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A profile of workers in the homelessness support sector

by Kiran Toor

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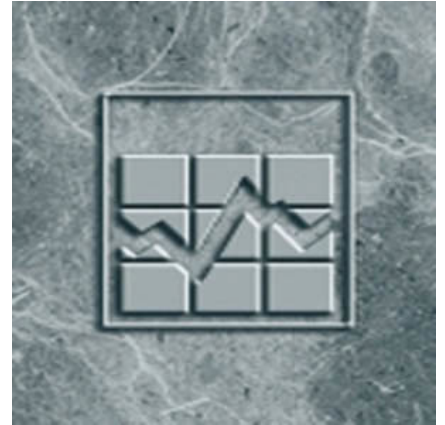
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A profile of workers in the homelessness support sector

by **Kiran Toor**

Abstract

This study aims to profile workers in the homelessness support field. This group was defined by classifying workers based on specific occupations and industry of employment. Using data from the 2016 Census of Population, various socio-economic characteristics for these workers are presented. The study profiles these individuals by geography, age, sex, educational attainment, Aboriginal identity and visible minority status. The study also addresses their work patterns, earnings and low income status. Some discussion of the limitations of available data and insights into potential future areas for research follow.

Introduction

Every Canadian deserves access to safe and affordable housing. However, some Canadians still experience homelessness. The Canadian Observatory of Homelessness defines homelessness as "the situation of an individual, family or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it".[1]

While much of homelessness research is, deservedly, focused on identifying and understanding the causes of homelessness, or the evaluation of intervention programs, little investigation has been done to understand who the individuals are that are providing services targeted towards homeless individuals. Labour market analysis is conducted for other industries and occupations, however little to no analysis has been conducted specifically on the group of workers supporting the homeless which will be called in this paper the homelessness support sector.

Staff in the homelessness support sector face many challenges including managing complex clients and dealing with trauma. The nature of their work can lead to burnout, traumatic stress, compassion fatigue and staff turnover. These challenges affect the individual as well as the homelessness support sector organization. The associated mental health consequences are worth mentioning in this context as they can play a role in the demographic and employment characteristics observed in the sector.[2]

The objective of this paper is to profile workers in the homelessness support sector by identifying occupations and industries which provide support to the homeless. The analysis will examine the demographic, education and employment characteristics to draw a portrait of the individuals working in the sector. To better understand the quality of response received by homeless clients in different regions, the number of skilled and experienced staff in the support sector will be used as a proxy.

As explained further below, the homelessness support sector is defined as the intersection of the industry 'Community food and housing, and emergency and other relief services' and either of the two occupations 'Social workers' and 'Social and community service workers'. This definition has shortcomings since it may include some workers who do not render services to homeless individuals, and exclude some who do. However, this industry and occupation combination clearly overlaps with the sector of interest and would include homelessness support sector workers, and no alternative method is presently available to identify more specifically these workers.

> This work was done in partnership with Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC).
>
> In 2018, ESDC commissioned Statistics Canada to prepare some statistical tables and a short text that describes what is known about the characteristics of workers in the homelessness support sector. These findings have been collaboratively edited to better present the results and should be useful to the wider audience interested in this area.

Using the 2016 Census to profile the homelessness support sector

The 2016 Census of Population, used in this study, 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, along with 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 towards 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). NAICS and NOCs were used to identify workers depending on the characteristics of the employer and of their job respectively.

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1. Gaetz, S. and al. 2012. *Canadian Definition of Homelessness*. Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press. p. 1-5.
2. Waegemakers Schiff, J. and A. Lane. 2016. Burnout and PTSD in Workers in the Homelessness Sector in Edmonton. Toronto, Ontario. https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/PTSD%20and%20Burnout%20in%20Edmonton%20February%202016.pdf (accessed August 20, 2019).

Homelessness support sector workers can be found in the "Community food and housing, and emergency and other relief services" industry (NAICS 6242), which provides food, shelter, medical aid, and counselling services to those requiring emergency aid, victims of domestic or international disasters or conflicts.[3] There are also homelessness support sector workers employed in the "Social workers" occupation (NOC 4152), and their main activities typically entail providing therapy and counselling to respond to the social needs and issues individuals, families and communities experience. Finally, "Social and community service workers" (NOC 4212) are included in the definition of homelessness support sector workers because they administer and implement social assistance programs and community services.[4]

Workers in these industry and occupation categories clearly provide support to homeless persons 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 Canada's homeless. For the remainder of the paper, any discussion of the homelessness support sector refers to jobs that fit this particular 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.

That being said, 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 in order to address industry differences, as well as to better contextualize worker characteristics in the support sector.

Shelter residents were mostly located in large urban population centres

To obtain a general illustration of which areas required support services that could have been provided by the homelessness support sector, the number of individuals who were living in a shelter at the time of the 2016 Census was examined.

