



Alternate Routes to Justice:
A REPORT FROM SHARED SAFETY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Alternate Routes to Justice

This report is the product of a working group of [Shared Safety](#), which aimed to explore what justice means for survivors of intimate partner and sexual violence, human trafficking, and reproductive coercion (referred to collectively as **relational violence**). The working group's process involved getting feedback from survivors in Philadelphia through a needs assessment survey. Then, working group members discussed the feedback and potential responses. This report presents a discussion of how stakeholder groups can better support survivors.

The survey completed by survivors highlighted several gaps in services. Each section of this report details potential innovative responses. These sections include discussions around:

Supporting survivors' physical and personal wellness.

Ideas include:

- Connecting survivors with resources that affirm their identities, especially for survivors from historically marginalized groups. Building organizational capacity to build trust among different identity groups.
- Creating meaningful partnerships between relational violence organizations and other community organizations. Increasing access in neighborhoods, and building trust with vulnerable communities.
- Recognizing and developing the role that survivors' communities have in supporting their safety. Supporting survivors with tools to identify supportive communities. Educating communities to better support survivors.

Helping survivors get space and stay away from people who have harmed them.

Ideas include:

- Developing "third spaces" for survivors. These are non-work and non-home spaces survivors could easily access. Third spaces can let survivors have space to safely think about what they want to do and access resources.
- Recognizing that space is often critical to safety. Creating more flexible funds to support easier access to transportation and relocation.

Supporting survivors to improve their financial resources.

Ideas include:

- Increasing programs that provide cash grants to survivors. Connecting survivors with programs to recover from financial abuse.
- Advocating for systemic changes that support survivors' financial wellbeing.

Expanding options for accountability and behavior change for people who have caused harm.

Ideas include:

- Increasing access to and knowledge about programs that serve people who have caused harm in their relationships.
- Promoting community-building practices to help hold people accountable for harmful actions. Building skills and knowledge with broader communities about how to support survivors and people who have used harm.

Improving legal responses to relational violence.

Ideas include:

- Improving resources to educate survivors about what legal responses can do and how to navigate them. Advocating for systemic improvements for efficiency.
- Advocating for increasing alternatives to police responses.
- Recognizing the reality of survivor gun ownership. Proactively safety planning with survivors about safe gun storage and practices.

This report highlights the need to engage with several strategies for survivor safety. Prevention, early intervention, and risk reduction are all key practices. But most importantly, increasing options for survivors is essential. Survivors in Philadelphia deserve to have many options and supportive resources for safety.

Introduction

Many survivors of relational violence do not report violent crimes. Some survivors experience barriers to reporting crimes. Formal responses to relational violence tend to focus on the courts. These resources may not feel safe for survivors. Especially survivors from historically marginalized communities. Other resources for help can be difficult to access. Many programs have eligibility criteria for who can take part. They may also be located in specific neighborhoods, or have limited operating hours. Even taking the time to learn about available resources can be difficult for survivors.

After learning what is available, survivors may feel like the options for help do not fit their needs. Survivors need creative and new approaches. Even those who do use and appreciate current resources can benefit from more options. But more options are especially important for survivors who feel like what they're offered isn't quite right.

This report began as a working group project of [Shared Safety](#), knowing that there are these gaps. The Alternate Routes to Justice (ARTJ) project aimed to explore what justice means for survivors of relational violence.

This is not the first report to address the need to increase options for finding safety, healing and justice for survivors. Organizations led by women of color have long championed these themes. This report references many resources by these organizations, including [Project Nia](#), the [Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective](#), and [Creative](#)

[Interventions](#). This report also reflects many of the strategies outlined in the [U.S. National Plan to End Gender-Based Violence](#). Ideas in this report match many across the country.

This report does reflect perspectives that are specific to Philadelphia. The working group started with a needs assessment survey for survivors in Philadelphia. The survey was distributed through the online platform Qualtrics in April and May 2023. It was available in English and Spanish. Survivors who completed the survey received compensation in the form of a \$30 gift card. The information survivors shared in the survey informs this report. Throughout the document, there are direct quotes from survivor responses to the survey. These are powerful snapshots of some of the feedback survivors shared.

This report is also informed by the collective expertise of the working group. Recommendations in this report come from professional experience and research into these issues.

The working group hopes that this guide can give readers ideas for collaborative approaches to support survivors. Justice for relational violence is very personal. What works for one person may not work for another. Expanding options is important for survivors to be able to choose what works for them. Many of the survey responses pointed to larger systemic gaps. These gaps cannot be addressed by safety planning alone, or by one organization alone. This guide also points to advocacy recommendations.

Please use these recommendations, informed by survivors in Philadelphia, to advocate for increasing access to justice.

What is Justice?

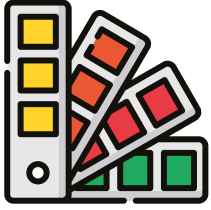
The needs assessment survey asked survivors: “In an ideal world, what would justice for the abuse you experienced look like?” This is not a simple question, so the survey offered categories of options. Survivors could check all that sounded ideal to them. Those options were:

- **Money.** (Examples: Compensation from the responsible person. Financial help from programs to help you be safe, feeling financially secure, etc.)
- **The responsible person getting or seeking help.** (Examples: The responsible person attending rehab, therapy, doing work on themselves, etc.)
- **Accountability from the responsible person.** (Examples: Getting a genuine apology (public or private). Responsible person being removed from a position of power, etc.)
- **Space.** (Examples: Not having the person who harmed you involved in your life, etc.)
- **Personal wellness.** (Examples: Finding peace or healing. Feeling emotionally safe, re-establishing self-confidence or trust in others. Mental health support/therapy, etc.)
- **Physical wellness.** (Examples: Feeling physically safe, getting medical services that you need, etc.)
- **Legal involvement.** (Examples: The responsible person going to jail, restraining orders, etc.)
- **Other:** _____ [fill in blank].

These options cannot capture what justice means to all survivors. The frequency of choices does show a ranking for survivors who completed the survey. The report is organized by these categories of justice. Each category highlights themes from survivors’ responses. These are paired with ideas for responses, which include:

- Ideas for safety planning with survivors;
- Ideas for communities to support survivors;
- Ideas for organizations to accommodate survivors; and
- Recommendations for advocacy.

