ACWS
ALBERTA COUNCIL OF WOMEN'S SHELTERS

The Cost of LEAVING

The 2024-2026 ACWS Shelter Impact Report

Learn More About This Report And Watch the Video



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We Are All Treaty People

ACWS acknowledges the traditional lands upon which we live, work, and play. We recognize that all Albertans are Treaty people and have a responsibility to understand our history so that we can learn from the past, be aware of the present, and create a just and caring future. ACWS celebrates and values the resiliency, successes, and teachings that Indigenous Peoples have shown us, as well as the unique contributions of every Albertan.

The ACWS office is located on Treaty 6 land in Amiskwacîwâskahikan, which is the traditional territory of the Plains Cree and an ancient gathering place of many Indigenous Peoples for thousands of years. These lands have also been home to, and a central trading place of, the Blackfoot, Nakota, Assiniboine, Dene, the Métis people of western Canada, and the home of one of the largest communities of Inuit south of the 60th parallel.

We honour the courage and strength of Indigenous women. We honour them as life givers and care givers as we honour and learn from their continuing achievements, their consistent strength, and their remarkable endurance.

Our members serve all nations and all peoples. They are located on Treaty 6, 7, and 8 lands across this province which include the five Métis territories of Alberta.

Acknowledgements

ACWS would like to thank the ACWS Data Committee and the ACWS Shelter Director Committee for their invaluable expertise, commitment, and guidance in gathering and analyzing the data in this report and providing vital context to help interpret the data trends. We also extend our thanks to Robyn Hoogendam, Chika Maduakolam, and Women's Shelters Canada for the supplementary data they shared from their 2025 National Survey Data.

A special thank you goes to the family violence shelters across the province for their unending work to support survivors, as well as to the staff who collected the data in shared in this report while continuing to serve survivors.

We would like to acknowledge and give our deepest thanks to the survivors who shared their data with ACWS member shelters and offered us a window into what it means to experience family violence in Alberta. To those survivors: we see you, we honour your voices, and we are privileged and humbled to be able to share one part of your story.

This report is made possible due to donations from the community. We thank our community supporters and donors for their ongoing generosity and contributions to our work.

This report would not have been possible without the following contributors:

Cat Champagne (Executive Director) provided strategic direction and leadership throughout the development of the report, including guidance on its analysis, key messages, and public release.

Alice Leef (Learning and Logistics Support), Chantelle Chornohus (Member Support and Communications Specialist), and Julia Hines (Communications & Executive Coordinator) did the graphic design of the report and provided communications and messaging support.

Wei Ling Goh (Member and Data Support) provided data and information management support to ACWS members as they collected the data shared in this report.

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ABOUT ACWS

The Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS) is the provincial network organization of domestic violence and elder abuse shelters in Alberta. We bring over 40 years of experience and knowledge to serve our 39 members operating over 50 shelters across the province for women, their children, and seniors facing family violence and domestic abuse.

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Honouring Survivors

In consultation with our Survivor Advisory Committee, composed of people with lived expertise of family violence and abuse, ACWS has chosen to use "survivor" as a term of respect for people currently experiencing or who have experienced family violence and abuse. We use it to emphasize their personal power, courage, and resiliency. We recognize that not all people who have experienced family violence and abuse identify with the term "survivor," and some people may prefer to describe themselves and their experiences using different terms. No term can adequately describe what it means to have experienced and survived violence and abuse.

Not everyone who experiences family violence and abuse survives it. Each year many Albertans tragically lose their lives to family violence.

ACWS acknowledges the strength and resiliency of all people who have experienced violence and abuse. It is essential that responses and solutions to violence and abuse are informed by survivors' and their families' expert knowledge and advocacy. We pay the utmost respect to those who have not survived and acknowledge the lasting impacts of this preventable violence on families and communities.

Executive Summary

This year's Shelter Impact Report is noteworthy for two reasons. First, as ACWS moves back to a November release for this annual report, this edition brings together two years of data, from April 1, 2024, through March 31, 2026. Examining those years together has given us a valuable opportunity to identify broader trends affecting family violence shelters and the survivors they serve. The trends we found are serious.

These trends are the second reason this report is noteworthy, and they made this a hard report to write. Across Alberta, family violence shelters are seeing less people reaching out for help and less people coming into shelter. We wish we could tell you that the drop in numbers means that less people are experiencing family violence and abuse. Unfortunately, there is a troubling concern behind this drop in numbers.

