



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 006

Tuesday, February 15, 2022

Chair: Mrs. Karen Vecchio



Standing Committee on the Status of Women

Tuesday, February 15, 2022

• (1545)

[English]

The Chair (Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC)): Good afternoon, everyone. I would like to welcome you to the sixth meeting of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

I call this meeting to order. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted on Tuesday, February 4, the committee will resume its study of intimate partner and domestic violence in Canada.

Given the ongoing pandemic situation and in light of the recommendations from public health authorities, as well as the directive of the Board of Internal Economy on October 19, 2021, to remain healthy and safe, the following is recommended for all of those attending the meeting in person.

Anyone with symptoms should participate by Zoom and not attend the meeting in person. Everyone must maintain two metres of physical distancing, whether seated or standing. Everyone must wear a non-medical mask when circulating in the room. It is recommended in the strongest possible terms that members wear the masks at all times, including when seated. Non-medical masks, which provide better clarity over cloth masks, are available in the room. Everyone present must maintain proper hand hygiene by using the hand sanitizer at the room entrance.

Committee rooms are cleaned before and after each meeting. To maintain this, everyone is encouraged to clean surfaces such as the desk, chair and microphone with the provided disinfectant wipes when vacating or taking a seat.

For those participating virtually, I would like to outline a few rules to follow.

You may speak in the official language of your choice. Interpretation services are available for the meeting. You have the choice, at the bottom of your screen, of floor, French or English. If interpretation is lost, please inform me immediately, and we'll ensure interpretation is properly restored before resuming the proceedings.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. If you are on the video conference, please click on the microphone icon to unmute yourself. For those in the room, your microphone will be controlled by the proceedings and verification officer. I will remind you that all comments should be addressed through the chair. When speaking, please speak slowly and clearly. When you're not speaking, your microphone should be on mute.

Before we welcome our witnesses, I would like to provide this trigger warning. We will be discussing experiences related to violence and assault. This may be triggering to viewers with similar experiences. If you feel distressed or if you need help, please advise the clerk.

I know we're starting late. This meeting usually goes to 5:30, and the first panel is usually from 3:30 to 4:30. Would the witnesses be able to extend that time to 4:45? Would you all be able to remain with us until 4:45? Can you give me a thumbs-up?

That's fantastic. Thank you so much. I really appreciate that, as it will give everybody a greater opportunity to speak to you.

I would like to welcome our witnesses now.

On our first panel today, we have, from Statistics Canada, Lucie Léonard, director of the Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics; and Kathy AuCoin, chief of the analysis unit at the Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics. As an individual, from the University of Calgary, we have with us Lana Wells, associate professor and Brenda Strafford chair in the prevention of domestic violence. From the Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children, we have Katreena Scott, professor.

Just to let everybody know, our witnesses will have five minutes to speak.

You're going to see me signalling to wrap up. That usually starts about 10 to 15 seconds before that time, and we just ask that everybody be tight on their time so that everybody gets the best and optimal time.

We're going to pass it over to Statistics Canada now.

You have your five minutes for your brief. Go ahead.

Ms. Lucie Léonard (Director, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics, Statistics Canada): Madam Chair and members of the standing committee, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to present our most recent statistics on intimate partner violence in Canada. Much of the information that I will be focusing on this afternoon is available in several publications, and I've provided the clerk a complete list of them with key data points in a written brief for your reference. It is important to note that the data I would be highlighting comes from various sources, including police-reported data and self-reported victimization surveys.

Police data captures forms of intimate partner violence that meet the criminal threshold and are reported to police. However, as many of you are well aware, intimate partner violence often goes unreported to the authorities and includes a range of abuses. These include psychological, emotional and financial abuse, all of which can be extremely harmful but will not be collected through police data. As such, I will be drawing from both types of data sources to provide a full picture of the nature and extent of intimate partner violence in Canada.

Overall trends of intimate partner violence over the past two decades have declined. According to the 2019 general social survey on victimization, spousal violence—that is, physical and sexual assault and the threat of violence—in the provinces was significantly lower in 2019 than in 1999. Over this time period, spousal violence decreased for both women and men. Overall trends for police-reported data showed declines in intimate partner violence from 2009 through 2015. However, more recently there have been incremental year-over-year increases. Specifically, the rate of police-reported intimate partner violence against women increased 10% in 2020 from what was recorded in 2017. Similar increases over the same period of time were noted for men.

Concerns about the impact of lockdown restrictions during the pandemic have also been noted, and through a web panel survey conducted during the early months of the pandemic, 8% of Canadians reported that they were very or extremely concerned about the possibility of violence in the home. This proportion was higher for women than for men.

Through the survey of safety in public and private spaces, we measure lifetime experiences of all forms of intimate partner violence, including physical and sexual assault, and psychological, emotional and financial abuse. According to this survey, 44% of women reported experiencing some form of violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime, that is, since the age of 15. In addition, almost one-quarter of women reported experiencing physical assault, compared with 17% of men. Notably, women were six times more likely than men to have been sexually assaulted by an intimate partner in their lifetime.

Women in some population groups are at greater risk of experiencing intimate partner violence in their lifetime. Indigenous women are at great risk of experiencing intimate partner violence in their lifetime. Specifically, about six in 10 first nation and Métis women stated that they had experienced some form of psychological, physical or sexual abuse committed by an intimate partner in their lifetime, as did 44% of Inuit women. Taken together, this represented 61% of all indigenous women.

Sexual minority people—those whose sexual orientation is gay, lesbian, bisexual, or another sexual orientation—are much more likely to experience all forms of intimate partner violence. For example, in 2018, two-thirds of sexual minority women had experienced at least one type of intimate partner violence since the age of 15. More than one-quarter of sexual minority women reported being sexually assaulted by an intimate partner at some point since age 15.

In addition, more than half of women with disabilities experienced some form of intimate partner violence in their lifetime. Almost one-third had been physically assaulted, while 18% reported being sexually assaulted by an intimate partner in their lifetime. More than one-quarter of intimate partner violence victims experience violence or abuse on a monthly basis or more frequently, and one in 10 women victims experiences it almost daily.

Measures of intimate partner violence often take into account the levels of fear that victims experience. Being afraid of a partner can indicate that experiences of violence are more coercive, relatively more severe and more likely to reflect a pattern of behaviour by an abusive partner. Compared with men, fear is considerably more common among women who experience intimate partner violence. Nearly four in 10 women who were victims said they were afraid of their partner at some point in their life because of the abuse.

• (1550)

The type of intimate partner violence experienced is associated with the likelihood of being fearful. Among victims of intimate partner violence who experienced solely psychological forms of abuse, 12% of women and 4% of men stated they had been afraid of a partner. In contrast, 55% of women—

The Chair: Excuse me, Ms. Léonard. I'll give you a couple more seconds. We're already a few seconds over time. If you could wrap it up in 10 seconds, then we'll be able to ask you through the questions.

Thank you.

Ms. Lucie Léonard: Absolutely.

In contrast, 55% of women who experienced physical or sexual violence feared their partner at some point.

Thank you, Madam Chair and honourable members, for your attention this afternoon.

My colleague Kathy AuCoin and I are happy to answer any questions you may have, in French or English.

Thank you.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you so much.

We just found out that you wouldn't be able to see me because I'm on the other screen, so I will have to interrupt you at the five-minute mark just to let you know that we're coming to that time.

I'm now going to move it over to Lana Wells, associate professor and Brenda Strafford chair in the prevention of domestic violence, from the University of Calgary.

You have five minutes.

Mrs. Lana Wells (Associate Professor, Brenda Strafford Chair in Prevention of Domestic Violence, University of Calgary, As an Individual): Thank you, Madam Chair and committee members, for inviting [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] privilege to be here with you today. I want to thank each of you for your service to ending intimate partner violence in Canada.

I'm calling from the town of Canmore, Alberta, which is located within the Treaty 7 region of Southern Alberta. The territory is home to the Métis Nation of Alberta Region 3.

Since 2010, I have held the position of the Brenda Strafford chair in the prevention of domestic violence in the faculty of social work at the University of Calgary, where I am leading a research hub called “Shift: The Project to End Domestic Violence”. The focus of our work is on preventing first-time perpetration and victimization of domestic and sexual violence by designing and scaling up interventions that target the structural and cultural conditions that produce and reinforce violence, while trying to build the will and skills of individuals, families, communities, organizations and systems to prevent violence.

