



EXPANDING HOUSING AND SUPPORT SERVICES FOR WOMEN AND TRANSGENDER
COMMUNITY SUB-COMMITTEE: REPORT ON HOMELESSNESS, POLICY, AND
INVESTMENTS PERTAINING TO WOMEN AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLES

November 2020

Overview

- 1) Needs assessment and gaps as these relate to housing and support services for women, non-binary, and transgender community
- 2) Homelessness policy overview as it pertains to the mandate of the Sub-Committee
- 3) Overview of funding administered through Housing Services Division for housing and support services for women, non-binary, and transgender community from all levels of government

1. Needs Assessment and Gaps

1. Needs Assessment

National Trends¹

There are fewer women-specific emergency shelter beds across Canada – 68% of shelter beds are co-ed or dedicated to men, compared to 13% dedicated to women. Emergency shelters for women systematically operate at over capacity.

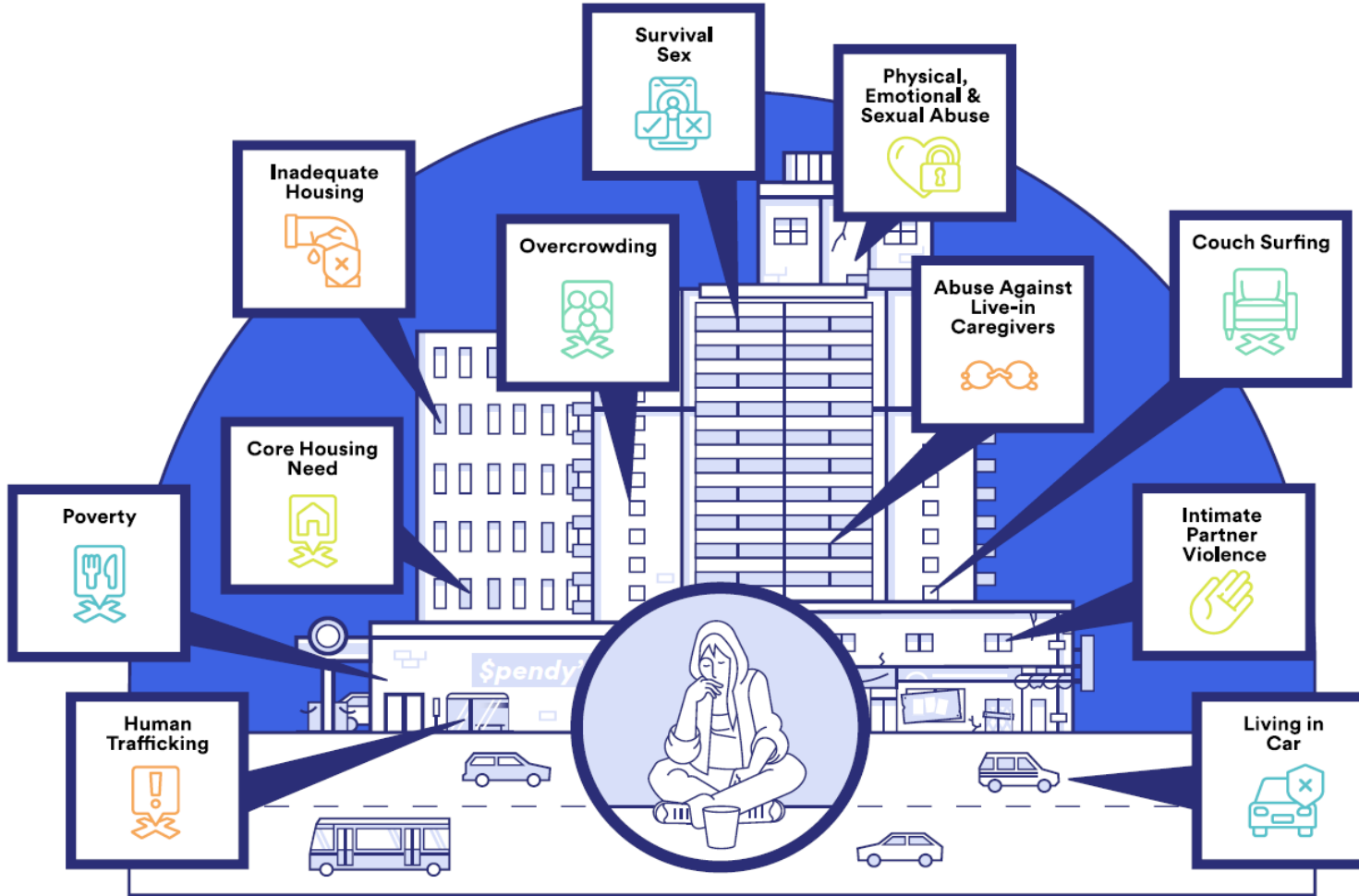
Women are systematically underrepresented in data that measures absolute/'street' homelessness; the scale of homelessness among women, girls and gender diverse peoples is widely understood to exceed current estimates. Data and research on gender diverse peoples' experiences is limited.

