

Ottawa Inuit Women's Housing and Shelter Needs Assessment

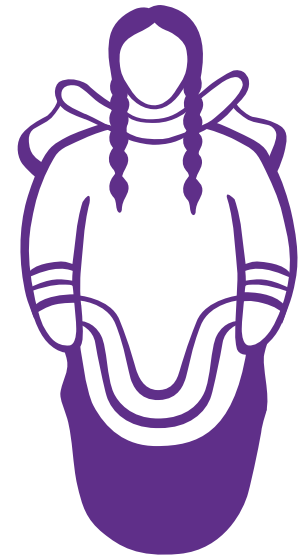


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1 Executive Summary



1.1 Background

In 2020-21, an assessment of the shelter and housing needs of Inuit women in Ottawa was undertaken by Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada in partnership with Tungasuvvingat Inuit (TI) and Inuuqatigiit Centre for Inuit Children, Youth and Families (Inuuqatigiit Centre). Funded by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), the goals of the needs assessment were to:

- 1) describe Inuit women's needs for shelter and long-term housing;
- 2) describe the current state of housing and shelter available to women and children in Ottawa; and
- 3) develop a method and tools that could be used in other Canadian urban Inuit communities.

Research has been conducted on housing needs in Inuit Nunangat (Inuit homelands) and Indigenous shelter and housing challenges in urban communities; however, less is known about the experiences and challenges faced by Inuit women living in urban areas. We do know that the severe shortage of affordable housing in Ottawa and other large cities is contributing to high levels of homelessness, substance abuse, family distress and gender-based violence among urban Inuit. While providing specific information on how to improve the Ottawa housing situation for Inuit women, the needs assessment also presents methodology and data collection tools to support shelter and housing needs assessments within other urban Inuit communities.



1.2 Method and Results

A four-person research team (two Inuit and two non-Inuit women) carried out the needs assessment under the direction of the partners. Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) values and Inuit research principles guided the project. Quantitative and qualitative information was collected through:

- 1) a voluntary online survey of 124 Ottawa Inuit women 15 years of age and older;
- 2) more in-depth follow-up telephone interviews with 34 women;
- 3) an online survey of 18 Ottawa housing and shelter service providers; and
- 4) follow-up interviews with the service providers.

The women's survey and interviews were available in Inuktitut and English, and Inuit women conducted the interviews. The needs assessment survey was heavily promoted by the partners and other agencies in Ottawa. While the COVID-19 pandemic made it more difficult to reach women who were homeless or in temporary housing, Indigenous and non-Indigenous agencies assisted in promoting the survey and filled out the survey for some women using tablets.

Since survey participants were not randomly selected, the results cannot be considered representative of all Inuit women in Ottawa. However, the research team is satisfied that the sample captures a range of women's demographics and living situations, including a wide age range and those with and without children. Both the women and their service providers shared rich information on shelter and housing needs, challenges and gaps.



1.3 Some Key Findings

The individual experiences of the women with the shelter and housing system in Ottawa ranged from quite satisfactory to dire. Women typically needed assistance to navigate the housing support system to get into housing – and often additional support in order to remain housed.

Homelessness and shelter use

- One in seven (14%) of the women was homeless at the time of the survey.
- Almost six out of ten (56%) had felt the need to leave their home, either temporarily or permanently, but had no safe place to go.
- About one in three (29%) had been turned away from a shelter because it was full.
- Four in 10 (44%) had avoided going to a shelter because they felt they would be unsafe there.
- Inuit women have stayed in violent situations at home due to a lack of safe shelter options for families.
- A lack of transitional housing keeps women in the shelter system for long periods of time.

Health challenges

- Sixty per cent (60%) of respondents reported some sort of physical or mental health challenge.
- One-half (53%) identified having mental health challenges such as addiction, depression, anxiety disorder, PTSD or schizophrenia. Women who were homeless often indicated multiple challenges that were barriers to finding and keeping housing.
- Some women reported that they had to access multiple service providers before they found help and/or healing that enabled them to get into longer-term housing.

Cultural understanding

- Women described a limited understanding of Inuit culture among non-Indigenous shelter and housing service providers. Agency staff acknowledged that increased cultural competency among staff was needed and that little systematic training is in place.
- While the Indigenous organizations showed greater awareness of Inuit culture, recurring Inuit-specific training was lacking.

Discrimination and racism

- Numerous women commented that the stereotype of the “drunk Inuk that causes trouble” is commonly held and that they had been negatively impacted by stigma and discrimination.
- Service providers cited systemic racism as one of the most significant challenges that they observed Inuit women facing when trying to get housing.

Moving to Ottawa from the North

- The majority of women in the needs assessment had moved to Ottawa as adults, including eleven of the 14 women who were homeless at the time of the survey. Many women leave the North fleeing violence and extremely crowded housing.
- Women arrive in the south with little information on the housing crisis here, the costs of housing and typically with no understanding of how market and social housing works.

Youth-specific housing supports

- One-quarter (24%) of the women surveyed had been in foster care. Youth aging out of care, or leaving their families at a young age, are typically ill-prepared to make the transition to independent living. They lack the life skills, financial support and emotional maturity to manage independently.
- Youth who are developmentally delayed or have FASD may need lifelong support.

Longer-term housing

- Many women expressed the need for space and stability to heal from trauma and to build a good life. However, challenges in this area are the perfect storm of a serious lack of supply of subsidized housing, high rents, overall low vacancy rates and financial supports that are inadequate to live on.
- The Social Housing Registry, as well as individual applications for housing, are difficult to navigate and waiting lists are extremely long.
- Low-income women can easily get overextended financially and not have money for utilities, food and other living expenses. Service providers also shared examples of marginalization, racism, stigma, and harassment from landlords and neighbours.

Effective housing support

Women and service providers identified a number of needs for effective housing support:

- Inuit-led solutions where culture and language are central. Nearly nine in 10 (87%) of the women agreed or strongly agreed that shelters and housing services that are specific to Inuit are needed;
- women need assistance in getting identification and other documentation, filling out paperwork, navigating the system, developing housing-related life skills, dealing with conflict and understanding their rights and obligations; and
- for those who need it, help travelling the city and getting to appointments, additional financial supports for rent arrears, first and last months' rent and moving expenses would contribute to getting stable housing.



1.4 Key Service Gaps

These key service gaps were identified in the needs assessment:

- information and support to find housing, especially for women arriving from the North, those with trauma and addictions and mental and physical disabilities/conditions;
- emergency shelter combined with transitional housing that provides safe healing environments for those exiting a relationship and/or experiencing violence and abuse;
- both Inuit-specific shelters and longer-term housing that are culture- and language-based;
- access to mainstream service providers that are knowledgeable about Inuit and able to provide culturally safe services;
- social housing that builds a sense of community, social cohesion and mutual support and is more readily accessible and safe;
- flexible financial subsidies and income assistance that is geared to the Ottawa rental market so that rental costs don't jeopardize food security and other necessities;
- help with financial barriers to moving and leasing; and
- livable incomes and better access to credit that would enable more women to transition to home ownership.

1.5 Recommendations

The recommendations below span issues relevant to Ottawa Inuit women, systemic housing issues that impact other urban Inuit communities and/or urban homeless communities at large. Concerted action at the municipal, provincial and federal government levels is needed to address these issues. Most importantly, urban Inuit organizations need to be fully engaged, and financially supported, as these changes are planned and implemented. Effectively addressing shelter and housing gaps will require allocation of adequate resources.

Improve delivery of shelter and housing services

1. Provide financial resources for Ottawa Inuit service-based organizations to work together to prioritize and advocate for:
 - i. national policies and initiatives (Federal government);
 - ii. provincial programs that fund wrap-around social and cultural supports and poverty reduction measures (Government of Ontario); and
 - iii. Increased local shelter and housing supports geared to Inuit (City of Ottawa).
2. Strike a task group with leaders of Inuit service-based organizations and senior officials with relevant City of Ottawa departments to ensure that Inuit housing priorities are adequately addressed and accounted for.
3. Inuit organizations deliver Inuit cultural competency training to front-line Ottawa housing and shelter service providers funded by municipal or provincial government.
4. Improve information sharing, planning and referral relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous shelter and housing organizations and programs including provision of adequate resources to the organizations. (Ottawa agencies and governments)
5. Deliver Inuit-specific satellite support services such as meetings with housing case workers and life-skills programming on-site at shelters and housing locations such as those managed by Ottawa Community Housing. (Ottawa agencies and governments)
6. The City of Ottawa formally engages Inuit organizations to ensure that the needs of Inuit women are a high priority in implementing actions outlined in the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Work Plan 2021-2022, paying special attention to actions 19 to 27 which aim to increase capacity of homelessness programs.
7. City of Ottawa senior officials work with Inuit organizations to design housing that serves the needs of Inuit and supports their cultural values, including, for example, family-based shelters-transitional housing; mixed community housing for families, singles, youth and elders; and indoor and outdoor communal spaces.

Adequately support vulnerable populations

8. Support shelters and transitional housing organizations to develop processes to connect Inuit clients to Inuit and other Indigenous services in addition to supporting them in-house (if that is the client's choice) and to remain up to date on available services. (Governments)
9. Provide culture-based supports to Inuit survivors of violence, women experiencing mental health and addictions issues, and at-risk youth in conjunction with Inuit organizations, shelters and transitional housing services. This support is to be strengths-based, trauma-informed and based on harm reduction. (Ottawa agencies and Governments)

10. Provide culturally appropriate services at the level needed during critical transition periods, including individuals discharged from hospitals and treatment centres, leaving prison and youth aging out of care. This will help individuals successfully re-integrate into the community and avoid homelessness. (Governments and community agencies)
11. Develop training for and employ more Inuit as housing support workers, systems navigators/ advocates and counsellors in shelters-transitional housing and longer-term housing. (Governments and community agencies)
12. Inuit Land Claim Organizations/Governments to partner with urban Inuit organizations to:
 - i. educate Inuit who are considering relocation to the south on how the market and social housing systems work, including processes, cost of housing, and availability;
 - ii. deliver settlement services to their members who relocate off the land claim and are at-risk of or experiencing homelessness; and
 - iii. support urban Inuit in understanding and exercising their rights as land claim beneficiaries.

Increase availability of shelter beds, second-stage housing and longer-term housing

13. Dedicate funds for Inuit-specific shelter and housing priorities along the continuum of need – from housing support services, needs-based emergency-transitional housing, supported social housing, to adequately subsidized market rentals. (All governments)
14. Reduce pressure on shelters through increased acquisition of existing infrastructure, further accelerated construction of affordable housing and developing better solutions for chronic homelessness. (City of Ottawa)
15. Increase the assets of Inuit Non-Profit Housing Corporation. (City of Ottawa – 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Work Plan 2021-2022 action #4)
16. Provide more equitable opportunities and reduce pressure on social housing, exploring how Inuit home ownership could be encouraged and what funding could be made available to support these efforts, for example, ongoing partnerships with Habitat for Humanity. (Governments and non-profit organizations)
17. Provide funding for the Aboriginal Community Advisory Board to advise on and monitor Indigenous shelter and housing needs and priorities. (City of Ottawa)

Make longer-term housing more affordable

18. The Government of Ontario provides adequate income supports and legislates living wages, recognizing that the cost of housing and other necessities varies considerably across Ontario.
19. The Government of Ontario increases the portability of rental subsidies such that they can also be applied to market housing. Currently only designated subsidized housing is eligible and an update to legislation is required to allow household rent-geared-to-income portability (City of Ottawa Workplan action #17).
20. Support efforts to make housing units more affordable through the City of Ottawa re-design of the Municipal Housing Subsidy Program (workplan actions #16 and #18) and ensure the interests of Inuit women are prioritized.
21. Provide dedicated funds to Tungasuvvingat Inuit in order to expand eligibility and increase financial help to Inuit to cover exceptional housing expenses such as first and last month's rent, moving costs, utility hook-ups, etc. (Government of Ontario)

Collect more and better data

22. Statistics Canada works with local Inuit organizations to improve census taking among Inuit in the Census Metropolitan Areas. This will result in increased accuracy of population estimates and contribute to a better understanding of evolving urban Inuit needs.
23. In the delivery of the 2021-2022 Housing and Homelessness Workplan, City of Ottawa staff engages/partners with local Inuit organizations in an evaluation of the Social Housing Registry (action #28), one-door access (action #29) and use of the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (action #32).
24. Ottawa Community Housing expands the client information that they collect to include self-reported Inuit, First Nations or Métis identity.
25. Ottawa shelters, transitional housing and longer-term housing agencies include a question allowing Inuit, Métis and First Nations to self-identify in intake forms and collating and sharing this information with Inuit organizations.
26. Tungasuvvingat Inuit accelerates development of a client database that includes client characteristics, referrals, service provided, housing placement and other pertinent information.

Develop and implement national policy that supports the effective delivery of culturally appropriate shelter and housing services to Inuit women

27. Apply Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) principles in the co-design of innovative housing solutions that meet Inuit needs and aspirations. (Governments and Inuit organizations)
28. Incorporate an intersectional human rights and gender equity approach into the National Housing Strategy, as recommended by Women's Shelters Canada. (Government of Canada and national Inuit organizations)
29. National Inuit bodies work with the regional Land Claim Organizations/Governments and southern Inuit services organizations to address housing needs of urban Inuit.
30. Hold an Inuit national forum to articulate urban Inuit realities and needs, including housing. (National, regional and southern Inuit organizations)



2 Introduction



2.1 Inuit Women and Housing

The lack of adequate housing for Inuit has been described for decades as a crisis. According to a national study completed in 2011:

Housing affects every aspect of [Inuit] life, including work, school, family, and social relationships, which in turn impact an individual's mental, spiritual, and physical health and well-being. — Knotsch & Kinnon, 2011, p. 1

Safe shelter is a fundamental human right, yet the housing inequities between Inuit and non-Inuit Canadians are significant. Rates of inadequate housing in Inuit Nunangat are almost six times the rate for non-Indigenous people in Canada (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2018). According to the 2016 Canadian Census, nationally, 40.6% of Inuit in Nunavut lived in overcrowded homes, with a high of 56.4% in Nunavut. About one-quarter (26.2%) nationally and 34.3% of Inuit in Nunavut lived in homes needing major repairs (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2016).

The proportion of Inuit living outside of Inuit Nunangat continues to grow substantially: more than one-quarter (27.1%) of Inuit currently live outside of their homelands. Between 2006 and 2016, the Inuit population increased by 29.1% while those living outside Inuit Nunangat grew by 61.9%. More than one-half (56.2%) of those living outside Inuit Nunangat reside in metropolitan areas larger than 30,000 people, with the largest populations in Ottawa-Gatineau, Montreal and Edmonton (Statistics Canada, 2017a). When multiple identities/Inuit ancestry is taken into account 40% of Inuit live outside Inuit Nunangat (Statistics Canada, 2017b).

It is becoming clearer that the housing crisis as well as high rates of violence in the North are contributing to increasing numbers of Inuit leaving their homelands, mainly relocating to urban centres where they face culture shock, barriers to employment and a scarcity of affordable accommodation (Morris, 2016; Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2017; Tungasuvvingat Inuit, 2016). One of the six goals of the National Urban Inuit Strategy is housing — ensuring Inuit in urban centres are able to access appropriate and safe housing (Tungasuvvingat Inuit, 2016).

Many urban Inuit who are seeking shelter are taken into already crowded houses, contributing to poor health outcomes and masking the real “homeless” rate. The City of Ottawa reports that in the 2018 point-in-time count

24% percent of those surveyed identified as First Nations, Inuit, Métis, or having Indigenous ancestry, which is higher than previously documented by the City through shelter-based data. The over-representation spans across all homeless locations— in shelters, on the street, in corrections and hospitals, transitional housing, and the hidden homeless populations at various percentage degrees. The City recognizes that the Indigenous community feels the actual overall percentage is higher as many Indigenous do not identify for fear of discrimination and ostracism from mainstream services. — City of Ottawa, 2018, p. 2

Those working in the shelter system in Ottawa today estimate that up to 20% of people in emergency shelters in Ottawa are Inuit, many of them women and children living in overflow crisis housing (motels) for months at a time.

Emergency shelter and transitional housing for women and their children impacted by violence is a critical need (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2019; Women's Shelters Canada, 2017). Two initiatives by Inuuqatigiit Centre – Sannginivut: Strong Voices for Stronger Communities and Inuit Well-Being: Gender-Based Violence have identified the lack of culturally safe and accessible emergency shelters and transitional housing as key needs in Ottawa (Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre, 2017).

Indigenous youth face particular shelter challenges. Nationally, 30.6 % of Canadian youth in shelters identify as Indigenous (Gaetz et al., 2016). A survey of youth-serving agencies in 2020 reports that during COVID-19, 64% of agencies have seen increases in youth staying in unsafe living arrangements. "Greater inequities are experienced by racialized, 2SLGBTQIA+, Indigenous, youth with disabilities, newcomers and other further marginalized and oppressed youth" (Buchnea & McKitterick, 2020, p. 5).



2.2 Project Goals

In 2020, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada received funding from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to conduct an assessment of Inuit women and their children's homelessness and housing needs in Ottawa. The goals of the project were to:

- 1) describe their needs for shelter and long-term housing;
- 2) describe the current state of housing and shelter available to women and children in Ottawa; and
- 3) develop a method and tools that could be used in other Canadian urban Inuit communities.

Research has been conducted on housing needs in Inuit Nunangat (Inuit homelands) and Indigenous shelter and housing challenges in urban communities; however, less is known about the experiences and challenges faced by Inuit women living in urban areas. We do know that the lack of safe, affordable housing was an issue raised repeatedly in community meetings on urban Inuit women's needs across Canada, including Ottawa. The severe shortage of affordable housing is contributing to high levels of homelessness, substance abuse and family distress among urban Inuit. Inuit women also highlighted the need for Inuit-specific emergency shelters, transitional housing and long-term social housing in cities (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2017)

In January 2020, Ottawa City Council declared a housing and homeless crisis and emergency in the national capital. At the time, it was estimated that about 92 people in Ottawa sleep outside every night, 600 families are living in "cramped" motel rooms and the wait list for subsidized community housing has ballooned to 12,000 households, a situation made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic (Britneff, 2020).

The needs assessment also was intended to test a methodology and data collection tools for shelter and housing needs assessments that can be undertaken in other urban Inuit communities. This approach will enable Inuit across Canada to document the gaps and challenges faced by Inuit women in their communities in relation to their housing supply and availability of shelter and transitional housing services.

2.3 Project Partnership

From the outset, the needs assessment has been supported, guided and improved by collaboration with two local Inuit organizations, Tungasuvvingat Inuit (TI) and Inuuqatigiit Centre for Inuit Children, Youth and Families (Inuuqatigiit Centre). These two organizations have front-line experience supporting Inuit in Ottawa and their full participation in this work has been integral to the successful delivery of this project. Our core research team included four people, two Inuit and two non-Inuit women who live and work in Ottawa.

