



2018 RURAL HOMELESSNESS ESTIMATION PROJECT

Banff and Canmore
Community Report

May 2019



MAY 2019

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The Step-by-Step Guide to Estimating Rural Homelessness
is available for download in English and French at www.ardn.ca

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Updated: May 31, 2019

Canada 

This project was funded in part by the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy. The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.

The Alberta Rural Development Network recognizes that the 2018 Rural Homelessness Estimation Project took place on the traditional territories of Treaty 6, Treaty 7, and Treaty 8.

Banff and Canmore's Estimation Count occurred on Treaty 7 territory, the ancestral home of the Blackfoot Confederacy (comprising the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai First Nations), the Tsuut'ina First Nation, the Stoney Nakoda (including the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nations), as well as the Métis. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous peoples whose footsteps have marked these territories for centuries. The ARDN also recognizes the direct connection between homelessness and colonization¹, and it is our hope that this project provides one small step towards righting wrongs.



PARTICIPATING COMMUNITIES

The following communities participated in the 2018 Rural Homelessness Estimation Project:

Athabasca County

Banff and Canmore

Camrose

County of Grande Prairie

Drayton Valley

Drumheller

Fort Macleod

Grande Cache

Greenville

Hinton

Jasper

Kainai First Nation

Lacombe

Okotoks

Lac La Biche

Peace River

Ponoka

Strathmore

Tri-Region (Spruce Grove, Stony Plain, and Parkland County)

Wetaskiwin

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

The following local organizations participated in Banff and Canmore's Estimation Count:

AHS Addiction and Mental Health

Banff Community Dinner

Banff Food Rescue

FCSS Banff

FCSS Canmore

Job Resource Centre

YWCA Banff

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In partnership with the Family and Community Support Services Association of Alberta (FCSSAA), the Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN) led a province-wide effort to estimate homelessness in rural communities in Alberta. Funded in part by the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy, the Rural Homelessness Estimation Project (RHEP) is an initiative which facilitated homelessness data collection in 20 communities across rural Alberta over a three-month period in fall 2018.

This initiative utilized the methodology outlined in ARDN's "Step-by-Step Guide to Estimating Rural Homelessness"² whereby surveys are administered at local and regional social service agencies to gather information on the following:

- Housing instability
- Employment
- Income
- Family demographics
- Services accessed

Lead project partners connected with local service agencies in their communities to coordinate the dates for their local count. Service agencies were instructed to invite individuals who visited their agency to fill out a 28-question survey during a consecutive 30-day period.

The participating 20 communities were provided with both an online and paper version of the survey. In either format, the survey could be completed directly by the respondent or with the assistance of a staff member.

Over the months prior to the collection period, service providers were trained on the objectives, needs, and overall goal of the project, which was to collect information on housing and service needs from individuals accessing local services. Emphasis during training was placed on clarifying survey terms, ensuring respondents' confidentiality and privacy, and securing their informed consent.

Data from paper surveys was input into the online platform by the local lead project coordinator and was compiled, reviewed, and consolidated by ARDN along with survey results collected online. To maximize the reach of the survey, this community took the contents of the paper survey and placed it into an easily shareable online format. Duplicates from both formats were removed (using the Unique Identifier, as per the Step-by-Step Guide methodology) and data analysis and integrity measures were performed by ARDN analysts to produce the final community findings outlined in this report.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

This report consists of an overview of the primary data collected through social service agencies in Banff and Canmore from November 2 - December 2, 2018. The lead coordinator for Banff and Canmore's Estimation Count was the Homeless to Housing Coalition (H2HC).

The primary data collected in Banff and Canmore's count indicated the following:

- 85 people felt their housing situation was unstable, that they could easily lose their housing, or were unsure whether their housing was stable;
- The majority of respondents who identified as housing-unstable were born in Canada (61%), identified

- as Caucasian (73%), and had resided in Banff and Canmore for more than a year (63%);
- 86% of respondents who were housing-unstable were employed (n=73);
- The most common support services needed by all survey respondents (both stably and unstably housed) were "Financial Support", "Health & Wellness Support", and "Transportation Support".

As per the Step-by-Step Guide, this survey used the Canadian definition of homelessness as defined by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness³. However, to encourage client participation, the survey was advertised as a way to better understand the housing and support needs and challenges faced by community members in Banff and Canmore; use of the term "homelessness" was minimized due to the associated stigma, and the questions within the survey focused on respondents' "unstable housing" conditions. Unstable housing, as defined in this iteration of the project, is when a person experiences **"difficulty paying rent, spending a major portion of the household income on housing, having frequent moves, living in overcrowded conditions, or doubling up with friends and relatives"**. By re-framing the focus of the survey, this project attempted to decrease stigma, increase community members' willingness to participate, and collect quality data that stays true to the estimation's purpose.

It is important to reiterate that the aim of the project was not solely to identify the scope of homelessness and housing instability in Banff and Canmore, but to better understand the support services potentially required to address these issues. Through the collection of direct input from individuals who access social services, a baseline depiction of the local situation can be established.

