



# **ST. ALBERT & STURGEON COUNTY**

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 and the residents in St. Albert and Sturgeon County 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 St. Albert and Sturgeon County'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 St. Albert and Sturgeon County. 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](mailto:info@ruraldevelopment.ca) for more information on Housing and Service Needs Estimations.



# Table of Contents

What does "Homelessness" mean?	1
Introduction	3
Methodology	5
Limitations	9
Results & Analysis	10
Objective Housing Situation	10
Exploring the Spectrum of Homelessness in St. Albert and Sturgeon County	11
St. Albert and Sturgeon County Population Overview	13
Housing & Service Needs Estimation Survey Respondent Population Overview	15
Education, Employment, and Income Sources	17
Living Situation	20
Community Supports	24
Insights on Community Spaces	31
“What Would You Like to See More of in Your Community?”	34
What Does Homelessness Look Like in St. Albert and Sturgeon County?	36
Opportunities Moving Forward	37
References	38

# 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. St. Albert and Sturgeon County were one of the 24 communities in



2020 that surveyed 86 community members, 46 of whom were determined to be housing insecure. Furthermore, in 2020 an additional 108 dependents and adults were identified as living with the 46 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 St. Albert and Sturgeon County 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

as 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 St. Albert and Sturgeon County's location parameters.

## Figure 1: Hinton's Location Question on Survey

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

- St. Albert
- Sturgeon County
- I am not sure
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to answer

RDN worked with St. Albert and Sturgeon County to develop a survey administration process that would ensure the greatest level of participation possible. For St. Albert and Sturgeon County, 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?

St. Albert and Sturgeon County collected 67 survey responses during the four weeks. Of the 67 surveys, 15 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, 52 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 St. Albert and Sturgeon County.

# 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 52 survey respondents, 23 self-identified as housing insecure and eight indicated “I’m not sure.” Through further analysis, it was determined that 50 survey respondents are housing insecure according to the national definitions of homelessness. An additional 72 dependents and 76 adults reported as living with housing insecure survey respondents. Therefore, based on survey results, there are at least 198 community members experiencing housing insecurity in St. Albert and Sturgeon County.

The top three reasons for housing insecurity in St. Albert and Sturgeon County, 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 / Mental health issues

*\*Note that the rest of the reported results and analysis will focus solely on housing insecure respondents.*





## Exploring the Spectrum of Homelessness in St. Albert and Sturgeon County

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 St. Albert and Sturgeon County. This can be achieved by exploring the experiences of the 50 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 St. Albert and Sturgeon County.

**Table 1: Respondents by Housing Situation in the Homelessness Spectrum**

<b>Place on the Homelessness Spectrum</b>	<b># of Respondents in Each Category</b>
Unsheltered	2
Emergency Sheltered	0
Provisionally Accommodated	18
At-Risk of Homelessness	74

This table demonstrates the diversity of respondents' experiences with housing insecurity in St. Albert and Sturgeon County 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. Some of these respondents are also living in overcrowded accommodations where there are not enough bedrooms for the number of people staying there.

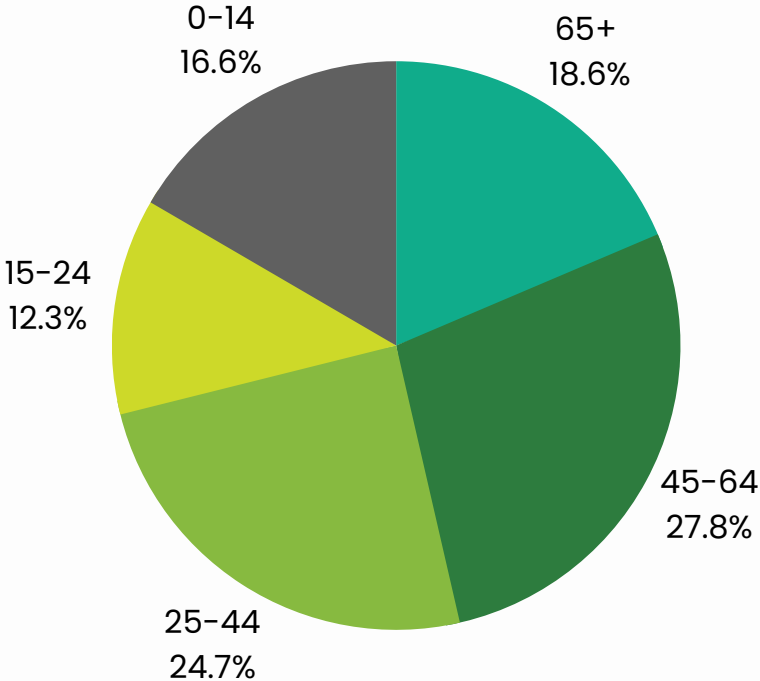
Respondents who indicated they experienced being provisionally accommodated noted stays in transitional housing. Some respondents also indicated staying in a home unwillingly because they have nowhere else to go and/or enduring violence because they had nowhere else to go.

