



# Legal System Use Patterns in Saskatchewan Rural, Urban, and Northern Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence

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# Overview

- Introduction
- Participants and Method
- Results
- Summary and Discussion



# INTRODUCTION



# Introduction

- Intimate partner violence (IPV)
  - Actual or threatened physical, sexual, psychological, or economic abuse directed toward a current or former spouse or dating partner
- Survivors of IPV may access legal services to help end the violence
  - e.g., protection order, family lawyer, police
- Duterte and colleagues (2008) found 19% of 1509 female survivors of IPV sought legal services
  - Rates of help-seeking increased with the severity and duration of abuse



# Introduction

- Legal service use is influenced by several factors
  - e.g., geographical location, cultural background, resource availability
- Women in urban centers have more access than rural and northern women
- Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal IPV victims demonstrate different patterns
  - May be influenced by comfort accessing services, culturally sensitive programming, help-seeking attitudes, and experiences with racism



# The Current Study

- Purpose
  - Explore patterns of legal system use according to geographic location and cultural background in a sample of 216 Saskatchewan women who have experienced IPV



# PARTICIPANTS AND METHOD



# The Healing Journey Study

- Tri-provincial study examining women's experience of IPV:
- 7 waves of interviews at 6 month intervals examining:
  - Impact of IPV on health and parenting
  - Utilization and satisfaction with services
  - Detailed labour force questionnaire for cost analysis study
- In-depth qualitative interviews



# Recruitment Sites and Number of Participants Recruited by Province

Province	City/town	Number of Participants
<b>Manitoba</b>		
	Winnipeg	163
	Small Town /Rural	45
	North	14
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>222</b>
<b>Saskatchewan</b>		
	Regina	62
	Saskatoon	86
	Prince Albert/north	68
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>216</b>
<b>Alberta</b>		
	Calgary & area	95
	Edmonton & area	75
	Small Town/Rural	44
	North	18
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>232</b>
<b>Overall total</b>		<b>670</b>



# Participants and Method

- The Healing Journey Project (SSHRC/CURA, PAF)
  - PI Dr. Jane Ursel
  - Longitudinal study focusing on healing from IPV in MB, SK, & AB
- 216 Saskatchewan participants
  - 188 (87.0%) lived in an urban centre
  - 20 (9.3%) lived in a rural community
  - 8 (3.7%) lived in a northern community
- Divided into Aboriginal & non-Aboriginal
  - 121 (56.0%) were Aboriginal
  - 95 (44.0%) were non-Aboriginal



# RESULTS



# Legal System Involvement

- More than half (63.9%) of participants reported some legal system involvement due to IPV
  - 54.5% of Aboriginal and 75.8% of non-Aboriginal participants
  - 66.5% of urban, 55.0% of rural, and 55.0% of northern participants
- Many participants (52.8%) reported concern that the legal system in their area does not take abuse of women seriously
  - 38.8% of Aboriginal and 70.5% of non-Aboriginal participants
  - 51.6% of urban, 65.0% of rural, and 50.0% of northern participants



# Protection Orders

- Nearly half (49%) of participants reported having orders preventing contact from their abusive ex-partner
  - 46% of Aboriginal and 54% of non-Aboriginal participants
  - 50% of urban, 40.0% of rural, and 75.0% of northern participants
- Only 20% of participants reported feeling safer with the order
  - 22% of Aboriginal and 19% of non-Aboriginal participants
  - 20% of urban, 15.0% of rural, and 50.0% of northern participants
- Approximately 1/3 (34%) of participants reported a breach
  - 31% of Aboriginal and 40% of non-Aboriginal participants
  - 34.0% of urban, 30.0% of rural, and 50.0% of northern participants



# Lawyer for IPV Issues

- 33% of participants reported having a lawyer for IPV
  - More non-Aboriginal than Aboriginal participants had a lawyer
- 18% of participants had legal aid
  - Aboriginal and northern participants were more likely to have legal aid
- 14% of participants had private counsel
  - Non-Aboriginal, urban, and rural participants were more likely to have private counsel
- Meanwhile, 18% of participants reported difficulty securing legal representation
  - Non-Aboriginal, rural, and northern participants reported the most difficulty



# Police Involvement

- 70% reported **police involvement** due to IPV
  - 29% of Aboriginal and 52.6% of non-Aboriginal participants
  - 71% of urban, 65% of rural, and 63% of northern participants
- 9% reported **police did not respond at all**
  - 5% of Aboriginal and 14% of non-Aboriginal participants
  - 9% of urban, 5% of rural, and 13% of northern participants
- 16% of participants reported **police told them the abuse wasn't a criminal matter**
  - 12% of Aboriginal and 12% of non-Aboriginal participants
  - 12% urban, 5% of rural, and 25% of northern participants



# Police Response

- **41% of participants were asked if they wanted to press charges**
  - 43% of Aboriginal and 38% of non-Aboriginal participants
  - 39% of urban, 50% of rural, and 50% of northern participants
- **15% of participants reported police tried to discourage them from pressing charge**
  - 14% of Aboriginal and 16% of non-Aboriginal participants
  - 15% of urban, 10% of rural, and 25% of northern participants



# Police Response

- 39% of participants reported their **abusive ex-partner was arrested** when police were called
  - 45% of Aboriginal and 33% of non-Aboriginal participants
  - 40% of urban, 25% of rural, and 50% of northern participants
- 3% of participants reported **both** they and their ex-partner were arrested
  - 6% of Aboriginal and 3% of non-Aboriginal participants reported both were arrested
  - 5% of urban, 70% of rural, and 13% of northern participants reported both were arrested



# Police Response

- 10% of participants reported police **confiscated weapons when called**
  - 8% of Aboriginal and 12% of non-Aboriginal participants
  - 9% of urban, 15% of rural, and 13% of northern participants
- 11% of participants were **police escorted to a shelter**
  - 16% of Aboriginal and 5% of non-Aboriginal participants
  - 10% of urban, 10% of rural, and 50% of northern participants
- 38% of participants reported police **just talked**
  - 31% of Aboriginal and 46% of non-Aboriginal participants
  - 37% of urban, 40% of rural, and 50% of northern participants



# DISCUSSION



# Summary and Discussion

- Several Saskatchewan women reported concern with their experiences with the legal system
  - One-third of SK women and half of northern SK women reported their no-contact order was breached
  - Understandably, 80% of participants reported a no-contact order did not help them feel safer
  - Over 17% reported difficulty securing legal representation
  - 15% of SK women and 25% of northern SK women reported the police discouraged them from laying charges
  - Over 16% of SK women and 25% of northern SK women reported the police dismissed IPV as non-criminal



# Community Implications

- Need for support and advocacy services
  - Such services would assist women in their dealings with the police and finding appropriate services in a timely manner
- Protection orders
  - Should be augmented by support services that can provide risk assessment, safety planning and assistance in reporting and following up on breaches
- Police response concerns (i.e., discouraging charges)
  - Is there a need for in depth police training?



# Summary and Discussion

- Survivors of IPV report many positive experiences with the legal system
- Survivors of IPV face barriers obtaining legal support
- Too many women report experiencing prejudice and blame when seeking legal assistance
- Regional and cultural factors affect experiences with the legal system
- More work is needed to further explore these trends



# Thank-you!

Questions?

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