**ALBERTA
REAL ESTATE
FOUNDATION**

Enabling Housing Choice Project

Preliminary Research

Alberta-Wide Survey Results

July 2022

SHI RDN

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Enabling Housing Choice Project encompasses all of what we call Alberta, and is the traditional and ancestral territory of many peoples, presently subject to Treaties 6, 7, and 8 including the Blackfoot, Cree, Dene, Saulteaux, Nakota Sioux, Stoney Nakoda, and the Tsuu T'ina Nation and the Métis People of Alberta. We acknowledge the many First Nations, Métis and Inuit who have lived in and cared for these lands for generations. We are grateful for the traditional Knowledge Keepers and Elders who are still with us today and those who have gone before us. We make this acknowledgment as an act of reconciliation and gratitude to those whose territory we reside on and that which we refer to in this research.

RDN is committed to supporting the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action, and believes in the need for meaningful engagement and consent with Indigenous peoples in the community. Colonialism is a current ongoing process, and we need to build our mindfulness of our present participation. As this project specifically touches on development and planning concepts which are built on a colonial system of governance and land use management, we also recognize that we have more work to unpack the systems in which we are upholding and working within.

PROJECT ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ALBERTA-WIDE SURVEY OVERVIEW

The Enabling Housing Choice (EHC) Project aims to provide insight on how Albertan municipalities can support growth in their communities and help provide more housing options and choices to their residents through local policy changes and capacity building strategies. As part of the first stage of our project, we conducted a survey spanning with participants from all over Alberta.

The overall goal of Phase 1 and this research is to provide interested groups information about our initial findings through case studies examples and recommendations. With the Alberta-wide survey we were able to hear from Albertans and their opinions and thoughts about their respective communities. The survey will be used by EHC to understand residents' thoughts and their real life obstacles encountered relating to housing choice and community values. The methodology used for this survey is explained below.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

To support the Enabling Housing Choice Project, the Sustainable Housing Initiative team conducted a province wide survey to learn from Albertan's perspectives on living in Alberta, the challenges and barriers faced, and ways to make living in Alberta more appealing.

This province wide survey complements the secondary research performed in Phase 1 of this project. It allowed the project team to identify Alberta specific themes and perspectives, to help better inform how policies are changed in Phase 2. This survey was intended to reach the general Albertan population, with special outreach to ensure responses reflect Alberta's diversity.

The survey was created using google forms, with a range of question types including:

» Conditional formatting to ensure questions are relevant based on the type of participant;

» Long answer questions to allow participants to explain their perspectives;

» Short demographics questions to allow us to break down perspectives; and,

» Informational sections to help inform participants regarding different trends in housing in Alberta.

The survey was promoted using two main methods: direct outreach via email and phone calls to specific groups and general promotion through social media. We reached out directly to a number of various groups to help promote our survey to their respective groups in both urban and rural communities which included:

» Members of the Legislative Assembly;

» Members of Parliament;

» Community groups (i.e. community leagues, associations, facebook pages);

» Representative groups for:

  » Indigenous groups;

  » 2SLGBTQIA+ representative groups;

  » Newcomer representative groups;

» Seniors; and,

» Low income individuals.

Our social media outreach included:

» Initial and follow up posts on both SHI and RDN social media accounts, tagging relevant partners; and,

» Single posts on relevant reddit pages, including: r/alberta.

To encourage more participants, a draw of ten $50 gift cards was also advertised for completing the survey.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The survey was based on several themes that the team wanted to explore and highlight. These included uncovering the perspectives for both urban and rural residents regarding:

» Willingness to live in rural Alberta;

» Willingness to live in urban Alberta;

» What they consider important when looking to live or relocate to other communities in Alberta, on a scale from not important to very important, including:

 » Employment;

 » Community;

 » Green space;

 » Access to housing and types of housing;

 » Social elements;

 » Services/amenities;

» What they like about their current community; and

» What they dislike about their current community.

To gain insight on who was taking the survey, demographic questions were asked, such as:

» Age

» Gender identity

» Gross household income level

» Education

» Current employment status

» Household makeup

» Difficulties in paying rent/mortgage

» Due to COVID-19 or other reasons

These questions were formatted multiple choice with the option of answering in short answer format if participants' felt the choices did not reflect them. While these questions state some characteristics of the participants, answers were generalized and anonymized.

Following the initial likes and dislikes of their community and demographic details, participants then answered questions based on whether they currently lived in a county/ country, city, town, reserve/nation, hamlet, or village. Each pathway provided customized streams of questions based on size and/or type of current community. For example, for a respondent who identified they lived in a hamlet, their subsequent questions were framed from a rural perspective, asking things like "have you ever thought about living in a community much larger than your current community?", and so on.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The survey collected over 600 responses throughout the province; however, analyzing the results and determining which ones were eligible and duplicate responses lead us to obtain 454 responses. While there were more respondents that lived in cities, the percentage of respondents from each area reflects the demographics of the population [Figure 1]. The respondents can be seen as a representative sample. We grouped each community into the land-use framework regions of Alberta which includes: the Lower Peace Region, the Lower Athabasca Region, the Upper Peace Region, the Upper Athabasca Region, the North Saskatchewan Region, the Red Deer Region and the South Saskatchewan Region [Map 1]. In addition to those regions, the Upper Athabasca and North Saskatchewan Regions were separated out to create the Calgary and Capital Region [Figure 2]. The Calgary and Capital Region were separated to highlight the major cities in Alberta.

Community Type
- City
- County / Country
- Town
- Village
- Hamlet
- Reserve / Nation

Region Name
- Calgary Region
- Capital Region
- Lower Athabasca Region
- Lower Peace Region
- North Saskatchewan Region
- Red Deer Region
- South Saskatchewan Region
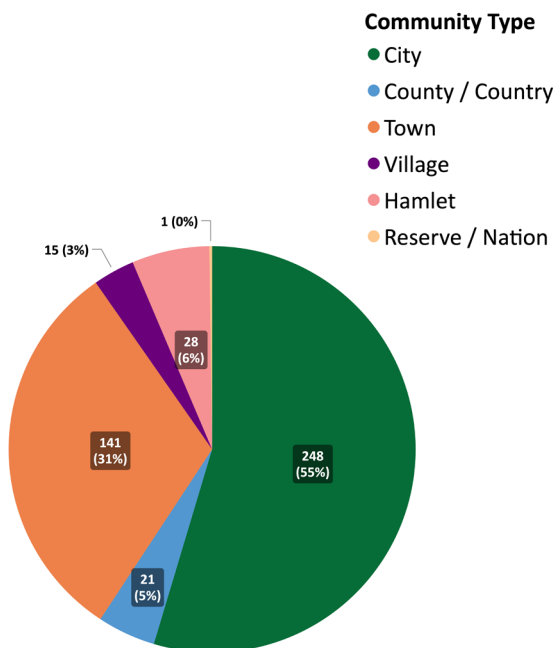- Upper Athabasca Region
- Upper Peace Region

Figure 1. Pie chart of representing what type of community respondents reside in.
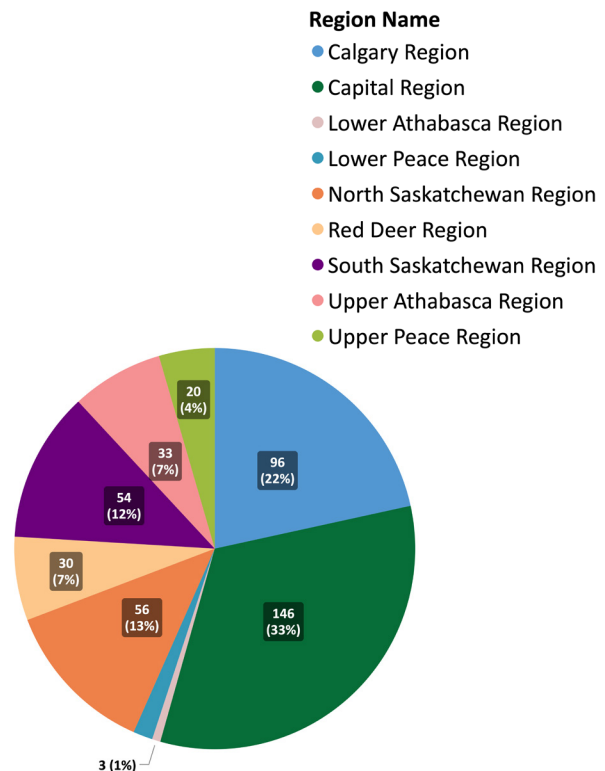
Figure 2. Pie chart representing what region respondents reside in.

Map 1. Map of land-use framework regions in Alberta.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The demographic questions were quantitative results as the questions were given from multiple choice selections for the respondents. The most evenly spread out characteristic was age, where the survey obtained a good diversity of age groups excluding *people 17 and under* [Figure 3]. The gender demographics were less diverse with a large majority of women taking the survey, which is common amongst surveys[1] [Figure 4]. Men and other genders may be underrepresented. Slightly under half of the responses answered as marginalized identities [Figure 5]; however, note that each respondent may choose more than one marginalized identity. For example, someone can identify as a racialized person and a person with disabilities. Within the portion who identified themselves as a marginalized identity, Figure 6 shows the proportion of these identities.
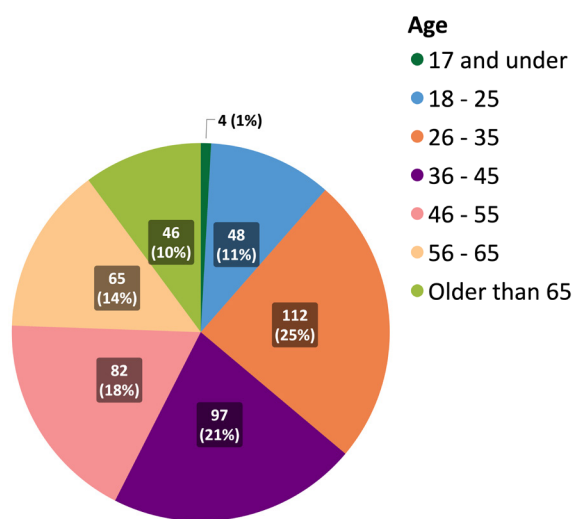
Age
- 17 and under
- 18 - 25
- 26 - 35
- 36 - 45
- 46 - 55
- 56 - 65
- Older than 65

4 (1%)
46 (10%)
48 (11%)
65 (14%)
112 (25%)
82 (18%)
97 (21%)

Figure 3. Pie chart representing participants' age class.

Gender Identity
- Agender
- Gender neutral
- Genderqueer
- Man
- Nonbinary
- Prefer not to answer
- Transgender
- Woman

3 (1%)
107 (24%)
324 (71%)
3 (1%)
2 (0%)
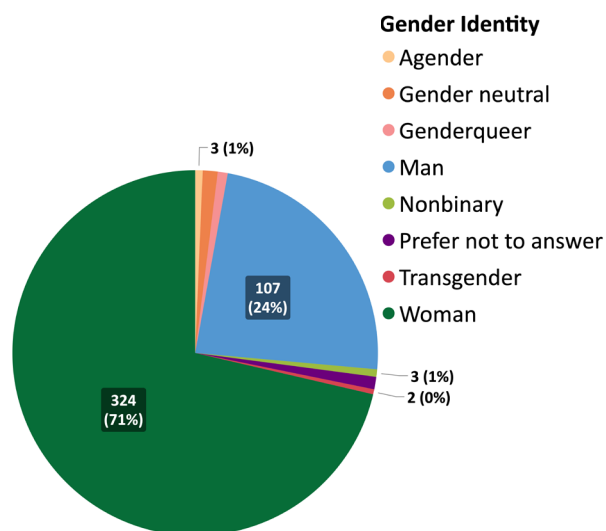
Figure 4. Pie chart showing participants' gender identity.

10 (2%)
7 (1%)
25 (5%)
74 (15%)
63 (13%)
255 (51%)
1 (0%)
29 (6%)
34 (7%)

Marginalized Identities
- A person with disabilities
- A racialized* person
- Immigrant of more than 5 years
- Indigenous
- LGBTQ2S+
- N/A
- Other
- Prefer not to answer
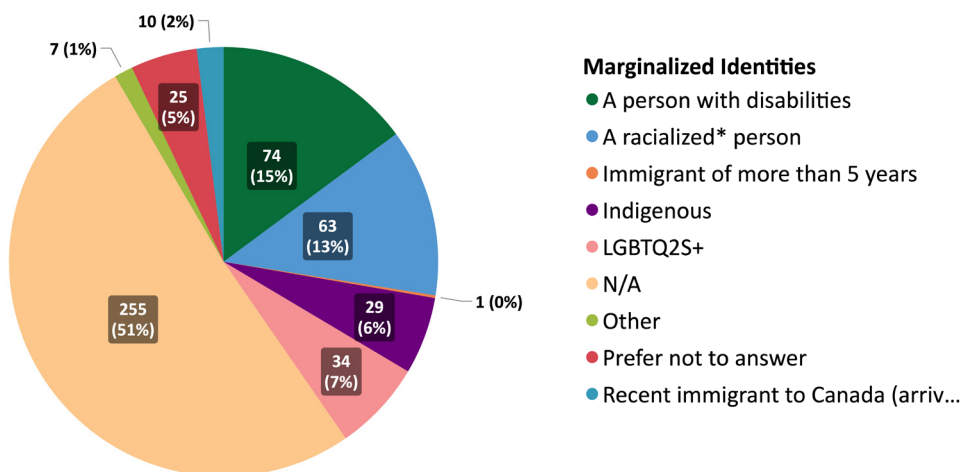- Recent immigrant to Canada (arriv…

Figure 5. Pie chart representing marginalized identities with participants responded with *not applicable*.
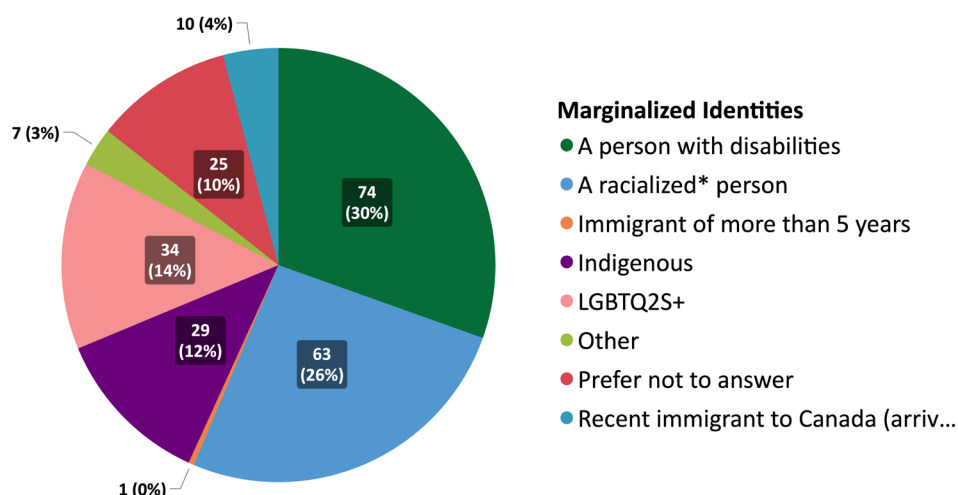
Figure 6. Pie chart representing ratio of marginalized identities.

