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WOMEN'S LEGAL  
EDUCATION & ACTION FUND  
FONDS D'ACTION ET D'ÉDUCATION  
JURIDIQUE POUR LES FEMMES



## **National Needs Assessment Survey For Women and Girls in Canada**

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LEAF is a national, charitable, non-profit organization, founded in 1985. LEAF works to advance the substantive equality rights of women and girls in Canada through litigation, law reform and public education using the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

This publication was created as part of LEAF's Feminist Strategic Litigation (FSL) Project. The FSL Project examines the use and impact of feminist strategic litigation to help LEAF, feminists, and gender equality advocates more effectively combat systemic discrimination and oppression.

The FSL Project is funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada.



Women and Gender  
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des genres Canada

Canada

## Preface

The Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) works to advance the rights of women and girls across Canada. The organization uses litigation, law reform, and public education to bring about legal change and awareness, and to push for substantive equality for women and girls.

In the spring of 2019, LEAF launched its Feminist Strategic Litigation (FSL) Project – a project to assess the impact of its past litigation work, and develop a five-year plan for litigation moving forward. To plan its future litigation work, LEAF needs to know:

1. What are the key issues facing women and girls across Canada?
2. How do we assess the impact of feminist strategic litigation?

The second question is addressed in the companion report “This Case is About Feminism: Assessing the Effectiveness of Feminist Strategic Litigation”.

To help answer the first question, LEAF partnered with the Social Research Centre at Ontario Tech University to carry out a survey of organizations across the country. LEAF stays in regular contact with its strong network of partner organizations and advocates, but this survey provided us with the opportunity to get detailed information from a larger and more representative group of organizations.

This report represents the findings of that survey, and will be used by LEAF to help guide its future litigation work. We also hope that the report will be useful to other advocates fighting to advance equality rights.

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## Acknowledgements

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The individuals at the over 100 organizations who completed the survey, providing valuable insights and data about their work, the communities they serve, and the issues facing those communities.

Matthew Stein and the team at the Social Research Centre at Ontario Tech University, for drafting and distributing the survey, as well as collecting and analyzing the results.

Kat Owens, Project Director for the FSL Project, for her oversight of the survey development process and her contributions to analyzing and communicating the survey results.

The FSL Project's Advisory Committee and Steering Committee, for their helpful input on the survey design and content.

Mary Neilans and March of Dimes Canada, for their assessment of survey accessibility and inclusion.

Jackie Neapole and the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW), for their assistance in identifying potential survey recipients.

LEAF Summer Legal Interns Gabrielle Aquino and Emily Dutton, and LEAF Office Coordinator April Leather, for their assistance with designing and distributing the survey.

LEAF FSL Project Assistant Borrsha Kanapathipillai and current LEAF Law Program Committee Chair Adriel Weaver, for their contributions to analyzing and communicating the survey results.

The Department for Women and Gender Equality, formerly Status of Women Canada, for its support and funding of the FSL Project and this survey.

## **Executive Summary**

This National Needs Assessment was initiated to gather data from organizations across Canada to get a better sense of the needs facing women and girls throughout the country.

## **Responding Organizations**

189 organizations completed the majority of the survey. The regional distribution of responding organizations roughly aligns with the population distribution in Canada, with Ontario, British Columbia, Alberta, and Québec-based organizations providing the largest numbers of responses.

Most responding organizations have been in existence for over 15 years, and serve both urban and rural populations. The majority have fewer than 15 full-time staff members, and a small majority rely solely on paid staff. The most common types of work done by responding organizations include: service delivery; advocacy and activism; and education, training, and capacity building.

Most responding organizations focus on the largest adult population (18-64). The main populations served by these organizations include women (cis and/or trans); low-income populations; and populations facing violence, abuse, or bullying.

The ten most common areas of focus for responding organizations were: sexual violence, intimate partner violence, gender inequality, family violence, emotional abuse, mental health, employment in nursing, harm reduction, sexual health, and transitional or short-term housing issues.

## **Key Areas of Need**

The six most common areas of need for women and girls served by responding organizations related to: violence, poverty, housing, health, family, and discrimination. Within those categories, common areas of need included:

- Violence: emotional abuse, sexual violence (including sexual assault and sexual harassment), intimate partner violence, family violence, physical abuse

- Poverty: sufficiency of social assistance, access to appropriate housing, access to a living wage
- Housing: availability of housing, affordability of housing, availability of accessible housing, availability of transitional housing
- Health: access to mental health services, access to physical health services, access to addiction supports, access to culturally appropriate health services
- Family: violence, access to legal services, child welfare system, access to childcare
- Discrimination: based on gender, based on race, based on sex, based on socioeconomic status

Areas of need commonly faced by Indigenous women and girls, in particular, include a lack of understanding of the history and legacy of residential schools, and a lack of cultural competency among legal professionals.

### **Usefulness of the Law**

The majority of responding organizations believe that the law is a useful tool for the communities they serve. Where organizations were critical about the law, they noted that it failed in particular contexts and in its application by actors such as the police. They also noted that the law failed particular communities, and oppressed others.

## **Methodology**

### **Survey Development**

Matthew Stein, Director of the Social Research Centre at Ontario Tech University, in collaboration with the FSL Project team, developed the online needs assessment survey.

The survey was vetted by the FSL Project's Steering Committee, then made up of:

- Megan Stephens, LEAF's Executive Director & General Counsel
- Susan Boyd, then Co-Chair of LEAF's Law Program Committee
- Rosel Kim, Staff Lawyer at LEAF
- Elizabeth Shilton, former Chair of LEAF and LEAF's Law Program Committee

The survey was also vetted by the FSL Project's Advisory Committee, then made up of:

- Jackie Stevens, Avalon Sexual Assault Centre
- Karen Segal, Ontario Nurses Association (ONA)
- Karine-Myrgianie Jean-François, DisAbled Women's Network of Canada (DAWN Canada)
- Linda Silver Dranoff, lawyer, feminist, author and writer
- Nathalie Léger, La Centrale des syndicats du Québec (CSQ) and LEAF's Law Program Committee
- Rachelle Venne, Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women (IAAW)
- Raji Mangat, West Coast LEAF
- Samantha Michaels, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada
- Savannah Gentile, Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS)
- Tamar Witelson, Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC)

Mary Neilans of March of Dimes Canada reviewed the survey and method of distribution to ensure accessibility of the survey content and process.

### **Survey Recipients and Dissemination**

Ideally, a survey aimed at identifying the needs of women and girls across Canada would be completed directly by those women and girls. However, the time and resources required to undertake such a survey were beyond the scope and capacity of this project. As a result, we chose to reach out to organizations across the country, to ask them to communicate their understandings of the areas of need of women and girls in the communities that they serve. We then took steps to put together a list of these organizations.

To start, the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW) generously provided us with a list of approximately 550 women's organizations. These included, to name only a few examples: sexual assault centres; women's shelters; women's centres; reproductive justice organizations; and organizations centered around particular communities including Indigenous women, racialized women, newcomer women, women



with disabilities, queer women, sex workers, low-income women, and women working in particular occupations such as midwifery.

We then identified groups that we thought we might miss or underrepresent if we focused only on the initial list. These included older women; women living in rural areas; HIV-positive women; and women working in industries such as hospitality, engineering, oil and gas, agriculture, and business. We conducted additional internet research to identify organizations working with or for these groups, and added them to our list.

To try and obtain responses from organizations serving as broad a range of communities as possible, we chose not to limit our survey recipients to organizations serving exclusively or even primarily women and girls. As a result, we broadened the list of recipients to include, for example, LGBTQ organizations, settlement organizations, friendship centres, seniors' associations, HIV/AIDS organizations, and accessibility organizations.

Finally, we wanted to achieve strong regional representation among our survey recipients. This ultimately led to smaller provinces and the territories being proportionately overrepresented among survey recipients, and the four largest provinces being proportionately underrepresented.

In the end, we compiled a list of 1,330 organizations. Efforts were made to identify the executive director or comparable leadership figures within the organization, and to send the survey to their email address. Where that was not possible, surveys were sent to the organizations' general emails.

The survey was sent out on September 5, 2019, and remained open until November 6, 2019. A reminder email was sent out to recipients at the beginning of October 2019.

## **The Surveys**

### **Survey Characteristics and Response**

The survey consisted of 75 questions, most of which were closed ended, looking at basic organization information, key issues, and how the law either served or failed communities.

Of the 1,330 organizations who were sent the survey, 189 completed the majority of the survey. This is a total response rate of 14.2%. This response rate is reasonably high, given the fact that this was a nationally-distributed survey with no direct incentive for recipients to participate.

### **Survey Data and Analysis**

#### **A. Geographic Representation**

As shown in Figure 1a, the regional distribution of responding organizations roughly aligns with the population distribution in Canada. The main exceptions to this are Québec and Ontario, which have fewer organizations represented as compared to their relative population sizes. There are also proportionately more organizations represented in Manitoba as well as the Maritimes, particularly Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Ten organizations, or 5.3% of survey respondents, did not specify their location.

Figure 1a

	Province/Territory	Percentage of Population <sup>1</sup> (Total Population)	Province/Territory	Percentage of Survey Respondents (Total Responses)
1	Ontario	38.8% (14,566,547)	Ontario	26% (44)
2	Québec	22.6% (8,484,965)	British Columbia	14.8% (28)
3	British Columbia	13.5% (5,071,336)	Alberta	11.1% (21)
4	Alberta	11.63% (4,371,316)	Québec	9.5% (18)
5	Manitoba	3.6% (1,369,465)	New Brunswick	7.9% (15)
6	Saskatchewan	3.1% 1,174,462	Manitoba	6.9% (13)
7	Nova Scotia	2.6% 971,395	Nova Scotia	5.8% (11)
8	New Brunswick	2.1% (776,827)	Newfoundland and Labrador	4.2% (8)
9	Newfoundland and Labrador	1.4% 521,542	Saskatchewan	3.2% (6)
10	Prince Edward Island	0.4% 156,947	Prince Edward Island	2.6% (5)
11	Northwest Territories	0.1% 44,826	Nunavut	2.1% (4)
12	Yukon	0.1% 40,854	Northwest Territories	1.6% (3)
13	Nunavut	0.1% 38,780	Yukon	1.6% (3)

<sup>1</sup> Population numbers were taken from Statistics Canada's estimations for Q3 2019, when the survey was distributed. See Statistics Canada, [Table 17-10-0009-01 Population estimates, quarterly](#).

Appendix A provides a more detailed breakdown of the cities/regions of responding organizations, and the cities/regions which they serve. The following chart provides a brief overview of those data:

Figure 1b

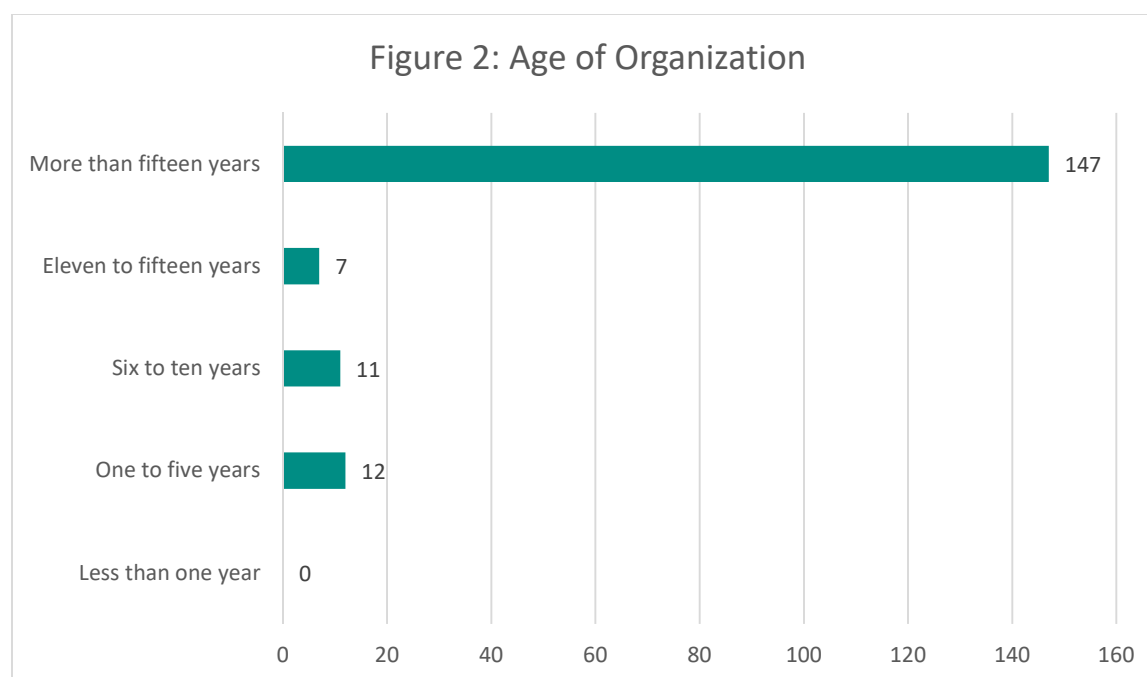
Province/territory	Total number of responding organizations	Primary locations of responding organizations	Primary areas of service of responding organizations
Ontario	44	Greater Toronto Area (20) Ottawa (9)	Greater Toronto Area (11) Entire province (8) Other (8) National organization (7)
Québec	28	Greater Montréal and Montréal Metropolitan Area (12)	Entire province (9) Other (4)
British Columbia	21	Metro Vancouver (13) Other (11)	Other (13) Entire province (8) Metro Vancouver (6)
Alberta	18	Calgary (8) Edmonton (7)	Entire province (11) Other (7)
Manitoba	15	Winnipeg (12)	Entire province (9) Winnipeg (4)
Saskatchewan	13	Saskatoon (3) Regina (1)	Regina (3) Saskatoon (2) Other (2)
Nova Scotia	11	Halifax Region (5)	Entire province (5)
New Brunswick	8	Other (5) Greater Moncton (4) Greater Saint John (3)	Other (6) Entire province (5)
Newfoundland and Labrador	6	Greater St. John's (6)	Entire province (4) Greater St. John's (2) Other (2)
Prince Edward Island	5	Greater Charlottetown Area (4)	Entire province (4)
Northwest Territories	4	Yellowknife (3)	Entire territory (2) Yellowknife (1)
Yukon	3	Whitehorse (3)	Entire territory (2)
Nunavut	3	Iqaluit (3)	Entire territory (2) Iqaluit (1)

## B. Responding Organization General Characteristics

Responding organizations tend to have been in existence for over 15 years, and to serve both urban and rural populations. The majority have fewer than 15 full-time staff members, and a small majority rely solely on paid staff. The most common types of work done by responding organizations include: service delivery; advocacy and activism; and education, training, and capacity building.

### *Organization age*

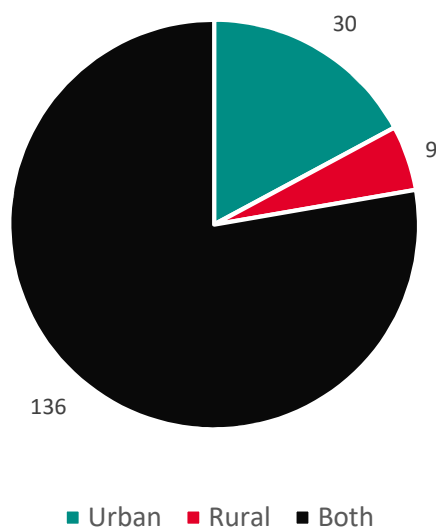
When asked as to the age of their organization, 83% of respondents identified that their organization was over 15 years old. As seen in Figure 2, a smaller number of organizations indicated that their organizations were one to five years old (6.8%), six to ten years old (6.2%), or eleven to fifteen years old (4%).



### *Organization service areas*

As shown in Figure 3, over 3/4 of the organizations surveyed (77.7%) indicated that they serve both urban and rural populations. 17.14% reported a focus on urban areas, and 5.1% on rural areas.

Figure 3: Urban or Rural Service

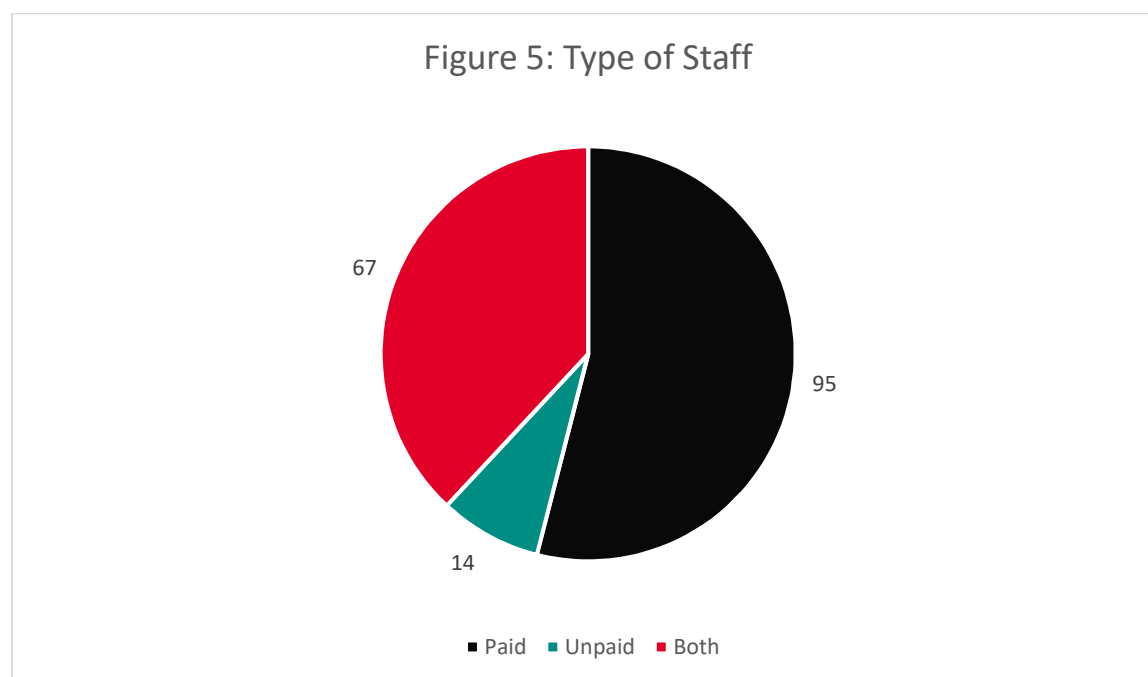
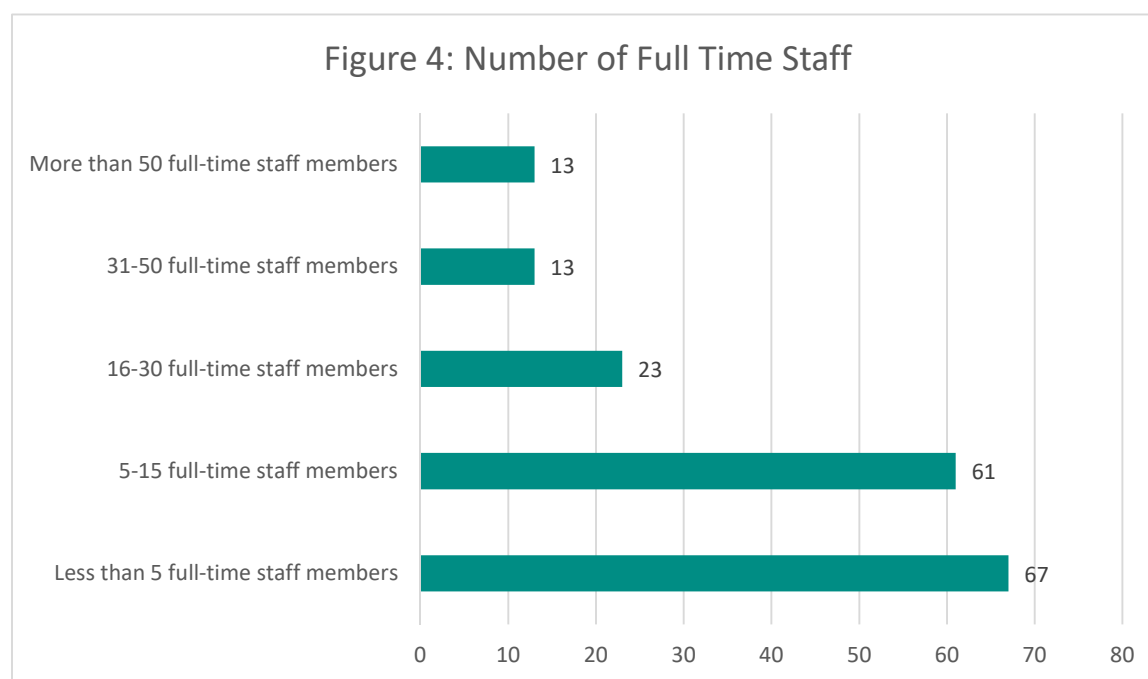


### *Organization staffing*

Over 2/3 of responding organizations operate with either 5-15 full-time staff members (34.5%) or fewer than 5 full-time staff members (37.9%). Fewer than 15% of all organizations surveyed have more than 30 full-time staff members (see Figure 4). This indicates that many organizations are operating under minimal staff support in offering their services.

