

“I feel like small scale landlords are often not considered”: RentSafe Survey of Small-Scale Landlords

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Background

Substandard housing conditions (e.g. dampness, mould, inadequate heating/cooling, poor indoor air quality) contribute to adverse health effects [1]. Such effects reflect health inequities when they disproportionately impact children, the elderly, people on low income, or people living with mental illness or addictions. In 2011, 294,750 Ontario households were found to fall below repair standards [2]. Further, the percentage of households that require at least one major housing repair is greater for renters (8.8%) than for owners (4.9%) [2]. The RentSafe Initiative seeks to address housing-related health hazards experienced by tenants living on low income through intersectoral action that takes into account the perspectives of all stakeholders (see box below). Building on previous RentSafe research with tenants, landlords, public health units, legal aid clinics, and front-line workers, the RentSafe team decided to explore the views of small-scale landlords as they might be more likely to be affected by economic challenges and limited capacity to maintain healthy housing conditions. Further, there is limited information from existing literature that accounts for landlord perspectives on healthy housing.

Objective

This poster reports the preliminary findings from a survey of small-scale landlords in Ontario that aims to understand the views of and challenges experienced by small-scale landlords in maintaining healthy conditions in rental housing.

RentSafe is an intersectoral initiative that seeks to address unhealthy housing conditions affecting tenants living on low income in both urban and rural communities in Ontario. The initiative aims to build awareness and capacity across sectors so that tenants and landlords are better able to get the support they need to reduce housing-related health hazards. This three-year initiative is led by the Canadian Partnership for Children’s Health and Environment and funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation. www.healthyenvironmentforkids.ca/collections/rentsafe

