

Athabasca

**2025 Alberta Provincial
Estimations and Service Needs**

Community Report



ATHABASCA CARES
Community Housing Society

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We Thank You.

This report and the information within were made possible through the efforts of many dedicated individuals and groups. First and foremost, we would like to thank the residents of Athabasca for sharing their experiences and insights about housing and service needs in the community. We appreciate your time, effort, and knowledge! Additionally, we want to thank the front-line staff at participating service provider locations for their support, dedication, and commitment to this project.

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Canada 

About this Report

In 2025, the Rural Development Network (RDN) partnered with 19 organizations representing 64 communities across Alberta to conduct the fourth iteration of a province-wide Housing and Service Needs Estimation.

This report outlines Athabasca's results within the provincial estimation, highlighting the number of residents who are housing insecure and their experiences with housing insecurity. This report is complemented by the [Alberta Provincial Report](#), which highlights the combined results of all 64 communities across the province.

This report is intended to support decision-making across organizations, funders, and government around housing insecurity by providing reliable and up-to-date data on housing and service needs in Athabasca. It can also be used in communities for program planning and advocacy purposes related to housing insecurity, housing stock, 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, more recently termed “houselessness,” considers the traumas imposed on Indigenous Peoples through colonialism. Indigenous houselessness is not only defined as lacking a structure of habitation; rather, it is more fully described and understood through a composite lens of Indigenous worldviews, including: “individuals, families, and communities isolated from their relationships to land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages, and identifies” (Thistle, 2017).

Most people do not choose to be homeless, and the experience is generally negative, unpleasant and stressful. 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, 2012).

In this report, we will use “housing insecure.” The term will be used to encompass the entire spectrum of homelessness, including unsheltered, emergency sheltered, provisionally accommodated, and at risk of homelessness, as well as those experiencing Indigenous houselessness.



Introduction



Housing insecurity is a continued and increasing concern in rural, remote, and Indigenous communities across Alberta and the entire country. When it comes to housing insecurity, the urban experience tends to dominate the conversation, mainly due to the visibility of unsheltered individuals experiencing housing insecurity in urban centres. The issue of housing insecurity in rural and remote areas is far less understood and acknowledged because of its hidden nature. Recent data suggests that rural homelessness is prevalent at rates equivalent to or greater than urban per capita rates (Schiff et al., 2022).

In 2023, the Alberta Provincial Housing and Service Needs Estimation identified 2,429 survey respondents as experiencing housing insecurity. An additional 2,354 dependents under 18 and 2,537 adults reported living with housing insecure survey respondents, meaning there were at least 7,320 community members experiencing housing insecurity across the 21 participating communities in rural and remote Alberta (Rural Development Network, 2023). While some housing insecure respondents had experiences of being unsheltered or emergency-sheltered, the majority of housing insecure respondents were provisionally accommodated or at risk of homelessness, further speaking to the issue of visibility, or rather invisibility, of housing insecurity in rural and remote communities.

As rural, remote, and Indigenous communities continue to experience growth amidst a national housing and affordability crisis, it has become more apparent than ever that more evidence is required to support decision-making on housing insecurity, housing stock, and services across the province.

Recognizing this, RDN conducted the 2025 Alberta Provincial Housing and Service Needs Estimation with 19 organizations representing roughly 64 rural, remote, and Indigenous communities across Alberta in an attempt to better understand what housing insecurity looks like in each community and across the rural provincial landscape. Specifically, the purpose of this estimation is to:

1. Provide a comprehensive picture of housing insecurity in Athabasca and across Alberta, including demographic information on who is experiencing housing insecurity and details on service use and gaps.
2. Help inform service providers and municipal, provincial, and federal policies, practices, and funding decisions on housing insecurity, housing stock, and support services.
3. Develop recommendations and next steps for service providers and all levels of government to address housing insecurity in Athabasca and across Alberta.
4. Elevate and incorporate the voices of people experiencing housing insecurity in local, provincial, and federal responses to housing insecurity.

This is the fourth iteration of the Alberta Provincial Housing and Service Needs Estimation. It was also conducted in 2018, 2020, and 2023, with 20, 24, and 21 communities, respectively. Table 1 details Athabasca’s participation in previous Provincial Housing and Service Needs Estimations.

Table 1: Past Participation in Provincial Estimations

	Total # of Respondents	# of Housing Insecure Respondents	# of Housing Insecure Dependents and Additional Adults	Total # of Housing Insecure Community Members
2018	22	15	16	31
2023	113	69	142	211



Methodology



The methodology employed in this Housing and Service Needs Estimation comes from the Step-by-Step Guide to Estimating Rural, Remote, and Indigenous Homelessness, published by the Rural Development Network (2022). RDN initially developed the Step-by-Step Guide due to the lack of available, accurate, and current data on rural housing insecurity. A lack of data limits the ability of rural communities like Athabasca 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. It recognizes the difficulties of conducting standard Point-in-Time (PiT) counts in rural and remote areas and 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.

