

Westlock

2025 Alberta Provincial
Estimations and Service Needs

Community Report



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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 Westlock 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 Westlock'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 Westlock. It can also be used in the community 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 Westlock 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 Westlock 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 Westlock's participation in previous Provincial and custom 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
2020	9	2	1	3
2023 (custom)	420	246	512	758



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 Westlock 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 Westlock’s location parameters.

Figure 1: Westlock's Location Question on Survey

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

- Town of Westlock
- Westlock County
- Village of Clyde
- Other: _____

RDN worked with Westlock to develop a survey administration process to ensure the greatest participation level possible. For Westlock, 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?

Westlock collected 56 survey responses during the four weeks. Of the 56 surveys, 12 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, 44 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 Westlock 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 Westlock 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 Westlock.



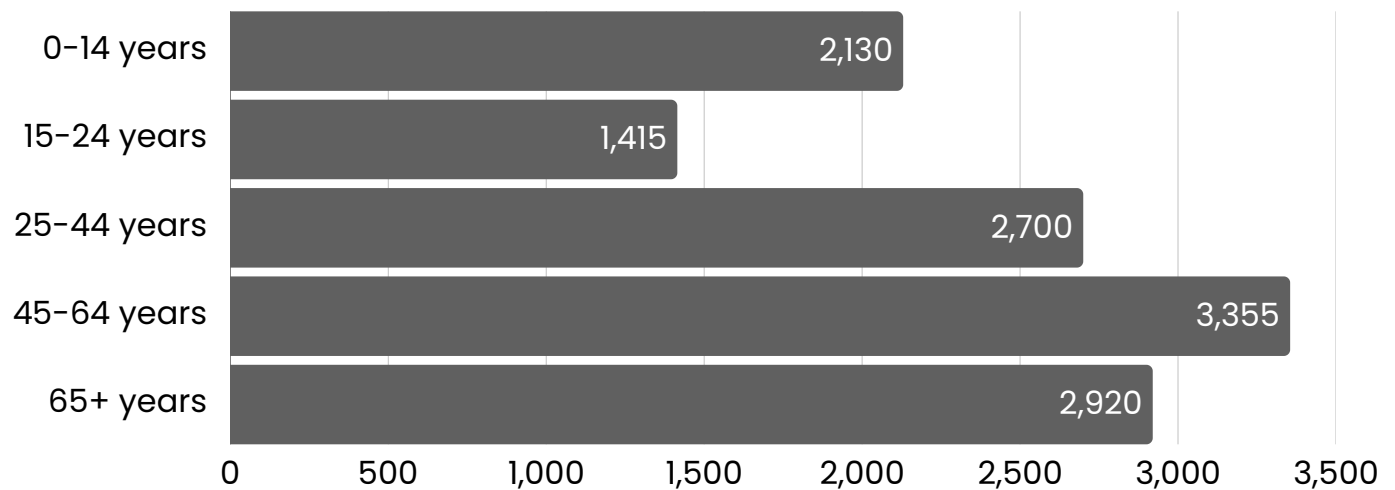
Results and Analysis

Westlock Population Overview

According to Alberta's Regional Dashboard (Government of Alberta, 2025a-c), the Town of Westlock, the County of Westlock, and the Village of Clyde cover a combined 3251.9 square km of geographical land base and have a combined population size of 12,521 (Statistics Canada, 2021a-c).

50.4% (6,315) of the Town of Westlock, the County of Westlock, and the Village of Clyde reported as women, while 49.5% (6,205) reported as men (Statistics Canada, 2021a-c).

Figure 3: Population Age Breakdown (2021a-c)



The average age in the Town of Westlock, the County of Westlock, and the Village of Clyde is 43.3 years.

According to Statistics Canada (2021a-c) Census numbers, in the Town of Westlock, the County of Westlock, and the Village of Clyde, 15.6% (715) of the population were immigrants to Canada. Further, 8% (1,045) of the combined population identified as Indigenous, 24% (250) of whom were First Nations and 73% (765) were Métis.

The 2021 Census also reported that the Town of Westlock, the County of Westlock, and the Village of Clyde have a combined 5,010 private dwellings with an average of 2.3 people per household. Of the 5,010 private dwellings, 78.5% (3,935) were owned, while 21.4% (1,075) were rented, with average monthly shelter costs for rented dwellings reported as \$1,067.33. Additionally, 77.6% (3,880) were single-detached houses, 7.8% (390) were apartments,¹ 11.5% (575) were moveable dwellings,² 1.7% (85) were semi-detached houses, and 1.3% (65) were row houses.

