



BREAKING BARRIERS: SUPPORTING NEWCOMER (WOMEN AND NON- BINARY) SURVIVORS OF GENDER- BASED VIOLENCE REPORT

Prepared for:
The Multicultural Women's Organization of NL

Prepared by:
Mary Oyeneyin

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Multicultural Women's Organization of Newfoundland and Labrador (MWONL) serves immigrant, newcomer, and culturally and linguistically diverse women/those who identify as women through a wide variety of supportive and culturally appropriate programs and services that facilitate connection, belonging, and participation in the community.

This report summarizes the findings of the public survey distributed to community members from September 16, 2024 to October 10, 2024, and collected a total of 158 responses.



This report addresses the needs and challenges faced by newcomer women and non-binary individuals experiencing gender-based violence (GBV). The report highlights significant barriers to accessing support services, including legal, cultural, and immigration status obstacles. The key findings emphasize the need for specialized resources such as legal advocacy, enhanced public awareness campaigns, and cultural competency training programs.

Key Terms

Gender-Based Violence (GBV)	Violence directed against a person based on their gender or gender identity. This includes physical, emotional, and financial abuse, as well as discrimination.
Newcomer	An individual who has been in Canada for less than five years. The term is inclusive of various categories of recent arrivals to Canada including Immigrants, Refugees, Protected persons, Permanent residents, and in some cases, asylum-seekers and international students .
Non-Binary	An umbrella term for gender identities that fall outside the traditional binary of male and female.
Emotional or Psychological Abuse	Emotional or psychological abuse is a pattern of controlling, manipulative, or harmful behaviors that undermine an individual's emotional well-being and sense of self-worth without physical violence.

KEY FINDINGS

Our survey collected responses from 158 participants across St. John's, Gander, Corner Brook, and Grand Falls Windsor.



Awareness and Utilization of Resources

- 67% of respondents are aware of local GBV resources, while 33% are unsure or unaware.
- 47% have personal or second-hand experience seeking help for GBV.
- Legal assistance (51%) is the most sought-after form of help, followed by support from friends/family (22%) and counseling/therapy (16%).
- Counseling services and support groups (39%) are perceived as the most crucial resources for GBV survivors.



Barriers to accessing support

- 11% faced discrimination due to newcomer/immigrant status when seeking GBV support.
- Fear of deportation (34%) and lack of trust in authorities (34%) are the most significant barriers.
- Cultural/religious beliefs (37%) and language barriers (17%) also pose substantial challenges.



Cultural and Community Influences

The report examines how cultural factors impact GBV experiences and help-seeking behaviors among immigrant populations.

- Communities play a complex role, with 35% providing emotional support but 22% discouraging reporting to authorities.
- 42% cite fear of judgment as a barrier to seeking help or disclosing GBV experiences.
- Only 3% report that their cultural norms facilitate open discussions about GBV.



Suggestions for Improvement

- 63% recommend offering more legal support for immigrant and newcomer women.
- 38% suggest partnering with trusted community organizations serving immigrants and refugees.
- 23% advocate for creating programs addressing specific challenges of immigrant, refugee, and newcomer women.
- 22% emphasize the importance of including diverse cultural backgrounds in staff and leadership.

Recommendations



SPECIALIZED LEGAL AID SERVICES

Establish dedicated legal aid services tailored specifically for newcomer survivors of gender-based violence (GBV).



CULTURAL COMPETENCY TRAINING

Implement comprehensive cultural competency training programs for all staff and organizations involved in GBV support services.



ENHANCED PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

Develop and launch robust public awareness initiatives to educate the community about GBV.



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Establish strong partnerships with trusted community organizations and leaders serving newcomers.

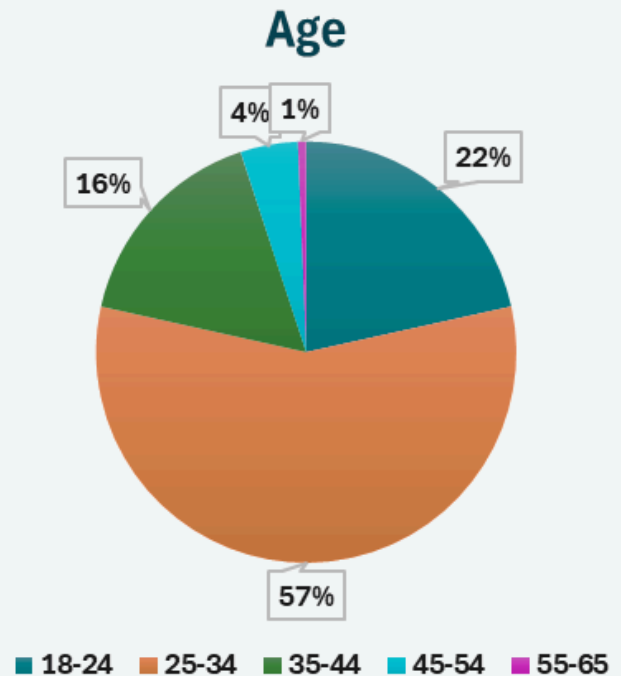
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Our survey collected responses from 158 participants across St. John's, Gander, Corner Brook, and Grand Falls Windsor.

Below is a summary of key demographic characteristics of our sample.