Please note: *As with a PiT count, this estimation is an undercount and represents only those individuals identified during the four-week period. The number of people experiencing housing insecurity is greater than presented in this report.*

Following the model proposed in the Step-by-Step Guide, RDN worked with communities and academics across Canada to develop a survey that reflected the contexts of rural and remote communities. The survey was developed following the definitions of homelessness proposed by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness and adopted by the federal government. 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, which could cause distress to their clients. By reframing the language of the survey, service providers were able to encourage all clients to participate, instead of targeting specific 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 considered their living conditions secure or insecure and to indicate scenarios in a “select all that apply” question that determined 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 insecure. As shown in the results below, some individuals who did not consider themselves housing insecure qualify as such based on the national definitions of homelessness.

The same survey was used across all communities participating in the 2025 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 Athabasca’s location parameters.

Figure 1: Athabasca's Location Question on Survey

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

- Athabasca
- Colinton
- Grassland
- Boyle
- Rochester
- Perryvale
- Donatville
- Ellscott
- Other: _____

RDN worked with Athabasca to develop a survey administration process to ensure the greatest participation level possible. For Athabasca, surveys were advertised at service provider locations and online as an open SurveyMonkey link across the community. Surveys were available through these locations and online for a period of four weeks, from October 1 to October 31, 2025.

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, prioritizing 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 allowed RDN to maintain the integrity of the data without knowing respondent identities. The unique identifier was 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?

Athabasca collected 43 survey responses during the four weeks. Of the 43 surveys, 13 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 (e.g., characters instead of numbers, etc.).
3. Survey respondent(s) submitted multiple surveys (determined based on unique identifier(s)).
4. Survey respondent(s) indicated they were located outside of community boundaries.
5. Survey respondent(s) did not complete enough questions to determine housing stability (e.g., abandoned the survey).

Based on this, 30 were deemed 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 service providers were informed that participants under 14 years old required guardian consent to participate in the survey. We recognize that this is inherently problematic and exclusionary, as most youth experiencing homelessness would not have a guardian to provide consent. However, to maintain survey ethics, this requirement complies with the Alberta College of Social Workers' Standards of Practice.

Additionally, the data does not represent Athabasca as a whole; rather, it represents only those who accessed services in the region during the four-week enumeration period.

As a result, there remains a portion of people experiencing housing insecurity in Athabasca whose voices were not captured in this project. Therefore, while the trends and highlights discussed in this report are informative, it is always important to remember that this report presents a conservative picture of the housing and services needs in Athabasca.



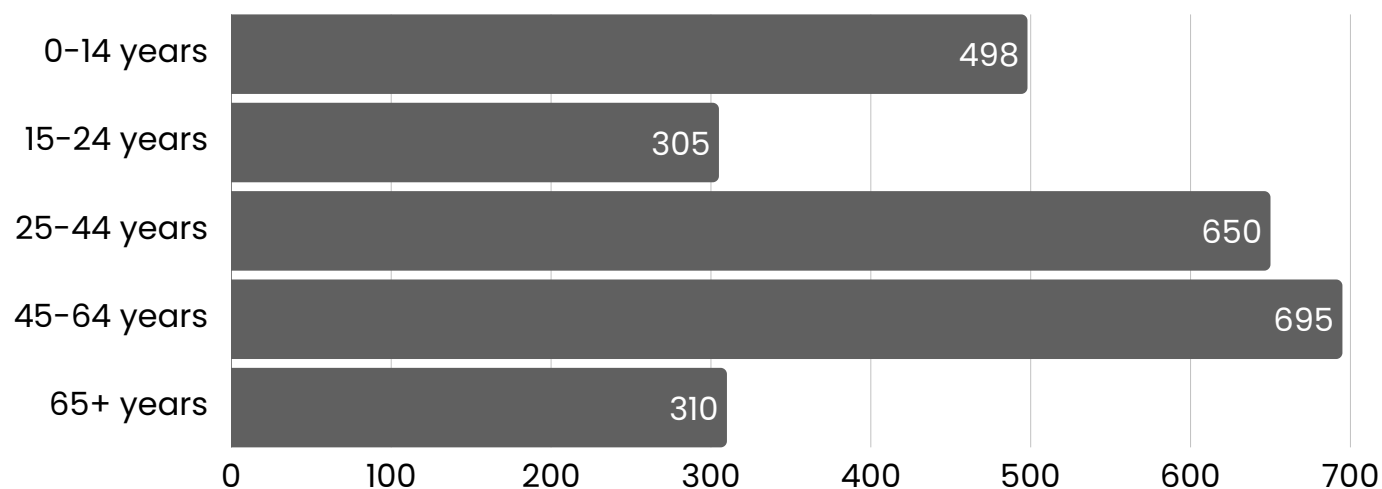
Results and Analysis

Athabasca Population Overview

According to Alberta's Regional Dashboard (Government of Alberta, 2024), Athabasca covers 18.6 square km of geographical land base and has a population size of 2,894.

53.36% (1,470) of Athabasca reported as women, while 46.64% (1,285) reported as men (Statistics Canada, 2021).

Figure 3: Athabasca Population Age Breakdown (2021)



The average age in Athabasca is 43 years.

According to Statistics Canada (2021) Census numbers, 10% (255) of Athabasca's population were immigrants to Canada. Further, 13% (330) of Athabasca's population identified as Indigenous, 3.7% (95) of whom were First Nations and 9% (230) were Métis.