From here on, the term partnership refers collectively to Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, Tungasuvvingat Inuit and Inuuqatigiit Centre for Inuit Children, Youth and Families.

2.4 Applying Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit Principles

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) is a unique body of knowledge established over thousands of years by Inuit living in the Arctic and northern Canada. IQ (“that which we know to be true” in Inuktitut) continues to be used today to develop Inuit-specific solutions to Inuit needs. Eight IQ principles, also called Inuit Societal Values, guide individual, family and community actions, and can be directly applied in understanding and acting on urban Inuit shelter and housing needs identified in this report.¹

Piliriqatigiinni – **working together for a common cause.** Ottawa Inuit organizations are working effectively together to address community concerns and form meaningful partnerships with non-Inuit allies. In this way we can pool our knowledge to develop immediate and longer-term solutions to the Inuit housing crisis. A common purpose can unite us.

Qanuqtuurniq – **being innovative and resourceful.** We can develop shelter and housing options that work for Inuit, support Inuit family values and provide safe, healthy places to live. If we can imagine it, we can create it.

Pijitsirniq – **servicing and providing for family and community.** Inuit shelter and housing can provide a healthy place to raise children, support youth as they become independent, and enable elders to “age in place.” Good housing creates community and connections with others. Secure housing is an important part of “living a good life.”

Inuuqatigiitsiarniq – **respecting and caring for other people and our relationships so that we can live together in harmony.** Temporary shelters, transitional and supported housing, and long-term accommodations can help women fleeing violence, single parents, Inuit facing mental health and addictions challenges, and those with disabilities to find safety, comfort and support. Together, we can be a strong caring Inuit community.

Tunnganarniq – **being open, welcoming and inclusive in fostering positive relationships.** We can build urban Inuit communities that are anti-discriminatory, tolerant of gender and sexual diversity and a range of life experiences and welcoming to newcomers. Shelter and housing options can be staffed by Inuit who understand and can support other Inuit. Together, we can heal and grow.

¹ Adapted from: Inuuqatigiit Centre for Children, Youth and Families website, Tungasuvvingat Inuit, 2016; Government of Nunavut 1999, Tagalik, 2010. <http://www.ccsa-nccah.ca/docs/health/FS-InuitQaujimajatuqangitWellnessNunavut-Tagalik-EN.pdf>

Ajjiqatigiinniq – decision making through discussion and consensus. Inuit children, youth and families can be centrally involved in designing housing that meets their needs. Inuit leaders, funders, architects and builders can work together to develop high quality housing units. Discussion opens the door to creativity and consensus processes build unity.

Pilimmaksarniq – learning and mastering new skills through observation, mentoring, practice and effort. Through the process of Inuit developing and delivering shelter and housing for Inuit, community members and organization staff can develop new skills and knowledge to share with other communities. Inuit self-determination provides opportunities to learn from people with lived experience through programming including art therapy and mental health support.

Avatittinnik – respecting and caring for the land, animals and the environment. In an urban setting Inuit can still live in harmony with nature through good urban development principles. Housing can be built to the highest environmental standards, include green spaces and provide opportunities for children and adults to exercise, gather, and share traditional food.



3 Methods

To gain insight into the shelter and housing needs of urban Inuit women and their children we directly engaged Inuit women and selected service providers in Ottawa. Particular focus was placed on homelessness or emergency shelter needs while also considering the full continuum of housing needs, from shelter to second stage/supported housing, to longer-term social and market housing.

Throughout the course of this research the partners actively supported this needs assessment by commenting on the approach, methods and results, promoting the survey on their social media, and supporting the participation of their clients to complete the survey.

The project was guided by the following research principles and practices:

- seek Inuit-specific solutions informed by experience;
- apply high standards of Inuit research ethics;
- use Inuit surveyors/interviewers as much as possible;
- maintain partner involvement throughout the project;
- be accessible to and provide a voice for a wide range of Inuit women; and
- produce recommendations relevant to present-day needs and opportunities for change.

Data sources included:

- 1) a voluntary online survey of 124 Ottawa Inuit women 15 years of age and older;
- 2) optional follow-up interviews with 34 women;
- 3) online survey of 18 Ottawa housing and shelter service providers; and
- 4) follow-up interviews with the service providers.

In an effort to complete the work in a timely manner the women's and service provider interviews were conducted while the surveys were still live online. All printed materials, including a description of the project, survey questions, interview guide and questions were available in English and Inuktitut (Appendices 6.1 and 6.3). Respondents were provided with information to enable them to make an informed decision about participating in the project and providing consent. Confidentiality was stressed and research results have been saved in password-protected electronic files and paper copies destroyed. Women also were provided with information with contacts for counselling and housing support if needed.

The results of this work speak to the challenging housing situation faced by Inuit women in Ottawa, the methods however were developed to support adaptation and delivery of similar initiatives in other urban areas with large Inuit populations. The description of methods is therefore more detailed than might be typical, and the survey and interview tools are included in the appendices.



3.1 On-line Survey of Inuit Women

The survey was designed to be completed online and to take about ten minutes to complete. A draft version was shared with the project partners and their feedback was incorporated. The partner organizations also were engaged to promote the online survey through their social media, and during delivery of virtual programming or client outreach calls.

A bilingual (English/Inuktitut) copy of the survey is provided in Appendix 7.1. As an incentive to participation eight \$50 prizes (gift card or money transfer) were advertised in the promotional materials and later awarded. Women had the opportunity to opt-in for participation in a follow-up interview.

The survey was online from August 5th to November 11th and was designed to be accessible from mobile devices as well as desktop computers.



3.2 Interviews with Inuit Women

Telephone interviews were conducted with women who completed the online survey and indicated their willingness to be contacted. The interviews were designed to complement and build on the information obtained through the survey, gathering more in-depth information on the women's experiences, challenges and needs related to housing. Women who were interviewed received \$25 to compensate them for their time.

Participants had the choice of being interviewed in Inuktitut or English. The bilingual (English/Inuktitut) interview guide, provided in Appendix 7.2, included scripts describing the research, how the information would be used, confidentiality, the interviewees' right to stop the interview at any time. Verbal consent to these terms was obtained.

The interviewers were Inuit women living and working with the Ottawa Inuit community. Due to COVID-19 they were provided with a videoconference orientation, with follow-up support from the lead researchers. To expedite completion of the interviews, we engaged four Inuit women in addition to the two on the research team. Interviewers were provided with interviewee contact information and the individual's survey responses. The interviewers then scheduled and conducted interviews, and submitted a report detailing the responses provided. In situations where there was a close personal or professional relationship between the interviewer and interviewee, the interviewee was reassigned.



3.3 On-line Survey and Interviews with Housing and Shelter Service Providers

With partner assistance, the team leads identified key community agencies to include in the needs assessment in the following categories: 1) emergency shelters, 2) second stage shelters or transitional/supportive housing, 3) longer-term housing, and 4) housing support. The importance of programming that was designed to support youth, elders/seniors or women fleeing violence was also considered. Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations were included.

While promoting the women's survey among shelter and housing agencies, team leads invited the selected agencies to complete a brief online survey and to participate in a telephone interview to provide information and perspectives on shelter and housing services in Ottawa and Inuit women's needs and service gaps. The private online survey was open from early October until mid-December. To facilitate their participation in this research the team leads completed the online survey for some of the agencies during their interview.

Follow-up interviews lasting from 30 to 60 minutes were conducted over the telephone by the team leads. The survey questions are available in Appendix 7.3 and the Interview Guide is available in Appendix 7.4.

It was somewhat difficult to schedule interviews due to the higher than usual demands on shelter and housing staff because of the pandemic. From the original list of service providers, four could not be reached: Elizabeth Fry Society of Ottawa, Evelyn Horne Women's Shelter, Nelson House and the Youth Services Bureau.



3.4 Impact of COVID-19

Our original intent was to include face-to-face contact in our research to: 1) engage with women at emergency shelters and support them to complete the survey on a tablet or computer, and 2) use focus groups to obtain more in-depth input from women who indicated their willingness to participate in these follow-up discussions when completing the online survey. These activities were impacted by the constraints necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The project benefited from the receipt of additional funds from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation enabling us to: 1) increase our promotion and follow-up efforts to engage homeless women and shelter clients in the needs assessment, and 2) spend the additional time needed to interview individuals over the phone rather than capturing their input through the use of focus groups.

4 Who Did We Talk To? / Characterizing the Participants



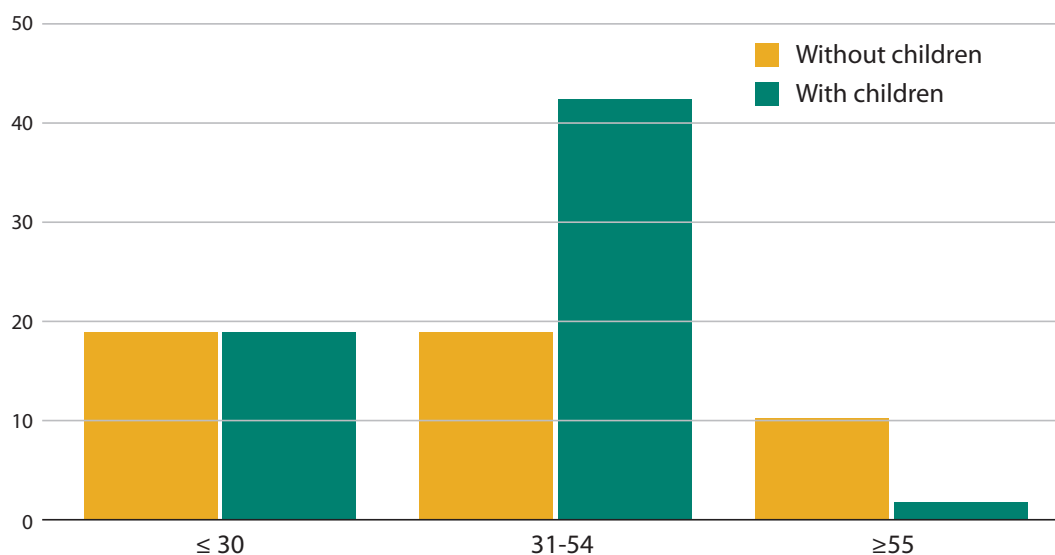
4.1 Survey of Ottawa Inuit Women

A total of 135 surveys were submitted, exceeding our target of 100. Eleven surveys were excluded (duplicate responses, only a few questions answered), therefore 124 respondents are included in the analysis. Responses to individual questions that apply to all respondents ranged from 98 to 123 for closed-ended questions. Between 63 and 82 women answered the four open-ended questions, and it is notable that many of these responses were quite detailed. We believe this reflects a high level of engagement and indicates that this issue is very important to the women who participated. The responses to the quantifiable/closed-ended survey questions are presented in Appendix 7.5, with selected results presented below in the *Findings* section.

Beneficiaries of all the land claim regions are represented, with Nunnavummiut making up the majority of the sample (84%). It is notable that 5% of women did not know if they are a beneficiary of a land claim.

Recognizing that housing needs could vary with age and responsibility for children we aimed to get respondents from six different sub-groups (see Figure 1).

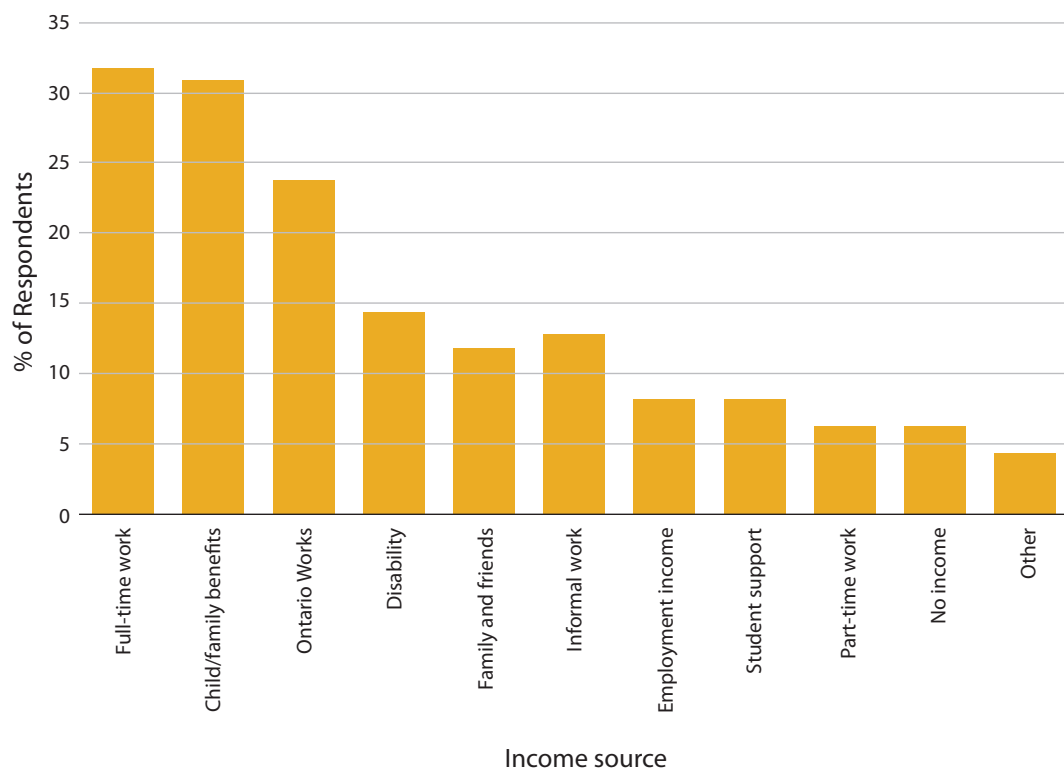
Figure 1: Survey Respondents According to Age and Responsibility for Children (N=110)



Overall, 44% of respondents had no children, 19% had one, 31% had two, 5% had three and 4% had four or more (N=110). Additionally, the sample included women with different relationship statuses – 57% of respondents were single, divorced or widowed, 31% were married or living common-law, and 12% were in a relationship but not living together (N=110). In contrast, national data from Statistics Canada (2019) indicates that almost three-quarters (71%) of the population aged 25 to 64 was married or living common-law. The rate in this group of women is less than half of that. It could be that women who have housing issues are more likely to have completed the survey, and interview results confirm that those recently separated experience challenges with housing. Inuit children are also more likely to live with a single mother – one in five (20.6%) Inuit children ages 0 to 4 live with a single mother, compared to 11.1% of non-Indigenous children (Statistics Canada 2017c).

The women reported income from a wide variety of sources (Figure 2), from social assistance and child benefits to full-time employment. Almost one-third of the women (35 of 110) were employed full-time and just over half of these women (18) also reported that they had experienced homelessness at some point in their life in Ottawa.

Figure 2: Income Sources Reported (N=110)



As the survey wasn't a random sample it cannot be considered representative of Inuit women in Ottawa. However, the research team is satisfied that the sample does capture a range of women's housing needs and challenges and living situations.



4.2 Interviews with Ottawa Inuit Women

While 60 survey respondents indicated a willingness to be interviewed and provided their contact information, it proved difficult to reach some women to schedule and carry out an interview. In order to ensure we included women who are homeless, we directly contacted several shelters to promote the survey and conducted four interviews in person at Centre 510 (a downtown Indigenous drop-in centre).

In total, 34 interviews were completed and are included in the analysis. Interviews typically took between 45 minutes and an hour to complete. The interview responses were sometimes deeply personal, and respondents often became emotional when providing detail about their experiences and needs. The impacts are clearly long-lasting as women shared that they still feel the effects today of housing challenges experienced years ago.

Women elaborated on their reasons and expectations in moving from the North to Ottawa; their current or past experiences of homelessness with and without children; financial and other barriers to housing; the types of support and services of benefit to them; and the health and economic effects on individuals and families from being inadequately housed. They provided many insights and ideas of what needs to be changed in the shelter and housing system.

The ability to link survey and interview responses provided a more comprehensive story for each woman. Numerous quotes were recorded, and selected ones have been included here to illustrate shared and individual experiences and needs. The voices of the women are very compelling and elaborate on the information presented in the charts and figures.

A strong testament to the importance of understanding the system and having the appropriate support is that one of the interviewers reported that, as a result of connecting through the interviews and sharing information, she was able to provide information that allowed two women to successfully access housing.



4.3 Connecting with Ottawa Shelter and Housing Service Providers

Eighteen service providers, representing the range of housing and shelter organizations available in Ottawa were surveyed and interviewed over the phone (Table 1). The interviewees included agency executive directors, program managers, and women's services coordinators.

The interviewees showed a strong interest in supporting the specific needs of Inuit women and had many recommendations for improvements to the Ottawa shelter and housing system.

Inuit women make up various proportions of their clientele. It was widely agreed that they have needs that are distinct from those of First Nations women, but that they also face many similar issues to other women in accessing safe and affordable housing.

Table 1: Ottawa Service Providers Contacted**Shelters:**

- 1) Interval House of Ottawa (women fleeing violence)
- 2) Oshki Kizis Lodge (Minwaashin) (Indigenous women fleeing violence) *
- 3) Shepherds of Good Hope

Second Stage Shelter or Transitional/Supportive Housing:

- 4) Cornerstone Housing for Women – Booth Street (includes Aging in Place program)
- 5) Cornerstone Housing for Women – Princeton
- 6) Harmony House Women's Shelter
- 7) Tewegan Housing for Aboriginal Youth*

Longer-term Housing:

- 8) Gignul Non-Profit Housing Corporation*
- 9) Inuit Non-Profit Housing Corporation**
- 10) The Oaks (Shepherds of Good Hope)
- 11) Ottawa Community Housing Corporation
- 12) Ottawa Salus Corporation

Housing Information and Supports:

- 13) Centre 510 (Odawa Friendship Centre)*
- 14) City of Ottawa
- 15) Housing Help
- 16) Inuuqatigiit Centre for Inuit Children, Youth and Families**
- 17) Tungasuvvingat Inuit**
- 18) Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health*

* Indigenous organization

** Inuit organization

Of the 18 service providers that we contacted, three are Inuit organizations, five are Indigenous organizations and the remaining 10 are either independent non-profits or run by the City of Ottawa. These contacts and their agencies have the potential to be valuable allies/advisors in the delivery of future initiatives for Inuit.

The survey data obtained from the service providers is presented in Appendix 7.6. Six of the 18 currently employ Inuit staff, and five are able to offer at least some support in Inuktitut. Nine of the organizations indicated that they receive funding to provide shelter or housing services specifically to Indigenous clients. All of the organizations we contacted serve female clients, with services to women without children being most common. Half of the service providers also support male clients.

Nine of the 18 organizations contacted indicated that they received funding specifically to support Indigenous clients, and all of them provide services to Inuit clients. Six organizations currently employ Indigenous staff and two more have in the past. Five organizations are able to offer at least some services in Inuktitut.

In the survey portion of data collection, 15 of the 18 organizations responded that they keep Indigenous-specific data, and 10 of those 15 keep Inuit-specific statistics. Requests during the interview phase to access data were however largely unsuccessful — with agencies citing time constraints and privacy concerns as the main reasons.

