StreetCount 2014

Final Report

City of Melbourne

July 2014

8608434

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Acknowledgements

StreetCount2014 was the sixth in a series of annual counts undertaken by the City of Melbourne. The street counts would not be possible without the support and practical assistance of many people.

The City of Melbourne would like to acknowledge the support of the wide range of individuals and organisations that contributed to making StreetCount possible.

Over the six years, over 650 people have volunteered to undertake the StreetCount in the early hours of the morning. This year in 2014 there were 99 volunteers from a wide range of organisations and businesses across the city. Each year there are new volunteers and about a third come back every year to participate in the project.

City of Melbourne staff managed the development and implementation of StreetCount and many contributed their time as volunteers in a number of capacities.

StreetCount has enjoyed the consistent support of agencies for homeless people based in the City of Melbourne. Agencies assist StreetCount in a number of very important ways: by being involved in the planning for the day, by contributing highly professional workers as volunteers and volunteer team leaders, by participating in and hosting the Day Count.

Agencies that provided support include:

- Central City Community Health Service
- Flagstaff Crisis Accommodation
- Frontyard Youth Services
- HomeGround Services - Collingwood
- Lazarus Centre
- Living Room Primary Health Service
- Ozanam House
- Ozanam Community Centre
- Salvation Army Family Support Services – Life Centre
- Travellers Aid
- Yarra Community Housing

StreetCount was provided considerable support from the Melbourne business community and special thanks go to Carman's Fine Foods who provided Muesli Bars for Thanks Packs and volunteers, GreenCo Parking who provided low cost parking for volunteers and the Royal Dental Hospital of Melbourne, who donated toothbrushes for the Thanks Packs. Thanks also go to Public Transport Victoria for the donation of pre-loaded Myki cards for the use of volunteers on the day of the count and for distribution to StreetCount participants completing surveys.

The work of the Salvation Army 614 team in particular is greatly appreciated. The team made contact with homeless people in squats and various known sleeping areas. Without their assistance many homeless people would not have been recorded in the StreetCount.

Special thanks go to the Council to Homeless Persons - Peer Education Support Program for their input to shaping the project, their promotion of the event to homeless support agencies and homeless people, their involvement in the training sessions and participation in the count.

Executive Summary

StreetCount2014 is the sixth in a series of counts of homeless rough sleepers in the Melbourne City Council area.

The aim of StreetCount2014 was to collect accurate and up to date information about the extent of people sleeping rough in parks, streets and other areas of the city. The count area covered represents approximately 20% of the municipality.

Pathways - The City of Melbourne Homelessness Strategy 2014-2017 is currently in draft form and open to the public for feedback and consultation. The information that has been collected through the 2014 StreetCount will further inform the development of the 'pathways' strategy. 'Pathways' is the main policy tool used to implement the City of Melbourne objective of supporting and developing sustainable pathways out of homelessness.

StreetCount data is a primary source of information for the City used to shape actions under the 'Pathways' strategy. The draft strategy 2014-2017 commits to showing leadership by addressing issues across four key themes:

1. **Know our City** –research, consult, refresh and share our knowledge of homelessness in Melbourne.

2. **Be inclusive** - respect, hear, welcome and include those who are homeless in our services, activities and events.

3. **Develop skills** - provide opportunities to enhance personal resilience, develop skills and strengthen social inclusion in order to avoid long term hardship.

4. **Create pathways** - work with our partners to courageously advocate for change and create sustainable pathways out of homelessness.

StreetCount data is used to measure the Strategic Indicator: '*Annual reduction in the number of people experiencing chronic homelessness as measured by Street Count results, compared to previous years.*'

Ninety Nine volunteers conducted the count in two parts on Tuesday 3rd June - an Early Morning Count (referred to as StreetCount) from 4:30 am to 8:30 am and a Day Count conducted at Homelessness support services within the city from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm.

One hundred and forty two rough sleepers have been recorded in the 2014 count. Eighty three people were surveyed and an additional fifty nine people were identified as rough sleepers through observation.

This report presents the results of the count and compares key data with information from the 2008-2012 counts. The background to the counts, some relevant literature and the limitations of the count method are also presented.

StreetCount2014 Summary of Key Findings

From 2008 the City of Melbourne has been undertaking annual StreetCounts in the municipality. Data from the 2008-2014 counts show that those who are sleeping rough are, compared to the general homeless population, more likely to be:

- Male
- Single
- Born in Australia
- 26 to 60 years of age
- Long term homeless – having been moving around for more than five years

Information from StreetCount needs to be interpreted in the context of the limitations of the approach. Some limitations are inherent to point-in-time surveys such as StreetCount and some arise as a result of the way StreetCount is conducted. Because of these it must be assumed that StreetCount numbers represent an underestimation of rough sleepers, and particularly of young people, Aboriginal people and women. Within these limitations however, a number of broad conclusions can be drawn from this year's count.

- At least 140 homeless people sleep rough in and around the City of Melbourne. This group of people is predominantly single, male, and Australian born.

- On average, 33% of those recorded in StreetCount have been homeless for more than five years and many for more than ten years. This suggests the presence of a group of at least 40 to 50 long-term homeless single men who sleep in and around the inner city.

- Around one third of the people counted, sleep openly on the street and another quarter in squats. Most people record sleeping in a wide variety of 'other' locations including train stations, public toilets, car parks and building foyers.

- Most people sleep in one place or move between two or three places over the period of a month. There is a smaller group of people who tend to move around between more places.

- Most (around three quarters) of the group are in touch with the service system, but mainly for 'subsistence' services such as meals and emergency relief centres. This suggests that this group might use the service system for survival, but not as a 'pathway' out homelessness.

- Most (almost two thirds) are not on the public housing waiting list, and half of those that are have been on the list for over two years.

StreetCount appears to record different individuals each year, and very few people are recorded in more than one count. StreetCount has recorded at least 572 different people over six years.

Background

The first City of Melbourne Street Count was conducted in 2008 in response to detailed research undertaken in 2006 and 2007. The research identified a group of homeless people who live in and around the city, use the range of services available in the day and who may sleep rough at night. The StreetCount method was recommended as one way of better understanding the needs of this group in order to develop better service responses over time.

In the City of Melbourne, a StreetCount was conducted annually from 2008 - 2012 and comparative data from the six counts including 2014 are provided in this report. In 2013 the StreetCount was replaced with a more in depth qualitative study.

> *"StreetCount 2013 - Living Rough in Melbourne was the first project of the new plan, aiming to gather qualitative information about the experience, issues, concerns and barriers to the resolution of homelessness for people sleeping rough in Melbourne".*

> *"The aim of using this approach was to explore whether connecting with the same people over a period of weeks and months could enhance understanding of the daily 'lived' experience of people sleeping rough and contribute to the development of different and more effective pathways out of homelessness for people who are homeless and sleeping rough in Melbourne." (City of Melbourne, 2013)*

The 2014 StreetCount brief was to return to the previously developed methodology, practice and processes used since 2008 so that a direct comparison of the findings could be undertaken over a series of years. The intention is to now alternate between a more in depth qualitative study biennially and the traditional point-in-time StreetCount.

Council's Senior Social Planner, homelessness and Homelessness Project Officer planned, managed and participated in the project. HomeGround Services were contracted to organise and deliver the count, including sourcing, training and supporting volunteers, engaging agencies and developing and distributing collateral. HomeGround Services was also contracted to collate, analyse and report on the data collected in the count.

The StreetCount office was located in CH1, Level 3, 200 Little Collins Street and was staffed from April through to June 2014. During this time volunteers and volunteer team leaders were recruited, collateral was created, intel was gathered around hotspots and high risk areas and training was delivered to team leaders and volunteers in late May. A detailed and comprehensive Manual was prepared and provided for each volunteer. The Manual included, among other things, information about:

- Preparation; including what to wear and bring
- How to approach rough sleepers
- Ethics and principles, including confidentiality and duty of care
- Surveying
- The roles and responsibilities of team leaders
- Communication
- Safety
- Maps

StreetCount2014 was held on Tuesday 3rd June 2014 from 4.30am - 8.30am. A Day Count followed from 8.00am – 4.00pm on the same day at homelessness support agencies around the City.

The weather for the count was wet with mild temperatures of 12-14 degrees recorded by the Bureau of Meteorology. The weather leading up to the count was unseasonably warm and mostly dry. In previous years rain had not been a feature of the StreetCount, although the temperature was cooler.

StreetCount2014 Methodology

The same method has been used to collect data for all six StreetCounts, and this consistency has ensured that results can be compared between years. The survey form, time of year, time of day and conduct of the event has remained essentially the same since 2008.

In 2014, ninety nine (99) volunteers were grouped into teams and disbursed to North Melbourne, East Melbourne, West Melbourne and the Central City. The search area was divided into forty-five small areas, (see StreetCount Maps at appendix one) and each quadrant was assigned a pair of volunteers.'

Volunteers met with their team at the StreetCount HQ at 4:00 am, departing between 4:30 and 5am to begin the count. Teams for North, West and East Melbourne were bussed and/or taxied to the count area and all other teams proceeded to their areas on foot.

Those who were sleeping were not disturbed. Volunteers were asked to approach rough sleepers if they could see that they were awake or, if they were asleep or otherwise unable to be interviewed, volunteers were asked to make observations about four particular characteristics of the person:

- The type of shelter being used
- Age
- Gender
- Presenting Unit (single, couple, etc)

All those who could be interviewed were approached to seek their consent to participate. Surveys were conducted with those who agreed and thank you packs were distributed to all those who were surveyed.

This year, the StreetCount 'Thank-You Pack' included:

- A copy of the statement of ethics
- A preloaded Myki card worth $6 plus an additional $4 loaded
- A $20 Coles Voucher
- A copy of the Melbourne City Helping *Out* booklet
- Toothbrush and Toothpaste
- A Carman's Muesli Bar
- A Suspended Coffee Card

These 'Thank You Packs' were more generous than in previous years with the $20 Coles voucher replacing the $5 phone card and the cooked breakfast voucher to be redeemed at Lazarus Centre. Generous donations from the business community enabled the budget to stretch further and purchase goods of a higher value. The Thank-You packs were very highly sought after and feedback received from volunteers suggest that the packs may have complicated the Day Count procedures. People who were not eligible for the StreetCount Survey were not able to access a Thank-You Pack which led to some disappointment.

Volunteers were asked to note on their map the location both of those observed and those surveyed as well as other evidence of camps and sleeping areas of homeless people. Volunteers regularly phoned in to Team Leaders who, in turn, kept in touch with StreetCount HQ. All volunteers made their own way back to the HQ by 7:30am and returned survey forms and maps. Volunteers were provided with breakfast and took part in a debriefing and discussion.

Following a request made at the Volunteer Training Session this year, a small flyer was created which volunteers left with people who they found asleep during the count. The flyer stated that;

> *'A StreetCount Volunteer came past while you were sleeping and wanted to ask you a few questions. If you would like to participate in the StreetCount please come past one of the services listed on the back of this page…..'*

The distribution of this flyer was a variation from the former StreetCount procedures and there was some concern that it may have contributed to an increase in the number of people who attended Day Services to participate in the count and complete a survey. Following further analysis this is believed unlikely. Please see the Data Analysis Summary for further discussion.

Prior to the StreetCount a series of meetings took place to identify areas in the city that could be considered 'hotspots.' Hotspots can be defined as areas which are likely to be highly populated by homeless people or present a heightened risk to volunteers when seeking to survey homeless people. A number of meetings were conducted to gather information from a range of people and sources, including;

- Formerly Homeless People – Members of the Council to Homeless Persons - Peer Educator and Support Program
- Police Officers working within the City of Melbourne
- City of Melbourne - Park Rangers
- Members of Homeless Outreach Services, e.g. Hanover Welfare Services and Salvation Army 24/7
- Members of the After Hours Child Protection Service
- A review of areas identified as hotspots during the 2012 StreetCount

An inventory of 'hotspots' was created for the 2014 StreetCount and ranked in terms of risk. Any areas that were considered to be of heightened risk were flagged to the Salvation Army 614 service. The service contributed their skills and expertise to visit these known, but often inaccessible sleeping areas. They interviewed people sleeping in these high risk 'hotspots,' providing observations about those who could not be interviewed.

The hotspot identification process was also a useful way to share knowledge about the number and location of people sleeping in the City of Melbourne prior to the count. The StreetCount has consistently covered only around 20% of the municipality. This year was no exception although the information that was received showed a large number of people sleeping outside the count area. In the past the count boundary has varied slightly to accommodate some of the hotspot intel. In this case it was decided that the boundaries would need to shift too far out to accommodate those known to be sleeping rough in some of the areas identified. There is some further discussion regarding this point in the Data Limitations section of the report.

As part of the risk management procedures for the count, volunteers were advised to not enter areas of the city in which they felt uncomfortable or concerned for their safety, this may have included dark alleyways or areas where their assessment of personal risk left them feeling uneasy. Volunteers were advised 'if in doubt, trust your instincts and leave it out'. Volunteers were also advised to not enter squats due to the high levels of personal risk.

The Day Count was conducted from 8:00am at day centres in and around the City. Those who had slept rough the night before were approached for interview either by volunteers or agency staff. This year there was a larger number of Day Service - agency staff as opposed

to volunteers responsible for completing the surveys. This was due to a smaller number of volunteers being recruited overall. The Day Count was finalised by 4pm.

StreetCount Data Limitations

The StreetCount method results in data that has a number of limitations, some of which are inherent in counts of this nature and some of which arise as a result of the particular StreetCount approach. Limitations are noted and, where possible steps are taken to reduce their effect on the analysis of results.

StreetCount is a count of rough sleepers and does not count all homeless people – only those who are literally sleeping out. The project does not aim to count homeless people in shelters, those who are moving between different types of accommodation and those in Boarding Houses and Rooming Houses.

StreetCount records rough sleepers at a very specific point in time - over three hours in one day each year. Data collected through point-in-time counts doesn't reflect the episodic nature of homelessness and the mobility of rough sleeping in particular, where people move in and out of homelessness and between rough sleeping and other types of shelter, (Chamberlain & Mackenzie 1998, Johnson, Gronda & Coutts 2008, Chamberlain, Johnson & Theobold 2007).

Enumeration of people who are experiencing primary homelessness is one of the most difficult statistical and demographic challenges. Rough sleepers seek out safe and private sleeping places and often go out of their way to be invisible. Many will never be recorded in a homeless street count. This is particularly the case for young people who are avoiding the authorities, women and families with children.