The 2021 Census also reported that Athabasca has 1,155 private dwellings with an average of 2.3 people per household. Of the 1,155 private dwellings in Athabasca, 58% (670) were owned, while 42% (485) were rented, with average monthly shelter costs for rented dwellings reported as \$1,120. Additionally, 67.7% (785) were single-detached houses, 17.3% (200) were apartments,¹ 1.3% (15) were moveable dwellings,² 8.6% (100) were semi-detached houses, and 5.2% (60) were row houses.

29.9% (345) of households in Athabasca reported 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."

¹ Includes apartments or flats in a duplex and apartments in both buildings with fewer than five storeys and with five or more storeys.

² According to Statistics Canada (2021), a moveable dwelling includes mobile homes and other movable dwellings such as houseboats, recreational vehicles and railroad cars.

The median after-tax income in Athabasca is \$38,800 for individuals and \$71,500 for households. The Economic Research Institute (2026) estimates the cost of living to be 2% higher than the national average and 2% lower than the Alberta provincial average for Athabasca.

Housing & Service Needs Estimation Survey

Respondent Population Overview

Gender and Sexuality

87% (26) of participants identified as women, 10% (3) as men, and 3% (1) as gender non-conforming.

93% (26) of respondents identified as straight and 4% (1) as bisexual/pansexual. Additionally, 4% (1) preferred not to answer.

Age

33% (10) of respondents were 25 to 44, 50% (15) were 45 to 65, and 17% (5) were 65 and older.

Household Makeup

38% (5) of respondents indicated they live in a multi-generational home and 8 (62%) were in single-parent households.

Time Spent in Care

3% (1) of respondents indicated they spent time in foster care, a youth group home, or in a youth/young adult agreement.

Immigration

90% (27) of respondents were born in Canada, while 10% (3) immigrated to Canada. 100% (3) of respondents who immigrated to Canada have lived here for more than ten years.

Race and Indigenous Identity

90% (26) of respondents identified as white, compared to 10% (3) of racially diverse respondents. Additionally, 7% (2) of respondents preferred not to answer.

Further, 17% (5) of respondents self-identified as Indigenous. Of those respondents who self-identified as Indigenous, 80% (4) identified as Métis and 20% (1) as Inuk.

Veteran Status

3% (1) of total respondents indicated that they served in the Canadian Armed Forces, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), or emergency services. 100% (1) of those who served were in emergency services.

Objective Housing Situation

As part of the survey, participants were asked: “Do you consider your housing situation 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 30 survey respondents, five self-identified as housing insecure, two indicated “I’m not sure,” while 23 indicated they were housing secure. Using the national definitions of homelessness to guide further analysis, 13 survey respondents were identified as housing insecure and 17 as housing secure. An additional eight dependents under 18 and 12 adults were reported as living with housing insecure survey respondents.

Tables 2 and 3 show breakdowns of respondents by housing security status and highlight the number of dependents and adults who reported sharing living conditions with housing insecure respondents in Athabasca.

Table 2: Breakdown of Respondent Housing Status

	# of Individuals
Housing Secure	17
Housing Insecure	13

Table 3: Breakdown of Dependents & Adults Sharing Insecure Housing Living Conditions

	# of Additional Individuals
Dependents	8
Adults	12

Based on survey results, there were at least 33 community members experiencing housing insecurity in Athabasca.

The top three reasons for housing insecurity in Athabasca, as reported by survey respondents, were:

- 1.High housing costs³
- 2.Low vacancy rates⁴
- 3.Health challenges⁵

³ “My rent/mortgage is too high for my current income”

⁴ “There is almost no vacancy/no rentals available”

⁵ “Illness/medical condition,” “Mental health concerns”, “Mental disability,” and/or “Physical disability”

Housing Secure vs. Housing Insecure Survey

Respondent Population Overview

Table 4: Housing & Service Needs Estimation Survey Population Overview Comparison by Housing Stability

Demographic Characteristic	Housing Secure	Housing Insecure
Number of Survey Respondents	17	13
Gender	Gender non-conforming: 0	Gender non-conforming: 1
	Man: 2	Man: 1
	Trans-man: 0	Trans-man: 0
	Trans-woman: 0	Trans-woman: 0
	Woman: 15	Woman: 11
	Not sure: 0	Not sure: 0
Sexual Orientation	Asexual: 0	Asexual: 0
	Bisexual/Pansexual: 0	Bisexual/Pansexual: 1
	Lesbian/Gay: 0	Lesbian/Gay: 0
	Straight: 16	Straight: 10
	Two-Spirit: 0	Two-Spirit: 0
	Not sure: 0	Not sure: 0
Age	0-14 years: 0	0-14 years: 0
	15-24 years: 0	15-24 years: 0
	25-44 years: 4	25-44 years: 6
	45-64 years: 10	45-64 years: 5
	65+ years: 3	65+ years: 2