Family violence and abuse remain an issue in all communities in Alberta and the need in communities across the province continues to outpace the resources available for survivors. **Over the past two years, survivors who have accessed an ACWS member shelter have reported high levels of abuse, have experienced some of the greatest levels of danger since before the COVID-19 pandemic, and have had to stay in shelter for longer than ever.** As survivors have needed more support and have had to stay in shelter for longer, this has meant that shelters have been unable to support as many survivors as they could previously. During the past two years, shelters have said "yes" to the smallest portion of admission requests since 2019.

As ACWS did a deep dive into the past two years of family violence shelter data and asked what was causing these trends, the people working on the front lines to support survivors consistently gave us the same answer: **it costs too much to leave.** Research shows that cost of living can either prevent survivors from leaving or make it harder for them to do so (Good Shepherd New Zealand; Nicholson-Pallett, Austin, and Davidge, 6). This insight from the research is reflected in the everyday lives of survivors in Alberta. Albertans are feeling the pinch of a cost-of-living crisis. In the context of rapidly increasing prices for basic essentials such as food, housing, and transportation, it costs more than ever to live. And for Albertans living in abusive relationships, this means it costs more than ever to leave.

Many survivors in Alberta have been forced to make an impossible choice.
Do they live free from abuse or do they pay their rent?
Do they escape their abuser or do they feed their children?

For too many survivors, there is really no choice at all.

As you read this report, we ask that you keep thinking about what the numbers we share represent. Because **the real story of this year's report is not that less Albertans are reaching out for help, but that Albertans are less able to reach out for help.** In this context, the work of family violence shelters is even more critical, as they help support survivors across the province to navigate both abuse and a cost-of-living crisis.

Above all else, we want you to know that help is still available. **Even amid difficult economic circumstances, family violence shelters continue to support survivors across Alberta, and to walk with them on their healing journeys.**

At the end of this report, we have included some suggestions for how you can get involved. Please consider supporting the work of family violence shelters and help make Alberta safer for everyone.

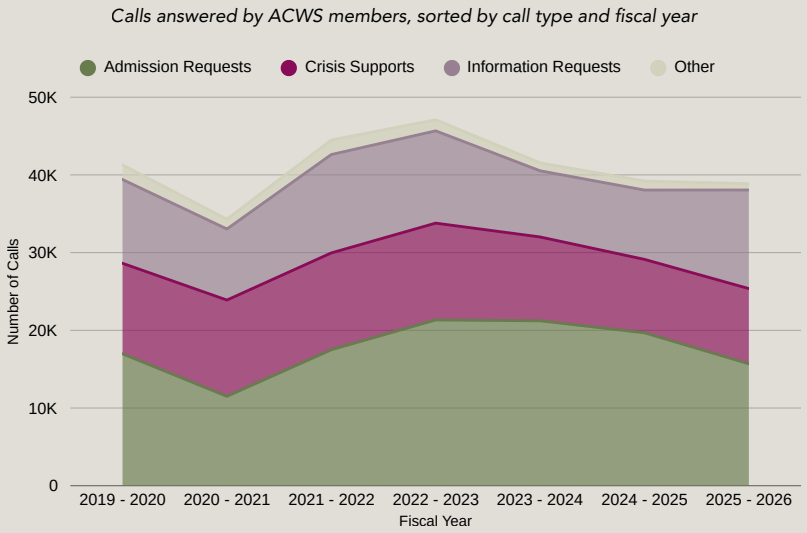
Survivors Need Help

Shelter Calls & Support

Family violence shelters across the province provide crucial, daily support to survivors of family violence and abuse. For many survivors seeking help and support in abusive situations, calling a shelter is one of their first points of contact with a service provider.

- **2024 – 2025:** ACWS members answered more than **39,000 calls** for help and support and spent more than **9,800 hours** on the phone supporting survivors.
- **2025 – 2026:** ACWS members answered more than **38,000 calls** from survivors and spent almost **9,000 hours** on the phone.

ACWS members answered more than 38,000 calls from survivors in 2025 - 2026 and more than 39,000 calls in 2024 - 2025.



In 2025 – 2026 alone frontline workers spent the equivalent of

370 DAYS

on the phone supporting survivors.

While the number of calls to shelters has decreased in the past few years, in the context of the cost-of-living crisis, this is not necessarily good news. According to research from Women's Aid, many abusers use the cost-of-living crisis as a way to further control and restrict survivors, and many survivors report not having enough money to even travel to a safe space such as a family violence shelter (Nicholson-Pallett, Austin, and Davidge, 6). In these circumstances, it may not be safe for many survivors to call for help, and other survivors may choose not to call for help if they won't be able to afford to get to safety.

