



Tri-Region

**Spruce Grove, Stony Plain, and
Parkland County**

**2020 Rural Housing and Service
Needs Estimation Project**

Community Report

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About This Report

This project is funded in part by the Government of Canada’s Reaching Home: Canada’s Homelessness Strategy. The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada or any of the municipalities within the Tri-Region.

The Rural Development Network recognizes that the 2020 Rural Housing and Service Needs Estimation Project took place on the traditional territories of Treaty 6, Treaty 7, and Treaty 8.

The Tri-Region Estimation Count occurred on Treaty 6 territory, the ancestral home of the Cree, Dene, Blackfoot, Saulteaux, and Nakota Sioux, as well as the Métis. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous peoples whose footsteps have marked these territories for centuries. The RDN also recognizes the direct connection between homelessness and colonization¹, and it is our hope that this project provides one small step towards righting wrongs.

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List of Partner Organizations

Alberta Parenting for the Future Association

Bredin Institute

Guidance Through Crisis

Native Counseling services

Neighbourlink Parkland

Parkland Food Bank

Paying Forward Kindness

Primary Care Network

Pregnancy Support Centre

Spruce Grove FCSS

Stony Plain FCSS

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This report and the information within was made possible through the efforts of many dedicated individuals and groups. We wish to thank the front line staff at participating service agencies across the Tri-Region for their tireless efforts during this challenging time.

Executive Summary

In October 2020, the Tri-Region participated in a large-scale effort to estimate housing and service needs in 24 rural communities across the province.

Funded by Reaching Home, the Government of Canada's official homelessness strategy, the Rural Housing and Service Needs Estimation Project (Estimations' Project) was led by the Rural Development Network (RDN) following the methodology outlined in the "Step-by-Step Guide to Estimating Rural Homelessness".

This project was an opportunity to better understand the needs of existing residents, as well as complement and improve official data for the Tri-Region. This year's estimations' project built on robust refinements from the pioneer project in 2018 that allowed service agencies to better connect and listen to the needs of the Tri-Region's residents. Collecting data during this period -where physical access to local establishments have been severely limited/ affected by a global pandemic - offers a unique opportunity to examine how residents' needs are exacerbated during a time of crisis, as well as measuring the gaps that arose in the Tri-Region's services and responses.

The Tri-Regional Housing and Service Needs Estimate was a partnership between Stony Plain FCSS and the City of Spruce Grove, who connected with the Tri-Region's local community organizations to prepare and coordinate a local count. Service agencies were instructed to invite individuals who visited their agency during a consecutive 30-day period to fill out a 30-question survey.

Surveys were intended to gather a holistic view of the interlocking needs that

affect an individual's ability to access/maintain safe, stable housing, which includes their ability to access proper services and resources within the community.

The Tri-Region's data was collected through paper and online surveys, where respondents had the choice to complete the survey by themselves, with assistance from staff, or in the comfort of their own homes using online access codes. Collected surveys were examined and analyzed for duplicates and errors by RDN analysts to ensure data integrity and validity. Data was then compiled, reviewed, and consolidated in the findings outlined in this report.

Out of 359 people surveyed, 197 (54.9%) were found to be living in situations defined as homeless or 'housing-insecure'.

An additional 219 dependents were reported to share these living conditions, along with 216 adults. In total, there are 632 individuals within Stony Plain, Spruce Grove, and Parkland County that are either living in insecure housing conditions, or sharing these conditions.

The most common factors affecting respondents' current living situation were: lack of money, unaffordable rent or mortgage, mental health struggles, medical conditions, and job loss.

This report breaks down the places of residence, services needed, demographics, housing, employment, and income sources of those experiencing housing insecurity or homelessness. This report also provides a qualitative sample of feedback from those most vulnerable within the community.

“In many instances, there are discrepancies between what people need or want, what service providers can offer and what the provincial or local governments can afford or support as best practices.”

-Marybeth Shinn,
International Homelessness:
Policy, Socio-Cultural, and Individual Perspectives³

Definitions

“Homelessness describes the **situation** of an individual, family or community **without** stable, safe, permanent, appropriate **housing, or the immediate** prospect, means and **ability of acquiring it.**

It is the **result of systemic or societal barriers, a lack of** affordable and appropriate **housing,** the individual/household’s **financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges,** and/or **racism and discrimination.**

Most people do not choose to be homeless, and the experience is generally negative, unpleasant, unhealthy, unsafe, stressful and distressing.”

-Canadian Definition of Homelessness,
Canadian Observatory on Homelessness⁴

Q11. Thinking about your living situation **this past month**, which of these statements apply to you? (Check all that apply)

- I own the house I'm currently in
- I rent the apartment I'm currently in
- I live in accommodations provided by my employer
- I live in a house that is owned by/rented out by the Band
- I share a house/apartment with roommates
- I live in a house/apartment that I share with family/dependents
- I find it difficult to pay rent and I feel like I spend more than a third of my monthly income on my housing
- I live in housing that needs major repairs (heating or plumbing problems, mould, leaky roof, etc.)
- There are not enough rooms for the number of people in the house I'm in
- I lived in supported housing (e.g. Housing First)
- I stayed in a medical/detox/rehabilitation facility
- I slept in a friend's/family's house because I had no other place to stay
- I stayed in a jail / prison/ remand centre
- I stayed at a women's / domestic violence shelter
- I stayed with someone I didn't know because I had no other place to stay
- I slept in a shelter
- I slept in a makeshift shelter, vehicle, tent, or shack
- I slept in a public space (sidewalks, park benches, bus shelter etc.)

Figure 1: table used in 2020 questionnaire to determine respondents' housing security. Refer to Appendix A for full questionnaire.

The accompanying typology² identifies a range of housing and shelter circumstances:

Provisionally Accommodated

People who are homeless whose accommodation is temporary or lacks security of tenure, including interim (or transitional) housing, people living temporarily with others (couch surfing), or living in institutional contexts (hospital, prison) without permanent housing arrangements.

At-Risk of Homelessness

People who are not homeless, but whose current economic and/or housing situation is precarious or does not meet public health and safety standards.

Emergency Sheltered

People who are homeless who stay in overnight emergency shelters designed to provide temporary accommodations.

Unsheltered

People who are homeless who live on the streets or in places not intended for human habitation.

Background

When it comes to homelessness and understanding its causes, the urban experience tends to dominate the conversation due to the visibility of individuals experiencing homelessness. The issue of homelessness within rural and remote areas is far less understood or acknowledged because of its hidden nature. Individuals experiencing homelessness in rural and remote communities are more likely to couch surf, pay housing costs that are more than 30% of their income, live in overcrowded housing, or own/rent housing that may need major repairs- often leveraging the relationships around them for support.

Methods for estimating homelessness and housing insecurity in urban centres are not suited to rural and remote ones. Conducting traditional Point-in-Time (PiT) counts over larger swaths of service area is not always feasible for already under-staffed/-resourced community agencies. This inability to participate in PiT counts translates to no data, which translates into no need. When there's no tangible data, rural and remote communities cannot advocate to address service gaps or for an increase in funding.

RDN developed the "Step-by-Step Guide to Estimating Rural Homelessness" to address the lack of available, accurate, and current data on rural homelessness. The guide is unique in that it tackles the issue of housing insecurity and homelessness from a rural perspective, and recognizes the difficulties that come with conducting standard PiT counts in rural and remote areas.

This tool allows for anyone, including small nonprofits and local front-line agencies, to gather data on gaps in local housing and service needs. This has been instrumental in helping rural communities gather credible evidence on homelessness to subsequently improve the kind of services offered within the community.

Methodology & Data Collection

The methodology used in this Housing and Service Needs Estimate follows the steps listed in the Step-by-Step Guide to Estimating Rural Homelessness with slight modifications to reduce stigma and encourage participation.

The model used in this project allows for a variety of service agencies to offer questionnaires to clients in places they already visit and know. This approach leverages existing social infrastructure (service agencies). Due to the sensitivity and the associated stigma surrounding homelessness and housing issues, this method relies on the relationships that service providers have established and cultivated over time with their clients to ensure respondents feel comfortable and safe at all times during the survey process.

The current survey was developed in accordance with the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness' definition of homelessness. However, rather than using the term "homelessness", the survey was advertised as a better way to understand the housing and support services needed within the community. This builds off feedback from multiple service providers that are committed to minimizing stigma that could cause distress to their clients. By re-framing the language of the survey, service providers were able to encourage all clients to participate, instead of pointedly targeting certain individuals.