Demographic Characteristic	Housing Secure	Housing Insecure
Household Makeup	Pregnancy in household: 0	Pregnancy in household: 0
	Multi-generational household: 3	Multi-generational household: 2
	Single-parent household: 4	Single-parent household: 4
	Spent time in care: 1	Spent time in care: 0
Immigration Status	Born in Canada: 15	Born in Canada: 12
	Born outside of Canada: 2	Born outside of Canada: 1
Racial Identity	White: 15	White: 11
	Racialized: 1	Racialized: 2
Indigenous Identity	First Nations: 0	First Nations: 0
	Métis: 3	Métis: 1
	Inuk: 0	Inuk: 1
	Other Indigenous ancestry: 0	Other Indigenous ancestry: 0
Served in Canadian Armed Forces, RCMP, Emergency Services	Canadian Armed Forces: 0	Canadian Armed Forces: 0
	RCMP: 0	RCMP: 0
	Emergency Services: 0	Emergency Services: 1

Exploring the Spectrum of Homelessness in Athabasca

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 Athabasca. This understanding can be achieved by exploring the experiences of the 13 housing insecure respondents.

To accurately place respondents along the spectrum of homelessness, a series of measures were used to understand their situations. These measures included their self-identified housing security response, calculated housing security, current housing situation, and the amenities they lack in their current situation.

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. Statements included, but were not limited to, "I slept in a vehicle," "I slept in a hotel overnight because I had nowhere else to go," "I live in supported or transitional housing," and "I live in housing that needs major repairs."

Respondents were able to select more than one statement. To accurately represent what housing insecurity might look like for respondents over a month, all responses have been included.

When reading this table, an important consideration is that people experiencing housing insecurity often fluctuate in and out of their situation. Someone who was unsheltered one night may 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 complexities of housing insecurity in Athabasca. This means that more incidents of housing insecurity are reported in the table below than the number of housing insecure respondents.

Table 5: Respondents by Housing Situation on the Homelessness Spectrum

Place on the Homelessness Spectrum	# of Incidents
Unsheltered	3
Emergency Sheltered	1
Provisionally Accommodated	8
At Risk of Homelessness	18

The above table illustrates respondents' diverse experiences with housing insecurity in Athabasca, emphasizing that homelessness presents itself in more ways than simply sleeping outside.

Respondents identified as **at risk** reported:

- Difficulty paying their rent or mortgage,
- Spending more than 30% of their monthly income on housing,
- Living in overcrowded accommodations with not enough bedrooms for the number of people staying in the unit,
- Staying in a home needing major repairs (e.g., heating or plumbing problems, mould, leaky roof, etc.), and/or
- Staying in a home with unsafe conditions (e.g., exposed wiring, no railing or banisters, physical hazards, etc.).

Respondents who indicated they experienced being **provisionally accommodated** noted:

- Staying in a hotel overnight because they had nowhere to go,
- Living in supported or transitional housing,
- Staying in an RV/trailer,
- Staying in a medical/detox facility,
- Staying in a jail/prison/remand centre,
- Staying with friends/family because they had nowhere else to go,
- Staying with a stranger because they had nowhere else to go, and/or
- Staying in a home where they experienced violence because they had nowhere else to go.

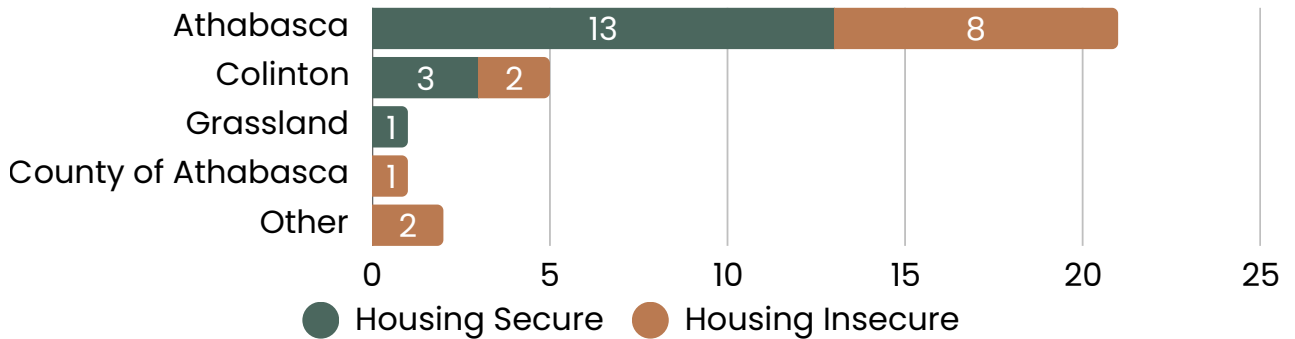
Respondents who had experiences of being **emergency sheltered or unsheltered** reported:

- Staying in an emergency shelter,
- Sleeping in a vehicle, and/or
- Staying in makeshift shelters such as a tent or shack.

Living Situation

Residents in and around Athabasca responded to the survey, as seen in Figure 4.

