

**CHANGING NEEDS OF RURAL AND NORTHERN
WOMEN IN MANITOBA**

A Research Report

RDI Working Paper #2005-10

March 2005



Rural Development Institute, Brandon University

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March 2005

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Executive Summary

This project, **The Changing Needs of Rural and Northern Women**, was initiated by the Women's Subcommittee, Rural Team Manitoba to gain information about:

- The needs of Rural and Northern Manitoba women
- Whether the needs of Rural and Northern women have changed as their communities change and evolve
- How to address the current needs and issues of Rural and Northern women (according to Rural and Northern women)
- What strategies are working well and what issues are not being addressed

Since this research was launched in September 2004, there has been an extensive literature review, five focus groups with women in Rural and Northern communities, and a discussion group that included representatives from a variety of provincial women's organizations and programs. As well, a questionnaire was developed to gather information from 114 women across rural and northern Manitoba. In total, more than 160 women have taken part and provided input on a variety of issues including:

- Employment and Income
- Child Care Services
- Education and Training
- Health and Wellness
- Technology
- Capacity Building

The results of this research reported here combines the information and knowledge gathered from the research literature, and from the women living in rural and northern Manitoba as well as the leaders of women's organizations from across Manitoba. The report describes the research process, includes the information gathered from the various phases of the research and synthesizes that information into themes and recommendations for next steps and for action.

In order to understand the changing needs of Rural and Northern women, it was necessary to first recognize the importance of several underlying realities that impact Rural and Northern women on a daily basis.

Women's needs are complex and inter-related. Women continue to be the caregivers of the family. For many women their wellness is directly connected to the health and wellness of their family as a whole. Women also live in communities, and their well-being is impacted by the opportunities and barriers existing in those communities.

Sociocultural and geographic considerations have a profound influence. For Rural and Northern women, their well-being is powerfully affected by where they live. Their income level and economic situation is crucial to their ability to have choices and options regarding all other aspects of their overall wellness. Income and economic status is affected by the employment options in their community and by their ability to get a job and earn a pay cheque.

The study also provided an opportunity for Rural and Northern women to provide their thoughts and opinions regarding the most urgent and important issues facing them and the other women in their community. The interest the women showed in the information gathering process and their strong desire to have input highlighted how important these issues are to Rural and Northern women.

The issues or themes the women put forward most often across Rural and Northern Manitoba were also themes reflected in the literature as being of prime importance to Rural and Northern women.

Employment / Income

Women's employment opportunities and their income level are of prime importance to rural and northern women's overall health and well-being. Better economic conditions mean better health. Employment opportunities and thus increased income is directly impacted by the number of jobs available in the rural or northern area, and by the education level the women have attained. Income levels reported by Rural and Northern women are significantly lower than the Manitoba average. 42% of the respondents to the survey reported an annual income below \$15,000.

Recommendations:

- **Increase self-employment and entrepreneurial skills programs in rural and Northern communities.**
- **The three levels of government must work together to increase local job creation.**
- **Women must have input at the community level into developing sustainable economic development and job creation plans for their community.**
- **More job training and job readiness programs are essential for women who are trying to move into the work force for the first time.**
- **Increase the minimum wage to make it worthwhile for women to go to work.**
- **More child care services and enhanced communication technology are needed to support women's employment options.**

Child Care Services

Flexible and affordable child care services must be available in the community if Rural and Northern women are going to be able to work outside of the home or farm. The research highlights that lack of child care is a barrier to employment and economic development. The survey identified the lack of child care as the main barrier preventing northern women from taking further education. Quality child care that is both affordable and accessible is a must if the woman wishes to go back to school to increase her education and training.

Recommendations:

- **Increase the number of affordable, accessible licensed child care spaces throughout Rural and Northern Manitoba.**
- **Funding must support flexible care for rural and northern families.**

- **Develop integrated service hubs or networks.**
- **Expand Rural and Northern training opportunities for Early Childhood Educators (E.C.E.'s).**

Education and Training

Women need to have an education. A woman's ability to get a job is affected by her education level, by her job readiness skills, and by having access to child care if she has children. Education is a key to social and economic development and educational opportunities are more limited in rural and northern communities. Rural and Northern women also brought forward concerns regarding access to training supports. Rural women often do not qualify for support programs due to the book value of the farm assets and Northern women reported difficulty in getting specific information about the bursaries and training dollars available to them.

Education must be accessible. Women mentioned that there have been more adult education opportunities for them in recent years, but that they still are not accessible to many women. The education program must be located within a geographic radius that is workable for both the woman and her family. They also discussed the challenge of finding out what programs were offered, and the intricacies of getting approval to attend.

More advanced post-secondary education is necessary. While there have been considerable improvements in supports for women over the past number of years, women's needs have also increased exponentially. A grade twelve upgrading program isn't enough anymore. With the explosion of the knowledge economy, women need a post-secondary education if they hope to secure employment that will pay a living wage.

Recommendations:

- **Post-secondary education and job training opportunities need to be expanded in Rural and Northern communities. These programs must be available locally whenever possible.**
- **Governments need to provide increased bursaries and training grants.**
- **The eligibility criteria for training supports and bursaries must be re-examined to ensure women are not facing inappropriate eligibility criteria.**
- **Expand entrepreneurial and self-employment skills programs.**
- **Increase public awareness of education programs and training supports that are available. The information must reach the women in the communities where they live.**
- **Ensure child care services are available to support all education and training initiatives.**

Health and Wellness

Women also need enhanced resource supports for their overall health and wellness.

Women spoke of the need for mentors and culturally appropriate women's resource centres to help them consider the many inter-related options facing them on an ongoing basis. The

traditional role of women as the gatekeepers of the family's health and well-being still exists. Women are also expected to be wage earners, parents, caregivers and community volunteers. Rural and Northern women spoke of the stress that accompanies these multiple roles in communities where the system supports found in urban areas are much more limited. The women named Family Resource centres and wellness programs as needed resources.

Recommendations:

- **Expand Women's Resource / Wellness Centres. Social Service and Family Services counselors need to be available in the community.**
- **Second-stage housing for abused women and public housing must be made available in Rural and Northern communities.**
- **More legal aide is required in Rural and Northern communities with lawyers who are familiar with women's issues and with rural issues.**
- **Regular re-evaluation of income assistance programs and policies is required.**

Rural and Northern Women as Decision Makers – Capacity Building

Women want to have a voice. The research and the women themselves noted the importance of Rural and Northern women having input into policy decisions. Rural and Northern women have the knowledge essential for defining what services and resources could be effective in their community. Decisions affecting the family and their community shouldn't be made for them; rather Rural and Northern women need the skills and the opportunity to be active participants in planning for and making important life decisions.

Initiatives must be gender, culture and place sensitive. Recommendations for community action must be developed in a manner that will ensure the results are truly helpful and useful for Rural and Northern women. All initiatives must be viewed with the appropriate gender, place and culture lens.

Recommendations:

- **Provide long-term operational funding for community-based groups to develop women's capacity.**
- **Economic, political and social services supports must all be delivered in the community.**
- **Long-term, ongoing funding is essential for women's and community social service initiatives.**

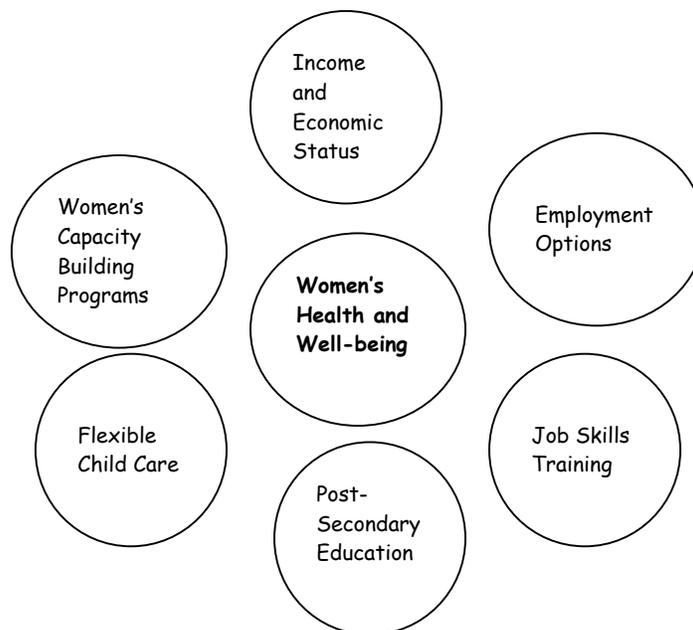
Conclusions

The web of interconnected factors and issues impacting Rural and Northern women continues to expand. Rural and Northern women can be helped to address these multi-faceted issues in a way that creates a path to health and well-being. True progress will be made if the assistance is offered with respectful dialogue that honestly considers the needs of the specific community.

The research also reminds us that the reverse is also true. If nothing is done to act on the issues facing Rural and Northern women, they face a never-ending and complex spiral of challenges and barriers. The study clearly highlights that no one issue stands alone as the problem and no one recommendation stands alone as the solution. Just as women's lives are complex, the issues and challenges before them are equally complex. They all deserve attention and action.

“Process is more important than policy!”

Working WITH the women in the community to help them develop workable and positive solutions to the many issues facing them is the most valuable support that can be offered. As the provincial women's representatives in the discussion reminded us, ***“Process is more important than policy”***.



The web of interconnected factors and issues impacting Rural and Northern women.

For those who wish a concise visual summary, the issues, the literature research, the perspective of Rural and Northern women and the recommendations are highlighted again in the charts that follow.

ISSUE	What the Literature Says	What the Women said	Recommended Actions
Employment / Income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better economic conditions mean better health <i>Improving the Health of Canadians</i> • Rural & Northern women’s incomes are chronically low <i>Statistics Canada</i> • Non-farm work is essential to the survival of the family farm <i>The Canadian Farm Family At Work Rural Remote and Northern Women’s Health</i> • Part-time, casual and seasonal work is prevalent in Rural and Northern areas <i>The Canadian Farm Family At Work Rural, Remote and Northern Women’s Health</i> • Lack of child care is a barrier to employment and economic development <i>Northern Manitoba Women and Sustainable Economic Development National Child Care Strategy for Rural, Remote and Northern Communities</i> • Women must have input into sustainable economic development plans <i>Northern Manitoba Women and Sustainable Economic Development</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 42% of respondents had an annual income below \$15,000 • “Without child care we wouldn’t be working” • Stable employment opportunities are limited • Long commutes to work are common and stressful • Women have difficulty accessing financing and credit • “We need jobs to keep our young people in the community” • There are jobs in some communities, but few women with job skills • “Increase the minimum wage so that working is worthwhile” • Ineffective information technology hinders communication and thus limits employment and income options • “We need cell phone and high speed internet for self-employment” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand self-employment and entrepreneurial skills programs • Work with 3 levels of government to increase local job creation • Increase availability of child care in rural and northern communities • Increase job readiness and job training programs • Increase minimum wage • Implement the Information and Communication Technology Initiative, Industry Canada 2004 throughout Rural and Northern Manitoba

	What the Literature Says	What the Women Said	Recommended Actions
Child Care Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible child care greatest need for rural families <i>Resource Needs for Families with Preschool Children in Marquette Region</i> • Flexible Child Care is a primary need for farm and for northern women <i>Northern MB Women and Sustainable Economic Development</i> • Child Care is a farm safety issue; farm families consistently work longer hours than the average Canadian family <i>The Canadian Farm Family At Work:</i> • Early learning opportunities are a social determinant of health for all children <i>Early Childhood Education and Care Improving the Health of Canadians</i> • The parent-based boards of community child care centres are stressed and growth of the child care system requires support and resources for boards. <i>Help or Hindrance</i> <i>National Child Care Strategy for Rural, Remote and Northern Communities</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Without child care we wouldn’t have kids” • “There is not sufficient child care in our communities” • Lack of child care is the main barrier preventing northern women taking further education (70%) • Volunteer time to serve on boards of child care facilities is reduced as work hours increase • Multiple roles of women > time stress. Child care offers needed supports but also adds another community-based board asking for parent involvement. • Lack of quality child care is a barrier to education and employment “We need to invest in Healthy Children & Healthy Families”. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of child care spaces throughout Rural and Northern Manitoba • Fund child care at a level that supports flexible service delivery • Community groups require governance resource supports to create child care programs • Increase supports for integrated Hub models of community-based governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Care • Nursery School • Healthy Child programs • Family Resource programs • Women’s Resource programs • Increase training supports for Rural and Northern Early Childhood Educator programs

	What the Literature Says	What the Women Said	Recommended Actions
Education and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education is a key to social and economic development <i>Improving the Health of Canadians Social Determinants of Health</i> • An education gap exists between Rural and Northern women and the population as a whole <i>Northern Manitoba Women and Sustainable Economic Development Statistics Canada</i> • Education level directly correlates to income level <i>Improving the Health of Canadians</i> • Barriers to education include lack of child care, inadequate funding, limited course offerings <i>Northern Manitoba Women and Sustainable Economic Development</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm women are not eligible for education and training supports due to farm assets • “We need post-secondary education opportunities close-by” • Job training, vocational / career training needed • Entrepreneurial skills required • Women don’t know what supports are available and how to access them • Lack of child care is a barrier to education • Distance is a barrier to education • Cost is a barrier to education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand post secondary education and job training opportunities in Rural and Northern communities • Review eligibility criteria for training supports and bursaries • Expand entrepreneurial and self-employment skills programs • Provide increased bursaries and training grants, especially for mature women employed in low-paying jobs • Continue to expand flexible child care options in Rural and Remote Communities • Enhance awareness of education programs and the supports available to women, i.e., public education

	What the Literature Says	What the Women Said	Recommended Actions
Health & Wellness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rurality is a powerful determinant of women’s health; Rural Canada is not homogeneous – there is no one common solution <i>Rural, Remote and Northern Women’s Health</i> • Income matters for health <i>Improving the Health of Canadians</i> • Early Childhood Development is key to a healthy life <i>Improving the Health of Canadians</i> • Women need to have a voice at a policy implementation level <i>Rural, Remote and Northern Women’s Health</i> • Services must be available and accessible when needed to be effective <i>Resource Needs for Families with Preschool Children in Marquette Region</i> • Poor economic conditions, long hours of work and high debt loads contribute to family violence; there is a lack of family violence programs in rural areas <i>Family Violence in Rural, Farm and Remote Canada</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of essential needs, i.e., food is a barrier to health • Lack of essential health services in Rural and Northern communities • Challenge of commuting to Winnipeg for health care, i.e., dentist • No time for self care, overwhelmed • Isolation and lack of confidential services • Lack of integrated services to support the many roles of women • Services and support programs must be culturally appropriate • No continuity of health services • Second stage housing and counseling supports need to be available in local communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-evaluate policies for income support programs to identify and correct policies with inadvertent negative consequences for the women and families using the program • Ensure food costs are not a barrier to health • Develop Family Resource / Women’s Wellness Centres throughout Rural and Northern Manitoba • Increase support for resource programs that reflect traditional culture and teachings • Develop additional second stage housing and counseling services, connected with a community and culturally based network of women’s services

	What the Literature Says	What the Women Said	Recommended Actions
Rural and Northern Women as Decision Makers Capacity Building in Rural and Northern Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural women have knowledge essential to formulating effective policies and programs that will maintain and improve their wellbeing Rural Women are largely invisible to policy makers It is important to involve women in gender/place/culture-based analysis Long-term operational funding is important for community-based organizations to support women’s engagement in economic, political and social services in Rural, Remote and Northern communities <i>Rural, Remote and Northern Women’s Health</i> Women need to be directly involved in developing plans to address economic development in their communities <i>Northern Manitoba Women and Sustainable Economic Development</i> Ongoing consultation process between government and community groups is the most effective way of creating change <i>Family Violence in Rural, Farm and Remote Canada</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A challenge is the lack of involvement with local community Good things happen in small places; there is no network to collect / share successes and lessons learned Need more women in decision-making roles “Would a united women’s voice move us ahead? Women are not empowered as equal decision makers” Support and build women’s personal and leadership skills Involve stakeholder voice (gender, diversity, age) Need sustainable – not project – funding Continue to fund what is working Recognize community building as a valid, sustainable, core activity <p style="text-align: center;">Process impacts Policy</p> <p>Process needs to include voices of those communities it impacts!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide long-term operational funding for community-based groups to develop women’s capacity to influence and develop policy by focusing on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership training Networking Proposal writing Gender/culture/place analysis Economic, political and social services Provide <u>sustainable long-term operational</u> funding for community-based social support and women’s initiatives that are proven to be effective

Introduction

This research project, The Changing Needs of Rural and Northern Women, was conducted under the direction and coordination of the Sub-Committee on Women of Rural Team Manitoba and Rural Development Institute of Brandon University. The research is related to changing needs of Rural and Northern women in Manitoba.

The project objectives were to investigate:

- the current and changing needs of Rural and Northern women in Manitoba
- the extent to which recent and current projects and initiatives have been effective in addressing these needs.
- the gaps between services provided for Rural and Northern women and their changing needs
- recommendations for changes or new initiatives.

Last spring, Rural Team Manitoba identified a need to undertake research related to the changing needs of Rural and Northern Women. Rural Development Institute is also a member of Rural Team Manitoba and agreed to work with the Women's Sub-committee, and the Women's Enterprise Centre to do this research.

The research was undertaken by a 2004-2005 Master's Student Internship. The two investigators, Betty Kelly and Osa Idehen are students registered in the Masters of Rural Development program at Brandon University.

Literature Review

An extensive literature review was conducted as part of this study. The results from previous in-depth research were used to formulate the areas of enquiry for this study, but, more importantly, to combine all available research in the formulation of conclusions and recommendations regarding the changing needs of Rural and Northern women.

A number of important research projects have been undertaken in the last 10 years. The intent of this study was not to duplicate that research but to add to it with up-to-date anecdotal information from individuals and key respondents.

Research especially relevant to the project was summarized and is included in this report for the benefit of the reader. A synthesis of the complete literature review formed the basis for the project research and was considered in the analysis and recommendations.

Rural, Remote and Northern Women's Health: Policy and Research Directions, Final Summary Report. by Rebecca Sutherns, PhD, Marilow McPhedran and Margaret Haworth-Brockman. Centres of Excellence for Women's Health, 2001 – 2003, 2004

This was an extensive national study combining the knowledge of women living in rural and remote areas of Canada with that of community organizations and researchers to develop a policy framework and research agenda on rural and remote women's health in Canada.

The research consisted of:

- extensive literature reviews in English and French
- 28 focus groups
- teleconferences and videoconferences with more than 200 women from all parts of Canada
- a national consultation which brought together more than 50 women from across Canada.

The key question posed was 'What are the challenges and opportunities for ensuring the best state of women's health in your community?'

A key premise of this research was the belief that rural women have knowledge essential to formulating effective policies and programs that will maintain and improve their well-being in their communities. It is essential that they be involved in policy formulation (p. 4).

