



LAC LA BICHE

2023 Alberta Provincial Housing
& Service Needs Estimation

COMMUNITY REPORT



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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 and the residents in Lac La Biche for their support, dedication, and commitment to this project.



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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 Lac La Biche'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 Lac La Biche. 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.



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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. Lac La Biche was one of the 20 communities that participated in the



2018 estimation, where they surveyed 88 community members, 86 of which were determined to be housing insecure, and one of the 24 communities in 2020, where they surveyed 74 community members, 45 of which were determined to be housing insecure. Furthermore, in 2020 an additional 5 dependents and adults were identified as living with the 45 housing insecure respondents.



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 Lac La Biche 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 definition 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 Lac La Biche's location parameters.

Figure 1: Lac La Biche's Location Question on Survey

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

<input type="checkbox"/> Lac La Biche	<input type="checkbox"/> Owl River	<input type="checkbox"/> Caslan
<input type="checkbox"/> Plamondon	<input type="checkbox"/> Beaver Lake	
<input type="checkbox"/> Hylö	<input type="checkbox"/> Buffalo Lake	
<input type="checkbox"/> Craigend	<input type="checkbox"/> Heart Lake	
<input type="checkbox"/> Kikino	<input type="checkbox"/> Rich Lake	
<input type="checkbox"/> I am not sure		
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____		
<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to answer		

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

Lac La Biche collected 359 survey responses during the four weeks. Of the 359 surveys, 46 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, 313 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 Lac La Biche.

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 313 survey respondents, 72 self-identified as housing insecure and 36 indicated “I’m not sure.” Through further analysis, it was determined that 197 survey respondents are housing insecure according to the national definitions of homelessness. An additional 264 dependents and 294 adults reported as living with housing insecure survey respondents. Therefore, based on survey results, there are at least 755 community members experiencing housing insecurity in Lac La Biche.

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

1. Low wages
2. Inability to afford rent/mortgage payments
3. Poor credit makes it difficult to secure housing



Exploring the Spectrum of Homelessness in Lac La Biche

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 Lac La Biche. This can be achieved by exploring the experiences of the 197 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 Lac La Biche.

Table 1: Respondents by Housing Situation in the Homelessness Spectrum

Place on the Homelessness Spectrum	# of Respondents in Each Category
Unsheltered	13
Emergency Sheltered	21
Provisionally Accommodated	74
At-Risk of Homelessness	162

This table demonstrates the diversity of respondents' experiences with housing insecurity in Lac La Biche 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.

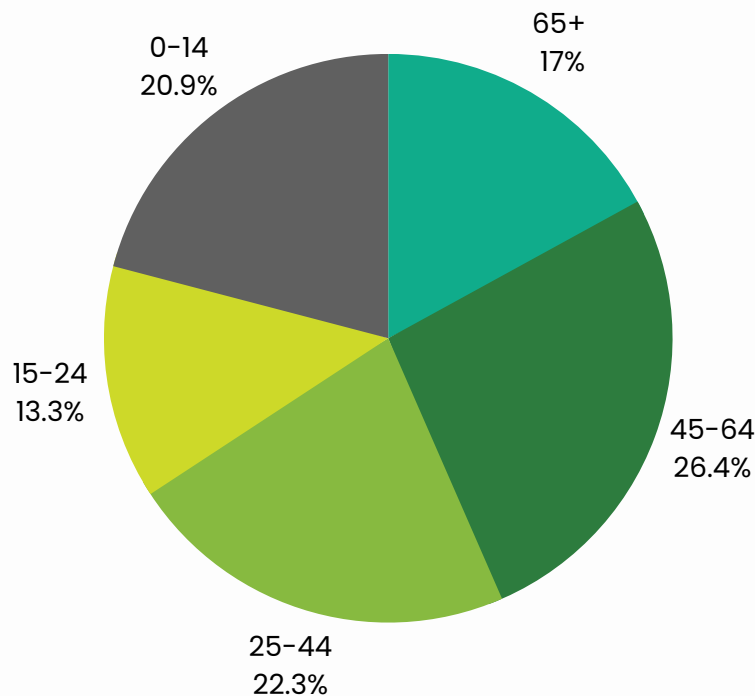
Respondents who indicated they experienced being provisionally accommodated noted stays in medical/detox facilities, a jail/prison/remand centre, and/or transitional housing units. Some respondents also indicated staying in a home unwillingly because they have nowhere else to go, staying with a stranger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

Lac La Biche Population Overview


According to Alberta's Regional Dashboard (Government of Alberta, n.d.), Lac La Biche County covers a 13,694.1 square km geographical land base with a total population size of 8,187; making up 0.18% of Alberta's total population.

48% (3,933) of the population is reported as female, while 52% (4,254) reported as male.

Figure 3: Lac La Biche Population Age Breakdown (2022)



The average age of the population is 40.8 years in Lac La Biche County.



According to Statistics Canada (2021) Census numbers, 9.5% (720) of the population immigrated to Canada, and 11.4% (860) of the population identified as a visible minority. Further, 25.3% (1,915) of Lac La Biche's population identified as Indigenous; 21% (405) of whom are First Nations, 77% (1,475) of whom are Métis, and 1% (25) of whom noted multiple Indigenous ancestries.

The 2021 Census also reports that Lac La Biche County has 2,945 private households with an average of 2.6 people per household. Of the 2,945 private households, 78.4% (2,310) are owned, while 21.7% (640) are rented, with the average monthly rent for a two-bedroom dwelling listed as \$961. Additionally, 81.5% (2,400) of occupied private dwellings are houses and 6.8% (200) of occupied private dwellings are apartments. Single-family houses make up 71.8% of all private dwellings in the area. Further, 25% (735) 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 \$38,800 for individuals and \$82,000 for households in Lac La Biche County. According to the Economic Research Institute (2023), the cost of living in Lac La Biche County is 9% higher than the national average and 3% higher than the provincial average for Alberta.

