



A
Count of Homeless
Persons in Edmonton

October, 2004



Edmonton Joint Planning
Committee on Housing



THANKS TO THE COMMITTEE & COMMUNITY

The Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing expresses its appreciation to the volunteer members of The Homelessness Count Committee and to the many agencies and other volunteers who donated their time to complete the sixth homeless count. We would like to particularly recognize the efforts of the Edmonton City Police Service and the City of Edmonton Park Rangers who provided valuable assistance to the Count Committee and volunteers. In addition, our appreciation is extended to Mr. Terry Ford, who provided the volunteers with insight about street life.

HOMELESSNESS COUNT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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A Count of Homeless Persons in Edmonton

Conducted October 19, 2004 by
The Edmonton Joint Planning Committee On Housing
Homelessness Count Committee

SUMMARY

The sixth count of the homeless found 2192 homeless* persons in the City of Edmonton. Of these, 1452 were absolute homeless (having no housing alternative) and 740 were sheltered homeless (living in emergency accommodations).

The Homelessness Count Committee organized the count, applying the methodology used in the previous counts (March/November 1999, March/September 2000, and October 2002), to ensure a consistent 'snapshot' of the homeless population. Employing the same methodology enables the monitoring of changes and trends of the homeless population. October 19, 2004 was selected for the twenty-four hour count period. In order to conduct the count, the Count Committee acquired the active support of approximately 157 volunteers, in addition to the community serving the homeless. In addition, some street count areas were expanded based upon the recommendation of community agencies and some locations covered in previous counts were not included as they had a history of little or no activity in the past.

***Definition of Homeless**

The Homelessness Count Committee used the following definition of the homeless for its work:

Absolute Homeless: Individuals and families who are absolutely homeless (having no housing alternatives). During the October 19th count, this was represented by people who, when asked on the street or within agencies like drop-in centres, bottle depots or food banks, self reported that they had no permanent place to reside. They may have ended up sleeping "on the street" or in a stairwell that night, or alternatively they may have stayed with a friend or found an emergency shelter space.

Sheltered Homeless: Individuals and families who are the sheltered homeless (living in emergency accommodations or condemned housing and expected to be "on the street" at the end of their stay). During the October 19th count, this was represented by people who were registered to stay in approved emergency shelters.

Major Findings were:

- There were 34 families staying in shelters the night of the count consisting of 34 caregivers over 16 years of age and 75 children 16 and under. An additional 86 people contacted during the street count indicated that they were caregivers to children and had no place to stay that night (absolute homeless). The indication was that this absolute homeless group consisted of 118 caregivers and 201 children 16 years of age and under.
- A majority of the homeless were single; 1764 of the 2192 total. Among them, 64% were absolute homeless compared with 36% who were sheltered homeless.
- From the perspective of observed gender, most of the homeless age 17 and over were male (69% or 1297) and 27% or 508 were female. The gender of the remaining persons 17 and older (5% or 81) was not recorded.

- Forty-two percent (42%) of those counted were observed to be Caucasian and thirty-seven percent (37%) to be Aboriginal. The observed race of the remaining twenty-one percent (21%) was not recorded and could include other Caucasian and Aboriginal individuals. Most of those whose race was not recorded were children under 17 years of age in families.
- Age groups ranged from the majority being 31-54 years of age (1133 or 51%) to the next largest group being the 17-30 age group (510 or 23%), with the remaining split between those under the age of 17 years of age and those 55 years and older.
- Although not included in the homeless count numbers, a tally of the people turned away by providers and crisis services identified 108, while an additional 54 individuals were discharged or ready for discharge from facilities but without a permanent residence to return to.

BACKGROUND

The Homelessness Count Committee is a working group of The Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing. The Count Committee was created to implement the recommendation detailed in the May 1999 report *Homelessness in Edmonton, A Call to Action* that: “the count be continued on a regular basis so trends of the homeless population can be monitored”.

For the purpose of the count, the Count Committee used the definition of homeless persons as outlined in the report *Homelessness in Edmonton, A Call to Action*:

- “1. Individuals and families who are absolutely homeless (having no housing alternatives)”
and
- “2. Individuals and families who are the sheltered homeless (living in emergency accommodations or condemned housing and expected to be 'on the street' at the end of their stay).”

