



# *A National Survey of Gender-Based Approaches to Women's Homelessness*

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# Project Team

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# Background

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- The 80's shift away from social housing
- A rapid increase in homelessness
- Disproportionately impacted (but in a hidden way) women, girls, and gender-diverse people
  - Challenges of transitioning into permanent housing
  - Risk factors (e.g., poverty, trauma, interpersonal violence)
  - Safety
  - Misrepresentation, underreporting, and fewer support services

# The Hope

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- Housing is a human right and social good
- Gender-based approach voiced by researchers, leaders, advocates, and allies
- The National Housing Strategy explicitly names a Gender Based Analysis+ (GBA+) approach

# The Challenge

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**Homelessness is gendered and yet there is limited uptake of gender-based approaches to community planning across Canada.**

There are many examples in which a gender-blind approach does not work for women or has left women behind, having only “...scratched the surface of women’s experiences, casualties, and what is required to end homelessness among women”

(McInnes & Drabble, 2020, p. 2).





# The Worry

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- “But what about men”
- Post-identity (“I don’t see colour”, “we treat everyone the same”, “we support all genders”) can equate to willful blindness to inequities
- Anti-woke is anti-woman
- Patriarchy means that men are disproportionately represented as funding and policy decision-makers

# Research Question

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- How have/are Canadian communities responding to women's and girls' homelessness?
  - In which ways are (or are not) Canadian communities including a gender-based approach within community plans to end homelessness?
  - Where gendered approaches are lacking, what are the barriers or limitations to their inclusion?
  - Where gendered approaches exist, what are facilitators to enabling them?

# The Partnership

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All Our  
Sisters

Toutes nos  
Sœurs

Western  
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# The Process

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- Mixed methods descriptive survey sent out to various service providers from Jan-March 2020
  - Disseminated through social media, e-mail distribution lists, websites, collaborative networks, online contacts, and within organizations servicing women and/or girls experiencing homelessness
  - Survey asked participants to rate their level of agreement with various statements related to women's homelessness and feedback about whether women's needs are met through service delivery
  - Open ended questions asked participants to elaborate and provide further information on their views
  - 107 participants

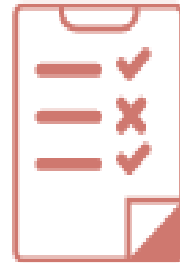
# The Process

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## DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH:



Exploring if/how communities use a gender-based approach to community planning to prevent and end homelessness.



Pan-Canadian, mixed-methods survey of 107 service providers in organizations serving women or girls experiencing homelessness.



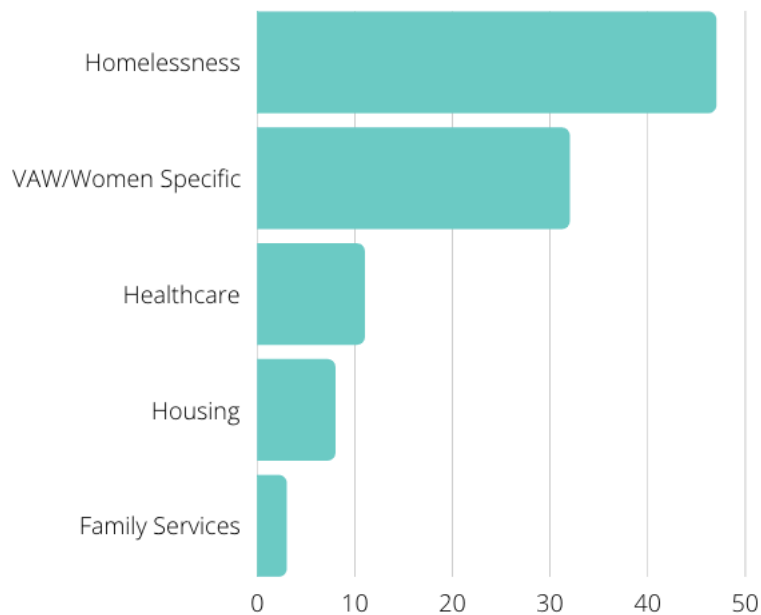
**68%** Central Canada  
**14%** Atlantic provinces  
**12%** Prairie provinces  
**6%** West Coast  
**1%** Northern Territories