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.

25.4% (1,275) of households in the Town of Westlock, the County of Westlock, and the Village of Clyde 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.”

The median after-tax income in the Town of Westlock, the County of Westlock, and the Village of Clyde is \$34,400 for individuals and \$64,500 for households (2021a-c). The Economic Research Institute (2026) estimates the cost of living to be equal to the national average and 4% lower than the Alberta provincial average for the Town of Westlock.

Housing & Service Needs Estimation Survey

Respondent Population Overview

Gender and Sexuality

73% (32) of participants identified as women, 18% (8) as men, 4.5% (2) as gender non-conforming, 2% (1) as trans-women, and 2% (1) as unsure.

79% (35) of respondents identified as straight, 7% (3) as Two-Spirit, and 2% (1) as bisexual/pansexual. Additionally, 11% (5) of respondents preferred not to answer.

Age

5% (2) of respondents were between the ages of 15 and 24, 52% (23) were 25 to 44, 25% (11) were 45 to 65, and 18% (8) were 65 and older.

Household Makeup

31% (9) of respondents indicated they live in a multi-generational home and 69% (20%) were in single-parent households.

Time Spent in Care

27% (12) of respondents indicated they spent time in foster care, a youth group home, or in a youth/young adult agreement.

Immigration

82% (36) of respondents were born in Canada, while 18% (8) immigrated to Canada. 100% (8) of respondents who immigrated to Canada have lived here for more than ten years.

Race and Indigenous Identity

95% (42) of respondents identified as white, compared to 2.5% (1) of racially diverse respondents. 2.5% (1) of respondents preferred not to answer.

Further, 23% (10) of respondents self-identified as Indigenous. Of those respondents who self-identified as Indigenous, 50% (5) identified as First Nations and 50% (5) as Métis.

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 whom served in the RCMP.

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 44 survey respondents, 19 self-identified as housing insecure, five indicated “I’m not sure,” while 20 indicated they were housing secure. Using the national definitions of homelessness to guide further analysis, 35 survey respondents were identified as housing insecure and nine as housing secure. An additional 52 dependents under 18 and 32 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 Westlock.

Table 2: Breakdown of Respondent Housing Status

	# of Individuals
Housing Secure	9
Housing Insecure	35

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

	# of Additional Individuals
Dependents	52
Adults	32

Based on survey results, there were at least 119 community members experiencing housing insecurity in Westlock.

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

1. Low vacancy rates³
2. High housing costs⁴
3. Health challenges⁵

³ “There is almost no vacancy/no rentals available”

⁴ “My rent/mortgage is too high for my current income”

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	9	35
Gender	Gender non-conforming: 0	Gender non-conforming: 2
	Man: 2	Man: 6
	Trans-man: 0	Trans-man: 0
	Trans-woman: 0	Trans-woman: 1
	Woman: 7	Woman: 25
	Not sure: 0	Not sure: 1
Sexual Orientation	Asexual: 0	Asexual: 0
	Bisexual/Pansexual: 0	Bisexual/Pansexual: 1
	Lesbian/Gay: 0	Lesbian/Gay: 0
	Straight: 9	Straight: 26
	Two-Spirit: 0	Two-Spirit: 3
	Not sure: 0	Not sure: 0
Age	0-14 years: 0	0-14 years: 0
	15-24 years: 0	15-24 years: 2
	25-44 years: 3	25-44 years: 20
	45-64 years: 3	45-64 years: 8
	65+ years: 3	65+ years: 5

Demographic Characteristic	Housing Secure	Housing Insecure
Household Makeup	Pregnancy in household: 0	Pregnancy in household: 0
	Multi-generational household: 0	Multi-generational household: 9
	Single-parent household: 4	Single-parent household: 16
	Spent time in care: 0	Spent time in care: 12
Immigration Status	Born in Canada: 8	Born in Canada: 28
	Born outside of Canada: 1	Born outside of Canada: 7
Racial Identity	White: 9	White: 33
	Racialized: 0	Racialized: 1
Indigenous Identity	First Nations: 0	First Nations: 5
	Métis: 0	Métis: 5
	Inuk: 0	Inuk: 0
	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: 1
	Emergency Services: 0	Emergency Services: 0

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

- Respondents identifying as women were 4.2 times more likely than their male counterparts to be housing insecure.
- 100% of respondents who identified as 2SLGBTQIA+ were housing insecure.
- 100% of racialized respondents were housing insecure.
- 100% of Indigenous respondents were housing insecure.
- 100% of respondents who spent time in care were housing insecure.
- 100% of respondents living in a multi-generational household were housing insecure.