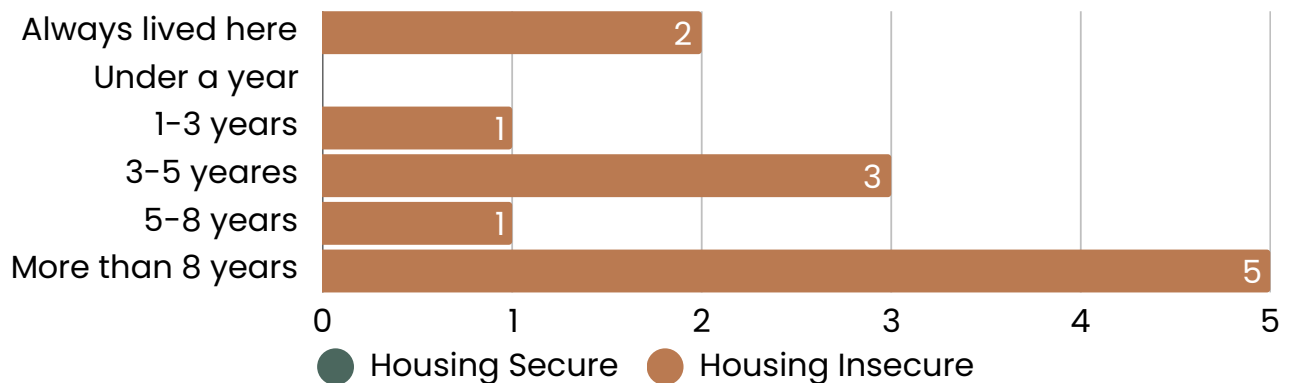
Figure 4: Breakdown of Survey Respondents by Location



Migration

13% (4) of all respondents, 50% (2) of which are housing insecure, have always lived in and around Athabasca. Figure 5 outlines the various lengths of time respondents have lived in the community.

Figure 5: Breakdown of Housing Insecure Respondents' Length of Time Lived in Athabasca



85% (11) of housing insecure respondents were not born in Athabasca. 70% (7) moved from another community in Alberta and 30% (3) moved from another province or territory.

Respondents were also asked: "What are the main reasons you came to this community? If you have always lived here, why have you chosen to stay in this community?"

The top three reasons housing insecure respondents came to the area were:

- Employment-related reasons (look for work, work-related transfer, more work opportunities, etc.)
- Family-related reasons (to be closer to family, to follow family, etc.)
- For the lifestyle the community offers

The other reason housing insecure respondents moved to the community was for education opportunities (to attend school, access better educational opportunities, etc.).

In comparison, the main reason housing insecure respondents stayed in the area were:

- Family-related reasons (to be closer to family, to follow family, etc.)

Noteworthy here is that 67% (2) of housing insecure respondents have moved between three and six times in the past 12 months.

Housing Situation and Missing Amenities

To better understand respondents' current living situations, they were asked to indicate if they rent or own their home (or if neither was true for them). 46% (6) of housing insecure respondents indicated that they owned their homes, 38% (5) indicated that they rented their homes, 8% (1) noted that they neither owned nor rented, and 8% (1) preferred not to answer. Comparatively, 88% (15) of housing secure respondents owned their homes, 6% (1) rented their homes and 6% (1) noted they neither owned nor rented.

Five unique housing insecure respondents, whether they rented, owned, or were in a different situation entirely, indicated that they lacked specific amenities in their current housing situation, many of which are considered necessary for a secure living situation. At the time of the survey, 40% (2) of these respondents did not have fire protection (including fire extinguishers, smoke alarms, and a safe exit out of their space).

Table 6: Breakdown of Respondents' Missing Amenities

Missing Amenities	# (%) of Respondents
Safe drinking water	2 (40%)
Indoor plumbing/bathing facilities	1 (20%)
Sufficient and affordable heating	1 (20%)
Fire protection (smoke alarms, fire extinguishers)	1 (20%)
Refrigeration	0 (0%)
Electricity	0 (0%)
Cooking facilities	0 (0%)

This breakdown highlights respondents who lacked basic amenities and is one way respondents' objective housing situation is calculated. Some respondents self-identified as housing secure but lacked amenities required for their housing to be considered stable according to the Canadian definitions of homelessness, including indoor plumbing/bathing facilities, sufficient and affordable heating, electricity, access to safe drinking water, and fire protection.

Education, Employment, and Income

Education

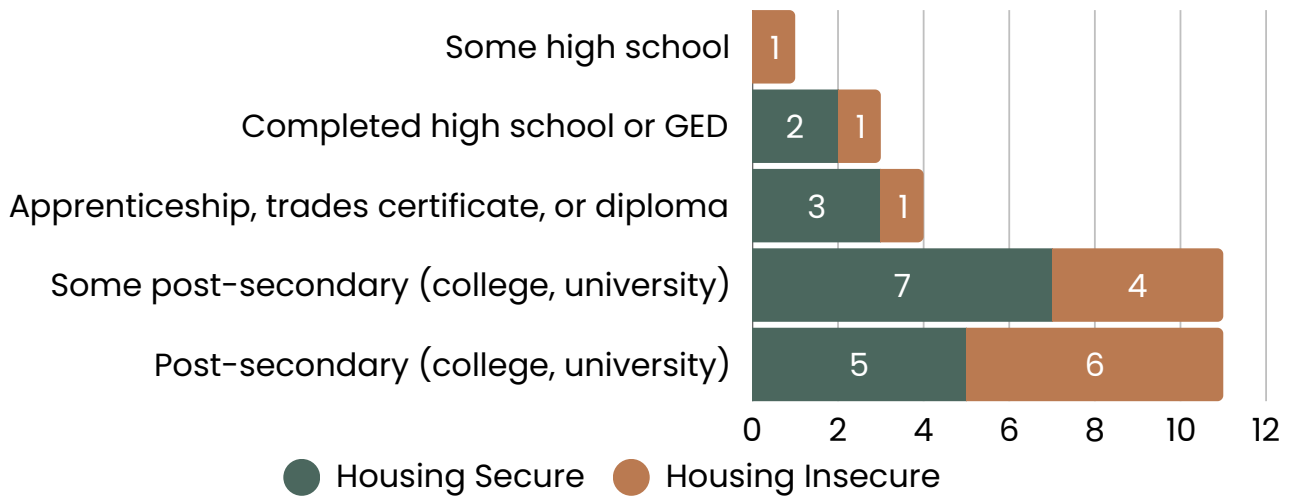
Respondents indicated various education levels when responding to the question, “What is the highest level of education you’ve completed?”

