

VISIT ALBERTA AVENUE



A guide and map to the wellbeing of the neighborhood

“

A good visit has no agenda
... [only] love. There
should be some food, tea,
and coffee.

Accepting each other as
human beings. Patience.
And storytelling.

Harold P Johnson, Author



Photography by Harley Russell

How do we capture wellbeing?

Cities and countries try to pinpoint wellbeing using standardized scales or generic indicators like: How satisfied are you on a scale of 1-10? Do you live near a park? Trouble is the generic indicators don't tell us much about people's sentiments and outlooks. And standardized scales hold different meanings to different people based on their lived experiences — or whether they've had their morning coffee.

Wellbeing evades reductionism. Ancient, local, and intuitive wisdom reminds us that wellbeing is more than the absence of illness or the presence of material things. Just because we aren't sick, and have a roof over our heads, doesn't mean we *feel* well.

That makes wellbeing more of a dynamic interaction than a static state. We feel well when we are connected to ourselves and our bodies, to the land, to family and community, to culture, to meaning, to purpose, and to awe and perspective.

So rather than treat wellbeing as a fixed point represented by a set of numbers, how might we conceptualize wellbeing as a mosaic of moments expressed through stories? And how might we collect those stories in ways that foster connection?

These are the questions animating our partnership with the City of Edmonton's RECOVER Urban Wellness Initiative. Since 2017, we've met and learned from more than 60 residents living on the margins. They have taught us that moments of respect, care, agency, belonging, meaning and purpose are as critical to wellbeing as meeting material needs.

We wondered what it could look like to build city infrastructure for visiting with and listening to residents, capturing the moments that matter for wellbeing.



DEC 2020

One year ago, we imagined what could be ... What if cities could map the moments affecting their residents' wellbeing, for better & worse?



LEG 1: ONE YEAR AGO

Starting points...

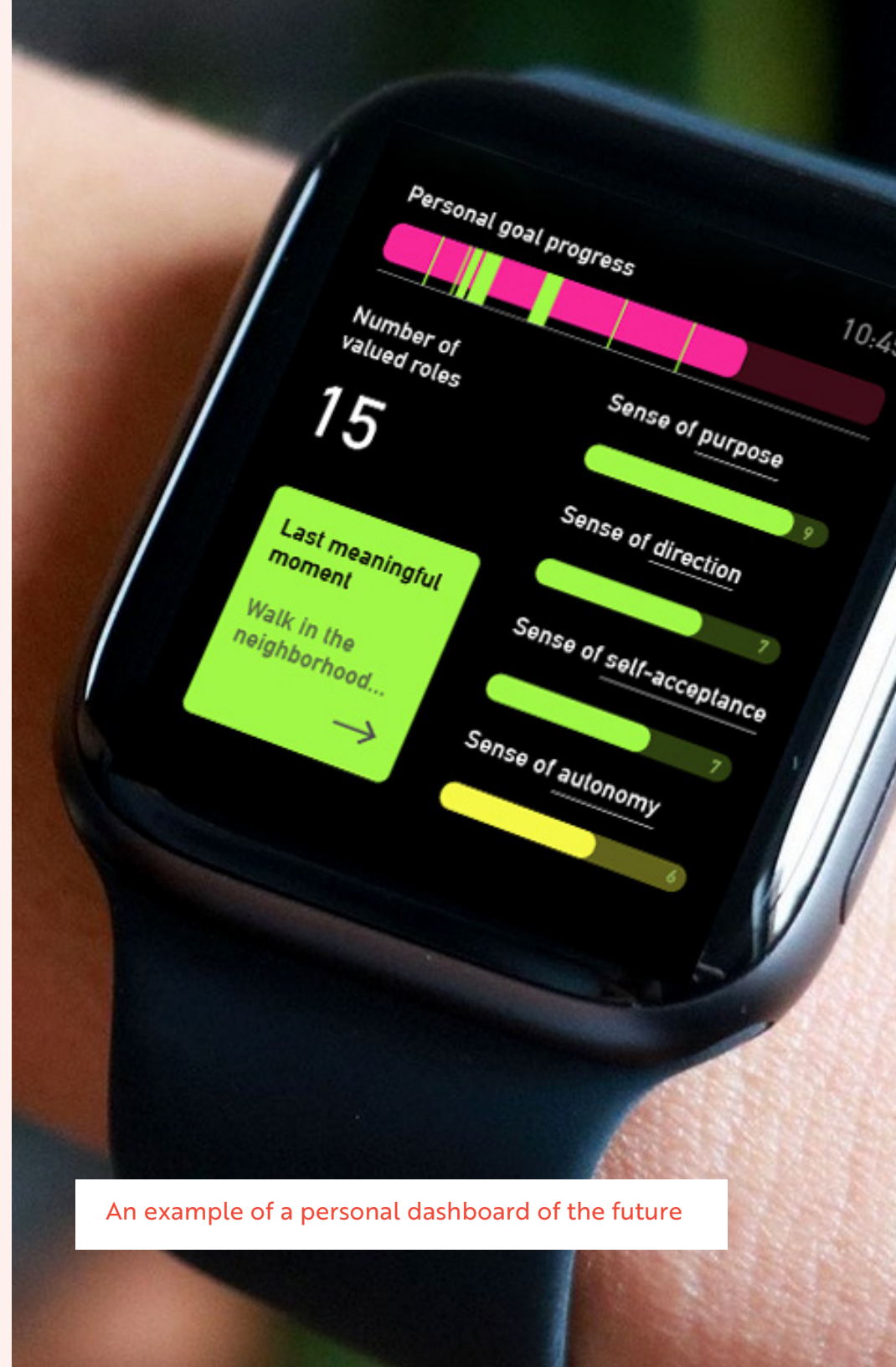
It's hard to talk about what doesn't yet exist, especially if we each hold different pictures and words in our heads.