In relation to stigma, previous findings suggest that clients are often reluctant to label themselves as homeless or housing-insecure. For this project, respondents were asked whether they consider their living conditions to be secure, AND to fill out checkboxes that determine their objective housing situation. Subsequent data analysis would determine which respondents were housing-insecure. **As we see in the results, some individuals who do not**

consider themselves to be either homeless or at-risk actually qualify based on national definitions of homelessness. The majority of the report focuses on the responses of individuals who were living in objectively housing-insecure conditions.

Insecure Housing is when a person experiences difficulty paying rent, spends a major portion of the household income on housing, frequently moves, lives in overcrowded conditions, or doubles up with friends and relatives.

Before the survey period began, RDN provided orientation and training sessions to the Lead Coordinators. Emphasis was placed on clarifying survey terms, ensuring respondents' confidentiality and privacy, and securing their informed consent. During these training sessions, resources were provided to improve outreach for both community members and potential agency partners, while promoting the benefits of understanding the need of clients. Training also covered various ways to administer the survey in an open, non-intrusive manner, placing extra consideration for meeting individuals' reasons for visiting the service agency before offering the survey.

This report consists of an overview of the primary data collected through social service agencies in the Tri-Region from October 1st to the 31st 2021. The lead coordinators for the Estimation project in the Tri-Region were Stony Plain FCSS and the City of Spruce Grove. Participating agencies took part in virtual training sessions for survey administration. The survey could be completed in two ways: a paper version which could be filled out on location, or an online version which could be accessed with an online access code later on.

Respondents were each assigned a unique ID composed of initials derived from respondents' name and birthdate, scrambled in a certain order to maintain confidentiality. This ensures that if the respondent took the same survey at a later date, the data would show further need by the individual without inflating the number of respondents.

Not every individual requiring help may have entered a participating service agency during the designated 30-day collection period, despite advertising efforts leading up to the survey. Some service agencies may not have been able to fully participate, given the urgency of the services they provide and the length of time required to complete the survey. As a result, although trends and highlights of the data are very informative, this report presents a conservative picture of the service needs and housing insecurity in the community as a whole.

A note about youth participation: service agencies were instructed to limit survey administration to individuals 14 years of age or older. In compliance with the consent and confidentiality guidelines of the Alberta College of Social Workers, individuals under 14 years of age were required to secure guardian's approval prior to participation.

Limitations

Despite our best attempts to reduce stigma and increase accessibility of the survey, not all clients who entered participating agencies chose to take the survey. The survey was voluntary, and accessing services was not contingent on their participation. There remains a portion of clients whose voices were not captured.

The data found in this report is survey data. There are no significance values, p-values, tests, or inferential statistics of any sort within this report. It is therefore not RDN's intention to:

- Guarantee that the data provides a complete or all-encompassing depiction of housing instability and service needs within the Tri-Region;
- Provide any interpretations of the data contained herein;
- Make any recommendations for policy changes or actions to be taken in the Tri-Region as a result of this data;
- Make any stake/claim about government policies, corporate actions, or externalities in the Tri-Region;
- Make any inferences or generalizations about the population of the Tri-Region.

However, we encourage individual community members and local community leaders to use this data to inform their own conclusions and policies, and to determine how to best make use of this information. RDN assumes no responsibility or liability for any changes, decisions, or actions made as a result of the interpretation of data outlined in this report.

Finally, it is important to note that due to exclusion of non-responses and skipped questions, subtotals and percentages may not exactly reflect absolute totals. A copy of the actual paper survey used in this project can be found at the end of this document (page 38).

Survey Results

Across participating agencies, 359 people were surveyed. Of those, 323 completed paper surveys, and 36 responded through an online survey. A copy of the survey questions used can be found on ruraldevelopment.ca.

Support Services

This section outlines the results for all respondents who completed a survey, regardless of their housing security. This was done to capture overall service needs of clients in the Tri-Region across partner organizations that participated in the Rural Housing and Service Needs Estimation project.

All survey respondents (n=359) were asked about where they most often sought services, and what kind of services they primarily needed during their visits to local service providers.

Figure 1 shows the responses, weighted by frequency, to the question “In which community do you most often seek services? Primarily respondents sought services in Spruce Grove and Stony Plain, however many of the surrounding communities were included.



Figure 1 - Word Cloud of the community in which respondents most often sought help from service agencies.

128 of the 197 (65.0%) housing insecure respondents specified accessing services in Spruce Grove. 22 (11.2%) said they accessed services in Stony Plain, and 2 (1.0%) specified accessing services in Parkland County. 24 (12.2%) specified accessing services in both Stony Plain and Spruce Grove. The remainder did not specify or keep it ambiguous or indicated they accessed services in communities outside of Tri-Region.

Taking into account the nature of interlocking needs, respondents were able to provide multiple responses (see Table 1).

Table 1 Main reason(s) for visiting the office today	# of respondents
Basic Needs	299
Financial	61
Support services	44
Health and wellness	39
Family/parenting	33
Crisis financial support	26
Not listed	25
Transportation needs	19
COVID-19 assistance	17
Legal	14
Prefer not to answer	8

Table 1 - Table of reasons for respondents' visit to the service agency (multiple responses possible).

Of the options provided, the top three types of support services sought by survey respondents were "Basic Needs Support" (299), "Financial Support" (61), and "Support Services" (44).

Respondents were then asked to identify the primary reason for their visit in an open response field. Due to the freeform structure of the question, answers varied but the most common keywords are listed in Figure 2.

When asked about the perceived socio-economic opportunities available within the community, most felt that the community did not provide enough affordable housing, employment opportunities, or recreation and social opportunities (Table 2).



Figure 2 - Word Cloud of the most common responses to the “Primary Reason” for visiting the service agency

Does the community provide enough:	Yes	No	Not Sure
Employment Opportunities?	77	127	119
Free or Accessible Recreation and Social Opportunities?	96	124	97
Sufficient Social Services?	111	92	114
Accessible Affordable Housing?	38	176	106

Table 2 - Respondents answer the question: “does our community provide enough of the following opportunities?”

Housing Needs

When respondents were asked whether they considered their housing situation to be unstable or felt that they could easily lose their housing, 166 (46.2%) of all survey respondents replied ‘Yes’.

Following this question, respondents were asked to objectively identify the current living situation(s) that apply to them (Table 3). The following options represent a range of physical living situations that constitute housing insecurity or precarity. Respondents were asked to select all that apply.

After analysis, there are approximately **197 respondents (54.9% of total)** whose housing conditions are considered to be insecure and/or absent. 45 out of the 125 respondents who felt they lived in secure housing, were found to objectively fit COH’s criteria for insecure housing conditions (Figure 3).

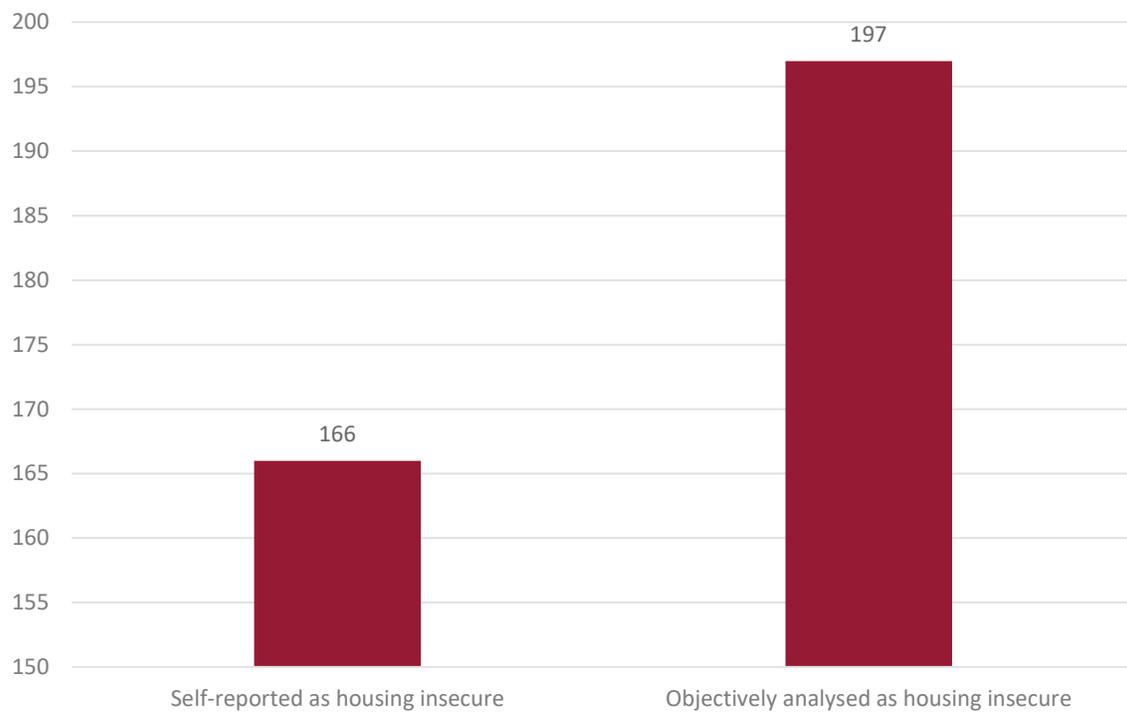


Figure 3 - Respondents who feel their housing is unstable/insecure vs. respondents who objectively fit living conditions that constitute insecure housing under COH.¹

