

October 2021

# Sonder House Modular Supportive Housing Resident Outcomes



**BC HOUSING**

**RESEARCH CENTRE**



## **BC HOUSING**

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### **RESEARCH CENTRE**

BC Housing’s Research Centre works in collaboration with housing sector partners to foster excellence in residential construction and find innovative solutions for affordable housing in British Columbia. Sharing leading-edge research and advances in building science and new technologies encourages best practices.

The Research Centre identifies and bridges research gaps to address homelessness, housing affordability, social housing challenges and the needs of distinct populations. Mobilizing knowledge and research expertise helps improve the quality of housing and leads to innovation and adoption of new construction techniques, Building Code changes, and enhanced education and training programs.

Learn more about the Research Centre at [www.bchousing.org](http://www.bchousing.org). Sign up to receive the latest news and updates at [www.bchousing.org/subscribe](http://www.bchousing.org/subscribe).

## Acknowledgements

BC Housing gratefully acknowledges ‘Ksan House Society for sharing their insights on Sonder House, a modular housing development in Terrace, and for supporting this study. We would like to sincerely thank all the residents who shared their perspectives through the resident survey as part of this study.



This snapshot shows outcomes for residents of Sonder House, a modular supportive housing development in Terrace, B.C., sixteen months after the building opened.

Please refer to page 12, Research Methodology for information about data sources.





# SONDER HOUSE



Housing provider, 'Ksan House Society operates Sonder House, providing on-site support coverage twenty-four hours every day of the week and helping residents to:

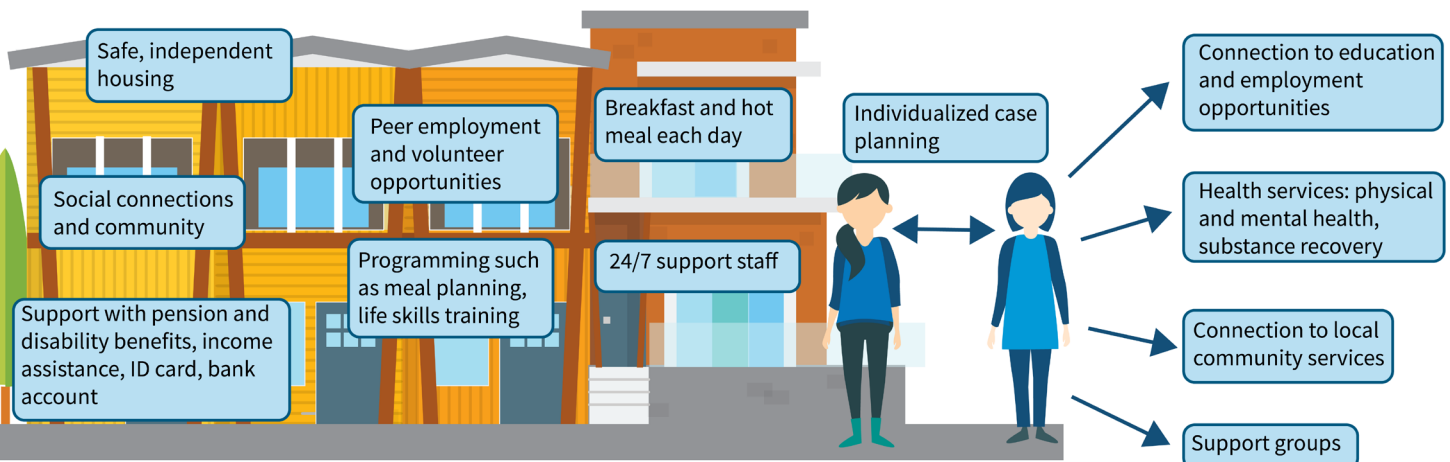
- › Maintain their homes
- › Enhance their life skills, including learning to cook
- › Connect with education, employment, health, and independent housing
- › Access community information, social and recreational programs
- › Participate in case planning and needs assessments
- › Access income assistance, pension benefits, and disability benefits
- › Apply for BC Identification
- › Open a bank account
- › Access food

## Modular units funded under Rapid Response to Homelessness program deliver results

Sonder House opened in June 2019 and is funded under the Rapid Response to Homelessness program. The building provides 52 units of housing for individuals experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness in Terrace, B.C.