No one person or organization can fully implement all these ideas. The aim of this report is to increase the menu of options for survivors. Building communities that support survivors needs collaboration. This report offers ideas on how to expand the idea of justice.





THEME 1:

Personal Wellness & Physical Wellness

Survivors shared that safety and healing were difficult. Community members or social services were often important to feeling **holistically supported**. Survivors wanted their **identities represented and understood** in the resources they accessed. **Navigating resources** was challenging. But survivors who did access services found them helpful. And finally, survivors reported that community **played an important role in safety**. Supportive communities aided healing.

Theme 1A: Survivors want their identities holistically supported

 Problems	 Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many survivors lack resources that reflect their identities and face stigma when trying to access help (i.e., survivors who identify as people of color, LGBTQ+, disabled, speaking a language other than English, etc.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers could build capacity to create proactively welcoming environments for clients. These efforts can include hiring bilingual staff, translating materials into a variety of languages, and making physical spaces welcoming and accommodating for a wide range of backgrounds and needs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disconnection between services for survivors and other community organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers could create more meaningful partnerships with other community organizations. Funding from private or government entities may help these collaborations.

Safety Planning Strategies for holistically supporting survivors

Work with the survivor to identify organizations, people, and resources that affirm their identities. Where have they found support in the past? Do they have any concerns about accessing services because of their identity? Think about:

- Planning for emotional safety, spirituality, and community belonging. Are the survivors' current connections still safe places? If not, are there alternate supports?
- Take the survivors' concerns about stigma seriously. Discuss what to expect about any resources or systems that they may be afraid to access.
- Use warm referrals when possible. Discuss what information survivors want shared or kept private.

“At the time there were not many resources around abuse in queer/lesbian relationships, which added to feelings of shame and made it more difficult to talk about or go to anyone about because I did not think I would be believed.”

The impact of relational violence is felt in many aspects of a survivor’s life. Feeling physically and emotionally safe were among the most important forms of justice for survivors. Yet resources for survivors most often address immediate crises: shelter, legal services, and short-term counseling. Finding peace, creating safety, and building self-confidence take time. And they are deeply connected to individual identity. To holistically support survivors’ needs, they must feel affirmed and welcomed in whatever services they use.

**“More social workers, public servants, and doctors who speak Spanish so there would be less discrimination due to barriers from language or nationality.”
[Spanish response]**

Providers may already have policies in place to provide services to survivors from many identities. For example, providers may use telephone interpretation services when there are not bilingual staff or they may train staff not to assume the gender of a survivor’s abusive partner. Providing welcoming and affirming services goes beyond good intentions and policy. How survivors experience services matters.

Survivors who spoke Spanish, who identified as LGBTQ+, or identified as having a disability reported more difficulty accessing services. Not seeing their identities reflected in services they were accessing was discouraging. Providers could build internal capacity for welcoming and affirming services. Following through on recommendations identified during assessments is critical for long-term change. Including these improvements into operating budgets is one way to ensure changes aren’t just ideas.



Resources to build capacity:

Building internal capacity to better serve survivors takes a lot of work. National technical assistance organizations can be an excellent resource for organizations. These include:

- [End Abuse of People with Disabilities' online assessment tool](#). This tool evaluates agency ability to serve survivors with disabilities and Deaf survivors.
- [FORGE's assessment tool](#). This tool evaluates agency ability to serve transgender and non-binary clients.



For additional support, see the [Domestic Violence Resource Network](#). It has a directory of additional national resource centers, special issue resource centers, and culturally-specific resource centers that provide tools and training for providers.

“Not having enough people look like me [made it difficult to access resources for help.]”

Providers can work to build diverse teams to reflect the communities they serve. But survivors seek help from a variety of communities. Often, organizations have partners based on proximity or through grant-funded activities. One way providers can build supportive networks for survivors is by mapping the gaps experienced by clients. Then, providers can seek partnerships with organizations that are already working with those communities. Organizational partnerships should be mutually beneficial relationships with the goal of raising the entire community's capacity to address violence and support survivors.

These types of collaborations may involve agencies seeking funding. In the absence of funding, agencies could brainstorm how to create mutual exchanges together. For example, they could host shared “lunch and learn” sessions or “trade” training sessions. Ideally, funding should support formal partnerships. Staff development, warm handoff referrals, or developing specialized services can address gaps felt by survivors. Ensuring both organizations can benefit is important to building trust and capacity for serving survivors.

Theme 1B: Survivors want easier to navigate resources

 Problems	 Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighborhood-based programs are limited in what they can provide. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relational violence organizations can improve relationships with community-based organizations to share information to survivors.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It can be hard knowing what support is out there and what a survivor qualifies for. Searching for services and resources takes a lot of time and energy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about sharing information that is specific about what services organizations offer, not just their phone numbers. For example, the Safe in Philly Resource Map shares service location, eligibility requirements, and what services are offered.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waiting lists for services can be discouraging for survivors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes services reach capacity. Advocates should work with survivors to identify alternate resources. Organizations should also review intake processes to make trauma-informed improvements. • Organizations should advocate for adequate funding and staffing as an issue of equity.

Safety Planning Strategies for holistically supporting survivors

Remember that survivors may be frustrated by long lists of resources, especially when they're looking for a specific service. Get familiar with what types of services organizations actually offer. Think about:

- Using entry-point resources, like hotlines, to help survivors learn about what services may be best for them.
- Managing expectations, including resource capacity. Discussing realistic outcomes with the survivor.
- Identifying a support person. Can someone help the survivor look into resources or debrief after contacting them?

“I can appreciate the therapy that I received that got me in touch with my self-worth which in turn has kept me away from abusive relationships.”

Many survivors shared that relational violence providers helped them immensely after abuse. Yet survivors also said that getting connected to help was often challenging. Knowing where to look and what kinds of services they qualify for can feel like an overwhelming task. Getting connected to help efficiently and effectively matters.

“I had to call multiple places which makes reaching out for help confusing and exhausting.”

