



BONNYVILLE

2023 Alberta Provincial Housing
& Service Needs Estimation

COMMUNITY REPORT



Prepared By:
Rural Development Network
(780)-964-2736
11443 - 143 Street, NW
Edmonton, AB

Acknowledgements

RDN's physical office is located on the Traditional Territories of Treaty 6 and is home to many Métis and Inuit Peoples. As a national organization, we also acknowledge that RDN staff and the communities we support, live, gather, and organize across Turtle Island.

Inuit, Métis, and First Nations Peoples are experiencing homelessness at disproportionately high rates compared to non-Indigenous people in Canada. Unlike the common, colonialist definition of homelessness, Indigenous homelessness is not simply defined as lacking a structure of habitation; rather, it is more fully understood as a loss or breakdown of relationships between individuals, families, and/or communities and their land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages, and identities. RDN recognizes the ways in which settler relationships to both the land and the Peoples of this land have been broken and misused, causing and contributing to Indigenous homelessness. We also recognize the ways in which our presence on this land continues to uphold colonialism and reproduces dispossession and violence for Indigenous people, further perpetuating experiences of Indigenous homelessness.

In an ongoing effort to support Indigenous communities in addressing issues of housing, homelessness, and service needs, we are committed to working to decolonize homelessness research and advocate to funders for Indigenous self-determination in the housing and social sectors.

We share this acknowledgement to reaffirm our responsibility and commitment to reconciliation.

We also recognize that this land acknowledgement is just that, an acknowledgement; it is but one step in our journey. We commit to working to uphold the conditions of the treaties that govern this land.





We thank you.

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 in Bonnyville and the residents of Bonnyville for their support, dedication, and commitment to this project.

Funded in part by the Government of Canada's Reaching Home Program:





About this Report

In 2023, the Rural Development Network (RDN) partnered with 22 organizations representing 45 communities across Alberta to conduct the third iteration of the provincial-wide housing and service needs estimation.

This report outlines Bonnyville's results within the provincial estimation, highlighting the number of residents who are housing insecure and their experiences with homelessness. This report is complimented by the [Alberta Provincial Report](#), which highlights the combined results of all 45 communities across the province.

This report is intended to support decision-making across organizations, funders and multiple levels of government around housing and homelessness by providing reliable and up-to-date data on housing and service needs in Bonnyville. It can also be used and referred to in the community for program and advocacy purposes related to housing, homelessness, and service needs.

Contact info@ruraldevelopment.ca for more information on Housing and Service Needs Estimations.



Table of Contents

Definitions: What Does Homelessness Mean?	1
Introduction	3
Methodology	4
Limitations	8
Results & Analysis	
Objective Housing Situation	9
Exploring the Spectrum of Homelessness in Bonnyville	10
Bonnyville Population Overview	12
Housing & Service Needs Estimation Survey	14
Respondent Population Overview	
Housing Secure vs. Housing Insecure Survey	15
Respondent Population Overview	
Education, Employment, and Income Sources	18
Living Situation	22
Community Supports	26
Community Spaces	34
"What Would You Like to See More of in Your Community?"	37
What Does Homelessness Look Like in Bonnyville?	40
Opportunities Moving Forward	41
References	43

Definitions

What Does Homelessness Mean?

Homelessness


According to the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (Gaetz et al., 2012), homelessness is the situation of an individual, family, or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means, and ability to acquire it. It is the result of systemic or societal barriers, domestic violence, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household's financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination.

Further, Indigenous homelessness considers the traumas imposed on Indigenous Peoples through colonialism. It is defined as a “human condition that describes First Nations, Métis and Inuit individuals, families or communities lacking stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means or ability to acquire such housing...Indigenous homelessness is not defined as lacking a structure of habitation; rather, it is more fully described and understood through a composite lens of Indigenous worldviews” (Thistle, 2017).

Most people do not choose to be homeless, and the experience is generally negative, unpleasant, stressful, and distressing. The national definition of homelessness notes that individuals who become homeless experience a range of physical living situations, including:

Unsheltered: Absolutely homeless, living on the streets or in places not intended for human habitation (e.g. living on sidewalks, squares, parks, vehicles, garages, etc.).

Emergency Sheltered: People who are staying in overnight shelters due to homelessness as well as those staying in shelters due to family violence.



Provisionally Accommodated: People with an accommodation that is temporary or that lacks security for tenure (e.g. couch-surfing, living in transitional housing, living in abandoned buildings, living in places unfit for human habitation, people who are housed seasonally, people in domestic violence situations, etc.).

At Risk of Homelessness: People who are not yet homeless but whose current economic and/or housing situation is precarious or does not meet public health and safety standards (e.g. people who are one rent payment missed from eviction, people whose housing may be condemned for health, by-law, or safety violations, etc.).

(Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, Canadian Definition of Homelessness, 2012).

Insecure Housing: For this report, the term housing insecure, or insecure housing, will be used to encompass the entire spectrum of homelessness which includes unsheltered, emergency sheltered, provisionally accommodated, and at risk of homelessness.

Introduction

When it comes to homelessness and understanding its causes, the urban experience tends to dominate the conversation, mainly due to the “visibility” of individuals experiencing homelessness in urban centres. The issue of homelessness in rural and remote areas is far less understood and acknowledged because of its “hidden” nature. Further, recent data suggests that rural homelessness is prevalent at rates equivalent to or greater than urban per capita rates (Schiff, et al., 2022).

Recognizing this, RDN conducted the 2023 Alberta Provincial Housing and Service Needs Estimation with 22 organizations representing 45 rural, remote, and Indigenous communities across Alberta in an attempt to better understand what homelessness looks like in each community and across the rural provincial landscape. Specifically, the purpose of this estimation is to:

1. Develop a contextually relevant process for local service providers to engage and collect informed data with those who are at risk of or currently experiencing homelessness.
2. Provide a comprehensive picture of housing insecurity and homelessness in Alberta, including demographic information on who is experiencing homelessness, and which services are being accessed and which services are missing.
3. Help inform service providers and municipal, provincial, and federal policies, practices, and funding decisions on homelessness, housing, and support services.
4. Develop recommendations and next steps for service providers and municipal, provincial, and federal governments.
5. Elevate and incorporate the voices of people experiencing homelessness in the solutions to end homelessness.

This is the third iteration of the Alberta Provincial Housing and Service Needs Estimation; it was also conducted in 2018 and 2020 with 20 and 24 communities respectively, though Bonnyville has never participated in the provincial estimation before.


Methodology

The methodology employed in this Housing and Service Needs Estimation comes from the Step-by-Step Guide to Estimating Rural Homelessness, published by the Rural Development Network. RDN initially developed the Step-by-Step Guide to Estimating Rural Homelessness due to the lack of available, accurate, and current data on rural homelessness. A lack of data limits the ability of rural communities like Bonnyville to advocate for better resources for their residents.