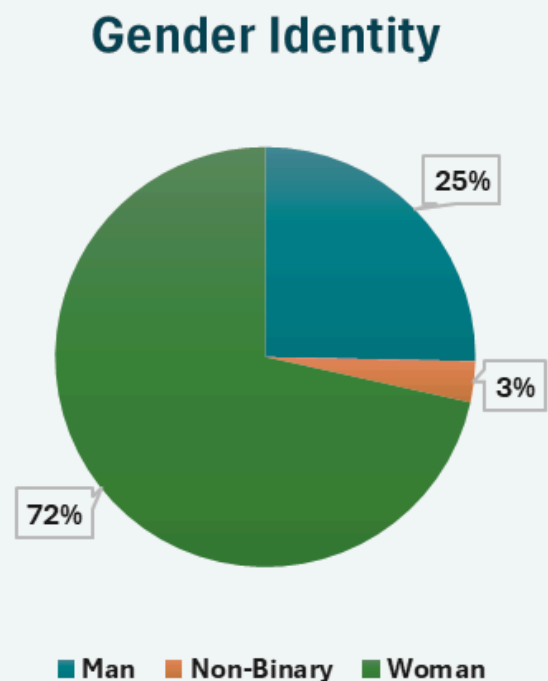
Age Distribution

The majority of respondents (57%) were between 25-34 years old, with the second largest group (22%) in the 18-24 age range.



Gender Identity Distribution

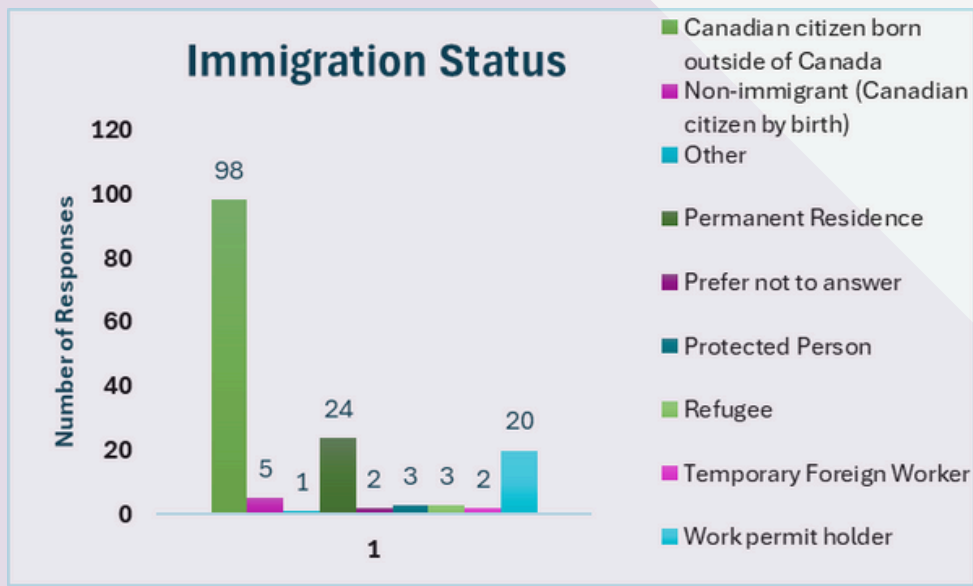
The majority (72%) of respondents self-identified as woman, followed by men (25%) and non-binary (3%). This aligns closely with our target demographic of women-identifying individuals. However, the survey was not able to garner a significant number of responses from non-binary individuals. For further surveys, efforts to target this group is crucial.





Immigration Status

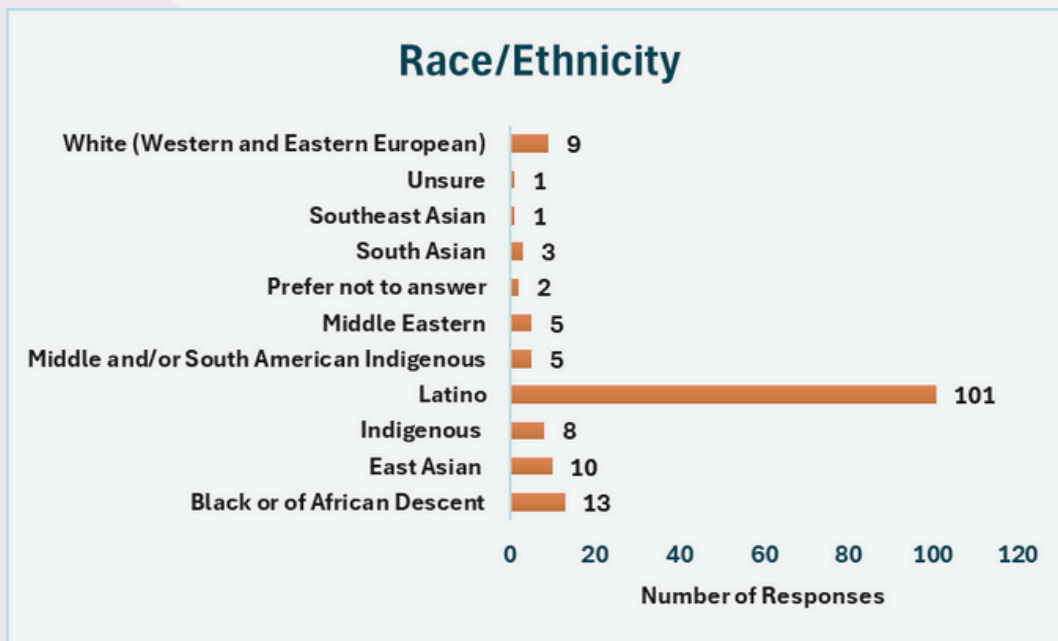
Survey respondents were asked to disclose their immigration status. It was important to collect this information as immigrant and newcomer individuals were our target audience. It is important to note that Immigrants include those who live in Canada permanently and have obtained Canadian citizenship by naturalization. A large portion (62%) of respondents were naturalized Canadian citizens who were born outside of Canada. The second largest category (15%) of respondents were Permanent Residents.