Many survivors feel overwhelmed on where to start with this. And depending on their situation, they may qualify for different types of help. Advertising entry-point resources could be one first step. Entry-point resources include hotlines or web resources that direct people to more specific services (for example, the [Safe in Philly Resource Map](#) or [FindHelp.org](#)). Funding for advertising could promote these resources. Funding could also be used to improve navigation, especially on web resources. Everyone should be able to access information for safety as easily as possible.

“I didn’t have internet access at home. I had to try to borrow computer use/ time to find my own help and resources. All police and health care workers should have printed resources with phone numbers as well as websites available and with them to provide to victims.”

Many nonprofits can relate to the challenge of how to advertise their services. Sponsoring public awareness campaigns or buying advertisements may not be in their budgets. Finding low-cost ways to communicate resources more is key.

One way providers can approach this is by creating more connections. [Registered Community Organizations \(RCOs\)](#), faith groups, and other nonprofit organizations can be sources of innovative partnerships. These organizations could share newsletter space, post printed resources, or host virtual and in-person events. These partnerships can help share training for professionals and community members. Increasing the number of places that can serve as touchpoints for survivors can help them get connected to help earlier.



Building community connections:

Resources that immigrant survivors often turn to are their faith leaders. Shared Safety, with leadership from [AFAHO](#) and [SEAMAAC](#), [hosted a one-day summit for immigrant faith leaders](#) in Philadelphia. This summit trained 35 faith leaders on information about domestic violence and resources and skills to help. Most attendees had not received training on domestic violence before the event.

Every community should have access to this information. Partnerships might start small. Building strong relationships is most important to building long relationships.

“Sometimes there are waiting lists to get help with shelter or even just therapy which felt like a rejection of help for me.”

At the same time, resources have limits. Organizations often require an intake to determine eligibility for services. Survivors may have to tell a traumatic story multiple times without knowing if that intake will result in help! Organizations can be upfront about eligibility and capacity for services. Survivors should be able to make informed decisions about how they share their information.

Organizations can review intake procedures to make trauma-informed improvements. [Safe + Sound Somerset](#), a domestic violence agency in New Jersey, provides an example. They include a section on their website on the intake process and what clients should expect. Having information available in multiple formats, such as verbally and visually on a website or flier, can help the information clearer. Organizations can also review their referral processes when survivors are not eligible or services are at capacity.





Partnering for improved resource navigation:

The [Family Advocacy and Integrated Resources \(FAIR\) Project](#) supports clients enrolled in [Philly Families CAN's Home Visiting Programs](#). As an expansion of the [National Nurse-Led Care Consortium's](#) Family Support Fund and Nursing-Legal Partnership, the FAIR Project provides families enrolled in home visiting programs with emergency funding for necessities or housing needs alongside no-cost legal support from [Health, Education and Legal Assistance Project: A Medical-Legal Partnership](#) (HELP:MLP). This innovative approach acknowledges that providing families with funding is a core part of supporting stable families.

Limited funding is a major issue behind difficulty navigating resources. Organizations may already be advocating for adequate funding to meet the needs of survivors. But organizations can likely engage supporters, including survivors, in this advocacy by creating opportunities for increased involvement (including letter writing events, voter readiness, elevating survivor voices during legislative visits). Survivor insight into barriers to access or navigate resources is important to know when organizations are advocating for more funding.

Theme 1C: Survivors' communities help keep them safe

 Problems	 Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding supportive communities can be challenging. Many survivors are isolated by the dynamics of relational violence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers should recognize the role of community support for survivors. It may feel safer to identify someone they know who can help support, rather than go to a shelter.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The stigma and shame associated with relational violence is serious. It can prevent survivors from seeking support from friends, family or community members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote training for communities on supporting survivors. Develop information for community members to use for safety planning with friends and family.

Safety planning strategies around engaging community for safety

Ask the survivor if they have trusted people in their lives. Survivors may feel disconnected, but still have people they could turn to. Think about:

- **Pod mapping** as a strategy to identify supportive people and communities in a survivor's life.
- What kind of support does a survivor need to contact their communities? Practicing asking for help or creating a script may help a survivor feel more confident.

“Someone close to me recognized what was happening and intervened and supported me through the process of leaving and maintaining distance and boundaries.”

The survey asked survivors what types of resources they reached out to and which helped them to feel safer. The most chosen category was “community help.” Providers often focus safety planning on formal systems. Recognizing the role that survivors' communities can hold in their lives is important. Survivors may already have effective relationships for creating safety and disrupting violence.

“Staying with a friend is always going to help me feel safe & bring community to me.”

Not all survivors have the same access to community-level support. Smaller communities tend to be more interconnected. For example, immigrant and LGBTQ+ survivors may find identifying safe places away from an abusive partner more challenging. Providers can help survivors to think through safety planning strategies with the connections they already have.



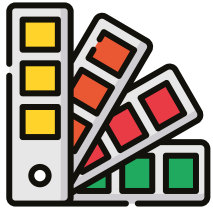
Using pod mapping for safety

Pod mapping was developed by the Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective. It is a practice to identify trusted spaces and people.

- Realistically, someone may have only one or two people in their lives that they would want to turn to in a crisis. Identifying “pods” is more about the strengths of relationships than the number of them.
- This practice can help someone think about who else they want to build more trust with. “Pods” may expand to include other people as a survivor develops more relationships and trust.
- Survivors may have been isolated for some time. They may need help thinking about how to approach friends and family to ask for the type of support they need.

“I wish it was not seen as a bad thing to receive help.”



Providers often work with survivors on feelings of shame about their experiences. People who behave abusively often use shame for control in a relationship. Survivors may also encounter these same messages from friends, family, and communities. Providers should consider how they reach out to and engage with the community. This could involve working directly with community organizations for training and partnerships. (See [Theme 1B](#) for more on outreach to communities). Outreach could involve developing more materials meant for individuals who want to support a survivor in their lives. Changing attitudes takes time. Building strong communities of support can increase safety for everyone in the community.



THEME 2: Space

Survivors ranked having space from an abusive ex-partner as one type of ideal justice. They also shared that **getting away and staying away** was really important for the abuse to stop. Two related themes came through in survivors' responses. The first was the **importance of a temporary "third space"** where survivors could go after an incident of abuse to collect themselves. The term third space refers to a place that is separate from someone's home and workplace. The second theme was the need for **resources for permanent relocation**. The lack of both was a barrier to safety and feeling a sense of justice for survivors.

