



TOWN OF VIKING, TOWN OF TOFIELD, AND BEAVER COUNTY

**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 both front-line staff and residents of the Town of Viking, the Town of Tofield, and Beaver 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 the Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County's results within the provincial estimation, highlighting the number of residents who are housing insecure and their experiences with homelessness. This report is complimented by the [Alberta Provincial Report](#) which highlights the combined results of all 45 communities across the province.

This report is intended to support decision-making across organizations, funders and multiple levels of government around housing and homelessness by providing reliable and up-to-date data on housing and service needs in the Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver 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 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. The Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County were one of the 20 communities that participated in the 2020 estimation, where they



surveyed 14 community members, 9 of which were determined to be housing insecure. Furthermore, an additional 9 dependents and adults were identified as living with the 9 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 the Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver 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 was able to determine which respondents were housing-unstable. As shown in the results, below, some individuals who don't consider themselves to be homeless or at risk of homelessness actually qualify based on the national definitions of homelessness.

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

Figure 1: The Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County Location Question on Survey

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

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tofield | <input type="checkbox"/> Kinsella |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ryley | <input type="checkbox"/> Viking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bruce | <input type="checkbox"/> Rural Beaver County |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Holden | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am not sure | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to answer | |

RDN worked with the Town of Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County to develop a survey administration process that would ensure the greatest level of participation possible. For the Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver 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?

The Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County collected 49 survey responses during the four weeks. Of the 49 surveys, 6 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, 43 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 the Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County as a whole.

Results & Analysis

Objective Housing Situation

As part of the survey, participants were asked the following question: *“Do you consider your housing situation to be unstable or feel you could easily lose your housing?”* Respondents were given the options “yes”, “no”, and “I’m not sure” to guide their responses. Of the 43 survey respondents, 14 self-identified as housing insecure, and 3 indicated “I’m not sure”. Through further analysis, it was determined that 26 survey respondents are housing insecure according to the national definitions of homelessness. An additional 16 dependents and 29 adults reported as living with housing insecure survey respondents. Therefore, based on survey results, there are at least 71 community members experiencing housing insecurity in the Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County.

The top three reasons for housing insecurity in the Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County, as reported by survey respondents, are:

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



Exploring the Spectrum of Homelessness in the Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver 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 the Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County. This can be achieved by exploring the experiences of the 26 housing insecure respondents.

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


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

Table 1: Respondents by Housing Situation in the Homelessness Spectrum

Place on the Homelessness Spectrum	# of Respondents in Each Category
Unsheltered	1
Emergency Sheltered	0
Provisionally Accommodated	8
At-Risk of Homelessness	27

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

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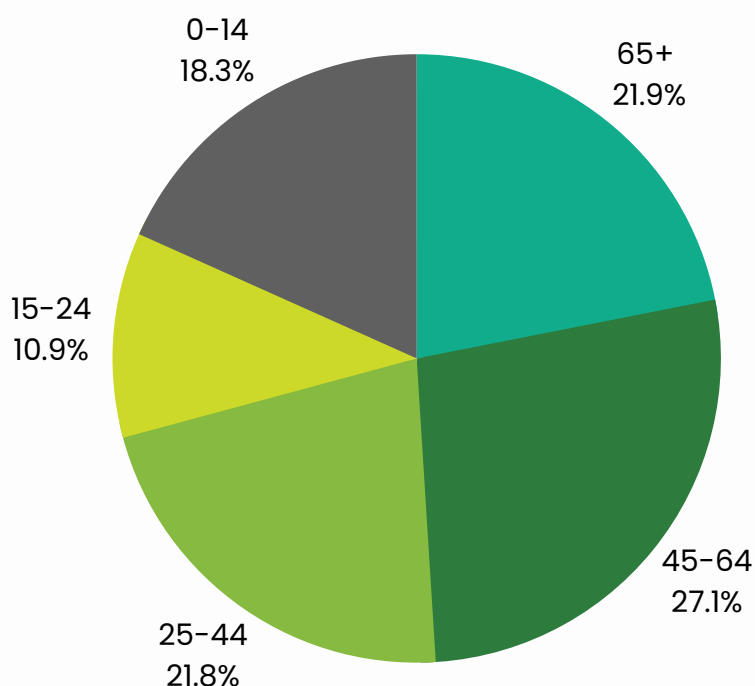
highlighted every incident of insecurity respondents experienced in the past month to understand the journey of housing insecurity in the Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County.


The Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County Population Overview

According to Alberta's Regional Dashboard (Government of Alberta, n.d.a; Government of Alberta, n.d.b; Government of Alberta, n.d.c), the Town of Town of Viking, the Town of Tofield, and the surrounding Beaver County cover a 3,616.5 square km geographical land base with a combined population size of 8,921; making up 0.19% of Alberta's total population.

47.7% (4,255) of the combined population is reported as female, while 52.3% (4,666) reports as male.

Figure 3: Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County Population Age Breakdown (2022)





As shown in Figure 3, the average age of the population is 49.8 years in the Town of Viking, 43.6 years in the Town of Tofield, and 42 years in Beaver County.

According to Statistics Canada Census numbers in 2021, 5.7% (505) of the population immigrated to Canada and 2.9% (260) of the population identify as a visible minority. Further, 4.9% (435) of the population identified as Indigenous; 25% (110) of whom are First Nations, and 70% (305) of whom are Métis.

The 2021 Census also reports that the Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County have 3,420 private households with an average of 2 people per household in the Town of Viking, 2.4 people in the Town of Tofield, and 2.5 people in Beaver County. Of the 2,895 private households, 85.5% (2,925) own their home, while 14.6% (500) rent their home with the average monthly rent for a two-bedroom dwelling listed as \$783 in the Town of Tofield. Additionally, 89.3% (3,055) of occupied private dwellings are houses and 2.6% (90) of occupied private dwellings are apartments. Further, 26.9% (920) of households in the Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County report one or more of the following:

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

The median after-tax income is \$37,200 for individuals and \$60,000 for households in the Town of Viking, \$37,600 for individuals and \$66,000 for households in the Town of Tofield, and \$39,200 for individuals and \$81,000 for households in Beaver County. According to the Economic Research Institute (2023a; 2023b), the cost of living in the Town of Viking is 2% higher than the national average and 4% lower than the provincial average for Alberta and 4% higher than the national average, and 2% lower than the provincial average for Alberta in the Town of Tofield.

Housing & Service Needs Estimation Survey Respondent Population Overview

43 community members responded to the Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County survey; 67% (29) of whom identified as female and 33% (14) as male. Additionally, 90% (38) of respondents identified as straight, 5% (2) as lesbian/gay, and 2% (1) as bisexual/pansexual. 2% (1) preferred not to answer.

Of the 43 respondents, 23% (10) are between the ages of 20-39, 35% (15) are between 40-59, and 42% (18) are 60 years or older.

90% (38) of respondents were born in Canada (Turtle Island), while 10% (4) reported being born outside of Canada.

93% (38) of respondents are white, compared to 2% (1) of respondents who are racialized. 5% (2) of respondents noted their identity was not listed in the options provided. Racialized respondents identified as Indigenous only. 9% (4) of respondents self-identified as Indigenous; 75% (3) as Métis and 25% (1) as having other Indigenous ancestry.

12% (5) of respondents stayed in foster care, a youth group home, or under a youth/young adult agreement in the past.

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 43 respondents, 5% (2) were in local or foreign Emergency Services.

Housing Secure vs. Housing Insecure Survey Respondent Population Overview

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

Demographic Characteristic	Housing Secure	Housing Insecure
# of Survey Respondents	17	26
Gender	Male: 4	Male: 10
	Female: 13	Female: 16
	Trans-male: 0	Trans-male: 0
	Trans-female: 0	Trans-female: 0
	Gender non-conforming: 0	Gender non-conforming: 0
	Don't know: 0	Don't know: 0
Sexual Orientation	Straight: 14	Straight: 24
	Gay/Lesbian: 0	Gay/Lesbian: 2
	Bisexual/Pansexual: 1	Bisexual/Pansexual: 0
	Asexual: 0	Asexual: 0
	Two-spirit: 0	Two-spirit: 0
	Don't know: 0	Don't know: 0