In Athabasca:

- 3% (1) of respondents completed some high school
- 10% (3) completed high school or received their GED
- 13% (4) had an apprenticeship, trades certificate, or diploma
- 37% (11) had some post-secondary (college, university)
- 37% (11) had a post-secondary degree (college, university)

Figure 6 provides a more detailed look at respondents' education levels.

Figure 6: Housing Secure and Housing Insecure Respondents' Education Levels



Employment

77% (10) of housing insecure respondents were employed at the time of the survey.

- 60% (6) were full-time (e.g., more than 30hrs/week)
- 10% (1) were part-time (e.g., less than 30hrs/week)
- 10% (1) were casual
- 20% (2) were self-employed

In comparison, 100% (14) of housing secure respondents were employed at the time of the survey, and three respondents were retired. Of employed housing secure respondents:

- 86% (12) were full-time (e.g., more than 30hrs/week)
- 7% (1) were casual
- 7% (1) were self-employed

Income

Housing insecure respondents were also asked to disclose their approximate household income for the previous year. Responses varied widely, as seen in Table 7.

Table 7: Housing Insecure Respondents Approximate Household Income in the Last 12 Months

Total Household Income in the Last 12 Months	# (%) of Respondents
Less than \$22,000	2 (15%)
Between \$22,001 and \$55,000	3 (23%)
Between \$55,001 and \$88,000	2 (15%)
Between \$88,001 and \$132,000	4 (31%)
More than \$132,001 ⁶	2 (15%)
Prefer not to answer	0 (0%)

This can be broken down further to understand household income level by housing security status, as seen in Table 8.

Table 8: Respondents' Household Income in the Last 12 Months by Housing Status

Total Household Income in the Last 12 Months	# (%) of Housing Secure Respondents	# (%) of Housing Insecure Respondents
Less than \$22,000	0 (0%)	2 (15%)
Between \$22,001 and \$55,000	3 (18%)	3 (23%)
Between \$55,001 and \$88,000	3 (18%)	2 (15%)
Between \$88,001 and \$132,000	5 (29%)	4 (31%)
More than \$132,001	5 (29%)	2 (15%)
Prefer not to answer	1 (6%)	0 (0%)

⁶ It is important to remember the spectrum of homelessness when considering income rates amongst housing insecure respondents. Someone who is experiencing domestic or family violence, for example, is considered housing insecure no matter their annual household income. Additionally, it is important to remember that people cycle through the spectrum of homelessness regularly and just because some reported an annual household income of \$88,001 or higher in 2024, for example, does not mean they were not experiencing housing insecurity in 2025 - this could have occurred as a result of job loss, a death in the family, increasing interest and utility rates, or any number of reasons.

Of the housing insecure respondents, 38% (5) reported a household annual income of \$55,000 or less compared to 58% (10) of housing secure respondents who reported an annual income of \$80,001 or more.

Interestingly, 15% (2) of housing insecure respondents reported a household annual income of between \$55,001 and \$88,000. This suggests that respondents who reported moderate income levels were experiencing housing insecurity, and again speaks to the spectrum of housing insecurity - respondents can and were making moderate income while unsheltered, emergency sheltered, provisionally accommodated, and/or at risk of housing insecurity.

Further, 84% (11) of housing insecure respondents indicated they spent more than 30% of their household income on housing (e.g., rent or mortgage payments) in the 12 months prior to completing the survey.

Community Supports

To better understand service needs and gaps in Athabasca, respondents were asked: “Which support services do you access and where do you most often access them?”

