

BC SOCIETY OF TRANSITION HOUSES

325-119 West Pender Street
Vancouver, BC V6B 1S5

The BC Society of Transition Houses' office is located on unceded Coast Salish territory, shared by the Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), xʷməθkwəyəm (Musqueam) and səłilwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.



BC Society of Transition Houses



Who We Are

Amy Fitzgerald, Executive Director

Tanyss Knowles, Getting Home
Project Manager

The BC Society of Transition Houses is a member-based, provincial umbrella organization. We support anti-violence workers providing support services and programs for women, children and youth experiencing violence.

Who We Support

We provides support to Transition, Second and Third Stage Houses, Safe Homes and PEACE programs for Children and Youth and Violence is Preventable programs.

We currently have 101 members and support over **120 housing** and **86 PEACE programs** throughout British Columbia.



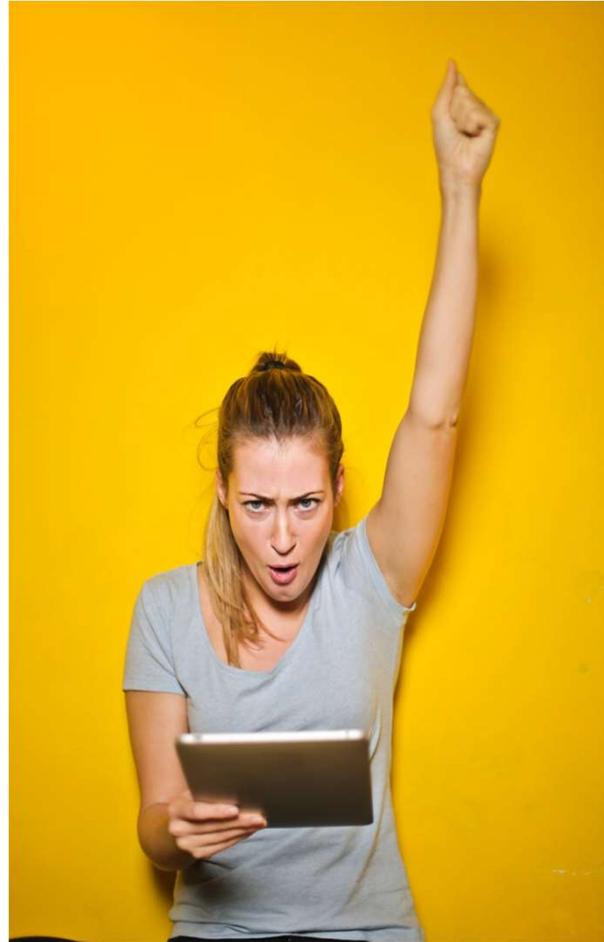
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PRESENTATION LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Learn about the housing barriers for women experiencing violence in BC
- Compare occupancy Standards internationally
- Explore potential responses and solution that could be implemented to safely and appropriately the housing needs of women experiencing violence



Raise your hand if...



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THE CANADIAN NATIONAL OCCUPANCY STANDARDS (CNOS)

- There should be no more than 2 persons per bedroom;
- Children less than 5 years of age of different sexes may reasonably share a bedroom;
- Children 5 years of age or older of opposite sex should have separate bedrooms;
- Children less than 18 years of age and of the same sex may reasonably share a bedroom; and
- Single household members 18 years or older should have a separate bedroom, as should parents or couples

In Compliance with the National Occupancy Standards ?



How many bedrooms are needed?

Megan is a single mother with 5 children. Her daughters, Rosie and Molly, are 19 and 6 years old, her son, Mike, is 15 years old, and her twins, Leo and John, are 2 years old. Her mother recently moved in with them to help with the childcare.

How many bedrooms does Megan need to compile with the national occupancy standards?