¹ Some respondents who believed they were living in insecure housing conditions **also** identified with living situations that constitute insecure housing as defined by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. Thus, there may be some overlap between these two indicators as shown in Figure 3.

Table 3 – Current living situation. “Which of these statements apply to you (thinking about the past month)?” (multiple responses possible) **% of re-
sponses**

I own the house I'm currently in	93	13.1%
I rent the apartment I'm currently in	152	21.3%
I live in accommodations provided by my employer	2	0.3%
I live in a house that is owned/rented out by the Band	7	1.0%
I share a house/apartment with roommates	34	4.8%
I live in a house/apartment that I share with family/dependents	92	12.9%
I find it difficult to pay rent and I spend more than a third of my monthly income on my housing	160	22.5%
I live in housing that needs major repairs (heating or plumbing problems, mould, leaky roof, etc.)	46	6.5%
There are not enough rooms for the number of people in the house I'm in	47	6.6%
I live in supported housing (e.g. Housing First)	2	0.3%
I stayed in a medical/detox/rehabilitation facility	6	0.8%
I slept in a friend's/family house because I had no other place to stay	19	2.7%
I stayed in a jail/prison/remand centre	3	0.4%
I stayed at a women's/domestic violence shelter	4	0.6%
I stayed with someone I didn't know because I had no other place to stay	7	1.0%
I slept in a shelter	9	1.3%
I slept in a makeshift shelter, vehicle, tent, or shack	20	2.8%
I slept in a public space (sidewalks, park benches, bus shelter, etc.) ¹	9	1.3%

¹ All 9 respondents who slept in a public space, also indicated they slept in a makeshift shelter during the past month.

Finally, respondents were asked about the length of time they've been in their current living arrangements. Their responses can be seen in Figure 4.

Of all surveyed respondents, 47 (13.1%) respondents stated they had once stayed or are currently staying in foster care or youth group home.

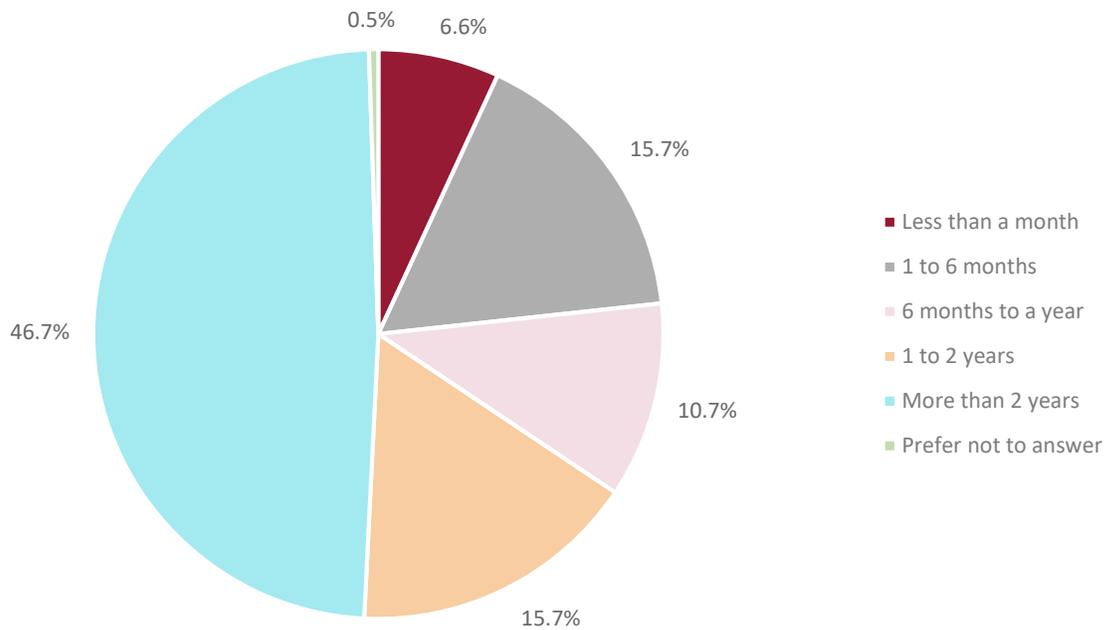


Figure 4 - Respondents answer the question “how long have you been staying in your current living arrangements?”

Reasons for Housing Insecurity

After identifying the respondents who were found to be without housing, or living in insecure housing situations, we asked whether any of the following options were contributing factors (Table 4).

The top five reasons for respondents who reported that they felt like they were housing-insecure were as follows: 131 responses for “I don’t make enough money”; 86 for “I can’t afford rent/mortgage payments”; 77 for “Mental health issues”; 53 for “Illness/Medical condition”, and 40 for “I lost my job”.

Table 4 - "Why do you feel your housing situation is insecure?"	Perceived housing unstable	% of re-sponses	Objectively housing unstable	% of re-sponses
I don't make enough money	101	19.2%	118	19.8%
I can't afford rent/mortgage payments	75	14.3%	76	12.8%
Mental health issues	57	10.9%	67	11.2%
Illness/Medical condition	38	7.2%	48	8.1%
I lost my job	35	6.7%	36	6.0%
Physical disability	35	6.7%	33	5.5%
My house needs major repairs (mould, etc.)	20	3.8%	27	4.5%
COVID-19-related	18	3.4%	26	4.4%
Lack of Transportation	23	4.4%	23	3.9%
Spouse/Partner lost their job	12	2.3%	23	3.9%
Mental disability	22	4.2%	21	3.5%
Domestic/Family violence	16	3.0%	19	3.2%
Conflict	17	3.2%	18	3.0%
My rent went up	20	3.8%	18	3.0%
Addictions/Substance use	11	2.1%	13	2.2%
Abuse	9	1.7%	10	1.7%
Prefer not to answer	5	1.0%	7	1.2%
Family rejection	6	1.1%	6	1.0%
Relationships	5	1.0%	5	0.8%
Racism/Discrimination	0	0.0%	2	0.3%

Respondents were then asked in an open field question to identify the main factor that affected their housing insecurity, whether from the list they had seen previously, or from their own experience. A sample of these responses can be found on page 23 and 34.

“Don’t receive enough funds as prices are rising too much for groceries, power, fuel, etc. **Cost of living is too high.**”

“**Home requires repairs** and I don’t have the money.”

“Partner has addiction and mental health struggles.”

“Hopefully soon I can get a new furnace & such (next year). **Now for the first time in 7 years I have my own room.**”

*“Unable to pay rent due to **unemployment.**”*

*“Financial - has been paying \$650/mth for rent for 17 years, **has been evicted and now has to pay \$1900/mth rent.**”*

“I spend about 60% of my income on **rent alone, before any other bills.**”

Demographics

The following sections of 'Demographics', 'Household Makeup', 'Shelter Services', 'Community Residency', and 'Employment and Income Sources' report results from those respondents who were found to be housing-insecure.

Age, Gender, and Sexual Orientation

Respondents were asked about their current age. The median age of individuals experiencing housing insecurity was 44.

The reported gender of both housing-secure and insecure respondents can be seen in Figure 5. The reported sexual orientation of respondents can be seen in Figure 6.

