

The Healing Journey

A Longitudinal Study of Women in Alberta Who
Have Experienced Intimate Partner Violence


The Research Team

- ▶ PI's: J. Ursel, U of M; M. Bertrand
- ▶ AB Research Team: L. Radtke, J. Reimer, L. Tutty, B. Brochu, P. Garrett, E. Gibbs van Brunschot, C. Goard, R. Grant-Kalischuk, K. Cassie, C. McDonald-Harker, K. Nixon, W. Thurston
- ▶ AB RA's: A. Egan, D. Exner, D. Nguyen, S. Gilani, D. Galappathy, M. Jovic, P. Marshall, N. Metuh, C. O'Connor, L. Sutherland
- ▶ AB Interviewers: A. Asgill-Winter, T. Behin, S. Canning, J. Christensen, W. Florence, K. Iyengar, S. LeDrew, C. Lezansky, D. Martin, J. Mazonde, C. Ogden, S. Patenaude, S. Roberts, L. Stuart, C. Tenzin, S. Wilson, J. Weaver, K. Wyllie

The Funders

- ▶ Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council; Community–University Research Alliance
 - ▶ Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research
 - ▶ Alberta Centre for Child, Community and Family Research
 - ▶ *PrairieAction* Foundation
 - ▶ Status of Women Canada
 - ▶ TransCanada Pipelines
- 

Presentation Outline

- ▶ Study background
 - ▶ Methodology
 - ▶ Focus of this presentation
 - ▶ Our participants
 - ▶ Service utilization
 - ▶ Conclusions
- 

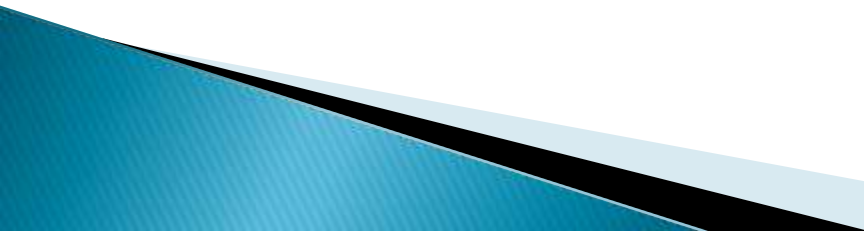
Study Background



Why?

- ▶ 1st of its kind in Canada
- ▶ Women's journeys as they aim for violence free lives
- ▶ Barriers are worldwide
 - Rooted in inequality
- ▶ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dp1-ncU2iIY>

Purpose of the Study

- ▶ Focus on the Prairie Provinces
 - ▶ Changes over time
 - ▶ Neglected groups:
 - Aboriginal
 - Immigrant
 - Older
 - Lesbian/two-spirited/bi-sexual
 - Disabled
 - Rural
 - Northern
- 

Methodology

- » Sample
Design
Procedures


Sample

- ▶ Recruitment criteria
 - 18 years and older
 - Last experience of IPA no earlier than January 2000
 - No mental health issues impairing comprehension, memory, or ability to give informed consent
 - Not in crisis – most recent experience of IPA at least three months prior to first interview
 - Willingness to stay in the study for the duration
- ▶ Five research sites across Alberta

Design

Wave	Questionnaires
1 (2005)	Background, History of Abuse General Functioning and Service Utilization
2	Parenting, Health Updates: Demographics and Abuse, General Functioning and Service Utilization
3	General Functioning and Service Utilization Updates: Demographics and Abuse, Parenting, Health
4	Repeat 2
5	Repeat 3
6	Repeat 2 Labour Market Survey (Cost Analysis)
7 (2009)	Repeat 3

Procedures

- ▶ Informed consent
 - ▶ Interviewer read questions and recorded answers
 - ▶ \$50 honorarium/interview
 - ▶ Qualitative interviews
 - Subsample
- 

Focus of Presentation

- »» Alberta – Wave 1
Service Utilization
Neglected Groups


Woman Abuse in Canada

- ▶ 10% of women in Alberta were victims of spousal assault in 2004, making it the highest in the country (the national average was 7%; Statistics Canada, 2005).
- ▶ Alberta has one of the highest rates of female homicide over the last three decades (Statistics Canada, 2005).

Impact of Woman Abuse

- ▶ “for women under the age of 45 years, intimate partner violence has a greater impact on health than any other risk factors, including obesity, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and illicit drug use.” (Cherniak et al., 2005)
- ▶ increased risk for mental health problems, substance abuse, chronic physical disorders, and sexual health complaints (Gondolf, 1998; Tutty, 1998; 2006a).
- ▶ Abused women are more likely to suffer from depression & anxiety than men (Statistics Canada, 2005).

