

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

Dr. Emily Grafton, Associate Professor, University of Regina
Dr. Amber Fletcher, Associate Professor, University of Regina
Crystal Giesbrecht (PhD Cand), Director of Research and Communications, Provincial
Association of Transition Houses and Services of Saskatchewan
Tmira Marchment (MSW), Executive Director, SOFIA House



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Executive Summary

Background: The Issue

In Saskatchewan, gender-based violence (GBV) rates are the highest among the provinces and more than double the national rate (Statistics Canada, 2021). When isolating the northern regions of Saskatchewan, these are the highest rates of GBV in all of Canada including the territories (Rotenberg, 2019). GBV disproportionately impacts women of all ages, as well as gender non-conforming and sexually-diverse individuals (Conroy, 2021), and it is the most significant instigator of women's homelessness (Tutty et al., 2009).

Second-stage housing provides an opportunity to mitigate the impact of GBV on women and resulting housing insecurity. This type of housing has not historically been publicly funded in Saskatchewan while it has been funded in most other Canadian jurisdictions. In April 2023, the province of Saskatchewan announced public funding for second-stage women's shelters for the first time (Saskatchewan Government, 2023). 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 housing supports, survivors face many barriers.

This report 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.

Objectives

No such knowledge synthesis of second-stage housing and associated rates of GBV in Canada exists, yet significant research has been done in both of these areas; hence, the need for this knowledge synthesis project. The objective set forth by the community partners is a better understanding of Saskatchewan's rates of GBV and the role of second-stage housing as a measure of mitigating violence and the widespread impacts of GBV. We ask: What kind of support for second-stage housing exists across Canada, including legislation, policy, and provincial/territorial budgets, and what are the corresponding rates of GBV in these jurisdictions? From this, we critically assess the state of knowledge of GBV and second-stage housing; identify knowledge-based strengths and gaps; and identify the most promising practices related to the second-stage housing to support similar policy change in Saskatchewan. The main objective of this project is to inform emerging policy regarding second-stage shelter funding in Saskatchewan.

Results

Key Findings

1. Saskatchewan's GBV rates are the highest among the provinces and Indigenous women and women living in the north are disproportionately affected.
2. Across Canada, each government (federal, provincial/territorial, and municipal) has a different response to GBV, including action plans, legislation, and funding models; therefore, there is a need for services to be made consistent and equitable across the country.

3. There are funding deficits and disparities amongst second-stage housing services across Canada.
4. 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.
5. There are many invisible barriers to accessing housing for women who have or are experiencing GBV.
6. There needs to be more consistency in terminology, language, and data collection related to GBV and housing in Canada.

Future Areas of Research

1. Investigate any potential correlation between GBV rates and support for second-stage housing.
2. Create alternative approaches to data collection and assessment.
3. Better understand the interconnection between settler colonization and GBV that disproportionality targets Indigenous women.
4. Examine the potential need for research infrastructure capacity within the non-profit sector.
5. Develop a knowledge foundation for GBV prevention and response as it intersects with power relations.

Key messages

1. The Government of Saskatchewan should implement a provincial GBV-related second-stage housing policy.
2. As part of implementing Canada's National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence (November 2022), governments at all levels should address intersectional factors that affect survivors differently and support second-stage housing as a model for sustained safety.
3. Canada needs a consistent national funding model to increase second-stage housing and wrap-around services, and to reduce disparities between jurisdictions.

Methodology

This project is framed by an intersectional feminist research methodology (Abu-Laban, 2015; Crenshaw, 1989; Criado Perez, 2019; D'Ignazio & Klein, 2020; May, 2014) that guided a literature review of legislation, policy, budgets, peer-reviewed scholarship, industry-related reports, and media documents. The search criteria for all documents included "gender-based violence"/"Intimate partner violence"/"GBV"/"IPV"/ "domestic violence" + "housing"/"second stage housing"/ "transition housing"/ "shelter"/ "wrap-around services." This pool of research was sorted, reviewed, and annotated bibliographies were produced. From these annotated bibliographies, themes were identified, and the research was organized according to these themes. One critical aspect of the synthesis process was the creation of graphs and Nvivo analyses, and synthesized into a cogent overview of the existing state of research.

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

Background

Gender-based violence (GBV) disproportionately impacts women, as well as gender non-conforming and sexually-diverse individuals, and GBV does not discriminate by age, racialization, ability, or class (Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2021; Umereweneza et al., 2020; Conroy, 2021). In Saskatchewan, GBV rates are the highest among the provinces and more than double the national rate (Statistics Canada, 2021). The northern regions of Saskatchewan have the highest rates of GBV in all of Canada, including the territories (Rotenberg, 2019). GBV rates in Saskatchewan have increased throughout the pandemic (James, 2021), while access to resources was simultaneously restricted. While GBV-mitigating services, including domestic violence shelters, continued to operate throughout the pandemic, other community services closed temporarily or permanently, or moved online; barriers emerged due to public health measures and individuals' fears of viral transmission; and isolation associated with the pandemic exacerbated barriers to access for many survivors. These factors made it more difficult for individuals to leave violent situations or influenced their choice to return (VAW Learning Network, n.d.). Shelter and outreach services for GBV in Saskatchewan stayed open throughout the pandemic; however, adequate funding for these agencies is a long-standing issue, and while additional funding was made available during the pandemic, this has since ended.

GBV in Saskatchewan is a crisis that continues while resources become scarcer in light of the pandemic and the ongoing crisis of affordability in Canada (Cox & He, 2016) and globally (Wetzstein, 2017). Experts have long argued that the excessive rates of GBV in Saskatchewan are due to the limited provincial government resources earmarked to reduce or eradicate GBV and support survivors (Umereweneza et al., 2020; Wiegers & Douglas, 2007). For example, Saskatchewan is one of two Canadian sub-national jurisdictions (provinces and territories) that does not have an action plan on GBV (Women's Shelters Canada 2019). Until 2023, Saskatchewan was one of only two jurisdictions in Canada that did not provide operational funding to second-stage shelter housing, a resource that is integral to the success of GBV survivors successfully leaving situations of domestic violence. The Saskatchewan Government recently announce limited funding for second-stage shelters in April 2023. This funding commitment includes \$876,000 over three years provided to five second-stage agencies (Saskatchewan Government, 2023). Stable second-stage housing can support the transition from emergency shelters to independent living, and it ensures survivors retain or access employment, have consistent access to childcare and/or schools for children, access healthcare or substance use services, and can live in a household free from abuse in a safer community.

GBV is one of the leading factors leading to women's homelessness (Maki, 2021). The intersection between GBV and stable and secure housing resources is clear: GBV leads to housing insecurity, and housing insecurity can foster unsafe living arrangements for women. Several non-profit community organizations have mandates to address gendered violence. This project is a collaboration with two such organizations: the Provincial Association of Transition

Houses and Services of Saskatchewan (PATHS) and SOFIA House. PATHS is the member association for agencies that provide GBV services across Saskatchewan, including women's shelters (domestic violence shelters, safe shelters, transition houses, or interval houses), second-stage shelters, and counselling centers specific to survivors of GBV. Since 1983, PATHS has provided collaborative representation to member agencies working towards a society free from GBV. SOFIA House (an acronym for "Support Of Families In Affliction") means "wisdom" in Greek, was the first second stage facility in Saskatchewan, opening in October 1988. Since then, services and programs have expanded and improved to better meet the needs of tenants, including women and children, particularly in the areas of advocacy, case management, and programming focused on helping families heal from trauma and work towards independence. SOFIA House expanded their services in July 2020 to operate 20 housing units. Both organizations advocate for a wide range of accompanying services for families to break cycles of violence, heal, and move forward; these are essential programs that support women and children fleeing violence. These services save survivors' and inter-generational survivors' lives.

This project used an intersectional feminist research framework to facilitate a literature review to identify, collate, and synthesize the existing research on GBV across Canada, with particular attention to Saskatchewan. The foci of this project proposal are: 1) the disproportionately high rates of gender-based violence (GBV) in Saskatchewan, and 2) the lack of provincially funded second-stage housing. GBV and housing are complex socio-political matters and, therefore, the sub-themes to be studied include: 1) a broad range of systemic barriers that survivors of GBV and those experiencing GBV face in Saskatchewan; 2) those structural barriers facing survivors that arise due to a lack of second stage housing; 3) exacerbation of GBV during the pandemic, which has led to increased rates of GBV, restricted access to resources, and reduced non-profit/professional agency funding; and, 4) the mitigating impacts of legislation, policy, and state financial support on GBV across Canadian jurisdictions. These sub-themes demonstrate the current state of women navigating housing in the aftermath of situations related to GBV.

Objectives

The objective set forth by the community partners is a better understanding of Saskatchewan's rates of GBV and the role of second-stage housing as a measure of mitigating violence and the widespread outcomes of GBV. We ask: What kind of support for second-stage housing exists across Canada, including legislation, policy, and provincial/territorial budgets, and what are the corresponding rates of GBV in these jurisdictions? From this, we critically assess the state of knowledge of GBV and second-stage housing; identify knowledge-based strengths and gaps within the research, and suggest requirements for future and on-going research in this area; and identify the most promising practices and recommendations related to the second-stage housing to support similar policy change in Saskatchewan. The result of this knowledge synthesis project is a research foundation that can be used to foster new and innovative research directions, support policy development on behalf of the government and non-profit agencies working in this sector, facilitate pressures on government for policy change and funding improvements, and serve as an academic teaching tool or research resource.

Project Significance: Expected Contributions and Impacts

No such knowledge synthesis of second-stage housing and associated rates of GBV in Canada exists, yet significant research has been done in both of these areas; hence, the need for this knowledge synthesis project. This project has the potential to address this gap and does so by synthesizing existing data from both academic and government sources to contribute to understanding why rates of GBV are significantly higher in Saskatchewan, the range of systemic inadequacies and structural barriers that those experiencing GBV or survivors face, and mitigating policies for reducing GBV and supporting survivors in the face of the ongoing pandemic and future crises. GBV rates rose during the pandemic in Saskatchewan and across Canada, due in part to the mounting financial, isolation, and socio-political strains of the pandemic, whilst access to resources that mitigate GBV and protect survivors of GBV simultaneously were reduced.