Housing & Service Needs Estimation Survey Respondent Population Overview

313 community members responded to the Lac La Biche survey; 63% (198) identified as female, 32% (99) as male, 0.3% (1) as trans-male, and 2% (5) as gender non-conforming. 2% (5) of respondents were unsure of their gender identity and 2% (5) preferred not to answer. Additionally, 89% (270) of respondents identified as straight, 1% (3) as lesbian/gay, 4% (11) as bisexual/pansexual, 1% (2) as asexual, and 1% (2) as two-spirit. 1% (3) were unsure of their sexual orientation, 1% (2) noted that their sexual orientation was not listed in the options provided, and 3% (10) preferred not to answer.

Of the 313 respondents, 21% (67) 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 this respondent is between 14-18 years old. Additionally, 39% (121) are between the ages of 20-39, 28% (86) are between 40-59, and 12% (38) are 60 years or older.

88% (274) of respondents were born in Canada (Turtle Island), while 8% (26) immigrated to Canada and 4% (11) preferred not to answer.

52% (167) of respondents are white, while 37% (121) of respondents self-identified as racialized. An additional 4% (14) of respondents noted their racial identity was not listed in the options provided and 7% (22) of respondents preferred not to answer. Additionally, 47% (148) of respondents self-identified as Indigenous and 2% (7) preferred not to answer; 39% (58) as First Nations, 55% (81) as Métis, 1% (1) as Inuit, and 5% (8) as having other Indigenous ancestry.

9% (28) of respondents stayed in foster care, a youth group home, or under a youth/young adult agreement in the past and 3% (10) 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 313 survey respondents, 5% (15) were in the Canadian Armed Forces or Foreign Military Service, 1% (2) were in the RCMP or Foreign Police Service, 3% (10) were in local or foreign Emergency Services, and 3% (8) 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	116	197
Gender	Male: 29	Male: 70
	Female: 81	Female: 117
	Trans-male: 0	Trans-male: 1
	Trans-female: 0	Trans-female: 0
	Gender non-conforming: 1	Gender non-conforming: 4
	Don't know: 2	Don't know: 3
Sexual Orientation	Straight: 103	Straight: 167
	Gay/Lesbian: 1	Gay/Lesbian: 2
	Bisexual/Pansexual: 3	Bisexual/Pansexual: 8
	Asexual: 0	Asexual: 2
	Two-spirit: 1	Two-spirit: 1
	Don't know: 0	Don't know: 3

Age	0 - 19 years: 23	0 - 19 years: 44
	20 - 39 years: 43	20 - 39 years: 78
	40 - 59 years: 33	40 - 59 years: 53
	60+: 16	60+: 22
Immigration Status	Born in Canada: 98	Born in Canada: 176
	Born outside of Canada: 14	Born outside of Canada: 12
Racial Identity	White: 78	White: 89
	Visible minority: 38	Visible minority: 83
Indigenous Identity	First Nations: 9	First Nations: 49
	Métis: 21	Métis: 60
	Inuit: 1	Inuit: 0
	Other Indigenous ancestry: 2	Other Indigenous ancestry: 6
Time in Foster Care, Youth Group Home, or Youth/Young Adult Agreement	Spent time in care: 4	Spent time in care: 24
Served in Canadian Armed Forces, RCMP, Emergency Services	Canadian Armed Forces: 4	Canadian Armed Forces: 11
	RCMP: 0	RCMP: 2
	Emergency Services: 5	Emergency Services: 5



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

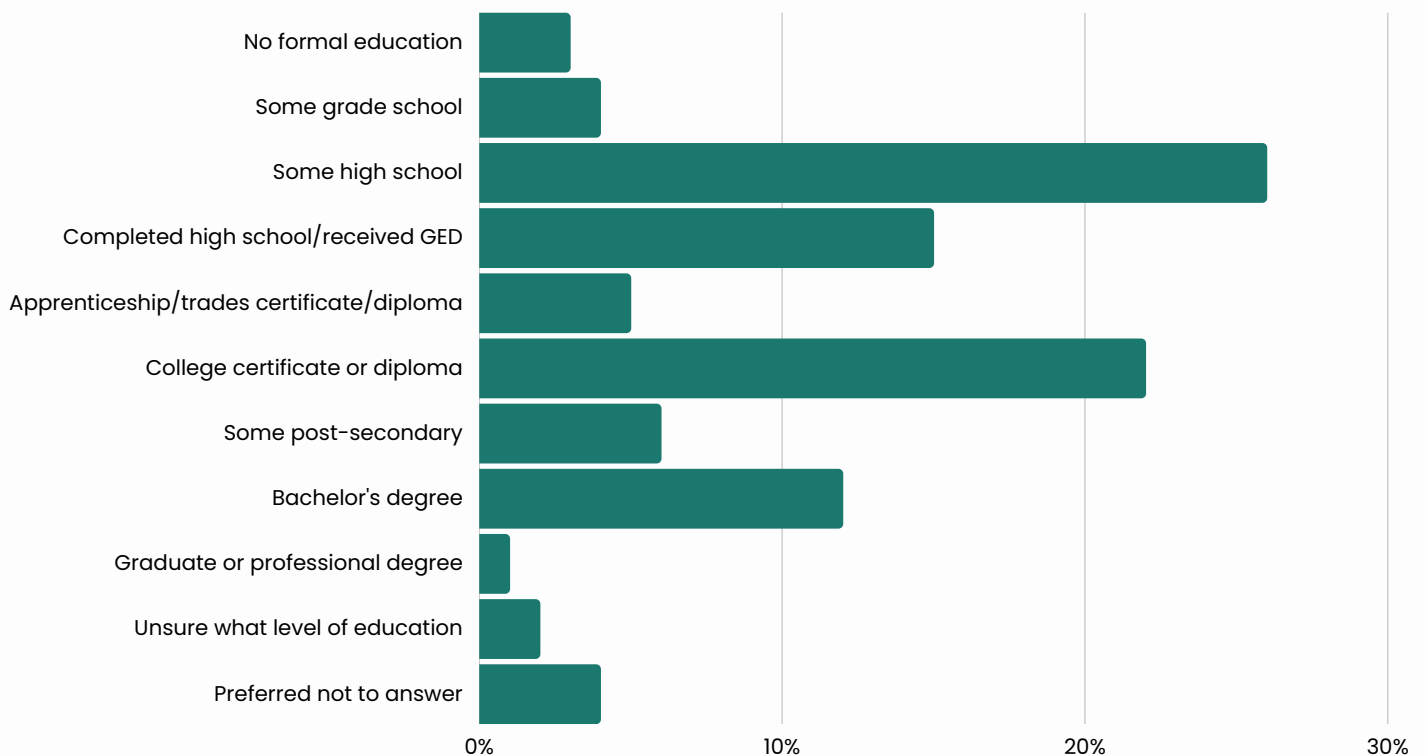
- Respondents identifying as female are 1.7x more likely than their male counterparts to be housing insecure
- 86% of respondents who spent time in care are housing insecure