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 Point-in-Time (PiT) counts in rural and remote areas. It instead uses a service-based population estimation approach, which allows for anyone, including small nonprofits and local front-line agencies, to gather data on gaps in local housing and service needs without adding additional strain to workloads and organizational capacities.

Following the model proposed in the Step-by-Step Guide, RDN worked with communities and academics across Canada to develop a survey that reflected rural and remote community contexts. The survey was developed in accordance with the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness' definitions of homelessness. However, the survey itself was advertised as a Housing and Service Needs survey; this is a result of feedback from multiple service providers who are committed to minimizing the stigma associated with homelessness 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.

To further minimize stigma throughout the survey, rather than asking respondents to identify themselves as homeless or housing insecure, they were asked whether they consider their living conditions to be secure or insecure and to fill out checkboxes that determine their objective housing situation.



Based on responses to the latter survey question along with subsequent data analysis, RDN was able to determine which respondents were housing-unstable. As shown in the results, below, some individuals who don't consider themselves to be homeless or at-risk of homelessness actually qualify based on the national definitions of homelessness.

The same survey was used across all communities participating in the 2023 Alberta Provincial Housing and Service Needs Estimation project, with one exception; each community's survey was customized to meet their location parameters. Figure 1 showcases Bonnyville's location parameters.

Figure 1: Bonnyville Location Question on Survey

Q2. Where do you currently live (or which community do you live closest to)?

- Town of Bonnyville
- Municipal District of Bonnyville
- Lacorey
- Ardmore
- Fort Kent
- I am not sure
- Other: _____
- Prefer not to answer

RDN worked with Bonnyville to develop a survey administration process that would ensure the greatest level of participation possible. For Bonnyville, surveys were advertised at service provider locations and online as an open Survey Monkey link across the community. Surveys were available through these locations and online for a period of four weeks: from March 1 to March 31, 2023.

Before the survey period began, RDN conducted orientation and training sessions with staff from participating agencies. During the training, emphasis was placed on clarifying survey terms, ensuring respondents' confidentiality and privacy, and securing participants' informed consent.

During each training session, resources were provided to staff to improve their understanding of the project and increase comfort in administering the survey. Training and resources also included the various ways to administer the survey in an open, non-intrusive manner, placing extra importance on meeting the individual's reasons for visiting the agency before offering the survey.

Important to note about the survey; to ensure the trust and anonymity of participants, each respondent was asked to give consent at the beginning of the survey, and create a unique identifier. The unique identifier allows RDN to maintain the integrity of the data without knowing respondent identities. The unique identifier is a combination of letters and numbers from a participant's name and birthdate.

Figure 2: Unique Identifier Question on Survey

Q1. Anonymous Unique Identifier (ex. John Smith, born on 15th November 1964)

H	N	What are the last two letters of your FIRST name?
T	H	What are the last 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?



Bonnyville collected 139 survey responses during the four weeks. Of the 139 surveys, 37 were excluded. Surveys were deemed unsuitable and excluded for one or more of the following reasons:

- Survey respondent(s) declined to give consent.
- Survey respondent(s) declined to provide the unique identifier or provided improper unique identifier information (i.e. characters instead of numbers, etc.).
- Survey respondent(s) submitted multiple surveys (determined based on unique identifier(s)).

Based on this, 102 were determined to be suitable for further analysis and will be the focus of the results outlined below.





Limitations

Despite our best attempts to reduce stigma and increase the accessibility of the survey, not all clients who were offered a survey chose to participate. Additionally, staff at participating agencies were informed that participants under the age of 14 years old required guardian consent to participate in the survey. While this is inherently problematic and exclusionary, as most youth experiencing homelessness would not have a guardian present to provide consent, to maintain survey ethics, this requirement is in compliance with the Alberta College of Social Workers. Worth noting here is that not everyone who filled out the survey responded to every question.

As a result, there remains a portion of people experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity whose voices and lived experiences were not captured in this project. Therefore, while the trends, highlights, and recommendations made are very informative, it is important to remember that this report presents a conservative picture of the housing and services needs in Bonnyville as a whole

Results & Analysis

Objective Housing Situation

As part of the survey, participants were asked the following question: “Do you consider your housing situation to be unstable or feel you could easily lose your housing?” Respondents were given the options “yes”, “no”, and “I’m not sure” to guide their responses. Of the 102 survey respondents, 29 self-identified as housing insecure, and 11 indicated “I’m not sure”. Through further analysis, it was determined that 60 survey respondents are housing insecure according to the national definitions of homelessness. An additional 56 dependents and 68 adults reported as living with housing insecure survey respondents. Therefore, based on survey results, there are at least 184 community members experiencing housing insecurity in Bonnyville.

The top three reasons for housing insecurity in Bonnyville, as reported by survey respondents, are:

1. Low wages
2. Inability to afford rent or mortgage payments
3. Mental health issues

Additionally, 27% (16) of respondents indicated that COVID-19 affected their housing security. Specifically, respondents noted the pandemic affecting their financial situation in terms of job loss and/or reduced hours. As a result of this, several respondents reported being unable to pay increased rental rates, receiving eviction notices, and being unable to pay mortgage rates and/or utilities associated with home ownership. Others mentioned the rising cost of living and the fact that wages have not been adjusted to match inflation. Respondents also indicated that their social life and relationships were negatively impacted by COVID-19.



Exploring the Spectrum of Homelessness in Bonnyville

Recognizing that the national definition of homelessness is complex, encompassing various housing situations across a continuum, it is important to better understand what housing insecurity looks like in Bonnyville. This can be achieved by exploring the experiences of the 60 housing insecure respondents.

To accurately place respondents along the spectrum of homelessness, a series of measures were used to understand their situations, including their self-identified housing stability response, their calculated housing stability, their current housing situation, the amenities they lack in their current home, and others. Early in the survey, respondents were asked to outline their current housing situation and were able to choose all situations that applied to them from a variety of statements that ranged from “I own the house I am currently in” to “I lived in supportive housing” to “I slept in a public space” and more. To accurately present what a journey of housing insecurity might look like for respondents over a month, we have included all responses, as respondents were able to select more than one statement.

An important thing to consider when reading this table is that people experiencing housing insecurity often fluctuate in and out of their situation; therefore, someone who was unsheltered one night might have been emergency sheltered or provisionally accommodated the next night. As a result, we have highlighted every incident of insecurity respondents experienced in the past month to understand the journey of housing insecurity in Bonnyville.