To understand the full scope of the demographics of our participants, the survey also collected employment status, education, and household income. Figure 7 shows employment status demonstrating that all other categories besides *employed full time* may be underrepresented. Statistic Canada's 2015 report[2] says 18% of families have a stay-at-home parent or homemaker, with Alberta having the highest proportion of stay-at-home parents. Students are underrepresented since there was a small number of participants that identified as 17 years old or younger which would under-represent the *employed part time* category.
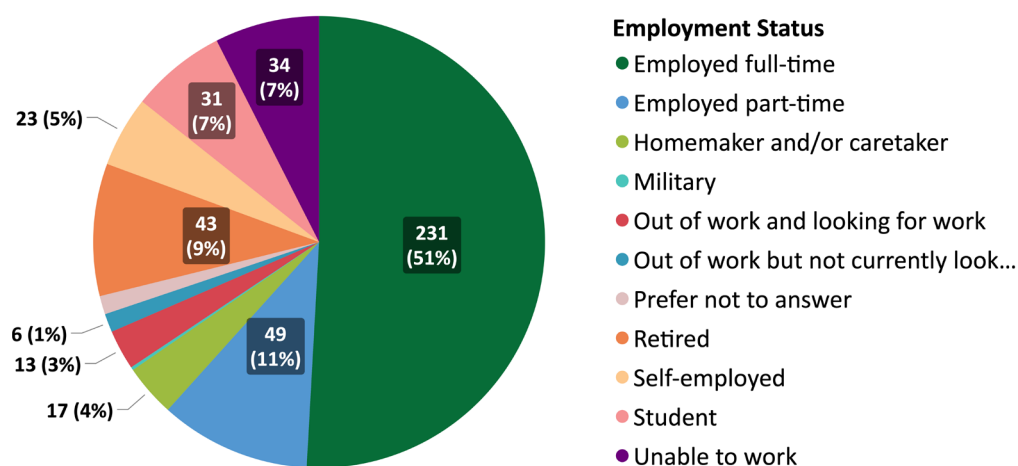

Figure 7. Pie chart representing employment status of the respondents.

[1] From W. G. Smith, 2008, Does Gender Influence Online Survey Participation?: A Record-linkage Analysis of University Faculty Online Survey Response Behavior. Copyright by Copyright Holder.
[2] From Statistics Canada, 2016, Changing profile of stay-at-home parents. Copyright 2022 by Statistics Canada.

The gross household income of respondents generally has an even distribution with the lowest and highest bracket points having the least number of respondents [Figure 8]. Low income individuals may be underrepresented. This may highlight how low income individuals may not have the time or access to engage and complete this survey. A large majority of respondents have some level of education, and more than half have post secondary education [Figure 9]. In comparison to Statistic Canada's 2016 report,[3] our responses encompass more respondents with higher education. While Statistic Canada's categorization is not exact to this survey, they are similar [Figure 10].

Household Income
- Less than $20,000
- $20,000 to $49,999
- $50,000 to $79,999
- $80,000 to $119,999
- $120,000 to $199,999
- Over $200,000
- Prefer not to answer
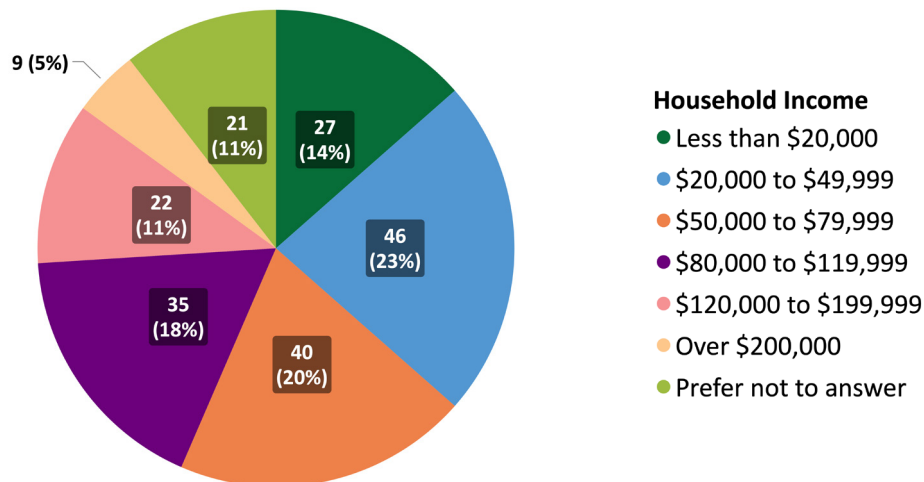
Figure 8. Pie chart representing household income of the respondents.

Education
- Associate degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Doctorate degree
- High school or GED
- Master's degree
- Prefer not to answer
- Some high school
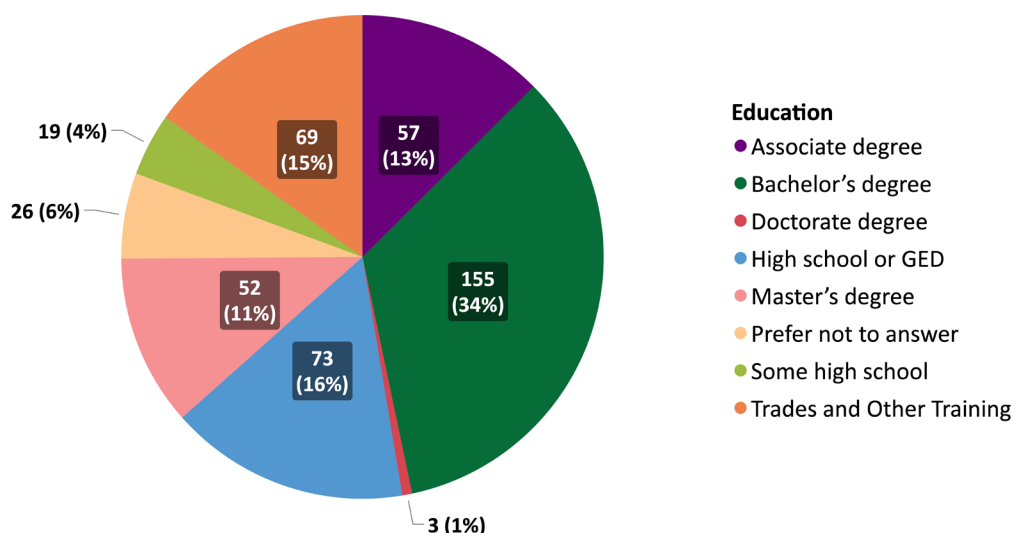- Trades and Other Training

Figure 9. Pie chart representing the level of education of the respondents.

3 From Statistics Canada, 2017, Focus on Geography Series, 2016 Census. Copyright 2022 by Statistics Canada.
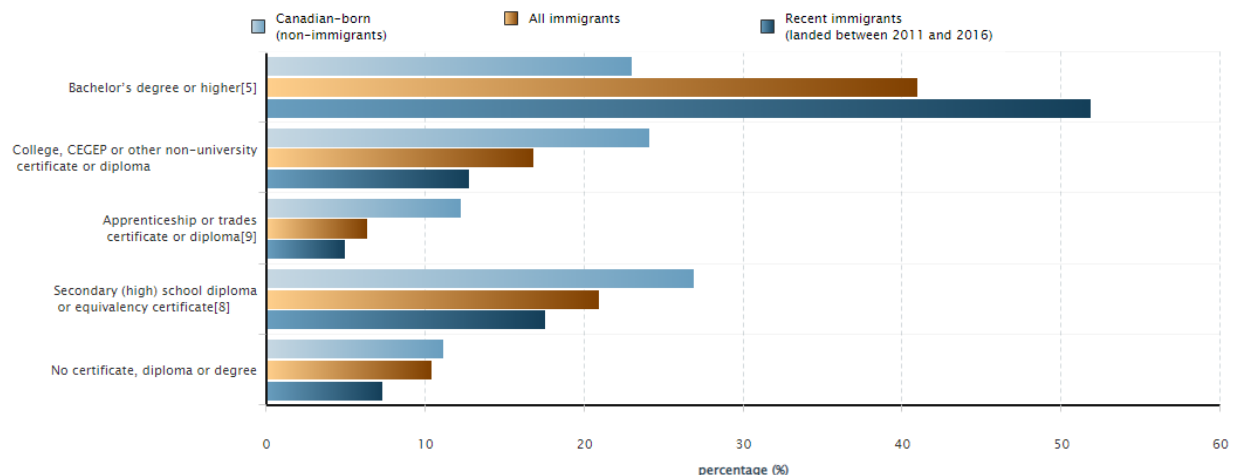
Figure 10. Bar chart representing percentage of population aged 25 to 64 years with selected highest level of education attainment (Statistics Canada, 2017).

Figure 11 shows the interaction of respondents' level of education and household income. Although Figure 11 provides a representation of the percentage of household income in each level of education, the more respondents there are, the more accurate the sample is. The most reliable category is respondents with a *Bachelor's Degree* with 156 responses, meanwhile there were only 3 respondents that answered with a *Doctorate Degree.*
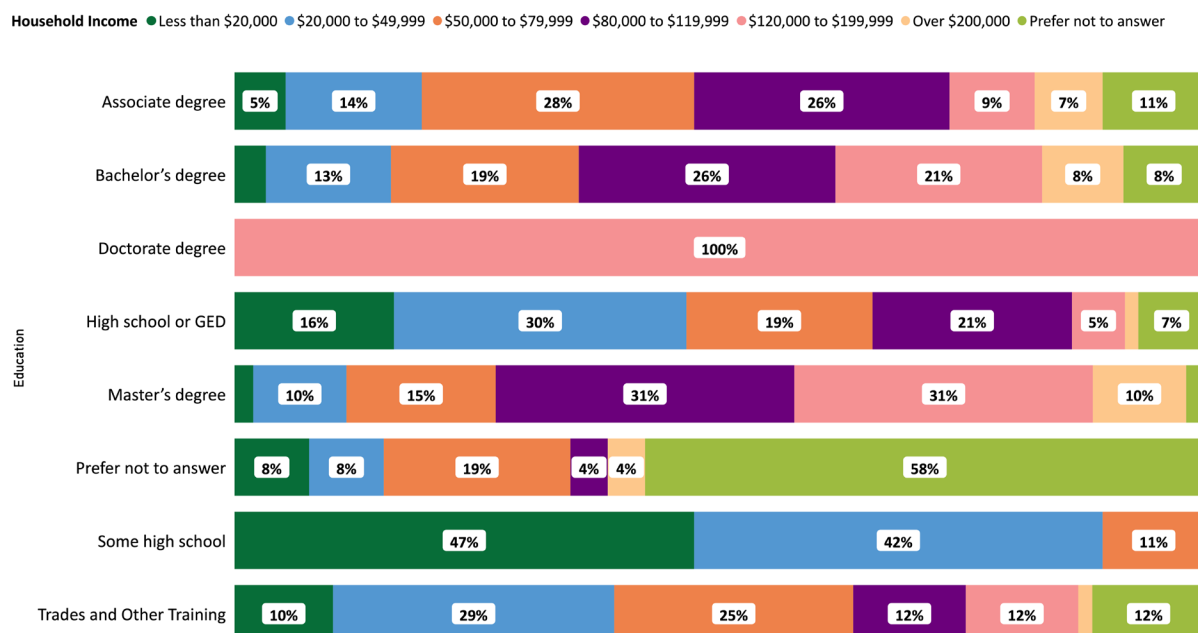
Figure 11. Stacked bar chart representing the correlation between household income and level of education of respondents.

SURVEY ANALYSIS

The portion of the survey that focuses on what respondents feel about their Albertan community is made up of quantitative and qualitative data, i.e. multiple choice questions and short answers which were coded into categories.

Housing Evaluation

To gain an understanding of participants' housing situation, our survey asked about each respondents' household size, housing arrangements, and barriers experienced when finding housing. While Statistics Canada's 2016 Census[4] has slightly different categorization than this survey, the household size of respondents are comparable to the census, suggesting an accurate representation of the population [Figure 12]. Over half of the respondents own their housing arrangements [Figure 13] which is to be predicted as 72.4% of Albertans are homeowners.[5] Nearly half (46%) of respondents indicated that they faced discrimination in accessing housing, a highly significant number as shown in [Figure 14]. Among this, Figure 15 shows the type of discrimination reported with age and mental disability being the top reasons.
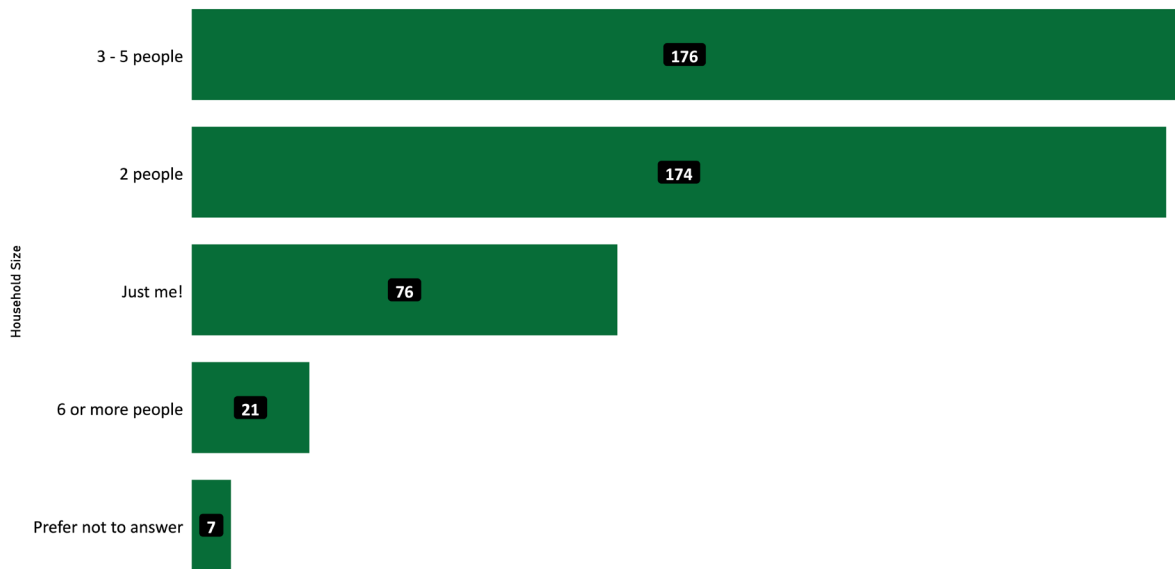
Figure 12. Bar chart representing household size of respondents.

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[4] From Statistics Canada, 2017, Census Profile, 2016 Census. Copyright 2022 by Statistics Canada.
[5] From Statistics Canada, 2017, Homeownership rates by provinces and territories, 2006 and 2016. Copyright 2022 by Statistics Canada.

Housing Arrangements
- Own
- Rent (entire suite)
- Live with friends or relatives (with no rent)
- Rent (part of the suite i.e. one room)
- Other
- Prefer not to answer
- Temporary housing (including couch surfing)
- Band housing
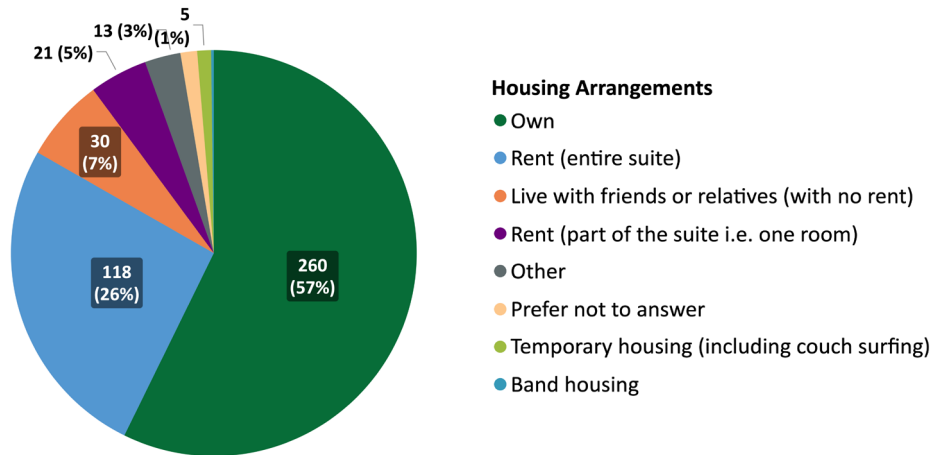
Figure 13. Pie chart representing housing arrangements of respondents.

