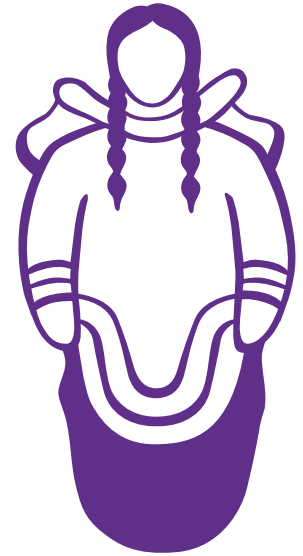


National Urban Inuit Homelessness and Housing Needs Assessment Final Report



April 2022



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Executive Summary

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada (Pauktuutit) is the national representative organization of Inuit women in Canada; and, in 2021 received funding from the Government of Canada's, *Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy* program to conduct research and produce a National Urban Inuit Housing and Homelessness Needs Assessment.

Drawing on primary research conducted in multiple urban centres across Canada and secondary sources, Pauktuutit recognizes the diverse housing-related lived experiences of the growing population of Inuit and experiences of housing service providers. The data collected from 12 urban centres across Canada (Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, St. John's, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Halifax, Regina, Edmonton, Yellowknife, Victoria, and Fredericton) highlights the need to address gaps and issues in capacity and the adequacy of supports available to Inuit. This Inuit-specific research and policy project seeks to better understand the impacts of homelessness and housing insecurity on Inuit living out of Inuit Nunangat, which is the homeland of the Inuit in Canada within the four Inuit Regions.

This project took a phased approach with this report culminating the completion of more than ninety formal interviews with Inuit service providers and Inuit with lived experience. Additionally, the project completed research from interviews with non-Inuit service providers, examined international homelessness approaches and strategies to leverage those practices for the betterment of Inuit in Canada, completed a literature review focussed on the adequacy and effectiveness of homelessness programs and services for urban Inuit in Canada, and an overview of homelessness and housing programs and services in the 12 designated urban centres.

These documents can be obtained by contacting Pauktuutit's Social and Economic Development team by email at lijtemaye@pauktuutit.ca.

- *Overview of Homelessness and Housing Programs and Services in Twelve Urban Centres*
- *International Approaches to Indigenous Homelessness: A Literature Review*
- *The Adequacy and Effectiveness of Homelessness Programs and Services for Urban Inuit in Canada: A Literature Review*
- *National Urban Inuit Homelessness and Housing Needs Assessment: Service Provider Interviews*
- *National Urban Inuit Homelessness and Housing Needs Assessment: Research Summary*

This project builds on the strengths and capacity in each of the 12 urban centres noted above, while adhering to health and safety practices for COVID-19. Due to the nature and timing of the project, selection of survey participants was not randomized; and, since the sample size is small, results cannot be generalized to all Inuit living outside of Inuit Nunangat. Nevertheless, the research captures a range of demographics and living situations for Inuit and their service providers. The importance and legitimacy of this data about shelter and housing needs, challenges and gaps should be highlighted and considered benchmarks for policy makers, service providers, and other housing authorities moving forward.

Based on formal and informal interviews, it is apparent each person has a unique experience contributing to their entrance to and experience of homelessness or housing insecurity. As such, creating services and opportunities for the possibility of assessing individual needs ought to be considered during the revision, development, and implementation of housing related services. Interviews revealed unique compounding factors and gaps that can lead to homelessness for Inuit and may be categorized as follows:

- lack of available and affordable housing,
- minimal education and employment opportunities,
- shortage of culturally specific supports to address mental health and substance misuse disorders,
- experiences of trauma, including gender-based and partner-based violence and
- experiences of discrimination, racism, gender-based inequity, and colonialism experienced when relocating from Inuit Nunangat to urban centres

These gaps are exacerbated as available housing and other support services are not Inuit-specific or culturally appropriate for Inuit. As a result, this may promote prejudice, discrimination, systemic racism, and sexism. Geographically, concerns were raised by services providers regarding accessing Inuit-specific funding outside of Inuit Nunangat. One Inuit Service Provider outside of Inuit Nunangat shared the barriers associated with supports in the south can be attributed to the lack of support of urban Inuit from Inuit organizations of the Inuit Regions, defined as from the three northern territories of Canada. This is compounded by the lack of targeted funding opportunities for Inuit outside of Inuit Nunangat, and Regional Inuit Land Claim organizations that have no agency concerning Inuit who leave the Inuit Regions to make the southern urban destinations their home.

Recognizing housing is a human right, Canada must consider legislative and policy contexts. Culturally appropriate approaches must acknowledge all homeless and housing insecure Inuit. Canada must also understand and respect the importance and necessity of meaningful local engagement, a housing policy for Inuit living outside Inuit Nunangat, and Inuit data sovereignty. It is essential to acknowledge the unique lived experiences and pathways to homelessness, including sources of income, current location, challenging conditions, and lived experiences of trauma of Inuit. Canada must also consider shelter use and transitional housing for Inuit women and gender-diverse Inuit. Should governments and support and housing services address recommendations put forth in this research Inuit may experience improving access to safe, culturally appropriate, and affordable housing and housing-related services.

Support and service agencies must acknowledge local circumstances and, community needs. They must incorporate culturally appropriate activities for Inuit. Inuit homelessness services and housing options must be provided by Inuit organizations and reflect Inuit values, beliefs, and traditions (e.g., community and family living environment). Through the recommendations put forth in this research, we are advocating for the achievement of four desired outcomes:

- economic integration,
- basic needs being met,
- prevention and shelter diversion, and
- housing security.

Informed by the results of this research, these outcomes consider the following factors for moving forward and providing support to Inuit and service providers:

- Governance and administration
 - Integrated supports and wrap-around services
- Addressing lived experiences and pathways to homelessness
 - Economic integration services
 - Basic needs services
- Recognizing diverse experiences of homelessness
 - Prevention and shelter diversion services
- Housing services

The recommendations promote equitable access to safe and affordable housing is essential to improving quality of life and safety for Inuit women, gender diverse Inuit, families, and communities across Canada.

Introduction

Assisted by a consulting firm, Pauktuutit conducted an analysis of housing services available to Inuit and interviews of service providers in twelve urban centres: Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, St. John's, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Halifax, Regina, Edmonton, Yellowknife, Victoria, and Fredericton, and conducted interviews with non-Inuit service providers in these cities. The reports, *National Urban Inuit Housing and Homelessness Needs Assessment: Research Summary* and *National Urban Inuit Housing and Homelessness Needs Assessment: Service Provider Interviews* summarize responses of service providers in each city and offer over arching themes and observations from the interview processes. Additionally, Pauktuutit completed a review of examined international homelessness approaches and strategies to leverage those practices for the betterment of Inuit in Canada, completed a literature review focussed on the adequacy and effectiveness of homelessness programs and services for urban Inuit in Canada, and an overview of homelessness and housing programs and services in the 12 designated urban. All documents may be obtained by contacting Pauktuutit's Social and Economic Development team by email at lijtemaye@pauktuutit.ca.

Homelessness "has an impact on every community in Canada. It affects individuals, families, women fleeing violence, youth, seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities. A Point-in-Time Count survey conducted in 2018 found that, on a given night, 25,216 people across 61 communities were experiencing absolute homelessness in shelters or unsheltered locations. An additional 6,789 people were in a transitional program. Point in Time Counts provide a one-day snapshot of homelessness in a community, including people experiencing homelessness in shelters, unsheltered locations, and transitional housing. They can also include people experiencing homelessness who are in health or correctional facilities or who are staying with others because they have no access to a permanent residence.¹ Overcoming homelessness is more complex than finding a physical place to call home. Instead, it is the process of sustaining that home and access to resources and supports to do so (i.e., wrap-around services to keep permanent safe housing). The resources and supports needed will be unique to individuals and vary over the course of their lives. Resources and supports must be based on culturally relevant and community-defined determinants of health.²

1 (ESDC, 2022)

2 (Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, 2018)

This project seeks to better understand the impacts of homelessness and housing insecurity on Inuit living out of Inuit Nunangat. Pauktuutit has developed a Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) framework to complete the research and policy review in a phased approach, while adhering to health and safety practices for COVID-19 and adhering to best practices for research with vulnerable populations. The objective of this research is to provide a better understanding of the current capacity and supports available to Inuit across the country in addition to serving as a advocacy tool toward more equitable representation of Inuit provincially and nationally. The diverse lived experiences of the growing Inuit population in urban centres and staff at various service agencies were collected, and analyzed these data provide an evidence-based assessment of the programs, services and supports required for Inuit to build the good lives in urban centres.³ The research explores barriers experienced by Inuit accessing funding, including issues experienced by Inuit outside of Inuit Nunangat, community capacity for proposal development and implementation, and a lack of Inuit data.⁴ This research is critical to understanding how needs of Inuit in urban centres have evolved, and impacts of prior initiatives.⁵