In each year of StreetCount, volunteers have noted how difficult it is to discern if someone is homeless in these circumstances. Volunteers will usually choose not to approach someone if they have doubt and some people who are homeless may choose not to identify, even if approached. This is a common difficulty with counts of this kind, and in other jurisdictions strict rules are in place to guide that should be approached. In the UK, for example, only those who are lying down are recorded in the Count. While it's unlikely that these kinds of rules would be useful for StreetCount, improved training and preparation for volunteers with regard to the interview process, intercept interview techniques and the survey form could improve volunteer confidence in this regard.

As previously mentioned, risk management procedures for the count meant that volunteers were advised to not enter squats or areas of the city in which they felt uncomfortable or concerned for their safety, this may have included dark alleyways or areas where their assessment of personal risk left them feeling uneasy. These essential elements of the risk management strategy have the unfortunate secondary consequence of contributing to the increased likelihood of undercounting. Many of the areas that volunteers would avoid due to concerns for their safety are the most likely places for homeless people to seek shelter.

StreetCount is conducted close to mid-winter and, unlike in some other jurisdictions, a Summer StreetCount is not conducted. It's assumed that only those with no alternatives will sleep in the open at the coldest time of the year. Sydney, Adelaide and Parramatta City Councils conduct both summer and winter counts and find, generally, that around 30% more people sleep out in summer. As mentioned the weather this year for StreetCount was unseasonably mild in the lead up to the count. It was however raining on the count morning and had been wet all night in the lead up to the count. The StreetCounts in 2011 and 2012 were much cooler but dry. It is difficult to speculate about the potential impact of the weather on the number of people sleeping out, or the number out to be counted however there is some possibility that weather conditions would have some impact.

Around 20% of the Melbourne municipal district is canvassed in StreetCount each year (see maps at attachment). The count area is reviewed annually in some detail and is sometimes adjusted to include where people are known to be sleeping, ensuring that the most frequented areas and roughly the same geographic area are covered each year, providing consistency.

This year, information received indicated that a large number of people were known to be sleeping in areas outside of the count area. Areas such as Carlton Gardens, Docklands, Kings Domain, Fawkner Park, the Botanical Gardens, Royal Park and Alexander Gardens in particular were reported by Park Rangers to have a large number of people sleeping, mostly in the public toilets. After much consideration it was agreed to not include these areas as to do so would have stretched the count boundaries to an extent which would compromise the consistency and comparability of data over the whole data set if the boundary was to increase so significantly. Without further investigation we can only speculate as to whether those people identified by Park Rangers to be sleeping outside the count area are likely to be counted later during the Day Count and also whether the movement of people in to other areas is a new thing or something that has been consistent across the years.

Summary of Relevant Literature

Enumeration of homeless people is complicated both by debates about who is homeless (definition) and how they should be counted (approach and method), (Rossi, et al 1989). This is particularly true of counts of Rough Sleepers. The definition of homelessness has evolved over time and is shaped by debate about whether lack of shelter or lack of connection to community, or both, connote a state of homelessness, (Herrman, et al 1988, SAAP 1984, Chamberlain & Mackenzie 1984). Widely used definitions in Australia have been connected to concepts of the temporal dimensions of homeless and rest largely on work undertaken by Chamberlain and MacKenzie, (2002). (ABS 2011, Chamberlain 1999).

The last 10 years have seen major developments in our understanding of homelessness and a range of projects and initiatives aimed at delivering support to those most in need. The past five years have seen significant investments made in reducing the number of people sleeping rough by the Federal and State Governments. (Johnson & Wylie, 2012)

In 2008 the Government released a White Paper titled 'The Road Home: A National Approach to Homelessness.' The paper acknowledged homelessness as more than just a housing problem.

> *"Homelessness has many drivers and causes, including the shortage of affordable housing, long term unemployment, mental health issues, substance abuse and family and relationship breakdown. Among women, domestic and family violence is the main reason for seeking help from specialist homelessness services."*

The paper also acknowledged the risk of growth in the number of people homeless.

> *"Just maintaining the current effort on homelessness will see an increase in the number of Australians who are homeless due to the growth in populations at risk of homelessness, such as older people in housing stress and children in care and protection."*

> *"Investing in services to prevent and reduce homelessness delivers benefits not only to those vulnerable to homelessness but also to the entire community." (FaHCSIA, 2008)*

The White Paper Vision

Homelessness is everyone's responsibility. Ending homelessness requires sustained long-term effort from all levels of government, business, the not-for profit sector and the community.

The Australian Government, with the agreement of state and territory governments, has set two headline goals to guide our long term response to homelessness:

- *halve overall homelessness by 2020*
- *offer supported accommodation to all rough sleepers who need it by 2020.*
  (FaCHSIA, 2008)

Homelessness can be prevented by tackling the structural drivers of homelessness such as entrenched disadvantage, unemployment and the shortage of affordable housing; and targeting groups who are at risk of homelessness such as older people in housing stress, women and children leaving violence, Indigenous Australians and people leaving state care.

The response involves many portfolios in all levels of government. Significant major reforms are already under way such as the Closing the Gap Package for Indigenous Australians, the National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy and the proposed National Child Protection Framework. (FaCHSIA, 2008)

Definitions of Homelessness

Up until 2008, ABS had neither developed its own definition of homelessness nor any other definition and it did not provide official estimates of homelessness. (ABS, 2012) In September 2012 ABS released their 'Information Paper – A Statistical Definition of Homelessness.' The definition emerged following the establishment of a Homelessness Statistics Reference Group (HSRG) to "advise on the development, collection, compilation, production and dissemination of robust statistics for use in analysing, understanding and reporting on homelessness in Australia." Wide ranging consultation with other key stakeholders in homelessness policy and service delivery, as well as the views of the Prime Minister's Council on Homelessness informed the development of a new ABS definition of homelessness. (ABS, 2012)

"The ABS definition of homelessness has been developed for application to the general population in Australia." Work continues, to develop elements of a definition of homelessness from an Indigenous perspective, which the current definition does not adequately capture. (ABS, 2012)

Because of the complexity of homelessness from a social policy and service delivery perspective there are a wide range of views on what constitutes homelessness. Homelessness has been defined by the ABS as a lack of one or more of the elements that represent 'home'. These elements may include a sense of security, stability, privacy, safety and the ability to control living space.

> *When a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives they are considered homeless if their current living arrangement:*
>
> - *Is in a dwelling that is inadequate; or*
> - *Has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or*
> - *Does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations*
>
> *(ABS, 4922.0, Information Paper, 2012)*

The definition of homelessness adopted by the StreetCount has been the tri-partite *cultural definition* proposed by Professors Chamberlain and Mackenzie (2008) which considers homelessness in three broad categories – *primary, secondary and tertiary*. This definition has been widely used and has also informed the estimations of homelessness undertaken by Chamberlain and Mackenzie of homelessness using Census and other data in the past.

As a reaction to, and in the absence of any reliable data regarding the number of people experiencing Primary Homelessness in the City of Melbourne, StreetCount was established. The City of Melbourne StreetCount focuses on people who are experiencing *primary homelessness*.

The following definition of homelessness is central to Melbourne City Council's 2014-2017 Homelessness Strategy – Pathways . The definition provides a mechanism for Council to focus on the needs of two groups - rough sleepers and rooming house residents - and a framework for measuring progress on assistance to these groups.

Primary Homelessness: People without conventional accommodation such as those who 'sleep out', or use derelict buildings, cars, railway stations for shelter.

Secondary homelessness: people who frequently move from temporary accommodation such as emergency accommodation, refuges, and temporary shelters. People may use boarding houses or family accommodation just on a temporary basis.

Tertiary homelessness: people who live in rooming houses, boarding houses on medium or long-term where they do not have their own bathroom and kitchen facilities and tenure is not secured by a lease.

(Chamberlain and Mackenzie, 1992, p291)

Some caution is advised with regard to the three terms – chronic homelessness, rough sleeping and primary homeless.

> *There are important differences between rough sleeping, chronic and primary homelessness, and although some degree of slippage in policy and research discourse is inevitable it is crucial that policy makers, researchers and service providers adopt clear terminology.*
>
> (Johnson and Wylie, 2012)

- **Chronic homelessness** refers to the length of time people are homeless. Many chronically homeless people move between various forms of low quality accommodation (such as boarding houses) over long periods of time with only occasional periods of rough sleeping.

- **Rough sleeping** refers to people residing in public places such as the street, in cars, under bridges or in similar arrangements. Not all rough sleepers are chronically homeless although this presumption is generally true; some have only been homeless for a short period of time, (as demonstrated by StreetCount Data).

- **Primary homelessness** (as defined above) includes people sleeping rough as well as those in improvised dwellings.

Who are Melbourne's Rough Sleepers?

We now have a better understanding of Melbourne's rough sleepers then we probably ever have before. Several projects have been completed in recent years which have helped to further our understanding and build a knowledge base of homelessness in Melbourne.

Published in 2007, *On the Outside – Pathways in and Out of Homelessness*, Johnson, Gronda and Coutts, sought to 'examine the connections between the causes of homelessness, how people respond to homelessness and how they get out of homelessness,'   103 households were interviewed as they were leaving emergency accommodation and, after 12 months, 79 of those households were re-interviewed. This research has made an important contribution as instead of focusing on the demographic characteristics of the homeless population it focused on the biographical experiences of each person prior to becoming homeless for the first time. Using a pathways approach the research sought to further the existing knowledge by 'distinguishing between the paths that different groups of people travel in to homelessness, and to then examine what bearing different pathways into homelessness have on experiences of homelessness, and their routes out of homelessness.' (Johnson, Gronda & Coutts, 2007)

The *Homelessness in Melbourne* Research Project, commissioned by Melbourne City Council, showed that the longer people remain homeless, the more likely they are to experience at least one period of rough sleeping. (Chamberlain, Johnson & Theobold, 2007)

The report supported a wide range of other research that shows that the longer that people remain homeless, the more complex their social, emotional and health needs are likely to become. The average age of the people in the *Homelessness in Melbourne* report was 28 years, but 39% had first become homeless when they were 18 or younger.

The report suggested that the complexity of need experienced by homeless people requires multiple support strategies and recommends a number of improvements to the service system.

The report was based on 106 client surveys and 18 in-depth interviews with clients, as well as surveys of 53 agencies aimed to identify gaps in the service system and to further clarify the role of the City of Melbourne, but also provided more information on the nature and needs of those in primary homelessness in Melbourne.

Twenty-eight (28%) of the homeless people interviewed for the *Stage One of the Homelessness Research Project (2007*), reported sleeping rough (29 people). Based on this data, the number of rough sleepers in Melbourne at the time was estimated to be between 56 to 120 people.

The needs of this group were very complex and included;

- Health services
- Material aid
- Accommodation
- Recreation and social space
- Information
- Culturally appropriate space
- Hygiene
- General support

The report also indicated that fifty four percent (54%) of those who reported being turned away from services had been moving around for more than two years compared to 14% who

had been moving around for less than 6 months. In the full sample of of 4,291 homeless households in Melbourne about 49 per cent of the homeless had slept rough. While most were chronically homeless in that they had been homeless for long periods of time, only two per cent were sleeping rough on a more or less permanent basis. (Chamberlain, Johnson & Theobold, 2007)

The Commonwealth Government White Paper recognised rough sleepers as having complex needs and a particular vulnerability to illness culminating in a mortality rate four times that of the general population. (FaCHSIA, 2008)

The National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPA) provides Victoria with funding to provide assertive outreach and housing focused support specifically to rough sleepers. HomeGround Services, the Salvation Army and the Royal District Nursing Service are working together to deliver the Melbourne Street to Home (MS2H) response which assesses the health and housing needs of people in primary homelessness in the inner city utilising a screening tool known as the Vulnerability Index. MS2H provide long-term (12 month) support to stabilise people's health in the context of stable housing with a view to 'intervene with rough sleepers by wrapping services around clients in order to end their homelessness permanently,' as prescribed by the White Paper.

The MS2H 'registry week' conducted in the City of Melbourne to identify suitable participants for the program. There have been four Registry weeks conducted since the program's inception when workers and volunteers have gone out between 3am and 7am over a period of 3 days to locate rough sleepers, these have occurred in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013. When rough sleepers are located they complete the Vulnerability Index survey to identify those 'most likely to die within the next five years if they do not find housing and support.' (HomeGround Services, 2011)

Of the rough sleepers counted in 2010 and 2011, 51% and 64% respectively were identified as vulnerable with characteristics including the following:

- 3 ER or hospital visits last year
- 3 ER visits last 3 months
- >60
- HIV +/ Aids
- Liver Disease
- Cold/Wet weather injury
- Tri-Morbid (co-occurring psychiatric, substance abuse and chronic medical condition)

Counting Methods

Point-in-time or snapshot counts like StreetCount have strengths and weaknesses. Researchers point out the importance of using both 'point in time' or census counts alongside enumeration of the number of homeless people who flow through services over a particular period. (Chamberlain & Mackenzie 2001, Rossi 1989, Fopp 1998)

To obtain estimates of homelessness in the past ABS census data was complemented by SAAP (Supported Accommodation and Assistance Program) data, today data comes from the NDCA (National Data Collection Agency). SAAP data and NDCA data however only accounts for the individuals receiving service through the Homeless Support System.   The virtue of projects like StreetCount is that they include those who may not be receiving service.

The ABS acknowledges that counting the primary population, 'is a major practical challenge'. The City of Melbourne Research project - stage one report further notes that many rough sleepers go out of their way to be invisible and these people are not recorded, so no count can claim to identify all homeless people and Berry (2007) estimated that between 40% and 70% of people are not captured in one off counts.

