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## CANADA'S SHELTERS FOR ABUSED WOMEN, 1999-2000

By Daisy Locke and Ruth Code\*

### HIGHLIGHTS

- In 1999-2000, 96,359 women and dependent children were admitted to 448 shelters for abused women across Canada. In comparison, 90,792 women and dependent children were admitted to 413 shelters in 1997-1998.
- In a snapshot taken on April 17, 2000, there were 5,351 residents in 464 shelters: 53% were women and 47% were dependent children.
- 81% (2,281) of women in shelters on April 17, 2000 were victims of abuse and the remainder were admitted for reasons other than abuse such as housing problems.
- On snapshot day, 55% of all women in shelters seeking refuge from abusive situations were admitted with children. Of those abused women who had children, the majority (73%) took them to the shelter. About three-quarters of the children were under 10 years old.
- On April 17, 2000, 163 women and 77 children departed before noon from 446 shelters across Canada. While 1 in 6 women left the shelter and returned to their spouse, the majority of women did not return to their spouse. More than 1 in 4 women (28%) left the shelter for new housing without their spouse, 12% went to stay with friends or relatives, 9% returned home without their spouse and 9% found other housing.
- On April 17, 2000, 89 shelters turned away 476 people: 254 women and 222 children.<sup>1</sup> More than 7 in 10 of these shelters (71%) turned women and children away because the shelter was full.
- The majority of shelters offer the following in-house services to women residents: individual short-term counselling (90%), advocacy (89%), specialized services for women aged 55 and older (84%), housing referral (82%) and parenting skills (75%).
- In 1999-2000, 67% of shelters provided group counselling, down slightly from 71% in 1997-1998. Similarly, the percentage of shelters that provided parenting skills decreased from 82% in 1997-1998 to 75% in 1999-2000. However, the percentage of shelters that provided a crisis telephone line and medical services rose from 60% to 64% and from 55% to 59% respectively.<sup>2</sup>
- Results from the 1999-2000 survey indicated a slight decrease from 1997-1998 in the percentage of shelters that provided individual counselling (69% versus 75% in 1997-1998), and programs for children who have witnessed or experienced abuse (51% versus 53% in 1997-1998).
- Since 1997-1998, there has been a 23% increase in the number of shelters with staff who communicate and provide services in languages other than English and French.
- Facilities reported providing an average of 43 outreach hours per week. Outreach work included supplying information, accompanying victims of abuse to court, and participating in drop-in centres.

\* *Integration and Analysis Program*

<sup>1</sup> *A person may be turned away from more than one shelter on snapshot day.*

<sup>2</sup> *Where there have been slight increases or decreases in the various types of services offered, many of these changes may be explained by shifts or changes in the type of shelters responding to the survey.*



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**INTRODUCTION**


In the past thirty years, the issue of abuse within the family, particularly against women and children, has been the subject of increased public awareness and concern. Community groups and governments have worked to reduce and prevent the incidence of abuse, including physical and sexual abuse, threats, harassment and financial and psychological abuse. One measure taken to assist abused women and their children has been the development of a substantial system of shelters.

There are no shelters in Canada that provide residential services exclusively to adult male victims of family abuse. However, some shelters do provide some services to men abused by their family. For the first time, the 1999-2000 Transition Home Survey included questions designed to gather information on the use of these shelters by adult men.

Currently, shelters exist in every province and territory. From its inception in 1991-1992, the Transition Home Survey has gathered data on the characteristics of all residential agencies serving women victims of abuse and on the characteristics of women and children residents. The Transition Home Survey is distributed across Canada to all residential agencies serving women victims of family violence. Shelters that do not provide residential services to abused women are excluded from the survey.

The Transition Home Survey is a census survey of residential facilities conducted every 2 years. Questionnaires are mailed to every known shelter identified as providing residential services (shelter) to abused women in every province and territory. Information is collected on the characteristics of the facilities and the services provided during the previous 12 months. The survey also provides a one-day snapshot of the characteristics of women and children residing in shelters on a specific day. For the 1999-2000 survey, the snapshot day was April 17, 2000. Out of the 508 shelters contacted for the 1999-2000 survey, 467 or 92% responded to the survey (Table 1). Where possible, comparisons are made with the 1997-1998 survey cycle which had 430 shelters reporting for a 91% response rate. Further trend analysis will be available in the report *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile 2001*.

Table 1

|  <b>Number of shelters operating and responding to the Transition Home Survey by province and territory, 1999-2000</b> |            |                       |                      |
|---|------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
|   | Number     | Number that operating | Percentage responded |
| <b>Canada</b>   | <b>508</b> | <b>467</b>            | <b>92</b>            |
| Newfoundland  | 13         | 12                    | 92                   |
| Prince Edward Island  | 4          | 4                     | 100                  |
| Nova Scotia   | 19         | 17                    | 89                   |
| New Brunswick   | 14         | 14                    | 100                  |
| Quebec  | 112        | 103                   | 92                   |
| Ontario   | 147        | 137                   | 93                   |
| Manitoba  | 23         | 18                    | 78                   |
| Saskatchewan  | 21         | 19                    | 90                   |
| Alberta   | 37         | 33                    | 89                   |
| British Columbia  | 99         | 93                    | 94                   |
| Yukon   | 6          | 5                     | 83                   |
| Northwest Territories   | 7          | 7                     | 100                  |
| Nunavut   | 6          | 5                     | 83                   |

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Transition Home Survey, 1999-2000.

## Shelter Funding

The number of shelters in Canada has been steadily increasing since the 1970's in part through capital funding assistance for shelters provided by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) under the non-profit housing programs of the *National Housing Act*, and operating funding from provincial and territorial programs (SPR Associates Inc., 1997). CMHC's capital financing role continued with Project Haven, a program that was delivered in close collaboration and partnership with provincial/territorial governments, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) and community agencies. This program spent \$22 million between 1988 and 1992 to establish or add transition homes with special priority to communities that had no transition homes (such as rural or remote areas and on reserves), and for shelters for immigrant women and women with disabilities. A total of 78 shelters and 465 shelter units received funding (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 1994).

