

FUNDING

VAW shelters and transition houses (THs) are **chronically and systemically underfunded**, which is contributing to low staff salaries and high workload. This is only growing more challenging with increasing inflation, which has not been reflected in funding levels. Staff are continually doing **more work with less funding** which is especially challenging as severity and rates of violence have increased.

VAW SHELTERS AND TRANSITION HOUSES ARE CHRONICALLY AND SYSTEMICALLY UNDERFUNDED.

AVERAGE ANNUAL SALARY IN CANADA: \$57,137

49%

OF STAFF REPORTED EARNING UNDER \$50K¹

66%

OF NON-MANAGERS OR SUPERVISORS REPORTED EARNING LESS THAN \$50K

Nearly **one-third** of staff reported working an additional job to **supplement their income.**

32%

1300
FRONT LINE STAFF

126
MANAGERS/
DIRECTORS QUIT²

31%

DUE TO LOW PAY/BENEFITS³

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The work we’re doing is really tough. We’re always hearing our clients’ traumatic stories and work with their trauma, but the pay is not really supplementing our work and the burnout. I think sometimes, it’s not worth the pay. The mental struggles you’re going through make you think, is it really worth sacrificing my mental health for this amount of pay?

—Frontline focus group

Not only are funding amounts impacting staff wellness, but the expectations of government funders are also affecting staff stress. A lot of costs are not accounted for within current funding models, in particular administration and evaluation of programming, and the costs to cover and train an adequate number of well-paid staff. For these, and many other organizational activities and supports, **staff need to fundraise the shortfall.**

Management and frontline staff feel like there is a **lack of appreciation and respect** from funders. The lack of understanding of the work being done contributes to chronic underfunding and organizations becoming a catch-all for any community needs (e.g. mental health and addictions, homelessness).

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Lack of funding and government support results in high stress and the feeling that our organization is being undermined and is unimportant.

—Survey respondent

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We are such a female-dominated field and the expertise of helping professions is not recognized... the biggest issue with pay is our expertise not being recognized. We are seen as easily replaceable and hence we are not worth paying higher.

—Frontline Focus Group

WHAT IS NEEDED⁴

Access to stable funding, with increases that reflect inflation and cost of living. This includes:

- An adequate number of staff positions, including administrative and management staff.
- Living wage salaries for all staff, including paid sick days and access to extended benefits.
- Capacity to double staff for night and weekend shifts.
- Training to ensure that all staff have the needed qualifications. Organizations also need to be able to provide training for areas of emerging needs, like supporting those with mental health and addictions concerns.



¹Through the Feminist Brain Drain Study, a national survey and a series of focus groups were conducted. The data is drawn from the results of a national online survey that WSC partnered on with the Victimology Research Centre at Algonquin College. For more information about the study: <https://endvaw.ca/feminist-brain-drain/>. The full report is forthcoming.

²Numbers reported by 243 organizations from 1 September 2021-31 August 2022.

³Women’s Shelters Canada (2022). Shelters Voices 2022. <https://endvaw.ca/shelter-voices-2022/>

⁴These practices were collected throughout the Feminist Brain Drain Study from shelters/THs across the country, and represent the innovative ways that organizations are navigating labour challenges.