



CITY AND COUNTY OF CAMROSE

**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 were made possible through the efforts of many dedicated individuals and groups. We wish to thank the front-line staff at participating service agencies:

- The Open Doors
- Camrose Family Resource Centre
- Changing Ways
- Village of Hay Lakes
- Camrose Helps
- Camrose Women’s Shelter
- Actions for Healthy Communities
- Association of Communities Against Abuse
- City of Camrose
- Camrose and District FCSS Association

and the residents in Camrose 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 Camrose's results within the provincial estimation, highlighting the number of residents who are housing insecure and their experiences with homelessness. This report is complemented 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 Camrose. 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

What does "Homelessness" mean?	1
Introduction	3
Methodology	4
Limitations	8
Results & Analysis	9
Objective Housing Situation	9
Exploring the Spectrum of Homelessness in Camrose	10
Camrose Population Overview	12
Housing & Service Needs Estimation Survey Respondent Population Overview	14
Housing Secure vs. Housing Insecure Survey Respondent Population Overview	16
Education, Employment, and Income Sources	19
Living Situation	23
Community Supports	27
Insights on Community Spaces	35
“What Would You Like to See More of in Your Community?”	39
What Does Homelessness Look Like in Camrose?	42
Opportunities Moving Forward	43
References	46

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. Camrose was one of the 20 communities that participated in the 2018 estimation, where they surveyed 169 community members, 72 of which were determined to be housing insecure.



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 Camrose 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 Camrose's location parameters.

Figure 1: Camrose's Location Question on Survey

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

- City of Camrose
- Camrose County (please specify)
 - Armena
 - Bawlf
 - Bittern Lake
 - Duhamel
 - Edberg
 - Ferintosh
 - Hay Lakes
 - Kelsey
 - Kingman
 - Meeting Creek
 - New Norway
 - Ohaton
 - Rosalind
- I am not sure
- Other: _____
- Prefer not to answer

RDN worked with Camrose to develop a survey administration process that would ensure the greatest level of participation possible. For Camrose, 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?

Camrose collected 572 survey responses during the four weeks. Of the 572 surveys, 170 were excluded. Surveys were deemed unsuitable and excluded for one or more of the following reasons:

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

Based on this, 402 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 Camrose.

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 572 survey respondents, 95 self-identified as housing insecure, and 49 indicated “I’m not sure.” Through further analysis, it was determined that 233 survey respondents are housing insecure according to the national definitions of homelessness. An additional 189 dependents and 241 adults reported as living with housing insecure survey respondents. Therefore, based on survey results, there are at least 663 community members experiencing housing insecurity in Camrose.

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

1. Low wages
2. Inability to afford rent/mortgage payments
3. Increasing rent costs



Exploring the Spectrum of Homelessness in Camrose

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 Camrose. This can be achieved by exploring the experiences of the 233 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. As a result, we have highlighted every incident of insecurity respondents experienced in the past month to understand the journey of housing insecurity in Camrose.

Table 1: Respondents by Housing Situation in the Homelessness Spectrum

Place on the Homelessness Spectrum	# of Respondents in Each Category
Unsheltered	29
Emergency Sheltered	35
Provisionally Accommodated	189
At-Risk of Homelessness	356

This table demonstrates the diversity of respondents' experiences with housing insecurity in Camrose and outlines that homelessness presents itself in more ways than simply sleeping outside. Respondents that have been identified as "At Risk of Homelessness" 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 respondents are also living in overcrowded accommodations where there are not enough bedrooms for the number of people staying there.

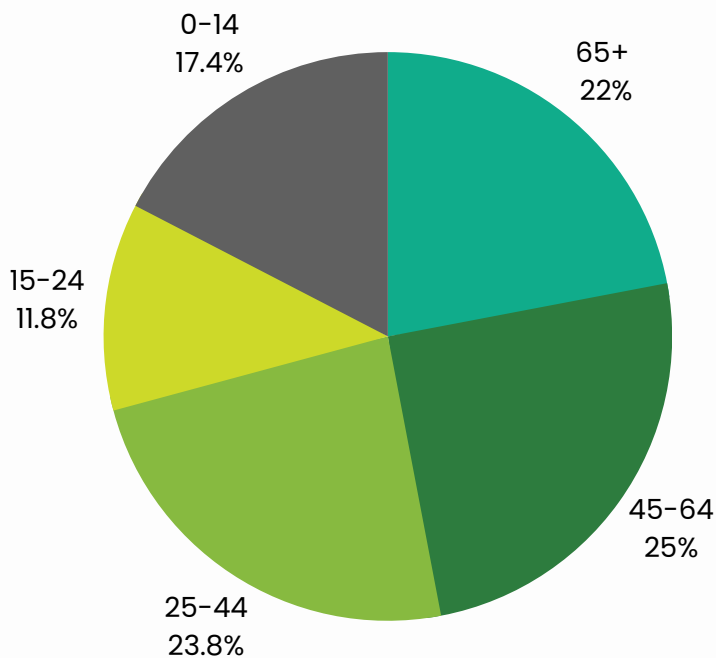
Respondents who indicated they experienced being provisionally accommodated noted stays in medical/detox facilities, a jail/prison/remand centre, and/or transitional housing units. Some respondents also indicated staying in a home unwillingly because they have nowhere else to go, staying with a stranger because they had nowhere else to go, and/or enduring violence because they had nowhere else to go.

Camrose Population Overview


According to Alberta's Regional Dashboard (Government of Alberta, n.d.a; Government of Alberta, n.d.b), the City of Camrose and Camrose County cover a combined 3,642 square km of geographical land base with a total population size of 29,055; making up 0.64% of Alberta's total population.

50.2% (14,576) of the population is reported as female, while 49.8% (14,479) reported as male.

Figure 3: Camrose Population Age Breakdown (2022)



The average age of the population is 43.7 years in the City of Camrose and 41.8 in the surrounding County.



According to Statistics Canada (2021) Census numbers, 8.1% (2,220) of the population immigrated to Canada, and 7.7% (2,105) of the population identified as a visible minority. Further, 6.2% (1,700) of Camrose's combined population identified as Indigenous; 28% (480) of whom are First Nations and 68% (1,160) of whom are Métis.