Table 1: Respondents by Housing Situation in the Homelessness Spectrum

Place on the Homelessness Spectrum	# of Respondents in Each Category
Unsheltered	3
Emergency Sheltered	3
Provisionally Accommodated	38
At-Risk of Homelessness	140

This table demonstrates the diversity of respondents' experiences with housing insecurity in Bonnyville and outlines that homelessness presents itself in more ways than simply sleeping outside. Respondents that have been identified as "At-Risk" emphasized their difficulty in being able to afford their rent/mortgage and/or have stayed in a home with unsafe conditions such as physical construction hazards, no windows, no electricity, etc. Many of these respondents also live in overcrowded housing, where there are too many people compared to the number of bedrooms in the home.

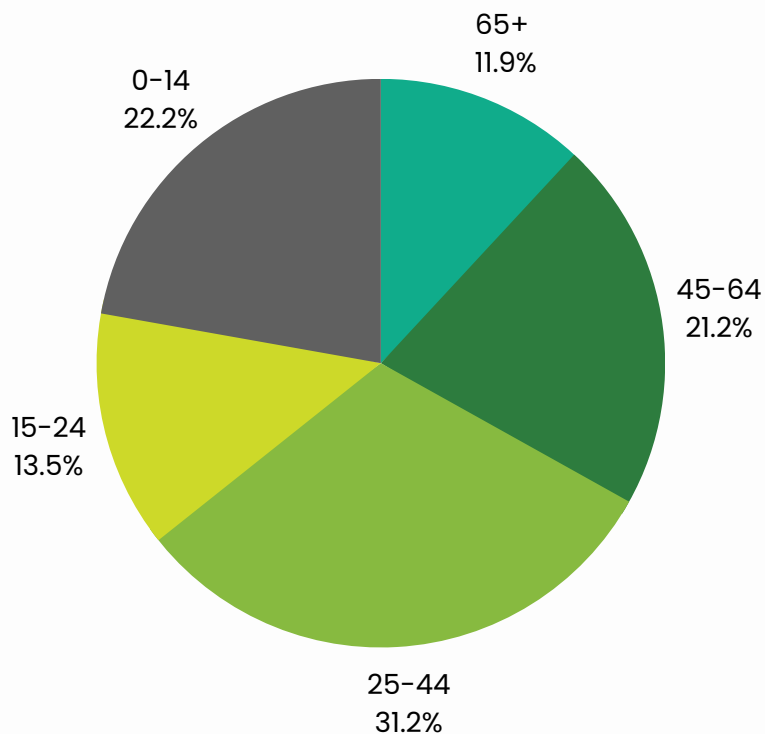
Respondents who indicated they experienced being provisionally accommodated noted stays in jail/prison/remand centre and medical/detox facilities. Some respondents also indicated staying in a home where they experience violence because they have nowhere else to go, staying with a stranger because they have nowhere else to go, and/or enduring unwanted sexual activity to have a place to stay.

Bonnyville Population Overview


According to Alberta's Regional Dashboard (n.d.), the Town of Bonnyville covers a 16.8 square km geographical land base with a population size of 5,915; making up 0.13% of Alberta's total population.

50.3% (2,972) of Bonnyville's population is reported as female, while 49.7% (2,943) reports as male.

Figure 3: Bonnyville Population Age Breakdown (2022)



As shown in Figure 3, the average age of the population in Bonnyville is 37.9 years.



According to Statistics Canada Census numbers in 2021, 11% (685) of the population immigrated to Canada and 13.5% (840) of the population identify as a visible minority. Further, 17% (1,055) of the population identified as Indigenous; 43% (445) of whom are First Nations, 55% (575) of whom are Métis, and 2% (25) of whom noted multiple Indigenous ancestries.

The 2021 Census also reports that Bonnyville has 2,535 private households with an average of 2.5 people per household. Of the 2,535 private households, 60.2% (1,525) own their home, while 39.8% (1,010) rent their home, with the average monthly rent for a two-bedroom dwelling listed as \$965. Additionally, 69.2% (1,755) of occupied private dwellings are houses, 48.6% of which are single-family houses, and 25.3% (640) of occupied private dwellings are apartments. Further, 31.2% (790) of households in Bonnyville report one or more of the following:

- Spending more than 30% of their income on shelter costs,
- That their dwelling is “not suitable”; and/or,
- That their dwelling has “major repair needs.”

The median after-tax income in Bonnyville is \$39,600 for individuals and \$75,000 for households. According to the Economic Research Institute (2023), the cost of living in the Town of Bonnyville is 6% higher than the national average and on par with the provincial average for Alberta.

Of note, the Town of Bonnyville is a major service area and serves over 10,000 people. The surrounding Municipal District of Bonnyville No. 87 is home to 13,085, many of whom are served by the Town of Bonnyville.

Housing & Service Needs Estimation Survey Respondent Population Overview

102 community members responded to the Bonnyville survey; 72% (73) of whom identified as female, 25% (26) as male, 2% (1) as trans-male, and 1% (1) as gender non-conforming. 2% (1) of respondents preferred not to answer. Additionally, 84% (86) of respondents identified as straight, 13% (13) as bisexual/pansexual, and 3% (3) preferred not to answer.

Of the 102 respondents, 2% (2) are between the ages of 0-18; we know from their unique identifier, which asks for their birth year, as well as our ethical standards on the age of consent when administering the survey that this respondent is between 14-18 years old. Additionally, 38% (39) are between the ages of 20-39, 41% (42) are between 40-59, and 19% (19) are 60 years or older.

97% (98) of respondents were born in Canada (Turtle Island), while 2% (2) reported being born outside of Canada and 1% (1) preferred not to answer.

88% (106) of respondents are white, compared to 9% (8) of respondents who are racialized. An additional 3% (3) of respondents preferred not to answer. Racialized respondents identified as East Asian and Indigenous only. 21% (21) of respondents self-identified as Indigenous; 14% (3) as First Nations, 81% (17) as Métis, and 5% (1) as having other Indigenous ancestry.

10% (10) of respondents stayed in foster care, a youth group home, or under a youth/young adult agreement in the past and 1% (1) preferred not to answer.


Lastly, in terms of demographics, respondents were asked to indicate if they have ever served in the Canadian Armed Forces/Foreign Military Service, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) or Foreign Police Service, or local or foreign Emergency Services (EMS, Police, Fire Department). Of the 102 respondents, 3% (3) indicated they serve(d) in the Canadian Armed Forces or Foreign Military Service and 3% (3) in local or foreign Emergency Services.