Exploring the Spectrum of Homelessness in Westlock

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 Westlock. This understanding can be achieved by exploring the experiences of the 35 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 Westlock. 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	7
Emergency Sheltered	4
Provisionally Accommodated	32
At Risk of Homelessness	50

The above table illustrates respondents' diverse experiences with housing insecurity in Westlock, 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,
- Staying in a home where they experienced violence because they had nowhere else to go, and/or
- Enduring unwanted sexual activity to have a place to stay.

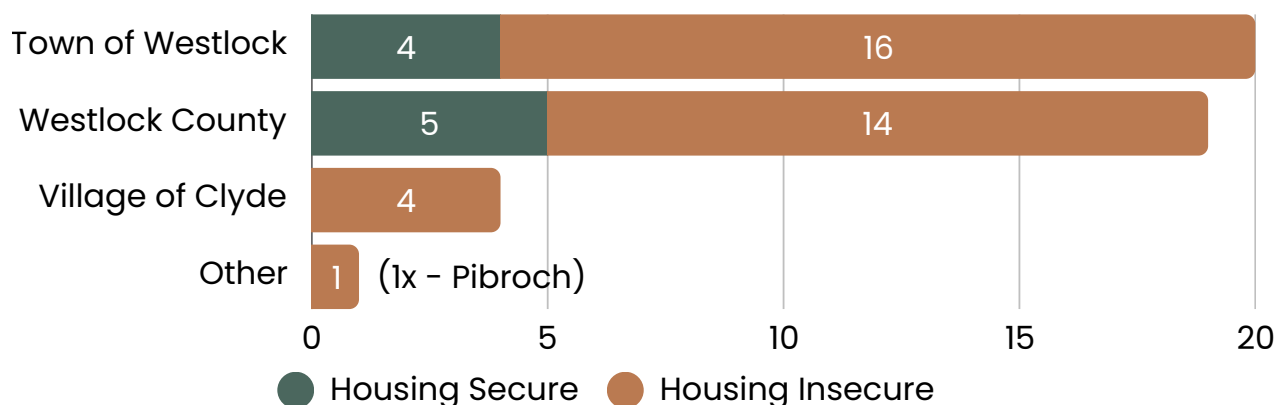
Respondents who had experiences of being **emergency sheltered or unsheltered** reported:

- Staying in an emergency shelter,
- Staying in a women's/domestic violence shelter, and/or
- Staying in makeshift shelters such as a vehicle, tent, or shack.

Living Situation

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

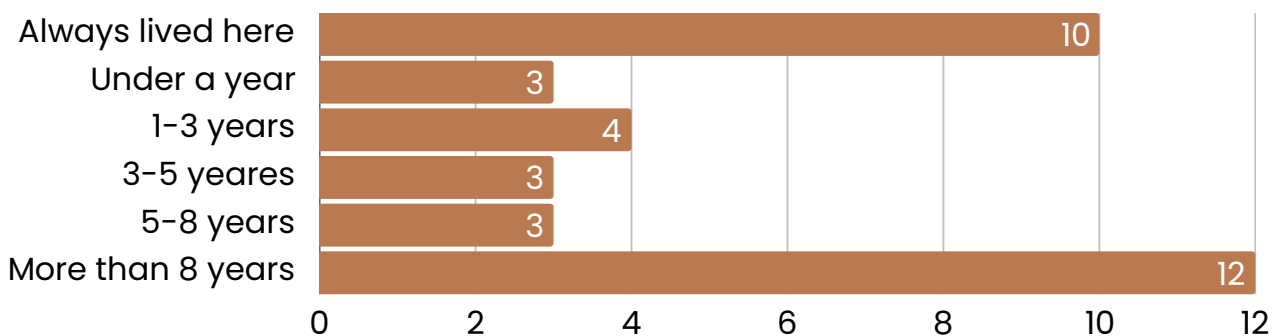
Figure 4: Breakdown of Survey Respondents by Location



Migration

32% (14) of all respondents, 71% (10) of which are housing insecure, have always lived in and around Westlock. 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 Westlock



71% (25) of housing insecure respondents were not born in Westlock. 75% (12) moved from another community in Alberta, 19% (3) moved from another province or territory, and 6% (1) moved from another country.