Both SOFIA House and PATHS observed several alarming results from the pandemic that exposed and exacerbated underlying weaknesses in social systems, such as housing issues, reduced support for addictions (e.g., cancellation of NA and AA meetings), and lack of childcare services. These social systems are integral to maintaining employment, accessing medical care and preserving well-being, and ensuring that survivors can avoid returning to situations of GBV. In fact, SOFIA House and PATHS observed that the pandemic exposed and exacerbated the existing complex needs and structural factors related to GBV. Often, survivors did not seek medical care for GBV injuries or family planning due to fears regarding the COVID-19 virus or not wanting to take up the time and resources of medical professionals dealing with the pandemic (VAW Learning Network, n.d.). These systemic barriers related to the pandemic often caused women to either return to violent or unsafe living situations or be less likely or unable to escape them altogether. In fact, adequate and appropriate housing supports are the most significant intervention to ensure women do not return to unsafe living arrangements (Allary et al., 2023; Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, 2021; Ponick et al., 2012). This project, led by these community-centred organizations, supports policy related to the Saskatchewan Government's recent funding announcement that can overcome these structural barriers that are increasingly exacerbated in light of the affordability crisis and ongoing pandemic-related recovery.

While exacerbated by the pandemic, GBV in Saskatchewan is not new and, instead, has sociocultural historical roots that reach back to the violent settler colonial formation of the province within the Canadian federation. Settler-colonialism is a violent undertaking (Veracini, 2010; Green, 1995) that targets women, specifically Indigenous women and girls (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019), through sexual violence and its related structures of hetero-patriarchy (Snyder, 2018; Eberts, 2017; Bourgeois, 2017). The systematic lack of attention to the experiences and needs of victims and survivors of GBV reflects the structural layers of ongoing and contemporary settler colonial violence (Carter, 1993; Razack, 2002). Intersectional analyses consider how lacking or absent structural supports disproportionately affect women who are multiply marginalized by race, sexuality, class, ability, rural location, and other social inequalities (Crenshaw, 1991; Smooth, 2013). In particular, Indigenous and rural women in Canada experience higher rates of intimate partner violence and femicide than non-Indigenous and urban women (Dawson et al., 2023; Conroy, 2021;

Heidinger, 2021; Moffit et al., 2022). Indigenous women are disproportionately represented in women's shelters in Saskatchewan (Giesbrecht et al., 2021). While other jurisdictions support those leaving violent situations of GBV through publicly-funded second-stage housing, the historical omission of these resources is longstanding in Saskatchewan, which has a socio-culture that is informed by settler colonial hetero-patriarchy: GBV is connected to hetero-patriarchy as it is a direct result of misogyny (Dawson et al., 2023). Support for second-stage shelters can help to transform this long-standing socio-culture of GBV in Saskatchewan.

GBV is a significant cost to society, which is evidenced through a Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) policy lens. In Canada, the total economic impact of spousal violence was calculated to cost approximately \$7.4 billion per year in 2009 (Zhang et al., 2012); equivalent to \$10.2 billion in 2023. Accounting for inflation, the costs estimated by Zhang and colleagues (2012) will result in \$46 million in lost wages, \$439 million in criminal justice system costs, \$275 million in healthcare costs, and \$563 million in social services costs, including shelters, in 2023 (Zhang et al. 2012). Mitigating these sorts of impacts of GBV would greatly improve the lives of survivors of GBV and their children, greatly improve survivors' ability to successfully leave situations of GBV, mitigate the intergenerational perpetuation of violence, and have significant impact on the public purse in terms of reduced spending on the justice system and healthcare, as well as broader economic benefits through the contributions of wage labour.

Methods

This project is framed by feminist research methodologies. Typically, feminist analyses redress women's subordination in society, politics, and economics. As such, feminist research identifies and analyzes gendered oppression in social systems and structures to mitigate or overcome subordination resulting from these gendered power relations (Criado Perez, 2019). D'Ignazio and Klein (2020) use an intersectional feminist research to counter-balance women's marginalization and write, "...data feminism: a way of thinking about data, both their uses and their limits, that is informed by direct experience, by a commitment to action, and by intersectional feminist thought. The starting point for data feminism is something that goes mostly unacknowledged in data science: power is not distributed equally in the world" (p.8). An intersectional analysis examines how forms of oppression combine to create context-specific marginalization and inequity, which is experienced by individuals and groups but is linked to broader, perseverant structures such as patriarchy, capitalism, and colonization (May, 2014). The experience of intersecting oppression cannot be understood through single-axis thinking (Crenshaw, 1989)—for example, by focusing solely on gender or "race" or class. Abu-Laban (2015) has argued that intersectional feminist methodological approaches will "enliven and sharpen" the analysis of social structures by revealing the multiplicity of differing social locations such as class, race, sexuality and gender, or disabilities (p.54).

This project uses an intersectional feminist methodological approach to knowledge synthesis. To do so, we draw on existing research data to identify and articulate the intersections of women's lives that are framed by socio-economic and political marginalization and exacerbated by the complexities of various relations of power. This is integral to unpacking the GBV crisis in Saskatchewan, which remains inadequately addressed through public policy, given the

province's ongoing settler colonial socio-climate that disproportionately affects Indigenous women and women living in rural communities. Communities throughout Saskatchewan are made up of multiple marginalized groups, including but not limited to Indigenous and racialized minorities, queer and gender non-conforming individuals, and persons living with disabilities, who also experience disproportionate rates of GBV and will have specific interests and needs regarding mitigating state responses. An intersectional framework is integral to valuing a broad spectrum of experience. Without this, an analysis of how GBV, housing, and women's experiences intersect, public policy solutions will not adequately meet these complications.

The feminist-centred research method of a literature review was used, first, to scope available research on second-stage housing in Canada, including legislation, policy, and budgets and, second, to scope corresponding rates of GBV. In addition to government reports and communication, the scoping exercise included peer-reviewed scholarship, industry-related reports, and media documentation. The search criteria for all documents included "GBV"/"IPV"/"domestic violence" + "housing"/"second stage housing"/ "transition housing"/ "shelter"/ "wrap-around services" and these were applied across legislation, policy, provincial/territorial budgets, peer-reviewed scholarship, industry-related reports, and media documentation.

With the identification of search terms, we were able to identify research sources for review. Searching databases can be limited by poor indexing, descriptive titles/abstracts, or descriptions of the research methods (Evans, 2002; Barroso et al., 2003). Given that these limitations can result in search results with references beyond the scope of the research questions, we examined source references. From these sources, various additional material were identified; however, we removed those that did not take up housing (expressly but not limited to second-stage housing) as a central concern. Indeed, given the narrow focus of the research questions and the narrow field of published work on this topic, citation searching was a useful approach to generate a pool of relevant literature sources. This pool of research was sorted, reviewed, and annotated bibliographies were produced. From these annotated bibliographies, themes were identified, and the research was organized according to these themes. We then synthesized the content into a cogent overview of the existing state of research. One critical aspect of the synthesis process was the creation of several graphs to illustrate the data (see figures 1-4). These are based on publicly accessible government data found by applying the search words "Intimate Partner Violence"/"IPV" + "Canada." These statistics are made available through Statistics Canada (StatCan) reports and are based on the year of data creation, not the year of publication. Figures 1-3 use various StatCan sources to best validate the data, year over year. This includes rates of family violence in 1999, 2004 and 2009 (Statistics Canada, 2015b), rates of IPV in 2010 (Sinha, 2012), 2011 (Sinha, 2013), 2013 (Taylor-Butts, 2015), 2014 (Statistics Canada, 2015a), 2015 (Statistics Canada, 2017), 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2018), 2017 (Conroy et al., 2018), 2018 (Cotter, 2021), and 2019, 2020, 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2022), and rates of IPV in Figure 4 (Rotenberg, 2019). The information that we pulled from the years 2009, 2004 and 1999 were represented by StatCan in percentage format and, therefore, were converted into rates to represent them along with the rest of the data collected in the form of graphs. In these instances, the formula used to find the rates of gender-based violence in all jurisdictions was: Total population= (number (thousands) *

100)/per cent, No. of incidents = (percent * number {thousands})/100, and Rate = (no. of incidents/ total population) * 100000. The results of this literature review can be found in the “Results” section.

The literature review was supplemented by a review of provincial policy documents related to GBV. A Google search was conducted using combinations of keywords in two groups: (1) violence (i.e., “gender-based violence”, “violence against women”, “intimate partner violence”, “family violence”) and (2) policy (i.e., “policy”, “plan”, “action plan”, “framework”). The results were screened to include only full reports produced by provincial governments. Due to the language abilities of the research team, only reports in English were included. A total of 45 reports were included in the final analysis. These reports were analyzed using NVivo 12 software. NVivo queries identified 46 mentions of second-stage housing/shelters in 14 policy documents. An additional query was done using the term “transition house” since some provincial reports use the term for both emergency and second-stage housing. All mentions of second-stage or transitional housing were analyzed inductively to identify themes.

Overall, the analysis demonstrated a lack of detailed policy strategies or clear pathways to support second-stage shelters. Documents were often unclear on what their second-stage housing policies are and how governments are implementing programs. While most of the documents provided rhetorical support for second-stage funding, very few specifically outlined funding commitments. Notable exceptions include Nova Scotia’s *Domestic Violence Action Plan* (2010)—which outlined formal protocols co-developed with community agencies, including a priority system for survivors accessing housing—and Ontario’s 2004 *Domestic Violence Action Plan*, which specifically committed funding for second-stage shelters.

Results

Understanding GBV and Second-stage Housing in Saskatchewan

Gender-based violence (GBV) can be understood as any sexual violence; it ranges from sexual assault and physical assault to unwanted sexual behaviour while in private, public, online, or in the workplace (Cotter & Savage, 2019). It further includes coercive controlling behaviours that intend to “to hurt, humiliate, intimidate, exploit, isolate, and dominate” (Moffitt et al., 2022, p. 776). Intimate-partner violence (IPV) focuses on violence within various forms of relationships, including marriage, common-law or dating relationships, and can occur during or after the relationship has ended (Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2021).

