

**CONTINUING AND SHIFTING PATTERNS
IN NANAIMO'S HOMELESS POPULATION:
BASED ON THE SEPTEMBER 2007 HOMELESS COUNT**

**CONDUCTED BY
THE NANAIMO WORKING GROUP ON HOMELESSNESS**

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INTRODUCTION

This document reports the findings of the census of the homeless population in Nanaimo, British Columbia conducted by the Nanaimo Working Group on Homelessness on September 26, 2007. The Working Group has conducted three prior censuses - April 2005, November 2005, and July 2006. Those challenging efforts to locate and count all homeless persons yielded widely divergent numbers, but did help dispel some myths, such as stories about a summer influx from other communities. The data simply did not support that, showing instead that for the most part, Nanaimo's homeless comes from Nanaimo. Being the first count attempted during the fall, or at least before the cold weather, *this* count could be expected to produce results at variance with the previous spring, summer, and cold weather (i.e., late fall).

METHOD

In carrying out this census of homeless persons in Nanaimo, the Working Group used a one-page questionnaire, revised again from those used previously. Key changes on the latest census form were: 1) more use of fixed choice questions (where response categories are provided) as opposed to open-ended questions; 2) an additional question on ethnic or cultural background; 3) an additional question on health condition; 4) a question about use of health and community services; and 5) an open-ended question on suggestions to solve homelessness. The form is appended to this report.

The count was conducted largely between 8:00 pm and midnight, Wednesday, September 26 on streets in the downtown core and in selected outlying neighbourhoods where it was believed homeless persons might be found. The night-time interviewing was done by volunteers in two- or three-person groups, with each group having a designated geographic area to cover. Other forms were completed by staff of shelters and meal sites. As well, forms were available for completion by homeless persons themselves during the day at the Salvation Army's resource centre . Without the benefit of an interviewer, a fair number of these respondents didn't fill out the forms as completely as the census organizers would have liked. It should be noted that this count took place on 'Welfare Wednesday' and thus may be an under count, that is recipients of Social Assistance might have received their cheque that day and spent some money on a hotel room, or be in other places or situations that would make them less visible to

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the census takers. Respondents' cooperation was acknowledged by an honorarium composed of comfort and hygiene items.

In this report, numbers of responses do not always add up to the total reported since some questions were not answered by everyone - as occurs on virtually any survey. Means (averages) are often used as are medians (where half the sample was below that number and half above) to convey an overall pattern. Differences between groups (e.g., length of homelessness for men vs. women) are reported chiefly when they are statistically significant as ascertained by standard tests. Some findings that fall just shy of the required significance level are referred to as "non-significant" or words to that effect.

THE SAMPLE

A total of 150 useable forms were returned; another seven forms were returned where the acknowledged homeless person declined participation in the count. The analysis here will consider only the 150 completed (or partially completed) forms.

Number of homeless persons

The total number of completed census forms returned was 150; of those, 140 had sufficient information to allow a count. Of those 140, 114 persons were alone, 18 with a partner (who may or may not have also been counted), six with someone else (again, we don't always know if that person was counted) and two had children with them. The best count then of homeless persons on this census night, including the seven who declined participation, is 173.

114 persons alone
36 (respondent + partner)
12 (respondent + someone else)
4 (respondent + child)
7 declined

173 TOTAL

Table 1. Count of Homeless

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Gender and age breakdowns

Males outnumbered females by a wide margin: 90 males (62.9%) to 53 females (37.1%). Respondents ranged in age from 14 to 73. The mean age was 36.7, the median was 36, and the

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mode was 37¹, but males in the sample were decidedly older than the females: males' mean age was 39.7, females' only 31.9. For women, the largest percentage of respondents were in their 20's (40%); for males, the largest number was found in their 30's (34%). Four of the five persons under age 20 are females; at other extreme, 79% of those 40-50 were males and 76% of those 50+ were also males.