Housing Secure vs. Housing Insecure Survey Respondent Population Overview

Table 2: Housing & Service Needs Estimation Survey Population Overview Comparison by Housing Stability

Demographic Characteristic	Housing Secure	Housing Insecure
# of Survey Respondents	42	60
Gender	Male: 10	Male: 16
	Female: 32	Female: 41
	Trans-male: 0	Trans-male: 1
	Trans-female: 0	Trans-female: 0
	Gender non-conforming: 0	Gender non-conforming: 1
	Two-spirit: 0	Two-spirit: 0
	Don't know: 0	Don't know: 0
Sexual Orientation	Straight: 42	Straight: 77
	Gay/Lesbian: 0	Gay/Lesbian: 1
	Bisexual/Pansexual: 0	Bisexual/Pansexual: 4
	Asexual: 0	Asexual: 0
	Two-spirit: 0	Two-spirit: 0
	Don't know: 0	Don't know: 2

Age	0 - 19 years: 0	0 - 19 years: 2
	20 - 39 years: 8	20 - 39 years: 31
	40 - 59 years: 20	40 - 59 years: 22
	60+: 14	60+: 5
Immigration Status	Born in Canada: 42	Born in Canada: 56
	Born outside of Canada: 0	Born outside of Canada: 2
Racial Identity	White: 37	White: 48
	Visible minority: 3	Visible minority: 11
Indigenous Identity	First Nations: 0	First Nations: 3
	Métis: 5	Métis: 12
	Inuit: 0	Inuit: 0
	Other Indigenous ancestry: 0	Other Indigenous ancestry: 1
Time in Foster Care, Youth Group Home, or Youth/Young Adult Agreement	Spent time in care: 0	Spent time in care: 10
Served in Canadian Armed Forces, RCMP, Emergency Services	Canadian Armed Forces: 1	Canadian Armed Forces: 2
	RCMP: 0	RCMP: 0
	Emergency Services: 2	Emergency Services: 1



Based on this survey population overview breakdown, we can determine the following:

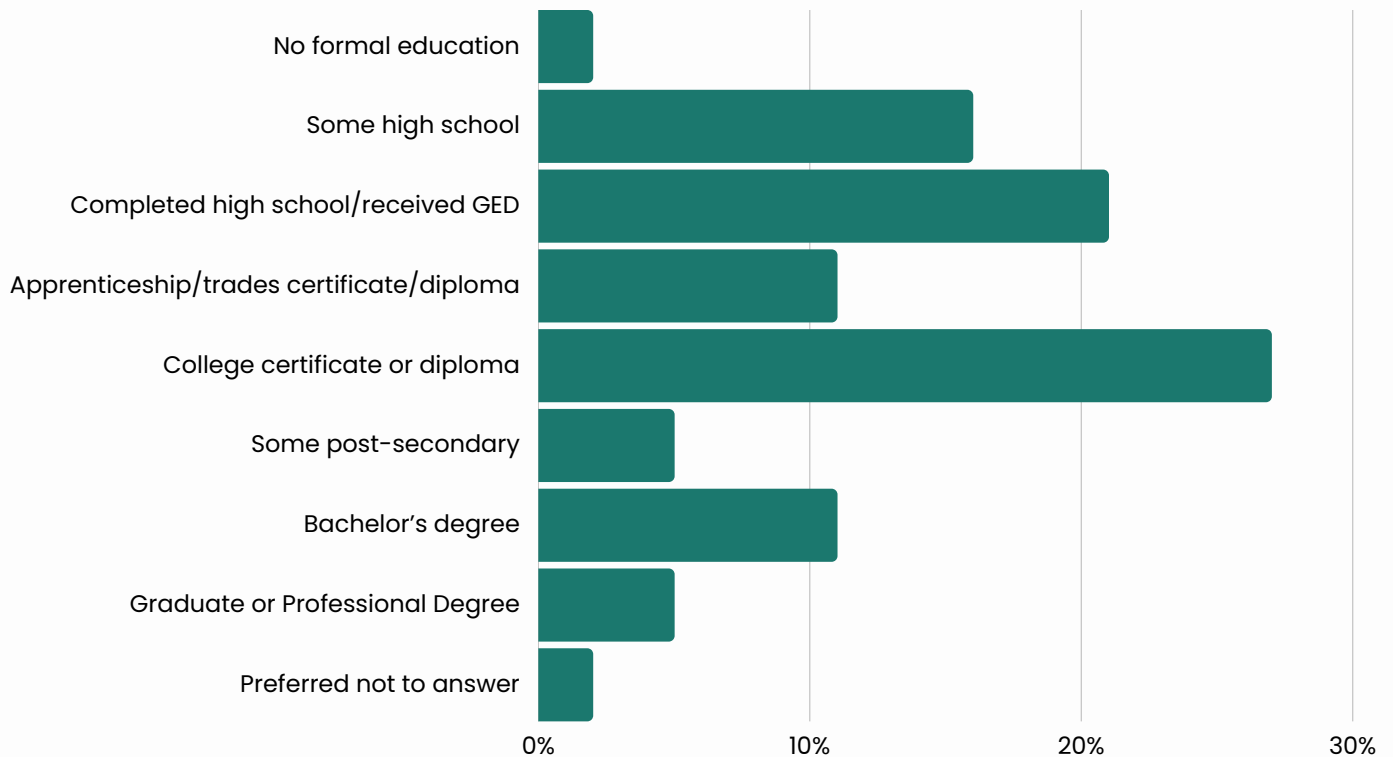
- Respondents identifying as women are 2.6x more likely than their male counterparts to be housing insecure
- 100% of respondents who spent time in care are housing insecure


**Note that the rest of the reported results and analysis will focus on housing insecure respondents unless otherwise indicated.*

Education, Employment, and Income Sources

Respondents indicated various education levels when responding to “What is the highest level of education you’ve completed?” 2% (1) of respondents have no formal education, 16% (9) have completed some high school, 21% (12) have completed high school or received their GED, 11% (6) have an apprenticeship, trades certificate, or diploma, 27% (15) have a college certificate or diploma, 5% (3) have some post-secondary, 11% (6) have a Bachelor’s degree, and 5% (3) have a Graduate or Professional Degree (Master’s, Ph.D., MD, JD, etc.). 2% (1) of respondents preferred not to answer. This can also be seen in Figure 4, below.

Figure 4: Respondents’ Education Levels Breakdown





Additionally, 61% (35) of respondents are employed and 4% (2) preferred not to indicate their employment status; 74% (26) of those employed are full-time, 14% (5) are part-time, 6% (2) are casual, and 6% (2) preferred not to answer.

Recognizing that many respondents are not full-time employed, we asked them, “What are your sources of income?” Respondents were encouraged to check all that apply from the following list of options: Job-related (e.g. employment, partner/spouse’s income, alimony/child support, etc.), Government-related (e.g. Seniors Benefits, Veterans’ Benefits, Disability Benefits, Employment Insurance, Student loans, etc.), Tax-related (e.g. child and family tax benefits, GST refunds, etc.), or Informal (e.g. bottle returns, panhandling, money from family and friends, etc.).

Respondents noted 60 times that they receive job-related income, 18 times that they receive government-related income, 29 times that they receive tax-related income, and 11 times that they receive informal income. Additionally, respondents noted 7 times that they have other sources of income including credit card loans and once that they prefer not to answer.