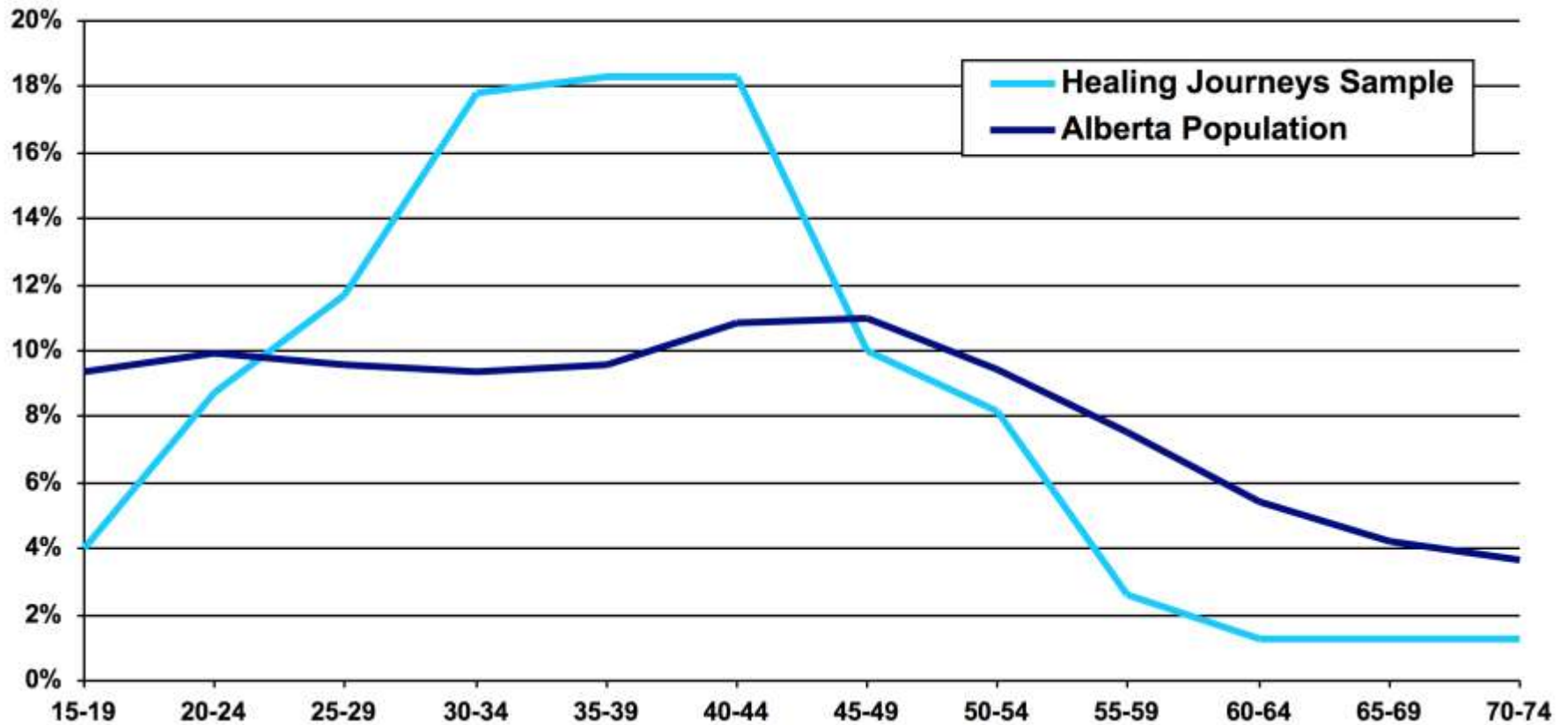
Women's Perceptions of Support

- ▶ Demand for shelters exceeds resources
 - ▶ Women value shelters as a safe and secure place to stay
 - ▶ Shelters provide services in addition to residency
 - ▶ Women need the support of services after shelter residency
- 