The count of shelter residents from the Census do not necessarily correspond to individuals who received services provided by the homelessness support sector. However, among the 22,190 recorded shelter residents, 7 out of 10 reported staying in a shelter for persons lacking a fixed address (15,505).[5] It is likely that residents staying in these types of shelters received services from workers employed in the 'Community food and housing, and emergency and other relief services' industry. As a comparison, Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) conducted a study, using data from the Homeless Individual and Families Information System (HIFIS), indicating that an estimated 129,000 people used emergency shelters at some point in 2016.[6]

From Table 1, it can be seen that in May 2016, two out of five shelter residents (39.6%) were counted in Ontario and one in five (19.1%) were counted at a shelter in Alberta. The vast majority of shelter residents (81.2%) were located in large urban population centres like Toronto (22.4%), Calgary (11.2%) and Vancouver (10.2%).

Comparing the number of identified homelessness support sector workers to the number of shelter residents, Ontario had 2,235 homelessness support workers, the most of any province or territory, for its 8,790 shelter residents. British Columbia had 1,385 homelessness support sector workers while having 4,025 shelter residents.

3. Statistics Canada. 2016. North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Canada. Statistics Canada Classification no. 12-501-X. Ottawa, Ontario. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/catalogue/12-501-X (accessed February 1, 2019).
4. Statistics Canada. 2016. National Occupation Classification (NOC). Statistics Canada Classification no. 12-583-X. Ottawa, Ontario. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/catalogue/12-583-X. (accessed February 1, 2019).
5. McDermott, S., A. Harding and J. Randle. 2019. The characteristics of shelter residents. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 75F0002M. Ottawa, Ontario. Income Research Paper Series. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75f0002m/75f0002m2019004-eng.htm (accessed June 14, 2019).
6. Employment and Social Development Canada. 2019. Highlights of the National Shelter Study 2005 to 2016. Catalogue no. SSD-231-07-19E. Ottawa, Ontario. https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/homelessness/reports-shelter-2016.html (accessed August 20, 2019).

Quebec ranked third in homelessness support sector workers with 1,090 while having 3,035 shelter residents. Alberta, despite having the second most shelter residents (4,235) ranked fourth in homelessness support sector workers (795).

It is difficult to make reasonable inferences in regions where the counts of homelessness support sector workers or shelter residents are relatively low such as some of the Atlantic provinces and in the territories.

Table 1
Distribution of workers by geography, for selected industries and occupations, 2016

	All workers[1]		Homelessness support sector[2]		Social workers[3]		Social and community service workers[4]	
	count	percentage	count	percentage	count	percentage	count	percentage
Canada	19,956,250	100.0	6,305	100.0	62,235	100.0	155,625	100.0
Atlantic provinces	1,299,080	6.5	335	5.3	4,650	7.5	10,480	6.7
Newfoundland and Labrador	286,035	1.4	95	1.5	1,250	2.0	1,940	1.2
Prince Edward Island	85,270	0.4	15	0.2	205	0.3	995	0.6
Nova Scotia	514,080	2.6	115	1.8	1,650	2.7	4,830	3.1
New Brunswick	413,695	2.1	110	1.7	1,545	2.5	2,715	1.7
Quebec	4,529,765	22.7	1,090	17.3	14,125	22.7	30,760	19.8
Ontario	7,579,080	38.0	2,235	35.4	24,400	39.2	56,785	36.5
Manitoba	710,835	3.6	220	3.5	2,750	4.4	7,945	5.1
Saskatchewan	633,325	3.2	175	2.8	2,160	3.5	5,500	3.5
Alberta	2,467,410	12.4	795	12.6	7,020	11.3	17,920	11.5
British Columbia	2,670,700	13.4	1,385	22.0	6,805	10.9	24,870	16.0
Territories	66,060	0.3	80	1.3	320	0.5	1,365	0.9
Yukon	23,495	0.1	10	0.2	170	0.3	480	0.3
Northwest Territories	25,570	0.1	55	0.9	110	0.2	420	0.3
Nunavut	17,000	0.1	15	0.2	40	0.1	465	0.3
Population centre sizes								
Large urban population centres	12,091,895	60.6	4,080	64.7	37,215	59.8	85,025	54.6
Medium population centres	1,743,955	8.7	625	9.9	6,390	10.3	18,605	12.0
Small population centres	2,431,240	12.2	760	12.1	8,205	13.2	22,800	14.7
Rural areas	3,689,165	18.5	840	13.3	10,425	16.8	29,195	18.8
Selected census metropolitain areas (CMAs)								
Montreal	2,308,565	11.6	575	9.1	6,320	10.2	13,885	8.9
Toronto	3,404,195	17.1	870	13.8	9,300	14.9	18,575	11.9
Vancouver	1,449,815	7.3	805	12.8	3,060	4.9	10,980	7.1

1. Includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and over who have worked at some point in time between January 2015 and May 2016.

2. Homelessness support sector as defined in this document includes workers in industry 'Community food and housing, and emergency and other relief services' (North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code 6242), and whose occupation was either 'Social workers' (National Occupational Classification (NOC) code 4152) or 'Social and community service workers' (NOC 4212).

3. 'Social workers' refers to NOC 4152.

4. 'Social and community service workers' refers to NOC 4212.

