



# **Needs Assessment and Priorities Update**

Prepared for:

**City of Lethbridge**

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# 1 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The City of Lethbridge acknowledges that the place we now call Lethbridge has for many generations had another name given to it by the Siksikaitstapi, the Blackfoot Peoples. The name is Sikóóhkotok, a reference to the black rocks found in the area.

The City of Lethbridge acknowledges that we are gathered on the lands of the Blackfoot people of the Canadian Plains and pays respect to the Blackfoot people past, present, and future while recognizing and respecting their cultural heritage, beliefs and relationship to land. The City of Lethbridge is also home to the Métis Nation of Alberta, Battle River Territory, District 1.

# 2 INTRODUCTION

## 2.1 Project Overview

The City of Lethbridge (The City), along with housing- and social service providers, and community organizations and other levels of government, are committed to achieving housing options for all residents and helping community members' access services that support their wellbeing and safety. The Community Wellbeing and Safety Strategy (CWSS) and Municipal Housing Strategy (MHS) are City documents that guide municipal action in support of housing, wellbeing, and safety objectives. Both Strategies, though still relevant, need updates to reflect current realities in Lethbridge and to have a greater focus on how to implement and action priorities outlined in the documents.

As a result, in 2023, the City initiated an update to the 2019 CWSS and MHS Strategies to take stock of current and future housing, wellbeing, and safety needs in the community, and develop renewed direction to address identified need.

## 2.2 Purpose

The Needs Assessment is a quantitative and qualitative research document that informs the update to the CWSS and MHS Strategies. It is a document that has multiple audiences, including City of Lethbridge Council and Administration, housing- and social service providers, community organizations, and elected officials from all orders of government.

## 2.3 Study Area

The Needs Assessment study area included within the jurisdictional boundary of the City of Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada. Where possible, quantitative data in the Needs Assessment reports on the City of Lethbridge Subdivision (CSD) from Statistics Canada.

Lethbridge serves as a regional hub for southern Alberta for hospitality, medical, educational, and employment services (Municipal Development Plan, p. 21). Many smaller communities and their populations rely on services provided in the city to meet their wellbeing and housing needs. An example of this broader service area includes Lethbridge Housing Authority's application catchment boundary, which notes that applications are accepted from people from the BC Border east to Taber, and the US Border north to Claresholm.

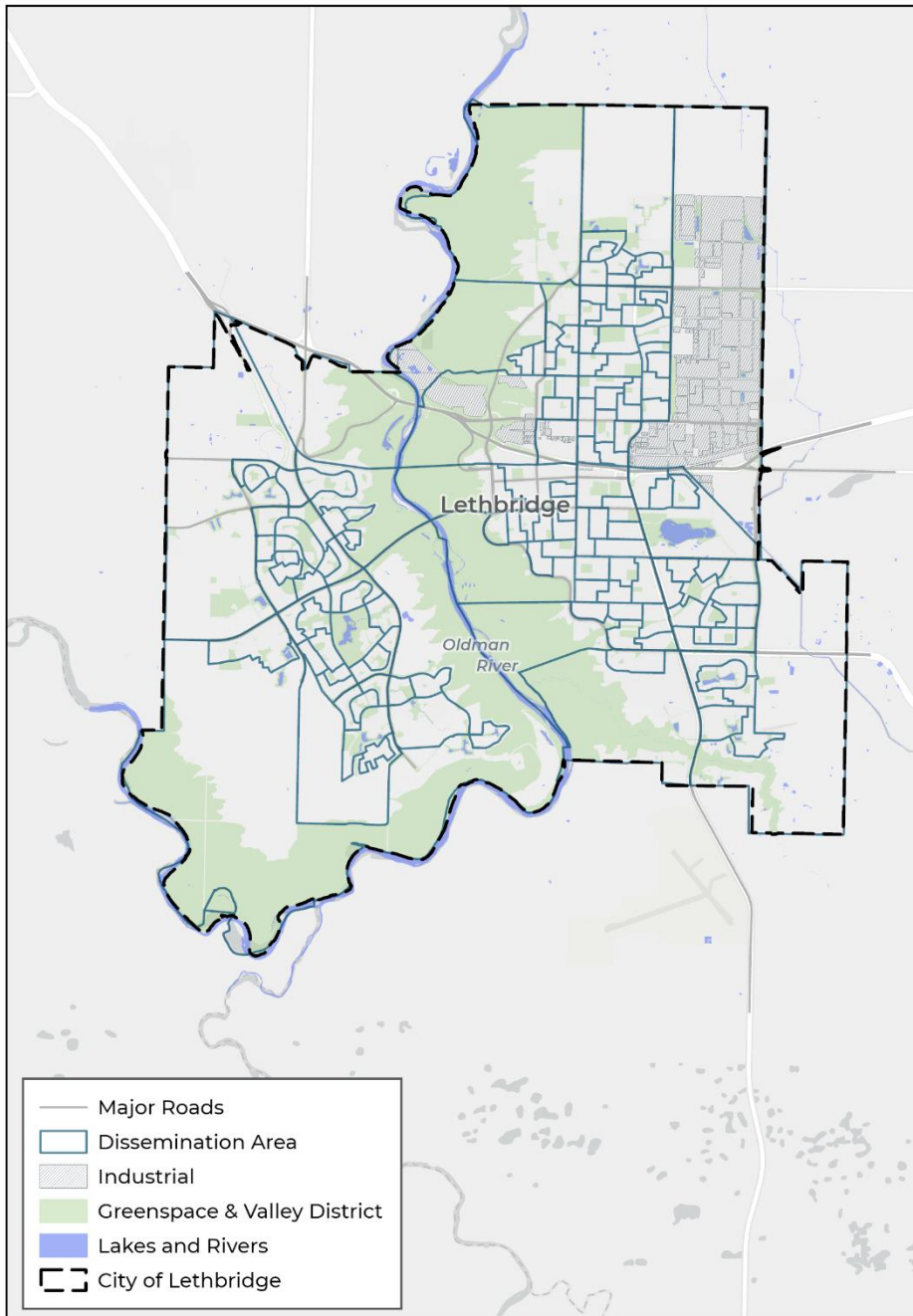
In addition, Lethbridge and the Kainai/Blood Tribe share an eight-kilometre border in the southwest of the City, along the Napitahtaa (Oldman River). As of March 2024, Blood Tribe / Kainai Nation had a total registered population of 12,963 (8,893 on-reserve, and 4,069 off-reserve). Piikani Nation, a member Nation of the Blackfoot Confederacy is also located in the region surrounding the city. As of March 2024, Piikani Nation had a total registered population of 3,916 (2,432 on-reserve and 1,485 off-reserve).<sup>1</sup> Lethbridge is the closest major service centre for both the Blood Tribe/Kainai and Piikani Nations.

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<sup>1</sup> Government of Canada (2024). Blood 435 Registered Population. Retrieved from: [https://fnp-ppn.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/fnp/Main/Search/FNRegPopulation.aspx?BAND\\_NUMBER=435&lang=eng](https://fnp-ppn.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/fnp/Main/Search/FNRegPopulation.aspx?BAND_NUMBER=435&lang=eng); Government of Canada (2024). Piikani 436 Registered Population. Retrieved from: [https://fnp-ppn.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/fnp/Main/Search/FNRegPopulation.aspx?BAND\\_NUMBER=436&lang=eng](https://fnp-ppn.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/fnp/Main/Search/FNRegPopulation.aspx?BAND_NUMBER=436&lang=eng).



Figure 1: Study Area



Source: Statistics Canada (2021)

Note: Spatial data is shown by census dissemination area in Lethbridge, except for Figure 3: Population Change which is shown by census tract.

## 2.4 Methodology

The Needs Assessment collected information to inform key findings through two key steps:

1. **Quantitative data analysis** of demographic information (community profile, health, wellbeing, safety indicators, and housing information) through the review of available data and existing City of Lethbridge documents.
2. **Qualitative input collected** through engagement with key stakeholders, City Councillors, and people with lived and living experience in the community, as well as a document review which noted qualitative inputs.

The process for each step is detailed below.

### 2.4.1 Quantitative Data

The Needs Assessment provides a snapshot of housing, wellbeing, and safety needs in Lethbridge using a variety of reputable data sources, including:

- Statistics Canada Census of Population (2021, 2016, 2011 and 2006) <sup>2</sup>
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation data (2023)
- Alberta Real Estate Association (2023)
- Government of Alberta Open Data (2023)
- City of Lethbridge Open Data (2023)

In addition, several community resources were used to collect information, including:

- Alberta Health Services (2023), Economic Development Lethbridge (2023), Lethbridge School Division (2023), Holy Spirit Catholic School Division (2032), Lethbridge Police Service (2022), BILD Alberta (2016, 2021, 2023).

Considerations should be applied when reviewing the data and findings of this report as follows:

1. Demographic data is sourced from published Statistics Canada Census of Population. Data is subject to random rounding and, at times, is a 25% representative sample.
2. The 2021 Statistics Canada Census Population was released in 2022 and it reports on 2020 data. Where available, updated data points on housing, wellbeing and safety have been provided.
3. Spatial data is shown by census dissemination area in Lethbridge.

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<sup>2</sup> The most recent version of the Census is from 2021. Further, due to the voluntary nature of the 2011 National Household Survey, the data is considered less reliable. As a result, 2006 Census data is used, where appropriate, for comparison purposes.

Projections contained in the Needs Assessment are based on assumptions available to us today and represent a plausible base case should the assumptions remain true over time. In each data section, the Needs Assessment provides a data description (where descriptions are available through Statistics Canada), and a high-level explanation of why specific data points are important for assessing community need.

This information is followed by analysis bullet points, and in specific sections, consideration bullet points that draw connections with other data information or relevant research. Some sections include a general observations section to capture additional analysis findings.

## 2.4.2 Qualitative Data

To complement the quantitative data analysis completed as part of the Needs Assessment, engagement with key stakeholders, City Councillors, and people with lived and living experience was conducted to add richness and tell a more complete story about housing, wellbeing, and safety needs in Lethbridge.

In total, engagement activities that informed the Needs Assessment included:

- 1 workshop with the CWSS Community Advisory Committee (the CWSS Advisory Committee acts in a Community Advisory Board capacity for Reaching Home Funding and include broader sector representation)
- 1 workshop with City of Lethbridge Internal Departments
- 4 workshops with housing and wellbeing key stakeholders
- 5 City Councillor interviews
- 6 focus groups (35 participants in total) with people with lived and living experience (youth, seniors, developmental disabilities, Lethbridge Housing Authority residents, and immigrant/newcomers)

Please refer to **Section 6 Engagement** for additional details.

# Community Profile

# 3 COMMUNITY PROFILE

## 3.1 Population

### Data Description

In census data, population refers to the number of people who live in a place. Trends in population have a significant impact on the type of housing and wellbeing service provision that is needed in the community.

**Table 1: Municipal Census Data vs. Federal Census Data Lethbridge**

Year	Federal Census Population	Municipal Census Population
2021	98,406	101,851
2016	92,729	96,828
2011	83,517	87,882

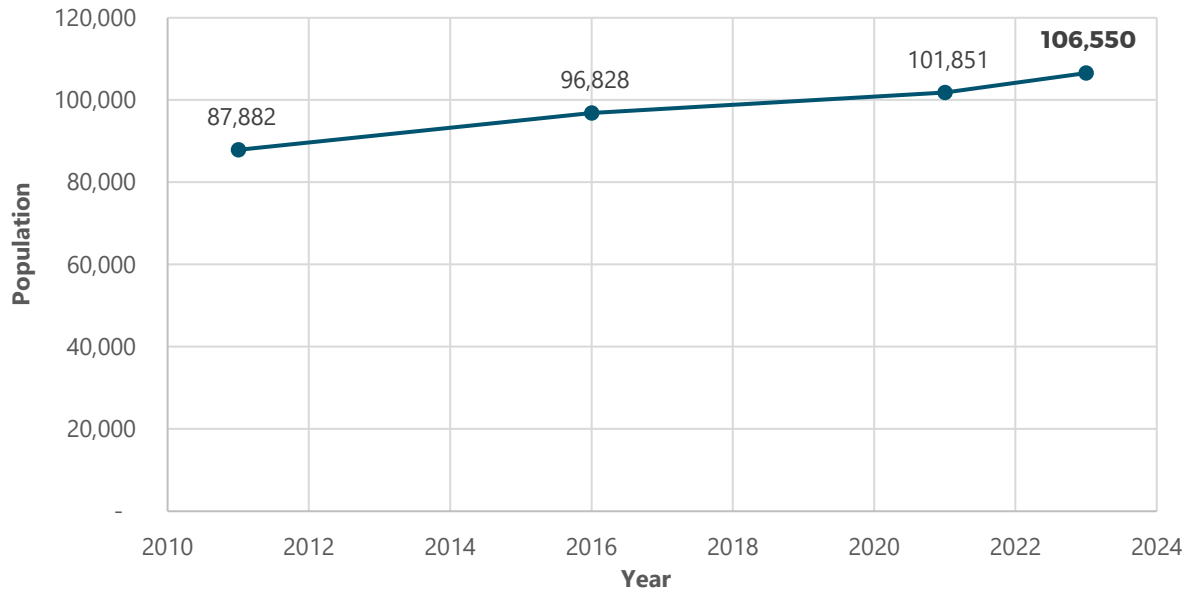
Source: City of Lethbridge Census (2011, 2016, 2021, Statistics Canada Census 2011, 2016, 2021).

**Table 2: Population Growth Comparison**

City	2011	2016	2021	Percentage Change (2011 to 2021)
Lethbridge	83,517	92,729	98,406	18%
Grande Prairie	55,032	63,166	64,141	17%
Medicine Hat	60,005	63,260	76,376	27%
Red Deer	90,564	99,832	100,844	11%
Alberta	3,645,257	4,067,175	4,262,635	17%

Source: Statistics Canada (2011, 2016, 2021).

**Chart 1: Lethbridge Population Growth**



Source: City of Lethbridge Census (2011, 2016, 2021, 2023).

## **ANALYSIS (TABLES 1 AND 2, CHART 1)**

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### **Lethbridge’s population has continued to grow.**

The City of Lethbridge Census and Statistics Canada Federal Census both indicate that significant growth has taken place in the City of Lethbridge since 2011. As will be explored in sections that follow, population growth broadly impacts wellbeing and housing, as there will be more demand for housing, demand for new types of housing, and increased pressure on programs and services that residents rely on to ensure their wellbeing. Lethbridge’s future growth means more families, more seniors, and more diversity. The Municipal Housing Strategy and Community Safety and Wellbeing Strategy will be important for managing growth and population change over the next 5 years.

#### City of Lethbridge Census Data, 2011-2023

- The population of the City of Lethbridge was 106,550 in 2023.
- The population has grown by +18,668 people (21%) between 2011 and 2023.

#### Statistics Canada Census Data, 2011, 2016, 2023

- Since 2011, Lethbridge has grown by +14,889 people (18%) which is higher than other mid-sized municipalities in Alberta, except for Medicine Hat which experienced 27% population growth between 2011 and 2023.

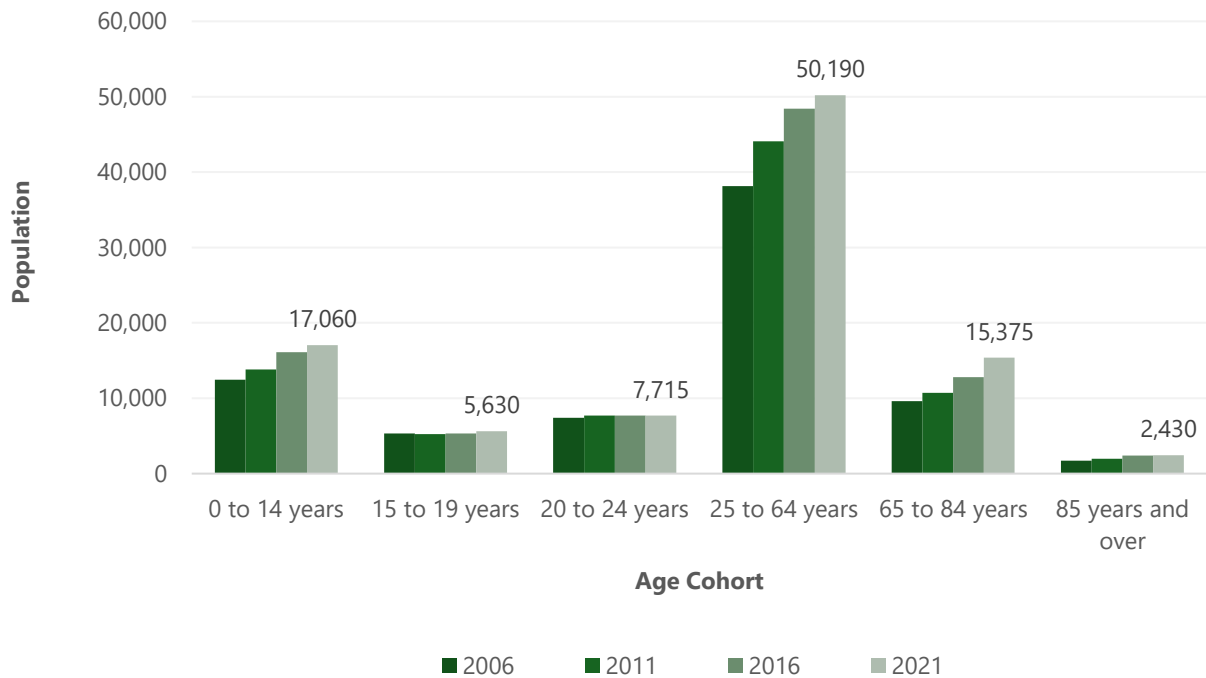
### 3.1.1 Population Growth: Age

#### Data Description

In census data, age refers to the age of the person at their last birthday. Understanding the age of the population, including the median age and distribution by gender, helps a municipality understand the kinds of housing, and wellbeing and safety supports that are most needed in a community.

Median age represents the “middle value” of all the ages reported in the census data. Understanding the median age is primarily a comparative value that helps a municipality benchmark against other municipalities or regions.

Chart 2: Lethbridge Population by Age



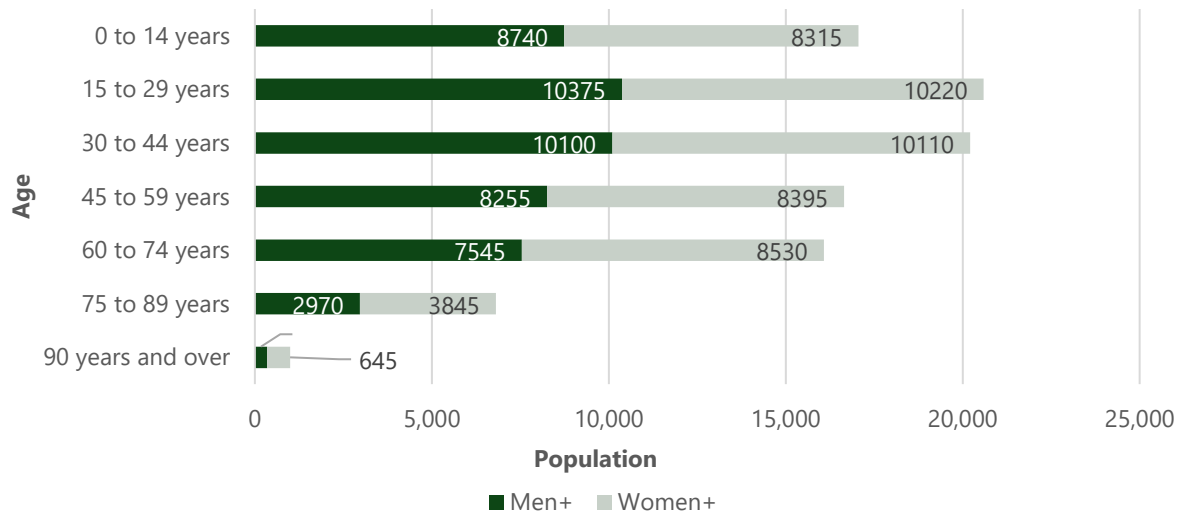
Source: Statistics Canada (2006, 2011, 2016, 2021).

Table 3: Median Age, Lethbridge vs. Alberta

City	2006	2011	2016	2021
Lethbridge	36.5	36.6	36.4	38
Alberta	36	36.5	36.7	38.4

Source: Statistics Canada (2006, 2011, 2016, 2021).

**Chart 3: Age Distribution by Gender**



Source: Statistics Canada (2021).

### ANALYSIS (CHART 2, TABLE 3, CHART 3)

#### The city's population is aging.

- Seniors (65+) are the fastest growing age cohort in Lethbridge.
- The average age of a Lethbridge resident increased from 36.4 in 2016 to 38.0 in 2021. Using this indicator, the population is steadily growing older. However, Lethbridge remains younger on average than Alberta overall (by 0.4 years), with the city's population aging less rapidly relative to the province.
- The distribution of women and men is equal for the population under 60; however, women have a higher distribution in the population aged 60+.

#### The number of children and youth living in Lethbridge has increased.

- In 2021, there were approximately 30,000 people under the age of 24 living in Lethbridge—an increase of approximately 1,000 since 2016.

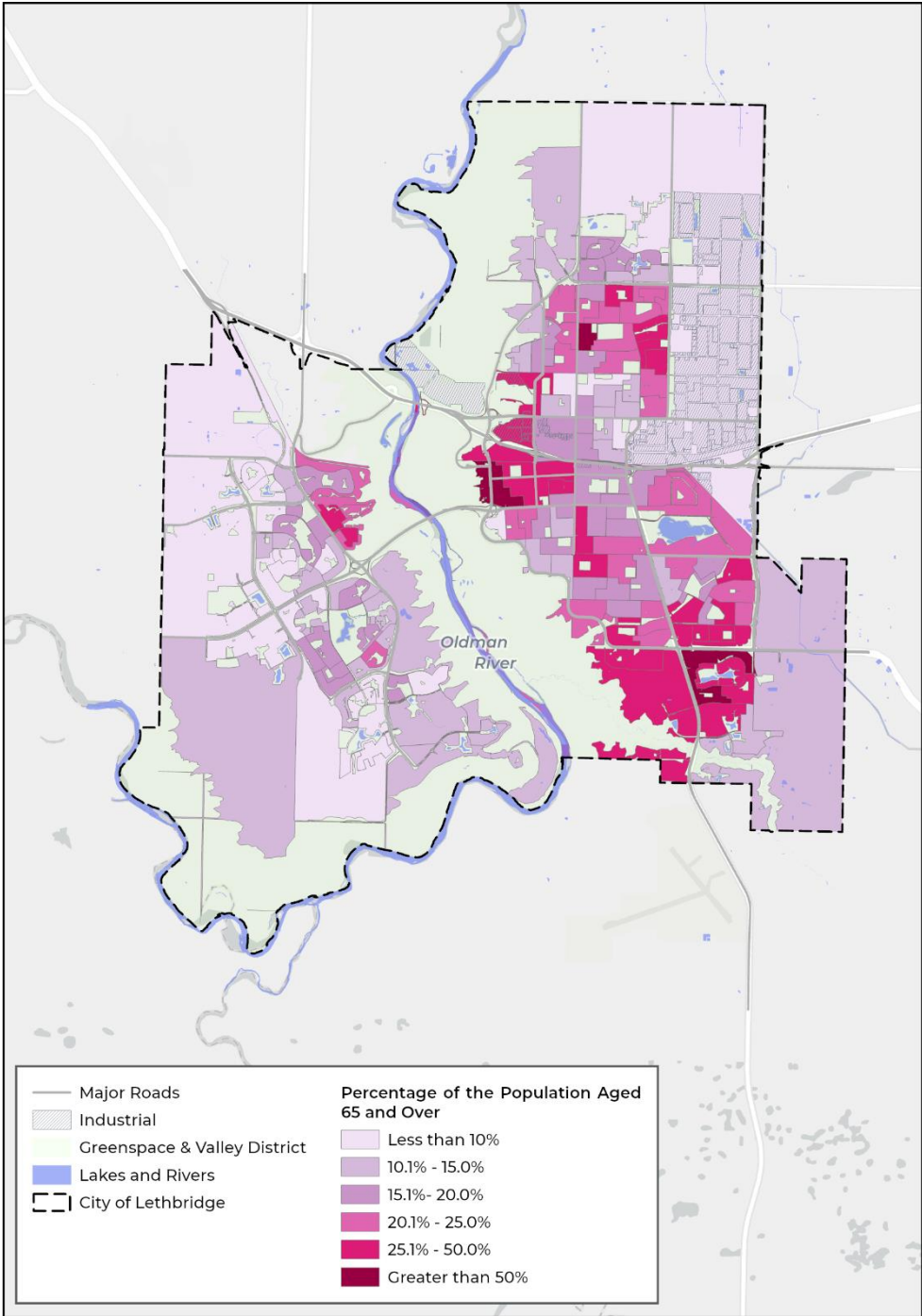
### CONSIDERATIONS

- The proportion of the city's population above the age of 65 will likely continue to grow. Specific efforts to support older adults and seniors to age in place and to provide access to services and programs that are tailored to their needs will be important.
- Growth in the children and youth population puts additional demand on school boards, daycare services, and children and youth programming. When contrasted with the growth in the senior population, encouraging youth to stay in Lethbridge becomes important to overall community demographics.



### 3.1.2 Spatial Analysis: 65+

Figure 2: 65+ Demographic Map



Source: Statistics Canada (2021)

## ANALYSIS (FIGURE 2)

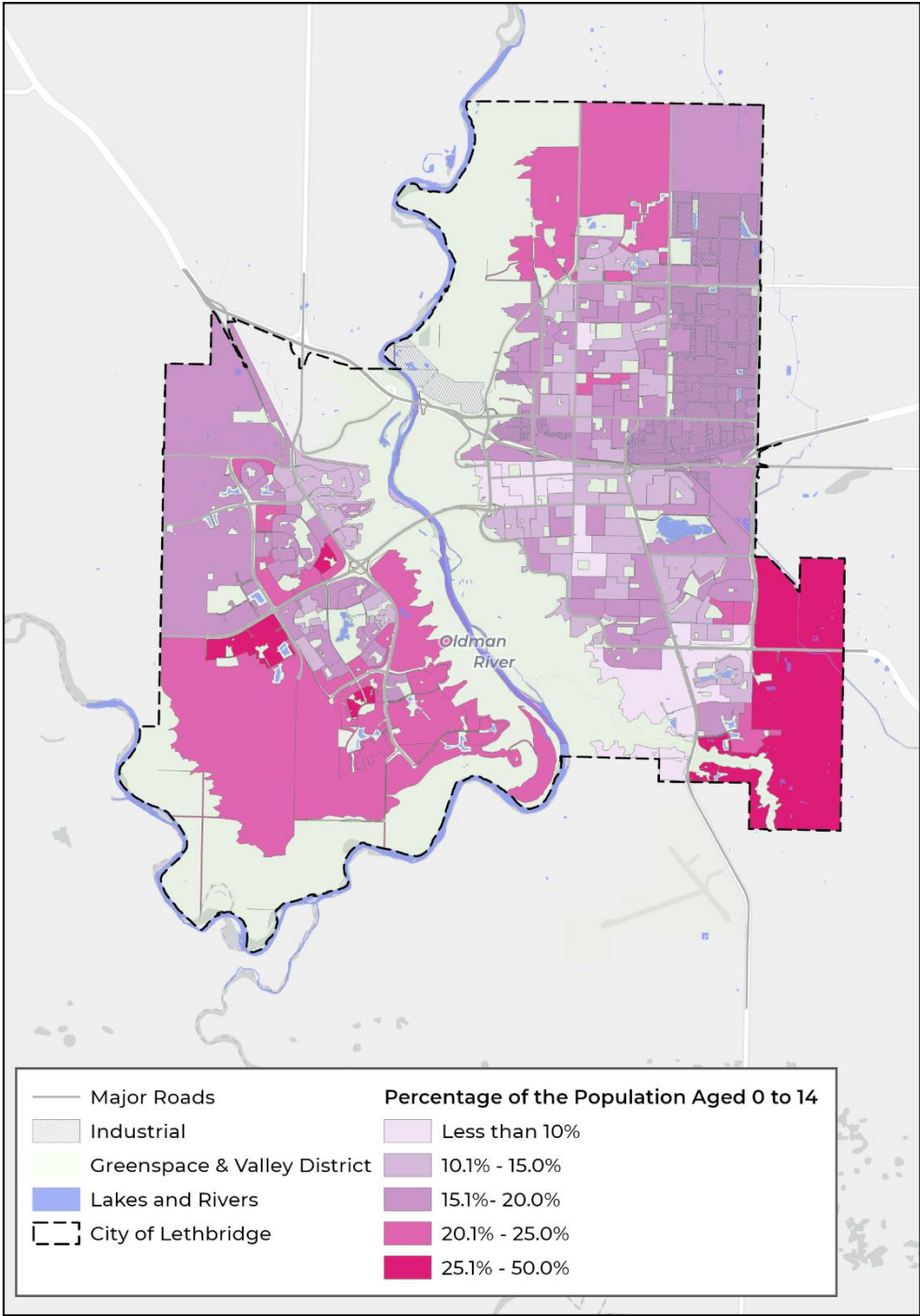
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### People over the age of 65 are predominantly living in core, mature and established neighbourhoods.

- South and north Lethbridge have higher percentages of people over the age of 65.
- When comparing where people over the age of 65 live in the Lethbridge, and the city's population density (**Figure 2: 65+ Demographic Map**), many areas of low-medium population density are the neighbourhoods where people 65+ are living. This spatial comparison may point to a growing cohort of one- or two- person, age 65 and over households living in older, lower density residential neighbourhoods in Lethbridge.

### 3.1.3 Spatial Analysis: Youth

Figure 3: 0-14 Demographic Map



Source: Statistics Canada (2021), City of Lethbridge (2022).

## ANALYSIS

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### **The city's population of children, youth, and young adults grew by 1,250 between 2016 and 2021.**

- West Lethbridge and developing neighbourhoods in south and north Lethbridge are the three areas with the highest percentage of children and youth (aged 0-14).
- As the city's population of children grows, so too will demand for childcare spaces. The City has identified a gap of approximately 600 childcare spaces as of late-2023.<sup>3</sup>
- There is an information gap on what types of programs and services are available in Lethbridge for children and youth. Some programs may only be accessible for certain age ranges or may only be offered during specific hours that may not be appropriate for family or youth schedules.

## CONSIDERATIONS

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- While the city's downtown has the greatest transit accessibility, it is important to consider how transit routes serve developing neighbourhoods from both an access and frequency perspective. With continued growth anticipated for Lethbridge's developing neighbourhoods, the City may wish to consider expanding youth services in these areas in partnership with community organizations.
- Ensuring that land is adequately zoned to support development of childcare spaces is key to ensuring that these services are accessible and affordable throughout Lethbridge. The City is actively reviewing long-term childcare needs and strategies for addressing gaps in service.
- Additional information is required to understand the provision of child and youth programs and services in Lethbridge, particularly in terms of identifying service gaps and whether current offerings are meeting demand / need. Timing of program and service offerings also needs to be considered to ensure that what is offered is convenient and at appropriate times for families and youth.

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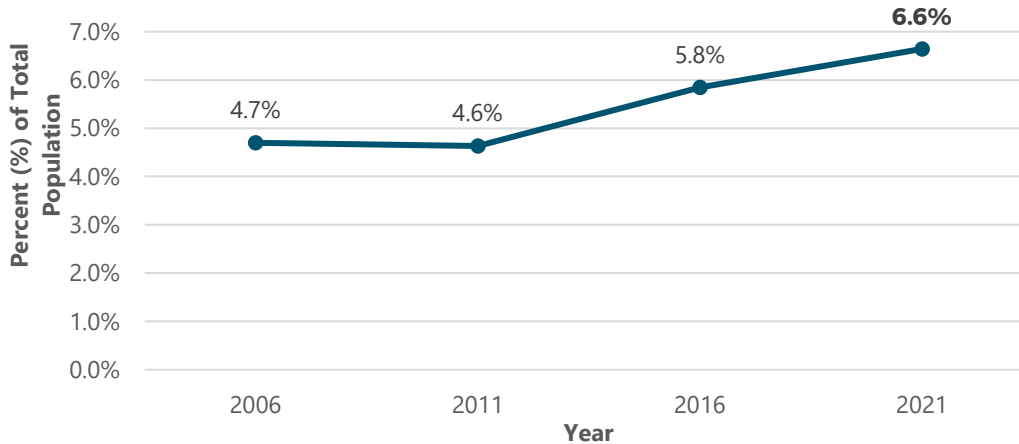
<sup>3</sup> CTV News (2023). Gap of 600 childcare spaces: City of Lethbridge assessing childcare needs as demand grows. Retrieved from: <https://calgary.ctvnews.ca/gap-of-600-childcare-spaces-city-of-lethbridge-assessing-childcare-needs-as-demand-grows-1.6627457>.

## 3.1.4 Population Growth: Indigenous Identity

### Data Description

This statistic shows the population growth in community members identifying as Indigenous within the census. This includes First Nations, Metis, and Inuk (Inuit) and individuals that identify with multiple Indigenous identities.

Chart 4: Percent of Total Population, Indigenous Identity



Source: Statistics Canada (2006, 2011, 2016, 2021).

### ANALYSIS (CHART 4)

**There are now close to 6,500 residents of Lethbridge that identify as Indigenous.**

- 6,395 individuals (6.6% of total population) identify as Indigenous in Lethbridge. This number has increased by 2,625 individuals (70%) since 2011.
- Indigenous children under the age of 14 represent nearly 30% of the city's Indigenous population (compared to 16.9% for the city's non-Indigenous population).
- As of March 2024, Blood Tribe / Kainai Nation, a member of the Blackfoot Confederacy, had a total registered population of 12,963 (8,893 on-reserve, and 4,069 off-reserve). Piikani Nation, also a member Nation of the Blackfoot Confederacy, is located in the region surrounding the city. As of March 2024, Piikani Nation had a total registered population of 3,916 (2,432 on-reserve and 1,485 off-reserve).<sup>4</sup> Continued on- and off-reserve population growth will create additional demand for Indigenous led and focused programs and services in Lethbridge.

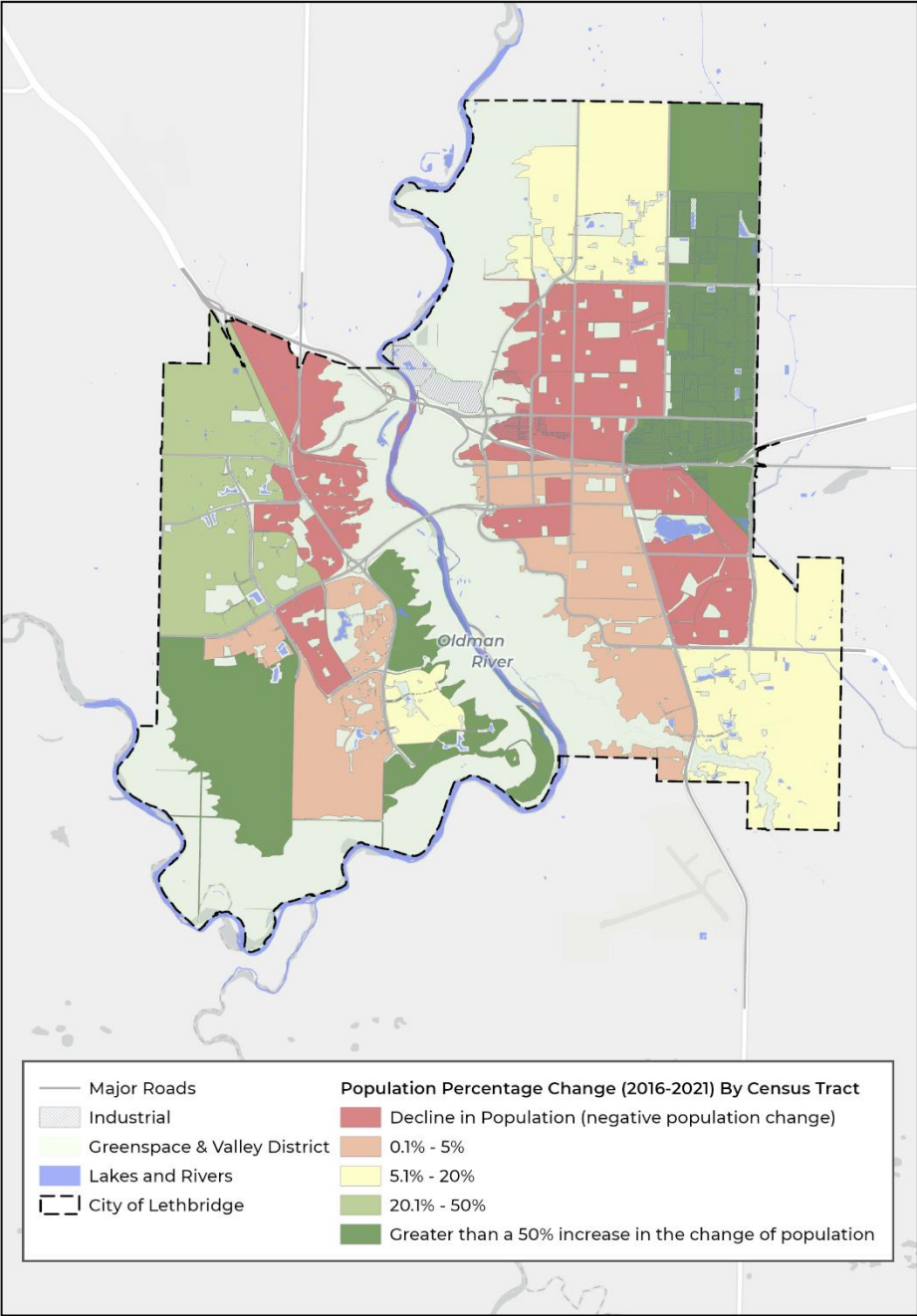
<sup>4</sup> Government of Canada (2024). Blood 435 Registered Population. Retrieved from: [https://fnp-ppn.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/fnp/Main/Search/FNRegPopulation.aspx?BAND\\_NUMBER=435&lang=eng](https://fnp-ppn.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/fnp/Main/Search/FNRegPopulation.aspx?BAND_NUMBER=435&lang=eng); Government of Canada (2024). Piikani 436 Registered Population. Retrieved from: [https://fnp-ppn.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/fnp/Main/Search/FNRegPopulation.aspx?BAND\\_NUMBER=436&lang=eng](https://fnp-ppn.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/fnp/Main/Search/FNRegPopulation.aspx?BAND_NUMBER=436&lang=eng).

# 3.1.5 Spatial Analysis: Population Growth

## Data Description

Spatial analysis of population growth helps a municipality understand where, and to what extent, growth is taking place. and where the population may be declining in the city.

Figure 4: Population Change



Source: Statistics Canada (2021)

## ANALYSIS (FIGURE 4)

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### Higher rates of growth are occurring on the edges of the city.