Despite this, the following data is count data. While there is likely a small error in responses due to data entry or user error, there are no significance values, p-values, tests, or inferential statistics of any sort within this report. It is therefore not ARDN's intention with this report to:

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

It is the responsibility of the individual community and local community partners to draw their own conclusions and interpretations based on this data and determine how to best utilize it. ARDN assumes no responsibility or liability for any changes, decisions, or actions made as a result of the interpretation of data outlined in this report.

Due to rounding and exclusion of non-responses, data presented throughout this report may not add up precisely to the totals provided and percentages may not precisely reflect the absolute figures. Additionally, some questions from the survey are not included within this report due to low response rates. A copy of the actual paper survey used in this project can be found at www.ardn.ca/publications/2018-rhep-survey.

LIMITATIONS

In this pilot study, respondents self-identified as to whether they considered their housing situation as unstable or whether they felt they could easily lose their housing. Because of the stigma associated

with the term "homelessness" and the relativity of the term "housing instability", many individuals may not self-identify under either term, even though they meet the defined criteria. Therefore, individuals who may meet the Canadian definition of homelessness may have nevertheless reported their housing situation as stable (and vice versa).

Not every person who entered a participating service agency may have consented to the survey (and therefore, not every participating agency may have been able to gather completed surveys); not every individual requiring help may have entered a participating service agency during the 30-day collection period; and not every service agency in Banff and Canmore may have participated. As a result, this report presents a conservative picture of Banff and Canmore's situation with regards to homelessness, housing instability, and community service needs.

SUPPORT SERVICES

All individuals who took the survey (n=106), including those who said they had stable housing, were asked which issues they were seeking assistance for when they came into the service agency. The support services that all respondents

Table 1: Respondents were asked "what general areas or issues are you here to get support with?"

General Support Services Needed (Multiple Responses Possible)	Responses
Financial Support	52
Health & Wellness Support	27
Transportation Support	18
Basic Needs (food, shelter, medical, shower, laundry) Support	17
Legal Support	17
Support Services (Accessing government services, accessing technology)	15
Prefer Not To Answer	15
Family/Parenting Support	11
Domestic Violence Support	8



reported as needing the most can be seen in **Table 1** (page 6) and multiple responses were possible. Fifteen respondents chose "prefer not to answer".

The top three most common responses for support services required by survey respondents were "Financial Support" (52), "Health & Wellness Support" (27), and "Transportation Support" (18).

COMMUNITY FINDINGS

Housing Stability

The total number of respondents who completed the survey was 106. Of those, a total of 85 individuals answered "yes" or "not sure" to the question "Do you consider your housing situation to be unstable or feel you could easily lose your housing?" and are therefore considered housing-unstable individuals (**Figure 1**). All the results that follow in this report include data solely from respondents who reported their housing situation to be unstable. This was done to both capture information from individuals facing homelessness, and better understand demand on local service agencies.

Reasons for Housing Instability

The reasons given for why individuals felt their

106

TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS

85

UNSTABLY HOUSED RESPONDENTS

housing was unstable can be seen in **Table 2** (page 8). Respondents had the option to give multiple answers if necessary. The top five most common responses for why they felt their housing was unstable were as follows: 49 responses for "Low

