

# Transition homes

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In every province and territory, abused women and their children can find refuge in a variety of facilities that provide residential services. In 1994-95, transition homes and similar institutions recorded more than 85,000 admissions. Most of the women admitted were escaping physical abuse by a current or previous spouse or common-law partner. In a quarter of the cases, medical attention had been necessary as a result of the abuse. A third of the women leaving an abusive situation had reported the latest incident to the police.

At the end of May in 1995, 405 residential facilities were providing direct services to abused women and their children (see *Types of facility*). As well, on an average day, the 266 shelters that supplied such information reported receiving a total of about 3,000 requests for services from non-residents.

## A day in the life

According to the 1994-1995 Transition Home Survey, on May 31, 1995, the 365 facilities that provided such data had 4,578 residents: 2,361 women and 2,217 accompanying children (see *Data source and definitions*).

The majority of women living in the shelters that day (79%) were there to escape abuse. (Non-abuse admissions generally resulted from housing problems.) Of the abusive situations that these women had left, 70% involved physical abuse, 47% threats, and 20% sexual abuse.<sup>a</sup>

The abuser was generally the woman's spouse or partner. In 64% of cases, it was her current spouse or common-law partner, and in another 21%, her ex-spouse or -partner (see *Violence against women*). Other relationships accounted for 12% of cases. (In the remaining 3% of cases, the relationship was not reported.)

## Types of facility

In 1994-95, the majority (71%) of facilities providing residential and other services to abused women and their children were **transition homes** or shelters that offer short- or medium-term (1 day to 11 weeks) secure housing. Included with transition homes are satellite facilities where residents can find 3 to 5 days' respite. These satellite facilities are usually linked to a transition home or other agency for administrative purposes.

The next most common type of facility was **second-stage houses** (10%) that offer longer-term (3 to 12 months) housing. **Safe home networks** offering 1 to 3 days' housing in private homes accounted for 5% of facilities. Ontario's **family resource centres**, which provide services similar to transition homes, made up 3%.

Another 7% of facilities were **emergency shelters** that offer 1 to 3 days' accommodation to a broader population, not necessarily abused women. These shelters may admit people who are not associated with family violence, but are without a home because of an emergency situation. Aside from room and board, few additional services are provided.

A variety of other types of shelter accounted for the remaining 4% of facilities.

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<sup>a</sup> Because of multiple responses, percentages do not add to 100%.

The women escaping abuse were relatively young (Chart 1). Close to a quarter of them were under age 25, and 43% were aged 25 to 34. Most of the children accompanying these women were younger

than age 10. In fact, 10% were under one year old, and 36% were aged 1 to 4.

## Data source and definitions

The data in this article are from Statistics Canada's 1994-1995 Transition Home Survey. The survey was developed under the Federal Family Violence Initiative (1991-1995), in consultation with the provincial governments and transition home associations and funded by the Women's Bureau and the Children's Bureau of Health Canada. The objectives are to collect information on the services provided by facilities for abused women and on the characteristics of the clients they serve.

In 1992, a one-page questionnaire gathered basic data on services and clientele, and in 1993, a comprehensive survey collected more detailed information. Selected questions from the 1992-1993 survey were repeated in 1994-1995 Transition Home Survey.

The 1994-1995 survey was conducted by mail. Of the 405 residential facilities providing services to abused women, 365 returned their questionnaires for a response rate of 90%. Separate questionnaires were completed for facilities that had two or more residences under the same name or address.

While every effort was made to ensure that all facilities operating at the time of the survey were included, establishments that opened after the initial set of consultations may have been excluded. It is assumed that the number of omissions is minimal, but it is impossible to estimate the impact of this under-reporting.

The questionnaire collected information on two time periods: annual data referring to the 12 months before May 31, 1995 (for example, number of admissions) and a one-day census of the clientele on May 31, 1995 (for example, number of residents, reason for admission). Data on the number and type of facilities and their geographic distribution are available for all 405 institutions. However, more detailed information is available from the 365 facilities that responded to the survey.

**Admissions** refer to the official acceptance of a resident into the facility with the allocation of a bed, child's bed, crib, bedroom/unit or apartment. A woman with three children would count as a total of four admissions. An admission is registered each time a person is formally admitted, even if it is a repeat visit. Because one person may be admitted more than once in a year, the statistics are a count of admissions rather than individuals.

**Children** are defined as dependent males or females aged 18 or younger accompanied by a parent. In cases where, for instance, a 16-year-old female is admitted to the facility, she would be counted as a child if she was accompanied by her mother. If she came alone, she would be counted as an adult female in the 15 to 19 age group.

**Relationship to abuser:** spouse/partner includes common-law relationships. The category "other" consists of dating/ex-dating relationships, relatives (for example, parents, children [elder abuse], in-laws), friends, caregivers, strangers and others.

**Health care** received by residents includes psychiatric services.

**Child protection/family services** include child welfare services, as well as Children's Aid or other child protection agencies.