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

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.

Homelessness support sector workers tended to live in Ontario and British Columbia

Homelessness support sector, social worker, and social and community service worker information at the geographic level is summarised in Table 1. Nationally, the 2016 Census counted 6,305 workers employed in the homelessness support sector. These individuals accounted for 2.9% of all social workers (62,235) and social and community service workers (155,625) combined.

The majority of homelessness support sector workers tended to be in Ontario (35.4%) and British Columbia (22.0%). Among the Atlantic provinces (5.3%), Nova Scotia (1.8%) and New Brunswick (1.7%) had the most homelessness support sector workers. While in the territories (1.3%), the Northwest Territories (0.9%) had the largest proportion. Across all industries, most social workers tended to be in Ontario (39.2%) and Quebec (22.7%). A similar trend followed for social and community service workers, who were predominantly in Ontario (36.5%) and Quebec (19.8%).

The provinces with larger numbers of homelessness support sector workers tended to be more populated provinces. The majority of homelessness support sector workers were in large urban centres (64.7%), followed by rural areas (13.3%).[7] Similarly, most social workers reported being in large urban centres (59.8%) and rural areas (16.8%), as well as social and community service workers in large urban centres (54.6%) and rural areas (18.8%).

Toronto (13.8%), Vancouver (12.8%) and Montreal (9.1%) were among the CMAs with the largest percentage of homelessness support sector workers. Toronto (14.9% and 11.9% respectively) and Montreal (10.2% and 8.9% respectively) also tended to have the largest percentage of social workers and social and community service workers.

Women led the way in the homelessness support sector

Table 2 provides a summary of the homelessness support sector, social worker, and social and community service worker data at the age and sex level. Three out of four homelessness support sector workers (76.5%) were female, exceeding the 48.2% share females held among all workers in all occupations. Social workers (84.9%) and social and community service workers (77.6%) across all industries also tended to have a large representation of females.

Among all homelessness support sector workers, more than one in four (28.0%) were between the ages of 25 and 34. Moreover, one in five support workers were between the ages of 35 and 44 (20.4%), and 45 and 54 (20.8%). Among younger support sector workers between the ages of 15 and 24, females were the majority (80.0%). More than one in four females (28.3%) were between the ages of 25 to 34 years among the homelessness support sector. Female social workers (28.6%) and social and community service workers (26.7%) in this same age group were similarly represented in their respective occupations.

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7. Population centres have a population of at least 1,000 and a population density of 400 persons or more per square kilometre. Small, medium and large urban population centres exist. Rural areas are denoted as areas outside of population centres.

Table 2
Distribution of workers by age and sex, for selected industries and occupations, 2016

	All workers[1]		Homelessness support sector[2]		Social workers[3]		Social and community service workers[4]	
	count	percentage	count	percentage	count	percentage	count	percentage
Total - Sex								
15 years of age and over	19,956,250	100.0	6,305	100.0	62,235	100.0	155,625	100.0
15 to 24 years	2,982,790	14.9	625	9.9	1,490	2.4	18,335	11.8
25 to 34 years	4,063,170	20.4	1,765	28.0	17,100	27.5	40,960	26.3
35 to 44 years	4,006,255	20.1	1,290	20.4	17,025	27.4	34,620	22.2
45 to 54 years	4,344,380	21.8	1,315	20.8	14,410	23.2	32,520	20.9
55 to 64 years	3,432,795	17.2	1,065	16.9	9,725	15.6	23,620	15.2
65 years and over	1,126,865	5.6	250	4.0	2,485	4.0	5,570	3.6
Female								
15 years of age and over	9,613,285	100.0	4,825	100.0	52,845	100.0	120,800	100.0
15 to 24 years	1,464,995	15.2	500	10.4	1,400	2.6	13,750	11.4
25 to 34 years	1,977,815	20.6	1,365	28.3	15,110	28.6	32,225	26.7
35 to 44 years	1,963,500	20.4	930	19.3	14,670	27.8	26,910	22.3
45 to 54 years	2,137,435	22.2	1,050	21.8	12,070	22.8	25,710	21.3
55 to 64 years	1,623,680	16.9	790	16.4	7,840	14.8	18,240	15.1
65 years and over	445,865	4.6	195	4.0	1,760	3.3	3,975	3.3
Male								
15 years of age and over	10,342,970	100.0	1,480	100.0	9,390	100.0	34,825	100.0
15 to 24 years	1,517,795	14.7	125	8.4	90	1.0	4,590	13.2
25 to 34 years	2,085,360	20.2	395	26.7	1,990	21.2	8,740	25.1
35 to 44 years	2,042,755	19.8	360	24.3	2,355	25.1	7,710	22.1
45 to 54 years	2,206,945	21.3	265	17.9	2,345	25.0	6,805	19.5
55 to 64 years	1,809,120	17.5	280	18.9	1,885	20.1	5,380	15.4
65 years and over	680,995	6.6	55	3.7	730	7.8	1,595	4.6

1. Includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and over who have worked at some point in time between January 2015 and May 2016.