Age Groups	Number	Percent	Cumulative
< 20	5	3.68	3.68
20-29	37	27.41	31.11
30-39	42	31.11	62.22
40-49	29	21.48	83.70
50+	22	16.3	100.0
TOTALS	135	100.0	100.0

Table 2. Age distribution of sample

Ethnic breakdown

Forty-nine persons (4% of those responding) identified themselves as Aboriginal, Metis or First Nations (referred to hereafter as AMFN). Most of those (40) simply said "yes," without providing details, while five specified First Nations, three Metis and one Aboriginal.

Twenty-seven of the 129 who responded to another question said they identified with an ethnic or cultural group, with no one ethnic or cultural group, other than First Nations, Metis, and Aboriginals, being mentioned more than once. A much larger proportion of women were AMFN than men - 43% to 29%. There was no significant difference on age between the AMFN respondents and the others.

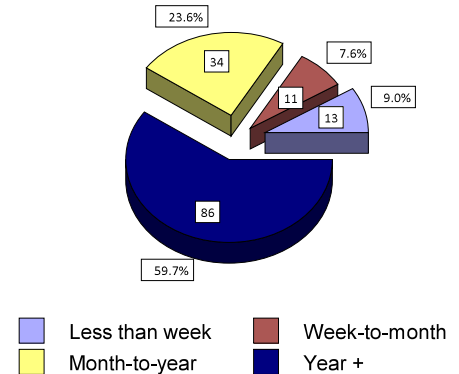
¹ The mean is the average; the median is the middle number in a list arranged from youngest to oldest; the mode is the one age most frequently recorded.

Time in Nanaimo

Newcomers to the city make up a small proportion of this sample of homeless persons: 13 (9%) have been here less than a week, and 11 more (8%) between a week and a month. About one in four (34 persons or 24%) have been here between a month and a year. The largest contingent are the 86 (60%) who've been here more than a year.

Men are far more mobile, it appears, in that they are disproportionately represented in the most recent arrivals: 92% of those in Nanaimo less than week are men. Women are disproportionately represented among those here over a year - 50% of that group (vs. the 38% that women represent in the overall sample).

Time in Nanaimo



The Aboriginal/Metis/First Nations subsample respondents are more recent arrivals: 52% of them have been in Nanaimo less than a month, contrasted with only 30% of the non-aboriginals.

Asked where they were previously, respondents listed a variety of places across the country, and even Brazil. Of those not from Nanaimo, 39 (29%) were from Victoria or other Vancouver Island communities, and 14 (14%) were from Vancouver or other Lower Mainland communities. Alberta was the former place of residence for seven (6%), Ontario was home for eight (6%), and 31 (31%) were from scattered other places, with none mentioned more than twice.

Place	Number	Percent
Nanaimo	35	26
Victoria	12	9
Elsewhere Van. Island	27	20
Vancouver	8	6
Other Lower Mainland	6	4
Alberta	7	5
Ontario	8	6
Elsewhere	31	23

Table 3. Previous place of residence

Being alone or with others

The vast majority of the sample (114 respondents or 80%) were homeless alone. The 29 who were accompanied included 18 (13%) with a partner, three with children (2%), and six with someone else (4%). Two persons (1%) had pets with them.

BECOMING HOMELESS

Length of homelessness

Approximately half the sample had been homeless less than six months and half more than six months. Table 4 below displays the precise figures.

Time	Number	Percent
Less than a week	10	8
A week to a month	19	15
1 to 6 months	35	27
6 months to a year	24	18
Year +	42	32
TOTAL	130	100%

Table 4. Length of homelessness

Persons with someone accompanying them have been on the streets for a longer time: 67% of them have been homeless six months or more contrasted with only 28% of those who are alone. Length of homelessness showed no statistical relationship to age, gender, or ethnicity.

Conditions leading to homelessness

Addiction or other health conditions was the factor most frequently mentioned as leading to a person's homelessness: 73 of 138 (53%) who responded to the question listed that. Next

were two financial factors: no income at 52 mentions (37%) and housing costs at 47 (34%). Other, lesser contributing factors were abuse or conflict at 22 (16%), eviction at 17 (12%), moving or being stranded at 11 (8%), and assorted other factors at 28 (20%). It should be noted that one could mention as many factors as applied in their case.