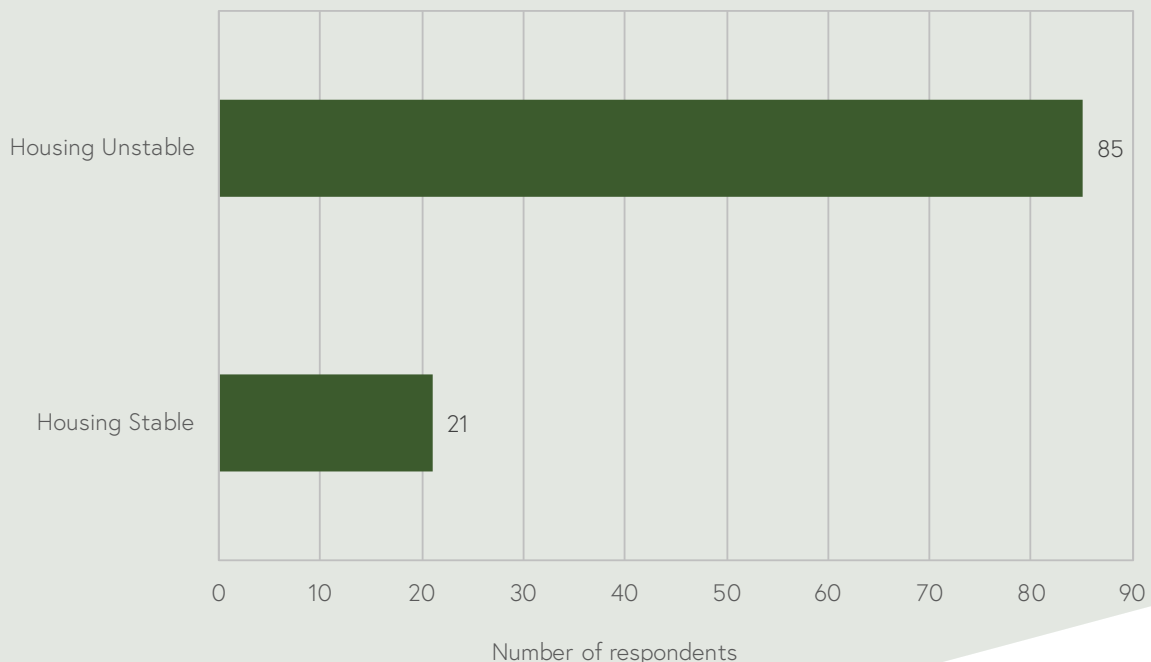


Figure 1: A total of 85 individuals answered "yes" or "not sure" to the question "Do you consider your housing situation to be unstable or feel you could easily lose your housing?" (n=106).

Table 2: The most common reasons provided by Banff and Canmore respondents as to why they felt their housing was unstable. Respondents were able to give more than one response. Other options that received zero responses are not shown.

Reasons for Unstable Housing Status (Multiple Responses Possible)	Responses
Low Income	49
Unable To Pay Rent/Mortgage	38
Job Loss	34
Conflict	34
Inadequate Housing	26
Other	20
Mental Health	11
Transportation	7
Illness/Medical Condition	6
Abuse	4
Addiction/Substance Use	3

Income"; 38 for "Unable to Pay Rent or Mortgage"; 34 for "Conflict"; 34 for "Job Loss"; and 26 for "Inadequate Housing".

When respondents were asked to give their primary reason that they thought their housing was unstable (one reason only), the most common responses were: 19 (22.9%) for "Low Income", 14 (16.9%) for "Unable to Pay Rent/Mortgage", and 11 (13.3%) for "Job Loss".

DEMOGRAPHICS

Gender

The reported gender identities of housing-unstable individuals can be seen in **Figure 2**. Of the survey respondents, 37 (43.5%) identified as men, 47 (55.3%) identified as women, and one (1.2%) identified as transgender.

Sexual Orientation

The reported sexual orientations of respondents can be seen in **Figure 3** (page 9). Of the survey respondents, 66 identified as straight, three identified lesbian or gay, seven as bisexual, one as

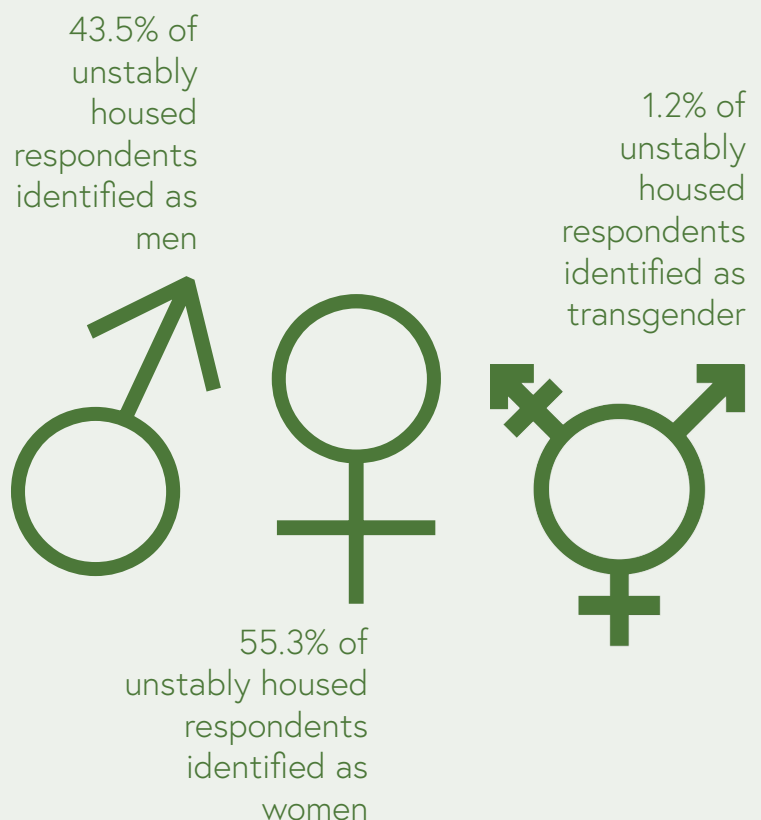


Figure 2: Gender identities of housing-unstable respondents (n=85).

