

March 2026

Navigating Home: Illuminating the Experiences of Black Youth in Edmonton

NorQuest College Findings Report

This report was developed on the traditional territories and gathering place of many diverse First Nations including Cree, Blackfoot, Dene, Nakota Sioux, Iroquois, Anishinaabe, Inuit and the homeland of Métis Nation Region 4 of what is now Alberta. In recognizing our privilege of calling amiskwacîwâskahikan or Treaty 6 home, we recognize our obligation and continued commitment to learning from the First Peoples whose histories, languages, cultures, and ways of life continue to influence our vibrant communities for this prioritized work of impacting meaningful social change, of which has been the call of countless Indigenous Peoples, Nations, and organizers for time immemorial. Read NorQuest College's official Land Acknowledgement.

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**FOUNDATION
FOR BLACK
COMMUNITIES**



**HEXAGON
WELLNESS**

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Executive Summary

With the support of the Colbourne Institute for Inclusive Leadership at NorQuest College, Hexagon Wellness conducted a mixed research study outlining the housing experiences of African, Caribbean and Black youth (18-29) in Edmonton. Using online surveys, interviews and focus groups with youth and service providers, we discovered current realities, challenges, successes, recommendations, and resiliency strategies.

The study attracted African newcomer and international student voices. Their experiences highlighted living with multiple roommates, moving yearly and deliberating ideas of community, safety, and affordability. Lack of access to steady and sustainable income was the biggest concern for securing safe and dignified housing. Youth sought and advocated for strengthened physical, psychological, and cultural safety. Interviewed youth consistently noted little to no impact of their race or other identities impacted their housing. However, survey data and service agency focus groups provided greater nuance, noting that the most vulnerable people are Queer immigrants who lack any support outside of unaccepting family members. Service agencies also noted the lack of overall resources for Black youth, and having tensions between supporting newcomers and Black youth that have been here longer or born here. Sustained support across sectors without timelines would enable greater success in support.

Survey participants were mostly newcomers, permanent residents, and the majority living with others: family, roommates, and partners. Youth cited below average and median incomes and half felt safe or secure in their housing. Income was cited as the largest factor. Focus groups and interviews enriched this data, with every youth (30) desiring and needing more income to secure housing. Queer and Female youth also felt less secure compared to their male counterparts. Christian youth felt more secure than other religions or spiritualities. Residents who have been in Canada longer experience declining security. Youth emphasized the importance of having access to Black community and social spaces, events, online supports and resources that could aid with understanding and finding culturally safe housing, resources, and other supports.

Taken together, Black youth and service agency participants offer the following recommendations based on their experiences:

- Black youth (newcomer and Black international student) social events to strengthen community connections and spaces
- Online supports, specifically housing resources that are culturally informed and decode the Canadian housing system (from damage deposits to leasing agreements)
- Black specific resources for settlement and other service agencies to have Black staff who directly support finding suitable and safe housing, currently agencies lack the ability to provide direct support
- A furniture library or other resource system that helps international students and Black youth in setting up life in Edmonton without permanent purchases
- A roommate directory and supports for informal living situations (conflict resolution, roommate agreement templates) for Black youth
- Advocacy for rental security through rental caps, laws that protect shorter term youth tenants and resourced cooperative or community living

Black youth are resilient despite the housing challenges they face, navigating very tight budgets while establishing themselves, moving toward greater independence and living solo. They require access to steady and increased income to secure safe and dignified housing opportunities and regular culturally informed community engagement

Introduction

Project Overview

Access to safe, secure, and dignified housing is not only a basic right^[1], but also essential to the ability for anyone to achieve a high quality of life in Canada. These characteristics to housing are therefore not only vital for felt safety and survival in Canada, but success experienced—especially for populations historically and continuously underprioritized, underserved, and systemically made vulnerable to safe, secure, and dignified housing. This study explores the specific and unique housing experiences of Black youth (ages 18-29) in Edmonton to address the barriers and facilitators that impact their access to safe, affordable, and culturally supportive housing. By centering on this underserved population, this project contributes to a deeper understanding of housing inequities faced by Black youth in Edmonton.

Project Objectives

This project intends to identify and document housing barriers while analyzing the impact of discrimination and socioeconomic inequities; amplifying lived experiences and resilience to develop culturally informed support models as well as inform and influence policy and practice. To do so, this project aims to:

- investigate the key challenges Black youth face in accessing stable housing in Edmonton;
- examine the role of discrimination, socioeconomic factors, and systemic barriers in shaping housing experiences;
- explore the resilience and coping strategies employed by Black youth in navigating the housing landscape; and
- illuminate wise strategies from the reality of those with lived experience to inform future practices and policies in youth housing.

[1] Canadian Human Rights Commission (2026) defines housing as a basic right that should be secure, affordable, habitable, provides basic services, close in location to employment and basic social services, accessible, and culturally appropriate.

Methodology

This project used a mixed methods approach offering quantitative and qualitative opportunities for data collection. Both approaches were co-designed with 14 community members, as an advisory committee, who represented varied experiences in relation to Black youth housing. Hexagon Wellness recruited participants by working with community organizations, schools, and social media platforms. In-depth interviews were then conducted with 30 Black youth to gain qualitative insights into personal experiences, challenges, and strategies. 57 survey participants participated.

Digital surveys were first publicized to capture the experiences of Black youth ages 18-29 in Edmonton to gather quantitative data on housing stability, affordability, and satisfaction. Interviews and focus group discussions were also held with 4 focus groups of who work for local service providers, who shared their personal and professional experiences in relation to Black youth housing in Edmonton.

Interviews and focus group discussions occurred online. Participants were asked questions in a semi-structured format, allowing for informal conversation and ease. However, this also means that data isn't consistent throughout, such as not all participants shared their immigration status, or gender. Participants were asked of their current living situations: the good, the bad, the ideal, their definition of safe and dignified housing, and recommendations for support or resources that would aid their sense of safety, belonging and security.

Survey data specifically collected demographic data and offered a Likert scale to gather their sense of security and cultural belonging.



Survey Findings

Compiled and analyzed by NorQuest College, Survey data below is divided into profiles, key highlights, summary, chart and graph representation. Survey questions asked for demographic information on 1-5 Likert scale, feelings of security regarding housing, income, access to Black culture, spirituality and community. 57 participants completed the survey enough to have answers qualify for eligibility.

General Profile

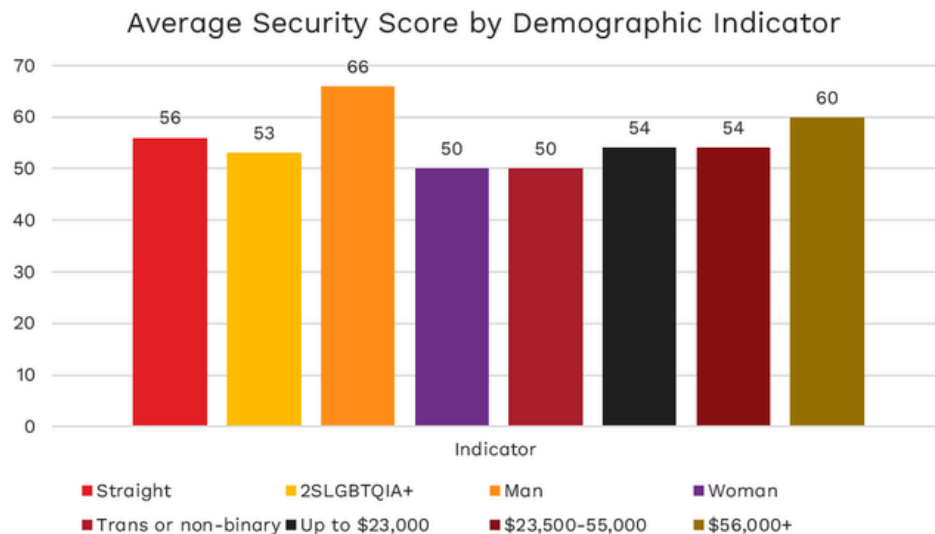
Key Highlights

- Obtaining a university degree in Canada, working full-time, having higher income, and having more autonomous living arrangements (alone or with roommates) contributed to having a higher average feeling of security.
- Respondents who identified as men, Christians, and solely African in ethnicity had higher average feeling of security.
- Citizens and permanent residents had lower levels of security than temporary residents, by a wide margin. This is supported by the levels of security felt by those who arrived in Canada recently. While initial security is low, it increases in short-run then declines in the long-run. This may imply that barriers to secure housing tend to worsen over time.
- Straight respondents were 69% of the sample. On average, 2SLGBTQIA+ respondents felt less secure with average scores of 53; however, straight respondents had average scores of 56.
- Respondents who identified as solely African were 65% of the sample and had average security scores of 58, compared to 50 for other ethnicities.
- The majority (78%) of respondents were Christian and felt significantly more secure (61) than other religions (37).
- Respondents with at-most a high school education outside of Canada had much higher average security scores than other education levels at 60. Respondents who had college or trades education outside of Canada felt the most precarious, with average security scores of 45.
- Respondents who had university education in Canada (30%) felt the most secure with average scores of 64. There were 35% of respondents who were in college or trades had significantly lower feelings of security at 48.
- Most (53%) of respondents worked part time or casual hours and also had the lowest levels of security (51). Interestingly while full-time workers felt the most secure (63), closely following were students (59) and unemployed (56).

