

Census 2025

# MUNICIPAL CENSUS REPORT



REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY  
OF WOOD BUFFALO



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo humbly acknowledges that the land on which we live, learn, work, and play is Treaty 8 Territory, the traditional lands of the Cree, Dene, and the unceded territory of the Métis.

We are sincerely grateful to all members of the business community, project accommodations, care facilities and non-profit organizations for their collaboration and commitment throughout the Census 2025 campaign. Further, we would like to thank all census enumerators, field coordinators, and administrators whose dedication, professionalism, and attention to detail made the successful delivery of Census 2025 possible.

This collective effort is vital in capturing a complete snapshot of our growing and diverse population, providing data that will help shape programs, policies, and services across the Municipality in the years ahead.





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# 1. CENSUS 2025 OVERVIEW

## 1.1 Key Findings

- Census 2025 marks a notable turning point for the Municipality, recording its first population growth in a decade. The total population has grown from 106,059 in 2021 to 107,740 in 2025.
- The Municipality added 1,681 new residents since Census 2021, an increase of 1.58%.
- Various initiatives aimed at localizing labour force and attracting new residents contributed to growth in the permanent resident population, increasing from 75,555 in 2021 to 83,988 in 2025, an 11.16% growth. At the same time, the shadow population experienced a decrease of 22.13%, from 30,504 in 2021 to 23,752 in 2025.
- The permanent population of the region's rural communities is 2,953 people, an increase of 8.29% from 2021.
- Children aged 0–14 make up 22% of the population, well above the national average of 15.2%, highlighting the strong presence of young families.
- The Municipality remains a predominantly young community, with the average age of 33.9, significantly younger than the national average of 41.6.
- The 40–44 age group now represents the largest portion of the population at 10.75%. This builds on a noticeable trend over the last two censuses, with the largest cohort shifting from 30–34 in 2018, to 35–39 in 2021.
- Seniors aged 65 and over make up 5.5% of the population, indicating a relatively small but gradually growing older population.
- A total of 32,062 private dwellings were reported, an increase of 419 dwellings (1.32%) from 31,643 in 2021.
- More than half of all newcomers relocated from within Alberta, with Edmonton (34.93%) and Calgary (21.66%) being the two largest sources of interprovincial migration into the Municipality.
- Reuniting with family members (37.76%), housing (27.63%), and starting a new job (18.73%) are the top reasons newcomers choose to relocate to the region, showing that social ties and quality of life are just as important as jobs.
- For the first time, information on household pets was collected. In total, 18,395 pets were reported across the Municipality.

## 1.2 Background

The Municipal Government Act gives municipalities the authority to conduct a census. The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (the Municipality) conducts a census every one to three years to determine the size and composition of its population. This report presents an overview of the results of the 2025 municipal census that was conducted between April 1 and June 30, 2025.

Census 2025 was conducted in accordance with all provincial census guidelines within the Municipal Census Manual. Information was primarily collected on population distribution, demographics, population mobility, pets, dwellings, and housing tenure. This comprehensive approach provided valuable insight into the characteristics and trends shaping communities across the region, helping the Municipality better understand its people.

For the first time, residents were asked about family ties and pet ownership, expanding the census beyond traditional questions about population and housing. These new additions were designed to provide a deeper look into how residents live, connect, and interact with their surroundings. By learning more about household dynamics and community relationships, the Municipality can better plan services and programs that reflect the real needs and lifestyles of the people who call Wood Buffalo home.

The results of Census 2025 establish an up-to-date and reliable baseline for the Municipality's population. This information is crucial for understanding potential future population projections and preparing municipal strategic planning and service provision. Additionally, information collected through the census provides local organizations and businesses with reliable information for conducting analysis, planning future needs, and capitalizing on future opportunities.

Participation in Census 2025 by residents was voluntary. To encourage mass participation, the Municipality launched a robust public awareness campaign ahead of the census period. Outreach efforts included radio announcements, social media engagement through platforms such as Facebook and YouTube, and poster displays in residential neighbourhoods, including apartment lobbies and building receptions. In addition, billboards placed at major traffic intersections and the airport helped reinforce the importance of participation and ensure broad public visibility.

## 1.3 Methodology

Census 2025 was conducted between April 1 to June 30, 2025. April 1, 2025 was designated as the official census reference date. This date is the specific day used to count and record all population and dwelling information in the Municipality.

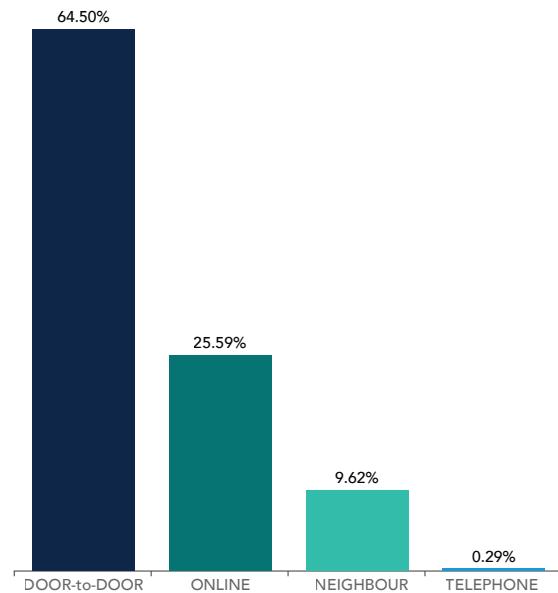
A combination of enumeration methods were used to ensure everyone in the Municipality was counted, covering the urban service area (Fort McMurray), rural communities, and collective dwellings. The census began with secure online and telephone options, giving people convenient ways to participate, followed by door-to-door enumeration to reach households that hadn't yet responded and ensure a complete and accurate count of all residents during the census period.

### 1.3.1 Online Self-Enumeration

One of the ways people could take part in the census was online self-enumeration. Every household received a letter with a unique Personal Identification Number (PIN), which let them log in securely to the online census portal. The PIN letters also helped make sure only people who specifically lived in the household could fill out the census questions, prevented duplicate submissions, and confirmed everyone was counted correctly.

The census app was accessible 24/7 throughout the census period and was fully optimized for use on mobile devices, tablets, and desktop computers. Overall, online participation declined from 44% in 2021 to 25.59% in 2025 (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1 POPULATION COUNTED BY ENUMERATION TYPE



### 1.3.2 Telephone Enumeration

People could also complete the census over the phone with trained municipal staff guiding them through the process. This method supported residents who were unable or preferred not to participate online. In total, 0.29% of the population participated through this method.

### 1.3.3 In-Person Enumeration

In-person enumeration was available at designated municipal offices for residents who required direct assistance. Trained municipal staff provided secure, guided support to ensure accuracy and accessibility. This method provided an additional way to engage residents, complementing both the online and telephone enumeration options.

### 1.3.4 Door-to-Door Enumeration

In this method, enumerators visited households that did not complete their census using other methods. This approach accounted for 64.50% of total responses and played an important role in achieving complete population coverage.

Neighbour enumeration complemented the door-to-door approach by allowing field enumerators to collect information from nearby residents when dwellings could not be reached directly after at least three visits. Approved by the province, this method ensured comprehensive coverage and accounted for 9.62% of all responses.

Door-to-door and neighbour enumeration together accounted for most responses in 2025, highlighting the significant role of in-person methods in achieving comprehensive population coverage across the Municipality.