Some of those factors leading to homelessness were more prevalent or less prevalent among certain subgroups in the sample:

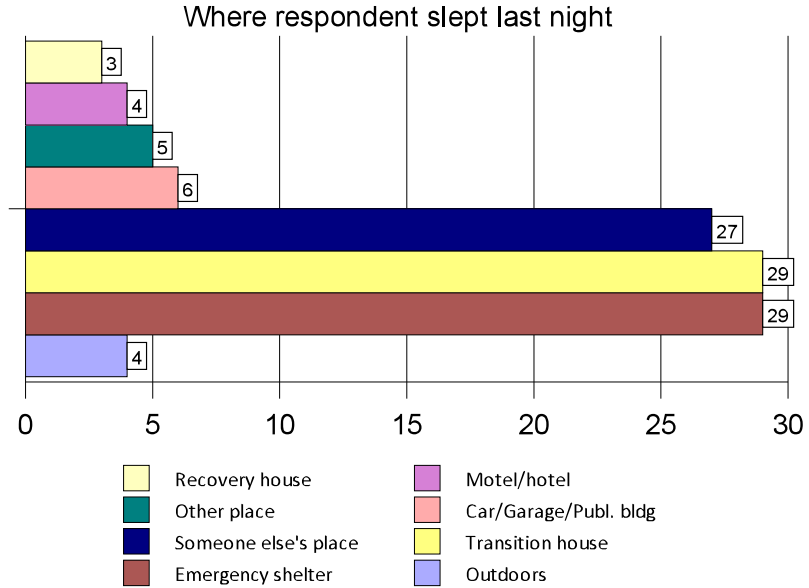
Factor	More prevalent among	Less prevalent among
Abuse/conflict	Women: 29%	Men: 7%
Abuse/conflict	Ethnic minorities: 28%	Non-minorities: 10%
Addiction/health issues	Non-minorities: 60%	Ethnic minorities: 41%
Addiction/health issues	Those over age 30 (58%)	Those under age 30 (20%)
Eviction	Those under age 30 (15%)	Those over age 30 (5%)
Housing costs	Non-minorities: 38%	Ethnic minorities: 26%
Housing costs	Percentage rose steadily with age from 20% among those under age 20 to 55% for those over age 50	

THE HOMELESS EXPERIENCE

Current housing situation

Data from the question about where one stayed last night showed that sleeping outside or sleeping rough was the most common response at 43, representing 29%. An additional half dozen (4%) also slept rough but in cars, garages, or public buildings. A total of 61 (42%) were in social agency facilities (29 in emergency shelters, another 29 in transition houses and three in recovery houses). Someone else’s place provided the roof over the heads of 27 respondents (18%), while a hotel or motel was used by four (3%).

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Shelter/Safe House Use

Respondents were asked the reason they did not stay in a shelter or safe house the previous night. Dislike of shelters was the number one reason, cited by 22 persons, followed by the shelter being full (10) and being able to stay with family or friends (16). Table 5 shows the full range of responses.

Reasons for not using shelter	Number	Percent
Dislike it	22	27
Turned away: Shelter full	19	23
Able to stay w/ family or friend	16	20
Turned away as inappropriate	12	15
Couldn't get to it/None in area	2	2
Didn't know about it	1	1
Other reasons	18	22
Total respondents	81*	100%

Table 5. Why respondent didn't use shelter of safe house

* Respondents could list more than one reason.

Respondents under age 30 cited “Dislike” 33% of the time contrasted with 20% for those over age 30. Men checked that item twice as often as women: 32% to 15%, (a non-significant trend).

Health conditions

Two questions were aimed at ascertaining respondents’ self-assessments of their physical and mental health: a rating system of 1 (very poor) to 5 (excellent) was employed for each. The two tables show most respondents rated both their physical and mental health about 3 or 4. For physical health, the mean was 3.2 while it was 3.31 for mental health.