The 2021 Census also reports that the City and County of Camrose have a combined 11,355 private households with an average of 2.2 people per household in the City and 2.5 people in the surrounding County. Of the 11,355 private households, 72.5% (8,235) are owned, while 27.5% (3,125) are rented. Additionally, 79.9% (9,070) of occupied private dwellings are houses and 16.8% (1,865) of occupied private dwellings are apartments. All of the apartments and a significantly higher proportion of renters are in the City of Camrose, where the average monthly rent for a two-bedroom dwelling is listed as \$1,025. Single-family houses make up 46.2% of all private dwellings in the City and 90.8% in the County. Further, 26.2% (2,970) of households 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 is \$37,600 for individuals and \$68,500 for households in the City of Camrose and \$38,400 for individuals and \$80,000 for households in Camrose County. According to the Economic Research Institute (2023), the cost of living in the City of Camrose is 6% higher than the national average and on par with the provincial average for Alberta.

Housing & Service Needs Estimation Survey Respondent Population Overview

402 community members responded to the Camrose survey; 71% (285) identified as female, 25% (100) as male, and 1% (5) as gender non-conforming. 2% (8) of respondents preferred not to answer and 1% (2) noted their gender identity was not listed in the options provided. Additionally, 86% (343) of respondents identified as straight, 1% (4) as lesbian/gay, 6% (25) as bisexual/pansexual, and 2% (4) as asexual. 1% (2) were unsure of their sexual orientation, 0.2% (1) noted that their sexual orientation was not listed in the options provided, and 5% (19) preferred not to answer.

Of the 402 respondents, 4% (14) are between the ages of 0-19; 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 these respondents are between 14-18 years old. Additionally, 33% (133) are between the ages of 20-39, 39% (157) are between 40-59, and 24% (96) are 60 years or older.

92% (367) of respondents were born in Canada (Turtle Island), while 7% (29) immigrated to Canada and 1% (4) preferred not to answer.

87% (353) of respondents are white, while 7% (30) of respondents self-identified as racialized. An additional 2% (10) of respondents noted their racial identity was not listed in the options provided and 3% (12) of respondents preferred not to answer. Additionally, 11% (46) of respondents self-identified as Indigenous and 3% (14) preferred not to answer; 22% (10) as First Nations, 48% (22) as Métis, 2% (1) as Inuit, and 28% (13) as having other Indigenous ancestry.

9% (36) of respondents stayed in foster care, a youth group home, or under a youth/young adult agreement in the past and 4% (14) 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 402 survey respondents, 1% (4) were in the Canadian Armed Forces or Foreign Military Service, 0.2% (1) were in the RCMP or Foreign Police Service, 3% (11) were in local or foreign Emergency Services, and 1% (5) preferred not to answer.




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	169	233
Gender	Male: 32	Male: 68
	Female: 132	Female: 153
	Trans-male: 0	Trans-male: 0
	Trans-female: 0	Trans-female: 0
	Gender non-conforming: 1	Gender non-conforming: 4
	Don't know: 0	Don't know: 0
Sexual Orientation	Straight: 159	Straight: 184
	Gay/Lesbian: 0	Gay/Lesbian: 4
	Bisexual/Pansexual: 3	Bisexual/Pansexual: 22
	Asexual: 0	Asexual: 4
	Two-spirit: 0	Two-spirit: 0
	Don't know: 0	Don't know: 2

Age	0 - 19 years: 2	0 - 19 years: 12
	20 - 39 years: 43	20 - 39 years: 90
	40 - 59 years: 63	40 - 59 years: 94
	60+: 61	60+: 35
Immigration Status	Born in Canada: 156	Born in Canada: 211
	Born outside of Canada: 9	Born outside of Canada: 20
Racial Identity	White: 158	White: 195
	Visible minority: 2	Visible minority: 28
Indigenous Identity	First Nations: 1	First Nations: 9
	Métis: 3	Métis: 19
	Inuit: 0	Inuit: 1
	Other Indigenous ancestry: 2	Other Indigenous ancestry: 6
Time in Foster Care, Youth Group Home, or Youth/Young Adult Agreement	Spent time in care: 1	Spent time in care: 35
Served in Canadian Armed Forces, RCMP, Emergency Services	Canadian Armed Forces: 2	Canadian Armed Forces: 0
	RCMP: 1	RCMP: 0
	Emergency Services: 5	Emergency Services: 6



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

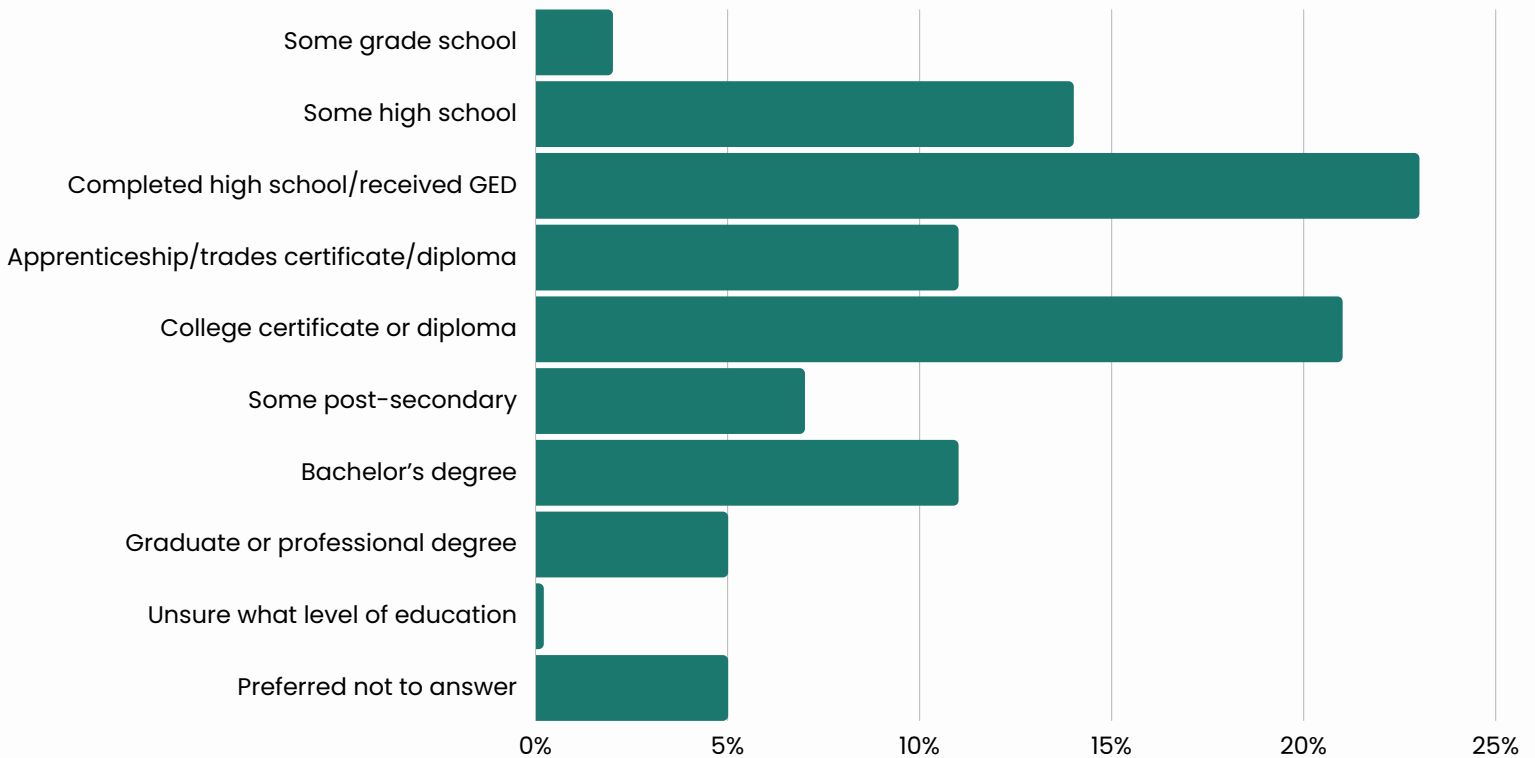
- Respondents identifying as female are 2.3x more likely than their male counterparts to be housing insecure
- 55% of housing insecure respondents are 40+
- 76% of Indigenous respondents are housing insecure
- 97% of respondents who spent time in care are housing insecure