In 2008, following widespread discussion in Australia about the meaning and measurement of social inclusion and exclusion, the ABS recognised the need to develop robust and transparent homelessness statistics across a range of ABS datasets. This decision coincided with the release of the Federal Government White Paper on Homelessness, (2008) which highlighted homelessness as an important social issue in Australia and identified the need to "turn off the tap", "break the cycle" and "arrest chronic homelessness". (ABS, 2012)

There have been a number of components introduced by the ABS to their census method which are also utilised by the StreetCount. These include utilising local service providers and their knowledge of the local area to identify places where people may be sleeping rough, promoting the census in the lead up to the event and utilising the relationships that agencies have with people in the primary population to assist in engaging with the target group. Observation has also been identified as an accepted method for counting people sleeping rough with collectors being asked to record sex, estimated age and location. (Chamberlain & Mackenzie, 2008)

The ABS further recommends that counting the primary population occur over a number of days rather than just on census night, enabling collectors to capture more of the people moving around. It is advised to ensure the same collectors are stationed at service delivery points to minimise double counting. (Chamberlain & Mackenzie 2008, Harvie 2011)

The methods prescribed above by ABS have also been adopted by the Melbourne Street to Home initiative who count the primary homeless in Melbourne by conducting a 'registry week,' where trained staff connected to local services conduct a health and well-being assessment of those in the primary homeless population to establish a 'Vulnerability Index.' (HomeGround Services, 2011)

Other Data Sources

> *Primary homelessness includes all people without conventional accommodation. This is the segment of the homeless population where there is greatest risk of undercounting. In practical terms, it is not possible to discover the whereabouts of every person without shelter across Australia. (ABS, 2008)*

StreetCount goes some way towards enumerating rough sleepers, but is best considered alongside other similar data sources. There are a number of available and emerging data sources that will help provide a more exact picture of primary homelessness in Melbourne:

Australian Bureau of Statistics

Both the ABS Counting the Homeless and the SAAP National Data Collection changed in 2011. The ABS completed a methodological review of the 2006 Counting the Homeless initiative to provide a different method for the 2011 Census. The 2011 Census estimates 105,000 people were homeless in Australia on Census night, the rate being 49 persons for 10,000 persons enumerated in the 2011 Census. This number shows an increase of 8% since 2006. Of all homeless persons, 6% are believed to be sleeping rough or in improvised dwellings, (experiencing primary homelessness). (ABS, 2012)

The ABS Census data for 2011 indicates that the City of Melbourne had the third highest number of homeless people (1,232) in Victoria after Dandenong (1,634) and Port Phillip (1,562). In the 2011 ABS census data for the City Of Melbourne 68% of the homeless population were male and 32% were female. The 2011 census data also showed that 65% of people counted as homeless in the City were aged between 19 and 44 years old. (Cited in CoM, 2014)

Figure 1: Overview of the 2011 Homelessness Census data for City of Melbourne (Cited in Draft- Pathways: Homelessness Strategy, City of Melbourne 2014 - 2017)
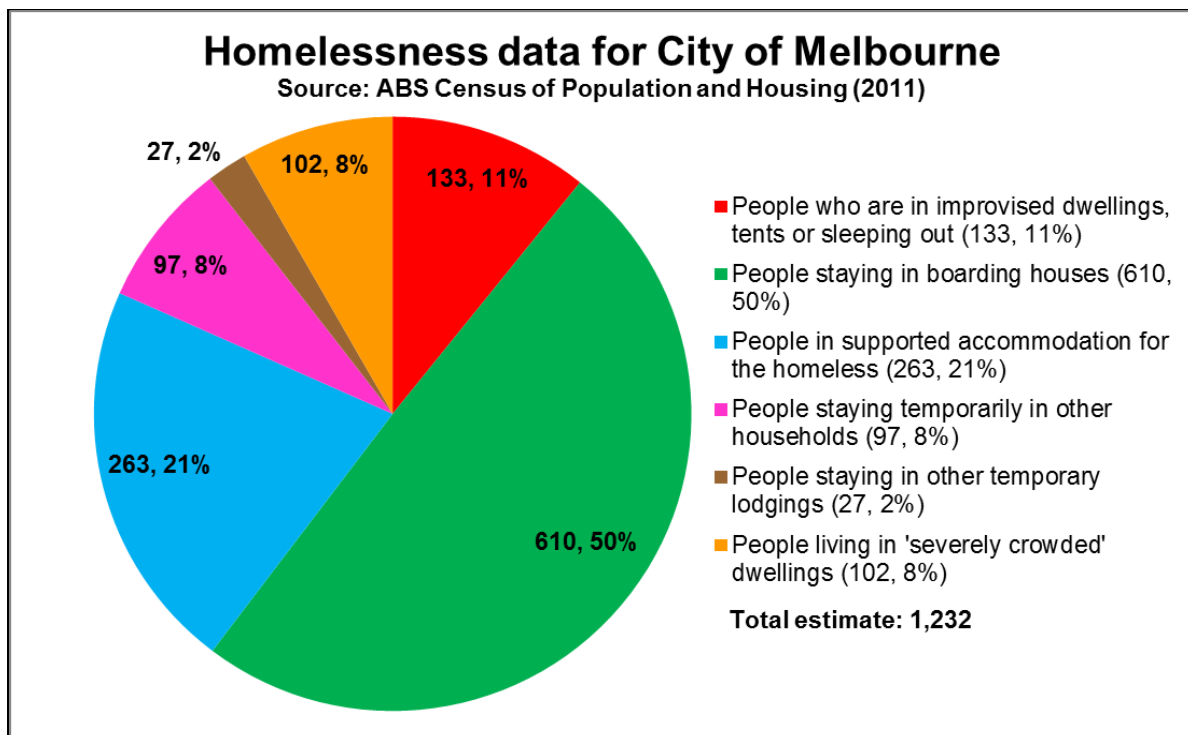
Estimates of homelessness by the Australian Bureau of Statistics are made utilising a special enumeration strategy. The strategy is outlined in Census of Population and Housing estimating Homelessness, 2011 (cat. No. 2049.0) Census data is supplemented by the NDCA (National Data Collection Agency) and more recently the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, through the Australian Institute of Housing and Welfare.

In 2011 the approach for counting rough sleepers was to focus on 'hot spots', using information received from service providers. ABS then worked closely with service and accommodation providers in awareness raising and local engagement in those areas, and recruited 550 specialist field staff to help count people sleeping rough. As in 2006, a collection period of one week spanning Census night was used to cover the various 'hot spot' locations. The use of special collectors, and particularly staff recruited from homelessness services, is designed to not only use their expertise to locate people sleeping rough, but also to ensure that the information collected relates only to those people sleeping rough on Census night (with no likelihood that they were enumerated elsewhere) and that they are not enumerated more than once in the 'hot spot' locations. In 2011, the Special Short Form used in 2006 was again generally used to enumerate rough sleepers. (ABS, 2011)

Melbourne Street to Home

The Melbourne Street to Home, 'registry week' (as defined earlier) is the other method of counting the primary homeless population in Melbourne. The data collected through MS2H registry week in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 found the following:

- In 2010, MS2H counted 190 people sleeping rough in their count area and surveyed 170 of those people were surveyed
- In 2011, 182 people were counted and 138 of those were surveyed
- In 2012, a total of 82 people were counted
- In 2013, 124 people were counted

It is difficult to compare these results to the StreetCount data from those corresponding years as the geographical count area for MS2H was more expansive then that of StreetCount; including parts of St Kilda, Prahran, Brunswick and Maribyrnong. The information collected was also more extensive with the focus on assessment of support need through the Vulnerability Index that focused primarily on health. (HomeGround Services, 2013)

Australian Institute for Health and Wellbeing

In 2012-13 specialist homelessness services assisted over 244,000 clients. Of these clients, 54% were at risk of homelessness, and 46% were already homeless when they first began receiving support (22% of those who were homeless had no shelter or were living in an improvised dwelling). (AIHW, 2013)

StreetCount Data from Adelaide and Sydney

Street counts in Adelaide and Sydney (and to a lesser extent, Parramatta) are important because they provide a different picture about how homelessness plays out in Australia's capital cities. Both counts also employ a slightly different approach to Melbourne, importantly including two counts each year – in summer and winter. Sydney City figures show that numbers on the street in summer are around 30% higher than in winter while numbers in crisis accommodation are around 30% higher in winter.

The characteristics of rough sleepers captured in these counts is very similar to those of Melbourne rough sleepers – predominantly middle aged, male and single and long term homeless with complex needs and an over-representation of Aboriginal people.

These and the 'Street to Home' data tend to indicate a small group of 'hard core' rough sleepers who may generally be more itinerate than sheltered. In Adelaide 30 of the 40 people indicated that they had spent most of their time sleeping rough over the last 12 months. (City of Adelaide, 2009)

StreetCount2014 Data Analysis Summary

In total, 142 people are recorded in this analysis:
- 59 people were observed during the Early Morning Street Count but not surveyed;
- 39 people were surveyed during the Early Morning Street Count; and
- 44 people were surveyed during the Day Count at service agencies.

For the purposes of this report, where n=142, the entire number of people counted are being discussed and where n=83 only those who were surveyed are being discussed.

Demographic Data (n=142)
- 72% of those counted were male and 14% were female. A further 14% were unable to be identified due to being asleep
- The majority of the people counted sleeping rough in 2014 were aged between 26 and 60 years old. With 40% in the 26-40 year old bracket and 26% in the 41-60 year-old bracket. Only one person aged under 18 years old was counted with 13% in the 18-25 year old group and 7%, or a total of 10 people aged over 60 years. For 19 people or 13% of those 'observed' during the StreetCount, it was not possible to identify the persons age.
- The presenting unit of the vast majority of people counted was single at 68%. There were a further 12% who reported being a part of a couple.

Location (n=142)
The location of where people were sleeping was either recorded through observation or asked where they had slept. 60% percent of people had slept or were sleeping in the Central City and the remaining 16% slept in North Melbourne, 20% in East Melbourne and 4 % in West Melbourne.

Type of Shelter (n=142)
34% of the people counted had slept or were sleeping on the street, 27% of those people counted had slept or were sleeping in a park, 9% had slept in squats and only 1 person which is less than 1% had slept in a car. This year, train stations were included in the form as a separate item and 15% of people counted had slept in these locations. The remaining 14% had slept or were observed sleeping in a variety of other locations.

Length of Time in Current Location (n=83)
Of those who were surveyed, 45% of those surveyed had been staying in their current location for under one month, including 29% who had been in their current location for less than a week. Seven percent had been in their current location for between one and two months and 19% for 2-6 months, 10% for 6-12 months. 16% of all those interviewed had been in their current location for more than one year. 3% did not answer the question.

Number of Places Stayed In Last Month (n=83)
32% of those surveyed had only stayed in the one place in the last month. 15% had stayed in 2-3 places in the last month and 23% had stayed in 4-6 places in the last month. 13% of those surveyed had stayed in more than seven places in the last month. 17% of those surveyed did not answer the question.

Length of Time Moving Around (n=83)
Nearly all of the survey participants had a long history of transience with only 4 of the people surveyed having been homeless for less than 1 month with all the other participants either unable to tell us how long they had been moving around ranging from more than 1 year up to "all my life" for several of the participants asked. Forty nine people (60%) had been moving

around for more than a year with 33% homeless for more than 5 years twelve of whom had been homeless for more than ten years and eight for longer than twenty years.

Where would they like to Live? (n=83)

31% of rough sleepers surveyed said they would like to live in Melbourne Central City or surrounding suburbs in the City of Melbourne. 52% of those surveyed would like to live outside of the City of Melbourne, including answers such as 'the bush,' 'country Victoria', 'Hawaii', etc. 17% did not answer the question.

Country of Birth (n=83)

Sixty Six people (79%) identified Australia as their country of birth, six people (7%) identified as New Zealanders and three (4%) as Indian. A further six people (10%) came from a number of other countries including France, Italy, Oman, Philippines, USA and Vietnam.

Identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (n=83)

Ten people or 12% of rough sleepers identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders compared to 7% in 2012, 3% in 2011, 12% in 2010 and 10% in 2009.

Service Usage and Type (n=83)

People who responded to the survey were asked whether they would seek assistance or a meal at a service later that day. Seventy two people or (87%) said that they would use a service later in the day; this is a big increase up from 57% in 2012. This included people who were interviewed at day centres, but who indicated that they would use a further service that day. People nominated a variety of places including; Ozanam Community, Salvation Army, Sacred Heart Mission, St Mary's House of Welcome, St Peters and Food Vans.

Public Housing (n=83)

56% of the rough sleepers surveyed said they were **not** on the public housing waiting list and 37% reported that they were on the public housing waiting list. 7% did not answer this question. More than 50% of those who reported being on the public housing waiting list had been waiting for over two years. 10% had been on the list 1- 2 years. The proportion of those waiting less than six months appears to have dropped with successive StreetCounts, while the proportion of those waiting for more than two years appears to have remained relatively similar.

Voluntary Identifier Code (n=83)

98% of those surveyed allowed their initials and month and date of birth to be recorded to minimise double-ups. Six of the people counted this year had also been counted in previous years with another 5 whose identifiers did not exactly match but may have been counted before judging based on the similarities in their codes.

StreetCount2014 Charts

### Information from both interviews and observation

The age, gender, relationship status, location and type of shelter were recorded for all of those who came into contact with StreetCount – one hundred and forty two people. Data for these items are presented in figures one to five below. The information was recorded through observation for fifty nine people and 83 people provided the information by responding to survey questions.

Chart 1- Age of rough sleepers - StreetCount2014 (n=142)
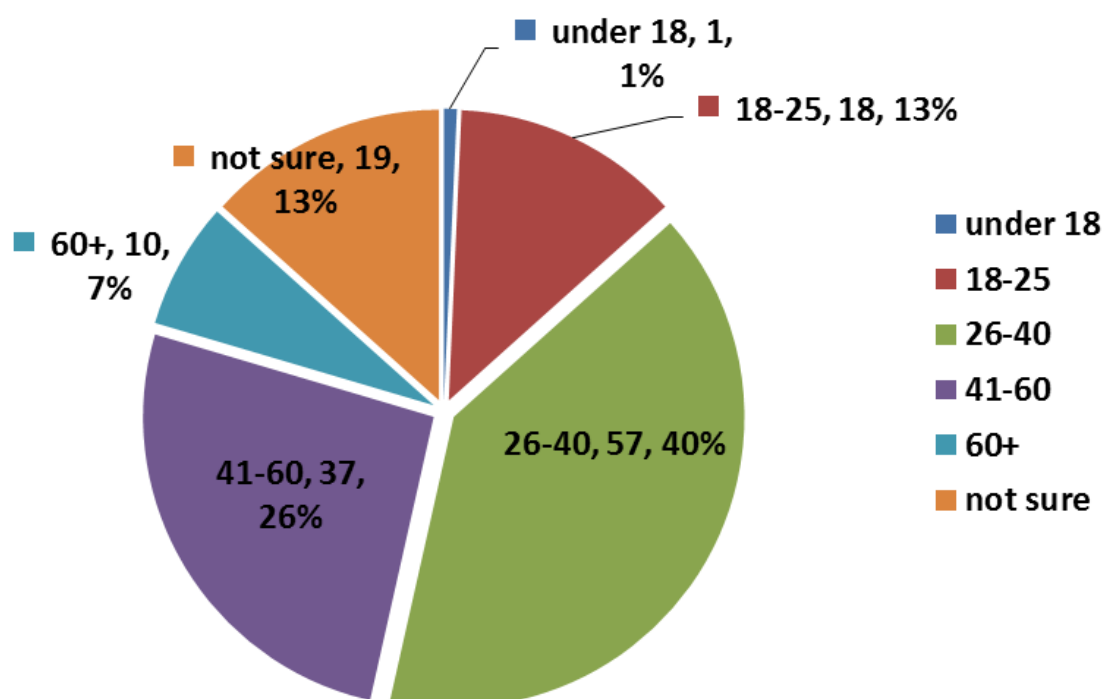
The majority of the people counted sleeping rough in 2014 were aged between 26 and 60 years old. With 40% in the 26-40 year old bracket and 26% in the 41-60 year old bracket. Only one person aged under 18 years old was counted with 13% in the 18-25 year old group and 7%, or a total of 10 people aged over 60 years. The oldest person counted this year was 77 years old. For 19 people or 13% of those 'observed' during the StreetCount, it was not possible to identify the persons age.