Summary

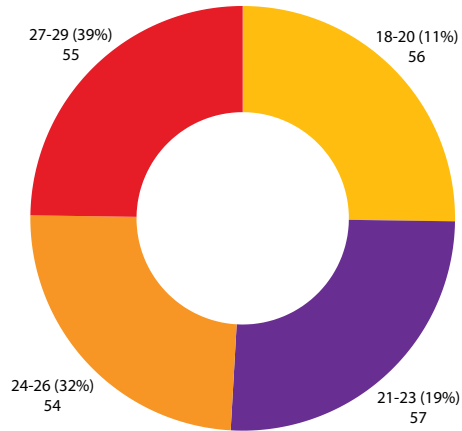
- Thirty-two percent (32%) of respondents were aged 24-26, followed by aged 27-29 (39%). Those aged 21-23 reported the higher average security (57).
- Most respondents (60%) were women, followed by men (32%). Women and trans or nonbinary respondents have security scores of 50, 16 points lower than men (66).

- Higher income respondents (15%) or those making more than \$56,000 a year felt the most secure at 60. Half of the respondents (50%) made up to \$23,000 a year and had average scores of 54.
- Five percent (5%) of respondents lived in a shelter or had no fixed address and had very low levels of security of 25. Respondents who lived with roommates were the most common living arrangement (32%) and also had highest average security (62). The average security score was 50.
- Citizens and permanent residents had the lowest average security at 50 and 53, respectively. Refugees and those with work visas have relatively high levels of security, at 67 and 66, respectively. For time in Canada, those who arrived less than a year ago felt the most insecure at 47. However, security sharply increases for those who have been here 1-3 years (60). Residents who have been in Canada longer experience declining security.

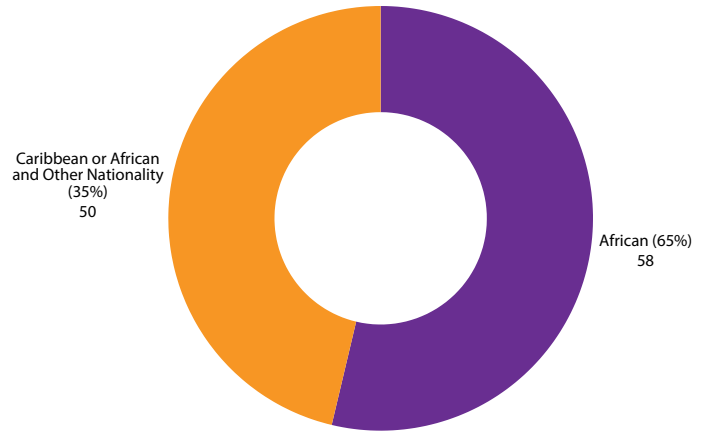


Demographics

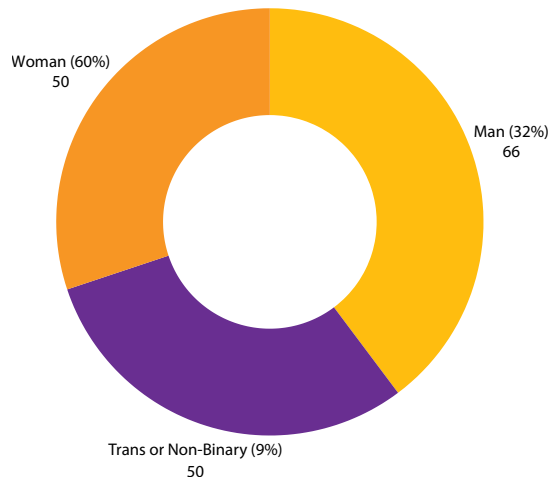
Average Overall Security by Age



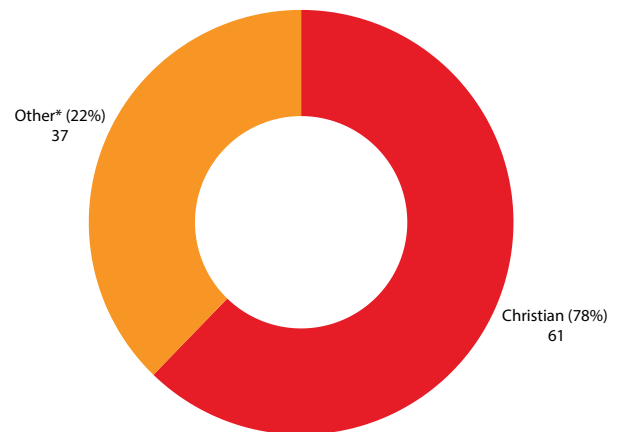
Average Overall Security by Ethnic Background



Average Overall Security by Gender



Average Overall Security by Spirituality



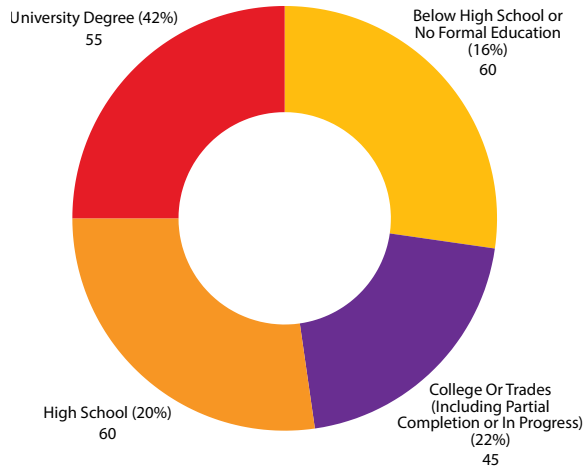
* Other includes African traditional/Indigenous spirituality, other spirituality, Jewish, Atheist, Agnostic, and Muslim.

Average Overall Security by Sexual Orientation

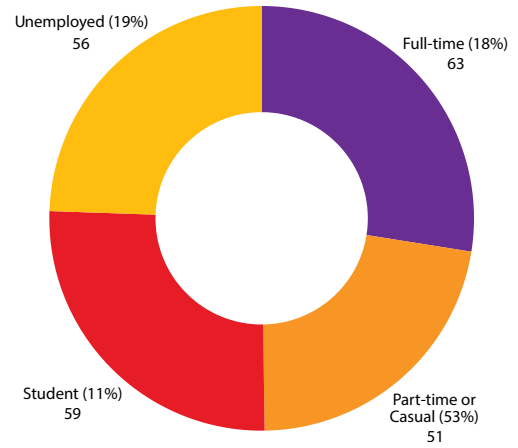


Education & Employment

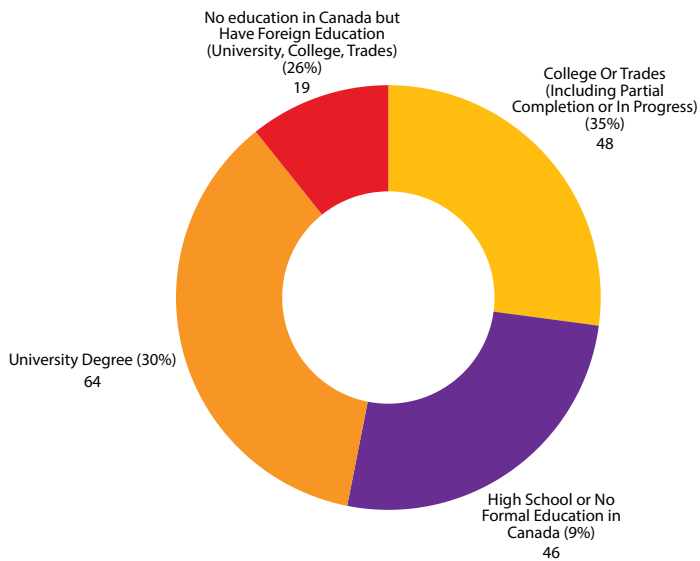
Highest Level of Education Outside of
Canada