**25%** Large city (1 million+)  
**61%** Mid-size city (10,000- 1 million)  
**14%** Small community (0- 10,000)

# The Process

## Participants identified areas of employment were:



## Participants worked in:



**32%** Frontline  
**30%** Volunteer/Other  
**27%** Management  
**11%** Lead administrator

## Participants had:

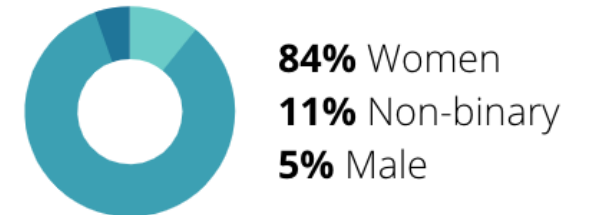
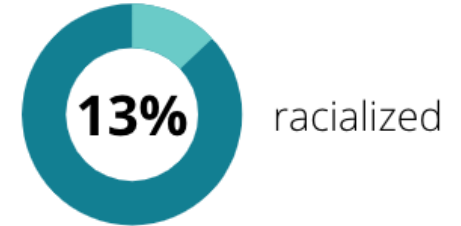
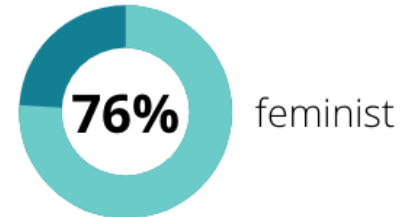
**71%**

worked in sector for 1-10 years.

**29%**

worked in sector for 11+ years.

## Participants identified:



# Findings

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- Women and girls (cis and trans) are under-recognized and underserved.
- While service providers recognize the unique needs of women and girls, they encounter barriers to the broader community accepting a gender-based analysis and approach to ending homelessness.
- Ending homelessness for women and girls means changing perspectives among leaders, policy-makers, and funders.
- Transformation must take an intersectional approach that targets actions at the individual, relationship, community, and societal level.