Understanding Indigenous Homelessness

It is important to recognize the complexity of Indigenous homelessness in Canada. It “is best understood as the outcome of historically constructed and ongoing settler colonization and racism that have displaced and dispossessed First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples from their traditional governance systems and laws, territories, histories, worldviews, ancestors and stories.”⁶ Indigenous homelessness is more than losing a physical space to call home. Rather, the lack of a strong connection to Indigenous culture and community is central to Indigenous experiences of home and homelessness.⁷

Based on engagement with Indigenous Peoples in Canada and for the purposes of Reaching Home, Canada’s homelessness strategy, Indigenous homelessness is defined as “the state of having no home due to colonization, trauma and/or whose social, cultural, economic, and political conditions place them in poverty.”⁸ Indigenous Peoples experiencing homelessness include individuals who are: ‘couch surfing’, using emergency shelters, alternating between unsheltered and sheltered living arrangements, living on the street, fleeing unsafe environments due to abuse, and youth transitioning from care. Experiences of homelessness also include living in unsafe, unaffordable, and inadequate accommodations or the release from facilities (e.g., mental health and addiction treatment centers, hospitals, transition houses, or prisons).⁹

There are several reasons why Urban Inuit feel a lack of safety and security in their housing. Reasons for feeling unsafe in their current or most recent housing include discrimination, conditions of the home/building, high traffic of people, criminal activity on or near the home/building, police presence, partner/ex-partner, state of the house itself, and mould.¹⁰ Other problems experienced in recent housing include pests, size [overcrowding], bullying, location (e.g., too noisy), and low-income support.¹¹

3 (Pauktuutit, 2021)

4 (Pauktuutit, 2021)

5 (Pauktuutit, 2021)

6 (Thistle, 2017, p. 6)

7 (Ecker, 2020)

8 (Government of Canada, 2020)

9 (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2021)

10 (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2021, 2022)

11 (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2021, 2022)

Taking a Distinctions-Based Approach

Any approach to ending Indigenous homelessness must include a distinctions-based approach and an understanding the experiences of specific sub-groups of Indigenous Peoples who are most marginalized and over-represented in homelessness systems. Understanding Indigenous homelessness requires acknowledging the diversity of Indigenous Peoples in Canada and the distinct needs of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, regardless of membership or residency. Research shows Indigenous women and gender-diverse people are disproportionately represented when it comes to housing insecurity and homelessness in Canada.¹² Research, service provision, and policy solutions must incorporate Inuit-specific values, traditions and beliefs about land, family, and community as they impact all Inuit, including women, gender-diverse, children, and families.

When considering the Inuit community, the population “is young and growing quickly. Most of the Inuit population live in 51 communities spread across Inuit Nunangat but increasing numbers of Inuit are moving to live in larger urban centres.”¹³ More than one quarter (27.1%) of Inuit live outside of Inuit Nunangat.¹⁴ When multiple identities/Inuit ancestries are considered, 40% are living outside Inuit Nunangat.¹⁵ Between 2006 and 2016, the overall Inuit population in Canada increased by 29.1%, while those living outside Inuit Nunangat increased by 61.9%.¹⁶ Inuvialuit, Nunavut, Nunavik, and Nunatsiavut are the four Inuit Regions that make up the Inuit homeland referred to as Inuit Nunangat.¹⁷

According to Statistics Canada, in 2016, 8.5% of Canadians were living in overcrowded environments.¹⁸ Inuit in Inuit Nunangat had the highest rate of overcrowding in Canada, at 51.7%, more than six times the national average.¹⁹ The well-documented housing crisis in Inuit Nunangat coupled with increased rates of various forms of violence are the main factors influencing the migration of Inuit from Inuit Nunangat to urban centres.²⁰ When asked how they came to be living in their current city, some Inuit women and gender-diverse Inuit shared they “ran away from home” or “moved due to lack of housing.”²¹

Trauma as a Leading Cause of Homelessness

Trauma is a significant factor influencing Inuit women's relocation to cities, according to Pauktuutit's (2017) *Understanding the Needs of Urban Inuit Women Report*.²² When considering experiences of eviction, some of the reasons may include incidents of violence or “relationship altercations.”²³ Respondents in Pauktuutit's (2021, 2022) surveys shared they had “left an abusive relationship” and “got evicted by spouse,”²⁴ and 88% shared they were Survivors of abuse — illustrating the high rates of experience of violence amongst this population of women and gender-diverse peoples.

12 (Native Women's Association of Canada, 2019)

13 (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2019, p. 11)

14 (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2021, 2022)

15 (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2021, 2022)

16 (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2021, 2022)

17 (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2019)

18 (Statistics Canada, 2017)

19 (Statistics Canada, 2017)

20 (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2019)

21 (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2021, 2022)

22 (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2017)

23 (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2021, 2022)

24 (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2021, 2022)

There are various forms of trauma that impact women and gender-diverse Inuit, including: violence against women (VAW); gender-based violence (GBV); emotional abuse; psychological abuse; physical abuse; sexual abuse; self-directed violence; interpersonal violence; collective violence; sexual violence; intimate partner violence (IPV); domestic violence; family violence; workplace violence; structural violence; lateral violence; spiritual violence; and financial abuse.²⁵ Inuit women show similar experiences “rooted in similar intergenerational and personal traumas” and “the lack of adequate services within [Inuit] communities often came up as the reason women had to stay in urban centres.”²⁶ This may also include encounters with the criminal justice system, substance abuse or addiction (e.g., alcohol, drugs, gambling), child welfare involvement as a child, child welfare involvement as an adult, residential school or other colonial practices, sex trafficking, and sexual abuse as a child.²⁷

A Path Forward

There are gaps in policies, programs, and services for all Inuit living outside of Inuit Nunangat. This is particularly true for the policies, programs, and services that consider and encourage the development and sustainability of Inuit cultures, social values, and languages.

Many Inuit families living outside of Inuit Nunangat face challenges related to social and cultural isolation, lack of access to culturally appropriate programs and services, and suffer high levels of mental distress.²⁸ The overarching goal of this research is to improve the socio-economic outcomes by better tailoring solutions and provide a clear set of recommendations that may improve the outcomes for Inuit who face housing insecurity or homelessness outside of Inuit Nunangat.²⁹ The recommendations are supported by Inuit perspectives of Inuit housing insecurity and homelessness outside of Inuit Nunangat.³⁰ This report draws upon primary research conducted in multiple urban centres across Canada and secondary sources, as appropriate.



Legislative & Policy Context – Housing is a Human Right

A comprehensive discussion of the legal framework surrounding housing is beyond the scope of this policy paper. Instead, this section situates Pauktuutit’s recommendations within existing Canadian law and policy.

Existing Canadian law and policy appreciate housing is a fundamental human right and reflects the three international agreements most relevant to housing and Indigenous peoples to which Canada is a signatory. This includes the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948), the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1966), and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2007). As per these agreements,

“to be adequately housed means to have secure tenure—not having to worry about being evicted or having your home or lands taken away. It means living somewhere that is in keeping with your culture, and having access to appropriate services, schools, and employment. Housing adequacy in the Indigenous context must be viewed through the lens of Indigenous culture.”³¹

25 (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2019)

26 (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2017, p. 17)

27 (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2021, 2022)

28 (Pauktuutit, 2021)

29 (Pauktuutit, 2021)

30 (Pauktuutit, 2021)

31 (Native Women’s Association of Canada, 2019)

Article 23 of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2007) states Indigenous Peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing, and other economic and social programs affecting them. Indigenous Peoples should also have the right to administer such programs through their own organizations and institutions.³²

The 2019 *National Housing Strategy Act* (NHSA) is Canada's first piece of legislation that identifies housing as a fundamental human right.³³ The NHSA (2019) recognizes all people have the "right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity" and mandates the federal government to develop and support rights-based housing policies to realize the right to housing over time progressively.³⁴ To be respectful of human rights, housing must meet minimum conditions of adequacy, which includes affordability, availability of services, and respect for cultural identity.³⁵

Under the *National Housing Strategy Act* (2019) the federal government must

- Adopt and maintain a *National Housing Strategy* to eliminate homelessness and realize the right to adequate housing in the shortest possible time, using all appropriate means and the maximum available resources.
- Ensure vulnerable groups and those affected by homelessness and inadequate housing can participate in policy development to realize their right to housing.
- Create and support mechanisms for vulnerable groups denied the right to housing to identify systemic issues, make submissions, and access hearings.
- Respond to recommendations about what the federal government must do to address systemic issues and ensure the right to housing for all.³⁶

The primary focus of the *National Housing Strategy* is to meet the needs of vulnerable populations, such as women and children fleeing family violence, seniors, Indigenous Peoples, people with disabilities, those dealing with mental health and substance misuse issues, veterans, and young adults.³⁷

The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation has stated their priorities include the co-development of distinctions-based Indigenous housing strategies and working on a nation-to-nation, Inuit-to-Crown, and government-to-government basis.³⁸ Indigenous leaders have informed the government the best approach respects the distinct housing needs of each group and community and is one that is led by Indigenous communities.³⁹ More specifically, "Indigenous housing should be designed, constructed, and delivered by Indigenous communities and organisations ... to generate the best possible outcomes for urban Indigenous people."⁴⁰ For this reason, Pauktuutit conducted its engagement with Inuit and a variety of service providers. This work expands on previous and related homelessness activities Pauktuutit has undertaken in recent years to construct positions for consideration when discussing housing and homelessness policy by and for Inuit living outside Inuit Nunangat.

