

TRI-REGION

Housing and Service Needs Estimate



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The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH) defines **Homelessness** as the situation where an individual or family is without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it.

The term **At Risk of Homelessness** is being used throughout this report to refer to survey respondents that indicated their housing was either unstable or they were unsure of their housing stability when answering Question 6: Do you consider your housing situation to be unstable or feel you could easily lose your housing; or they shared reasons to demonstrate that their housing was precarious.

Unsheltered refers to survey respondents who shared that they were living in “other spaces” including camping, outdoor (sidewalks, parks, makeshift shelter), abandoned building, or couch surfing.

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ABOUT THE PROJECT

Project Background

20 communities across Alberta participated in the 2018 ARDN Homelessness Estimation Project. This project was one of the largest projects to collect rural homelessness data in the world. The project was funded in part by the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy and administered by the Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN) in partnership with the Family and Community Support Services Association of Alberta (FCSSAA).

Participating Communities included:

- Athabasca
- Banff and Canmore
- Camrose
- County of Grande Prairie
- Drayton Valley
- Drumheller
- Fort Macleod
- Grande Cache
- Greenview
- Hinton
- Jasper
- Lac La Biche
- Lacombe
- Kainai Nation
- Okotoks
- Peace River
- Ponoka
- **Spruce Grove and Stony Plain**
- Strathmore
- Wetaskiwin

This project aimed to capture data on the homeless population by using survey data gathered by service agencies. This data highlights the number of people who used the services within a particular predefined time frame (e.g. one month), providing a snapshot of homelessness within the community.

Homelessness is often hidden in rural communities and rarely looks like it does in urban centres. This method allows the community to gather information about "hidden" or precariously housed individuals who are at risk of homelessness.

Our Tri-Region Project

In the Tri-Region, data was collected over a consecutive 30-day period from October 9 to November 9, 2018.

All service providers were provided with training on the project and administration of the surveys.

A variety of methods were used to complete the surveys:

- Independently by clients or assisted by a survey administrator; and
- Electronically or paper

The survey was marketed as a call to action for residents to share their housing and service needs. The survey was promoted as a way to better understand the needs and challenges of people struggling in our community with the intent on using this information to improve services.

In addition to doing 30-days of surveys, our community hosted an event in which residents, known to be at risk, were invited to a supper and asked to share information through participating in the survey.

Community Partners included:

- Alberta Parenting for the Future
- Alberta Works
- Bredin Institute
- Native Counseling Services & Aboriginal Parent Link
- Neighbourlink Parkland
- Parkland Food Bank
- Parkland County Libraries
 - Duffield Public Library*
 - Entwistle Public Library*
 - Keephills Public Library*
 - Tomahawk Public Library*
- Primary Care Network Social Worker
- Spruce Grove FCSS
- Stony Plain FCSS
- Wabamun FCSS

Help us learn about
your housing and
service needs...

Count Me In

“free” PLEASE JOIN US FOR
SUPPER &
SURVEY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (FLASH DEBRIEF)

In the fall of 2018, **260** respondents completed the Tri-Region Housing and Service Needs Estimate survey. An additional **30** people (9%) started the survey but either did not complete or did not consent to the use of their data.

Of the people surveyed, **76%** have been in our community for years; **14%** have always lived in our community; and **6%** have been in our community for less than a year.

219
*ADULTS AT RISK OF
HOMELESSNESS*

84% of those surveyed indicated that they were At Risk of Homelessness.

Only **12%** of respondents felt their housing was stable.

4% preferred not to answer.

The top three reasons for housing instability identified were: **Low income (46%), Job Loss (14%), and Conflict (8%).**

18% of those surveyed were unsure where they would be staying in the next week.

Of those At Risk of Homelessness, **68%** indicated they were staying with family – **77%** with children, **48%** with partner, **14%** with extended family, and **8%** with parents.

Of the community partners that assisted in administering the surveys, Parkland Food Bank completed **73%**, Spruce Grove FCSS and Stony Plain FCSS completed **11%**, and Westview Primary Care Network completed **6%**.