## 1.4 Quality Assurance

Census 2025 followed several key steps to ensure the information collected was credible and reliable. This process involved detailed preparation before enumeration, the use of technology to confirm information during fieldwork, and a careful review of the results once collection was complete. Together, these measures formed a multi-level system that maintained consistency throughout the process and ensured the information gathered could be confidently used for planning and decision-making.

### 1.4.1 Pre-Enumeration Verification

Ahead of the census, the Municipality conducted a thorough review of its dwelling inventory, validating and standardizing all addresses to ensure complete geographic coverage. Each verified address received a unique Personal Identification Number (PIN) for secure online and telephone enumeration.

Since 2021, the Municipality has used an in-house census app to streamline data collection and management. For Census 2025, this app continued to play an important role, providing a secure and user-friendly platform for respondents. Prior to deployment, the app underwent extensive user testing to ensure reliability, including rigorous checks to confirm its ability to detect and reject invalid submissions. These tests helped guarantee that the system accurately captured valid census responses while maintaining data integrity, reinforcing confidence in the quality and robustness of the census process.

At the same time, all enumerators and field coordinators completed comprehensive training on census procedures, digital tools, privacy requirements, and communication strategies, supported by a detailed census handbook. This rigorous preparation established a strong foundation for a reliable, community-wide population count.

### 1.4.2 GPS-Enabled Field Validation

All in-person enumerators used mobile devices connected to the census app, which captured the GPS coordinates at the moment each census interview was completed. The recorded coordinates confirmed that each survey was conducted at the correct location, helping maintain the reliability of the information and reducing the risk of off-site entries.

### 1.4.3 Post-Enumeration Quality Checks

The Municipal Census Manual states that a total of 1,000 dwellings or 10%, whichever is less, should be contacted for a quality assurance check. In Census 2025, a post-enumeration quality check was conducted to ensure the accuracy and reliability of door-to-door responses.

The guidelines require verification of up to 1,000 dwellings, however, the Municipality exceeded this benchmark as part of its commitment to high-quality data collection. A total of 2,314 households participated in the post-enumeration quality check. This additional diligence further strengthened the overall integrity and credibility of Census 2025 results.

### 1.4.4 Data Validation and Internal Auditing

All submitted responses underwent rigorous comprehensive validation, including:

- Checking for duplication, inconsistencies, and completeness.
- Manually reviewing flagged entries.
- Directly following up with households requiring clarification.
- Completing internal audits of each enumeration zone to verify response rates, coverage, and accuracy.
- Carrying out spot checks on enumerators, including in-field monitoring conducted by field coordinators.

## 1.5 Data Security and Privacy Protection

Data collection and storage was managed through a secure digital infrastructure, with strict adherence to all applicable regulations of ATIA (Access to Information Act) and POPA (Protection of Privacy Act). Access to census information was restricted to authorized personnel only, and all responses were handled with a high standard of confidentiality. As part of this commitment, all census enumerators were required to take an oath of confidentiality prior to commencing their duties, reinforcing the Municipality's dedication to protecting the privacy and trust of all residents.

## 1.6 Population Estimates

To account for residents who were unable to complete their census, the province provided an extrapolation tool, which was used to estimate the population in these dwellings. The extrapolation tool used information on typical household sizes for each type of dwelling, along with the enumeration method, to estimate the population in households that could not be directly contacted.

Using this approach, it calculated that the 2,418 uncounted dwellings were home to approximately 5,009 residents. This method ensured all residents were accounted for, preserving the completeness and reliability of Census 2025 population figures.



## 2. DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

The population of the Municipality consists of both permanent residents and shadow residents.

Permanent residents are individuals whose usual place of residence is within the Municipality. Shadow residents, in contrast, are temporary residents who maintain a usual residence outside the Municipality but are employed by an industrial or commercial establishment within the Municipality for a minimum of 15 days during the municipal census year.

Shadow residents fall into three categories.

- Residential shadow population: Residents temporarily living in traditional residential dwellings (e.g., single detached houses, apartment buildings).
- Project Accommodation population: Individuals residing in work camps.
- Other shadow population: Temporary residents staying in hotels or motels.

The following sections provide an overview of key population statistics from Census 2025.

## 2.1 Population Changes (2021-2025)

Census 2025 marks an important turning point for the Municipality's demographic trends, showing a return to population growth after several years of challenges. This improvement is particularly meaningful considering the impacts of the 2016 Horse River Wildfire and the challenges faced during COVID-19. The total population has grown from 106,059 in 2021 to 107,740 in 2025. While the overall increase of 1.58% may appear modest, it represents the first growth in ten years and a meaningful shift from historical patterns.

As shown in Table 2.2, the permanent population rose by 11.16%, from 75,555 residents in 2021 to 83,988 in 2025. During the same period, the project accommodation population declined from 27,313 to 21,263 residents, a reduction of 22.15%.

The residential shadow population also decreased, falling from 2,358 to 1,358 residents. In contrast, the other shadow population comprising individuals living in hotels, motels, and other non-permanent dwellings at the time of enumeration increased from 833 in 2021 to 1,131 in 2025, a rise of 35.77%.

The census results show a stabilizing resident base. The permanent population increased to 83,988, while the shadow population decreased to 23,752, reflecting fewer temporary workers in the region. Both urban and rural communities experienced growth. The Urban Service Area expanded from 76,006 residents in 2021 to 83,467 in 2025, and rural communities grew from 2,740 to 3,010 residents, demonstrating strengthening across the Municipality as a whole.

TABLE 2.1 POPULATION AND DWELLING OVERVIEW, 2021 VS. 2025

	POPULATION			DWELLINGS		
	2021	2025	% CHANGE	2021	2025	% CHANGE
Urban Service Area	76,006	83,467	9.82%	30,424	30,907	1.59%
Rural Communities	2,740	3,010	9.85%	1,219	1,155	-5.25%
Project Accommodations	27,313	21,263	-22.15%	68	25	-63.24%
<b>Total</b>	<b>106,059</b>	<b>107,740</b>	<b>1.58%</b>	<b>31,643</b>	<b>32,062</b>	<b>1.32%</b>

TABLE 2.2 POPULATION REPRESENTATIONS, 2021 VS. 2025

POPULATION TYPE	2021	2025	% CHANGE
Permanent Population	75,555	83,988	11.16%
Project Accommodation Population	27,313	21,263	-22.15%
Residential Shadow Population	2,358	1,358	-42.41%
Other Shadow Population	833	1,131	35.77%
<b>Total</b>	<b>106,059</b>	<b>107,740</b>	<b>1.58%</b>

## 2.2 Population Distribution

The Municipality's population categories are distributed across the Urban Service Area (USA), rural communities, and Non-Residential Shadow, which consist of "Project Accommodation" and "Other Shadow". The USA continues to hold the majority share of the Municipality's total population, increasing to nearly 77% in 2025 from 71.6% in 2021.

As shown in Table 2.3, the urban population grew from 75,186 in 2021 to 82,393 in 2025, an increase of 7,207 residents (9.59%). Several neighbourhoods experienced notable growth. Downtown added 2,173 residents (20.43%), Timberlea increased by 1,948 residents (5.40%), and Thickwood grew by 1,383 residents (9.21%).

Other established neighbourhoods also showed steady increases, including a growth of 884 residents in Abasand (23.44%), 211 residents in Beacon Hill (11.69%), and 506 residents in Parsons Creek (13.04%). Gregoire grew by 72 residents (1.95%), while Waterways experienced a small decline of 7 residents (-2.56%). Saline Creek, still early in development, recorded an additional 37 residents in 2025, an increase of 462.50% (see Table 2.3 for neighbourhood-level details).