A small majority of responding organizations were staffed primarily by paid staff members (54%), with nearly 40% being staffed by both paid staff members and unpaid volunteers. Only 8% of organizations were staffed completely by unpaid volunteers (see

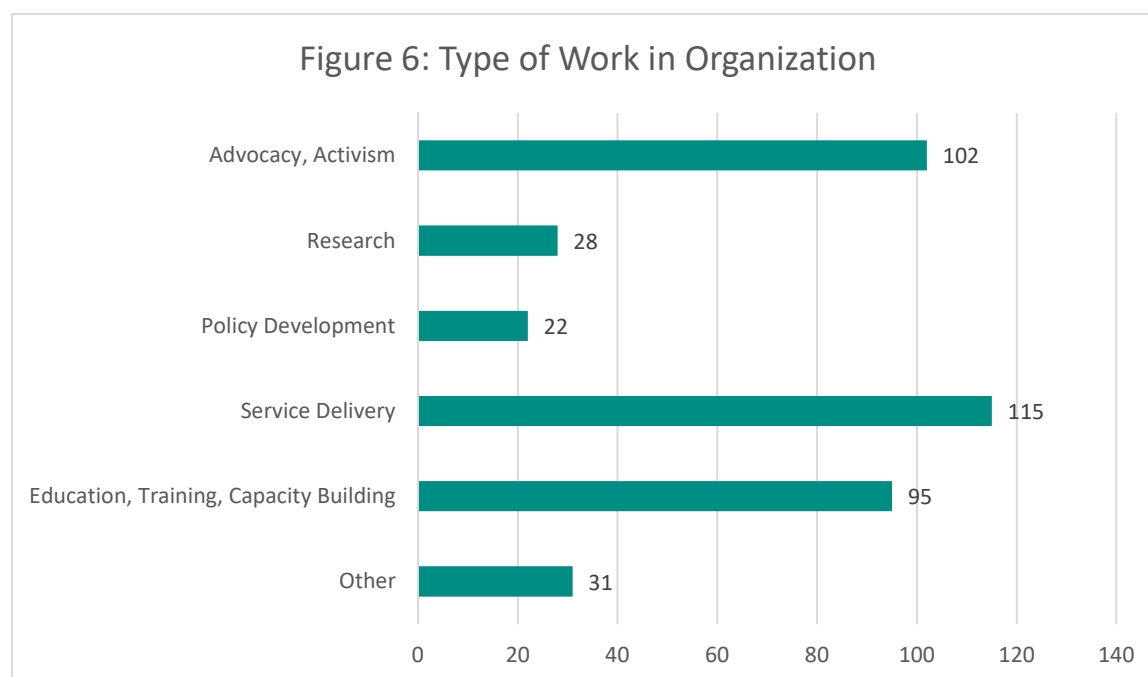
Figure 5).



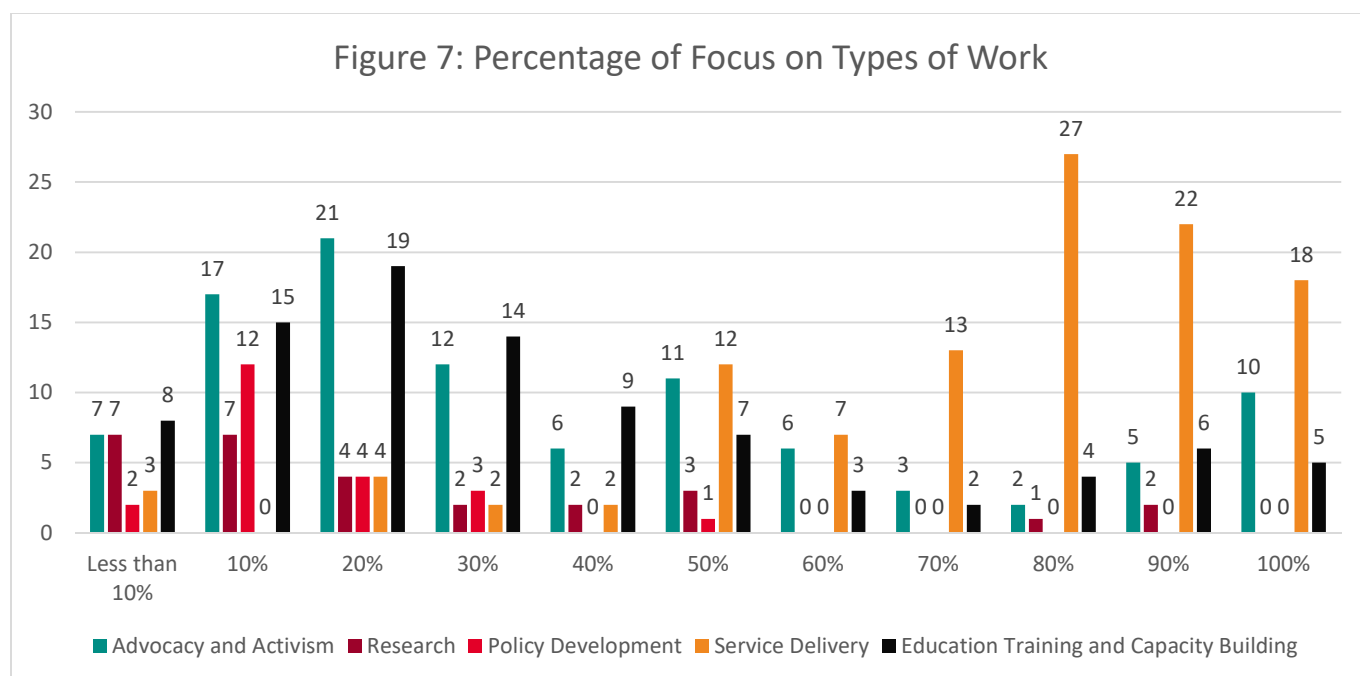
### *Type of work*

The three most common types of work across the organizations surveyed include service delivery (29.2%), advocacy and activism (26%) and education, training and capacity building (24.2%) (see Figure 6). Organizations that selected “other” indicated that they focus on work including: assisting new immigrants, legal services, healthcare and fundraising.

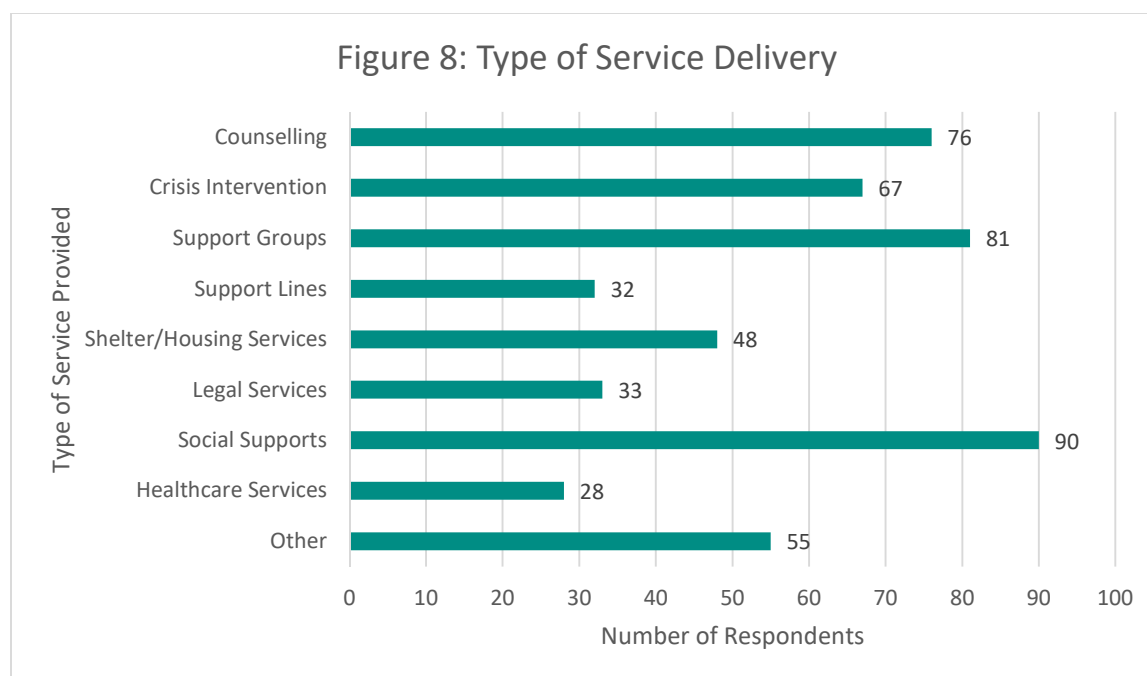
Some of the organizations indicated that they work in multiple areas. As seen in Figure 7, the organizations primarily focused on service delivery are more singularly focused on that aspect of their work. In contrast, advocacy and activism; or education, training and capacity building seemed to be more of a secondary area of work, often to a primary focus on service delivery.







Organizations which indicated that they provided services were then asked which type of service delivery they provided. The types of services provided most frequently included: social supports, support groups, counselling, crisis intervention, and “other” (see Figure 8). There were no responses that demonstrated a majority for types of service delivered. Examples of services provided in the “other” category included: awareness projects, peace activism, career and employment exploration, and settlement services.

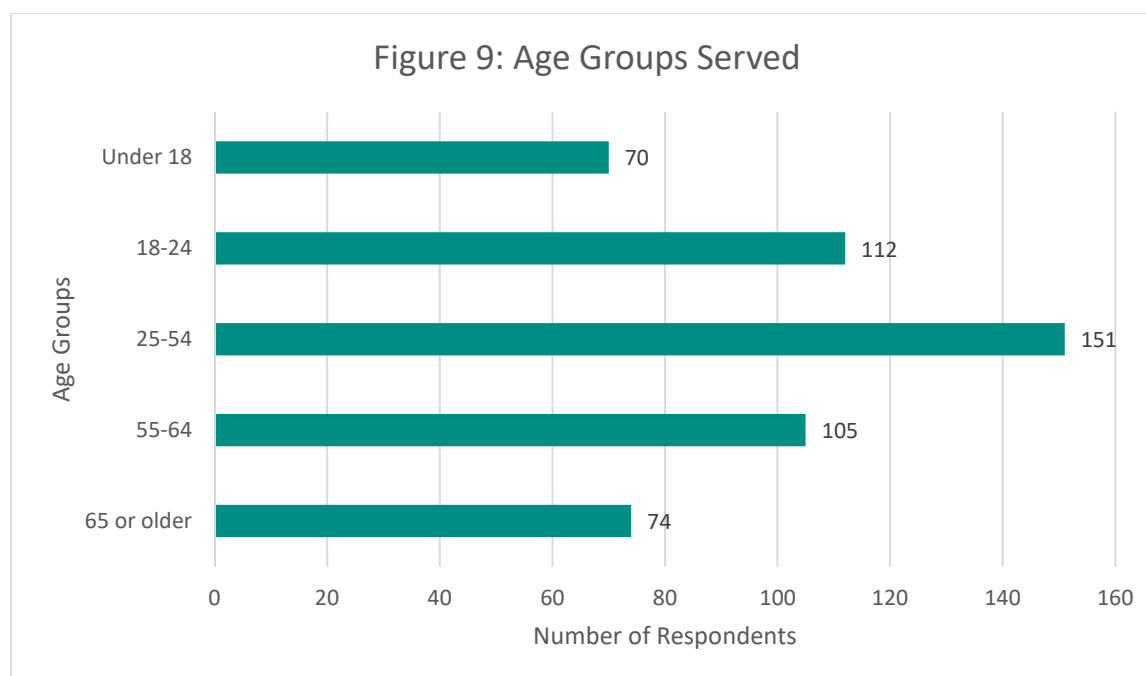


### C. Population Characteristics

Organizations were asked to identify the primary population groups that they serve. Most responding organizations focus adults between 18 and 64. The responding organizations serve a large variety of population groups. Population groups represented more notably include women (cis and/or trans); low-income populations; and populations facing violence, abuse, or bullying.

#### *Age of populations served*

Organizations were able to select multiple options for the age groups of the populations they served. There was a fairly standard distribution for age groups served, with most responses identifying the 25-54 group (79.9% of responding organizations) and then trailing off at either side for 18-24 (59.2% of responding organizations) and 55-64 (55.6% of responding organizations) (see Figure 9). This indicates that most organizations are directing their attention towards the largest adult population.



### *Population groups served*

Organizations were able to select as many primary population groups as they served. There was, for the most part, an even distribution of responses across all categories of the primary population group served, with a few notable spikes in women (cis and/or trans); low-income populations; and populations facing violence, abuse, or bullying (see Figure 10). A particularly small number of organizations indicated that they served religious populations, or populations working in specific employment sectors. Responses given in the “other” category included: geographically focused groups, entrepreneurs, and sex workers.

Figure 10

Population group	Responding organizations primarily serving population group	Percentage of total number of responding organizations
Women (cis and/or trans)	128	67.7%
Low income populations	102	54.0%
Populations facing violence, abuse, or bullying	98	51.9%
Populations with housing needs	82	43.4%

Populations with family needs	77	40.7%
Indigenous peoples	76	40.2%
Populations with health needs	76	40.2%
LGBQ+ populations	69	36.5%
Populations who use drugs and/or have substance use needs	65	34.4%
Children and youth	64	33.9%
Populations with employment needs	63	33.3%
Immigrant or refugee populations	55	29.1%
Populations from specific racial, cultural, or ethnic communities	53	28.0%
Two-spirit populations	52	27.5%
Populations with education needs	49	25.9%
Senior populations	49	25.9%
Gender non-conforming populations	46	24.3%
Populations with disabilities	40	21.2%
Men (cis and/or trans)	39	20.6%
Populations living with HIV	35	18.5%
Incarcerated or criminalized populations	30	15.9%
Other	20	10.6%
Religious populations	13	6.9%
Populations within particular employment sectors	11	5.8%

#### D. Areas of Focus for Organizations

Organizations were asked to identify their primary areas of focus. The ten most common areas of focus for responding organizations were:

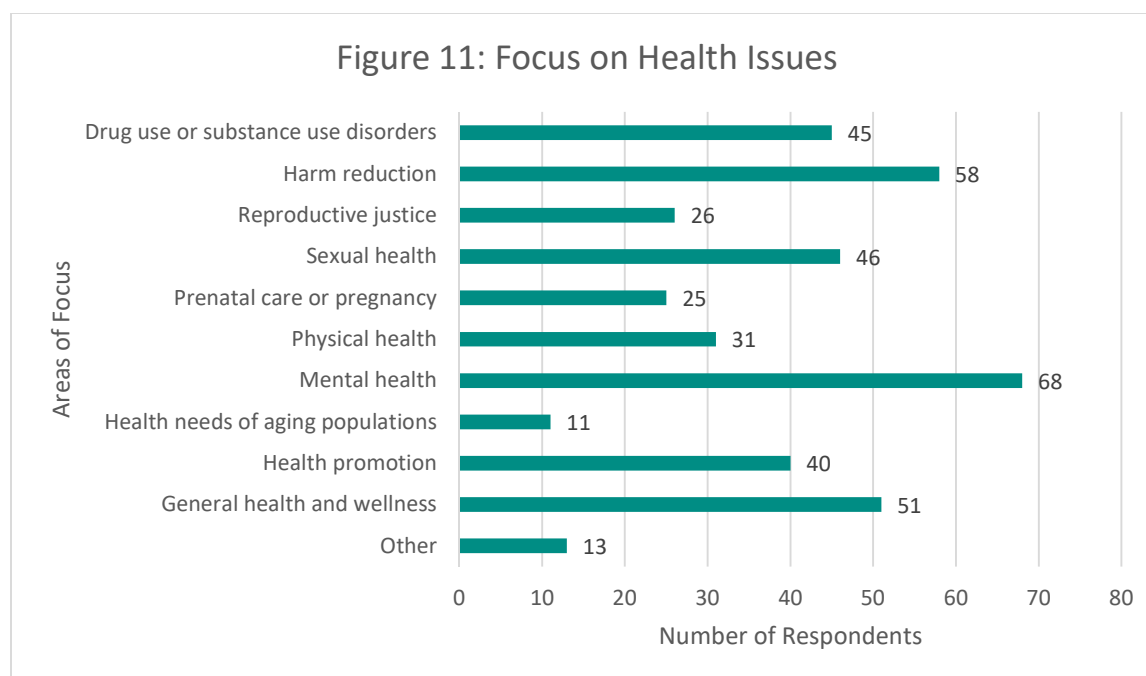
1. Sexual violence (83)

2. Intimate partner violence (76)
3. Gender inequality (75)
4. Family violence (70)
5. Emotional abuse (69)
6. Mental health (68)
7. Employment in nursing (68)
8. Harm reduction (58)
9. Sexual health (58)
10. Transitional or short-term housing issues (56)

A breakdown of responses by category (health issues, employment issues, housing issues, family issues, gender and sexuality issues, and violence issues) is provided below. Organizations were able to select as many options as applied, so the total number of responses for each question may be greater than the total number of organizations which completed the survey.