# St. Albert and Sturgeon County Population Overview


According to Alberta’s Regional Dashboard (Government of Alberta, n.d.a; Government of Alberta, n.d.b), St. Albert and Sturgeon County cover a combined 2,195.7 square km geographical land base with a total population size of 91,367; making up 2.01% of Alberta’s total population.

50.1% (45,803) of the population is reported as female, while 49.9% (45,564) report as male.

**Figure 3: St. Albert and Sturgeon County Population Age Breakdown (2022)**



The average age of the population is 41.8 years in St. Albert and 40.2 years in Sturgeon County.



According to Statistics Canada (2021) Census numbers, 10.9% (9,595) of the population immigrated to Canada, and 9.3% (8,220) of the population identified as a visible minority. Further, 6% (5,298) of the combined population identified as Indigenous; 27% (1,415) of whom are First Nations, 69% (3,650) of whom are Métis, 2% (120) of whom are Inuit, and 2% (90) of whom noted multiple Indigenous ancestries.

The 2021 Census also reports that St. Albert and Sturgeon County have a combined 32,955 private households with an average of 2.6 people per household in St. Albert and 2.8 in Sturgeon County. Of the 32,955 private households, 83.8% (27,600) are owned, while 16.3% (5,355) are rented. Additionally, 86.5% (28,505) of occupied private dwellings are houses and 12% (3,940) of occupied private dwellings are apartments. Almost all of the apartments and a significantly higher proportion of renters are located in St. Albert. Single-family houses make up 54.9% of all private dwellings in St. Albert and 85.3% of all private dwellings in Sturgeon County. Further, 22.4% (7,385) 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 \$47,600 for individuals and \$100,000 for households in St. Albert and \$46,000 for individuals and \$105,000 for households in Sturgeon County. According to the Economic Research Institute (2023), the cost of living in St. Albert is 1% lower than the national average and 7% lower than the provincial average for Alberta.

## Housing & Service Needs Estimation Survey Respondent Population Overview

50 housing insecure community members responded to the St. Albert and Sturgeon County survey; 72% (36) identified as female, 26% (13) as male, and 2% (1) as trans-male. Additionally, 94% (47) of respondents identified as straight, 4% (2) as bisexual/pansexual, and 2% (1) were unsure of their sexual orientation.

Of the 50 respondents, 40% (20) were between the ages of 20-39, 48% (24) were between 40-59, and 12% (6) are 60 or older.

73% (37) of respondents were born in Canada (Turtle Island), while 24% (12) immigrated to Canada.

63% (32) of respondents are white, while 25% (13) of respondents self-identified as racialized. 6% (3) of respondents indicated that their identity was not listed in the options provided and 6% (3) preferred not to answer. 25% (13) of respondents self-identified as Indigenous and 2% (1) preferred not to answer; 38% (5) as First Nations, 38% (5) as Métis, and 23% (3) as having other Indigenous ancestry.

8% (4) of respondents stayed in foster care, a youth group home, or under a youth/young adult agreement in the past, and 2% (1) preferred not to answer.

Lastly, in terms of demographics, respondents were asked to indicate if they have ever served in the Canadian Armed Forces/Foreign Military Service, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) or Foreign Police Service, or local or foreign Emergency Services (EMS, Police, Fire Department). Of the 50 housing insecure survey respondents, 2% (1) were in the Canadian Armed Forces or Foreign Military Service and 2% (1) were in local or foreign Emergency Services.