The project authors discerned eight key messages. The majority of these messages are as much about rural, remote and northern women as about Rural, Remote and Northern health care. Five of them are relevant to research into the changing needs of rural and northern women and include:

- Rurality is a powerful determinant of women's health as both a geographic and sociocultural influence.
- Rural Canada is not homogeneous.
- Consistent rural health priorities are discernable in the face of diversity.
- Rural women are largely invisible to policy makers.

- Poverty and financial insecurity, primarily as a result of unemployment, job insecurity, low wages or seasonal work, is a key determinant of health for rural women and their families.

The final policy recommendations contained ones that are especially pertinent to this wider look at women's needs. They include:

- The project noted the importance of involving women in Rural, Remote or Northern Canada in gender/place/culture-based analyses. Women must have input into assessing the effectiveness of policies to improve the social and economic capital in their own region.
- Long-term operational funding for community-based organizations is necessary to catalyse women's engagement in and coordination of economic, political and social services in Rural, Remote and Northern communities.
- It is essential to take steps to stabilize household incomes.

An overarching focus of the research was on the challenge of ensuring Rural, Remote and Northern women have a voice that will indeed be heard at a political and policy implementation level. Specific actions recommended increasing funding "to build upon the social capital of women community leaders" (p 10) and included the following: including:

- leadership training
- travel
- networking
- proposal writing
- honoraria and childcare

This need to support social engagement and capacity building activities was a strong message in the Manitoba focus groups re: Changing Needs of Rural and Northern Women.

This research on women's health also includes a synthesis of findings on the positive and negative aspects of living rurally, implications of distance, and health as health care. Common themes include the absence or fragility of community infrastructure such as child care, public transportation, inadequate housing (especially for seniors) limited local-educational opportunities and few jobs. The lack of confidentiality in small communities and the resulting reluctance to disclose personal issues and volunteer burnout were other important findings. These findings mirror what was said, heard, and reported in the Changing Needs of Rural and Northern Women focus groups, interviews and questionnaires.

"Family Violence" in Rural, Farm and Remote Canada; A Project of: The Canadian Farm Women's Network, by Wendy Scott, W.M. Scott & Associates, Human Resource Development March 3, 1995

This research paper was commissioned to address the issue of 'Family Violence in Rural Canada'. It explored issues of violence that are common to the general population as well as those that are unique to the rural/farming community. Their research identified that there are distinct differences in how the resulting financial and human costs of family violence impacts those in rural vs. urban communities:

- Lack of rural services

- Lack of family violence programs, and
- Slower judicial process for rural communities, all compounded by the distance factor

The researchers spoke with farm women who believed that there are three realities that contribute to violence:

1. poor economic conditions
2. long hours of labour on and off the farm (paid and unpaid)
3. high debt loads and few solutions

The stress related to these three realities was seen to be a contributing factor to family violence on the farm.

The farm women also brought forward seven issues of primary importance to rural communities:

1. **Family Violence:** the need for sensitization of professionals and resources of the factors that relate to family violence on farms.
2. **Family Violence:** rural education and awareness campaigns as a method of prevention
3. **Family Violence:** research and consultation with rural and farm people to reflect the actual problems, needs and solutions concerning family violence.
4. **Family Violence:** community ownership of the problem for family violence in rural, farm and remote regions.
5. **Economic Security:** the impact of poverty and the need for economic security for rural and farm women.
6. **Child Care:** flexible rural child care to eliminate risk during the operation of the farm.
7. **Rural Support Services:** re-instatement and/or development of essential support services for families in rural, farm and remote regions.

An ongoing consultation process between government, community groups and national farm women leaders is an effective method of enacting change.

The three realities and seven concerns are very relevant and applicable to this project on the Changing Needs of Rural and Northern Women in 2005.

The Canadian Farm Family at Work: Exploring Gender and Generation, by Diane J.F. Martz, Ingrid S. Brueckner, March 2003. Centre for Rural Studies and Enrichment, St. Peter's College, Muenster, Saskatchewan

This study, commissioned by the National Farmers Union, followed farm families for 15 months in 2001 and 2002, looking at their work and the time they spent on various activities. The results were compared to a similar study done 20 years earlier. This is a detailed, in-depth study that factored gender and age into each aspect of the analysis. This depth gives an especially useful picture of reality for farm women in 2003, and how reality has changed in the last 20 years.

Over the past two decades, women's contributions to almost all aspects of the farm operation have increased. The number of farm women and men working at non-farm employment has increased by more than 50%.

Off-farm work has become very important to the viability of the family farm. Farm women and men each work an average of 11 hours per day, 7 days per week all year round. This is over 1.5 hours more than the Canadian population as a whole.

Farm women under age 50 spend significantly more time working and less time on leisure activities than women over the age of 50.

The report cites a number of findings relevant to research on the Changing Needs of Rural and Northern Women:

- **Farm people work longer hours**
The total hours of work done by farm men and women are higher than the hours of work done by the average Canadian in a comparable age group. Farm women and men spend more hours in paid work and more hours in volunteer and community work than the average Canadian, making up for the increased hours spend by reducing their leisure time. (8.1)
- **Non-farm work is essential to survival**
“The study clearly points out the importance of non-farm work to the viability of the family farm. This trend ties the future of the family farm to the ability of the rural region to generate high quality employment and for the farm family members to create additional income to support the farm operation.” (8.2)
- **Urban Canada must be educated about the importance of agriculture**
The farmers involved in the study felt that urban Canadians must be educated about agriculture to increase the support for farmers and the willingness of urban Canadians to buy local agricultural products where possible.

Northern Manitoba Women and Sustainable Economic Development, by Hari Dimitrakopoulou, Northern Women's Development Network, 1993

This study was conducted by northern women, specifically a network of 10 northern women's organizations, interested in a statistical profile of women in the economy of the northern Manitoba. This research provides a clear picture that can act as a baseline for more recent comparisons.

“Northern Manitoba Women and Sustainable Economic Development” found that:

- there were fewer women income earners in the north in comparison to the rest of the province
- self-employment for women in the north was lower than the provincial and national averages
- there was an education gap amongst women in the north as compared to both other women and men
- the education gap was especially true for Aboriginal women.

The research identified barriers to northern women's education and economic development. Barriers to education included:

- the lack of child care
- inadequate housing
- inadequate funding
- stereotypes
- limited course offerings.

Barriers to economic development included:

- the lack of child care
- limited education and training opportunities
- poverty
- geographic isolation
- lack of business skills and financing
- lack of jobs.

The report called for the development of a sustainable economic development action plan and presented 20 principles to be incorporated into the plan. Important underlying beliefs included:

- the need for northern women to be directly involved in all aspects of developing such a plan, and
- recognition of the differing needs as defined by their place of residence, culture, age and individual circumstances (p. 136).

Resource Needs for Families with Pre school Children in the Marquette Region - Presented to: *The Marquette Parent Child Coalition*; Presented by: *The Rural Development Institute, Brandon University, May 30, 2002*

As a result of the initial funding for Healthy Child Initiative, the report was commissioned to:

- a) Determine the services available to families with pre school children in the Marquette Regional Health Authority district,
- b) To gain insight into what services families saw as most important, and
- c) To provide a framework for a preliminary action plan for the region's Healthy Child Project.

The researchers invited residents to participate in focus groups in 10 communities throughout the region and, in all, 103 residents participated.

The report gives a detailed look at issues for families, and thus for women with preschool children, in one region of rural Manitoba. These findings can be extrapolated across other regions of rural southern and central Manitoba with confidence, as the demographics and the service delivery system are similar across all regions. The information is relevant as we consider the Changing Needs of Rural and Northern Women.

Key findings included:

- Services provided by Public Health Nurses are vital for families in the Marquette region. They are the “front line”.
- Flexible daycare was the greatest need in 9 of the 10 communities.
- Parents of preschool children want more information.
- Parents of preschool children feel isolated.
- There are very different perceptions and expectations relating to the services required for pregnancy and childbirth.
- The attitudes of local service providers affect the use of the service.
- There is a stigma attached to the use of some services.

The report included an analysis of the information as it impacted on the potential for future direction by the regional Healthy Child Project. Findings specifically relevant to the Changing Needs of Rural and Northern Women were:

The rural economy is changing and there is an increased need for:

- flexible childcare
- affordable housing, and
- a myriad of other supports.

‘As yet, some local politicians and community leaders have not responded to this change. It was mentioned in three communities that councils are more interested in attracting tourism and business than in supporting families.’ (p. 19)

There are factors affecting utilization of services in a rural community. Even if a service exists, people probably won’t come to it unless it is:

- **Available** - when it is needed. (i.e., won’t be used if waiting lists are long)
- **Appropriate** - and relevant to the family’s current situation
- **Advertised** - via word of mouth and local recommendations. (The personal relationship with the Public Health Nurse is a key reason why the nurses are the most immediate ‘front-line’ resource.)
- **Accommodating** – fitting with the needs and values of the citizens.
- **Accessible** – distance, transportation, time
- **Affordable** – question of cost encompasses not just money but also time and energy and includes travel time, time off work, time away from farm or family.

Synthesis of Themes

The literature review provided a basis or a starting point for the project. Manitoba is a rural province. 28.1% of Manitobans live in rural Manitoba (Statistics Canada, 2001 Census). With women making up 50.9% of the overall population, Manitoba’s Rural and Northern women make up a significant percentage of the population, and their contribution to the economic and social well-being of their families, their communities and the province is huge.

Historically, Manitoba’s Rural and Northern women have faced all the same challenges and issues that other Canadian women experience. They also face the added challenges of geographic isolation, limited educational and employment opportunities and reduced access to social programs and resources.

There were issues that recurred thought-out the literature. We have organized the material from the review of the literature into five predominant themes:

- Employment / Income
- Child Care Services
- Education and Training
- Health and Wellness
- Technology
- Rural and Northern Women as Decision Makers - Capacity Building

Employment and Income

Income matters. Women make up about 58.7% of those living in poverty nationally in Canada. A large percentage of those living in poverty are women living in rural and northern communities (Northern Manitoba Women and Sustainable Economic Development, 1993). It is well documented in the literature that better social and economic conditions mean better health (Improving the Health of Canadians, CIHI, 2004).

The agricultural economy has experienced a severe decline in the last two years, and it is predicted to remain precariously low for the foreseeable future. The northern resource-based economy is also struggling. As a result of depressed agricultural economy and lack of employment, more women in rural and northern Manitoba are becoming interested in self-employment.

Access to credit and financing is a great problem for Rural and Northern women. Many financial institutions are reluctant to lend money to women farmers, to immigrant women and to women who do not have a steady, full-time job. Some specialized financial programs and services have been implemented by the government and private development organizations to help reduce the barriers faced by self-employed women, particularly those in disadvantaged positions (e.g., low earnings and low collateral). In spite of the support of these specialized micro-credit loans, many women still fall between the no credit history and no collateral categories. In such cases, more help is needed (Rural, Remote and Northern Women's Health, 2004).

The Women's Enterprise Centre has been providing much needed planning and financial support for Manitoba women since 1994. The Centre's focus is on providing resources and assistance for women trying to start their own businesses. The regional development corporations also provide support and resources at a local level.

Child Care Services

The literature identifies child care as an essential support for education, for employment and economic development, for farm safety, for family health and wellness, and for early childhood development and learning. "Child care is important not only because it allows parents to balance their work and family responsibilities, but also because it can be a key contributor to ensuring positive developmental outcomes. Experts agree that the best child care system is an accessible and educationally strong day care or preschool system." (p 59, Improving the Health of Canadians)

“Child care is important not only because it allows parents to balance their work and family responsibilities, but also because it can be a key contributor to ensuring positive developmental outcomes.”

Rural and Northern women are faced with the challenge of finding affordable, quality child care that is truly accessible to them. As noted before, the reality of flexible, part time employment is mirrored in the need for flexible, part time child care. Urban programs often enroll children on a standard 5 days per week, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. basis. That does not work in rural areas. Women cannot afford to pay for child care on days when they are not working. The child care program must be able to offer flexible care options that respond to parents’ complex lives. The issues of location and commuting distance add further challenges as rural and northern women attempt to make good care arrangements for their children.

The vast majority of Manitoba Child Care programs are non-profit organizations run by a local parent-based board of directors. Rural traditions promote importance of family values, of family working together, of Mom staying home caring for her children. Not only do rural women have to personally address these traditional stereotypes when they decide to use child care and enter the work force, they must also tackle these same traditional values systems to develop the child care in their community. It is left to the women to come together in an effort to mobilize the community to see child care, not as something that is going to destroy the traditional family, but rather as a valuable and essential service that supports the rural family.

The time commitments and organizational challenges are huge. As rural and northern parents take on more full-time employment as well as their family responsibilities, there is less and less time available to volunteer (The Canadian Farm Family at Work, 2003). The issues facing the boards of community organizations also continue to increase in complexity and volume. More governance supports and resources are essential.

Education and Training Issues

Better social and economic conditions mean better health.

The importance of education to human and economic development is well documented. Education is the key to everything, from getting a job to improving one’s earning and career potential, to improving one’s health status. Education is also the key to social development, not only to individuals but to the whole segment of society as well (Northern Manitoba Women and Sustainable Economic Development, 1993).

Rural education options in Manitoba continue to expand. In recent years, programs such as BUNTEP (Brandon University Northern Teacher’s Education Program) and the northern social work, nursing and general university and college programs available through University College of the North have resulted in many more Rural and Northern women being able to access an education. For example, BUNTEP is currently training teachers in

Thompson, Lynn Lake, Cross Lake, Norway House, St. Theresa Point and Winnipeg. In spite of these initiatives, issues such as, distance, financing, child care and awareness of the options available all present barriers for many women.

Health & Wellness

Health and wellness is impacted both positively and negative by living in a rural or northern area. The distance to the nearest health service, the lack of health and wellness resources and the related time and travel costs needed to access both front line and specialist health services are all barriers that reduce rural and northern people's use of the health system.

In an effort to keep her family healthy and safe, it often falls on the woman to access health care services for the family, to gather information about health and wellness, and to incorporate that information into the family life-style on a day-to-day basis (Rural, Remote and Northern Women's Health, 2004). As well as the geographic isolation and the limited access to health care services, rural women often face socio-cultural values that influence health-seeking behaviours. This may include striving to change long-standing life-style and cultural practices. For example, rural children have historically had the whole farm as an unsupervised adventure playground, free to play and explore while their parents worked. Traditionally, child care was viewed with suspicion. Women choosing to use child care were not doing their part to 'maintain rural family values'. It's known from the research however,

that children's accidental injury rates are higher in rural and northern communities (Childhood Injury Rates in Manitoba, 2002).

“As children, we had no fear; after all, we were invincible then. Now as a parent of farm children, I have a lot of fear. I fear for my children's safety...” (Egilson, One Parent Speaks Out).

One rural woman wrote about the cultural and life-style challenge and the pressure for this next generation of rural parents to continue opting for less than safe options for their children this way:

“As children, we had no fear; after all, we were invincible then. Now as a parent of farm children, I have a lot of fear. I fear for my children's safety, that they might not be as lucky as my brother and I to escape unhurt.” (Egilson, Viable Child Care Options: One Parent Speaks Out, 1993)

There is a strong correlation between poverty and financial insecurity and the health of rural women and their families. The very low incomes and financial unpredictability is the result of:

- farm crises such as drought, BSE
- unemployment
- job insecurity, low wages and seasonal work.

Lack of employment options and few child care supports mean that as they try to supplement the family income, Rural and Northern women are often forced to turn to part-time or casual employment which generally provides few health and disability benefits or pension benefits (Child Care Coalition of Manitoba, 2004). As they do so, safe and healthy child care options are often limited. Efforts to improve the economic and social capital of a community will also improve the overall level of health and wellness.

The report, *‘Improving the Health of Canadians’* reminds Canadians, **“Rich people live longer than poor people, and they are healthier at every stage of life. Don't be poor!”**

Rural and Northern Women as Decision Makers - Capacity Building

The literature consistently cited that Rural and Northern women have knowledge about what influences the well-being of themselves and their families. While rural women are often invisible to the policy makers it is essential that they are able to have input (Rural, Remote and Northern Women's Health, 2004).

Whether the specific issue under review was health based (Rural, Remote and Northern Women's Health, 2004), had an economic focus (Northern Manitoba Women and Sustainable Economic Development, 1993), or was specifically looking at violence in the rural community (Family Violence in Rural, Farm and Remote Canada, 1995), the recommendations included the need to support women's capacity and skills as advocates, as policy makers and as the gate-keepers of their family's well-being. Other studies highlighted the need to ensure that as services are developed, specific input from the women in the community must be considered if the services are to be truly successful (Resource Needs for Families with Preschool Children in the Marquette Region, (2002).

Rural women are largely invisible to policy makers.

Summary of Literature

The literature identifies many issues that confront Rural and Northern women as they strive to meet the needs of their family and their community while still finding energy to address their own individual needs for health, wellness, self-care and economic well-being. The ongoing challenges of geography, of distance and isolation; the realities of declining rural and northern resource-based economies; the need to attract young people in the community – these are common themes across all parts of rural and northern Manitoba.

However, Rural and Northern women also demonstrate much innate strength and resilience. They continue to work long hours, to volunteer in their communities, to care for children and families and often to flourish. This strength, in spite of challenging circumstances, was identified in the literature and was also evident in our conversations with, and input from, Rural and Northern women. There is a sense of strength and well-being that comes from living in a community where you trust your neighbours and feel that you belong (Improving the Health of Canadians, 2004).

Underlying the common issues and challenges faced by Rural and Northern women is the reality of each woman's uniqueness. The literature consistently reminds us that there is no one common type of Rural and Northern woman, and no 'one size fits all' solution. As issues and possible solutions are considered, researchers and policy planners need to engage in both gender-based and diversity-based analysis to effectively respond to the ever-changing needs of all Rural and Northern women.

There is no one common type of Rural and Northern woman,
and no 'one size fits all' solution.



Visiting University College of the North – The Pas

Methodology

This study was conducted to identify the changing needs of Rural and Northern women in Manitoba. The research involved an extensive literature review and up-to-date data and anecdotal information from individual women and key respondents. The research objectives were to identify:

- women's opinions and perspectives of their life experiences as members of their communities
- what barriers they encounter
- what has been done by the government, organizations and women themselves to address these issues
- strategies that are working well
- issues that still need to be addressed
- new issues that pose challenges to women in their communities.

The intent of the study was not only to add research and knowledge, but more importantly, to provide recommendations on how these issues can be addressed.

This research employed both qualitative and quantitative methods to build on data identified in the literature. The qualitative methods gave women the opportunity to speak from their own experiences and relate to the questions concerning issues in their own words. The quantitative methods gave women the opportunity to respond to structured questions concerning issues that are relevant to them.

Data Sources and Participant Selections

Participants were selected using relevant sampling and referral from a community-based network of women organizations. Women of different age cohorts, occupation and status were selected based on the communities in which they live. Letters were sent to individual potential participants telling them what the research was about and asking their consent for participation. Women who gave their consent to participate were asked to complete a written statement of informed consent (see appendix 5).

Qualitative data were drawn from a series of focus groups, discussion groups and telephone interviews. Quantitative data was drawn from a survey distributed to women in different communities in Manitoba.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were conducted in the following communities:

Northern Manitoba

- 6 women and students in University College of the North (UCN), The Pas.
- 5 women and students in University College of the North (UCN), Thompson.
- 7 women community organization leaders in Thompson.