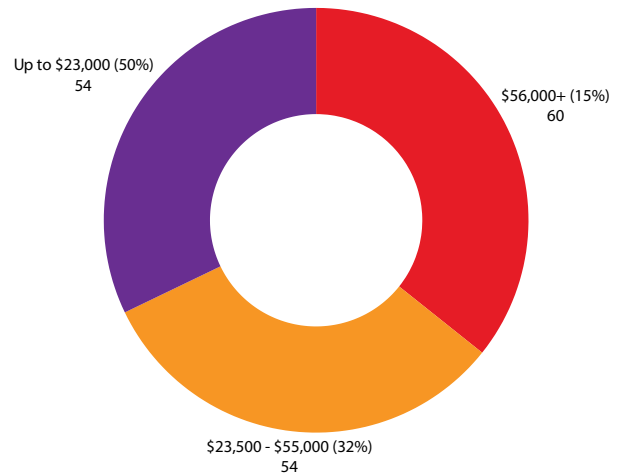
Employment Status



Highest Level of Education Inside of
Canada

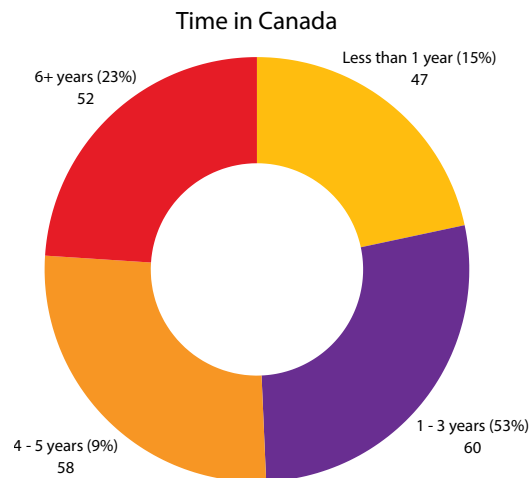
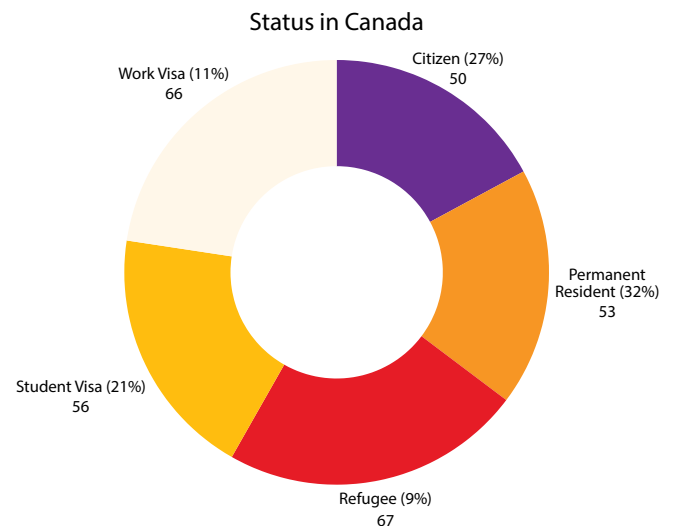
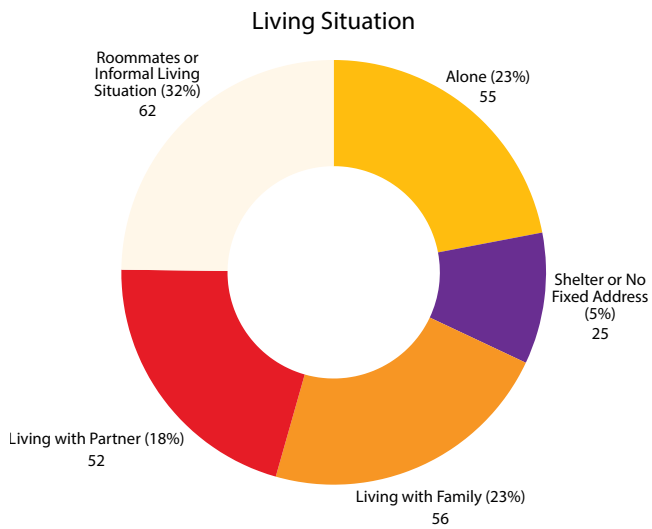


Income



* Other includes African traditional/Indigenous spirituality, other spirituality, Jewish, Atheist, Agnostic, and Muslim.

Housing & Status in Canada



Gender Profiles

Key Highlights:

- Data on trans or non-binary respondents was sparse. Trans or non-binary respondents typically the same security scores as women, both lower than men. Women typically had the lowest average level of security than other respondents, across most identifiers.
- Women were in lower income brackets than men with only 15% working full time, almost half that of men.
- More women reported earning their university degrees in Canada than men. However, nearly half of men earned their university degrees outside of Canada.
- Women living with their partner had nearly the same average security score as women living in shelters (39 and 33 respectively). Women had higher average security scores if they lived with roommates. This may indicate that women respondents experienced strong stressors while living with partners and felt more secure living with roommates. However, while there was an improvement in security for women living alone, the low scores may indicate challenges. Conversely, men who lived with their partner had the highest average security score (73) compared to other living arrangements. These results may indicate that women respondents felt more secure with higher levels of autonomy.

	Gender Profile Summary		
	Man	Woman	Trans/Non-Binary
Age	Men in the youngest (18-20) and oldest (27-29) age groups reported the highest levels of security, at 78 and 75, respectively. Men aged 21-23 and 24-26 had scores of 64 and 47, respectively.	Unlike men, the younger and older age groups had the lowest security scores, at 34 and 46, respectively.	Younger trans or non-binary respondents had higher security scores than older trans or non-binary respondents.
Sexual Orientation	Of the 17 who identified as 2SLGBTQIA+, 42% were men. Compared to straight men (72), 2SLGBTQIA+ men had scores of 64.	Of the 17 who identified as 2SLGBTQIA+, 35% were women. 2SLGBTQIA+ women had very low security scores of 43, compared to 51 for straight women.	Eighty (80%) percent identified as 2SLGBTQIA+ whose average security score was 50.

Ethnic Background	Sixty-seven percent (67%) of men were African whose average security score was 75, compared to 49 for other ethnicities.	Seventy-one percent (71%) of women were African whose average security score was 49 – slightly lower than other ethnicities (51).	Most trans or non-binary respondents were Caribbean or African and other nationality (80%) who average security score was 48.
Highest Level of Education Outside of Canada	Fifty percent (50%) had university degrees. Degree holders had an average security score of 71, lower than high school educated (78).	Foreign post-secondary educated women had lower security scores than other women. Forty-three percent (43%) had university degrees. Degree holders had an average security score of 44. The 23% who had college or trades education has low scores of 42.	Most respondents (50%) did not finish high school or had no formal education outside of Canada.
Highest Level of Education Inside of Canada	The most common level of education in Canada was college or trades (39%). There were 22% who had university education.	Women who had foreign post-secondary education had nearly as low security (45) as women in college or trades (44). Women who had a Canadian university education had the highest security among women at 64.	The majority of respondents (80%) were in or had completed post-secondary education in Canada.
Employment Status	Half (50%) of men were employed part time or casual, followed by full time (28%). Unemployed men had higher average security scores (83).	Over half (53%) of women were employed part time or casual, followed by unemployed time (18%). Full-time employed women (15%) had higher average security scores (62). Unemployed women had very low security at 39).	The majority (60%) worked part-time or casual.

Income	Forty-seven percent (47%) of men made up to \$23,000 a year. Twenty-nine percent (29%) made \$23,500-55,000. The highest earning men had the lowest average security scores, with those earning \$56,000+ having a score of 51.	Most women earned up to \$23,000 a year (53%), followed by \$23,500-55,000 (37%). Higher earning women had higher average security scores (67).	The majority (80%) made at least \$23,500 a year.
Living Situation	Thirty-three percent (33%) of women were living with roommates or in an informal living situation and had the lowest scores among men at 62. Men living with their partners had the highest security at 73.	Twenty-six percent (26%) of women lived with roommates. Likewise, 26% lived with family. Women who lived with their partners had low scores of 39. Women who lived alone also had fairly low security at 48.	Most (60%) lived with roommates.

Sexual Orientation Profile

Key Highlights:

- A greater proportion of 2SLGBTQIA+ respondents had acquired post-secondary education outside and within Canada. However, wherever the source, 2SLGBTQIA+ respondents with a college or trade education reported very low average security scores (30-40). This may indicate that 2SLGBTQIA+ in these fields experience stressors that decrease their feeling of security.
- A greater proportion of 2SLGBTQIA+ were in higher income ranges than straight respondents. However, lower income 2SLGBTQIA+ respondents had significantly lower average security scores (43) than lower income straight respondents (58). This may indicate that having lower income and being 2SLGBTQIA+ have compounding effects on feeling secure.
- 2SLGBTQIA+ respondents had higher rates of labour participation (82%) than straight respondents (63).
- 2SLGBTQIA+ respondents reported higher average security scores when they lived alone (67) followed by living with roommates (57). This may indicate that 2SLGBTQIA+ respondents have fewer options for other living arrangements so they feel secure. This may indicate that 2SLGBTQIA+ respondents have fewer options for other living arrangements so they feel secure.