FIGURE 2.1 POPULATION DISTRIBUTION OVER THE PAST 10 YEARS

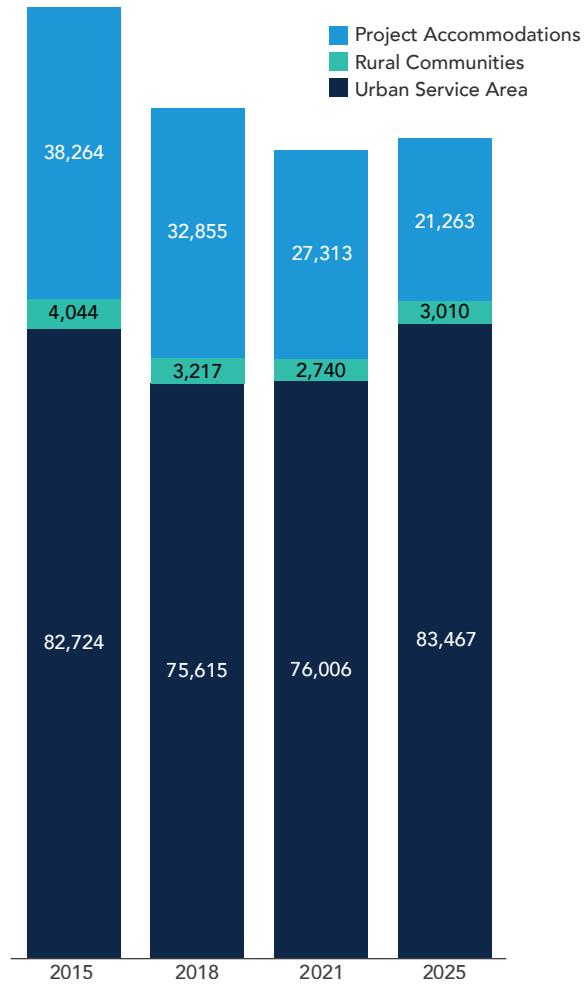


TABLE 2.3 POPULATION DISTRIBUTION BY NEIGHBOURHOOD, 2021 VS. 2025

NEIGHBOURHOOD / COMMUNITY		2021 POPULATION	2025 POPULATION	CHANGE	% CHANGE
Urban	Abasand	3,772	4,656	884	23.44%
	Beacon Hill	1,805	2016	211	11.69%
	Downtown	10,638	12,811	2,173	20.43%
	Gregoire	3,698	3,770	72	1.95%
	Parsons Creek	3,880	4,386	506	13.04%
	Saline Creek	8	45	37	462.50%
	Thickwood	15,022	16,405	1,383	9.21%
	Timberlea	36,090	38,038	1,948	5.40%
	Waterways	273	266	-7	-2.56%
Urban Subtotal	Urban Service Area	75,186	82,393	7,207	9.59%
Rural	Anzac	555	659	104	18.70%
	Conklin	178	229	51	28.65%
	Draper	132	137	5	3.79%
	Fort Chipewyan	847	641	-206	-24.32%
	Fort Fitzgerald	6	13	7	116.67%
	Fort McKay	57	60	3	5.26%
	Gregoire Lake Estates	217	199	-18	-8.29%
	Janvier	77	229	152	197.40%
	Saprae Creek Estates	658	786	128	19.45%
Rural Subtotal	Rural Communities	2,727	2,953	226	8.29%
Non-Residential Shadow Population	Project Accommodation	27,313	21,263	-6,050	-22.15%
	Other Shadow	833	1131	298	35.77%
Total		106,059	107,740	+1,681	+1.58%

Rural communities collectively increased from 2,727 residents in 2021 to 2,953 in 2025, representing an increase of 8.29%. The largest increases occurred in Janvier (152), Saprae Creek Estates (128), Anzac (104), and Conklin (98). More moderate changes were recorded in other communities, while Fort Chipewyan (-196) and Gregoire Lake Estates (-18) saw population declines.

## 2.3 Population Mobility

Census 2025 offers a fresh look at how people move into and within the Municipality, continuing the story explored in previous census years. As in earlier reports, the data highlights a community shaped by both long-time residents and those who have chosen Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo as their new home.

Among respondents who relocated from somewhere else, just over half (51.47%) were from somewhere else within Alberta (see Figure 2.2). This continues the long-standing pattern of strong movement from within the province, encompassing relocations from both nearby communities and major centers such as Edmonton and Calgary.

Residents also continue to arrive from across the country. Ontario (13.36%), Newfoundland and Labrador (10.27%), and British Columbia (9.63%) remain the most common origins outside Alberta, reflecting many of the same migration connections noted in earlier census cycles. Smaller but steady numbers of newcomers reported arriving from Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, Manitoba, Quebec, and Prince Edward Island, with only a small share coming from Canada's northern territories.

While the origins of newcomers are diverse, the overall picture echoes past findings. Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo continues to attract people from across Canada, adding new perspectives and experiences to our community (see Figure 2.3). This mix of stability and movement shapes the Municipality's evolving identity, supporting its role as a place where people build careers, families, and long-term roots.

The driving motive for relocating is to join family members (see Table 2.3). Housing needs are also significant, with many seeking more suitable or improved accommodation. Employment plays an important role as well, whether starting a new job or looking for opportunities.

Other factors, such as education, access to services, or lifestyle choices, are less frequently mentioned, suggesting that social and practical considerations remain the primary drivers of mobility.