Race and Ethnicity Distribution

In analyzing the demographic composition of our survey respondents, we observed a notably higher participation rate from Latino individuals (64%). While this higher response rate offers valuable insights, it's important to note that results may not be fully generalizable to the broader population and there is potential for overemphasis on Latino viewpoints in overall conclusions.



Summary

The inclusion of demographic information and percentages related to GBV experiences indicates a data-driven approach. This quantitative analysis is essential for gaining a high level understanding of the participants in the survey and sets the tone for acknowledging the intersectionality of challenges faced by this population. It recognizes that immigration status, gender identity, and experiences of violence create a unique set of obstacles that require tailored solutions.

EXPERIENCE WITH GBV

This section of the survey report focuses on respondents' personal experiences and awareness of gender-based violence (GBV) in their social circles, the specific types of GBV experienced, confidence in recognizing GBV, and factors affecting GBV experiences.

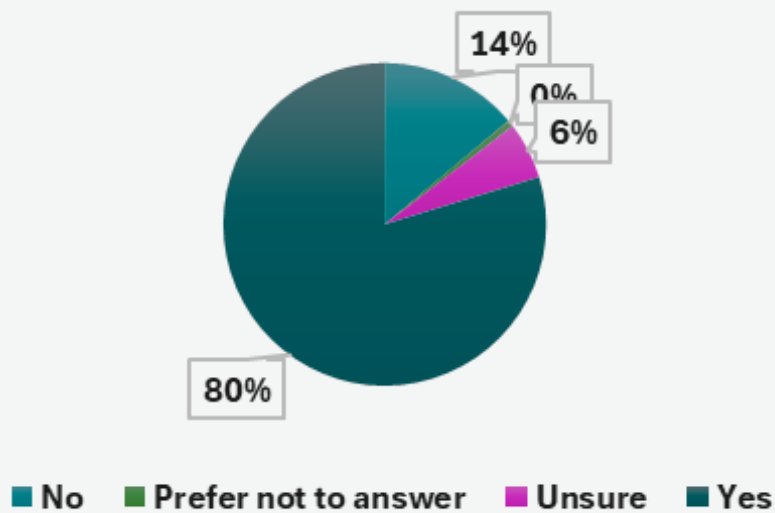




Experience of (GBV)

Our survey results indicate that 80% of respondents reported personally experiencing gender-based violence. This finding reveals the frequency of GBV in our community and highlights the urgent need for intervention and support services.

Have you experienced GBV?





Types of Gender-Based Violence Experienced

The survey reveals that physical abuse was the most commonly reported form of GBV at 76%, followed by emotional or psychological abuse at 17%. The high prevalence of physical forms of abuse, highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to GBV prevention and support that addresses all forms of violence.

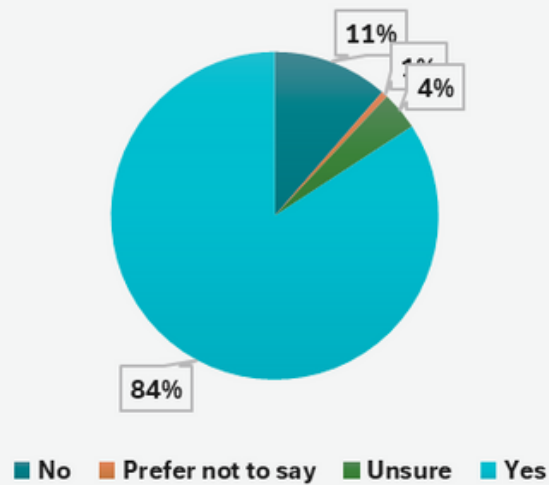




Awareness of GBV

A significant 84% of respondents reported knowing someone who has experienced gender-based violence. This high percentage suggests that GBV has a wide-reaching impact, affecting not only direct victims but also their friends, family, and acquaintances.

Has someone you know experienced GBV?

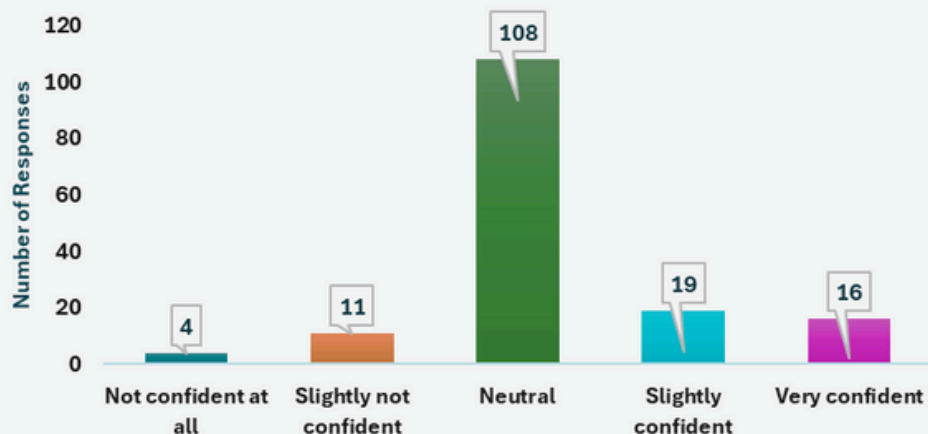




Confidence in Recognizing GBV

The survey reveals that 12% of respondents feel slightly confident in their ability to recognize gender-based violence, with only 10% feeling very confident. However, a significant 68% of respondents feel neutral in recognizing GBV. This highlights the need for increased education and awareness sessions to improve the community's ability to identify and respond to GBV. It's important that people are able to confidently recognize cases of GBV, so they're able to report to local authorities.