### *Health issues*

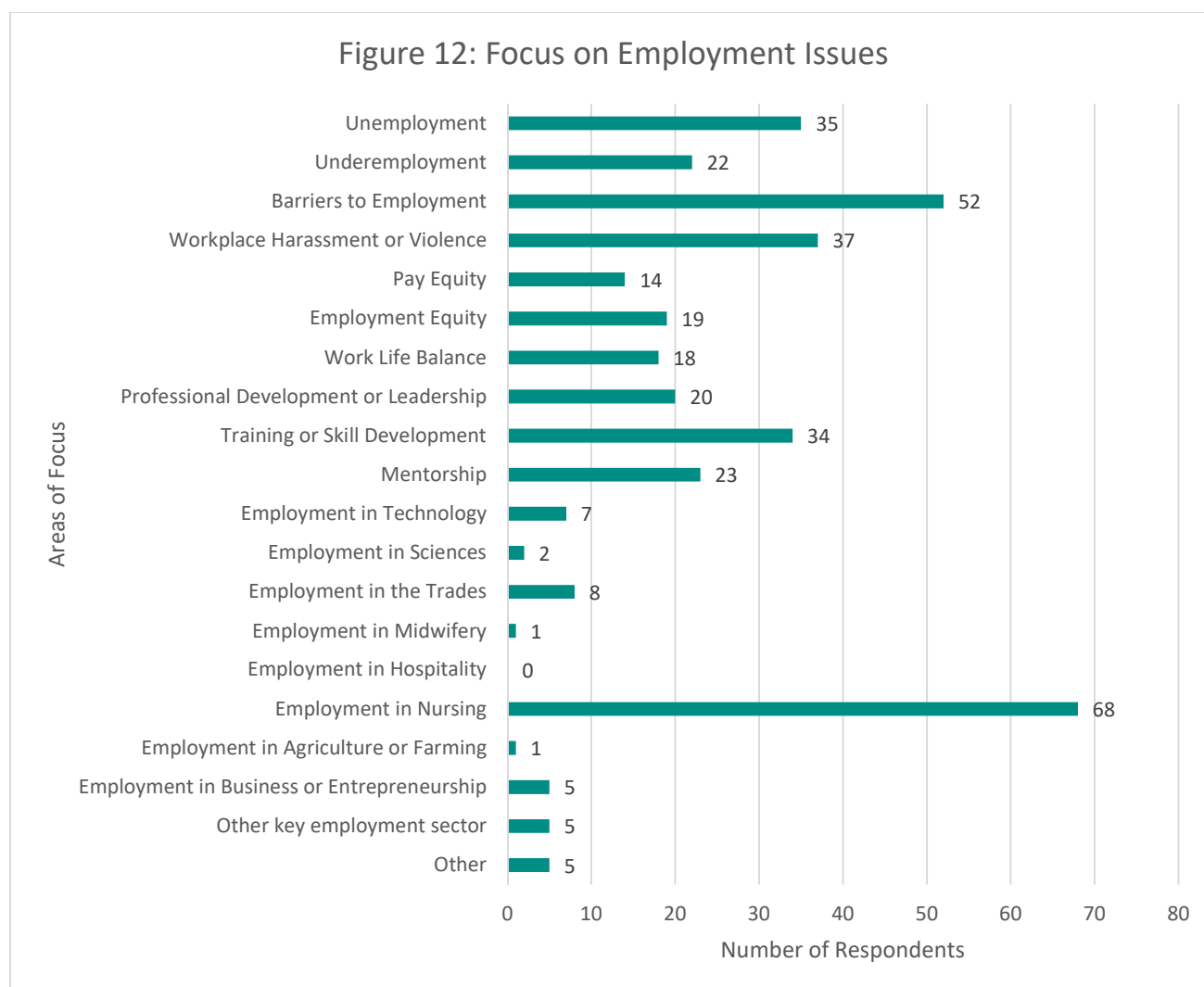
Common areas of focus for responding organizations working on health issues included mental health, harm reduction, general health and wellness, sexual health, and drug use or substance use disorders (see Figure 11). Few organizations reported a focus on the health needs of aging populations. Organizations which responded “other” specified issues surrounding various types of trauma.



### *Employment issues*

Common areas of focus for responding organizations working on employment issues included employment in nursing, barriers to employment, workplace harassment or violence, unemployment, and training or skill development (see Figure 12). Organizations which responded “Other” primarily referred to employment services. Few organizations reported a focus on employment in sectors other than nursing.

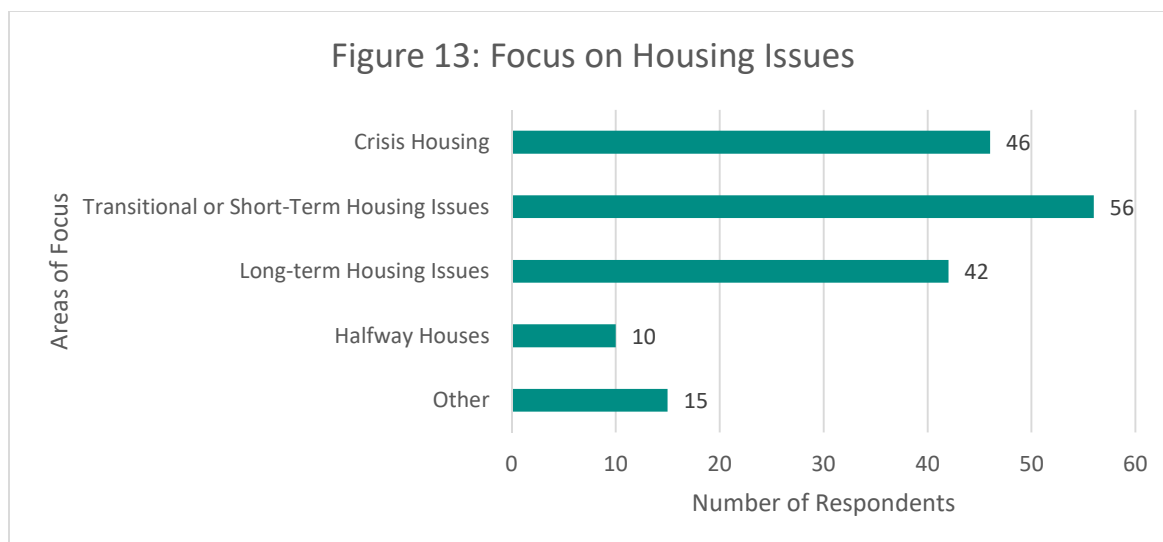
Figure 12: Focus on Employment Issues



### *Housing issues*

Areas of focus for responding organizations working on housing issues saw a fairly even distribution of responses between crisis housing, transitional or short-term housing issues, and long-term housing issues (see Figure 13). Organizations which responded “Other” primarily referred to social housing and advocacy for housing issues.

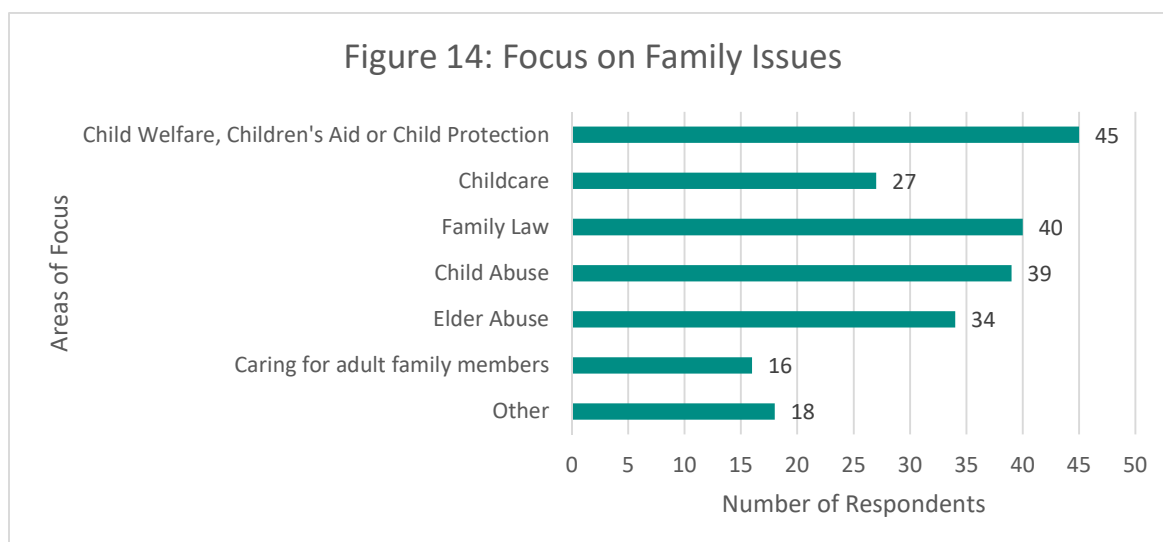
Figure 13: Focus on Housing Issues



### *Family issues*

Areas of focus for responding organizations working on family issues saw a fairly even distribution of responses among most of the response categories, with a slight inclination towards child welfare, and family law. Noticeably fewer organizations identified caring for adult family members, or the other response category as areas of focus (see Figure 14). Organizations which responded “other” primarily discussed various forms of violence against women, with one respondent indicating persons with disabilities as their area of focus.

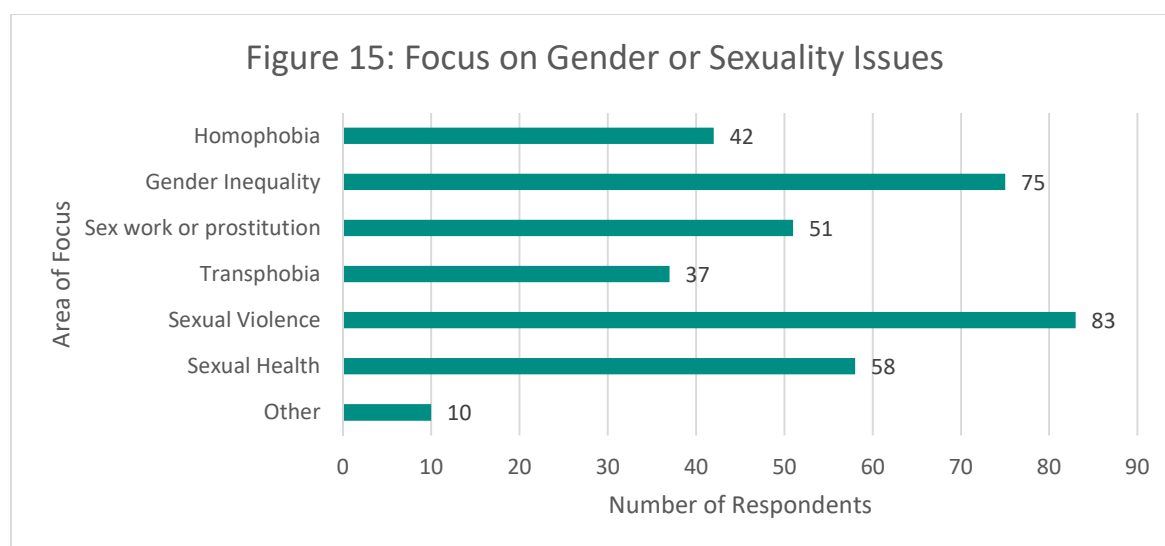
Figure 14: Focus on Family Issues





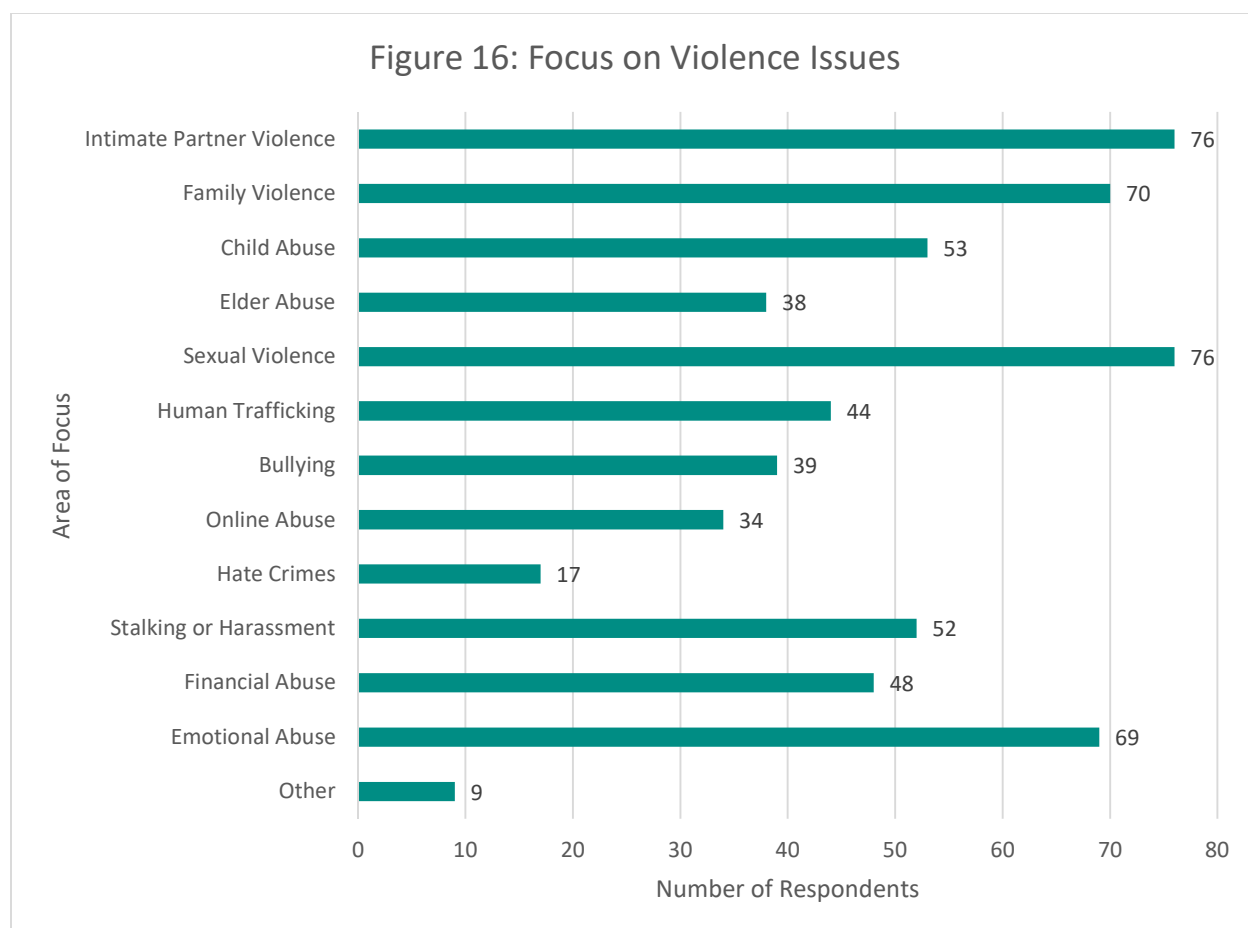
### *Gender or sexuality issues*

The main areas of focus for responding organizations working on gender or sexuality issues were sexual violence, and gender inequality. Organizations also focused on sexual health, and sex work (see Figure 15). Organizations which responded “other” primarily discussed capacity building and specific forms of violence.



### *Violence issues*

The main areas of focus for responding organizations working on violence issues were intimate partner violence, sexual violence, family violence, and emotional abuse (see Figure 16). Few organizations indicated a focus on hate crimes, or other violence issues.



### E. Categories and Frequency of Areas of Need

Organizations were asked to identify the key areas of need faced by the women and girls they serve, and how frequently those populations face those areas of need.

Organizations were also asked to indicate how they identified the issues faced by the women and girls they serve, and were allowed to select multiple responses. Organizations primarily identified issues through in-person engagement (68.2% of responding organizations) or engagement with other organizations (57.14% of responding organizations). Other means of issue identification included through secondary source research (31.2% of responding organizations) and engagement through surveys (22.2% of responding organizations).

### *Key areas of need – categories*

Organizations most frequently identified violence, poverty, housing, health, family, and discrimination as the key areas of need facing the women and girls they serve (see Figure 17). The least commonly identified areas of need were culture, corrections or criminalization, and other. Organizations responding to the other category gave responses including racism, access to services, and transportation.

Figure 17

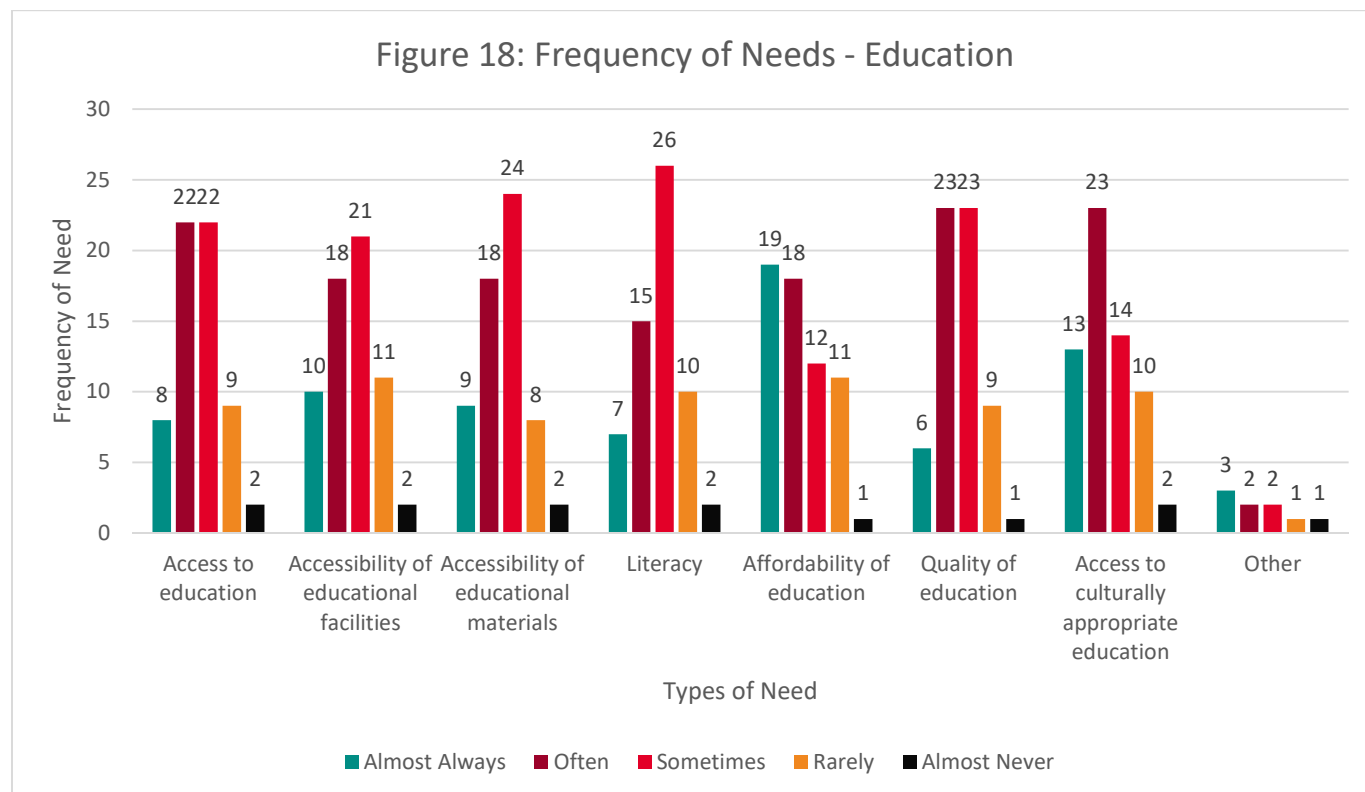
Area of need	Number of organizations identifying this as a key area of need	Percentage of total responding organizations
Violence	124	65.6%
Poverty	115	60.8%
Housing	109	57.7%
Health	99	52.3%
Family	96	50.8%
Employment	93	49.2%
Discrimination	90	47.6%
Stigmatization	80	42.3%
Education	71	37.6%
Topics specific to Indigenous peoples and communities	70	37.0%
Culture	55	29.1%
Corrections or criminalization	44	23.3%
Other	16	8.5%

### *Education*

Organizations were asked to identify how frequently the women and girls they serve experience particular areas of need related to education (Almost Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Almost Never).

