Edmonton Community Foundation

VITAL SIGNS® 2026

Building the Foundation for Edmonton's Future.

Vital Signs 2026 looks at what shapes life in Edmonton — from affordability and livability to early childhood development. Together we're laying the foundations for a stronger Edmonton.

COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS OF CANADA | VitalSigns®



Edmonton Community Foundation works in Treaty 6 Territory, the traditional lands of diverse First Nations including the nêhiyaw (Cree), Dene, Nakota Isga (Nakota Sioux), Anishinaabe (Saulteaux), and Niitsitapi (Blackfoot), and within the Métis homelands of the North Saskatchewan River Territory. These lands have long been places of gathering, ceremony, and community for many Nations. We honour this history and are inspired by Indigenous principles such as Seven-Generation thinking. As we are guided by those who came before, we act with care for those who will follow The Ecological Child Well-being Framework.

Our region is shaped by the people, cultures, experiences and perspectives of those who call it home. Through Vital Signs, we seek to better understand life in our community and the opportunities to improve it.



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Edmonton is a city people believe in.

Building on that optimism means creating the conditions that help people thrive: a stable home, support within reach and a community where we belong. Easing pressures on families and strengthening the connections around them can help give children a strong start and build a stronger future for our region.

Vital Signs 2026 is a snapshot of life in Edmonton, and it lays the groundwork for giving our youngest children, from birth to age six, the best possible start. Drawing on community voices, local data and expert insight, it shows what's working, what's hard and where we can do better.

Edmontonians love their city.

81% agree Edmonton is a great place to live, and only 11% rate their quality of life negatively. That optimism runs strongest among people actively building careers, raising families, and establishing long-term roots in the city.

Yet optimism exists alongside growing affordability pressures.

Money feels tight for many. About one in three Edmontonians finds monthly expenses easy to manage (32%) and about one in three finds them difficult (32%). Everyone else falls somewhere in between.

- Housing is the biggest source of pressure (34%), rising to 42% for families with children under six.
- Groceries (31%) and utilities (16%) follow.
- 64% expect life here to get less affordable over the next year.

Affordability influences many of the decisions families make about childcare, recreation and education. Yet for families with children under six, the strongest driver of quality of life is a sense of belonging.

Belonging matters.

What is Vital Signs?

Edmonton Community Foundation's Vital Signs® report provides a snapshot of the well-being of Edmontonians and the health of our region. Vital Signs 2026 draws on two primary sources: a survey of Edmonton residents conducted by Stone-Olafson and research on families and young children led by the University of Alberta's Community-University Partnership (CUP). The report helps inform decision-makers, community organizations and residents as they shape priorities and actions that strengthen our community.

Turning Insights into Action

Vital Signs 2026 highlights both the challenges and opportunities shaping life in Edmonton. The findings show that addressing affordability pressures while strengthening belonging and family supports can help more children thrive and build an even stronger future for our region.

Edmonton Community Foundation invites the community to put these findings into action.

- **Community organizations:** Use this data to inform program design, funding applications and conversations with partners, particularly where housing costs and family belonging intersect.
- **Funders and policy makers:** Use the findings to guide decisions that address affordability pressures, strengthen quality of life and improve supports, services and opportunities for children, families and communities.
- **Donors:** Give through ECF to help meet community needs and build a stronger future for Edmonton.
- **Residents and neighbours:** Use Vital Signs to help inform community conversations, decision-making and action.

Vital Signs 2026 is a tool for understanding and strengthening quality of life across the Edmonton region. Explore the findings and learn how you can put the insights into action at **ecf.ca/vitalsigns.**

Questions about Vital Signs 2026?

Contact Edmonton Community Foundation
info@ecf.ca | 780.426.0015

Edmonton remains one of Canada's more affordable major housing markets, helping attract newcomers to the region. While Alberta reports the highest median after-tax household income in Canada, many residents continue to face financial pressure, with cost of living and inflation remaining the top personal concern.

Income Thresholds & Well-Being Shift

Research suggests household incomes around $80,000 are associated with improved financial confidence and emotional well-being, while gains in life satisfaction become less pronounced beyond $130,000. Vital Signs research found that locally, a clear shift occurs between households earning less than $50,000 and those earning above that threshold.

Specific Household Pressures & Future Outlook

Residents are evenly split on their ability to manage monthly expenses, with roughly one-third reporting it is easy, difficult or neither. Housing remains the most significant financial pressure (34%), particularly among families with young children (42%) and newcomers (48%), followed by groceries (31%) and utilities (16%).

Difficulty Meeting Monthly Expenses

A noticeable shift in financial stability occurs around the $50K-$100K income range.

Under $50K

55%

Struggle with monthly expenses

$50K-$100K

34%

Struggle with monthly expenses

$100K+

18%

Struggle with monthly expenses

This reflects the reality of Edmonton's 2026 living wage of $22.65/hour where housing, childcare and transportation account for the largest household expenses.