Between 1992 and 1995, CMHC's Next Step Program funded the creation of 34 second stage housing projects and 23 first stage shelters across Canada. Second stage housing financing was targeted to communities where first stage shelters existed but women needed secure housing for a longer period as they searched for permanent housing in the community. Since 1996, CMHC's Shelter Enhancement Program has funded repairs and modifications to existing shelters and second stage housing for abused women. The Shelter Enhancement Program has also assisted in the acquisition and construction of new shelters and second stage housing, including shelters in First Nations' communities in partnership with First Nations and INAC. INAC also provides approximately \$6.2 million each year to on-reserve shelters for their operating and management expenses and approximately \$1.8 million annually to off-reserve shelters to reimburse them for providing shelter and services to on-reserve residents.

In addition to the efforts of federal agencies, there are many provincial, territorial and community programs that provide services and alternatives for women who have experienced abuse. These programs include expenditures for the on-going operation and maintenance of shelters, counselling and prevention programs, legal services and public awareness programs.

## Types of shelters

The term shelter is used broadly to refer to all residential facilities for abused women and their dependent children. The types of shelters are defined by the Transition Home Survey as:

**Transition Home** - Short or moderate term (1 day to 11 weeks) first stage emergency housing.

**Second Stage Housing** - Long-term (3-12 months) secure housing with support and referral services designed to assist women while they search for permanent housing.

**Safe Home Network** – A network of private homes in rural or remote areas where there is no full-fledged operating shelter. It offers subsidiary very short-term (1-3 days) emergency housing.

**Women's Emergency Centre/Shelter** - Short-term (1-21 days) respite (temporary relief) for women and their dependent children.

**Emergency Shelter** - Short-term (1-3 days) respite for a wide population range, not exclusively abused women. Some facilities may provide accommodation for men as well as women. This type of facility may accommodate residents who are not associated with family abuse but are without a home due to an emergency situation (e.g., eviction for non-payment of rent). Other than residential (room and board) services, these shelters offer few additional client services.

**Family Resource Centre** - An Ontario government initiative that serves a wide range of clients and provides clients with an extensive array of information and referrals as well as residential services.

**Other** - All other facilities/shelters not otherwise classified. This category may include Rural Family Violence Prevention Centres in Alberta, Interim Housing in Manitoba, and other types of emergency shelters. These services may not be exclusive to abused women.

## A PROFILE OF FACILITIES

### Number of shelters for women growing

On April 17, 2000, there were 508 shelters for abused women across Canada. Of these, only 18 existed prior to 1975 (Figure 1). The largest period of growth came in the 1980s as the issues of violence against women and family violence gained attention at all levels of government (Rodgers and MacDonald, 1994; Pottie Bunge and Levett, 1998). Growth in the number of shelters in the 1990s was due, in large part, to the development of shelters in rural areas and Aboriginal communities.

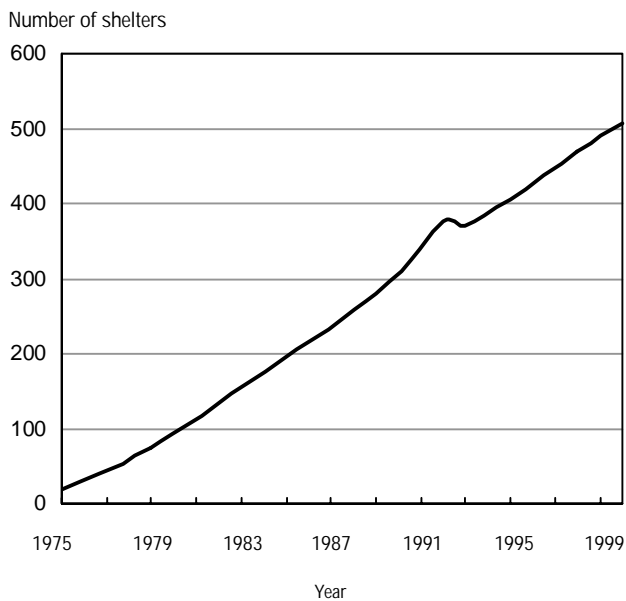
Canadian shelters provide services in all provinces and territories and serve a variety of areas. In 1999-2000, 88% of shelters served urban areas, 47% of shelters served rural areas and 34% provided services to reserves.<sup>3</sup>

Transition homes made up 58% (269) of the 467 shelters that reported to the 1999-2000 Transition Home Survey. The remaining 198 shelters included 73 second stage housing facilities, 38 women's emergency shelters, 37 emergency centres, 16 safe home networks, 14 family resource centres (Ontario only) and 20 other types of facilities. Transition homes were the predominant type of emergency housing available

<sup>3</sup> Percentages will not add to 100% due to multiple responses.

Figure 1

**Number of shelters for abused women continue to grow**



Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Transition Home Survey.

in most of the provinces and territories. The exceptions were Prince Edward Island, where 3 out of the 4 shelters were second stage housing; Manitoba, where 7 of the 18 shelters were second stage housing; Alberta, where women's emergency centres accounted for almost one-half of all facilities; and Nunavut, where 4 of the 5 shelters were women's emergency shelters.

**Extensive variety of services offered**

In addition to providing refuge, the majority of shelters offer a variety of services. The services provided depend to a large extent on available funding and can vary with the availability of services in the larger community. Nine in ten facilities provided in-house, individual, short-term counselling to women residents. Other in-house services included advocacy (89%), specialised services for women aged 55 and older (84%), housing referral (82%) and parenting skills (75%) (Table 2). Sixty-two percent of the facilities provided services for women with disabilities, 63% provided culturally sensitive services for Aboriginal women,<sup>4</sup> while nearly 6 in 10 shelters provided culturally sensitive services to ethno-cultural and visible minority residents<sup>5</sup> (58%).

Overall, the types of services provided by shelters in 1999-2000 have remained fairly consistent with those offered in 1997-1998. Where there have been slight increases or decreases in the various types of services offered, many of these changes may be explained by shifts or changes in the types of shelters responding to the survey. Results from the 1999-2000 survey indicated a slight decrease from 1997-1998 in the percentage of shelters that provided group counselling

and parenting skills. In 1999-2000, 67% of shelters provided group counselling, down slightly from 71% in 1997-1998. Similarly, the percentage of shelters that provided parenting skills decreased from 82% in 1997-1998 to 75% in 1999-2000. However, the percentage of shelters that provided a crisis telephone line and medical services rose from 60% to 64% and from 55% to 59% respectively.