Enter speculative design. Speculative designers use provocations: something visual and tangible that makes an idea concrete enough to elicit reactions. Provocations aren't recommendations so much as starting points; communication tools to picture alternative futures.

That was our rationale for mocking-up wellbeing dashboards of the future. As a provocation, the dashboards make visible the types of information a city AND its citizens might have access to if we invested in local listening infrastructure.



See more of our provocations

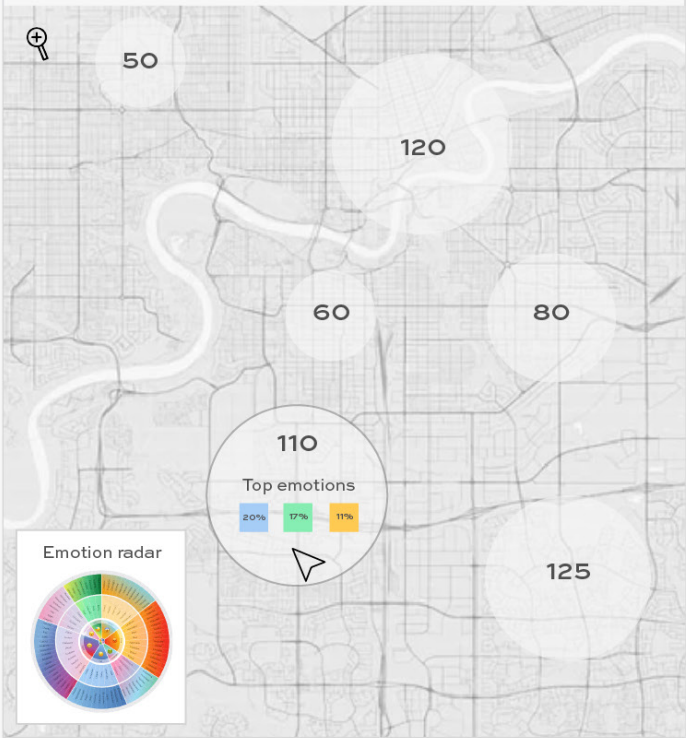


An example of a personal dashboard of the future



Stories

Stories by neighborhood

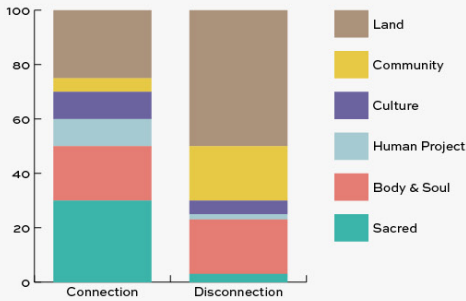


Total citizen stories this month



See full statistics
→

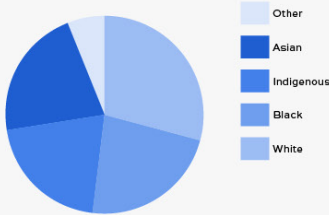
Stories of connection versus stories of disconnection by type



