



DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographic Information of Diverse Populations

**Healthy Diverse Populations
Alberta Health Services - Calgary Health Region**

Demographics of Diverse Populations

As part of our effort to understand the health needs of Calgary's increasingly diverse population, we must first understand the nature of that diversity. We are constantly collecting and reviewing statistics from a number of sources to have a clearer understanding of the diversity in the Calgary Health Region. We have drawn upon information provided by Statistics Canada, the City of Calgary and Health Atlas of the Calgary Health Region among other resources to present this picture.

This document presents the demographic information of diverse populations in the City of Calgary, and when possible provincial (Alberta) and national (Canada) comparisons have also been made. Developing a demographic profile is important, for it assists in measuring the socio-economic and health conditions of a population. The amount of demographic information available on each topic in this document varies. This variation is due to lack of information in some of the key priority areas. All efforts have been made to include the most recent information in the document.

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Population Growth and Increasing Diversity: Canada, Alberta and Calgary

As the composition of the Canadian population continues to diversify, so do the populations served by health organizations. As a multicultural nation, one in five Canadians is foreign-born (19.8%), the highest proportion in 75 years (Statistics Canada, 2007a). However, diversity is a broad term and is not limited to cultural diversity alone. According to Calgary Health Region, diversity encompasses all the dimensions which would make an individual unique and different from others. Currently, the Calgary Health Region serves over 1.2 million persons (Calgary Health Region, 2008), a significantly diverse population in terms of ethnic origin, cultural orientation, language, socioeconomic situation, and age distribution. As well, the population is diverse in terms of age, religious affiliation, disability, and sexual orientation. In this document we have focused on seven diverse populations.

According to Statistics Canada (2007f), a smaller proportion (20%) of Canadians were living in rural areas compared to urban areas (80%) in 2006. Statistics Canada defines the rural areas as those areas outside urban centers with a population less than 10,000. Small town and rural areas grew by 1% between 2001 and 2006, after declining by 0.4% between 1996 and 2001. The rural population in Alberta grew 3.8% between 2001 and 2006, the fastest growth of any Canadian province. In rural areas close to urban centers, population growth was close to the

national average between 2001 and 2006; however, there had been a decline in population growth in remote rural areas. In the same period, the urban growth rate in Alberta, in the north-south corridor from Edmonton to Medicine Hat, including Red Deer and Calgary, was higher than the national average of 5.4%. Between 2001 and 2006, Calgary's population increased by 13.4%, the second highest among Census Metropolitan areas. Edmonton's population grew by 10.4%, fourth highest in Canada.

Population Growth of Calgary

Calgary is diverse and one of the fastest growing metropolitan cities in Canada. It is the largest city in Alberta and fifth largest in Canada. The 2006 Census revealed that Calgary's (census metropolitan area) population grew by 13.4% between 2001 (951,494) and 2006 (1,079,310) (Statistics Canada, 2008b). In the same five-year period, the population of Alberta also increased by 10.6% (2,974,807 in 2001 vs. 3,290,350 in 2006) compared to national population growth of 5.4% (30,007,094 in 2001 vs. 31,612,897 in 2006) (Statistics Canada, 2008a). It is projected that Calgary's population will rise to 1.23 million by 2033 (City of Calgary, 2003). However, the population growth rate is expected to average 1.2% annually, and then decline to 0.6% between 2026 and 2033 (City of Calgary).

	Total Population		Population change (%)
	2001	2006	
Canada	30,007,094	31,612,897	5.4
Alberta	2,974,807	3,290,350	10.6
Calgary	1,079,310	951,494	13.4

(Data Source: Statistics Canada, 2008a, 2008b)

The population growth is largely due to migration, while the decline in population growth is expected to occur mainly due to slowing of natural increase, that is, the number of births would be less than the number of deaths. For instance, it is estimated that by 2033 natural increase will slow to just 1,000 versus 9,000 in 2001 (City of Calgary, 2003).

City of Calgary's growth and demographic profile is expected to be influenced mainly by increases in three subpopulations: aging population, immigration, and the growth of the urban Aboriginal population (City of Calgary, 2003). These and other diverse groups are presented in detail below.

Aging Population

Canada has the youngest population in the G8 countries, second only to the United States (Statistics Canada, 2005). It is projected that seniors (65 years and over) will out-number children (0 to 14 years) around 2015 in Canada. The median age (the age which divides a population into two equal halves) of Canada's population is continuously rising. In 2006, the median age climbed to 39.5 years from 37.6 years in 2001 and 35.8 years in 1996 (Statistics Canada, 2007b). It is projected that the median age will be between 43 and 46 years in 2031 and between 45 and 50 years in 2056 (Statistics Canada, 2005). It is further estimated that the proportion of seniors will increase over the next few decades, reaching 23% to 25% in 2031. The 2006 Census indicates that seniors accounted for 13.7% of the Canadian population

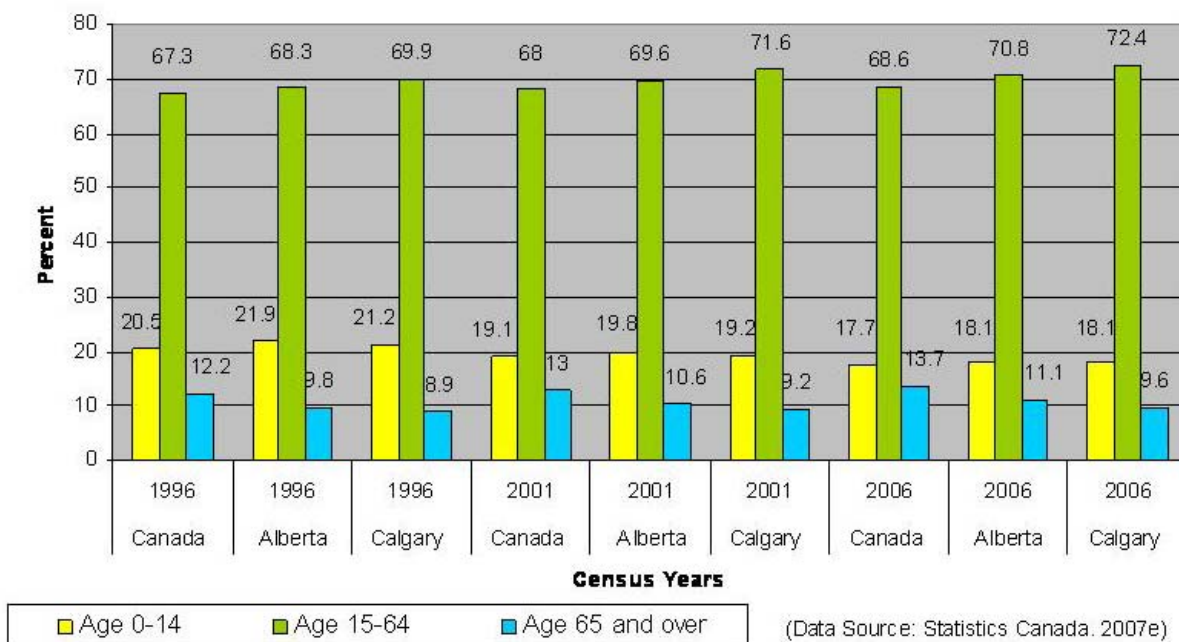
(Statistics Canada, 2007b). Between 2001 and 2006, the proportion of seniors increased by 11.5%, while the number of children in the country declined by 2.5% (Statistics Canada, 2007c). Refer to Table One.