Theme 2A: Survivors want temporary third spaces

 Problems	 Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough places to go in the middle of or immediately after an abusive incident. Survivors wanted a place they could go to process what happened and think through their next steps. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers could build capacity with community spaces to be trauma-informed and welcoming for survivors. Third spaces could include businesses, or public spaces like rec centers and libraries. Money is often a barrier for survivors seeking help. Spaces that are welcoming to people who will not be spending money are important. • Providers can help survivors to identify community members whose spaces they can use.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting to a safe third space could also be difficult. Many survivors do not have access to a car. They may also not feel comfortable on public transit or have the funds to take public transit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers could build partnerships with public transit, car share, or taxi companies to transport survivors to identified safe third spaces for free or for reduced fees.

Safety planning strategies around third spaces:

Brainstorm available third spaces where a survivor could go to decompress and figure out next steps after an incident of abuse. Are there any spaces that would feel safe for them to do that? Think about:

- Free spaces like parks, a car, or a friend or family member's home. Hours of operation may limit some places, like a recreation center, library, or religious institution. Check that space's schedule and keep that in mind.
- Businesses that are open 24 hours like pharmacies, fast food chains, gas stations or convenience stores.

“Somewhere you can [go] instead of having to call the hotline.”

Several survivors shared that they wished for a place to decompress after an incident of abuse. Identifying these spaces can be difficult. Many survivors may not have appropriate options of somewhere to go or people to call for help in their personal networks.

Identifying safe third spaces for survivors can be a helpful safety planning strategy. Community resources may not be available at all hours. Survivors may need to get creative. For example, a nearby 24/7 gas station or Walmart may not be ideal, but it could be a safe physical location outside of the home.

“Resources in your own neighborhood besides the police would be more helpful.”

Many people feel most comfortable with services in familiar areas. But businesses and non-profit organizations are often in Center City or other business corridors. The [Safe in Philly](#) map shows some of this. The map plots resources to support the needs of people in Philadelphia experiencing domestic violence.

Some neighborhoods have fewer resources or categories of resources. So survivors may need to travel longer distances to access a specific resource type. Some survivors may feel more comfortable leaving the neighborhood to get help. Others may feel most comfortable in a location they are familiar with. Planning for third spaces in a variety of neighborhoods is important!



Creative neighborhood-based public health and safety programs:

These examples are not focused on relational violence. But they offer some ideas about how creating partnerships with community organizations to serve as third spaces for survivors could look:

- City of Philadelphia-funded [Community Evening Resource Centers \(CERCs\)](#). CERCs are in buildings that provide other programs. They give young people spaces to go that are safe and that have resources during curfew hours.
- The Philadelphia Department of Public Health's [resource hubs](#) (RHs). RHs have been set up in five neighborhoods around the city. Some resource hubs were set up in empty storefronts. Others were set up in shared spaces in churches and a wellness center. Initially, RHs aimed to increase free access to COVID-19 testing. They have expanded to provide other services and resources to protect residents' health.



“[In the middle of an abusive incident, it would have been helpful to have] a safe person to talk with or a place nearby to go if only for a few hours like a recreation center.”

Creating new, neighborhood-based services from scratch is resource-intensive and difficult to sustain. But, thinking about developing third spaces from existing resources is one way to expand options for survivors. Building capacity with neighborhood-based third spaces may still require some resources- i.e. people or funding. A third space for survivors would need to be:

- Safe and appealing to survivors,
- Available “after hours” (i.e. outside of normal business hours),
- In trusted locations, and
- Accessible in communities where people live.

Grant funding could support partnerships to create neighborhood-based, survivor-welcoming third spaces. Survivors could walk into designated community spaces during late or overnight hours. These spaces should have brochures or flyers for resources that are clear. Third spaces could be multi-purpose. Setting up a partnership could start with posters and brochures about entry-point resources. A more developed partnership could include trained staff to help survivors navigate resources.

Theme 2B: Survivors want help for permanent relocation

 Problems	 Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The actual process of getting away can be a barrier when survivors don't have access to funds or transportation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers could develop partnerships or funds for easily accessed transportation or relocation help.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survivors shared that it was difficult to leave "everything" in their home behind, especially for survivors with young children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers should remember that leaving a dangerous situation can be emotionally difficult. Work with survivors to explore their options. Discuss pros and cons whenever possible. Providers could advocate for more housing resources and support with the state and federal government to better meet the needs of survivors.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic violence shelters tend to have strict rules. These rules can leave some survivors out. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shelters may not be able to change funder requirements. They could advocate to funders to build in more flexibility. They can also review internal practices with a trauma-informed lens.

Safety planning strategy for relocation or space:

Explore what the survivor's goals are for relocation or enforcing space between them and an abusive partner. Ask:

- Are they hoping to move? Where?
- What resources exist to help them do so or to get set up where they decide to move?
- A survivor may also hope to stay where they are, but decrease potential for contact between them and their abusive partner. Ask:
- When are the times they have the most contact?
- When are the times they feel less safe?

Explore options and strategies for how to improve safety in place.

“I wish there was an immediate way to escape the situation. Like just a way to vanish.”

Many survivors reported that space from an abusive partner made them feel safer or ended the abuse. Creating that space can be complicated. Moving is expensive and rental prices in Philadelphia have increased. Financial constraints may force some survivors who want to leave to stay with an abusive partner.

“No access to phone, money for transportation to these places.”

Survivors commonly said they wished they had access to funds to help them get away safely. This barrier is tied to many survivors not having enough money. (See [Theme 3](#) for more on building survivor financial resources.) So, responses may need to include the development of funds specifically for survivor transportation.

Providers could build partnerships with public transit, car share, or taxi companies to transport survivors to safe locations. For example, RAINN and Lyft [partnered to provide free rides for survivors of intimate partner and sexual violence](#) during the early COVID-19 pandemic. Providers may be able to seek funding to support this kind of partnership as a pilot. Survivors would need to be able to access this quickly and with limited requirements.

