

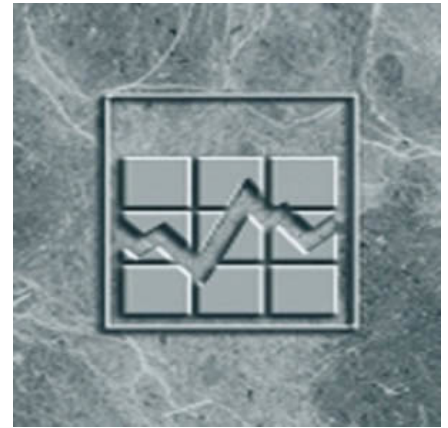
Catalogue no. 75F0002M
ISSN 1707-2840
ISBN 978-0-660-48011-4

Income Research Paper Series

A profile of workers in the homelessness support sector, 2021

by David McNamee, Jeff Randle, Zheren Hu, Annie Duchesne
and Rhi Ann Ng

Release date: May 10, 2023



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A profile of workers in the homelessness support sector, 2021

by David McNamee, Jeff Randle, Zheren Hu, Annie Duchesne and Rhi Ann Ng

Abstract

This study aims to profile workers in the homelessness support sector using data from the 2021 and 2016 censuses of population. The homelessness support sector combines specific occupations and industry of employment to identify individuals employed in jobs that provide services to families and individuals who face homelessness. The study profiles these workers by geography, age, sex, family status, educational attainment, Indigenous identity and visible minority status. The study also sheds light on their earnings and poverty status.

Introduction

Access to adequate housing is a right for all Canadians and an objective laid out in the National Housing Strategy. At the same time, many Canadians face homelessness and struggle to secure safe and affordable housing.

Previous studies have suggested more than 200,000 Canadians experience homelessness over the course of a year.¹ Statistics Canada counted 12,565 Canadians staying in shelters during the 2021 Census of Population. This point-in-time count (conducted on Census Day) does not capture the true extent of homelessness in Canada.² Identifying the homeless population is a challenge in part because of transiency and the lack of a permanent address. Stigma and prejudice toward this population may also mean that people may not identify themselves as experiencing homelessness.

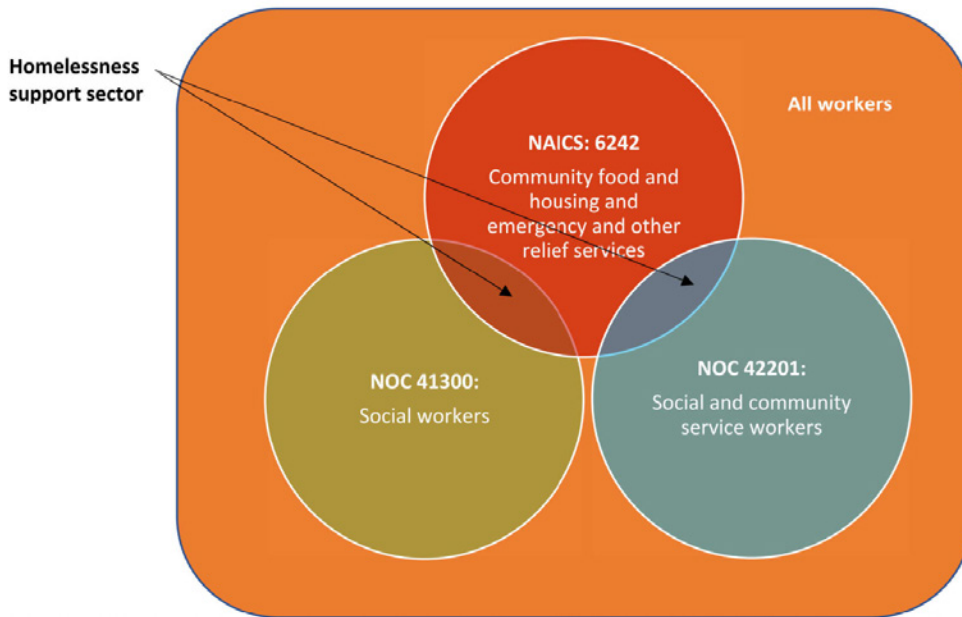
While much of the research on homelessness focuses on the individuals and families who face homelessness, this study aims to better understand the people who work in jobs that are providing services to these individuals and families. Workers in the homelessness support sector face challenges on a continuing basis including dealing with trauma and clients with complex needs. The nature of their work can lead to a greater risk of burnout, traumatic stress, compassion fatigue and a high staff turnover rate within the sector. These challenges affect the individual and the homelessness support sector as a whole. The associated mental health consequences are worth mentioning in this framework because they can play a role in the demographic and employment characteristics observed in the sector.³

1. Gaetz, S., B. O'Grady, S. Kidd, and K. Schwan. 2016. *Without a Home: The National Youth Homelessness Survey*. Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. Toronto, Ontario. <https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/WithoutAHome-final.pdf> (Accessed 12 January 2023).
2. Statistics Canada. 2022. *A portrait of Canadians who have experienced homelessness*. StatsCan Plus. Ottawa, Ontario. <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/o1/en/plus/1995-portrait-canadians-who-have-experienced-homelessness>. (Accessed 12 January 2023).
3. Waegemakers Schiff, J., and A. Lane. *Burnout and PTSD in workers in the homelessness sector in Edmonton*. Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. Edmonton, Alberta. 2016. <https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/PTSD%20and%20Burnout%20in%20Edmonton%20February%202016.pdf>. (Accessed 12 January 2023).

Defining the homelessness support sector

The homelessness support sector is defined as the intersection of "Community food and housing, and emergency and other relief services" and either "Social workers" or "Social and community service workers" occupations.

Figure 1
Homelessness support sector



Defining the sector in this way has limitation since it may include some workers who do not render services to individuals experiencing homelessness while excluding others who do. However, this industry and occupation combination clearly overlaps with jobs of interest and would include homelessness support sector workers.

This work was done in partnership with Infrastructure Canada’s Homelessness Policy Directorate.

In 2022, Infrastructure Canada commissioned Statistics Canada to prepare a brief text and statistical tables describing what is known about the characteristics of workers in the homelessness support sector. These findings have been edited collaboratively to better present the results and should be useful to the wider audience interested in this area.

The homelessness support sector grew between 2016 and 2021

There were 10,130 people working in the homelessness support sector in 2021, an increase of 60.7% (+3,825) compared with 2016. This outpaced the growth in the total number of employed people (+3.4%) over the same period.

Over the same period, there were also large employment increases in related occupations, such as social workers (+11.6% to 69,440 workers) and social and community service workers (+24.8% to 194,275 workers). This finding indicates that increases in these related field services also grew faster than the national average of all workers (+3.4%).

The number of homelessness support sector workers grew in nearly every province

Nationally, 9 of 10 provinces saw the homelessness support sector grow. Ontario (4,000 workers) and British Columbia (2,270 workers) accounted for the largest number of workers in the sector, which is mainly driven

by the size of the population and number of large cities where services for homeless individuals and families are most commonly available. While accounting for more than half of the workers in the sector, the number of workers in Ontario (+79.0%) and British Columbia (+63.9%) also grew faster than the overall growth rate (+60.7%) of the sector.

The homelessness support sector grew fastest in Nova Scotia (+130.4%) and Saskatchewan (+125.7%) where the number of workers more than doubled since the previous census. New Brunswick was the only province where the number of workers in the sector did not grow, remaining at 110 total estimated workers.

The territories had very few workers in the homelessness support sector according to how it has been defined for the purpose of this analysis. Given the harsh weather conditions, cultural differences and smaller populations in the North, the way services are available and provided to homeless families and individuals may not be well represented by the intersection of this set of occupation and industry codes.

