

Successful Tenancies

Building knowledge and partnerships on gender-based violence in Toronto's housing market



Women and Gender
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité
des genres Canada



About WomanACT

VISION

WomanACT envisions a world where all women are safe and have access to equal opportunities.

MISSION

WomanACT works collaboratively to eradicate violence against women through community mobilization, coordination, research, policy, and education.



Learning Objectives

1. Understand the experiences of survivors of gender-based violence in accessing and residing in private rental housing
2. Describe hidden homelessness and its impacts on survivors of gender-based violence
3. Recognize the need for survivors' housing solutions that go beyond social and non-profit housing options

Project Background

- Survivors face unique challenges to housing (e.g., hidden homelessness, landlord discrimination, poor rental histories, and economic insecurity)
- Survivors want more housing options when leaving violence, including remaining in existing private rental or moving directly to new private rental
- Landlords may be uniquely positioned to identify signs of intimate partner violence, prevent related evictions, and create safe housing environments
- With social housing and shelter systems at capacity, we need to broaden housing solutions and bring together new partners

Research Activities

Online Rental Housing Survey

- One-time survey between July to September 2022
- Woman or gender-diverse person
- Experienced gender-based violence
- Currently live in private rental housing in Toronto area

141 Responses

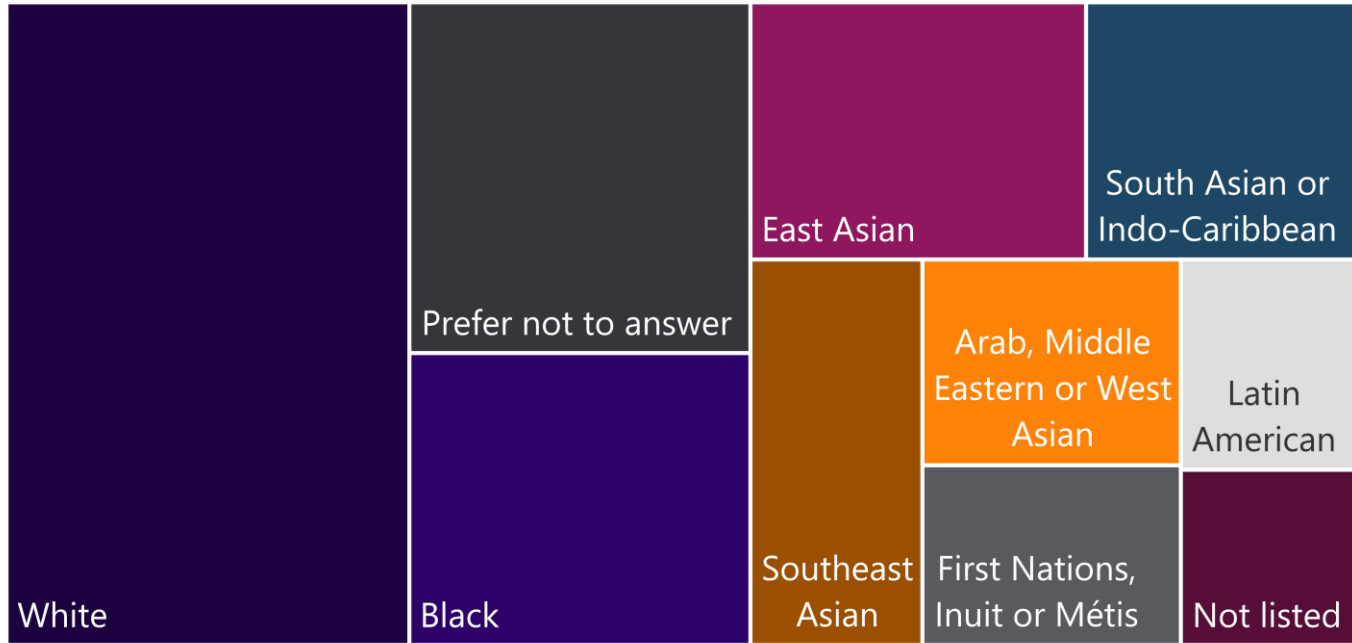
Temporary Housing Questionnaires

- 5 questionnaires (every 2-3 weeks) from July to October 2022
- Woman or gender-diverse person
- Experienced gender-based violence
- Currently live in Toronto area
- Currently live in temporary housing without an immediate ability to secure permanent housing
- Not accessing services related to housing or homelessness