**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?” 3% (6) of respondents have no formal education, 4% (8) have completed some grade school, 26% (48) have completed some high school, 15% (29) have completed high school or received their GED, 5% (9) have an apprenticeship, trades certificate, or diploma, 22% (41) have a college certificate or diploma, 6% (11) have some post-secondary, 12% (22) have a Bachelor’s degree, 1% (2) have a graduate/professional degree, and 2% (4) are unsure what level of education they have. 4% (8) of respondents preferred not to answer. This can be seen in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Respondents’ Education Levels Breakdown





Additionally, 60% (181) of respondents are employed and 5% (16) preferred not to answer; 60% (59) of those employed are full-time, 24% (24) are part-time, 7% (7) are casual, and 3% indicated “other.” 5% (5) 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 175 times that they receive job-related income, 39 times that they receive government-related income, 68 times that they receive tax-related income, and 25 times that they receive informal income. Additionally, respondents noted 24 times that they have other sources of income including credit card loans, and 28 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	49 (27%)
Between \$30,001 and \$49,999	19 (11%)
Between \$50,000 and \$69,999	22 (12%)
Between \$70,000 and \$89,999	12 (7%)
Between \$90,000 and \$109,999	10 (6%)
More than \$110,000	25 (14%)
Prefer not to answer	43 (24%)

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

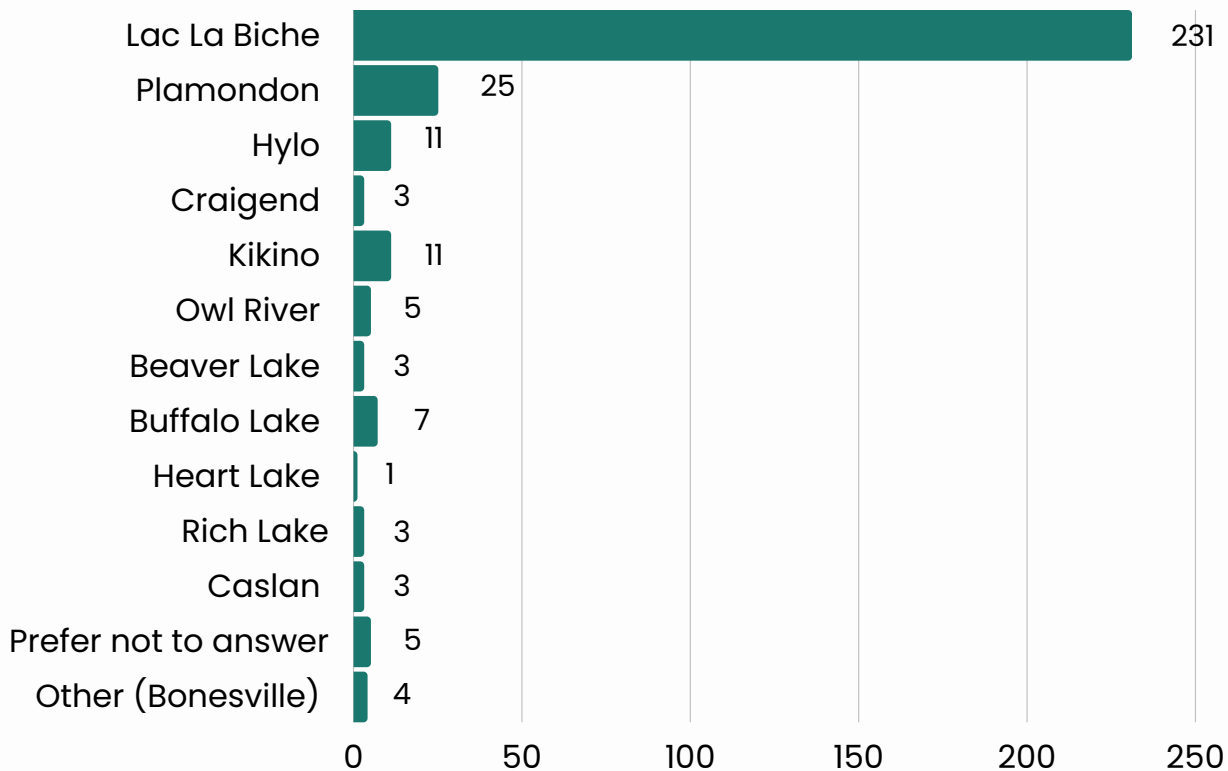
Table 4: Respondents' Household Income in 2022 by Housing Status