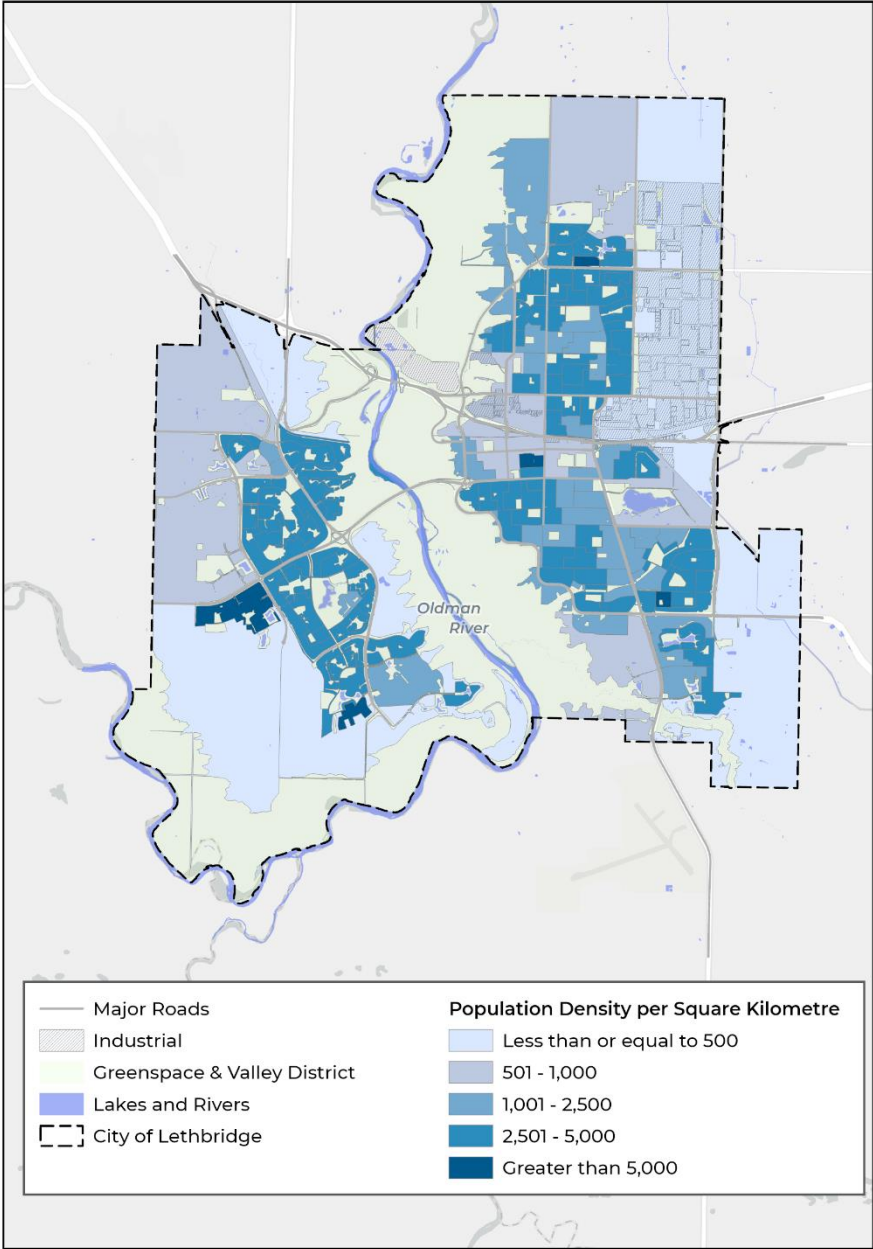
- Higher rates of population growth (+20%) are occurring in developing neighbourhoods and urban growth areas in Lethbridge. As these are *developing* areas, this trend should be expected and will continue as Lethbridge's population grows. With continued growth in these areas, ensuring that land use plans and zoning can accommodate development of needed neighbourhood level services such as daycares, affordable and/or multi-unit housing, and public transit infrastructure is important.
- Established, mature, and core neighbourhoods in Lethbridge are experiencing low growth (0-5%) or population decline. However, when comparing this spatial information to city's population density, some of these neighbourhoods are the most densely populated (**Figure 4: Population Change**).
- When comparing where growth is occurring in Lethbridge, and the distribution of age cohorts, areas with higher numbers of people over the age of 65 are generally areas experiencing a lower population growth, and areas with higher numbers of people aged 0-14 are areas in the city experiencing higher growth rates. This spatial comparison may point to people aged 65 and older living independently in their homes longer in the city's core, mature and established areas while families with children aged 0-14 are choosing to live in areas of the city with higher growth rates (i.e., near the University, developing neighbourhoods on the edge of the city, and urban growth areas).

### 3.1.6 Spatial Analysis: Population Density

#### Data Description

Population density was mapped to understand the current distribution of population within the municipality.

Figure 5: Population Density



Source: Statistics Canada (2021)



## ANALYSIS (FIGURE 5)

**Established, mature, and core neighbourhoods in Lethbridge are the areas with the highest population density.**

- Lethbridge has higher population density in (**Figure 5: Population Density**), neighbourhoods near the University, and in established and mature neighbourhoods in north and south Lethbridge. developing neighbourhoods on the edge of the city, and urban growth areas.

## 3.2 Change in Mobility Status

### Data Description

Mobility status refers to whether a person changed residences from the previous year (e.g. moved between 2020-2021). The following table details the different types of mobility, including whether a person changed residences from elsewhere in Alberta (e.g. intra-provincial migrant), or from another province (e.g. interprovincial migrants). Or, whether a person moved from outside of Canada (e.g. external migrants). Trends in mobility status often influence housing supply and demand in a community.

**Table 4: Mobility in Lethbridge**

Mobility Status	2011	2016	2021
Non-movers	66,425	73,375	79,510
Movers	13,845	15,980	15,670
Non-migrants	8,715	10,420	10,530
Migrants	5,130	5,565	5,140
Internal migrants (i.e., intra-provincial and Interprovincial)	4,270	4,685	4,645
External migrants	860	880	490

Source: Statistics Canada (2011, 2016, 2021).

## ANALYSIS (TABLE 4)

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### **Mobility in Lethbridge has remained stable since 2011.**

- Mobility in Lethbridge between 2016 and 2021 did not vary widely, with non-movers representing 82% (73,375 people) and 84% (79,510 people) of the population, respectively.
- In 2021, 67% of movers (10,530 people) moved within Lethbridge, and the remaining 33% (5,140 people) moved from outside of Lethbridge.
- Only 3% (490) of movers moved from outside of Canada.
- Between 2016 and 2021, the number of refugees living in Lethbridge increased from 2,640 to 3,025. Given recent geopolitical dynamics (e.g. war in Ukraine, increasing number of applicants seeking asylum in Canada), the number of refugees living in Lethbridge is likely greater now than in 2021.

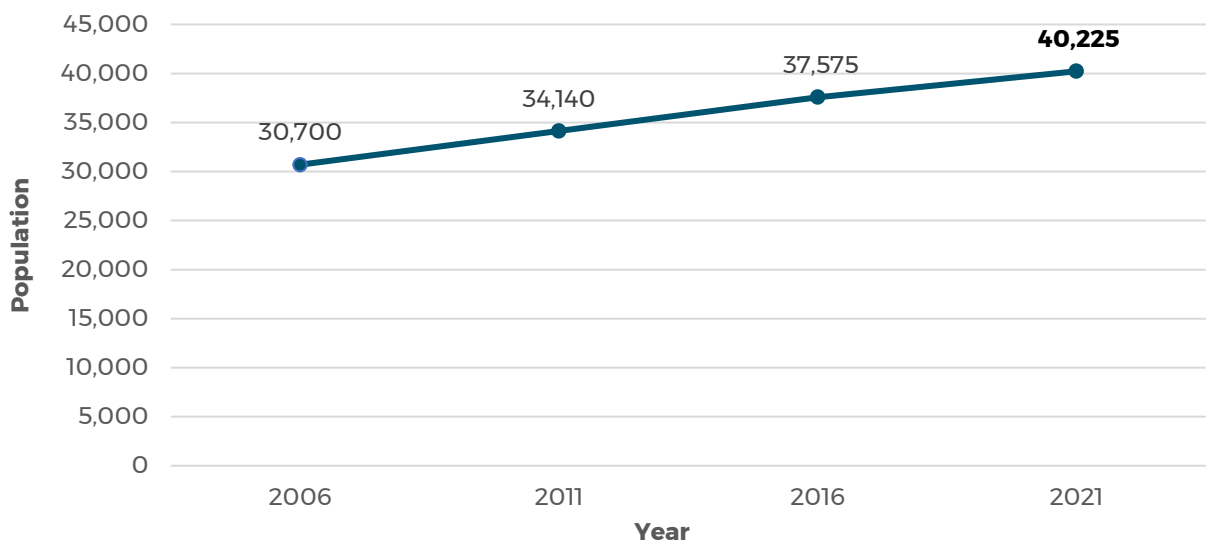
## 3.3 Households

### 3.3.1 Growth

#### DATA DESCRIPTION

In census data, a household refers to a person or a group of people who live in the same house. Trends in household numbers are helpful for a municipality to understand current housing need in a community, and to identify changes in housing need in comparison to previous census years.

Chart 5: Number of Households



Source: Statistics Canada (2006, 2011, 2016, 2021).

Table 5: Household Growth Comparison

	2016	2021	Percent Change
Lethbridge	37,575	40,225	7%
Medicine Hat	26,650	27,215	2%
Red Deer	39,980	40,515	1%
Grande Prairie	23,675	24,815	5%
Alberta	1,527,675	1,633,220	7%

Source: Statistics Canada (2016, 2021).

## 3.3.2 Composition

### Data Description

Household composition refers to the type of family occupying a dwelling (e.g., a couple with or without children or one person living alone). Trends in a household composition help a municipality understand how families are structured within the population and potential demand for specific housing sizes and types.

- **Census-Family Households** are households defined as a married couple with or without children, a couple living common law with or without children, or a one-parent family with children.
- **Non-Census-Family Households** are households which do not include a census family, instead non-Census family households are either one person living alone or a group of two or more persons who live together but do not constitute a census family.
- **Other Census Family** are households which include at least one family and additional persons. For example, "other family" could refer to a family living with one or more persons who are related to one or more of the members of the family, or a family living with one or more additional persons who are unrelated to the family members.

**Table 6: Household Composition, 2021**

Type of Household	Total Count	Percentage of Total Households
Total Households	40,225	100.0%
One couple without children	10,640	26%
One couple with children	9,385	23%
One-parent census family	3,315	8%
Other census family households	2,445	6%
Non-census family households	14,440	36%

*Source: Statistics Canada (2021).*

### ANALYSIS (CHART 5, TABLE 5, TABLE 6)

#### The number of households has grown in Lethbridge.

- The number of households in Lethbridge increased by 7% (+2,650 households) from 2016 to 2021. This is higher than comparable mid-sized Alberta communities but is in alignment with the household growth experienced by the province.
- Growth in household numbers in Lethbridge is being driven by one- and two-person households.

**The number of census family households with children has declined by more than 500 since 2016.**

- 58% of Lethbridge households (23,335 households) are census-family households. Of the 58%, 20,025 households (49%) are couples with or without children, the remaining 8% (3,315 households) are one-parent census family households.
- In 2021, there were 12,700 couples and lone-parent families with children (3,315 lone-parent families), a decline from 2016 (12,940 couples, 3,760 lone-parent families), with on average 1.9 children per household. With Lethbridge's child and youth population also growing over this period, the slight decline in households with children suggests that households with children are having more children.
- The number of lone-parent households has declined by 445 between 2016 and 2021.

**People living alone and roommate households are a growing proportion of the community.**

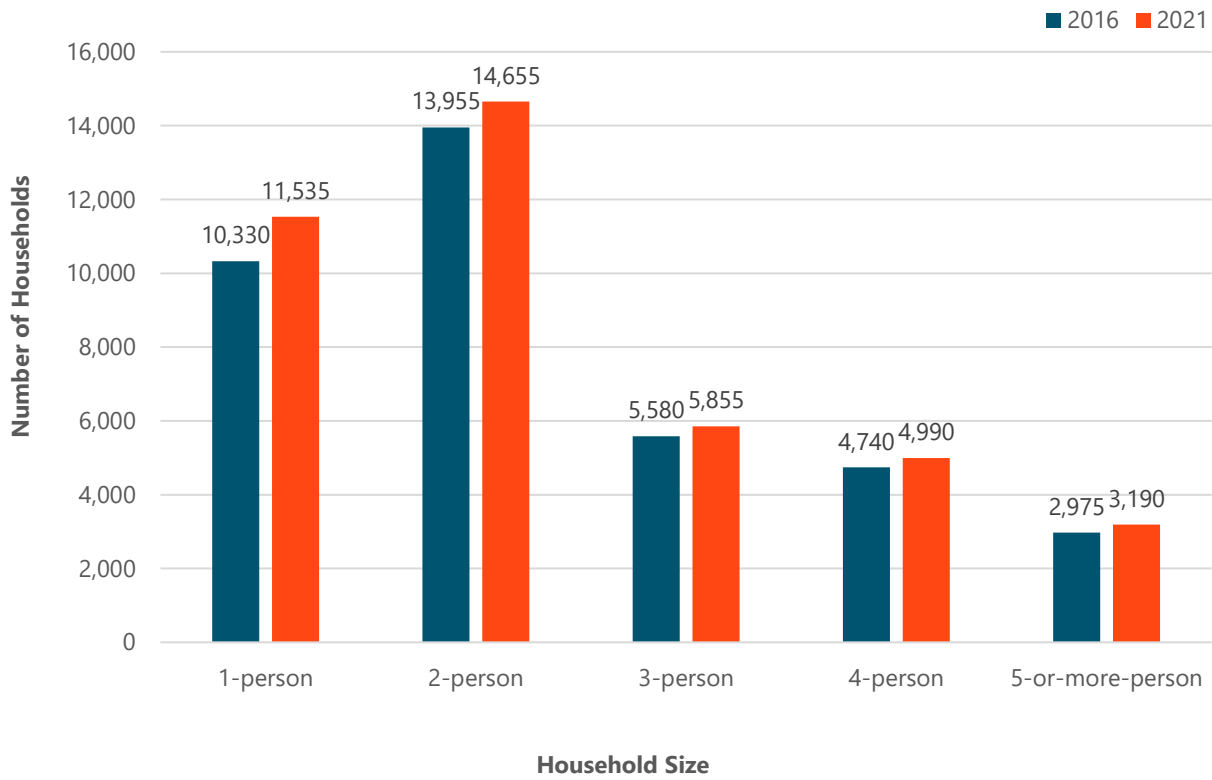
- In 2021, data shows that 7.2% (2,910 households) are two or more unrelated people living together (i.e., roommates), and 28.7% (11,530 households) are one person households (i.e., people living alone). These numbers are up slightly from 2016, where there were 7.1% (2,675) households of two or more unrelated people living together, and 27.5% (10,330) one-person households.

### **3.3.3 Household Size**

#### **Data Description**

Household size refers to the number of people in a household. In comparison to household type data, household size does not consider the relationships between people in the household. Trends in household size indicate the number of bedrooms a household may need, and/or how prevalent issues of overcrowding are within a municipality.

**Chart 6: Household Size**



Source: Statistics Canada (2016, 2021).

**Table 7: Household Size, Percent Comparison**

Household Size	Lethbridge	Alberta
1-person	29%	26%
2-person	36%	34%
3-person	15%	15%
4-person	12%	15%
5-or-more-person	8%	10%

Source: Statistics Canada (2016, 2021).

## ANALYSIS (CHART 6, AND TABLE 7)

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### **The average household size in Lethbridge is remaining steady, but one- and two- person households are increasing, and higher than provincial percentages.**

- Nearly one-in-three households (11,535 households) in Lethbridge is a one-person household.
- 65% of households in Lethbridge (26,190 households) are one- and two-person households. This is higher than the percentage of households in Alberta that are one- or two-person households (60%).
- The percent of households with 5 or more persons is slightly lower (8%) in Lethbridge than the province (10%).
- The average household size in Lethbridge is 2.4 persons in 2021 which is lower than the average household size for the province at 2.6 persons.

## CONSIDERATIONS

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- When considering smaller household sizes in relation to other demographic and household factors, such as the growth in the city's seniors' population, the safety and suitability of dwellings becomes increasingly important (e.g., appropriate number of bedrooms, accessibility features, etc.), as well as for households that may be having more children on average.

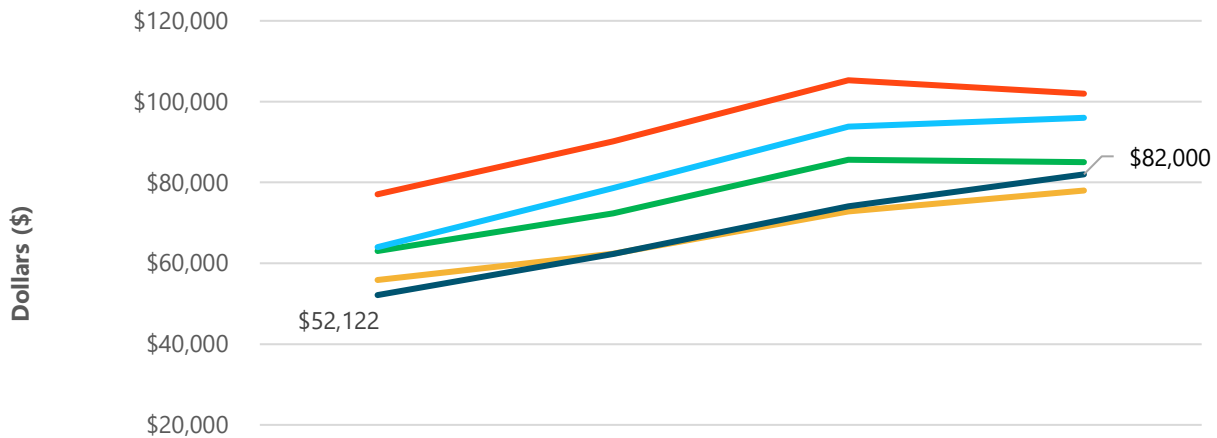
## 3.4 Economy

### 3.4.1 Household Median Income

#### Data Description

Household income refers to the sum of total income for a household before tax. Trends in a median household income identify the mid-point of income distribution in the community (i.e., half of the data sample make more than the median income and half makes less than the median income).

Chart 7: Median Income Comparison Over Time



	Year			
	2006	2011	2016	2021
Grande Prairie	\$77,071	\$90,151	\$105,288	\$102,000
Red Deer	\$63,034	\$72,385	\$85,616	\$85,000
Medicine Hat	\$55,858	\$62,375	\$72,806	\$78,000
Lethbridge	\$52,122	\$62,298	\$74,084	\$82,000
Alberta	\$63,988	\$78,632	\$93,835	\$96,000

Source: Statistics Canada (2006, 2011, 2016, 2021).



## ANALYSIS (CHART 7)

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**The rate of household income grew faster than the rest of the province while the median income is still below the provincial average.**

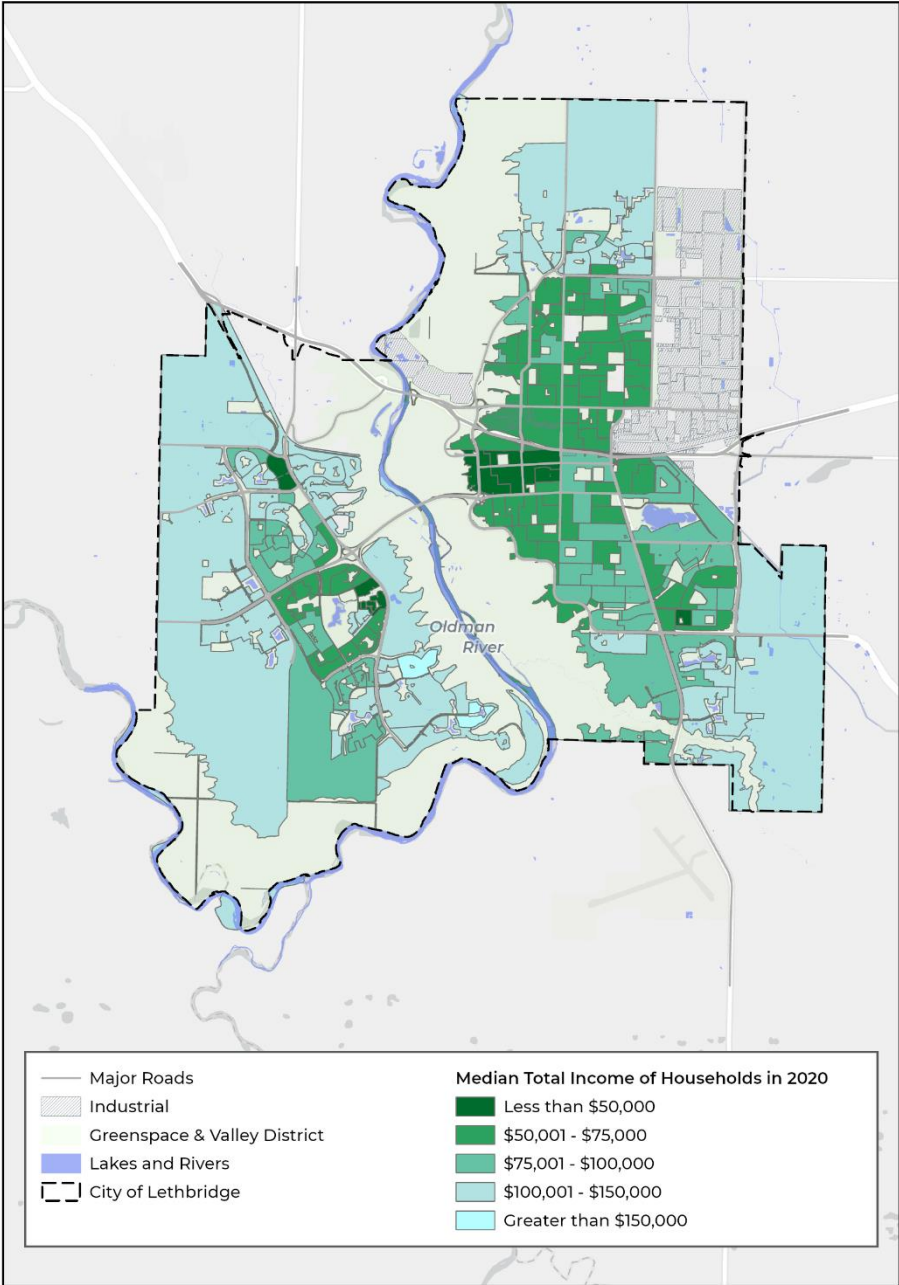
- Median income in Lethbridge grew 11% between 2016 and 2021. This growth is higher than provincial growth (2%), and a contrasting trend to Grande Prairie and Red Deer where both municipalities have seen decreases in median income, 3% and 1% respectively. As the Lethbridge economy is less reliant upon resource extraction industries, increases or decreases in natural resource prices have a less pronounced impact on household incomes.
- The median income of Lethbridge was \$14,000 lower than the provincial median of \$96,000 in 2021.
- Alberta's minimum wage increased to \$15.00 per hour in October 2018, which may explain some of the increase in the overall median household income in Lethbridge between 2016 and 2021. However, the effect of the minimum wage rising is likely a small component of this overall increase.

### 3.4.2 Household Median Income: Spatial Analysis

#### Data Description

Median income displayed spatially can help municipalities understand where households in higher need may be located geographically within a community. This can assist municipalities make decisions about the location and level of service potentially required in different areas of the city.

Figure 6: Household Median Income



Source: Statistics Canada (2021).

## ANALYSIS (FIGURE 6)

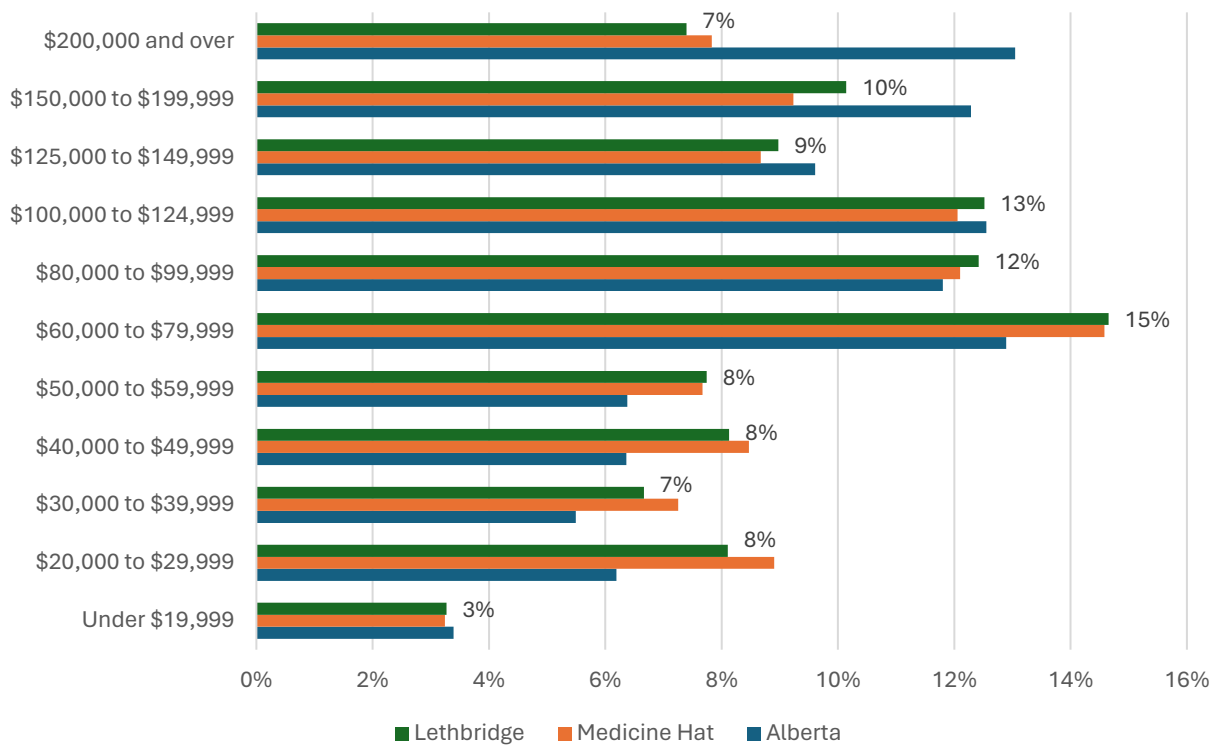
- Households with higher median incomes tend to live in developing neighbourhoods in Lethbridge, with a greater percentage of households earning less than \$75,000 living in core and mature neighbourhoods.

### 3.4.3 Income Distribution

#### Data Description

Income distribution represents the percent of households in Lethbridge that have an income within the income brackets specified. Medicine Hat was selected to compare the income distribution because it has the most similar median income.

Chart 8: Income Distribution, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and Alberta



Source: Statistics Canada (2021).

## ANALYSIS (CHART 8)

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### Income distribution is relatively comparable to other areas in the province.

- Approximately 18% of Lethbridge households earn less than \$40,000 per year as of 2021, which is slightly higher than provincial rates (16.9%). This percentage has declined significantly since 2015, where close to 24% of Lethbridge households earned less than \$40,000 per year.
- Lethbridge has a higher percentage (26%) of households making under \$50,000 compared to the province (21%).
- Lethbridge has a lower prevalence (7%) of households making over \$200,000 a year compared to the province (13%).

## CONSIDERATIONS

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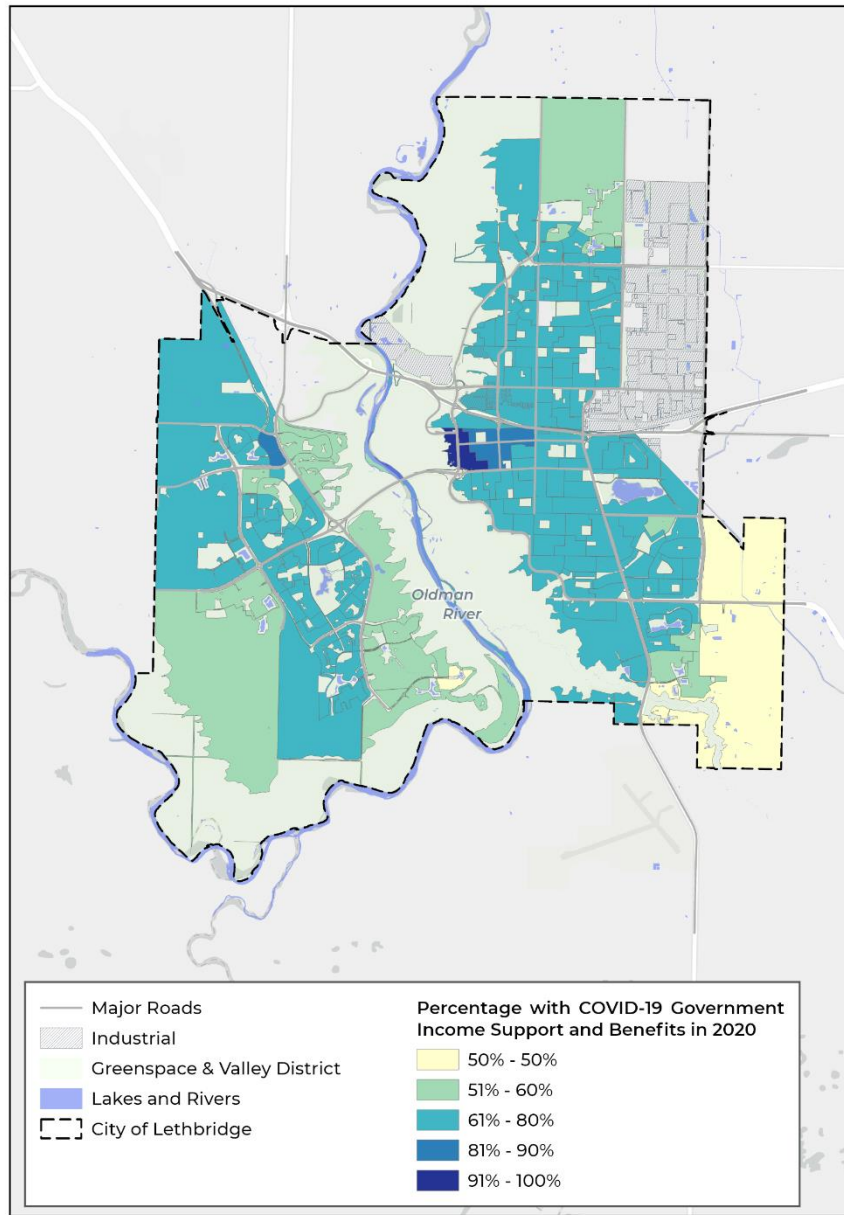
It is important to acknowledge the impact that COVID-19 emergency benefits may have had in lifting some Lethbridge households out of low-income classification, with median benefits at around \$8,000 per recipient. With emergency COVID-19 benefit programs now concluded, it is possible that Lethbridge households may once again slip into low-income status. For example, with 40,225 households as of 2021, and a return to pre-pandemic trends for incomes (24% earning less than \$40,000), there could be roughly 2,400 additional households classified as low-income in Lethbridge.

### 3.4.4 Spatial Analysis: Covid-19 Supports and Benefits

#### Data Description

Covid-19 supports and benefits refers to the sum of benefits from various federal and provincial programs intended to provide financial support to individuals affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and the public health measures implemented to minimize the spread of the virus. This information may help a municipality understand areas of the city that required additional financial assistance during the Covid-19 pandemic to meet basic needs.

Figure 7: Covid-19 Supports and Benefits



Source: Statistics Canada (2021).

### ANALYSIS (FIGURE 7)

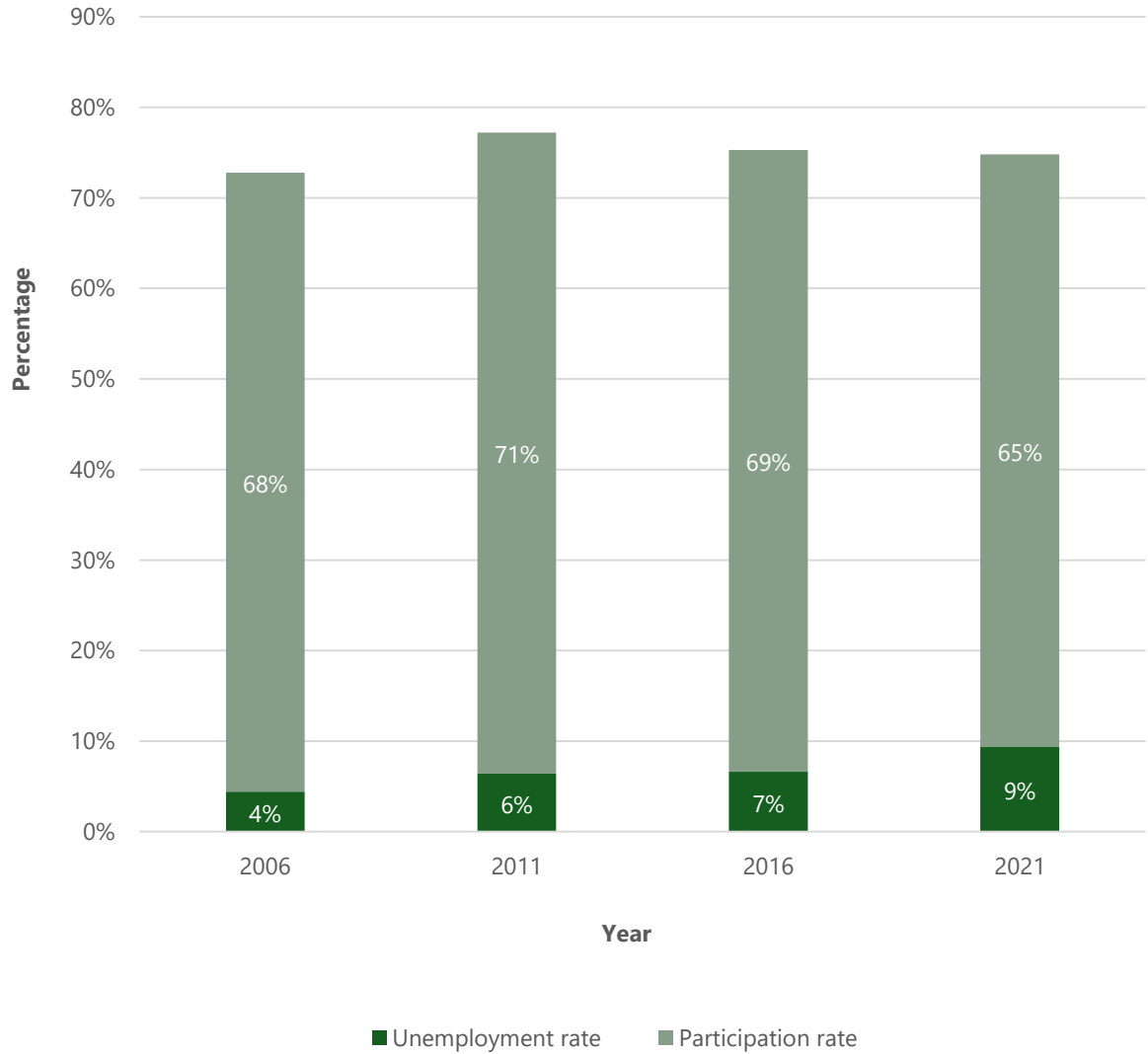
- Spatial data related to Covid-19 benefits and supports indicates that most recipients of government supports are in downtown and core neighbourhoods (80-100%).
- When comparing the location of the highest concentration of Covid-19 beneficiaries and the areas of the city where there is the highest prevalence of Core Housing Need (+20% of households), there is a strong correlation between the two datasets (**Figure 13: Core Housing Need**).

### 3.4.5 Economic Indicators

#### Data Description

Economic indicators refer to three terms: employment rate, unemployment rate, and overall participation in the labour force. Participation rate measures the total labour force of a community (people aged 15 years or older) and encompasses people that are employed and unemployed. Economic indicators are important to understand from a municipal perspective, as these trends can indicate what social supports may be needed within a community.

Chart 9: Labour Participation and Unemployment Over Time



Source: Statistics Canada (2006, 2011, 2016, 2021)

## ANALYSIS (CHART 9)

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- Between 2016 and 2021, unemployment rates climbed from 7% to 9%, while the labour participation rate declined from 69% to 65%.
- In 2021, the unemployment rate in Lethbridge (9.4%) was higher than the provincial unemployment rate (7.6%), and the labour participation rate in Lethbridge (65%) was lower than the provincial labour participation rate (71%).
- Recent data suggests that unemployment peaked in Lethbridge in June 2020 at more than 10%, but unemployment has steadily declined since that period (4.3% in November 2023).
- Sectors with highest unemployment rates as of December 2023 include accommodation and food services (8.3%), finance and insurance (7.4%), mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction (6.3%), and construction (5.8%)<sup>5</sup>.

## CONSIDERATIONS

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- Considering Lethbridge's major employment sectors (see below), the city may be somewhat more economically resilient than other communities that are more reliant upon traditional extractive industries and financial services. It is also important to note that unemployment rates can increase or decrease rapidly, often because of economic factors beyond the control of businesses or municipalities.
- Since 2016, the city's working age population has increased from 74,375 to 79,220. The total number of Lethbridge residents actively in the labour force has remained the same (51,075 in 2016 to 51,775 in 2021). Compared to 2016, there are fewer Lethbridge residents that are employed (47,705 in 2016 to 46,895 in 2021).
  - There are two major factors that may explain this declining participation rate: one being more residents have aged out of the workforce and are now collecting pensions and the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on employment opportunities, with many individuals exiting the workforce as a result.
  - Statistics Canada notes that population aging is the largest driver of a declining labour force participation rate, which is being observed nation-wide.

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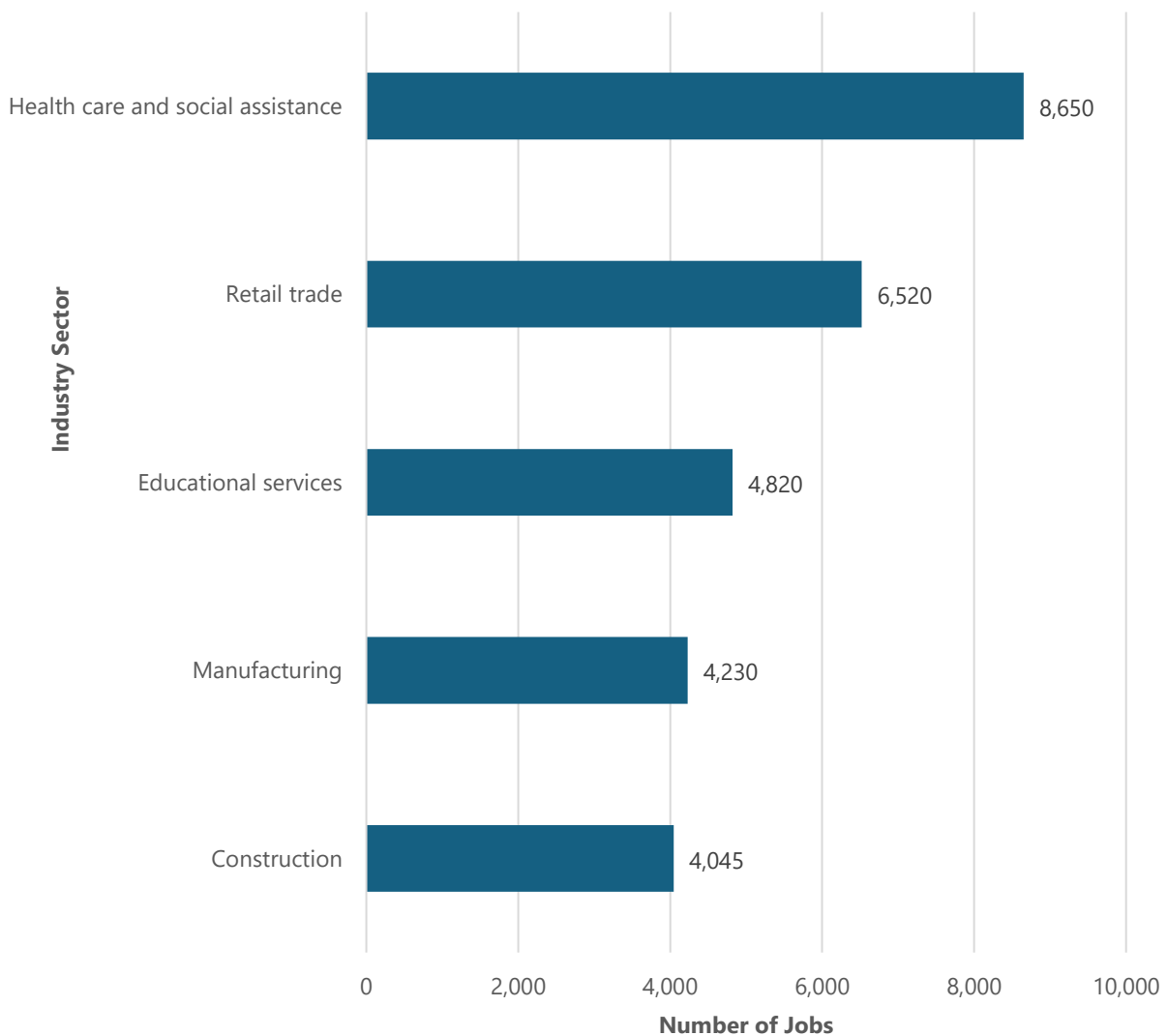
<sup>5</sup> Government of Alberta (2023). Alberta Economic Dashboard. Retrieved from: <https://economicdashboard.alberta.ca/>.

### 3.4.6 Employment: Labour by Industry Sector

#### Data Description

Workers by industry refers to a general group of economic sectors engaged in a specific set of activities within an industry. Understanding key employment sectors helps a municipality to understand where the population is employed, and how economic and environmental factors may influence the population. The table below includes the top five employment sectors and is not a full representation of all employment sectors in Lethbridge.

Chart 10: Number of Jobs by Industry Sector, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada (2021).