Further, respondents were asked to disclose their approximate household income for the previous year. Responses varied widely, as seen in Table 3.

Table 3: Respondents Approximate Household Income in 2022

Total Household Income in 2022	# of Respondents Per Income Level
\$30,000 or less	21 (38%)
Between \$30,001 and \$49,999	8 (14%)
Between \$50,000 and \$69,999	6 (11%)
Between \$70,000 and \$89,999	3 (5%)
Between \$90,000 and \$109,999	2 (4%)
More than \$110,000	11 (20%)
Prefer not to answer	5 (9%)

This can be broken down further to understand household income level by housing security status, as seen in Table 4.

Table 4: Respondents' Household Income in 2022 by Housing Status

Total Household Income in 2022	# of Housing Secure Respondents Per Income Level	# of Housing Insecure Respondents Per Income Level
\$30,000 or less	1 (3%)	21 (38%)
Between \$30,001 and \$49,999	2 (6%)	8 (14%)
Between \$50,000 and \$69,999	5 (14%)	6 (11%)
Between \$70,000 and \$89,999	3 (8%)	3 (5%)
Between \$90,000 and \$109,999	4 (11%)	2 (4%)
More than \$110,000	12 (33%)	11 (20%)
Prefer not to answer	9 (25%)	5 (9%)

Of the housing insecure respondents, 38% reported a household annual income of \$30,000 or less compared to 44% of housing secure respondents who reported an annual income of \$90,000 or more.

Living Situation

To better understand respondents' current living situations, respondents were asked to indicate if they rent or own their home (or if neither is true for them). 32% (19) of respondents indicated that they own their home, 58% (35) indicated that they rent their home, and 10% (6) noted that they neither own nor rent. Comparatively, 95% (37) of housing secure respondents own their home, 5% (2) rent their home. Based on this, it can be concluded that respondents who rent their homes or who neither rent nor own are significantly more likely to be housing insecure than respondents who own their homes.

Further, respondents were asked, "If you pay rent or a mortgage, how much do you pay per month?" Of the responses, rent and mortgage prices varied.

Table 5: Rent or Mortgage Costs per Month by Housing Status


Rent/Mortgage Cost	# of Housing Secure Respondents Paying Rent/Mortgage Costs	# of Housing Insecure Respondents Paying Rent/Mortgage Costs
Less than \$500	0	0
Between \$500 to \$999	2 (5%)	18 (31%)
Between \$1000 to \$1499	8 (21%)	19 (11%)
Between \$1500 to \$1999	5 (13%)	12 (21%)
Over \$2000	3 (8%)	7 (12%)

I don't pay rent or a mortgage	17 (45%)	7 (12%)
Prefer not to answer	3 (8%)	3 (5%)

Among housing insecure respondents, whether they rent, own, or are in a different situation entirely, 40% (12) do not have sufficient and affordable heating and 23% (7) do not have access to safe drinking water.

Table 6: Breakdown of Respondents' Missing Amenities

Missing Amenities	# of Respondents Missing Amenities
Indoor plumbing/bathing facilities	1 (3%)
Sufficient and affordable heating	12 (40%)
Safe drinking water	7 (23%)
Refrigeration	1 (3%)
Electricity (or equivalent - i.e. solar power)	2 (7%)
Cooking facilities	2 (7%)
Fire protection (smoke alarms, fire extinguishers)	5 (17%)



Interestingly, the number of respondents lacking sufficient and affordable heating is fairly split between respondents who rent their home (7) and respondents who own their home (5) and are evenly split between respondents lacking access to safe drinking water who own their home (3) and who rent their home (3). This speaks to potentially predatory landlords, as it is a human right (and housing regulation) to provide tenants with heat and water.

Table 6 highlighted respondents who lack basic amenities and is one of the ways in which respondents' objective housing situation is calculated. Some respondents self-identified as housing stable but lacked amenities that would consider their housing situation stable according to the Canadian definition of homelessness, including indoor plumbing, heat, electricity, and access to safe drinking water.

28% (28) of all respondents, 32% (19) of which are housing insecure, have always lived in Bonnyville. Of the housing insecure respondents who were not born in the area, 35% (21) have lived in the Bonnyville area for more than 8 years. Respondents who are not from Bonnyville were also asked to indicate the reasons why they came to this community. The top three reasons respondents came to the Bonnyville area are:

1. To be closer to family (35%)
2. To start a job (21%)
3. To look for work (16%)

Other reasons people moved to the Bonnyville area include fear for safety/fleeing from violence (7%), to reconnect with culture and community (5%), and to find housing (5%). 11% of respondents indicated other reasons for coming to the community other than the options listed on the survey, including "I was homeless", "I am on parole", and "for a fresh start."

Additional analysis also discovered that 7% (4) of respondents are experiencing domestic/intimate partner violence in their current living situations; 50% (2) of whom identify as female, 25% (1) as male, and 25% (1) as trans-male. 25% (1) of respondents identified as straight while 50% (2) identified as bisexual/pansexual, and 25% (1) preferred not to answer. Additionally, 25% (1) are between 14-19 years old and 75% (3) are between 20-39 years old. 75% (3) are white, while 25% (1) are Indigenous, and all were born in Canada. The top three reasons these respondents are housing insecure are mental disability, addictions/substance use, and family rejection; only 25% (1) of respondents are employed full-time; the other 75% (3) are all unemployed. As a result, 75% (3) of respondents have an annual household income of less than \$30,000 and 25% (1) have an annual household income of between \$30,000-\$49,999. A lack of consistent income is often a reason why people are unable to leave their abuser. Further, 75% (3) of respondents have only some high school education and 25% (1) have their high school diploma/GED.



Community Supports

In an attempt to better understand service needs and gaps in Bonnyville, respondents were asked: “Which support services do you access?” The main reasons respondents access services are to help with health and wellness (28%), basic needs (21%), and support services (12%).

Table 7: Reasons Why Respondents Access Support Services

Services Accessed	# of Housing Secure Respondents who Accessed these Services	# of Housing Insecure Respondents who Accessed these Services
Basic Needs - Food, shelter, clothing, etc.	0	34 (23%)
COVID-19 - PPE, information, supports	0	9 (6%)
Crisis Financial Support - Eviction notice, utility bill problems, damage deposits, etc.	0	5 (3%)

<p>Family/Parenting - Child care, parenting/family issues, relationship issues, child developmental assessment tools/referrals, etc.</p>	0	3 (4%)
<p>Financial - Employment, housing, training/education, etc.</p>	0	7 (10%)
<p>Health and Wellness - Addictions, mental health, physical health care, spiritual/cultural, etc.</p>	3 (75%)	18 (25%)
<p>Legal - Separation/divorce/custody, wills/estates, employment/labour standards, landlord/tenant issues, immigration issues, criminal/misdemeanor, etc.</p>	0	6 (8%)

<p>Support Services - Help with government forms, help with accessing government/other programs or services, access to technology, etc.</p>	<p>1 (25%)</p>	<p>8 (11%)</p>
<p>Transportation - Access to basic services/education/employment, medical transportation</p>	<p>0</p>	<p>5 (7%)</p>

To further understand respondents' abilities to access the necessary support services, we asked: "Which of these services were you able to access in your community?" and "Which of these services did you have to access in another community?" followed by, "If applicable, how long did you travel to access these services (one-way)?"

