



# **YELLOWHEAD 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 was made possible through the efforts of many dedicated individuals and groups. We wish to thank the front-line staff at the Wildwood, Evansburg, and Entwistle Community Food Bank in Yellowhead County and the residents of Yellowhead 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 Yellowhead 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 Yellowhead 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 Yellowhead County	11
Yellowhead County Population Overview	13
Housing & Service Needs Estimation Survey Respondent Population Overview	15
Housing Secure vs. Housing Insecure Survey Respondent Population Overview	16
Education, Employment, and Income Sources	18
Living Situation	22
Community Supports	26
Insights on Community Spaces	29
“What Would You Like to See More of in Your Community?”	30
What Does Homelessness Look Like in Yellowhead County?	33
Opportunities Moving Forward	34
References	35

# 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, 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. Yellowhead County was one of the 24 communities who participated in the 2020 estimation, where they surveyed 36 community



members, 22 of which were determined to be housing insecure. Furthermore, an additional 18 dependents and adults were identified as living with the 22 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 Yellowhead 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 Yellowhead County's location parameters.

## Figure 1: Yellowhead County Location Question on Survey

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

- |   |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fullham              | <input type="checkbox"/> Entwistle |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Peers                | <input type="checkbox"/> Edson     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Niton Junction       | <input type="checkbox"/> Evansburg |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wildwood             |                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am not sure        |                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____         |                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to answer |                                    |

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

Yellowhead County collected 26 survey responses during the four weeks. Of the 198 surveys, 8 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, 18 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 Yellowhead 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 18 survey respondents, 3 self-identified as housing insecure, and 2 indicated “I’m not sure”. Through further analysis, it was determined that 12 survey respondents are housing insecure according to the national definitions of homelessness. An additional 3 dependents and 12 adults reported as living with housing insecure survey respondents. Therefore, based on survey results, there are at least 27 community members experiencing housing insecurity in Yellowhead County.

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

- 1.Low wages
- 2.Housing needs major repairs
- 3.Lack of housing in the community





## Exploring the Spectrum of Homelessness in Yellowhead 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 Yellowhead County. This can be achieved by exploring the experiences of the 18 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 Yellowhead 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	0
Emergency Sheltered	0
Provisionally Accommodated	0
At-Risk of Homelessness	14

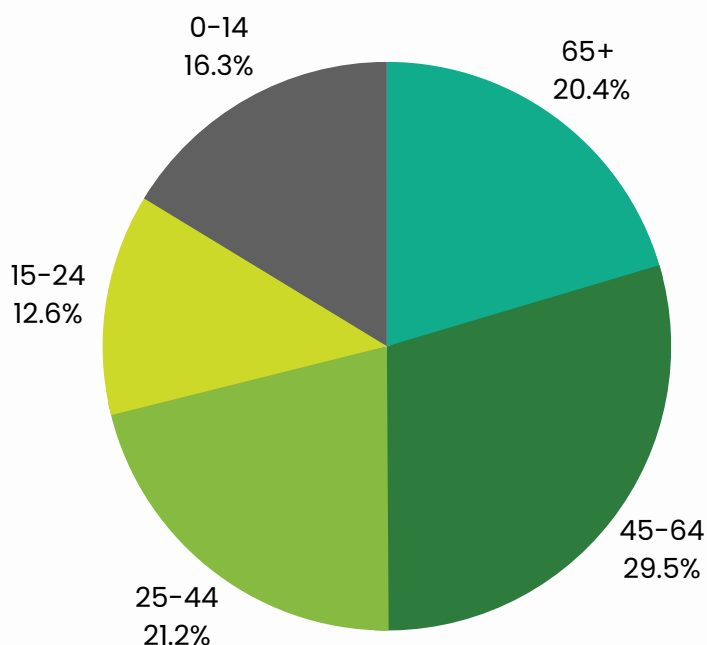
This table demonstrates that homelessness presents itself in more ways than simply sleeping outside. Many of those respondents identified as at-risk of homelessness noted having to live in a different community than where they work due to the housing shortage in Yellowhead County.