32 (Assembly of First Nations, n.d.)

33 (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, n.d.)

34 (Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation, n.d.)

35 (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2009)

36 (Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation, n.d.)

37 (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2018)

38 (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2021)

39 (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2018)

40 (Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, 2018)

The Government of Canada works with Inuit every day by providing services vital to their lives. Like all other Canadians, Inuit deserve high-quality, easy-to-access, straightforward, and secure services responsive to their unique needs, whether provided in person, online, or through call centres. Economic and social policies and programs must move forward to enhance possibilities and improve outcomes for Inuit to promote social inclusion, financial stability, and cultural connections within communities.



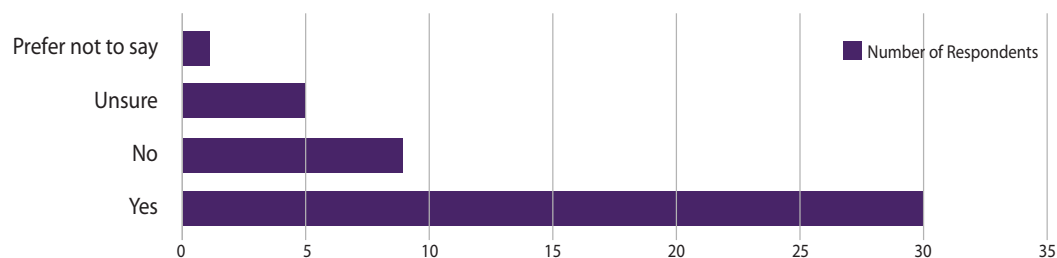
The Inuit Way – Housing Policy for Inuit Living Outside Inuit Nunangat

This section gives the necessary conceptual background for Pauktuutit’s recommendations to the Government of Canada regarding the *National Housing Strategy* and specifically, *Reaching Home*. As well, it discusses Pauktuutit’s recommendations regarding housing policy for Inuit living outside Inuit Nunangat concerning relevant Inuit values and principles. A table of guiding principles for applying Inuit Values, reflecting Inuit knowledge as expressed by Elders,⁴¹ is included in Appendix A for reference.

Meaningful Local Engagement – By Inuit, for Inuit

In Canada, existing social systems, and institutions (e.g., the justice system, educational system, political system, economy, religion, and family) are designed to manage areas of social need that often do not ‘fit’ within Inuit worldviews. In many instances, these social systems and institutions work contrary to the beliefs and values of Inuit ways of being and doing.⁴² The data collected in twelve urban centres across Canada indicated that majority of respondents believe that shelter services that serve only Inuit women or gender-diverse Inuit are needed, which is highlighted in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Inuit-Specific Shelter Services



When participants were asked how important it is that housing support services are provided by Inuit, 59% shared that this was “very important.” When asked how important it is that housing support services be available in Inuktitut, 34% indicated that this was “very important,” while 43% shared that it was “somewhat important.” There are significant cultural differences between mainstream Western culture and Inuit culture, underlining the need for Inuit-specific services that are built for Inuit by Inuit. This is necessary to promote equity Inuit and specifically for Inuit women, gender-diverse Inuit, as an element of reconciliation.

41 (Karetak, Tester, & Tagalik, 2017); (Government of Nunavut, n.d.)

42 (Tagalik, 2010)

Acknowledging All Housing-Insecure Inuit

Many urban Inuit who are seeking shelter are taken into already crowded houses, contributing to poor health outcomes, and masking the accurate and up-to-date rates of homelessness. In Pauktuutit's (2021-2022) study, 64% of respondents indicated that they had made use of shelters in their current city. When asked whether they have been turned away from a shelter because it was full, 43% shared that this has happened between two to five occurrences. Furthermore, 38% stated that they have been turned away more than five times because the shelter was at capacity. There are a variety of difficulties and challenges experienced by Inuit women and gender-diverse Inuit when looking for a place to stay. Pauktuutit (2021, 2022) found that these reasons may include experiences of discrimination (67%), documentation or paperwork (53%), availability (84%), cost/affordability (84%), and safety of location (64%).

The government's current focus on "chronic homelessness" when designing and implementing programs under the *National Housing Strategy* does not respond to the needs of Inuit women and gender-diverse Inuit. The current definition excludes "hidden homelessness," which is the most common way women and gender-diverse people experience homelessness. The lack of acknowledging "the experiences of women within federal definitions of chronic homelessness results in inequitable investments for women who are homelessness and contributes to severe gaps in supports, services, and emergency housing."

Women and gender-diverse people often stay temporarily with acquaintances or family members, remaining in dangerous or substandard conditions, unable to leave abusive relationships, and/or trading sex and companionship for a place to stay. It is important to consider the distinct reasons why some Inuit women and gender-diverse Inuit may avoid shelters. Pauktuutit (2021, 2021) found that 62% of those who responded indicated that they have avoided going to a shelter. Some of these reasons include "rules around intoxication meant no access to shelter, felt unsafe around a shelter user so decided not to go." Considering the lack of safety in shelters, one respondent shared that it was easier to sleep in a park, on a heating grate, or under a bridge because "sometimes I felt that staff at the shelter didn't like me because I was Native and would treat me differently." Another said that they were "scared of getting sick and/or diseases, such as lice" or "avoided going to shelters because I got tired of getting turned away but also because other women, had made threats against me and staff just brushed it off." One respondent stated

I was afraid, I had never been to one before, I had a small child. I had to leave my home and I knew I couldn't take my stuff to a shelter and wasn't sure if I'd be safe. Second time I didn't want to go because it wasn't safe, and I didn't want to go, and I couched surfed instead.

Another participant said

After not being able to get into a shelter multiple times due to bed shortages I just gave up. I have also heard stories from friends of them being taken advantage of by staff, attacked by other women so now I just avoid them at all costs.

The lack of acknowledging "the experiences of women within federal definitions of chronic homelessness results in inequitable investments for women who are homelessness and contributes to severe gaps in supports, services, and emergency housing."⁴³ Pauktuutit appreciates that Canada engages in discussions on chronic homelessness with the National Indigenous Homelessness Council and Northern Indigenous organizations including those of Inuit Nunangat. To acknowledge all housing-insecure Inuit, Pauktuutit supports the ongoing discussions between Indigenous Community Entities, Indigenous Community Advisory Boards, and Canada.

43 (Schwan & Ali, 2021)

Culturally Appropriate Approaches

There is a need for culturally appropriate services and housing models to address Inuit homelessness. Displacement of Inuit men and women is occurring at increasing rates.⁴⁴ More specifically, the percentage of Inuit living outside of Inuit Nunangat increased by 27.2 per cent since 2006.⁴⁵ Inuit have reported that Statistics Canada has undercounted Inuit living in southern urban centres and that the rate is more accurately estimated at four to six times the reported numbers. We also know that Inuit live across Canada, in every province and territory and not restricted to urban centres. The rate of Inuit living in southern Canada is increasing and growing exponentially. When considering the displacement of Inuit women, they represent 51% of the total Inuit population and experience violence at 14 times higher than the national average.⁴⁶ Inuit women move out of Inuit Nunangat to flee family violence and for access to health care, postsecondary education, safe and adequate housing, employment and training opportunities, and the chance for 'a better way of life.'⁴⁷ Much like Inuit women, Inuit men move out of Inuit Nunangat for access to health care, postsecondary education, safe and adequate housing, employment and training opportunities, and 'a better way of life' for their children.⁴⁸ Inuit men also move away to distance their families from historic trauma and intergenerational trauma. Many Inuit men and women are sent or moved south not by choice but by systemic deficiencies in Inuit Nunangat social services to provide community care for their resident population.⁴⁹ It is fundamental to understanding the Inuit diaspora that the reason many Inuit are no longer in Inuit Nunangat is not of their own design or self-determination. Rather, it is a consequence of the legacy of colonization and the impact of various institutions (e.g., correction services, child welfare, intensive or speciality health care, long term health care, seniors' services, disabilities, and palliative care).⁵⁰

Inuit Data Sovereignty

Data sovereignty is a critical component of coordinated access. It includes the type of data collected, how and where it is stored, who has access to it, and who has control over it.⁵¹ Inuit agencies should hold the data and share what is necessary and appropriate with mainstream organizations at their own discretion.⁵²

Standardized data collection procedures, grounded in Western-based methods, can be inappropriate and damaging for Indigenous Peoples.⁵³ Assessment tools commonly used in Reaching Home programs, particularly the Vulnerability Index-Service Prioritization Decision Assessment Tool (VI-SPDAT), do not provide an accurate representation of Indigenous Peoples' needs and may re-traumatize populations.⁵⁴ Assessment tools that assign a numerical score of need to people are "in direct violation of Indigenous tradition, knowledge, and teachings. It also has linkages to historically traumatizing practices that occurred during the period of Residential Schools and the 60's Scoop."⁵⁵ In a study by Ecker et al. (2021), a key informant shared

44 (Pauktuutit, 2021)

45 (Pauktuutit, 2021)

46 (Pauktuutit, 2021)

47 (Pauktuutit, 2021)

48 (Pauktuutit, 2021)

49 (Pauktuutit, 2021)

50 (Pauktuutit, 2021)

51 (Ecker, 2020)

52 (Ecker, 2020)

53 (Ecker, 2020)

54 (Ecker, 2020)

55 (Ecker, 2020)

Absolutely, historically for us having a number like that is that it could be a trauma and a trigger that people are experiencing. So, we don't want to be traumatizing people by just coming by. You're already vulnerable and coming to ask for additional support for your family, we don't want to create any kind of environment that's not safe.⁵⁶

Pauktuutit supports the development of the community grown assessment tool for coordinated access by the National Indigenous Homelessness Council, with oversight by the National Indigenous *Reaching Home* CE/CAB Advisory Committee. Pauktuutit recommends that Inuit organizations be funded to provide guidance to make the assessment tool culturally appropriate for Inuit and in particular Inuit women and gender-diverse Inuit.