FIGURE 2.3 LENGTH OF RESIDENCY IN THE REGION

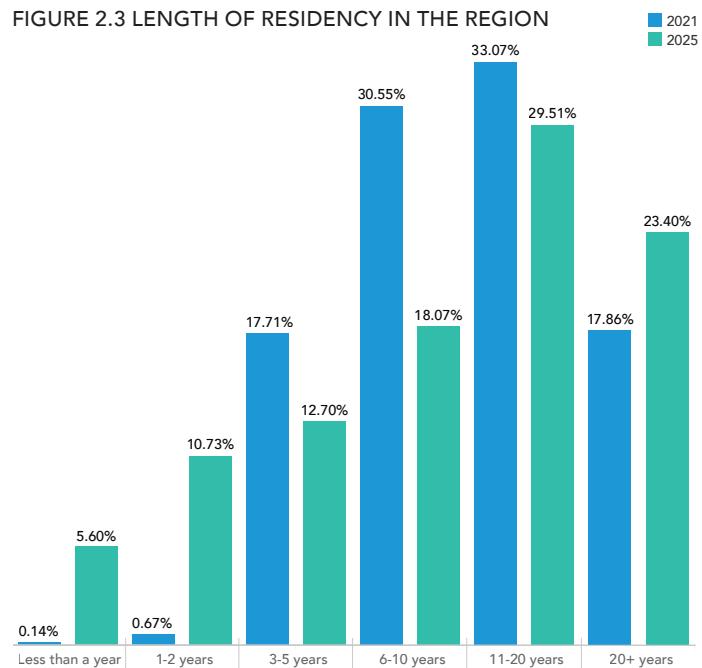


FIGURE 2.2 NEWCOMERS – PREVIOUS PROVINCE

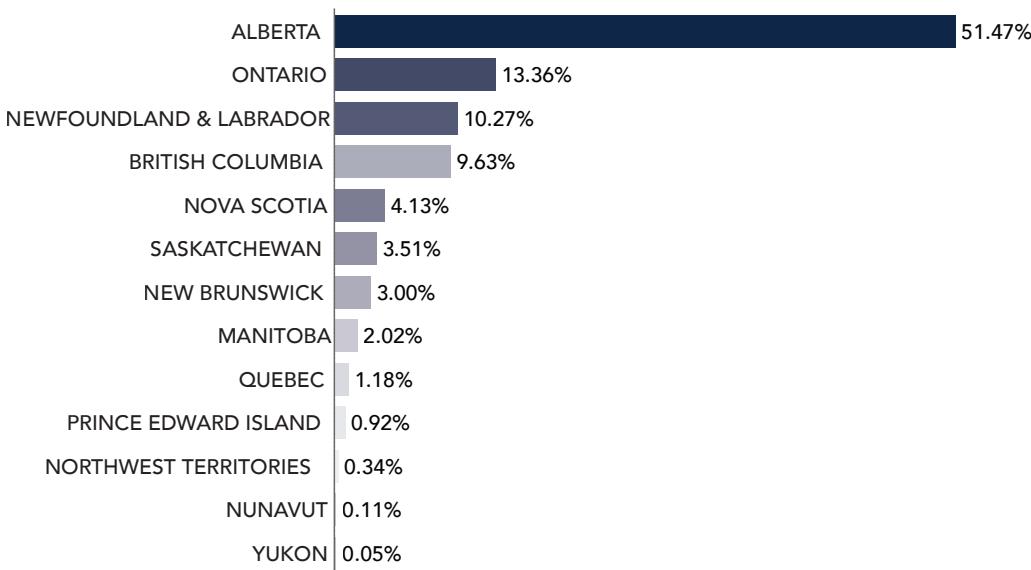


TABLE 2.3 REASON FOR MOBILITY

CATEGORY	SPECIFIC REASON	% OF RESPONDENTS
Social	Join family	37.76%
Housing	Find suitable/improved housing	27.63%
Employment	Start employment	18.73%
	Seek employment	8.66%
Education	Attend school	5.50%
Other Services	Access services and supports	1.19%
Lifestyle & Recreation	Access recreational facilities	0.41%
	Access shopping opportunities	0.13%

## 2.4 Age and Gender Distribution

Census 2025 shows that the Municipality continues to have a predominantly young population, with most people falling within the working-age adult group. Adults aged 25–64 make up the largest share at just over 60%, driven by strong representation in the 35–44 age range, which remains the region's largest demographic segment. Children aged 0–14 account for

22% of the population, reflecting the stable presence of young families. Youth aged 15–24 represent 12.1%, maintaining a solid base of older adolescents and young adults. Seniors aged 65 and over make up 5.5% of the population, indicating a relatively small but gradually growing older population.



TABLE 2.4 AGE DISTRIBUTION, 2025

AGE CATEGORY	AGE GROUP	% OF TOTAL POPULATION		
		2025	2021	2018
Children (0-14 years)	0–1 year	1.86%	2.44%	2.85%
	2–4 years	4.32%	5.13%	12.44%
	5–9 years	8.15%	8.26	
	10–14 years	7.68%	7.03%	5.50%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>22.01%</b>	<b>22.86%</b>	<b>20.79%</b>
Youth (15–24 years)	15–17 years	4.30%	3.41%	2.92%
	18–19 years	2.17%	2.08%	2.01%
	20–24 years	5.60%	5.03%	5.57%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12.06%</b>	<b>10.52%</b>	<b>10.50%</b>
Adults (25–64 years)	25–29 years	6.61%	6.48%	9.24%
	30–34 years	8.24%	10.00%	12.32%
	35–39 years	10.62%	11.20%	10.95%
	40–44 years	10.75%	9.68%	9.00%
	45–49 years	7.96%	7.64%	7.22%
	50–54 years	6.55%	6.85%	7.26%
	55–59 years	5.42%	5.90%	6.06%
	60–64 years	4.33%	4.59%	3.77%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>60.48%</b>	<b>62.34%</b>	<b>65.82%</b>
Seniors (65 and over)	65–69 years	2.87%	2.31%	1.51%
	70–74 years	1.46%	1.08%	0.77%
	75 years and over	1.12%	0.90%	0.61%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>5.45%</b>	<b>4.29%</b>	<b>2.89%</b>

In terms of gender, the Municipality continues to show a slight male majority, with 53.09% identifying as male and 46.76% as female. Census 2025 also reflects ongoing efforts to represent gender diversity more clearly.

This is the first census to collect information beyond the traditional gender categories, demonstrating continued progress toward inclusive and respectful data collection (see Table 2.5).

Overall, the 2025 age and gender profile highlights a youthful, working-age–driven population with a modest but important presence of children, youth, and seniors. It also underscores the Municipality’s commitment to ensuring that census data accurately reflects the full diversity of residents.

TABLE 2.5 GENDER COMPOSITION, 2021 VS. 2025

GENDER IDENTITY	2021	2025
Male	52.6%	53.09%
Female	47.4%	46.76%
Gender diverse	--	0.06%
	--	0.04%
Trans man	--	0.03%
Trans woman	--	0.03%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

## 2.5 Disability and Inclusive Community Planning

Census 2025 highlights the importance of recognizing and supporting residents living with disabilities as an essential part of building a healthy, inclusive community. Nearly 4,000 residents reported living with one or more disabilities, reflecting a wide range of physical, sensory, cognitive, and mental health experiences.

As in previous census cycles, collecting this information helps the Municipality better understand the diverse challenges residents may face and supports thoughtful, evidence-based planning. The most reported disabilities include neurodivergent (cognitive disabilities), chronic health conditions, physical disabilities, and mental health conditions, with many people reporting more than one type. This shows the importance of flexible, inclusive approaches to service delivery that recognize disability as complex and varied.

This information plays a critical role in shaping how the Municipality plans and delivers services. From accessible transportation and barrier-free buildings to inclusive recreation, housing design, and emergency planning, understanding the needs of residents with disabilities helps ensure that public spaces and programs work for everyone. It also supports collaboration with community organizations, healthcare providers, and advocacy groups.

