

CLARESHOLM

Housing & Service Needs Community Report 2025





**Prepared By:
Rural Development Network
(780) 964-2736
11443 – 143 Street, NW
Edmonton, AB**

About this Report

In 2024, RDN partnered with Claresholm FCSS to conduct a Housing and Service Needs Estimation.

This report outlines Claresholm's estimation results, highlighting the number of residents who are housing insecure and their experiences with housing insecurity.

This report is intended to support decision-making across organizations, funders, and government about housing insecurity by providing reliable and up-to-date data on housing and service needs in Claresholm. It can also be used in the community for program 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 and fcss.director@claresholm.ca for more information on housing and homelessness in Claresholm.

Acknowledgements

RDN's physical office is located on the Traditional Territories of Treaty 6 and is home to many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples. As a national organization, we acknowledge that RDN staff and the communities we support live, gather, and organize across Turtle Island.

Inuit, Métis, and First Nations Peoples are experiencing homelessness at disproportionately high rates compared to non-Indigenous people in Canada. Unlike the common, colonialist definition of homelessness, Indigenous homelessness is not simply defined as lacking a structure of habitation; rather, it is more fully understood as a loss or breakdown of relationships between individuals, families, and/or communities and their land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages, and identities. RDN recognizes the ways in which settler relationships to both the land and the Peoples of this land have been broken and misused, causing and contributing to Indigenous homelessness. We also recognize the ways in which our presence on this land upholds colonialism and reproduces dispossession and violence for Indigenous people, further perpetuating experiences of Indigenous homelessness.

In an ongoing effort to support Indigenous communities in addressing issues of housing, homelessness, and service needs, we are committed to decolonizing homelessness research and advocating to funders for Indigenous self-determination in the housing and social sectors.

We share this acknowledgement to reaffirm our responsibility and commitment to reconciliation. We also recognize that this land acknowledgement is just that—an acknowledgement; it is but one step in our journey. We commit to upholding the conditions of the treaties that govern this land.

We thank you.

This report and its information were made possible by the efforts of many dedicated individuals and groups. First and foremost, we would like to thank the residents of Claresholm for sharing their experiences and insights with 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 agencies and the nursing students for their support, dedication, and commitment to this project.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Definitions: What Does “Homelessness” Mean?	1
Introduction	2
Methodology	3
• Limitations	6
Results & Analysis	7
• Claresholm Population Overview	8
• Housing & Service Needs Estimation Survey Respondent Population Overview	10
• Housing Secure vs. Housing Insecure Survey Respondent Population Overview	11
• Objective Housing Situation	13
• Exploring the Spectrum of Homelessness in Claresholm	14
• Living Situation	16
• Employment and Income	18
• Community Supports	22
• “What Would You Like to See More of in Your Community?”	26
Opportunities Moving Forward	27
• Foster community awareness and understandings of housing insecurity	28
• Increase awareness of, and access to, services	29
• Encourage sustainable housing growth in Claresholm	30
References	31

Definitions: What Does “Homelessness” Mean?

Homelessness

According to the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (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. Homelessness can stem from 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 identities” (Jesse Thistle, 2017).

The national definition of homelessness notes that individuals who become homeless can 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 shelters due to homelessness or 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 away 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 the term “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 an increasing concern in rural 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 homelessness in rural and remote areas is far less understood and acknowledged because of its “hidden” nature. Recent data suggests, though, that rural homelessness is prevalent at rates equivalent to or greater than urban per capita rates (Schiff et al., 2022).

In an attempt to better understand housing insecurity in Claresholm and collect evidence to support decision-making on housing and service needs in the community, RDN and Claresholm FCSS conducted a Housing and Service Needs Estimation. The purpose of the estimation was to:

1. Develop a contextually relevant process for local service providers to engage and collect informed data with community members experiencing housing insecurity.
2. Provide a comprehensive picture of housing insecurity in Claresholm, including demographic information on who is experiencing housing insecurity and details on service use and gaps.
3. Help inform service providers and municipal, provincial, and federal policies, practices, and funding decisions on housing insecurity, housing stock, and support services.
4. Elevate and incorporate the voices of people experiencing housing insecurity in Claresholm's responses to housing insecurity.

This is the first Housing and Service Needs Estimation conducted in Claresholm.

Methodology

The methodology employed in this Housing and Service Needs Estimation comes from the Step-by-Step Guide to Estimating Rural Homelessness, published by RDN. RDN developed the Step-by-Step Guide to Estimating Rural Homelessness because of the lack of available, accurate, and current data on rural homelessness. A lack of data limits the ability of rural communities like Claresholm to advocate for better resources for their residents.

