

Women's Shelters Canada Launches National Survey on the State of Shelters



Women's Shelters Canada is a national organization connecting provincial and territorial shelter organizations and shelters and transition houses (THs) across the country. Our work includes networking opportunities, knowledge exchange, advocacy, policy analysis, and research. With a grant from Status of Women Canada for our *Shelters of the Future Project*, we are conducting a national survey.

Developing a national profile of Women's Shelters today

Many people still believe that shelters only provide a bed, a roof, and safety for women and their children. We know that shelters do much more than that, but we don't have the numbers to back it up. Much of the research conducted about shelters, such as the *StatsCan Transition Home survey*, focuses on the women who use shelters and their services. This survey is different in that its focus is not on the clients that are served, but rather the shelters themselves. The purpose of our survey is to illustrate the scope of the shelter sector and provide reliable, up-to-date information on shelter capacity, infrastructure, services, funding, and staffing structures across the country.

We hope that our research will provide a wide range of information, including but not limited to:

- The number of shelters and transition houses in Canada
- The average operating budget for shelters regionally, provincially, and nationally
- The number of staff working in the shelter sector
- The average wages and salaries for shelter workers and how they compare across rural/urban and Indigenous/non-Indigenous communities
- The number of unionized shelters
- The number of shelters operating at or beyond their capacity
- The frequency with which shelters have to turn women away because of lack of space or resources;
- The number of shelters in need of renovation
- The average number of years since the last funding increase
- The full range of services provided by shelters and transition houses
- How shelters meet fundraising challenges
- The innovative partnerships and coalitions that have been established

Why budget and financial information is collected

In our conversations with provincial shelter associations, individual shelters/THs, and through our annual [Shelter Voices Survey](#), we often hear how much shelters are doing with so little. The lack of sustainable and adequate funding has many impacts on shelters, staff, and the women and children who use the services offered. However, we do not have sufficient data or numbers to back up these claims – in our work with partners and stakeholders, we often get requests for “the numbers.” This data will better empower us to do the advocacy work needed to ensure that the work of shelters is given due recognition.

Many shelter directors we speak with note the difficulties in delivering a wide range of services without adequate funding. For example, most provincial funding does not cover public education, prevention, and awareness work that many shelters do within their communities. Shelters often have to fundraise to meet basic operating costs. Early data shows that some shelters in rural, isolated, or northern communities have a high staff turnover as a result of budget stresses on the organization. The [National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence \(NACFV\)](#) has found that Indigenous women’s shelters are significantly underfunded. We hope our research will be able to support NACFV’s work and build on their findings to demonstrate the discrepancies between Indigenous and non-Indigenous shelters, and to hopefully remedy them. We also want to be able to demonstrate the inconsistencies across regions, to advocate for comparable levels of services and protection for women across the country. Collecting data on budgets, staff, salaries, and the amount of fundraising that is needed to meet operating costs will allow us to demonstrate the necessity of investing in shelters and their life saving work.

How the information will be used

The results of the survey will be instrumental in allowing us to demonstrate the extent of shelter work across the country. Developing our own data by the shelter sector for the shelter sector will empower Women’s Shelters Canada, provincial and territorial shelter associations, and individual shelters/THs, who will all benefit from having access to this information. From the research, we hope to publish accessible and easy to share mini reports and infographics that shelters can use, as well as academic and policy articles/reports.

We acknowledge [OCAP® principles \(Ownership, Access, Control, and Possession\)](#) in collecting information that includes Indigenous peoples and will share data collected within their communities (with personal information excluded) with our Indigenous partner organizations.

Confidentiality

Due to the sensitive nature of some of the questions asked in the survey, your name, the name of your shelter, and your contact information will be strictly confidential. The survey results will be reported by province and territory, by rural/urban differences, Indigenous/non-Indigenous, and possibly other groupings, but without naming any individual or shelter. Your words may be quoted when the results are published, but we will ensure that no one will be able to identify you. The data are being held confidentially in Canada. For information on the security of our data, see the [Qualtrics Security Statement](#).

How will this research benefit women who flee violence?

We hope that the data generated from this research will result in greater recognition of the work done by shelters, and eventually an overall improvement in shelter services depending on the specific needs of each shelter. For some, this might mean that they can invest in better security; pay better wages for staff; develop new programming; have better services for 2nd stage/transitional housing; improve accessibility of shelters; fund advocacy and prevention work; hire specialized counsellors, etc.

Have further questions?

Contact Krystle Maki PhD, Research and Policy Coordinator
Monday-Friday 9am-5pm (EDT), 613-680-5119
Email: kmaki@endvaw.ca

Stay Connected!



Sign up for our newsletter



Join our Facebook group



Follow us on Twitter



Check out our YouTube Channel