

**Safety Audit Tools  
and Housing:  
The State of the Art and  
Implications for CMHC**

**A Report Prepared for  
*Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation***

submitted by:

***The Women's Action Centre  
Against Violence (Ottawa-Carleton)***

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NOTE: LE RÉSUMÉ EN FRANÇAIS SUIT IMMÉDIATEMENT LE RÉSUMÉ EN ANGLAIS.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide CMHC with a better understanding of the work currently being done in Canada to apply safety audits to diverse housing situations, in order to assess what role the Corporation could play in fostering the effective use of housing-related safety audit tools.

Safety audits are a process which brings individuals together to walk through a physical environment, evaluate how safe it feels to them, identify ways to make the space safer and organize to bring about those changes.

The methods used to assess the current use of safety audits, and to identify the strengths and limitations of the process as it currently exists, included a widely distributed written survey and a limited number of in-depth interviews.

The survey was designed to solicit a wide range of information on the use of safety audits across Canada. In total, 250 surveys were sent to individuals and organizations identified as possibly having knowledge of, or some involvement with safety audits in their area. 47% or 117 of the surveys were returned; of these 69 (59%) had direct knowledge of safety audits, 30 sent back the survey uncompleted. Of the safety audits described in the completed surveys, 65% had evaluated one or more housing areas.

16 interviews were completed, 11 in English and 5 in French. Ten of the people interviewed had participated in safety audits in housing environments.

Through the surveys and the interviews it was clear that safety audits offer a wide range of benefits to participants, the community at large, decision makers, planners and the organizations that sponsor the audits. Safety audits are a flexible tool, that can be used by a wide diversity of groups, for many purposes in many situations.

Specifically, groups in Canada have found safety audits effective for several purposes:

- ♦ as a community development tool
- ♦ to address violence against women and other vulnerable groups
- ♦ to make tangible changes which reduce opportunities for crimes against people

Equally clearly, safety audits are seldom used to their full potential. The research identified several limitations to the current use of safety audits:

1. There is great frustration about following up on safety audits and the less-than-optimal changes that have been achieved.
2. The groups who are most affected by violence and fear of violence are also the most difficult to involve.
3. The safety audit tools currently in use do not seem to encourage or support groups to evaluate policies and practices.

4. In many cases, the lack of a trained or experienced safety audit facilitators was identified as a gap which significantly decreased the effectiveness of the audit.
5. There is an identified need for a safety audit tool that was more specific to residential environments.
6. No group that we encountered through the research had established clear evaluation criteria to measure the effectiveness of safety audits.

Based on the experience of survey respondents and interviewees, we also identified several elements of effective safety audits.

Successful safety audits are based on two key concepts:

- i) a community development approach to the process
- ii) a focus on women and other groups who are vulnerable to violence

Other elements critical to the success of safety audits include:

- ♦ adequate human and financial resources
- ♦ trained facilitators
- ♦ effective outreach to potentially marginalized groups
- ♦ planning for follow-up from the beginning
- ♦ clarifying the roles of professions

Making safety audits work effectively in housing environments requires attention to all the above elements of successful safety audits, but there are also some additional steps that could be taken specifically to facilitate housing-related safety audits:

- ♦ education for housing providers and property managers about the links between personal security concerns and the management and design of housing structures as well as about the usefulness of safety audits;
- ♦ a safety audits guide which was specific to housing environments;
- ♦ a guide, based on safety audits, that would help individuals to evaluate the safety of privately owned housing.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

CMHC has an interest in promoting personal security in housing for all Canadians. Safety audits have tremendous potential as one tool in that effort. Through the responses to this study, we have identified actions and resources which could help increase the efficacy of safety audits. We suggest that, through further involvement, CMHC could support the effective use of safety audits in housing and thereby respond to the many tenants and housing providers who view person security as one of their priorities.

### **Recommendations for CMHC**

1. That CMHC sponsor a pilot project, to be done with agencies experienced in safety audits and representatives from different housing communities. This project would include five steps.

- i) Develop a safety audit kit for housing, based on the METRAC Women's Safety Audit Guide.
- ii) Develop a training process and manual for safety audit organizers and facilitators. Although no other group has yet published a manual, there are groups who do already train safety audit facilitators. A training manual could be built on this existing knowledge, with special attention to making it applicable for housing communities.
- iii) Develop evaluation criteria to measure the success of safety audits.
- iv) Pilot the newly developed materials and training package in several different types of housing and varied communities. To be effective, this pilot project must be long enough to allow for follow-up to the safety audit, and human and financial supports must be made available to the host community.
- v) Invite the housing groups, agencies that promote safety audits and other resource people to a one-day workshop to review the evaluation of the pilot projects and examine issues such as liability. This would also be an opportunity to discuss what future role CMHC, and other groups, could play in supporting effective safety audits in housing.

Depending on the results of the pilot project outlined above, there are a variety of ways that CMHC could continue to support safety audits and other strategies to involve community members in improving the security of their housing.

2. CMHC should explore strategies "beyond safety audits". This would involve identifying tools which can involve diverse users in the development and design of new housing projects for the purpose of creating housing environments which are comfortable and safe for all residents.

## RÉSUMÉ

Ce rapport vise à mieux situer la SCHL quant au travail qui se fait actuellement au Canada dans la vérification sécuritaire en milieu résidentiel. Il devrait permettre à la Société de définir le rôle éventuel qu'elle pourrait jouer pour favoriser l'utilisation efficace des outils de diagnostic sécurité dans le domaine du logement.

Dans le processus de vérification sécuritaire, des personnes se rendent dans un endroit, évaluent dans quelle mesure il leur semble sécuritaire, déterminent des façons de le rendre plus sûr et s'organisent pour mettre en place les changements requis.

Pour évaluer l'emploi actuel de la vérification sécuritaire et déterminer les points forts et les points faibles de ce processus dans sa forme actuelle, nous avons fait parvenir un questionnaire à un grand nombre de personnes et procédé à quelques entrevues approfondies.

L'enquête a été conçue pour recueillir une grande variété de renseignements sur l'utilisation de la vérification sécuritaire d'un bout à l'autre du Canada. Au total, 250 questionnaires ont été envoyés à des particuliers et à des organisations dont on supposait qu'ils pouvaient posséder certaines connaissances sur la vérification sécuritaire ou avoir eu recours à ce processus dans leur région. Nous avons reçu 47 % des questionnaires expédiés, soit 117. De ce nombre, 69 répondants (59 %) savaient exactement ce qu'était une vérification sécuritaire, alors que 40 questionnaires nous ont été retournés sans avoir été remplis. Parmi les vérifications sécuritaires décrites dans les questionnaires remplis, un certain pourcentage avait servi à évaluer au moins un secteur relatif au logement.

Seize entrevues ont été réalisées, 11 en anglais et 5 en français. Dix des seize personnes interviewées avaient participé à une vérification sécuritaire effectuée en milieu résidentiel.

Les questionnaires et les entrevues permettent d'affirmer que la vérification sécuritaire offre de nombreux avantages aux participants, à la collectivité en général, aux décideurs, aux urbanistes et aux organisations qui parrainent ces vérifications. La vérification sécuritaire constitue un outil souple qui peut être utilisé par toutes sortes de groupes pour de nombreuses applications et dans de nombreuses situations différentes.

Plus précisément, des groupes du Canada ont trouvé que ce processus avait plusieurs usages, notamment :

- ♦ comme outil de développement communautaire;
- ♦ pour trouver des solutions à la violence faite aux femmes et à d'autres groupes vulnérables;
- ♦ pour réaliser des changements tangibles qui réduisent les occasions de crime contre la personne.

Il est aussi évident qu'on utilise rarement le plein potentiel de la vérification sécuritaire. Ainsi, l'étude a fait ressortir plusieurs obstacles à l'utilisation actuelle qui est faite de la vérification sécuritaire :

1. On éprouve beaucoup de frustration à l'égard du suivi accordé à la vérification sécuritaire et des changements minimes qui sont réalisés.
2. Les groupes les plus touchés par la violence et par la peur de la violence sont également les plus difficiles à faire participer.
3. Les outils de vérification sécuritaire actuellement utilisés ne semblent pas encourager les groupes à évaluer les politiques et les lignes de conduite en place.
4. Bien des répondants ont noté que l'absence d'une personne-ressource qualifiée ou expérimentée dans le domaine de la vérification sécuritaire constituait une lacune qui réduisait considérablement l'efficacité du processus.

5. On a exprimé le besoin d'un outil de vérification sécuritaire qui serait plus particulier aux milieux résidentiels.
6. Aucun des groupes que nous avons rencontrés dans le cadre de l'enquête n'avait établi de critères d'évaluation clairs destinés à mesurer l'efficacité de la vérification sécuritaire.

À partir des réponses fournies sur les questionnaires et lors des entrevues, nous avons pu établir plusieurs éléments déterminant l'efficacité de la vérification sécuritaire.

- ♦ La vérification sécuritaire est réussie lorsque deux conditions clés sont réunies :
  1. le processus est fondé sur une approche de développement communautaire;
  2. le processus est axé sur les femmes et les autres groupes vulnérables à la violence.
- ♦ Il existe d'autres éléments essentiels au succès de la vérification sécuritaire, à savoir :
  - ♦ des ressources financières et humaines appropriées;
  - ♦ des personnes-ressources bien formées;
  - ♦ la participation des groupes potentiellement marginalisés;
  - ♦ la planification du suivi dès le départ;
  - ♦ la clarification des rôles des spécialistes.

Pour assurer l'efficacité de la vérification sécuritaire en milieu résidentiel, il faut que tous les éléments de succès susmentionnés soient réunis, mais il faut également prendre quelques mesures supplémentaires propres à faciliter la réalisation des vérifications sécuritaires touchant particulièrement au domaine du logement :

- ♦ information des producteurs de logements et des gestionnaires d'immeubles sur les liens existant entre les préoccupations personnelles en matière de sécurité et la façon dont sont gérées et conçues les structures résidentielles ainsi que sur l'utilité de la vérification sécuritaire;
- ♦ production d'un guide sur la vérification sécuritaire concernant particulièrement les milieux résidentiels;
- ♦ production d'un guide, fondé sur la vérification sécuritaire, destiné à aider les personnes à évaluer la sécurité de leur propriété.

## RECOMMANDATIONS

La SCHL s'intéresse à la promotion de la sécurité personnelle dans les habitations à l'échelle du Canada, et la vérification sécuritaire possède un énorme potentiel à cet égard. Cette enquête nous a permis de déterminer quelles mesures et quelles ressources pourraient contribuer à accroître l'efficacité des vérifications sécuritaires. Nous croyons qu'en participant de façon plus active, la SCHL pourrait appuyer l'utilisation efficace de la vérification sécuritaire en milieu résidentiel et ainsi donner suite aux préoccupations de nombreux locataires et producteurs de logements qui considèrent la sécurité personnelle comme une priorité.

### Recommandations pour la SCHL

1. La SCHL devrait parrainer un projet pilote en collaboration avec des agences possédant de l'expérience dans le domaine de la vérification sécuritaire et des représentants de différentes collectivités. Ce projet serait réalisé en trois étapes :
  - i) Elaborer une trousse de diagnostic de sécurité pour les logements, fondée sur le guide de vérification sécuritaire du METRAC (Metro Action Committee on Public Violence against Women) destiné aux femmes;

- ii) Élaborer un processus et un manuel de formation à l'intention des personnes-ressources et des organisateurs de vérifications sécuritaires. Bien qu'aucun autre groupe n'ait publié ce genre de manuel, il en existe qui forment déjà des personnes-ressources en vérification sécuritaire. Un éventuel manuel de formation pourrait s'appuyer sur ces connaissances tout en accordant une attention particulière à son application au contexte résidentiel;
- iii) Établir des critères d'évaluation visant à mesurer l'efficacité des vérifications sécuritaires.
- iv) Mettre à l'essai le nouveau matériel et la nouvelle trousse de formation dans des collectivités différentes et des milieux résidentiels divers. Pour être efficace, ce projet pilote devrait s'étendre sur une période suffisamment longue pour que la vérification sécuritaire fasse l'objet d'un suivi, et la collectivité hôte devra disposer des ressources financières et humaines nécessaires.
- v) Inviter les organismes et agences de logement qui encouragent les vérifications sécuritaires et d'autres personnes-ressources à participer à un atelier d'une journée pour passer en revue l'évaluation des projets pilotes et examiner des questions comme la responsabilité. Ce serait également l'occasion de discuter du rôle futur que la SCHL et d'autres groupes pourraient jouer à l'appui de vérifications sécuritaires efficaces en milieu résidentiel.

Selon les résultats obtenus au terme de ce projet pilote, la SCHL pourrait continuer d'appuyer la vérification sécuritaire et d'autres stratégies destinées à inciter les membres de la collectivité à améliorer de diverses façons la sécurité de leur milieu de vie.

2. La SCHL devrait explorer des stratégies allant «au-delà de la vérification sécuritaire». Elle pourrait par exemple trouver des outils susceptibles d'encourager divers utilisateurs à mettre au point et à concevoir de nouveaux ensembles résidentiels qui soient plus confortables et sécuritaires pour tous les occupants.