Rural Manitoba

- 4 farm and off-farm women in Poplar Point.
- 9 farm and off-farm women in Langruth.

A discussion group was held in Winnipeg with 16 women leaders of provincial women's organizations (see appendix 1 for more information).

Telephone Interviews

Three telephone interviews were done with the farm rural stress line and one rural woman.

Survey

Surveys were distributed to 114 women from different parts of Manitoba through conferences, women's organizations and community contacts:

- Farm Women's Conference 2004 in Portage la Prairie (rural and farm women from across Manitoba)
- Fall Fair 2004 in Brandon
- The Women's Institute Provincial Board of Directors
- Brandon University Aboriginal student centre

As well, the surveys were distributed to women from other communities across various regions in Manitoba: Thompson, The Pas, Langruth, Poplar Point, Campus Manitoba Portage, St. Malo, Miami, Minnedosa, Steinbach and Brandon.

Participants

In total, 47 women participated in the focus groups and discussion groups in the northern and rural communities selected, 3 took part in telephone interviews, and 114 across Manitoba responded to survey questions.

SETTING	TYPE OF AUDIENCE	NUMBER OF WOMEN
Discussion group	Organization leaders	23
Focus group	Rural women	13
Focus group	Northern women	11
Survey	Rural/Northern women	114
Telephone interview	Farm & Rural Stress line, Rural woman	2 1
Total number of women		164

Process

Focus groups, discussion groups, and interviews were held in rural communities, northern communities and Winnipeg with time and location arranged for convenience of participants with consideration for personal schedules and work. In all venues, women were asked to respond to the questions:

- What is rural and northern?
- What needs are women faced with?

- What needs have been met in your community?
- What is working well?
- What are the new needs women have in your community?
- What do you think can be done to meet these needs?

Identification of themes

Data was subsequently analyzed using qualitative research techniques to identify consistent and recurring themes. The data from the survey was analyzed using a research analysis software program, Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Main findings

This portion of the report is organized to first give the reader an overview of the focus group and questionnaire data. This is followed by a detailed description and analysis of the issues by theme. Data from the literature review, the focus groups, telephone interviews and the questionnaire are then incorporated into an analysis of each of the main issues facing rural and northern women.



Participants in Thompson focus group share their thoughts and issues.

Focus group findings

The participating women provided a wealth of information on their experiences and opinions. The women enthusiastically discussed the various challenges and barriers women face in their communities, what has been done and their new needs and issues. Tables that capture the essence of their input are included here. The reader can find a more complete summary of the focus group data in Appendix 5.

Improved Programs (what is working)

Rural women	Northern women
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Child care services when available2. Increased educational opportunities (Distance Ed)3. Healthy Child programs4. Increase in professional career options5. Technology is increasing options for women's education and self-employment	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Increased education opportunities (close and affordable)2. School programming in life skills3. Willingness to partner at local levels4. Neighborhood Alive, i.e., playgrounds5. Improved senior rental housing6. Networking between craft groups and informal support via local church7. Supported parenting programs8. Career opportunities for women with education

Needs of Rural and Northern Women

<u>Rural women</u>	<u>Northern women</u>
<p>Sports Recreational activities/sport/exercise program for Kids and adults.</p>	<p>Sports More recreational activities/facilities for kids and adults.</p>
<p>Technology Computer courses for seniors. Access to the Internet. Cell phone connections.</p>	<p>Business More training for business skills. Entrepreneurship training.</p>
<p>Employment More jobs for women and young people.</p>	<p>Transportation Lower airfare cost. More buses and regular schedules.</p>
<p>Transportation Bus routes and regular schedules.</p>	<p>Education More funding for women's education. Public Education regarding women's education options and funding available.</p>
<p>Services Affordable services (Tradesman services such as plumbers, electricians are expensive due to mileage costs.) Hotels, motels, restaurants are limited.</p>	<p>Health care More health care officials i.e. doctors, midwives, support workers, nursing aids, helpers. Better health care services.</p>
<p>Credit facilities Access to loans for women and increased funding for farm support programs.</p>	<p>Child care Lower cost for child care services. Child care in all communities</p>
<p>Education Accessible adult education Online access to education. More schools in rural areas. (<i>Stop closing the local schools.</i>)</p>	<p>Professionals and skilled workers More professionals in the north (keep a professional of every field in the north). More skilled workers to provide services in banks and other services/trades people.</p>
<p>Healthcare More doctors in rural areas. Better healthcare services such as open emergency rooms in rural hospitals. Rurally-responsive healthcare services. Closer healthcare facilities.</p>	<p>Life skills Positive life skill centers for young people (to reduce alcohol and drug use and violence). Women's Resource Centres: Motivational speakers for young women. Role models and mentors.</p>
<p>Child Care Affordable, flexible child care in all communities.</p>	<p>Family Values Parenting programs. Traditional and spiritual values programs.</p>

Survey

150 surveys were printed and distributed to women in different Rural and Northern communities in Manitoba. 114 responses were returned and 36 surveys were not returned

The survey was divided into two sections: Demographic information and women's issues, totaling 28 questions in all. The findings from the survey complemented the results of the issues discussed in the various focus groups and from the interviews conducted. Again key pieces of data are included here, and the reader can find the complete survey analysis in Appendix 6.

Demographic section

Figure 1 illustrates the age distribution of respondents.

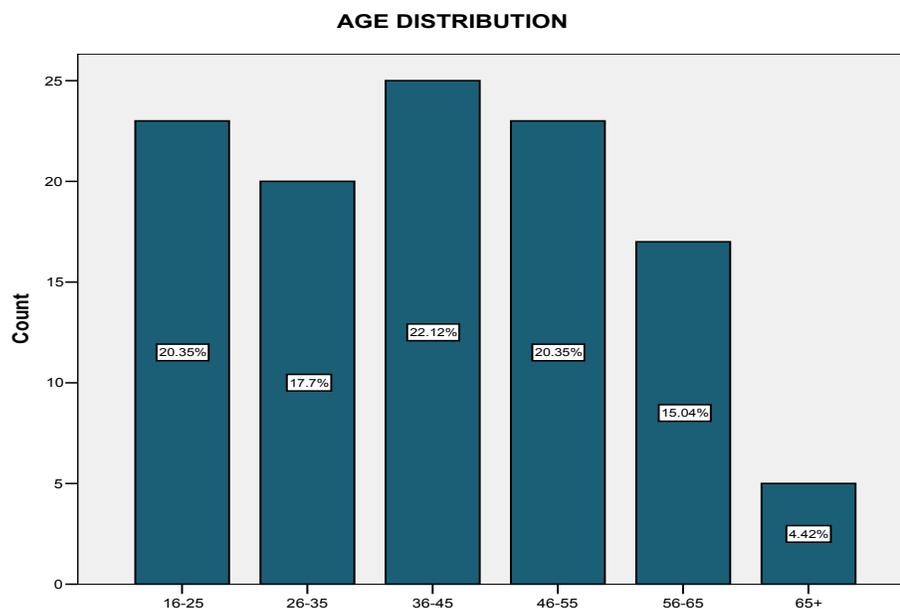


Figure 1

There was a balanced age distribution with:
20.35% in the “16 – 25 year old” group
17.7% in the “26-35 year old” group
22.12% in the “36-45 year old” group
20.35% in the 46 – 55 year old group
16.04% in “56-65 year old” group, and
4.42% are in “over 65 year old” group.

A majority of the women were younger women, and only 4.425% were over 65 years.

Figure 3 illustrates the educational level of respondents.

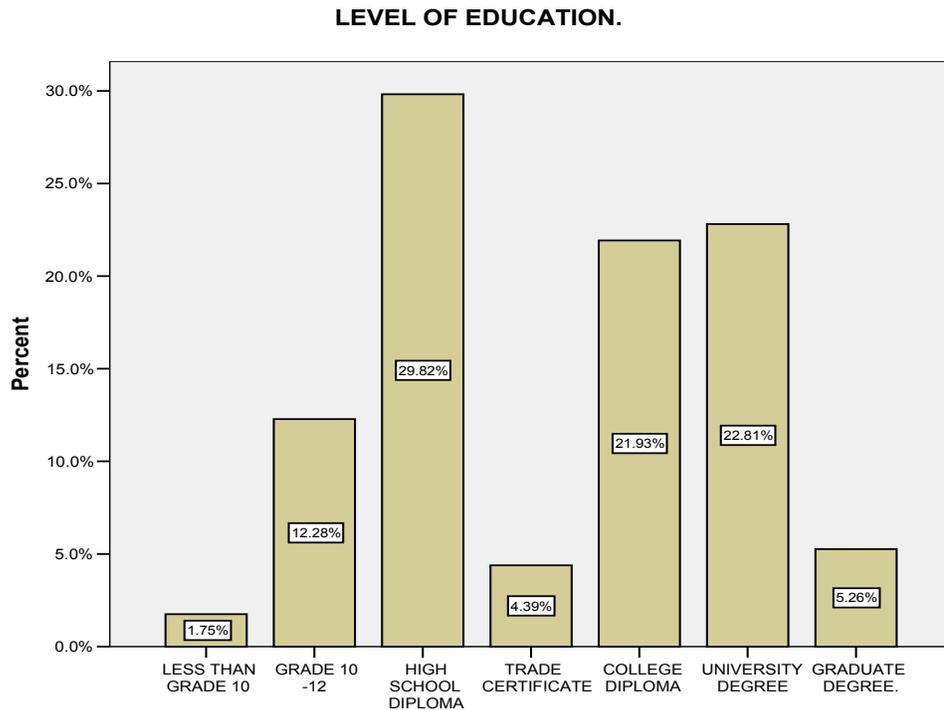


Figure 3

1.75% had less than grade 10 level of education,
12.28% had grades 10 –12,
29.82% had a high school diploma,
22.81% had a university degree,
21.93% had a college diploma,
4.39% had a trade certificate and
5.26% had a graduate degree.

In comparing this data to Statistics Canada data regarding the percentage of northern and rural women with at least a high school education, this sample is more educated than the provincial average. According to Statistics Canada (2001) 25.6% of Manitoba women aged 20 and over had less than a high school graduation certificate.

We believe this reflects the enhanced capacity level of the women who chose to respond. However it is also striking to keep this data in mind when considering the personal and family income levels of the respondents. In spite of the above average education levels, both personal and family income levels are significantly below the provincial average. The challenges for Rural and Northern women are indeed complex.

These Rural and Northern women's incomes are noticeably lower than the Provincial average.

Figure 4 illustrates personal income levels of respondents.

41.94% earned less than \$15,000,
23.66% earned \$15,000 - \$24,999,
23.66% earned \$25,000 - \$34,999 and
10.79% earned more than \$45,000 monthly.

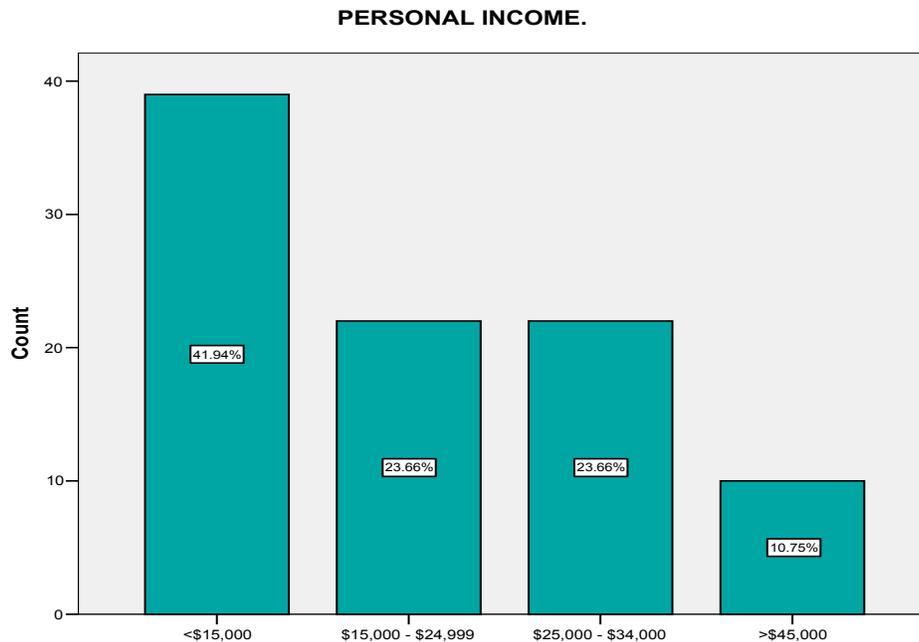


Figure 4

Statistics Canada Census 2004 shows that average monthly personal income for women in Manitoba is \$20,469. This study demonstrates that many of the women in rural and Northern communities earn less than the average income.

According to Statistics Canada Census 2004, the average total household income in Manitoba is \$50,934. A majority of the respondents have a household income below this provincial average, and much lower than urban families.

21.21% earned less than \$15,000 16.16% earned \$15,000 - \$24,999
16.16% earned \$25,000 - \$35,999 5.05% earned \$36,000 - \$44,999
41.41% of the women reported a total household income of more than \$45,000.

This result is similar to previous research findings -- that many **households in rural and northern communities earn less than the provincial average household income.** (See figure 9 in Appendix 6).

Northern women said lack of child care, cost and distance are barriers preventing women from taking further education.

The main barrier preventing women from taking further education is lack of childcare.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	1	2.7	2.7	2.7
1	10	27.0	27.0	29.7
2	16	43.2	43.2	73.0
3	7	18.9	18.9	91.9
4	2	5.4	5.4	97.3
5	1	2.7	2.7	100.0
Total	37	100.0	100.0	

Table 1

Seventy point two percent of the northern women agreed that the main barrier preventing women from further education is lack of child care, 8% disagreed, 19% were undecided and 3% did not respond at all.

The main barrier preventing women taking further education is money.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	1	2.7	2.7	2.7
1	8	21.6	21.6	24.3
2	15	40.5	40.5	64.9
3	7	18.9	18.9	83.8
4	4	10.8	10.8	94.6
5	2	5.4	5.4	100.0
Total	37	100.0	100.0	

Table 2

Sixty-two percent of the women agreed that the main barrier preventing women from taking further education is money, 16% disagreed, 19% were undecided and 3% did not respond at all.

The main barrier preventing women from taking further education is distance.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	1	2.7	2.7	2.7
1	7	18.9	18.9	21.6
2	15	40.5	40.5	62.2
3	6	16.2	16.2	78.4
4	7	18.9	18.9	97.3
5	1	2.7	2.7	100.0
Total	37	100.0	100.0	

Table 3

Fifty-nine point four percent of Northern women agreed that the main barrier preventing women from taking further education is distance, 22% disagreed, 16% were undecided and 3% did not respond at all.

Rural women said that distance and money are the main barriers preventing rural women from taking further education.

The main barrier preventing women from taking further education is distance.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	3	3.9	3.9	3.9
1	10	13.0	13.0	16.9
2	36	46.8	46.8	63.6
3	11	14.3	14.3	77.9
4	16	20.8	20.8	98.7
5	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	77	100.0	100.0	

Table 4

Sixty percent of the women agreed that the main barrier preventing women from further education is distance, 22% disagreed, 14% were undecided and 4% did not respond at all.

The main barrier preventing women from taking further education is money.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	3	3.9	3.9	3.9
1	7	9.1	9.1	13.0
2	38	49.4	49.4	62.3
3	16	20.8	20.8	83.1
4	12	15.6	15.6	98.7
5	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	77	100.0	100.0	

Table 5

Fifty-nine percent of the rural women agreed that the main barrier preventing women from taking further education is money, 17% disagreed, 21% were undecided and 4% did not respond at all.

Summary of survey responses for Rural and Northern women

The survey data shows that Rural and Northern women have similar issues in their communities. Women expressed similar views in questions relating to cost of ambulance service, access to medical health specialists, adequate employment opportunities for young people, and sufficient post-secondary education for women. Money, childcare and distance are barriers to further education for women.

Rural and Northern women showed some differences in opinion of which issues or needs were the most important to them. These differing opinions were reflected in the questions

relating to adequate access to family doctors, sufficient licensed childcare services, cost of childcare services, flexibility of childcare services, overall adequate employment opportunities, adequate employment for women, sufficient training for women and distance as a barrier to further education. These differences in the importance of specific needs demonstrate that women's needs are impacted by place and culture. Their needs vary depending on their life experiences, on the services available and the realities of their community.

The main issues identified by the women in the survey correspond closely with issues identified in the literature and the focus groups. Income and employment, child care services, furthering their education, and health and wellness are recurring themes.

Discussion and Recommendations

The key issues are categorized as follows:

Employment / Income

- Access to credit and loans
- Employment opportunities
- Self-employment/ entrepreneurship
- Income

Child Care Services

- Availability of services
- Flexibility of service
- Delivery models

Education and Training

- Post-secondary education (access, cost, other barriers)
- Skills training
- Business training
- Adult education

Health and Wellness

- Low income adds to health challenges
- Services must be accessible
- Stress; no time for self-care
- Silo'd services

Technology

- Access to high speed Internet
- Cell phone connections
- Effective telephone services

Capacity Building

- Input into policy making
- Women need a voice
- Gender/culture/place analysis

This research reveals that these issues are common to Rural and Northern women irrespective of where they live. However, addressing the issues from a general perspective will not be effective unless individual community responses are incorporated. One solution will not fit all communities and all women.

A brief discussion of the main issues and the pertinent recommendations follows:

Employment and Income

The research identifies that economic issues are ongoing challenges for Rural and Northern women and their families.

The income level of Rural and Northern women is low compared to urban Manitoba. The personal income earned by these women is well below the general average personal income in Manitoba (\$21,480) and in Canada. Forty-two percent of respondents to the questionnaire have an income less than \$15,000. Living costs continue to rise, and with a yearly personal income of less than \$15,000, it is difficult to live well.

An increased employment opportunity was one of the needs women in the focus groups and respondents to the questionnaire emphasized the most. Rural women stressed the need for creation of jobs that will provide opportunities for women and young people. An on-going issue that was named in both the literature and focus groups is the need for long-term job creation that will help address the problem of youth out-migration from rural and northern communities. The need for off-farm jobs to supplement farm income in rural areas requires the creation of additional employment support programs and entrepreneurship opportunities, as well as simply more jobs.

Assessing job creation and self-employment opportunities with a gender lens is important. The literature describes a number of on-going bureaucratic challenges faced by women. Access to credit and loans has been a long-term issue. Women often do not get loans because they do not have the required collateral demanded by financial institutions. Some specialized financial programs such as the Women and Economic Development Consortium established in 1996 and other growing organizations like the Women Enterprise Centre born out of Women's Economic Development in 1994, in partnership with banks, credit unions and chambers of commerce, have helped women access credit and loans. However, there is still the need for improved access to alternative financing.

Self-employment and entrepreneurship is an issue that requires more attention. The Government of Canada has embarked on the policy of job creation through small-scale businesses and enterprises in order to reduce the problem of unemployment. Women want to become small-scale business owners and create jobs for themselves and others, if they receive the needed support from both government and organizations. The provincial farm women's conference in November 1986 created interest in self-employment for self-fulfillment and independence. Women still need entrepreneurial training and financial support to build on this potential.