## ANALYSIS (CHART 10)

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**Lethbridge has strong health and social services, educational, and manufacturing construction employment sectors. Despite recent inflationary pressures, Lethbridge remains among the more affordable communities to live in Alberta in 2023.**

- The largest sectors in Lethbridge by jobs are Healthcare and Social Assistance (17%), Retail (13%) and Educational Services (9%); manufacturing and construction jobs are also prevalent in Lethbridge at 8% each.
- These three industry sectors represent 39% of the jobs in Lethbridge.
- In 2021, the five largest employers in Lethbridge were Alberta Health Services (3,512), University of Lethbridge (2,114), City of Lethbridge (1,532), Lethbridge School District Number 51 (1,200), and Lethbridge College (910).<sup>6</sup>

## CONSIDERATIONS

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- Considering the major employment sectors and employers in the city, Lethbridge's economy is potentially more stable than other mid-size communities in the province that have a larger dependence upon natural resource sectors. However, as many of these sectors and employers are directly affected by federal and provincial funding, it is important to note that disruptions resulting from funding decreases (or increases) may be felt more acutely in Lethbridge.
- The Alberta Living Wage Network calculated Lethbridge's 2023 living wage to be \$20.60 per hour, up \$0.30 from 2022. This Living Wage is the average wage needed to maintain a modest standard of living (e.g. food, shelter, clothing, transportation, health care), calculated for three household types – a family of four, a lone parent with one child, and a single individual. For a lone parent, the Living Wage increased to \$25.24, and for a single person it increases to \$23.46.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Choose Lethbridge (2022). 2021 Major Employers of Lethbridge – Companies Employing 100 or More People. Retrieved from: <https://chooselethbridge.ca/?p=0&action=table&subaction=view&ID=1812>.

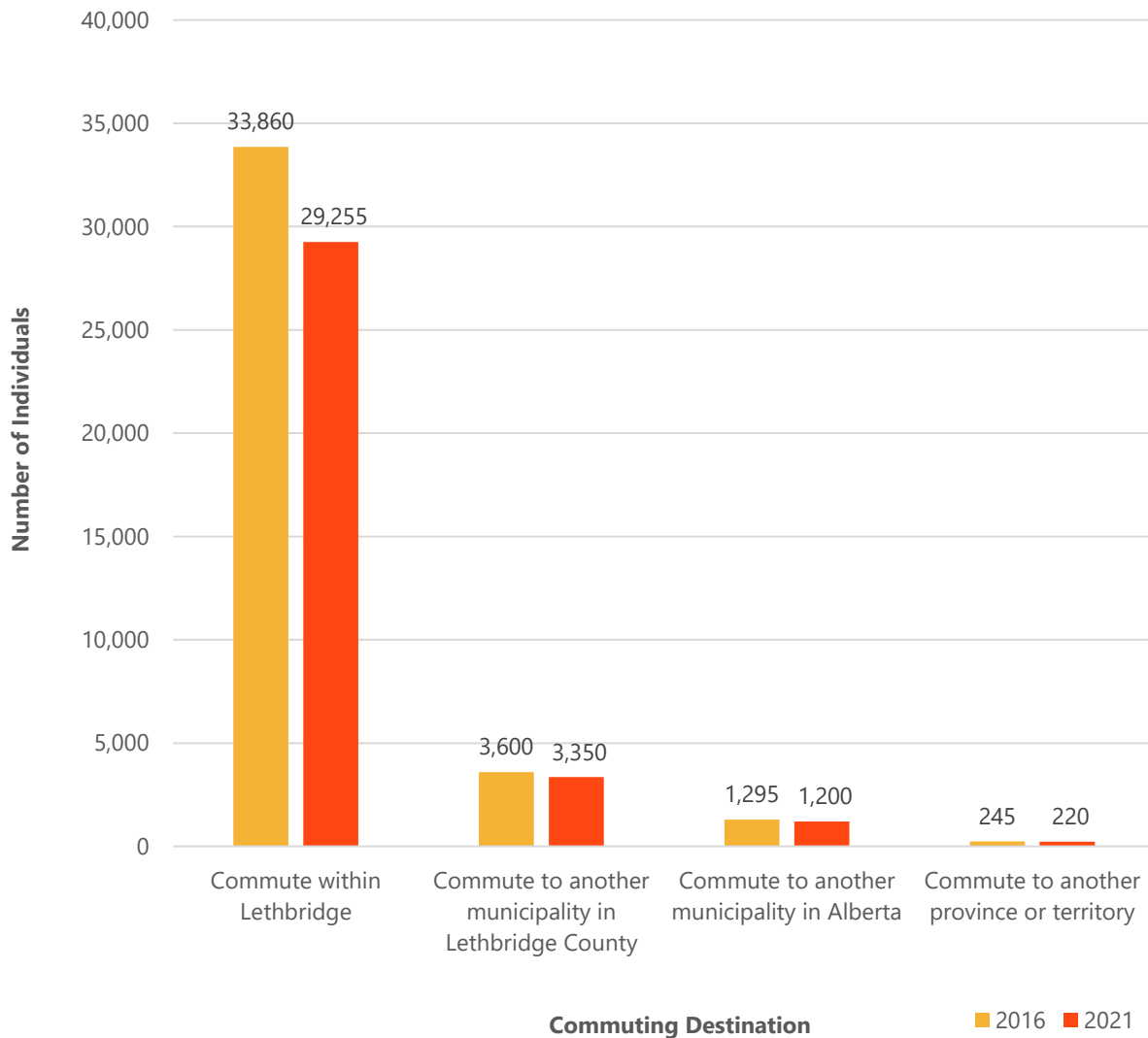
<sup>7</sup> Alberta Living Wage Network (2023). Resources. Retrieved from: <https://www.livingwagealberta.ca/>.

### 3.4.7 Workforce Commuting

#### Data Description

Commuting, in census data refers to the travel between a person’s place of residence and their place of work. Trends in commuting indicate to the municipality how many people live and work in and outside of the community. There has been a large decline in commuting within Lethbridge from 2016 to 2021; however, people living in Lethbridge generally work in Lethbridge or a nearby municipality.

Chart 11: Commuting Trends, Lethbridge, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada (2016, 2021).

## ANALYSIS (CHART 11)

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### Most people living in Lethbridge tend to work in Lethbridge or a nearby municipality.

- Between 2016 and 2021 the number of commuters declined by more than 4,600. This decrease is explained by an increase in population reporting to work from home (from 2,480 in 2016 to 6,070 in 2021)
- Of the 34,000 residents that reported commuting to work, 86% commuted to a place of work in Lethbridge, which is consistent with 2016 rates.

## CONSIDERATIONS

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- The decrease in commuting may be explained by an increase in the number of individuals indicating that they work from home (2,480 in 2016 to 6,070 in 2021) or reporting no fixed work address (6,130 in 2016 to 6,690 in 2021).
- In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many employers shifted employees to work-from-home arrangements. While many have since returned to usual places of work, some employers have maintained work-from-home or hybrid arrangements. The impacts of this shift have been observed in many downtowns across Canada, with fewer daily workers in the area, increased retail, and office vacancies, and fewer “eyes on the street” to support community safety.<sup>8</sup> Many municipalities are now looking at how to encourage residents back to core and downtown areas.

## 3.5 Community Growth

To anticipate future housing needs in Lethbridge, population, and household projections until 2029 were completed and are summarized below. The methodology used to derive these projections was created out of the Housing Accelerator Fund projections that were completed by the City in the Spring 2023.

The population projections undertaken in Housing Accelerator Fund demonstrate three possible scenarios. The actual growth of the community will be influenced by a variety of factors, including economic and population growth in the region, availability of housing, land-use decisions, and jobs in the community. Readers should note that the growth projections in this section use 2023 as the baseline year to remain consistent with the work undertaken for the Housing Accelerator Fund.

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<sup>8</sup> University of Toronto, Rotman School of Business (March 2022). COVID-19, working from home, and the future of cities and downtowns. Retrieved from: [https://www-2.rotman.utoronto.ca/insightshub/efficiency-operational-performance/Downtown\\_covid\\_real\\_estate#:~:text=If%20fewer%20workers%20are%20downtown,demand%20for%20central%20business%20districts](https://www-2.rotman.utoronto.ca/insightshub/efficiency-operational-performance/Downtown_covid_real_estate#:~:text=If%20fewer%20workers%20are%20downtown,demand%20for%20central%20business%20districts).

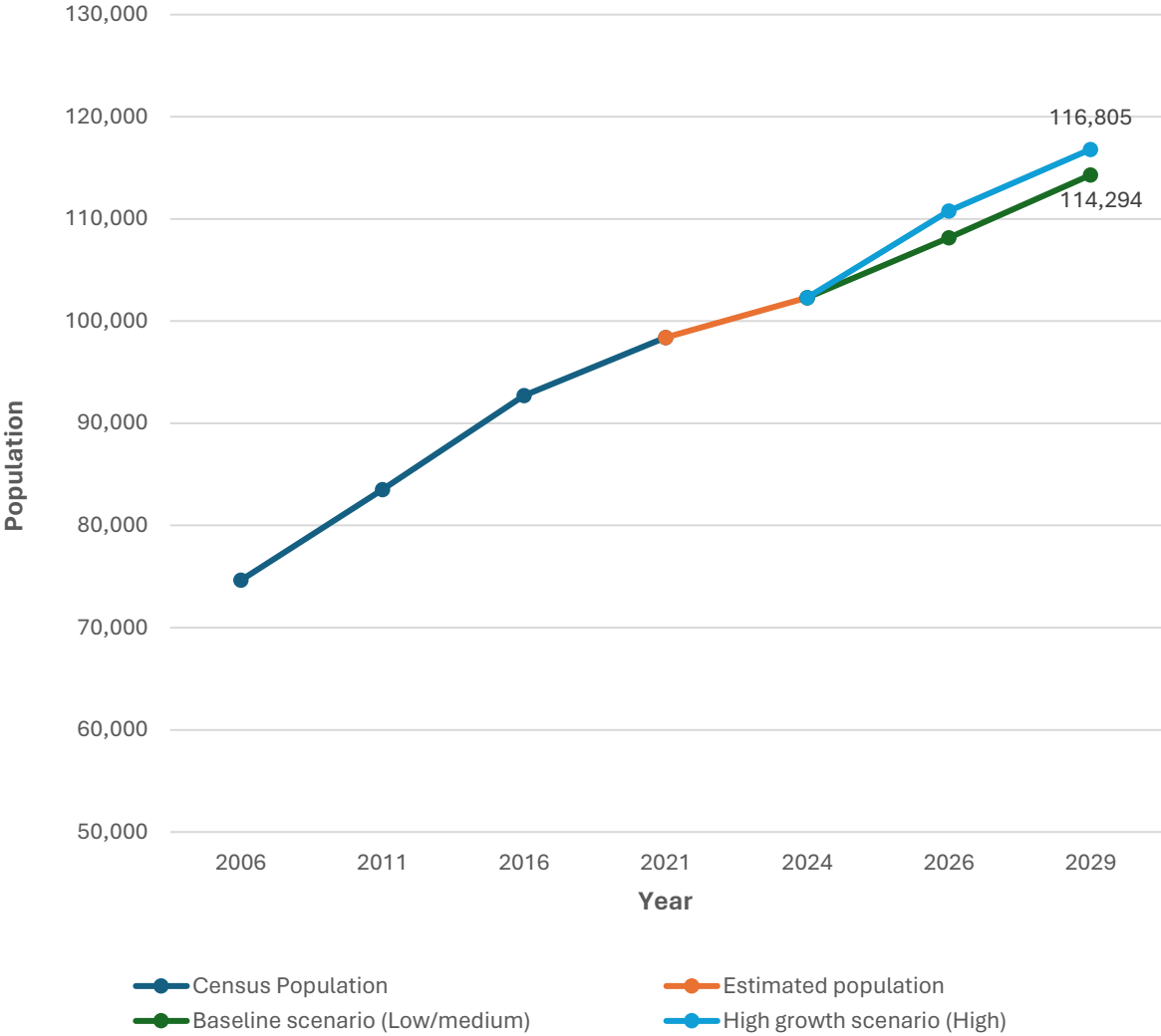
# 3.5.1 Community Growth Scenarios

## 3.5.1.1 Projected Population Growth

Community growth was projected using two population growth scenarios: baseline (low/medium growth), and high (high growth).

Using the growth scenarios, in 2023, the projected population in Lethbridge is assumed to reach 114, 294 people under the baseline growth scenario and 116,805 people under the high growth scenario.

Chart 12: Population Projection to 2029



Source: City of Lethbridge, Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF)

### 3.5.1.2 Housing Implications of Population Growth

In alignment with the work undertaken with the Housing Accelerator Fund, a top-down approach is adopted to determine headship rates in the future.

- Total headship rate is firstly determined by age group which is assumed to be constant as in 2021.
- Then, the proportion of rental tenure by age groups is projected in the next 5 years up to 2029 based on the historical trend of rental tenure proportion in the past 15 years from 2006 to 2021 to determine the proportion of renters in the next 10 years.
- The distribution of tenure-dwelling types is then determined by the historical distribution of the dwelling types for each tenure type by 2021.

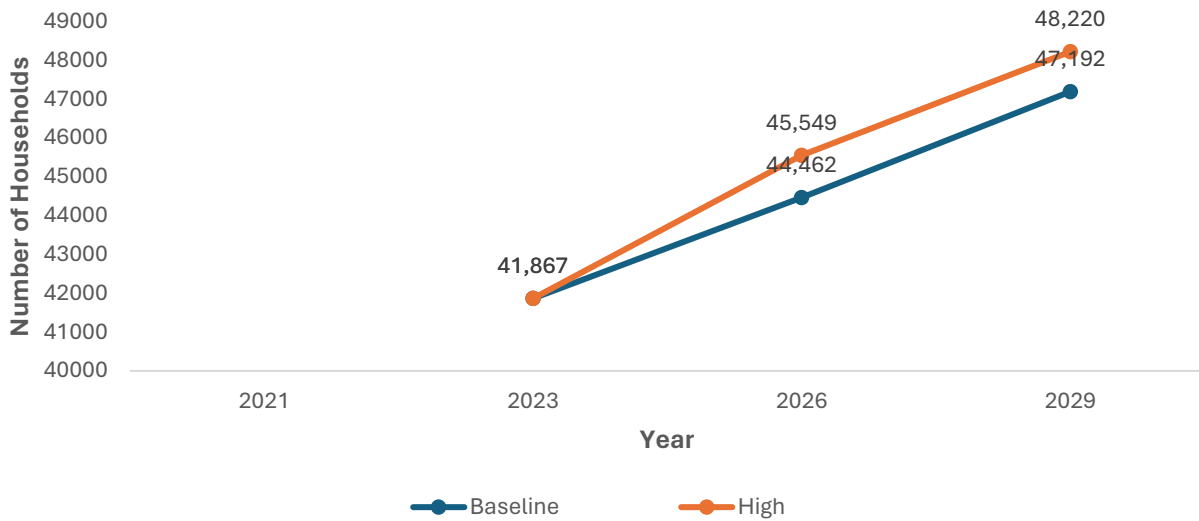
**Table 8: Description of Assumptions for Housing Growth Scenarios**

Growth Scenario	Projected Population by 2029	Headship Rate	Proportion of Rental	Affordable Housing Need
Baseline	114,294 people	Constant as of 2021	Trending	Historical averages
High	116,805 people	Constant as of 2021	Trending	Historical averages

*Source: City of Lethbridge, Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF)*

Using the headship rate, the number of households under each growth scenario are projected to 2029. If population follows low/medium growth, Lethbridge can likely expect 47,192 households in 2029 (+5,325 households). Whereas, if the high growth scenario is followed, Lethbridge can likely expect 48,220 households in 2029 (+6,353 households).

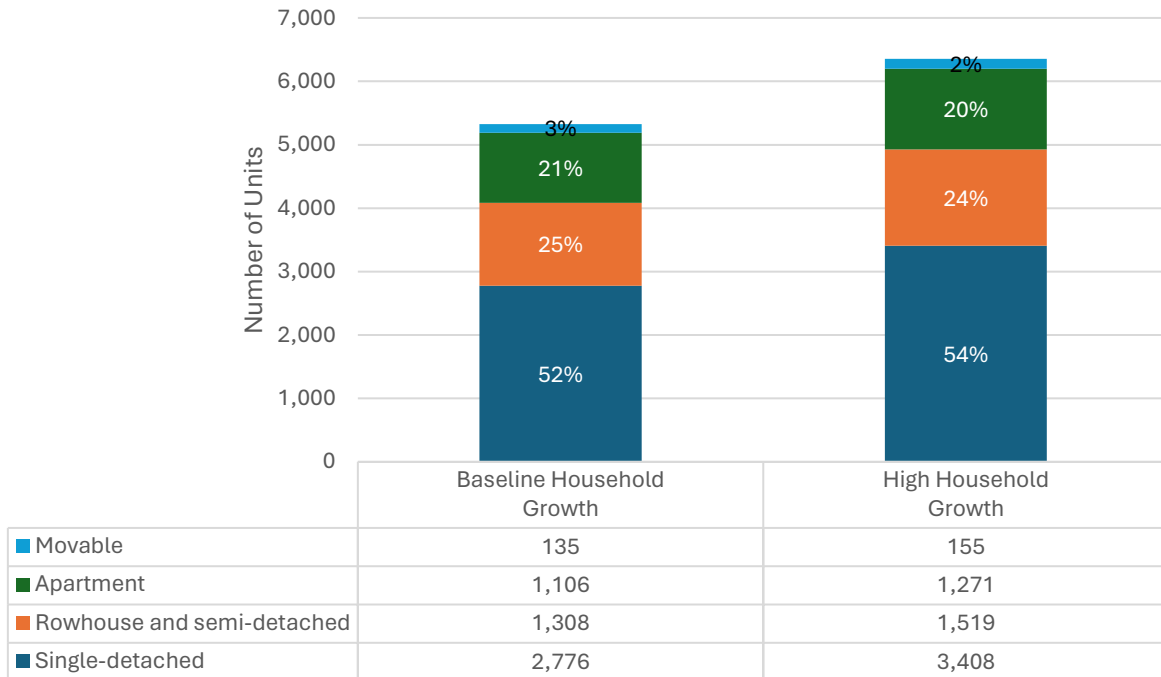
**Chart 13: Household Growth Projections (Number of Households)**



Source: City of Lethbridge, Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF)

The chart below outlines the housing type composition of the additional households projected under each growth scenario. In comparison to the existing housing type composition in Lethbridge (please refer to Section 5.1), the baseline and high growth scenario population projections anticipate higher demand for rowhouse, semi-detached and apartment housing types over the next five years and decreasing demand for single-detached housing.

**Chart 14: Additional Households by Household Composition, 2023 - 2029**



Source: City of Lethbridge, Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF)

# Community Wellbeing & Safety

# 4 COMMUNITY WELLBEING AND SAFETY

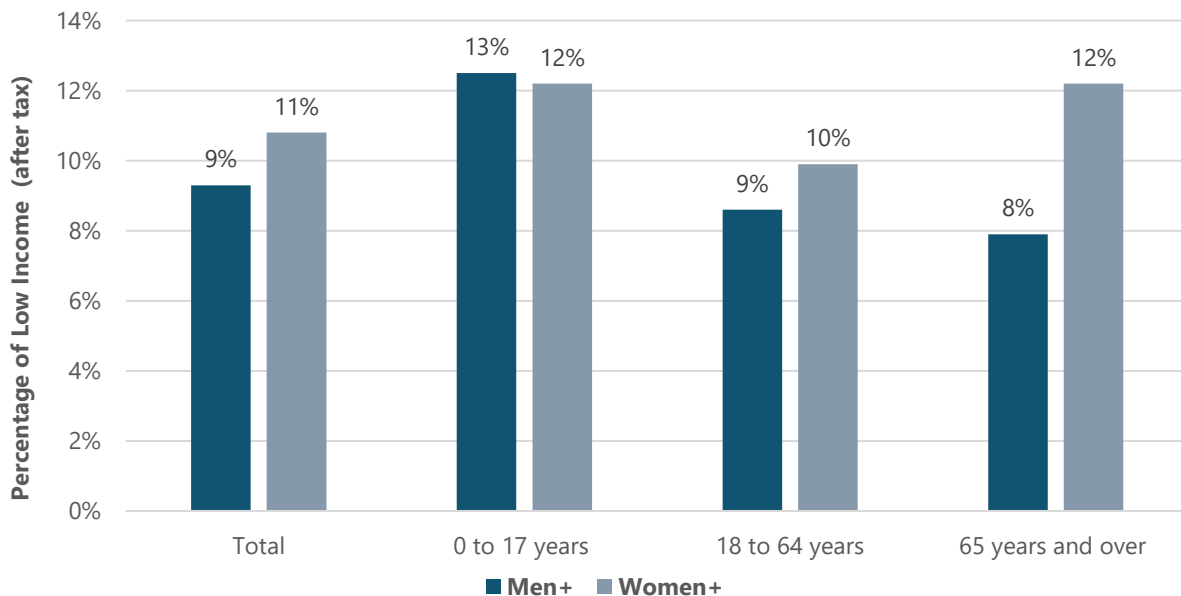
## 4.1 Income

### 4.1.1 Prevalence of Low Income

#### Data Description

The Low-income measure, after tax (LIM-AT), refers to a fixed percentage (50%) of median-adjusted after-tax income of private households. The household after-tax income is adjusted by an equivalency scale to take economies of scale into account. This adjustment for different household sizes reflects the fact that a household's needs increase, but at a decreasing rate, as the number of members increases.<sup>9</sup>

Chart 15: Low Income



Source: Statistics Canada (2021).

#### ANALYSIS (CHART 15)

**Women over age 18 are more likely to be in a low-income state than men.**

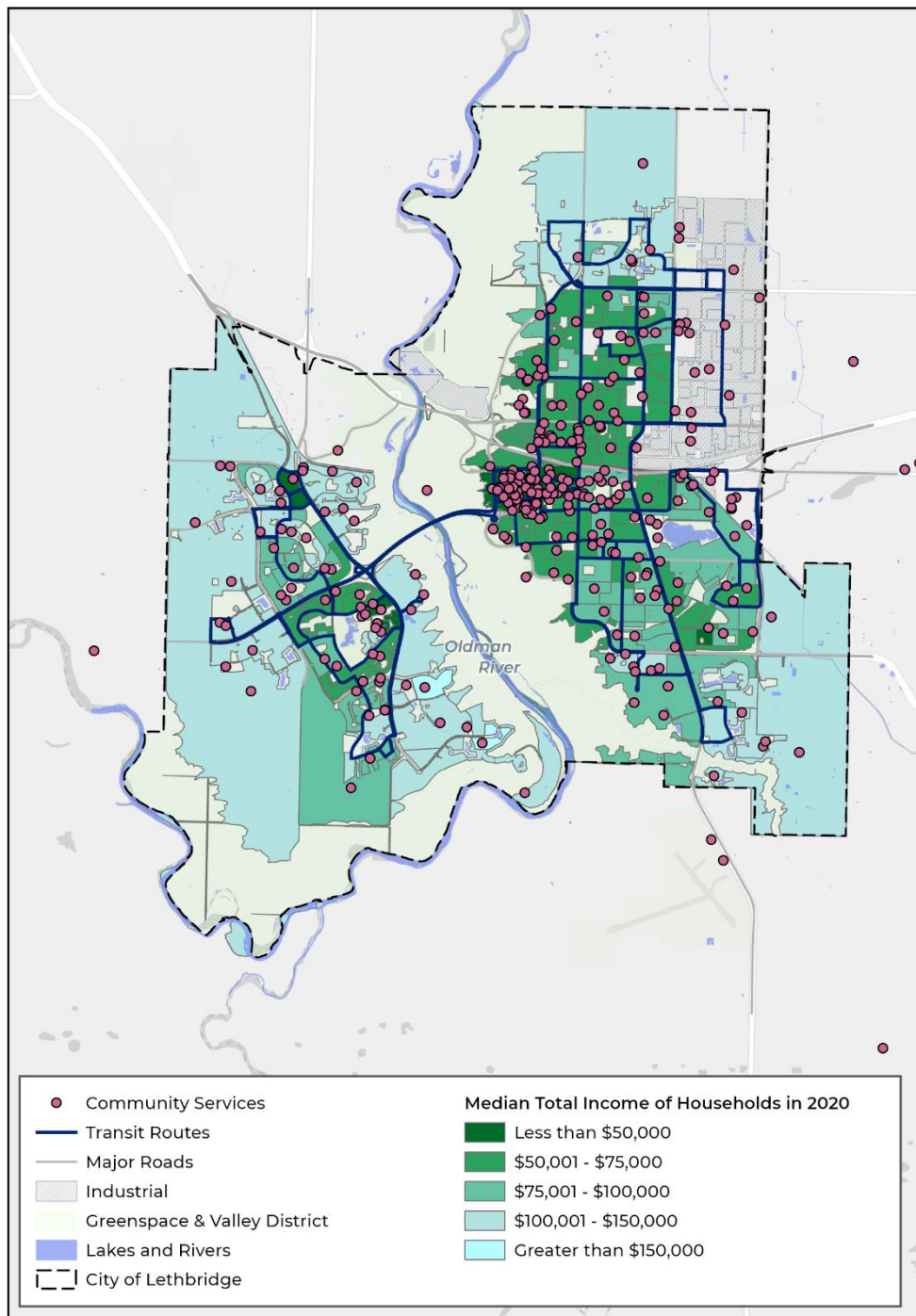
- This difference between women and men becomes especially pronounced for individuals above the age of 65, where 8% of men are in a low-income state compared to 12% of women.

<sup>9</sup> Statistics Canada (2022). Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021 – Definition. Retrieved from: <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/ref/dict/az/Definition-eng.cfm?ID=fam021>.



## 4.1.2 Income and Fee Assistance

Figure 8: Household Median Income with Community Assets



Source: Economic Development Lethbridge (2024); Statistics Canada (2021).

Note: Community assets were identified by referencing registered societies that were noted as community serving organizations in Lethbridge under the Alberta Society's Act. This list of Community Assets should be further refined by the City of Lethbridge, and updated on a consistent basis, to confirm that the listed Community Assets cover the service areas most relevant to community wellbeing, safety, and housing.

## ANALYSIS (FIGURE 8)

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**There are just over 10,000 households that may be eligible for fee assistance from the City of Lethbridge as of 2021.**

- 10,525 households earn less than \$50,000 per year—the income cut-off for fee assistance from the City of Lethbridge for a family of four. The City of Lethbridge applies a 10%+/- approach to determining eligibility, which increases the income threshold for assistance.
- The number of households earning less than \$50,000 per year has steadily declined since 2011, where there were 13,035 such households, compared to 11,980 in 2016 and 10,525 in 2021. Alberta’s minimum wage increased to \$15.00 per hour in 2018, which may have contributed to this decline in the number of households earning less than \$50,000 per year.
- Many of the households qualifying for income assistance are in the downtown, core, and mature neighbourhoods.
- More than 1,600 Lethbridge residents accessed the Fee Assistance Program (FAP) in 2022<sup>10</sup>. In 2023, the program was enhanced to include recreation and culture activities, as well as bus passes.
- As of December 2023, there were more than 7,700 recipients of Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) in the South Zone.<sup>11</sup> While data is not available specific to Lethbridge, the total caseload number of recipients of AISH has increased from approximately 55,000 in 2016 to nearly 75,000 in 2023/24. As of January 1, 2023, the maximum monthly living allowance through AISH was \$1,787 for an individual, with additional benefits available for individuals living in facilities or with children.<sup>12</sup> Considering Lethbridge’s aging population, it is possible that the number of individuals receiving AISH in the city will increase overtime. Given the modest level of income that these individuals receive, housing affordability, combined with overall cost of living increases, is a significant concern. AISH living allowances will be re-indexed to inflation as of 2024.
- Areas of the city that tend to have lower median household incomes have greater concentrations of community and social services. These neighbourhoods also have large numbers of seniors, smaller households (e.g. one or two person households) and are experiencing population decline. It is important for the provision of community and social services to be located in the areas where they are most needed; while historically these areas have been more centrally located, over time need may become more diffused across the city rather than concentrated in core neighbourhoods.

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<sup>10</sup> City of Lethbridge (2022). Cultural and Social Standing Policy Committee Report, December 15, 2022. Retrieved from: [https://agendas.lethbridge.ca/AgendaOnline/Documents/ViewDocument/Summary\\_Sheet\\_for\\_-\\_FEE\\_ASSISTANCE\\_PROGRAM\\_ANNUAL\\_REPORT\\_\(94047\)?meetingId=3884&documentType=Minutes&itemId=96831&publishId=79530&isSection=false](https://agendas.lethbridge.ca/AgendaOnline/Documents/ViewDocument/Summary_Sheet_for_-_FEE_ASSISTANCE_PROGRAM_ANNUAL_REPORT_(94047)?meetingId=3884&documentType=Minutes&itemId=96831&publishId=79530&isSection=false)

<sup>11</sup> Government of Alberta (2024). Alberta Seniors, Community Social Services Open Data – Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH). Retrieved from: <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/df7b7b00-c5c3-4d0e-97ff-5f902537fac0/resource/4ffaa6a4-383d-47ab-b515-014f8fe2f015/download/aish-data-visualization-september-2020.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Government of Alberta (2024). Financial Benefits Summary - Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH). Retrieved from: <https://cfr.forms.gov.ab.ca/form/DS0433>.

## CONSIDERATIONS

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With significant increases to cost of living being experienced post-pandemic, it will be important to monitor FAP uptake, expand promotion and awareness, adjust income thresholds, and review what types of costs are eligible for support on an ongoing basis, as demonstrated by the City's recent expansion of the program to include public transit costs.

### 4.1.3 Food Security

Table 9: Food Bank Usage, Interfaith Food Bank Program

Year	Interfaith Food Bank Program Usage			
	Hampers	Adults	Children	New Clients
2018	7894	12032	7225	404
2019	7026	9641	6324	394
2020	5833	8047	4942	267
2021	6344	8661	5839	252
2022	8123	11425	8184	382

Source: Interfaith Food Bank Society of Lethbridge (2022).

## ANALYSIS (TABLE 9)

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### Food insecurity has increased in Lethbridge since 2019.

- In 2022, the Lethbridge Interfaith Food Bank Society (Food Bank) served approximately 11,000 adults and 8,100 children in need.
- In 2022, more than 8,100 food hampers were distributed by the Lethbridge Interfaith Food Bank Society—a significant increase from 5,800 food hampers in 2020.

### More people, including a significant increase in children, are relying on food bank support in Lethbridge.

- As of July 2023, the Lethbridge Interfaith Food Bank reports having distributed more than 3,000 hampers, with new clients of the Food Bank increasing from 252 people to more than 380 people in 2022.
- The ending of COVID-19 relief benefits has resulted in a 'boomerang' effect in child poverty rates where rates have likely returned pre-pandemic measures where approximately 4,100 residents under

the age of 17 were considered as low-income in 2016 (LIM-AT).<sup>13</sup> In 2021, 5,839 children accessed Lethbridge Interfaith Food Bank programming. In 2022, children accessing the food bank has increased by 71% (8,184 children).

- The Lethbridge Food Bank established a Mobile Food Support program that distributes hampers at key locations throughout the community, including the Nord-Bridge Seniors Centre, Lethbridge College, and other locations.

## CONSIDERATIONS

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- COVID-19 relief benefits may have played a role in decreasing reliance on the Interfaith Food Bank in 2020 and 2021.
- Food insecurity is increasing across Canada because of significant food price increases experienced between 2020 to 2023: the average family of 4 is now estimated to spend close to \$16,300 per year on food alone and while food prices are forecast to decline in 2024, there were almost 2 million visits to food banks in 2023 – a close to 80% increase from pre-2020 levels.<sup>1415</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Alberta Child Poverty Report (2022). Retrieved from: [https://edmontonsocialplanning.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/ESPC\\_ChildPovertyReport-V04\\_230512.pdf](https://edmontonsocialplanning.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/ESPC_ChildPovertyReport-V04_230512.pdf).

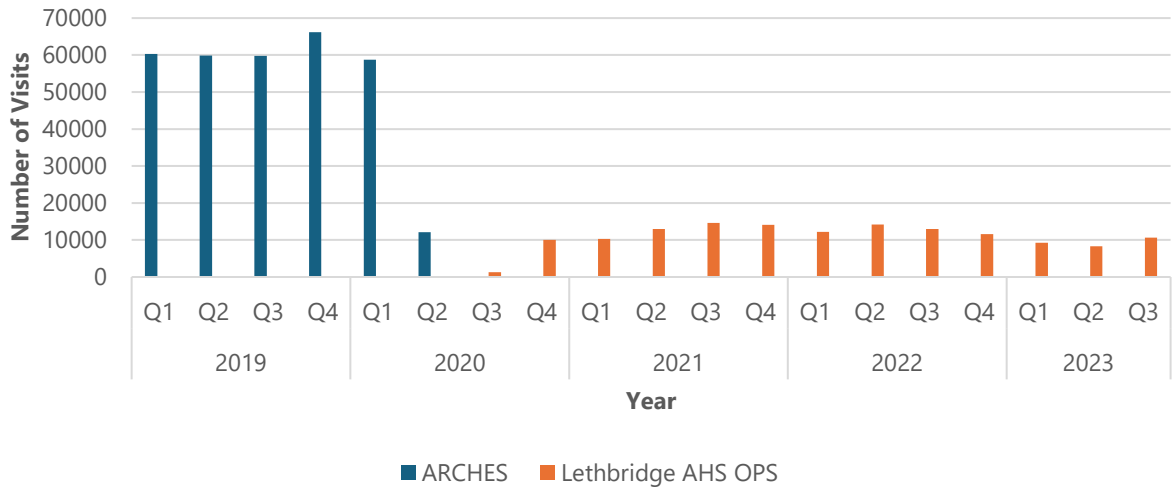
<sup>14</sup> Dalhousie University, The University of British Columbia, University of Guelph, and University of Saskatchewan (2024). 14<sup>th</sup> Edition of Canada's Food Price Report 2024. Retrieved from: [https://cdn.dal.ca/content/dam/dalhousie/pdf/sites/agri-food/EN\\_CANADA'S%20FOOD%20PRICE%20REPORT%202024.pdf](https://cdn.dal.ca/content/dam/dalhousie/pdf/sites/agri-food/EN_CANADA'S%20FOOD%20PRICE%20REPORT%202024.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Food Banks Canada (2023). Hunger Count 2023. Retrieved from: <https://foodbankscanada.ca/hungercount/> [Food Banks Canada \(2023\). Hunger Count 2023. Retrieved from: https://foodbankscanada.ca/hungercount/](https://foodbankscanada.ca/hungercount/)

## 4.2 Substance Use

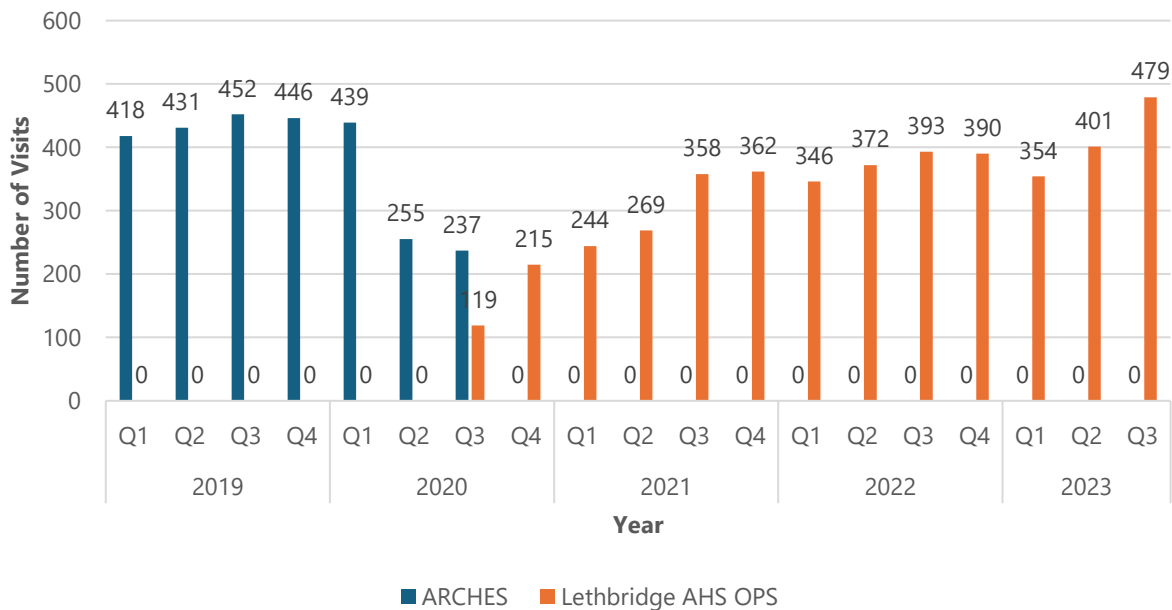
### 4.2.1 Opioid Use and Treatment

Chart 16: Visits by Site to Supervised Consumption Site Services in Lethbridge



Source: Alberta Health Service (2023).

Chart 17: Average Unique Visitors Per Month to Supervised Consumption Site Services in Lethbridge



Source: Government of Alberta Substance Use Surveillance System (Feb 2024 Update).

## ANALYSIS (CHART 16 AND 17)

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### Harm reduction supports in Lethbridge has evolved since 2019.

- In 2018, the Supervised Consumption Site operated by the non-profit organization, ARCHES, opened. Between 2018-2020, the ARCHES facility was the only safe consumption service offered in Lethbridge. The Government of Alberta defunded the facility in August 2020 (Q3 2020).
- During its operations, ARCHES reported an average of 383 unique visitors per month between Q1 2019 and Q3 2020; and an average of 52,000 visits per quarter. COVID-19 public health restrictions limited ARCHES ability to operate in 2020, helping to explain the decline in the number of unique visitors per month and total number of visits observed in the data (Chart 13 and 14)
- Following the closure of ARCHES in August 2020, Alberta Health Services (AHS) started operating a mobile Overdose Prevention Service (OPS). The mobile unit (i.e., vehicle) is located outside at the Lethbridge Wellness Shelter and Stabilization Units.
- The AHS OPS has experienced a steady increase in the average number of unique visitors per month since it started operating, increasing from 119 visits in Q3 2020 to 479 visits as of Q3 2023. AHS indicates that the mobile OPS is a temporary solution and long-term strategies need to be in place to support Lethbridge community members living with addiction.<sup>16</sup>
- It is important to note that there are significant differences between services that were offered by ARCHES and what is currently being offered by AHS through the OPS, both in terms of capacity and route of consumption. OPS should not be viewed as a direct replacement of services offered by ARCHES, but rather, as a different service entirely.

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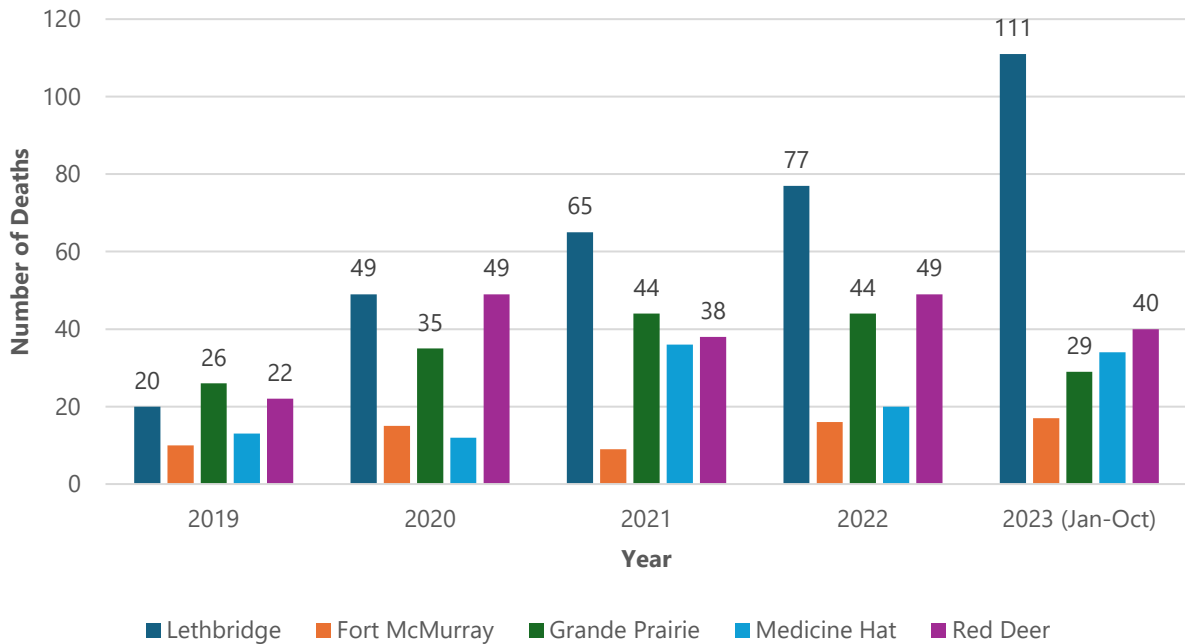
<sup>16</sup> Alberta Health Services (2023). Lethbridge: Supervised Consumption Services. Retrieved from: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/info/Page16052.aspx>

## CONSIDERATIONS

- The Government of Alberta is shifting its approach to addressing addiction support.
- The Government is moving away from safe supply/harm reduction towards a recovery-oriented system of care.
- A recovery-oriented system of care includes investments being made into recovery communities and expanding digital supports for those struggling with mental health and addiction. As well, a recovery-oriented system of care includes the development of new 50-bed recovery facility east of Lethbridge operated by Fresh Start Recovery Centre, and the construction of 75-bed recovery facility near Cardston, AB operated by the Blood Tribe Department of Health. It will be integral for the City and its partners to work closely with AHS and the province on the long-term implementation of the Alberta Recovery Model.<sup>17</sup>

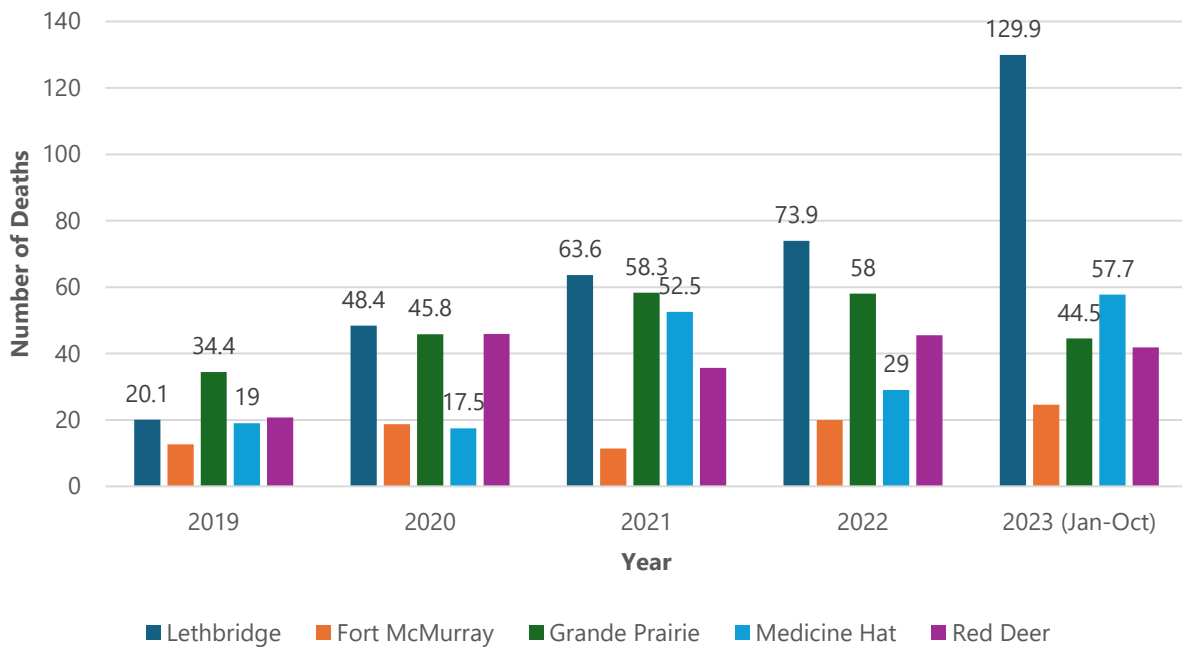
### 4.2.2 Opioid Deaths

Chart 18: Number of Drug Poisoning Deaths by Year (Any Opioid)



<sup>17</sup> Government of Alberta (2024). Alberta Recovery Model. Retrieved from: <https://www.alberta.ca/alberta-recovery-oriented-system-of-care>.