Story sharers

Filter by

- Race
- Gender
- Class
- Disability



See full statistics
→

An example of a city-level dashboard of the future



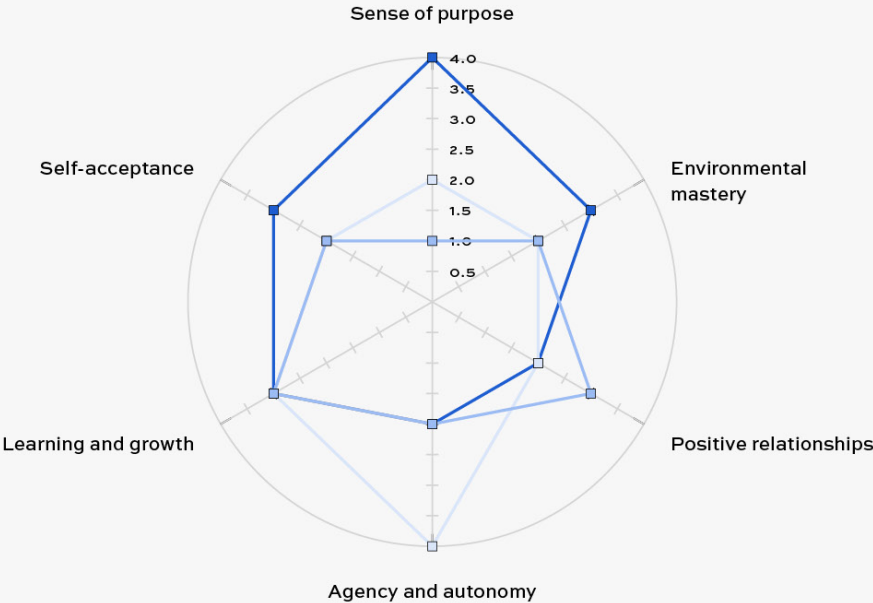
Pulse

◀ ▶ DECEMBER 2020

Levels of balance

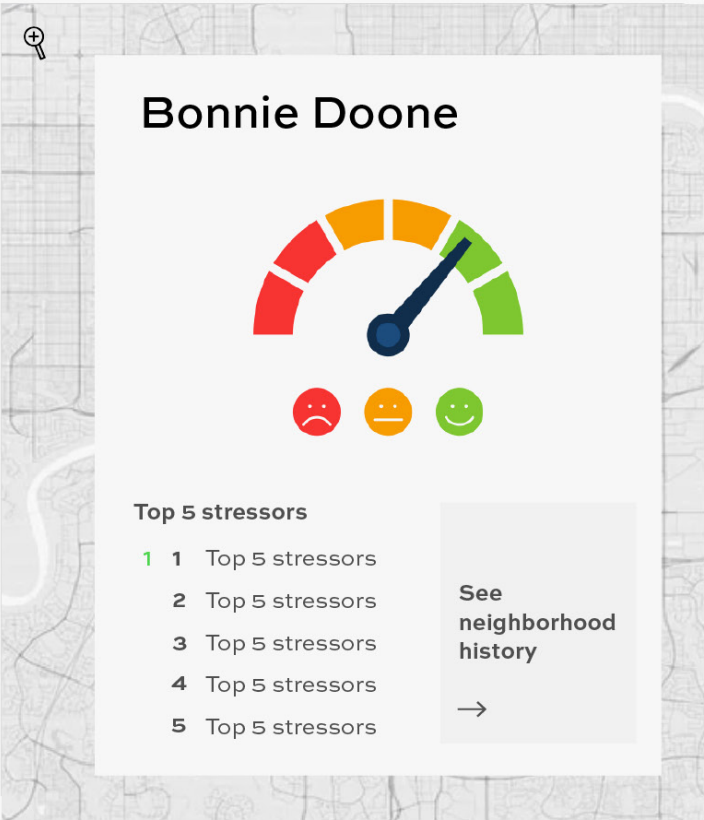
Filter by

- Class
- Race
- Gender
- Disability



□ Lower class □ Middle class ■ Upper class

Stress by Neighborhood





MAY 2021

Fast forward one year.

We prototyped fresh ways to tune into local experiences of wellbeing, and create real life dashboards.

Introducing Auricle...