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

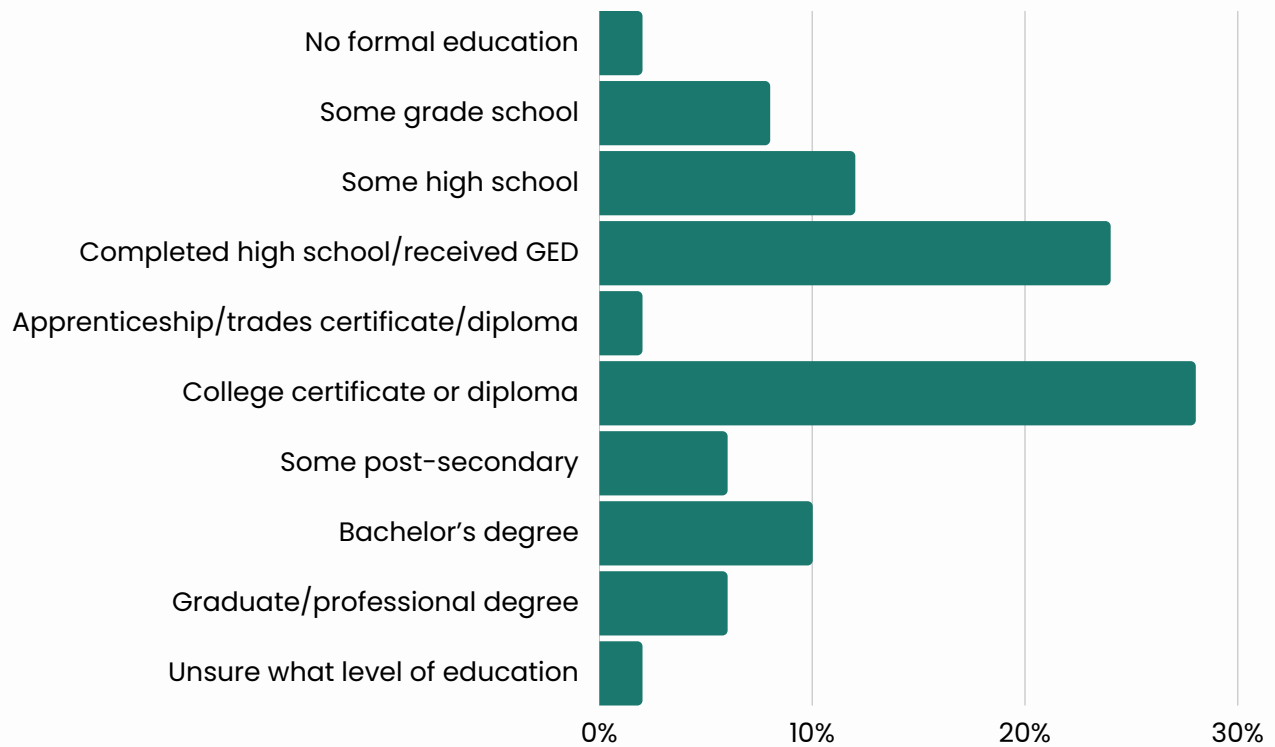
- 72% of housing insecure respondents identified as female
- 60% of housing insecure respondents are 40+
- 100% of respondents who spent time in care are housing insecure and 50% self-identified as Indigenous




## Education, Employment, and Income Sources

Respondents indicated various education levels when responding to “*What is the highest level of education you’ve completed?*” 2% (1) of respondents have no formal education, 8% (4) have completed some grade school, 12% (6) have completed some high school, 24% (12) have completed high school or received their GED, 2% (1) have an apprenticeship, trades certificate, or diploma, 28% (14) have a college certificate or diploma, 6% (3) have some post-secondary, 10% (5) have a Bachelor’s degree, 6% (3) have a graduate/professional degree, and 2% (1) are not sure what level of education they have. This can be seen in Figure 4 below.

**Figure 4: Respondents’ Education Levels Breakdown**





Additionally, 38% (19) of respondents are employed and 2% (1) preferred not to answer; 58% (11) of those employed are full-time, 11% (2) are part-time, 11% (2) are casual, and 21% (4) are either self-employed or 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 35 times that they receive job-related income, 25 times that they receive government-related income, 30 times that they receive tax-related income, and 16 times that they receive informal income. Additionally, respondents noted nine times that they have other sources of income including credit card loans and once 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.