Even with the decrease in the number of calls to shelters, demand for shelter spaces continues to exceed the available capacity at ACWS member shelters.

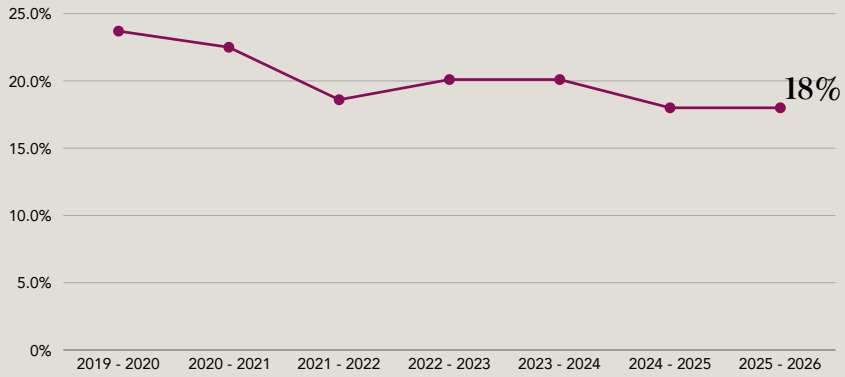
In 2025 – 2026, **40.4% of calls** to a member shelter came from **callers seeking admission** for themselves and their children.

Over the past seven years, fewer than 25% of calls requesting admission to a shelter have resulted in an adult being admitted to a shelter program. This rate has been steadily declining over the years, dropping to just **18%** in 2025 – 2026. This is the **lowest rate of admission** since before the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2025 – 2026, **82%** of calls requesting admission did not result in an admission. **Shelters continue to offer support and referrals when admission is not possible.** In some cases, a caller may not be accommodated by a shelter because there are not enough beds or space available for them and their family. In other cases, a specific shelter may not be the best program available for that caller. For example, a caller may have limited access to transportation needed to reach the shelter, or they may have mobility or healthcare needs that cannot be adequately accommodated within the shelter's community. In these cases, frontline workers often work to connect callers with other services or programs that may be able to help.

In 2025 – 2026 18% of calls requesting admission to a shelter resulted in an adult being admitted to a shelter program. This the lowest rate of admission since before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Percentage of calls for admission requests that resulted in an adult being admitted to a shelter program.



Even in cases where a bed isn't available, frontline workers at shelters are committed to finding ways to support survivors of violence and abuse.

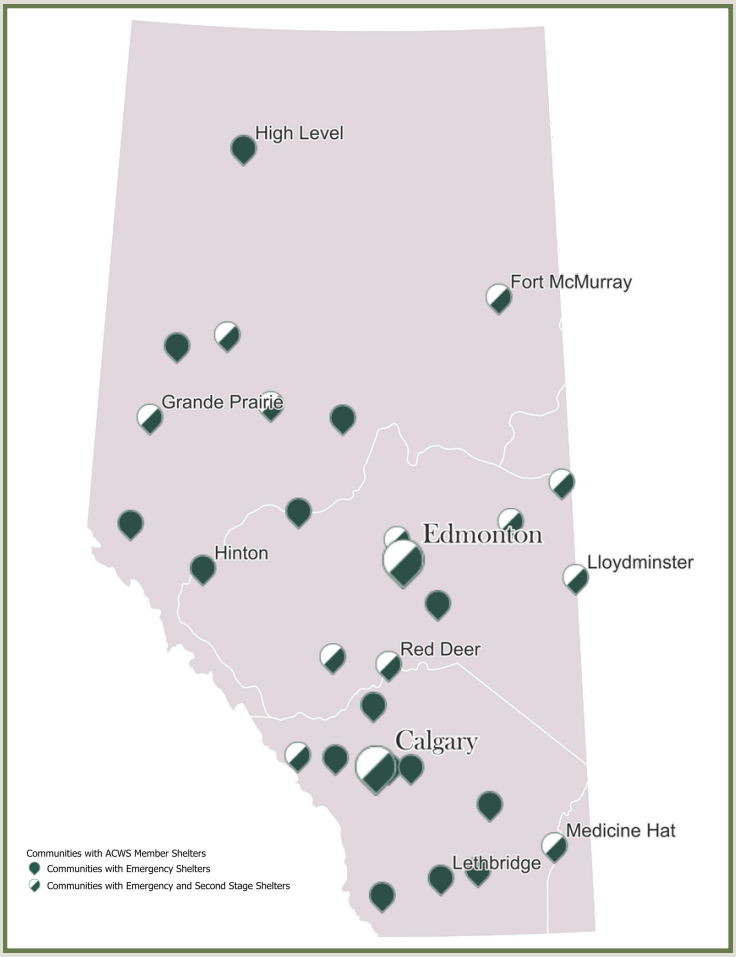
According to survey data from Women's Shelters Canada, in 2025 emergency shelters in Alberta found ways to support callers who couldn't be accommodated by either always or sometimes:

- Referring them to other shelter services (100%).
- Helping to find them another shelter or service (100%).
- Providing outreach programming until a space is available (91.3%).
- Paying for a stay in a hotel room (56.5%).
- Adding the survivor to a waitlist (43.5%).

In 2025, Emergency Shelters in Alberta who were polled by Women's Shelters Canada found ways to support callers who couldn't be accomodated by either always or sometimes:



Program Admissions



Emergency Shelters

- In 2024 – 2025 ACWS members operating emergency shelters admitted **3,383 adults** and **2,537 children**.
- In 2025 – 2026 ACWS members operating emergency shelters admitted **2,613 adults** and **1,979 children**.

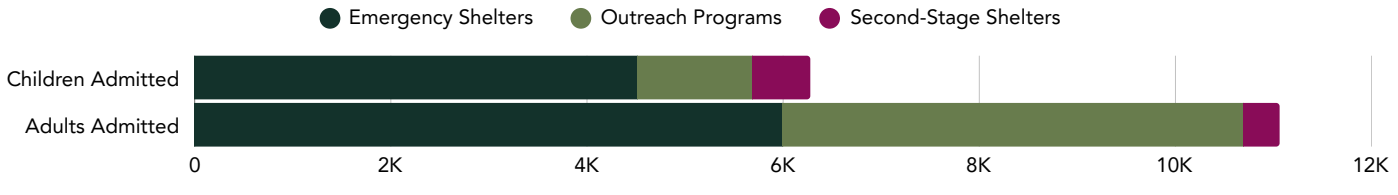
Second Stage Shelters

- In 2024 – 2025 ACWS members operating second stage shelters admitted **159 adults** and **269 children**.
- In 2025 – 2026 ACWS members operating second stage shelters admitted **214 adults** and **322 children**.

Outreach Programs

- In 2024 – 2025 ACWS members operating outreach programs admitted **2,455 adults** and **693 children**.
- In 2025 – 2026 ACWS members operating outreach programs admitted **2,508 adults** and **477 children**.

From April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2026 17,609 people were admitted into shelter programs, including 6,277 children and 11,332 adults.



When the Cost of Living Rises, So Does the Cost of Leaving

Leaving an abusive relationship costs money. And once survivors have left an abusive relationship, they have to be able to afford the ongoing cost of building a safe and stable life for themselves and their families. Depending on their circumstances, to leave and live free from abuse, survivors may need to afford:

- Food.
- Safe housing, including rent, a deposit, and utilities.
- Transportation. This can include travel to safety as well as travel to get and keep a job, to take their children to school, and to get to important appointments for themselves and their children.[1]
- A phone, internet access, and identification.
- Essentials such as prescription medications, clothing, and personal products like tampons and pads.
- Childcare, moving costs, or replacement of belongings left behind.

For survivors with children or dependents in their care, many of these costs must be covered for the whole family.

But it costs more than ever to live in Alberta. Since 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic began:

The cost of food has increased by **35.6%** (Statistics Canada). Alberta's food banks are now receiving **134%** more visits than in 2019, which is the largest increase in Canada (Food Banks Canada, 28).

Gas prices have increased by **34.5%**, with overall transportation prices increasing by **31.9%** (Statistics Canada).

The cost of health and personal care has increased by **20.4%** (Statistics Canada).

The cost of housing has increased by **31.4%** (Statistics Canada). Albertans now must make an average of $23.98 an hour to afford a one-bedroom market rent apartment, which is $9 higher than Alberta's minimum wage (Macdonald and Tranjan, 12). In the major cities, it can take years to get access to affordable housing. This past year, Calgary Housing's affordable housing waitlist grew to **more than 7,500 people** (Lepine). In Edmonton, Civida's affordable housing waitlist grew to **more than 10,000 people**, with another **700** new people joining the waitlist each month (Fournier and Mohamud). In rural Alberta, apartment vacancy rates dropped to **3%** (Government of Alberta), which means that rural Alberta may now be one of the hardest places to find housing in the province.