The count began at 4:30 AM on October 19, 2004 and continued until 4:30 AM on October 20, 2004. October 19, 2004 was a cloudy and cold day with temperatures ranging from a high of -3.8°C to a low of -8.9°C. Noon time temperatures were -4.1°C with a wind at 11km/h (Environment Canada).

The following partners collaborated and actively participated in the organization and implementation of the count: the City of Edmonton, the Province of Alberta, the Government of Canada, the community serving the homeless and many volunteers.

METHOD

Preparations for the count involved contacting all organizations and community agencies who work with those individuals and/or families facing issues of homelessness.

The method included a direct and indirect count to ensure as much thoroughness and accuracy as possible.

The **direct count** involved a tally of people in emergency shelter beds.

The **indirect count** attempted to capture the invisible homeless through:

- **street count**, asking people on the street if they have a permanent residence to return to that night and recording the number that did not.
- **agency count**, asking people at agencies (such as the food bank, drop-in centres and bottle depots) if they have a permanent residence for that night and recording the number that did not.

In addition to the count of homeless the following information was collected the same day but these figures are not included in the homeless tally:

- **Number of turnaways**: people turned away by providers and crisis services because no appropriate housing was available
- **Number of Discharges**: people either discharged or ready for discharge from facilities but with no permanent residence to go to.

Demographic data gathered during the count included observed gender, race and age. Family status was also documented; including the number of caregivers, and the number of dependent children. Forms documenting count results were faxed to a central number on October 20th, 2004.

The Count Committee acknowledges that the count methodology has inherent limitations and that the results reflect only a point-in-time. However, in order to report the count findings in a consistent manner that would allow for comparison, the October 19th count used the same methodology of that used for the previous counts.

Implementation of the count relied on the cooperation and involvement of the community serving the homeless and a team of volunteers. The community was divided into the following sectors, with a coordinator assigned to organize and implement the count:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • institutions (hospitals/jails) • inner-city agencies • streets • shelters (youth, adult and families) • Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission • adult group homes • youth group homes • seniors facilities • subsidized housing registries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • housing registries • aboriginal agencies and housing • Abbottsfield Mall (outreach programs) • bottle depots • Stanley Milner Library • food bank • River valley park system • other miscellaneous crisis and assistance services
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COUNT RESULTS

A total of 2192 homeless persons were counted on October 19, 2004 in Edmonton: 1452 absolute homeless (66%) and 740 sheltered homeless (34%). This includes adults and children.

TOTAL HOMELESS		
	No.	%
Absolute Homeless	1452	66
Sheltered Homeless	740	34
Total Homeless	2192	100

Family Status

A majority of individuals counted were single (1764). Among the single homeless, 1133 (64%) were absolute homeless compared with 631 (36%) who were staying at shelters.

SINGLE HOMELESS*		
	No.	%
Absolute Homeless Singles	1133	64
Sheltered Homeless Singles	631	36
Total Homeless Singles	1764	100

* Includes - Singles Without Children

There were 120 families counted, encompassing 276 children under the age of 17 and 152 caregivers. Among families, 72% (86) identified themselves during the street count as absolute homeless, while 28% (34) stayed at shelters. The absolute homeless indicated to us that in their households were 201 children and 118 caregivers. Families staying in shelters consisted of 75 children under 17 years of age and 34 caregivers.

Families having one caregiver totaled 97, while 23 had two or more caregivers. Among those identifying themselves as absolute homeless families, 63 had one caregiver while 23 had two or more caregivers. At shelters, 34 families had one caregiver while none had two or more caregivers. Caregivers include men & women 17 years of age and older.

HOMELESS IN FAMILIES								
	Families By # of Care Givers				Total Families		Children	
	2 or more	%	One	%	No.	%	No.	%
Absolute Homeless Families	23	6	63	16	86	72	201	73
Sheltered Homeless Families	0	0	34	9	34	28	75	27
Total Homeless Families	23	6	97	25	120	100	276	100

Gender

Sixty-nine percent (69%) of the homeless adults counted were male, totaling 1297 compared to 508 (26%) female adults. There were eighty-one (81) adults counted that were not identified by gender.

HOMELESS BY OBSERVED GENDER*								
	Males		Females		No Gender Identified		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Absolute Homeless	835	44	323	17	76	4	1234	65
Sheltered Homeless	462	25	185	9	5	1	652	35
Total Homeless	1297	69	508	26	81	5	1886	100

* Does not include children 16 and under

Race

The percentage of Caucasian homeless identified by observation was 42% and Aboriginal homeless was 37%. The race of the remaining 21% was not recorded and may include Caucasians, Aboriginals and others. The major portion of those not recorded were children in families.

