



Housing Needs Assessment - Lived Experience Engagement Report for the City of Edmonton Final Report

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This report represents the opinions of the ethnography research participants and the authors and is the product of ethnography research with individuals with lived experience. It is not meant to represent the position or opinions of the City of Edmonton, Edmonton City Council, or its partners. Any errors and/or omissions are the authors' responsibility.



Table of Contents

Executive Summary	03
Background	08
Methodology	12
• Study design	12
• Thematic areas	13
• Recruitment and sampling	13
• Demographics	14
• Limitations	14
• Data analysis	14
• Engaging participants	15
• Interview questions	15
Broad themes	16
Findings	18
Themes specific to Priority Population Groups	42
Housing Stories	48
Housing experience and journey through the voices of the participants	66
Annexure	89
• Demographic information	89
• Priority Population Group Segregation by Interview Participants	97
• Gender segregation by ethnicity	98
• Demographic Summary	99
• References	101



Executive Summary

This work sits within the context of a larger City of Edmonton project, the Housing Needs Assessment (Phases 1 & 2). It was undertaken to identify existing and projected gaps in affordable housing and to provide informed insights on housing challenges in Edmonton.

The research was undertaken by EndPovertyEdmonton and involved qualitative research methods for the collection and analysis of in-depth interviews with people with lived or living experiences in the 13-priority population identified in this study. The style of interview used empowers participants to tell their stories in their own ways, guided only by broad and/or clarifying questions.

Participants were purposely sought and/or referred from 13 priority populations identified in Phase 1 & 2 of the Housing Needs Assessment. These priority groups are:

- Women and children fleeing domestic violence
- Female heads of households, especially single mothers
- Seniors 65+
- Young adults aged 18-29
- Indigenous peoples
- Racialized people
- Recent immigrants, especially refugees
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Two-Spirit (LGBTQ2S+)
- People with physical health or mobility challenges
- People with developmental disabilities
- People dealing with mental health and addictions issues
- Veterans
- People experiencing homelessness

A total of 28 interviews were conducted, each one lasting about an hour. 2 participants were interviewed per priority population and only 1 participant in the veteran population. At the preference of the participant, some were in-person and some were virtual.



Honouraria were provided. In addition, for privacy and confidentiality, pseudo names were used throughout the report.

Key themes emerged in analysis of the interviews. These themes and key findings follow.

Affordability

All the participants made references to low income/social assistance support and high costs of housing as challenges to finding, or retaining affordable housing, feeling crunched against other necessary expenses like food, utilities, childcare, and phone bills. All 28 participants referenced affordability as a **barrier** to adequate, affordable, and suitable housing including:

- Low-income & benefits/social assistance, including mismatches between income/subsidies and rent
- Rising cost of living (food, utilities, phone, childcare, etc.)
- High cost of housing (rising rent, high damage deposits)

The dominant **solution** proposed is:

- Higher volume of affordable housing

Inadequate housing:
Unaffordable housing:
Unsuitable housing:

Adequate housing is reported by their residents as not requiring any major repairs. Affordable housing has shelter costs equal to less than 30% of total before-tax household income. Suitable housing has enough bedrooms for the size and composition of resident households according to the National Occupancy Standard definition. – [StatsCan](#)

Accessibility/Availability

Accessibility and availability were intertwined for several of the participants. The details and context vary, but the impacts are similar, and they include low income relative to high cost of housing, not enough affordable houses, long wait times, onerous application processes and the inability to navigate the affordable housing landscape due



to silos, duplication and disconnects in the system. Other complicating factors include being physically and/or mentally challenged, addiction, being a senior, a single mother, a woman fleeing abuse, a student, being the object of social prejudice or discrimination. For too many of the participants, uncertainty in the housing system works against personal stability, that is, increasing rents, high damage deposits and the mismatch between income/subsidies and rising costs of affordable houses. Specifically, lack of access include:

- Wheelchair accessibility
- Mobility challenge accessibility
- Access to transit
- Security/safety
- Stability
- Long waits & processing times
- Complicated applications
- Lack of communication between agencies and between agencies and applicants
- Incomplete knowledge or awareness of support options
- Issues of competence (e.g. computer literacy and/or access)
- Unavailable or inadequate information

Solutions proposed include:

- Better reach and connectivity for public transportation systems
- Involving people with physical mobility challenges in housing/neighborhood design
- Simplified application processes
- Creation/availability of population/need specific housing

Rehabilitation

Some of the participants mentioned the significance of supporting people who are experiencing homelessness to be reintegrated into society through therapy and counselling especially for those suffering from addiction and mental health challenges.



Additional suggestions include training the residents on how to live in a home and to keep a home, especially for those who have been homeless for a while; training case workers and supporting youths through transition from youth to adulthood as they grapple with homelessness when they age out of the system.

Solutions to transitions and needs associated with housing challenges include:

- Support for becoming housed after homelessness
- Support for recovery from addiction and mental health care
- Increased access to (on-site) therapy and counselling services
- Mentorship programs and/or training for budgeting, paying bills and other skills, including social skills
- Better (and more comprehensive) training for housing support workers, including trauma-informed and skills-building in empathy and compassion

Stigmatization/Discrimination

Participants faced stigmatization and racial discrimination. Mothers to multiple children, Indigenous people, international students, people of color, people with past criminal records, people with mobility or physical challenges and people on social support/welfare and those living in low-income have faced discrimination by landlords and housing authorities in accessing housing in the city. There is a narrative about homeless people being drug addicts, lazy, mentally ill, dangerous or criminals. As a result of these narratives, doors sometimes remain closed due to social prejudices.

Solutions – Tackle racism and poverty; involve the voices of lived and living experiences in policy making.

Rent/Building Maintenance/Regulations

Participants described extensively the challenges with maintenance issues in their respective housing facilities. Other challenges identified by them in the housing units



include uncooperative and inconsiderate neighbors, excessive noise, delayed response to maintenance requests, lack of privacy, and subpar housing materials. Although the participants did not specifically mention it, it could be that marginal quality building materials or practice results in higher utility bills, noise, and constant maintenance issues. Unpredictable maintenance schedules/calls cause additional stress and instability for residents who may already have a high burden of stress and uncertainty. Many of the participants wondered out loud about how the system can be fixed when they feel disempowered in the system and by the system. They mentioned landlords with absolute power to evict whereas they have no legal power or backings. They want the system to recognize them as people. They need people to advocate for them especially when the system does not give them a chance to tell their story and listen to both sides of a story.

Solutions – Adapt regulations for landlords and housing maintenance; advocate for residents to give them a chance to tell their stories.

Support Systems

Many of the participants expressed their gratitude for multiple supports in the system. Participants gratefully acknowledge the pivot role of support received in their lives when they needed it. Conversely, the difficulty of life challenges is compounded in many cases due to lack, or breakdown, of support systems. Sources of key support identified include:

- Family and friends
- Therapy and counselling services
- Housing/case support/social workers
- Income support through Alberta Works and Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH)
- Various subsidized housing sector organizations, e.g. Homeward Trust Edmonton, Civida, Niginan Housing Ventures, and Home Ed, City of Edmonton



- Transitional shelters/women shelters
- Charitable organizations

Conclusion

To conclude, many of the participants wondered out loud about how the system can be fixed when they feel disempowered in the system and by the system. They mentioned landlords with absolute power to evict whereas they have no legal power or backings. They believe the system is fragmented making housing access very difficult. The solution to the housing challenges based on the participants responses are broadly categorized here. Participants categorized the **solutions** as:

- Provide long-term economic security to support those in low-income
- Provide greater financial assistance, more quickly
- Tackle poverty and racism; involve the voices of lived and living experiences in policy in making e.g., Indigenous voices, physically challenged, seniors and others
- Provide appropriate and targeted workforce development, professional development, job coaching, and job readiness
- Provide sustained and continuous therapy for those with mental health, addiction or other issues including recovery from abuse
- Review income-dependent rent calculations
- Build capacity for financial literacy; particularly learning to build credit for youth
- Train case workers in sensitivity and peer support
- Train residents to be able to live in, maintain, and keep a home
- Advocate for residents to give them a chance to tell their stories
- Build more affordable homes, ensuring a higher proportion of mobility accessible and larger-family dwellings; access to transit; include people with lived/living experience in the design phase
- Simplify and coordinate applications
- Shorten wait times



- Adapt/develop better regulations for landlords and maintenance of rental dwellings.

Background

EndPovertyEdmonton conducted qualitative research, utilizing critical ethnography through one-on-one in-depth interviews with individuals with housing lived and living experiences in the 13-priority population identified in this study. Critical ethnography was utilized to highlight the experiences of people with lived and living experiences in the 13-priority population identified in this study, empowering the participants to tell their stories, to relay their housing journey and to support the City of Edmonton to better understand current and future housing needs of the 13-priority population identified in the Phases 1 & 2 of the Housing Needs Assessment. This work therefore is situated in the context of a larger City of Edmonton project, the Housing Needs Assessment (Phases 1 & 2), implemented to identify existing and projected gaps in affordable housing, and to provide informed insights on local housing challenges in Edmonton. The 13 identified priority population groups interviewed are as follows: Women and children fleeing domestic violence; Female heads of households, especially single mothers; Seniors 65+; Young adults aged 18-29; Indigenous peoples; Racialized people; Recent immigrants, especially refugees; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Two-Spirit (LGBTQ2S+); People with physical health or mobility challenges; People with developmental disabilities; People dealing with mental health and addictions issues; Veterans, and People experiencing homelessness (e.g. international students).

The interview questions explored the following thematic areas: housing experience and journey; current housing status; barriers and challenges to accessing housing; housing support systems and broad solutions to housing problems from individual perspectives.



Participants were recruited through both purposive and snowball sampling methods. 28 interviews were conducted based on one-one in-depth interviews with housing lived and living experience participants. The interviews lasted about an hour each. 18 interviews were conducted in person and 10 others were conducted virtually via Zoom at the preference of the participants. The demographics include 15 females, 11 males and 2 LGBTQ2+. The age range is 18-70 years old and Ethnicities/Race include: Indigenous (6 females and 1 LGBTQ2+); Black/African (4 males and 3 females); White (5 males, 4 females and 1 LGBTQ2+); Hispanic (1 female); Middle Eastern/Arab (2 males) and Chinese (1 female). For privacy and confidentiality, pseudo names were used throughout the report.

The recurring themes around initial findings were Affordability, Accessibility/Availability, Rehabilitation, Stigmatization/Discrimination, Rent/Home/Building maintenance & regulations and Support systems.

All the participants highlighted low income/social assistance support and high costs of housing as challenges to finding, or retaining affordable housing, feeling crunched against other necessary expenses like food, utilities, childcare, and phone bills. Stable housing is a necessary context for personal stability, but for too many of the participants, uncertainty in the housing system works against personal stability. Increasing living expenses and rents, high damage deposits and the mismatch between income/subsidies and rising costs of affordable houses, all contribute to a sense of uncertainty. For instance, budgeting solutions that worked before don't necessarily work now. The dynamic of change in the system itself is stressful for the participants.

Accessibility and availability were intertwined for several of the participants. The details and context vary, but the impacts are similar. These include low income relative to high cost of housing, not enough affordable houses, long wait times, onerous application processes and the inability to navigate the affordable housing landscape due to silos, duplication and disconnects in the system. Other complicating factors include being physically and/or mentally challenged, addiction, being a senior, a single mother, a woman fleeing abuse, a student, or being the object of social prejudice or



discrimination. Lack of access and availability came up several times for many of the participants. A specific example is for wheelchair accessibility for the physically challenged persons. Participants suggested involving those with lived experience in design of City housing. Another suggestion was for public transportation system to have better reach and connectivity across neighborhoods in the city, with emphasis on accessibility for senior citizens, physically disabled, women fleeing abuse, single moms, and students.

Some other elements of access and availability to affordable housing are security, safety, stability, long waiting and processing times, complicated application processes, and disconnects between the housing administration and applicants. The participants believe the system is fragmented making housing access very difficult. Some of the participants mentioned difficulties in accessing housing due to lack of knowledge and competence (e.g. lack of computer literacy), unavailable resources and/or inadequate information. Some of the solutions mentioned by the participants included a one-stop solution for housing needs with a simplified application process, availability of population-specific targeted housing facilities for different population groups, including accessible housing facilities for seniors and people with physical issues or mobility challenges, more shelters/housing facilities for youths, women and children fleeing domestic violence, single moms, people dealing with addiction and mental health issues, and, housing for international students.

Several participants mentioned the importance of supporting those who have been homeless, and/or people recovering from addiction and mental health issues, towards reintegration into society through rehabilitative programs, therapy, and counselling. Another important suggestion was to have mentorship programs for youth and other people in need to support their transition into housing by training them on budgeting their expenses, paying utility bills and supporting them in developing social, economic and household management skills. The need to have on-site counselling services by certified mental health professionals was stated by participants from several priority population groups, including women and children fleeing domestic violence, female heads of households, single mothers and people dealing with mental health and



addiction issues. Training of house case support workers to be more sensitive and responsive towards the applicants was important to the participants and the need for recruiting more housing case support workers was reiterated by almost all of the participants, mentioning the excessive workload, work burnout, and high turnover rates of the housing case support workers.

Study participants faced stigmatization and racial discrimination. Mothers to multiple children, Indigenous people, international students, people of color, people with past criminal records, physically disabled people and people on social support/welfare and low-income threshold often experience discrimination by landlords and housing authorities in accessing housing in the city. There is a narrative about homeless people being drug addicts, lazy, mentally ill, dangerous or criminals. As a result of these narratives, doors sometimes remain closed to them.

Participants described extensively the challenges with maintenance issues in their respective housing facilities. Other challenges identified by them in the housing units include uncooperative and inconsiderate neighbors, excessive noise, delayed response to maintenance requests, lack of privacy, and subpar housing materials. Although the participants did not specifically mention it, it could be that marginal quality building materials or practice results in higher utility bills, noise, and constant maintenance issues. Unpredictable maintenance schedules/calls cause additional stress and instability for residents who may already have a high burden of stress and uncertainty. Uncomfortable housing leads to personal distress, which in turn leads to social distress, all of which works against personal and social health stability. Participants specifically mentioned, noise, smell, and infestations (mold and insects). Many of the participants wondered out loud about how the system can be fixed when they feel disempowered in the system and by the system. They mentioned landlords with absolute power to evict whereas they have no legal power or backings. They want the system to recognize them as people. They need people to advocate for them especially when the system does not give them a chance to tell their story and listen to both sides of a story.



Many of the participants expressed their gratitude for multiple supports in the system. Participants gratefully acknowledge the pivot role of support received in their lives when they needed it. Conversely, the difficulty of life challenges is compounded in many cases due to lack, or breakdown, of support systems. Sources of key support identified include: family and friends, therapy and counselling services, housing case support workers, income support through Alberta Works and Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH), and various subsidized housing facilities, e.g. Homeward Trust Edmonton, Civida, Niginan Housing Ventures, and Home Ed, City of Edmonton.