Safe, affordable, adequate, and appropriate housing for women and gender diverse peoples is lacking.

Indigenous women, girls, and gender diverse peoples experience the most profound forms of housing need across Canada.

¹Schwan, K., Versteegh, A., Perri, M., Caplan, R., Baig, K., Dej, E., Jenkinson, J., Brais, H., Eiboff, F., & Pahlevan Chaleshtari, T. (2020). *The State of Women's Housing Need & Homelessness in Canada: Executive Summary*. Hache, A., Nelson, A., Kratochvil, E., & Malenfant, J. (Eds). Toronto, ON: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press.

1. Needs Assessment



While we often imagine homelessness as people in emergency shelters or on the street, women's homelessness is often hidden: it includes couch surfing; trading sex for housing; and, unsafe and/or exploitative situations to access shelter

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1. Needs Assessment

Data on homelessness experiences of Women and Gender Diverse Peoples in Hamilton

The City of Hamilton relies on multiple sources of information to triangulate data on homelessness, including:

- Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS)
- Point-in-Time Connection Events
- By-Name Priority List
- Women's Housing Planning Collaborative
- Local research initiatives
- Service Provider Organizations: expertise of frontline staff and people with lived or living experiences of homelessness

1. Needs Assessment

Clients Served in Hamilton's Homeless Serving System in the last 12 months

Figure 1: Gender

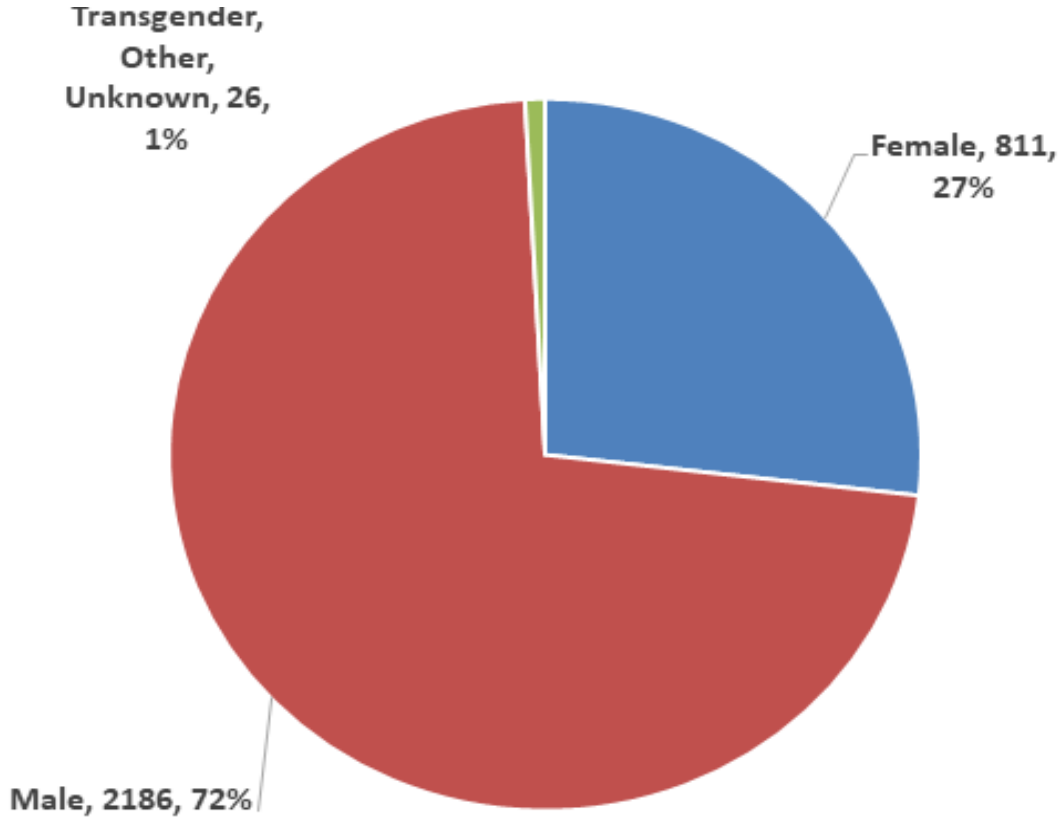
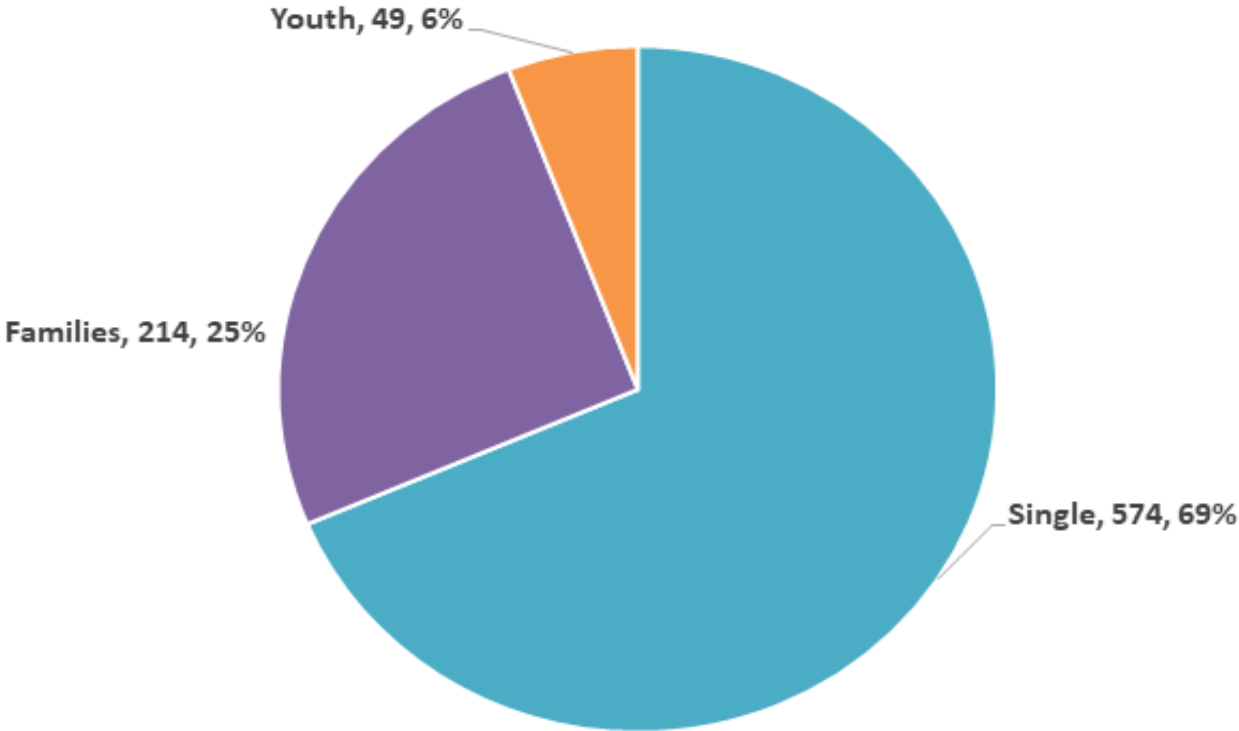
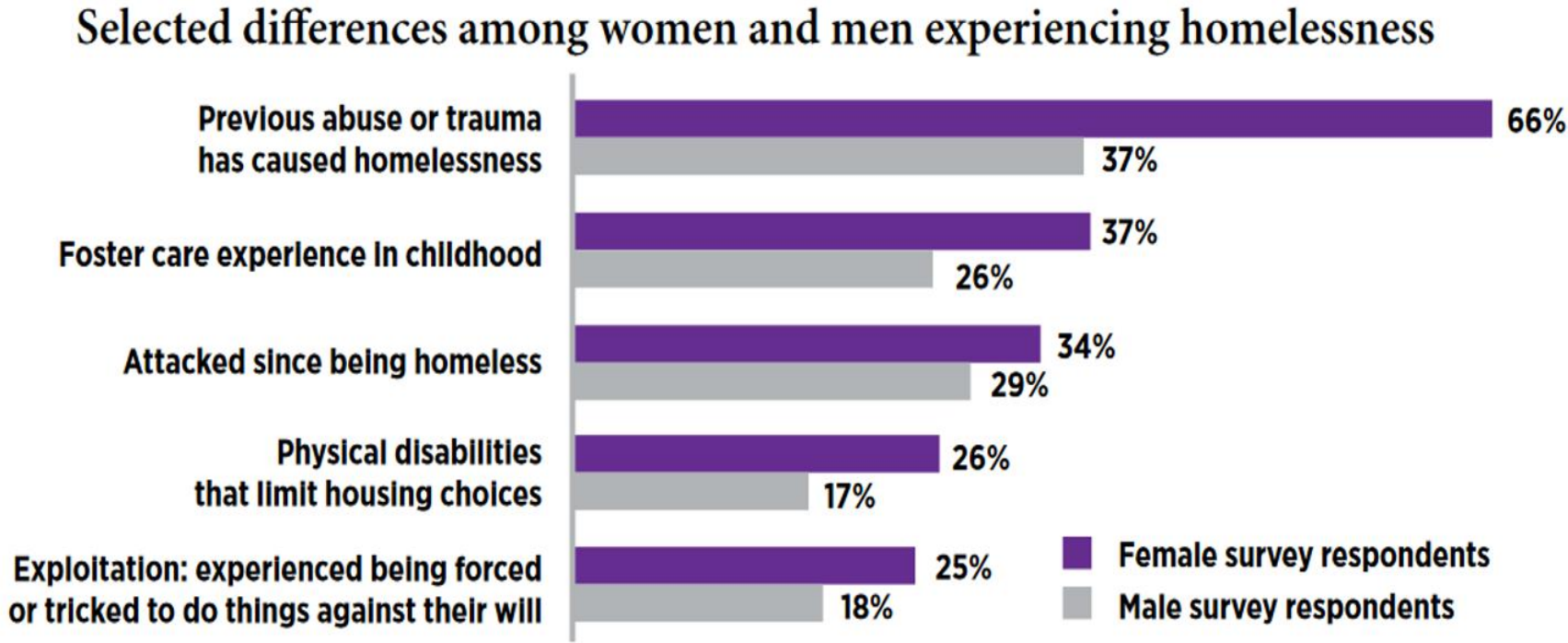