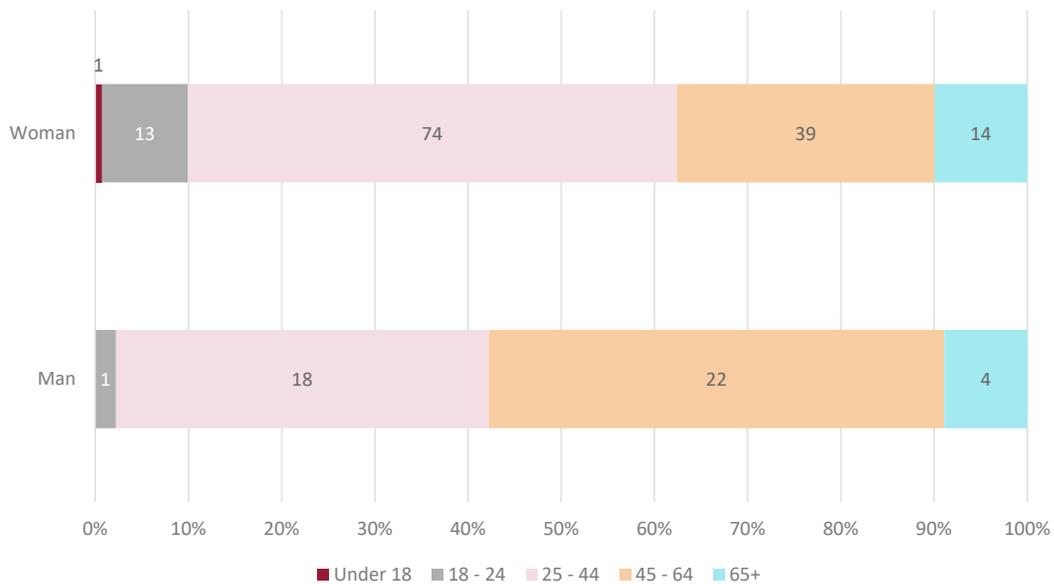


Figure 5 – Respondents answer the question “how do you describe your gender identity?”

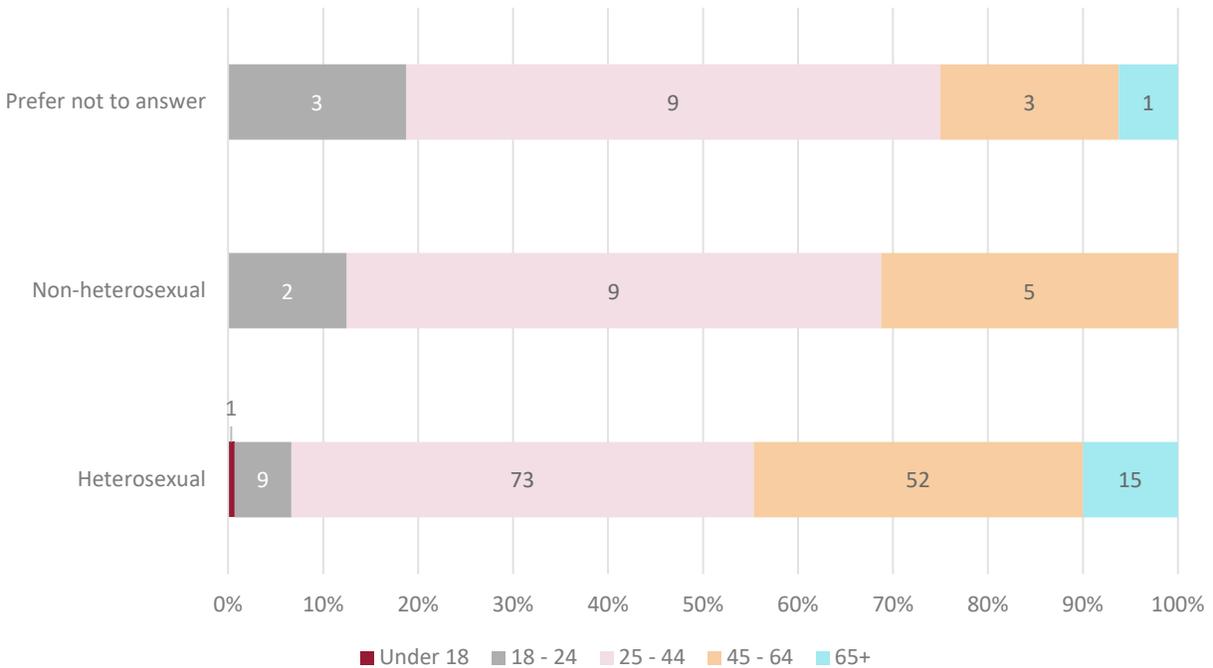


Figure 6 – Respondents answer the question “How do you describe your sexual orientation?”

Ethnicity and Migration Status

Of housing-insecure respondents who responded to the question, 146 identified as Caucasian, 3 identified as African, 1 as Asian, 1 as Hispanic/Latino, 35 as Indigenous, and 6 identified with other ethnicities. Of the respondent who identified as Indigenous, 14 identified as First Nations and 19 as Métis. (Figure 7).

The majority (93.9%) of respondents experiencing housing-insecurity were born in Canada. 10 indicated that they migrated to Canada at some point, including 3 who came to Canada as Landed Immigrants, 7 as Permanent Residents, and 2 as Temporary Foreign Workers.

The majority of respondents (98.5%) are Canadian Citizens, as shown in Figure 8 (page 25).

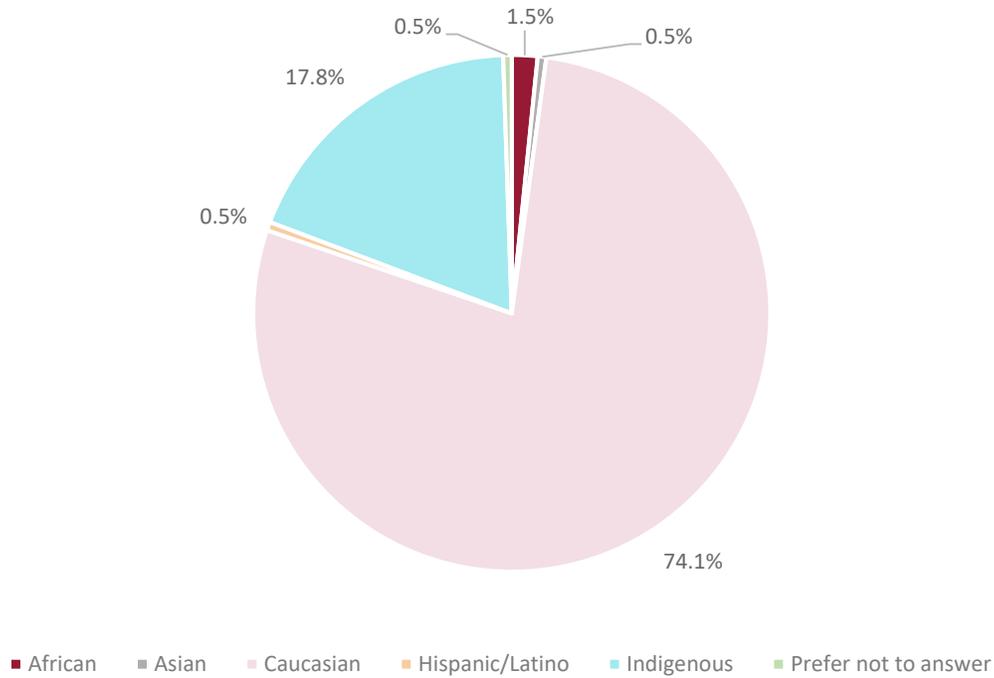


Figure 7 - Respondents answer the question “what ethnicity do you identify with?”; Other possible options with no responses: Middle Eastern

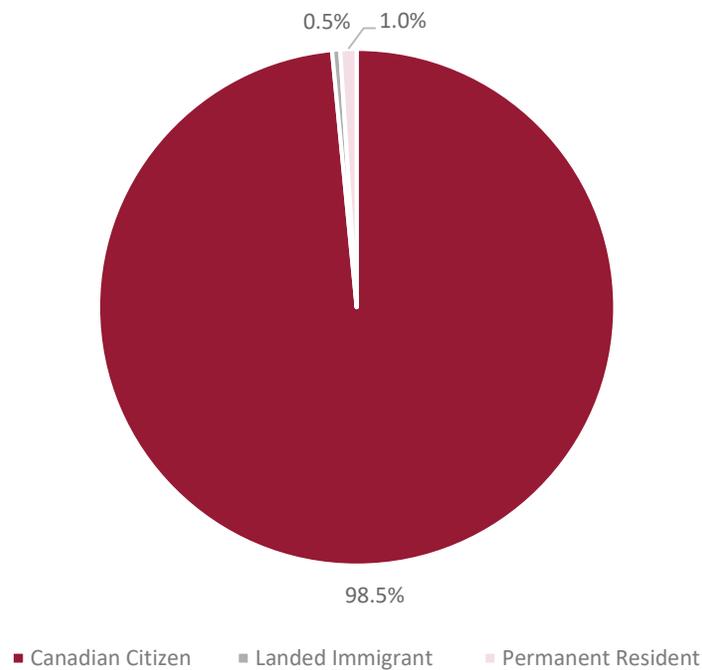


Figure 8 - Respondents answer the question “what is your current migration status?”; Other possible options with no responses: Economic Migrant Worker, Refugee/Claimant, Student Visa, Temporary Foreign Worker, Prefer not to answer.