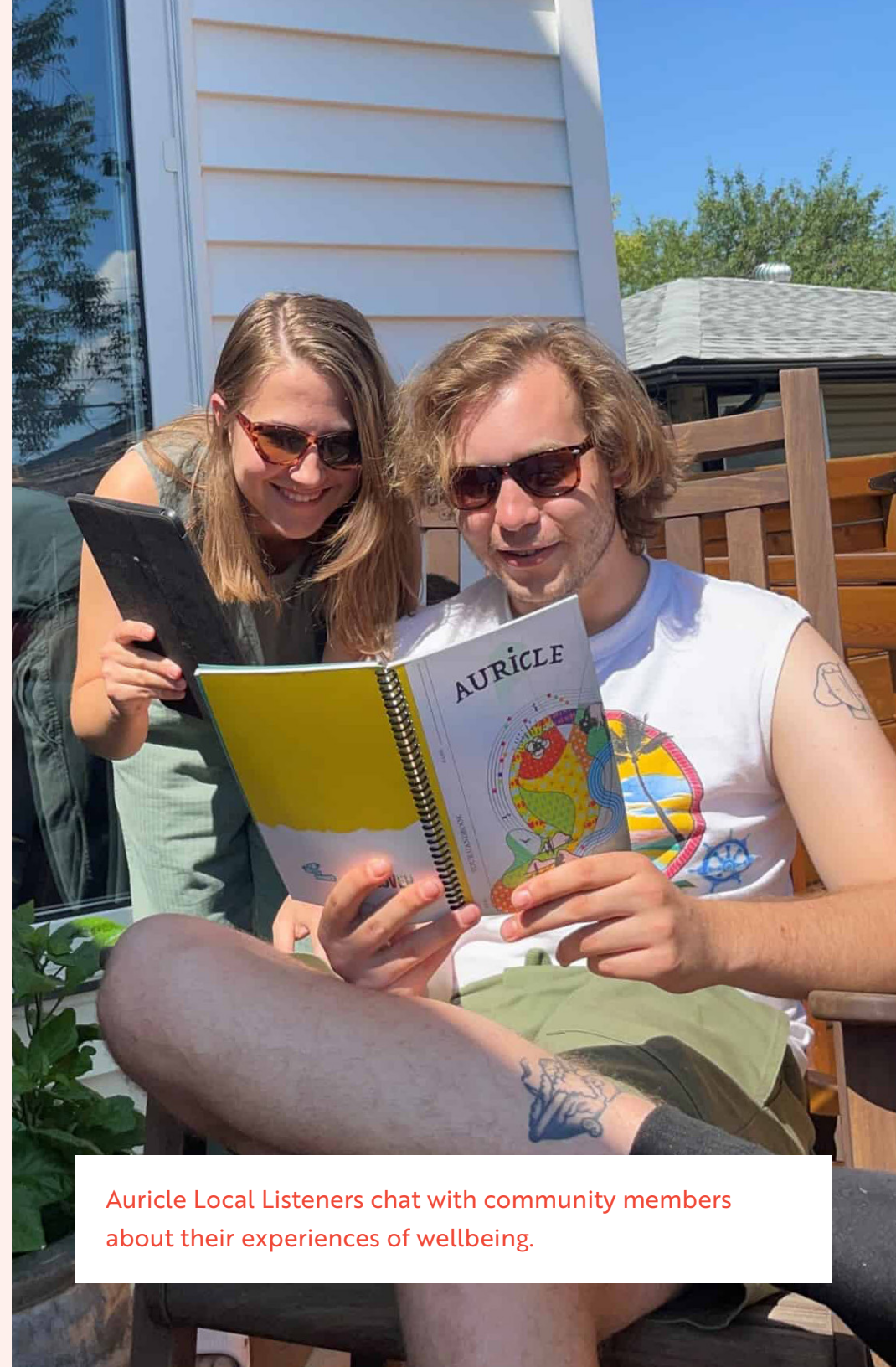
Over three months, we tested what makes up local listening infrastructure including roles, tools, and engagement strategies. We called this infrastructure, Auricle.

At the centre of Auricle are Local Listeners: a group of neighbours recruited, trained and supported to reach out to and engage fellow community members in their neighbourhood. Using digital and paper-based storytelling prompts, Local Listeners initiate and record stories about moments that shape wellbeing.

Community members interpret and analyze their own stories, helping to make sense of each moment. Stories and interpretations are then aggregated and visualized as part of a real time dashboard that is shared back with the neighbourhood for dialogue and exploration.



Discover more about our process and methodology



Auricle Local Listeners chat with community members about their experiences of wellbeing.



JUL 2021

Stories of wellbeing
in Alberta Avenue
defy stereotypes.
By reframing data
collection as good
visits, we honoured
humans over
one-dimensional
statistics.

Too often, traditional research harms by disenfranchising people, imposing deficit-laden narratives, and perpetuating prejudice. Alberta Avenue has experienced this harm.

Back in 2004, Alberta Ave resident and author Carissa Halton read a headline about her chosen neighbourhood in a City of Edmonton report: Alberta Avenue had zero quality of life. The conclusion felt palpably untrue. For her, Alberta Avenue was a place of both visible solidarity and pain, with strong ties and identity.