⁵⁶ (Ecker, 2020)

Methodology

This Inuit specific research and policy project seeks to understand better the impacts of homelessness and housing insecurity on Inuit living out of Inuit Nunangat. This project took a phased approach and builds on the strengths and capacity in each of the identified urban centres while adhering to health and safety practices for COVID-19 and by adhering to best practices for research with a vulnerable population, through innovation and safe practices.

This research project collected and analyzed feedback from diverse lived experiences of the growing Inuit women population in urban centres and provides an evidence-based assessment of the programs, services and supports required for them to build the good lives in urban centres. This research builds upon existing qualitative research to address barriers to the development of sustainable livelihoods, free from violence, homelessness, job precarity and poverty. The research explores the barriers experienced in accessing funding, including issues experienced by Inuit women outside of Inuit Nunangat, community capacity for proposal development and implementation, and a lack of Inuit data.

This research is critical to understanding how the needs of Inuit women in urban centres have evolved, and the impacts of prior initiatives.⁵⁷ This research builds upon Pauktuutit's previous work to collect evidence on the needs and challenges of Inuit women and their access to programs. Pauktuutit's (2016-2017) *Urban Aboriginal Strategy Project Understanding the Needs of Urban Inuit Women* created the initial research and baseline of needs of Inuit women across Canada and living outside Inuit Nunangat.⁵⁸ A 2015-2016 *Urban Aboriginal Strategy Project titled Engaging Inuit Women in the Canadian Economy*, explored the needs, challenges and priorities of Inuit women across Inuit Nunangat from which it developed clear and realistic recommendations. In addition, the recent study completed "Needs Assessment for Creating an Inuit-Specific Urban Women's Shelter in Ottawa, ON."



Anticipated Outcomes & Objectives

There were several anticipated outcomes and objectives that were originally associated with this research.

1. Engage community leaders, housing support service providers and Inuit service providers in twelve regions across Canada (St John's, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Halifax, Fredericton, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, Regina, Edmonton, Vancouver, and Yellowknife).
2. Identify impacts resulting from the (lack of) housing and homelessness for Inuit.
3. Identify the social impacts for Inuit and their families because of housing and homelessness.
4. Identify gaps and barriers for Inuit accessing housing supports.
5. Addresses gaps and barriers for Inuit organization and groups in accessing or utilizing federal grants and supports for housing and homelessness supports.
6. Develop and promote comprehension of Inuit homelessness nationally.
7. Establish a non-Nunangat policy approach, including defining and mapping the experiences faced by homeless Inuit in urban settings.
8. Conduct all research and documentation from a strengths base approach, by recording the practices and innovative approaches fostered by Inuit service providers across the country.

⁵⁷ (Pauktuutit, 2021)

⁵⁸ (Pauktuutit, 2021)



Sample Groups

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada (Pauktuutit) collected and analyzed surveys to highlight the diverse housing-related lived experiences of the growing population of Inuit women, gender-diverse Inuit, and housing service providers. More specifically, this data was collected from twelve urban centres across Canada, including: St. John's and Happy Valley-Goose Bay in Newfoundland; Halifax in Nova Scotia; Fredericton in New Brunswick; Montreal in Quebec; Ottawa and Toronto in Ontario; Winnipeg in Manitoba; Regina in Saskatchewan; Edmonton in Alberta; Vancouver in British Columbia; and Yellowknife in the Northwest Territories. This work highlights the current capacity and supports available to Inuit across Canada and acknowledges the gaps and concerns that exist. The recommendations derived from this work and previous activities focus on equitable access to programs, supports, and funding for Inuit, with a particular focus on supports for women and gender-diverse Inuit. These recommendations also focus on supports for service providers.

Table 1 Breakdown of Organizations by City and Province

City	Province	Organizations
St. Johns	Newfoundland and Labrador	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St. John's Status of Women Council/Women's centre • Choices for Youth • STJ Friendship Centre (First Light) • Thrive • Homestead Inc.
Happy Valley-Goose Bay	Newfoundland and Labrador	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Hub • Mokami Women's Council • Salvation Army • Labrador Friendship Centre
Montreal	Quebec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Native Friendship Centre • Open Door • PAC • Care Montreal
Winnipeg	Manitoba	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oak Table, Mainstreet Project • CMHA • New Centre • Kinew Housing • Ndinawe
Edmonton	Alberta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bissell Centre • Pathways to Housing • Jasper Place Wellness Centre • E4C • George Spady Centre
Regina	Saskatchewan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YWCA • Salvation Army • Street Culture Project • Phoenix Residential Society
Ottawa	Ontario	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gignul, Odawa, Teweegan • Wabano Centre • Centre 454 • Centre 507 • Elizabeth Fry Society of Ottawa • John Howard Society • Ottawa Mission

Table 1 Breakdown of Organizations by City and Province (cont'd)

City	Province	Organizations
Toronto	Ontario	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal Housing Support Centre • Akwa Honsta, Gabriel Dumont Non-Profit Homes • Miizwe Biik • NaMeRes • Nishnawbe Homes
Fredericton	New Brunswick	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gignoo • The Fredericton Homeless Shelters Inc • John Howard Society
Yellowknife	Northwest Territories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Yellowknife • Tree of Peace Friendship Centre



Participant Profiles

Table 2 Self-Identification as Inuk

Response to Q2 - Self-Identification as Inuk	# Of Responses	% Of Responses
Yes	44	97.78
No	1	2.22

Table 3 Gender Identity

Response to Q3 - Gender Identity	# Of Responses	% Of Responses
Woman	35	77.78
Trans Woman	1	2.22
2 Spirit	2	4.44
Man	7	15.56
Trans Man	0	0
Non-binary (please specify)	0	0
Prefer not to say	0	0

Table 4 Age

Response to Q4 - Age	# Of Responses	% Of Responses
15 to 17	0	0
18 to 30	10	22.22
31 to 54	29	64.44
55 or older	6	13.33
Prefer not to say	0	0

Table 5 Beneficiary Under Land Claim Regions

Response to Q5 – Beneficiary Under Land Claim Regions	# Of Responses	% Of Responses
Inuvialuit Settlement Region	10	22.2
Nunavut	13	28.89
Nunavik	7	15.56
Nunatsiavut	6	13.33
Not a beneficiary	2	4.44
Unsure	7	15.56
Prefer not to say	0	0

Table 6 Relationship Status

Response to Q6 – Relationship Status	# Of Responses	% Of Responses
Single	32	71.11
Married or Common-Law (Living together)	2	4.44
Separated	4	8.89
Divorced	3	6.67
Widowed	3	6.67
Prefer not to say	1	2.22

Table 7 Sexual Orientation

Response to Q7 – Sexual Orientation	# Of Responses	% Of Responses
Straight/Heterosexual	36	80
Lesbian	0	0
Bisexual	3	6.67
Intersex	0	0
2 Spirit	2	4.44
Gay	0	0
Queer or Questioning	1	2.22
Asexual	0	0
Prefer not to say	3	6.67
Unsure	0	0
Other (please specify)	0	0



Limitations

One of the main components of this project was to interview Inuit, with a particular focus on women and gender-diverse Inuit who have experienced homelessness or housing insecurity. It is important to note that there were several factors that must be overcome to facilitate meaningful participation in this research. The research team had to consider that generational and personal trauma experienced by would-be participants may reduce trust and increase anxiety in research settings. The research team used practices to mitigate these barriers to participation to the best of their ability. It is also important to acknowledge that Pauktuutit has had greater success conducting similar one-on-one interviews with women and gender-diverse Inuit who are less vulnerable.

An objective of the research design was to secure geographic representation across southern urban centres in Canada. While interviews were conducted with participants in all regions, the research team did not secure the desired level of representation in some areas despite extensive and repeated outreach. This limited the ability of the research team to compare across geographies. As a result, more broad comparisons between southern Canada were made.