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	1
Defining Safety Audits	1
The Social Context in Which Safety Audits Developed	2
The History of Safety Audits	2
Critical Issues in the Application of Safety Audits to Housing	4
Structure of this Report	4
<b>THE RESEARCH</b>	5
<i>Methodology</i>	5
<i>An Overview of the Approach</i>	5
Identifying Key Contacts	5
Survey Design	6
Interview Questions and Process	6
Examining the Survey and Interview Results	7
<i>Survey Findings</i>	8
Safety Audits - Profile of use	9
<i>Summary of interview findings</i>	19
Overview	19
The benefits and limitations of safety audits	21
The participation of organizations, professionals and decision-makers in safety audits	22
The involvement of vulnerable groups in safety audits	22
Implementing the results of safety audits	25
The Use of Safety Audits in Housing Environments	26
<i>Analysis of Findings</i>	29
Personal security with respect to housing is an urgent concern	29
Safety Audits have proven advantages	30
The question of who is vulnerable to violence and crime is important	31
Getting results by implementing the recommendations of safety audits is crucial	32
Housing-related safety audits involve practical, logistical and legal concerns	33
Beyond Safety Audits	35
<b>EFFECTIVE USE OF SAFETY AUDITS IN HOUSING</b>	36
The Current Use of Safety Audits -- Strengths and Limitations	36
Keys to Effective Safety Audits	38
Changes to Maximize the Effectiveness of Safety Audits in Housing	40
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS</b>	42
Conclusions	42
Recommendations for CMHC	43
<b>APPENDICES</b>	45

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to provide CMHC with a better understanding of the work currently being done in Canada to apply safety audits to diverse housing situations, in order to assess what role the Corporation could play in fostering the effective use of housing-related safety audit tools.

In order to respond to these objectives, the Women's Action Centre Against Violence (WACAV) agreed to:

- a) identify key contacts;
- b) document the current use of safety audits in Canada especially as applied to housing environments;
- c) analyze the factors that contribute to successful safety audits and identify any limitations to the current tool; and
- d) prepare a written report to summarize the Canadian experience with safety audits, outline the efficacy of current housing-related safety audit tools, and discuss whether there is a role for CMHC in fostering the development or effective use of safety audit tools for diverse housing environments.

### Defining Safety Audits

The Women's Action Centre Against Violence understands safety audits as a process which brings individuals together to walk through a physical environment, evaluate how safe it feels to them, identify ways to make the space safer and organize to bring about those changes. In our experience, there are usually several steps to safety audits:

*Organizing the safety audit*, which can include choosing the sites to be audited, involving other agencies, and recruiting participants;

*Orientation to safety audits*, sometimes including training for facilitators or team leaders as well as introducing participants to safety audits;

*The walk-about*, during which groups of individuals, using a safety audit checklist, walk through a space to identify where and why they feel uncomfortable and what other aspects of the space help them to feel safe;

*Debriefing*, discussing what participants observed during their walk, writing down findings and developing recommendations for changes that would make the space feel safer; and,

*Follow-up*, which may begin with disseminating the results of the safety audit to community members, decision-makers and other players such as municipal staff. Strategies such as lobbying, negotiating for resources and developing partnerships may be used to help get the recommendations implemented.

## The Social Context in Which Safety Audits Developed

The development in 1989 in Toronto of a women's safety audit is best understood in the context of the variety of concerns which informed and inspired it. As Whitzman notes<sup>1</sup>, between about 1960 and 1980, there were four distinct sets of influences:

- 1) internationally, the growth of feminist organizations intent to pressure governments to work in favour of women's equal rights (Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, Information Canada, 1970);
- 2) the emerging insights of North American feminist anti-violence activists, who argued that the violence perpetrated against women by men because of gender was a significant barrier to achieving equality between the sexes (Gordon M, Riger S. The Female Fear, New York: Free Press, 1989; Liz Kelly, Surviving Sexual Violence, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1989);
- 3) the investigation of environmental design as a possible factor affecting urban crime, in the United States and Britain, including the specific disciplinary development of Community Planning Through Environmental Design (CPTED) (Brantingham and Brantingham, "Situational Crime Prevention in Practice", Canadian Journal of Criminology 32,1: 17-40); and
- 4) the work in some European cities, of municipal 'women's committees' and local women's groups, to take women's safety concerns into account in urban design and planning (Jan Penrose, "Women and Man-Made Environment: The Dutch Experience", Women and Environments, Winter 1987, pp. 12-13).

## The History of Safety Audits

Given this general context, the development of the safety audit tool becomes easier to understand. Listed below are the key elements of its chronology:

- 1) In Toronto, in 1982, a "Task Force on Public Violence against Women and Children" was formed by the regional government to respond to concerns raised by a series of rape/murders;
- 2) The Task Force resulted in the creation of an advocacy agency, the Metro Action Committee on Public Violence against Women and Children (METRAC), which was charged with ensuring that the many recommendations in the Task Force's final report (1984) would be carried out.
- 3) Among these recommendations were several specifically geared to urban design issues. The content of these recommendations was strongly influenced by the work of a local community group, "Women in/and Planning" which included feminist faculty and students from York University's Faculty of Environmental Studies. One explicit motivation for their

<sup>1</sup> The chronology described in this section and the one that follows are based on the much more detailed history provided by Carolyn Whitzman, "Taking Back Planning: Promoting Women's Safety in Public Places - The Toronto Experience", The Journal of Architectural and Planning Research, 9:2, pp. 169-179.

involvement was the lack of attention given to women's safety concerns in CPTED. Another was a 1984 dissertation about the relationships between physical spaces and violent crime. "Women in/and Planning" sponsored a participatory research project called Women Plan Toronto in 1985, which asked diverse women in 25 different workshops to identify what they liked, disliked and would like to see in cities. Safety emerged as a major issue in all of these workshops.

- 4) Out of this research emerged another project whose final report was titled The Women in Safe Environments (WISE) Report. Open-ended workshops were again the vehicle to ask a variety of women "where do you feel safe or unsafe and why?", and this method was supplemented with a questionnaire distributed to a wide variety of women. The results of this research helped to pinpoint the areas of concern.
- 5) Parallel to this work, women's action committees emerged in a variety of neighbourhoods in the City of Toronto. Their concerns were brought to municipal council with the help of a local councillor, and the result was The Safe City Report: Municipal Strategies for Preventing Public Violence Against Women. This document was especially concerned to identify how a municipal bureaucracy could contribute to creating a safer city. A receptive council responded by establishing the Safe Cities Committee whose mandate was to monitor recommendations such as: including "a policy on safety in the Official Plan, review policies on land use mix and open space planning w. the perspective of reducing opportunities for public violence against women, hire a planner to assist in the development of guidelines that integrate safety in the planning process, train planners in women's safety issues" (Whitzman, 1992, p. 173).
6. Influenced by the various efforts of Women Plan Toronto and other women's action committees, METRAC worked with the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) and the Metropolitan Toronto Police to identify women's public safety concerns relevant to TTC facilities. The safety audit concept was developed and piloted through this project in 1989. A "Women's Safety Audit Kit" was later published by METRAC in order to enable other women and community groups to evaluate the physical safety of their residential, community and work environments. In 1990, in collaboration with the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, the audit was adapted specifically for use on campus.

In summary, the recognition that physical design issues cannot be dealt with outside of the social context in which they are located has been integral to the development of the women's safety audit. In other words, the fear of violence that women confront is based on the reality that women are threatened by violence in a manner quite different than are men -- a manner that is intimately tied to their sexuality. Although women in different circumstances certainly experience fear of violence differently, this is an issue that affects all women. Equality, including equal access to places that offer a variety of benefits (including employment, education and recreational), will not be achieved until the threat of sexual assault is identified and challenged in a myriad of ways. At the same time, the benefits that accrue from meeting such a challenge will not be restricted to women but will provide more liveable cities for everyone who uses them.

## **Critical Issues in the Application of Safety Audits to Housing**

In preparing for this study, WACAV identified five critical issues that link safety audits to housing. These issues have been the basis for both the methodology and the analysis upon which this investigation has been based. They are summarized briefly here by way of introduction:

While there is considerable public concern about personal security, and housing providers continue to identify safety as priority issue, many housing communities feel that they lack the knowledge and skills to address the issue.

The previous use of safety audits has demonstrated their advantages, but the tool has focused broadly on public and semi-public spaces, not on the home.

There is a need to consider who is most vulnerable to violence, and this may have particular relevance to certain housing types, structures or designs. (For example, a large percentage of single mothers and their children live below the poverty line, perceive themselves to be very vulnerable to violence and may often live in sub-standard housing with poorly maintained security features such as lighting or locks.)

While safety audits are gaining in popularity, there is some frustration over the question of how to implement the findings.

Housing-related safety audits involve a myriad of practical, logistical and legal concerns.

## **Structure of this Report**

This remainder of this report is divided into the following sections:

### ***The Research***

Methodology, outlining briefly how the information for this study was collected;

Summary of Findings, including an overview of the survey findings, a profile of the use of safety audits across Canada, and a summary of the interview responses; and

Analysis, summarizing the main lessons learned under each of the critical issues.

### ***Effective use of safety audits***

The Current Use of Safety Audits -- Strengths and Limitations, synthesizing lessons learned through the research -- what works and what doesn't; and

Keys to Effective Safety Audits, highlighting key elements for the successful use of safety audits.

### ***Recommendations and Conclusions***

Recommendations for CMHC, outlining what work remains to be done to support effective housing-related safety audits, and suggesting roles CMHC could play in this regard.

## THE RESEARCH

### METHODOLOGY

#### An Overview of the Approach

Our approach to this project was guided by our basic philosophy:

- ◆ We are a community-based group. We believe that efforts to improve safety in the community must be based in the experience of community members, especially those that are most vulnerable to violence and fear of violence.
- ◆ We believe that projects must include *meaningful* consultation with *all* groups affected by the initiative.
- ◆ We recognize and respect the diversity of Canadians, and understand that different groups have different experiences, priorities and access to resources.
- ◆ We are action-oriented and work to produce practical, useable results.
- ◆ We believe that a community which is safer for the most vulnerable people is safer for everyone.

Given our understanding of the critical issues identified in the introduction, our knowledge of the groups who are working to create safer communities across Canada, and the research experience of our Study Team<sup>2</sup>, WACAV decided to collect information in two ways:

- ◆ a brief written request to solicit examples of safety audit tools and a brief description of how the tools have been used;
- ◆ structured interviews with individuals and organizations who have been key to the development and application of safety audits.

We also decided to involve two focus groups in designing the survey and interview questions and in analyzing the results.

#### Identifying Key Contacts

The project began with a series of discussions between Study Team members and key contacts throughout Canada. The purpose was to identify appropriate organizations to be surveyed as well as key interview subjects. Between 10 and 20 individuals were contacted in this preliminary way. Their input and feedback was valuable in the subsequent stages of research.

A comprehensive list of organizations that might have carried out safety audits was constructed on the basis of a variety of extant lists and through personal connections. The most important sources were:

- a) a list of organizations and individuals that had requested a copy of the METRAC safety audit guide in 1993 and 1994;

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix A for a brief overview of the Study Team composition and structure.

- b) the list of presenters to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities consultations on municipal strategies to end violence against women; and
- c) the Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities list of post-secondary institutions receiving funding for the development of campus safety units.

Other lists such as the membership of the National Crime Prevention Council were reviewed, and appropriate organizations were selected for inclusion in the survey. In addition, individual members of the Study Team used their contacts to identify appropriate individuals in locations and from groups that were otherwise underrepresented. These efforts resulted in a list of 250 individuals and organizations.

A list of particularly knowledgeable and/or influential individuals that WACAV might wish to interview was collected on an on-going basis throughout this stage of the process.

### **Survey Design**

The survey was intended to be a brief multiple choice questionnaire which would gather information on the situations in which the safety audit has been applied and the diversity of people who have taken part.

However, given the critical issues we had identified and the valuable feedback from two focus group meetings, the survey became a longer and more complex instrument than was originally envisioned (see Appendix B).

The survey was pilot-tested in both English and French. The final survey consisted of 18 questions. Half were multiple-choice and close-ended, and half gave respondents an opportunity to add comments or explain a response. This design allowed us to describe, compare and contrast safety audit users, and at the same time to invite explanation, qualification and further insights into the various ways that safety audits are used.

Surveys were faxed or mailed, together with a cover letter describing the purposes of the survey and the organizations involved (WACAV and CMHC). Letters were personalized to let organizations or individuals know why they had been selected to receive a survey.

### **Interview Questions and Process**

The interview questions were developed as a frame of reference for all subjects, but gave the interviewer latitude to probe further into any special or significant experience with safety audits (see Appendix C). The final instrument was revised on the basis of focus group input and pilot testing.

Interview subjects were initially contacted by telephone and given an overview of the project and an outline of the questions which would be asked. Once an interview time was set, a letter was mailed or faxed to the subject reiterating the purpose and structure of the study. A survey was included for subjects who had not received one. In all cases, an informed consent



form was provided. Interviews were conducted in English or French, based on the preference of the subject.

The majority of interviewees maintained their commitment to the telephone appointment. Interviewees were highly responsive and eager to share their experiences and thinking regarding the use of safety audits, and to discuss issues of personal security, violence, and crime prevention.

Plans were made to interview six individuals in person, which resulted in five face-to-face interviews. There was no marked difference in the quality of information gained from the two different means of interviewing.

Whenever it was possible, the subject's response to the written survey was used as a grounding for the interview. The interviewer reviewed the survey, identifying answers which needed clarification and looking for unique approaches which merited further probing. At times interviewers also formulated additional questions to solicit responses to ideas advanced by other subjects.

### **Examining the Survey and Interview Results**

The survey and interview findings were summarized, and then reviewed in a series of meetings. The study team met to examine the raw data, identify possible patterns, and consider ways of organizing the data in order to identify further trends. The results of this analysis were reviewed by two focus groups.

Members of the Women's Action Centre Safety Audit Committee reviewed the findings related to the implementation of safety audit recommendations and the involvement of vulnerable groups in safety audits. This committee is composed of women of different ages and backgrounds who work in a variety of settings in Ottawa-Carleton, from health care to computer programming, and who have supported many community-based safety audits as volunteers. Their review of the survey results provided further suggestions which helped guide the interpretation of the findings.

The second focus group, the advisory panel established for this project, included three women who work in various aspects of housing: a non-profit housing provider, an architect, and a municipal planner. They reviewed the survey and interview findings specific to the housing-related use of safety audits, suggested ways of interpreting the results, and discussed what these findings meant for housing providers, residents and CMHC.

