

A stylized house outline composed of multiple parallel lines in various colors (orange, green, purple, yellow, grey) that converge at the top and bottom. The lines extend downwards to small circles of the same color.

CHEC  **CCRL**
Affordable Housing Monitor

Canadian Rental Market Data Sources

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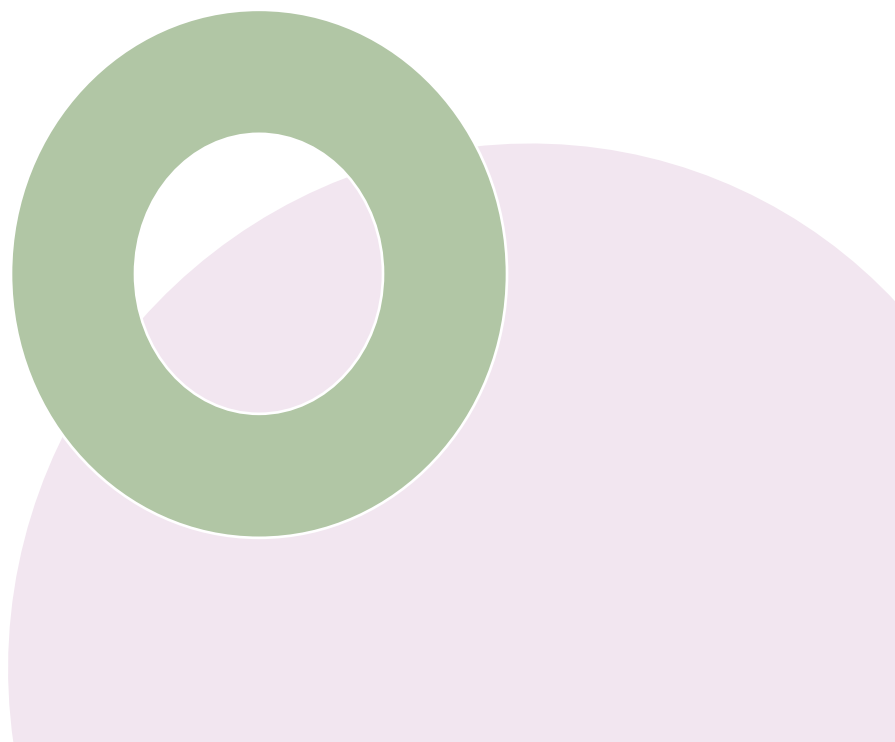


Executive Summary

In response to stakeholder needs we have assembled this report, an overview of the current federal housing data sources relevant to the rental housing market. These sources are collected nationally through CMHC and Statistics Canada and are the basis of current understandings of Canadian housing trends, characteristics and features. All data sources are available publicly online.

We find that some excellent federal data sources exist, however, significant gaps need to be filled especially in relation to the housing needs of vulnerable groups and the rental housing market.

While a thorough analysis is outside the scope of this report, we recommend that in future data collection incorporate digital data collection methods to increase sample size which is critical to reaching greater numbers of marginalized and vulnerable populations. We also recommend that collection methods and survey tools for future and ongoing initiatives include Indigenous strategies and an equity, diversity and inclusion lens.



Background

Since its launch in 2017, the National Housing Strategy (NHS) has sought to support households, specifically renters, with various housing challenges related to affordability, vacancies, foreign ownership, and supply.¹ It is widely recognized that Canada is currently lagging behind other countries in its development and collection of housing data metrics and indicators, specifically ones that will allow it to measure its NHS progress accurately.² The NHS recognizes that data gaps must be addressed. For future policy to be evidence-based, it must be informed by accurate, timely and relevant data.

Some excellent Canadian data sources exist – but significant gaps need to be filled.