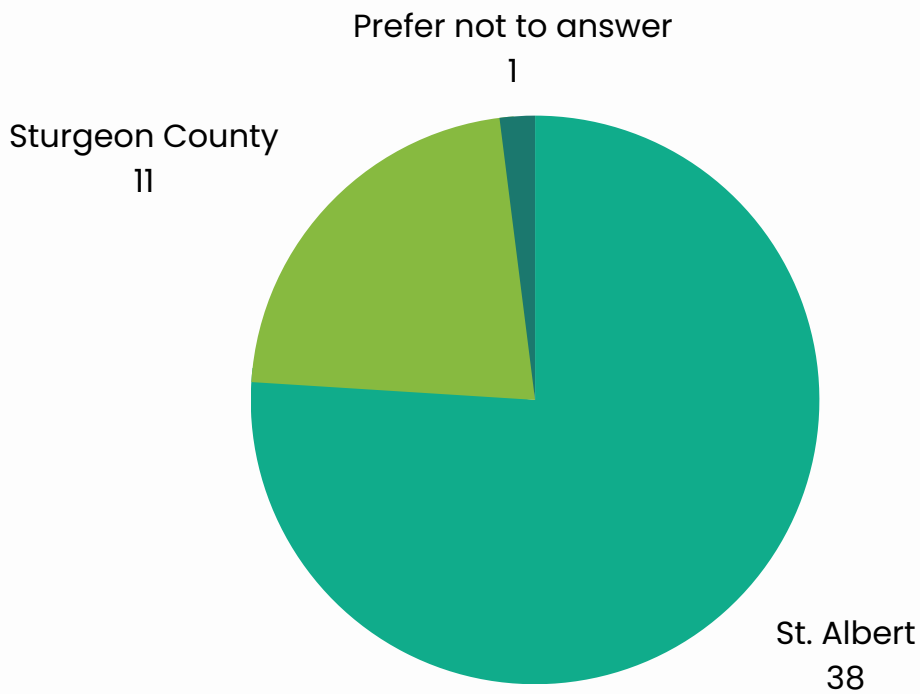
**Table 3: Respondents Approximate Household Income in 2022**

<b>Total Household Income in 2022</b>	<b># of Respondents Per Income Level</b>
\$30,000 or less	33 (67%)
Between \$30,001 and \$49,999	7 (14%)
Between \$50,000 and \$69,999	2 (4%)
Between \$70,000 and \$89,999	3 (6%)
Between \$90,000 and \$109,999	1 (2%)
More than \$110,000	0
Prefer not to answer	3 (6%)

## Living Situation

Residents from St. Albert and Sturgeon County responded to the survey, as can be seen in Figure 5.

**Figure 5: Breakdown of 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). 23% (11) of respondents indicated that they own their home, 65% (31) indicated that they rent their home, 6% (3) noted that they neither own nor rent, and 6% (3) 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 4: Housing Insecure Respondents’ Rent or Mortgage Costs per Month**

<b>Rent/Mortgage Cost</b>	<b># of Housing Insecure Respondents Paying Rent/Mortgage Costs</b>
Less than \$500	1 (2%)
Between \$500 to \$999	8 (16%)
Between \$1000 to \$1499	15 (31%)
Between \$1500 to \$1999	13 (27%)
Over \$2000	6 (12%)
I don’t pay rent or a mortgage	1 (2%)
Prefer not to answer	5 (10%)

Among respondents, whether they rent, own, or are in a different situation entirely, 30% (14) do not have fire protection and 26% (12) do not have sufficient and affordable heating.

**Table 5: Breakdown of Respondents' Missing Amenities**

<b>Missing Amenities</b>	<b># of Respondents Missing Amenities</b>
Indoor plumbing/bathing facilities	3 (6%)
Sufficient and affordable heating	12 (26%)
Safe drinking water	5 (11%)
Refrigeration	4 (9%)
Electricity (or equivalent - i.e. solar power)	5 (11%)
Cooking facilities	4 (9%)
Fire protection (smoke alarms, fire extinguishers)	14 (30%)

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.

23% (11) of respondents, have always lived in St. Albert and Sturgeon County. Of the respondents who were not born there, 25% (12) have lived in the area for more than eight years. Respondents who are not from St. Albert and Sturgeon County were also asked to indicate why they came to this community.

The top two reasons respondents came to the area are:

- 1.To be closer to family (30%)
- 2.To start a job (11%)

Other reasons people moved to St. Albert and Sturgeon County include the lifestyle the community offers (8%), to look for work (8%), fear for safety/fleeing from violence (7%), to attend school (7%), to find housing (7%), to access services/supports (5%), to reconnect with culture, family, and traditions (3%), and due to environmental displacement (2%). 3% (2) of respondents preferred not to answer.