RDN's guide is unique. It tackles the issue of housing insecurity from a traditionally rural perspective. It recognizes the difficulties of conducting standard Point-in-Time (PiT) counts in communities without service providers whose mandate is to address housing insecurity and with larger rates of hidden housing insecurity. Additional difficulties, such as geographical location, distance across communities, and lack of volunteer capacity, further challenge a community's ability to enumerate housing insecurity. In contrast, RDN's guide allows anyone, including small non-profits and local front-line agencies, to gather data on gaps in local housing and service needs without adding additional strain on workloads and capacities. A Housing and Service Needs Estimation is an accepted methodological tool for collecting data on housing insecurity.

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 base survey that reflected community contexts. From there, RDN worked with Claresholm FCSS to customize the survey to best suit the community's needs and contexts. The survey was developed following the definitions of homelessness by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. As a result of feedback from service providers, the survey itself was advertised as a housing and service needs survey rather than a homelessness survey. This shift in advertising minimizes triggering potential stigma associated with homelessness, which may cause distress to their clients. By re-framing the survey's language, service providers could encourage all clients to participate instead of targeting specific individuals, producing increased data.

To further minimize stigma throughout the survey, respondents were not asked to label themselves as housing insecure. Instead, they were asked whether they consider their living conditions secure and to fill out checkboxes that determine their objective housing situation. Based on responses to the latter survey questions and subsequent data analysis, RDN determined which respondents were housing insecure. As shown in the results outlined within this report, some individuals who do not consider themselves housing insecure or at risk of housing insecurity are considered housing insecure based on national definitions of homelessness.

The survey was advertised at service provider locations and online as an open Survey Monkey link across the community. It was available through these locations and online from February 3 to February 28, 2025.

Before the survey period began, RDN trained staff from participating agencies were brought in to support the data collection process and methodology. This training included ensuring respondents' confidentiality and privacy, securing informed consent, offering the survey in an open, non-intrusive manner, and placing extra consideration on meeting the individuals' reasons for visiting the survey agency before offering the survey.

It is important to note that consent was required from respondents at the beginning of the survey. In addition, a unique identifier was created to protect the identity of all participants. The unique identifier is a combination of letters and numbers from a participant's name and birthdate, allowing RDN to maintain the integrity of the data without knowing respondent identities.

To ensure no duplicate survey entries were included during data analysis, RDN data analysts cleaned the data by scanning surveys first for their unique identifiers and second for any anomalies. If multiple of the same unique identifiers are found, the most recent response from that respondent is included in the analysis. The surveys are also reviewed for anomalies that could suggest survey duplicates.

Figure 1: Unique Identifier Question on Survey

Q1. Anonymous ID code (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?

A total of 150 surveys were submitted during the four weeks. Of the 150 surveys, 48 were excluded. Surveys deemed unsuitable were excluded for one or more of the following reasons:

1. Survey respondent(s) declined to give consent;
2. Survey respondent(s) declined to provide the unique identifier or provided improper unique identifier information (i.e., characters instead of numbers, etc.); or,
3. Survey respondent(s) submitted multiple surveys (determined based on unique identifier(s)).

Based on this, 102 were determined suitable for further analysis, which will be the focus of the results outlined below.

Limitations

Despite our best attempts to reduce stigma and increase the accessibility of the survey, not all clients who were offered a survey chose to participate. Additionally, staff at participating agencies were informed that participants under 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' guidelines.

Additionally, the data does not represent Claresholm 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 Claresholm whose voices were not captured in this project. While the trends and highlights discussed are informative, it is always important to remember that this report presents a conservative picture of the housing and services needs in Claresholm.

