



**YWCA**  
C A N A D A

NATIONAL ADVOCACY.  
COMMUNITY ACTION.  
UNE VOIX NATIONALE.  
DES ACTIONS LOCALES.

# **BORN TO BE BOLD**

**Measuring success for women's access to the  
labour market**

**Interim Findings Report**



A photo of seven learners seated in a classroom eagerly listening to their instructor.

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YWCA Canada is located on the traditional unceded territory of the Wendat, the Anishnaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Métis, and the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation. We recognize the land, history, relationship, and rights that Indigenous Peoples (First Nation, Inuit, Métis) have held to the land since time in memorial. We offer our respectful thanks to the Indigenous communities, their ancestors, their contemporaries, and their descendants.

The lead researcher is a first-generation settler and young woman of colour in what is currently known as Canada and approaches this research with these experiences and lens. While the intention of this research is to understand the barriers and practices to women's access to gainful employment, we recognize the need for and work toward decolonizing the research process. We know that research has historically involved treating Black and Indigenous People as subjects; not engaging them in the research design, methods, data collection, or sharing. We continue to alter our researcher perceptions and decolonize through transparency, more control to participants, accessibility, and learning.

We recognize that the definitions of work and the labour market reflect a colonial worldview and that Indigenous Peoples, particularly Indigenous women and Two-Spirit people, have been working on this land since time in memorial, which is far prior to the establishment of the current labour market.



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## YWCA CANADA

YWCA Canada is a leading voice for women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender diverse people. For 150 years, we've been at the forefront of a movement: to fight gender-based violence, build affordable housing and advocate for workplace equity. We work to advance gender equity by responding to urgent needs in communities, through national advocacy and grassroots initiatives. Local YWCAs invest over \$258 million annually to support over 330,000 individuals across the nation. Today, we engage young leaders, diverse communities, and corporate partners to achieve our vision of a safe and equitable Canada for all.

For more information, visit our website: <https://ywcacanada.ca/>.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The preliminary findings of this phase of research clearly indicates that a holistic, person-centered approach is necessary for increasing women's access to gainful employment. No one program or action will be able to address the myriad of barriers a woman might be facing, nor can all women be considered as one homogenous group. This report conveys patterns of challenges that most participants commonly faced and practices that they have found helpful or missing in their experiences.

The main barriers to accessing gainful employment identified were income and affordable housing, access to affordable childcare and transportation, navigating social systems, lack of skills or access to skills-based programming, social location, and experiences of trauma. Participants clearly indicated necessary actions for policy makers, employers, and service providers to improve their access to gainful employment; particularly flexible work schedules and locations, accessible and affordable childcare and transportation, acknowledging non-institutional, foreign, and lived experiences as expertise, paid training and learning opportunities, peer programming, communities of support, and one-on-one resource navigation support.

**“My confidence, skills, and how I think is so different from this time last year. The program at YWCA really turned my life around.”<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Interview, Program participant, Halifax, NS, Sept 2019

## INTRODUCTION

“Born to be Bold: Measuring success for women’s access to the labour market” is a national research project focused on the issue of economic empowerment for [vulnerable women](#) and the need to better understand promising practices for engaging these women in the workforce. By working with over 300,000 women in our 32 member associations in nine provinces and two territories, YWCA Canada has learned that systemic barriers are inhibiting women from accessing the labour market. This problem is only exacerbated when marginalized women are involved, including women from remote and Northern communities, Black, Indigenous and other racialized women, women fleeing violence, newcomers, single mothers, 2SLGBTQQIA, low-income women, and women with varying levels of ability.

Today, only 82 percent of Canadian women participate in the labour market compared to 91 percent of men.<sup>2</sup> This figure declines further as we take into account marginalized identities. For example, only 76 percent of Black, Indigenous, and women of colour participate in the labour force, despite being 10 percent more likely to hold a university degree. They are also more likely to be employed part-time and receive lower pay.<sup>3</sup>

A landmark study by McKinsey Global Institute estimated that \$150 billion can be added to Canada’s GDP by advancing women in the workforce and increasing women’s labour force participation.<sup>4</sup> The evidence is clear: improving access to the labour market for women with marginalized experiences is essential for gender equity and for economic growth. It is time that we change the system to better serve women living in Canada.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Economic empowerment is a key goal informing YWCA Canada’s mission, including a commitment to “advance gender equity for all women through informed advocacy.”<sup>5</sup> Despite women having a 61 percent labour market participation rate, men are still more active in the workforce.<sup>6</sup> Research on the reasons for the persisting gaps in participation and employment is ongoing. As a provider of programming that supports women securing and maintaining employment, YWCA is well positioned to engage in this research in meaningful ways. This engagement consists of actionable steps to address barriers to accessing gainful employment at the service level through shifts to programming and services, as well as at

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<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada, 2018

<sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada, 2016

<sup>4</sup> McKinsey & Company, 2017

<sup>5</sup> YWCA Canada, 2020, para. 2,4

<sup>6</sup> Statistics Canada, 2019

the systems level through policy change and advocacy. It is key, however, for this work to be based in the experiences of women in Canada.

## **LABOUR MARKET AND ITS HISTORY**

The labour market has historically been dominated by cis-gendered, heterosexual white men and has failed to address the needs of populations that have been marginalized. However, as it has evolved from its original formation, women and other diverse communities have become increasingly involved in the labour market. At the beginning of women's empowerment in the labour movement in 1971,<sup>7</sup> Canada implemented a federal policy allotting benefits for 15 weeks of paid maternity leave. While these labour policies, as well as others implemented over the years, are allowing women to participate more actively in the labour force, they are not sufficient to provide women with equitable and safe access to work. By recognizing the concrete effects of different intersections of identity—such as race, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, class, immigration status, and education—among others, we will be able to explore diverse experiences and understand the complexity behind one's ability to access gainful employment.

## **UNPAID DOMESTIC CARE WORK**

Women spend one hour less per day in paid work compared to men, while spending on average 1.2 more hours undertaking unpaid work,<sup>8</sup> including spending twice as much time on household chores than men on average.<sup>9</sup> This is an important indicator of the uneven distribution of domestic care work duties. Women's labour in domestic work is often not acknowledged as labour that would qualify as work experience or expertise. Childcare services are a key policy solution to reduce women's disproportionate childcare responsibilities, but it is not the ultimate solution to ending the uneven distribution of unpaid domestic work.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Canadian Labour Congress, 2015

<sup>8</sup> Statistics Canada, 2015

<sup>9</sup> Statistics Canada, 2015

<sup>10</sup> Childcare Resource and Research Unit, 2018

## HOUSING AND TRANSIT

Stable employment, housing, and transit are closely related. Housing and transit access are largely dependent on cities, regions, urban or rural, and local demographics. The relationship between employment and transit creates a double bind for those who are unemployed and underemployed. The inability to secure and maintain employment translates to being unable to pay for public transit or other forms of transportation, while being unable to pay for transit options makes it difficult to secure and maintain employment.<sup>11</sup> In addition to affordability, a lack of transit accessibility can make it more difficult to access the labour market and maintain employment due to longer and more strenuous commutes.<sup>12</sup> Public transit accessibility and affordability may disproportionately affect populations that are already marginalized. Those who are Black, Indigenous or people of colour (BIPOC), and those who live in rural areas, as well as at the intersections of these and other aspects of their identities, are disproportionately employed in precarious positions and are more likely to rely on public transit.<sup>13</sup>

Housing options are highly constrained by income level and, as such, there is a strong relationship between housing stability and employment.<sup>14</sup> In addition, housing insecurity, lack of financial independence associated with underemployment, and the reduced access to means of transport contribute to perpetuating unsafe situations for women.<sup>15</sup> While increased shelter access and transitional housing is a step in the right direction, they are only short-term solutions and do not offer long term stability. Safe and accessible housing options, as well as accessible, affordable, and reliable transit options, are important to address housing instability, gender-based violence, and access to employment.<sup>16</sup>

## THE WORKPLACE : SAFE, RESPECTFUL, ACCESSIBLE

The environment created within a workplace can greatly impact one's ability to access and maintain employment. Women, Black, Indigenous, and people of colour, and workers from other marginalized communities in particular face systemic discrimination within the workplace, which directly impacts their ability to maintain employment.<sup>17</sup> This

<sup>11</sup> Premji, 2017

<sup>12</sup> Allen & Farber, 2019

<sup>13</sup> Premji, 2017

<sup>14</sup> O'Campo, Daoud, Hamilton-Wright, & Dunn, 2016

<sup>15</sup> O'Campo et al., 2016

<sup>16</sup> O'Campo et al., 2016

<sup>17</sup> Deschamps, 2019



marginalization can take the form of sexism, sexual harassment, racism, homophobia, transphobia, sanism, and so on.<sup>18</sup> Hiring, promotion, evaluation, and disciplinary processes can all be influenced by assumptions associated with their social location.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to an anti-oppressive workplace that is free of discrimination, lack of accessibility and accommodations creates significant barriers to securing and maintaining employment.<sup>20</sup> These barriers can include spatial organization and lack of accessibility, lack of assistive technology,<sup>21</sup> lack of gender neutral options and understandings,<sup>22</sup> and a lack of effective mental health policies,<sup>23</sup> among others. These and other factors contribute to an inaccessible and unsafe workplace that acts as a barrier to securing and maintaining employment.

## PAY EQUITY

Although the average hourly wages for full time employees has been on the rise, women continue to be paid less than men. More specifically, women are paid 13.3 percent less per hour than their male counterparts and therefore make 87 cents on the dollar earned by men.<sup>24</sup> This figure shifts based on other aspects of a worker's identity. Though racialized workers are more likely to be accessing the labour market, they earn significantly less than workers who are not racialized, especially along other intersectional axes. For example, racialized women earned on average 59 cents on the dollar earned by white men.<sup>25</sup> The gendered, racialized pay gap is a multi-dimensional problem that maps onto existing social inequalities in Canada. As a result, Indigenous women, racialized women, newcomer women, and disabled women earn 65 cents, 67 cents, 71 cents, and 54 cents on the dollar that men earn respectively.<sup>26</sup> This is despite having the same relevant education and experience. This gap starts when women are young and just beginning to access the labour market—young women typically make \$3.00 less per hour than young men.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Deschamps, 2019

<sup>19</sup> Symposium on Women and the Workplace, 2019

<sup>20</sup> Padkapayeva, Posen, Yazdani, Buettgen, Mahood, & Tompa, 2017

<sup>21</sup> Padkapayeva et al., 2017

<sup>22</sup> Reddy-Best, 2018

<sup>23</sup> Eggertson, 2011

<sup>24</sup> Pelletier, Patterson, & Moyser, 2019

<sup>25</sup> Black, Galabuzi, & Tranjan, 2019

<sup>26</sup> Canadian Women's Foundation, 2018

<sup>27</sup> Girl Guides of Canada, 2019

In addition to women's access to the labour market, women also face barriers around the type of work they are able to access. Women tend to be streamed into employment rooted in caring for others, such as nurses, social workers, and personal support workers, and are typically pushed away from higher-earning fields such as the skilled trades, technology, and the sciences.<sup>28</sup> For example, Canada's science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) sectors continue to be dominated by men, who make up 66 percent of STEM university graduates and 73 percent of workers in university-level STEM occupations.<sup>29</sup> From a young age, girls are streamlined out of pathways to STEM through a lack of women role models, platforms, and marketing geared towards men. As a result of workplace culture, 52 percent of women leave the private-sector and findings show that women have less willingness to enter this industry due to the lack of women role models and streamlined programming for young girls.<sup>30</sup>

Women are also underrepresented in leadership positions, even in fields that are typically considered "women's work." Men occupy 62 percent of managerial positions across the board, even though women make up 47.9 percent of the Canadian workforce.<sup>31</sup> Even in the not-for-profit sector, within which women make up 75 percent of the workforce, they only hold 51 percent of senior leadership positions, which tend to be in organizations with smaller operating budgets and fewer employees.<sup>32</sup>

## LABOUR AND HEALTH

While research shows that the workplace environment has a direct effect on workers' health, the relationship between labour and health is much more complex and functions in reciprocal ways. Being able to secure meaningful employment and having positive working conditions can provide workers with opportunities for professional and personal development, while at the same time, the health of workers is essential to households' economic stability.<sup>33</sup> The Government of Canada acknowledges 12 main social determinants of health, two of which are directly linked to labour: "income and social status" and "employment and working conditions."<sup>34</sup> "Gender" and "race/racism" are other main social determinants of health that are closely related to labour and employment.<sup>35</sup> Research also

<sup>28</sup> Wingfield, 2009

<sup>29</sup> Dionne-Simard, Galarneau, & LaRochelle-Côté, 2016

<sup>30</sup> Mueller, Truong, & Smoke, 2018

<sup>31</sup> Ontario Nonprofit Network, 2018; Statistics Canada, 2019

<sup>32</sup> Ontario Nonprofit Network, 2018

<sup>33</sup> World Health Organization, 2012

<sup>34</sup> Government of Canada, 2019

<sup>35</sup> Government of Canada, 2019

shows that a wage sufficient to meet basic needs is associated with a substantial improvement in the health of workers and their families.<sup>36</sup>

Though there has been a rise in minimum wage earners since 1998, doubling and reaching 10.4 percent nationally in 2018,<sup>37</sup> the minimum wage still falls under the amount needed to reasonably cover basic needs.<sup>38</sup> This lack of sufficient income disproportionately affects women as they make-up over 58 percent of the minimum wage workforce.<sup>39</sup> Along with the increasing numbers of full-time contract workers, minimum wage workers are not likely to receive benefits including pension contributions, paid sick leave, and various health and dental benefits.<sup>40</sup> Canada is currently tied for 19 out of 21 OECD countries for the least amount of paid vacation days each year when starting a new job.<sup>41</sup> Even some of the benefits intended to support women in the labour force specifically, such as maternity and parental benefits, carry with them waiting periods, hour requirements, income cut-offs, and other restrictions that prevent the most marginalized workers from accessing them.<sup>42</sup> Lack of accommodations around mental health, illness (either of the worker themselves or those dependent on them), and other life events forces workers to choose between maintaining their employment or attending to the health and well-being of themselves and their families which, if they are able to maintain employment, affects their productivity.<sup>43</sup>

## KEY RESEARCH GAPS

Though a wealth of research on women's access to the labour market exists, there are some key gaps that this research will attempt to fill; these include:

- (a) A lack of a mixed methods approach to garner a deeper understanding of promising practices for women's access to gainful employment, particularly for marginalized women in Canada;
- (b) A holistic approach to understanding barriers to employment;
- (c) The intentional use of an intersectional approach to account for diverse identities and lived experiences of women in the workforce.

