

# Gap Analysis Report

*draft*

Submitted to the Yellowknife Women's Society

March 31, 2020

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## Contents

INTRODUCTION

METHODS	5
Community Engagement	5
Community Profile	5
Public Survey	6
Interviews	6
Data analysis	6
Project Limitations	7
RESULTS	7
Yellowknife, Social Issues, and Programs and Services	7
Main social Issues and/or problems in Yellowknife:	7
Is there enough support to address issues from the different levels of government?	10
Is there enough support to address issues by community organizations?	11
Addressing social issues through programs and services	12
Challenges for organizations	12
Challenges for people trying to access programs and services	14
Organizational Successes	14
Programs and services residents would like to see in Yellowknife	15
Perceptions of the Yellowknife Women’s Society	17
Prior knowledge of the Yellowknife Women’s Society	17
Knowledge of YWS Programs and Services	18
Relationship with the YWS	21
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	22
Yellowknife Social Issues	22
Perceptions of the Yellowknife Women’s Society	23
RECOMMENDATIONS	23
Mission and Vision	23
Funding and Government	23
Relationships	24
Public Awareness:	24
Visibility and Digital Advocacy	25
REFERENCES	26

List of Figures

- Figure 1.1. Identified social issues in Yellowknife, by percentage (%) of responses
- Figure 1.2. Identified challenges faced by women and girls, by number of responses
- Figure 1.3. Social issues identified by media interviewees
- Figure 1.4. Survey responses by percentage (%) to do different levels of government provide enough supports?
- Figure 1.5. Survey responses by percentage (%), do community organizations provide enough support?
- Figure 1.6. Organizational challenges identified by interviewees
- Figure 1.7. Challenges for service users identified by survey respondents, by number of responses
- Figure 1.8. Desired programs and services provided by survey respondents
- Figure 1.9. Organizational responses on what they would provide if they were free of constraints
- Figure 2.1. Survey responses on YWS programs and services that contribute positively to the community, by number of responses
- Figure 2.2. Survey respondents overall view of the YWS, by percentage (%) of responses
- Figure 2.3. Survey respondents overall view of YWS impact since 1990, by percentage (%) of responses

#### List of Appendices

- Appendix A: Survey Questions
- Appendix B: Consent Form
- Appendix C: Community organization Questions
- Appendix D: Media questions

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to all who took the time to fill out the survey. Thank you to everyone who shared the survey with their network. Thank you to all the community organizations and media personnel who took time from their busy schedules to be interviewed.

Thank you to the Status of Women Canada for providing the funding for this project.



## INTRODUCTION

In 2019, the Yellowknife Women's Society (YWS) received funding from the Status of Women Canada to build capacity in various aspects of the organization, including advocacy. In October 2019, the previous advocacy efforts of the YWS were evaluated in a report submitted to the YWS. Since October 2019, a gap analysis of programs and services provided within Yellowknife for women and girls has been prepared and is presented below. The purpose of the gap analysis is to identify areas of concern for women and their families in Yellowknife, specific to the social issues they are facing and the supports they are receiving in order to deal with them. In order to present a broad picture of the perspectives within the Yellowknife community the gap analysis report is comprised of: a community profile of organizations and services, a survey open to the general public, and interviews with community organizations and media companies. The findings from these components are compiled and presented respectfully to the YWS to be considered during the on-going building and implementation of a long-term advocacy strategy.

## METHODS

### Community Engagement

In order to follow best practice guidelines, the Government of Canada methods for public surveys was used for guidance (Government of Canada, 2019a). Part of the mandate of the YWS is to reflect community need in programs and services. Therefore, based on the descriptions in TCPS2 which is the Canadian guideline for ethics in research, the surveys and interviews undertaken for the purpose of this project would be considered quality improvement, as they will be “used exclusively for assessment, management or improvement purposes” (Article 2.5, Government of Canada, 2019b). Based on definitions and descriptions within TCPS2 this work was not considered a research study and an ethics submission was not prepared as it was not deemed necessary. Current service users of the YWS programs and services were not surveyed or interviewed as this was considered out of the scope of the report, which was confirmed through communications with the YWS.

The purpose of the survey was to understand public perception of: how social issues are being addressed in Yellowknife, the gaps in services to address social issues, and how YWS as an organization is viewed within the social services sector. The purpose of the interviews with the community organizations is the same, with the additional goal of clarifying and adding to the community profile. Interviews were also conducted with media outlets to understand the experiences and challenges they come across in delivering and identifying stories on social issues as well as their relationship with the YWS.

### Community Profile

To understand the current social services, programming, and advocacy landscape in Yellowknife a community profile was prepared. The community profile was prepared through a desktop review, and organizes the existing organizations (either community-based or government department), their mandate, and the programs and services they offer. The information collected through the community profile was used to select organizations that should be contacted for interviews.

## Public Survey

The survey was created on Google Forms and consisted of 20 questions in three sections. The beginning of the survey states how the information will be used, and each question allows for the respondent to either select or write in a preference not to answer. No contact information was collected or required from respondents. An option to email [ywssurvey@gmail.com](mailto:ywssurvey@gmail.com) with questions, or for final survey results was provided in the survey description. No demographic constraints such as age, gender, residency, income, etc., were put in place to restrict respondents. In total, the survey consisted of seven questions related to social issues within Yellowknife, six questions related to the YWS specifically, and seven questions related to demographics (Appendix A). The survey was available online from December 2, 2019 – January 24, 2020. Community engagement to promote the survey included: displaying posters around town, creating small promotion cards which were provided to various businesses, organizations and individuals, emails to various organizations to promote survey to clientele and staff, advertisement on Facebook, participating in radio segments on CBC and Cabin Radio, and setting up booths in public spaces such as coffee shops, markets and social gatherings. Physical copies of the survey were printed out and provided by request. The survey was only provided in English. In total 79 survey responses were received.

## Interviews

Community organizations, various city and government departments, and media outlets were emailed in early December with an invitation to voluntarily participate in a semi-structured interview with a YWS consultant. Follow-up interview requests were sent twice, recognizing the overlap with holidays. In total 17 community organizations and media groups were interviewed from December 11, 2019 – January 27, 2020. Interviewees ranged from executive directors, managers and frontline staff. The semi-structured interviews were held at various locations based on preference of the participant, such as their office or a coffee shop. Prior to conducting the interview, a consent form outlining the purpose of the interview and outlining the anonymity and confidentiality of the participant were provided (Appendix B). Consent forms were signed and returned before the interview. A pre-developed set of questions were used for each interview (Appendix C). Questions for community organizations were broken into 5 sections: information on the organization, clients, advocacy, collaboration for advocacy and relationship with the YWS. Questions for media organizations were broken into 3 sections: information on the organization, Yellowknife issues, and relationship with the YWS (Appendix D). The majority of interviews were tape recorded, and handwritten notes were taken while the interview was taking place. Quotes used in the report were sent back to the original participant via email to confirm the content and context. As indicated on the consent form, the raw data from the interviews will be kept by the consultant until March 23, 2023, and subsequently destroyed. Participant identities and raw data will not be provided to the YWS to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of participants.

## Data analysis

Survey questions were provided in the following formats: multiple choice (one option), checkboxes (multiple options), and short answer. Responses for multiple choice and checkbox questions were tallied and analyzed by number of responses. Responses to short answer questions were categorized and grouped thematically. Write in answers were categorized and organized based on themes in responses.

In order to analyze common themes that emerged through interviews, audio recordings were transcribed. Themes were recognized based on interview questions and answers derived from the participant. Answers were categorized based on similarities among participant responses, which helped

identify specific themes. Quotes were selected which identify and convey the wider context of the emergent themes. NVivo software was used in the process of qualitative data - transcribed interviews were put into the software, which helped identify major words and affirm themes that emerged.