HOMELESS BY OBSERVED RACE								
	Caucasian		Aboriginal		No Race Identified		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Absolute Homeless	538	25	529	24	385	18	1452	67
Sheltered Homeless	376	17	275	13	89	3	740	33
Total Homeless	914	42	804	37	474	21	2192	100

Age

Those between 31 and 54 years old were the predominant age group, at 1128 or 51%. The next largest was the 17-30 age group (510 or 23%)

The majority of those under 17 years of age (218 of 306) were absolute homeless according to indications given to us by their caregivers. For those over 17 years of age more were in absolute homelessness than sheltered (1234 compared to 652).

HOMELESS BY OBSERVED AGE												
	0-16*		17-30		31-54		55-65		Over 65		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Absolute	218	10	364	17	725	33	125	6	20	1	1452	67
Sheltered	88	4	146	6	408	18	77	4	21	1	740	33
Total	306	14	510	23	1133	51	202	10	41	2	2192	100

* Includes 276 children in families and 30 children on their own

THE FOLLOWING FIGURES ARE NOT INCLUDED IN THE HOMELESS TALLY.

Turnaways & Discharges

A tally was also taken of the number of people denied a bed because the facility was full or the client didn't meet entrance standards (by, for example, exhibiting violent behavior) and who declared having no home to return to. On count day, 22 individuals were turned away from housing providers and treatment centres (20%) and 86 from shelters (80%). Discharges totaled 54 people, including 53 from jails, hospitals and/or group homes. These people were not included in the reported number of absolute or sheltered homeless.

COUNT OF TURNAWAYS & DISCHARGES*				
	Turnaways		Discharges	
	No.	%	No.	%
Housing Providers/Treatment Centres	22	20	1	2
Jails/Hospitals/Group Homes	n/a	n/a	53	98
Shelters	86	80	n/a	n/a
Total	108	100	54	100

*Turnaways and discharges declaring no home to return to.

Shelter-by-Shelter Numbers: Registered and Turnaways

The number of persons who were housed or turned away by each participating shelter on October 19, 2004 is outlined in the table below. Herb Jamieson Centre housed the highest number, at 239 (32%). The number registered are included in the homeless tally, the turnaways are not.

REGISTERED AND TURNAWAYS FROM SHELTERS						
Shelter Name	Available Spaces	No. Registered	% Occupancy	Percentage of Total Registered	No. Turned Away	Percentage of Total
Herb Jamieson	265	239	90	32	0	0
WEAC	75	88	117	12	0	0
Elizabeth House	24	22	92	3	3	4
George Spady	72	98	136	13	24	28
Urban Manor	75	75	100	10	8	9
WIN 1	21	20	95	3	13	15
WIN 11	30	24	80	3	4	5
Lurana	25	23	92	3	21	24
Safe House	8	5	75	1	0	0
Protective Safe House	5	5	100	1	0	0
Inner City Youth Housing	27	11	41	1	4	5
Youth Emergency Shelter	28	23	82	3	1	1
Seniors Safe House	7	5	71	1	0	0
SFI Hotels*	0	43	0	6	0	0
Other**	58	58	100	8	8	9
Total	692	740	107	100	86	100

*On an as need basis – no set number of spaces.

**Number of individuals sheltered on an emergency basis by the Hope Mission Trailers (Youth & Intoxicated Individuals) & Wings.