The six largest cities in Canada accounted for nearly half of all homelessness support sector workers. Toronto (15.6%), Vancouver (12.3%), Montréal (8.2%), Edmonton (4.4%), Ottawa-Gatineau (4.3%) and Calgary (3.8%) were the census metropolitan areas with the largest percentages of homelessness support sector workers in Canada.

Compared with 2016, Canada's six largest cities accounted for a similar share (47.8%) of homelessness support sector workers. At the same time, some other census metropolitan areas saw the homelessness support sector more than double in size, such as Hamilton (+343.8%), Kelowna (+242.9%), Windsor (+171.4%) and Victoria (+147.4%).

Table 1a
Workers by province and territory, for selected industries and occupations, 2016 and 2021

	All workers			Homelessness support sector workers ¹		
	2021	2016	Percent change	2021	2016	Percent change
	count			count		
Canada	20,630,520	19,956,250	3.4	10,130	6,305	60.7
Atlantic provinces	1,311,940	1,299,080	1.0	535	335	59.7
Newfoundland and Labrador	267,975	286,035	-6.3	140	95	47.4
Prince Edward Island	90,300	85,270	5.9	20	15	33.3
Nova Scotia	530,410	514,080	3.2	265	115	130.4
New Brunswick	423,255	413,695	2.3	110	110	0.0
Quebec	4,747,110	4,529,765	4.8	1,330	1,090	22.0
Ontario	7,885,710	7,579,080	4.0	4,000	2,235	79.0
Manitoba	727,130	710,835	2.3	275	220	25.0
Saskatchewan	615,785	633,325	-2.8	395	175	125.7
Alberta	2,422,110	2,467,410	-1.8	1,255	795	57.9
British Columbia	2,855,890	2,670,700	6.9	2,270	1,385	63.9
Territories	64,845	66,060	-1.8	75	80	-6.3
Yukon	25,520	23,495	8.6	10	10	0.0
Northwest Territories	24,145	25,570	-5.6	45	55	-18.2
Nunavut	15,180	17,000	-10.7	20	15	33.3

1. Homelessness support sector as defined in this document includes workers in the community food and housing, and emergency and other relief services industry (North American Industry Classification System code 6242) and whose occupation was either social workers (National Occupational Classification [NOC] code 41300) or social and community service workers (NOC 42201).

Note: Due to random rounding, totals may be different from the sum of all numbers.

For the 2016 Census, includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and older who have worked at some point in time between January 2015 and May 2016.

For the 2021 Census, includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and older who have worked at some point in time between January 2020 and May 2021.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016 and 2021.

Table 1b
Selected National Occupation Classification codes by province and territory, 2016 and 2021

	Social workers ¹			Social and community service workers ²		
	2021	2016	Percent change	2021	2016	Percent change
	count	count		count	count	
Canada	69,440	62,235	11.6	194,275	155,625	24.8
Atlantic provinces	5,600	4,650	20.4	13,725	10,480	31.0
Newfoundland and Labrador	1,295	1,250	3.6	2,565	1,940	32.2
Prince Edward Island	175	205	-14.6	1,285	995	29.1
Nova Scotia	2,170	1,650	31.5	6,090	4,830	26.1
New Brunswick	1,960	1,545	26.9	3,785	2,715	39.4
Quebec	16,980	14,125	20.2	35,280	30,760	14.7
Ontario	25,320	24,400	3.8	70,315	56,785	23.8
Manitoba	3,255	2,750	18.4	10,190	7,945	28.3
Saskatchewan	2,495	2,160	15.5	7,465	5,500	35.7
Alberta	7,450	7,020	6.1	23,410	17,920	30.6
British Columbia	7,975	6,805	17.2	32,445	24,870	30.5
Territories	370	320	15.6	1,455	1,365	6.6
Yukon	215	170	26.5	505	480	5.2
Northwest Territories	110	110	0.0	480	420	14.3
Nunavut	45	40	12.5	470	465	1.1

1. "Social workers" refers to NOC 41300.

2. "Social and community service workers" refers to NOC 42201.

Note: Due to random rounding, totals may be different from the sum of all numbers.

For the 2016 Census, includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and older who have worked at some point in time between January 2015 and May 2016.

For the 2021 Census, includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and older who have worked at some point in time between January 2020 and May 2021.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016 and 2021.

The homelessness support sector grew fastest in large urban population centres

Large urban population centres are some of the places where homelessness is most visible but are also where many services for homeless individuals and families are located.

About 7 out of 10 homelessness support sector workers (70.8%) lived in large urban population centres, accounting for 7,175 of the total 10,130 workers in the sector. The share of the homelessness support sector workers living in large urban centres was larger than that of all workers (62.7%). The number of workers in the homelessness support sector living in large urban centres was also the fastest growing group (+75.9%) compared with the smaller sized population centres since the previous census.

While more services are located in larger centres, homelessness support sector workers who lived in rural areas (910 workers) represented 9.0% of the total sector. This rate was below the percentage of all workers that lived in rural areas in 2021 (17.3%), but the number of homelessness support sector workers that lived in rural areas grew by 8.3% since the previous census while the number of total workers in rural areas declined by 3.3% over the same period.

Women outnumber men in the homelessness support sector by nearly three to one

Nearly three out of four homelessness support workers (73.8%) were women according to the 2021 Census. This share was larger than the share of women in all occupations (48.2%). Social workers (86.1%) and social and community service workers (76.5%) also had a larger share of women than men.

The growth in the homelessness support sector since the previous census was strongest for men, where the number of workers grew to 2,655 (+1,175; +79.4%). The number of women working in the homelessness support sector grew to 7,475 (+2,650; +54.9%) over the same period. The stronger growth in the number of men working in the homelessness support sector led to a decline in the overall share of women in the sector from 76.5% in the previous census.

Fastest employment growth among youth aged 15 to 24 years

The fastest growing age cohort in the homelessness support sector workers since the previous census was among those aged 15 to 24 years (+132.8%). This group more than doubled in size from 625 to 1,455. The growth was strongest for boys and men (+176.0%) in this age group, and the number of girls and women in this age group also more than doubled (+123.0%) since the previous census.

Workers aged 25 to 44 years included the largest group of homelessness support sector workers, representing 52.5% of, or 5,320, workers in the sector. This group grew by 74.1% since the previous census when the total number of workers in this group was 3,055.

Older workers, or those aged 65 years and older, also saw their representation in the sector grow (82.0%) despite representing the smallest share of workers in the sector (4.5%, or 455 out of 10,130). The growth in the sector was seen to a lesser extent for those aged 65 years and older working in all sectors (+20.9%). [While participation rates have remained stable for older workers since 2016](#), this phenomenon reflects Canada's aging population, driven by baby boomers continuing to age and work into their senior years.