2. Homelessness support sector as defined in this document includes workers in industry 'Community food and housing, and emergency and other relief services' (North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code 6242), and whose occupation was either 'Social workers' (National Occupational Classification (NOC) code 4152) or 'Social and community service workers' (NOC 4212).

3. 'Social workers' refers to NOC 4152.

4. 'Social and community service workers' refers to NOC 4212.

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

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.

The largest concentration of males in the homelessness support sector were between the ages of 25 and 34 (26.7%), which was similar to males employed as social and community service workers (25.1%) and less than those employed as social workers (21.2%). It could be that among occupations which support the homeless, a younger cohort of males and females tended to work specifically in the homelessness support sector when compared to other industries.

Homelessness support sector workers were likely to have a trade school, college or non-university certificate or diploma

As shown in Table 3, more than two out of five homelessness support sector workers (44.4%) obtained a trade school, college or non-university certificate or diploma, and one in four homelessness support sector workers (27.4%) earned a bachelor's degree.

Given that the homelessness support sector is largely comprised of social workers and social and community service workers, it is valuable to look at these occupations among all industries for comparison. Half of all social workers (49.7%) had a bachelor's degree as their highest level of education, and approximately one in three social workers (31.0%) had a graduate degree or certificate above the bachelor's level. These statistics seem to be in line with current education standards, as a bachelor's degree is a requirement to become a social worker.

Table 3
Distribution of workers by highest certificate, diploma or degree, for selected industries and occupations, 2016

	All workers[1]		Homelessness support sector[2]		Social workers[3]		Social and community service workers[4]	
	count	percentage	count	percentage	count	percentage	count	percentage
Total - Highest certificate, diploma or degree	19,956,250	100.0	6,305	100.0	62,235	100.0	155,625	100.0
No certificate, diploma or degree	2,275,265	11.4	300	4.8	25	0.0	6,590	4.2
High school diploma or equivalency certificate	5,212,570	26.1	1,000	15.9	1,875	3.0	23,235	14.9
Trade school, college or non-university certificate or diploma	7,015,930	35.2	2,800	44.4	10,080	16.2	69,775	44.8
Bachelor's degree	3,660,985	18.3	1,725	27.4	30,935	49.7	42,800	27.5
Graduate degree or certificate above bachelor's level	1,791,505	9.0	485	7.7	19,320	31.0	13,230	8.5

1. Includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and over who have worked at some point in time between January 2015 and May 2016.

2. Homelessness support sector as defined in this document includes workers in industry 'Community food and housing, and emergency and other relief services' (North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code 6242), and whose occupation was either 'Social workers' (National Occupational Classification (NOC) code 4152) or 'Social and community service workers' (NOC 4212).

3. 'Social workers' refers to NOC 4152.

4. 'Social and community service workers' refers to NOC 4212.

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

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.

The educational attainment breakdown is virtually the same for social and community service workers as it is for the homelessness support sector, where most social and community service workers (44.8%) obtained a trade school, college or non-university certificate or diploma, and a quarter (27.5%) earned a bachelor's degree. Based on the 2016 Census, social workers tended to have a higher level of education, on average, compared to homelessness support sector workers and social and community service workers.

Homelessness support sector workers with post-secondary education likely to have studied business, management and public administration

From Table 4, it can be seen that among the 5,005 employees in the homelessness support sector with post-secondary education, over one third (37.0%) reported their major field of study as business, management and public administration, which was predominantly made up of individuals who reported studying fields related to public administration and social service professions (30.2%). Furthermore, more than one in four (28.6%) homelessness support sector workers reported studying social and behavioural sciences and law.

Among all social worker occupations, an even larger proportion (73.9%) reported business, management and public administration as their major field of study, followed by social and behavioural sciences and law (15.0%). Nearly one third of social and community service workers (30.4%) reported their major field of study as social and behavioural sciences and law, or business, management and public administration (30.7%), while 15.5% reported being in health and related fields.

Table 4
Distribution of workers with post-secondary education by selected major field of study, for selected industries and occupations, 2016

	All workers[1]		Homelessness support sector[2]		Social workers[3]		Social and community service workers[4]	
	count	percentage	count	percentage	count	percentage	count	percentage
Total - Workers with post-secondary education	12,468,425	100.0	5,005	100.0	60,335	100.0	125,800	100.0
Education	727,620	5.8	240	4.8	1,265	2.1	8,845	7.0
Visual and performing arts, and communications technologies	490,615	3.9	125	2.5	220	0.4	2,330	1.9
Humanities	639,275	5.1	280	5.6	1,430	2.4	7,085	5.6
Social and behavioural sciences and law	1,449,220	11.6	1,430	28.6	9,030	15.0	38,215	30.4
Family and consumer sciences/human sciences	256,515	2.1	385	7.7	1,505	2.5	12,385	9.8
Psychology	229,130	1.8	335	6.7	3,315	5.5	10,970	8.7
Social sciences	512,315	4.1	490	9.8	3,355	5.6	9,910	7.9
Business, management and public administration	2,671,150	21.4	1,850	37.0	44,605	73.9	38,585	30.7
Public administration and social service professions	193,540	1.6	1,510	30.2	42,840	71.0	28,485	22.6
Business, management, marketing and related support services	2,473,045	19.8	335	6.7	1,755	2.9	10,090	8.0
Architecture, engineering, and related technologies	2,635,120	21.1	135	2.7	240	0.4	2,410	1.9
Health and related fields	1,750,735	14.0	640	12.8	2,465	4.1	19,505	15.5
Personal, protective and transportation services	789,415	6.3	180	3.6	435	0.7	4,525	3.6

1. Includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and over who have worked at some point in time between January 2015 and May 2016.