To conclude, the solution to the housing challenges based on the participants responses are broadly categorized here: Long term economic security to support low income; Tackle poverty and racism; Involve people with lived and living experiences in policy making, e.g., indigenous voices, physically challenged, seniors and others; Work force development customized to the different priority groups especially youths; Sustained and continuous therapy and counselling for mental health, substance abuse, single mothers and women fleeing abuse; Review the 30% taken from resident's income; Financial assistance, professional development, job coaching, job readiness, financial literacy to help build credit scores especially for youths; Train case workers in sensitivity and peer support; Train residents to be able to live in a home and keep a home; Advocate for residents to give them a chance to tell their stories; Build more affordable homes with the vision for accessibility to transit for seniors, disabled, single mothers and students; Build more homes for the physically disabled and involve them in the planning of the homes prior to building the homes; Simplify the application process and shorten the wait time for getting into an affordable housing; Adapt regulations for landlords and the housing maintenance process.

Methodology

Study Design



Qualitative analysis was used to explore general questions around housing experience/journey with critical ethnography as the methodology. The study was designed to highlight the experiences of the 13 identified priority populations as it relates to housing in Edmonton. The work relied upon one-one in-depth interviews of 13 priority populations. The 13 identified priority population groups interviewed are as follows: Women and children fleeing domestic violence; Female heads of households, especially single mothers; Seniors 65+; Young adults aged 18-29; Indigenous peoples; Racialized people; Recent immigrants, especially refugees; LGBTQ2S+; People with physical health or mobility challenges; People with developmental disabilities; People dealing with mental health and addictions issues; Veterans, and People experiencing homelessness.

Critical ethnography was utilized to uncover underlying mechanisms at play based on historical, cultural and social factors with emphasis on affordable housing experiences. This project pulls the voices of different people, voices that are otherwise not easily accessible, to be part of this housing assessment project. This project would not have been possible without the 28 participants. We want to use this opportunity to thank all the participants for their participation and contribution as the experts on this project and for trusting us with their stories.

Thematic areas

After interviewing 20 participants, key categories in the analysis began to emerge in the following thematic areas: housing experience and journey; current housing status; barriers and challenges to accessing housing; housing support systems and broad solutions to housing problems from individual perspectives. The one-one in-depth interview is a useful tool in representing the voices that are likely not otherwise represented at the policy table. The lived and living experienced of the 13-priority population through this study bring insights on local housing challenges in Edmonton.

Recruitment and sampling

Participants were recruited through purposive (housing agencies) and snowball (word of mouth through other participants) sampling methods. Participants were approached



through emails or phone calls. Consent forms were shared with them prior to the interviews. Before the interviews were conducted, there was usually an introduction from both the researchers and the participants while the consent form and the honorariums (\$130 - \$100 for their time and \$30 for refreshment) were handed out to the participants to sign to indicate their willingness to participate in the study. The interviews were audio taped for the in-person or video-taped for the Zoom interviews with the consent of the participants. 1 participant opted out of audiotaping.

Questions were asked in an interactive manner, empowering participants to freely tell their own stories and gather their experiences. Topics were based on the thematic areas starting with their demographics. Guiding questions designed prior to the study were used to initiate discussion and to guide discussion on the topic of interest. All of the interviews were conducted in English.

28 interviews were conducted based on one-one in-depth interviews with housing lived and living experience participants. The interviews lasted about an hour for each participant. Interviewing began on May 24th and was completed by July 6th of 2022. 18 interviews were conducted in person and 10 other interviews were conducted via zoom.

Demographics

15 females, 11 males and 2 LGBTQ2+. Age range is 18-70 years old. Ethnicities/Race include: Indigenous (6 females and 1 LGBTQ2+); Black/African (4 males and 3 females); White (5 males, 4 females and 1 LGBTQ2+); Hispanic (1 female); Middle Eastern/Arab (2 males) and Chinese (1 female).

Limitations

2 of the participants who were immigrants and learning to speak English were interviewed in English. Another participant had an interpreter during the interview. There was difficulty accessing the veteran population and we were only able to interview one veteran. Some of the participants were not forthcoming. At times, questions are answered with just a yes or no. We walked around this problem by encouraging participants to elaborate by asking the same question in a different way. On other occasions, we have to redirect participants' attention to the topic of interest. Some



participants were verbose while others tend to be quiet and needed to be prodded or redirected. Regarding personal challenges, we experienced secondhand smoke in one of the participant's residences. The additional limitation was the tight timeline around project deliverables. On average, a project like this from the time the RFQ was called to the report deliverable takes about 4 months. This work spanned 2 months from the time the interviews were conducted to the conclusion of the report writing.

Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted by transcribing all the 28 interviews. We used one form of method of transcription to validate the other. One form of transcription was done using a software and the other form was done manually, additionally, field notes were used in transcription process. The transcriptions were read multiple times by the two researchers. We highlighted sections of the text and made comments on anything that we found striking. Highlighted sections were grouped into categories and then emergent sub-categories were identified. We judged the categories based on the following considerations: Does the data reflect the categories and fit?; Does the category make sense?; How are the categories related?; What main patterns keep recurring in the data?; What conclusions can be drawn?. We looked for common themes that ran through the data, compared the themes in each transcribed note, looked for commonalities and differences and then identified the overall themes that best described the experiences of the participants.

Engaging participants

We plan to loop back with each participant and share findings with them based on their responses. This study is a combination of many voices and will add to the other multiple voices on affordable housing experience in the city. These are the voices of those who will be directly impacted by the policy on housing in the city.

Interview questions

1. Tell me a bit about yourself. How long have you lived in Edmonton? Age, ethnicity, gender, how do you self-identify, family status and composition?
2. Tell me your story/experience about trying to find housing in Edmonton



3. Where are you in your housing journey?
4. How did you get to where you are now in your housing journey?
5. What do you consider as barriers in accessing housing that would be good for you or/and your family?
6. What are some of the challenges you are currently facing with housing?
7. What supports do you use to get housing?
8. What in your opinion is the solution/s to some of the housing problems that people are facing in Edmonton? What do you see as the solution to your own housing needs?
9. What would you like to see in terms of housing – what matters to you?
10. What do you think is currently working or not working? If not working well, how can things be better? What changes would you like to see?
11. What is preventing people/you from finding safe, secure, affordable housing?
12. Is there anything we have not covered today that you would like to talk about regarding housing in Edmonton? What else are people struggling with that the government is not aware or does not know?

Broad Themes Emerging from the Interviews

1. Affordability

- Low income
- High cost of housing

2. Accessibility/availability

- Physical, addiction and mental health challenges
- Transit and housing
- Seniors
- Not enough affordable houses
- Long wait times
- Onerous application process - Difficult to navigate affordable housing due to silos, duplication and disconnect in the system



3. Rehabilitation

- Therapy and counseling
- Training of residents and case workers
- Youths support as they age out of systems
- Job support and training
- Transitional housing

4. Stigmatization/Discrimination

- Single moms with children
- Unemployed/low income/social support
- Students
- People suffering from addiction and mental health challenges
- People with past criminal records
- Racism
- Physically disabled

5. Rent/Home/building maintenance issues

- Low quality materials used
- Noise
- Slow response to maintenance issues
- Landlords

6. Support systems

- Family and friends through couch surfing
- Homeward Trust
- Civida
- Youth Empowerment and Support Services (YESS)
- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH)
- Hope Mission/Mustard Seed
- Transitional housing – Niginan Housing Ventures
- Women's shelters
- Housing case/support workers



- Therapy and counselling



Findings

1. Affordability

All of the participants mentioned low income and high costs of housing as a challenge to finding, or retaining affordable housing, feeling crunched against other necessary expenses like food, utilities, childcare, and phone bills. Stable housing is a necessary context for personal stability. For too many of the participants, uncertainty in the housing system works against personal stability. It is noteworthy that several mentions ever increasing expenses or changing support systems. For instance, budgeting solutions that worked before don't necessarily work now. The dynamic of change in the system itself is stressful for the participants.

“And then how do you expect people to stay housed when you're giving them 723 a month, and they gotta pay rent and pay bills? Like you try living off of that. You know, so nothing is matching up, right? So you house somebody, and you give them low income, to even allow them to create stability.”

“The price of housing doesn't match income now. We build all of these low income places, and then we're charging \$900 a month, who's going to afford that? Like, welfare took away the extra \$300 that you used to get for rent that doesn't exist anymore that you could get with a letter. So people don't have that anymore where they can top up their rent. That doesn't exist anymore.”

“The utilities in the house are skyrocketing. And like, you know, just living prices have been so intense. You know, what I mean? Like, it's hard for people who are already living in poverty, on the streets to be able to afford these things. And I just feel like there needs to be assisted living or programs for that.”



“Affordable living so the rents would be reasonable. I also feel, if I had the power, I would make more programs to help people through these things.”

And for the participants who rely on social assistance monthly, they believe the social assistance do not reflect the realities of the economy. Here’s how they put it:

“It's called AISH. And they give you 1600, and that's what you have to live off monthly. And my rent is 930. So you can already see the complication. And then you got to pay for your own power and utilities and it's hard.”

“I'm struggling with living on my disability every month like it's one cheque a month. And it's hard for me to just even get by with that”

“So by making 1200 on income support and then 450 for Child Tax, give or take, if I'm not working, right? So that's 1600 and 1/3rd of 1600 is what? 550, something like that. That still doesn't cover the food, your phone, your electricity, day care essentials”.

2. Accessibility/Availability

Accessibility and availability were intertwined for several of the participants. The details and context vary, but the impacts are similar, and they include low income relative to high cost of housing, not enough affordable houses, long wait times, onerous application processes and the inability to navigate the affordable housing landscape due to silos, duplication and disconnects in the system. Other complicating factors include being physically and/or mentally challenged, addiction, being a senior, single mother, a woman fleeing abuse, a student, being the object of social prejudice or discrimination – all of whom have additional exacerbating problems with access and availability as some of the participants



indicated below to the question about the challenges of finding safe secure housing;

Low income and high cost of housing

“And I think even right now I say I, you know, have this worry about meeting my budgets in my rent and like I said, I'm stuck in my home because I don't have a down payment to go get what do you call it damaged deposit? I can't get because if I go get damaged deposit, it's gonna be another 1500 plus 1500 for rent, I need three grand. I can't get three grand right now. It's unless I get a bursary, but then other expenses arise.”

More accessible housing for physically challenged

“Well, we tried for a while and we just had we had to go with just a regular high rise. We have the problem that the wheelchair does not make it in all places, including either bathrooms. So that's difficult when I'm in it. I'm not in it all the time. It's just when I get really seriously bad, but like the bathrooms aren't set up for handicap. We do need two bathrooms because of our illnesses. And it's very hard to find a two bedroom with one and a half or two baths, whichever. It's really difficult to get around because of all the corners even the ambulance drivers complain because they can't get in with a stretcher anywhere, like they have to help you out or carry you out into the hallway to get on a stretcher. So it's just not convenient right now.”

“Stairs like I can't, I can't walk upstairs, right. So it always has to be like level. And like my husband and I were talking today just to get out on our balcony, I have to step up and over a foot just to get on the balcony. So that is why I don't go out on the balcony. It's just simple stuff like that, that you don't think of until you try to do it.”



“Well, I mentioned about the room for the the wheelchairs and stuff, and the washrooms I think that I look at the thing from a wheelchair aspect too, because I've been there. Like the the cupboards being too high, the counters being too high. The bathtub, another thing that most people wouldn't even think about, I can't get into a bathtub, like a regular bathtub. So I have to, like do one of those hospital baths every single day. Because I can't get into the tub. I have holders, like on the tub and stuff. Ready for me. But I just I can't lift my legs that high. So I don't know if it would be too much of an expense to have like one of those walk in tubs in some of the houses for people that are as disabled, or people that just can't climb. Let's see. Another thing would would be the, the peep-hole in the door to check to see if someone is there. Only a six foot person can see in those in the in the peep-holes, like I'm only five foot five. So like I have to stand on my tiptoes just to see through the peep- hole just to be safe. And I thought if they had two of them, like one a little shorter than where it is and plus a wheelchair height, one in the same door so that you can stay safe.”

More affordable housing

“Not enough affordable houses. It's like the housing that they have today is not adequate.”

“If there was enough housing, you wouldn't see 3000 People chronically homeless.”

“What is preventing me now is honestly, I can't find anywhere that has accessible and affordable housing”.

Long wait times to accessing housing



“And I did everything, of course they take all your information and they give you a phone number so that you can track or call them and ask you how you're moving up the list because well, I sat on that list for up until the time that I actually got my old age pension, which was two years later”

“I started to see how I knew the struggle, I had to get housing. And even when I was trying to leave that place where I was living that, that transitional housing, I was there for a year when I was trying to move and get into low-income housing, there was huge waiting list.”

“I've been there for a year and I've been waiting and waiting for a place....And I still haven't gotten a place. There are so many people like us on their list.”

“Yeah, the last time that I call was like a year ago. And the thing that they say is because of the COVID, they don't have affordable house available, because they say that, for the pandemic, there are a lot of people that they don't want to move, and they cannot force everyone to move, right. So I have to be in the waiting list.”

“And so I actually did put an application in for that. And then I have heard one update, which was, then I need to edit my application, because I put wrong information. And then I haven't heard from them since. So it feels like it's a very long process. Or a waitlist.

“I applied like two years ago, and I still haven't heard any update about it. And I'm like, that's a long waitlist. I get it like there is programs that are willing to help, but I'm like, come on, like there has to be reasonable time.”

Single mothers and women fleeing abuse



“Don't price gouge single moms or, you know, like how the same amount of deposit damage or rent and stuff like that, like, I was looking at other housing as well. And it was too much I was really overwhelmed by it, ...don't know, like, do I just pay for this house and not eat for a month? Or I don't know.”

“I don't party, you know, like, I just need a place for me and my kids, you know, and to make it our safe space....But if there's stereotypes or anything around single moms and Indigenous people, it's that it's that you're dirty and you're lazy and you just live on welfare and your kids just make a mess and wreck houses. And you know, like, that's sad.”

“More affordable. Apartments, for families with children housing. And in places where you have access to any grocery stores and buses.”

Seniors

“Accessibility to buses, grocery stores, things like that. We take cab but we really can't afford it because we have to walk right now. We still have to walk four blocks to the bus.”

“It's really difficult, what we've gone through, I've checked with them, what is the government? Oh, I can never think of that. The housing for seniors, there's different places that will take you younger, but then it's not really a place for couples. There's a lot of places for singles. But again, with the washroom situation if you need two, it's nearly impossible.”

Addiction and mental health



“I wasn't they (charity organization) didn't want me there anymore. I wanted to pay rent. They just said we don't want you anymore. I was using drugs.”

“You could put it if I was not taking my meds I couldn't own our own place I will be homeless in spite of owning a home like it would matter. It is the prison of the mind. And mean certain disorders like fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, brain injury and lead. Cognitive problems can't be treated just by harm reduction.”

“They could No, they couldn't take care of us because we were alcoholics. Drugs. I was brought up in foster care my whole life as a child as a young child. And I went through physical abuse through the system. That's what screwed me up today. I don't know if it was hereditary through my family's drinking, because my, my both my parents drank their parents drink before and so forth. Right. Then I drink. But I quit now.”

Onerous application process and the inability to navigate the affordable housing system due to silos, duplication, and a disconnected system

“...but just be able to like put together all the information in one place, and then like distill it in a manner that's easy to digest. Because there may be things that you look for when you look for a place like don't just look for something that's cheap, or something like a mission, something that's safe, secure, something that is easy for access. And so being able to have all the information in one place, and then make it in a way that is not overwhelming.”

