

Addressing GBV in Saskatchewan through Second Stage Housing: Mitigating Public Policy Deficits to Enhance Safety for Survivors

An Evidence Brief for Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and Women and Gender Equality Canada

About the project:

Saskatchewan has the highest rate of intimate partner violence and second-highest rate of sexual violence among the Canadian provinces. One opportunity to reduce the impact of gender-based violence (GBV) is second-stage housing, which has not historically been publicly funded in Saskatchewan. In April 2023, the province announced public funding dedicated to second-stage women's shelters for the first time. Second-stage housing is an integral resource to support victims of GBV as it enables them to successfully relocate to stable, independent, and safe housing arrangements. Without second-stage housing, survivors face many barriers, including ongoing safety concerns as well as difficulty securing housing, retaining/maintaining employment, accessing medical care, obtaining childcare supports, and accessing educational programs.

This brief presents the results of a collaborative research partnership between SOFIA House, a second-stage women's shelter in Saskatchewan, the Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services of Saskatchewan (PATHS), and the University of Regina. The project used a feminist research approach to frame a literature review of academic and government sources, including an NVivo analysis of provincial policy documents. We asked: what is the state of second-stage housing in Canadian jurisdictions, and what are the rates of GBV in those jurisdictions? We also sought to contribute to understandings of why GBV rates are significantly higher in Saskatchewan, identify any systemic inadequacies and structural barriers survivors face, and help inform potential policies for reducing GBV and supporting survivors. The main objective of this project is to inform emerging policy regarding second-stage shelter funding in Saskatchewan.

Key Findings:

- Saskatchewan's **GBV rates are the highest** of Canada's provinces, with disproportionately higher rates of violence against Indigenous women and women residing in northern and rural areas. A provincial action plan on GBV and sustained funding for second-stage funding are recommended.
- Across Canada, each government (federal, provincial/territorial, and municipal) has a **different response** to GBV, including action plans, legislation, and funding models; therefore, services are not equitable across the country. There is no uniformity or consistency, and many gaps exist in related service provision. Canada should support national standards for GBV prevention and response services.
- There are **funding deficits and disparities** amongst second-stage housing services across Canada. This results in limited or non-existent second-stage shelter spaces in

many communities. Lack of operational funding reduces capacity for second-stage housing organizations to offer robust wrap-around services. Canada should implement a national funding strategy for stable second-stage housing and wrap-around services.

- There is a **link between GBV and homelessness** for women, and second-stage housing has a preventative and mitigating role in the interrelated cycles of violence and housing insecurity. Second-stage housing can help address the links between violence and homelessness and should be understood as a structural model of sustained change.
- There are many **invisible barriers** to accessing housing for women who have experienced GBV. Many barriers intersect with geographic region (i.e., limited resources in rural, reserve, or northern communities), race, age, and disability. This is due, in part, to housing models that ignore the structural nature of GBV and housing insecurity. Subsequently, Indigenous women face the highest rates of GBV, with direct links to ongoing colonial traumas. Second-stage housing with sustained funding for appropriate wrap-around services can provide tailored support that improves outcomes related to safety and well-being.
- There is a **lack of consistency in terminology, language, and data collection** related to GBV and housing in Canada. Inconsistency in data collection on outcomes for second-stage housing relates to organizational/staffing capacity issues, funding deficits, and limitations on the operations of second-stage housing operations. Inconsistent language (terminology) and data collection techniques are impediments to adequate understandings of the nature of women's housing insecurity due to GBV and to generating the corresponding policy responses. An effort should be made nationally involving second-stage shelters, funders, and other stakeholders (e.g., researchers and provincial/territorial associations) to inform and coordinate consistent definitions and data collection. Provision of operational funding can support data collection to demonstrate effectiveness.

Policy Implications:

- The Government of Saskatchewan should implement a **provincial GBV-related second-stage housing policy** that commits to stable, adequate, and ongoing funding for second-stage housing and wrap-around services.
- As part of implementing Canada's **National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence (NAP)**, which was announced in November 2022, governments at all levels should address intersectional factors that affect survivors differently and support tailored service provision through second-stage housing to improve outcomes, with attention paid to rural and northern shelters, including those on First Nations, and intersections of race, age, and disability. Funding associated with the NAP should support second-stage housing as a model for sustained safety. Implementation of the NAP must identify the

existing “best practices” in second-stage funding across Canadian jurisdictions and work toward equity and consistency.

- Canada needs a **national funding model** to increase second-stage housing and wrap-around services. This includes consistent funding across all jurisdictions to properly resource shelters, thus enabling them to support their broader service provision to the community (e.g., preventative education about GBV). A mechanism should be created to ensure that governments consistently and transparently report funding for GBV and how these dollars are allocated—for example, by shelter or service type.

Further Information:

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- Full report: <https://pathssk.org/research/>; <https://sofiahouse.ca/>.