

Indigenous Peoples' Experience of Homelessness in Toronto: 2021 Street Needs Assessment

City of Toronto Shelter, Support and Housing Administration and the Toronto
Indigenous Community Advisory Board

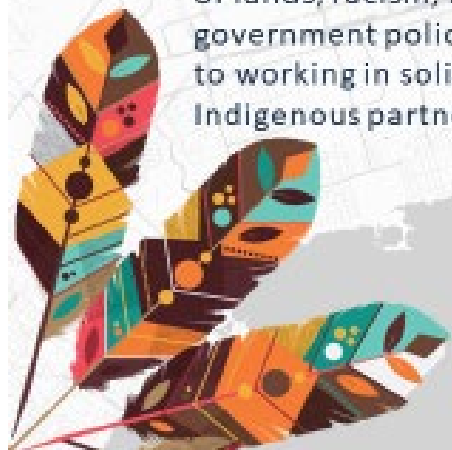


Land Acknowledgement for Toronto



We acknowledge that our work takes place on the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaty signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.

We acknowledge that Indigenous homelessness is the direct result of Canada's history and ongoing colonization of Indigenous peoples and exploitation of lands, racism, intergenerational trauma and government policies and practices. We are committed to working in solidarity and in partnership with Indigenous partners to end Indigenous homelessness.



We Acknowledge

This work was done in partnership with the Toronto Indigenous Community Advisory Board to support our mutual goal of meaningfully addressing Indigenous homelessness in Toronto as well as to honour commitments in Meeting in the Middle related to Indigenous self-determination, data sovereignty and respectful and meaningful collaboration.

We are grateful for the guidance and advice from Indigenous partners working in the housing and homelessness sector.

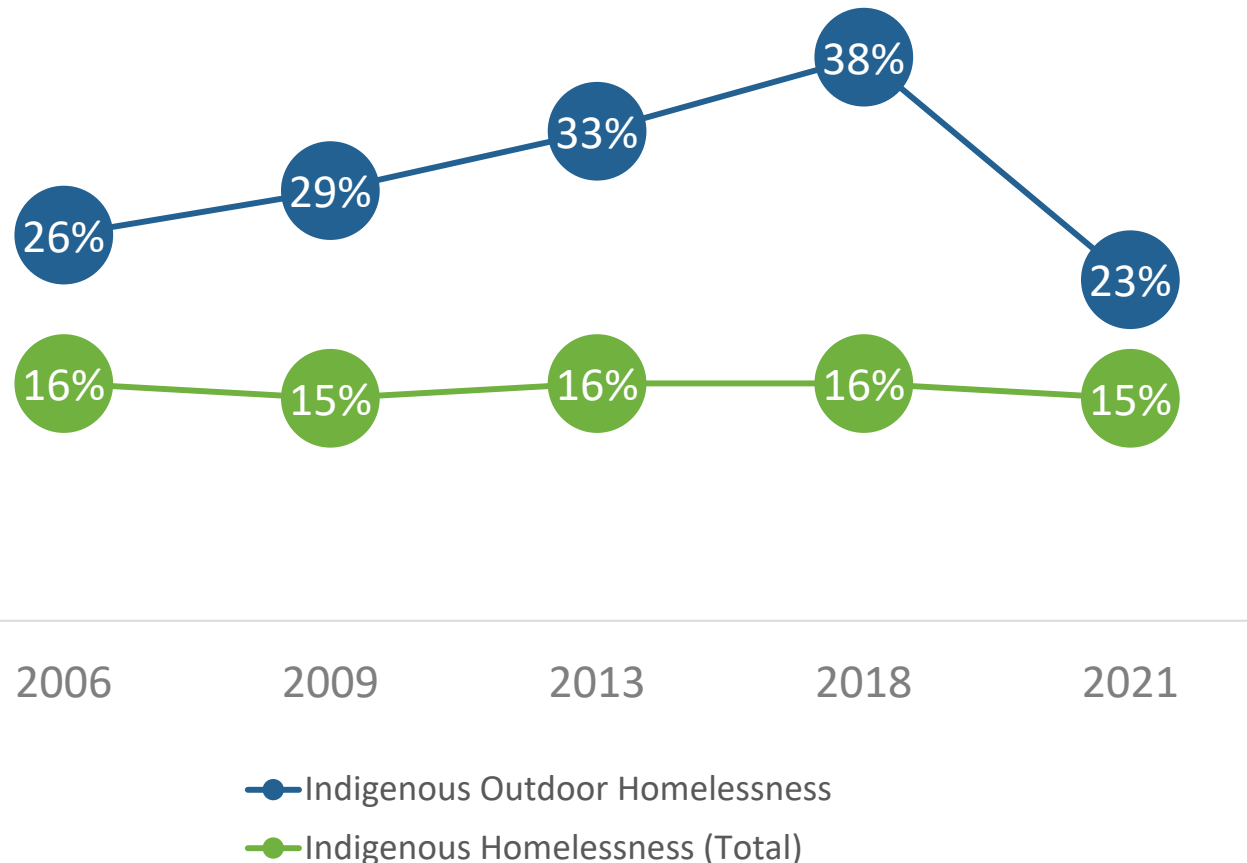
Street Needs Assessment 2021 Overview

- Toronto's fifth SNA was held in April, 2021, during the peak of the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic
- The SNA is a point-in time count and needs assessment survey of people experiencing homelessness in Toronto
- The SNA provides a better understanding of trends and the needs and experiences of different groups and is a direct input into Shelter, Support and Housing Administration's Homelessness Solutions Service Plan
- We spoke with **383** Indigenous people experiencing homelessness staying outdoors, in City-administered shelters, and provincially-administered Violence Against Women shelters (out of a total of 2,629 people we spoke with)
- Thank you to the people who shared with us and to Indigenous community partners who collaborated on the 2021 SNA

Key Findings

- Indigenous people continue to be overrepresented among people experiencing homelessness in Toronto, especially people staying outdoors and in encampments
- An estimated 1,042 Indigenous people were staying outdoors and in City-administered shelters on the night of April 21, 2021
- Indigenous men represented the largest share of Indigenous homelessness; Indigenous women represented a greater share of people experiencing homelessness compared to non-Indigenous women
- Indigenous people were more likely to experience chronic homelessness, to first experience homelessness as children/youth, and to have foster care experience
- Indigenous people were more likely to report health challenges, particularly mental health challenges and multiple health challenges
- Two Spirit, transgender and non-binary Indigenous people were more likely to experience health challenges compared to cisgender Indigenous men and women
- Increasing incomes and access to affordable and supportive housing were identified by Indigenous people as the most important supports for finding housing

Persistent overrepresentation of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness in Toronto

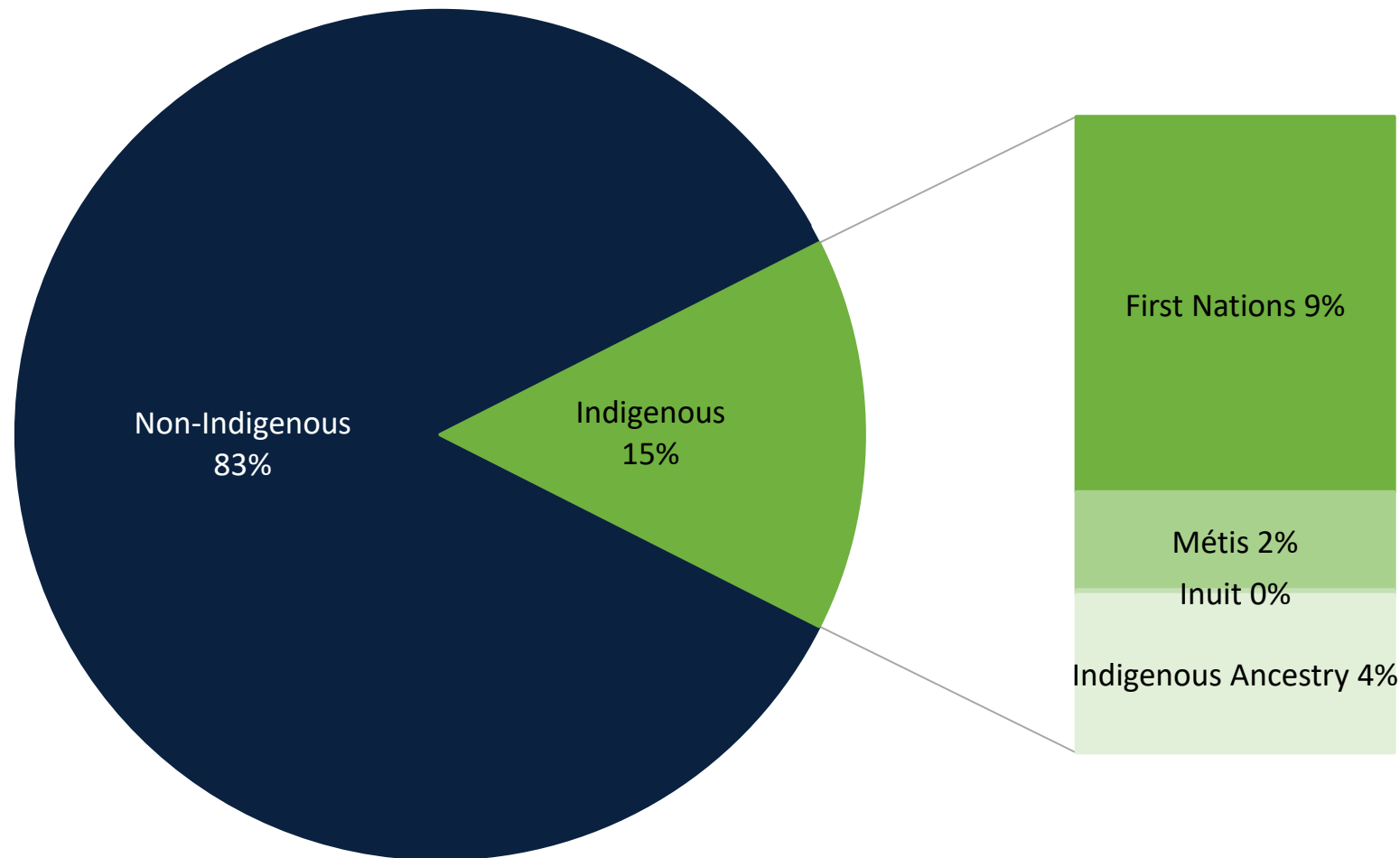


- Indigenous people experiencing homelessness consistently represent 15% of people experiencing homelessness yet approximately 2% of the general population of Toronto
- It is estimated that 1,042 Indigenous people were staying outdoors and in City-administered shelters on April 21, 2021