Rating	Count	Percent	Cumulative
1 (very poor)	12	9	9
2	21½*	15	24
3	45½*	33	57
4	43½*	31	88
5 (excellent)	17½*	13	101**

Rating	Count	Percent	Cumulative
1 (very poor)	10	8	8
2	16	12	20
3	50	38	58
4	37	28	86
5 (excellent)	20	15	101**

Table 6. Self-reported physical health

Table 7. Self-reported mental health

* Half numbers created by some respondents rating 2½ or 3½

** Error due to rounding

The self-ratings for men vs. women were remarkably close, both on physical and mental health. On age, the self-ratings on physical health declined across the five age groups from 3.5 for those under age 20 to 3.0 for those 50+ but the differences among the groups were not statistically significant. For mental health, there was no discernible pattern whatsoever. On both physical and mental health, non-aboriginals showed slightly lower ratings, but again, not statistically significant. No inter-group differences showed up when controlling for length of time one has been homeless.

Another health question asked what health concerns respondents had, offering four choices as well as space for additional comments. Ninety-three persons (65%) cited a drug or

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alcohol concern, 53 persons (37%) a medical conditions, 25 (18%) a mental illness concern, and 2 (16%) a physical disability. Twenty persons named something else, but these were mostly elaborations on the items already checked. Those included four people with Hepatitis C, three with a significant injury, three just coming off drugs, two pregnant, and two with cancer. Some groups within the sample were more or less likely to have health concerns, as shown below:

Health concern	More prevalent among	Less prevalent among
Have medical condition concern	Aboriginals: 46%	Non-Aboriginals: 34%
Have medical condition concern	over age 50: 64% - aged 30-49: 56% - <age 30: 29%	
Have alcohol/drug concern	Non-Aboriginals: 71%	Aboriginals: 56%
Have alcohol/drug concern	<age30: 63% - aged 0-49: 75% - over age 50: 50%	
Have physical disability	over age 50: 32% - aged 40-49: 26% - <age 40: 10%	
Have mental illness	<age 50: 21%	over age 50: 12%

Use of health services

A list of eight health services was presented and respondents queried as to which, if any, of them they have used recently. The table below contains the list, ranked from most used to least used.

Health service	Mentions	Percentage
Doctor	84	61%
Hospital emergency room	58	41
Mental health worker	38	27
Needle exchange	25	18
Dentist	22	16
Mental health clinic	21	15
Ambulance	18	13
Optometrist	9	6
Other services	35	25

Table 8. Use of health services

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Most frequently listed among the “other services” were detox services (12 persons), the walk-in clinic (4), NCAA (3) and AVI methadone (2). Only one inter-group difference was discernable: The female use of doctors was at 72% contrasted with 52% for males.

Use of the emergency room tended to increase with time one is homeless. Women use the services of the mental health worker far more than men: 40% vs 18%. There is a non-significant trend for greater mental health clinic use by those under age 40 (20%) than those over 40 (8%)

While 20% of the under 50 group used the needle exchange recently, 0% of the over 50 group did. How long one had been homeless is statistically related to use of the needle exchange also: those homeless under six months show 11% utilization of the needle exchange while 36% of those homeless more than six months used it recently.

Use of community services

Use of other community services was also explored. The table below shows the relative use of a half-dozen programs or facilities in rank order. No differences on gender, age group, or ethnic identity emerged on use of these community services.

<u>Service or Facility</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Hot meal	75	54%
Shelters	65	46
Food bank	57	40
7-10 Club	56	40
Library	23	16
Police	13	9
Other community services	23	16

Table 9. Use of community services and facilities

Getting money

Respondents’ reports of how they regularly get money show a wide variety of responses. A ten-item check list was used, with a place to indicate “other” as well. On average, respondents

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identified 1.26 ways they gained money, with Income Assistance by far and away the most common: 74 persons or 51% of those answering this particular question. A dozen people (8%) reported they get no money at all. The table below contains the breakdown, categorized by general categories of work, public assistance, and other. It shows public assistance is most critical for this sample, with over half receiving one form or another of public assistance. Work brought in some money for over one-fourth (28%).

<u>From work</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Public assistance</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>No</u>
Full time employ.	7	Income Assistance	74	Illegal activities	15
Part time employ.	13	Disability	6	Other	9
Sex trade	8	Employment Ins.	5		
Recycling	3				
Creative work	3				
Pension	7				
TOTALS	41 (28%)		80 (55%)		24 (17%)

Table 10. Sources of income

Public assistance

Receiving public assistance was more common among those homeless longer than a month (57%) than among the short-term homeless segment (34%). Being on disability generally rose with age, with 12% of those under 40 checking that item, 25% of those in their forties, and 36% of the 50+ age group.