Table 2a
Workers by age and gender, for selected industries and occupations, 2016 and 2021

	All workers			Homelessness support sector workers ¹		
	2021	2016	Percent change	2021	2016	Percent change
	count			count		
Total - Gender						
15 years of age and over	20,630,520	19,956,250	3.4	10,130	6,305	60.7
15 to 24 years	2,862,195	2,982,790	-4.0	1,455	625	132.8
25 to 44 years	8,669,890	8,069,425	7.4	5,320	3,055	74.1
45 to 64 years	7,736,470	7,777,175	-0.5	2,895	2,380	21.6
65 years and over	1,361,960	1,126,860	20.9	455	250	82.0
Men+						
15 years of age and over	10,690,035	10,342,970	3.4	2,655	1,480	79.4
15 to 24 years	1,465,165	1,517,795	-3.5	345	125	176.0
25 to 44 years	4,442,045	4,128,115	7.6	1,370	755	81.5
45 to 64 years	3,973,595	4,016,065	-1.1	785	550	42.7
65 years and over	809,230	681,000	18.8	155	60	158.3
Women+						
15 years of age and over	9,940,490	9,613,285	3.4	7,475	4,825	54.9
15 to 24 years	1,397,035	1,464,995	-4.6	1,115	500	123.0
25 to 44 years	4,227,845	3,941,310	7.3	3,955	2,295	72.3
45 to 64 years	3,762,875	3,761,110	0.0	2,110	1,835	15.0
65 years and over	552,730	445,860	24.0	300	190	57.9

1. Homelessness support sector as defined in this document includes workers in the community food and housing, and emergency and other relief services industry (North American Industry Classification System code 6242) and whose occupation was either social workers (National Occupational Classification [NOC] code 41300) or social and community service workers (NOC 42201).

Note: Due to random rounding, totals may be different from the sum of all numbers.

For the 2016 Census, includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and older who have worked at some point in time between January 2015 and May 2016.

For the 2016 Census, men+ and women+ is derived using 'sex': <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/pop122-eng.cfm>

For the 2021 Census, includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and older who have worked at some point in time between January 2020 and May 2021.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016 and 2021.

Table 2b
Worker by selected National Occupation Classification codes, age and gender, 2016 and 2021

	Social workers ¹			Social and community service workers ²		
	2021	2016	Percent change	2021	2016	Percent change
	count			count		
Total - Gender						
15 years of age and over	69,440	62,235	11.6	194,275	155,625	24.8
15 to 24 years	2,190	1,490	47	22,175	18,340	20.9
25 to 44 years	40,275	34,120	18	95,450	75,575	26.3
45 to 64 years	23,985	24,135	-0.6	67,885	56,135	20.9
65 years and over	3,000	2,485	20.7	8,760	5,570	57.3
Men+						
15 years of age and over	9,655	9,395	2.8	45,735	34,825	31.3
15 to 24 years	255	90	183.3	5,465	4,595	18.9
25 to 44 years	5,010	4,340	15.4	22,580	16,450	37.3
45 to 64 years	3,645	4,230	-13.8	15,170	12,185	24.5
65 years and over	750	725	3.4	2,520	1,595	58
Women+						
15 years of age and over	59,785	52,845	13.1	148,545	120,800	23
15 to 24 years	1,935	1,395	38.7	16,715	13,745	21.6
25 to 44 years	35,260	29,780	18.4	72,870	59,130	23.2
45 to 64 years	20,340	19,905	2.2	52,720	43,950	20
65 years and over	2,250	1,760	27.8	6,240	3,975	57

1. "Social workers" refers to NOC 41300.

2. "Social and community service workers" refers to NOC 42201.

Note: Due to random rounding, totals may be different from the sum of all numbers.

For the 2016 Census, includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and older who have worked at some point in time between January 2015 and May 2016.

For the 2016 Census, men+ and women+ is derived using 'sex': <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/pop122-eng.cfm>

For the 2021 Census, includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and older who have worked at some point in time between January 2020 and May 2021.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016 and 2021.

Growth in the homelessness support sector was strongest among those who had a bachelor's degree or higher

Nearly 4 out of 10 homelessness support sector workers (39.8%) had obtained a bachelor's degree or higher. These people represented the largest group of homelessness support sector workers based on highest certificate, diploma, or degree. This group of the sector grew by 82.6% since the previous census while across all workers in all sectors, the number of people with a bachelor's degree or higher grew by 19.8% since the previous census and represented one out of three (31.7%) workers overall according to the 2021 Census.

The 4,035 individuals with a bachelor's degree or higher were divided across 3,055 people who had a bachelor's degree and 985 people with a graduate degree or certificate above the bachelor's level. Focusing on workers with a graduate degree or certificate above the bachelor's level, the number doubled (+101.0%) from 490 since the previous census. The group now represents nearly 1 in 10 homelessness support sector workers.

The share of homelessness support sector workers with a trade school, college or non-university certificate or diploma grew slower (+42.1%) than that of its counterparts within the sector, but still represented a large portion of the sector overall (39.3%) in 2021. The growth of this group of workers in the sector also outpaced the rate of change for this groups of workers in all sectors by more than 40 percentage points where the number of workers with a trade school, college or non-university certificate or diploma contracted by -2.4% since the previous census.

Social and community service workers had a similar level of bachelor's degree or higher (34.6%) and overall post-secondary education (79.8%) compared to the homelessness support sector. Most social workers (92.8%) had a bachelor's degree or higher as their highest level of education, reflecting the regulatory requirements of this profession.⁴

4. Job Bank. 2023. [Job requirements - Social worker in Canada](https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/marketreport/requirements/23025/ca). Ottawa, Ontario. <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/marketreport/requirements/23025/ca>. (Accessed 3 April 2023).

Table 3a
Workers by highest certificate, diploma or degree, for selected industries and occupations, 2016 and 2021

	All workers			Homelessness support sector workers ¹		
	2021	2016	Percent change	2021	2016	Percent change
	count	count		count	count	
Total - highest certificate, diploma or degree	20,630,520	19,956,250	3.4	10,130	6,310	60.5
No certificate, diploma or degree	2,019,155	2,275,260	-11.3	440	300	46.7
High school diploma or equivalency certificate	5,230,300	5,212,570	0.3	1,675	1,005	66.7
Trade school, college or non-university certificate or diploma	6,848,715	7,015,935	-2.4	3,980	2,800	42.1
Bachelor's degree or higher	6,532,345	5,452,490	19.8	4,035	2,210	82.6
Bachelor's degree	4,278,095	3,660,985	16.9	3,055	1,725	77.1
Graduate degree or certificate above bachelor's level	2,254,250	1,791,505	25.8	985	490	101

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Note: Due to random rounding, totals may be different from the sum of all numbers.

For the 2016 Census, includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and older who have worked at some point in time between January 2015 and May 2016.

For the 2021 Census, includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and older who have worked at some point in time between January 2020 and May 2021.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016 and 2021.

Table 3b
Workers by highest certificate, diploma or degree, for selected occupations, 2016 and 2021

	Social workers ¹			Social and community service workers ²		
	2021	2016	Percent change	2021	2016	Percent change
	count	count		count	count	
Total - highest certificate, diploma or degree	69,440	62,240	11.6	194,275	155,625	24.8
No certificate, diploma or degree	50	30	66.7	7,795	6,590	18.3
High school diploma or equivalency certificate	635	1,875	-66.1	33,480	23,235	44.1
Trade school, college or non-university certificate or diploma	4,285	10,085	-57.5	85,835	69,775	23
Bachelor's degree or higher	64,470	50,250	28.3	67,155	56,030	19.9
Bachelor's degree	40,165	30,935	29.8	51,165	42,800	19.5
Graduate degree or certificate above bachelor's level	24,305	19,320	25.8	15,990	13,230	20.9

1. "Social workers" refers to NOC 41300.

2. "Social and community service workers" refers to NOC 42201.

Note: Due to random rounding, totals may be different from the sum of all numbers.

For the 2016 Census, includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and older who have worked at some point in time between January 2015 and May 2016.

For the 2021 Census, includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and older who have worked at some point in time between January 2020 and May 2021.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016 and 2021.

Business, management and public administration degrees were the most common fields of study in the homelessness support sector

According to the 2021 Census, 8,010 workers in the homeless support sector had completed some post-secondary education with a major field of study. Compared with the 2016 Census, which reported an estimated 5,005 workers in the sector with a major field of study, the increase of over 3,000 workers represented a 60.0% growth rate.