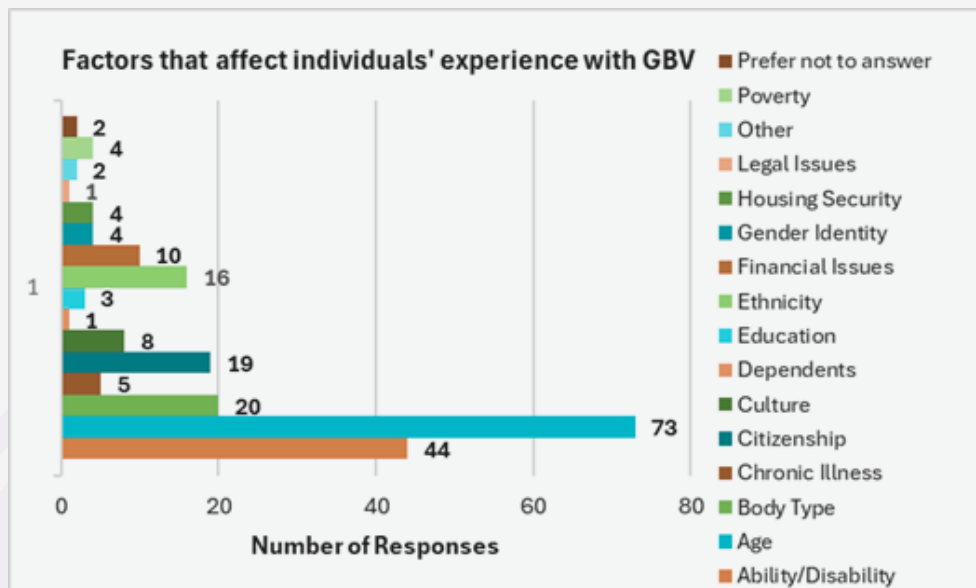
How confident are you in your ability to recognize gender-based violence?





Factors Affecting Experiences of Gender-Based Violence

The data indicates that multiple intersecting factors influence GBV experiences. Age was reported as the most common factor affecting GBV experiences at 34%, followed by Ability/Disability at 20%. This emphasizes the complex nature of GBV and the need for intersectional approaches in prevention and support strategies.



BARRIERS & CHALLENGES

This section examines the obstacles faced by victims and witnesses of gender-based violence (GBV) when seeking support and accessing services. It particularly highlights the unique challenges encountered by newcomers, as well as general barriers that hinder help-seeking behaviors.

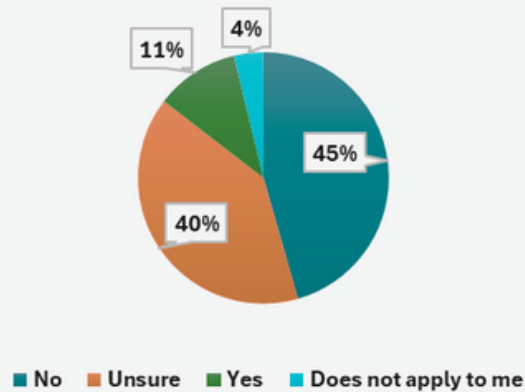


Discrimination and Bias in Seeking Support for Newcomers

- 11% of respondents reported experiencing discrimination or bias due to their newcomer status.
- 40% were unsure if they had faced discrimination, suggesting lack of clarity on what discrimination is and difficulty identifying discriminatory behavior.
- 45% reported not experiencing discrimination, which is encouraging.

A combined total of those who faced discrimination or were unsure is 51%, indicating a significant issue that needs addressing. The experiences of those facing bias cannot be overlooked, highlighting the need for attention to this issue.

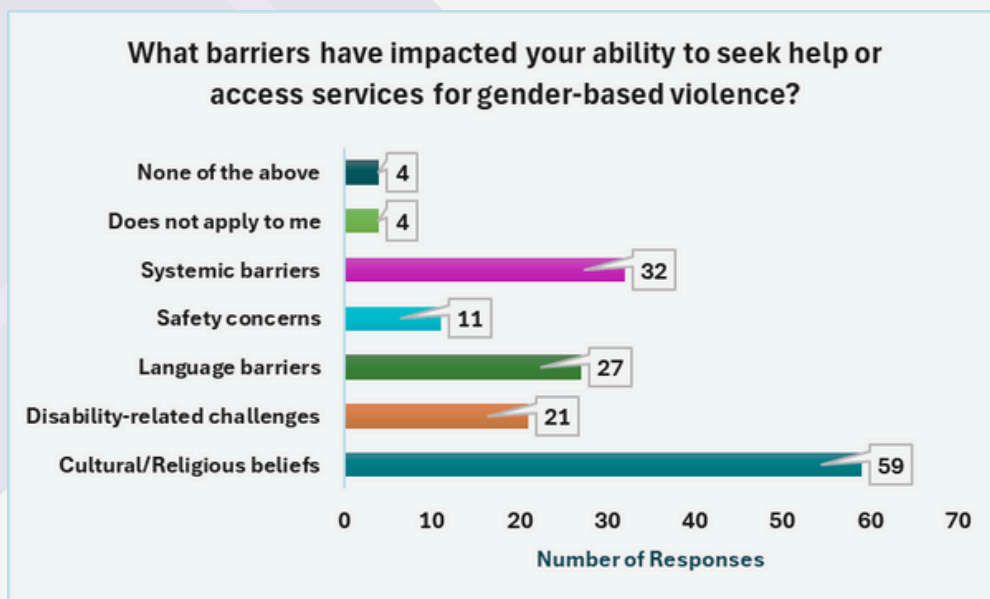
Have you or someone you know faced any discrimination or bias when seeking support due to your immigrant or refugee status?