	Sexual Orientation Summary	
	Straight	2SLGBTQIA+
Age	There was a fairly even distribution of straight men. On average their security scores were 56.	Most 2SLGBTQIA+ respondents were aged 27-29 (65%). Younger respondents had higher average security scores reaching 64 for those aged 21-23 and the lowest being 52 (aged 27-29).
Highest Level of Education Outside of Canada	Post-secondary educated men had lower average scores than other education levels.	2SLGBTQIA+ respondents tended to be more educated with 36% having a university degree, followed by college or trades (35%). However, college or trade educated 2SLGBTQIA+ respondents had a very low average security score at 30, while university educated had 70.
Highest Level of Education Inside of Canada	Canadian university degree holders had security scores of 60 whereas college or trades educated straights had scores of 59. At 53, straight men for foreign credentials had relatively low scores.	Most 2SLGBTQIA+ respondents received post-secondary education in Canada. Fifty-three (53%) percent had a college or trades education followed by university education (24%). Like those educated outside of Canada, university degree holders had high scores at 75. Likewise, college or trades educated respondents had low scores at 40.
Employment Status	Among straight respondents, 55% worked part-time or casual and 8% worked full time. Full-time workers had the highest security at 67.	Over half (53%) of 2SLGBTQIA+ respondents worked part-time or casual, followed by 29% working full-time. Only 18% were students or unemployed. Part-time or casual workers had low scores at 44, compared to full-time workers (66).

Income	Most straight respondents (61%) earned up to \$23,000 a year, followed by \$23,500-55,000 (30%).	2SLGBTQIA+ respondents were higher earning with 41% earning \$23,500-55,000 and 24% earning \$56,000+. Across income levels, 2SLGBTQIA+ had higher average scores than straights. However, those earning up to \$23,000, had average scores of 43 (compared to 58 for straights).
Living Situation	One-third of straight respondents lived with roommates, followed by living with their partner (21%). Straight respondents who lived alone (24%) has the lowest security at 48.	Eighteen percent (18%) of 2SLGBTQIA+ respondents lived in a shelter or had no fixed address. These respondents had very low security at 25. Among 2SLGBTQIA+ respondents, the most secure were those living alone (67) or living with roommates (57).

Income Profile

Key Highlights:

- Part-time or casual employment was the most common for those with incomes below \$56,000.
- For those earning below \$23,000 a year, living with others such as roommates or family reported having higher overall security than those living alone. The largest proportion (46%) of those earning below \$23,000 a year lived with roommates and had a security score of 62. While those who lived with family had similar levels of security, only 20% did so. This may indicate that those earning below \$23,000 a year have fewer options to live with family.
- Respondents earning more than \$23,500 a year had the highest security scores if they lived alone. This may indicate that as income rise, so does the ability to afford more autonomous living arrangement. Subsequently, living with others increases security for those with lower incomes due to affordability challenges.
- Respondents who identified as African only were more concentrated in lower income brackets (\$55,000 or below) but reported higher levels of security than other ethnicities.

	Income Profile Summary		
	Up to \$23,000	\$23,500 - \$55,000	\$56,000+
Age	The majority of respondents were aged 24+ (54%) and had average security scores of 52.	Most respondents (83%) were over 24 years old.	Most respondents (88%) were over 24 years old. Respondents had the highest average scores.
Sexual Orientation	Nearly one-quarter of respondents were 2SLGBTQIA+ and how significantly lower (43) security than straight respondents (58).	Thirty-eight percent (38%) of responses were 2SLGBTQIA+ and had a score of 56, which was higher than straight respondents (51).	Half (50%) of responses were 2SLGBTQIA+ and had a score of 65, on par with straights (67).
Ethnic Background	Most (73%) of this income bracket were African and had higher security scores than other ethnicities (59 vs 42).	Half (50%) of responses were African and had average scores of 59 (vs 49).	This is the only income bracket where Africans (55) had lower average scores than other ethnicities (66).
Highest Level of Education Outside of Canada	In this income bracket, 36% of respondents had university degrees. High school educated respondents reported the highest scores at 61.	University degree holders had the highest security scores at 61.	Most (75%) of respondents had university degrees.
Highest Level of Education Inside of Canada	Post-secondary educated students had nearly the same security, with college or trades being 55 and university being 53.	Forty-four (44%) percent of respondents completed university in Canada.	Half (50%) of respondents completed university in Canada.

Employment Status	The majority (69%) of respondents worked part-time, or casual followed by 19% being unemployed.	The majority (56%) of respondents worked part-time, or casual, followed by 28% working full-time.	The majority (63%) of respondents worked full-time, followed by 25% working part-time, or casual.
Living Situation	One-quarter (23%) of respondents lived alone. Forty-six (46%) lived with roommates. Those who lived with roommates had the highest security score (62) whereas those who lived alone had scores of 48.	The distribution of housing types was fairly even in this income bracket. However, those who lived alone (28%) had the highest security score at 67.	This income bracket had the highest average security score (61) across income levels.

Levels of Safety & Security

Key Highlights:

- Employment and income were the most significant stressors among respondents. However, the disparity among trans or nonbinary and non-heterosexual respondents was large. Respondents who were not solely African (e.g., African Canadian) also experienced large disparities.

Summary:

- Over fifty percent (50%) of respondents reported feeling very or somewhat safe or secure consistently across the different domains. The outliers are connection to black resources (48%) and employment (39%).
- Respondents tended to feel somewhat or very safe or secure in the social-oriented domains. This domain includes personal and family relationships, and social networks. A similar pattern was found for physical and spiritual health.
- Employment was the lowest scoring domain with 34% of respondents feeling somewhat or very unsafe or insecure.
- Thirty-three percent (33%) of respondents felt very safe or secure in their housing, followed by 37% feeling somewhat safe or secure. Only 16% felt somewhat or very unsafe or insecure.

- Respondents felt more negatively about their income security. Forty-five percent (45%) of respondents felt neutral about their income, followed by 34% who felt somewhat or very unsafe or insecure. This is aligned with the insecurity felt by respondents about their employment. Therefore, income and employment were the biggest stressors towards feelings of unsafe-ness or insecurity.
- Thirty-seven percent (37%) of respondents felt somewhat safe or secure in their social support followed by 37% who were neutral.
- Trans or non-binary respondents had higher rates of feeling somewhat or very unsafe or insecure across every domain. The margin between these respondents and other genders was very large in most domains. However, all respondents shared similar rates of negative feelings about employment (29-40%).
 - Sixty percent (60%) of trans or nonbinary respondents felt that their housing and income were somewhat or very unsafe or insecure. Therefore, trans and nonbinary respondents experienced the significant housing precarity compared to men and women, at over 5 times the rate.
 - All genders felt precarious about their income. This is aligned with respondents feeling negatively towards their employment security. Trans and nonbinary respondents experienced income precarity at double the rate of other genders.
 - Zero percent (0%) of men felt precarious about their social supports. However, women (16%) and trans or nonbinary (40%) respondents did not feel safe or secure about their social supports.
- Compared to Africans, respondents who identified as Caribbean or African and other nationality (e.g., African Canadian), had more negative feelings across all domains. The relative margin between ethnic identities was the highest for physical health (25% vs 3%) and education (11% vs 3%). Employment was consistent among respondents who shared similar rates of negative feelings (31-40%).
 - Compared to Africans, respondents of other ethnic backgrounds felt insecure or unsafe about their housing at over four times the rate (30%).
 - Like employment, all ethnic backgrounds felt insecure or unsafe about their income. However, other ethnic backgrounds experienced significantly higher rates of precarity.
- Across most domains, 2SLGBTQIA+ respondents had higher rates of insecurity. The largest relative margins were physical health, spiritual health, education, and connection to Black cultural programming and local communities. Respondents felt insecure (29-38%) about their employment.
 - Compared to straight respondents, 2SLGBTQIA+ respondents experienced over four times more precarity (29%). Further, 2SLGBTQIA+ respondents experienced significantly more precarity in income (44%).
- Employment and income were the most common factors which inhibited feeling fully safe or secure at 86% and 82%, respectively. This is aligned with results from the Likert-style questions. Interestingly, mental health was third place (65%) for the inhibiting factor. In the Likert-style questions, only around one-fifth to one-quarter reported feeling very or somewhat unsafe or insecure about their mental health.

