



# Measuring Trauma Among Near-Homeless, Substance-using Women

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## Background

- Experiencing trauma, such as sexual, physical and emotional abuse, separation and grief of loss, and/or community and intimate partner violence, has lasting impacts, and puts individuals at greater risk to experience poor health and sub-optimal life outcomes.
- Data as reported in this study are required to understand and promote health prevention education. Holistic approaches considering physical and psychological factors, and social contexts, are best simultaneously considered to address, and improve the well-being of individuals facing challenging life situations. We herein assessed *traumatic experiences* among women (N=851) with substance use issues.

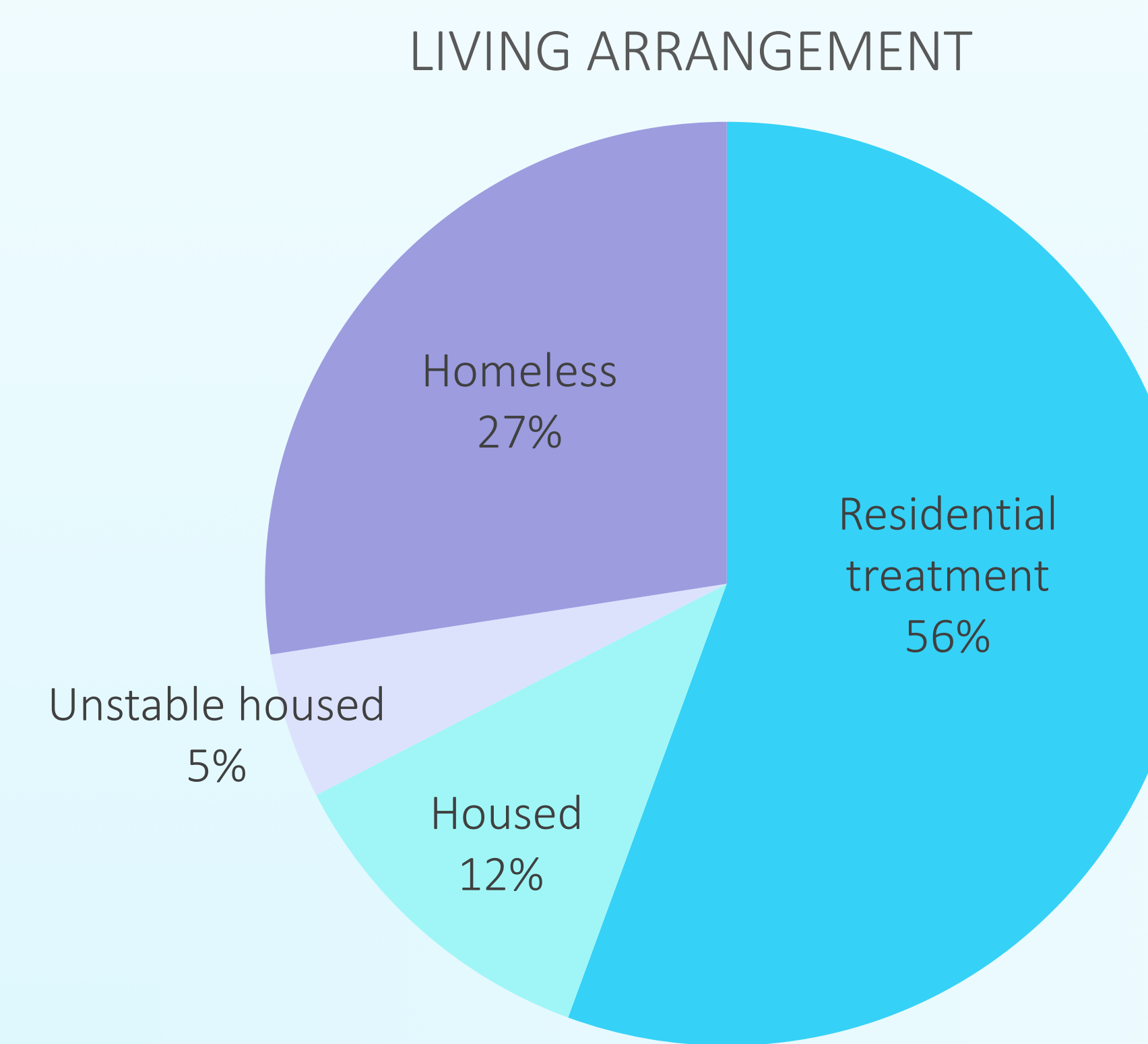
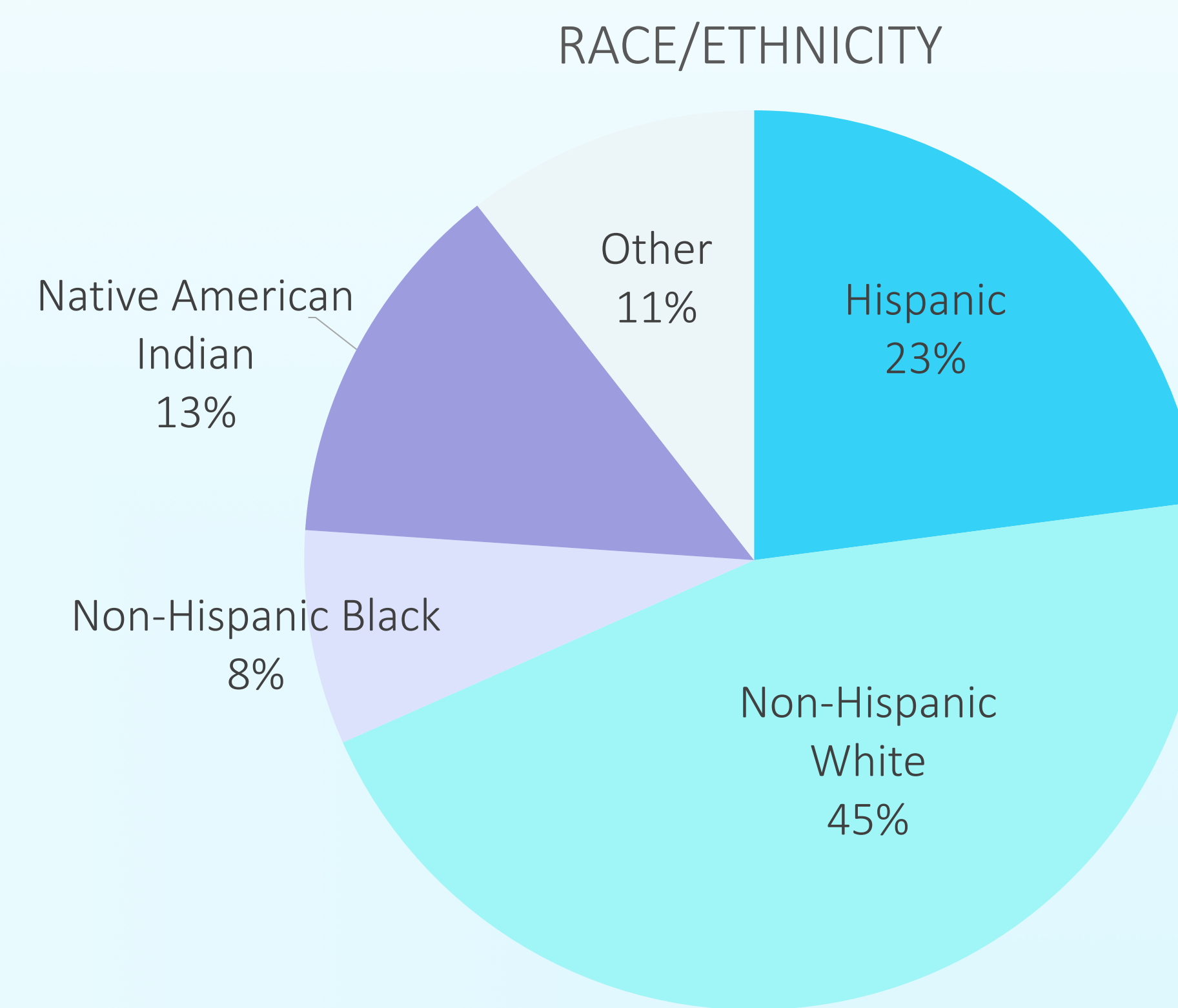
## Methods