## Yellowhead County Population Overview


According to Alberta's Regional Dashboard (Government of Alberta, n.d.), Yellowhead County covers a 22,578.2 square km geographical land base with a population size of 11,438; making up 0.25% of Alberta's total population.

48% (5,485) of Yellowhead County's population is reported as female, while 52% (5,953) reported as male. Additionally, Yellowhead County has a fairly even distribution of age across its population, as seen in Figure 3.

**Figure 3: Yellowhead County Population Age Breakdown (2022)**



As shown in Figure 3, the average age of the population in Yellowhead County is 42.5 years.



According to Statistics Canada Census numbers in 2021, 8% (570) of the population immigrated to Canada and 10% (720) of the population identify as a visible minority. Further, 8.4% (875) of the population identified as Indigenous; 19% (165) of whom are First Nations, 76% (670) of whom are Métis, and 3% (30) of whom are Inuit.

The 2021 Census also reports that Yellowhead County has 4,160 private households with an average of 2.5 people per household. Of the 4,160 private households, 86.2% (3,585) own their home, while 13.8% (575) rent their home. Additionally, 79.8% (3,320) of occupied private dwellings are houses, 77.6% of which are single-family houses, and 1.3% (55) of occupied private dwellings are apartments. Further, 24.2% (1,005) of households in Yellowhead 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 in Yellowhead County is \$37,600 for individuals and \$79,000 for households.





## Housing & Service Needs Estimation Survey Respondent Population Overview

18 community members responded to the Yellowhead County survey; 61% (11) of whom identified as female, 39% (7) as male, and 100% (18) of whom identified as straight.

Of the 18 respondents, 17% (3) are between the ages of 20–39, 33% (6) are between 40–59, and 50% (9) are 60 years or older.

94% (17) of respondents were born in Canada (Turtle Island), while 6% (1) reported being born outside of Canada.

100% (18) of respondents are white; 12% (2) of respondents also self-identified as having other Indigenous ancestry.

6% (1) 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 18 respondents, 11% (2) indicated they serve(d) in the Canadian Armed Forces or Foreign Military Service, and 11% (2) 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	6	12
Gender	Male: 4	Male: 3
	Female: 2	Female: 9
	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: 6	Straight: 12
	Gay/Lesbian: 0	Gay/Lesbian: 0
	Bisexual/Pansexual: 0	Bisexual/Pansexual: 0
	Asexual: 0	Asexual: 0
	Two-spirit: 0	Two-spirit: 0
	Don't know: 0	Don't know: 0