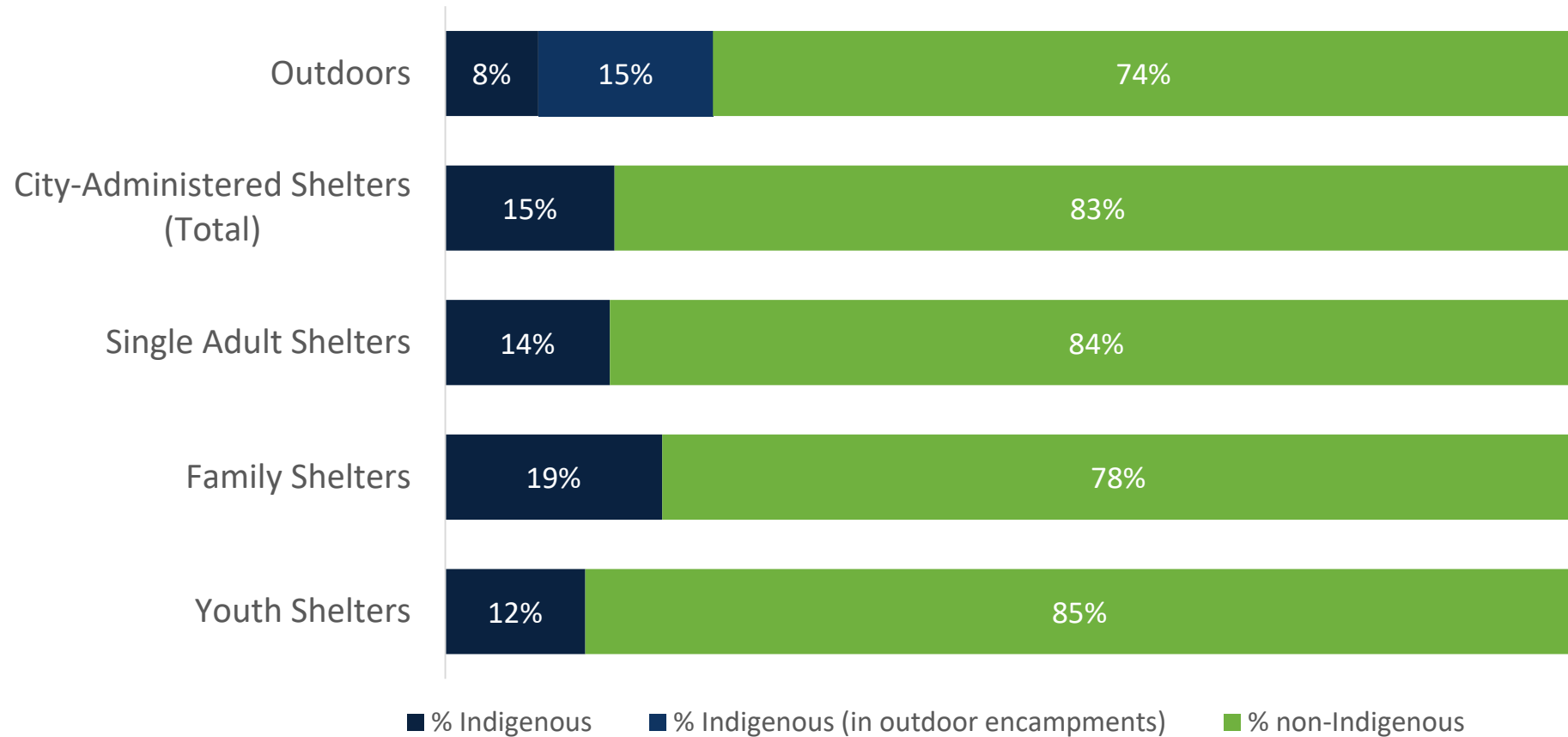


Profile of Indigenous People Experiencing Homelessness

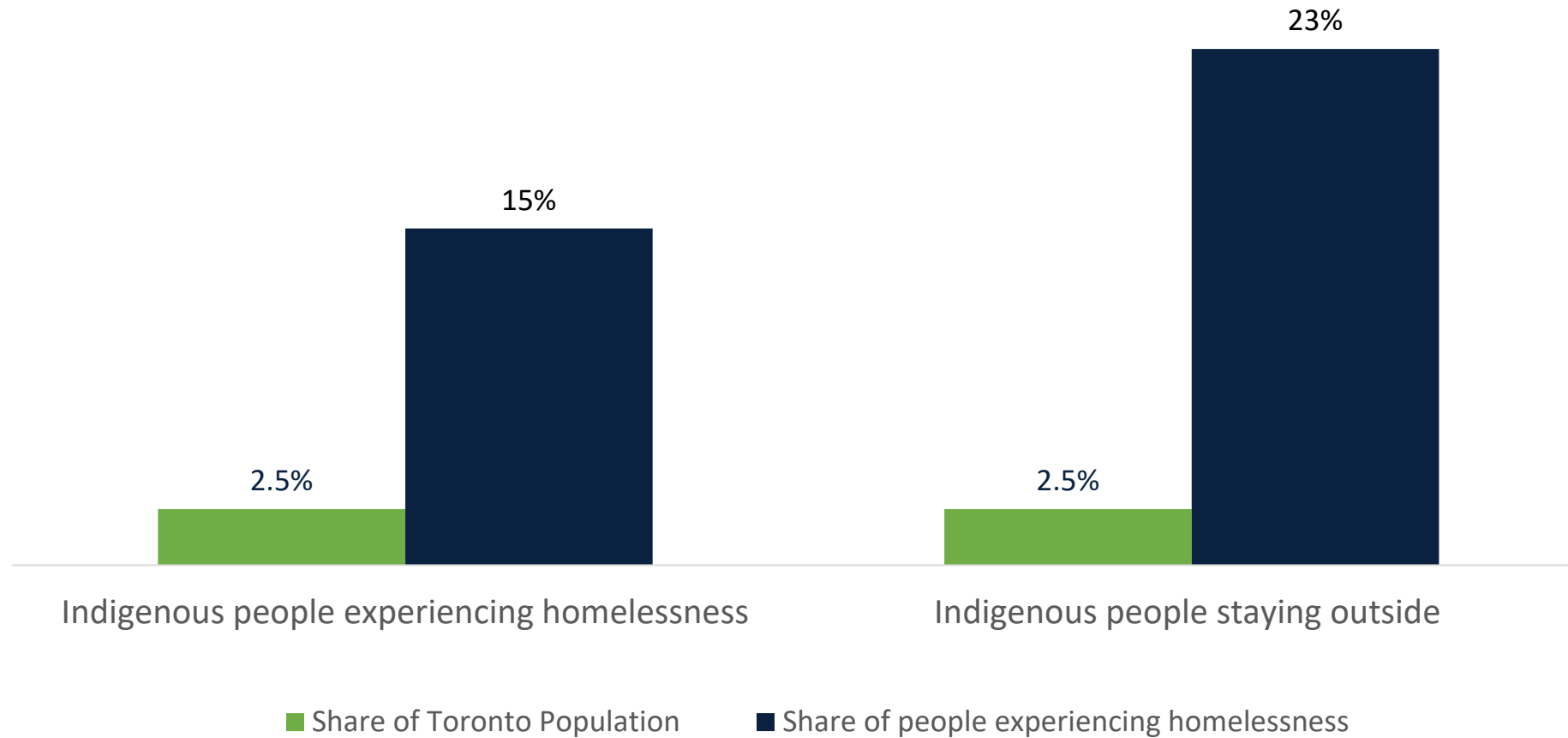
15% of people experiencing homelessness identified as First Nations, Inuit, Métis or having Indigenous ancestry



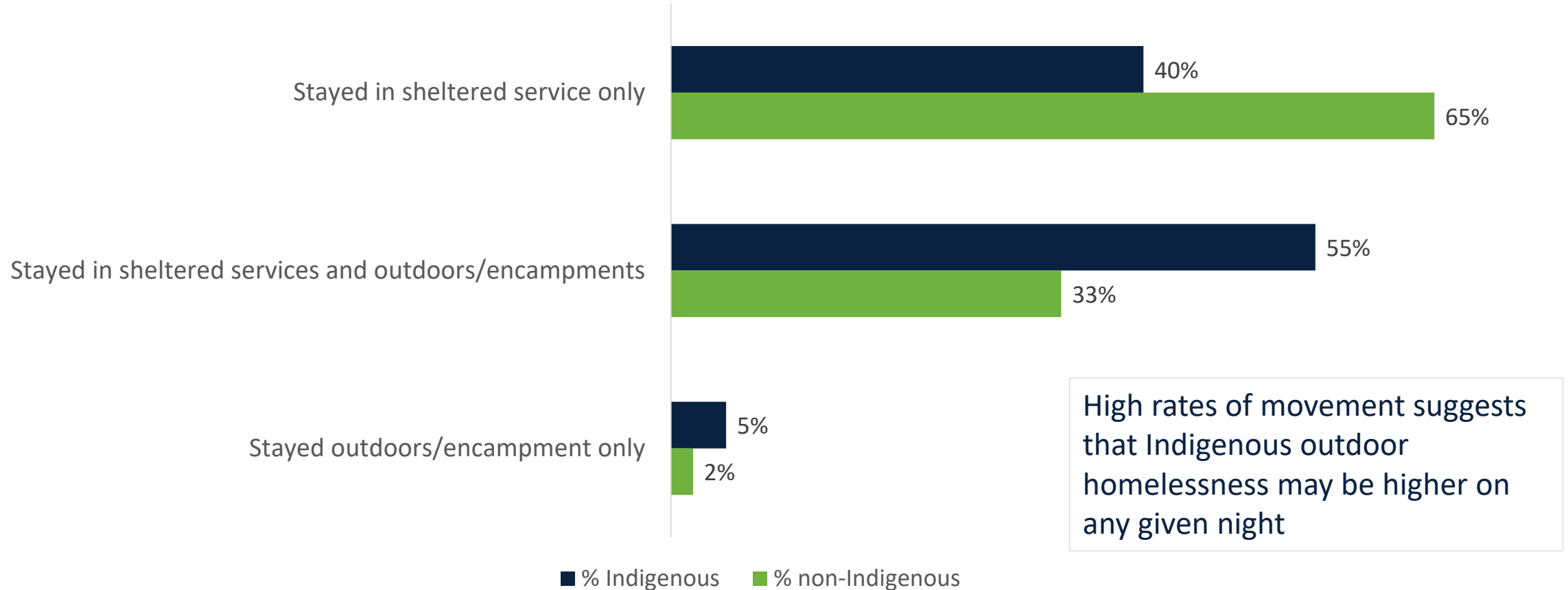
23% of people staying outdoors identified as Indigenous, with two-thirds staying in encampments