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<sup>36</sup> Bhatia & Katz, 2001

<sup>37</sup> Dionne Simard & Miller, 2019

<sup>38</sup> Living Wage Canada, 2016

<sup>39</sup> Dionne-Simard & Miller, 2019

<sup>40</sup> Dionne-Simard & Miller, 2019

<sup>41</sup> PressProject, 2020

<sup>42</sup> Ontario Nonprofit Network, 2019

<sup>43</sup> Fang, Lee, Timming & Fan, 2019

## MIXED METHODS APPROACH

This project integrates a trend-based, wide-reaching perspective as well as in-depth, person-centered perspectives. In doing so, we will be able to recognize patterns in barriers to accessing the Canadian labour market for women, while also sharing the nuanced experiences of women across the country on a wider scale.

## HOLISTIC APPROACH

To facilitate improved access to gainful employment for Canadian women, it is necessary to consider all of the different barriers they may face. This includes a holistic understanding of identity markers, such as race, gender identity and expression, age, ethnic background, ability, mental health, and so on; as well as how each of these interact to shift how an individual experiences the world.<sup>44</sup> An understanding of intersectionality also comes along with the everyday social, economic, and political conditions experienced by communities that have been marginalized. This report would not produce meaningful results without an understanding of the systemic conditions that maintain social inequities, such as the feminization and racialization of poverty, institutionalized oppression, the increase in precarious work and the working poor, meritocracy, the child welfare system, the lack of accessible social supports, caregiving responsibilities, and so on. Using a holistic perspective to frame this research will be key to informing effective recommendations to employers, service providers, and government stakeholders.

## INTERSECTIONALITY AND GBA+ ANALYSIS

Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term “intersectionality” in 1989 to “denote the various ways in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women’s employment experiences.”<sup>45</sup> The term has grown into a social theory of how oppression intersects based on the complexity of one’s identity. On the surface, there are generalized trends in how systemic oppression manifests in the everyday lives of marginalized communities. At the same time, it is important to understand that marginalized individuals do not have homogenous experiences. Women, BIPOC, 2SLGBTQQIA, and other

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<sup>44</sup> Canadian Women’s Foundation, 2010, p. 5

<sup>45</sup> Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1244

communities are marginalized in a system that was built by and for white, cis-gendered, heterosexual men.

In order to address the systemic social inequalities, we must always think and work under an intersectional approach. A gender-based analysis+ (GBA+) approach is a method of analysis that explicitly pulls in this intersectional approach by looking at how “diverse groups of women, men, and non-binary people may experience policies, programs, and initiatives.”<sup>46</sup> The plus brings in the identity factors that influence the way that gender affects our experiences, such as race, ethnicity, age, ability, mental health, and so on.<sup>47</sup> By using an intersectional lens and GBA+ as an applied framework, our research will attempt to go beyond a one-dimensional understanding of barriers to accessing the labour market.

## METHODS

This 36-month project consists of three phases: project set-up and research, pilot and evaluation, and knowledge transfer. Research activities have been planned for and taken place in ten of our member associations (YWCA Calgary, Halifax, Moncton, Montreal, Northwest Territories, Regina, Sudbury, Thompson, Toronto, and Vancouver) and knowledge dissemination will be implemented on a national scale to reach all provinces and territories with active YWCAs (all except the Yukon and Prince Edward Island).

Thus far, the research and set-up phase consisted of establishing the foundation for the project, the research framework and methods; as well as developing the project ethics protocol and informed consent tools including a recorded webinar, form, and presentation. Research activities have been carried out in nine of the ten participating sites.<sup>48</sup>

## RECRUITMENT AND DESIGN

Ten YWCA member associations were selected to be part of this research project based on their location and context, where it is believed participants will be of the main communities of focus for this research.<sup>49</sup> Staff at each member association were given the option to select one to three programs whose staff and service users would be invited to participate in this research. This program selection was left up to each member association, given their expert

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<sup>46</sup> Status of Women Canada, 2018, para. 2

<sup>47</sup> Status of Women Canada, 2018

<sup>48</sup> Research activities in Thompson, Manitoba were interrupted due to COVID-19. Findings from this site will be included in the final report.

<sup>49</sup> Refer to *Acknowledgements* and *Introduction* for more information on our definition of this research.

knowledge of their context, program experience, and holistic understanding of what barriers women from their populations face in accessing the labour market. Staff were also asked to identify the most appropriate research activities for their member association. Various activities were offered in order to engage different participants' comfort levels and ways of engaging.<sup>50</sup> However, given time constraints for visits, the majority of research activities centered around survey completion for quantitative data collection, and focus groups and interviews for qualitative data collection.

## INFORMED CONSENT

Participants were given an opportunity [to provide clear consent to participate](#), after learning about the project. The extent of participation and information sharing was open to the participants and participation kept voluntary. Participants were given the option to refuse to participate, withdraw at any time, decline to answer any question or participate in any parts of the research tasks without penalty or negative consequence to their role, access, compensation, or other relationship to the YWCA and its programs.

Creating an [ethical research framework](#), intentional results-sharing, and an informed consent process were all steps to begin decolonizing research and research methods. The ethics protocol for this project was informed by the principles of Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP®), as well as several university research board protocols. While these were important steps, an ideal outcome or process would be to design fully participatory and community research, and fully encompass the OCAP® principles.<sup>51</sup>

Furthermore, no pre- and post-tests were included in this research, as they were not deemed appropriate for this person-centered approach to research design and have previously proven ineffective in other member associations' programs monitoring and evaluation. Instead, greater emphasis was placed on the holistic approach to include any programs deemed relevant by member associations.

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<sup>50</sup> See [Activities](#).

<sup>51</sup> First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2020.

## ACTIVITIES

The following research activities were included in our research design and offered to member association staff and participants:

- Survey completion (available online and in print)
- Group discussion (approximately 6-8 women)
- Participation in a one-on-one interview (a conversation with research officer)
- Photovoice (digital/print photos and descriptions)
- Digital storytelling (using video for storytelling)
- Other activities defined by participants (for example, a larger group workshop)

## DEFINITIONS

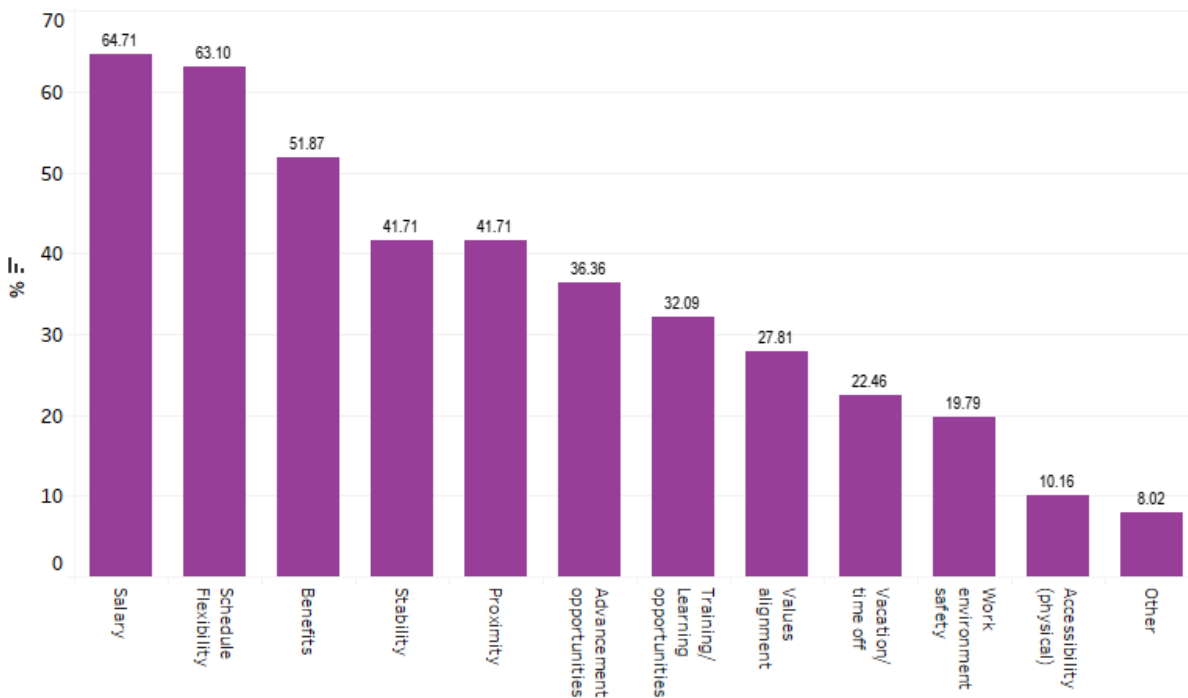
A critical aspect of this project is to have clear definitions of the terms and questions being researched.

## GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT

For the purposes of this project, we chose to focus on the term “gainful employment” rather than simply access to jobs or the labour market. We defined gainful employment as “a job or employment that offers consistent work, job security, work that is free from all forms of violence and discrimination, safe working conditions and payment to sustain a meaningful living.” In this way, we call attention to the importance of not only increasing women’s access to jobs, but also highlighting the role of employers in creating employment and ensuring safe, accessible, and meaningful work environments where women can thrive. In addition to the official project definition, participants were asked to share their definition of gainful employment, or their ideal work situation.

In answering the question, “what does your ideal job look like?” participants reaffirmed the project definition, with responses most commonly including: an alignment of values, a comfortable living wage and benefits, opportunities for learning and growth, and a safe working environment. Similarly, when asked what the most important factors are when searching and applying for jobs, 64.7 percent of survey respondents selected “salary” and 63.1 percent selected “flexibility of work hours” as one of their top 5 factors (*see Figure 1*). Other top responses included “benefits” (51.9 percent), “proximity (transportation/commute)” (41.7 percent), and “stability” (41.7 percent).

Most important factors when looking for a job? (Select 5 factors)



**Figure 1:** Survey responses to the question “When searching for a job, what are the most important factors for you (select up to 5)? organized by frequency of responses chosen.

Connected to the discussion of gainful employment, defining “success” as included in the project title, must then reflect this definition of employment and different women’s expectations and realities, thus not being limited to a simple quantitative measure of the number of women in the labour market.

## LABOUR MARKET

It is important to recall that the definitions of work and the labour market, within the scope of this project, still reflect a Western definition and worldview. Thus, this project is inherently assuming that all women want to work in this way or participate in the current labour market, which may not be the reality for all women living in Canada. While we research and consider the ways to increase vulnerable women’s access to and success in the labour market, simultaneous research and knowledge dissemination must take place regarding recognizing the different ways different women engage in work and how such success is measured.



## LIMITATIONS

In conducting work from an intersectional framework, it is always necessary to ask and question who is missing from our work. Although this phase engaged marginalized women, it is important to acknowledge that our research design did not engage women furthest from opportunity. By mainly engaging women who access YWCA services across Canada, we were not able to reach beyond YWCA program participants. In addition, groups that have been the most marginalized are likely to experience barriers in accessing YWCA programming, whether due to transportation, information, or safety limitations.

The principles of participatory research guided this research and framework, particularly in acknowledging participants as experts and implementing results-sharing steps to inform continued adaptation of the research. However, we were unable to fully implement this approach given time and resource limitations, such as paying to consult and have participants take part of each step of the research design, data collection, and analysis process.

The lengthy survey and academic language used has been a barrier for some women's participation. The language of the survey was intended to mirror that of the Canadian census, to allow a comparison of our data to the national averages; however, this was not the most accessible for all respondents. While we tried to circumvent this by simplifying the process, providing funding for interpreters, and providing multiple ways to engage, we recognize that this has still been a barrier to participation. We continue to adapt and use alternative approaches to make the survey more accessible as the research continues. Finally, we recognize that all organizations play a role in implementing these holistic and person-centered practices. As a women's organization that employs women, we also recognize and reflect on our own responsibility, role, and necessary additional steps to increasing vulnerable women's access to safe, gainful employment.