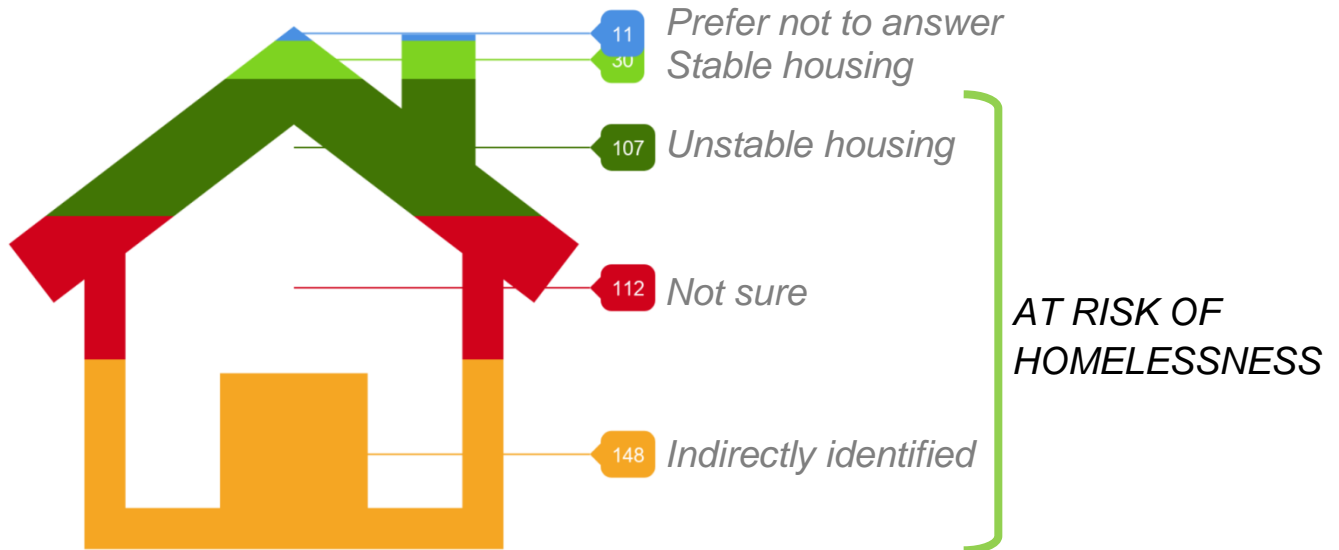
The remaining **10%** of surveys were completed by our other partners including: Alberta Parenting for the Future, Bredin Institute, Alberta Works, Neighbourlink Parkland, Aboriginal Parent Link, and the Parkland County Libraries.

10
UNSHELTERED

HOUSING STABILITY

The survey identified **219** adults who were At Risk of Homelessness.

93 people surveyed who were At Risk of Homelessness shared that they lived with other adults. From this indirect data, it may be determined that potentially an additional **148** adults in our community were living At Risk of Homelessness – making the total **367** adults At Risk of Homelessness.



4% of people At Risk of Homelessness transitioned housing during the survey period – half increasing their stability and half decreasing their stability.

11% of the people At Risk of Homelessness were unsure of where they would be living the following week.

HOUSING TYPE

Only **five** people At Risk of Homelessness (**7%**) reported their housing was subsidized or affordable housing.

171 people At Risk of Homelessness responded that they live in apartments or houses – **62%** rent and **26%** own.

Other housing situations shared included: **14** living in motel/hotel, **12** living with someone else, and **10** Unsheltered.

6% people preferred not to disclose their housing type.

REASONS FOR INSTABILITY

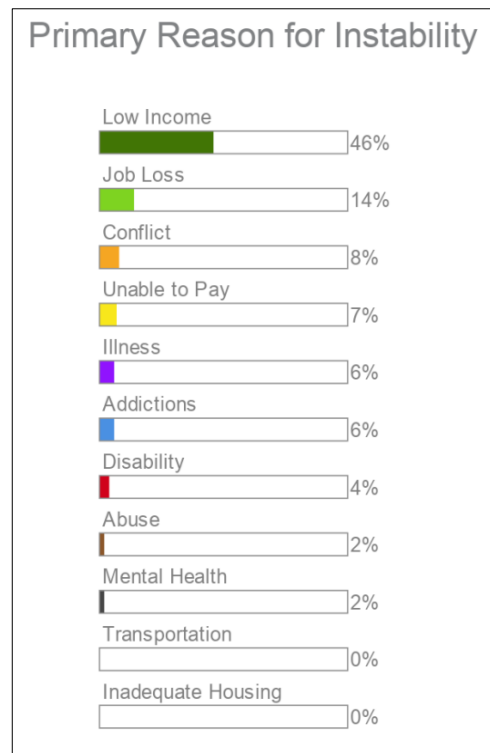
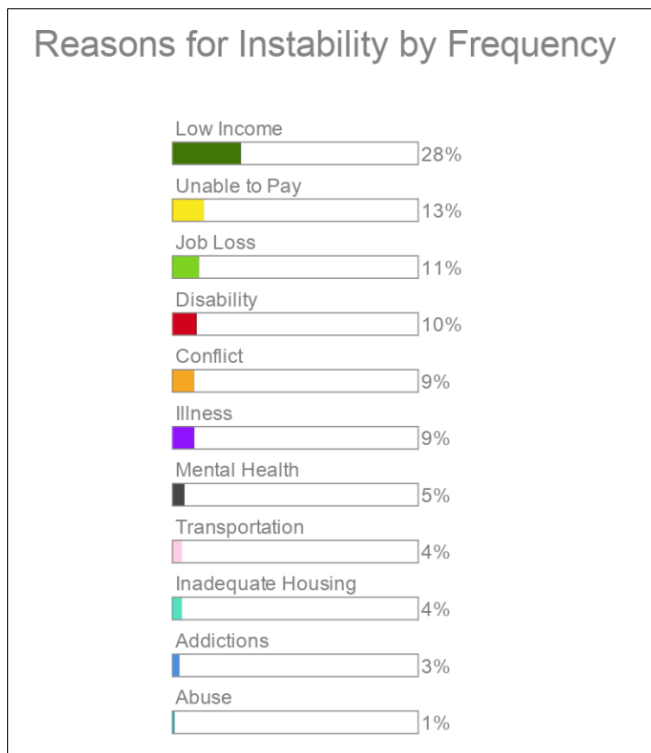
Interestingly, **43%** of respondents indicated that they preferred not to disclose their reasons for their housing instability.

