



The 2008 Saskatoon Homeless Count: Lessons Learned

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November 5, 2008



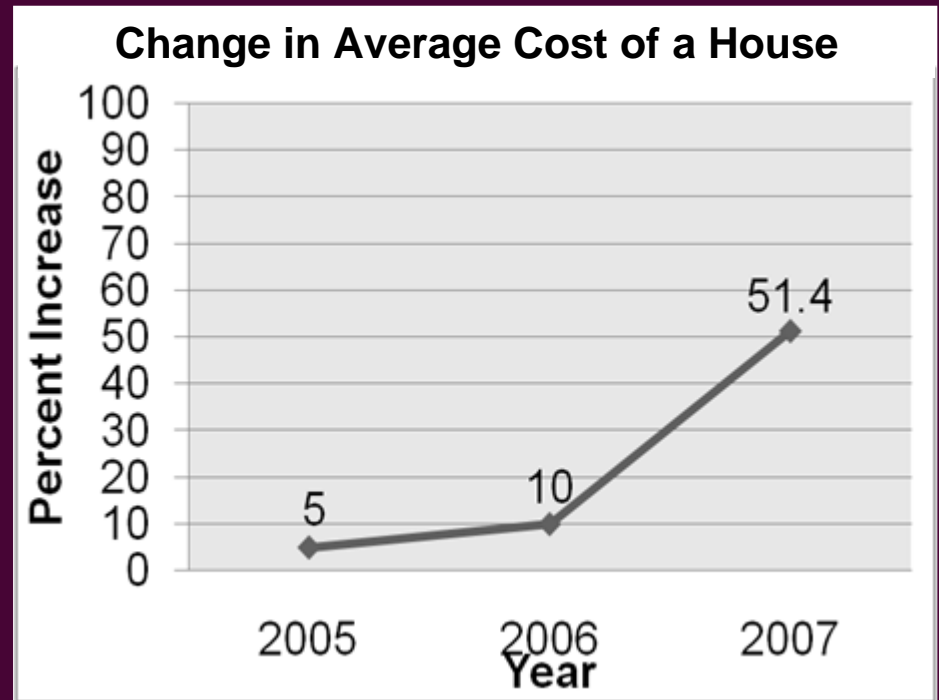
Overview

- Background
- Method
- Results
- Lessons Learned



Housing in Saskatoon

- Rapid increase in average cost of a house
- Rent increases
- Vacancy rate decreases
- Record condo conversions
- Affordable housing deficit
- Low income families especially hard hit



(Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2007; City of Saskatoon, 2008; Statistics Canada, 2006a, 2006b; Wallace, 2007)



Homelessness: Saskatoon

- Anecdotally, the Homelessness Community Advisory Committee estimated that, in 2007, there were:
 - ~6,400 homeless people
 - ~30,000 people at risk of becoming homeless
 - Especially women in abusive relationships, people with mental illness, people with addictions
- Single parents, working families, people of Aboriginal descent, single people in greatest need
- Students, recent immigrants, and visible minorities are an emerging group



The Saskatoon Homeless Count 2008

- Two parts:
 - A count
 - How many people in Saskatoon are homeless?
 - A needs assessment
 - What does homelessness in Saskatoon “look like”?



Method

- Point-in-time counting methodology
 - Most common method of enumerating homeless people
 - Teams conduct in-person interviews in one 24-hour period
- Two surveys
 - Service provider survey: Sheltered homelessness
 - No permanent residence; currently reside in emergency accommodations such as emergency shelters, safe houses, and transition houses
 - Outdoor survey: Absolute homelessness
 - No permanent residence or conventional housing alternatives (e.g., friends, family); do not stay in shelters, safe houses, or transition houses



Needs Assessment Survey Content

- Demographic characteristics
- Where the respondent stayed the night
- Preferences related to obtaining housing including:
 - Services that would help the respondent to obtain housing
 - Common barriers to obtaining housing
- Recent service utilisation including:
 - Housing, food bank, job training, health care services
 - Whether the respondent was getting help to obtain housing
 - Other services that might help obtain housing
- Length of homelessness