Total Household Income in 2022	# of Housing Secure Respondents Per Income Level	# of Housing Insecure Respondents Per Income Level
\$30,000 or less	8 (7%)	49 (27%)
Between \$30,001 and \$49,999	6 (6%)	19 (11%)
Between \$50,000 and \$69,999	7 (7%)	22 (12%)
Between \$70,000 and \$89,999	7 (7%)	12 (7%)
Between \$90,000 and \$109,999	13 (12%)	10 (6%)
More than \$110,000	36 (34%)	25 (14%)
Prefer not to answer	30 (28%)	43 (24%)

Living Situation

Residents from across Lac La Biche 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). 54% (170) of housing insecure respondents indicated that they own their homes, 22% (69) indicated that they rent their homes, 14% (45) noted that they neither own

nor rent, and 9% (28) preferred not to answer. Comparatively, 69% (80) of housing secure respondents owned their homes, 27% (53) rented their homes, 12% (14) noted they neither own nor rent, and 5% (6) preferred not to answer.

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	4 (4%)	14 (7%)
Between \$500 to \$999	5 (4%)	17 (9%)
Between \$1000 to \$1499	16 (14%)	38 (20%)
Between \$1500 to \$1999	16 (14%)	27 (14%)
Over \$2000	19 (17%)	19 (10%)
I don't pay rent or a mortgage	41 (36%)	55 (29%)
Prefer not to answer	12 (11%)	19 (10%)

Among housing insecure respondents, whether they rent, own, or are in a different situation entirely, 18% (28) do not have sufficient and affordable heating and 22% (34) 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	23 (15%)
Sufficient and affordable heating	28 (18%)
Safe drinking water	34 (22%)
Refrigeration	15 (10%)
Electricity (or equivalent - i.e. solar power)	16 (10%)
Cooking facilities	12 (8%)
Fire protection (smoke alarms, fire extinguishers)	28 (18%)

This breakdown 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.

36% (112) of all respondents, 61% (68) of which are housing insecure, have always lived in Lac La Biche. Of the housing insecure respondents who were not born there, 31% (60) have lived in the area for more than eight years. Respondents who are not from Lac La Biche 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 (30%)
2. To start a job (24%)
3. To look for work (8%)

Other reasons people moved to Lac La Biche include to attend school (7%), for the lifestyle the community offers (7%), to reconnect with culture, family, and traditions (4%), fear for safety/fleeing from violence (2%), to find housing (2%), to access emergency shelter (2%), to access services/supports (2%), and environmental displacement (1%). 6% of respondents indicated “other” and 5% preferred not to answer.

Noteworthy here is that 7% (13) of housing insecure respondents have moved between three and six times in the past 12 moves and 3% (6) have moved more than six times in the past 12 months.

Additional analysis also discovered that 6% (11) of respondents are experiencing domestic/intimate partner violence in their current living situations; 64% (7) of whom identify as female and 36% (4) of whom identify as male. 100% (11) of respondents identify as straight and 100% (11) are Indigenous. 18% (2) of respondents are employed in part-time capacities while 82% (9) are unemployed; 54% (6) reported annual incomes of less than \$30,000 in 2022 and 36% (4) rely on income assistance to support themselves. A lack of consistent income is often a reason why people are unable to leave their abuser. Further, 64% (7) of respondents indicated they stayed in their current living situation unwillingly because they have nowhere else to go and 45% are experiencing mental health issues. The top two reasons for housing insecurity as reported by these respondents are low wages and family rejection.

Community Supports

To better understand service needs and gaps in Lac La Biche, respondents were asked: “Which support services do you access?” The main reasons all respondents access support services are to help with basic needs (16%), family/parenting support (15%), and health and wellness (14%).

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	65 (17%)
COVID-19 - PPE, information, supports	0	36 (9%)
Crisis Financial Support - Eviction notice, utility bill problems, damage deposits, etc.	0	25 (7%)

<p>Family/Parenting - Child care, parenting/family issues, relationship issues, child developmental assessment tools/referrals, etc.</p>	11 (46%)	49 (13%)
<p>Financial - Employment, housing, training/education, etc.</p>	1 (4%)	43 (11%)
<p>Health and Wellness - Addictions, mental health, physical health care, spiritual/cultural, etc.</p>	9 (38%)	49 (13%)
<p>Legal - Separation/divorce/custody, wills/estates, employment/labour standards, landlord/tenant issues, immigration issues, criminal/misdemeanor, etc.</p>	0	31 (8%)

Support Services - Help with government forms, help with accessing government/other programs or services, access to technology, etc.	2 (8%)	44 (12%)
Transportation - Access to basic services/education/employment, medical transportation	0	38 (10%)