## FINDINGS

At the time of this report, 23 focus groups and 48 interviews were conducted in nine of ten total project sites, engaging a total of 196 women. The Born to be Bold Survey also received 211 responses from women in 9 participating locations and we received one digital story.<sup>52</sup> The project did engage a majority of low-income women as 53.1 percent of the survey respondents had total household incomes under \$30,000 per year (29.9 percent reported a

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<sup>52</sup> At the time of this report, research activities in Thompson, MB have not been completed due to COVID-19 restrictions. Subsequent research activities will be scheduled for later in 2020.

total income under \$15,000 per year).<sup>53</sup> 45.5 percent of survey participants were born outside of Canada and had varying racial identities. The project also engaged women from language minorities: two focus groups were conducted in French, one with simultaneous interpretation in Spanish, and one with simultaneous interpretation in Arabic. The survey was made available bilingually in French and English. Moreover, 52.6 percent of survey respondents did not identify English as their mother tongue. The majority of survey respondents (66.4 percent) were between the ages of 30-49 and 70.1 percent identified as the parent, guardian, or primary caregiver of a child.<sup>54</sup>

The findings below are the result of data analysis identifying the major thematic outcomes from the qualitative and quantitative data collected. The findings point to trends and patterns seen across the research locations and activities, highlighting the most commonly occurring issues.

The data produced from the research point to one common theme: in working to reduce barriers to women's access to the labour market, a holistic and person-centered approach acknowledging individual experiences is necessary. Although many women share similar experiences, there is not a single solution or approach to women's access to gainful employment. Every individual woman is different and is impacted by the same policies in different ways, so no one solution for every barrier exists. While considering access to the labour market, we must be shifting conversations from simply access to jobs to discussions of gainful employment. Any approach must also recognize the compounding and various barriers each woman faces in their unique context, recognizing that such issues all impact a woman's ability to not only apply for and gain employment, but even to be in a position where employment is possible. The impact of all policies on a woman's ability to search, apply for, or thrive in a work environment must be considered, as well as the structures and systems that need to be in place for this to occur at all.

Increasing women's success in accessing and thriving in the labour market requires not only increased programming for women, but more fundamentally, a structural shift in the labour market, along with a shift in the way work is created and offered by employers. From this research's findings, as expressed by participants' experiences and difficulties, it is clear that labour market structures were not built for women, especially when considering diverse identities. We thus need to stop asking women to fit themselves into a mould that was never

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<sup>53</sup> It should be noted that no one average measure of minimum living income, or clear poverty line can be applied across Canada, given the various context and household numbers of overall survey respondents. It should further be noted that this average household income is likely for 1+ person household, placing many survey respondents below defined "low income" cut offs.

<sup>54</sup> See [Appendix 4](#) for further survey respondent demographics.

built for them and allow them to be part of the design of the future of work. This means altering power structures and our current ways of working and including women with marginalized experiences in the design, reshaping, and implementation of new ways of work. The research findings and women's experiences highlighted the importance of having policy makers, program designers, and staff who are peers or have shared experiences with women of marginalized experiences. The capacity to connect with the realities of different women's lives leads to richer, more meaningful actions, as well as increased trust in and engagement with programming, services, and systems.



A photo of two children with their parent. One rests their head delicately on their parent's lap while the other smiles affectionately.

## MAIN BARRIERS

The barriers marginalized women face to accessing gainful employment are often interrelated and compounding. While the major barriers were common amongst the majority of participants, their social and geographic locations sometimes meant increased challenges. The challenges identified also often lead to another and influenced each other in complex ways, leading to more compounded, cyclical barriers to accessing and thriving in the labour market.

### INCOME AND HOUSING

Low-income situations and the inability to meet basic needs are underlying challenges for a majority of the women who participated in this research, where 53.1 percent of survey respondents had total household incomes under \$30,000. Even when participants were able to access employment, they tended to be in low paying positions. One participant noted that,

“having a job doesn’t necessarily mean that I’m thriving or living a good life. I’m just surviving.”<sup>55</sup> The uncertainties that women in low paying positions experience include, as a foundational challenge, access to safe, secure, and affordable housing. Housing that is inaccessible in terms of cost, space, and time restrictions was a major trend in discussions identifying barriers to being in a position of considering securing employment at all. Participants in 30 of 48 interviews and 14 of 23 focus groups mentioned housing access as a challenge to being in a position to consider gainful employment.

Participants from YWCA housing programs as well as staff identified the need for safe secure housing before anything, as many women require housing to find childcare, plan transportation, and attain work, where they are often required to provide a home address. Even for participants who were able to access housing, some knew of “postal code discrimination” that came with area-based assumptions.<sup>56</sup> Women simultaneously need secure, reliable work that provides a steady, decent income to attain safe and secure long-term housing. This cyclical relationship makes it difficult to secure both adequate housing and gainful employment, further compounding the barriers faced.

In accessing secure housing, single mothers face additional barriers as opposed to women in two-parent households, as they have to provide for all their own and their children’s basic needs and costs from a single income. Single mothers expressed having unique concerns around isolation such as dealing with courts and trauma while caring for their children. They expressed further difficulty in securing housing as they faced discrimination from landlords around their perceived responsibility. Discrimination in renting was also raised by many Indigenous participants, who expressed experiences of being denied housing because of the “stereotypes”<sup>57</sup> that landlords held about Indigeneity. Women who were leaving situations of abuse and trauma also faced increased barriers such as limited availability of transitional housing, where they did not have adequate time to address and receive support for their mental, psychological, and other health needs, while feeling pressured to find a new living space.

## CHILDCARE

When asked about barriers to accessing gainful employment, a top concern expressed in 35 of 48 interviews and 19 of 23 focus groups was a lack of affordable, accessible, and trustworthy childcare. When asked what the main barriers were in accessing gainful

<sup>55</sup> Focus group participant, Vancouver, BC, January 2020

<sup>56</sup> Focus group participant, Toronto, ON, January 2020

<sup>57</sup> Focus group participant, Yellowknife, NWT, October 2019

employment, the number one response from those surveyed centred around this issue, with 18.2 percent of the words related to childcare and family obligations (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2:** Top 30 occurring words in survey responses to the question “Based on your experience, what are the three main barriers to accessing gainful employment?” represented as a word cloud.

***“It felt like I had to put my life on hold until kids were old enough to go to school.”<sup>58</sup>***

This was a limitation experienced by women in every province, as well as across age and racial groups. Without access to affordable childcare, many women are forced to choose between gainful employment or very limited employment to accommodate the availability of childminding. Survey responses illustrate that women who are caregivers of children more frequently indicated that employment makes it difficult to manage family responsibilities, such as caring for children, than women who were not caring for children (see Figure 3).

<sup>58</sup> Interview participant, Yellowknife, NWT, October 2019

		All of the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never	Total
Are you a parent, guardian or primary caregiver of a child/children?	Yes	7	29	53	13	102
		5.19%	21.48%	39.26%	9.63%	
		6.86%	<b>28.43%</b>	51.96%	<b>12.75%</b>	
		87.5%	90.63%	77.94%	48.15%	
	No	1	3	15	14	33
		0.74%	2.22%	11.11%	10.37%	
		3.03%	<b>9.09%</b>	45.45%	<b>42.42%</b>	
		12.5%	9.38%	22.06%	51.85%	

**Figure 3:** Survey responses to “In the past 12 months, how often has it been difficult to fulfill your family responsibilities because of the amount of time you spent on your job?” (x-axis) cross tabulated with responses to “Are you a parent, guardian, or primary caregiver of a child/children?” (y-axis), organized by frequency of response and bolded for statistical significant differences.

The challenges around accessing childcare include affordability, accessibility in terms of location, general availability, long waitlists, and limited times where childcare is offered thereby limiting mothers’ available hours for work. Even in Quebec where more affordable childcare is available, the limited times, long waitlists, lack of trust in the quality of care, and inaccessible locations considerably restrict women’s ability to access gainful employment or the services needed to be prepared to enter the labour market.

Single mothers face additional challenges when considering childcare as they are the sole parent responsible for their children’s wellbeing and schooling, thus needing greater flexibility for their children’s needs. These can include regular or routine needs—such as picking up children from school or care—as well as unforeseen needs, such as illness or an emergency at school, requests for early pickups, etc. These challenges of childminding are further compounded for mothers of children with different learning abilities, who require increased access to one-on-one support for their children, and increased flexibility in scheduling. A lack of trust in the quality of care was expressed by mothers in Quebec and Indigenous mothers, who shared experiences of anti-Indigenous racism with childcare providers, forcing mothers to take their children out of programming.

***“The transit system is expensive, as is having a car or even getting a license.”<sup>59</sup>***

<sup>59</sup> Focus group participant, Yellowknife, NT, October 2019

## TRANSPORTATION

Access to safe, affordable, and available transportation or means of transportation was another major barrier for many women accessing gainful employment. Transportation as a challenge to seeking gainful employment was raised in 60.4 percent of interviews and 19 out of 23, or 82.6 percent of focus groups. Although the nature of the concern differed slightly given women's geographical issues; for example, lack of access to cars or licenses, versus availability of transit schedules and routes, versus the affordability of transit options, transportation and distance to programs, jobs, and opportunities was a challenge relayed by the majority of research participants.

Additional barriers were experienced by some groups, such as mothers and those who live outside of city centres. Women with children faced increased challenges with accessible transportation where often the means of transportation, whether public transport or ridesharing options are “not made for moms.”<sup>60</sup> For participants in non-urban areas, very limited public transportation availability in terms of schedules and routes was an additional concern.

## SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES

Many women in speaking about their experiences with social services, most often income assistance, expressed negative sentiments, regarding their experience and the system itself, as well as the inadequacy of income assistance to support all basic needs. 85.4 percent of interviews and 91.0 percent of focus groups raised concerns of these structural barriers. Many expressed feelings of hopelessness: “there are so many loops and bureaucracy; it's almost like they want you to give up”<sup>61</sup> or “it's like they built the system to keep you stuck.”<sup>62</sup> If a woman is able to attain employment, often at a low wage, they lose their access to income assistance or the income is automatically deducted from their assistance. This leads to an inability to live on this minimal income while attempting to pull themselves from this cycle of poverty and suddenly losing access to all support services. This cycle was repeatedly expressed as a main reason why women felt they could not go beyond survival.

Navigating the overwhelming number of resources and available programming, as well as compiling the correct documentation, was an added challenge noted by research

<sup>60</sup> Focus group participant, Moncton, NB, November 2019

<sup>61</sup> Focus group participant, Regina, SK, January 2020

<sup>62</sup> Focus group participant, Yellowknife, NT, October 2019

participants. This challenge was often cited by women who were of language minorities or newcomer women who also faced difficulties due to limited networks of contacts in Canada and the labour market.

### ***"Will people know? Was it like a sign on my forehead?"***

*(re: shame and stigma with social assistance)*<sup>63</sup>

The discrimination they faced for accessing social assistance as well as during the process of proving their need led to a decrease in self-confidence and self-worth, as well as increased mental health concerns for many of the participants: "You feel like you don't deserve any more."<sup>64</sup> Discernibly, these challenges were compounded and had more profound impacts for women with more than one of the aforementioned identities.

Criminal records and charges were also a recurring challenge for many participants' access to gainful employment across all participating sites. The majority of the women's records were due to offenses that were minor, outdated, or irrelevant to the job they were seeking. Furthermore, low-income women were found to be least likely to be able to pay off their charges or afford a pardon. In many job applications and requirements, applicants are required to indicate whether they have a criminal record or charge, often without the context or space to assess its relevance to the position, nor the context of the charge. Women who are unable to pay off their charges are frequently barred from access to many jobs due to charges that are often irrelevant or outdated.

## **SKILLS, EDUCATION, AND EXPERIENCE**

### ***"Instead of looking [just] at my resume, watch me work."***<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Focus group participant, Regina, SK, January 2020

<sup>64</sup> Focus group participant, Moncton, NB, November 2019

<sup>65</sup> Focus group participant, Moncton, NB, November 2019



A common theme emerging from the challenges voiced by research participants was a perceived gap in applicable skills and education. These were challenges raised in 98 percent of interviews and in all focus group discussions. Many participants expressed educational or professional work experience requirements in employment opportunities as a barrier to accessing gainful employment, often referencing employers' inflexibility or disregard for lived experience in lieu of education or professional experience. In other instances, gaps in skills or education were due to time off from employment for parental or medical leave, where the women considered how a gap in employment would be perceived by employers and its impact on their skillset. This was a common challenge expressed by mothers who had to take time off to care for their children and women with experiences of trauma and abuse. Younger and older women expressed challenges attaining professional experience due to a lack of relevant experiences or prejudice due to their age.

A need for more professional certifications and skills such as resume writing and interviewing was also expressed by program participants, particularly among newcomer women. Most women in entrepreneurial roles or programs cited a lack of financial resources, challenges with social assistance programs, as well as lack of access to mentors with relevant experiences as major barriers.