Barriers to Seeking Help and Accessing Services for Gender-Based Violence

Cultural/Religious beliefs emerged as the most significant barrier, affecting 37% of respondents. This highlights the profound influence of cultural and religious contexts on help-seeking behaviors amongst newcomers in cases of GBV. Systemic barriers (long waitlists, legal status, and bad experiences in the past) were the second most reported obstacle, impacting 20% of respondents.

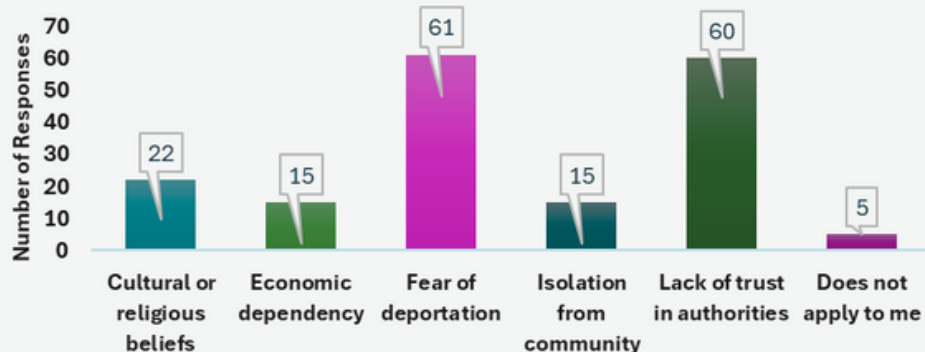




Specific Barriers Encountered in Seeking Help for Gender-Based Violence

- Fear of deportation and lack of trust in authorities emerged as the most prevalent barriers, each affecting 34% of respondents. This indicates that immigration status and relationships with official institutions play crucial roles in seeking help.
- The high percentage of respondents citing fear of deportation and lack of trust in authorities suggests that immigration status is a major concern for many individuals seeking help for GBV and that there is a significant breakdown in the relationship between potential GBV victims and official support systems.

What specific barriers have you or someone you know encountered when seeking help for gender-based violence?



Summary

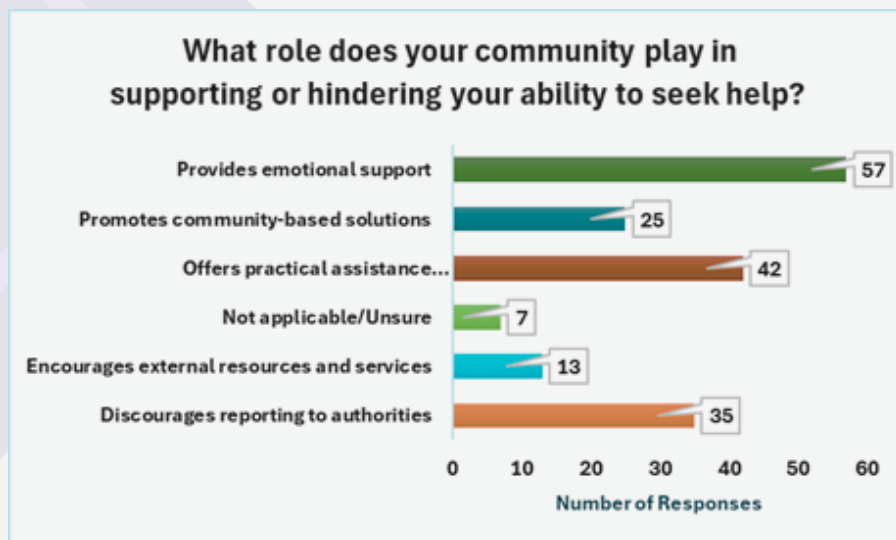
This survey has revealed multiple, complex barriers that individuals face when seeking help for gender-based violence. The most prominent challenges include immigration-related fears, distrust in authorities, cultural and religious influences, language and communication etc. These findings paint a picture of a complex landscape where multiple factors intersect to create significant obstacles for those seeking help for gender-based violence. Addressing these barriers will require a well-rounded approach involving community engagement, improved training for service providers and authorities, and targeted support programs

COMMUNITY INFLUENCES

This section examines the role of cultural beliefs and community norms in shaping individuals' responses to gender-based violence (GBV). It explores how community support systems and cultural attitudes influence help-seeking behaviors and disclosure of GBV experiences.