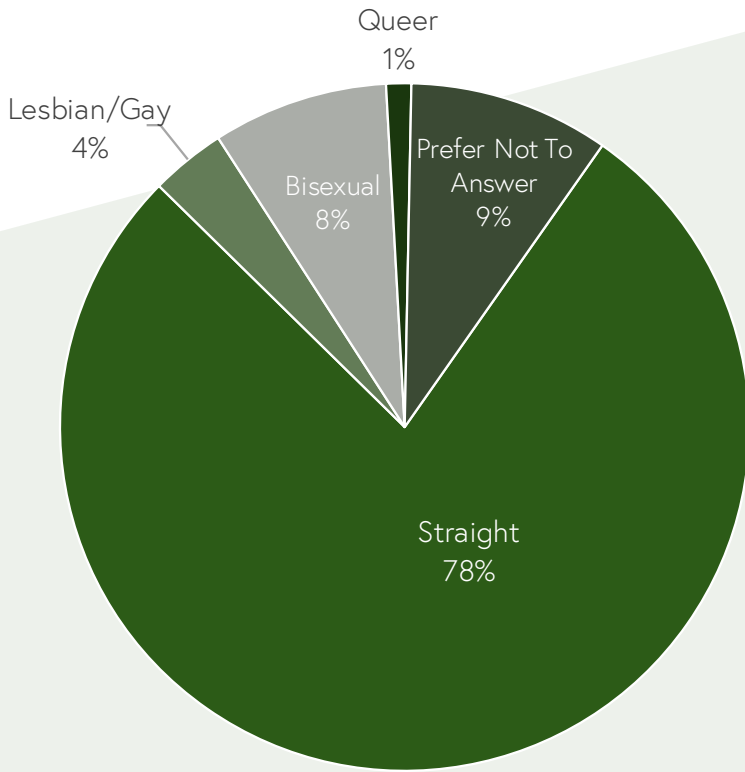


Figure 3: Sexual orientation of respondents who identified as housing-unstable (n=85).

queer, and eight responded "Prefer Not to Answer".

Age of Respondents

The age demographics of respondents with unstable housing can be seen in **Figure 4** (below). The average age of individuals facing unstable housing was 34 and the median age was 30.

A note about youth participation: service agencies were instructed to limit survey administration to individuals 14 years of age or older, as per the consent and confidentiality guidelines of the Alberta College of Social Workers⁴.

Migration Status and Ethnicity

Out of all housing-unstable respondents, 52 were born in Canada, 32 born outside of Canada, and one responded "Prefer Not to Answer". These results are shown in **Figure 5** (page 10).

Of those respondents who were born in Canada, 24 identified as Caucasian, one as Indigenous (Métis), four as a Visible Minority, four responded "Prefer Not to Answer", and 19 gave no response (**Figure 6**, Page 10).