Over the years, our primary prevention efforts have focused on developing multi-level interventions that prevent teen dating violence, because we know that one in three Canadian youth experiences violence, and that victimization during adolescence is related to revictimization in adulthood. Youth who have experienced dating violence have a higher rate of experiencing domestic violence in adult relationships, so working with youth and the adults around them is a key strategy for violence prevention.

We've also focused our research on supporting the transformation of the anti-violence sector to better serve and support informal and natural supporters, because we know that only 12% of Canadians experiencing intimate partner violence go directly to the police. Most survivors and aggressors go to their friends, families, neighbours and co-workers first. In fact, research shows that positive informal supports lead to decreased risk of experiencing domestic violence, especially if that support occurs before relationships become violent, when initial problems or issues begin to emerge. So the importance of stepping in early with the right skills must be taught to all Canadians.

For 11 years, our research hub has been designing, implementing and learning ways to engage and mobilize more men and boys in violence prevention and gender equality. We believe violence is a learned behaviour, and if we want to stop violence, we must work with and support men and male-identified people. One of our most recent partnerships is working with the Calgary Police Service, a

male-dominated environment, with which we are testing a “nudge and social norms” approach to get at the structural and cultural change, because we know policy and training are not sufficient to get at the changes we're all seeking.

Since COVID, we've been digging in to understand how big data, artificial intelligence, machine learning and predictive analysis can support prevention efforts. We're trying to leverage new technologies to monitor COVID impacts to inform our response and recovery in real time, as we have no central repository of comprehensive, cross-analyzed violence data in Alberta. As a result, we partnered with a collective impact organization that represents hundreds of anti-violence organizations and systems in Alberta to better collect data but also to use the information to inform prevention efforts.

Lastly, we're conducting a research project to better understand alternative justice approaches to sexual violence healing and prevention. By “alternative justice approaches”, we mean those activities and interventions that are outside of the criminal legal system, that are survivor-centred and trauma-informed, and that promote prevention and healing with survivors and aggressors of sexual violence.

At Shift, we believe we need to be working on initiatives that create hope, healing and opportunities to transform gender relations and norms, that support accountability and repair, and that are survivor-centred. We believe a non-mandated model that integrates reparative and transformative principles has the potential to meet survivors' needs, rehabilitate offenders, address injustice and prevent future acts of violence.

I'm super excited to be here with you today. As a committee, you have a very large and important mandate. I'm hoping our conversation will continue to motivate you to undo the systems of oppression that are hurting and reinforcing violence. That means focusing time, resources and political leadership on the root causes of violence.

• (1555)

I know this task is daunting and overwhelming, but for us to end violence, we will need to dismantle white supremacy, patriarchy, colonialism and racial capitalism, because they are the foundation that gives rise to individual and collective manifestations of violence. These systems have normalized inequality and systemic racism, put profit and exploitation over people's well-being, put individualism over co-operation and social cohesion, and normalized competition, aggression and many forms of violence that we don't often recognize as violence—

The Chair: That's five minutes and 10 seconds.

Mrs. Lana Wells: I'll end there. Thank you so much for the opportunity to be here, and I look forward to a robust discussion.

The Chair: I'm sorry. I hate cutting you off, because I know there's so much information you're providing to us, but we'll try to get all that information with the questions.

We're now going to turn to Katreena Scott with the Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children.

Katreena, you have five minutes.

Dr. Katreena Scott (Professor, Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children): I, too, would like to thank the committee for this opportunity. I bring greetings from Niagara, Ontario, traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabe peoples.

As introduced, my name is Katreena, and I'm the director of the Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children, which was one of five centres across Canada whose creation was prompted by the 1989 targeted murder of 14 women at l'École Polytechnique in Montreal.

We've heard just now about the prevalence and impact of domestic and family violence, and it's true that ending these problems is going to require taking a number of actions, but there are clear pathways to change. We know that we need to make significant progress on gender equity with initiatives like national child care and "take it or leave it" paternal leave. We know we need to continue public conversations about gender violence and that these conversations need to include considerations around structural violence and intersectionality, and, as my colleague Lana Wells just spoke about, we know that we need to do a much better job of prevention.

What I want to talk about today is what happens when public education and prevention fail. What kind of response can Canadians count on? There will be many people testifying to this committee about what is needed to respond to survivors. We know that one part of the answer is providing stable and adequate funding to women's shelters, sexual assault centres and other programs for survivors of abuse, but what do we need to do to address people who are engaging in abusive behaviours, who are causing harm to others? When Canadians are concerned about their own behaviours in their family and their relationships, where do they turn to get help?

We have seen investments federally, provincially and territorially in professional education to make sure that gender-based violence is better recognized by health care providers, social service professionals and workplaces. These are welcome developments and changes but, again, whom do people call when they want to make a referral to service? What about the many Canadians who have a family member, a loved one, a colleague or a neighbour who turns to them, who sees degrading, abusive or threatening behaviour? How do they get help for the person they want to change?

The reality is that finding help to address abusive behaviour in Canada is really, really difficult. All Canadian provinces and territories have at least one program that specializes in working with those who perpetrated abusive behaviours, but in many parts of Canada, the only way you can access this program is by being arrested. This can't be the way we want the system to work. Although all places have at least one program, mostly it's that, just one pro-

gram, a short-term, group-based, one-size-fits-all intervention that, in many rural communities, is offered once or twice a year.

We have known for years that one size doesn't fit all. There are many examples, but just to share one, we've known for a long time about the relationship between intimate partner violence and substance use. We know that abuse is not caused by alcohol or drugs, but for those who suffer from addiction and also perpetrate abusive behaviour, it's important to address these behaviours in tandem, and despite many years of recommendations, there aren't collaborative or joint programs available in Canada. Even if you can pay for service privately, you're going to be hard pressed to find a therapist to do this work.

What can we do about it? Part of the problem is one of workforce capacity. It takes specialized knowledge and skill to work with perpetrators of abuse, to know how to have difficult conversations, to help amplify people's discomfort with and concern about their behaviour and to be able to track access and address abuse and risks for abuse. This is not something that's taught in most psychology, social work, nursing or even psychotherapy programs. Most learning happens on the job.

We did a survey recently of specialist service providers in Canada, and one of the things we found is that only eight per cent of current specialists who work with men who cause harm said that they were prepared when they started their job. Almost all of them reported that ongoing training that was available from their agency was also inadequate.

The federal government could develop and support workforce capacity. We just finished a WAGE-funded project based on the collaborative work of service providers, survivors and researchers from all Canadian provinces and territories to develop the flourishing practice model, a framework that outlines the expertise of service providers in this area.

● (1600)

The other thing that governments can do is make the development and testing of a range of different intervention programs for perpetrators part of the national action plan.

The Chair: The five minutes are done.

Dr. Katreena Scott: Thank you.

The Chair: Awesome. Thank you so much.

We'll be starting our first round. In the first round, each member will have six minutes. I'll give you the one-minute warning so you can wrap up in that six-minute time.

I'm going to pass the floor over to Michelle Ferreri.

Michelle, you have six minutes.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Thank you so much to all of the witnesses. It's not an easy topic to have on a Tuesday. I think it's Tuesday, isn't it? Who knows what day it is any more?

I'm not sure who wants to answer this. All three witnesses could answer this. It's mostly around statistics.

Emotional abuse during childhood has been shown to be associated with an increased risk of intimate partner victimization in adulthood. Are there statistics that address the correlation between emotional abuse during childhood and perpetrating intimate partner violence?

• (1605)

Ms. Kathy AuCoin (Chief of Analysis Unit, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics, Statistics Canada): Thank you, Chair, for the question.

There are key linkages between risk of being a victim of intimate partner violence and experiencing maltreatment before the age of 15. That could include harsh parenting or witnessing violence within the home. From a child's perspective, if the home front had those behaviours, their understanding as an adult is that this is acceptable and normal. There are key linkages.

In addition to that, we also know that children who have been exposed could be victims of other forms of violence outside of an intimate partner relationship. There are definitely some key linkages to that—

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you. I hate interrupting. I always feel like we're rushed because we have such limited time.