	1996	2001	2006
Canada	35.8	37.69	39.5
Alberta	33.7	35.0	36.0
Calgary	33.6	34.9	35.7

(Data source: Statistics Canada, 2007e)

Figure 1 presents a comparative picture of age composition on the national (Canada), provincial (Alberta) and local (Calgary) levels, and across three censuses years (1996, 2001 and 2006). The figure shows a steady increase in the population of seniors and a population while decline in the population of children (Statistics Canada. 2007e).

Figure 1. Population Age Trends - Canada, Alberta, and Calgary (1996, 2001, 2006 Censuses)



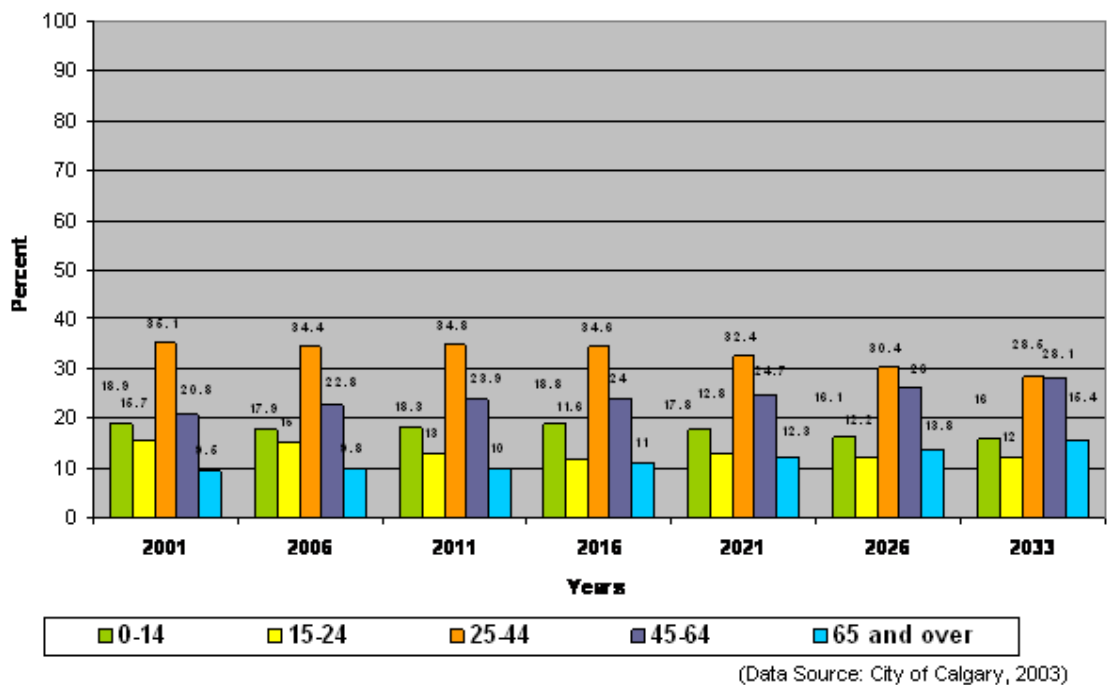
Even though the median age of Alberta's population continues to increase, its population remain the youngest among all the ten provinces in the country, with a median age of 36 years in 2006. The median age of Calgary's population was 35.7 years (Statistics Canada, 2007e).

Alberta was the only province (except for the Northwest Territories) to have experienced an increase of 2.3% of children between 2001 and 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2007c). The percentage of seniors also increased by 10.7%, the smallest increase compared to the other provinces (Statistics Canada, 2007d). Similarly, Calgary also saw an increase in the proportion

of children (6.7%) between 2001 and 2006, accounting for 18.4% of its total population. In the same census period, the seniors' population increased by 18% from 2001 to 2006, accounting for 9.4% of the total Calgarians (Statistics Canada, 2007b).