The study team developed the final analysis and recommendations, guided by the observations and experience of the two focus groups.

## SURVEY FINDINGS

The survey was designed to solicit a wide range of information on the use of safety audits across Canada. In total, 250 surveys were sent to individuals and organizations identified as possibly having knowledge of, or some involvement with safety audits in their area. 47% or 117 of the surveys were returned; of these 69 (59%) had direct knowledge of safety audits, 40 sent back the survey uncompleted.

### Surveys by region

Region	Surveys sent	Surveys returned	# completed
Maritimes	20	8	1
Quebec	53	29	17
Ontario	138	56	39
Prairies	22	11	4
BC & the Territories	17	13	8

A preliminary review of the survey returns demonstrated that respondents working with different types of organizations had differential access to resources and skills, and often approached safety audits from different perspectives. To capture these differences, we divided the returns into three major categories for analysis:

post-secondary educational institutions - colleges and universities were grouped together, since they usually had access to funding and resources specifically to perform safety audits and implement their findings. For example, Ontario universities and colleges received funding through the Women's Campus Safety Initiative from the Ontario Violence Prevention Secretariat, which required that they complete safety audits and demonstrate changes to qualify for the money.

community associations and individuals - groups, either incorporated or volunteer that are community-based, including women's groups, community associations etc. (for example, Tandem Montréal or The Dalhousie Community Association). In two cases, individuals responded to our survey without identifying the organization that sponsored the safety audit. They are included in this category.

municipal organizations - elected representatives, architects, planners, city staff or consultants contracted by municipalities to perform/facilitate safety audits. This group also includes police officers and police services. In many cases these safety audits were part of a "Safe City initiative". Such initiatives exist across the country, and generally consist of municipal and community representatives. They identify ways that municipalities and local communities can act to address violence against women and/or promote a safer community for everyone.

### Surveys by type of organization

Type of organization	Surveys sent	Surveys returned	# completed
All surveys	250	117	69
Post-secondary institutions	45	30	29
Community associations and individuals	155	65	26
Municipal organizations	50	22	14

As well, in some cases we have highlighted respondents who indicated that they had audited a housing community. These are presented under the category *Housing* where relevant.

### Safety Audits - Profile of use

Based on a very general overview of the survey results, we begin to get a picture of the current use of safety audits in Canada.

The questionnaire began by asking respondents to define safety audits. Almost three-quarters of the respondents chose the answers that defined safety audits as being the event itself and the implementation process. The results are as follows:

A one time walk with a group to evaluate the area	10% (6)
A series of walks with a group in the same area	17% (11)
A process which includes a walk and the work to get recommendations implemented	87% (55)
Other	10% (6)

There was not much variation across categories of respondents. Among the "other" responses, a number of respondents highlighted the idea of reviewing a whole area or neighbourhood and that the identification of this area, based on residents' concerns, was part of the overall process. In general, the respondents agreed with the idea that safety audits included the process of working towards implementation.

### Why were safety audits organized?

This emphasis on results also emerges in the replies to the question as to why the safety audit was organized, where respondents were asked to circle the three most important answers. Overall, the answer given the most often was that the audits had been organized in order to make changes to improve safety. The second most frequent answer "as part of a strategy to address violence against women", relates more to programmes than to physical changes. The number of respondents choosing each option, are as follows:

Responses	Overall	Post-s.	Comm.	Mun.	Housing
<i>Total Respondents</i>	68	28	26	14	43
To make changes to make area safer	93% (63)	93% (27)	92% (24)	86% (12)	95% (41)
Strategy to address violence	72% (49)	85% (24)	58% (15)	72% (10)	72% (31)
In response to incidents	34% (23)	18% (5)	38% (10)	57% (8)	26% (11)
Building community	26% (18)	21% (6)	31% (8)	29% (4)	30% (12)
Other	22% (15)	18% (5)	31% (8)	14% (2)	21% (9)
In response to community pressure	3% (2)	4% (1)	4% (1)	0	5% (2)
In response to property crime	7% (5)	0	12% (3)	14% (2)	7% (3)

As the table indicates, there are few differences between the categories of respondents. Municipalities were more likely to reply that the safety audits had been organized in response to specific incidents. Groups who audited housing followed trends similar to the community groups but were more likely to organize safety audits to build community. In the "other" responses, two of the post-secondary institutions mentioned the influence of government funding of their activity.

*In what ways did the safety audits succeed?*

The questionnaire also asked in what ways the respondents felt their safety audit succeeded. As in the question just described, the emphasis on concrete changes emerges, with the most frequent response being "it resulted in measurable changes which made the area safer". A wide set of answers received a fair number of responses, indicating that there were a more varied set of reasons for judging the success of the audit than for organizing it. The answers were as follows:

Responses	Overall	Post-s.	Comm.	Mun.	Housing
<i>Total Respondents</i>	67	29	25	14	42
Measurable changes	66% (44)	79% (23)	44% (11)	71% (10)	62% (26)
Participants gained a sense of ability to create change	58% (39)	48% (14)	56% (14)	79% (11)	57% (24)
Led to other projects on violence	49% (33)	62% (18)	40% (10)	36% (5)	48% (20)
Increased awareness of violence	42% (28)	45% (13)	44% (11)	29% (4)	40% (17)
Contributed to better sense of community	36% (24)	14% (4)	52% (13)	50% (7)	38% (16)
Good participation	34% (23)	34% (10)	32% (8)	36% (5)	29% (12)
Other	10% (7)	7% (2)	12% (3)	14% (2)	10% (4)

There are some differences between the categories of respondents. In the post-secondary sector, answers were in terms of measurable changes and new projects or plans to address violence against women. Community groups gave the priority to participants gaining a sense of their own ability to create change and building community. The municipal respondents were between the others, identifying measurable changes and the increase in participants sense of their own abilities. Municipal respondents did not emphasize safety audits as leading to other projects to address violence against women.

It is difficult to know how to interpret these results. It would be logical to assume that the community sector is more interested in building community and in giving participants a sense of their own worth. It might also be that community organizations had more difficulties getting to implementation and therefore their criteria for success dealt less with measurable changes. Post-secondary respondents, on the other hand, replied in terms of measurable changes which, undoubtedly, reflect at least in part, the impact of the Ontario Colleges and Universities funding. There was money to organize the safety audit and follow up, therefore measurable changes were very much part of the process.

Even the overall results of this question are subject to alternative interpretations. Is the fact that responses were divided among six answers an indication of the wide reaching success of safety audits, or is it an indication of a more mixed message that there is no dominant explanation and no specific criteria for success.

#### *The safety audit tools used*

In terms of tools used, the large majority of respondents (52 or 71%) used the guide developed by the Metro Action Committee on Public Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC), but over 2/3 said they had adapted it. This pattern of use was particularly evident in the post-secondary and the municipal sectors - the community associations were slightly less likely to have used the METRAC guide (16 yes, 9 other), but for those who used the METRAC guide, also likely to have adapted it. The adaptations generally were explained as revisions relevant to the specific circumstances and/or area being audited. This could include changes in language, in complexity of language, and adding or deleting questions to better focus on the specific area. In some cases very detailed adaptations were made, while others simply used the METRAC guide as their general model but didn't follow it closely. Groups in Québec most often used a guide put together by the City of Montréal, which was inspired by the METRAC guide but has been made particularly relevant to women within the cultural context.

#### *What was audited?*

With regard to the actual safety audits, we asked the respondents to describe the area audited. The most frequent answers were parking lots (42), outdoor areas (36), campus (31) and indoor areas (25). As well, many of the respondents from Québec reported auditing community and recreational spaces. The vast majority of audits took place either after dark (36) or both before and after dark (16), with a very small number only taking place before dark (6). From the responses we can see that safety audits have often been used in relation to housing - 20 respondents had looked at row houses, and 25 had looked at apartment

buildings; among the "other" responses, student housing, residence, townhouse complex and housing for seniors are mentioned. Even though parking lots are the most popular target, housing has been the focus for a number of safety audits.

For those audits where housing was included, we asked specifically which physical spaces had been looked at. The most frequent answers were the outside of the area (45), outdoors parking lots (41), indoors shared space (27), security measures (24), and indoors parking garages (16).

The question of the focus of safety audits - whether it was restricted to aspects of physical space or whether it made connections to policies and practices - is obviously of central importance. We asked groups who audited housing if various policies or practices had been looked at. The responses are as follows:

Responses	Overall	Post-s.	Comm.	Mun.
<i>Total Respondents</i>	24	9	11	4
Patterns of use of common areas	54% (13)	67% (6)	36% (4)	75% (3)
Other forms of communication to tenants	50% (12)	56% (5)	45% (5)	50% (2)
Opportunities for tenant involvement	54% (13)	45% (4)	55% (6)	75% (3)
Maintenance practices for common Areas	46% (11)	23% (2)	55% (6)	75% (3)
Anti-harassment policies	29% (7)	67% (6)	9% (1)	0
Orientation of new tenants	25% (6)	34% (3)	9% (1)	50% (2)
Zero tolerance policies	8% (2)	11% (1)	9% (1)	0

We also asked whether audits that had not dealt with housing had looked at policies and practices in addition to physical space. Overall, more than two-thirds of those answering this question said that the audit had looked at policies and practices. Of the different categories of respondents, municipal respondents were slightly less likely to have gone beyond questions of physical space.

Policies and practices	Overall	Post-s.	Comm.	Mun.
<i>Total Respondents</i>	56	22	22	12
Yes	59% (33)	77% (17)	38% (9)	58% (7)
No	36% (20)	23% (5)	42% (10)	42% (5)
Don't know	6% (3)	0	8% (3)	0

The question included two examples (anti-harassment and maintenance policies) and most of the responses fell under these suggested categories. More people gave examples related to

maintenance policies (11 times) but anti-harassment policies were mentioned by at least 6 respondents. Clearly safety audits do not deal only with questions of physical space. Municipal respondents indicated less focus on policies and practices and, perhaps consistent with this, the examples given tended to relate more to maintenance policies. Most of the references to anti-harassment policies came from the post-secondary sector, reflecting the fact that most post-secondary educational institutions have explicit anti-harassment policies.

*Follow up to safety audits*

Given the fact that the respondents clearly defined safety audits as including the process of implementation, it is interesting to examine the forms of follow-up to the audits. By far the two most frequent responses were that recommendations for change had been developed and that the findings had been written down. After this, the responses were much less frequent to follow-up strategies such as forming committees, writing letters, lobbying politicians, working with media and contacting local residents and/or businesses. The results are as follows:

Follow up steps taken	Overall	Post-s.	Comm.	Mun.	Housing
<i>Total Respondents</i>	68	29	26	13	43
Recommendations developed	96% (65)	97% (28)	96% (25)	92% (12)	95% (41)
Findings written down	93% (63)	97% (28)	88% (23)	92% (12)	98% (42)
Committee formed	49% (33)	55% (16)	46% (12)	38% (5)	40% (17)
Follow-up still in progress	44% (30)	48% (14)	35% (9)	54% (7)	47% (20)
Letters written	38% (26)	14% (4)	50% (13)	69% (9)	40% (17)
Politicians lobbied	31% (21)	14% (4)	38% (10)	54% (7)	33% (14)
Work with media	26% (18)	24% (7)	17% (6)	38% (5)	26% (13)
Contact local residents	25% (17)	7% (2)	38% (10)	38% (5)	26% (11)
Other	15% (10)	14% (4)	11% (4)	15% (2)	14% (6)

Some different patterns emerge among the categories of respondents. The post-secondary sector was slightly stronger on forming committees than were the community and municipal sectors. The post-secondary and the municipal sectors, reflecting their greater institutionalization, were higher in considering that follow-up was still in progress. The municipal sector was more likely to report that letters had been written, politicians lobbied, media worked with and local residents and/or businesses contacted. The contrast between the replies of the community respondents and the municipal respondents is quite telling - the community associations seem to have greater trouble assuring follow-up. One respondent explicitly identified lack of time as a way of explaining the limited follow-up.

We then went on to ask directly what changes had occurred from the safety audit. Physical changes stand out clearly as the most frequent response, with 51 respondents mentioning physical changes compared to the next most frequent responses, increased awareness (29) and changes in policies and practices (27). The answers are as follows:

	Overall	Post-s.	Comm.	Mun.	Housing
<i>Total Respondents</i>	68	29	26	13	43
Physical changes	75% (51)	90% (26)	62% (16)	69% (9)	72% (31)
Increased awareness	43% (29)	52% (15)	27% (7)	31% (4)	33% (14)
Changes in policies & practices	40% (27)	62% (18)	8% (2)	46% (6)	33% (14)
Other programs organized	38% (26)	41% (12)	27% (7)	54% (7)	47% (20)
Other safety audits organized	37% (25)	41% (12)	19% (5)	62% (8)	33% (14)
New committee formed	21% (14)	24% (7)	19% (5)	15% (2)	21% (9)
Other	16% (11)	21% (6)	19% (5)	0	19% (8)
Measurements indicate people feel safer	10% (7)	17% (5)	0	15% (2)	12% (5)
Measurements show a decrease in crime	6% (4)	10% (3)	0	8% (1)	7% (3)

The answers again suggest that audits by community organizations result in less follow up. Sixteen respondents mentioned physical changes but only two, changes in policies and practices. This may reflect that safety audits by community groups were less part of a process or institutional framework that had included implementation plans and resources from the start. The post-secondary institutions, in Ontario at least, were involved in safety audits as part of a ministry funded process that included funding for implementation measures. The specific examples given by these respondents illustrate the prevalence of implementation measures related to the safety audits. The kinds of examples include physical changes (more lighting, outdoor security cameras, landscape changes), new programmes (particularly foot patrols and walk-home programmes but also self-defense workshops and programmes for after hours working) and activities aimed at increasing awareness of violence against women (publicizing recommendations, lecture series, library resource guide written, speakers). The numbers of specific examples here, compared to the difficulties expressed by community groups, highlight the importance of funding for implementation measures. The examples from the municipal respondents were less specific than those from the post-secondary sector, but the general replies suggest that the municipal safety audits were more connected to processes of implementation than those by community groups. Follow-up among groups who audited housing was mostly focused upon physical changes, but also had a high incidence of new programmes stemming from the process.