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 and family/parenting supports in Lac La Biche, while health and wellness and basic needs supports were most accessed outside the community, 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.	94 (15%)	Basic Needs - Food, shelter, clothing, etc.	58 (12%)
COVID-19 - PPE, information, supports	63 (10%)	COVID-19 - PPE, information, supports	46 (10%)
Crisis Financial Support - Eviction notice, utility bill problems, damage deposits, etc.	60 (9%)	Crisis Financial Support - Eviction notice, utility bill problems, damage deposits, etc.	44 (9%)
Family/Parenting - Child care, parenting/family issues, relationship issues, child developmental assessment tools/referrals, etc.	74 (12%)	Family/Parenting - Child care, parenting/family issues, relationship issues, child developmental assessment tools/referrals, etc.	46 (10%)

Financial - Employment, housing, training/education, etc.	66 (10%)	Financial - Employment, housing, training/education, etc.	47 (10%)
Health and Wellness - Addictions, mental health, physical health care, spiritual/cultural, etc.	72 (11%)	Health and Wellness - Addictions, mental health, physical health care, spiritual/cultural, etc.	62 (13%)
Legal - Separation/divorce /custody, wills/estates, employment/ labour standards, landlord/tenant issues, immigration issues, criminal/ misdemeanour, etc.	65 (10%)	Legal - Separation/divorce/ custody, wills/estates, employment/labour standards, landlord/tenant issues, immigration issues, criminal/ misdemeanour, etc.	46 (10%)

Support Services - Help with government forms, help with accessing government/other programs or services, access to technology, etc.	67 (11%)	Support Services - Help with government forms, help with accessing government/other programs or services, access to technology, etc.	51 (11%)
Transportation - Access to basic services/education /employment, medical transportation	68 (11%)	Transportation - Access to basic services/education/ employment, medical transportation	52 (11%)

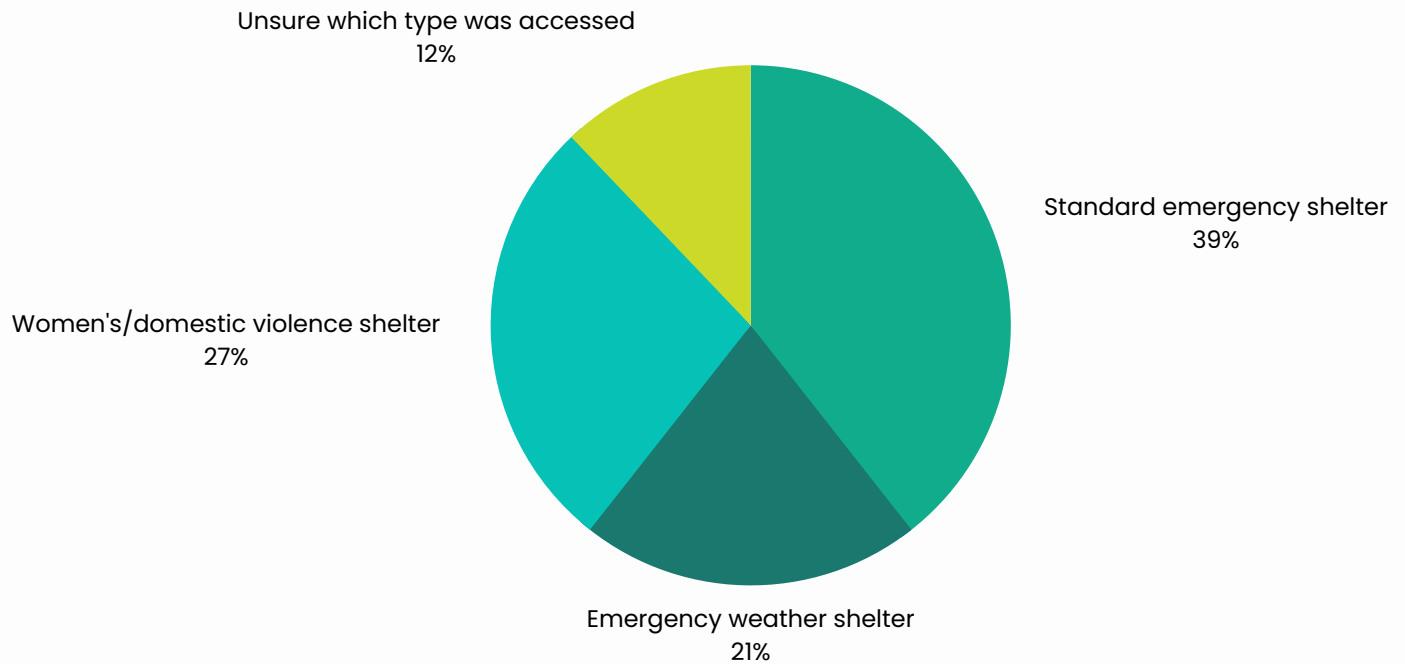
Respondents noted travelling an average of one and a half hours one-way to access services. Time and distance to access services outside of the community is a barrier for some respondents; while 55% of respondents travel by vehicle to get to these services, 15% rely on family members or friends, 19% rely on public transit or e-bus, taxis and/or a service agency staff arranging a ride for them, and 9% resort to hitchhiking to access services.

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.

15% (28) of respondents accessed an emergency shelter in the past 12 months and 4% (7) preferred not to answer; 39% (13) accessed a standard emergency shelter, 21% (7) accessed an emergency weather shelter, 27% (9) accessed a women's/domestic violence shelter, and 12% (4) were not sure which type of

shelter they accessed. Of the 28 unique individuals who accessed emergency shelters, four of them accessed more than one type of shelter.

