

# Tenant Wellbeing Community Report 2018

## The Importance of Wellbeing

At Capital Region Housing (CRH) we believe that home is more than four walls and a roof over one's head. As an organization dedicated to every customer's success, CRH is moving towards more inclusive and holistic measures to assess customers' needs and successes.

In May 2017, Capital Region Housing conducted its first wellbeing survey for CRH tenants. The results from our survey will help to inform business plan priorities and programs, as well as policies and supports for tenants as we fulfil our mission to provide quality homes and inclusive communities.

Wellbeing is a way to measure the qualities of people's lives in a more holistic way. This includes things like physical and emotional health, connection to community and finances. Seligman (2014) cites wellbeing as a positive emotion, encompassing engagement, relationships, meaning and achievement; defining wellbeing this way means that people can define for themselves what it means to live well.

Governments and researchers are starting to use wellbeing to measure and improve the lives of people and to inform policy. Stable, secure and affordable housing is a fundamental component of wellbeing. It contributes to wellbeing through improved health outcomes, increased stability and security, feelings of belonging and more.

## The Survey

CRH developed a wellbeing survey tool which was sent to tenants in Community Housing and Near Market Rentals in May 2017. Questions covered different parts of wellbeing, such as sense of belonging, access to health care and financial stress. All answers were confidential and anonymous. People could skip any question they wanted to. Approximately 5,100 households received the survey. We received 465 responses, a response rate of approximately 9%.

# What We Learned

## Community Wellbeing

People liked what their homes and communities were close to, such as schools, parks, transit and groceries. This is illustrated in the sample of respondent's answers highlighted to the right.

A high percentage of people rated their sense of belonging to their local community as somewhat strong or very strong (40%). This is slightly lower than the sense of belonging reported by Statistics Canada in 2015, where 29% of Albertans reported their sense of belonging as very strong.

Most people felt safe in their communities (68%) and in their homes (71%). These numbers are slightly higher than the percentage of City of Edmonton residents who feel that Edmonton is a safe city (66% in 2016) and slightly lower than the percentage of Albertans who feel safe in their communities (80% in 2015-2016).

People born outside of Canada were more likely to report that they felt they belonged (52% of people born outside of Canada and 27% of people born in Canada). They were also more likely to report that they felt safe in their communities (77% of people born outside of Canada and 57% of people born in Canada). More people born outside of Canada also reported that they felt safe in their homes (75% of people born outside of Canada and 66% of people born in Canada).

Some recommendations from respondents that would increase feelings of safety included increasing video surveillance, increasing exterior lighting and increasing community connections.

### QUESTION 1

What do you like most about the community or neighbourhood in which you live?

- "That it's a nice quiet neighbourhood with the mall close and the school with a park close"
- "My neighborhood is small and quiet. Its location is very convenient. Schools are very close and ETS bus stop is few steps away"
- "It's safe community. Loving neighborhood, friendly for kids, close to school"
- "I love where we live, the community is diverse and everyone gets along very nicely"
- "The community or neighborhood in which I live is very quiet, open and convenient for public transportation, school, workplace and grocery shop"
- "You do get to know your neighbours in this community and friendships are formed"
- "I grew up in the community, close to school and park"
- "It is a quiet neighborhood and I feel safe in it"

## Emotional Wellbeing

Most people reported being in good or very good mental health (69%) and that they were happy or very happy (70%).

## Physical Wellbeing

The vast majority of people reported having a family doctor (90%) and the most common ways people accessed health care were through medi-clinics (63%) and Primary Care Networks (33%). Overall, people were most satisfied with their access to health or medical care and least satisfied with their quality of sleep.

## Financial Wellbeing

A high percentage of people reported feeling high or overwhelming stress about finances and debts (36%). Many people disagreed or strongly disagreed that their current level of income met their everyday needs (47%). Many people reported struggling to pay bills and other expenses all or most of the time (41%).

When asked how they managed if they did not have enough money between pay cheques, many people responded that this impacted their food situation. Food insecurity – a lack of access to safe, affordable and nutritious food – continues to be a concern even for families living in affordable housing.

Even in the face of financial stress, 75% of people reported never using pay-day loans and only 5% reported using them all or most of the time.

## Supports and Services

People most commonly wanted improved access to recreation and organized sports, especially swimming. People also wanted improved access to transit. Some people born outside of Canada highlighted access to English language training. People were most satisfied with their access to libraries, and least satisfied with their access to arts and cultural opportunities, informal education and personal development.

People also wanted more community connection, including through working with community leagues and creating community gardens.

Overall, people were satisfied or very satisfied with the services or benefits they received from CRH (78%) and with the job being done by CRH (76%). Most were happy or very happy to live in a CRH home (76%). Most people felt better able to support themselves and their families after receiving services from CRH (68%), illustrating the support provided by living in affordable housing.