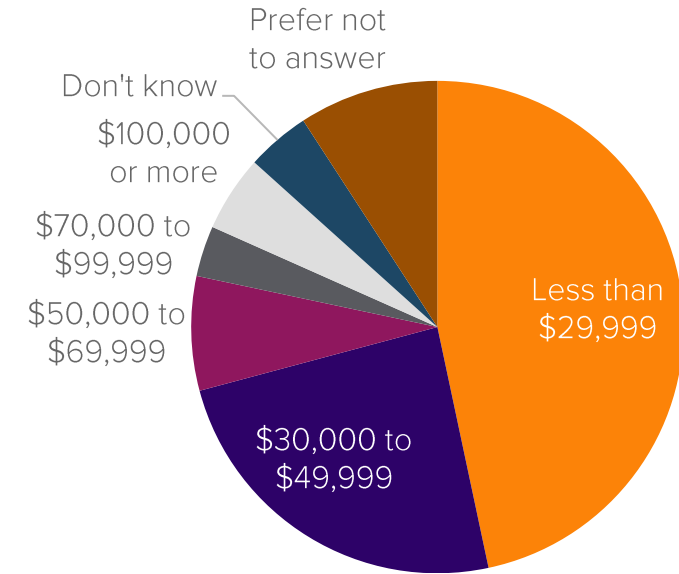
12 Participants

Rental Housing Survey Findings

Race and/or Ethnicity



Before-Tax Household Income



Born in Canada

Yes: 46% No: 49%

Living with a Disability

Yes: 36% No: 52%

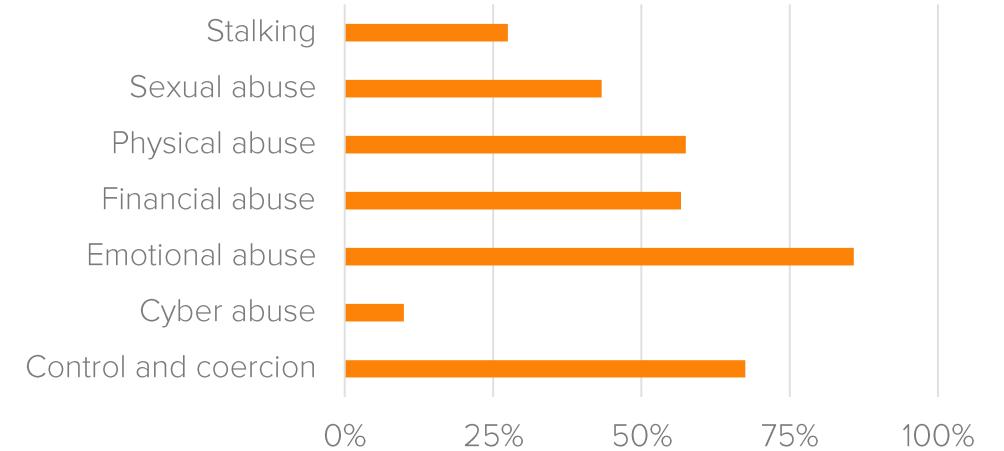
Gender Identity

Woman: 71%

Prefer not to answer: 10%

<5% non-binary, questioning, transgender, Two-Spirit

Type of Abuse



Housing Types & Tenure

62% lived in apartment buildings or condominiums

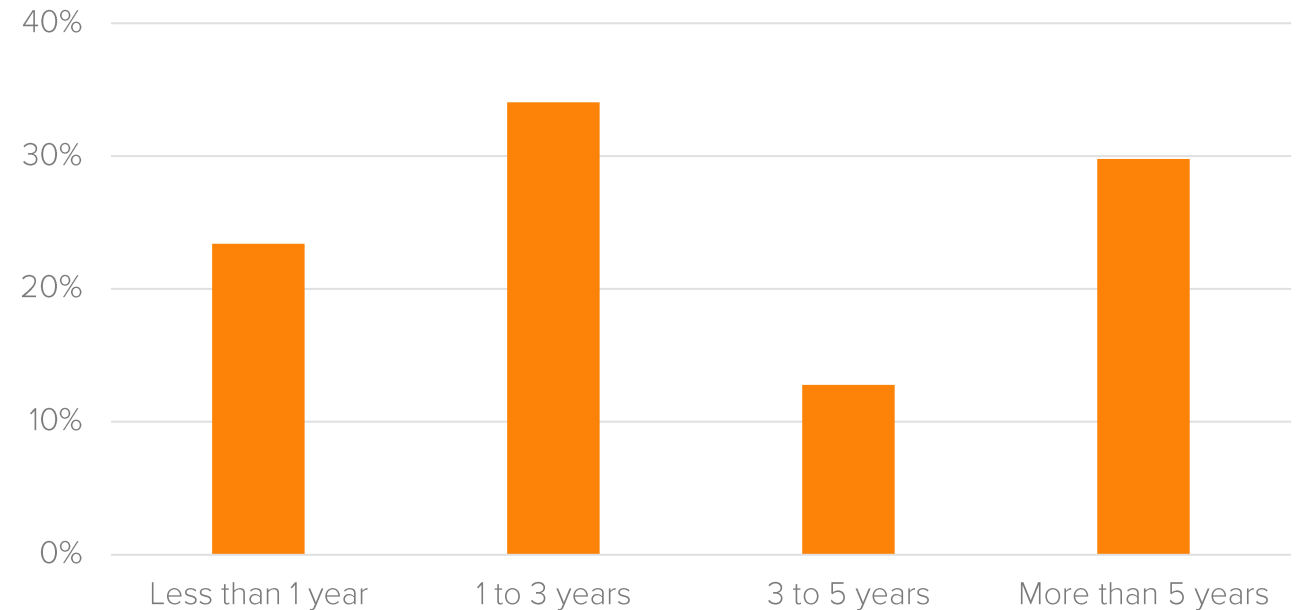
60% lived in a private unit

23% lived in a private room in a shared housing unit

37% lived with their children

85% were listed on lease

How long have you lived in your current private rental housing?



91% of respondents live in core housing need.



of respondents spend 30-50% of their before-tax income on housing



of respondents do not have a suitable number of bedrooms for occupants



of respondents spend more than 50% of their before-tax income on housing



of respondents' housing requires major repairs

Accessing Private Rentals

Top Priorities in the Housing Search

1. Affordability