Providers could develop direct funding opportunities for survivors for longer-distance relocation. Some providers already have funding for this. Typically this funding comes with eligibility requirements. Funds that could be accessed quickly and more flexibly could help more survivors swiftly leave a dangerous situation.

“I wish immediate housing was available for single mothers. It was difficult to leave [an abusive situation] in which I have invested so much into and had to walk away from everything to sleep on a couch or floor with my child.”

“I wish the agencies that gave rental assistance moved faster... it took them 6 months to issue a rental assistance check.”

It can also be hard to leave a space that someone has called home for so long. Some survivors, for a variety of reasons, may not want to enter a shelter. Not knowing the exact pathways to obtaining alternate permanent housing, or knowing that this process can take significant time can be a barrier to someone deciding to leave a dangerous situation.

Providers could continue to pursue flexible funding options to provide grants to survivors, either to relocate or to increase security on a home to make it safer if someone would like to stay where they are. Advocacy for better housing systems is also important. These barriers can be addressed with funding, but ultimately, providers could support legislative advocacy to improve housing options for survivors to improve access to safe and affordable housing outside of the provider network.

Providers could also pursue funding opportunities with fewer requirements or restrictions. Most federal and state funding is more restrictive, but more stable. Private funding could be less stable but also more flexible about reporting and eligibility.

“Once you complete the programs within 60 days you and family [get thrown] back into [the] street [with] no understanding of the situation... ”

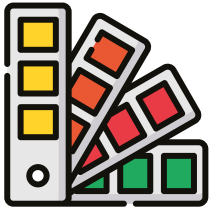
Temporary housing through shelters can be an important resource for survivors. But survivors can also find entering an unfamiliar space to be difficult. Domestic violence shelters tend to have strict rules. These may include rules about the number of and age of children, prohibiting pets or other family members, curfews, or how recent or active the threat of violence is. Shelters may also have restrictions on how long a survivor can stay, or waiting periods before a survivor can re-enter a shelter. Some shelter rules and requirements may be related to funder restrictions. Shelters may not be able to change these rules. They could look for opportunities to advocate to funders to build in more flexibility. They can also review internal practices with a trauma-informed lens. The toolkit [“Come on In: Reimagining Shelter as a Healing Space for Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse.”](#) from the Resource Sharing Project gives ideas on how to review internal practices.



Great ideas for supporting survivors in shelter:

Another approach organizations could take is operating lower-barrier domestic violence shelters. [AFAHO](#) took this approach in opening a small, culturally-specific shelter and transitional home for African and Caribbean immigrant survivors of domestic violence. This approach takes significant funding and resources. But it centers the needs of survivors who have specific linguistic, cultural, and legal needs.

Limited funding is a major issue behind difficulty navigating resources. Organizations may already be advocating for adequate funding to meet the needs of survivors. But organizations can likely engage supporters, including survivors, in this advocacy by creating opportunities for increased involvement (including letter writing events, voter readiness, elevating survivor voices during legislative visits). Survivor insight into barriers to access or navigate resources is important to know when organizations are advocating for more funding.



THEME 3: Money

Survivors frequently said lack of funding or exhausted resources made safety difficult. It is unsurprising that money ranked highly as a form of ideal justice for survivors. To put it simply, **not having enough money made getting help more difficult**. There were several money related challenges, from not having enough of it, to making just enough money that they were ineligible to receive certain free services.

Theme 3: Survivors need financial resources for safety	
! Problems	⚡ Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survivors who do not have enough money to meet their needs have few options for immediate assistance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers can explore providing flexible funding for survivors. They may already provide some flexible funding for survivors, but could work to streamline access to these funds.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial abuse in relationships is common and leaves survivors with lasting financial challenges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers can build partnerships with existing local financial resources. Providers could also seek funding to offer savings grants or match savings to help build survivors' financial resources.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survivors are often unaware of legal protections and resources that can offer financial relief. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers can work to ensure better advertising of local resources and ordinances that can offer financial relief or protection to survivors.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some survivors shared that they made too much money to qualify for free legal services, but not enough money to afford hiring a private attorney. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free legal assistance programs typically have income eligibility guidelines. These guidelines are informed by Federal or State guidelines, or funding requirements. Organizations could advocate to raise the eligibility guidelines, or include more flexibility in those guidelines depending on circumstance.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dealing with and responding to experience of abuse also takes time and resources that burden survivors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Systemic changes could help ease the burden of time and resources on survivors. Providers could elevate the issues that survivors experience to advocate for more flexible systems of help.

Safety planning strategy around increasing survivors' financial resources

Work with survivors to identify immediate resources to meet financial needs and discuss long term resources. Availability of resources may mean getting creative! Think about:

- Referral to programs for short term or immediate assistance. For example, a referral to a food pantry could help someone spend less on groceries for a period of time, and use the money they would spend on groceries toward other expenses.
- Referral to programs for long-term financial recovery or stability. For example, finding programs for education or vocational training to start earning a higher salary, or resources to help pay for childcare.

“He stopped [abusing me] for a while because I walked away, later I admit that I looked for him because I needed help with food and so on.” [Spanish response]

For people already struggling financially, experiencing abuse is a stressful and costly expense. From spending money on medical or mental health treatment, taking time off of work, or moving, the costs add up quickly. There is a significant need for immediate funding for survivors. Some providers have funds that can be given directly to survivors, but those funds may have restrictions on how they can be used or may have application processes. Providers should consider streamlining access to these funds to make them easier to access. Since financial barriers are so common for survivors, providers could also look to increase financial support offerings for survivors.

On top of this, financial abuse is a common experience in abusive relationships. Abusive partners often restrict survivors' ability to make money or control money in the relationship. Abusive partners may also sabotage survivors' efforts to make money, for example, by interfering with their employment, childcare, or educational efforts. Financial abuse can force a survivor to be tied to an abusive partner for longer. Without supportive financial resources, survivors may find it difficult to get transportation, higher education or ESL classes, or other housing. Healing from abuse may be more difficult without support for long-term financial recovery and stability. Resources like [BenePhilly](#) helps Philadelphia residents enroll in public benefits programs. Resources like [Clarifi](#) can help survivors work to repair credit and build long term financial goals. More financial resources increase flexibility to make choices that can impact long term safety.