Table 2

**In-house services<sup>1</sup> provided by shelters to women residents, ex-residents and non-residents, 1999-2000**

|   | In-house services provided by shelters to: |                              |                           |
|---|--|------------------------------|---------------------------|
|   | Residents                                  | Non-residents <sup>2,3</sup> | Ex-residents <sup>2</sup> |
|   | %  |                              |                           |
| Individual short-term counselling   | 90   | 70                           | 74                        |
| Individual long-term counselling  | 36   | 33                           | 38                        |
| Group counselling   | 67   | 45                           | 52                        |
| Family counselling programs   | 16   | 10                           | 12                        |
| Crisis telephone line   | 64   | 75                           | 72                        |
| Medical services  | 59   | 35                           | 41                        |
| Legal services  | 74   | 56                           | 59                        |
| Financial assistance/welfare  | 74   | 49                           | 53                        |
| Life skills   | 74   | 33                           | 45                        |
| Job training/employment search  | 25   | 11                           | 14                        |
| Parenting skills  | 75   | 37                           | 47                        |
| Housing referral  | 82   | 46                           | 51                        |
| Culturally sensitive services for Aboriginal women                          | 63   | 42                           | 43                        |
| Culturally sensitive services for ethno-cultural and visible minority women | 58   | 36                           | 39                        |
| Services for women with disabilities  | 62   | 37                           | 38                        |
| Recreation services   | 48   | 13                           | 22                        |
| Advocacy  | 89   | 64                           | 70                        |
| Specialized services for older women (55+)                                  | 84   | 61                           | 64                        |
| Other   | 23   | 18                           | 19                        |

<sup>1</sup> Service reported as a percentage of 467 responding facilities.

<sup>2</sup> A non-resident was someone who had never resided in a shelter but was receiving services, while an ex-resident was someone who had resided in a shelter in the past and was receiving follow-up services.

<sup>3</sup> Some shelters do not distinguish between non-residents and ex-residents. These responses were included with the non-residents data.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Transition Home Survey, 1999-2000.

In 1999-2000, 68% of shelters were accessible to women with disabilities, as they had complete or partial building access for wheelchairs. It should be noted that since the mid 1990s, many shelters have improved accessibility through CMHC's Shelter Enhancement Program. Shelters that

<sup>4</sup> Culturally sensitive services for Aboriginal women were such services as recognition of traditional healing methods, use of spiritual elders and teachers, accessibility to language interpreters and Aboriginal language materials, and recognition and understanding of Aboriginal cultural norms and beliefs.

<sup>5</sup> Culturally sensitive services for ethno-cultural and visible minority women include accessibility to language interpreters, resource materials in various languages, and counsellors who are familiar with immigration issues and parenting styles in different cultures.

provided services for people who are hearing impaired, including telephone devices such as TDD/TTY or sign language services remained virtually unchanged (33% in 1997-1998 versus 32% in 1999-2000) and services for people who are visually impaired such as large print and Braille material increased from 13% of shelters in 1997-1998 to 19% in 1999-2000.

In-house services for children most often included outdoor and indoor recreation spaces (79% and 78%), individual counselling (69%), group counselling (54%) and programs for children who have witnessed or experienced abuse (51%). Results from the 1999-2000 survey indicated a slight decrease from 1997-1998 in the percentage of shelters that provided individual counselling (69% versus 75% in 1997-1998). The percentage of shelters that provided programs for child witnesses or child victims of abuse remained virtually unchanged at about 50 percent.

The non-residential services provided by shelters is an important aspect of their overall workload. On snapshot day, shelters had 1.7 times as many requests for assistance from ex-residents and non-residents as there were women residing in shelters. Shelters provided assistance to non-residents<sup>6</sup> through a 24-hour crisis telephone line (75%), individual short-term counselling (70%), advocacy (64%), and legal services (56%).<sup>7</sup> The majority of facilities also provided ex-resident women with services such as individual short-term counselling (74%), a 24-hour crisis telephone line (72%), advocacy (70%), legal services (59%) and group counselling (52%) (Table 2).

Services to ex-residents and non-residents are made through telephone, letter, fax or walk-in contact. For an average month, 411 shelters reported 11,046 housing related contacts, 48,420 non-housing related contacts and 11,589 other contacts<sup>8</sup> for a total of 71,055 requests for services. Fourteen percent of shelters had no contacts for assistance while 44% had from 1 to 99 contacts, 18% had from 100 to 199 contacts and 24% had 200 or more contacts in an average month.<sup>9</sup>

An average of 43 hours per week was spent providing outreach activities in the community. Of the 408 shelters that responded to the question, 30% spent from 1 hour to 19 hours per week on outreach work, 21% spent from 20 to 39 hours and 38% spent 40 or more hours per week providing outreach activities. The remaining 12% did not report spending any time on outreach activities. Outreach work included supplying information, accompanying victims of abuse to court and participating in drop-in centres.

Shelters also rely on other agencies within the community, often working together in multi-agency co-ordinating committees, to provide services to their residents. The majority of facilities were able to obtain services in the community for their residents in the areas of job training or employment search (69%), legal services (61%), financial assistance or welfare (61%), medical services (62%), and individual long-term counselling (60%).

Many shelters relied on outside agencies to provide treatment or counselling services to abusive partners (38%), but some shelters also provided this service to abusive partners of residents (6%) partners of ex-residents (4%), and to partners of non-residents<sup>10</sup> (7%).

## Services provided in a variety of languages

As Canada's population has become increasingly diverse, many shelters have responded by ensuring that they have staff or volunteers who can communicate and deliver services in a variety of languages. In 1999-2000, 94% of shelters reported that they could provide services in English, 61% in French, 24% in Spanish, 13% in German, 12% in Cree, 12% in Punjabi, 10% in Italian, 10% in Polish, 8% in Portuguese, 7% in Chinese, 7% in Ukrainian, 6% in Arabic, 6% in Vietnamese, 5% in Greek and 4% in Tagalog (Table 3). In total, 56% of shelters indicated that they have staff who can communicate and provide services in languages other than English and French, a 23% increase from 1997-1998.