“Following along with taking numbers down, remembering to call all these numbers. I forget. Because I have wet brain I was drinking a lot of Listerine on the street. Okay. I need help with that. Like assistance.”



“Because somebody is asking them all these difficult questions using language that they don't understand... terminologies.”

“The application process is, is difficult. And they need more support to be taken to these places, that's accommodating their needs.”

“The Alberta government because there's a top up from the Alberta government to low-income seniors. So what could the Alberta government be doing? They could be making sure that each one of those people is given an information kit and told how to do this and then don't just leave it with them. Either follow it up, or just tell them how to cut through all the mess. Did you realize that you qualify for a suite? With greater Edmonton foundation? Would you like us to help you get one?”

“Just no communication, everybody's not communicating together. So then there's some times there's duplications of service, because one hand doesn't know what the other hand is doing...or you start working on something where they already have somebody else working on it... then that just creates more disconnect.”

Students

“I will say the challenges here is one big challenge and knowing your way around the city. Because sometimes like most international students, they want to stay close to campus, they have the peace of mind, like okay, I can walk to campus, and all of that. But there are some places that may not be as close to campus as you might think, like walking distance. But if you live close by transit, for example, because by the train station, you pretty much on campus, like you just get on a train and then University Street.”

Transit and housing



“Well, being homeless, wait, we haven't been homeless, we've been in the same place now for a while. But if I had to do it again, it's definitely accessibility to places.”

“Transit was one of the things that came up. Most people that used to live in those areas use transit for transportation, but they felt that it wasn't enough as in it is not coming fast enough in the winter it's terrible. It's not going deep enough into the neighborhoods. They're gonna walk with their kids in the winter to the bus stop, wait 10 minutes...was terrible”

3. Rehabilitation

Some of the participants mentioned the significance of supporting people who are experiencing homelessness, assisting them in reintegrating into society through therapy and counselling. Such assistance is especially important for those suffering from addiction and mental health challenges. Additional suggestions include training the residents on how to live in a home and to keep a home, especially for those who have been homeless for a while; training case workers and supporting youths through transition from youth to adulthood as they grapple with homelessness when they age out of the system.

Therapy and counseling

“One of the things is, like, I had to get some counseling, and some trauma help...I think that probably anybody that's experience homelessness, period, probably needs some kind of help mentally.”

“When I was in the shelter, we have the circles, the meeting circles for domestic violence, in which we talk every day about our cases, our experiences in we were everyday crying, but we have no moral support, like someone who dealt with it”



“And I was following his footsteps and following the person he was and I never got a chance to know, flourish and become a young adult. I was just chasing somebody. That was clearly really bad. And it wasn't just mentally it was physically too. And like now, I want to heal from that. I want to go to counseling. Like I need counseling.”

“But we at that time, we didn't have anyone who, who taught us how to succeed, someone who tell us like you can do it. If you do this, you will succeed or someone who will make us to become strong internally, we didn't have that, they don't provide that kind of support, like psychologist, someone who to talk to right.”

“After I finished my time there I had some sessions with a psychologist for one and a half year. And that helped me a lot. But I was thinking why we didn't have any, any kind of support in the shelter. Right? And besides, we had to pay \$600. So it was not free.”

Training of residents

“I started to see how, you know, there was a lot of displacement when these people were housed because they didn't know how to have a home. Hmm. Right. They didn't know how to take somebody whose home was on the streets for years, and you put them into this apartment and all of a sudden it's quiet, they have nobody, you know, and then you want them to mop the floors, wash their dishes clean their bathroom, pay bills, buy groceries, cook all of these things that they haven't had to do.”

“----you can't just you got to help somebody create a home, you can house them, but how do you create a home. And so I really am a strong voice for that. Because I truly understand it even you know, it continued to exist in everything that I do is housing is foundation, but you got to help them build



that foundation and help them understand how to create safety for themselves through helping them know when they move into a home, let's go into your community, let's know what's out there, what's available to you, who's in your community..."

"...especially when I didn't have a job because I was getting an income, I was upgrading. So they kept updating me with like, job opportunities and stuff like that. And that's how I ended up actually getting hired."

Training of caseworkers

The participants mentioned the importance of training caseworkers by supporting them as they manage their workload. Participants point out the huge workload caseworkers grapple with that often leads to work burnout and a high rate of turnover. What this translates to is that caseworkers attached to them leave before any connection is made. It is therefore difficult for caseworkers to maintain ongoing relationships with the residents, or understanding of their challenges:

"The biggest thing that I say that is missing is we're not educating our staff enough, right. Like if you educate them to understand what is trauma informed care, what is healthy boundaries, what is it like to be housed, have some lived experience, speakers go and speak to these people when they're first getting trained, so they can truly understand what success is and what is possible."

"People just need to first of all respect. Teaching and training on both sides, workers and residents."

"Some of the things that I've seen over time is, yes, we have housing support workers, but they're burnt out because they've got 52 caseloads. What's holding me back is having to have a worker to help me get a place."



And then they change all the time because people don't last in those positions.”

For youths, it is overwhelming for young people who are at a critical stage in their lives to also be contending with housing as they age out of the system. The youths point out the difficulty of ageing out of the system and having to fend for themselves. Some of the youths mentioned the transitional program from Homeward Trust and advocated for more programs like that for the youths. They also mentioned the importance of some form of workforce development support customized to training youths and preparing them for employment, some form of long-term economic security:

“I was depending on a housing provider at first, but once the program was over, and my support was over, like I had to transition to graduate of that program after two years. So this is like, what 2010 I got house in 2012. I am off the program, I'm graduated. So now I have to find subsidy to help me, I had kids, whatever, and the rent would go up, you know, so I don't have any power or control over that. And, you know, it's the economy as well, like, the economy goes up, everything goes up.”

“So when I was 22, there was a court case going on with Alberta. They wanted to cut off children...,youth at the age of 20 instead of 24 to save money. And so I remember my social worker coming to tell me like she came to my house and she's like, I have some terrible news. She's like, I don't really know what's going to happen to you. But she's like, basically, you might be cut off your funding sooner than we thought. And I remember just like, feeling heartache, because I'm like, I don't know what I'm going to do. Because there's no way I could afford my housing, I was scared that I was going to be homeless again, I was scared that I was gonna have to go back to YESS. And I remember just like crying. And she just told me, she's like, we'll figure it out together. And she's like, are you still interested in like, applying for AISH was my safety net, because I knew that I would



probably qualify for it. But I know that for a lot of other kids, they don't have that opportunity. Because for AISH, you need to have certain qualifications just to be approved for that program. And so I know, for other people, it probably was harder for them. And I guess, I don't really know, because my story was different than other people. What basically, you need to be prepared at any minute, because it seems like the government can switch. You know, like, without law, they were trying to switch it within months. And you know, like, we were told that we were on we had till 24. And now all sudden they want to change it to 20. Like, I don't know, it was hard.

"I feel like there needs to be more programs that are willing to go out with their clients to help them look for a place like it can be so intimidating to do it on your own. And then also, just, I feel like a year is not good enough. Like I feel like it needs to be a little bit longer than that."

"That's a Homeward Trust program for youth. After that you're graduated, and then they will see if you still need help. They'll do another nine months."

"I think people that are also living are youths, I find that there's more young people on the streets. And a lot of them are leaving the foster care system. There is no transitional housing, as well."

"You know, and, like, it would be nice, even if we had programs, we used to have a program years ago, where it helped people to learn a skill, you know, how people learn a skill and know that they're capable of working, you know, like, construction or whatever, have these programs for low income people to learn how to get back into the workforce, you know, so workforce programs would be really good."



“You can't just house them and not support them to become productive members of society, because it's still possible. You know, like, so if we have work programs, I think that would be incredible to have.”

Transitional housing

Transitional housing is seen as helpful bridge to affordable housing. NiGiNan came up as a good example of transitional housing.

“I'm staying at a transitional housing. Okay. Bridge. It's a bridge housing, harm reduction living. Transitional housing. I'm there right now until I get a place right till I get into my own apartment.”

“You move these people in for three months into transitional housing, as long as they're going to transition somewhere? Do you know what I mean? But if they're putting them back into homelessness, because nothing's available, and their short-term fixes, yeah, right. So, you know, to me, it's like, if you're gonna have transitional housing, have a plan.”

4. Stigmatization

There is a narrative about homeless people being drug addicts, lazy, mentally ill, dangerous or criminals. As a result of these narratives, doors sometimes remain closed due to social prejudices:

“Like homeless people. Or people struggling because we're all at a certain place for different reasons. However, homeless people congregate right and they do believe they're all their friends and since other people that don't understand what homelessness is, point fingers and say they're all criminals, they're all druggies, they're all this and all that all the negative stuff”

Single mothers with children



“Well, because they see these single moms with six kids, well, and like, and they're just like, okay, the money is there. But then they're like, okay, those are just some of the things that I've experienced and other people's experience because they don't even look at your application.”

Students

“Finding housing I'll say well as an international student and also as a student... when you use the platforms like Kijiji or Facebook marketplace and the like...you have to compete against the stigma of being a student..., they're seen as they party a lot they like make a mess of the property.”

People with past criminal records

“And criminal checks anything 20 years ago, they want to know and they'll know if it's violence. I understand that, you know, smoking drugs or something like that should be gone. You know, a lot of people, they want you to do this and you pay for it. When you want to rent a place. It's not right.”

“My experience is challenging because going through certain renters like landlords asking for credit check, the history of violence or if you party a lot have gotten in trouble with the law. Gotta go to court or anything right? Like stuff like that.”

Racism

“I just need a place for me and my kids, you know, and to make it our safe space. And you know, but if there's stereotypes or anything around single moms and Indigenous people, it's that you're dirty and you're lazy and you



just live on welfare and your kids just make a mess and wreck houses. And you know, like, that's sad...Because a lot of people are, like I said, there's still stigma, you know, stigma around indigenous peoples, stigma against, you know, even just anyone that's not living a very good lifestyle."

Physically disabled

"I think some people should have their staff have wheelchairs for a day. You know. And live like it. Like go to a shopping place and go to your office and go home and just see what it's like in that wheelchair and it'll change your life."

"People don't like third party checks, if you're on welfare or anything like that. They want you to have a guaranteed income they want to see that."

Addiction and mental health

"I wasn't they (Charity organization) didn't want me there anymore. I wanted to pay rent. They just said we don't want you anymore. I was using drugs."

Social support/low income

"Well, part of it is yeah, the income, it's the system of these landlords, that's a big one, they don't want to look at you once you say low income, social services, whatever it is. That's it, you're done. Don't think about it. Those are two big ones."

5. Rent/Building maintenance and regulations

Although the participants did not specifically mention it, it could be that marginal quality building materials or practice results in higher utility bills, noise, and



constant maintenance issues. Unpredictable maintenance schedules/calls cause additional stress and instability for residents who may already have a high burden of stress and uncertainty. Uncomfortable housing leads to personal distress, which in turn leads to social distress, all of which works against personal and social health stability. Participants specifically mentioned, noise, smell, and infestations (mold and insects).

Noise issue in the buildings due to low quality building materials

“Yeah. And they will come all the time. Like, they sit over here because of a noise complaint... They said, there's a lot of banging on like, I said, my son goes up and down the stairs. It's like the only thing Yeah, he's a kid..., kept happening...”

“I call they told me to wear earplugs in my ears. I haven't slept in the last nine months. I am very tired and I'm home and people are asking me how you're home and you're tired. You should hear the child cry....I can hear it through the walls. My kids are already dreading summer because they're not going to be sleeping... You know the floor squeaks....I don't sleep. My mental health...I've had kids throw balls on my car and dented my vehicle my previous vehicle through someone wrote derogatory things on my vehicle. Nobody does anything I call the security. I complain. The toilet leaks, nobody fixes anything. The sink is falling off. Nobody cares. I can't wash my dishes.”

Maintenance

“Nowadays, when something is not working, they said you pay for it like yesterday, my oven the light is not working the super said I will pay... Why would I pay? So that's why sometimes if I'm going to pay, I will not report it. So if people don't report is going to make a lot of hard work for them.”



Two plates are not working. Okay, we will come, we'll send someone in for maintenance. But two, three weeks, they don't even come.

"...when they have like appointment for inspection or maintenance. They give like a big gap of time from eight in the morning till the eight of the night. And we don't know like which time you can come. They can't come on how long he needs to stay in the house. And this is like he's not comfortable situation."

"There's no balance because there's no equality. There's no rent equality. There's no, you know, like, even housing, like even building equality, you know someone can have a rundown thing. And then someone has a brand new one. Inequality even within low-income housing."

"And so, for example, I was looking at, I don't want to trash the housing provider, but I was looking at some buildings. And you go in there. And you ask yourself, is this even legal for people to be living here? Is that right? And this is not just some random landlord, this is a housing provider here... This smell is still is so strong. And then who ends up living there? Low-income families? Yeah, I mean, some kind of, I think stronger standards around that. Living situation is definitely not nice. Even things like the sizing. Obviously, we don't, we can't all you know, not all of us need or wants to live in, in large bedrooms or whatever. But some of the bedrooms that people have called bedroom, this, like, this is a closet, this is not a bedroom, you know, call it what it is. So I just think stronger standards around how people should live and, you know, both you know, physiologically, and even ethically, as well, because there's this, there's some conditions that are just, yeah, you'll it'll pass a you know, an inspection, but should a human being really live in this."

Hygiene



“There was like cockroaches and black mold...I'm gonna get sick in this house...”

“... And if they do find a cheap apartment, like that's where the cockroaches come in, that's where... you know what I mean. Very hard.”

Landlords

“But it's, there's the other thing with housing is very important. And that's it. Truthfully, the fact is, a lot of times you can't get in housing because people just go oh, that's your income????!! Bye. I don't want anything to do with you.”

“The other thing, being able to pay your bills, because that's another thing that can stress you out. You've got all these bills, and that can mess you up again. Or make things worse, you go backwards just because of your bills. I know I did it many times. So the income situation is definitely a huge problem. And homelessness, that's a part of the problem, too. Because when you think that the amount of money I was getting, like, say for four kids that want to I was getting \$1,000 for four kids. I was thinking, how did I do it? Well, I couldn't do it. I kept getting evicted. Cycle cycle cycle cycle. And that's a big cycle, because the low income, they can't afford anything. Let's be realistic. How do you pay your rent? And for food?”

“Yes. We got to abide by the rules, but they (landlords) don't.”

“And then also another barrier I noticed too, like so when I was trying to move from Downtown to like a new apartment, all other people didn't want to accept my application for moving in because I live on AISH. And then



they would say no, like, I don't trust you, because it was like, don't trust that I'm going to pay it on time because I'm on a support program."

6. Support systems

Participants gratefully acknowledge the pivot role of support received in their lives when needed. Conversely, the difficulty of life challenges is compounded in many cases due to lack, or breakdown, of support systems. Sources of key support identified are:

Family and friends

"I was trying to stay in the north right close to my sister. So she can still continue to babysit... my parents helped a lot. Thank God for them."

Housing Provider

"Well, my daughter got help with a housing provider."

"So, I found another place to move in to from there, a housing provider helped me, I picked the apartment. And so, they helped me get in there."

"I finally left when I was 19. And I, I had the reason why I have my own housing is because I went through a housing provider, I actually went through the program. And so they helped me find my first apartment. They helped me furnish my first apartment through a charity organization and through my social worker."