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 respondents came to the area are:

- Family-related reasons (to be closer to family, to follow family, etc.)
- Housing-related reasons (to access affordable and appropriate housing, etc.)
- Employment-related reasons (look for work, work-related transfer, more work opportunities, etc.)

Other reasons housing insecure respondents moved to the community included fear for safety/fleeing from violence, education opportunities (to attend school, access better educational opportunities, etc.), for the lifestyle the community offers, access to services, the connection to culture, community, and traditions, and access to emergency shelters.

In comparison, the top three reasons housing insecure respondents stayed in the area are:

- Family-related reasons (to be closer to family, to follow family, etc.)
- Access to services,
- Employment-related reasons (look for work, work-related transfer, more work opportunities, etc.)

Other reasons housing insecure respondents stayed in the community included for the connection to culture, community, and traditions, housing-related reasons (to access affordable and appropriate housing, etc.), for the lifestyle the community offers, and fear for safety/fleeing from violence.

Noteworthy here is that 83% (15) of housing insecure respondents have moved between one and two times in the past 12 months and 17% (3) 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). 11% (4) of housing insecure respondents indicated that they owned their homes, 74% (26) indicated that they rented their homes, and 14% (5) noted that they neither owned nor rented. Comparatively, 67% (6) of housing secure respondents owned their homes and 33% (3) rented their homes.

15 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, 73% (11) of these respondents did not have access to safe drinking water and/or sufficient and affordable heating, 40% (6) did not have fire protection (including fire extinguishers, smoke alarms, and a safe exit out of their space), and 27% (4) did not have indoor plumbing/bathing facilities.

Table 6: Breakdown of Housing Insecure Respondents' Missing Amenities

Missing Amenities	# (%) of Respondents
Sufficient and affordable heating	11 (73%)
Fire protection (smoke alarms, fire extinguishers)	6 (40%)
Indoor plumbing/bathing facilities	4 (27%)
Safe drinking water	3 (20%)
Refrigeration	1 (7%)
Electricity	1 (7%)
Cooking facilities	1 (7%)

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.

Further, Table 7 highlights respondents' missing amenities by whether they rented or owned.

Table 7: Breakdown of Housing Insecure Respondents' Missing Amenities by Housing Situation

Missing Amenities	# (%) of Respondents who Rented	# (%) of Respondents who Owned
Indoor plumbing/bathing facilities	2 (17%)	0 (0%)
Sufficient and affordable heating	9 (75%)	0 (0%)
Safe drinking water	1 (8%)	0 (0%)
Refrigeration	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Electricity	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Cooking facilities	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Fire protection (smoke alarms, fire extinguishers)	3 (25%)	1 (100%)