- We analyzed *Mujer Sana – Healthy Women\** project baseline data. These data were collected prior to implementing and evaluating a curriculum that provided information about reproductive anatomy, HIV, sexually transmitted diseases, hepatitis B and C, tuberculosis, birth control methods and relationship skills among substance using women. Data were gathered by interviewing women about drug use, mental health, family and socioeconomic status, trauma and environmental stressors, and health behaviors at the time of entry into drug treatment, using the **Comprehensive Assessment for Drug Involved Women (CADIW)**<sup>1</sup>. Total study enrollment n=851; 05/2003-09/2007. At the time of the interview participants were either receiving drug treatment or were not-in-treatment, but currently using substances.
- Eligibility Criteria:** (1) Sex/Gender identity: female/women, (2) 18 years and older at the time of enrollment to the project (3) receiving drug treatment from *Amity's Circle Tree Ranch*, *CODAC's Las Amigas*, or *The Haven residential treatment facilities* in Tucson, or (4) not-in-treatment but currently using drugs and alcohol.
- Survey methodology:** We measured **trauma** with the Grief, Loss and Environmental Stress inventory (GLES), that facilitates assessing single and/or complex-multiple trauma experiences in childhood up to the time of the interview. The GLES inventory (43 items) facilitates a comprehensive picture of experienced trauma, because it measures the negative impact of a traumatic event on a person's feelings and quantifies how often the trauma was experienced.

## Acknowledgments

\**Mujer Sana* was funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (Grant # H79 TI 14452; PI: R. Andrade). The views expressed here are the authors and do not necessarily represent the official policies of SAMHSA; nor does mention of trade names, commercial practices, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

## Participants



Overall, the sample reflects a vulnerable, female population of low socioeconomic status, i.e. low levels of education, low occupation rate, and high poverty rate. All women were current alcohol or drug users. Women were between 18 – 69 years (mean=32 years).<sup>2</sup>