Chart 2 : Gender of rough sleepers - StreetCount2014 (n=142)

unsure,
20, 14%

female,
20, 14%

male, 102,
72%

■ male

■ female

■ unsure
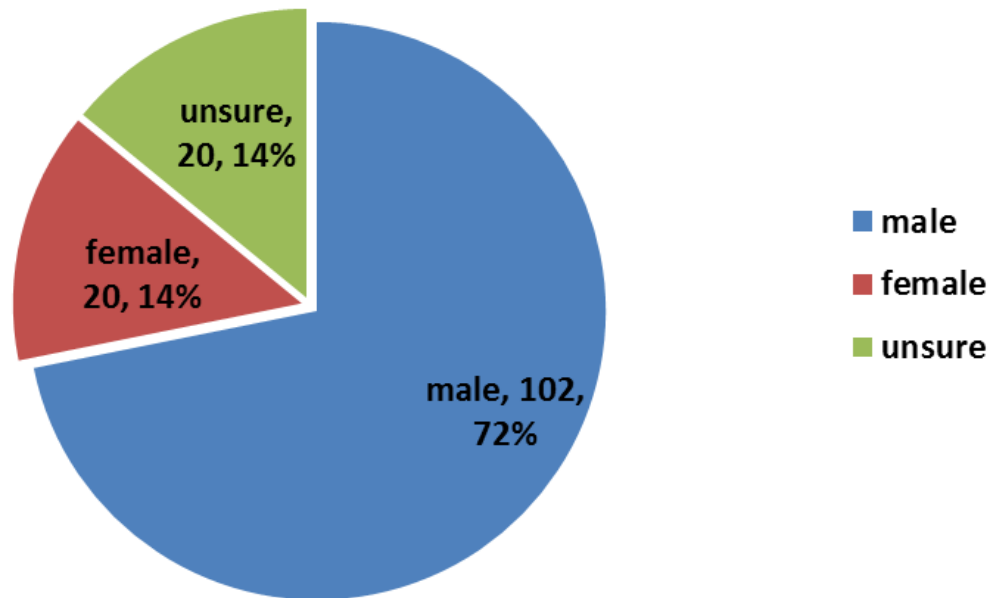
102 Men (72%) and 20 Women were counted in 2014 with the gender of 20 noted as unknown. The unknown responses were gathered by the observation of people who were asleep and concealed either by blankets or by other means.
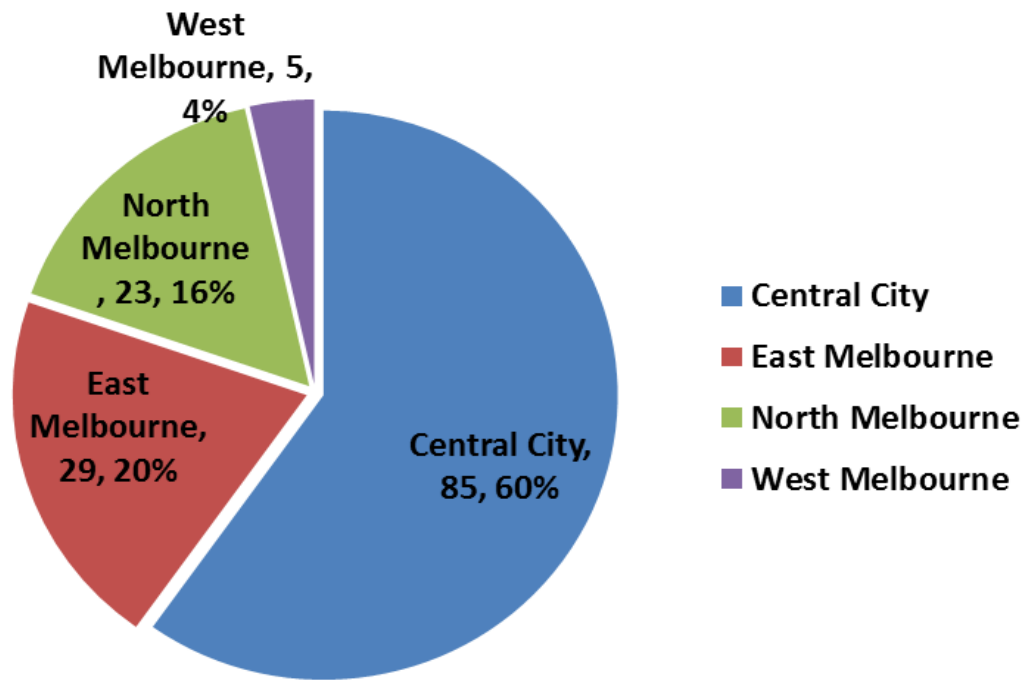
Eighty Five people (60%) had slept or were sleeping in the Central City. Twenty three people had slept in North Melbourne, 5 people in West Melbourne and Twenty Nine in East Melbourne.

other, 1, 1%

not sure, 19, 13%

unrelated group, 9, 6%

couple, 17, 12%

single, 96, 68%

- single
- couple
- unrelated group
- not sure
- other
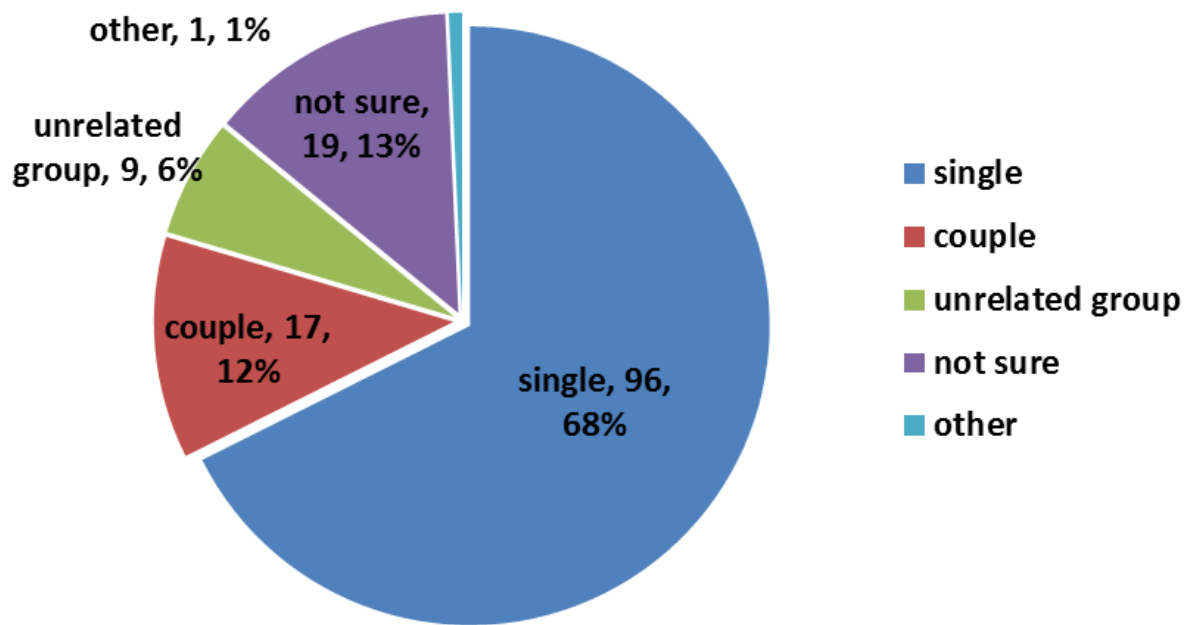
The majority (68%) of those recorded in the count were single people. There was an increase in couples counted this year with 12% being recorded as part of couple and nine people (6%) were part of an unrelated group. The relationship status of 19 people could not be identified.
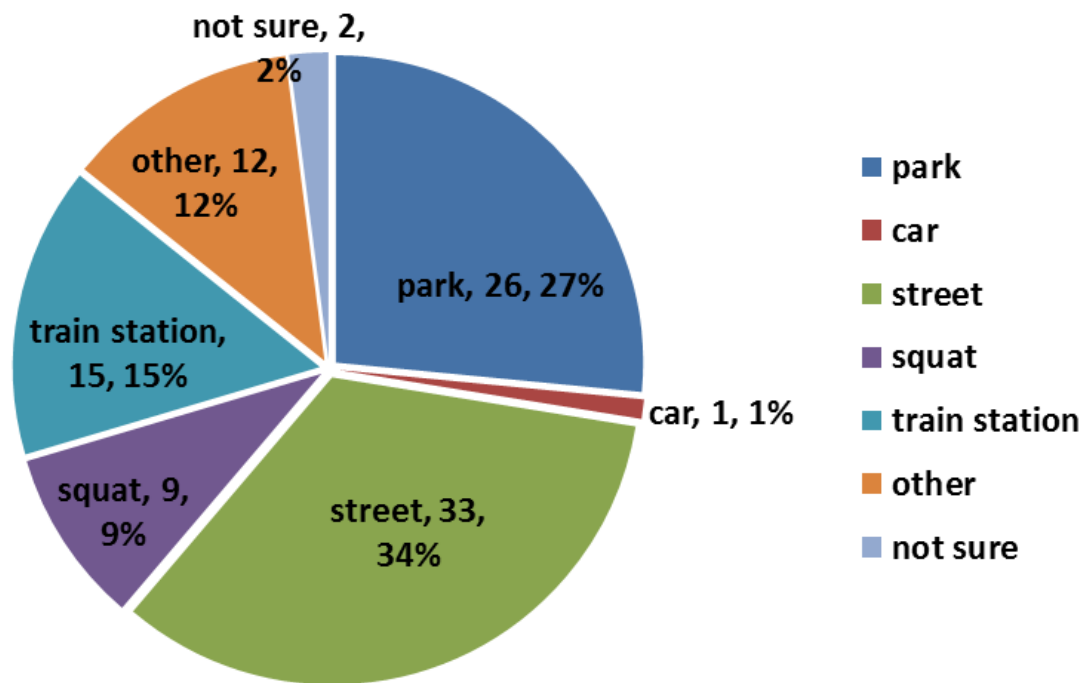
Of the 98 people surveyed or observed during the early morning, one third of the people counted (34%) had slept or were sleeping on the street, and a further fifteen people (15%) slept in a train station. Twenty six people (27%) slept in a park and nine people slept in a squat. Twelve people (12%) were recorded as having slept in a variety of other places including car parks, under bridges, in a train carriage, building foyer, etc. One person slept in a car.

N.B. These figures do not include those surveyed during the DayCount as 'type of shelter' was not asked in the Day Count Survey.

Information from Surveys

Eighty three people responded to the StreetCount survey, providing a range of information about the length of time they had spent in their current location, the number of places they had stayed recently and the period of time they had been moving around. Information about these data items is presented in charts 6 to 13.

Chart 6: Length of time in current location - StreetCount2014 (n=83)
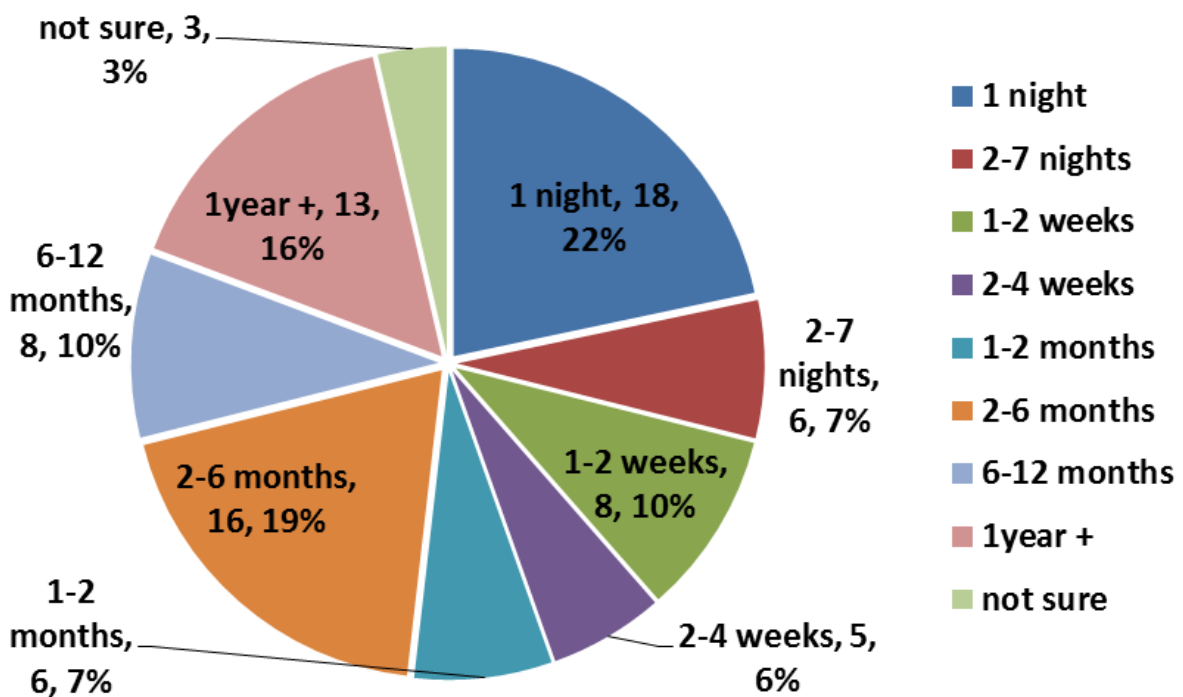
This year the responses were split with roughly half of those surveyed having stayed in their current location for more than 2 months and the other half less than 2 months. Eighteen people or 22% had only stayed the one night in their current location and at the other end of the spectrum 16% had been staying in their current location for more than a year.