As living in Alberta becomes more expensive, it becomes harder for survivors to leave abusive relationships. **For many survivors, this creates an impossible choice.**

Do they stay in an abusive relationship to meet their and their children's basic needs?

Or do they leave the relationship and risk houselessness and food insecurity?

[1] For more information on the travel needs of survivors, see ACWS's report, *A Ride Can Save a Life*. https://acws.ca/ruraltransportation.

Impact on Survivors

Alberta Survivors are Experiencing High Levels of Abuse and Greater Danger

The impacts of abuse are devastating. This is especially true during a cost-of-living crisis. Research shows that intimate partner violence increases in situations of both individual financial stress as well as broader economic crisis (Benson and Fox 2001; Benson and Fox 2004; Sharma and Borah).

Over the past seven years, **as the cost-of-living crisis has intensified, so has the abuse that many survivors experience.**

In 2025 - 2026, 8 out of 10 adults who accessed an ACWS member shelter reported experiencing at least one type of abuse. Of those adults who reported experiencing at least one type of abuse:

92.6% reported experiencing emotional abuse.

68.2% reported experiencing physical abuse.

51.6% reported experiencing economic abuse.[2]

All these survivors experienced real safety concerns that could escalate quickly. Many of these survivors experienced heightened danger to their lives. We can see this danger manifesting across Canada where, according to data from the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability, in 2025 a woman was killed by her current or former intimate partner, on average once every 8 days. Many ACWS members use the Danger Assessment (DA)—a validated tool developed out of Johns Hopkins University—to measure the risk that a survivor will experience lethal violence.

Over the last two years, ACWS member shelters have recorded some of the highest levels of danger since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2025 - 2026, 8 out of 10 adults who accessed an ACWS member shelter reported experiencing at least one type of abuse. Of those clients who reported experiencing at least one type of abuse, 92.6% were emotionally abused.

Percentage of clients in 2025 - 2026 who experienced at least one type of abuse, sorted by the three most commonly experienced types of abuse.



[2] Please note that this number is likely underreported. Research indicates that economic abuse is one of the most common forms of abuse but is often not identified or reported (see Haileyesus, Snow, Chadrarajan, and Mayer). For more information on economic abuse, see ACWS' forthcoming report on economic abuse in Alberta, which will be released on November 26, 2026.

Between April 1, 2024, and March 31, 2025, **72%** of survivors who completed a DA at an ACWS member shelter across all program types (including emergency shelters, second stage shelters, and outreach programs) were at severe or extreme risk of being killed by a current or former intimate partner. **This is the highest number recorded since 2019 – 2020 and is 9.6% higher than the 2019 – 2020 number.**

The danger levels were higher for survivors who physically stayed in shelter. **83.6%** of survivors who completed a DA in an emergency shelter were at severe or extreme risk of being killed. **80.8%** of survivors who completed a DA in a second stage shelter were at severe or extreme risk of being killed.

In 2024 – 2025, of the survivors who completed a DA at an ACWS member shelter:

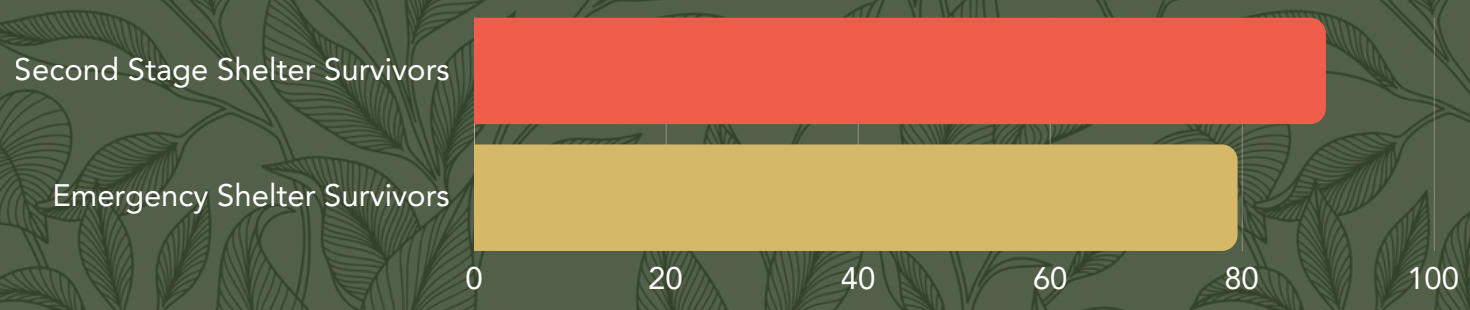
- **49.2%** reported being strangled.
- Of those who reported being strangled, **60.3%** reporting being strangled more than once or that the strangulation made them black out or feel dizzy.
- **72.4%** reported that they had experienced increasing physical violence over the past year. **This is the highest number since 2019 – 2020 and is 19.7% higher than the 2019 – 2020 number.**
- **52.2%** reported being forced to have sex.
- **63.6%** said that they believed their partner was capable of killing them. **This is the second highest number since 2019 – 2020.**