**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% (4) of respondents have completed some grade school, 14% (31) have completed some high school, 23% (51) have completed high school or received their GED, 11% (25) have an apprenticeship, trades certificate, or diploma, 21% (45) have a college certificate or diploma, 7% (16) have some post-secondary, 11% (24) have a Bachelor’s degree, 5% (11) have a graduate/professional degree, and 0.2% (1) are unsure what level of education they have. 5% (11) of respondents preferred not to answer. This can be seen in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Respondents’ Education Levels Breakdown





Additionally, 56% (123) of respondents are employed and 5% (11) preferred not to answer; 56% (68) of those employed are full-time, 31% (38) are part-time, 7% (8) are casual, and 3% (4) indicated “other.” 2% (3) preferred not to answer. Of those that indicated “other”, 75% (3) are employed on contract and 25% (1) are employed seasonally.

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 219 times that they receive job-related income, 94 times that they receive government-related income, 133 times that they receive tax-related income, and 96 times that they receive informal income. Additionally, respondents noted 63 times that they have other sources of income including credit card loans, and 12 times that they preferred 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	74 (34%)
Between \$30,001 and \$49,999	40 (18%)
Between \$50,000 and \$69,999	18 (8%)
Between \$70,000 and \$89,999	19 (9%)
Between \$90,000 and \$109,999	15 (7%)
More than \$110,000	16 (7%)
Prefer not to answer	36 (17%)

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

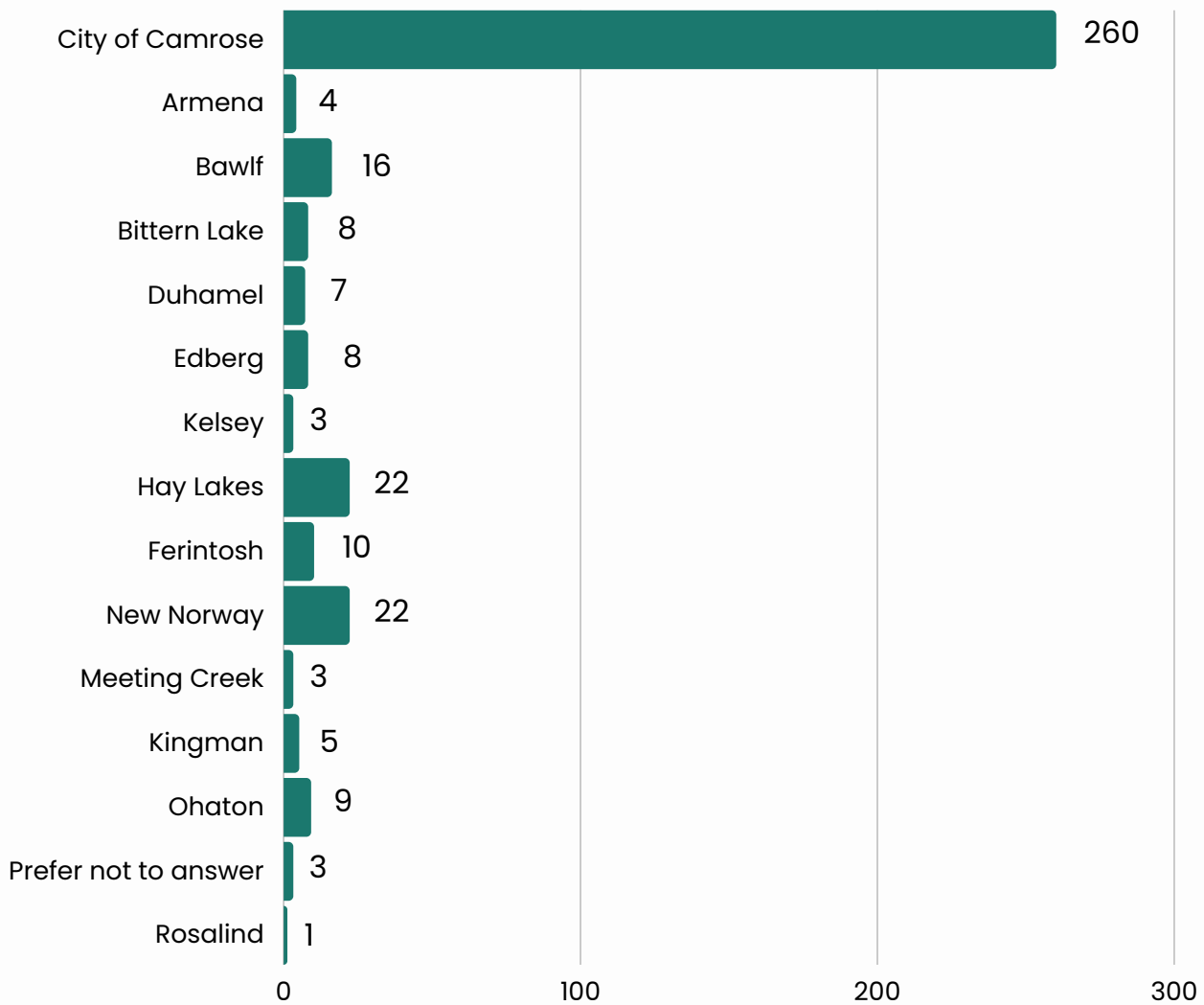
Table 4: Respondents' Household Income in 2022 by Housing Status