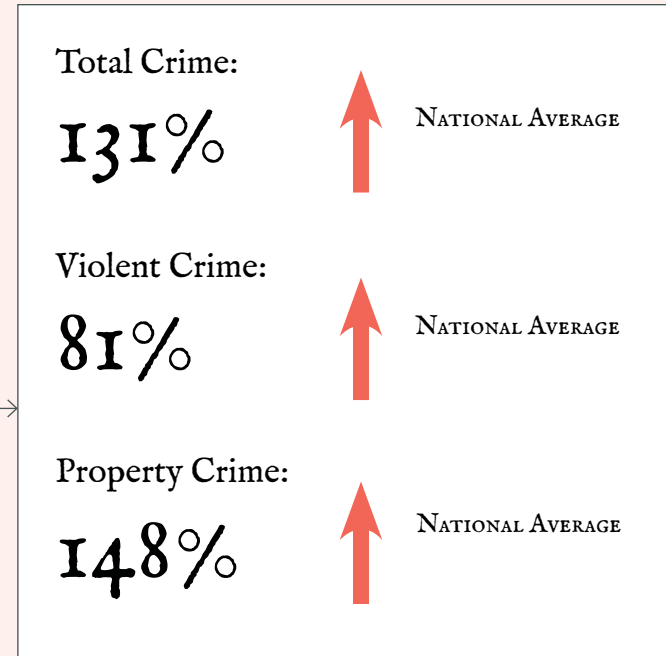
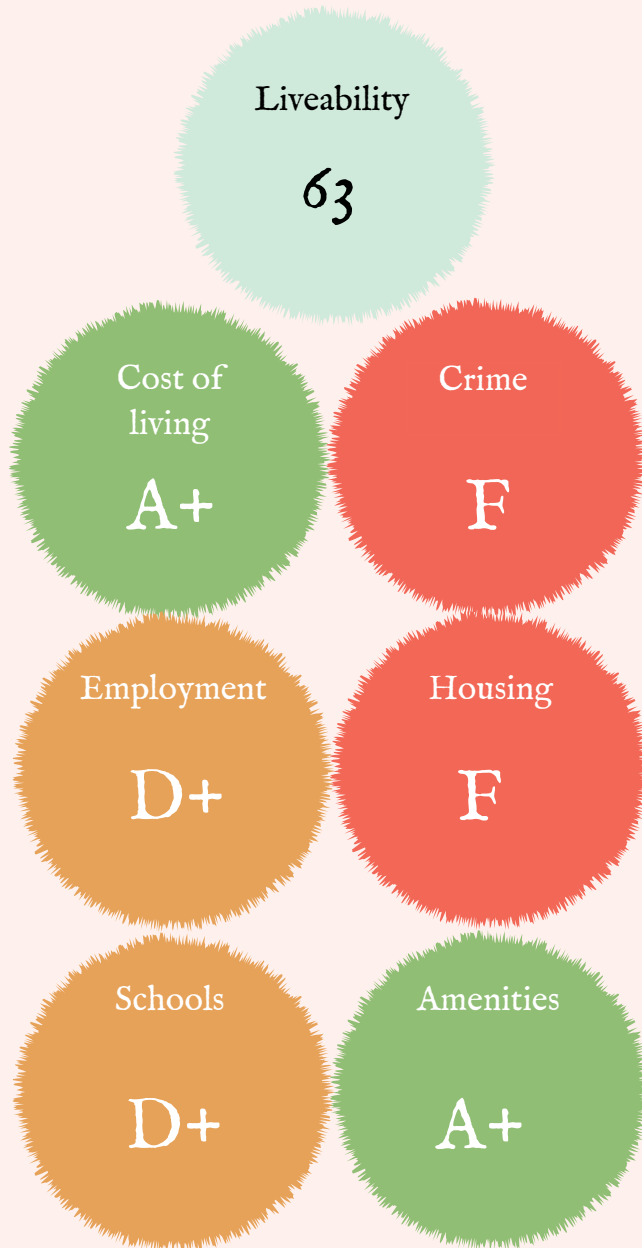
Let's take a look at the incomplete picture of Alberta Avenue painted by traditional data.

What impressions are you left with from the numbers?

KEY FINDINGS

-  Alberta Avenue has a Livability Score of 63/100, which is considered below average
-  Alberta Avenue crime rates are 33% higher than the Edmonton average
-  Cost of living in Alberta Avenue is 7% lower than the Edmonton average
-  Alberta Avenue real estate prices are 37% lower than the Edmonton average
-  Rental prices in Alberta Avenue are equal to the Edmonton average

SOURCE: [HTTPS://WWW.AREAVIBES.COM/EDMONTON-AB/
ALBERTA+AVENUE/](https://www.areavibes.com/edmonton-ab/alberta+avenue/)



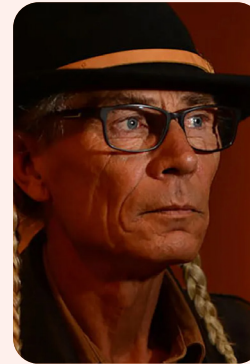
INDEX	ALBERTA AVENUE	EDMONTON	ALBERTA	NATIONAL
TOTAL CRIME	10,211 (ESTIMATE)	7,681	6,821	4,416
VIOLENT CRIME	1,968	1,480	1,315	1,090
PROPERTY CRIME	8,243	6,201	5,506	3,326

SOURCE: [HTTPS://WWW.AREAVIBES.COM/EDMONTON-AB/ALBERTA+AVENUE/](https://www.areavibes.com/edmonton-ab/alberta+avenue/)

What the numbers missed were the relationships forged between neighbours: the mom down the street who taught Carissa how to cultivate squash and cook the flowers, the teenager who babysat her children, and the folks who joined an unlikely alliance to save feral cats.

Indeed, behind the dismal numbers is a dominant mental model that views numbers as truth; people as passive research subjects; and data as output. One of the many atrocities of colonization has been research 'on' Indigenous peoples which has decontextualized, dehumanized, and decimated culture.

We are committed to discontinuing this legacy.