The housing data gaps that persist across government datasets include the housing needs of these vulnerable populations:

- women and children fleeing violence
- seniors
- Indigenous peoples
- people with disabilities
- veterans
- those with mental health and addiction issues
- young adults
- recent immigrants
- those experiencing homelessness³

¹ CMHC. (2021). New Rental Data to Assess Housing Needs. Housing Research: Research Insight. Link: <https://assets.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/sites/cmhc/professional/housing-markets-data-and-research/housing-research/research-reports/housing-needs/research-insights/2021/research-insight-new-rental-data-assess-housing-needs-69780-en.pdf?rev=1f10e73d-a7f7-43bc-befd-64dd68b6af82>

² CMHC. (2017). National Housing Strategy: A Place to Call Home. Link: <https://www.placetocallhome.ca/-/media/sf/project/placetocallhome/pdfs/canada-national-housing-strategy.pdf>

³ *Ibid.*

Specific to the rental market, significant gaps include:

- unit accessibility
- cost of utilities
- housing types
- housing markets outside of Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs)
- secondary rental market.⁴

As the primary source of housing research, data, and knowledge, the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) announced in 2017 that through the NHS, \$241 million will be invested over the next 10 years to close housing data and research gaps.⁵ Initiatives include new data collection tools, housing solutions labs, and support of non-government housing-related research.⁶

In support of addressing these housing data gaps, it is relevant to understand the current housing data source landscape.

⁴ Leviten-Reid, C., Horel, B., Matthew, R., Deveaux, F., & Vasallo, P. (2019). Strong foundations: Building community through improved rental housing data. *The Journal of Rural and Community Development*, 14(3), 75.

⁵ CMHC. (2017). Designing a National Housing Strategy for Canada: Lessons Learned. Link: <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/media-newsroom/speeches/2017/designing-national-housing-strategy-canada-lessons-learned>

⁶ *Ibid.*



Overview of Rental Data Sources

Name of Source	Owner	Temporal Resolution	Temporal Coverage	Spatial Coverage	Participation	Collection Method(s)
Census of Population	Statistics Canada	Every 5 years	Every 10 years since 1871, every 5 years since 1971	Nationwide	Mandatory	Electronic questionnaire and telephone interview
Household Spending Survey	Statistics Canada	Every 2 years	Since 2010 in provinces, 2015 in territories	Nationwide	Voluntary	Electronic questionnaire and telephone interview
Canadian Housing Survey	Statistics Canada	Every 2 years	Since 2018	Nationwide	Voluntary	Electronic questionnaire and telephone interview
Social & Affordable Housing Survey	CMHC	Every 2 years	Since 2018	Nationwide		Electronic questionnaire, telephone interview and site visits
Rental Market Survey	CMHC	Monthly		Urban population centres of 10,000+		Telephone interviews and site visits
Rural Rental Market Survey	CMHC	Every 5 years		Population centres of 2,500-10,000		Telephone interviews and site visits
Secondary Rental Market Survey	CMHC	Annual		Selected CMAs		Telephone interviews
Condominium Apartment Survey	CMHC	Annual	Since 2014	Selected CMAs		Telephone interviews
Building Permit Survey	Statistics Canada	Monthly	Since 2016	Nationwide	Mandatory	Mail and online responses
Starts & Completions Survey	CMHC	Monthly		Selected urban centres	Mandatory	Site visits
Market Absorption Survey	CMHC	Monthly		Selected urban centres	Mandatory	Site visits
Senior's Housing Survey	CMHC	Annual		Nationwide		Telephone interviews and fax/ email responses

Guide to Federal Rental Market Data Sources

Census of Population

Conducted every five years by Statistics Canada, the Census is “mandated by law in the Constitution Act (1867) and the Statistics Act (1985)” to collect population-related information of Canada’s provinces and territories.⁷ Approximately 25% of the population receives a long-form questionnaire version of the Census (sample survey with cross-sectional design), and the remaining 75% receiving a short-form questionnaire.⁸

Information obtained by the Census is vital in determining boundaries of federal electoral districts, estimating demand for services in minority official languages, planning community services, determining consumer and market demands, calculating transfer payments between levels of government, and many more policy and planning decisions.⁹ Responses to the Census are mandatory and are collected through the months of May to July using online and paper questionnaires, the Census Help Line, and failed-edit and non-response follow-ups.¹⁰

As the Census collects information at the housing-unit level, relevant data pertaining to renters is collected, including dwelling characteristics, location, monthly rent prices, subsidies, etc.¹¹

Household Spending Survey

Conducted by Statistics Canada every two years, this survey samples Canadian households for data pertaining to their spending information, demographic characteristics, dwelling characteristics, and household equipment.¹² This survey links household members’ spending to income, derived from tax information by the Canadian Revenue Agency. From this stakeholders identify patterns of spending, income distribution and other relevant metrics.