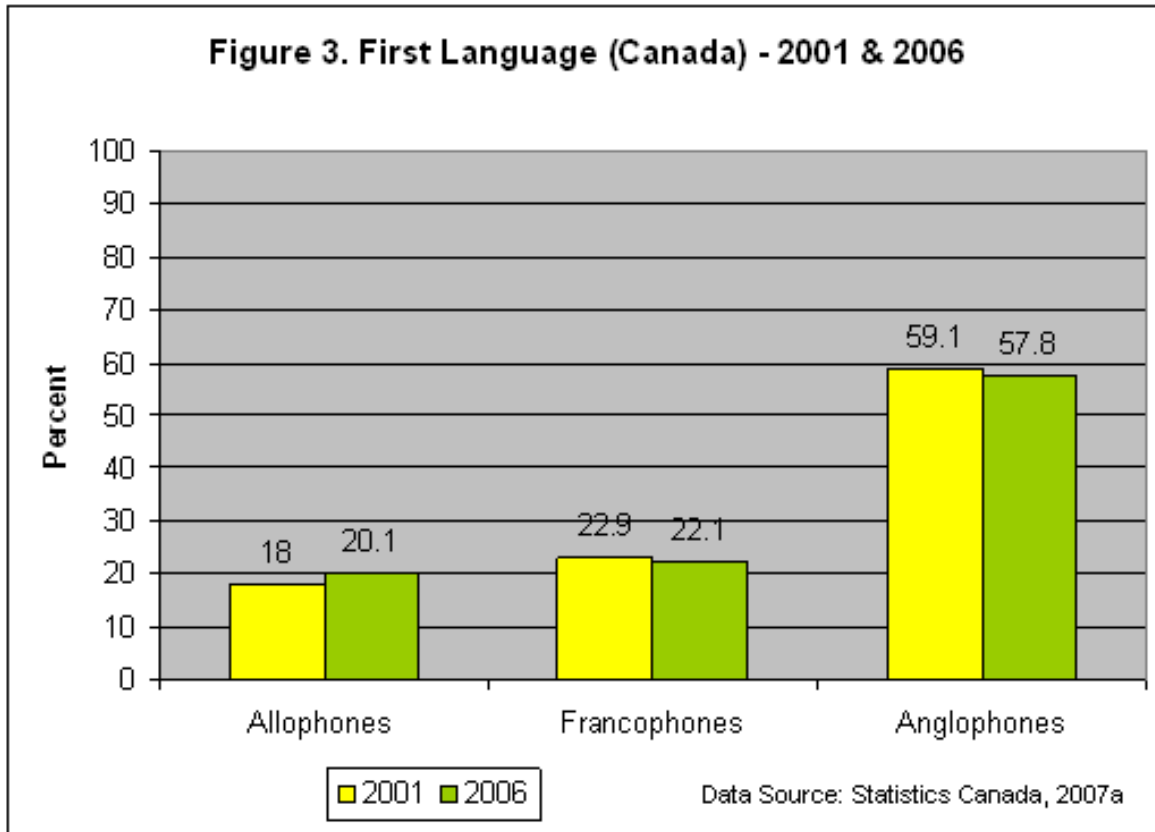
The average age of Calgarians is expected to increase while the population under 14 is expected to decline (City of Calgary, 2003). Between 2011 and 2021 the baby boom generation will have reached 65, which will represent a 51% increase in this age group (City of Calgary, 2003). However, the youth population (age 0-24) is expected to decline in the same period. **See Figure 2.**

Figure 2 - Total Projected Population by Age, Calgary



Language

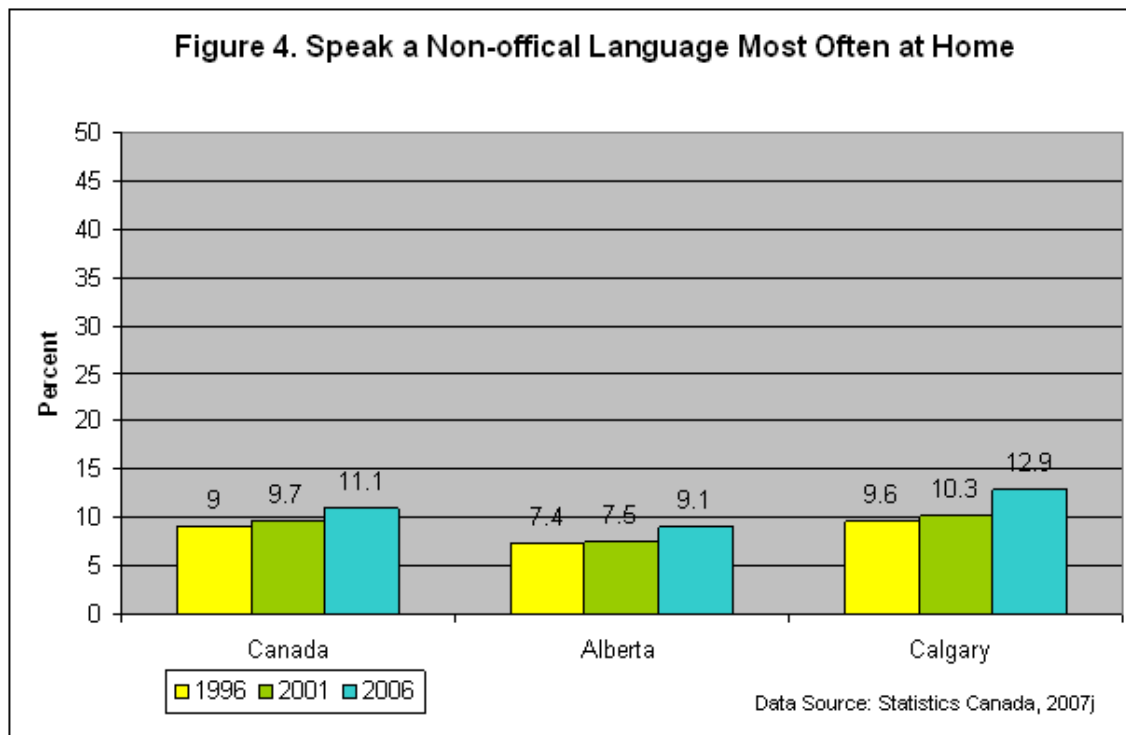
According to the 2006 Census, one in five (20.1%) Canadians reported that their language of origin is not English or French (Statistics Canada, 2007d). This number is a 18.0% increase over 2001 and three times the population growth of 5.4% (Statistics Canada). On the other hand, the numbers for Anglophones (persons who reported English as their first language) also increased, by 3% from 2001, but their proportion in the population declined (from 59.1% to 57.8%). A similar trend was spotted amongst Francophones (persons who reported French as their first language), with an increase of 1.6% but a decline from 22.9% to 22.1% (Statistics Canada). **See Figure 3.**



The increase of allophones (persons whose language of origin is not English or French), was largely due to the number of immigrants who arrived in Canada between 2001 and 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2007a). More than 200 languages were reported as language of origins in the census. However, only 10% of the population indicated speaking a non-official language most often at home. Languages from Asia including the Middle East recorded the largest growth between 2001 and 2006. These language groups include the Chinese languages, Punjabi, Arabic, Urdu, Tagalog, and Tamil (Statistics Canada).

However, approximately 9 out of 10 Canadians mostly spoke English or French at home in Canada (89%) and Alberta (90.9%). This proportion was slightly lower in Calgary (87.1%) (Statistics Canada, 2007j). See figure 4.