5 Findings/What Did We Hear?



Thank god for Minwaashin. I was able to leave my abusive boyfriend and moved into Ottawa Community Housing in a couple of months.

Last night I was beaten up at the homeless shelter. I go by my nickname and not by my real name at the shelter. There was another person with same nickname and got into physical altercation by mistaken identity.

There is an incredible level of need among Inuit women in Ottawa for safe, affordable housing. Women get turned away from shelters because they are full, housing is in very short supply and beyond the means of low and even middle-income households. In Canada 55% of Canadian households in core housing need are female led, as are 63% of households living in subsidized housing (Government of Canada, 2017). Inuit-specific statistics are not available but anecdotal evidence indicates that frequencies are higher.

The more affordable units are typically poor quality and in neighbourhoods where women are often afraid for their safety.

While Inuit women are in many ways similar to the general population of homeless or under-housed people they also have unique characteristics. There clearly is no one-size fits all solution, means to better address emergency shelter and long-term housing needs is vital to their safety, security and wellbeing. The words of the Inuit women who participated in this research are shared in the text boxes that accompany the narrative in this section of the report.

The individual experiences of the women with the shelter and housing system in Ottawa ranged from quite satisfactory to dire. Women can experience communication barriers when applying for housing and it can be very challenging to be aware of the services available. Women typically needed assistance to navigate the housing support system to get into housing — and often additional support in order to keep it.

Even under the added stress of COVID-19 service providers took the time to be interviewed and showed great dedication to their work and compassion for their clients. We saw evidence of good relationships and collaboration among all service providers, in particular between Indigenous and Inuit organizations.



5.1 Homelessness and Use of Emergency Shelters

For single women it is harder to secure safe housing. Before I had my daughter, I was homeless for years and waiting for a place. I was in an abusive relationship and could not go to shelters downtown because my abuser knew where all the shelters are.

The numbers tell a story of considerable hardship. At the time of the survey:

- One in seven of the women were homeless (14%);
- Six out of ten had, at some point, to sleep at someone else's house, in a shelter, tent, shed or outside (59%); and
- Almost six out of ten had felt the need to leave their home, either temporarily or permanently, but had no safe place to go (56%, N=101).

Additionally, 29% of women had been turned away from a shelter because it was full (N=101), and 44% had avoided going to a shelter because they felt they would be unsafe there (N=100). Other problems included having to leave during the day, lack of privacy, poor quality of accommodation and limits on the number of days that one can stay at a shelter.

There is a particular shortage of shelter accommodation for families. Women and service providers alike expressed frustration with the clear inadequacy of housing women with children in hotel rooms, often with only a bar fridge and microwave, and sometimes for extended periods of time. Some women also expressed that if you were not fleeing violence it was much harder to get a bed, or if there was one available it was more likely to be in a less desirable location.

Women expressed a clear dislike for the large shelters and actively avoid going there — preferring sometime to stay outside instead. Exposure to individuals that would offer them drugs and alcohol was cited as problematic at the larger shelters. Many women shared stories of suffering from violence, abuse, and trauma and that more supports, treatment for addictions and learning opportunities, on site at the shelters would be helpful to them.

A place that is not just a space for sleeping but a place to stay in during the day. Especially during wintertime.

There should be different policies like if fleeing violence from back home with children, then there should be no alcohol or drugs in that specific emergency shelter. But [also] a separate section for those with addictions with alcohol or drugs.

I don't feel safe at X because there are a lot of drugs and alcoholics there too and it isn't safe. There are not enough places for single women or women without kids. I am [seen as] a drunk Inuk, and no one takes me seriously. I want better but can't do it alone.

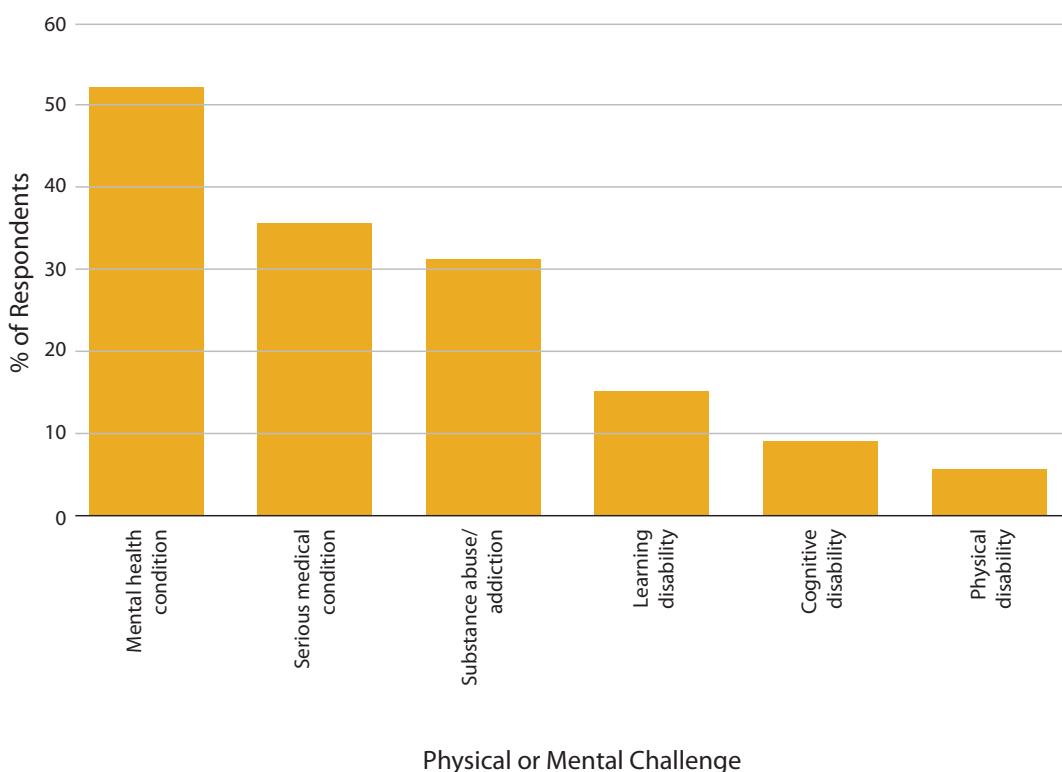


5.2 Physical and Mental Health Challenges

Of the 124 respondents 74 (60%) reported some sort of physical or mental health challenge (Figure 3). Of the 14 respondents who were homeless at the time of the survey 11 provided information about their health — often indicating multiple challenges. Six of them indicated that they have mental health issues, five live with addictions, two have physical disabilities, and two are coping with a chronic or acute medical issue.

One service provider shared that the need for housing to accommodate individuals with physical disabilities has become more prevalent as many of the more affordable buildings are walk ups without elevators. One of the supportive housing facilities that has an “aging in place” program noted that their accommodation for physical disabilities is heavily used and in demand. It is a newer build and has fully wheelchair-accessible units and an elevator.

Figure 3: Physical and Mental Challenges (N=74)



Trauma and addictions

[Not having housing] made me more of an alcoholic. Sleeping around. Feeling like no one cares. I had to leave my son with family because I can't take care him.

I have a challenge here because I am in community housing and my place is not safe — because I live in a place where others have addictions, and it makes my place unsafe sometimes.

More than half of respondents (53%) identified having mental health challenges such as addiction, depression, anxiety disorder, PTSD or schizophrenia (Figure 3). Breaking the cycle of homelessness is a big challenge – women reported that they had to access multiple service providers before they found help and healing that enabled them to get into longer-term housing.

While not all women who need housing struggle with trauma, addiction or concurrent disorders, many have found this to be a major barrier to finding and keeping housing. People who are wounded by trauma can find following rules a problem, and addictions and mental illness are hard to deal with if you have no private space. Emergency shelters are not secure or peaceful places. Also, staying housed is difficult when women are dealing with trauma and mental health or addictions issues. They need help dealing with landlord problems before they become a major issue and it's too late to fix, but women can be reluctant to ask for help. A lot of the support stops once physical accommodation is found.

Service providers agree that many Inuit women need culturally sensitive and appropriate treatment and support before they can be successfully housed. And some women with chronic alcoholism, severe mental illness or developmental disabilities may require long-term supported or residential housing which is lacking. One service provider said that she is amazed how women remain strong with all they go through; they still hope for a better life. Culturally appropriate alcohol and drug treatment would go a long way to improving the likelihood of improved outcomes for clients.



5.3 Inuit-Specific Challenges

Gaps in cultural understanding

I felt like I was judged a lot and they expected me to inform them as soon as other people started moving in with me. Even my own family.

Indigenous beds are great, but Inuit are not always treated the same... [We need] more beds especially for families.

[We need an] Inuit homeless shelter run by Inuit for Inuit mainly because of the language barrier. Inuit like to be around other Inuit to have a sense of belonging... to eat raw food without being watched or disgusted and be more comfortable to be themselves.

Interviews showed that the understanding of Inuit culture within the non-Indigenous shelter and housing service providers is very limited. While most acknowledged that increased cultural competency was needed there is surprisingly little systematic training in place. Only two of the non-Indigenous organizations said they had regular annual training and it was Indigenous, not Inuit-specific. While the Indigenous organizations showed greater awareness of Inuit culture, regular training was also lacking.

One example that is so typical of the Inuit way is their general readiness to allow relatives or friends to stay with them. This can be challenging as it is against the rules of many community housing establishments (where guests are limited to 14 days of consecutive visits), and frequently leads to conflicts with landlords or neighbours.

One Indigenous service provider shared that a difference between Inuit and First Nations women that they had observed is that Inuit women really embody their cultural values. For example, they really rely on the fats and proteins from country food as a part of wellness — this is another health risk when they come south and don't have access.

Discrimination & racism

I've encountered many biased or racist neighbors and I've lived in Ottawa for 13 years.

Social challenge from neighbours making comments thinking I was "easy". There are a lot of young Inuit women with older white guys, and it creates a stereotype.

There is a lot of racism in Ottawa. I have had so much problem with it with landlords.

During the interviews one of the questions addressed racism by asking the women if they think any of their housing challenges arose because they are Inuit. While respondents seemed very generous and were quick to give people the benefit of the doubt, many respondents shared stories that indicated they had been subjected to racism and discrimination.

Numerous women commented that the stereotype of the "drunk Inuk that causes trouble" is commonly held and that they had been negatively impacted by that perception.

Service providers cited systematic racism as one of the most significant challenges that they observed Inuit women facing when trying to get housing. For example, when some landlords realize that it is an Inuk looking to rent the unit they will back out and say it is no longer available. They think there will be substance abuse issues or that the women won't pay their rent.

Moving to Ottawa as an adult

I fled violence up north and landed here in Ottawa.

Moving down here I didn't know that I needed a credit check, and it was hard finding a home.

For people coming from the North it would be great if there was information available before they come ...who to contact, and information about what to expect when they arrive. I fled an abusive situation in my home community and had to learn a lot of this the hard way.

When the women were asked why they are now living in Ottawa we learned that the majority of them (69%) moved here as adults, while 19% moved here as children, and only 11% of them were born in the city (N=108). Among the women who were homeless at the time of the survey, 11 of the 14 (79%) had moved to Ottawa as adults.

Women described many difficulties looking for accommodation in Ottawa. They did not know where to go for information on available housing, or that they needed certain types of identification to even get on a waiting list for subsidized housing. They had no experience with market housing including submitting an application, the need for references, a credit rating and a deposit to cover first and last month's rent.

Understanding and communicating the background and specific needs of this group could go a long way to addressing housing challenges. Additionally, beneficiaries would also benefit from an increased understanding of their rights under their respective land claims while living outside Inuit Nunangat.

Service providers offered multiple observations regarding the nature and needs of this demographic. The culture shock experienced by this group is extreme. Although there is a lot of tragedy and trauma in the North, there is still support around, including peer and community support. Women can be unprepared for the anonymity and lack of family and community support when they come to a large city in the south. Women can also get exposed very quickly to drugs and are at risk of extreme violence, including human trafficking, all of which contributes to long-term homelessness.

Youth-specific housing and supports

Sometimes I want to go back home but it's not affordable. I tried outside of Ottawa, but I prefer being closer to Inuit.

Some people have lost their children to CAS and have had a hard time to get them back — partly because they did not understand how the system works.

Almost one-quarter (24%) of the women surveyed indicated that they had been in foster care (Table 2). The over-representation of Indigenous children in foster care is well established and it is also well known that youth are typically ill-prepared to make the transition from care to independent living.

They lack the life skills including budgeting and paying rent and utilities, financial support and emotional maturity to manage independently. Some policy progress is being made on this provincially, but significant change is needed. This is another priority group to target when designing supports.

According to service providers Inuit youth are used to living either in a large family or a group or foster home. They experience isolation on their own and get involved in unhealthy relationships. Youth also can be resistant to “rules”, often desire more autonomy than they can handle, and need community support workers who can provide support and “forgive mistakes.”

Service providers told us that youth who are wards of the crown, then age out of care and are dropped from group homes often end up in shelters. These youth need supportive housing/housing support workers to help them make the transition to community living in the context of their Inuit culture. A big gap is developmentally delayed and youth with FASD who may need lifelong support.

I think a big barrier was aging out of the system, once I was 18 it was like “good luck, this is the information on the welfare office.”

An aging out program would be nice or a young people program. Most of if not all of us are survivors of loved ones who have committed suicide, so maybe more of a community focus would help.



5.4 Longer-Term Housing

Because I pay market rent, I must use food banks even though I am working.

I have been here over six years and the shelter really helped me. But I am in a one- bedroom apartment with my partner and my 16 year old daughter. I have been waiting for four years for a two bedroom.

I am currently living in a one bedroom with my panik [daughter] and aipak [partner] with a little one on the way. Finding an affordable three-bedroom apartment is very difficult. ...my daughter moved here four years ago we are living [together] in a one- bedroom place.

My experience right now is a one-bedroom and living with my schizophrenic son and he is 32, very hard to get into a two-bedroom.

I've had good and bad experiences. Cases of landlords ignoring requests to fix bathtubs (also trying to make me pay for the plumber when it wasn't my place to because it came from another unit into my own). Currently with a great landlord though!

Although there is tremendous support for street outreach, I feel that once housed the same level of support should be continued.

Many women expressed the need for space and stability to heal and build a good life. However, challenges in this area are the perfect storm of a serious lack of supply of subsidized housing, high rents, overall low vacancy rates, and financial supports that are inadequate to live on. The maximum amount available for shelter to a single person under the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) is \$497, and \$390 under Ontario Works Financial Assistance (OW). The average rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Ottawa however is \$1,469 and a space in a rooming house about \$800.

Service providers said that gentrification (wealthier people moving to a poor neighbourhood, raising rents and displacing residents) is also reducing the low-income housing options in the city, including fewer rooming houses or single rooms available.

The Social Housing Registry of Ottawa (The Registry) is a non-profit organization that maintains the central waiting list for people applying for rent-gear-to-income (RGI) housing. The Registry keeps the list according to rules set out by the Province of Ontario in the Housing Services Act, 2011.

It is complex and difficult to navigate the application to be put on the waiting list, and clients are obliged to accept the first accommodation that is offered to them. It was also clear anecdotally that the success many women had finding a place to live was through another avenue rather than the waiting list.

On top of that once in a rental unit many women told us that it is exceptionally hard to get a transfer. Therefore, women accept a unit that is either too small or in a location that does not suit them, and they are trapped in that location as their priority to be housed goes way down. Many women shared stories of living in units that are clearly too small for the number of people in their family, living far from their place of employment or in neighbourhoods that they considered unsafe.

Service providers observed that women can't afford to live in the more desirable centrally located neighbourhoods where they could receive services and live closer to other Inuit. Children are often displaced to a new neighbourhood and can be hard to keep up with available cultural support services if they are far away. If clients do find a market rental, they can easily get in over their heads financially and not have money for utilities and other living expenses.

Service providers observed that women can't afford to live in the more desirable centrally located neighbourhoods where they could receive services and live closer to other Inuit. Children are often displaced to a new neighbourhood and can be hard to keep up with available cultural support services if they are far away. If clients do find a market rental, they can easily get in over their heads financially and not have money for utilities and other living expenses.

Many women cited problems with landlords, especially with respect to maintenance and dealing with repairs in their units (including broken appliances, too cold, mold, water damage). There were frequent comments about not feeling safe in the neighbourhoods where units were available and many problems with loud neighbours and lack of support from landlords.

Service providers also shared examples of marginalization, racism, stigma, and conflict/harassment from landlords and neighbours.

Housing crises for women can also be associated with becoming separated or divorced. This can result in women losing access to housing, often without any time to find alternate accommodations. There can also be financial challenges because of debts or shared ownership.

Inuit women also sometimes move back and forth between Ottawa and communities in the North — sometimes related to housing challenges in both locations. This typically causes additional expense and logistical challenges.

Being a person of colour invites subtle racism and stereotyping of addiction making it less of a chance for rentals.

An Inuit homeless shelter run by Inuit for Inuit [is needed —] mainly because of the language barrier. Inuit like to be around other Inuit to have a sense of belonging.

Inuit like to hang around other Inuit with the same culture and eat raw food without being watched [by people that are] disgusted and be more comfortable to be themselves.



5.5 What Does Effective Support Look Like?

With the support I had, it was overall great but if I [had tried to do it] on my own probably the outcome would have been different.

People need to be educated about first and last months' rent and housing support programs.

There needs to be more culturally specific support. More with parenting skills, money management and cooking skills programs. Something to teach what your rights are and what's not right. Knowing how to advocate for yourself.

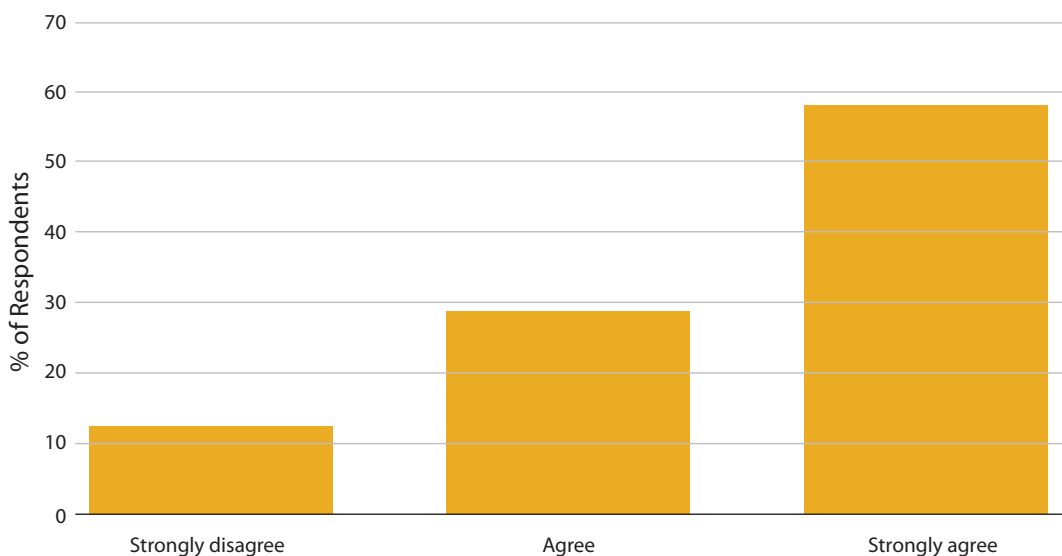
Due to cultural values and long-term effects of colonization, Inuit can find it difficult to advocate for themselves. They are more likely to accept “what is” rather than challenge the system or assert their rights. One example of a greater acceptance of situations is that when asked during the survey if there are currently too many people living in their home, only 8% said yes. There are however numerous examples in their comments that many are living under very crowded conditions. Several comments also indicated that they were grateful for the housing they did have and were hesitant to complain.