Housing provider



“Yeah, my quality of life has definitely improved since receiving independent housing subsidy through a housing provider. It’s, it’s been incredible.”

Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH)

“AISH, and social services, right? Because that’s where a lot of people get their money.”

“Because just prior to me getting my old age, and CPP for a short period of 18 months, I was on AISH.”

“I’m living on AISH now, because I don’t have any social workers in my life anymore. I aged out of the system at 24. So I am on disability. And that’s how I’ve been paying for my rent my power and stuff.”

“Because of all my trauma and my past, I have PTSD. I also have brain damage from when my mom hit me. Like, yeah. And then I’m also a diabetic. So that’s why I was approved for AISH.”

Charity organization

“Mustard Seed, and Hope Mission. And there’s this one other place. Or they like they’re, they kind of they walk around with wagons and they give out food. I forget what it’s what it’s called, but...”

Transitional housing

“And it’s, it’s helped me a lot. Because without that I would have been still depressed. You know, not doing anything from my life. But now I’m in



school, or going to register myself in the school waiting for the student loans.”

“I'm staying at transitional housing. Okay. Bridge. It's a bridge housing, harm reduction living. Transitional housing. I'm there right now until I get a place right till I get into my own apartment.

“What's helping me is the workers. I have bad arthritis. And I'm on a walker and my knee. I'm doing everything. Right after you come to native healing. Oh. sweats. I'm getting much better. Transitional housing helped me a lot to get better.”

Housing support workers

“They supported me with where I can file my taxes, Or where I can go to work out? Or the closest libraries? Or the food bank that are close? And other stuff that are like in need as well.”

Therapy and Counselling

“You know, I had supports, but they, they were all looking at one thing and not everything. And so that holistic approach that they took, and that Indigenous approach really grounded me and who I was and really gave me like a lot of teachings and I needed to help me grow.”

“So I graduated drug court after 15 months with one day's probation. So you know, and it was an incredible program, that program helped me go to counseling, get my life fixed, you know, have a career I have to give back to the community by volunteering.”



“The other supports that were really important for me was addiction services, Edmonton.”

“Counseling for sure. Right. Different online courses and different things that helped along the way.”

Themes specific to Priority Population Groups

Women and children fleeing domestic violence

Participants from this priority population group emphasized the need to have specific/dedicated safe housing for women and children fleeing domestic violence.

“Just be able to have a place where I can go oh my goodness, this feels so good. I've never felt this in my life. I'm safe.”

Female heads of households, especially single mothers

Participants suggested building affordable and safe houses for families with children. They emphasized housing facilities closer to grocery stores and other service facilities, along with easy access to public transport.

“More affordable apartments, for families with children. And in places where you have access to any grocery stores and buses.”

Seniors aged 65+

The participants from this priority population group emphasized accessibility.

“Transportation/accessibility to buses, grocery stores, things like that. We take cab but we really can't afford it because we have to walk right now. We still have to walk four blocks to the bus.”



Young adults aged 18-29

The youths underlined more youth shelters, transitional housing, and support for when they age out of the system, mentorship programs and/or training for budgeting, paying bills and developing other useful skillsets like appropriate and targeted workforce development, professional development, financial literacy, job coaching, and job readiness.

“Yes. I think more youth shelters, because there's only two or three and the beds are usually like, all filled up and stuff.”

“You know, and, like, it would be nice, even if we had programs, we used to have a program years ago, where it helped people to learn a skill, you know, how people learn a skill and know that they're capable of working, like, construction or whatever, like, have these programs for low income people to learn how to get back into the workforce, so workforce programs would be really good. You can't just house them and not support them to, to, you know, become productive members of society, because it's still possible. You know, like, so if we have work programs, I think that would be incredible to have.”

Students

It was important for students to have specific student residences built close to the campus:

“As a student, I think that there needs to be more purpose-built housing for students, whether that's towers or multifamily places, but built with a purpose of housing students. I know some other cities have similar things, not necessarily, it's not definitely not publicly funded. But it's kind of a quasi-collaboration that the city says, we're gonna allocate this space for student housing, and the private sector says, Yeah, we're gonna build student housing there. And it works.”



Indigenous people

Several Indigenous participants recounted their experiences of facing discrimination and/or racism while accessing housing. The indigenous people would like to be included in the housing decision because their worldview is not linear, it is cyclical and all connected.

“They were wanting to indigenize you know, the program, but you don’t approach a situation through colonial lens, you can’t look at it as linear, what indigenous people experience it’s in a circle, everything is connected.”

“I don’t know what it feels like to be like an immigrant because I’ve never lived in a different country. But I still feel like a refugee of my own country. Because A, there’s still some reserves on this land that don’t even have clean water. You know, there are still people of this land that do not have a home. It’s still, we’re still refugees in our own countries and even communities because we don’t feel like we belong anywhere. And I think that, you know, the chronic homelessness has, risen on that matter. Just a sense of belonging somewhere is, what helps you, I think, what helped me because I had to, like, feel safe in my own skin and in my own land.”

Racialized people

Participants from this priority population group reported being denied housing based on their low-income levels. Additional challenge is the 30% taken from their salary to pay for rent. For some of the participants on contract work, this is unsettling because with contract work, income is variable. This creates instability and many hours spent on paperwork to adjust for income change. The other anxiety around affordable housing is when income goes up, the residents are asked to leave in 3 months. Additional challenges mentioned here is poor housing standards and improper sizing of low-cost housing facilities across the city.



“They say you’re not allowed to deny somebody on their income, all those different things, but they do all the time. It’s just a normal practice. And it’s happened to me forever.”

“But how do you adjust for contract on demand work? I received EI and EI was added to my income and they say income has gone up, leave”

“And so, for example, I was looking at, I don’t want to trash the housing provider, but I was looking at some buildings and you go in there and you ask yourself, is this even legal for people to be living here? Is that right? And this is not just some random landlord, this is a housing provider here, like that have the deferred repairs, for this long that you can’t you can you feel you’re going to the building, you can’t even breathe. I know. The smell is so strong. And then who ends up living there? Low income families? Yeah, I mean, some kind of, I think stronger standards around that living situation is definitely nice. Even things like the sizing. Obviously, we don’t, we can’t all you know, not all of us need or wants to live in, in large bedrooms or whatever, but some of the bedrooms that people have called bedroom, this, like, this is a closet, this is not a bedroom, you know, call it what it is. So I just think stronger standards around how people should live and, you know, both you know, physiologically, and even ethically...”

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Two-Spirit (LGBTQ2S+)

This priority population stated the need for affordable and safe housing facilities. They also suggested establishing housing facilities specifically for the LGBTQ2S+ community.

“I know, a couple of times, over the years I have seen, there was an organization specifically focused at LGBTQ, affordable housing. That’s another thing that really does need to be recognized. As well as having LGBTQ specific housing.”



People with physical health or mobility challenges

Accessibility was a factor for this priority group e.g. wheelchair accessibility, accessible doors, ramps, countertops and washrooms etc.

“This place could be more accessible. Like, I have no way of opening my door by myself.”

People dealing with mental health and addictions issues

The participants here stated the importance of having rehabilitative programs, therapy, and counselling services to reintegrate them into society. Another suggestion was not to have housing facilities in areas prone to criminal/drug activities so that they are not pulled back into the addiction cycle. Many of the participants here reiterate the importance of therapy as they transition into affordable housing.

“The other things that became really relevant to my care was counseling to continue to support the trauma.”

People with developmental disabilities

Participants with developmental disabilities state that at times, special needs individuals cannot speak for themselves because they have restricted mobility, therefore they require moral support and companionship for their overall well-being. The suggestion is to have the provision of sensory stimulation activities included in their housing, in addition to well trained staff who would not disrespect or abuse them.

“And I think that's its twofold, too, because the staff, although there's awesome staff, that that that really care about their job, just like any job. It's really, when you think about it, it's really funny that that's really an entry level position. Very low paid position, taking care of human beings. That doesn't make much sense to me. And, you know, and I don't blame them that much, if they're making 15 to \$20 an hour. If they don't have the same enthusiasm, if it was like a stepping stone for a career, you know? So that's my take on it.”



“I would like to see more people a little bit more bedside manner. Respect, like respecting people's houses. Like I wouldn't go into somebody else's house and start throwing stuff around and breaking stuff. Yeah, a lot of respect.”

“I don't know if I have any good idea, you know, special needs individuals, although sometimes they can't speak for themselves, or they can't move for themselves, they still need stimulus. Or companionship, companionship.”

Veterans

This participant suggested building micro-suites or smaller accommodations for the veterans.

“So I think that in terms of housing, the micro suites, try to get more smaller houses, they're more affordable, more easy to rent. I did mention about the tiny homes, that's something that veterans have done, that's maybe an option, maybe a way out. And I do think why so many of them are homeless is because they're trained to live outside. So they aren't intimidated by this. It's not outside of their experience to sleep upon the ground and stuff.”

Housing stories

1. Chelsea - safety, support and affordability elusive in the wake of trauma

Chelsea moved to Edmonton with her husband and child. They had high hopes for a good life, but her husband died and she didn't have the money to move home.



Eventually, after escaping several abusive relationships, Chelsea found herself couch surfing with her kids, doing whatever she could to get by. She got referred to an inner-city support agency and a case worker located short-stay housing for her. To get in, she had to apply for subsidized housing.

The short-stay housing was scary for Chelsea. She didn't do drugs and now she was surrounded by those with substance-use issues. Back to couch surfing, her case worker found another option. This time a condo owned by a housing support agency in a "regular" building. She was warned building management had it out for the support agency residents. Sure enough, a false accusation reported to police had her relocated across the city by the housing agency, and on only a couple of days notice. No one asked her side of the story.

One day, she came home and found items belonging to the landlord in her apartment. No one had told her they were coming in. With some new skills gained in mental health treatment, she tried to talk to the office about it, but it didn't go well. She didn't feel safe and told her case worker she needed to move. With no supported options left, Chelsea moved into a market-rent space.

Chelsea was shocked to learn rent is due on the 1st. For years, she'd been paying rent when the landlord showed up on the 25th, the very day her AISH income came in.

Her rent really was too expensive. Chelsea moved in with an ex-boyfriend, for the chance to split rent and have 1 bedroom for her and the kids. Eventually, she learned she was paying more than half the apartment costs, but without options, she stayed anyway.

Finally, after more than 10 years of regular updates to her subsidized housing application, Chelsea got a call that a place was available. She would now be paying \$285 a month in rent. Chelsea feels like she's won the lottery, since she knows others on the waitlist who get far less in income support than she does.



Now, Chelsea's gratitude and compassion drive her to give back. She volunteers as a peer counselor for others transitioning out of homelessness. She's learned a lot on her journey and she'd like to see agency workers continue to help, but she says they need better training and more compassion, that too often they're cruel or don't know enough to help. She'd also like to see more transitional housing, places that have a community of people with similar histories or issues, instead of places that lump everyone experiencing homelessness together as though they all have the same set of needs.

2. Sara - as we keep the land, the land will keep us, but finding housing is still a challenge

Sara grew up moving around a lot with her mother and siblings. It wasn't until she got older that she realized they were actually homeless. By then, she was 18 and alone in the city. Her mother, siblings and her own child all relocated up north.

Sara spent the next 10 years going from shelter to living rough, moving between Edmonton and Calgary. Sometimes there's nowhere to go when you're without a home, but laws against loitering result in fines. Sara didn't have the money, and did time in jail.

For Sara, that time in her life, without her daughter and removed from her family, is clouded. She knows she felt safe on the land, because that's what her people have always been connected to, but she didn't feel safe around the people and turned to alcohol and drugs to self-medicate.

There was a moment, she says, when she realized she needed a home, a chance, and help. She was in Edmonton and a new program called Housing First had started. She was accepted and connected to resources. But since many housing programs won't accept those with a criminal record, her options were limited. Still, Sara got housed. Housing First expired after 2 years, though, and she had to move on. She decided to try private rentals, but the landlords would take one look at her and up the rent, or claim



someone else had just gotten approved. Sara doesn't want to blame others, she just wants a safe, stable home for her and her children.

But with prices on the rise everywhere, she's been priced out of several places in the last years. She's chosen to leave others because changes in ownership changed the sense of community and safety. Sara's dedication to healing her drug and alcohol dependence means she's had to voluntarily leave public housing to protect her own sobriety, since being around people who imbibe can be triggering.

Sara is grateful to her Indigenous ancestors and peers, especially their ability to form community anywhere. She's noticed though, that a lot of public housing options have no green space, because people have forgotten that being connected to the land is vital to healing and wellbeing.

Now reunited with her oldest child, Sara is intent on proving she has what it takes to be a good mother and provider to her children. She worries about what public housing is exposing her children to, and if she'll ever afford a private rental. In pursuit of a safe, stable home, she's now working through the process of getting into an Indigenous housing support agency's collective housing space.

3. Chad - boom times lead to a bust

Chad moved west to do oil & gas work and it treated him well for years. But the economic downturn in the late 90s left him out of a job, with bills to pay. He turned to dealing drugs to make ends meet. He thought it would be temporary, that he'd be back at his old work soon enough.

Instead he ended up addicted to his own product and, eventually, convicted of trafficking. His drug addiction continued throughout his jail sentence, and after parole, he ended up in Edmonton. He was alone, in his 50s, unable to find work, and living rough while trying to support a drug habit. Chad says he lucked out when he



encountered a rehab & housing program at an inner-city agency. He got a year of treatment and housing and has been clean and sober ever since.

But finding work has been a challenge, and the temporary work he was able to get resulted in him getting a serious injury. Chad's ability to support himself with his existing skills evaporated, but he was connected to a housing program that helped him find public housing and subsidize his rent. It only lasted a year, though.

For a period of time he bounced from place to place, encountering difficulties when private landlords wouldn't accept third-party checks for his rental subsidy, or would, but then required adherence to rules like no visitors, or would breach his privacy to check up on him.

Now, he's self-taught some new skills and he works as much as he's physically able. It's not enough to cover independent private rental though, and he's having trouble coordinating his income supports. One office thinks he's dead, and another support payment was delayed because they thought he was receiving the other. There is no coordination between income support agencies and he can't afford a lawyer. Chad has waited over 60 days to get emergency funds to pay his rent. Thankfully, he's living with people he knows who have allowed him to put his trade skills to work on the property, in lieu of rent, while he tries to get everything worked out.

Chad says his eyes have been opened through his journey and he's now actively working with housing agencies to help advocate for others. He doesn't tell a lot of people that though, since he knows trust in the housing agencies is non-existent among the unhoused. He says it's a hard road for people, because there isn't enough transparency about what's happening to people who are homeless. He says it's vitally important that public housing exist, but that few do it well. Combine that with public housing rules Chad says are unlawful, and the ones that say an eviction from public housing prohibits your access for years and you have a recipe for chronic homelessness. Still, he'd like to see more housing available. He'd just like the rules to set people up for success, instead of increasing their burden.



4. Charity - childhood trauma can haunt and inspire

Growing up, Charity moved back and forth between her parents multiple times, eventually ending up with her father. She endured ongoing sexual abuse and developed self-harming coping mechanisms. She was relinquished to a youth centre where she received a few months of inpatient treatment.

At 15 she left treatment, but received no transitional or ongoing support. At 16, Charity was in a relationship with an older man and unsupported and floundering at home, signed a Support and Financial Assistance Agreement. The agreement provides assistance when youth fully cooperate with case workers. Charity's relationship resulted in a lack of support, so she was reliant on an abusive partner until she got a referral to a youth shelter.