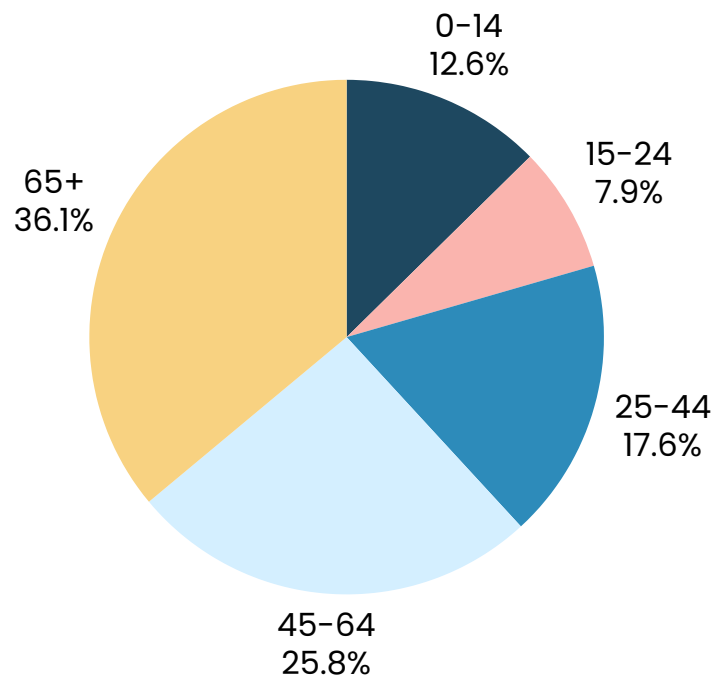
RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Claresholm Population Overview

According to Alberta's Regional Dashboard (Government of Alberta, 2025), the Town of Claresholm covers a 10.8 square km geographical land base and has a population size of 3,805 (Statistics Canada, 2021).

51.0% (1,940) of the Town of Claresholm reported as women, while 49.0% (1,865) reported as men (Statistics Canada, 2021).

Figure 2: Town of Claresholm Population Age Breakdown (2021)



The average age for residents of the Town of Claresholm is 50.9 years.

According to Statistics Canada (2021) Census numbers, 10.3% (365) of the Town of Claresholm's population are immigrants to Canada. Further, 4.5% (160) of the Town of Claresholm's population identified as Indigenous; 2.4% (85) of whom are First Nations, and 1.8% (65) of whom are Métis.

The 2021 Census also reports that the Town of Claresholm has 1,710 private dwellings with an average of 2.1 people per household.

Of the 1,710 private dwellings in the Town of Claresholm, 76.6% (1,310) are owned, while 23.4% (400) are rented, with an average monthly shelter cost for rented dwellings reported as \$1,109. Additionally, 72.8% (1,245) are single-detached houses, 12.3% (210) are apartments¹, 7.9% (135) are semi-detached houses, 3.8% (65) are moveable dwellings, and 2.9% (50) are row houses.

23.7% (405) of the households in the Town of Claresholm 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 Claresholm is \$34,000 for individuals and \$77,000 for households. The Economic Research Institute (2025) estimates the cost of living to be 2% lower than the national average and 5% lower than the Alberta provincial average for the Town of Claresholm.

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

Housing & Service Needs Estimation Survey

Respondent Population Overview

Gender and Sexuality

78% (69) of participants identified as women, 20% (18) as men, and 1% (1) were unsure. Additionally, 1% (1) preferred not to answer.

Additionally, 91% (77) of respondents identified as straight, 2% (2) as bisexual/pansexual, and 1% as asexual. 6% (5) of respondents preferred not to answer.

Age

Of the 102 respondents, 43% (44) were between the ages of 25 and 44, 42% (43) were 45 to 64, and 15% (15) were 65 or older.

Immigration

74% (67) of respondents were born in Canada, while 25% (23) immigrated to Canada. 56% (13) of respondents who immigrated to Canada have lived here for more than ten years, while 35% (8) have lived here between one to three years, and 9% (2) have lived here between seven and nine years.

Race and Indigenous Identity

76% (68) of respondents identified as white, compared to 8% (7) of racialized respondents. 10% (9) of respondents preferred not to answer, and 2% (2) self-disclosed as "Canadian".

Further, 6% (5) of respondents self-identified as Indigenous. 80% (4) of Indigenous respondents self-identified as Métis, and 20% (1) identified as having other Indigenous ancestry.

Veteran Status

Of the 102 respondents, 4% (4) indicated that they served in the Canadian Armed Forces, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), or emergency services, and 1% (1) preferred not to answer. Of those, 75% (3) served in emergency services, and 25% (1) served in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Housing Secure vs. Housing Insecure Survey

Respondent Population Overview

**Table 1: Housing & Service Needs Estimation Survey Population Overview
Comparison by Housing Stability**

Demographic Characteristic	Housing Secure	Housing Insecure
Number of survey respondents	30	72
Gender	Male: 5	Male: 13
	Female: 20	Female: 49
Sexual orientation	Straight: 22	Straight: 55
	Bisexual/Pansexual: 1	Bisexual/Pansexual: 1
	Asexual: 1	Asexual: 0
Age	0-14: 0	0-14: 0
	15-24: 0	15-24: 0
	25-44: 9	25-44: 35
	45-64: 15	45-64: 28
	65+: 6	65+: 9
Immigration status	Born in Canada: 21	Born in Canada: 46
	Born outside of Canada: 4	Born outside of Canada: 19
Racial Identity	White: 21	White: 47
	Racialized: 0	Racialized: 7