Discriminated in Housing
- Yes
- No
- N/A
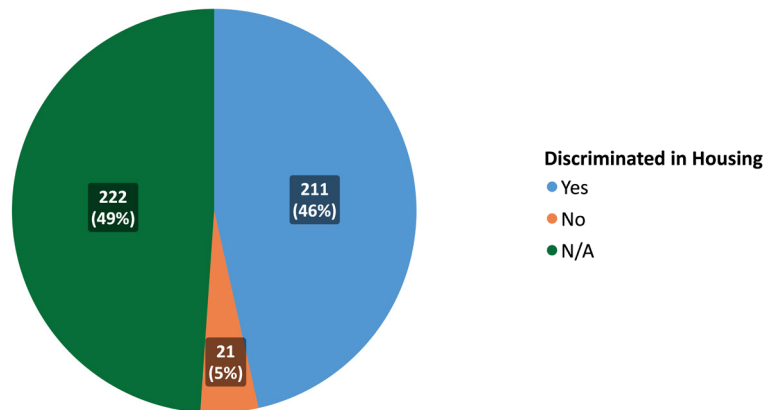
Figure 14. Pie chart representing percentage of respondents that have experienced discrimination while finding housing.

Discrimination Factors
- Age
- Ancestry
- Family Status
- Gender Identity
- Marital Status
- Mental Disability
- Other
- Pets
- Physical Disability
- Place of Origin
- Race
- Religious Beliefs
- Sexual Orientation
- Source of Income

Figure 15. Pie chart representing perctange of types of discrimination of respondents that have experiences discrimination while finding housing.

Important Factors for Where Participants Live

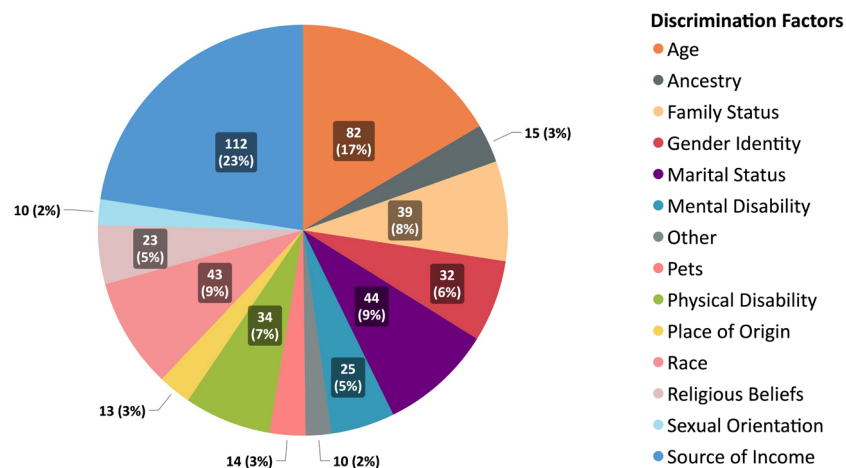The survey asked "What is important to you when thinking about where you want to live?" which listed 13 categories for respondents to choose if they were very important, somewhat important, or not important to them. These categories consist of:

- » Community engagement (being able to be involved in the community)
- » Living near friends and family
- » Accessible by foot (being able to walk to shops and local amenities)
- » Close to cultural centres
- » Access to healthcare (for example, hospitals)
- » Access to recreation (for example, gym, pools, curling rinks, hockey arenas)
- » Access to nature (including public parks, playgrounds, and/or bike paths)
- » Nice downtown or main street
- » Access to affordable housing
- » Job opportunities
- » Access to bus transit
- » Access to schools

Rating ● Very Important ● Somewhat Important ● Not Important ● Not Applicable

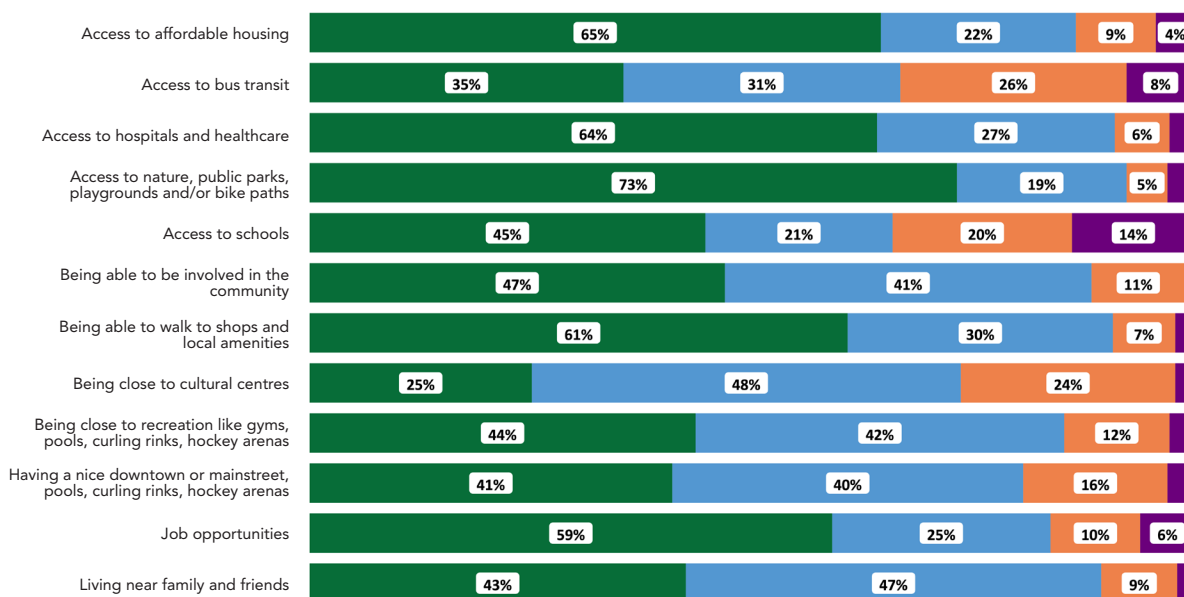| Category	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Not Applicable
Access to affordable housing	65%	22%	9%	4%
Access to bus transit	35%	31%	26%	8%
Access to hospitals and healthcare	64%	27%	6%	
Access to nature, public parks, playgrounds and/or bike paths	73%	19%	5%	
Access to schools	45%	21%	20%	14%
Being able to be involved in the community	47%	41%	11%	
Being able to walk to shops and local amenities	61%	30%	7%	
Being close to cultural centres	25%	48%	24%	
Being close to recreation like gyms, pools, curling rinks, hockey arenas	44%	42%	12%	
Having a nice downtown or mainstreet, pools, curling rinks, hockey arenas	41%	40%	16%	
Job opportunities	59%	25%	10%	6%
Living near family and friends	43%	47%	9%	

Figure 16. Stacked bar chart representing the responses to "What is important to you when thinking about where you want to live?"

Figure 16 shows the percentage of responses for each category. The top three very important categories are *access to nature*, *access to affordable housing*, and *access to healthcare*. From our preliminary reports, employment opportunities seemed more notable in importance to the well-being of residents; however nature prevails over job opportunities. Although our report, Housing & the Environment focused more on environmental awareness, nature is a substantial factor in residents' health and well-being. *Affordable housing* was the second most important category, although this category may have bias as people who initially clicked on this survey knew this would be a survey about housing and housing choice. *Healthcare* being among the top three categories reflects how it is an important necessity that all communities must have to ensure the well-being and safety of its residents. The three least important categories are access to *bus transit*, *close to cultural centres*, and *access to schools*.

Types of Housing Needed

To determine the types of housing respondents thought were needed in their community, the survey asked "What types of housing do you think are needed in your community?" [Figure 17] which listed 11 categories for respondents to choose. These categories consists of:

» **Apartment - Rental** (temporary use of a residential suite a part of a larger building by entering an agreement with the property owner);

» **Basement Suites** (a separate unit in the basement of a home);

» **Communal Housing** (housing that has its own private residents but shares many common facilities with a larger group);

» **Condominiums - Owned** (a residential suite a part of a larger building that an individual can own);

» **Duplexes and/or Triplexes** (a house that is divided into two to three units with a separate entrance for each unit);

» **Garage and/or Garden Suites** (a separate residential suite residing in the backyard of a home, typically on top of the garage);

» **Modular Homes** (a home that is constructed then deliver to the intended building site);

» **Single Family Homes** (a freestanding residential building on its own parcel of land);

» **Tiny Homes** (a freestanding residential building on its own parcel of land, typically smaller than the average size home);

» **Townhouse** (a residential unit that has two to three levels and is attached to other residential units by a shared wall); and

» **No Need for More Housing**.

Participants can choose as many options as they see fit or they can choose the *no need for more housing* option. Figure 17 is a stack bar chart that represents the percentage of categories that each community shows. While this chart shows the percentages as a whole in comparison to each community, the data may seem skewed; there were many

Answer Community Characteristics	Very Important Count	Percent
Access to nature	332	76%
Access to affordable housing	293	68%
Access to healthcare	291	67%
Accessible by foot	276	64%
Job opportunities	268	62%
Community engagement	213	49%
Access to schools	203	47%
Access to recreation	198	46%
Living near friends and family	193	44%
Nice downtown or main street	186	43%
Access to bus transit	161	37%
Close to cultural centres	114	26%

Table 1. Table Chart of Count and Percentage of Answer "Very Important"

Answer Community Characteristics	Somewhat Important Count	Percent
Close to cultural centres	220	51%
Living near friends and family	213	50%
Access to recreation	189	44%
Community engagement	188	44%
Nice downtown or main street	180	42%
Access to bus transit	142	33%
Accessible by foot	136	32%
Access to healthcare	122	29%
Job opportunities	112	26%
Access to affordable housing	100	23%
Access to schools	96	22%
Access to nature	87	20%

Table 2. Table Chart of Count and Percentage of Answer "Somewhat Important"

Answer Community Characteristics	Not Important Count	Percent
Access to bus transit	116	40%
Close to cultural centres	110	38%
Access to schools	92	32%
Nice downtown or main street	74	26%
Access to recreation	54	19%
Community engagement	48	17%
Job opportunities	46	16%
Access to affordable housing	41	14%
Living near friends and family	39	13%
Accessible by foot	32	11%
Access to healthcare	28	10%
Access to nature	21	7%

Table 3. Table Chart of Count and Percentage of Answer "Not Important"

Answer Community Characteristics	Not Applicable Count	Percent
Access to schools	63	53%
Access to bus transit	35	30%
Job opportunities	28	24%
Access to affordable housing	20	17%
Access to nature	14	12%
Nice downtown or main street	14	12%
Access to healthcare	13	11%
Access to recreation	13	11%
Accessible by foot	10	8%
Close to cultural centres	10	8%
Living near friends and family	9	8%
Community engagement	5	4%

Table 4. Table Chart of Count and Percentage of Answer "Not Applilcable"

more city and town respondents than the other communities. The city communities had the highest count for *no need for more housing* [Figure 18] - this is possibly due to a belief that urban centers have an abundance of housing for an abundance of people. As the community gets smaller, the *no need for more housing* category also has less counts. For city respondents all categories were chosen relatively equally with the exception of *no need for more housing* which was the highest chosen category and *modular homes* which was the lowest chosen category. *Modular homes* being the lowest category was to be anticipated as modular homes are not a typical building typology in cities. The second highest category chosen in city respondents is *condominiums* which is also predictable since condominium developments are mostly seen in cities as for the density that cities hold.

For the other five communities, the chosen categories are spread evenly except for a few noticeable categories [Figure 19, 20, 21, 22, 23]. Condominiums were not a popular need for these communities; however, respondents in these communities believe there is a need for rental apartments. This response could be because there is more of a prejudice to condominiums in smaller communities since they are often associated with being large and disruptive to a community. For towns, the highest category chosen was *modular homes*. Reserve/nation only had one respondent which highlighted the need for modular homes. It is important to note that *modular homes* have just as many chosen responses as the other categories or even more since our research did not particularly touch on them.
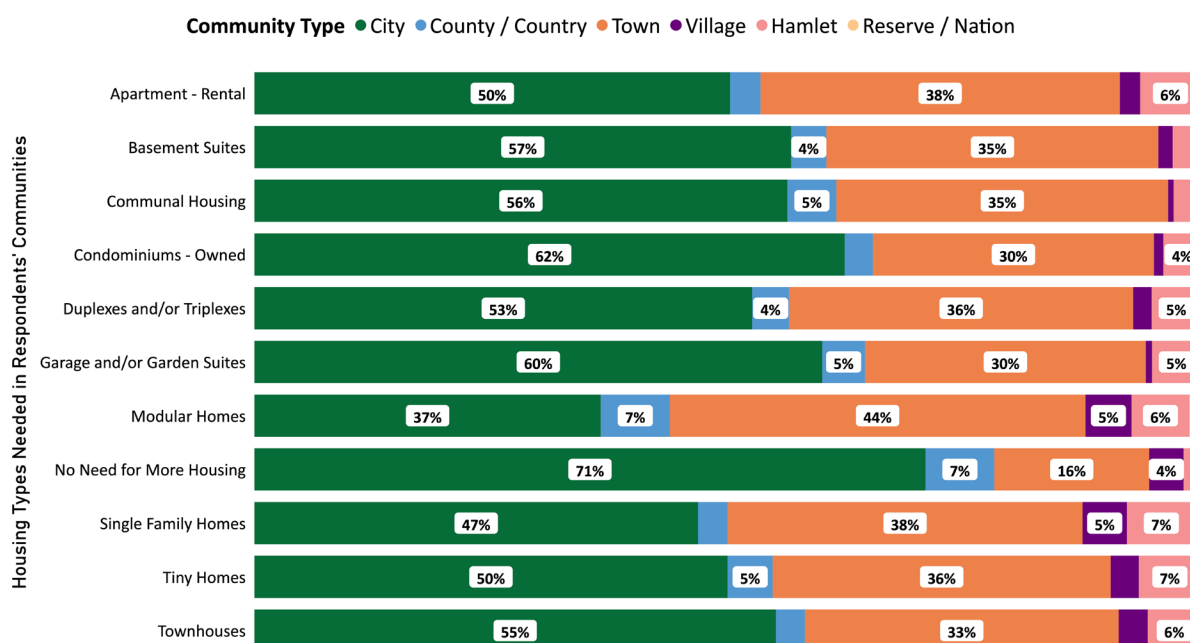
Community Type ● City ● County / Country ● Town ● Village ● Hamlet ● Reserve / Nation

Housing Types Needed in Respondents' Communities

Category	City	County/Country	Town	Village	Hamlet
Apartment - Rental	50%		38%		6%
Basement Suites	57%	4%	35%		
Communal Housing	56%	5%	35%		
Condominiums - Owned	62%		30%	4%	
Duplexes and/or Triplexes	53%	4%	36%		5%
Garage and/or Garden Suites	60%	5%	30%		5%
Modular Homes	37%	7%	44%	5%	6%
No Need for More Housing	71%	7%	16%	4%	
Single Family Homes	47%		38%	5%	7%
Tiny Homes	50%	5%	36%		7%
Townhouses	55%		33%		6%

Figure 17. Stacked bar chart representing the correlation between the question "What types of housing do you think are needed in your community?" and community type of respondents.