Often Inuit don't know their rights or how southern systems work. This does not serve you well when resources (housing) are in short supply and people are competing for them. This can contribute to Inuit putting up with conditions that others would complain long and loudly about, and increased wait times for transfers to larger units.

Inuit-led solutions are needed

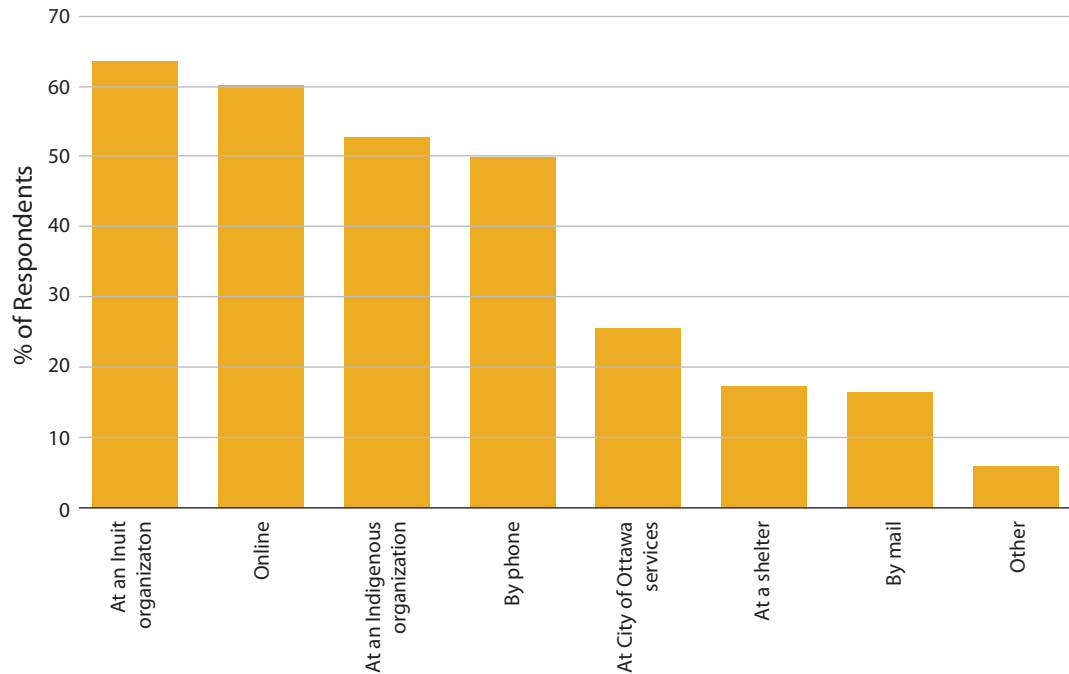
We heard very clearly that culture and language are central to the lives of Inuit women in Ottawa, and that to address homelessness and housing challenges Inuit-led solutions are needed. Support for shelter and housing services specific to Inuit is very strong, with 87% of women agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Need for Shelter and Housing Services that Serve only Inuit (N=100)



Consistent with their desire for more Inuit-led solutions to housing challenges the Inuit women we surveyed preferred to get their support from an Inuit organization, closely followed by an Indigenous organization. Online and telephone support services also were of interest (Figure 5).

Figure 5: How Women Want to Get Support to Find Housing

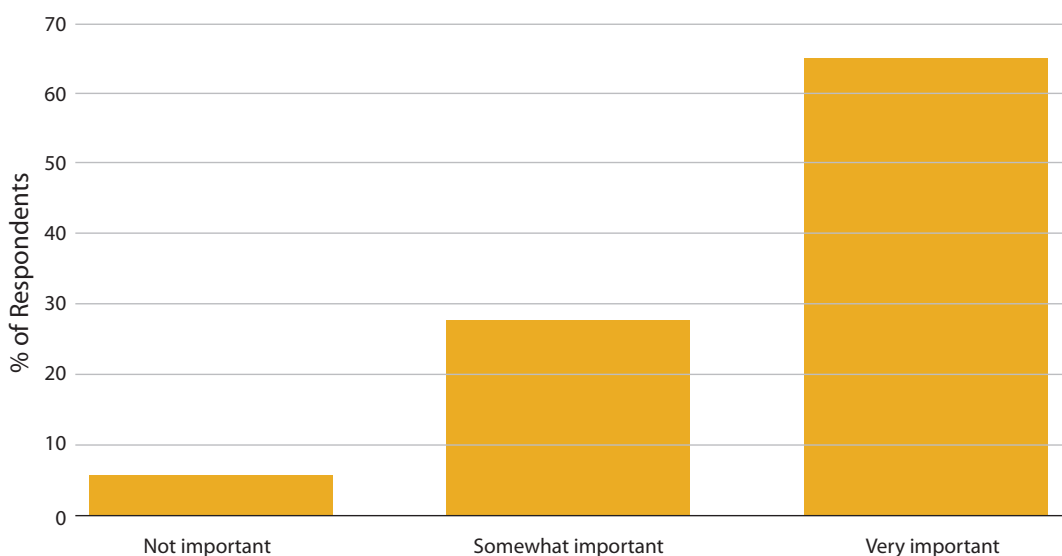


When asked how important it was to them that staff in shelters are able to speak Inuktitut, 94% of women responded that it was either somewhat or very important, while only 6% said it was not important (Figure 6).

Aptitude in English for Inuit women in Ottawa ranges widely, so Inuktitut speakers working in the shelter and housing service providers are clearly needed to adequately support Inuit women.

Language wise it might be difficult, but my English is ok — and I knew to keep asking questions and asking for help.

[Getting housing] was somewhat challenging, but [I am] able to speak English. If I were unilingual, it would have been different.

Figure 6: Importance of Housing Support Services in Inuktitut (N=97)

Services needed

Advocacy when faced with neighbours that are constantly causing trouble.

It would be great if there was organization here in Ottawa that would be able to help people with financial difficulties in moving. That would take away a lot of the added stress.

Social housing is not ideal. There's mold, infestation, racism, bad neighbours. Need more advocacy for Inuit.

I think that there should be more help with addictions programs to help people with those problems and it gets worse with being homeless.

We heard a number of success stories where women received the support that they needed to find and keep their housing. Understanding the variety of experiences that Inuit women face, and what support is needed can help us respond to their needs.

A number of women confirmed that they need support to carry out administrative tasks including:

- getting identification,
- filling out paperwork, and
- advocacy/help navigating the system associated with receiving services.

In addition, many women expressed a need to develop housing related life skills such as budgeting, shopping and cooking, dealing with conflict with neighbours and landlords, and understanding their rights and obligations.

With affordability of accommodation such a big issue in Ottawa, women also identified that targeted financial support would make a big difference. The impact of being responsible for debt with a previous partner, moving expenses, and the cost of furnishing an apartment came up repeatedly. Others identified that they would like help to be able to own their own home one day.

Additionally, service providers identified that if someone has existing rental arrears, they are not eligible to even get on the wait list for subsidized housing.

Service delivery

One challenge that many service providers raised was the difficulty that many women had navigating the city, getting to appointments and travelling to different neighbourhoods to look at housing. For some information and financial supports would be sufficient, others need transportation services and/or someone to accompany them.

Service providers recognized the importance of Inuit women connecting to their culture and other Inuit and accessing culturally appropriate support. It is essential to have culture at the core of how services are delivered because culture is what roots and sustains people. One service provider said that we need to *"...fill wellness needs and provide connections to culture but give women choices. Come up with different models, [solutions] beyond shelters. Re-imagine what housing looks like. Listen to the women then re-frame into workable solutions."*

6 Discussion



The critical importance of housing has been widely recognized and activities are underway from the national to the local level to address the issue. The National Housing Strategy Act came into law in Canada in 2019. In it, the Government of Canada recognizes that adequate housing is a fundamental human right, and that housing is essential to the inherent dignity and well-being of the person and to building sustainable and inclusive communities (Government of Canada, 2019). Work across a number of areas and jurisdictions is required to deliver on this commitment. In July of 2020 the City of Ottawa adopted a 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan 2020-2030 (City of Ottawa, 2020) and in February of 2021 tabled the Workplan for 2021/22 which included 42 specific actions (City of Ottawa, 2021).



6.1 Key Issue: Housing Supply

Results from the needs assessment indicate that the biggest single housing problem for Inuit women in Ottawa is a lack of affordable supply. Availability of housing for lower income families has reached such a critical level that the City of Ottawa declared a state of emergency in January 2020. While some efforts are underway by the City to increase the supply of affordable and subsidized housing, the crisis continues along the continuum. There are insufficient emergency shelter beds, too few supportive or transitional housing options, and too few rent-geared-to-income housing units for the needs of the Inuit and other communities. Market housing is not only in short supply – it is priced out of reach of most Inuit women and families.

A significant sign of distress can be found in the average nightly occupancy of families in emergency accommodation in motel units. Between 2018 and 2019, the number of families in Ottawa housed in motels increased by 37.7%. (City of Ottawa, 2019). Clearly this is a very unsatisfactory and expensive way to provide shelter. Additionally, the shortage of transitional housing and wait lists of **up to eight years** for subsidized housing (according to respondents) puts increased pressure on emergency shelters. As a result, many Inuit women and their children in need, having fled violence, struggle with trauma, mental health and addictions issues or require support to live successfully in the community, instead live in cyclical and chronic homelessness. This in turn contributes to family breakdown, worsening addictions and another layer of trauma.



6.2 A Continuum of Need

The trend toward urbanization is growing among Inuit, with many relocating from small northern communities to southern urban centres. According to the Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada the number of Inuit in Ontario has grown from around 100 in 1987 to an estimated 3,700 in 2017 (Canadian Geographic, 2018). Many Inuit successfully adapt to urban living and find appropriate housing. Many others require settlement services similar to those immigrating from other countries. Needs range from information on the housing situation and how it is different from the North, to help getting onto lists and filling out paperwork. Those with the highest needs require individualized support, access to culturally safe health and social services before and after finding housing.

Housing support/options include:

- Information
- Settlement services
- Emergency and transitional support OR longer-term residential/staffed housing
- Subsidized community housing
- Market rentals
- Home ownership

Needs:

- Affordable/living income
- Physically Safe
- Culturally appropriate
- To be supported at the level of need
- Community



6.3 The Importance of Accurate Data

There are two primary data gaps to fill in addressing Inuit shelter and housing needs in Ottawa: 1) accurate population estimates, and 2) more reliable information on Inuit use of emergency shelter, transitional and longer-term housing options.

One of the challenges that was acknowledged at the outset of this project is a lack of an accurate understanding of the number and demographics of the Inuit in Ottawa. Accurate population counts and demographics are essential for planning, funding and delivering services for distinct population groups. The most recent census conducted by Statistics Canada in 2016 estimated that there were 1,280 Inuit in Ottawa (Statistics Canada, 2017a). A study by Tungasuvvingat Inuit and St. Michael's Hospital (2017) indicates that the Inuit population in Ottawa is four times larger than the Statistics Canada estimate. Clearly better data is needed.

The 2019 City of Ottawa Housing Progress Report provides community and family shelter data for 2014 to 2019. The source of the data is the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS), a common database used by shelters to collect information on people experiencing homelessness. This data tracks progress towards many of the targets identified in the Plan, but the report acknowledges that the data on Indigenous people must be viewed with caution and must start with the understanding that the numbers are underreported and do not accurately reflect the nature and scope of the issue. Inuit and Indigenous information on homelessness, and use of shelter, transitional and social housing can and should be collected.



6.4 Using the Needs Assessment Method in Other Urban Inuit Communities and Groups

The project partners and research team are confident that the needs assessment method and tools implemented in Ottawa can be used in other urban communities and with other Inuit target populations. A supported online survey reached a good sample size and a diversity of women with Survey Monkey providing an easy-to-use platform. The combination of quantitative and open-ended qualitative questions provided a rich data source. Having Inuit organizations heavily promote the project on social media and other housing service providers informing Inuit clients about the survey helped a great deal. However, this level of promotion and engagement might prove more difficult in urban centres with fewer Inuit organizations and established relationships among Inuit, Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations.

Inviting survey participants to participate in individual interviews provided a ready source of contacts, however, many of them were difficult to reach by telephone. In-person focus groups (not possible during the COVID-19 pandemic) may have been more successful as the women could have met at the Inuit organizations or shelters and housing communities where they lived. On the other hand, since we were able to provide women's survey results to the interviewers, they could follow-up one-on-one on comments made in the survey, many of which were deeply personal and more difficult to share in a group setting.

Another strength of the project was having Inuit women conduct the interviews. They were able to provide a level of cultural safety and understanding unavailable to non-Inuit researchers and to offer interviews in Inuktitut (although most of the women participated in English). It is important for interviewers to be provided with knowledge of Inuit research ethics, to not conduct interviews with women they had a close personal or professional relationship with and to have access to support from the team leads.

Review of key housing reports and interviews with local shelter and housing service providers supplied important information on the housing situation, gaps in services and observed needs of Inuit women clients. Due to the extra pressures of the pandemic, it took additional time to reach service providers, and some were unable to participate. Persistent and organized follow-up is often required.

Data analysis and reporting was greatly aided through the involvement of the Inuit researchers and the partner organization representatives. This enabled the research leads to draw on partner knowledge and experience and interpret results in the context of the local Inuit community. In the absence of established Inuit organizations in other urban centres researchers could target key Inuit community members to perform this role in the project delivery. This would result in an increased project cost but could be integral to carrying out a successful assessment.



6.5 Challenges Facing Inuit Women and Their Children

Inuit women and their children face many shelter and housing challenges, including:

- lack of information and support in finding shelter and housing;
- the need for safe shelter due to relationship breakdown, violence and abuse where the expectation is that the woman leave the home with children rather than having the partner removed;
- varying levels of cultural understanding among non-Indigenous service providers;
- untreated trauma, mental health and addictions issues; and
- higher levels of physical and mental disability.

Information and support to find housing: Inuit women move to Ottawa from the North for a variety of reasons – education, healthcare, severe lack of housing in their communities, high levels of violence and abuse or to be close to family including to their children's father. Most had either no expectations or assumed that they could get housing in a reasonable amount of time. Instead, they faced a very different, complex shelter and housing system. Inuit women who have lived in Ottawa for a longer time also might lack up-to-date information on affordable housing and the support services available to them. Better information and additional Inuit housing support workers would enable more women to find housing more quickly and not repeat the cycle of homelessness.

Safe shelter: Inuit women who are exiting a relationship and/or have experienced violence and abuse need safe, non-institutional healing environments that provide enough time and supports to regain their confidence, address mental health issues and make the transition to safe and healthy living for them and their children. These women and children do not do well in large general shelters or motel/hotel rooms. Ideally, "emergency" shelter and transitional housing should be combined to provide more seamless services and less disruption to adults and children.

Cultural understanding: While there are good intentions and a personal commitment to learning among many mainstream service providers, there is still a serious lack of knowledge. During the needs assessment women shared stories of experiencing stereotypes and many acts of discrimination and overt racism. Service providers need education to understand the unique cultures, history, and family and community values held by Inuit, distinct from First Nations and Métis. Regular, systematic Inuit cultural and racial bias training for service providers is needed. Private and public sector housing providers also would benefit from increased cultural knowledge and scrutiny of their delivery practices.

Trauma, mental health and addictions: Both the Inuit women responding to the needs assessment and their service providers recounted many instances where current and past trauma, mental health conditions and addiction prevented women from being successfully housed. Those who had access to culture-based treatment, counselling and aftercare, and supported transitional housing were most successful in breaking the homelessness cycle. Community-based, on-site support by Inuit providers was seen as the most effective model. Having those supports provided in Inuktitut was essential for some women.

Physical and mental disabilities: The needs assessment and other Inuit research reveals higher rates of chronic illnesses, physical disabilities and mental disabilities that require specific types of housing and housing supports. Housing units need to be physically accessible and supportive of disabilities. Those with health challenges, especially older adults, need accommodation where they can “age in place” with the culturally appropriate supports needed to live in the Inuit community. Better options for residential or congregated living would provide Inuit of all ages with the care they need to live with dignity.



6.6 Sector-Specific Barriers and Gaps

Sector-specific barriers and gaps relate to the lack of:

- Inuit-specific shelters/transitional housing;
- longer-term supported housing;
- access to and availability of social housing;
- affordable and adequate market rentals; and
- financial options for home ownership.

Inuit-specific shelters/transitional housing: Inuit women and their service providers made a strong case for Inuit-specific shelters and transitional housing. Women showed a strong preference for physical structures and programming that is designed for Inuit, employs Inuit staff and offers services in Inuktitut. Family shelters that can accommodate larger family units (parents, children, grandparents, other family members) and spaces for single women are desperately needed.

Supported housing: The needs assessment presents a strong case for more and better housing support that would increase chances of success for women to live independently in longer-term housing. Supported housing ideally should provide on-site staffing 24/7, life skills education, individual and group support programs, and practical assistance for residents. This would benefit many groups: women and their children surviving violence, youth living away from their families, Inuit with mental health and addictions issues and others who could live independently with the right supports.

Social housing: Inuit have a strong ongoing connection with their culture and each other. The women's comments indicated a striking sense of community and examples of the sharing nature that is typical among Inuit. Inuit social housing can build on this sense of cohesion and mutual support. However, we need a better understanding of Inuit use of social housing services through reliable data collection, information on the housing selection process and the use of a centralized waiting list.

Market rentals: Most newcomers from the North have limited or no experience with the southern private housing market and the competitive application processes to obtain rental units. They may lack a credit history, first and last month's rent, money for moving expenses and utilities. Too often they experience discrimination from landlords. While the current apartment shortage and high rents make market housing inaccessible to many Inuit, flexible financial subsidies and help navigating the private market would enable more Inuit to exit the high-demand social housing system.

Home ownership: Only a few of the women in the needs assessment talked about owning their own homes, discussing the many barriers including affordability, financing and size. Many of them are employed full-time but home ownership is a remote dream. Homeless and poorly housed women yearn for housing stability, choice and a space to call their own. A livable income and better access to credit would enable more women to move into home ownership, contributing to greater equity between Inuit and non-Inuit women.