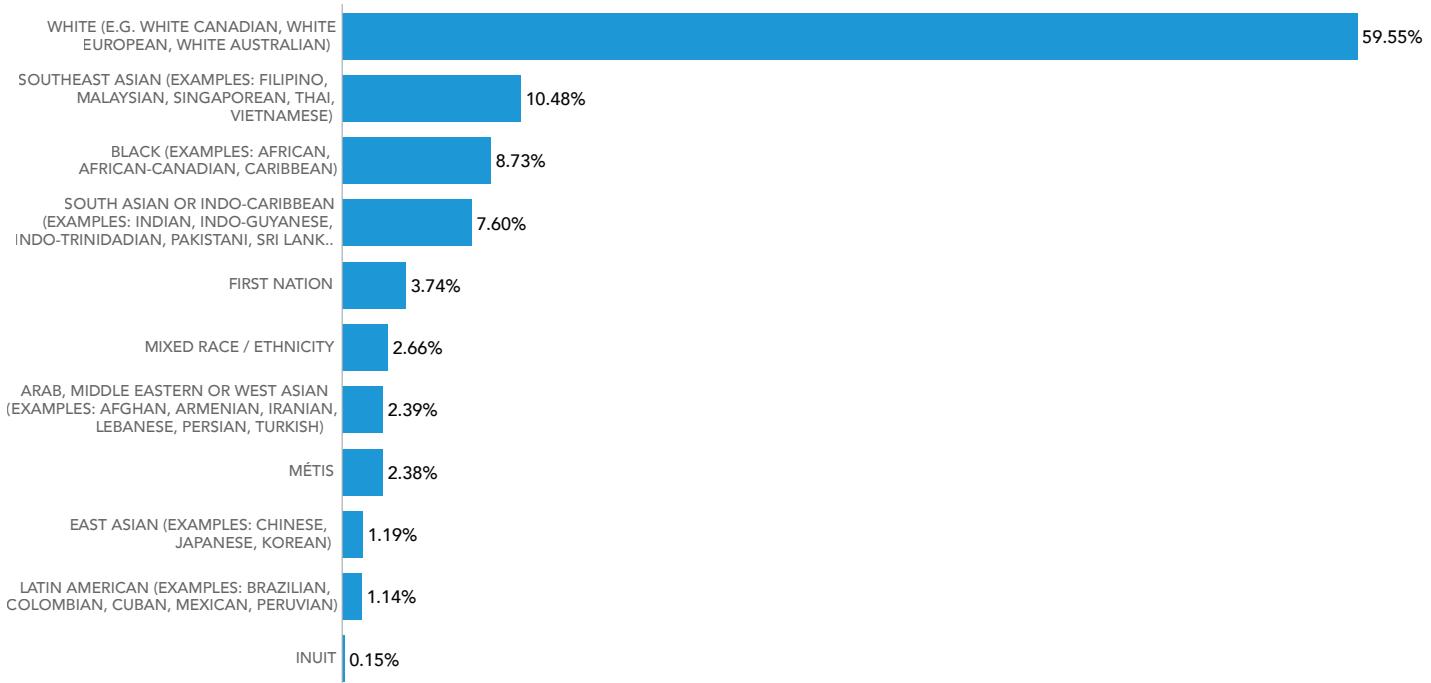
Overall, the 2025 Census reinforces the Municipality's commitment to inclusive community planning that recognizes and integrates the needs of people of all abilities into long-term decision-making.



## 2.6 Ethnicity

The Municipality continues to be culturally diverse, with residents identifying with a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Census 2025 asked residents to provide information on the ethnic group they primarily identify with, and the results highlight the ongoing richness and diversity of the region (see Figure 2.4). Just under 60% of people identify as White or Caucasian, including those with Canadian or European roots, a small decline from previous censuses (60.26%). Southeast Asian residents make up the second-largest group at 10.48%, while Black and Caribbean residents now represent 8.73%, showing noticeable growth compared to previous censuses, followed by South Asian and Indo-Caribbean at 7.60%, which is consistent with past trends. Indigenous Peoples remain an essential part of the region's identity, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, which account for just over 6% of the population, remaining consistent from census 2021.

FIGURE 2.4 ETHNIC COMPOSITION, 2025



## 2.7 Family Ties

Census 2025 shows that the Municipality is a place where people truly put down roots. Most households (64.2%) are nuclear families, made up of couples with or without children. This highlights that many residents are raising families, establishing homes, and contributing to a stable and connected community. A significant portion of households (30.5%) are individual or shared households, where people live alone or with non-relatives such as roommates. Smaller but meaningful are extended family households (5.3%), which include cousins, grandparents, or other relatives living together. These households show the enduring importance of multigenerational ties. Wood Buffalo is where people are not simply passing through, but building lives, maintaining strong connections, and creating a community that they call home.



TABLE 2.6 HOUSEHOLD FAMILY STRUCTURE, 2025

FAMILY STRUCTURE	% HOUSEHOLDS	DESCRIPTION
Nuclear Family	64.21%	Single parent, or couples with or without children.
Non-Family	30.53%	Individuals living alone or with non-relatives (e.g., roommates).
Extended Family	5.26%	Multi-generational or additional relatives living together.
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	

## 2.8 Shadow Population

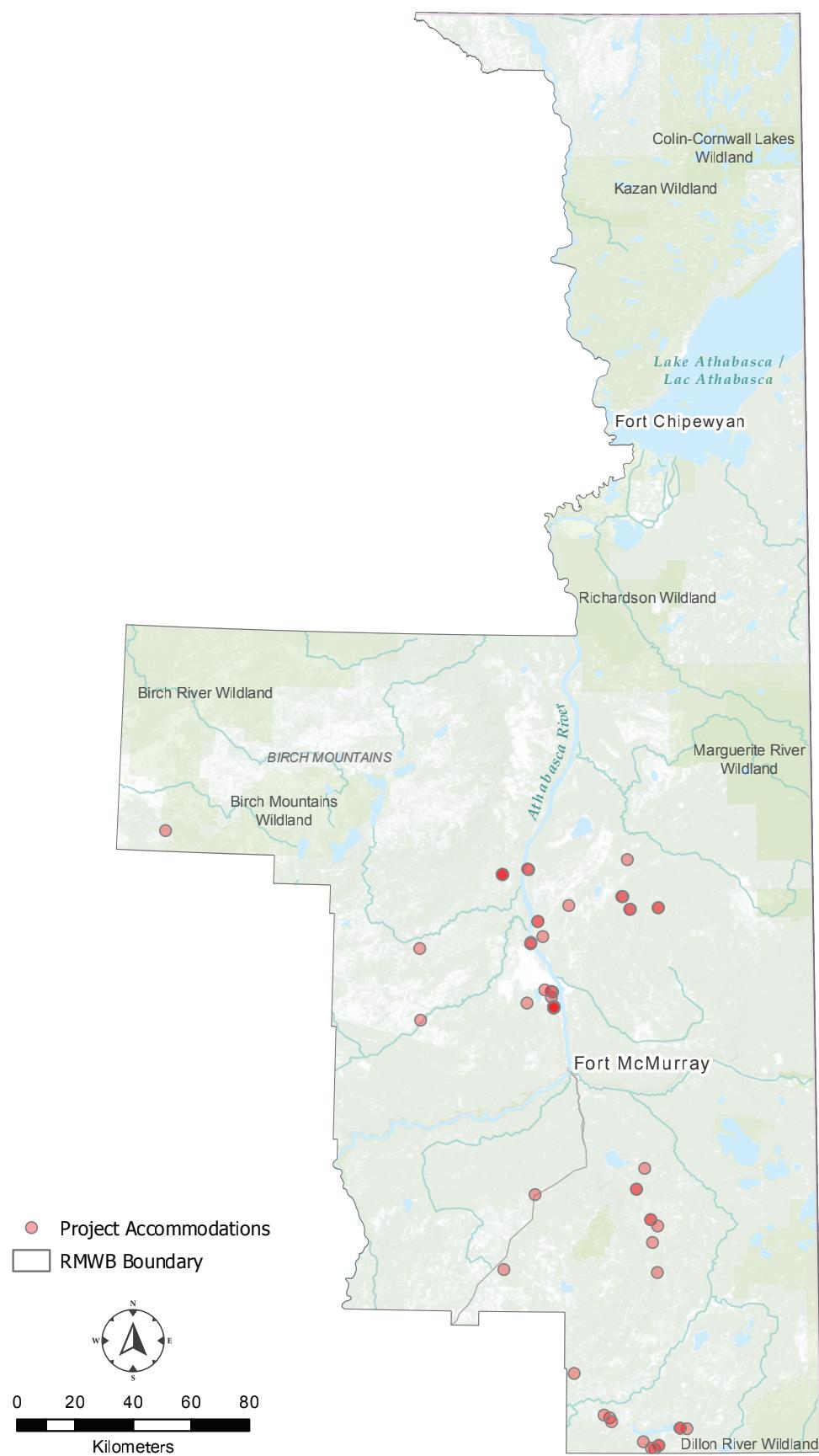
The shadow population in the Municipality is divided into two main components, residential shadow population and non-residential shadow population. The residential shadow population includes temporary residents living in residential dwellings but who do not reside in the Municipality permanently. The non-residential shadow population includes residents living in accommodations such as hotels, motels, campgrounds, and project accommodations (work camps), located across the urban, rural communities, and rural areas of the Municipality.