Age	0 – 19 years: 0	0 – 19 years: 0
	20 – 39 years: 3	20 – 39 years: 7
	40 – 59 years: 7	40 – 59 years: 8
	60+: 7	60+: 11
Immigration Status	Born in Canada: 17	Born in Canada: 21
	Born outside of Canada: 0	Born outside of Canada: 4
Racial Identity	White: 13	White: 25
	Visible minority: 2	Visible minority: 1
Indigenous Identity	First Nations: 0	First Nations: 0
	Métis: 0	Métis: 3
	Inuit: 0	Inuit: 0
	Other Indigenous ancestry: 1	Other Indigenous ancestry: 0
Time in Foster Care, Youth Group Home, or Youth/Young Adult Agreement	Spent time in care: 0	Spent time in care: 5
Served in Canadian Armed Forces, RCMP, Emergency Services	Canadian Armed Forces: 0	Canadian Armed Forces: 0
	RCMP: 0	RCMP: 0
	Emergency Services: 2	Emergency Services: 0

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

- Respondents identifying as women are 1.6x more likely than their male counterparts to be housing insecure
- 42% of respondents are 60 or older
- 100% of respondents who spent time in care are housing insecure and 40% of those respondents are Indigenous

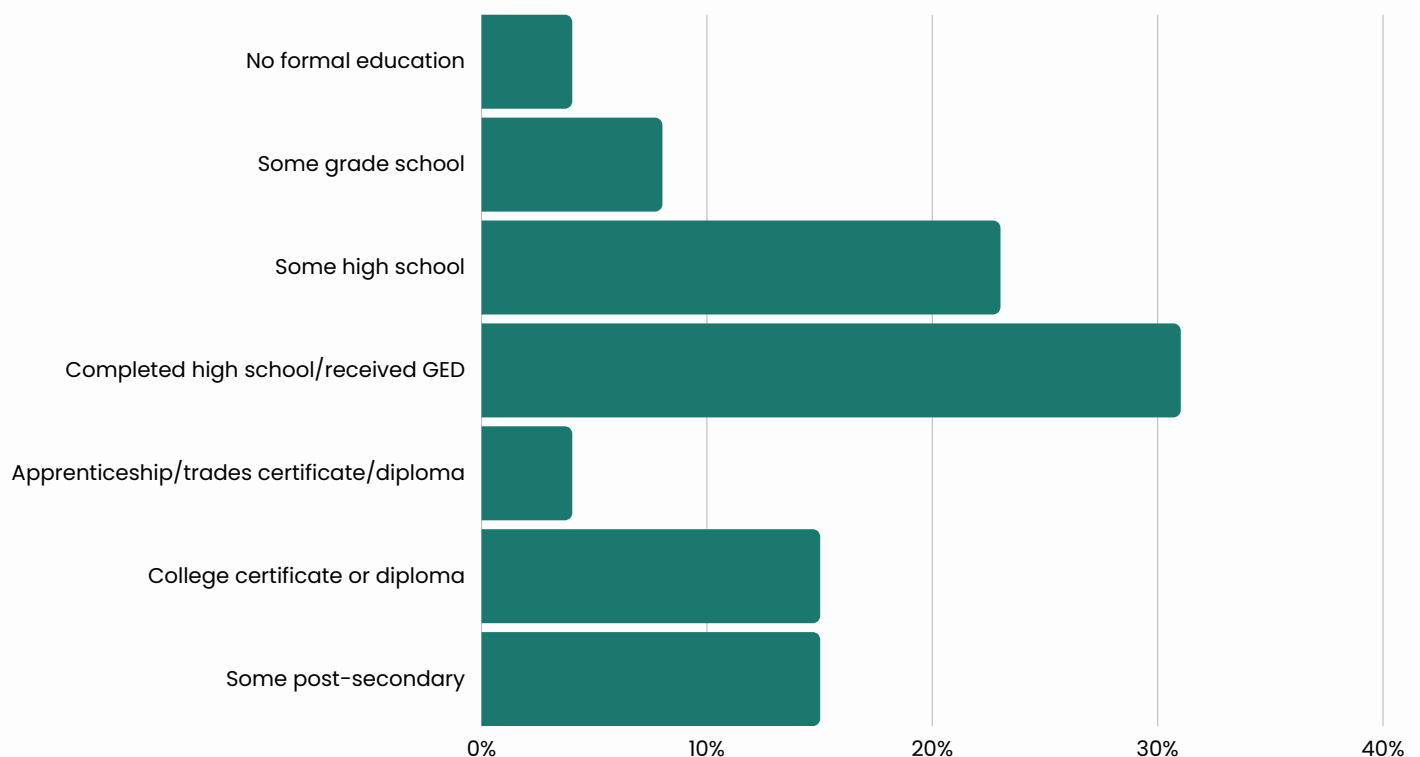
**Note that the rest of the reported results and analysis will focus on housing insecure respondents unless otherwise indicated.*