Respondents were most likely to access basic needs, health and wellness, and financial services in Bonnyville. Interestingly, respondents also noted accessing health and wellness, basic needs, and financial services most often out of the community.

Table 8: Services Accessed by Housing Insecure Respondents by Location

Services Accessed in Bonnyville	# of Respondents who Accessed these Services	Services Accessed Outside of Bonnyville	# of Respondents who Accessed these Services
Basic Needs - Food, shelter, clothing, etc.	34 (20%)	Basic Needs - Food, shelter, clothing, etc.	11 (11%)
COVID-19 - PPE, information, supports	13 (8%)	COVID-19 - PPE, information, supports	7 (7%)
Crisis Financial Support - Eviction notice, utility bill problems, damage deposits, etc.	13 (8%)	Crisis Financial Support - Eviction notice, utility bill problems, damage deposits, etc.	8 (8%)
Family/Parenting - Child care, parenting/family issues, relationship issues, child developmental assessment tools/referrals, etc.	18 (11%)	Family/Parenting - Child care, parenting/family issues, relationship issues, child developmental assessment tools/referrals, etc.	8 (8%)

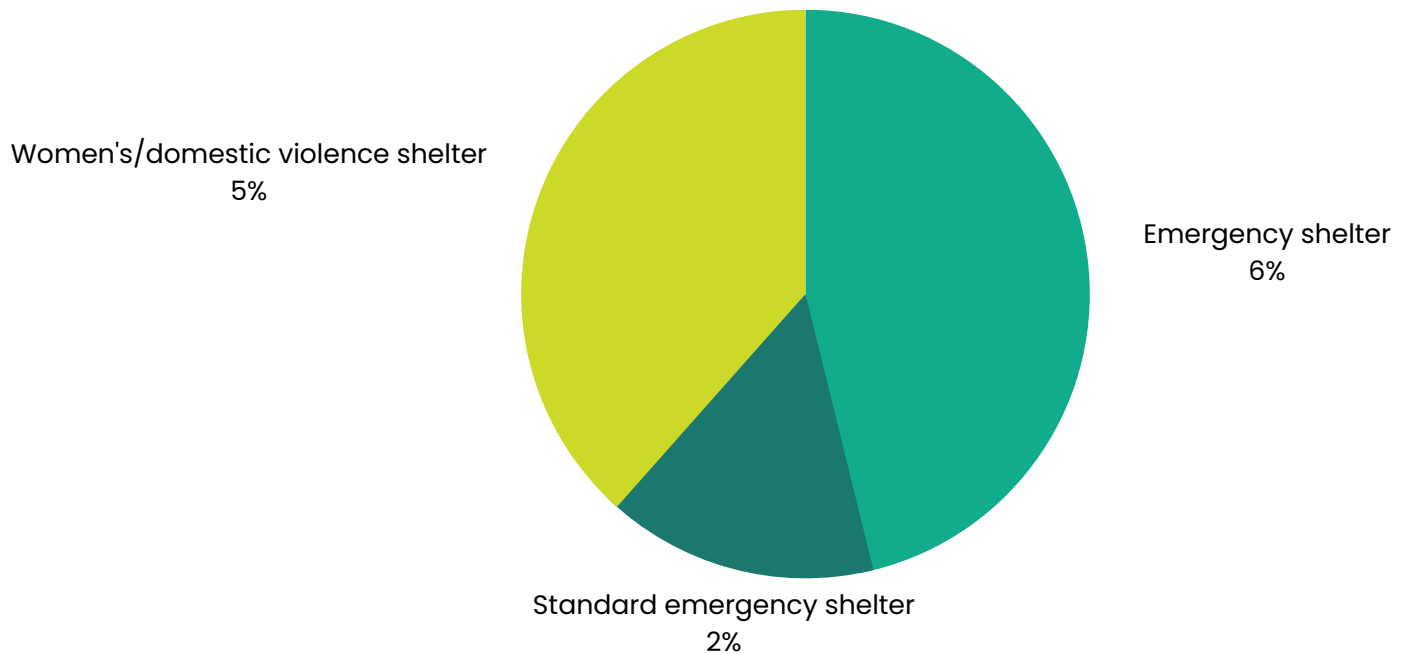
Financial - Employment, housing, training/education, etc.	20 (12%)	Financial - Employment, housing, training/education, etc.	11 (11%)
Health and Wellness - Addictions, mental health, physical health care, spiritual/cultural, etc.	25 (15%)	Health and Wellness - Addictions, mental health, physical health care, spiritual/cultural, etc.	22 (23%)
Legal - Separation/divorce /custody, wills/estates, employment/ labour standards, landlord/tenant issues, immigration issues, criminal/ misdemeanour, etc.	15 (9%)	Legal - Separation/divorce/ custody, wills/estates, employment/labour standards, landlord/tenant issues, immigration issues, criminal/ misdemeanour, etc.	8 (8%)

Support Services - Help with government forms, help with accessing government/other programs or services, access to technology, etc.	15 (9%)	Support Services - Help with government forms, help with accessing government/other programs or services, access to technology, etc.	8 (8%)
Transportation - Access to basic services/education /employment, medical transportation	17 (10%)	Transportation - Access to basic services/education/ employment, medical transportation	8 (8%)

Respondents noted traveling anywhere from 30 minutes to six hours one way to access services, though the average trip to access services one way is two and a half hours. Time and distance to access services outside of the community is a significant barrier for respondents; while 55% of respondents travel by vehicle to get to these services, 36% rely on a family member or friend, taxi, or service agency-arranged ride, and 6% resort to hitchhiking or catching a ride from a stranger in order to access services. Important to consider here is that respondents who face significant barriers to accessing services or who are unable to access the necessary support will continue to experience housing insecurity at much higher rates than those respondents who can access the support needed to stabilize their housing situation.

6% (4) of respondents accessed an emergency shelter in the past 12 months; 2% (1) accessed a standard emergency shelter, 5% (3) a women’s/domestic violence shelter, and 3% (2) stayed in a transitional housing unit. An additional 2% (1) of respondents preferred not to answer.