I'm just wondering if you have specific stats around that.

Ms. Kathy AuCoin: We do.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: If there are, can you table them for the committee?

Ms. Kathy AuCoin: Certainly.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Fantastic.

I'm also looking for stats on men. Do you have any stats right now—again, I would ask them to be tabled with the committee—on men who know what intimate partner violence is, starting at a younger age?

Ms. Kathy AuCoin: We have no data on that specific question.

We do have something I will send your way. With the survey of safety in public and private spaces, we asked a series of questions about attitudes towards gender-based violence. It was very generic. We broke it down by male and female and whether their perceptions of those statements were supportive or not.

I think that would touch on what you're getting at and we could supply the committee with that information.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you. That would be super helpful.

In your research or in your statistics collection, do you break it down into age, socio-economic class and ethnicity?

Ms. Kathy AuCoin: We can. For the first report, we didn't do a deep dive.

Those are great questions. We can definitely produce it for you.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Fantastic.

This question is for Katreena, I believe. Katreena, were you the last witness who spoke? I always want to make sure I have the right people.

Dr. Katreena Scott: Yes.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Fantastic.

You talked a lot about having people working in this field to help...having lived experience and learning on the job. I'm curious if you've looked into having men working in this who have re-stored...have the lived experience or have come out on the other side?

Dr. Katreena Scott: Yes, absolutely. I think those voices are important.

The work we did to develop the workforce capacity framework involved survivors of intimate partner violence as core partners. We didn't make as core partners for this work those who have engaged in abusive behaviours. However, many of the conversations were vetted by men who had many years of experience working with men and for whom that kind of feedback is part of a continual improvement of the program.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you so much.

I have another stats question. I'm not sure who wants to answer this one.

Do we have any stats on the difference between rural and urban intimate partner violence?

Ms. Kathy AuCoin: We do. In the packet, we provided one table. I also have another table in the office that I can send that compares 2019 to 2020.

We know that with intimate partner violence for women, the rates are higher in rural Canada than in urban areas. When we think about rural, we need to be careful and not think of rural as a "one size fits all" across Canada. Every province has a different community. Rural in Quebec will be different from rural in Ontario, Saskatchewan or Manitoba.

The highest rates of intimate partner violence against women are in the territories, as well as rural Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you.

I know we don't have a lot of time left, but—

The Chair: You have 45 seconds.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: What do you think would be effective in educating young males on what a healthy relationship is?

Ms. Kathy AuCoin: I would defer to the experts on the service providers, who know policy and programs.

Mrs. Lana Wells: I'm happy to jump in on that.

I think Canada has been investing, particularly [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] trying to scale up, where they're actually targeting grade 7, 8 and 9 boys to do gender-transformative and human rights work so they can be woken up around their own experiences of socialization around male norms, healthy relationships, gender equality and equity and so forth. I think investing in targeted classes and then all-gender classes is critical. The content has to go into curricula. I know the federal government doesn't have a responsibility—provincial governments do—but I think we can encourage governments to take up this kind of curriculum, as well as teacher education programs to ensure it's embedded in the teachers who are being trained. Of course, to support all genders—

• (1610)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Wells. We do have to move on to the next questioner. I'm sorry about that.

We're now going to Sonia Sidhu.

Sonia, you have six minutes.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to all the witnesses for your testimony.

My first question is for the team from Stats Canada.

Your brief notes said you'll be doing another round of data collection in 2024. Can you speak to any gaps you think may exist in your data and research, and how that may be improved moving forward, if you feel there are any kinds of gaps?

Ms. Kathy AuCoin: Chairwoman, that's a great question.

I think Statistics Canada has done a great job, with funding from our partners, in monitoring intimate partner violence over the years. Where we understand the gaps to be is for new immigrants who don't speak English or French. They would not be captured in our household surveys. In addition, they might be reluctant to report to the police. That would be a qualitative study. I think complementing qualitative studies with our quantitative studies really tells the full picture.

When I think about long-term issues, what we hear from shelter managers is that shelter use for victims of intimate partner violence has not gone down. There's a constant need, and what we hear from managers of shelters is that women often leave to go back to their abusers. It's not because they want to go; it's because there's not enough adequate housing. That structural issue has been there for

more than 20 years. If someone doesn't have a place to go, they're stuck in a circle.

So, it's qualitatively and quantitatively exploring victims of intimate partner violence and what they need to leave the abusive situation. There's a gap. Again, from my opinion, that's a qualitative study.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Thank you.

The next question is for Ms. Scott.

What sort of mental health supports are available to women and girls who experience intimate partner violence, and which methods have proven to be the most effective? What do you think about that? Their mental health is more impacted than anything else.

Dr. Katreena Scott: Survivors of intimate partner and domestic violence turn first to friends and family, primarily, and then they turn to and can access supports through shelters and through women's advocates. One of the things that are so important about the work that shelters and women's advocates in sexual assault centres do is that they centre the identity, the strengths and the needs of the survivors. In that way, they recognize that the impact of violence is not an individual mental health problem. They recognize the impact of violence on that person and are able to work around mental health issues through that trauma- and violence-informed lens. Having that lens is very important. It's a very important start point for dealing with mental health problems, if you want to call them that, that are a result of experiencing violence and abuse.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Thank you.

Ms. Wells, marginalized women experiencing intimate partner violence can face specific barriers in accessing services and justice. Could you tell us how stigmas and biases affect women and individuals from diverse backgrounds when they're trying to seek support following an experience of intimate partner violence, because there are language barriers? You also talk about prevention efforts, new technology, artificial intelligence. What do you think? How can it be more effective for them?

Mrs. Lana Wells: That's a great question. I think equity-deserving groups have been left out of the mainstream services for quite some time. Lots of grassroots community organizations and associations do a great job in servicing, but I don't think the mainstream services have taken up enough, I would say, capacities to actually transform their own services to better serve the unique populations that you're talking about.

It's not only the forms of violence that are experienced. They're also experiencing discrimination in the workplace, systemic discrimination and racism, as you mentioned, so I think those are the issues.... If the committee really wants to go upstream and think about the root causes, we have to start unpacking those systems and how they're showing up in our culture and our structures, and then rethinking them to better serve all populations in Canada.

• (1615)

The Chair: You have one minute.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Ms. Scott, do you want to add anything to that?

Dr. Katreena Scott: I would love to if I could, because one thing that I think is really important is creating services within—adding to what Lana said—culturally specific and culturally led organizations that can work in an integrated way with and alongside other services. There have been some really well-developed services in that way that address and recognize migration and premigration, traumas and experiences and, as Lana said, the ongoing impacts of racism and discrimination. All of those do need to be taken into account. When we can bring that strength within the cultural organizations and culturally based services and work alongside the mainstream, I think we get the best of both worlds.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Thank you.

Do you want to talk about the Caring Dads program briefly? What is that?

The Chair: You have about 10 seconds.

Dr. Katreena Scott: Caring Dads is one of those programs about what other needs we have. Can we do something other than just one program? Caring Dads is a program we developed to meet the needs of fathers who have perpetrated violence and abuse in their families either towards their children or towards their children's mother.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now move to the next six-minute round.

Christine Normandin, you have the floor for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to thank all the witnesses who are here today. We are grateful to them, even though we hope for the day when they will no longer need to come because we no longer need to study this kind of issue.

My first question is for Ms. Wells.

You talked about restorative justice programs. In my riding, there is an organization that carries out restorative justice activities with adolescents, under the Young Offenders Act. We sometimes get the impression that a restorative approach is more effective with a young person.

I would like to hear what you have to say about the possibility of applying this kind of measure with older aggressors. Can we hope that it will work, in spite of everything?

In any event, can that be a good thing for the victim as well?

[*English*]

Mrs. Lana Wells: Thank you for raising that, because I truly believe the answer to resolving and preventing domestic intimate partner violence and sexual violence is in a reparative, transformative way that is outside the criminal legal system. The federal government can play a significant role in supporting this stream of funding and services, and the adaptation and adoption by multiple stakeholders across Canada that are trying to do this kind of work in communities. They're working with the victim, the survivor, and it's driven by the survivor. It's in support of what they're calling the “aggressor”, not “perpetrator”. It's about supporting not only both of them, but their families, communities and support systems, in healing and repairing and then advancing social justice and change.