In Saskatchewan, GBV rates have consistently been the highest of the provinces in Canada and over double the national rate (Statistics Canada, 2021; Latimer 2021; Conroy, 2021; Burczykca, 2019). Figure 1, “Rates of IPV across the Provinces and Nationwide,” demonstrates rates of IPV across all of Canada’s provinces in relation to the national average from 1999-2021, with Saskatchewan having the highest rates (Statistics Canada, 2015b; Sinha, 2012; Sinha, 2013; Taylor-Butts, 2015; Statistics Canada, 2015a; Statistics Canada, 2017; Statistics Canada, 2018; Conroy et al., 2018; Cotter, 2021; Statistics Canada, 2022).

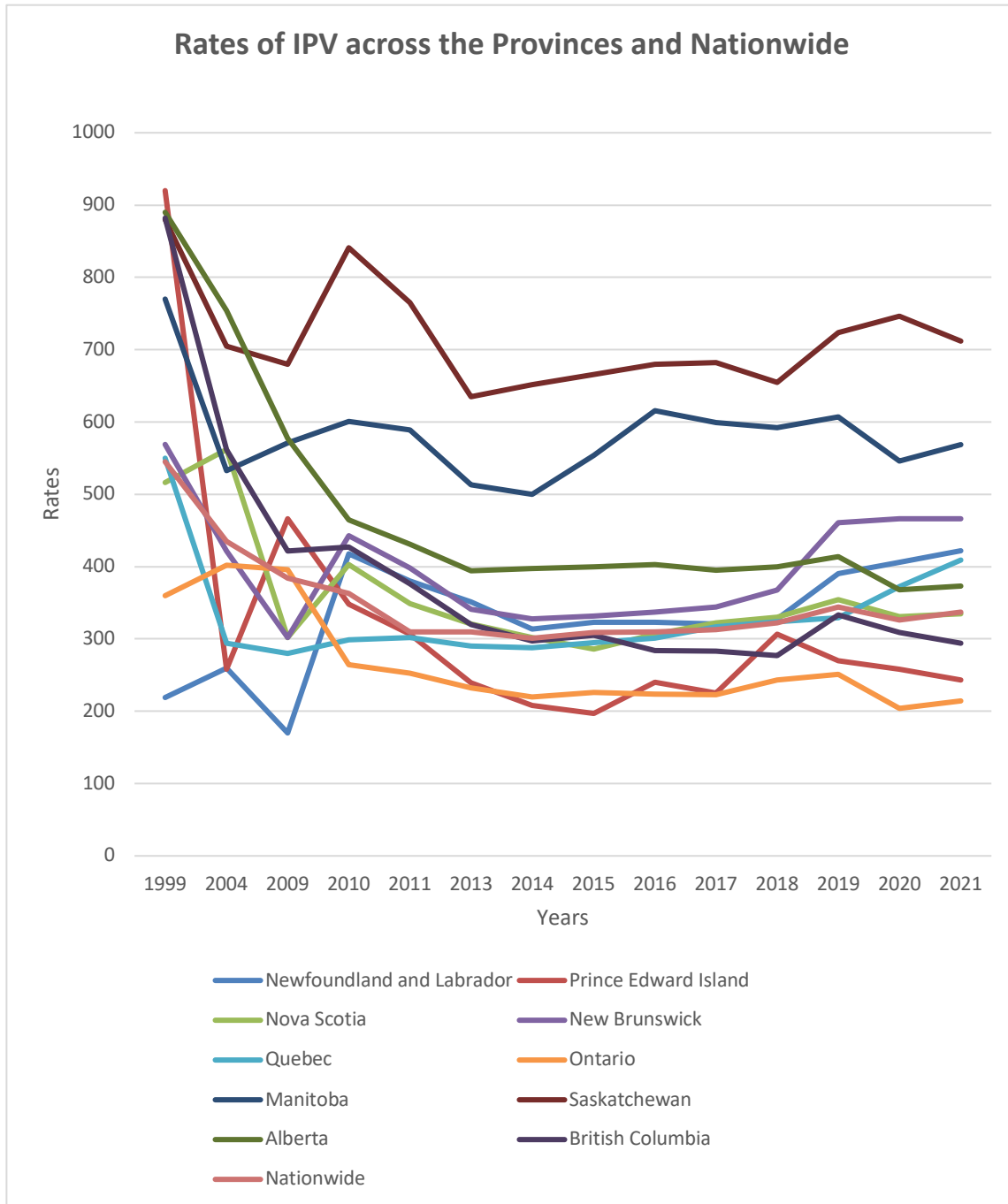


Figure 1: Rates of IPV across the Provinces and Nationwide

Figure 2, “Rates of IPV in Saskatchewan and Canada,” isolates data from Saskatchewan against that of the national average from the years 1999-2021 and demonstrates the consistency of rates of IPV in Saskatchewan as approximately double that of the national average (Statistics Canada, 2015b; Sinha, 2012; Sinha, 2013; Taylor-Butts, 2015; Statistics Canada, 2015a; Statistics Canada, 2017; Statistics Canada, 2018; Conroy et al., 2018; Cotter, 2021; Statistics Canada, 2022).

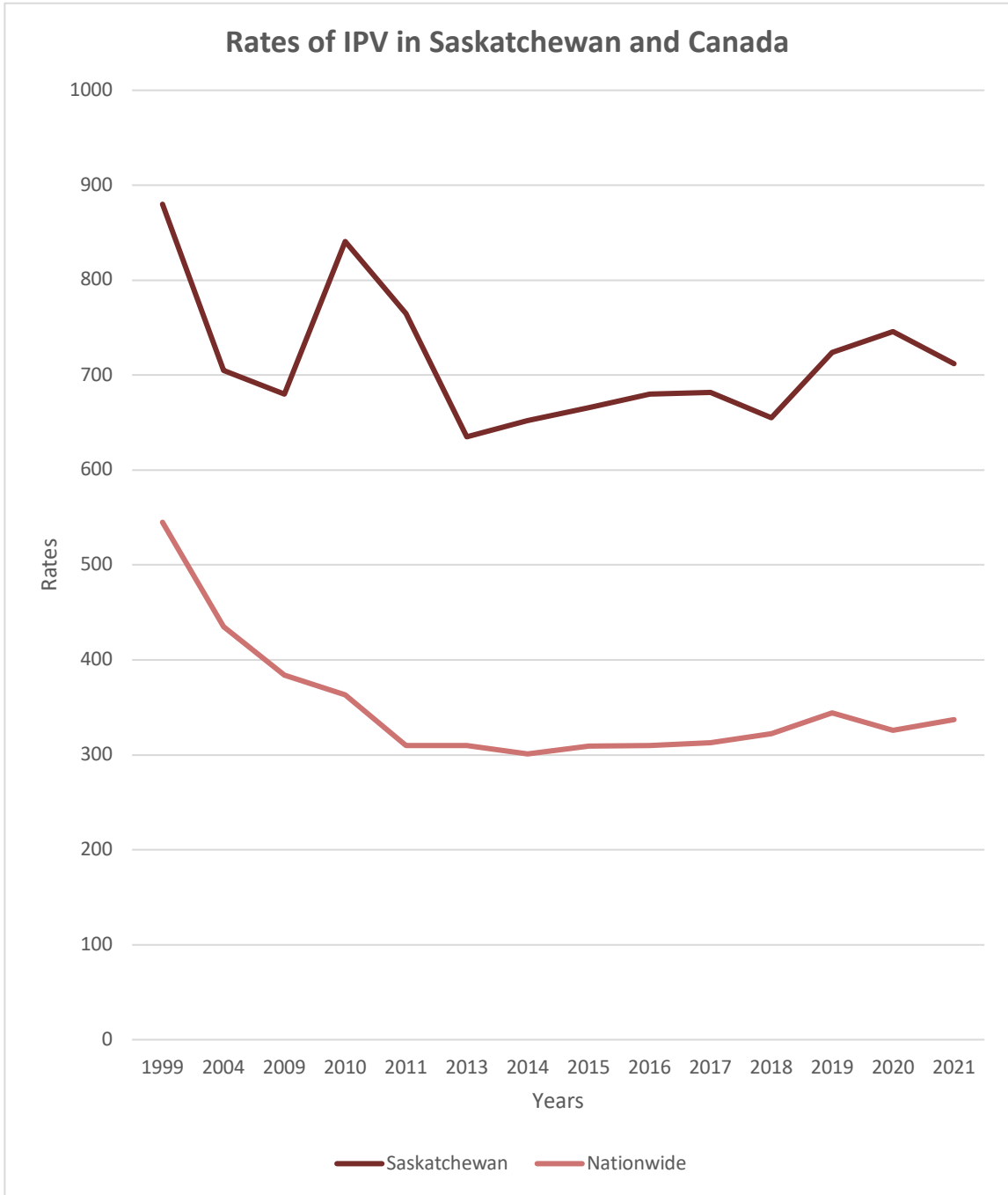


Figure 2: Rates of IPV in Saskatchewan and Canada

The rates of IPV across all of Saskatchewan are not as staggering as those rates in Canada’s territories. Figure 3, “Rates of IPV in Provinces, Territories, & Nationwide,” illustrates the high rates of GBV in the territories (Statistics Canada, 2015b; Sinha, 2012; Sinha, 2013; Taylor-Butts, 2015; Statistics Canada, 2015a; Statistics Canada, 2017; Statistics Canada, 2018; Conroy et al., 2018; Cotter, 2021; Statistics Canada, 2022).