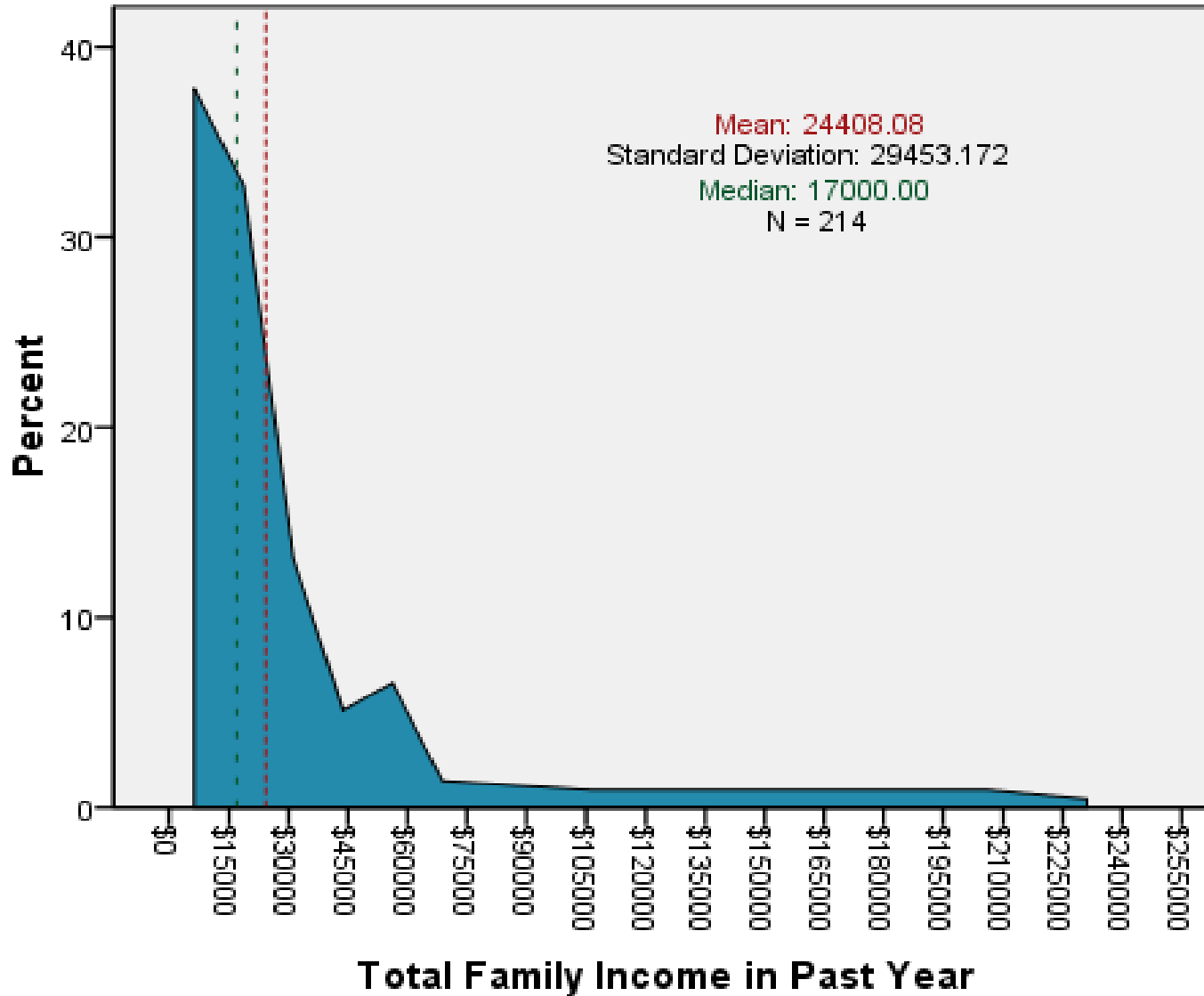
Who are our participants?



Age Distribution of Sample



Total Family Income in Past Year




Employment (Majority not employed)

Employment Status	Frequency	%
Full-time	51	22.1
Part-time	30	13.0
Casual	13	5.6
Not employed	135	58.4
Missing	2	0.9
TOTAL	231	100.0