Illegal activities

While only one of 33 AMFN respondents (3%) said they derive income from illegal activities, among non-aboriginals the proportion was 15%. Deriving income from illegal activities was found only in those between ages 20 and 49, and not at all in those younger than 20 or older than 50.

No income

As noted, there were twelve people reporting no income whatsoever. Having no income was more common among those under age 30 (15%) than among those 30 and older (4%).

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Employment

A larger proportion of men (18%) gained income from employment (part-time or full-time) than did women (4%). No other differences were seen among various groups.

What's needed

An open-ended question inquired about “what other services would be of help” to respondents. Eighty-seven persons responded with one or two items, and responses were categorized as much as possible to discern any pattern. Two persons indicated everything was okay, that nothing was needed.

<u>Needed services</u>	<u>Mentions</u>
Housing (rental, affordable)	20
Shelter (more places, more beds)	10
Food (soup kitchen, more 7-10s, etc.)	10
Work, help finding work	6
Counselling	6
Free clothing	5
Detox & similar services	4
Bus passes	3
Living Room type facility	2
Outreach	2
Other services (once each)	30

Table 11. Other services wanted

A second open-ended question asked “How do we solve homelessness?” Ninety-three respondents offered a suggestion or two, and again those were categorized into the following patterns, with the responses very similar as on the previous question:

<u>Proposed solutions</u>	<u>Mentions</u>
Housing (affordable, rental, etc.)	37
Shelter (more places, more beds)	11
Rent control, lower rents	9
Detox & similar services	6
Better funding of services	5
Public education acceptance	4
It's impossible	3
Work	3

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Education, schooling	2
Food	2
Living Room type facility	2
Increase social assistance rates	2
Other suggestions (once each)	22

Table 12. Proposed solutions to homelessness

Eight respondents added something - as much as a full page! - on the final question which asked whether there was “anything else you would like to tell us.” Two persons gave somewhat lengthy descriptions of their mental health struggles. Two were critical of the New Hope Centre’s staff and/or operating hours. Two called for more resources, one of those noting especially a lack of services for older women. One described her child custody legal struggle. One argued against jailing those with addictions instead of providing treatment to get to the root of their problems.

COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS CENSUSES

With this being the fourth census of the homeless in Nanaimo, the data obtained on it was compared and contrasted with the findings of the three previous counts to see what trends might exist. Since several questions were altered, as has happened with each census, not all the comparisons can be made.

Points of comparison	Spring 2005	Fall 2005	Summer 2006	Fall 2007
Total count (including others with the respondent)	149	99	300	173
In all three censuses, males outnumbered females, with the margin very consistent until the 4 th count, on which males very heavily outnumbered females	54%-46%	57%-43%	56%-44%	63%-37%
The proportion of the homeless population that’s Caucasian (C) increased and then decreased over four censuses. Over the first three counts, the First Nation (FN) proportion shrunk while the Metis (M) proportion shows steady growth	C: 68% FN: 25% M: 1% O: 5%	C: 73% FN: 14% M: 6% O: 7%	C: 68% FN: 14% M: 13% O: 5%	C: 68% A+M+FN: 32% Question altered