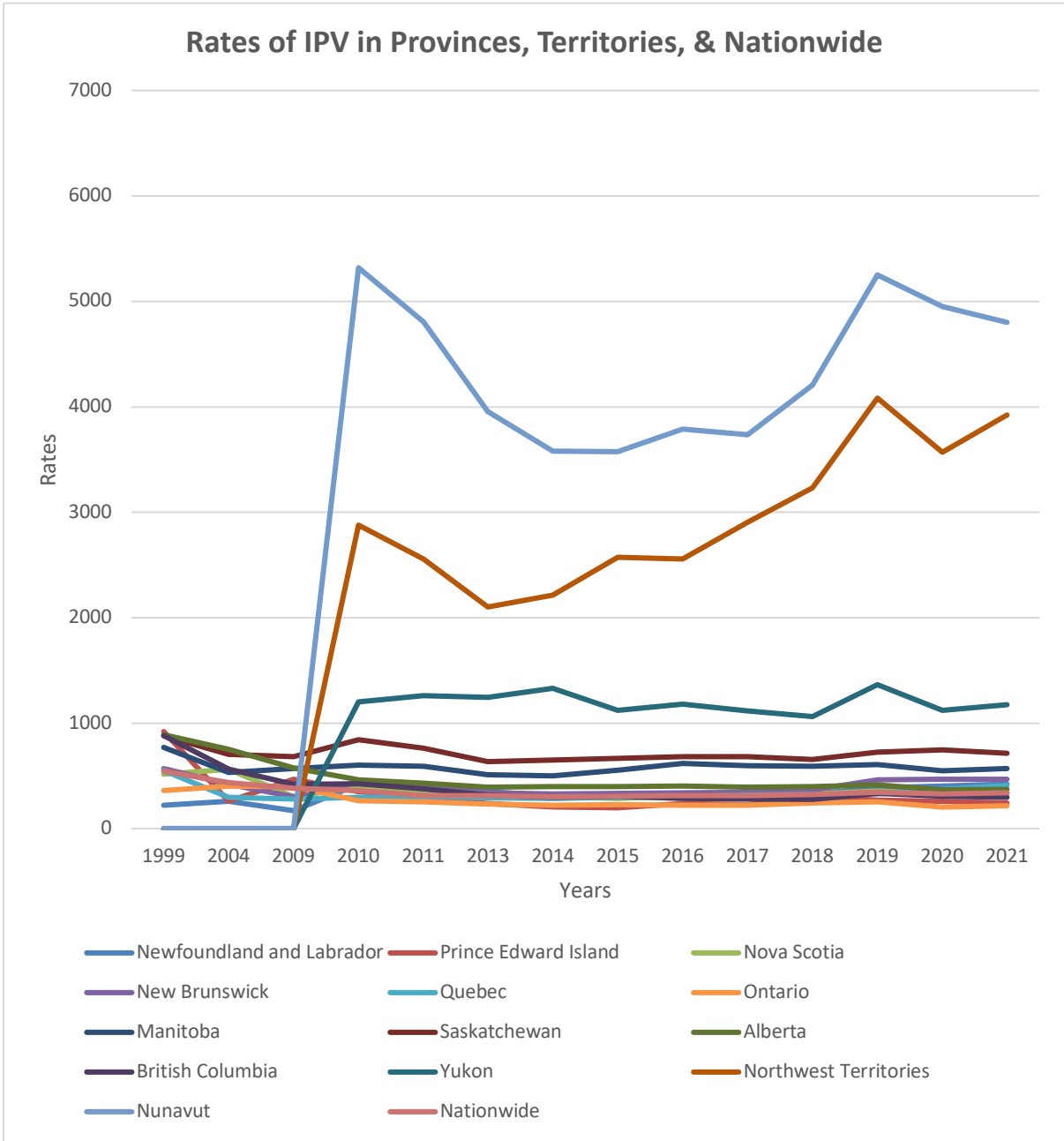


Figure 3: Rates of IPV in Provinces, Territories, & Nationwide

While rates of IPV across all of Saskatchewan are double that of the national average and below that of the territories, it is the northern regions of Saskatchewan that have the highest rates of GBV in all of Canada, including the territories (Rotenberg, 2019). Figure 4, “Rates of GBV in the Provinces and Territories: North vs South,” (Rotenberg, 2019) illustrates the excessive rates of GBV through northern Saskatchewan in juxtaposition to the territories and northern regions of the provinces (this graph excludes those provinces that do not have northern regions: Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia).

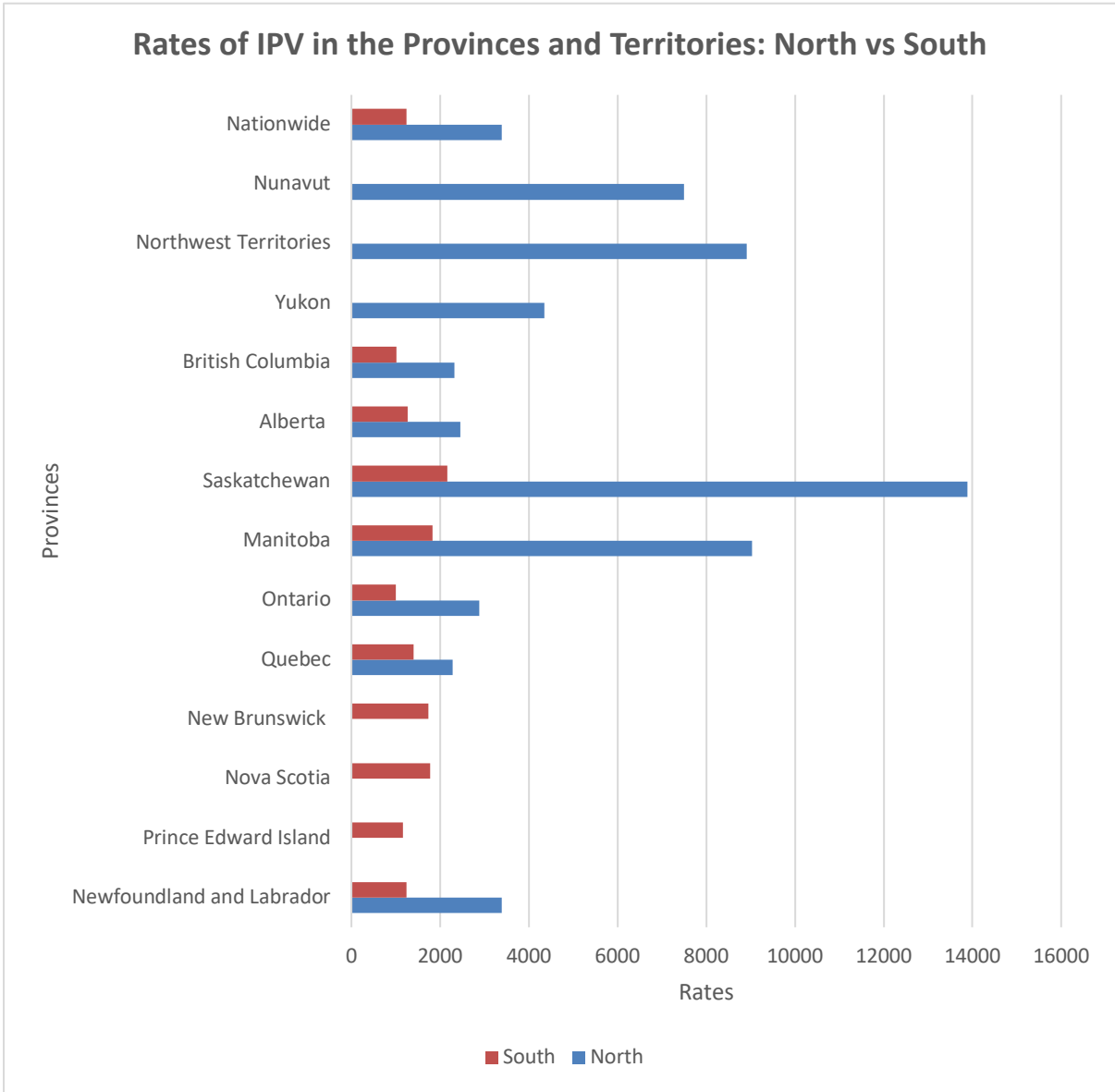


Figure 4: Rates of IPV in the Provinces and Territories: North vs South

Experts have long argued that these excessive rates of IPV in Saskatchewan are due to the limited provincial government resources earmarked to reduce or eradicate GBV and support survivors (Umereweneza et al., 2020; Wiegers & Douglas, 2007). As stated, Saskatchewan is one of two Canadian jurisdictions that does not have a provincial/territorial action plan on GBV (Women's Shelters Canada 2019). Also, until 2023, Saskatchewan was one of two provinces in Canada that has not provided provincial funding for second-stage shelters (Latimer 2020), though the government did recently announce limited funding for second-stage shelters in April 2023. This funding commitment includes \$876,000 over three years provided to five second-stage shelters (Saskatchewan Government, 2023). Second-stage housing is identified as a critical resource in enabling longer-term sustainable safety when escaping domestic situations

(Umereweneza et al., 2020), and GBV is one of the leading factors that lead to homelessness among women (Maki 2021).

Services related to GBV are typically delivered through crisis agencies, shelters, counselling agencies, and dedicated sexual assault centers (Umereweneza et al., 2020). Despite insufficient public funding, several non-profit community organizations throughout Saskatchewan have mandates to address GBV. Non-profit community organizations throughout Saskatchewan rely on a funding model that might be characterized as unsustainable and is often bolstered by fundraising and/or grant-based funding. Shelters often have long wait lists—a situation exacerbated during the pandemic—which limits accessibility for those seeking safety from an abuser; in such situations, victims of IPV may have no option but to remain living with the abuser (James, 2021). These GBV-related shelters and accompanying resources throughout Saskatchewan struggle to maintain provisional services due to insufficient funding (Maki, 2020). As increases in food, utilities, and transportation costs accompany budgetary restrictions that lead to low wages, it can be challenging to attract and retain staff for difficult labour (Latimer 2020). As one director of a Saskatchewan-based second-stage shelter stated in a research interview, “We receive zero funding from the provincial government... Without core operational funding, our entire program is at risk” (Maki, 2020, p.40). Lack of stable and consistent funding pressures service provision and restricts follow-up support for former residents (Maki, 2020). Providing adequate financial support would mitigate some of these ongoing deficiencies in the resources available to survivors of domestic violence, which could contribute to women's ability to return to or remain in the wage economy.

GBV in Saskatchewan: Government Legacies and Responses

Rates of GBV in Saskatchewan, and throughout Canada, have not decreased in years, regardless of legal changes intended to address, mitigate, and reduce rates of violence. While exacerbated by the pandemic, GBV in Saskatchewan is not new and, instead, has sociocultural historical roots that reach back to the violent settler colonial formation of the province within the Canadian federation (Carter, 1993; Razack, 2002; Milhorean, 2005; Beattie 2005). Settler-colonialism is an inherently violent undertaking (Veracini, 2010; Green, 1995) that targets women, specifically Indigenous women and girls (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019), through sexual violence and its related structures of hetero-patriarchy (Snyder, 2018; Eberts, 2017; Bourgeois, 2017). One contemporary example of this colonial legacy is the disproportionate rates of Indigenous women who face GBV in Saskatchewan (Arriagada, 2016; Giesbrecht et al., 2021).