**Chart 19: Rate of Drug Poisoning Deaths per 100,000 Persons Years by Year (Any Opioid)**



Source: Government of Alberta Substance Use Surveillance System (Feb 2024 Update)

## ANALYSIS (CHART 18 AND CHART 19)

### Opioid related overdoses and deaths in Lethbridge has increased significantly over time.

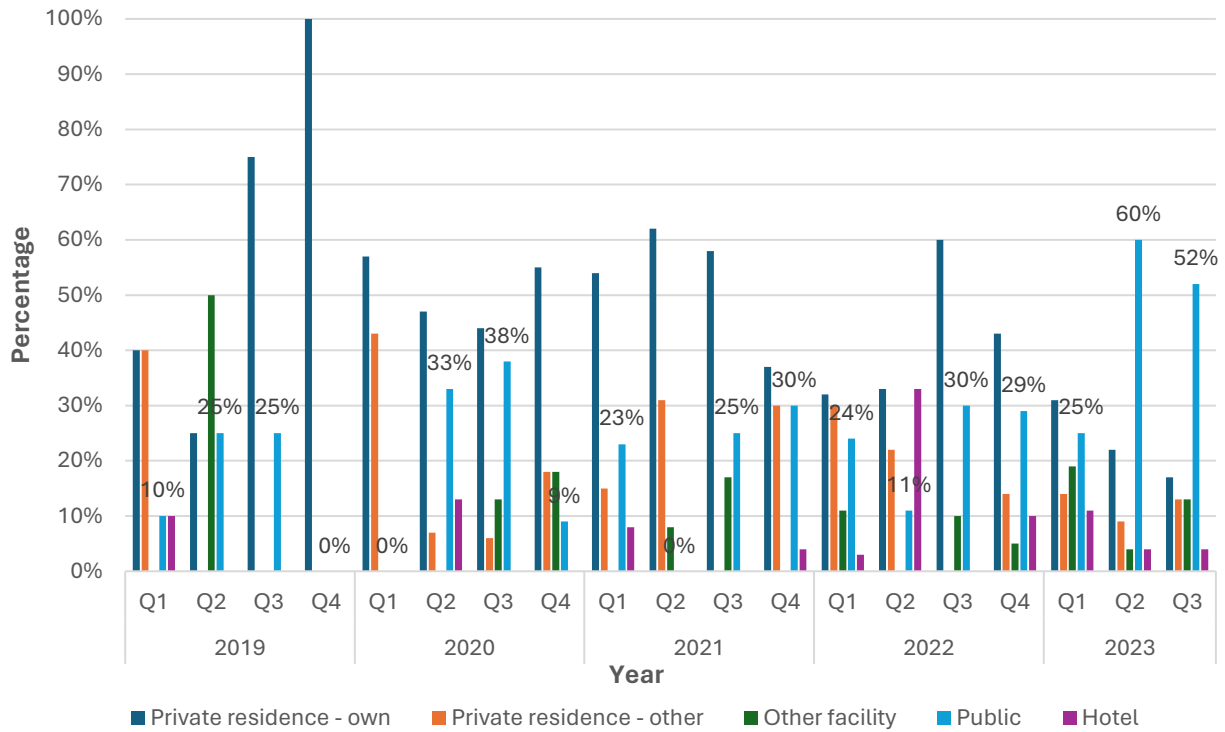
- According to the Government of Alberta's Substance Use Surveillance Dashboard, more than 111 people in Lethbridge lost their lives to opioid drug poisoning between January and October 2023 – compared to 77 for the entirety of 2022, 65 in 2021, and 41 in 2020.<sup>18</sup>
- On a per capita basis, Lethbridge has the highest rate of drug poisoning deaths of any municipality in Alberta being monitored by the province (more than three times the rate of Red Deer and more than twice the rate of Medicine Hat).
- A significant driver of opioid related drug poisoning deaths may be the overall toxicity of the local drug supply, which is highly variable across communities. Periods of particularly toxic supply can lead to rapidly increased numbers of overdoses and deaths. It will be important to monitor the Substance Use Surveillance Dashboard regularly to determine whether this trend is episodic or more sustained.

<sup>18</sup> Government of Alberta (2024). Alberta substance use surveillance system. Retrieved from: [https://healthanalytics.alberta.ca/SASVisualAnalytics/?reportUri=%2Freports%2Freports%2F1bbb695d-14b1-4346-b66e-d401a40f53e6&sectionIndex=0&sso\\_guest=true&reportViewOnly=true&reportContextBar=false&sas-welcome=false](https://healthanalytics.alberta.ca/SASVisualAnalytics/?reportUri=%2Freports%2Freports%2F1bbb695d-14b1-4346-b66e-d401a40f53e6&sectionIndex=0&sso_guest=true&reportViewOnly=true&reportContextBar=false&sas-welcome=false)



## 4.2.3 Opioid Death Locations

Chart 20: Location of Unintentional Opioid Poisoning Deaths



Source: Government of Alberta Substance Use Surveillance System (Feb 2024 Update)

## ANALYSIS (CHART 20)

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### Where people are dying of drug poisonings in Lethbridge has changed since 2019.

- In 2019, the most common location for an unintentional opioid poisoning death was either a person's private residence or someone else's residence. As of 2023, the most common location was in public.
- On average in 2023, 46% of opioid poisoning deaths in Lethbridge occurred in public, compared to 24% in 2022, and 20% in 2021. This trend is also visible Alberta-wide, with 34% of deaths occurring in public in 2023 (increasing to 43% in Q3 2023). In Q3 2023, 22% and 50% of opioid poisoning deaths occurred in public in Red Deer and Grande Prairie, respectively.

## CONSIDERATIONS

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It is important to note the interconnected nature of social challenges in relation to not only the increased number of opioid poisoning deaths in Lethbridge, but also where people are using and dying from substance use in the city.

The trend of increasing public drug poisoning deaths is likely interconnected with a lack of supportive, transitional, and emergency shelter capacity development, and the increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness in Lethbridge.

At the same time, with the closure of the supervised consumption site in the city and increase in homelessness, drug usage has become more visible in the community, with more residents aware of how severe the situation has become over time. All these factors, together, also help contribute to a declining perception of safety in the community, especially in the downtown.

## 4.3 Health

Lethbridge falls within Alberta Health Services' South Zone. This means that in some cases there is not Lethbridge-specific health data available for review. However, there are some datasets pertaining to the city that have been reviewed. Data presented below has been sourced from AHS annual reporting for the South Zone, with specific analysis of Lethbridge-specific indicators where available.

## 4.3.1 Rates of Chronic Disease

Table 10: Prevalence Rates of Chronic Disease per 100 People (2022)

Location	Hypertension	Diabetes	Ischemic Heart Disease	Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease
Lethbridge – South	20	7.9	3.7	2.6
Lethbridge – North	22	9.2	4	3.1
Lethbridge – West	19.9	7.5	3.3	1.7
Alberta	20.6	8.3	4	2.9

Source: Alberta Health Service (2022a, 2022b, 2022c).

### ANALYSIS (TABLE 10)

**In 2022, prevalence of death due to chronic disease in Lethbridge is comparable to provincial rates.**

- The most common cause of death due to chronic disease in Lethbridge is hypertension, with around 20 per 100 deaths (20.6 Alberta-wide), followed by diabetes at 8.2 (8.3 Alberta-wide), and ischemic heart disease at 3.6 (4.0 Alberta-wide).
- In 2022, health zone reporting indicated that there are generally lower rates of chronic disease related deaths in West Lethbridge than in south or north Lethbridge. This data may relate to spatial analysis completed for the population by age cohort where data shows higher percentages of people aged 65 and older live in south and north Lethbridge where chronic disease death rates are higher, and higher percentages of people aged 0-14 living in West Lethbridge where chronic disease death rates are lower.

**The total number of physicians practicing in Lethbridge has been stable since 2019, but recent efforts to increase recruitment may see more physicians move to the city.**

- In 2019, according to the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta, there were 294 physicians practicing in Lethbridge.<sup>19</sup> The number of physicians practicing in Lethbridge declined to 278 in 2022; however, bounced back in 2023 by 8% with 300 physicians practicing in the city.<sup>20</sup> Factoring in population growth over this period, the per capita ratio of physicians to population has increased from 345:1 in 2019 to 355:1 in 2023.
- The City of Lethbridge, along with Economic Development Lethbridge and Chinook Primary Care Network, have been working to increase physician attraction and retention through advertising campaigns and developing information resources to encourage physicians to start medical practices in Lethbridge.<sup>21</sup> These efforts, where feasible, should be continued.

**The Chinook Regional Hospital is a major healthcare asset in Lethbridge and the region.**

- AHS has recently invested in Chinook Regional Hospital include expanding the ICU and creating new inpatient units.<sup>22</sup>
- As of 2021/2022, there were approximately 222 acute care beds available at the hospital, with close to 14,000 acute care hospital stays in 2022/2023.
- The hospital saw close to 65,000 emergency room visits in 2022/2023.<sup>23</sup>

## CONSIDERATIONS

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In late-2023, the Government of Alberta announced major changes to the structure of AHS, including the creation of four separate agencies with different portfolios: primary care, acute care, continuing care, and mental health and addiction.<sup>24</sup> These changes will affect the operations of the Chinook Regional Hospital and other AHS facilities in Lethbridge. It will be important for the City of Lethbridge and its partners to monitor capital and program planning within AHS to understand what impacts may be occurring locally, specifically as they relate to access to and provision of health care services in the city.

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<sup>19</sup> College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta (2019). Quarterly Update: Physician Resources in Alberta April 01, 2019, to June 30, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://cpsa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Quarterly-Report-Q2-2019.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta (2023). Quarterly Update: Physician Resources in Alberta Oct 01, 2023, to Dec 31, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://cpsa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Q4-2023-Quarterly-Report.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> Choose Lethbridge (2023). Doctor Recruitment. Retrieved from: <https://choosethbridge.ca/doctor-recruitment>.

<sup>22</sup> Alberta Health Services (2021). Multi-Year Health Facility Infrastructure Capital Submission 2021. Retrieved from: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/about/publications/ahs-pub-2021-capital-submission.pdf>.

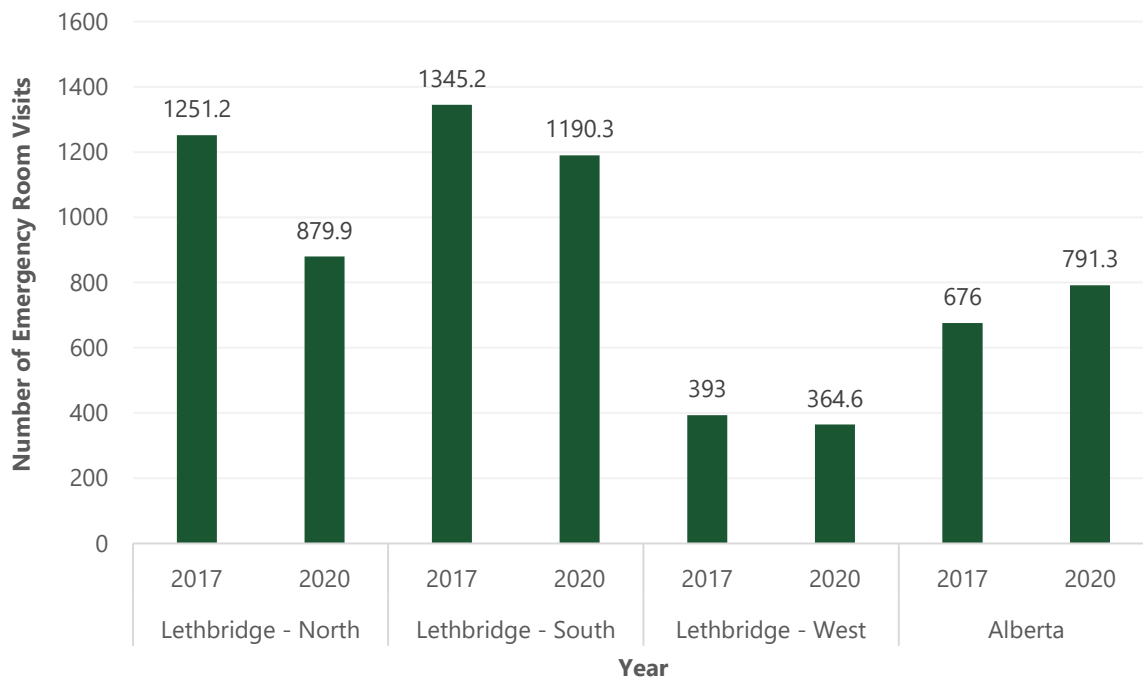
<sup>23</sup> Canadian Institute for Health Information (2022-2023). Chinook Regional Hospital. Retrieved from:

<https://yourhealthsystem.cih.ca/hsp/indepth?lang=en#/overall/d8afc83395806ec6292153c1759ba2d95c7a2e8c/4/>

<sup>24</sup> Government of Alberta (2024). Refocusing health care in Alberta. Retrieved from: <https://www.alberta.ca/refocusing-health-care-in-alberta>.

## 4.3.2 Mental Health: Emergency Room Visits

Chart 21: Emergency Room Visit for Mental and Behavioral Disorders due to Psychoactive Substance Use (per 100,000)



Source: Alberta Health Services (2022a, 2022b, 2022c).

### ANALYSIS (CHART 21)

**Need for mental health supports and awareness of mental health has increased significantly since 2019.**

- In 2022, health zone reporting indicated that there are generally higher rates of emergency room visits for mental and behavioural disorders due to psychoactive substance use in South or North Lethbridge than West Lethbridge.
- Per 100,000 population, rate of emergency room visits for mental and behavioral disorders due to psychoactive substance use is significantly higher in South Lethbridge (1190 / 100k) and North Lethbridge (878) than provincial rates (791); rates are nearly half the Alberta rate in West Lethbridge.
- Rate of emergency room visits for mental and behavioral disorders due to psychoactive substance use have declined from 2019 in North Lethbridge (1442), South Lethbridge (985), and West Lethbridge (706)
- At a zone-level, there were 9,077 individuals in the South Zone that accessed outpatient mental health services in 2020-2021; an additional 152 individuals accessed addiction residential treatment

programs, 351 accessed detox programs, and 199 accessed opioid dependency programs over this period.

- Compared to zone-level data for 2017/18, the number of individuals accessing addiction residential treatment (179) and detox (225) have declined in Lethbridge, but the number of individuals accessing opioid dependency programs (18) has increased significantly; it should be noted that opioid dependency programs was newly introduced in 2017-18, with additional resources and efforts directed towards supporting individuals with substance use challenges dedicated by AHS in the years that have followed.<sup>25</sup>
- The Government of Alberta announced \$275 million in funding for addictions and mental health supports in 2023. Much of this funding is allocated to developing Recovery Communities as part of the government's broader Alberta Recovery Model to addiction and mental health treatment. One of these Recovery Communities has opened near Fresh Start Recovery Centre east of Lethbridge, with capacity of 50 beds.
- Understanding the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health and addiction support services in Lethbridge is difficult without AHS data for this time period, but engagement with service providers illustrates that availability of services is inadequate for level of demand that is being experienced.

## 4.4 Education

### 4.4.1 Primary and High School

#### ANALYSIS

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**School enrolment and achievement levels have remained stable at the primary level in Lethbridge, but graduation rates have declined at the secondary level in Lethbridge since 2019.**

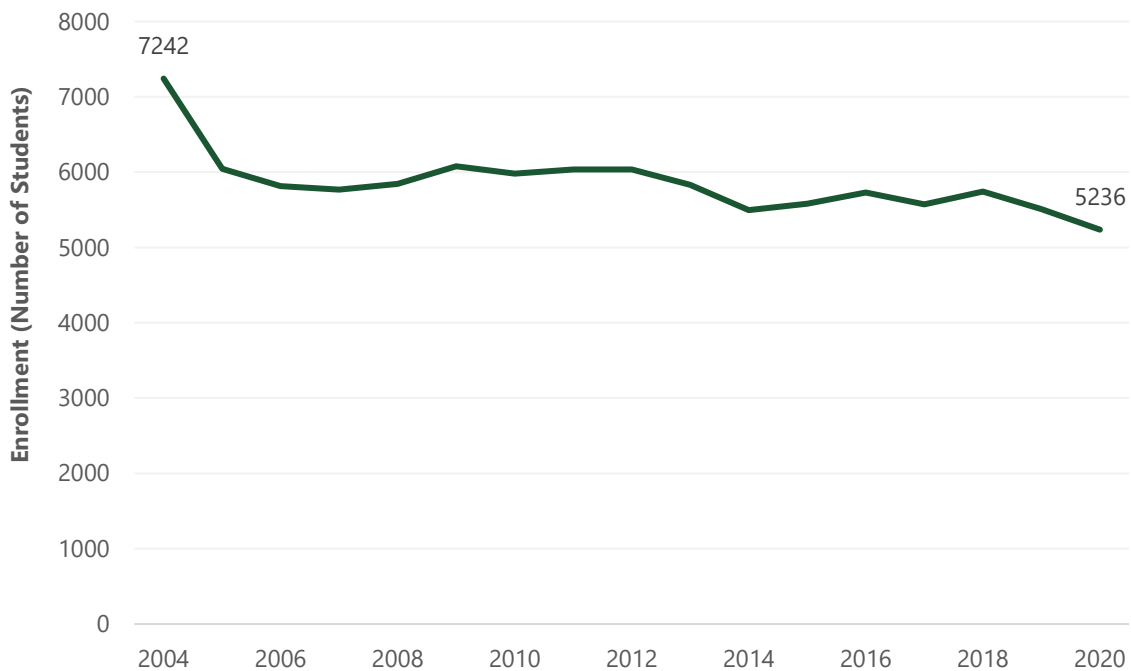
- Lethbridge School Division 51 reported a 75.2% 3-year high school completion rate for 2022/23, compared to nearly 80% in 2021/22—these graduation rates are below the Alberta rate of 81.1% (2022/23).
- Lethbridge School Division 51 and Holy Spirit School Division are projecting student enrolments to remain stable over the next two academic years. In 2023, Lethbridge School Division 51 reported 12,006 enrolled students, and the Holy Spirit School Division reported 5,143 enrolled students.

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<sup>25</sup> Government of Alberta (2019). Alberta Health: Primary, Community and Indigenous Health – Community Profile: Lethbridge South, Health Data and Summary. Retrieved from: <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/0fa22a31-d2c5-40d8-acc6-f63f4e6677fc/resource/838f470e-6713-43e1-9d27-7dfd6877d606/download/health-pcih-community-profile-lethbridge-south-2019.pdf>.

## 4.4.2 Post-Secondary Education

Chart 22: Number of Students Enrolled in Post-Secondary Education in Lethbridge



Source: Alberta Regional Dashboard (2023).

### ANALYSIS (CHART 22)

The number of Lethbridge residents enrolled in post-secondary programs has declined from a peak of 7,242 students in 2006 to 5,236 students in 2020.

- Lethbridge College and the University of Lethbridge reported declining enrolment as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, Lethbridge College reports that enrolments have now returned to pre-pandemic levels (6,500 students) for the 23/24 academic year.
- University of Lethbridge enrolment has declined since 2019 (8,956 students), with around 8,300 students enrolled for the 23/24 academic year.
- Recent policy changes at the Federal level have capped the number of international student permits to 360,000 for 2024, a decrease of 35% compared to 2023. More than 10% of the University of Lethbridge's student body was comprised of international students in the 2022 academic year.

International students are also increasingly making up a larger percentage of new applicants at Lethbridge College, as well.<sup>26</sup>

## CONSIDERATIONS

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- Economically, post-secondary will remain a key sector in Lethbridge, with the University of Lethbridge and Lethbridge College employing more than 3,000 people in 2021.<sup>27</sup>
- As these institutions grow and evolve, it is important for the City of Lethbridge to monitor capital and programming expansion plans, as well as to work as a partner with both to ensure continued and expanded access to high-quality instruction for Lethbridge residents and those moving to Lethbridge for their studies.
- With close to 14,000 post-secondary students living in Lethbridge, this population is having an impact on availability of rental housing and demand for City-delivered programs and services, including recreation and transit.
- Restrictions on the number of international students admitted to Canada annually will impact Lethbridge post-secondary institution's recruitment efforts. These institutions may focus greater effort on recruiting domestic students to maintain or increase registration numbers moving forward. Coordination and collaboration between these institutions and local school boards in Lethbridge will be important for ensuring that Lethbridge students see clear pathways between high school and post-secondary studies.
- Post-secondary education is an important social determinant of health, with individuals with some form of post-secondary generally having significantly higher incomes than those with high school level educations, as well as lower unemployment rates.

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<sup>26</sup> Lethbridge College (2019). Another Big Jump in Lethbridge College Enrolment. Retrieved from: <https://lethbridgecollege.ca/news/campus-news/another-big-jump-lethbridge-college-enrolment>.

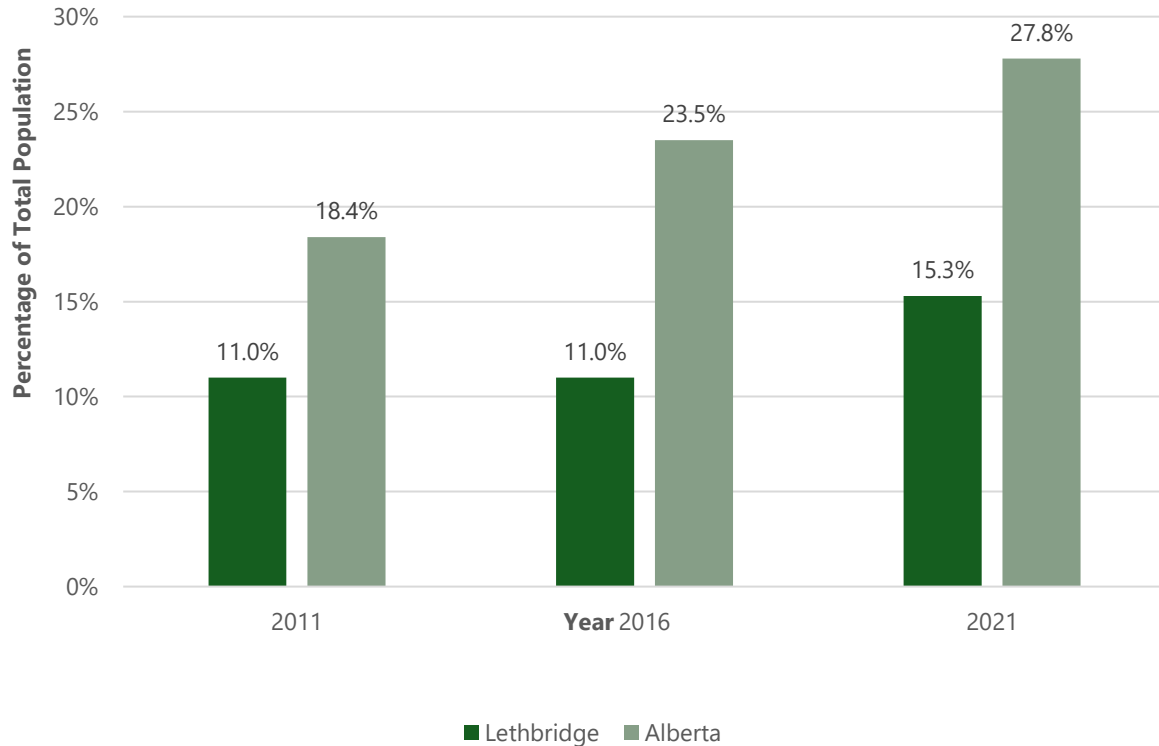
<sup>27</sup> Choose Lethbridge (2022). 2021 Major Employers of Lethbridge – Companies Employing 100 or More People. Retrieved from: <https://choosethbridge.ca/?p=0&action=table&subaction=view&ID=1812>.



## 4.5 Diversity and Inclusion

### 4.5.1 Visible Minority Population

Chart 23: Visible Minority Population



Source: Statistics Canada (2011, 2016, 2021)

#### ANALYSIS (CHART 23)

##### The city's population is becoming more diverse—culturally and visibly.

- In 2021, more than 15% of Lethbridge's population was a member of a visible minority—an increase of 4.3% from 2016. This means that more than 15,000 Lethbridge residents are members of a visible minority as of 2021, compared to 9,633 in 2016 (an increase of 5,423).
- When considering the city's population growth overall between 2016 and 2021, Lethbridge's population increased by 10,834. Visible minorities account for half of this growth.
- Between 2016 and 2021, the most common country of origin for newcomers (3,155 people) was the Philippines (730), Syria (245), and India (210).
- Since 2022, more than 28,000 Ukrainians have resettled in Alberta, including in Lethbridge.

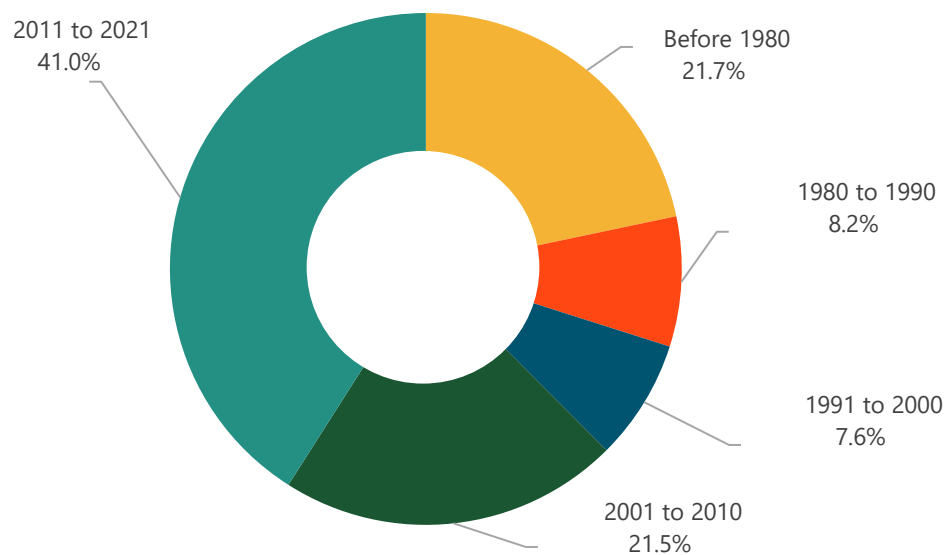
## CONSIDERATIONS

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Initiatives and social service providers offering programming and support to newcomers under all arrival circumstances are needed for successful community integration. Where immigrants are choosing to live in Lethbridge will also impact what types of programs and services may be needed (e.g. language appropriate resources, etc.), as well as can change over time. Working with service providers to understand needs of clients and how needs may change over time is important for ensuring offerings match demand.

### 4.5.2 Immigration

Chart 24: Percentage of Immigrants Arriving to Lethbridge by Period of Arrival



Source: Statistics Canada (2021).

## ANALYSIS (CHART 24)

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**Immigration is a large factor in population growth in Lethbridge.**

- 41% of all newcomers (5,940 people) to Lethbridge arrived between 2011 and 2021.
- Comparing between census periods, close to approximately 3,155 immigrants arrived in Lethbridge between 2016 and 2021, 2,780 between 2011 and 2016, and 3,100 between 2001 and 2010.

## CONSIDERATIONS

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- Both the federal and provincial government recognize the crucial role that immigration is playing in community demographic and economic stability, with several programs established to increase and support immigration.

- Newcomers often face challenges upon arrival, including securing housing, health care, and other services and supports needed for successful integration. As the city's immigrant population continues to grow, it will be important to monitor availability of and demand for newcomer programs and services, and to foster close collaboration between organizations that provide these supports to immigrants and newcomers to Lethbridge.

### 4.5.3 2SLGBTQI+ Community

#### ANALYSIS

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##### **Lethbridge has the highest number of people identifying as transgender or non-binary of Alberta's four largest cities.**

- Of the total 100,815 people identifying as transgender or non-binary in Canada, 12,480 people live in Alberta; and, further, 390 of those people live in Lethbridge. Broken down further, 89 people identify as transgender men, 106 identify as transgender women, and 195 identify as non-binary.
- Lethbridge has the highest number of people identifying as transgender or non-binary of the four identified Alberta Cities (Lethbridge, Calgary, Edmonton and Red Deer).
- Organizations such as Lethbridge Pride, OUTreach Southern Alberta Society, Theatre Outré, and the University of Lethbridge are important advocates and supporters of Lethbridge's 2SLGBTQIA+ community, providing support and connections to individuals that may be struggling or seeking community or other supports needed to thrive.

#### CONSIDERATIONS

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- Hate crimes based on sexual orientation are on the rise in Canada, increasing from 258 incidents in 2020 to 491 in 2022<sup>28</sup>
- The Government of Alberta has recently announced policy changes affecting transgender and non-binary youth in the province, including restrictions on gender-affirming care, requiring parental consent for students aged 15 and under seeking to change their names or pronouns
- The Canadian Paediatric Society notes that transgender youth are at high risk of having mental health challenges and that policy changes may subject individuals to greater mental anguish, increasing mental health need and level of burden on the system of care.<sup>29</sup>

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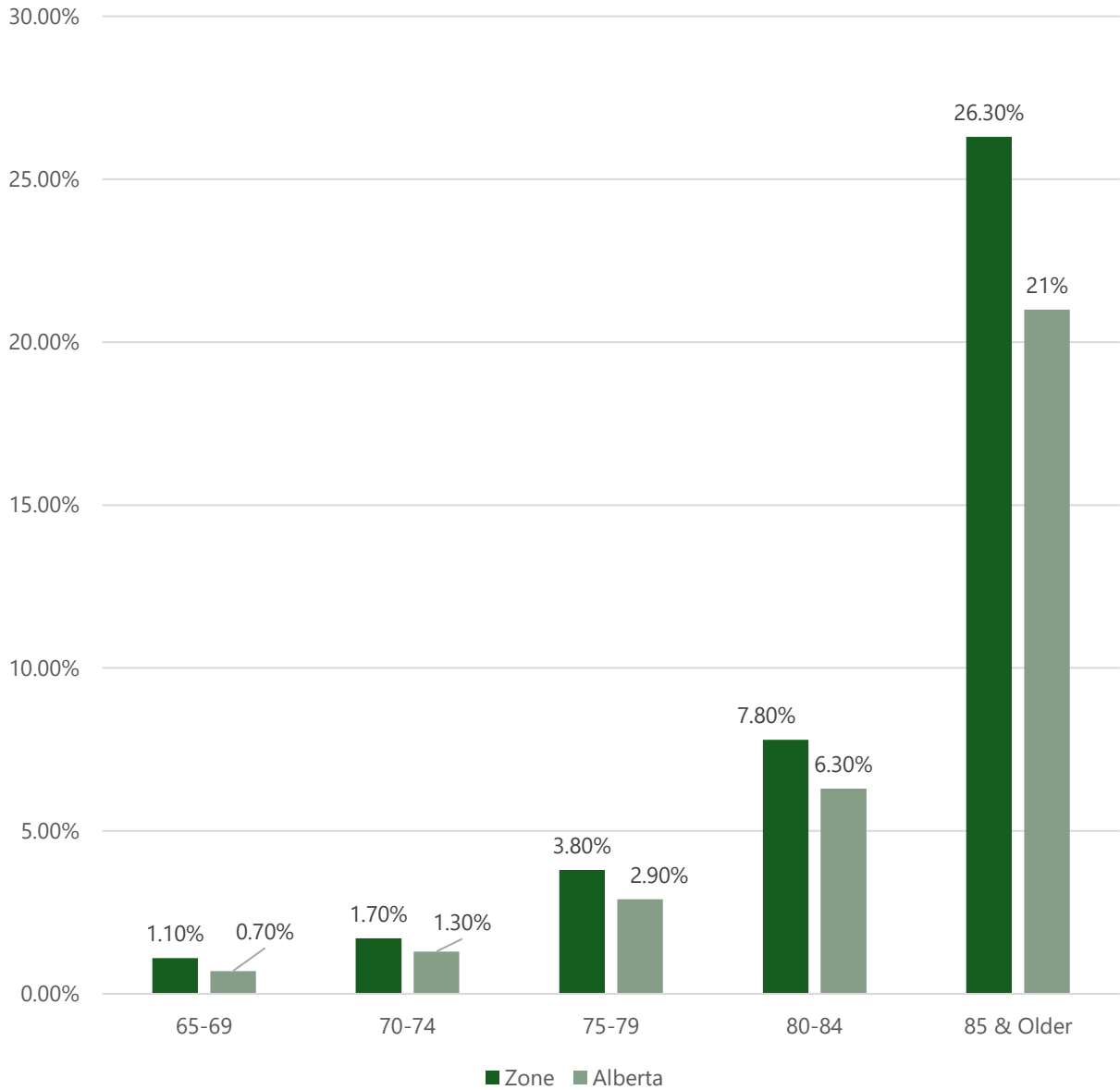
<sup>28</sup> Statistics Canada (2022). Table 6: Police-reported hate crimes, by detailed motivation, Canada, 2020 to 2022. Retrieved from: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/230727/t006b-eng.htm>.

<sup>29</sup> Canadian Pediatric Society (2024). Open Letter. Retrieved from: [https://cps.ca/uploads/advocacy/Gender-affirming\\_care\\_in\\_AB\\_Public.pdf](https://cps.ca/uploads/advocacy/Gender-affirming_care_in_AB_Public.pdf).

## 4.6 Facilities and Services

### 4.6.1 Seniors in Community Care Facilities

Chart 25: Seniors in Community Care Facilities, South Zone v. Alberta



Source: Alberta Health Services (2023).

## ANALYSIS (CHART 25)

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### **There is a greater proportion of seniors living in community care facilities in Alberta Health Services (AHS) South Zone compared to the rest of the province.**

- Close to 4% of individuals between the ages of 75-79 in Lethbridge are living in a community care facility in the South Zone, nearly 8% between the age of 80-84, and 26% for individuals above the age of 85 (compared to 21% provincially).
- In 2021, there were close to 18,000 residents above the age of 65 living in Lethbridge and the proportion of the population over the age of 65 is expected to grow over time. With an increasingly aging population and Lethbridge serving as a health care service centre for the broader AHS South Zone, it should be expected that demand for continuing care facility spaces in the city will increase over time.

## CONSIDERATIONS

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- In 2020, an AHS analysis identified that many areas in Southern Alberta need additional continuing care spaces, which included Lethbridge.<sup>30</sup> As of late-2023, there were 10 AHS-affiliated continuing care facilities in the city, with approximately 1,150 spaces providing a combination of supportive living and long-term care supports.
- The City of Lethbridge is not responsible for the delivery of continuing care; however, identifying potential opportunity sites for developing new facilities may support future AHS business cases and support broader municipal and partner advocacy work.

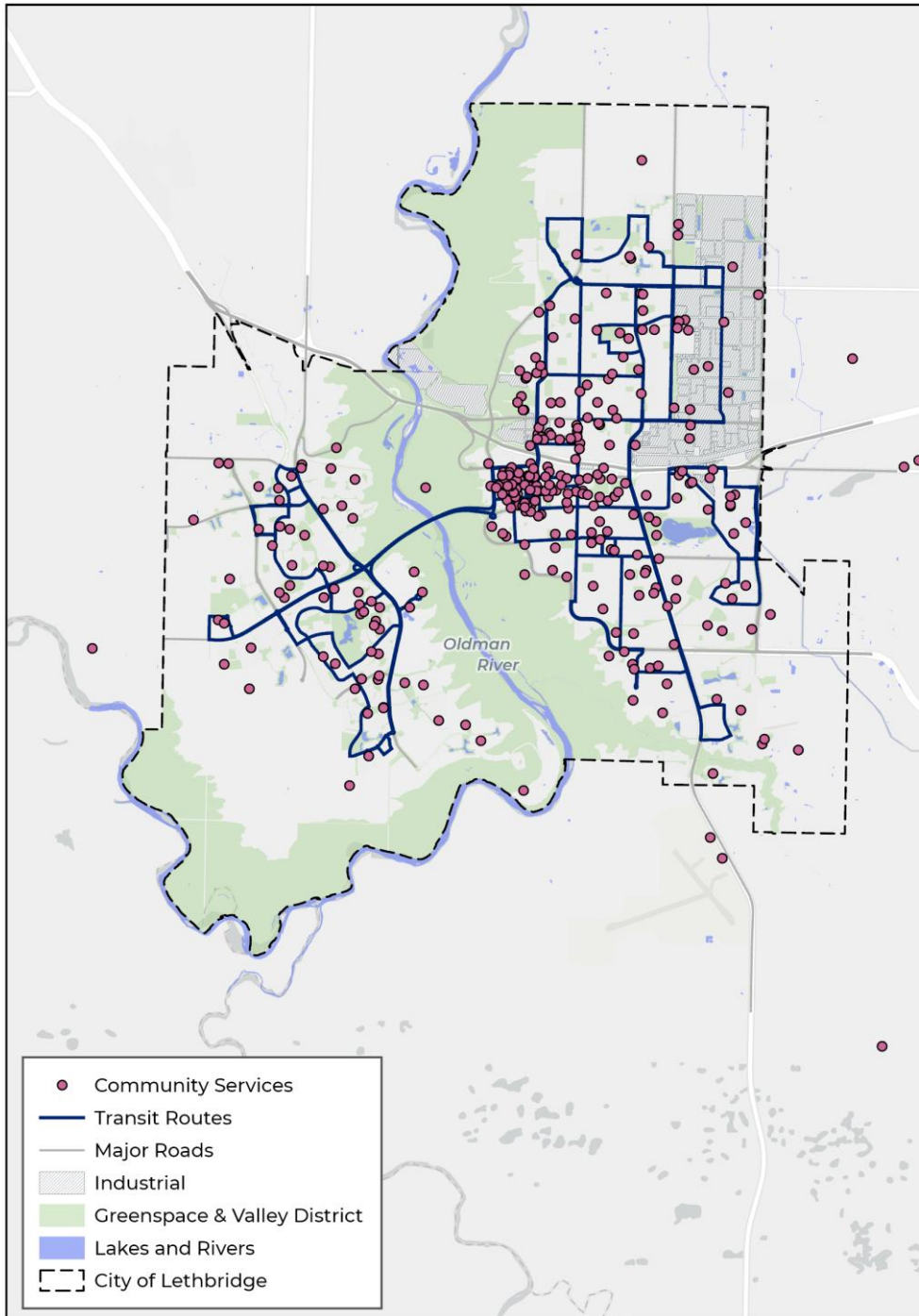
### **4.6.2 Spatial Analysis: Transit & Community Assets**

The following figure outlines how community assets (community services and non-profits) are situated in relation to key transit routes in Lethbridge. As the community asset list is refined, this mapping may support organizations in location selection and / or in conversations with funders around accessibility of services.