77 people indicated that low income affected their housing stability, **37** people indicated inability to pay their rent/mortgage, and **32** people indicated job loss.

Job loss was most frequently reported to be from the Oil and Gas industry at **22%**. Other industries that were mentioned include: Health (16%), Finance (6%), Hospitality (6%) and Human Services (6%).

28 people indicated that disability played a role in their housing stability – **57%** physical and **14%** cognitive.

26 people indicated conflict played a role in their housing stability – **39%** with landlords, **31%** with spouses, and **19%** with roommates.



SERVICE NEEDS

73% of those surveyed reported that the primary reason that they were accessing support was for basic needs. This aligns with the fact that **73%** of the surveys were completed by clients of the Parkland Food Bank. We recommend changing this question on future surveys to a more general question of what services have you accessed or what services would you be interested in accessing.

Both community partners and survey participants expressed interest in expanding the survey to capture more data on types of service and service needs.

26% of those surveyed were seeking financial services – of these, **38%** were experiencing housing issues, **20%** required training or educational assistance, and **20%** indicated “Other” including: health, seniors, or disability benefits, medical equipment, bills or utilities, and food securities.

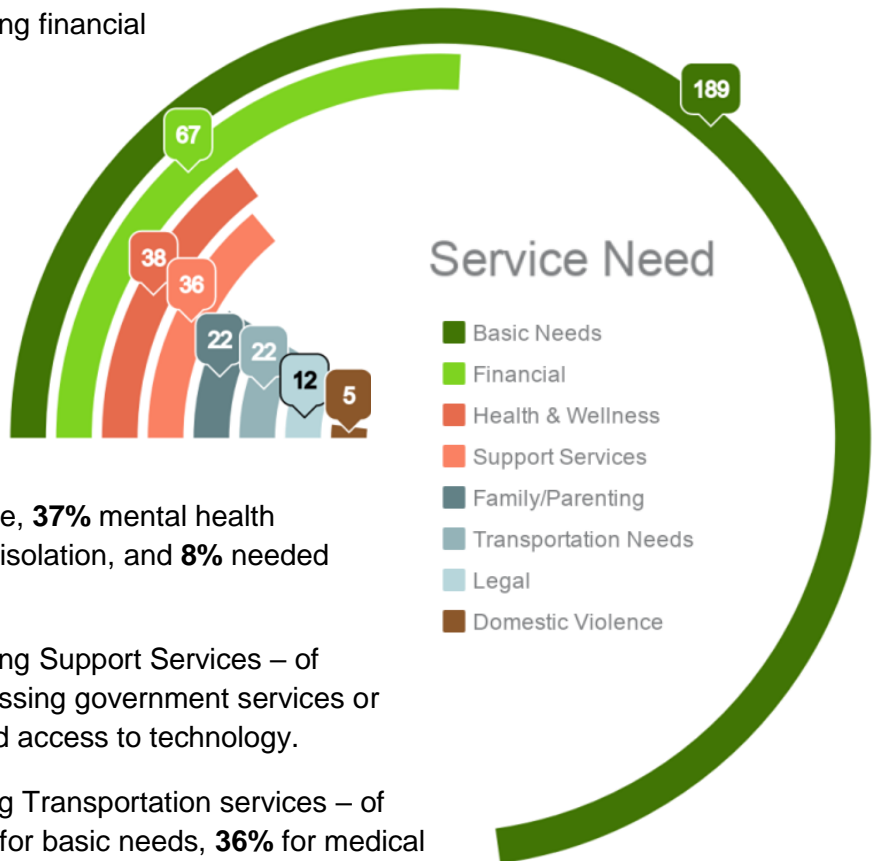
15% of those surveyed were seeking support for Health and Wellness services – of these, **42%** needed health care assistance, **37%** mental health assistance, **13%** expressed social isolation, and **8%** needed addiction assistance.

14% of those surveyed were seeking Support Services – of these, **81%** needed help with accessing government services or completing forms, **17%** just needed access to technology.

9% of those surveyed were seeking Transportation services – of these, **55%** needed transportation for basic needs, **36%** for medical needs, and **8%** for employment or education.