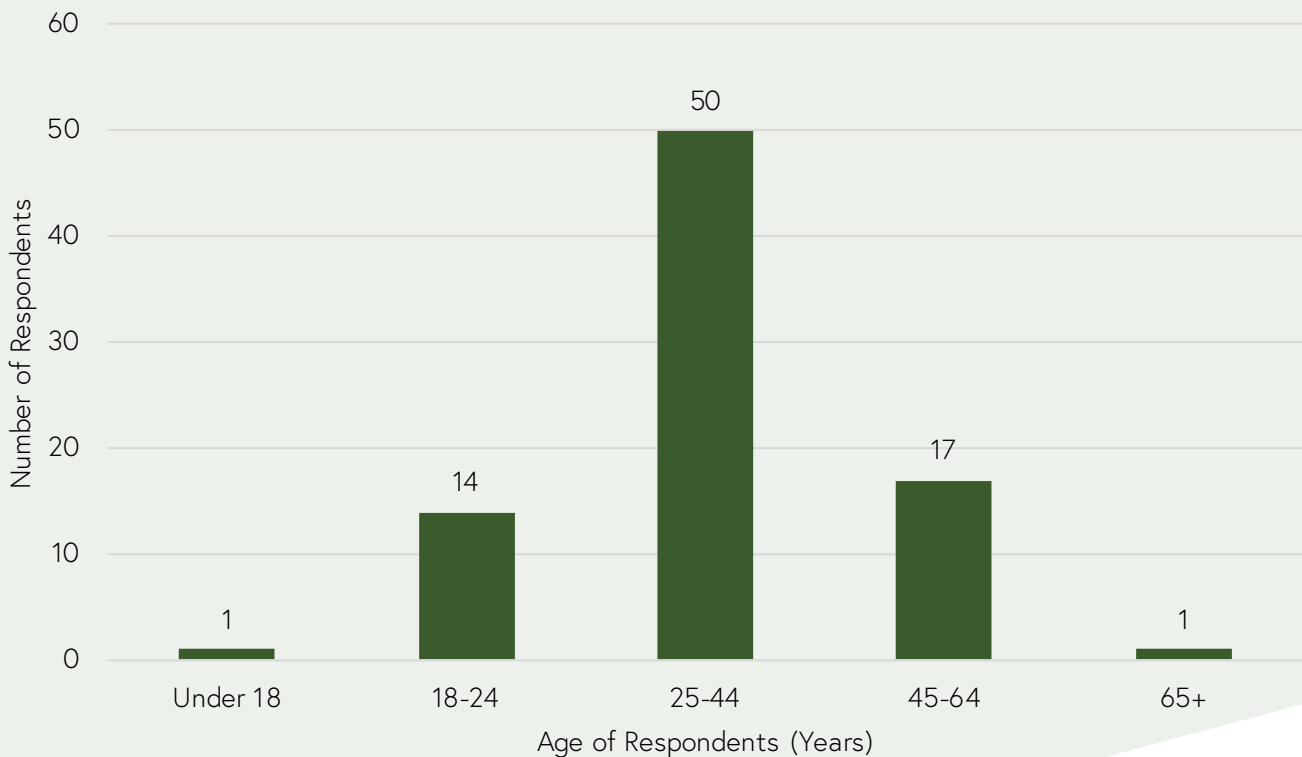


Figure 4: Age demographics of housing-unstable respondents (n=83).

Of respondents who were born outside of Canada (n=32), four arrived in Canada as economic migrant workers, four as immigrants or refugees, nine as

temporary foreign workers, and three as "Other". Seven responded "Prefer Not to Answer", and six gave no response.

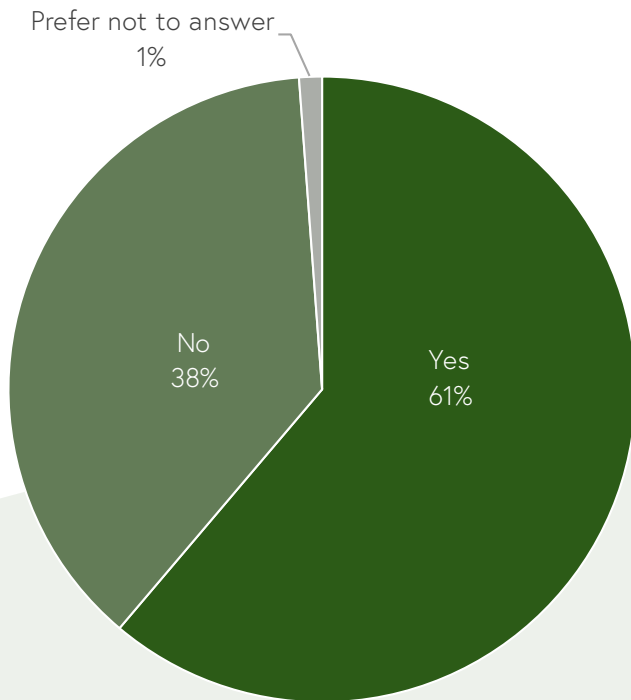


Figure 5 (above): Unstably-housed respondents who answered "yes" or "no" to the question "were you born in Canada"?

Of respondents currently facing unstable housing, 59 were Canadian citizens, three were permanent residents, five were non-permanent residents, two responded "Prefer Not to Answer", and 16 gave no response.

RECENT LIVING SITUATION

Duration of residency

The duration of time that respondents had lived in the community can be seen in **Figure 7** (page 11). Four respondents reported that they have always lived in the community, 54 had lived in the community for over a year, and 27 had lived in the community for under a year.

Accommodations

Respondents were asked about their most recent living situations. Respondents' most commonly reported

Table 3: Respondents were asked about their accommodations within the past week.

Accommodations in the past week (multiple responses possible)	Responses
Apartment/House	53
Someone Else's Place	8
Motel/Hotel	8
Camping	7
Shelter Services	3
Sidewalks, Squares, Parks, or Makeshift Shelter	2
Prefer Not To Answer	2
Other Accommodations	2
Vehicles	2
Abandoned Building	1

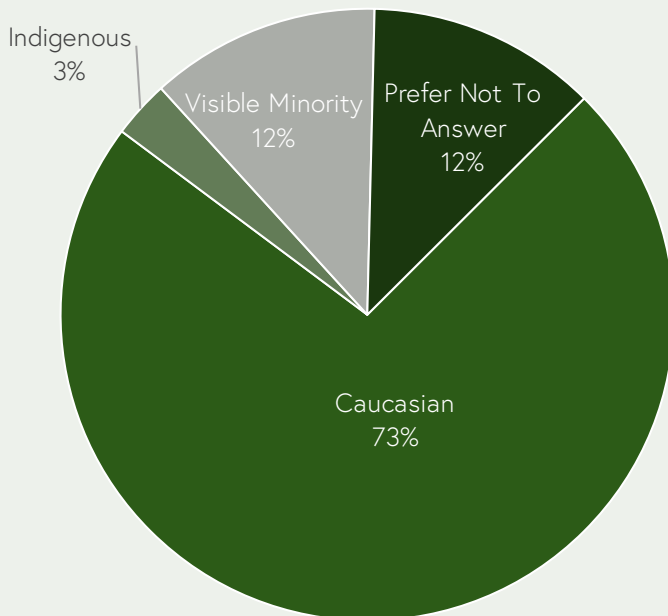


Figure 6 (above): Of respondents born in Canada, 73% identified as Caucasian, 12% identified as Visible Minorities, 3% identified as Indigenous, and 12% responded with "prefer not to answer" (n=33). Non-responses were excluded from this graph (n=19).

