OCASI

women caucus survey finding

October 22,2021

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Introduction #1

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this survey is on women's organizations. The main goal is not only to collect data on their baseline conditions to better know who these organizations are, who they serve and how they serve them, but also to identify the specific impacts of COVID-19 for women's organization in the settlement sector.

54% OCASI organizations completed the survey (22 out of 41).

Respondents location:
Toronto   64%
Scarborough   4,5%
Etobicoke.   4,5%
North York.   4,5%
Waterloo   4,5%
Windsor   9%
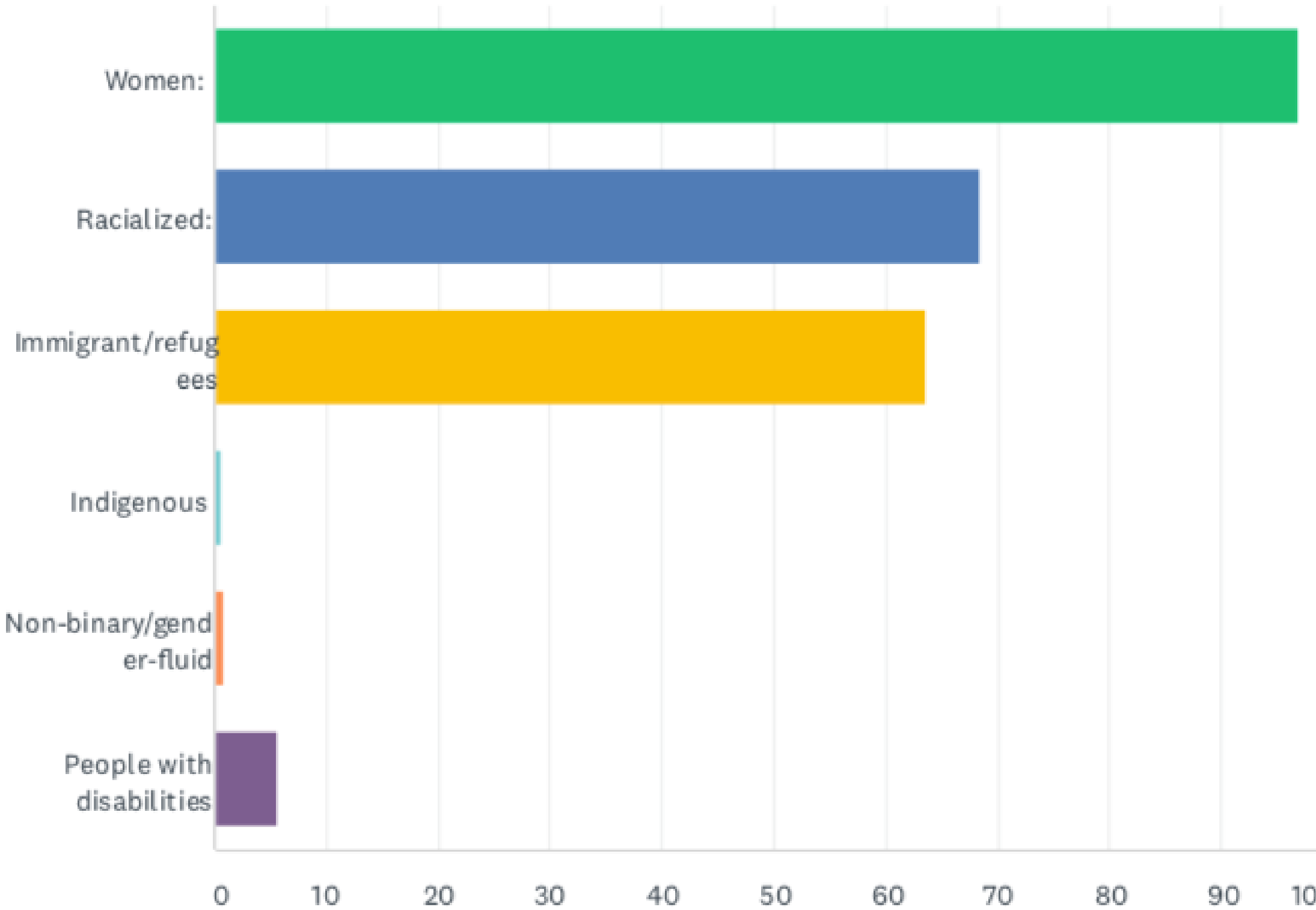Durham   4,5%
Ottawa   4,5%

General information #2

Women's organizations employees demographic

Largely dominated by women (average 97%), mostly radicalized (average 68%) with an immigrant or refugees background (average 64%). Indigenous and non-binary/gender fluid are still a minority but non-binary/gender fluid are not often identified .

Overall impact of Covid-19 #4

How agencies have been impacted by COVID–19 pandemic?