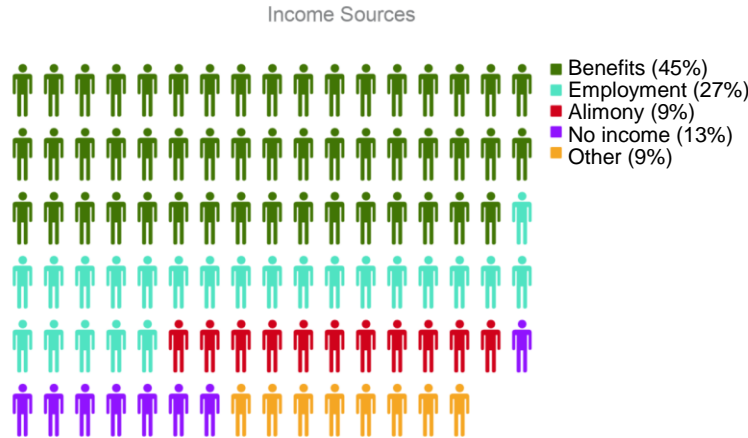
9% of those surveyed were seeking support for Family/Parenting services – of these, **36%** were seeking help on family/parenting issues, **27%** childcare issues, **18%** relationship issues.

5% of those surveyed were seeking legal support – of these, **58%** needed help with family law, **17%** needed help with will and estate planning, and **17%** expressed conflict issues.



INCOME

Benefits were listed as a source of income with **58%** of respondents who were At Risk of Homelessness.



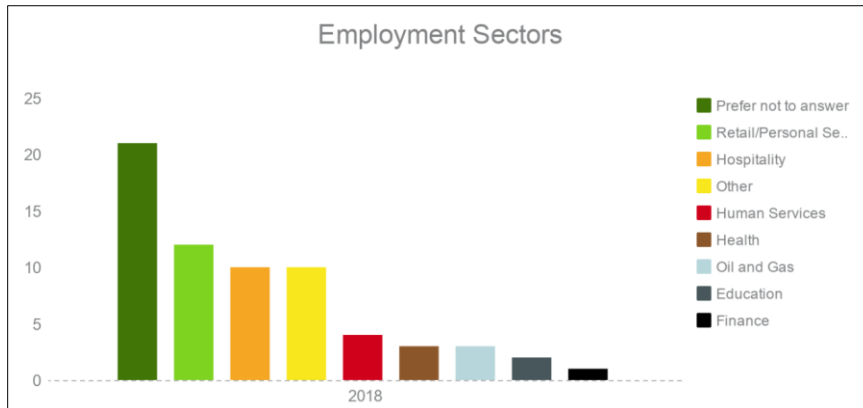
98 people were collecting non-senior benefits including: Child Tax Credit (38%), Alberta Supports Benefits (36%), AISH (27%), and Canadian Pension Plan Disability (16%).

19 people were collecting senior benefits including: Canadian Pension Plan (89%), Old Age Security (68%), Alberta Seniors Benefit (63%), and Guaranteed Income Supplement (16%). Other income sources reported included: Social services, foreign pension, social assistance, Retirement Income Funds, Alberta Works, spousal support, spouse pension, maternity leave, and intermittent work.

29 people reported no source of income; of these – **40%** were being helped by family or friends.

EMPLOYMENT

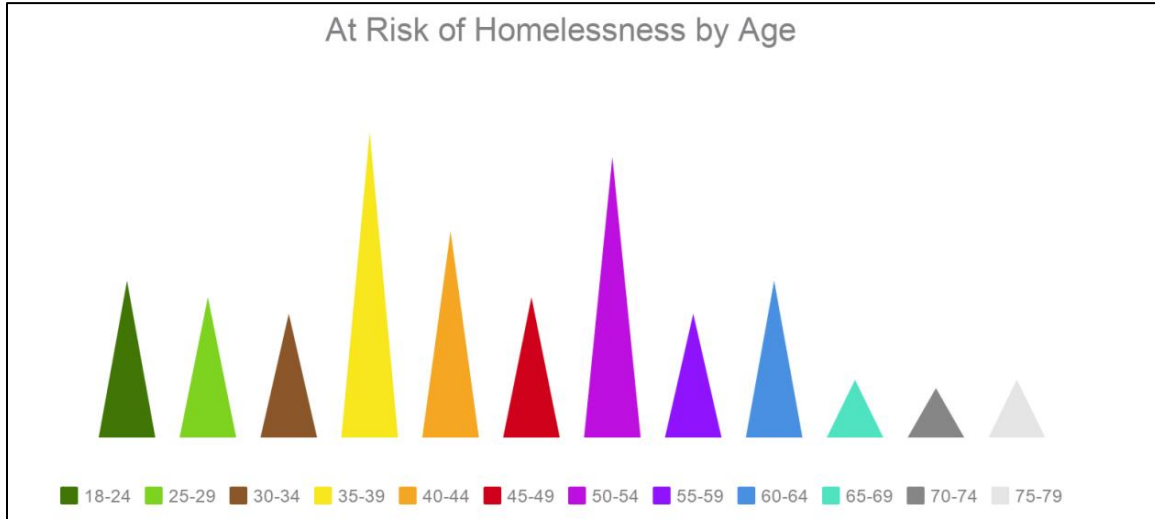
Employment was listed as the primary source of income for **59 (27%)** of At Risk of Homelessness respondents.



1 in 4
 PEOPLE
 AT RISK OF
 HOMELESSNESS
 ARE EMPLOYED

DATA BY AGE

People who indicating that they were At-Risk of Homelessness ranged in age from 18-70. Analysis shows that there were a greater numbers of people At Risk of Homelessness in the age groups of 35-39 and 50-54.