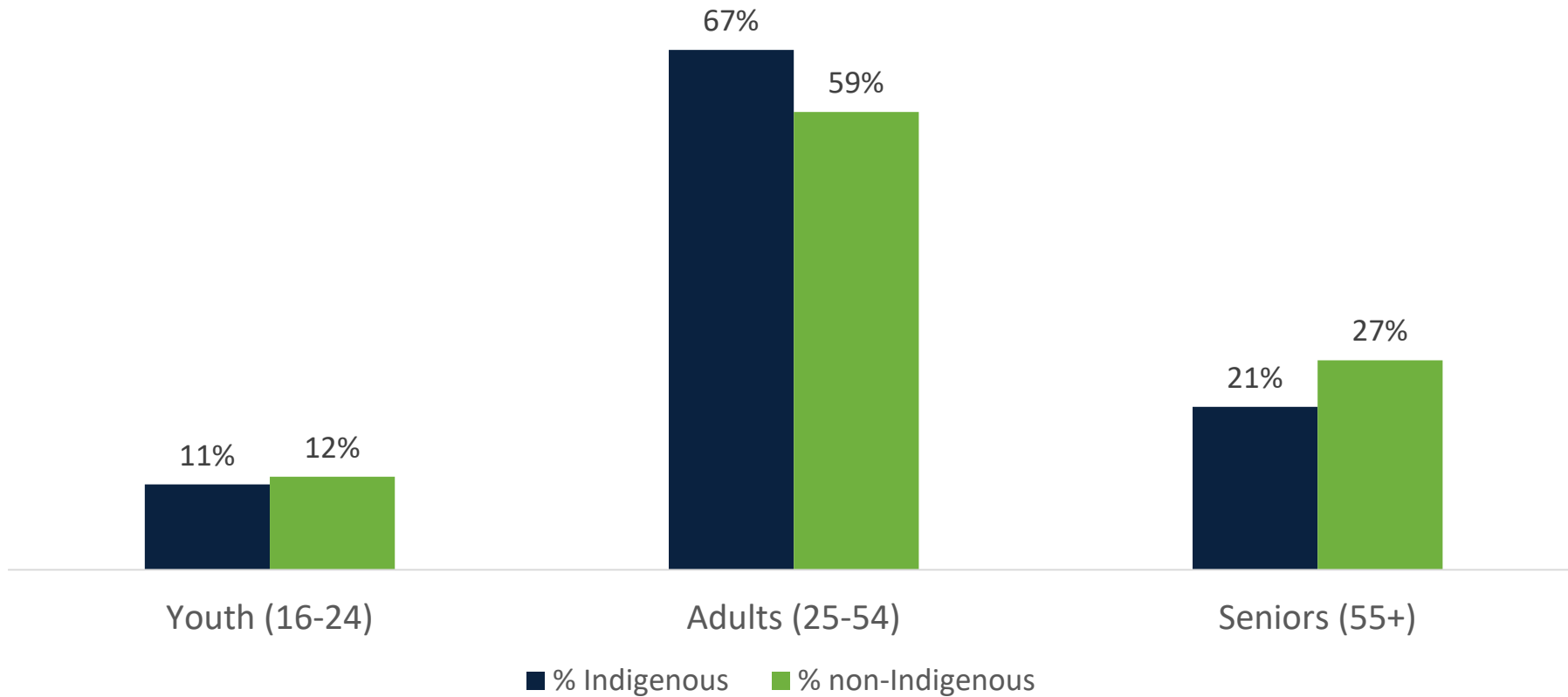
Indigenous people are overrepresented among people sleeping outdoors in Toronto



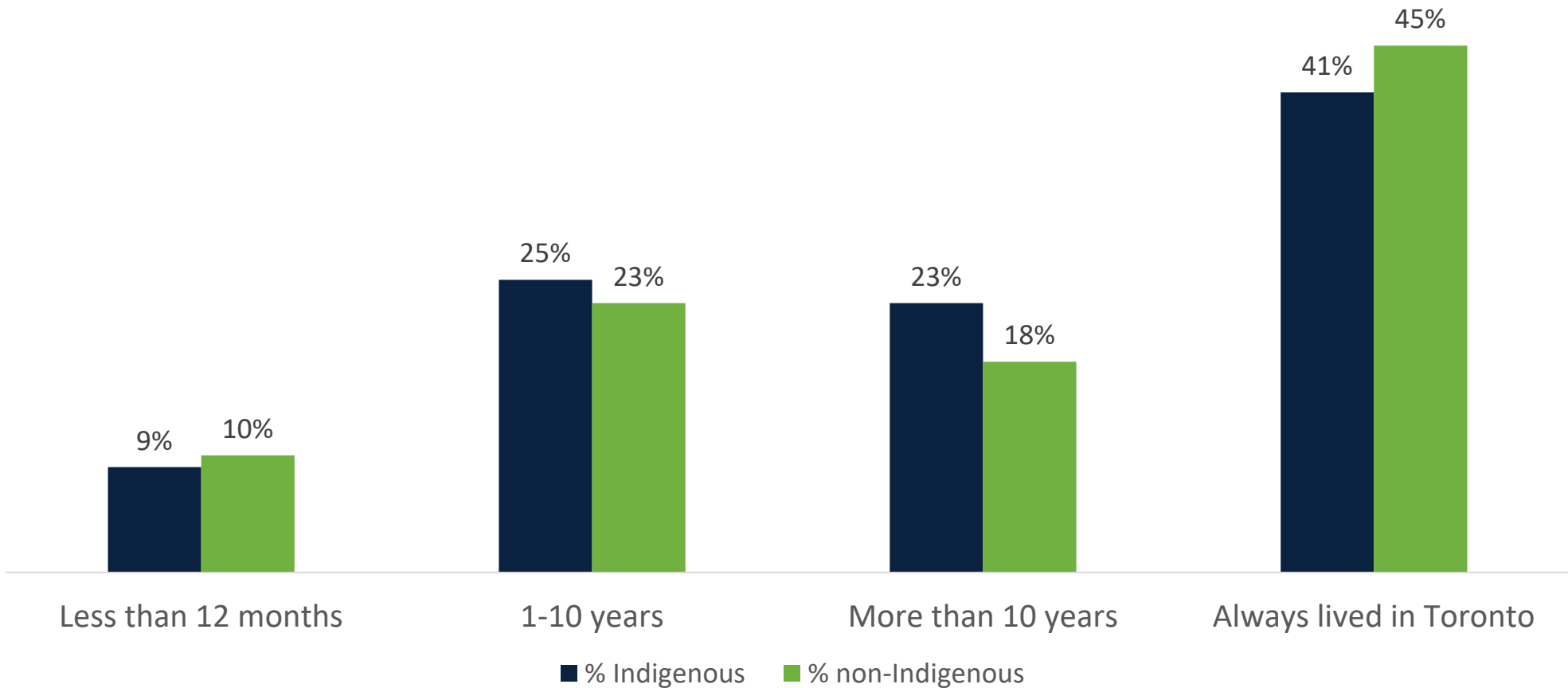
More than half of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness moved between indoor and outdoor locations in the past year



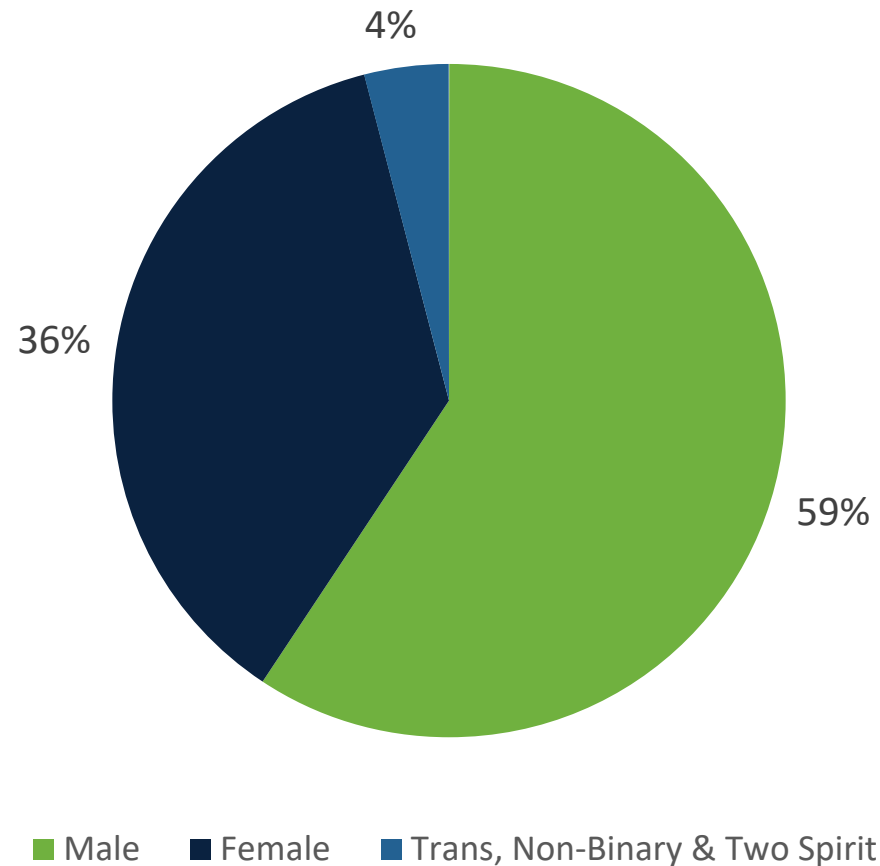
Indigenous people experiencing homelessness were younger on average