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Points of comparison	Spring 2005	Fall 2005	Summer 2006	Fall 2007
Age range was roughly similar across four counts	15 - 71 years	16 - 63 years	15 - 78 years	14-73 years
Average age was almost identical on first two and two years older on third count, & right in the middle on the 4th	35.6 years	35.5 years	37.9 years	36.7
Median age (½ above, ½ below) was almost identical on the first two counts, about three years older on the third, right in the middle on the fourth count	36	35.7	39	36
Males continue to be older, on average... males are less represented among the under 20 group... males are more represented among the over 50 group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (m) 38.3 to (f) 31.5 yrs • 6 of 8 under 20 were females • 15 of 16 over 50 were males 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (m) 37.6 to (f) 33.1 yrs • all 4 under 20 were females • 6 of 8 over 50 were males 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (m) 40.1 to (f) 35.5 yrs • too few <20 to compare • 23 of 32 over 50 were males 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (m) 39.7 to (f) 31.9 yrs • 4 of 5 <20 were females • 16 of 21 over 50 were males
Average and median time in Nanaimo continue to increase across the first three counts, while the range continues to be very wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • few days to 58 years • 8.6 years on average • median of 3 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • few days to 45 years • 10.5 years on average • median of 6 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • few days to 57 years • 12.7 years on average • median of 9 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9% less than week; 8% week to a month; 24% month to a year; 60% year +
Most common reasons for being in Nanaimo looked similar on the first two censuses, but a different mix showed up on the third count Family decision Wanting to be closer to family Grass looked greener... Followed partner here For alcohol or drug treatment Work or search for work Born here Got stuck, ran out of money Family problems or conflict Visiting or passing through	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 16 cases 12 7 6 6 7 5 4 4 - 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 23 cases 8 4 6 3 7 6 2 5 - 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 case 2 4 0 0 7 0 0 0 7 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Question not asked

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Points of comparison	Spring 2005	Fall 2005	Summer 2006	Fall 2007
The proportion of respondents who were alone has fluctuated over four counts, but the spread on the last three counts is only 9%	66% alone 34% not	86% alone, 14% not	77% alone, 23% not	80% alone, 20% not
Males were 10-19% more likely to be alone on all four counts	m: 72% f: 62%	m: 94% f: 75%	m: 83% f: 69%	m: 86% f: 74%
The average time being homeless shows some fluctuation over the first three counts, while the median showed increases; comparisons on the fourth count are hard to make with categories having been changed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • few days to 19 years • average: 1.02 years • median: 3 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • few days to 15 years • average: 1.42 years • median: 5 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • few days to 16 years • average: 1.17 years • median: 6 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ½ over 6 months, ½ under • 23% less than month • 32% over a year
The proportion homeless more than a year showed a big jump between the first and second census and has remained up; the proportion homeless 3+ years rose significantly from April to November and marginally in July. The figure for September cannot be calculated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 86% < a year, 14% over a year • 3+ years: 8% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 64% < a year, 36% over a year • 3+ years: 12% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 65% < a year, 35% over a year • 3+ years: 14% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 68% < a year, 32% over a year • 3+ years: can't say
In the spring, females on average had been homeless more than twice as long as males; in the fall, that reversed itself; in the summer, the pattern switched back again to females being homeless longer & the pattern switched again on the fourth count	f: 18 months m: 8 months	f: 10 months m: 22 months	f: 16 months m: 12 months	fe: 28% < month, m: 17% fe: 47% 6 months +, m: 55%
The reasons cited for becoming homeless show large increases in addiction and financial problems on the third & fourth counts			(multiple responses allowed)	(multiple responses allowed)
Addiction	30%	42%	60%	53%
Family conflict	17%	15%	18%	16%
Eviction	16%	14%	32%	12%
Financial reasons, i.e., poverty, housing costs	18%	28%	95%	71%
Assorted other reasons	19%	1%	41%	28%
Each of the first two censuses found about a third of respondents sleeping outside; that percentage soared on the third (i.e., summer) census & returned to 1/3 on the latest count	32%	35%	51%	34%