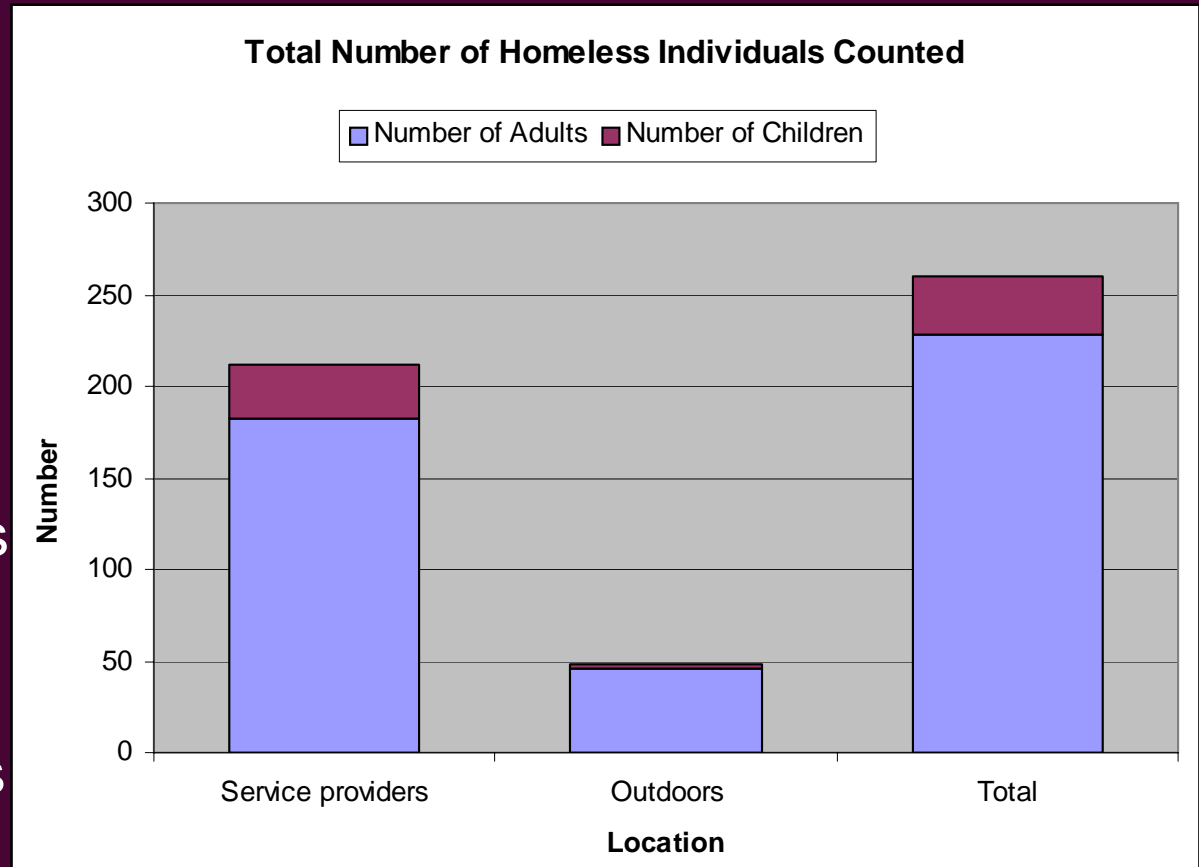
Data Collection

- Survey areas identified in consultation with Advisory Group, city shelters, other community organizations
 - Four emergency shelters and six transitional housing facilities
 - Collected number of residents and turnaways
 - 18 outdoor areas (concentrated in the core, central business district, park areas)



Enumeration Results

- A total of 260 individuals
 - 228 adults
 - 32 children
- Staying with service providers
 - 182 adults
 - 30 children
- Staying outdoors
 - 46 adults
 - 2 children





Needs Assessment Key Findings

- 56 surveys completed (38 service provider and 18 outdoor)

Service Provider

- Average age was 37 years (n=33)
- 21 respondents were male (n=36)
- 15 of Caucasian and 17 of Aboriginal descent (n=36)
- 17 were formally employed (n=36)
 - 70% of those who were employed formally, informally, or at day jobs worked full time

Outdoor

- Average age was 29 years (n=16)
- 13 respondents were male (n=18)
- 7 of Caucasian and 9 of Aboriginal descent (n=18)
- 5 were formally employed (n=18)
 - 6 who were employed formally, informally, or at day jobs worked full time



Other Findings of Interest

- Most respondents had been homeless for less than a year
 - The shortest amount of time a respondent was homeless was 1.5 days whereas the longest amount of time was 16 years
- Most of the respondents were not on a housing waiting list
 - Everyone who was on a waiting list found the application process difficult
- High levels of contact with housing, health, and justice service providers
 - Most respondents who had been in contact did not receive help finding housing
- Perceived housing affordability and availability were the key barriers to finding housing



Limitations

- Methodological considerations
 - Underestimates number
 - “Snap shot” does not capture cyclical/long-term info
 - Representativeness of sample
 - Did not examine “At-Risk of Homelessness”
 - Individuals or families currently living in inadequate, overpriced, unsafe, and/or overcrowded housing
 - Or “Hidden Homelessness”
 - Do not have secure housing; would be absolutely or sheltered homeless but are able to stay with family or friends



Limitations

- Detection may have been low due to practical considerations
 - Private property
 - Limitations in number of volunteers/survey areas
 - Police presence in some neighbourhoods
 - Reflector vests
 - Two teams unable to complete their survey areas



Strengths

- Community support (locally & from City of Toronto)
- Links to CBOs and University of Saskatchewan
- Participatory approach to research
- Volunteers highly committed and skilled
 - 92 of 100 recruits completed training; 88 participated
 - Minimum of one team member experienced at interviewing and one at working with vulnerable populations



Acknowledgements

- Service Canada & the Homelessness Partnering Strategy
- Iain de Jong, City of Toronto *Streets to Homes*
- Homeless Count Advisory Committee
- Chief Weighill, Saskatoon Police Service
- Passion for Action group
- Participating service providers
- Rainbow Community Centre
- Volunteers