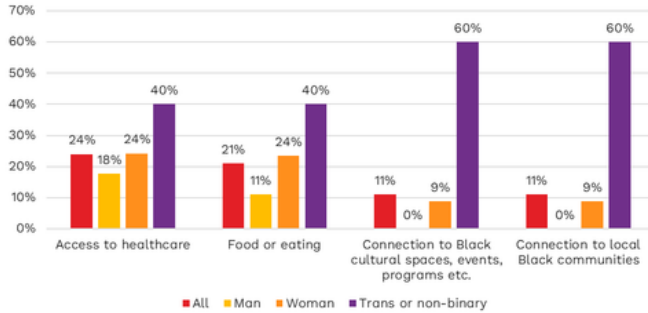
	Level of Safety & Security			
	Very Safe or Secure	Somewhat Safe or Secure	It Depends, Changes, or is Neutral	Somewhat or Very Unsafe or Insecure
Age		The majority of respondents were aged 24+ (54%) and had average security scores of 52.	Most respondents (83%) were over 24 years old.	Most respondents (88%) were over 24 years old. Respondents had the highest average scores.
How safe or secure do you feel within the last year when accessing...				
Healthcare	20%	31%	25%	24%
Food or Eating	30%	25%	25%	21%
Connection to Black cultural spaces, events, programs, etc.	21%	36%	32%	11%
Connection to local Black communities	27%	29%	34%	11%
Connection to local Black resources	18%	30%	36%	16%

	Very Safe or Secure	Somewhat Safe or Secure	It Depends, Changes, or is Neutral	Somewhat or Very Unsafe or Insecure
How safe or secure do you feel within the last year when accessing...				
Connection to your African, Caribbean, and or Black culture(s), traditions, and ways of thinking, being, and living	21%	39%	25%	14%
Education	36%	36%	22%	5%
Employment	9%	30%	27%	34%
Mental Health	16%	38%	25%	21%
Personal relationships	39%	41%	13%	7%
Physical health	33%	37%	19%	11%

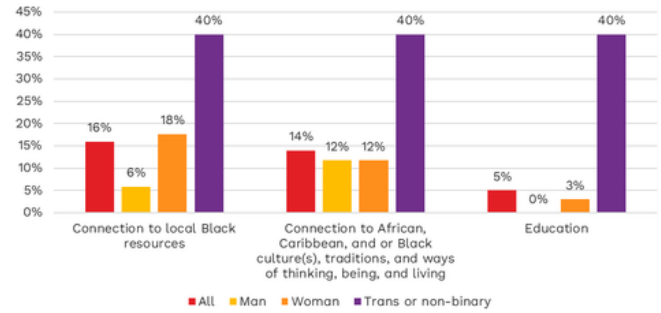
	Very Safe or Secure	Somewhat Safe or Secure	It Depends, Changes, or is Neutral	Somewhat or Very Unsafe or Insecure
How safe or secure do you feel within the last year when accessing...				
Relationship with family	45%	34%	14%	7%
Social networks	20%	36%	29%	15%
Spiritual health	32%	39%	21%	9%
On a scale of 1-5, I felt Safe or Secure within in the last year in...				
My housing feels safe or secure	33%	37%	14%	16%
My income feels safe or secure	4%	17%	45%	34%
My social support feels safe or secure	13%	37%	37%	13%

Safety & Security Continued

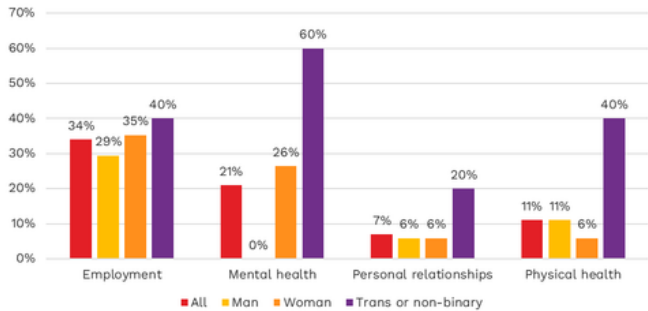
Proportion Who Felt Somewhat Or Very Unsafe or Insecure - Gender



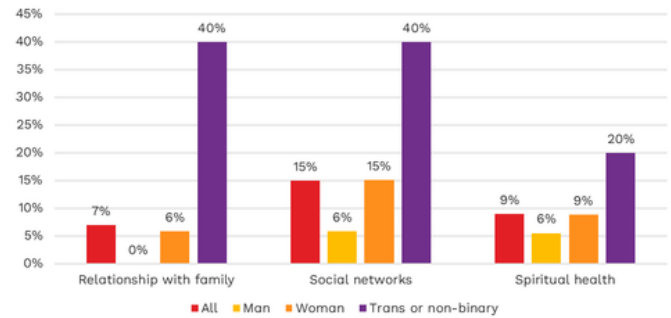
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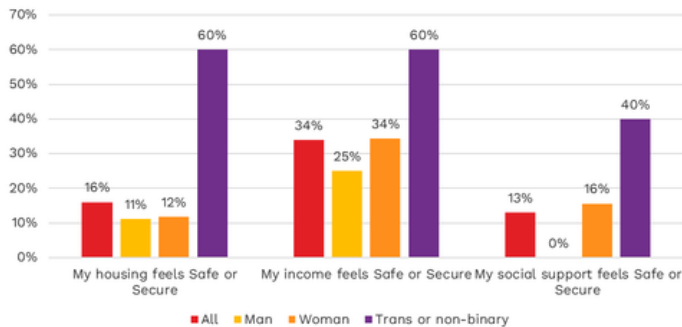
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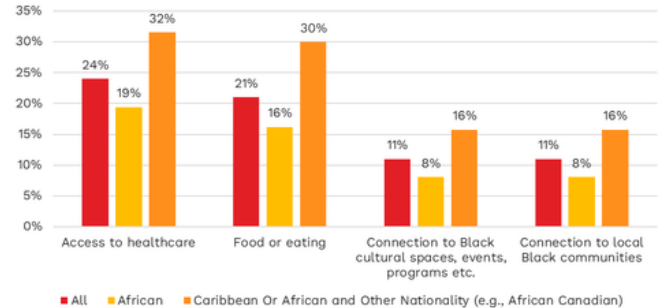
Proportion Who Felt Somewhat Or Very Unsafe or Insecure - Gender



Proportion Who Felt Somewhat Or Very Unsafe or Insecure - Gender

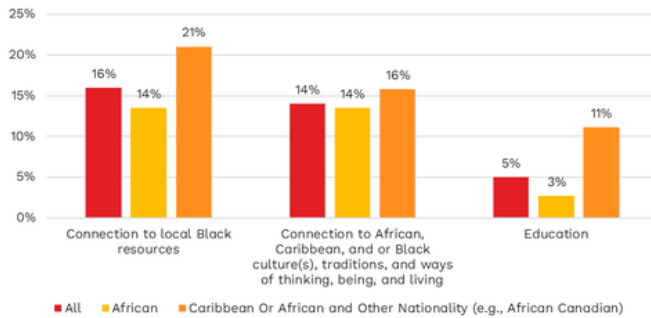


Proportion Who Felt Somewhat Or Very Unsafe or Insecure - Ethnicity

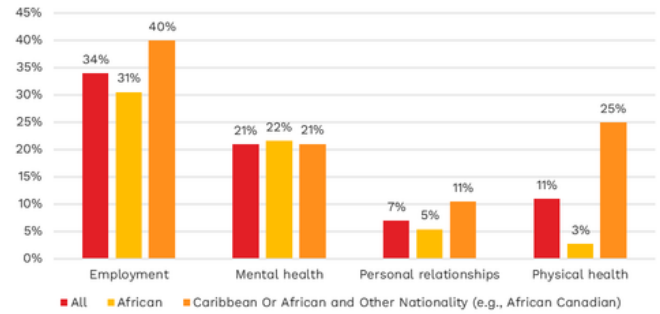


Safety & Security Continued

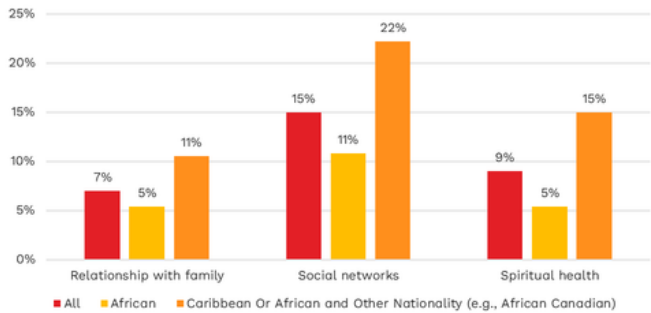
Proportion Who Felt Somewhat Or Very Unsafe Insecure - Ethnicity



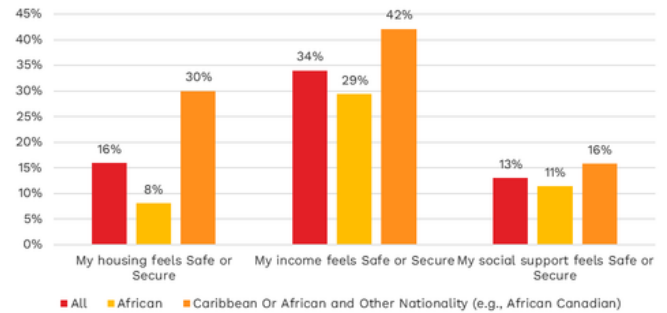
Proportion Who Felt Somewhat Or Very Unsafe Insecure - Ethnicity