Between April 1, 2025, and March 31, 2026, **69.5%** of survivors who completed a DA at an ACWS member shelter were at severe or extreme risk of being killed by a current of former intimate partner. **This is the third highest number recorded since 2019 – 2020.**

The 2025 – 2026 danger levels were also higher for survivors who physically stayed in shelter. **79.5%** of survivors who completed a DA at an emergency shelter were at severe or extreme risk of being killed. **88.7%** of survivors who completed a DA at a second stage shelter were at severe or extreme risk of being killed.

From April 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026 79.5% of survivors who completed a DA at an emergency shelter were at severe or extreme risk of being killed. 88.7% of survivors who completed a DA at a second stage shelter were at severe or extreme risk of being killed.

Percentage of clients in 2025 - 2026 who completed a Danger Assessment who reported being at severe or extreme risk of being killed.



In 2025 – 2026, of the survivors who completed a DA at an ACWS member shelter:

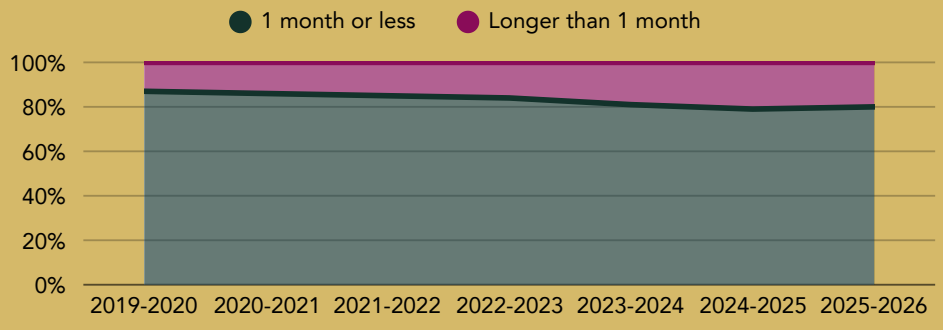
- **50.7%** reported being strangled. **This is the highest number since 2019 – 2020.**
- Of those who reported being strangled, **70.2%** reported being strangled more than once or that the strangulation made them black out or feel dizzy. **This the highest number since 2019 – 2020 and is 37.4% higher than the 2019 – 2020 number.**
- **69.3%** reported that they had experienced increasing physical violence over the past year.
- **51.3%** reported being forced to have sex.
- **64.7%** said that they believed their partner was capable of killing them. **This is the highest number since 2019 – 2020 and is 20% higher than the 2019 – 2020 number.**

Survivors are now experiencing greater danger than they did before the COVID-19 pandemic. For many of these survivors, accessing a family violence shelter can be lifesaving.

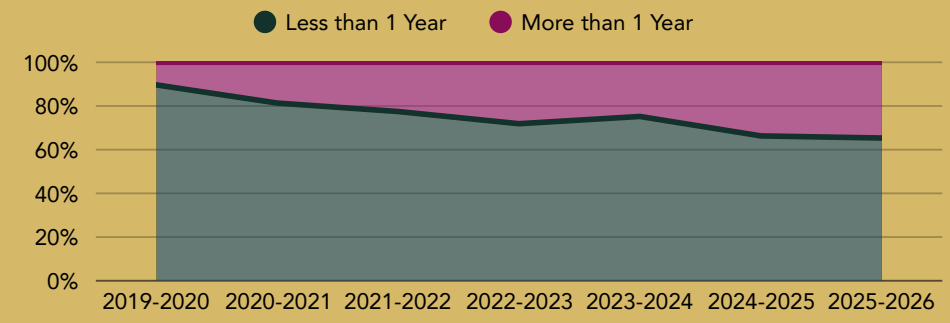
Survivors are Staying in Shelter Longer

The rising cost of living and housing shortages across the province are making it difficult for survivors who are ready to leave the shelter to find safe, adequate and affordable housing for themselves and their families, leading survivors to extend their shelter stays. Increasing lengths of stay also impact the number of survivors who can be offered admission into a shelter's program. Shelters continue to support each survivor for as long as they need, but they cannot solve the housing shortage on their own.

