



# Evaluative Research on Housing for Women and Gender-Diverse People in Canada:

## Preliminary Considerations

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WOMEN'S NATIONAL  
HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS  
NETWORK



# Presentation outline

- 1. Project background**
- 2. Emerging themes**
- 3. Preliminary regional findings**
- 4. Gaps in knowledge**
- 5. Next steps**
- 6. Roundtable discussion**

# Methodology



**Qualitative interviews & focus groups** with lived experts, community-based advocates, & service-providers



**National Quantitative Survey** – 500 participants in WNHHN Pan-Canadian Survey



**Scoping literature review** and analysis

## Project Background

- **Purpose of Project:** Develop a regional portrait of the housing challenges women and gender-diverse persons experience in Canada
- **Positioning Our Work:** This PCVWH-funded project is being undertaken by the Women's National Housing and Homelessness Network
- **Positioning Ourselves**





# Emerging Themes

1. Absence of **gender-responsive** policies and practices
2. Interconnection of housing need with **experiences of violence, and the anti-violence sector**
3. Deregulated **private rental housing** and lack of **tenant protections**

# Theme 1: Lack of gender-responsive policies and programs

Participants across regions in Canada unanimously agreed that gender-sensitivity is absent in housing policies and planning, even when policies are meant to serve women and gender-diverse people

Almost all policies are not gender-responsive. Maybe some things name women within their mandate, but **nothing within it actually matches what is going on for people.**

Focus Group Participant, Central

From a Saskatchewan perspective, the problem around gender-based housing is there is so much prejudice- **if you are trans, you don't count as a person.** We do take in trans people but there is not resources for it.

Focus Group Participant, Prairies

# Gendered housing need:

**Deeper investment in gender-specific housing options is badly needed across all study regions, with attention for intersecting needs, communities and lived realities.**

**Services and programs tailored to women and gender-diverse people are often over capacity, with years-long waitlists for supportive housing, and shelters having to turn people away:**

- Gender-diverse people were significantly more likely to be **unable to access a shelter bed** when they needed one (56%) than cisgendered women (34%)

(WNHHN Pan-Canadian Survey)

Because I was male presenting and fleeing abuse with a baby and a dog and you can't bring all of them with you/only one family shelter for women allows pets [...] I felt that because I present more masculine and don't identify exactly as a woman **it would cause issues or I wouldn't be welcome or safe there either.**

-WNHHN Survey respondent





**“Policies reinforce women's economic uncertainty. Like, some of our programs require women and gender-diverse people to give up their assets, but then we are told a GBA+ lens has been used to inform the practice.”**