6.7 Successes and Opportunities

In addition to many challenges and unmet needs, the needs assessment also provided examples of success in Inuit women's shelter and housing journeys. Many women reported receiving the help they needed from compassionate and knowledgeable agency staff with specific mentions of those at Wabano Centre for Indigenous Health, Tungasuvvingat Inuit, Gignul Non-Profit Housing Corporation and others. Having a housing support worker made a big difference most of the time and was often successful in getting women into appropriate housing within a few months. Advocacy is especially important for a population that is culturally distinct, a visible minority and often reticent to challenge "the system."

Women reported positive experiences in all of the housing sectors, usually related to having the information and support they needed, the appropriateness of the living situation and the kindness of staff. Among shelter and housing service providers, we discovered a general overall awareness of the distinct needs and often dire circumstances of Inuit women. There is a willingness to learn more about specific needs in different groups to better serve their Inuit clients, as already-stretched resources permit. There is an interest in developing closer ties with Inuit organizations in order to increase two-way referrals and better serve mutual clients.

There are a number of promising models of service delivery that could be further developed and adapted for Inuit-specific solutions. The Cornerstone Housing for Women offers fully supported permanent independent living units while also creating a community atmosphere. Minwaashin Lodge, an Indigenous women's support centre operates a 21-bed shelter for Indigenous women fleeing abuse and their children and support on-site as well as a street outreach, food deliveries and a range of programming. The Oaks program of Shepherds of Good Hope provides a long-term residential managed alcohol program, using a harm reduction approach to stabilize clients then moving them to permanent supported housing. Tewegan Housing for Aboriginal Youth provides supported transitional housing for young women ages 16 to 29 without children. Staff believes strongly in an empowerment, non-colonial approach that builds on strengths while acknowledging the harm that the system does to young women. Ottawa Inuit Non-Profit Housing has a long track record of providing Inuit-governed subsidized housing with 63 units at 28 properties throughout Ottawa and a low turnover.

The City of Ottawa, which funds social housing in the city, including Ottawa Community Housing, has recognized the unique needs and inequities faced by urban Inuit, and has expressed a willingness to work with Inuit to address needs through the 2021-2022 work plan (City of Ottawa, 2021) delivering on the Ottawa 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan.

7 Recommendations



The recommendations below span issues relevant to Ottawa Inuit women, systemic housing issues that impact other urban Inuit communities and/or urban homeless communities at large. Concerted action at the municipal, provincial and federal government levels is needed to address these issues. Most importantly, urban Inuit organizations need to be fully engaged, and financially supported, as these changes are planned and implemented. Effectively addressing shelter and housing gaps will require allocation of adequate resources.



7.1 Improve Delivery of Shelter and Housing Services

1. Provide financial resources for Ottawa Inuit service-based organizations to work together to prioritize and advocate for:
 - i. national policies and initiatives (Federal government);
 - ii. provincial programs that fund wrap-around social and cultural supports and poverty reduction measures (Government of Ontario); and
 - iii. increased local shelter and housing supports geared to Inuit (City of Ottawa).
2. Strike a task group with leaders of Inuit service-based organizations and senior officials with relevant City of Ottawa departments to ensure that Inuit housing priorities are adequately addressed and accounted for.
3. Inuit organizations deliver Inuit cultural competency training to front-line Ottawa housing and shelter service providers funded by municipal or provincial governments.
4. Improve information sharing, planning and referral relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous shelter and housing organizations and programs including provision of adequate resources to the organizations. (Ottawa agencies and governments)
5. Deliver Inuit-specific satellite support services such as meetings with housing case workers and life-skills programming on-site at shelters and housing locations such as those managed by Ottawa Community Housing. (Ottawa agencies and governments)
6. The City of Ottawa formally engages Inuit organizations to ensure that the needs of Inuit women are a high priority in implementing actions outlined in the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Work Plan 2021-2022, paying special attention to actions 19 to 27 which aim to increase capacity of homelessness programs.
7. City of Ottawa senior officials work with Inuit organizations to design housing that serves the needs of Inuit and supports their cultural values, including, for example, family-based shelters-transitional housing; mixed community housing for families, singles, youth and elders; and indoor and outdoor communal spaces.



7.2 Adequately Support Vulnerable Populations

8. Support shelters and transitional housing organizations to develop processes to connect Inuit clients to Inuit and other Indigenous services in addition to supporting them in-house (if that is the client's choice) and to remain up to date on available services. (Governments)
9. Provide culture-based supports to Inuit survivors of violence, women experiencing mental health and addictions issues, and at-risk youth in conjunction with Inuit organizations, shelters and transitional housing services. This support is to be strengths-based, trauma-informed and based on harm reduction. (Ottawa agencies and Governments)
10. Provide culturally appropriate services at the level needed during critical transition periods, including individuals discharged from hospitals and treatment centres, leaving prison, and youth aging out of care. This will help individuals successfully re-integrate into the community and avoid homelessness. (Governments and community agencies)
11. Develop training for and employ more Inuit as housing support workers, systems navigators/ advocates and counsellors in shelters-transitional housing and longer-term housing. (Governments and community agencies)
12. Inuit Land Claim Organizations/Governments to partner with urban Inuit organizations to:
 - i. educate Inuit who are considering relocation to the south on how the market and social housing systems work, including processes, cost of housing, and availability;
 - ii. deliver settlement services to their members who relocate off the land claim and are at-risk of or experiencing homelessness; and
 - iii. support urban Inuit in understanding and exercising their rights as land claim beneficiaries.



7.3 Increase Availability of Shelter Beds, Second-Stage Housing and Longer-Term Housing

13. Dedicate funds for Inuit-specific shelter and housing priorities along the continuum of need — from housing support services, needs-based emergency-transitional housing, supported social housing, to adequately subsidized market rentals. (All governments)
14. Reduce pressure on shelters through increased acquisition of existing infrastructure, further accelerated construction of affordable housing and developing better solutions for chronic homelessness. (City of Ottawa)
15. Increase the assets of Inuit Non-Profit Housing Corporation. (City of Ottawa – 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Work Plan 2021-2022 action #4)
16. Provide more equitable opportunities and reduce pressure on social housing, exploring how Inuit home ownership could be encouraged and what funding could be made available to support these efforts, for example, ongoing partnerships with Habitat for Humanity. (Governments and non-profit organizations)
17. Provide funding for the Aboriginal Community Advisory Board to advise on and monitor Indigenous shelter and housing needs and priorities. (City of Ottawa)



7.4 Make Longer-Term Housing More Affordable

18. The Government of Ontario provides adequate income supports and legislates living wages, recognizing that the cost of housing and other necessities varies considerably across Ontario.
19. The Government of Ontario increases the portability of rental subsidies such that they can also be applied to market housing. Currently only designated subsidized housing is eligible and an update to legislation is required to allow household rent-geared-to-income portability (City of Ottawa Workplan action #17).
20. Support efforts to make housing units more affordable through the City of Ottawa re-design of the Municipal Housing Subsidy Program (workplan actions #16 and #18) and ensure the interests of Inuit women are prioritized.
21. Provide dedicated funds to Tungasuvvingat Inuit in order to expand eligibility and increase financial help to Inuit to cover exceptional housing expenses such as first and last month's rent, moving costs, utility hook-ups, etc. (Government of Ontario)



7.5 Collect More and Better Data

22. Statistics Canada works with local Inuit organizations to improve census taking among Inuit in the Census Metropolitan Areas. This will result in increased accuracy of population estimates and contribute to a better understanding of evolving urban Inuit needs.
23. In the delivery of the 2021-2022 Housing and Homelessness Workplan, City of Ottawa staff engage/partner with local Inuit organizations in an evaluation of the Social Housing Registry (action #28), one-door access (action #29) and use of the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (action #32).
24. Ottawa Community Housing expands the client information that they collect to include self-reported Inuit, First Nations or Métis identity.
25. Ottawa shelters, transitional housing and longer-term housing agencies include a question allowing Inuit, Métis and First Nations to self-identify in intake forms and collating and sharing this information with Inuit organizations.
26. Tungasuvvingat Inuit accelerates development of a client database that includes client characteristics, referrals, service provided, housing placement and other pertinent information.



7.6 Develop and Implement National Policy that Supports the Effective Delivery of Culturally Appropriate Shelter and Housing Services for Inuit Women

27. Apply Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) principles in the co-design of innovative housing solutions that meet Inuit needs and aspirations. (Governments and Inuit organizations)
28. Incorporate an intersectional human rights and gender equity approach into the National Housing Strategy, as recommended by Women's Shelters Canada. (Government of Canada and national Inuit organizations)
29. National Inuit bodies work with the regional Land Claim Organizations/Governments and southern Inuit services organizations to address housing needs of urban Inuit.
30. Hold an Inuit national forum to articulate urban Inuit realities and needs, including housing. (National, regional and southern Inuit organizations).

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health database project. [http://tungasuvvingatinuit.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/](http://tungasuvvingatinuit.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Our-Health-Counts-Urban-Indigenous-Health-Database-Project-Inuit-Adults-July-2017.pdf)

[Our-Health-Counts-Urban-Indigenous-Health-Database-Project-Inuit-Adults-July-2017.pdf](http://tungasuvvingatinuit.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Our-Health-Counts-Urban-Indigenous-Health-Database-Project-Inuit-Adults-July-2017.pdf)

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[and-VAW-Discussion-Paper-Aug-2017.pdf](http://endvaw.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Housing-Homelessness-and-VAW-Discussion-Paper-Aug-2017.pdf)

9 Appendices



9.1 Women's Survey Questions

SHELTER & HOUSING NEEDS OF INUIT WOMEN IN OTTAWA

1. Project Description

We are carrying out this survey to better understand the shelter and housing needs of Inuit women and children in Ottawa. This is a first step in designing Inuit-centred programs to address these needs.

This project is being carried by Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada in partnership with Inuuqatigiit Centre for Inuit Children, Youth and Families, and Tungasuvvingat Inuit.

Responses are confidential and your privacy will be respected. If you have any concerns with the content of the survey please contact us at inuitwomenshousing@gmail.com

Individuals who complete the survey will be eligible to enter a draw for one of eight prizes of \$50.00 each.

2. Administration

Please note that this survey is for Inuit women aged 15 years and older

1. Do you self-identify as an Inuk woman?

- Yes No >>> This survey is for Inuit women.
Please pass it along to an Inuk woman you know.

2. How old are you?

- 15 to 17
 18 to 30
 31 to 54
 55 or older

3. Those who complete the survey are eligible to be entered into a draw for one of eight \$50.00 gift cards. I would like to be included in the draw.

- Yes No

3. This section collects information about you

4. Are you a beneficiary under any of the following land claim regions?

- Inuvialuit Settlement Region
 Nunavut
 Nunavik
 Nunatsiavut
 Not a beneficiary
 Unknown

5. What is your relationship status?

- Single, divorced or widowed
- Married or common-law (living together)
- Married or in a relationship (not living together)

6. How do you describe your sexual orientation?

- Straight / Heterosexual
- Lesbian / Gay
- Bisexual
- Decline to answer
- Other (please specify)

7. How many children under 18 years old are you responsible for housing?

- None
- One
- Two
- Three
- Four or more

8. Have you ever been in foster care or a group home?

- Yes No

9. Please check all income sources below that apply to you

- Full-time employment
- Part-time/casual or seasonal employment
- Student grants and scholarships
- Informal employment (e.g. selling of sewing, crafts, carvings, or other artwork)
- Panhandling
- Sex work
- Employment Insurance (EI)
- Ontario Works (OW)
- Disability support
- Senior's benefits
(e.g. Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security, Guaranteed Income Supplement)
- Sex work
- Child and family tax benefits
- Money from family and friends
- No income
- Other (please specify) _____

10. Do you have any of the following?

- Chronic or acute medical condition (e.g. diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, cancer)
- Physical disability (e.g. use a cane or wheelchair)
- Substance abuse or addiction (e.g. alcohol, drugs, gambling)
- Mental health condition (e.g. depression, anxiety disorders, PTSD, schizophrenia)
- Learning disability (e.g. dyslexia, ADHD)
- Mental disability or problem understanding many things
(e.g. brain injury, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder)
- Other (please specify) _____

11. Why are you now living in Ottawa?

- I was born and raised here
- I moved here as a child
- I moved here as an adult from

4. This section is about homelessness and use of emergency shelters

Homelessness means any time when you have been without a secure place to live, including sleeping in shelters, on the streets, or living temporarily with others.

12. Are you currently homeless?

- Yes
- No

13. In Ottawa have you ever had to sleep at someone else's house, in a shelter, tent, shack, shed, outside or somewhere else because you had nowhere else to sleep?

- Yes
- No

14. Have you ever felt you needed to leave your home, either temporarily or permanently, but had no safe place to go to?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

15. Have you ever been turned away from a shelter because it was full?

- No
- Yes, once
- Yes, two to five times
- Yes, many times

16. Have you ever avoided going to a shelter because you felt you would be unsafe there?

- Yes
- No

17. How would you describe your experiences with housing in Ottawa?

18. How important is it to you that the staff in shelters speak Inuktitut?

- Not important
-
- Somewhat important
-
- Very important

19. Shelter and housing services that serve only Inuit are needed.

- Strongly disagree
-
- Agree
-
- Strongly agree

20. What are your thoughts on the way Ottawa services respond to homelessness?

5. This section is about medium and longer term housing solutions

21. Do you think there are too many people currently living in your home?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

22. How useful are the following in helping you find or keep long-term housing?

Help filling out paperwork

- Not useful Somewhat useful Very useful

Help getting ID

- Not useful Somewhat useful Very useful

Help finding appropriate housing

- Not useful Somewhat useful Very useful

Financial aid (rent subsidies, paying rental arrears, other expenses)

- Not useful Somewhat useful Very useful

Help keeping your housing

(e.g., problems with the landlord, utility companies, neighbours, by-laws, etc.)

- Not useful Somewhat useful Very useful

23. Is there anything else that would help you find and keep your housing?

24. How important is it to you that housing support services be available in Inuktitut?

- Not important Somewhat important Very important

25. What are the best ways for you to get the help you need to find appropriate housing?

- Online
- By mail
- By phone
- At a homeless or women's shelters
- At an Inuit organization
- At an indigenous organization
- At City of Ottawa services
- Other (please specify) _____

26. Please share any part of your personal story that would help us understand how to better support your efforts to live in safe and affordable housing.

6. Thank-you and next steps

Your privacy will be protected and we will not disclose your survey responses in any way that will identify you. You can contact us at inuitwomenshousing@gmail.com if you have any questions about the survey.

If you have immediate housing needs please contact:

Monika Tochman, Manager, Housing Services at Tungasuvvingat Inuit

mtochman@tiontario.ca

(613) 749-4500 ext. 25

27. I am interested in being contacted to have further, more in-depth conversations about shelter and housing services in Ottawa. I understand that all participants in the interview process will receive a \$25.00 grocery gift card.

Yes No

28. Please provide your contact information if you want to be in the draw for prizes or be contacted for an interview. We will not share this information with anyone.

First name _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Facebook messenger _____

9.2 Inuit Women's Housing Survey

WOMEN'S INTERVIEW GUIDE

Notes for Interviewer

1. Review survey responses in advance of the interview and note:
 - answers or comments that aren't clear
 - answers to specific questions relevant for interview questions below.
2. Make sure you get clear verbal consent.
3. Confirm contact information so we can send the \$25.00 gift card.
4. Offer counselling support if needed (contact details below).

Introduction

Hi, my name is... and I'm working on the Ottawa Inuit Women's Housing Needs Survey. I am calling because you filled out our online survey and said you were interested in being interviewed for the project.

Are you able to do about a 30-minute interview now on the telephone? We are offering a \$25.00 gift card for your time.

- If declined,
 - If declined, thank them for their survey comments — these will help us to improve housing options for Inuit women.
 - If accepted but not a good time, set up another time to talk.

Language Preference

Would you prefer to do the interview in Inuktitut or English?

[If another interviewer is needed, tell the woman who will contact her.]

Background

I am going to give you some background on the project. We are carrying out this survey to better understand the shelter and housing needs of Inuit women and children in Ottawa. This is a first step in designing Inuit-centred programs to address these needs.

The project is being carried out by Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada in partnership with Inuuqatigiit Centre for Inuit Children, Youth and Families, and Tungasuvvingat Inuit.

We are only interviewing women who filled out the online survey and your survey responses are the starting point for the interview.

We want to get your further insights into any challenges, barriers or gaps in emergency shelter and longer-term housing and how we can improve policies and services.

Consent

I would like to explain how this information will be used and then ask if you consent.

All of the information we collect will remain confidential (private), unless we believe that a child or underage youth is at risk of harm – then we are obligated to report our concerns to a child welfare agency.

We won't identify any of your comments by name, or include personal details in the reports we write.

The information will only be used by the partner organizations.

It's up to you how much personal information you share with us.

You can stop participating at any time. If you find the discussion upsetting, we can provide support for you, both today and in the future.

Do you have any questions about the research?

If you would like more information about the project, you can contact Dianne or Heather at inuitwomenshousing@gmail.com

Given this information, do you consent to be interviewed?

Questions

1. a. Clarify understanding of any survey responses (if required).
b. How did you hear about the survey?
2. [Survey questions 5 and 7 - for non-single women with children]
How did having a partner or children affect your access to emergency shelter or longer-term housing?
3. [Survey question 11 - those who moved to Ottawa from somewhere else as an adult]
 - a. What brought you to Ottawa?
 - b. What were your expectations (with respect to housing) when you arrived?
4. [Survey questions 12-26 - those who have experienced housing challenges]
 - a. What do you think are the main things that contributed to your housing challenges?
 - b. Do you think any of these challenges arose because you are Inuk?
 - c. What helped you or would have helped you overcome those challenges?
5. What service barriers or gaps have you faced in getting appropriate longer-term housing in Ottawa?
[Prompt only if needed: for example, information about housing options, access to emergency shelter, financial help, rental policies, understanding how market-housing works, language barriers]
6. [Survey question 12 and 13 - those who have been homeless]
Can you describe your situation of being homeless now or in the past and how it affected you?
7. [Survey questions 15 and 16 - those who were turned away or chose not to go to an emergency shelter]
When you were turned away or chose not to go to an emergency shelter, what did you do instead?

8. What types of emergency shelters and housing options would most benefit the Inuit community in Ottawa?
9. We have a few ideas of possible solutions to housing challenges and are interested in your feedback. What you do think of:
 - a. Living in a mix of housing types with other members of the Inuit community?
 - b. Having wrap-around support services (trauma, addiction, family counselling) available in association with housing solutions?
 - c. The idea of subsidies that could be applied to market housing rather than tied to a specific unit?
10. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you so much for your time today!

Address for Gift Card

Can I confirm your address to send the gift card?

Counselling Support

Would you like to contact a counsellor at TI or Inuuqatigiit?