Thirty eight people (47%) had stayed in three places or fewer in the month before StreetCount. Thirty people(36%) had stayed at more than four places, including eleven people who had stayed at seven places or more. Fourteen people (17%) surveyed either chose not to provide information or could not remember the number of places that they had stayed at over the last month.
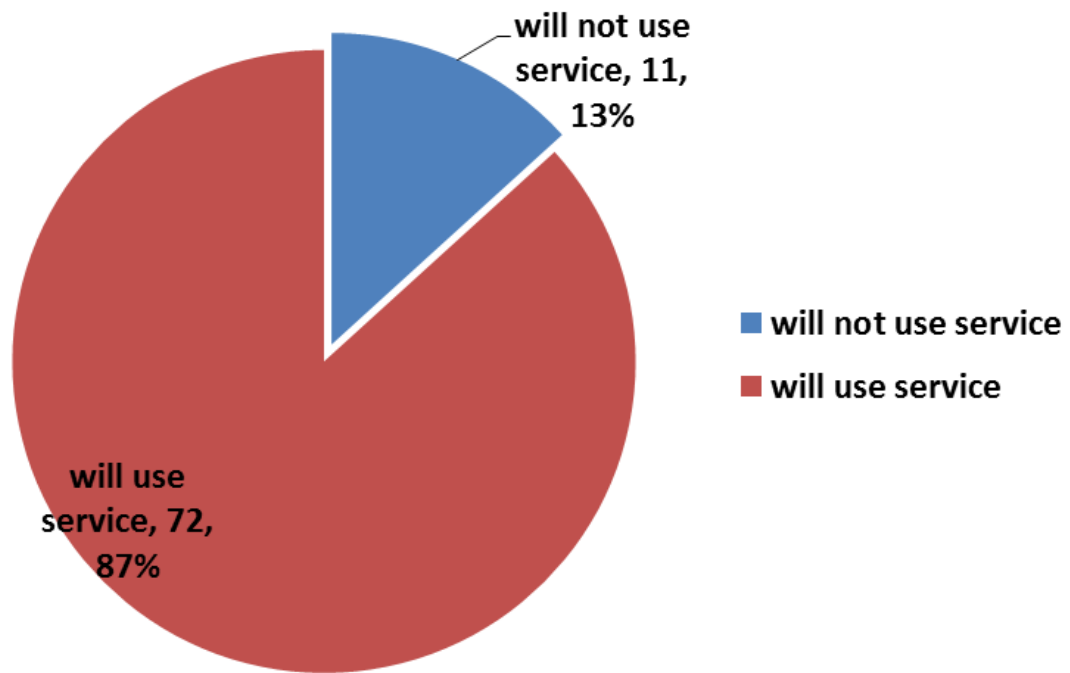
Nearly all of the survey participants had a long history of transience with only 4 of the people surveyed having been homeless for less than 1 month with all the other participants either unable to tell us how long they had been moving around ranging from more than 1 year up to "all my life" for several of the participants asked. Forty nine people (60%) had been moving around for more than a year with 33% homeless for more than 5 years. Twelve of whom had been homeless for more than ten years and eight for longer than twenty years.

People who responded to the survey were asked whether they would seek assistance or a meal at a service later that day. Seventy two people or (87%) said that they would use a service later in the day; this is a big increase up from 57% in 2012. This included people who were interviewed at day centres, but who indicated that they would use a further service that day. People nominated a variety of places including Ozanam Community, Salvation Army, Sacred Heart Mission, St Mary's House of Welcome, St Peters and Food Vans.

India 3
4%

Other
Country 8
10%

New Zealand 6
7%

- Australia 66
- New Zealand 6
- Other Country 8
- India 3

Australia 66
79%

Sixty Six people (79%) identified Australia as their country of birth, six people (7%) identified as New Zealanders and three (4%) as Indian, two people were from the United Kingdom. A further six people (10%) came, one each from France, Italy, Oman, Philippines, USA and Vietnam. We have never recorded anyone with India as their country of origin in the past so this is a new group in the StreetCount. Out of interest the ages of these three men were 23, 34 and 41 and they had been moving around for 1-4 weeks, 6-12 months and 2-5 years.
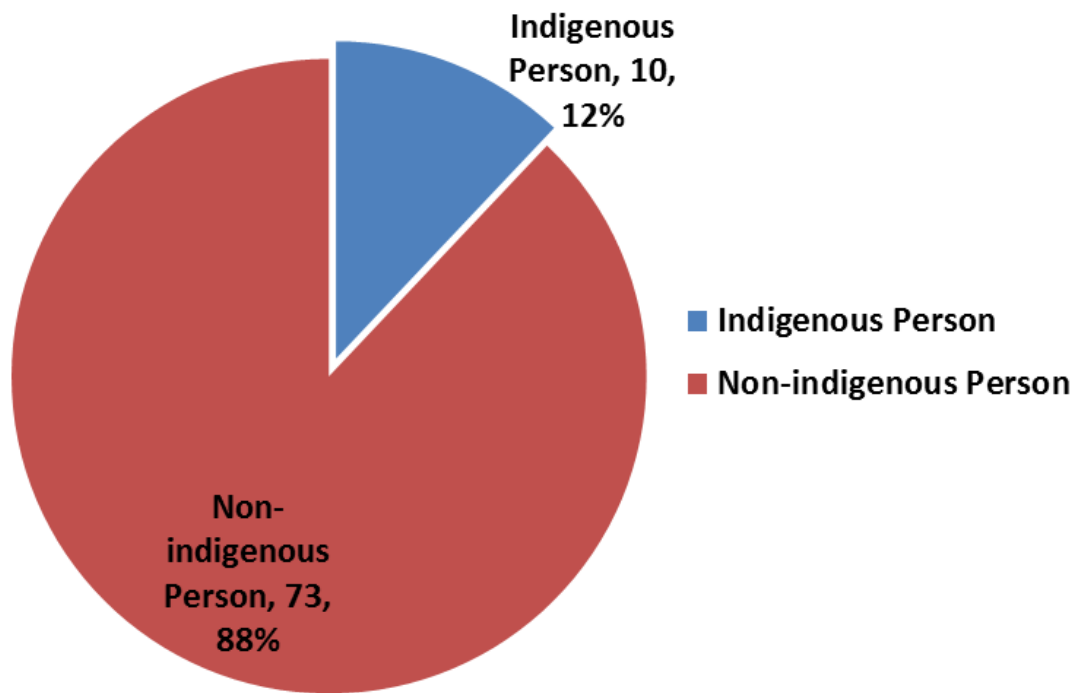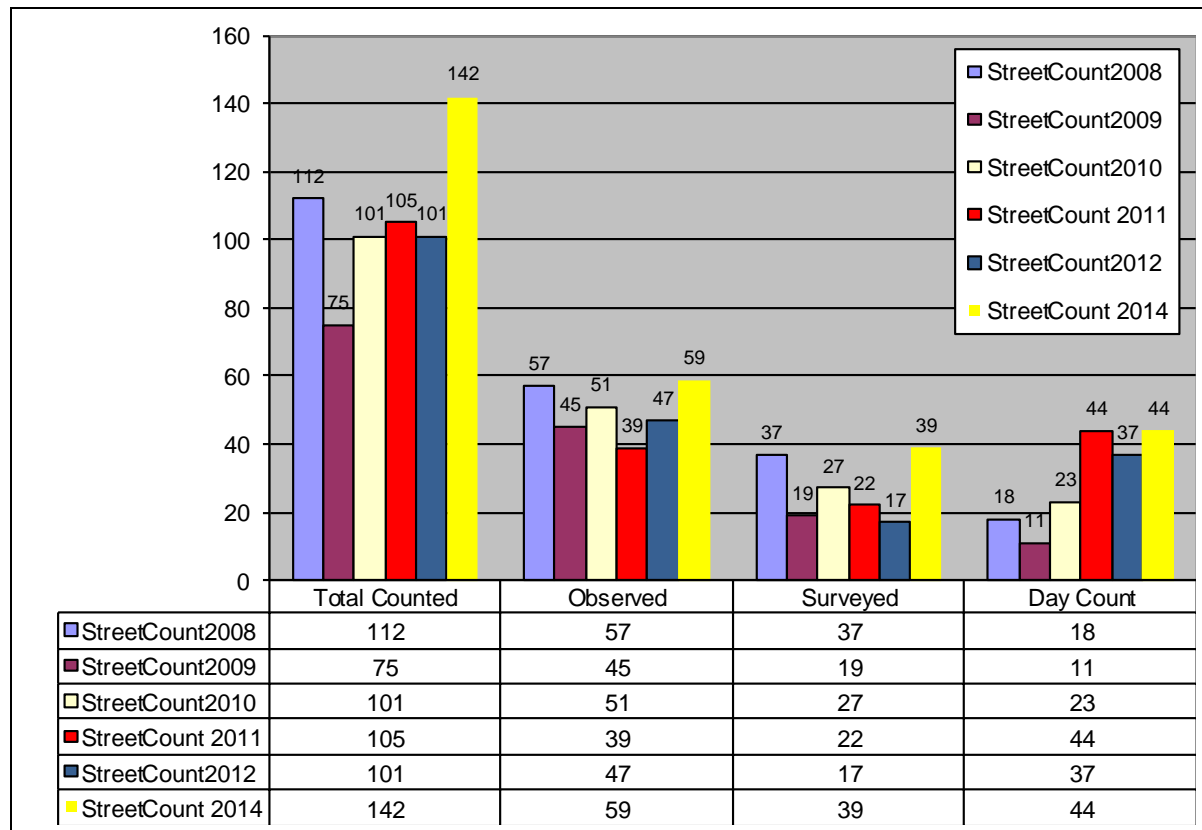
Ten people (12%) identified as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin.

Comparison of StreetCount 2008 - 2014

Charts in this section provide a comparison of key StreetCount over the six years of the count – from 2008 to 2014. The charts allow for simple comparison between years and determination of trends where they exist. The high level of consistency of approach and questions from year to year allows valid comparisons to be drawn.

Chart 12: Overall StreetCount comparison 2008-2014

	Total Counted	Observed	Surveyed	Day Count
StreetCount2008	112	57	37	18
StreetCount2009	75	45	19	11
StreetCount2010	101	51	27	23
StreetCount 2011	105	39	22	44
StreetCount2012	101	47	17	37
StreetCount 2014	142	59	39	44

One hundred and forty two people were recorded in the 2014 StreetCount compared to one hundred and one in 2012, one hundred and five in2011, one hundred and one in 2010, seventy-five in 2009 and one hundred and twelve in 2008. Six hundred and thirty six people have been counted over the last six years, including three hundred and thirty eight people who have consented to be interviewed.

As mentioned in the methodology, this year a slight change in methodology occurred with the advent of a flyer which was placed next to people who were observed sleeping during the StreetCount. The flyer informed the sleeper that StreetCount was happening and encouraged them to contact one of the services conducting the StreetCount to be counted. When the increase in numbers sleeping rough was first identified there was some concern that the introduction of the flyer may have disproportionately impacted on the numbers by increasing the number of people counted twice, as both an observation and as a Day Count survey.

Table 1: 2014 - Collection Method

Year	Survey		Day count - Surveyed		Total Surveyed	Observation		TOTAL counted	
2014	39	(27%)	44	31%)	83 (58%)	59	(42%)	142	(100%)
2012	17	(17%)	37	37%)	54 (53%)	47	(47%)	101	(100%)
2011	22	21%)	44	(42%)	66 (63%)	39	(37%)	105	(100%)
2010	27	27%)	23	(23%)	45 (50%)	51	(50%)	101	(100%)
2009	19	25%)	11	(11%)	30 (40%)	45	(60%)	75	(100%)
2008	37	(33%)	18	(16%)	55 (49%)	57	(51%)	112	(100%)
Average	25%		27%		45%	48%		100%	

Looking at the distribution of count method between Survey, Observation and Day Count as percentages in Table 1 above helps restore confidence that the risk of over-counting has not been unreasonably inflated. Our most reliable count method is the surveys which are conducted in the morning StreetCount, followed by the surveys conducted during the Day Count.   In 2014 the number of surveys conducted during both the StreetCount and DayCount have been above average with combined total of 58% compared to the average 45%. The number of observations were well below average at 42% compared to 48%.