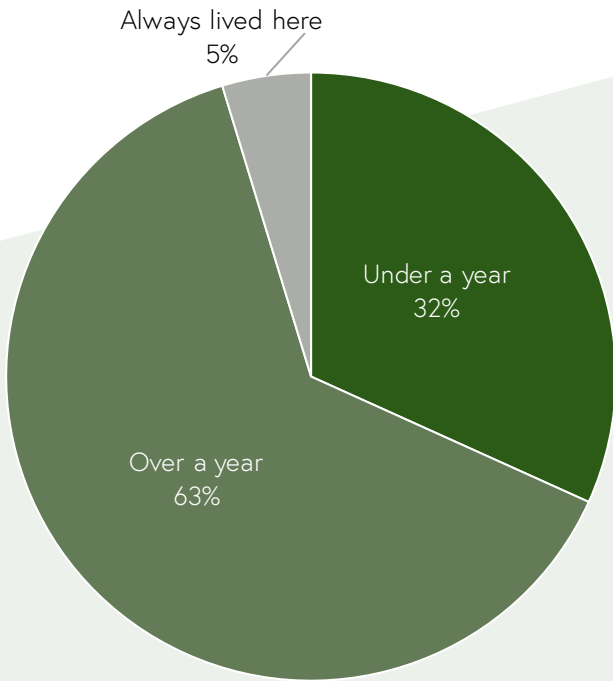


Figure 7: Respondents were asked about their current living situations. The figure above contains the response for the question "how long have you lived within this community?" (n=85).

living situations for the week prior to taking the survey can be seen in **Table 3** (page 10). The duration of time that respondents reported living in their current living situation can be seen in **Figure 8** (below).

Respondents were asked about the number of times they had moved in the past year; frequent moves can be an indicator of instability and insecurity. 23 respondents had not moved in the past year. Of respondents who had moved in the past year, 28 had moved 1-2 times, 19 had moved 3-5 times, three had moved 6-10 times, two had moved 10 or more times, one responded "Not Applicable", one responded "Prefer Not to Answer", and 8 gave no response.

For respondents who had lived somewhere else in the past year, 25 moved from another residence within the community, eight came from another community in the province, 10 from another province, 15 from another country, and eight responded "Prefer Not to Answer".

Who's Staying with You

Some respondents reported that they had other people sharing their living situation with them. Of collected housing-unstable survey responses (n=85), there were a total of 43 adults staying with unstably-housed respondents. The average number of adults sharing respondents' living situation was 1.48. There were also a total of 15 children staying with the respondents. The average number of children sharing respondents' living situation was 0.83.