The Getting Home Project

- Reduce barriers to long-term housing for women experiencing violence
- Specific supports for immigrant, refugee, and indigenous women to access housing
- The development of on-going and sustainable supports that improve access to long-term housing for women



Project Partnerships

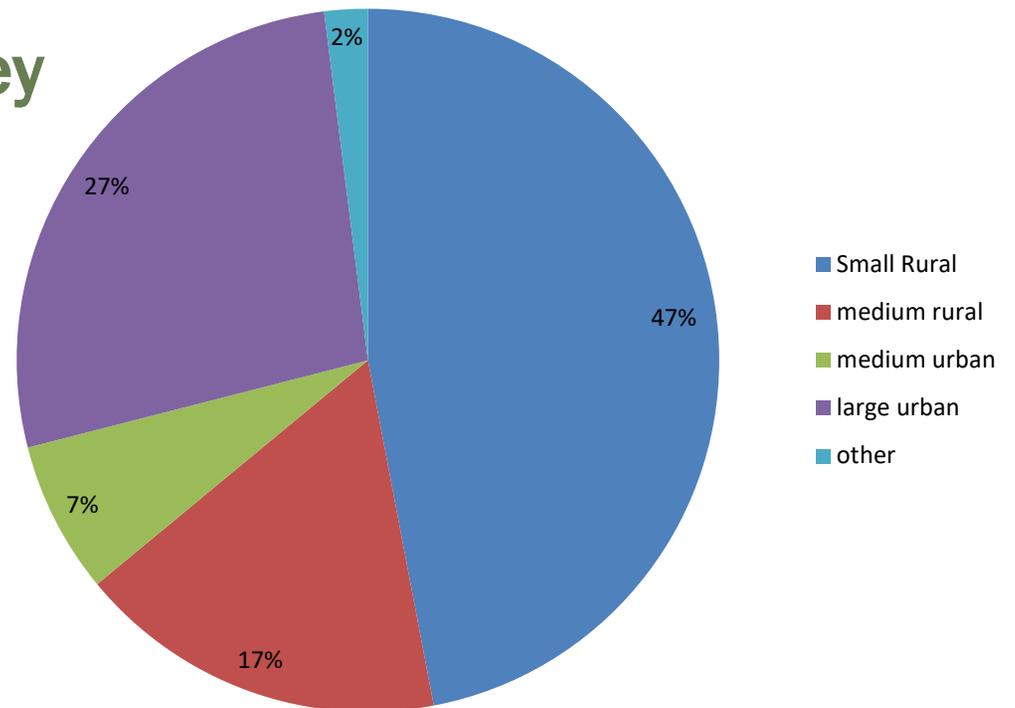
- BC Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH)
- BC Non-Profit Housing Association (BCNPHA)
- Co-operative Housing Federation of BC (CHFBC)
- BC Housing (BCH)
- Vancity Community Foundation (VCF)
- Funded by: Department of Women and Gender Equality (WAGE)



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Community Needs Assessment

- Province-wide Survey
- Focus Group
- Interviews
- Literature Review



Women's Homelessness

“It is harder and harder for women with low income...to be able to find housing...How is a women supposed to be able to find ANY housing for \$375 that will provide safety, security, peace of mind and encourage her to be able to move out of abject poverty?”

– *Getting Home Research Participant*

Finding a home after violence?

Only 4% of women are able to leave transition houses for an affordable home in BC. While 25% find housing (mostly beyond their means), 75% remain in insecure housing or return home to their abuser.



Research Themes: hopelessness, frustration, and lack of safety

“[The unaffordability of housing is causing] a sense of hopelessness. Women [are] no longer able to choose where they want to live or how much they can afford. Women [return] to partners or other abusive situations because of [the] need for housing”