The research team did not administer all the questionnaires, as respondents were given the option to fill out the questionnaire themselves. Given the interviews were delivered in different formats, there are different biases that may have been introduced. Still, it may not be as prevalent with written responses where the respondent may not be as concerned about the opinion of others. Conversely, written responses were at times not as detailed and thorough as those collected through interviews. Given the size of the sample group and for purposes of simplicity, the various formats did not receive separate treatment.

The interviews were conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, meaning that in-person interviews were not always possible. In addition, discussions not in person may limit the interviewer's ability to interpret questions based on body language. Further, individuals with a limited internet connection or a lack of access to other means of communication (e.g., telephone) may have been excluded from the study.

Results and Analysis

Pauktuutit is encouraged by the Government of Canada's National Housing Council's current focus on urban, rural, and northern (URN) Indigenous housing, including Inuit Nunangat as one of its three priority areas for 2021-2022, coupled with the federal government's commitment to distinctions-based housing.



Recognition of Systemic Discrimination & Racism

When exploring experiences of homelessness and housing insecurity, it is important to recognize the impacts of systemic discrimination on Inuit women and gender-diverse Inuit. Of those who participated in this study, 56% shared that they had experienced discrimination or harassment when seeking housing or housing support services. Of those that experienced discrimination, 52% believe that this was because they were both a woman/gender-diverse and Inuk. Some participants shared details of their experience(s) facing discrimination when seeking housing or housing support services. One individual shared that “landlords assume I wouldn't pay rent. Categorizing me. I didn't bother going through with application when that happened.” Another participant wrote.

I was told that they didn't take people who were on social assistance, and I got asked why my husband wasn't applying too that it would make it easier especially since it was apparent that my husband was white cause my kids are white passing. I said I was divorced due to domestic violence, and I had a steady income. They said welfare doesn't count and I never heard back from them.

One individual was told “we don't rent to people like you” while another “felt belittled and not taken seriously.” Another was “told there is no availability after being shown a place, no phone call back even though the place was available.” Considering discrimination solely based on being Inuk, a participant said they “think that because I'm Inuk people look down at me. Because I'm quiet and don't really have an education or a voice.” One participant shared:

I told I was a “dirty lazy native,” so I was probably a troublemaker, so they didn't want my kind. Some housing workers just look through me when I talk... I felt so dismissed and lumped in with everyone one, like I was not seen or heard.

Canada can no longer deny many Inuit experience discrimination and feel they have no place safe to go. This gives reason to believe that the systemic discrimination and barriers it presents to this population is a crisis in need of urgent attention. To address the discrimination faced by Inuit, culturally appropriate supports and services are required.



Indigenous Access Points are Required

Having a choice in where Indigenous individuals and families can access coordinated access systems is key. Furthermore, “an essential element to this is the availability of Indigenous organizations that Indigenous individuals and families feel comfortable accessing.”⁵⁹ Relationship building and fostering trust over time with people is necessary when determining an individual or family’s needs. Additionally, “in determining the housing and service needs of Indigenous individuals and families, the approach should be conversational, culturally appropriate, trauma-informed, and not rushed. A culturally safe space where you’re accepted for who you are and not judged when you walk in the door.”⁶⁰ Pauktuutit (2021, 2022) found that an alarming 70% of respondents indicated that they had felt they needed to leave home, either temporarily or permanently, but had no safe place to go.⁶¹

To provide transition and second-stage housing in each community in Inuit urban centres where there is significant need, the federal government must provide funding to Inuit Land Claims Organizations for this housing including operating, repairs and maintenance expenses, staffing, recruitment and training of staff, programming, and services, indexed each year to the cost of living in that community.⁶²

Creation of New Housing — For Inuit, By Inuit

The National Housing Strategy’s capital programs — the National Housing Co-Investment Fund and the Rental Construction Financing Initiative — should be redesigned to increase access for women-led and women-focused organizations, non-profits, and housing providers. In their current state, both programs are designed to favour market developers who are not responsible for nor responsive to people most in need of housing.

Canada should support the identification of mechanisms for capacity-building amongst small, grassroots women’s and Indigenous organizations and service providers in the building and management of housing.

All Inuit organizations outside of Inuit Nunangat that were interviewed for this work agreed that access to culturally appropriate policies, programs, and services is vital. Further, Inuit culture is crucial when establishing an organization’s priorities and means of delivering appropriate services. Participants made statements such as, “culture is everything,” and services must be “by Inuit, for Inuit.” Services providers also raised concerns about accessing Inuit-specific funding outside of Inuit Nunangat. One Inuit service provider outside of Inuit Nunangat shared that the barriers associated with support in the south could be attributed to the lack of support for Urban Inuit from Inuit organizations in the Inuit Regions. This is compounded by the lack of funding opportunities specific to Inuit outside of Inuit Nunangat and Inuit organizations with no authority over Inuit and for Inuit that leave Inuit Nunangat to reside in the south.

59 (Ecker, 2020)

60 (Ecker, 2020)

61 (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2021, 2022)

62 (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2021)



Acknowledging Lived Experiences & Pathways to Homelessness

Sources of Income & Affordable Housing

It is important to understand the population of participants that were surveyed and any details of their lived experiences. When asked what their current sources of income are, majority of the forty-five participants (53%) shared that they were receiving social or government assistance. Of the participants, 22% receive their current income from child and tax family benefits. Other current sources of income include informal employment (e.g., bartending) (13%), part-time/casual/seasonal employment (13%), and money from family and friends (13%). Participants who selected “Other,” shared that current income sources include “child support,” “Work Safe B.C.,” and financial support from their children’s father. Participants also shed light on past sources of income, with 80% sharing they had full-time employment. Others stated that past sources of income included part-time/casual/seasonal employment (58%), social or governmental assistance (47%), receiving money from family and friends (33%), and panhandling (31%). It is important to acknowledge how sources of income (current and past) may influence experiences of homelessness and housing insecurity. It is also important to recognize the factors influencing the decrease in full-time employment from 80% to 7% as the source of income.

Service Providers echoed concerns regarding availability and affordability of housing. Many service providers that Pauktuutit interviewed confirmed that there are not enough housing units. Furthermore, service providers shared that high rent acts as a barrier to exiting homelessness for Inuit women and gender-diverse Inuit.

While Canada is not responsible for the permanent housing components of the National Housing Strategy, Pauktuutit felt it necessary to highlight its support for policies that increase the attainability and availability of safe, culturally appropriate, and affordable housing as a necessary factor of ending homelessness. The affordability metrics used in many National Housing Strategy programs (e.g., 30% of median income for the region) do not reflect what is affordable for those most in need. Therefore, “in partnership with lived experts, scholars, and key stakeholders, the Government of Canada should revise the [National Housing Strategy] affordability metrics in line with human right standards, seeking to ensure that investment and prioritization reflects the depth of poverty and core housing need that many women, girls, and gender diverse people experience.”

Pauktuutit approves the Canada Housing Benefit (CHB) of the National Housing Strategy as a new tool to address the affordability challenge of families and individuals in housing need. This potentially includes those living in social housing, those on a social housing waitlist, or those housed in the private market but struggling to make ends meet. To maximize the CHB’s potential to help Inuit women, gender-diverse Inuit, and their families, Pauktuutit recommends the following to the federal government.

1. Provide the CHB as a direct entitlement to individuals and families, rather than through cost-sharing agreements with provinces and territories, to increase access to the benefit.
2. That the CHB adopt specific targets aligned with the disproportionate needs of Inuit women and gender-diverse peoples.
3. That the amount available per household (\$2,500 annually) is increased, as it is severely inadequate.

Housing developments should be for people of all income levels and include rent-geared-to-income and market rent. Key informants recognize that developing housing takes time, including finding the right properties and fostering necessary partnerships.

Current Location

When the participants were asked about the reasons why they are living in their current city, 60% responded that they had moved or returned as an adult. Of the participants, 16% were born and raised in their current city while 11% moved there as a child. Some of the participants shared that there were “Other” reasons for living in their current city. For instance, some individuals may have moved due “to a lack of housing,” “for school and work opportunities,” or “to take care of in-law.” Others shared that they “ran away from home N.W.T. early 1980s” or “ran away from abuse.”

When participants were asked to share the reasons for moving or returning to their current city, majority (48%) shared that it was to get away from a negative situation in another location. Others responded that they had moved or returned to be close to family/friends (28%) or for employment/education (15%). Some of the participants shared that there were “Other” reasons for moving or returning to their current city. For instance, one participant shared that the

apartment I had in Inuvik was \$1850.00, daycare was \$1,975 a month. Cheaper to live in the South. Kids moved back to city to live with their dad, and I followed afterward.

Another explained

I had breast cancer and we moved from Inuvik to Edmonton. After treatment I got a job and then got laid off due to Covid, same with my husband. Husband got a job in BC.

Some participants indicated that the reasons for living in their current city was due to family. More specifically, their “parents moved for employment” or “to take care of grand father-in-law.” One participant stated

though I was born in Toronto, my mom took me away, up to the Territories. She could not take care of me due to her addiction, so she called my dad. My dad came from Toronto to come get me when I was just a small child (3 or 4 years old) and brought me to Toronto and he raised me. I was lucky to not end up in foster care.