Percentage of emergency shelter clients who stayed in shelter for either less than 1 month, or longer than 1 month



Percentage of second stage shelter clients who stayed in shelter for either less than 1 year, or longer than 1 year



- In both **2024 – 2025** and **2025 – 2026** survivors and their families stayed in emergency shelters for an average of **20 days**. This is **7 days longer** than the 2019 – 2020 average.
- In both **2024 – 2025** and **2025 – 2026**, **20%** of survivors stayed in emergency shelters for **longer than 1 month**. In **2025 – 2026** of the survivors who stayed for more than 1 month, **9% stayed for more than 3 months.**
- In **2024 – 2025** survivors and their families stayed in second stage shelters for an average of **346 days**, while in **2025 – 2026** the average length of stay in a second stage shelter was **284 days**.
- Since 2019 – 2020 the number of survivors staying in second stage shelters for **more than 1 year** has increased by **63.1%.**

When Shelters Thrive, Survivors Thrive

The impact of having to choose between safety and affordability is devastating. Survivors who are forced to stay in abusive relationships for longer often experience greater impacts of abuse and need more services and supports to move forward in healing and growth.

In this context, **the work of family violence shelters is more vital than ever**. Shelters provide critical resources and support for survivors that can help them to find safety and healing even while facing cost-of-living challenges.

In **2024 – 2025** shelters provided more than 18,000 referrals and 37,000 services to clients across all programs.

- **96.2%** of survivors who stayed in shelter received support with basic needs.
- **49.4%** received advocacy support.
- **39.8%** were referred to housing supports.
- **37.6%** received transportation support.
- **32.9%** were referred to financial supports.
- **42.8%** of clients with children received childcare support.
- **24.6%** received medical referrals.

In **2025 – 2026** shelters provided more than 17,000 referrals and 34,000 services to clients across all programs.[3]

- **97.4%** of survivors who stayed in shelter received support with basic needs.
- **57.1%** received advocacy support.
- **42.3%** were referred to housing supports.
- **37.4%** received transportation support.
- **39.6%** were referred to financial supports.
- **39.4%** of clients with children received childcare support.
- **26.1%** received medical referrals.

Each one of these numbers represents a survivor who was better **supported**, better **connected**, and better **able to navigate the complexities of abuse because of the work of family violence shelters**.

[3] While we've seen an overall decline in the total number of services and referrals provided to clients from 2024 – 2025 to 2025 – 2026, this decrease can be explained by the overall lower number of clients who left shelter in 2025 – 2026. On average, clients received the same level of support with services and referrals from shelter workers across both years.

Recommendations

Family violence shelters work miracles every day, but they can't do it alone. Just as rising costs have impacted survivors, they have also impacted shelters. Shelters must now pay more than ever to continue to serve survivors. **It is up to Alberta as a community to ensure that shelters—and the survivors they serve—have the resources and supports they need.** The following recommendations provide concrete solutions for how all Albertans can help to address the challenges outlined in this report.

Dedicated Housing Pathways

Survivors are staying in shelter longer because safe and affordable housing is difficult to find. Shelter staff do their best to connect survivors with housing resources and support them in securing housing options that meet the needs of their families, but they frequently run up against high prices, long waitlists, and housing shortages.

For a survivor with two children, accessing Income Support will provide them with up to **$1,635 per month** for a private market rental. In 2025, in rural communities, a two-bedroom rental unit cost on average **$1,145 per month**, and this rate can increase dramatically in the cities, where a two-bedroom rental costs an average of **$1,714 per month** (Government of Alberta; Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation). For someone on Income Support this could mean that up to **95.4%** of their income support cheque goes towards their housing costs, leaving very little for any other basic needs. In many communities across the province, survivors on Income Support may be forced to choose between rent and food.

There is a need for a dedicated housing pathway for survivors leaving family violence shelters that includes:

- Priority access to housing options.
- Dedicated funding for costs such as deposits, initial rent, moving expenses, and basic household needs.