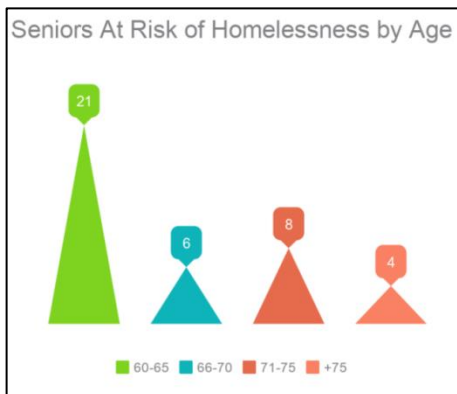
Children

No children under the age of 18 were directly surveyed; however, **114** people At Risk of Homelessness shared they were living with children (age 0-18), sharing the details of the number of children and their ages.

From this indirect data, it may be determined that **221** children in our community were At Risk of Homelessness.

221
CHILDREN
AT RISK OF
HOMELESSNESS

Seniors



The survey captured that pre-seniors between the ages of 60-65 were at greater risk of being At Risk of Homelessness than seniors over the age of 65.

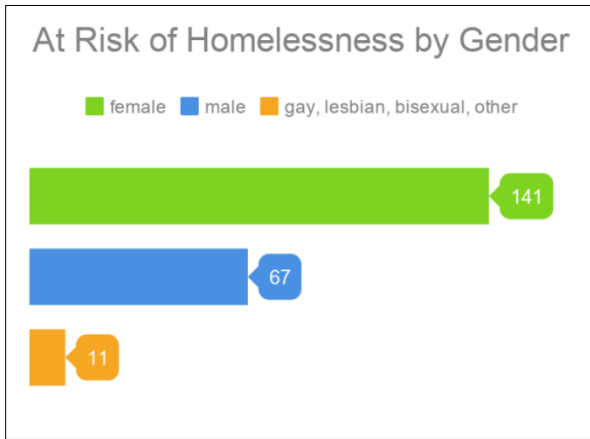
Although Low Income was listed as the primary reason of housing instability by most seniors who were At Risk of Homelessness, **10%** listed conflict (with landlord, spouse, or roommate) as the primary reason for housing instability.

The service needs of seniors were in line with the service needs of the general population.

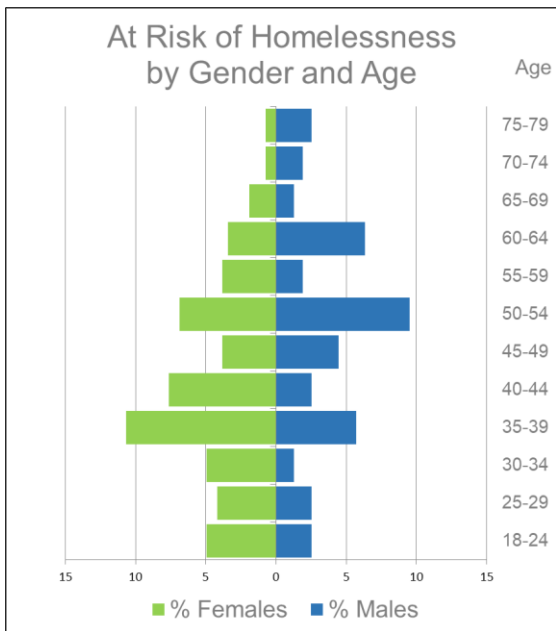
DATA BY GENDER

67 men and 141 women reported being At Risk of Homelessness. **2/3** of people surveyed who were At Risk of Homelessness were women.

5% of those At Risk of Homelessness identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or other.



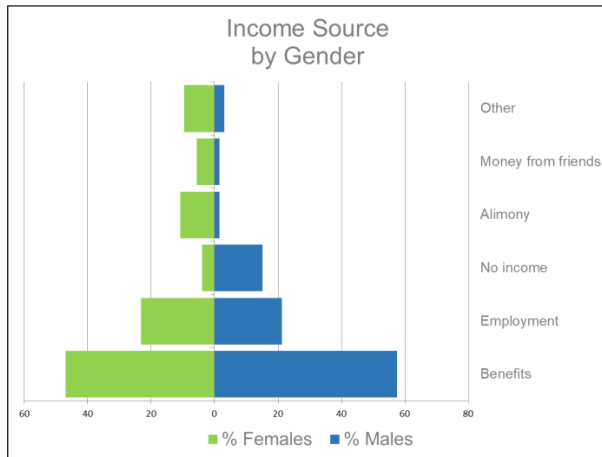
In general, the percentage of women At Risk of Homelessness was greater in the younger age groups 45 years of age or under, whereas, the percentage of men At Risk of Homelessness was greater over the age of 45.



Women At Risk of Homelessness received income from friends and family or other, more often than men At Risk of Homelessness.

Men were **three times** more likely to report having no income than women (5% of the women had no income compared to 15% of the men with no income).