Table 3

|            | Total facilities |            |
|------------|------------------|------------|
|            | Number           | Percentage |
| English    | 440              | 94         |
| French     | 283              | 61         |
| Spanish    | 111              | 24         |
| German     | 60               | 13         |
| Cree       | 57               | 12         |
| Punjabi    | 56               | 12         |
| Italian    | 46               | 10         |
| Polish     | 45               | 10         |
| Portuguese | 39               | 8          |
| Chinese    | 35               | 7          |
| Ukrainian  | 31               | 7          |
| Arabic     | 28               | 6          |
| Vietnamese | 27               | 6          |
| Greek      | 23               | 5          |
| Tagalog    | 21               | 4          |
| Other      | 166              | 36         |

<sup>1</sup> Service reported as a percentage of 467 responding facilities.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Transition Home Survey, 1999-2000.

## Admissions of male youth

Shelters for abused women often have criteria to determine who is eligible for admission. While the objective of shelters is to provide residential services for abused women and their dependent children, limits are sometimes imposed on the age of male youth accompanying their mothers. The existence of an age limit for the admittance of male youth was reported by 69% of shelters while 24% of shelters had no age limit. For

<sup>6</sup> A non-resident was someone who has never resided in a shelter but was receiving services, while an ex-resident was someone who had resided in the shelter in the past and was receiving follow-up services.

<sup>7</sup> Some shelters do not distinguish between non-residents and ex-residents. These responses were included with the non-residents data.

<sup>8</sup> Other contacts are those contacts that could not be classified as housing or non-housing related.

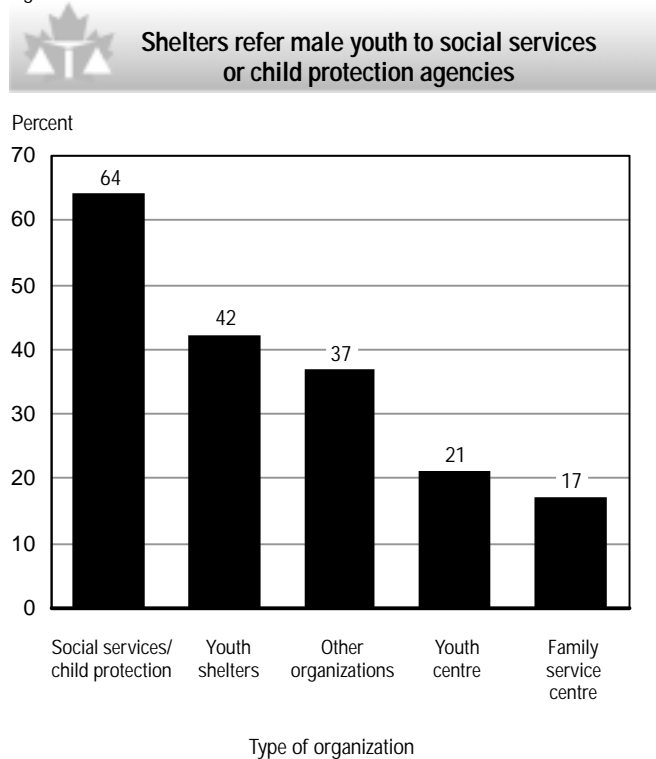
<sup>9</sup> This may be an underestimate as 56 shelters did not provide data for this question.

<sup>10</sup> Some shelters do not distinguish between non-residents and ex-residents. These responses were included with the non-residents data.

the remaining 6% of shelters, no services for male youth were provided.<sup>11</sup> Nationally, the average age limit for admittance to a shelter for male youth, for those shelters that had an age limit, was 16 years of age. Rates in the provinces and territories ranged from 14 years of age in the Yukon to 17 years of age in Quebec.<sup>12</sup>

For shelters that had an age limit, 62% referred male youth to other organizations and agencies. These shelters reported making referrals to social service/child protection agencies (64%), youth shelters (42%), other organizations (37%), youth centres (21%) and family service centres (17%) (Figure 2).

Figure 2



**Note:** Figures will not add to 100% due to multiple responses. Percentages are based on the responses of 229 facilities that referred male youth to other organizations.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Transition Home Survey, 1999-2000.

### Number of admissions

An admission is the official acceptance of a woman or child into a shelter with the allocation of a bed. A person may be admitted more than once during the year. From April 1, 1999 to March 31, 2000,<sup>13</sup> there were 96,359 admissions to the 448 facilities that responded to the survey question: 57,182 women and 39,177 children (Table 4). The 1997-1998 survey found that 90,792 women and dependent children were admitted to 413 shelters.<sup>14</sup>

An examination of shelter types shows that the majority of admissions (59%) were to transition homes, followed by

Table 4

### Annual admissions<sup>1</sup> to shelters by province and territory, 1999-2000<sup>2</sup>

|                       | Admissions    |               |               |
|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
|                       | Total         | Women         | Children      |
| <b>Canada</b>         | <b>96,359</b> | <b>57,182</b> | <b>39,177</b> |
| Newfoundland          | 1,246         | 745           | 501           |
| Prince Edward Island  | 251           | 107           | 144           |
| Nova Scotia           | 8,436         | 7,631         | 805           |
| New Brunswick         | 1,878         | 1,038         | 840           |
| Quebec                | 16,842        | 10,012        | 6,830         |
| Ontario               | 29,810        | 17,125        | 12,685        |
| Manitoba <sup>3</sup> | 4,367         | 1,916         | 2,451         |
| Saskatchewan          | 3,464         | 1,448         | 2,016         |
| Alberta               | 13,242        | 7,562         | 5,680         |
| British Columbia      | 14,163        | 8,230         | 5,933         |
| Yukon <sup>3</sup>    | 795           | 425           | 370           |
| Northwest Territories | 954           | 506           | 448           |
| Nunavut <sup>3</sup>  | 911           | 437           | 474           |

<sup>1</sup> A person may be admitted more than once during the reporting period.  
<sup>2</sup> 448 shelters responded to this question.  
<sup>3</sup> Response rates were less than 85%.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Transition Home Survey, 1999-2000.

women's emergency centres and general emergency shelters (16% each). Second stage housing, safe home networks, family resource centres and other types of facilities accounted for the remaining 9% of admissions. There are several reasons for the high number of admissions to transition homes. These include the greater number of transition homes compared to other facility types, the greater number of residents transition homes are licensed to house per day (51% of the total for all shelters) and the shorter length of stay, ranging from 1 day to 11 weeks compared with 3 to 12 months in second stage housing.