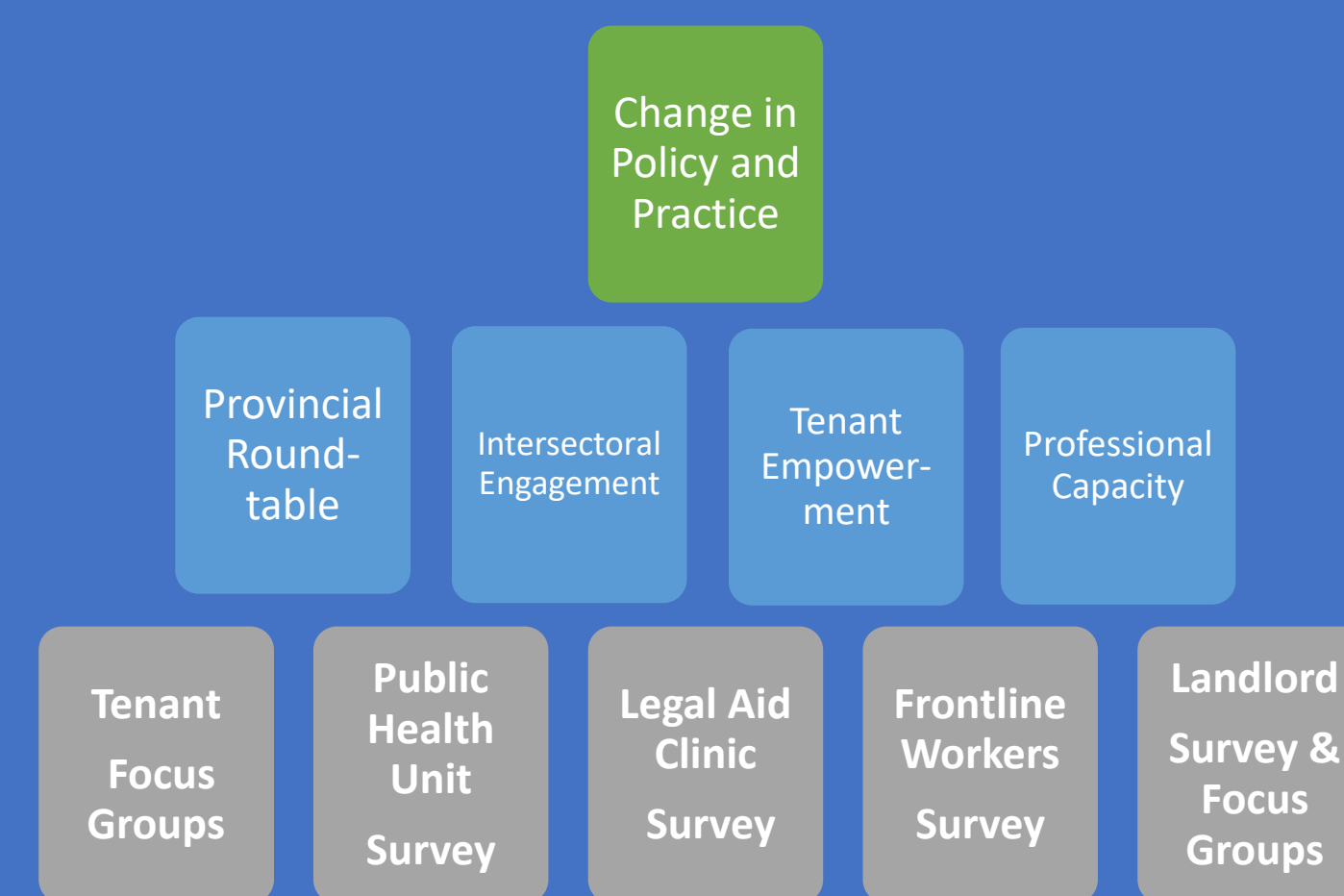


Figure 1.
RentSafe Initiative

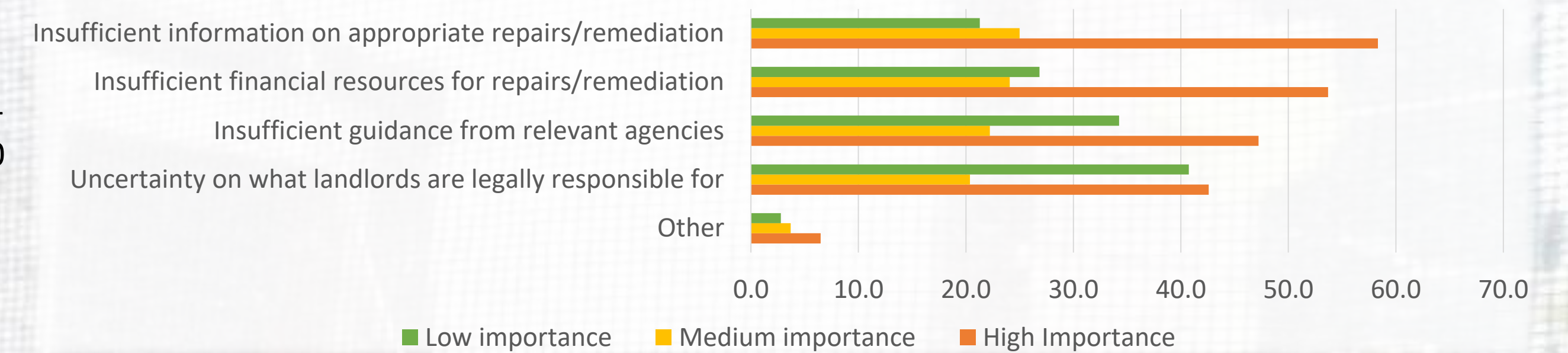
Methods

This study is led by a group of students from the Centre for Environmental Health Equity at Queen’s University in collaboration with other RentSafe partners and the Landlord’s Self-Help Centre (LSHC), a legal aid clinic based in Toronto that provides services to small-scale landlords. Survey design involved a collaborative drafting process between academic researchers and RentSafe partners to ensure its content and outcomes adhere to high methodological and ethical standards while informing practice. After incorporating input from reviewers, an online survey was created using the FluidSurveys platform and beta tested by three landlords. Email invitations were sent on March 20th, 2017 to LSHC member and subscriber listservs (~2,300 contacts). Ontario-based landlords who rent nine units or fewer were eligible to participate. Preliminary results are presented here, while further data analysis will be made available in a final public report later in 2017.

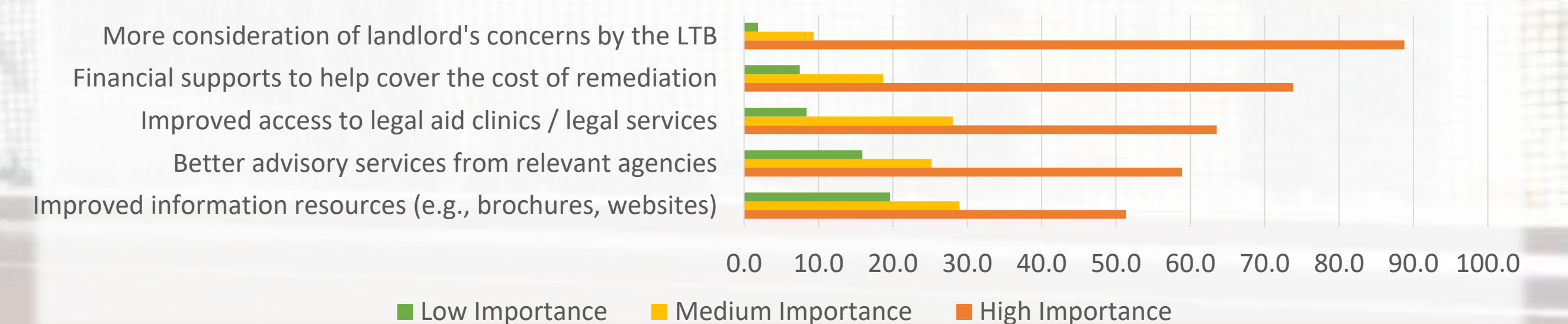
Highlights from Preliminary Survey Results