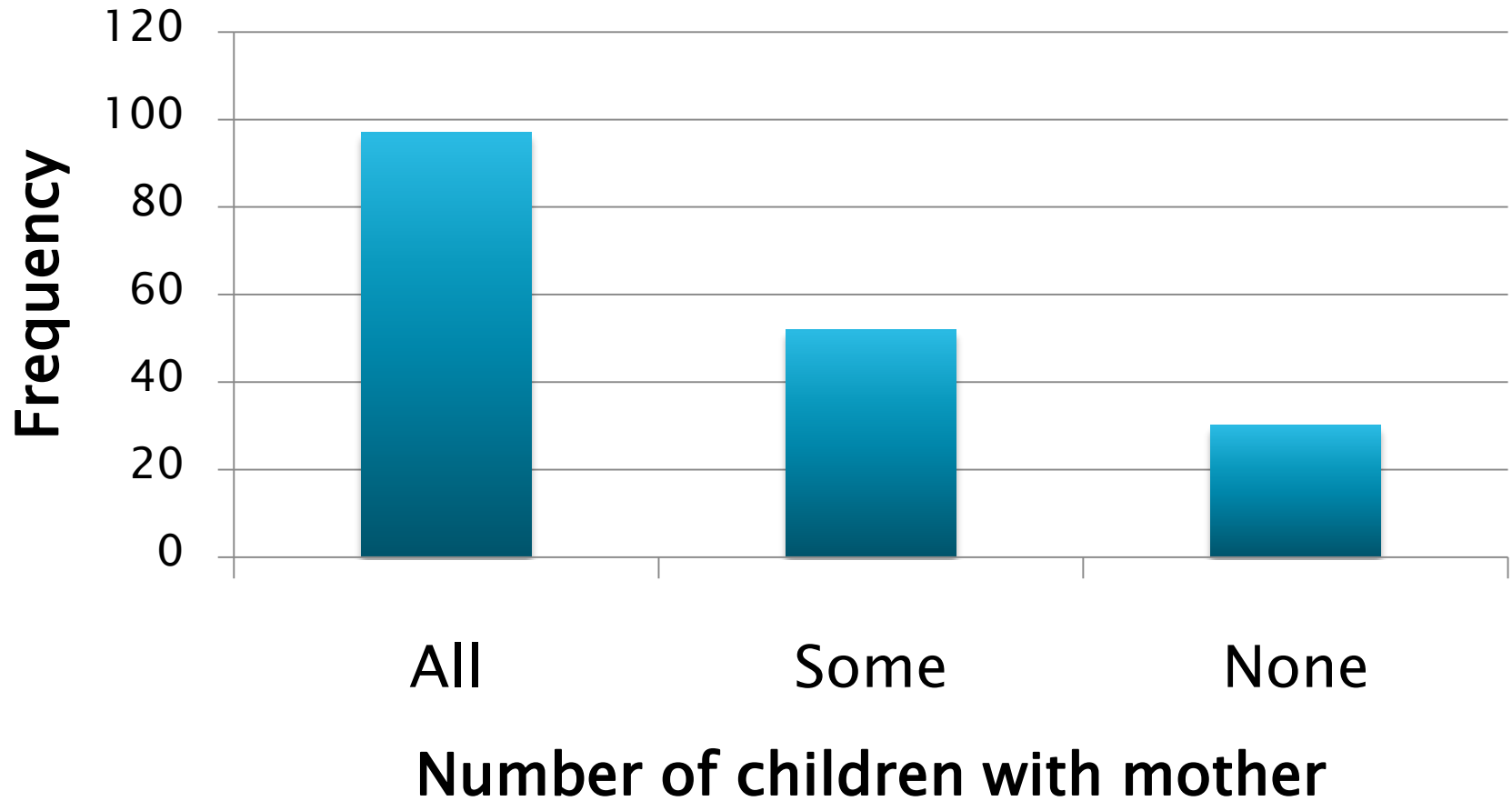
Highest level of education completed

Education Level	Frequency	%
Less than high school	84	36.4
High school diploma or equivalent	51	22.1
Some post-secondary	25	10.8
Completed post-secondary	68	28.6
Completed university post-graduate degree	4	1.7
Missing	1	0.4