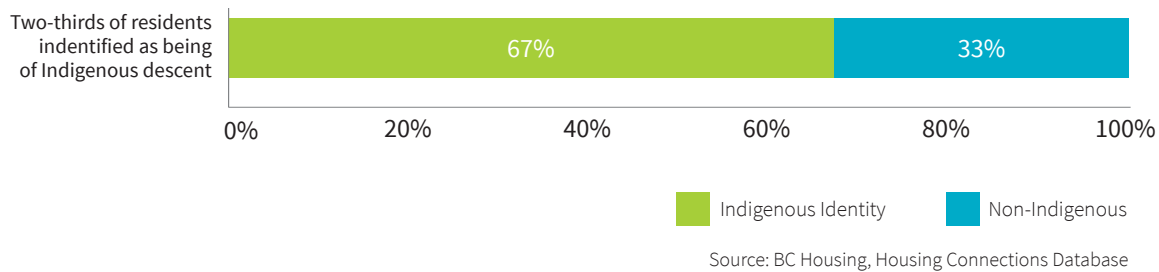
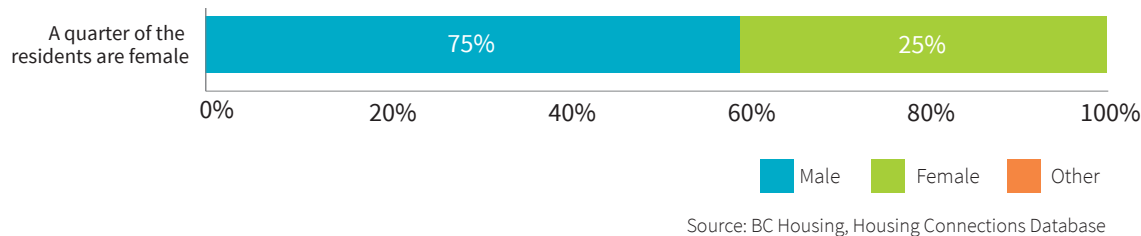
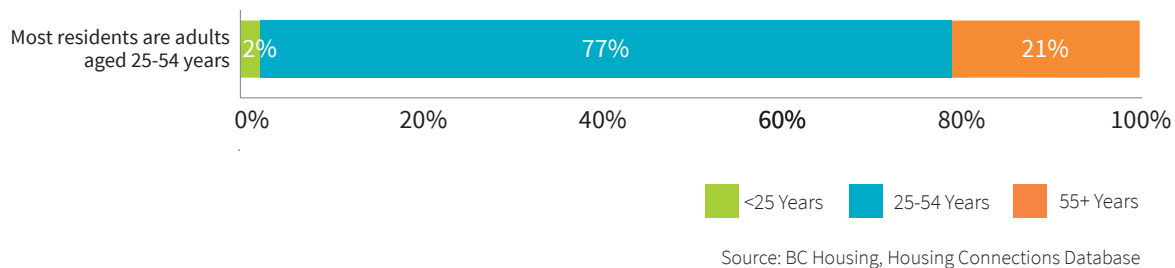
The Government of British Columbia announced the Rapid Response to Homelessness program in 2017 as an immediate response to homelessness across the province. The B.C. Government committed \$291 million over two years to build 2,000 modular supportive housing units for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. In addition, \$170 million was committed over three years to provide staffing and support services for residents.

Each self-contained studio apartment is 320 square feet and includes a 3-piece bathroom, 2-burner stovetop and a full-height fridge. Each building includes 2,000 square feet of amenity space with an oven for social gatherings and meals. Six units on the first floor of the building are wheelchair accessible.

