquitlam	10	1%	35	2%	25	250%
Port Moody	0		0		0	n/a
Richmond	29	3%	33	2%	4	14%
Surrey	160	15%	371	18%	211	132%
Vancouver	628	60%	1,291	63%	663	106%
West Vancouver	13	1%	2	<1%	-11	-85%
Total Respondents	1,050	100%	2,057	100%	1007	96%

Table A4 - 2002 and 2005 adult homeless population by municipality of last permanent home

Homeless population by last permanent home	Total homeless 2002		Total homeless 2005		Change 2002-2005	Change 2002-2005
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Burnaby	29	4%	70	4%	41	141%
Coquitlam	14	2%	20	1%	6	43%
Delta	11	1%	17	1%	6	55%
Langley (City and Township)	12	1%	49	3%	37	308%
Maple Ridge	39	5%	29	2%	-10	-26%
New Westminster	31	4%	61	3%	30	97%
North Vancouver City and District	25	3%	61	3%	36	144%
Pitt Meadows	5	1%	0	n/a	-5	-100%
Port Coquitlam	9	1%	31	2%	22	244%
Port Moody	1	<1%	0	n/a	-1	-100%
Richmond	18	2%	16	1%	-2	-11%
Surrey	153	19%	329	19%	176	115%
Vancouver	234	28%	633	36%	399	171%
West Vancouver	3	<1%	5	<1%	2	67%
White Rock	2	<1%	0	n/a	-2	-100%
Rest of BC	80	10%	146	8%	66	83%
Elsewhere in Canada	138	16%	259	15%	121	88%
Outside Canada	21	3%	24	1%	3	14%
Total respondents	826	100%	1,750	100%	924	112%
No answer	224		307			
Total	1,050		2,057		1,007	96%

## Appendix B – Method

The 2005 Homeless Count used the same methodology as the 2002 snapshot, with some modifications to improve coverage.

It was conducted from 12:01 am to 11:59 pm on March 15, 2005. Although a count date in mid-February was preferred, late approval of project funding meant a delay until March 15, 2005. It was important to conduct the count at a similar time of year as the previous count (January), and when cold wet weather strategy beds were operating (November to April). The day of the count was selected to be a few days prior to when income assistance cheques are issued, as this is a time when homeless people are most likely to seek service of some kind.

The 24-hour enumeration of homeless individuals through the 2005 Homeless Count was divided into two parts:

- A. The complete enumeration of all shelters, safe houses and transition houses for the night of March 15, called the night-time component. This measured the size of the *sheltered homeless* population.
- B. The enumeration of 'locations' where street homeless people may be found, such as congregating areas, meal programs and other services, during the hours of 5:30 am to midnight on March 15, 2005. This was designed to identify those homeless persons who had not spent the previous night in a shelter, safe house or transition house. This is called the day-time component and counts the *street homeless*.

### Night-time component

Lists of shelters (including cold wet weather facilities), safe houses and transition houses operating in the GVRD were updated. The list included some facilities that are not strictly shelters but are open during the night to provide refuge for homeless people.

Approximately two weeks in advance all facilities were sent a package of material with instructions. Then, a few days before count day, all night-time providers were telephoned to ensure they received the package and to answer any questions they may have had about completing the forms.

### Day-time component

The day-time component once again used a census approach to enumerate street homeless people at service and other locations throughout the region. This approach was used for safety and security reasons and to avoid the difficulties associated with a night-time street count, particularly in a large regional setting.

The sampling frame consisted of two general types of locations – line up locations such as soup kitchens and meal programs, and indoor and outdoor congregating areas such as drop in centres, community centres, malls, street panhandling locations etc. A list of all such locations was compiled in advance based on discussions with key informants in each

municipality/sub-region. A member of the research team contacted each location in advance to discuss their participation in the count. Letters were also sent to the indoor day-time locations to gain their support/participation in the count. Interviewers attempted to visit all pre-identified locations on count day. Interviewers at line-up locations were instructed to count the size of the line-up with a hand held counter.

Area coordinators from local agencies or the consulting team oversaw the process of identifying locations and volunteers for each sub-region or municipality. They also provided support on count day.