⁷ Statistics Canada. (2021). Surveys and Statistical Programs: Census of Population.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Population, Questionnaire(s) and reporting guide(s) for 2021. Link:

<https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvInstrumentList&Id=1283315>

¹² Statistics Canada. Surveys and Statistical Programs: Survey of Household Spending (SHS).

This survey is conducted through an electronic questionnaire, with a follow-up telephone interview with one designated individual from the household being surveyed.¹³ The most recent version of this survey was released in 2021 and collected information for 45,000 private dwellings across the ten provinces, and 2,670 dwellings across the three territorial capitals.¹⁴

Note: This survey excludes residents of institutions, members of the Canadian Forces living in military camps, and Indigenous peoples living on reserves.¹⁵

Canadian Housing Survey (CHS)

Launched in 2018, the Canadian Housing Survey (CHS) gathers information on the housing conditions of Canadian households. The survey is administered by Statistics Canada and includes questions on “housing needs, social and affordable housing, subsidized housing, forced moves, satisfaction with dwelling and neighbourhood, household’s social interactions with the community, health, homelessness, and socio-demographic characteristics”.¹⁶ The purpose of this survey is to supplement additional housing data sources with the perspectives and lived experiences of Canadians, and how they view the dwellings in which they live.

The CHS is conducted every two years until 2028 through voluntary electronic questionnaires and telephone interviews¹⁷ on a nationally representative sample of approximately 125,000 households living in market housing, as well as social and affordable housing.¹⁸ As the sampling unit is private dwellings, collective dwellings, such as nursing homes, senior’s residences, Indigenous reserves, military bases, shelters, school residences, and other communal colonies are excluded.¹⁹

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Statistics Canada. Canadian Housing Survey (CHS). Link: <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/survey/household/5269>

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ CMHC. (2019). Getting Housing Right: A Progress Report on Federal Housing Investments.

¹⁹ Statistics Canada. (2020). Surveys and Statistical Programs: Canadian Housing Survey (CHS). Link: <https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SDDS=5269>

Note: A single reference person from each household is sampled in the CHS and completes the questionnaire individually. This person has self-identified as the household member responsible for housing decisions, and the responses recorded in the questionnaire therefore reflect their views and not all household members.²⁰

Social and Affordable Housing Survey- Rental Structures

Launched in 2018, this survey is conducted annually by CMHC and collects information on the physical characteristics of the social and affordable housing stock.²¹ This survey was specifically developed as a result of the Housing Needs Data Initiative under the NHS, with the overall goal of addressing data gaps and understanding progress made towards improved housing outcomes across Canada.²² The data collected in this survey includes:

- estimates on average rents
- vacancy rates
- number of units per centre
- number units by bedroom type per centre
- type of organization
- rent determination mechanism
- building condition
- accessibility features^{23 24}

The targeted respondents for this census survey are all structures across Canada with at least one rental unit subsidized by a public or private (non-profit) entity.²⁵ Data collection methods for this

²⁰ Statistics Canada. (2019). Canadian's satisfaction with their housing: Highlights from the 2018 Canadian Housing Survey. *Income Research Paper Series*, Catalogue no. 75F0002M.

²¹ CMHC. (2021). Social and Affordable Housing Survey — Rental Structures. Link: <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/professionals/housing-markets-data-and-research/housing-research/surveys/social-affordable-housing-survey-rental-structures>

²² CMHC. (2020). Measuring Social and Affordable Housing Outcomes. *The Housing Observer*. Link: <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/blog/2020-housing-observer/measuring-social-affordable-housing-outcomes>

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ CMHC. (2020). Social and Affordable Housing Survey — Rental Structures Data Tables. Link: <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/professionals/housing-markets-data-and-research/housing-data/data-tables/rental-market/social-affordable-housing-survey-rental-structures-data>

²⁵ CMHC. (2021). Methodology for Social and Affordable Housing Survey — Rental Structures. Link: <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/professionals/housing->

survey include online CMHC web portals, emails, telephone interviews, and site visits with owners or property managers.²⁶