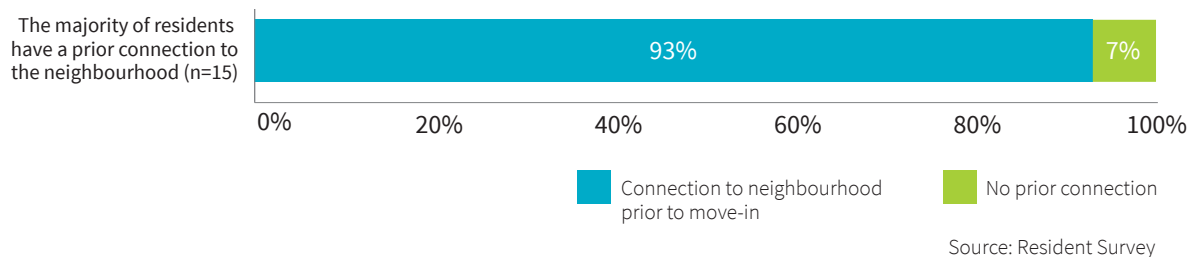


## Resident Profile

Sonder House provides housing for a mixed community of residents. This includes residents with different genders, ethnicities, and ages. Residents also have a mix of vulnerabilities and support needs. The majority of residents are adults aged 25-54 years.



Ninety-three per cent of survey respondents indicated that they had a prior connection to the neighbourhood. These connections include living in the neighbourhood either immediately prior to moving to Sonder House or in the past, having friends or relatives in the neighbourhood, and using services located in the neighbourhood.

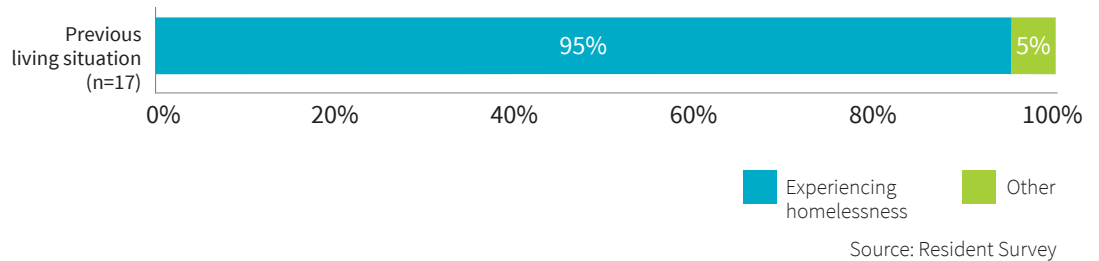




## Experience of Homelessness

### OUTCOME: DECREASED

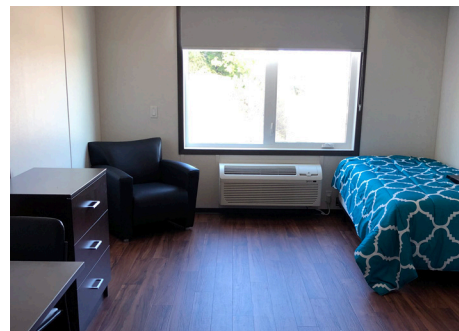
Almost all residents who responded to the survey were experiencing homelessness immediately prior to moving into Sonder House. Staff reported that the majority of residents had previously been staying in emergency shelters or living outside.



## Housing Stability

### OUTCOME: INCREASED

Eighty-five per cent of the first residents at Sonder House remained housed there six months after moving into their homes. Most of the residents who moved out before six months were asked to leave for behavioral issues.



## Quality of Life for Residents

### OUTCOME: **IMPROVED**

\*Due to a data entry error, outcome data is not available for all indicators at Sonder House. Staff interview data has been used for indicators where residents survey data is not available.

### **Overall Well-being**

Staff reported that the majority of residents like the safety, security and sense of community at Sonder House.