Total Household Income in 2022	# of Housing Secure Respondents Per Income Level	# of Housing Insecure Respondents Per Income Level
\$30,000 or less	5 (3%)	74 (34%)
Between \$30,001 and \$49,999	14 (9%)	40 (18%)
Between \$50,000 and \$69,999	14 (9%)	18 (8%)
Between \$70,000 and \$89,999	29 (18%)	19 (9%)
Between \$90,000 and \$109,999	16 (10%)	15 (7%)
More than \$110,000	49 (31%)	16 (7%)
Prefer not to answer	30 (19%)	36 (17%)

Living Situation

Residents from across Camrose responded to the survey, as can be seen in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Breakdown of All Survey Respondents by Location



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). 39% (90) of housing insecure respondents indicated that they own their homes, 50% (116) indicated that they rent their homes, 8% (19) noted that they neither own nor rent, and 2% (5) preferred not to answer. Comparatively, 91% (153) of housing secure respondents owned their homes, 7% (11) rented their homes, and 3% (5) noted they neither own nor rent.

Further, respondents were asked, "If you pay rent or a mortgage, how much do you pay per month?" Of the responses, rent and mortgage costs 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	3 (2%)	11 (5%)
Between \$500 to \$999	19 (11%)	56 (24%)
Between \$1000 to \$1499	42 (25%)	75 (32%)
Between \$1500 to \$1999	23 (14%)	38 (16%)
Over \$2000	13 (8%)	14 (6%)
I don't pay rent or a mortgage	58 (35%)	24 (10%)
Prefer not to answer	9 (5%)	14 (6%)

Among housing insecure respondents, whether they rent, own, or are in a different situation entirely, 22% (64) do not have sufficient and affordable heating and 16% (32) 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	34 (12%)
Sufficient and affordable heating	64 (22%)
Safe drinking water	46 (16%)
Refrigeration	32 (11%)
Electricity (or equivalent - i.e. solar power)	32 (11%)
Cooking facilities	34 (12%)
Fire protection (smoke alarms, fire extinguishers)	49 (17%)

This breakdown highlighted respondents who lack basic amenities and is one of the ways in which respondents' objective housing situation is calculated. Many 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.



17% (67) of all respondents, 81% (54) of which are housing insecure, have always lived in Camrose. Of the housing insecure respondents who were not born there, 37% (84) have lived in the area for more than eight years. Respondents who are not from Camrose were also asked to indicate why they came to this community. The top three reasons respondents came to the area are:

1. To be closer to family (24%)
2. To start a job (12%)
3. For the lifestyle the community offers (11%)

Other reasons people moved to Camrose include to find housing (9%), to access services/supports (8%), to look for work (8%), fear for safety/fleeing from violence (7%), to reconnect with my culture, community, and traditions (6%), and to attend school (3%). 8% of respondents indicated “other” and 1% preferred not to answer.

Noteworthy here is that 7% (15) of housing insecure respondents have moved between three and six times in the past 12 moves and 8% (18) have moved more than six times in the past 12 months.

Additional analysis also discovered that 12% (29) of respondents are experiencing domestic/intimate partner violence in their current living situations; 48% (14) of whom identify as female, 48% (14) of whom identify as male, and 4% (1) of whom preferred not to answer. 86% (25) of respondents identify as straight, 3% (1) as lesbian/gay, and 7% (2) as bisexual/pansexual. 40% (11) are Indigenous; 27% (3) are First Nations, 27% (3) are Métis, and 45% (5) have other Indigenous ancestry. Additionally, 7% (2) are 0-19, 28% (8) are 20-39, 59% (17) are 40-59, and 7% (2) are over 60. 17% (5) of respondents employed; 59% (17) reported annual incomes of less than \$30,000 in 2022. A lack of consistent income is often a reason why people are unable to leave their abuser. Further, 66% (19) of respondents indicated they slept in a makeshift shelter in the past month and 24% (7) reported stays in a women’s/domestic violence shelter. The top two reasons for housing insecurity as reported by these respondents are low wages and poor credit making it difficult to secure housing.

Community Supports

To better understand service needs and gaps in Camrose, respondents were asked: “Which support services do you access?” The main reasons all respondents access services are to help with health and wellness (19%), basic needs (11%), family/parenting support (11%), and support services (11%).

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	84 (13%)
COVID-19 - PPE, information, supports	0	62 (9%)
Crisis Financial Support - Eviction notice, utility bill problems, damage deposits, etc.	0	50 (8%)

<p>Family/Parenting - Child care, parenting/family issues, relationship issues, child developmental assessment tools/referrals, etc.</p>	10 (13%)	70 (11%)
<p>Financial - Employment, housing, training/education, etc.</p>	0	63 (10%)
<p>Health and Wellness - Addictions, mental health, physical health care, spiritual/cultural, etc.</p>	43 (54%)	99 (15%)
<p>Legal - Separation/divorce/custody, wills/estates, employment/labour standards, landlord/tenant issues, immigration issues, criminal/misdemeanor, etc.</p>	13 (16%)	63 (10%)

<p>Support Services - Help with government forms, help with accessing government/other programs or services, access to technology, etc.</p>	<p>7 (9%)</p>	<p>72 (11%)</p>
<p>Transportation - Access to basic services/education/employment, medical transportation</p>	<p>5 (6%)</p>	<p>61 (9%)</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)?"

Interestingly, respondents were most likely to access basic needs supports and health and wellness services both in Camrose and outside of Camrose, as seen in Table 8.