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<sup>30</sup> Lethbridge News Now (2020). Southern Alberta communities identified as being “most in need” of new continuing care spaces. Retrieved from: <https://lethbridgenewsnow.com/2020/09/01/southern-alberta-communities-identified-as-being-most-in-need-of-new-continuing-care-spaces/>

Figure 9: Transit Routes and Community Assets



Source: City of Lethbridge (2024)

## ANALYSIS (FIGURE 9)

Transit routes and community and social services are located in the city's core, mature and established neighbourhoods.

- When comparing the location of transit and community services and where different types of population growth are occurring the city (**Figure 9: Transit Routes and Community Assets**), the data indicates that there is limited transit service to developing neighbourhoods where greater proportions of immigrant/newcomer households and families are choosing to live in Lethbridge.

## 4.7 Community Safety

The crime severity index examines both the volume and the seriousness of crime. The index is calculated by assigned a weight to each offence; weight is derived from average sentences handed down by criminal courts (e.g., the more serious the average sentence, the higher the weight for that offence). As a result, more serious offences have greater impact on changes in the index. Frequency of the offences also contributes to the crime severity index. All criminal code offences are included in this index<sup>31</sup>.

### 4.7.1 Provincial Crime Severity Index

Table 11: Provincial Crime Severity Index Over Time

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Crime Severity Index – Lethbridge, Alberta	79.58	98.96	112.2	121.1	141	161.3	161	158.7	150	134.73
Percent Change in Crime Severity	-11.19	24.35	13.42	7.86	16.3	14.61	-0.2	-1.44	-5.6	-10.02

Source: Statistics Canada (2023).

<sup>31</sup>Statistics Canada (2019). Definition, Crime Severity Index of crime. Retrieved from: <https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3Var.pl?Function=DEC&Id=252233>.

## CONSIDERATIONS

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- The crime severity index in Lethbridge has decreased by more than 17% since 2018. This decline has been primarily driven by decreases in non-violent crime, as violent crime rates have increased in Lethbridge.

### 4.7.2 Crimes Against People

Table 12: Crimes Against People. Lethbridge Police Service

Reported Crimes	2020	2021	2022
Homicide	3	1	2
Attempted Murder	0	0	2
Sexual Assault	119	113	133
Child Sex Offences	26	22	27
Assault	1,141	1,216	1,423
Child Pornography	13	18	24
Robbery	47	57	46
Criminal Harassment	40	74	70
Domestic Violence	1,667	1,820	1,752

Source: Lethbridge Police Service (2022).



## 4.7.3 Crimes Against Property

Table 13: Crimes Against Property, Lethbridge Police Service

Reported Crimes	2020	2021	2022
Arson	28	41	14
Break And Enter	1,072	1,045	965
Theft/Shoplifting	4,160	3,464	4,002
Theft Of Vehicle	224	244	375
Attempted Vehicle Theft	24	14	46
Possession Of Stolen Property	208	142	360
Fraud	725	577	978
Mischief	875	1,026	1,302

Source: Lethbridge Regional Police (2022).

### ANALYSIS (TABLE 11, TABLE 12, TABLE 13)

**The crime severity index in Lethbridge declined from 2019 to 2022; but the severity of crime has increased over the same period.**

- The crime severity index in Lethbridge was the third highest in Canada in 2021/2022.
- The Crime Severity Index in Lethbridge has declined from a high of 161.3 in 2018 to 134.73 in 2022. Much of this decline is the result of non-violent crime declining significantly over this period.

**Incidences of crime are generally up year over year, with notable increases in the number of reported assaults, sexual assaults, and domestic violence incidences.**

- In 2022, Lethbridge Police Service (LPS) reported an increase in the number of assaults (1,423 compared to 1,216 in 2021), sexual assaults (133 compared to 113), child sex offenses (27 compared to 22), child pornography (24 compared to 18), and a slight decline in domestic violence (1,752 compared to 1,820 in 2021).

**Property crime has also increased year or year, particularly incidences of theft/shoplifting, vehicle and attempted vehicle theft, and mischief.**

- In 2022, LPS reported an increase in the number of theft/shoplifting (3,464 in 2021 to 4,002 in 2022), theft of vehicles (244 in 2021 to 375 in 2022), and mischief (1,026 in 2021 to 1,302 in 2022).

**The perception that Lethbridge is unsafe has been increasing over time, with a year-over-year increase of 7%.**

- In a 2023 Lethbridge Police Service community survey:
  - 35% of respondents noted that they felt unsafe in Lethbridge.
  - When asked if safety has changed over the past 12 months, nearly half (47%) indicate there has been no change.
  - The feeling that Lethbridge has become less safe is up 9 percentage points between 2022 and 2023.
  - Specific safety issues in Lethbridge shared by respondents included drug use, homelessness, and general sense that crime has increased in the city.
  - The top policing priorities identified by respondents include addressing property crime, drug crime, and crimes against persons. Respondents would like to see greater community visibility of LPS Officers, including participating in more community policing activities while on duty.<sup>32</sup>

## CONSIDERATIONS

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- Improving safety in the city's downtown is a priority for the City of Lethbridge.
- The City of Lethbridge has made significant investments in improving public safety since 2019, including creating an online public safety reporting tool, securing funding through the Building Safer Communities Fund to address gun and gang violence, and has established a cross-functional task force on lawlessness in collaboration with the Downtown Business Revitalization Zone.
- Lethbridge Police Service's *The Watch* program was established in 2019 to address public safety concerns in the city's downtown.
  - Consisting primarily of community volunteers, alongside some paid staff, *The Watch* seeks to provide an additional layer of safety in the downtown by offering safe walk services, needle pickup, wellness checks, and connecting with vulnerable members of the community.
  - *The Watch* logged more than 4,100 hours in the city's downtown in 2021.

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<sup>32</sup> Lethbridge Police Service (2023). 2023 Community Survey. Retrieved from: <https://irp.cdn-website.com/5a4daa43/files/uploaded/FINAL%20REPORT%20-%20LPS%202023%20Community%20Survey.pdf>

- Additional supports for vulnerable community members in the city's downtown include the Division Outreach Team that provides transportation and outreach support, and the S.A.G.E Clan Patrol team that primarily patrols the downtown at night, providing meals, snacks, water, and other supports. As safety in the downtown is a priority for the City of Lethbridge, continuing to support these and new initiatives can help to improve the feeling of safety in the downtown, as well as connect those most vulnerable in the community with needed supports.
- Community engagement and citizen participation in policing are goals of the LPS, with specific effort to be focused on developing partnerships and collaborative responses.<sup>33</sup> Efforts made by LPS to achieve these goals include attending Town Hall sessions, increasing police officers on the street, exploring partnerships with newcomer organizations by re-hiring a Diversity Liaison Officer, and working to advance reconciliation by seeking to translate LPS values into Blackfoot language.<sup>34</sup>

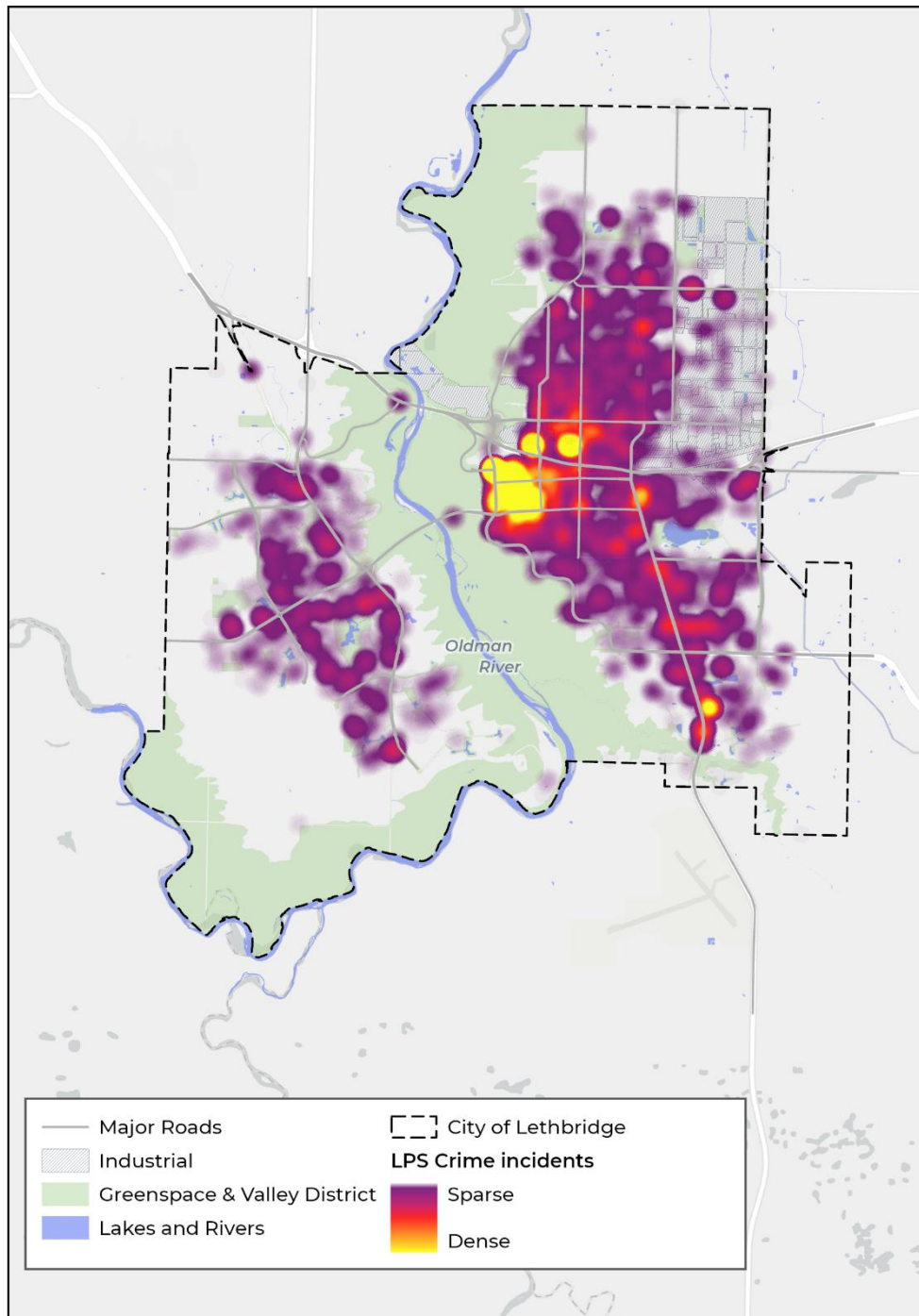
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<sup>33</sup> Lethbridge Police Service (2023). 2023-2026 Strategic Plan. Retrieved from: <https://irp.cdn-website.com/5a4daa43/files/uploaded/2023-2026%20LPS%20Strategic%20Plan.pdf>.

<sup>34</sup> Lethbridge Police Service (2023). Annual Policing Plan – Year-End Update. Retrieved from: <https://irp.cdn-website.com/5a4daa43/files/uploaded/2023%20Annual%20Policing%20Plan%20-%20Year%20End%20Update-ce152e8e.pdf>.

## 4.7.4 Spatial Analysis: Crime Data

Figure 10: Crime Hot Spot



Source: Lethbridge Police Service Open Data, LPS Crime Map (2023).

## ANALYSIS (FIGURE 10)

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**The LPS Crime Map reports higher incidence of crime in downtown and in pockets within neighbourhoods in the community in South and north Lethbridge.**

- Specific areas of where higher incidence of crime appear to follow major roadways, key transit routes, and in areas where there are higher proportion of people experiencing homelessness (i.e., emergency shelter).

# Housing & Homelessness

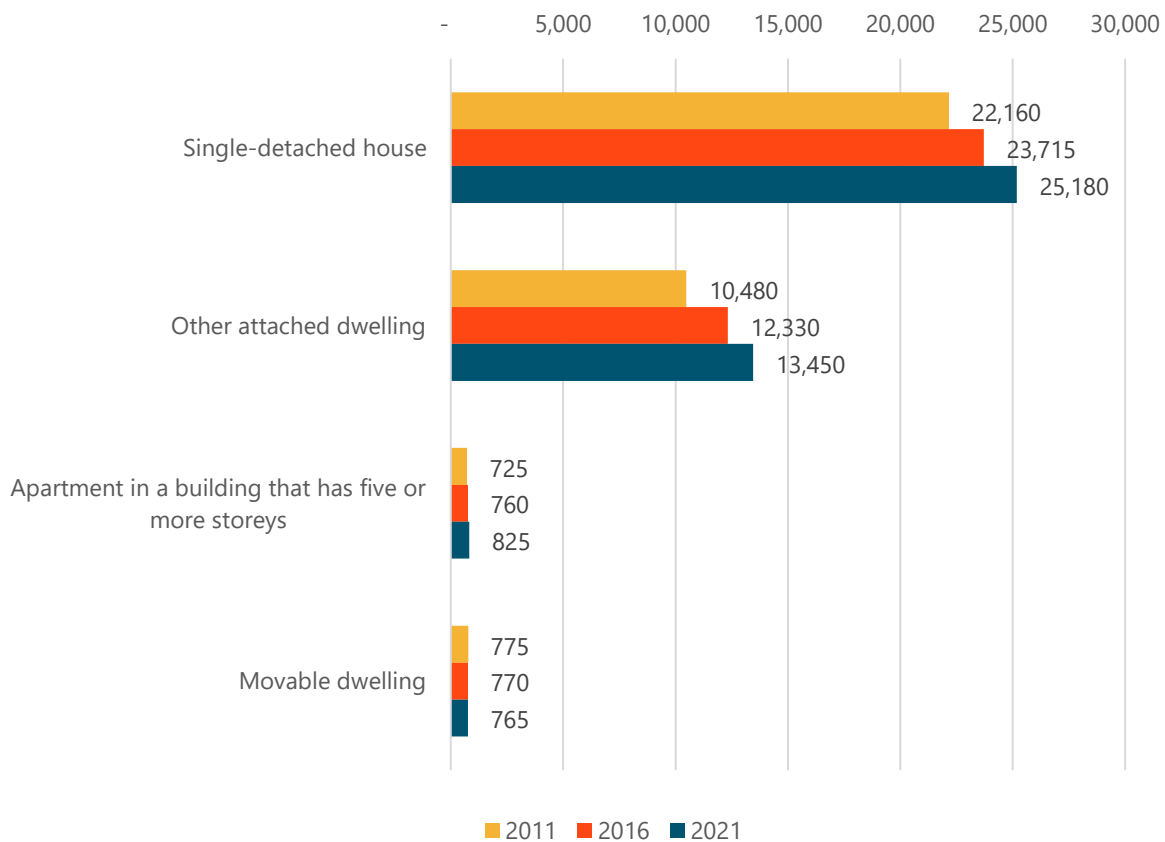
# 5 HOUSING PROFILE

## 5.1 Dwelling Units by Structure Type

### Data Description

Structure type refers to the form of housing of each dwelling. This includes single detached homes, other attached dwellings (duplex, triplex, row houses, semi-detached houses, apartment in a building under five storeys), apartment in a building five or more storeys, and movable dwellings (trailers, and ready to move homes). Understanding the structure type breakdown helps the municipality understand the current mix of dwelling types and where there may be potential housing gaps.

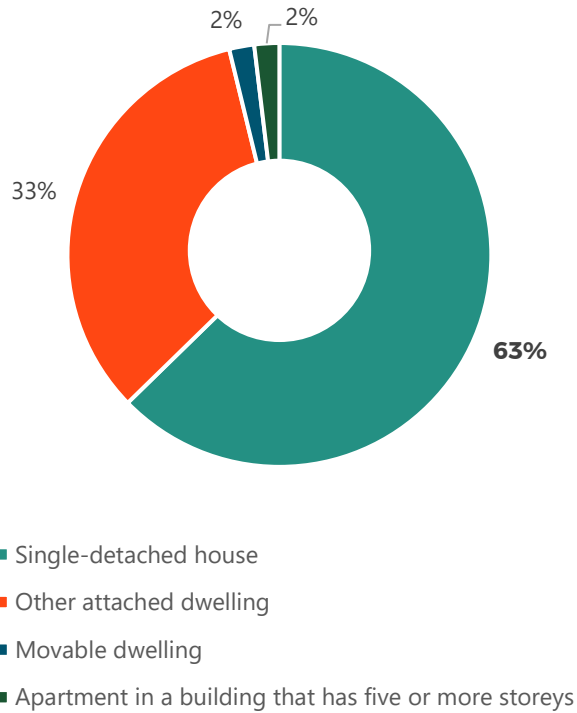
Chart 26: Dwelling Units by Structure Type Over Time



Source: Statistics Canada (2011, 2016, 2021)

## 5.1.1 Housing Units: Percentage of Single-Detached

Chart 27: Dwelling Type Composition, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada (2021)

Table 14: Single Detached Housing Comparable Communities

Comparable Communities	Percent (2021)
Lethbridge	63%
Grande Prairie	62%
Medicine Hat	63%

Source: Statistics Canada (2021)



## ANALYSIS (CHART 26, CHART 27, TABLE 14)

### The dominant form of housing in Lethbridge continues to be single-detached homes.

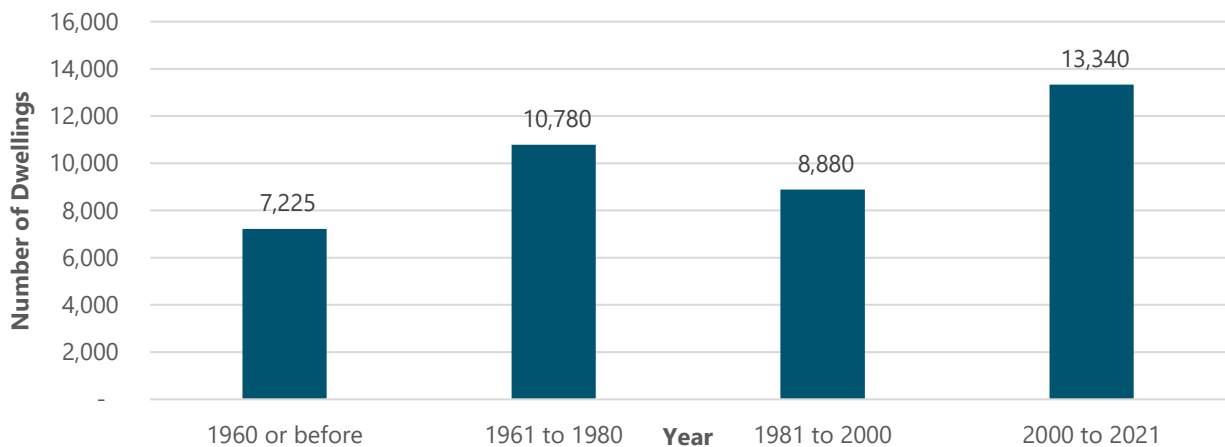
- In 2021, there were 40,225 dwelling units in Lethbridge.
- In 2021, 63% (25,180) of the total housing stock was single-detached houses.
- This percentage of single-detached homes is in alignment with other comparable municipalities, including Grande Prairie (62%) and Medicine Hat (63%).
- The city has seen increasing numbers of duplexes, semi-detached houses, row houses, and apartments with fewer than five stories, constructed between 2011 – 2021.

## 5.1.2 Housing Stock by Age

### Data Description

Age, in reference to dwellings, refers to the year the home was built. Understanding housing stock by age can support the municipality in understanding where redevelopment is likely to take place and how infrastructure planning may be undertaken to support housing development.

Chart 28: Number of Dwellings by Age



Source: Statistics Canada (2021).

## ANALYSIS (CHART 28)

### The housing stock in Lethbridge is well distributed across construction periods.

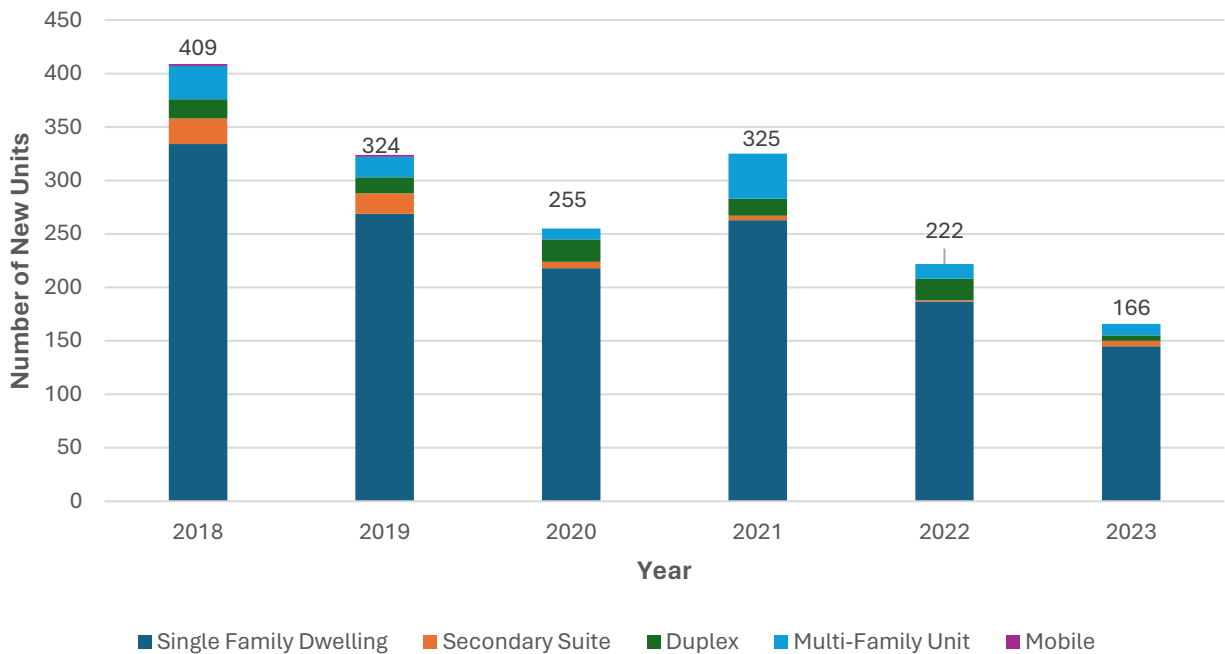
- 67% (26,885 dwellings) of the current housing stock in Lethbridge was built prior to 2000 while the remaining 33% (13,340 dwellings) was built after 2000.
- 45% (18,005 dwellings) of the current housing stock in Lethbridge was built prior to 1980 (40+ years old).

## 5.1.3 Building Permit Data

### Data Description

Building permit data further illuminates the kinds of housing development seen in the municipality. This building permit data was provided by the City of Lethbridge to inform the analysis.

Chart 29: Building Permit Data 2018-2023



Source: Lethbridge Building Permit Data (2023)

### ANALYSIS (CHART 29)

**The number of building permits issued in Lethbridge is declining.**

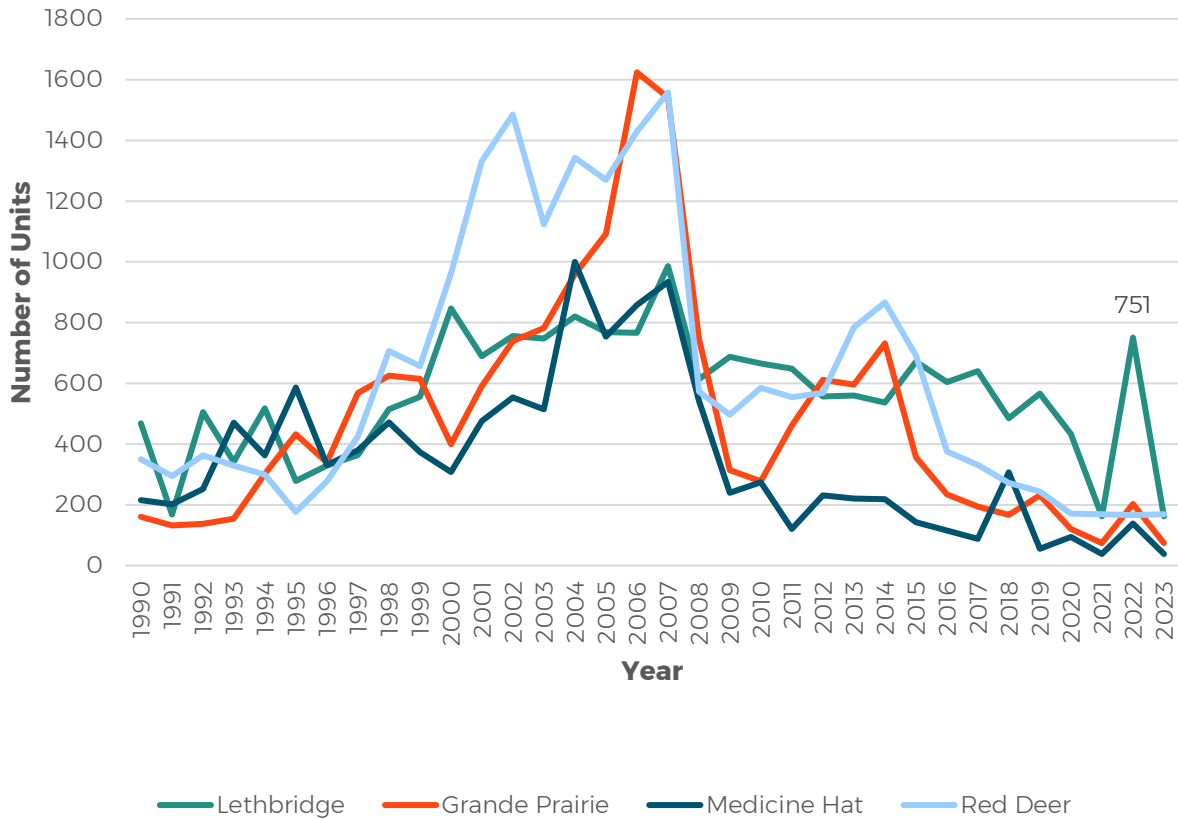
- 87% of building permits (145 permits) issued in Lethbridge in 2023 were for single family homes, while 7% of building permits (11 permits) issued in Lethbridge in 2023 were for multi-family homes.
- In 2018, 6% of building permits (24 permits) issued in Lethbridge were for secondary suites; however, since then, secondary suite permits have declined steadily. In 2023, 1% of building permits (5 permits) were for secondary suites.
- Building permits have slowed down from 409 permits in 2018 to 166 permits in 2023.

## 5.1.4 Construction: Housing Starts

### Data Description

Housing starts are an economic indicator that reflect the number of residential housing projects that have been started over a specific length of time.<sup>35</sup>

Chart 30: Housing Starts, Comparable Communities



Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2023.

### ANALYSIS (CHART 30)

**Lethbridge has witnessed an overall decrease in housing starts since 2007.**

- Over the last 5 years (2019 – 2023), Lethbridge has had more housing starts than other comparable communities identified.

<sup>35</sup> Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation (CMHC) (2024). Monthly Housing Starts and Other Construction Data Tables. Retrieved from: <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/professionals/housing-markets-data-and-research/housing-data/data-tables/housing-market-data/monthly-housing-starts-construction-data-tables>.

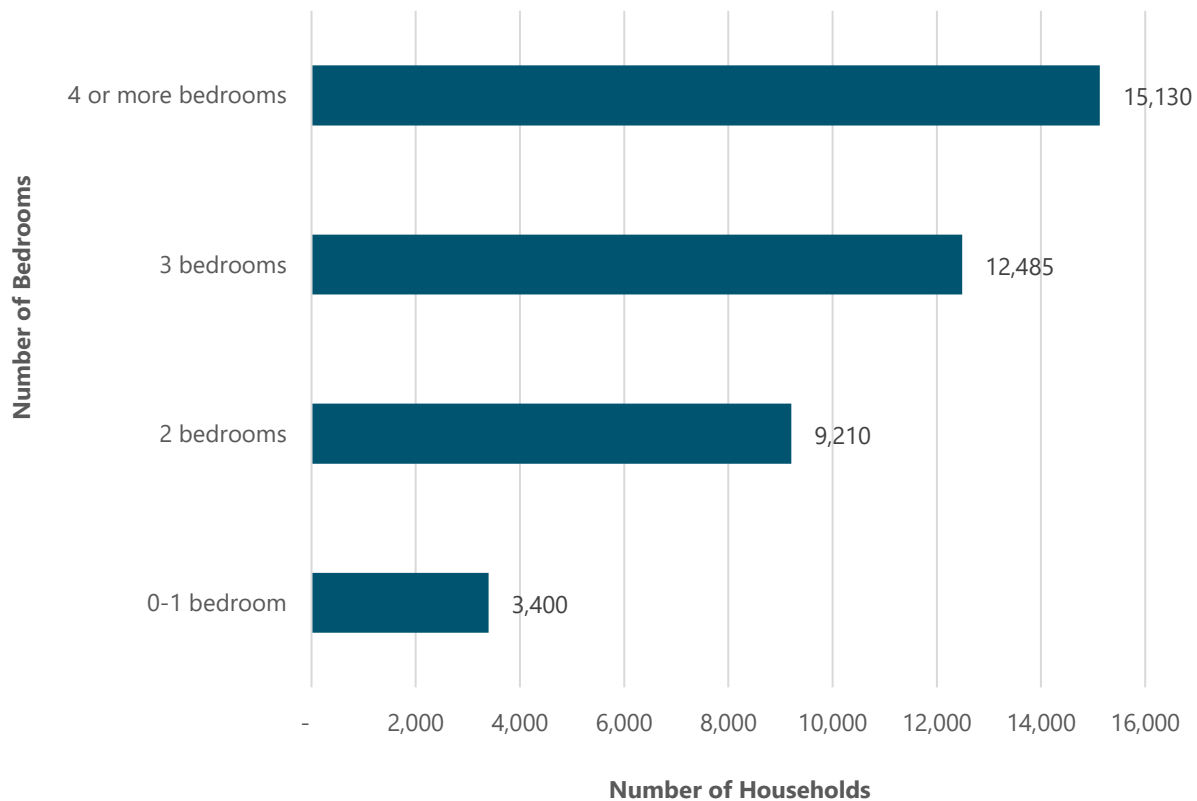
- This indicates that the development industry in Lethbridge is active in comparison to Grande Prairie, Medicine Hat, and Red Deer.

## 5.1.5 Housing Units: Number of Bedrooms

### Data Description

This data point speaks to the distribution of housing units in terms of number of bedrooms.

**Chart 31: Number of Bedrooms by Number of Households**



Source: Statistics Canada (2021).

### ANALYSIS (CHART 31)

#### Most households have more bedrooms than occupants.

- 69% of Lethbridge housing units (27,615 units) have 3+ bedrooms.
- 38% of Lethbridge housing units (15,130 units) have 4+ bedrooms.
- The number of bedrooms offered in housing in Lethbridge is generally higher than the average household size (2.4 persons in 2021).

## CONSIDERATIONS

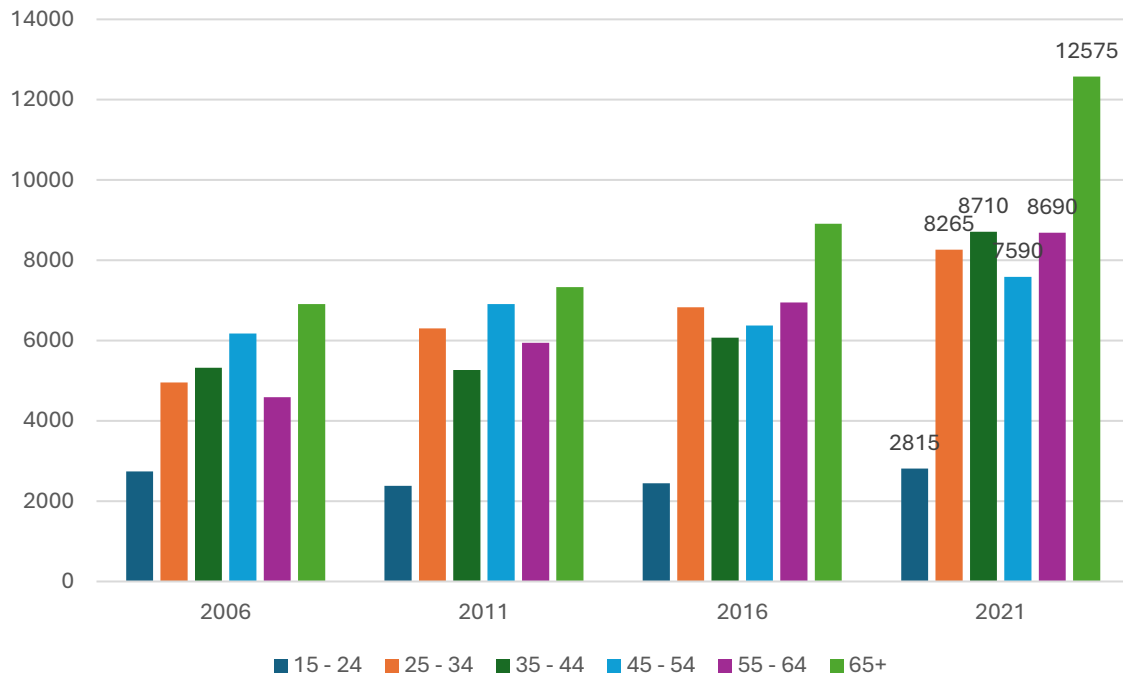
Market conditions in Lethbridge may reflect the desire for households to have extra bedrooms for storage, and increased working from home requires additional office space etc. This may be why we see the lack one and two bedrooms.

### 5.1.6 Age of Primary Household Maintainer

#### Data Description

This statistic explains the age of the person primarily responsible for maintaining the dwelling. This metric helps the municipality understand how many homes may be required in the future or are likely to end up on the market in the coming years.

Chart 32: Age of Primary Household Maintainer



Source: Statistics Canada (2021)

#### ANALYSIS (CHART 32)

##### Primary household maintainers are getting older.

- 26% of household maintainers (12,575 households) are over the age of 65.
- 44% of household maintainers (8,690 households) are over the age of 55.

## CONSIDERATIONS

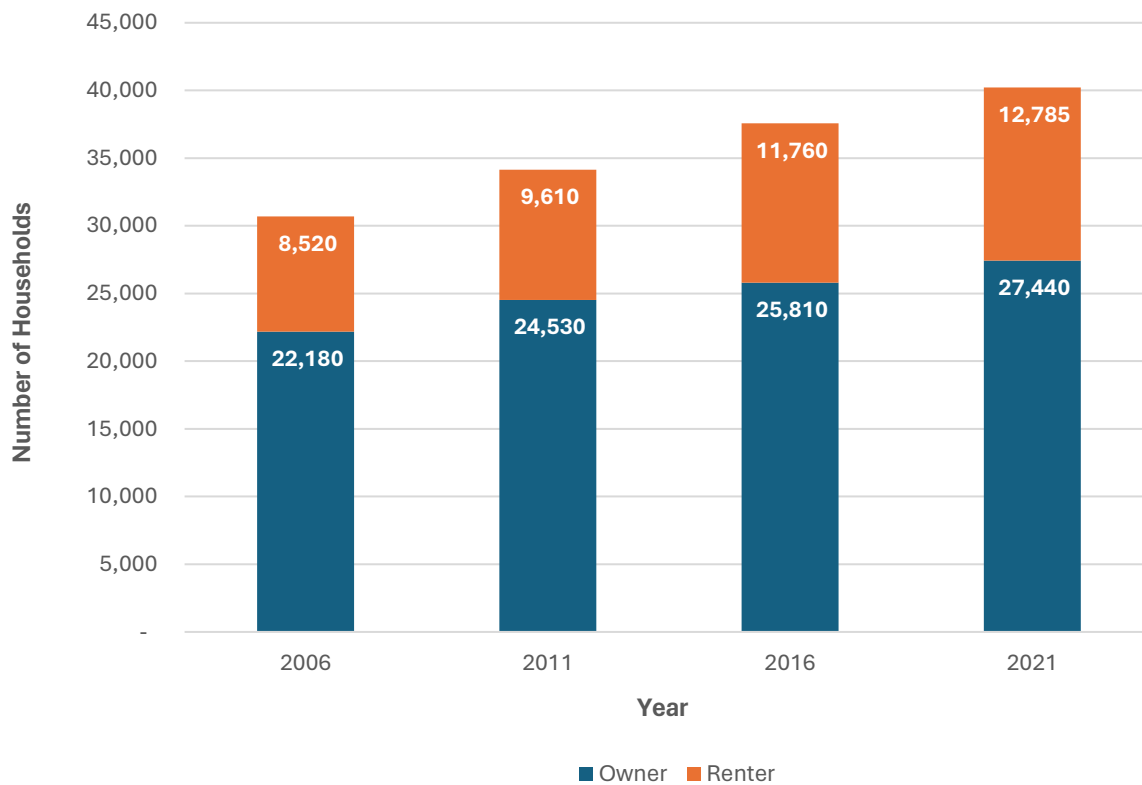
- The largest cohort of household maintainers are over the age of 65.
- Over the next 20 years, there will be many these homes that will turn-over.
- More seniors are aging in place and are staying in their own homes longer.

## 5.2 Household by Tenure

### Data Description

Tenure refers to whether a household owns or rents their private dwelling. Trends in households that own and rent are used in correlation with household income to determine affordability in the community and the types of housing units needed to meet demand in the future.

Chart 33: Household Tenure



Source: Statistics Canada (2006, 2011, 2016, 2021)

## ANALYSIS (CHART 33)

The percentage of renter households is increasing.

- The percentage of renters in Lethbridge has increased from 28% in 2006 to 32% in 2021.
- Between 2016 and 2021, Lethbridge had a 9% (+1,025) increase in renter households.

## 5.3 Non-Market Housing Supply

### Data Description

This section explores the non-market housing options present in Lethbridge. These housing options are important parts of the housing continuum—from emergency shelter to below market rental and homeownership housing options.

#### What is the housing continuum?

The housing continuum shows the variety of shelter and housing options that are needed in a community. The housing continuum does not represent a single, linear pathway. Instead, the housing continuum shows the variety of housing options a person may need over the course of their life to meet their changing needs.

For example, someone may live in community housing during childhood and then move into market rental as a young adult; they may purchase a home and start a family before moving into community housing when they retire. A healthy community has a variety of housing types to support individuals at each stage of their life.

Figure 11: Housing Continuum



### 5.3.1 The Housing System

The housing system is complex and involves many players working to build and operate housing across the housing continuum. **Figure 11: Housing Continuum** shows the housing spectrum in Lethbridge. The City uses the following definitions to explain the housing options on the housing spectrum.

Often the housing spectrum is described as follows:

Housing Spectrum Option	Definition
Homelessness	Describes the situation of an individual, or family without stable, safe, permanent, and appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. <sup>36</sup>
Emergency Shelters	Short-term, often crisis support, accommodation. Shelter spaces provide an immediate place to stay (usually 30 days or less) for individuals and families.
Transitional/Interim Housing	Housing that is temporary, and often includes short-term support services. Often, transitional housing bridges individuals entering or exiting institutions, treatment centres, or other programs. This type of housing may allow different accommodation lengths (i.e., 30 days to three years), and aims to transition individuals to long-term, permanent housing options.
Supportive Housing	Housing that combines rental or housing assistance with individualized, flexible, and voluntary support services for people with complex needs related to physical or mental health, development disabilities, or substance use. Often individuals or families who require supportive housing have experienced chronic homelessness, experience greater barriers to maintaining their housing, and have higher needs that require additional support.
Social or Community Housing	Housing that is needed by low-income households who are capable or living independently, generally without need for support services. Units are often developed with some form of capital funding from levels of government, and/or on-going subsidies enable rents to be paid by residents on a "rent-to-income" basis (i.e., usually 30% of gross household income).
Below Market Rental Housing	Housing with rents equal to, or lower than (typically 10-20% below), average rates in private market rental housing. Often individuals and families accessing below market rental housing are low-to-moderate income but may not be eligible for subsidized housing options.
Below Market Home Ownership	Housing that focuses on those who are independent and who have earnings which are less than the median income and generally do not

<sup>36</sup> Canadian Observatory of Homelessness (2017). Canadian Definition of Homelessness. Retrieved from: <https://www.homelesshub.ca/resource/canadian-definition-homelessness>.



Housing Spectrum Option	Definition
	require on-going subsidy. Below market home ownership can be accomplished with flexible lending terms and longer loan periods to keep payment amounts affordable.
Rental Housing	Housing that is a unit on the private rental market (primary or secondary) owned or operated by private operators (i.e., landlords or property management firms) charging market rent.
Home Ownership	Housing that is priced at the average market value and purchased with or without a mortgage but without any government assistance.