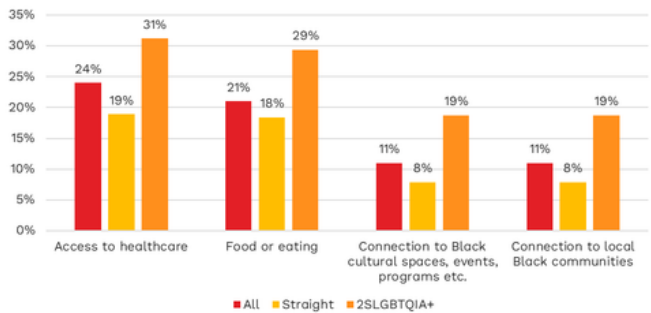
Proportion Who Felt Somewhat Or Very Unsafe Insecure - Ethnicity



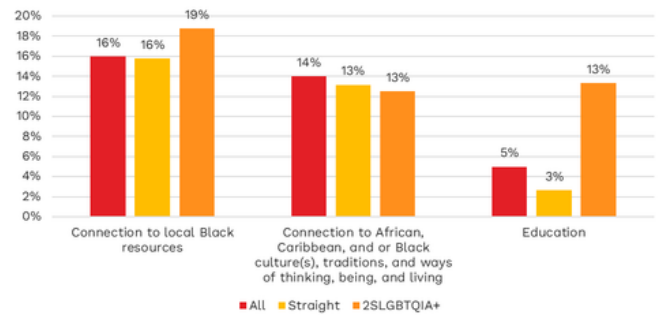
Proportion Who Felt Somewhat Or Very Unsafe Insecure - Ethnicity



Proportion Who Felt Somewhat Or Very Unsafe or Insecure - Sexual Orientation

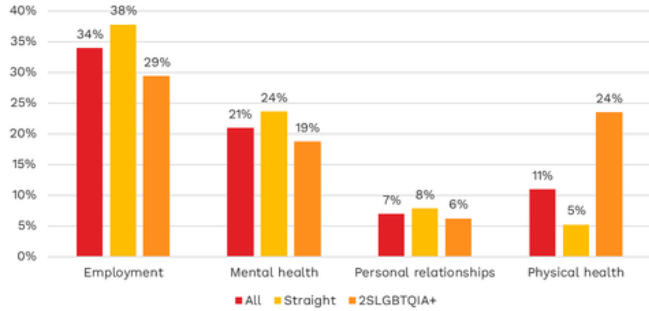


Proportion Who Felt Somewhat Or Very Unsafe or Insecure - Sexual Orientation

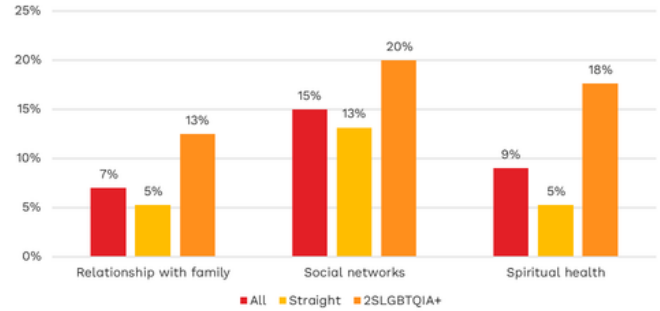


Safety & Security Continued

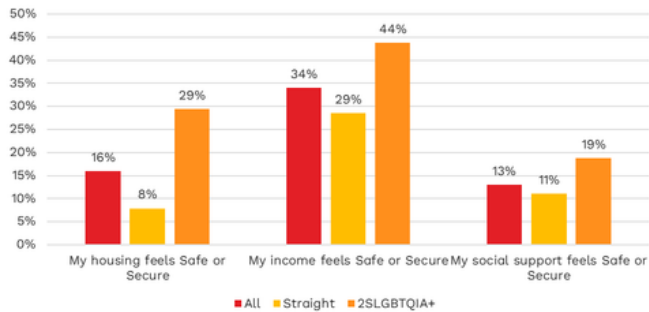
Proportion Who Felt Somewhat Or Very Unsafe or Insecure - Sexual Orientation



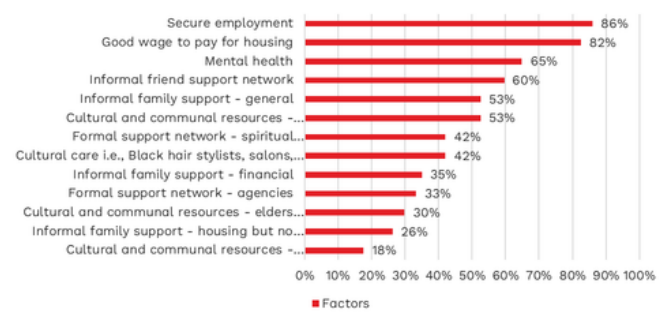
Proportion Who Felt Somewhat Or Very Unsafe or Insecure - Sexual Orientation



Proportion Who Felt Somewhat Or Very Unsafe or Insecure - Sexual Orientation



Factors Contributing to Feeling Fully Safe or Secure (n=57)



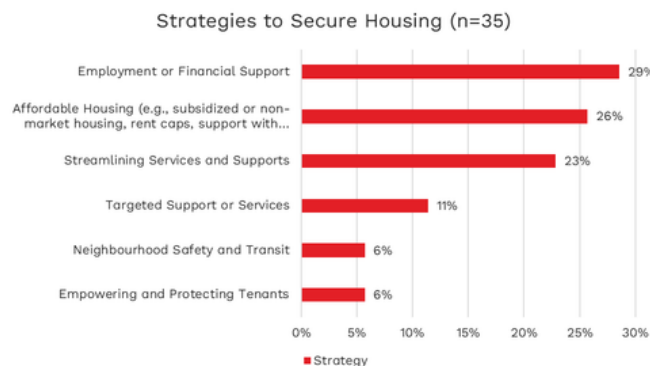
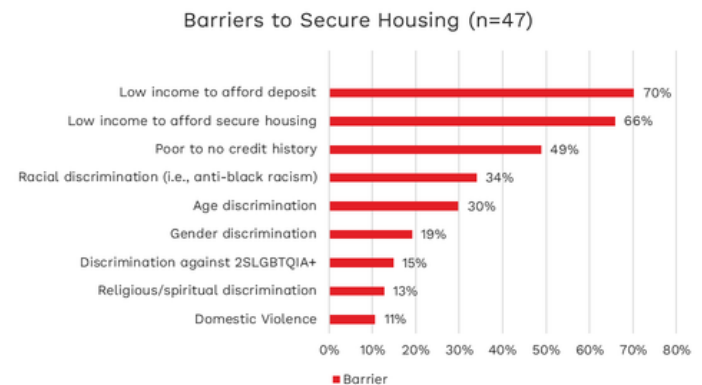
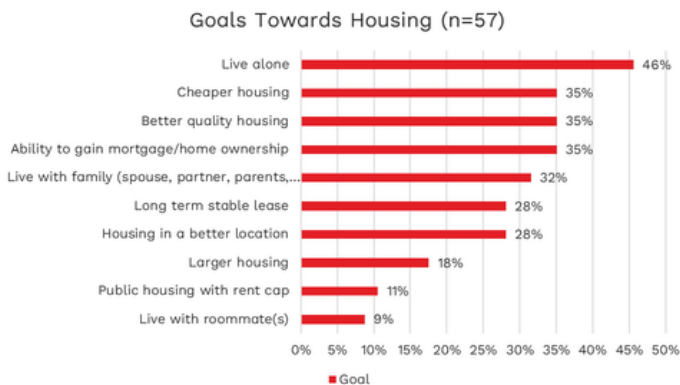
Challenges to Accessing Safe & Secure Housing

Key Highlights

- Income and employment were the most challenging barriers to secure housing among respondents. Subsequently, respondents cited income and financial support as what they need to achieve better outcomes.
- Access to affordable and high-quality housing were important for respondents. This may imply that many respondents settled or inadequate living housing arrangements due to cost, income, and employment precarity.

Summary

- Living alone (46%) and accessing good and affordable housing (35%) were the most common housing goals among respondents.
- The most common barriers for respondents to secure housing are all income or financial related (49-70%). This is aligned with other findings from other similar questions. Respondents also described discrimination as being barriers to accessing secure housing. Thirty-four percent (34%) cited racial discrimination, 30% cited age discrimination, 19% cited gender discrimination, 15% cited discrimination against 2SLGBTQIA+, and 14% cited religious discrimination. Eleven percent (11%) cited domestic violence (e.g., family, spousal) as barriers.
- For types of changes to enable safer, stable, and dignified housing, 29% required employment or financial support. Following was 28% who required support to acquire and maintain affordable housing. Thirdly, 28% would benefit from streamlining support and services.