Housing insecure respondents primarily accessed services in Athabasca for:

- Legal services (71%)
- Financial supports (57%)
- Basic needs (57%)

In comparison, those accessing services outside of Athabasca did so primarily for:

- Health and wellness services (83%)
- Basic needs (33%)
- Shelter & crisis financial supports (17%)

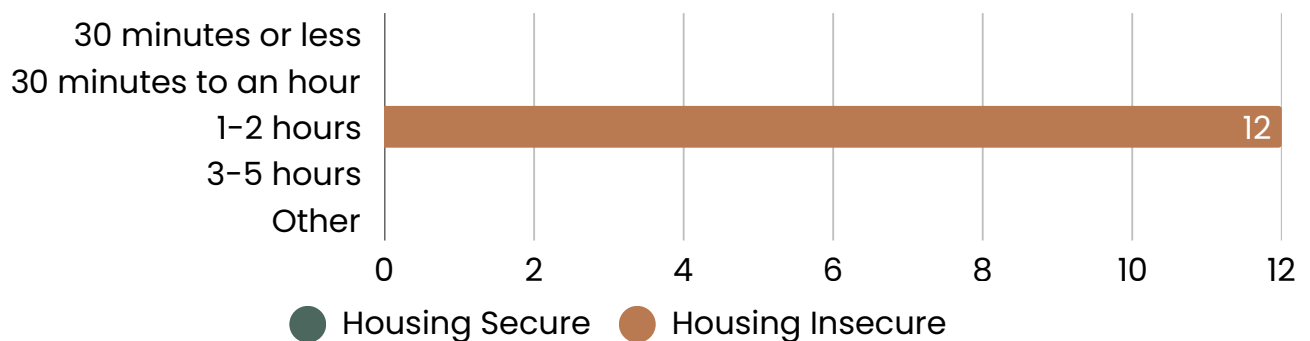
Table 9: Reasons Housing Insecure Respondents Accessed Support Services

Services Accessed	# (%) of Respondents who Primarily Accessed Services in the community	# (%) of Respondents Primarily Accessed Services Outside of the community
Basic needs (Food bank, clothing donations, public washrooms, etc.)	4 (57%)	2 (33%)
Shelter (Emergency shelter, domestic violence shelter, transitional housing, affordable housing, etc.)	3 (43%)	1 (17%)
Financial (Rental assistance, non-market housing, financial life skills training/education, etc.)	4 (57%)	0 (0%)
Crisis financial support (Eviction notices, utility shutoffs, damage deposits, etc.)	2 (29%)	1 (17%)
Family/Parenting (Child care, parental resources, relationship issues, child developmental assessment tools/referrals, etc.)	3 (43%)	0 (0%)

Health and wellness (Addictions, mental health, physical health care, spiritual or cultural well-being, etc.)	3 (43%)	5 (83%)
Legal (Separation/divorce/custody, wills/estates, employment/labour standards, landlord/tenant issues, immigration issues, criminal/misdemeanour, etc.)	5 (71%)	0 (0%)

Of the services housing insecure respondents accessed outside of Athabasca, most travelled between one and two hours to access them, as seen in Figure 7 below.

Figure 7: Distance Travelled by Housing Insecure Respondents for Services Outside of the Community



To access these services, 92% (12) housing insecure respondents travelled by car or truck, 8% (1) took an e-bus, 8% (1) relied on public transportation, and 15% (2) relied on a family member or friend.

It is important to consider that respondents who are unable to access supports and services are more likely to continue experiencing housing insecurity than those who can access the necessary supports and services to stabilize their housing situation.

Shelter Use

One unique housing insecure respondent reported staying in a shelter in the past year. They reported staying in:

- An emergency shelter,
- An extreme weather space or shelter, and
- A women’s/domestic violence shelter.

15% (2) housing insecure respondents reported needing emergency shelter services at some point in the 12 months before completing the survey, but did not access them. Several reasons were provided for this, as outlined in Table 10. The main reason these respondents did not access shelter services when needed was because there was a lack of disability accommodations at the shelter.

Table 10: Reasons Housing Insecure Respondents Did Not Access Shelter Services When Needed

Reason for Not Accessing Shelter Services	# (%) of Respondents
Lack of disability accommodations	2 (100%)
The right kind of shelter wasn't available (for example, I needed a women's or family shelter where I could stay with my kid(s) and couldn't access one)	1 (50%)
The shelter was full	1 (50%)
I exceeded my stay at a shelter	1 (50%)
No shelters in my area	1 (50%)
I didn't feel safe	1 (50%)
The shelter did not welcome me because of my gender identity	1 (50%)
Alcohol/substance use is not permitted on-site	1 (50%)
Lack of transportation	1 (50%)
No pets allowed	1 (50%)
The shelter was too far away from my family and/or friends	1 (50%)
I didn't meet the intake criteria to access the shelter	0 (0%)
The shelter was unclean	0 (0%)

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

To gain more insight into respondents' perceptions of service provision in Athabasca, they were asked: *“Does your community provide enough...accessible and affordable housing; access to food; addictions and mental health supports; employment services; free/accessible recreation/social opportunities; public transportation services; social services?”*

Table 11: Total Respondents' Perceptions of Athabasca's Provision of Services

Does the Community Provide Enough:	Yes	No	Unsure
Accessible, affordable housing	1 (3%)	24 (80%)	5 (17%)
Access to food (grocery stores, markets, food banks, etc.)	17 (57%)	12 (40%)	1 (3%)
Addictions and mental health supports (counselling, treatment, post-treatment support, etc.)	9 (30%)	19 (63%)	2 (7%)
Employment services (resume writing, job searching, etc.)	26 (87%)	2 (7%)	2 (7%)
Free/accessible recreation/social opportunities	12 (40%)	13 (43%)	5 (17%)
Public transportation services	1 (3%)	27 (90%)	2 (7%)
Social services (libraries, emergency services, outreach programs, etc.)	17 (57%)	8 (27%)	5 (17%)

In Table 11, there is a significant discrepancy in respondents who, at the time of the survey, believed there was enough accessible and affordable housing in Athabasca (3%) versus those who believed more housing was needed (80%) or were not sure if more housing was needed (17%). Similarly, 63% of respondents believed more addictions and mental health supports were needed in comparison to 30% who believed there were enough supports in Athabasca already. Additionally, only 3% of respondents believed there was enough public transportation services in Athabasca.