*“It’s an amazing program, an amazing province-wide initiative, and it’s such a help to our community.”*

– Sonder House staff member

### **Employment, Income, and Education**

Staff reported that some residents are now able to think about employment, and that a few residents have found jobs or are crafting their resumes. One resident has reached out regarding exploring educational opportunities.

### **Living Skills**

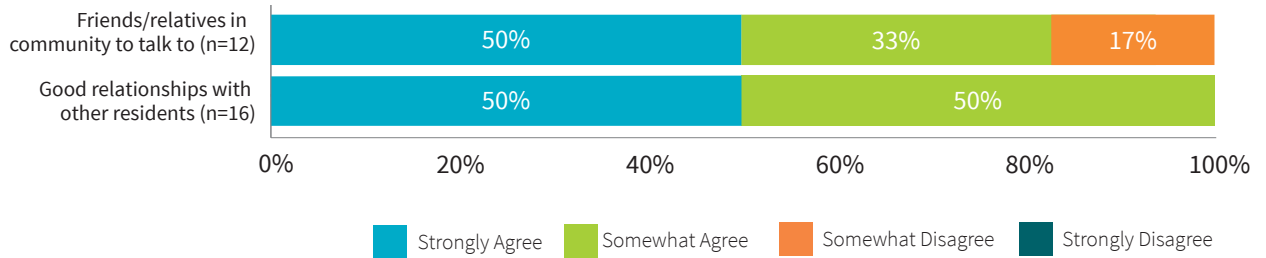
Staff reported that residents are connecting with the Northern Health Life Skills program, a support that residents were not accessing prior to moving into Sonder House. Staff are also available to help residents with the cleanliness of their unit and work with residents on maintaining that level of cleanliness.





## Social Connections

Sonder House residents reported improved social connections. Eighty-three per cent of survey respondents somewhat or strongly agreed that they have friends or relatives in the community to talk to, while all residents reported good relationships with other residents. Staff reported that there is a real sense of community in the building and that residents look out for each other.



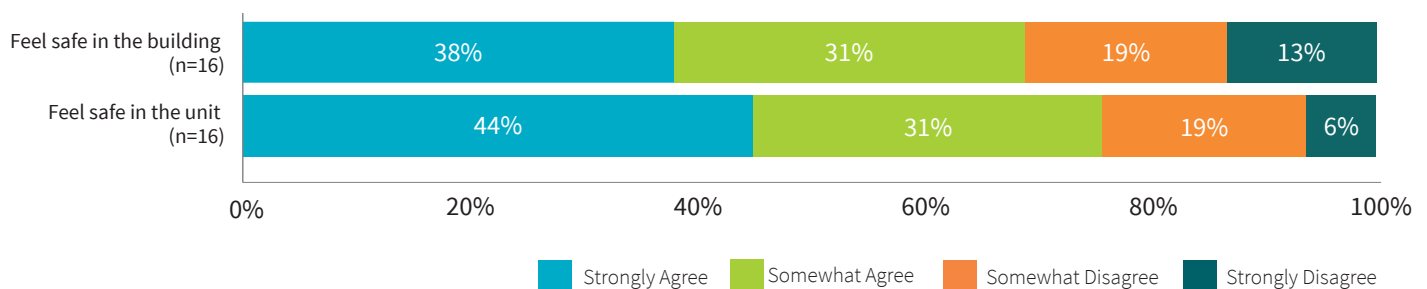
Source: Resident Survey

## Recreation

Staff are connecting with residents who want to obtain a recreation centre or pool pass but reported that there are not a lot of other recreational opportunities in the community.

## Safety

The majority of survey respondents (69 per cent) somewhat or strongly agreed that they felt safe in the building, while 75 per cent agreed that they felt safe in their home.