***"We are knowledgeable; we are smart; we have experiences to share."<sup>66</sup>***

A unique barrier faced by foreign-trained professional women and newcomers is lack of Canadian experience. Often professionally trained and with years of experience, women are forced to start over or attain onerous additional educational equivalencies and accreditations, which present additional financial and time costs while adjusting to a new living environment. Even for participants who have attained the necessary accreditations, they are faced with a lack of "Canadian experience" as a reason for being barred from employment opportunities or the chance to practice in their professional field.

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<sup>66</sup> Focus group participant, Moncton, NB, November 2019

## TRAUMA, MENTAL HEALTH, AND ABUSE

Participants who had experienced gender-based violence, abuse, or experiences of trauma, communicated challenges in feeling ready to access employment, due to lack of affordable and accessible support and counselling services. Others expressed a need for a safe and secure work environment, particularly with clear policies and accountability mechanisms for harassment and sexual harassment. For others, a main challenge was inflexible work schedules, during which they would not be able to access counselling support. This challenge was compounded for single mothers who were often simultaneously attending court hearings and legal obligations, responsible for the care of their child, and for meeting all basic needs.

## PROMISING PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### HOLISTIC SUPPORT AND APPROACH

***"We must always consider the full picture of the woman or the client."<sup>67</sup>***

A common theme emerging from the research is a need for holistic and person-centered approach to increasing marginalized women's access to gainful employment. An overarching recommendation emerging from participants and program staff is to provide wrap-around services and supports included in programming (childcare, transportation, counselling, access to food, etc.) and to compensate participants and students for their time and energy in participating.

### FLEXIBILITY

#### Work or programming hours, schedules, and locations

The top recommendation and request from the women engaged in this research for improving their access to gainful employment was the need for flexible working hours,

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<sup>67</sup> Interview, YWCA Staff, Vancouver, BC, January 2020

schedules, and locations. 63.1 percent of survey respondents selected “flexibility of work hours” when asked what the most important factor was for them in seeking employment, which represents the number one response along with “salary” at 64.7 percent.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, when asked what best practices might be to increase access to gainful employment, one of the most common themes from survey responses was of “flexibility” and “flexible schedules” with 14.0 percent mentioned words, along with “training” (15.5 percent, see *Figure 4*).



**Figure 4:** Top 30 most occurring words in survey responses to the question “Based on your experience, what would be the best practices for employers to increase access to good job/gainful employment?” represented as a word cloud.

Whether due to arising care duties, disability, trauma, transportation, or safety, flexible working hours would drastically improve various women’s ability to engage in and thrive in a work environment. The possibility of remote work, with provision of necessary equipment and resources, would give many women the ability to work while available for dependents’ needs and reduce transportation costs, needs, or barriers.

This would mean extended or flexible program scheduling, as well as programs on weekends or during school hours to increase accessibility for women with children. Furthermore, making programming and support available online with provision of computer and Internet access where necessary, by phone, or going to a woman’s location can all support in providing flexible locations more suitable for different women’s participation.

<sup>68</sup> See [Figure 1](#).

Flexible scheduling and locations are a particularly relevant practice for women with experiences of trauma, women with children and particularly, single mothers, mothers with children with disabilities, women living further from city centers in order to afford rent, and women without access to a vehicle or driver's license. Bringing programming to women is a practice currently used by YWCA Metro Vancouver's Employment Navigator, whereby the navigator travels to housing sites and single mothers' groups to share information about available resources, and subsequently travels to meet the women in a location of their choosing to provide supplemental one-on-one support.

## **PROVIDE CHILDCARE AND TRANSPORTATION**

Free or more affordable childcare options, as well as childcare with extended hours and locations was a need relayed by the majority of research participants. Free or more affordable transportation in large cities is necessary for women accessing jobs, childcare, well-being support, programming, as well as everyday needs such as food and clothing. Designing transportation options must include and be made for women, to aid in picking up children, buying groceries, accessing jobs, interviews, and be available beyond work hours. The transportation means, whether public transportation or ride-sharing services, should also be family-friendly, including space for car seats, strollers, and accessible for women with disabilities. Safe, accessible, and affordable transportation support is necessary for not only women with children, but also many low-income women who live further from city centers and cannot access licenses, cars, or the transit system due to costs or ability. Beyond physical access barriers, challenges to accessing and travel to workplaces for research participants included physical, mental, and chronic health issues that affected their sleep cycles, well-being, or capability to leave home for the workplace. Challenges they expressed would be, or had been, eased with the option to work from home and on a much more flexible schedule.

When providing funding or grants to organizations with programming for women, ensuring that part of the funding is allocated to providing child minding and transportation will reduce the burden on organizations providing the programming and increase the likelihood of more women being able to participate. Provision of childcare subsidies, flexible work schedules, childcare on site or a family-friendly work environment, and equal parental leave are all actions employers can take to ensure fairer access to marginalized women. Similarly, employers can provide transportation subsidies or a transportation service including pickups and drop offs with a trusted driver.

Organizations providing programming should incorporate transportation and child minding as a core part of the design of all programs to ensure participation from parents and women who face transportation barriers. A current practice from YWCA Moncton is integrating transportation and child minding into all program proposals and design. The organization has acquired its own vehicle that provides pickups and drop offs for the participants, as well as on-site childminding options. Moreover, coordinating transportation and child minding is the designated role (0.5 FTE) of one staff member, demonstrating the need to allocate adequate resources to making programs more accessible for women. Further practices are to offer programming during times when women with children will be available and able to attend (oftentimes during school hours and weekends), make sessions or workshops available online so that women can access them from their own homes or while children are taken care of, and to provide childminding on site.



A photo of four colleagues in a meeting looking enthusiastically at another colleague giving an animated presentation.

## EDUCATION, EXPERIENCE AND SKILLS

### Acknowledging lived experiences as expertise

Women's complex identities lead to complex experiences for each individual. Expertise is not purely measured by education or professional experiences, as often required for employment opportunities. Each individual is the expert in their lived experiences. Accepting or acknowledging lived experience in work recruitment was a need identified by many of the participants in the research, particularly amongst mothers, young women, and newcomer women. One participant expressed that, for newcomers, it is as though they are "expected

to start at the bottom and be satisfied with any work opportunity”<sup>69</sup> despite any other experiences. For women with marginalized experiences, their lived experience is a reflection of their current place in our society, and entails the unrecognized and unpaid labour they often undertake.

***“Give newcomers a chance.”***<sup>70</sup>

Recognizing and evaluating lived experience and expertise, as well as experience outside of Canada, in recruitment and job advertising can increase various women’s access to roles and employment they have traditionally been kept out of. In addition, supporting newcomer women in accessing accreditation, equivalencies, and presenting non-Canadian work experiences in job applications are actions that can support women with different experiences.

In recruitment and hiring processes, assessing whether listed qualifications are truly necessary for the job or can be captured by other experiences is helpful for expanding the job market to marginalized women. Creating safe environments where individual contexts can be discussed without fear of losing or not obtaining employment through clear policies and accountability was a common response in asking participants’ needs from an employer. For example, asking for context of a criminal record within the required job. A few participants who had been successful in attaining jobs despite their criminal record stated their employer’s willingness to ask about the context of their charges and assess its relevance to the position as the reason for their success. They also stated that they trusted the employer enough to be able to engage in this conversation. Programming and staff can support women with different experiences and such barriers by providing support in navigating available resources, as well as what is legally permissible to be asked by employers.

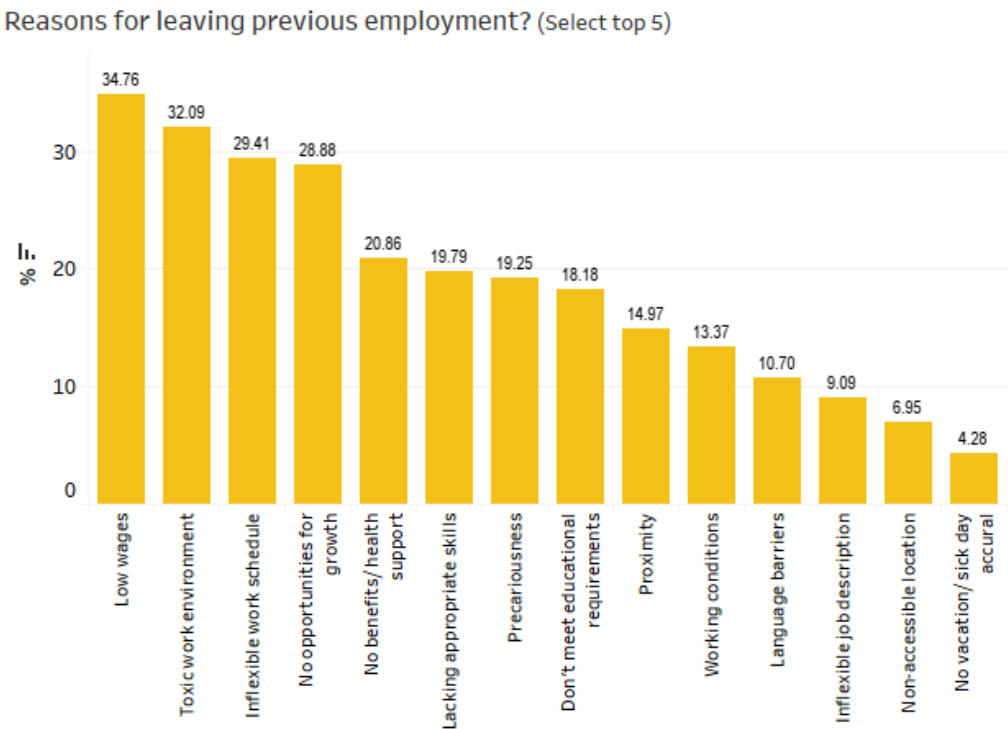
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<sup>69</sup> Focus group participant, Montreal, QC, November 2020

<sup>70</sup> Survey participant response to: “Based on your experience, what would be the best practices for employers to increase access to good jobs/ gainful employment?”

**Paid training and learning opportunities**

To address the skills gap that many marginalized women face, and as we prepare for the future of work and labour market growth, employers and programming for women should offer paid training, placement, and learning opportunities. As many participants expressed the need for more training opportunities, they relayed sentiments that, in this way, they would not have to choose between education and training versus survival. Not having to balance financial concerns and burdens while attaining skills will allow more focus, better health, and more productive employees, ultimately benefiting their employers. Such measures can begin to address concerns regarding low wages, expressed as one of the top 5 factors in leaving previous employment, or finding employment opportunities (see figure 5).



**Figure 5:** Survey responses to the question “In your experience, why have you left previous employment OR what do you find most difficult when searching for employment? (select up to 5)?”, organized by frequency of responses chosen.

Programs that offer paid training or placement opportunities allow women to test their learning, adjust to a working environment and test whether it is a right fit. These opportunities also addresses the desire for the opportunities to grow and advance, as expressed by research participants; 32.1 percent of survey participants also selected



“Training and Learning Opportunities” as one of the top five important factors when searching for employment.<sup>71</sup>

In addition to on-the-job and paid placement training, participants of YWCA employment programming conveyed the importance of employment-specific skills training, including resume and application writing, as well as interview preparation and practice. Recognized accreditation for or access to free professional certifications, including CPR and First Aid, is a means of supporting women in skills upgrading and addressing the skills gap challenge. YWCA Toronto’s Building Sustainable Future Toolkit outlines the many ways in which YWCA member associations are implementing or pushing for the implementation of these practices already.<sup>72</sup>

## PEER PROGRAMMING AND COMMUNITIES OF SUPPORT

When referencing positive practices from programs they have participated in, many focus group and interview participants stated that having somebody with a shared experience leading the programming or providing support made an immense difference in their perception of, comfort with, and ultimate success in the program. Peers, or those with shared experiences, had access to the resources and networks necessary for the women’s specific needs, as well as a higher level of understanding and empathy of the specifics of the women’s experiences. One participant mentioned that “we need someone in the same situation; people who work in these roles who have been there.”<sup>73</sup> When hiring program directors, managers, staff, counsellors, and other roles, ensure the call is made specifically for peers and people with shared experiences. Representation from people with lived experience or similar experiences in policymaking, employment, and program design is important for the success of service users.

In order to decrease experiences of discrimination and further isolation, all program staff and employers should operate from an Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression framework and all programming should apply a trauma-informed framework and practice. Anti-oppression is a theory of practice that focuses on “equity, inclusion, transformation, and social justice,” as well as reducing and eliminating oppression in all of its forms.<sup>74</sup> Research shows that Anti-Oppression workshops and policies aimed at valuing diversity and inclusion create a safer

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<sup>71</sup> See [Figure 1](#).

<sup>72</sup> YWCA Toronto, Building Sustainable Futures Toolkit, 2019

<sup>73</sup> Focus group participant, Vancouver, BC, January 2020

<sup>74</sup> Moffatt, Barnoff, George, & Coleman, 2017, p. 49



work environment for all with reduced fear of discrimination in its various forms within the workplace.<sup>75</sup>

### **Cohort-based models, community, and follow up**

A practice referenced by YWCA staff as a promising practice is cohort-based programming—a cohort refers to a group of students who enter a program at the same time and remain through the program together as a group. Having cohort-based programming leads to building communities of connections, care, and reliance between program participants while also extending their network. Women in participating programs frequently mentioned the support and connection of their classmates as one of the most pertinent outcomes of their program participation. This was a result of women being able to understand their shared experiences or appreciating a space where they could share their experiences and receive support.