Education, Employment, and Income Sources

Respondents indicated various education levels when responding to “*What is the highest level of education you’ve completed?*” 4% (1) of respondents have no formal education, 8% (2) have completed some grade school, 23% (6) have completed some high school, 31% (8) have completed high school or received their GED, 4% (1) have an apprenticeship, trades certificate, or diploma, 15% (4) have a college certificate or diploma, and 15% (4) have some post-secondary. This can also be seen in Figure 4, below.

Figure 4: Respondents’ Education Levels Breakdown





Additionally, 42% (11) of respondents are employed and 4% (1) preferred not to answer; 18% (2) of those employed are full-time, 64% (7) are part-time, and 18% (2) are casual.

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 24 times that they receive job-related income, 17 times that they receive government-related income, 14 times that they receive tax-related income, and once that they receive informal income. Additionally, respondents noted twice that they have other sources of income including credit card loans, and once that they prefer not to answer.

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

Table 3: Respondents Approximate Household Income in 2022

Total Household Income in 2022	# of Respondents Per Income Level
\$30,000 or less	17 (65%)
Between \$30,001 and \$49,999	3 (12%)
Between \$50,000 and \$69,999	1 (4%)
Between \$70,000 and \$89,999	1 (4%)
Between \$90,000 and \$109,999	1 (4%)
More than \$110,000	2 (8%)
Prefer not to answer	1 (4%)

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

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

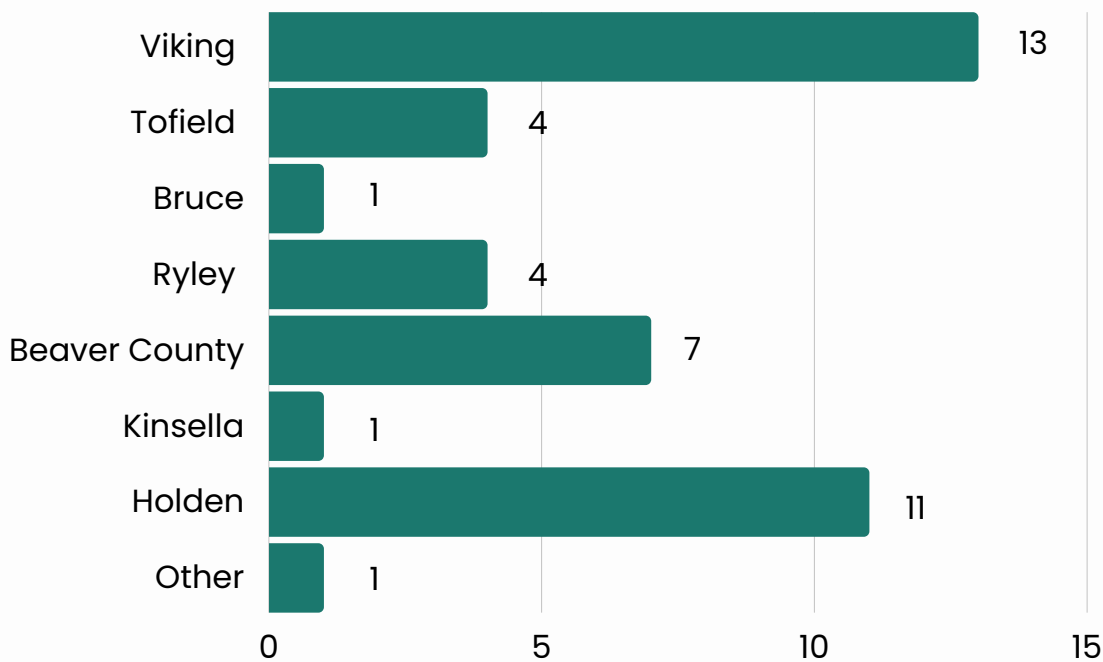
Total Household Income in 2022	# of Housing Secure Respondents Per Income Level	# of Housing Insecure Respondents Per Income Level
\$30,000 or less	1 (7%)	17 (65%)
Between \$30,001 and \$49,999	2 (14%)	3 (12%)
Between \$50,000 and \$69,999	0	1 (4%)
Between \$70,000 and \$89,999	4 (29%)	1 (4%)
Between \$90,000 and \$109,999	1 (7%)	1 (4%)
More than \$110,000	3 (21%)	2 (8%)
Prefer not to answer	3 (21%)	1 (4%)