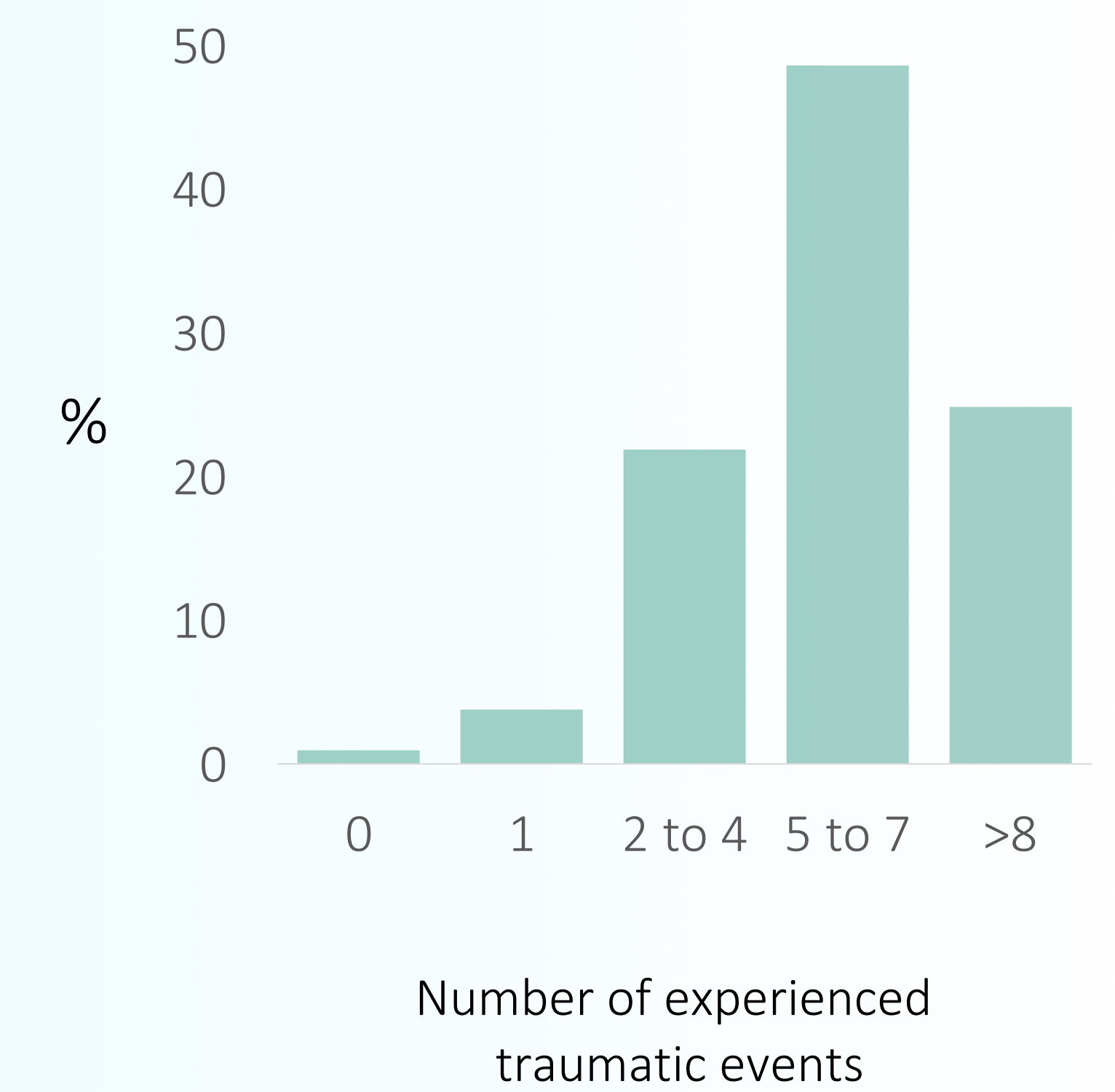
## Traumatic Events

<i>10 most commonly experienced types of trauma and stress</i>	<i>% experienced during live time</i>	<i>% experienced during 90 days prior to interview</i>	<i>How upset? 5=extremely 1=not at all</i>
Got in trouble with the law	82.6	37.7	4.31
Didn't have a stable place to live	71.3	52.2	4.53
Feared that someone might physically hurt you	67.1	46.4	4.47
Being raped	54.1	6.7	4.85
Feared that someone might make sexual advances towards you	53.1	40.1	4.19
Thought about hurting or killing yourself	52.2	37.8	4.31
Separated from a parent	51.9	0.9	3.75
Had a serious accident or illness	49.7	21.3	4.48
Friends died violently	49.2	7.9	4.68
Your husband/significant other left you	49.0	17.5	4.51

## References

- Comprehensive Assessment for Drug Involved Women (CADIW). *Mujer Sana – Healthy Woman*. (2005).
- Korchmaros J., Stevens S., Andrade R. (2008). *Mujer Sana – Healthy Woman*. Final Progress Report.

## Summed up Traumatic Events



## Conclusions/Implications

- The majority of the interviewed women experienced trauma, grief and loss during their lifetime and during the 90 days prior to the interview.
- Women experienced several types of traumatic experience, ranging from:
  - sexual and physical abuse*
  - serious accidents and illnesses*
  - community violence and system-induced trauma*
  - disasters*
  - forced displacement*
  - traumatic grief through separation and loss*
- 49% experienced five to seven, and 25% have been exposed to eight or more traumatic events and environmental stressors throughout their lifetime. Less than 1% didn't experience any of the 10 environmental stressors.
- Traumatic events were commonly experienced by participants of all racial/ethnic groups.