City Respondents

Housing Type	Value
Townhouses	108
Communal Housing	98
Apartment - Rental	94
Garage and/or Garden Suites	93
Single Family Homes	90
Tiny Homes	84
Duplexes and/or Triplexes	81
Condominiums - Owned	63
Basement Suites	76
Modular Homes	30
No Need for Housing	29

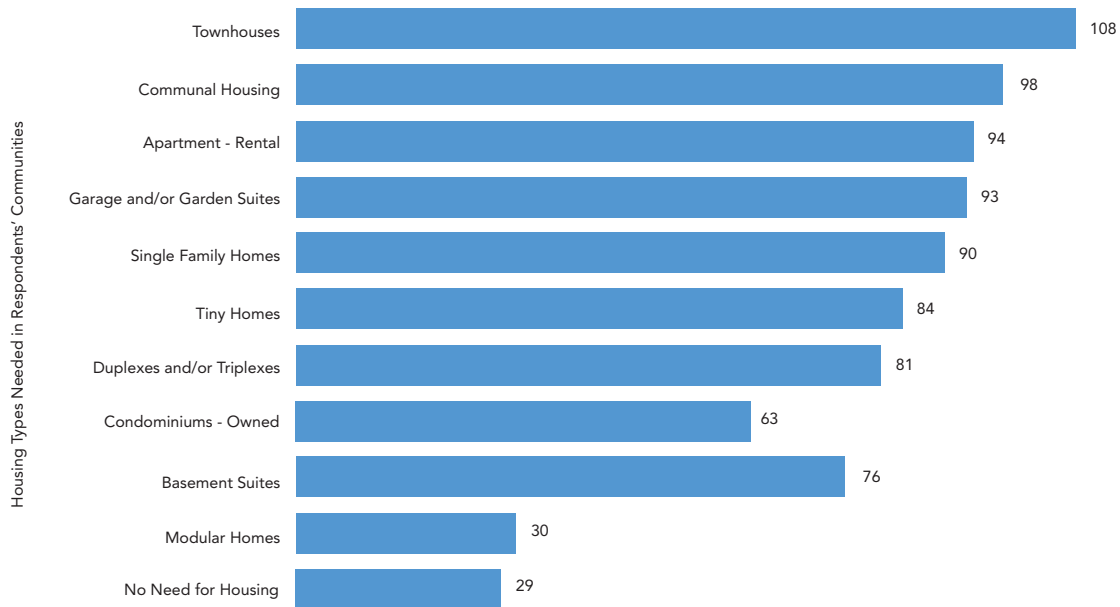*Housing Types Needed in Respondents' Communities*

Figure 18. Bar chart representing responses from city communities to "What types of housing do you think are needed in your community?"
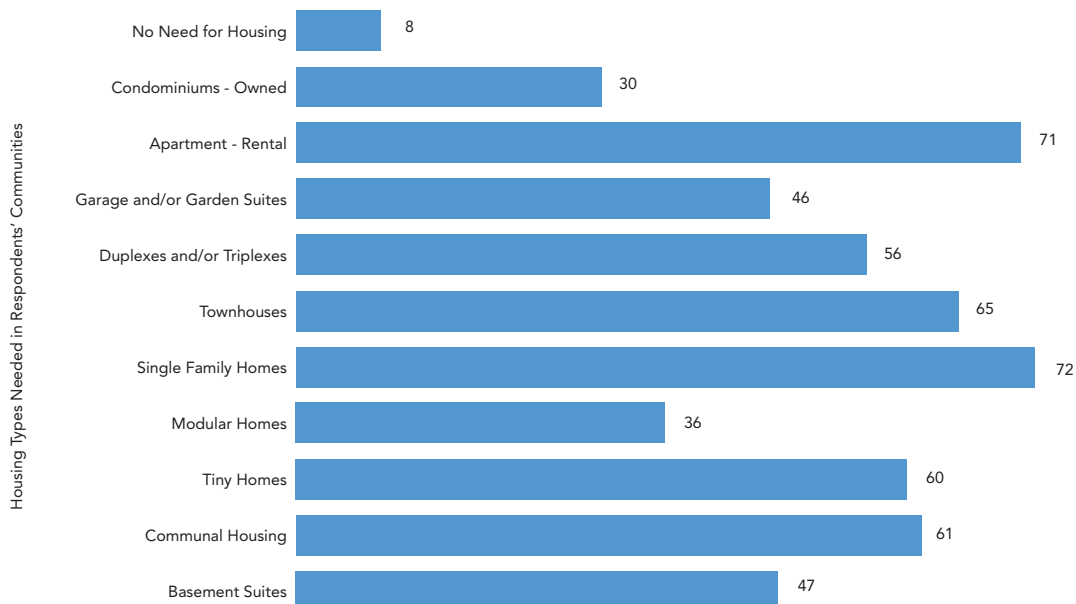
Town Respondents

Housing Type	Value
No Need for Housing	8
Condominiums - Owned	30
Apartment - Rental	71
Garage and/or Garden Suites	46
Duplexes and/or Triplexes	56
Townhouses	65
Single Family Homes	72
Modular Homes	36
Tiny Homes	60
Communal Housing	61
Basement Suites	47

Housing Types Needed in Respondents' Communities

Figure 19. Bar chart representing responses from town communities to "What types of housing do you think are needed in your community?"

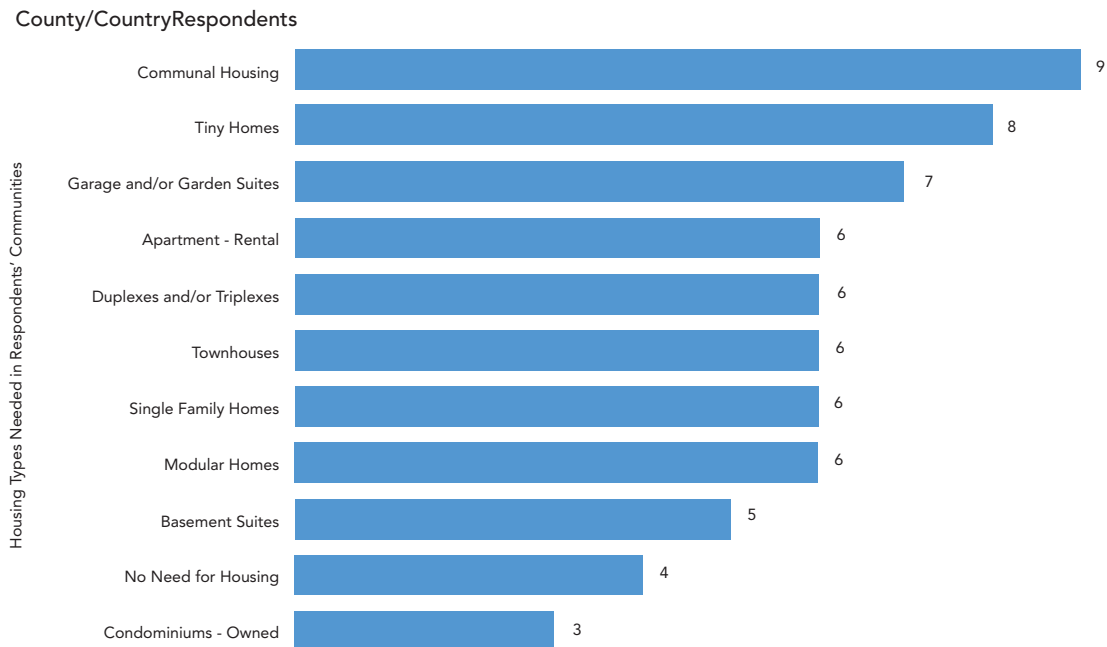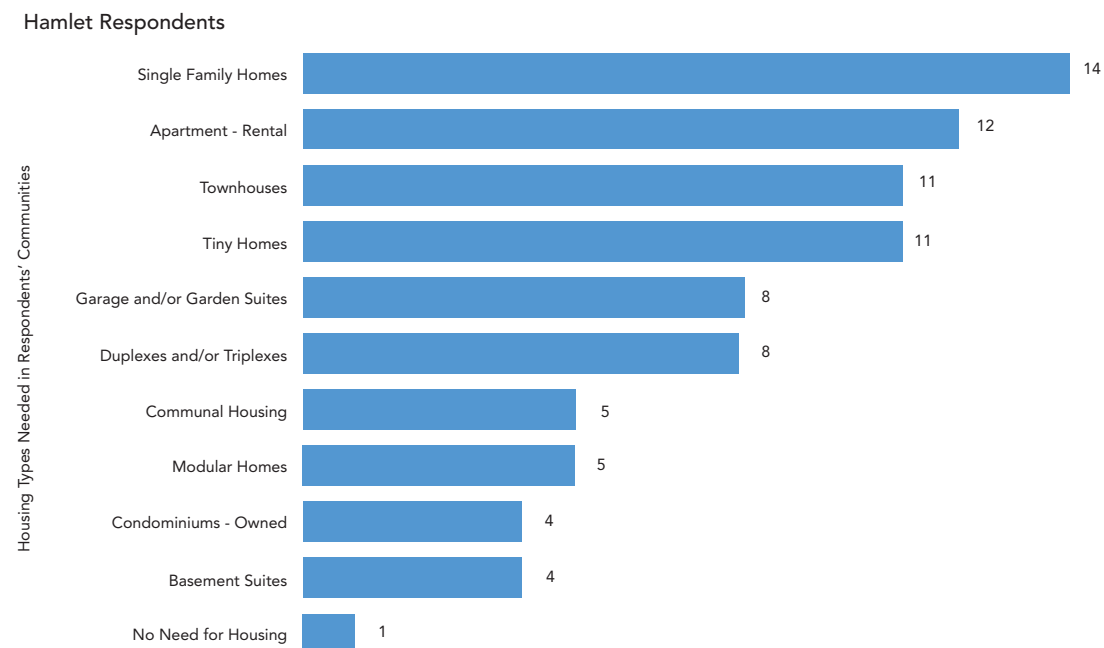**County/CountryRespondents**

Housing Types Needed in Respondents' Communities

Housing Type	Value
Communal Housing	9
Tiny Homes	8
Garage and/or Garden Suites	7
Apartment - Rental	6
Duplexes and/or Triplexes	6
Townhouses	6
Single Family Homes	6
Modular Homes	6
Basement Suites	5
No Need for Housing	4
Condominiums - Owned	3

Figure 20. Bar chart representing responses from county/country communities to "What types of housing do you think are needed in your community?"

Hamlet Respondents

Housing Types Needed in Respondents' Communities

Housing Type	Value
Single Family Homes	14
Apartment - Rental	12
Townhouses	11
Tiny Homes	11
Garage and/or Garden Suites	8
Duplexes and/or Triplexes	8
Communal Housing	5
Modular Homes	5
Condominiums - Owned	4
Basement Suites	4
No Need for Housing	1

Figure 21. Bar chart representing responses from hamlet communities to "What types of housing do you think are needed in your community?"
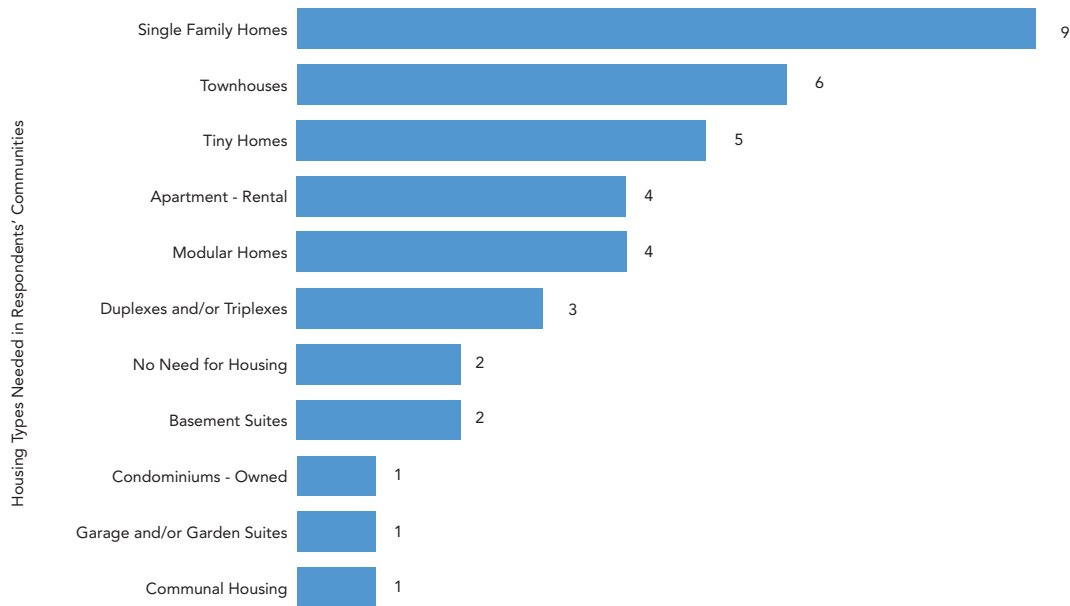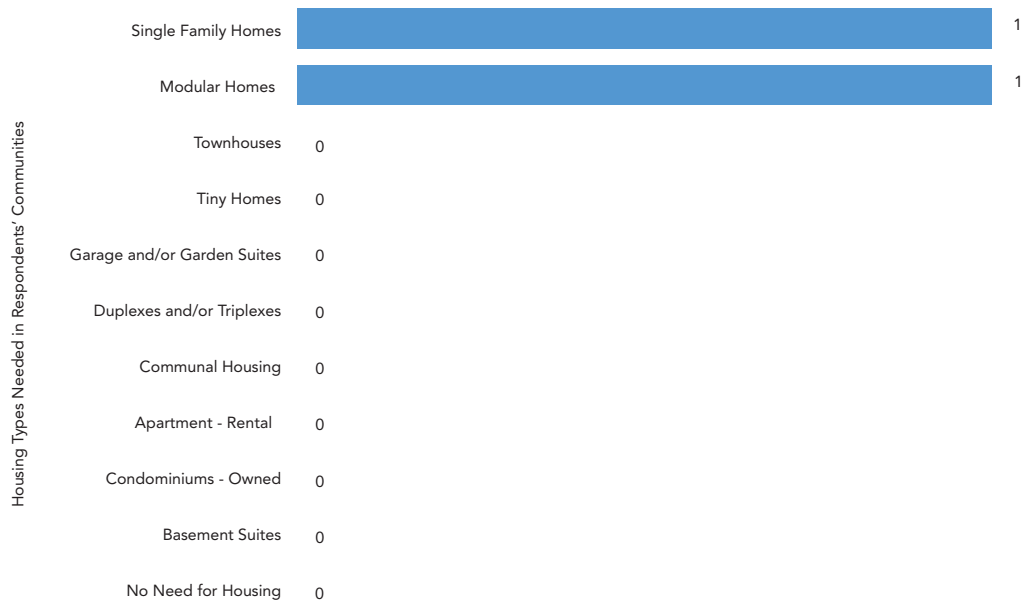
Village Respondents

Housing Type	Count
Single Family Homes	9
Townhouses	6
Tiny Homes	5
Apartment - Rental	4
Modular Homes	4
Duplexes and/or Triplexes	3
No Need for Housing	2
Basement Suites	2
Condominiums - Owned	1
Garage and/or Garden Suites	1
Communal Housing	1

Housing Types Needed in Respondents' Communities

Figure 22. Bar chart representing responses from village communities to "What types of housing do you think are needed in your community?"

Nation/Reserve Respondents

Housing Type	Count
Single Family Homes	1
Modular Homes	1
Townhouses	0
Tiny Homes	0
Garage and/or Garden Suites	0
Duplexes and/or Triplexes	0
Communal Housing	0
Apartment - Rental	0
Condominiums - Owned	0
Basement Suites	0
No Need for Housing	0

Housing Types Needed in Respondents' Communities

Figure 23. Bar chart representing responses from nation/reserve communities to "What types of housing do you think are needed in your community?"

Favourite Aspects of Participants' Community

Each respondent was asked "What is your favourite thing about your community?" that they answered in a short answer which was manually coded [Figure 24]. For the questions that were needed to be manually coded, they were coded in specific categories then consolidated into 14 categories. These categories are:

» **Sense of Community and Community Supports** - when the community invokes welcoming characteristics and community members help one another, works together, and residents often have relationships with their neighbours and the people in their community.

» **Amenities and Services** - residents can access a variety of amenities and services which are necessary for their everyday needs. These include, healthcare, education, municipal services, et cetera.

» **Atmosphere and Surroundings** - when the surroundings of a community are aesthetically pleasing and the atmosphere is amicable and comforting.

» **Nature and Green Space Recreation** - residents can access nature, green space, and natural recreation and the community values a clean environment.

» **Walkability and Active Transportation** - when the community is walkable with infrastructure to support active transportation, i.e. bike infrastructure, sidewalks maintenance.