Great ideas for survivor financial support:

Expanding resources to provide survivors with financial support could follow several different models. The FAIR Project (see details in [Theme 1B](#)) is one example that relies on partnerships between organizations. Other survivor financial support models include:

- [FreeFrom](#) provides cash grants to survivors on an emergency basis, runs a savings matching program, and peer groups.
- The [NNEDV Independence Project](#) is a microloan and credit-building program for survivors.
- The [Moving Ahead Curriculum](#) and grant program provides funds and financial education to survivors.
- Universal basic income (UBI) projects could also support survivors. The [Philly Joy Bank](#) is a pilot project that will provide pregnant Philadelphia residents with cash. Future UBI pilots could focus on survivors of relational violence.

Relational violence providers may already have some direct funding for survivors, but could look into developing additional financial support. Providers in Philadelphia could pursue resources to expand capacity of existing flexible funding programs. Advocates and survivors often focus on short term and immediate resources when safety is the priority. But advocates can also help survivors think about what their longer term money goals are, and brainstorm what resources could help them accomplish those.

Another challenge that survivors may face is not knowing about legal protections that can help them financially. Survivors may not know about these protections until it is too late to prevent a financial crisis. The City and providers can increase community education about these kinds of protections. This could include improved communication on:

- The [Unfair Rental Practices Ordinance](#),
- [Unpaid leave for domestic or sexual violence](#), and
- [Affordable utilities for survivors](#).

Spreading the word about these resources could include community training. Equipping trusted messengers to understand financial resources and protections for survivors can help increase the number of people who are able to connect with these resources.

“I’ve been denied plenty of resources because I make “too much” money even though I live paycheck to paycheck.”

On the other hand, many resources are tied to proving someone is low-income or living in poverty. Income level may not show the whole story of a survivor’s situation. Rigid income guidelines for services can keep survivors out of services, and push them to either stay in an abusive relationship longer, or have additional financial burdens from responding to the abuse. These guidelines are informed by Federal or State guidelines, or funding requirements.

Providers could advocate to raise the eligibility guidelines, or include more flexibility in those guidelines depending on circumstance. Looking at financial data specific to Philadelphia could also help inform guidelines that reflect local trends.

Another solution could be to build more partnerships with private law firms to serve people ineligible for free services. This could look like income-based fees for domestic and sexual violence related cases, offering more legal clinics to give advice to self-represented people, or a commitment to pro-bono representation of survivors.

“There was not space when I tried to go [to a shelter] and I ended up having to pay out of my savings.”

While survivors have their own financial limitations, service providers often have their own set of limited resources. When organizations have limited resources, it falls to the survivor to find the money to get to safety. There is a need to both increase funding and capacity for organizations that provide services to survivors, and to develop policies that support people to have financial autonomy.

Programs that focus on economic development, upward mobility, and career and educational opportunities should include survivors in how they plan to target and engage participants.

“Covid made everything so difficult. Also, if I didn’t have access to a computer, scanner (and a very nice boss), I probably would have given up. I can understand why women throw up their hands.”

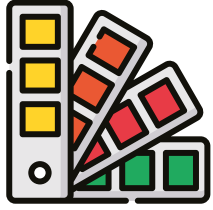
Survivors’ time also matters. Long waits and complicated systems can be very discouraging. Whenever possible, providers should help elevate the issues survivors experience to advocate for improvements.



Systemic changes that could ease the burden on survivors:

Legislative action takes time, but here are some potential changes that could help survivors:

- Policy changes could make the [Victims Compensation Assistance Program](#) (VCAP) more efficient, easier to navigate, and more inclusive for survivors. In the Pennsylvania legislature, [one proposal](#) would add property damage as an allowable expense for compensation.
- While Philadelphia has [unpaid leave for domestic or sexual violence](#), policy changes to include paid leave could better support survivors. The [U.S. National Plan to End Gender-Based Violence](#) includes a recommendation for paid family and medical leave for survivors.





THEME 4:

Accountability & Abuser Getting Help

Survivors in Philadelphia have limited options to seek accountability from partners who behave abusively. In the survey responses, some survivors shared that they wished they were able to convince an abusive partner to stop hurting them. Others mentioned wishing for mediation, or resources for help other than the police. Few responses overall shared what accountability for abusive behaviors could look like. Current options for accountability and behavior change are already limited. It may be difficult to imagine what other forms of accountability could look like without seeing examples. Ultimately, there should be more options for abusive partner accountability and behavior change.

Theme 4: Survivors want more options for accountability and behavior change

 Problems	 Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Survivors may want abusive behaviors to end, but not the relationship. There are few resources to support people who act abusively in relationships to change their behavior, and they are often not known.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Promote resources that work with people who behave abusively to change behaviors. Resources that are not connected to punishment or isolation are important. These resources may be formal (like therapy) or informal (like friends/family with knowledge).Advocacy for funding for programs that help people who cause harm is needed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Survivors wanted other ways to intervene in an abusive incident (i.e., mediator, bystander or someone to call to de-escalate).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Providers can explore alternate responses with survivors. An informal approach could include pod mapping to identify personal connections who could help. Formal approaches could include organizations that do mediation as a crisis response.

Safety planning strategy for accountability or behavior change

Providers who work primarily with survivors may not feel as prepared to explore abusive partner accountability and behavior change. When working with survivors who want a partner to be accountable for abusive behaviors without formal systems, or work toward long-term behavior change, think about:

- Connecting with appropriate resources. Who would be a safe person to approach someone who has behaved abusively about getting help for their behavior?
- Are there people or communities that can help keep someone who has acted abusively accountable for their behavior? Can [pod mapping](#) be used to think about the people someone who has acted harmfully can turn to for support?
- Respect the survivor's choices and instincts about their partner. Respect their desire for their level of involvement. They know the abuse inside and out much better than anyone outside of it. They know what will be unsafe, listen to them.

“[I wish I had been] able to say the right words so my abuser would stop.”

In survey responses, some survivors wished they had a way to convince an abusive partner to stop abusing them. This hope for change is rarely reflected in resources. While many services for survivors exist, there are far fewer resources that address abusive behaviors. Resources for survivors also tend to be more well-known.