Demographic Characteristic	Housing Secure	Housing Insecure
Indigenous Identity	Métis: 1	Métis: 3
	Other Indigenous ancestry: 0	Other Indigenous ancestry: 1
Foster care/Youth group home	Yes: 1	Yes: 3
	No: 24	No: 61
Served in Canadian Armed Forces, RCMP, Emergency Services	Canadian Armed Forces: 0	Canadian Armed Forces: 1
	Emergency Services: 2	Emergency Services: 1

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

- Respondents identifying as women are 3.7x more likely than their male counterparts to be housing insecure.
- 75% of respondents who spent time in care are housing insecure.
- 80% of Indigenous respondents are housing insecure.
- 100% of racialized respondents are housing insecure.
- 83% of respondents born outside of Canada are housing insecure.

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 102 survey respondents, 31 self-identified as housing insecure, 6 indicated “I’m not sure” while 65 indicated they were housing secure. Using the national definitions of homelessness to guide further analysis, 72 survey respondents were identified as housing insecure and 30 as housing secure. An additional 92 dependents and 67 adults were reported as living with housing insecure survey respondents.

Table 2: Breakdown of Respondent Housing Status

	# of Individuals
Housing Secure	30
Housing Insecure	72

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

	# of Additional Individuals
Dependents	92
Adults	67

Based on survey results, there were at least 231 community members experiencing housing insecurity in Claresholm.

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

1. Low vacancy rates²
2. High housing costs³
3. Inadequate rental options⁴

² “There are no/very few rentals available in Claresholm”

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

⁴ “The rentals in Claresholm do not accept pets”

Exploring the Spectrum of Homelessness in Claresholm

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 Claresholm. This understanding can be achieved by exploring the experiences of the 72 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 Claresholm. This means that more incidents of housing insecurity are reported in the table below than the number of housing insecure respondents.

Table 4: Respondents by Housing Situation in the Homelessness Spectrum

Place on the Homelessness Spectrum	# of Respondents in Each Category
Unsheltered	6
Emergency Sheltered	0
Provisionally Accommodated	23
At Risk of Homelessness	95

The above table illustrates respondents' diverse experiences with housing insecurity in Claresholm, 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:

- Living in accommodations provided by a First Nation or Métis Settlement,
- Staying in an RV/trailer,
- Staying in a medical/detox facility,
- Staying with friends/family,
- Staying with a stranger,
- 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.

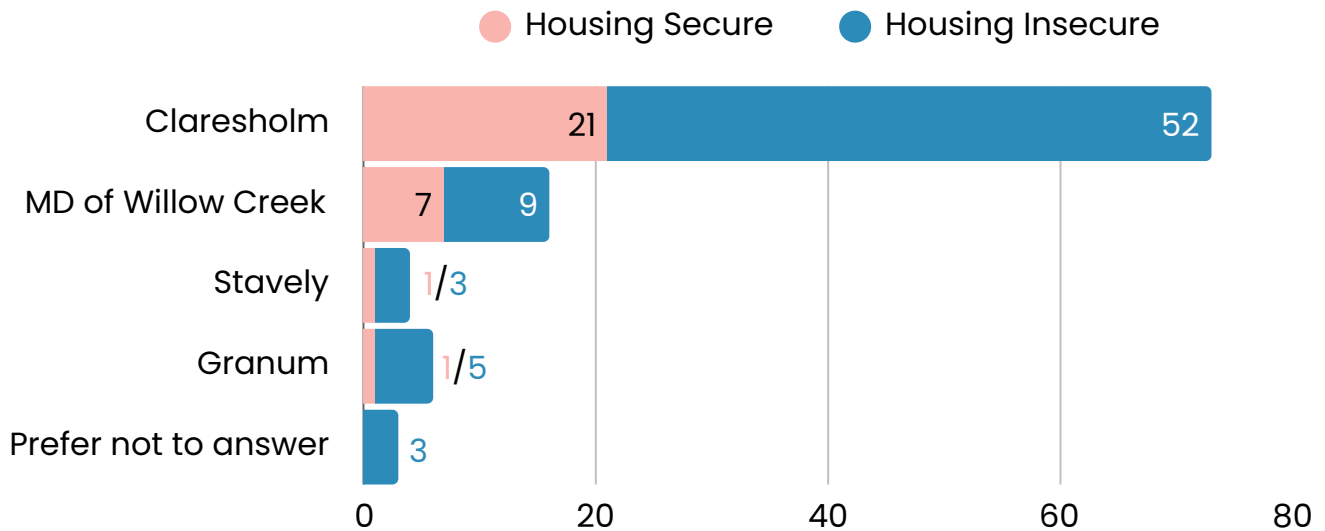
Respondents who had experiences of being **emergency sheltered or unsheltered** reported:

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

Living Situation

Residents in and around Claresholm responded to the survey, as seen in Figure 3.

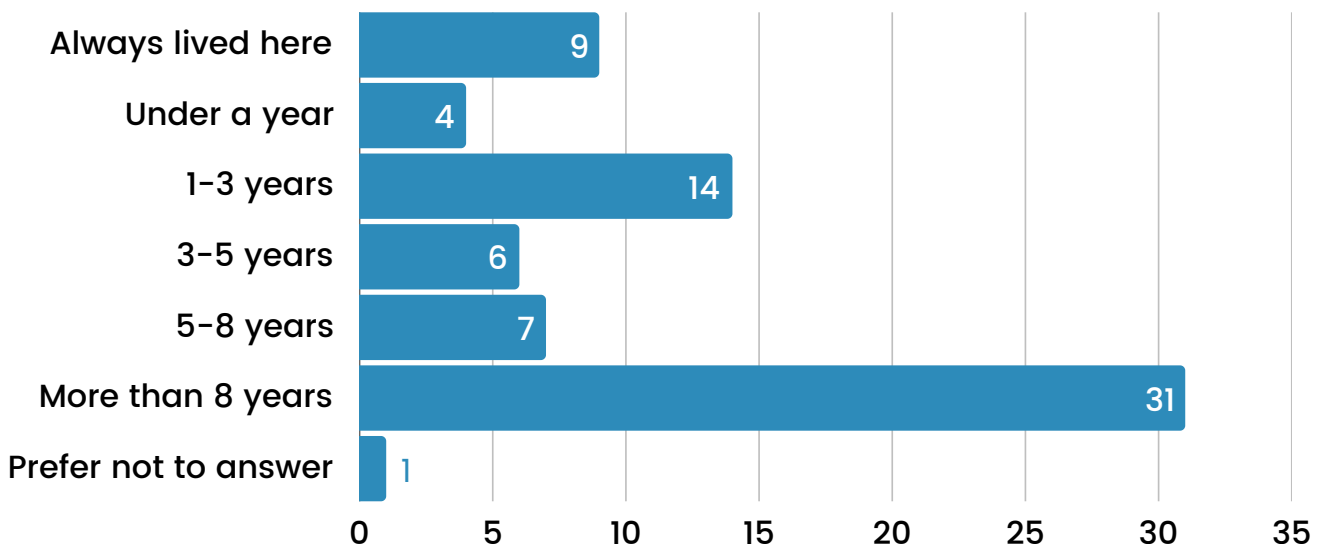
Figure 3: Breakdown of Survey Respondents by Location



Migration

12% (12) of all respondents, 75% (9) of which are housing insecure, have always lived in and around Claresholm. Figure 4 outlines the various lengths of time housing insecure respondents have lived in the community.

Figure 4: Breakdown of Housing Insecure Respondents' Length of Time Lived in Claresholm and Area



Missing Amenities

18 unique housing insecure respondents indicated that they lack specific amenities in their current living situation, many of which are considered necessary for a secure living situation. At the time of the survey, 61% (11) of these respondents did not have fire protection (including smoke alarms, and fire extinguishers), 44% (8) did not have access to safe drinking water, and 17% (3) did not have access to either heating or indoor plumbing/bathing facilities.

Table 5: Breakdown of Respondents' Missing Amenities

	Housing Insecure (n=18)
Fire protection (smoke alarms, fire extinguishers)	61% (11)
Safe drinking water	44% (8)
Indoor plumbing/bathing facilities	17% (3)
Heating	17% (3)
Electricity	11% (2)

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

Employment and Income

Employment

71% (46) of housing insecure respondents were employed at the time of the survey, 12% (8) were retired, and 2% (1) preferred not to answer:

- 53% (24) were full-time (i.e. more than 30 hours per week)
- 33% (15) were part-time (i.e. less than 30 hours per week)
- 2% (1) were casual
- 2% (1) were on contract
- 2% (1) were self-employed

Additionally, 7% (3) of housing insecure respondents indicated “other,” noting that they were either on maternity leave, on long-term disability, or were working two jobs – one full-time and one part-time job.