Recommendations:

- **Increase self-employment and entrepreneurial skills programs in rural and Northern communities.**
- **The three levels of government must work together to increase local job creation.**
- **Women must have input at the community level into developing sustainable economic development and job creation plans for their community.**
- **More job training and job readiness programs are essential for women who are trying to move into the work force for the first time.**
- **Increase the minimum wage to make it worthwhile for women to go to work.**
- **More child care services and enhanced communication technology are needed to support women's employment options.**

Child Care

Child care has been much in the public eye over the past months. As the federal and provincial governments negotiate over the creation of a National Child Care strategy, Manitoba's rural and northern families continue to experience a patchwork of child care programs and services. As we look at what Rural and Northern Manitoba women said about child care services, it is helpful to look first at the evolution of the service itself and at the Manitoba context.

What is Child Care?

What was once known as day care, and then child care, is now often referred to as early childhood learning and care. Whatever name is used, child care is now an essential service for young families, whether they live in rural, northern or urban settings. Across Canada over 70% of mothers now work outside the home, and many other parents are involved in education and training.

Child Care is a women's issue: Child care has often been seen as a women's issue. Quality child care helps support women in the labour market, helps reduce their poverty and unemployment and helps women balance work and family needs. The focus groups and telephone interviews spoke of the struggle to balance employment to earn income, while still meeting family responsibilities, Quality child care options was identified as an essential support to women.

Child Care is a farm safety issue: In rural areas child care is also a farm safety issue. Farming is one of the last occupations where parents regularly take their children to the workplace. Unless child care services are available locally at an affordable cost, farm families will continue to take their children to work with them and the number of children injured or killed in farming related accidents will continue to climb.

Child Care is community-based: Almost all child care programs in Manitoba are non-profit organizations run under the auspice of a local volunteer board of directors. In order to access provincial funding, 20% of the board of directors must be parents using the facility. This requirement for local parent participation is one of the strengths of the Manitoba program and helps ensure the program responds to community needs. However, the commitment of volunteer hours needed to start and maintain a child care program in a community is huge.

Research study after study speaks to the time-stress experienced by working families. Rural families work long hours, with both men and women working an average of 11 hours per day, 7 days per week, all year round (Canadian Farm Family at Work, 2003). This is 1.5 hours more than the Canadian average. While rural men and women also still volunteer more than the Canadian average, these numbers are dropping dramatically for the younger families. And the volunteer hours come at the expense of personal leisure time (The Canadian Farm Family at Work, 2003.) It is often beyond the capacity of the local community to develop and maintain this needed, in fact essential, resource.

Child Care is early learning: As well as providing child care as a support to parents who are working or going to school, quality early childhood learning and care is now recognized as a key determinant of school readiness, of future success and well-being. The importance of children's early childhood learning and care experiences, both in the home and in child

care settings, is well understood (Rural, Remote and Northern National Child Care Strategy, 2005). As child care supports women as they improve their life circumstances, it also enriches children's lives and learning experiences. Children who grow up in enriched environments show the benefits throughout their entire lives.

Child Care in Manitoba: In spite of Manitoba being a leader in child care; the literature confirms that there is a shortage of licensed care across all of Manitoba and that shortage is worse in Rural and Northern areas (Resource Needs for Families with Pre-school Children in the Marquette Region, 2002). The shortage of volunteer board members for child care centres and other community organizations continues to be an issue. Here again, large geographic areas and lower population density provide an additional challenge to the provision of child care services and to community development overall. Financial viability and the need for intense and ongoing fundraising activities add to the difficulties.

What did Rural and Northern women say?

"We wouldn't have kids if we didn't have child care"

Each of the focus and discussion groups and the telephone interviews identified access to quality child care as a key issue for Rural and Northern women. In communities where there is a child care program and focus group participants had care for their children, the comments reflected how important that was to them. *"We wouldn't have kids if we didn't have the child care"* and *"We wouldn't be working (without child care)"* were telling statements.

During a discussion of the importance of child care and how it was available at the college, a northern student at UCN noted, however, that she would have to quit school in February when her baby was born. There is no child care for children under 3 months of age at the college, and care for infants under 2 years of age is especially difficult to find.

The questionnaire results show that **70% of Northern women see the lack of child care as the main barrier preventing women from taking further education.** This was the highest percentage response for any question. Forty-nine percent of Northern women felt there is a shortage of child care in their communities. Cost and flexibility were also seen as barriers for Northern women trying to access child care.

New Initiatives in Child Care: Child care is one of the programs delivered by the provinces with some funding dollars flowing from the federal government. Prime Minister Martin and the Liberal Government made a national child care strategy one of their 2004 election promises and since then there has been a series of federal and provincial/territorial meetings of the social service Ministers to discuss how such a program should be structured. Child care has been the centre of much public debate and discussion.

Most recently, the Federal Budget of February 22, 2005 included a commitment to \$5 billion dollars to the provinces over a 5-year period. There could be substantial growth in Manitoba's child care program. This growth must address the needs of Rural and Northern women as well as urban communities.

As Manitoba and the federal government finalize their agreement, and then as Manitoba moves forward with this major program expansion, there are important policy decisions to be made. It is essential that the policy makers consider the effect of these decisions on the provision of child care in Rural and Northern communities (National Child Care Strategy for Rural, Remote and Northern Communities, 2005).

As documented in the discussion around health and wellness, Rural and Northern women need to have input into the policy development process on an ongoing basis. It is important that resources and supports be put in place to encourage women's active involvement in the process; to give Rural and Northern women a voice.

Recommendations:

- **Increase the number of affordable, accessible licensed child care spaces throughout Rural and Northern Manitoba.** To be truly accessible, the programs, be it in centres or in licensed homes, need to be located in the local communities and must have the ability to offer the flexible hours and days of care needed by the communities.
- **Funding must support flexible care for rural and northern families.** Flexible care means care that is full-time, care that is part-time, care that is for extended hours, especially during peak farming and fishing seasons, and care that is seasonal (Rural, Remote and Northern Rural Child Care Strategy, 2005).
- **Develop integrated service hubs or networks:** Funding and resource support for integrated hubs will ensure the local community has input into the programs available in the community. Combining child care and family service networks and linking them to other health, education, and recreation and social service programs provides the economy of scale that is so necessary in rural and Northern areas. Hubs are also efficient at a governance level, reducing the need for individuals to be on a number of boards and attend numerous meetings. Integrating services under a common umbrella can provide some important partnerships and can allow services to adapt to each community's unique cultural and socio-economic makeup.
- **Expand Rural and Northern training opportunities for Early Childhood Educators (E.C.E.'s):** There is a severe shortage of qualified E.C.E.'s throughout Manitoba. The shortage is especially evident in rural and northern communities. The community colleges and UCN must offer more E.C.E. training in rural and Northern communities. Rural and Northern people will be more likely to stay and work in their home community if they do not have to leave to go to school.

Education and Training

Education is very important to women. Education is important to human and economic development; it is the key to everything from getting a good job to improving one's earning power.

With initiatives by the government to encourage post-secondary enrolment in the past, programs such as Inter-Universities North (IUN) 1972 and Brandon University Northern Teacher Education Program (BUNTEP) have increased Rural and Northern women's access to post-secondary education in Manitoba. More recently, with distance education programs

and the establishment of UCN in Thompson and The Pas, access to education has improved even more. Despite the improved access to education, women still face some significant barriers to furthering their education.

Cost is a barrier: Women emphasized the need for the cost of education to be reduced. The cost of education has prevented many Rural and Northern women from taking further education. In the North, women discussed the politics and bureaucracies that prevent people from receiving funds. The funds available are not evenly distributed to women in need, and some women do not know that there are funds available for their education. Rural farm women often do not qualify for loans or bursaries because of the farm's capital assets. Other women do not qualify for training allowances because they are employed, albeit in low-paying, dead-end jobs.

Distance is a barrier: As well as cost, rural women identified distance as a major barrier to furthering their education. While distance education is an option, the distance they needed to travel to write exams was an issue. Women also talked about the need for classroom experiences in education.

Child care must be available: Both Rural and Northern women stated that child care must be available if women are going to be able to enroll in post-secondary education. The literature also identifies child care as an essential support to education and training.

Job Training and Business Skills Training is required: Job readiness programs and business training for Rural and Northern women have received some attention in past years. The federal/provincial single parent skills training program to equip women with necessary skills for job access has shown significant progress. The business skill training provided by private organizations such as the Women's Enterprise Centre and the Young Women Christian Associations (YWCA) have helped many Rural and Northern women gain job skills. In spite of these programs there are still many without the necessary skills.

Recommendations:

- **Post-secondary education and job training opportunities need to be expanded in Rural and Northern communities. These programs must be available locally whenever possible.**
- **Governments need to provide increased bursaries and training grants.**
- **The eligibility criteria for training supports and bursaries must be re-examined to ensure women are not facing inappropriate eligibility criteria.**
- **Expand entrepreneurial and self-employment skills programs.**
- **Increase public awareness of education programs and training supports that are available. The information must reach the women in the communities where they live.**
- **Ensure child care services are available to support all education and training initiatives.**

Health and Wellness

The health of Rural and Northern women is powerfully affected by where they live. The socio-cultural and geographic influences have a profound impact. As well as being responsible for their own health, women continue to be the gatekeepers of the family's health and well-being. With this responsibility come added challenges and stresses. This is especially true for Rural and Northern women, where access to information, to services and to resources is more limited than in urban settings.

The literature and input from the women who participated in this study named many health care issues that impact women's well-being. The solutions to a number of these issues are beyond the scope of this project. This report will focus on the issues that are specifically relevant to this study and its recommendations.

Access to Physicians and Medical Services

Women in all parts of the province see the distance to access medical services, especially the lack of immediate services for urgent or crisis situations, as part of the challenge of living outside of the big city.

“the walk-in clinics are not living up to their name. You can't just walk in; you have to phone first.”

In northern communities, the shortage of physicians has become so acute that it is not just hard to get a family doctor; it is difficult for young women to see any physician. As one young woman reported, “the walk-in clinics are not living up to their name. You can't just walk in; you have to phone first.” If you have a sick child and can't afford a telephone, this adds yet another stress.

Aboriginal Midwifery Education Program: Currently, Northern women regularly relocate to a major population centre several weeks before their baby is due to be born as there are no doctors or midwives in their home communities. The recently announced Aboriginal Midwifery Education Program to be offered through University College of the North will give more Northern women the option of staying in their home community to deliver their baby.

Income impacts health delivery: Not only does income impact overall health and wellness, it also impacts how women are able to access health care. Individuals receiving provincial 'employment and income assistance' benefits (Provincial Welfare) are required to use dentists that charge at a predetermined fee level agreed to by the Dental Association and the Manitoba Department of Family Services and Housing. Dentists in some communities, such as Thompson and Carman, are charging above that rate and in effect denying service to employment and income assistance recipients. The province pays to have these individuals travel to other communities to obtain services at the preset rate.

We spoke to a young single mom in Thompson who had to take the bus to Winnipeg, simply for a dental appointment. The cost to the individual and her family, and the travel costs to the system, should be examined against the dollars saved in dental fees. This seems to be one more example of policies that 'blame the victim' and cost the taxpayer money, rather

than addressing the real issue of affordable services. The most vulnerable – the single mothers, children, the disabled, seniors -- are the most impacted by these policy decisions. They are the ones bearing the cost of the policy dispute.

Multiple care-giving roles add stress: The women in the focus groups spoke of the multiple roles that women hold and the stress that results from this balancing act. The literature documents the impact this has on women no matter where they live (Family Violence in Rural, Farm and Remote Canada, 1995). Women’s commitment to child rearing, care-giving and jobs/employment all result in the lack of time for self-care for rural, northern women and for urban women.

In rural areas, distance compounds the challenges. During a discussion of the time spent commuting, one focus group participant noted, “Distance = time”, time that is already stretched to the limit. As the amount of time required for employment, volunteer commitments and care for others increases, rural women, even more than men, give up their personal leisure time (The Canadian Farm Family at Work, 2003).

No time for self-care: This time crunch and the resulting risk to health are highest for younger women. Nationally, the number of farm women and men working off the farm has increased by over 50% in the past 20 years. As more and more Rural and Northern women move into out-of-home employment, the lack of personal time have greater and greater impact on the overall stress and fatigue level they experience (Canadian Farm Family at Work, 2003).

Words and phrases that were used by women in the focus groups to describe the stress experienced by many Rural and Northern women give us a clear picture:

- Overwhelmed
- Lack of time
- Multiple roles
- No time after ‘life’ to participate in setting direction for community

Living in a rural area often does offer that greater sense of personal identity and of being part of a community. In the words of one of the workers at the Manitoba Farm and Rural Stress Line, “*(Rural women) are a lot of things to a lot of people – women take joy from that.*” For many women, that joy, that sense of being an important part of something bigger than themselves, is one of the more treasured aspects of rural life.

For many other women, isolation is an equally strong reality. The Farm Stress Line hears women talk about the isolation, not just the geographic isolation, but about not having anyone to talk to who isn’t a relative or long-term friend of the family. In most rural communities, there is no one for women to turn to for support, for legal or financial advice.

Stress is a Health Issue: The stress related to long hours of labour on and off the farm, both paid and unpaid, was identified by The Canadian Farm Women’s Network as one of the factors contributing to family violence on the farm. Staff members of the rural stress resource programs, such as the Manitoba Farm and Rural Stress Line, are very aware of the risks associated with increased stress levels. “Stress is such a common part of farming that it is taken for granted. But for some, the stress can mount and become unbearable” (Western Producer Special Report, Feb. 10th, 2005).

One woman, writing for 'Women & The Economy, 2003 - UN Platform for Action Committee (MB),' describes it very graphically: *"I have admitted that I have run out of 'next year' mentality. So have many of my close friends. It has torn apart marriages and plunged many of us into levels of depression or stress that we do not know how to handle."*

When asked about issues that affect the health of women in their communities, women in a northern focus group quickly identified suicide. They also spoke of the lack of resources or mentors to help people see positive options. Suicide is not just an issue for northern communities; it is becoming more prevalent in rural communities as well. And not just with farmers stretched to the breaking point, but amongst young people. Rural women worry about keeping their teenagers safe. Recent youth suicides in southwestern Manitoba may have rekindled that fear. (Western Producer Special Report, Feb. 10th, 2005)

"You shouldn't have to wait till you've been hit before you can get help. I went back a couple of times because I had no other option."

Family Violence: One young woman, who had left her marriage due to her husband's addiction problems, spoke of the lack of options that were available to her. *"There is no one to help you, nowhere to go in the community"*. She spoke of the need to find a place to live in the nearest large centre, and to have a way to pay the bills before you can leave. The Women's Crisis Centre is there if you've been abused, *"but you shouldn't have to wait till you've been hit before you can get help. I went back a couple of times because I had no other option."*

The severity and incidence of family violence and mental health issues in rural and northern communities is hard to measure. The reluctance of rural people to discuss such taboo subjects and the shortage of confidential, professional support services that can be easily accessed in a rural community add to the problem (Manitoba Farm and Rural Stress Line). This lack of rural services is an issue that is well researched. The recent Senate Report on Mental Health, Mental Illness and Addiction (The Honourable M. Kirby, 2004) notes, "It is obvious that the current geographic mal-distribution of mental health and addiction professionals lead to reduced access to necessary services and supports in Canada's rural and remote regions."

Women must have input into health planning: Major studies of rural and Northern health and medical services are underway. The delivery of health and medical services are large, multi-faceted issues that are beyond the scope of this report. However, the literature reiterates time after time how important it is for Rural and Northern women to have input into these studies and into the provision of their ongoing health services (Rural, Remote and Northern Women's Health, 2004; Family Violence in Rural, Farm and Remote Canada, 1995).

Recommendations:

- **Expand Women's Resource / Wellness Centres; Social Service and Family Services counselors need to be available in the community.** Women want professionals who they can talk to about stress, marital problems, their financial and

legal rights, supports available, parenting and child welfare that visit the community on a regular schedule (Manitoba Farm and Rural Stress Line). There is need for a confidential one-stop shop for resources and information that is the point of first contact – in the community!

- **Second-stage housing for abused women** and public housing must be available in Rural and Northern communities. Women have a right to remain in their community. They need safe and affordable places to live that are close enough to their community and extended family that they can continue to co-parent, to work and to be part of the community.
- **More legal aid is required in Rural and Northern communities**, with lawyers who are familiar with women's issues and with rural issues. Farm women need access to women lawyers who understand farm issues, who understand the complexities of farm ownership and the value of land. Northern women need access to women lawyers who appreciate their unique cultural and geographic issues.
- **Regular re-evaluation of income assistance programs** and policies is required to ensure that policies do not have unintended adverse effects on program participants. Participants and their families should not have to bear the brunt of policy conflicts.

Technology

Technology is a priority in our present world, with which we can gain access to an endless array of information. Technology in the form of the Internet, cellular phone connectivity and regular direct telephone were mentioned by the rural and Northern women as being very important to livelihood in their communities. Rural and Northern women need to develop both the knowledge and the skills necessary to keep up with the growing use of technology.

The Internet is available in these communities in form of a telephone dial-up system. High-speed Internet connectivity, which is already available in most places, is far from the reach of Rural and Northern women. From the survey, over 50% of the women had access to the Internet only in their place of work and schools. The majority of women surveyed did not have access to high-speed Internet in their homes. Cellular phones are not available in much of the rural areas because there is limited connectivity; people cannot be reached anywhere and anytime. Women in several focus groups spoke of being out of reach once they drove out of town. Direct telephone land lines are available, but women complained that the telephone services into smaller communities do not function properly. Communication is hindered because of ineffective information technology.

Rural and Northern can be empowered through access to information, especially with the new E-index initiative of 2004 by Industry Canada. The goal of this initiative is to identify barriers, strengths and weaknesses with information and communication technology (ICT) in rural, remote and Northern areas with a view of providing solutions to identified problem.

Recommendation for technology access

- The issue of technology access must be addressed for rural and Northern communities, with immediate implementation of the recommendations provided by the on-going ICT initiative for better linkage of the rural areas with the world.

Improved communication will enhance educational and employment options and will also enhance overall quality of life.

Rural and Northern Women as Decision Makers - Capacity Building in Rural and Northern Communities

One striking observation throughout our research was the local women's strong degree of interest in the project. They want to talk about their situation; they want to do what they can to improve the life circumstances in their communities. They care about what happens for other women, not just themselves and their family. One young student originally from a small isolated community expressed it clearly: "They need to know there is a world out there," and that there are options.

While women make up 51% of the population of Manitoba (Statistics Canada, 2001), the literature documents the ongoing male bias in federal, provincial and local government policy development. The women in the study, *Resource Needs for Families with Preschool Children in the Marquette Region 2002*, stated '[Municipal] councils are more interested in attracting tourism and business than in supporting families.'

"Rural women are largely invisible to policy makers."