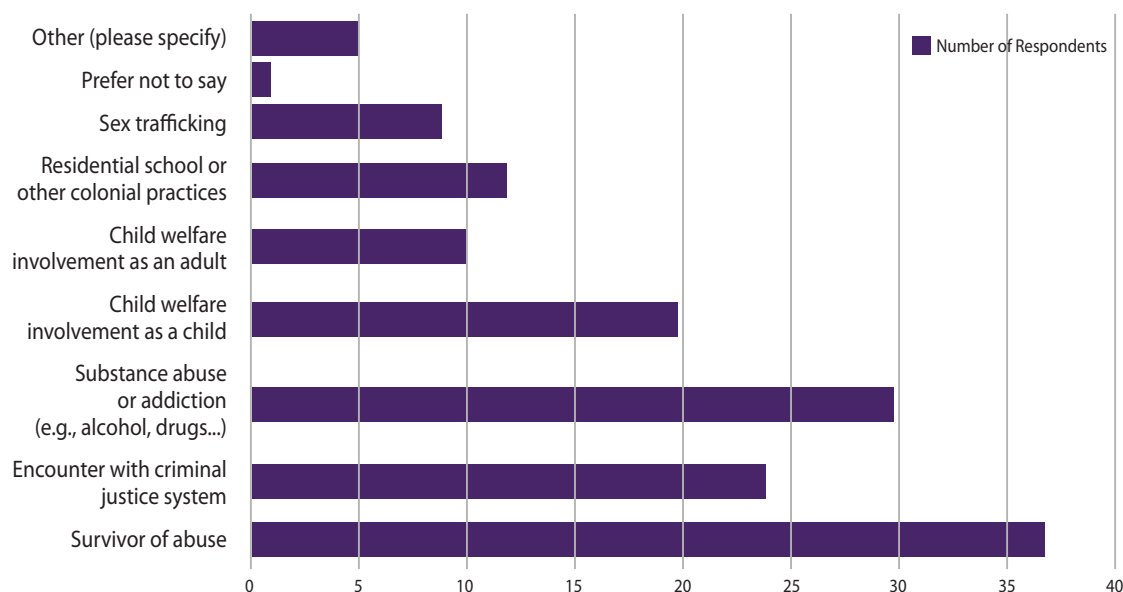
Service providers also reported a vast difference in housing availability between urban centers. For example, in Ottawa, it was reported that there is no transitional housing available. The waitlist for long-term affordable housing is two to three years for individuals who are classified as high priority due to experiences of violence priority. Otherwise, those not in this category may wait up to 12 years. By contrast, there is a one-month waitlist for both transitional housing and long-term affordable housing in Winnipeg.

Challenging Conditions & Experiences of Trauma

Participants highlighted a variety of challenging conditions they experience, including substance abuse or addiction (53%) and mental health conditions (53%). For those who shared their experiences with substance abuse or addiction, this may include challenges with alcohol, drugs, or gambling. For participants who responded with mental health condition(s), this may include challenges with depression, anxiety disorder, PTSD, and schizophrenia. Of the participants, 42% shared that they experienced chronic or acute medical conditions, including diabetes, heart diseases, arthritis, and cancer. Furthermore, 39% shared that they had a learning disability (e.g., dyslexia, ADHD), while 21% had a physical disability (e.g., use a cane or wheelchair). Participants who selected “Other,” shared that they experience “trouble with working memory,” “visual light processing disorder,” and “Irene’s Syndrome.”

When addressing experiences of homelessness and housing insecurity, it is also important to acknowledge the impacts of trauma. Participants shared various unique experiences of trauma, which are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Experiences of Trauma



88% of participants shared that they were a Survivor of abuse, while 57% had encounter(s) with the criminal justice system. It is also important to highlight encounters with the child welfare system, which was highlighted by 48% of the participants. Others indicated that they had experiences of trauma from colonial practices (e.g., residential school system) (29%) and sex trafficking (21%). Connected to discussions of the child welfare system and colonial practices, we must also highlight that 43% of participants had experiences in foster care or group homes.



Diverse Experiences of Homelessness & Housing Insecurity

Acknowledging Living Situations

These next set of results explore experiences with homelessness and housing insecurity. Experiences of homelessness accounts for any time the participants have been without a secure place to live, including sleeping in shelters, on the streets, or living temporarily with others. Experiences of housing insecurity means that they have shelter, but their living situation puts them at risk for being homeless soon. Of the participants, 53% shared that they were currently homeless or housing insecure. Participants were also asked about their living situation over the past year, which is highlighted in Table 8.

Table 8 Living Situation Over the Past Year

Response to Q18 – Living Situation Over the Past Year	# Of Responses	% Of Responses
No shelter of Any Kind	3	6.82
Sleeping in Shelters	15	34.09
Living with friends/family	13	29.55
Spending more than half of your monthly income on shelter	12	27.27
Living in substandard housing (lacking in basic services like heat or water, in need of major repairs, unsanitary etc.)	12	27.27
Moving around often so that you have a place to stay	8	18.18
Other (please specify)	13	29.55

Numerous participants shared that they had “Other” living situations over the past year. For instance, some shared that they were “at risk of not making rent” or that they were “not affected yet but I have no income so we may get behind on rent and then possibly evicted.” Others stated that they “live in subsidized housing, which is stable but not decent quality,” or “lived in a motel for 16 days.” One participant stated that they were “no longer working, no income, and are on the verge of being evicted soon.” To understand better the experiences of housing insecurity, participants were asked whether they have experienced the need to leave home with nowhere to go. As stated in a previous section, we must recognize that majority of individuals felt that they had no where to safe to go when they had to leave their current living situation. It is also important to acknowledge the age of the individuals’ first experience of homelessness or housing insecurity, as this often impacts access to resources and services. Of the participants, 38% shared that they had experienced homelessness or housing insecurity at the age of 15 or younger, while 22% had similar experiences between the age of 20 to 29.

The next set of results explore experiences and thoughts about medium- and long-term housing. There are a variety of unique challenges or difficulties experiences when looking for a place to stay. These challenges are highlighted in Table 9, with majority experiencing availability/housing shortages (85%) and issues with cost/affordability (85%).

Table 9 Difficulties or Challenges Experienced When Looking for Place to Stay

Response to Q32 – Difficulties or Challenges	# Of Responses	% Of Responses
Availability/housing shortages	38	84.44
Cost/affordability	38	84.44
Safety of location	29	64.44
Accommodation for disability	7	15.56
Discrimination	30	66.67
Documentation or paperwork	24	53.33
Unsure	0	0
Prefer not to say	1	2.22

Safety was also a concern for many participants, with 27% sharing that they feel unsafe in their current to most recent housing. There were several reasons why participants feel unsafe, including discrimination (57%), high traffic of people (57%), and criminal activity on or near the home/building (50%). Other reasons included the condition of the house itself (36%), police presence (21%), and safety due to partner or ex-partner (14%). Of the participants, 49% shared that they experience other problems in their current or most recent housing. These problems include the size of the house being too small (55%), pests (50%), and incomplete repairs/maintenance (41%). Some of the other problems in current or recent housing included “bullying,” “very low-income support,” and the “mixed community.” One participant shared that the problem was the “location of unit, too noisy. I have many health and mental issues that I need quiet.” Another that indicated location as a problem said that they “have appointments that are very far.”

This research highlights experiences of eviction as another challenge for Inuit women and gender-diverse Inuit. More specifically, 68% of participants shared that they had experienced instances of being evicted from their home. There were distinct reasons why participants had been evicted from their homes. For some, this was a “loss of income” and because they “couldn’t pay rent anymore.” Another shared that “the rent was too high, and I couldn’t afford the rent” while another “left an abusive relationship, got evicted by spouse.” When asked whether they had sought support or help (e.g., legal advice) for the eviction, 66% had shared that they had not done so.

Shelter Use

As a result of the various living conditions, 64% shared that they had made use of the shelters in their current city. Of those who have tried to use shelters, 38% had been turned away on two to five occurrences due to shelter capacity. An alarming 24% shared that they had been turned away more than five times due to capacity issues. When asked whether they have avoided going to shelter, 66% responded “yes”. When asked about the reasons why they have avoided going to a shelter, 23 respondents skipped answering while several shared the reasons. One participant stated that they avoided the shelter when they were “intoxicated and if I get dark inside my head, I just don’t go.” Another wrote that they were “scared of getting sick and/or diseases such as lice, etc.,” while another said that “most shelters were full.” One participant shared.

some of the shelters were unsafe. It was easier to sleep in a park, heating grate (depending on the weather or under a bridge, because sometimes I felt that staff at the shelter didn't like me because I was Native and would treat me differently.

Another participant shared

after not being able to get into a shelter multiple times due to bed shortages I just gave up. I have also heard stories from friends of them being taken advantage of by staff, attacked by other women so now I just avoid them at all costs.