Interestingly, this is comparable to housing secure respondents’ employment trends. 72% (18) of housing secure respondents were employed at the time of the survey and 20% (5) were retired. Of those employed:

- 67% (12) were full-time (i.e. more than 30 hours per week)
- 22% (4) were part-time (i.e. less than 30 hours per week)
- 6% (1) were casual
- 6% (1) were self-employed

Unemployment Amongst Housing Insecure Respondents



At the time of the survey, **15%** (10) of housing insecure respondents were unemployed (not including those who indicated that they were retired). Based on additional analysis, we know that:

Age Breakdown

25-44 **40%**
45-64 **60%**



- **70%** identified as women, **20%** as men



- **92%** were born in Canada
- **8%** immigrated to Canada



- **70%** were born in Canada, while **30%** immigrated to Canada

90%

- were white and **10%** were Métis



- **60%** reported experiencing job loss within the past twelve months
- **70%** report spending more than **30%** of their income on housing

Income

Housing insecure respondents were also asked to disclose their approximate household income for the previous year. Responses varied, as seen in Table 6.

Table 6: Housing Insecure Respondents' Approximate Household Income in 2024

Household income	Housing Insecure (n=62)
Less than \$22,000	18% (11)
Between \$22,001 and \$55,000	32% (20)
Between \$55,001 and \$88,000	15% (9)
Between \$88,001 and \$132,000	15% (9)
More than \$132,001	5% (3)
Prefer not to answer	16% (10)

This can be broken down further to understand household income level by housing security status, as seen in Table 7.

Table 7: Respondents' Household Income in 2024 by Housing Status

Total Household Income in 2024	# of Housing Secure Respondents (n=25)	# of Housing Insecure Respondents (n=62)
Less than \$22,000	8% (2)	18% (11)
Between \$22,001 and \$55,000	8% (2)	32% (20)
Between \$55,001 and \$88,000	20% (5)	15% (9)
Between \$88,001 and \$132,000	36% (9)	15% (9)
More than \$132,001	20% (5)	5% (3)
Prefer not to answer	8% (2)	16% (10)

Of the housing insecure respondents, 34% (21) reported an annual household income of \$55,000 or less compared to 56% (25) of housing secure respondents who reported an annual income of \$88,001 or more.

Further analysis shows that of the 50 housing insecure respondents who reported spending more than 30% of their income on housing/shelter costs, 58% (22) reported an annual household income of \$55,000 or less in 2024. This means that housing insecure respondents were paying, at minimum, between \$550 and \$1,375 in housing/shelter costs per month at the time of the survey.

Community Supports

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

Housing insecure respondents primarily accessed services in Claresholm for:

- Basic needs
- Family/parenting
- Health and wellness

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

- Health and wellness
- Family/parenting
- Legal

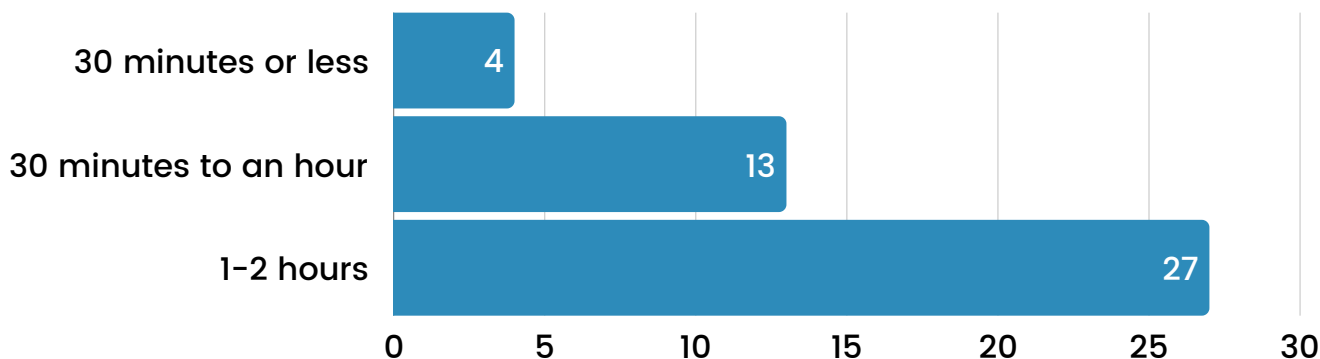
Table 8: Reasons Housing Insecure Respondents Access Support Services