For a variety of reasons related to the organization size, nature of the primary services offered, and management capacity, organizations had diverse experiences in coping with unprecedented human resources challenges. Respondents from women's organization showed even if programs and service delivery moved online, 37% remained open because their services were deemed essential. Beside financial challenges, human resources also were impacted with volunteers loss (69%), lay off (5%) and changes in staff working conditions (increase of hours, redeployment, rotation, etc.).

Lost volunteers	69 %
Hired additional staff	69 %
Had clients that contracted COVID-19	69 %
Developed new partnerships to continue to deliver programs and services	63 %
Had staff that contracted COVID-19	58 %
Had to increase staff work hours due to increased demand for programs and services	48 %
Remained open- Our services were deemed essential	37 %
Experienced lost revenue from user fees and fundraising	37 %
Had to re-deploy staff to essential services and/or had rotational staffing options	32 %
All non-essential appointments, services, and Programs were suspended until further notice	26 %
Had to apply to the Canada Emergency. Wage Subsidy (CEWS). To maintain staffing levels	26 %
Ineligible for federal or provincial supports (e.g Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy, Canada Emergency Business account)	21 %
Had to reduce staff work hours	21 %
Lost funding from funders, program partners or donors	11 %
Had to lay off staff due to financial constraints (temporary or permanent)	5 %
Implemented a hiring freeze (except for critical roles)	5 %

Impact on Services and Programs

Shift in mode of operation
Client reach

TO EXPECT AN INCREASE** OF 25% CLIENTS IN NEED OF SERVICE IN 2021 COMPARED TO A 11.3% DECREASE* IN 2020

Served in 2019

128 024 clients

Served in 2020

113 559 clients

Expected to serve in 2021

141 985 clients

* May be due to the drastic decrease of newcomers in 2020, but also to access the internet, digital literacy challenges, family economic struggles, privacy issues, etc.
**The sector and its clients are getting more and more used to emerging hybrid service delivery in settlement and agencies are hoping for Canada reopening.

Human resources impact

Laid off employees since the pandemic started

HAVE YOU LAID OFF EMPLOYEES SINCE THE PANDEMIC STARTED?

84%   No

16%.   Yes

AVERAGE NUMBER OF LAID OFF EMPLOYEES

Full–time: 7

Part–time: 4

Casual/seasonal time: 4

Financial Impact

HAS YOUR ORGANIZATION EXPERIENCED A DROP IN REVENUE SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE PANDEMIC?

74 %   No drop in revenue

16%   Up to 5%

5%   Up to 10%

5%   More than 25%

100% of organizations experiencing a drop in revenue are from Toronto with 2020-2021budget

20%   0-600 000$

20%   600 001-1000 000

60%   4000 001-8000 000

Size of organizations experiencing a drop of revenue

60%   101+employees

40%   1-20 employees

40%   51-1000 employees

All size of organizations (revenue and employees) in Toronto have experienced a drop in revenue since the beginning of the pandemic. They lost revenue from users fees and fundraising. As a result some organizations had to lay off staff, temporarily or permanently.

What worries them most about COVID-19 or a similar future crisis

Funding reality of the sector	84 %
Economic repercussions (on provincial, national and/or global economy)	68 %
Effect on workforce/reduction in productivity	53 %
Lack of appropriate resources and means to effectively service clients	52 %
Organization's ability to meet their financial obligations	42 %
Low financial reserves	37 %
Concern about re-openin too soon	21 %
No clear policy for what is expected of staff if they get sick, have symptoms, or if an exposure is reported at the organization	16 %
Office may be at risk of closing if a significant. Proportion of staff is afflicted or unwilling or unable to go to work	16 %
How to address hazards and unsafe work	5 %
Access to resources for staff (internet, office equipment)	5 %

OTHER ADDED BY RESPONDENTS
Clients accessing services
Biggest challenge: we are relocating to two new premises
Staff overwork isolation
No real provincial plan. For paid sick leave
When government stops throwing money at the pandemic

Challenges

The priority issues affecting women's organizations clients (service users)

Stuck with abuser	VAW issues increase	Food security	Housing
Mental health issues	Employment/financial support	Face to face services	Lack of technology
Access to resources, testing, vaccines	Lack of knowledge and equipment	More settlement and employment services	High risk situation
Managing spatial arrangements in the home	Income strain	Social connections	Unable to return to Canada
Reducing options in leaving abuse	Training for future employment needs	Not getting services from many legal supports	Transportation
Mental health of youth/ children	Precarious and/or unsafe employment		

Issues and challenges experienced regarding digital technology

The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated shift to hybrid model of service delivery by women's organizations, which have been forced to move many activities online and get creative in supporting clients but also employees with limited internet access. All these unexpected changes have a cost. That is the reason why funding is so crucial to leverage technology and build the capacity of the settlement sector and women agencies in particular.