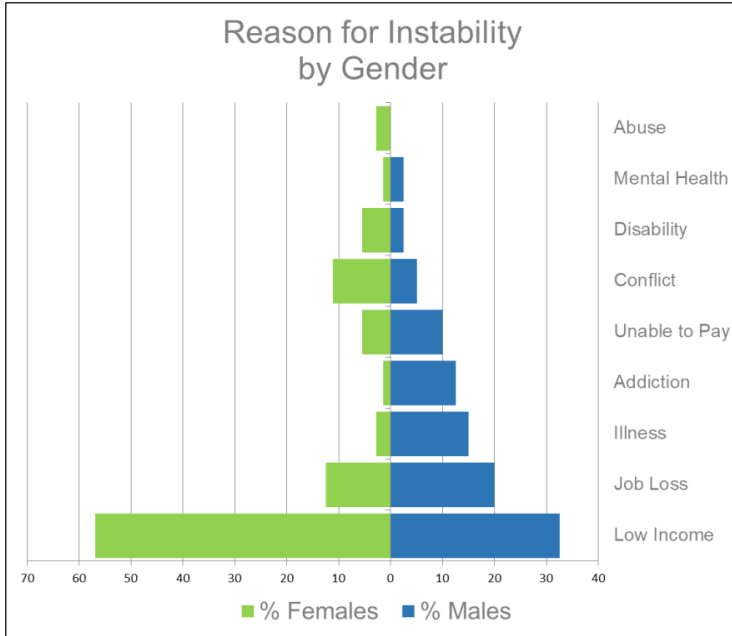
8% of the women At Risk of Homelessness were receiving alimony, compared to only **1%** of men.



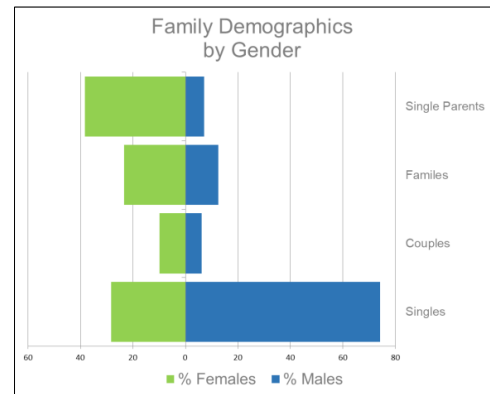
Of the people identified as At Risk of Homelessness, five were pregnant.



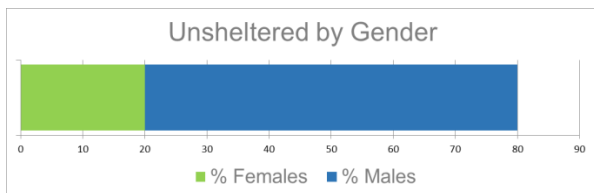
Both men and women identified low income and job loss as primary reasons for instability; however, men were more likely to also identify addictions and illness, whereas women were more likely to identify conflict, or unable to pay rent.



Single men were almost **three times** more likely than single women to be At Risk of Homelessness. Single moms were over **five times** more likely than single dads to be At Risk of Homelessness. There was no noticeable difference between male or female couples and families.

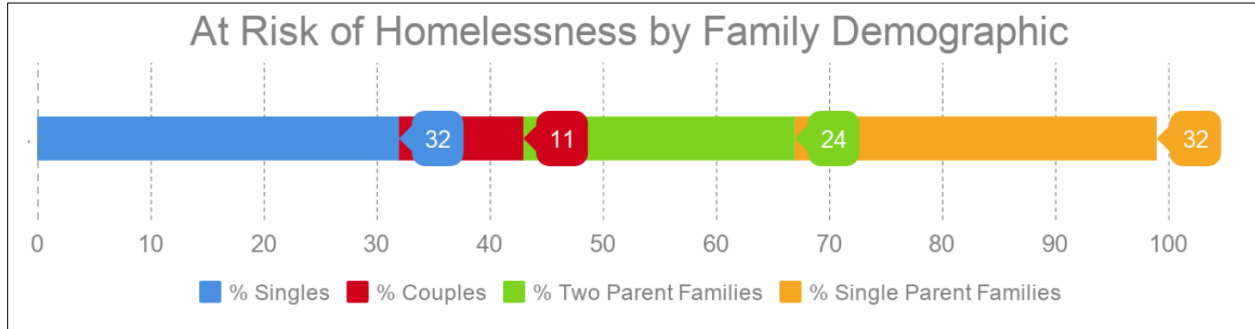


Men were **four times** more likely to be Unsheltered than women.



DATA BY FAMILY DEMOGRAPHICS

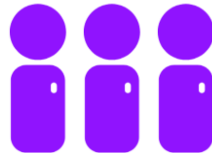
210 families indicated that they were at Risk of Homelessness – 114 families had children and 96 did not have children.