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 the shelter was full, they didn't feel safe at the shelter, 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)	2 (4%)
The shelter was full	10 (20%)
There was no shelter in my area	3 (6%)
I didn't meet the intake criteria to access the shelter	4 (8%)
I didn't feel safe	6 (12%)
The shelter was unclean	1 (2%)
The shelter did not welcome me because of my gender identity	0
Alcohol/substance use is not permitted on site	2 (4%)
Lack of disability accommodations	0
Lack of transportation	6 (12%)
No pets allowed	3 (6%)
Isolation from social support (family, partner, friends, etc.)	5 (10%)
Prefer not to answer	7 (14%)




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 Lac La Biche, two themes emerged: a 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 Lac La Biche. Respondents also appreciate how beautiful Lac La Biche is and the amount of cultural diversity in the community. Respondents also spoke to the "feel" of the community, mainly attributing that to the people in the community. More than anything, respondents emphasized over and over again their love for the people in Lac La Biche; 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 community leaders who strive to make Lac La Biche open and welcoming through community events. One respondent seemed to encompass the feeling all respondents were speaking to when they said, "It's my home."

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 proximity to additional nature spaces in the community. Respondents love the community's proximity to both provincial and national parks, the local parks, that they can access outdoor recreation year-round, and the lake. Many also noted the ability to participate in a variety of outdoor recreation activities, including hunting, fishing, and biking as huge




sources of enjoyment. Others spoke of the infrastructure in the community which allows for more organized sports activities, including the Bold Centre.

In contrast, when discussing the things they don't love about the community, respondents spoke often of crime, lack of affordability, and a lack of services within the community. Additionally, a common theme of discrimination was messaged through housing secure and housing insecure respondents' responses to their likes and dislikes in Lac La Biche.

Crime: Both housing secure and housing insecure respondents alike noted their displeasure with the increasing amount of crime in Lac La Biche. Specifically, respondents noted concerns with seemingly increasing incidents of theft in the community, including vehicle theft. Additionally, respondents indicated concerns with the amount of drug-related offenses occurring in the community. Other respondents indicated their frustration with the "lack of RCMP presence" when it comes to both theft and drug-related offenses.

Lack of Affordability: Despite their love for the community, many respondents expressed frustration with the increasing cost of living in Lac La Biche. Respondents noted increasing costs of goods and services, to the tune of 10%-15% higher than a year ago as a major source of concern. The increasing cost of food, gas, utilities, and taxes specifically, has made Lac La Biche unaffordable for some. Others noted that Lac La Biche seems to be a much more expensive place to live when compared to surrounding communities.

Services: Respondents often noted the lack of services available in Lac La Biche when discussing what they don't love about the community. Specifically, respondents are frustrated by the lack of childcare options in the community, indicating that Lac La Biche is a childcare desert: "The options that do exist have long waitlists and cost insane amounts of money." Many respondents also expressed their displeasure with the lack of health and wellness services in the community, including medical services and addictions/substance use support. Additionally, respondents spoke about the need for emergency shelter and transitional housing in Lac La Biche. Many stated that the emergency shelter is