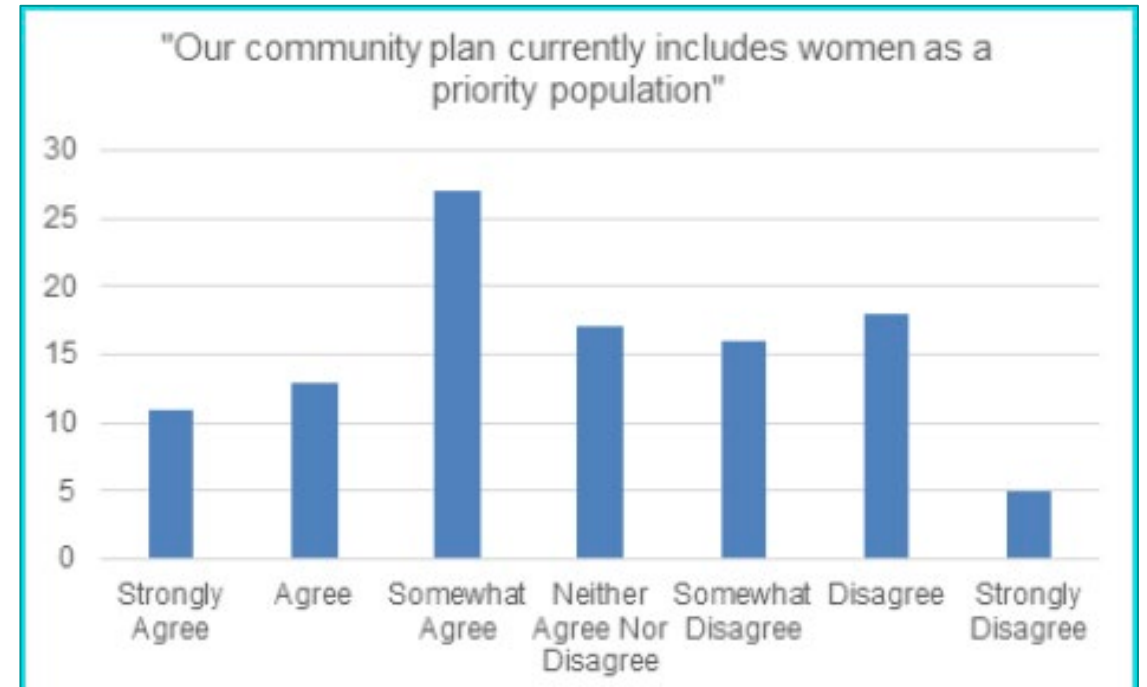
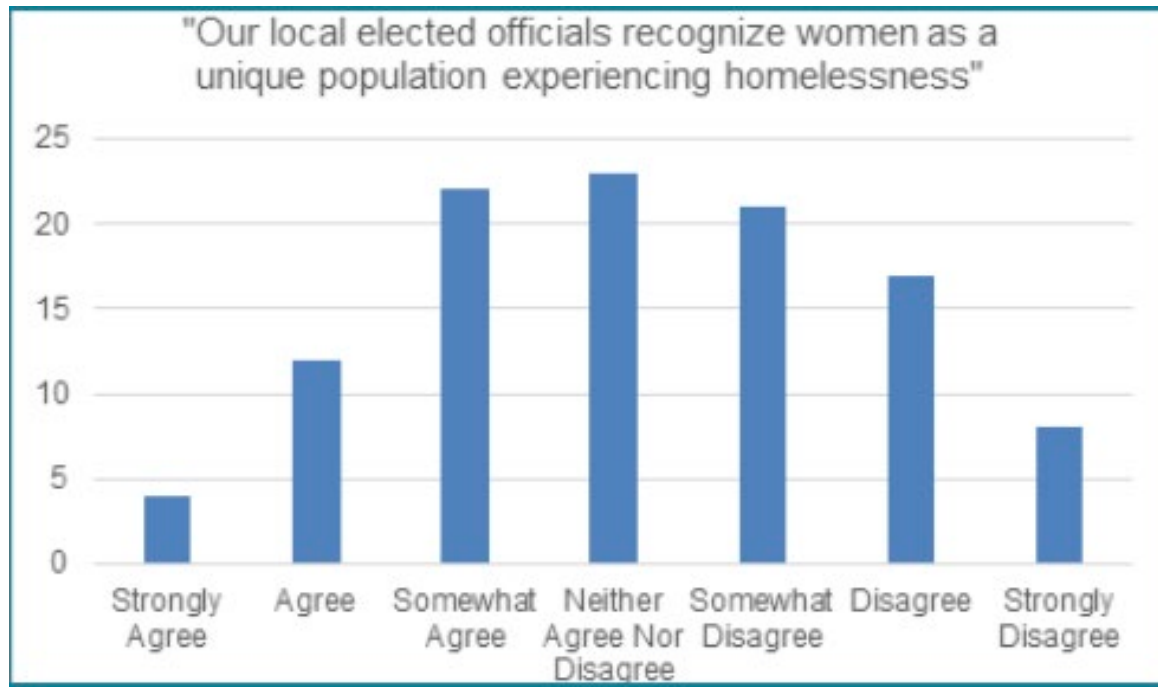
# Quote

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*"The supports are built to suit a single unattached male who desires a single room occupancy, which we know would not work for the vast amounts of women." (Andrey)*

# Findings

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# Findings

**97%**

felt that women and girls experience homelessness different than men.

**95%**

agreed that a gender-based approach is important to ending homelessness yet only

**52%**

felt that this was a current reality.

## PARTICIPANT FINDINGS:

“ *The needs of women within the homeless sector are not being met because policy development continues to be traditionally executed as a one problem fits all model. -Erin* ”

**53%**

felt that Black, Indigenous, women of colour, transgender and non-binary people were not included in community planning to end homelessness.