Nearly all of the response categories for the frequency of needs related to education followed a more standard distribution curve, peaking in the “Sometimes” category (see Figure 18). The exception to this pattern was on affordability of education, and access to

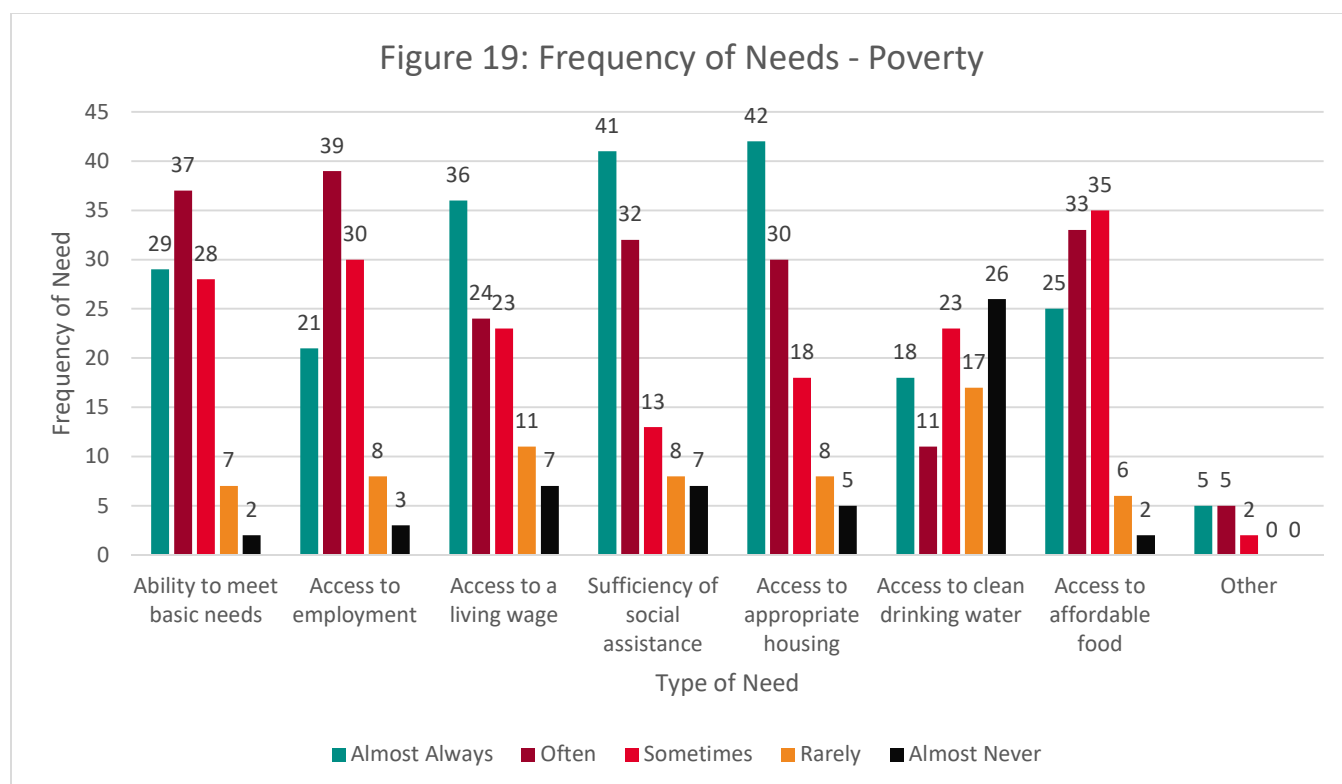
culturally appropriate education, where there were higher responses on the “Almost Always” or “Often” categories. This indicates that these may be particularly common areas of need for women and girls with education needs served by responding organizations.



### Poverty

Organizations were asked to identify how frequently the women and girls they serve experience particular areas of need related to poverty (Almost Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Almost Never).

There were a variety of response distributions in this category (see Figure 19). Sufficiency of social assistance, access to appropriate housing, and access to a living wage, saw higher responses on the “Almost Always” or “Often” categories. Less commonly seen areas of need included access to clean drinking water, and access to affordable food.



### *Employment*

Organizations were asked to identify how frequently the women and girls they serve experience particular areas of need related to employment (Almost Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Almost Never).

Most of the distributions for frequency of needs related to employment followed a standard distribution pattern peaking in the “Sometimes” category. The exceptions to this were in the areas of unequal pay, and insufficient benefits, which saw higher responses on the “Almost Always” or “Often” categories (see Figures 20a and 20b). This indicates that women and girls served by responding organizations may frequently face needs linked to unequal pay, and insufficient benefits.

Figure 20a: Frequency of Need - Employment

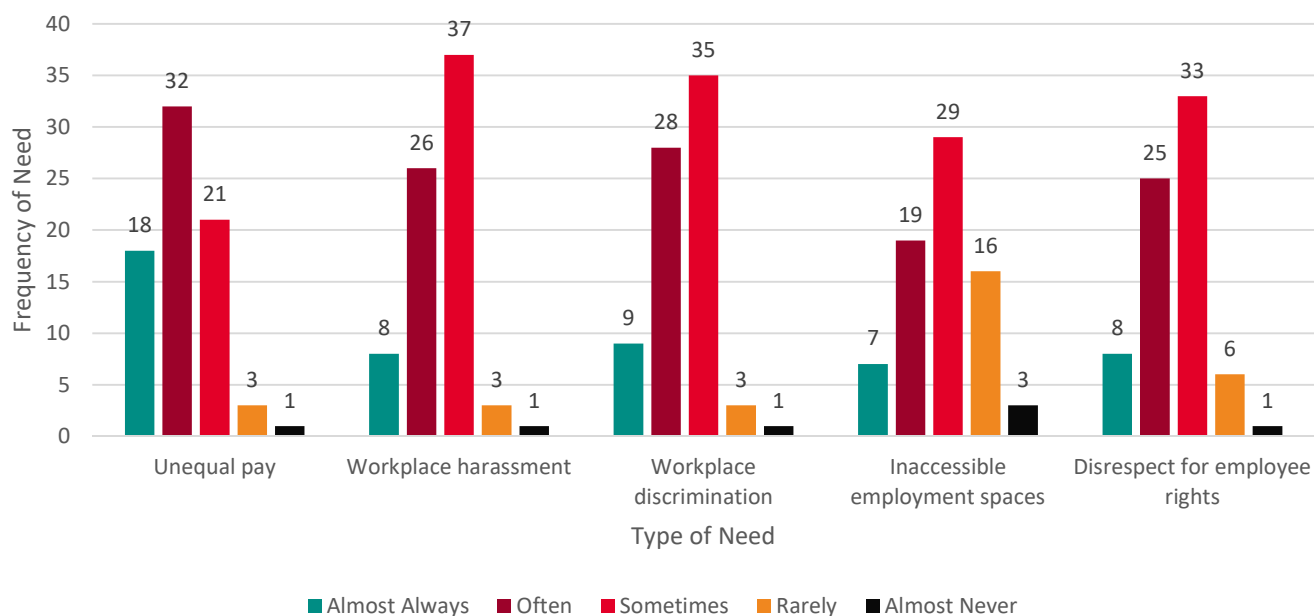
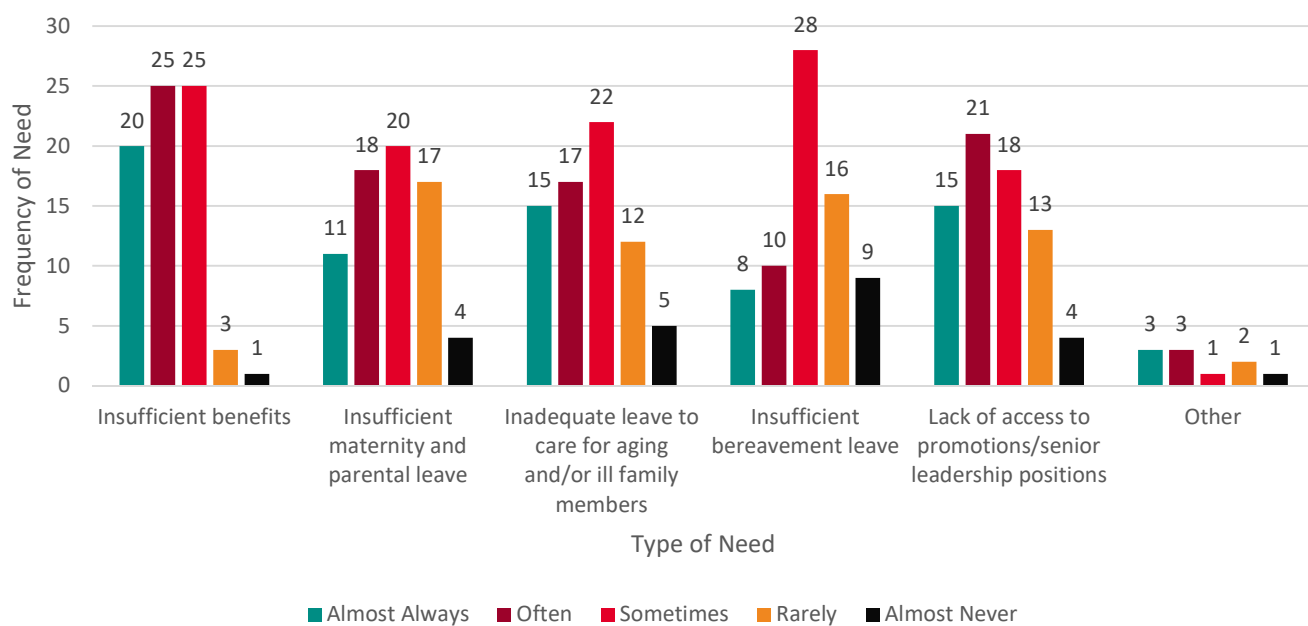


Figure 20b: Frequency of Need - Employment - Continued



## Health

Organizations were asked to identify how frequently the women and girls they serve experience particular areas of need related to health (Almost Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Almost Never).

More frequently seen health areas of need for women and girls served by responding organizations seem to be in relation to access to services. These services include mental health services, physical health service), addiction support, and culturally appropriate health services. Areas of need seen comparatively less frequently include: fertility services, access to gender reassignment surgery, and forced sterilization (see Figures 20a, 20b, and 20c).

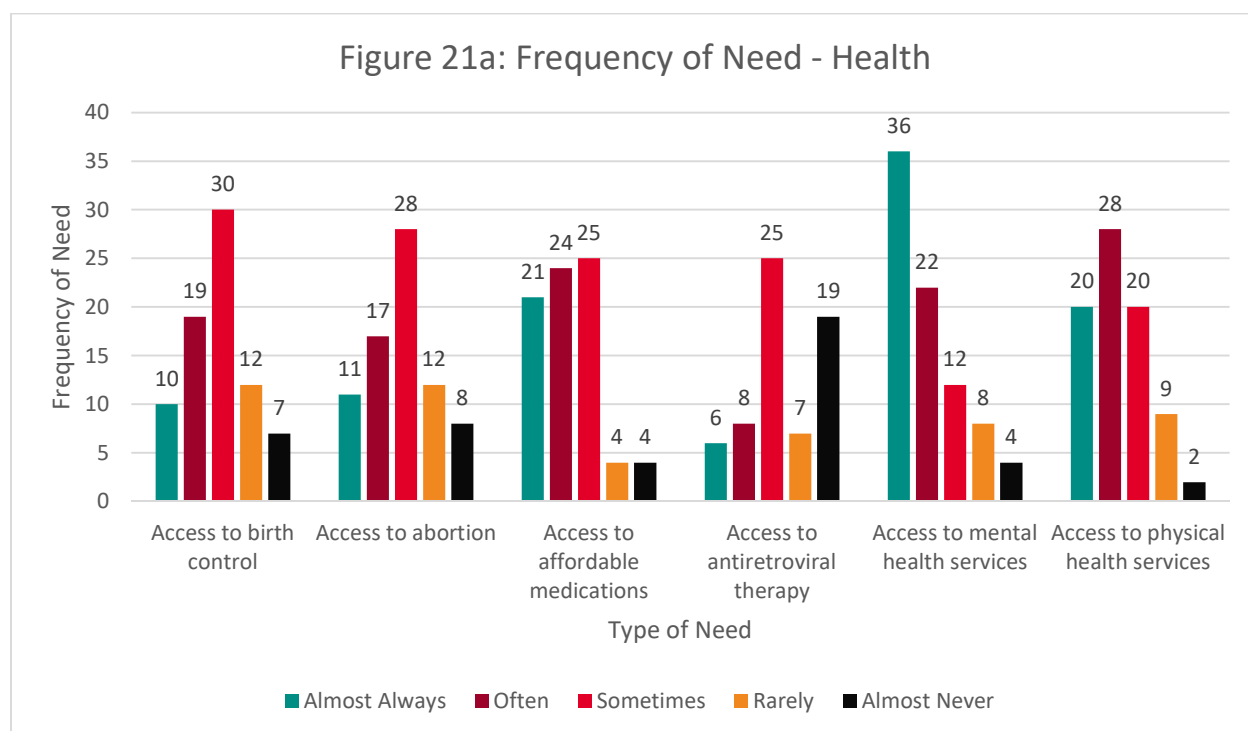


Figure 21b: Frequency of Need - Health - Continued

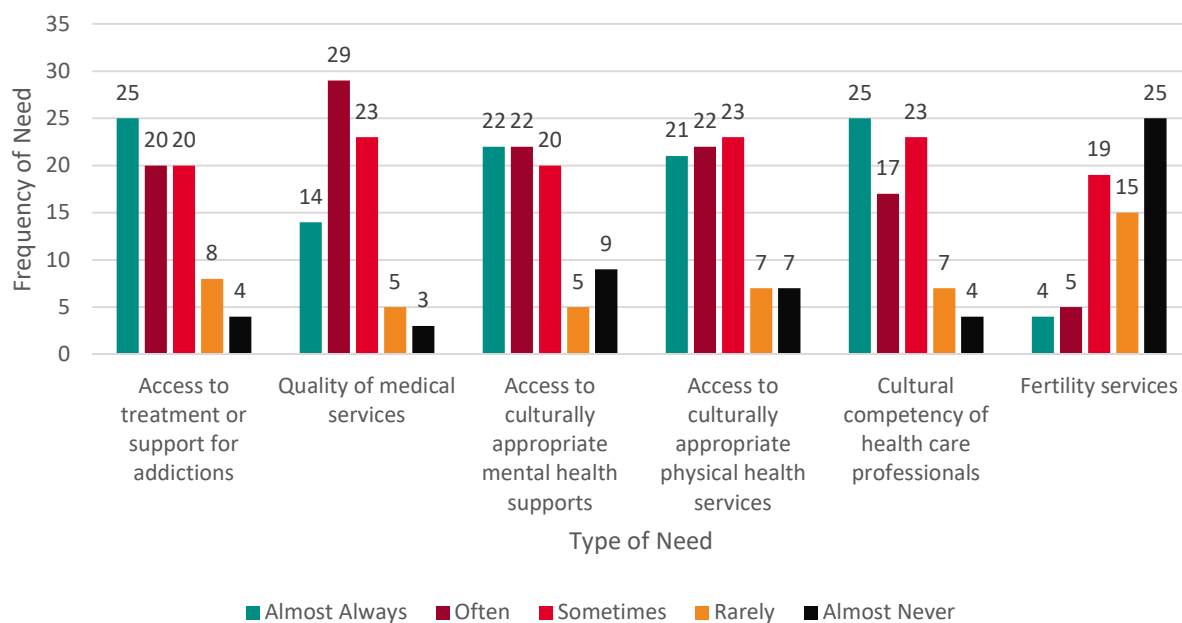
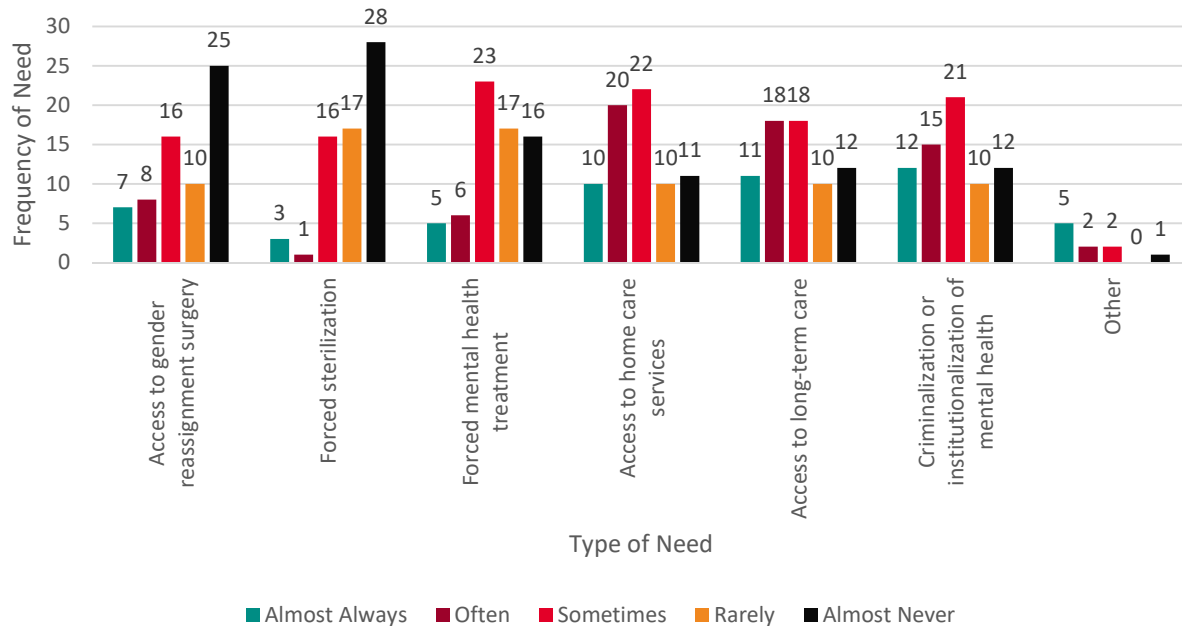


Figure 21c: Frequency of Need - Health - Continued

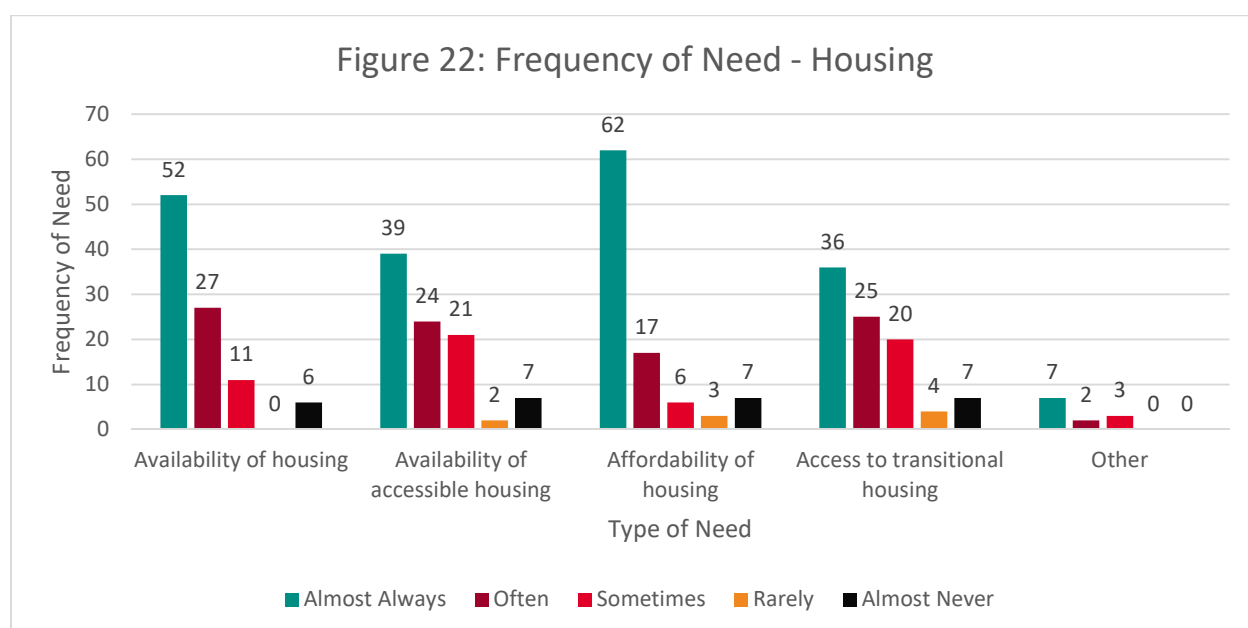




## Housing

Organizations were asked to identify how frequently the women and girls they serve experience particular areas of need related to housing (Almost Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Almost Never).

Responding organizations reported that women and girls with housing needs consistently appear to face needs related to availability and affordability of housing. These are closely followed by availability of accessible housing, and access to transitional housing (see Figure 22).



## Family

Organizations were asked to identify how frequently the women and girls they serve experience particular areas of need related to family (Almost Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Almost Never).

Family-related areas of need had a wide distribution of responses. Organizations reported that the women and girls they served frequently had needs related to violence, and legal services. Areas of need concerning child welfare, and childcare were also relatively common among women and girls facing family-related areas of need (see Figure 23a and 23b).