Newcomers & Growth

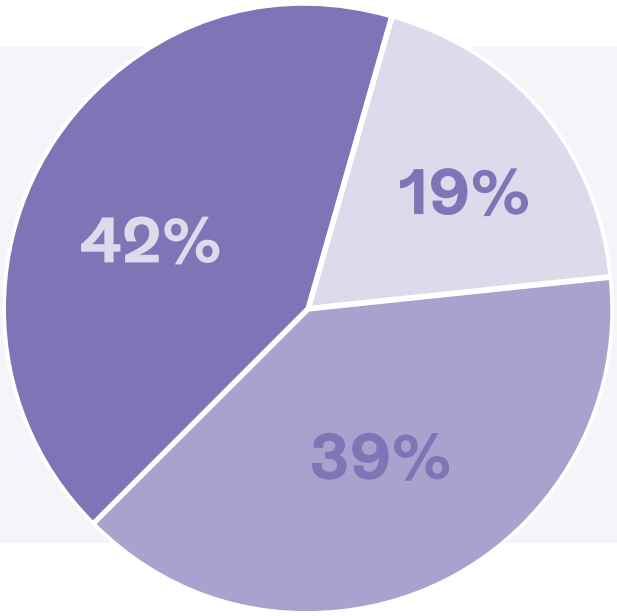
Defined for the purposes of this report as residents who have lived in Edmonton for less than 10 years, newcomers are playing an increasingly important role in Edmonton's growth and future prosperity. Compared to the broader population, newcomers are younger, more likely to be raising children and more likely to identify as a visible minority.

Newcomers	Edmonton Overall
46% Under 35	28%
42% Households with Children	34%
51% Visible	31%

*all percentages are based on primary research

How People Are Arriving to Edmonton

- **42%** From other parts of Canada
- **39%** International
- **19%** From other parts of Alberta



*all percentages are based on primary research

Optimistic About the Future, Challenged in the Present

Despite facing greater financial pressures than the broader population, newcomers remain notably optimistic about the future. While 42% report difficulty meeting monthly expenses and 64% earn less than $100,000 annually, 53% expect their quality of life to improve over the next year. Housing remains the most significant affordability pressure, with 48% of recent newcomers identifying rent or mortgage costs as their primary financial challenge compared to 34% of all residents.

Building Belonging

Newcomers report lower levels of neighbourhood and city belonging than the broader population. Community participation tends to increase over time, indicating that belonging and civic engagement grow as people build connections within their communities.

A Growing City

Edmonton's rapid population growth presents opportunities for economic development and community vitality while increasing demand for housing, infrastructure and services. How newcomers are supported to thrive will play an important role in shaping Edmonton's future.

Quality of Life Equation

Three core drivers were used to measure quality of life in Edmonton: financial security, community participation and sense of belonging.

Financial Security

33% positive QoL

Community Participation

46% active participation

Sense of Belonging

34% neighbourhood belonging

Financial Security

Financial security is the starting point for well-being. While 33% of Edmontonians report a positive quality of life, that rises to 62% among residents who can comfortably meet their monthly expenses and falls to just 11% among those experiencing financial strain.

Community Participation

When residents have the capacity to engage in community life, they are more likely to build social connections and support networks. Across Edmonton, 46% of residents actively participate in community activities, rising to 61% among households with children under six. Those who are highly engaged report nearly double the sense of neighbourhood belonging compared to those who are less involved.

Sense of Belonging

Belonging is where participation translates into well-being. Only 34% of residents report a strong sense of neighbourhood belonging and 26% feel a strong connection to Edmonton overall. Among families with young children, sense of belonging emerged as the strongest driver of quality of life, ahead of affordability and infrastructure.

Together, the findings suggest that **quality of life is shaped not only by economic conditions but also by opportunities to connect, participate and belong.**

Living in Edmonton

An in-depth exploration of overall livability, community sentiment and city drivers.

Understanding the Dual Perception Gap

Edmontonians continue to express strong pride in their city. More than four in five residents consider Edmonton a great place to live (81%), 78% are proud to call themselves Edmontonians and 91% view the city as diverse and welcoming. Residents also recognize Edmonton's quality-of-life strengths, with 85% agreeing there is plenty to see and do and 78% saying it is a great place to raise a family.

Economic perceptions are more cautious. Only 15% rate local economic conditions positively, while 66% hold a neutral view and 19% view conditions negatively. Affordability follows a similar pattern, with most residents expressing uncertainty rather than optimism.

Together, these findings reveal a dual perception gap: residents remain highly positive about Edmonton as a place to live while continuing to express concerns about affordability, financial security and economic conditions.

Edmonton's current reality is defined by both strong civic pride and economic uncertainty.

Two realities can be true at the same time.

CIVIC PRIDE		ECONOMIC REALITY
91% Diverse & Welcoming		**15%** Positive Economic Conditions
85% Plenty to See & Do	VS	**16%** Positive Affordability
81% Great Place to Live		**66%** Neutral Economic Conditions
78% Proud to be an Edmontonian		**63%** Neutral Affordability

Affordability Pressures & Household Impact

Affordability continues to shape how residents view their future. Nearly 64% of Edmontonians expect life in the city to become less affordable over the next year, with concern particularly pronounced among older adults and women.

While Edmonton remains relatively affordable compared to many Canadian cities, housing remains the largest source of financial pressure. One-third of households (34%) identify rent or mortgage costs as their primary financial challenge, rising to 42% among households with young children and 48% among recent newcomers.

Food costs are the second-largest affordability concern, cited by 31% of households, followed by utilities at 16%.