Before the 1970s, Canadian society viewed GBV as a private issue: it took considerable advocacy throughout the 1980s for a socio-political shift to result in civil legislation to address GBV (Wieggers & Douglas, 2007). The evolving legal response primarily focused on the criminal justice system (Lavallee, 1990; Macleod, 1994). In 1981, Canada ratified both the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* and *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*: yet, its provisions are still not fully incorporated into the national legal system and do not have full legal effect at the federal, provincial, or territorial levels (United Nations, 2019).

Civil domestic violence legislation in Saskatchewan emerged from these national and international contexts. Initially, the focus concerned crisis intervention through *The Victims of Crime Act* of 1989 (now *The Victims of Crime Act*, 1995) and the formation of the Saskatchewan Justice Victims Services Program of 1992 and the Victims of Crime Act of 1995 (Wiegiers & Douglas, 2007). In 1995, Saskatchewan became the very first province to enact legislation providing civil redress to domestic violence victims through *The Victims of Domestic Violence Act* (VDVA), which influenced specialized domestic violence legislation globally (Schollenberg & Gibbons, 1992). The VDVA was formulated to go beyond such limitations to address domestic violence by providing three principal remedies to victims of domestic violence. First, the Emergency Intervention Orders (EIO) refer to immediate remedies such as exclusive possession of the family home (Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly, 1994). Second, the Victim's Assistance Orders facilitate access to longer-term remedies. Third, the Warrants of Entry allow access to premises where a victim is thought to be unable to act independently (Wiegiers & Douglas, 2007). More recent legislative reform target rental and employment rights. The *Residential Tenancies Act* (2006) stipulates regulations that ensure victims of GBV can break a rental lease (Office of Residential Tenancies, n.d.). Critics explain that systemic labour impacts due to GBV exist in Saskatchewan (Giesbrecht, 2020; Hunter, 2019); the *Saskatchewan Employment Act respecting Interpersonal Violence Leave* (2017) and the *Saskatchewan Employment Act respecting the Provision of Paid Interpersonal Violence and Sexual Violence Leave* (2019) provides employees who are experiencing GBV with related supports such as paid leaves. Finally, the *Interpersonal Violence Disclosure Protocol (Clare's Law) Act* (2019) enables police services to disclose information related to risk and safety in intimate relationships.

The Social Intersections of GBV

It is generally known that women, girls, and gender non-conforming individuals face disproportionate rates of GBV (Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2021; Umereweneza et al., 2020; Conroy, 2021), and the perpetrators of this violence are most often intimate partners (Rodger, 2004; Johnson and Sacco, 1995; Statistics Canada, 1993). These statistics are clear evidence of disproportionate victimization, yet, the realities of this violence are likely more staggering than the research shows. Likely, we cannot correctly understand GBV rates in Canada as a result of under-reporting due to real and perceived structural issues and barriers within the criminal justice system in Canada (Cotter, 2021; Maki, 2020; Johnson, 2017; Craig, 2020; Umereweneza et al., 2020; Rotenberg, 2019).

While these statistics are likely under-reported, we know that geographic location, age, disability, and race can contribute to the likelihood of experiencing GBV. For example, in Canada, women living with disabilities experience GBV at higher rates than that of people without known disabilities (Conroy & Cotter, 2017; DAWN Canada, 2014). Intimate partner violence in the context of women with disabilities is often overlooked (Barnett et al., 2005) and, as such, has not been central to research concerning GBV (Curry et al., 2001).

The intersection of age and gender demonstrates that women between the ages of 15 to 24 experience a rate of sexual assault seven times higher than same-aged men, and women aged

25 to 34 years of age experience a rate of sexual assault five times higher than same-aged men (Cotter, 2021; Cotter & Savage, 2019). Childhood victimization of abuse, neglect, and violence in the home directly relates to experiences of victimization in adulthood (Cotter, 2021; Conroy et al., 2018; Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, 2021).

Women living in rural, reserve, and northern Canadian communities face heightened degrees of violence with fewer accessible safety and protection resources (Groening et al., 2019). As is similar to other provinces (United Nations, 2019), the northern regions of Saskatchewan have higher rates of GBV than the southern regions (Maki, 2020). These rates of GBV in the northern regions of Saskatchewan are the highest in all of Canada, including the territories (Rotenberg, 2019). Interestingly, reporting of GBV and other crimes is higher in the north; this might be due to smaller communities where citizens are more familiar with each other (Rotenberg, 2019).

In Canada, the rates of and experiences with GBV have a very clear intersection with race. For example, racialized women face a higher proportion of intimate femicide in Canada (Dawson et al., 2023; Ponicek et al., 2012). Women who are newcomers to Canada also face various structural limitations that can enable abuse, such as language barriers, isolation, or unfamiliarity with Canadian laws (Giesbrecht et al., 2023; Umereweneza et al., 2020), as well as lacking informal support systems, limited access to social assistance and housing, and concerns about deportation (Maki, 2020). Gender, race, and immigration status intersect to create barriers specific to newcomer women in Canada and exacerbate disproportionate rates of GBV.

The intersection of race and gender is particularly acute for Indigenous women. Indigenous women in Canada are seven times more likely than non-Indigenous women to be a victim of GBV (NWAC, 2021; Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2021; Heidinger, 2021; Allary et al., 2023). In 2018, Indigenous women and girls were about 5% of the population in Canada, but 36% of those women and girls were killed by violence (Dawson et al., 2023). Indigenous women also reflect disproportionate statistics in other areas linked to GBV (Heidinger, 2021; Conroy & Cotter, 2017; Umereweneza et al., 2020). Indigenous women are more likely than non-Indigenous women to have been abused, physically or sexually, as a child by an adult, which corresponds with increased chances of further victimization (Heidinger, 2021). These heightened rates of violence against Indigenous women are further direct results of colonialism, including experiences with the Indian residential school system (Allary et al., 2023; NWAC, 2021; Giesbrecht et al., 2021; Umereweneza et al., 2020). As such, Indigenous women who seek GBV-related support services have often experienced multiple traumatic events, and these experiences are more likely to be severe forms of violence (Giesbrecht et al., 2021).

Our literature review found that only six of Canada's 14 jurisdictions have a plan to mitigate the disproportionate rates of violence that Indigenous women experience: Alberta's *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) Roadmap* (2022), British Columbia's *Minister's Advisory Council on Aboriginal Women Strategic Plan 2017-2020* (2017), Northwest Territories' *Changing the Relationship: Action Plan In response to the calls for justice on missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people* (2021), the *New Brunswick plan to prevent and respond to violence against Aboriginal women and girls 2017 – 2021* (2017),

and the *National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* (2019). Notably, Saskatchewan does not have a plan concerning the disproportionate rates of GBV that Indigenous women face. Again, the data indicate that Saskatchewan has the highest rates of violence among Canada's provinces and the highest rates of GBV when isolating the northern regions, and Indigenous women disproportionately experience GBV. The recent 2021 Census concludes that Canada's overall population includes 5% of Indigenous peoples, and Saskatchewan's population includes 17% of Indigenous peoples (Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics, 2022). Additionally, 56% of Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan live in rural communities (Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics, 2022), which includes reserve communities, and the broader research data underscores higher incidence of violence experienced in rural communities. Given the disproportionate rates of GBV that Indigenous women and rural communities face and the relatively large Indigenous populations throughout Saskatchewan, it is problematic that the Saskatchewan government has no articulated plan to mitigate and reduce these rates of violence.

Housing Insecurity and the Multi-dimensional Impacts of GBV on Women and Children

The impacts of GBV on women and children are broad-based and long-lasting, and second-stage shelters have an integral role in mitigating further multi-dimensional impacts. Leaving a violent living situation does not ensure a woman is free from further violence (Groening et al., 2019; Ponc et al., 2012; Maki, 2020): Ongoing security concerns will continue to manifest related to this violence and general safety (Hoffart, 2015). The lack of adequate support transitioning from shelters to the second-stage and beyond can lead to housing insecurity (Schwan et al., 2020). Access to trauma- and violence-informed crisis/counselling services at the time of need is critical for people who experience sexual violence to work through their trauma and build constructive coping mechanisms (Sexual Assault Services of Saskatchewan, 2019).

There are significant economic and social costs associated with GBV. The economic costs of GBV are higher during economic downturns (Ouedraogo & Stenzel, 2021). The pandemic resulted in both an economic downturn and heightened rates of GBV (VAW Learning Network, n.d.). The economic cost occurs due to decreases in women's engagement in the workforce as an outcome of GBV. In contrast, these same women access more public resources in the public health and justice sectors (Ouedraogo & Stenzel, 2021).

In Canada, the total economic impact of spousal violence was calculated to cost approximately \$7.4 billion per year in 2009 (Zhang et al., 2012), which is equivalent to \$10.2 billion in 2023. The inclusion of other forms of GBV would lead to a much higher figure. In addition, GBV includes forms of IPV, such as physical abuse, criminal harassment (including stalking), sexual violence, emotional /psychological abuse, financial abuse, spiritual abuse, reproductive coercion, coercive control, and cyber violence (Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2021; Hoffart, 2015), as well as sexual violence and abuse. GBV enormously impacts survivors' personal health, including mental and psychological health, such as depression, and parenting stress related to parenting, and perpetrators' harmful parenting practices (Holtrop et al., 2015). Living under such duress can lead to further marginalization and a limited capacity to heal from trauma (Ponc et al., 2012). More than half of all victims of GBV suffer a physical injury, nearly

three-quarters (72%) are assaulted with force, and 15% are assaulted with a weapon (Conroy, 2021). This violence results in physical/physiological injuries, pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases (Stewart et al., 2013; Campbell, 2002; Chmielowska & Fuhr, 2017; Devries et al., 2013; Lagdon et al., 2014; Stockman et al., 2015). Today, GBV is recognized as a widespread public health issue (Conroy, 2021).