We've been doing a big research project, and there are groups like Women at the Centre out of Toronto and some other groups.... I know of Dr. Jo-Anne Wemmers, who's a specialist in this out of Montreal, so there is great stuff happening in Quebec as well. We've been linking people, and a lot of first nations and indigenous communities that are doing this work together right now, to see how we can start to create a series of principles, practices and training, and to start thinking about how we can move to the best ways of working.

I think we all want repair. I've been working for 11 years engaging men, and often a lot of them have been hurt in their past or have been complicit in violence. However, they are healing, growing and changing and want to work with other men to heal, grow and change. We need to support people on this journey.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: I see that Ms. Scott has opened her mic. I am going to ask her a question to continue along this line.

Ms. Scott, you say that one of the problems is that people often have to wait for there to be an arrest before being able to use other intervention methods.

Do you have options that would enable you to start the process ahead of an arrest?

Dr. Katreena Scott: I'm sorry that I can't answer your question in French.

• (1620)

[English]

I agree. When we think about restorative justice, we often think about some sort of intake through a justice process. What I want to do is think much more broadly about opening as many doors and as many pathways as possible.

We need to intervene as early as possible with these models. We need to do repair way upstream as soon as somebody is engaging in abusive behaviour. We know that only 12% of abusive behaviour gets reported to police. We know that people experience a lot of violence before they call the police.

For me, the location to do this work is as early and as upstream as possible. I don't want the restorative justice models to be linked at the end of the process. They need to be at the beginning.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Do you think it would be worth creating programs under which victims would know that their complaint would not lead to an arrest? Sometimes, the victim knowing that her husband is going to be arrested is a barrier to filing a complaint. Would it be useful to be able to make a complaint precisely with restorative justice in mind?

[English]

Dr. Katreena Scott: I think we can do this. I think we can create a system and we can create responses that are flexible, that meet people's needs and that create a web of accountability for people who have caused harm, but that keep people in view while we work and we centre the needs and the safety of survivors.

That kind of system would close loopholes and the kinds of gaps that end up implicitly condoning the actions of perpetrators by letting them feel victimized or vindicated by the system, or that end up putting the burden on family members, victims, neighbours and communities for the risk and for the harm that's being caused.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you.

I would now like to direct a question to Ms. Léonard and Ms. AuCoin.

In your statistical studies, apart from the violence aspect, did you address the issue of coercive behaviour? In the part on self-reporting, were questions asked about that kind of behaviour?

[English]

Ms. Kathy AuCoin: Thank you for the question.

In the survey of safety in public and private spaces, we did ask respondents whether they had experienced any emotional abuse and if some of it was controlling: "Did your partner blame you for the violence? Did you feel trapped?" Some of these key indicators get at that sense of coercive control. We never asked respondents specifically, "Did your partner coercively control you?", but we've asked a series of other questions to get at those behaviours.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: So it was always in connection with an element of physical violence, is that right?

[English]

Ms. Kathy AuCoin: We did more than that. We had physical violence and several behaviours just for physical, several behaviours for sexual and then several behaviours for emotional and psychological abuse. It did not have to include physical violence.

The Chair: That's awesome. Thank you so much.

We're now going to pass it over to Leah Gazan.

You have six minutes.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Thank you so much, Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for your excellent presentations today.

My first question is for Lana Wells.

You mentioned something that was very interesting to me. You mentioned white supremacy, colonization and capitalism. You mentioned those three things specifically and associated them with increased rates of violence. I'm wondering if you could expand on that.

Mrs. Lana Wells: Sure, and thank you for the question.

If we think about the systems of oppression and how we organize ourselves, we organize ourselves around these grand narratives. You can see it play out in systems and processes. One example I can give is that as the federal government is moving to give child welfare authority back to indigenous communities, that's the way you're dismantling colonialism.

In thinking about not only these grand gestures, but the supports enacting UNDRIP to support the implementation of indigenous rights, I think those are the conversations that Canada is having, and it's critical that we really reflect on our positions and positionality. Even in thinking about the universities, about all of our systems and structures, we have these processes and policies that are embedded and that actually hurt marginalized people and continue to hurt women as well.

As we think about advancing gender equity, and as we think about breaking down systemic racism, I think these are the conversations that Canadians want to have. I think we need to change our systems and the way we organize our policies and laws, because they're not supporting ending domestic or intimate partner violence.

Just to loop back to the reports of control, there's a lot of advocacy going on to get this into our Criminal Code. As we think about coercive control, it's a really important definition. It helps us to understand—

• (1625)

Ms. Leah Gazan: I'm sorry. Just because it's my time for questions, I want to use it. It's not that I'm not interested.

Mrs. Lana Wells: Okay, sorry.

Ms. Leah Gazan: I believe you mentioned a bit about incarceration. I've done some work with jails when I taught at the university. One of the observations I made was that it's very difficult to teach pro-social behaviour, to teach behaviours of non-violence in anti-social, very violent institutions. I wonder if you agree with that, speaking to alternative justice approaches—although I agree that prevention is a better way of eradicating violence.

Thank you.

Mrs. Lana Wells: Yes, I definitely agree. I also think certain populations get over-policed in Canada. We are working closely with the Calgary Police Service, and have been for two years, trying to change the discrimination and bias that happen within policing, so that they can better support the Calgary community.

Policing has to be modernized. Police acts have to be modernized. I think a lot of people in Canada are up for the challenge to start dismantling these systems that are hurting particular populations.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much.

Dr. Scott, I agree with you that getting help for individuals who display abusive behaviour is difficult and often unavailable. I wonder if you could share how the barrier to getting help is limiting our ability to really address this crisis of violence.

Dr. Katreena Scott: The best response might be an example. One of the really positive things that happened over the pandemic is that Nova Scotia managed to put in place, with some collaborative agreements, something called the Men's Helpline. It was a broad, general line aimed at men. The messaging was around "Life can be tough; you can get help." They ran it through 211. They ran it through a general service and saw a massive uptake in the number of men who were calling. We did some analysis of the reasons men were calling. There were a number of reasons, but one of the main ones had to do with anger and abusive behaviour in relationships. Men might not have been calling to say, "Listen, I'm being abusive", but what they were calling to say was "I'm really angry. I'm having these problems. I'm worried about what might be happening in my relationship. My partner asked me to call." They were reaching out for help.

When we create these opportunities, people will reach out and ask for help.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you very much for that.

Just expanding on that, you spoke about the need to include it in the national action plan. I agree with you. We often look at one side of the issue and we don't look at the cause. You also looked at prevention so that we don't have to use alternative justice strategies, so that it's dealt with before there's an issue. Can you please expand on that very quickly?

How much time do we have?

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Dr. Katreena Scott: I just want to draw a connection with the kind of model that Lana and I have both talked about, which brings people together to do some reparative work, and I would point out that we need to do that right before. We need to do that so that

when men call, we can start to respond in that way. When neighbours say there's a concern, when workplaces identify that there is somebody in their workplace whose behaviour they're concerned about, we can put that model in place right then.

The Chair: That's awesome. Thank you so much.

We're now going to move on to our second round. You'll have five minutes each. We'll start with Laila Goodridge.

Laila, you have the floor for five minutes.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Thanks so much, Madam Chair.

I just want to briefly touch on a question that was asked by my colleague Ms. Ferreri earlier regarding rural versus urban. We have StatsCan's data tables, so I'm not looking for more answers from the department on this, but do any of the service providers other than StatsCan have any answers in regard to the why behind rural versus urban and the difference in abuse?

• (1630)

Dr. Katreena Scott: I can start, if that's okay.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Absolutely.

Dr. Katreena Scott: One of the reasons is that there's a surveillance effect of having neighbours, friends and family, and workplace and colleagues. In rural areas, there are fewer people around to watch.

There are also more barriers to getting help. There are more barriers around everybody knowing everyone. Somebody gave me an example earlier: If I park my car outside the shelter, everybody knows that I'm in the shelter and that has a lot of judgment associated with it in that community.

Those are two reasons—

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Are there stats?

Dr. Katreena Scott: Oh, yes.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: If you could table those stats with the committee, that would be spectacular.