Of the housing insecure respondents, 65% reported a household annual income of \$30,000 or less compared to 29% of housing secure respondents who reported an annual income of more than \$90,000.

Living Situation

Residents from across the Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County responded to the survey, as can be seen below, 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 homes (or if neither is true for them). 31% (8) of respondents indicated that they own their homes, 35% (9) indicated that they rent their homes, 31% (8) noted that they neither own nor rent, and 4% (1) preferred not to answer. Comparatively, 82% (14) of housing secure respondents own their homes, 6% (1) rent their homes, 6% (1) indicated that they neither own nor rent, and 6% (1) 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	0	7 (28%)
Between \$500 to \$999	1 (6%)	9 (36%)
Between \$1000 to \$1499	3 (18%)	2 (8%)
Between \$1500 to \$1999	2 (12%)	3 (12%)
Over \$2000	0	1 (4%)
I don't pay rent or a mortgage	8 (47%)	1 (4%)
Prefer not to answer	3 (18%)	2 (8%)

Among housing insecure respondents, whether they rent, own, or are in a different situation entirely, 57% (4) do not have fire protection, and 29% (2) do not have sufficient and affordable heating.

Table 6: Breakdown of Respondents' Missing Amenities

Missing Amenities	# of Respondents Missing Amenities
Indoor plumbing/bathing facilities	0
Sufficient and affordable heating	2 (29%)
Safe drinking water	1 (14%)
Refrigeration	0
Electricity (or equivalent - i.e. solar power)	0
Cooking facilities	0
Fire protection (smoke alarms, fire extinguishers)	4 (57%)

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 heat and access to safe drinking water.

21% (9) of all respondents, 23% (6) of which are housing insecure, have always lived in the Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County area and 5% (2) preferred not to answer. Of the housing insecure respondents who were not born in the area, 23% (6) have lived in the area for more than eight years. Respondents who are not from the Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County were

also asked to indicate the reasons why they came to this community. The top three reasons respondents came to the Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County area are:

- 1.To be closer to family (45%)
- 2.To find housing (10%)
- 3.For the lifestyle the community offered (10%)



Community Supports

In an attempt to better understand service needs and gaps in the Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County, respondents were asked: “Which support services do you access?” The main reasons respondents access services are for support services (26%), health and wellness (22%), and basic needs (21%).

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	14 (21%)
COVID-19 – PPE, information, supports	0	1 (1%)
Crisis Financial Support – Eviction notice, utility bill problems, damage deposits, etc.	0	2 (3%)

Family/Parenting - Child care, parenting/family issues, relationship issues, child developmental assessment tools/referrals, etc.	1 (20%)	1 (1%)
Financial - Employment, housing, training/education, etc.	0	9 (13%)
Health and Wellness - Addictions, mental health, physical health care, spiritual/cultural, etc.	4 (80%)	15 (22%)
Legal - Separation/divorce/ custody, wills/estates, employment/labour standards, landlord/tenant issues, immigration issues, criminal/misdemeanor, etc.	0	5 (7%)

Support Services - Help with government forms, help with accessing government/other programs or services, access to technology, etc.	0	18 (26%)
Transportation - Access to basic services/education/employment, medical transportation	0	3 (4%)

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, support services, and health and wellness services in the Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County. In comparison, health and wellness, financial, and legal services outside of the community.