Together, these findings suggest affordability is not a single issue, but a combination of housing, food and household expenses that influence financial confidence and quality of life, particularly for young families, newcomers and lower-income households.

64%

EXPECT LIFE IN EDMONTON TO BECOME LESS AFFORDABLE NEXT YEAR

Housing (Rent/Mortgage)

34%

Groceries

31%

Utilities

16%

Housing pressures are greatest among newcomers and young families.

48% Recent newcomers

42% Households with children under 6

34% All households

What Really Drives Quality of Life?

When asked what shapes their well-being, Edmontonians most often point to affordability, safe neighbourhoods, relationships with friends and family and access to public services.

However, deeper analysis reveals that overall quality of life is most strongly influenced by:

1. **Overall affordability**
2. **Job opportunities**
3. **Local economic conditions**
4. **Sense of belonging in Edmonton**
5. **Safe neighbourhoods**
6. **Safe spaces for children to play**

Together, these findings suggest that while residents value many aspects of community life, quality of life is fundamentally anchored in economic security.

A Different Story for Young Families

For households with children under six, the picture changes. While affordability and infrastructure remain important, sense of belonging emerges as the strongest driver of quality of life.

STRONGEST DRIVER OF QUALITY OF LIFE FOR YOUNG FAMILIES

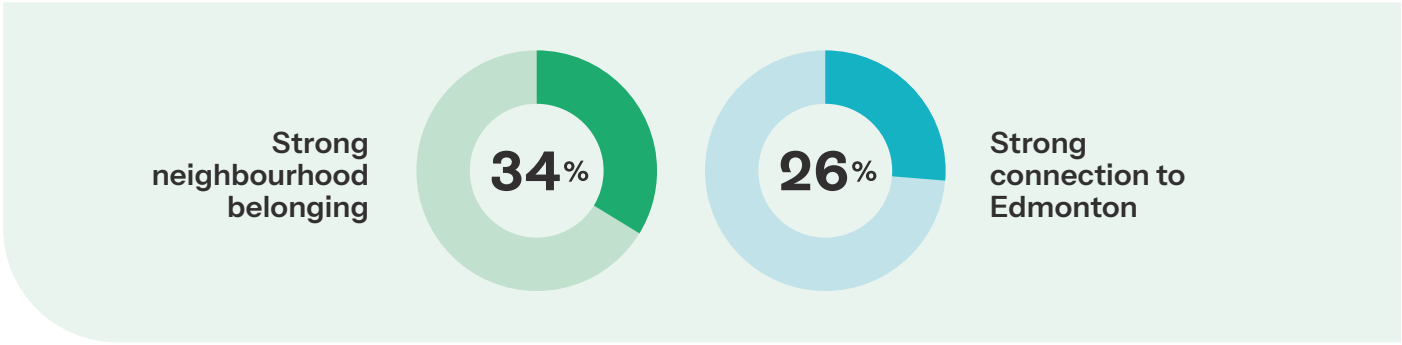
Sense of Belonging > **Infrastructure Affordability**

This finding suggests that helping young families thrive is not only about reducing financial pressures. It is also about creating opportunities for connection, participation and community belonging.

Neighbourhood Belonging

Participation doubles belonging and nearly doubles positive quality of life.

A sense of belonging remains an opportunity area across Edmonton. Just 34% of residents report a strong sense of belonging in their neighbourhood, while only 26% feel a strong connection to Edmonton overall. Levels of belonging are even lower among newcomers.



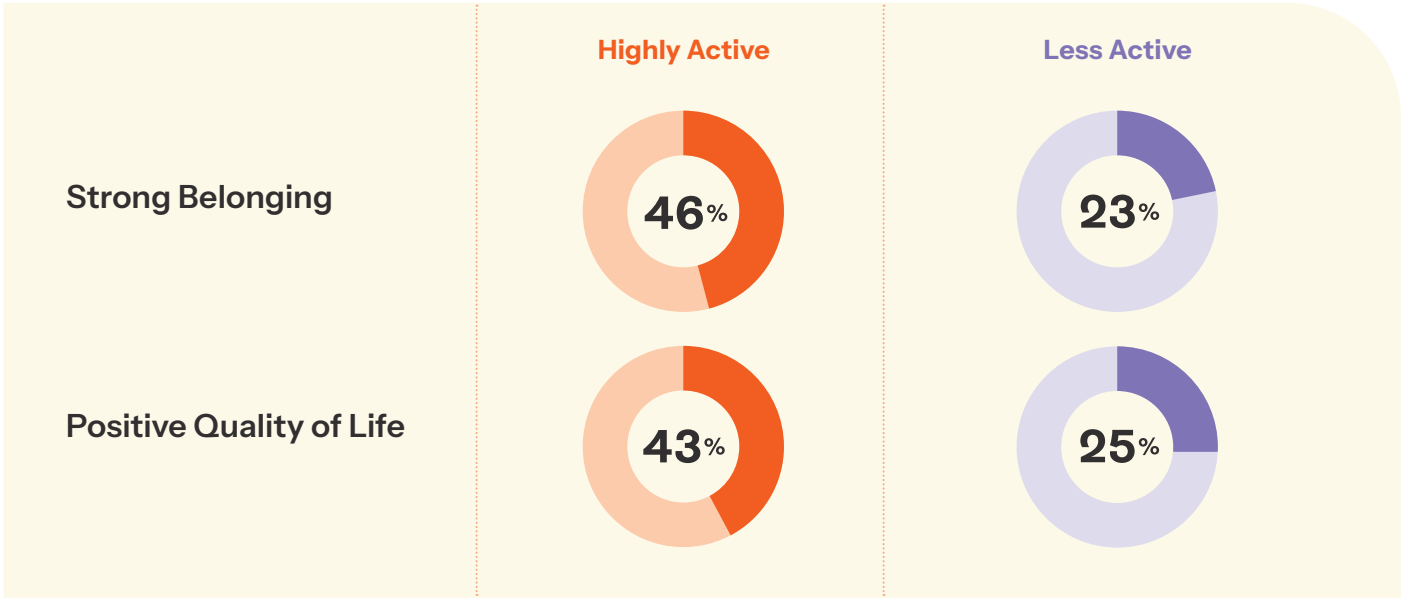
Participation offers a more encouraging picture. Forty-six percent of Edmontonians consider themselves active participants in community life, rising to 61% among households with children under six and 64% among residents who have lived in Edmonton for five to ten years.