- Focus Group Participant, central

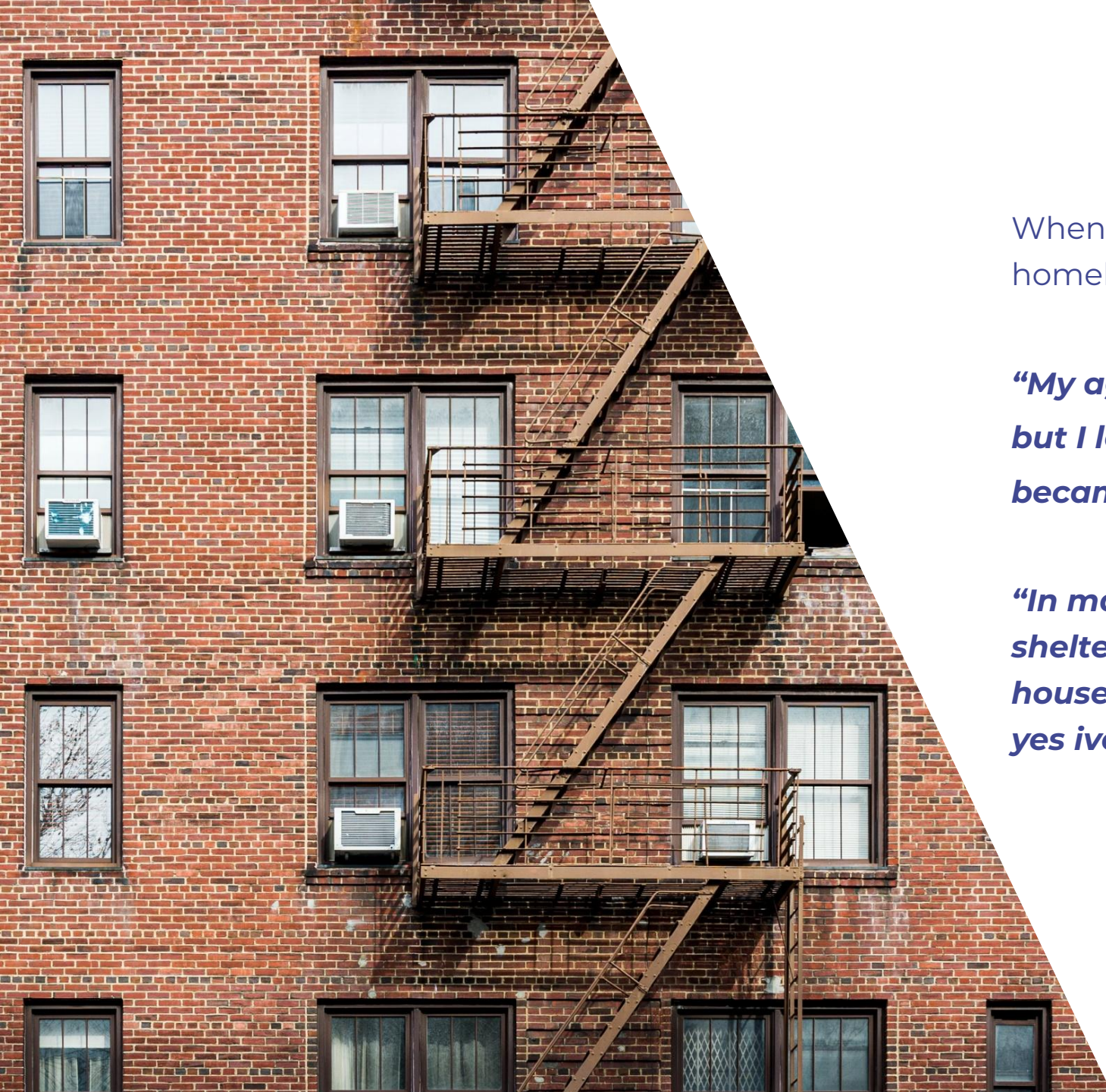
## Theme 2: Violence and the anti-violence sector

**Housing need among women and gender-diverse people is interconnected with experiences of violence and trauma. Many participants reported violence and trauma resulting from navigating anti-violence systems and seeking respite when trying to escape housing insecurity, homelessness or violence in a previous housing situation.**

I was sex-trafficked in Manitoba by a guy I was with. It went on for a year, I was homeless at the time and I couldn't get into women's shelters in Winnipeg. Had a bad date and the guy bit up my face and the police said that the shelter is for women that get beat up everyday, not just a one-time thing. And they would not make a report for me, would not do nothing for me.

What is the alternative to living on the street and in bad situations: people living in transition programs. transitional housing is unsafe and people feel institutionalized. Building more transitional solutions might not be the answer. lots of people are talking about more shelters. transitional solutions; expecting people to stopgap. Not transitioning into a permanent housing situation, which is what it should be.