“

Cree lawyer, author and activist Harold Johnson helps us to see that justice requires that we be in relationship, honouring the stories and experiences that make-up lives and communities. Swapping stories and experiences is the essence of a “good visit” — characterized by active listening and hospitality over politeness and expediency. In an interview with the CBC’s Shelagh Rogers, he says:

“Imagine where your heart is until you are aware of it. Then just let it go. And when you do that your brain stops thinking about the answer when the other person is speaking. ...when you can really listen, you can hear.”



DEC 2021

Here's some of
what we *heard*
and learned from
residents about
wellbeing in
Alberta Avenue ...

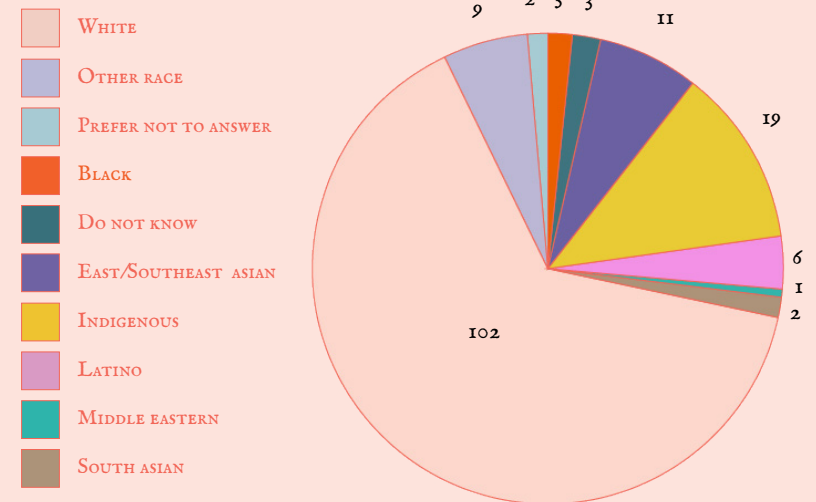
152

STORIES
IN OUR
DASHBOARD

To collect data, we used a digital tool called Sensemaker, which weaves micro-stories together with demographic & self-report data to produce automated visualizations.

The dashboards are public and open for community analysis. Here are some highlights.

Overall Mood

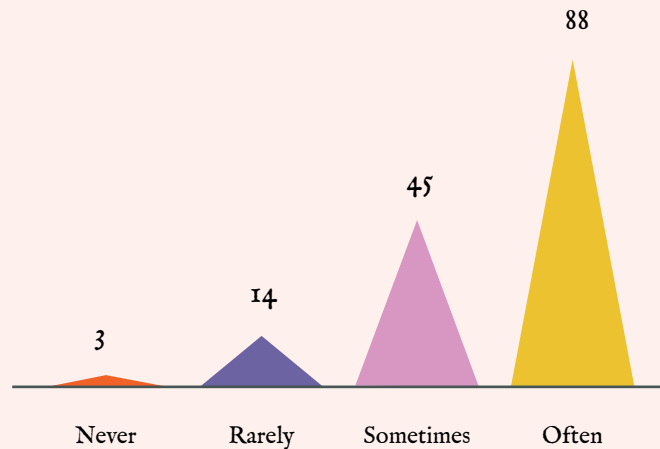
Most reoccurring
words in story titles8+ RACIAL IDENTITIES
REFLECTED

TOP SELF-IDENTIFIERS IN LARGEST SEGMENTS

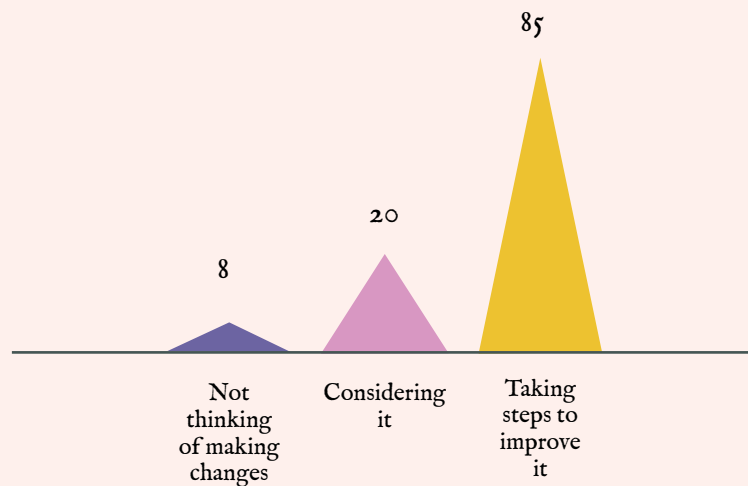
WHITE		INDIGENOUS		EAST ASIAN	
Mom	11	Nice	4	Curious	2
Lover	10	Energetic	3	Community	2
Kind	10	Kind	3		
Outdoorsy	10				