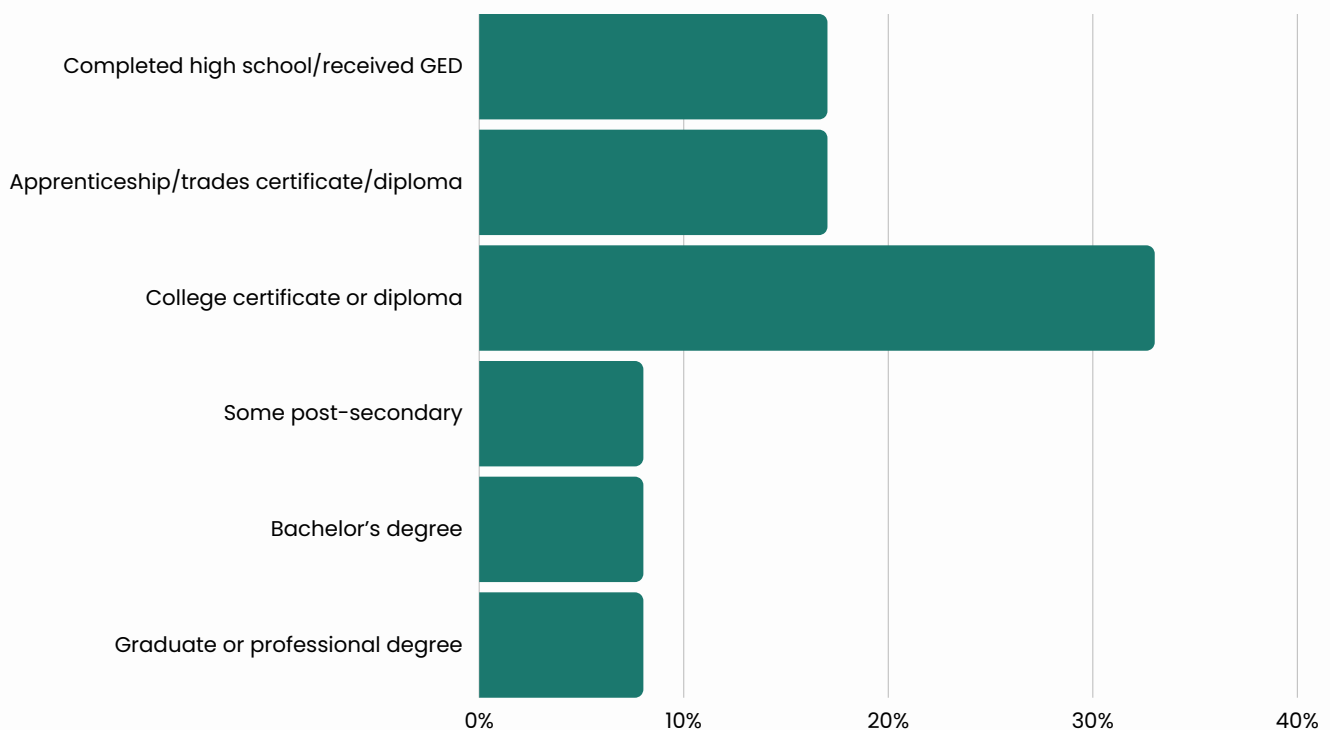
<b>Age</b>	0 – 19 years: 0	0 – 19 years: 0
	20 – 39 years: 2	20 – 39 years: 1
	40 – 59 years: 3	40 – 59 years: 3
	60+: 1	60+: 8
<b>Immigration Status</b>	Born in Canada: 6	Born in Canada: 11
	Born outside of Canada: 0	Born outside of Canada: 1
<b>Racial Identity</b>	White: 6	White: 12
	Visible minority: 0	Visible minority: 0
<b>Indigenous Identity</b>	First Nations: 0	First Nations: 0
	Métis: 0	Métis: 0
	Inuit: 0	Inuit: 0
	Other Indigenous ancestry: 0	Other Indigenous ancestry: 2
<b>Time in Foster Care, Youth Group Home, or Youth/Young Adult Agreement</b>	Spent time in care: 1	Spent time in care: 0
<b>Served in Canadian Armed Forces, RCMP, Emergency Services</b>	Canadian Armed Forces: 0	Canadian Armed Forces: 2
	RCMP: 0	RCMP: 0
	Emergency Services: 0	Emergency Services: 2

*\*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?*” 17% (2) of respondents have completed high school or received their GED, 17% (2) have an apprenticeship, trades certificate, or diploma, 33% (4) have a college certificate or diploma, 8% (1) have some post-secondary, 8% (1) have a Bachelor’s degree, and 8% (1) have a Graduate or Professional Degree (Master’s, Ph.D., MD, JD, etc.). This can also be seen in Figure 4, below.

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







Additionally, 33% (4) of respondents are employed and 8% (1) preferred not to answer; 50% (2) of those employed are full-time, 25% (1) are part-time, and 25% (1) 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 12 times that they receive job-related income, six times that they receive government-related income, and four times that they receive tax-related income. Additionally, one respondent noted that they have other sources of income including credit card loans.