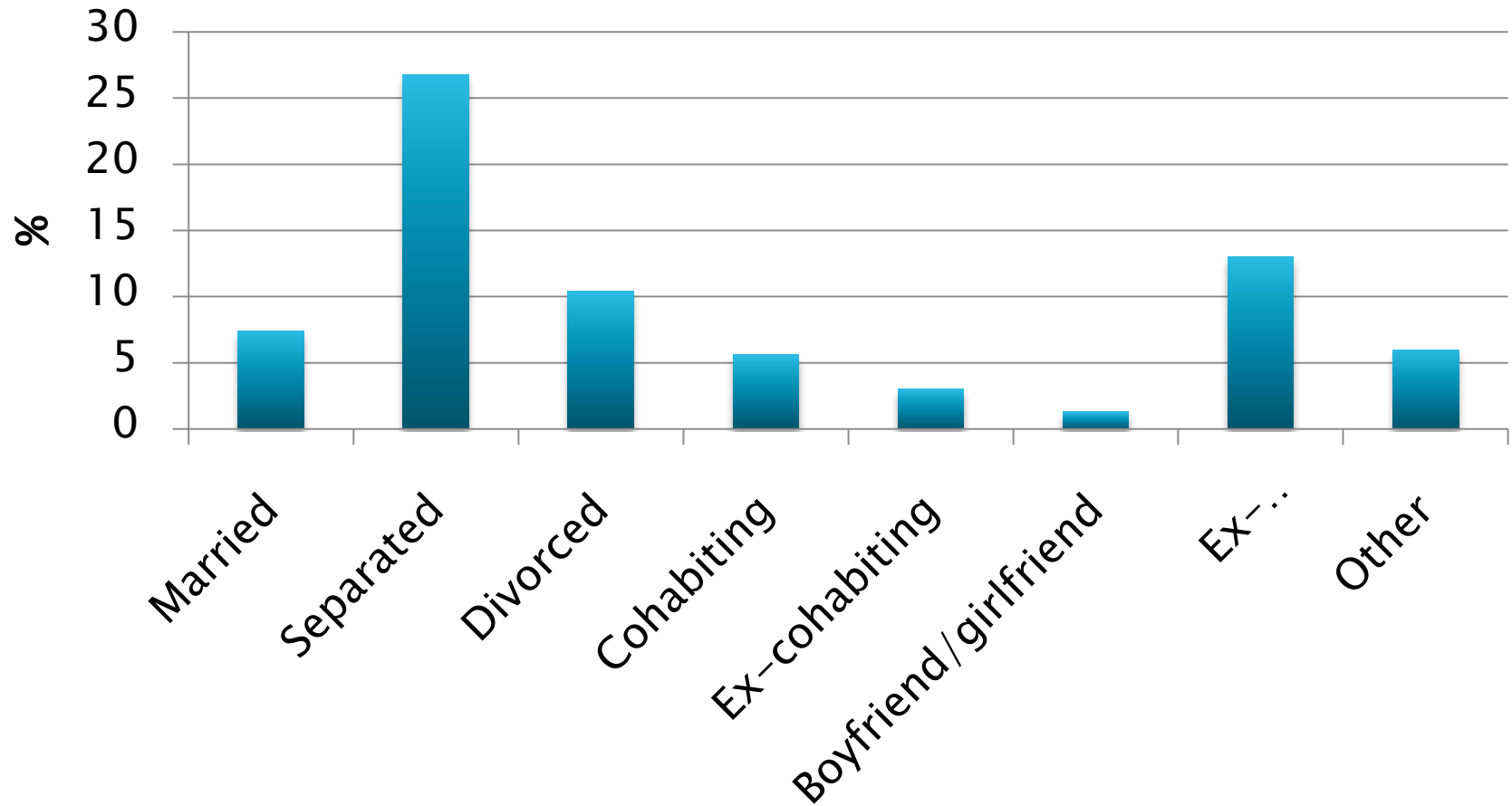
Children

- ▶ 92.6% (214) are mothers
 - ▶ 80% separated from the children's other parent [49% parent alone]
 - ▶ Average no. of children = 2.74 (max=11)
 - ▶ Age range of children = in 1st year - 50 years
 - ▶ 35.1% have at least one child with a disability, long-term illness and/or special needs
 - ▶ 7.4% have had a child die
- 

Where do the children live?



Relationship with most recent abusive partner



Relationship Characteristics

Most recent abusive partner	Average	Range
Length of time together	9.7 years	.17–50 years
Length of time relationship abusive	7.9 years	.02–48 years

Intimate Partner Abuse – last 12 months (Hegarty, 1999, 2005)

Type of Abuse	Prevalence (%) (at least one episode)	Chronicity (Average frequency) 0 (never) –5 (daily)
Emotional (e.g., Told me that I wasn't good enough.)	98.7	2.73 (once a month)
Harassment (e.g., Followed me.)	97.4	2.24 (several times)
Physical (e.g., Slapped me.)	98.3	1.99 (several times)
Severe Combined (e.g., Kept me from medical care.)	82.6	1.08 (only once)

Severity of Abuse

Type of abuse	N	Prevalence (%)
All four	183	79.6
Severe combined abuse plus at least one other type	190	82.6
Physical abuse plus emotional abuse and/or harassment	38	16.5
Physical abuse only	0	00.0
Emotional abuse and/or harassment	3	1.3
Emotional abuse only	2	0.8
Harassment only	1	0.4

Abuse Specific to Target Groups

- ▶ Threatened to out them: 2/14
- ▶ Threatened to withdraw sponsorship or damages chances for citizenship: 10/18