Sources used for definitions included below.<sup>37</sup>

At the time of drafting the Needs Assessment, the total count of non-market housing in Lethbridge is 3,709 units/beds. This number of units/beds has increased from the count completed in 2018 (2,509 units/beds); however, this is largely due to a change in how the City accounted for non-market housing units/beds in this Needs Assessment, including:

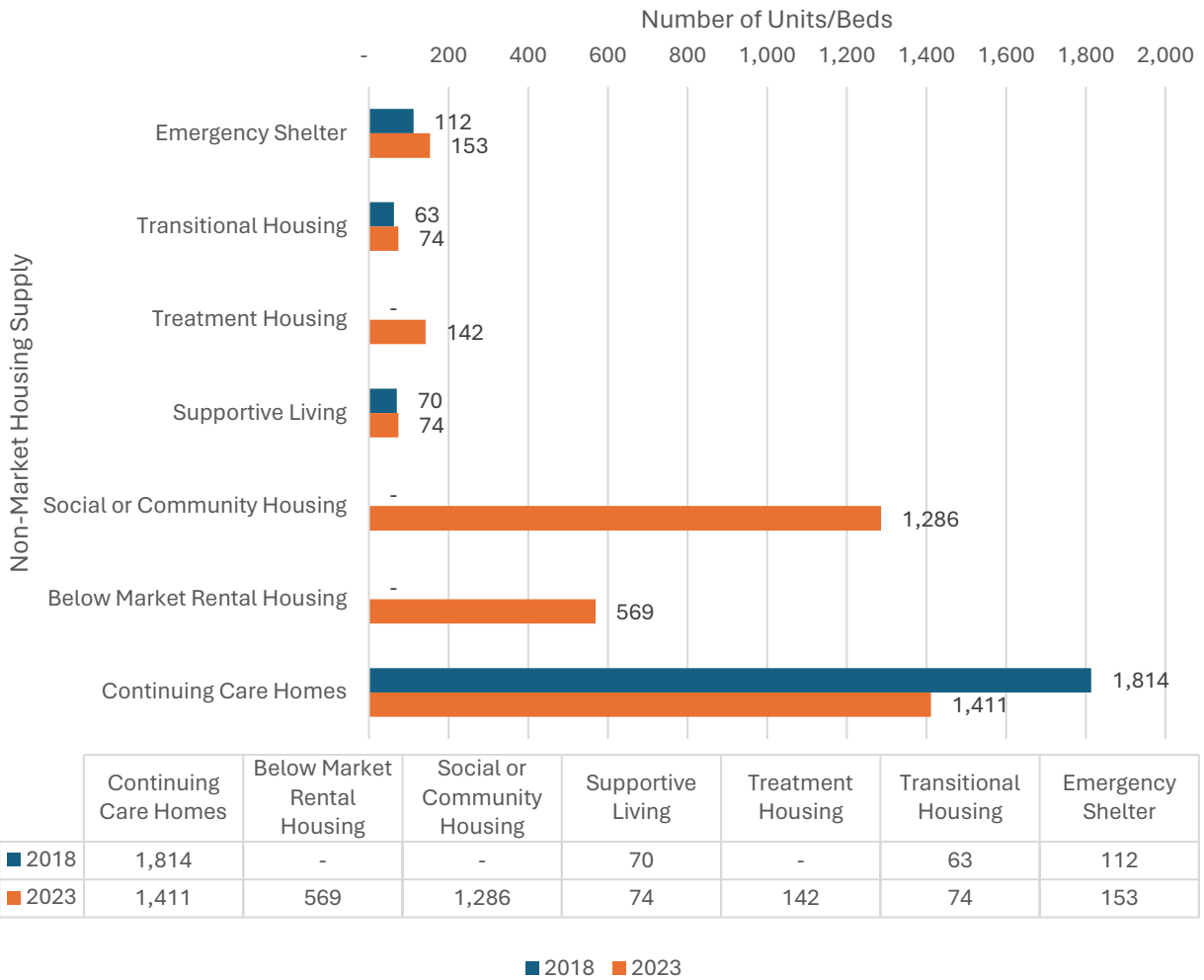
- Adding non-market housing categories to align with the housing spectrum and housing options offered in Lethbridge: treatment housing, social or community housing, and below market rental housing. These categories were not included in the previous Needs Assessment; as such, it appears that a large increase of units has taken place between 2018 and 2023 within these housing types, when in fact, many of these units existed in 2018 but were not accounted for as part of the Needs Assessment.
- Including unit/bed counts from Lethbridge Housing Authority and Green Acres Foundation in the appropriate housing type category (e.g., shifting most of the units provided by Green Acres Foundation from the Continuing Care Homes category (i.e., Assisted or Long-term Care Housing) to Social or Community Housing or Below Market Rental Housing in order to accurately reflect the type of housing being provided to residents.
- Including counts of people receiving income subsidies (i.e., rental subsidy programs) to maintain their housing. Participant numbers were not included in the total unit/bed count; however, they're part of the non-market housing landscape in Lethbridge and are important numbers to include to understand need in the community.

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<sup>37</sup> Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (2023). About Affordable Housing in Canada. Retrieved from: <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/professionals/industry-innovation-and-leadership/industry-expertise/affordable-housing/about-affordable-housing/affordable-housing-in-canada> ; Inn from the Cold (2023). What is the housing continuum? Retrieved from: <https://innfromthecold.org/what-is-the-housing-continuum/#:~:text=The%20housing%20continuum%20is%2C%20at,different%20people%20at%20different%20times.> ; Homeward Trust (2022). Glossary. Retrieve from: <https://homewardtrust.ca/glossary/> ; A Place to Call Home: Edmonton's Updated Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness (2017); BC Housing (2023). Glossary. Retrieved from: <https://www.bchousing.org/glossary>

The following section shares data on each non-market housing category currently offered in Lethbridge.

**Chart 34: Non-Market Housing Options in Lethbridge, Unit/Bed Counts**



Source: City of Lethbridge in consultation with local housing providers, 2023

## 5.3.2 Emergency Shelters

Table 15: Emergency Shelters in Lethbridge

Agency / Shelter	Target Population	Number of Beds/Units	Max Capacity (Individuals)	Average Length of Stay	Max Length of Stay
Lethbridge Wellness Shelter and Stabilization Unit	Adult males and females, 18 years and older	121* (91 beds; 30 stabilization spaces)	125	90 days or less	-
YWCA Harbour House Women's Emergency Shelter	Women and children	24	30	10 days or less	21 days
Woods Homes Emergency Youth Shelter	Males and females, under 18 years	8	8	14 days	-
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>153</b>	<b>163</b>		

Source: City of Lethbridge in consultation with local housing providers, 2023.

\*In February 2024, the provincial government announced that it will fund an expansion to the Lethbridge Wellness Shelter and Stabilization Unit. Blood Tribe Department of Health will continue to operate the Wellness Shelter and Stabilization Unit, and Lethbridge Housing Authority will own the facility. The expansion will be built on the same property as the existing facility and will increase capacity to approximately 200 beds.

## 5.3.3 Transitional Housing

Table 16: Transitional Housing Providers in Lethbridge

Agency / Shelter	Target Population	Number of Beds/Units
Blackfoot Family Lodge	Women and children	54
YMCA HESTIA Homes	Young adults aged 18-24	9
McMan Youth and Family Services (TIP Program)	Young adults aged 18-24	3 (Capacity of three participants in the LOFT program and one short-term emergency placement)
Southern Alcare Manor	Adults living with addiction (1 year)	8
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>74</b>

Source: City of Lethbridge in consultation with local housing providers, 2023.

## 5.3.4 Treatment Housing

Table 17: Treatment Housing Providers in Lethbridge

Agency / Shelter	Target Population	Number of Beds/Units
Fresh Start**	Adults living with addiction (14-week long-term addiction treatment program)	Co-ed (Site 2): 23 beds Men (Site 3): 50 beds
Southern Alcare Manor	Adults living with addiction (120-day maximum stay)	25
Streets Alive	Adults living with addiction (120-day maximum stay)	Exodus Program (Men): 32 Genesis Program (Women): 12
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>142</b>

Source: City of Lethbridge in consultation with local housing providers, 2023.

\*Treatment Housing is considered a form of Transitional/Interim Housing. Due to its focused, and specific service to community members, treatment housing providers and associated bed/unit counts have been pulled out as a separate table to understand operator capacity and diversity.

\*\*Fresh Start is located outside of Lethbridge City Limits but serves the local Lethbridge community.

## 5.3.5 Supportive Housing

Table 18: Supportive Living Providers in Lethbridge

Agency/Shelter	Target Population	Number of Beds/Units
Family Ties River House (Permanent Supportive Housing)	Males aged 55+, with experience and history of alcohol addiction and chronic homelessness	10
L'Arche Association of Lethbridge	Individuals with developmental disabilities	12
Laura House	Individuals living with mental health concerns between the age of 18-64	7
Streets Alive*	Post-treatment housing	20
Lethbridge Housing Authority, Castle Apartments	Low-income individuals and families	25
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>74**</b>

Source: City of Lethbridge in consultation with local housing providers, 2023.

\*\*In September 2023, Lethbridge Housing Authority received unanimous Council approval for a land use rezoning of a parcel of land to allow for the development of a supportive housing building that will provide an additional 30 units.

## 5.3.6 Social or Community Housing

Table 19: Social or Community Housing Providers in Lethbridge

Agency/Shelter	Target Population	Number of Households on Subsidy	Number of Beds/Units
Lethbridge Housing Authority – Social Housing	Low-income individuals and families	-	676
Lethbridge Housing Authority – Rent Assistance Benefit (RAB)	Low-income individuals and families	535* (number of households on RAB)	
Lethbridge Housing Authority – Municipal Subsidy (Lethbridge Economic Assistance Fund - LEAF)	Low-income individuals and families	107 (number of households on Municipal Subsidy)	
Treaty 7 Urban Indian Housing Authority	Indigenous peoples	-	114**
Green Acres Foundation (Apartment – Independent Living)	Seniors ("rent-to-income" - i.e., rent is 30% of gross household income)	-	154
Green Acres Foundation (Lodge Suites– Partial or Full Services)	Seniors ("rent-to-income" - i.e., rent is 30% of gross household income)		342
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>642</b>	<b>1,286</b>

\* The Rent Assistance Benefit (RAB) is a long-term benefit available to subsidize the rent for Albertans with low income. Individuals and families in 30+ communities in southern Alberta can apply for this benefit. 535 represents total tenant numbers across these communities and does not represent the total number of RAB recipients in Lethbridge.

\*\* Treaty 7 Urban Indian Housing Authority units/beds are located in several communities, including Lethbridge, Cardston and Calgary. Of the total 1,318 represents total units/beds across these communities, 114 are located in Lethbridge.

## 5.3.7 Below Market Rental Housing

Table 20: Below Market Rental Housing Options in Lethbridge

Agency/Shelter	Target Population	Number of Households on Subsidy	Number of Beds/Units
Lethbridge Housing Authority – Affordable Housing	Low-income individuals and families	-	183
Lethbridge Housing Authority – Temporary Rent Assistance Benefit (TRAB)*	Working households with low income or individuals between jobs (TRAB allows individuals and families to obtain affordable and suitable housing by subsidizing rent in the market rental sector)	60	-
Green Acres Foundation (Apartment—Independent Living)	Seniors (rents lower than (typically 10-20% below), average rates in private market rental housing)	-	31
Green Acres Foundation (Lodge Suites– Partial or Full Services)	Seniors (rents lower than (typically 10-20% below), average rates in private market rental housing)	-	183
Aboriginal Housing Society	Off-reserve housing options for Indigenous people	-	172**
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>60</b>	<b>569</b>

\* The Temporary Rent Assistance Benefit (RAB) is intended to help eligible tenants afford rent while they stabilize or improve their housing situation. Individuals and families in 30+ communities in southern Alberta can apply for this benefit. 102 represents total tenant numbers across these communities and does not represent the total number of TRAB recipients in Lethbridge.

\*\*This bed/unit count includes the new development project (132 units) nearing completion at the time of drafting the Needs Assessment.

### 5.3.8 Continuing Care Homes

Continuing Care Homes (Assisted Living and Long-Term Care) are licensed settings that are either operated by Alberta Health Services (AHS) or other contracted non-and for-profit providers. The amount and type of care provided to residents is based on their assessed needs.<sup>38</sup>

Continuing Care Homes receive public funding to provide residents with health care services (nursing, personal care, and other support services). Often, however, Continuing Care Home residents are required to pay an "Accommodation Charge" on a monthly basis to cover meals, housekeeping, building maintenance, etc. In Alberta, the Provincial government sets a maximum Accommodation Charge that can be charged to residents. In some instances, residents may receive a partial subsidy to pay for a Continuing Care unit; however, many residents are not subsidized and can pay similar market rental rates for Continuing Care housing options. As a result, Continuing Care Homes are not usually included in as a non-market housing option. However, in order to understand the landscape of housing options serving Seniors in Lethbridge, Table 18 and 19 outline current bed/units counts.

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<sup>38</sup> Alberta Government. "Continuing Care – Overview." (2023). Retrieved from: <https://www.alberta.ca/about-continuing-care>.



**Table 21: Assisted Living Providers in Lethbridge**

Agency/Shelter Name	Number of Beds/Units
Green Acres Foundation (Designated Care Sites (DSL))	SL3 Units (personal care on a 24 hour/day basis) – 33 Community Transition Beds (CTB) (short-term hospital discharge/acute care) - 12
Covenant Care	102
Covenant Health	140
Covenant Living	118
Adaptacare Personal Care Homes	53
Seasons Retirement Communities	153
Columbia Assisted Living	112
Extendicare Fairmont Park	140
Good Samaritan Society	216
Legacy Lodge	104
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,183</b>

Source: City of Lethbridge in consultation with local housing providers, 2023

**Table 22: Long Term Care Providers in Lethbridge**

Agency Name	Number of Beds/Units
Covenant Health – Long Term Care	108
Edith Cavell Care Centre	120
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>228</b>

Source: City of Lethbridge in consultation with local housing providers, 2023

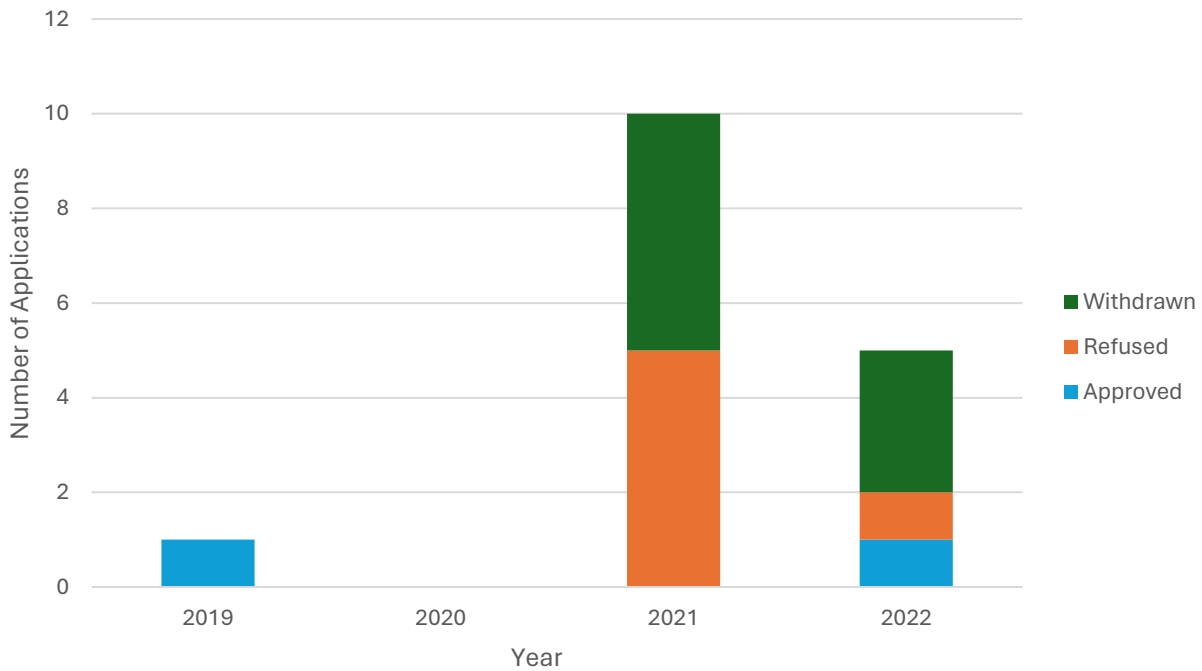
### **Non-market housing supply have increased modestly.**

- Lethbridge has seen an increase of non-market housing supply between 2018 (2,509 units/beds) and 2023 (3,709 units/beds). As noted at the beginning of this section, this is largely due to a change in how the City accounted for non-market housing units/beds in this Needs Assessment, including: new categories for non-market housing options, recategorizing some existing housing options into a housing category along the housing continuum that better reflects the type of housing being provided, and adding income subsidy numbers to understand more fully need in community. More details on each of these changes included in the initial text of Section 5.3.
- The number of units/beds in non-market housing options serving individuals and families requiring short-term, crisis accommodation (i.e., emergency shelters), or serving individuals with complex needs who require some form of support (i.e., transitional housing and supportive housing) has increased modestly (1-2%) between 2018-2023.
- The number of units/beds in non-market housing options that serve low-income households who are capable of living independently, generally without need for support services (i.e., social or community housing or below-market rental housing) appears to have increased significantly. However, this is largely because many of these units existed in 2018 but were not accounted for as part of the Needs Assessment; as such, there is no comparable 2018 data to calculate percentage point differences between 2018 and 2023.

### **5.3.9 Outcomes of Non-Market Housing Approvals**

Through the initial work completed on the Land Use Bylaw Renewal project, development and land use rezoning approvals were reviewed to understand how many applications for social uses (i.e., drop-in centres, food banks, group homes, resource centres, shelters, soup kitchens, and supportive housing) were approved between 2013-2022.

**Chart 35: Outcomes for Rezoning Applications for Social Uses 2019-2022**



Source: City of Lethbridge, Planning and Design (Land Use Bylaw Renewal, Decoding Social Uses, 2023).

## ANALYSIS (CHART 35)

**Tracking development approvals and rezoning applications can help identify areas where the City might be able to streamline planning approvals processes.**

- Development Approvals

Between 2013 – 2022, a total of 33 development applications were made for social uses. Of these 17 (52%) were approved, 5 (15%) were refused, 4 (12%) were approved but resulted in a reduction in the number of units of a change of use away from a social use, 3 (9%) were cancelled before the decision was made, and 4 (12%) were withdrawn by the applicant (Land Use Bylaw Renewal, Decoding Social Uses Paper, p. 22).

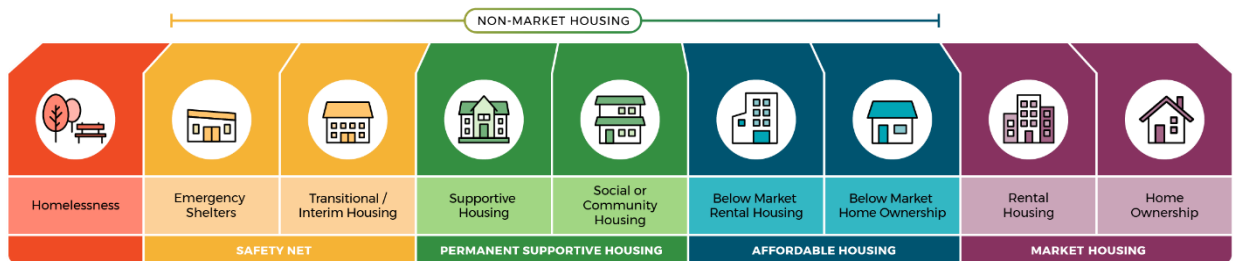
- Development Approvals

Between 2019 – 2022, a total of 16 rezoning applications were submitted. Of the 16 applications, 2 (13%) were approved, 6 (38%) were refused, and 8 (50%) were withdrawn by the applicant.

## 5.4 Market Housing Supply

### Data Description

This section explores market housing options present in Lethbridge. Market housing is often the type of housing people think of when imagining housing options in their community—either market rental housing or home ownership. However, as the housing continuum demonstrates, market housing is only one part of the housing continuum.



**Market rental housing** refers to a unit on the private rental market (primary or secondary) owned or operated by private operators (i.e., landlords or property management firms) charging market rent.

- The primary rental market is composed of purpose-built rental buildings which are solely intended to be rented out, with a corporation in most cases acting as the landlord.
- The secondary rental market is composed of rental units which were not initially built to serve as a rental unit.

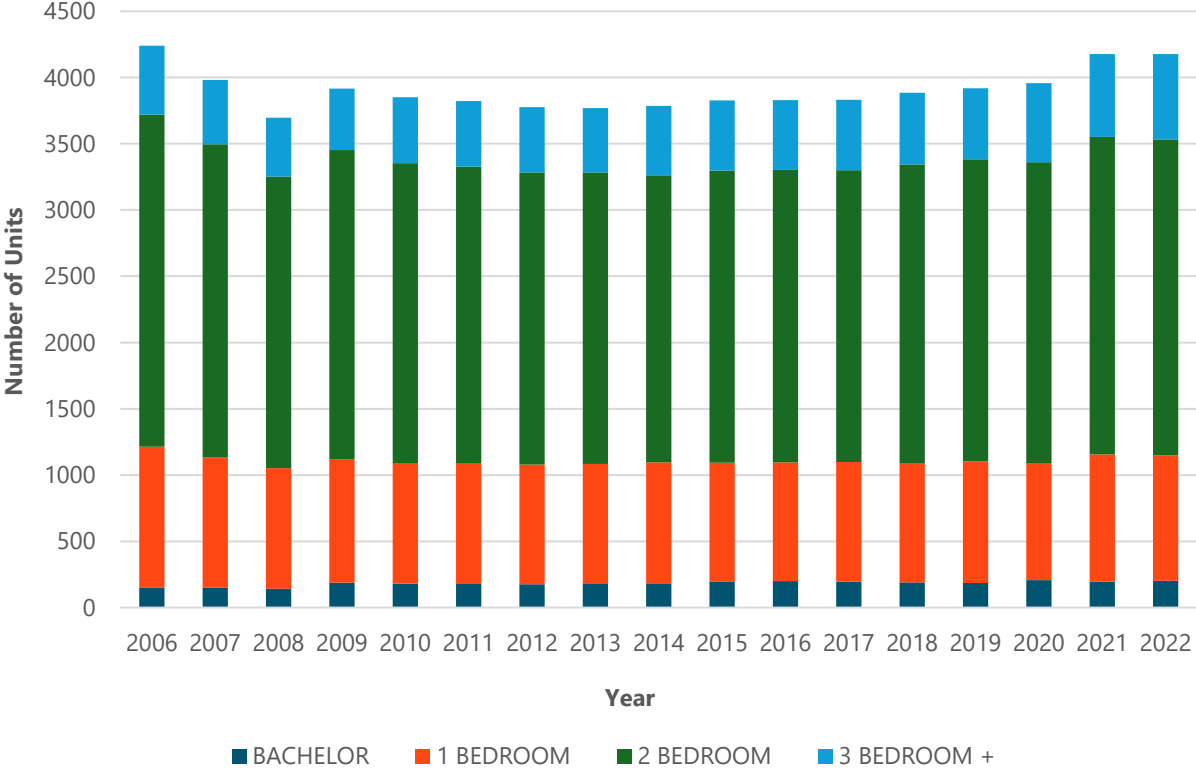
Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) only provides data on rental costs for the primary rental market in Lethbridge. While the available data provides insight into trends and is a good proxy for the rental market overall, it does not provide a complete picture since a large portion of Lethbridge's rental stock is in the secondary market. The information in this section refers to the primary rental market only.

**Home ownership** refers to housing that is priced at the average market value and purchased with or without a mortgage but without any government assistance.

Understanding market conditions (rental and home ownership) is important because it can assist a municipality in identifying development gaps.

# 5.4.1 Rental: Availability by Bedroom Type

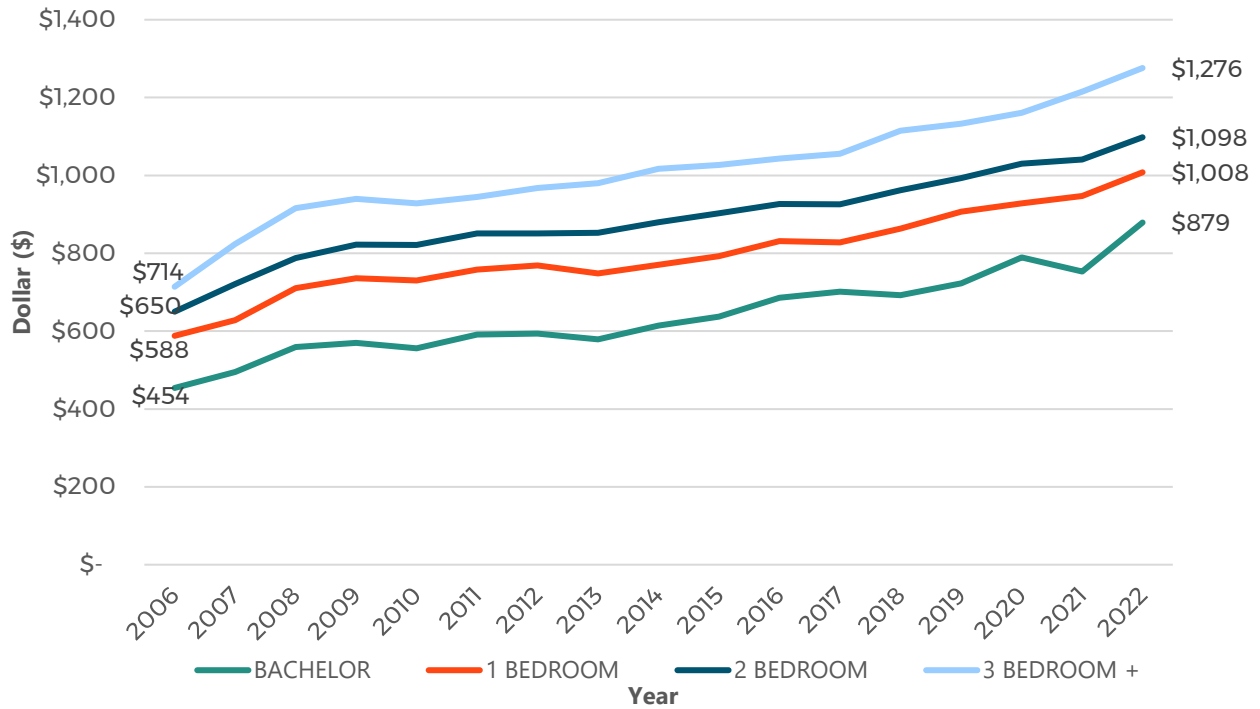
Chart 36: Bedroom Type by Availability



Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Lethbridge, 2022

## 5.4.2 Rental: Cost by Bedroom Type

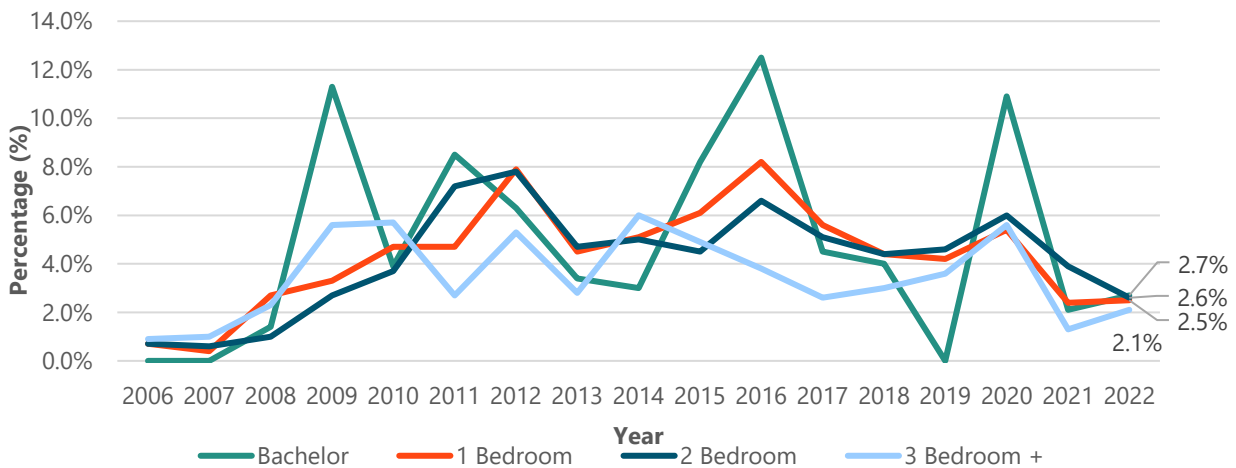
Chart 37: Rental Housing in Lethbridge, Cost by Bedroom Type Over Time



Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Lethbridge, 2022

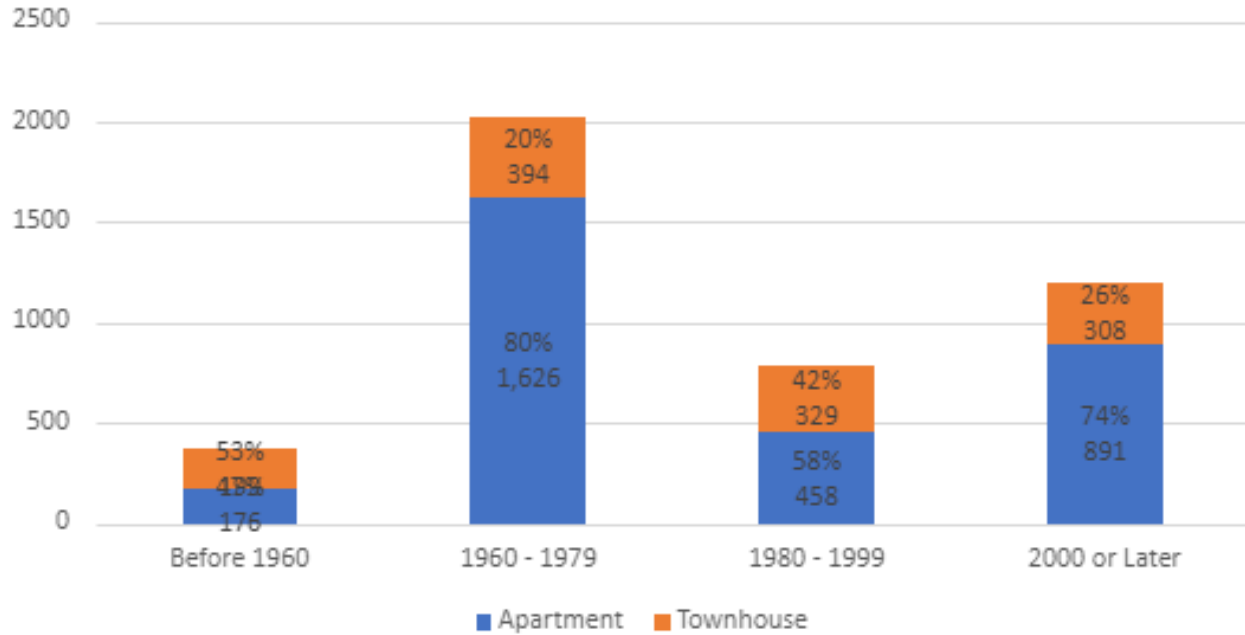
## 5.4.3 Rental: Vacancy Rate by Bedroom Type

Chart 38: Rental Vacancy by Bedroom Type



Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Lethbridge, 2023.

Chart 39: Primary Rental Market by Structural Type and Construction Year



Source: City of Lethbridge, Building, Permit Data 2023.

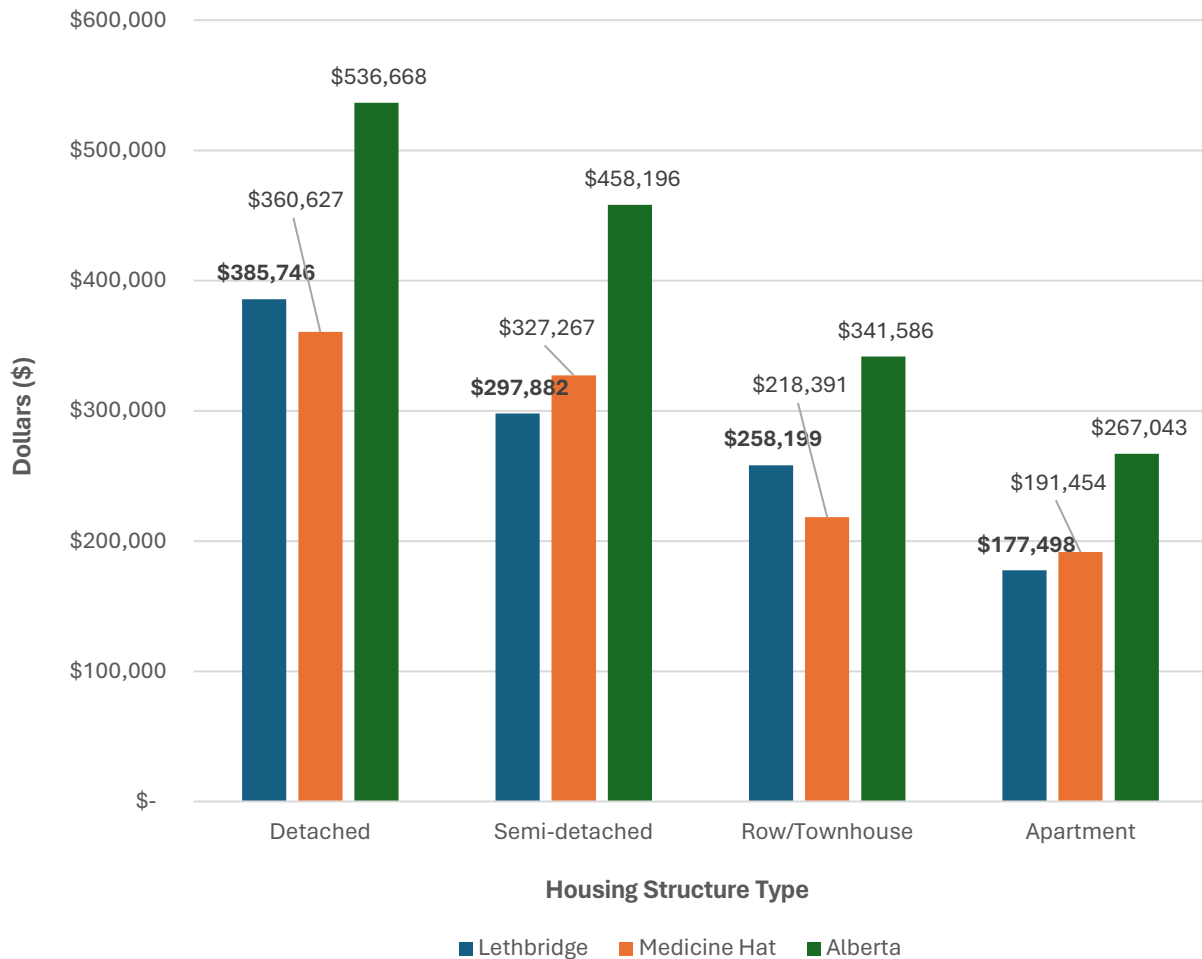
## ANALYSIS (CHART 39)

### Rental units are becoming more costly and difficult to secure.

- In 2022, Lethbridge had 4,178 primary market rental units. Consistently, more than half of all available rental units are two-bedroom units.
- Between 2006 and 2022, the cost of rental units across all bedroom types has increased between 69% (2 bedroom) and 94% (bachelor).
- Lethbridge has fewer available primary rental market units in 2022 (overall 2.5% vacancy rate) than in 2016 (overall 6.9% vacancy rate) and represents the lowest vacancy rate since 2008.
- Most renters are renting within the secondary rental market.

## 5.4.4 Ownership: Average Value

Chart 40: Ownership Average Value







Source: Alberta Real Estate Association (AREA) November 2023 Monthly Reports (Average Annual Price, Year to Date).



## 5.4.5 Ownership: Average Value

Figure 12: Ownership Average Value

 <p>Average apartment price: <b>\$177,498</b> Income needed to adequately <b>\$69,132</b></p>	 <p>Average semi-detached price: <b>\$297,882</b> Income needed to adequately afford: <b>\$92,802</b></p>
 <p>Average row/townhouse price: <b>\$258,199</b> Income needed to adequately afford: <b>\$87,546</b></p>	 <p>Average detached price: <b>\$385,746</b> Income needed to adequately afford: <b>\$114,273</b></p>

Sources: Alberta Real Estate Association (AREA) November 2023 Monthly Reports (Average Annual Price, Year to Date); TD Mortgage Calculator, 2023).

### ASSUMPTIONS

- No more than 30% of gross income allocated to housing cost
- 10% deposit on mortgage
- 6.73% interest rate, 3-year fixed rate
- Included approximate property taxes and utilities. Does not include condominium fees or other municipal services.

### ANALYSIS (FIGURE 12)

**The average purchase price for all forms of housing in Lethbridge is increasing.**

- The average house price for a single-detached house in Lethbridge was slightly higher than Medicine Hat yet more than \$150,000 less than the provincial average.
- Homebuyers in Lethbridge require an annual household income of at least \$69,132 to adequately afford housing.

### CONSIDERATIONS

- The household median income in Lethbridge in 2021 was \$82,000. This means that approximately 50% of households in Lethbridge earn less than \$82,000/year would only be able to afford a row/townhouse or apartment, using the assumptions noted above.
- Row/townhouse and apartments (including semi-detached units) only make up approximately 35% of the housing stock in Lethbridge.

## 5.5 Affordability Analysis

### 5.5.1 Affordability: Ownership

Table 23: Ownership Affordability Analysis by Household Type and Housing Type

Household Type	2023 Income Projections	Affordable Monthly Shelter Costs (30% of income)	Detached	Semi-detached	Row/Townhouse	Apartment
One couple without children	\$95,821	\$2,346	\$2,857	\$2,320	\$2,189	\$1,728
One couple with children	\$144,757	\$3,619	\$2,857	\$2,320	\$2,189	\$1,728
One parent census family	\$66,336	\$1,658	\$2,857	\$2,320	\$2,189	\$1,728
Other census family households	\$147,728	\$3,693	\$2,857	\$2,320	\$2,189	\$1,728
Non-census family households	\$52,111	\$1,303	\$2,857	\$2,320	\$2,189	\$1,728

■ Affordable
 ■ Slightly Unaffordable
 ■ Unaffordable

Sources: Alberta Real Estate Association (AREA) November 2023 Monthly Reports (Average Annual Price, Year to Date); TD Mortgage Calculator, 2023; Lethbridge Property Tax Calculator, 2023; and Utilities Consumer Advocate Cost Comparison Tool, 2023.

#### ANALYSIS (TABLE 23)

**Home ownership in Lethbridge for any housing type will be a struggle for one-parent households and single individuals in the community.**

- One parent families with a maximum shelter spend of \$1,658/month and non-census family households with a maximum shelter spend of \$1,303/month will struggle to own any housing type in Lethbridge. It is important to note that most people in a non-census family household (85-93%) are single people.
- Households with one couple with and without children or other census family households with higher monthly shelter spends will be able to purchase a variety of housing options in Lethbridge.

## 5.5.2 Affordability: Rental

Table 24: Rental Affordability Analysis by Household Type and Housing Type

Household Type	2023 Income Projections	Affordable Monthly Shelter Costs (30% of income)	Bachelor	One bedroom	Two bedroom	Three+ bedroom
One couple without children	\$58,450	\$1,461	\$1,017	\$1,228	\$1,373	\$1,689
One couple with children	\$90,184	\$2,255	\$1,017	\$1,228	\$1,373	\$1,689
One parent census family	\$41,327	\$1,033	\$1,017	\$1,228	\$ 1,373	\$ 1,689
Other census family households	\$92,035	\$2,301	\$1,017	\$1,228	\$1,373	\$1,689
Non-census family households	\$32,465	\$812	\$1,017	\$1,228	\$1,373	\$1,689
Households on a Fixed Income (Individual on AISH)	\$21,444	\$536	\$1,017	\$1,228	\$1,373	\$1,689

■ Affordable
 ■ Slightly Unaffordable
 ■ Unaffordable

Sources: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2023; Lethbridge Property Tax Calculator, 2023, and Utilities Consumer Advocate Cost Comparison Tool, 2023.

### Monthly rental costs in Lethbridge for any housing type will be a struggle for one-parent households, single individuals in the community, and people living on a fixed income.