Need for women's voice: Women must be involved, and there need to be an intentional effort to ensure all stakeholders have input into community decisions. Gender, diversity, age – all need a voice. The Rural, Remote and Northern Women's Health Research Summary Report (2004), emphasized that not only are 'rural women largely invisible to policy makers,' rural women have knowledge essential to formulating effective policies and programs that will maintain and improve their wellbeing."

Women have important input to contribute to all issues affecting their community, be it issues related to

- employment and income,
- child care services,
- education and training or
- health and wellness
- technology

"Rural women have knowledge essential to formulating effective policy that will maintain and improve their wellbeing."

The women in the focus and discussion groups also talked about the need for more women in decision making roles. "Women are not empowered as equal decision makers." To increase women's ability to have input into the ongoing development of their community, women

need to have strong personal and leadership skills. There is a strong base of research knowledge confirming the benefits of on-going capacity building at a community level.

Sustainable, ongoing funding is required for community-based programs that support women's engagement in addressing economic, social service and political issues (Rural Remote and Northern Women's Health, 2004, Northern Manitoba Women and Sustainable Economic Development, 1993). At the discussion group in Winnipeg, the leaders of the provincial women's organizations included a strong statement on capacity building: "Community development (must) recognize capacity building as a valid, sustainable, core activity."

The need for more integration of the policy-making process, involvement of the local stakeholders and ways to increase the awareness of good things happening in other small communities was another common theme of discussion. We heard women's frustration with the ongoing dilemma of project funding and the need to a) maintain what is working well and b) spread the word to other communities. "Good things happen in small places, [there is] no network to collect and share successes and lessons learned."

"The policy process needs to include the voices of those 'communities' it impacts."

If women are to be truly equal partners in making the policies and decisions that have an impact on their lives, there must be a change in the policy making process. Dialogue must happen throughout the process and must include all the stakeholders. The gender, place and culture lens must be in place and used on an ongoing basis, not just as a 'token effort'. Women want to have input, and women know their communities and the issues they are facing; women need a voice. The women themselves summed it up: "The policy process needs to include the voices of those 'communities' it impacts."

"Women's lives are broad – Government is departmentalized."

Recommendations for women's capacity building

- **Provide long-term operational funding for community-based groups to develop women's capacity.** Women have a strong role to play in community and policy development and in community-based social support programs. More women are needed in decision making roles. Women need help to develop the skills and abilities for these important roles. These needed skills include:
 - Leadership training and personal development
 - Networking and asset mapping
 - Proposal writing and communication skills
 - Gender/place/culture analysis training

- **Economic, political and social services supports must all be delivered in the community,** with the women actively involved developing the programs to ensure

they reflect the cultural traditions and the gender needs of all groups in the community.

- **Long-term, ongoing funding is essential for women's and community social service initiatives** that demonstrate measurable positive outcomes. Support what is working rather than having more short-term demonstration or pilot projects.

Conclusion

In examining the changing needs of Rural and Northern women, there have been some key findings and observations that have flowed through the full length of this project. As we have analyzed the literature review and research from the survey questionnaire and the focus groups, the strong correlation in the findings has been striking. Issues all women face include:

- Having sufficient income and employment options
- Accessing educational and training opportunities
- Having flexible, affordable child care accessible in their communities.
- Having increased family health and wellness supports in the community
- Technology that supports communication, employment and education
- Increasing their capacity for leadership and policy development

Women continue to be the gatekeepers of their family's health, and, while the specific issues have changed over the past few years, the challenge of continually juggling roles and responsibilities remains a common theme for most Rural and Northern women.

Equally noteworthy is the women's strong desire to have input into the day-to-day decisions and policies that impact their well-being. This message flows through the research, the literature and the discussions.

The needs identified through the project are of two distinct types or perspectives, i.e., specific service needs and skill development or process needs. The project recommendations address both. Readers will note recommendations that name the need for enhanced supports and services to address a number of specific issues. Other recommendations address the importance of building women's skills and capacity at a community level in order that Rural and Northern women can have input into their own overall health and well-being.

It is hoped that as a result of this research into the changing needs of Rural and Northern women, the women themselves will receive support that enables them to address the specific issues and policies affecting their well-being. This research will have contributed to knowledge and to the improvement of women's lives, but does not negate the need for more research into similar and new issues.

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Appendix Two: Provincial and Regional Women's Organizations Participating in Discussion Groups:

Changing Needs of Rural and Northern Women Discussion Group Nov. 19th, 2004 - Winnipeg, MB

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**Changing Needs of Rural and Northern Women
Dec. 15th Discussion Group
Thompson, MB**

Participant	Organization	Address
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Penny Byer	Chamber of Commerce	c/o Box 5000 Thompson, MB (204) 778-2777

Appendix Three: Template of Questions from Discussion and Focus Groups

- What comes to mind when you think about living rurally; or living northern?
What does rural mean for you?
For a rural woman? A rural Family?

- In your experience, what appear to be the key issues or challenges for women living in a rural or northern area, now in 2004?

- Thinking about the services your organization (or the organizations you are familiar with), What is going well?

- What difficulties or challenges have you faced, that prevent effective delivery of service?

- What is one new service or program that would make a difference for rural and northern women? What would you like to do, that you just can't do now?

- If you had the undivided attention of key policy-makers, what two most important issues would you raise?

- Take a moment to reflect on what has been said, on what is posted from our conversations: What stands out for you? Is there something else you'd like to add?

Appendix Four: Sample Questionnaire

Information Cover Letter - Questionnaire

Fall 2004

This questionnaire will be of interest to Manitoba's Rural and Northern Women!

The questionnaire is part of a research project under the direction and coordination of the Sub-Committee on Women of Rural Team Manitoba and Rural Development Institute. The research is related to changing needs of Rural and Northern Women.

Objectives are to investigate:

- the current and changing needs of rural and northern women in Manitoba
- the extent to which recent and current projects and initiatives have been effective in addressing these needs.
- the gaps between services provided for rural and northern women and their changing needs
- recommendations for changes or new initiatives.

Last spring, Rural Team Manitoba identified a need to undertake research related to the changing needs of Rural and Northern Women. Rural Development Institute is also a member of Rural Team Manitoba and agreed to work with the Women's Sub-committee, and the Women's Enterprise Centre to do this research.

The project is being undertaken by a 2004-2005 Master's Student Internship. The two investigators, Betty Kelly and Osa Idehen are students registered in the Masters of Rural Development program at Brandon University.

We are interested in your comments. Your input will help us reach a better understanding of the present and changing needs of rural and northern women in your community. If you have any questions as a result of reading this questionnaire, please contact Betty Kelly at (204) 243-2463.

We are asking you to take a few moments to complete this short questionnaire. Information from this questionnaire will be included in the findings of this research project on the Changing Needs of Rural and Northern Women. Individual participants will not be identified in the report. Completion of this questionnaire is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any specific questions on the questionnaire. Please place your completed survey back in the unmarked envelope and put it into the box provided. If you do not wish to complete this survey, please place the blank survey form back in its envelope and place it in the box. Thank you very much.

Please complete the attached questionnaire and deposit in the collection box provided, or return it in the self-addressed envelope.

Thank you very much.

Survey Questionnaire

Rural and Northern Women Survey

Section I: Demographic Information

1. How old are you?
 16 – 25 26 – 35 36 – 45 46 – 55 56 – 65 65+
2. a) Are you a Canadian Citizen? _____ Landed Immigrant _____ Other _____
- b) Aboriginal Yes _____ No _____
If Yes: First Nations, Status _____ Non-Status _____
Inuit _____
Métis _____
- c) What is your primary language?
English _____
French _____
Aboriginal Language _____
Other _____
3. What level of schooling have you completed?
 Less than Grade 10 College Diploma
 Grade 10 – 12 University Degree
 High School Diploma Graduate Degree
 Trade Certificate
4. a) Is your annual household net income (i.e. after taxes):
 < \$15,000 \$15,000 - \$ 24,999 \$25,000 - \$34,999 > \$45,000
- b) Is your annual personal net income (i.e. after taxes):
 < \$15,000 \$15,000 - \$ 24,999 \$25,000 - \$34,999 > \$45,000
5. Are you currently (check all that apply):
 Employed for pay Self-employed /Business owner Not employed for pay
 Working on the farm/home based work Student Retired
6. If employed for pay,
a) what is your occupation: _____

- b) How many km. one way do you commute to work: _____
7. Approx. how many Kilometers is it to the city, town or village where you go to:
a) make major grocery purchases _____
b) do your banking _____
c) see your family physician _____
d) see medical specialists _____
e) get your mail or mail a letter _____
8. What is your present marital status?
 Single Married Unmarried and living with partner
 Separated Divorced Widowed

9. Do you have children? Yes _____ No _____
 a) If yes, How many (include any other children you are raising) _____
 b) What are their ages? _____
10. Are you involved as a volunteer in your community?
 Yes _____ No _____
- a) If yes, are you involved as (check all that apply):
 a participant? _____
 a parent? _____
 a Board member or organizer? _____
- b) What types of volunteer organizations or community groups are you involved in (check all that apply):
 church groups _____
 sports/recreation groups _____
 community service clubs _____
 women's service/advocacy _____
 school activities _____
 other _____
- c) If Yes, on average how many hours per week are you involved in community or volunteer activities?
 < 1 hour _____ Any Comments: _____
 1 – 2 hours _____
 2 – 5 hours _____
 > 5 hours _____
11. If you are not involved in community or volunteer activities, what are the reason(s)? (check all that apply)
- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------|---------------|
| Not enough time | _____ | Any comments: |
| Not enough money | _____ | |
| Don't think I have the ability | _____ | |
| Don't feel welcome | _____ | |
| Don't feel it will make a difference | _____ | |
| Not interested | _____ | |
| Lack of a car or other transportation | _____ | |
| Other | _____ | |
12. a) Do you have regular access to a computer? Yes _____ No _____
 b) To the internet? Yes _____ No _____
 c) If Yes, where is the computer with internet access?
 In your home? _____
 Friend's or family members? _____
 Community access site _____
 Library? _____
 School? _____
 Work? _____

**Section 2: Do you agree with the following statements for your community? Please check the choice that MOST accurately reflects your opinion for each item –
i.e. strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, strongly disagree or no answer.**

In your community ...	Strongly agree	Agree	Un-decided	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable
Health Issues						
1. There is adequate access to Family doctors.						
2. There is adequate access to Medical Health Specialists.						
3. There are adequate ambulance services.						
4. The cost of ambulance services discourages people from using it.						
Child Care						
5. There is sufficient licensed child care.						
6. The cost of child care discourages people from using it.						
7. Licensed child care is flexible enough to meet families' needs.						
Employment						
8. Overall, there are adequate employment opportunities.						
9. There are adequate employment opportunities for women.						
10. There are adequate employment opportunities for young people.						
Education						
11. There are sufficient training opportunities for women.						
12. There are sufficient post-secondary education opportunities for women.						
13. The main barrier preventing women taking further education is money.						
14. The main barrier preventing women from taking further education is lack of childcare.						
15. The main barrier preventing women from taking further education is distance.						
16. The main barrier preventing women from taking further education is lack of transportation.						

Appendix Five: Focus Group Data

The participating women provided a wealth of information on their opinions and experiences. The women enthusiastically discussed the various challenges and barriers women face in their communities, what has been done, and their new needs and issues:

Rural women

Sports

Recreational activities/sport/ exercise program for Kids and adults.

Technology

Computer courses for seniors.
Access to internet.
Cell phone connections.

Employment

More jobs for women and young people.

Transportation.

Bus routes and regular schedules.

Services

Affordable services (Tradesman services such as plumbers, electricians are expensive due to mileage costs.) Hotels, motels, restaurants are limited.

Credit facilities

Access to loans for women and increased funding for farm support programs.

Education

Accessible adult education
Online access to education.
More schools in rural areas. (*Stop closing the local schools.*)

Healthcare

More doctors in rural areas.
Better healthcare services such as open emergency rooms in rural hospitals.
Rurally – responsive healthcare services.
Closer healthcare facilities.

Child Care

Affordable, flexible child care in all communities.

Northern women

Sports

More recreational activities/ facilities for kids and adults.

Business

More training for business skills.
Entrepreneurship training.

Transportation

Lower airfare cost.
More buses and regular schedules.

Education

More funding for women's education.
Public Education regarding women's education options and funding available.

Health care

More health care officials i.e. Doctors, Midwives, support workers, Nursing aids, helpers.
Better health care services.

Child care

Lower cost for child care services.
Child care in all communities

Professionals and skilled workers

More professionals in the north (keep professional of every field in the north).
More skilled workers to provide services in banks and other services/trades people

Life skills

Positive life skill centers for young people (to reduce alcohol and drug use and violence)
Women's Resource Centres

- Motivational speakers for young women.
- Role Models and mentors

Family Values

Parenting programs
Traditional and Spiritual values programs.

What is rural and northern?

At the beginning of every session, women were asked what they understood as being “Rural and Northern”. And many of the rural women responded that rural means:

“Close to nature”

“Peaceful”

“Isolated”

The Northern women responded that northern means:

“Isolated”

“Highway 6”

“Distant”

But when women were asked what was good about the rural and the northern communities, the rural women said

“The rural living helps kids know people and learn more”

“There is this sense of belonging and community life that exist in the rural community”

“We enjoy the community sense in the area”.

“It was my choice to be a rural woman”.

“I am here because my husband is here”.

“I would have been in Winnipeg but I am glad that I am here. I don’t want my kids to grow up in the city. In a bigger community? Yes! But not in the city!”

The Northern women said the advantages of the northern communities were:

“It is not really northern as people think it to be”.

“There is a world beyond being northern”.

“Schools are lot cheaper and very friendly”

“Family ties, people are very friendly here and we’re close to each other”

“The northern lights are beautiful”

The women agreed that though life in rural and northern communities brings challenges, they were happy about the advantages of quietude, fresh air, closeness to nature and knowing that people had a sense of belonging in the communities where they lived and they liked the fact that their kids would grow up in non-violent communities unlike the big cities where life is more crowded and complex.

Initiated program that are working

Women were asked about the existing initiatives that have been provided by the government and various organizations. The women agreed that health care, educational, childcare and business-training programs have been initiated in their various communities. The one that were effective and working well were:

Child care services

Rural women strongly expressed their appreciation for the childcare and healthy child program in their communities. They expressed the effectiveness of the child care services and how important it is to their everyday lives.

There is an integrated Hub rural child care program in one of the rural focus group communities. This integrated Hub offers flexible, extended hour care.

- One rural woman said “We wouldn’t have kids if we didn’t have the child care center”.
- Another rural woman said, “We wouldn’t be working”.

One of the young women in the north said, “*The day cares are good and not racist*”.

Improved education opportunities

Women talked about the improvement in educational opportunities in the past few years in their communities. The rural women expressed their appreciation for the distance education program that is now available to them. Northern women agreed that the closeness of educational institutions have increased the chances of women’s education in their communities.

More jobs for women with education

Rural and Northern women agreed that the increase in educational opportunities has led to an increase in educational capacity for women which has also resulted in more women being employed in various companies and firms.

Neighborhood Alive programs

Women in the north said that the Neighborhood Alive program, which includes creating playgrounds and recreational places for kids and adults, has added life to their communities.

Senior’s Housing

Rural and Northern women also said that the provision of affordable senior rentals was a program that was working well. However, other Northern women talked about the lack of quality rental housing for seniors.

School programming in life skills

Women expressed their views about the life skills programming that is operational in the high schools in the North and how it has helped to keep the teenagers off drugs and violence, helping them to have a sense of direction in life.

Increased technology

Rural and Northern women spoke of the usefulness of computer technology and Internet access in their various communities.

Changing needs of Rural and Northern women

The new needs identified by women followed a number of consistent themes in many areas of concern, which are listed above (see table 2) but will briefly be discussed here as the women expressed them.

Sport

Rural and Northern expressed the need for creation of more recreational facilities in their communities. They mentioned that their communities need facilities for kids and adult

recreation and exercise classes. The women complained that there were no places to go with their kids for such important needs. Two women said, *“No lively activities and no opportunities for recreational activities for us and our kids”*.

Technology

Most of the rural women mentioned that in as much as there was an increase in computer awareness programs, the technology available to them was not so effective. Rural women complained about the slow analogue computer network and no cell phone connections.

They expressed a strong need of high-speed Internet access, cells phones connection and better telephone services. The women also mentioned the need for computer training for seniors. In the North, one of the women said, *“You can’t be reached by your employer by phones because there are no phones”*. And another woman agreed with her saying,

“You can’t track people because they have no phones”.

Business

The rural women expressed their concerns for lack of business in their communities.

One woman said, *“It will be really nice if we had big business centers like Wal-Mark, Tim Horton, hotels, motels and big malls in our communities. It will light up this place”*.

Women talked about the long distance they had to drive in order to buy groceries and shop for necessities. On the other hand, the Northern women were more concerned about the need for business and entrepreneurship trainings. One woman complained that, *“Women don’t know how to go about entrepreneurship”*.

Employment

Rural women expressed their need for more jobs to be created for employment of young women and youths in their communities. A woman said with utmost concern:

“I have been here and the 5th generation is my son, but I don’t see it getting to the 6th generation because there are no jobs to keep the young people here”. Another woman said, *“I don’t see my kids here because there are no jobs. We need more rural employment for women”*. And one more woman said with a loud voice: *“We need more pubs, kid’s games. Invest some money in the small towns”*.

Transportation

In the area of transportation, rural women stressed their need for effective transport services. They agreed that there was a desperate need for more bus routes and regular schedules. This was a time when many women complained that distance was a great barrier in the rural areas and some women expressed their concerns frankly:

You can’t even have a drink when you go to places because you know you have to drive”.

“We spend too much time commuting. Distance is a barrier”.

“You are so far between towns, where I come from there were towns close by”.

The Northern women also expressed their need for more buses and a regular schedule but beyond that they frankly voiced their concern about the expensive airfare they had to pay traveling by air.

Services

In the rural communities, the women complained that tradesman services were too expensive. *“Everything is just too expensive”* a woman exclaimed. In the north, women talked about the pressing need for improved services in every area. They stressed the need for more people to work in the service sectors. A woman mentioned an instance in bank service:

“No banking services. Cheques are left in the ATM for 2 weeks without being attended to. When you think your money is in the bank account, its still in the machine unchecked”.

Another woman said, *“We don’t have service people here. The few people that here are too busy”*.

Credit

Rural women complained that there was great need for access to credit facilities for women for farming. According to them, loans were not accessible to them. Most women mentioned that: *“It’s easier for men to get money/credit from the bank”*. They also spoke of the difficulty of getting a mortgage in a rural area if the house was not part of a working farm mortgage. The northern women did not really make mention about loans and credit facilities in general.

Education

Rural and Northern women appreciated the increase in educational opportunities but the rural women particularly expressed their need for nearby schools for adult education. A woman explained that online long distance education is helping but *“Long distance education cannot be compared to class room learning, you need a classroom experience,”* she said in a frank voice. Rural women also mentioned the need for more schools in the rural areas for both adults and children, explaining that the minimum time kids spend commuting on the school bus is about forty-five minutes to one hour daily.