Figure 2: Demographic breakdown of women and transgender clients



1. Needs Assessment

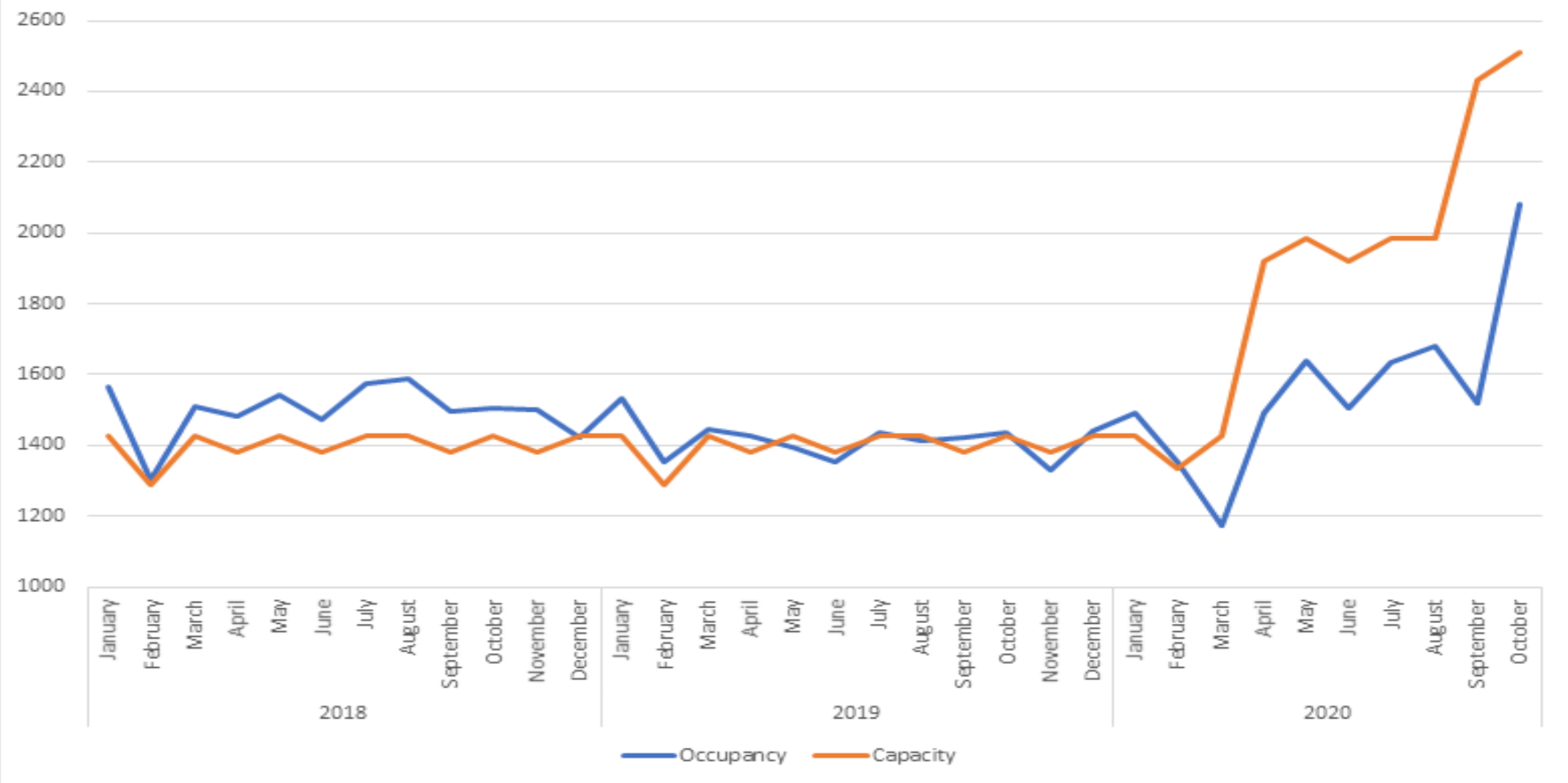
Figure 3: Women’s Experiences of Homelessness²