## Project Limitations

The data gathering period overlapped with winter holidays, when many people are travelling or out of town, which may have limited participation in both the public survey and interviews. The online survey may have created a barrier to participation for people without English literacy, digital literacy, and access to a computer or mobile phone with internet. The main avenue for sharing the survey online was the YWS Facebook page, so the survey is likely to demonstrate a bias from respondents who have positive views of the YWS, and are aware of the mandate and activities of the organization. Physical copies were available at outreach events and by request, but were more difficult to obtain and return. Interviews were conducted with staff in a variety of employment positions (frontline, management, executive) across different organizations. However, interviews were not conducted across various employment positions within one organization. Media interviews were conducted predominantly by an individual journalist from an organization.

## RESULTS

### Yellowknife, Social Issues, and Programs and Services

#### Main social Issues and/or problems in Yellowknife:

*Survey:* Addictions and substance abuse were the most identified social issues in Yellowknife, followed by homelessness, violence/abuse and housing. Family violence and abuse were the most common types of violence identified (Figure 1.1). The highest responses for challenges specifically faced by women and girls were related to violence, economic challenges, substance abuse / addictions, and family / child supports (Figure 1.2).

*Organization interviews:* Perceptions of Yellowknife's main social issues was not asked directly. During conversations, consistent themes emerged through discussions of social issues dealt with regularly in participants' work. One interviewee mentioned they see certain social issues on a daily basis, this includes mental health, substance abuse and employment issues. Many interviewees talked about housing and shelter challenges. There was an overall reflection that social issues are very complex and are tied to one another. If one issue was being handled it still meant clients were dealing with other issues, for example, housing issues for women can be connected with childcare and income challenges.

*Media interviews:* The main issues mentioned were: housing, homelessness, child family and welfare services, addictions and mental health, lack of healing resources, family violence and violence (Figure 1.3). The main issues affecting women and children in particular were identified as housing, homelessness, family violence and the safety of women (Figure 1.3).

*"I feel like if I sit here, I can probably go on forever in terms of issues that Yellowknife's women and girls particularly Indigenous women and girls have to put up with or being faced by."-Media Personnel*

*"It really comes up so often, family violence about everything that came after residential school, all the trauma, the effects and the legacy of it; with regards to women issues, telling the stories it requires a lot of context and back stories...you know as much as you want to tell the story of the day saying a new study came out showing NWT has one of the highest rates of family violence in the country, that's okay to put out there but to get at the root issues it takes story after story after story."-Media Personnel*

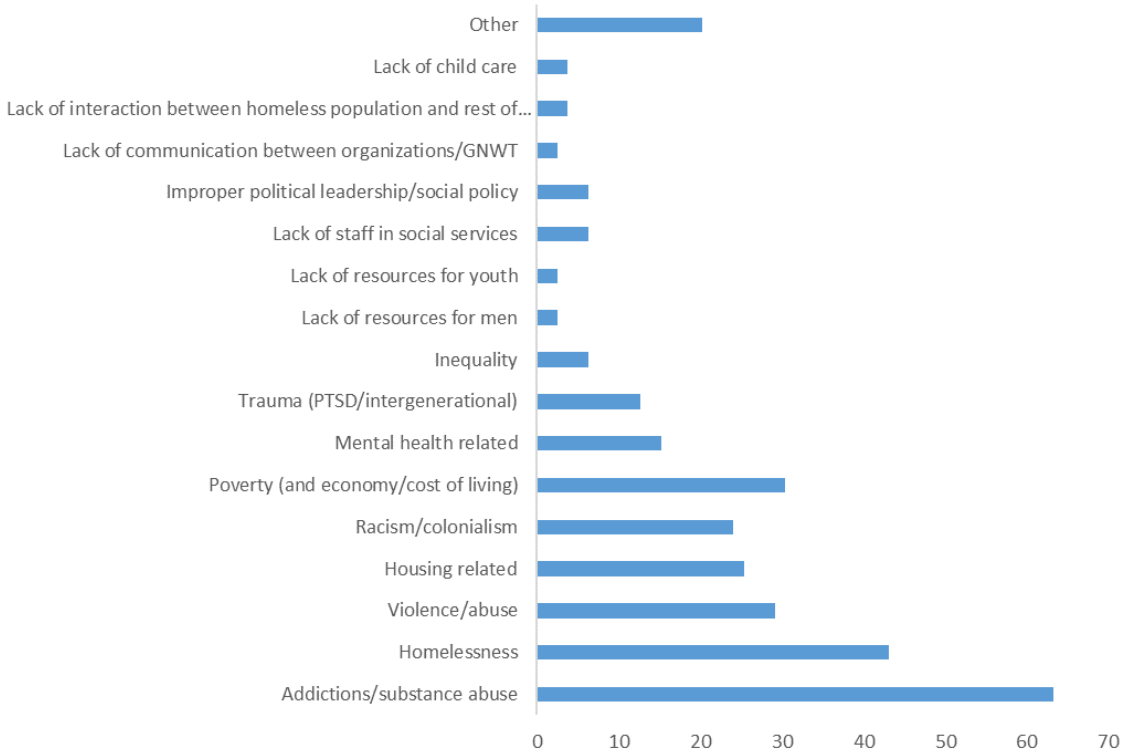


Figure 1.1. Identified social issues in Yellowknife, by percentage (%) of responses

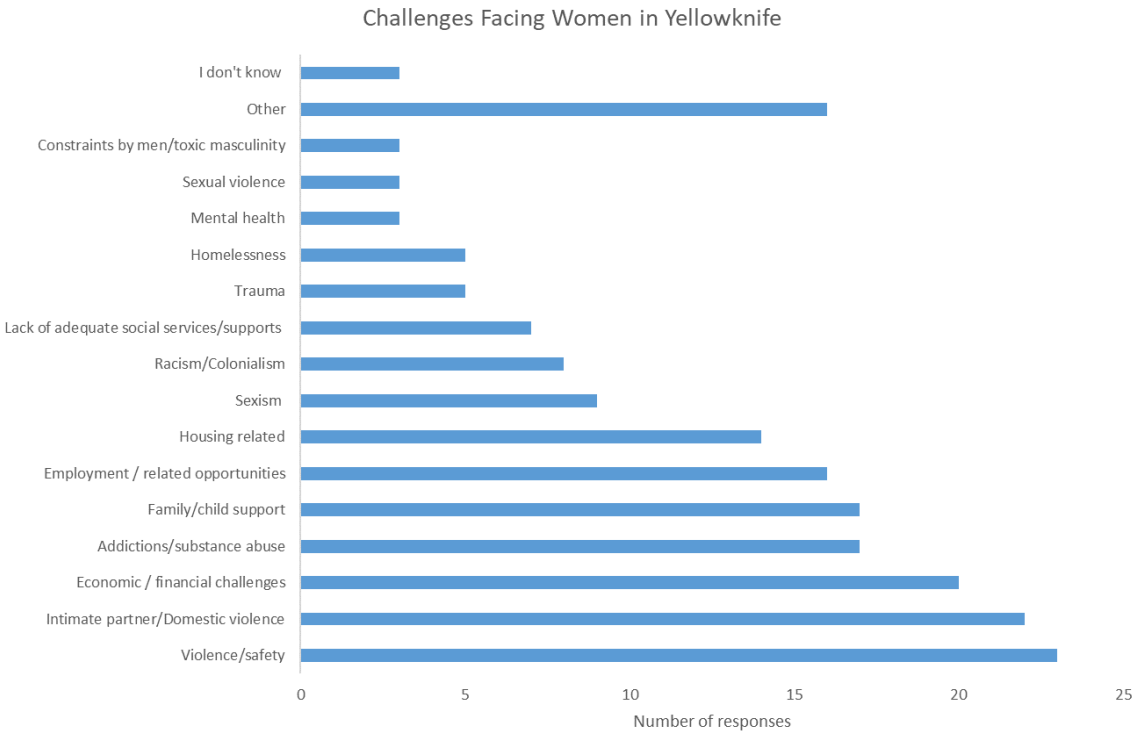


Figure 1.2. Identified challenges faced by women and girls, by number of responses



Social Issues
Housing
Homelessness
Child and Family and welfare Services
Addictions
Mental Health
Lack of Healing Resources
Family Violence
Violence
Safety of women

Figure 1.3: Social issues identified by media interviewees

\* The yellow sections show main social issues for women and children.