Mike Stevens

Counselling Services, TI
613-894-8917

9.3 Service Provider Survey

PROJECT TO ASSESS SHELTER AND HOUSING NEEDS OF INUIT WOMEN IN OTTAWA

Project Description

We are carrying out this survey to better understand the shelter and housing needs of Inuit women and children in Ottawa. This is a first step in designing Inuit-centred programs to address these needs.

This project is being carried out by Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada in partnership with Inuuqatigiit Centre for Inuit Children, Youth and Families, and Tungasuvvingat Inuit.

Your comments will remain anonymous. If you have any concerns with the content of the survey please contact us at inuitwomenshousing@gmail.com

1. What agency do you work for?

2. What is your name?

3. What is your position at that agency?

4. Please provide your email address

5. and your phone number.

6. What shelter and housing services does your agency provide?

- Emergency shelter
- Second-stage / transitional housing
- Long-term social / subsidized housing
- Market rental housing
- Help finding housing
- Other (please specify) _____

7. If so, which of the following groups of clients do you serve?

- Women without children
- Men without children
- Women with children
- Men with children
- Young women (under 18)
- Young men (under 18)
- Older adults
- Other (please specify) _____

8. Do you receive any funding to provide shelter or housing services specifically to Indigenous clients?

- Yes
 - No
 - Don't know
- Comments (optional)

9. Do you find that there are differences among First Nation, Inuit and Metis clients with respect to their shelter and housing needs?

- Yes
 - No
 - Don't know
- Comments (optional)

10. Do you provide services to clients who self-identify as Inuit?

- Yes
 - No
 - Don't know
- Comments (optional)

11. Does your agency keep Indigenous-specific statistics?

- Yes
 - No
 - Don't know
 - Not applicable
- Comments (optional)

12. Does your agency keep Inuit-specific statistics?

- Yes
- No

13. Does your agency employ any Inuit staff?

- Yes
 - No
 - No, but it once did
 - Don't know
- Comments (optional)

14. Are you able to offer any services in Inuktitut?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Comments (optional)

Thank-you for taking the time to contribute to this important project!

9.4 Inuit Women's Housing

SERVICE PROVIDER INTERVIEW GUIDE

We are carrying out a project to better understand the shelter and housing needs of Inuit women and children in Ottawa. This is a first step in designing Inuit-centred programs to address these needs

The project is being carried out by the national organization Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada in partnership with two Ottawa Inuit organizations, Inuuqatigiit Centre for Inuit Children, Youth and Families, and Tungasuvvingat Inuit.

We appreciate your time in doing this interview. We will be building on responses provided in the online survey.

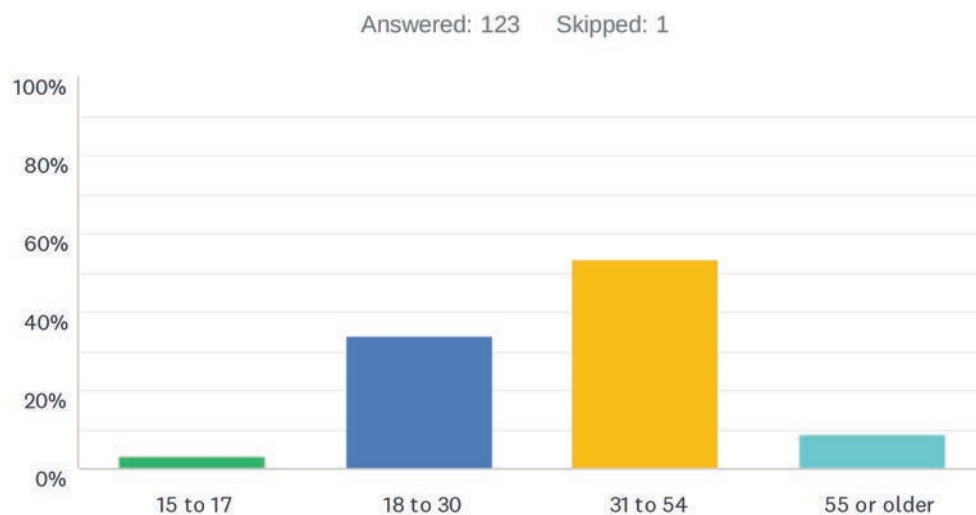
- 1. Confirm:**
 - Name
 - Position
 - Agency
 - Email address
 - Telephone number
- 2. Clarify any comments they put in the survey.**
- 3. Ask about availability of Indigenous or Inuit statistics or client estimates.**
- 4. What are the average wait times for your services?**
- 5. Do you provide any Indigenous cultural competency training for staff?
If yes, elaborate.**
- 6. If serving Inuit, what are the most common services that Inuit access?**
- 7. What is the most common Inuit client group you serve (see survey categories)?**
- 8. What kind of referral relationship do agency staff members have with Ottawa Inuit organizations?**
- 9. What do you think are the main challenges Inuit women in Ottawa have finding and keeping housing?**
- 10. Which population groups do you find have the greatest challenges?
Youth, young adults, women with children, older women, LGBTQ2 and gender-diverse people, those with disabilities?**
- 11. What single change in Ottawa shelter and housing options for Inuit do you think would have the greatest impact on homelessness?**
- 12. What other changes in your service sector could better serve Inuit women?**
- 13. Do you have any final comments?**

Thank you for your time today. If you have other information or comments to share, please get in touch.

9.5 Survey Data — Women

SHELTER AND HOUSING NEEDS OF INUIT WOMEN IN OTTAWA SELECTED SURVEY RESULTS

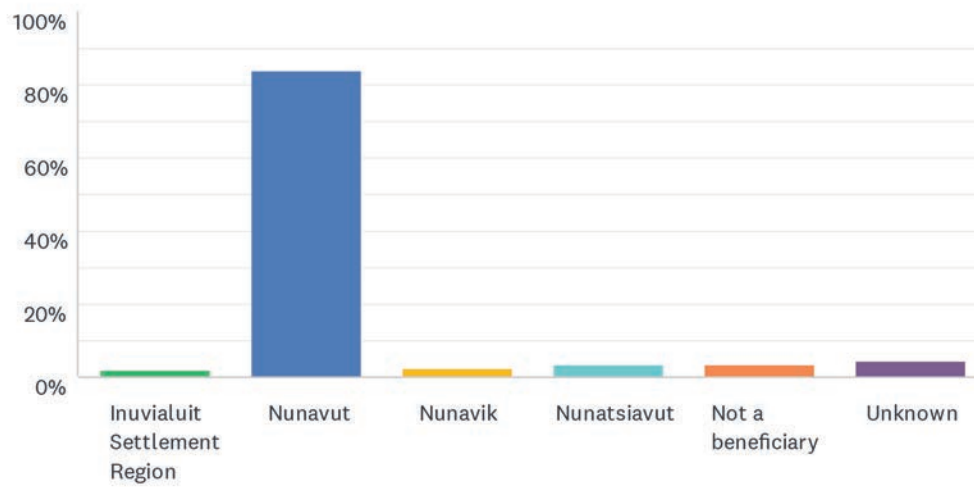
Q2 How old are you?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
15 to 17	3.25%	4
18 to 30	34.15%	42
31 to 54	53.66%	66
55 or older	8.94%	11
Total		123

Q4 Are you a beneficiary under any of the following land claim regions?

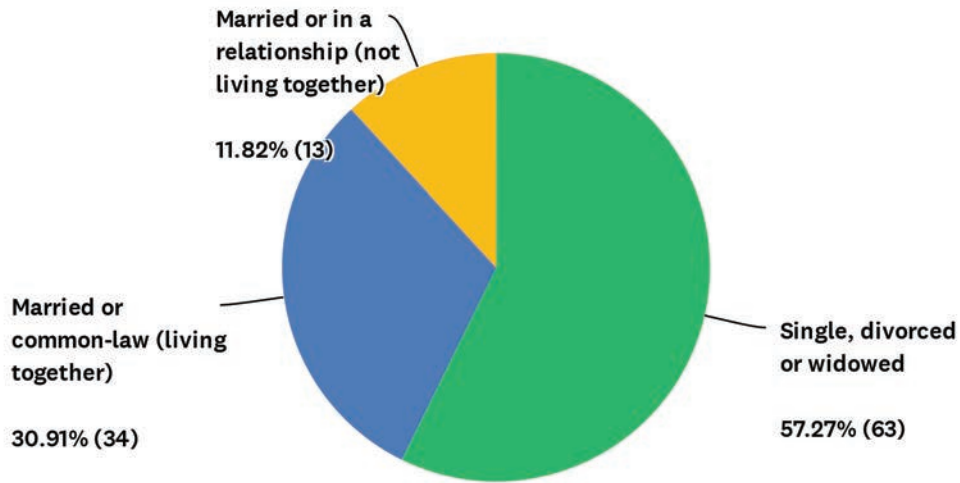
Answered: 111 Skipped: 13



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Inuvialuit Settlement Region	1.80%	2
Nunavut	83.78%	93
Nunavik	2.70%	3
Nunatsiavut	3.60%	4
Not a beneficiary	3.60%	4
Unknown	4.50%	5
Total		111

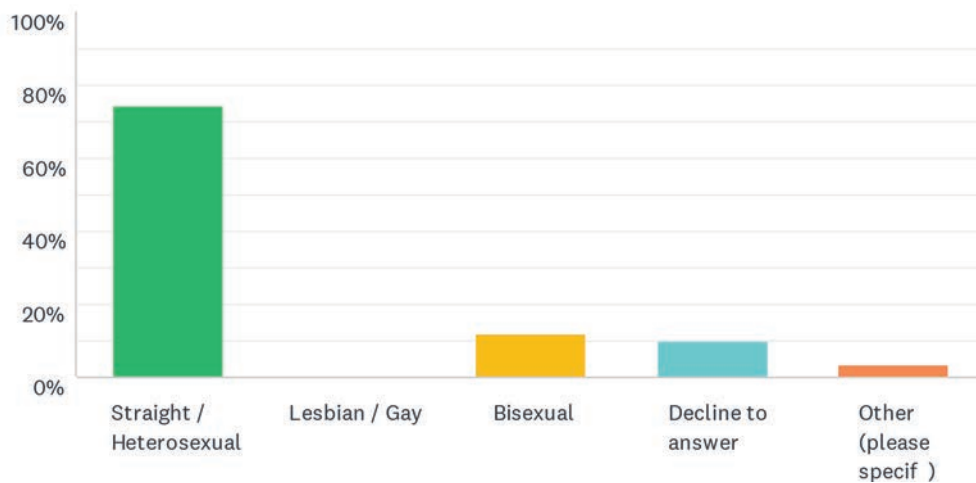
Q5 What is your relationship status?

Answered: 110 Skipped: 14



Q6 How do you describe your sexual orientation?

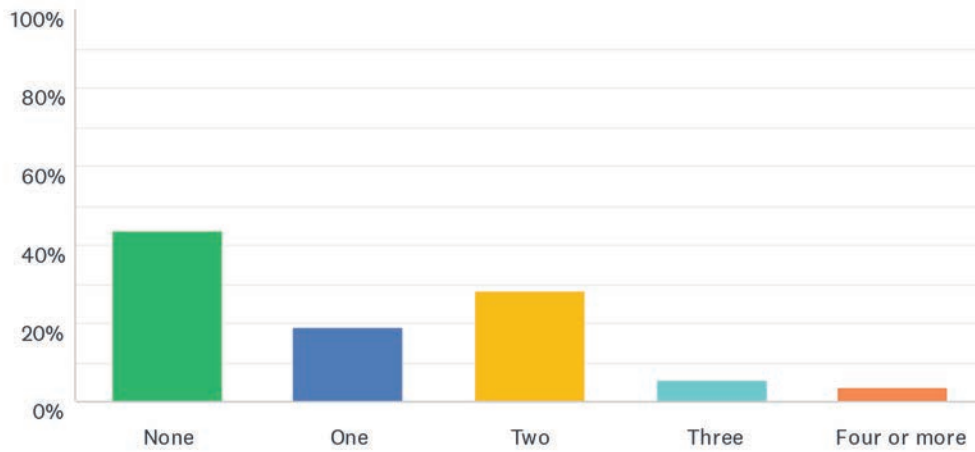
Answered: 110 Skipped: 14



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Straight / Heterosexual	74.55%	82
Lesbian / Gay	0.00%	0
Bisexual	11.82%	13
Decline to answer	10.00%	11
Other (please specify)	3.64%	4
Total		110

Q7 How many children under 18 years old are you responsible for housing?

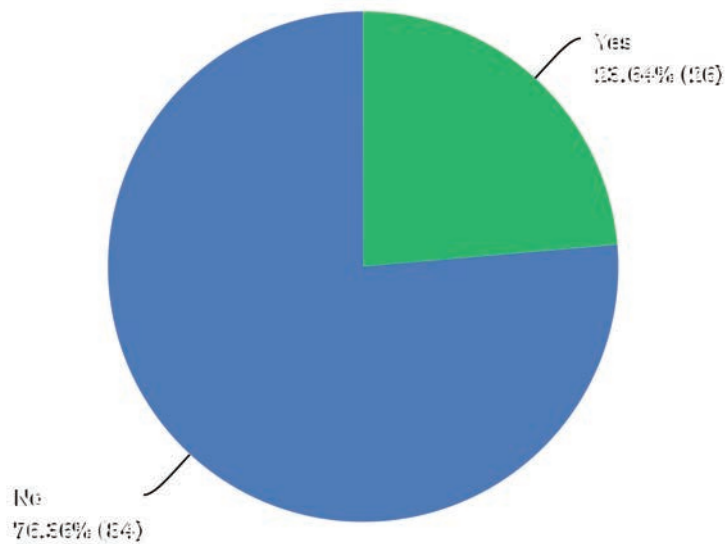
Answered: 110 Skipped: 14



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
None	43.64%	48
One	19.09%	21
Two	28.18%	31
Three	5.45%	6
Four or more	3.64%	4
Total		110

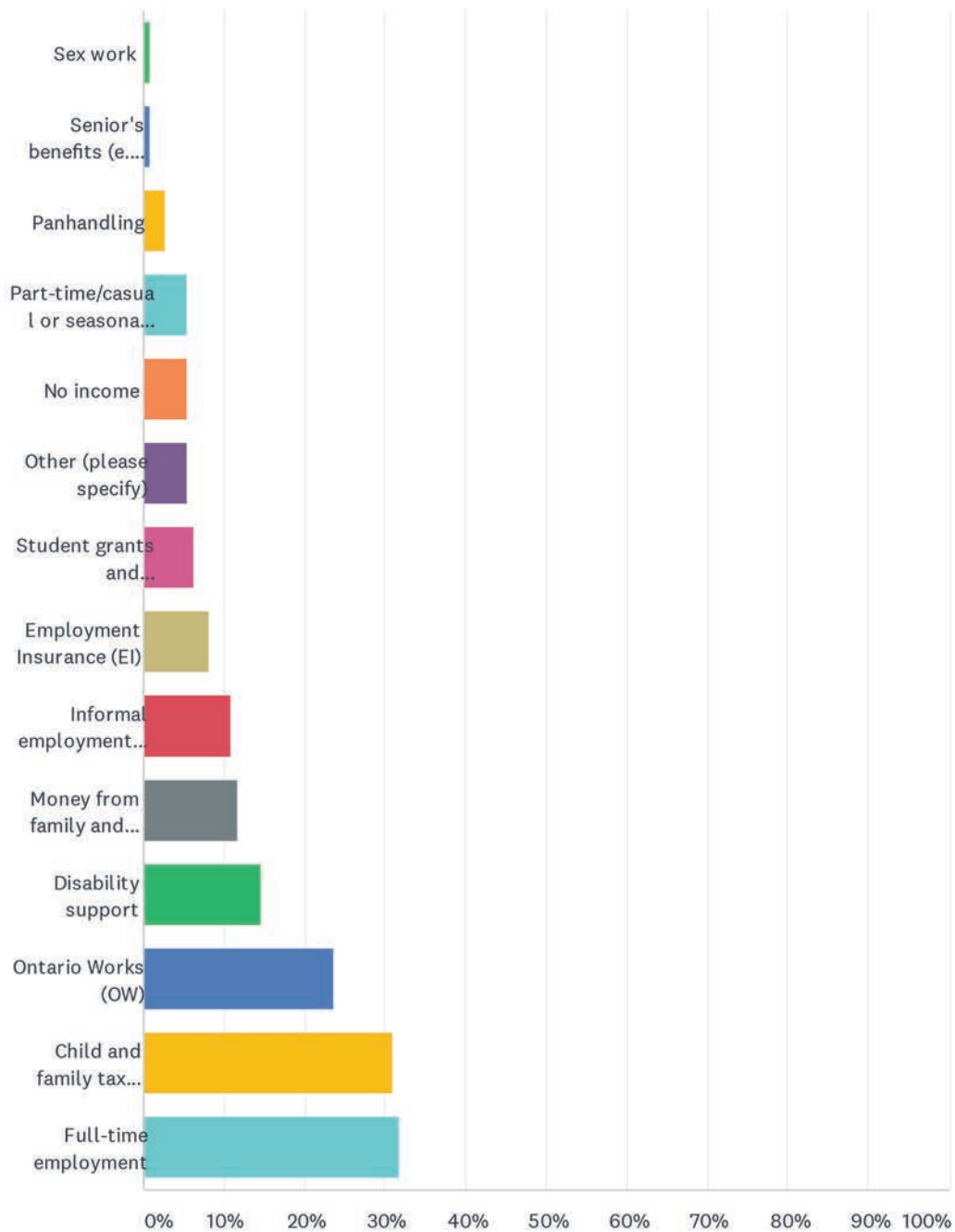
Q8 Have you ever been in foster care or a group home?