Even though a higher number of Canadians reported speaking at least one official language (98%), only 80% of the population reported English (58%) and French (22%) as their first language. While close to one-fifth (19.7%) of the Canadian population reported their first language as a non-official language, in comparison 17.9% of the Albertans reported their first language as other than English or French. In addition, 22.7% of Calgarians identified themselves as speaking their first language rather than English or French. (Statistics Canada, 2007j). This reaffirms Calgary's position as one of the leading multicultural cities in Canada. **See Figure 4**



Language use among new immigrants

Language use at home changes the longer an immigrant has lived in Canada. For instance, one-fifth (19%) of the recent immigrants (immigrants who have arrived in the country within five years) reported they often speak English or French at home in 2006. This percentage increased to one-third for those who had been in Canada since the 1980s (Statistics Canada, 2007j).

In 2006, nearly three-quarters (70.2%) of the immigrants to Canada reported a language of origin other than English or French, with 18.6% reporting Chinese languages; 6.6% Italian; 5.9% Punjabi; 5.8% Spanish; 5.4% German; 4.8% Tagalog; and 4.7% Arabic (Statistics Canada, 2007a).

The City of Calgary has documented new immigrants by official language ability in the Calgary Metropolitan Area (CMA) for 2005 (Table 1). Just over half of all immigrants (66.8%) knew either or both official languages. Amongst the new immigrants, 43.2% knew none of the official languages, 52.2% knew English, 0.7% knew French, and 3.9% were bilingual. Amongst those who spoke English, only 10.7% reported that English was their native language (City of Calgary, 2007a).

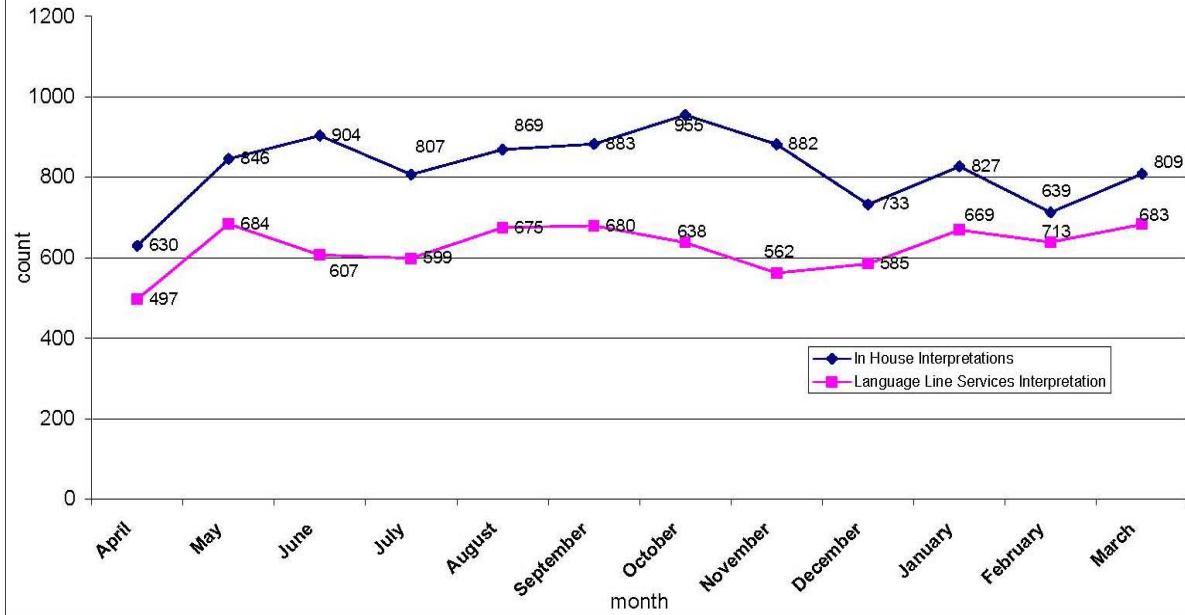
	Number	Percent
Mandarin	1,845	16.7%
Tagalog	1,238	11.2%
English	1,101	10.0%
Punjabi	1,049	9.5%
Spanish	729	6.6%
Urdu	599	5.4%
Russian	411	3.7%
Arabic	373	3.4%
African Languages	262	2.4%
Korean	209	1.9%

The Health Atlas (Calgary Health Region, 2007), based on 2001 Census, indicates that Calgary's North-East quadrant (social districts 3 and 6), reports over one-third of its population spoke neither English nor French as their first language. In Calgary, 18.3% of the population reported neither of Canada's official languages as their first language. Calgary's percentage was higher than Canada Health Region's (17.6%), but slightly lower than the Capital Health Region (18.6%).

Language issues for newcomers are often seen as time-limited, it is assumed that immigrants will soon be speaking one of the official languages (Health Canada, 2001). Although some persons have bilingual interpersonal skills and are able to communicate effectively in daily life in either language, their competence in English may not be adequate to understand health care issues, more complex disorders, or cope with highly stressful health events (Health Canada). Additionally, health care providers typically overestimate their client's ability to comprehend and communicate in a second language (Jackson, 1998 cited in Health Canada).

The most common users of interpretation services provided by Calgary Health Region to its clients/patients in order to ensure informed consent and informed treatment are: Cantonese, Punjabi, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Arabic, Spanish, Korean, and Hindi, as illustrated in the graph linked below.

**Total Regional In-House
 & Language Line Services
 Interpretations By Month
 April 01, 2007 - March 31, 2008**



(Source: Diversity Services- Interpretation and Translation, 2008)

**Diversity in Canada, Alberta and Calgary
 Immigrants and Refugees**

Immigrants

Canada's foreign-born population is growing at a rapid pace, increasing by 13.6% between 2001 and 2006, compared to a 3.3% increase in the Canadian-born population during the same period (Statistics Canada, 2007a). The composition of immigrants is shifting; in 1971, 61.6% of immigrants to Canada were of European descent, but in 2006, this figure dropped to 16.1%, with individuals of Asian descent comprising 58.3% of the immigrant population (Statistics Canada). See Table 4 below.