- One parent families with a maximum shelter spend of \$1,033/month and single individuals (i.e., non-census family households) with a maximum shelter spend of \$812/month will struggle to rent any housing type in Lethbridge. It is important to note that most people in a non-census family household (85-93%) are single people.
- Market rental options are incredibly challenging for people living on a fixed income (e.g., receiving Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH)) with market rent starting at nearly double what has been calculated as affordable monthly shelter costs on a fixed income.
- One couple without children (i.e., young, working age adults) start to experience affordability challenges with a maximum shelter spend of \$1,461/month when renting a 2 or 3+ bedroom apartment.

## 5.6 Core Housing Need

### 5.6.1 Core Housing Need by Tenure and Indicator

#### Data Description

Core Housing Need indicators refer to the ways that housing challenges are measured nationally. Core Housing indicators show when households are not meeting the following housing standards:

- **Adequate housing** is reported by their residents as not requiring any major repairs
- **Affordable housing** costs less than 30% of total before-tax household income
- **Suitable housing** has enough bedrooms for the size and composition of the resident households according to the National Occupancy Standards (NOS) requirements.

CMHC defines Core Housing Need as a household whose housing does not meet the minimum requirements of at least one of the adequacy, affordability, or suitability indicators. In addition, the household would have to spend 30% or more of its total before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local housing that is acceptable (i.e. housing option that meets all three indicators).<sup>39</sup>

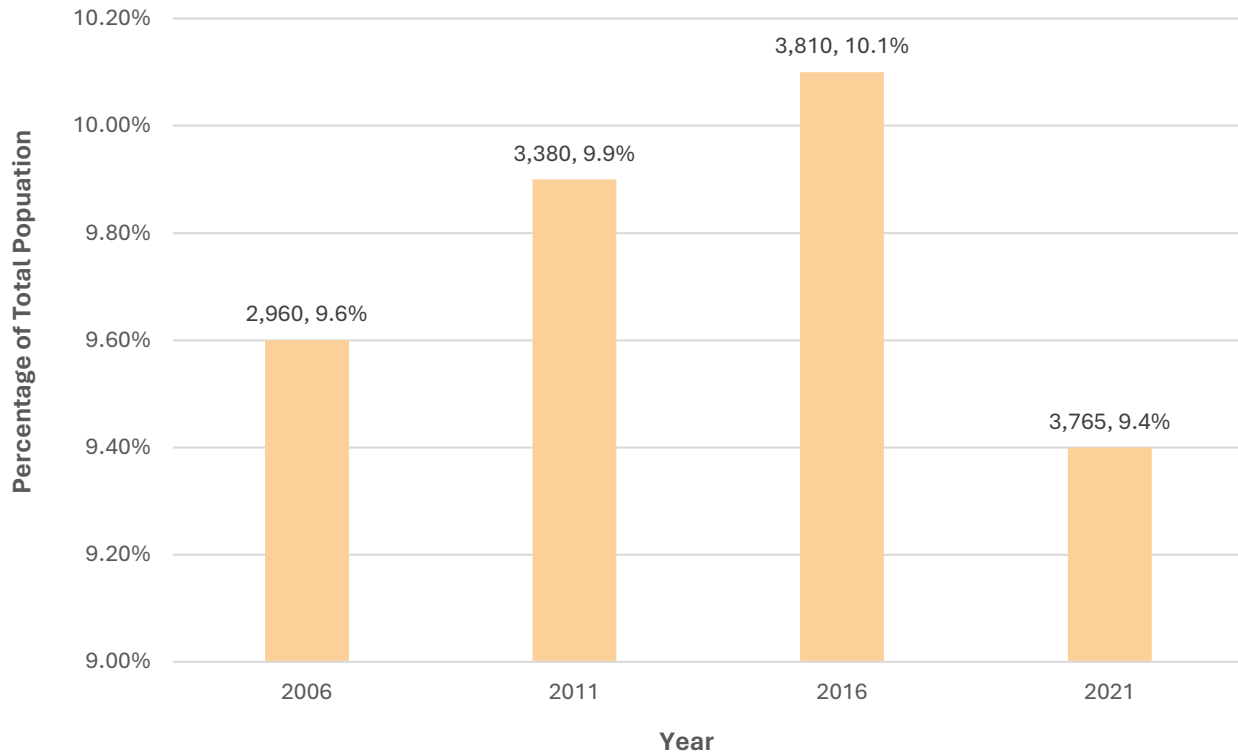
Trends in these measurements allow communities to monitor three key housing-related challenges (adequacy, affordability, and suitability), changes over time, and differences between comparable communities.

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<sup>39</sup> Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) (2020), Core Housing Need Definition. Retrieved from: <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/professionals/housing-markets-data-and-research/housing-research/core-housing-need>

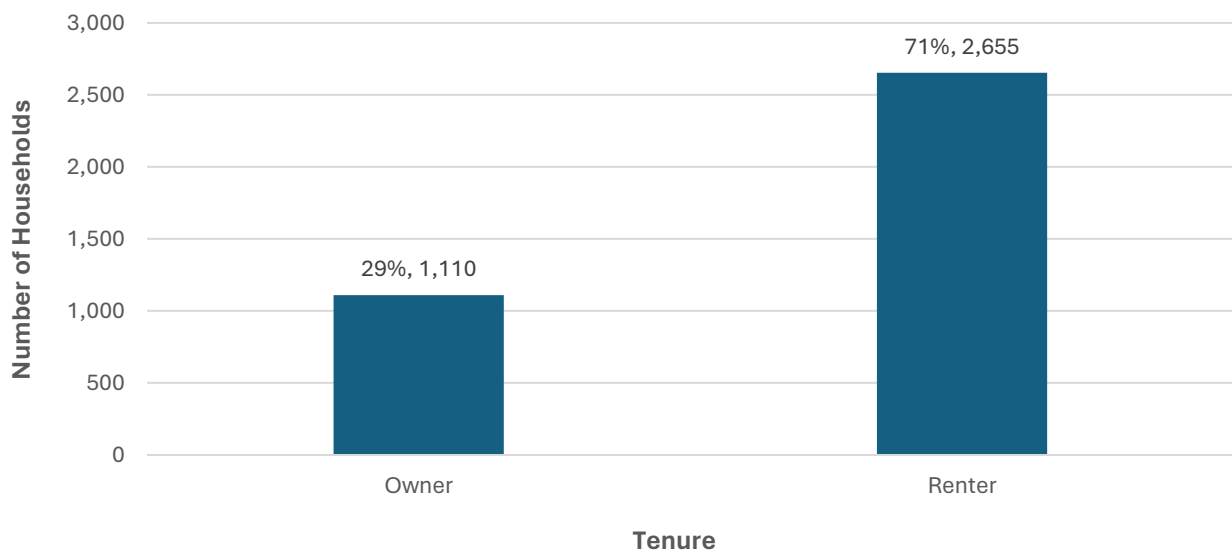
The following graphs shows Core Housing Need as a percent of the total population of Lethbridge over time, and break out Core Housing Need by indicator, and by tenure (rental and ownership).

**Chart 41: Core Housing Need Over Time**



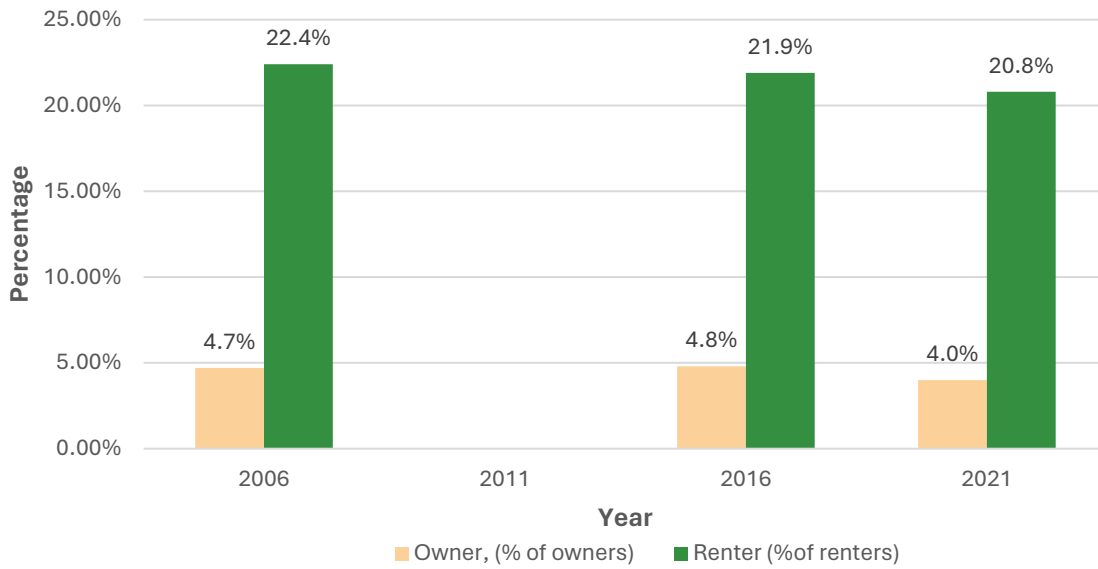
Source: Statistics Canada

**Chart 42: Core Housing Need by Tenure, 2021**



Source: Statistics Canada

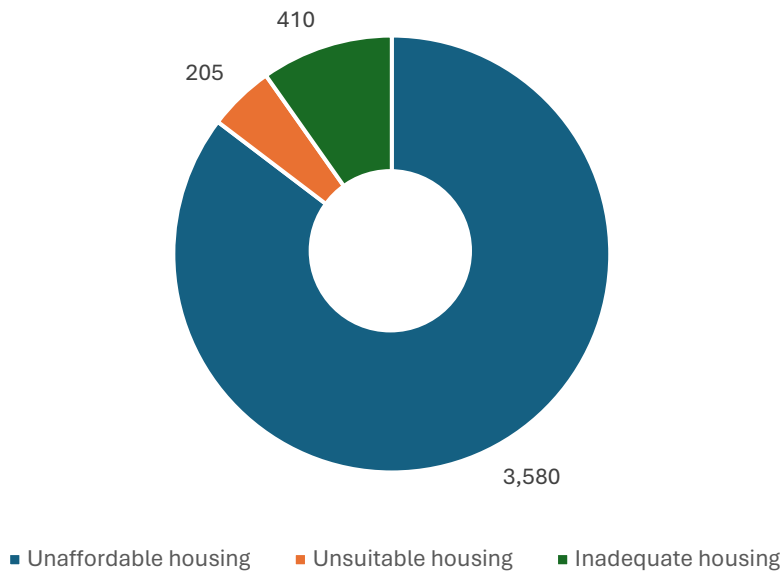
**Chart 43: Core Housing Need by Tenure, 2006 - 2021**



Source: Statistics Canada (2006, 2016, 2021).

\* No breakdown of Core Housing Need is Available for 2011.

**Chart 44: Core Housing Need, 2021**



Source: Statistics Canada (2021).

Note: Numbers in Table 48 do not add up to total household numbers in Core House Need identified in Table 45 (3,765 households) because some households experience more than one Core Housing Need indicator and may be counted more than once in the data collected for Core Housing Need by Indicator.

## 5.6.2 Core Housing Need: Waitlists

### Data Description

Waitlist information from local housing providers helps a municipality get a sense of underlying housing need in a community because it identifies households that are currently waiting to receive housing supports—either income subsidies or units.

**Lethbridge Housing Authority**—1049 unique household applications on waitlists as of November 2023. Households can only be on one waitlist at a time.

- Rent Supplement List: 449 households
- Supportive Housing, Social or Community Housing and Affordable Housing: 600 households

**Green Acres Foundation**—170 households on waitlists. Green Acres Foundation operates in Lethbridge, Coaldale, and Picture Butte. Households can be on waitlists in multiple municipalities. The number of households on multiple waiting lists is 30.

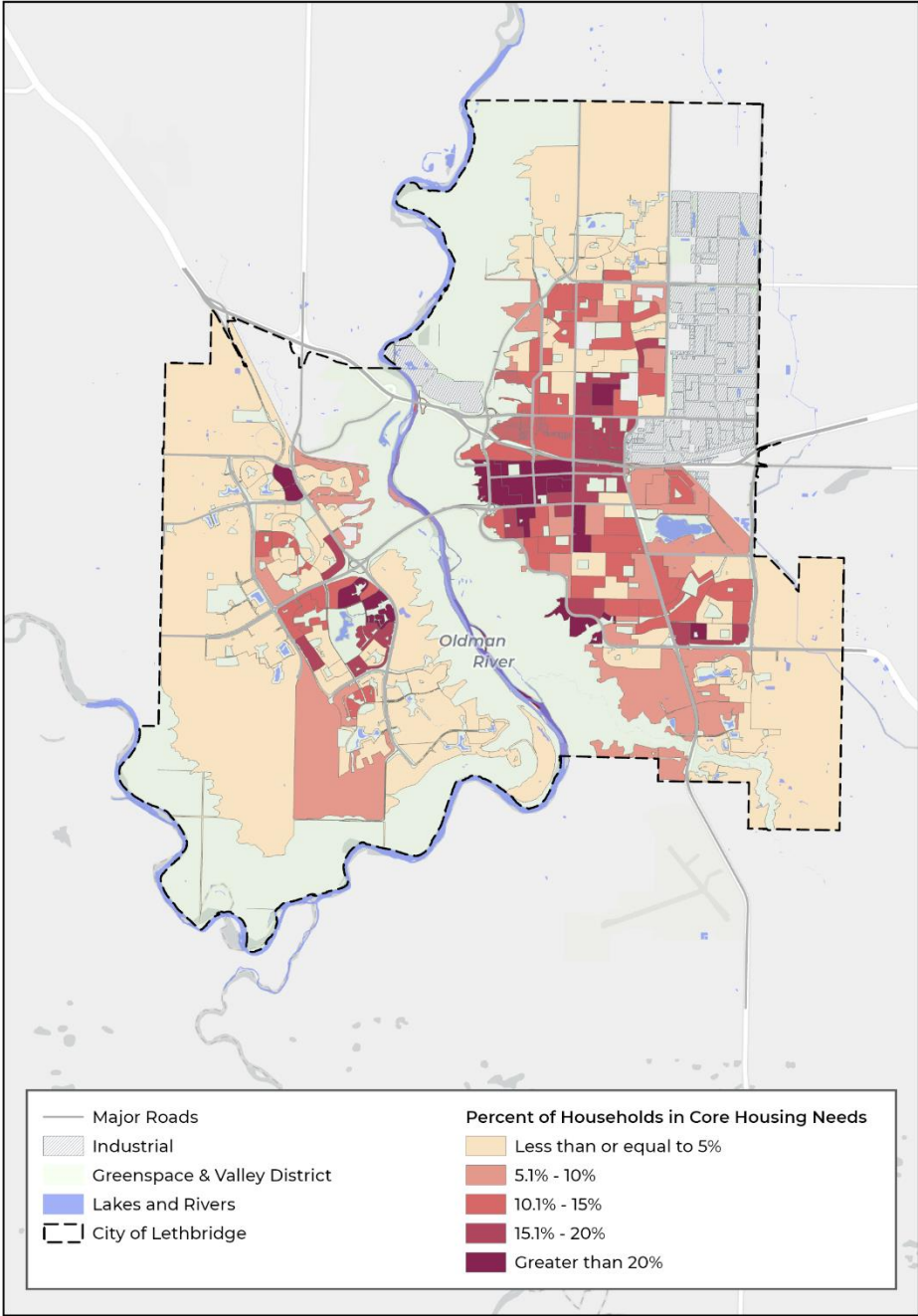
- Apartment – Independent Living: 100 households
- Lodge Suites – Partial or Full Services: 70 households

No waitlists were noted by Green Acres Foundation for Continuing Care Home units/beds; referrals handled by Alberta Health Services Access Centre.

*Source: Lethbridge Housing Authority (2023), Green Acres Foundation (2024).*

### 5.6.3 Spatial Analysis: Core Housing Need

Figure 13: Core Housing Need



Source: Statistics Canada (2021).

Source: Statistics Canada (2006, 2016, 2021).



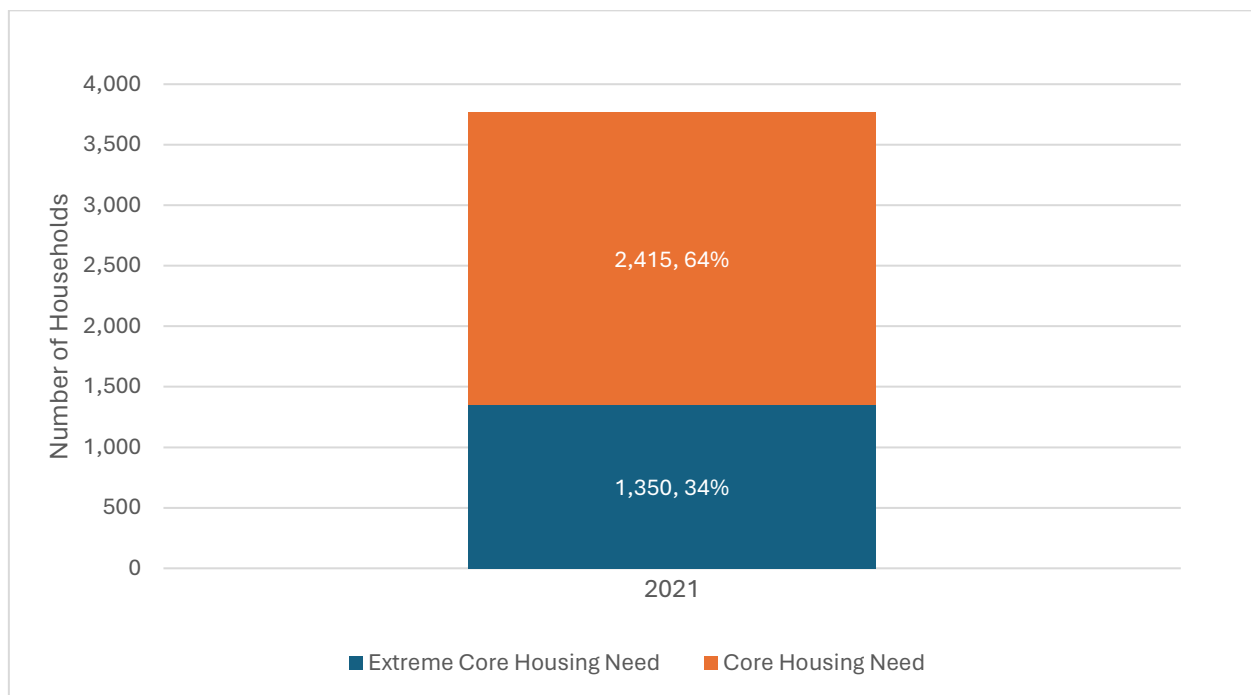
## 5.6.4 Extreme Core Housing Need

### Data Description

Extreme Core Housing Needs identifies households spending 50% or more of before-tax household income on housing costs. As a result, and in comparison, with Core Housing Need, Extreme Core Housing Need provides a more accurate proxy measure for underlying housing need in a community because it identifies households that need deep subsidy to afford housing.

As of 2021, of the 3,580 households in Core Housing Need, 1,350 of these households are in Extreme Core Housing Need in Lethbridge.

Chart 45: Extreme Core Housing Need within Core Housing Need



Source: Statistics Canada (2021).

## ANALYSIS

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### **9.4% of Lethbridge households are in Core Housing Need in 2021.**

- Of the 9.4% households in Core Housing Need in 2021, renters are disproportionately represented. Renters make up 71% (2,655) of the Core Housing Need households, while owners only make up 29% (1,110).
- From 2006 to 2021, the average proportion of Core Housing Need renters was 22% of total renter households. On the other hand, the average proportion of Core Housing Need owners was 4.5% of total owner households.

### **Affordability is the greatest challenge for people in Core Housing Need.**

- 85% of households in Core Housing Need are experiencing affordability challenges (i.e., spending more than 30% of total before-tax household income on housing). Core Housing Need indicators of suitability and adequacy are less of an issue in Lethbridge at 5%, and 10%, respectively.

### **1,350 households in Lethbridge are in Extreme Core Housing Need and spending 50% or more of before-tax household income on housing costs.**

- A majority of households in Extreme Core Housing Need (64%, 870 households) are renters.

## CONSIDERATIONS

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- Core Housing Need in Lethbridge was growing prior to the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) being provided by the Federal government to people through the COVID-19 pandemic.
- CERB likely resulted in artificially depressed 2021 Core Housing Need data, and it is anticipated that municipalities across the Country may see an increase of Core Housing Need numbers emerging in future data as a numbers rebound to average levels following the discontinuation of CERB in 2021.
- If the average number of households in Core Housing Need between 2006-2021 were to be applied to 2021 data, there would be 3,922 households in Lethbridge in Core Housing Need. This extrapolated average for 2021 would result in an additional 112 households in Core Housing Need in Lethbridge.
- In addition, economic circumstances since the pandemic have also been more volatile than the years previous. These two economic factors should be considered when evaluating trends in Core Housing Need presented in this Needs Assessment.<sup>40</sup>

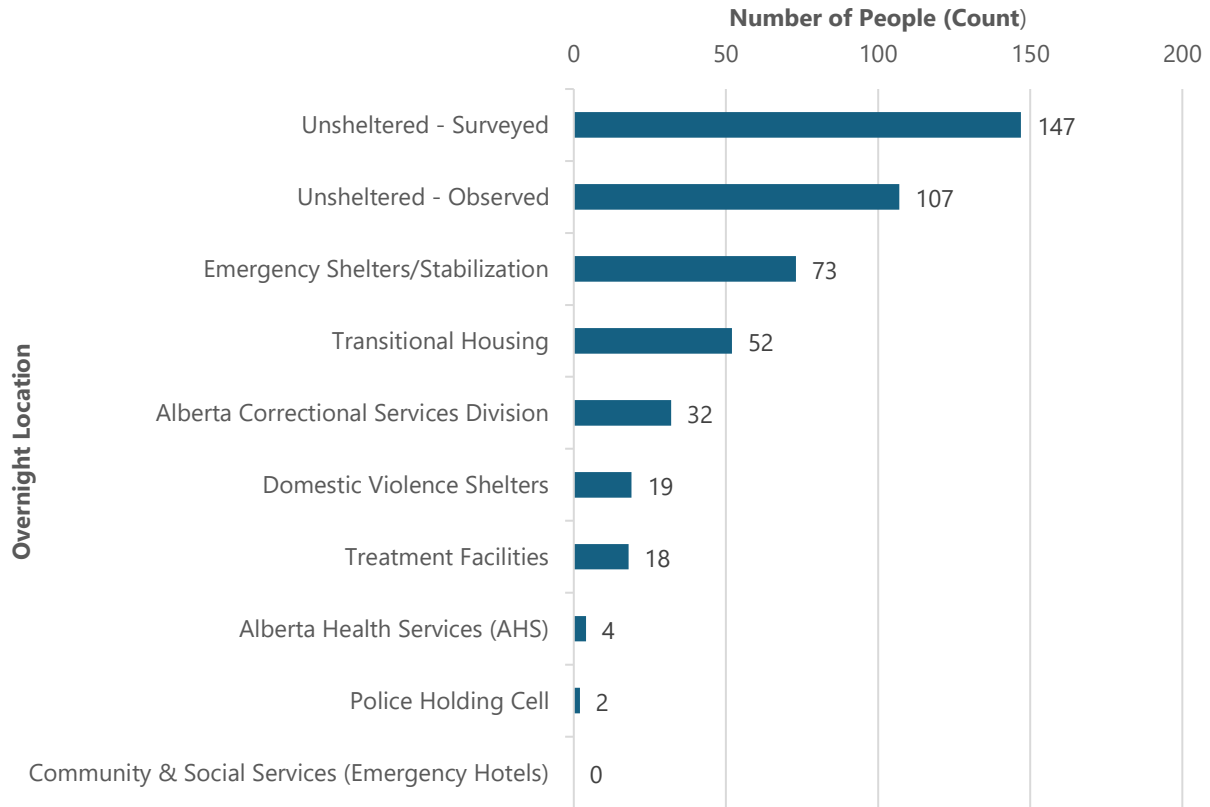
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<sup>40</sup> Housing Assessment Resource Tools (HART) (2022). Understanding 2021 Core House Need Data. Retrieved from: <https://hart.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Understanding-2021-Core-Housing-Need-Data.pdf>; Statistics Canada (2022). Housing challenges remain for vulnerable populations in 2021. Retrieved from: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220721/dq220721b-eng.htm>

## 5.7 Homelessness

### 5.7.1 Homelessness: Point in Time (PiT) Count

Chart 46: Point in Time Count, 2022



Source: City of Lethbridge, Point in Time (PiT) Count, 2022.

#### ANALYSIS (CHART 46)

**The number of individuals experiencing homelessness in Lethbridge has doubled between 2018 and 2022.**

- According to Point-In-Time (PiT) Counts by the City, the number of individuals experiencing homelessness in Lethbridge has increased by 104%, from 223 in 2018 to 454 as of 2022.
- Through the 2022 PiT Count, 72% of Lethbridge's unsheltered community identified as Indigenous, with 51% of all individuals in the PiT Count identifying as Indigenous.
- Nearly two-thirds (61.5%) of unsheltered individuals are between the ages of 25 and 44.

- Sixty-five percent (65%) of individuals identified through the PiT count were chronically homeless, that is, homeless for more than 6 months in the past year, and the average number of days spent homeless was 254.<sup>41</sup>
- In addition to the PiT Count in 2022, the City of Lethbridge, working with the Blood Tribe Department of Health initiated the By Names List (BNL) in 2023. A By Names List is a real-time list of all known people experiencing homelessness in a community and includes a set of data points that supports coordinated access between service providers and helps the community to understand the inflow and outflow of homelessness at a system level. At the end of March 2024, the BNL had 422 unique individuals experiencing homelessness on the list.

## CONSIDERATIONS

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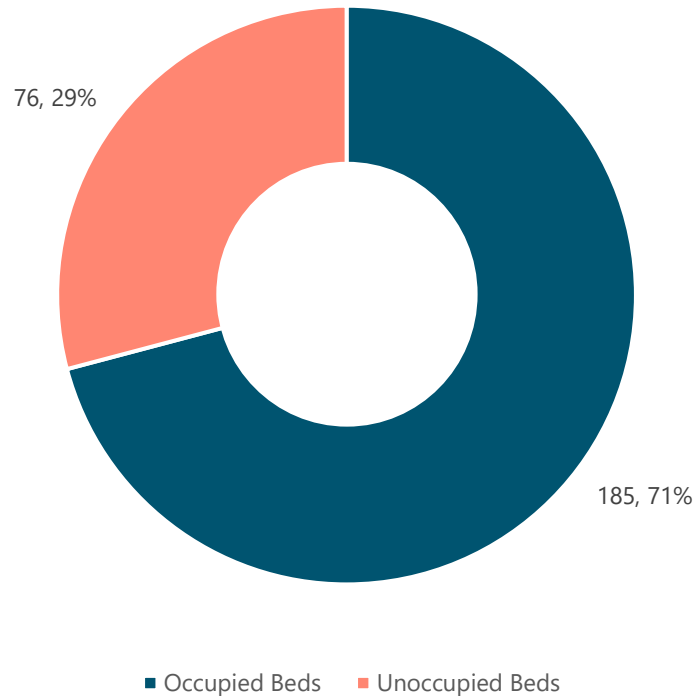
- The increase in people experiencing homelessness is likely due to several factors, including increased substance use and the opioid crisis, financial, mental, and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the rising cost of living.
- With a majority of surveyed individuals in the PiT Count experiencing unsheltered homelessness, the City of Lethbridge, alongside emergency shelter operators, and non-market housing providers, will need to work collaboratively using existing Strategies (e.g., Encampment Strategy, Shelter Development Strategy), to identify appropriate homelessness supports that will address the local housing need in Lethbridge (e.g., working together to progress individuals from emergency shelter to other housing options in the community, enhancing daytime program facilitation to bring individuals into contact with homelessness supports, expanding Peer Support Network to help mediate between people experiencing homelessness and available/appropriate supports).
- The City's Integrated Coordinated Access (ICA) system is designed to help individuals experiencing complex social challenges navigate resources and supports that are available. The Lethbridge ICA has many components, including system navigators that can help individuals access supports and organizations that help identify where they can work alongside the system to provide referral pathways, subsidies, stabilization funds, and potential rental listings.
- The City should continue to support the ICA system and work with partners to identify new programs and supports that could be integrated moving forward.
- While addressing homelessness is often beyond the control of the City of Lethbridge, the sharp increase in the population experiencing homelessness in the community (i.e., PiT Count numbers and the By Names List) requires all levels of government to pitch in and pull in the same direction. The City of Lethbridge's commitment to administer funds through Reaching Home, a community-based program funded by the Federal Government to help address local homelessness needs, is one way the City can continue to support housing providers move people into stable and long-term housing.

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<sup>41</sup> City of Lethbridge (2022). Lethbridge 2022 Point-in-Time Count: Full Enumeration and Survey Results Report.

## 5.7.2 Homelessness: Shelter Capacity

Chart 47: Shelter Capacity



Source: City of Lethbridge, Point in Time (PiT) Count, 2022

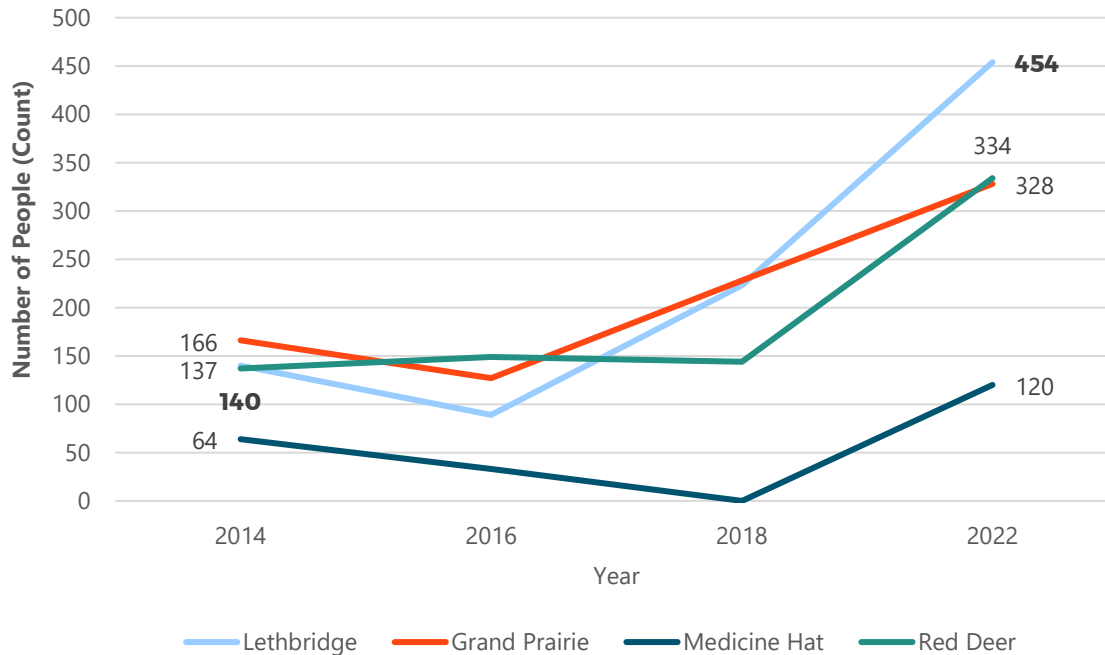
### ANALYSIS (CHART 47)

**There is insufficient emergency, transitional, and treatment housing within Lethbridge to support the city's current homeless population.**

- 454 people experienced homelessness in Lethbridge on the night of September 27, 2022—just over half of these individuals stayed in unsheltered locations.
- On September 27, 2022, a total of 261 beds were available in Lethbridge for individuals experiencing homelessness—185 beds (71%) were occupied on the night of the PiT count, including 92 individuals at emergency shelters, 52 individuals staying at transitional housing, and 41 individuals in treatment housing.
- In 2023, if there was 100% occupancy of the same housing options (emergency shelter, transitional and treatment housing), there still more individuals experiencing homelessness in Lethbridge than there are beds available (a total 369 units/beds in emergency shelters, transitional housing, and treatment housing) vs. 422 people (BNL unique individuals) to 454 people (PiT Count number) experiencing homelessness.

## 5.7.3 Homelessness: Comparable Cities

Chart 48: Comparable Communities Experiencing Homelessness



Source: City of Lethbridge, Point in Time (PiT) Count, 2022; City of Grande Prairie, Point in Time (PiT) Count, 2022; City of Medicine Hat, Point in Time (PiT) Count, 2022; City of Red Deer, Point in Time (PiT) Count, 2022.

### ANALYSIS (CHART 48)

**In 2022, Lethbridge had the highest number of people experiencing homelessness amongst comparable communities in Alberta.**

- In Alberta, all comparable communities experienced an increase in homelessness between 2018 and 2022.
- Between 2022 and 2018, Lethbridge witnessed a 49% increase in the number of individuals experiencing homelessness, with a total of 454 people counted during the PiT Count in 2022.
- The reasons for housing loss are complex and intersection with my facets of community safety and wellbeing. In the PiT Count, the top six reasons identified by individuals experiencing homelessness as the reason for losing their housing, included substance use issues, not enough income, being evicted, conflict with spouse/partner, unsafe housing conditions, and conflicts with landlords or other tenants.

## CONSIDERATIONS

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- The City of Lethbridge has historically taken a hands-off approach to developing new shelter spaces, instead leaving this responsibility to the province, and interested not-for-profit organizations. However, in response to an increase in homelessness, the City is now taking a more active role in shelter development, including the 2023 Shelter Development Strategy and the 2023 Encampment Strategy. In addition, the Land Use Bylaw Renewal Project, the City is also clarifying its role in supporting shelter development through land use changes.

### **Shelter Development Strategy**

- The 2023 Shelter Development Strategy seeks to address challenges that include: a lack of available and appropriately zoned land for shelter development, access to funding, and availability and willingness of operators to manage these spaces.
- The primary areas for City involvement are land use regulation, land banking, providing capital funding and lobbying other levels of government for increased capital and operational funding.
- Areas where the City may not be most appropriate to be involved include providing operational funding and service operations.
- At the time of this Needs Assessment, the City is currently renewing its Land Use Bylaw to understand how to accommodate social uses such as shelters, transitional and supportive housing, and social services, as well as where opportunities may exist to partner with other levels of government.<sup>42</sup>

### **2023 Encampment Strategy**

- The City of Lethbridge, in partnership with the Lethbridge Police Service, developed an Encampment Strategy in 2023.
- Highlights of this Strategy include creating a year-round encampment response process that is adequately resourced, creating a dedicated outreach services team to support those living in encampments with the goal of connecting them to appropriate shelter and housing before encampment removal, and adopting a multi-tiered risk assessment tool to ensure that sites are closed and cleaned up in a way that protects public health and supports the most vulnerable in Lethbridge.
- The Strategy identifies \$750,000 in funding for 2023 and \$500,000 per year on an ongoing basis.
- Between June and October 2023, the City had received 377 calls for encampments. From this, 23 coordinated clean ups have taken place, and 600 structures have been removed.

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<sup>42</sup> City of Lethbridge (2023). Shelter Development Strategy – Update Report.

- As the City of Lethbridge planned for winter 2023, City Council approved an additional \$230,000 in municipal funding to create temporary emergency shelter spaces, with additional funds (up to \$1 million dollars) was provided by the Government of Alberta.

## 6 ENGAGEMENT

### 6.1 Methodology

To tell a more complete story about housing, wellbeing, and safety in Lethbridge, input from key stakeholders, City Councillors, and people with lived and living experience was completed to inform the Needs Assessment, and the overall updates to the CWSS and MHS Strategies.

The purpose of engagement was to introduce and raise awareness about the updates to the CWSS and MHS Strategies and seek feedback on the key concerns, issues, and successes related to housing, wellbeing, and safety in Lethbridge.

In total, engagement for the updates to the CWSS and MHS included:

- 1 workshop with the CWSS Community Advisory Committee
- 1 workshop with City of Lethbridge Internal Departments
- 4 workshops with housing and wellbeing key stakeholders
- 5 City Councillor interviews
- 6 focus groups with people with lived and living experience focus groups (youth, seniors, developmental disabilities, Lethbridge Housing Authority residents, and immigrant/newcomers)

Additional engagement as part of the updates to the CWSS and MHS is planned for spring 2024.

It is important to note that engagement for the updates to the CWSS and MHS build on previous outreach efforts involved in a variety of housing and wellbeing initiatives undertaken by the City in recent years, including: the Age Friendly Lethbridge Community Profile (2019), the Community Wellbeing and Safety Strategy Annual Report (2020), the Municipal Housing Strategy Engagement Summary Report (2020), the Community Clean and Safe Strategy (2021), and the Point-in-Time (PiT) Count Report (2022).



## 6.2 What We Learned

The following notes highlight the key themes that emerged from the engagement process.

### 6.2.1 Workshops

#### 6.2.1.1 CWSS Advisory Committee

- **Reactive versus proactive approach.** Committee members reflected that they were able to respond rapidly to issues during the COVID-19 pandemic. They noted that they do a great job of coming together to respond to emergent critical issues but would like to see increased emphasis on proactive, long-term planning.
- **Governance and structure.** Ongoing discussion about the CWSS Advisory Committee's structure and ability to influence real change in the community. Members of the CWSS Advisory Committee would like to move towards true collaboration with the City, and clarity around roles for service delivery.
- **Connection and trust.** Members of the CWSS Advisory Committee explained there is a lack of trust when working with City Council and Administration, noting there has been a noticeable breakdown in communication since 2018/2019. Members noted that the frustration is not directed at any specific individual; instead, frustration relates to the CWSS Advisory Committee's overall reporting structure and existing power dynamics within the City.
- **Indigenous representation.** Members recognized the need for more diverse representation on the CWSS Advisory Committee, especially from Indigenous peoples and organizations. There used to be several Indigenous committee members but there is now only one remaining.

#### 6.2.1.2 Internal Departments

- **Awareness and alignment.** Internal department participants had little familiarity with the existing CWSS and MHS. As a result, participants expressed feeling limited in their ability to provide meaningful feedback. Departments acknowledged that their work may be contributing to the strategies without knowing it. There is an opportunity for more awareness, relationship building, and alignment with Internal departments to improve implementation of the updated CWSS and MHS.
- **Public education.** Participants noted that there is a lack of understanding by the public about housing and the housing continuum, especially when it comes to the responsibility of municipalities in addressing housing challenges. There is an opportunity to increase awareness and education across the community to provide more clarity and reduce barriers (e.g., NIMBYism) to address housing, wellbeing and safety challenges in Lethbridge.

### 6.2.1.3 Key Housing and Wellbeing and Safety Stakeholders and Indigenous Individuals and Organizations

- **Clarity on vision and goals.** Despite the existing CWSS and MHS, participants perceive a lack of vision and action from the City. Participants expressed an interest in the updated CWSS and MHS Strategies including a comprehensive list of specific goals and actions that include details on costs, timelines, roles, and responsibilities.
- **Engagement fatigue.** Participants expressed frustration about being asked to attend workshops and not seeing tangible outcomes or actions stemming from their participation. It was noted that some key voices in the social-serving sector have already stopped attending engagement opportunities for this reason.
- **Connection and trust.** Similar to the CWSS Advisory Committee, participants noted a lack of trust and authentic working relationship with the City. Currently, stakeholders believe that the City takes a supervisory and directive approach rather than working as partners to achieve the same outcomes. This relationship dynamic has produced a feeling of “us versus them”.
- **Integration and cooperation.** Participants highlighted the need for improved integration between all levels of government. For example, different levels of government have distinct definitions of “affordable housing,” which can often result in confusion and barriers to progress. Instead, stakeholders would like to see more alignment which would reduce administrative barriers and “red tape.”
- **Lack of institutional knowledge.** Participants noted the high staff turnover within the City’s CSD team, leading to a lack of historical knowledge and difficulties in maintaining momentum on initiatives. Participants expressed support for adding members to the CSD team who have direct experience working in community social work and frontline services.
- **Enhanced representation and buy-in.** Participants perceived a lack of participation from developers, landowners, funders, and investors in strategic planning discussions about housing and wellbeing. It was acknowledged that these groups play a very important role in improving community outcomes and should be active participants in community discussions.
- **Innovation.** Participants expressed support for exploring and piloting innovative approaches to housing, such as tiny homes and pod homes. Participants are keen to explore alternative types of housing with support from the City in the form of funding and bylaw revisions.

## 6.2.2 City Councillor Interviews

- **Acknowledgement of significant housing and wellbeing need in the community.** Councillors identified critical need for more supply of affordable and supportive housing to support community members, and address broader wellbeing concerns (i.e., homelessness, drug use, property crime, and mental health issues).

- **Rebuilding trust.** Councillors noted past Council-Administration tensions related to housing and wellbeing strategies and indicated a commitment to rebuilding relationships and enhancing coordination to deliver on identified actions.
- **Clarity on roles and responsibilities.** Recognition of the need to outline clear roles for delivery of housing between municipality, other orders of government and housing- and social service providers in the community.
- **A vision of hope for the community.** Councillors shared a vision of a more inclusive and supportive community with adequate housing and wellbeing services for all residents. Councillors had varying focuses, such as emphasizing mental health services, transportation systems, or specific housing types.