Education, Employment, and Income

Education

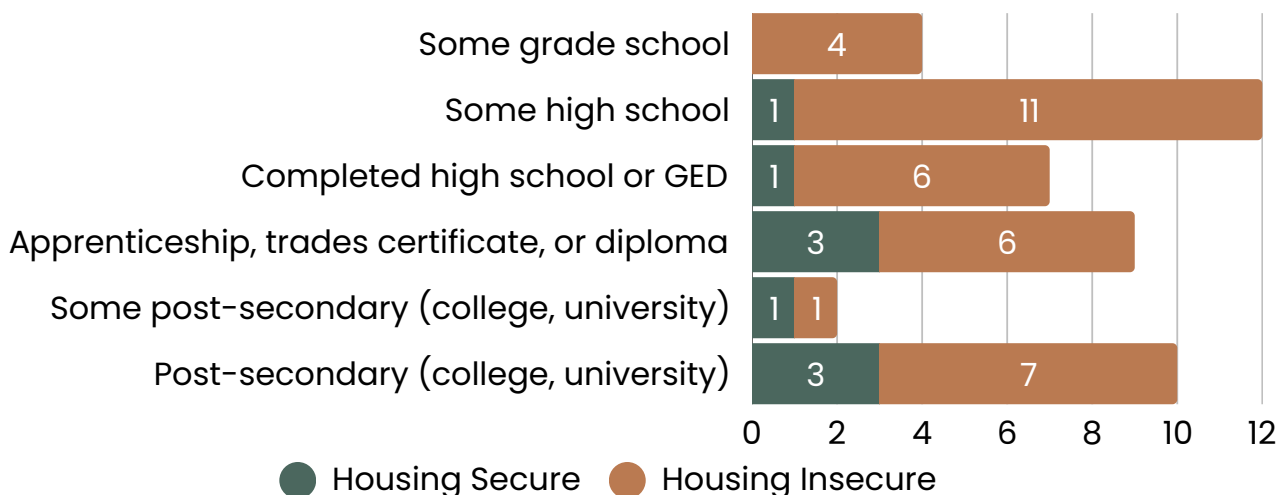
Respondents indicated various education levels when responding to the question, “What is the highest level of education you’ve completed?”

In Westlock:

- 9% (4) of respondents had completed some grade school
- 27% (12) had completed some high school
- 16% (7) had completed high school or received their GED,
- 20% (9) had an apprenticeship, trades certificate, or diploma
- 5% (2) had some post-secondary (college, university)
- 23% (10) 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

41% (13) housing insecure respondents were employed at the time of the survey. Additionally, three respondents indicated they were retired. Of employed housing insecure respondents:

- 62% (8) were full-time (e.g., more than 30hrs/week)
- 8% (1) were part-time (e.g., less than 30hrs/week)
- 8% (1) were casual
- 23% (3) indicated “other” and stated they were either working multiple part-time jobs or a full-time and part-time job

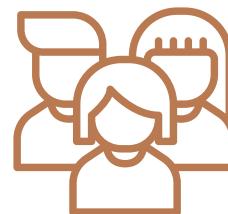
In comparison, 86% (6) of housing secure respondents were employed at the time of the survey and two were retired. Of those employed: 100% (6) were full-time (e.g., more than 30hrs/week)

Unemployment Amongst Housing Insecure Respondents

56% (18) of housing insecure respondents were unemployed at the time of the survey. Based on additional analysis, we know that:

50% identified as women, **33%** men, **11%** as gender non-conforming, and **6%** as unsure

61% were straight, **17%** were Two-Spirit, **6%** were bisexual/pansexual, and **17%** preferred not to answer



Age Breakdown

25-44	61%
45-64	28%
65+	11%

Indigenous Identity

- 44%** were Indigenous
- **63%** were First Nations
 - **38%** were Métis

Income

Housing insecure respondents were also asked to disclose their approximate household income for the previous year. Responses varied widely, as seen in Table 8.

Table 8: 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	20 (57%)
Between \$22,001 and \$55,000	12 (34%)
Between \$55,001 and \$88,000	1 (3%)
Between \$88,001 and \$132,000	0 (0%)
More than \$132,001 ⁶	1 (3%)
Prefer not to answer	1 (3%)

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 \$132,000 or more 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.

This can be broken down further to understand household income level by housing security status, as seen in Table 9.

Table 9: 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	1 (11%)	20 (57%)
Between \$22,001 and \$55,000	2 (22%)	12 (34%)
Between \$55,001 and \$88,000	0 (0%)	1 (3%)
Between \$88,001 and \$132,000	1 (11%)	0 (0%)
More than \$132,001	4 (44%)	1 (3%)
Prefer not to answer	1 (11%)	1 (3%)

Of the housing insecure respondents, 91% reported a household annual income of \$55,000 or less compared to 55% of housing secure respondents who reported an annual income of \$88,001 or more.