The gap in knowledge about help and available services to address harmful behavior is serious. This may contribute to an outsized focus on a survivor's behavior (i.e., how they are responding to someone else's harmful actions). And it can also mean that people who need help changing their behavior are not getting connected to help early on.

Violence intervention starts with prevention. All people should learn how to have healthy relationships and address conflict in a safe way. If people haven't learned this, they need help. Providers try to make information about survivor services easily accessible. The hope is to meet survivors wherever they are and intervene as early as possible. This approach could apply to promoting resources to address abusive behavior change. People who have been harmful or abusive in relationships may also experience stigma and shame about how they have acted. Finding help to address these behaviors should be easier.



Promoting harmful behavior change - check out these programs:

Violence intervention happens on a spectrum. These programs provide help on a spectrum as well. From focusing on prevention, to immediate intervention, to long-term behavior change, here are programs in Philadelphia to address harmful relationship behaviors:

- The Lutheran Settlement House [Masculinity Action Project](#) is a community education and violence prevention program. The project brings men and masculine-identifying people together to be part of the movement for gender justice.
- The WOAR [Healthy Masculinity Initiative](#) is a education and outreach program that trains men in sexual violence prevention strategies.
- [Courdea](#) offers individual and group counseling for people who have acted harmfully in relationships.
- [JJPI's Safety and Responsibility Programs](#) offer specialized services for individuals who have displayed problematic/harmful sexual behaviors and/or who have a history of using violence in their intimate relationships. Individual, group, and family (when indicated and safe) therapy are offered. JJPI also offers trainings to educate on their specific client populations.

“I wish there was more community around[.] The abuse would happen behind close[d] doors. Sometimes it would happen in public. If [it] happened in public there was usually some form of intervention.”

Community can be an important part of survivor safety. (See more on the community’s role in safety for survivors in [Theme 1C](#)). Community can also help hold people who have caused harm accountable. There are some resources for mediation or restorative justice in Philadelphia. Generally, they do not address relational violence. Dynamics of power and control in abusive relationships are complicated. Community accountability processes may not be appropriate for everyone. But if a survivor is interested, providers can support them to explore that option. If providers can’t be involved in an accountability process (i.e., because of funding restrictions), they could recommend resources to a survivor.

Many communities have practiced accountability processes for a long time, even for experiences of relational violence. Providers can increase familiarity with informal and formal resources to support this. Giving survivors tools or resources about accountability can be one part of a safety plan. Survivors can review these resources themselves and with their communities. They can decide if these resources would be useful and safe options.



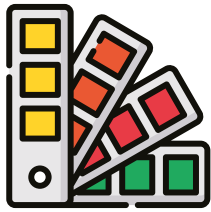
Grassroots resources to support accountability:

These resources discuss approaches that communities can take to address relational violence. These may be approaches that survivors and their communities want to try in their own lives:

- [Pods and Pod Mapping](#) See [Theme 1C](#) for more information on this tool from the Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective.
- [Creative Interventions Toolkit: A Practical Guide to Stop Interpersonal Violence](#): This free, comprehensive toolkit seeks to make support and safety more accessible, stop violence earlier on, and promote healthy change and transformation for people who have acted abusively.
- [Working Through Harm Zine](#). This free, brief workbook provides an overview of different accountability processes, possible outcomes, and recommendations on how to approach them.
- [A Restorative Conversation Toolkit](#). This free, brief toolkit helps people practice healthy conversations about conflict, address impact of harm, and support healing from harm.

For more learning, the [Barnard Building Accountable Communities](#) video series is an introduction to restorative processes. Additional Building Accountable Communities videos are available from [Project NIA](#). The API-GBV document, [Framing Batterer Accountability in the Context of Our Work as Advocates](#) gives providers more context on the type of work involved in accountability processes.

The resources listed above are part of a growing number of toolkits and organizations that want to expand options for repairing harm. Formal resources and systems, from providers and lawmakers, could begin to get familiar with these. The [U.S. National Plan to End Gender-Based Violence](#) includes support for the development of more restorative justice programs. This is something that many survivors want as an option.



THEME 5: Legal Responses

While legal systems were not the focus of the survey, many survivors shared about their experiences with them. Throughout the survey survivors gave examples of these systems being **difficult to navigate**, even if the systems were useful to them. Many survivors expressed disappointment with police responses. They also wanted **more alternatives to police involvement**. And finally, some survivors shared that formal systems still sometimes **weren't enough for safety**.

Theme 5A: Survivors want legal systems to be easier to navigate

! Problems	⚡ Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal systems are not trauma-informed. Survivors often feel traumatized by court processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support community based alternatives and resources for violence intervention and de-escalation. Develop more resources to support alternatives to court. Advocate within legal systems to promote trauma-informed perspectives for survivors.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal systems are often time consuming. The COVID pandemic made it more challenging. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate within legal systems to improve efficiency for survivors. Changes like time-certain hearings could help survivors reduce the amount of time they have to take off of work or arrange for childcare. This could include education for survivors to better understand time commitment and possible outcomes.

Safety planning strategy for navigating the legal system

It is common for survivors to learn as they go through legal systems. Without fully understanding, it is difficult to make informed decisions. Work with survivors to:

- Connect with appropriate resources as early as possible. If possible, survivors could connect with legal services before filing anything to learn about the process and possible outcomes. Be wary about assumptions. Every situation is different, so legal services can help survivors figure out the best decision for them.
- Identify if legal process outcomes align with the survivor's goals. What are their priorities? And what resources can best prepare them for success in meeting those goals?

“You are waiting for long periods to be seen and have to take time off of work. You also have to explain your case without getting too emotional otherwise police officers and judges don’t take you as seriously which is frustrating and draining. When going the legal route, it is very costly and it feels like pulling teeth trying to get updates from your lawyer.”

Many survivors shared about their experiences with legal systems in Philadelphia. Some survivors shared that legal resources, like Protection From Abuse Orders, were helpful for their safety. At the same time, they frequently shared that these systems were frustrating, time-consuming, and traumatic. Survivors who had free legal help appreciated that support. But some survivors shared that they were ineligible for free services. Without advocacy or an attorney, communicating their experiences of abuse to judges and defense attorneys was more difficult.