*"I think overall you don't see a lot of enough meaningful reporting about women's experiences, either because a lack of access to knowing what women are experiencing or just frankly not asking."*  
**Media Personnel**

*"it's hard, it is hard to do that but we try our best to make sure we take time to do a good job of reporting on social issues."* **-Media Personnel**

**Getting the Story:**

**Media interviews:** When asked how stories are developed or where they come from, there were a multitude of answers. A lot of information is shared by people, organizations and government who reach out to the media directly, communicating what is happening and possible topics to report on. Other times stories are derived through social media, community engagement, and news releases.

*"most of the time our reporting is based on people coming to us and saying this should be reported on, whether it's a organization, whether it's an individual, [on the basis of] somebody affected by something, somebody who knows somebody who's affected by something. Because generally we don't know it's an issue so a lot of our reporting is driven by people pointing out specific issues to us."* **Media Personnel**

*"definitely keeping an eye on social media, I would say that's about 80% of where my story ideas come from. Just because...a lot of community pages will turn to social media to raise awareness around social issues, they'll post events, it's an easy way to contact and do our research...If I see a lot of the same sort of issues coming up and people posting about them, especially when its something revolving around housing or about employment. If I keep seeing a trend of people posting from a certain area...then that is going to take precedence."* **Media Personnel**

Is there enough support to address issues from the different levels of government?

*Survey:* The majority of survey participants responded that different levels of government did not provide enough support to address social issues.

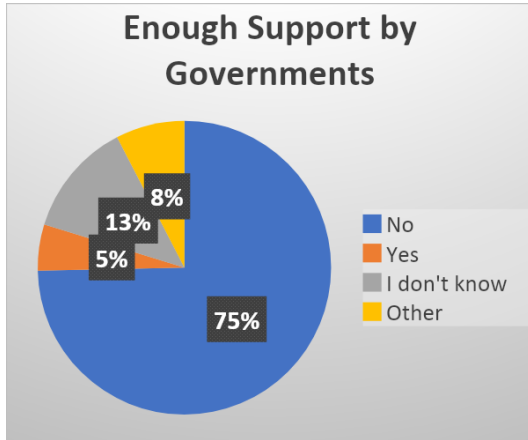


Figure 1.4. Survey responses by percentage (%), do different levels of government provide enough supports?

*“all of our programs to some extent receives some government funding and some of our programs more than others...some are more dependent on government funding than others and some of the departments/programs have not received an increase in funding for several years, even if we request it and that creates a challenge... When funding is leveled over time because of inflation...essentially it’s like a decrease because your costs always go up...We have staff to pay, we have utilities to help keep the building [running], generally that’s a challenge.”*

**-Non-Profit Manager**

*Organization interviews:* The perspective on government support from interviewees was based on their level of partnership. 12 out of 17 interviewees said funding is a main challenge for them. Many discussed having previous and current partnerships with the government. The partnerships were about working together because organizations contain specific expertise that the government does not have, such as building training material or creating promotional resources.

*Media interviews:* Some media organizations brought up the challenge of not having government support. One challenge that journalists face in the NWT is the lack of communication from government departments, like RCMP or Department of Justice, who were described as “the gatekeepers”. It was described as difficult to receive information or updates from them, and they have a lot of influence on how a story is told. There are ways to receive information from the “gatekeepers”, which requires a lot of effort by media, where media staff feel they are already working over capacity. The lack of communication leads to gaps in the story, and additional time, energy, and resources for reporters.

*“I really do feel like sometimes it’s hard to tell the full story because of what’s in the court and what is allowable in the court as fact and heavily relying on court reporting to tell stories about the kind of circumstances of what is happening to women up here and I don’t like using the court as a bar for social acceptability.”* **Media Personnel**

Is there enough support to address issues by community organizations?

Survey: 64% of survey respondents did not believe community organizations provided enough support in addressing the social issues they identified in question 1 (Figure 1.3).

*-I think they do a good job in potentially bridging the gap, but I would hope that they could expand their services and become more case oriented to help individuals with their own paths/plans.*

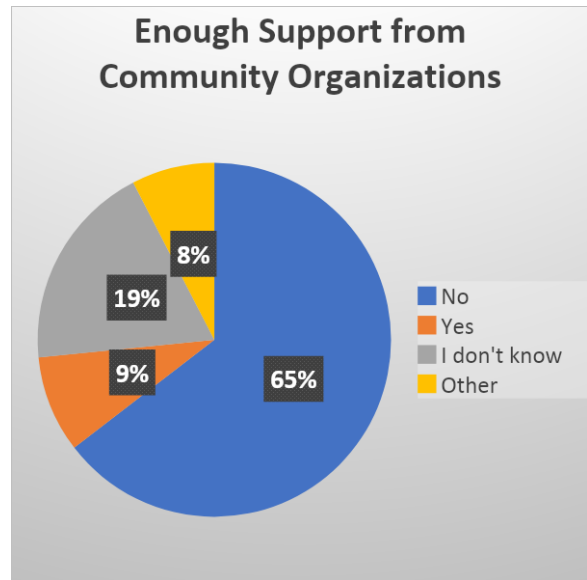
*-Very helpful and trying hard. Family willingness and support is key.*

*-NGOs offer good programs but there are still needs that are not being met. Housing is one of these.*

*-I believe they do as much as they can given funding issues*

**-various survey respondents.**

Figure 1.5. Survey responses by percentage (%): do community organizations provide enough support?



## Addressing social issues through programs and services

### Challenges for organizations

*Organization interviews:* The three challenges most often mentioned by organizations were funding, high staff turnover, and location (Figure 1.6). Funding is a challenge mentioned by all interviewees, and a large portion are dependent on government funding (local and federal). However, government funding can be a challenge because non-profit policies and vision may clash with government policies, thus creating tension and less flexibility for the organization to deliver its programs and services the way they see fit. The organizations' delivery of services and programs can be influenced by funder preferences, and it is also difficult for some organizations to sustain programming and services on government support. Many non-profits in the community are a territorial wide service provider, they provide support to people in Yellowknife but as well to all other communities and residents in the territory. There is the need for more costs, resources and capacity to provide services and programs to all NWT residents.

Non-profits also face resource and capacity challenges. They cannot provide the competitive salaries and incentives of government or private sector. Many interviewees mentioned running over capacity as a challenge within their organization. With limited staffing there is less opportunity to grow and move towards the organization's vision. This may also influence the amount of time organizations have to collaborate with others.

It was recognized that collaboration is a good idea, but it doesn't happen in Yellowknife. Some reasons provided include: funding challenges and priorities, having little staff and always working over capacity, and Yellowknife being a revolving door for staff. The lack of collaboration in such a small town results in some overlap in services and programs. This causes mistrust, tension and competition among organizations that could be working together.

*"If you are not careful it's very easy to become siloed...where you get so focused on the day to day stuff that you are doing because we are all busy. We are all probably working over capacity, so it's easy to get lost in your own world just dealing with your day to day stuff in crisis mode... government workers, politicians, front line, civil service people, NGO's...[they are] trying to stay connected but people come and go..." Non-profit manager*

*"How do the governments who fund all of these services expect or create that environment, so are they creating a very siloed environment within the funders stream themselves or [do] they help facilitate in being a backbone to create that collaborative environment where one organization doesn't feel threatened by another organization because it isn't purely based on numbers and funding..." Non-profit Executive Director*

*Media interviews:* Some interviewees thought non-profits face the challenges of lack of northern statistics and stories in national research, which could lead to less of a chance to gain support, recognition and capital. It was also reflected that organizations face challenges around perception and money. Additional challenges are the complexity of social issues, representing a vast geographic scale, and generalizing populations and their needs when trying to explain an issue.