Figure 23a: Frequency of Need - Family

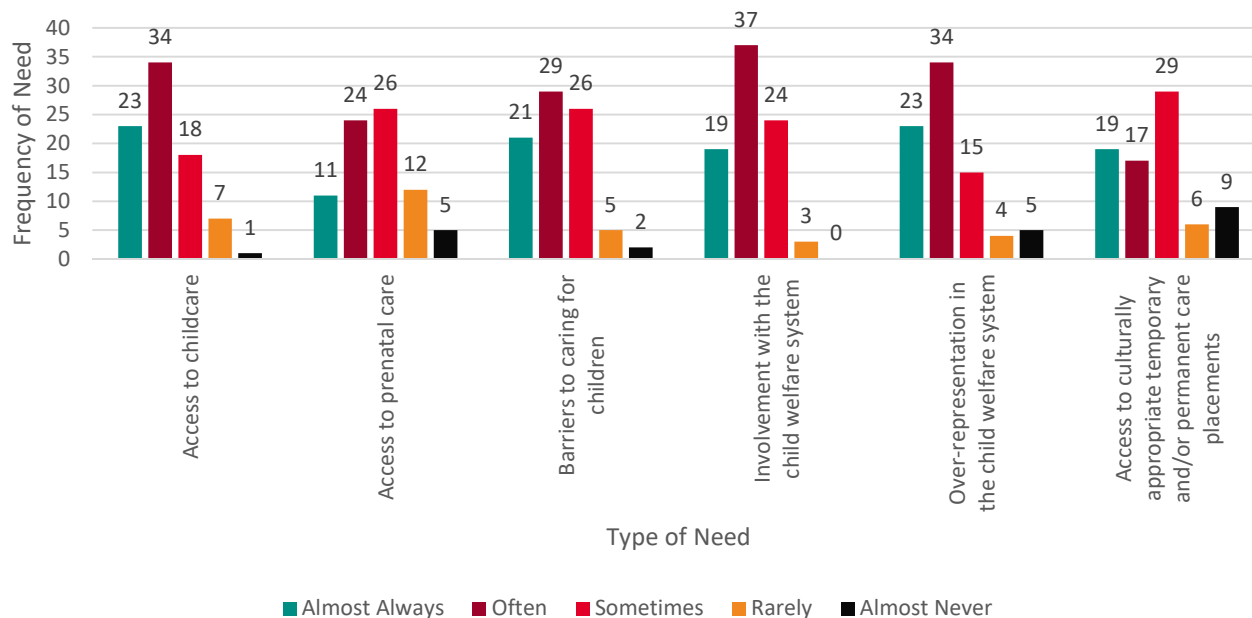
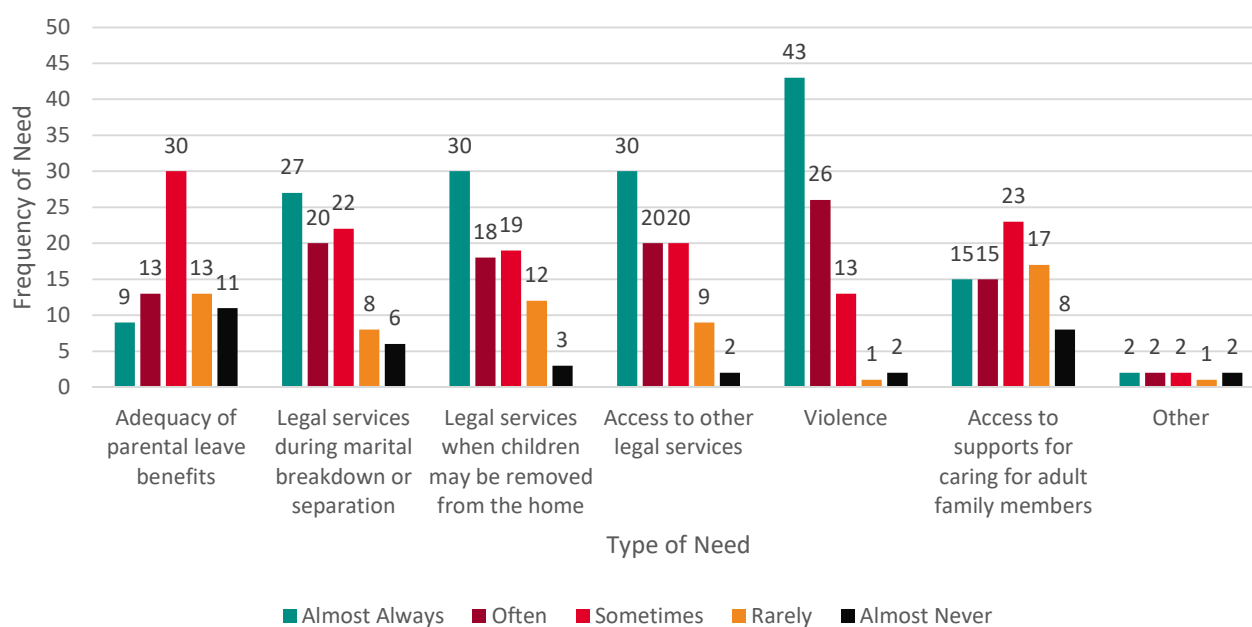


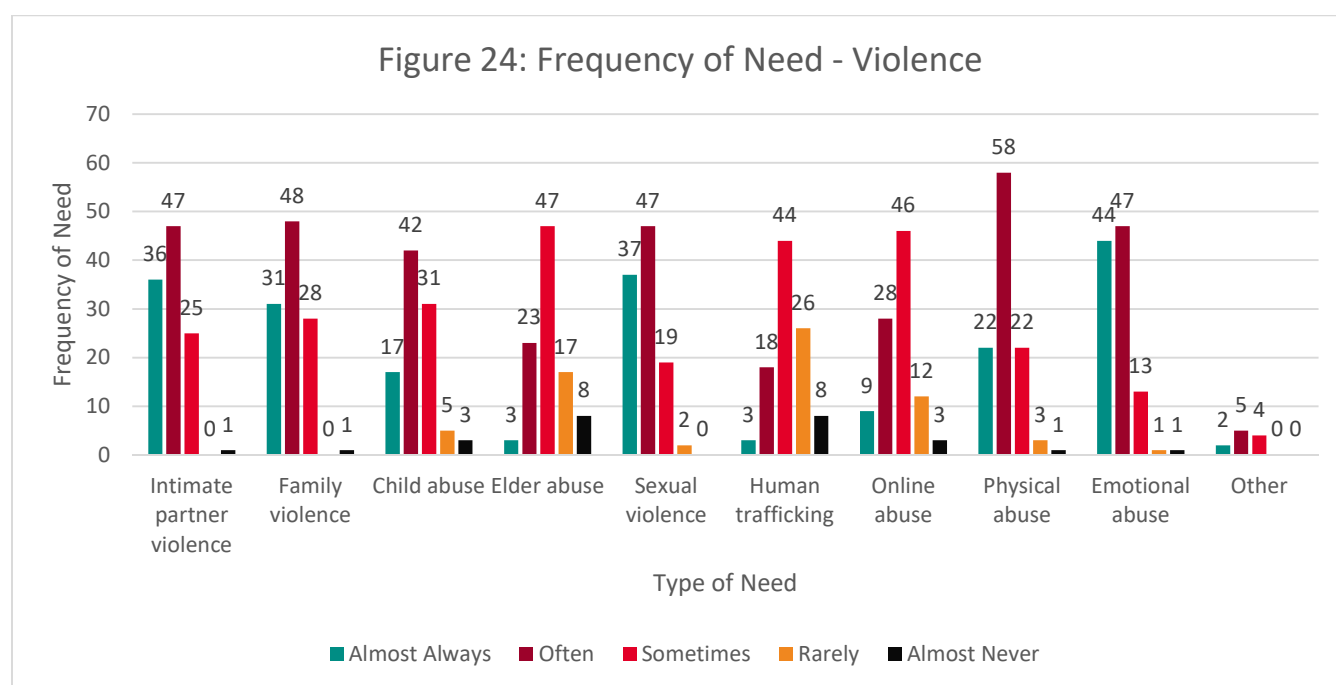
Figure 23b: Frequency of Need - Family Continued



## Violence

Organizations were asked to identify how frequently the women and girls they serve experience particular areas of need related to violence (Almost Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Almost Never).

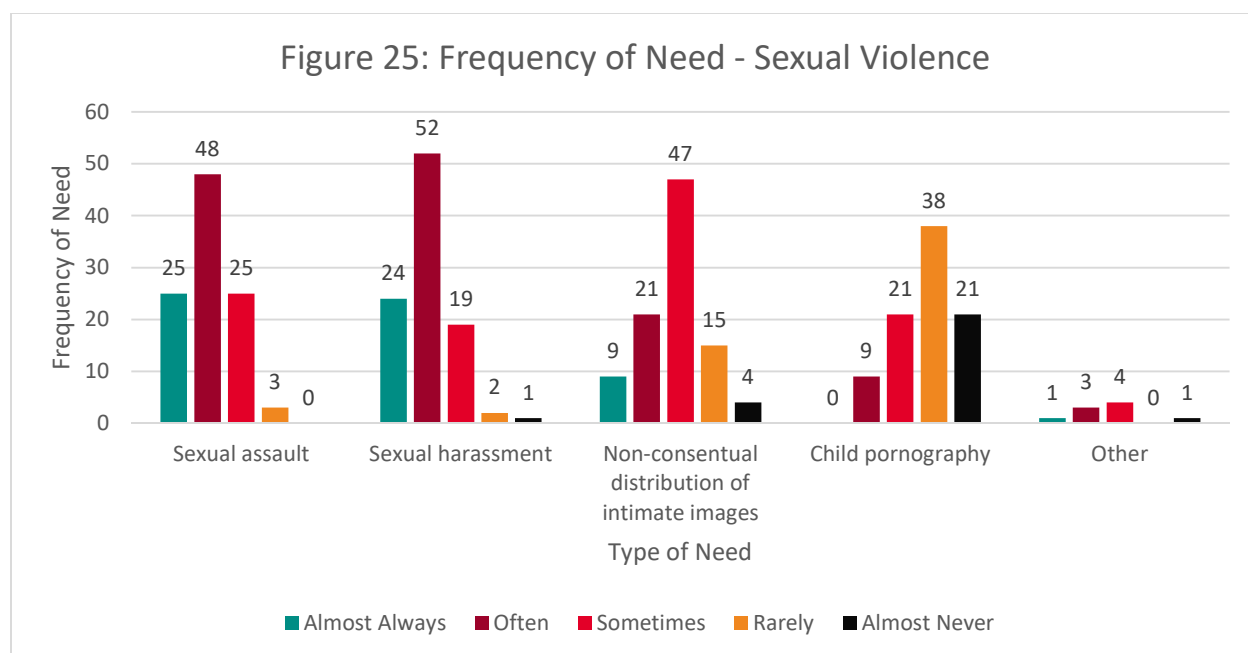
Responding organizations reported that the women and girls they serve frequently experience needs flowing from emotional abuse, sexual violence, intimate partner violence, and family violence (see Figure 24). Women and girls served by responding organizations also commonly experience needs stemming from physical abuse.



## Sexual Violence

Organizations were asked to identify how frequently the women and girls they serve experience particular areas of need caused by sexual violence (Almost Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Almost Never).

Responding organizations indicated that the women and girls they serve more frequently face need stemming from sexual assault or sexual harassment (see Figure 25). Needs stemming from child pornography were relatively less common.



### *Criminal Justice System*

Organizations were asked to identify how frequently the women and girls they serve experience particular areas of need related to the criminal justice system (Almost Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Almost Never).

The highest frequencies of areas of need related to the criminal justice system for women and girls included: access to justice or legal services, criminalization of poverty, access to alternatives to imprisonment, and access to their children when incarcerated. While these areas demonstrated the highest frequencies, they were not significantly different than many of the other areas listed (see Figures 26a and 26b). Given the high frequencies across all categories, it appears as though women and girls with needs related to the criminal justice system frequently present with needs linked to all of the categories listed.

Figure 26a: Frequency of Need - Criminal Justice System

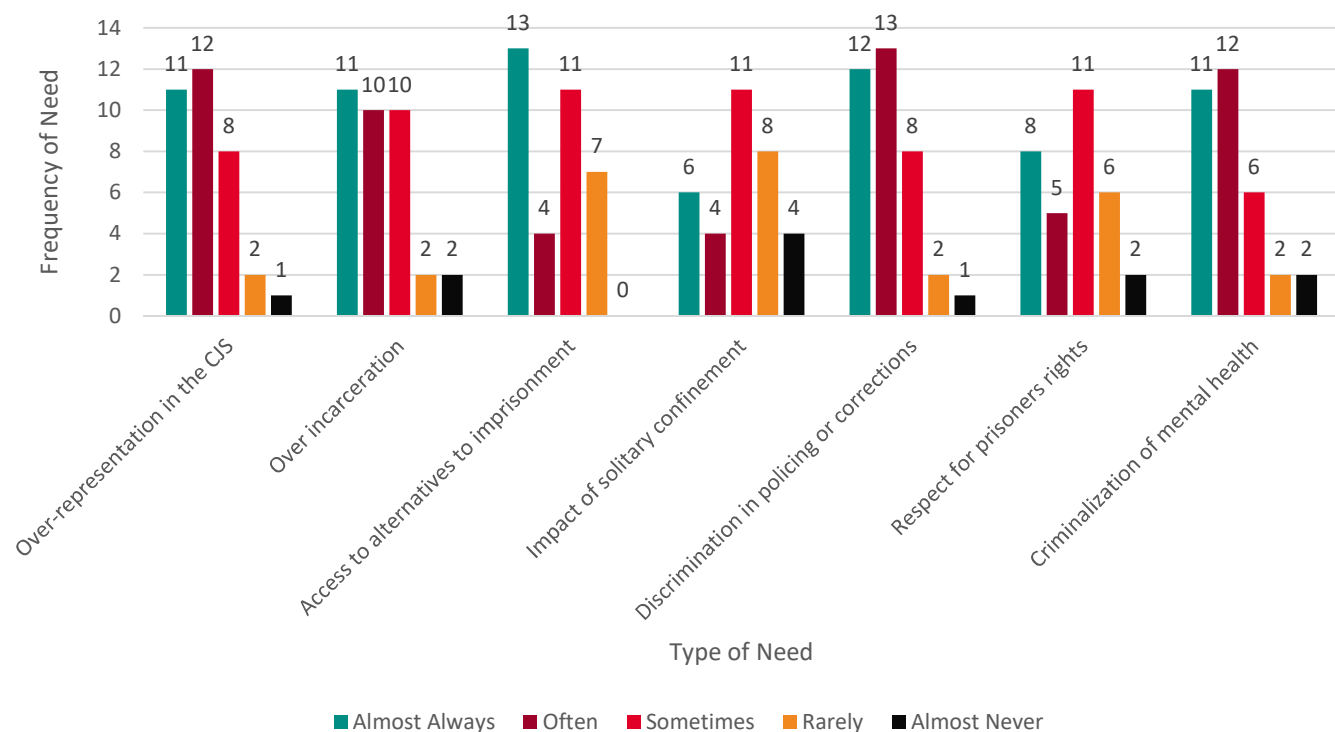
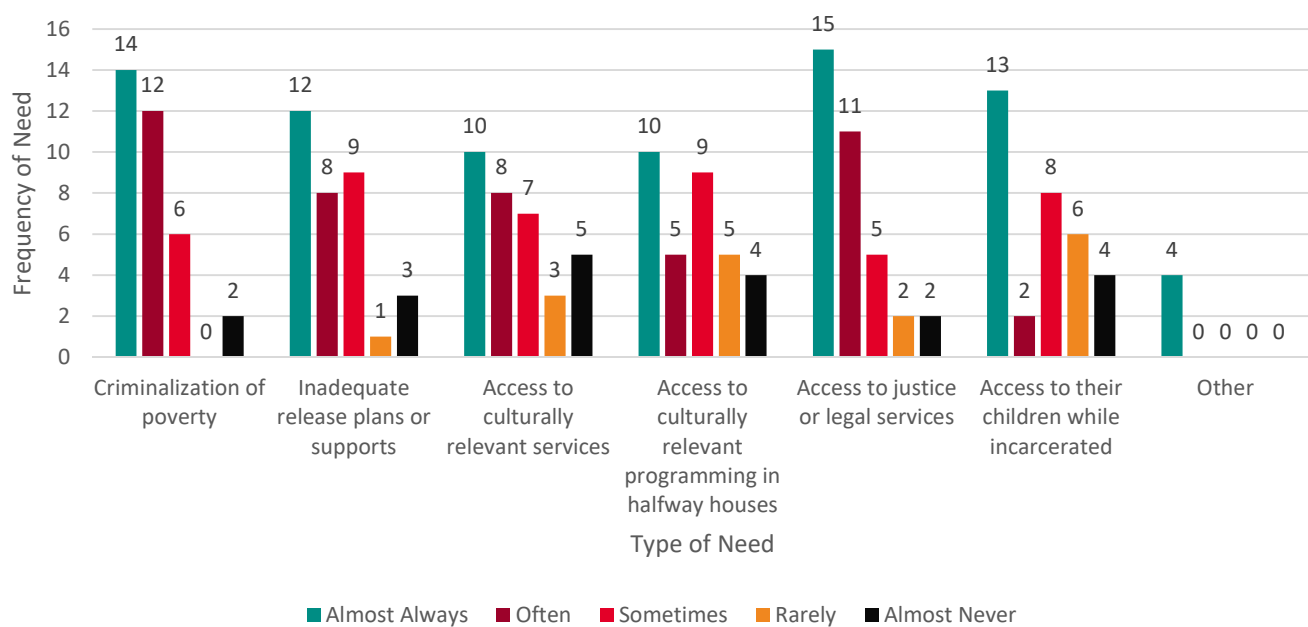


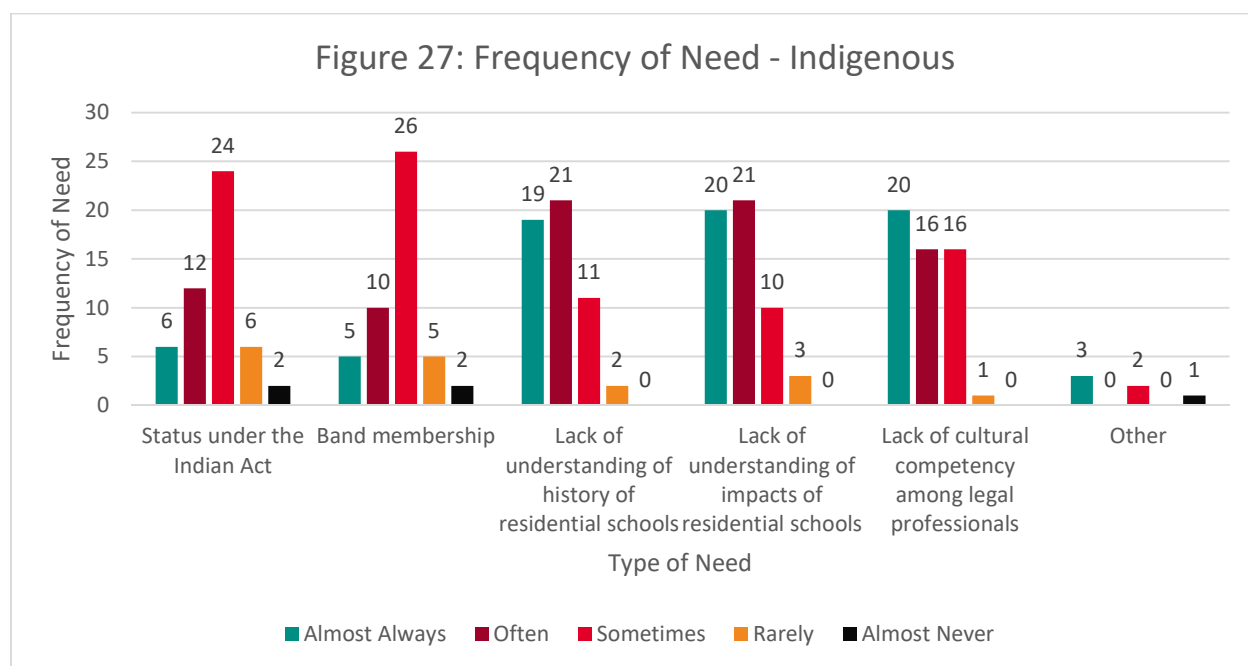
Figure 26b: Frequency of Need - Criminal Justice System - Continued



### *Needs unique to Indigenous peoples and communities*

Organizations were asked to identify how frequently the Indigenous women and girls they serve experience particular areas of need (Almost Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Almost Never).