The risk of double counting has always been present in the StreetCount as there have been no checks in place to account for possible double ups. The inherent undercounting which is believed to occur in counts of this nature (as detailed in the literature review) could be seen to balance out the risk of an overall over count.
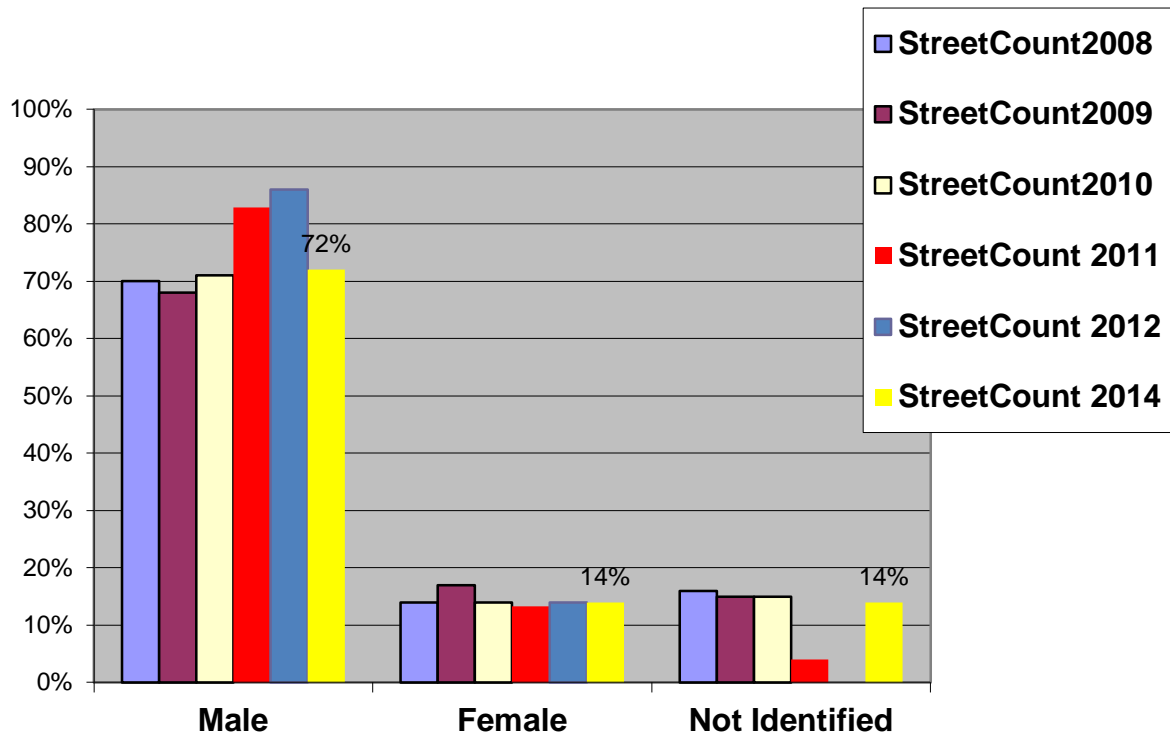
On average 75% of those counted each year are men. Women are not strongly represented in the count. The gender of between ten and fifteen per cent cannot be identified each year.
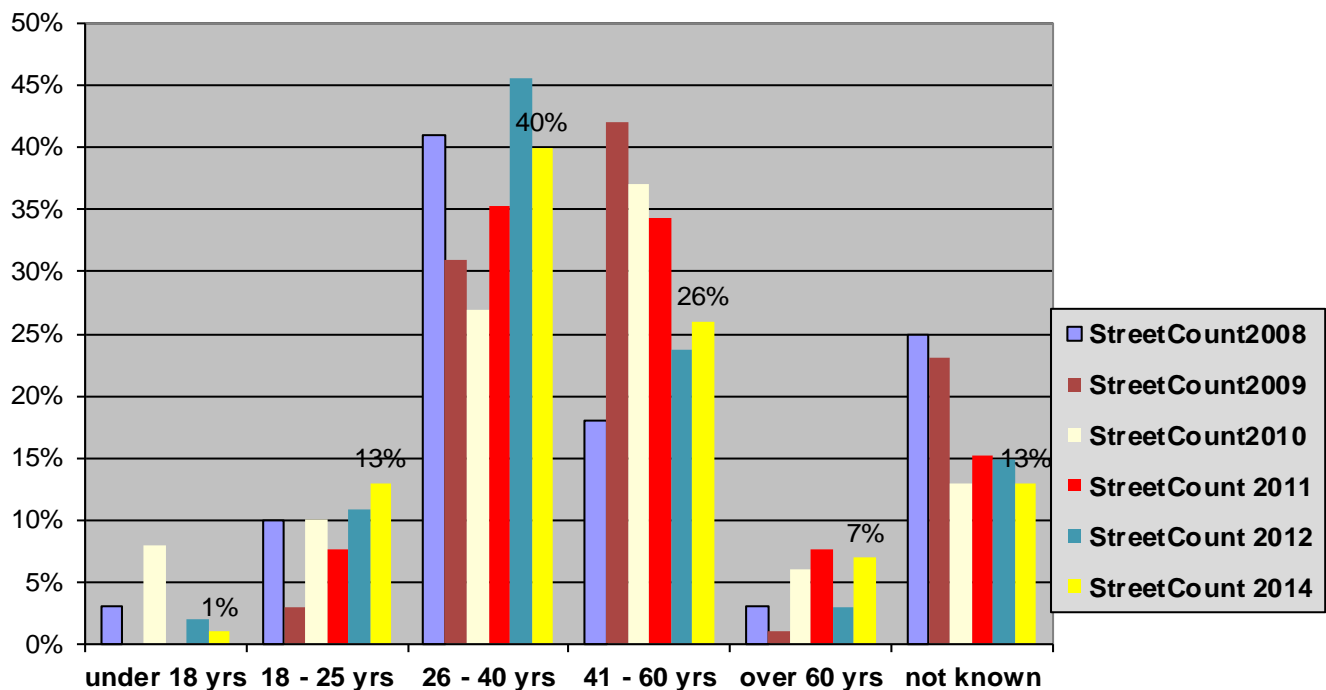
Most people recorded in the count are aged between twenty six and sixty years of age, with around one third between 25 and 40 years and one third between 40 and 60 years. This year we saw an increase in the number of people aged 18-25 as a proportion of the overall. The numbers of young people recorded in the count varies considerably between years. Fourteen people under the age of eighteen were included in StreetCounts over the last five years with one of those recorded this year in 2014. No one under the age of 18 was recorded in 2009 and 2011.
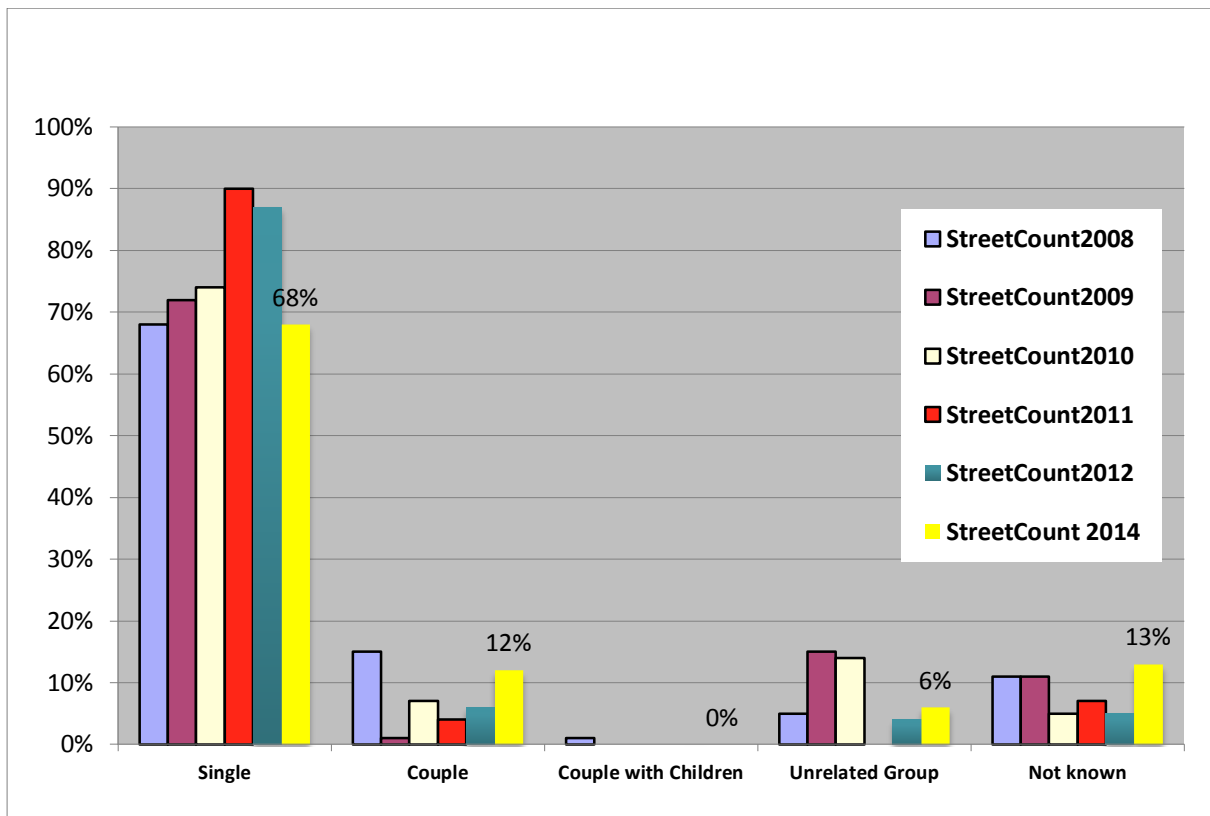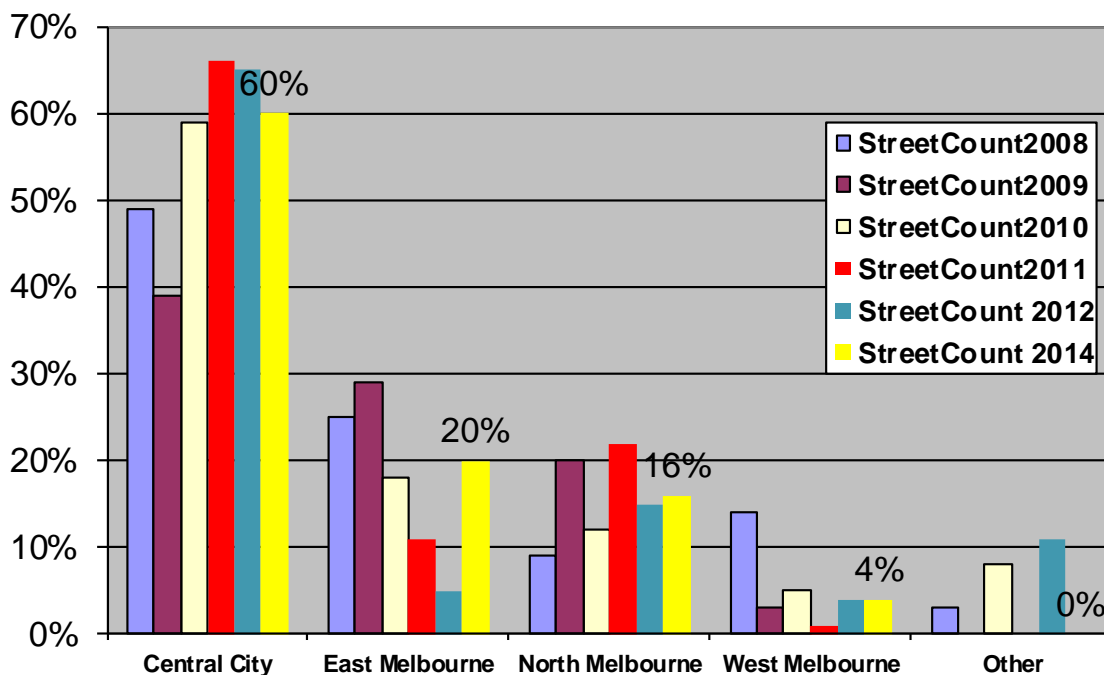
Generally between seventy and ninety percent of those who participate in the count are single people. This year we saw a reduction in the number identified as singles and an increase in the number of couples and people who were recorded as unknown for their relationship status.

Most people were recorded as sleeping in the Central City. Following recommendations from the 2011 StreetCount technical report a new question was included on the Day Count survey to ask people what area they slept in last night. This has allowed for more accurate reporting as formerly the area slept last night was attributed to the area in which the service conducting the Day Count survey was located.
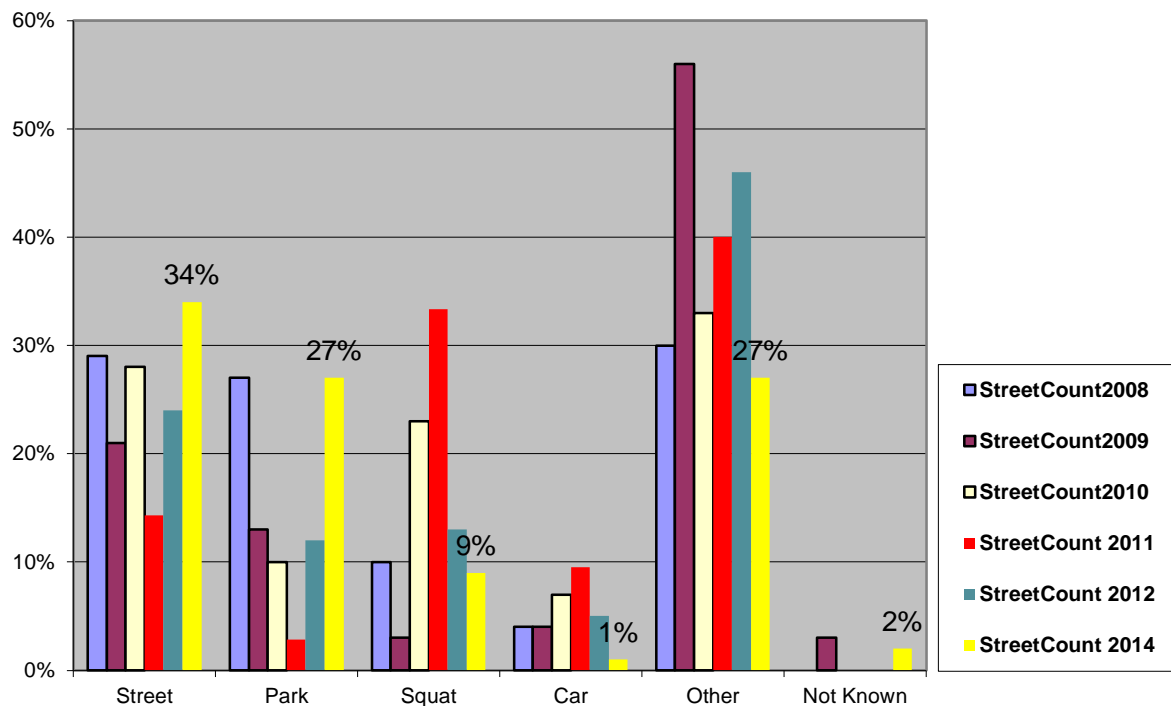
People sleep in a wide variety of places – rough sleepers listed public toilets, bridges, fast food outlets, train stations, car parks and churches during interview. From 2010 the Salvation Army outreach program actively sought to engage people who use known squats, which accounts for the increase in this category since that time. In 2012, train stations were listed as a separate question choice and these accounted for 64% of the 'other' category in that year. In 2014, 15 people were found or reported to be sleeping in train stations, 33 on the street, 26 in parks and gardens, 9 in squats and 12 in the 'other category' including building foyers, train carriages, etc.
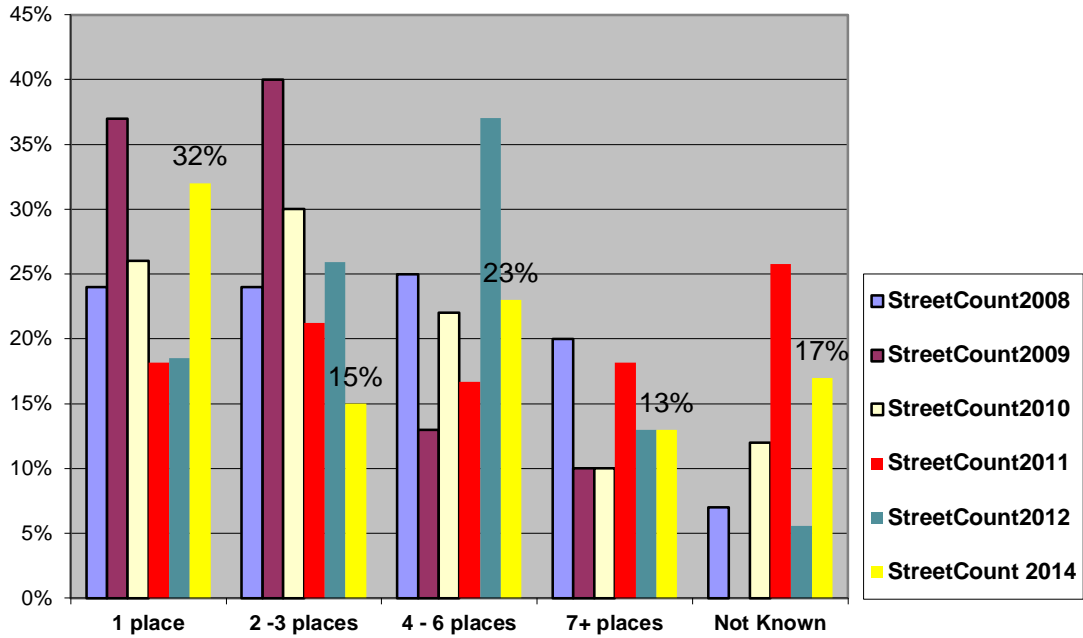
About half (52%) on average of those with known answers recorded over the five years report moving between only one to three places over the course of a month. The remaining 48% move around between four and seven places. Fewer people appear to be highly mobile, moving around between seven to twelve places in a month
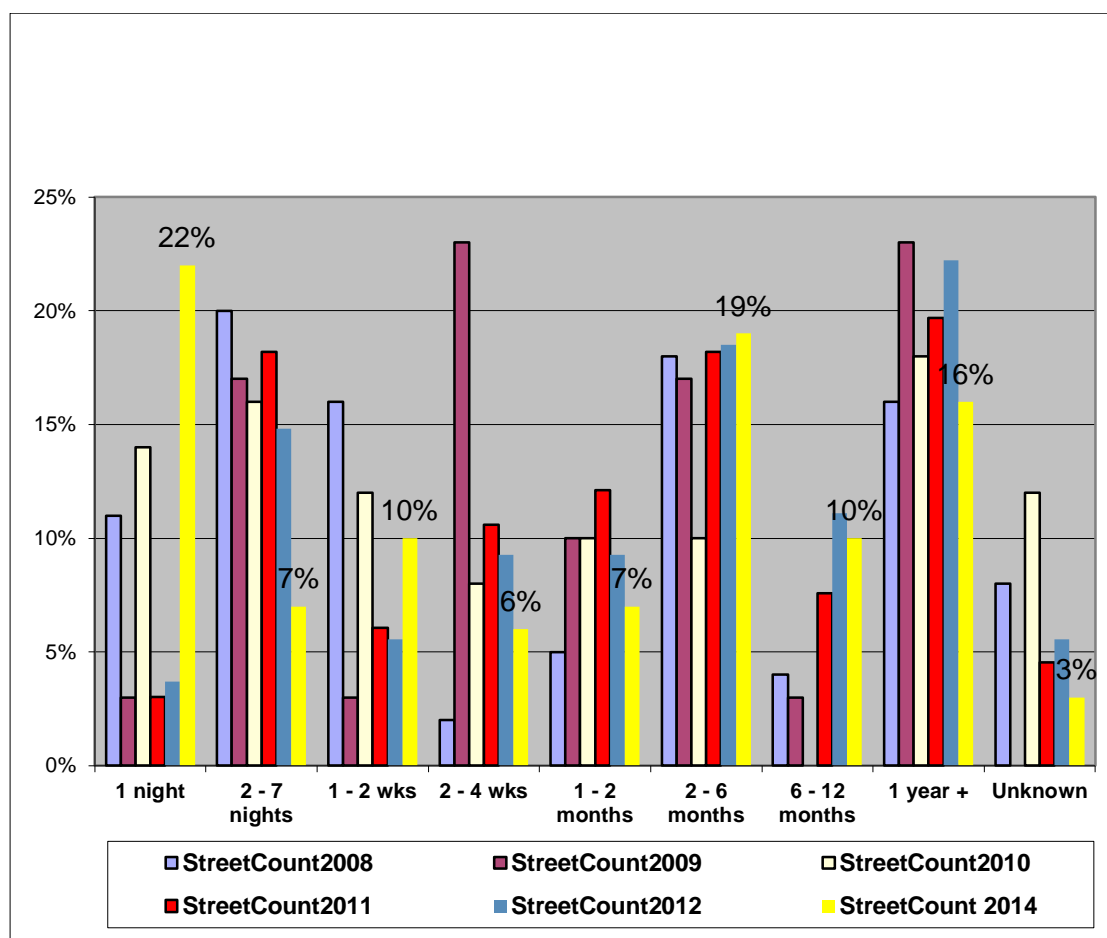
This year we have seen a large increase in the number of people who reported being in their current location for only one night. Roughly 50% of people recorded in the count, on average, had been in their current location for up to two months, another 10% had been in the one location for between 6 and 12 months with 17% reporting that they had been in the same location for in excess of a year.

