

**For Immediate Release**

**What Alberta Men Think about Violence against Women in 2016**

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**CALGARY, AB. March 7, 2016** – The results of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Alberta Men's Attitudes about Violence against Women are in and show a shift in the right direction. Today, at the YWCA of Calgary a joint media conference with the YWCA and Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS) will present the results of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Alberta Men's Attitudes and Behaviours toward Violence against Women Survey and the impact those attitudes have in our community.

The survey was completed over the telephone by Leger between January 29, 2016 and February 14, 2016 with 1,478 Alberta males.

Leger's four key insights from the survey results:

- In general, seeing a positive shift in attitude since 2012, with opportunities to improve further,
- education and tools are needed to help Alberta men intervene,
- a large number of men feel that education on this issue starts at home; and
- focusing the messages on women's human rights and gender equity will help shift attitudes.

Adopted from a similar Australian survey, ACWS and Leger use a "Gender Equity Scale" as a benchmark to measure men's attitudes. The gender equity scores have increased overall in our province since 2012 – a positive indicator of progressive change relating to gender issues.

Another positive from the survey is Alberta men's overwhelming response that violence and abuse against women is a concern to them (97%). They are also more likely (from 54% in 2012 to 65% in 2016) to recognize that violence against women and girls impacts the women they care about in their lives.

One in five men report having witnessed an abusive behaviour against women in the past year in a social environment. Two-thirds of these men checked to see if the woman was okay or needed help, while 61% said something or challenged the man's behaviour. Younger men are more likely to have witnessed abusive harassing behaviour than other survey respondents.

However, the survey also found that 61% of Alberta men found it hard to understand why women stay in an abusive relationship. "This statistic points to the lack of understanding of the dynamics of abuse, the multiple financial barriers women face, the implications for children and the fact that women are at high risk of being killed by a controlling abusive spouse after they leave a relationship," commented Jan Reimer, Executive Director of the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters.

Although there is still a lot of work to do, ACWS and the YWCA are encouraged to see a change for the better in the responses in general - especially during a tough economic climate and with the survey taking place during a high-profile sexual assault trial featuring rigorous defense tactics.

"Encouraging that fewer men agree that if women wear provocative clothing, they are putting themselves at risk for sexual assault", says Deb Tomlinson, Chief Executive Officer of the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault

Services, “the study findings indicate that rape culture appears to be as great a concern in Alberta as it was four years ago. Until we can shift from rape culture to a culture of “We believe you”, the reporting rate of sexual assault will continue to remain at an alarming 3%. This means survivors don't get the help they need; don't access the criminal justice system and offenders are not held accountable for the crimes they have committed. This has serious consequences for all of us.”

We take heart that the many community partners: governments, not-for-profits and of course, hardworking women’s shelters are coming together to shift these attitudes and move towards a safer, more equitable community for all.

**Material:**

2016 Provincial Survey results: <https://www.acws.ca/alberta-mens-attitudes-about-violence-against-women-survey>

**Background:**

The first survey was conducted by Leger in 2011 and released in 2012 at the Breakfast with the Guys in Calgary. Taking the temperature of Alberta men’s attitudes on the issue of violence against women allows governments and the gender violence prevention and intervention sector to target resources and messaging.

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**About ACWS:**

The Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters is a provincial umbrella non-profit organization with a two-pronged mission: to support member women’s shelters and work together to end domestic violence. For more information, visit [acws.ca](http://acws.ca)

**About the YWCA of Calgary:**

The YWCA of Calgary is the largest and longest serving women’s organization in Calgary. Through its more than 105 year history, the organization has touched tens of thousands of lives and evolved its programs to meet the changing needs of women in the community. The YWCA offers a continuum of services for women, and their families, who are struggling with poverty, homelessness, family violence and isolation.

With the focus on empowering women to move from a place of vulnerability to one of resilience, the YWCA continues to be there when and where she needs us most. For more information, visit [ywcaofcalgary.com](http://ywcaofcalgary.com)

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