– *Research Participant*

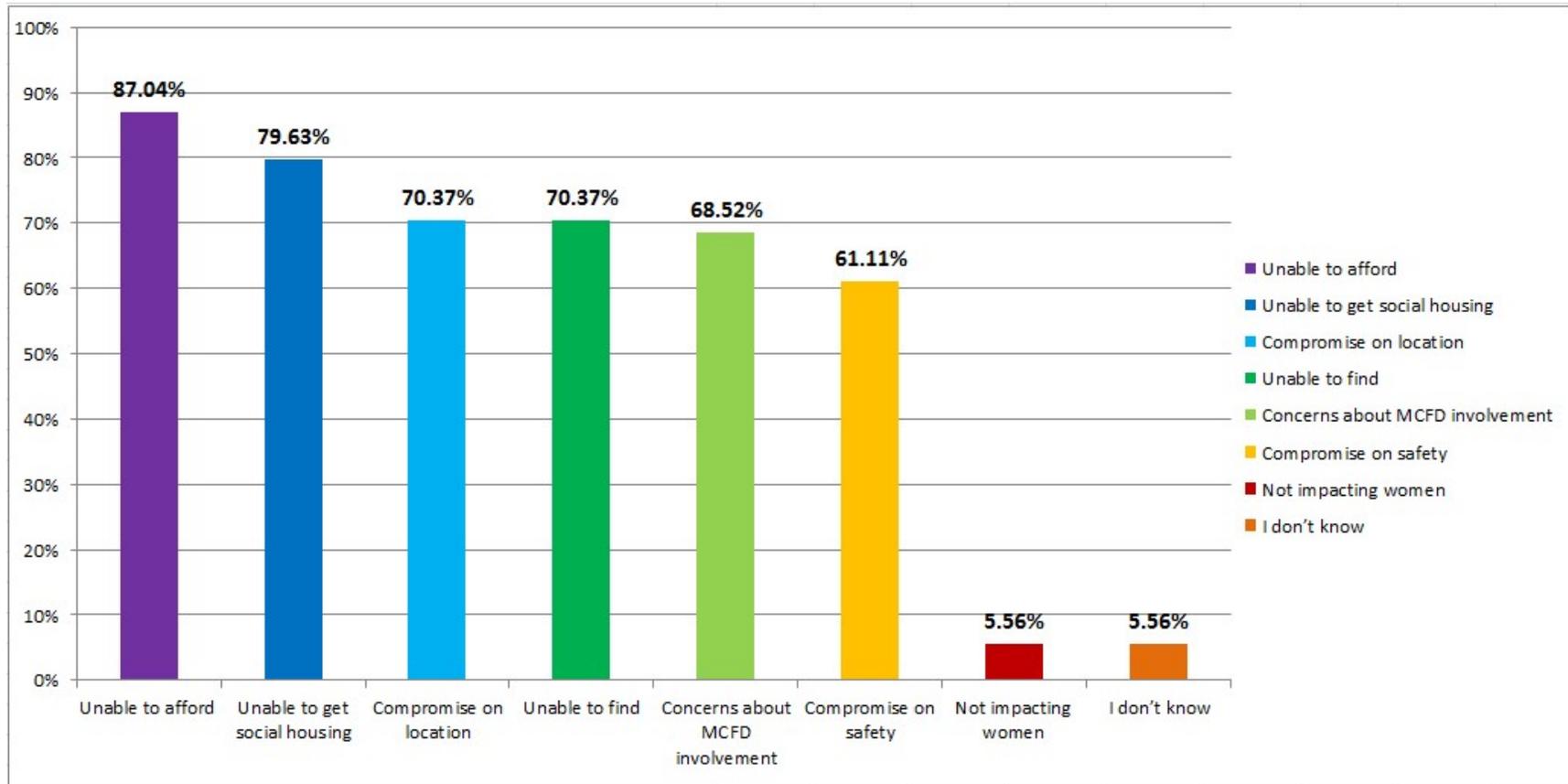


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Major Barriers to Housing

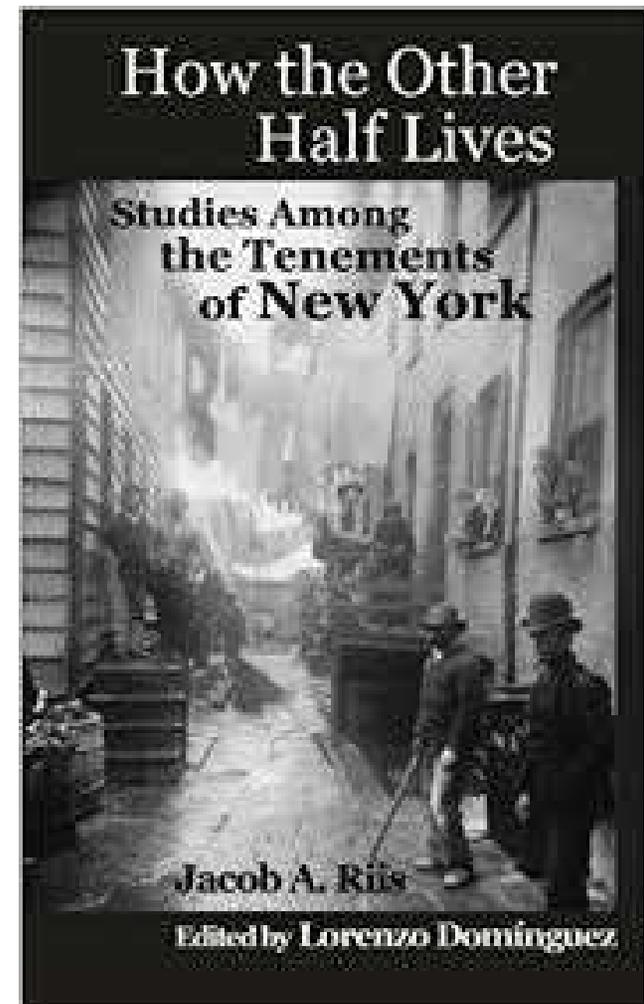
- Affordability
- Availability
- Family size/ the National Occupancy Standards
- Safety
- Discrimination