**Culturally sensitive services for Aboriginal children** are not necessarily targeted toward Aboriginal children only, but may be components of other services offered to children. Aboriginal children are Inuit, and status and non-status Indian children. **Culturally sensitive services for ethno-cultural and visible minority children** are not necessarily for these groups exclusively, but may be components of other services offered to children. Ethno-cultural and visible minority children are those whose origin is non-British, non-French and non-Aboriginal.

Data from the 1994-1995 Transition Home Survey are now available. For more information, contact the Information Requests Unit (613-951-1746; fax: 613-951-0792), Health Statistics Division.

**Violence against women**

According to Statistics Canada's 1993 Violence Against Women Survey,<sup>1</sup> 51% of women aged 18 and over (about 5.4 million) had experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16, and 10% (just over a million) had been victims of violence in the previous 12 months. ("Violence" was defined as experiences of physical or sexual assault consistent with legal definitions of these offences and that could be acted upon by a police officer.) The women who had experienced violence in the previous 12 months tended to be relatively young. One-third of them were aged 18 to 24, and another third were aged 25 to 34.

Twenty-nine percent of women who had ever been married or lived in a common-law relationship had experienced violence at the hands of a current or past partner since the age of 16: 15% of currently married women reported violence by their spouse, and 48%

**Table 1****Involvement of criminal justice system, women in transition homes and other shelters because of abuse, by province and territory, May 31, 1995**

	Total women admitted because of abuse	Restraint order obtained* 1	Incident reported to police 1	Charges laid 1
		% of incidents		% of reported incidents
<b>Canada</b>	<b>1,862</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>56</b>
Newfoundland	15	-	13	100
Prince Edward Island	8	-	-	-
Nova Scotia	68	32	47	69
New Brunswick	29	10	24	57
Quebec	426	16	31	61
Ontario	746	14	28	49
Manitoba	87	55	48	86
Saskatchewan	61	13	38	65
Alberta	167	11	39	48
British Columbia	232	28	43	52
Yukon	10	50	50	80
Northwest Territories	13	38	46	-

**Source:** 1994-1995 Transition Home Survey

\* A restraint order may be obtained even if an incident has not been reported to police.

1 Most recent incident of abuse

**Over 85,000 admissions**

In the 12 months before May 31, 1995, the 356 facilities that responded to the survey question recorded 85,259 admissions: 44,516 women and 40,743 children (Table 2). The majority of admissions (80%) were to transition homes, followed by emergency shelters (12%). Second-stage housing, family resource centres, and safe home networks each accounted for 2% of admissions; the remaining 2% were to other types of facility.

At the national level, the rate of admission for women aged 15 to 64 was 5 per 1,000. Provincial rates varied from 7 admissions per 1,000 women in Manitoba to 2 per 1,000 in Newfoundland.<sup>b</sup> However, the territories had the highest admission rates: 31 per 1,000 women in the Yukon and 23 per 1,000 in the Northwest Territories.

<sup>b</sup> Because of the small number of facilities in Newfoundland, those that did not report could have a notable deflating effect on the rate in this province.

**Table 2****Admissions to transition homes and other shelters in past 12 months, by province and territory, May 31, 1995**

	Admissions			
	Total	Women	Per 1,000 aged 15-64	Children
<b>Canada</b>	<b>85,259</b>	<b>44,516</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>40,743</b>
Newfoundland	620	349	2	271
Prince Edward Island	353	165	4	188
Nova Scotia	2,744	1,503	5	1,241
New Brunswick	1,418	737	3	681
Quebec	14,302	8,245	3	6,057
Ontario	29,917	16,127	4	13,790
Manitoba	5,242	2,594	7	2,648
Saskatchewan	2,777	1,116	4	1,661
Alberta	11,482	5,250	6	6,232
British Columbia	14,665	7,653	6	7,002
Yukon	632	320	31	312
Northwest Territories	1,117	457	23	660

**Source:** 1994-1995 Transition Home Survey

**Note:** Data refer to 356 facilities.

**Services provided for the benefit of children**

In addition to room and board, the majority of facilities offered residents a variety of services, many of which were for the benefit of children.<sup>c</sup> The most common services were individual counselling for children and parenting skills, provided by about three-quarters of the establishments. Over half the facilities had group counselling or support for children and child care. A quarter of them provided child protection/family services, but clients were more likely to be referred to other agencies for these services (77% of facilities indicated that they did this). Many also referred residents to outside agencies for individual counselling for children (71%) and parenting skills (60%). And although some shelters offered school classes and culturally sensitive services for Aboriginal, ethno-cultural, and visible minority children, they tended to refer residents to external agencies for these services.

Some facilities also provided child-oriented services to non-residents, most often individual (39%) and group (31%) counselling for children. Relatively few (less than 15%) offered services such

<sup>c</sup> The 1994-1995 survey asked only about services provided for the benefit of children. Information about other services provided by these facilities is available from the 1992-1993 survey.

as child care and parenting skills to non-residents. On a typical day, the 266 shelters that reported such data received a total of over 3,000 requests from non-residents; in about six out of 10 cases, the services sought were non-residential.

## References

1. Statistics Canada. The Violence Against Women Survey. *The Daily* (Cat. No. 11-001E) 1993 Nov 18:1-9.
2. Statistics Canada. Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. Homicide Survey, 1991-1993. Unpublished data.