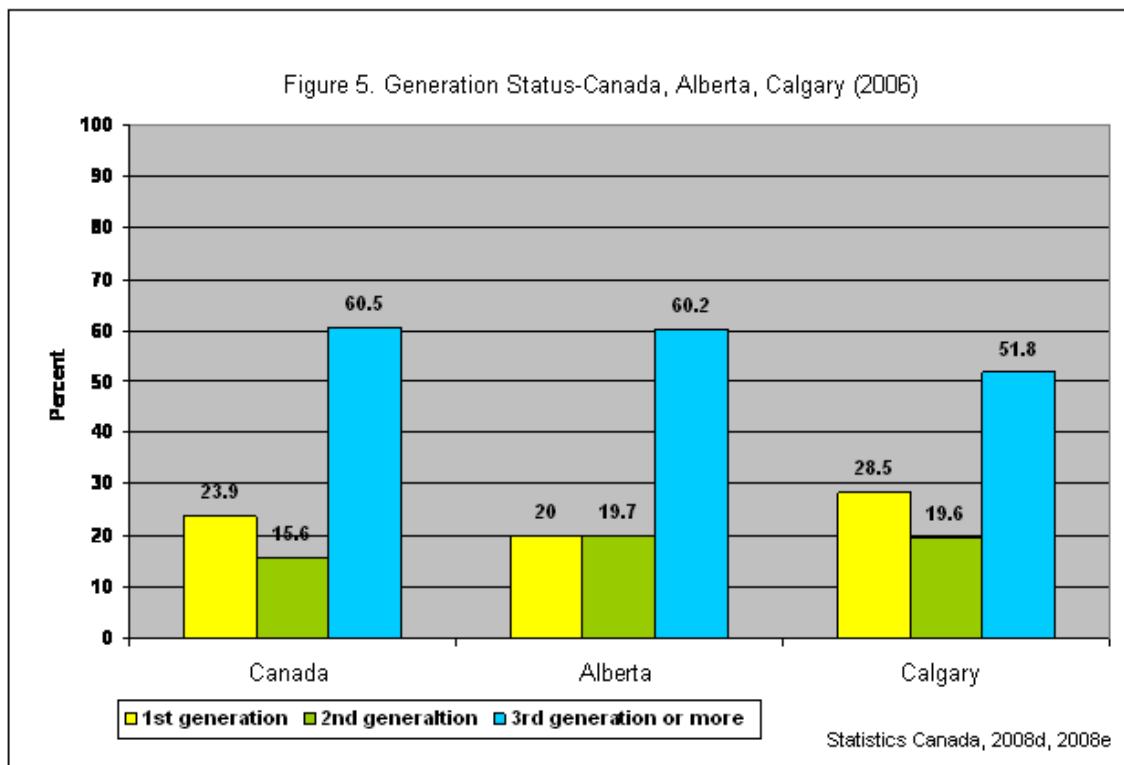
Census Year					
Order	2006	2001	1996	1991	1981
1	China	China	Hong Kong	Hong Kong	UK
2	India	India	China	Poland	Vietnam
3	Philippines	Philippines	India	China	US
4	Pakistan	Pakistan	Philippines	India	India
5	US	Hong Kong	Sri Lanka	Philippines	Philippines
6	South Korea	Iran	Poland	UK	Jamaica
7	Romania	Taiwan	Taiwan	Vietnam	Hong Kong
8	Iran	US	Vietnam	US	Portugal
9	UK	South Korea	US	Lebanon	Taiwan
10	Colombian	Sri Lanka	UK	Portugal	China

Note: 'Recent immigrants' refers to landed immigrants who arrived within five years prior to a given census.
(Data sources: Statistics Canada, 2008a)

According to the 2006 Census, Alberta was the fastest growing province in Canada. Its population increased by 10.6% between 2001 and 2006, double the national growth rate (5.4%), accounting for over 3 million Albertans (Statistics Canada, 2008a). In the first three months of 2008, Alberta's population increased 0.41%, even though inter-provincial migration reduced in this period (Statistics Canada, 2008b). The main source of population increase in the province was due to new immigrants and non-permanent residents. In the first quarter of 2008, 5,300 immigrants and 4,000 non-permanent residents came to Canada (Statistics Canada). Out of the total immigrants in Alberta 19.7% were recent immigrants, i.e. have been in the country for 5 years or less) (Statistics Canada, 2008c).

Calgary's population grew 13.4% between 2001 and 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2008c), with 5.4% being recent immigrants. Of 23.6% of Calgary's total immigrant population, 22.9% were recent immigrants (Statistics Canada). According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) (2008b) Calgary continues to be the fourth choice of destination for new immigrants. Recent statistics released for permanent residents in the country show that 8.8% of the total immigrants in Canada in the year 2007 selected Alberta as their new home with 4.7% choosing to settle in Calgary (CIC). The data also indicated an increase in new immigrant settlers in Red Deer and other Alberta regions. According to Health Atlas (Calgary Health Region, 2007), 3.5% of recent immigrants settled, with main concentration in two social districts in East Calgary; social districts 9 (8.0%) and 3 (6.8%). In 2001, 3.6% of recent immigrants settled in Calgary, and 2.8% had selected Capital Health Region as their new home.

Close to half (48.1%) of the Calgary's population aged 15 years and over were either first or second generation Canadians (Statistics Canada, 2008d, 2008e). This percentage was noticeably higher than provincial or national percentage **See Figure 5.**



In addition, 13.9% of Alberta's population was a visible minority in 2006, compared to 16.2% in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2008a), and 22.2% in Calgary (Statistics Canada, 2008c). The four largest visible minority groups in Alberta were: Chinese (3.7%), South Asian (3.1%), Filipino (1.6%), and Black (1.4%), while in Calgary, the four largest visible minority groups were: 6.2% Chinese, 5.4% South Asian, 2.4% Filipino, and 2.0% Black (Statistics Canada).

In 2001, the majority (89%) of Canada's total immigrant population lived in urban areas (Beshiri, 2004). During the same period, most new immigrants reported residing in urban areas, with only around 12,000 of the new immigrants living in rural regions. Immigrants who settled in rural areas tended to prefer higher-income provinces (British Columbia, Ontario, and Alberta) and the Yukon. The study found that 16% of all rural immigrants were visible minority, accounting for approximately 3.5% of all visible minority immigrants in the country. According to the 2006 Census, 96% of all visible minorities in Canada live in urban census metropolitan areas compared to 68.2% of Canada's total population (Fenlon, 2008).

Refugees

In 2008, there were approximately 11.4 million refugees were reported world-wide (CIC, 2008a). Operating under resettlement programs, refugees from 70 different nationalities were resettled in Canada in 2007 (CIC). According to the Government of Canada, 4,025,546 people migrated to Canada between 1979 and 2001, out of which 15.4% were refugees (as cited in CBC, 2008). Of these refugees, 56.7% were government sponsored and 43.3% were sponsored privately.