2. Homelessness support sector as defined in this document includes workers in industry 'Community food and housing, and emergency and other relief services' (North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code 6242), and whose occupation was either 'Social workers' (National Occupational Classification (NOC) code 4152) or 'Social and community service workers' (NOC 4212).

3. 'Social workers' refers to NOC 4152.

4. 'Social and community service workers' refers to NOC 4212.

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

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.

Most homelessness support sector workers were married or common-law with children

Household type and census family status provide information on whether there are census families in the household and the family arrangements within each census family. According to Table 5, more than half of workers (56.1%) in the homelessness support sector were in a household with a married or a common-law couple census family. Among these workers living in a couple family, three out of five (60.5%) were living in a family where children[8] were present.

When considering all social workers, two out of three (67.8%) were in married or common-law census family households, which was a slightly greater proportion than social and community service workers (61.6%). Among married or common-law census family types, two out of three social workers (66.3%) and social and community service workers (64.6%) were in households where children were present. A possible explanation for the slightly lower proportion of homelessness support sector workers in households with children compared to their counterparts who are social and community service workers or social workers could be due to the homelessness support sector being comprised of a younger cohort.

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8. Children refer to the census family status of individuals in private households, and does not necessarily refer only to individuals below the age of 18.

Table 5
Distribution of workers by census family status, for selected industries and occupations, 2016

	All workers[1]		Homelessness support sector[2]		Social workers[3]		Social and community service workers[4]	
	count	percentage	count	percentage	count	percentage	count	percentage
Total - Census family status[5]	19,956,250	100.0	6,305	100.0	62,235	100.0	155,625	100.0
Married or common-law couple	13,812,910	69.2	3,535	56.1	42,200	67.8	95,890	61.6
With children	9,151,300	45.9	2,140	33.9	27,960	44.9	61,975	39.8
Without children	4,661,610	23.4	1,400	22.2	14,240	22.9	33,910	21.8
Lone parent	1,995,250	10.0	915	14.5	7,070	11.4	22,330	14.3
Female lone parent	1,208,105	6.1	830	13.2	6,455	10.4	19,360	12.4
Male lone parent	787,150	3.9	85	1.3	605	1.0	2,965	1.9
Multiple census-family household	876,270	4.4	230	3.6	1,825	2.9	6,470	4.2
Non-census family household	3,271,825	16.4	1,625	25.8	11,140	17.9	30,940	19.9
One person household	2,290,860	11.5	1,075	17.0	8,825	14.2	20,925	13.4

1. Includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and over who have worked at some point in time between January 2015 and May 2016.

2. Homelessness support sector as defined in this document includes workers in industry 'Community food and housing, and emergency and other relief services' (North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code 6242), and whose occupation was either 'Social workers' (National Occupational Classification (NOC) code 4152) or 'Social and community service workers' (NOC 4212).

3. 'Social workers' refers to NOC 4152.

4. 'Social and community service workers' refers to NOC 4212.

5. 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.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.

Homelessness support sector workers were more likely to be living in lone-parent census family households (14.5%) compared to the working population (10.0%). In particular, homelessness support sector workers were more than twice as likely to be female lone parents (13.2%) compared to all workers (6.1%). The percentage of social and community service workers (14.3%) considered to be lone-parents was virtually the same as that of the homelessness support sector, while only one in ten social workers (11.4%) were in lone-parent households.

More homelessness support sector workers (25.8%) reported living in non-census family households compared to all workers (16.4%), social workers (17.9%) and social and community service workers (19.9%). Non-census family households are composed of individuals living alone, or a group of two or more living together who do not constitute as a census family based on their relations.

More visible minorities, Indigenous persons worked in homelessness support sector

Table 6 summarizes the visible minority status of people working in the homelessness support sector, as well as for social workers, and social and community service workers. One in five homelessness support sector workers (19.6%) reported being visible minorities, which was higher than social workers (14.8%) and social and community service workers (17.6%) among all industries and in line with the total working population (21.3%). One in ten (10.6%) homelessness support sector workers reported an Aboriginal identity, this was virtually the same as for social and community service workers (10.7%), but higher than among all social workers (7.5%) and the total working population (4.0%).