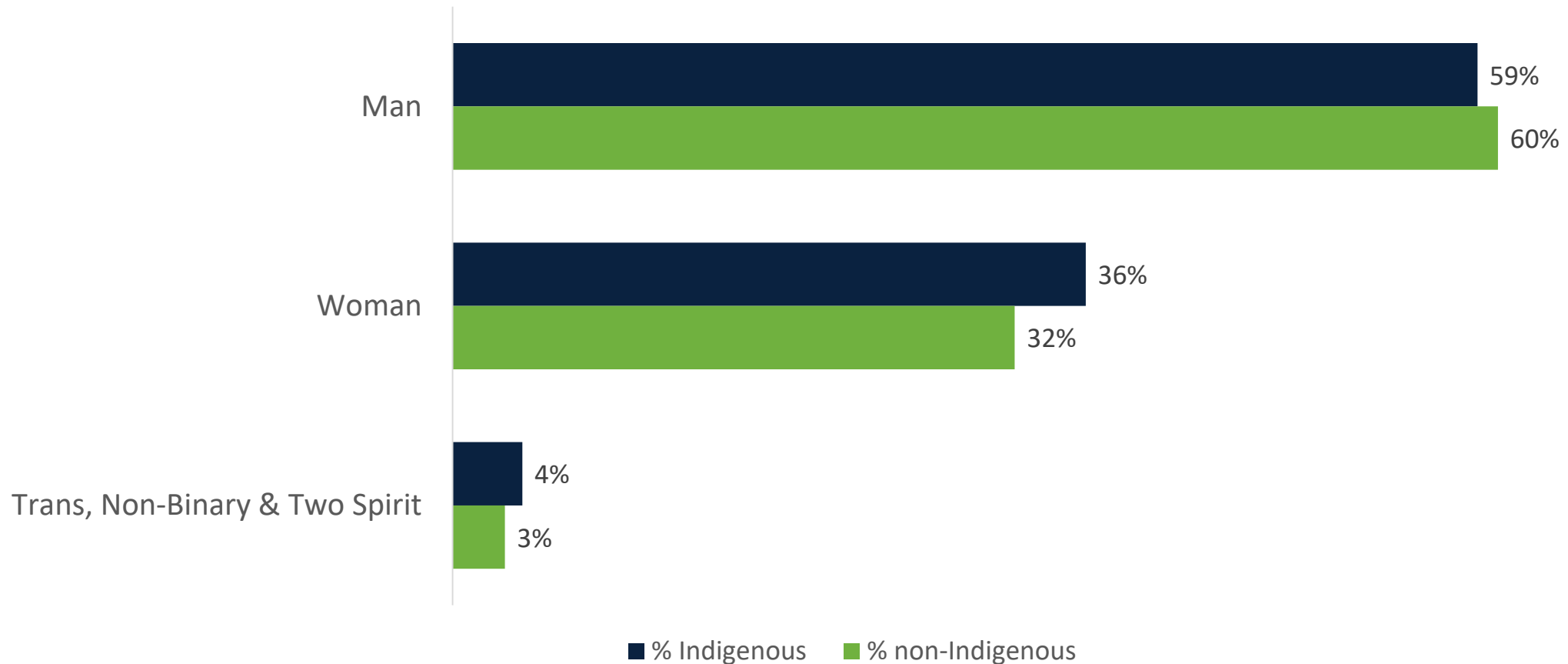
Over 40% of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness have always lived in Toronto



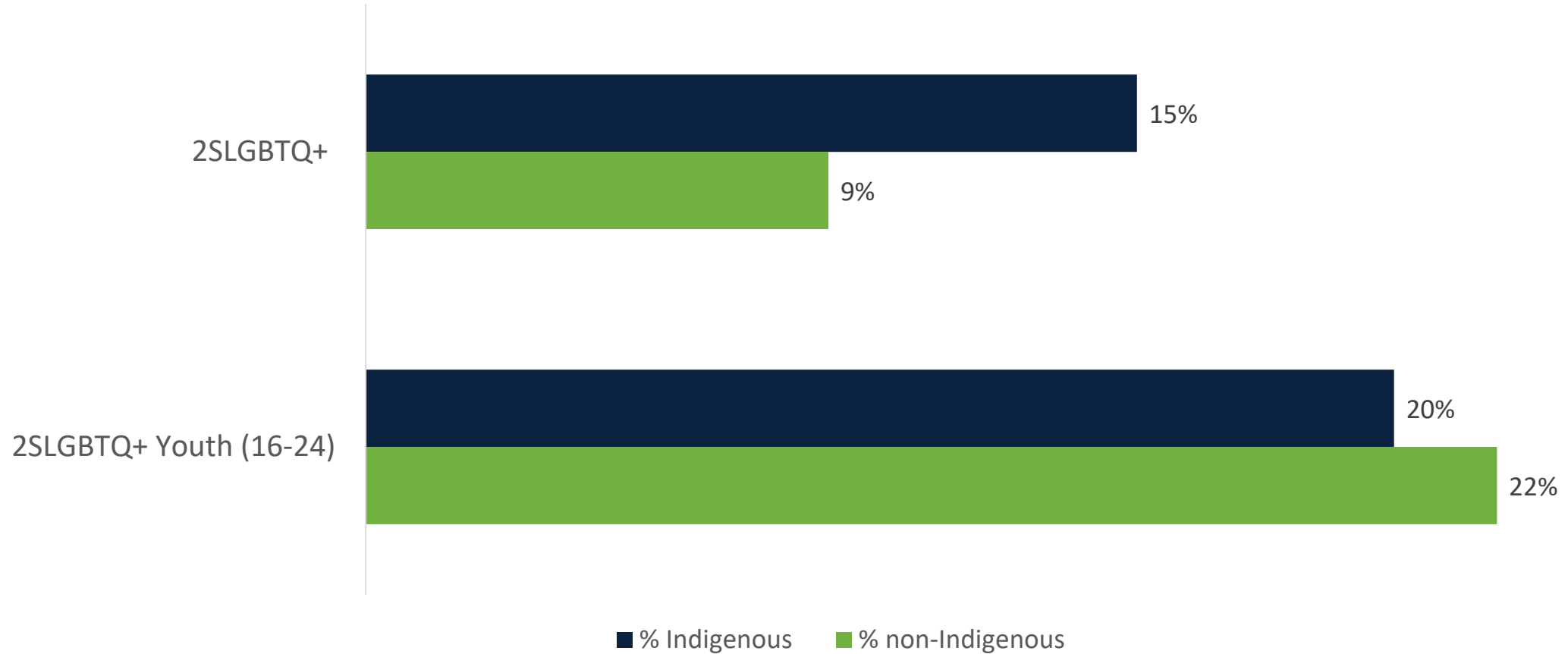
Indigenous men represent the largest share of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness



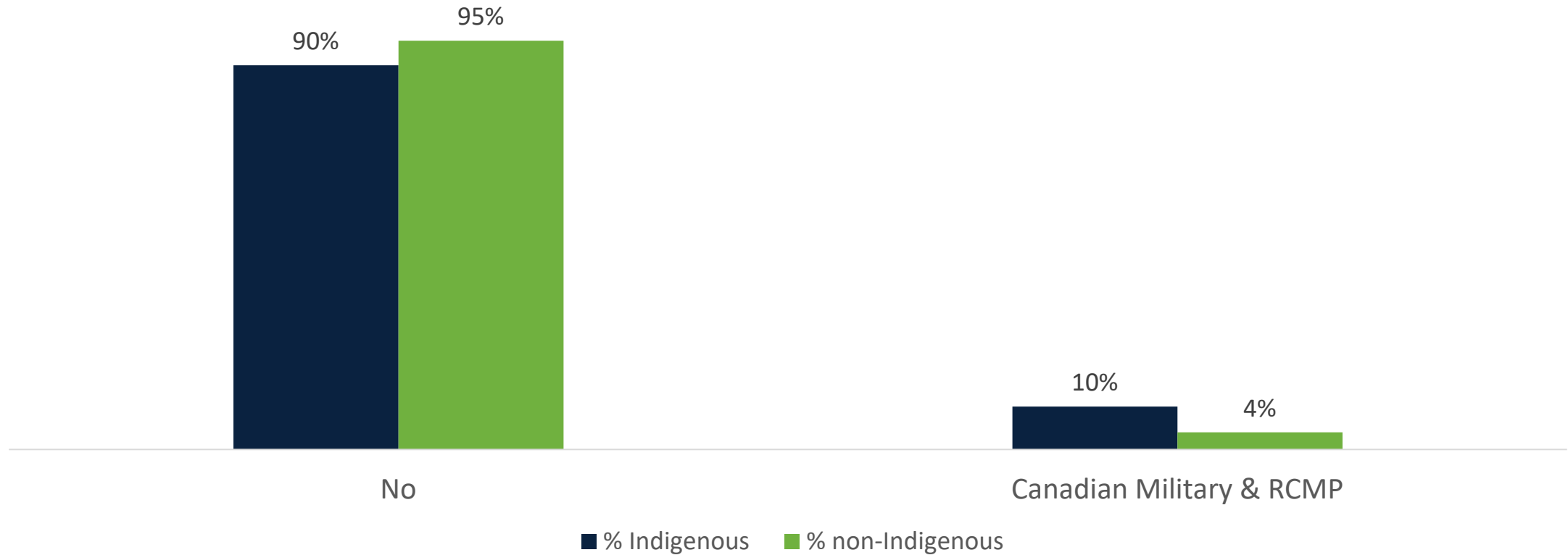
Indigenous women represent a greater share of people experiencing homelessness compared to non-Indigenous women