## Community Supports

To better understand service needs and gaps in St. Albert and Sturgeon County, respondents were asked: “Which support services do you access?” The main reasons respondents access support services are to help with basic needs (41%), financial support (15%), and health and wellness (10%).

**Table 6: Reasons Why Respondents Access Support Services**

<b>Services Accessed</b>	<b># of Housing Insecure Respondents who Accessed these Services</b>
<b>Basic Needs</b> - Food, shelter, clothing, etc.	43 (41%)
<b>COVID-19</b> - PPE, information, supports	4 (4%)
<b>Crisis Financial Support</b> - Eviction notice, utility bill problems, damage deposits, etc.	5 (5%)
<b>Family/Parenting</b> - Child care, parenting/family issues, relationship issues, child developmental assessment tools/referrals, etc.	6 (6%)
<b>Financial</b> - Employment, housing, training/education, etc.	16 (15%)

<b>Health and Wellness</b> - Addictions, mental health, physical health care, spiritual/cultural, etc.	11 (10%)
<b>Legal</b> - Separation/divorce/custody, wills/estates, employment/labour standards, landlord/tenant issues, immigration issues, criminal/misdemeanour, etc.	7 (7%)
<b>Support Services</b> - Help with government forms, help with accessing government/other programs or services, access to technology, etc.	8 (8%)
<b>Transportation</b> - Access to basic services/ education/employment, medical transportation	0

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 support services in St. Albert and Sturgeon County, while health and wellness services and legal services were most accessed outside the community, as seen in Table 7.

**Table 7: Services Accessed by Housing Insecure Respondents by Location**

<b>Services Accessed in the Community</b>	<b># of Respondents who Accessed these Services</b>	<b>Services Accessed Outside of the Community</b>	<b># of Respondents who Accessed these Services</b>
<b>Basic Needs -</b> Food, shelter, clothing, etc.	10 (30%)	<b>Basic Needs -</b> Food, shelter, clothing, etc.	2 (8%)
<b>COVID-19 -</b> PPE, information, supports	3 (5%)	<b>COVID-19 -</b> PPE, information, supports	0
<b>Crisis Financial Support -</b> Eviction notice, utility bill problems, damage deposits, etc.	5 (8%)	<b>Crisis Financial Support -</b> Eviction notice, utility bill problems, damage deposits, etc.	0
<b>Family/Parenting -</b> Child care, parenting/family issues, relationship issues, child developmental assessment tools/referrals, etc.	6 (10%)	<b>Family/Parenting -</b> Child care, parenting/family issues, relationship issues, child developmental assessment tools/referrals, etc.	1 (4%)



<b>Financial -</b> Employment, housing, training/education, etc.	6 (10%)	<b>Financial -</b> Employment, housing, training/education, etc.	3 (12%)
<b>Health and Wellness -</b> Addictions, mental health, physical health care, spiritual/cultural, etc.	4 (6%)	<b>Health and Wellness -</b> Addictions, mental health, physical health care, spiritual/cultural, etc.	5 (19%)
<b>Legal -</b> Separation/divorce /custody, wills/estates, employment/ labour standards, landlord/tenant issues, immigration issues, criminal/ misdemeanour, etc.	4 (6%)	<b>Legal -</b> Separation/divorce/ custody, wills/estates, employment/labour standards, landlord/tenant issues, immigration issues, criminal/ misdemeanour, etc.	4 (15%)

<b>Support Services -</b> Help with government forms, help with accessing government/other programs or services, access to technology, etc.	7 (11%)	<b>Support Services -</b> Help with government forms, help with accessing government/other programs or services, access to technology, etc.	0
<b>Transportation -</b> Access to basic services/education /employment, medical transportation	5 (8%)	<b>Transportation -</b> Access to basic services/education/ employment, medical transportation	2 (8%)

Respondents noted travelling an average of two hours one-way to access services. Time and distance to access services outside of the community is a barrier for some respondents; while 71% of respondents travel by vehicle to get to these services, 18% rely on family members or friends, 4% rely on public transit or e-bus, and 4% rely on taxis and/or a service agency staff arranging a ride for them 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.

4% (2) of respondents accessed an emergency shelter in the past 12 months; 50% (1) accessed a women's/domestic violence shelter and 50% (1) did not know what type of shelter they accessed.