Interview & Focus Group Findings

Participant Demographics

Criteria for selecting project participants was Black youth ages 18-29 who live in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Interview participants were predominantly African newcomers with at least 5 international students, namely Nigerian and Ghanaian. Of those who shared their age, interviewed participants ranged from 21-28 and described settling in Canada for less than 5 years. It is important to note that the gender, if participants identified as women, men, or were gender diverse or sexuality, whether participants identified as 2SLGBTQIA, were not disclosed.

When interviewed participants were asked if other aspects of their identity impacted their housing, almost all answered no. However, gender, class, and immigration status were woven into other answers that indicated that there may be intersectional factors that impacted their housing experience. 2SLGBTQIA+ identities and experiences were not spoken about by the Black youth interview participants. Service providers interviewed during focus groups shared that newcomers are not comfortable discussing their Queerness or sexuality/sexual experiences in relation to housing.

Supporting Black housing experiences are the 16 focus group participants who shared their professional and personal experiences in housing support services during individual or focus group interviews.

They were a mixture of Black—namely African and Caribbean, and non-Black staff. Service agency participants were made up of frontline workers, settlement agency practitioners, instructors, and newcomer Queer support group facilitators.

Strengths & Limitations of Qualitative Collections

The qualitative portion of this project offers a rich snapshot of some of the current realities of Black youth living in Edmonton. This project attracted and engaged mostly African newcomers and international students of predominantly West African backgrounds.

Given this specific background engaged, the qualitative data captured through this project reflects African, newcomer, and international student experiences. Further research is needed to know if and how this research contrasts or compares with other Black youth and Black Edmontonians in general by actively targeting differing marginalities, such as Black 2SLGBTQIA+, disabled, and neurodiverse populations. Despite this limitation, the experiences and recommendations gained will still benefit other Black young peoples.

Describing Black Housing Experiences in Canada

Participants interviewed identified living with (2-5) roommates in either apartments, basement suites, or student housing in Edmonton. Most of these participants desired to have less roommates or live alone—especially once they had a better job or school ended. Interviewed participants described moving often: almost all shared that they originally lived elsewhere before moving to Edmonton. A handful of participants first moved in with their relatives or currently live with relatives.

Listed in descending order of prevalence, interview participants disclosed living in the North, South, Downtown, West, East, and close to or on campus; others were non-disclosed. Monthly rent for interviewed participants ranged from \$500-1500 with utilities sometimes included while others were surprised at needing to pay additional costs for Wi-Fi and garbage pickup. Only 2/30 interviewed participants mentioned staying in shelters; one expressed this as a traumatic experience, while the other noted the shelter would be backup/last resort, if needed.

Housing Successes & Resiliencies

A range of physical, cultural, and psychological successes were described by interview participants. With their current roommates, most participants valued good communication, mutual respect, and cleanliness. Some participants also noted good communication with their landlords.

Others noted virtual supports as helpful and good government infrastructure, such as consistent waste management, access to buses, funding, and student residences were identified as benefits to housing in Edmonton. Those living on campus appreciated the convenience of living close to their necessities and the security of multiple door locks and needing to scan an ID to get in.

Resiliencies were apparent in local and back home familial support, who co-signed leases, helped with damage deposits, and loans, as shared by Black youth and service provider staff. Familial connections in Edmonton helped at least 2 youth who were able to stay with their family when coming to Edmonton, such as an uncle or cousin, but this was a challenge because they were too far away from campus or other community assets. Two other participants noted local family friends or cousins of family back home who assisted them with finding housing in Edmonton. Participants also described the ability to lean on friends of shared cultural backgrounds, their culture, faith, and personal strengths and interests. Cultural-specific resiliency was noted for the Caribbean cultures, as a focus group participant stated that Caribbean cultures have stigma against receiving formal support for housing or income, instead relying on themselves or family networks for support, information, etc. Those specific communities may not know of resources available or see themselves as eligible.

Housing Challenges

The most common stressor for interview participants was not making enough money and barriers to employment. Participants equally spoke about the uncertainty of finding housing accommodations in a city they did not know.

Shared challenges amongst international students were high tuition fees, rent and other costs, while only being permitted to work 20 hours a week as an international student. A couple of participants addressed the challenge of moving out of their family home despite cultural expectations of staying home until marriage. Despite facing challenges of not knowing the housing system and related services, they found housing through online searching, and word-of-mouth through cousins, soft family ties, co-workers, or other students.

Barriers to Comprehensive Safety

Safety was described in the physical, psychological, and cultural sense.

Interview participants spoke of a lack of privacy or not feeling control over who their roommates were on campus. Some participants described having to deal with mice and roaches in their homes. Participants noticed that living in areas with mostly immigrants was unsafe and labelled as “the ghetto” and raised concerns of unsafety when living in neighbourhoods with houseless populations to access cheaper rent.

In addition, interview participants spoke to landlord insecurities, feeling uncertain that their landlord could increase rent, sell or evict from their home. They did not feel control or secure.

Psychological safety in relation to housing was being impacted by landlord uncertainties and issues that could impact their access to housing. Examples included a lack of clarity of overall housing processes, such as providing references, credit checks, and deposits; the landlord selling their property as well as the landlord and or their family living on the same property.

Intersectional Housing Challenges

While the project aimed to provide an intersectional examination of discrimination with the inclusion of gender, sexuality, etc. in addition to race and class, interview participants did not explicitly disclose their gender or sex. A couple of participants who were women spoke about their parents feeling safer that they lived on campus with roommates of the same gender. Black youth participants raised challenges of living with roommates who were not African and therefore did not understand the hours it took to cook African food.

All 30 interview participants voiced that they did not experience explicit racial or other types of discrimination related to housing. However, some interview participants described racial discrimination, such as cases where roommates not wanting to share common space with them, they suspected because they're Black, roommates not wanting to share bathrooms and being perceived and treated as “dirty”, the refusal to be rented when arriving for a walk through, and landlords requesting additional requirements despite being eligible to rent. They also spoke about landlords looking for a specific gender, and being denied public housing.

Outside of, but related to housing discrimination, participants discussed discrimination in employment e.g., retail and everyday life like going to store or service like nail salons. One participant talked about roommate challenges as an international student with another Black Diaspora student.

General challenges to housing were related to learning a new system and facing the stigma of accessing support services or even asking for help, unawareness of tenant rights and landlord responsibilities. When there was support, participants specified that barriers were faced with a 5-year limit for newcomer support and resources being more available for people with kids, pregnant people, and shelters. Personal barriers included time management between work and school, inconsistent hours for work, access to transportation to look at housing options, barriers to accessing references, bank statements.

Black Definitions of Safe, Secure, and Dignified Housing

Safe, secure, and dignified housing was defined by interview and focus group participants as physically, culturally, and psychologically safe.

A physically safe home

Increased physical safety was of critical importance to all 30 participants interviewed. Participants described physical safety as having the ability to lock the doors of their rooms to protect their personal space from visitors, surveillance in apartment hallways, a security app with all entrance doors locked, and security guards.

Felt physical safety also meant the ability to not have to share common spaces, such as the kitchen and bathrooms. Relatedly, cleanliness of their living environments was also noted. Participants who live in basement suites mentioned needing better lighting. And lastly, physical safety included having landlords who would fix their concerns.

With respect to neighbourhood safety, living close to public transportation, schools, and parks were identified as an indicator of a good and safe neighbourhood. Policing in neighbourhoods was identified by some as creating fear. Safe neighbourhoods were noted as priorities but sacrificed for cheaper rent.

A culturally safe home

Cultural safety was not always explicitly defined by participants. However, almost every participant identified the importance of their roommates understanding and respecting the time that African cultural food takes to make. While some participants described the importance of having African or Black roommates and neighbours for a shared sense of cultural background, Others noted preferring more multicultural roommate situations that allowed them to learn from new experiences, such as sharing different food. Regardless, Black youth expressed wanting good communication within their roommate experience, shared standards and clear communication through conflict and support.

Generally, interview participants described that they valued roommates or neighbours who would check in on them. They also found great importance in cultural community events.

A psychologically safe home

Psychological safety was defined by interview participants as free from worry, conflict, and discrimination, as well as reciprocal in respect and living responsibilities. Not having to stress about increasing rent, evictions, and the ability to be themselves were important influences of their psychological safety. Access to counsellors and mentors who understood their experiences of racism. Community spaces where Black people can talk about stress, life, racism.

Findings Summary

In summary, this project responds to the racial, economic, social, and cultural challenges that Black youth face when trying to access stable housing in Edmonton. In addition to navigating the immigration process as newcomers or international students, participants described employment barriers and financial challenges, experiences of isolation while living in individual-centered housing arrangements as opposed to a collective-minded homes and emphasized the importance of living in more culturally safe homes and neighbourhoods.

Experiences of housing discrimination are described by participants as anti-Black racism when searching for housing options, from non-Black roommates who refuse to share living quarters, newcomer discrimination from African Diaspora who have spent longer in Canada. Despite the challenges in accessing safe, secure, and stable housing faced by Black youth in Edmonton, they have resiliently obtained housing using several strategies. Living with other roommates of similar predicaments, they access housing needs (from roommates to leases) with the support of family and friends both locally and back home.