COUNT COMPARISON

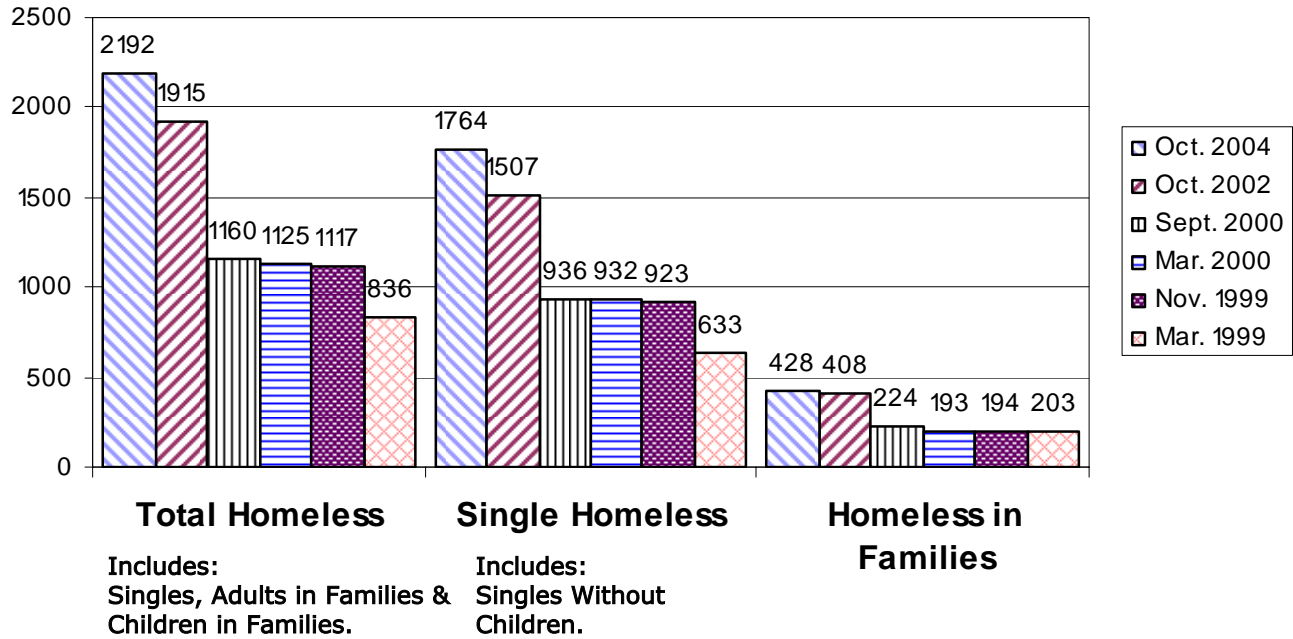
The October 19, 2004 count is the latest of six counts to be conducted as recommended in the May 1999 report “*Homelessness in Edmonton, A Call to Action*”.

Since the last count on October 23, 2002, more shelter beds have been created in the City of Edmonton. An additional 7 spaces to house Seniors and very recently an additional 70 spaces to accommodate intoxicated individuals along with 100 additional emergency spaces.

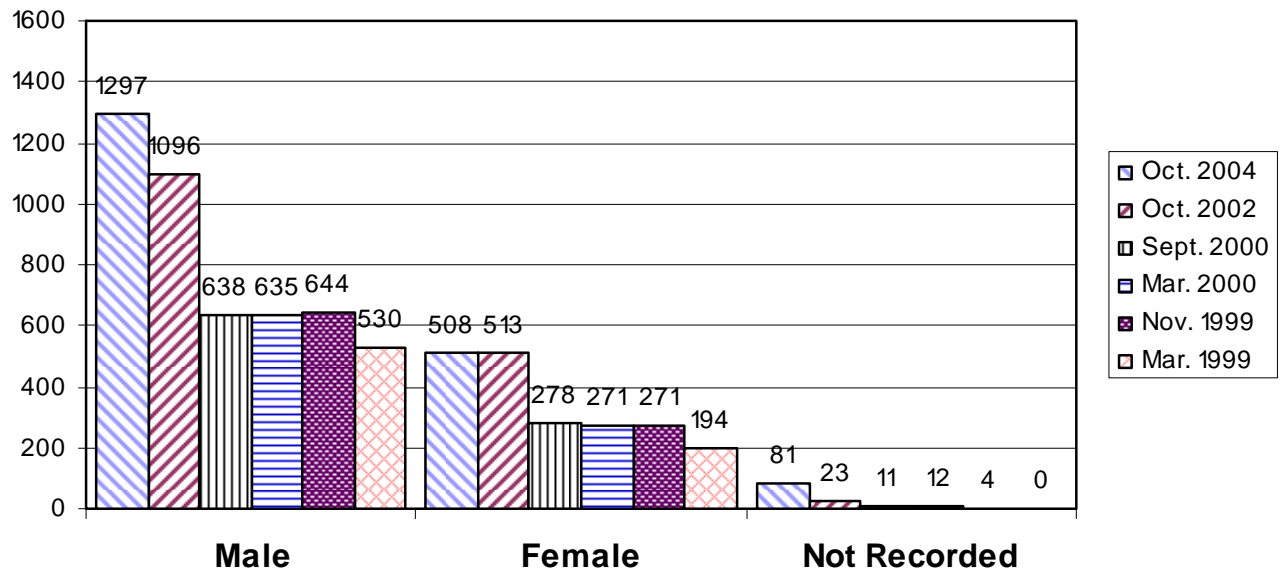
Although significant progress has been made towards addressing the needs of the homeless in Edmonton (reference the *Interim Edmonton Community Plan on Homelessness 2003 - 2006*), the recent economic boom has accelerated the homelessness and affordable housing crisis in Edmonton. The October 19, 2004 count results clearly show that homelessness continues to be a growing issue in Edmonton. With this in mind, the following graphs (pages 8-10) illustrate the numeric differences between the six counts.