## A PROFILE OF RESIDENTS ON APRIL 17, 2000

### Women going to shelters to flee abusive situations

In a snapshot taken as of noon on April 17, 2000, the 464 shelters that supplied data had 5,351 residents: 2,826 women and 2,525 accompanying children. Eighty-one percent of the women and 91% of the children living in shelters that day were there to escape abuse. These women were escaping from psychological abuse (77%), physical abuse (68%), threats (50%), financial abuse (40%), harassment (36%) and sexual abuse (30%) (Figure 3). Nineteen percent of women

<sup>11</sup> Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.  
<sup>12</sup> Average age for admittance of male youth is based upon the responses of the 322 shelters that have an age limit for male youth.  
<sup>13</sup> The precise reporting period may vary. Shelters were asked to provide information for the twelve-month period ending March 31, 2000 or their own twelve-month fiscal period. This may be an underestimate, as 19 shelters did not provide data for this question.  
<sup>14</sup> Response rates were quite high for both 1999-2000 (92%) and 1997-1998 (91%), therefore non-response bias is minimal.



### How to get help

Most communities have services for individuals who have been abused. These organizations provide abused persons with information and support. Recommended steps for taking action and getting help include the following:

- 1) **Keep yourself and your children safe.** This may mean leaving the situation, moving out, or setting limits on what you will put up with. Have an escape plan ready if the violence starts again.
- 2) **Refuse to take blame for the abuse.** The abuser made the choice to act violently. You are not responsible for this behaviour.
- 3) **Call a friend or family member you trust.** Call someone who is supportive and understands that violence is never okay or justifiable.
- 4) **Call a shelter or crisis line.** Their telephone numbers are at the beginning of the telephone book. A shelter can provide safety, support and help with your future plans. Moving to a shelter is not the only option. You can also obtain advice from a counsellor over the phone.
- 5) **Call the police.** Telephone numbers for the police are at the beginning of the telephone book.
- 6) **Join a support group.** Sharing experiences with others often helps victims to realize that they are not alone. These groups can be extremely useful in helping abused people find ways to protect themselves and to deal with the situation.
- 7) **See a counsellor.** Counselling can provide an opportunity to learn about the impact that the abuse has had on you and to discuss options.

Several of these steps for taking action and getting help are also appropriate for male victims of family abuse. Many large urban centres across Canada have private practitioners that offer support groups for abused men or have men's organizations that can direct individuals to available services.

**Sources:** Health Canada (1995), Canadian Association of Broadcasters (1996), The Denise House/Sedna Women's Shelter (1997), Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women (1997), Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (1998), Tutty (1999).

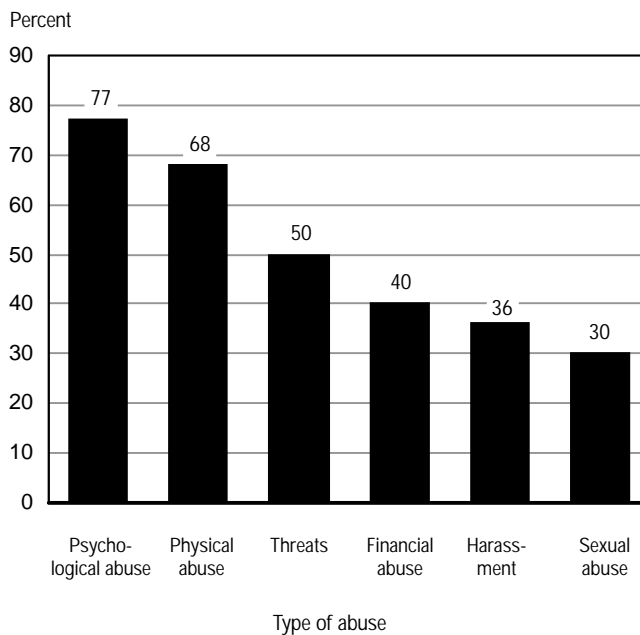
were also in shelters for reasons other than abuse, such as housing problems, mental health problems, and drug and alcohol addiction (Table 5). Compared to 1997-1998, the total number of women admitted to shelters on April 17, 2000 for reasons of abuse increased from 77% to 81%, while the number of women admitted to shelters for reasons other than abuse decreased from 22% to 19%. The number of children residing in shelters for reasons of abuse also increased from 78% in 1997-1998 to 91% in 1999-2000 and the number of children residing in shelters for reasons of non-abuse decreased from 22% in 1997-1998 to 9% in 1999-2000.

Overall, the rate of abused women in shelters on April 17, 2000 was 18 per 100,000 women (aged 15 and over) in the population (Table 6). Rates in the provinces ranged from a low of 14 in Quebec to a high of 21 in Prince Edward Island. Differences in provincial rates are not necessarily a reflection of differences in the incidence of abuse, but may be affected by the availability and size of shelters, the catchment area that a shelter serves, and the number of shelters responding to the survey in each province and territory.

The vast majority of abused women in shelters on April 17, 2000 were seeking shelter from someone with whom they had an intimate relationship (85%). Sixty-six percent of abused women indicated that their spouse or common-law partner was the abuser, down slightly from 68% in 1997-1998. Fourteen percent of abused women indicated that their former spouse or partner was the abuser, up from 12% in 1997-1998. The percentage remained the same for women who were abused by a current or ex-boyfriend (5%). A further 11% were abused by a relative, friend, caregiver, authority figure

Figure 3

### Women in shelters by type of abuse, April 17, 2000



*Note:* Figures do not add to 100% due to multiple responses.  
*Source:* Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Transition Home Survey, 1999-2000.