Table 8: Services Accessed by Housing Insecure Respondents by Location

Services Accessed in the Community	# of Respondents who Accessed these Services	Services Accessed Outside of the Community	# of Respondents who Accessed these Services
Basic Needs - Food, shelter, clothing, etc.	91 (13%)	Basic Needs - Food, shelter, clothing, etc.	63 (14%)
COVID-19 - PPE, information, supports	68 (10%)	COVID-19 - PPE, information, supports	32 (7%)
Crisis Financial Support - Eviction notice, utility bill problems, damage deposits, etc.	65 (9%)	Crisis Financial Support - Eviction notice, utility bill problems, damage deposits, etc.	31 (7%)
Family/Parenting - Child care, parenting/family issues, relationship issues, child developmental assessment tools/referrals, etc.	74 (10%)	Family/Parenting - Child care, parenting/family issues, relationship issues, child developmental assessment tools/referrals, etc.	30 (7%)

Financial - Employment, housing, training/education, etc.	74 (10%)	Financial - Employment, housing, training/education, etc.	34 (8%)
Health and Wellness - Addictions, mental health, physical health care, spiritual/cultural, etc.	82 (12%)	Health and Wellness - Addictions, mental health, physical health care, spiritual/cultural, etc.	90 (21%)
Legal - Separation/divorce /custody, wills/estates, employment/ labour standards, landlord/tenant issues, immigration issues, criminal/ misdemeanour, etc.	71 (10%)	Legal - Separation/divorce/ custody, wills/estates, employment/labour standards, landlord/tenant issues, immigration issues, criminal/ misdemeanour, etc.	45 (10%)

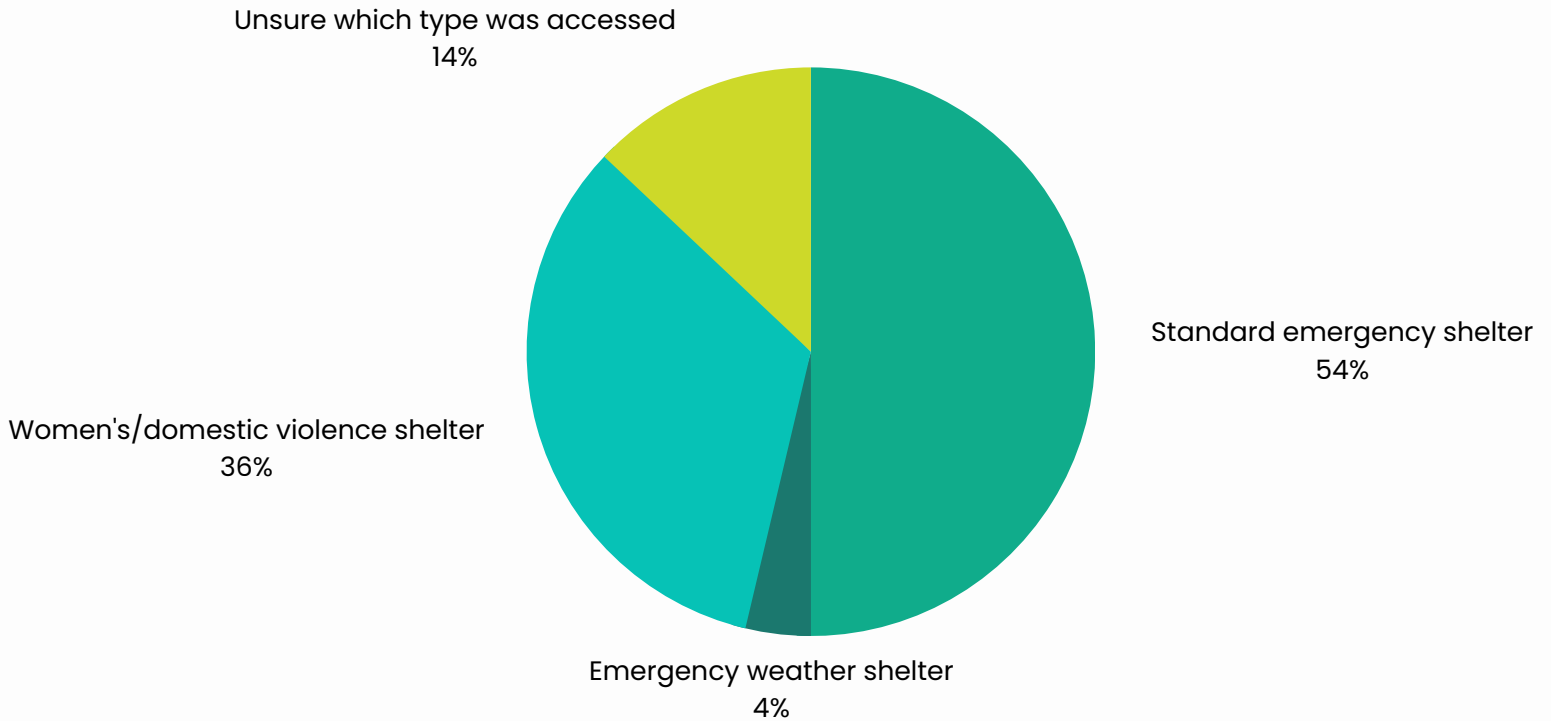
Support Services - Help with government forms, help with accessing government/other programs or services, access to technology, etc.	79 (11%)	Support Services - Help with government forms, help with accessing government/other programs or services, access to technology, etc.	59 (14%)
Transportation - Access to basic services/education /employment, medical transportation	67 (9%)	Transportation - Access to basic services/education/ employment, medical transportation	32 (7%)

Respondents noted travelling an average of one and a half hours one-way to access services. Time and distance to access services outside of the community is a barrier for some respondents; while 33% of respondents travel by vehicle to get to these services, 19% rely on family members or friends, 28% rely on public transit or e-bus, taxis and/or a service agency staff arranging a ride for them, and 19% resort to hitchhiking to access services.

What's important to consider is that respondents 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.

12% (28) of respondents accessed an emergency shelter in the past 12 months and 4% (9) preferred not to answer; 54% (15) accessed a standard emergency shelter, 4% (1) accessed an emergency weather shelter, 36% (10) accessed a women's/domestic violence shelter, 14% (4) were not sure which type of shelter they accessed, and 11% (3) noted stays in a transitional housing unit.