Answered: 110 Skipped: 14



Q9 Please check all income sources below that apply to you

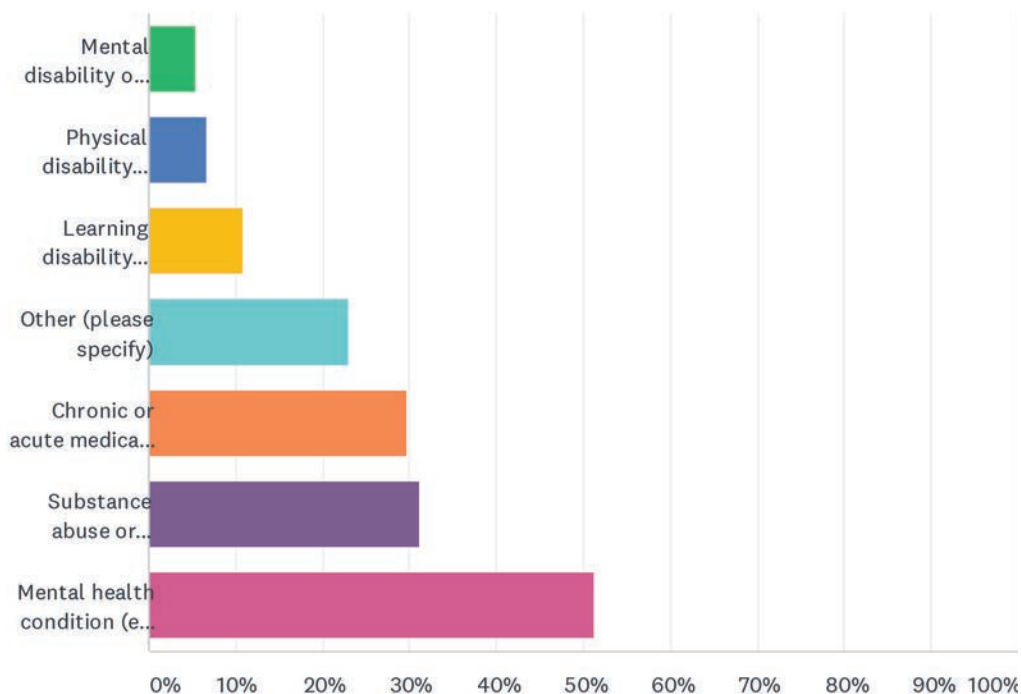
Answered: 110 Skipped: 14



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Sex work	0.91%	1
Senior's benefits (e.g. Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security, Guaranteed Income Supplement)	0.91%	1
Panhandling	2.73%	3
Part-time/casual or seasonal employment	5.45%	6
No income	5.45%	6
Other (please specify)	5.45%	6
Student grants and scholarships	6.36%	7
Employment Insurance (EI)	8.18%	9
Informal employment (e.g. selling of sewing, crafts, carvings, or other artwork)	10.91%	12
Money from family and friends	11.82%	13
Disability support	14.55%	16
Ontario Works (OW)	23.64%	26
Child and family tax benefits	30.91%	34
Full-time employment	31.82%	35
Total		110

Q10 Do you have any of the following?

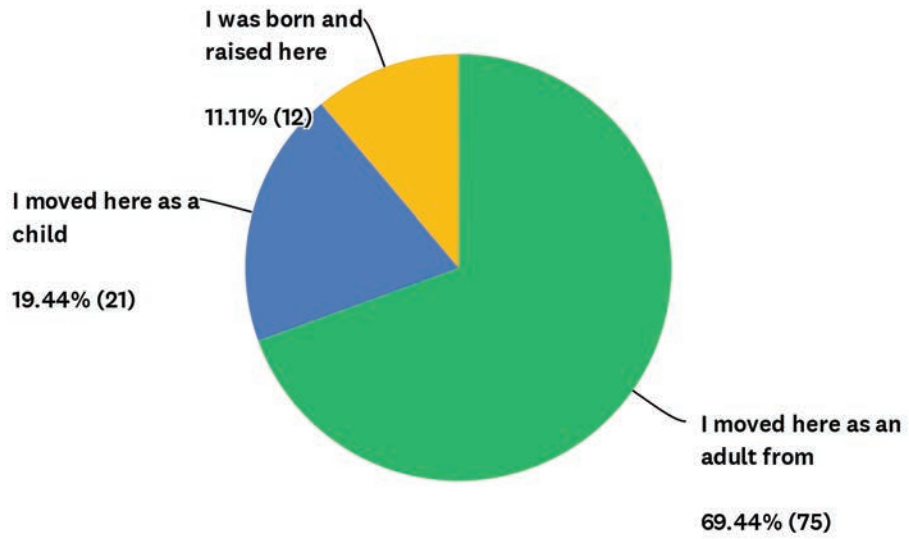
Answered: 74 Skipped: 50



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Mental disability or problem understanding many things (e.g. brain injury, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder)	5.41%	4
Physical disability (e.g. use a cane, wheelchair,)	6.76%	5
Learning disability (e.g. dyslexia, ADHD)	10.81%	8
Other (please specify)	22.97%	17
Chronic or acute medical condition (e.g. diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, cancer)	29.73%	22
Substance abuse or addiction (e.g. alcohol, drugs, gambling)	31.08%	23
Mental health condition (e.g. depression, anxiety disorders, PTSD, schizophrenia)	51.35%	38
Total		74

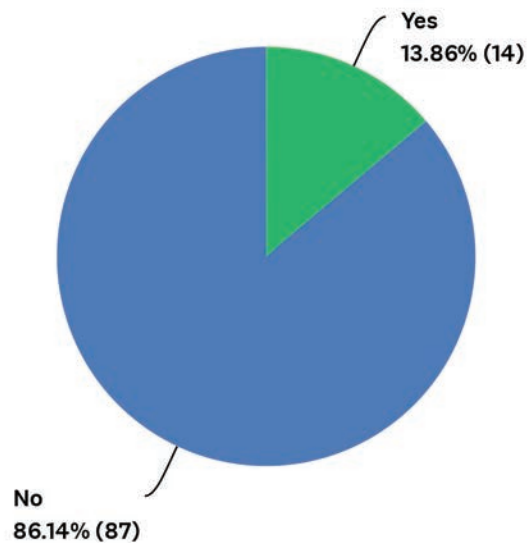
Q11 Why are you now living in Ottawa?

Answered: 108 Skipped: 16



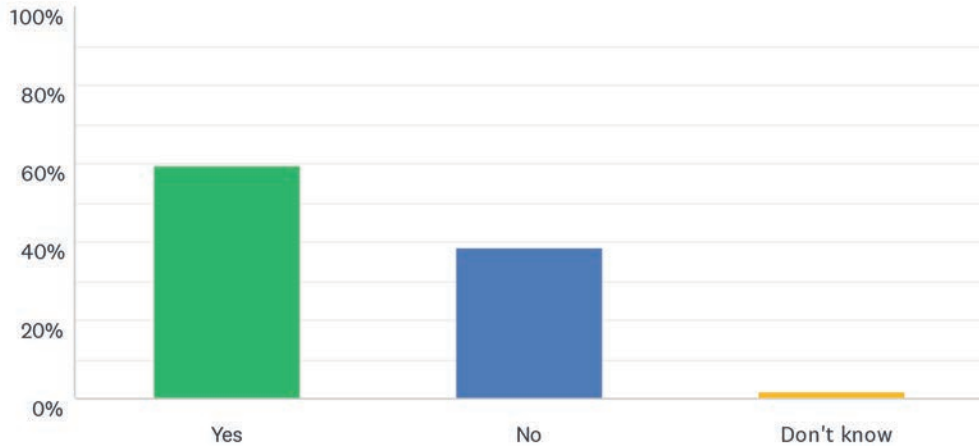
Q12 Are you currently homeless?

Answered: 101 Skipped: 23



Q13 In Ottawa have you ever had to sleep at someone else's house, in a shelter, tent, shack, shed, outside or somewhere else because you had nowhere else to sleep?

Answered: 101 Skipped: 23



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	59.41%	60
No	38.61%	39
Don't know	1.98%	2
Total		101

Q14 Have you ever felt you needed to leave your home, either temporarily or permanently, but had no safe place to go to?

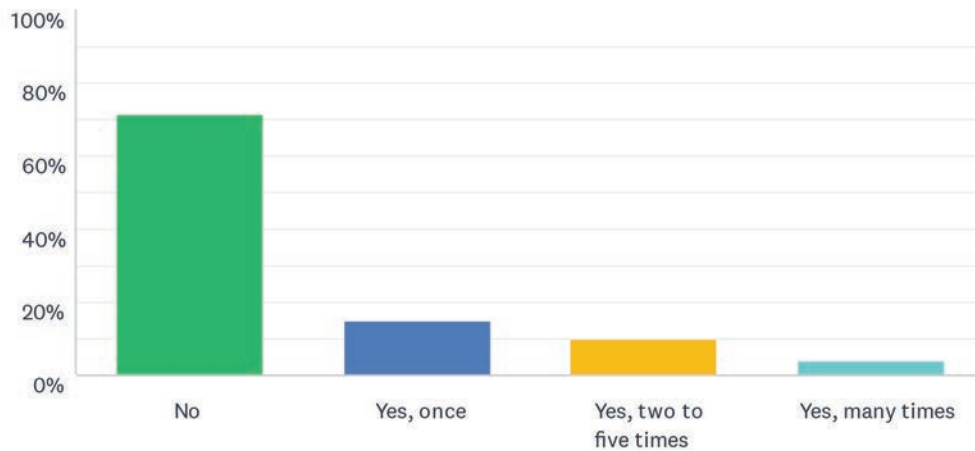
Answered: 101 Skipped: 23



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	56.44%	57
No	41.58%	42
Don't know	1.98%	2
Total		101

Q15 Have you ever been turned away from a shelter because it was full?

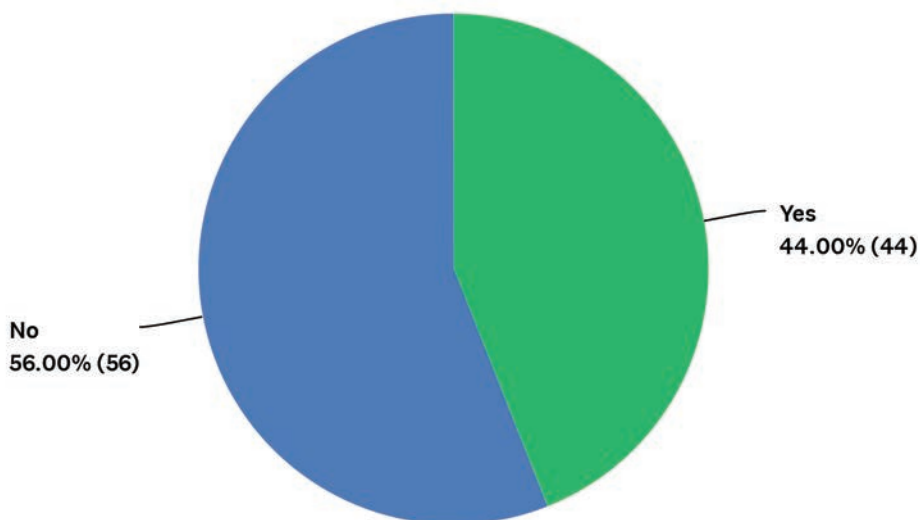
Answered: 101 Skipped: 23



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
No	71.29%	72
Yes, once	14.85%	15
Yes, two to five times	9.90%	10
Yes, many times	3.96%	4
Total		101

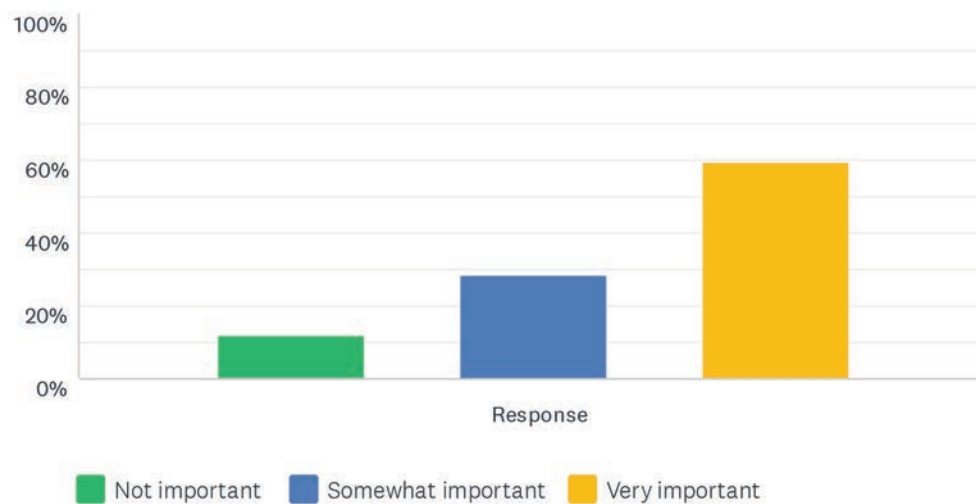
Q16 Have you ever avoided going to a shelter because you felt you would be unsafe there?

Answered: 100 Skipped: 24



Q18 How important is it to you that the staff in shelters speak Inuktitut?

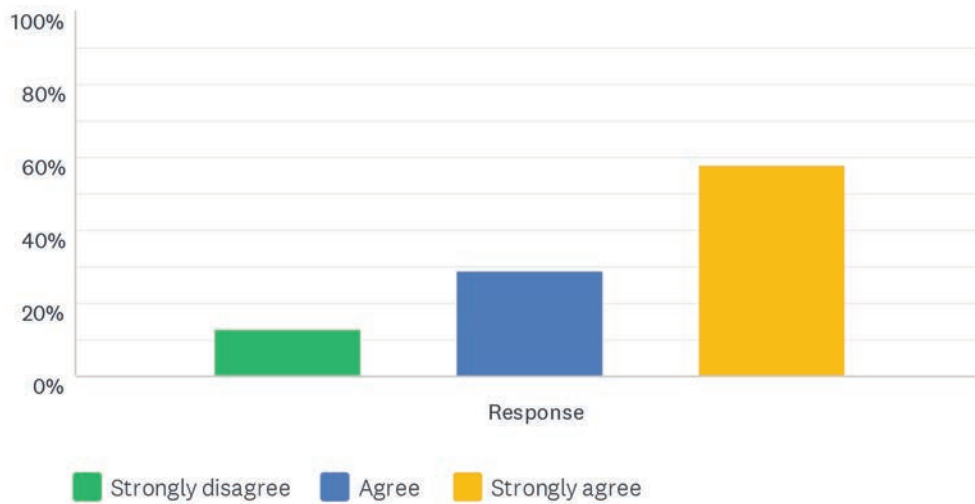
Answered: 99 Skipped: 25



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Not important	12.12%	12
Somewhat important	28.28%	28
Very important	59.60%	59
Weighted average	2.76	
Total		99

Q19 Shelter and housing services that serve only Inuit are needed

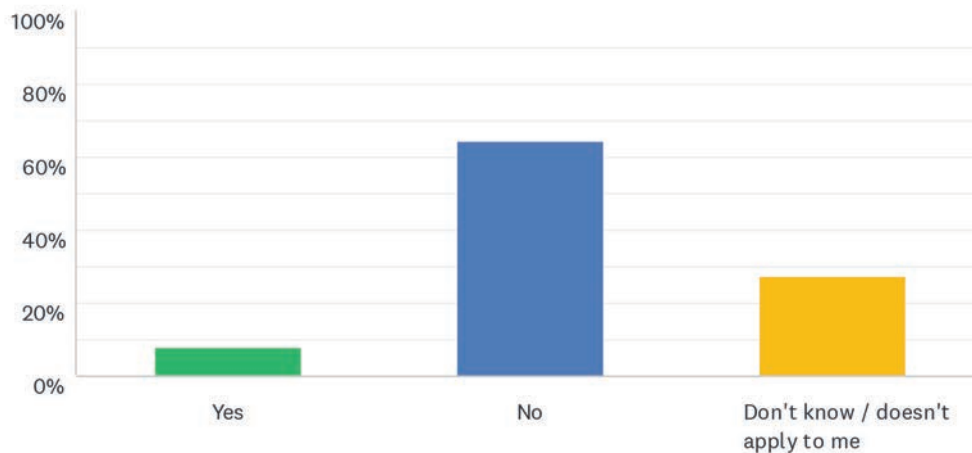
Answered: 100 Skipped: 24



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly disagree	13.00%	13
Agree	29.00%	29
Strongly agree	58.00%	58
Weighted average	2.74	
Total		100

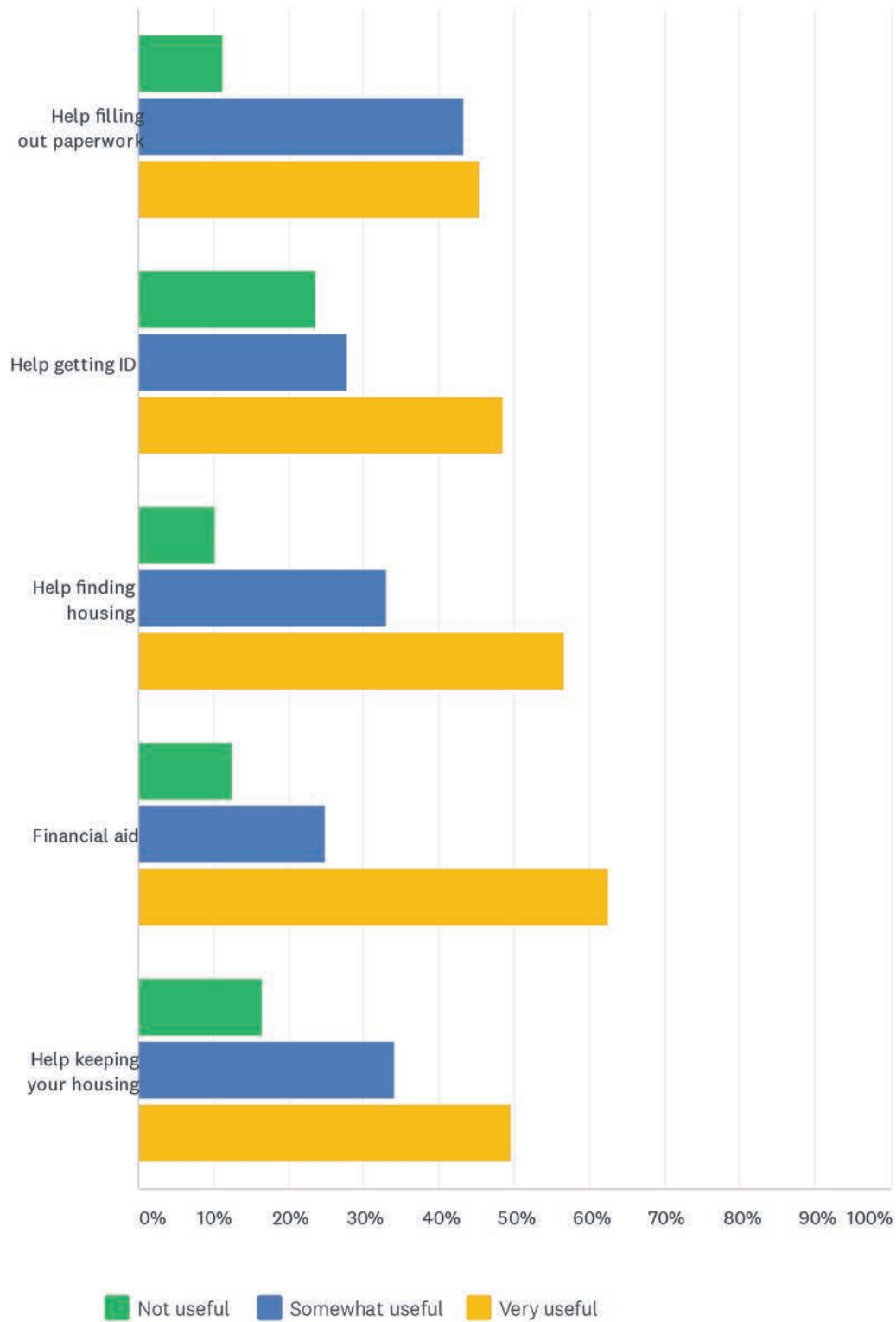
Q21 Do you think there are too many people currently living in your home?