» **Downtown and Central Areas** - residents enjoy the vibrancy of their downtown
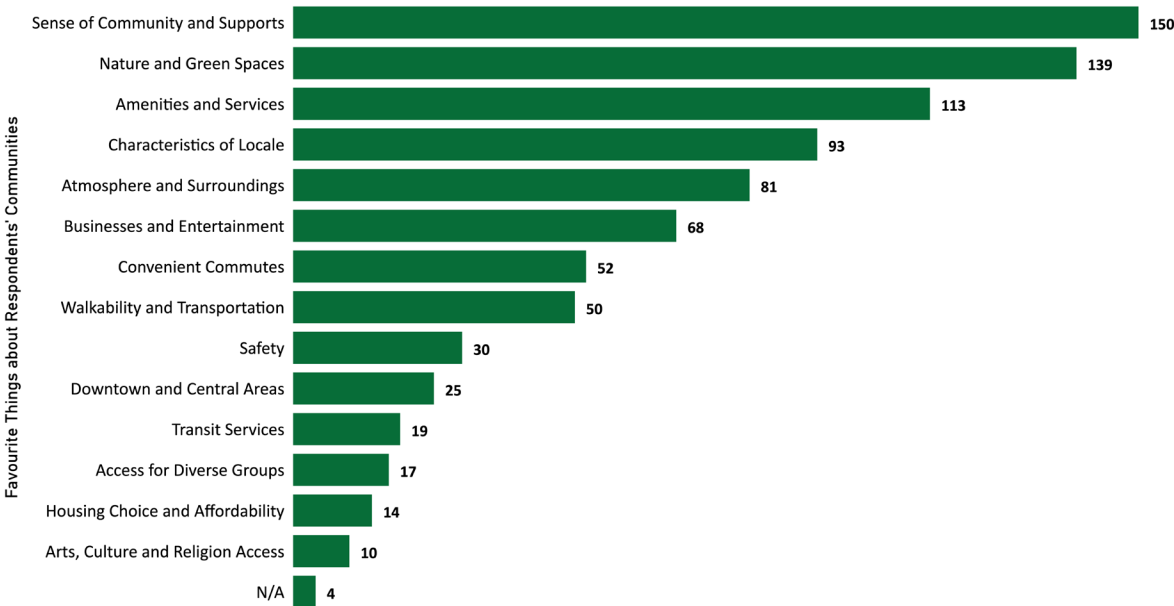
All Respondents

Figure 24. Bar chart representing all responses to "What is your favourite thing about your community?"

areas or enjoy being in close proximity to a major central area.

» **Characteristics of Locale** - residents enjoy the specific characteristics of their community which can include, the locale, the size, the community characteristics, et cetera.

» **Businesses, Entertainment, and Economy** - when the community has a strong economy with access to a variety of shopping, entertainment, and options in general. Economic development is happening and local businesses are flourishing.

» **Opportunities for Culture, Arts, and Religion** - residents can gain opportunities to experience culture, arts, and religion through cultural centres, art programs, and religious centres.

» **Considerations for Diverse Groups** - when the community considers diverse groups, particularly marginalized groups, like people with disabilities, seniors, or racialized groups.

» **Convenient Commutes** - residents are able to commute to work, necessities, entertainment in a short or convenient time.

» **Safety** - residents feel safe and comfortable in their communities.

» **Transit Services** - residents can access transit services which includes bus services and train services.

» **Housing Choice and Affordability** - residents can access a diversity of housing choices as well as affordable housing.
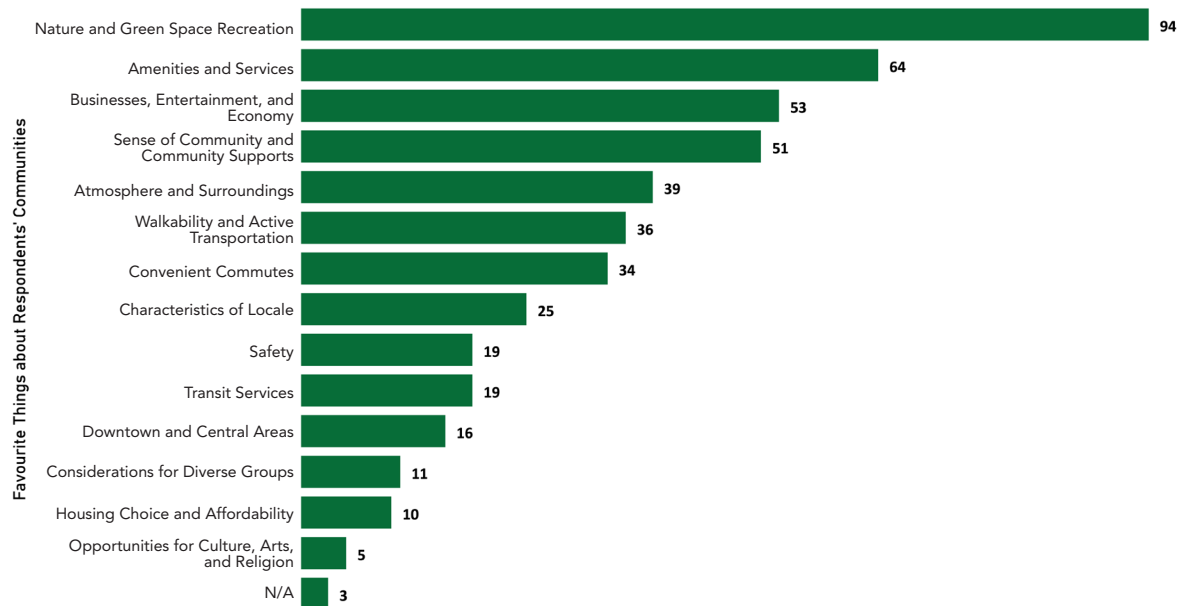
City Respondents

Figure 25. Bar chart representing responses from city communities to "What is your favourite thing about your community?"
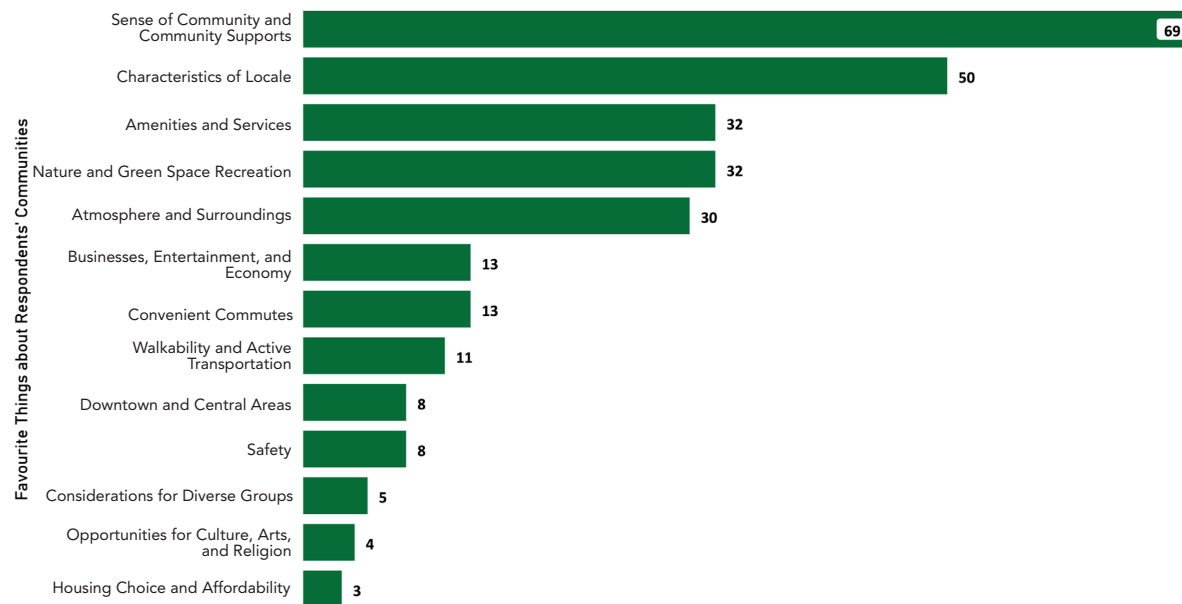
Town Respondents

Figure 26. Bar chart representing responses from town communities to "What is your favourite thing about your community?"
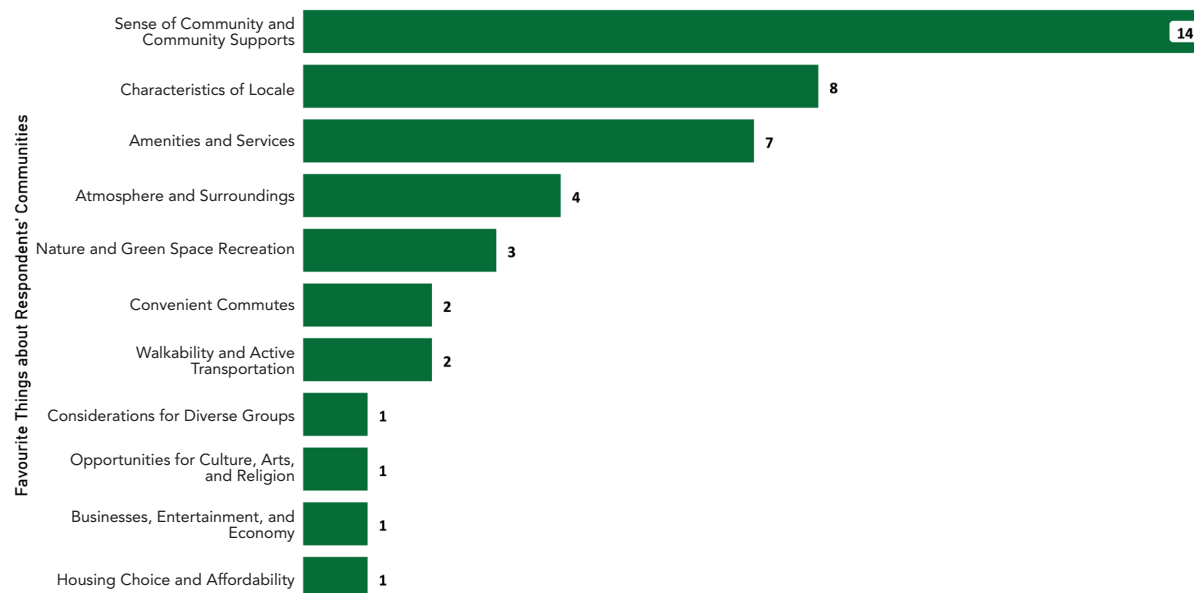
Hamlet Respondents

Figure 27. Bar chart representing responses from hamlet communities to "What is your favourite thing about your community?"
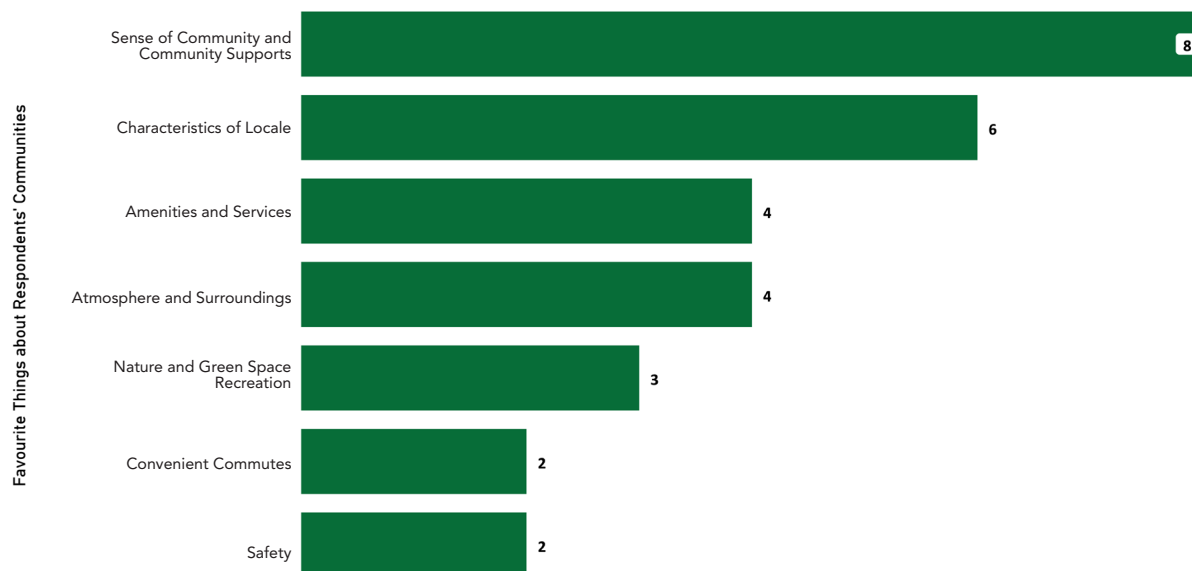
Village Respondents

Favourite Things about Respondents' Communities

Category	Value
Sense of Community and Community Supports	8
Characteristics of Locale	6
Amenities and Services	4
Atmosphere and Surroundings	4
Nature and Green Space Recreation	3
Convenient Commutes	2
Safety	2

Figure 28. Bar chart representing responses from village communities to "What is your favourite thing about your community?"

County/Country Respondents

Favourite Things about Respondents' Communities

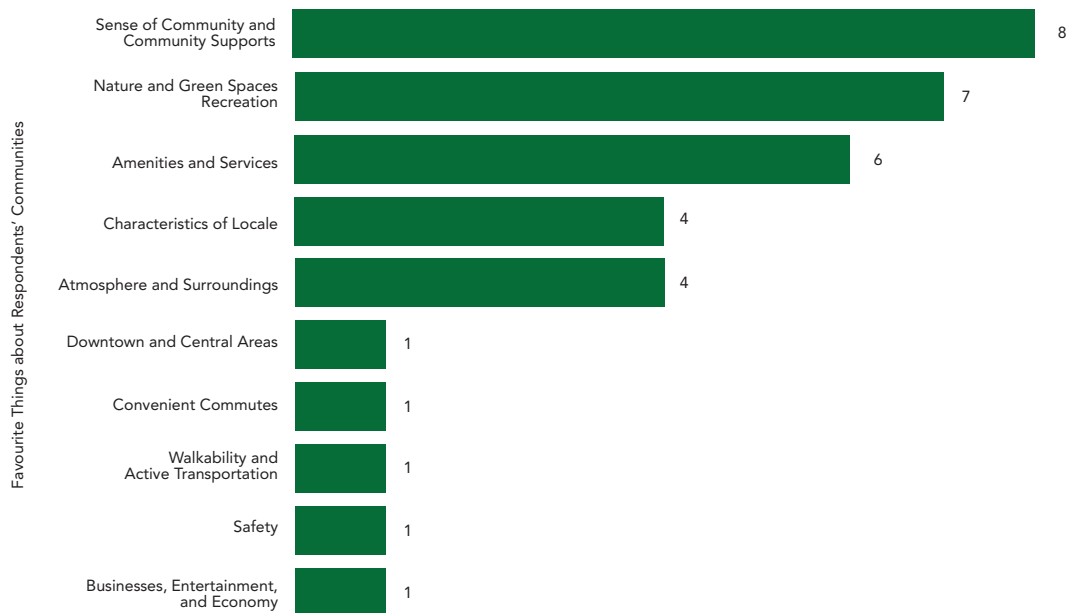| Category	Value
Sense of Community and Community Supports	8
Nature and Green Spaces Recreation	7
Amenities and Services	6
Characteristics of Locale	4
Atmosphere and Surroundings	4
Downtown and Central Areas	1
Convenient Commutes	1
Walkability and Active Transportation	1
Safety	1
Businesses, Entertainment, and Economy	1

Figure 29. Bar chart representing responses from county/country communities to "What is your favourite thing about your community?"

Overall, the top three favourite things that came up the most in respondents' answers about their communities were *sense of community and community supports*, *nature and green space recreation*, and *amenities and services*. The *sense of community and community supports* was the most liked attribute of a community, possibly because people often feel strong emotions like pride and spirit when speaking about a community they reside in. However, what respondents may overlook is that many of the other categories contribute to a sense of community like safety or businesses and entertainment. It is interesting to note that *businesses, entertainment, and economy* is low on the list since our preliminary reports found that many communities flourish when the economy grows. *Nature and green space recreation* and *amenities and services* were two of the top three responses, possibly because people find importance in being surrounded by nature and the needs and necessities to aid in their day to day activities. From our research, we know that housing choice is a substantial problem in many communities; however, it was interesting to note that not many respondents categorized *housing choice and affordability* as their favourite thing in their community.

When looking at the responses by community, the hierarchy of counts changes. Responses from the city communities had the most counts in *nature and green space recreation*, *amenities and services*, and *business, entertainment, and economy* [Figure 25]. It was interesting to see that *nature and green space recreation* was the city communities' top response; however, was not in the top three for any other community. This could be because the smaller communities (ex. town, village, hamlet, and county/country) are surrounded by more nature and green space so they may not be conscious of it.