Emergency Shelters & Transitional Housing

Service gaps for Inuit women and gender-diverse Inuit experiencing housing insecurity suggests there is overlap between violence against women (VAW) and homeless services. However, admission criteria can be a barrier to accessing the most appropriate shelter. For example, a woman with serious mental health or substance use concerns may not access a VAW shelter. In addition, there could be a concern for the safety of children present in the shelter. Barriers and exclusions can happen with both VAW and homeless services. Discriminatory policies and practices within both the VAW and homelessness sector can create profound harm in the lives of women, girls, and gender diverse peoples.⁶³ The successful implementation of the creation of shelters for Inuit women must respond to the *National Inuit Action Plan on Missing and Murdered Inuit Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People*, with safety being paramount in the 231 Calls for Justice.

The federal government must provide sustainable annual funding for the shelters and safe spaces, including operating, repairs and maintenance expenses, staffing, recruitment, and training of staff, programming, and services, indexed each year to the cost of living in that community. Canada must fund Inuit-focused shelters in urban centres.

Based on interviews with Inuit organizations and service providers, and non-Inuit service providers it became clear that funding for Inuit organizations could support a number of culturally appropriate services:

1. Deliver Inuit-specific cultural competency training to housing and shelter service providers.
2. Deliver Inuit-specific satellite support services, such as meetings with housing caseworkers and life-skills programming on-site at shelters and housing locations.
3. Provide culture-based support to Inuit Survivors of violence, women experiencing mental health and addictions issues, and at-risk youth in conjunction with Inuit organizations, shelters, and transitional housing services. This support is to be strengths-based, trauma-informed and emphasize harm reduction.
4. Provide culturally appropriate services at the level needed during critical transition periods, including individuals discharged from hospitals and treatment centres, leaving prison and youth aging out of care. This will help individuals successfully reintegrate into the community and avoid homelessness.
5. Develop training for and employ more Inuit as housing support workers, systems navigators/ advocates, and counsellors in shelters-transitional and longer-term housing.
6. Expand eligibility and increase financial help to Inuit to cover exceptional housing expenses such as first and last month's rent, moving costs, and utility hook-ups.

To ensure equitable investments in emergency homelessness supports and services, the Government of Canada should conduct or commission regular GBA+ audits of federal investments in the homelessness sector made through *Reaching Home*. Furthermore, the Government of Canada should seek to identify and remedy gender-based inequities in funding, with focus on Inuit women and gender-diverse Inuit.⁶⁴

63 (Schwan, Versteegh, Perri, Caplan, Baig, Dej, Jenkinson, Brais, Eiboff, & Pahlevan Chaleshtari, 2020)

64 (Schwan & Ali, 2021)



Recognizing Potential Housing Solutions

The next set of results explore experiences and thoughts about medium- and long-term housing. Participants were asked what good housing would look like for them, which could include anything from what it looks like, the building materials used, location, size, type of housing (e.g., single home, apartment, co-operative housing with other peoples' homes, supportive housing that has services provided to you), cost of renting and so on. Some of the responses included a "one bedroom apartment for fixed income," a home that is "clean, has heat, support for housing," and a house in a "safe neighbourhood, close to schools, close to grocery amenities, close to rec facilities, close to hospital, easy access to transit, laundry." Another individual highlighted that good housing would be "a safe building with security measures, a community space, which is used for cultural practices like circles, art and crafts groups." A participant stated that good housing would be a

building that was single family units that were size properly for the tenants, more Indigenous food services like community potluck, food banks), more access to get more traditional medicines and healers (smudging and other medicines from a healer) more natural and traditional materials used like wood, plants, soap stone carvings and stone statues (Inuksuk).

Shelter Features & Supports

Recognizing the rate of shelter use, it is important to consider the various features and support services that would provide more positive experiences for Inuit women and gender-diverse Inuit. There were numerous participants that shed light on some of the features of a shelter that would make them the most comfortable. There are a variety of features of a shelter that may make Inuit women and gender-diverse Inuit uncomfortable that must be considered. These may include "staff who abuse power," "lack of security," "discrimination and cultural insensitivity," "no mental health supports," and "breaching confidentiality." One respondent shared that what makes them uncomfortable in shelters is "the continued gaslighting by shelter staff about Inuit issues and complaints, uneducated staff about Indigenous issues."

There are various features of shelters that must be considered to make Inuit more comfortable. Pauktuutit (2021, 2022) found that this may include having "intervention workers, counselling and direct communication" and staff that "were empathetic."

For people experiencing homelessness, crisis shelters are a place for warmth, food, and a place to rest. For people fleeing violence, shelters provide safety and security from abusers. They are not meant to be long-term housing. There is a need for more resources to bridge the gap between emergency services and permanent housing.⁶⁵ There is also a significant lack of gender-specific housing options across Canada, including supportive housing, with waiting lists for social and supportive housing often stretching years in many communities. Existing transitional housing often does not offer residents security of tenure and protection under landlord/tenant legislation. There is also very few gender-specific, low-barrier and harm reduction-focused supportive housing programs accessible to women and gender-diverse people.⁶⁶ One participant shared that

it would be more comfortable if staff were more empathetic, more evidence of cultural awareness and support, better food choices that are traditional for Inuit.

Another stated that they would want the shelter to be more

welcoming and not so clinical, more understanding, empathetic and lenient when mistakes are made, allow smudging and windows that open slightly.

⁶⁵ (Homelessness Learning Hub)

⁶⁶ (Schwan, Vaccaro, Reid, Ali, & Baig, 2021)

For comfort, others would like a “friendly and comfortable atmosphere,” “free Wi-Fi,” “cleanliness,” “security,” and a shelter “where you feel like you’re not being judged.” One participant would like to shelter to have “some sort of cultural activity to get your mind off your situation, having country food” while another would like a “private room or space.” Another suggested that to make shelters more comfortable, they would like “safety and security for the children” and a shelter with staff that are

more educated about my culture. Different food choices (like adding food that are traditional like Bannock or akutaq) and having traditional healers on site.

Results presented information on how useful various resources and supports would be in helping respondents find or keep long-term housing. Participants were asked to rate the usefulness on a scale of 1 to 3. Of the features listed, the features that participants indicated were “very important” include “day shelter” (89%), “night shelter” (89%), “food/meals” (87%), “hygiene/showers” (86%), “laundry” (78%), and “telephone/internet” (82%). When asked about the types of services offered by shelters, there were selected by majority of participants as “very important.” More specifically, this included: “housing support” (87%), “crisis intervention” (87%), “counselling” (84%), “medical services” (78%), “legal services” (67%), “employment services” (68%), and “referrals to other agencies” (82%). When asked if there is anything else that would help participants find and keep housing, participants shared that they would like “follow up supports,” “support groups,” “advertisements,” and “no rent increase.” Another shared that they would like to be “able to stay connected to our housing counsellor and/or a follow up worker” while one stated that they would like “having a mental health check in with a follow up worker monthly, access to counselling as well as support circle of other Inuk women.”

Summary of Recommendations

After careful consideration of the results, there is a clear set of policy recommendations to improve the outcomes for all Inuit, with particular focus on women and gender-diverse Inuit who face housing insecurity or homelessness outside of Inuit Nunangat. This summary of policy recommendations is supported by the unique perspectives of Inuit of those with lived experience and service providers. For instance, this includes the consideration of “support groups” and “programs in-house.” The recommendations suggest that equitable access to safe and affordable housing is key to improving the quality of life for urban Inuit. All of these recommendations will also be relevant inside Inuit Nunangat and would support and/or reduce the number of Inuit who have left their homelands for the reason of housing insecurity. As the scope of this project are recommendations specific to living outside Inuit Nunangat, that lens has been applied for the majority of this research work. With acknowledgment of the recommendations put forward in Pauktuutit’s (2019) study on gender-based violence and shelter service needs, general policy recommendations to address homelessness include:

1. Develop Inuit-specific homelessness and housing insecurity intervention, prevention, and healing initiatives that incorporate a unique political, social, historical, economic, and cultural Inuit context.
2. Ensure that all levels of government prioritize funding for safe, secure, and affordable housing for Inuit living outside of Inuit Nunangat.
3. Conduct a needs assessment to identify any gaps in culturally appropriate resources for Inuit women and gender-diverse Inuit experiencing violence (e.g., Inuit-specific emergency shelters and transitional housing).
4. Prioritize prevention, intervention, and postvention activities to improve the quality of life for women and gender-diverse Inuit.
5. Increase funding for healing initiatives that are focussed on Inuit families and communities.
6. Provide all service providers with extensive and Inuit-specific cultural safety training.
7. Identify effective strategies to promote the safety and well-being of Inuit women and gender-diverse Inuit through community-based collaboration amongst individuals, service providers, and community members.

The following specific recommendations consider local circumstances, community needs, and possibilities. They incorporate activities that are culturally appropriate for women and gender-diverse Inuit. Inuit homelessness services and housing options must be provided by Inuit organizations and reflect Inuit values, beliefs, and traditions (e.g., community and family living environment). If these recommendations are actioned, we hope to achieve the four desired outcomes: economic integration, basic needs met, prevention and shelter diversion, and housing security. Informed from the results of this research, these outcomes take the following key factors into consideration: governance and administration; lived experiences and pathways to homelessness; and experiences of homelessness and housing insecurity.