Further, 57% (20) 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 Westlock, respondents were asked: *“Which support services do you access and where do you most often access them?”*

Housing insecure respondents primarily accessed services in Westlock for:

- Basic needs (91%)
- Financial supports (66%)
- Crisis financial supports (63%)

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

- Shelter services (46%)
- Health and wellness services (46%)
- Legal services (36%)

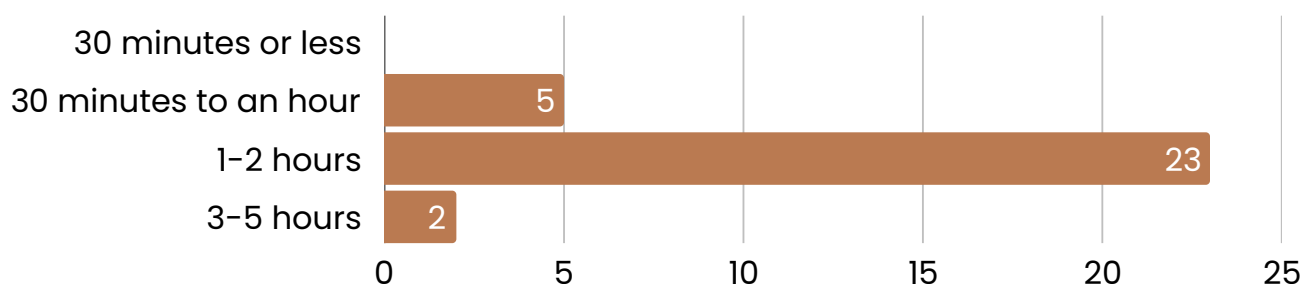
Table 10: Reasons Housing Insecure Respondents Accessed Support Services

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.)	29 (91%)	0 (0%)
Shelter (Emergency shelter, domestic violence shelter, transitional housing, affordable housing, etc.)	2 (6%)	6 (46%)
Financial (Rental assistance, non-market housing, financial life skills training/education, etc.)	21 (66%)	4 (31%)
Crisis financial support (Eviction notices, utility shutoffs, damage deposits, etc.)	20 (63%)	3 (23%)
Family/Parenting (Child care, parental resources, relationship issues, child developmental assessment tools/referrals etc.)	11 (34%)	2 (15%)
Health and wellness (Addictions, mental health, physical health care, spiritual or cultural well-being, etc.)	11 (34%)	6 (46%)

Legal (Separation/divorce/custody, wills/estates, employment/labour standards, landlord/tenant issues, immigration issues, criminal/misdemeanour, etc.)	6 (19%)	5 (38%)
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Of the services housing insecure respondents accessed outside of Westlock, 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, 58% (18) housing insecure respondents travelled by car or truck, 3% (1) took an e-bus, 42% (13) relied on a family member or friend, 10% (3) took a taxi or ride-share service, 10% (3) had a service provider arrange a ride for them, and 3% (1) hitchhiked or caught a ride with a stranger.

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

Six unique housing insecure respondents reported staying in a shelter in the past year. Among them:

- 50% (3) stayed in an emergency shelter,
- 33% (2) stayed in an emergency weather space or shelter, and
- 17% (1) preferred not to disclose what type of shelter they accessed.

Additionally, 6% (1) of housing insecure respondents reported stays in transitional housing.

31% (11) 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 11.

Table 11: Reasons Housing Insecure Respondents Did Not Access Shelter Services When Needed

Reason for Not Accessing Shelter Services	# (%) of Respondents
The right kind of shelter wasn't available (for example, I needed a women's or family shelter where I could stay with my kid(s) and couldn't access one)	2 (18%)
The shelter was full	2 (18%)
I exceeded my stay at a shelter	2 (18%)
No shelters in my area	2 (18%)
No pets allowed	2 (18%)
I didn't meet the intake criteria to access the shelter	1 (9%)
I didn't feel safe	1 (9%)
The shelter was unclean	1 (9%)
The shelter did not welcome me because of my gender identity	0 (0%)
Alcohol/substance use is not permitted on-site	0 (0%)
Lack of disability accommodations	0 (0%)
Lack of transportation	0 (0%)
The shelter was too far away from my family and/or friends	0 (0%)

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

To gain more insight into respondents’ perceptions of service provision in Westlock, 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 12: Total Respondents’ Perceptions of Westlock’s Provision of Services

Does the Community Provide Enough:	Yes	No	Unsure
Accessible, affordable housing	1 (2%)	38 (90%)	3 (7%)
Access to food (grocery stores, markets, food banks, etc.)	29 (69%)	11 (26%)	2 (5%)
Addictions and mental health supports (counselling, treatment, post-treatment support, etc.)	8 (21%)	20 (53%)	10 (26%)
Employment services (resume writing, job searching, etc.)	21 (51%)	11 (27%)	9 (22%)
Free/accessible recreation/social opportunities	6 (15%)	30 (73%)	5 (12%)
Public transportation services	1 (2%)	38 (88%)	4 (9%)
Social services (libraries, emergency services, outreach programs, etc.)	27 (66%)	12 (29%)	2 (5%)