Services Accessed	# of Housing Insecure Respondents who Accessed Services in Claresholm	# of Housing Insecure Respondents who Accessed Services outside of Claresholm
Basic needs (e.g., food, emergency shelter, clothing, etc.)	71% (25)	17% (5)
Financial (Rental assistance, financial life skills training/education, etc.)	29% (10)	21% (6)
Employment services (Resume writing, job searching, etc.)	29% (10)	17% (5)
Crisis financial support (Eviction notices, utility shutoffs, damage deposits, etc.)	20% (7)	10% (3)

Services Accessed	# of Housing Insecure Respondents who Accessed Services in Claresholm	# of Housing Insecure Respondents who Accessed Services outside of Claresholm
Family/Parenting (Child care, parental resources, relationship issues, child developmental assessment tools/referrals, etc.)	40% (14)	52% (15)
Health and wellness (Addictions, mental health, physical health care, spiritual or cultural well-being, etc.)	40% (14)	59% (17)
Legal (Separation/divorce/custody, wills/estates, employment/labour standards, landlord/tenant issues, immigration issues, criminal/misdemeanour, etc.)	37% (13)	31% (9)

Most housing insecure respondents travelled between one and two hours to access services outside Claresholm, as shown in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Distance Travelled by Housing Insecure Respondents for Services Outside Claresholm



To get to these services, 69% (38) of housing insecure respondents travelled by car or truck, 20% (11) relied on a friend or family member, 5% (3) walked or biked, and 4% (2) had a service agency or non-profit arrange a ride for them. Additionally, 2% (1) reported that they have had to cancel appointments due to challenges accessing transportation.

Shelter Use

1% (1) of housing insecure respondents accessed an emergency shelter in the past 12 months.

Nine unique housing insecure respondents (13%) reported needing emergency shelter services at some point in the past 12 months before completing the survey but did not access them. Several reasons were provided for this, as outlined in Table 9.

Table 9: Reasons Housing Insecure Respondents Did Not Access Shelter Services When Needed

Reason for Not Accessing Shelter Services	# of Respondents(n=4)
The right kind of shelter wasn't available	50% (2)
No shelters in my area	50% (2)
No pets allowed	50% (2)
The shelter was full	25% (1)
I didn't meet the intake criteria to access the shelter	25% (1)
I didn't feel safe	25% (1)
Lack of disability accommodations	25% (1)
Lack of transportation to access a shelter	25% (1)
Isolation from family and friends	25% (1)
Reason not listed: Concerns of separation from children	25% (1)

Five respondents preferred not to share why they did not access emergency shelter when they needed it.

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

Respondents outlined many things they would like to see more of in Claresholm when asked, “Does your community provide enough...accessible and affordable housing; access to food; social services?”

Table 10: Total Respondents’ Perceptions of Claresholm’s Provision of Services

Does Claresholm Provide Enough:	Yes	No	Unsure
Accessible & affordable housing	6% (5)	80% (70)	15% (13)
Access to food (grocery stores, markets, foodbanks, etc.)	34% (31)	59% (53)	7% (6)
Social services (libraries, emergency services, outreach programs, etc.)	58% (51)	30% (26)	13% (11)

Table 10 highlights a significant discrepancy in perceptions of accessible and affordable housing in Claresholm. Only 6% of respondents believed there was enough accessible and affordable housing in Claresholm at the time of the survey, while 80% felt more housing was needed. Interestingly, only 34% of respondents felt there was sufficient access to food (grocery stores, markets, foodbanks) in Claresholm.



OPPORTUNITIES MOVING FORWARD

Opportunities Moving Forward

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

1. Foster community awareness and understandings of housing insecurity;
2. Increase awareness of, and access to, services, and
3. Encourage sustainable housing growth in Claresholm.

Foster community awareness and understandings of housing insecurity.

Implementing a community engagement strategy is essential to addressing housing insecurity in Claresholm. The purpose of implementing a community engagement strategy is to support community learning on issues related to housing insecurity in Claresholm. More specifically, this will help inform and educate 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 to ensure residents experiencing housing insecurity and projects specific to housing insecurity are met with understanding, empathy, and support. Of the 102 survey respondents, only 31 self-identified as housing insecure. However, further analysis revealed that 72 respondents actually met the criteria for housing insecurity, meaning 41 individuals were unaware of their housing status and likely had not accessed social or housing services that could help improve their housing situation. A community engagement strategy would help bridge this gap by raising awareness and connecting residents with support services.