### 6.2.3 Focus Groups

- **Affordability and access to housing.** Participants across all groups expressed challenges with housing affordability, particularly for those on fixed incomes or with limited financial resources. Access to suitable housing was identified as an issue, with concerns about waitlists, criteria required to access housing, and discrimination from landlords.
- **Transportation challenges.** Transit issues, including route accessibility, reliability, and suitability for accessing essential services, were common concerns across groups. The lack of transportation choices was seen as a barrier to accessing healthcare, groceries, and social connection in the community.
- **Community safety and social connection.** Safety concerns in public and park spaces were highlighted, particularly for vulnerable populations like youth and individuals experiencing homelessness. Social connection was identified as crucial for wellbeing and mitigating isolation, emphasizing the importance of housing options that meet the needs of residents (regardless of where it fell on the housing continuum), and environments that promote social interaction and community building.
- **Stigma and discrimination.** Stigma surrounding homelessness, poverty, and accessing social services was identified as a barrier to seeking help and accessing housing and well-being resources. There were discussions about the need for anti-stigma campaigns and efforts to promote inclusivity and understanding within the community.
- **Service gaps and program supports.** Participants noted gaps in their experience of the social service system, such as the lack of support for individuals transitioning or trying to transition from one type of housing along the housing continuum to another (e.g., emergency shelter to transitional housing options) or aging out of services (e.g. too old to access youth supports, too young to access resources provided to seniors). Suggestions were recommended for specific program supports, including rent caps, landlord education campaigns, and subsidized transit access.

# 7 KEY THEMES

This section outlines the key findings of the Needs Assessment using the information from the quantitative data analysis and qualitative insights shared by key stakeholders, City Councillors and people with lived and living experience focus groups.

## 7.1 Community Profile

### 1. Lethbridge has an aging population living in older homes.

#### Quantitative Analysis:

- Of the total population (98,406 people), 18% (17,805 people) are over the age of 65, of which 55% are women (7,965 people). Further, more than 25% of households (12,575 households) are maintained by someone over the age of 65. This age data compared with the age of the existing housing stock (i.e., 55% of houses (22,040 dwellings) are more than 30 years old), suggests that there are many households in Lethbridge maintained by a resident, likely a woman, over the age of 65, living in a house that is more than 30 years old.

(Chart 2, Chart 3, Chart 29, and Chart 25).

- There is also potential for there to be a mismatch between number of bedrooms in a dwelling and what is required by aging occupants. Close to 70% of housing units in Lethbridge have three or more bedrooms. Government of Canada research indicates that close to 85% of older Canadians prefer to age-in-place in their homes, which in turn strongly connects to positive long-term health outcomes.<sup>43</sup> Considering that many Lethbridge seniors are likely to be living in a home that is more than 30 years old,, adapting homes to support aging in place will become more important over time, particularly as Lethbridge’s seniors population continues to grow.

(Chart 2, Chart 3, Figure 2, Chart 28, Chart 29)

#### Qualitative Analysis:

- In the focus groups for seniors and residents in social housing, 10 out of the 11 participants identified as women, and 9 out of the 11 participants as over the age of 65. Although this is a not a representative sample, participant demographics align with quantitative data.
- Focus group participants that identified as 65+, and senior-supporting organizations participating in the workshops, noted challenges for senior community members related to housing affordability—particularly for those with fixed-incomes or with limited financial supports.

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<sup>43</sup> Government of Canada (2024). Aging in Place Challenge Program. Retrieved from: <https://nrc.canada.ca/en/research-development/research-collaboration/programs/aging-place-challenge-program>

### Priority Population:

- Seniors

## 2. Young people in Lethbridge are facing complex challenges.

### Quantitative Analysis:

- Of the total population (98,406 people), 14% (13,245 people) are youth and young adults aged 15-24. The percentage of youth and young adults has decreased slightly between 2001 to 2021, from 17% to 14%, respectively.
- In 2021, graduation rates from high school in Lethbridge dropped below Alberta's average; and, more recent academic year enrollment numbers from post-secondary institutions in Lethbridge noted an overall decline in student numbers since 2004. This data suggests that Lethbridge should consider affordable housing options for income earning youth and young adult workers without a high school diploma, or post-secondary degree.

(Chart 2 and Chart 19)

- Educational attainment and literacy are two critical social determinants of health. Post-secondary education generally equates to better employment opportunities, higher incomes, greater health literacy, more stable careers, and even longer life expectancies. Over the long-term, declining post-secondary enrolment for Lethbridge residents may have broader implications on economic and social wellbeing.

### Qualitative Analysis:

- Participants in the youth focus group expressed the challenge they face trying to find affordable housing when they haven't graduated high-school or don't have previous work experience to support their employment search. When asked what type of housing they would like, youth shared that they "want a place that is clean, low maintenance, working appliances, and within their budget."
- Stakeholder workshop participants identified the lack of resources for youth as a significant challenge in the community. This issue was also identified as a challenge by youth focus group participants who shared that the lack of access to 24-hour youth-specific shelter services means that they often find themselves "wandering and exploring" or "staying warm at the Mall" during the daytime before the shelter opens. Further, youth focus group participants shared that their seeking reliable support and shared that this meant "someone or an organization that will advocate for you through the programming or help you find the stuff that you need – not expect you to do all the work and they just sign the paperwork."
- Youth focus group participants who identified as Indigenous indicated that the place they felt the safest was on-reserve, and now that they're in the City, they have limited ways to connect to their culture and community.

## Priority Population:

- Indigenous peoples
- Youth and young adults

## 3. Lethbridge is becoming more diverse.

### Quantitative Analysis:

- Since 2016, 3,155 people arrived as newcomers to Lethbridge and 5,940 people since 2011. Further, in 2021, 15.3% (15,625 residents) identify as a member of a visible minority (i.e., a person, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour)—an increase of 4.3% from 2016. Of the total population (98,406 people), 6.6% (6,500 residents) identify as Indigenous, which is an increase from 5,285 (5.8%) in 2016.

(Chart 23, Chart 24, Chart 4)

- Between 2016 and 2021, the number of refugees living in Lethbridge increased from 2,640 to 3,025. Given recent geopolitical dynamics (e.g. war in Ukraine, increasing number of applicants seeking asylum in Canada), the number of refugees living in Lethbridge is likely greater now than in 2021. Many individuals arriving as refugees have complex needs, including trauma, language barriers, and economic and social barriers.

(Table 4)

- Of the total 100,815 people identifying as transgender or non-binary in Canada, 12,480 people live in Alberta; and, further, 390 of those people live in Lethbridge. Broken down further, 89 people identify as transgender men, 106 identify as transgender women, and 195 identify as non-binary. Lethbridge has the highest number of people identifying as transgender or non-binary of the four identified Alberta Cities (Lethbridge, Calgary, Edmonton and Red Deer).

(Section 4.5.3.)

### Qualitative Analysis:

- Immigrant and refugee focus group participants shared that as part of the Government-Assisted Refugee Program, they receive government income support for the first 12 months that they're in Canada (approximately \$500/month). This income support alone is not enough to afford adequate housing, and often refugees must navigate social services to receive additional income support. Further, at month 13, refugee status changes and refugees do not receive the same amount of government income support. This often leads to housing precarity because attaining employment is challenging (i.e., existing training/skills not recognized in Canada, choosing between employment, living with a chronic illness/injury, needing to learn English to improve employability, experiences of discrimination and racism when applying to jobs). Refugee participants shared examples of not earning enough income by month 13 to afford existing housing, leading to precarious housing situations (i.e., housing with roommates they don't feel safe with, unfair lease agreements/challenging landlord situations, housing and transit not located close to transit stops).

- Representatives from newcomer/immigrant supporting organizations indicated as part of the stakeholder workshops, and as supports to focus group participants, that an increasingly diverse population requires adequate housing, social, cultural and employment supports to allow for a successful transition to Lethbridge. Immigrant and refugee focus group participants emphasized this point, noting that the social supports that they have accessed have been critical to their integration into the community.

#### **Priority Populations:**

- Indigenous peoples
- Immigrants and refugees
- 2SLGBTQI+ individuals

## **4. Neighbourhoods in Lethbridge are unique and require housing options and place based social services that support resident needs.**

#### **Quantitative Analysis:**

- Core, mature and established neighbourhoods in south and north Lethbridge are experiencing low or declining population growth and aging housing stock. With a decline in population and given the older housing stock, these neighbourhoods are well suited for potential redevelopment, to meet the evolving housing needs of the community.

(Figure 4, Figure 5, Chart 25)

- The City of Lethbridge includes a wide variety of community assets to support the needs of its residents. Community assets are generally located within the downtown and core neighbourhoods in south and north. Additional analysis is required to determine if community asset categories including recreation, non-market housing, social supports, and many others, are located to best serve the unique needs of their neighbourhood.

(Figure 9)

- Demographic information (e.g., location of adults 65 years and older, location of youth and young adults, income levels, Core Housing Need) demonstrate that neighbourhoods and areas in the City are unique and different from one another. As a result, this data underlines the importance of City-led neighbourhood planning processes to develop local plans and policies that engage local residents and set policy direction to guide appropriate development that meets the unique needs of each neighbourhood.

(Figure 2, Figure 6, Figure 13)

#### **Qualitative Analysis:**

- Participants in the youth and development disabilities focus groups identified neighbourhoods and areas of Lethbridge where they have noticed higher or lower income households, often referenced as

“ghetto” areas of the City. Participants suggested a “node” approach to delivering social supports and resources in order for community members in different neighbourhoods to have access to social supports and resources that are tailored to their needs.

### Priority Populations

- Indigenous peoples
- Youth and young adults
- Seniors
- Immigrants and refugees
- Women fleeing violence
- Families with children, especially lone-parent households
- People with disabilities
- Those facing mental health challenges and substance use addictions
- Low-income households
- 2SLGBTQI+ individuals

## 5. People living alone and roommate households are a growing proportion of the community.

### Quantitative Analysis:

- In 2021, data shows that 7.2% (2,910 households) are two or more unrelated people living together (i.e., roommates), and 28.7% (11,530 households) are one person households (i.e., people living alone). These numbers are up slightly from 2016, where there were 7.1% (2,675) households of two or more unrelated people living together, and 27.5% (10,330) one-person households.

(Chart 6)

- 65% (26,190) of households in Lethbridge are one- and two-person households. This is higher than the percentage of households in Alberta that are one- or two-person households (60%). In comparison to the existing housing stock where almost 70% of the total housing units (27,615 households) in Lethbridge have 3+ bedrooms, this data suggests that most houses in Lethbridge have more bedrooms than people living in the household.

(Chart 6, Table 7, and Chart 28)

- The number of households that are one and two person households should be analysed with consideration that 44% of household maintainers (8,690 households) are over the age of 55. This data suggests that many household maintainers are aging in one or two person households.

(Chart 6, Table 7, and Chart 29)

### Qualitative Analysis:

- In focus groups with youth, seniors, immigrants and refugees, and people living with developmental disabilities, many participants reported that they live on a fixed monthly income. Of those on a fixed



income, many reported that market rental prices are too high, and their monthly budget doesn't allow for them to live on their own. As a result, many participants shared that they live with a roommate to be able to afford housing. However, even when living in a roommate household, market rental housing prices were still noted as unaffordable when considering other monthly living expenses.

- In focus groups with seniors, people living in social housing, and people with development disabilities, other participants reported living alone and noted that it can be challenging to pay rent within their monthly fixed budget. Participants shared that because housing costs take up such a substantial portion of their fixed income budget, they are often making difficult decisions to cut costs on other monthly expenses: food, utilities, cellphone, medical expenses, and transportation. For example, many participants reported fixed incomes between \$1800-\$1900/month. One senior shared they are paying \$1250/month for rent; and as a result, leaves \$650/month for other living expenses. This theme was underscored by participants in stakeholder workshops as well; they identified the financial squeeze on low-income households, noting that housing is unaffordable for those on fixed incomes, especially as the cost-of-living increases.
- Representatives from post-secondary institutions in Lethbridge reported that there is no vacancy for on-campus housing. As a result, students are searching for housing in the community—likely in the primary and secondary rental market. Post-secondary institution representatives also noted that they have recently transitioned housing that would have previously supported roommate households (i.e., single-detached home with multiple bedrooms) into family-oriented housing to provide housing options for students and their families.

### Priority Populations

- Youth and young adults
- Seniors
- Immigrants and refugees
- Low-income households
- Students
- People with disabilities

## 6. Indigenous people in Lethbridge are facing intersecting challenges in the community.

### Quantitative Analysis:

- The data indicates that the Indigenous population in Lethbridge has increased by 70% between 2011 and 2021, from 3,770 people (4.6% of total population) to 6,395 people (6.6% of total population).  
(Chart 4)
- As of March 2024, Blood Tribe / Kainai Nation, a member of the Blackfoot Confederacy, had a total registered population of 12,963 (8,893 on-reserve, and 4,069 off-reserve). Piikani Nation, also a

member Nation of the Blackfoot Confederacy, is located in the region surrounding the city. As of March 2024, Piikani Nation had a total registered population of 3,916 (2,432 on-reserve and 1,485 off-reserve).<sup>44</sup> Continued on- and off-reserve population growth will create additional demand for Indigenous led and focused programs and services in Lethbridge.

- Indigenous people disproportionately make up the over half of all individuals counted (51%) in the city's 2022 Point in Time (PiT) Count, and 72% (107) of unsheltered individuals identified as Indigenous. This percentage of unsheltered individuals identifying as Indigenous is similar to what was reported in the 2018 PiT Count (73%).

(Chart 42)

- Indigenous communities have been disproportionately affected by the opioid crisis, both in terms of use of opioids and harms resulting. Intergenerational trauma, systemic racism, and lack of culturally-appropriate supports are complex factors contributing to these inequities.<sup>45</sup> Lethbridge's Indigenous population have unique needs, histories, backgrounds, and lived experiences that must be reflected in the system of care.

### Qualitative Analysis:

- Across the different focus groups, a total of 9 (25%) people identified as Indigenous, and shared challenges with navigating life off-reserve. For example, youth focus group participants experiencing homelessness and identifying as Indigenous shared that they don't feel safe on the street in Lethbridge—they often feel like they need to carry weapons to defend themselves, and specifically, Indigenous women in the youth focus group, shared that they had all been followed and approached by people who they believe are part of human trafficking rings and offered drugs and ride "to stay warm." Stakeholder workshop participants expressed concerns around human trafficking and violence against women in the community and attributed the rise in incidences to funding cuts to programming helping women and children.
- Other focus group participants with development disabilities shared the need for housing that encourages social and cultural connection to broader Indigenous community (e.g. housing that allows friends, amenity areas, shared kitchen). The example shared by a few focus group participants included individuals finding stable housing post-detox and treatment but feeling isolated from previous connections in the community; and, as a result people choose to go back to being unhoused because they feel a sense of belonging.

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<sup>44</sup> Government of Canada (2024). Blood 435 Registered Population. Retrieved from: [https://fnp-ppn.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/fnp/Main/Search/FNRegPopulation.aspx?BAND\\_NUMBER=435&lang=eng](https://fnp-ppn.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/fnp/Main/Search/FNRegPopulation.aspx?BAND_NUMBER=435&lang=eng); Government of Canada (2024). Piikani 436 Registered Population. Retrieved from: [https://fnp-ppn.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/fnp/Main/Search/FNRegPopulation.aspx?BAND\\_NUMBER=436&lang=eng](https://fnp-ppn.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/fnp/Main/Search/FNRegPopulation.aspx?BAND_NUMBER=436&lang=eng).

<sup>45</sup> Government of Canada (2019). Government of Canada supports efforts to better understand how substance use affects Indigenous communities. Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/news/2019/07/government-of-canada-supports-efforts-to-better-understand-how-substance-use-affects-indigenous-communities.html>.

- Focus group participants shared experiences of racism when trying to access housing in the community. For example, individuals identifying as Indigenous shared experiences of being “blacklisted” by landlords because of an Indigenous sounding last name, as well as feelings of being stereotyped when applying for housing as an Indigenous person in Lethbridge (i.e., perceptions of drug use, property damage, inability to pay monthly rent). This theme was also emerged in the stakeholder workshops where participants identified “stigma, racism, discrimination, divisiveness, and “not in my backyard” (NIMBY) public perception” as significant housing challenges in the City.

### Priority Populations

- Indigenous peoples

## 7. Income has not kept pace with the rising cost of living, particularly for middle and low income households.

### Quantitative Analysis

- Household median income in Lethbridge has increased by 11% between 2016 and 2021. This growth is higher than provincial growth (2%), and a contrasting trend to Red Deer and Grande Prairie where both municipalities have seen decreases in median income, 2% and 1% respectively. However, overall, the median income in Lethbridge is \$14,000 lower than the provincial median. This data suggests that even though median income in Lethbridge has increased, it is not keeping up with provincial median incomes.

(Chart 7)

- In 2021, the household median income in Lethbridge was \$82,000/year. This means that roughly 50% of households in Lethbridge earn less than \$82,000/year. Using recent Alberta Real Estate Association data and cost-of-living assumptions compared against the median income in Lethbridge, data suggests that half of the households in Lethbridge can only afford an apartment or potentially a row/townhouse in the home ownership market. Further, comparing this information with the dominant form of housing in Lethbridge as single-detached homes, points to roughly 50% of the population not being able to afford 63% of the existing housing stock in the City.

(Chart 7, Figure 17, Chart 24)

- As of December 2023, there were more than 7,700 recipients of Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) in the South Zone. As of January 1, 2023, the maximum monthly living allowance through AISH was \$1,787 for an individual, with additional benefits available for individuals living in facilities or with children. Given the modest level of income that these individuals receive, housing affordability, combined with overall cost of living increases, is a significant concern.

(Section 4.1.2, Table 24)

- The average residential sale price in Lethbridge has increased by 27% between 2016 (\$259,000) and 2021 (\$329,954) and an additional 11% between 2021 and 2023 (\$365,746). With median income increasing by only 11% in the same period between 2016 and 2021, residents living on a Lethbridge income are increasingly challenged to afford housing on the home ownership market.

(Chart 40, Chart 7, Table 23)

### Qualitative Analysis

- Stakeholder workshop participants frequently brought up of “cost of living” as a significant housing, wellbeing and safety challenge, including statements like “cost of living impacts seniors and student,” “rising cost of living and interest rates makes housing unaffordable,” “limited adaption to rising cost of living,” “housing is unaffordable when considering rent, utility, taxes” and “affordable housing is not aligned with current economy.”
- Participants in all focus groups emphasized that their making daily decisions on what basic needs to meet, especially if their homeless and not receiving income supports or living on a fixed income. Participants shared experiences of needing to pay rent to maintain their housing, but then choosing to not eat meals, or feel like they can’t leave their home because of transportation costs (i.e., cost of transit, taxi, access-a-ride) and the cost of accessing recreational services.
- Youth focus group participants shared that they often use transit tickets provided by Woods’ Homes to get on the bus. One senior focus group participant noted that they have utilized the Fee Assistance Program to access recreational services. Other seniors in the focus group were unaware that the City expanded the program to include access to recreational and culture programming.

### Priority Populations

- Indigenous peoples
- Seniors
- Students
- Families with children, especially lone-parent households
- People with disabilities
- Low-income households

## 7.2 Wellbeing and Safety

### 8. Transit routes and reliability are a challenge for people using transit service as their primary mode of transportation.

#### Quantitative Analysis:

- Spatial data indicates that community services are largely concentrated in core, mature and established neighbourhoods. This concentration of community services aligns with higher volumes of transit access to the downtown. However, in contrast, the city's population growth is occurring in developing neighbourhoods and urban growth areas on the edges of the city that have more limited access to transit and community and social services.

(Figure 8, Figure 4)

- Several Lethbridge neighbourhoods are on limited transit schedules (e.g. daytime service, limited Saturday service, no Sunday service). The City's Rides on Demand program was launched in 2022 to help fill gaps in regular transit service coverage. This program should be evaluated regularly to ensure that the service is effectively connecting riders with destinations they want to go at the right frequencies.<sup>46</sup>
- CityLINK Ride-on-Demand program provides service to zones where transit routes are not available. Rides can be booked via a dedicated app or through calling 311. This may service may be convenient for some portions of the population but may create unintentional barriers for some individuals that may not have access to a smartphone, comfort with using technology, or without regular access to a phone.

#### Qualitative Analysis:

- Youth focus group participants shared a concern related to transit use and safety; several participants mentioned they do not feel safe waiting for the bus or once they're on the bus, especially at night. Senior focus group participants, especially those on fixed incomes, shared that transit ends up being a primary mode of transportation because taxi rides are not affordable. Senior and development disability focus group participants also shared that the recent change/reduction in transit routes was challenging to adapt to, users did not feel engaged in the process, and new routes do not provide the same access to daily needs or support services.
- Focus groups participants with development disabilities and immigrant and refugees shared similar challenges with the transit system: it can be hard to navigate if you have trouble reading and understanding maps, transit schedules, and directions. Many focus group participants noted they have to take trips that involve multiple buses, and that this can be confusing and not a reliable way to move around the community.

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<sup>46</sup> City of Lethbridge (2023). Transit. Retrieved from: <https://www.lethbridge.ca/roads-parking-transit/transit/#:~:text=%E2%80%8BcityLINK%20Ride%2Don%2DDemand,as%20of%20October%202%2C%202023.>

- Immigrant and refugee focus group participants noted that there is limited transit access to industrial employment areas of the City; and, as a result, transportation to-and-from work can be a stressful component of maintaining employment.

#### Priority Populations:

- Indigenous peoples
- Youth and young adults
- Seniors
- Students
- Immigrants and refugees
- Families with children, especially lone-parent households
- People with disabilities
- Low-income households

## 9. There is growing reliance on housing and social service providers to help people meet their basic needs.

#### Quantitative Analysis:

- More than 1,600 Lethbridge residents accessed the Fee Assistance Program (FAP) in 2022<sup>47</sup>. In 2023, the program was enhanced to include recreation and culture activities, as well as bus passes.

(Figure 9)

- The ending of COVID-19 relief benefits has resulted in a 'boomerang' effect in child poverty rates where rates have likely returned pre-pandemic measures where approximately 4,100 residents under the age of 17 were considered as low-income in 2016 (LIM-AT).<sup>48</sup> In 2021, 5,839 children accessed Lethbridge Interfaith Food Bank programming. In 2022, children accessing the food bank has increased by 71% (8,184 children).

(Table 9)

- Food insecurity is increasing across Canada because of significant food price increases experienced between 2020 to 2023: the average family of 4 is now estimated to spend close to \$16,300 per year on food alone<sup>49</sup> and while food prices are forecast to decline in 2024, there were almost 2 million

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<sup>47</sup> City of Lethbridge (2022). Cultural and Social Standing Policy Committee Report, December 15, 2022. Retrieved from: [https://agendas.lethbridge.ca/AgendaOnline/Documents/ViewDocument/Summary\\_Sheet\\_for\\_-\\_FEE\\_ASSISTANCE\\_PROGRAM\\_ANNUAL\\_REPORT\\_\(94047\)?meetingId=3884&documentType=Minutes&itemId=96831&publishId=79530&isSection=false](https://agendas.lethbridge.ca/AgendaOnline/Documents/ViewDocument/Summary_Sheet_for_-_FEE_ASSISTANCE_PROGRAM_ANNUAL_REPORT_(94047)?meetingId=3884&documentType=Minutes&itemId=96831&publishId=79530&isSection=false)

<sup>48</sup> Alberta Child Poverty Report (2022). Retrieved from: [https://edmontonsocialplanning.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/ESPC\\_ChildPovertyReport-V04\\_230512.pdf](https://edmontonsocialplanning.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/ESPC_ChildPovertyReport-V04_230512.pdf).

<sup>49</sup> Dalhousie University, The University of British Columbia, University of Guelph, and University of Saskatchewan (2024). 14<sup>th</sup> Edition of Canada's Food Price Report 2024. Retrieved from: [https://cdn.dal.ca/content/dam/dalhousie/pdf/sites/agri-food/EN\\_CANADA'S%20FOOD%20PRICE%20REPORT%202024.pdf](https://cdn.dal.ca/content/dam/dalhousie/pdf/sites/agri-food/EN_CANADA'S%20FOOD%20PRICE%20REPORT%202024.pdf)

visits to food banks in 2023 – a close to 80% increase from pre-2020 levels.<sup>50</sup> Affordability and the rising cost of living are likely major concerns for Lethbridge residents.

#### **Qualitative Analysis:**

- Participants in all focus groups expressed gratitude for the service providers in the community that help them navigate systems in the community (i.e., housing, day to day activities, transportation), and in particular the organizations that supported the focus group process. Many focus groups participants shared their experiences of accessing these support and resources, indicating long waitlists for housing, limited spots in detox and treatment programs, and limited access to programming for families fleeing violence.
- All participants in the development disabilities focus group reported with a show of hands that they access the food bank in order to access food, and three out of four participants in the seniors group reported accessing the food bank regularly.
- One senior reported accessing the Fee Assistance Program to afford recreational services; several youth and development disabilities reported awareness of the Transit Pass and Access-A-Ride Fee Assistance Program but struggled to pay the upfront one-month amount to receive the two additional months free.

#### **Priority Populations:**

- Indigenous peoples
- Youth and young adults
- Seniors
- Students
- Immigrants and refugees
- Women fleeing violence
- Families with children, especially lone-parent households
- People with disabilities
- Those facing mental health challenges and substance use addictions
- Low-income households
- 2SLGBTQI+ individuals

## **10. People are experiencing stigma and discrimination when trying to find housing and employment in Lethbridge.**

#### **Quantitative Analysis:**

- Please refer to Qualitative Analysis in Key Finding 3.

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<sup>50</sup> Food Banks Canada (2023). Hunger Count 2023. Retrieved from: <https://foodbankscanada.ca/hungerc>

### **Qualitative Analysis:**

- Focus group and workshops participants shared that there are a small number of large rental property groups/management companies representing the majority of units within the primary rental market. Participants shared that these property groups/management companies often hesitate to rent to individuals that have complex and co-occurring health and social needs; and further, several participants shared experiences of discrimination or being “black-listed” based on race, income, language, and employment status when applying for housing with these property groups/management companies.
- Focus group and workshops participants shared that they find it hard to find housing in certain neighbourhoods because of “Not in My Backyard (NIMBY)” attitudes of community members that are concerned with “certain types” of people living in housing that they don’t see as “part of their community.”
- Newcomers and refugee focus groups participants shared the difficult choices they must make when settling in Lethbridge—either they prioritize learning English to improve their employability in their trained field, or they forego language classes, and get a low-paying job to help make ends meet but does not help them learn English. Often the latter option leads to entrenched poverty, on-going economic discrimination and challenges for newcomer and refugee individuals and families.

### **Priority Populations:**

- Indigenous peoples
- Youth and young adults
- Seniors
- Immigrants and refugees
- People with disabilities
- Those facing mental health challenges and substance use addictions
- Low-income households
- 2SLGBTQI+ individuals



## 11. Opioid related overdoses and deaths in Lethbridge have increased significantly.

### Quantitative Analysis:

- According to the Government of Alberta’s Substance Use Surveillance Dashboard, there were more than 111 opioid drug poisoning deaths in Lethbridge between January and October 2023 – compared to 77 for the entirety of 2022, 65 in 2021, and 41 in 2020. On a per capita basis, Lethbridge has the highest rate of drug poisoning deaths of any municipality in Alberta being monitored by the province.

(Chart 18)

- On average in 2023, 46% of opioid poisoning deaths in Lethbridge occurred in public, compared to 24% in 2022, and 20% in 2021. Other municipalities in Alberta are experiencing a similar trend, including those with safe consumption sites available. The trend of increasing public drug poisoning deaths is likely interconnected with a lack of supportive, transitional, and emergency shelter capacity development, and the increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness in Lethbridge.

(Chart 20)

- When considering availability of overdose prevention services, it is important to note that AHS’ Overdose Prevention Service (OPS) is not a one-to-one replacement of services that were offered by ARCHES prior to its closure (supervised consumption).

(Chart 16, Chart 17)

- The Government of Alberta’s shift to a recovery-oriented system of care for mental health and addictions challenges will see new investments made in facilities and services to help those in need. The City has an important role to play in future conversations about what service delivery can and should look like in Lethbridge when it comes to substance use.

- (Chart 16, Chart 17)

### Qualitative Analysis:

- All participants in the focus groups noted the presence of drugs and drug use in the City. For example, youth focus group participants shared that they avoid specific locations and parks in the City because they do not feel safe in areas where people are using or trying to sell drugs. One youth participant noted that drug use and “being a bad person” are usually perceived as the same thing, but it is important to remember that “everyone has a story and for many, people have intergenerational trauma.”
- In the stakeholder workshops, drug use, opioid dependency, and drug poisoning deaths was identified as a significant challenge in the community. Case workers that attended a few of the focus groups to support participants underlined this as a major concern for their clients and their wellbeing.

### Priority Populations:

- Indigenous peoples
- Immigrants and refugees
- Youth and young adults
- People with disabilities
- Those facing mental health challenges and substance use addictions

## 12. There is a growing perception in the community that Lethbridge is unsafe.

### Quantitative Analysis:

- Crimes against people and property have increased steadily between 2020 and 2022, with climbing counts of sexual assault, assault, theft, theft of vehicles and mischief.

(Table 12, Table 13)

- According the LPS Crime data, higher incidences of crime are occurring in downtown and in pockets within neighbourhoods in south and north Lethbridge, often following major roadways, key transit routes, and in areas where there are a higher proportion of people experiencing homelessness.

(Figure 10)

- Improving safety in the downtown is a priority for the City of Lethbridge. Several programs through the collaboration of the City, Lethbridge Police Service, and community outreach partners have been established to increase safety and reduce lawlessness in the community.
- The City has received funding through the Building Safer Communities Fund in 2023 to address and respond to gun and gang violence concerns in Lethbridge. This work is ongoing, takes a preventative approach to support youth and overall community wellbeing and safety, and intersects with many other initiatives underway – including the Community Wellbeing and Safety Strategy Update.

### Qualitative Analysis:

- Participants in focus groups noted several specific locations that feel unsafe; many of these locations are located downtown (e.g., Galt Gardens, the Public Library, the Emergency Shelter).
- Participants in living in social housing downtown did note an increased presence of patrol and outreach efforts by community outreach partners in downtown to support high-acuity individuals and people experiencing homelessness.
- Many focus group participants shared experiences of having their property stolen—either while sleeping rough (e.g., backpacks being cut of people’s shoulders while sleeping park bench, shoes being stolen off people sleeping in public), or while accessing temporary shelter (i.e., carts, clothes, medical aids (i.e., walkers, crutches) going missing once a person wake’s up.

### Priority Populations:

- Indigenous peoples

- Youth and young adults
- Seniors
- Immigrants and refugees
- Women fleeing violence
- Families with children, especially lone-parent households
- People with disabilities
- Those facing mental health challenges and substance use addictions
- Low-income households
- 2SLGBTQI+ individuals

### **13. Relationship building is required between City Council, City Administration, and housing and social service providers to improve trust and collaboration.**

#### **Qualitative Analysis:**

- Stakeholder workshop participants shared frustration with City Council and City Administration. Key stakeholders and CWSS Advisory Committee members noted a lack of trust and authentic working relationship with the City. Currently, stakeholders believe that the City takes a supervisory and directive approach rather than working as partners to achieve the same outcomes. This relationship dynamic has produced a feeling of “us versus them”.
- Members of the CWSS Advisory Committee explained there is a lack of trust when working with City Council and Administration, noting there has been a noticeable breakdown in communication since 2018/2019. Members noted that the frustration is not directed at any specific individual; instead, frustration relates to the CWSS Advisory Committee’s overall reporting structure and existing power dynamics within the City.
- Workshop participants from the Internal Departments noted that there is an opportunity for more awareness, relationship building, and alignment between Internal departments to improve implementation of the updated CWSS and MHS.

#### **Priority Populations:**

- Indigenous peoples
- Youth and young adults
- Seniors
- Immigrants and refugees
- Women fleeing violence
- Families with children, especially lone-parent households
- People with disabilities
- Those facing mental health challenges and substance use addictions
- Low-income households
- 2SLGBTQI+ individuals

## 7.3 Housing

### 14. The dominant form of housing in Lethbridge continues to be single-detached homes.

#### Quantitative Analysis:

- The percentage of housing units in Lethbridge that are single-detached homes has held steady at 63% since 2016 and is comparable to other mid-sized Alberta municipalities. The percentage of single-detached housing units in the community aligns with the data showing that almost 70% of the total housing units (27,615 households) in Lethbridge have 3+ bedrooms.

(Chart 20, Chart 25)

- While the predominant form of housing has remained single-detached housing in Lethbridge, households earning the median household income (\$82,000) or less, let alone households on a fixed monthly income, do not earn enough to make home ownership of a single-detached home a reality without overspending on housing costs each month (i.e., spending 30% or more of income on housing costs).

(Chart 7, Chart 42, Figure 13)

- The supply of alternative forms of low-density housing (i.e. duplex, semi-detached and row/townhouses) increased by 1,120 units (8.3%) between 2016 and 2021. This housing supply data compared with the age of the existing housing stock (i.e., 55% of houses (22,040 dwellings) are more than 30 years old), and declining population growth in the core, mature and established neighbourhoods, suggests that there is significant opportunity to increase redevelopment that prioritizes alternative forms of low-density housing in areas where units and households are aging.

(Chart 19, Chart 222, Figure 3)

- 87% of building permits (145 permits) issued in Lethbridge in 2023 were for single family homes. It is important to consider if single detached homes are the most appropriate form of development to meet housing need in the community when smaller households are a growing proportion of the community, and people living alone, and roommate households increased in Lethbridge between 2016 and 2021.

(Chart 23, Table 6, Chart 6)

- Development in Lethbridge has slowed down—from 409 building permits in 2018, to 166 building permits in 2023. Also, CMHC reported that despite having more housing starts than other comparable communities in Alberta, construction starts in Lethbridge have been on a steady decline since their peak in 2007. This data is likely impacted by pandemic related economic factors; however, it may point to the development industry responding to fewer buyers in the home ownership market that are in a position to afford single detached housing.

(Chart 23 and Chart 24)

### Qualitative Analysis:

- Youth, seniors, and people living on fixed incomes expressed frustration with the lack of housing supply and options that they can afford. Participants expressed concern that the City continues to prioritize development of new neighbourhoods on the edge of the community, and from their perspective, does not invest the same level of attention to affordable housing options for community members that can't afford this type of housing.
- Workshop participants expressed concern over the City relying on market driven housing that targets middle-to-high incomes earners—it was shared that this approach to housing leaves low-income and fixed income community members behind. Further, many housing and social service providers indicated that demand for housing options—beyond what is available and driven by the market—is outpacing supply.

### Priority Populations

- Seniors
- Immigrants and refugees
- Families with children, especially lone-parent households
- Low-income households

## 15. The supply, diversity, and affordability of rental housing is a challenge for renter households in Lethbridge.

### Quantitative Analysis

- The percentage of renter households is increasing – up from 28% (11,760 households) in 2006 to 32% (12,785 households) in 2021.

(Chart 27)

- The number of total households in Lethbridge has grown by 2,650 (%) between 2016 and 2021. Of those 2,650 households, 1,025 (39%) were renter households. During the same period, the total number of purpose-built rentals increased by 350 units (3,830 units to 4,177 units) accommodating 34% of the demand for market rental units. This data points out that purpose-built rental housing development is not keeping pace with the increasing demand for market rental units.

(Chart 5, Table 5)

- There is a limited supply of three or more-bedroom units available through the primary rental market. Renter households, especially those with children, on fixed incomes, or living with a roommate, struggle to find and afford suitable (i.e., housing that has enough bedrooms for individuals in the household) for their household size.

(Chart 38, Table 44)

- Rent has increased by 69% for 2-bedroom units and 94% for bachelor units between 2006 and 2022. Despite the median income increasing by 11% between 2016 and 2021, those earning less than the

median income, those on a fixed monthly income, one parent households with children, people living alone, and roommates, are struggling to afford much more than a bachelor suite.

(Chart 39, Chart 7, Table 44)

- Vacancy rates in the primary rental market have dropped from 6.9% in 2016 to 2.5% in 2021—this represents the lowest vacancy rates since 2008. A low vacancy rate in the primary rental market signals that renter households are relying on the secondary rental market for housing. This signal of secondary rental market reliance is confirmed whereby 66% of the demand for market rental units (675 units) had to be accommodated by the secondary rental market because new purpose-built rental units could only absorb 34% of market demand.

(Chart 40)

- 71% (2,655 households) of the households in Core Housing Need are renters. The limited supply of affordable rental options in Lethbridge directly impacts renters and increases the likelihood of low-income renters becoming in Core Housing Need.

(Chart 46)

#### **Qualitative Analysis:**

- Youth, refugee, and homeless focus group participants shared that on their fixed monthly income, they cannot afford the costs associated with rental housing (i.e., damage deposit and first month's rent), and as such, households have to choose between meeting their monthly basic needs and housing.
- Seniors, youth, refugees, and people living with developmental disabilities shared that landlords and property management companies are increasing parameters that are required in order to apply for market rental units, including: limiting or not allowing pets, requiring identification and a current address, requesting references, limiting the number of children within the unit, and increasing minimum household income thresholds. The rise in parameters to access market rental housing is leading to precarious housing situations for some individuals (e.g., unsafe or undesirable roommate situations).
- As a result of challenges in the primary rental market, renters are increasingly turning to the secondary rental market to access housing. The secondary rental market is more volatile because of economic and market conditions (e.g., no cap on rent increases).

#### **Priority Populations:**

- Indigenous peoples
- Youth and young adults
- Seniors
- Immigrants and refugees
- Women fleeing violence
- Families with children, especially lone-parent households
- People with disabilities

- Those facing mental health challenges and substance use addictions
- Low-income households
- 2SLGBTQI+ individuals

## 16. Lethbridge needs more housing options with supports to help people with complex needs.

### Quantitative Analysis:

- Between 2018 and 2022, the number of individuals experiencing homelessness in Lethbridge has doubled from 223 people to 454 people, respectively. However, the number of units/beds in non-market housing options serving individuals and families requiring short-term, crisis accommodation (i.e., emergency shelters), or serving individuals with complex needs who require some form of support (i.e., transitional housing and supportive housing) has only increased modestly (1-2%) between 2018-2023.

(Chart 45, Table 24)

### Qualitative Analysis:

- Participants in the focus groups shared their frustration with limited emergency shelter options, including access to only one youth specific emergency shelter and one emergency shelter specific to the needs of women and children. Participants also shared a common concern around their personal safety and safety of their belongings when accessing services at the primary emergency shelter.
- Limited increases in transitional and supportive housing options in recent years often means that individuals trying to move between homelessness and emergency shelter services are often on housing waitlists for several months, if not years, before being able to access safe and affordable housing that meets their specific needs. Focus group participants emphasized this challenge, indicating that transitions into housing that meets age and stage takes a long time in Lethbridge.
- Engagement participants also underscored the importance of having enough housing options to meet the needs of all different types of people accessing non-market housing options. Placement in transitional and supportive housing that does not have adequate social supports for high acuity individuals often leads to negative outcomes for the resident and their neighbours (i.e. buildings not feeling safe, individuals choosing to go back to unsheltered living to be close to social networks, etc.).
- The City of Lethbridge, in partnership with the Blood Tribe Department of Health, have developed a By-Name List (BNL) which is a real-time list of all known people experiencing homelessness in the city. The BNL includes a series of data points that support coordinated access, prioritization and service provision to reduce homelessness. Additional analysis and engagement are required with local service providers, building off the success of the BNL, to better understand the needs of the unhoused population to inform appropriate policy development, advocacy, and investment.

### Priority Populations:

- Indigenous peoples
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- Low-income households
- 2SLGBTQI+ individuals

## 17. The majority of people in Core Housing Need are in Core Housing Need because of affordability.

### Quantitative Analysis

- 9.4% of Lethbridge households (3,756 households) are in Core Housing Need in 2021. Of the 9.4% households in Core Housing Need in 2021, renters are disproportionately represented. Renters make up 71% (2,655) of the Core Housing Need households, while owners only make up 29% (1,110).

(Chart 40, Chart 41)

- 85% of households in Core Housing Need are experiencing affordability challenges (i.e., spending more than 30% of total before-tax household income on housing). Core Housing Need indicators of suitability and adequacy are less of an issue in Lethbridge at 5%, and 10%, respectively.

(Chart 43)

- Higher percentage of households in Core Housing Need are in mature and established neighbourhoods in Lethbridge.

(Figure 13)

- 1,350 households in Lethbridge are in Extreme Core Housing Need and spending 50% or more of before-tax household income on housing costs. Of the 1,350 households in Extreme Core Housing Need (64%, 870 households) are renters.

(Table 44)

### Qualitative Analysis

- Please refer to Qualitative Analysis from Key Finding 15.



**Priority Populations:**

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- 2SLGBTQI+ individuals