² City of Hamilton Point in Time 20,000 Homes survey among persons experiencing homelessness, 2016

1. Needs Assessment

Figure 4: Women’s Emergency Shelter System Occupancy 2018-2020 Bed Nights vs. Maximum Capacity



1. Needs Assessment

Acuity (Level of Need) of Women and Gender Diverse Clients

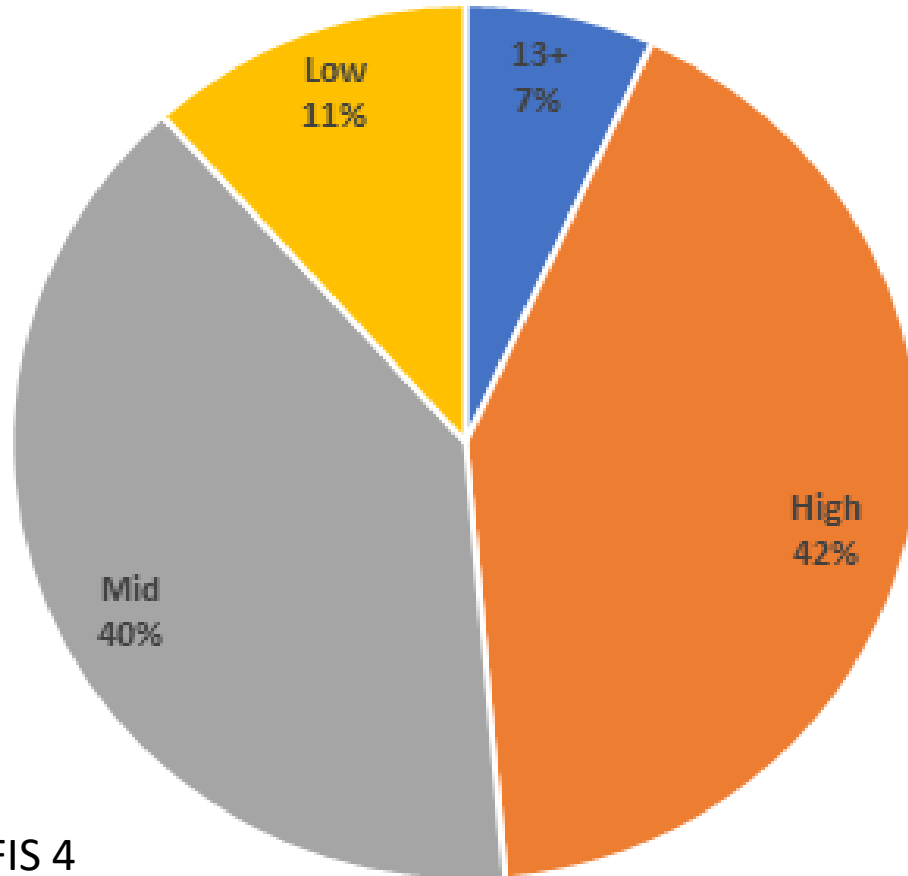


Figure 5:
Chronic Clients with SPDAT Assessments
Total Respondents: 327, Average Acuity: 7