When asked about their most recent experiences of homelessness, two participants responded:

***“My aggressor was removed from the home but I lost my housing as a result and became homeless.”***

***“In manitoba if ur partner isnt physical u dont get shelter If it isnt ur partner but member of ur household it doesnt qualify even if theyr beating u So yes ive been denied shelter at womens abuse shelters”***

-WNHHN Pan-Canadian Survey respondents

# Theme 3: Deregulated private rental housing and lack of tenant protections

Regions across Canada are experiencing rampant financialization of private rental markets, unchecked power of landlords and property managers over vulnerable renters and lack of tenant protections

Landlords have a lot of money behind them and even with tenant organizations in place, tenants can't go up against them. The actions are slow and people don't know what the consequences are gonna be.

Focus Group Participant, Central

Landlords intimidating people to moveout. Someone we knew committed suicide cos they were bullied by the landlord.

Focus Group Participant, Central

Landlords don't do their end of the bargain, and if tenants don't know their rights then they are screwed. Pest infestations and no maintenance are common

Focus Group Participant, Atlantic





**“I have so many friends in inadequate accommodations that simply put up with the horrific conditions at their homes because their only other option is homelessness.”**

- WNHHN Survey respondent





# Preliminary Regional Analysis: Pan-Canadian Survey Data

- **Women and gender-diverse people in the Territories, Prairies and Atlantic were more likely to be accessing income supports whereas people in the West and Central regions reported higher access to disability benefits.**
- **Women and gender-diverse people from West were much more likely to report being homeless for longer than 6 months, compared to any other region.**
- **Atlantic and West region are most likely to see women and gender-diverse people losing their housing due to natural disasters**
- **Women and gender-diverse people from Atlantic region reported the highest number of average reasons to leave their housing, West reports the lowest number of average reasons.**



## Preliminary Regional Analysis: Pan-Canadian Survey Data

- Inability to afford a place, inability to afford a damage deposit and local shortage of places are reported as top 3 challenges in finding and keeping housing across all regions.
  - Atlantic and Prairies regions have the highest proportions of people reporting inability to afford a damage deposit
  - Atlantic and Territories have the highest proportion of people reporting local shortages of places
- While the portrait of discrimination does not vary much across regions, significantly higher proportion of women and gender-diverse people reported discrimination due to Indigenous identity in Prairies and Territories compared to other regions.

# Preliminary Regional Analysis: Pan-Canadian Survey Data

- When it comes to challenges in accessing shelter/drop-in spaces, Atlantic reported relatively high proportion of following:
  - Not being able to get in because there is not enough space / beds
  - Not knowing what services are available
  - Not feeling safe
- Prairies was second most likely to report aforementioned challenges in accessing shelters/drop-in.
- In terms of personal experiences, women and gender-people from the Central and Prairies were most likely to report experiences of sex-trafficking.
  - People from the Territories reported the highest rates of involvement with child welfare system as a child.

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***“Services in rural and northern communities, people are reluctant to take because the service providers know your entire family. They might give you bad name or make assumptions.”***

***“We're trying to do more and more work with municipalities that do city planning and policies- it's not exciting, but there are actually lots of opportunities. [Right now] you can't build anything but a detached home, so bylaw and zoning makes a huge difference”***

-Focus group participant responses, northern and central



# Gaps in Knowledge at the Intersection of Gender and Housing

- Culturally grounded approaches to housing for Indigenous women and Two-Spirit and gender-diverse persons
- Compounding experiences of discrimination and gendered exclusion of multiply marginalized women and gender-diverse people
- Experiences of eviction for women and gender-diverse people, and barriers to accessing legal supports and access to justice during evictions
- The impact of the financialization of housing on women and gender-diverse households and individuals
- Best practices and models (domestically and internationally) for rights-based housing provision for women and gender-diverse persons
- Experiences of hidden homelessness amongst Two-Spirit, trans, non-binary, and gender-diverse persons
- Community-held and lived experience-designed solutions for housing

# Questions for group Discussion

1. What do you think is **not well understood about housing in your region** for women and gender-diverse people? Where are the **gaps**?
2. Compared to housing situations in other regions or communities, **what is unique about yours**?
3. What are examples of **promising housing policies, practices, or programs** that are working in your region?



# Thank you!

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