Media organizations also face capacity and resource challenges, affecting how and what they report on. Stories may not be published for a variety of reasons: perceived as a personal conflict without an independent way to verify information, too sensitive to report, too difficult to keep people anonymous based on community populations, and the journalist may not be the right person to tell the story.

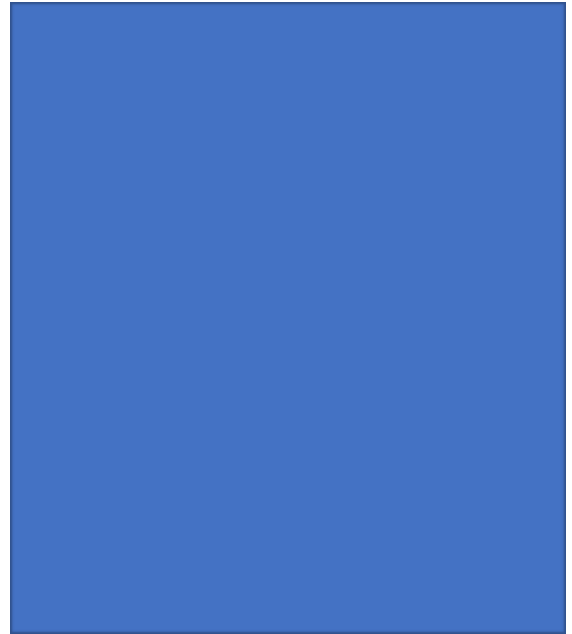
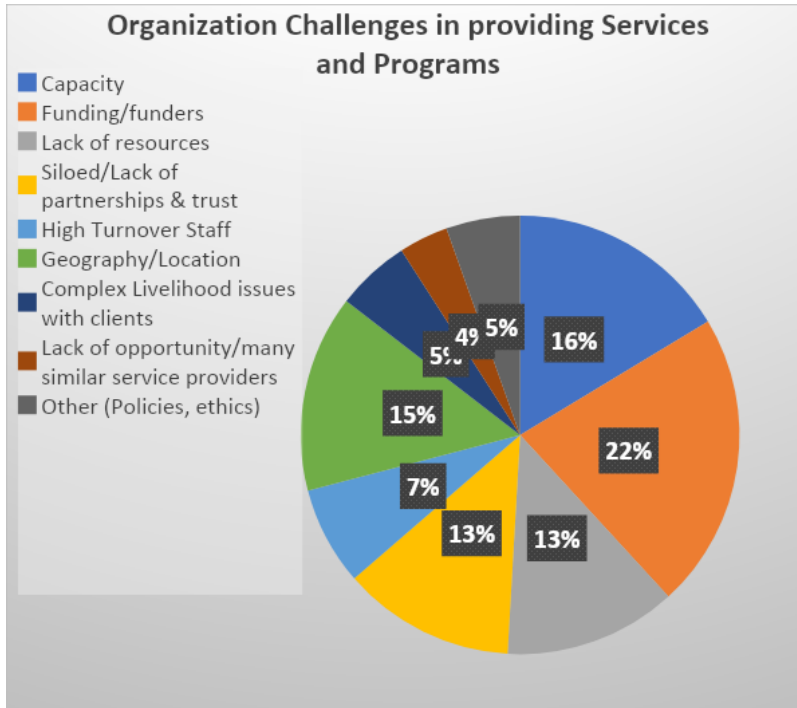


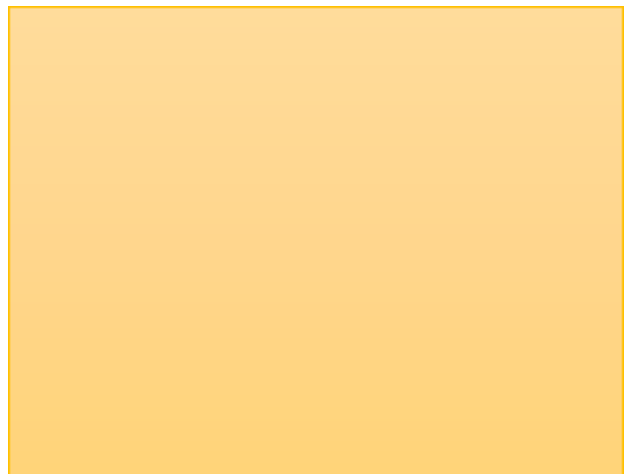
Figure 1.6. Organizational challenges identified by interviewees

*“government workers, politicians, front line, civil service people, NGO’s...[they are] trying to stay connected but people come and go...some times you have to be intentional...for example, a couple years ago the hospital there was a good understanding and connection of [our programs]. we could send people for medical [services] and they would refer people; lately I have noticed since the new hospital...it’s bigger, it’s expanded there seems to be a disconnect, a little bit. So, I need to intentionally go down there, meet with the head of the emergency ward for example, take some brochures and tell them about our program. Saying how can we work together, this is who we are and this is what we are doing, for example... You always kind of have to be intentional and kind of work at it.”*

**-Non-profit Manager**

*“there’s an extreme deficit of research and studies say that they are national but completely ignore the North and it is almost as if we don’t exist because researchers have decided that national doesn’t include the people in the 3 territories...it’s really unfortunate when there are studies that talk about social issues or talk about things like housing or education...that is an obstacle I think.”*

**-Media Personnel**



## Challenges for people trying to access programs and services

*Survey:* The top challenges identified by respondents is help to access supports and system navigation followed by accessibility and waitlists. Other top issues include the lack of a program or service and the treatment of potential users (Figure 1.7).

*Organization interviews:* The main challenges clients face that were mentioned include:

- organizations not having enough capacity or space to provide services and programs to support all demand resulting in waiting lists or needs that are just not being met;
- when a space feels unsafe or not inclusive then clients may feel reluctant to access those services or programs;
- physical access challenges;
- clients have complex livelihoods and deal with many challenges making it difficult to be supported by one organization;
- lack of empowerment and self-worth and may result in more dependency on others to give that support;
- and systematic challenges (meeting certain criteria to use programs and services).

## Organizational Successes

*Organization interviews:* For many organizations, word of mouth is how clients come to know of their services and programs. Many organizations provide information to clients and others by referring them to places that provide the services and programs they are looking for. Another successful organizational feature is having the right staff and board, as noted by the majority of interviewees. Staff that are passionate and dedicated to the work make all the difference. It was also noted that providing a space to allow mistakes and creativity among staff makes for better success. The North provides opportunities to test out ideas. There is only a certain number of organizations and departments that can provide support and this makes it easy to try out pilot projects. There is opportunity to attend meetings with other stakeholders, where you can share and collaborate with others in decision making. There have been plenty of successful collaborations among various NWT organizations. Successful partnerships have created a mutual trust and work together to support one another as well as their clients. When partnerships happen in Yellowknife they provide more support, expertise, resources and capacity to deliver the program or service.

