



Housing and Homelessness

Fact Sheet

Housing is considered essential to Canadian family life, and is in many cases its major financial commitment. The cost, quality and location play major roles in family decisions about careers, mobility and lifestyle.

Many social/economic policy changes occurred in the 1990's. At the same time, the incomes of many Canadians did not keep pace with increases in the Consumer Price Index leading to uncertainty in employment and housing problems. As a result, there is a growing need for new affordable housing units as well as a need for repair of existing rental housing.

What is the status of housing and homelessness in Edmonton?

Housing Tenure:

In 2001, 40.6% of Edmonton dwellings were rented and 59.4% were owned. The percent of rented private occupied dwellings declined 7.3% from 1991 to 2001.

Core Housing Need:

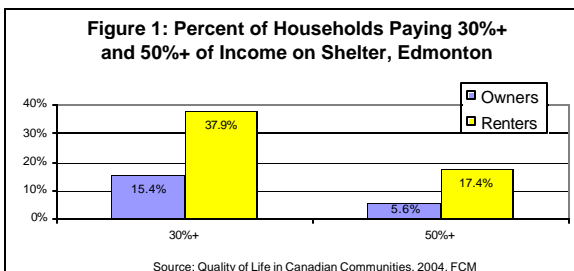
"Core Housing Need" counts tenant households who have one or more of the following housing problems:

- Affordability – home costs more than 30% of gross income
- Suitability – home is too small for household size or composition
- Adequacy – home lacks full bathroom facilities or needs major repairs.

In 1991, 23% of Alberta tenants were in core housing need. This declined to 20% in 1996.

Affordability:

Housing is considered affordable if less than 30% of gross income is spent on shelter. In 2001, 37.9% of Edmonton renters were paying 30%+ of their income for shelter and 17.4% were paying 50%+. For homeowners, the



numbers were lower (Figure 1).

From 1991 to 2001, the average rent in Edmonton increased 10.3%, to \$619 per month.

The average price of a single family dwelling in Edmonton in 2003 was \$185,569, up from \$171,599 in 2002, and a 23% increase from 2001.

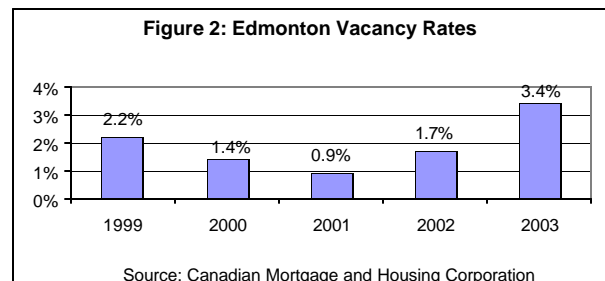
Housing Age and Condition:

The largest percent of Edmonton dwellings (28.1%) were built from 1971 to 1980.

In 2001, 7.4% of Edmonton dwellings were in need of major repair, up from 6.4% in 1996. Low income families and lone parent families were more likely to live in dwellings in need of major repair.

Apartment Vacancy Rates:

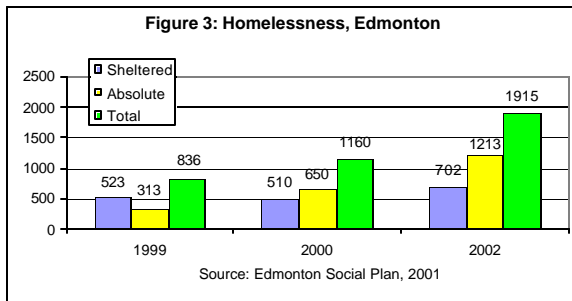
Edmonton's vacancy rate declined from 1999 to 2001, then rose in 2002 and in 2003 (Figure 2). The increase has been due primarily to low mortgage rates, which encourage home ownership.



In 2001, 13.2% of residential housing starts were for rental housing, up from 5.3% in 1996.

Homelessness:

In 2002, there were 1915 homeless people in Edmonton, including 1213 absolute homeless and 702 sheltered homeless. Homelessness has increased by 129% since 1999 (Figure 3).



Characteristics of Homeless People:

The majority of homeless people in Edmonton in 2002 were men (67%). Most homeless people were single (79%), although there were 97 homeless families with 267 children.

A Toronto study conducted from 1988 to 1996 found the incidence of mental illness and other health problems to be higher among shelter users than for the general population. Aboriginals were over represented. Youth and families were the fastest growing group of shelter users. Three quarters of shelter users were chronic users. Many had been recently released from correctional facilities or hospital. Refugees were more vulnerable to homelessness.

Supportive Housing:

Edmonton is facing increased demand for

- ◆ Affordable housing,
- ◆ Social housing, where government funding supports projects and subsidizes rent,

- ◆ Special needs housing, where support services are provided for individuals and families who need assistance to live independently.

Social Housing:

Social housing in Edmonton is provided for seniors, families and physically disabled persons through a number of non-profit agencies.

In 1998, 2440 households were on waiting lists for subsidized housing in Edmonton.

Emergency and Transitional Shelter:

In 1998, the average occupancy rate for transitional and emergency shelter bed was 99%. In review of the “turn-away” rates and waiting lists, the greatest need for shelter was for women (with or without children), “hard-to-house” seniors and those with problems with alcohol/drugs.

Compounding the demand for these shelters is the difficulty in finding affordable, suitable permanent housing with the support systems clients may require.

Sources:

- ◆ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
- ◆ Edmonton Real Estate Board
- ◆ Edmonton Social Plan, Edition 4, 2001
- ◆ Quality of Life in Canadian Municipalities, 2004, Federation of Canadian Municipalities

For further information see:

www.edmonton.ca/socialplan

or contact:

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