Figure 5: Emergency Shelter Use



Of the respondents who needed shelter services but did not access them, several reasons were provided as to why, as outlined in Table 9. The top two reasons why respondents did not access shelter services when they needed them were because there was no transportation to get to the closest shelter and alcohol/substance use was not permitted at the shelter.

Table 9: Reasons Respondents Did Not Access Shelter Services When Needed

Reason for Not Accessing Shelter Services	# of Respondents
The right kind of shelter wasn't available (for example, I needed a women's shelter and couldn't access one)	1 (10%)
The shelter was full	0
There was no shelter in my area	1 (10%)
I didn't meet the intake criteria to access the shelter	1 (10%)
I didn't feel safe	0
The shelter was unclean	0
The shelter did not welcome me because of my gender identity	0
Alcohol/substance use is not permitted on site	2 (20%)
Lack of disability accommodations	0
Lack of transportation	3 (30%)
No pets allowed	1 (10%)
Isolation from social support (family, partner, friends, etc.)	1 (10%)
Prefer not to answer	0



Insights on Community Spaces

Wanting to ensure the respondents had the opportunity to reflect on their experiences in the community, they were asked; "What are two things you love about the community and what are two things you don't love about the community?" In analyzing responses across both housing secure and housing insecure respondents in reference to what respondents love about Bonnyville, two themes emerged; sense of community and parks and recreation.

Sense of Community: Respondents repeatedly spoke to the sense of community that comes with living in Bonnyville. Many respondents noted how family-oriented the community is, how friendly neighbours and community members are, and how tightknit the community is. Others highlighted the sense of peace and quiet associated with living in Bonnyville.

Parks and Recreation: Respondents noted their love for the walking trails, parks, and greenspaces accessible to them in Bonnyville. Many also indicated their appreciation for the large trees that surround the community.

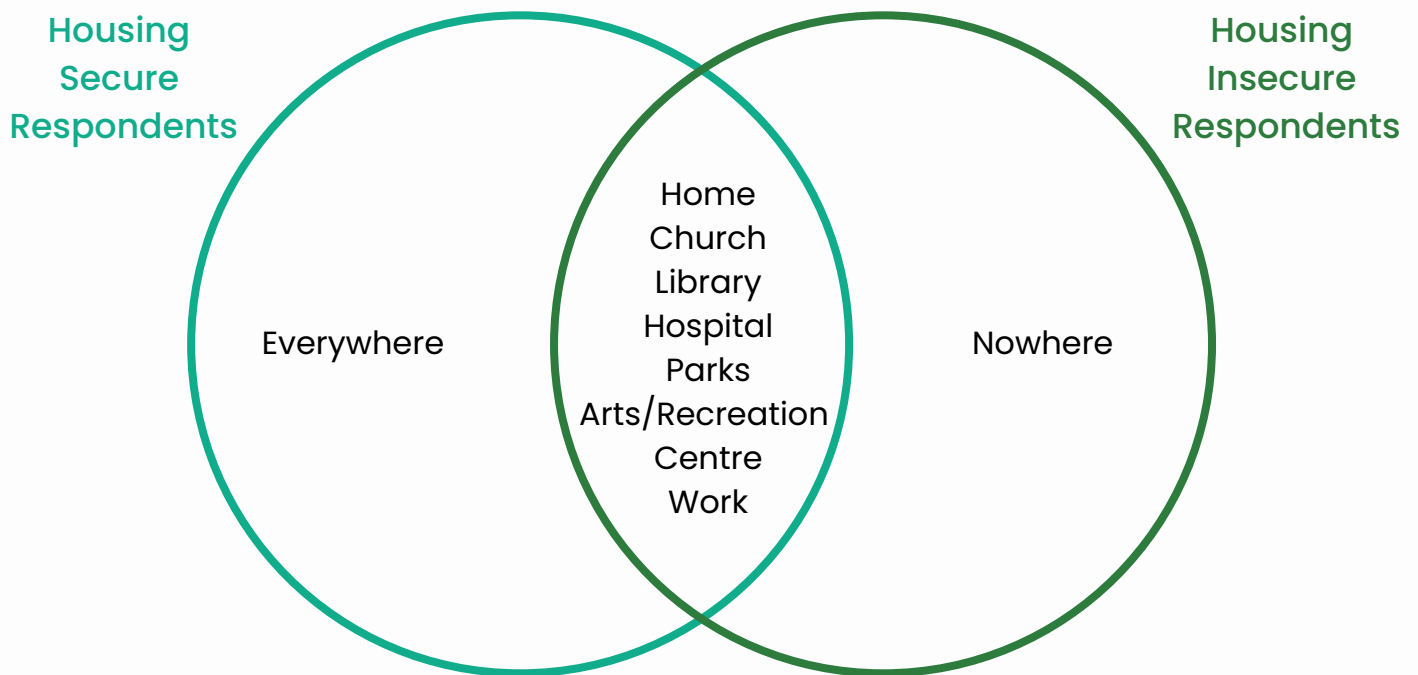
In contrast, when asked what they don't love about the community, both housing secure and insecure respondents spoke mostly of a lack of services available in the area.

Lack of Services: Respondents listed a lack of both social and commercial services as one thing they dislike about Bonnyville. Specifically, respondents want to see more commercial infrastructure including grocery stores, larger box stores, restaurants, and recreation buildings like swimming pools or gyms. Respondents also spoke to the need for more addictions/substance use support services, public transportation, and mental health services.

Respondents were also asked, "What are two places that make you feel safe in the community and what are two places that make you feel unsafe in the community?"

There were several overlapping responses between housing secure and housing insecure respondents when answering the question of safe spaces, as shown in Figure 6

Figure 6: Venn Diagram of Safe Spaces Responses by Housing Status



The main difference in responses between housing secure and housing insecure respondents was that while many housing secure respondents noted that they feel safe everywhere in Bonnyville, several housing insecure respondents stated that they don't feel safe anywhere in the community.

In terms of unsafe spaces, responses varied much more between housing secure and housing insecure respondents. The only theme across both groups was feeling unsafe in certain public spaces at night or after dark and feeling unsafe at the bank. Figure 7 showcases this below.

Figure 7: Venn Diagram of Unsafe Spaces Responses by Housing Status



“What Would You Like to See More of in Your Community?”

Respondents outlined many things they would like to see more of in Bonnyville. Upon further analysis, they can be categorized into three main themes: housing, support services, and transportation services. Interestingly, two of these three themes align perfectly with respondents' answers to a previous question they were asked: “Does Bonnyville provide enough...employment opportunities; free/accessible recreational and social opportunities; social services; accessible and affordable housing; public transportation; access to food?”