Data source: HIFIS 4

1. Needs Assessment

Length of Homelessness of Women and Gender Diverse Clients

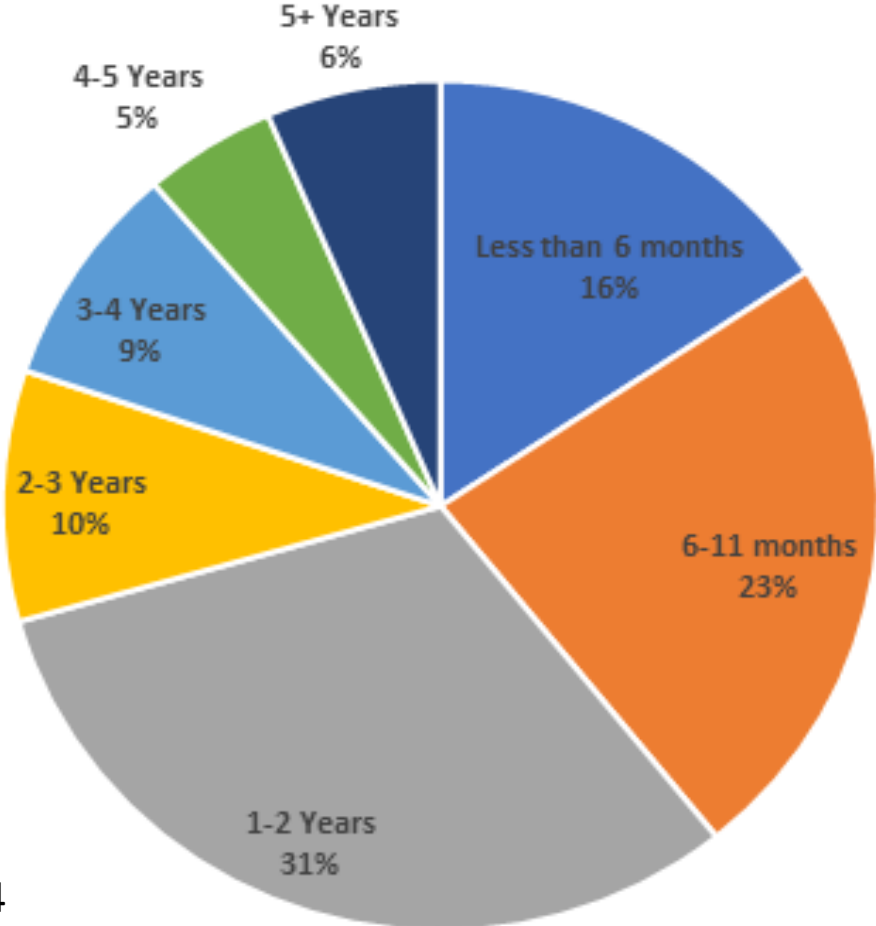


Figure 6:
“How long since you’ve had permanent, stable housing?”
Total Respondents: 388

Data source: HIFIS 4

2. Homelessness Policy

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Homelessness is a Housing Issue

Hamilton has committed to moving from managing to ending homelessness. This means increasing investment to prevention and permanent housing with supports interventions.

“It’s important to make sure that women can take the first step [of getting into shelter] and have a second step to housing after a shelter stay, otherwise you begin to give up.” (Focus Group Respondent)³

▶ STRATEGIES FOR ENDING HOMELESSNESS

CAN WE MOVE FROM THIS...



...TO THIS!



³ Social Planning & Research Council of Hamilton (2015) *Emergency Planning Services for Single Women Experiencing Homelessness*. p. 11

2. Homelessness Policy

Systems Approach

The City of Hamilton has moved to a systems approach to ending homelessness. This approach considers each program as a part of a coordinated homeless serving system.

Organizations work together in an integrated way with the same goal: getting and keeping people housed.

Individual programs contribute to system success; tangible metrics and data are used to determine program success.