The total shadow population recorded in 2025 is 23,752, representing a 22.1% decrease from the 30,504 shadow residents counted in 2021. This decline in project accommodation use can be attributed to regional initiatives aimed at encouraging the localization of the labour force.

Through policies, industrial collaborations, and long-term planning that encourages a locally based workforce, these efforts are helping shift more employment activity into residential areas rather than work camps. The decrease in project accommodation population reflects the success of these initiatives.

Table 3.1 shows the distribution of the shadow population in the Municipality. The distribution pattern is similar to past trends. In 2025, project accommodation accounted for the majority (89.52%) of the shadow population, while residential shadow residents accounted for 5.72%, and other temporary accommodations accounted for 4.76% of the total shadow population. Map 1 illustrates the geographic distribution of project accommodations in the Municipality.

MAP 1 PROJECT ACCOMMODATION LOCATIONS



## 2.9 Pet Ownership

Census 2025 collected information on household pets for the first time, helping the Municipality better understand how pets fit into daily life across the region. This information supports planning for veterinary services, emergency preparedness, and pet-friendly spaces.

In total, 18,395 pets were reported across the Municipality. Dogs (11,138) and cats (5,956) make up most of the pet population, with households also reporting fish, birds, reptiles, rodents, and other species of unique pets such as aardvark and sugar gliders (see Table 2.7).

Pet ownership is common in both urban and rural communities. Larger neighbourhoods such as Timberlea and Thickwood reported the highest numbers, while smaller areas had numbers consistent with their population size. Overall, the results show that pets are an important part of many households in Wood Buffalo and will help guide future planning and community services.

TABLE 2.7 WHERE OUR PETS LIVE: DISTRIBUTION BY TYPE ACROSS THE COMMUNITY

AREA NAME	AMPHIBIAN	BIRD	CAT	DOG	FISH	HORSE	OTHER	REPTILE	RODENT	TOTAL
Abasand		33	413	689	35		1	16	19	1,206
Anzac		7	76	183	1	1	4		2	274
Beacon Hill	2	14	139	408	65			5	7	640
Conklin			21	68				1		90
Downtown	2	53	511	538	27		1	10	18	1,160
Draper		2	17	54		1			2	76
Fort Chipewyan		1	16	99				1	1	118
Fort Fitzgerald			2	32						34
Fort McKay			4	14	1			1		20
Gregoire		37	313	627	4			5	13	999
Gregoire Lake Estates		1	14	55	1			1	1	73
Janvier			5	62						67
Parsons Creek		10	218	459	6			11	10	714
Saline Creek			3	8						11
Saprae Creek Estates	2	34	51	211	8	9	8	1	3	327
Thickwood	5	58	1,439	2,601	113	4	11	45	51	4,327
Timberlea	11	142	2,674	4,971	185	3	22	63	86	8,157
Waterways			40	59			2	1		102
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>5,956</b>	<b>11,138</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>18,395</b>

# 3. HOUSING OVERVIEW

The following sections present a summary of key dwelling statistics from Census 2025. Overall, the total number of private dwellings increased slightly since 2021, rising from 31,643 to 32,062 (see Table 3.1).

## 3.1 Dwelling Count and Occupancy

As shown in Table 3.1, the composition of dwellings across the Municipality has shifted in several areas since 2021. The number of occupied private dwellings remained generally stable, decreasing by just 0.53%, from 28,499 in 2021 to 28,347 in 2025. This slight change suggests a consistent level of long-term residential use across both the Urban Service Area (USA) and rural communities.

The number of vacant dwellings increased from 918 to 1,890, a 105.88% rise. Most of this increase occurred within the urban communities, where vacancies grew from 779 in 2021 to 1,800 in 2025. Rural communities, in contrast, saw a reduction in vacant units over the same period. The non-contact dwelling category also saw a notable increase. In 2021, 463 dwellings were recorded as non-contact compared to 1,825 in 2025.

TABLE 3.1 OCCUPIED DWELLINGS, 2021 VS. 2025

PRIVATE DWELLINGS	URBAN COMMUNITIES		RURAL COMMUNITIES		TOTAL		TOTAL CHANGES
	2021	2025	2021	2025	2021	2025	
Occupied	27,499	27,393	1,000	1,000	28,499	28,347	-0.53%
Non-Contact	430	1,748	33	77	463	1,825	294.17%
Vacant Dwelling	779	1,800	139	90	918	1,890	105.88%
Not Enumerated	1,716	-	47	-	1,763	-	-
<b>Total Dwellings</b>	<b>30,424</b>	<b>30,941</b>	<b>1,219</b>	<b>1,168</b>	<b>31,643</b>	<b>32,062</b>	<b>1.32%</b>

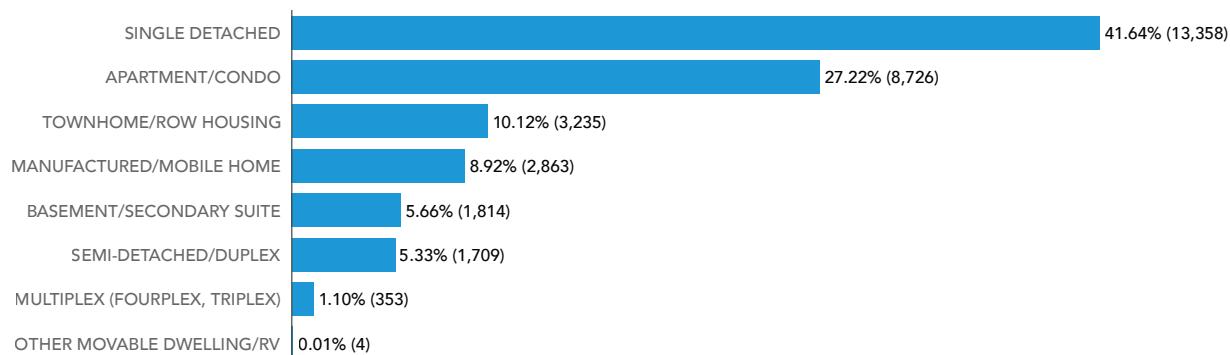
## 3.2 Dwelling Type

Figure 3.2 presents the distribution of dwelling types across the Municipality. Single-detached homes continue to be the most common form of housing, making up 41.66% of all dwellings. Apartments and condominiums form the second-largest category, representing 27.22% of the total housing stock. Together, these two dwelling types account for nearly 69% of all private dwellings in the Municipality.

Townhomes and row housing represent 10.09% of dwellings, followed by manufactured/mobile homes at 8.93%, both remaining important housing options in several neighbourhoods and rural communities. Secondary suites and duplex/semi-detached units account for 5.66% and 5.33% respectively, reflecting ongoing demand for flexible and multi-unit housing.



FIGURE 3.1 DWELLING TYPE VOLUME IN THE MUNICIPALITY, 2025



### 3.3 Population by Dwelling Type

Table 3.3 illustrates the share of the total population living in different types of dwelling. In Census 2025, 50.87% of residents live in single detached dwellings, continuing their role as the region's predominant form of housing. Apartment and condominium units represent the second-largest category, home to 19.47% of residents. The remaining population lives in a townhouse (10.24%), manufactured home (8.73%), semi-detached/duplex (6.25%), secondary/basement suite (2.93%), multiplex (1%), collective dwelling (0.50%), or other movable dwelling type (less than 1%).