For example, a majority of YWCA Northwest Territories's housing clients referenced the importance of the sense of community and being cared for at Rockwell (the previous affordable housing program). The sentiment of building relationships and relying on neighbours for things like childcare and legal support in housing units and other group programming was echoed by participants in Halifax, Vancouver, Toronto, and Sudbury. Wanting to interact with or show up for their classmates was cited as a reason for leaving home by participants in programs in Moncton, Toronto, Halifax, and Montreal.



A photo of five people sitting on a blanket laughing together.

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<sup>75</sup> Cunningham, Bergman, & Miner, 2014

### One-on-one support and resource navigation

To address the overwhelming amount of information, number of resources, and steps in accessing supports available, one-on-one support, check-ins during programming, and follow up post-graduation is a promising practice. As some single-mother participants stated, while trying to balance meeting basic needs, mental and physical health concerns, legal needs, and providing for their children, more one-on-one support “similar to a guidance counsellor,” while respecting each woman’s autonomy and different engagement needs, can be supportive in helping to navigate opaque systems.

## OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

### PAY EQUITY AND MINIMUM INCOME

As evident by the cyclical pattern and relationship of barriers identified through this research, support provisions alone are not adequate in truly addressing challenges to accessing gainful employment. Responding to “When searching for a job, what are the most important factors for you?” 64.7 percent of survey participants selected “Salary.” A living wage, or the minimum hourly rate that earners in a family or household unit must bring home in their specific context to meet their basic needs,<sup>76</sup> would not only provide parents with sufficient funds to access childcare, but would also acknowledge and provide for the nature of this unequal distribution of domestic work. By implementing a context-based living wage to facilitate access to childcare, women are able to spend less time performing unpaid domestic labour and access paid labour that will further increase their ability to provide for their family. Guaranteed liveable income is an important policy solution that will acknowledge the economic and social value of unpaid domestic work.

Pay equity is equal pay for equal work of value and one of the core foundations of gainful employment as it would contribute to financial empowerment and economic stability. Many workers rely on their employment for income, thus making it essential to examine whether their income is proportionate to living costs. Creating legal repercussions and accountability mechanisms for pay inequity is a step towards eliminating the wage gap for the labour market, ending the discriminatory practice, and normalizing fair pay in the labour market.

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<sup>76</sup> Living Wage Canada, 2013

## FUNDING WITH FEWER RESTRICTIONS

An emerging promising practice and overarching strategy identified by program staff is the availability of funding and contributions for less-restricted needs and programming. As such, women can identify for themselves the most important factor or need to address in order to better position themselves for accessing gainful employment. For example, funding or bursaries can be used to pay off criminal record charges or pardons, which can be critical to many women's access to gainful employment who are currently unable to access jobs or interviews due to the practice of stating their current record. Alternatively, funding can be used to finance school programs of their choosing, without time limits. For example, YWCA Metro Vancouver has internal bursaries that are offered for costs often not covered by other opportunities, such as Permanent Residency applications or unforeseen expenses such as snow tires. Trusting women to know what their needs are and to responsibly use funding is essential to advancing their economic empowerment, while providing holistic wrap-around supports.

## NEXT STEPS

### RESEARCH

The immediate next step of this first phase, we will be sharing our findings from this interim report with the broader public to bring awareness to the barriers and promising practices we have identified. We plan to use a variety of methods of information sharing including visual presentation, storytelling, infographics, and other media. The findings of the research will be presented in a format that is more readily understandable and accessible to many stakeholders, including the public. In addition, these findings have been shared back with project participants and program staff who wished to continue to engage with the project for the input prior to publication.

We will also be evaluating the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on some of the barriers and practices that we have identified. Then, we will launch our 18-month pilot and evaluation phase, working with member associations to implement programs and measures to test the saliency of the promising practices identified through Phase I. Finally, we will be scaling these practices to other locations across the country and creating training modules for dissemination.

## EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

Informed by the research produced from the Born to be Bold project, we have developed a stakeholder engagement framework that will guide our efforts in 2020 and 2021 to effectively communicate the results of the project outcomes. At the same time, this framework will leverage the research results to effectively connect with the private sector for action-driven engagement in bridging the gender gap. This engagement strategy will have a focus on three key industries—technology, finance, and transportation—as strategic stakeholders for the future of work and access to the labour market for women.

## CONCLUSION

In the first phase of this project, the Born to be Bold research has identified major barriers to vulnerable women's access to gainful employment, including access to affordable housing, childcare, and transportation, as well as systemic and structural challenges including skills, experience, and trauma. Promising practices identified by research participants as actionable steps to address these barriers include flexible work schedules and location, increased accessible and affordable childcare and transportation, paid learning and training opportunities, acknowledgement of different skills and lived experience, as well as peer programming. These practices require action from decision-makers at all levels and in all sectors with a holistic, person-centered approach.

By engaging women from across Canada with diverse identities and experiences, the findings of this report shed light on the importance of nuanced and person-centered research, reporting, and understanding of the context of gender equity in labour market access. The practices identified through this research demonstrate the ways in which cross-sectoral action can be taken to restructure current conversations around women in the workforce, improve access to gainful employment, improve overall economic growth, and ultimately get us closer to achieving gender equity.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix One: Survey

Click to access the [Born to be Bold survey](#)

#### Born to be Bold

##### 1. Welcome to YWCA Born to be Bold Survey

**Thank you for participating in our survey. Your participation is extremely important. This survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.**

**This project focuses on economic empowerment for vulnerable women, addressing the need to better understand promising practices for engaging these women in the workforce. This survey is used to better understand the barriers to accessing the labour market, and how this may differ for different women.**

**Please complete the informed consent forms prior to taking this survey. As your participation is voluntary, you can choose not to answer any question that you do not feel comfortable answering by selecting "prefer not to disclose".**

## Appendix 2: Research Ethics Protocol

### YWCA CANADA—Born to be Bold

#### Ethics Protocol

##### Purpose of the Ethics protocol

The purpose of this Ethics Protocol is to establish a framework of principles and procedures to guide the YWCA Canada Research Officer and team members to accomplish the tasks and objectives of the Born to be Bold Project. This protocol outlines the responsibilities of all participants and members involved in the project, through the various steps of the project.

##### Recruitment and process design

Ten member associations have been selected to be part of this research project, based on their location and contexts, where it is believed participants will be of the main community of concern for this research, namely “vulnerable women”<sup>77</sup>. Member association staff will be given the option to select one to three programs whose staff and service users will be the participants in this research. This program selection is up to each member association, given their superior knowledge of their context, program experience, and holistic understanding of what barriers women from their populations face in accessing the labour market.

##### Informed Consent

- Consent to participate in data collection and this project is a process rather than a singular event. Participants will be given an opportunity to provide clear consent to participate.
- The extent of participation and information sharing will also be open to the participants, as participation is voluntary. Participants may refuse to participate, withdraw at any time, decline to answer any question or participate in any parts of the procedures/tasks without penalty or negative consequence to their role, access or other relationship to the YWCA and its programs.

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<sup>77</sup> For the purposes of this research, refers to: Low-income women, women experiencing or having experienced gender-based violence, Indigenous women, racialized women, women in Northern and remote locations, and newcomer women specifically. Also includes young women and non-binary youth, single mothers, and women with physical disabilities. \* We use this term interchangeable with “marginalized women” or “women of marginalized experiences”

- Any participant can request to have their data removed at any point, if feasible (for example, prior to public publishing, or during focus groups prior to transcription, but not after).

## Transparency

- Prior to requesting meaningful consent, participants will be briefed and informed<sup>78</sup> on the intent of the research, clarity around what is being asked, and how the information will be stored, read, shared and used.
- Research tools and techniques will be open, direct and transparent; information will not be used outside of the outlined research plan, nor will covert work take place.

## Access

- Participants will have access to information and data collected about them (upon request), as well as all findings/outcomes of the research and project broadly shared, regardless of where the data are held.
- Participants/groups can also make decisions about access to their information. Specifically, participants' identifying information (name, individual demographics) will not be used in any reports or information dissemination. All personal identifying information will only be accessible to the Research Officer and Program manager at YWCA Canada. However, participants may choose and indicate to have their information shared further, for example through direct quotes or videos with project partners.
- The research methods will be developed in consultation with the individuals and groups who will form part of the research.
- The raw data will be only accessible to the Research Officer and YWCA Canada Programs Manager in order to ensure confidentiality. The research findings (trends, promising practices) will be publicly available and made accessible to all participants.
- The findings of the research will be presented in a format that is readily understandable and accessible to all stakeholders. This will include a research report, oral presentations, and will be publicly available at no cost.

## Control

- Participants will have control on how information about them is collected and disclosed by choosing specific research activities to participate in (for example, digital storytelling versus completing a survey). The activities will have implications on how information is collected. By indicating consent to various forms of information-sharing (aggregate data, direct stories, etc.) participants will control the information sharing.
- The researchers' main responsibility and accountability will be to the participants involved

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<sup>78</sup> Through varied mediums including written, orally, and/or a video presentation

- Participants will be informed, as far as anticipated, about what will happen with the information they have shared and its possible uses
- For discussion groups and interviews, participants will have a chance (at the end of the session) to review the researchers notes to ensure their contributions have been correctly captured
- The results and outcomes of the research will be presented to participants in draft form (either shared electronically or in a community/group gathering), to gather input and feedback prior to the finalization of the report – although draft reports may be shared with partners at the same time.
- The contribution of groups will be acknowledged in the final research report, recognizing that all participants in the research have a right to remain anonymous.

### **Risks/Benefits**

- Potential emotional/mental harm from having to relive/retell lived experience
  - Mitigation: various fora and mediums of data collection, ownership over what information is shared, how, and how it is presented
  - Where possible, mental health and spiritual support services that participants can draw on if issues arise will also be provided.
- Misrepresentation of experiences in broad report
  - Mitigation: draft output presented to participants for approval
- Philanthropy/ misuse of information beyond project scope
  - Mitigation: staff training regarding confidentiality and the use of the report
  - Raw data only available to the Research Officer and Programs Manager at YWCA Canada
- Benefits: contribution to an evidence-based approach to addressing Canadian women's access to the labour market, particularly for marginalized women

### **Compensation**

- Participants will not be paid for their participation. However, transport, a childcare stipend and food during the focus groups will be provided.

### **Access to information, confidentiality, and publication of results**

- The various formats of data collection provide different levels of confidentiality with information collected; full confidentiality can be strived for with mechanisms such as surveys and interviews, whereas groups discussions and sharing circles will establish different levels of confidentiality based on participants' agreements
  - For data collected quantitatively (e.g., surveys, questionnaires) only aggregate information or results will be shared (if a minimum threshold of responses is obtained)

- Pseudonyms and generic descriptions can be used, with consent from the participant, to share specific stories or quotes, in any form of research publication.
- Aggregated examples or patterns of stories can also be used to share trends of participant experiences, without disclosing specific individuals' experiences directly
- By participating in focus group discussions and sharing circles, participants recognize that despite best efforts, full confidentiality cannot be guaranteed
- The research outcomes will be shared as a publicly published and available report, and shared directly with Women and Gender Equality Canada, as well as project partners. Only the overall results, trends, and consented stories will be shared, while any identifying information will only be available to the Research Officer and Programs Manager at YWCA Canada.

### Consultation

- Although the broad framework of this research, questions and focus have been developed, participants will be consulted on the formulation, format and methodology of the research. Specifically, program staff at each location will be given a list of proposed research tools and asked to select which activities and format are most suitable for their given contexts. Participants will also have the choice of which (if any) research activities/methods they engage with and can suggest a more suitable method.

### Record Keeping

- Upon participants' request, their data will be withdrawn and destroyed if feasible; however, participants will be informed that research outcomes and data from focus group discussions and submitted surveys cannot be destroyed. All data will be destroyed after 3 years of project's end.
- In all components of data collection, notes will be taken to capture overall information shared
  - Notes may be either written or typed, and will be stored in a password protected and secure drive
  - Data shared beyond Research Officer and Programs Manager will be anonymized
- To help data collection and storytelling, some sessions may be audio or video recorded
  - In such cases, participants will have the right to consent or refuse any type of recording, with the use (note taking versus sharing stories) being previously clarified
  - If participants refuse to be recorded, only handwritten/typed notes will be used.

- Data for the survey component will be collected using Survey Monkey software, which stores the data in the United States, guided by its privacy policy<sup>79</sup>. Given this data storage, no personal information such as names or addresses will be collected through the survey. As well, the option not to answer any demographic questions in the survey will be provided, enabling participants to decide what identifying information is collected.