Education

Of all survey respondents, the majority (25.9%) indicated that the highest level of education they have completed is a High school diploma or GED. This is closely followed by 20.6% respondents who obtained a College certificate or diploma, and those who completed some high school (18.1%). Detailed responses can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5 – “What is the highest level of education you’ve completed?”	# of respondents	% of responses
High school diploma or GED	93	26.9%
College certificate or diploma	74	21.4%
Some high school	65	18.8%
Some post-secondary	34	9.8%
Apprenticeship, trades certificate, or diploma	27	7.8%
Some grade school	21	6.1%
Post-secondary degree (bachelor's)	20	5.8%
Prefer not to answer	7	2.0%
Graduate/Professional Degree (Master's, PhD, MD, JD, etc.)	4	1.2%
Don't know	1	0.3%
No formal education	0	0.0%

Table 5 - Respondents answer the question “What is the highest level of education you’ve completed?”

Household Makeup

The survey included questions regarding household or family members who are currently sharing accommodations with the respondent.

7 housing-insecure respondents reported that either they or someone in their household was pregnant, and 77 said that they were currently a single-parent household.

119 (60.4%) of the total 197 housing-insecure respondents were living with dependents under the age of 18. Of those, 36 had one dependent, 31 had two, 19 had three, 16 had four or more, and 17 responded “other”, for a total of at least 219 dependents sharing living conditions with those living in housing-insecure conditions. Additionally, it has been noted that there may be a total of 2 dependents living in makeshift shelters based on the respondents’ living situations.

For respondents that listed out the number of dependents staying with them, 27.5% of listed dependents were between 0-4 years of age, 30.2% were between 5-9, 31.1% were between 10-14, and 11.3% were between 15-17. There was a roughly even split between boys (49.3%) and girls (50.7%).

Some housing-insecure respondents reported that they had other adults living with them. The total number of adults sharing respondents’ living situation was 216, an average of 1 per respondent. Additionally, it has been noted that there may be a total of 19 additional adults living in makeshift shelters based on the respondents’ living situations. The relationships of these cohabitants can be found in Figure 9.

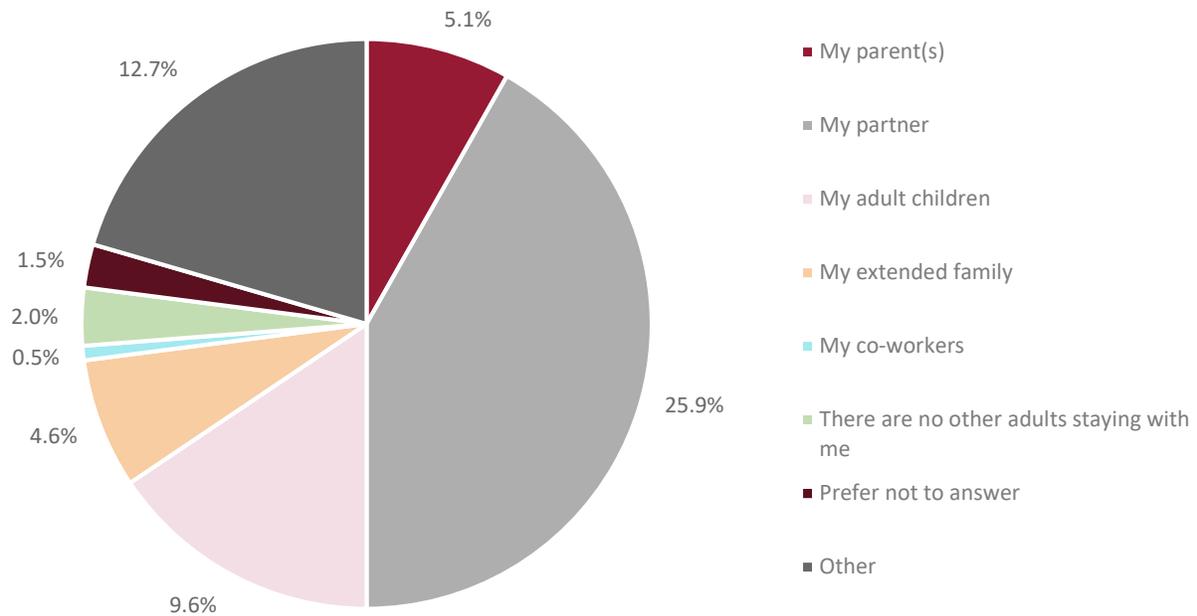


Figure 9 - Co-habitant relationships to housing-insecure respondents.

Shelter Services

Of respondents experiencing housing insecurity, 5.6% reported accessing a shelter within the past year. Of the 20 unsheltered respondents:

- 11 were men, 8 were women, and the remainder did not specify
- 12 were Caucasian, 7 were Indigenous (of which 1 identified as First Nations and 6 identified as Métis), and the remainder did not specify.
- 2 were employed, 17 were unemployed, and the remainder did not specify.
- 10 said they live around the Spruce Grove area, 6 live around the Stony Plain area, and the remainder did not specify or left it ambiguous.

Of respondents who needed a shelter but did not access shelter services within the past year, the following reasons were provided: Table 6.

Table 6. "If you needed a shelter in the past year and didn't access one, what were the reasons?"	# of respondents	% of responses
I didn't need shelter services	103	51.5%
No shelters in my area	24	12.0%
Lack of transportation	15	7.5%
I didn't feel safe	13	6.5%
No pets allowed	9	4.5%
Reason not listed	9	4.5%
Separation from family member/partner	7	3.5%
Prefer not to answer	7	3.5%
The shelter was full	5	2.5%
Lack of disability accommodations	5	2.5%
Health concerns (bed bugs, dirty, etc.)	2	1.0%
Hours of operation	1	0.5%

Table 6 - Respondents answer the question "If you needed a shelter in the past year and didn't access one, what were the reasons?"

Community Residency

Respondents were asked to indicate where they currently reside. Figure 10 displays those responses, weighted by frequency.

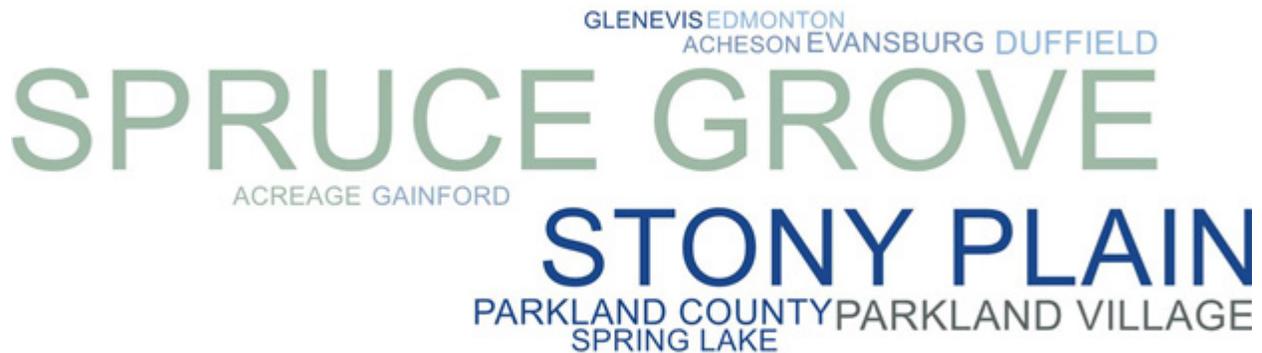


Figure 10 - Word Cloud of responses to "where do you currently reside?"