100,000 refugees are annually resettled in 19 countries around the world and 10% of these refugees were resettled in Canada as permanent residents (CIC, 2008b). In 2007, 11.8% of the refugees became permanent residents in Canada.

Refugees in Canadian small towns and rural areas represent only 5% of immigrants to Canada. Findings further show that refugees living in small urban areas, smaller cities, and rural areas tend to integrate well and more rapidly from an economic standpoint, regardless of their country of origin or official language competency (Bernard, 2008).

Demographics of Persons with Disabilities

A significant share of the Canadian population self-identifies as having a disability. Disability affects one-in-seven Canadians, or 14.3% of the population (Statistics Canada, 2007g). Adults (aged 15 years and older) with disabilities comprise 16.5% of the population, and children with disabilities comprise 3.7% (Statistics Canada). Of Canadians with disabilities, one-third has a mild disability, while 14% and 18.9% of adults and children respectively, have a disability that is severe (HRSDC, 2006). In Alberta, the proportion of people with disabilities rose from 12% in 2001 to 14% in 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2001, 2006). In Calgary, the rate was 15% (City of Calgary, 2007b).

The three most common disabilities identified were related to pain, mobility and agility, affecting 11% of the population (Statistics Canada, 2007g). One-in-twenty adults with disabilities report an auditory disability, 3.2% report a visual disability, and 1.9% reports a speech disability (Statistics Canada). Seniors appear to be most affected by disability among the 15 and older age group. 56% of adults aged 75 and over reported having some form of disability as compared to 35.3% of those aged 65 to 74 years (Office for Disability Issues, 2006).

The majority of school-aged children (aged 5-14 years) with disabilities report having multiple disabling conditions (73.7%), with learning disabilities, chronic conditions, and speech disabilities the most common forms of disability (Statistics Canada, 2007g).

The share of the Canadian population with disabilities increased by 1.9% between 2001 and 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2007g). This increase is attributed to Canada's aging population (Statistics Canada ; Marks & Teasell, 2006), increased longevity of persons with disabilities (Ouellette-Kuntz et al., 2005; Ramirez, Farmer, Grant, & Papachristou, 2005), and an increase in the share of young people developing chronic and disabling conditions (Marks & Teasell).

Albertans with disabilities have the second highest employment rate in Canada. In Alberta, 55.6% of those between the age of 15 and 64 were either employed or were actively seeking employment. When compared to individuals without disabilities, 52% of the disabled were employed versus 79.3% without disability (Office for Disability Issues, 2006). The report indicates a clear disadvantage for the disabled in attaining university level education. For example, 12.7% of females with a disability had a university degree, compared to 19.9% of females without disabilities.

The percentage of people with a disability living in Calgary, is likely higher than the provincial percentage as more services are available in an urban settings (Personal Communication, Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, 2008).

According to a background paper released in September 2004, approximately 31,500 of Albertans were receiving Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) payments (Keenbon, 2005). Most of the disabilities of AISH receivers were 'invisible' but permanent and debilitating in nature: 45% of AISH receivers had a physical disability, while 23% had a developmental disability, and 32% had a chronic mental illness. Among AISH payment receivers, over half (52%) were between 40 and 59 years of age, over a third (37%) were 18 and 39 years old, and approximately one in every 10 (11%) AISH recipients were between 60 and 65 years of age (Keenbon).

Gender and Sexually Diverse Persons

Estimates of the proportion of the Canadian population self-identifying as bisexual or homosexual range from 1.7% (Statistics Canada, 2004a) to 8.1% (Personal Communication, Wilde Marketing, 2005). Literature indicates that often it is difficult to get accurate information on sensitive topics from research participants (Snowden, Wichter, & Gray, 2008). There is a possibility the marginalized and vulnerable groups may feel threatened or apprehensive in revealing personal information. According to Statistics Canada (2004a), 1.0% of Canadians between 18 to 59 years of age were homosexual and 0.7% were bisexual. More men (1.3%) identified themselves as homosexual compared to 0.8% of women. More women (0.9%) than men (0.6%) considered themselves to be bisexual (Statistics Canada). Approximately 362,000 Canadians aged 18 years and older (1.5%) reported as being gay, lesbian or bisexual (Beauchamp, 2008).

1.2% of the Albertans considered themselves to be homosexual or bisexual (Statistics Canada, 2004a). It is estimated that between 5 and 10% of Calgarians identify as sexual minorities (Calgary Outlook: Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity, n.d.).

Persons Living in Poverty

In Canada, there is no standard measure of poverty. However, low-income cut-off (LICO) is Statistics Canada's most established and widely used measure of poverty. LICO is an income threshold below which a family will devote a large amount of its income on necessities of food, shelter, and clothing than the average family. It means those who spend 20 percentage points more of their gross income on food, shelter, and clothing than the average Canadian (Statistics Canada, 2006).

According to Statistics Canada (2008e), in 2006 approximately 3.4 million Canadians (10.5%) were living in low-income households (after taxes). 11.3% of Canada's children under the age of 18 were residents of a low-income household. Among these children, 40% were living in a single parent family, and almost 33% of children were with a single mother. In 2006, low-income families on average need \$7,000 more to move above LICO.

Despite Alberta's booming economy, 9.1% of all Albertans were living in poverty or low income households (Statistics Canada, 2008a). In the same period, 10.3% of Alberta's children were living in low-income household, and in the Calgary Health Region over a quarter of individuals living in social district 9 (28.1%) and social district 10 (25.2%) were living below the LICO in 2001 (Calgary Health Region, 2007). The total proportion of population living below the LICO the Calgary Health Region in 2001 was 13.3%, while, 16.2% of the Capital Health Region and Canadian residents, were living below LICO, respectively.

On average, incomes in rural Canada were lower than in urban areas (Laurent, 2002). This income gap decreased by 16% between 1980 and 1995; however, in 2000, rural regions had higher unemployment rates (7.2%) compared to urban areas (5.4%) (Laurent). Between 2000 and 2006, the employment rate in Canada rose 12.6%, but the employment rate in smaller urban and rural regions was only 9.6% (Statistics Canada, 2007c).