Responding organizations indicated that the Indigenous women and girls they serve tend to face needs linked to a lack of cultural competency among legal professionals, and a lack of understanding of the history and impacts of the residential schools. The Indigenous women and girls served by these organizations less frequently face issues linked to status under the *Indian Act*, or in relation to band membership.

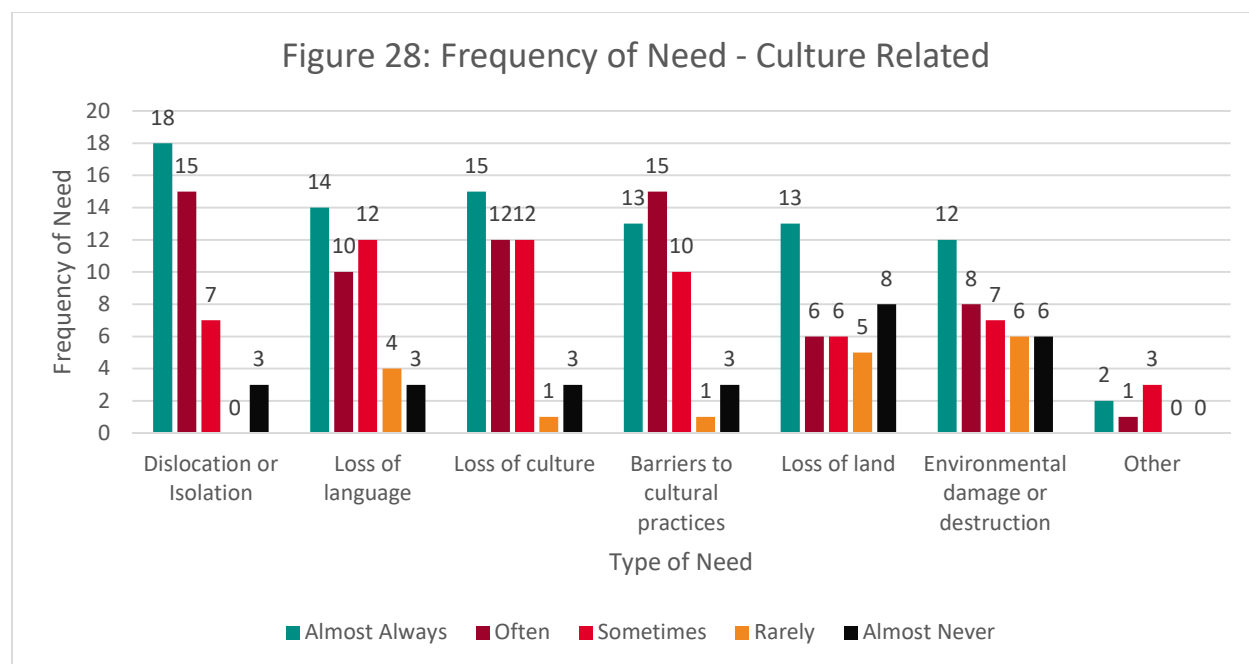


### *Culture-related*

Organizations were asked to identify how frequently the women and girls they serve experience particular areas of need related to culture (Almost Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Almost Never).

Responding organizations indicated that the women and girls they serve frequently face needs linked to dislocation or isolation, and loss of culture. Similar to the divide in focus

of the criminal justice system services, there was a fairly even and consistent frequency of needs across all of the main response categories for this question (see Figure 28).



### *Discrimination*

Organizations were asked to identify how frequently the women and girls they serve experience particular areas of need caused by discrimination (Almost Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Almost Never).

Responding organizations indicated that the women and girls they serve frequently face needs linked to discrimination based on gender, race, sex, and socioeconomic status (see Figures 57 and 57a). The communities served by the responding organizations less frequently have needs resulting from discrimination based on marital status, faith, or family status.

Figure 29a: Frequency of Discrimination

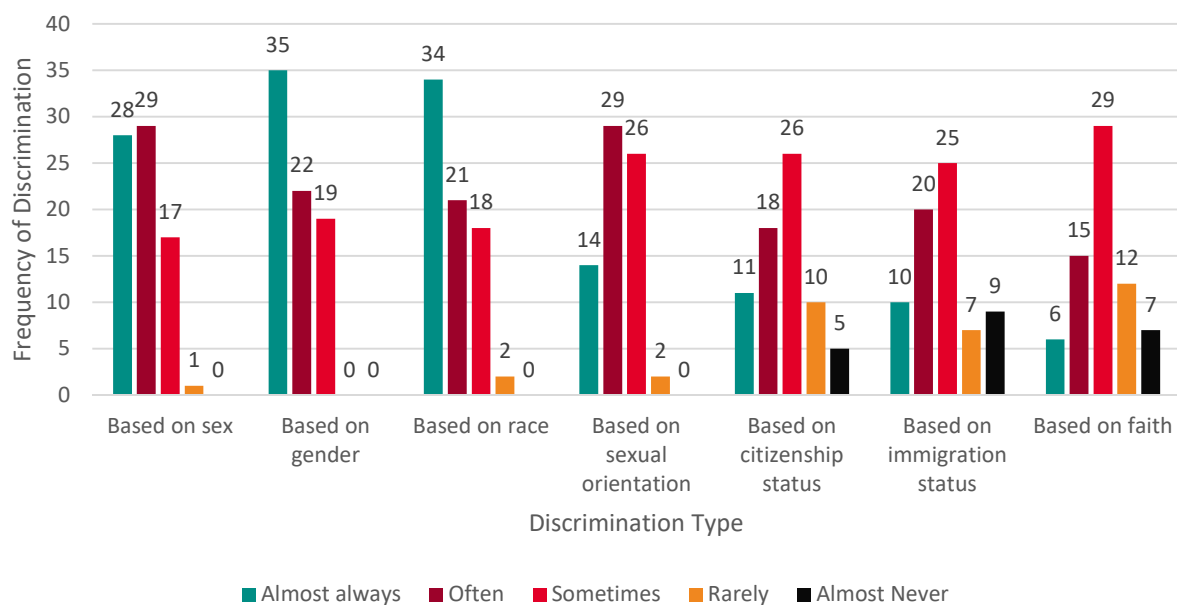
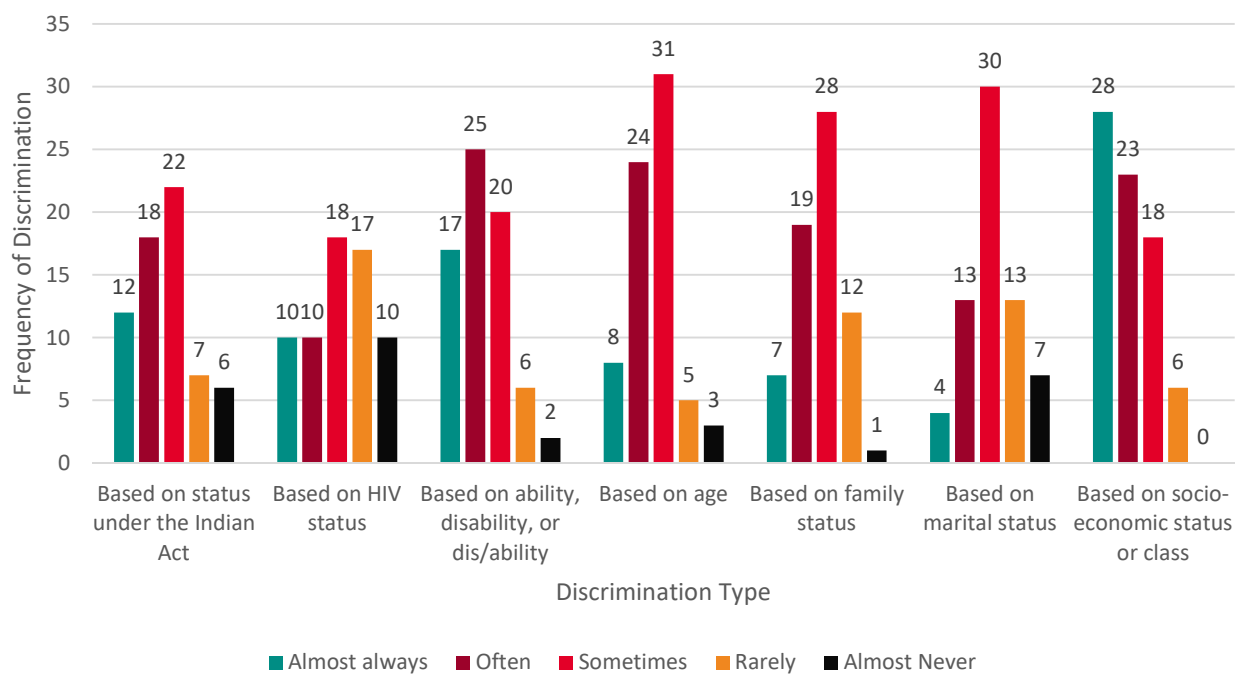


Figure 29b: Frequency of Discrimination by Type - Continued

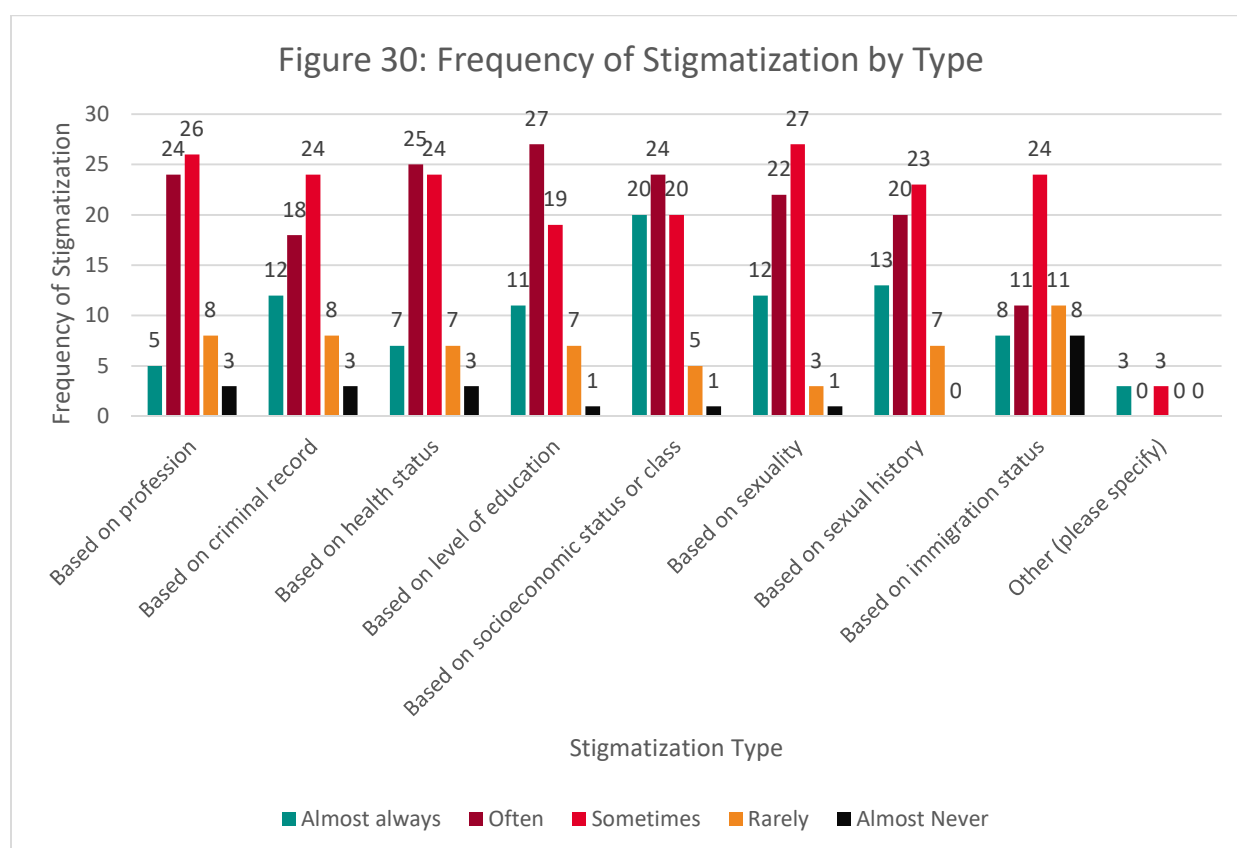




## Stigmatization

Organizations were asked to identify how frequently the women and girls they serve experience particular areas of need caused by stigmatization (Almost Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Almost Never).

Responding organizations reported that the women and girls they serve frequently experienced stigmatization based on socioeconomic status or class, followed by sexuality/sexual history, criminal record, and education. Areas of stigmatization faced less frequently include: profession, health status, and immigration status (see Figure 30).



## Additional areas of need

Organizations were asked to name any additional areas of need for women and girls within the communities that they serve. The full text of their responses can be found in Appendix B.

Organizations highlighted the need for affordable and accessible services, with one respondent indicating a need for “Affordable housing, employment, daycares, shelters, affordable food, mental health services.” Respondents also indicated that these services need to be inclusive of marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities, women using drugs, queer women, trans women, migrant women, rural residents, and Indigenous populations living on reserves.

Organizations pointed out needs specific to rural, Northern, Atlantic, and reserve communities. This included the high rates of sexual and intimate partner violence in the North and Atlantic Canada. For example, one respondent noted: “The economic depression of the Atlantic region and PEI in particular coupled with our traditional, religious and patriarchal culture has created a hotbed of violence and misogyny in this region.” Responses also included the need for the feminist movement to better consider the needs of these populations. One respondent emphasized: “Rural issues are consistently ignored in the feminist movement. Women in rural Canada and Northern, isolated regions have an entirely different experience.”

Responding organizations highlighted the need for education, in particular in relation to HIV, sexual health, and consent and rape culture.

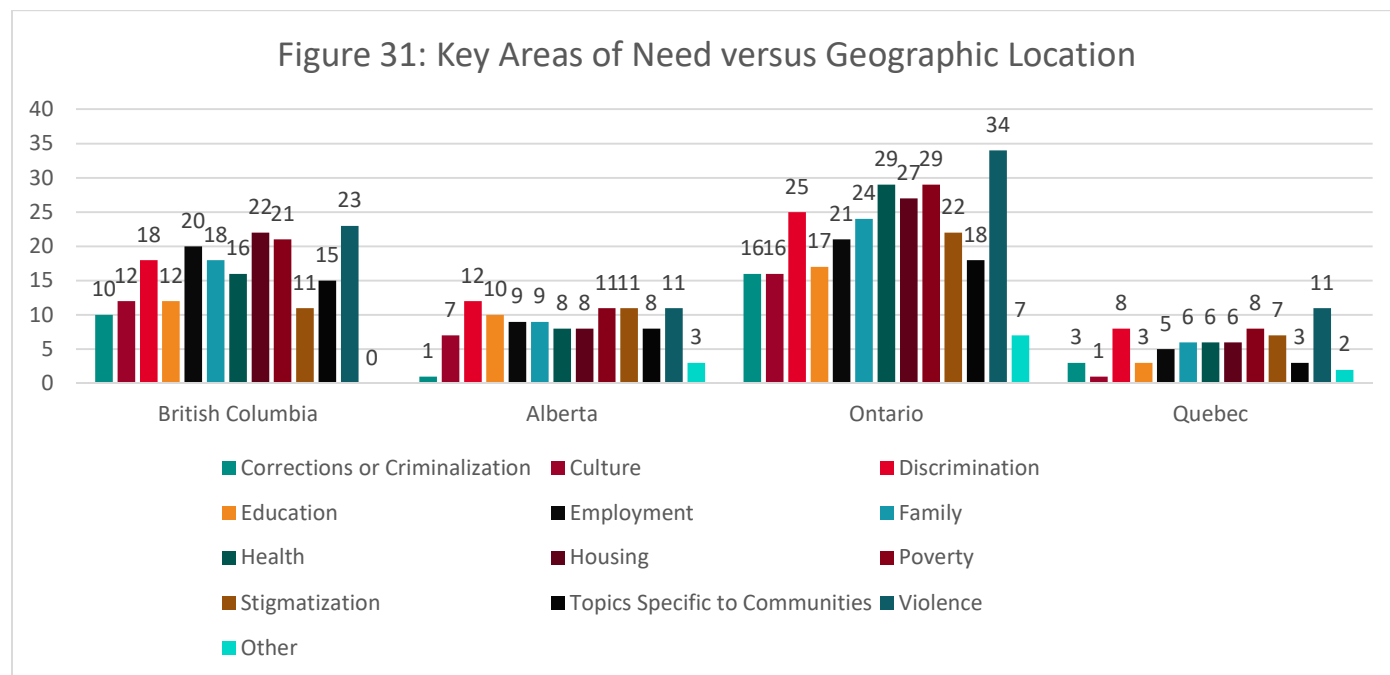
The need for funding and support was also a key theme. This included the need for resources for women in the family law system, supports for women facing violence, childcare, and supports for women navigating the child welfare system.

### *Areas of need by location*

Survey results were cross-tabulated to see if there were differences in key areas of need based on the location of the responding organizations (see Figure 31). Results were cross-tabulated for British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, and Québec because of their relative population sizes and the number of responding organizations.

Ontario and British Columbia both matched the standard distribution of responses for key areas of need, which is a logical outcome given they represent the two largest numbers of

responses. There were variations, however, in the most commonly reported areas of need between the provinces (see Figure 32). This indicates that there are likely regional differences worth further exploring to better identify priority areas in different regions.



**Figure 32**

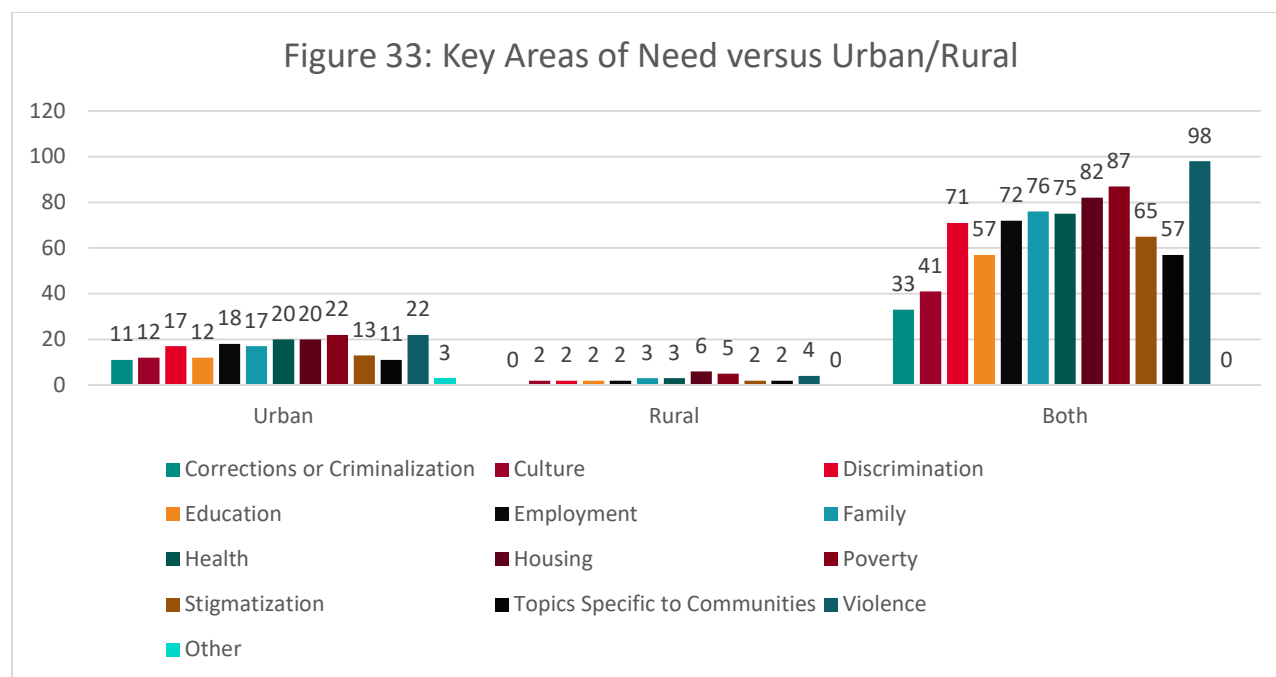
	British Columbia	Alberta	Ontario	Québec
1.	Violence	Discrimination	Violence	Violence
2.	Housing	Poverty	Health	Discrimination
3.	Poverty	Stigmatization	Poverty	Poverty
4.	Employment	Violence	Housing	Stigmatization

### *Areas of need for urban and rural populations*

Survey results were cross-tabulated to see if there were differences in key areas of need based on whether the populations served were urban, rural, or both rural and urban (see Figure 33).