Table 5

**Reason(s) for admission to shelters of women residents, April 17, 2000<sup>1</sup>**

|                                       | Number       | Percentage |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|------------|
| <b>Total Women</b>                    | <b>2,826</b> | <b>100</b> |
| <b>Situations of abuse</b>            | <b>2,281</b> | <b>81</b>  |
| Physical abuse                        | 1,541        | 68         |
| Sexual abuse                          | 680          | 30         |
| Financial abuse                       | 909          | 40         |
| Psychological abuse                   | 1,759        | 77         |
| Threats                               | 1,141        | 50         |
| Harassment                            | 816          | 36         |
| Other abuse                           | 219          | 10         |
| Protection of children from:          |              |            |
| Physical abuse                        | 312          | 14         |
| Sexual abuse                          | 87           | 4          |
| Threats                               | 296          | 13         |
| Psychological abuse                   | 628          | 28         |
| Neglect                               | 181          | 8          |
| Witnessing abuse of mother            | 852          | 37         |
| <b>Situations not involving abuse</b> | <b>545</b>   | <b>19</b>  |
| Housing emergency                     | 267          | 49         |
| Unable to find affordable housing     | 504          | 92         |
| Short-term housing problem            | 199          | 37         |
| Mental health problems                | 264          | 48         |
| Drug and alcohol addiction            | 287          | 53         |
| Other non-abuse                       | 178          | 33         |
| Reason unknown                        | 28           | 5          |

<sup>1</sup> Percentages will not add to 100 due to multiple responses.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Transition Home Survey, 1999-2000.

and other, up from 8% in 1997-1998, while for 4% of women, the shelter could not specify the relationship (Table 7).

**Young women in abusive relationships continue to make up a small proportion of shelter users**

According to the Transition Home Survey, women aged 15 to 24 represented a small proportion of abused women residing in shelters (20%) on April 17, 2000. However, both the 1999 General Social Survey on Victimization and the 1993 Violence Against Women Survey show that women under the age of 25 had the highest rates of spousal violence and that rates decline by age. According to the 1999-2000 Transition Home Survey, the largest proportion of abused women residing in shelters on snapshot day were women aged 25 to 34 (36% of all women residing in shelters for reasons of abuse) while those aged 35 to 44 accounted for 28%. Women aged 45 and over made up the smallest proportion of shelter users, as they accounted for only 14% of residents, not surprising given their low rates of spousal violence. Age was unknown for 3% of women (Table 7). Calculated as a rate per 100,000 women in the population aged 15 and over, women in the age group 25 to 34 were the most likely to use shelters with a rate of 37, compared to 24 for those 35 to 44 and 23 for women aged 15 to 24. Women who were 45 years of age and over had the lowest rate at 6 per 100,000 women.

Table 6

**Rate of women in shelters, resident on April 17, 2000, admitted for reasons of abuse, by province and territory<sup>1</sup>**

|                       | Number of resident women | Number of women in the population 15+ | Rate per 100,000 women 15+ |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Canada</b>         | <b>2,281</b>             | <b>12,657,090</b>                     | <b>18.0</b>                |
| Newfoundland          | 36                       | 226,116                               | 15.9                       |
| Prince Edward Island  | 12                       | 57,250                                | 21.0                       |
| Nova Scotia           | 71                       | 395,945                               | 17.9                       |
| New Brunswick         | 54                       | 315,933                               | 17.1                       |
| Quebec                | 428                      | 3,088,100                             | 13.9                       |
| Ontario               | 956                      | 4,803,929                             | 19.9                       |
| Manitoba <sup>2</sup> | 74                       |                                       |                            |
| Saskatchewan          | 74                       | 406,915                               | 18.2                       |
| Alberta               | 209                      | 1,178,690                             | 17.7                       |
| British Columbia      | 303                      | 1,689,155                             | 17.9                       |
| Yukon <sup>2</sup>    | 14                       |                                       |                            |
| Northwest Territories | 26                       | 14,619                                | 177.9                      |
| Nunavut <sup>2</sup>  | 24                       |                                       |                            |

<sup>1</sup> Rates are calculated based on 100,000 population. The population estimates are provided by Statistics Canada, Census and Demographic Statistics, Demography Division. Populations as of July 1: preliminary postcensal estimates for 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Response rates for Manitoba, the Yukon and Nunavut are less than 85% therefore no rate has been calculated.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Transition Home Survey, 1999-2000.

Table 7

**Characteristics of abused women residing in shelters, April 17, 2000**

|  | Number       | Percentage |
|--|--------------|------------|
| <b>Total women admitted due to abuse</b> | <b>2,281</b> | <b>100</b> |
| Age                                      |              |            |
| 15-24                                    | 455          | 20         |
| 25-34                                    | 819          | 36         |
| 35-44                                    | 630          | 28         |
| 45-54                                    | 220          | 10         |
| 55+                                      | 99           | 4          |
| Age unknown                              | 58           | 3          |
| Parental status                          |              |            |
| Admitted with child(ren)                 | 1,260        | 55         |
| Admitted without child(ren)              | 476          | 21         |
| Admitted and have no child(ren)          | 515          | 23         |
| Parental status unknown                  | 30           | 1          |
| Disabilities                             |              |            |
| Physical                                 | 120          | 5          |
| Other                                    | 119          | 5          |
| No disabilities                          | 1,234        | 54         |
| Don't know                               | 808          | 35         |
| Relationship between woman and abuser    |              |            |
| Spouse/common law partner                | 1,516        | 66         |
| Ex-spouse/Ex-partner                     | 309          | 14         |
| Dating/Ex-dating                         | 107          | 5          |
| Relative                                 | 173          | 8          |
| Other                                    | 77           | 3          |
| Don't know                               | 99           | 4          |

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Transition Home Survey, 1999-2000.