In addition to physiological health impacts, GBV further impacts women's and children's economic and social well-being (Stewart et al., 2013). Financial instability and poverty often result from GBV (Tutty et al., 2009). In Canada, it is estimated that spousal violence annually results in \$487 million in lost wages (Zhang et al. 2012). Women fleeing GBV situations often carry additional costs related to childcare, financial loss due to family dissolution, work interruptions, and inadequate social assistance provisions (Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, 2021). This is because abusers often control finances, and as women flee they have no/little access to these (Hoffart, 2015). GBV further negatively affects workplace performance (Wathen et al., 2014). For 20.5% of victims in Saskatchewan, stalking and harassment continued near the workplace (Giesbrecht, 2020). The consequence is lower personal incomes due to missed work, employment changes, temporary and insecure work placements, and loss of jobs (Wathen et al., 2015; Groening et al., 2019). This compounds the long-standing income gap in Canada, in which, as recently as 2019, the average individual income for women was \$43,010, compared to \$60,680 for men (Statistics Canada, 2021). Statistics indicate that poverty in Canada has steadily shifted towards women since the 1970s, leading to a "feminization of poverty" (Abowitz, 1986, p.209).

GBV leads to housing insecurity and is the leading cause of homelessness of women, and women and families headed by only women are the fastest-growing demographic in homeless shelters (Tutty et al., 2009; Maki, 2020). There is a profound lack of safe, affordable, and secure housing for women, girls, and gender-diverse people in communities across Canada (Schwann et al., 2020; Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, 2021). In fact, "Violence from intimate partners or within families is a key pathway into homelessness for women and girls" (The Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, 2021, p.12). Abuse and housing instability correlate: women who experience IPV are four times more likely to be housing insecure (Ponic et al., 2012). Canada has insufficient affordable housing and poor/inconsistent shelter options; directly due to this, women and children often return to dangerous living arrangements and/or are trapped living in poverty (Allary et al., 2023; Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, 2021). This insecurity has been further linked to insufficient social assistance rates, poor-paying jobs, and lending/borrowing money that exacerbate debts (Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, 2021). Survivors of GBV report declines in living in private market housing with corresponding increases in social housing (Ponic et al., 2012). This creates access issues, such as limited subsidized housing options, lack of availability in many communities, long waiting lists, and restrictive eligibility rules (Hoffart, 2015, p.12).

GBV and related housing and financial insecurities also have short- and long-term impacts on children (Stewart et al., 2013). The experience of violence and homelessness increases parents' stress which can negatively implicate a child's emotional and behavioral development (Holtrop

et al., 2015). The lack of secure housing can also lead to child welfare services being involved, which can lead to children being apprehended from their mothers (Schwan et al., 2020). In fact, as Allary et al. (2023) write, “One of the most underrated benefits of transitional housing is that these programs allow women survivors of IPV to parent and be close to their children independent of their spouses” (p.32).

The Current State of Housing Support and GBV across Canada

The intersection of housing security and GBV as related to women is broadly under-researched and, thus, an undefined social policy area (Schwan et al., 2020; Groening et al., 2019). This intersection remains underdeveloped because housing insecurity is often cast as a gender-neutral issue; this conceptualization both obscures and ignores the differing ways that women experience homelessness, particularly regarding GBV (Canadian Centre for Housing Rights, 2023). For example, women are less likely to turn to emergency housing support and more likely to remain in dangerous, unsafe, and exploitative living situations (Schwan et al., 2020; Maki, 2020). It has been estimated that the existing data collected by resource agencies on women facing housing insecurity due to violence might only reflect about 10% of the women who flee such situations (Groening et al., 2019). Much of this data collection gap is due to resource agencies' organizational capacity issues: there is no time and funding allocation to collect more accurate data (Maki, 2020).

While we may not have an accurate assessment of women's housing needs related to violence, we do have a general grasp of the resources available to those fleeing situations of GBV. Approximately 552 emergency shelters offer services explicitly to women experiencing violence in Canada, and 124 of these are second-stage shelters (Vecchio, 2019; Moreau, 2019). Of these, 27 emergency shelters exist in Saskatchewan: 18 of these are emergency shelters and seven are second-stage shelters (PATHS, n.d.(a)). In April 2023, the Saskatchewan Government announced that it would provide \$876,000 over three years to five second-stage shelters across Saskatchewan including SOFIA House (Regina), Adelle House (Saskatoon), YWCA Turning Points (Saskatoon), North East Outreach Support Services (Melfort) and Sapohtewan House (La Ronge) (Saskatchewan Government, 2023).

This snapshot of housing supports related to women experiencing GBV illustrates the disparate, or unequal, access to emergency housing across Canada, with heightened restrictions in rural and reserve communities. Just over one-third of shelters in Canada serve small populations and rural areas (Maki, 2018), with four per cent of these shelters serving population areas of less than 1000 people (Beattie and Hutchins, 2015; Maki, 2018), and ten shelters are located in fly-in communities, which are remote with limited access (Maki, 2018). Only 30 shelters are located on reserves (Moreau, 2019), and three of these reserve locations are unfunded second-stage shelters (Allary et al., 2023). While no shelters are located in reserve communities in Saskatchewan, various shelters are operated by tribal councils: Wichihik Iskwewak Safe House (Regina), Ts'ekwi K'oni Koe (Black Lake), Piwapan Women's Centre (La Ronge), Waskoosis Safe Shelter (Meadow Lake), Yorkton Tribal Council Safe Haven (Yorkton), Qu'Appelle Haven Safe Shelter (Fort Qu'Appelle) (PATHS, n.d.(b)), and Yellow Quill First Nation's Safe House (located in east-central Saskatchewan) (Yellow Quill Child & Family Prevention Services, n.d.). Less than

half of these shelters and transition homes in small and rural communities have access to public transportation in their community, and most in these smaller communities report a lower rate of access to mental health services and victim support for children than those in larger urban centers (Maki, 2018). Access to shelters in northern Canada is acutely minimal (Moffitt & Fikowski, 2017; Moffitt et al., 2022).

Given the vastness of Canada, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2019) has described the existing network of emergency shelters, including second-stage shelters, as insufficient. Women fleeing situations of GBV require access to a continuum of support ranging from emergency shelters to second-stage shelters, third-stage shelters, and finally, permanent housing (Maki, 2020). And yet, access is stymied: women fleeing violence often encounter full shelters with long waitlists, resulting in hundreds of women being turned away daily (United Nations, 2019), because there is a lack of transitional housing to bridge the gap between emergency shelters and long-term housing options (Schwan et al, 2020).

The Role of and Need for Second-stage Housing

Housing insecurity is not the only outcome of GBV; however, stable housing options are a vital solution to ending GBV (Maki, 2020). It is further an integral influence on whether a survivor returns to the abuser (Ponic et al., 2012). Second-stage shelters are crucial for women to achieve independence free from violence, economic self-sufficiency, and to prevent future exposure to domestic violence (Allary et al., 2023; Hoffart, 2015; Tutty et al., 2009).

Emergency shelters and transition houses provide short term safety and accommodation to survivors—including all genders— of GBV and their children. Second-stage shelters are different from emergency shelters or other types of emergency housing. Second-stage shelters offer longer stay situations (typically six months to two years), and they often bridge a women's living situation from a shelter to permanent placement (Hoffart, 2015; PATHS, n.d.(a)). The length of stay will vary, determined by the shelter and user. A number of different programs will be offered including counselling and practical supports, such as assistance securing housing or employment In addition to safety, and many shelters offer outreach programming (PATHS, n.d.(a)). Programming is often framed as a continuum of care (Vecchio, 2019) that might focus on developing independence, healing, establishing goals, building community, networking, and participating in programming (Allary et al., 2023).

Second-stage shelters are integral to women's safety and success because the more women move in the aftermath of fleeing domestic violence, the more likely they are to be re-victimized (Cotter, 2021). However, GBV survivors often face difficulties in obtaining housing post-shelter (Hoffart, 2015), with as many as 97% of women who have fled violence indicating that affordable housing was "always" or "sometimes" hard to find in their community (Maki, 2020). The difficulties in finding stable housing in Canada will only grow as research suggests that affordable and safe housing options will become scarcer throughout Canada (Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, 2021; Hoffart, 2015).

Second-stage Housing Funding Models & Challenges

Violence against women shelters across Canada are chronically underfunded (Vecchio, 2019; Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, 2021). For nearly half of all shelters, funding is the most significant challenge to delivering services (Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, 2021). As such, transition housing organizations are understaffed and limited in the quality, quantity, and timeliness of the programs that they can provide (Maki, 2020; Vecchio, 2019). These funding deficits create disparities for women and children fleeing GBV who, across Canadian jurisdictions, do not have equal access to comparable services (Vecchio, 2019).

Second-stage shelters and transition housing cannot rely on the government for adequate funding to cover all operating costs, and often turn to private and corporate sector donations. In a focus group, one participant commented, "The problem with numbers is that we lose sight of the fact that there is a human being attached to every single one of those numbers...The government loses sight of that... Because if you take one woman into your second stage, and she stays alive, how is that measurable? Beyond the fact that you saved a life... But government funders, it's just, 'Show me the numbers, show me the numbers, show me the numbers'" (Maki, 2020, p.40). Funders may favour data collection methods that prove programs' successes, but this data collection comes at an expense to other shelter services, like program delivery.

Funding challenges are ever-present in the violence against women (VAW) sector. For example, second-stage shelters' housing stock and infrastructure are ageing, and repair expenses can easily out-grow budgets due to inflation (Maki, 2020). Restrictions on alternative funding sources compound the state of housing and repairs. For example, the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) does not support second-stage housing with loans. However, CMHC does support other housing models, such as transitional and supportive housing (Allary et al., 2023). In Saskatchewan, second-stage shelters can apply for project capital costs; however, until the recent provincial funding commitment (Saskatchewan Government, 2023), funding was unavailable for ongoing operating costs (Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, Nd).

Second-Stage Shelter Operations & Institutional Design

The overall structures and operations of second-stage shelters vary. It is quite common that the available emergency housing stock is characterized negatively as impermanent with an institutional feel, or may elicit perceptions of insecurity and a lack of safety (Allary et al., 2023). Some operational designs are based on mixed or stand-alone arrangements, and the different approaches dictate program deliverables.