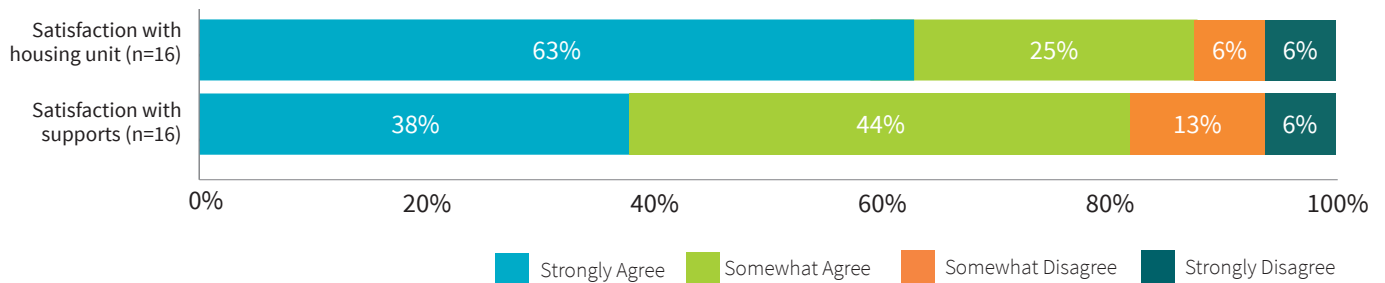
Source: Resident Survey



## Satisfaction with Housing and Supports

The resident survey supports staff perceptions that residents are satisfied with their housing and supports. Most survey respondents (88 per cent) somewhat or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with their housing unit, while eighty-two per cent of survey respondents somewhat or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the level of supports they receive at Sonder House.

*“The building is beautiful and easy to clean.  
The yard is phenomenal.”*  
–Sonder House staff member



Source: Resident Survey

## Challenges

Some Sonder House residents have experienced challenges since moving to their new home. Staff noted that adjusting from living outside to living inside has been a challenge for some residents. There have also been challenges for residents related to living communally with others, and some residents are not yet engaging with staff to access services and supports.

Sonder House staff also identified challenges related to the modular building design, including:

- Not enough storage or office space for staff.
- Issues with the door locking system.
- Not enough common space in the building for residents.
- Challenges related to the durability of some of the building materials.





## Residents' Health and Health Care System Usage

### OUTCOME: IMPROVED

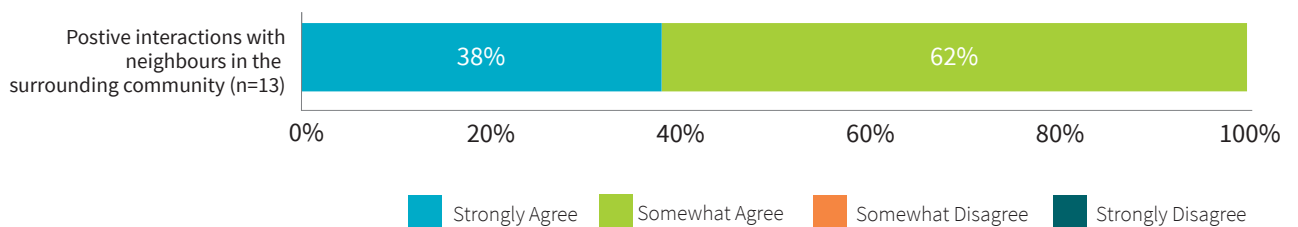
Staff reported that residents are accessing emergency services less frequently than when they were experiencing homelessness. They also reported that staff are able to help residents address health concerns before they become emergencies, resulting in fewer ambulance trips and visits to the hospital. Residents are also accessing doctors more frequently and having health care needs addressed that may have gone untreated previously.