There were no significant differences in the key areas of need for urban, rural, or both rural and urban populations. Each distribution follows a very similar pattern to the other. The

only difference of note is a slight drop off from violence being the top response in the rural population relative to the urban or combined populations.



### *Other Issues*

Organizations were asked to specify anything else they wanted to share about the issues facing women and girls in the communities they serve. The full text of their responses can be found in Appendix B.

Responding organizations highlighted the negative impacts of stigmatization and discrimination on women and girls in the communities they serve. For example, organizations noted that women and girls face discrimination and stigmatization because of:

- Their HIV status (“Afro-Canadians living with HIV are struggling to engage in their communities because of stigma and discrimination”)
- Their disabilities (“as women with disabilities we face a lot of stigmatization”)
- Their status as young mothers (“Young women continue to be disempowered and stigmatized when they assume the parenting role in their teens”)
- Their employment industry (“We need to get rid of the stigma around women working in the construction trades.”)

- Their status as sex workers (“Those initiative encourage the surveillance of sex workers, violate their rights and increase the vulnerability and endanger the safety of sex workers, (e.g they are result in arrest, detained and deportation), sex workers are being forced to relocated.”)

One organization noted the links between economic and social rights, and other areas of need, stating: “Both affordable housing and food, plus access to employment opportunities for family members would go a long way to assist with violence prevention, health concerns, and general community health and well-being.”

Organizations identified a number of issues linked to violence, sexual violence, and harassment. These included:

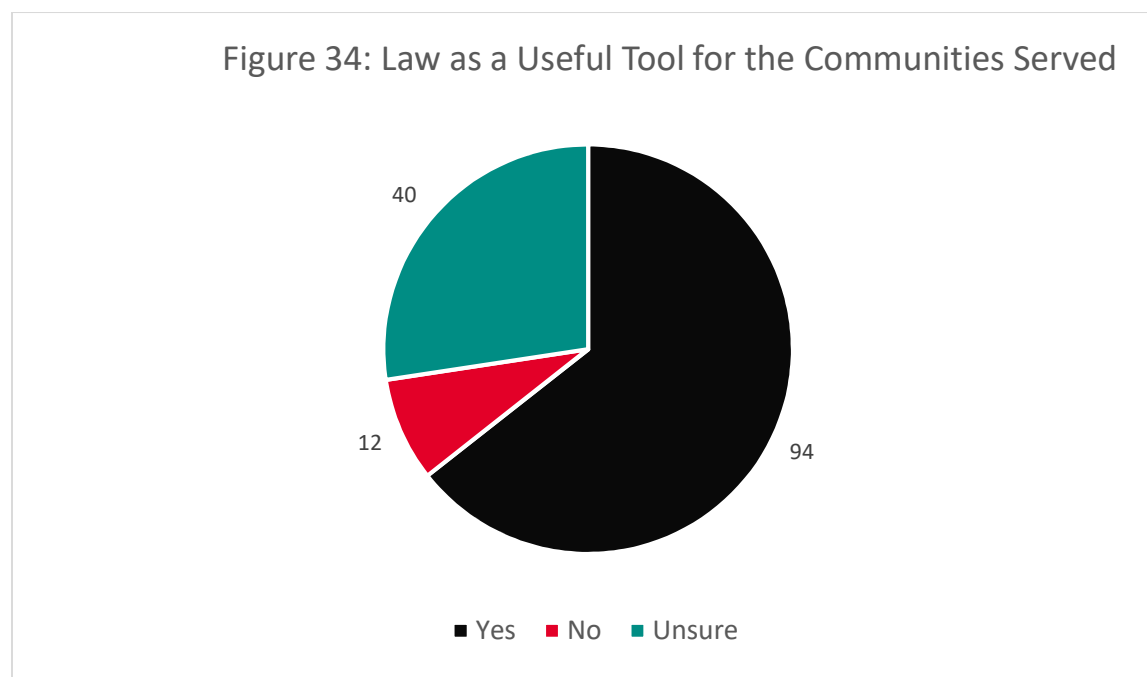
- Challenges linked to the legal system (“One struggle is the child welfare system giving a woman's abuser access to children, or the struggle women face when trying to "prove" abuse to the child welfare system”)
- The need for changes to how we think about consent (“Consent education needs to exist in a culture that has reevaluated the way we think about women and sex”)
- The need to work closely with communities to prevent violence (“Through this dissemination of information at the community level, taboo subjects such as family violence are openly discussed as are options for victims, resources, laws and key concepts such as equality of women and men.”)

Respondents again highlighted geographic disparities, and the need for regional representation. One organization emphasized the need for rural and Atlantic representation: “We as in Atlantic Canada and PEI in particular get lost in National initiatives”. Another highlighted the importance of focusing on the needs of rural women and girls: “Attention must be paid to the specific (and often urgent) needs of women in rural and remote areas.”

#### F. Usefulness of the Law

In the final section of the survey, responding organizations were asked whether they felt that the law was a useful tool for the communities that they served. Of the 146 organizations responding to this question, nearly 2/3 (64.38%) indicated that they did find the law to be a useful tool. Only 8.2% indicated that it was not a useful tool. Just over a quarter of

the respondents (27.40%) said that they were unsure if the law was a useful tool for the communities served (see Figure 34).



Organizations were also asked to provide short, concrete examples of (1) where the law had succeeded, or been a useful tool in serving their community; and (2) where the law had failed, or not been a useful tool in serving their community. The full text of their responses can be found in Appendix B.

Organizations pointed to a number of examples of where the law had been successful and/or useful, including specific laws, bills, cases, and rights in areas such as:

- Reproductive justice and health (“The Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act, has greatly reduced the harassment and bullying of patients and our staff by removing these people 50 metres away.”)
- Family issues (“Bill 84 recognizing homoparental families.”)
- Violence, sexual violence, and harassment (“The ability for a victim of IPV to apply for an Emergency Intervention Order AND have it enforced when perpetrator breaks the order.”)
- HIV criminalization (“Recent changes to the criminalization of HIV (see HALCO reports)”)

Respondents also pointed to specific examples of the use of the law, including in:

- Reproductive justice and health (“We lobbied actively for the enactment of 'safe access zone' legislation across a number of provinces.”)
- Opposition to the Trans Mountain Pipeline (“Indigenous community groups using the law to intervene in construction of Trans Mountain Pipeline.”)
- Family issues (“Les femmes que nous servons ont des besoins importants en matière de droit de la famille. Les informations et conseils juridiques que nous prodiguons est d'une aide majeure.”)
- Violence, sexual violence, and harassment (“The law has been a useful tool when social workers at our organization support women facing family violence issues as many of the women are not aware of their rights in Canada.”)
- Restorative justice (“Restorative Justice is represented here from both Indigenous and non - Indigenous communities.”)

A number of respondents painted a mixed picture of the usefulness of law. They noted that while the law is sometimes helpful or successful, it also fails. One respondent noted: “The law is useful at the end of a problem. We need to look at the source of the issues and fix them”. Another noted the different levels of helpfulness in different areas of law: “The law has been somewhat helpful in convicting the offender of Intimate Partner Violence but there seems to be a gap between Criminal Law and Family Law.”

Many respondents pointed to the failure to apply law as a source of the law’s lack of usefulness. One respondent explained: “Generally, we believe there has been a great success on the part of feminist activists in achieving legal reforms aimed at ending male violence against women. However, the application and enforcement of these laws does not reflect these achievements.”

Where respondents indicated that the law had failed women and girls in the communities they serve, several pointed to the law’s colonial and oppressive roots, including in relation to:

- Indigenous women and girls (“This is difficult to say because I work with Indigenous women and girls, and the law is a segment of our colonial government that has done

tremendously criminal things to Indigenous peoples for generations and continues to do so today.”)

- Sex workers (“The law is useful but mainly is the tools of oppression against the sex workers, particular the racialize and migrant”)
- Women who use drugs (“the criminalization of people who use drugs negatively impacts their health and wellbeing, even in instances where the law could potentially be helpful (eg when they are the victims of a crime)”)

Other organizations highlighted that law had failed particular communities, including:

- Indigenous women (“The law fails, on a systemic level, aboriginal women on all front.”)
- Women facing violence (“The law fails to protect or find justice for survivors of sexual and gendered violence.”)
- Trans women (“There are many laws that make murder and physical assault illegal, and yet trans women are still over-represented in experiencing violence.”)
- Individuals involved with the child welfare system (“Children lost into the Child Welfare System are often not returned.”)
- Northern and rural communities (“there is no real penalty for sexual assault, or physical assault in relationships in the courts...women do not feel safe to report as in rural areas their safety is compromised because of time it takes for the police to respond to a call.”)
- Unionized workers (“The Trade Union Act prohibits complainants to act on their own. That's a problem with unionized employees whose unions will not support them.”)

### Next Steps

The goal of this survey was to obtain a better understanding of the needs facing women and girls across Canada.

Based on the characteristics of responding organizations, questions for further research which arise from this survey report include:

- Areas of need in rural communities
- Areas of need in Québec, in particular outside of Montréal
- Areas of need in Northern communities



- Areas of need identified by newer organizations (and whether those are different than those identified by responding organizations, which tended to be more than 15 years old)
- Areas of need of older women
- Areas of need of religious women

The data collected through this survey, and the questions for further research moving forward, will be used along with other resources and consultations to develop a new 5-year strategic litigation plan for LEAF. We look forward to sharing that plan with you.

## Appendix A – Location of Responding Organizations and Service Areas

### *British Columbia*

City/region	Organizations located in city/region	Organizations providing service to city/region
Metro Vancouver	13	6
Langley	2	2
Vancouver Island	3	1
Abbotsford	2	2
Kelowna	3	0
Kamloops	1	0
Prince George	4	2
Chilliwack	2	1
Squamish	1	0
Prince Rupert	1	0
Other	11	13
Entire province	N/A	8
National organization	N/A	1

### *Alberta*

City/region	Organizations located in city/region	Organizations providing service to city/region
Calgary	8	2
Edmonton	7	3
Red Deer	1	1
Medicine Hat	1	2
Grande Prairie	1	2
Fort McMurray	2	1
Other	2	7
Entire province	N/A	11
National organization	N/A	0

### *Saskatchewan*

City/region	Organizations located in city/region	Organizations providing service to city/region
Saskatoon	3	2
Regina	1	3
Humboldt	1	1
Other	1	2

Entire province	N/A	1
National organization	N/A	0

*Manitoba*

City/region	Organizations located in city/region	Organizations providing service to city/region
Winnipeg	12	4
Brandon	1	0
Flin Flon	1	1
Other	0	2
Entire province	N/A	9
National organization	N/A	1

*Ontario*

City/region	Organizations located in city/region	Organizations providing service to city/region
Greater Toronto Area (GTA)	20	11
Hamilton	1	2
Kitchener Waterloo	0	1
London	4	4
Ottawa	9	6
Kingston	0	1
Windsor	1	1
Niagara	0	1
Sudbury	1	2
North Bay	0	1
Blind River and Manitoulin Island	1	1
Sault Ste. Marie	1	2
Thunder Bay	3	3
Other	5	8
Entire province	N/A	8
National organization	N/A	7

*Québec*

City/region	Organizations located in city/region	Organizations providing service to city/region
Greater Montréal and Montréal Metropolitan Area	12	3
Gatineau	2	0

Saguenay	1	1
Other	2	4
Entire province	N/A	9
National organization	N/A	0

### *Newfoundland and Labrador*

City/region	Organizations located in city/region	Organizations providing service to city/region
Greater St. John's	6	2
Other	2	2
Entire province	N/A	4
National organization	N/A	0

### *Nova Scotia*

City/region	Organizations located in city/region	Organizations providing service to city/region
Halifax Region	5	1
South Shore (Bridgewater)	1	1
Cape Breton Island	2	1
Tri County (Yarmouth, Digby, Shelburne)	1	1
Annapolis Valley	1	0
Truro	2	1
Other	1	0
Entire province	N/A	5
National organization	N/A	0

### *New Brunswick*

City/region	Organizations located in city/region	Organizations providing service to city/region
Greater Saint John	3	2
Fredericton	2	0
Greater Moncton	4	2
Bathurst	1	1
Other	5	6
Entire province	N/A	5
National organization	N/A	0

*Prince Edward Island*

City/region	Organizations located in city/region	Organizations providing service to city/region
Greater Charlottetown Area	4	0
Summerside	2	0
Alberton	1	0
Montague	1	0
Other	1	0
Entire province	N/A	4
National organization	N/A	0

*Yukon*

City/region	Organizations located in city/region	Organizations providing service to city/region
Whitehorse	3	0
Entire territory	N/A	2
National organization	N/A	0

*Northwest Territories*

City/region	Organizations located in city/region	Organizations providing service to city/region
Yellowknife	3	1
Entire territory	N/A	2
National organization	N/A	0

*Nunavut*

City/region	Organizations located in city/region	Organizations providing service to city/region
Iqaluit	3	1
Entire territory	N/A	2
National organization	N/A	1

## Appendix B – Responses to Open-ended Questions

Responses to four of the open-ended questions are listed below, sorted by theme. Responses have been reproduced in full, and are unedited aside from occasional redactions required to remove identifying information.

**Q 68) Please list any other key areas of need for the women and girls within the communities you serve.**

### *Services*

- **Affordability**
  - “Affordable housing, employment, daycares, shelters, affordable food, mental health services.”
- **Accessibility**
  - “Giving them access to things like transportation that's often a barrier when they need to go to medical appointments or services or even programs.”
  - “The promotion of linguistic access to services and information, particularly for newly arrived immigrants and particularly for women. This information should also be provided in different communities so as to assure that all Canadians are obtaining the same information irrespective of the language that they speak. This in an effort to promote access to programs that affect social equality. Promotion of key concepts that apply in Canada, i.e. gender equality, from the onset of the immigration process. Promotion of key concepts that apply in Canada, i.e. gender equality, from the onset of the immigration process. Support and follow up for people, particularly women during and after the immigration process particularly in the case of sponsored women who do not speak the language as they are doubly vulnerable; Training of Immigration officials to recognize key issues of abuse that may be present, honor-based violence, forced marriages or trafficking.”
  - “Accès à des services dans leur langue (le français), distances à parcourir pour cet accès.”
- **Need for Inclusion and Accommodation of Marginalized Groups**
  - “Services specific to persons with disabilities and families supporting persons with disabilities (e.g. basic health care, childcare, income security, access to disability-specific drugs/medical supplies/extended health care).”
  - “Mental health. Trauma”

- “women using drugs (women are often injected after their male partners and as a result of being second on the needle are more prone to HIV acquisition), Access to naloxone training, stigma surrounding getting access to naloxone kits and training in pharmacies. Access to hormone therapy for gender reassignment has been difficult to access, lack of service provider competency. Lack of competency among healthcare service providers on queer and trans women's sexual and reproductive health needs. Women migrant workers are often discriminated, underpaid, abused and assaulted, little to no access to healthcare despite having an OHIP card.”
- “Artists with disabilities are often isolated and live in poverty. This is doubly so for female artists with disabilities. Sometimes even being able to enter an art gallery can be a challenge, let alone trying to get work shown in the gallery.”

### *Geographic Disparities*

- **Rural, North, Atlantic, and Reserves**

- “access to services, transportation and housing for rural residents/Indigenous populations living on-reserve”
- “Access to transportation, availability of access in isolated rural communities.”
- “Sexual and intimate violence are prevalent within the communities of Northern BC. Prevalence rates in some communities are multiple times higher than in southern BC. Services (legal and other) are extremely thin and concentrated in Prince George, BC. Health services, food security, and housing are all extremely variable in their availability throughout the region.”
- “Our women come to us with bruises, cuts, concussions, broken arms, broken ribs, broken knee-caps and we do our best to provide first aid and take them to the hospital. Men make the assumption that they “own” or limit the women's contacts and activities. When males are intoxicated, they are very unpredictable and will strike out at the partner. Women are equal - it's the Law, but women in the North never feel that way, as they have male partners who direct them, limit them, put firm boundaries in for them and are very violent towards them.”
- “The economic depression of the Atlantic region and PEI in particular coupled with our traditional, religious and patriarchal culture has created a hotbed of violence and misogyny in this region. Rural areas are worse but its endemic everywhere. A good man is considered someone who doesn't punch his wife regularly. That is where the bar is here. We must address toxic masculinity and all of the economic issues that force women in heterosexual relationships to stay in abusive ones. We need to deal with the gap, need basic income, increase to wages, new child support arrangements, universal childcare,

increased gender specific health services, etc... to give women especially the most marginalized the freedom to live free from violence. Rural issues are consistently ignored in the feminist movement. Women in rural Canada and Northern, isolated regions have an entirely different experience. All resources (including for this project I am assuming) go to urban areas and they get capacity to find out what is happening in rural areas. This doesn't work we need to build capacity and create leadership amongst rural communities, outsiders coming in does not help. This government has created a ton of feminist initiatives and increased supports to national groups and not enough of this money has gone to small rural, northern and isolated groups."

### *Stigmatization and Discrimination*

- **HIV Status**

- "HIV Stigma and discrimination is huge and lack of education, ignorance, misinformation. People are dying because of lack of funding and stigma"

### *Reproductive Justice*

- **Education**

- "Éducation à la sexualité (grossesse non planifié, ITSS, contraception, cycle ovulatoire, etc.) Besoin d'aides matérielles et alimentaires."

### *Violence and Harassment*

- **Support Requirements**

- "Need for court resources for custody cases when intimate partner violence has not been assessed."
- "Besoin de soutien suite à un ordre de la cour ou de la DPJ suite à des comportements violents. (nous offrons un groupe de soutien). Nous offrons aussi un groupe de soutien pour les femmes en situation de separation."
- Besoin d'hébergement sécuritaire et de services spécialisés en violence conjugale Besoin d'accompagnement dans les démarches Besoin de \$ pour les démarches... souvent elles n'ont pas accès aux ressources (avocats par exemple) par manque de sous..."

- **Particular Issues**

- "Missing and murdered women's issues presumably by men and man run investigation."
- "Sexual harassment in job sites is rampant - jobs are few, transportation is a barrier and in these small communities women are afraid to speak out."



Muskoka Parry Sound had the 3rd and 5th worst unfounded rates for women reporting sexual assault in the country. This is one crime unit of the OPP.”

- **Education and Training**

- “Education and training around consent and rape culture.”