The responses for town, village, hamlet, and county/country all have their top count as *sense of community and community supports* [Figure 26, 27, 28, 29]; this could be because many smaller communities take a lot of pride in their sense of community and neighbourly relationships. It is also not surprising that *amenities and services* is in the top three favourite things in all communities since it is important for residents to find the necessities they need to live. *Housing choice and affordability*, *considerations for diverse groups*, and *opportunities for culture, arts, and religion* were the least responses for each community and overall.

Desired/Believed Improvements in Participants' Communities

The survey asked each respondent "What could be improved in your community?" that was answered and coded like the last question [Figure 30]. These codes were also consolidated into 14 categories which consists of:

» **Housing Choice, Affordability, and Quality** - the need for a diversity of housing choice, affordability, and quality, this includes appropriate infill development, rental units, et cetera.

» **Amenities and Services** - the need for additional and variety of amenities and services, this includes health care, social services, municipal services, education, et cetera.

» **Walkability and Active Transportation** - the need for better connectivity and

infrastructure for walkability and active transportation and less automobile usage.

» **Nature and Environmental Awareness** - the need for additional green space and environmental awareness.

» **Sense of Community and Social Opportunities** - the need for more social opportunities so community members can get involved in the community as well as form relationships.

» **Community Culture and Diversity** - to combat exclusive culture and enhance cultural diversity

» **Transit Services** - to improve and add in more public transportation, i.e. bus routes, LRT improvements

» **Crime and Safety** - the need for better safety and security measures to combat crime.

» **Businesses, Entertainment, and Economy** - the need for economic development including, employment opportunities and commercial development.

» **Built Environment and City Planning** - to improve and maintain infrastructure and city planning.

» **Considerations for Diverse Groups** - the need for more considerations for diverse groups especially marginalized groups including people with disabilities, seniors, people experiencing homelessness, et cetera.

» **Downtown** - the need for a vibrant downtown.

» **Traffic and Parking** - the need for better traffic and parking regulations.

» **Political and Organizational Change** - to improve communication with councils and big corporations.

Amenities and services was the largest response in regards to this question overall which was predictable considering it was the category where all communities deemed their favourite thing. However, the second most response was *housing choice, affordability and quality* which is interesting since it was one of the least chosen responses in "What is your favourite thing about your community?" This is the same for *business, entertainment, and economy* which is the third most response.

Improvements that respondents highlighted for all the smaller communities had similar top three categories [Figure 31, 32, 33, 34], with the exception of county/country with its third top category being *considerations for diverse groups* which is an unexpected outlier to the others [Figure 35]. City respondents' top need for improvement is *amenities and services* similar to the other communities [Figure 36]; however, it is surprising to see that category has the top improvement need for the city respondents because cities do have more amenities and services in comparison to smaller communities. The second and third most highlighted categories for city respondents *crime and safety* and *businesses, entertainment, and economy*. Concerns for crime and safety is more prominent in cities because of the higher densities cities hold which reflects the survey results. The same

can be said for *businesses, entertainment, and economy* as many would connote this category with a "booming city."
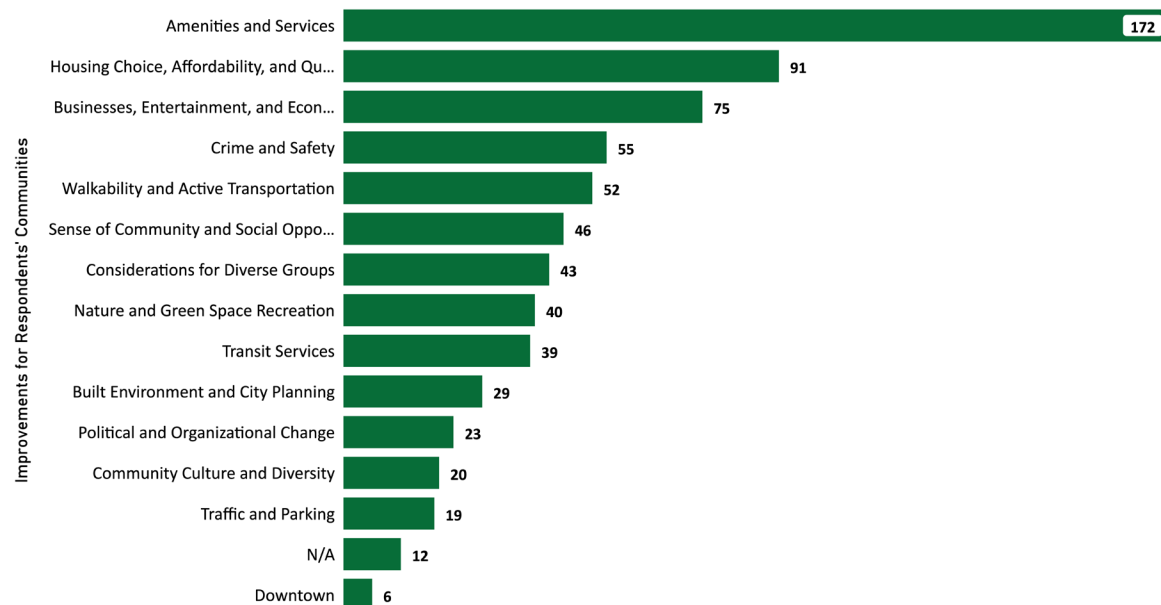
All Respondents

Improvements for Respondents' Communities	Count
Amenities and Services	172
Housing Choice, Affordability, and Qu...	91
Businesses, Entertainment, and Econ...	75
Crime and Safety	55
Walkability and Active Transportation	52
Sense of Community and Social Oppo...	46
Considerations for Diverse Groups	43
Nature and Green Space Recreation	40
Transit Services	39
Built Environment and City Planning	29
Political and Organizational Change	23
Community Culture and Diversity	20
Traffic and Parking	19
N/A	12
Downtown	6

Figure 30. Bar chart representing all responses to "What could be improved in your community?"

Hamlet Respondents

Improvements for Respondents' Communities	Count
Amenities and Services	16
Businesses, Entertainment, and Econ...	8
Housing Choice, Affordability, and Qu...	5
Sense of Community and Social Oppo...	5
Community Culture and Diversity	3
Political and Organizational Change	3
Nature and Green Space Recreation	2
Considerations for Diverse Groups	1
Crime and Safety	1
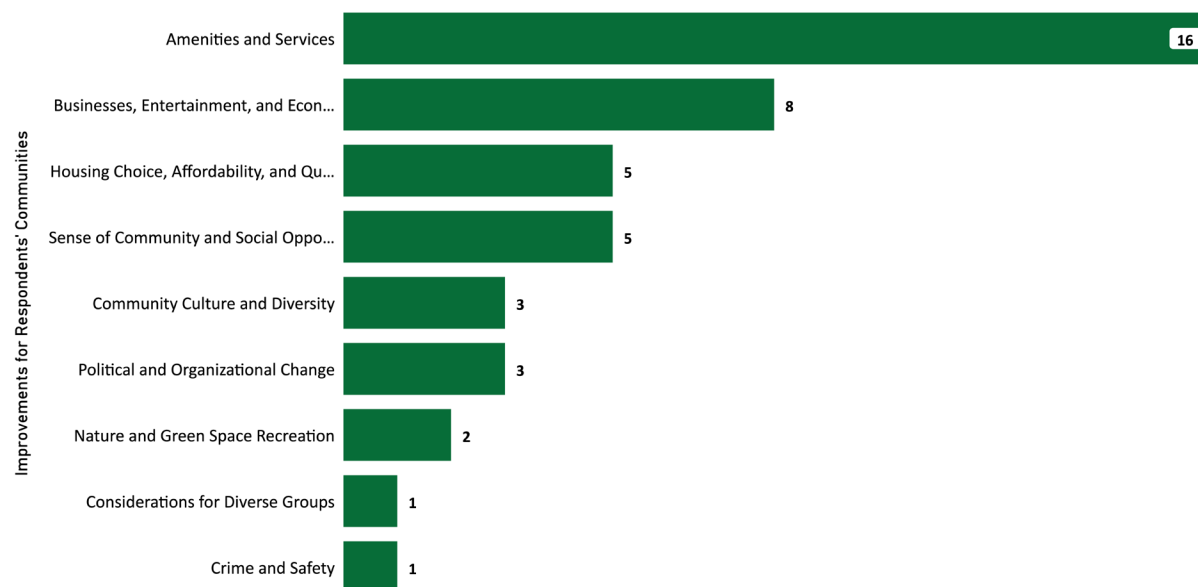
Figure 31. Bar chart representing responses from hamlet communities to "What could be improved in your community?"

Reserve /Nation Respondents

Figure 32. Bar chart representing responses from reserve/nation communities to "What could be improved in your community?"
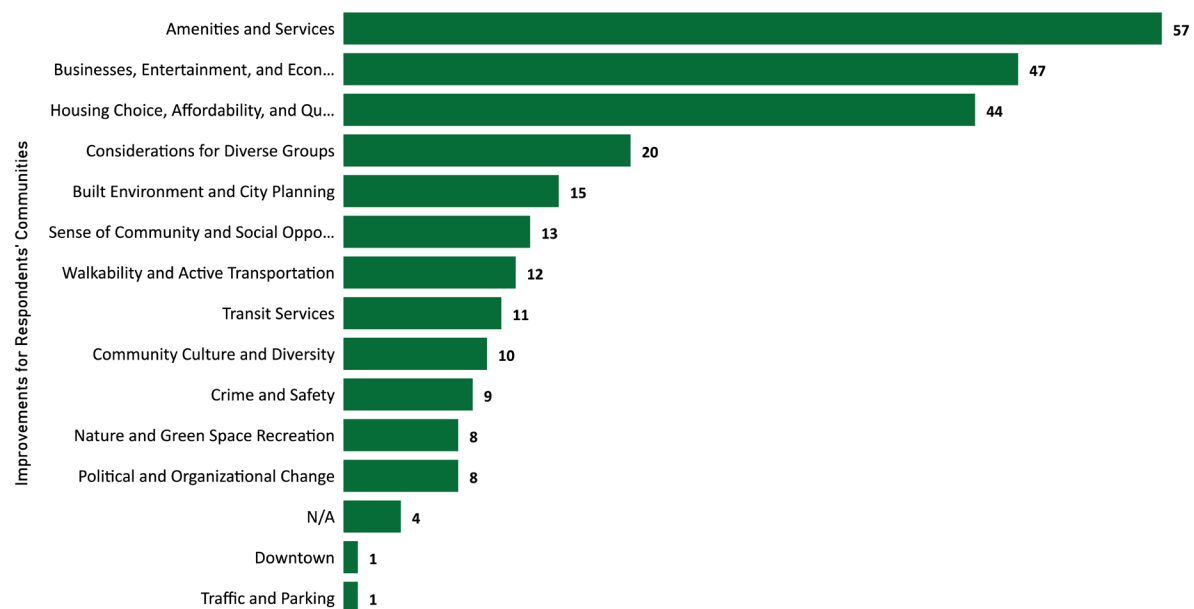
Town Respondents

Figure 33. Bar chart representing responses from town communities to "What could be improved in your community?"
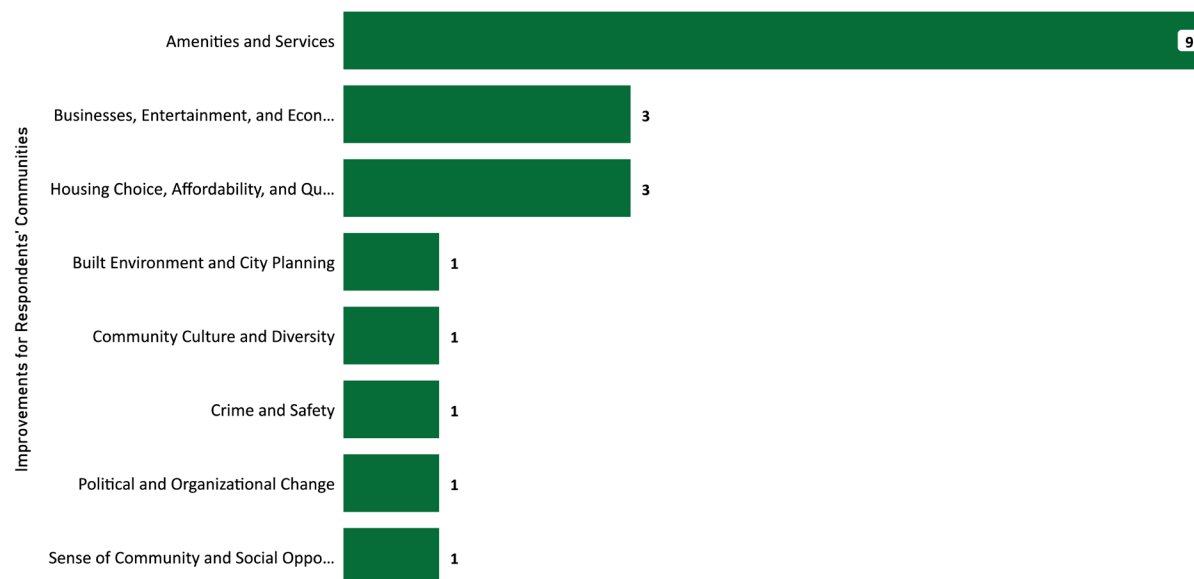
Village Respondents

Figure 34. Bar chart representing responses from village communities to "What could be improved in your community?"
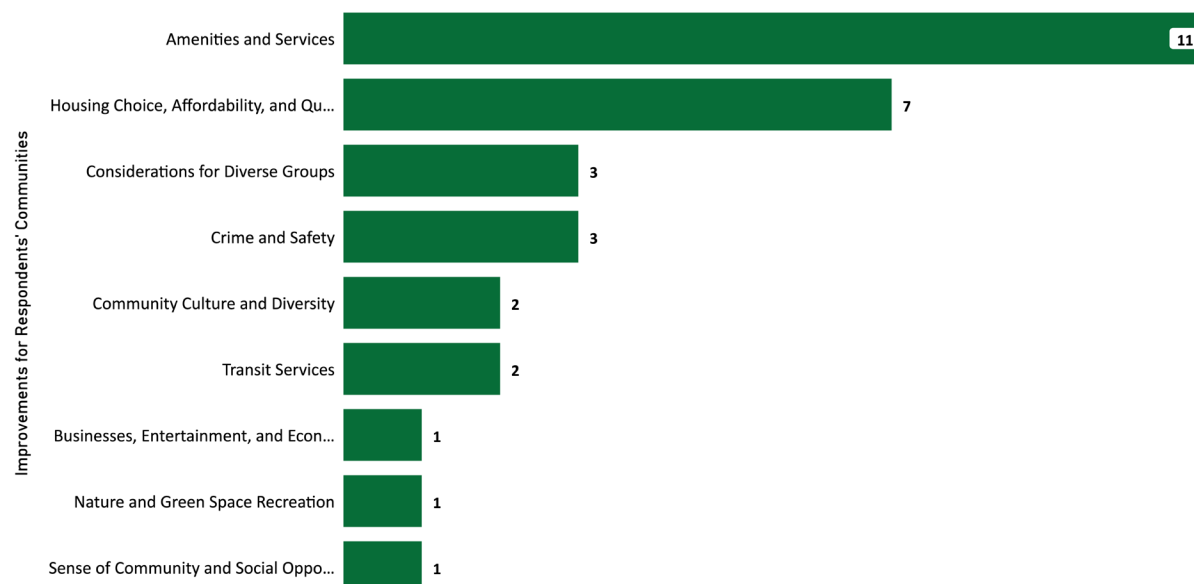
County / Country Respondents

Figure 35. Bar chart representing responses from county/country communities to "What could be improved in your community?"
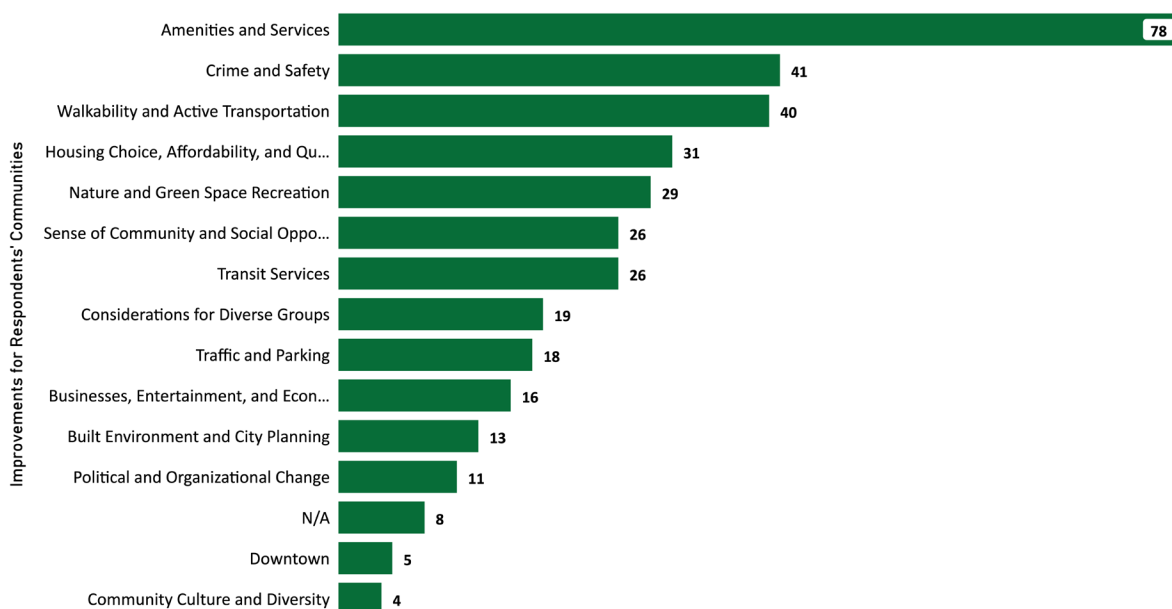
City Respondents

Figure 36. Bar chart representing responses from city communities to "What could be improved in your community?"