I'll go to a totally different space here. In the missing and murdered indigenous women calls to justice, 5.24 gives the recommendation to "call upon the federal government to amend data collection and intake-screening processes to gather distinctions-based and intersectional data". I'm wondering what StatsCan has done to implement this call to justice, if anything.

Ms. Lucie Léonard: I can respond to this one.

We're working very closely with CIRNAC in terms of the federal pathway in response to the national inquiry. There are different calls for justice, as was mentioned, as part of this committee. We've tackled one in particular in terms of moving forward with the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police to have more consistent reporting mechanisms and information on missing indigenous women and girls, 2SLGBTQIA people and other missing persons. This was one of the calls to justice.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Thank you. I appreciate that. But I am asking about that specific call to justice. Has anything been done by StatsCan to increase that intersectional lens on data collection? If you don't have the answer at the tip of your fingers, you're more than welcome to table an answer with the committee.

Ms. Lucie Léonard: Yes, we will table more information. As you know, we do have a specialized centre on indigenous statistics. We're doing some work.

I don't know if Kathy wants to comment on that.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Thank you.

I would like to share the rest of my time with Madame Vien.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): I would like to thank all our guests for being here today.

Good afternoon, colleagues.

I have some questions for Ms. Scott.

Ms. Scott, is there help for violent men and boys in Canada?

Do rehabilitation programs work? Maybe we would have an answer if we had statistics about the number of repeat offenders.

And is a child who was a victim of violence or witnessed violence in their family at greater risk of becoming a victim or aggressor?

[English]

Dr. Katreena Scott: Let me take those in reverse order.

Absolutely, adversity in childhood, including all forms of violence, losing a parent, or having a parent who has a major mental health problem or a substance use problem or who's incarcerated, is associated with later victimization for women and perpetration for men. It's both for both, but more often it's perpetration for men and victimization for women.

In terms of relapse, yes, we do have information. We don't have as much information as I think we need. We know that when abuse is identified, somewhere between one-third and two-thirds of men go on to not engage in any subsequent abusive behaviour. We know that about one in five engages in subsequent abusive behaviour, often very quickly, often more severely, and often within the first six months.

We know that a range of change does happen. Yes, change does happen, but there are people for whom that change doesn't happen. It's been recognized that their engagement with systems afterwards—that could be any range of systems—predicts less reassault.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Ms. Scott, to conclude, can you tell us quickly whether we have enough services for violent men and boys in Canada?

The Chair: Mrs. Vien, excuse me—

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Pardon me, Madam Chair.

• (1635)

[English]

The Chair: I'm sorry. I'm going to have to interrupt because we are past the five minutes. I am sorry about your time.

On the question that Dominique just asked, if there is a possibility of any written reports coming in on that, that would be greatly appreciated.

I will now pass the floor over to Anita.

Anita, you have five minutes.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

My first question is for you, Ms. Léonard, although if others wish to answer, they should please go ahead. It's pulling on something you said, and I want to make sure I heard it correctly. Very often, for obvious reasons, we look at men as the aggressors or the perpetrators, but in your testimony you said that 17% of men have faced physical assault at some point in their lifetime.

My question is twofold. First of all, in their lifetime, what would be the breakdown of how many of them would have faced that in childhood, perhaps, or in a conjugal relationship? The other thing I'm wondering about is this: Since so much of it is self-reported or reported to police, is it possible there could be an under-reporting as well because of social norms and stigma? The perception of men and strength may be something that would cause many men not to be reporting to police or in the surveys that you're doing.

Thank you.

Ms. Kathy AuCoin: Madam Chair, that's a great question.

Seventeen per cent of male respondents said that in their lifetime they had experienced some form of intimate partner violence, and that was from the age of 15. You are correct. Many victims of intimate partner violence do not report to the police for a number of reasons: shame, feeling that it won't be taken seriously, concerns about disentangling the financial relationship or children who are involved. In addition, we also know that men are reluctant to turn to police for a multitude of reasons.

Every year we publish a lot of data from police-reported statistics outlining the number of men and women who were victims of intimate partner violence, and we can look at the data from police and determine whether it was a same-sex relationship or an opposite-sex relationship.

We insist on monitoring the impact of intimate partner violence on both sexes, because they're both at risk, although women are at greater risk for more severe forms of violence and, sadly, more lethal violence.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you very much for that answer.

To follow up on that, there would obviously be other groups that would be less inclined to self-report or to report to police, particularly if—and I noted many of the witnesses talked about norms—they're in a group where perhaps something is normalized, violence might be more normalized, and therefore they might not even consider that what is happening to them is violence or abuse. In particular, I'm looking at financial and economic abuse where, particularly depending on age groups, older women but others as well might think that a man controlling their finances is normative and not something that would signal abuse.

Could you talk a little bit about the limitations of self-reporting in terms of data and how to ensure that people understand—I noted that teens were mentioned—what abuse is and what things to look for if something's happening to them so they are able to identify it as abuse in order to be able to report it?

Ms. Kathy AuCoin: Again, that's a wonderful question.

When we try to measure financial abuse, we ask a series of behavioural questions—rather than simply asking if they think they're a victim of financial abuse, which means the respondent has to label what they've experienced as abuse. In fact, what we say is “controls your income” or “restricts your access to your income”, and when we look at those behaviours combined, then we label it as financial abuse.

Similarly, we do that for physical and sexual assault behaviours. We had 28 different forms of abuse, and when someone checked off “yes”, then we classified them as being a victim. In fact, we believe that if we had simply asked if they thought they were a victim of emotional abuse, they would have probably said no. Again, there are a lot of cultural norms, as you said, and whether they think this is just the norm.... Thinking about child maltreatment, if they grew up in an environment where that was accepted, then—

• (1640)

The Chair: You have 15 seconds, Anita.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: I'm sorry; I wanted to make sure the professors got a chance to answer as well.

The Chair: I'll give 15 seconds to the professors.

Go for it.

Dr. Katreena Scott: One thing I would say is that, yes, there are absolutely limits in self-report data. I think it's important that we combine self-report data with information from communities, qualitative information and police report information in all cases. There are some pretty clear trends and findings.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We're now going to turn the next five minutes over to Christine.

Christine, you have five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you, Madam Chair. I thought I had two and a half minutes, but if you are giving me five minutes, I will be happy to take them.

[*English*]

The Chair: Sorry, Christine, I am taking two and a half minutes back. Yes, you get two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you.

I would like to go back to the limits of self-reporting too. One limit that comes to mind is the fear of getting caught when you are on a data capture site.

I would first like to know whether there are ways to encourage self-reporting. For example, if you are filling out a survey on a Statistics Canada website, would it be possible for the page not to appear in your search history? Would it be possible that after you have had to close the page quickly, another one opens automatically, for example, a page showing the weather forecast? I know that happens for some reporting sites.

I would also like to know whether there is a way of following up confidentially, so that the person who fills out the survey can then go and get the necessary resources, in all kinds of assault cases.

[*English*]

Ms. Kathy AuCoin: That's a wonderful question.

When we developed the victimization surveys, we took a lot of care and concern about respondents. Two strategies were used. On the individual's computer, they would follow a link to Statistics Canada and the questions would come up. There was a help button, so if someone was concerned about their safety—perhaps their partner was in the room—they could click that button and it would pop out and go to some other home page within Statistics Canada about cow purchases. I can't remember what it was. Secondary to that, we also added, at the very end, a list of victim services and call centres, if anyone was in need of help.

For the telephone interviews, we trained interviewers to detect if there was a change in patterns between the interviewer and the respondent. Perhaps they were now being reluctant to share stuff. The interviewer would say, “Is this a good time or a bad time?” In addition, they offered respondents links to different victim services. We took a lot of care.

We would never follow up in a secondary survey to ask additional questions. Everything was anonymized. Once you responded to the survey, there was no way for us to contact you again, because your first and last name would have been stripped from the data file.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we're going to move over to Leah.

Leah, you have two and a half minutes.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much, Chair.

My question is for Mrs. Wells. Part of the recommendations that came from Shift was the need to “fund and support [indigenous] community leadership in developing and implementing...initiatives that focus on traditional healing and holistic approaches.”