15% of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness (and 20% of Indigenous youth) identified as 2SLGBTQ+



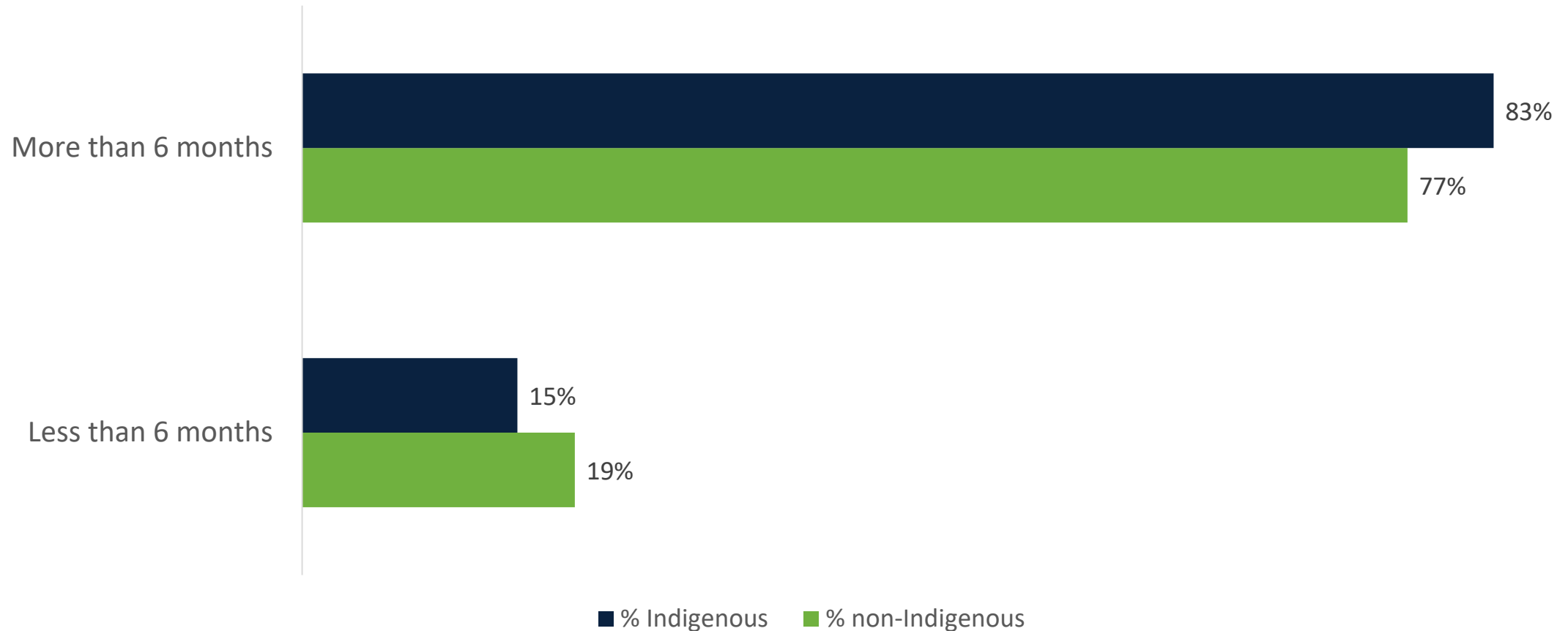
Indigenous people experiencing homelessness were more likely to be veterans of the Canadian military & RCMP



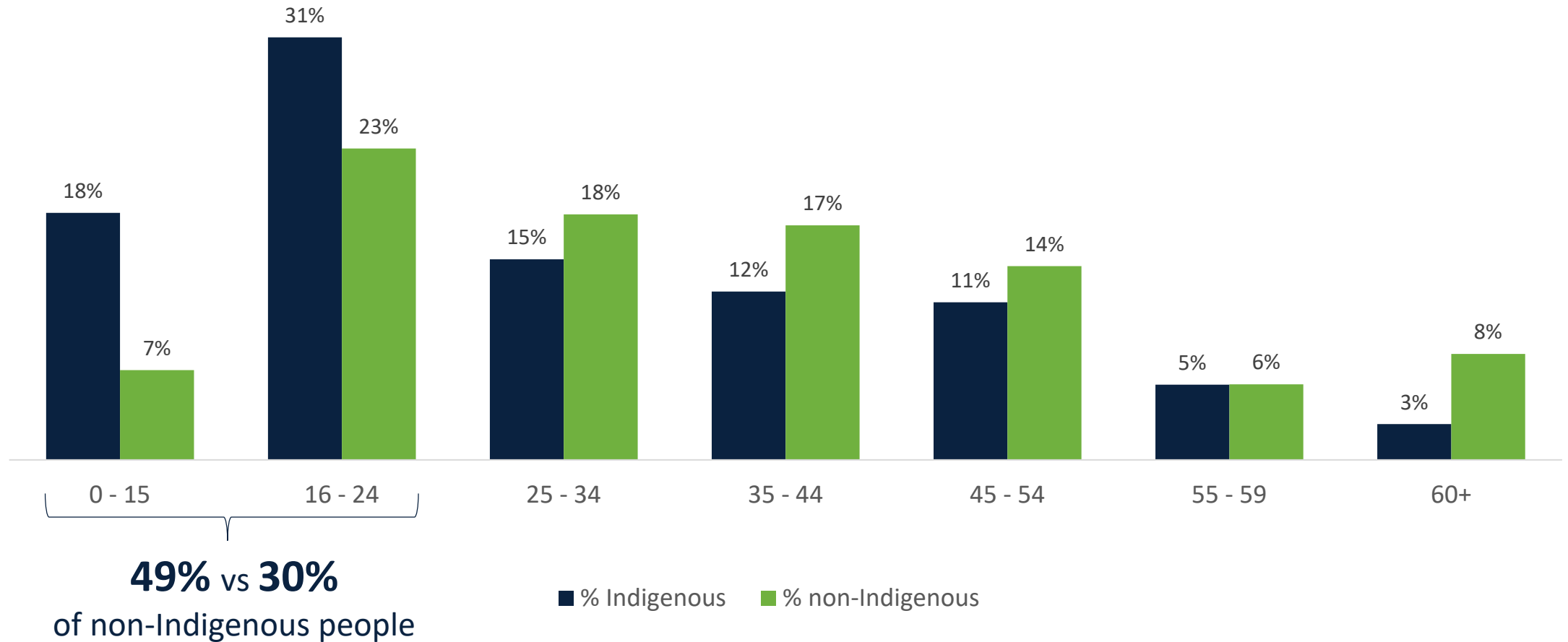


Homeless History of Indigenous People Experiencing Homelessness

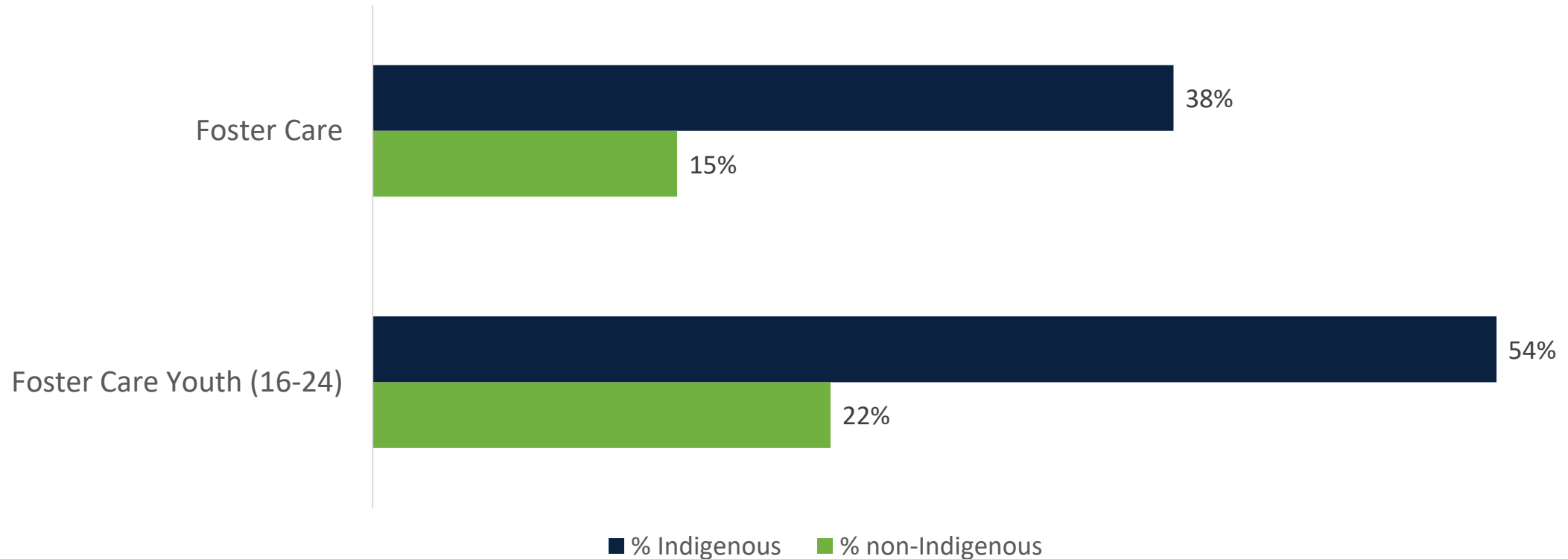
Indigenous people were more likely to experience chronic homelessness compared to non-Indigenous people