66 Single Adults living alone

114

Families with Children



9 Single Adults were living with extended family members (siblings, cousins, niece/nephew, step children, or aunt/uncles)



50 couples with children
6 of which were living in extended family units



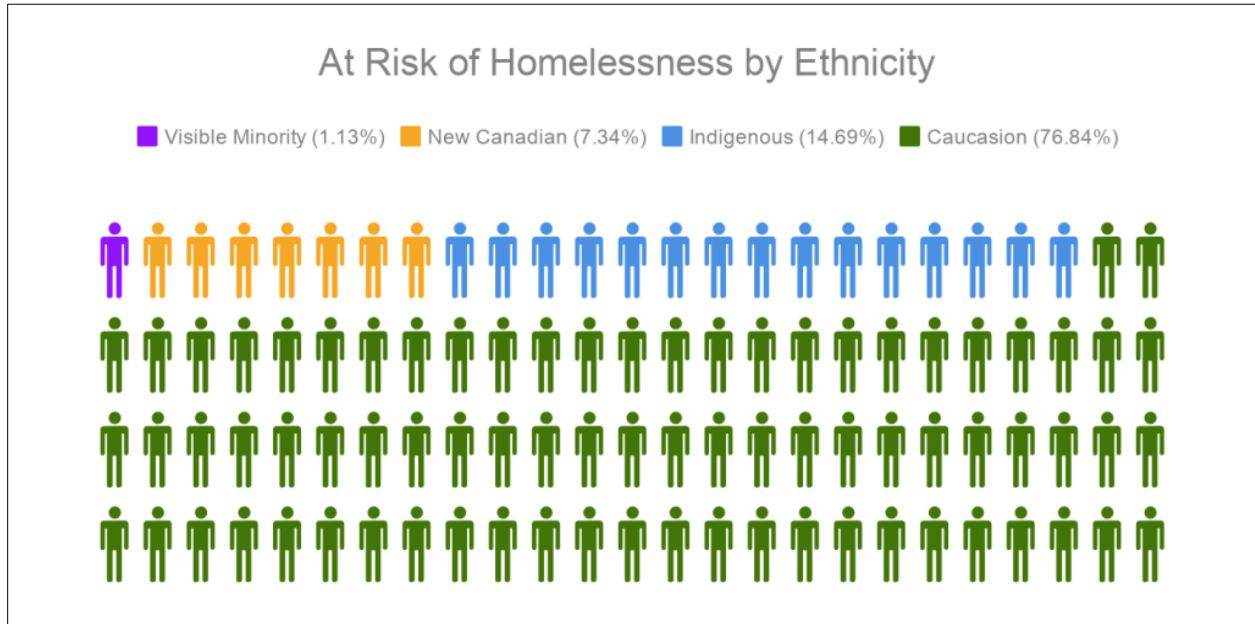
21 Couples



64 Single Parents
5 of which were living in extended family units

DATA BY ETHNICITY

136 people At Risk of Homelessness indicated they were Caucasian.



Indigenous

26 Indigenous people reported being At Risk of Homelessness – 13 First Nations and 13 Metis.

Immigrants

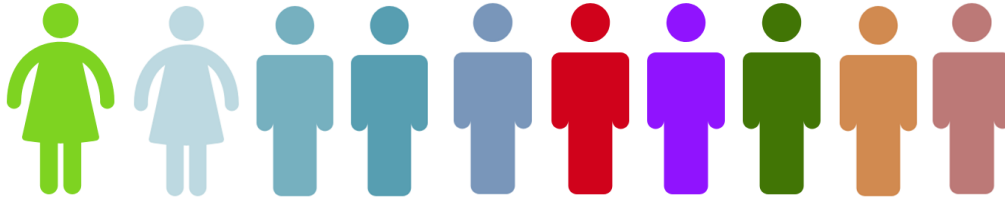
13 of those At Risk of Homelessness indicated that they were not born in Canada. Of these, the time lived in Canada ranged from 1-67 years, with an average of 28 years reported.

DATA FOR MILITARY/EMS

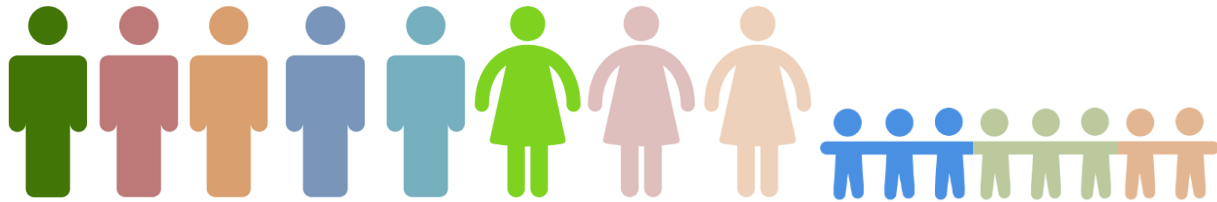
13 people At Risk of Homelessness reported having served in the Canadian Military and three reported having worked in Emergency Medical Services.

UNSHELTERED

10 people surveyed indicated that they were living in “other” housing including camping, outdoor (sidewalks, parks, makeshift shelter), abandoned building, or couch surfing.