Admitted to a residential program at the shelter, she tried to refocus on school, but had a difficult time because of her history. Charity was often scared, wondering if she'd be cast out. She was determined, however, and remained until she was 19, when she was referred into another housing program.

Her case worker helped her find a subsidized apartment, and used local charitable resources to help Charity get it furnished. Charity was overjoyed and felt proud of what she'd accomplished, setting her sights on getting into post-secondary so she could help kids with histories like hers. But Charity's health began to deteriorate, and upgrading forced the realization that the abuse she'd suffered had caused brain damage. Now faced with health concerns and accommodation needs, Charity realized the mold and pest problems in her supported apartment were unhealthy.



Her support worker was able to find her another place that would accept third-party payments, and arranged, out of her own pocket, help for moving. Charity credits the help she received to her age and the compassion of her support worker. She knows from talking to others that it doesn't work out that well for everyone.

Despite the support, Charity has continued to encounter barriers. Recently, she faced being cut off from all supports, as a government proposal sought to drop the age of support from 24 to 20. Her support worker was proactive, however, and helped Charity apply for, and get, AISH, due to her health and cognitive issues.

Recently, Charity has spent her time trying to get ahead on her studies, since her youth-in-care program funds it. She's finding it difficult to keep up with everything though. Her dietary health needs, power and internet have gone up, and her private rent has risen to \$930/mo.

Two years ago Charity put in an application for subsidized housing. She's hopeful she'll hear something soon, before she gets forced out of her home because she can't afford it.

5. Citana - carrying the strength and trauma of the ancestors

Citana spent her childhood moving a lot. Many members of her family had addiction issues, and she was pulled from the family time and again. By the time Citana was a teenager, she was in a group home, and left when she became pregnant. Determined not to repeat the experience of her upbringing, she accepted money from a family member to return to Edmonton and be part of a jobs-training program for Indigenous women. She succeeded in landing a good job, where she was promoted successively.

The unresolved intergenerational trauma remained unresolved and Citana ended up in downward spiral of an abusive relationship and alcohol use. The death of a close family member made it all worse. She started doing drugs, ended up in and out of rehab, child



welfare involved with her four children now. They lost their home and moved in with a friend on reserve, but it wasn't healthy. Citana ended up in a women's shelter.

The shelter provided stability, allowing Citana to get sober and find another job. Her sobriety didn't last, however, and she lost the job. She started trafficking drugs to make money. She got transferred into drug treatment court in Edmonton. Through that program, she was sent to an Indigenous-led treatment centre, where she credits the reconnection to her Indigenous culture and history with saving her.

Upon leaving, she entered a sober living facility. That only lasted 3 months, however, and then she was on her own, trying to pay bills on \$723 a month from Alberta Works. To get her children back, she was told she would need a 3-bedroom apartment, because of their ages and genders. Around the same time, Citana was diagnosed with mental health issues, in addition to her addiction issues.

These diagnoses gave her the ability to access transitional housing for women and children. Citana says that all the supports she was able to access, from charitable to government funded, made it possible for her to actually become a good parent. It was only through the availability of free childcare in the inner-city that she was able to return to work. With work income though, she earned out of additional supports. Knowing that she couldn't properly care for 5 children on her low income and pay market rent, Citana was lucky to be able to move in with her Kokum. Without family, she's afraid they all would have been homeless again. Today, Citana is an avid volunteer for anti-poverty and other groups, shedding light on the systemic barriers that keep people struggling.

6. Josh - responsible for himself

From a young age Josh was bounced between foster care and kinship care, since a lot of his family, including his parents, have addiction issues. An Auntie brought him to Edmonton, but it didn't last and he ended up back in care where he endured a string of



abuses. He was young when he started drinking and smoking weed to cope with the pain.

Josh knows he's got problems thinking and remembering things. He blames himself for it, though someone once said something about fetal alcohol spectrum disorder to him, because he resorted to drinking mouthwash while living rough.

At 35 now, Josh has been on the streets for about 6 years, in between stints in transitional housing and couch surfing with family. He says nothing ever lasts though because he's not responsible enough about his drinking. He says when he drinks he gets nasty and he makes poor choices. He says his drinking makes his bipolar and depression and anxiety worse, and that's all his fault. He's been evicted from public housing, has an arrest record, has damaged the homes of family, and been ostracized by some of them.

His father has been in supportive housing downtown for many years though, and recently approached his support agency to find a place for Josh. They did, and now Josh is in sobriety counseling. He's been sober for several months now. He's met a housing worker and is hoping for help finding his own place, but he's worried he won't be able to when they find out about his Alberta Works income and his eviction record.

Josh thinks we need more support workers and better transitional supports. He knows he's not good at remembering names and numbers, or organizing a schedule. He says sometimes the questions he's asked are just too hard and he'd really like it if someone could help him learn how to budget, and care for a home, and pay his bills, and grocery shop properly. He says previous programs found him an apartment, but no one ever helped him keep one and that most of the time, the places weren't safe anyway. He explained the housing options he's been provided were in the thick of the areas that he frequented while living rough. He was often triggered by other residents' behaviour, or the scenes from the street, so he wishes people like him were allowed to live in nicer neighbourhoods with better support.



Josh isn't complaining though, because he knows he's to blame for his troubles, so he's just going to focus on keeping the drinking under control.

7. Eliza - money won't buy you appropriate housing

Eliza has been paralyzed for some 14 years now. She tells the story of her injury in no uncertain terms: she was selfish and dove off a balcony. The part she's not telling you is about her struggles with mental health and addiction issues.

For well over a decade, Eliza kept a home while managing a high-functioning addiction. It was public housing, since finding accessible units at affordable prices is near impossible. She put up with no visitor rules that made it hard to keep contact with her young-adult children. Then, in the middle of the pandemic, she ended up in hospital for 3 months. While there, she received word that she was being evicted, despite being ready and able to pay rent. Her possessions were packed up and put in storage and when she left hospital, she had nowhere to go but a shelter. She'd been told there would be a bed, but instead she was confronted with needing to lower herself out of her scooter onto a mat on the floor in the middle of winter. As a result, she got frostbite which led to complications and a total amputation.

At inner-city shelters, Eliza has witnessed people lose their income support cheques to addicts; had personal possessions "go missing" from mandatory storage; watched fights and bullying occur non-stop, and had her own scooter stolen. She gets around now in a borrowed wheelchair in ill-repair. She mentions something about a support worker suggesting she sold the scooter for drug money. Eliza doesn't need drug money anymore, she stopped that. What she wants is help to heal, but she's not eligible for any of the programs because they can't help her. Rehab centres aren't equipped for complex medical needs.

Eliza struggles to know where to look or who to talk to for help. She's got a social worker, but housing workers seem to keep getting fired or just don't show up when they



say they will. Eliza and her social worker are trying to find an accessible and affordable place for her, but there just doesn't seem to be any such thing, or if there is, it's on an eternal waitlist. That's the thing, Eliza says, she has the money for first and last and damage deposit, since she's been saving her income. Yet still, there's just no home for her. That's all she's really looking for, a little place to call her own, where the counters and stove are lowered so she doesn't burn her arms, where her kids are allowed to come visit, and maybe there's a little church nearby she can go to on Sunday.

8. Foy - crowd-sourcing a housing solution

Foy was ecstatic when he was accepted into University in Edmonton, but almost immediately the stress of needing housing overwhelmed him. He began searching every website he could find to locate a place to stay, since his student Visa and application process all depended on him having somewhere to go.

With his departure imminent, he finally thought he had a line on a place, so he boarded the plane leaving his African home. On a layover, he received word his application had been accepted and he would have a place to go when he landed.

He didn't have much of anything to equip a home, and wasn't sure he knew where it was located, but he had a place to stay. He had a roof over his head, but it wasn't great. The price was high, the location not easy to get to, and his landlord was always in his space without warning. He couldn't relax or study or feel safe in his rooms. He was only allowed 2 specific visitors and never seemed to be able to get things fixed.

But Foy made friends and they helped him find other options and learn more about different parts of the city and how the transit system worked. They helped him learn the questions to ask before renting a place. If it wasn't for his friends, Foy isn't sure he would have made it. He wishes Edmonton had a better handle on student housing options.



Now, Foy talks to other international students and sees there's a need for something that will help orient newcomers to our city. Something that helps them understand what the landlord and tenant rules are and what locations are good for students. Something where people from similar backgrounds can learn about each other and find aspects of culture in the community. Find out which landlords will accept students, even. He thinks crowd-sourcing is the key - building a platform to help newcomers navigate their housing needs with better information and peer support from others that have gone through, or are going through, the same thing. He says it won't help with the price, or the people that look at you and turn you away, but at least you could tell others so they don't have to go through it, too.

9. Raylan - applying the wisdom and empathy of a life in the arts

Raylan had a long career in the arts, managing a middle-class life for close to 40 years on his talent, hard work and empathy. It ended with a brain injury just before he qualified for old-age pension.

Unable to work and struggling with cognitive deficits, Raylan was met with interminable bureaucracy when trying to access supports and find a place to live he could afford on his now-meager income. He's thankful he had a little savings, some small equity he could take out of a rental property and good friends, who would let him stay or pay his rent from time to time while he waited for a place to be available. At first, a subsidized apartment, and then a couple more years waiting to age-in and then another couple years awaiting access to seniors' low-income housing.

Raylan had years of arts management knowledge behind him, and he applied it to getting through the paperwork and requirements that he's sure prevents others from getting the support they need. If it's even available. He's lived the waiting lists and knows there isn't enough housing.



For Raylan, his mixed race background has shown him that people of racialized decent are pushed to the fringes. He's back in the neighbourhood he was born into in the 50s, the neighbourhood that was the only place a mixed race family was allowed to settle at the time. He's grateful for the place though, since his seniors' residence only charges him 30% of his income.

Raylan says he's maybe a radical, but he thinks the only way we end poverty is to stop basing our societies on economies and instead base them on love for each other. He knows that the support workers he's encountered are well-intentioned, but he sees they expect things from people in poverty that just aren't reasonable to expect someone in that space to navigate. He's seen the person next to him in a support centre waiting room having a full panic attack interacting with a support worker who's clueless as to what's going on right in front of them. He's seen other seniors' in his neighbourhood, people he knows don't have any more money than he does, pay full market rents and not eat for the last week of the month. He wishes government did a better job of telling people what supports are available to them.

Raylan knows the decision-makers in government want to help, but he doesn't think they're really seeing how their systems are making it impossible for people to get ahead. Raylan knows it's for them to fix though, so he's hoping they're willing to be as radical as he is.

10. Paul - surviving on privilege, not acceptance

Paul knows he presents as a fairly typical white male, though he's diagnosed on the autism spectrum and has other mental health issues. But he won't complain. He knows he's lucky.

At a young age Paul's parents were trying to find supports or residential schooling that would support their son, to be close to a school that might offer what he needed. Paul was bullied though, as his sexuality started to become apparent, and though his parents



didn't shun him when he eventually came out as gay, he's not really accepted either. It makes their ongoing support stressful and triggering to his mental health, since he's never fully himself. He can't choose otherwise, though, since his AISH income never stretches far enough and additional support is elusive. He does manage to work a little, but he has to be careful how much or the claw backs to his AISH cause longer-term problems.

Paul will point out how much worse it is for other gay people. He's seen and talked to them downtown. They are homeless and faced with aging out of LGBTQ youth supports. Paul has been in far less than ideal housing situations - bad landlords, abusive neighbours, violence in the buildings, pest problems, being targeted for being gay, and constant police presence - but he's always gotten by and always been able to get a little extra money from his parents when he needed it. He credits them for their devotion to supporting his neurodiversity and mental health challenges. He just wishes more people would support gay youth, or designate more housing for them so they could be safer.

For years Paul managed to live away from his parents by having roommates or living in low-quality housing, always able to go home if things got bad. Paul is 37 years old now, and it wasn't until recently he was finally able to access an independent living subsidy and get into affordable housing. He's paying \$795 a month in rent plus other bills on his AISH income. He used to pay almost \$1100 a month for rent.

It's all about the affordability and the quality, Paul says, when it comes to making ends meet. He recognizes he doesn't have much left to live on every month, and he wonders how others with less income and subsidy make it. He's got a friend on AISH who's having to GoFundMe to get the wheelchair he needs. He wishes he had money to contribute. He wishes we had systems that actually took care of people with complex needs. And maybe a system that didn't shove everyone together as though the need for affordable housing makes everyone the same.



11. Amy - you can escape abuse and still be trapped

Amy came to Canada when she was 12. Her mother had died and so her father brought her to live in Edmonton with his second family. She didn't fit, but she made friends and married at 17.

She had two kids with her husband. They rented a decent apartment and she put her name on the lease, since she was the one with a stable job. Then the abuse escalated from verbal and emotional to physical. A chance encounter with a high school friend led to a place to stay for a bit, so she could leave her husband.

It couldn't last, though, so despite her misconceptions, she went to a local women's shelter. It was new. It was clean. It was fully furnished. Amy was in school at the time, on student loans, but she didn't want to go to the free shelter, she didn't want to be a burden. She paid the \$500 a month they asked for, and she continued to pay the \$900 a month for the apartment she'd left. She couldn't get off the lease and didn't want her credit destroyed. She followed the rules: no men, no smoking or drugs or drinking. She helped the other women. She went to therapy.

But you can only stay in the shelter for 2 years, so she took the first subsidized housing she was offered and applied for something more appropriate.

After more than 10 years and many moves, Amy has arrived at the conclusion that subsidized housing is a trap. Not because it's a bad thing, but because it's so badly run. She's had to disclose her living situation to her employers, to confirm her income. She sees the looks she gets when she does this. When she gets a raise, her rent goes up. Amy brings home \$1800 a month. Her subsidized rent is \$900 a month. She's never missed a payment, but she has no savings and sometimes has to go without to make ends meet. The kids in the building scream non-stop. No one enforces limits on the number of people her neighbour crams into their suite. The garbage rots next to a dumpster instead of in it. People do drugs in the hallways her children walk down.



Amy doesn't understand why people aren't better placed according to needs, or why there isn't a program to help you save and move out, maybe get a small place of your own. She thinks that would help people leave, instead of being stuck for decades while waitlists multiply.

Sometimes, Amy needs a break and drives her car into a nice neighbourhood. But Amy worries she's taking a big risk. She's worried what might happen when someone sees a black woman sleeping in an old car in a nice neighbourhood. Maybe the next place will finally be livable?

12. Yusef - thankful, grateful, confused

Yusef, his wife and 5 children were refugees from Syria when they were sponsored by a church group to come to Canada. The church group set them up in a market rental house and helped them get around for a while, ensuring the rent was paid. Yusef is thankful for the chance to be here and to be supported for a while.

Yusef couldn't use his previous qualifications and so learned truck driving. He got a job, but it was only part-time. He knew his sponsorship would only last a year, so a friend recommended subsidized housing and helped him complete and submit the application.

Yusef and his family welcomed another child. They got subsidized housing within 6 months. He's grateful it worked out because he hears now from his neighbours that some people were on the list for years. He hears about the bad design his elderly friend deals with that forces him up and down stairs he's not physically well enough to manage safely. He hears about some of the other neighbourhoods and the violence and police raids they endure. It makes their families scared.