*Who participated in safety audits?*

The questionnaire also asked about participants in the safety audit, first asking about different groups and decision-makers that might have been involved and then focusing specifically on vulnerable groups and their participation. The questions were complicated, with respondents asked to indicate whether each particular group had been composed of women or men and whether they had participated, helped plan, led and/or been involved in the follow-up. In the general question of participation, the results are as follows<sup>3</sup>:

<b>Participants in Audit</b>	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Post-s.</b>	<b>Comm.</b>	<b>Mun.</b>	<b>Housing</b>
Police officers	48	13	21	14	32
Community associations	39	9	17	13	27
Municipal Politicians	32	1	17	14	21
Women's groups	32	12	16	4	25
Municipal planners	24	3	8	13	20
Local crime prevention group	30	9	12	9	23
Media	24	7	10	7	13

All the participating groups are seen as being composed more of women than of men except for police officers (seen 18 times as women, 30 times as men) and the media (9 times as women, 15 times as men). The groups most often represented by women were women's groups (not surprisingly, seen 32 times as women) and municipal politicians (21 times seen as women, 11 as men).

It is interesting to note that from the municipal sector, municipal politicians are seen as the most frequent participating group. Whereas, in all other areas, police officers are the most frequent answer. This is particularly interesting given the predominance of women in the municipal politicians' category.

If we look at the different stages of the audit, community associations are the most frequent answer in helping to plan the audit. The replies are as follows:

<b>Planners of Audit</b>	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Post-s.</b>	<b>Comm.</b>	<b>Mun.</b>	<b>Housing</b>
Community associations	31	8	15	8	20
Police officers	26	9	10	7	21
Women's groups	25	9	13	3	21
Local crime prevention group	23	6	11	6	20
Municipal planners	16	0	7	9	14
Municipal politicians	19	3	7	9	13
Media	4	2	2	0	1

<sup>3</sup> The survey questions about the involvement of resource people in safety audits allowed respondents to indicate the gender of those involved. The numbers here were derived by totalling the responses for men and women. Actual numbers are included in Appendix D.

Police officers, municipal politicians and the media seem overall to be less likely to help plan the audits than to join in as participants. However, there are some interesting differences across the categories of respondents. The post-secondary sector indicated that women's groups and police had helped to plan the audits, while the community sector most often chose community associations and local crime prevention groups, and the municipal sector gave the highest number of replies to municipal politicians and planners. Groups that audited housing, similarly to the post-secondary sector, most often indicated that women's groups and police were active in planning, but these were very closely followed by the involvement of community groups and local crime prevention groups.

Community organizations and women's groups were the most often mentioned as having led or facilitated the audit (25 times and 20 times respectively). Local crime prevention groups followed (19 times), and then police officers (18), municipal politicians (13), municipal planners (12) and the media (8). Women's groups dominated both the post-secondary and community sector replies, although in the community sector there was also a strong showing from community groups and local crime prevention groups. The municipal respondents reported a strong role for municipal politicians, municipal planners and community groups in leading or facilitating the audit (6 each). Leading or facilitating safety audits is particularly marked in all sectors by the participation of women's groups and female politicians or female planners.

The follow-up to safety audits is also marked by the participation of community associations (31 times), followed by the participation of municipal politicians (26), police officers (24), planners (22), women's groups (22), local crime prevention groups (21) and the media (10). The patterns for involvement in follow up are slightly different to those for the facilitation of audits. The post-secondary replies outline a strong role to police (10 replies, compared to 8 for the community associations and women's groups, and 6 for local crime prevention groups); the community sector for municipal politicians and community groups (14 replies each compared to 11 for women's groups); and the municipal groups for municipal planners (11) and municipal politicians (10), in both cases seem primarily as female (8 of 11 for the planners and 7 of 10 for the politicians).

In general, we can see degrees in participation. Police officers are the most likely to have participated in the audits, and sometimes in planning, but not the most likely to have taken roles in leading or following-up. The post-secondary sector seems to have involved women's groups and the municipal sector female planners and female politicians. It is interesting to speculate how this relates to the more effective implementation in these two sectors. Is the link through female politicians and planners and the involvement of women's groups pushing for a broad array of implementation measures? These interpretations may go beyond what is possible to conclude from the replies to the questionnaire.

#### *Participation of vulnerable groups*

Approximately 2/3 of respondents replied to the question asking them to identify vulnerable groups involved in the audit. The most frequently identified groups were women and people of colour (22 responses each). Of course women were involved in all audits, but apparently

were not always identified as a "vulnerable group". Other groups most often mentioned as participating in the audit were persons with disabilities and seniors. The overall replies are as follows:

	Overall	Post-s.	Comm.	Mun.	Housing
Women	22	9	9	4	11
People of colour	22	13	5	4	10
Persons with disabilities	20	12	2	6	9
Seniors	20	3	7	10	12
Lesbians, bisexuals, gays	14	11	1	2	7
Adolescents, children	13	0	8	5	5
Immigrants	7	2	4	1	4
Single mothers	3	0	3	0	3
Poor women	2	0	1	1	2
Aboriginal people	1	1	0	0	1
Ex-psychiatric patients	1	0	1	0	1

All these groups were reported more often as being women than men. Seniors (16 out of 20), immigrants, refugees (5 out of 7), lesbians, bisexuals, gays (10 out of 14), people of colour (14 of 22) and adolescents, children (8 of 13) were predominantly female. In terms of the safety audits covered by the questionnaire, participation by vulnerable groups was predominantly female.

If we examine what leadership roles these groups played within the safety audit process, the groups most often mentioned as having helped plan the audits were women (15), people of colour (14), seniors (12) lesbians, bisexuals, gays (11), persons with disabilities (10), immigrants, refugees (5), adolescents (3) single mothers and poor women (2 each). There are interesting differences between the categories of respondents. For the post-secondary sector, the group mentioned most often as helping to plan the audit is lesbians, bisexuals, gays (9) followed by women (8), people of colour (7) and persons with disabilities (4). In the community sector, women are mentioned most often (6), followed by seniors and people of colour (4 each), immigrants, refugees (3), persons with disabilities and single mothers (2 each), adolescents, children and poor women (1 each). In the municipal sector it is seniors (6), persons with disabilities (4), people of colour (3), adolescents, children (2), women and lesbians, bisexuals, gays (1 each).

Somewhat the same pattern exists for leading or facilitating the audit. The group most often mentioned is women (16), followed by lesbians, bisexuals, gays (11), people of colour (10), seniors (8), persons with disabilities (5), adolescents, children and immigrants, refugees (4 each), single mothers and poor women (1 each). The variations across categories of respondents are very similar to those for planning the audit.

In terms of follow-up, the groups mentioned most often are women (15), people of colour (12), lesbians, bisexuals, gays (10), seniors and persons with disabilities (8 each), adolescents, children and immigrants, refugees (4 each), single mothers and poor women (1 each). The sector replies indicate, as before, the active role of lesbians, bisexuals, gays in the post-secondary sector, the pronounced role of people of colour in the community sector and the relatively low but spread out participation of vulnerable groups in municipal audits.

The extensive participation of vulnerable groups in the safety audits of the post-secondary and municipal sectors probably reflects the greater institutionalization of the process in these two sectors, which provided a context and resources that may have led to more pro-active processes of inclusion.

#### *In summary*

As a way of summing up respondents' views, we asked for what purposes they would recommend the use of safety audits. The answers are numerous, thoughtful and precise. It is perhaps possible to summarize them as leading to three main categories of answers. Safety audits are seen as useful for solving physical space problems related to safety, they are seen as helpful to building community and they are seen as useful for increasing the awareness of safety issues for both the community and decision-makers. Limitations were also mentioned; the lack of follow-up procedures, the importance of funding for the implementation of recommendations and the difficulties of ensuring volunteer energy through the implementation stages.

People who have been involved in safety audits across Canada are aware of the potential of this tool to bring about improvements both physical and programmatic, to increase awareness about the issues of safety and security and to empower communities. They are also aware of the limitations in the current use of safety audits, particularly in relation to the insufficient links between audits and implementation.

Some respondents see audits very clearly in the context of physical changes to the environment whereas others see them in a much broader context of social change. Purposes ranged from "to identify safety concerns of individuals accessing the facility and to develop a plan of action to address the noted safety concerns" through "to increase awareness about safety, to make physical changes to ensure safer areas, to create safe spaces" to "pour permettre aux femmes de devenir des citoyennes à part entière dans la ville (to allow women to become citizens in every part of the city)".

## SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW FINDINGS

While the survey provided concrete data on the use of safety audits in diverse communities, the interviews offered insights into what works and why. The interviewees identified changes which would make safety audits more effective and more applicable to housing environments.

Comments from the interviews are summarized under the following topics:

- ♦ The overview, which outlines the perspective of the people interviewed and the types of safety audits they described;
- ♦ The benefits and limitations of safety audits;
- ♦ The participation of organizations, professionals and decision-makers in safety audits;
- ♦ The involvement of vulnerable groups in safety audits;
- ♦ Implementing the results of safety audits; and
- ♦ The use of safety audits in housing.

The interview findings are discussed in greater detail in Appendix E.

### Overview

#### a) Who was interviewed

16 interviews were completed, 11 in English and 5 in French. The list of individuals interviewed is included in Appendix A. The interviews represent a variety of perspectives and many cumulative years of experience with safety audits.

The people interviewed included two women who took part in the development of the METRAC Women's Safety Audit Kit in 1989, which marked the first use of the safety audit process. There were 6 people from community organizations, including two from Ontario and one from Quebec women's groups who are recognized as experts in the field; one from a crime prevention organization that supports safety audits in neighbourhoods across Montreal; and three who were involved in local safety audits organized by community organizations or networks.

Six of those interviewed had experience primarily with "Safe City" initiatives, including two community representatives on municipal committees, three municipal staff, and one municipal councillor who co-chaired a Safe City committee.

Finally, there were two people employed to address personal security concerns, especially for women, at universities — one in Ontario, and one in Quebec.

Ten of the 16 people interviewed had participated in safety audits of housing environments. At least three of these had used safety audits to evaluate middle to high density housing developments.

*sb) The safety audits as described by the interviewees*

In outlining why they chose to become active in the safety audit process, the respondents offered the following reasons, among others:

- ♦ through a critique of crime prevention strategies (with particular reference to their failure to address issues of violence against women) and an interest in research on the relationship between environmental circumstances and sexual assaults
- ♦ as a tool which would encourage the broader community (women and men, local government) to take responsibility to address violence against women
- ♦ as a tool to involve the community in developing solutions to community safety problems
- ♦ to demonstrate the need for improving personal security for women, or to create support for the establishment of an agency to focus on safety for women

All interviewees agreed that safety audits were a process, not just a one-time walk to evaluate a space. In most cases, the safety audits discussed were part of a larger initiative or project. In fact, no one interviewed used safety audits in isolation from an overall mandate and other related initiatives. The respondents clearly saw safety audits as a tool or strategy, not an end product.

Although it varied over time and circumstance, the safety audit process generally included:

- ♦ Planning and organizing
- ♦ Reviewing the safety audit checklist
- ♦ Meeting with participants, an orientation to safety audits
- ♦ Doing the actual audit
- ♦ Summarizing the findings and developing recommendations
- ♦ Developing and implementing an action plan

One variation which several respondents described was the inclusion of interviews or surveys prior the organization of safety audits. These helped to identify residents' personal security concerns and pinpoint areas perceived to be unsafe.

The respondents defined the purpose of safety audits as:

- ♦ to create concrete changes that improve personal security; to promote a technique that relies on individual perceptions of safety rather than "objective measurements"; to help groups identify specific concerns and the changes needed to address them;
- ♦ to provide decision-makers with an alternative perspective and another source of information, especially when planners or others are ignoring personal security concerns; to gather information that can be used to lobby the municipality for changes;
- ♦ to mobilize the community with women in a central role;
- ♦ to encourage community responsibility for women's safety;
- ♦ to address violence against women and other vulnerable groups through an action-oriented strategy;
- ♦ for community empowerment: for concrete results; for fun; to bring groups together; to create a sense of ability to do things; and

- ♦ to give women an opportunity to voice concerns regarding their personal security.

The interview subjects had audited a wide range of public, semi-public and private spaces, including schools and streets, transit systems, parking lots and garages, housing communities, parks, and campus buildings. The audits covered the physical environment, but also extended to other matters including patterns of use, patterns of staffing, municipal standards, complaints procedures, and the amount of information available to users.

### **The benefits and limitations of safety audits**

#### a) The benefits of safety audits

There was a consistent sense from the interviews that the participants in the audit process gain in many ways. Several interviewees suggested that all users of a space gain because of changes which improve personal security in the area.

Specifically, safety audits can provide the following benefits:

- ♦ Increased profile for sponsors and organizers
- ♦ Validating the experience of women
- ♦ Increased awareness of how different people can perceive the same space, and of women's fears about violence
- ♦ Increased recognition of women's safety as an important issue
- ♦ Useful information on personal security to decision-makers and service providers
- ♦ A sense of participants' ability to create change
- ♦ A stronger community
- ♦ Real, visible changes
- ♦

#### b) The limitations of safety audits

Everyone interviewed identified ways in which safety audits are limited or can create negative outcomes. These limitations have been divided into four categories.