The major field of study that was most common within the homelessness support sector was business, management and public administration with over one in four (25.9%) workers having such a designation. This group of workers grew by 42.5%, which was slower than the overall rate. Most of the workers in this group had a major field of study in the subcategory of public administration and social service professions (2,075) that grew by 37.0%.

Workers with a major field of study in social and behavioural sciences and law was the next largest group of homelessness support sector workers, with nearly one in four (22.8%) reporting this designation in 2021. This group grew by 61.5% since 2016, and the fastest growing subcategory within it was psychology, a group that grew by 98.5% from 340 in 2016 to 675 in 2021.

There were also 1,125 workers with a major field of study in health and related fields. This group of workers grew 75.8% as they eclipsed the 1,000-worker mark from their 2016 total of 640 workers.

Table 4a**Workers with post-secondary education by selected major field of study, for selected industries and occupations, 2016 and 2021**

	All workers			Homelessness support sector workers ¹		
	2021	2016	Percent change	2021	2016	Percent change
	count	count		count	count	
Total - workers with post-secondary education	13,381,065	12,468,420	7.3	8,010	5,005	60
Education	742,015	727,620	2	300	245	22.4
Visual and performing arts, and communications technologies	506,640	490,615	3.3	235	125	88
Humanities	674,740	639,280	5.5	535	285	87.7
Social and behavioural sciences and law	1,618,950	1,449,220	11.7	2,310	1,430	61.5
Family and consumer sciences/human sciences	264,280	256,515	3	565	385	46.8
Psychology	259,480	229,125	13.2	675	340	98.5
Social sciences	565,085	512,315	10.3	805	490	64.3
Business, management and public administration	2,946,260	2,671,155	10.3	2,630	1,845	42.5
Public administration and social service professions	214,440	193,540	10.8	2,075	1,515	37
Business, management, marketing and related support services	2,728,105	2,473,040	10.3	550	335	64.2
Architecture, engineering, and related technologies	2,713,180	2,635,120	3	195	135	44.4
Health and related fields	1,844,535	1,750,740	5.4	1,125	640	75.8
Personal, protective and transportation services	775,895	789,415	-1.7	350	175	100

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For the 2021 Census, includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and older who have worked at some point in time between January 2020 and May 2021.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016 and 2021.

Table 4b**Workers with post-secondary education by selected major field of study, for selected occupations, 2016 and 2021**

	Social workers ¹			Social and community service workers ²		
	2021	2016	Percent change	2021	2016	Percent change
	count	count		count	count	
Total - Workers with post-secondary education	68,750	60,335	13.9	152,995	125,800	21.6
Education	1,050	1,265	-17	9,410	8,845	6.4
Visual and performing arts, and communications technologies	180	225	-20	2,905	2,330	24.7
Humanities	1,485	1,430	3.8	8,470	7,085	19.5
Social and behavioural sciences and law	10,325	9,030	14.3	47,690	38,215	24.8
Family and consumer sciences/human sciences	1,090	1,500	-27.3	15,290	12,385	23.5
Psychology	4,330	3,315	30.6	14,125	10,975	28.7
Social sciences	3,945	3,355	17.6	12,145	9,910	22.6
Business, management and public administration	51,375	44,600	15.2	43,630	38,585	13.1
Public administration and social service professions	49,960	42,845	16.6	31,425	28,485	10.3
Business, management, marketing and related support services	1,415	1,755	-19.4	12,185	10,095	20.7
Architecture, engineering, and related technologies	240	240	0	1,310	2,415	-45.8
Health and related fields	2,985	2,465	21.1	24,160	19,505	23.9
Personal, protective and transportation services	275	435	-36.8	6,915	4,530	52.6

1. "Social workers" refers to NOC 41300.

2. "Social and community service workers" refers to NOC 42201.

Note: Due to random rounding, totals may be different from the sum of all numbers.

For the 2016 Census, includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and older who have worked at some point in time between January 2015 and May 2016.

For the 2021 Census, includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and older who have worked at some point in time between January 2020 and May 2021.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016 and 2021.

Half of the homelessness support sector workers lived in married or common-law couples

According to the 2021 Census, 50.0%, or 5,060 of the 10,125 workers in the homelessness support sector, lived in a married or common-law couple family household. This finding is lower than the average for all workers in all sectors (67.8%) and lower than that of this group of workers share in the 2016 Census (56.0%). This change in share was driven by comparatively slower growth in this group of workers in the sector, where the number of workers in married or common-law family households grew by 43.1% from 3,535 in 2016.

Workers in the homelessness support sector living in one-parent family households nearly doubled since the previous census, growing by 94.0%. Workers in the homelessness support sector (15.5%) were also over twice as likely to have lived in one parent families in which the parent was a woman when compared with all workers (7.6%).

At the same time, the number of workers who lived in a one-parent family in which the parent was a man grew by 141.2% since the previous census, more than doubling from 85 to 205, but remained the smallest group within the sector.

The number of workers in the homelessness support sector that lived in non-census family households⁵ grew by 80.6% from 1,625 in 2016 to 2,935 in 2021. This group represented 29.0% of the homelessness support sector, which was larger than the share of all workers living in these households (17.6%). Most workers living in these types of households were in one-person households.

Table 5a
Workers by census family status, for selected industries and occupations, 2016 and 2021

	All workers			Homelessness support sector workers ¹		
	2021	2016	Percent change	2021	2016	Percent change
	count			count		
Total - Census family status ²	20,630,525	19,956,250	3.4	10,125	6,310	60.5
Married or common-law couple	13,992,335	13,812,910	1.3	5,060	3,535	43.1
with children	9,230,470	9,151,300	0.9	3,120	2,140	45.8
without children	4,761,865	4,661,615	2.2	1,935	1,395	38.7
One-parent family	2,058,070	1,995,255	3.1	1,775	915	94.0
in which the parent is a woman+	1,570,185	1,544,020	1.7	1,570	825	90.3
in which the parent is a man+	487,885	451,235	8.1	205	85	141.2
Multiple census-family household	944,020	876,270	7.7	365	235	55.3
Non-census family household	3,636,100	3,271,820	11.1	2,935	1,625	80.6
One person household	2,471,125	2,290,855	7.9	1,925	1,075	79.1

1. Homelessness support sector as defined in this document includes workers in the community food and housing, and emergency and other relief services industry (North American Industry Classification System code 6242) and whose occupation was either social workers (National Occupational Classification [NOC] code 41300) or social and community service workers (NOC 42201).

2. Includes households with and without additional persons, where additional persons are persons not in a census family.

Note: Due to random rounding, totals may be different from the sum of all numbers.

For the 2016 Census, includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and older who have worked at some point in time between January 2015 and May 2016.

For the 2016 Census, man+ and woman+ is derived using 'sex': <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/pop122-eng.cfm>

For the 2021 Census, includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and older who have worked at some point in time between January 2020 and May 2021.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016 and 2021.

Table 5b
Workers by census family status, for selected occupations, 2016 and 2021

	Social workers ¹			Social and community service workers ²		
	2021	2016	Percent change	2021	2016	Percent change
	count			count		
Total - Census family status ³	69,445	62,240	11.6	194,375	155,625	24.9
Married or common-law couple	47,175	42,200	11.8	115,710	95,890	20.7
with children	31,045	27,965	11	74,640	61,975	20.4
without children	16,135	14,240	13.3	41,070	33,915	21.1
One-parent family	8,015	7,070	13.4	29,225	22,325	30.9
in which the parent is a woman+	7,250	6,410	13.1	25,730	20,035	28.4
in which the parent is a man+	765	665	15	3,500	2,290	52.8
Multiple census-family household	1,955	1,825	7.1	8,070	6,465	24.8
Non-census family household	12,300	11,140	10.4	41,275	30,945	33.4
One person household	9,735	8,825	10.3	27,695	20,920	32.4

1. "Social workers" refers to NOC 41300.