Of the respondents who needed shelter services but did not access them, several reasons were provided as to why, as outlined in Table 8.

**Table 8: Reasons Respondents Did Not Access Shelter Services When Needed**

<b>Reason for Not Accessing Shelter Services</b>	<b># of Respondents</b>
The right kind of shelter wasn't available (for example, I needed a women's shelter and couldn't access one)	0
The shelter was full	1 (9%)
There was no shelter in my area	0
I didn't meet the intake criteria to access the shelter	0
I didn't feel safe	2 (18%)
The shelter was unclean	0
The shelter did not welcome me because of my gender identity	0
Alcohol/substance use is not permitted on site	0
Lack of disability accommodations	1 (9%)
Lack of transportation	0
No pets allowed	3 (27%)

Isolation from social support (family, partner, friends, etc.)	1 (9%)
Prefer not to answer	3 (27%)



## Insights on Community Spaces

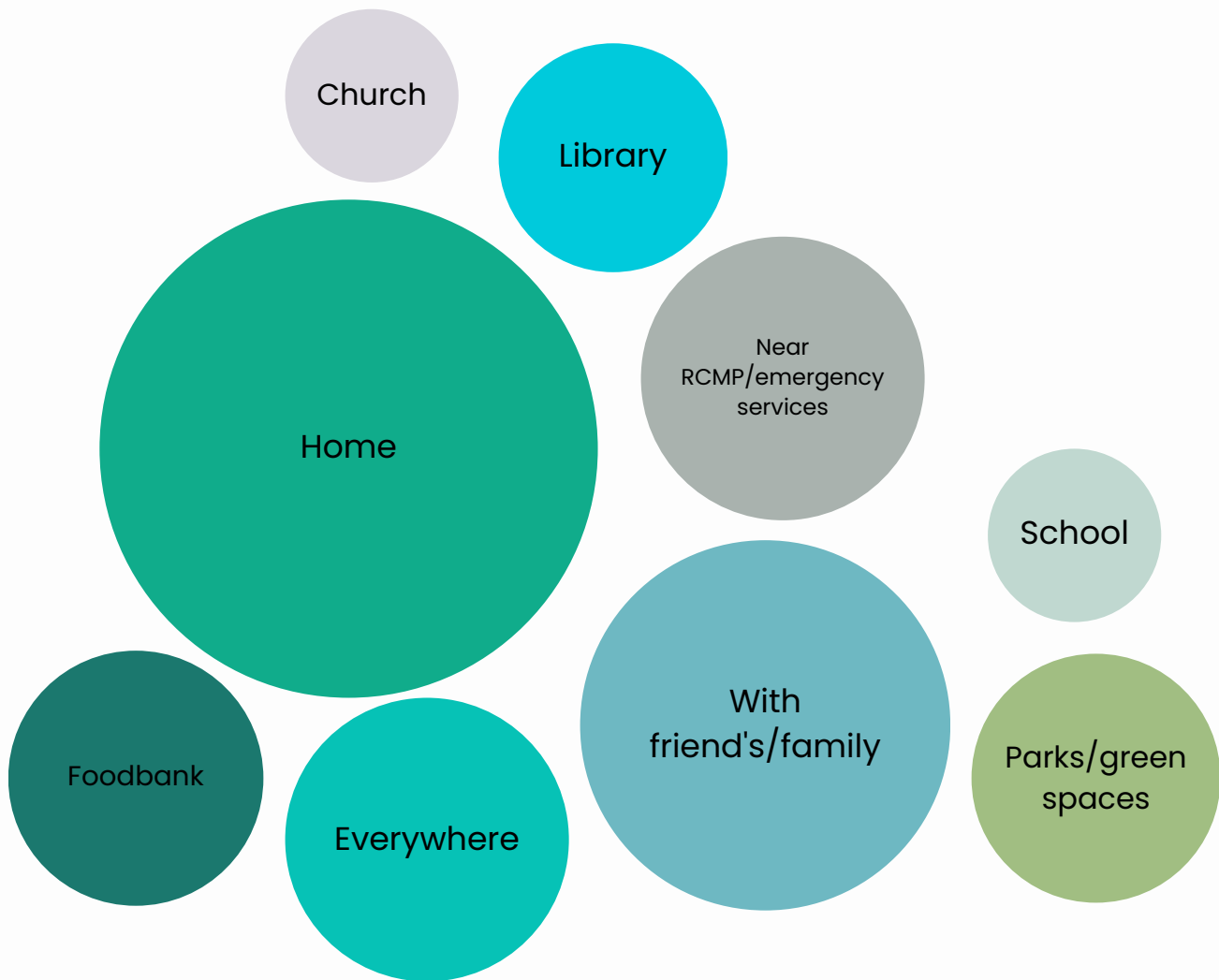
Wanting to ensure the respondents had the opportunity to reflect on their experiences in the community, they were asked; *“What are two things you love about the community and what are two things you don’t love about the community?”*