*"I think a good media campaign is big. A lot of it has to do with word of mouth, but also marketing is huge. It's sucks as a non-profit, your work should speak for itself...but I think having good marketing and media strategies is important, having good logos and making sure you are getting in as much as possible with private companies and having that symbiotic relationship is important." **Non-profit interviewee***

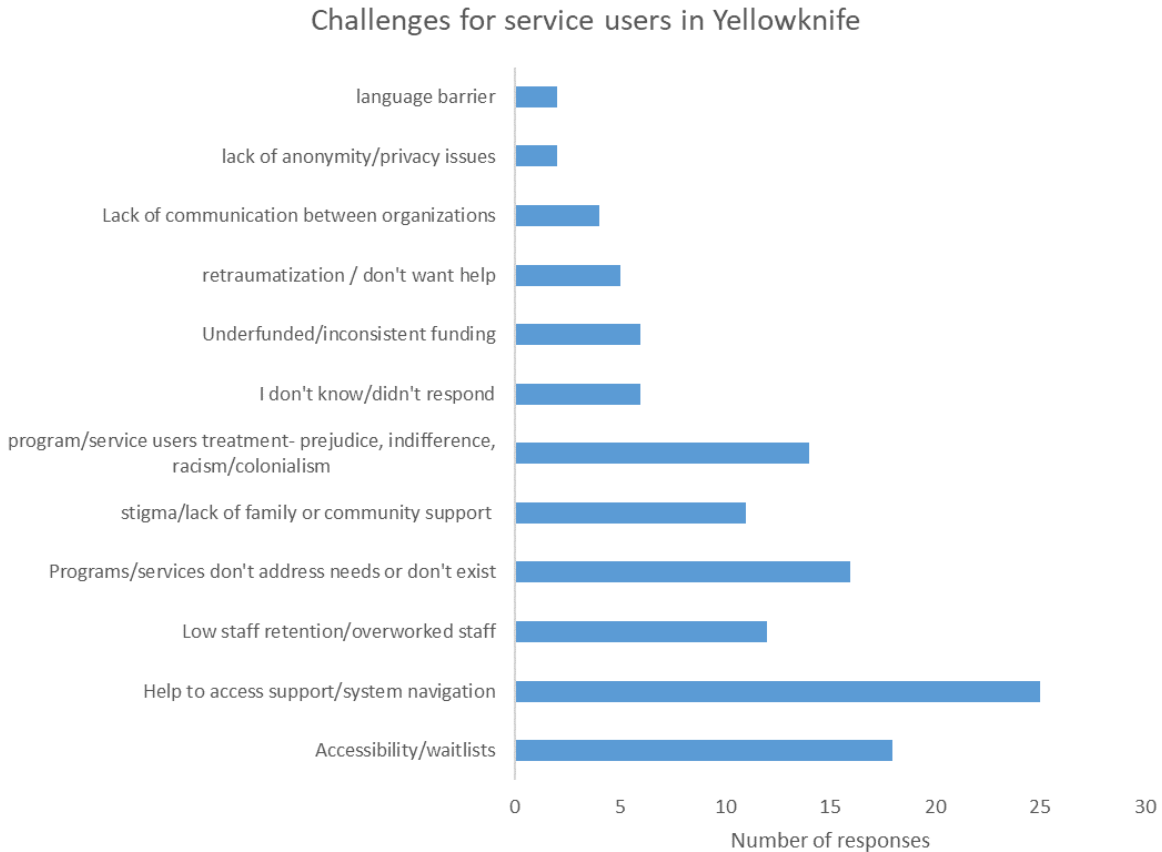


Figure 1.7. Challenges for service users identified by survey respondents, by number of responses

*“one of the key thing is having...the right staff for the right program because not everyone has the training, the education or experience to work in each and every department so you try and find the right staff. You screen the right staff. You hire the right staff to fit into the right program as best as possible and staff that understand the mission, what we are doing and committed to it, and we have been successful having some good long term staff like that.” **Non-profit Manager***

*“Staff here really get positive notches from pay but [also] from [the] environment we try to provide and their opportunity to really connect with individuals. Everything we do here...[we] do a lot of hands on work with clients ... We have 80 staff and they are all client connected and I think that part is what makes us successful... [it provides] support. Our board is tremendously supportive of what we do and supports [the organizations'] vision...they understand that we have some broad parameters [with] operating and being client focused, [which] allows us to be absolutely flexible...it works for us.”*

**-Non-profit Executive Director**

### Programs and services residents would like to see in Yellowknife

Survey respondents were asked what programs and services they would like to see in Yellowknife. The most commonly repeated answers were categorized by them and condensed for clarity, provided in Figure 1.6 below.

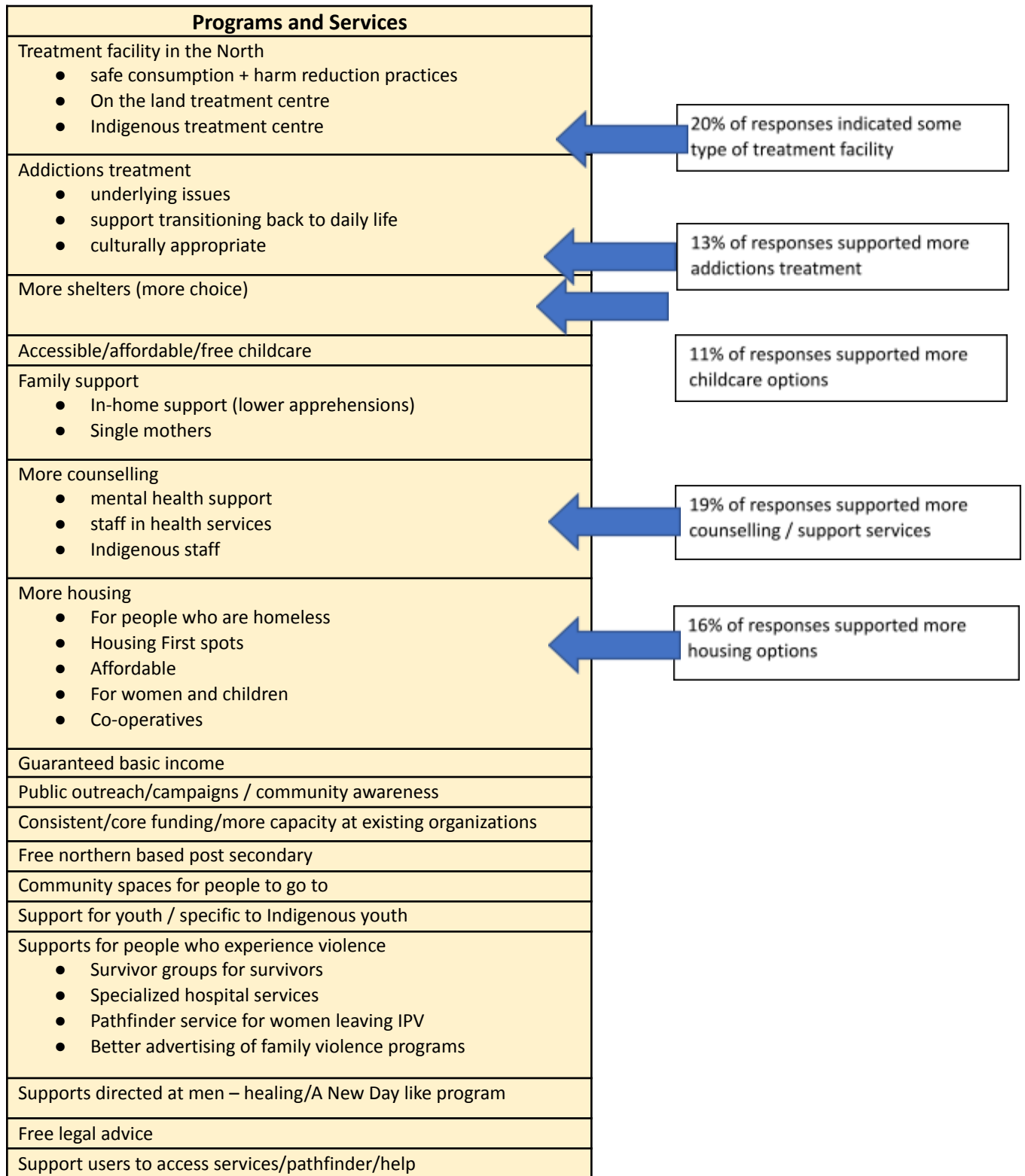


Figure 1.8. Desired programs and services provided by survey respondents



Topics
Growing current programs and services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>resources</li> <li>more activities and bigger programs</li> <li>outreach</li> <li>space availability and own space</li> <li>filling in gaps</li> </ul>
Housing and shelter support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth</li> </ul>
Income support
More Indigenous programming
More and better support for women who have been sexually assaulted
Family literacy centre
Expand addiction services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>an addiction centre</li> </ul>
Gender Based Analysis unit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>supporting governing decisions and policies</li> </ul>

*Organization interviews:* organizations were asked what they would like to ideally provide if they had no constraints. Building on existing programs and services was the most popular response. Some examples include increasing the frequency of programs and services and being able to provide more for the current programs (e.g., inclusive and respectful programming, food, space and promotional resources).