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	2 (17%)
Between \$30,001 and \$49,999	2 (17%)
Between \$50,000 and \$69,999	8 (1%)
Between \$70,000 and \$89,999	0
Between \$90,000 and \$109,999	2 (17%)
More than \$110,000	1 (8%)
Prefer not to answer	4 (33%)

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

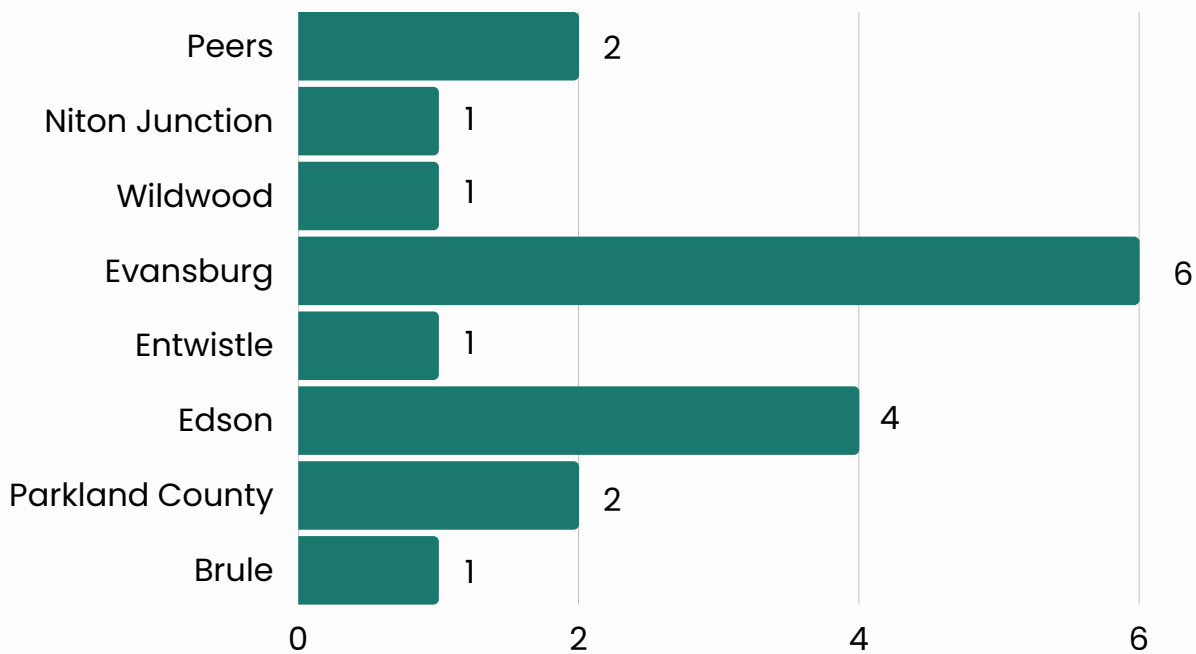
**Table 4: Respondents' Household Income in 2022 by Housing Status**

<b>Total Household Income in 2022</b>	<b># of Housing Secure Respondents Per Income Level</b>	<b># of Housing Insecure Respondents Per Income Level</b>
\$30,000 or less	0	2 (17%)
Between \$30,001 and \$49,999	0	2 (17%)
Between \$50,000 and \$69,999	1 (17%)	8 (1%)
Between \$70,000 and \$89,999	1 (17%)	0
Between \$90,000 and \$109,999	1 (17%)	2 (17%)
More than \$110,000	2 (33%)	1 (8%)
Prefer not to answer	1 (17%)	4 (33%)

## Living Situation

Residents across Yellowhead 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 home (or if neither is true for them). 89% (16) of housing insecure respondents indicated that they own their home, 17% (2) indicated that they rent their home.

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**

<b>Rent/Mortgage Cost</b>	<b># of Housing Secure Respondents Paying Rent/Mortgage Costs</b>	<b># of Housing Insecure Respondents Paying Rent/Mortgage Costs</b>
Less than \$500	0	0
Between \$500 to \$999	1 (17%)	35% (6)
Between \$1000 to \$1499	0	6% (1)
Between \$1500 to \$1999	3 (50%)	29% (5)
Over \$2000	1 (17%)	6% (1)
I don't pay rent or a mortgage	1 (17%)	24% (4)
Prefer not to answer	0	1 (8%)

Among housing insecure respondents, whether they rent or own, 40% (2) do not have sufficient and affordable heating and 60% (3) do not have access to safe drinking water.