Answered: 98 Skipped: 26



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	8.16%	8
No	64.29%	63
Don't know / doesn't apply to me	27.55%	27
Total		98

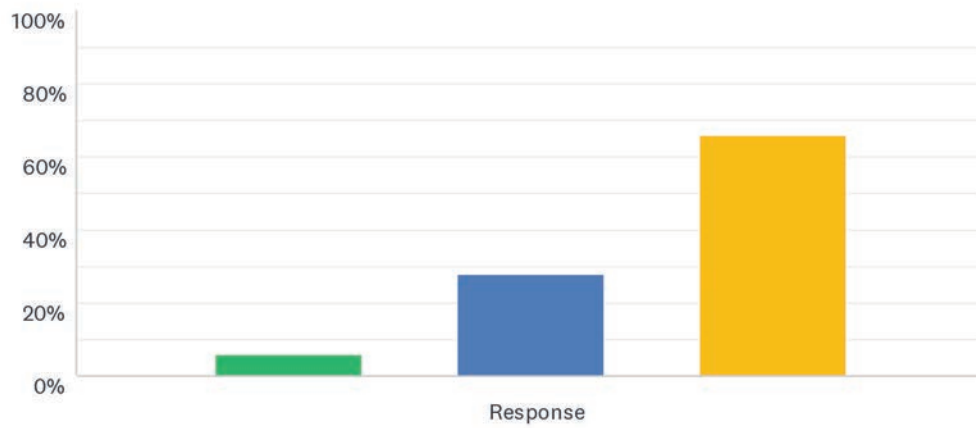
Q22 How useful are the following in helping you find or keep long-term housing.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Help filling out paperwork		
Not useful	11.34%	11
Somewhat useful	43.30%	42
Very useful	45.36%	44
Weighted average	2.77	
Total		97
Help getting ID		
Not useful	23.71%	23
Somewhat useful	27.84%	27
Very useful	48.45%	47
Weighted average	2.53	
Total		97
Help finding housing		
Not useful	10.31%	10
Somewhat useful	32.99%	32
Very useful	56.70%	55
Weighted average	2.79	
Total		97
Financial Aid		
Not useful	12.50%	12
Somewhat useful	25.00%	24
Very useful	62.50%	60
Weighted average	2.75	
Total		96
Help keeping your housing		
Not useful	16.49%	16
Somewhat useful	34.02%	33
Very useful	49.48%	48
Weighted average	2.67	
Total		97

Q24 How important is it to you that housing support services be available in Inuktitut?

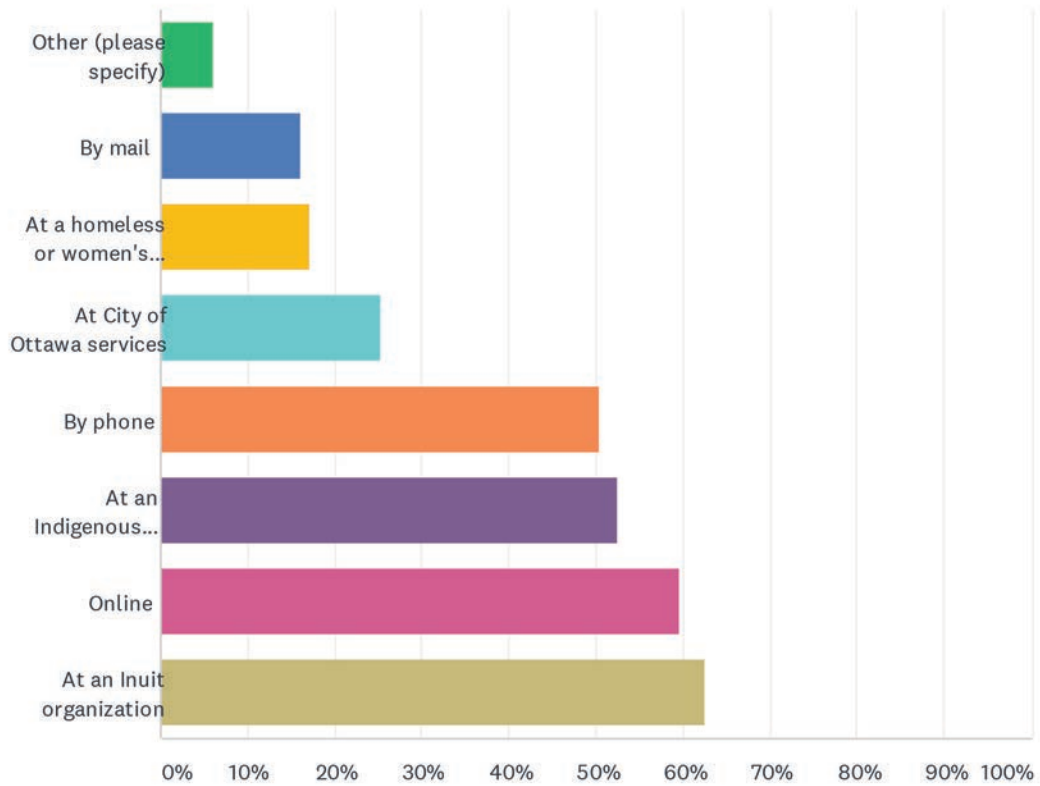
Answered: 97 Skipped: 27



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Not important	6.19%	6
Somewhat important	27.84%	27
Very important	65.98%	64
Weighted average	2.88	
Total		97

Q25 What are the best ways for you to get the help you need to find appropriate housing?

Answered: 99 Skipped: 25



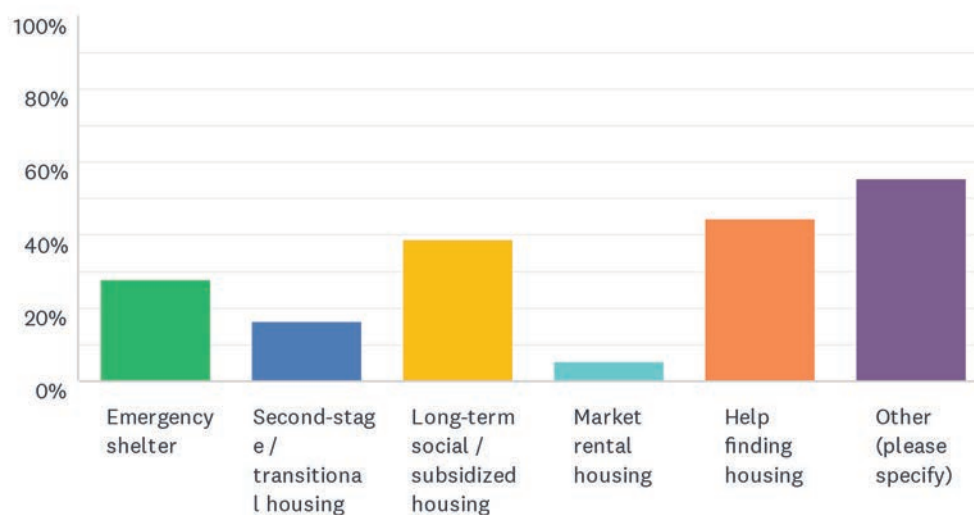
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Other (please specify)	6.06%	6
By mail	16.16%	16
At a homeless or women's shelters	17.17%	17
At City of Ottawa services	25.25%	25
By phone	50.51%	50
At an Indigenous organization	52.53%	52
Online	59.60%	59
At an Inuit organization	62.63%	62
Total		99

9.6 Survey Data — Service Providers

SERVICE PROVIDER SURVEY

Q6 What shelter and housing services does your agency provide?

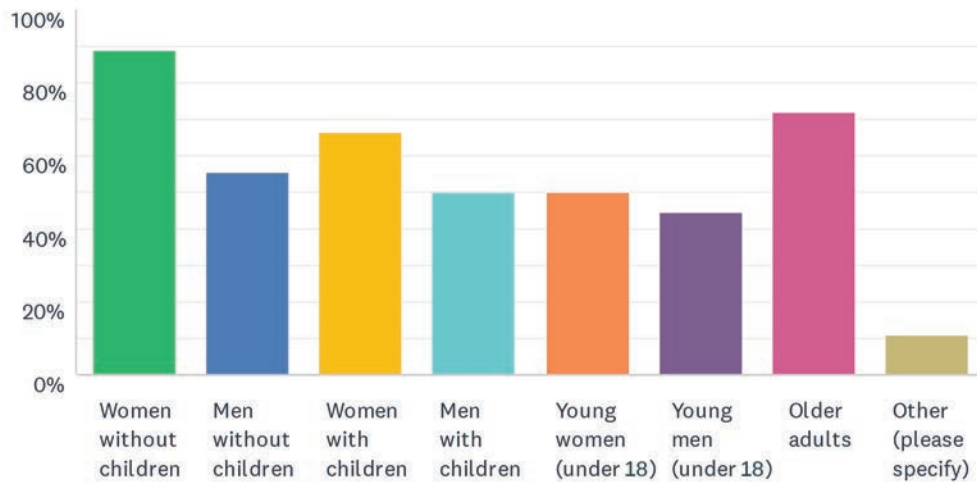
Answered: 18 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Emergency shelter	27.78%	5
Second-stage / transitional housing	16.67%	3
Long-term social / subsidized housing	38.89%	7
Market rental housing	5.56%	1
Help finding housing	44.44%	8
Other (please specify)	55.56%	10
Total		18

Q7 If so, which of the following groups of clients do you serve?

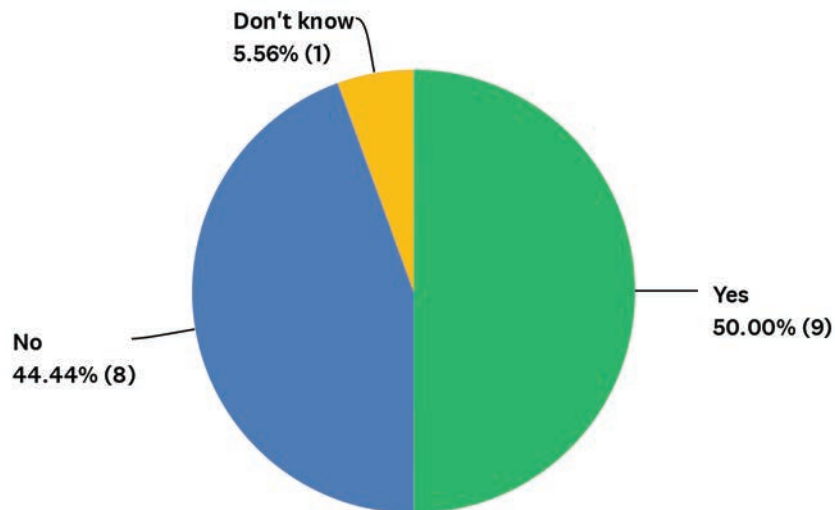
Answered: 18 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Women without children	88.89%	16
Men without children	55.56%	10
Women with children	66.67%	12
Men with children	50.00%	9
Young women (under 18)	50.00%	9
Young men (under 18)	44.44%	8
Older adults	72.22%	13
Other (please specify)	11.11%	2
Total		18

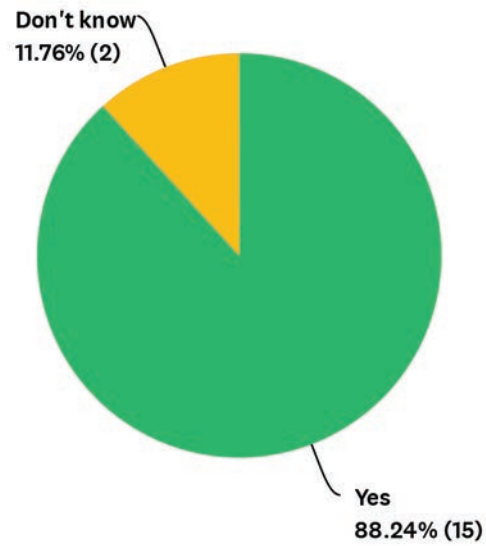
Q8 Do you receive any funding to provide shelter or housing services specifically to Indigenous clients?

Answered: 18 Skipped: 0



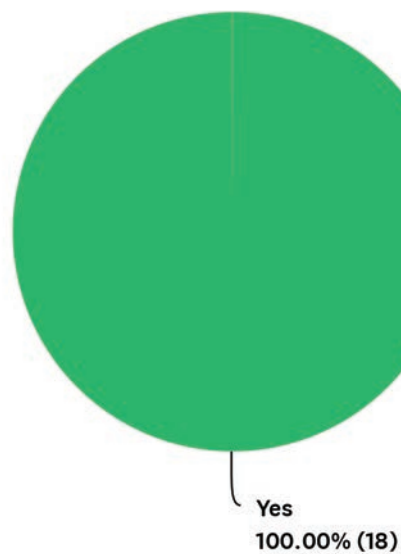
Q9 Do you find that there are differences among First Nation, Inuit and Metis clients with respect to their shelter and housing needs?

Answered: 17 Skipped: 1



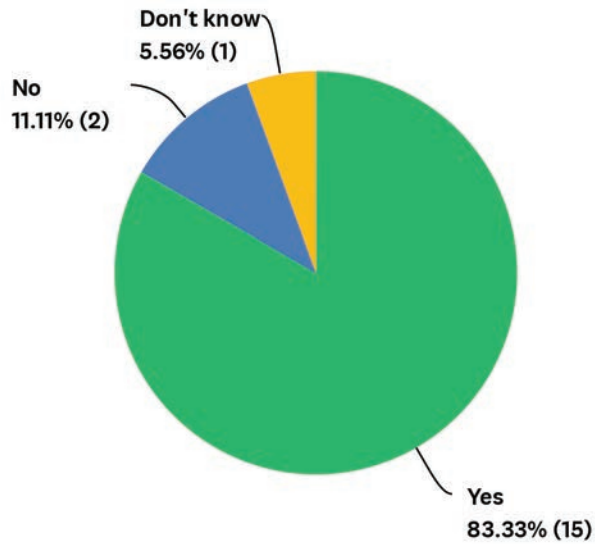
Q10 Do you provide services to clients who self-identify as Inuit?

Answered: 18 Skipped: 0



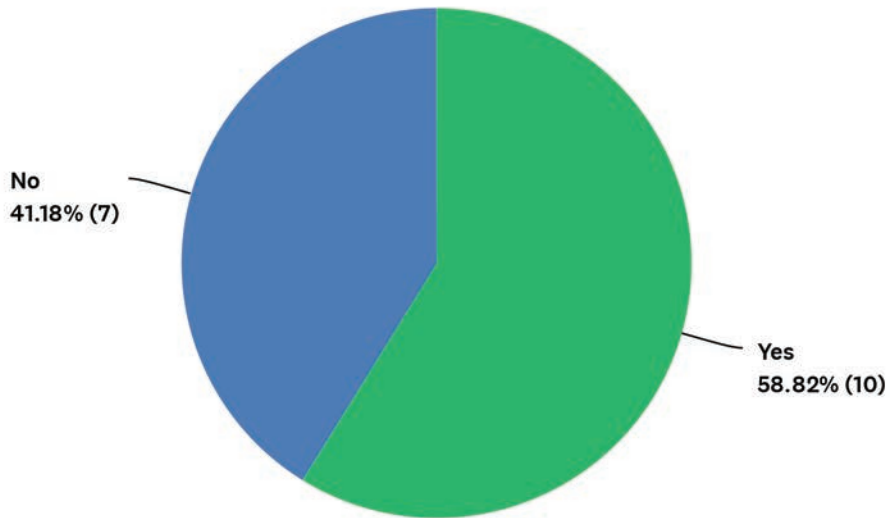
Q11 Does your agency keep Indigenous-specific statistics?

Answered: 18 Skipped: 0



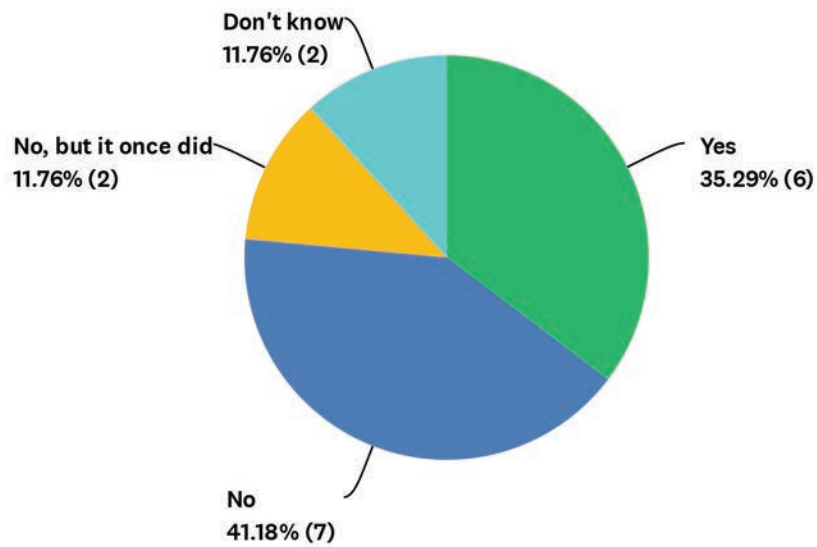
Q12 Does your agency keep Inuit-specific statistics?

Answered: 17 Skipped: 1



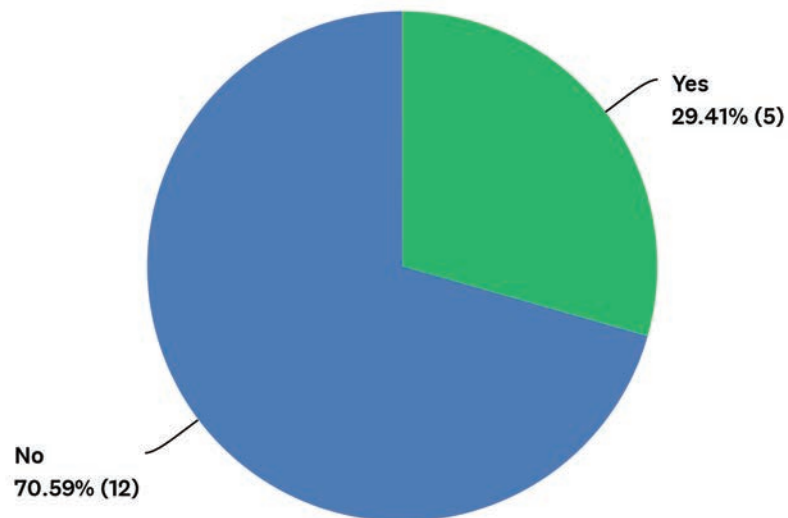
Q13 Does your agency employ any Inuit staff?

Answered: 17 Skipped: 1




Q14 Are you able to offer any services in Inuktitut?


Answered: 17 Skipped: 1







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