By March 28th, 108 respondents completed the survey. Among respondents, 60.2% rented 3 units or fewer, 26.9% rented 4-6, and 12.9% 7-9 units. Most (55.2%) had less than 10 years experience providing rental housing. Their rental units were typically houses (37.8%), semi-detached units (27.1%), or apartments in 1-4 story buildings (20.7%). Most respondents (73.8%) indicated that the units they rented were separate from the property where they live. Most respondents affirmed that the units they rented needed no repairs (63.9%), whereas others reported that at least one unit needed some repair (27.8%), or significant repairs (8.3%).

Perceived challenges in maintaining healthy housing conditions

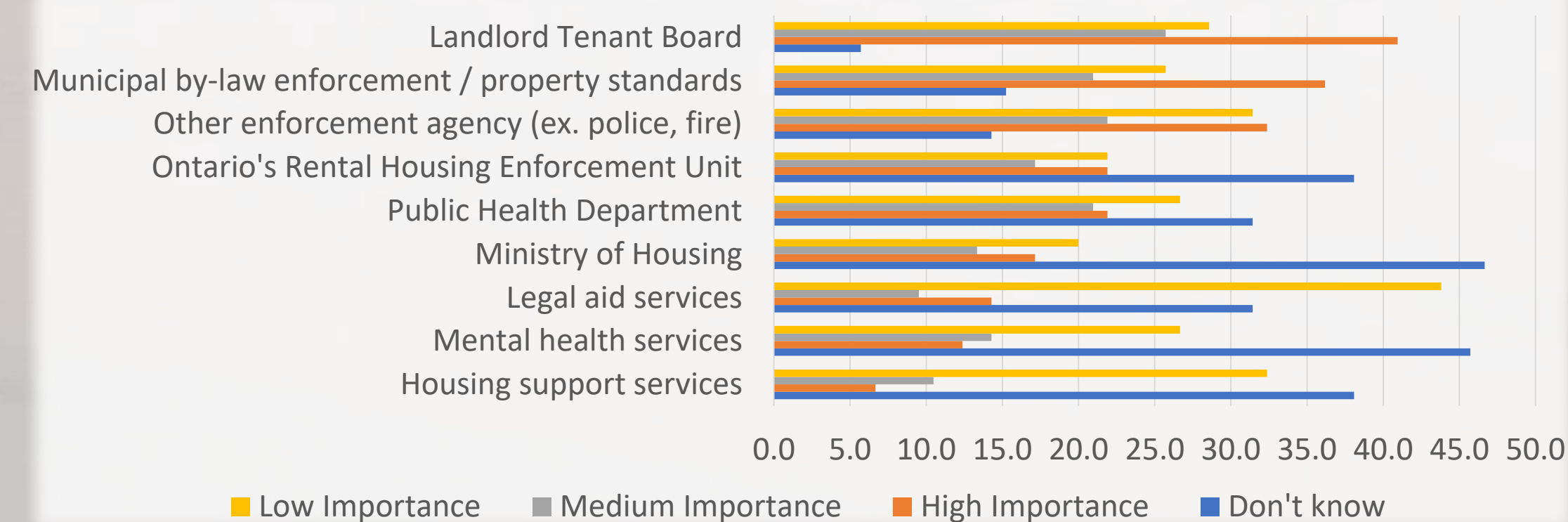


Respondents views on potential measures to better support small-scale landlords in providing healthy housing



“[We need] More resources and support for landlords that do care to remedy the situations. More often than not we are faced with ultimatums and added pressure instead of help and support when approaching some of these agencies for help.”

Respondents views on the roles of various agencies in supporting landlords to provide healthy rental housing



Next Steps

Results from this survey will inform at least three outcomes: 1) a report of this survey, to be released in August 2017; 2) an updated version of the RentSafe baseline report, which summarizes the results of other research projects within the RentSafe Initiative, to be released by Winter 2017/2018; and 3) the design of a series of focus groups with small-scale landlords in both rural and urban settings. Overall, RentSafe-related research will be used to build knowledge, capacity and cross linkages among relevant service providers in order to better support both tenants and landlords towards the goal of healthy housing conditions for all.



Sign-up for RentSafe project updates to receive the full survey results, once available: <https://goo.gl/hM1Zgh>



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References

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- [2] Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, “Interactive local data tables,” 2015. [Online]. Available: <https://goo.gl/RxTMSZ>. [Accessed: 11-Feb-2017].

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