Roughly 101 of the 197 housing insecure respondents (51.3%) said they live in Spruce Grove, 21 (10.7%) said they live in Parkland County, and 38 (19.3%) said they live in Stony Plain. The remainder either didn't specify or left ambiguous answer or lived outside of Tri-region.

Table 7 – “What is the main reason you came to this community?”	# of respondents	% of responses
To look for work	36	14.3%
Other	35	13.9%
My family moved here	34	13.5%
To start a job	27	10.7%
To find housing	26	10.3%
To move in with spouse/partner	22	8.7%
To visit family/friends	21	8.3%
To access services/supports	16	6.3%
To attend school	10	4.0%
Fear for safety	9	3.6%
Prefer not to answer	6	2.4%
COVID-19 treatment or supports	5	2.0%
To access emergency shelters	3	1.2%
Environmental displacement (flooding, wildfire, lack of clean drinking water, etc.)	2	0.8%

Table 7- Respondents answer the question “what is the main reason you came to this community?”

Of those who moved to the community at some point, Table 7 describes the primary reasons for the move.

Of those who had moved to the community at some point, Figure 11 describes where they resided previously.

Respondents were asked about the number of times they had moved in the past year; frequent moves can be an indicator of insecurity and precarious housing. 44.2% of those facing housing insecurity have not moved in the past

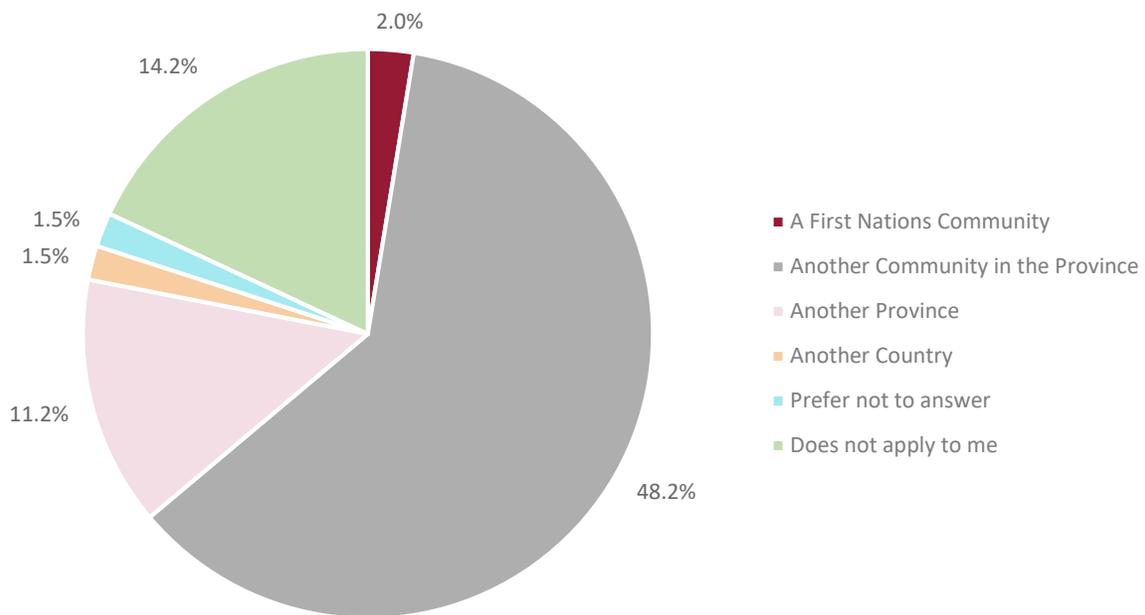


Figure 11 – Respondents answer the question “Where did you live before you came to this community?”; Other possible options with no responses: A Métis settlement and an Inuit Community.

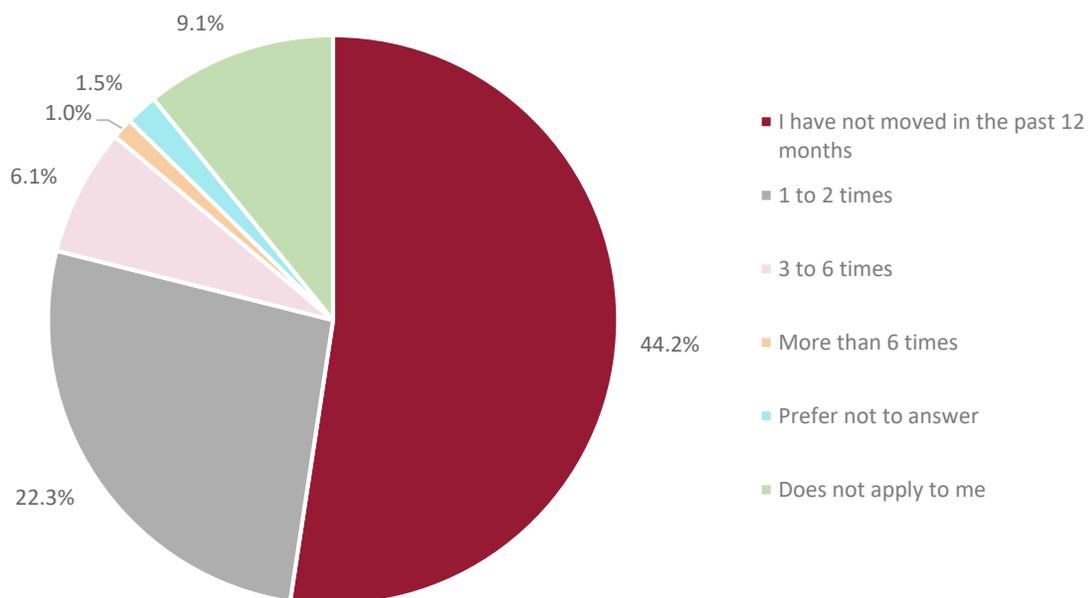


Figure 12 – Respondents answer the question “How many times have you moved in the past year?”; Other possible options with no responses: Other.

year. Of respondents who had moved in the past year, 22.3% had moved 1-2 times, 6.1% moved 3-6 times, and 1.0% moved more than 6 times (Figure 12).

Respondents were also asked if they would have stayed in their previous community if they had better access to services or programs. 25.5% of respondents said “Yes”, while 54.5% said “No”.

Employment And Income Sources

Of respondents who are experiencing housing insecurity, 24.4% reported being employed in some capacity. 45.8% of those employed were working full-time, 35.4% part-time, 10.4% casual, and 20.8% listed other forms of employment. These respondents reported employment in the following industries (Table 8).

Table 8 - If employed, “which area do you work in?”	# of respondents	% of responses
Not Listed	19	30.2%
Health	12	19.0%
Food and Beverage/Restaurant	8	12.7%
Oil and Gas	7	11.1%
Retail/Personal Services	7	11.1%
Human/Social Services	3	4.8%
Education	2	3.2%
Hunting/Trapping	2	3.2%
Agriculture	1	1.6%
Finance	1	1.6%
Technology	1	1.6%

Table 8 - Respondents answer the question “which area do you work in?”; Other possible sectors with no respondents were: Forestry, Marketing, and Tourism.

Military/Emergency Service

Out of all respondents experiencing housing insecurity, 3 (1.5%) identified as veterans of the Canadian Armed Forces, 1 (0.5%) had served in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), and 5 (2.5%) had served in Emergency Services.

Sources of Income

Identifying sources of income can provide a better snapshot to the personal situations of respondents needing increased supports. For employed individuals, it can also provide insight into the disparity between wages and costs-of-living in the community.

Table 9 – “What are your sources of income?”	# of respondents	% of responses
GST refunds	92	18.0%
Child and Family Tax Benefits	80	15.7%
Income assistance	53	10.4%
Employment	45	8.8%
Money from family and friends	34	6.7%
Informal income (e.g. bottle returns, panhandling, etc.)	32	6.3%
Seniors Benefits (CPP, OAS, GIS, etc.)	28	5.5%
My partner/spouse's income	26	5.1%
Disability Benefits	26	5.1%
Canadian Emergency Relief Benefit (CERB)	22	4.3%
Employment Insurance	20	3.9%
Alimony/Child Support	19	3.7%
Not Listed	17	3.3%
Canada Emergency Student Benefit (CESB)	5	1.0%
Student loans	5	1.0%
Prefer not to answer	4	0.8%
Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS)	2	0.4%

Table 9 – Respondents answer the question “What are your sources of income?”