Chart 20: Length of time moving around comparison 2008-2014
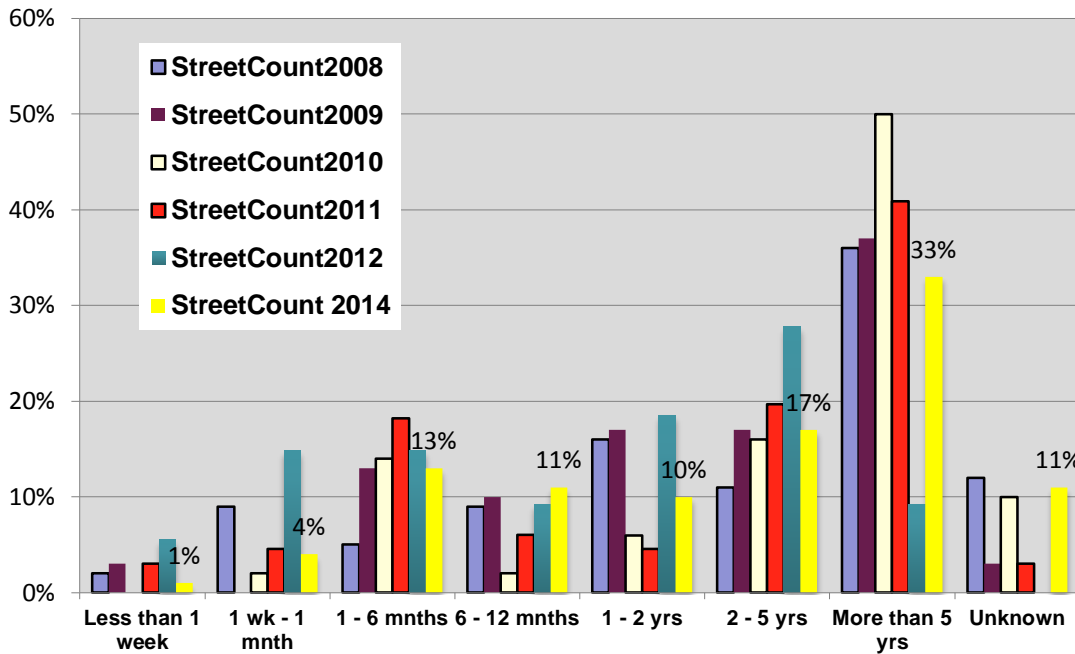
Eighteen percent of all of those counted in 2014 have been homeless for less than six months, but very few – on average one percent – were homeless for a week or less at the time of the count. When asked how long they had been moving around the largest single response for people surveyed this year was more than 5 years or (33%) and of these 12 had been homeless for more than 10 years and 8 for more than 20 years.

Chart 21: Public Housing list comparison 2008-2014
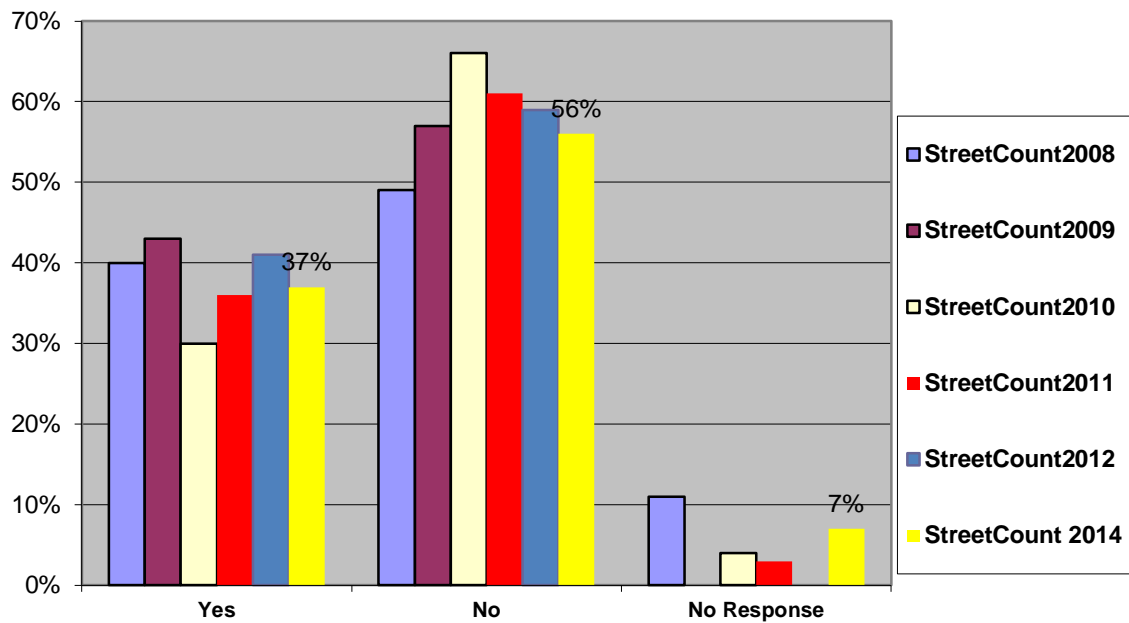
Over half (46 people) of those surveyed in the count reported that they were not on the public housing waiting list. This proportion has been fairly stable over time.

Chart showing length of time on public housing waiting list, with categories Under 6 months, 6 - 12 months, 1 - 2 years, over 2 years, No Response across StreetCount2008, StreetCount2009, StreetCount2010, StreetCount 2011, StreetCount2012, StreetCount2014.

More than 50% of the 31 people who reported being on the public housing waiting list had been waiting for over two years. 10% had been on the list 1- 2 years. The proportion of those waiting less than six months appears to have dropped with successive StreetCounts, while the proportion of those waiting for more than two years appears to have remained relatively similar.
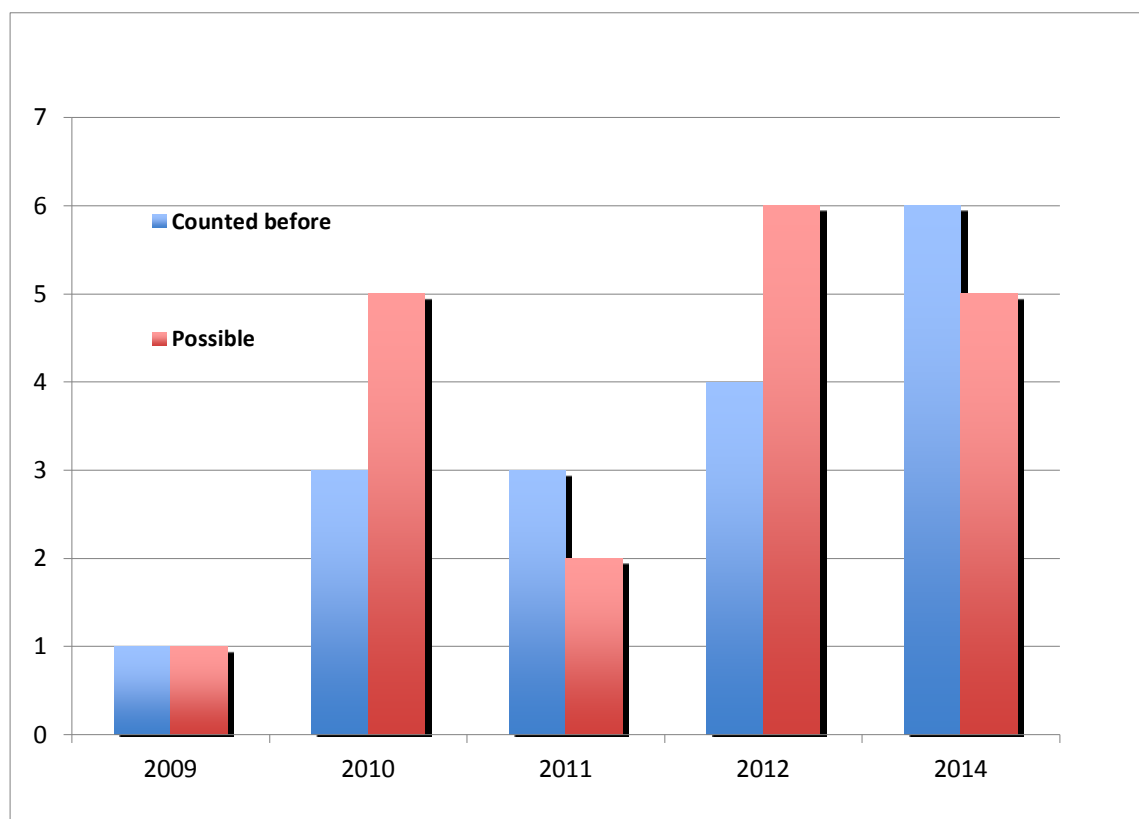
Comparison of Voluntary Identifier Codes

People who are surveyed in StreetCount are asked to provide their first initials, month and year of birth, which is then converted into a non-identifying code – a Voluntary Identifier Code (VIC).

About half of all those recorded in StreetCount are surveyed each year and, on average 96% provide VIC information so that, after six years, 271 VIC's have been collected. About four or five codes are poorly recorded each year. The most common errors are lack of birth date, transposed years of birth or addition of initials. These errors affect around 10% of the total sample and mean that 29 codes can't be used for comparison.

The main purpose of the VIC is to ensure that people are not counted more than once per StreetCount, but analysis over multiple years can also tell us about the extent to which people have been counted in previous year's counts.

Chart 23: Voluntary Identifier Codes comparison 2008-2014

Analysis of Voluntary Identifier Codes (VIC's) indicates that only fifteen people have been counted in more than one StreetCount with 6 of those recounts occurring this year in 2014. In 2009 one person who had been counted in 2008 was recorded, there were three previously recorded people in 2010 and 2011 and four in 2012. One person has been recorded in three counts. One of the people counted this year in 2014 had also been counted in 2009 and 2012. One was counted in 2014 and 2012, two in both 2014 and 2011

and another two in both 2009 and 2014. For all of these people, VIC's across the years match exactly.

In nineteen other cases near matches of VIC's were recorded in different years. These codes are the same except for the variation of one letter or number – it's possible that these could represent different people, but there is also a possibility that they could represent the same person and the VIC has been poorly recorded.