2. Safety
3. Cleanliness and maintenance
4. Located near employment, transit, or other services and amenities
5. Good landlord

Top Barriers in Rental Applications

1. Landlord references
2. Security deposits or other upfront payments
3. Credit checks
4. Record of employment
5. Unable to bring pet

76% REPORTED FEW OR NO VACANCIES THAT MET THEIR NEEDS.

Experiences with Housing Personnel

How would you rate your overall experience engaging with...?



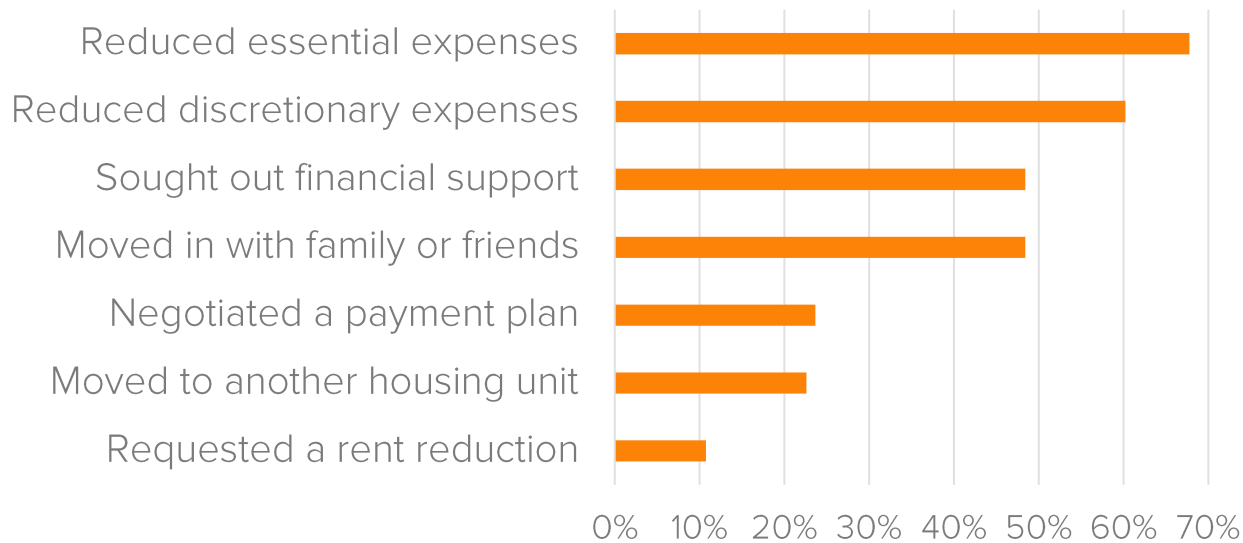
Private Rentals & Gender-Based Violence

Experience	Percentage
Feeling unsafe or at risk of gender-based violence	38%
Gender-based violence taking place in my housing unit or building (e.g., intimate partner violence, sexual violence)	37%
Disclosed gender-based violence to landlord or other housing personnel	30%
Sexual harassment from a landlord or other housing personnel (e.g., property manager, security)	21%
Damage to my rental unit as a result of gender-based violence	19%
Forced to leave a tenancy or housing unit due to gender-based violence	17%
Eviction related to gender-based violence	10%