#### *Negative impacts on participants:*

- ♦ Participating in a safety audit may increase women's fear for a period of time immediately after the audit. Several interviewees noted that this increased fear may continue to affect women if they have no confidence that changes will result from the audit.
- ♦ Participants become disillusioned or frustrated when they have expectations of having a voice and of making real change but don't see results.

#### *Misinterpretation of the safety audit:*

- ♦ Some organizations use safety audits as a "quick fix" — a fast, cheap and relatively simple way of satisfying constituents without making significant changes or addressing the complex issue of violence.
- ♦ Some organizations make safety audits a neutral process by removing all reference to women and other vulnerable groups, or to who is perpetrating the violence.

*Negative outcomes resulting from ineffective use of safety audits:*

- ♦ When follow up doesn't happen, participants and organizers get frustrated. Some decision-makers suggest that the community simply turn over their recommendations (and power) to an organization like the police.
- ♦ Some participants drop out, saying "let the City do it", and some don't have the skills to advocate for changes. A lone organizer or very small group may get stuck with the follow-up.
- ♦ When safety audits are not well facilitated, participants may end up arguing over whose safety concern is more valid, leaving some participants feeling that their concerns were negated.

*Lack of resources*

- ♦ Governments or funders may not recognize the preparation, training and follow-up that are required.
- ♦ There can be tremendous resistance to making recommended changes, and backlash that public money is being spent to address women's personal security concerns.

*The participation of organizations, professionals and decision-makers in safety audits*

Respondents were asked to comment on the benefits and limitations of working with public servants or various community organizations. The largest number — 10 out of 16 — chose to comment on the work of the police. While the comments ranged from positive to negative, a representative view was that the police have made progress, but need to be further sensitized to gender issues. Five respondents mentioned the media, and their usefulness in promoting the safety audit concept.

Four people mentioned municipal politicians, and their significant power to lead the way on the issues of violence and personal security. It was also noted, however, that this motivation to create change may lead them to take action without consulting the community. Four respondents spoke of the need to involve planners, designers and engineers.

*The involvement of vulnerable groups in safety audits*

*a) Safety audits as a tool to address violence against women*

All but two of the people interviewed saw safety audits as one part of a strategy to address violence against women. Most interviewees also emphasized the need to address the personal security issues facing other marginalized groups.

Several interviewees raised concerns about attempts to minimize the focus of safety audits on women and other vulnerable groups. Four different people, each of whom was involved in a municipal initiative, described how their organizing committees had been pressured to remove all reference to women and other vulnerable groups, and to talk about violence "among people". Each of them felt that this would not only weaken the safety audit, but defeat its purpose as a tool for focusing public attention on the problem of violence.



*b) The advantages of involving people from groups vulnerable to violence*

Women provide most of the energy and time for safety audit projects. In fact, it appears that if women are not at the centre of the safety audit process, the work will not get done. In one case, when a Safe City Committee decided to diminish the focus on women and other vulnerable groups, several members left the committee.

The inclusion of various people helps to broaden the range of problems identified. For example, one group found that a woman participant who used a wheelchair pointed out conditions which were very unsafe for her, which had have gone unnoticed by everyone else.

More appropriate recommendations are developed when the users who are most at risk are consulted. The sexual assault of an elementary school student in the washroom was a motivating factor for one safety audit. One suggestion during the audit was to remove the washroom doors. Parents rejected this suggestion on the grounds of privacy. The kids, the group actually at risk, had no problem with the recommendation.

*c) Past experience in the involvement of vulnerable people and groups*

In almost all cases, the people interviewed had made attempts to include a diversity of people in safety audits. All audits which were discussed in any detail included a majority of women. Some involved people with disabilities, especially in auditing public transit facilities. Some audits were done in poor neighbourhoods.

One safe city process had significant involvement from the gay and lesbian community. Many groups tried to involve seniors; others made specific attempts to include children and single mothers. Two interviewees had tried to involve adolescents, in one case successfully.

Several interviewees described attempts to involve people from diverse ethnic origins but none of these were as successful as the organizers had hoped. In Vancouver, for example, representatives from the Indo-Canadian and Chinese-Canadian communities participated on the organizing committee, and the safety audit guide was translated to facilitate participation by members of those communities. There were not, however, resources to provide direct support and the organizers are not sure whether any safety audits were undertaken by Indian or Chinese community groups. If they were, no results were forwarded to the co-ordinating group.

In Ottawa, residents of Cambodian background participated in a safety audit with the assistance of interpreters, but their participation was limited by not understanding the process and not feeling they had the right to complain. Several groups in Quebec organized safety audits specifically for women of particular cultural groups but very few women participated.

*d) The challenges in involving vulnerable groups*

The respondents emphasized the need to get full representation from among the groups who use the space; one suggested there should also be people who do *not* use the space for reasons of personal security.

Interviewees were able to identify barriers to involving the people most affected by violence, and to suggest solutions.

Most important was the creation of a safe environment, where people will not feel threatened "powerful" people or experts. This can pose a dilemma because action on safety audit findings is often enhanced by the involvement of people with decision-making power.

There must also be a focussed effort to facilitate the involvement of marginalized people. Conscious outreach is needed, preferably through talking to people face-to-face. Several people mentioned going door-to-door in a community and encouraging involvement from everyone. There was a suggestion that it is not only up to the members of a community to ensure that an audit includes everyone. For example, low income white women in a public housing community may not know their low-income black women neighbours, and the tendency is just to post a notice about the audit and tell their friends. A community worker or facilitator can help to involve the black women, making the process more inclusive and helping to establish links within the community. However it is done, outreach is labour intensive and requires resources which many groups do not have.

Practical supports are an important consideration. For example, offering childcare and paying for transportation are important for involving single mothers and any other women with limited resources. As well, people's physical stamina needs to be considered when planning the route for the walk-about part of the safety audit.

Having addressed the above issues, some women who are particularly fearful may still not participate because they are afraid to go out after dark. The answer might be to involve them in an audit during the day, in their own area, and to ensure that some follow-up occurs.

Culture and socialization can also be barriers to participation. Several interviewees felt that elderly women were not accustomed to being asked for their opinion and were often used to "making do". Taking a critical look at their environment, and holding decision-makers accountable, was a unfamiliar concept to them.

Particular efforts are needed to involve people of diverse cultural origin. Translation of materials and interpretation may be important but are not enough on their own. For example, one community made the safety audit guide available in different languages and distributed it, but don't know whether any audits were actually done. Another group involved interpreters during the audit, but found that this also had limited effectiveness. The women were Cambodian, and although they were able to participate in the discussion as a result of the interpretation, they did not understand the concept of the audit and seemed to feel that it was not their role to complain about problems. The respondent who described this audit suggested that people from other cultures may need a more thorough introduction to the concept and process of safety audits. As well, they needed a cultural interpreter who could help to address cultural differences rather than someone who just translated the words being spoken.

Overall, interviewees summarized the following obstacles to broader participation from women of diverse cultural origins:

- ♦ the safety audit as it exists may not be culturally appropriate for some groups
- ♦ women from some cultures, especially if they are recently arrived in Canada, may not believe that they have a right to equal access to public spaces, or a right to complain
- ♦ the organizations co-ordinating the safety audit may not have the skills or resources for effective outreach to ethnic communities
- ♦ involvement of police can be a barrier for people from some countries or cultures

Specific support may be needed in order to involve people in the follow-up. "Middle class people may know the ins & outs of government, be able to write up the results of a safety audit, get them to the right people and have things happen. But most people that do safety audits don't fall into this group. They are mostly people who are somewhat marginalized from the system to begin with and its too much to give them a safety audit kit and say 'go figure it out'. They need some kind of support or resource person."

#### Implementing the results of safety audits

The implementation of safety audit recommendations was a topic of concern for everyone interviewed. Interviewees gave examples of many different types of changes which had resulted from audits in which they were involved, including:

- ♦ Changes to the physical space
- ♦ Changes to policies, practices and standards
- ♦ Creating opportunities for community input
- ♦ Developing programs

#### *a) Conditions which support effective implementation of safety audit findings*

Considered all together, the interviews suggest that the following conditions or steps maximize the probability of change occurring:

1. Safety audits need to be approached as a process, not a one-time event. Follow up needs to be included in the planning from the beginning.
2. Safety audits can be most effective when used at critical times, for example when a building is about to be renovated.
3. The organization which controls the space should recognize the legitimacy of the safety audit process. On some university campuses, a staff has been created with the mandate to ensure that personal security concerns are integrated into all aspects of university functioning. In another example, regular meetings were established between the group doing safety audits and the decision-makers (transit commission members.)
4. The audit must include a diversity of users of the space. One interviewee recalled a case where all entrances but one to a building were locked to control evening access, but residents who were unaware of the safety reasons for the change simply forced their way in, defeating the purpose of the change.

5. Some respondents felt the audit should involve decision-makers and "experts" (such as planners and police); some disagreed. One strategy outlined by a few respondents was to take decision-makers on a "mini-audit" after the community audit had been completed, showing them the problem areas.
6. Some interviewees observed that even though safety audits are a predominantly volunteer activity, if there are skilled people who are paid to support safety audits there is a greater chance of success.

There was also general agreement that, although there are low-cost changes which can be made, commitment of financial resources for more significant physical changes and of human resources to organizational changes are critical for longer term improvements.

7. Training for safety audit facilitators will improve their ability to keep participants involved in the follow-up stage. Many participants do not have experience or skills for advocacy or lobbying so they need support, information and opportunities to develop their skills.
8. Some interviewees suggested that more complete and useable information on follow-up strategies should be included in the safety audit guide.

### **The Use of Safety Audits in Housing Environments**

Of the 16 people interviewed, 11 had some knowledge of the use of safety audits in housing environments, although only 7 referred to their own participation in audits which included a housing community.

The general benefits and limitations of safety audits also apply to audits of housing. There were, however, some specific suggestions of ways that audits could help to develop housing environments that were safer for all residents.

1. A few interviewees suggested that safety audits are often most effective in housing situations. People are most detailed and specific about personal security concerns in the place where they spend most of their time. It may be easier to recruit participants from marginalized groups within housing communities, either because they are comfortable in their home environment or because they clearly stand to gain from improvements. In social housing or co-operatives there is usually some recognition of the importance of tenant involvement and reasonably open access to people or committees who can act on the findings of an audit. Some of the benefits of safety audits, such as an increased sense of community, have even greater impact when they occur in a housing complex.
2. Safety audits can play an important role at all stages in the life of a housing project. Safety audits have been used to evaluate housing that is about to be renovated, or to review newly built housing before the final touches are completed. Safety audits are also done in existing buildings; one person suggested that "post-occupancy" safety audits

could help developers to improve their designs before starting their next project. Some groups have used safety audits as an evaluation tool for plans for public or private non-profit housing. Other people described developing design ideas and standards based on the findings of safety audits. Still others suggested that new tools are needed to facilitate the integration of women's personal security concerns in the process of planning and designing housing.

3. It is more effective and cheaper to integrate personal security concerns into the design of a building than to retro-fit existing buildings. Several people recommended development of design criteria and standards to support this, and thought that funding for non-profit housing could depend partly on meeting these standards. Others suggested codifying personal security as has been done with fire safety.
4. When considering personal security in housing it is important to look also at the surrounding area. There needs to be a working relationship between the housing and the surrounding community and a shared commitment to improving personal security. Access to and from housing always raises security concerns and requires this co-operative approach.
5. Everyone who discussed housing recognized that safety audits in housing must look beyond the built environment and include management practices and social dynamics:
  - ♦ One interviewee stressed the need to work with residents and understand why a problem occurs. Using the example of vandalism, she explained that some kinds of vandalism have to do with the quality of the material and the design, while other times kids who have nothing to do are a factor. Safety audits can help examine the physical environment, but also encourage discussion about what is going on.
  - ♦ Safety audits provide an excellent opportunity to increase tenant involvement. In one university residence safety audits were incorporated into student orientations to campus and residence life. They helped familiarize students with the buildings but also led to discussions of a wide range of personal security issues.
  - ♦ Safety audits in housing can look at accessibility issues, especially for any residents with special physical or social needs.
  - ♦ Safety audits of common areas need to include representation from all parts of the community. For example, not just the people with cars need input around the use of parking lots. These spaces may be the only place for youth to play or hang out, and this may raise fears among other residents.
  - ♦ Creating safe housing requires looking at policies, practices and relationships. For example, safety audits can be used to consider anti-harassment policies or how the community will respond to domestic violence. When this happens, the resulting changes not only reduce the opportunity for violence but also begin to address causes of violence and to build a truly healthier community.
6. Several respondents suggested that adapting the safety audit guide would help to maximize the value of safety audits in housing. One group had developed a pocket guide for students to use when looking for off-campus rental housing. Several others suggested that

an adapted guide could highlight personal security concerns that are particularly important in housing, especially high-rise housing.

## ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Based on the results of the survey, the interviews and focus group discussions, the following points seem critical in understanding the role of safety audits and using them effectively in housing environments.

The analysis is organized by the five critical issues:

- ◆ Personal security with respect to housing is a growing concern
- ◆ Safety audits have proven advantages
- ◆ The question of *who is vulnerable* to violence and crime is important
- ◆ Getting results by *implementing the recommendations* of safety audits is crucial
- ◆ Housing-related safety audits involve practical, logistical and legal concerns

The final section, Beyond Safety Audits, points toward strategies which will go beyond the scope of safety audits.

### **Personal security with respect to housing is an urgent concern**

Responses to our study support the importance of addressing personal security concerns in housing. The vast majority of survey respondents said that safety audits were organized with the goal of making the area safer and/or addressing violence against women, and 71% of these audits included housing environments. 11 of 16 people interviewed also gave examples of personal security concerns in various types of housing, and discussed the role of safety audits in improving personal security for residents. The focus group which discussed these findings strongly agreed that personal security was a key issue in housing.