In analyzing responses about what respondents love about St. Albert and Sturgeon County, two themes emerged: the sense of community and parks and recreation. Respondents repeatedly highlighted how welcoming and friendly the people are, how safe they feel in the community, and how peaceful and quiet the community is. Respondents also emphasized the beauty of the land they live on, including the surrounding parks, green spaces and the recreation opportunities provided in St. Albert and Sturgeon County.

In contrast, when discussing the things they don’t love about the community, respondents spoke often of the high cost of living in St. Albert and Sturgeon County and the lack of accessible public transportation and affordable housing options within the community. Respondents mentioned the increasingly high cost of living as prohibitive to living in St. Albert and Sturgeon County. Additionally, respondents indicated that the lack of accessible public transportation and affordable housing options was something they didn’t love about the community.

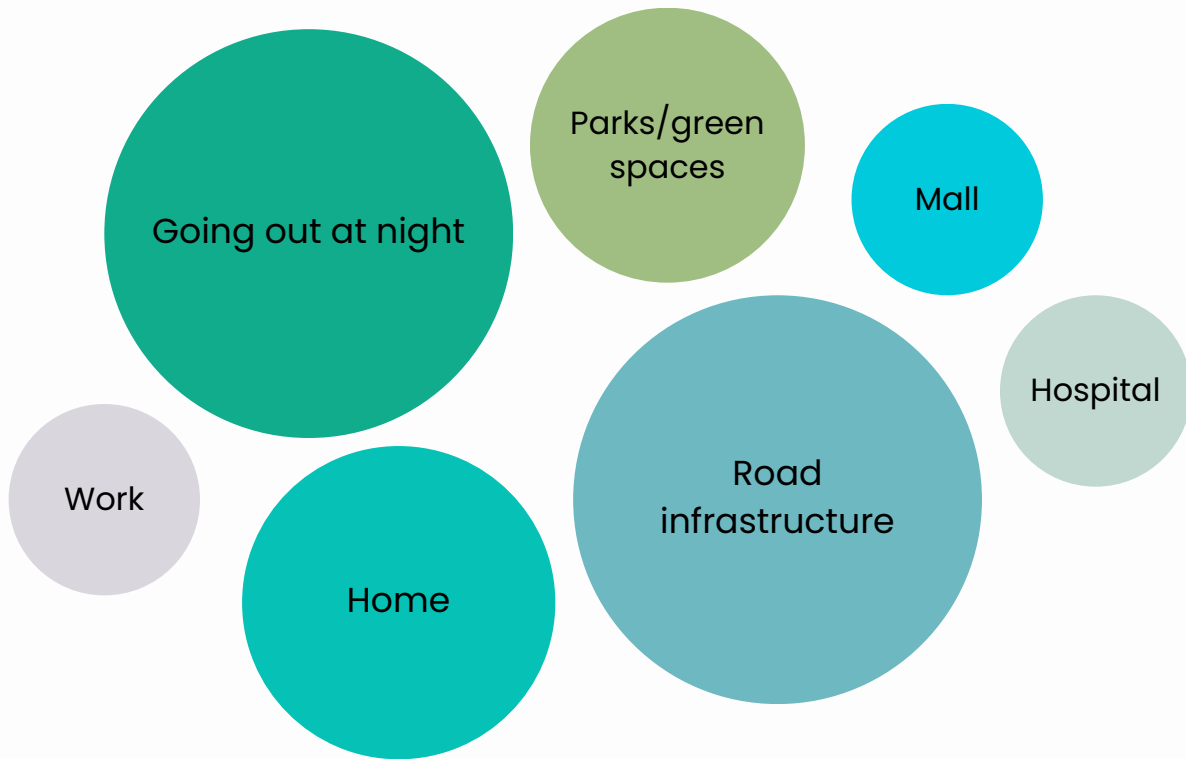
Respondents were also asked, *“What are two places that make you feel safe in the community and what are two places that make you feel unsafe in the community?”* Figure 6 highlights the spaces where respondents feel safe.