### Right to Appeal/report/support mechanism

- Participants have a right to appeal or report any misconduct or discomfort directly to the Director of Projects or CEO at YWCA Canada: Sydney Piggott, +1 (416) 962-8881 ext. 225; [spiggott@ywcacanada.ca](mailto:spiggott@ywcacanada.ca))

## References

This protocol has been developed and informed by:

- First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey (RHS) Code of Research Ethics. (2007, February). Retrieved from [https://fnigc.ca/sites/default/files/ENpdf/RHS\\_General/rhs-code-of-research-ethics-2007.pdf](https://fnigc.ca/sites/default/files/ENpdf/RHS_General/rhs-code-of-research-ethics-2007.pdf)
- Guide for Informed Consent. (2010, April). Retrieved from <http://www.research.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/GUIDE-FOR-INFORMED-CONSENT-April-2010.pdf>  
UofT REB Informed Consent Guide
- The First Nations Principles of OCAP® (Ownership, Control, Accessibility and Possession). OCAP® is a registered trademark of the First Nations Information Governance Centre --for more information see: [www.FNIGC.ca](http://www.FNIGC.ca)
- University of Victoria. (2003, February). Protocols & Principles For Conducting Research in an Indigenous Context. Retrieved from <https://www.uvic.ca/hsd/research/igovprotocol.pdf>

This protocol has been reviewed by:

- **Dr. Faye Mishna**, Dean and Professor at the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto

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<sup>79</sup> Survey Monkey Privacy Policy: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/legal/privacy-policy/#pp-section-4>



## Appendix 3: Informed Consent Form

# Informed Consent Form for YWCA Canada Research project: Born to be Bold

### Purpose of research:

“Born to be Bold: Measuring success for women’s access to the labour market” focuses on the issue of economic empowerment for vulnerable women, addressing the need to better understand promising practices for engaging these women in the workforce. Systemic barriers are inhibiting women from accessing the labour market, a problem that is worsened when marginalized women are involved, including women from remote and Northern communities, racialized and Indigenous women, women fleeing violence, newcomers, single mothers, LGBTQ+, low-income women, and women with varying levels of ability.

In order to understand and address these systemic failures, it is important to conduct quality research to ensure an understanding of the best ways forward to full labour market access and inclusion.

The Born to be Bold project will produce research using an intersectional framework on labour market access for women in Canada, and will result in a report describing barriers to accessing gainful employment, as well as three promising practices for the advancement of gender equity in the labour market. The findings will also guide a national conversation around employer engagement culminating in a press conference or roundtable convening employers from different sectors to discuss labour market access for women.

This project is mainly funded by Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) Canada; however, YWCA Canada is not conducting this research on behalf of the Canadian government nor any of its agencies. Only research findings and overall outcomes will be shared with any partners in this project, including WAGE, and member associations.

### What You Will Be Asked to Do in the Research<sup>80</sup>:

As a participant, you will be asked to participate in one or some of the following activitie[s];

#### **Please select what you will participate in:**

- ☐ Survey completion (available online and in print, and will take approximately 25 minutes)
- ☐ Group discussion (with approximately 7 other women with similar experiences, approximately 1.5 hours)
- ☐ Participation in a 1:1 interview/ conversation with research officer (approximately 1 hr)
- ☐ Photovoice (details attached, can span 1-3 days)

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<sup>80</sup> Full details of each activity are provided below

☐ Digital Storytelling (details attached, can span 1-3 days)

☐ Other activities defined by you/group: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Voluntary Participation:**

Your participation in the study is completely your choice and will not affect your relationship with YWCA either now, or in the future. You can stop participating in the project at any time, for any reason. Your decision not to participate, to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not affect your relationship with the researcher, the YWCA, or any programs in which you are involved. If you choose to withdraw, all associated data collected will be destroyed wherever possible (please see note on focus groups below). All the services you receive will continue and nothing will change. Your choice will have no impact on your job or on any work-related evaluations.

### **Confidentiality:**

All information you supply during the research will be held in confidence and your name will not appear in any report or publication of the research. Any time your name/identity is noted (interviews, group discussions), your name will be coded by using pseudonyms, with only the research officer and program manager at YWCA Canada having access to the coding system. You may choose to/ indicate to have your personal quotes or stories shared directly in the research results, by indicating consent below, or by participating in “Digital Storytelling”.

The information you share will be collected mainly through handwritten or typed notes; Audio or video tapes may be used to help note taking in group discussions and interviews. If a discussion is being audio-recorded, all participants will be asked for consent to record, and the recording will be destroyed once transcribed. If a participant does not agree to have their audio recorded, the group discussion will take place without audio recording, and information will be collected only by handwritten/typed notes. All documents with identifiable information will be destroyed as soon as they are transcribed and coded. The research data will be safely stored in a password protected and secure drive, and only the research officer and programs manager at YWCA Canada will have access to this information. The data will be stored for 3 years after the completion of the research, then destroyed by the program director.

### **Regarding focus groups and/or other group discussions and sharing:**

All participants will be asked not to directly share any information shared in the group, and to keep information confidential, while sharing what has been learned. However, we cannot guarantee that full confidentiality will be maintained by all participants. Your participation in a focus group is voluntary – you may choose to withdraw at any point. If you choose to withdraw, your contributions can be destroyed up until the point of transcription. Once group notes have been transcribed, it will not be possible to identify individualized information.

### Digital/Video images:

Digital photos or videos will only be taken of participants who consent(below) to having their photos/video shared in the research directly. If a participant withdraws their consent for use of their photos/videos **prior to public publishing of research results**, any photo/video they appear in will be withdrawn.

### Risks and Discomforts:

You are being asked to share some personal information, and you may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics. You do not have to answer any question or take part in the discussion/interview/survey if you are not comfortable to do so, without providing any reason.

You will be given an opportunity at the end of interviews to review the researcher notes, and you can ask to change or remove portions of those, if you do not agree or if you were not understood correctly.

### Benefits:

Although there may not be any direct or immediate benefit to participants, your participation in this research will allow future access to improved employment services and consequently gainful employment opportunities for you and women with similar experiences.

We aim to give you the space to influence Canadian policies and practices to address and remove barriers to women's access to the labour market, through storytelling, informing our research and sharing your knowledge.

### Compensation:

You will not be provided any direct compensation to take part in the research. However, we will provide transport, childcare stipend and food during the focus groups.

### Results Sharing:

Only aggregated data, trends, or previously consented to stories will be shared with the funder, national partners and/or participating Member Associations. Participant can receive a summary of the results/ draft of the overall report (by indicating best means in this consent form). Following participant feedback, we will publicly publish the results so that other interested people may learn from the research.

### Questions About the Research?

If you have questions about the project in general or about your role, please feel free to contact: Shiva Mazrouei, Research Officer: +1 (416) 962-8881 ext. 223/ [smazrouei@ywcacanada.ca](mailto:smazrouei@ywcacanada.ca) ; OR: Sydney Piggott, Manager of Programs & Projects: +1 (416) 962-8881 ext. 225/ [spiggott@ywcacanada.ca](mailto:spiggott@ywcacanada.ca)

### Results sharing for feedback:

Once all research activities have been completed, a draft report will be shared with the funders (WAGE Canada) and partners (ten participating member associations) of this project – simultaneously, the draft report can be shared with participants to receive your feedback. If you would like to receive this draft for feedback, please indicate the best way below:

☐ Email report and communication for feedback (provide email address below – you will be contacted with a draft by the research officer)

**Email address:** \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Community meeting (a meeting/group held in your member association to discuss the report draft)

☐ I don't wish to see a draft of the research results / provide feedback

### Agreement and Signatures:

I have read the above information in its entirety, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in the Born to be Bold project.

Print Name of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

### Digital videos/images:

**Please only complete this if you would like your video or images to be used in the project results directly (beyond only the research officer)**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to allow video and/or [digital images or photographs] in which I appear to be used in teaching, presentations and/or publications with the understanding that I will not be identified by name. I am aware that I may withdraw this consent at any time without penalty. I am aware that if I withdraw consent after reports have been published, my image cannot be removed from published material, but will not be used further.

Print Name of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

## DETAILS OF RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

### Survey

- participants will be asked to fill out a survey administered online through surveymonkey OR in print
- An option not to answer/skip will be provided on every question
- The information collected will be confidential; it will be stored in a password protected and secure drive and accessible only to the Research officer and Program Manager at YWCA Canada YWCA Canada
- Participants will not be able to go back to their responses once the survey is submitted
- Since the survey is anonymous (you are not asked to share your name/contact information), if you withdraw consent to participate after submitting your survey, it will not be possible to destroy your response.
- The survey does ask demographic information that may be personal/ deemed identifiable – you will have the option to not answer any/all of the questions. This information will also only be available to the Research Officer and Program Manager, and shared as aggregate results / overall patterns.
- Data for the survey component will be collected using **Survey Monkey software**, which stores the data in the United States, guided by its privacy policy<sup>81</sup>. Given this data storage, no personal information such as names or addresses will be collected through the survey. As well, the option not to answer any demographic questions in the survey will be provided, enabling participants to decide what identifying information is collected.

### Group Discussions (Focus groups)

- Participate in a discussion/sharing with up to 7 other women with similar experiences, with the research officer (Shiva) and/or other facilitators
- The session will begin with the moderator answering any questions about the research, and collectively agreeing upon a space agreement/ rules for the group
- The role of the facilitator is simply to capture the outcomes of discussion, and provide general overarching questions for consideration, which can be altered by the groups' choice o We will collaboratively establish learning and outcome goals that will be beneficial to you and the project

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<sup>81</sup> Survey Monkey Privacy Policy: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/legal/privacy-policy/#pp-section-4>

- These questions will mainly be about your experiences with searching for work, as well as experience with and outcome of participating in YWCA's programming
- You do not have to share any knowledge or experience that you are not comfortable sharing.
- The entire discussion will be audio-recorded (if consented to by all participants), but no one will be identified by name on the recording. The recording will be kept on a secure drive and destroyed as soon as session notes are transcribed by the research officer. No names will be used on transcriptions.

### 1:1 interview/conversations

- Participants will be asked/given a chance to participate in a private conversation with the Research officer.
- Although a series of pre-prepared questions will be posed, participants can choose not to answer any, some, or all of the questions.
- This will be an opportunity for participants to share their own stories in their own way and means; therefore, answering pre-set questions is not the sole purpose of this exercise, and the participant will be given time to lead and decide on the produced outcome
- The research officer will collect information by taking hand written notes, or if previously consented, by audio or video recording.
- The information recorded will be confidential and solely available to the Research officer and Program Manager at YWCA Canada. All hand-written and recorded notes will be transcribed, by the research officer, assigned a pseudonym for the participant, and destroyed – the transcribed notes will be stored in password protected and secure drive.
- Only if participants have specifically consented to sharing personal stories and information with a broader audience, then the recordings may be shared beyond this team

### Photovoice

- Photovoice uses photos and written captions/narratives as research data.
- Photos can be taken by the research officer, and/or participants will be trained in photovoice. Participants are given a disposable or digital camera and asked to take photos (and write narratives related to the photos) that help to answer the research question.
- The research officer and program manager will converse and analyze the photos and narratives with all 'photoresearchers'.
- The photos and narratives will be stored in a password protected and secure drive (or a locked drawer in case of print photos) and only accessible to the research officer and program manager, unless participants explicitly consent to their photovoice findings being shared directly with project partners.

- If you choose to participate in photovoice, you will be given, and asked to agree to further instructions regarding who/what can be contained in the photos

### Digital Storytelling

- Digital Storytelling uses video/film.
- Videos will be made by the research officer and/or participants.
- Digital storytelling can be used to record interviews with people who want their story to be heard. This means you can tell your story where broader audiences, partners and so on can hear your voice, and see your facial expression, and body language.
- You will get to decide what/how much is included in your video: for example, you can choose to have only your voice over an image, or to include full video footage of you speaking.
- Participating in digital storytelling means that there is lower guaranteed confidentiality, as you are agreeing to share what you produce as part of project results.

### If illiterate<sup>82</sup>

I have witnessed the accurate reading of the consent form to the potential participant, and the individual has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the individual has given consent freely.

Print Name of witness \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of witness: \_\_\_\_\_

Thumb print of participant:



### VERBAL CONSENT

A few questions to ask to ensure familiarity with/clarity on consent pieces

- Do you know why we are asking you to take part in this project? Do you know what it is about?
- If you decide not to participate, do you know what your options are? Do you know that you do not have to take part in this research if you do not wish to? Do you have any questions?

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<sup>82</sup>A literate witness must sign (if possible, this person should be selected by the participant and should have no connection to the research team). Participants who are illiterate should include their thumb print as well.

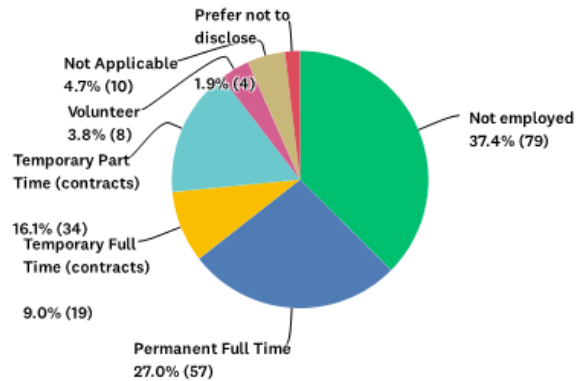
- Did you understand the procedures that we will be using to make sure that any information that we as researchers collect about you will remain confidential? Do you understand that the we cannot guarantee complete confidentiality of information that you share with us in group discussions? Do you have any more questions?