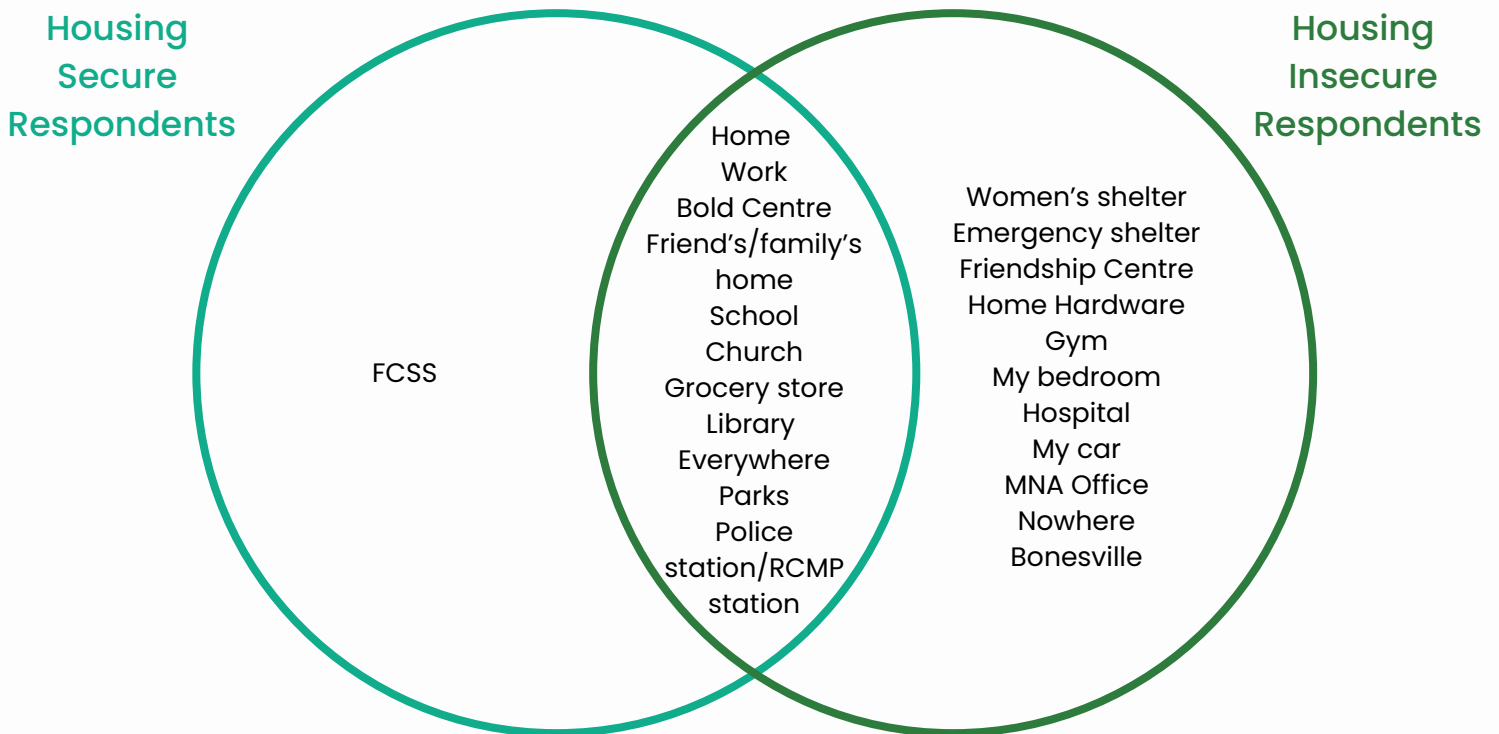


not big enough to support the current population of unsheltered residents. Others noted that transitional housing would be more appropriate for some shelter users. Lastly, several respondents noted that there is limited food availability in the community both in terms of grocery and restaurant options.

Interestingly, though many respondents, both housing secure and housing insecure, spoke overwhelmingly of the strong sense of community in Lac La Biche, including their friendly neighbours and the welcoming feel, there were several responses that indicate racism and discrimination towards housing insecure residents are a major concern in the community. When asked what they don't love about the community, one respondent stated: "homeless people," another noted: "Indigenous people," and another expressed: "too many bums." One respondent specifically stated: "All the homeless people in town...go somewhere else." Many respondents felt that RCMP's behaviour towards housing insecure respondents was inappropriate. Others spoke of the judgment and discrimination they face as someone who is housing insecure and/or as someone with substance use struggles. Several respondents also specifically expressed concerns of racism and discrimination towards 2SLGBTQIA+ residents in the community. One respondent noted: "We talk about how diverse our community is, but I don't find it particularly inclusive."

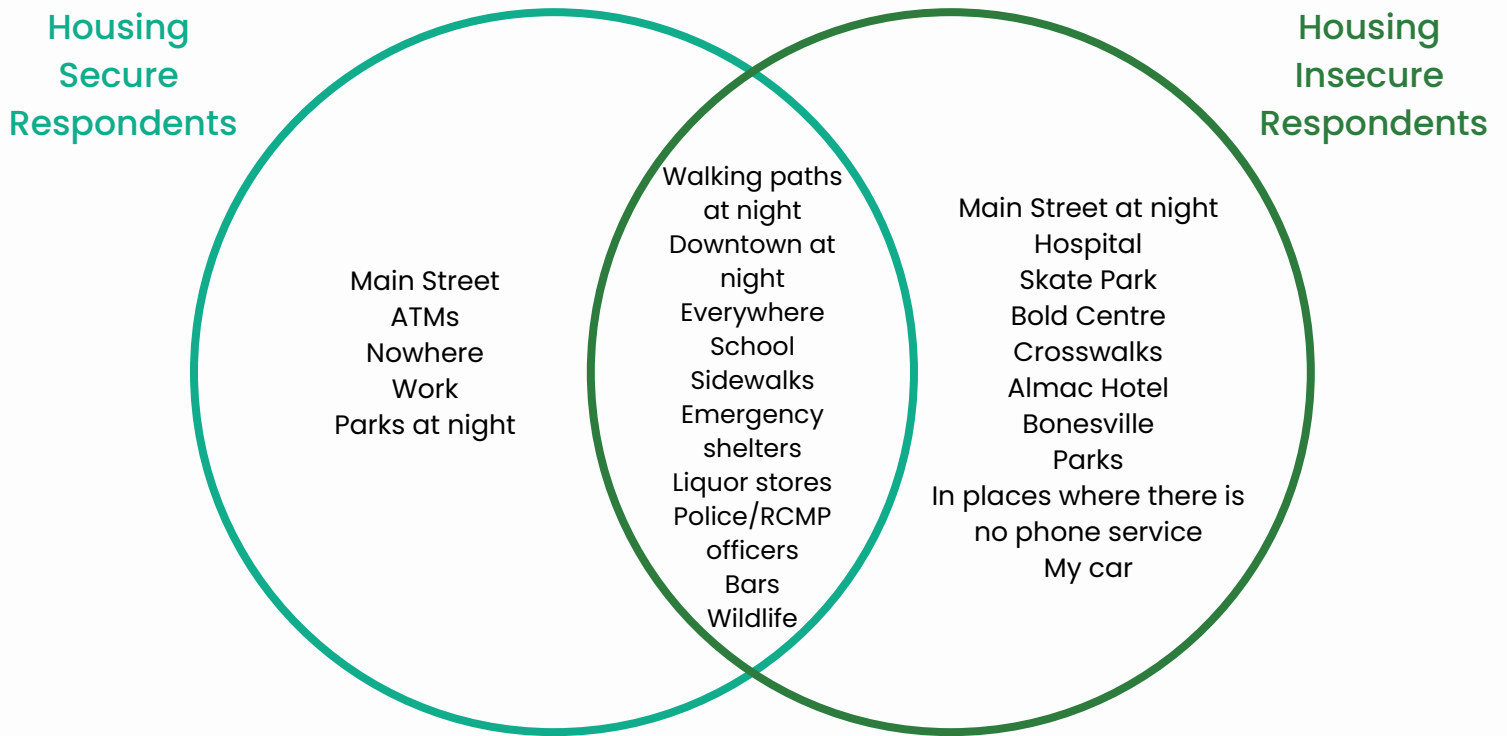
Respondents were also asked, *"What are two places that make you feel safe in the community and what are two places that make you feel unsafe in the community?"* Figure 7 highlights the spaces where respondents feel safe.