Figure 6: 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 three reasons why respondents did not access shelter services when they needed them were because there were no shelters in their area, isolation from social supports, and there was no transportation to get to 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)	17 (7%)
The shelter was full	15 (6%)
There was no shelter in my area	44 (17%)
I didn't meet the intake criteria to access the shelter	21 (8%)
I didn't feel safe	22 (9%)
The shelter was unclean	10 (4%)
The shelter did not welcome me because of my gender identity	4 (2%)
Alcohol/substance use is not permitted on site	17 (7%)
Lack of disability accommodations	16 (6%)
Lack of transportation	27 (11%)
No pets allowed	22 (9%)
Isolation from social support (family, partner, friends, etc.)	27 (11%)
Prefer not to answer	2 (1%)


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 about what they love about Camrose, two themes emerged: the sense of community and parks and recreation.

Sense of Community: Respondents overwhelmingly spoke of their love of the community in terms of size, location, and feel. Respondents love how small and rural the community is with many respondents indicating a love for the comfort and safety they feel in Camrose and appreciating how beautiful Camrose is. Respondents also spoke to the "feel" of the community, mainly attributing that to the people in the community. More than anything else, respondents repeatedly emphasized their love for the people in Camrose; how friendly people are, how welcoming people are, how supportive people are, how close-knit people in the community are, and people's community spirit. Many respondents noted their appreciation for the community events hosted regularly. One respondent seemed to encompass the feeling all respondents were speaking to when they said that Camrose brings them a "sense of belonging."

Parks and Recreation: Respondents spoke of their love for the parks and green space in and around the community, for recreation opportunities and infrastructure, and for the beautiful landscape the community provides. Respondents love the local parks and the trail system that encompass many biking and walking paths. Many noted the recreation facilities which host more organized recreation and sporting activities including the skating rink and pool. Several respondents also specifically highlighted their appreciation for the emphasis on arts and culture in Camrose.



In contrast, when discussing the things they don't love about the community, respondents spoke primarily about services, transportation, and housing. Additionally, a sense of community divide came out among respondents' responses to their dislikes in Camrose.

Lack of Services: Respondents listed several services that are lacking in Camrose, including medical and mental health services, addiction/substance use support services, and basic needs support for housing insecure residents. Additionally, many respondents spoke of the lack of job training and English language courses offered in the community. Others highlighted the lack of food options in Camrose both in terms of groceries and restaurants while others indicated a lack of big box stores like Costco. Some respondents also indicated a lack of police presence and spotty cell service as major concerns.

Lack of Housing Options: Respondents overwhelmingly noted a lack of emergency shelter services (emergency shelter, youth shelter, and women's/domestic violence shelter) in Camrose. Additionally, respondents spoke of a lack of housing options and specifically a lack of seniors housing, pet-friendly rentals, and affordable housing options.

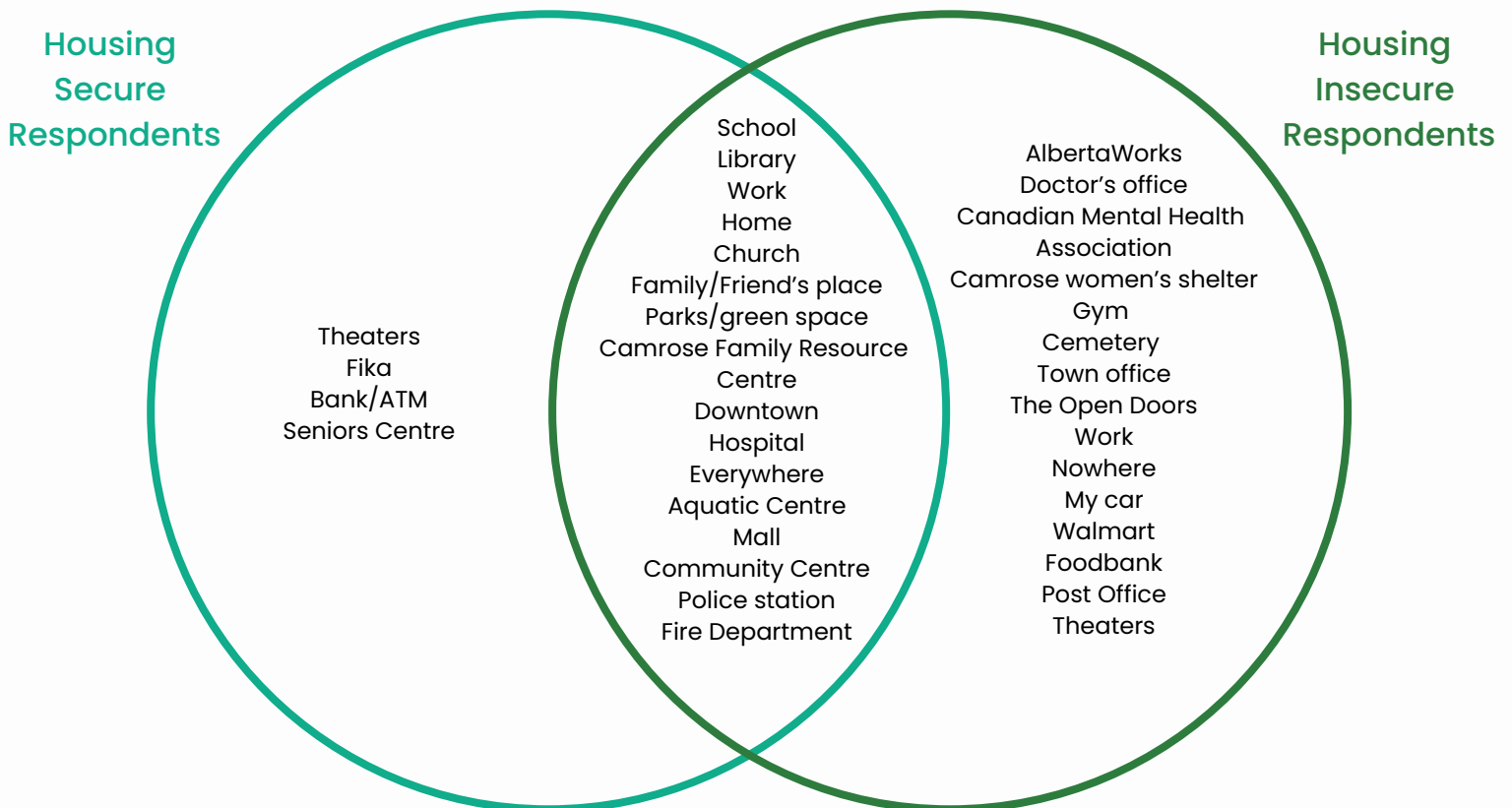
Transportation: Many respondents highlighted poor transportation infrastructure as a major frustration, noting minimal road maintenance, non-existent winter sidewalk maintenance, and a lack of infrastructure to support active commuting (i.e. sidewalks or bike lanes). Several respondents also indicated that the current infrastructure (sidewalks, crosswalks, parking spaces, etc.) is not wheelchair accessible. Others expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of public transportation options to get around Camrose and to travel to and leave the community.