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Points of comparison	Spring 2005	Fall 2005	Summer 2006	Fall 2007
The fall census saw a sharp reduction in the number who rated their physical health as good (g) vs. fair (f) or poor (p); in the summer, the percentage of good rebounded & rose even more in the fall '07 count	g: 40% f: 35% p: 25%	g: 29% f: 44% p: 27%	g: 40% f: 40% p: 20%	g: 43% f: 33% p: 24%
Likewise, reports of good mental health were down in the fall '05, but rebounded by the summer and saw a spike in the latest count	g: 36% f: 32% p: 32%	g: 25% f: 50% p: 23% f-p: 2%	g: 34% f: 41% p: 26%	g: 42% f: 38% p: 20%
The proportion who didn't have a meal the day of the census remains at about one in six or seven	17%	16%	13%	Question not asked
Shelters (SH) and the Salvation Army (SA) were the most likely places respondents had eaten on the first three counts	SA: 34% SH: 20%	SA: 18% SH: 31%	SA: 33% SH: 23%	Question not asked
The spring finding of females being more likely to have eaten was been reversed in the fall census; no difference on the summer count	f: 91% m: 77%	f: 77% m: 94%	f: 81% m: 84%	Question not asked
The first two censuses found about one in three having made any money on census day	34%	33%	question altered	Question not asked
The fall data show less reliance on drug dealing and relatively more reliance on panhandling from the spring to the fall '05 count, & large increases in employment & illegal activities in fall '07			Question altered	
Sex trade	14	7		8
Other employment	10	7		26
Panhandling	5	6		0
Drug dealing (or other illegal activities)	4	0		15
An increase in the proportion receiving no public assistance was seen in the fall '05, followed by a drop in the summer and a very large increase in fall '07; Social Assistance (SA) and Disability Assistance (DS) continue to be most common among those receiving some help	32% SA: 27 DS: 25	39% SA: 17 DS: 19	29% SA: 68 DS: 25	45% SA: 74 DS: 6
Economic poverty looms larger and larger among major barriers to getting a place of one's own:				Question not asked
Lack of money or job, or lack of affordable housing	37	46	163	
Addictions	28	19	43	
Transportation	1	5	4	
Mental illness	0	3	6	

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CONCLUSIONS

Total numbers

The count of 173 represents a large drop from the June 2006 count of 300. As with any research, the findings are a function of at least two factors: the true situation (often unknowable) and the tools used to gather information about the situation. The timing of this most recent census - on what's known as "Welfare Wednesday" - could account for fewer people on the streets. With no evidence that 127 formerly homeless people are now housed since the June 2006 count of 300, and no evidence that 127 of that 300 have left the city, it's a fair conclusion that the number of homeless in Nanaimo is something more than 173.

Total numbers aside, the data reveal a remarkable consistency on any number of characteristics of the city's homeless population:

Continuing trends

- The majority of the population continues to be males, but the 27% margin of males over females far exceeds the 6-12% margin found in the three previous counts.
- The identifiable minority proportion of the population has stayed remarkably consistent over four counts: 32% on three of the counts and 27% on one.
 - The age range remains fairly consistent from the mid-teens to the mid-seventies.
 - Mean or average age has a variance of only 2.4 years cross four censuses.
 - Median age (where ½ are above and ½ below) also shows a tight variance of only three years.
- Men among the homeless continue to be older, on average, than women; this shows up in the mean, the median, and the predominance of females in the 20-29 age group and males in the 40+ age groups.
 - Past counts documented that the majority of Nanaimo's homeless people are from the city, not already homeless people drawn here. The question of length of residence used on this count does not permit comparison.
 - Comparisons on length of homelessness are difficult to make this time around because of a change in the question, but the proportion homeless under a year hovers in the 64-68% range on each count.

- Although the range here is not as tight as on some of the above demographic characteristics, being alone (not accompanied by anyone) continues to characterize 75-80% of the homeless population. This is ruerd of males than females, but the margin fluctuates.

- Addiction and financial factors (no or inadequate income and high housing costs) are consistently the two leading factors on the path to homelessness.

- One-third of Nanaimo's homeless population is sleeping outdoors at least during the spring and fall counts; half, however, were sleeping rough on the summer 2006 census.

- Self-assessments of physical health continues to show 1/4 in poor health and / in fair health.

Shifting patterns

- Length of homelessness for males and females shows no consistency with males showing the higher average figure twice and females showing a higher average twice.

- The latest count shows more positive self-assessment on mental health: the 42% checking "good" (4 or 5 on the scale) is the highest seen yet and the 20% checking "poor" (1 or 2 on the scale) is the lowest seen thus far.

- On this fourth count, a larger proportion have jobs (about 23%), but a larger percentage are also earning their livelihood through illegal means (10%).

- The latest count finds a substantial increase in the proportion receiving no public assistance - about 45%.