Half of Indigenous people first experienced homelessness as children/youth



More than one-third of Indigenous people (and half of youth) experiencing homelessness had foster care experience

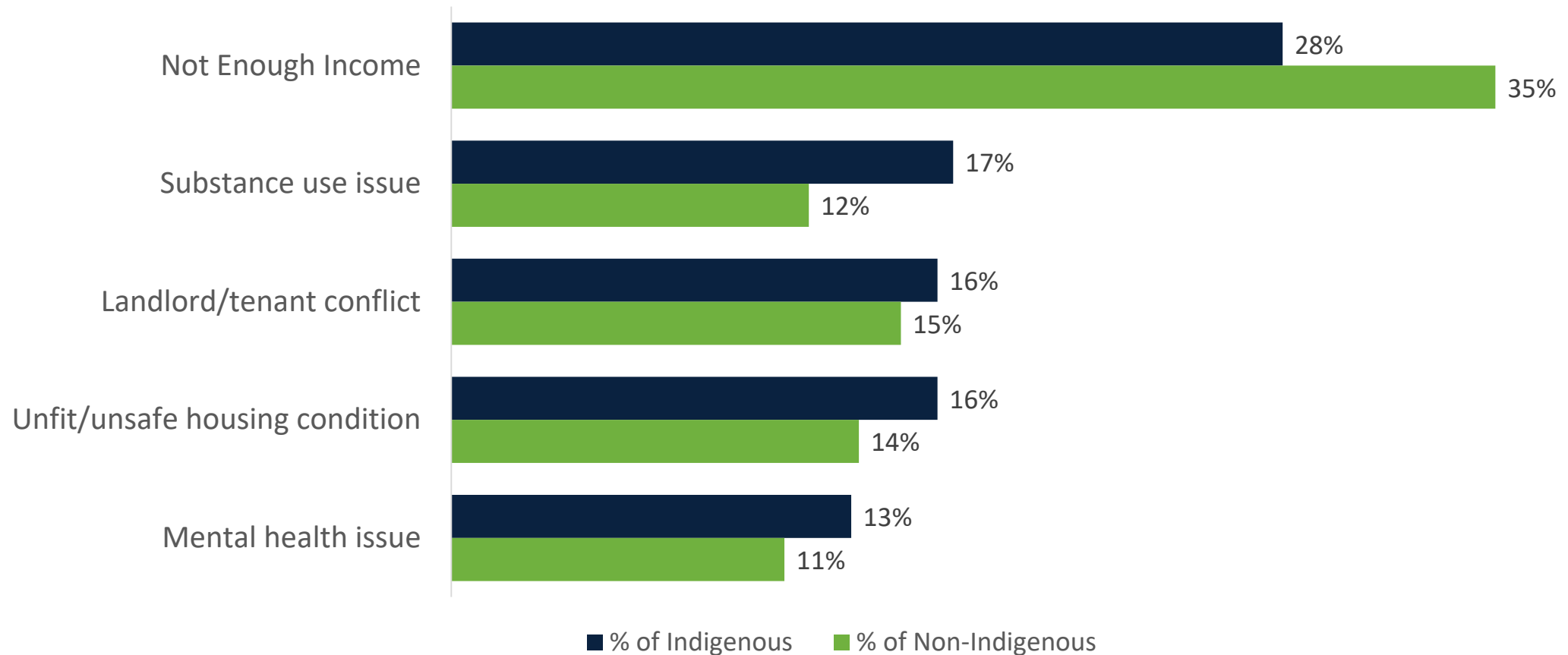


*Foster care, kin care and/or youth group home

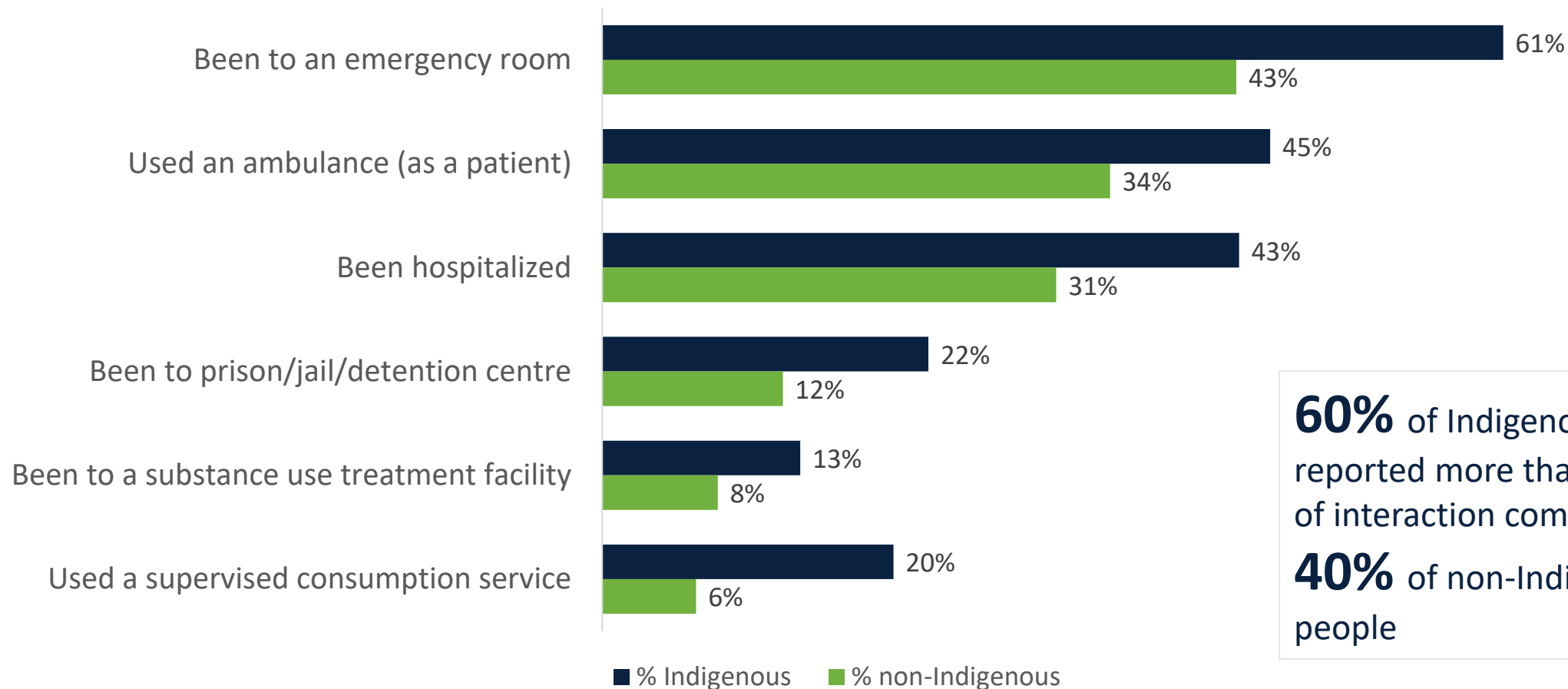


Service Needs of Indigenous People Experiencing Homelessness

Not enough income was the primary reason for housing loss reported by Indigenous people

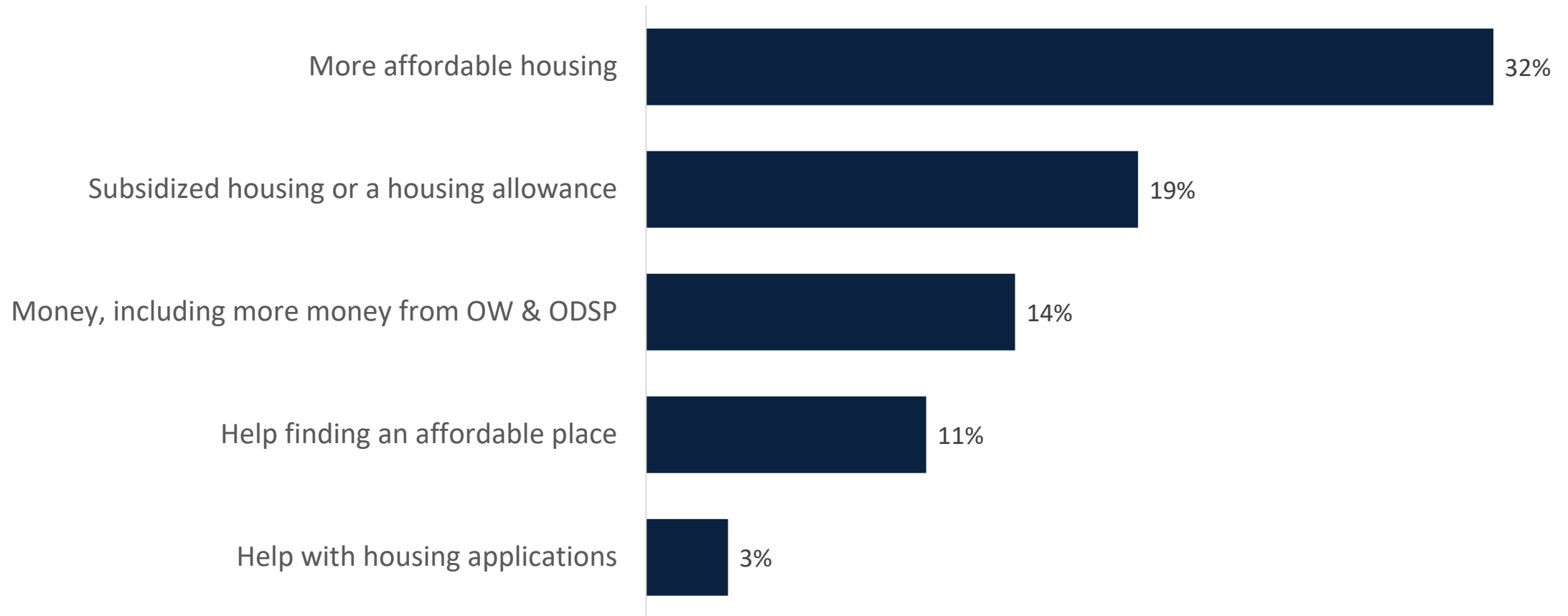


Indigenous people experiencing homelessness were more likely to interact with health care and criminal justice systems