Table 8: Services Accessed by Housing Insecure Respondents by Location

Services Accessed in the Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County	# of Respondents who Accessed these Services	Services Accessed Outside of the Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County	# of Respondents who Accessed these Services
Basic Needs – Food, shelter, clothing, etc.	6 (13%)	Basic Needs – Food, shelter, clothing, etc.	5 (11%)
COVID-19 – PPE, information, supports	4 (9%)	COVID-19 – PPE, information, supports	4 (9%)
Crisis Financial Support – Eviction notice, utility bill problems, damage deposits, etc.	4 (9%)	Crisis Financial Support – Eviction notice, utility bill problems, damage deposits, etc.	4 (9%)
Family/Parenting – Child care, parenting/family issues, relationship issues, child developmental assessment tools/referrals, etc.	4 (9%)	Family/Parenting – Child care, parenting/family issues, relationship issues, child developmental assessment tools/referrals, etc.	4 (9%)

Financial - Employment, housing, training/education, etc.	4 (9%)	Financial - Employment, housing, training/education, etc.	6 (13%)
Health and Wellness - Addictions, mental health, physical health care, spiritual/cultural, etc.	5 (11%)	Health and Wellness - Addictions, mental health, physical health care, spiritual/cultural, etc.	7 (15%)
Legal - Separation/divorce /custody, wills/estates, employment/ labour standards, landlord/tenant issues, immigration issues, criminal/ misdemeanour, etc.	4 (9%)	Legal - Separation/divorce/ custody, wills/estates, employment/labour standards, landlord/tenant issues, immigration issues, criminal/ misdemeanour, etc.	6 (13%)

Support Services - Help with government forms, help with accessing government/other programs or services, access to technology, etc.	6 (13%)	Support Services - Help with government forms, help with accessing government/other programs or services, access to technology, etc.	4 (9%)
Transportation - Access to basic services/education/employment, medical transportation	4 (9%)	Transportation - Access to basic services/education/employment, medical transportation	5 (11%)

Respondents noted traveling an average of 45 minutes one way to access services. Time and distance to access services outside of the community are significant barriers for respondents; while 54% of respondents travel by vehicle to get to these services, 27% rely on a family member or friend, and 8% resort to hitchhiking or catching a ride from a stranger.



Insights on Community Spaces

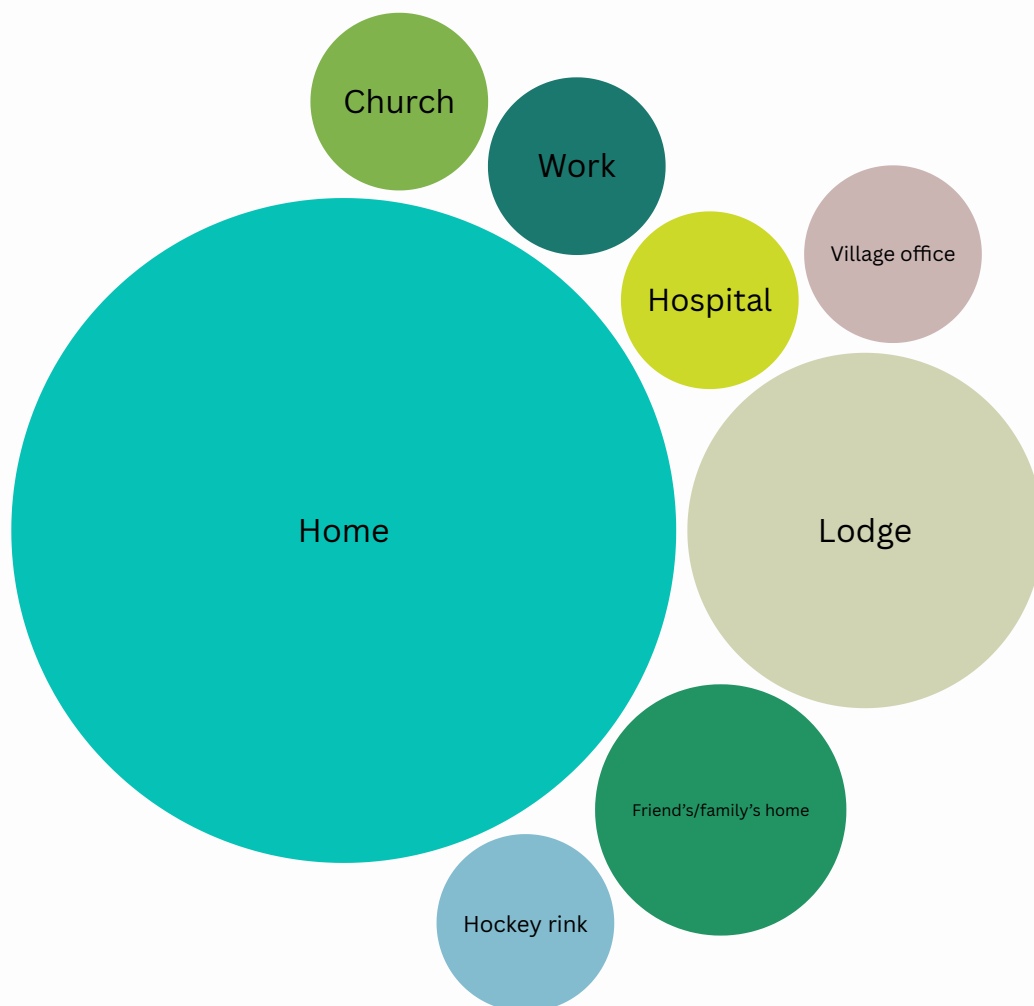
Wanting to ensure the respondents had the opportunity to reflect on their experiences in the community, they were asked; *"What are two things you love about the community and what are two things you don't love about the community?"*