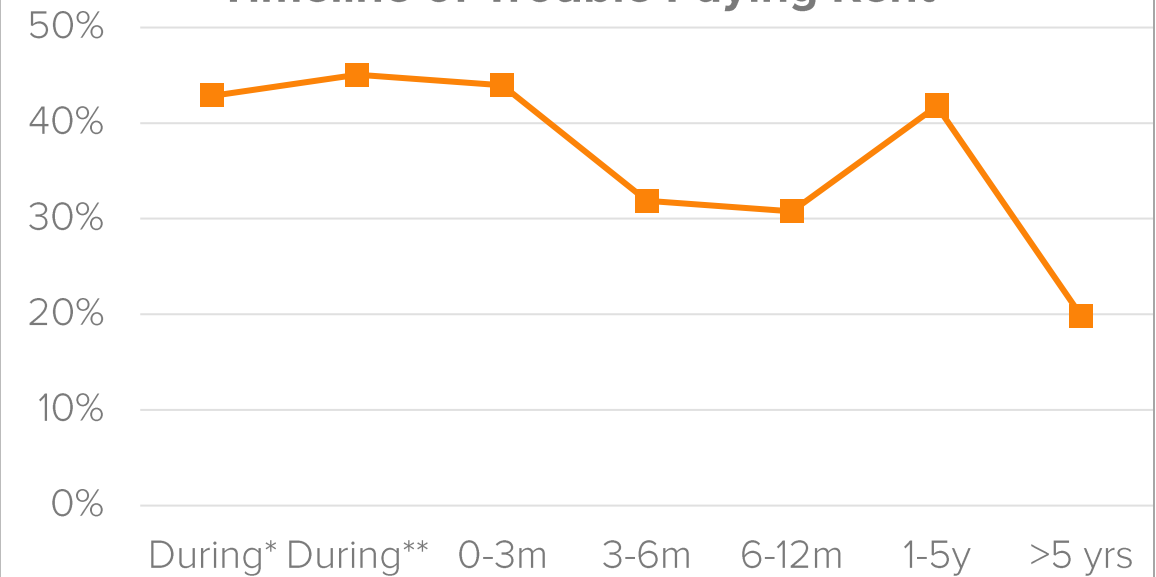
Private Rentals & Economic Security

- 74% of respondents have had trouble paying their rent in private rentals
- Most common reasons were unexpected expenses and changes to income