**Table 6: Breakdown of Respondents' Missing Amenities**

<b>Missing Amenities</b>	<b># of Respondents Missing Amenities</b>
Indoor plumbing/bathing facilities	0
Sufficient and affordable heating	40% (2)
Safe drinking water	60% (3)
Refrigeration	0
Electricity (or equivalent - i.e. solar power)	0
Cooking facilities	0
Fire protection (smoke alarms, fire extinguishers)	0

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.

6% (1) of all respondents, 100% (1) of which are housing insecure, have always lived in Yellowhead County and 8% (1) preferred not to answer. Of the housing insecure respondents who were not born in the area, 35% (6) have lived in the



Yellowhead County area for more than five years. Respondents who are not from Yellowhead County were also asked to indicate the reasons why they came to this community. The top three reasons respondents came to the Yellowhead County area are:

- 1.To be closer to family (33%)
- 2.To start a job (17%)
- 3.For the lifestyle the community offers (17%)

Other reasons people moved to the Yellowhead County area include looking for work and finding housing.



## Community Supports

In an attempt to better understand service needs and gaps in Yellowhead County, respondents were asked: “Which support services do you access?” The main reasons respondents access support services are to help with health and wellness (45%), basic needs (27%), and family/parenting (18%).

**Table 7: Reasons Why Respondents Access Support Services**

<b>Services Accessed</b>	<b># of Housing Secure Respondents who Accessed these Services</b>	<b># of Housing Insecure Respondents who Accessed these Services</b>
<b>Basic Needs</b> – Food, shelter, clothing, etc.	0	3 (33%)
<b>COVID-19</b> – PPE, information, supports	0	0
<b>Crisis Financial Support</b> – Eviction notice, utility bill problems, damage deposits, etc.	0	0

<b>Family/Parenting -</b> Child care, parenting/family issues, relationship issues, child developmental assessment tools/referrals, etc.	1 (50%)	1 (11%)
<b>Financial -</b> Employment, housing, training/education, etc.	0	0
<b>Health and Wellness -</b> Addictions, mental health, physical health care, spiritual/cultural, etc.	1 (50%)	4 (44%)
<b>Legal -</b> Separation/divorce/ custody, wills/estates, employment/labour standards, landlord/tenant issues, immigration issues, criminal/misdemeanor, etc.	0	1 (11%)

<b>Support Services</b> - Help with government forms, help with accessing government/other programs or services, access to technology, etc.	0	0
<b>Transportation</b> - Access to basic services/education/employment, medical transportation	0	0

Of the 11 respondents who answered the questions *"Have you stayed in a shelter this past year?"* and *"If you needed a shelter in the past year and could not access one, what barriers/challenges did you face?"*, none reported needing to access an emergency shelter in the past year.



## Insights on Community Spaces

Wanting to ensure the respondents had the opportunity to reflect on their experiences in the community, they were asked; *"What are two things you love about the community and what are two things you don't love about the community?"* In analyzing responses across both housing secure and housing insecure respondents in reference to what respondents love about Yellowhead County, it became immediately apparent that respondents love the sense of community Yellowhead County provides; respondents noted how friendly and helpful everyone is and how much they love the "small-town feel". Respondents also spoke of their love for the wildlife, lakes, and trails in the community. In contrast, when asked what they don't love about the community, both housing secure and insecure respondents spoke mostly about crime, a lack of recreation facilities, a lack of services, including transportation and daycare options, and the high cost of living in Yellowhead County.


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?"* Housing insecure respondents listed home, the library, the outdoors, the fire hall, and everywhere as where they feel safe in the community. In terms of unsafe spaces, respondents noted feeling unsafe at night/after dark, at the bank, and around areas of the community where drug use is frequent.