Community Divide: Additionally, some comments left by respondents when asked what they don't love about the community suggest there are many residents experiencing racism, discrimination, and/or isolation from the rest of the community. Several respondents articulated personal experiences of racism, experiences of discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation, and/or experiences of discrimination or judgment on the basis of their housing insecurity

status. Some respondents indicated that the community has not been very welcoming to newcomers while others noted that housing secure residents often lack empathy towards housing insecure residents' living situations. Many respondents specifically stated that the community is: "a bit of an old boys club" when it comes to decision-making and programming. Several respondents suggested that it is isolating in Camrose and very difficult to meet people with one respondent stating: "[it] has been tough to find a community of people."

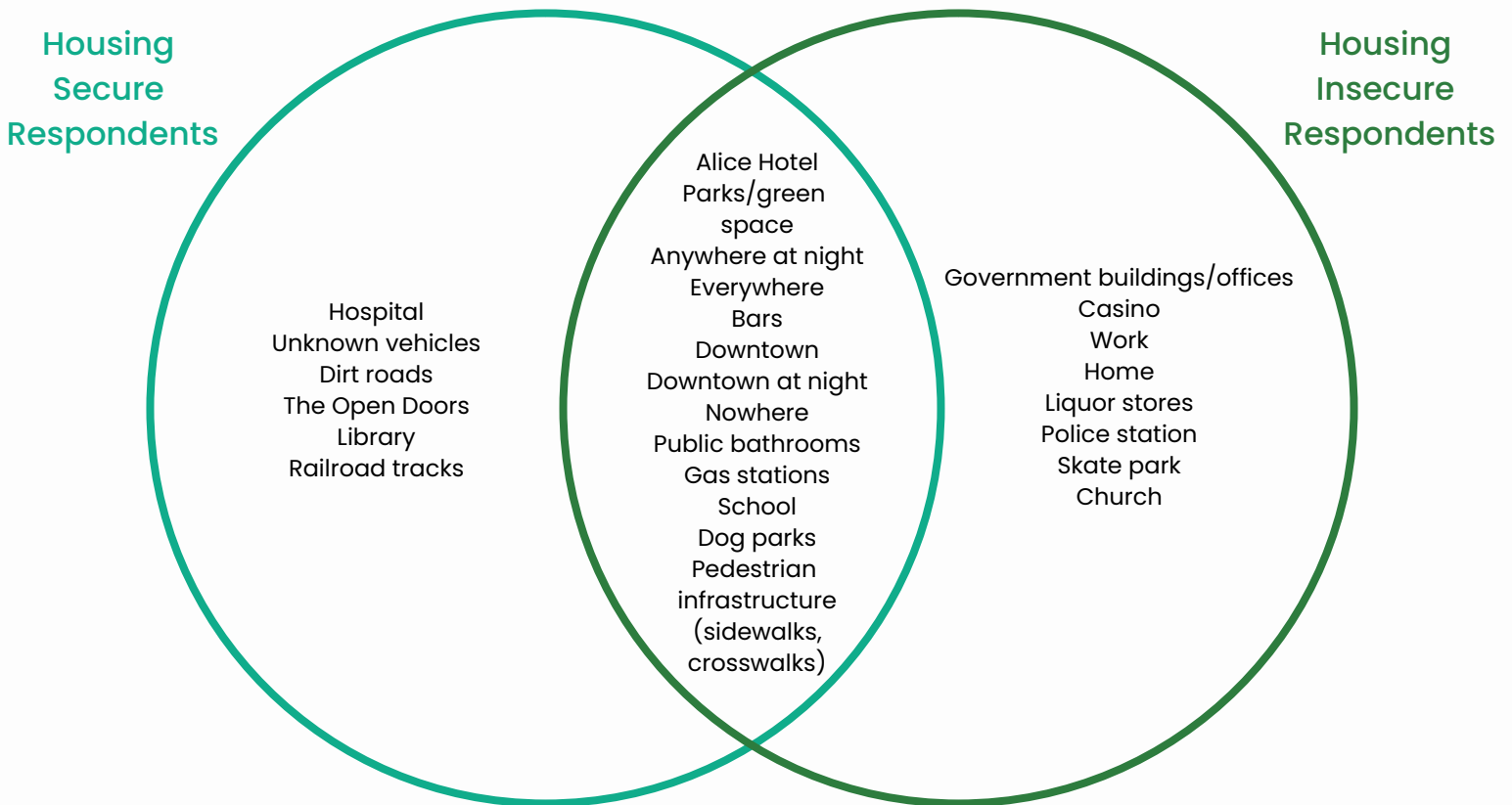
Respondents were also asked, "What are two places that make you feel safe in the community and what are two places that make you feel unsafe in the community?" Figure 7 highlights the spaces where respondents feel safe.

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



In comparison, Figure 8 highlights spaces where housing secure and housing insecure respondents felt unsafe.

Figure 8: Venn Diagram of Unsafe Spaces Responses by Housing Status



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

In order to gain a better understanding of respondents’ perceptions of services offered in Camrose, respondents were asked: “Does Camrose provide enough... employment opportunities; free/accessible recreational and social opportunities; social services; accessible and affordable housing; public transportation; access to food?” Table 10 outlines their responses.

Table 10: Respondents' Perceptions of Camrose's Provision of Services

Does the Community Provide Enough:	# of Respondents Who Believe the Community Provides Enough...	# of Respondents Who Believe the Community Does Not Provide Enough...	# of Respondents Who Aren't Sure if the Community Provides Enough...
Employment opportunities	82 (24%)	155 (46%)	101 (30%)
Free/accessible recreational and social opportunities	132 (39%)	144 (43%)	62 (18%)
Social services	194 (58%)	78 (23%)	62 (19%)
Accessible and Affordable Housing	53 (16%)	160 (47%)	125 (37%)

Public transportation	62 (18%)	234 (67%)	53 (15%)
Access to food (grocery stores, markets, food banks, etc.)	233 (67%)	86 (25%)	31 (9%)

Of note in Table 10 is the significant discrepancy in respondents who believe there is enough accessible and affordable housing in Camrose (16%) versus the number of respondents who believe more accessible and affordable housing is needed (47%) and the number of respondents who are not sure if there is enough accessible and affordable housing (37%).