Further Challenges

- ▶ **Stability and quality of housing**
 - Median time living at one address = 5 years
 - Average quality of housing where have lived longest as an adult = 4.53 (between “adequate” and “good”)
 - 15% rated it as less than adequate
 - Average quality of housing where lived most recently = 4.75 (9.1% less than adequate)
 - Average quality of neighbourhood where lived most recently = 4.52 (17.3% less than adequate)
- ▶ **Chronic illness and disability**
 - 74.5%
 - Limits activities: 48.1%
 - Limits employability: 40.3%

Service Utilization



- Shelters
- 2nd stage housing
- Counselling
- Crisis lines
- Other social services
- Criminal Justice services

Average Ratings of Helpfulness

0=not at all; 4=quite a bit

Service	Average Helpfulness
Shelters	2.94
2 nd stage housing	3.39
Counselling	3.30
Crisis line	3.24
Social Assistance	2.68
Social housing	3.10

Stayed at a “battered women’s” shelter (at least once)

Sample	N	%
Total	231	74.7
Aboriginal	76	81.6
Non-aboriginal (age matched)	76	71.1
Immigrant/refugee	18	77.8
Non-immigrant (age matched)	18	66.7
Lesbian/two-spirited/bisexual/other	14	78.6
Heterosexual (age matched)	14	71.4

Ever stayed at a shelter

Age	N	%
39 and younger	130	76.9
40–54	84	72.6
55 and older	17	58.8

What do the women say?

- ▶ Majority of comments positive or neutral
- ▶ 31% of comments rated as complaints
 - Access (72%)
 - Social and physical environment
 - Quality of physical space (77%)
 - Child issues (63%)
 - Emotional/social support (31%)

Women's Comments: Positive

- ▶ Support (69%)
 - “Let me get my feelings out. Listened to me.”
 - “Physical/social/emotional needs met in a nurturing environment.”
- ▶ Social and physical environment (59%)
 - “Felt very safe, could rest.”
 - “It was helpful because I could hide and feel safe for a while.”
- ▶ Quality of service (87%)
 - “Helped me get help for mental health issues, directed me to another place.”
 - “They helped me find a place of my own.”

Women's Comments: Critical

- ▶ Support (31%)
 - “Did not provide counselling support.”
 - “I think they need to be more caring.”
- ▶ Social and physical environment (41%)
 - “Racism was a factor occasionally and this made her feel worse and thinking it might be better to return to her abusive partner.”
 - “Communal living is crappy.”
- ▶ Quality of service (13%)
 - “Prejudiced, didn't want you there, no information, no resources, sent me to [city name].”
 - “Not helpful in finding other accommodation.”

Residential second stage housing (at least one)

Group	N	%
Total	231	35.5
Aboriginal	76	36.8
Non-aboriginal (age-matched)	76	38.2
Immigrant/refugee	18	72.2
Non-immigrant/refugee (age-matched)	18	33.3
Lesbian/two-spirited/bisexual/other	14	78.6
Heterosexual (age-matched)	14	71.4

Residential 2nd stage housing

Age	N	%
39 and younger	130	43.1
40–54	84	26.2
55 and older	17	23.5

What do the women say?

- ▶ Majority of comments positive or neutral
- ▶ 37% of comments rated as complaints
 - Access (98%)

Women's Comments: Positive

- ▶ Social and physical environment (61%)
 - “Helpful – feeling safe – her own space.”
 - “Gave me a safe place to live with no male worries. Helped give me the security of independence and ability to live on my own with my children. Excellent stepping stone.”
- ▶ Quality of service (78%)
 - “Donations – bread, clothing, have a chance to breathe.”
 - “Gave me a roof over my head, free. No expectations. Time to get back on my own feet.”
- ▶ Personal growth (100%)
 - “Gained self-awareness, learned to love and respect who I am. Learned responsibility and accountability for my own actions.”
 - “Very helpful. I have been able to become stronger. If I see him I won't fall for his charm. I didn't know what to expect.”

Women's Comments: Critical

- ▶ Quality of service (22%)
 - “Counselling is good but need to deal with underlying issues – vocational support, etc. Pay staff more so there is less turnover.”
 - “The programming is not practical. None of the staff have the training that is necessary. They are uninformed about the resources in the community.”
- ▶ Access (98%)
 - “Didn’t know if it existed (it doesn’t).”
 - “I didn’t qualify or the wait list was too long – I couldn’t be bothered. Being single with no kids is a barrier plus my disability. I don’t fit – story of my life.”
- ▶ Social and physical environment (39%)
 - “Parents let kids run wild – screaming up and down the halls.”
 - “I would feel ‘not safe’ because it’s not my home and there’s lots of people, rules and regulations.”