Safety audits which were organized by community groups or through municipal initiatives (such as Safe City Committees) were most likely to evaluate the safety of row houses and apartment buildings. We also know that these groups are likely to have chosen their audit sites in response to the concerns of local residents. This contrasts with most of the universities, who organized safety audits as part of a requirement to evaluate certain spaces. Thus we can assume that, judging from the pattern of demand at the community level, there is a strong interest in improving security in medium to high density housing.

Survey respondents and interviewees also indicated the crucial importance of areas which link housing complexes with the rest of the community. The interviews and focus group yielded several suggestions that audits need to consider the community around the housing project. Aspects of housing which connect residents to "the street" — such as building access and parking — are always areas of particular concern. Survey respondents agreed: 93% of those who audited housing looked at the exterior of the buildings; 84% audited outdoor parking lots, and 36% parking garages. As well, 55% looked at security systems and access to the housing. One respondent who had audited a housing co-op described a positive outcome from their audit as the improved relations with a 24-hour donut store across the street. It has come to be seen as part of what makes the community safer.

Within the housing complex itself, interviewees and focus group members particularly stressed the importance of looking at both social and physical environments, and the relationship between the two. How housing is managed and used by residents and others has clear impacts on the personal security and comfort of everyone involved. The environment of non-profit or social housing in particular offers extensive opportunities to address the social aspects of safety.

### **Safety Audits have proven advantages**

Through the surveys and interviews it is clear that safety audits offer a wide range of benefits to participants, the community at large, decision-makers, planners and the organizations that sponsor the audits.

The most tangible benefit of safety audits is that they often result in measurable changes which improve personal security for all users of the space. In about 50% of cases, they also lead to other programs or projects that address issues of violence. Directly linked to these tangible results is the fact that many participants gain a sense of their own ability to create change.

The list of less tangible benefits is long and varied. Safety audits are useful as an educational tool — to increase awareness of violence against vulnerable groups, and to help users and decision-makers understand how different people experience their environments. They provide an opportunity for women and other people who feel threatened to share their experiences.

When all of these results are considered, it is clear why many study participants believe that safety audits are an effective tool for building community.

People interviewed explained other benefits that show why safety audits have so much potential for creating change. They observed that safety audits are an attractive and accessible tool for many types of organizations. Safety audits provide information on personal security which is both relevant and useable for decision-makers and the people responsible for planning and managing a particular space. As a result, safety audits often give legitimacy to concerns which, in the past, have been marginalized or overlooked.

Equally clear from the study results is that there are several conditions which must be met in order to maximize the benefits of safety audits. First, safety audits are most effective when they consider both physical space and social context. When the link between the physical and human environment is not made, the audit may lose credibility with the people who feel most unsafe and its educational benefits are lost. Many respondents emphasized that *using the audit as a quick fix that only considers the physical environment is a recipe for failure.*

Related to this is the need to ensure that safety audits are done in a context which acknowledges that some groups in our society are more vulnerable to violence than others.



Finally, there are practical considerations which are critical to the success of the safety audit process. Even though safety audits may be primarily a volunteer activity, human and financial resources are essential to help plan, support, facilitate and follow up safety audits. Safety audits leaders need training in the concepts on which the audit is based, and in facilitation skills. Acting on the findings of the safety audit must be seen as part of the process from the beginning, and this stage needs active and trained support.

### **The question of who is vulnerable to violence and crime is important**

The majority of people in the study (14 of the 16 people interviewed, and 72% of the survey respondents) view safety audits as one strategy for addressing violence against women. Five (28%) of the respondents who did not see this as a goal of the audit, still recorded that increased awareness of violence against women was one of the outcomes which made the safety audit a success, and 6 said that their audit led to other projects or plans to address violence against women.

It is therefore clear that the vast majority of the people we were able to contact using the diverse networks described earlier see the question of who experiences violence as critical. This makes sense in that the tool which was the basis for all safety audits discussed (although many groups adapted it) was the Women's Safety Audit Kit published by METRAC. In interviews with people who worked to develop that tool, it is clear that the original purposes of the safety audit were to reduce opportunities for sexual assault and to give women a voice in the design and management of their environments. The underlying philosophy recognized the systemic nature of violence against women and women's traditional lack of input into decision-making.

What the Women's Action Centre Against Violence study has shown is that these concerns are shared by diverse groups across Canada.

Through interviews, we also heard several examples of how safety audits which lose this focus on violence against women also tend to lose support and result in fewer changes. These audits were apt to be seen as events which allowed organizations or decision-makers to claim they had addressed personal security issues without committing significant time or resources to real change.

METRAC's Women's Safety Audit Kit recognizes that there are other groups who are marginalized in our communities and vulnerable to violence. There was a lower involvement of these groups in the safety audits studied. Only about 2/3 of survey respondents answered a question asking about the involvement of vulnerable groups. However, those who did answer tended to list two or more vulnerable groups who had participated in their audit. This suggests that when organizers address issues of vulnerability, it is likely to result almost automatically in a more diverse group of people being involved in the audit.

Interestingly, 45% of audits which involved two or more vulnerable groups looked at apartment buildings, compared to 33% of all respondents. This suggests that recognizing who is most at risk may be particularly relevant to housing communities.

From the interviews it is clear that involving a diversity of people — poor people, seniors, adolescents, children, people with disabilities, immigrants, people of colour, gays and lesbians — takes resources. It requires a conscious and time-consuming effort on the part of organizers, and it helps if people with community development skills are involved. It also helps if there are practical supports such as child care, transportation or cultural interpretation. Some respondents suggested that the safety audit guide could be adapted to better suggest how to make the process more inclusive.

Having identified these challenges, the people interviewed were clear that the effort was worth it. Audits which included the full diversity of users produced more thorough and appropriate solutions and often led to changes which not only improved personal security but improved the overall accessibility of the area audited. There were also indications that working within a defined community, such as a housing complex, increases the likelihood that outreach will be successful. In fact, the few surveys which described audits which were organized specifically by a housing community did include a good diversity of people and were seen as very successful (although at least one is still in process so final results are not clear).

### **Getting results by implementing the recommendations of safety audits is crucial.**

When interviewees were asked about negative outcomes of safety audits, several mentioned that, for some women, participating in an audit increases their fear. Several respondents went on to say, however, that when women see changes made as a result of the audit, such fears tend to subside.

Clearly, it is critical that the audits result in actual change. 93% of all survey respondents indicated that one goal of their safety audits was to make changes that would improve the safety of the area. Most audits did result in changes. 66% of survey respondents report that some kind of change occurred. Many respondents, however, made it clear that they hoped for more. Interview participants also named follow-up as the most difficult stage of the safety audit process. Through interviews and surveys, people expressed their frustration about following up on safety audits and the less-than-optimal changes that have been achieved.

Interviewees observed that this is partly because people and groups often see safety audits as a one-time event, rather than a process. The survey responses support this interpretation. There is a striking pattern — an inverse pyramid — in the steps survey respondents took after the safety audit walk-about was completed. 9 out of 10 groups wrote down their findings and developed recommendations, one half of them formed a committee, 1/3 wrote letters requesting changes, 3 out of 10 lobbied politicians or involved the media, and 1/5 of groups contacted local residents or businesses to request changes.

There are also indications that resources such as skilled facilitators and access to decision-makers are needed to ensure that safety audits lead to change. Universities, who generally had staff to facilitate the audit and budgets to make the resulting changes, recorded a higher number of changes made. Municipal initiatives were often supported by paid staff and involved politicians, planners and other city staff. They took noticeably more follow-up steps and recorded more changes than community groups, although fewer than the universities. Community groups did the least amount of follow up, and recorded fewest changes. In fact, when asked why they considered their safety audit a success, only 44% of community groups gave measurable changes as their reason, compared with 71% of municipal respondents and 79% of universities.

One of the great strengths of safety audits is that they help marginalized people gain a voice in decisions which affect their environment, and to a greater sense of their ability to create change. Yet it is precisely these groups who face the most difficulties in following the audit recommendations through to real changes. Community-based groups are least likely to have the skills and confidence to advocate for change, and least likely to be able to count on the support of paid staff. In a sense, therefore, safety audits are currently least effective in the situations where they could make the greatest difference.

From the interviews, and the few surveys completed by housing groups, there are encouraging indications that a housing community might offer an environment which would support the optimal use of safety audits. Public or private non-profit housing may provide the environment in which it is easiest to involve people who are usually marginalized in a safety audit process, offer the support of skilled community workers throughout all stages of the audit, and facilitate access to decision-makers who can act on the audit findings.

#### **Housing-related safety audits involve practical, logistical and legal concerns.**

There were very few responses from housing groups who had completed safety audits, but many other organizations described safety audits which included housing. 42% of all respondents had looked at medium to high density housing during their audits. If residential neighbourhoods are included, then 45% of all audits reported including a housing environment.

Interestingly, the groups who audited apartment buildings or row houses also reported having done significantly more safety audits overall than those who reported only non-housing related audits. Clearly there is an interest in using safety audits in housing.

The focus group and some interviewees observed that the housing industry is already familiar with "audits" — energy audits or health and safety audits, for example. This familiarity can make it easier to build credibility for safety audits, but it also provides a challenge. Safety audits are based on the experience of the people who use a space and their perceptions of whether an area is safe or threatening. More traditional audits are based on the assumption that experts can use objective, measurable data to assess if a building is up to standards.

There is, therefore, a need for education among housing industry professionals about personal security issues, how the structure and management of the built environment affects people's sense of safety, and what the appropriate roles for users and "experts" might be in processes like safety audits. Based on the study results, we can assume that if this is done, it is possible to have safety audits recognized as a legitimate part of evaluating a housing environment.

It is, however, also important that safety audits of housing look beyond the design and maintenance of the physical building to the social context and the surrounding community. To have optimal results, audits need to be done with full awareness of who uses the space, how they use it and how they are specifically affected by issues of personal security. In doing this, the use and management of the physical space becomes as relevant as the physical structure. As well, since people go to and from housing for a variety of purposes, and since their perception of "home" often does not stop at the walls of their dwelling, this will also lead to auditing the area surrounding the housing.

With proper use and adequate resources, safety audits can lead not only to improved physical environments, but also to the development of policies to deal with harassment, domestic violence or disputes between neighbours. They can also result in programs, educational opportunities or new life for under-used (and therefore more threatening) spaces. This potential should be considered in the light of the interest across Canada in increasing resident involvement in the management of non-profit housing. Non-profits in Ontario, for example, face new requirements and standards for tenant involvement. The safety audit can be an effective tool for increasing tenant involvement in all aspects of a housing community, provided the links are made between the physical and social environment.

Tenants who are able to organize to address personal security concerns within their building will also build skills to help them advocate for changes in the surrounding neighbourhoods. Issues like personal security when using public transit, nearby parks and shopping areas directly affect the quality of life of tenants, and improvements will help the entire neighbourhood as well as the residents of a particular housing community.

Safety audits which include not only the individual buildings but also the immediate surroundings may help the housing provider to strengthen partnerships with local businesses, politicians and local organizations.

The diversity of ways in which safety audits may benefit residents and housing providers also points to the complexities of using safety audits in housing. The tool, as it exists, does not seem to encourage or support groups to evaluate policies and procedures, nor does it directly discuss the difference between advocating for change within a small environment (the building) versus a larger political entity (such as the municipality). As well, there are a multiplicity of codes and regulations which already affect housing. It is not always clear how personal security can be integrated with, for example, fire safety or protecting a heritage building. This may be one explanation for the finding that audits which looked at housing were less likely to consider policies and practices.

A few people speculated about whether concerns regarding liability would be raised should there be a comprehensive effort to promote safety audits in housing. One person noted that an organization (not in housing) would never directly credit the changes from an audit with reducing crime or violence. To say that X caused Y to happen, and when we changed X, the problem was solved, would also be to take responsibility for any crime which occurred when recommended changes were not made. Another interviewee asserted that housing providers who continue to use "dangerous design elements" should be held liable. It seems that, if there was a campaign to promote safety audits, issues of liability would be raised. Studying how safety audits are integrated into some universities or municipalities might be one way of finding answers to these questions.

A final consideration when applying safety audits to housing is their use throughout the life span of a project. Safety audits can be used to evaluate almost-finished constructions, allowing time to integrate personal security concerns rather than retro-fit. Using the safety audit prior to renovations is another way to incorporate personal security measures with less cost. Post-occupancy safety audits may be one part of developing design ideas for future projects. A few people also reported using safety audits to evaluate plans for new housing, but in that case the safety audit tool took on quite a different meaning, as a proactive rather than reactive measure.

### **Beyond Safety Audits**

One of the clear findings from the research is that using safety audits has led people to consider a variety of related concerns. "Beyond safety audits" is a concept that recognizes the benefits of safety audits, and at the same time acknowledges that other tools can be used in conjunction with safety audits to expand the opportunities for user input into the safety of a built environment.

Safety audits were developed to help users evaluate an environment that is already built. Throughout the interviews and from some surveys, there was recognition that improvements to the physical environment are easier, more effective and less costly when they are incorporated into the design and construction of the space. Design criteria related to personal security would help to ensure that spaces are built right the first time, but on their own they won't be enough. Who would design the criteria? Whose safety would they address? Because a sense of safety is so affected by an individual's life experiences and situation, it is not possible to rely only on objective standards. The people who will use a space must have a way to indicate what feels safe and comfortable, and what will not be accessible to them because it feels threatening.

Several of the interviews touched on ideas for effectively incorporating the safety needs of users into designs, and into the organizational decisions which will affect personal security. Through a more thorough examination of the strategies people are using now, it may be possible to develop a "tool kit" which would help housing designers and providers take new steps in integrating personal security into all stages of housing development.

## **EFFECTIVE USE OF SAFETY AUDITS IN HOUSING**

### **The Current Use of Safety Audits -- Strengths and Limitations**

#### **Strengths of Safety Audits**

Through the surveys and interviews it is clear that safety audits offer a wide range of benefits to participants, the community at large, decision-makers, planners and the organizations that sponsor the audits. Safety audits are a flexible tool, that can be used by a wide diversity of groups, for many purposes and in many different situations.