2. "Social and community service workers" refers to NOC 42201.

3. Includes households with and without additional persons, where additional persons are persons not in a census family.

Note: Due to random rounding, totals may be different from the sum of all numbers.

For the 2016 Census, includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and older who have worked at some point in time between January 2015 and May 2016.

For the 2016 Census, man+ and woman+ is derived using 'sex': <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/pop122-eng.cfm>

For the 2021 Census, includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and older who have worked at some point in time between January 2020 and May 2021.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016 and 2021.

5. Non-census-family households refer to households that do not contain a census family and include persons living alone or a group of two or more persons who live together but do not constitute a census family.

Homelessness support sector workers were more than twice as likely to be Indigenous

Over 1 in 10 (11.0%) homelessness support sector workers had an Indigenous identity, which was more than double the rate of all workers (4.1%). This rate changed very little from 2016 when 10.6% of homelessness support sector workers had an Indigenous identity compared with 4.0% of all workers. Despite the rate remaining stable within the homelessness support sector, the number of workers who reported an Indigenous identity increased by almost two-thirds (+65.7%), growing from 670 in 2016 to 1,110 in 2021.

Social workers (6.6%) were less likely to report an Indigenous identity than homelessness support sector workers in 2021. However, social and community service workers (12.3%) reported an Indigenous identity at a similar rate as homelessness support sector workers.

Racialized groups accounted for more than one in four homelessness support sector workers

In 2021, over one in four homelessness support sector workers (28.4%) were part of a racialized population group, which was a higher rate than social workers (18.2%) and social and community service workers (22.2%) but similar to the rate of all workers (26.8%). The Census collects data on the main racialized groups in Canada, including: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Arab, Latin American, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean and Japanese populations.

From 2016 to 2021, the number of racialized workers in the homelessness support sector more than doubled (+134.1%) from 1,230 to 2,880. While the growth of racialized groups in the homelessness support sector was stronger, it follows the trend seen in all workers who were part of a racialized group (+30.0%) and changes in the workforce that have been driven in large part by immigration.

Different data sources shed light on the specific experiences of the country's racialized groups. For example, the results of the 2020 General Social Survey on Social Identity revealed that these groups [were more than twice as likely as the rest of the population to report having experienced discrimination since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic](#) and that this difference was more pronounced than in the five years preceding the pandemic. According to data from the Labour Force Survey, [some racialized groups have higher unemployment rates than the rest of the population](#).

Table 6a
Workers by visible minority status and Indigenous identity, for selected industries and occupations, 2016 and 2021

	All workers			Homelessness support sector workers ¹		
	2021	2016	Percent change	2021	2016	Percent change
	count			count		
Total - Visible minority status	20,630,520	19,956,250	3.4	10,130	6,305	60.7
Total visible minority population	5,519,790	4,245,805	30.0	2,880	1,230	134.1
Indigenous identity	840,725	796,175	5.6	1,110	670	65.7
Not a visible minority and not an Indigenous identity	14,270,005	14,914,280	-4.3	6,145	4,405	39.5
	Distribution of all workers			Distribution of Homelessness support sector workers		
	2021	2016	Difference	2021	2016	Difference
	percentage			percentage		
Total visible minority population	26.8	21.3	5.5 p.p.	28.4	19.5	8.9 p.p.
Indigenous identity	4.1	4.0	0.1 p.p.	11	10.6	0.4 p.p.
Not a visible minority and not an Indigenous identity	69.2	74.7	-5.5 p.p.	60.7	69.9	-9.2 p.p.

1. Homelessness support sector as defined in this document includes workers in the community food and housing, and emergency and other relief services industry (North American Industry Classification System code 6242) and whose occupation was either social workers (National Occupational Classification [NOC] code 41300) or social and community service workers (NOC 42201).

p.p. percentage point

Note: Due to random rounding, totals may be different from the sum of all numbers.

For the 2016 Census, includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and older who have worked at some point in time between January 2015 and May 2016.

For the 2021 Census, includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and older who have worked at some point in time between January 2020 and May 2021.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016 and 2021.

Table 6b
Workers by visible minority status and Indigenous identity, for selected occupations, 2016 and 2021

	Social workers ¹			Social and community service workers ²		
	2021	2016	Percent change	2021	2016	Percent change
	count			count		
Total - Visible minority status	69,445	62,235	11.6	194,275	155,625	24.8
Total visible minority population	12,660	9,245	36.9	43,170	27,395	57.6
Indigenous identity	4,570	4,690	-2.6	23,830	16,710	42.6
Not a visible minority and no Indigenous identity	52,215	48,305	8.1	127,275	111,520	14.1

	Distribution of social workers			Distribution of social and community service workers		
	2021	2016	Difference	2021	2016	Difference
	percent			percent		
Total visible minority population	18.2	14.9	3.3 p.p.	22.2	17.6	4.6 p.p.
Indigenous identity	6.6	7.5	-0.9 p.p.	12.3	10.7	1.6 p.p.
Not a visible minority and not an Indigenous identity	75.2	77.6	-2.4 p.p.	65.5	71.7	-6.2 p.p.

1. "Social workers" refers to NOC 41300.

2. "Social and community service workers" refers to NOC 42201.

p.p. percentage point

Note: Due to random rounding, totals may be different from the sum of all numbers.

For the 2016 Census, includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and older who have worked at some point in time between January 2015 and May 2016.

For the 2021 Census, includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and older who have worked at some point in time between January 2020 and May 2021.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016 and 2021.

More homelessness support workers with employment income despite COVID-19 pandemic

In 2020, the incomes of many in Canada were affected by unprecedented measures taken by governments to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, Canadians working in non-essential jobs may have seen some of their otherwise regular employment income replaced in part by government transfers. For Canadians working in essential jobs or positions that allowed them to work from home, the impacts on earnings may have been less severe. The number of homelessness support sector workers that had employment income⁶ in 2020 grew by 58.8%. This growth is contrasted against the smaller growth of all workers in all sectors who earned employment income in 2020, growing 2.6% since the previous census, but follows the overall growth trend of the sector.

Homeless support sector workers were more likely to be in poverty

Homelessness support sector workers were more likely to be in poverty⁷ (6.7%) than all workers in all sectors (6.0%) in 2020. This gap was also present in 2015 where 11.6% of homelessness support sector workers were in poverty compared with 10.7% of all workers in all sectors.

From 2015 to 2020, the gap in the poverty rates narrowed from 0.9 to 0.7 percentage points at the same time as median employment income for homelessness support sector workers shrunk over the same period. The median employment income for homelessness support sector workers was \$34,000 in 2020, 3.4% lower than the \$35,200 recorded in 2015, not adjusted for inflation. For all workers in all sectors, the median employment income grew 4.0% from \$39,600 in 2015 to \$41,200 in 2020, not adjusted for inflation.

[Income growth was faster for those with lower incomes, reflecting greater contributions of the Canada Child Benefit and pandemic relief benefits to the incomes of lower-income families.](#) The contributions of these benefits to total income, when combined with employment income, helped drive the relative changes in poverty rates observed between 2015 and 2020.

6. Employment income refers to all income received as wages, salaries and commissions from paid employment and net self-employment income from farm or non-farm unincorporated business and/or professional practice during the reference period.