Figure 1.9. Organizational responses on what they would provide if they were free of constraints

## Perceptions of the Yellowknife Women’s Society

### Prior knowledge of the Yellowknife Women’s Society

*Survey:* 94% of survey respondents knew about the YWS prior to the survey. Most respondents selected that they knew of the organization through a personal connection (31 response), followed by friends or family (26 responses), another organization (23 responses), radio/newspaper (23 responses), or Facebook/Twitter (21 responses). The majority of respondents felt the YWS should work with other organizations to address social issues (63 responses), followed by provided important programs and services that aren’t offered otherwise (61 responses), and advocate on behalf of women

*“Hire “visibly” Indigenous staff to reflect the users of programs.”*

*“Continue to help women, keep the youth active, work with men when they are healthy.”*

*“Both YWS and YWCA address need for support and housing but for different groups. This is ok as the need is*

to the different levels of government (53 responses).

*Organizations interviews:* Various organizations in Yellowknife have partnered or supported YWS and its clients but for the most part, many groups are unsure exactly what their vision is, what they provide and who they provide services for. Even so, they still attribute positive outcomes to the YWS and believe they provide necessary supports for community members.

*“they have helped make our programs more accessible to their clients but other than that we haven’t really worked together at all. Personally, I am more aware of the services but not all of them...”* **Non-profit member**

*“I don’t know what it is. I’m having trouble following... I don’t understand the relationship between it and the YWCA, and housing first and some of the things with the day shelter.”* **Non-profit interviewee**

*“The YWS I think they do great work. I think they have a big mandate particularly in the territory here with issues...”* **Non-profit executive director**

*“I am amazed at what the YWS has taken on. The ready to work project... it’s very gutsy to do...it’s not just for women [but] it’s for everyone but I think it’s a really good program because it helps people build some kind of history of employment in the long run. They were right in there for housing first, which I think is amazing as well...with Bree as the ED they seem to have something come up, and [they] think they can do it, [and]they just do it and I find that to be amazing.”* **Non-profit Executive Director**

*“... at one point it was very clear it was women that came from certain background, they had certain issues... Now its really grown into other [stuff]. Like when I hear the daycare has government employees dropping their kids off at it, I’m not sure what kind of a daycare that is then because its very different from what the original daycare was from the kind of support and the people that were accessing it.”*

**-Non-profit Executive Director**

*I really don’t know anything about the Women’s Society. Obviously, I have looked it up before but a lot of my clients that have come in here have never asked what they do, or anything like that...I’ve never worked with them.”*

**-Non-Profit member**

*“I think its evolved over the years like... [their] not always distinct with the specific services that are provided because ...people are doing work but its not always visible to the public eye.”*

**-Media Personnel**

*Media interviews:* The media personnel that were interviewed have connected and worked with YWS, and know of them as an organization but do not have a comprehensive idea as to exactly what they provide, and who exactly they provide support for. One media participant affirmed that as a media platform they are aware of what Yellowknife organizations provide in a general sense and won’t know more about them until a related story emerges. Knowledge of the YWS is related to the individual journalist: what kinds of stories they focus on, their relationship building, and how long they have been

working in the city. Yellowknife and the North in general is a transient place with a high turnover of journalists.

### Knowledge of YWS Programs and Services

*Survey:* When asked to identify YWS programs and services, the majority of survey respondents identified the women’s shelter, centre for northern families, and housing supports as providing the most positive contribution to the community (Figure 2.1). The second most common response was don’t know enough to answer (Figure 2.1). Although the majority of survey respondents have a positive to very positive overall view of the YWS and overall view of the YWS impact since 1990 (Figures 2.2 and 2.3), many answers to a follow up question asking to list which programs and services offered by the YWS have made the most positive impact include ones they never did or no longer offer, including emergency protection order support, working with immigrant families and providing a shelter for women with their children.

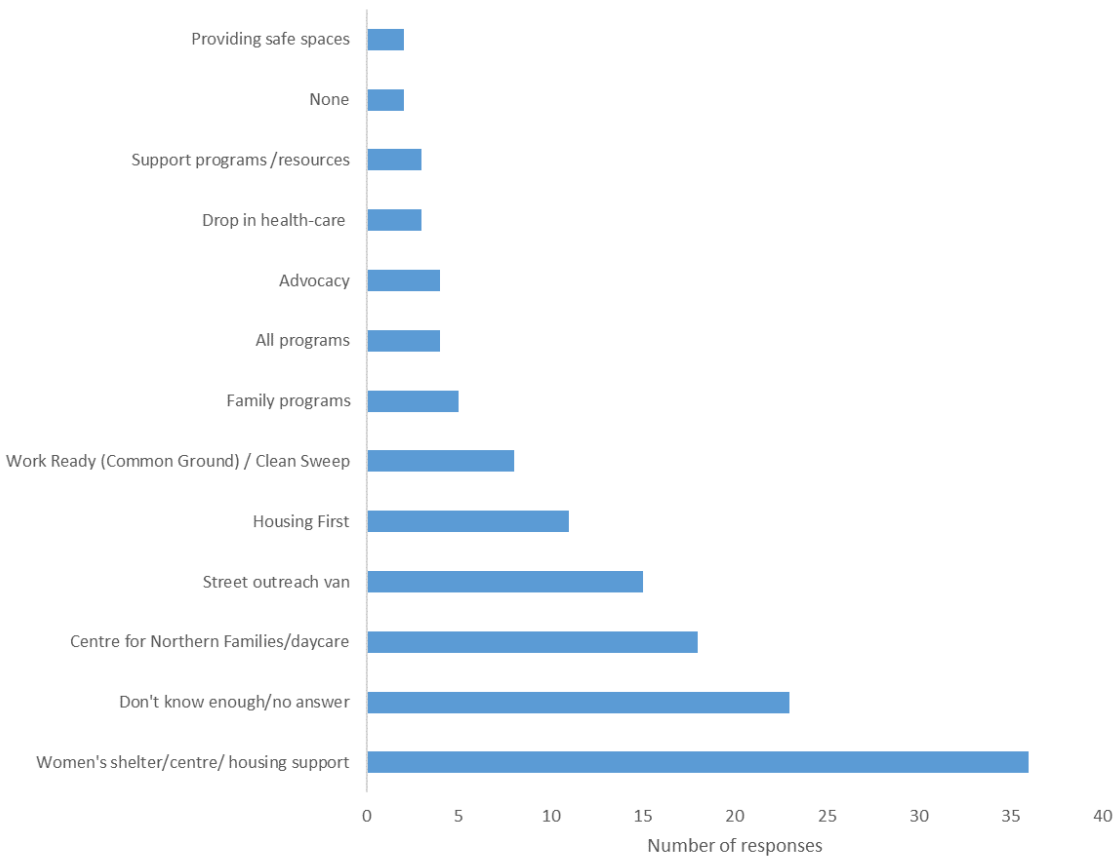


Figure 2.1. Survey responses on YWS programs and services that contribute positively to the community, by number of responses