The questionnaire begins with screening questions to ensure that only qualified homeless individuals take part in a complete interview. To qualify for inclusion in the day-time component, an individual at one of these locations:

- must not have been interviewed earlier that day;
- must be homeless according to the project's definition; and
- did not stay in a shelter, safe house or transition house the night before (where they would have been counted in the night-time component).

Two different formats were used for the screening component of the questionnaire – a separate screener form, useful for situations with many people, and a combined screener/questionnaire, better for situations with fewer people. The day-time questionnaire gathered the same information as the night-time count forms. The one page questionnaire took only a couple of minutes to complete.

Volunteer interviewers, mostly from local service providers and other sources conducted the screening and personal interviews for the day-time component. They were paired into teams of two. At least one member of each team was expected to attend one of the training sessions offered around the region. Interviewers traveled to pre-identified locations on count day to conduct interviews. Approximately 300 interviewers participated consisting of staff and volunteers of homeless service providers, social planners, youth outreach workers, researchers and consultants.

Interviewers were instructed to avoid interviewing in the presence of media in order to preserve interviewee confidentiality. They wore identifying buttons and carried candies and cigarettes as icebreakers. Most teams spent an average of 3-4 hours in the field.

Youth outreach workers used their networks and skills to locate youth to interview for the day-time component.



## Changes in approach

The 2005 Homeless Count used the same methodology as the 2002 snapshot, with some modifications to improve coverage. The survey questionnaires collected virtually the same data to facilitate comparison, although there were minor changes. These included adding a direct question on Aboriginal identity, Question 11, and minor wording changes. For the first time, we asked respondents to indicate whether they were “with pets” in question 10.

The first set of changes would affect the scope or reach of the day-time count and consisted of:

- more volunteers (over 300 volunteers were recruited for the 2005 compared to less than 100 in 2002. The larger number of volunteer interviewers for the day-time count meant that all the identified locations could be covered during some part of the day and that the volunteers could provide 3 hours, on average, for their shift on March 15<sup>th</sup> compared to close to 8 hours, on average, in 2002.)
- more locations (additional congregating areas and trails out of parks were identified as potential locations beyond those known in 2002)
- Aboriginal interviewers and identification of Aboriginal locations
- added UBC area
- interviewed clients of Kitsilano shower program on the Saturday preceding the count<sup>27</sup>
- one set of night-time street counters looked for rough sleepers in parking garages (midnight – 3 am)

Other changes improved night-time coverage:

- homeless people placed by the Ministry of Human Resources in Greater Vancouver hotels were enumerated by MHR

Another set of changes concerned improving our ability to reach and count sofa surfers or the invisible homeless:

- posters provided to agencies in advance notifying people about the upcoming count and urging them to visit a pre-identified location to be enumerated
- outreach workers/service agencies in Richmond and other municipalities completed interviews with clients who were homeless, who came to them for service on count day

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<sup>27</sup> The Kits shower program caters to those who primarily live in the woods in Pacific Spirit Park. Most are known not to frequent other services for the homeless. The homeless at the shower program were interviewed on the Saturday prior to the count (March 12) with an emphasis being placed that they should not participate in another interview should someone with the identifying yellow badge approach them on Tuesday, March 15<sup>th</sup>. This group of homeless are very difficult to contact so the completed interviews were included in the count data.

Tried but not included in the 2005 count:

- Detox facilities and recovery houses are short stay facilities for those with substance use issues. There are many recovery houses around the region, although they are difficult to find as many are not licensed. Some residents of recovery houses have nowhere to go when they leave and thus are homeless according to the definition used for the count. We attempted to improve the coverage of the night count by including clients of detox facilities and recovery houses. 27 facilities participated by identifying 201 clients who had nowhere to go when they left. This was treated as a pilot, and the figures were not included in the count.
- School counsellors on the North Shore were specifically recruited to interview students who they knew were sofa surfing on the night of the count. The counsellors noted that there were few that evening (counted where forms turned in) but that others were known to be frequent sofa surfers who just happened to be at their home that evening. These were not counted but it does raise the question if the count of sofa surfers, especially youth, needs to be done over a set time frame.
- Social worker at Lions Gate Hospital provided basic information about 11 patients who were well enough to be discharged but were still on the ward because they had no place to live upon discharge. They were not counted.