How are the National Occupancy Standards impacting women who use your agency?



Occupancy Standards: History

- Early 20th Centry: Tenement houses of New York and London
- 1919 is the key date, where space standards were set in England.
 - Tudor Walter Committee
 - Chadwick and Shaftesbury Inquires
- 1931: Overcrowding was first assessed in the national census
- 1944: Dudley Report and Canada's National Housing Act.
- 1961: Parker Morris Standards



Occupancy Standards: History

- 1970s: Development of the concept of Core Housing Need
- 1980s: overcrowding at historically low rates in Canada
- 1985: Canada's National Housing Act
 - A series of federal-provincial talks
 - Canadian National Occupancy Standards



Occupancy Standards: “vulnerable” communities

- Indigenous communities
- Refugees
- Multi-generational households
- Women fleeing violence

“When people cannot choose where to live, or how to live in the space of their homes due to culturally defined regulations, regulations with no real health or safety basis, they are being discriminated against in their search for decent, affordable housing”

– Ellen Pader



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The Evidence Today

- Few anthropometric studies on space needs
- Some studies showing that additional space in homes may result in broad health, wellbeing and quality of life.
- Some studies link overcrowding to poorer academic performance in kids



Do you know of any studies?

- Bedroom and privacy needs of children?
- Separating children by gender at a certain age?
- Long-term vs short-term results of overcrowding?



International Comparisons: USA

- Generally, 2-person-per-bedroom is acceptable
- avoid making social judgement on a family's sleeping arrangements. For example, it is not for the owner to determine...whether a young child can share a bedroom with a parent.
- Owners much count all anticipated children
- As long as the unit assignment does not conflict with local codes or cause serious overcrowding, the family can be housed in a smaller unit until a bigger unit becomes available.



International Comparisons: France

Housing suitability is assessed by rooms per person and available floor space. The norm for overcrowding was developed in the 1950s. Suitable dwellings must have:

- One living room for the household;
- One room for each couple;
- One room for each single person aged 19 and older,
- Children over 7 of opposite gender should have separate rooms.



International Comparisons: Scotland

The Housing Act (2003) defines the Bedroom Standard as well as Space Standard, which is the adopted from the UK's space requirements. This legislation states that the Bedroom Standard requires each of the following groups or individuals to have a separate bedroom:

- any couple;
- a person aged 21 years or older;
- children over 10 of opposite genders should have separate rooms.

International Comparisons: New Zealand

A healthful residential environment:

- A sufficient number of rooms, usable floor area and volume of enclosed space to satisfy human requirements for health and for family life, consistent with the prevailing cultural and social pattern of that region...
- Minimum degree of privacy
- Suitable separation of rooms as used for:
 - Sleeping by adolescent and adult members of the opposite sex except husband and wife

International Comparisons: London, Ontario

- 2 persons per room Two children of opposite sex, under age 5, may share a bedroom.
- A single parent is eligible for a unit in which the parent shares a bedroom with the child.
- A household may choose to be under-housed in accordance with municipal by-laws



International Comparisons: London, UK

29/11/2017

London Plan: Density limits removed and new minimum space standards outlined

Words: Laura Edgar



Mayor of London Sadiq Khan has published his draft London Plan, which outlines proposals to make better use of land including creating places of higher density, and minimum space standards for different sized dwellings.



Share in Pairs

Imagine you had the ability to rewrite the CNOS, would you change them?

How would you figure out what occupancy standards would be best in the current Canadian context?





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