Specifically, groups in Canada have found safety audits effective for several purposes:

- ♦ *As a community development tool*

Approximately 1/4 of the groups surveyed organized safety audits specifically with the goal of building a sense of community. More than half of the respondents identified that their safety audit(s) resulted in a stronger community and an increase in individual's sense of ability to create change.

- ♦ *To address violence against women*

For individuals or groups who are trying to encourage the broader community to take responsibility for addressing violence against women, safety audits have offered a way to involve both women and men, professionals and residents.

For women and other marginalized groups, safety audits have been a way to make their voices heard in decisions which affect their environment and their ability to use that environment safely.

- ♦ *To make tangible changes which reduce opportunities for crimes against people*

Safety audits are resulting in renovations to existing spaces, changes in maintenance procedures and the development of policies and programs which make spaces feel more secure and reduce opportunities for violence or harassment.

#### **Limitations and Gaps**

Equally clearly, safety audits are seldom used to their full potential. The research identified several limitations to the current use of safety audits:

1. There is great frustration about following up on safety audits and the less-than-optimal changes that have been achieved. While every survey respondent and interviewee did feel that their safety audits had led to change, many had found the process of advocating for changes difficult and almost all of them felt that more and different changes could have occurred. Specific problems with the follow-up to safety audits include:
  - ♦ many safety audit participants understand the audit process to start and end with the walk-about. It is difficult to maintain involvement during follow-up.

- ♦ community-based groups consistently identified a lack of skills and resources as obstacles to follow-up:
  - ♦ marginalized groups, who may gain the most from safety audits, also face the most difficulties in following the audit recommendations through to real changes. They lack confidence and/or skills to influence decision-makers and have even fewer resources to draw on.
  - ♦ the involvement of decision-makers may help ensure some action on the safety audit findings, but some "experts" (such as police officers, municipal councillors or planners) impose their own agenda, working for the changes they want to see rather than being guided by the community. Others focus on the changes requested by the community, but do it completely on their own with no involvement from the community -- and therefore no gains in the community's sense of power.
  - ♦ groups often have no way to communicate with audit participants about changes that are made as a result of the audit.
2. The groups who are most affected by violence and fear of violence are also the most difficult to involve. Several groups suggested that the current safety audit tools are not equally accessible or appropriate for all cultural groups. Groups organizing safety audits often do not have the experience or resources necessary for effective outreach to marginalized groups.
  3. The safety audit tools currently in use do not seem to encourage or support groups to evaluate policies and procedures, yet this was identified as critical to the success of the audit.
  4. In many cases, the lack of a trained or experienced safety audit facilitator was identified as a gap which significantly decreased the effectiveness of the audit. In many areas of the country there are few or no people who have experience facilitating safety audits, and there are few accessible ways to learn the skills.
  5. While safety audits are flexible to a wide variety of environments and circumstances, most groups who had audited housing felt that a safety audit tool that was more specific to residential environments would have helped them achieve a better process and outcome.
  6. The safety audit tools currently in use are not well suited to rural or isolated communities.
  7. No group that we encountered through the research had established clear evaluation criteria to measure the effectiveness of safety audits. Neither was any group documenting the varied use of safety audits, or the outcomes, in their community or region. In many cases, groups did not even monitor the outcomes of their specific audit.

## Keys to Effective Safety Audits

Based on the experience of survey respondents and interviewees, we have identified several elements of effective safety audits.

First of all, we suggest that successful safety audits are based on two key concepts:

### *1. A community development approach is critical to the success of safety audits*

Safety audits were designed to bring people together to examine and influence their immediate environment. In other words -- safety audits are a community development process. When audits are used in this way they can result in significant and lasting change -- for individuals, groups and communities. The most enthusiastic reports of safety audits highlighted outcomes such as increased community involvement, greater understanding between different groups, and the benefits to marginalized groups when their concerns are heard and acted on for the first time. Tangible improvements to the environment were also recorded.

On the other hand, safety audits which are not based in community concerns do not strengthen the community in any way. They may result in some physical changes -- but there is no guarantee that these changes will improve the sense of safety for community members. In fact, some interviewees noted that safety audits which were used as a "quick fix" or to appease community concerns, resulted in increased scepticism and decreased community spirit.

A safety audit organized by people or groups in the community will not, however, automatically result in a stronger community. The organizers need to work from a community development perspective. The people interviewed and surveyed identified the following elements of this approach:

- ◆ safety audits need to be approached as a process, not as a one-time event;
- ◆ it is important to recognize who uses, or would like to use, an environment and to ensure that these groups are included in the process;
- ◆ facilitating participation is key; this includes creating an atmosphere that is safe for participants, providing practical supports and helping people develop the skills to participate;
- ◆ safety audits need to examine how a space is used and managed, as well as evaluating the physical aspects of the environment that affect personal security;
- ◆ in considering solutions to problems, it is important to look for program and policy alternatives as well as physical changes; and
- ◆ advocating for change based on the safety audit findings is as critical as the walk-about and control of this process needs to stay with the community.



2. *Successful safety audits focus on women and other groups who are vulnerable to violence.*

Safety audits can, and often do, involve both women and men, but the tool was developed (and is generally presented) as a way of addressing the safety concerns of women. This focus on women and safety is often questioned. Why women? Why not everyone? In fact, the results of this study strongly suggest that focussing on women is both the most effective and most practical way of using safety audits as a part of a community development process. Several dimensions of this link between effective community development and the focus on women emerged from the survey and the interviews.

*a. Focussing on women is a way to focus on vulnerability*

Safety audits should allow people to make the links between the built environment and social relationships. The violence in our society is the result of unequal power relations between different groups, not a lack of lighting. To address safety from violence, safety audits need to recognize the differences in access and resources between groups. One very concrete way to do this is to emphasize the idea of vulnerability and the fact that certain groups are more subject, and feel more subject, to violence. Women, as one example of a vulnerable group, are widely understood as experiencing more violence and having less access to resources. "Safer for women, safer for all" does make sense to people as a way to focus safety concerns.

*b. Focussing on women allows a focus on the social dimension of community and change*

A number of people pointed out that safety audits are most successful when they consider social factors, examine the connection between a physical space and the way that people live in or use that space and promote social change as well as physical improvements. Safety audits are not as successful when they take a technological orientation -- the addition of safety technologies do not make communities more liveable. The perspective on women and their ability or inability to use a space effectively allows the social dimension of the built environment to remain central.

*c. Focussing on women facilitates the expression of everyone's concerns.*

Experience has shown that women find it easier to explain their safety concerns during safety audits. Clearly this is partly related to the fact that it is more socially acceptable for women to admit to being afraid. Women's willingness to openly discuss how comfortable they are in different parts of their community, can also allow men to articulate their concerns about safety. As well, the changes made in response to women's voiced concerns often also address personal security concerns which men did not feel safe to identify.

*d. Focussing on women is effective for mobilizing community efforts.*

The surveys demonstrated that, although women and men are both involved in safety audits, the leadership and work necessary for a successful safety audit has most often been provided by women. Interviewees very clearly stated that the energy to create, promote and organize safety audits has come out of "women's concerns about other women; about sexual assault against women". Safety audits which do maintain a focus on women's concerns were seen to encourage less participation and produce fewer results.

The surveys and interviews also identified the following specific elements of successful safety audits:

- ♦ Human and financial resources are essential to help plan, support, facilitate and follow up safety audits.
- ♦ Safety audits organizers need training which includes the concepts on which the audit is based; ideas for effective outreach and for maintaining broad community involvement; facilitation skills; methods and skills in advocating for change.
- ♦ Conscious and skilled outreach is needed in order to involve people who may be marginalized by ethnic origin, poverty, age, disability, sexual orientation, life experience of violence, etc. Person-to-person methods are most effective; just posting flyers or advertising the audit does not work.
- ♦ Acting on the findings of the safety audit must be seen as part of the process from the beginning, and this stage needs active and trained support.
- ♦ The role of professionals or "experts" in the safety audit process must be clear, must not take away from the power of community members and must suit the goals of that particular safety audit.

### **Changes to Maximize the Effectiveness of Safety Audits in Housing**

In the opinions of several people interviewed, housing environments may offer the opportunities for effective use of safety audits. Social housing, in particular, may provide an environment in which it is easiest to involve people who are usually marginalized in a safety audit process, offer the support of skilled community workers throughout all stages of the audit, and facilitate access to decision-makers who can act on the audit findings.

The environment of non-profit or social housing offers extensive opportunities to address the social aspects of safety and, in turn, housing providers who want to increase resident involvement and build a sense of community may find safety audits particularly useful.

Making safety audits work effectively in housing environments requires attention to all the above elements of successful safety audits, but there are also some additional steps that could be taken specifically to facilitate housing-related safety audits.

1. The focus group and some interviewees observed that the housing industry is already familiar with "audits" — energy audits or health and safety audits, for example. This familiarity can make it easier to build credibility for safety audits, but it also provides a

challenge. Safety audits are based on the experience of the people who use a space and their perceptions of whether an area is safe or threatening. More traditional audits are based on the assumption that experts can use objective, measurable data to assess if a building is up to standards.

Educating housing providers and property managers about the safety audit process, and its potential benefits, would allow them to apply their understanding of "audits" in general, while making a positive contribution to community-based safety audits.

2. There is a need for education for housing providers and property managers about the links between personal security concerns and the management and design of housing structures. Personal security concerns are generally not recorded in the same way that vandalism, a needed repair or even a complaint about noise might be recorded. Property managers need an opportunity to learn to recognize personal security concerns when they are voiced, and to understand why these are legitimate issues for housing providers to address. Alongside this increased awareness, could come a change in actual logging or reporting forms and procedures. The result would not only be a quicker response by housing providers to personal security concerns, but more support and less defensiveness about the concerns raised during a safety audit process.
3. Several participants in the study identified the need for a safety audit guide which was specific to housing environments. This guide would include changes such as:
  - ◆ a greater emphasis on examining the management and use of the environment as well as physical spaces
  - ◆ highlighting the importance of considering the community around the housing
  - ◆ a checklist which included questions and examples specific to housing (this is especially important for apartment buildings)
  - ◆ more ideas on outreach within the housing community
  - ◆ more information and guidance for follow-up, with a recognition that changes may be made at an organizational level (such as by the board of a non-profit housing provider) as well as at the larger community level (by municipal government, etc.)
4. Another suggestion was that a guide could be developed, based on safety audits, that would help individuals to evaluate the safety of privately owned housing. This would be of particular assistance to people on a limited income, looking for rental accommodation.

As stated before, any steps taken to encourage the elements listed on page 48 or to address the gaps identified on page 45 would also support housing-related safety audits.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

### Conclusions

The safety audit tool was originally developed in 1989, and is now in use across Canada. It is a tool which evaluates the design and management of the built environment from the perspective of women and other groups who are vulnerable to violence.

Based on the results of this study, we believe that:

- ♦ safety audits have tremendous potential for empowerment of individuals and communities as well as for addressing personal security concerns and reducing opportunities for violence against women and other vulnerable groups
- ♦ the safety audit process has particular potential for housing environments, especially non-profit or social housing
- ♦ as could be expected from a relatively new process that has not been extensively evaluated, there are limitations to the way safety audits are currently being used, and there is a fair degree of consensus on what is needed to overcome these limitations
- ♦ there are some very concrete steps which would improve the efficacy of safety audits in general and housing-related safety audits in particular

CMHC has an interest in promoting personal security in housing for all Canadians. Safety audits have tremendous potential as one tool in that effort. Through the responses to this study, we have identified actions and resources which could help increase the efficacy of safety audits.

*We suggest that there is a useful role for CMHC in developing the additional resources needed to realize the potential of safety audits. As well, we believe CMHC should investigate strategies and tools for involving community members in the design and development of housing so that safety concerns are effectively addressed at those stages.*

## Recommendations for CMHC

1. That CMHC sponsor a pilot project, to be done in partnership with agencies experienced in safety audits and representatives from different housing communities. This project would include six steps:
  - i) Develop a safety audit kit for housing, based on the METRAC Women's Safety Audit Kit, with the following changes and additions:
    - ♦ Develop a checklist appropriate for rural and isolated communities.
    - ♦ Adapt the rural and urban checklists to include concerns specific to medium and high density housing, such as elevators and building access. Adapt the safety audit description and directions to include more housing examples and references.
    - ♦ Develop additional materials which outline how groups can audit the management and use of housing environments; how to involve people who are particularly vulnerable or generally under-represented; and, suggestions on how to advocate for change based on the findings of a safety audit.
  - ii) Develop a training process and manual for safety audit organizers and facilitators. Although no other group has yet published a manual, there are groups who do already train safety audit facilitators. A training manual could be built on this existing knowledge, with special attention to making it applicable for housing communities.
  - iii) Develop training for housing providers and property managers, that would:
    - ♦ increase their awareness of the links between personal security and the design and management of housing; and
    - ♦ introduce the concept of safety audits, outline their role in safety audits, and teach the skills needed to fulfil that role effectively.
  - iv) Develop evaluation criteria and methods to measure the effectiveness of safety audits.
  - v) Pilot the newly developed materials, training package and evaluation methods in several different types of housing, in a rural or isolated community, a co-op, specialized housing (such as for seniors or newcomers to Canada) and perhaps in a new housing project. To be effective, this pilot project must be long enough to allow for follow up to the safety audit, and human and financial supports must be made available to the host community.
  - vi) Invite the housing groups, agencies that promote safety audits and other resource people to a one-day workshop to review the evaluation of the pilot projects and examine issues such as liability. This would also be an opportunity to discuss what future role CMHC, and other groups, could play in supporting effective safety audits in housing.
2. Depending on the results of the pilot project outlined above, there are a variety of ways that CMHC could continue to support safety audits and other strategies to involve community members in improving the security of their housing. These methods could

range from offering "training for trainers", to establishing a fund (perhaps in partnership with another agency) that offers financial support for safety audits, to making it a requirement that any housing project which receives support from CMHC must conduct a safety audit and demonstrate a commitment to incorporate the findings into the design, maintenance and management of their complex.