**Opportunities Moving
Forward**

Based on the findings outlined in this report, RDN has identified two opportunities to address housing insecurity moving forward. They are:

- Foster community awareness and understanding of housing insecurity.
- Increase awareness of, and access to, services.

Foster community awareness and understanding of housing insecurity.

Implementing a community engagement strategy is crucial to addressing housing insecurity in Athabasca. The purpose of implementing a community engagement strategy is to support community learning on issues related to housing insecurity in Athabasca. More specifically, this will help inform residents about the spectrum of housing insecurity and the different experiences and realities of housing insecurity in their community. In addition, community conversations will aim to shift public perceptions of housing insecurity, ensuring that residents experiencing housing insecurity and any projects specific to addressing housing insecurity are met with understanding, empathy, and support.

Of the 30 survey respondents, only five self-identified as housing insecure. However, upon further analysis, 13 survey respondents were identified as housing insecure. This means that eight respondents were unaware of their housing insecurity status and likely have not accessed social or housing services that could help improve their housing situation. A community engagement strategy would help increase residents' understanding of housing insecurity and make them aware of the current service offerings available to support their housing situations.

With at least 33 residents experiencing housing insecure living conditions, public perceptions of housing insecurity must be met with understanding and empathy to successfully address housing insecurity in Athabasca.

Recommendations:

- Host community conversations on housing insecurity.
- Host community conversations and opportunities to learn about emergency shelters and transitional housing developments.
- Promote programs and service offerings that support residents experiencing housing insecurity widely.
- Encourage inclusive and welcoming events that bring the whole community together.
- Identify and share community initiatives that focus on community connection.
- Offer orientation and training sessions around housing insecurity to support elected officials in leading the community to address housing insecurity in Athabasca.

Increase awareness of, and access to, services.

83% of housing insecure respondents indicated that they had to access health and wellness services (e.g., addictions supports, mental health supports and services, physical health care services, spiritual or cultural well-being services, etc.) outside of Athabasca. Additionally, 33% of housing insecure respondents accessed basic needs supports and 17% of respondents accessed shelter services outside of Athabasca. Further, of the housing insecure respondents who accessed services outside of Athabasca, 75% had to travel between one to two hours to access services. While 92% travelled by car or truck, many relied on a family member or friend to take them or public transportation.

53 housing insecure respondents indicated that they lack specific amenities in their current housing situation, many of which are considered necessary for a secure living situation. At the time of the survey, 36% of these respondents did not have access to safe drinking water and 36% did not have sufficient and affordable heating. Limited awareness of or access to supports likely plays a contributing role in their inability to access safe drinking water and/or sufficient and affordable heating.

Also important to note is that 54% of all housing insecure respondents are 45 years or older. With an aging housing insecure population, supports and services must be designed and offered specifically to reach older adults struggling with their housing situation. People experiencing housing insecurity age physiologically and psychologically at much higher rates than people who are housing secure. Most 45+ year-olds experiencing housing insecurity are considered seniors, as their physiological and psychological health match or surpass that of a 65+ year-old person who is housing secure; this is called “functionally geriatric” (Campbell et al., 2017; Demallie et al., 1997; Rota-Bartelink and Lipmann, 2007; McDonald et al., 2007). Moving forward, it is important to promote and increase awareness of current senior support services and to consider implementing new support services designed specifically for older adults experiencing housing insecurity.

Additionally, 15% of housing insecure respondents reported needing emergency shelter services at some point in the 12 months before completing the survey, but did not access them. The main reasons respondents did not access shelter services when needed was because there was a lack of disability accommodations at the shelter. Given this, efforts should be made to further identify service gaps in the community and address these gaps, either by offering new services or by better promoting the availability of current services that community members may not be aware of. Additionally, ensuring programs and services are physically accessible will be critical moving forward.

Recommendations:

- Conduct an informal audit of services (also called service mapping) in Athabasca.
- Determine gaps in service delivery in Athabasca and develop an action plan for filling any gaps in services.
- Promote current programs and service offerings that support community members experiencing housing insecurity and/or with health and wellness concerns.
- Promote current seniors-specific programs and service offerings.
- Conduct an Age-Friendly Assessment to review outdoor spaces and buildings, transportation and housing, respect and inclusion, social participation, civic participation and employment opportunities, communication and information, and community support and health services for their age-friendliness and develop an Age-Friendly Action plan.
- Audit programs and services to ensure they are physically accessible for housing insecure residents with mobility challenges and develop a plan for addressing any lack of accessibility findings.
- Host training sessions for service providers in Athabasca focused on providing inclusive and culturally appropriate services.

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