## Community Relations

### OUTCOME: MIXED

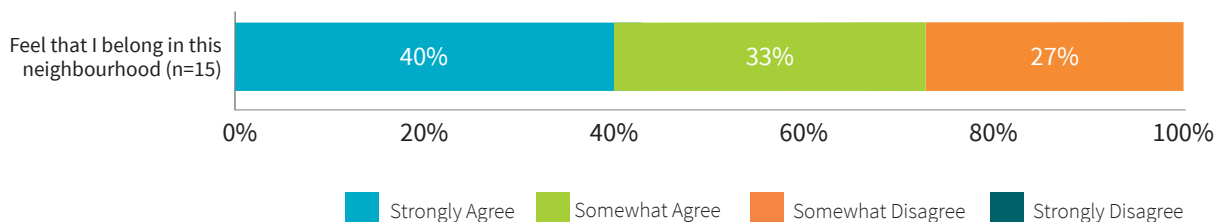
Sonder House staff indicated that the relationship with the wider community is mixed. Staff reported that when the building first opened, they encountered a lot of resistance in the community. They felt that this was partly because the grounds were not ready, and there was no paved parking lot or fencing around the site. Now that the backyard is finished, they no longer receive complaints from neighbours.

All survey respondents strongly or somewhat agreed that they have experienced positive interactions with the surrounding community.



Source: Resident Survey

Seventy-three per cent of survey respondents feel that they belong in the neighbourhood.

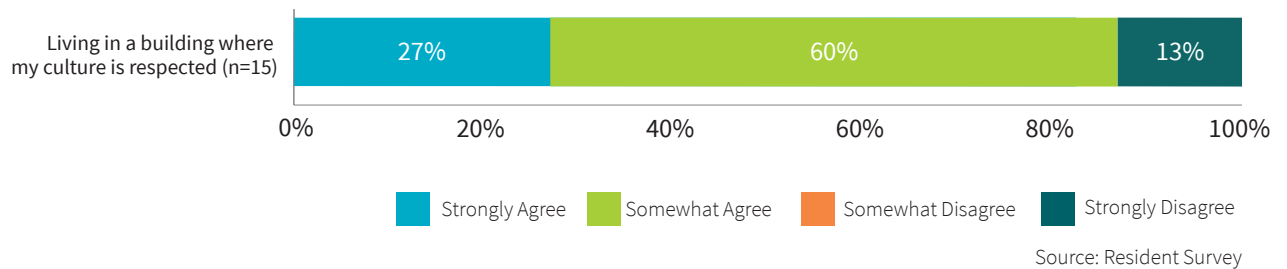


Source: Resident Survey

## Access to Cultural Programming

### OUTCOME: **POSITIVE**

Sonder House serves individuals from a range of cultural backgrounds. Almost all (87 per cent) of survey respondents reported that they feel their culture is respected at Sonder House.



Data provided in this report was collected sixteen months after Sonder House opened. Data from the Housing Connections database is from six months after the first residents moved into the building to be comparable across reports. While all evaluations were originally planned for six months after the building opened, some of the later surveys and interviews were delayed. Outcomes may change over time as the resident mix in the building changes.

## Resident Survey

A resident survey was made available to Sonder House residents in October 2020. The objective of this survey was to measure the change in well-being and quality of life that residents have experienced because of the supportive housing development. The resident survey results are self-reported by residents.

- Thirty-three per cent of Sonder House residents responded to the resident survey.
- Not all survey respondents chose to answer all questions.
- Data for each question is based on those who answered.



## Housing Provider Interviews

Housing provider interviews were conducted with three Ksan House Society staff in March 2020. The objective of these interviews was to gather information about the change in well-being and quality of life that residents have experienced because of the supportive housing development.

## Housing Connections Data

Data on housing stability, and some demographic information was sourced from BC Housing's Housing Connections Database for the first residents who moved into the building. Percentages presented in this report are based on those individuals for whom data was available.

## Partners

This study is being undertaken at modular supportive housing developments across the province in collaboration with non-profit housing societies and other partners.



Contact: **Research Centre** Email: [research@bchousing.org](mailto:research@bchousing.org) Phone: **604-439-4135**

For more information, visit our website at: [www.bchousing.org](http://www.bchousing.org)