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

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

**Table 8: Respondents’ Perceptions of Yellowhead County’s Provision of Services**

<b>Does Yellowhead County Provide Enough:</b>	<b># of Respondents Who Believe Yellowhead County Provides Enough...</b>	<b># of Respondents Who Believe Yellowhead County Does Not Provide Enough...</b>	<b># of Respondents Who Aren’t Sure if Yellowhead County Provides Enough...</b>
Employment opportunities	3 (17%)	9 (50%)	6 (33%)
Free/accessible recreational and social opportunities	9 (50%)	6 (33%)	3 (17%)
Social services	10 (56%)	5 (28%)	3 (17%)



Accessible & affordable housing	1 (8%)	11 (61%)	6 (33%)
Public transportation	2 (11%)	14 (78%)	2 (11%)
Access to food (grocery stores, markets, food banks, etc.)	12 (67%)	6 (33%)	0

Of note in Table 8 is the significant discrepancy in respondents who believe there is enough accessible and affordable housing in Yellowhead County (8%) versus the number of respondents who believe more is needed (61%) and in the number of respondents who believe there is enough public transportation (11%) versus the number of respondents who believe more public transportation is needed (78%).

Housing: Respondents emphasized the need for more affordable and accessible housing options in Yellowhead County. Specifically, the need for independent and affordable seniors housing was noted several times; one respondent spoke of this, “my future is not looking good...not a lot [of services] for ‘in-between seniors’.” Likely what this respondent is referring to is the lack of seniors services available for residents who are 55–70 and don’t qualify yet for certain supports.

Support Services: Respondents mainly emphasized the need for public transportation options in and across the County. Others also expressed their interest in seeing more health and wellness services open up in the community, including a doctor’s office and an eye clinic.

Upon further analysis, an overall satisfaction score was generated to better understand respondents’ perceptions of service provision in Yellowhead County. It was determined that housing secure respondents are 42% satisfied, while only



31% of housing insecure respondents are satisfied with service provision in Yellowhead County. Important to note here is that the satisfaction rates calculated above are speaking to the lack of available services in Yellowhead County rather than satisfaction with currently available services in the community.



## What Does Homelessness Look Like in Yellowhead 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 Yellowhead County, this is a 60+ year-old woman who owns her home with her spouse/partner and pays between \$500-\$999 per month in mortgage costs. She has lived in the community for more than eight years, is retired, and relies on her pension and senior’s benefits to make ends meet. Her approximate household income last year was between \$50,000 and \$69,999. She notes that her house needs major repairs. Despite these struggles, she enjoys the lifestyle that Yellowhead County offers.

The true diversity of respondents is illustrated in the Results & Analysis section, but this highlights what someone experiencing housing insecurity might look like in Yellowhead 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. Conduct a gap analysis and audit of service offerings in Yellowhead County.**

Respondents indicated several services they would like to see in Yellowhead County from transportation to daycare facilities to health and wellness services. Further, housing secure respondents are 42% satisfied and housing insecure respondents are only 31% satisfied with the provision of services in Yellowhead County. Given the service gaps identified by residents of Yellowhead County, it is critical to audit the availability of services in the community; conducting a gap analysis and audit of services will also help to identify where new services are needed versus where increased awareness around currently available services is needed.

**2. Consider public transportation options in Yellowhead County.** Respondents indicated a lack of transportation as being prohibitive to accessing supports in 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 supports, accessing the employment centre, obtaining a job, or even finding housing, transportation is crucial. Public transportation is often very difficult to provide in rural communities due to the lack of infrastructure and costs associated with operations. Consider creative and/or alternative options to public transportation such as car share programs, taxi credits, volunteer ride share programs, or other options to ensure community members, specifically housing insecure community members, can get around the community.

## References

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

Gaetz, S., Barr, C., Friesen, A., Harris, B., Hill, C., Kovacs-Burns, K., Pauly, B., Pearce, B., Turner, A., & Marsolais, A. (2012). *Canadian Definition of Homelessness*. Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press.

Government of Alberta. (n.d.). Yellowhead County. Alberta Regional Dashboard. Retrieved April 26, 2023 from <https://regionaldashboard.alberta.ca/region/yellowhead-county/#/>

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

Statistics Canada. (2021). Census profile, 2021 Census of Population. Yellowhead County, Municipal district (MD) [census subdivision], Alberta. Retrieved from <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dppd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&SearchText=yellowhead&GENDERlist=1&STATISTIClist=1,4&DGUIDlist=2021A00054814003&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