As in previous census cycles, a significant portion of the rural population resides in single detached homes. In 2025, 76% of rural community residents live in single detached dwellings. This is followed by manufactured homes (11%) and multiplex or apartment-style housing in much smaller proportions. Other dwelling types—including duplexes, townhomes, basement suites, and collective dwellings—each represent less than 4% of the rural population.

TABLE 3.2 POPULATION BY DWELLING TYPE, 2025

	APT	BSMT	COL	MF	MUP	OTH	DUP	SF	TWN	Total
Rural Communities	99	25	44	331	89	9	47	2,252	57	2,953
	3.35%	0.85%	1.49%	11.21%	3.01%	0.30%	1.59%	76.26%	1.93%	100%
Urban Service Area	16,519	2,479	384	7,118	761	-	5,283	41,163	8,686	82,393
	20.05%	3.01%	0.47%	8.64%	0.92%	-	6.41%	49.96%	10.54%	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,618</b>	<b>2,504</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>7,449</b>	<b>850</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5,330</b>	<b>43,415</b>	<b>8,743</b>	<b>85,346</b>
	<b>19.47%</b>	<b>2.93%</b>	<b>0.50%</b>	<b>8.73%</b>	<b>1.00%</b>	<b>0.01%</b>	<b>6.25%</b>	<b>50.87%</b>	<b>10.24%</b>	<b>100%</b>

## LEGEND: TABLE 3.2

APT – Apartment / Condo

MF – Manufactured / Mobile Home

MUP – Multiplex (fourplex, triplex)

OTH – Other

MR – Other Movable Dwelling / RV

BSMT – Basement / Secondary Suite

DUP – Semi-detached / Duplex

SF – Single-detached

TWN – Town / Row Housing

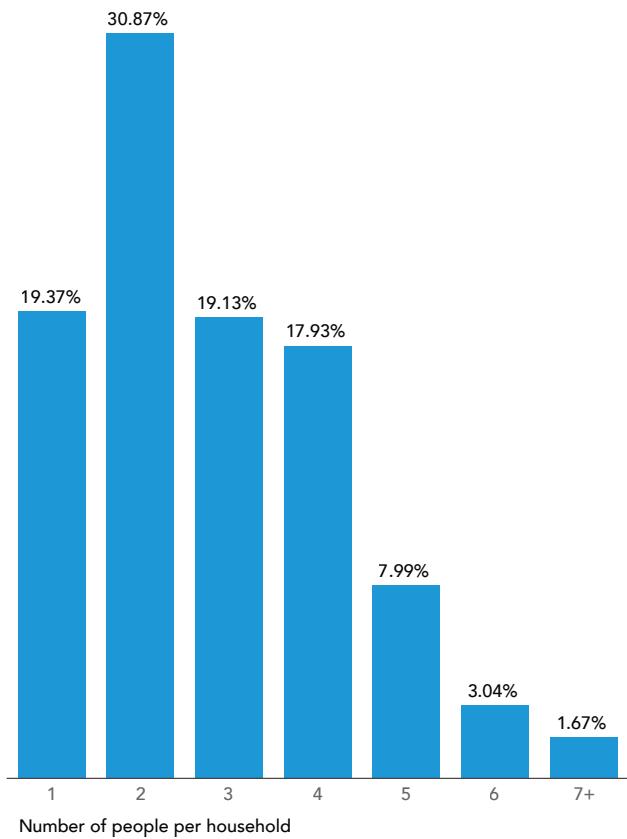


### 3.4 Household Size

Figure 3.2 highlights the number of residents living in households across the Municipality, broken down by household size. Census 2025 shows that the largest share of residents lives in two-person households, representing 30.87% of the population. This remains consistent with previous census findings, where two-person households continued to be the most common household size in the Municipality.

The next largest categories are one-person households (19.37%) and three-person households (19.13%), with less than 1% separating the two. Four-person households also make up a notable share of the community, while larger households of five or more people become increasingly less common. Overall, the results show that smaller households remain the typical living arrangement within the Municipality.

FIGURE 3.2 HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION, 2025



### 3.5 Home Ownership

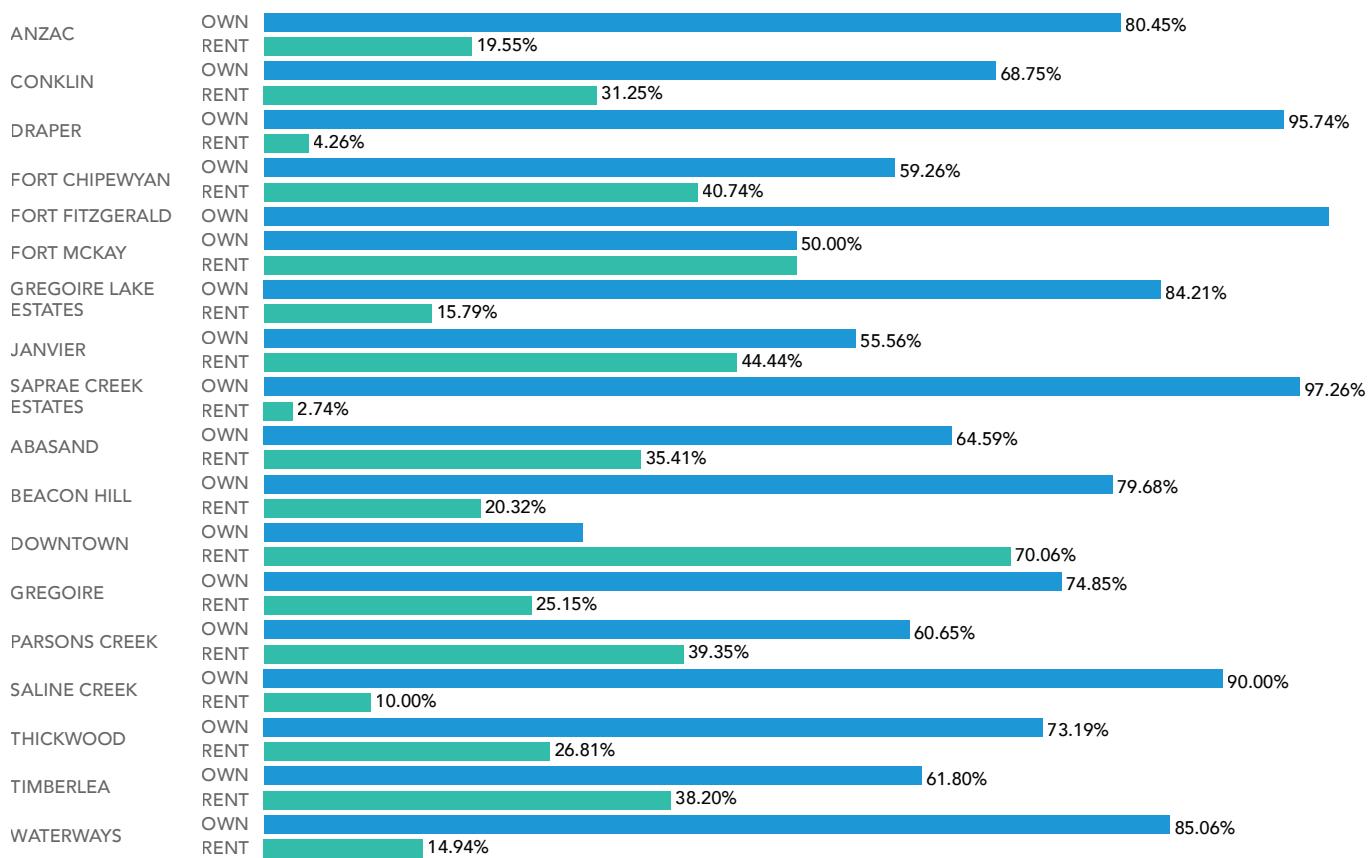
Homeownership across the Municipality shows considerable variation between neighbourhoods and rural communities. Overall, 61.05% of occupied dwellings are owner-occupied, which is slightly lower than the national average of 65.5%, while 38.95% are rented. Several areas report very high ownership levels, including Saprae Creek Estates, Draper, Saline Creek, and Waterways, all of which exceed 85% ownership. Neighbourhoods such as Beacon Hill, Gregoire, Thickwood, and Abasand also maintain strong ownership rates, while communities like Gregoire Lake Estates, Anzac, and Conklin continue to be predominantly owner-occupied. In contrast, some rural areas show more mixed patterns, for example, Fort McKay, where ownership and rental are evenly split.