In analyzing responses across both housing secure and housing insecure respondents about what respondents love about Taber, one theme emerged: community. Respondents overwhelmingly indicated their love for the people in the community, the welcoming nature of their neighbours, and the overall sense of community they get living in the Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County. Respondents also indicated their love for the peace and quiet that comes with living in the area.

In contrast, when discussing the things they don't love about the community, respondents spoke often of the lack of housing and lack of transportation available in the area.

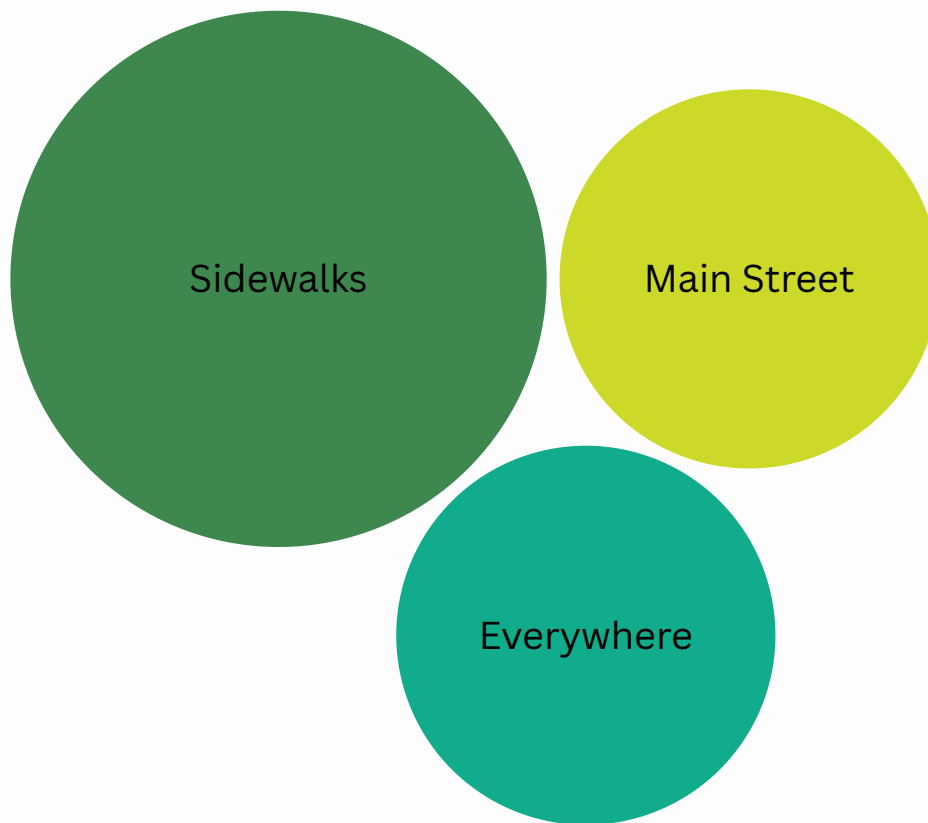
Respondents were also asked, *"What are two places that make you feel safe in the community and what are two places that make you feel unsafe in the community?"* Figure 6 highlights the spaces where respondents feel safe.

