

Students with Lived Experience of Precarious Housing

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Prepared for UASU Executive Committee by
Department of Research and Advocacy



Overview

A survey on the UASU Perks platform produced 118 responses from students who had recent lived experience of precarious housing situations. The survey ran February 21–24, representing 14% of the unique Perks users active during that time frame. These 118 students represented all faculties and years of study. Though per-faculty breakdowns are unreliable with a sample this small, Engineering students were especially strongly represented: 19% of the 118 were Engineering students.

"Within the past few years, have you experienced any of the following types of precarious housing?"

This chart represents only the 118 students with recent lived experience of precarious housing; it does not represent a proportion of the entire student body, just relative frequencies of situations. As in some previous surveys, note that self-identification as unhoused or homeless is relatively rare.

SITUATION	PROPORTION
Remained in an unsafe living/housing situation due to lack of options	40%
Been evicted or forced to leave my place of residence	30%
'Couch-surfed' or stayed with friends without paying formal rent	24%
Slept on campus, other than at the Commuter Study Hostel, because I had nowhere else to go	17%
Stayed in a car, abandoned building, or other place not meant for housing	12%
Slept at the Commuter Study Hostel because I had nowhere else to go	11%
Identified as unhoused or homeless	3%

"We're trying to run a panel/forum of elected officials about campus and transit safety. Are there any questions or comments you'd like to share with the panelists anonymously?"

While we took stock of responses from all respondents, this report highlights responses from just the 118 students with recent lived experience.

- "Transit safety for women has been absolutely horrible and I swear it just gets worse. I feel unsafe and can't use transit during the late hours because of the sheer amount of times I've been harassed."
- "It's more common for students to be houseless than we think it is."

- "Lack of housing options leads to a lot of unhoused people in transit stations, which presents a fire hazard at best or unsafe situations at night."
- "Why isn't there more being done to keep students safe?"
- "UofA practicum fees have broken me financially. Asking students to teach full time days, spend hours planning lessons, AND charge us to do so lead me to work full time in addition to my practicum. I nearly lost my housing during both teaching practicums and have gone into debt to avoid doing so. Stop asking us to work for FREE while making us pay for the privilege to do so. It's unethical."
- "More security on transit. Super dangerous."
- "International students are facing scams/fraud from house owners while choosing a place to live before actually coming to Edmonton. At times, the house owners take advantage of their vulnerability and lack of experience or familiarity."
- "How can new Ukrainians in Canada find stable housing?"
- "Is anyone on the panel a regular user of transit? It feels to me like a lot of the solutions to transit issues are created by people who haven't so much as stepped foot onto a bus. What I mean is the solutions to things such as safety and routing work really well on paper but not so much in execution."
- "Not really. Honestly at this point I just have to accept that travelling home as a young woman is unsafe if I try to after high volume hours."
- "What are some ways that students can keep themselves safe on public transit?"
- "For me it's okay if people with precarious housing stay in the LRT stations to get warm, but it's a different thing harassing people or doing drugs there."
- "Have more busses for Campus Saint-Jean."