The Northern women expressed the need for women to know that there are educational opportunities for them in the North but they also mentioned the need for more scholarships, loans and sponsorships for women’s education. One of the young women said, *“We need more funding for all women irrespective of ethnic”*.

Health Care

Rural and Northern women strongly stressed the need for better health care services. They all stressed the urgent need for more health care practitioners in their communities. The Northern women mentioned the great need of doctors, midwives, nurses, nursing aids, support worker and helpers. The rural women mentioned the need for closer health care facilities and all types of health workers. All the women stressed the shortage of good health care services in their various communities as follows:

“The walk- in clinics are not living up to their names, you can’t just walk in, you have to phone first”.

“Health care service are not responsive to rural needs, health care services ought to be rurally-tailored to meet rural need”, giving an instance of a farm family whose baby almost died because the doctors in Winnipeg could not understand why the baby’s mother could not stay in the hospital with the baby 24 hours per day. The young couple ran a dairy farm and it was harvest season. Even though the mother promised to be at the hospital as many hours as possible each day, the baby was discharged and sent home.

Child Care

Rural women mentioned the need for more childcare services and the Northern women stressed the need for cheaper day care services. One of the younger women said, *“We need cheaper and more flexible day care services”.*

Professionals and skilled workers

The Northern women voiced a concern for the shortage of professionals and skilled workers in the North. One woman said, *“There are jobs but there are no professionals and workers to do the jobs”.* The women stressed the need for professionals in every field.

“Especially in the banks and other services” a woman said.

Family / parenting skills

The Northern women stressed the decline in parent- children relationships in the north. The need to strengthen family values was to them very important.

“People need to be taught parenting techniques,” a woman stressed with utmost concern.

And another said, *“Parenting skills are not good enough. The way kids are raised is inappropriate”.*

Some women talked about the need to address the negative effect of social services and social workers on the behavior of children. One woman had this to say, *“Social services make children’s behavior deplorable”.* And another woman said, *“There are some social workers who don’t have the maturity and life skills to assist the children and cases. You need the experiences, not just the books”.*

“Women don’t know their rights and responsibilities towards their children”.

“If we have proper family values and system, I don’t think we will need social workers”.

“You can’t give what you didn’t get. Family values need to be addressed”.

Life skills

The Northern women also stressed the urgent need for the creation of positive life skills centers, role modeling programs and motivational speakers for young women and other young people to reduce alcohol, drug use and violence in the community.

Women also stressed the need to have spiritual values and teach the young people.

One of the women said, *“People need spiritual counseling”*.

Recommendations by women

Rural and Northern women gave a series of recommendation on how their new and changing needs can be met by the government (federal and provincial), and by the private and non-profit organizations who are the main people who can actually make a change in their lives and environments where they live and work. Women gave the following recommendations:

Rural women

Government should be aware of rural lifestyle and implement programs to fit the rural populace:

Rural women stressed the need for the government and organizations to be aware of rural living and implement programs to fit the rural livelihood especially the health care system. One woman had this to say, *“Health care officers should understand farm life situations and be flexible to meet rural farmers health needs”*.

“Understand rural situations from the rural farmer’s perspective”

“Healthcare understanding of farm life situations by Doctors and health care officials and policy”

Give equal attention to rural issues & services ‘just like the urbans’

Rural women with a strong voice said that the government should give equal and fair attention to rural issues just like they do to the urban citizen without marginalization and exclusion. A woman had this to say, *“We deserve equal services. Just do it, whether rural or urban”*.

Bring health care closer to the rural communities

Women stressed that it is very important that health care be brought closer to them in the communities because the distance they had to travel for health care was too long.

Many women made the following comments:

“Give more attention to health care issues in the rural areas, we need health care services closer to us”

“Closer healthcare facilities, having to drive to Winnipeg or Brandon for any specialists is stressful”

Recreation directors and recreation facilities and activities for young people

Women mentioned that recreation directors and facilities for both young and adult such as gymnasiums, sports, Girl Guides and Brownies should be provided in the communities.

Include more women in decision-making process

Women suggested that it is time for more women to be included in the process of decision-making in every sector in the government because only women understand women's needs and issues.

Farming loans and programs need to be addressed

Women mentioned that farm loans and farm programs were burdensome. The government has to look into the matter to ease the paper work associated with the farm programs. The loans were not enough and most of their husbands now have other jobs to supplement their income. Women made the following comments:

"Almost all farm people work off-farm because of the needs, only a few don't work off-farm".

"Women are left with most of the farm work because our husbands have off-farm jobs far away".

"All we do now is so much paper work because if you don't do that, you are screwed".

Northern women

A social planning agency/council with paid staff to coordinate community service programs.

The Northern women stressed the need for government to establish a social planning committee with paid staff who will coordinate community service programs in the north because there are many social problems to look into and only a council like that can help. Women made this comment:

"The government needs to create a social service council to coordinate all the social service organization for better output."

Make long-term commitment to existing social support programs

Women suggested that existing programs that were successful should be expanded and made to serve long-term use instead of repeating similar programs over again.

Two women said this; *"Strengthen the existing programs i.e., long term commitment to programs"*.

"Expand staffing and open more branches of existing programs and not scattering resources all about"

Women also had this to say about partnerships: *"Partnership should be made effective by commitment to make partnership work"*.

"We need to watch the size of each partnership; too many partnerships become a problem at times".

Empower women

Women suggested that more women should be empowered by providing more jobs for them, providing training programs to create awareness for self-fulfillment thereby reducing dependence on social assistance and including women in the decision making process in work and political settings. Women made the following comments:

“When young people decide to make a change in their lives by adopting the right values, they will necessarily need jobs to survive and continue well. The system should help support young women”.

“Create more craft groups and training forums for women”.

Address Family values and spirituality

Northern women suggested with a strong voice that family values and spirituality need to be addressed quickly by the society as a whole. The women had so much to say about this problem as follows:

“We need to be connected to our spirituality. We need to talk about and address our spiritual values. If we can talk about sex and other things, then we should talk about spiritual values to strengthen our families”.

“The problem is not money, we have to put our family, social, spiritual values intact to make things work”.

“Is not all about money, but focusing on family values and making our family work and emphasizing on family as a backbone”?

“People need to be committed to family values and good living”.

“The government needs to implement programs to help build family which will lead to healthy children and a better community”.

“Its not really the government but the people”.

“Parents should know what their roles and responsibilities and examine their values”.

“Gender relations in the family should be addressed i.e., gender roles need to be revisited”.

“We need behavioral psychologist to enhance better behavior”.

Stop gambling, reduce violence

Women agitated for the stopping of gambling by the government. *“Government should take their hands of gambling and try harder to stop it”.* The Northern women said that youth gang violence and violence against women should be addressed. The issue of violence was sensed to be contentious because women were reluctant to talk about it for long.

Address the widening gap between Have & Have Not groups; need to build partnerships between cultures and socio-economic groups.

Appendix Six: Complete Questionnaire Data

QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

150 questionnaires were printed and distributed to women in different rural and Northern communities in Manitoba. 114 responses were received back and there was a non – response of 36.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections: Demographic information and women issues totaling 28 questions in all. The findings from the survey complimented the results of the issues discussed in the various focus groups and interviews conducted.

DEMOGRAPHIC SECTION:

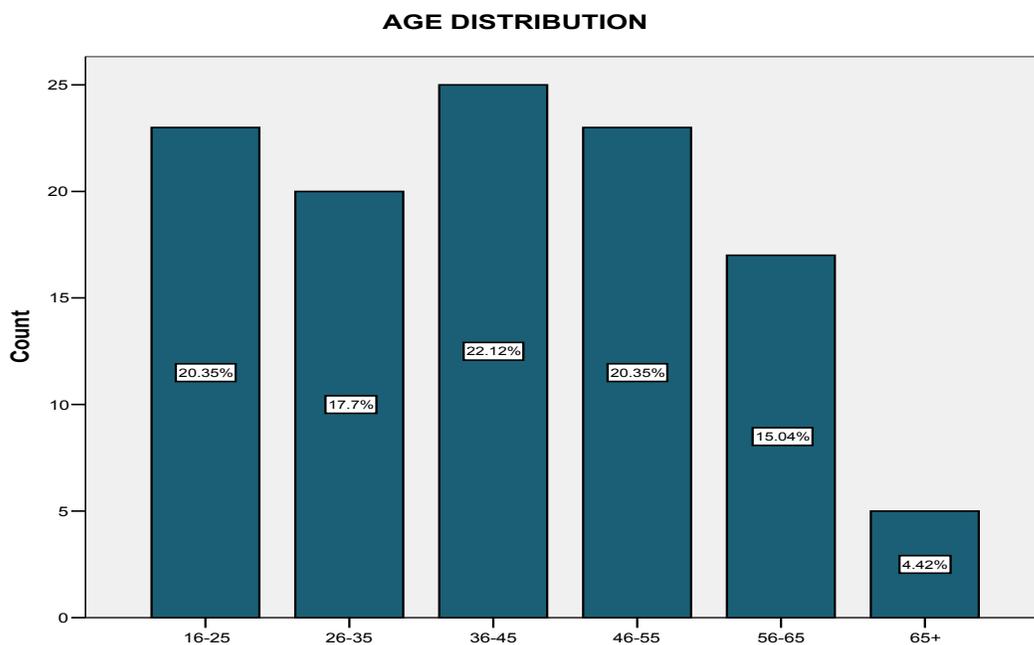


Figure 1

The graph (figure 1) illustrates the age distribution of respondents.

There was a balanced age distribution with:

- 20.35% in the “16 – 25 years old” group
- 17.7% in “26-35 years old” group
- 22.12% in the “36-45 year old” group
- 20.35% in the 46 – 55 years old group
- 16.04% in “56-65 years old” group, and
- 4.42% in “65+ years old” group.

A majority of the women were younger women, with only 4.425% over 65 years.

CITIZENSHIP

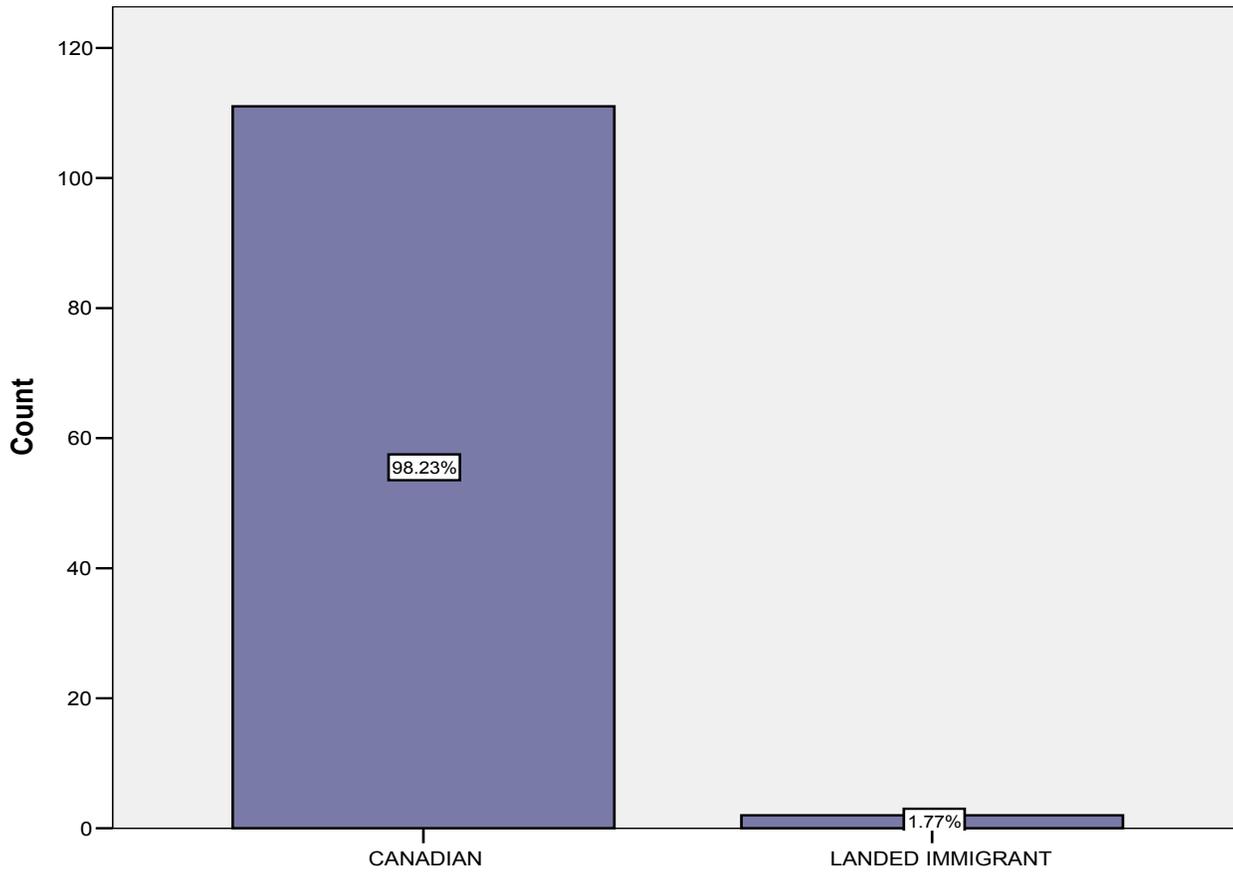


Figure 2

The large majority of the respondents (98.23%) were Canadian citizens and 1.77%, landed immigrants from other countries.

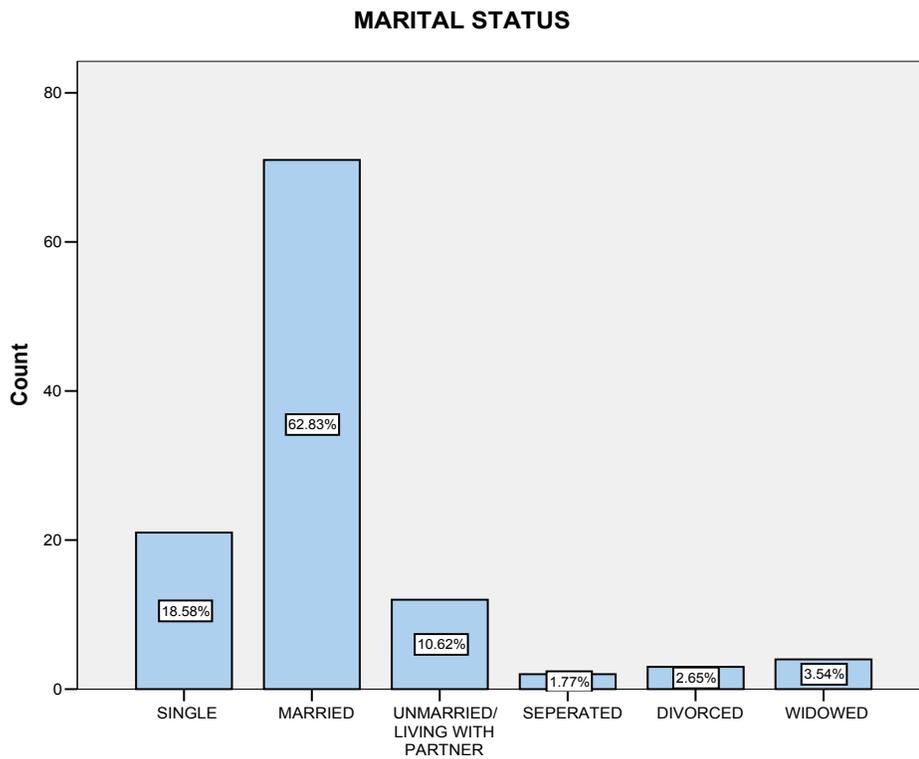


Figure 3

52.83% of the respondents were married, 18.58% were single, 10.62% were unmarried but living with their partners, 3.54% were widowed, 2.65% were divorced and 1.77% were separated.

All categories of marital status were represented in this survey.

PRIMARY LANGUAGE OF RESPONDENTS

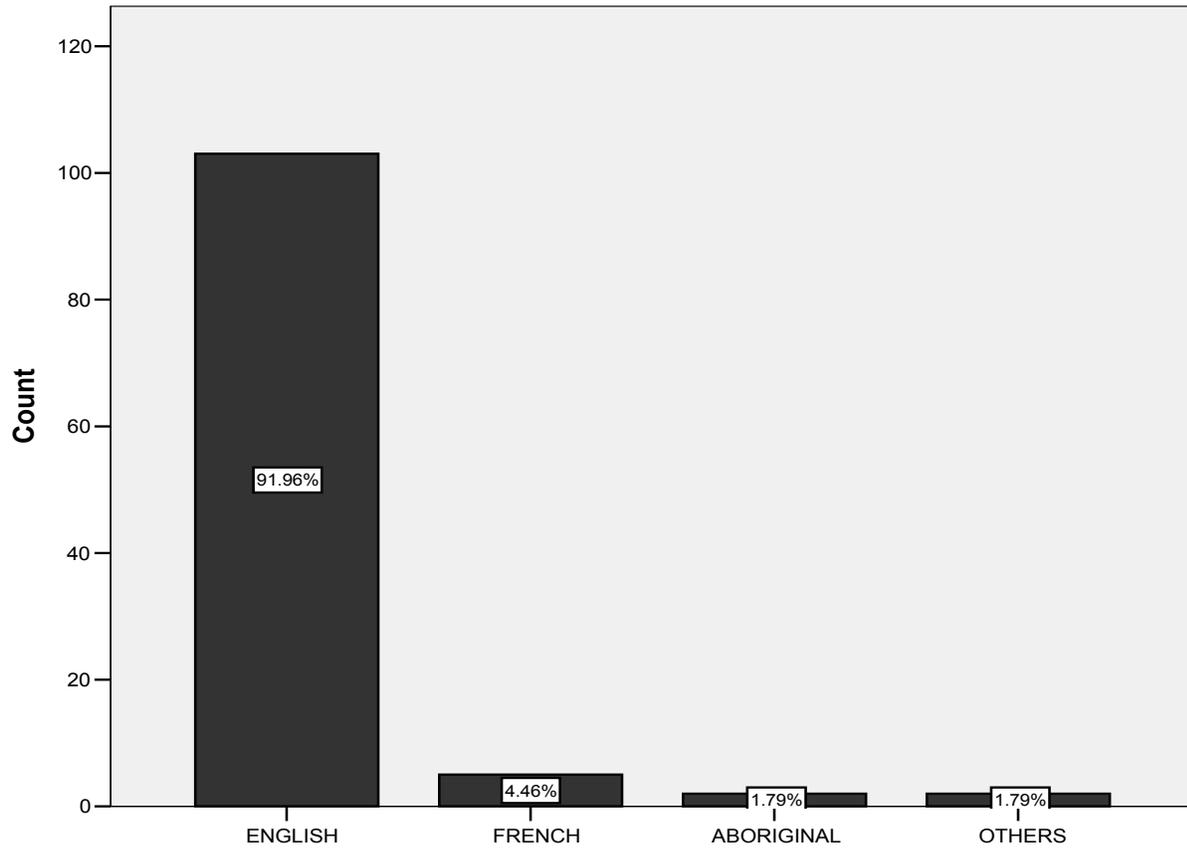


Figure 4

91.96% of respondents spoke English as their primary language, 4.45% spoke French, 1.79% spoke an aboriginal language and 1.79% spoke other languages.