2. Homelessness Policy

Systems Level Goals

- 1** Ensure 100% of chronically homeless individuals have access to appropriate housing options by 2025.
- 2** Provide homelessness prevention interventions to stabilize a minimum of 15% of those presenting at imminent risk.
- 3** Provide housing interventions to 25% of those experiencing homelessness presenting for service through Coordinated Access.
- 4** Reduce returns to homelessness from housing interventions to less than 15% across funded programs by 2025.
- 5** Enhance service quality and impact through ongoing performance management, living/lived experience and frontline engagement.

2. Homelessness Policy

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

Housing Services Division commits to using and strengthening EDI principles to inform decisions on funding and service delivery. This includes recognizing and working to address disproportional structural barriers faced by individuals and groups, ensuring equity in policy, program and funding decisions, and engaging in meaningful consultation throughout these processes with those directly impacted.

While acknowledging strength and resiliency of unique populations, there is also awareness of unique structural and institutional barriers that each group may experience linked to systemic discrimination and oppression. This may include experiences related to discrimination in employment, education or the housing market, limited access to social or health supports, and restricted access to various public and private settings.

Housing responses must not be a one-size-fits-all approach; EDI principles can help ensure housing models and accompanying person-centred support programs are effectively adapted to meet the specific needs of the people they serve.

2. Homelessness Policy

Permanent Housing, Innovation & Best Practice

Hamilton's housing and homelessness programs adhere to the Housing First approach that houses people directly in permanent housing with supports with no pre-conditions. This rights-based, person-centred intervention is evidence-informed and it plays a key role in Hamilton's efforts to end homelessness.

Since 2015, more than 350 women have been permanently housed by Housing First programs in Hamilton. The retention rate is approximately 95% for these women at 6 and 12 months after initial housing.

The Supporting our Sisters (SOS) Housing First for Women program run by Good Shepherd has been an example of this innovation in practice. During a Fidelity Review in 2018 conducted by the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, the program was identified as "...a very strong, ground breaking program, which uses a welcoming and comprehensive trauma informed approach to address women's homelessness using the Housing First model". They have also been invited to deliver national web tutorials on gender-based service delivery in housing and homelessness.

2. Homelessness Policy

Dedicated Women's Homelessness City-Funded Programs in Hamilton

Homelessness Prevention

- Crisis Intervention Case Worker (Native Women's Centre)
- Staying Home (Good Shepherd)

Emergency Shelters:

- Mary's Place (Good Shepherd)
- Womankind (St Joseph's Hospital)
- Notre Dame Youth Shelter (Good Shepherd)
- Family Centre (Good Shepherd)
- Overflow Beds within VAW system
- Hotel Referral Overflow

Transitional Housing Case Management:

- YWCA

Housing Programs

- Intensive Case Management for Women, Families & Youth
- Rapid Rehousing for Women, Families & Youth
- Rapid Rehousing – Hotels

"You don't want to go to the shelter", but once there "it's the staff that's so great" (Focus Group Respondent)⁴

⁴ Social Planning & Research Council of Hamilton (2015) *Emergency Planning Services for Single Women Experiencing Homelessness*. p. 11

3. Funding Overview

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Homelessness Funding in Hamilton

Housing Services Division is the service manager for Federal and Provincial housing funding and allocates funds to community organizations to deliver a variety of homeless services. The current funding cycle runs 2019-2024.

Violence against women (VAW) services are funded directly by the Province of Ontario, except for VAW shelter overflow beds. The City of Hamilton offsets VAW shelter pressures using homelessness program funds.