There are a number of community-driven men's groups that have popped up in Winnipeg—proudly, in the riding that I come from—that focus on men's healing rooted in culture and decolonization, and reviving traditional responsibilities for indigenous men. It has seen some positive results, but I'm wondering if you could share some examples or speak to the need for those kinds of initiatives and for supporting them.

Mrs. Lana Wells: Definitely. We're working with indigenous elders here and indigenous scholars to lead circles of support. They need to be indigenous-led and supported.

I hope more funding and support will go to indigenous communities, as well as immigrant and racialized communities, because a lot of the support happening for men by men happens in the community and through peer support, and we know that's quite an effective near-peer model. I hope that continues to be invested in.

• (1645)

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much.

My last question is for either witness from StatsCan. I can't pronounce their names. I'm so sorry. I'm embarrassed.

You spoke about how certain groups—indigenous, sexually or diverse-gendered, and individuals from the disability community—were at higher rates of experiencing violence. Could you identify very quickly the top two factors that made certain groups more at risk?

The Chair: You have about 10 seconds.

Ms. Kathy AuCoin: That's a great question. When we've done regression analysis, one of the leading indicators to victimization as an adult was experiencing child maltreatment, and that's when we were controlling for economic factors, ethnicity, age and income. That was not just intimate partner violence, but overall violent victimization. I can send you some reports.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank all of the witnesses today. I know that we have asked many of you for specific information, so if you could send that documentation to our clerk, we'd really appreciate it. Thank you very much for your time today.

We are going to suspend for just a few seconds, because we're going to switch over to our next panel.

Our panellists can now leave. Thanks. Have a good day.

• (1645)

(Pause)

• (1649)

The Chair: We are now going to reconvene the meeting.

On behalf of the status of women committee, I would like to welcome the Regroupement des maisons pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale. I thank you for coming today.

We have with us Chantal Arseneault, who is the president, as well as Louise Riendeau, co-responsible, political issues.

I'm going to pass the floor over to them.

You have five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Chantal Arseneault (President, Regroupement des maisons pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale): Good afternoon, ladies and gentleman. Thank you for the invitation to appear today.

The team at the Regroupement des maisons pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale was very interested to read the report entitled “The Shadow Pandemic: Stopping Coercive and Controlling Behaviour in Intimate Relationships”. We have studied the effects of criminalizing coercive control in several countries. We believe that Canada should pursue this avenue and study Bill C-202.

The Divorce Act introduced the concept of coercive and cumulative violence. Now it is important for there to be knowledge and recognition of that reality in all areas of the law.

In addition to enabling many women to report controlling acts and to recognize the repercussions those acts have for them, creating an offence relating to coercive control would entitle women to compensation for victims of crime. This would recognize the violation of women's fundamental rights to dignity and freedom, and hold the aggressor responsible for his actions.

Some countries, including England, Ireland, Scotland, six U.S. states, and Australia, have enacted legislation to criminalize coercive control or are in the process of enacting such legislation. The Scottish approach seems to us to be the most appropriate and worth considering. It recognizes the impact and consequences of controlling behaviours on the victims, including children. The emphasis is placed on the conduct of the perpetrator without having to prove the harm caused to the victim.

Experience in the various countries that have made coercive control a crime shows that it must be accompanied by training for all of the professionals, including judges, so they are able to recognize these behaviours, so they are aware of gender stereotypes, and so they are able to gather evidence. The training should have an intersectional perspective and include the lived experience of indigenous populations or marginalized groups, to avoid those communities being disadvantaged by criminalizing the behaviour. The training must be accompanied by indicators of success and evaluations.

Support for victims and access to resources are essential, as is educating the public and our young people.

On the subject of support for victims in Quebec, there are about 100 houses providing shelter and help. The 44 shelters that belong to our association provide support exclusively to women who are fleeing violence committed by an intimate partner. They offer services to women who need shelter with their children, but also to women who want to be seen on a non-residential basis. The services they provide include supporting women through the legal process and finding housing. The workers at these houses also going to the schools and the community to raise public awareness about violence and to encourage prevention.

In Quebec, we find that there is a shortage of spaces in shelters. In regions like Montreal, the Outaouais and Lanaudière, it is sometimes impossible to find a place for victims. What is needed is not just resources for properties, but also an operating budget.

Since the start of the pandemic, we have seen a large increase in telephone requests and requests for non-residential consultations. However, we have also seen a limited supply of services because of the shortage of workers. On top of that, the terms of employment that our shelters are able to offer are not very attractive. An increase in transfers to the provinces might help them better fund the resources, as would a review of the programs offered by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Economic issues also prevent women from leaving their violent spouse. They need to have access to affordable housing, safe social housing, a decent income, and an employment integration program, to reorganize their lives.

Immigration status can also prevent women from fleeing their partner's violence, when the victim is dependent on her spouse, for example, or in sponsorship or joint application situations. We have to provide women with autonomous status and access to language courses.

Preventing spousal violence necessarily involves educating children from the earliest years. They have to learn about egalitarian relationships, consent, healthy sexuality, and so on. The shelters often lack resources to send workers to the schools so they can work with students on a more regular and intensive basis.

In closing, I would like to point out that when there is no physical violence, not everyone recognizes the presence of spousal violence, be it the victims, the ones committing the violence, or their family and friends. It is therefore important that awareness campaigns showing the various aspects of coercive control be carried out intensively and on a regular basis.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you so much. You were right on time at five minutes.

We're going to start our first round. You will each have six minutes. We'll start with Dominique.

You have the floor for six minutes.

• (1655)

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: I would like to thank you for being here today, Ms. Arseneault and Ms. Riendeau.

Ms. Arseneault, you have brought up a number of things. Having said that, I would like to start at the beginning: if we want action, we need money. You mentioned the need to have an operating budget. We have also heard about the differences between urban and rural communities.

Your association has 44 shelters for women victims of spousal violence located all over Quebec. Tell us about the services you offer and the funding you say you need. Are you short of money at present?

Ms. Chantal Arseneault: Yes, we are short of money at present. Our association includes 44 shelters spread throughout Quebec. Yes, the urban and rural situations are very different.

We need consolidated funding. Shelter services are very important, but the needs for non-residential consultations and crisis lines have risen astronomically during the pandemic. We need to consolidate our teams to be able to double up during work shifts and answer the calls.

There is also the entire awareness aspect, involving prevention and training. Our partners need training in spousal violence and information about how to assess risk levels. Our workers are real experts in this field.

So those are the fields of expertise where we need additional funding.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: At present, I assume you are getting money from the Government of Quebec to support the shelters. Do you get any money from the federal government?

Ms. Louise Riendeau (Co-responsible, Political Issues, Regroupement des maisons pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale): We don't. The recurrent grants come mainly from the government of Quebec.

For all of the shelters, the ones that are members of our association, that is, and the other women's shelters, we estimate that it would take about \$143 million. That is not how much is paid at present. We are short about \$30 million.

That is why we say it is important to increase the federal transfers to help the province meet the needs.

The money we get from the federal government covers pandemic-related costs, but we don't receive regular amounts...

Mrs. Dominique Vien: You don't have money for your mission.

Ms. Louise Riendeau: No.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: You say that you don't have the money to do education in the schools.

We had experts tell us a few minutes ago that a child who has witnessed spousal violence is obviously at higher risk, later on, of becoming a victim, in turn, or of being violent.

You give women and children a place to stay in your shelters. When you have young children come in, what kind of intervention can you do with them?

Ms. Chantal Arseneault: What we do is entirely adapted to each child's situation. You have to understand that the children who come into the shelters have suffered a shock, after witnessing crises. We give them space to allow them to be children again. We try to translate what they have experienced into children's words, to validate it. By working that way, we allow them to name things, to differentiate between what is good and what isn't, and we help them to make more informed choices later.

We see this in our adolescents: they clearly recognize controlling strategies, when you make the effort to give them the information. We think this can truly change things.

We also address social stereotypes with children in the shelters.

In fact, our range of intervention is pretty broad.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: You said that certain situations might deter women from fleeing a violent relationship. It is easy to imagine that.

Would you say that the main reason preventing women from leaving a violent situation is financial?