Table 6
Distribution of workers by visible minority status and Aboriginal identity, for selected industries and occupations, 2016

	All workers[1]		Homelessness support sector[2]		Social workers[3]		Social and community service workers[4]	
	count	percentage	count	percentage	count	percentage	count	percentage
Total - Visible minority status	19,956,250	100.0	6,305	100.0	62,235	100.0	155,625	100.0
Visible minority	4,245,800	21.3	1,235	19.6	9,240	14.8	27,395	17.6
Not a visible minority	15,710,450	78.7	5,070	80.4	52,995	85.2	128,230	82.4
Aboriginal identity	796,170	4.0	670	10.6	4,690	7.5	16,710	10.7
Non Aboriginal identity	14,914,280	74.7	4,400	69.7	48,305	77.6	111,520	71.7

1. Includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and over who have worked at some point in time between January 2015 and May 2016.

2. Homelessness support sector as defined in this document includes workers in industry 'Community food and housing, and emergency and other relief services' (North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code 6242), and whose occupation was either 'Social workers' (National Occupational Classification (NOC) code 4152) or 'Social and community service workers' (NOC 4212).

3. 'Social workers' refers to NOC 4152.

4. 'Social and community service workers' refers to NOC 4212.

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

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.

Homelessness support sector workers were more likely to work part-time

As shown in Table 7, the proportion of homelessness support sector workers working part-time in 2015 (27.8%) was higher than the total working population (22.5%) and social and community service workers (23.3%), and nearly double the percentage of social workers (14.0%) who reported working part-time for all sexes.

Table 7
Distribution of workers by tenure and sex, for selected industries and occupations, 2016

	All workers[1]		Homelessness support sector[2]		Social workers[3]		Social and community service workers[4]	
	count	percentage	count	percentage	count	percentage	count	percentage
Total - Sex								
Total - 15 years of age and over	19,956,250	100.0	6,305	100.0	62,235	100.0	155,625	100.0
Did not work in 2015	595,240	3.0	205	3.3	1,095	1.8	4,100	2.6
Worked full-time in 2015	14,871,495	74.5	4,350	69.0	52,445	84.3	115,280	74.1
Worked part-time in 2015	4,489,515	22.5	1,750	27.8	8,695	14.0	36,250	23.3
Female								
Female - 15 years of age and over	9,613,285	100.0	4,825	100.0	52,845	100.0	120,800	100.0
Did not work in 2015	312,135	3.2	165	3.4	930	1.8	3,280	2.7
Worked full-time in 2015	6,484,870	67.5	3,230	66.9	44,365	84.0	88,855	73.6
Worked part-time in 2015	2,816,275	29.3	1,430	29.6	7,550	14.3	28,665	23.7
Male								
Male - 15 years of age and over	10,342,965	100.0	1,480	100.0	9,395	100.0	34,825	100.0
Did not work in 2015	283,105	2.7	45	3.0	165	1.8	820	2.4
Worked full-time in 2015	8,386,625	81.1	1,120	75.7	8,075	85.9	26,425	75.9
Worked part-time in 2015	1,673,240	16.2	320	21.6	1,145	12.2	7,580	21.8

1. Includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and over who have worked at some point in time between January 2015 and May 2016.

2. Homelessness support sector as defined in this document includes workers in industry 'Community food and housing, and emergency and other relief services' (North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code 6242), and whose occupation was either 'Social workers' (National Occupational Classification (NOC) code 4152) or 'Social and community service workers' (NOC 4212).

3. 'Social workers' refers to NOC 4152.

4. 'Social and community service workers' refers to NOC 4212.

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

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.

Given the participation differences of males and females in the homelessness support sector, observing the part-time or full-time status of employees could provide further insight into the sector. In the homelessness support sector, one in three females (29.6%) and one in five males (21.6%) reported working part-time in 2015.

Relative to the homelessness support sector, a lower percentage of female social workers (14.3%) and social and community service workers (23.7%) among all industries reported working part-time. A smaller percentage of male social workers (12.2%) reported working part-time compared to the homelessness support sector.

Median earnings of homelessness support sector workers were less than median earnings of all Canadian workers

In discussing earnings, wages, salaries and commissions was the main indicator assessed. This category considers types of remuneration that relate more commonly to paid employment such as regular wages or salaries, tips, cash bonuses, commission and other employer or union benefits. For comparability, employment income, which also includes self-employment income, is shown. Table 8 summarizes the earnings and income levels of homelessness support sector workers, social workers, and social and community service workers.

Almost all homelessness support sector workers (96.6%) received employment income in 2015 and 95.6% received wages, salaries and commissions. Social workers (95.7%) and social and community service workers (94.3%) also exhibited virtually the same proportion of workers receiving wages, salaries and commissions as the homelessness support sector.

The median wages, salaries and commissions for homelessness support sector workers was $32,707, which was lower than social workers ($59,494) and social and community service workers ($37,716) employed in all industries. Homelessness support sector workers also earned median wages, salaries and commissions below that of all workers in all occupations ($38,269).

Median wages, salaries and commissions for social workers in all industries were nearly double that of homelessness support sector workers. This could be explained in part due to differences in educational attainment and that part-time employment was more common in the homelessness support sector.