With at least 231 residents experiencing housing insecure living conditions, fostering empathy and public awareness is crucial to successfully addressing housing security in Claresholm.

Recommendations:

- Host community conversations on housing insecurity.
- Provide learning opportunities about emergency shelters and transitional housing.
- Promote programs and service offerings that support residents experiencing housing insecurity widely.
- Offer orientation and training sessions for elected officials to equip them with the knowledge to lead community efforts on housing security.

Increase awareness of, and access to, services.

59% of total respondents indicated that they had to access health and wellness (i.e., addictions supports, mental health supports and services, physical health care services, spiritual or cultural well-being services, etc.) outside of Claresholm. Of the housing insecure respondents who accessed services outside of Claresholm, 61% had to travel an hour or more to access services. Further, while 69% travelled by car or truck, 20% relied on a family member or friend to take them, and 9% had to either walk, bike, or have a service agency or non-profit arrange a ride for them. Further, 2% reported cancelling appointments due to transportation challenges.

Given this, efforts should be made to further identify service gaps in the community and address their 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 racialized respondents, 83% of immigrant respondents, and 80% of Indigenous respondents were housing insecure, it is important to consider whether services offered are inclusive and culturally appropriate.

Recommendations:

1. Conduct an informal audit of services (also called service mapping) in Claresholm.
2. Determine gaps in service delivery in Claresholm and develop an action plan for filling any gaps in services.
3. Promote current programs and service offerings that support community members experiencing housing insecurity and/or with health and wellness concerns.
4. Host training sessions for service providers in Claresholm focused on providing inclusive and culturally appropriate services.

Encourage sustainable housing growth in Claresholm.

It is critical to highlight the need for accessible, affordable, adaptive, and appropriate housing projects to increase housing options in Claresholm. The top three reasons for housing insecurity in Claresholm were reported as low vacancy rates, high housing costs, and inadequate rental options (specifically that rental options in Claresholm were not pet-friendly). Interestingly, 64% of housing insecure respondents indicated low vacancy rates. According to Statistics Canada (2021), rental units in Claresholm make up 23.4% of the housing stock – a rather large proportion of the housing stock compared to other rural communities.

Additionally, only 6% of respondents believed there was enough accessible and affordable housing in Claresholm compared to 80% who believed more housing was needed and 15% who were unsure if there was enough housing in Claresholm. Further, 69% of housing insecure respondents noted spending more than 30% of their annual household income on housing/shelter costs.

Short-term and emergency housing was also identified as a critical need in Claresholm. While only 1% of housing insecure respondents accessed emergency shelter in the 12 months prior to completing the survey, 13% of housing insecure respondents noted that they did not access emergency shelter when they needed it because there was no shelter in their area, the right kind of shelter wasn't available, and/or no pets were allowed in the shelter. Data also indicates a need for basic needs support to accompany emergency shelter.

As a result, it is critical to address the need for sustainable housing growth in Claresholm to better support housing insecure community members moving forward.

Recommendations:

1. Conduct a housing needs and demands assessment in Claresholm to better understand housing needs.
2. 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 (including basic needs supports) typically associated with a Housing First Program and accommodate individuals with pets.
3. Conduct community engagement sessions to address concerns and misconceptions around housing development.
4. Implement a Housing First philosophy into service delivery in Claresholm.

References

Economic Research Institute. (2025). Cost of Living Data in the Town of Claresholm, Alberta, Canada. <https://www.erieri.com/cost-of-living/canada/alberta/claresholm>

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

Government of Alberta. (2025). Town of Claresholm. Alberta Regional Dashboard. <https://regionaldashboard.alberta.ca/region/claresholm/#/>

Statistics Canada. (2021). Census profile, 2021, Census Population profile table. Profile table, Census Profile, 2021, Census of Population - Town of Claresholm, [Census subdivision], Alberta.

Reference: <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?LANG=E&GENDERlist=1,2,3&STATISTIClist=1,4&DGUIDlist=2021A00054803022&HEADERlist=0&SearchText=Claresholm>

Thistle, J. (2017). *Indigenous Definition of Homelessness in Canada*. Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press.



Rural Development Network
(780)-964-2736
11443 - 143 Street, NW
Edmonton, AB