Counselling (at least once)

Group	N	%
Total	231	88.3
Aboriginal	76	86.8
Non-aboriginal (age-matched)	76	86.8
Immigrant/refugee	18	72.2
Non-immigrant/refugee (age-matched)	18	94.4
Lesbian/two-spirited/bisexual/other	14	78.6
Heterosexual (age-matched)	14	85.7

Counselling

Age	N	%
39 and younger	130	90.0
40–54	84	84.5
55 and older	17	94.1

Types of Counselling Services

- ▶ Shelter/domestic violence
 - ▶ Mental health
 - ▶ Drug abuse/rehabilitation
 - ▶ Aboriginal
 - ▶ Couples/family
 - ▶ Church/religious/spiritual
 - ▶ Psychiatric
 - ▶ Parenting
 - ▶ Individual/1-on-1
 - ▶ Group
 - ▶ Drop-in
- 

What do the women say?

- ▶ Majority of comments positive or neutral
- ▶ 23% critical
 - Access (100%)

Women's Comments: Positive

- ▶ Support (84%)
 - “Group – learned a lot. One-on-one really connected with counsellor, understood my situation better. Counsellor was amazing, honest, insightful. Grew a lot from both services.”
 - “It was really helpful for me as I could talk about as to what was going on with my life.”
- ▶ Quality of service (81%)
 - “It showed me lots of different kinds of abuse and in what ways my children are being affected.”
 - “All were informative – especially at shelter. Great support – understanding; safe; encouraging; allowed to feel however you feel.”
- ▶ Quality of programs (70%)
 - “Most effective were the ones who had an Aboriginal worldview and had a more holistic counselling training, e.g., included spirituality as an important threat in the healing journey. Social workers were much more helpful than trained clinical psychologists.”
 - “Assisted her hugely in all four areas: spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional. Believes this helped her move forward.”

Women's Comments: Critical

- ▶ Quality of programs (30%)
 - “I need more time with the Wednesday evening group. One years was not good enough as things take me a little longer.”
 - “It was okay – wished it was longer.”
- ▶ Access (100%)
 - “I don't think there is enough resources and enough places to go for counselling.”
 - “Nothing available to help women once not in abusive relationship. You have to pay for outside counselling.”
- ▶ Support (16%)
 - “Felt judged (sort of) – didn't think my issue was serious – told me it would pass. Made me feel I shouldn't be there.”
 - “I feel I need more assistance with my past to understand the present.”


Crisis Line Services (at least once)

Group	N	%
Total	231	47.2
Aboriginal	76	46.1
Non-aboriginal (age-matched)	76	47.4
Immigrant/refugee	18	44.4
Non-immigrant/refugee (age-matched)	18	33.3
Lesbian/two-spirited/bisexual/other	14	57.1
Heterosexual (age-matched)	14	35.7

Crisis Line Services

Age	N	%
39 and younger	130	43.8
40–54	84	48.8
55 and older	17	64.7

Types of Crisis Line Services

- ▶ Distress Line/Support Network/Crisis Line/Help Line
 - ▶ Shelter
 - ▶ Police/RCMP/911/Victim Services
 - ▶ Social Services/ Child Welfare
 - ▶ Addictions
- 

What did the women say?

- ▶ Fewer comments – majority positive or neutral (62%)
- ▶ Support
 - Good info, listening ear.
 - Has made a lot of calls over the years. Put on hold, never spoke to anyone.
 - They told me how to get to shelter. They believed what I told them and took it seriously.
- ▶ Quality of service
 - Some very good. Others too young and inexperienced. I phone Distress when I fell lonely or extremely stressed.
 - RCMP came and got my kids and I to the women's shelter.
 - Didn't do anything. Just took my information.

Other Social Services

- ▶ 80.5% applied for social assistance
 - 40.3% reported social assistance as a source of income
- ▶ 56.7% applied for social housing
 - 35.9% indicated they need help to find affordable housing other than social housing

What did the women say?

- ▶ Social assistance: 52% comments critical
 - “Glad to have the money, but it’s not enough.”
 - “Helped me in the moment–pay bills but didn’t help me move forward.”
 - “I didn’t have a job when I left my husband – it was helpful for surviving.”
 - “It helped cause it paid my rent. It allowed me to attend a training course to find out my options re: going back to school. Of course, the money I received was not enough but I got by.”