## Appendix 4: Survey Participant Demographics

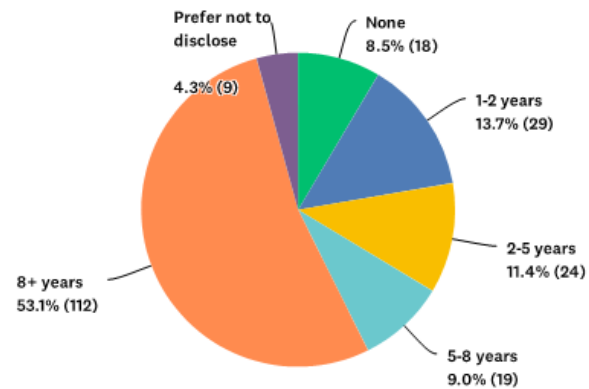
Q2 Employment Status

Answered: 211 Skipped: 0



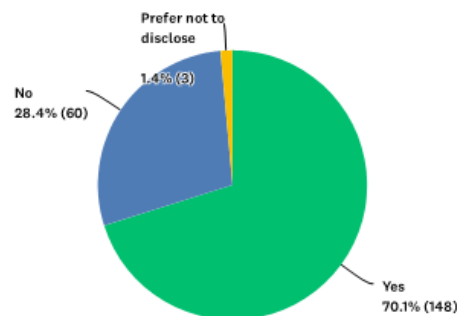
Q3 Years of paid work experience

Answered: 211 Skipped: 0



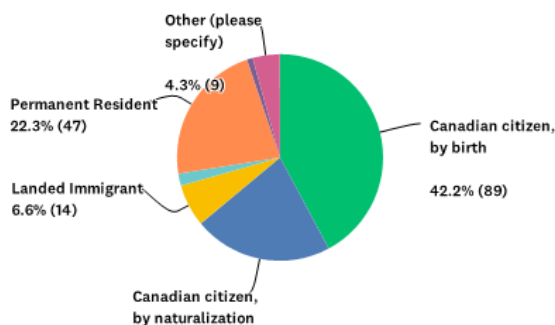
Q7 Parent, guardian or primary caregiver of a child/children?

Answered: 211 Skipped: 0



Q8 Citizenship status

Answered: 211 Skipped: 0

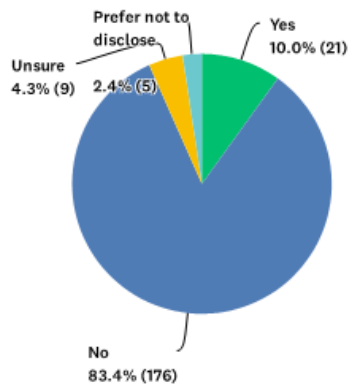


45.5% of respondents were born outside of Canada

73.9% of respondents primarily reside in an urban population center

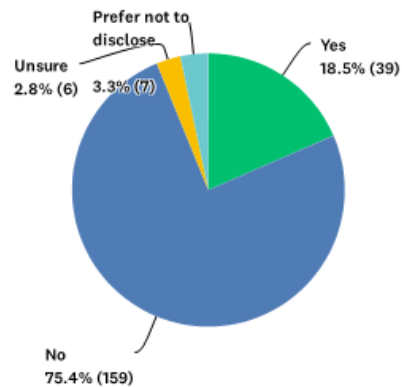
### Q11 Currently live with a physical disability?

Answered: 211 Skipped: 0



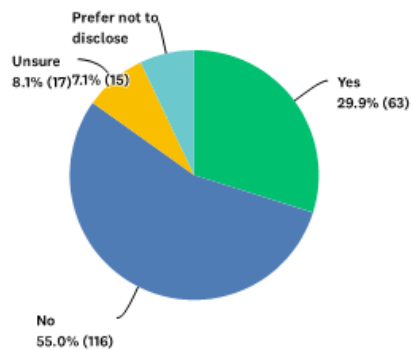
### Q12 Currently live with a chronic illness?

Answered: 211 Skipped: 0



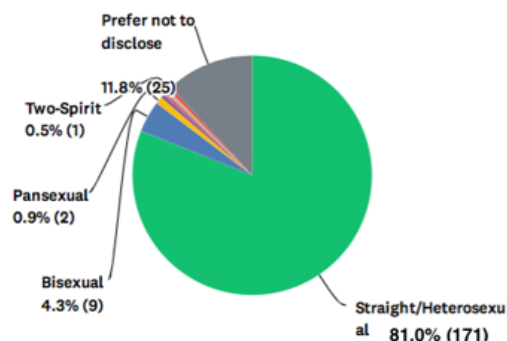
### Q13 Currently live with an emotional, psychological, or mental health condition?

Answered: 211 Skipped: 0

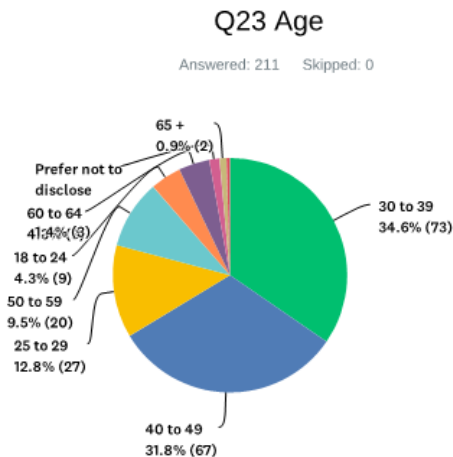
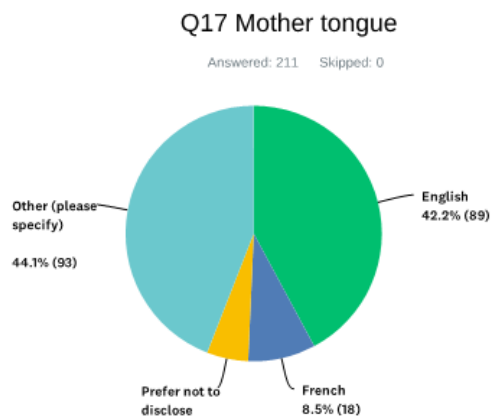


### Q14 Sexual orientation\*

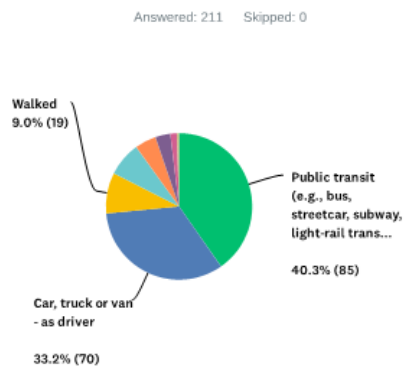
Answered: 211 Skipped: 0



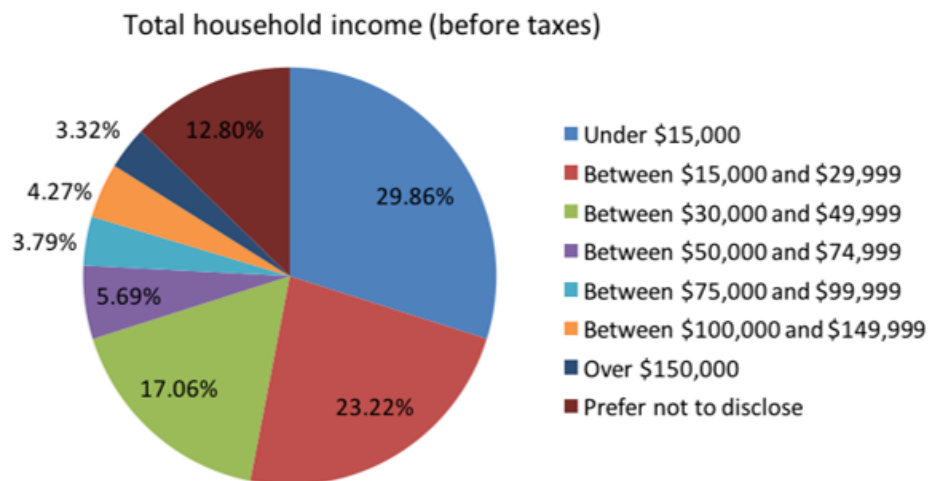
98.6% of respondents identified as woman



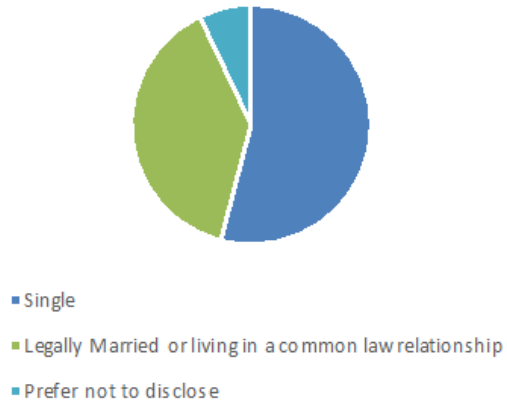
**Q27 Last week, how did you get to [school/work]?**



**Total household income of 70.2 % of respondents was under \$50 000.**

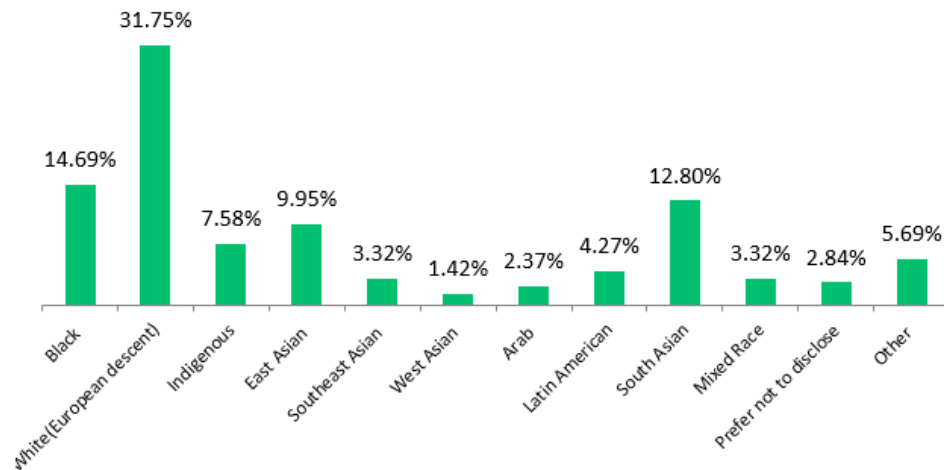


### Marital Status



*Single: comprised of Never legally married, legally married but separated, divorced and widowed*

### Racial Ethnicity\*



## Appendix 5: Participating programs

### CALGARY

1. **Women's Employment Resource Center (ERC):** YW Women's Employment Resource Centre helps women with essential skills, job search techniques, resume writing and making connections with education partners and employers. The goal is to support women as they establish and maintain employment; to create a learning environment that supports women in building capacity. We offer workshops and one-on-one employment readiness support to hundreds of women who are currently accessing YW housing and support programs, as well as anyone living in the community. **Other Services:** The ERC works with other areas and programs YW Calgary offers to make sure all ERC clients find the services they need. We also work with our contacts in the community, including potential employers.
2. **LINC program** (Language Instruction for New Canadians): The LINC program is a federally funded programme by the Government of Canada that provides basic English language training to help permanent residents or refugees with social, cultural and economic adaptation. This program is designed to help women and men adjust and build confidence. Participants learn about the local community and Canadian society; develop practical English-language skills, and widen their social circle. LINC classes are organized by Canadian Language Benchmark levels — YW currently offers CLB 1 to CLB 4. Some child-minding included/available.

### HALIFAX

1. **Step Ahead employment program:** Step Ahead is a nineteen-week employment program for women connected to Income Assistance who want to enter or re-enter the workforce. **Eligibility:** Women who are 19 or older, currently receiving income assistance and are willing and able to return to work. **Program Outline:**
  - Phase One: Six weeks of programming provides women with tools to succeed in the workplace. The workshops cover communication styles, teamwork, resume/cover letter/interview skills, how to navigate workplace situations, self-motivation, leadership, decision making and problem-solving through self-confidence and personal management skills.
  - Phase Two: A five-week volunteer placement integrated with workshops to support navigating the transition into the workplace. Peer-driven activities provide space for problem-solving and shared learning.
  - Phase Three: A paid eight-week work experience.

2. **Supportive Housing for Young Mothers program (SHYM):** SHYM provides supportive housing, parenting support, and life skills development for at risk young single mothers ages 16 to 24. SHYM is open to young mothers in their third trimester of pregnancy or who are independently parenting their child or children, and are in need of supportive housing. SHYM also provides housing for at risk single mothers who are attending a post secondary institution full-time. SHYM Offers:
  - A safe, nurturing environment to learn about and focus on parenting.
  - Participants receive a self-contained two-bedroom apartment.
  - Access to common areas such as a program room, children's playroom and backyard playground.
  - Individualized case management and home visitation support.
  - Group programming incorporating community members and resources.
  - 24-hour access to on-site staff.
3. **Launch employment program:** A six (6) month employment program for young women experiencing multiple barriers to employment. Launch includes:
  - A paid seven-week employment skills development group program
  - A 16 week paid work experience in a young woman's field of interestEach LAUNCH participant engages in PAID classroom and one-on-one workshops: Portfolio & resume development; Computer software training; CPR & WHMIS Certifications; Career & education exploration  
  
Priority Youth (Including but not limited to):  
  
High school non-completion; Disability; Aboriginal; Residence in a rural or remote location; Lone (single) parent; Visible or ethnic minority; Language barriers; Recent immigrant

## MONCTON

1. **Employment My Way:** Employment My Way is a self-employment training program for women. Includes group programming (12 weeks, 3 half-days/per week for 12 weeks), one-on-one mentorship, and networking.
2. **Housing/Outreach programs:** We believe everyone should have access to safe and affordable housing. YWCA Moncton provides supportive housing programs for women, children, and their families, who are homeless or precariously housed.