Expensive, not available, shared work spaces at homes, devices being lost or broken, updates and annual costs

Software challenges

Increased costs to navigate the increase in computer devices and cyber security

not enough band width

Lack of familiarity, loss of in-person contact, lack of access to devices, ongoing internet challenges

Our clients do not have adequate laptops. some are learning on smart phones

Lack of technology, lack of access to internet, lack of language or knowledge in using technology.

We redirected funding to hire a part-time digital literacy coach. We have raised funds to acquire tablets to loan to clients. We have trained ELP instructors on new platforms (e.g. Avenue).

affordability to complete a digital transformation. issues with low quality connectivity among staff and participants issues with resources - computer, laptops and tablets for participants.

many clients have no access to technology, the internet and do not speak English. many cannot access medical services and book appointments on line

lack of digital skills and devices

digital skills for some staff and participants; and lack of digital tools/equipment for participants;

We required more technical support for staff and clients.

Digital equity is an issue for our client population. Access to data and network connections very minimal.

Adequate bandwidth for staff working at home where they also have children and partner using internet for school and work.

- Some clients, especially senior population, are not able to access online services due to lack of capacity such as no internet, no device or lack of knowledge. - Staff & agency level: security issues are arisen more important matter for online services.

We were fortunate to receive emergency funding to upgrade our IT infrastructure

VPN access for all staff: internet too costly; having to prioritize who has VPN access and who does not Clients do not have internet - computers-laptops or there are not enough for a family; digital fluency-literacy for staff and clients; security: fear of cyber attacks and data breaches; increase in insurance costs to cover cyber security

lack of access to access to network connections, to devices, to software and applications, affordability, digital skills

Actions taken

Regarding COVID, which of the following actions is currently a priority for your organization?

Proactively communicate. Your COVID-19 recovery measure to staff and clients	100 %
Continuing to assess the current and future impacts of COVID-19	100 %
Do everything possible to protect the health and safety of staff and clients by providing adequate information, training, sanitation, and personal protective equipment	94 %
Facilitating communications across teams and departments	74 %
Creating/providing additional resources to at-risk populations	74 %
Equip your staff team with communication tools	68 %
Sharing tools and strategies with other organizations	68 %
Identifying tasks and positions essential to the organization	63 %
Considering having a phased-in approach when recalling staff	53 %
Rebuilding low financial reserves	25 %

OTHER ADDED BY RESPONDENT
Advocacy efforts for access to care/vaccines/testing for radicalized communities

Financial and legal expertise

HAS YOUR ORGANIZATION INVESTED IN FINANCIAL AND LEGAL EXPERTISE?

Yes 58%
No 42%

IF NO, HOW DID YOUR ORGANIZATION NAVIGATE AROUND FINANCIAL AND LEGAL DIFFICULTIES DURING THE PANDEMIC?

Attended information webinars	100 %
Sharing information with other organizations	80 %
Needed expertise in house (board, staff, volunteers)	50 %
Self-researched legal and financial advice	50 %
Received pro-bono legal/financial aid	40 %

Actions taken by the women's organizations for the collection and storage of information accessed remotely by staff

The sensitive nature of their work could explain the reason why 100% of the respondents' organizations took an action regarding this issue.

Raising awareness on security and confidentiality concerns	84 %
Updating programs and systems regularly	74 %
Changing and using stronger passwords	68 %
Prohibiting or limiting work-related data on personal devices	57 %
Reinforcing control access	53 %
Hiring I.T consultants to evaluate the security of software used remotely	53 %
Requiring sensitive data to be encrypted	37 %
Requiring cybersecurity training for staff	37 %

79% women's agencies have protocol for staff that require special accommodation upon returning to work.

Approaches taken to pay staff who remain employed, but are not able to work, or work remotely, due to illness or caregiving needs

Applying existing leave policy/benefit	68 %
Applying new leave policy/benefit	32 %
Laid off so they can collect CERB or EI	21 %
Providing full salary continuation	16 %
Providing partial salary continuation	11 %

Other by respondents

leaves of absence and then workers are able to access EI for up to the sick benefit and they can use entitlements
we have part time staff who work from home and are paid for the hours worked
We will alow them to work remotely (online)
Everyone has continued to work, almost all are working from home
As our policy, we provide 10 paid sick days
Accessed sickness benefits through EI

Women's organizations support (beyond pay initiatives) those in care giving by:

Allowing those in caregiving roles to continue working remotely		74 %
Assessing staff requests on a one-to-one basis and providing alternative working accommodations based on individual needs		74 %
Offering rotational staffing shifts		42 %
We are not offering additional support to those in caregiving roles		11 %
Access or subsidy for daycare needs		5 %

What new ways of operating practices will make your organization better in the long run?

Technology investments		61 %
New ways to serve the community/clients		61 %
Work flexibility		39 %
Exploring non-traditional funding options		17 %
Exploring social enterprise as a means of income generation		11 %
Leaner operations (downsizing, cost-savings, etc.)		6 %