Rental Market Survey (RMS)

The Rental Market Survey (RMS) is an annual survey conducted by CMHC that provides an in-depth analysis of market trends across Canada. This survey specifically collects information on market rent levels, availability (outside Quebec), turnover and vacancy data for all sampled structures.²⁷ The RMS data is collected from rental unit owners, managers, and/ or building superintendents through a combination of telephone interviews and site visits.²⁸

The RMS is conducted annually during the first two weeks of October on a sample basis in all urban areas with populations of 10,000 or more, and targets only purpose-built rental structures with at least three rental units that have been on the market for at least three months.²⁹ Owing to its collection period, the RMS only reflects October rental market conditions.

Notes:

The RMS does not include data on the secondary rental market. Prices, locations, and sizes between primary and secondary rental units may differ, with secondary units often being affordable housing options.³⁰

As the RMS collects information on currently occupied units, units in high-price markets with low vacancy rates may be reflective of legacy rents. This varies across Canada based on the presence and scope of rental control regulations.³¹ The RMS does, therefore, not

[markets-data-and-research/housing-research/surveys/methods/methodology-social-affordable-housing-survey-rental-structures](https://www03.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/hmip-pimh/en/TableMapChart/RmsMethodology#footnote2)

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ CMHC. Housing Market Information Portal: Methodology for Rental Market Survey. Link: <https://www03.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/hmip-pimh/en/TableMapChart/RmsMethodology#footnote2>

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ CMHC. (2021). New Rental Data to Assess Housing Needs. Housing Research: Research Insight. Link: <https://assets.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/sites/cmhc/professional/housing-markets-data-and-research/housing-research/research-reports/housing-needs/research-insights/2021/research-insight-new-rental-data-assess-housing-needs-69780-en.pdf?rev=1f10e73d-a7f7-43bc-befd-64dd68b6af82>

³¹ *Ibid.*

provide an analysis of the prices of currently unoccupied units and the entry to market price-point.

Rural Rental Market Survey (RRMS)

This survey is conducted by CMHC every five years in advance of each Census for population centres with 2,500 to 10,000 people.³² Data for 2021 was collected through the Rental Market Survey, and its methodology, scope, questionnaires, and notes remain the same.

Secondary Rental Market Survey (SRMS)

This survey is conducted by CMHC through telephone interviews every year in late September to early October, with property management companies, condominium (strata) boards, or building superintendents.³³ The purpose of this survey is to estimate the relative strengths of the secondary rental market, as these dwellings are not covered by the regular annual Rental Market Survey.³⁴

Unit types covered in this survey include rented: single-detached houses, semi-detached houses, freehold row/ town homes, duplex apartments, accessory apartments, condominiums, or one of two apartments which are part of a commercial or other type of structure.³⁵

This survey previously had three components:

1. A Household Rent Survey: collected information about rents and provided an estimation on the number of renter households residing in the secondary market dwelling types;
2. A Condominium Apartment Survey: collected information about rents; and
3. A Condominium Apartment Vacancy Survey: collected vacancy information.

³² CMHC. (2021). Rural Rental Market Survey Data: Vacancy Rate by Centre. Link: <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/professionals/housing-markets-data-and-research/housing-data/data-tables/rental-market/rural-rental-market-survey-data-vacancy-rate-centre>

³³

<http://skyviewrealty.com/CMHCb/2015/2015%20Rental%20Market%20Report%20-%20Canada%20Highlights.pdf>

³⁴ CMHC. (2017). Housing Market Information: Rental Market Report. *Canada Highlights*.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

Note: As of 2017 the Household Rent Survey has been discontinued, and the Condominium Apartment Vacancy Survey and Condominium Apartment Survey have been combined into one annual survey collecting information on both rents and vacancy data congruently.³⁶

Condominium Apartment Survey (CAS)

Launched in 2014, CAS is an annual survey conducted by CMHC every September that estimates the relative strengths of the condominium apartment rental market.³⁷ This survey collects information on vacancy levels, number of total units being rented, and the rent levels of units in the following CMAs: Montreal, Quebec, Toronto, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Regina, Saskatoon, Calgary, Vancouver, Victoria, Gatineau, Kelowna, Hamilton, London, Winnipeg, Kitchener, Halifax.³⁸ CAS provides a census of all apartment condominium buildings with three units and over, with an exception in Montreal, where a sample of structures is surveyed. Information is collected through telephone interviews with property management companies, condominium (strata) boards, or building superintendents.