Fortin (2008) found that in 2003, the proportion of the working poor in both rural (8.6%) and urban (7.8%) areas were similar. For both these groups, family income was approximately 30% below the LICO; however, low income workers had different profiles depending on where they lived. The study showed that poor rural workers were more likely to be older in age, to be living in dual-income families with children and had a lower probability of holding a university degree (Fortin). The same author reported differences in the labour market characteristics of the poor rural and urban workers. The rural working poor on average worked 300 hours more per year, had more work experience, and were also more likely to be self-employed than their urban counterparts. The rural poor workers were also less likely to receive Social Assistance benefits (7%) than urban poor workers (13%), and more salaried rural workers (30%) reported receiving Employment Insurance (EI) benefits than their urban counterparts (20%). Rural to urban migration seems to improve economic outcomes for the working poor. The reverse was not true.

The income gap between the rural and urban population has decreased between 1980 and 2000 (Statistics Canada, 2004b). Average incomes in rural Canada increased in the past two decades, often at a faster rate than average incomes in urban regions. Therefore, the rural population living in low income conditions decreased more than the urban population living in low income conditions. In predominantly rural areas, the average income increased 25.7% from 1980 to 2000. In predominantly urban areas the average income grew 21.6% in the same period.

Persons Experiencing Homelessness

The City of Calgary (2008, pp. 2) defines homeless persons as “those who do not have a permanent residence to which they can return whenever they so choose.” People who are living on the streets, and/or staying in the emergency shelters or facilities are defined as homeless. The United Nations (as cited in City of Calgary, 2008, pp. v) classified homelessness as absolute or relative. Absolute homelessness means when “individuals living in the street with no physical shelter of their own, including those who spend their nights in emergency shelters.” On the other hand, relative homelessness implies those individual “living in spaces that do not meet basic health and safety standards, including protection from the elements; access to safe water and sanitation; security of tenure and personal safety; affordability; access to employment, education and health care; and the provision of minimum space to avoid overcrowding.”

There is a lack of accurate homeless statistics in Canada because Census data is representative of only those living in a shelter when Census survey are conducted (Turnbull, Muckle, & Masters, 2007). The Census data excludes those living in motels, transiently with friends, at a YMCA or a YWCA, or on the street (Turnbull et al.). Despite the lack of data, it is evident that there has been a substantial increase of homelessness in the nation. For example, in Calgary, the homeless percentage increased 32% between 2004 and 2006 (City of Calgary, 2006).

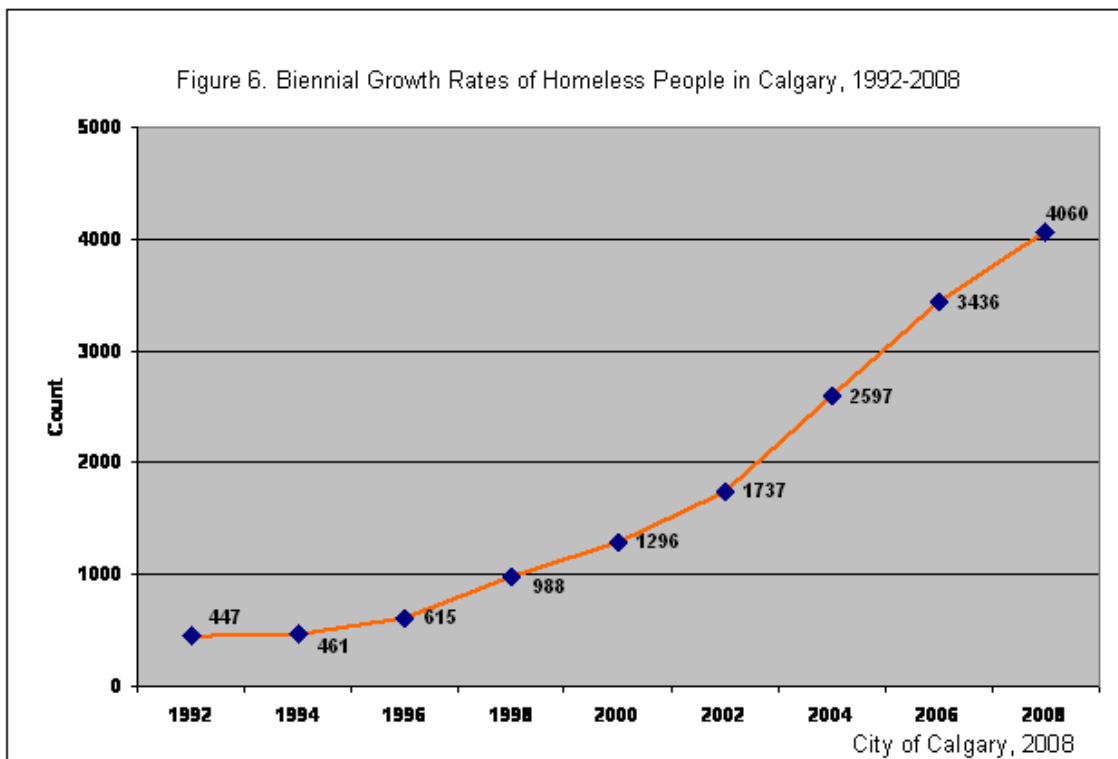
Documented evidence reveals a changing and increasingly diverse face of homelessness. In the past, overwhelming proportions of the homeless were alcoholic single men. In recent years,

the proportion of children, adolescents, single mothers, families with children, underemployed, seniors, and recent immigrants experiencing homelessness has increased (City of Toronto, 2001; City of Calgary, 2006; Turnbull et al. 2007).

Homelessness in Calgary was a relatively rare phenomenon in the early 1990s; however, a number of changes in Calgary caused a dramatic rise. Increased migration to Calgary, a decline in real earnings for those with low incomes, and a growing scarcity of affordable housing put the vulnerable at risk, or into, homelessness. Government and social service barriers have also impacted the most vulnerable of the homeless (Calgary Committee to End Homelessness, 2008).

Homelessness in Calgary has risen a staggering 650% in the last decade. Along with this rate jump came increasing severity: between 1997 and 2002 the percentage of people who reported being homeless for over a year more than doubled. Equally disturbing is the fact that about half of the homeless people in Calgary have jobs, but still cannot afford to house themselves (Calgary Committee to End Homelessness, 2008).