### Adult men in shelters

In order to obtain a more complete picture of the clients served by shelters, the 1999-2000 Transition Home Survey also included, for the first time, questions designed to gather information on the use of shelters by adult men. The module of 3 questions was introduced by the following statement:

*The following questions refer to adult men, 15 years of age and over, who were admitted to a facility with or without their dependent children and refer to the time period between April 1st, 1999 and March 31st, 2000 or during the previous 12 month period if March 31st, 2000 is not your fiscal year end. DO NOT include adult men who are admitted with their mothers.*

1. Does your facility have a policy on admitting adult men with or without children?

*Policy allows adult men to be admitted.  
Policy does not allow adult men to be admitted.  
There is no facility policy on admitting adult men*

2. During the reference period, how many adult men were admitted to your facility?

3. During the reference period (between April 1st, 1999 and March 31st, 2000 or during the previous 12 month period if March 31st, 2000 is not your fiscal year end), were any adult men admitted for reasons of abuse?

*Yes  
No*

In 1999-2000, there were no shelters in Canada that provided residential services exclusively to adult male victims of family abuse. As with women, adult men were defined as those 15 years of age and over who were admitted to a facility with or without children. Adult men admitted with their mother were excluded.

Results indicate that a majority of facilities (90%) had a policy that did not allow adult males to be admitted into their facility. Five percent of shelters had a policy that allowed adult men to be admitted, while 4% had no facility policy on admittance. Data were not provided by 1% of shelters. Seventeen shelters reported admitting adult men. Thirteen of these shelters indicated that they admitted adult men for reasons of abuse. In total, these thirteen shelters admitted 285 men; however, it is not known what proportion of these men were admitted for reasons of abuse. Sixty-nine percent of these 13 shelters serviced reserves or were owned or operated by a band council or were located on a reserve. These facilities may be more likely to admit adult men due to policies of serving entire family groups which may include adult male members of the household.

### Most women bring their children to shelters

When women leave their homes for the safety of a shelter, their children often accompany them. As stated previously, there were 2,281 women and 2,310 children (464 shelters provided data) escaping abusive situations who were residing in shelters on April 17, 2000. Fifty-five percent of abused women were admitted with children, 21% came to a shelter without any of their children and 23% had no children. For 1% of women, it was unknown whether they had children. There are many reasons that women may not bring their children to shelters. For example, some may be old enough to live on their own, older children may stay in the family home because of schooling issues, and older children may not be eligible to stay in some shelters (Trainor, 1999). However, of those abused women who reported having children, 73% brought their children to the shelter.

The majority of children accompanying their mother to a shelter were very young. Specifically, children under 5 years of age constituted 41% of all children admitted and an additional 32% were aged 5 to 9. Children aged 10 to 15 made up 22%, while the smallest group (3%) was aged 16 and over. For 2% of children, the age was not known.

The survey data also indicate that women living in shelters for reasons of abuse on April 17, 2000 were also there to protect their children from abuse. Of those women in shelters on April 17, 2000 with parenting responsibilities, almost half (49%) were protecting their children from witnessing the abuse of their mother, 36% were protecting them from psychological abuse, 18% from physical abuse, 17% from threats, 10% from neglect, and 5% from sexual abuse (Figure 4).<sup>15</sup>

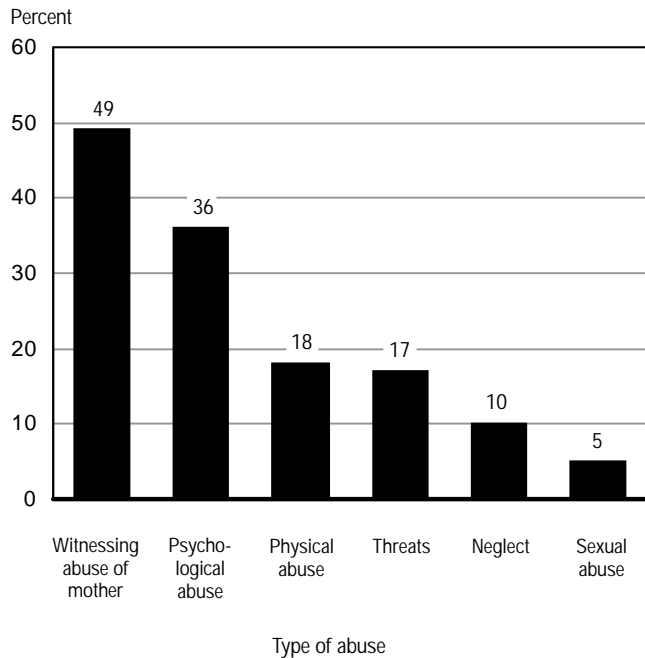
### Criminal justice system involvement

In response to mandatory police and prosecutorial charging guidelines or policies, most provinces currently have guidelines and procedures in place to respond to abuse within the family. Shelters, however, are not required to report abuse of adults to the police but provincial legislation requires them to report abuse of children to the appropriate authorities including the police and child welfare agencies. While not all precipitating events that lead women to shelters are by definition criminal acts requiring police response, 28% of women in shelters for reasons of abuse on April 17, 2000 had reported the most recent incident of abuse to the police. In 62% of these cases, either the woman, the police or the Crown laid charges. An order for the abuser to stay away was obtained in 50% of cases reported to the police and in 81% of cases in which charges were laid.

<sup>15</sup> Percentage will not add to 100% due to multiple responses.

Figure 4

**Women with parenting responsibilities going to shelters to protect their children from abuse, April 17, 2000**



Note: Figures do not add to 100% due to multiple responses.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Transition Home Survey, 1999-2000.

**Departures and refusals**

On April 17, 2000, 163 women and 77 children departed before noon from 446 shelters across Canada. While 1 in 6 women left the shelter and returned to their spouse, the majority of women did not return to their spouse. Twenty-eight percent of women left the shelter for alternative housing without their spouse. These alternative accommodations included second stage housing, another emergency shelter and other new accommodations. Another 17% of women returned to their spouse, 12% went to stay with friends or relatives, 9% returned home without their spouse and 9% went to other housing. For 25% of women, it was not known where they intended to reside (Figure 5).

The number of women and children who use shelters does not necessarily reflect the actual need as it does not capture those who are turned away because of lack of space. For this reason, the 1999-2000 Transition Home Survey asked shelters if they had turned away women and children from their facility before noon on snapshot day and the reason(s) for that refusal. On a single day, April 17, 2000, 89 shelters reported that they had turned away 476 people: 254 women and 222 children.<sup>16</sup> More than seven in 10 of these shelters (71%) turned women and children away because the shelter was full. Other reasons included drug or alcohol issues (12%), mental health problems (10%) non-admit or caution list (7%)<sup>17</sup> and other reasons (30%).<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> A person may be turned away from more than one shelter on snapshot day.