3. CMHC should explore strategies "beyond safety audits". This would involve identifying tools which can involve diverse users in the development and design of new housing projects for the purpose of creating housing environments which are comfortable and safe for all residents.

## APPENDIX A

### Study Team, Survey respondents, Interviewees, Focus group participants

#### Study Team

**Project Coordinator:** Chris Hunter

Executive Director, Women's Action Centre Against Violence

**Steering Committee:** Caroline Andrew

Professor, Political Science, University of Ottawa

Fran Klodawsky

Assistant Professor, Department of Geography and

Pauline Jewett

Institute of Women's Studies,

Carleton University

Judie McSkimmings

Consultant and Educator on Violence Against Women

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**Research Support:** Danette Steele  
Community Program Worker  
Women's Action Centre Against Violence

Karen Campbell

Administrative Support

Women's Action Centre Against Violence

Brenda Kennedy

Volunteer

Women's Action Centre Against Violence

## APPENDIX B

**WOMEN'S ACTION CENTRE AGAINST VIOLENCE  
SAFETY AUDIT SURVEY**

Please complete the following questions regarding your involvement with safety audits.  
Thank you.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
 ORGANIZATION: \_\_\_\_\_  
 ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
 TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ FAX: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Have you ever participated in a safety audit? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If no: If you have not participated in a safety audit, but someone else in your organization has, please forward this survey to them. If no one in your organization has participated in a safety audit, please return this page to the address listed at the end of the survey.

If yes, please continue with the survey.

2. By your definition, what does one safety audit include (circle those you would include):
- A. a one time walk with a group to evaluate an area
  - B. a series of walks with a group in the same area
  - C. a process which includes a walk and the work to get the recommendations from the walk implemented
  - D. other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_
3. How many safety audits have you participated in? \_\_\_\_\_  
 If you have participated in more than 1 safety audit, please answer the following questions as they apply to a safety audit that you feel was successful.
4. In what ways do you think your safety audit succeeded (circle up to three of the most important reasons):
- A. it contributed to a better sense of community in the area audited
  - B. it led to other projects or plans to address violence against women
  - C. participants gained a sense of their own ability to create change and influence their environment
  - D. there was good participation from all the groups and individuals concerned
  - E. it resulted in measurable changes which made the area safer
  - F. it helped increase awareness of violence against women
  - G. don't know
  - H. other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_



5. Now we would like to know the details of the safety audit that you were involved in. Your participation in this audit was through which group or organization?

What was your role?

Date (mo /yr)	Time	Name of Municipality	Area Audited (circle all that apply)	Approx- imate # of Participants	Approx- imate # of Women	Type of Area
	A. before dark  B. after dark		C. neighbourhood with single family homes D. row houses E. apartment building(s) F. park G. shopping area H. parking lots I. public transit J. campus K. business or industrial areas L. office building(s) M. indoor areas N. outdoor areas O. other (please describe)			P. urban Q. rural R. suburban S. small town T. other (please describe)

6. Why was the safety audit organized? (circle the three most important)

- A. as a way of building community in the area audited
- B. in reaction to property crime
- C. due to community pressure
- D. as part of a strategy to address violence against women
- E. in response to specific incidents and/or complaints
- F. in order to make changes to make the area safer
- G. don't know
- H. other (please describe)

7. What tool did you use as a guide in your safety audit?

- A. METRAC's Women's Safety Guide
- B. other (please identify)
- C. don't know

Did you adapt the tool which you used? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Know

If yes, describe briefly the changes you made:

8. **If your safety audit included an apartment building, row houses or other housing development**, did your audit look at any of the following physical spaces (circle all that apply):
- A. the outside of the area
  - B. indoors shared space (such as laundry rooms or lobbies)
  - C. indoors parking garages
  - D. outdoors parking lots
  - E. security measures such as locks or buzzer systems
  - F. indoors private space (such as individual apartments or houses)
  - G. don't know
  - H. other (please describe): \_\_\_\_\_
9. **If you audited a housing community** (for example, an apartment building or a townhouse complex), did your audit look at the following policies or practices (circle all that apply):
- A. an orientation of new tenants to the building
  - B. other forms of communication with tenants regarding safety concerns or measures
  - C. anti-harassment policies
  - D. zero tolerance policies
  - E. patterns of use of common areas (such as the parking area or laundry room)
  - F. maintenance practices for common areas (such as the parking area or laundry room)
  - G. opportunities for tenant involvement in creating a safer community (such as existence of apartment watch program)
10. **If your audit did not involve a housing community:**  
 Did your safety audit look at policies and practices (such as anti-harassment policies, maintenance procedures, etc.) in addition to physical space?  
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Know If yes, please give specific examples.
11. What follow-up steps were taken by the group who participated in the safety audit? (please circle all that apply)
- A. safety audit findings were written down
  - B. recommendations for change were developed from findings
  - C. committee was formed to act on and monitor recommendations
  - D. politicians were lobbied to make changes
  - E. work with media to publicize findings from the audit
  - F. local residents and/or businesses were contacted to make changes
  - G. letters were written to city or other officials to request changes
  - H. follow up is still in progress
  - I. don't know
  - J. other (please describe)

## 12. Did changes result from the safety audit work you did?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Know

If yes, please briefly note the changes (circle all that apply):

A. physical changes

B. changes in policies and practices

C. other safety audits were organized

D. measurements (such as a survey) indicate that people in the area audited feel safer E.

measurements (such as crime statistics) indicate a decrease in crimes

F. increased awareness (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

G. other programs or projects were organized (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

H. a new committee or organization was formed (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

I. other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

13. Safety audits often involve a variety of groups, representatives of different services and decision makers who can act on the findings of a safety audit. Using the chart below please check who was involved in your safety audit:

	participated in the audit		helped plan the audit		led or facilitated the audit		involved in follow-up to the audit	
	women	men	women	men	women	men	women	men
police officers								
municipal planners, architects								
municipal politicians								
media								
local crime prevention group								
community association								
womens groups								
other community agencies (please list)								
others (please list)								

14. Many studies have shown that certain groups of people in our society are more vulnerable to violence and harassment. These groups include women, children, elderly people, people with disabilities, aboriginal people, immigrants and refugees, visible minority people, lesbians and gays. These groups also report more fear of using public and semi-public spaces after dark. Safety audits are one tool which can involve people in making a community feel safer for everyone who lives or works there. However, involving diverse members of the community can be a challenge.

Using check marks on the chart below, please describe which people, that you consider vulnerable to violence or fear of crime, were involved in your safety audit:

Description of Participants	participated in the audit		helped plan the audit		led or facilitated the audit		involved in follow-up the audit	
	women	men	women	men	women	men	women	men

15. For what purposes would you recommend the use of safety audits?

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16. Is there any additional information you would like to give us regarding safety audits?

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17. As part of this project we are collecting written documents from safety audits including safety audit tools, written findings and recommendations, follow-up reports etc. If you have any documents from your safety audit(s), we would ask you to send us a copy and an invoice for the costs. Please list here the names/titles of the documents. Thank you.

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18. Could you suggest other people or groups who should receive this survey?

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Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey.

Please return by January 27th, 1995 to the **Women's Action Centre Against Violence**,  
1206-170 Laurier Av. W., Ottawa, ON K1P 5V5 (613) 230-4413, or fax to : 613-230-4164.

## APPENDIX C

### Interview schedule Informed Consent Form

#### Women's Action Centre Against Violence

#### CMHC Project

#### Interview Questions

#### NOTES:

We will use the short survey as a starting point, and refer to it throughout the interview.

If the person being interviewed has been involved in more than one safety audit, we can explore one audit experience in depth, but we would also like to draw on the experience and knowledge gained from other audits.)

1. How did you get involved in safety audits.
  - how did you hear about the tool
  - through which group, if any, did you get involved in the audit
  - what was your role in the safety audit(s) (important to probe until this is clear)
2. Describe your experience with safety audits.
  - in how many safety audits have you been involved (should be clear from the short survey)
  - what was the main purpose of the safety audit(s)
  - what were the main uses of land in the area audited (eg. residential streets, parking lots, shops, office buildings, etc)
  - what aspects of physical space did you audit?
  - what policies, practices or other, non-physical aspects of the space did you audit?
3. What do you see as the most significant advantages or gains from the use of safety audits.
  - who do you think gained from the audit
  - what were the gains (could look for gains in awareness of issues, improved strength for a participating or sponsoring organization, measurable outcomes, gains in personal empowerment or increased sense of control for women, etc.)
  - For people who have done more than one: how did your approach to audits change as you went along based on what you learned
  - To what extent did you achieve your main purpose (as described in question 2)
4. Can you describe any negative outcomes you have observed which you attribute to a safety audit?
  - Examples: some women report being more afraid than before; other groups are concerned that audits could create a false sense of security...
5. In our experience, many groups have found it difficult to follow-up the findings of safety audits so that the desired changes do occur.

We want to talk about what aspects of a safety audit affects which specific changes are made and which are not.

- what changes were made as a result of your safety audit (probe for social changes -- such as setting up a program -- as well as changes to the physical environment)

- who asked for the changes, who made them and who paid for them
- who knows about the changes -- how were participants in the audit informed?
- describe any attempt that has been made to measure or quantify outcomes from the safety audit (eg. a survey on resident feelings of security, crime statistics, etc.)
- in cases where some changes were made but not others, is there a plan for phased in implementation?
- was there an analysis done to identify the costs of the recommended changes? If so, what were the results of the analysis

What other changes do you think could have resulted from the safety audit we are discussing? In your opinion, why didn't these changes occur? Who would have had to act to get other changes made?

What mechanism or resource would have helped to get these outcomes:

- a tool
- knowledge or skills (for who?)
- dedicated funds

6. We want to know which organizations and individuals are participating in safety audits. Refer to the results of short survey. Use this interview question to get more details on involvement of following organizations and individuals.

Organizations:

Ask for more details re the extent of involvement by organizations like those listed below. We want to probe for: what role they played; how much control they exerted over the process; what did they contribute to the process or outcomes; what were the challenges of involving them; were there any negative outcomes of involving them.

- police, municipal planners, politicians, media, community associations, women's advocacy groups, etc.

Individuals:

Ask for more details about each organization or type of participant, about numbers of participants from each perspective; whether changes were made to the safety audit process to accommodate different perspectives, etc.

- people whose primary concern was personal security or security of property
- tenants, homeowners, commercial/retail owners, professionals, etc.
- age
- gender
- ethnic origin, language spoken
- urban, suburban, rural
- any people with disabilities, what kinds of disabilities
- sexual orientation
- low income people

What groups or individuals did you hope would participate, who did not?

What do you think might be the reasons for this lack of involvement?

7. There are concerns that the people who are most vulnerable to violence may be least likely to become involved in an audit process.

Was that your experience?

Who do you see as most vulnerable?

What are the barriers to their participation?

What could be done to facilitate their involvement?

To what extent do you believe the safety audit addresses the safety concerns of these groups and individuals?

8. CMHC is particularly interested in personal safety in housing. We would like to talk about how the safety audit can be used to improve the safety of housing environments. We are looking at housing very broadly, including residential neighbourhoods, high-rise apartment buildings, accommodation facilities such as university residences, housing complexes, etc.

Refer back to the types of space the person being interviewed has audited: land use, did they look at the interior and or exterior of buildings, who were the users of these spaces

Please describe any housing-related area that was audited.

What did you look at in this space? (which interior spaces, locking or security systems, etc.)

Why did you chose to look at those aspects of the space, and not others?

Were any changes recommended that specifically related to housing?

Were any of those recommendations implemented?

What things did you learn from this audit that could be incorporated in future housing development or design?

How could the safety audit be made more applicable to housing environments.

9. So far we've talked about safety audits. Have you experienced / heard of other tools that are useful in looking at issues of safety in the design or planning of the built environment?
  - describe any tools or processes you know of which can help evaluate spaces which are already built
  - describe any tools or processes you know of that help to develop ideas during the design process.
  - how would you compare these tools to safety audits? In your experience, what are the situations in which one of these tools is more effective than a safety audit?

Do you have any written materials describing the use of the tools or processes discussed? Can you mail us copies of these materials. (If there is a cost for the material, the interviewee can send an invoice with the materials and CMHC will send them a cheque.)

Can you describe any opportunity you have had to participate in the process of developing or designing plans for a particular environment? (probe for who would be the users of the space being designed, why this individual had an opportunity for involvement, how they were involved)

To what extent were you considering safety factors during this involvement? Whose safety were you considering?

What would have helped you to more effectively incorporate safety concerns?

10. Can you suggest any other people we should talk to about this topic or related topics?



**Letter of Consent**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in the study being conducted by the Women's Action Centre Against Violence. I am aware that this study will examine my experiences with safety audits, and my thoughts and recommendations for the effective use of safety audits in housing environments.

I understand that my participation in this study involves:

- ♦ completing a survey which will require about 15 minutes of my time participating in one telephone interview of approximately one hour at a mutually agreed upon time
- ♦ audio-taping of this interview; the tape will be erased or returned to me by the end of October, 1995. Only the CMHC Study team of the Women's Action Centre Against Violence will have access to the audio-tapes.
- ♦ use of the information from the interview for a research paper which will be submitted to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. The information may also be incorporated into other projects of the Women's Action Centre Against Violence.
- ♦ protection of my confidentiality by not including my name or identifying details in the report unless I given written permission for a specific quote or story to be included.
- ♦ receiving a summary of the project findings

I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_