In Alberta, the Escaping Abuse Benefit is an important source of financial support that can help survivors with the expenses of moving or setting up a new home. This is a critical resource for many Albertans that could provide more effective support to more survivors with the following recommendations:

- Indexing the benefit to account for the increasing cost of living.
- Providing clear, publicly accessible information about eligibility, allowable expenses, available benefit amounts, and application processes.
- Expanding access to the benefit to provide support for moving and/or setting up a new home to survivors who are moving into second stage shelters or other forms of transitional housing.
- Streamlining and expediting access to the benefit through dedicated application and verification pathways involving family violence shelters and other trusted service providers, reducing administrative barriers, and ensuring survivors can access financial assistance when they need it.

Faster Access to Financial Support

The findings in this report highlight the need for faster, easier access to Income Support and other government financial assistance programs for survivors leaving abuse. This could include:

- Expedited, low-barrier pathways for survivors to access Income Support and other government financial assistance programs.
- Reduced documentation and administrative barriers for survivors applying for Income Support and other government financial assistance programs.
- Verification pathways for shelter workers and other trusted professionals to validate the need and experiences of survivors.

Advocate for Equitable Funding

Family violence and abuse happen in every community in Alberta. In every one of these communities, survivors need help, and they deserve to receive it. No survivor should have to face abuse alone because there wasn't enough funding to sustain a shelter close to them. **No survivor should have to play postal code roulette.**

One of the most powerful things you can do to help is to speak up for shelters. Consider advocating with every level of government—municipal, provincial, and federal—to ensure that funding for family violence shelters across Alberta is adequate, equitable, and addresses the affordability concerns in their community. No shelter should have to struggle to remain open.

To stay up to date on ACWS advocacy campaigns and how you can join them, visit our website, and subscribe to our newsletter.

Donate

Your support is essential to helping ACWS continue to support family violence shelters across Alberta, and to helping our member shelters continue to support their communities. Please consider donating to ACWS or one of our member shelters.

To donate to ACWS, visit acws.ca/donate.

To connect with a family violence shelter in your community, visit acws.ca/shelters.

Spread the Word

Share the key takeaways of this report with your family, friends, and networks. You can find our easy-to-share social media posts on our channels.

Facebook	Instagram	LinkedIn
Alberta Council of Women's Shelters	@albertacouncilofwomensshelters	Alberta Council of Women's Shelters



Participating Shelters

Thank you to the ACWS member organizations who contributed data to inform *The Cost of Leaving: The 2024 – 2026 ACWS Shelter Impact Report*.

Brooks and District Women's Safe Shelter Society
Camrose Women's Shelter Society
Capella Centre Alberta
Catholic Social Services
Central Alberta Women's Emergency Shelter
Chestermere Women's Crisis Society
Crossroads Resource Centre
Discovery House Family Violence Prevention Society
Grande Cache Transition House Society
Heart Home Network
Jessica Martel Memorial Foundation
Maskan Family Association
Medicine Hat Women's Shelter Society
Mountain Rose Women's Shelter Association
Mountain View Emergency Shelter Society
Northern Haven Support Society
Odyssey House
Peace River Regional Women's Shelter Society
Pincher Creek Women's Emergency Shelter Association
Ruth's House
Taber Safe Haven Women's Shelter Society
Safe Home
Sage Seniors Association
SPARK Foundation of Lloydminster
Stepping Stones Crisis Society
True North Society
Unison Society
Waypoints Community Services Association
Wellspring Family Resource and Crisis Centre
WIN House
Wings of Providence
Yellowhead Emergency Shelter for Women Society
YWCA of Banff
YWCA of Lethbridge and District

Methodology

This report represents the data shared from 34 member organizations operating 49 family violence shelters across Alberta, in small communities, rural areas, and large cities.

The data shared in The Cost of Leaving was collected through disaggregated values provided by member shelters that includes information like the number of adults admitted to various programs, how many children accompanied those adults, and what the outcomes of these programs were. The data shared here reflects a selection of the services shared by participating ACWS members and may not represent the full breadth of services offered by the family violence and elder abuse shelters operating across the province. Unless we mention otherwise, where we provide a range of multiple years, like 2025 – 2026, we are referring to data collected between April 1st and March 31st of the years mentioned. This data was supplemented with disaggregated, Alberta-specific data from Women's Shelters Canada's National Survey Data from 2025.

Please note that the composition of organizations that participate in each of ACWS' reports changes slightly. As a result, some of the absolute totals in this report are different than they may have been in previous years. However, on a rate basis these metrics are comparable to what we have seen in previous years. We update our trend analysis in each report to include only comparable data from past years, meaning that this report cannot be compared to our previous publications. To ensure we clearly depict both shelter and survivor experiences over the past two years, we have included the relative changes in the data for the past two years alongside the absolute totals wherever possible and appropriate.

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