76% of Aboriginal people in the survey were First Nation and 24% were Métis. However, there were no Inuit respondents.

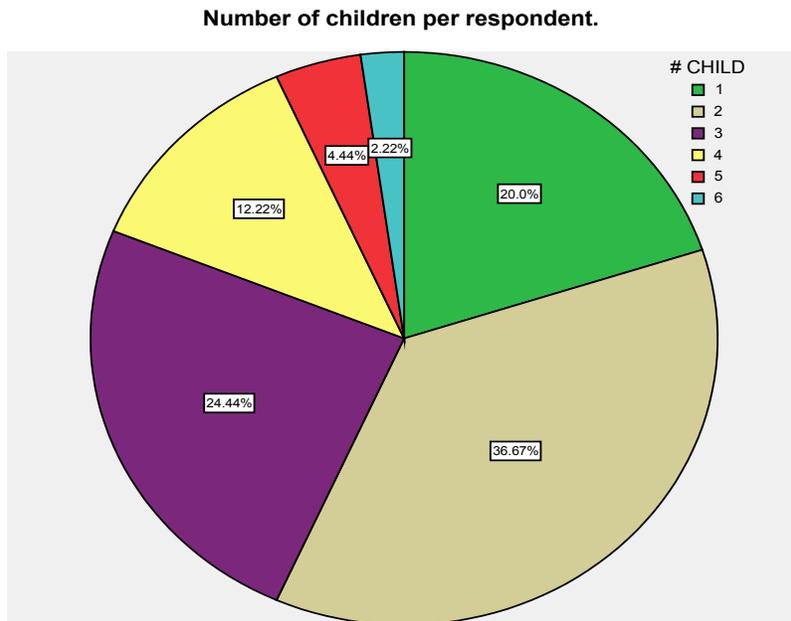


Figure 5

The graph illustrates the number of children per respondent.
 20% of the women had 1 child 36.67% had 2 children,
 24.44% had 3 children, 12.22% had 4 children,
 4.44% had 5 children and 2.22% had 6 children.

Over 45% of the women had children between ages 0 – 15 years and others had children between the ages of 16 – 40 years old.

LEVEL OF EDUCATION.

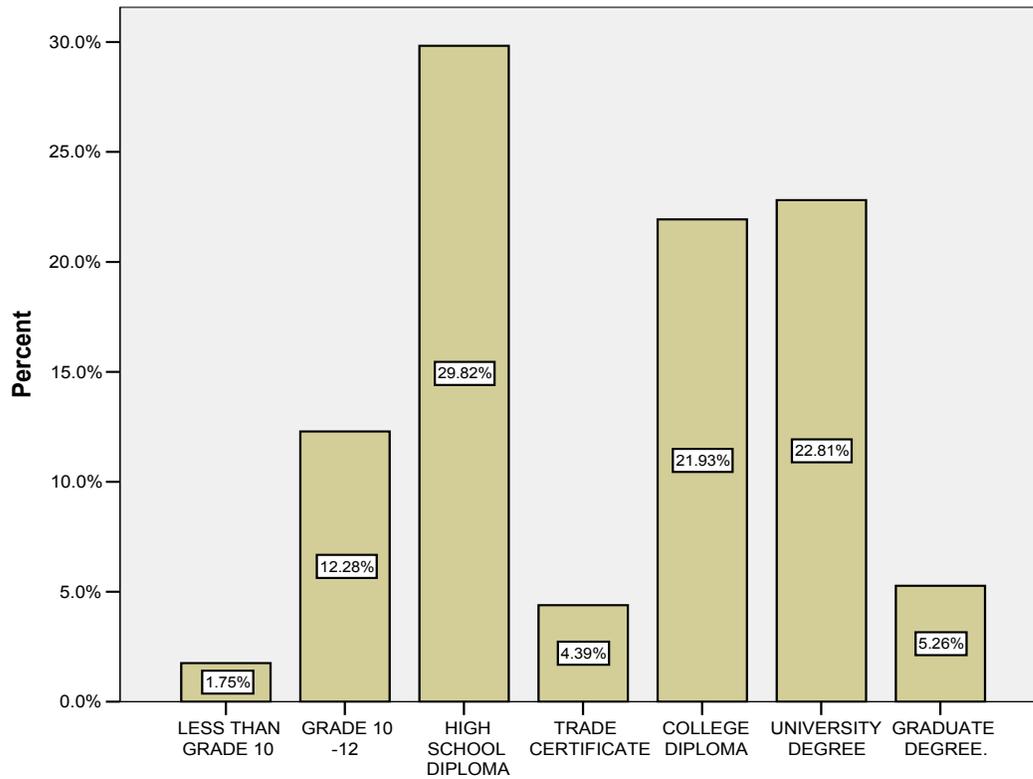


Figure 6

The graph (figure 7) illustrates the educational level of respondents.

1.75% had less than grade 10 level of education.

12.28% had grade 10 –12,

29.82% had high school diploma,

22.81% had university degree,

21.93% had college diploma,

4.39% had trade certificate and

5.26% had graduate degree.

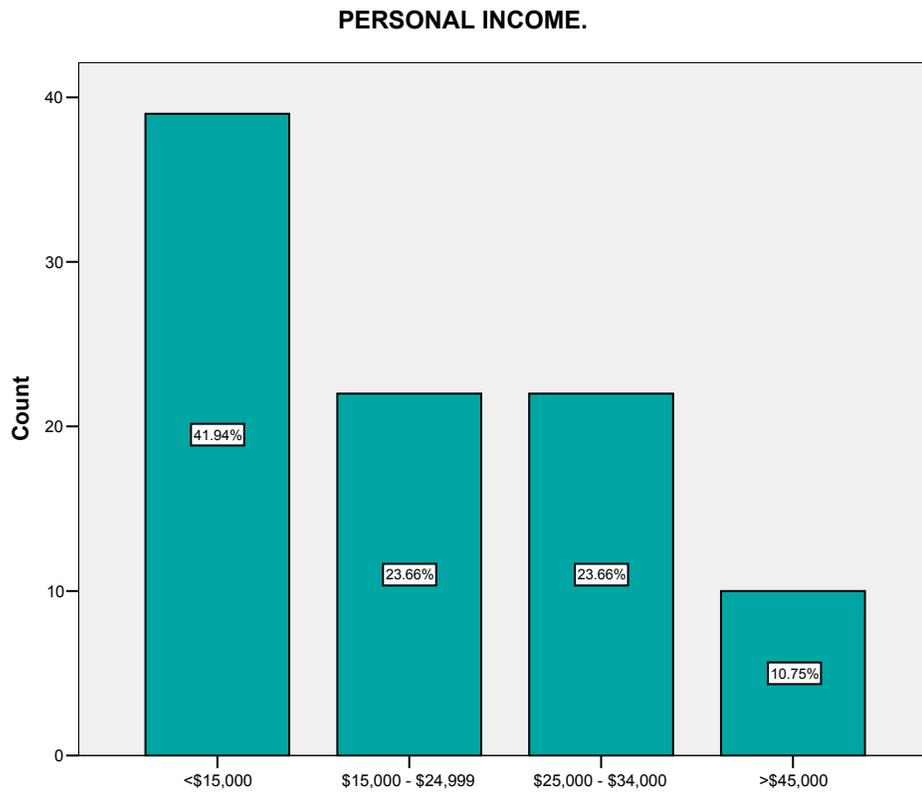


Figure 7

The graph (figure 8) illustrates personal income levels of respondents.

- 41.94% earned less than \$15,000,
- 23.66% earned \$15,000 - \$24,999,
- 23.66% earned \$25,000 - \$34,999 and
- 10.79% earned more than \$45,000 monthly.

Statistics Canada Census 2004 shows that average monthly personal income for women in Manitoba is \$20,469. This study demonstrates that many of the women in the rural and Northern communities earn less than the average income.

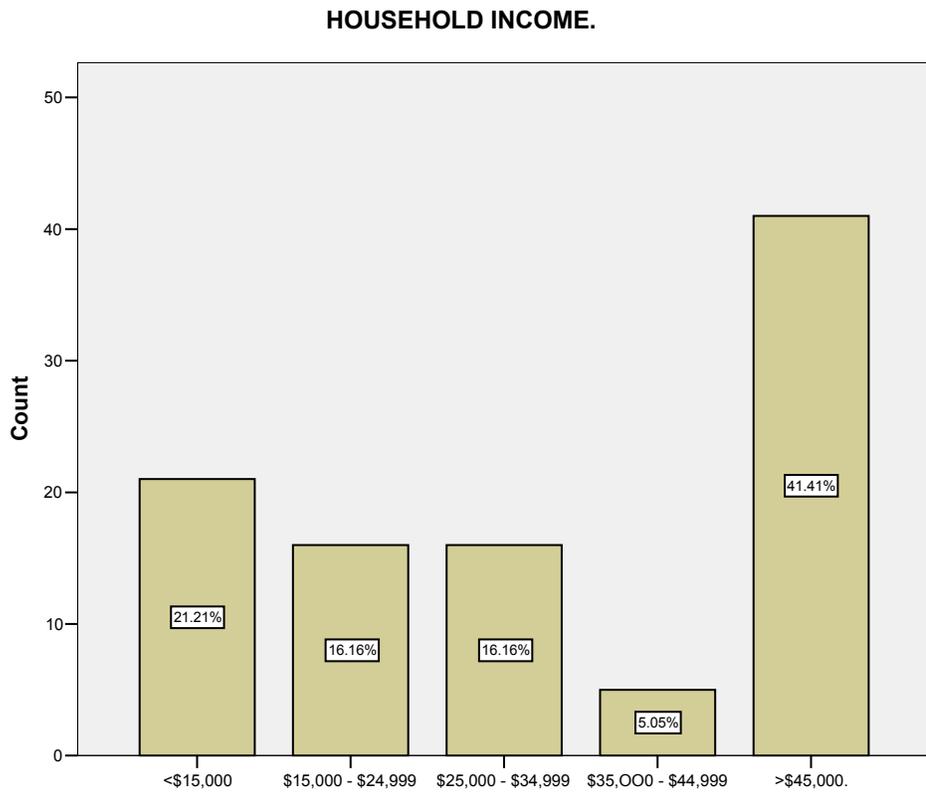


Figure 8

According to Statistics Canada Census 2004, the average total household income in Manitoba is \$50,934. Majority of the respondents have a household income below this provincial average, and much lower than urban families.

21.21% earned less than \$15,000 16.16% earned \$15,000 - \$24,999
 16.16% earned \$25,000 - \$34,999 5.05% earned \$35,000 - \$44,999
 41.41% of the women reported a total household income of more than \$45,000.

This result is similar to previous research findings - that many **households in rural and Northern communities earn less than the provincial average household income.**

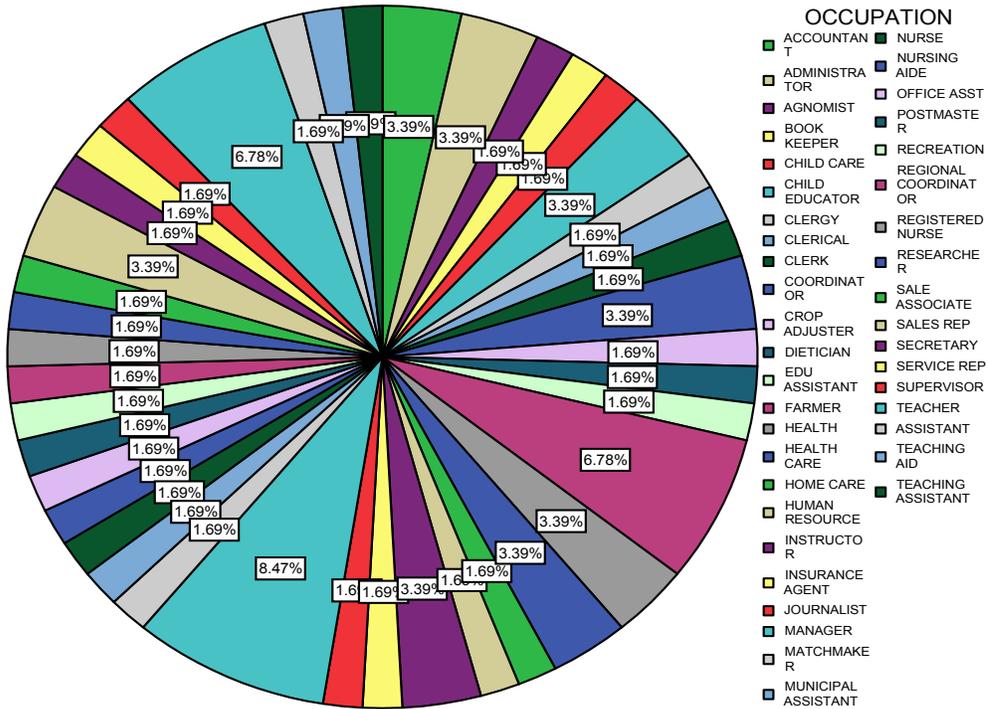


Figure 9

The pie shows the percentages of occupational distribution of respondents. Women surveyed were functioning in different occupations which include, accounting, farming, health aid, teaching, nursing, home care, service representatives, human resources, insurance agents, crop adjusting, clergy, book keeping, secretary, clerk, clericals, sales associates, agronomy, child education, recreational assistance and others.

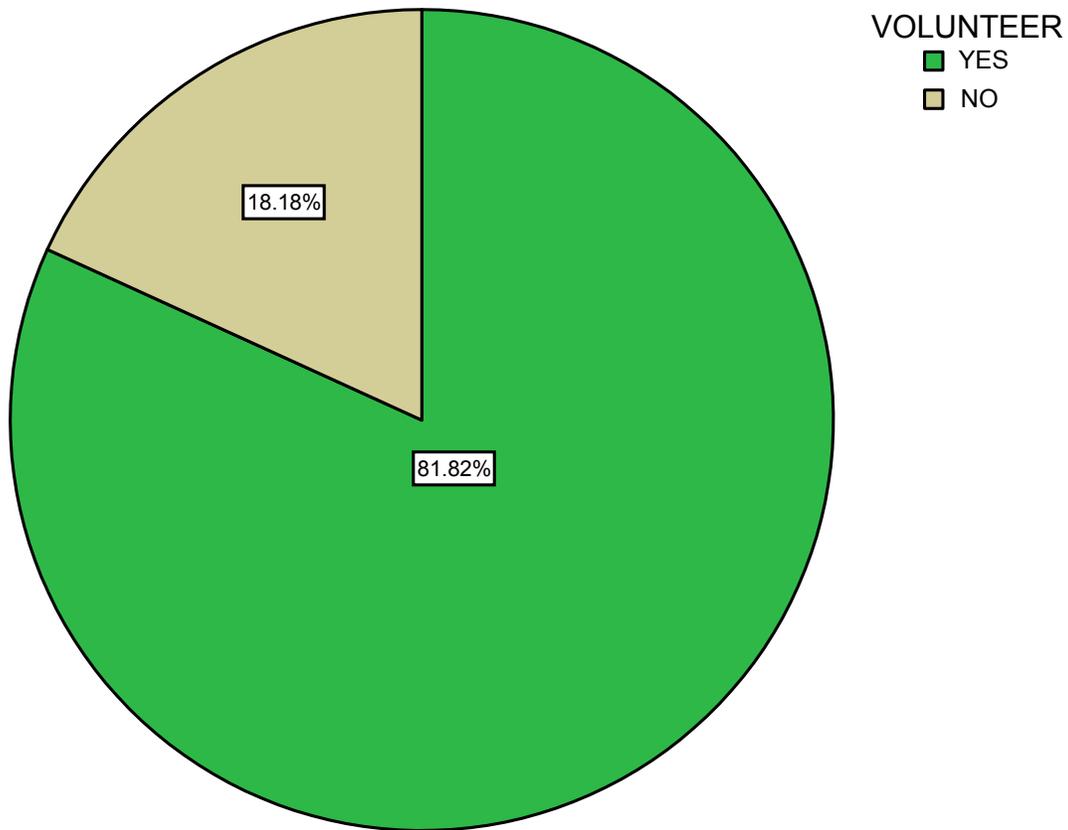


Figure 10

The pie above illustrates that 81.82% of the women are involved in voluntary work in their communities and only 18.18% were not in any voluntary work.

From the survey findings, most of the women were volunteers in their children's school, church groups, and social clubs. Very few of them were volunteers in women advocacy groups and recreational groups because there were not many of these types of groups in their communities.

Those that were not in any voluntary work said it was due to lack of time.

HOURS OF VOLUNTARY WORK.

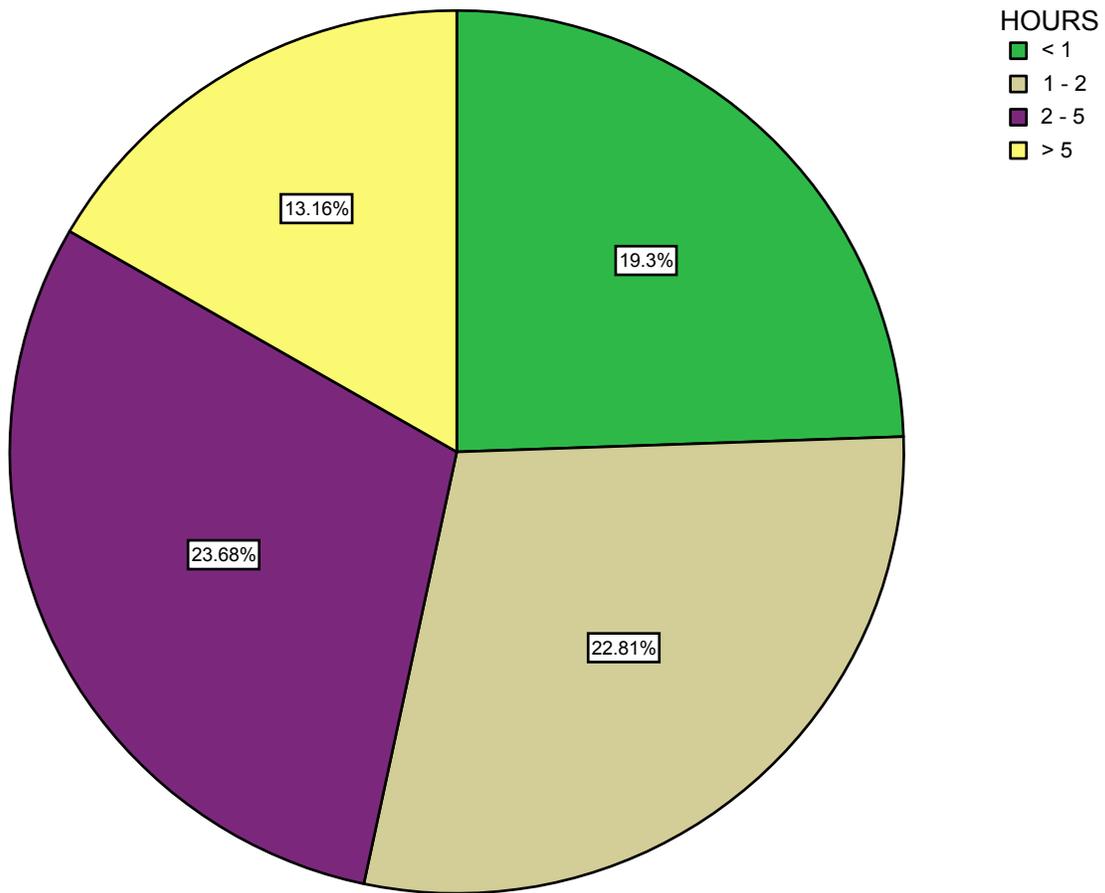


Figure 11

The pie chart illustrates the number of hours per week respondents put into voluntary work:

- 19.3% put in less than 1 hour
- 22.81% put in 1 – 2 hours
- 23.81% put in 2 – 5 hours, and
- 13.16% put in more than 5 hours of volunteer efforts.