The connection between participation and belonging is significant. Residents who are highly active in their communities are twice as likely to report a strong sense of neighbourhood belonging (46% vs. 25%) and are also nearly twice as likely to report a positive quality of life (43% vs. 25%).

Beyond community participation, Edmontonians demonstrate strong civic engagement, with 65% voting in municipal, provincial or federal elections, 56% donated to a charitable organization and 34% volunteering over the past year.

Together, the findings suggest that creating opportunities for residents to connect, participate and contribute can strengthen both belonging and overall well-being.

The Participation Effect



Physical Infrastructure & Public Space

Edmonton's parks, public spaces and community amenities provide an important foundation for child development, family well-being and community connection. The city offers **6.3 hectares of parkland per 1,000 residents, 424 playgrounds** and added **35 kilometres of new walking, cycling and rolling connections in 2024-25.**

Residents place high value on the community services that support children and families. Healthcare, public schools, recreation opportunities and libraries are all viewed as essential community assets.

As affordability pressures continue, parks, playgrounds, libraries and recreation facilities play an increasingly important role as accessible spaces where residents can connect, participate and build community. Supporting this are nine Family Resource Networks that help families access programs and services closer to home.

Together, these assets help create the conditions for healthy child development, stronger social connections and a greater sense of belonging.



6.3 Hectares Parkland per 1,000 residents



35 km New active transportation connections



424 Playgrounds



9 Family Resource Networks

Most Valued Community Assets

89% Healthcare

85% Public Schools

84% Recreation & Free Play

84% Libraries

Moving from Survival to Community Stability

Edmonton faces a growing challenge: helping households move beyond simply managing day-to-day pressures and toward long-term stability and well-being. While economic security remains the foundation of quality of life, communities can play an important role in reducing barriers, strengthening connections and fostering resilience.

There are practical steps that can be taken for funders, governments and community partners to help residents feel more secure, connected and supported. The following livability levers represent proactive actions that can strengthen stability and improve quality of life across Edmonton:

- **Expanding low-cost and free community experiences** such as recreation, arts, cultural programming and public spaces that encourage participation and connection.
- **Addressing core affordability pressures** particularly housing, food security and emergency family supports to help households achieve greater financial stability.
- **Strengthening neighbourhood-based family supports** by continuing to invest in Family Resource Networks , libraries, community leagues and recreation centres as trusted access points for services and programs.
- **Improving navigation and accessibility** particularly for newcomers and diverse communities, through culturally responsive supports and multilingual service connections.
- **Building stronger coordination across sectors** including health, education, childcare and community services to create a more connected and accessible support system for families.

Collectively, these actions can help reduce barriers to participation, strengthen belonging and improve quality of life across the city. In a period of continued affordability pressures, community connection remains one of Edmonton's strongest and most accessible assets.

Raising Children in Edmonton

Primary Focus: The family experience, service priorities and frontline realities.

The Family Landscape in Edmonton

Families with young children play a significant role in Edmonton's communities. Across the city, 39% of residents are involved in raising a child under six as a parent, grandparent or caregiver, while 15% have a young child living in their household.

Households raising young children are also among Edmonton's most engaged residents. Sixty-one percent actively participate in community events, sports and neighbourhood activities compared with 46% of the general population. In addition, 82% agree Edmonton is a great place to raise a family.

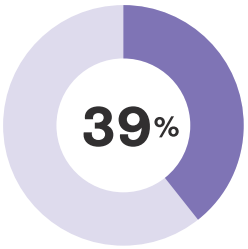
Affordability Pressures Shape Family Experiences

Despite strong community engagement and participation, affordability remains a significant challenge for many families. Housing costs are the top concern for Edmontonians, affecting 34% of residents overall and 42% of households with children under six. At the same time, nearly one-third (32%) of Edmontonians report difficulty covering their monthly expenses.

When choosing childcare, recreation, healthcare and preschool services, families prioritize affordability (56%), followed by quality (35%) and accessibility (28%).