The Role of Community in Supporting or Hindering Access to Help

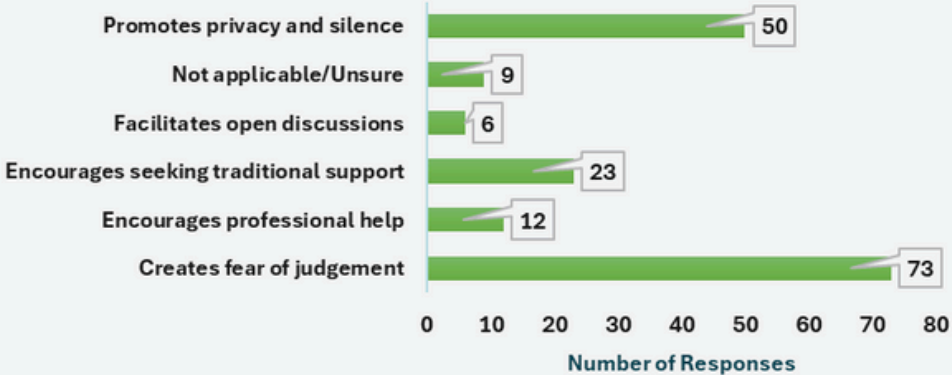
- A significant portion of respondents (35%) indicated that their community provides emotional support, while 24% reported receiving practical assistance (transportation, childcare etc.). This suggests that for many, the community serves as a valuable resource in addressing GBV.
- 22% of respondents reported that their community discourages reporting to authorities, potentially creating a significant barrier to accessing formal support systems.
- Only 5% of respondents indicated that their community encourages the use of external resources and services, suggesting a potential gap in connecting individuals with professional support.



Impact of Cultural Beliefs and Community Norms on Seeking Help

- 42% of respondents indicated that cultural beliefs or community norms create a fear of judgment, while 29% reported that these norms promote privacy and silence.
- This suggests that for a majority of respondents, cultural factors pose significant barriers to seeking help or disclosing GBV experiences.
- 13% of respondents noted that their culture/community encourages seeking traditional support, while only 7% reported encouragement for professional help.
- This indicates a preference for familiar, culturally aligned support systems over formal, external services.

How do cultural beliefs or community norms impact your decision to seek help or disclose experiences of violence?



Summary

Community support systems play a crucial role in addressing GBV, with emotional and practical support being significant factors. There is a concerning trend of discouraging official reporting, which may leave many GBV cases unaddressed by formal support systems. From the survey, there is a clear preference for traditional and community-based solutions over external or professional help, which may limit access to specialized GBV support services.

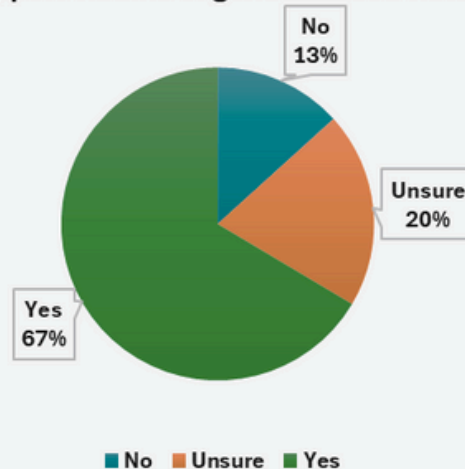
AWARENESS & SUPPORT RESOURCES

This section examines respondents' awareness of local resources for gender-based violence (GBV), their experiences in seeking help, the types of support sought, and perceptions of crucial resources for those experiencing GBV.

Awareness of Local Resources for Victims of Gender-Based Violence

- A significant majority (67%) of respondents are aware of local resources or organizations supporting GBV survivors and witnesses.
- However, a combined 33% are either unsure or unaware of such resources, indicating a need for improved outreach and information sharing.

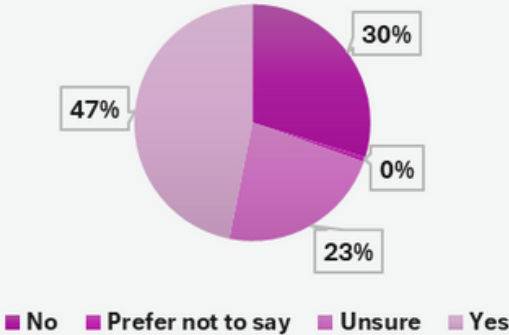
Are you aware of any local resources or organizations that support victims of gender-based violence?