7. The Market Basket Measure refers to Canada's official measure of poverty based on the cost of a specific basket of goods and services representing a modest, basic standard of living developed by Employment and Social Development Canada

Table 7a
Workers by selected sources of income and poverty status, for selected industries and occupations, 2015 and 2020

	All workers			Homelessness support sector workers ¹		
	2020	2015	Percent change	2020	2015	Percent change
	count			count		
Total - Persons aged 15 years and over	20,630,525	19,956,255	3.4	10,125	6,305	60.6
Persons with income	20,378,470	19,726,915	3.3	10,055	6,285	60
Persons with employment income	19,306,005	18,820,745	2.6	9,670	6,090	58.8
Persons with wages, salaries and commissions	17,876,605	17,434,920	2.5	9,580	6,030	58.9
Poverty status (market basket measure) - concept applicable	20,429,480	19,750,120	3.4	9,950	6,095	63.2
In poverty	1,219,930	2,114,130	-42.3	665	705	-5.7
Poverty rate (%)	6.0	10.7	...	6.7	11.6	...
	In dollars		Difference	In dollars		Difference
Median employment income (\$)	41,200	39,600	4.0 p.p.	34,000	35,200	-3.4 p.p.
Median wages, salaries and commissions (\$)	43,200	41,600	3.8 p.p.	34,400	35,200	-2.3 p.p.

1. Homelessness support sector as defined in this document includes workers in the community food and housing, and emergency and other relief services industry (North American Industry Classification System code 6242) and whose occupation was either social workers (National Occupational Classification [NOC] code 41300) or social and community service workers (NOC 42201).

... Not applicable

p.p. Percentage point

Note: Due to random rounding, totals may be different from the sum of all numbers.

For the 2016 Census, includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and older who have worked at some point in time between January 2015 and May 2016.

For the 2021 Census, includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and older who have worked at some point in time between January 2020 and May 2021.

The 2018-base MBM low-income concept is not applied in the territories and on reserve.

The reference year for the 2021 Census is 2020, and for the 2016 Census is 2015.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016 and 2021.

Table 7b
Workers by selected sources of income and poverty status, for selected occupations, 2015 and 2020

	Social workers ¹			Social and community service workers ²		
	2020	2015	Percent change	2020	2015	Percent change
	count			count		
Total - Persons aged 15 years and over	69,440	62,235	11.6	194,275	155,625	24.8
Persons with income	69,255	62,140	11.4	193,185	154,945	24.7
Persons with employment income	67,780	61,085	11	184,945	149,670	23.6
Persons with wages, salaries and commissions	65,860	59,570	10.6	180,650	146,735	23.1
Poverty status (market basket measure) - concept applicable	68,280	60,965	12.0	186,345	149,505	24.6
In poverty	1,265	2,300	-45.0	9,950	15,000	-33.7
Poverty rate (%)	1.9	3.8	...	5.3	10.0	...
	In dollars		Difference	In dollars		Difference
Median employment income (\$)	67,000	64,000	4.7 p.p.	42,400	40,400	5.0 p.p.
Median wages, salaries and commissions (\$)	67,000	64,500	3.9 p.p.	42,800	40,800	4.9 p.p.

1. "Social workers" refers to NOC 41300.

2. "Social and community service workers" refers to NOC 42201.

... Not applicable

p.p. Percentage point

Note: Due to random rounding, totals may be different from the sum of all numbers.

For the 2016 Census, includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and older who have worked at some point in time between January 2015 and May 2016.

For the 2021 Census, includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and older who have worked at some point in time between January 2020 and May 2021.

The 2018-base MBM low-income concept is not applied in the territories and on reserve.

The reference year for the 2021 Census is 2020, and for the 2016 Census is 2015.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016 and 2021.

Almost 1 in 10 homelessness support sector workers did not work in 2020

The outbreak of COVID-19 and the corresponding public health measures brought significant changes to the Canadian labour market. According to the 2021 Census, 7.7% of homelessness support sector workers reported that they did not work in 2020, a slightly higher rate than all workers in all sectors (7.0%). These rates were higher than those reported in the 2016 Census where 3.3% of homelessness support sector workers and 3.0% of all workers reported not having worked during the reference year.⁸

Homelessness support sector workers were more likely to have worked mainly part-time weeks in 2020 (24.1%) compared with all workers in all sectors (20.0%). At the same time, both the homelessness support sector and all

8. The reference year for the 2021 Census is 2020, and for the 2016 Census is 2015.

workers in all sectors saw larger reductions in the share of those who worked mainly part-time weeks. In 2020, the share of homelessness support sector workers who worked mainly part-time weeks was down 3.7 percentage points from 27.8% in 2015. For all workers, the rate in 2020 was down 2.5 percentage points from 22.5% in 2015.

Table 8a**Workers by full-time, part-time and did-not-work-status, for selected industries and occupations, 2015 and 2020**

	All workers			Homelessness support sector workers ¹		
	2020	2015	Percent change	2020	2015	Percent change
	count			count		
Total - Persons aged 15 years and older	20,630,520	19,956,250	3.4	10,130	6,305	60.7
Did not work	1,435,380	595,240	141.1	785	205	282.9
Worked mainly full-time weeks	15,059,915	14,871,495	1.3	6,895	4,350	58.5
Worked mainly part-time weeks	4,135,230	4,489,515	-7.9	2,445	1,750	39.7
	Distribution of all workers			Distribution of homelessness support sector workers		
	percentage		Difference	percentage		Difference
Did not work	7.0	3.0	4.0 p.p.	7.7	3.3	4.5 p.p.
Worked mainly full-time weeks	73.0	74.5	-1.5 p.p.	68.1	69.0	-0.9 p.p.
Worked mainly part-time weeks	20.0	22.5	-2.5 p.p.	24.1	27.8	-3.6 p.p.

1. Homelessness support sector as defined in this document includes workers in the community food and housing, and emergency and other relief services industry (North American Industry Classification System code 6242) and whose occupation was either social workers (National Occupational Classification [NOC] code 41300) or social and community service workers (NOC 42201). p.p. percentage point

Note: Due to random rounding, totals may be different from the sum of all numbers.

For the 2016 Census, includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and older who have worked at some point in time between January 2015 and May 2016.

For the 2021 Census, includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and older who have worked at some point in time between January 2020 and May 2021.

The reference year for the 2021 Census is 2020, and for the 2016 Census is 2015.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016 and 2021.

Table 8b**Workers by full-time, part-time and did not work status, for selected occupations, 2015 and 2020**

	Social workers ¹			Social and community service workers ²		
	2020	2015	Percent change	2020	2015	Percent change
	count			count		
Total - Persons aged 15 years and over	69,440	62,235	11.6	194,275	155,625	24.8
Did not work	2,440	1,095	122.8	11,395	4,095	178.3
Worked mainly full-time weeks	58,935	52,445	12.4	143,530	115,380	24.5
Worked mainly part-time weeks	8,070	8,695	-7.2	39,355	36,245	8.6
	Distribution of social workers			Distribution of social and community service workers		
	2020	2015	Difference	2020	2015	Difference
	percent			percent		
Did not work	3.5	1.8	1.8 p.p.	5.9	2.6	3.2 p.p.
Worked mainly full-time weeks	84.9	84.3	0.6 p.p.	73.9	74.1	-0.3 p.p.
Worked mainly part-time weeks	11.6	14.0	-2.3 p.p.	20.3	23.3	-3.0 p.p.

1. "Social workers" refers to NOC 41300.

2. "Social and community service workers" refers to NOC 42201.

p.p. percentage point

Note: Due to random rounding, totals may be different from the sum of all numbers.

For the 2016 Census, includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and older who have worked at some point in time between January 2015 and May 2016.

For the 2021 Census, includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and older who have worked at some point in time between January 2020 and May 2021.