Women's response to issues

The second section of the questionnaire focused on women issues reflected in different areas. The questions were divided into groups of issues and respondents were asked to choose the option that best reflect their opinions on issues from “strongly agree to not applicable” listed 1- 6 in boxes. The responses to the questions are illustrated in frequency tables below with each question written above the table. These questions were analyzed, using the SPSS analysis software.

The numbers that appear in the first column “valid” 1 to 6 represent option answers as reflected in the questionnaire.

- 1 - Strongly agree
- 2 - Agree
- 3 - Undecided
- 4 - Disagree
- 5 - Strongly disagree, and
- 6 - Not applicable. 0 indicates “no response at all”.

37 Northern women and 77 rural women responded to the questionnaire survey. The findings shown in the tables are also divided into two parts, separating rural response from Northern, to highlight differences and similarities.

Northern Women's Response To Issues

RESPONSE OF NORTHERN WOMEN TO HEALTH ISSUES

There is adequate access to family Doctors.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	1	2.7	2.7	2.7
1	1	2.7	2.7	5.4
2	9	24.3	24.3	29.7
3	4	10.8	10.8	40.5
4	4	10.8	10.8	51.4
5	17	45.9	45.9	97.3
6	1	2.7	2.7	100.0
Total	37	100.0	100.0	

Table 1

56.7% of the women disagreed that there is adequate access to family doctors in their communities, 27% agree, 10.8% were undecided and 2.7% said it was not applicable.

There is adequate access to medical health specialists.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	1	2.7	2.7	2.7
2	6	16.2	16.2	18.9
3	4	10.8	10.8	29.7
4	9	24.3	24.3	54.1
5	17	45.9	45.9	100.0
Total	37	100.0	100.0	

Table 2

70.2% of the women disagreed that there is adequate access to medical health specialist in their communities, 16.2% agreed, 10.8% were undecided, and 2.7% did not respond to the question at all.

There are adequate ambulance services.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	2	5.4	5.4	5.4
1	6	16.2	16.2	21.6
2	17	45.9	45.9	67.6
3	8	21.6	21.6	89.2
4	2	5.4	5.4	94.6
5	1	2.7	2.7	97.3
6	1	2.7	2.7	100.0
Total	37	100.0	100.0	

Table 3

62.1% of the women agreed that there is adequate ambulance services in their communities, 8.4% disagreed, 21.6% were undecided, 2.7% said the question was not applicable, and 5.4% did not respond at all.

The cost of ambulance services discourages people from using it.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	1	2.7	2.7	2.7
1	2	5.4	5.4	8.1
2	10	27.0	27.0	35.1
3	11	29.7	29.7	64.9
4	6	16.2	16.2	81.1
5	6	16.2	16.2	97.3
6	1	2.7	2.7	100.0
Total	37	100.0	100.0	

Table 4

32.4% of the women agreed that the cost of ambulance services discourages people from using it, 32.4% disagreed, 29.7% were undecided, 2.7% said not applicable and 2.7% did not respond at all.

RESPONSE OF NORTHERN WOMEN TO CHILD CARE ISSUES

There is sufficient licensed childcare.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	2	5.4	5.4	5.4
1	4	10.8	10.8	16.2
2	9	24.3	24.3	40.5
3	4	10.8	10.8	51.4
4	8	21.6	21.6	73.0
5	10	27.0	27.0	100.0
Total	37	100.0	100.0	

Table 5

48.6% of the women disagreed that there is sufficient licensed childcare in their communities, 35.1% agreed, 10.8% were undecided, and 5.4% did not respond at all. The relative closeness in percentage difference between agreement and disagreement is an indication that though childcare is working well, there is a need for more services.

As indicated by the focus group findings, the women that have child care services are satisfied, while those that don't and have young children, see it as a major issue. Considered together with tables 7 and 14, the responses confirm that northern women view child care as an important issue.

The cost of childcare discourages people from using it.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	1	2.7	2.7	2.7
1	2	5.4	5.4	8.1
2	8	21.6	21.6	29.7
3	12	32.4	32.4	62.2
4	11	29.7	29.7	91.9
5	2	5.4	5.4	97.3
6	1	2.7	2.7	100.0
Total	37	100.0	100.0	

Table 6

35.1% of the women disagreed that the cost of childcare discourages people from using it, 27% agreed, 32.4% were undecided, 2.7% said not applicable and 2.7% did not respond at all.

Licensed childcare is flexible enough to meet families' needs.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	2	5.4	5.4	5.4
1	3	8.1	8.1	13.5
2	3	8.1	8.1	21.6
3	12	32.4	32.4	54.1
4	13	35.1	35.1	89.2
5	3	8.1	8.1	97.3
6	1	2.7	2.7	100.0
Total	37	100.0	100.0	

Table 7

43.2% disagreed that licensed childcare is flexible enough to meet families' needs, 16.2% agreed, 32.4% were undecided, 2.7% said not applicable, and 2.7% did not respond at all.

RESPONSE OF NORTHERN WOMEN TO EMPLOYMENT ISSUES

Overall, there are adequate employment opportunities.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	1	2.7	2.7	2.7
1	1	2.7	2.7	5.4
2	12	32.4	32.4	37.8
3	6	16.2	16.2	54.1
4	11	29.7	29.7	83.8
5	5	13.5	13.5	97.3
6	1	2.7	2.7	100.0
Total	37	100.0	100.0	

Table 8

43.2% of the women disagreed that there are adequate employment opportunities in their communities, 35.1% agreed, 16.2% were undecided, 2.7% said not applicable and 2.7% did not respond at all.

There are adequate employment opportunities for women.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	1	2.7	2.7	2.7
1	1	2.7	2.7	5.4
2	14	37.8	37.8	43.2
3	9	24.3	24.3	67.6
4	7	18.9	18.9	86.5
5	4	10.8	10.8	97.3
6	1	2.7	2.7	100.0
Total	37	100.0	100.0	

Table 9

40.5 of the women agreed that there are adequate employment opportunities for women in their communities, 29.7% disagreed, 24.3% were undecided, 2.7% said not applicable and 2.7% did not respond at all.

There are adequate employment opportunities for young people.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	1	2.7	2.7	2.7
1	1	2.7	2.7	5.4
2	13	35.1	35.1	40.5
3	4	10.8	10.8	51.4
4	10	27.0	27.0	78.4
5	7	18.9	18.9	97.3
6	1	2.7	2.7	100.0
Total	37	100.0	100.0	

Table 10

45.9% of the women disagreed that there are adequate employment opportunities for young people, 37.8% agreed, 10.8% were undecided, 2.7% said not applicable and 2.7% did not respond at all.

RESPONSE OF NORTHERN WOMEN TO EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

There are sufficient training opportunities for women.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	1	2.7	2.7	2.7
1	5	13.5	13.5	16.2
2	10	27.0	27.0	43.2
3	10	27.0	27.0	70.3
4	8	21.6	21.6	91.9
5	3	8.1	8.1	100.0
Total	37	100.0	100.0	

Table 11

40.5% of the women agreed that there are sufficient training opportunities for women in their communities, 34.7% disagreed, 27% were undecided and 2.7% did not respond at all.

There are sufficient post-secondary education opportunities for women.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	1	2.7	2.7	2.7
1	6	16.2	16.2	18.9
2	16	43.2	43.2	62.2
3	6	16.2	16.2	78.4
4	5	13.5	13.5	91.9
5	3	8.1	8.1	100.0
Total	37	100.0	100.0	

Table 12

59.4% agreed that there are sufficient post secondary education opportunities for women in their communities, 21.6% disagreed, 16.2% were undecided and 2.7% did not respond at all.

The main barrier preventing women taking further education is money.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	1	2.7	2.7	2.7
1	8	21.6	21.6	24.3
2	15	40.5	40.5	64.9
3	7	18.9	18.9	83.8
4	4	10.8	10.8	94.6
5	2	5.4	5.4	100.0
Total	37	100.0	100.0	

Table 13

62 % of the women agreed that the main barrier preventing women from taking further education is money, 16.4% disagreed, 18.9% were undecided and 2.7% did not respond at all.

The main barrier preventing women from taking further education is lack of childcare.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	1	2.7	2.7	2.7
1	10	27.0	27.0	29.7
2	16	43.2	43.2	73.0
3	7	18.9	18.9	91.9
4	2	5.4	5.4	97.3
5	1	2.7	2.7	100.0
Total	37	100.0	100.0	

Table 14

70.2% of the women agreed that the main barrier preventing women from further education is lack of child care, 8.1% disagreed, 18.9% were undecided and 2.7% did not respond at all.

The main barrier preventing women from taking further education is distance.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	1	2.7	2.7	2.7
1	7	18.9	18.9	21.6
2	15	40.5	40.5	62.2
3	6	16.2	16.2	78.4
4	7	18.9	18.9	97.3
5	1	2.7	2.7	100.0
Total	37	100.0	100.0	

Table 15

59.4% of the women agreed that the main barrier preventing women from taking further education is distance, 21.6% disagreed, 16.2% were undecided and 2.7% did not respond at all.

The main barrier preventing women from taking further education is transportation.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	1	2.7	2.7	2.7
1	7	18.9	18.9	21.6
2	11	29.7	29.7	51.4
3	7	18.9	18.9	70.3
4	10	27.0	27.0	97.3
5	1	2.7	2.7	100.0
Total	37	100.0	100.0	

Table 16

48.6% of the women agreed that the main barrier preventing women from further education is lack of transportation, 29.7% disagreed, 18.9% were undecided and 2.7% did not respond at all.

Rural Women's Response To Issues

RESPONSE OF RURAL WOMEN TO HEALTH ISSUES

There is adequate access to family Doctors.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	1	1.3	1.3	1.3
1	8	10.4	10.4	11.7
2	38	49.4	49.4	61.0
3	5	6.5	6.5	67.5
4	19	24.7	24.7	92.2
5	6	7.8	7.8	100.0
Total	77	100.0	100.0	

Table 17

58.8% of the women agreed that there is adequate access to family doctors, 32.5% disagreed, 6.5% were undecided and 1.3% did not respond to the question at all.

There is adequate access to medical health specialist.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	2	2.6	2.6	2.6
1	3	3.9	3.9	6.5
2	22	28.6	28.6	35.1
3	15	19.5	19.5	54.5
4	21	27.3	27.3	81.8
5	13	16.9	16.9	98.7
6	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	77	100.0	100.0	

Table 18

44.2% of the women disagree that there is adequate access to medical health specialist in their communities, 32.5% agreed, 19.5% were undecided, 1.3% said not applicable and 2.6% did not respond at all.

There is adequate ambulance service.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	3	3.9	3.9	3.9
1	9	11.7	11.7	15.6
2	51	66.2	66.2	81.8
3	12	15.6	15.6	97.4
4	1	1.3	1.3	98.7
5	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	77	100.0	100.0	

Table 19

77.9% of the women agreed that there are adequate ambulance services in their communities, 2.6% disagreed, 15.6% were undecided and 3.9% did not respond at all.

The cost of ambulance services discourages people from using them.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	3	3.9	3.9	3.9
1	9	11.7	11.7	15.6
2	27	35.1	35.1	50.6
3	25	32.5	32.5	83.1
4	12	15.6	15.6	98.7
5	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	77	100.0	100.0	

Table 20

46.8% of the women agreed that the cost of ambulance services discourages people from using it, 16.9% disagreed, 32.5% were undecided and 3.9% did not respond to the question.

RESPONSE OF RURAL WOMEN TO CHILDCARE ISSUES

There is sufficient licensed childcare.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	3	3.9	3.9	3.9
1	6	7.8	7.8	11.7
2	26	33.8	33.8	45.5
3	10	13.0	13.0	58.4
4	15	19.5	19.5	77.9
5	11	14.3	14.3	92.2
6	6	7.8	7.8	100.0
Total	77	100.0	100.0	

Table 21

Only 41.6% of the women felt that there is sufficient licensed childcare in their communities, 33.8% disagreed, 13% were undecided, 7.8% said not applicable and 3.9% did not respond at all. This result again shows that though child care is working well in these communities, there is a need for more services because many women do not have child care.

The cost of childcare discourages people from using it.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	6	7.8	7.8	7.8
1	8	10.4	10.4	18.2
2	22	28.6	28.6	46.8
3	16	20.8	20.8	67.5
4	15	19.5	19.5	87.0
5	3	3.9	3.9	90.9
6	7	9.1	9.1	100.0
Total	77	100.0	100.0	

Table 22

39% of the women agreed that the cost of childcare discourages people from using it, 23.4% disagreed, 20.8% were undecided, and 9.1% said not applicable and 7.8% did not respond at all.

Licensed childcare is flexible to meet families' needs.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	7	9.1	9.1	9.1
1	9	11.7	11.7	20.8
2	18	23.4	23.4	44.2
3	15	19.5	19.5	63.6
4	12	15.6	15.6	79.2
5	7	9.1	9.1	88.3
6	9	11.7	11.7	100.0
Total	77	100.0	100.0	

Table 23

Only 35.1% of the women agreed that licensed childcare is flexible enough to meet families' needs, 24.7% disagreed, 19.5% were undecided, and 11.7% said not applicable and 9.1% did not respond at all.

RESPONSE OF RURAL WOMEN TO EMPLOYMENT ISSUES

Overall, there are adequate employment opportunities.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	5	6.5	6.5	6.5
1	2	2.6	2.6	9.1
2	28	36.4	36.4	45.5
3	12	15.6	15.6	61.0
4	23	29.9	29.9	90.9
5	7	9.1	9.1	100.0
Total	77	100.0	100.0	

Table 24

39% of the women agreed that there are adequate employment opportunities for young people, 39% disagreed, 15.6% were undecided, and 6.5% did not respond at all.

There are adequate employment opportunities for women.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	4	5.2	5.2	5.2
1	2	2.6	2.6	7.8
2	25	32.5	32.5	40.3
3	12	15.6	15.6	55.8
4	29	37.7	37.7	93.5
5	5	6.5	6.5	100.0
Total	77	100.0	100.0	

Table 25

44.2% of the women disagreed that there are adequate employment opportunities for women in their communities, 35.1% agreed, 15.6% were undecided and 5.2% did not respond at all.

There are adequate employment opportunities for young people.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	3	3.9	3.9	3.9
1	1	1.3	1.3	5.2
2	25	32.5	32.5	37.7
3	10	13.0	13.0	50.6
4	26	33.8	33.8	84.4
5	12	15.6	15.6	100.0
Total	77	100.0	100.0	

Table 26

49.4% of the women disagreed that there are adequate employment opportunities for young people, 33.8% agreed, and 13% were undecided and 3.9% did not respond to the question at all.

RESPONSE OF RURAL WOMEN TO EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

There are sufficient training opportunities for women.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	3	3.9	3.9	3.9
1	2	2.6	2.6	6.5
2	26	33.8	33.8	40.3
3	13	16.9	16.9	57.1
4	25	32.5	32.5	89.6
5	7	9.1	9.1	98.7
6	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	77	100.0	100.0	

Table 27

41.6% of the women disagreed that there is sufficient training opportunities for women in their communities, 36.4% agreed, 16.9% were undecided, 1.3% said not applicable and 3.9% did not respond to the question at all.

There is sufficient post –secondary education opportunities for women.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	3	3.9	3.9	3.9
1	3	3.9	3.9	7.8
2	33	42.9	42.9	50.6
3	11	14.3	14.3	64.9
4	20	26.0	26.0	90.9
5	6	7.8	7.8	98.7
6	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	77	100.0	100.0	

Table 28

46.5% of the women agreed that there is sufficient post secondary education for women, 33.8% disagreed, 14.3% were undecided, 1.3% said not applicable and 3.9% did not respond at all.

The main barrier preventing women from taking further education is money.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	3	3.9	3.9	3.9
1	7	9.1	9.1	13.0
2	38	49.4	49.4	62.3
3	16	20.8	20.8	83.1
4	12	15.6	15.6	98.7
5	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	77	100.0	100.0	

Table 29

58.5% of the women agreed that the main barrier preventing women taking further education is money, 16.9% disagreed, 20.8% were undecided and 3.9% did not respond at all.

The main barrier preventing women from further education is lack of childcare.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	2	2.6	2.6	2.6
1	3	3.9	3.9	6.5
2	26	33.8	33.8	40.3
3	23	29.9	29.9	70.1
4	18	23.4	23.4	93.5
5	3	3.9	3.9	97.4
6	2	2.6	2.6	100.0
Total	77	100.0	100.0	

Table 30

37.7% of the women agreed that the main barrier preventing women from taking further education is lack of childcare, 27.3% disagreed, 29.9% were undecided, 2.6 said not applicable and 2.6% did not respond to the question at all.

The main barrier preventing women from taking further education is distance.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	3	3.9	3.9	3.9
1	10	13.0	13.0	16.9
2	36	46.8	46.8	63.6
3	11	14.3	14.3	77.9
4	16	20.8	20.8	98.7
5	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	77	100.0	100.0	

Table 31

60.4% of the women agreed that the main barrier preventing women from further education is distance, 22.1% disagreed, 14.3% were undecided and 3.9% did not respond at all.

The main barrier preventing women from further education is lack of transportation.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	2	2.6	2.6	2.6
1	6	7.8	7.8	10.4
2	17	22.1	22.1	32.5
3	25	32.5	32.5	64.9
4	26	33.8	33.8	98.7
5	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	77	100.0	100.0	

Table 32

35.1% of the women disagreed that the main barrier preventing women from taking further education is lack of transportation, 29.9% disagreed, 32.5% were undecided and 2.6% did not respond at all.

Overview:

The findings of the survey strongly correlate with the views expressed by women in the focus group discussion and the literature review of past research into related issues. Women have many significant needs and issues. Some communities are ahead of others in addressing the various needs of women and their families. A key observation is that women in different communities have similar needs with slight differences due to personal circumstances, culture, and place. Rural and northern Manitoba is not homogeneous – there is no one common need and no one common solution.

Women deal with similar issues and their needs continue to evolve. Programs and initiatives by governments and community organizations must be continually re-evaluated and updated to ensure they are still relevant and effective. This evaluation needs to be based in the community and needs to involve the women.