Movement Between Communities

Depending on which community respondents resided in, they were taken down different streams of questions. County/country, village, and hamlet respondents were asked "Have you ever lived in a community much larger than your current community in Alberta?," while city and town respondents were asked "Have you ever lived in a community much smaller than your current community in Alberta?" Reserve/nation respondents have their own set of questions because of their special case and did not have to answer this question. The data may be a bit skewed as a large proportion of respondents did not answer this question. It can be assumed that the respondents who did not answer this question have never lived in a larger community to their current one. If that is the assumption, only 2% of respondents have lived in a larger community than their current one [Figure 37]; these respondents moved on to the next question.

From our research, the reasons that the participants listed for moving away from a larger community were predictable [Figure 38]. The reason with the highest count was to *relocate for different employment opportunities*. The second highest count was because of *high crime* and *lack of safety* which is often associated with large communities like cities. The third highest count was for *family considerations and lack of social supports* which is often associated with smaller communities, enticing respondents to move away from a larger community.
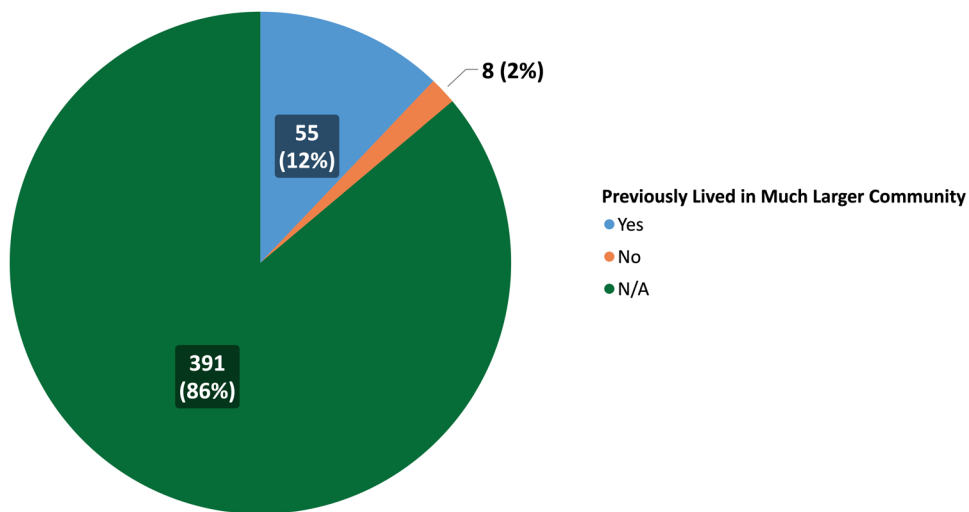
Previously Lived in Much Larger Community
- Yes
- No
- N/A

8 (2%)
55 (12%)
391 (86%)

Figure 37. Pie chart representing responses to "Have you ever lived in a community much larger than your current community in Alberta?"

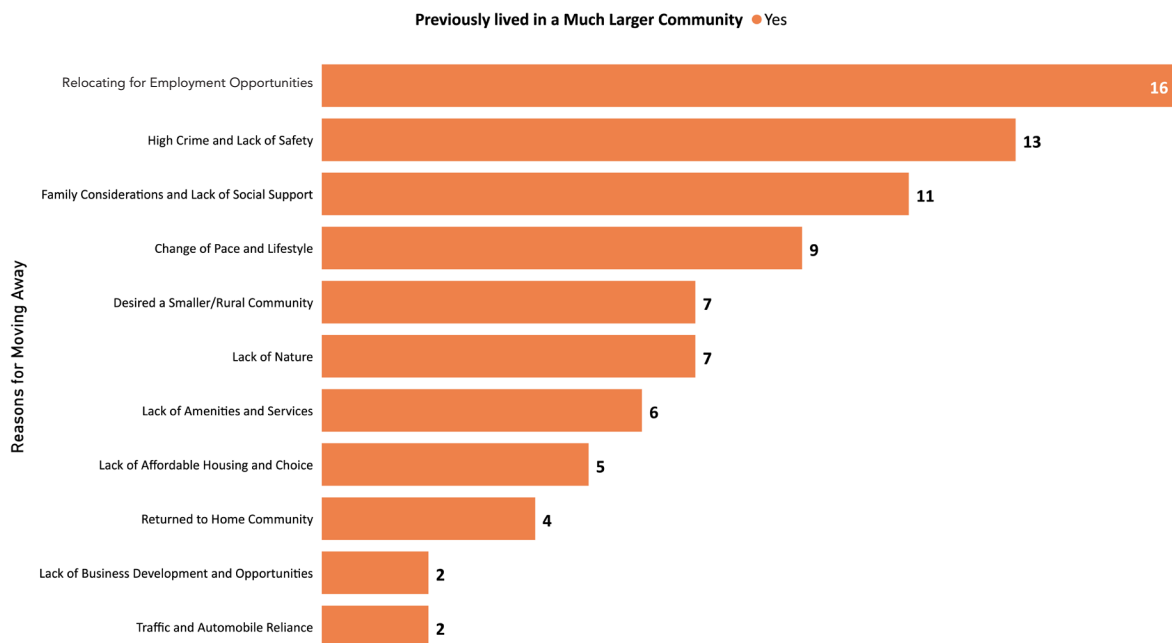Previously lived in a Much Larger Community ● Yes

Reasons for Moving Away	
Relocating for Employment Opportunities	16
High Crime and Lack of Safety	13
Family Considerations and Lack of Social Support	11
Change of Pace and Lifestyle	9
Desired a Smaller/Rural Community	7
Lack of Nature	7
Lack of Amenities and Services	6
Lack of Affordable Housing and Choice	5
Returned to Home Community	4
Lack of Business Development and Opportunities	2
Traffic and Automobile Reliance	2

Figure 38. Bar chart representing responses to "Why did you move away from this community?" in correlation to previously living in a much larger community.

A significant number of participants responded more to "Have you ever lived in a community much smaller than your current community in Alberta?" than "Have you ever lived in a community much larger than your current community in Alberta?" which makes this data more reliable. It was also anticipated that more people would have lived in a smaller community and migrated to a larger community as Alberta's urban population growth has increased 6.3% and its rural population has decreased 2.7% from 2016 to 2021.[6] Figure 39 shows 40% responded yes to the question which moved the participants to the next question.

The top and second with the highest count was the *lack of employment opportunities* and the l*ack of amenities and services* which is consistent to our research since smaller communities often struggle to retain workers and are lacking amenities and services. Often, residents of smaller communities must leave for employment opportunities or stay and travel to major centres to find the services and amenities they need. The third highest count was *family considerations and lack of social supports* which aligns with what we found in our research. Oftentimes there is a stigma attached to newcomers in a small community leaving the newcomers with a lack of social support and difficulty finding those community supports.
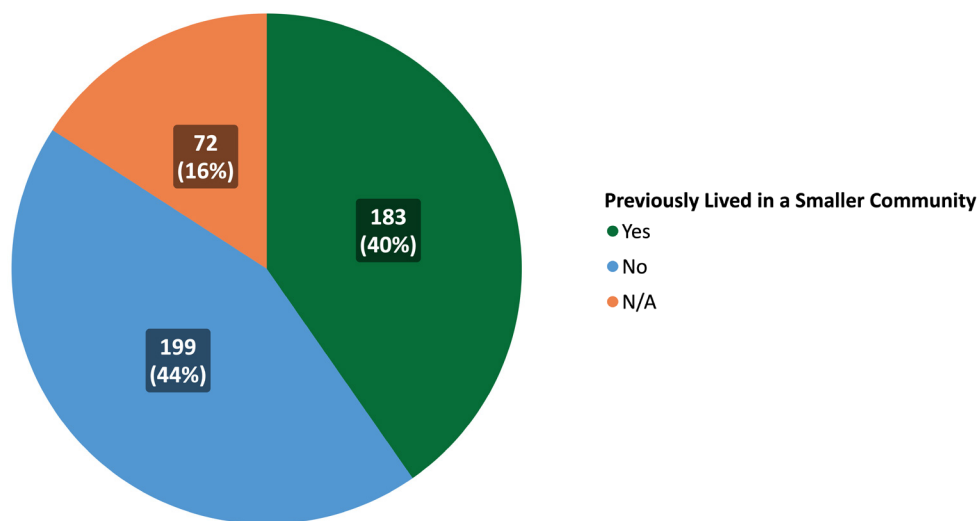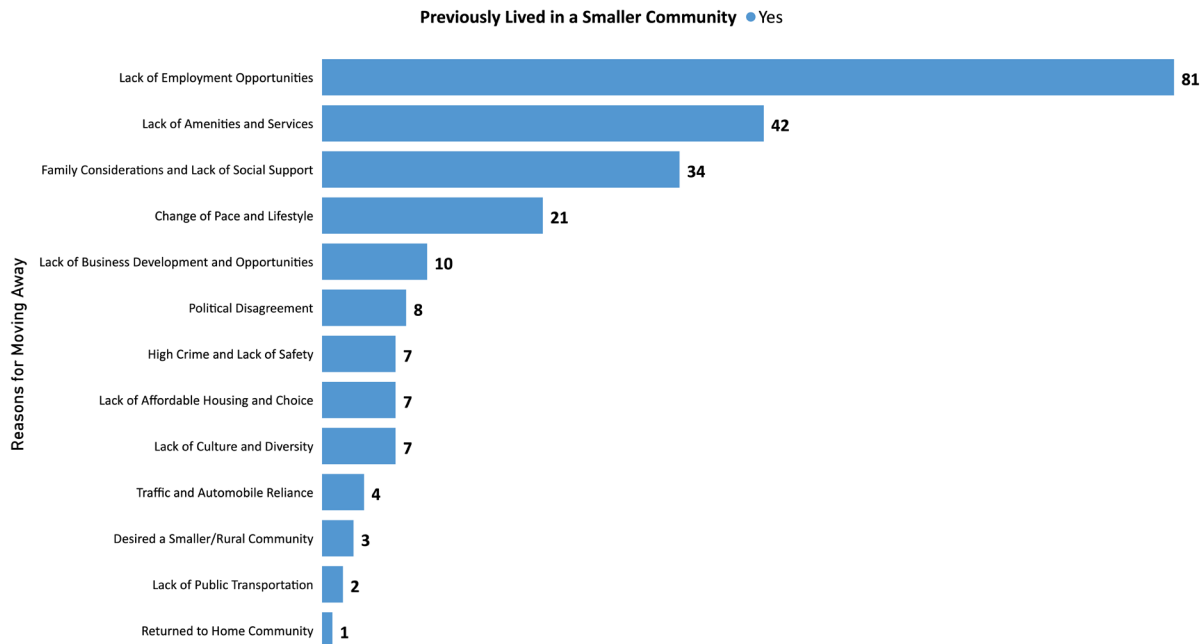

Previously Lived in a Smaller Community
- Yes
- No
- N/A

Figure 39. Pie chart representing responses to "Have you ever lived in a smaller community in Alberta?"

Previously Lived in a Smaller Community ● Yes

Reason	Value
Lack of Employment Opportunities	81
Lack of Amenities and Services	42
Family Considerations and Lack of Social Support	34
Change of Pace and Lifestyle	21
Lack of Business Development and Opportunities	10
Political Disagreement	8
High Crime and Lack of Safety	7
Lack of Affordable Housing and Choice	7
Lack of Culture and Diversity	7
Traffic and Automobile Reliance	4
Desired a Smaller/Rural Community	3
Lack of Public Transportation	2
Returned to Home Community	1

Figure 40. Bar chart representing responses to "Why did you move away from this community?" in correlation to previously living in a smaller community.

General Thoughts of Larger and Smaller Communities

To gain an understanding of what participants thought about larger and smaller communities, the survey included a short answer question so that participants could describe their general thoughts and personal feelings about it. County/country, town, village, and hamlet communities were asked "What comes to mind when you think about living in a much larger community?" and city and town communities were asked "What comes to mind when you think about living in a much smaller community?." Towns can be larger communities, but there is a large range of size in what could be considered a town so respondents who live in towns were asked both questions.