<sup>17</sup> A non-admit or caution list is a shelter's list of persons who, based on previous experiences in the shelter, are not allowed further admission.

<sup>18</sup> Percentages will not add to 100% due to multiple responses.

**Children witnessing violence**

Witnessing violence can encompass a wide range of experiences, including seeing or hearing the violence between parents or seeing the physical or emotional consequences of the battering of a parent (Jaffe, Wolfe & Wilson, 1990). There is evidence that if children witness physical violence, they will also witness a considerable amount of psychological abuse, including verbal abuse, belittling and threats (Health Canada, 1996).

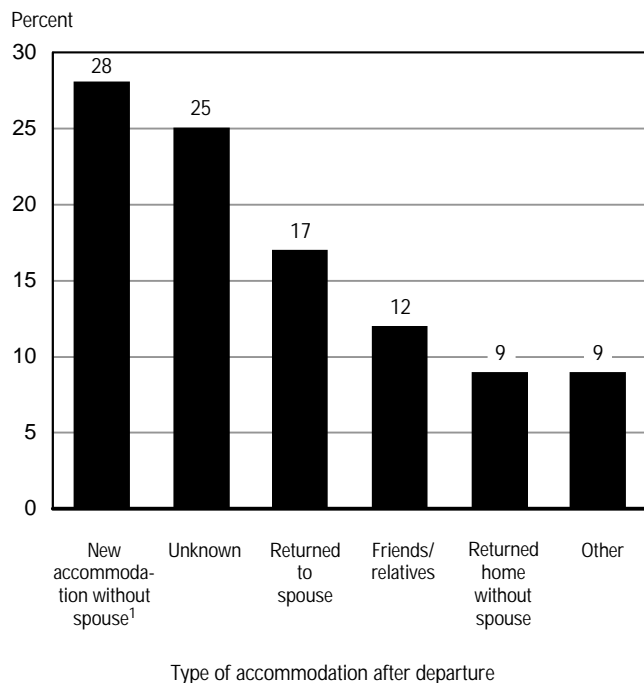
According to the 1999 General Social Survey on Victimization, 37% of spousal violence victims reported that children had heard or seen violence in the home in the past five years. This amounts to at least half a million children who heard or witnessed a parent being assaulted and who more than likely witnessed violence against their mothers, during the 5 year period. In many cases, the children lived in households where severe acts of violence had taken place. In those households where a child reportedly witnessed or heard the violence, 41% of victims had feared for their lives at some point in the past 5 years and 45% of victims had been physically injured (Pottie Bunge and Locke, 2000).

Research suggests that the effects on children of witnessing violence between their parents can be serious and long lasting. These children are at increased risk of becoming victims or perpetrators of violence themselves (Health Canada, 1996), and are at a greater risk of numerous behavioural, emotional and developmental problems (O'Keefe, 1995; Allan, 1991; Jaffe, Wolfe & Wilson, 1990; Egeland, Jacobvitz & Sroufe, 1988). This can include experiencing symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, including fear, anxiety, irritability, difficulty concentrating, intrusive memories of the abuse, anger outbursts and hyperarousal (Lehmann, 1997; Graham-Berman & Levendosky, 1998). These children may also experience elevated rates of depression, withdrawal, low self-esteem and other emotional problems. They also have a greater risk of behaviour problems, such as aggression and non-compliance with peers and adults, destructive behaviour, and conflict with the law.

A future edition of *Juristat* will provide an analysis of the 1999 GSS and the 1996-1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth data on children witnessing violence. See Mia Dauvergne & Holly Johnson. 2001. Children Witnessing Family Violence. *Juristat*

Figure 5

 **Women's accommodations after leaving shelters, April 17, 2000**



<sup>1</sup> New accommodation without spouse includes second stage housing, another emergency shelter and other new accommodations without spouse.  
 Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Transition Home Survey, 1999-2000.

**DATA SOURCES**

**Transition Home Survey**

The Transition Home Survey was developed under the federal government's Family Violence Initiative in consultation with provincial/territorial governments and transition home associations. The objectives of the survey are to collect information on residential services for abused women and their children during the previous twelve months of operation as well as to provide a one-day snapshot of the clients being served on a specific day. In 1991-1992, Statistics Canada began collecting basic information on transition home services and clientele. The survey was repeated with some changes in 1992-1993, 1994-1995, 1997-1998, and 1999-2000.

The Transition Home Survey is a mail-out/mail-back census survey of all residential facilities providing services to abused women and their children. Of the 508 residential facilities providing services to abused women and their children, 467 returned their questionnaires for a response rate of 92%. Separate questionnaires were completed for facilities that had two or more residences under the same name or address.

**Violence Against Women Survey (VAWS)**

In 1993, Statistics Canada conducted the VAWS on behalf of Health Canada. It was conducted by telephone using random digit dialing techniques. A total of 12,300 women aged 18 years and older were interviewed about their experiences of physical and sexual violence since the age of 16, their responses to these experiences, and their perceptions of their personal safety. Responses were weighted to represent the 10.5 million women in the Canadian population. Estimates were made of both twelve-month and adult lifetime rates of violence.

**The General Social Survey (GSS) on Victimization**

The GSS is an annual survey that monitors changes in Canadian society and provides information on specific policy issues of current or emerging interest. Each year, the GSS focuses on various regular topics (including time use, social support, the family, technology and victimization). In 1999, Statistics Canada conducted the victimization cycle of the GSS for a third time. Previous cycles were conducted in 1988 and in 1993. The objectives of the survey are to provide estimates of the prevalence of eight offence types (based on the Criminal Code definitions for these crimes) in the population, to examine factors related to the risk of victimization, victims' willingness to report crimes to the police, reasons for not reporting, and to measure public perceptions of crime and the criminal justice system.

The GSS is a telephone sample survey covering the non-institutionalized population aged 15 years or more in the ten provinces. A total of approximately 26,000 people were interviewed with a response rate of 81.3%.

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