## Demographics

The survey provided CRH with an opportunity to learn more about our tenants when compared to what we learn through the regular tenancy process. Considering that the survey was only available in English and was 55 questions long, CRH understands there were barriers to completing the survey. The demographics below are based on the responses received and not the entire tenant population.

### ***Respondent Characteristics***

Avg. Age	Avg. Household Size	Gender	Employment	Length of Tenancy			
<b>46</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>66%</b> identified as female	<b>33%</b> reported being employed	< 1 yr. <b>17%</b>	1 < 5 yrs. <b>40%</b>	5 < 10 yrs. <b>19%</b>	10 > <b>24%</b>

### ***Immigration Status***

Born outside Canada	Most Common Immigration Year	Year of Immigration	Language	Language Breakdown		
<b>55%</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>1969 - 2016</b>	<b>41%</b> speak a language other than English at home	<b>Somali</b> <b>7.5%</b>	<b>Arabic</b> <b>7.3%</b>	<b>Urdu</b> <b>2.3%</b>

## Life Satisfaction

While the survey looked at the various dimensions of wellbeing, CRH wished to have a measure that could describe, overall, the wellbeing of CRH tenants. Life satisfaction is commonly used as general measure of wellbeing (for example, by Statistics Canada). Life satisfaction will now be reported by CRH biennially.

Most people rated their current life satisfaction 7 or higher out of a scale of ten (57%). When asked what they thought their life satisfaction would be in 5 years, 70% said 7 or higher. The average rating was 6.5, which rose to 7.4 in 5 years.

There were variations by immigration status. People born outside of Canada were more likely to report higher life satisfaction (average rating of 6.9 vs 6.1) and in five years (average rating of 7.8 vs 6.9). 17% of people born outside of Canada rated their current life satisfaction at 10, compared to 8% of those born in Canada. This increased to 33% and 16% when rating life satisfaction in five years.

The main barriers that prevented people from rating their current life satisfaction higher were health, employment and finances and family pressures. When we asked why they ranked their life satisfaction the way they did when thinking about the future, there were two main groups of answers.

Seniors and those who self-identified as having health or disability concerns - and often on a fixed income - were more likely to report no change or a decrease in life satisfaction in five years. This is illustrated in the sample of responses to the right.

A more positive outlook was more common amongst younger households and those who had self-identified as having a significant life change in the future. For example, they would be done school, or a young child would start school, or their English would improve.

This group was more likely to report an increase in life satisfaction in five years, as seen in the sample of responses to the right.

## QUESTION 9

Why do you think you will feel this way in five years?

- "As a senior my health will come into play and will affect my income and quality of life and where I will be able to live comfortably."
- "older, more mobility issues, overall health and mostly cost of living expenses rising."
- "although I have been retired for a number of years, my life is quite stable and predictable and as long as my health remains good I don't see the future any big changes"
- "I may soon join my ancestors because of my poor health but my children may enjoy their future"

Why do you think you will feel this way in five years?

- "I am continually reminded of how blessed I am. This enhances my perspective of my personal well-being. The good things in my life always far outnumber the areas in which I struggle."
- "In 5 years I would be speaking better English and I will have better knowledge of applying for jobs in Canada. Also in 5 years when CRH gives me forms to complete I will be able to complete them on my own without assistance."
- "I hope to have a better job in the future, making the best out of life and always moving forward to better myself"
- "...I am able to better myself and not stress about added costs, my affordable living helps me with rising costs of childcare and other expenses. I plan to own or purchase my own home within 5 years."

## Next Steps

The results are overall positive and encouraging. Approximately 70% of people felt safe in their homes and communities. People told us they liked their communities, they liked their homes, and they felt better able to support themselves and their families by living with CRH.

The results also highlight that tenants are facing multiple issues, including health, language, employment and finances. Particularly, food insecurity was highlighted as a key issue facing our tenants. There is also likely a significant newcomer population amongst our tenants who experience different needs, such as language training.

We plan to run this survey every two years, with the next survey distribution anticipated for 2019. Capital Region Housing is committed to improving the wellbeing of tenants and customers. We have several initiatives underway in 2018 to realize this commitment, including:

- opening Parkdale under the new mixed income model
- developing a Resident Advisory Council
- hosting Annual Tenant Meetings during the summer
- launching the Language Line to assist with overcoming language barriers
- installing video surveillance systems and increasing exterior lighting at high priority sites

We are also investigating future partnerships and supports around recreation, transit, food security and community connectedness, based on the recommendations from tenants.

We want to say a heartfelt **thank you** to tenants who shared their time and thoughts with us.



## Questions or Comments?

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