ON WELLBEING

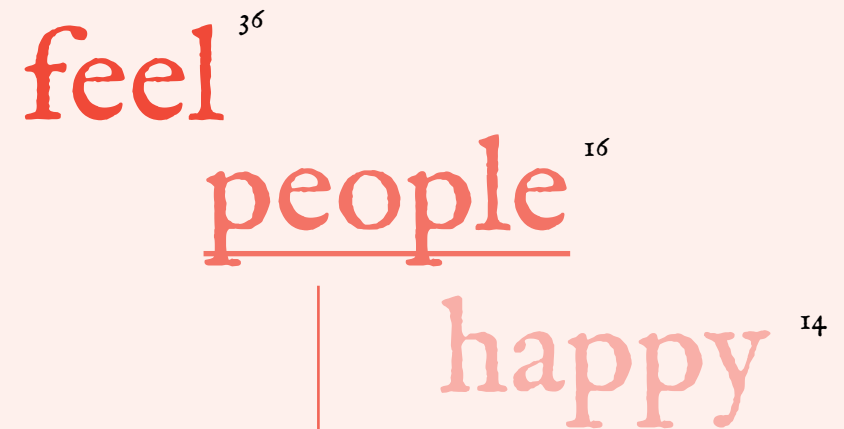
How often is wellbeing thought about?



Attitudes towards wellbeing

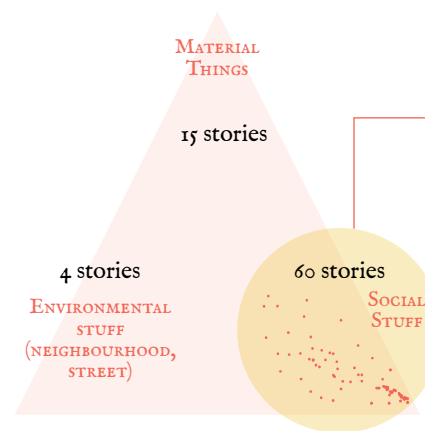


Top words mentioned as an indicator of personal wellbeing



RELATED OBSERVATION

In a question about what helped or could have helped someone's wellbeing in their story...



In this yellow area, approximately

40%

of respondents *strongly* felt like social stuff (relationships) could have helped or did help their wellbeing

50%

of folks who identified as male (32/63) placed their story within this area

THE INFLUENCE OF TIME

Average Priority of Wellbeing

76/100

With score of 100 being VERY HIGH

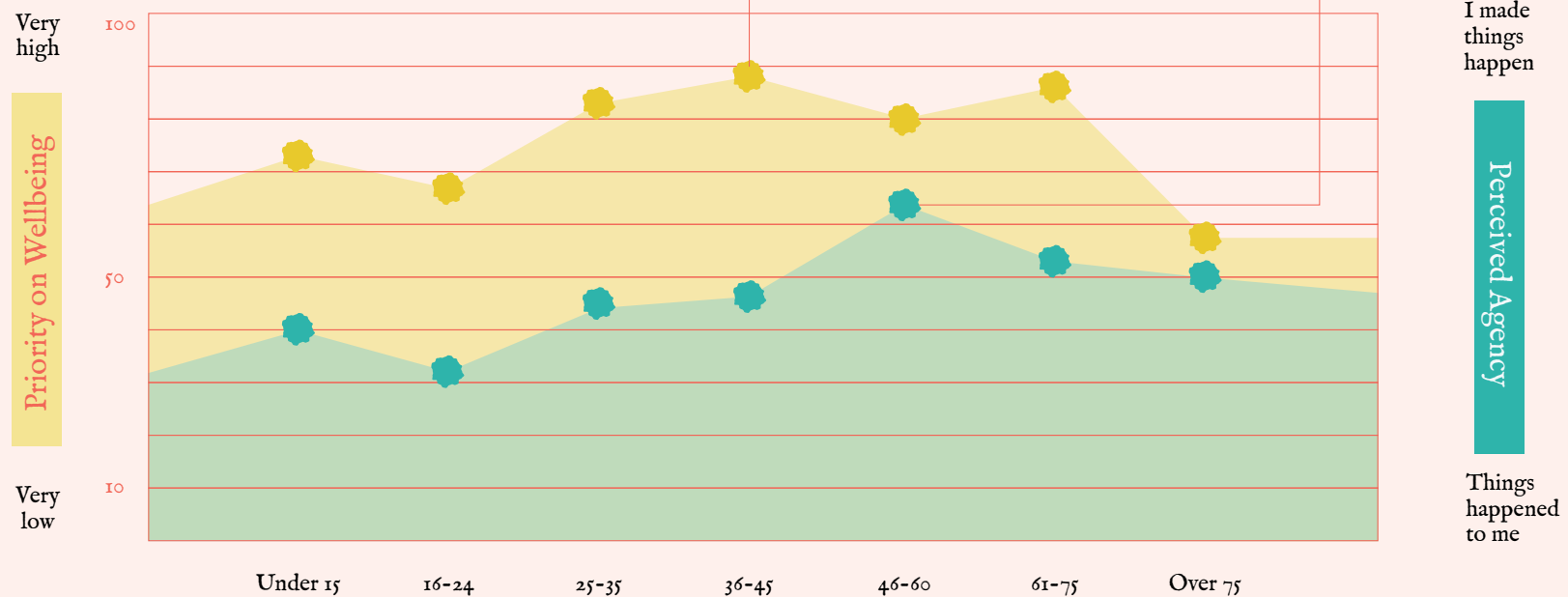
Individuals within this age bracket placed most priority on their wellbeing, rating it an average of 87/100