Governance & Administration

Integrated Supports and Wrap Around Services

Recommendations for housing must address concerns about the extreme lack of human capacity, financial capacity, and infrastructure. To address these concerns and remediate the impacts of colonization, a Wrap Around Model can benefit Inuit women and gender-diverse Inuit as a full system solution. Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada (2008) shares that a Wrap Around Model

involves families, schools, elders, and other helpers in working together to provide a safe, kind, helpful environment for children and youth who are at risk. This model can also work with women at risk. In the Wrap Around Model, plans and services are based on the needs of each person. The plan is put together by those people who know the person best, including the family.

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada (2008) also shared the criteria for success in the Wrap Around process, which include the following

- Wrap Around services that are based in the community
- Supports and services that are individualized to address the unique needs of the individual and their families
- A process that acknowledges family culture and builds on their strengths, preferences, and values
- Whenever possible, include members of the family at every step of the development process
- Wrap Around teams and partners are offered resources and supports to address their needs
- The process is supported by suitable agencies, families, and the larger community
- The Wrap Around plan includes a balance of informal family and community resources, as well as formal services (e.g., medical check-ups)
- Support services are dedicated and if the needs change for the individual and their family, they continue receiving services

To promote the well-being of Inuit women and gender-diverse Inuit, a holistic approach is required. To ensure positive results for entire Inuit families, we must recognize the importance of information sharing and effective communication between provinces and territories. Considering child and family services, Wrap Around services must promote the following:

- An increase in the number of foster parents who are Inuit
- The incorporation of Inuit values
- Greater cultural awareness
- An increase in the number of staff in family services
- Social work training that is Inuit-specific
- Investments in long-term infrastructure (e.g., housing, daycare)
- A streamlined databased for family and child services

Further funding should be provided specifically for projects to build the organizational capacity of networks, coalitions, and other sector-organized groups to establish more responsive and well-integrated partnerships and services. Expressing concerns about the funding gap to support southern Inuit, all Inuit service providers outside of Inuit Nunangat stated that they require more funding. This additional funding would allow them to provide culturally appropriate services. To this end, an investigation into how to increase access to culturally appropriate information, tools, and training throughout the country is recommended



Addressing Lived Experiences & Pathways to Homelessness

Economic Integration Services

To address the homelessness amongst Inuit, supports addressing economic integration may increase the knowledge and skills required for meaningful and secure employment.

- a. Employment assistance: provide pre- and post-employment services that connect Inuit to the labour market and help them keep their jobs and achieve self-sufficiency (i.e., develop a culturally appropriate resource guide/manual that provides information on interview preparation, employment skills, and job search assistance).
- b. Income assistance: provide services for Inuit to access income benefits (i.e., develop a culturally appropriate resource guide/manual that provides information on how to access child benefits, veterans' allowance, employment insurance, provincial/territorial social assistance, and old age security).
- c. Education and Training Assistance: provide education and training opportunities for Inuit (i.e., develop a culturally appropriate Financial Literacy course that focuses on housing related costs including rent agreements, mortgages, and home repairs).
- d. Provide the CHB as a direct entitlement to individuals and families, rather than through cost-sharing agreements with provinces and territories, to increase access to the benefit.
- e. That the CHB adopt specific targets aligned with the disproportionate needs of Inuit women and gender-diverse peoples.
- f. That the amount available per household (\$2,500 annually) is increased, as it is severely inadequate.

Basic Needs Services

To address the homelessness amongst Inuit, traditional supports and basic needs services may increase cultural connection for Inuit. Furthermore, this may increase the sense of belonging within communities and overall quality of life.

- a. Provide essential services to Inuit (i.e., funds for food, emergency shelter beds, laundry and shower facilities, soup kitchens, food banks, and community drop-in centres).
- b. Provide life skills development training (i.e., an e-learning course on food preparation, reading, oral communication, computer use, and numeracy).
- c. Revise existing cultural awareness courses (i.e., revise the existing course Pauktuutit developed with Cancer Society of Canada to deliver to shelters).
- d. Provide funding for Inuit Ottawa organizations to deliver culturally appropriate training to ESDC and other funders (i.e., an e-learning to increase cultural awareness)
- e. Provide funding for Montreal shelter to hire staff fluent in Inuktitut in response to number of unilingual Inuit facing homelessness
- f. Revise existing cultural awareness courses (i.e., revise the existing course Pauktuutit developed with Cancer Society of Canada to deliver to shelters)
- g. Programs seen as 'missing' include parenting, LGBTQ+, and arts.
- h. Addition of an elder or those familiar with Inuit programming, to source, prepare and integrate country food with proper tools



Recognizing Diverse Experiences of Homelessness

Prevention and Shelter Diversion Services

To address the homelessness amongst Inuit prevention and shelter diversion services may increase culturally appropriate supports available for at-risk Inuit.

- a. Provide culturally appropriate training that addresses non-financial techniques (i.e., an e-learning course on landlord-tenant mediation, problem-solving with neighbours).
- b. Offer short-term financial support (i.e., utility deposits and rent arrears).
- c. Provide in-kind assistance (i.e., personal hygiene products and grocery gift cards).
- d. Provide culturally appropriate supports that address the deeply rooted inequalities between men and women (i.e., a course that addresses decolonization and the impacts of intergenerational traumas).
- e. Provide culturally appropriate supports to educate men on ways to refrain from exerting power through violence, abuse, and coercion (i.e., a course that addresses conflict management and effective communication).



Housing Services

To address the homelessness amongst Inuit, housing services must include enhanced culturally appropriate responses to the diverse needs of service providers, Inuit.

- a. Offer choice of program for service providers to deliver/test projects through a procurement/RFP process to access funding for this specific purpose. Can be administered through partner organizations (non profit or municipal) in collaboration with the funder.
- b. Identify available housing units for specific for Inuit and Inuit women and gender-diverse Inuit (i.e., collaborate with private and public local real estate, landlord associations, and home communities).
- c. Provide funding to assist paying housing costs in the short term while waiting for access to longer-term housing supports, such as the Canadian Housing Benefit or benefits from provincial, territorial, or municipal programs, within the limitations defined by the community.
- d. Provide funding to assist with housing costs (i.e., insurance, damage deposit, first and final months' rent, maintenance, moving, furniture, kitchen, and basic foods and supplies upon move-in).
- e. Provide landlord-tenant services to Inuit who have been put in housing (i.e., landlord mediation and training on tenant and landlord duties and obligations).
- f. Develop enhanced staff training for service providers (i.e., a course on the broader systematic approach to addressing homelessness amongst Inuit; a course on effective ways to limit the risk of infection and transmission of COVID-19).
- g. Provide funding for projects to build the organizational capacity of networks, coalitions, and other sector-organized groups (i.e., a course on best practices in service delivery, as well as ways to establish more responsive and well-integrated partnerships and services).
- h. Ease administrative burdens-explore partnerships for groups to have administration overseen by another organization (i.e., government branch manages administration work for non profit housing organizations to allow them to focus exclusively on service delivery).

- i. Fund administration costs specifically. There is not capacity in many organizations to complete reporting to funders, proposal writing, etc.
- j. The Covid 19 pandemic has eliminated some previously required process steps allowing timelier access to funding, which has been appreciated and requested to continue.
- k. Sustainable funding cycles allow programming to be offered on a continual basis.
- l. Flexibility how to use funding- (i.e., 'social workers not a security guard').
- m. Funding should build capacity in organizations as well at the people they serve-more core funding to support organizations develop their capacity.
- n. Additional funding is needed for early intervention to help families and children avoid homelessness.
- o. Employment specific supports are underfunded and need to help people get back into the workforce.
- p. More funding is required for women experiencing violence services. Suggestion is that it is funded under "Health" to receive more funding

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Appendix A - Guiding Principles To Apply Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit

IQ Principle	Description
Inuuqatigiitsiarniq	Respecting others, relationships and caring for people.
Tunnganarniq	Fostering good spirit by being open, welcoming, and inclusive.
Piliriqatigiinni	Working together for a common cause through collaboration and mutual understanding. (The concept of collaborative relationships or working together for a common purpose.)
Qanuqtuurniq Qanuqtuurunnarniq	Being resourceful and persistent to solve problems, recognizing that we must constantly explore many different opportunities to find the best ways to move forward. (The concept of being resourceful to solve problems.)
Ajiiqatigiinni	The way of decision-making where decisions are made, and valuable information is relayed through face-to-face communications. (The concept of consensus decision-making.)
Pijitsirniq	Serving and providing for family and/or community.
Pilimmatsaniq Pilimmaksarniq	The passing on of knowledge and skills through observation, doing, and practice, and accommodating or making room for new things or practices that need to be implemented.
Avatittinnik kamattiarniq	The concept of environmental stewardship.
Silatuniq	The wisdom to know how to apply your knowledge.
Uppiriqattautiniq	The foundation for fair treatment, honest commitment to work together, and the source of harmonious environment.
Piviqatittiniq	It is important to give people their opportunity for participation and contribution.
Ikajuqatigiinni	Offering assistance and cooperation when it is called for, in any shape or form, without barriers."
Ajuqsatittinginniq piviqarialinnik	To support a place for growth, development, and success.



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