### *Family Issues*

- **Support Requirements**

- “Childcare support”
- “Young women often need additional time and support when engaging with legal professionals. At times, there is a lack of patience and ability to work with young women facing multiple challenges such as educational level, cognitive limitations, mental health issues, history of trauma that may make intrusive conversations difficult. Young women often don't understand their rights in relation to child welfare needs and when their child has been taken to court. Crown Wards often seem at the mercy of Child Welfare when the quality and commitment of workers varies significantly. Access to safe gender specific residential care when leaving our agency with their child apprehended.”

- **Access to Benefits**

- “Access to statutory and regulatory benefits to which they and their children are entitled is often an issue. Many are tied to Revenue Canada and the Income Tax Act and yet there is little help to get and keep things like the Child Benefit, the Canada Learning Bond etc. Also caring for children is a gender issue (obviously) and BC chooses to not provide the Supplemental Child Benefit to foster families so women at the end of their economic lives are trying to raise children - particularly affects Indigenous children. Ontario pays the foster parent the fostering rate and the Supplement benefit so they get roughly twice what a foster does in BC. IN BC the Ministry keeps it.”

**Q 70) If there is anything else you would like to share about the issues that are facing the women and girls in the communities that you serve, please do so at this point.**

### *Stigmatization and Discrimination*

- **HIV Status**

- “Afro-Canadians living with HIV are struggling to engage in their communities because of stigma and discrimination. Women and girls are isolated and face fear of being arrested when they engage in relationships since HIV is criminalized.”
- “Women are made more vulnerable by the criminalization of HIV non-disclosure. Threats to go to police with false allegations of non-disclosure are

used as a tool of abuse and extortion. Victims of forced sex may face accusations of HIV non-disclosure by their attackers. Threats to disclose a woman's HIV status to others, are also used as a tool of abuse. When their status is disclosed to others (very often through posting on a social media site), they are faced with increased risk of discrimination, harassment and even violence because of pervasive HIV stigma. Historically, we have seen some women face discrimination by children's aid agencies who may poorly understand the modes of HIV transmission and inflate the risk of transmission between mothers and children, but this issue seems to be improving over the years.”

- **Living with a Disability**

- “That as women with disabilities we face a lot of stigmatization. Which causes many barriers throughout different areas of our lives.”

- **Parenting**

- “Young women continue to be disempowered and stigmatized when they assume the parenting role while in their teens. Many community members and professionals alike feel that becoming pregnant is a choice that young women make. When they choose to have their baby, they are often subjected to a series of barriers including poverty, inadequate access to resources and unstable housing options. This results in the next generation of children also experiencing adverse childhood conditions which continues the intergenerational cycle of abuse. Child welfare continues to struggle to understand individual differences ie., cognitive limitations and the system fails to meet options for this. For example, for young women leaving the sex trade, they are often ineligible for residential supports because they have a child. For a young women whose child is in care, if under 18 she is either homeless or in a foster home that does not offer the option for placement with her baby.”

- **Employment Industry**

- “We need to get rid of the stigma around women working in the construction trades.”

- **Sex Work**

- “The anti-trafficking initiatives and policies has received a lot of funding(including law enforcement and anti-sex work organization ) Those initiative encourage the surveillance of sex workers, violate their rights and increase the vulnerability and endanger the safety of sex workers, (e.g they are result in arrest, detained and deportation), sex workers are being forced to relocated.”

### *Economic and Social Rights*

- **Impact on Other Areas of Need**
  - “Both affordable housing and food, plus access to employment opportunities for family members would go a long way to assist with violence prevention, health concerns, and general community health and well-being.”

### *Mental Health*

- **Funding**
  - “[Redacted] is a feminist organization which advocates for women and counsels women dealing with substance use and problem gambling. Many of our clients are enrolled in our sexual abuse support program. Many are long-term clients. There is a definite lack of funding and support for long-term counselling services for women in recovery.”

### *Culture*

- **Religion**
  - “Religion has an impact on individuals. As first nation most of use knows the importance of maintaining one's Spirit. We are also told to respect our Elder but most of them are now into religions. Elder and/or older people don't accept that the younger one wants to connect with native spirituality.”

### *Violence and Harassment*

- **Legal System**
  - “One struggle is the child welfare system giving a woman's abuser access to children, or the struggle women face when trying to "prove" abuse to the child welfare system. There are very few lawyers in our community, and none that are currently taking on legal aid clients and there are no services specific to providing legal supports (legal aid is available remotely). Abuse is often not taken into account when women are navigating the legal system trying to get a court order surrounding children. There is no public transportation in our community so clients struggle to get around.”
  - “labelling intimate partner violence custody concerns as high conflict custody”
  - “Les accusations d'aliénation parentales à l'endroit de victimes de violence... c'est très grave et fréquent et à en pleurer... Les femmes nous disent qu'elles regrettent d'avoir demandé de l'aide... Il y aurait besoin justement que des causes où ceci est allégué soient accompagnées (et que les frais soient défrayés) pour défendre ces femmes et ces enfants et faire jurisprudence. Voir : [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3448062&fbclid=IwAR1eMvs5n9mj5h0iaUzzWb31Umqf1dPRTp4Jq7CK6i1uyFLOpj9qj4dKfK4](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3448062&fbclid=IwAR1eMvs5n9mj5h0iaUzzWb31Umqf1dPRTp4Jq7CK6i1uyFLOpj9qj4dKfK4)”

- **Education and Training**

- “Consent education needs to exist in a culture that has reevaluated the way we think about women and sex, changing from a moralistic view and dichotomies of virgin/whore to an empowered sex positive, freedom to choose approach. Without it consent education will only teach girls that they have the power to say no, and not also the power to say yes.”

- **Increasing Access to Information/Skills and Promoting Dialogue**

- “We have been doing community outreach for close to thirty years. We have found that when this information is provided in the language of origins, with the purpose of increasing their access to social justice and providing equality of information to them, this is highly appreciated. Through this dissemination of information at the community level, taboo subjects such as family violence are openly discussed as are options for victims, resources, laws and key concepts such as equality of women and men. This information helps victims to present themselves when issues are defined, such as conjugal violence. Many victims may not have recognized that they were in a cycle of abuse as there was no traditional framework that specified its existence within their community. Speaking openly also empowers women victims to ask for change in their situation.”
- “We are working currently in a community driven capacity building program to provide access to education and skill development training to encourage local women to bring their voices out into community to end violence of all kinds. Empowering Indigenous Women for Stronger Communities.”

### *Reproductive Justice*

- **Impact of Social Attitudes**

- “Rise of populism on women's rights (Doug Ford/ Andrew Scheer/ Trump/Pence), celebration of incels (involuntary celibates) on media online, HIV complex care and integrating women into the care cascade is difficult without women' centred health care models (family centric), first groups lost to care in transition from paediatric care to adult care, trans women are at 10X risk for HIV compared to general Ontario populations, black and Indigenous women at great risk for HIV, and this cultural attitude of slut-shaming impacts women from accessing sexual health care and supports, male entitlement to women's bodies.”

### *Geographic Disparities*

- **Atlantic Canada**

- “Would be great to see some Rural and Atlantic Canadian partners on this project. We as in Atlantic Canada and PEI in particular get lost in National initiatives and national organizations rarely have representation from or in PEI.”
- **Rural vs. Urban**
  - “There is a large and growing divide between large-city/urban Canada, which contains most of the country's population, and rural/remote Canada. Attention must be paid to the specific (and often urgent) needs of women in rural and remote areas.”
  - “Il est souvent presque impossible de soutenir une femme dans son cheminement de guérison face à la violence alors qu'elle n'a pas les moyens financiers pour se loger, s'alimenter, et vivre en santé. Les besoins primaires doivent être comblés avant de pouvoir travailler les autres besoins. Malheureusement parfois il faut tout faire à la fois selon les circonstances particulières de la femme. Une femme vivant en milieu rural vivant des difficultés de violence et doublement et triplement en difficulté.”

### *Other*

- **Impact of Social Attitudes**
  - “Previously in a hunting culture, women had to get under the wing of a man, with her children to eat. The dominance of males continues. Although she will be the worker in the home and outside the home, many males, due to their education level, have not found jobs, are very suspicious of her and restrict her mightily. Girls grow up seeing this and feel they have to have a man, rather than getting a fine education and being able to stand on their own. The things they put up with are indescribable.”

**Q 72) If the law has succeeded, or has been a useful tool in serving your community, please provide a short, concrete example as to how or why this is true in your community. You may choose to reference a specific law or policy, but do not need to.**

**Q 73) If the law has failed, or has not been a useful tool in serving your community, please provide a short, concrete example as to how or why this is true in your community. You may choose to reference a specific law or policy, but do not need to.**

### *Specific Laws, Bills, Cases, and Rights that have been Successful and/or Useful*

- **Reproductive Justice and Health**
  - “Tremblay c. Daigle. R. c. Morgentaler”

- “The Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act, has greatly reduced the harassment and bullying of patients and our staff by removing these people 50 metres away.”
- “Christian Medical and Dental Society of Canada v. College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, 2019 ONCA 393 (CanLII).”
- “Infants Act in BC: allows youth to make decisions about their own medical care if they are deemed a mature minor capable of consenting to their own medical care. Can allow trans youth to access gender-affirming care without parental consent”
- **Family Issues**
  - “Bill 84 recognizing homoparental families. Reform of family law: currently being studied in Quebec. Rights for transparent families. Rights for multiparent families”
  - “Child Welfare System and laws”
- **Violence, Sexual Violence, and Harassment**
  - “Rape Shield Law”
  - “The Barton case from the Supreme Court provided important direction to courts about addressing discrimination in sexual assault cases.”
  - “Robin camp, Cindy Gladue Case”
  - “Changer des lois pour reconnaître le caractère criminels d'actes de violence conjugale Ex: harcèlement criminel depuis 1993, Diffusion d'images intimes depuis peu.”
  - “Hanson v. Hureau Intersport Decision”
  - “Protection orders through the FLA have been helpful to women (to a certain degree in that it is only a piece of paper) to gain distance from an abusive partner.”
  - “The ability for a victim of IPV to apply for an Emergency Intervention Order AND have it enforced when perpetrator breaks the order. This is one legal measure that I have seen help in keeping abuse victims safe temporarily.”
- **HIV Criminalization**
  - “Recent changes to the criminalization of HIV (see HALCO reports)”
- **Multiple Areas of Law**
  - “Gladue principles; human rights; employment laws.”

- “Human Rights Tribunal & FNCS; NI-MMWIG; UN Tribunal -McIvor decision”
- “ex : P-22.1 - Loi visant à prévenir et à combattre les violences à caractère sexuel dans les établissements d’enseignement supérieur, E-12.001 - Loi sur l’équité salariale”

### *Specific Examples of the Use of Law*

- **Reproductive Justice and Health**

- “We lobbied actively for the enactment of 'safe access zone' legislation across a number of provinces. The legislation seeks to protect those seeking abortion care from violence, intimidation and harassment.”

- **Use of Law by Indigenous Communities**

- “Indigenous community groups using the law to intervene in construction of Trans Mountain Pipeline.”

- **Family Issues**

- “Les femmes que nous servons ont des besoins importants en matière de droit de la famille. Les informations et conseils juridiques que nous prodiguons est d'une aide majeure.”

- **Violence, Sexual Violence, and Harassment**

- “We work collaboratively with the RCMP, the Crown Prosecutors office, and Probation on several projects ([redacted]) to support children and families in navigating the criminal justice system, to prevent further re-offending on the part of perpetrators, and to ensure that women and children experiencing abuse have a voice and feel supported when fleeing situations of domestic violence. We also believe that there are several areas in which the law could improve its ability to effectively support those experiencing oppression and marginalization.”
- “The law has been a useful tool when social workers at our organization support women facing family violence issues as many of the women are not aware of their rights in Canada.”

- **Restorative Justice**

- “Restorative Justice is represented here from both Indigenous and non - Indigenous communities. There are often partnerships created between community based programs and all levels of the justice system in our area. There is currently a community driven initiative to support the creation of a local Indigenous Court process in our Territory.”

- **Multiple Areas of Law**

- “Administrative Fairness has been a vital tool to legal tribunals and quasi-judicial processes like family hearing. Court challenges are very expensive and time draining so we have used the framework of the legal principles to leverage change. We believe Jordon's Principle succeeded on that basis, and that challenges with CSC have been effective for inmates as the remedies otherwise can be too long. We have though explored with [redacted] the issue of advancing the Bangkok Rules particularly the provision for indigenous and parenting/pregnant women as a means of reducing incarceration and increasing the rights of children to be raised by their parents. 92% of women serve sentences of less than 6 months so we see the impact potentially as significant.”
- “Dans nos services, nous pouvons informer les femmes sur leurs droits, leur faciliter l'accès à des conseils juridiques essentiels lorsqu'elles sont en instance de separation/divorce, que la garde des enfants est menacée,, qu'elle a subi une violence sexuelle, conjugale ou autre. Dans certaines communautés rurales, il nous a été possible de faciliter l'accès à des services juridiques grâce à nos moyens ou liens en province. Le soutien que nous avons pu apporter au niveau du droit, n'a pas toujours donné le résultat desiré mais il est essentiel afin que les femmes obtiennent le droit et l'accès à la justice. Ceci joue aussi un grand rôle dans la capacité des femmes de vivre des vies plus saines.”

### *The Law is Sometimes Helpful, but also Fails*

- **Failure to Address Root Causes**

- “The law is useful at the end of a problem. We need to look at the source of the issues and fix them, people in most cases just need something to do to feel a sense of self worth: Going back through to root causes: violence/anger/frustration/no source of income to support family/lack of jobs/poor education/families wanting to stay in community where there are family connections/housing shortage or very expensive housing costs that serves the well paid/overcrowded housing/very expensive food costs/lack of hunting skills/culturalization to southern ways”

- **Different Levels of Usefulness**

- “Occasionally international law is helpful regarding issues of violations of the law of war, but less so than would be wished--it seems largely ignored despite all the efforts made to use it. The Charter can be more relevant and useful.”
- “The law has been somewhat helpful in convicting the offender of Intimate Partner Violence but there seems to be a gap between Criminal Law and Family Law. Many Emergency Intervention Orders have been denied depending on the adjudicator, some judges are not a fan of the EIO and are reducing length of the requested EIO. Family Law is backed up until spring 2020 putting many



women and children at greater risk. More and more men are keeping their children from their mother.”

- “For many of the women we work with, the law has been a tool that has been both useful and problematic. The law enables women to obtain custody of their children, have a restraining order against their abusive ex-partner but it has also throw women into the abyss of legal wrangling.”

- **Failure in Law’s Application**

- “Generally, we believe there has been a great success on the part of feminist activists in achieving legal reforms aimed at ending male violence against women. However, the application and enforcement of these laws does not reflect these achievements. Too often women are let down by the legal system and men continue to beat, rape, harass, and prostitute us without abatement. The legal system has not succeeded in holding men accountable for their violence.”
- “Les enjeux doivent être centrés sur la défense des droits des femmes. Nous sommes loin de l'égalité de fait!”
- “[Redacted] Police refusing to take reports of females who wish to report a sexual assault - likely done to keep their ""unfounded"" rates low (we've encountered over 12 cases in the past 2-3 months). Schools forcing female victims to attend classes with their perpetrators, citing police refusal to take a report as grounds for not protecting children (we had 7 children from multiple schools encounter this in the past few weeks). Family courts not looking at the criminal records of dads, especially in relation to violence and/or weapons. Family courts don't understand IPV dynamics, resulting in the women being more at risk of being murdered. Perpetrators getting subpoenas for their victims' health records - we have to fight each one of these and the cost is huge, and the impact to the victim is devastating.”
- “Indirectly from my experience, we've had clients who've reported assault that have been dissuaded and I would say ignored and bullied by police. Their cases were not pursued, and they were left (at best) feeling unprotected and unserved.”
- “a lady was looking for her son that was missing and police and shelters gave no info”
- “issue of unfounded - high rate, already mentioned failure of local justice system to address male perpetrators effectively - low rates of involvement with Partner Assault Response (PAR) local Crown in [Redacted] refuses to attend VAWCC meetings, refuses to provide statistics on Crown prosecutions.”

- **Law Fails but Remains Necessary**

- “The law often fails but it still a necessary tool. The conviction and imprisonment of former judge David William Ramsay in 2004 was evidence of both corruption (the judge preyed on vulnerable minors, some of whom appeared before him in court) and the ultimate power of law.”

### *The Law Oppresses Groups*

- **Indigenous Women and Girls**

- “This is difficult to say because I work with Indigenous women and girls, and the law is a segment of our colonial government that has done tremendously criminal things to Indigenous peoples for generations and continues to do so today. While laws have played a part in protecting our people sometimes in the moment, by responding to calls of violence etc, but ultimately throwing people in prison does not rehabilitate our community members to return as balanced and healthy members of society. Significant reform in our government and lawmaking protocols is vital to creating a just society for not just Indigenous, but all underserved communities. Thank you for doing this research and trying to bring about meaningful change!”
- “Non-Indigenous partners with good knowledge often use the legal system as a tool to control indigenous women.”

- **Sex Workers**

- “The law is useful but mainly is the tools of oppression against the sex workers, particular the racialize and migrant”

- **People who Use Drugs**

- “i work with people who use drugs. the criminalization of people who use drugs negatively impacts their health and wellbeing, even in instances where the law could potentially be helpful (eg when they are the victims of a crime).”

### *The Law Fails*

- **General**

- “When I said "yes" previously, I think it could be a useful tool, but often it is intimidating, and doesn't serve the women we work with well.”

- **Indigenous Women**

- “The law fails, on a systemic level, aboriginal women on all front.”
- “news reports of all the missing persons of Indigenous ancestry”
- “people don’t understand what is their role and responsibilities as chief and council or people in position of governing roles (board of directors) once a

resolution was pass to dismantle a sweat lodge. The chief didn't understand her role."

- **Women Facing Violence**

- "The law fails, on a systemic level, women facing violence in all it's forms."
- "The law is not designed to support women experiencing domestic violence, it minimizes their experiences, re victimizes them and leaves them feeling worse and often less safe."
- "The law fails to protect or find justice for survivors of sexual and gendered violence."
- "the law is not always helpful or on the side of victims. the fact that men can be charged and then released despite the escalating threat of violence. Police and judges are not equipped to deal with trauma. seen too often how officers choose to interpret safety, violence and interventions. women living on-reserve or in our rural communities do not have equitable access to the legal systems and are often stigmatized when they are travelling into the urban area."

- **Trans Women**

- "There are many laws that make murder and physical assault illegal, and yet trans women are still over-represented in experiencing violence."

- **Individuals Involved with the Child Welfare System**

- "Children lost into the Child Welfare System are often not returned."
- "Batterers getting unsupervised access of children or custody of children."

- **Northern and Rural Communities**

- "We have a high rate of crime, drugs and gangs in the North, and nothing seems to address the reduction of the issues Those that do receive sentences return back to community to continue the violence."
- "there is no real penalty for sexual assault, or physical assault in relationships in the courts...women do not feel safe to report as in rural areas their safety is compromised because of time it takes for the police to respond to a call.... An abuser may be 3 months but is out in 6 weeks and that is only enough time for him to be really angry at her and the risks go up for her to be attacked again. Transportation is a real issue for women to get to court etc."

- **Unionized Workers**

- “The Trade Union Act prohibits complainants to act on their own. That's a problem with unionized employees whose unions will not support them. The NS Human Rights Act does not have ""getting one's job back"" as a remedy when someone is discriminated against.”

### *Multiple Issues and Isolated Responses*

- “Success is a strong word. People need to understand the law in order to avoid victimization and criminalization. People who are marginalized for various reasons need to have both their rights and credibility acknowledged and respected by legal, economic and social service systems. They require substantial advocacy to make the law work for them.”
- “A lot of the people we serve are either homeless, PWID, members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community and they face a lot of prejudice, judgement, and stigmatization with the general population and the police force.”
- “sexual assault laws, consent laws, child protection, restraining orders, criminal harassment/stalking, Al-Rawi, RCMP doctor, police/systemic failure, Rethaeh Parsons, NS Home for Coloured Children, police checks”