60% of Indigenous people reported more than one type of interaction compared with **40%** of non-Indigenous people

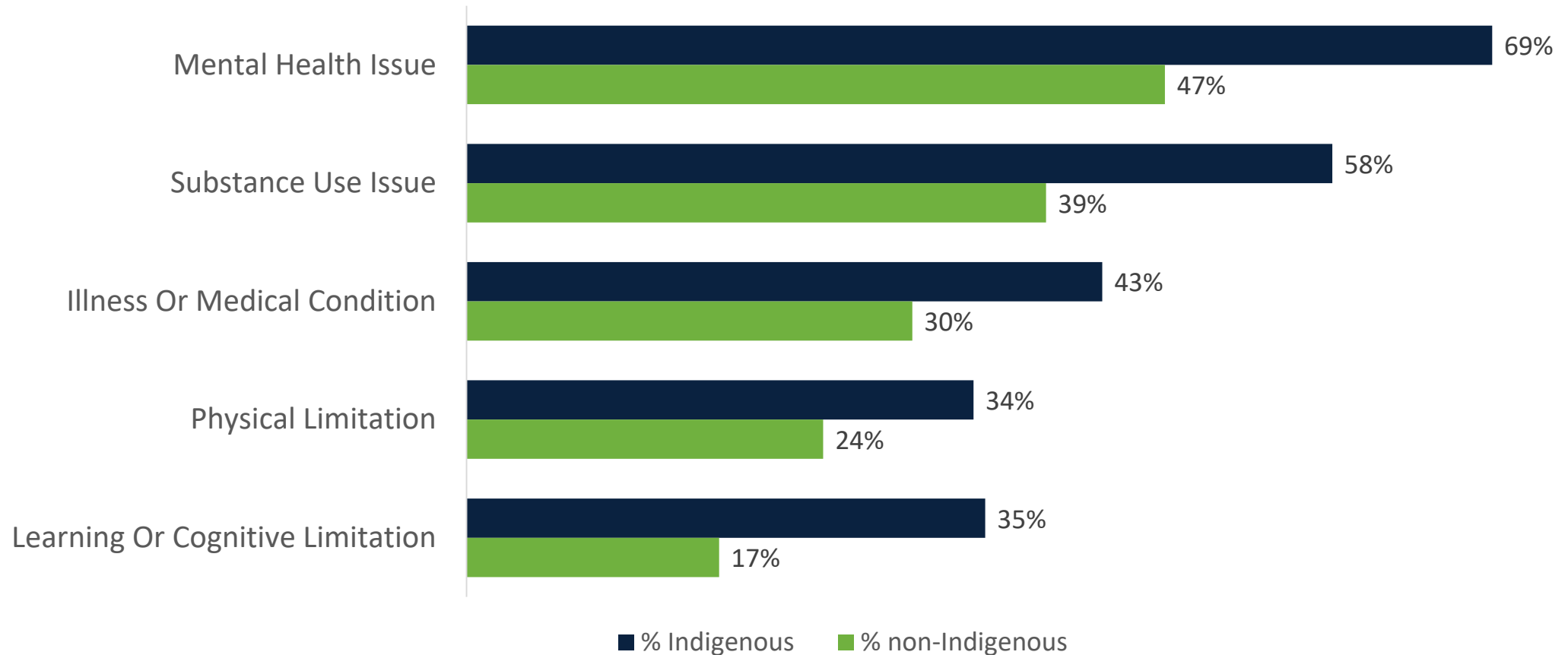
Increasing income and housing affordability were identified as the most important services to help find housing



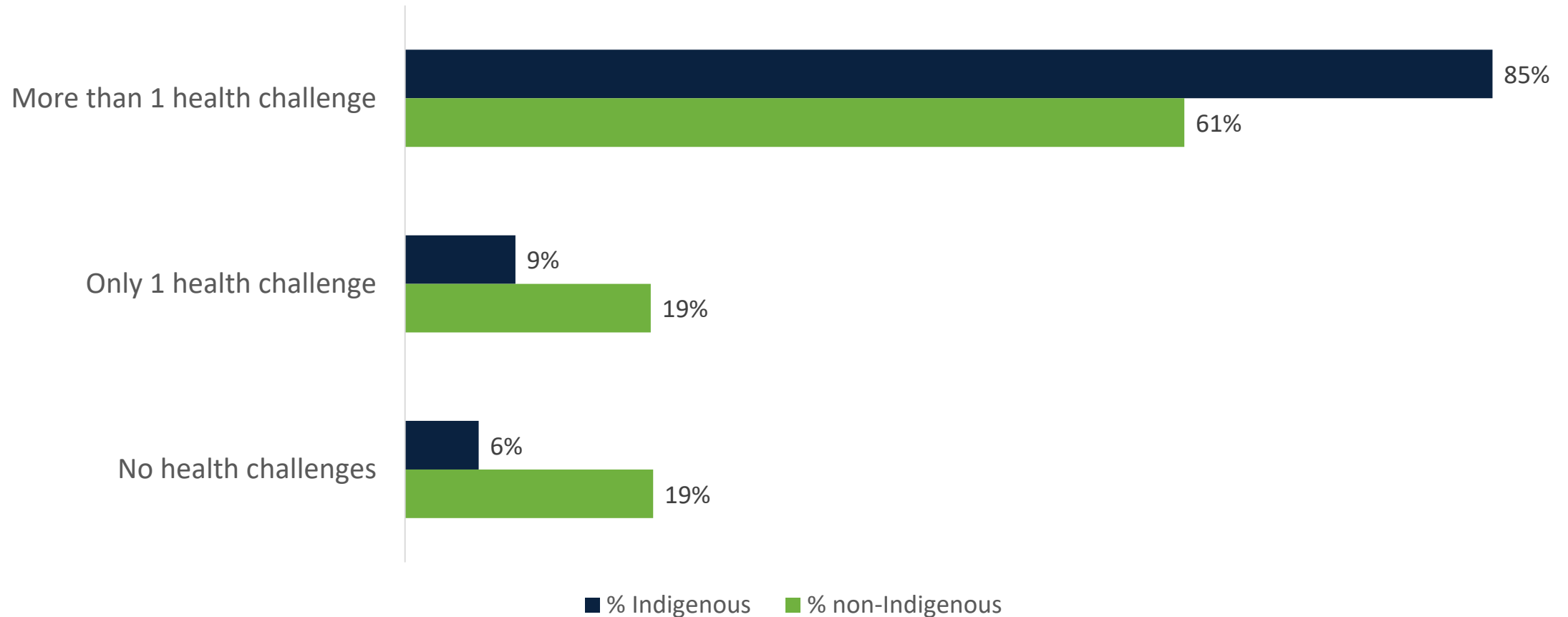


Health Challenges and Needs of Indigenous People Experiencing Homelessness

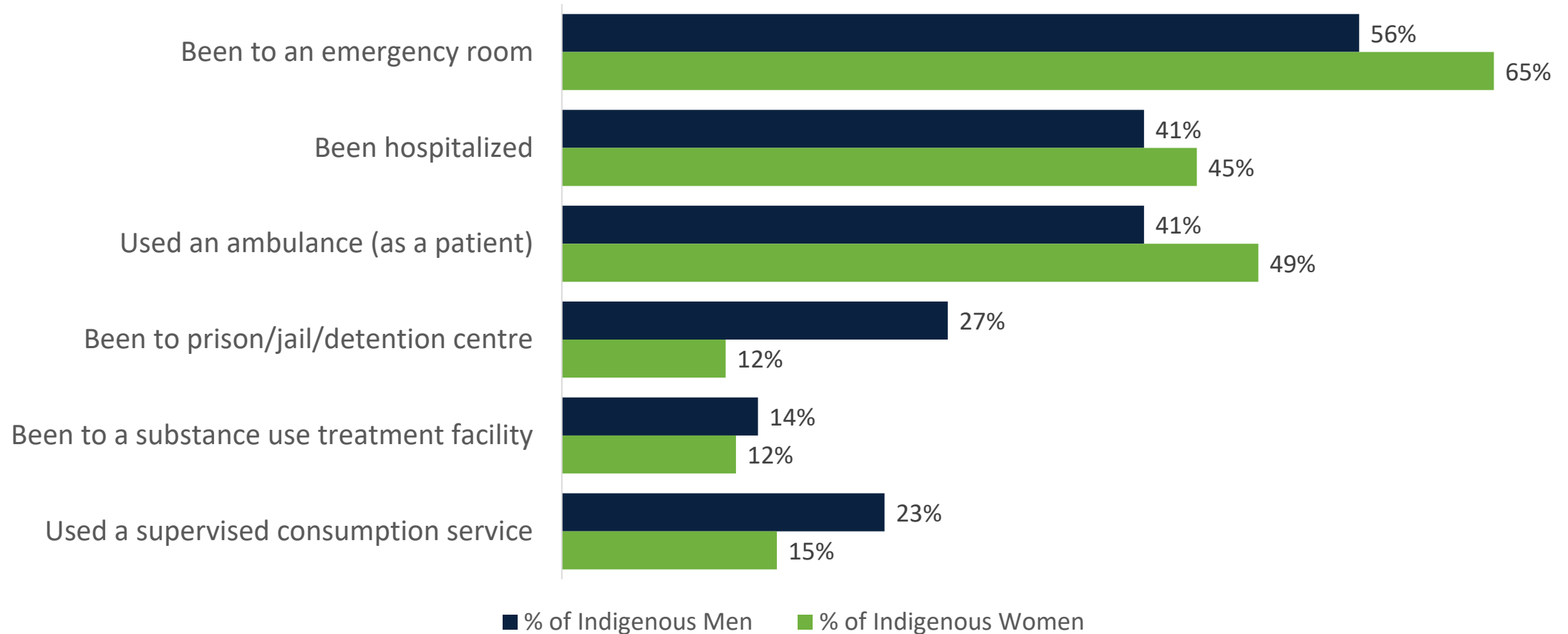
Nearly 70% of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness reported having mental health challenges