What did the women say?

- ▶ Social housing: 43% critical
 - Access
 - “Didn’t get it. Horrendous. The wait list is so long as a single women with no kids I didn’t fit. They wanted to put me in the [facility name] with all the drugs and creeps. I said no, I’d rather be homeless.”
 - Social and physical environment
 - “Nice, quiet, clean place, convenient and rent is reasonable.”
 - “Social housing is located in bad places. I don’t want my children in those areas. The standard is poor.”
 - “First home I’ve built for me and my son, so I’m very proud and thankful.”

Criminal Justice Services




Safety

- ▶ 51.9% have a safety plan
 - 73.3% received help with this
 - Mainly shelters and other service agencies
 - ▶ 40% have used the plan
 - ▶ 34% think legal system in their community takes abuse of women seriously
- 

Involvement with Legal System

	%
No	17.3
Family Law System	40.3
Police	74.9
Criminal Courts	42.9
Had order(s) preventing contact by abusive partner	54.1
All of the above	21.2

Services rendered/Challenges faced

- ▶ 43.3% who applied granted a protection/prevention order
 - ▶ 45% have had legal aid or private counsel to help with abuse issues
 - ▶ 20.3% reported having had difficulty securing legal assistance/representation
- 

Use of police services and police response

	%
Called police at least once because of partner abuse	72.3
Just talked to you	42.9
Asked if you wanted charges laid	35.9
Arrested ex/partner	33.3
Escorted you to a shelter	19.9
Said it wasn't a criminal matter	13.4
Tried to discourage you from wanting him/her charged	13.4
Confiscated weapons	11.7
Police did not respond	11.7
Arrested both you and your ex/partner	5.2


What the women said?

- ▶ “I felt that I was bothering them.”
- ▶ “The police response wasn’t too great—they took too lightly. I made lots of complaints and the police thought I am in the revenge mood, that is all.”
- ▶ “It was okay—worked to get rid of him.”
- ▶ “Good. Responded quickly. Aware of the situation and what was going on. They even stopped me several times—just checking on me to see that I was safe.”
- ▶ “They didn’t respond. The one time I called the police to tell them that he is following me in the car, they said he is allowed to drive wherever he wants.”

Conclusions

- » Social services
- Criminal Justice services
- A human rights perspective

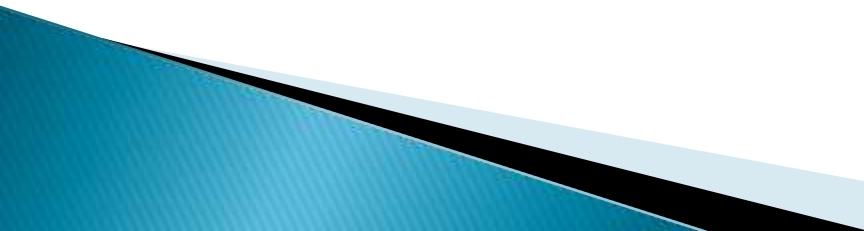
Social Services

- ▶ When available and accessed, the majority of women report benefits.
 - ▶ Critical comments are primarily directed at issues related to under-resourcing of services.
 - ▶ Meeting basic needs – housing and a safe environment for children – remain the bottom line.
 - ▶ Preliminary look at target groups – still need further analysis of variations in availability and accessibility of services.
- 

Safety and Criminal Justice Services

- ▶ Safety remains a concern for the women.
- ▶ Criminal justice services provide limited and variable support.

The United Nations Beijing Platform for Action (1996)

- ▶ “provide well-funded Shelters and relief support for girls and women subjected to violence, as well as medical, psychological and other counselling services”
 - ▶ free or low-cost legal aid, where it is needed, as well as appropriate assistance to enable them to find a means of subsistence“.
 - ▶ “support initiatives of women’s organizations and non-governmental organizations to raise awareness on the issue of violence against women and to contribute to its elimination”
- 

Whose rights? Whose Interests

Female
VICTIM/ SURVIVOR

Right to safety
*Fails to protect her
child*

Male
PERPETRATOR

Right to privacy
Property rights
Presumed innocent
A good enough father

CHILD

Right to know both parents
Right to safety and
protection

How Much Longer?

- ▶ 30 years since CEDAW Convention (1979)
 - ▶ 20th anniversary of CRC Convention (1989)
 - ▶ 13 years since the Beijing Platform for Action (1996)
 - ▶ 5 years since Premier's Roundtable on Family Violence Final Report (2005)
- 