45 people facing housing-insecurity reported employment as their main source of income. Sources of income varied, and respondents could select additional sources of income as it applied to them, shown on page 33 (Table 9).

Qualitative Findings

To compliment the large amount of quantitative data encompassed in this report, we also included some of the qualitative findings that respondents included in their surveys. In addition to respondents providing answers to multiple-choice questions, some parts of the survey had space for written responses. This allowed respondents to provide additional information.

When asked to provide the main reason why respondents find themselves to be homeless or at-risk, we received the following replies:

- “Home requires repairs and I don’t have the money.”
- “Hopefully soon I can get a new furnace & such (next year) Now for the first time in 7 years I have my own room.”
- “Partner has addiction and mental health struggles.”
- “Don’t receive enough funds as prices are raising too much for groceries, power, fuel, etc. Cost of living is too high.”
- “Unable to pay rents due to unemployment.”
- “financial - has been paying \$650/mth for rent for 17 years, has been evicted and now has to pay \$1900/mth rent.”
- “I spend about 60% of my income on rent alone, before any other bills.”
- “Lack of transportation to find work and lack of jobs.”

What Does Homelessness Look Like?

Using the most common responses from the survey, we were able to compile a profile of a “typical” respondent facing housing insecurity.

In the case of the Tri-Region, this turns out to be a woman, in her early 40s, who has lived in the community for over a year or more. She finds it difficult to pay rent and feels like she spends more than a third of her monthly income on housing. She notes that there are not enough rooms for the number of people living with her, and that the housing she has needs major repairs (heating or plumbing problems, mould, leaky roof, etc.). She is unemployed, and there is a ~58% chance she has at least one dependent sharing her living situation.

The true diversity of the respondents is of course illustrated in the Survey Results section, but this serves to highlight what someone in-need might look like within the Tri-Region.

Conclusion

This report provides a summary of primary data collected by service agencies in the Tri-Region from October 1st to the 31st. It is an overview of the needs and factors that affect housing security for individuals who accessed services during the survey period.

This project was coordinated in the midst of a global pandemic where in-person services offered by organizations have been severely reduced. The Tri-Region’s participation represents a unique set of data that provides insight into the resiliency and strength of individuals even in times of crisis.

This project confirms that housing insecurity exists in rural and remote communities, presenting concrete data from respondents in 24 participating communities. This supports previous qualitative research which examined the pervasiveness of housing issues across the province⁵.

The intention of this report is to provide means for agencies and leadership to determine their community's needs, as well as the necessary responses and potential avenues to prevent or reduce homelessness and housing instability in the Tri-Region.

Disclaimer

The data and information in the data set provided here are intended for use by persons possessing technical skill and knowledge in data management and analysis. While the data is provided in good faith and to the best of RDN's knowledge, RDN does not commit to it being updated.

While every effort is made to ensure data quality and integrity, the data is provided "as is". The accuracy of any external user's statistical analysis and any reported findings are not the responsibility of RDN. Nothing arising from the data should be taken to constitute RDN's professional advice or as a formal recommendation.

The Rural Development Network would like to thank Stony Plain, the City of Spruce Grove and all community partners in the Tri-Region for their work on this study.

Endnotes

- 1 Thistle, J. (2017.) Indigenous Definition of Homelessness in Canada. Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press.
- 2 Gaetz, S.; Donaldson, J.; Richter, T.; & Gulliver, T (2013): The State of Homelessness in Canada 2013. Toronto: Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press
- 3 Shinn, M. (2007). International Homelessness: Policy, Socio-Cultural, and Individual Perspectives. *Journal of Social Issues* 63(3): 657–677.
- 4 Gaetz, S.; Barr, C.; Friesen, A.; Harris, B.; Hill, C.; Kovacs-Burns, K.; Pauly, B.; Pearce, B.; Turner, A.; Marsolais, A. (2012) Canadian Definition of Homelessness. Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press
- 5 Schiff, JW.; Schiff, R., & Turner, A. (2016): Rural Homelessness in Western Canada: Lessons Learned from Diverse Communities. *Journal of Social Inclusion* 4(4): 73–85.

Housing and Service Needs Estimation Survey

PURPOSE OF THE SURVEY

- This survey was created to help our community gain a better understanding of the needs of our residents and the services required to improve and enhance community well-being.
- Your answers will help us identify the type of services that are currently being accessed and which ones are currently seeing the most use, and what needs in the community aren't being met. We will use the information gathered from this survey to take steps to increase and/or improve the services offered within our community.

PROCEDURE

- Time required: 6 – 10 minutes.
- This survey contains questions regarding your current/past living situations, employment, and citizenship/immigration status.
- If the questions make you feel uncomfortable at any point, feel free to skip that question or stop the survey.
- Staff members are available to answer any questions regarding the survey.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND DATA PROTECTION

- By continuing with this survey, you consent to the collection, use, and disclosure of your personal information for the purposes described above.
- A unique identifier will be assigned to the information you provide in this survey and your full name will not be used anywhere on the questionnaire.
- Physical and electronic copies of the data (where available) will be stored and protected using adequate safeguards like password-protected computers.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW

- Your participation is completely voluntary.
- You can skip questions if you wish. If you skip questions, your responses to other questions will still be recorded.
- You can stop at any time without affecting your access to services. If you stop the survey at any point, none of your information will be used.

Knowing the information above, are you willing to take this survey right now?

- Yes
- No — **If no**, for which reasons?
- I don't have time today
 - I have taken the survey before
 - The survey is too long
 - The survey is too personal
 - The survey doesn't relate to me
 - Other

START SURVEY

Q1. Anonymous Unique Identifier
[ex. John Smith, born on 15th November 1964]

J	O	What are the first two letters of your FIRST name?
S	M	What are the first two letters of your LAST name?
1	5	What is the DAY you were born?
6	4	What are the last two numbers of the YEAR you were born?

Q2. How do you describe your gender identity?

- Male/Man
- Female/Woman
- Two-Spirit
- Trans Male/Trans Man
- Trans Female/Trans Woman
- Non-binary (including genderqueer & gender fluid)
- Don't Know
- Identity not listed:
- Prefer not to answer

Q3. How do you describe your sexual orientation

- Straight
- Lesbian
- Gay
- Asexual
- Bisexual
- Two-spirit
- Queer
- Questioning
- Don't Know
- Identity not listed:
- Prefer not to answer

DEMOGRAPHICS

Q4. Were you born in Canada?

- Yes
- No (if no, please answer **Q4a.** to **Q4c.**)
- Prefer not to answer

DEMOGRAPHICS (CONTINUED)

Q4a. If no, how long have you lived in Canada?

- # days / weeks / months / years (underline)
OR
- MM / DD / YYYY (date of arrival)
- Don't know
- Prefer not to answer

Q4b. Did you come to Canada as an immigrant, refugee, or refugee claimant?

- Economic Migrant Worker
- Landed Immigrant
- Permanent Resident
- Refugee/Claimant
- Student Visa
- Temporary Foreign Worker
- Prefer not to answer

Q4c. What is your current migration status?

- Canadian Citizen
- Economic Migrant Worker
- Landed Immigrant
- Permanent Resident
- Refugee/Claimant
- Student Visa
- Temporary Foreign Worker
- Prefer not to answer

Q5. Which ethnicity do you identify with?

- African
- Asian
- Caucasian
- Hispanic/Latino
- Indigenous
 - First Nations
 - Métis
 - Inuit
- Middle Eastern
- Identity not listed:

Q6. Have you ever served in the Canadian Armed Forces, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), or any Emergency Services? (check all that apply)

- Canadian Armed Forces
- RCMP
- Emergency Services (EMS, Police, Fire Dept.)
- No
- Prefer not to answer

HOUSING NEEDS

Q7. Do you consider your housing situation to be unstable or feel you could easily lose your housing?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Prefer not to answer

Q8. Thinking about your living situation **this past month**, which of these statements apply to you? (Check all that apply)

- I own the house I'm currently in
- I rent the apartment I'm currently in
- I live in accommodations provided by my employer
- I live in a house that is owned by/rented out by the Band
- I share a house/apartment with roommates
- I live in a house/apartment that I share with family/dependents
- I find it difficult to pay rent and I feel like I spend more than a third of my monthly income on my housing
- I live in housing that needs major repairs (heating or plumbing problems, mould, leaky roof, etc.)
- There are not enough rooms for the number of people in the house I'm in
- I lived in supported housing (e.g. Housing First)
- I stayed in a medical/detox/rehabilitation facility
- I slept in a friend's/family's house because I had no other place to stay
- I stayed in a jail/ prison/remand centre
- I stayed at a women's/domestic violence shelter
- I stayed with someone I didn't know because I had no other place to stay
- I slept in a shelter
- I slept in a makeshift shelter, vehicle, tent, or shack
- I slept in a public space (sidewalks, park benches, bus shelter etc.)