Indigenous people experiencing homelessness were much more likely to experience multiple health challenges

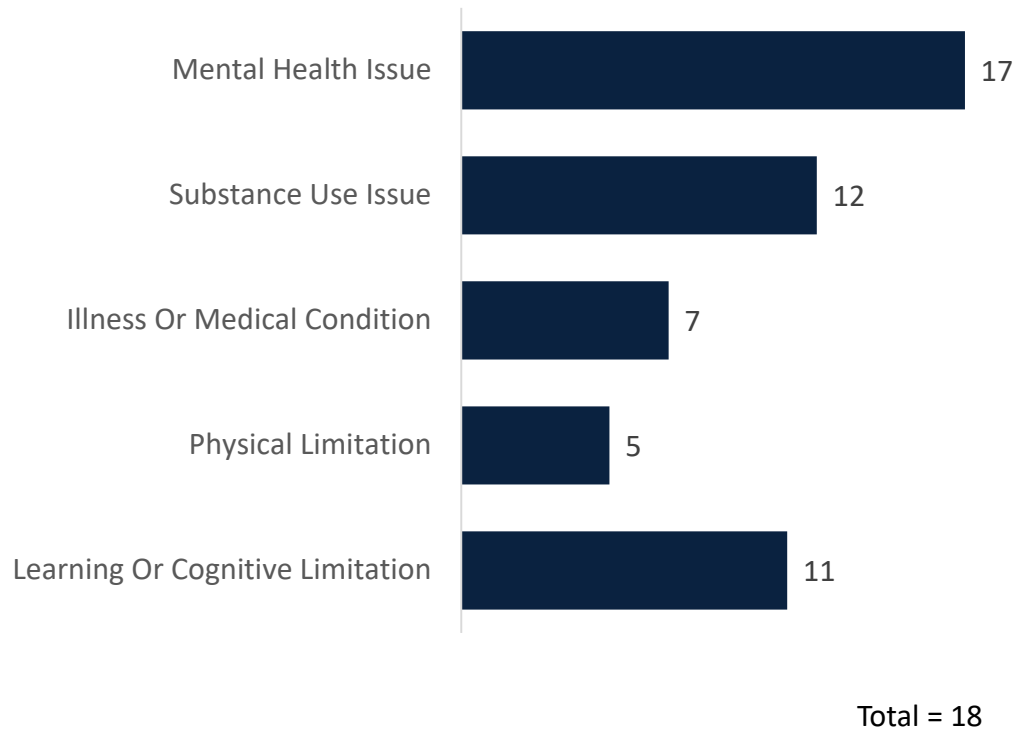


Indigenous women experiencing homelessness reported higher rates of interaction with the health care system

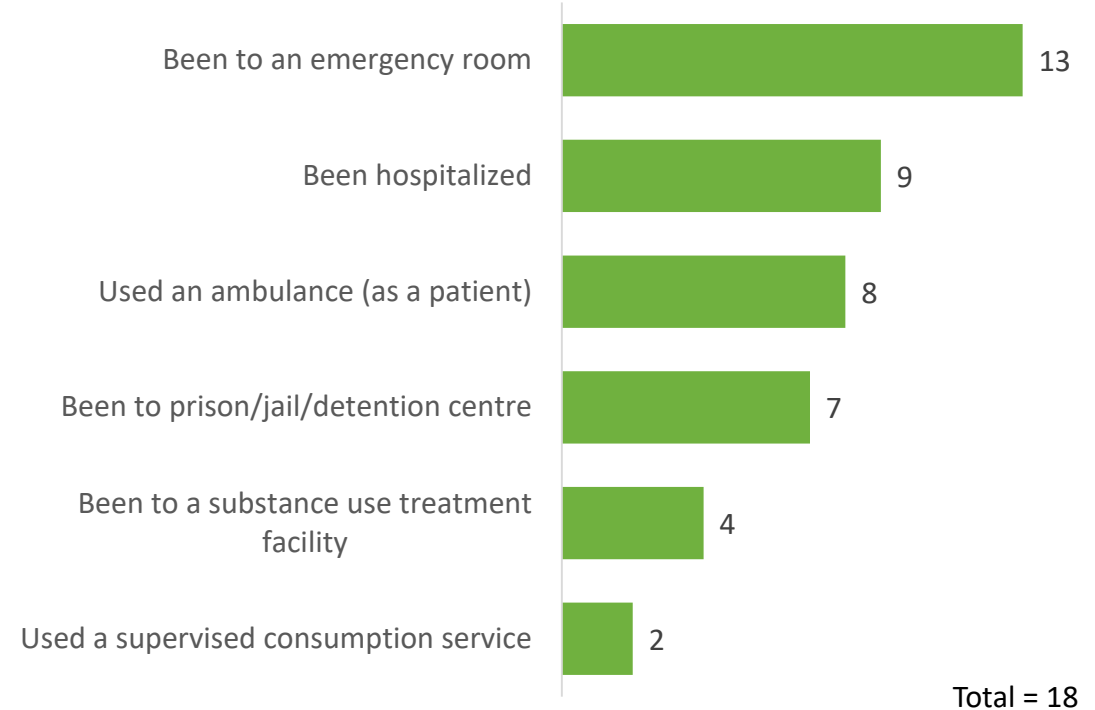


Most Indigenous Trans, Non-Binary and Two Spirit people reported mental health challenges and interactions with the health care system

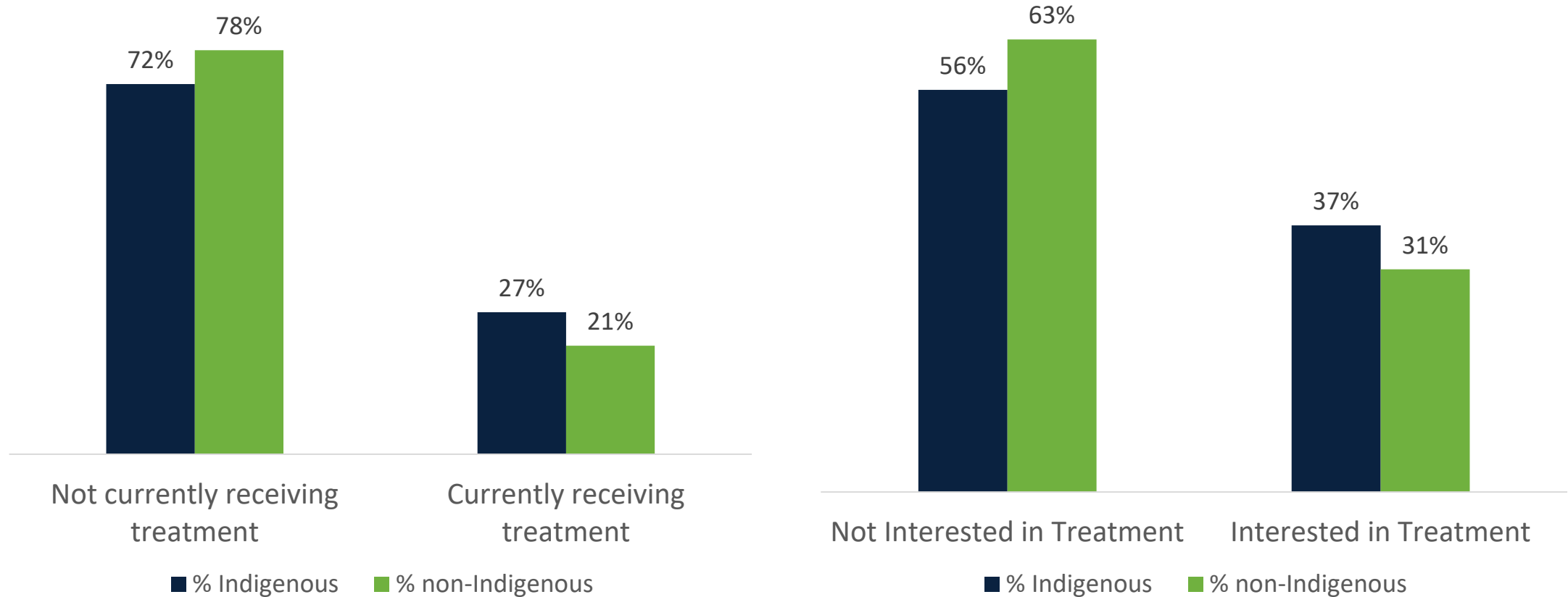
Health challenges, Indigenous Trans, Non Binary & Two Spirit People (Number)



Interactions with Health Care and Criminal Justice Systems, Indigenous Trans, Non Binary & Two Spirit People (Number)



Indigenous people are experiencing gaps in access to treatment for alcohol or drug use



SNA Limitations

- Definition of homelessness used for purposes of the SNA does not adequately capture the multi-dimensional nature of Indigenous homelessness captured in the [Definition of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada](#)
- Using this broader and culturally-based definition would likely result in an even greater overrepresentation of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness
- Hidden homelessness is not included – Indigenous women's organizations have noted that this definition underrepresents the extent of homelessness among Indigenous women, non-binary individuals, and Indigenous families which is largely hidden
- Indigenous partners have expressed concern that counts of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness staying in provincial institutions (such as correctional facilities) are under-represented, suggesting an even greater magnitude of Indigenous homelessness in Toronto

For More Information