The low number of duplicate VIC's over the five years of the count indicates that different people are being counted each year. It would seem that of the 338 people surveyed since 2008 at least 304 (or 90%) are different people. If this holds true for all of those recorded, StreetCount has counted roughly 572 different people over the six years of the count. Given the limitations of the study it is not possible to draw too many conclusions here, although when looking at the data around 'length of time homeless' we see that 33% of our respondents this year have been homeless for longer than five years and yet we are not seeing those levels of recounting across the history of the StreetCount. We can speculate that either these figures suggest patterns of extensive transience within the primary homeless population or that we are only counting a fraction of Melbourne's primary homeless population each year. Our understanding of these matters would benefit from further exploration.

StreetCount2014 Summary of Key Findings

From 2008 the City of Melbourne has been undertaking annual StreetCounts in the municipality. Data from the 2008-2014 counts show that those who are sleeping rough are, compared to the general homeless population, more likely to be:

- Male
- Single
- Born in Australia
- 26 to 60 years of age
- Long term homeless – having been moving around for more than five years

Information from StreetCount needs to be interpreted in the context of the limitations of the approach. Some limitations are inherent to point-in-time surveys such as StreetCount and some arise as a result of the way StreetCount is conducted. Because of these it must be assumed that StreetCount numbers represent an underestimation of rough sleepers, and particularly of young people, Aboriginal people and women. Within these limitations, however a number of broad conclusions can be drawn from the count.

- There has been a significant increase in the number of homeless people sleeping rough in and around the City of Melbourne. This group of people is predominantly single, male, and Australian born.

- On average, 45% of those recorded in StreetCount have been homeless for more than 12 months and many for more than ten years. This suggests the presence of a group of at least 40 to 50 long-term homeless single men who sleep in and around the inner city.

- Around a third of the people counted sleep openly on the street and over a quarter in parks and gardens. Other people record sleeping in a wide variety of 'other' locations including train stations, public toilets and car parks.

- Most people sleep in one place or move between two or three places over the period of a month. There is a smaller group of people who tend to move around between more places.

- Most (around three quarters) of the group are in touch with the service system, but mainly for 'subsistence' services such as meals and emergency relief centres. This suggests that this group might use the service system for survival, but not as a 'pathway' out homelessness.

- Most (around two thirds) are not on the public housing waiting list, and most that are, have been on the list for over two years.

- StreetCount appears to record different individuals each year, and very few people are recorded in more than one count. StreetCount has recorded at least 572 different people over six years.

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Homeless Count Regions: North & West Melbourne
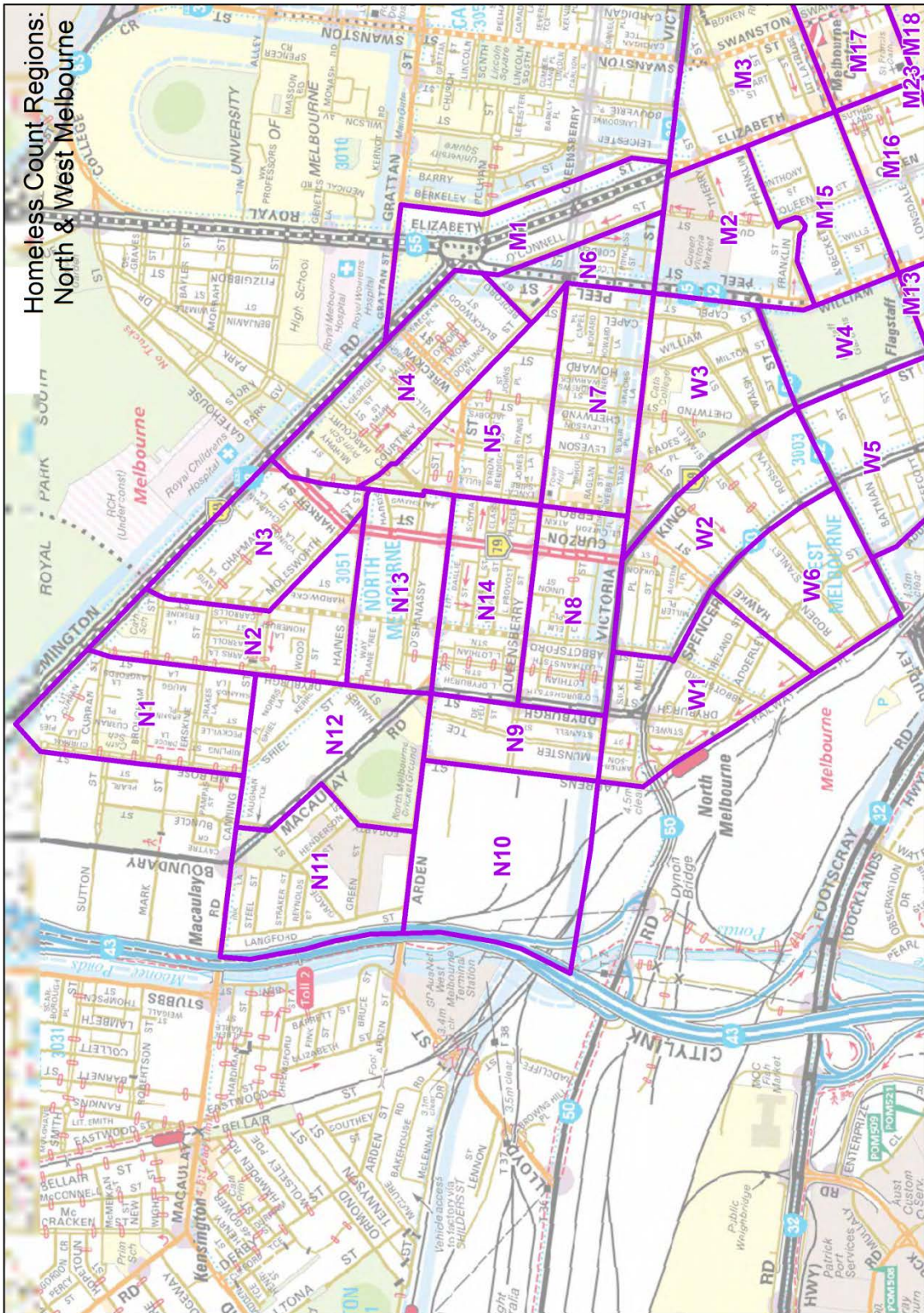
Homeless Count Region:
CBD & East Melbourne
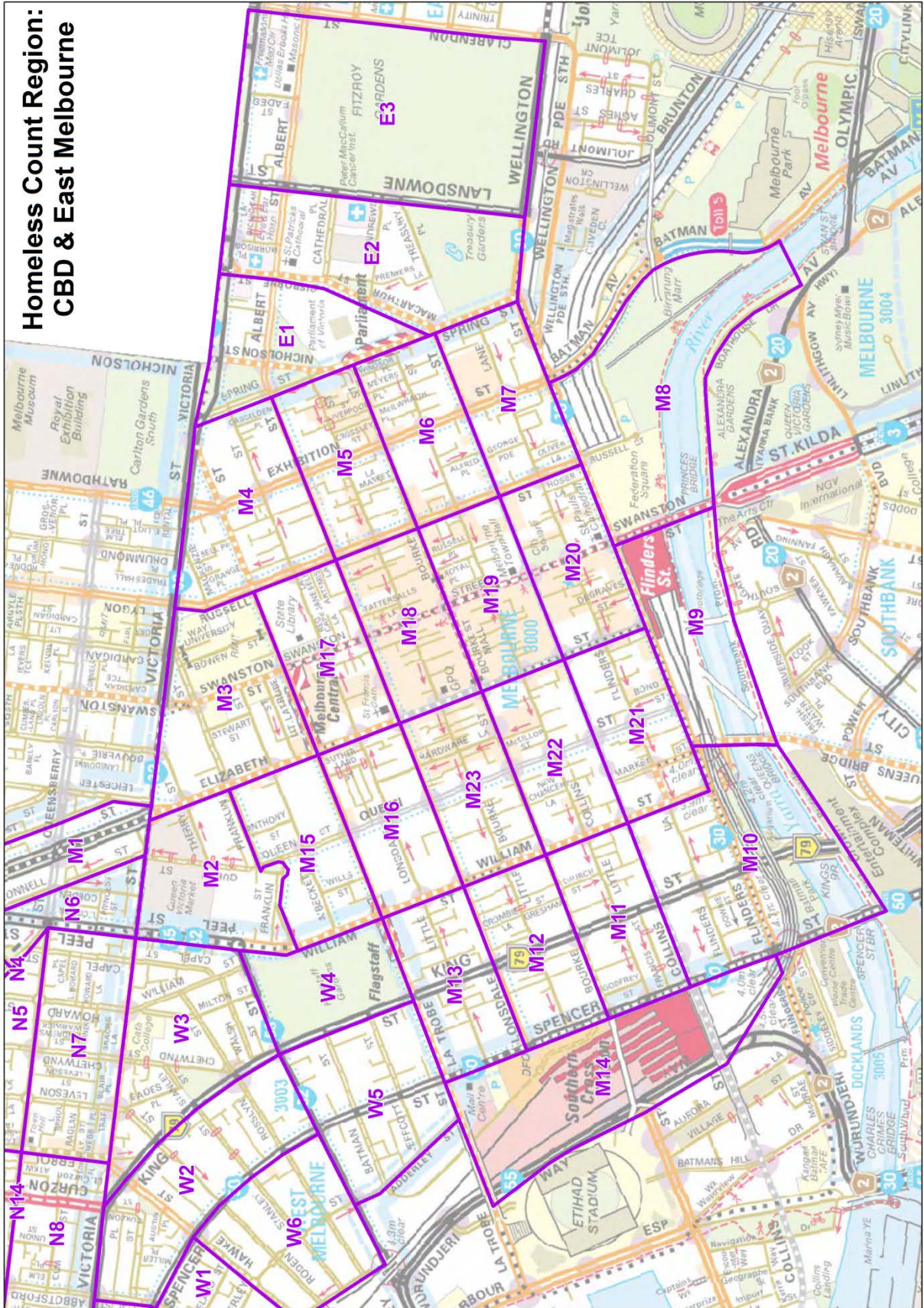
STREETCOUNT2014 SURVEY   SURVEYOR'S NAME:

AREA CODE: SURVEY NUMBER:

SAFE ☐   UNSAFE ☐

Please mark person's location on your map
Boxed & shaded questions to be completed by observation only

1.
DO NOT WAKE ANYONE WHO IS ASLEEP *(By observation – Circle one of the following)*   **a. AWAKE   b. ASLEEP**

2. **Has someone from StreetCount2014 already talked to you today?**
If **Yes,** <u>do not</u> complete this form.   If **No,** introduce the Street Count.

3. **Do you want to go ahead with the StreetCount questions?** (verbal consent)
a. ☐ **Yes** proceed to Q. 4   b. ☐ **No**   c. ☐ **Incapacitated**
<u>*If b or c ask no more questions*</u> and by observation fill out Questions 1, 4, 10, 16 and 17.

4.
Type of shelter (By observation - Circle one of the following) **PARK   CAR   STREET   SQUAT   TRAIN STATION   OTHER_____**

5. ***DAY COUNT QUESTION ONLY:***
In which part of the city did you sleep last night?
_____

6. **How long have you been staying here?**
_____

7. **How many different places have you stayed in the last month?**
_____

8. **How long have you been moving around?**
_____

9. **What suburb or town would you prefer to live?**
_____

10.
What is your age? _____ Years *(Estimate by observation, if asleep or incapacitated)*

11. **In what country were you born?**
_____

12. **Do you identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?**   ☐ **No**   ☐ **Yes**

13. **Will you be going to any services for a meal or some other assistance later today?**
☐ **No**   ☐ Yes   Service Name (s): _____

14. **Are you on a public housing waiting list?**   ☐ **No**   ☐ **Yes**

15. **How long have you been on the public housing waiting list?**
_____

16.	☐ **Male**	☐ **Female** (By observation)

Presenting Unit (By observation)

17.		
	☐ Single Person	☐ Couple
	☐ Person with Child/ren How many? _____	☐ Unrelated Group ....
	☐ Couple with Child/ren How many? _____	☐ Other..............................
	☐ With pet – What sort? _____	

18. **We don't want to count anyone twice today. To avoid this, may I write down your initials, month and year of birth? You will not be identified from this**.
☐ **No** (survey completed)   ☐ **Yes** Go to Q.19

19. **What are your initials and what is your month & year of birth?**

First Name <u>Initial</u>	Last Name <u>Initial</u>	MONTH		YEAR			

Survey completed. Thank the participant for their time and provide a Thanks Pack.

STREETCOUNT2014 DAY COUNT SURVEY

Service NAME:

Please FAX BACK ATTENTION: Tanya Hough 9650 1112 BY 1pm June 3rd – or scan and return via email: tanya.hough@melbourne.vic.gov.au

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1. **Has someone from StreetCount2014 already spoken to you today?**
    If **Yes,** do not complete this form.   If **No,** introduce the Street Count.

2. **Do you want to go ahead with the StreetCount questions?** (verbal consent)
    a. ☐ Yes proceed to Q. 3   **b. ☐ No**

    If b ask no more questions

3. ***DAY COUNT QUESTION ONLY:***
    In which part of the city did you sleep last night?
    _____

4. **How long have you been staying here?**
    _____

5. **How many different places have you stayed in the last month?**
    _____

6. **How long have you been moving around?**
    _____

7. **What suburb or town would you prefer to live?**
    _____

8. **What is your age?**   _____ **Years**

9. **In what country were you born?**
    _____

10. **Do you identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?**   ☐ **No**   ☐ **Yes**

11. **Will you be going to any services for a meal or some other assistance later today?**

    ☐ **No**   ☐ Yes   Service Name (s): _____

12. **Are you on a public housing waiting list?**   ☐ **No**   ☐ **Yes**

13. **How long have you been on the public housing waiting list?**
    _____

14.	☐ **Male** ☐ **Female** (By observation)

15.

Presenting Unit (By observation)

☐ Single Person	☐ Couple
☐ Person with Child/ren How many? _____	☐ Unrelated Group …………….
☐ Couple with Child/ren How many? _____	☐ Other……………………………
☐ With pet – What sort? _____	

16. **We don't want to count anyone twice today. To avoid this, may I write down your initials, month and year of birth? You will not be identified from this**.
☐ **No** (survey completed)   ☐ **Yes** Go to Q.18

17. **What are your initials and what is your month & year of birth?**

First Name <u>Initial</u>	Last Name <u>Initial</u>	MONTH		YEAR			

Survey completed. Thank the participant for their time and provide a Thanks Pack.