Mixed shelters include emergency/first-, second-, or third-stage, and there are 33 in Canada. This model allows for shared facilities and services, which can be cost-reducing by providing "economies of construction" and sharing staffing and services, and this can facilitate ongoing relationships between residents and staff as women move from the transition house into second-stage housing (Maki, 2020, p.27).

Stand-alone second-stage shelters vary in layout, with shared and private or self-contained units (Maki, 2020). Stand-alone second-stage housing often features shared spaces for

entertaining and gathering. Such shared space is helpful for building a sense of community and connection between the residents to support healing (Maki, 2020).

Second-stage shelters will typically provide various supports for women and children in addition to housing. These programs range widely from counselling, navigating various social services and legal systems, wellness activities, and supports to achieve goals of independence and safety (Maki, 2020; Allary et al., 2023). These program operations are contingent on funding for the support workers that operate these programs, and financial limitations or reliance on external grants are often significant barriers to staffing and operations of these programs (Maki, 2020).

Second-stage shelters often rely on piecemeal funding and disjointed government policy. Instead, second-stage housing structures require better government support, including cross-sectoral collaboration and multi-level government (municipal, provincial, territorial and federal) collaboration (Maki, 2020; Vecchio, 2019). A national framework for shelter and transition house services for women and children is required to increase coordination, cooperation, cross-training, and partnerships between the two systems to minimize service disconnections and reduce access barriers (Vecchio, 2019; Hoffart, 2015; Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, 2021). The co-location of emergency beds and second-stage units in one building can provide cost efficiencies regarding infrastructure, program offerings, and staffing (Maki, 2020).

Promising Practices for Second-Stage Housing Programs

Comprehensive and inclusive policies and practices related to GBV and housing are developing across the VAW sector. These are evidence-based and derived from women's collective experience to counteract gaps in service delivery, policies, and programs related to GBV and intersections with housing insecurity (BC Society of Transition Houses, 2022). These can be summarized as the following:

- Mobile Advocacy: Mobile advocacy involves advocates working with survivors in their communities and homes to provide outreach services to “meet women where they are”;
- Flexible Funding: Many survivors need safe and stable housing, as well as temporary financial assistance to meet financial realities;
- Address Safety: Resource teams must take into consideration how past abuse, whether ongoing or ceased, continues to impact the survivor;
- The Relationship Between Advocate and Survivor and How Services are Offered: increased safety-related empowerment fostered by advocates and services can lead to reduced depressive and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms;
- Survivor-Driven Practices: Advocates bring knowledge and expertise, but survivors drive the decision-making;
- Trauma-and-Violence-Informed Practices: Implementing trauma-and-violence-informed practices can increase the well-being and agency of survivors. It will require staff training and intentional consideration of the impact of trauma in all facets of service delivery (e.g., focus on choices, experiential services, women's needs vs program needs);
- Voluntary Services: A low-barrier and voluntary services are best for survivors and staff (this includes substance use and mental wellness);

- Wrap-around Services: A focus on response-based and empowerment-focused wrap-around service delivery models;
- Focus on Children and Family: While recognizing that domestic violence is gendered, services should be child- and family-centred. This child- and family-centred approach includes pet-friendly spaces, programs to support mother-child healing and bonding, and resources to address the impacts of substance use and mental health stressors;
- Integrative Services: Integrating supportive services across all housing stages to increase advocacy and partnership between researchers/academic and service providers;
- Success Model: Investing in a prevention continuum that is comprehensive and strength-based to demonstrate the existing capability that women have to succeed;
- A Streamlined Intake Process: Organized resources through a shared intake process among urban second-stage services to create one contact point;
- Centering Well-being, not Work: Offering the option that women are not required to seek employment during their stay so that they can focus on well-being and fully commit and participate in program offerings;
- Housing Shortages: Increasing outreach program size in response to the increased vacancy rates in some locations, liaising with the private housing market, and building VAW-informed housing coalitions and working groups;
- Harm Reduction Approach: A harm reduction approach can lower barriers for women accessing second-stage housing, increase access to housing, and enhance mental health supports and other culturally-specific and -appropriate programming (Turner et al., 2018; Sullivan, 2017; Women's Shelters Canada, 2017).

Recommendations from the Literature Review

1. Recommendation: Develop a national funding model based on flexible standards. The financial resources available to GBV survivors often need flexible frameworks to enhance women's financial autonomy (Maki, 2020). Flexible funding models related to housing and IPV have a success rate as high as 95% by better meeting women's needs (Maki, 2020). Measures ought to increase access to affordable housing and transitional support, such as flexible rental supplements or benefits, or work with CMHC to provide front-end funding to GBV-related organizations (Vecchio, 2019).
2. Recommendation: Develop an equitable national policy to combat IPV as connected to housing. While Canada has taken steps to develop a National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence (NAP), there remains no national plan related to shelter operations, which operate according to subnational jurisdiction's policies (United Nations, 2019). The federal government should use the *National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence* and the *National Housing Strategy* to create a national action plan on gender-based violence as it intersects with access to affordable housing, to increase access equitably across the nation (Maki, 2020; Vecchio, 2019; Allary et al., 2023).
3. Recommendation: Synchronize information gathering through a national observatory. There is a lack of consistency with language and data collection: This impedes fully and adequately understanding the true nature of women's housing insecurity due to GBV and, thus, properly

creating mitigating policy. The various jurisdictions in Canada discuss and define GBV differently, and this leads to inconsistent shelter policies (Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, 2021). Data on IPV is reported, gathered, and analyzed in a fragmentary approach, rendering it incomparable across the nation (United Nations, 2019) and resulting in a need to ensure data collection—both quantitative and qualitative—includes and is guided by the survivors of IPV, including access, availability, and quality of wrap-around support and services (Dale et al., 2021).

4. Recommendation: Address legislative deficits by harmonizing national laws with international standards of violence criminalization. Although Canada ratified the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW), the *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*, and other international and regional human rights instruments, its provisions are not fully incorporated and do not have full legal effect at the federal, provincial, or territorial levels (United Nations, 2019). Though globally the laws protecting women are a patchwork and the United Nation’s resources do have limits—the CEDAW, as an example, does not articulate the words “rape,” “violence,” or “assault” in its text nor definition of discrimination against women (Nwadinobi et al., 2020, pp. 13 & 47)—advocates do argue that the federal and subnational jurisdictions should fully harmonize with international models to strengthen those existing laws that protect, deter, and mitigate violence against women (United Nations, 2019; Ouedraogo & Stenzel, 2021).
5. Recommendation: Create trauma-informed and culturally appropriate victims’ services. Many women in Canada cannot access culturally appropriate services, which is a barrier to seeking the support required to leave an abusive environment and successfully gain independence. Transition housing and accompanying services ought to follow trauma-informed care standards and culturally competent services (Hoffart, 2015), in particular for Indigenous women and communities (United Nations, 2019; Giesbrecht et al., 2021).
6. Recommendation: Create a national standard for normative workplace leaves and accommodations related to GBV. Barriers to violence prevention and healing can exist within the workplace, which, correspondingly, can also be a place that can foster and enhance support for women's safety. The workplace can offer information to prevent GBV and support victims of GBV through resource information and paid leave policies (Giesbrecht, 2020; Canadian Labour Congress, 2021).
7. Recommendation: Create an Indigenous-guided framework to create culturally appropriate and accessible services for Indigenous women everywhere in Canada. Indigenous women and children in Canada face a higher risk of gender-based violence, and many Indigenous communities lack adequate housing and related support services (Allary et al., 2023; Canadian Women’s Foundation Nd.; Vecchio, 2019). GBV-related strategies, services, and programs ought to include specific authentic Indigenous-led and partnered cultural practices—not pan-Indigenous— including ceremonial space and access to knowledge keepers (Giesbrecht et al., 2021; Allary et al., 2023; Vecchio, 2019).
8. Recommendation: Address housing unaffordability and accessibility through national policy standards. In Canada, housing is increasingly unaffordable and inaccessible and, increasingly,

women acutely experience housing insecurity due to the intersection of GBV. Various policies currently deny women access to mortgages or penalize highly mobile women, which creates barriers to escaping violence or abuse (Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, 2021; Ponick et al., 2012). Removing barriers to eligibility for housing services (e.g. immigration status) and the restrictive time limits on stays in shelters and transitional housing can better support women's success in fleeing GBV (Dale et al., 2021). Housing insecurity in childhood directly affects adult homelessness and can be mitigated by addressing the unique needs of mothers in poverty (Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, 2021). One crucial aspect of this is creating an urban Indigenous housing component to the National Housing Strategy (Vecchio, 2019).

9. Recommendation: Increase public funding for second-stage shelters across all of Canada. Throughout Canada, second-stage shelters often receive little to no public funding for these programs and services, and these services (and their funding) need to be more consistent across the country. The federal government ought to create core operational funding for all second-stage shelters to increase access to and reduce barriers to these resources and accompanying wrap-around services (Maki, 2020; Dale et al., 2021). This should include funding the transportation for women and their children living in urban, rural, remote, and northern communities that do not offer access to safe shelter services (Vecchio, 2019).
10. Recommendation: Use GBA+ policy analysis to frame national and sub-national policy on IPV and housing. While GBA+ is regularly used at the federal level, it is not uniformly used across all government levels (Canadian Women's Foundation, 2020). GBA+ ensures a gender lens is placed on policy to ensure equity and dissuade marginalization of women's experiences, which are often made invisible (Paterson & Scala, 2020). The way homelessness is defined, measured, and responded to does result in the invisibility of women (Schwan et al., 2020): Women's homelessness will only be understood when traditional methodologies of research around homeless populations shift to include a GBA+ approach: this will contribute significantly to ensuring more accurate data on rates of GBV, the intersection of GBV and housing insecurity, and women's homelessness in Canada (Schwan et al., 2020).
11. Recommendation: Implement NI-MMIWG Call to Justice #4.7 as related to transitional housing. The NI-MMIWG Call to Justice #4.7 remains unimplemented: "We call upon all governments to support the establishment and long-term sustainable funding of Indigenous-led low-barrier shelters, safe spaces, transition homes, second stage housing, and services for Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people who are homeless, near homeless, dealing with food insecurity, or in poverty, and who are fleeing violence or have been subjected to sexualized violence and exploitation" (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019). An array of policies, many of them rooted in colonial and hetero-patriarchal systems, disproportionately dislocate Indigenous women, their children, and gender-diverse people as owners of the property and create barriers to escaping violence or abuse (Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, 2021; Allary et al., 2023). There is a real need for increased access to resources related to second-stage housing shelters throughout Indigenous communities (Maki, 2020; United Nations, 2019). On May 8,

2023, Ottawa announced \$103 million for Indigenous women's shelters to address the recommendations by the NI-MMIWG to provide for long-term sustainable funding shelters. While this funding will support 22 projects in 21 communities nationwide, more is needed (Stefanovich, 2023).