Building Permit Survey

This survey is a monthly census collection by Statistics Canada and is used to estimate residential and non-residential construction activity at various geographic levels across Canada. The survey collects information on permits issues by municipalities, specifically their permit number, type of project, type of work, value of the work, total building area, and the addresses of the builder, owner and construction site.³⁹ This survey also measures the number of dwelling units demolished. Data from this survey is used across public, private, and academic domains for construction industry, housing market and economic development analysis.

The survey currently comprises of data from approximately 2,400 municipalities across all of Canada, encompassing 95% of the total

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ CMHC. (2020). Housing Market Information: Rental Market Report- Windsor CMA.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Statistics Canada. Surveys and Statistics Programs: Building Permits (BPER).

Link:

<https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SDDS=2802>

national population.⁴⁰ The remaining 5% of municipalities are not included in the survey, as they make up a very small portion of the population and do not have significant construction activity.⁴¹ Data collection methods for the survey include mail and online responses from municipalities directly.

Starts & Completions Survey

This survey is conducted by CMHC through site visits at the end of each month to enumerate dwelling units in new structures that are designed for non-transient, year-round occupancy.⁴² Municipal building permits, collected through the Building Permit Survey, are used to determine where construction is likely to take place, and the monthly CMHC site visits determine if new units have reached set stages in the construction process that need to be recorded. In municipalities where there are no building permits, reliance for data is placed on local sources and/ or searching procedures.⁴³

This survey is carried out in urban areas with populations more than 50,000. For urban areas with populations of 10,000 to 49,999 the survey is carried out on a quarterly basis (end of March, June, September, and December).⁴⁴

Market Absorption Survey (MAS)

This survey is conducted alongside the Starts & Completions Survey by CMHC at the end of each month through site visits in urban areas with populations more than 50,000.⁴⁵ This survey only collects data on dwelling units in the homeownership and condominium markets. When a structure is recorded as completed through the Starts & Completions Survey, a report is made through MAS as to whether it has been sold. Completed dwellings are then counted each month until absorption occurs.

The dissemination of apartment absorption prices and square footage is only collected in the following CMAs: Montreal, Quebec, Toronto, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Regina, Saskatoon, Calgary,

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² CMHC. Housing Market Information Portal: Starts & Completions Survey Methodology. Link: <https://www03.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/hmip-pimh/en/TableMapChart/ScsMasMethodology>

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ CMHC. (2021). Housing Information Monthly- March 2021. Housing Market Information.

Vancouver, Victoria, Gatineau, Kelowna, Hamilton, London, Winnipeg, Kitchener, Halifax. ⁴⁶

Senior's Housing Survey (SHS)

Conducted by CMHC annually in February through March, this survey is a census of all seniors' residences in Canada that meet the following criteria:

1. Have at least one unit that is not subsidized (in the Atlantic provinces, Quebec and Ontario);
2. have been in operation for at least one year;
3. have at least 10 rental units (in Quebec, Ontario and the Prairies) or 5 rental units (in the Atlantic provinces and B.C.);
4. offer an on-site meal plan;
5. not mandate high levels of health care (defined as 1.5 hours or more of care per day) to all of its residents; nursing homes and long-term care homes are examples of residences that were not included in the survey;
6. offer rental units; life lease units and owner-occupied units are excluded from this survey; and
7. have at least 50 per cent of its residents who are 65 years of age or older. ⁴⁷

Data for this survey is collected through a combination of telephone interviews and fax/ email responses with residence owners, managers, or administrators. This survey specifically seeks to provide information on the average rents and vacancy rates of senior's residences. ⁴⁸

Additional Data Sources

Canadian Housing Statistics Program

Initialized in 2017, the Canadian Housing Statistics Program is run through Statistics Canada and is a comprehensive residential property database that covers numerous aspects of the housing sector.⁴⁹ The program leverages existing data sources and