The reference year for the 2021 Census is 2020, and for the 2016 Census is 2015.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016 and 2021.

The COVID-19 pandemic changed how shelters were operated and used

A majority of direct service providers (79.5%) working with people experiencing homelessness reported a decline in their mental health during the pandemic.⁹ Safety and health have also been a concern within the sector, since many are frontline workers and in close contact with clients. Moreover, people experiencing homelessness are at higher risk of infection with COVID-19 and many staff lack the training and personal protective equipment to provide their services safely.¹⁰ These safety concerns are compounded by reports of COVID-19 outbreaks within homeless shelters.^{11 12} Outbreaks can also diminish the number of staff available depending on quarantine or self-isolation guidelines.

Confusion surrounding public health guidelines and struggles with their application were also reported. Coupled with rapidly changing knowledge and guidelines surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, many staff reported confusion, fear, and uncertainty while navigating these circumstances.¹³

In certain regions, homelessness support sector staff may not have been recognized as frontline or essential workers and may not have been compensated with pandemic pay or prioritized for vaccination. In addition, staff shortages are on the rise in this sector. Many staff have chosen to take leave of absences or quit completely to avoid exposure to COVID-19.¹⁴

Summary

The findings in this report demonstrated that there are differences between the homelessness support sector and all workers in all sectors of the labour market. The homelessness support sector, while representing a relatively small part of the workforce with 10,130 workers in 2021, was a fast-growing sector (+60.7%), outpacing the growth of all workers in all sectors (+3.4%). Homelessness support sector workers were more likely to be women and younger. These workers also tended to have some post-secondary education more often than all workers. Homelessness support sector workers were about as likely to be visible minorities when compared with all workers in all occupations, however, Indigenous persons represented a larger share of the homelessness support sector compared with that of Indigenous people held among all workers. Homelessness support sector workers were more likely to be in married or common-law households with children or female lone-parents compared with all workers. Workers in the homelessness support sector also had lower median employment income than all workers and were more likely to be in poverty.

Using the Census of Population labour indicators

The Census of Population collects labour data on the long-form questionnaire from a 25% sample of private households in Canada. The large sample size allows for detailed analysis on relatively small sectors of the labour force, including the homelessness support sector. The Census includes demographic characteristics and a variety of labour-related variables, which provide a better understanding of the sector.

The homelessness support sector provides support to individuals experiencing homelessness, and to individuals accessing services that are targeted toward those at risk of facing housing crises. Labour market variables were employed to create a proxy for the homelessness support sector by using the two standard industry and occupation classification systems: the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) and National Occupation Classification (NOC). The NAICS and NOC were used to identify workers depending on the characteristics of the employer and of their job, respectively.

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14. Levesque, J., C. Sehn, J. Babando, J. Ecker, and L. Embleton. 2021. *Understanding the Needs of Workers in the Homelessness Support Sector*. Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. Toronto, Ontario. <https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/HubSolutions-Understanding-Needs-Oct2021.pdf>. (Accessed 28 February 2023).

Homelessness support sector workers can be found in the community food and housing, and emergency and other relief services industry (NAICS 6242). This industry group comprises establishments primarily engaged in the collection, preparation and delivery of food for the needy; providing short-term emergency shelter; and providing food, shelter, clothing, medical relief, resettlement and counselling to victims of domestic or international disasters or conflicts.¹⁵ There are also homelessness support sector workers employed in the social workers occupation (NOC 41300), help individuals, couples, families, groups, communities and organizations develop the skills and resources they need to enhance social functioning and provide counselling, therapy and referral to other supportive social services. Social workers also respond to other social needs and issues such as unemployment, racism and poverty.¹⁶ Finally, social and community service workers (NOC 42201), administer and implement a variety of social assistance programs and community services, and assist clients to deal with personal and social problems.¹⁷

Workers in these industry and occupation categories clearly provide support to homeless people in Canada. However, it is also clear that they may also provide support for individuals who may not be facing homelessness. Taking that into consideration, a homelessness support sector worker was defined as someone working in the community food and housing, and emergency and other relief services industry, as either a social worker or a social and community service worker. This combination of industry and occupation more clearly overlaps with services that are targeted towards supporting Canadians facing homelessness. For the remainder of the paper, any discussion of the homelessness support sector refers to jobs that fit this intersection between industry and occupations. Industry and occupation data are not available for second or third jobs. This definition, therefore, may not capture workers employed in homelessness support sector industries who had more than one job, workers temporarily hired through agencies or other contractors, or volunteers.

It should also be noted that narrowing down the population to this intersection provides an approximation of the targeted homelessness support sector population; however, employing a method based solely on labour market variables may lead to the exclusion of workers in other occupations that may in fact be providing services to homeless individuals as a result of focusing only on the intersection of specific NAICS and NOCs. The analysis in this study also uses the characteristics of the primary job held during the reference week for people who worked at the time of the census. For those who did not, the industry and occupation information is for the job held for the longest period of time from January, 2020 to May, 2021.

Given that social workers and social and community service workers cover a substantial portion of the homelessness support sector, comparisons of these two occupations across all industries will be made to the homelessness support sector to address industry differences, as well as to better contextualize worker characteristics in the support sector.

Limitations of the data and analysis

The term homelessness may evoke different sentiments to different people when it is used in discussion. It is important to remember that not all homelessness is the same and that different types of homelessness may require different types of services. Below are some examples of homelessness as defined by Infrastructure Canada's, *Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy Directives*.¹⁸

- Staying in unsheltered locations, that is public or private spaces without consent or contract, or places not intended for permanent human habitation (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH) Typology: 1.1 and 1.2).
- Staying in emergency shelters, including overnight shelters for people experiencing homelessness (including those for specific populations, such as youth, families, and newcomers), shelters for people impacted by family violence, and emergency shelters for people fleeing a natural disaster or destruction of accommodation (COH Typology: 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3).

15. Statistics Canada. 2022. *North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Canada 2022 Version 1.0*. Statistics Canada. Ottawa, Ontario. <https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3VD.pl?CLV=3&CPV=6242&CST=27012022&CVD=1369949&Function=getVD&MLV=5&TVD=1369825> (accessed 12 January, 2023).

16. Statistics Canada. 2021. *National Occupational Classification (NOC) 2021 Version 1.0*. Statistics Canada. Ottawa, Ontario. <https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3VD.pl?CLV=5&CPV=41300&CST=01052021&CVD=1322870&Function=getVD&MLV=5&TVD=1322554> (Accessed 12 January 2023).

17. Statistics Canada. 2021. *National Occupational Classification (NOC) 2021 Version 1.0*. Statistics Canada. Ottawa, Ontario. <https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3VD.pl?CLV=5&CPV=42201&CST=01052021&CVD=1322870&Function=getVD&MLV=5&TVD=1322554> (Accessed 12 January 2023).

18. Infrastructure Canada. 2022. *Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy Directives*. Ottawa, Ontario. <https://www.infrastructure.gc.ca/homelessness-sans-abri/directives-eng.html#h2.2>. (Accessed 11 April, 2023).

- Staying temporarily with others without the guarantee of continued residency or the immediate prospects for accessing permanent housing, or short-term rental accommodations (for example, motels) without security of tenure (COH typology: 3.2 and 3.3).

Counts of shelter residents from the census are not limited to just shelters for residents lacking a fixed address (that provide short-term emergency shelter), but also shelters for abused women and children, or other shelters and lodging with assistance, where residents may not necessarily receive service from workers from the community food and housing, and emergency and other relief services industry. These counts from the census do not include individuals and families who are facing hidden or unsheltered homelessness.