Table 8
Distribution of workers by earnings status and low-income status, for industries and occupations, 2016

	All workers[1]		Homelessness support sector[2]		Social workers[3]		Social and community service workers[4]	
	count	percentage	count	percentage	count	percentage	count	percentage
Total - Persons aged 15 years and over	19,956,250	100.0	6,305	100.0	62,235	100.0	155,625	100.0
Persons with income	19,726,915	98.9	6,290	99.8	62,145	99.9	154,940	99.6
Persons with employment income	18,820,750	94.3	6,090	96.6	61,085	98.2	149,670	96.2
Persons with wages and salaries	17,434,920	87.4	6,025	95.6	59,570	95.7	146,735	94.3
Persons evaluated for low-income status	19,750,120	100.0	6,090	100.0	60,970	100.0	149,510	100.0
Persons in low-income (LIM-AT)[5]	1,782,710	9.0	585	9.6	1,710	2.8	12,080	8.1
				in dollars				
Median employment income ($)	36,693		32,635		59,010		37,452	
Median wages, salaries and commissions ($)	38,269		32,707		59,494		37,716	

1. Includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and over who have worked at some point in time between January 2015 and May 2016.
2. Homelessness support sector as defined in this document includes workers in industry 'Community food and housing, and emergency and other relief services' (North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code 6242), and whose occupation was either 'Social workers' (National Occupational Classification (NOC) code 4152) or 'Social and community service workers' (NOC 4212).
3. 'Social workers' refers to NOC 4152.
4. 'Social and community service workers' refers to NOC 4212.
5. The low-income-measure does not apply to persons living in the territories or on-reserve.
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.

One in ten homelessness support sector workers were in low-income

The Low-income measure, after-tax (LIM-AT) can be used to assess an individuals' income relative to a fixed percentage (50%) median household income adjusted for household size.[9] Individuals with a household income below the low-income threshold are considered to be in low income. Analysing the proportion of homelessness support sector workers considered to be in low income provides labour market insight about the "working poor" population in the sector.

9. Statistics Canada. 2016. Low-income measure, after-tax (LIM-AT). 2016 Census of Population Dictionary. Ottawa, Ontario. https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/fam021-eng.cfm (accessed March 15, 2019).

It can be seen in Table 8 that among homelessness support sector workers, approximately one in ten (9.6%) were considered to be in low-income, which was similar to the proportion of all workers (9.0%) in low-income. Far fewer social workers (2.8%) were considered to be in low-income, while the proportion of social and community service workers in low-income (8.1%) was not substantially different than that of homelessness support sector workers.

Limitations of the data and analysis

The Census collects labour data on an individuals' primary job when the individual was employed during the reference week of Sunday, May 1 to Saturday, May 7, 2016. As a result, industry and occupation data do not cover other jobs held by individuals who have more than one job. This issue could be more prevalent for part-time workers, who were more common among homelessness support sector jobs. When an individual did not work during the reference week but had worked at some time since January 1, 2015, the industry and occupation data relate to the job held the longest during that period. Given this, of the 6,305 homelessness support sector workers, 5,635 were employed during the reference week.

Furthermore, turnover rates, job vacancies and permanency of jobs in the homelessness support sector cannot be properly evaluated by solely using labour market variables available in the Census and most other social surveys.

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 underestimates the true size of the sector. There may be other jobs in other industries and occupation classes which provide support to the homeless, however, it is difficult to systematically identify these jobs based on the labour market variables available.

Part-time and full-time status is reported for the year 2015. This means that for individuals who were employed during the reference week, the full-time or part-time status may not correspond to the job held during the reference week. Likewise for income, the reference period is the calendar year 2015. Due to these reporting differences, it does not necessarily mean that an individual's income in 2015 corresponds to the Census labour variables.

The count of the population living in shelters from the Census is not a true representation of homelessness. People living in cars or couch surfing (hidden homelessness) are not captured in this count. Moreover, those staying in parks or other unsheltered areas, which may be more prevalent given the season on Census day, are also not accounted for by solely looking at the Census Day shelter population count. 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.

Conclusion and next steps for analysing the homelessness support sector

Most homelessness support sector workers were located in large urban centres, with notable concentrations in Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal.

The results show that homelessness support sector employees were predominantly female and were comprised of a younger cohort. Homelessness support sector workers tended to have post-secondary education such as a trade school, college or non-university certificate diploma, similar to social and community service workers. Most social workers, however, held a bachelor's degree or above. Homelessness support sector workers were about as likely to be visible minorities when compared to the total workforce, however, Indigenous persons held a much larger share of the homelessness support sector compared to their share of the total workforce. Homelessness support sector workers typically reported being in married or common-law households with children, and were more likely to be female lone-parents compared to the total workforce. Workers in the homelessness support sector also tended to work part-time and earn less than social workers and social and community service workers in all industries, as well as among all workers.