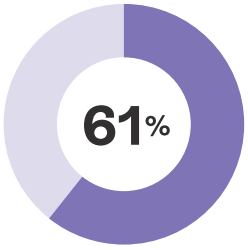
Belonging Supports Family Well-Being

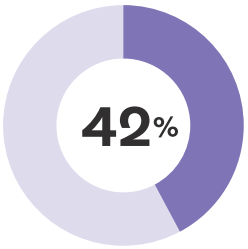
While affordable and accessible services remain essential, Vital Signs 2026 suggests families thrive when they also feel connected to their community. Strong social networks, welcoming neighbourhoods and opportunities to participate in community life are important contributors to family well-being.



Involved in raising a child under 6

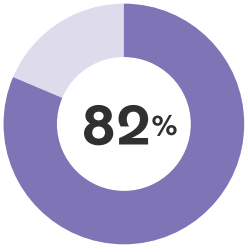
Actively engaged in community life

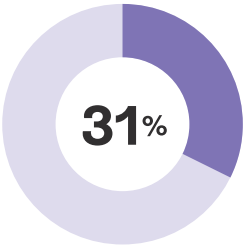




Identify housing as their top financial pressure

Say Edmonton is a great place to raise a family





Rate their quality of life positively

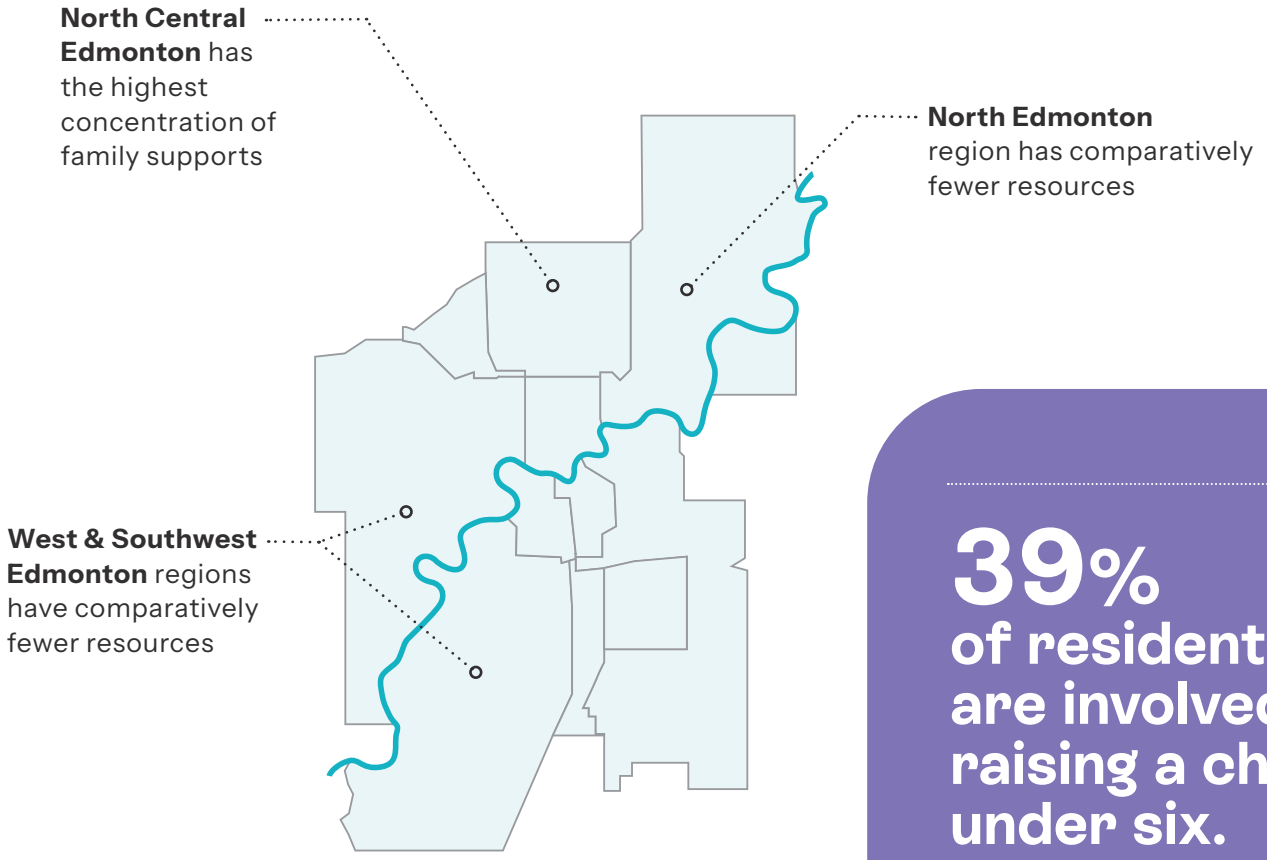
Access to family supports across Edmonton

Across the Edmonton region, 39% of residents are involved in raising children under six. Demand varies depending on family support services with 45% of North Edmonton residents reporting involvement in raising young children, compared with 24% in Central Edmonton. These patterns point to a broader mismatch between where services are located and where families may need them the most.

Registration data from Edmonton Public School Board schools also suggests that demand is often concentrated in communities experiencing higher levels of social vulnerability. Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 1 students represent a larger share of enrolment in the district's 60 highest-vulnerability schools than across the district as a whole.