3. Funding Overview

Gender-Specific Investment: 2014-2019 Overview

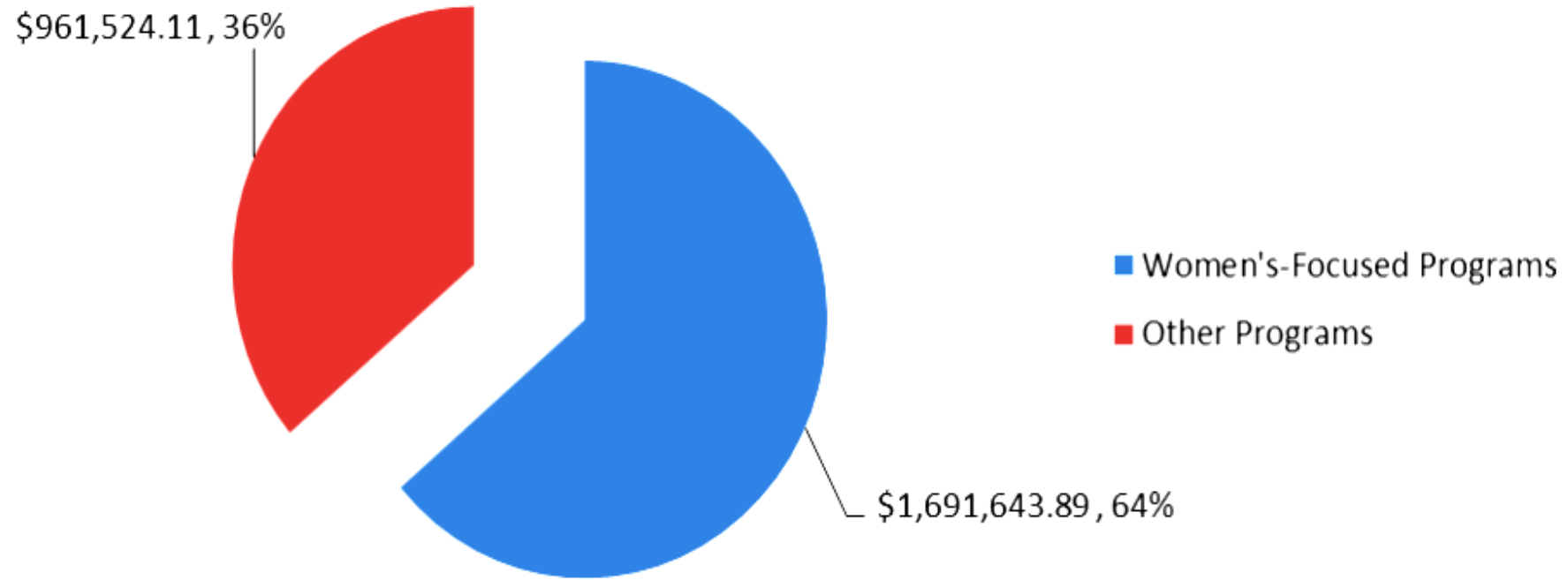
Women's specific services receive 30% of all population specific homelessness operating funding. Other population specific sectors are: Men, Youth, and Indigenous Peoples.

Over the last 5 years the City of Hamilton has increased its investment in women's homelessness significantly. In 2014/15 the City funded \$2.2M in women's specific homelessness services; in 2019/20 the allocated budget was approximately \$4.4M.

The City of Hamilton also dedicates 20% of Federal homelessness program dollars to Indigenous-specific homelessness services, with the Indigenous Community Entity and Indigenous Community Advisory Board providing funding recommendations to the General Manager of Healthy and Safe Communities.

3. Funding Overview

Investments of Increased Annualized Funding



3. Funding Overview

2019 Coming Together to End Homelessness Call for Applications

In January 2020 Council approved funding recommendations in the amount of \$7,576,159 to programs in four intervention streams: Assertive Housing-Focused Street Outreach; Prevention and Diversion; Transitional Housing; and, Permanent Housing with Supports.

The recommended investments in housing with support interventions more than double the number of permanent housing placements and in-home case management supports, from 350 program spaces to 732.

Building on past success of Prevention Services and Shelter Diversion, the system will continue to support individuals in maintaining their current tenancies, with enhanced population-specific capacity for women, youth, families and seniors. By implementing a robust system of care, occupancy pressures within the emergency shelter system may incrementally decrease over time.

3. Funding Overview

2020 Women's Shelter Beds Request for Proposals

In February 2020, the Board of Directors of the Hamilton Chapter of Native Women's Centre made the strategic decision to move away from emergency interventions and focus efforts primarily on housing stabilization and supports. As a result, the Mountainview emergency shelter was scheduled to cease operations as of June 30, 2020.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Board agreed to extend operations until September 30, 2020 to ensure there was not a negative impact on providing vital services to vulnerable women and provide the system the ability to concentrate efforts on pandemic response.

On November 4, 2020, the City of Hamilton launched a Request for Proposals for funding to provide gender-specific emergency shelter services for women, trans-feminine, trans-masculine and non-binary adults experiencing homelessness in our community. Applications close November 15.

3. Funding Overview

Additional Investments Required

In addition to the need for an adequate number of shelter beds in the women's system, there is a strong sentiment and general agreement among stakeholders that responding to the rising demand for shelter for homeless women by only providing additional shelter beds is not a comprehensive solution.

While emergency shelter needs must be met, at least in the short term, the solution to homelessness is more affordable, safe and adequate housing with appropriate supports.