Q9. Why do you feel that your housing situation is unstable or why do you feel you could lose it ? (please choose up to 5 answers)

- Does not apply to me

Financial

- I can't afford rent/mortgage payments
- I don't make enough money
- My rent went up
- I lost my job
- Spouse/Partner lost their job

Health & well-being

- Addictions/Substance use
- Illness/Medical condition
- Mental health issues
- Mental disability
- Physical disability

Relationships

- Abuse
- Domestic/Family violence
- Conflict with: landlord, parent, guardian, roommate, spouse/partner (*underline*)
- Family rejection due to: gender identity/ expression, or sexual orientation (*underline*)

Other

- My house needs major repairs (mould, etc.)
- Racism/Discrimination
- Lack of Transportation
- I was in jail/prison
- Prefer not to answer

Q10. If you had to **choose only one main reason** why you feel that your housing situation is unstable, which one would it be? Please write your answer in the box below:

RECENT ACCOMMODATIONS

Q11. Have you stayed in an emergency shelter this past year?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know
- Prefer not to answer

Q12. If you needed a shelter in the past year and didn't access one, what were the reasons? (select all that apply)

- I didn't need shelter services
- The shelter was full
- No shelters in my area
- I didn't feel safe

Operations Concerns

- Health concerns (bed bugs, dirty, etc.)
- Hours of operation
- Lack of disability accommodations
- Lack of transportation
- No pets allowed
- Separation from family member/partner
- Reason not listed: _____
- Prefer not to answer

Q13. How long have you been staying in your current living arrangements?

- Less than a month
- 1 to 6 months
- 6 months to 1 year
- 1 to 2 years
- More than 2 years
- Prefer not to answer

HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS

Q14. As a youth, were you ever in foster care or in a youth group home?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

Q15. Are you or anyone in your household currently pregnant?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS (CONTINUED)

Q16. Are you currently a single-parent household?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

Q17. How many dependents under 18 years old are staying with you tonight?

- None
- 1
- 2
- 3
- Other: _____
- Prefer not to answer

Q18. Please list out the ages/gender of the dependents staying with you:

e.g. 12-year-old boy, 5 year-old girl

- Does not apply to me
- Prefer not to answer

Q19. How many adults are staying with you?

- None
- # total number of adults
- Prefer not to answer

The adults staying with me are:

- My parent(s)
- My partner
- My adult children
- My extended family
- My co-workers
- Not listed: _____
- Prefer not to answer

COMMUNITY LIVING

Q20. How long have you lived in this community?

- Always lived here
- Under a year
- Over a year (please answer **Q20a.** to **Q20d.**)
- Prefer not to answer

COMMUNITY LIVING (CONTINUED)

Q20a. Where did you live before you came to this community?

- A First Nation Community
- A Métis Settlement
- An Inuit Community
- Another community in the province:

- Another province:

- Another country:

- Prefer not to answer
- Does not apply to me

Q20b. How many times have you moved in the past 12 months?

- I have not moved in the past 12 months
- 1 to 2 times
- 3 to 6 times
- More than 6 times
- Prefer not to answer
- Does not apply to me

Q20c. What is the main reason you came to this community?

- Environmental displacement (flooding, wildfire, lack of clean drinking water, etc.)
- Fear for safety

Financial

- To look for work
- To start a job
- To attend school

Services

- To access emergency shelters
- To access services/supports
- To find housing

Family

- To visit family/friends
- To move in with spouse/partner
- My family moved here
- Other:

- Prefer not to answer

Q20d. Would you have stayed in your previous community if you had access to better services/programs?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Prefer not to answer

EMPLOYMENT

Q21. Are you currently employed?

- Yes (please answer **Q21a.** to **Q21b.**)
- No
- Prefer not to answer

Q21a. If yes, is your position: (check all that apply)

- Casual
- Part-time
- Full-time
- Not listed:

- Prefer not to answer

Q21b. If yes, which area do you work in?

- Agriculture
- Education
- Finance
- Forestry
- Food and Beverage/Restaurant
- Health
- Human Services
- Hunting/Trapping
- Marketing
- Oil and Gas
- Retail/Personal Services
- Technology
- Tourism
- Not Listed:

- Prefer not to answer

Q22. What is the highest level of education you've completed?

- No formal education
- Some grade school
- Some high school
- High school diploma or GED
- Apprenticeship, trades certificate, or diploma
- College certificate or diploma
- Some post-secondary
- Post-secondary degree (bachelor's)
- Graduate/Professional Degree (Master's, PhD, MD, JD, etc.)
- Don't know
- Prefer not to answer

EMPLOYMENT (CONTINUED)

Q23. What are your sources of income? (check all that apply)

- Employment
- My partner/spouse's income
- Alimony/Child Support

Government-related

- Seniors Benefits (CPP, OAS, GIS, etc.)
- Veterans' Benefits
- Disability Benefits
- Employment Insurance (EI)
- Student loans
- Income assistance

Tax-related

- Child and Family Tax Benefits
- GST refunds

Informal

- Informal Income (e.g. bottle returns, panhandling, etc.)
- Money from family and friends
- Not Listed:

-
- Prefer not to answer

SUPPORT SERVICES

Q24. What is the main reason(s) for visiting the office today? (choose as many options as it applies to you)

- Basic needs
food, shelter, clothing, etc.
 - Crisis Financial Support
eviction notice, utility bill problems, damage deposits, etc.
 - Family/Parenting
child care, parenting/family issues, relationship issues, child developmental assessment tools/referrals etc.
 - Financial
employment, housing, training/education, etc.
 - Health and Wellness
addictions, mental health, physical health care, spiritual/cultural, etc.
 - Legal
separation/divorce/custody, wills/estates, employment/labour standards, landlord/tenant issues, immigration issues, criminal/misdemeanor, etc.
 - Support Services
help with government forms, help with accessing government/other programs or services, access to technology, etc.
 - Transportation Needs
access to basic services/education/employment, medical transportation
 - All of the above
 - Not listed:
-
- Prefer not to answer

SUPPORT SERVICES (CONTINUED)

Q25. Of the areas listed in **Q24.**, which ones do you feel you need the most help with? (List as many options as it applies to you)

Q26. Does our community provide enough...

Yes No Not Sure

Employment opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Free/accessible recreation/social opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sufficient social services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accessible affordable housing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q27. Knowing the information you've shared, do we have your consent to use this information to estimate the resources needed to better support people in our community?

As a reminder, no identifying information will be used; all data will be treated securely and with respect; and saying "No" will NOT affect your ability to access services.

- Yes
- No

END SURVEY

Thank you for your time!

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Survey Details

Survey was: Administered by Staff Member Filled out by Client Other:

Date Completed: M M / D D / Y Y Y Y

Location Name: City, Town, Hamlet, etc.

Service Agency Name: e.g. FCSS, Friendship Centre

Unique Identifier

Please fill in the unique identifier with the info on page 2 as well as the guidelines below.

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UNIQUE IDENTIFIER GUIDELINES

To safeguard and protect the respondents' identity and ensure their anonymity, the unique identifier must be filled in based on the following guidelines:

e.g. John Smith, Male, born on November 15th, 1964

J	O	S	M	0	6	6	4	M
A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2	D1	D2	E

e.g. John Smith, Gender Unknown, born on November 15th, Year Unknown

J	O	S	M	0	6	#	#	#
A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2	D1	D2	E

(A1, A2)	(B1, B2)	(C1, C2)	(B1, B2)	(E)
First two letters of first name	First two letters of last name	Sum* of the numbers of birth day	Last two numbers of birth year	'M' for male, 'F' for female, and 'X' for non-binary

* If the sum of the numbers in the Birth Day of the individual is less than 10, add a '0' in front of the final sum, and if the resulting sum is greater than or equal to 10, record it as is. Refer to the examples above. This is done to keep the overall unique identifier length consistent among all survey participants with a total of 9 characters.

** In the case of any missing information to develop a 'Unique Identifier', please use "#" for the character representing the information that is missing.



April 2021

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