So Yusef will not complain about the cracks in the walls and the leaking pipes and the worn-through linoleum that his children trip on. He will tell you that he is lucky, even



though he lost his job during COVID and now must try to make his \$555 rent payment and feed his family of 7 on Alberta Works income.

Yusef believes in community, spends time at the community centre attached to the mosque, and tries to help those that are new here understand how to get a job, how to get a house and where the safe places are to have a house. He thinks that information should be given to newcomers. It confuses him that so many houses in his complex sit empty for so many months when so many people need houses. He thinks maybe the government just doesn't know what's happening, and so can't fix it. He thinks it's fixable and he knows people need it fixed.

13. Duncan - a veterans' hard-fought wisdom, shared

Duncan left the military in his 20s, returning to school to complete professional credentials. He could tell something wasn't right, though. In time a referral to veterans' services and psychiatric assessment resulted in a serious mental health diagnosis. He was advised to quit school and informed his professional aspirations would never amount to anything. He applied to, and received, AISH. He fought through and finished school anyway.

As is common with certain mental health issues, and especially with ever-changing coverage for medications, he wasn't always stable and the advice he received about his career potential seemed to be correct. He could barely get, and couldn't hold, a job.

Duncan wasn't deterred, despite paying the price of trying to work and losing AISH and then having to go back on it. He kept making independent contributions to his field. Sometimes he was homeless while doing so, staying in transitional housing or emergency shelters. Duncan is pretty sure his comfort sleeping rough is from his military training. He knows how to shelter and sleep anywhere.



He learned a lot about people and situations while on the street. He developed an incredible compassion and understanding for the role of intergenerational trauma, mental illness and things like FASD. He's dissected systems and policy as it relates to the causes of poverty and homelessness. He sees the ripple effects throughout the communities whose streets he walked to pass the time between shelter visits.

Duncan eventually married. He and his partner (also receiving AISH) managed to obtain a mortgage in a lower-income neighbourhood, on a small accessible multi-unit space that his partner could navigate with a walker. He credits that accomplishment with providing the stability that's allowed him to continue his independent professional development.

It's never been easy for them to hold onto the property, but they did. They used it as a homebase to create a family from those Duncan encountered on the streets and in his volunteering with vulnerable groups, eventually adopting several children many claimed were irredeemable.

Their neighbourhood, never great, is now riddled with crime. People are scared to visit him. Duncan and his partner have been the victims of crime themselves. While they may no longer have a mortgage, now they're both nearing retirement age, maintenance takes every penny they can scrounge and their home value hasn't kept pace. With the lack of accessible options at affordable prices, Duncan and his partner know they have nowhere else to go. They just have to hope that aging in place doesn't end with violence.



Housing experience and journey through the voices of the participants

Participant 01

So it was something I thought I had to do to stay off the street. And it ended up being that situation where I had to do you know, sex, pay money, I spent all my money. And then I had that situation. And somebody that I met with had mentioned that it was it was I can't think of the wording for it couch surfing another term, I guess we're kind of like how homelessness. So, I got in touch with some people who put me in the housing for women, and I can't remember what it was called. That's how it started. And I got in touch with some ladies and then I was informed of some housing scenarios that they had.

I didn't use drugs or alcohol. I was just extremely depressed. Because I had PTSD and I had all these things. And it was just I couldn't handle anything. So, I got put in this house where housing where all the people in the building, were really a hot mess.

And for me, it was not a good fit at all. It was scary. It was like I was saying I'll go live on the street in the back alley if you don't get me out of here. It was that bad. And I understand there's different scenarios, but for me, it was not good. So then again, I was going in moving around to different places, right because I didn't feel safe there. So, then I did some more couch surfing. Then they put me in with a housing provider that had a building where they own some individual condos. And they put me in a place there. And it was the I'm going to get emotional. I didn't know that I didn't know what it was like to have my own. I remember exactly coming around the kitchen and have this overwhelming feeling. Its like, how did I not know how it feels to have a home, nice home.

Participant 17

Well, I have an idea of what this is really about, and I do have some experience with low income housing for myself in, in Edmonton over the over the last few years. So because



of my circumstances, I kind of entered that whole circumstance and how I navigated through it, actually, I'm finally in a good spot on it, but it took a long time. And, and because it was kind of thrust on onto my life by a medical situation. And also my age.

I was single, a single man in 2015. And I was for a single man in the arts. I was, I was doing quite well, do you know you were living very comfortably between 70 and \$90,000 a year at that point. And that ended abruptly from a brain injury that I had actually had 20 years ago in a car accident and then fell and reinjured. So it took away some of my cognitive and other abilities to actually do the job that I was doing. I had burned through my savings, my children don't live here, they're not in not in that don't have the ability to take care of me. And so that I started dealing with the system. At that time, I'm a couple of years from my old age pension and that sort of stuff. But I've got like a two year gap. Well, of course, I'm not earning, so I have to get into this system. So now I'm looking for housing. Originally, with what I had, and any money I had coming in, I immediately couldn't pay the type of rent. That was the market value of rent. So I went to the Edmonton housing place or whatever it is over on 112 street and I forget the name of the place and you go sign up and get on a list for subsidized housing.

It's good. But to get back to this, this process. So I got on board with them. And I did everything of course they take all your information and then they give you a phone number so that you can track or call them and ask you them how you're moving up the list because well, I sat on that list for up until the time that I actually got my old age pension, which was two years later. So I found subsidized low income seniors housing, but again, you have to go on a list. The positive thing I'll say about that because eventually in the spring of 2019 as a low-income senior for the housing, which what they do is they only take 30% of my entire income which is just fine for covering, right so basically what that does is it covers my rent and the power on this place, I pay the insurance independently, the tenants insurance independently. But I'm here in one of these buildings and it took about four years to get that done in that four years, the circumstances that you go through living the below the poverty line, I can't even begin to explain it.



Participant 03

I am from Montreal and came to Edmonton for work. And I worked on oil rigs and lost my job when the economy changed. And so I started dealing drugs and got into trouble with the law. And started dealing and then I started using, I got addicted and was a downhill spiral from there. Then I came to Edmonton and got into a program at the Hope Mission. That was called the breakout. And I was a year in there and I'm clean now and sober for almost four years. Really good. I like it now. I worked as a temporary worker for a temp agency. I went to the counselors there to take workers or whatever. He gave me a form for rapid exit. That's a housing program they have there and they put me into housing, they helped me with my managing my rent and helped me with bills and that for a year and ever since then I haven't looked back into. I was within and then I graduated from there and, then went to a graduation program with Homeward Trust and I joined a committee there to try and help give back to the community.

Participant 04

Growing up, some of my living situation was hard. I was always back and forth between my mom and dad. It was never stable. I experienced sexual assault when I was younger by my stepbrother, and so I had started self-harming myself. And my father didn't really know how to deal with that, because he was a single parent with two girls, me and my older sister. And so basically, he kind of just gave me up to the system. And then in the system, I didn't really know how to control my emotions, like I was still angry about all the abuse that had happened.

I remember when I was 16, I had signed my own SAFA agreement, but I was involved with an older gentleman, gentleman that they did not approve of, so they didn't really give me money. So I kind of relied on him for everything. And then when everything kind of hit, like our relationship didn't work out and stuff, because obviously there was a lot of differences. They put me into the youth program.



And so they have the overnight shelter. But then they also have a program for youth that are homeless, they can live in there. Like they have bedrooms. And so basically, you can live there as long as you're doing stuff to transition to get out of there.

I lived there for about two years. And so that's how I experienced homelessness because of like my past and like, but I wasn't really homeless, homeless because I still lived in the shelter. But also at the shelter was hard because they didn't have the food there. Like they didn't provide us with food. And it was just a hard situation like yeah, it was just really hard. And then I remember like asking my worker, I was like, Can I get my own place. Yeah. And he is like, I don't think you're ready for that. Because, you know, like, I just came out of a freshly relationship with an older man and stuff. And then, so I stayed at that youth shelter for around two years.

I finally left when I was 19. And I, I had the reason why I have my own housing is because I went through housing provider, I actually went through the program. And so they helped me find my first apartment. They helped me furnish my first apartment through my social worker. And then they helped me with my, like, setting up my power setting up my Wi Fi, like, just things that I just didn't know about my insurance for apartment, they helped me with a lot of that stuff. And then, once I got the hang of it, I was like, I don't need you.

Participant 06

I live we grew up in a small like, our home was two bedroom and there was six of us. So you know, my three other siblings. My parents had their own room. So we shared room. Like it was never like I never had my own home until I moved here a year, maybe six months after I started. I applied with a housing provider. So I was always living even with my son.

Finally, I got into affordable housing. And I was going to school so it was kind of it was good, but the neighbors were or the neighbor was not a nice neighbor 'cause she would always call the cops on us with my son.



Participant 02

I first started living in when I was, you know, on my own, my parents actually moved away. So I was homeless for nine years off and on like, I would say chronically homeless, but from the age of 18 to 27 Yeah, I was, I was couch surfing. I was, you know, like, living rough by. Yeah, I would travel from actually Calgary and Edmonton, between shelters, you know, programs, detox, anything and everything in between, I guess, even a jail system. So that was, yeah, just but when I turned 27, I actually got a hold. I got into affordable housing. It was like their pilot project, you know, which turned into like, a permanent thing. So I graduated. So I've been successfully housed for 12 years. Yeah. Well, I graduated their program. So I've been like housing helped since then. So, but you're just this much away from being homeless, like the blink of eye, blink of an eye.

I was depending on housing provider at first, but once the program was over, and my support was gone, like I had to transition, graduate out of that program after two years. So now I have to find subsidy to help me and my, you know, I had kids, whatever, and the rent would go up, you know, so I don't have any power or control over that. And, you know, like, it's the economy as well, like, the economy goes up, everything goes up.

Participant 05

I grew up in a smaller community, my mom was, I was part of a family that was struggling with addiction, especially my mom. And I had a lot of family back home. So I would be transferred back and forth between different families. And so as far as I can, I can always remember is experiencing that housing displacement from a really young age.

I've actually, you know, experienced houselessness since a child, right, because my mom was in and out of addiction. And we were very transient. So we moved a lot. So I didn't have, you know, I would what I did have, I never really had it for very long. And



then we would move right. And so then as you move, you lose things. So I just always remember not having a bedroom, you know, with like a bed and a dresser. You know, it's like, normal housing stuff.

I think I've been struggling with that for many years. And then my mom got us back when I was about 12 years old. And we always were low-income family, right. I remember, you know, struggling and getting food from the food banks, from churches, you know, things different things like that. That was just always kind of part of my upbringing, secondhand clothes, you know, things there was just I always remember there never been enough. I left home and I was in some group homes for about a year and then I got pregnant at about 17 and a half. I have my son when I was 18. I became a young mom had experience didn't know about being a mother. I just thought I'm just going to try to do everything opposite of what I was taught and shown because I went through a lot of different traumas growing up. Sexual, sexual trauma, physical mental abuse, right? Even spiritual abuse because my mom was very religious.

So we moved to Edmonton, my dad was like, take your kid and go to Edmonton and get an education. He gave me money. And I moved back here with my son when he was just one year old, right. And I did come back here and I went to this program they had at one time. This is quite a while ago, but they had this program for Indigenous people who were working towards getting a job. And I ended up getting a job in the Royal Bank.

We got housed with a housing provider, and I lived with them for eight years. And in that time, you know, I was able to get back on my feet and really learn about myself and continue to grow.

Participant 12

I am a mother of two beautiful kids. They're all grown up. And I'm also struggling with homelessness, the past year of my life, over a year of my life. And it's been the worst, because I'm paralyzed. So I have been in the hospital, and I lost my left leg due to frostbite on my toes from last winter. And I got discharged from the hospital on Friday



afternoon, I had no bank card and I went to the shelter. I was supposed to have a bed. I didn't get. I was on a mat. And it was the worst it was just how they treated the people and being stuck outside for so many hours freezing. And yeah, it was a lot of violence and drugs. And it's just like there was nowhere safe to go. It was it was pretty rough. So I ended up coming back to the hospital with frostbite.

And I've applied for housing, I'd love to get in there I was in over a month ago now. The housing provider says it can take up to eight weeks and I called them just to make sure everything you know, it's the way it's supposed to be. Even you know, and they said it could take till the end of July, but they just said keep checking your emails. And I would love to rent off them because they have some housing where, remember how I told you they used to fund me they used to be called capital regional housing, and they changed their name. But anyways, some of the places they only charge you 30% of your income. So that would be so ideal, right?

Participant 21

I live in Canada since 2007. I have three kids. I come from a different country. And a few years ago, I had to run away from my husband because he became a little bit aggressive. And then I used to living in a shelter two years ago. Well, no, not two years ago, four years ago.

Yes, I was with my children because one day I escaped home and I want I wanted a shelter, and I was there two years...

Yes, well, first, I went for six months for one building, because of the women's shelter has two buildings. The first one is like a first emergency shelter. And the second one is for women who wants to work, or who wants to study. So after six months, I was transferred to the other building. And then they allow me to study there. I was studying at a College, I took in upgrading to improve a little bit of my English, because well, I still am. But I believe now I can communicate.



I apply as soon as I get to the shelter. I tried to apply for a house because I needed a house right away for my kids and myself. But then I couldn't be able to find a house. I just signed up for a house of three bedrooms. And I've been waiting. I've been waiting the whole time. I'm still waiting. I don't know if I have I have to call. I have to continue calling them.

Participant 19

Okay. When I came, I came in the case that he kicked us out. So I didn't have anywhere to go. I went to the internet, I went to the library. And then I went to the internet. And then I saw, I was passing question where I can get a place a shelter to stay. And I submit my application, I printed it from the library, and I submitted it at the office. And lo and behold, you will not believe like three days they call me that is ready. Like, yes, even the clerk was surprised. He said, wow, whatever I say, I don't know. You know, just 3 days.

Even when I was here, I was going to school, I sent them my information, everything they reduced the rent. That time I was paying 1060, they reduced it to 120. But when I was going to school, they were charging me like 800. And later on, they realized they overcharged me so I didn't pay rent like eight months.

At that time the most annoying part honestly is every month they review that you have to take to work. And you know, not everybody want people to know their private life, right? So, like me if any changes, I'll notify, but you have to, you need to submit to your workplace, they have to write this you have to send to them. And it is a whole lot of stress that is the only one. That's the only way, apart from that where I live is a very peaceful place. If anything is not working, and I think I can fix it myself. I do. If not, I call the Super they attend to it. Yeah. Very good area, very good neighborhood.

Participant 22



Picked Edmonton because of the oil and gas industry. Highly educated, but could not access transcripts from Iraq and underemployed, overqualified and as a result for these reasons stay in affordable housing. Application to housing is onerous.

30% of income is taken from the salary to pay rent and since he is on contract work, there is a lot of instability and many time spent on paperwork to adjust for income change. The other anxiety around affordable housing is when income goes up, they are asked to leave in 3 months. "But how do you adjust for contract on demand work? I received EI and EI was added to my income and they say income has gone up, leave"

They don't respond well to maintenance issues except if it is a broken furnace. There is bad ventilation and the air turnover is bad, "we have to open windows for ventilation"

Participant 24

Well, I remember when we first came to Canada we used to live in, there was seven of us in the family the youngest being six months old, I was 11 at the time, and we used to live in a two bedroom apartment. It was one of the boardwalk buildings. And I remember we were always told there was a bit too much noise. And I know that there are places where they have bigger houses are usually three bedrooms, maybe four. So I used to always ask my parents. Okay, well, why don't we just go live there, right? And we'd have more space, because, obviously me 11 year old, I'm complaining about sharing a room with three other siblings, right? That was my primary concern.