Opportunities to Strengthen Access

While access remains uneven, the findings highlight opportunities to better align family supports with community need. Building on Edmonton's existing network of organizations and services can help strengthen access and support positive outcomes for children, families and communities across the city.



39%
of residents are involved in raising a child under six.

*Reference 211 Children/Families Resource Dashboard for latest map results of family support resources.



The Early Learning & Childcare Reality

Childcare affordability measures have significantly reduced costs for many families, with full-time parents, fees falling from approximately **$44 per day in 2021 to $15 per day in 2025.**

Childcare Availability

Access remains one of the sector's biggest challenges. Twenty-eight percent of Edmonton children under school age live in a childcare desert and a further 52% in areas with inadequate coverage; only 20% live in neighbourhoods that meet federal childcare coverage targets. As a result, many families continue to face long waitlists or must travel outside their communities to secure care.

Workforce Pressures

Access is shaped not only by the availability of spaces but also by workforce capacity. A persistent shortage of Early Childhood Educators (ECEs), driven by low compensation and limited benefits, has left some newly licensed childcare spaces unopened despite long parent waitlists.

Families seeking childcare for children with additional support needs often encounter further barriers, including limited availability of inclusive programs and specialized supports. Together, these challenges highlight that while affordability has improved, access, workforce capacity and inclusion remain critical priorities for strengthening Edmonton's early learning and childcare system.

Drivers of Well-Being for Young Families

The factors that shape quality of life for families with young children differ from those of the broader population. While economic stability remains an essential foundation, research suggests that family well-being is influenced just as strongly by whether parents feel connected to their community, supported by local networks and able to access the services they need.

This distinction is reflected in the difference between what families identify as their immediate priorities and what contributes most to their overall well-being. Affordability remains a critical concern, particularly as families navigate the costs of housing, childcare and raising young children. However, quality of life is also shaped by a broader set of factors that create a sense of belonging and support in daily life.

Families place particular importance on access to quality healthcare, schools, childcare and preschool opportunities, recreation and free play, children's programming and safe neighbourhoods. These services and amenities help families meet practical needs while creating opportunities to build relationships, participate in community life and support healthy child development.

The findings also highlight a paradox facing many young families. Despite being among the most active participants in community life, they often experience lower overall quality of life due to the combined pressures of caregiving responsibilities, financial demands and limited time. Housing affordability remains a significant source of stress, while broader social and support networks can be difficult to establish and maintain during the early years of parenting.

When families feel connected, supported and able to thrive, communities are better positioned to foster healthy child development and long-term well-being.



Family Priorities for Service Delivery

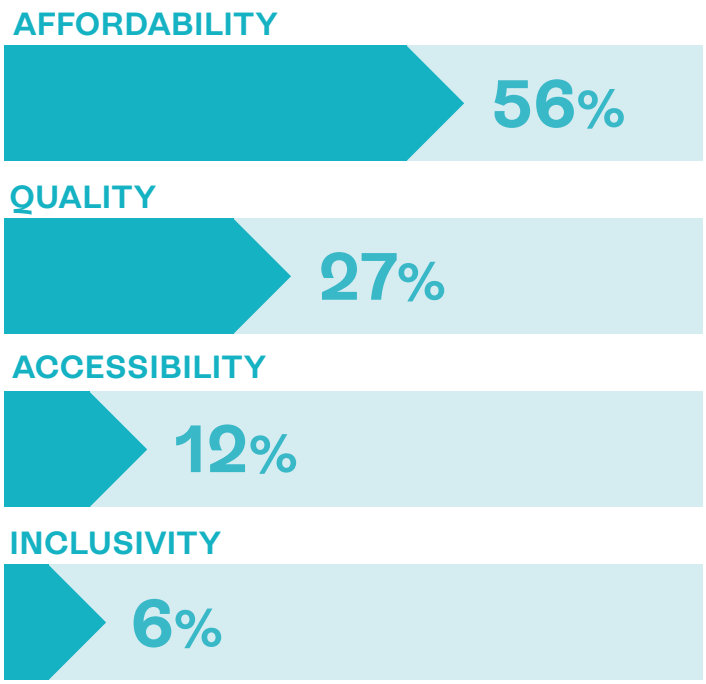
When Edmonton families evaluate services for their children, affordability is the highest priority (56%), followed by quality (27%), accessibility (12%) and inclusivity (6%).

Priorities vary by age and stage. For families with children under six, quality becomes a much stronger consideration, with parents placing particular importance on high-quality childcare, stable staffing, safe environments and programs that support healthy development.

Families with young children are most likely to prioritize financial assistance, childcare affordability, daycare availability and neighbourhood safety. As children grow older, priorities shift toward recreation and sports programs, free youth activities and after-school programming.

While childcare affordability measures have reduced costs for many families, access remains a challenge. Twenty-eight percent of preschool-aged children live in childcare deserts, and families of children with additional support needs often face barriers finding inclusive programs and services.

Overall, families are looking for services that are not only affordable, but also high-quality, accessible and available when and where they are needed most.