COUNT COMPARISON GRAPHS

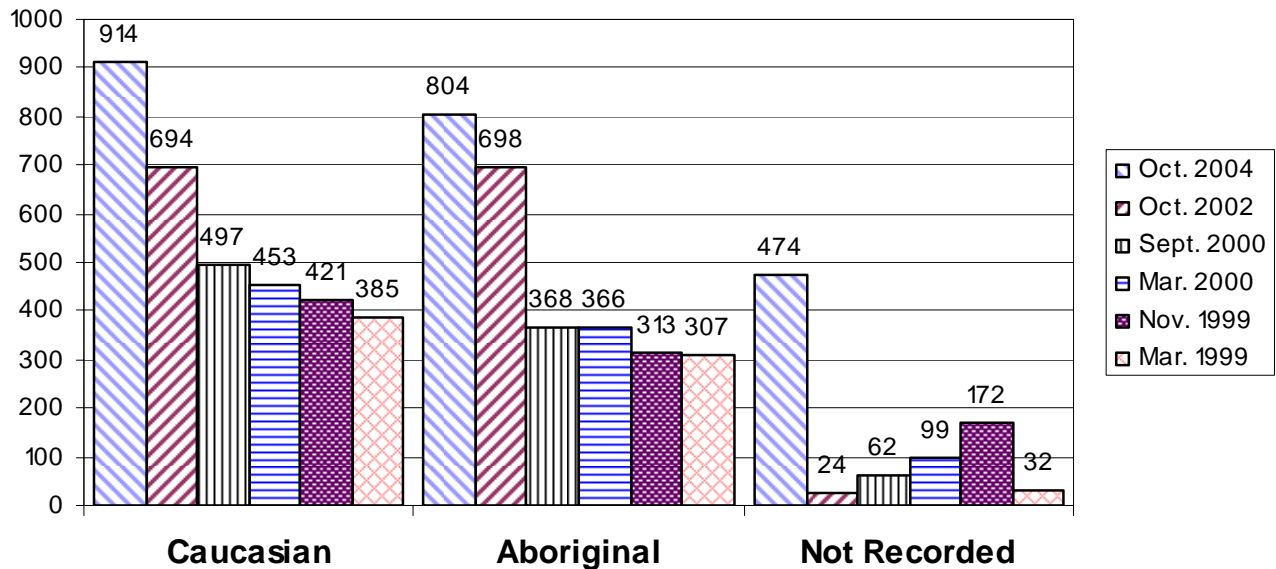
Total Homeless in Edmonton



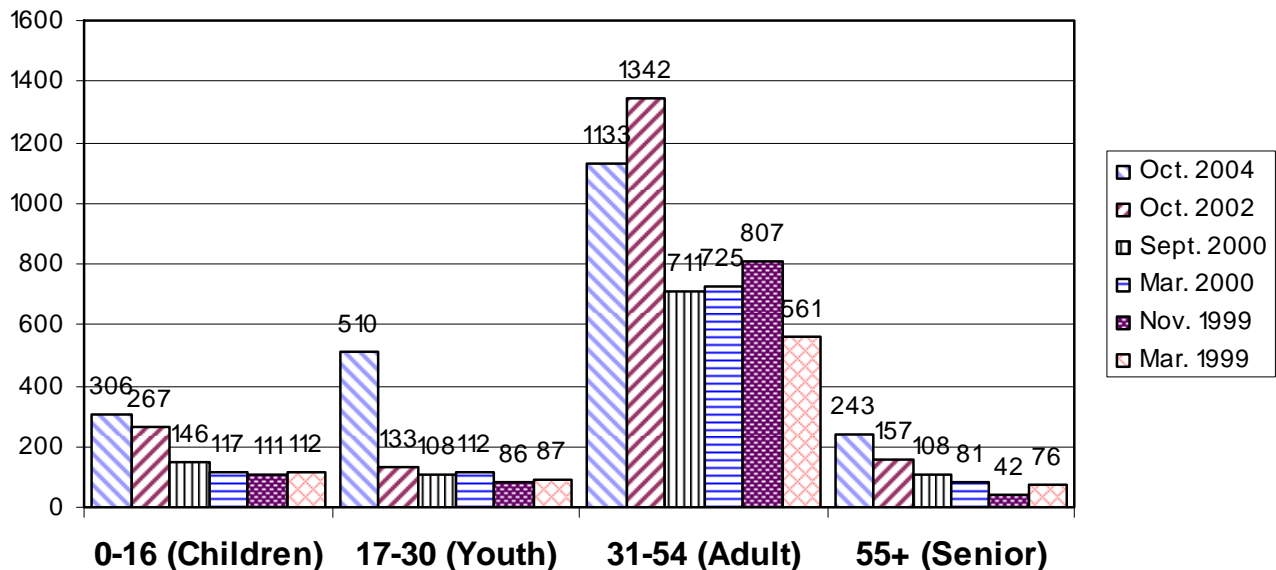
Homeless (Age 17 and over) by Observed Gender



Total Homeless by Observed Race



Total Homeless by Observed Age*

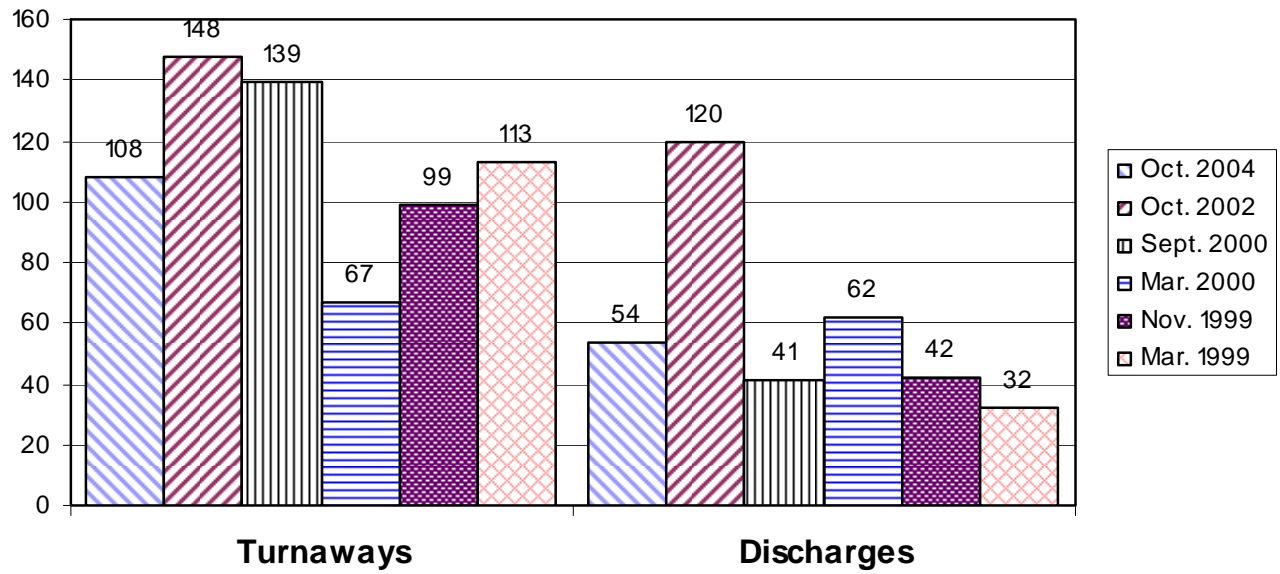


0-16 (Children) 17-30 (Youth) 31-54 (Adult) 55+ (Senior)

*Age Categories in the 2004 Count have changed since previous counts, creating discrepancies in the Youth and Adult categories. Previous age categories are now reported as follows:

Graph Labels	2004:	Previous Counts:
0-16 (Children)	0-16	Children (in families or age 0-15)
17-30 (Youth)	17-30	15-18
31-54 (Adult)	31-54	19-54
55+ (Senior)	55-64	55+
55+ (Senior)	65+	Not Applicable

Total Turnaways & Discharges



Turnaway and Discharge figures are not included in the homeless tally.