Respondents, both housing secure and housing insecure, outlined many things they would like to see more of in the community. Upon further analysis, they can be categorized into two main themes: housing and support services:

Housing

- Emergency shelter
 - Emergency weather shelter
 - Women’s/domestic violence shelter
 - Youth shelter
- Affordable housing
 - Wheelchair accessible housing units
 - Youth-specific housing units
 - Family-specific housing units
 - Rental caps to minimize high rent increases from year to year

Services

- Employment support
 - Job placement programs
 - Job training/employability programs
 - English language courses

- Living wages
- Temp Agency
- Health and Wellness services
 - Medical centre
 - Medical detox facility and accompanying substance use support programs
 - Mental health services
 - Specialized medical and psychological supports
- Senior supports and programming
- Youth supports and programming
- Basic needs
 - Public bathrooms for unsheltered residents
 - More food bank access
 - More awareness on who and where housing insecure residents can go for support
- Transportation
 - Public transportation system
 - Expanded operation hours
 - Expanded routes
 - Bus service from Camrose to Edmonton (and back)
 - Improved pedestrian infrastructure
 - Including wheelchair accessible infrastructure
- Food access
 - More grocery store options
 - More farmers markets with fresh produce options
 - Expanded foodbank

Upon further analysis, an overall satisfaction score was generated to better understand respondents' perceptions of service provision in the community. It was determined that housing secure respondents are 41% satisfied, while housing insecure respondents are only 34% satisfied with service provision in Camrose. Important to note here is that the satisfaction rates calculated above speak to the lack of available services in the area rather than satisfaction with currently available services in the community.

What Does Homelessness Look Like in Camrose?

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 Camrose, this is a woman between 40-59 who has lived in the community for more than eight years. She currently rents her home which she shares with her partner/spouse for between \$1,000-\$1,499 per month. Though employed full-time, she reports spending more than 30% of her monthly income on housing and finds it difficult to consistently pay rent. She originally came to Camrose to start a job and for the lifestyle the community offers. She regularly accesses health and wellness services and basic needs support.

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




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. Increase community awareness and understanding of housing insecurity and homelessness. Community conversations around housing insecurity should have two goals: First, to broaden the community's understanding of and empathetic reaction to community members experiencing housing insecurity, and second, to help community members understand the various experiences of housing insecurity in Camrose. Of the 233 survey respondents who were identified as housing insecure, only 95 self-identified as housing insecure. It is possible then, that the 138 respondents who believe they are housing secure have never accessed supports that could help improve their current housing situation. Facilitating community conversations on housing insecurity and homelessness will help to ensure more people better understand their current housing situation and at the same time, will hopefully encourage the community and housing secure residents to show empathy and understanding towards housing insecure respondents and decrease the incidents of judgment, discrimination, and exclusion of housing insecure respondents' experiences. Considering 22% of respondents do not have sufficient heating and 16% do not have access to safe drinking water in their current housing situation, community conversations should also include sharing information and resources on human rights, tenant rights, and homeowner rights.

2. Consider public transportation options in Camrose. Respondents indicated that the lack of transportation is a barrier to accessing support services, recreation opportunities, and shelter in the community. 19% of respondents in need of services resorted to hitchhiking to get the support they needed. Additionally, many respondents indicated that transportation infrastructure, including roads, sidewalks, parking lots, and buses, are inaccessible to community members with mobility challenges, for example, individuals who may be pushing a stroller, or pulling a wagon. To ensure respondents can get the



support they need to stabilize their housing situation, whether that be access to medical or mental health support, accessing the employment centre, obtaining a job, or even finding housing, accessible transportation is crucial. Consider expanding operating hours and adding to existing public transportation routes in order to better serve residents in need of transportation. Public transportation is often very difficult to provide in rural communities, due to lack of infrastructure and costs associated with operations. If needed, 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. Additionally, conducting an accessibility audit across the community to identify transportation infrastructure that is not currently accessible is a great starting point to understand how to support respondents who need accessibility support.

3. Conduct an analysis of emergency shelter services in Camrose and develop an action plan to provide consistent and expanded emergency shelter options to all unsheltered residents. The main reason for not accessing shelter when needed is: “There was no shelter in the area.” Additionally, 7% of respondents who did not access a shelter when needed noted: “The right kind of shelter wasn’t available.” Furthermore, 12% of respondents left the community to access emergency shelter in the past 12 months, which aligns with one of the top reasons why many respondents who needed emergency shelter but did not access one: “Isolation from social supports.” When asked what they want to see more of in Camrose, respondents overwhelmingly noted the need for emergency shelter options for unsheltered residents. Many specifically, respondents identified the need for a sn inclusive emergency shelter as well as a youth-specific emergency shelter. As a result, it’s recommended to conduct an analysis of current emergency shelter services in the community to develop an action plan. Developing an action plan will help ensure there are consistent and expanded provision of emergency shelter services moving forward. The action plan could include information on how to find funding to expand and/or support an emergency shelter, an audit of past and current shelter policies, recommendations on expanding shelter services, and a long-term operational



timeline. This information should also be included in the analysis of current emergency shelter services available across the region, identifying any gaps in service provision. Additionally, 11% of respondents noted an inability to access emergency shelters due to a lack of transportation; as a result, it is important to consider partnering with the transportation unit to ensure service is provided from several locations to the shelter.

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 Camrose, Alberta, Canada. <https://www.erieri.com/cost-of-living/canada/alberta/camrose>
- 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.a). Camrose. Alberta Regional Dashboard. Retrieved April 26, 2023 from <https://regionaldashboard.alberta.ca/region/camrose/#/>
- Government of Alberta. (n.d.b). Camrose County. Alberta Regional Dashboard. Retrieved April 26, 2023 from <https://regionaldashboard.alberta.ca/region/camrose-county/#/>
- 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. Camrose, City (CY) [census subdivision], Alberta and Camrose County, Municipal district (MD) [census subdivision], Alberta. Retrieved from <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfmLang=E&SearchText=camrose&DGUIDlist=2021A0005481001,2021A0005481001&GENDERlist=1&STATISTIClist=1,4&HEADERlist=2,30,5,6,20,23,9,7,11,19,1,3>
- 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