There are both **barriers** (e.g. lack of political will, discrimination) and **facilitators** (e.g. accurate data, women specific supports) to a gender-based approach.

# Recommendations

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## 1. HOMELESSNESS IS GENDERED

Those experiencing homelessness are not a homogenous group.

Canadian cis- and transgender women and girls' needs are under-recognized, and thus they are consequently underserved. Unique groups of women have unique needs, and all must be kept safe.

## 2. ACCURATE DATA

What is the scale of the problem?

Traditional data collection does not capture the hidden nature of women and girls homelessness. Understanding the diversity, reality, and extent of the issue will better inform what changes are required.

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*Pushing the importance of acknowledging and responding specifically to women's needs, is most often met with 'yes of course, of course- there's info on our gender-based approach in the document'- which is several lines or a paragraph that sounds wonderful but that has yet to be felt on the frontlines. - Max*

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# Recommendations

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## 3. ENHANCE DIVERSITY

Work together at decision making tables.

Include diverse people and those with lived experience(s) at community planning and decision making tables.

## 4. ENGAGE LEADERS

In government, housing, social services, and beyond.

Commit to meaningful change in a way that reimagines and redesigns a sector that has lacked a gendered lens.

## 5. ELIMINATE GENDER BLIND POLICY

Which is harmful to the well-being of women and girls.

Policy and funding decisions should be inclusive and equitable for women and girls- not restricting and limiting their choices.

**If we are going to meet the needs of women and girls, we need to work in solidarity to translate a gender-based analysis into housing and homelessness services in communities across Canada.**



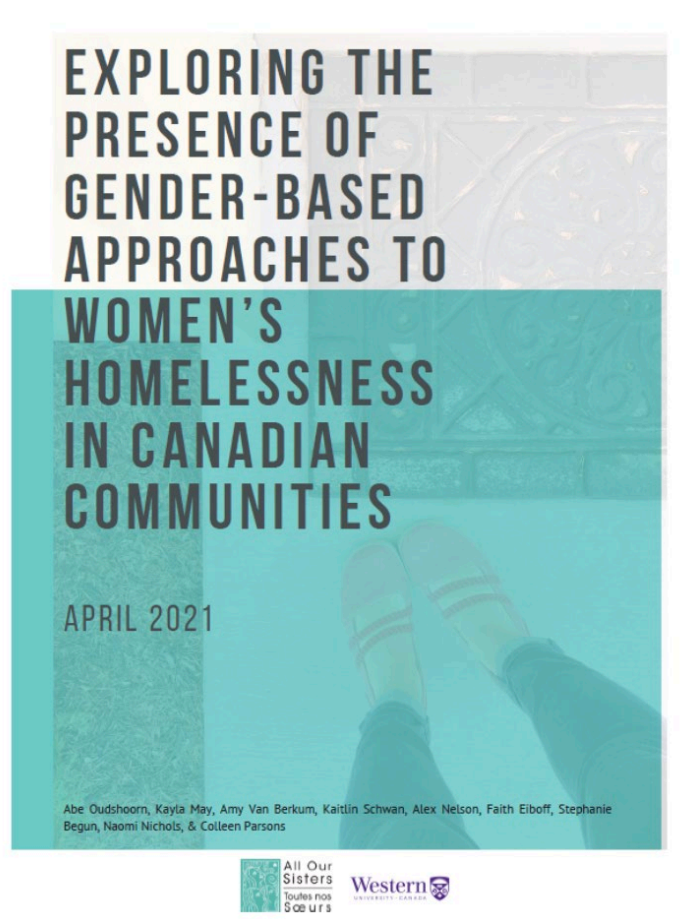
# Conclusions

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- Ongoing exclusion of women and gender-diverse people is structural violence
- The anti-woke perspective permeates municipal governments and serves to exclude women
- We need to call out misogyny for what it is
- All community planning must name women and gender-diverse people as a priority population

# Full Report:

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<https://www.abeoudshoorn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Gender-Based-Approach-to-Homelessness-Final.pdf>