And what's even worse is most houses near this university aren't even that nice. They're all old houses, which I in my first year of university, I lived in a house that was built like 1950 something. And we were paying lots for a four-bedroom place, and it had mice in it. The landlord was not a terrible guy, but also not the nicest guy, he bought it off, and he used to live next door in a brand-new infill. And so, he bought it off of the lady that used to own it when she had to go off to for a retirement home. And he started renting it out to students, as I guess a cash cow. But yeah, but with these new infills, it's making things even worse, because all of the houses in the in the in the vicinity are just getting



pricier and pricier and pricier. I would consider myself extremely lucky now because we found this nice three bedroom place. We each have our bathrooms. No, not No, not quite. It's actually near West Edmonton.

Participant 11

Currently, I live on my own in an apartment. Well, my parents were divorced. At the time. I was like four or five. I was with my dad in Edmonton. And then he couldn't take care of me, so he took me to live with relatives.

And then so I went to sleep over at my dad's for the weekend. And they like his wife just went crazy on me, and I decided to leave that weekend. And I went to the mall, Southgate mall. I remember sitting there crying.

And then I started looking for support. And that's how I started like, I started reaching out everywhere. Like, hey, this is a situation I'm in. I need help finding housing. I was 18. From when I started reaching out, I reached out to a youth shelter and then they sent me to a housing provider. And that's how I got into the program. And then it took the process took about three months, until I was assigned to a housing supporter that was going to take me to like viewings and stuff like that.

I am in my fourth apartment. So a lot more like experience now. It's it's been hard learning on my own and everything. But where I'm at right now I can say I can fully I can. I can fully be like, not fully but half responsible, I guess. But so much better than where I started at first.

I live in a one bedroom apartment. I live alone.

Honestly, just a roof on top of my head. That's all that matters, because I never had somewhere I can call home. I was always like moving around and stuff like that. So I'm



really grateful. That's where I'm at right now. I think that if it wasn't Housing First, I would have not gotten my own apartment or like where I've been where I would have been.

Participant 09

I was in Edmonton, then I move back to St. Albert in order to live with my sister. And that's when I got injured in 2009. And I spent nine months in ICU, then six months in the hospital. And then I moved to another hospital, to get an address to be accepted to another hospital. But they said they couldn't do anything, the hospital couldn't help me and they took me in as outpatient and from the hospital I move to a home in St. Albert, long term care center. And I lived there for seven years. And then I moved into the city of Edmonton.

Participant 07

It's been like back and forth for like, five for four or five years because I was living with my dad. And we would move to Red Deer, and then move back to Edmonton to Whitecourt and then back to Edmonton. But recently, I think before I turned 18. It all started with my boyfriend. We were staying with his grandma.

And I didn't have no income at the time had no Alberta works or anything.

A hotel that was transitioned into a homeless housing, this place has helped me a lot. This is like what I needed. For my situation, it was different. We just went there. And then I told them, what was going on. And they were so welcoming for me so welcoming. And then they said, Yeah, come come. We know, you're young. You need safety. And this is like, my safe house. That's what I'm saying is my safe, safe place.

Participant 08

I was staying with my auntie. She was taking care of us through a child welfare system. So she brought us down. Okay. Right. When we were young, I was 10 years old. Nine years old.



They could No, they couldn't keep care of us because they were alcoholics. Drugs. I was brought up in foster care my whole life as a child as a young child. And I went through physical abuse through the system. That's what screwed me up today. I don't know if it was hereditary through my family's drinking, my both my parents drank their parents drink before and so forth. Right. Then I drink. But I quit now.

My experience is challenging because going through certain renters like landlords asking for credit check the history of violence or if you party a lot have gotten in trouble with the law. Gotta go to court or anything right? Like stuff like that.

I want to get housing because I want my own thing. My own my own my own place to call home recently. I don't know how much how else to put it but basically. I'm staying at a transitional housing. Okay. Bridge. It's a bridge housing, harm reduction living. Transitional housing. I'm there right now until I get a place right till I get into my own apartment.

I came, my dad brought me there. He because he was living there, and he brought me there.

It's pretty good. I like it. I like it. That is better than, Downtown shelters. It's better than nothing. I appreciate living there. Because when you're homeless, you don't have nowhere to live because you are homeless, right? You're on the streets, staying at the shelters or whatever. But being there, I appreciate being there like haha at the center. I have to I do. I appreciate the little things in life. Because I'm not there complaining about this and that I'm not I have no complaints. The only complaint that I have is that I don't want to end up back on the streets downtown kicked out. That's the complaint that I have.

I got in there through a charity organization rapid exit program. Then I moved in, and it was all good until I relapsed. I was drinking acoustics and I got drunk.



I know. Yes. This next apartment that I get, I'll even do better last apartment. Because of when you get a place, you get the sense of responsibility. What's on the line, your apartment, your place, your home? The stuff you have in there, right? You don't want to lose any of that, right? So you want to be responsible, you got to make sure you're not gonna drink. You're not gonna, you know, because if you have a slip, then you can lose everything.

Participant 10

And how I came to Edmonton was I've always just getting abused from my ex-husband. And I lived in Edmonton for eight years. I was couch surfing from one house to another. I applied with Homeward Trust which was years ago. I went I was at a women's shelter. They told me about it.

Right now I'm living in transitional housing. It's an apartment. We got moved from our rooms to where the bar area used to be in those cubicles there. Just don't feel safe being there because there are no curtains, there's no door. I went from the shelter to having my own place. And my kids got me evicted. Your kids. Yeah, from drinking too much. After that I was couch surfing, like from my friend's place. My kids place. And I think it was like four years ago, me and my daughter were homeless for two years. And we picked up bottles every day just so we eat or buy cigarettes. It was rough. Those 2 years. I ended up living with my daughter. But that didn't work out. I got kicked out.

Participant 13 (on behalf of his son)

My wife and I have decided to keep the house that we have where my son and two other physically challenged or disabled individuals live with my son, and it's manned 24/7. So, yeah, and I've experienced many challenges in regards to the housing, because we've had that group home, where my son who's just turned 30 has cerebral palsy lives there. And that was what happened when the government decided that, you know, let's not have institutions, let's push this into the households and so he's been in that house since early 2000s.



Well, I think administratively it has to cost more money, well, because now you have houses spread all over. You know, everybody that got pushed into that situation, you know, the ones that actually took on that, and got a house and started running their own house like we do, we're getting old now, you know, and who's gonna run that house when we're gone. And, what happens if something happens to my son, I don't want to be in that housing business. So what happens to the other two people who live there, you know, I'm going to have to kick them out? And then what, right, my son could pass away tomorrow or something, you know, and then there'll be two people that wouldn't have a house to live in. And there's a lot of people that are getting out of that business, they don't want to do it anymore. It's very stressful. It's not a moneymaker, you know, we have a rental house that we continually have to do repairs on because the staff, they don't care, if they run the wheelchair into the door 100 times, they don't care if they run it into the stove, they don't care if they run it into the dishwasher. So you're concerned, you know, continually replacing washers and dryers because they're used 24/7, though, those washers and dryers, you know, so it's a very expensive, expensive, I could send you pictures of my house, we put puck boards all the way up 36 inches, because the wheelchairs are running into the drywall and putting holes in it, right? Especially if you have an individual that can get around with their wheelchair, but can't really drive it, you know, accurately. And, you know, it's my whole point on that is not to whine and complain about that. It's just that it's not a moneymaker, you know, nobody's gonna make a ton of money, having three individuals renting their property that destroy it on a regular basis. So it's a never ending stream of expense.

Well, I think my currently my son is in a safe home that needs renovation, and but you know, that is very dependent on who the team lead is for the company that takes care of [group home] before, we have a wonderful lady that's running it now. And she's been running it our house for the last four or five years, and she's been really nice and really easy to work with. The lady that ran it before was very problematic. And I did not think our son was safe there.



Participant 14a and 14b

I moved to Edmonton and I quit my career job that I did have, and then kind of things went kind of downhill a little bit. I had a little bit to drink a few times and ended up going well, I ended up homeless.

So we had a few friends and stuff but living on their couches and stuff and not being able to pay rent because we're already paying rent staying with other friends and stuff. So it's a little hard to save money and pay two grands or try to make save up enough money for two grands, we did move into a cheap place that we finally had with no credit and stuff. And we lived there for four years. We built up our credit and we moved out there and ended up in affordable housing. And we've paid for a one bedroom apartment which wasn't bad. Well, we're both kind of on welfare at the time, I couldn't work. I got cancer and stuff. So in 2008, so I haven't worked since 2008. So we were both social assistance.

She was living in Tent city for a while. Yeah, at least through one winter and one summer. So a good six months anyway. I wound up twice with pneumonia sleeping on the dirty ground. I remember winter. I remember going to visit her and she was using a shopping cart. Shopping Cart for kitchen table.

What was good is to having someplace where we can go like we went on the west end we went to the health and wellness. Kind of a god send because you get soup and stuff up there. You go down in the morning hours at the health and wellness for about eight o'clock in the morning. To stand in line. You could bring one load of laundry once a week and also shower in the morning.

Participant 15

Yeah. So my experience so when I first came to Canada I think when I got accepted to university, I had to start looking like as soon as I selected the different platforms or Facebook marketplace to kijiji, rent faster, and like to find a place to stay. It was quite stressful. No, no, I knew because I need to find a place to stay. Also for the visa



application. Because, like the immigration, they like things like a place where I'm gonna be staying. So the whole journey was quite stressful first time away from my family. Never been to a foreign country like Canada. New Culture. So like the whole experience was stressful.

In my housing journey? So I've I found the place I'm renting out the place right now. It is going well is going well, might stress go? I think that I've been, I've gone through everything, like all the experiences, it's like, I know, I know how to set myself up to like, avoid some of it and how to set myself like gain more out of it.

Yeah, so started essentially helping students find housing off campus. So like the streamline the whole process from looking for placement for them when you start looking for students.

Participant 17

I have lived in Edmonton off and on since my early 20s I would say that there was times where I had moved to my parents place over the years.

But I got on AISH since I was right on my 18th birthday, I so I've been on it for quite some time. You know, living when I got on it, I wasn't paying rent. So it was relatively things were pretty good. I was actually in my last year of school. So that was good. I have lived on my own a couple of times by myself, twice prior to that, before I got on affordable housing, but it was really tight, being on AISH and stuff and of course, having, you know, having your bills to pay, you know, your Wi Fi, internet, whatever. And then Power bill as well. So that was that made things a bit tight and restricted. So most of my experience in housing revolved around you know, share living, like renting your room and, and people's homes. And that in order to buy to save money that way, and have a bit more money as a buffer. But I moved. In 2016, I ended up moving into an apartment unit and living in a studio and then I got accepted into affordable housing. Because of my anxiety and my depression, I was diagnosed on the autism spectrum when I was 18. I'm only bringing that up just because there was there's obviously been



before I was diagnosed with borderline personality disorder, I always had a bit of a mental health...

Participant 19

Well, I'm a senior citizen. Well, almost 63. And my husband is 63. We are both disabled. I am more severely disabled than he is I'm not able to get around too well. And I have cancer and fibromyalgia and a bunch of other illnesses that tend to limit what I can do and where I can go.

If it's mainly the pain, that's, that's getting to me right now. But we are both not able to get around really well. Both of us have canes we have walkers. I have a wheelchair. So I need, I need to be able to get around in a unit but there are not very many that are set up for people with disabilities.

Well, we tried for a while and we just had we had to go with just a regular high rise. The problem is that the wheelchair does not make it in all places, including either bathrooms. So that's difficult when I'm in it. I'm not in it all the time. It's just when I get really seriously bad, but like the bathrooms aren't set up for handicap. We do need two bathrooms because of our illnesses. And it's very hard to find like a two bedroom with one and a half or two baths, whichever. It's really difficult to get around because of all the corners even the ambulance drivers complain because they can't get in with a stretcher anywhere, like they have to help you out or carry you out into the hallway to get on a stretcher. So it's, it's just not convenient.

It's really difficult, like what we've gone through. There's a lot of places for singles. But again, with the washroom situation if you need two, it's nearly impossible. And trying to it's so hard. And being in the wheelchair, I was only in the wheelchair for about a year steady. And I just learned so much about all of the difficulties that people have with wheelchairs and the way that they're treated, and trying to get into like a public washroom is impossible. But thinking of that, in your own home, if you can't get into the washroom, you're in a bit of trouble.



Participant 22

I'm just a number to the housing provider. And it makes me really upset. Really upset that I'm just a number. And the way they classify everybody with the biasness of saying there are people who are not educated, they don't have jobs, they're worthless, they smoke weed, they're just when I drive up to my vehicle, when I was working, I'm telling you to say I would sit there in my car before I turn into my parking lot for like maybe 10 to 15 minutes and cry. That's how much I hate it. I don't think the housing provider makes you save money to leave. When I make money, they put the rent up there focusing on the wrong thing. How am I supposed to leave to let somebody else come there? A lot of people say they'll never work because the place is not worth paying for. So you have a bunch of people who are not willing to leave.

Participant 24

I'm a refugee immigrant here in Canada, have been in South Africa almost nine years, but my wife passed away. Then I came with three children. So to get the job, it was very hard. I did HVAC, air conditioning, refrigeration and ventilation in South Africa, to arrive here to get job, it was very hard. I went to a social service organization, then they told me while you don't have income you can apply for affordable Housing. So I applied for that when I arrived here, that's why I say 2017. That July, then I applied then I got it after a year or something. But they told me here, I have to pay for 540. That's a very great, I have to save some money. And I start to work part time somewhere in the warehouse. Yeah, that is my experience. Which I did. But I was very surprised to see that when I got the full time, then they increase the money double. Now I pay 1000 in this house, which has got three bedroom, I have three children. My wife is not here. I am a single father. But I wanted to I speak to someone that why you keep on increasing money every time. They told me no, because you've got a full-time job. That's why we increase the money. I said, okay, no matter that I have a spare responsibility that children that what the money that I get is not even enough. But they keep on telling me no, no, you have to pay \$1,000 is what I'm paying now. 1000 Canadian dollar every month. So I'm just here with my kids. So it's a lot challenging.



Participant 25

Edmonton is very nice place for my whole life and I am so happy at home and I have a feeling I can achieve something for myself and for my daughter. Yeah, I came to Edmonton and I was renting from housing provider.

The housing provider is not providing emergency shelter for vulnerable people with low income family we have to pay 30% of our income for the rent. And every year we have income review they know exactly what we are doing. I still like living in the affordable housing. It is really nice.

Participant 26 (through an interpreter)

They sponsored him to Canada. So when he arrived to Canada, because the sponsor live here, they bring him to Edmonton. And when he arrived to Edmonton, he helped to rent house for him and put furniture to the house. And almost all the essential things. And when he started like, built his relationship with the neighborhood, he visited the Islamic Centre, and some people there tell him about the housing provider. They gave him a hard copy of the application for this house, and he filled this application with help of the sponsor and take him to submit the application. And that's what this is the story about how he reached the house.