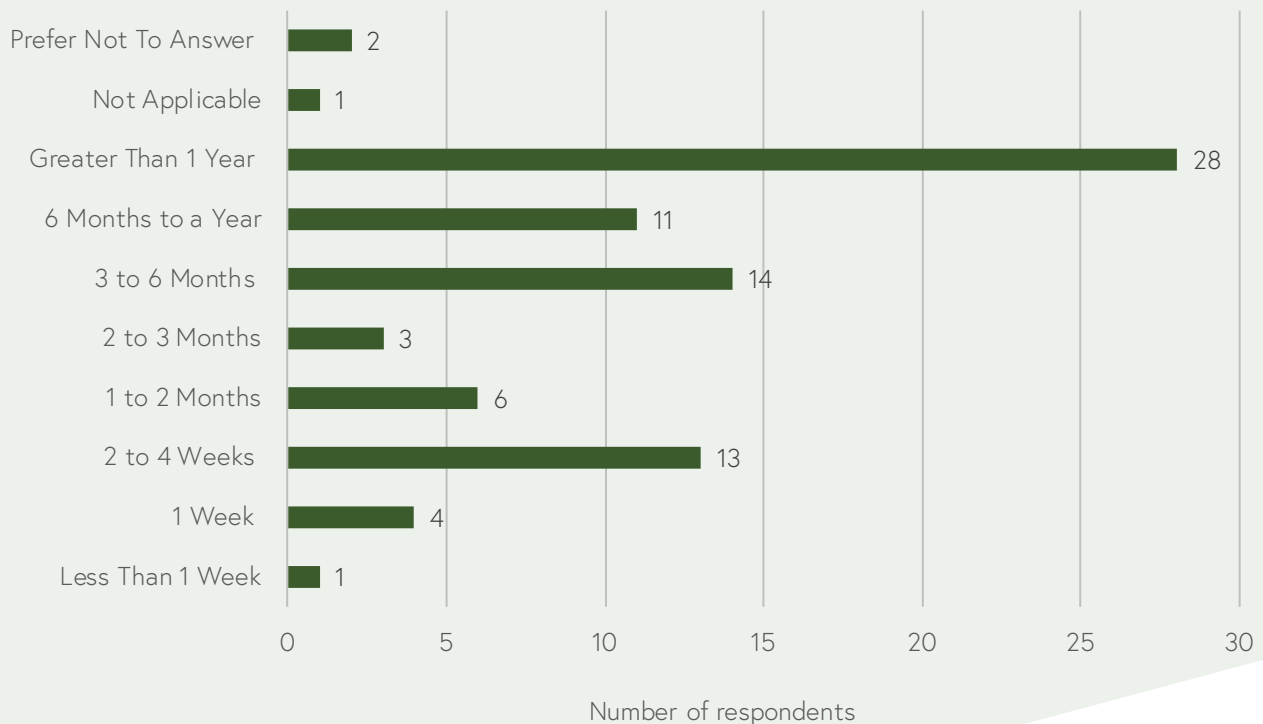


Figure 8: Respondents were asked how long they have been staying in their current accommodations.

It is important to note that these individuals cannot be confirmed to be experiencing housing instability, and these numbers are just an indication that they share the same living situation or household as the survey respondent.

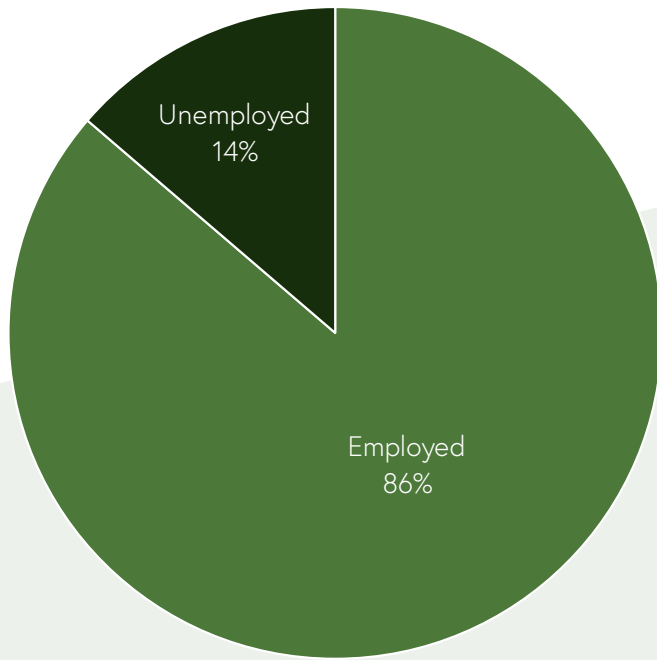


Figure 9 (above): Respondents were asked whether they're currently employed (n=73).

No unstably-housed respondent answered "yes" to the question "are you or anyone in your household pregnant?".

Shelter Use

Respondents were asked if they had spent time in an emergency shelter in the past year. 16 individuals responded to this question, and three answered "yes" to accessing shelter services in the past year. Subsequently, if they had answered "no", respondents were asked about possible reasons for not utilizing emergency shelter(s). All 13 "no" respondents responded with "Prefer Not to Answer".

Note: due to a technical error, the shelter use question was not included on the online version of the survey (for all 20 communities that took part in the survey); therefore, data was only collected for respondents who filled out the paper version of the survey. As a result, this question was asked of a smaller subset of housing-unstable survey respondents and the data is therefore incomplete.

EMPLOYMENT

The employment status of housing-unstable individuals can be seen in **Figure 9** (page 12). Out



of 73 individuals who responded to the question, 63 were employed and 10 were unemployed. Thirty-five were employed full-time, nine were employed part-time, four were casual workers, and 27 gave no response. The sector that people were currently employed in can be seen in **Table 4** (below).

Table 4: Of respondents who reported being employed, 26 identified which sector they were employed in.

Current Employment Sector	Responses
Hospitality/Food and Beverage Sector	14
Tourism Sector	4
Other Sector	3
Retail/Personal Services Sector	2
Health Sector	1
Agriculture Sector	1
Education Sector	1

Military or Emergency Services

Two respondents reported that they had either been employed by the military or in any emergency service positions (RCMP/police, EMS/paramedics, or firefighters). Of these, one respondent is currently or has previously worked in emergency services. One respondent chose "Prefer Not to Answer".

Sources of Income

Finally, respondents were asked to identify what sources of income they had, with multiple responses if applicable. The top responses for the community can be seen in **Table 5**.

UNIQUE FINDINGS

We compared Banff and Canmore's data to the overall data from the other 19 communities that participated in the Rural Homelessness Estimation Project. This section describes unique data findings that are outliers in comparison to other communities. All findings in this section are based only on housing-unstable respondents (n=85). Percentages are rounded to the nearest tenth.

Banff and Canmore ranked highest amongst the 20 communities for men (45.6%) and women (38.3%) who were housing unstable and reported being currently employed full-time, as well as highest for men (73.0%) and highly for women (72.3%) who reported employment as at least one source of income. They also ranked highly for women who reported being employed in the Hospitality/Food and Beverage sector (17.0%).