Experiences of Seeking Support After Gender-Based Violence

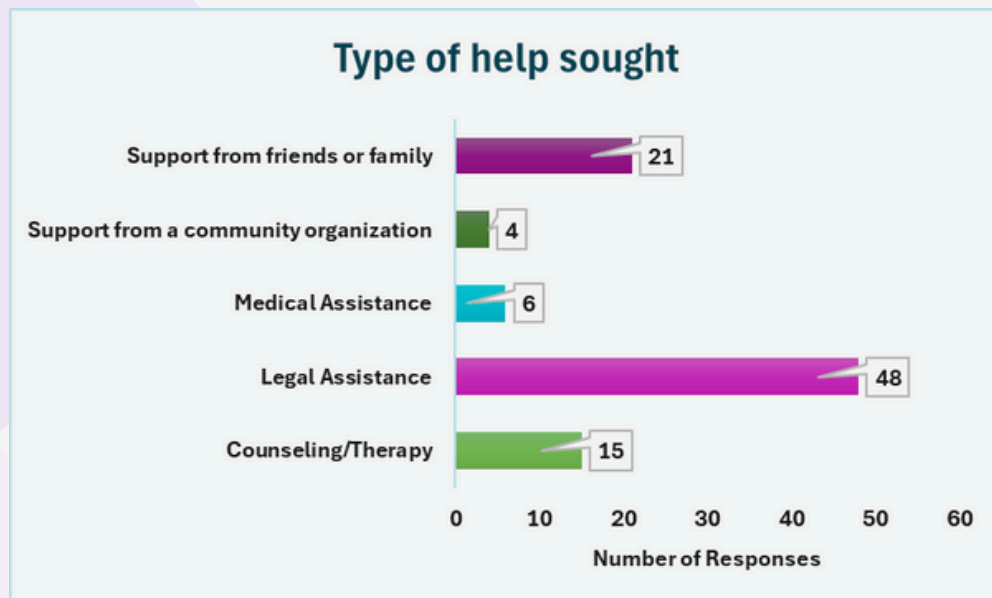
- Nearly half (47%) of respondents reported that they or someone they know have sought help for GBV. This high percentage reveals the prevalence of GBV and the need for support services.
- The significant proportion of "No" and "Unsure" responses (53% combined) suggests potential barriers to help-seeking or lack of recognition of GBV experiences.

Have you ever sought help or support after experiencing gender-based violence?



Type of Support Sought

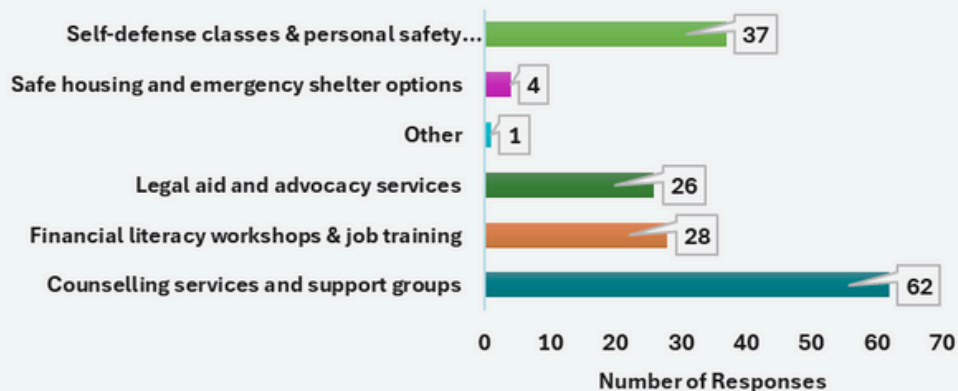
- Legal assistance was the most commonly sought form of help (51%), highlighting the importance of legal support in addressing GBV.
- Informal support networks (friends and family) were the second most utilized resource (22%), followed by professional counseling/therapy (16%).




Key Resources for Navigating Gender-Based Violence Support

- Counseling services and support groups (39%) emphasizes importance of emotional and psychological support
- Self-defense classes and personal safety planning (23%) indicates desire for practical skills to enhance personal safety
- Financial empowerment through literacy workshops and job training (18%) recognizes link between economic independence and escaping GBV situations

Which of the following resources are most crucial for people actively experiencing gender-based violence to build their skills and improve their options?





Needed Services for Newcomer and Immigrant Women and Non-Binary Individuals Experiencing Gender-Based Violence

In addition to the resources mentioned above, respondents highlighted several specific needs for immigrant and refugee women experiencing GBV:

- Affordable childcare to enable attendance at counseling sessions or legal appointments
- Training and employment opportunities for financial independence
- Dedicated legal advocates familiar with both immigration issues and GBV
- Multilingual counseling services, including psychological counseling hotlines
- Local support centers in rural areas providing housing and assistance
- Multilingual translation services and English language courses
- Safe housing options

Summary

While a majority are aware of local GBV resources, there's a significant portion (33%) who are not, indicating a need for enhanced public awareness campaigns. The fact that 47% of respondents have personal or second-hand experience with seeking help for GBV reveals the widespread nature of the issue and the critical need for robust support systems. The additional needs identified for immigrant and refugee women highlight the importance of intersectional approaches in GBV support services.

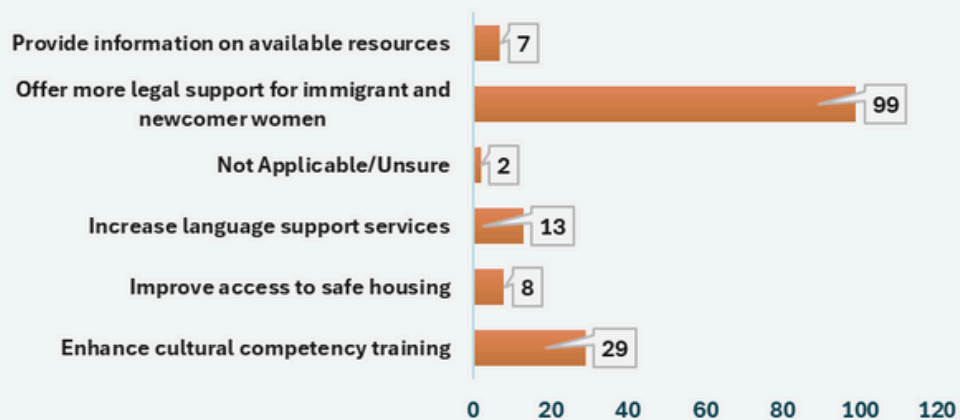
SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