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?”

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 services. Interestingly, only one of these themes seems to align with respondents' answers to a previous question they were asked: *“Does Lac La Biche provide enough...employment opportunities; free/accessible recreational and social opportunities; social services; accessible and affordable housing; public transportation; access to food?”* Moreover, the interest in seeing more specific support services conflicts with respondents' answers.

Table 10: Respondents’ Perceptions of Lac La Biche’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	123 (42%)	103 (35%)	65 (22%)
Free/accessible recreational and social opportunities	172 (59%)	75 (26%)	45 (15%)
Social services	202 (70%)	48 (17%)	40 (14%)

Accessible & affordable housing	52 (18%)	151 (52%)	85 (30%)
Public transportation	98 (34%)	136 (47%)	54 (19%)
Access to food (grocery stores, markets, food banks, etc.)	185 (64%)	68 (24%)	36 (12%)

Of note in Table 10 is the significant discrepancy in respondents who believe there is enough accessible and affordable housing in Lac La Biche (18%) versus the number of respondents who believe more accessible and affordable housing is needed (52%) and the number of respondents who are not sure if there is enough accessible and affordable housing (30%).

Housing: Respondents overwhelmingly expressed a need for more accessible and affordable housing in Lac La Biche. Many respondents indicated that more wheelchair-accessible housing options are necessary in the community for both market-rate and below market-rate housing units. Others stated a need for more low-income or affordable housing in the community. Additionally, many respondents highlighted the need for a larger emergency shelter and/or transitional housing options for residents who are looking to transition out of an emergency shelter, but are not quite ready to enter into the housing market without support. Others also indicated a need for more training, staff, and resources at the emergency shelter so they are able to support higher-need individuals.

Services: Respondents indicated several services that are needed in Lac La Biche. As indicated by respondents, accessible and affordable childcare is at the forefront of services needed. Others emphasized the need for more health and

wellness services, including medical facilities, a medical and detox centre which would house and provide supportive programming for residents struggling with substance use, and more social workers. Additionally, many would like to see more disability-specific services, more Indigenous-specific services, and more 2SLGBTQIA+-specific support and programming. Respondents also noted wanting more grocery stores in the community.

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 53% satisfied, while housing insecure respondents are only 44% satisfied with service provision in Lac La Biche. 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 Lac La Biche?

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 Lac La Biche, this is a Métis woman between 20–39 who has always lived in the community. She owns her home which she shares with her partner/spouse and two dependents. With an annual household income in 2022 of between \$30,001 and \$49,999 and a monthly mortgage payment between \$1,000 and \$1,499, she spends more than 30% of her monthly income on housing. Her home lacks access to safe drinking water and is in need of major repairs. Having completed only some high school, she cannot find a higher paying job and accesses basic needs support regularly to help make ends meet.

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




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 Lac La Biche. Of the 197 survey respondents who were identified as housing insecure, only 72 self-identified as housing insecure. It is possible then, that the 125 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 status and at the same time, will hopefully encourage the larger community to show empathy and understanding towards housing insecure respondents and decrease the incidents of judgment, racism, discrimination, and exclusion of housing insecure respondents' experiences. Considering 18% of respondents do not have sufficient heating and 22% 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, homeowner rights, and any available crisis related financial supports.

2. Conduct a gap analysis and audit of service offerings in Lac La Biche. Respondents indicated several services they would like to see in Lac La Biche from basic needs and shelter to health services. Further, housing secure respondents are 53% satisfied and housing insecure respondents are only 44% satisfied with the current provision of services in the community. Given the number of service gaps identified by residents of Lac La Biche, it is critical to audit the availability of services in the community. If these services currently exist in the community, consider why respondents identified the service(s) as a gap. This



might mean rethinking the delivery of certain services, increasing access to these services, and/or looking for ways to better promote these services to increase awareness across the community. Emergency shelter services are a good example of this. In the case of emergency shelter services, 6% of respondents didn't access a shelter when they needed them because "there was no shelter in the area" even though there is an emergency overnight shelter and a women's/domestic violence shelter in Lac La Biche. Conducting a gap analysis and audit of services in the community will help identify where new services are needed versus where increased awareness around currently available services would be beneficial.

3. Conduct an analysis of emergency shelter services in Lac La Biche and develop an action plan with the goal of increasing emergency shelter services and offering transitional housing options to unsheltered residents. The main reason residents noted not accessing a shelter when they needed one was because "the shelter was full." Results suggest there are 28 unique (and regular) emergency shelter users in Lac La Biche, though that number is likely larger than captured in this study. Additionally, four respondents were unable to access emergency shelters as they didn't meet the intake criteria. When asked what residents would like to see more of in Lac La Biche, several respondents indicated increased staff, training, and resources to support higher-need individuals in accessing shelter services. As a result, it is critical to review current emergency shelter policies and processes with the goal of updating staff training opportunities, as well as updating possible outdated shelter processes and policies. At the same time, consider developing an action plan to increase the number of beds available at the emergency shelter to support the large number of frequently unsheltered residents. Respondents also repeatedly indicated the need for transitional housing options in Lac La Biche. Many noted that there are several residents who could transition out of emergency shelter use but are either not yet able to secure their own rental unit, or still require more support than is currently available in order to successfully transition into their own housing (rental unit). To support unsheltered residents in their journey towards more stable housing and to decrease the number of residents experiencing homelessness in Lac La Biche, continue working to develop a transitional housing



program in which respondents can access consistent and longer-term housing while receiving the support they need to continue their journey towards appropriate and secure housing.

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