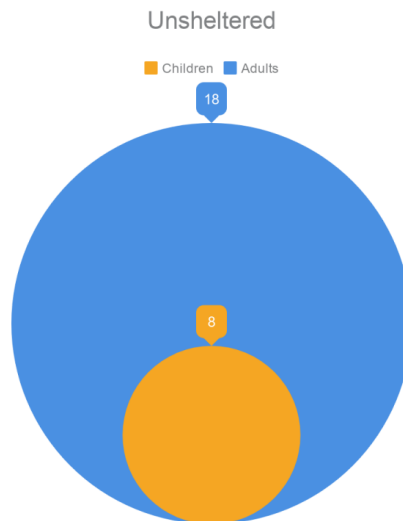
Four of these individuals shared that they were part of a family unit; from this, we can indirectly identify an additional **eight** adults and **eight** children who were unsheltered.



Bringing the total to **26** unsheltered adults and children living in the Tri-Region.

Out of the 10 people surveyed, **20%** of the unsheltered people were Indigenous peoples and **10%** had served in the military previously. **20%** were employed; **40%** were on benefits; and **30%** had no source of income.

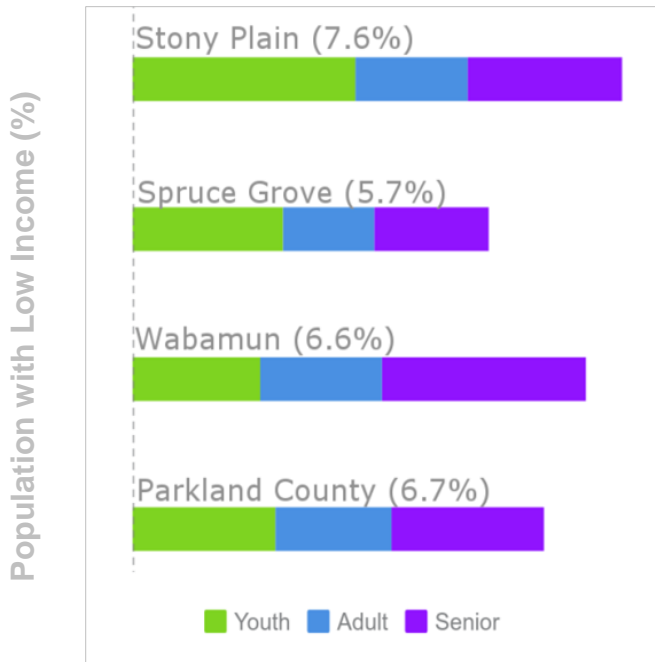
Primary reasons for being unsheltered were presented as Low Income, Addictions, and Unable to Pay Rent/Mortgage.



CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The data collected in this survey represents a limited sample size compared to the larger population which may be struggling with housing issues in our community.

In 2018, the Parkland Food Bank provided **16,771** food hampers to **4088** individuals in our Tri-Region community.



According to Statistics Canada¹ between 5.7% to 7.6% of our population are struggling with low income – approximately **5400** individuals. The snapshot provided by this survey captured housing and service needs feedback from only **4%-5%** of our region’s At-Risk population.

With this small sample, it is hard to make definitive analysis or identify strong trends. It does, however, provide us with many interesting data bits and a starting point for measuring our success in ending poverty, ensuring all residents are appropriately housed, and improving the health of our community.

As with any first-time project, the ARDN Homelessness Estimation Project faced some challenges. It has been noted by the ARDN that differences in methodology used to collect data, both within communities and across communities, may affect provincial data reporting.

Issues including discrepancies between electronic and paper surveys, different survey administration styles, varied project messaging, and different targeting tactics will all be considered in more detail prior to the next survey execution in 2020.

Differing data analysis must also be considered. One example of data variation includes the analysis of the number of At Risk of Homelessness respondents. The survey question of housing instability led the ARDN to report on self-identified respondents exclusively; however, the Tri-Region data team was able use follow up questions to create a more detailed measure of housing instability in our community. In this way, the ARDN reports and our report will measure different criteria.

This report represents a summary and basic analysis of data collected through the 2018 survey. Special thanks to all the community partners for their assistance and support with this project.

¹ *Source: 2016, Stats Canada Census Profiles, based on Low-Income measure after tax statistics – a generally accepted measure of poverty within communities across Canada.

SURVEY RESULTS 2018

We invite all community members and partners interested in specific data that may not have been included in this report to contact the FCSS offices for assistance.

The data collected from the project confirms existing statistics from service providers in our area. It is important to use this data to continue to enhance community knowledge of poverty in the Tri-Region. This data will allow us to raise awareness and gain support from the general community.

The success of this project supports the ongoing collaboration of community partners. It is important to continue to foster and strengthen relationships between service providers with the end goal of ensuring a coordinated community response to reducing poverty in the Tri-Region.

Community partners will continue to work on and support projects addressing community housing needs including subsidized and affordable housing projects.

Spruce Grove FCSS and Stony Plain FCSS will continue to work with ARDN to review and enhance the Rural Homelessness Estimation Project and Step-By-Step Guide for use across Canada. It is important to advocate expanding the survey to include more relevant data and to eliminate data discrepancies before our community's next survey in 2020.

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