Table 10: Respondents’ Perceptions of Bonnyville's Provision of Services

Does Bonnyville Provide Enough:	# of Respondents Who Believe Bonnyville Provides Enough...	# of Respondents Who Believe Bonnyville Does Not Provide Enough...	# of Respondents Who Aren't Sure if Bonnyville Provides Enough...
Employment opportunities	36 (41%)	29 (33%)	22 (25%)
Free/accessible recreational and social opportunities	27 (31%)	43 (49%)	18 (20%)
Social services	53 (60%)	20 (23%)	15 (17%)
Accessible & affordable housing	7 (8%)	53 (61%)	27 (31%)
Public transportation	5 (6%)	75 (86%)	7 (8%)

Access to food (grocery stores, markets, food banks, etc.)	67 (78%)	15 (17%)	4 (5%)
--	----------	----------	--------

Of note in Table 10 is the significant discrepancy in respondents who believe there is enough public transportation in Bonnyville (6%) versus the number of respondents who believe more public transportation is needed (86%) and the number of respondents who believe there is enough accessible and affordable housing in Bonnyville (8%) versus the number of respondents who think more housing is necessary (61%).

Housing: Respondents overwhelmingly emphasized the need for accessible and affordable housing options in Bonnyville. Many respondents spoke to the need for more accessible housing options for both at market and below market rate housing units. Additionally many noted their desire to see more pet-friendly rental options. Respondents also indicated their interest in seeing transitional housing units, housing specifically designated for people struggling with addictions/substance use, and more creative housing options including tiny homes and trailer parks. Respondents overall also noted the need for emergency and domestic violence shelters in the community.

Support Services: Respondents listed several services they believe are needed in Bonnyville. Many spoke to the need for better food access, both in terms of food bank access and generally healthy and affordable food access. Others are looking for support in finding employment and improving their employability. Respondents also noted the need for mental health services, addictions/substance use supports and services, and crisis support.

Transportation Services: The need for accessible and affordable transportation options was highlighted by many respondents. Respondents indicated the need for public transportation options that are accessible for people with mobility challenges and affordable for low income community members. Several respondents noted that they are unable to access the services they need without reliable and public transportation.

Upon further analysis, an overall satisfaction score was generated to better understand respondents' perceptions of service provision in Bonnyville. It was determined that housing secure respondents are 45% satisfied, while only 33% of housing insecure respondents are satisfied with service provision in Bonnyville. Important to note here is that the satisfaction rates calculated above are speaking to the lack of available services in Bonnyville rather than satisfaction with currently available services in the community.



What Does Homelessness Look Like in Bonnyville?

In a report that is composed of mainly quantitative data, it can be easy to overlook the humanity behind the numbers reported. 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 Bonnyville, this is a woman, between the ages of 20 - 39, who is currently renting her home for between \$500 and \$999 per month. She has lived in the community for over 8 years and is currently full-time employed yet still feels like she is spending more than 30% of her income on housing. Her current unit lacks sufficient heating. Her main reason for coming to Bonnyville was to start a job.

The true diversity of respondents is illustrated in the Results & Analysis section, but this highlights what someone experiencing housing insecurity might look like in Bonnyville.





Opportunities Moving Forward

Based on the findings outlined in this report, RDN has identified three opportunities to support housing insecure respondents moving forward. They are:

1. Conduct an audit of current housing options and services in Bonnyville.

Respondents overwhelmingly highlighted the lack of accessible and affordable housing options in the community. Consider reviewing rental policies and bylaws across the community including restrictions on pets in rental units. Similarly, consider reviewing zoning and bylaws on housing properties in Bonnyville to allow for more creative housing options in the community including tiny homes, secondary suites/units on properties, etc. Once the audit has been completed, it is important to begin addressing the lack of accessible and affordable housing options within the community by updating bylaws and building permit requirements, renovating currently inaccessible locations to improve accessibility, and reaching out to community members to let them know the work that is ongoing to address concerns.

2. Conduct a gap analysis and audit of service offerings in Bonnyville.

Respondents indicated several services they would like to see in Bonnyville from shelter to transportation to health services. Further, housing secure respondents are 45% satisfied and housing insecure respondents are only 33% satisfied with the provision of services in Bonnyville. Given the number of service gaps identified by residents of Bonnyville, it is critical to audit the availability of services in the community. If these services currently exist in Bonnyville, consider why respondents identified the service(s) as a gap. This might mean rethinking certain services, increasing access to these services, and/or looking for ways to better promote these services to increase awareness across the community.

3. Consider public transportation options in Bonnyville.

Respondents indicated a lack of transportation as being prohibitive to accessing support services, gaining employment, and accessing housing in the community. 36% rely on a family member or friend, taxi, or service agency-arranged ride, and 6% resort to hitchhiking or catching a ride from a stranger in order to access services. To ensure respondents can get the support they need to stabilize their housing situation, whether that be access to medical or mental health supports, accessing the employment centre, getting a job, or even finding housing, transportation is crucial. Public transportation is often very difficult to provide in rural communities due to lack of infrastructure and costs associated with operations. Consider creative and/or alternative options to public transportation such as car share programs, taxi credits, volunteer ride share programs, or other options to ensure community members, specifically housing insecure community members, can get around the community.

References

Abedin, Z. (2022). *Step-by-step guide to estimating rural homelessness, 2nd Ed.* Rural Development Network. <https://www.ruraldevelopment.ca/publications/step-by-step-guide-to-estimating-homelessness>

Economic Research Institute. (2023). Cost of Living Data in Bonnyville, Alberta, Canada. <https://www.erieri.com/cost-of-living/canada/alberta/bonnyville>

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.

Government of Alberta. (n.d.). Bonnyville. Alberta Regional Dashboard. Retrieved April 26, 2023 from <https://regionaldashboard.alberta.ca/region/bonnyville/#/>

Schiff, R., Wilkinson, A., Kelford, T., Pelletier, S., & Waegemakers Schiff, J. (2022). Counting the undercounted: Enumerating rural homelessness in Canada. *International Journal on Homelessness*, 3(1), 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.5206/ijoh.2022.2.14633>

Statistics Canada. (2021). Census profile, 2021 Census of Population. Bonnyville, Town (T) [census subdivision], Alberta. Retrieved from [https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?](https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&SearchText=bonnyville&GENDERlist=1,2,3&STATISTIClist=1,4&DGUIDlist=2021A00054812009&HEADERlist=2,37,30,5,6,4,20,22,23,9,7,11,21,19,1,3)

[Lang=E&SearchText=bonnyville&GENDERlist=1,2,3&STATISTIClist=1,4&DGUIDlist=2021A00054812009&HEADERlist=2,37,30,5,6,4,20,22,23,9,7,11,21,19,1,3](https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&SearchText=bonnyville&GENDERlist=1,2,3&STATISTIClist=1,4&DGUIDlist=2021A00054812009&HEADERlist=2,37,30,5,6,4,20,22,23,9,7,11,21,19,1,3)

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



Rural Development Network
(780)-964-2736
11443 - 143 Street, NW
Edmonton, AB