Rental housing is more prominent in neighbourhoods closer to the urban core. Downtown has the lowest ownership rate at 29.94%, reflecting the concentration of apartment-style dwellings and rental-oriented units. Parsons Creek and Timberlea also show more balanced tenure patterns, with ownership rates near 60%.





FIGURE 3.3 DWELLING OWNERSHIP DISTRIBUTION



## 4. CONCLUSION

Census 2025 marks a notable turning point for the Municipality, recording its first population growth in a decade. After consistent declines in previous census years, the population has grown to 107,740 residents, reflecting renewed stability and modest growth across communities. This year's census also continues to strengthen data quality through enhanced enumeration methods and improved identification of dwelling types and household structures.

One of the clearest stories is how deeply connected residents are to the region. The census results show that household composition remains strongly centered around families. Most households (64.21%) are made up of couples, indicating that many residents continue to raise families and build their lives in the Municipality.

The age profile reinforces this picture: children aged 0–14 make up 22% of the population, while youth aged 15–24 represent 12.1%, ensuring a strong base of young families and emerging adults. Adults aged 25–64 make up over 60% of residents, with the largest share in the 35–44 age group. Seniors continue to be a smaller but growing segment at 5.5%.

A slight male majority remains (53.09% male, 46.76% female), and for the first time, the Census also collected information beyond traditional gender categories, reflecting our community's commitment to inclusivity and representation.

Population mobility remains an important part of the Municipality's story. Among newcomers, just over half relocated from within Alberta, with many coming from Edmonton (34.93%) and Calgary (21.66%). Others arrived from provinces such as Ontario, Newfoundland and Labrador, and British Columbia. The most common reason for relocating continues to be reuniting with family members, highlighting Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo as a place where people are choosing to establish long-term roots.

For the first time, information on pet ownership was collected, providing a more complete picture of daily life in Wood Buffalo. Residents reported a total of 18,395 pets, with dogs and cats making up the majority.

Both urban and rural areas reported strong levels of pet ownership, with larger neighbourhoods such as Timberlea and Thickwood reporting the highest numbers. This information will help guide planning for community amenities and services that support both pets and their owners.

Housing patterns remain similar to previous census years. Single-detached homes continue to be the most common type of dwelling, followed by apartments and townhomes. Improvements in dwelling type identification have contributed to more accurate reporting and a clearer understanding of housing diversity across the region. Homeownership remains a defining feature of many neighbourhoods, with 61.05% of households owning their homes. Areas such as Saprae Creek Estates, Draper, Gregoire Lake Estates, and Beacon Hill continue to show strong ownership levels, while Downtown and select urban areas reflect the region's more active rental market.

Household size patterns also remain consistent with previous years. Two-person households continue to be the most common, followed by one-person and three-person households, which remain nearly equal in proportion. Larger households, including those with four or more residents, make up a smaller yet meaningful part of the population and contribute to the diversity of family and living arrangements within the Municipality.

Census 2025 provides a clear picture of the Municipality showing early signs of renewed growth, strengthened by family-oriented households and a diverse housing landscape. The combination of improved data quality, detailed reporting, and broad community participation ensures that the census continues to serve as a reliable foundation for planning, service delivery, and long-term decision-making. The Municipality extends its appreciation to all residents and partners who helped make the 2025 municipal census a success.

# 5. GLOSSARY

## Collective Dwellings

A collective dwelling is a dwelling identified as being of a communal, institutional or commercial nature. It may be defined by a sign or by speaking with the person in charge, or a resident. Examples include lodging/rooming houses, hotels, motels, nursing homes, hospitals, staff residences, communal quarters of military camps, work camps, jails, missions, and group homes.

## Dwelling

General term used to describe a set of living quarters in which a person or a group of people resides or could reside. This includes all types of dwelling categories (apartment/multiple dwelling, manufactured home, duplex, single-family, town house, or other) used for data collection.

## Dwelling Unit

This is a place of residence occupied by one or more persons with a "private entrance." There can be many dwelling units within a structure.

## Household

Usually consists of a person or a group of people, related or unrelated, who live together in the same homestead/compound, but not necessarily in the same dwelling unit. They have common catering arrangements and are answerable to the same household head. It is important to remember that members of a household do not need to be related, either by blood or marriage.

## Municipality

Refers to the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo.

## Non-Contacted Dwelling

A "non-contacted dwelling" is a dwelling where a census worker has not been able to contact a member of the household, and the census worker believes the dwelling was occupied by usual residents on census enumeration day (April 1, 2025). Reasons why contact was not made include "not at home", "incapacity", and "refusal to come to the door on an enumerator visit to the household". This count does not include refusals after contact has been made with a member of the dwelling.

## Permanent Resident

A person whose primary place of residence (address) is within the Municipality. This is the address where they live and sleep, and the place to which they intend to return when temporarily away.

## Population Estimation

The extrapolation tool used information on typical household sizes for each type of dwelling, along with the enumeration method, to estimate the population in households that could not be directly contacted.

## Population Mobility

The process of residents moving or not moving locally, provincially, or globally within a community, as seen through previous census enumeration.

## Private Dwellings

These are non-commercial residential buildings such as single detached buildings, apartment buildings, or townhouses and used solely for the purpose of housing.

## Rural Area

These are locations outside the boundaries of urban or rural communities.

## Rural Communities

Refers to the rural communities of Anzac, Conklin, Draper, Fort Chipewyan, Fort Fitzgerald, Fort McKay, Gregoire Lake Estates, Janvier and Saprae Creek Estates, all of which are located within the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo.

## Shadow Population

The shadow population refers to temporary residents who are employed by an industrial or commercial establishment in the Municipality for a minimum of 120 hours (about 15 days) of the municipal census year. The Municipality has categorized its shadow population into three groups:

- Residential Shadow are residents whose primary address is outside the Municipality and reside in a private dwelling in urban or rural communities.
- Project Accommodation is for people living in workcamps.
- Other Shadow are temporary residents staying in commercial accommodations such hotels or motels.

## Urban Service Area (USA)

Fort McMurray is an Urban Service Area in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. Formerly a city, Fort McMurray became an Urban Service Area when it amalgamated with Improvement District No. 143 on April 1, 1995, to create the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. The Fort McMurray Urban Service Area should be recognized as equivalent to a city by the Government of Alberta for the purpose of program delivery and grant eligibility.



REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY  
OF **WOOD BUFFALO**