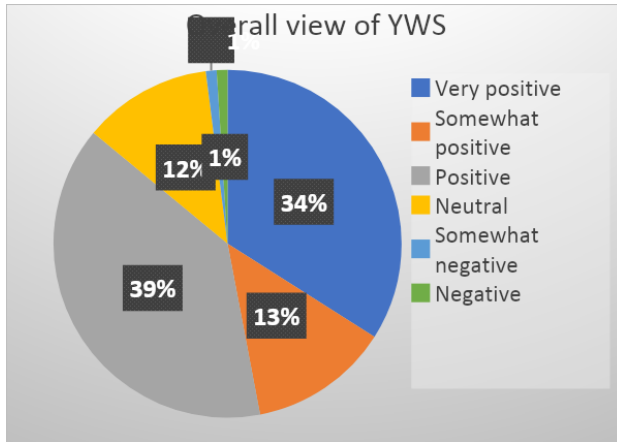


Figure 2.2. Survey respondents overall view of the YWS, by percentage (%) of responses

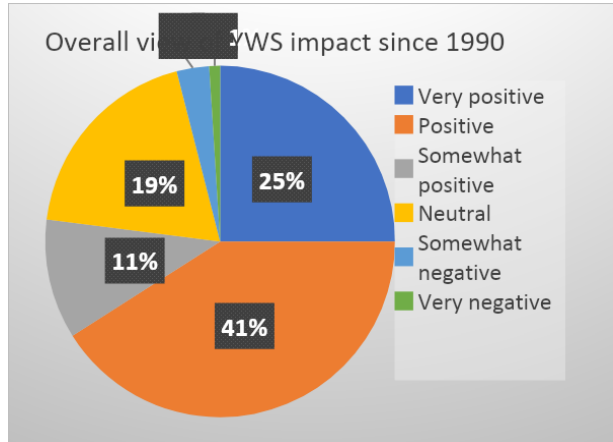


Figure 2.3. Survey respondents overall view of YWS impact since 1990, by percentage (%) of responses

**Organization interviews:** Two interviewees identified as having a strong partnership and regular communication with the YWS. Other organizations know of the YWS and its staff members from meetings, local coalitions and through occasional collaboration. A few organizations partner with the YWS but specifically with Centre for Northern Families and know about some other aspects of the organization, or communicate with the executive director or board members. The target population for programs and services was confusing because the YWS is also known for supporting families and men, such as through the Housing first or the Work Ready program but is viewed as a women’s organization.

*“I don’t have a really good sense ...of the organization and all the things that are involved...I know some parts of it... I know that there’s a shelter but how the shelter works or who can go to that shelter and how you get referred, I wouldn’t know which would be good information to have because potentially there are people that I work with who might [need those services].”*

**-Non-profit employee**

*“There’s programs for people who aren’t women and you know that’s in the name so you assume that’s part of it. But there’s also the family side of it as well, [like] the daycare...It’s similar to the YWCA the programs offered are going to change with the needs of the community. Its so hard what to say what the niche would be specifically for them.”*

**Non-Profit staff**

*“... at one point it was very clear, it was women that came from certain backgrounds, they had certain issues... Now its really grown into other [stuff].”*

**Non-profit interviewee**

*“First of all, you have to define who you are and what is your core mandate and get good at that.”*

**Non-profit Executive Director**

**Media interviews:** For the most part, media organizations know of the YWS. Media personnel knew some of the services they provide or had a general idea on who they support. Some aspects of the YWS that the media knew about include, emergency shelter, advocacy, support to families and daycares, and the Housing First program. There was mention about how the YWS role has evolved and the person was unsure of the distinct services and programs they currently provide.

*“[I think their role is] advocacy and partnership to provide programs and services...but I don’t know what those programs or services are... I think what I know of the YWS is just on what press release I get and sometimes it’s not even from YWS it’s from other funders and donors.” **Media Personnel***

All interviewees mentioned the YWS Executive Director (ED), Bree Denning as their main YWS line of communication, both for community and media organizations.

*“they need somebody who can champion the organization... I don’t see them advocating...if anyone on the board or anyone could take that role...saying look what we can do. I think they could also just keep an eye on their website...people know what they are doing. But I just think they are just awesome for what they have taken on.” **Non-profit Executive Director***

*“they’re not connected to the community in a way, like they are connected to their clientele, which is fine but in order for your organization to get the support from the community you also have to be connected to them...improving their presence in the community would be extremely beneficial.” **Non-profit Executive Director***

*“again I think it’s the visibility piece...where [the YWS] building is, everyone sees it, like they go to work and they see it, they go home and they see it because they are driving along that road. That is a prime piece of real estate that can do some excellent advocacy just visually.”*

**-Non-profit staff**

### Relationship with the YWS

*Organization interviews:* Although organizations noted a pleasant attitude regarding the YWS, many noted they did not feel they have a relationship with the organization. Some expressed interest in collaborations and discussed previous collaborations in the past.

*“I love collaboration but it just doesn’t happen”*

*“I find right now Yellowknife seems less open to collaboration than it has been in the past...there just seems like less opportunity for collaboration [now].”*

*“...everyone seems to want to do their own thing, in their own corner of the universe and I mean that’s okay too.”*

*“even partnering with other organizations on projects that could help their message but also build other organizations. They’ve been around for like 30 years and they need to modernize because it’s getting to the point it’s at a detriment for the organization. Eventually they will not be around because they won’t have modernized.”*

**-various non-profit interviewees**

*Media interviews:* For the media who have communicated and worked with YWS, the experience has been positive. The YWS is described as willing and open to work together. The media in Yellowknife

seem to have positive relations with the YWS and open to build on that relationship if there is opportunity. When media contact the YWS, they usually speak with the Executive Director, Bree Denning. She will either follow through with providing information or may suggest someone else to speak on the organizations' behalf. The YWS has also contacted media outlets to help promote what things are happening for them. One media interviewee has never communicated with the YWS but would like to if there is opportunity.

*"... we consider the YWS to be a very reliable and easy to work with organization when it comes to talking."*

*"if its an issue affecting women, I'm almost always going to call YWS"*

*"Bree's pretty quick, and she usually agrees to an interview so that's good. If I need to get a comment she is there to do it I find."*

**-various media personnel**

Having social media presence also provides an outlet for media to gather community focused stories. Other ways of gathering stories is through news releases, visiting communities, attending events and building relationships with community members. Some stories are updated and continuously followed through based on a journalist's view of what is in the public interest.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

### Yellowknife Social Issues

The main social issues the public finds to be the most pressing in Yellowknife is addictions and substance abuse, followed by homelessness, violence/abuse and housing challenges. In the 2017 City of Yellowknife Citizen Survey report it also classifies poverty and homelessness, addictions and drug abuse and housing challenges as the top three growing public concerns in general for quality of life (City of Yellowknife, 2017). Community and media organizations also identified similar social issues as the public including: substance abuse and addictions, family violence/violence, homelessness, mental health, lack of healing resources, employment and housing/shelter challenges.

The public identified social issues that predominantly affect women and girls to be: violence, economic challenges, substance abuse and addiction, and lack of family and child supports. Media personnel identified housing, homelessness, family violence and safety. Many identified the precursor of such issues to be trauma related (i.e., PTSD or intergenerational). For many organizations that provide community programs and services, social issues were described as complex, and holistic approaches of working as a community are best to support program and service users who face interconnected issues.

Based on survey results, respondents do not feel that the services and programs offered in Yellowknife are doing enough to address social issues. Most respondents (75%) think the different levels of government do not give enough support. Most respondents (64%) think that community organizations do not provide enough support, but remain supportive of their activities and attempts to address the issues. Government is also seen as a barrier by most interviewed community organizations and media personnel. Most community organizations rely on government funding, and funding issues may interfere with organizations delivering services and programs as they would like. Organizations also struggle with capacity, resources and disconnection from other organizations. Media interviewees identified government as creating challenges because there is a lack of communication and support from them when it comes to providing needed information, resulting in gaps within published stories.