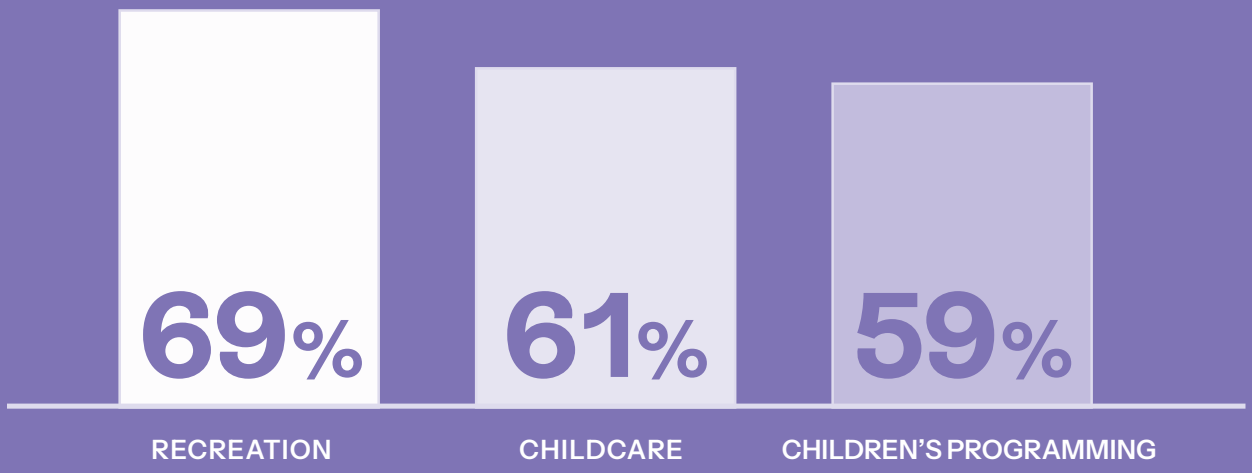
Needs by Life Stage

UNDER 6
Financial Assistance
Childcare Access
Neighbourhood Safety
SCHOOL AGED
Financial Assistance
Sports & Recreation
Activities
After-School Programs

Healthcare, Education & Play

Edmontonians place a high value on the services that support children and families, with **healthcare (89%) and public schools (85%)** ranking as the most important community supports overall. For families raising children under six, the importance of these services extends beyond education and care to include the developmental opportunities that help children thrive.

Compared to families with older children, households with young children place greater emphasis on



These priorities reflect the central role of early childhood experiences in healthy development and family well-being. Yet families continue to face barriers to accessing some supports. Demand for specialized pediatric and developmental services continues to grow, and schools are supporting increasingly complex student needs.

These pressures highlight the importance of accessible healthcare, education, childcare, recreation and family support programs. For families with young children, these services are essential building blocks for healthy child development and long-term well-being.

Vulnerable Families & Emergency Supports

Growing Demand for Family Supports

Service providers across Edmonton and Alberta report growing demand for supports that help families navigate crises, access specialized services and meet basic needs.

Crisis & Emergency Supports

Demand for emergency family supports continues to exceed available capacity. In 2022-23, domestic violence shelters across Alberta supported 3,561 children fleeing abuse, while an estimated 8,020 children were turned away due to limited shelter space. Survivors with children waited roughly three months on average for a shelter spot, about double the previous year's wait.

Developmental & Diagnostic Services

Families seeking developmental assessments and specialized supports often face an average of three years after applying before receiving full access to services. Community partners and service providers continue to identify access and capacity challenges as barriers to timely diagnosis and support.

Basic Needs & Family Stability

Many families are also struggling to meet basic needs. Twenty-one percent of Edmonton households experience food insecurity, contributing to increased demand for nutrition programs, transportation assistance, and other family supports.

Together, these findings point to growing demand across the family support system and an opportunity to strengthen service capacity, access and coordination in the years ahead.

8,020
Children turned away from shelters

3,561
Children supported through shelters

21%
Households experiencing food insecurity

Sector experts continue to identify capacity challenges in developmental and diagnostic services.

Building a More Complete Picture of Family Well-Being

The research offers important perspectives on early childhood and family well-being. However, community-specific data remains limited, leaving gaps in understanding the experiences of Indigenous, newcomer and racialized children and families. Existing public datasets do not consistently provide community-specific information, making it difficult to fully understand strengths, challenges and outcomes across diverse populations.

Current data often focuses on service use and system outcomes, but community partners emphasized the importance of also measuring factors such as **belonging, cultural connection, family relationships and overall well-being.**

Looking ahead, there is an opportunity to strengthen understanding of what helps children and families thrive, including:

- Access to culturally responsive programs and services
- Strong relationships with educators and service providers
- The ability to find and navigate supports when needed
- A sense of belonging, inclusion and cultural connection

Trusted community organizations, cultural brokers and settlement supports play an important role in helping families access services, build connections and strengthen community well-being.



What Helps Children and Families Thrive

Primary Focus: Cross-sector analysis of early childhood systems

Health & Early Learning Analysis

The early childhood system in Alberta operates across multiple ministries and service areas, creating challenges for coordinated planning, service delivery and data sharing. While significant investments have been made in childcare affordability and family supports, responsibility for children's services remains spread across education, social services, healthcare and community agencies, making it difficult to track outcomes and align supports across the system.