Responses to Trouble Paying Rent



Timeline of Trouble Paying Rent



* Living separately ** Living together

Evictions in Private Rentals

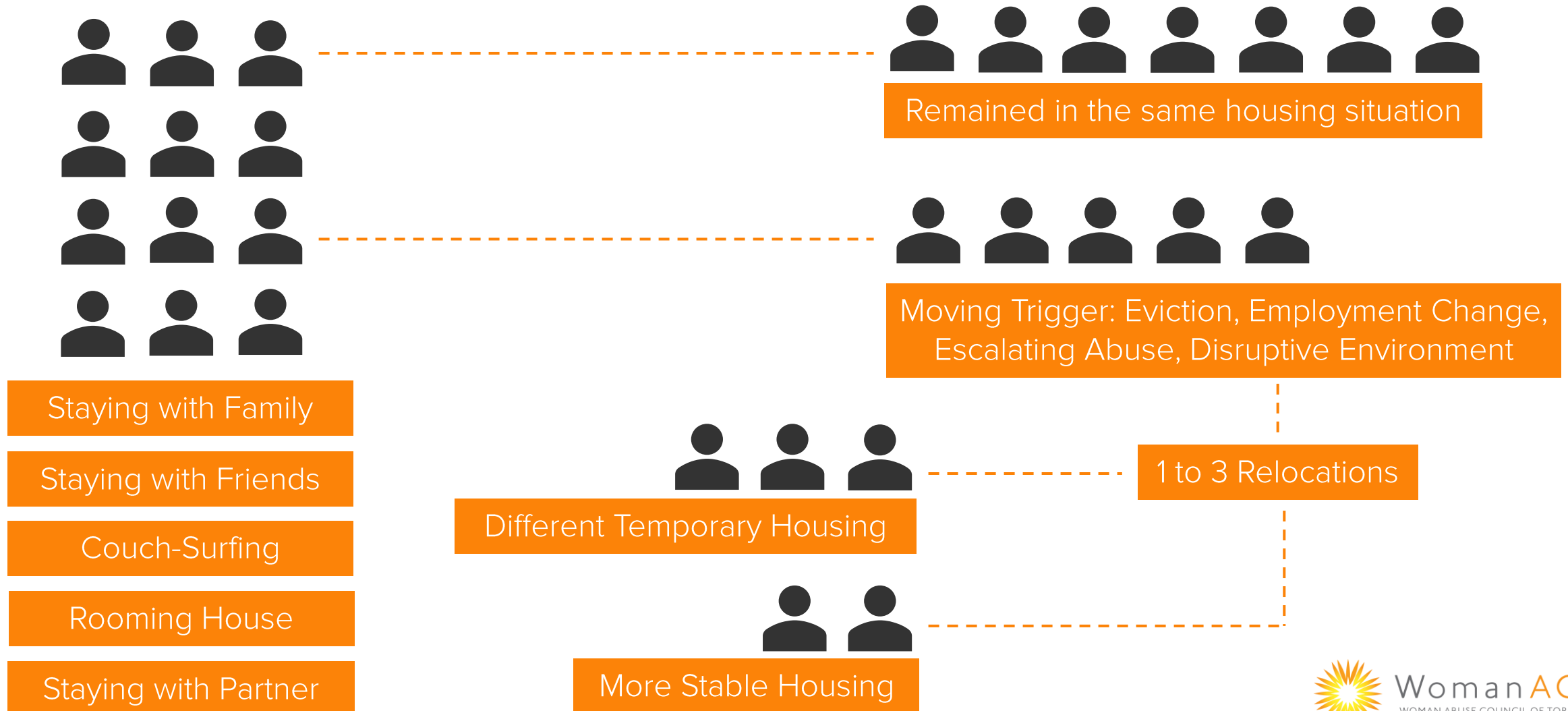


29% have received an eviction notice or been evicted

- Most common reasons for evictions:
 - overdue rent payments (36%)
 - often paying rent late (36%)
 - landlord moving into the unit (28%)
 - renovictions (25%)
- 70% received a formal eviction notice
 - 40% had Landlord-Tenant Board hearing
- 56% were ultimately evicted from the unit after receiving an eviction notice

Temporary Housing Pathways Findings

Housing Pathways



Temporary Housing & Homelessness

- Survivors viewed temporary housing and homelessness as distinct experiences
 - Temporary housing was seen as situations that were transitional, reliant on others, unstable, and without agency
 - Homelessness was seen as situations where basic needs are not met and you have nowhere else to go – male-centric definition of homelessness
- Survivors saw a difference between being housed and being at home

“At least I'm not on the street and I have a place to put my head and rest.”

Temporary Housing and Wellbeing

- Temporary housing often led to stress, fear, physical discomfort, frustration
- Tension between gratitude for housing and living in inadequate circumstances
- Living with family or friends created opportunities for self-development and improving financial stability

“The only benefit is to save some money while sleeping on the couch.”

“I am having a hard time to sleep properly... I don't have a proper bed and malnutrition because of lack of money. I am not able to concentrate while all the financial stress... It's extremely hard on me.”

Support Systems

- Restoring sense of community and identity
- Perceptions of being a personal burden
- Immediate safety
- Reliance on friends and family for emotional support and social interaction

“I am imposing on my brother’s life and causing his inconvenience and stress... I believe he may have some resentment towards me but doesn't kick me out yet.”

“I live with my family, which means we share household responsibilities and spend some time together.”

“I met a few new people in the park the other day. It is nice to connect with other people. There was a neighborhood BBQ and it was nice to be part of the community.”

Economic Precarity



- Financial dependence on others
- Barriers to permanent employment
- Discrimination from landlords

“I’ve been turned down by many landlords because I don’t have a steady job, I don’t have the first and last months’ rent and I don’t have a reference from the landlord.”

Project Next Steps

- Finalize data analysis and create information sharing products
- Work with lived experience advisors on knowledge mobilization
- Deliver training to landlords and housing providers on supporting survivors
- Build partnerships between private landlords, non-profit and social housing providers, violence against women agencies

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