Figure 6: Housing Insecure Respondents Safe Spaces



Interestingly, as can be seen in Figure 7, there was overlap in three spaces: home, church, and parks/green spaces. Some respondents indicated they felt safe here while others noted feeling unsafe in the same spaces.

Figure 7: Housing Insecure Respondents' Unsafe Spaces



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

Respondents outlined many things they would like to see more of in the community. Responses spoke of the need for more accessible and affordable housing and more support services in St. Albert and Sturgeon County. This emphasis on housing is echoed in respondents' answers to a previous question they were asked: *“Does St. Albert and Sturgeon County provide enough... employment opportunities; free/accessible recreational and social opportunities; social services; accessible and affordable housing; public transportation; access to food?”*

**Table 9: Respondents' Perceptions of St. Albert and Sturgeon County's Provision of Services**

<b>Does the Community Provide Enough:</b>	<b># of Respondents Who Believe the Community Provides Enough...</b>	<b># of Respondents Who Believe the Community Does Not Provide Enough...</b>	<b># of Respondents Who Aren't Sure if the Community Provides Enough...</b>
Employment opportunities	13 (31%)	12 (29%)	17 (40%)
Free/accessible recreational and social opportunities	24 (55%)	9 (20%)	11 (25%)
Social services	28 (67%)	7 (17%)	7 (17%)



Accessible & affordable housing	8 (19%)	24 (56%)	11 (26%)
Public transportation	25 (57%)	13 (30%)	6 (14%)
Access to food (grocery stores, markets, food banks, etc.)	34 (76%)	7 (16%)	4 (9%)

Of note in Table 9 is the significant discrepancy in respondents who believe there is enough accessible and affordable housing in St. Albert and Sturgeon County (19%) versus the number of respondents who believe more accessible and affordable housing is needed (56%).

Upon further analysis, an overall satisfaction score was generated to better understand respondents' perceptions of service provision in the community. It was determined that respondents are 51% satisfied with service provision in St. Albert and Sturgeon County. What's 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 St. Albert and Sturgeon County?

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 St. Albert and Sturgeon County, this is a woman between 40-59 who lives with her spouse/partner. She rents her home for between \$1,000-\$1,499 per month and notes spending more than 30% of her monthly income on housing. She has lived in the community for over eight years, originally coming to St. Albert and Sturgeon County to be closer to family. She is currently unemployed and relying on her GST refunds and income assistance to help cover rental costs while she searches for a new job.

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





# Opportunities Moving Forward

Based on the findings outlined in this report, RDN has identified two 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 general community's understanding of and empathetic reaction to community members experiencing housing insecurity, and second, to help general community members understand the various experiences of housing insecurity in St. Albert and Sturgeon County. Of the 50 survey respondents who were identified as housing insecure, only 23 self-identified as housing insecure. It is possible then, that the 27 respondents who believe they are housing secure have never accessed supports that could help improve their current housing situation.

**2. Conduct an audit of current housing options in St. Albert and Sturgeon County with the goal of increasing accessible and affordable housing.** Respondents overwhelmingly highlighted the need for accessible and affordable housing options in the community. As a result, it is important to highlight the need for affordable and adaptable housing projects to increase housing options in St. Albert and Sturgeon County which could include income-based housing units, below-market-rate rental units, and/or advocating for more creative housing options.

## 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 St. Albert, Alberta, Canada. <https://www.eri.com/cost-of-living/canada/alberta/st-albert>
- Government of Alberta. (n.d.). St. Albert. Alberta Regional Dashboard. Retrieved April 26, 2023 from <https://regionaldashboard.alberta.ca/region/st-albert/#/>
- Government of Alberta. (n.d.). Sturgeon County. Alberta Regional Dashboard. Retrieved April 26, 2023 from <https://regionaldashboard.alberta.ca/region/sturgeon-county/#/>
- 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.
- 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. St. Albert, City (CY) [census subdivision], Alberta, and Sturgeon County, Municipal district (MD) [census subdivision], Alberta. Retrieved from <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&SearchText=st%2E%20albert&DGUIDlist=2021A00054811059,2021A00054811062&GENDERlist=1&STATISTIClist=1,4&HEADERlist=2,30,20,23,9,7,11,19,1,3>
- 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