## MONTREAL

1. **S'Entreprendre:** This program is aimed at women who wish to take a step, a step toward self-reliance and to achieve their economic independence. We wish to help these women emerge from a precarious situation by developing their true social and economic potential and empowering them on the long term by: starting a business, pursuing post-secondary education and returning to the workplace. Our interventions take place in three essential steps to achieve financial independence:
  - Phase I: Encourage self-esteem (web platform)
  - Phase II: Train to achieve full potential (web platform and group sessions)
  - Phase III: Support by financing
  - Women targeted:
    - Women 18 years old and over; Women living in a precarious situation; Women who are ready to achieve financial independence; Women from all backgrounds (rural, urban); Mostly, women who are without public income support; Entrepreneurs in the making
2. **Fringues & Cie:** Professional training program in sales and customer service techniques, and job search strategies offered to women 18 to 60 years of age who are experiencing difficulties integrating into the workforce, receiving Employment-Assistance, Employment Insurance or who are without income.
3. **Women's Work Integration Program** (previously known as the *Mother's Work Integration Program*): Group career counselling and job search strategies tailored for women. The Women's Work Integration Program is a program that centers on orientation and job re-entry by focusing on self-assessment and employability. The program's ultimate goal is the eventual integration of women into the workforce. This program involves a commitment to a 19-week group process.

## NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

1. **Housing Support:** YWCA NWT continues to support their housing clients. This includes working with clients to find low-income housing in apartments across Yellowknife, as well as providing ongoing support, programming and referrals to clients who were re-housed after the fire. YWCA works with housing clients in various ways to ensure they are able to feed their families – this ranges from providing cooking classes to learn ways of cooking affordable family meals, holding group meals

on special occasions to bring families together, providing heavily discounted meat through a partnership with the local butcher, as well as providing grocery cards to families when money is really tight so they can get what they need, when they need it. The women at the YWCA transitional housing are not only focusing on revamping the programs offered (such as employment and nutritional programming) but also on providing daily support to their clients with navigating the systems and processes for their various needs including income support, education, childcare, and cooking.

## REGINA

YWCA Regina partners with Neil Squire, Sask Abilities, Rainbow Youth Road to Employment, Sask Polytechnic, and Nicor Property Management to help provide work and volunteer experience opportunities to those with barriers when it comes to securing employment. This program benefits those in return to work programs in addition to the women we serve who are looking for employment opportunities. This is included in our annual Outcomes as: Provide individuals with an opportunity to work experience through Support Service department. This is a commitment to 4 work terms in 2019 and we have surpassed this as of June 2019.

## SUDBURY

1. **Building Opportunities for Women (BOW):** The program is designed to support women in reaching their potential. The goal of the program is to address topics of interest for women so that they can meet new people, be exposed to relevant exciting learning opportunities, and achieve greater financial and social stability in their life. Some of the workshops topics included: Self-esteem, Increasing Self-awareness, Communication Skills, Stress and Relaxation, Budgeting/Financial Literacy, etc. Number of beneficiaries reached since the program starts is 24.
2. **Transitional and Housing Support Program:** The program assists women in accessing rent geared to income or market rent housing. The program establishes a transitional plan with women to assist women in sustaining independence, living free from abuse, and eliminating barriers in doing so. The program is offered to women who access the shelter and in the community. The program offers safety planning and counseling. The Transitional workers assist with referrals such as and not limited to; women's group, children's treatment groups/mothers, education, employment opportunities, addiction services, Court Support Programs. The program works in partnership with Sudbury Counseling Centre to offer children's treatment groups.

## THOMPSON

**To be Confirmed**



## TORONTO

1. **Moving on to Success (MOTS):** Moving on to Success is a free employment program for women. Priority is given to women who meet certain conditions based on income, or women who have experienced (or are at risk of) domestic violence. The program provides women with support and tools to reclaim their self-esteem, develop skills, take control of their careers and achieve economic security. Program offers:
  - one-on one counselling to develop a personalized career goal and employment action plan
  - job search support, job coaching and mentoring
  - computer skills training
  - general office skills
  - business communication skills
  - help writing résumés
  - job interview skills
  - job placements in a supportive work environment
  - ongoing support from YWCA employment specialists
  - opportunities to reconnect with personal interests values, skills and abilities through testing and reflection

This program is for women who: meet certain conditions based on income; have experienced or are at risk of domestic violence; want to explore career, training and education options; are able to commit to an employment action plan.

## VANCOUVER

1. **YWCA Single Mothers Support Services**

YWCA Single Mothers' Support Groups offer a range of individual and group services to assist, empower and inform low-income single mothers facing the challenges of parenting alone. This program offers 15 support groups throughout the Lower Mainland with free childminding to ensure access. Through weekly meetings culminating in a yearly conference, single mothers have the opportunity to meet other single mothers going through or having gone through similar life experiences. In this way, they develop relationships of trust, they become role models for each other and are able to provide support for each other. Groups meet for two hours each week year-round and are led by trained facilitators who are or were single mothers themselves. We also employ two Family Support Workers who provide 1:1 support services to single mothers enrolled in our groups including personalized needs assessments, action plans and advocacy. Each group collaborates on identifying the issues affecting them most, and this feedback informs the group's activities, discussions and workshops.

2. **YWCA Single Mothers Housing**

YWCA Metro Vancouver currently operates 13 affordable housing communities for single mothers and their children. Because safe, affordable housing is key to successful educational outcomes, stable health and economic sustainability, we are committed to providing affordable housing to families who urgently need it across Metro Vancouver. In order to ensure success, our housing model offers on-site support staff to address our tenants' needs and help them access services to strengthen self-sufficiency.

## Appendix 6: Project Glossary

### 2SLGBTQIA:

Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual <sup>83</sup>

### Anonymity | Anonymous:

Indicates that no identifying values (ex: name, personal details) that can link information provided to the participant; not even the researcher could identify a specific participant.<sup>84</sup> However, identities can still be inferred from anonymous information.

### Binary:

In technical terms, this refers to something composed of two parts. When used to describe the Gender Binary, this refers to the classification of sex and gender into two distinct, opposite and disconnected forms of 'masculine' and 'feminine'.<sup>85</sup>

### BIPOC:

Black, Indigenous and People of Colour

### Community:

Refers to a group of people sharing a similar background or experiences. These experiences may be linked to geography (a group of people living in the same neighborhood), profession (a group of people working as social service providers) or identity (people who share the same gender, race, class, sexual orientation, immigration status, language, ability, etc.). A community member is an individual who belongs to a particular community. At the same time, all definition of community is socially constructed and thus is dynamic and implicated with power relations.<sup>86</sup>

### Confidentiality | Confidential:

Indicates that the researcher/those privy to data will be able to identify participants based on their responses. However, a confidentiality agreement indicates that personal or identifying information will not be shared beyond the individuals agreed to – in this case, the participant, research officer and programs manager.

### Data:

Information produced by and used in research — includes numbers, words, pictures, or any type of information used.

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<sup>83</sup> Trans Student Educational Resources, 2020

<sup>84</sup> Statistics Solutions, 2019

<sup>85</sup> Tremblay, Malla, Tremblay, & Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2015, p. 31

<sup>86</sup> Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services, 2011, p. ix

### **Employed:**

Employed refers to persons who, during the reference time:

- did any work at all at a job or business, that is, paid work in the context of an employer-employee relationship, or self-employment. This also includes persons who did unpaid family work, which is defined as unpaid work contributing directly to the operation of a farm, business or professional practice owned and operated by a related member of the same household;
- had a job but were not at work due to factors such as their own illness or disability, personal or family responsibilities, vacation or a labour dispute. This category excludes persons not at work because they were on layoff or between casual jobs, and those who did not then have a job (even if they had a job to start at a future date).<sup>87</sup>

### **Equity:**

"Refers to systems & strategies for understanding and influencing the idea and practice of "fairness". For example, the distribution of resources in political, professional and social situations. These resources can include basic needs like food, housing, clothing, and money, but also education, employment, and safety from violence among other things. In order to have equity in diverse communities we must be able to identify the forms of oppression and discrimination that causes inequity and challenge these."<sup>88</sup> An example of an equity creating measure is the Employment Equity Act/Affirmative Action.

### **Focus group:**

A type of interactive interview that is conducted with a group of people to explore their ideas on a particular topic. They are often used to gain a deeper understanding of respondents' attitudes and opinions. Focus groups typically involve 6-10 people, and last for 1-2 hours. A key feature is that participants are able to interact with, and react to, each other.

### **Gainful employment:**

A job or employment that offers consistent work, job security, work that is free of all forms of violence and discrimination, safe working conditions and payment to sustain a meaningful living.

### **Informed consent:**

The process of obtaining voluntary participation of individuals in research based on a full understanding of the possible benefits and risks involved.

### **Intersectionality:**

Refers to the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, which are seen as creating overlapping and

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<sup>87</sup> City of Toronto, 2017, p. 9

<sup>88</sup> Tremblay et al., 2015, p. 4

interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. *“Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It’s not simply that there’s a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LBGTQ problem there. Many times that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things.”*<sup>89</sup>

**Labour force:**

Refers to persons who, during the reference time were either employed or unemployed. Labour force = Employed + Unemployed.<sup>90</sup>

**Marginalization:**

“Marginalization is the effect of people being considered outside of, different or other than the ruling class and dominant ideas of what is normal. Often marginalization is directly connected to a person or groups real or perceived class, education, social networks, race, ability, age, gender and sexuality among other things. People who are marginalized or “othered” in a society will often experience social and systemic exclusion resulting in limited access to resources and opportunities.”<sup>91</sup>

**Participatory research:**

Uses a variety of research techniques with an aim to share power and ownership over the research between researcher and research participants. Participants are meant to have input on the research agenda, process and outcomes. Participants are encouraged to identify possible solutions and actions to be taken. The research methods aim to articulate and share the perspectives of more marginalized groups directly.<sup>92</sup>

**Photovoice:**

A strategy that combines photography with grassroots social action. Participants in a photovoice project are asked to represent their community or point of view by taking photographs. It is intended to give insight into how people see and understand their circumstances.

**Precarious work:**

According to the International Labour Organization, precarious employment refers to an inadequacy of rights and protection at work. This can apply to informal work, but also to several types of formal work, including subcontracting, temporary contracts, interim work, certain types of self-employment and involuntary part-time work. These types of employment are more precarious because they are associated with reduced financial

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<sup>89</sup> Crenshaw, as quoted in Columbia Law School, 2017, para. 5

<sup>90</sup> City of Toronto, 2017, p. 10

<sup>91</sup> Tremblay et al., 2015, p. 4

<sup>92</sup> Participate, n.d.

security stemming from lower wages, less access to benefits such as private pension plans and complementary health insurance, and greater uncertainty about future employment income.<sup>93</sup>

### **Sexual Harassment:**

Defined by the Government of Canada as “Any conduct, comment, gesture, or contact of a sexual nature that is likely to cause offence or humiliation to any employee; or that might, on reasonable grounds, be perceived by that employee as placing a condition of a sexual nature on employment or on any opportunity for training or promotion.”<sup>94</sup> In the context of this project, sexual harassment constitutes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature in the workplace. Further, these actions do not always have to concern sexual behavior or directed at a specific person. For example, negative comments about women as a group may be a form of sexual harassment.<sup>95</sup>

### **Trans:**

Transgender is a term used to describe people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. Gender identity is a person's internal, personal sense of being a man or a woman (or boy or girl.) For some people, their gender identity does not fit neatly into those two choices. For transgender people, the sex they were assigned at birth and their own internal gender identity do not match.<sup>96</sup>

### **Vulnerable women:**

Low-income women, women experiencing or having experienced gender-based violence, Indigenous women, racialized women, women in Northern and remote locations, and newcomer women specifically. Also includes young women and non-binary youth, single mothers, and women with physical disabilities.

*\* We use this term interchangeable with “marginalized women” or “women of marginalized experiences”*

### **Women:**

All those who self-identify as a woman, which may include trans women, trans-femme, genderqueer and non-binary people. Although the current research is centred around the experiences of those who identify as women, we recognize that non-women identifying gender minorities experience different types of discrimination when it comes to labour market access. Therefore, we will also be collaborating with non-women identifying people - including Two-Spirit, agender, gender fluid, and other gender minorities – as part of our research.

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<sup>93</sup> Library of Parliament Canada, 2018

<sup>94</sup> Employment and Social Development Canada, 2019, para. 3

<sup>95</sup> RAINN, 2018, para. 2

<sup>96</sup> GLAAD. n.d.