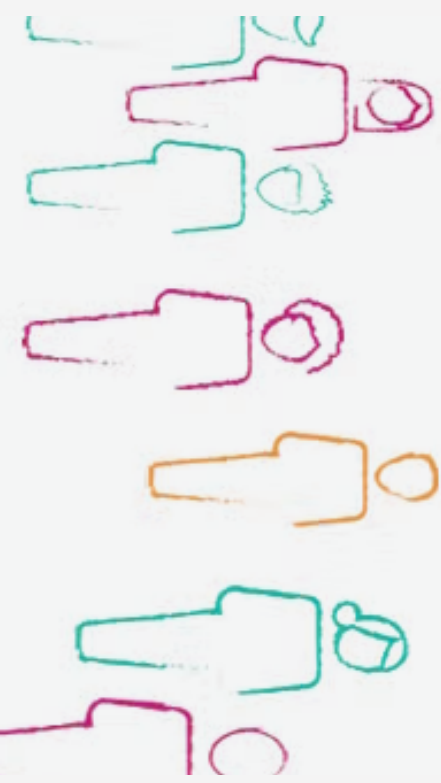
This section examines respondents' recommendations for enhancing support systems for newcomer, immigrant women, and non-binary individuals facing gender-based violence. It also explores strategies for organizations to better address the unique needs of these populations.

Recommended Improvements for Supporting Newcomer Women Experiencing Gender-Based Violence

The overwhelming majority of respondents (63%) identified the need for increased legal support as the primary recommendation for improving GBV support systems for newcomers and immigrants. This highlights the critical role of legal assistance in addressing the complex challenges faced by these populations. Cultural competency training was the second most recommended change (18%), underscoring the importance of culturally sensitive approaches in service provision. Language support services, safe housing access, and information dissemination were also identified as areas for improvement, although to a lesser extent.

What changes would you recommend to improve the support systems for immigrant and refugee women facing gender-based violence?





Recommendations for Organizations

Respondents strongly favored partnerships with trusted community organizations (38%) as the most effective strategy for addressing the unique needs of newcomers, immigrants, and non-binary individuals facing GBV. This suggests a recognition of the value of community-based approaches and existing trust networks. Creating specialized programs (23%) and increasing diversity in staff and leadership (22%) were also highly recommended, indicating a desire for tailored services and representation.



KEY THEMES

This section examines respondents' recommendations for enhancing support systems for newcomer, immigrant women, and non-binary individuals facing gender-based violence. It also explores strategies for organizations to better address the unique needs of these populations.



Awareness and Utilization of Resources

- The survey findings indicate a strong awareness of local GBV resources among respondents, with 67% reporting familiarity with available support services. However, there remains a notable gap in accessibility, as 33% of participants were either unsure or unaware of such resources.
- Legal assistance emerged as the most sought-after form of help (51%), followed by support from friends and family (22%) and counseling services (16%).



Barriers to Accessing Support

Notably, 34% of respondents expressed fear of deportation, while an equal percentage reported a lack of trust in authorities. Cultural and religious beliefs also significantly hinder access to help, with 37% citing these as obstacles.



Cultural and Community Dynamics

The role of community dynamics is complex; while 35% of respondents indicated that their communities provide emotional support, 22% noted that their communities discourage reporting to authorities. This duality suggests that while community networks can be beneficial, they can also perpetuate stigma and silence surrounding GBV. Additionally, fear of judgment from community members was highlighted by 42% of respondents as a barrier to seeking help.



Suggestions for Improvement

A substantial 63% of participants recommended increasing legal support specifically for newcomer women. Furthermore, partnering with trusted community organizations was favored by 38% as an effective strategy to better address the unique needs of these populations. The emphasis on cultural competence is evident in the call for more diverse representation within staff and leadership roles (22%) and enhanced cultural competency training (18%).

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

This section examines respondents' recommendations for enhancing support systems for newcomer, immigrant women, and non-binary individuals facing gender-based violence. It also explores strategies for organizations to better address the unique needs of these populations.



Specialized Legal Support

Establish specialized legal clinics staffed by experts in both immigration law and gender-based violence (GBV) issues. This approach provides comprehensive legal support tailored to the unique challenges faced by newcomer survivors, addressing the complex legal landscape they must navigate.



Cultural Competency Training

Implement ongoing cultural competency training for staff and volunteers in organizations dealing with GBV. This training should cover:

- Safety considerations
- Cultural norms around gender
- Hierarchical and patriarchal views in specific societies
- Nuanced understanding of cultural factors impacting GBV experiences and help-seeking behaviors



Community Leader Engagement

Leverage community networks to enhance outreach and support efforts. Given that victims and witnesses of GBV are more likely to reach out to their community for support, connecting with community leaders can help bridge the gap in accessing services.



Public Awareness Campaigns

Develop culturally sensitive education and awareness programs about GBV, focusing on:

- Prevention strategies
- Available support services
- Reducing stigma
- Increasing community-wide understanding of GBV issues

Conclusion



This report underscores the urgent need for improved support systems tailored to the unique challenges faced by newcomers, immigrants, and non-binary individuals experiencing gender-based violence. By implementing the recommended strategies focused on legal support, community engagement, cultural competence, and engaging community leaders, stakeholders can create more accessible, effective, and empowering systems that address the complex realities of those affected by GBV. Through collaborative efforts between service providers and communities, we can foster an environment where all individuals feel safe seeking help and receiving the support they need to overcome violence in their lives.