Average Perceived Agency in Wellbeing

46/100

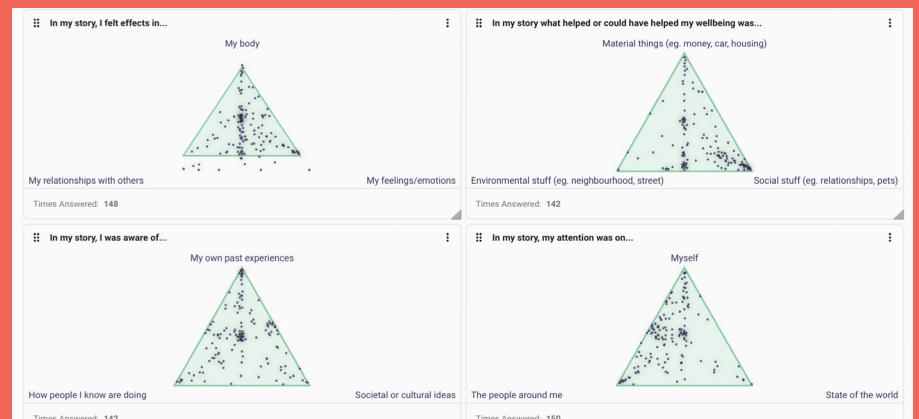
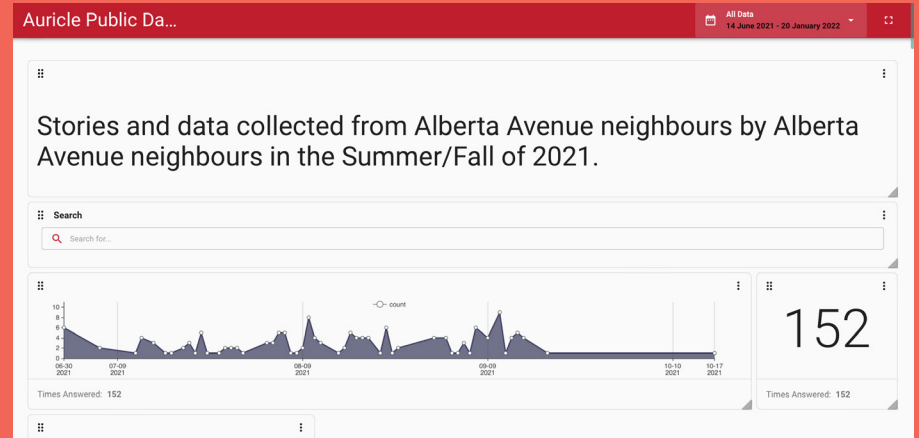
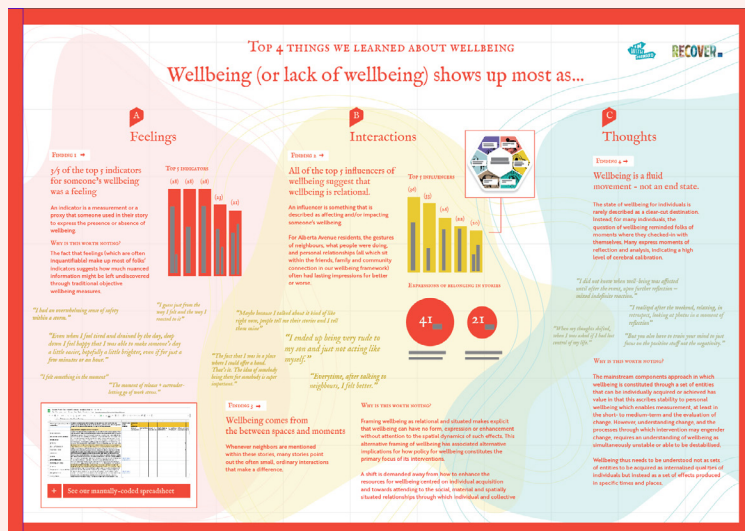
With 100 reflecting a strong sense of agency, and 1 reflecting a lack of agency.

20% of individuals (7/37) within this age bracket answered that they entirely made things happen - the highest proportion in any age category.



While the dashboard visualizations help us identify overarching **themes and patterns**, they still gloss over the thickness and nuance of people's stories.

To try and capture some of that texture, we've created a topographical map comprised of snippets of the 152 moments which shaped people's wellbeing for better and for worse.



See our raw data on our public dashboard



WWW.AURICLE.INFO