Because the Canadian government have rules for the sponsor and the government pay one year monthly payment for any new immigrant he paid the rent from this money the government gave it to him every month. Three bedrooms, one living room one kitchen, one and a half bathroom and basement with a small backyard. He said the housing is a good program especially for the people who are newcomers here because this help them support them at least till they have the opportunity to know.

Like he have like a few concern when they have like appointment for inspection or do maintenance. They give like a big gap of time from eight in the morning till eight at night.



And we don't know like which time you can come. Also, when he moved first time to the house he paid less than this number and when you have a new child in his family they increase the rent.

Participant 27

So I think that in terms of housing, the micro suites try to get more smaller places, they're more affordable, more easy to rent. I did mention about the tiny homes, that's something that veterans have done, that's maybe an option, maybe a way out. And I do think I want theory about veterans and why so many of them are homeless, because they're trained to live outside. So they aren't is intimidated by this. It's not outside of their experience to sleep on the ground and stuff. Whereas from, you know, like, people would be roughing it, but as an ex-military person, I slept in dirt in the ground and bushes and stuff and yeah, in the snow.

I just use all the skills I learned in graduate school and how to survive on meagre incomes in undergraduate to be on an AISH and disabilities after that, and I continued with my education. I was in and out of marginal housing, homeless at various points. I would have to subsidize my publications through my meager disability allowance. But we made sure that we pay always pay the mortgage on time and against mortgage payment even though we use the food bank regularly. And we paid off our mortgage and we own our own place. It's not the best but we own it. And so we're very proud of that. We did that all while being on AISH.



Demographic information

Serial	Participant	Age (years)	Gender (M/F/LGBTQ2+)	Ethnicity	Population group
1.	Participant 01	57	F	White	<p>Women and children fleeing domestic violence</p> <p>Female heads of households, especially single mothers</p> <p>Racialized people</p>
2.	Participant 02	38	F	Indigenous	<p>Female heads of households, especially single mothers</p>



					Indigenous people Racialized people
3.	Participant 03	62	M	White	People dealing with mental health and addictions issues
4.	Participant 04	25	F	Indigenous	Young adults aged 18-29 Indigenous people People dealing with mental health and addictions issues
5.	Participant 05	51	F	Indigenous	Racialized people Indigenous people People dealing with mental health and addictions issues



6.	Participant 06	48	F	Indigenous	Female heads of households, especially single mothers Indigenous people Racialized people
7.	Participant 07	18	F	Indigenous	Young adults aged 18-29 Indigenous people People dealing with mental health and addictions issues
8.	Participant 08	35	Bisexual	Indigenous	Indigenous people Racialized people Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Two-Spirit (LGBTQ2S+)



					<p>people</p> <p>People with developmental disabilities</p> <p>People dealing with mental health and addictions issues</p>
9.	Participant 09	39	M	White	People with physical health or mobility challenges
10.	Participant 10	55	F	Indigenous	<p>Women and children fleeing domestic violence</p> <p>Indigenous people</p> <p>People dealing with mental health and addictions issues</p>
11.	Participant 11	23	F	Black	Women and children fleeing domestic violence



					<p>Young adults aged 18-29</p> <p>Racialized people</p>
12.	Participant 12	45	F	White	<p>People with physical health or mobility challenges</p>
13.	Participant 13	59	M	White	<p>People with physical health or mobility challenges</p> <p>People with developmental disabilities</p>
14.	Participant 14a	68	M	White	<p>Seniors aged 65+</p> <p>People dealing with mental health and addictions issues</p>



15.	Participant 14b	64	F	White	Seniors aged 65+
16.	Participant 15	22	M	Black	Young adults aged 18-29 Racialized people International Students
17.	Participant 16	70	M	Black	Seniors aged 65+ Racialized people People dealing with mental health and addictions issues
18.	Participant 17	37	Gay	White	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Two-Spirit (LGBTQ2S+) people People with



					developmental disabilities
19.	Participant 18	48	F	Black	Women and children fleeing domestic violence Female heads of households, especially single mothers Racialized people
20.	Participant 19	63	F	White	Seniors aged 65+ People with physical health or mobility challenges
21.	Participant 20	39	F	Hispanic	Women and children fleeing domestic violence Female heads of households, especially single mothers Racialized people



22.	Participant 21	50	M	Middle Eastern/Arab	Racialized people
23.	Participant 22	42	F	Black	Women and children fleeing domestic violence Female heads of households, especially single mothers Racialized people
24.	Participant 23	22	M	Black	Young adults aged 18-29 Racialized people
25.	Participant 24	39	M	Black	Racialized people Recent immigrants, especially refugees
26.	Participant 25	54	F	Chinese	People dealing with mental health



					and addictions issues
27.	Participant 26	39	M	Middle Eastern/Arab	Racialized people Recent immigrants, especially refugees
28.	Participant 27	60	M	White	Veterans

Priority Population Group Segregation by Interview Participants

Serial	Priority Population Group	Participants
1.	Women and children fleeing domestic violence	Participant 01 Participant 10 Participant 11 Participant 18 Participant 20 Participant 22
2.	Female heads of households, especially single mothers	Participant 01 Participant 02 Participant 06 Participant 18 Participant 20 Participant 22



3.	Seniors aged 65+	Participant 14a Participant 14b Participant 16 Participant 19
4.	Young adults aged 18-29	Participant 04 Participant 07 Participant 11 Participant 15 Participant 23
5.	Indigenous people	Participant 02 Participant 04 Participant 05 Participant 06 Participant 07 Participant 08 Participant 10
6.	Racialized people	Participant 11 Participant 15 Participant 16 Participant 18 Participant 20 Participant 21 Participant 22 Participant 23 Participant 24 Participant 26



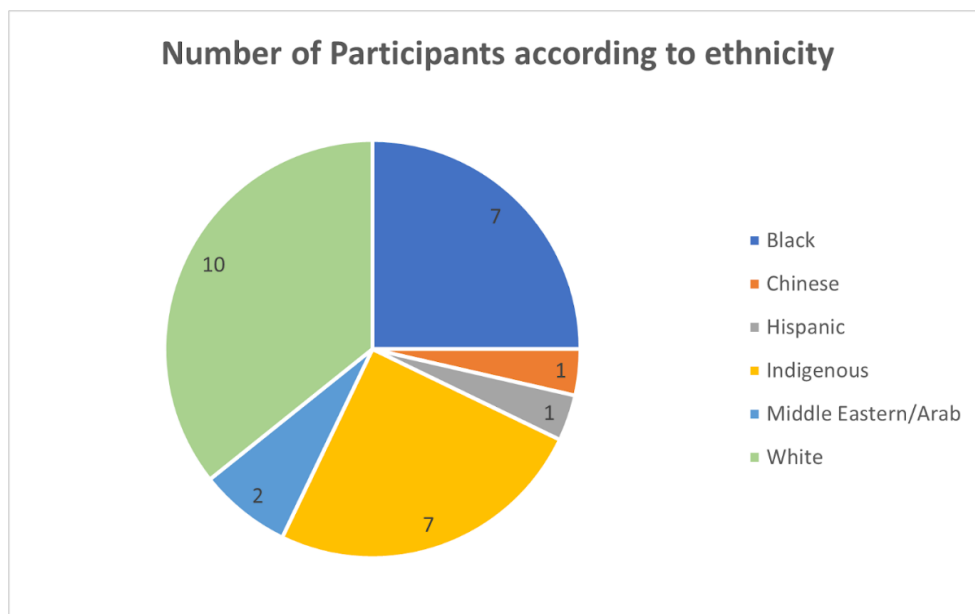
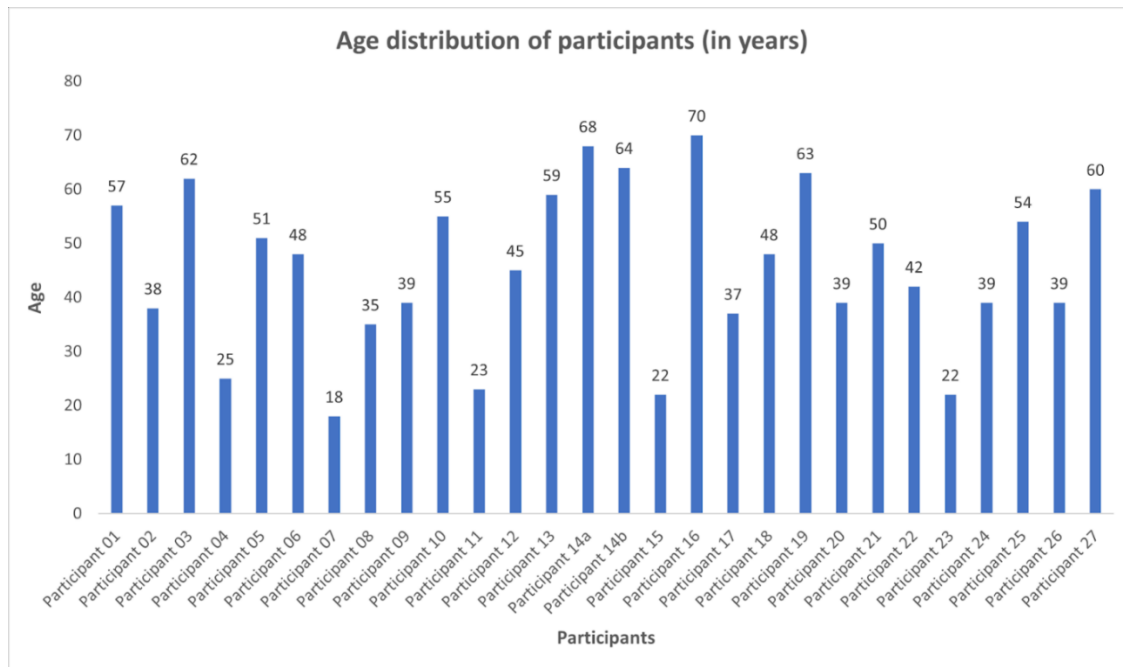
7.	Recent immigrants, especially refugees	Participant 24 Participant 26
8.	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Two-Spirit (LGBTQ2S+) people	Participant 08 Participant 17
9.	People with physical health or mobility challenges	Participant 09 Participant 12 Participant 13 Participant 19
10.	People with developmental disabilities	Participant 08 Participant 13 Participant 17
11.	People dealing with mental health and addictions issues	Participant 03 Participant 04 Participant 05 Participant 07 Participant 08 Participant 10 Participant 14a Participant 16
12.	Veterans	Participant 27
13.	International Students	Participant 15

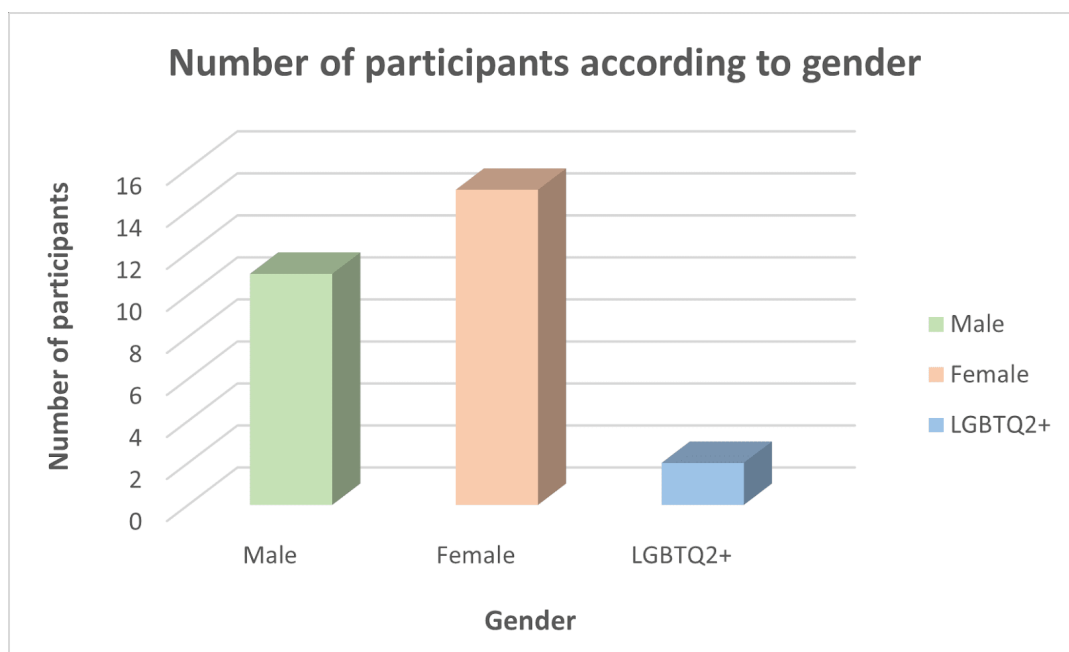
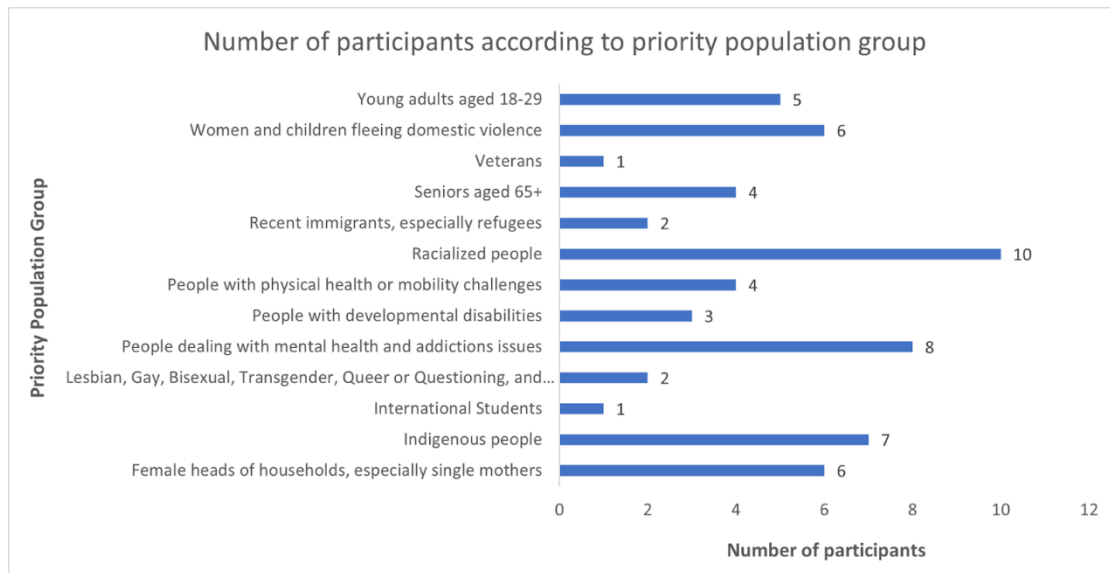


Gender segregation by ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Male	Female	LGBTQ2+
Indigenous	0	6	1
White	5	4	1
Black/African	4	3	
Hispanic	0	1	
Middle Eastern/Arab	2	0	
Chinese	0	1	
Total	11	15	2
Grand Total			28

Demographic Summary







References

1. Statistics Canada. (2018). The Canadian Housing Survey, 2018: Core housing need of renter households living in social and affordable housing. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75f0002m/75f0002m2020003-eng.htm>