Figure 6: Housing Insecure Respondents Safe Spaces



Interestingly, as can be seen in Figure 7, some respondents indicated feeling unsafe everywhere.

Figure 7: Housing Insecure Respondents Unsafe Spaces



“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. Responses spoke of the need for more accessible and affordable housing, transportation, and recreation activities in the Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County. The emphasis on housing and transportation is echoed in respondents' answers to a previous question they were asked: *“Does the community provide enough...employment opportunities; free/accessible recreational and social opportunities; social services; accessible and affordable housing; public transportation; access to food?”* Interestingly, respondents' desire for more specific support services conflicts with other responses which suggest that 79% of respondents believe there are sufficient services available in the community.

Table 9: Respondents' Perceptions of the Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County's Provision of Services

Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County 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	5 (13%)	25 (64%)	9 (23%)
Free/accessible recreational and social opportunities	16 (43%)	14 (38%)	7 (19%)



Social services	31 (79%)	3 (8%)	5 (13%)
Accessible & affordable housing	1 (3%)	18 (45%)	21 (53%)
Public transportation	1 (3%)	30 (79%)	7 (18%)
Access to food (grocery stores, markets, food banks, etc.)	21 (53%)	14 (35%)	5 (13%)

Of note in Table 9 is the significant discrepancy in respondents who believe there is enough accessible and affordable housing in the Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County (3%) versus the number of respondents who believe more housing is needed (45%) and the number of respondents who believe there is enough public transportation (3%) versus the number of respondents who believe more public transportation is needed (79%).

Upon further analysis, an overall satisfaction score was generated to better understand respondents' perceptions of service provision in the Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County. It was determined that housing secure respondents are 31% satisfied, while 32% of housing insecure respondents are satisfied with service provision in the Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County. Important to note here is that the satisfaction rates calculated above are speaking to the lack of available services in the Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County rather than satisfaction with currently available services in the community. Respondents overwhelmingly noted their pleasure with the services currently available to them when asked to identify two things they love about the community.

What Does Homelessness Look Like in the Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver 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 the Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County, this is a woman over 60, who is currently renting her home with her spouse/partner for between \$500 and \$999 per month. She has always lived in the community and is currently retired, relying on her seniors’ benefits and GST refunds to make ends meet. She also accesses basic needs, health and wellness, and support services regularly.

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




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 the Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County. Of the 26 survey respondents who were identified as housing insecure, only 14 self-identified as housing insecure. It is possible then, that the 12 respondents who believe they are housing secure have never accessed supports that could help improve their current housing situation.


2. Consider public transportation options in the Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver County. Respondents indicated a lack of transportation as prohibitive to accessing support services, recreation opportunities, and shelter in the community. 27% of respondents relied on family or friends and 8% of respondents hitchhiked to access services. Additionally, 79% of respondents do not believe there are enough public transportation options across the community. To ensure respondents can get the support they need to stabilize their housing situation, whether that be access to medical or mental health support, accessing the employment centre, obtaining a job, or even finding housing, accessible transportation is crucial. Public transportation is often very difficult to provide in rural communities, due to lack of infrastructure and costs associated with operations. Consider creative and/or alternative options to public transportation such as car share programs, taxi credits, volunteer ride share programs, or other options to ensure community members, specifically housing insecure community members, can get around the community.



3. Conduct an audit of current housing options in the Town of Viking, Town of Tofield, and Beaver 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 the area which could include income-based housing units, below market-rate rental units, and/or advocating for more creative housing options.

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