• (1700)

Ms. Louise Riendeau: Yes, absolutely. We did a survey at the start of the pandemic to ask women whether they had asked for help, and a lot of women said they had not asked for help because they were afraid of not finding housing. So yes, access to a decent income and access to housing are essential conditions. There are women who are discouraged by the cost of housing being too high and decide to go back with their spouse. So those are very important factors.

We have thought a lot about the justice system and psychosocial support, but there has not been enough work done on the whole question of economic and social rights to help the victims get away from spousal violence.

In Australia, when a woman leaves a shelter after fleeing violence, she can be given up to \$5,000 to relocate.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: I would have liked you to talk to us about coercive control as well, but I suppose others of my colleagues will allow you to do that.

Thank you, ladies.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm now going to pass the floor over to Emmanuella. You have six minutes.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): I thought I was second. I apologize for that.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much for being with us today—

[*English*]

The Chair: I apologize. You are second. I am so sorry about this.

I am just like Dominique. I should borrow her glasses.

You are second on this, Emmanuella. I'm going to let you guys decide how to roll it, but it's either you or Jenna.

That's my fault. I'm sorry.

Mrs. Jenna Sudds (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.): Feel free to go ahead, Emmanuella. You've started.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Okay. I don't mind continuing.

[*Translation*]

I would like to thank the witnesses very much who are with us today to help us with our study.

We are seeing what should be included in the next budget and finding recommendations to make in connection with our study.

I would like to know whether you are aware of the amounts that were already planned in the previous budget, for 2021-2022. As you said, most of the money you received was paid in the form of pandemic aid. Having said that, do you know what programs already exist for shelters? Do you think that if there is money, it could be invested better elsewhere, if it has not yet been used?

We are trying to find better ways to use the money, so could you recommend programs where this money would be better invested?

Ms. Louise Riendeau: Yes, what we have heard the most about is the special pandemic funds, but there are certainly also funds at the Department for Women and Gender Equality.

If I had recommendations to make regarding investments, I would say that we need to invest massively in educating the public and young people, to genuinely change minds, so that one day we will get away from violent and non-egalitarian relationships. We also have to educate the public so that the victims, the aggressors, and their family and friends recognize what violence is. When there is no physical violence, sometimes people don't realize that there is spousal violence. And yet there are women who have been killed by their spouse when there had been no request for help to deal with violence.

I think that prevention is the key if we want to get away from the situation we are in.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: I would like to address another problem that I think you alluded to earlier. There are a lot of women who look for help, who get away from the violent situation but go back to live with their partner once that initial assistance ends, because they didn't know where to go or they have financial difficulties.

Do you think it is also important for the government to invest in housing specifically for women who are fleeing violent situations?

• (1705)

Ms. Louise Riendeau: In our shelters, there are women who have decided to separate, who have started legal proceedings, who would be ready to leave the shelter, but they have to stay there because they are waiting for social housing. That type of housing is too hard to find.

We absolutely have to invest in housing, to be able to offer women options, so they have access to affordable, safe housing.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: In your previous answer, you talked about educating young people, and that is extremely important. I am a former teacher, so I am well aware of how much influence a person has on children when they are in that profession.

Generally, education is under provincial jurisdiction. How can the federal government help the school system in its efforts to prevent this kind of situation in the future?

Ms. Louise Riendeau: In fact, there are all the programs in the school system, but there also has to be support for the outside resources who can go in and do work in the schools. As we know, teachers are not always comfortable conveying this kind of content. It is better to support the workers in the shelters and rape crisis centres so they can go into the schools and present this content.

There can also be targeted programs that use social networks and will enable us to be in contact with young people otherwise than in school.

So there can be a portion of the funds that goes into the transfers, and would allow us to fund the workers better who have to do this work, and there may also be projects for direct interventions.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you.

[English]

Madam Chair, how much time do I have?

The Chair: You have one minute left.

[Translation]

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Right.

Are you familiar with the population staying in the 44 shelters in your network?

Do you think immigrant women have more difficulties? Certainly language and culture can be barriers, in general, when it comes to getting services, breaking down psychological barriers and asking for help. Can you talk to us about that?

I know it's a big question and you have only 30 seconds to answer. Still, what recommendations would you make to help that group of women?

Ms. Chantal Arseneault: The first difficulty for these women stems from their status. These women often arrive here with the status of spouse or sponsored immigrant, and that is a real barrier.

They also have to have an income. Women who arrive here whose status is not settled, have no income. We talked earlier about financial resources to escape spousal violence. Well, immigrant women are starting from even further back. These are important issues.

Having said that, our member shelters take in all women experiencing spousal violence, without regard for their status.

[English]

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you so much.

We're now going to move over to Christine for six minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to thank the witnesses for being here. It is really very interesting to hear them.

To start with, you talked about Bill C-202 relating to coercive conduct. We will have to discuss that in the House.

What would happen if we did nothing but pass that bill? We can have this sort of magical thinking and believe that merely making the thing a crime will make it disappear and solve the problem. But it takes more than that.

What do we have to do around that? You mentioned housing and training for the professionals who receive the complaints. Are there other things we should be thinking about, when it comes to amending the bill, so that at the end of the day, it has a real effect?

Ms. Louise Riendeau: Certainly all the professionals, including judges, need to get training. I know there is currently a bill about training for judges on spousal violence. That is essential.

Spousal violence and coercive conduct happen in private. People sometimes have difficulty identifying them. Sometimes, they are associated with gender stereotypes. Earlier, the situation when a man controls the finances was mentioned: is that really a controlling man, or is that normal?

The professionals are not always able to properly understand these situations and don't manage to gather the evidence to submit to a court. They have to be trained so they are able to detect and understand situations of violence and so they are capable of proceeding.

The public also has to be educated, because family and friends are often the first ones in a position to help victims and refer them to resources. They too have to be helped to recognize these behaviours.

Certainly criminalizing these behaviours will not solve everything. We have to make sure that the people who will be providing services are capable of doing so.

• (1710)

Ms. Christine Normandin: You addressed the issue of funding. I would like you to tell us what that would do for women's shelters, to have recurrent funding and greater foreseeability.

Ms. Louise Riendeau: The shelters operate 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We can't decide to close a shelter for a day or a week; otherwise, the lives of women and children would be in danger. There have to be teams in place to support the women. We need the workers' know-how; they have to refer the women for legal resources, housing and immigration.

We need money that allows us to have stable teams, to attract and retain competent staff, and to have enough staff to offer all the services the women and children need. That is why we need stable, recurrent and adequate funding.

Ms. Christine Normandin: You don't need that only in emergency situations like COVID-19.

Ms. Louise Riendeau: Absolutely not.

Ms. Christine Normandin: In your presentation, you spoke quickly about what happened in Scotland after certain bills were passed.

Can you give us an overview of what has happened at the international level and the impacts it has had? Do you have data that shows an increase in reports to police or an increase in incarcerations, for example?

Ms. Louise Riendeau: The trailblazers in this are England and, more recently, Scotland.

In England, between the year ending in 2019 and the one ending in 2020, there was a 49% increase in the number of offences associated with coercive conduct. Improvements were made to the law during that period. Almost 25,000 offences associated with coercive conduct were recorded in England.

In Scotland, the law is very recent, dating from 2019. Nonetheless, almost 63,000 incidents of spousal violence were recorded in 2019-2020. That is an increase of 4%. That's not a major increase, but the law was new. So we see that it has a substantial effect.

For the moment, there has been no effect observed on femicides, but we should remember that the pandemic caused a rise in femicides everywhere in the world, both here and elsewhere. I think more time will be needed to observe differences in this regard.

All in all, there was a definite jump in England at one point. It started slowly and then there was a substantial increase in reports to police.

Ms. Christine Normandin: I would like to ask you a question that you will undoubtedly not be able to answer in one minute. However, there will be another round.

It is important that the issue not be handled differently by Quebec, which has decided to establish a specialized court for spousal violence, for example, and by the federal government. Can you comment on that?

Ms. Louise Riendeau: We were very happy with the changes to the Divorce Act, which now includes controlling and coercive behaviours.

Now, we are working hard [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] to have the same definition used, to guide the courts in the judgments they give.

The specialized court has been created, and all the participants involved in these issues will receive training, be they police, prosecutors or psychosocial professionals. We are therefore very hopeful that we will be better able to take all aspects of these women's experiences into account.