Overall, when answering "What comes to mind when you think about living in a much larger community?" respondents thought of *amenities and services* the most [Figure 41]. Much like the other questions amenities and services is a forthcoming factor in what participants need and want in their communities. People often associate *amenities and services* with larger communities, especially if they live in a smaller community. The next two highest thoughts associated with larger communities are *crime and safety concerns* and *crowded and larger populations*; predictable with cities being central hubs with much density which oftentimes comes with more crime. There were some outliers in the data where some people did associate *safe and peaceful* connotations with larger communities, as well as *lack of amenities and services*.
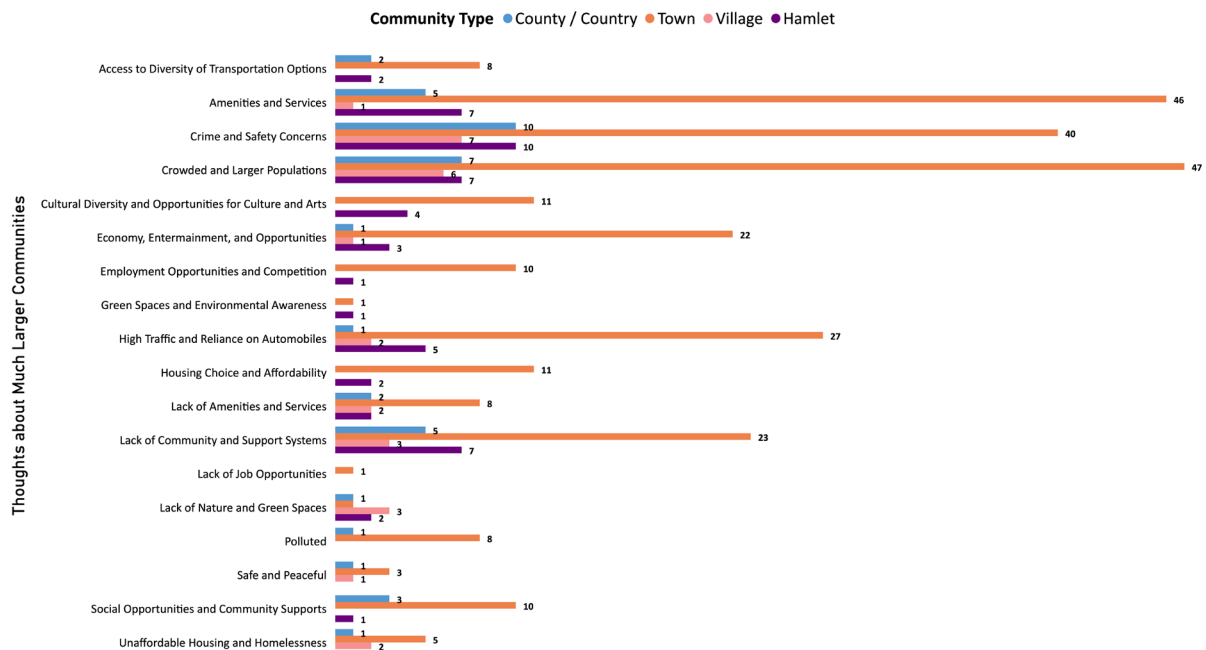
Figure 41. Bar chart representing responses to "What comes to mind when you think about living in a much larger community?"
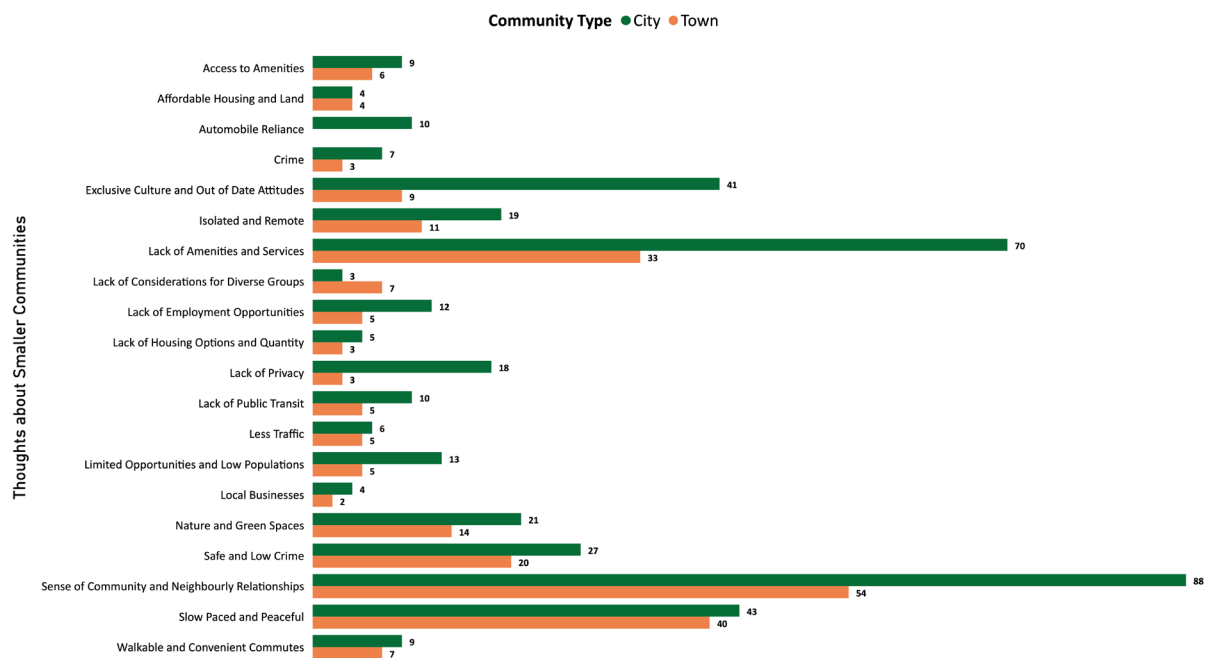

Figure 42. Bar chart representing responses to "What comes to mind when you think about living in a smaller community?"

Respondents from city and town communities think of *sense of community and neighbourly relationships*, *lack of amenities and services*, and *slow paced and peaceful* to be the top three answers [Figure 42]. These top responses show how smaller communities are often associated with feelings of community and community relationships since there is less density and more opportunities for residents to become tight knitted. Notably, *nature and green spaces* was not one of the highest thought of connotations for smaller communities even though they are often surrounded by rural areas which are abundantly encompassed with the natural environment. Many of the categories that respondents thought of revolved around a lack of resources and services which is a recurring theme when asked about smaller communities.

Considerations of Moving

Of the participants 98% skipped answering if they have ever considered moving to a community much larger than their current community. Within the participants who answered, Figure 43 shows 5 participants answered *yes* and 4 participants answered *no*. Note that the data may not be accurately represented because of the small sample size; however, it is not surprising that the answers were evenly split between *yes* and *no* because there are often many mixed feelings about living in a smaller community. Many people in smaller communities do have strong feelings of pride in their community and would not give a second thought about moving, but many of these smaller communities may not have the resources and services needed to conveniently provide residents with their needs and wants, leading to some thought about living in larger communities.
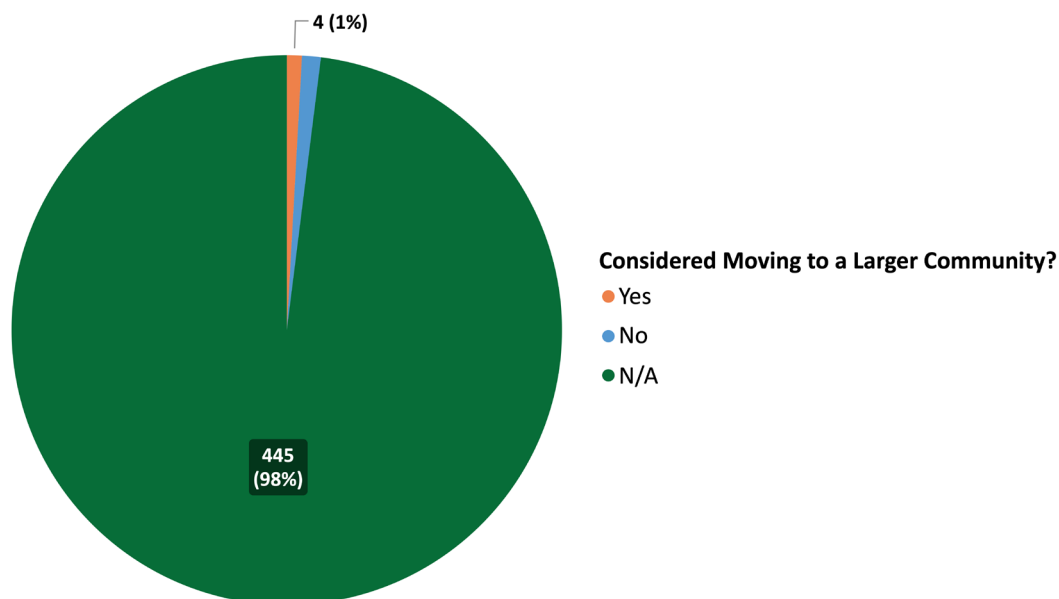

Figure 43. Pie chart representing responses to "Have you ever thought about living in a community much larger than your current community?"

The respondents who answered yes to the previous question were then directed to the question "What prevented you from making the decision to move there?" However, only five respondents moved along to this question, 3 respondents from hamlet communities and 2 respondents from county/country communities; thus it may have insufficient information to accurately convey what prevents people from moving to larger communities. From the responses from the participants who answered, five reasons were highlighted: *likability of their current residence, employment restrictions, family considerations*, and l*ack of housing choice* [Figure 44]. Note that the responses from these answers were only located in the county/country and hamlet communities.
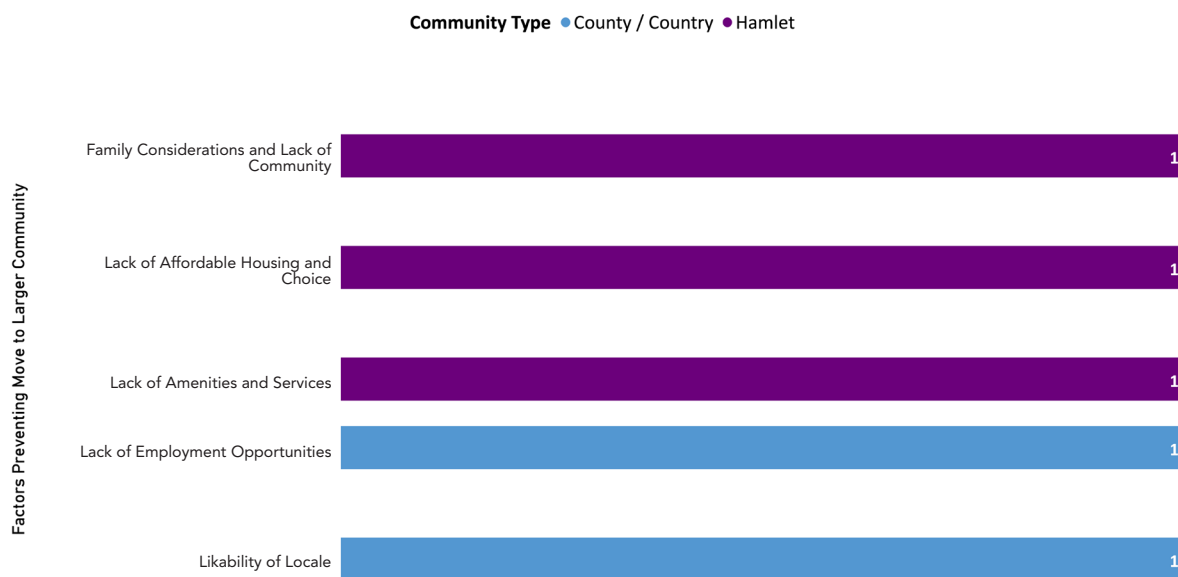
Community Type ● County / Country ● Hamlet

Figure 44. Bar chart representing responses to "What prevented you from making the decision to move there?" in correlation to considering moving to a larger community.

More participants answered if they thought about living in a community smaller than their current residence; a major part of the reason could be because there are more participants from city and town communities overall. However, 49% still did not answer the question. Within the participants who responded, 106 participants answered *no* and 93 participants answered *yes* [Figure 45]. Although this question had more responses than the previous question, it is a similar ratio of respondents answering *yes* and *no*.

The respondents who answered yes to the previous question were then directed to the question "What prevented you from making the decision to move there?" Majority of the respondents answered not applicable. The top three reasons respondents were prevented from moving to a smaller community were *Lack of Amenities and Services, Family Considerations and Lack of Community*, and *Lack of Employment Opportunities.* The results were aligned with how respondents previously answered questions about

smaller communities. The responses were relatively similarly distributed when comparing responses of people from Town communities and people from City communities.
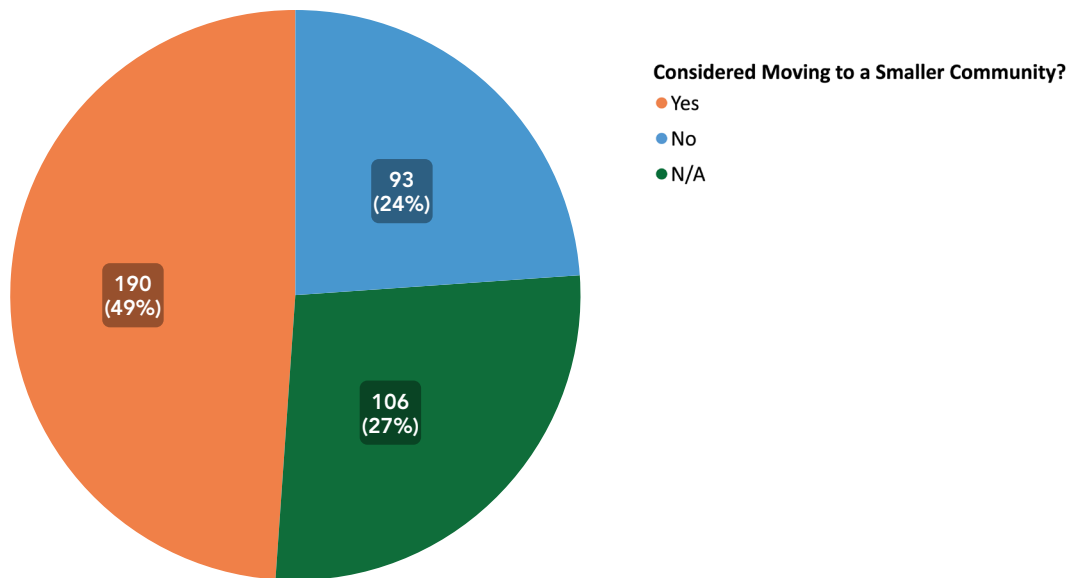

Considered Moving to a Smaller Community?
- Yes
- No
- N/A

93 (24%)
190 (49%)
106 (27%)

Figure 45. Pie chart representing responses to "Have you ever thought about living in a community much smaller than your current community?"

Community   ● City   ● Town

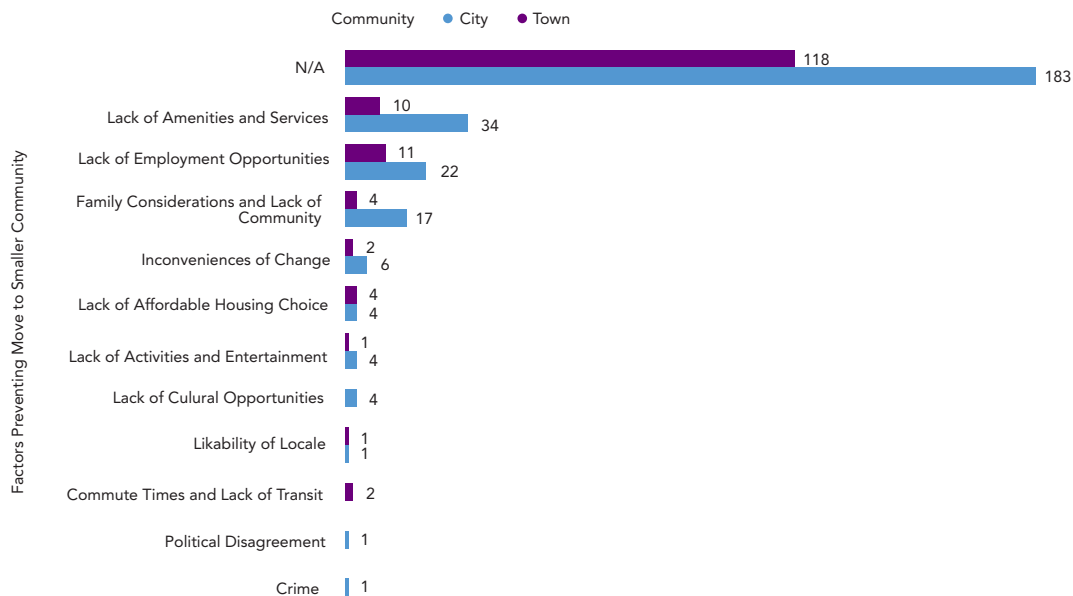| Factors Preventing Move to Smaller Community	Town	City
N/A	118	183
Lack of Amenities and Services	10	34
Lack of Employment Opportunities	11	22
Family Considerations and Lack of Community	4	17
Inconveniences of Change	2	6
Lack of Affordable Housing Choice	4	4
Lack of Activities and Entertainment	1	4
Lack of Culural Opportunities		4
Likability of Locale	1	1
Commute Times and Lack of Transit	2	
Political Disagreement		1
Crime		1

Figure 46. Bar chart representing responses to "What prevented you from making the decision to move there?" in correlation to considering moving to a smaller community.

LIMITATIONS

For this survey, there are several limitations to note. While the percentage of respondents from each area reflect the demographics of the population from those areas, respondents from smaller communities may still be lacking. In particular, there was a very low response rate from Indigenous communities and Reserves. Having a larger sample size would have given a more accurate representation of those communities. Unfortunately, some communities and groups may also be underrepresented such as young individuals, marginalized identities (LGBTQ2S+ individuals, racialized groups, people with disabilities, and immigrants), and students.