The 2021 Census occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the uniqueness of conducting a census during the pandemic, several limiting and unforeseen factors may have affected the results. For instance, COVID-19 related programs or social distancing measures may have affected counts in homelessness and the homelessness support sector from census to census.

Turnover rates, job vacancies and permanency of jobs in the homelessness support sector are not measured in the census but can be found in other sources.

Using industry and occupation codes allowed for the homelessness support sector to be broadly classified; however, that is not to say that all jobs that support the homeless are captured within this grouping of industry and occupations. To some extent, focusing on the specified homelessness support sector may underestimate the true size of the sector. There may be other jobs in other industries and occupations that provide support to the homeless; however, it is difficult to systematically identify these workers based on the labour market variables available.

The reference period for income variables is the 2020 calendar year. At the same time, the industry and occupation data can refer to the job held during the reference week, but for people who did not work during the reference week, they can refer to the longest job held since the start of 2020. The differences in reference periods may result in an individual's income not corresponding directly to their job characteristics. In addition, fewer Canadians received employment income in 2020, particularly women, lower-income earners and older workers while at the same time over two-thirds of Canadian adults received income from one or more pandemic relief programs.

Table A1 - Appendix
Workers by geography, for selected industries and occupations, 2016 and 2021

	All workers			Homelessness support sector workers ¹			Social workers ²			Social and community service workers ³		
	2021	2016	Percent change	2021	2016	Percent change	2021	2016	Percent change	2021	2016	Percent change
	count			count			count			count		
Total population centre sizes	20,630,520	19,956,250	3.4	10,130	6,305	60.7	69,440	62,235	11.6	194,275	155,625	24.8
Large urban population centres	12,931,915	12,091,895	6.9	7,175	4,080	75.9	42,825	37,220	15.1	108,280	85,030	27.3
Medium population centres	1,704,330	1,743,955	-2.3	1,020	625	63.2	6,880	6,390	7.7	22,630	18,605	21.6
Small population centres	2,427,400	2,431,240	-0.2	1,020	765	33.3	8,770	8,205	6.9	28,430	22,800	24.7
Rural areas	3,566,875	3,689,165	-3.3	910	840	8.3	10,970	10,420	5.3	34,930	29,195	19.6
Census metropolitan areas ⁴												
St. John's	120,515	123,645	-2.5	95	55	72.7	710	660	7.6	1,125	945	19.0
Halifax	275,590	255,005	8.1	175	75	133.3	1,160	905	28.2	2,400	1,995	20.3
Fredericton	63,110	59,855	5.4	20	-	-	315	250	26.0	685	415	65.1
Moncton	90,810	84,655	7.3	25	20	25.0	365	305	19.7	640	545	17.4
Saint John	71,480	69,770	2.5	15	15	0.0	310	250	24.0	680	505	34.7
Drummondville	55,355	52,660	5.1	25	15	66.7	110	105	4.8	360	310	16.1
Montréal	2,454,065	2,311,400	6.2	835	575	45.2	7,785	6,325	23.1	16,110	13,900	15.9
Québec	485,960	469,720	3.5	85	110	-22.7	2,150	1,760	22.2	3,535	3,205	10.3
Saguenay	85,920	85,490	0.5	-	15	-100.0	540	425	27.1	650	600	8.3
Sherbrooke	124,955	115,875	7.8	15	35	-57.1	705	490	43.9	1,075	850	26.5
Trois-Rivières	84,390	81,125	4.0	20	20	0.0	290	255	13.7	1,045	790	32.3
Barrie	123,065	116,855	5.3	105	40	162.5	350	345	1.4	1,255	935	34.2
Belleville - Quinte West	56,810	54,825	3.6	20	10	100.0	175	180	-2.8	825	810	1.9
Brantford	78,545	74,645	5.2	70	20	250.0	285	250	14.0	855	785	8.9
Greater Sudbury	92,000	91,810	0.2	65	30	116.7	425	455	-6.6	1,425	1,175	21.3
Guelph	98,415	92,835	6.0	45	35	28.6	345	345	0.0	890	665	33.8
Hamilton	433,460	419,385	3.4	355	80	343.8	1,700	1,620	4.9	3,555	2,885	23.2
Kingston	94,365	89,545	5.4	70	30	133.3	380	320	18.8	1,360	905	50.3
Kitchener - Cambridge - Waterloo	333,145	308,800	7.9	180	90	100.0	1,150	970	18.6	2,710	2,565	5.7
London	295,470	274,780	7.5	155	120	29.2	1,340	1,080	24.1	3,105	2,790	11.3
Oshawa	227,050	214,000	6.1	65	80	-18.8	750	730	2.7	2,225	1,785	24.6
Ottawa - Gatineau	851,290	792,925	7.4	435	280	55.4	2,760	2,405	14.8	6,700	5,225	28.2
Peterborough	66,110	65,185	1.4	60	65	-7.7	295	285	3.5	1,045	935	11.8
St. Catharines - Niagara	227,020	218,715	3.8	125	100	25.0	755	745	1.3	2,365	1,755	34.8
Thunder Bay	65,475	66,705	-1.8	45	25	80.0	495	585	-15.4	1,655	1,175	40.9
Toronto	3,539,900	3,404,195	4.0	1,580	875	80.6	9,635	9,295	3.7	22,875	18,575	23.1
Windsor	217,790	206,180	5.6	95	35	171.4	920	840	9.5	1,660	1,525	8.9
Winnipeg	475,610	454,605	4.6	215	130	65.4	2,345	1,940	20.9	6,490	5,130	26.5
Regina	141,535	143,620	-1.5	115	80	43.8	720	640	12.5	1,825	1,365	33.7
Saskatoon	183,065	179,235	2.1	120	60	100.0	790	730	8.2	2,025	1,400	44.6
Calgary	865,260	866,890	-0.2	380	260	46.2	2,735	2,520	8.5	6,640	5,210	27.4
Edmonton	809,705	809,165	0.1	445	220	102.3	2,725	2,565	6.2	8,165	6,025	35.5
Lethbridge	68,510	68,155	0.5	50	30	66.7	285	225	26.7	1,205	835	44.3
Red Deer	56,705	62,145	-8.8	20	15	33.3	175	175	0.0	925	770	20.1
Abbotsford - Mission	110,030	101,355	8.6	170	75	126.7	310	210	47.6	1,555	1,015	53.2
Chilliwack	59,425	53,065	12.0	55	10	450.0	220	200	10.0	965	645	49.6
Kamloops	62,945	59,380	6.0	10	20	-50.0	355	295	20.3	1,020	720	41.7
Kelowna	128,845	112,600	14.4	120	35	242.9	385	340	13.2	1,325	825	60.6
Nanaimo	62,195	56,570	9.9	50	45	11.1	255	170	50.0	1,075	810	32.7
Vancouver	1,564,385	1,449,815	7.9	1,245	805	54.7	3,700	3,060	20.9	14,175	10,980	29.1
Victoria	231,730	214,790	7.9	235	95	147.4	730	710	2.8	3,075	2,505	22.8

1. Homelessness support sector as defined in this document includes workers in the community food and housing, and emergency and other relief services industry (North American Industry Classification System code 6242) and whose occupation was either social workers (National Occupational Classification [NOC] code 41300) or social and community service workers (NOC 42201).

2. "Social workers" refers to NOC 41300.

3. "Social and community service workers" refers to NOC 42201.

4. Geographies are controlled for 2021 boundaries.

Note: Due to random rounding, totals may be different from the sum of all numbers.

For the 2016 Census, includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and older who have worked at some point in time between January 2015 and May 2016.

For the 2021 Census, includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and older who have worked at some point in time between January 2020 and May 2021.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016 and 2021.

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