A next step in this analysis could include conducting Census to Census linkages to observe the longevity of employment in the homelessness support sector. This could shed light on job retention as well as address

whether volunteerism is prevalent in the sector. Furthering this analysis could also involve integrating data from T4 Statement of earnings files showing wage levels and employers over multiple years. This would allow historical trends to be observed and information on multiple job holders and tenure with the employer to be added. Additional development can also be made by considering whether the younger age distribution of workers in the homelessness support sector suggests it acts as a feeder group for employment in the broader occupational groups.

It could also be the case that people working in shelters may have previously had lived experience of homelessness. Linking the Homeless Individual and Families Information System (HIFIS), which contains data on shelter usage, with the Census would enable a target population to be identified in order to better understand the homelessness support sector.[10] Moreover, this linkage could illustrate which communities are under-supported by looking at the distribution of workers compared to the distribution of homeless individuals.

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10. Employment and Social Development Canada. 2019. Homeless Individuals and Families Information System. Ottawa, Ontario. https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/homelessness/hifis.html (accessed August 20, 2019).

Appendix

Table A1
Distribution of workers by census metropolitain area, for selected industries and occupations, 2016

	All workers[1]		Homelessness support sector[2]		Social workers[3]		Social and community service workers[4]	
	count	percentage	count	percentage	count	percentage	count	percentage
Canada	19,956,250	100.0	6,305	100.0	62,235	100.0	155,625	100.0
Census metropolitan areas (CMAs)								
St. John's	122,320	0.6	50	0.8	655	1.1	940	0.6
Halifax	241,390	1.2	75	1.2	850	1.4	1,905	1.2
Moncton	84,650	0.4	20	0.3	305	0.5	540	0.3
Saint John	69,775	0.3	15	0.2	245	0.4	505	0.3
Saguenay	85,170	0.4	15	0.2	430	0.7	595	0.4
Québec	465,845	2.3	105	1.7	1,745	2.8	3,180	2.0
Sherbrooke	115,875	0.6	35	0.6	485	0.8	845	0.5
Trois-Rivières	81,130	0.4	20	0.3	255	0.4	790	0.5
Montreal	2,308,565	11.6	575	9.1	6,320	10.2	13,885	8.9
Ottawa - Gatineau	765,590	3.8	280	4.4	2,340	3.8	4,975	3.2
Ottawa - Gatineau (Quebec part)	190,565	1.0	50	0.8	650	1.0	1,270	0.8
Ottawa - Gatineau (Ontario part)	575,030	2.9	230	3.6	1,685	2.7	3,705	2.4
Kingston	89,545	0.4	35	0.6	325	0.5	905	0.6
Belleville	54,865	0.3	10	0.2	180	0.3	805	0.5
Peterborough	65,190	0.3	65	1.0	285	0.5	940	0.6
Oshawa	214,000	1.1	80	1.3	725	1.2	1,785	1.1
Toronto	3,404,195	17.1	870	13.8	9,300	14.9	18,575	11.9
Hamilton	419,385	2.1	80	1.3	1,620	2.6	2,885	1.9
St. Catharines - Niagara	218,715	1.1	100	1.6	745	1.2	1,755	1.1
Kitchener - Cambridge - Waterloo	308,795	1.5	90	1.4	970	1.6	2,570	1.7
Brantford	74,645	0.4	25	0.4	250	0.4	785	0.5
Guelph	92,835	0.5	35	0.6	340	0.5	665	0.4
London	274,785	1.4	125	2.0	1,075	1.7	2,790	1.8
Windsor	170,430	0.9	35	0.6	745	1.2	1,235	0.8
Barrie	116,855	0.6	40	0.6	345	0.6	935	0.6
Greater Sudbury	91,155	0.5	30	0.5	455	0.7	1,160	0.7
Thunder Bay	66,705	0.3	25	0.4	585	0.9	1,175	0.8
Winnipeg	451,980	2.3	125	2.0	1,935	3.1	5,105	3.3
Regina	143,430	0.7	80	1.3	640	1.0	1,365	0.9
Saskatoon	179,235	0.9	60	1.0	730	1.2	1,400	0.9
Lethbridge	68,155	0.3	30	0.5	225	0.4	835	0.5
Calgary	866,895	4.3	260	4.1	2,515	4.0	5,210	3.3
Edmonton	809,165	4.1	215	3.4	2,565	4.1	6,025	3.9
Kelowna	112,595	0.6	35	0.6	340	0.5	825	0.5
Abbotsford - Mission	101,355	0.5	75	1.2	205	0.3	1,020	0.7
Vancouver	1,449,815	7.3	805	12.8	3,060	4.9	10,980	7.1
Victoria	214795	1.1	95	1.5	710	1.1	2,505	1.6

1. Includes persons living in private households and aged 15 years and over who have worked at some point in time between January 2015 and May 2016.

2. Homelessness support sector as defined in this document includes workers in industry 'Community food and housing, and emergency and other relief services' (North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code 6242), and whose occupation was either 'Social workers' (National Occupational Classification (NOC) code 4152) or 'Social and community service workers' (NOC 4212).

3. 'Social workers' refers to NOC 4152.

4. 'Social and community service workers' refers to NOC 4212.

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

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.

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