Recommendations & Further Research

Recommendations for Safe, Stable, & Secure Housing in Edmonton

This section captures the recommendations Black interview participants and service providers identified as recommendations to strengthen housing and housing supports for Black across Edmonton.

Affordable & Subsidized Housing

Black youth advocated for affordable housing in Edmonton. This included subsidized housing for students, particularly international students. Individual participants and service providers raised issues with not being eligible or waiting long periods to access Cvida, a public housing organization. Other housing initiatives such as co-ops or housing first agencies were not mentioned. Interview participants stressed the need for more access to employment opportunities, income support for increased housing support, and grace periods for students.

Focus group participants mentioned Black youth, particularly Queer youth could benefit from networks for established community members as landlords or “opening their doors” while youth get settled. This ensures acceptance and culturally-informed living situations. However, with no financial supports attached, this can burnout informal, community-based networks.

Housing Information Guide and Directory

A common challenge communicated by individual participants was finding housing in the midst of the countless options. To support this challenge, they suggested a Black student housing directory so that Black youth could find roommates, community members, friends, and mentors. The directory should also dedicate a section to neighbourhoods that offer affordable housing, vetted housing including furnished places, student housing options, a breakdown of the rental market, where to access used furniture, and organizations that assist with securing housing prior to, or upon arriving to Edmonton. Service provider staff interviewed supported this stating that education around the housing system is critical for Black youth and Black newcomers in general.

A critical part of this directory is an information guide that outlines the basics of housing in Edmonton and Canada. Participants spoke to the importance of being briefed on the fact that apartments are not readily furnished, utilities are not included, an awareness of landlord standards and expectations as well as tenant rights, the requirements from landlords, such as a damage deposit, reference checks, etc. Suggestions were also made for an app, website, and or social media-based resource of the above recommendations.

Black & Newcomer Housing Resources

Interview participants emphasized the importance of having housing resources that specifically serve the unique needs of Black newcomers and international students. Service provider staff identified that these needs included resources that are not limited by immigrant status eligibility, Black specific emergency housing supports, financial literacy education, culturally informed life skills support (such as cooking classes), and social spaces for Black international students both on and off campus. Existing resources should be publicized widely as participants shared that they found out too late. Housing resources and other supports should not be tied to immigration eligibility, so sustained support can be provided.

In addition to resources, Black youth and housing service providers raised the need for access to Black housing advocates. They described these advocates and mentors, as individuals who understood and related to their cultural background and needs, but are not ‘overlapping what worked at home here’ (December 15, interview). They expressed wanting community mentorship that understands the intersections of Black culture with Canadian experience.

Communal Housing Options

From the ability to “borrow salt” from one another to exchanging a listening ear to fellow neighbours, interview participants described the importance of a community or collective feel to housing as ways that would help them feel they belonged. They noted the Canadian living was not friendly nor community-based the way they were used to, and they found that lonely.

They understood that here, people will not just come into your house or stop by for a visit. One participant poetically mentioned missing the community sounds, the particular way of people being in the street and feeling part of a community in a passive way. Canada in contrast would be very quiet, with most neighbourhoods not getting enough foot traffic or people not actively living outside expect the occasional summer meal.

Online Outreach

Describing the need for online-specific resources and outreach, Black youth participants expressed the importance of being able to search for information through their phones, social media channels, apps, and the internet.

This could be extended to outreach for social gatherings, WhatsApp, or other text-based groups that allow Black youth to connect, meet and share information.

Further Research

Data findings could be contextualize using Statistics Canada data and other literature to better understand the experiences of Black youth in Edmonton. Further research is recommended to comparatively understand Black youth housing experiences in other Canadian municipalities. Policy and program successes and current programs that match recommendations can also be further explored, such as social programs and youth-specific housing programs that exist.

Conclusion

This research project was undertaken to understand the housing experiences of African, Caribbean and Black youth in Edmonton. The project identified Black youth requiring greater income to secure housing. Their goals are to live alone, with most currently living with roommates in apartments, student residencies, and basement suites.

Most youth did not express their race or other identities directly impacting their housing. However, some participants identified discrimination in cases such as, roommates not wanting to share common spaces or landlords asking for additional information once meeting them in person. Other identities impacted Black youth housing when Black women expressed wanting all same-gender accommodation or feeling roommates would treat them with more respect if men, or to have more freedom from parental expectations. Survey participants who had completed university, worked full time, were Christian, men, and African expressed higher feelings of insecurity. Citizens and permanent residents experienced lower security than Refugees or recent immigrants. Residents who have been in Canada longer experienced declining security. Employment and income were the most significant stressors among respondents. However, the disparity among trans or nonbinary and non-heterosexual respondents was large.

LGBTQIA+ perspectives did not surface within the Black youth interviews. Survey participants, however, noted having access to less income and housing security. Focus groups with settlement agency workers also noted greater vulnerability for Black Queer newcomer youth where there may not be acceptance from their family members and limited support in Canada. Black youth defined safe and dignified housing and ideal housing goals as follows:

- Physical safety in neighbourhoods resourced with close amenities, public transportation, schools and children with multiple points of physical security and access to personal space.
- Cultural safety with roommates and neighbours who understand that African foods take time within common spaces, shared identity and cultural norms, traditions, and thoughts.
- Psychological safety is defined as a worry and conflict free living situation that is based on respect and stability with roommates and their landlord. This also includes access to mentors, counsellors, and other professionals, who understand the Black experience, racism, culture, and immigration.

Recommendations range from greater support through information guides, directories, and online resources that assist Black youth in finding suitable and safe housing and furniture as well as community events for Black youth, international students and others to build intentional networks of community and care. This could be informal, such as neighbours checking in, or more formal in Black youth community events, roommate matching initiatives, or intentional community housing. Future research can be conducted by evaluating other support, settlement, and housing programs for Black youth across Canada.

Acknowledgements

This project was conceived and managed by Hexagon Wellness with the support of the Colbourne Institute for Inclusive Leadership at NorQuest College in Edmonton, Alberta. Hexagon Wellness was advised by 14 community members with expertise in research, housing initiatives, service agencies, immigration, settlement services and supporting Black youth.

Data collection was conducted by Hexagon Wellness and analyzed by Colbourne Institute researchers. Research was approved by the University of Alberta's Ethics Board in partnership with NorQuest College. This project was made possible by funding from Catapult Grant held by Hexagon Wellness.

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Table 01: Demographics			
	Count	Proportion	Average Overall Security
Age			
18-20	6	11%	56
21-23	11	19%	57
24-26	18	32%	54
27-29	22	39%	55
Total	57		55
Gender			
Man	18	32%	66
Trans Or Non-Binary	5	9%	50
Woman	34	60%	50
Total	57		55
Sexual Orientation			
2SLGBTQIA+	17	31%	53
Straight	38	69%	56
Total	55		55
Ethnic Background			
African	37	65%	58
Caribbean Or African and Other Nationality (e.g., African Canadian)	20	35%	50
Total	57		54
Spirituality			

Christian	42	78%	61
Other*	12	22%	37
Total	57		49
* Other includes African traditional/Indigenous spirituality, other spirituality, Jewish, Atheist, Agnostic, and Muslim.			

Table 02: Education and Employment			
	Count	Proportion	Average Overall Security
Highest Level of Education Outside of Canada			
Below High School or No Formal Education	8	16%	60
College Or Trades (Including Partial Completion or In Progress)	11	22	45
High School	10	20%	60
University Degree	21	42%	55
Total	50		55
Highest Level of Education Inside of Canada			
College Or Trades (Including Partial Completion or In Progress)	20	35%	48
High School or No Formal Education in Canada	5	9%	46
University Degree	17	30%	64

No education in Canada but Have Foreign Education (University, College, Trades)	15	26%	19
Total	57		52
Employment Status			
Full Time	10	18%	63
Part Time Or Casual	30	53%	51
Student	6	11%	59
Unemployed	11	19%	56
Total	57		57
Income			
\$56,000+	8	15%	60
\$23,500-55,000	18	32%	54
Up To \$23,000	26	50%	54
Total	52		56

Table 03: Housing and Status in Canada			
	Count	Proportion	Average Overall Security
Living Situation			
Alone	13	23%	55
Shelter or No Fixed Address	3	5%	25
Living With Family	13	23%	56
Living With Partner	10	18%	52

Roommates Or Informal Living Situation	18	32%	62
Total	57		50
Status in Canada			
Citizen	15	27%	50
Permanent Resident	18	32%	53
Refugee	5	9%	67
Student Visa	12	21%	56
Work Visa	6	11%	66
Total	56		58
Time in Canada			
Less than 1 year	7	15%	47
1-3 years	25	53%	60
4-5 years	4	9%	58
6+ years	11	23%	52