In Table 12, there is a significant discrepancy in respondents who, at the time of the survey, believed there was enough accessible and affordable housing Westlock (2%) versus those who believed more housing was needed (90%). Additionally, only 21% of respondents believed there was enough addictions and mental health supports in Westlock and 2% believed there was enough public transportation in Westlock.



**Opportunities Moving
Forward**

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

- Foster community awareness and understanding of housing insecurity,
- Increase awareness of, and access to, services, and
- Encourage sustainable housing growth in Westlock.

Foster community awareness and understanding of housing insecurity.

Implementing a community engagement strategy is crucial to addressing housing insecurity in Westlock. The purpose of implementing a community engagement strategy is to support community learning on issues related to housing insecurity in Westlock. 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 44 survey respondents, only 19 self-identified as housing insecure. However, upon further analysis, 35 survey respondents were identified as housing insecure. This means that 16 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. Additionally, a community engagement strategy could garner support for community responses to housing insecurity such as increased service offerings and housing development.

With at least 119 residents experiencing housing insecure living conditions, public perceptions of housing insecurity must be met with understanding and empathy to successfully address housing insecurity in Westlock.

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 Westlock.

Increase awareness of, and access to, services.

46% 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 Westlock. Similarly, 53% of total respondents, both housing secure and insecure, indicated more addictions and mental health supports (counselling, treatment, post-treatment support, etc.) were needed in the community. Further, of the housing insecure respondents who accessed services outside of Westlock, 77% had to travel between one to two hours to access services. While 58% travelled by car or truck, 42% relied on a family member or friend to take them, and 26% had to either walk, bike, taxi/ride-share, or have a service provider arrange a ride for them. Further, only 2% of all respondents believed there was enough public transportation services in Westlock while 88% of respondents believed more were needed.

Also important to note is that 37% 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.

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, given that 100% of 2SLGBTQIA+ respondents, racialized respondents, and Indigenous respondents were housing insecure, it is important to consider whether services offered are inclusive and culturally appropriate.

Recommendations:

- Conduct an informal audit of services (also called service mapping) in Westlock.
- Determine gaps in service delivery in Westlock and develop or implement 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.
- Host training sessions for service providers in Westlock focused on providing inclusive and culturally appropriate services.

Encourage sustainable housing growth in Westlock.

It is critical to highlight the need for accessible, affordable, adaptive, and appropriate housing projects to increase housing options in Westlock. Two of the top three reasons for housing insecurity in Westlock were reported as low vacancy rates and high housing costs. Additionally, 90% of respondents believed there was not enough accessible and affordable housing in Westlock compared to 2% who believed there was enough accessible and affordable housing and 7% who were unsure if there was enough housing in Westlock. Further, 83% of housing insecure respondents have moved between one and two times in the past 12 months while 17% of housing insecure respondents have moved between three and six times in the past 12 months, suggesting a need for increased accessible and affordable housing to ensure respondent stability.

15 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, 73% of these respondents did not have access to safe drinking water and 40% did not have fire protection (including fire extinguishers, smoke alarms, and a safe exit out of their space).

11% of respondents reported staying at an emergency shelter, extreme weather space, or women's/domestic violence shelter and 6% in transitional housing units in the past twelve months. Additionally, 46% of housing insecure respondents reported accessing shelter services outside of Westlock.

It is also important to consider that 31% 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 top three reasons respondents did not access shelter services when needed were because 1) the shelter was full, 2) they exceeded their stay at a shelter, and 3) the right kind of shelter wasn't available.

Recommendations:

- Conduct a housing needs and demands assessment in Westlock to better understand housing need.
- Work with all levels of government to develop a model to deliver short- and long-term housing solutions in the community (e.g. emergency shelter, transitional housing, and affordable/below-market rate housing). This model should include wraparound supports typically associated with a Housing First Program.

- Conduct community engagement sessions to address concerns and misconceptions around housing development.
- Implement a Housing First philosophy into service delivery in Westlock.

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