Analysis of Research Strengths and Gaps

The research methods of the literature review and NVivo, as well as the synthesis of data and development of graphs, exposed various strengths in the existing state of research. In particular, much of the scholarship and data from non-profits focused on women-centred narratives and strength-based data collection and analysis. Furthermore, there is a growing—yet still limited—pool of work focusing on promising practices for second-stage housing, and these are equally methodologically situated as women-centred and strengths-based.

The research methods of the literature review and NVivo analysis, as well as the synthesis of data and development of graphs, exposed various gaps in the existing state of research.

1. Deficient in Saskatchewan-specific content: In all source documents used for the literature review, we found a limited focus on GBV and/or second-stage housing in Saskatchewan-specific situations. Though some excellent resources exist, the bulk of this research body focuses on the cross-Canada situations of GBV and housing.
2. Broadly-scoped content: We quickly recognized that the literature search presented too much scope, resulting in a substantial content volume. The scope of the content's focus is consistently outside our specific objectives of correlating rates of GBV and funding for second-stage housing as a mitigating factor of violence. For example, there is a large pool of research on GBV, lesser available research on women and housing security with minimal research that explicitly focuses on second-stage housing, and marginal research on the intersection of women, GBV, and second-stage housing.
3. Institutional Reporting: Two gaps in research emerged concerning reporting. These are broadly construed as a gap in transparency among government documents and a gap related to capacity among non-profit agencies working in GBV and second-stage housing sectors.
 - a. Government Reporting: Review of publicly available documents revealed a lack of clear, specific information about government funding for GBV, particularly funding for second-stage shelters. Specific funding amounts allocated to second-stage shelters were difficult to find, which poses challenges for comparative analysis of funding across jurisdictions. Enhanced transparency of government funding would be beneficial for future analyses and for identification of any correlations between GBV funding and GBV rates by province or territory. Further, it is not always clear whether provincial action plans are preceded by funding commitments, or whether funding commitments are expected to follow provincial plans. Further research in this area is required.
 - b. Non-profit organization's reporting: Non-profit organizations working in GBV and second-stage housing sectors are underfunded, impacting their ability for data collection and reporting. We recognized clear gaps in the research related to capacity limitations. For example, the research synthesis activities could not determine basic funding units for comparative analysis. As a result, we do not know how many beds are funded in the

country, nor can we determine the range of programming offered, access to wrap-around services, or the continuation of programming services. With more robust capacity and better funded research-centred administration at these non-profits, we can produce a comprehensive comparative analysis of the intersection of GBV and second-stage housing to understand better the correlation of the state resources available to women and how to enhance these resources.

4. Inconsistent language: We recognized that a lack of consistent language made cross-comparative analysis difficult. Often, differing jurisdictions interchange or have competing definitions for terms. For example, transition housing might be interchanged with both emergency shelters and second-stage housing or be used to describe transitioning from correctional institutions into different living situations. Another example relates to gender-based violence, domestic violence and/or intimate partner violence, which might be defined differently according to different resources or used interchangeably. This fosters gaps in scoping, compiling, and synthesizing data to result in a robust comparative analysis.

Implications

Our research resulted in six key findings and three recommendations for policy changes:

Key Findings

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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.

6. 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 impede an adequate understanding of women's housing insecurity due to GBV and generate 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.

Recommended Policy Changes

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.

Conclusion

This knowledge synthesis demonstrates a severe lack of commitment on behalf of the Saskatchewan Government to supporting women's success in fleeing situations of GBV. Given the prevalence of disproportionate violence that women face within this jurisdiction—the highest of the Canadian provinces, double the national average, and, when isolating the northern territories in all jurisdictions, the highest throughout all of Canada—it is discouraging

that the Saskatchewan Government continues to under-fund and under-develop services associated with mitigating, alleviating, and terminating these episodes of violence and associated socio-economic and health determinates.

Future Areas of Research

This knowledge synthesis project recognizes various avenues for future research that are required to better conceptualize the state of resources currently for women experiencing GBV and the associated rates of success of these resources. There are five research priorities resulting from this project:

1. Build a better understanding of the correlation between GBV rates and second-stage housing: When comparing funding across years to rates of GBV, there is no clear correlation between the impact of funding on mitigating, alleviating, and terminating GBV. We suggest that this does determine that no funding effect on GBV rates is identifiable; instead, we determine that more research on this correlation must occur. The lack of a clear correlation between funding and GBV indicates that this situation is complex and comparative analysis is complicated. This complexity and complication are because all jurisdictions in Canada have inconsistent and incompatible reporting practices, data collection techniques, and language use and determined definitions. Additional socio-jurisdictional indicators such as geographic characteristics, cultural distinctions, post-secondary education, economic wealth, access to better public services on a jurisdictional basis, and urban and rural divides must be layered upon the differing data collection, analysis, and synthesis techniques.
2. Create alternative approaches to data collection & assessment: An overall gap in the research concerns the data collection and assessment effectiveness of second-stage housing. Commonly, granting applications and funding reports will require quantitative data collection: this often shifts the non-profits' organizational focus of service delivery to data collection. Furthermore, data does not easily illustrate successes for women concerning situations of GBV. For example, all second-stage shelters will have lower numbers of clients than crisis shelters: a crisis shelter may serve 350 different people in a year, while a second-stage shelter serves the same 30 people over a one-year time span. Essentially, the higher numbers of clients do not illustrate nor equate to the higher need for housing services. This knowledge synthesis did not uncover alternative assessment and evaluation metrics that shift quantitative reporting standards to qualitative understandings of success. Such an alternative measurement approach might, as an example, recognize lower numbers over more years as indicative of success. In addition to quantitative data assessments shifting the focus of service delivery to data collection, these kinds of reporting scales can be taxing on the time, workload, and attention of staff in non-profits agencies, and this work can shift attention from priority wrap-around services, which can limit the effectiveness of the programming and reduce supports for women.
3. Better understand the interconnection between settler colonization and GBV that disproportionality targets Indigenous women: Throughout the literature review, Indigenous women are consistently marginalized in data analysis and discussion of GBV and second-stage housing. Indigenous women, however, are not marginalized in the disproportionate rates of GBV and the heightened violence of these episodes: indeed, Indigenous women are disproportionately centred in all such data. This knowledge synthesis report concludes that more research needs to be undertaken that will centre Indigenous women, the ongoing

legacies of settler colonialism, and the staggering statistics of GBV that they face each year. Specifically, this research must be strengths-based, decolonial, Indigenous-led, and framed by culturally-appropriate and culturally-responsive policy and program practices.

4. Evidence the need for research infrastructure capacity within the non-profit sector: There are relatively few community researchers within most non-profit agencies dealing with GBV and second-stage housing, which seriously limits research capacity. And yet, the government or other funding agencies regularly require data to be included in granting applications and funding reports. However, most non-profits do not have researchers on staff, nor do they have access to research databases or research ethics boards to support these research requirements. Without such research-related infrastructure, non-profits working in the GBV and/or second-stage housing sector will face limitations with data collection, synthesis, and knowledge mobilization. This results in significant gaps in the knowledge concerning the practices of non-profits. We need more research to determine: What are the programs for second-stage housing? What are the intake criteria? What are the ways to measure success? To develop this knowledge, government ought to support the research capacity within this sector, including staff researchers and research infrastructure access.
5. Develop a knowledge foundation to GBV prevention and response as it intersects with power relations. Our research methodologies were framed by intersectional feminist research in an attempt to better understand systems of power relations that foster GBV in Saskatchewan. As noted, there is a deficit in research that looks at the disproportionate rates of GBV in Saskatchewan and second-stage housing. This deficit was further notable in how social and political power relations result in these disproportionate rates of violence, except in the work surrounding Indigenous women where the continued legacies of settler colonial exploitation are often used to frame analyses. There is a need to identify and articulate the intersections of women's lives that are framed by socio-economic and political marginalization and exacerbated by the complexities of various relations of power throughout Saskatchewan as related to GBV and second-stage housing.

Knowledge Mobilization Activities

This knowledge synthesis proposal has 17+ knowledge outputs across five knowledge mobilization activities that will engage cross-sectoral audiences: 1) For SSHRC and WAGE, researchers attended a virtual kick-off webinar and a 6-month virtual knowledge mobilization event to present a Synthesis Report and Two-page Evidence Brief; 2) With our community collaborators, we hosted two Community Partner Sessions to establish relationships and foster trust and an additional two sessions to return research results, as well as a workshop through the Community Engagement and Research Centre (CERC), University of Regina; 3) For scholars, researchers, and students, we will disseminate research findings at in-person and virtual academic conferences. 4) For scholars, the public service, and nonprofit organizations, we will write an open-access and/or peer-reviewed journal article; 5) For GBV professional agency networks, we will develop a webinar to be recorded and shared with PATHS member agencies throughout Saskatchewan. For survivors, agencies, and the general Saskatchewan society, we will share the Synthesis Report and Policy Brief on PATHS' and CERC's websites and make the CERC workshop publicly accessible.

The knowledge mobilization (Kmb) activities associated with this project are broad-based to ensure engagement with various sectoral stakeholders to increase the likelihood of effecting policy transformation and social change in support of those who have fled, or intend to flee, situations of GBV. This project has 17+ knowledge outputs across five Kmb activities to diversify engagement with cross-sectoral stakeholder groups: academic, public, private, and not-for-profit sectors. Through these stakeholders, this project proposal will engage the broader Saskatchewan public: urban centers, rural communities, and newcomer and Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) communities. This approach—a broad-based range of mobilization activities and cross-sectoral audiences—will effect change in policies and practices related to GBV and second-stage shelter housing in Saskatchewan.

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