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ CMHC. Housing Market Information Portal: Senior's Housing Survey Methodology. Link: <https://www03.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/hmip-pimh/en/TableMapChart/SeniorsMethodology>

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

<https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SDDS=5257>

⁴⁹ Statistics Canada. (2019). Canadian Housing Statistics Program (CHSP). Link: <https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SDDS=5257>

transforms them into new and timely indicators on Canadian housing, these sources include:

- Provincial and territorial land registries;
- Property assessment program;
- Tax data;
- the Business Registrar;
- the Census of Population
- the Longitudinal Immigration Database; and
- additional administrative data files.⁵⁰

This program is continuously collecting data and currently has a completed list of residential properties and residential property owners in the provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario and British Columbia. It is projected that the database will contain information for all properties in every census subdivision nationwide by December 2022.⁵¹

Note: The Canadian Housing Statistics Program database does not contain residential property information for non-residential properties, residential properties on reserves, or collective dwellings (e.g., nursing homes, jails or staff residences).⁵²

Housing Market Assessment

Developed by CMHC, the Housing Market Assessment is an analytical framework that uses several indicators and existing data sources to test for the presence of signals of vulnerability in housing markets against predefined thresholds.⁵³ Once vulnerabilities are detected, the assessments measures their intensity and persistence against related imbalances from the past.

To track these vulnerabilities in the housing market, the assessment uses economic and financial research, characteristics of Canadian housing markets, econometric methods and data from various sources (Multiple Listing Service, Centris in Quebec), and validates the models with previous instances of housing imbalances in the Canadian housing markets.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ CMHC. Housing Market Information Portal: Housing Market Assessment (HMA). Link: <https://www03.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/hmip-pimh/en/TableMapChart/HMAMethodology>

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

The Housing Market Assessment is specifically looking for four types of housing market vulnerabilities:

1. overheating when demand outpaces supply;
2. sustained acceleration in housing prices;
3. overvaluation of house prices in comparison to levels that can be supported by housing market fundamentals; and
4. excess inventories (elevated number of newly built unsold homes or high rental apartment vacancy rates).⁵⁵

Note: CMHC publishes Housing Market Assessment on a quarterly basis through a combination of assessment results and in-house knowledge of local market conditions. These reports are not forecasting tools or affordability assessments.⁵⁶

Conclusions & Recommendations

Current sources of housing data in Canada have left gaps in knowledge that through the NHS, the Canadian government is attempting to address. The NHS recognizes that these gaps undermine its ability to prepare and plan for the housing needs and challenges of Canadians, and ultimately reach its goals and targets as a national housing strategy.⁵⁷ With its investments until 2028 the NHS will work to remedy these gaps through new data collection tools, housing solutions labs, and the support of non-government housing-related research.⁵⁸ Ultimately, these newly funded efforts need to be accessible, shareable, usable and answer housing-related questions that the current portfolio of sources has been unable to do.

This report has provided an overview of the current federal level housing data sources relevant to the rental housing market, these sources are collected nationally through CMHC and Statistics Canada and are the basis for current understandings of the Canadian housing market, and its trends and features. This report serves as a starting point for housing researchers and related

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ CMHC. (2018). What We Heard: Shaping Canada's National Housing Strategy. *The Conference Board of Canada*, 41.

⁵⁸ CMHC. (2017). Designing a National Housing Strategy for Canada: Lessons Learned. Link: <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/media-newsroom/speeches/2017/designing-national-housing-strategy-canada-lessons-learned>

stakeholders to understand the Canadian data source landscape and where solutions for data gaps exist and how they may be addressed.

While a thorough analysis is outside the scope of this report, we recommend that in future data collection incorporate digital data collection methods to increase sample size which is critical to reaching greater numbers of marginalized and vulnerable populations. We also recommend that collection methods and survey tools for future and ongoing initiatives include Indigenous strategies and an equity, diversity and inclusion lens.

In the context of Canada's current housing crisis it is also especially **critical** that a more comprehensive **Rental Market Survey** be conducted that:

- includes buildings with few than three units
- samples at least on a quarterly, if not monthly basis

This data is essential to understanding the rapidly changing needs of the most vulnerable Canadians and ensuring that everyone has an affordable and safe place to call home.