The bi-annual count of homeless persons in the City of Calgary (City of Calgary, 2008) found more than 4,000 Calgarians were homeless, an 18.2% increase since 2006. The number of people living on the street also increased 14% in the same period. The survey found that close to 200 of these Calgarians were families and 96% of those homeless families included children. Significant demographic characteristics of the homeless include 78% male; 62% Caucasian, 15% Aboriginal and 11% visible minorities; 43% working age (aged 25-44) and 29% middle-aged (45-64) and 9% young adults (aged 18 -24). 11% of the enumerated people were 17 years old or under and 2% were aged 65 years or older. [See Figure 6](#)



There is a lack of demographic information related to homelessness in rural communities in Canada. According to HRSDC (2007), these communities often do not have the capacity to deal with homelessness issues. As a result, homeless individuals or those who are at risk of homelessness frequently move to urban communities.

Persons with Low Literacy Skills

Past research has established a link between literacy, level of education and health status (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007; Center for Health Care Strategies, 2005; Karmakar & Breslin, 2008). Literacy skills play an important role in social, economic, and political issues (Corbeil, 2006), impacting functioning capacity in the economy as well as society (Sen, 1999).

Although literacy rates specific to Calgary are not available, Canadian literacy information reveals that a substantial number of adults in Canada have low levels of literacy: Canadians over age of 16 scored 48% below the minimum level of knowledge and skills needed to understand and use information from text, and to locate and use information contained in materials. 55% scored below the minimum level of knowledge and skills required to apply arithmetic operations embedded in printed materials (TD Bank Financial Group, 2007).

Young working people and those with advanced levels of education have higher literacy levels while seniors tend to have lower levels of literacy. Lower levels of literacy are also found among people whose language of origin is neither English nor French, as well as people who are not in the labour force (Rootman & Gordon-El-Bihbety, 2008).

Poor youth literacy is known to contribute to high school drop out rates, long-term unemployment and higher crime rates. Weak adult literacy contributes to poverty and to Canada's dismal productivity performance. Poor literacy in English and French amongst immigrants severely hampers the ability of many new residents to integrate into the Canadian economy and society at a time when their skills are needed more than ever (TD Bank Financial Group, 2007). According to Literacy Alberta (2005), approximately 10% of Canadians have a learning disability and a vast majority of these individuals have difficulty learning to read.

Those with low literacy skills are also disadvantaged when it comes to health literacy. Health literacy requires an availability of simultaneous multiple skills (Canadian Council on Learning, 2008, as cited in Rootman & Gordon-El-Bihbety, 2008). Therefore, those with impaired literacy skills must rely on others for assistance (CCL, as cited in Rootman & Gordon-El-Bihbety). According to the same study, there is variation in literacy scores across Canadian jurisdictions. The Yukon, Saskatchewan, and Alberta had the highest literacy average in the country, however, each province and territory still had a large number of adults with low health literacy.

According to Health Atlas (Calgary Health Region, 2007), in 2001, 4% of residents aged 20 years and older had less than a grade 9 level of education and 16% had a grade 9 to less than 13 level of education. At the same time, 22% had a Bachelor degree or higher; 32% had trade/college/university certificates or diplomas, and 26% had high school level of education. Further, the Region's social districts 6, 10 and 17 had the highest proportion of residents with less than a high school level of education. In social district 17, 10% of the residents had an education level of less than grade 9 and 27% had grade 9 to less than 13 years of education. While, in social district 10, 9% had less than grade 9 and 28% had grade 9 to less than 13 years of schooling.

A comparison between the Capital Health Region and the Calgary Health Region shows that the percentage of those who had high school or higher level of education was greater in the Calgary Health Region (79%) than the Capital Health Region (75%). A further breakdown indicates that in the Calgary Health Region, 5% had less than a grade 9 level of education, versus 6% in the Capital Health Region (Calgary Health Region, 2007).

In Canada, 15% of the Canadian-born individuals, ages 25 to 59 years, have not attained a high school diploma. Similar percentages of immigrants have not graduated from high school. On the other hand, a larger proportion of immigrants reported being a university graduate (Beshiri, 2004). On average, in 2001, immigrants in rural areas reported a higher level of education than their Canadian-born counterparts (Beshiri). Interestingly, rural and urban residency seems to have an effect on the education levels of both Canadian-born and immigrant residents. In urban areas, 11% of native-born Canadians have not graduated from high school. In comparison to students from urban schools, students from rural schools attained lower reading scores (Statistics Canada, 2002b). Urban students in Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Alberta obtained significantly higher scores than their rural counterparts. However, rural students in Alberta scored higher than the national rural average and exceeded the scores of the urban students in some other provinces.

Quick Facts about Calgary's Diversity

Immigrants:

- 23.6% of Calgarians were born outside of Canada
- Approximately 12,000 new immigrants arrive in Calgary per year
- 22% of Calgary's population were visible minorities in 2006
- 43.6% of new immigrants to Calgary in 2006 were born in Asia. China (16.4%), India (10.2%), Philippines (10%) and Pakistan (7%) were the leading countries of birth for immigrants to Calgary
- 18% of Calgarians in 2001 spoke neither English nor French as their first language

Refugees:

- Approximately 1,300 refugees arrive in Calgary each year
- 1/3 are government-assisted refugees destined to Calgary and are received through the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society and 2/3 are migrants to Calgary from their original destinations in Canada

Persons with disabilities:

- Nearly 14% of Albertans aged 15 and over report having one or more disabilities
- Many persons with disabilities live in poverty, or are at risk for living in poverty
- More than half of Albertans with disabilities aged 15 to 64 are employed

Gender and sexually diverse persons:

- 5 – 10% of Calgarians would identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, inter-sexed, transgender and two-spirited

Persons living in poverty in Calgary:

- 1/3 of all persons with disabilities, 1/2 of all Aboriginal persons, almost 1/2 of all recent immigrants, close to 1/3 of all visible minority persons, over 1/2 of all single parent families, over 1/4 of seniors, and 1/5 of Calgary's children live in poverty

Persons experiencing homelessness:

- 4,060 of Calgarians were absolutely homeless (living on the street with no physical shelter, including those who spend their nights in emergency shelters in 2008)
- The true number of homeless in Calgary is probably much higher when the numbers of "hidden homeless" are considered, particularly women, families and youth

Persons with low literacy skills:

- 40% of youth and 48% of adults have inadequate literacy in Canada
- Youth from disadvantaged backgrounds, including lower socio-economic status, are vulnerable to low literacy

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