Maintaining quality across the early learning and childcare sector is another ongoing challenge. Since the removal of Alberta's accreditation funding model in 2020, only minimum licensing standards remain, and quality is no longer actively tracked across licensed childcare providers. Contributing to this, evidence-based frameworks and professional development resources remain available; however, their use varies by organization.

System pressures are further compounded by workforce shortages across the early childhood sector. Childcare providers continue to face challenges recruiting and retaining qualified early childhood educators, limiting service capacity and contributing to waitlists despite strong demand for spaces.

Ultimately, supporting children and families requires more than individual programs or services. A well-connected system, supported by a skilled workforce and a shared commitment to quality, can help ensure every family has access to the resources and opportunities needed to thrive.

Systemic Data Limitations & Service Coordination Challenges

Measuring What Matters

A key finding from Community-University Partnership's research is that most publicly available data measures system activity rather than child and family well-being.

While strong data exists on topics such as childcare spaces, school enrolment and healthcare utilization, there is limited information on how children and families are actually experiencing and progressing through these systems.

The research also highlights opportunities for stronger coordination across child- and family-serving sectors, helping improve service planning and better understand outcomes for children and families.



Education & Social Services Analysis

As the needs of children and families become more complex, education and community support systems are facing increasing pressure to provide timely and coordinated services.

Changes to Program Unit Funding (PUF) and declining pre-Kindergarten enrolment have reduced access to some early intervention opportunities, while schools report growing demand for specialized supports, language services and individualized learning accommodations.

Community organizations face similar challenges. Family Resource Networks continue to provide developmental screening, parenting supports and service navigation, but changes to provincial developmental screening supports have increased variability in how organizations identify and respond to developmental concerns.

Across systems, information is often collected independently, limiting the ability to track children's experiences and outcomes across health, education, childcare and community services.

Strengthening coordination across organizations can help families access supports earlier and navigate services more easily.

A Roadmap for Action in Edmonton

Early childhood experiences play a critical role in shaping lifelong outcomes. Affordability, belonging, community infrastructure and coordinated systems all influence whether children and families can thrive. Below are some opportunities for action across four interconnected levels: child, family, community and systems.

Support Healthy Childhood Development

Ensuring children have access to the supports and services they need during their earliest years can help build a strong foundation for lifelong well-being.

- Expand access to early learning and developmental supports.
- Improve developmental screening and early intervention.
- Strengthen access to specialized assessments and services.

Strengthening Families

Families play a central role in children's development. Reducing barriers and increasing support can help create the conditions for families to thrive.

- Reduce affordability pressures on families.
- Invest in parenting supports and early childhood development.
- Improve navigation supports for newcomer and culturally diverse families.

Building Connected Communities

Welcoming neighbourhoods and strong local networks help families feel supported, connected and engaged in community life.

- Expand neighbourhood-based early years hubs and family gathering spaces.
- Strengthen local support networks that foster connection and belonging.

A Roadmap for Action in Edmonton continued.

Creating More Coordinated Systems

Families often interact with multiple services and organizations. Strong coordination can improve access, reduce complexity and strengthen outcomes.

- Improve coordination across health, education, childcare and social service systems.
- Strengthen data sharing and outcome measurement.
- Support organizations that provide system leadership and coordination.

Moving Forward Together

Vital Signs 2026 highlights both challenges and opportunities for Edmonton. While affordability pressures continue to shape daily life for many residents, the findings also point to the strengths that help communities thrive: connection, belonging and access to support.

Together, these factors influence quality of life across the region and help create the conditions for children to get the best possible start in life. By building on these strengths and aligning action across child, family, community and systems levels, Edmonton can foster a future where people of all ages are supported to live well and reach their full potential.

Building Knowledge Together

Edmonton Community Foundation leads and produces Edmonton's Vital Signs, bringing together research, data and community knowledge to build a deeper understanding of well-being across our region.

Vital Signs 2026 was developed with two research partners: Stone-Olafson, which conducted a survey of Edmonton residents, and the Community-University Partnership at the University of Alberta, which led research on families and young children. We thank our research partners and the many organizations and individuals who contributed to this report. Their knowledge helps inform conversations, decisions and actions that help our community thrive.

Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF)

As the largest non-governmental funder of Edmonton's charitable sector, ECF connects donors, charities and community partners to enrich lives and build a vibrant city, now and for generations to come. Through endowed funds, ECF supports a broad range of community needs, with current focus areas in affordable housing and early childhood development. Vital Signs helps inform this work by deepening understanding of the issues and opportunities shaping life across the Edmonton region.

Contributors

Stone-Olafson

Stone-Olafson led the public opinion research and community engagement components of this project, conducting Edmonton-wide survey research and statistical driver analyses across more than 1,000 residents. Their work captured the lived experiences, affordability pressures, community belonging and service priorities of residents and newcomers across Edmonton.

Edmonton Community-University Partnership for the Study of Children, Youth and Families (CUP) at the University of Alberta.

The Community-University Partnership (CUP) at the University of Alberta contributed extensive research, environmental scanning, key informant interviews, system mapping and cross-sector analysis across Health, Early Learning & Child Care, Education and Community & Social Services. CUP's work provided critical evidence on early childhood development (birth to age six), family well-being and the ecological systems that support children and families in Edmonton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