Poverty and homelessness have been identified by many as being one of the most serious social issues in Yellowknife and women have been identified as the fastest-growing group that are at risk (City

of Yellowknife, 2017; Bopp et al., 2009). Some characteristics that places one into homelessness include, high cost of living, inadequate access to appropriate social services, and lack of affordable and accessible transportation systems (Bopp et al., 2009; Levan, Bopp, McNaughton, & Hache, 2007). As recently as 2011, the GNWT did not have a dedicated position to manage and focus on the homelessness challenge, whereas there is now a manager of homelessness and community planning with a homelessness specialist under them (Falvo, 2011; GNWT, 2020; Levan et al., 2007).

Based on the findings from the surveys and interviews, women face a variety of pressing social issues and while there are a multitude of programs and services to support them, significant gaps remain. Due to the broad nature of survey and interview responses, specific recommendations for addressing these gaps are not possible. However, the responses provide perspective on the perceived focus areas for advocacy or expansion of program and service delivery by the YWS.

### Perceptions of the Yellowknife Women's Society

The majority of public survey participants (94%) stated they knew of the YWS before this survey. The majority of respondents also identified YWS as being an important organization in the community, whether they work with others to support issues, advocate on behalf of women to various government levels or provide programs and services that are offered elsewhere or not offered anywhere else. When asked what YWS programs and services provide the most positive impact in the community participants mentioned the women's shelter, the women's centre and housing support. The second highest response was not knowing enough about the YWS programs and services to respond to the question. It seems that the majority of survey participants know of the organization but do not have a comprehensive idea as to what they offer.

Community organizations and media also have a similar perception of the YWS to that of the public, in that they view the organization positively, but are unclear on specific goals, programs and services. There was the sense that the YWS mandate has evolved throughout the years. Even if they do not have a clear idea as to what the YWS provides they still find the organization to be an important entity for supporting the community. Many are interested to potentially collaborate with the YWS on similar and complimentary services, some examples include to help increase YWS initiatives through promotion or partnering to support violence against women programs and to build relationships within the community across organizations. Interviewees from media organizations identified were most aware of YWS services and programs related to the emergency shelter, advocacy and the housing first program. Many organizations know of the YWS through collaborations, meetings and coalitions but are unsure exactly what their vision is and what they exactly provide in services and programs.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, recommendations are provided in the section below. The recommendations are not considered an exhaustive list.

### Mission and Vision

Advocacy helps to strengthen policies, leading and promoting social justice, democracy, equality and giving a voice to diverse perspectives (Almog-Bar & Schmid, 2014; McCoy, Nordberg, Hoefler, & Mellinger, 2017). For advocacy efforts to be successful, an organizations' mission and vision needs to be clear for both the organization members but also for the public and other stakeholders (Ahmed, 2019).

- ***Assess the Yellowknife Women's Society current vision, mission, goals, and objectives for clarity and alignment against current and/or future organizational practices***

## Funding and Government

The largest funder for non-profits is the government. Non-profits are highly dependent on funding in order to deliver and function as a service provider (Almog-Bar & Schmid, 2014). This dependence influences policy-advocacy activities. Advocacy efforts from non-profits could challenge government policies, risking future support and funding from those government funders and creating challenges for the organization to deliver its mandate. This potential restriction for organizations in delivering advocacy efforts can affect the overall social change within the community (Shier & Handy, 2015).

- **Advocate for the protection of vital funding streams that can ensure funding stability. One potential route is through building and maintaining positive relationships with decision makers.**
- **Build-up other funding streams to reduce heavy reliance on government funding.**

## Relationships

Advocacy efforts are influenced by an organization's internal systems and relationships. It's been identified that the size and age of an organization has a positive impact on advocacy. This is because older organizations have established organizational and financial support networks, the accessibility of information systems and partnerships, professional leadership and administrative experience (Almog-Bar & Schmid, 2014). The YWS is well established in the community, which provides an advantage over newer non-profits. Advocacy efforts are a major part of an organization's mission, but it involves lots of time, resources, effort and commitment to do. It may require working beyond regular hours, which may be a challenge for non-profits as they are already overrun with other priorities. Almog-Bar and Schmid (2014) suggest that "the scope and intensity of non-profit advocacy tend to increase as a function [with board member communication towards citizens] and the level of citizen involvement in strategic decision-making" (p.20).

- **Create a board position or sub-committee that is responsible for leading advocacy**
- **Build a roster of volunteers who can support in championing advocacy positions**

Yellowknife is a small community where many community organizations, government departments and businesses serve the same clients. Interaction, even on a basic level needs to happen with other service providers (Snavel & Tracy, 2002). There appears to be an understanding that organizations should focus on their own specific agendas. Interviewees described the lack of collaboration is influenced by a variety of factors, including: relationships with funders, resource scarcity, mandates, community relations, and capacity challenges. Many organizations responded favourably to the idea of collaboration, and long-term/sustainable collaboration requires trust among partners (Snavel & Tracy, 2002). Trust increases communication among community stakeholders, progression towards common goals, reduces unnecessary service/program overlaps, and creates potential to establish joint advocacy efforts (McCoy et al., 2017; Shier & Handy, 2015).

- **Look for collaboration opportunities with organizations and reach out to build the relationship/opportunity. Potential areas for collaboration include: policy proposals, media campaigns, public education, and research.**

## Public Awareness:

The majority of organizations that were interviewed provide their services to all NWT residents. Organizations need to be creative in promoting and providing information to all communities. Some organizations create packages and materials that get circulated around Yellowknife as well as throughout the territory. One organization incorporates a brochure of their services into another organization's information kits that are sent annually throughout the territory. This is a successful partnership in



delivering information together. Promotional and informational materials are a good way for organizations to market themselves.

- **Create new or updated promotional/informational resources for the organization and specific programs. Ensure they are clear and clearly state what the YWS/the specific program does.**

The YWS has been recognized to support women and families in general, but is specifically identified as providing support to marginalized women without access to supports elsewhere. They have been recognized for having good relationships with their clients, and for not turning women away. This reputation can be used to the organization's benefit in either building relationships within the community or providing public education on principles, theories, etc. that guide the organization.

- **Information sessions / open houses / public talks on specific ideas or issues will give a chance for the public and other stakeholders to learn and understand what the YWS provides while also engaging in discussions on relevant issues**
- **Information campaigns that are run or sponsored by the YWS can support civic engagement and mobilize action while educating the public on activities of the YWS**

### Visibility and Digital Advocacy

Throughout the interviews with organizations and media, many were unsure of who represented the YWS (other than the Executive Director) and where the main building is located. It was evident that the YWS needs to increase their visibility within the community. Increased visibility will also support advocacy and fundraising efforts, as the organization will gain supporters who are unaware of their work within the community. It was assumed by one non-profit staff that the YWS office was the Centre for Northern Families' (CNF) building. While it may not be feasible increase visibility physically at the various YWS operated buildings in Yellowknife, other avenues are available.

- **Increase visibility through various avenues: online presence, promotional material at high traffic areas around town, and attending public events.**

Non-profits like the YWS have not used social media to its fullest potential. Online strategies and tools allow information sharing and gathering, and support organizational efforts to remain relevant and innovative as issues evolve (Goldkind, 2015; Shier & Handy, 2015). Utilizing online tools and platforms to create a space to share and transmit knowledge aids in the creation of online communities and strengthens outreach efforts (Bowen et al., 2017). Civic engagement is a big part of advocacy efforts and social media can be a tool to foster such action (Bowen et al., 2017). When speaking with Yellowknife organizations, they described Facebook as being the best way to communicate, gather and share information. One media personnel described Facebook as being the main source for their stories.

- **Implement a social media strategy using Facebook at the bare minimum**
- **Update the YWS website regularly, and integrate it with social media strategy**
- **Assign a dedicated communications person for all website and social media communications**

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