## Item Non-response

The item non-response for the survey questions ranged from negligible for age and gender, to between 10 and 20% for most of the other questions. The ethnic origins question had a 35% non-response rate. We know that several shelters completed only basic demographics on the night-time count form, so that much of the non-response is attributed to the sheltered homeless. To facilitate comparison, the tabulation is made only for complete records for each of the specific characteristics. *It is important to note that the characteristics of those shelter clients who did not respond to a question may not necessarily be the same as those who did respond.*

## Extent of coverage

With this methodology, if the enumeration of night-time facilities was complete, and if the list of day-time locations was complete and each thoroughly enumerated, then the only homeless persons missed would be those that were not sheltered on the night of March 14 and who passed through none of the day-time locations on March 15.

Part A of the enumeration was essentially complete, with 49 of 51 facilities (operating that night) reporting. 29 of 30 permanent and cold wet weather shelters, all youth safe houses and 16 out of 17 transition houses participated.

Table B1 – Participation in the night-time component

Type of shelter	Number of facilities in GVRD	Number facilities that participated	Missing facilities	# Missing beds
Shelters (incl. CWWS)	30	29	1	12
Safe houses	4	4	0	0
Transition houses	17	16	1	10
Total	51	49	2	22

The difference between the total capacity of the facilities operating that night, and those that participated in the count represents the potential night-time undercount. The estimated capacity of the non-reporting night-time facilities is 22 beds. If these two facilities were full on the night of March 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup>, it would add an additional 22 individuals to the number of homeless in the region.

For the day-time component, a very thorough ‘frame’ or inventory of all such locations throughout the region was compiled using the knowledge of local experts. As well, the interviewers were recruited from the ranks of people who worked regularly with the homeless, and could add locations, if some were missing from the list. Conceptually, if all of the locations were enumerated during all hours of March 15<sup>th</sup>, then the number of homeless missed would be extremely low; under coverage would only come from having missed a location with homeless people that went nowhere else that day. Also, as enumeration progressed throughout the day, more and more people approached would fall into the ‘previously screened’ category, to the point where no new homeless people were being identified at the end of the day.

It was, of course, not feasible to enumerate all locations during all hours. With the intention of maximizing the number of people screened, enumeration of each meal line-up location was made to coincide with the peak hours of operation. At peak times, it might not be possible to screen all persons waiting for a meal. Accordingly, interviewers were also asked to count or estimate the number they were not able to screen. Peak hour enumeration was also adopted for bottle depots and drop-ins; other congregating areas (parks, streets, etc.) were scheduled to fill in the remaining time. Outside of the meal program locations, interviewers were not asked to keep track of persons they might have, but were unable to screen.

Notwithstanding the care that went into maximizing the coverage of the homeless, some were missed and cannot be estimated. These fall into two categories:

- **Those who could not be enumerated by the methodology** – (i.e. those that were not sheltered on March 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> and who passed through none of the listed locations during their peak enumeration hours). These are likely to be people who sleep ‘rough’ and who avoid contact with services, at least during peak hours. They could only be found in the early morning hours at their isolated sleeping locations (something that was considered not appropriate for this exercise). The other group

that falls into this category is those staying temporarily with friends on March 14/15 and who had no need for services. The size of this group is unknown.

- **Those who slipped through the screening** – With more resources and better training to do a more thorough screening, some additional unsheltered homeless would have been identified. In some cases, volunteers ran out of time to screen everyone in a line-up.

## Limitations

In summary, the following affect the likely accuracy of the 2005 Greater Vancouver Homeless Count:

- time and place issues on the particular day the count was undertaken (i.e. rousting of parkade sleepers, Richmond school closure, etc.)
- detox/and recovery houses undercount
- sofa surfers undercount
- hospital and jail undercount
- shelter enumeration non-response for some questions
- 2 missing night-time facilities
- inability to screen everyone at some day-time locations with line-ups



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### **On Our Streets and in Our Shelters**

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