Spousal violence is not limited to a single criminal incident. It often takes place over many years, during which a number of acts are committed and a number of tactics are used. Often, those tactics and those acts are not criminal in themselves and seem trivial, but they instil fear in women and take away their freedom.

We have to be able to take all these facts into account. It all has an impact in our judicial system.

• (1715)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're now going to move over to Leah for our next six minutes.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much, Chair.

Thank you so much to the witnesses for coming today.

We know there's a direct link between access to affordable, accessible housing and rent geared to income, which either allows individuals experiencing violence to leave or prevents them from leaving. We also know there's a direct link between the ability to leave and income. You spoke a little bit about income.

I put forward a bill in the current Parliament to develop a framework in support of a guaranteed livable basic income, without requiring participation in work or employment—I'm thinking specifically of women, who are often responsible for unpaid care work, for example—and not requiring citizenship. For example, refugees, temporary foreign workers and permanent residents would also be eligible for income.

Would putting in place a guaranteed livable basic income assist women to leave violent situations?

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Riendeau: That will certainly help women. If they knew they would have the resources to support themselves and their children, it would be much easier for women to leave their violent spouse.

[English]

Ms. Leah Gazan: Building on that, individuals with precarious immigration status, for example, often don't qualify for programs. Does this impact the ability of women or diverse-gendered individuals to leave relationships? Does being disqualified from certain social support programs limit their ability to do that?

[Translation]

Ms. Chantal Arseneault: Yes, exactly. One of the most difficult challenges that immigrant women face is that they don't know the country or the language and they are not yet entirely integrated. Their spouse is exercising coercive control over them and telling them a load of things, for example, that they will have no income. That is really a mountain to climb, for them. If we could assure them that they would have the financial resources to get away from this violence with their children and to find affordable housing, certainly that would be a determining factor in regaining their autonomy. That is undeniable.

[English]

Ms. Leah Gazan: I asked that because I know that even for the Canada child benefit, depending on immigration status, there are individuals who can't even qualify for it, which is concerning when we're talking about poverty being a factor that forces individuals to stay in situations of violence.

With that in mind, we know that in organizations providing support to women who are experiencing gender-based and intimate partner violence there have been some discussions about looking at providing services and programs through an intersectional lens to respond to different barriers that women or individuals of diverse genders face. Why is using an intersectional lens so critical for addressing this issue for all women and diverse-gendered individuals?

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Riendeau: We know that all of the oppressive acts that women suffer have to be taken into consideration if we want to help them take steps to protect themselves. It is also essential to take the particular repercussions that certain decisions or certain programs may have for them into account. We said earlier that if we take the approach of criminalizing coercive control, as we hope, consideration will have to be given to the situations of Indigenous women, who are over-represented among women who are incarcerated and are themselves accused of using violence, when, in many

cases, they were only defending themselves. That will have to be taken into consideration, and an intersectional perspective applied.

• (1720)

[English]

Ms. Leah Gazan: Can I ask a question about that, building on criminalization? One of the questions I asked in the last panel was on criminalizing behaviours. We know that penitentiaries are riddled with anti-social behaviour and violence. How does placing people in situations that are violent and, quite frankly, anti-social help resolve an individual's issues with violence?

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Riendeau: I think I have understood your question.

The reason we advocate using the justice system in cases of violence is that we think a clear message has to be sent to society. Many spouses of women in our shelters feel completely entitled to use violence. We have to send a clear message to offenders that our society does not tolerate that behaviour. We have to look for solutions to educate these people and get them to make changes in their behaviour. We think the message has to be unequivocal.

[English]

The Chair: Awesome. Thank you so much.

We're now going to move on to our second round. The only thing is that we are getting very tight on time, and we have about two minutes of committee business that we need to do. With the time being 5:21, we have eight minutes to do this, so I'm going to ask each party to just put forward one question. Of course, if it's a long question, you can ask for the documentation, because I know there are a lot of things that we do want from that.

I'm going to pass this over to Laila.

Laila, you have one question.

If we can, let's just recognize that we have eight minutes for all the work to get done. Thanks.

[Translation]

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Thank you, everyone.

In order for coercive control to be considered a crime, does it have to be accompanied by some form of physical violence? For example, can simply taking away your spouse's credit card be considered to be coercive conduct?

Ms. Louise Riendeau: The nature of coercive control consists of using various strategies at once. I don't think we are talking about coercive control when there is just one controlling act. That is not the nature of spousal violence.

We observe that spouses will use all sorts of strategies, which can be economic or consist of threatening or of isolating the victims. You have to look at all of these behaviours.

At present, these behaviours do not constitute crimes in themselves, and that is why women who would like to file a report are not able to obtain the assistance they would need.

[English]

The Chair: We're now going to move it over to Jenna.

Jenna, I stole all your time, so you get a question. Go for it.

Mrs. Jenna Sudds: Thank you.

As part of our study, we are looking at the barriers facing women who are seeking to flee the perpetrators. We've listed specifically and have spoken a bit today about financial, social and coercive abuse and immigration factors.

From your purview, what are we missing? What are the other factors that we're not talking about today that women are facing and that we need to start talking about and address through this work?

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Riendeau: When we talk about access to income, we also mean access to jobs that offer equitable pay. So it is a matter of pay equity. We also have to encourage women to diversify the occupations they are going to work in, in order to have adequate pay and sources of validation.

We can also look at how workplaces can help women get away from a violent situation. The Canadian Labour Congress has done a lot of work on this. In Quebec, we have a campaign called Milieux de travail alliés contre la violence conjugale that urges employers to provide information to victims, to support them, and to accommodate them if they need to ask for help and take leave, for example.

These are all among the conditions that could facilitate and could remove barriers for victims who are trying to escape from a violent partner.

• (1725)

[English]

The Chair: Awesome. Thank you so much.

Caroline, I know you've just joined us now. We have time for one question, so I'll pass the floor to you.

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I really like what I am hearing today. It is very enlightening.

I would like to ask the witnesses, to conclude, whether they have something to add about foreseeability, for example. I would like them to talk to us about how foreseeability can help women feel safe and encourage them to leave a violent situation.

Ms. Chantal Arseneault: It can make a whole change in these women's lives: it can provide them with security, once and for all. That is what changes like that can do.

Security exists at several levels. We talked about financial security, and security to escape coercive control. There is also the security of knowing that the social message is being sent loud and clear, that it is legitimate to be assertive and to leave a violent relationship and that you will get support from all of the actors in the system.

By giving women assurance for themselves and their children, foreseeability can certainly save lives.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you so much.

I'm now going to pass it over to you, Leah, for your last question.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much, Chair.

Building on my last set of questions, you indicated that some individuals think they have a legitimate right to use violence and that we need to send a clearer message that we do not tolerate violence.

In terms of incarcerating individuals who use violence, I'm wondering what the recidivism rate is. How many people commit violence, go to jail, come out and reoffend? Are we actually resolving the behaviour by using the penal system?

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Riendeau: I don't have any statistics on that subject, but I would say that the sentences imposed for spousal violence are under provincial authority, for the most part. So they are not long terms of incarceration. Rather, they often involve probation or conditional discharges.

For the moment, I don't think a majority of these men are being incarcerated. So we have to continue to look for ways to get them to change their behaviour.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you so much.

I'd really like to thank Chantal and Louise for joining us today. It's been wonderful having you on this panel.

I would ask you to leave the meeting, if you don't mind. We do have about two minutes of committee business. Thank you once again from all of us.

Thank you so much, everybody. I know it's really hard when we're on a time crunch.

There has been a person who has come to the attention of the clerk who would like to put forward a brief. The only problem is that the person is not able to do a written brief. The clerk has offered, with her willingness, to take a phone call and get it all written down—transcribed into both French and English—so that we have a copy of the brief.

I'm looking for support from the committee.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Madam Clerk, you have the grounds to go ahead and take that brief.

Thank you so much, everybody. I know it's been a little goofy and a little hard. As you know, our time is committed from 3:30 to 5:30, and because there are other meetings going on, votes and all those things, we'll just get to work as soon as we can once everything is done. I know that we have awesome witnesses coming forward.

On behalf of the people in the room, thank you so much to all of you guys for being great committee members.

We will see you again on Friday.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>