Banff and Canmore ranked highest for men, and highly for women, with regards to the proportion of people who had lived in another country before moving to the community (21.6% and 12.8%, respectively). Finally, these communities ranked highly amongst the 20 communities for men who

Table 5: Respondents were asked to identify their current sources of income.

Sources of Income (Multiple Responses Possible)	Responses
Employment	62
No Source of Income	8
Non Senior Related Benefits: AISH	7
Money From Family/Friends	7
Non Senior Related Benefits: Alberta Supports Benefits	4
Non Senior Related Benefits: Child Tax Credit	4
Other Sources	3
Non Senior Related Benefits: Other Benefits	3
Prefer Not To Answer	2
Non Senior Related Benefits: Employment Insurance	2
Senior Related Benefits: Canada Pension (CPP)	1
Senior Related Benefits: Old Age Security (OAS)	1
Both Senior And Non Senior Related Benefits	1
Senior Related Benefits: Canada Pension Plan Disability (CPPD)	1

reported being in the community less than 2 years (37.8% of men).

CONCLUSION

The 2018 Rural Homelessness Estimation Project was a pilot project aimed at investigating rural and remote homelessness in 20 rural communities across Alberta. It represents the first coordinated effort to quantitatively estimate homelessness outside the seven major cities across the province. It's intent was to provide baseline data for further investigation into the issue of rural and remote homelessness in Alberta.

This report provides a summary of primary data collected by service agencies in Banff and Canmore from November 2 - December 2, 2018. It is a snapshot of the living situation of individuals who accessed services in the community and reported that they were experiencing housing instability.

From a total of 106 survey respondents, 85 people reported that they felt that they could easily lose their housing or that they were uncertain whether their housing situation was stable. Given the reasons outlined at the beginning of this report, there are likely more individuals who met the Canadian definition of homelessness or who are struggling with housing instability and homelessness in Banff and Canmore.

It is important to reiterate that the information herein is intended to be presented as objectively as possible, without interpretation or recommendations from the ARDN. The intention of this report is to provide means for agencies within the community – who are most familiar with their local needs and realities – to determine their community's potential needs, as well as what concrete responses or additional research may be necessary to prevent or reduce homelessness and housing instability in Banff and Canmore.

What has been made clear from the study is that rural and remote housing instability and homelessness exists in all 20 rural communities that were investigated, a finding that supports previous qualitative research indicating that it is

widespread across Alberta⁵. More research on rural and remote homelessness, in both the Banff and Canmore area and across Alberta, is warranted to better understand the issues unique to individual municipalities and areas, as well as commonalities shared, in order to inform best practices and local solutions. Given that it was the first such count of its kind (as well as the first large-scale utilization of the methodology described in the Step-by-Step Guide to Estimating Rural Homelessness), many lessons were learned and the results from this pilot study will help shape and improve future counts.

The Alberta Rural Development Network would like to thank the Homeless to Housing Coalition (H2HC) and all community partners in the Banff and Canmore area for their work on this pilot study, as well as the Family and Community Support Services Association of Alberta (FCSSAA) for their work coordinating the project.



ENDNOTES

1) Thistle, J. (2017). Indigenous Definition of Homelessness in Canada. Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press.

2) Abedin, Z. (2017). Step-by-Step Guide to Estimate Rural Homelessness (1st ed.). Retrieved from <https://www.ardn.ca/estimation-guide/step-by-step-guide-to-estimate-rural-homelessness-english>

3) 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.

4) Alberta College of Social Workers. (2015). Guidelines on the Management of Consent and Confidentiality When Working with Minors. Retrieved from http://acsw.in1touch.org/uploaded/web/NEWS_GUIDELINES_ConsentwithMinors.pdf

5) Schiff, J. W., Schiff, R., & Turner, A. (2016). Rural Homelessness in Western Canada: Lessons Learned from Diverse Communities. Social Inclusion. (4)4, 73-85. doi: 10.17645/si.v4i4.633

CORRECTIONS

- **Page 4 (Executive Summary):** *The number of total questions in the survey has been corrected to 28. It was incorrectly given as 25.*
- **Page 8 (Reasons for Housing Instability):** *Data percentages were minorly corrected for primary reasons for unstable housing due to discovery of a survey formatting error.*
- **Page 10 (Duration of Residency):** *Data was changed to distinguish between respondents who have lived in the community for more than a year and less than a year. Original: "81 people have moved to the community at some point".*
- **Page 10 (Accommodations):** *Due to an issue with data calculation automation, number of respondents who stayed at an apartment/house within the last week has been corrected from 85 to 53.*
- **Page 13 (Unique Findings):** *Changed ranking of Banff and Canmore's population of women who reported employment as a source of income from "highest ranked of all communities" to "highly ranked amongst all communities".*

Updated May 31, 2019



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