“It was very helpful to have a Women Against Abuse attorney with me during court. It is hard to express yourself in this difficult situation and to be believed and taken seriously you must have the language that the court understands or [they] will deem you as [not] credible no matter how bad the abuse. It is not fair, but it is the truth.”

Survivors may engage with legal systems because they feel like they have no other option. Systems responses to relational violence tend to focus on civil or criminal legal solutions. But people who have caused harm are not encouraged to take accountability through these systems. Developing non-court options could help. These would focus on repairing harm over punishment. (See [Theme 4](#) for more information on accountability.) Hopefully, people who use these alternatives would be able to create safety and avoid going to court. If safety is not achievable through non-court processes, civil and criminal solutions still remain.



Taking a harm reduction approach to legal systems



Survivors often make difficult choices about their safety, including using legal systems. Advocates help survivors weigh pros and cons to make the best decision for them. These are complicated systems. Easy-to-follow resources can benefit survivors and advocates to understand better:

- [Make Your Case](#) is a short video series from Philadelphia Legal Assistance (PLA). It helps people who are representing themselves in Family Court. More videos in this style could help survivors learn about and prepare for court. PLA also runs a [Help Center](#) on the 11th floor of Family Court weekdays from noon to 3pm to assist individuals with filing custody pleadings. Assistance includes filing petitions to waive filing fees for low-income petitioners.
- [Tools for Navigating the System](#) were created by the Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective. They give explanations and scripts for advocates, individuals, and communities to learn about the systems that respond to child sexual abuse in California. Resources in this style could be created for general education about what using court systems involves.
- [Guides for Immigrant Victims of Crime](#) were created by a Shared Safety working group. These guides give plain-language, translated information for immigrants in Philadelphia. Resources like this should be easy to access and available in multiple languages.

At the same time, court systems can still improve how they interact with survivors. Advocacy to include more trauma-informed perspectives in court processes is important. Training for court staff and judges should continue to be a priority. But other changes could make legal systems easier to navigate. Most people using Family Court in Philadelphia represent themselves. Changes could include simplifying forms and instructions and time-certain hearings to reduce waiting. And since so many survivors benefit from free help, increasing access to advocates and attorneys is important.

Legal systems can be critical resources for survivors, even when they are frustrating. Developing community-based alternatives could help survivors who don't want to use courts. Improving access and efficiency in courts can help survivors who do. Addressing both increases options for survivor safety.

Theme 5B: Survivors want law enforcement alternatives

 Problems	 Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all survivors want to call the police for help. Non-police intervention resources are limited. Many alternate programs exclude domestic or sexual violence issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As more non-police, first responder programs develop, they should receive training on abusive relationships and dynamics.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survivors may have difficulty imagining what non-police responses to relational violence could look like. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting alternative responses to relational violence should include education about what is available. Community training for violence intervention, de-escalation, and bystander intervention can also help survivors.

Safety planning strategy for avoiding law enforcement responses

Some survivors of relational violence do not want to call the police. The [Creative Interventions Toolkit](#) includes a [Staying Safe Tools](#) section that advocates and survivors can use together. This section includes:

- A risk assessment chart that helps survivors identify what behaviors and times are most dangerous.
- Templates for creating safety plans for different situations. They prompt for backup plans and follow up actions.
- Checklists of things to think through depending on the survivor's situation.
- A worksheet to think through safety if meeting up with the person who caused harm.

Survivors cannot control or predict the behavior of an abusive partner. With careful safety planning, survivors can increase their options for safety and harm reduction.

“Law enforcement, when they would question us some male officers would take his side. I wish they would [have] been more helpful, most of my physical abuse was after the police would leave and not do anything.”

“I never called the police for fear of discrimination against me because of my [immigration] documentation.” [Spanish Response]

“I couldn’t do anything in the middle of this particular incident and bringing myself to call the police was terrifying. I had no knowledge about any services that were offered at that point.”

The survey did not specifically ask about experiences with police. However, many survey responses brought up negative experiences with police. These experiences included long response times, bias, and improper documentation.

Some survivors never called the police out of fear of discrimination. The working group hoped to learn more about what types of non-police resources survivors would be interested in. Without widely-known examples, it may be difficult for survivors, and the people who want to support them, to imagine alternate resources.

Systems may have similar difficulty imagining how alternate resources could be added to the current “menu” of options for survivors. There is a significant gap for non-police immediate responses to relational violence in Philadelphia.

“[I would want a] non-police phone line to help de-escalate the situation.”

Some survivors wished for non-police resources for bystander intervention, mediation, or de-escalation. Some survivors may be able to work with their communities to build capacity for this. (See [Theme 1C](#) and [Theme 4](#) for more information on community-based responses to relational violence.) Other survivors may not have communities that can do this. There is a gap in formal, non-police resources that can respond to relational violence. Similar resources for other issues can serve as examples. Philadelphia introduced Community Mobile Crisis Response Teams (CMCRTs) as an alternative to calling the police for mental health crises. As the CMCRTs expand, there is room for integration with responses to relational violence.

Another local resource, Philadelphia Anti-Drug/Anti-Violence Network (PAAN), responds to neighborhood crises with mediation and resources from trained outreach workers. PAAN focuses on responding to gun violence. They do receive calls for other issues, including relational violence. Developing more cross-sector partnerships can expand options for survivors of relational violence. (See [Theme 1B](#) and [1C](#) for more on building organizational partnerships.)

Many police-alternative programs do not currently respond to calls involving domestic violence. Appropriate training on risk assessment and de-escalation tactics are critical. Police presence may escalate someone who has harmed their partner. Non-police responders may be seen as less threatening. An alternative response could keep some survivors safer by not escalating an abusive partner. Investing time and resources to train alternative programs broadens options for survivors.





What do non-police responses to relational violence look like?

Other communities have developed programs to respond to relational violence. Some examples include:

- The [Hey Bro Hotline](#) in New Zealand and [10 to 10 Helpline](#) in Massachusetts are crisis lines for people who use abuse and control in relationships. Peer advocates can de-escalate callers and refer them to resources for help.
- [Bringing in the Bystander®](#) is a program for bystander intervention in domestic and sexual violence on college campuses.
- [Reimagining Intimacy through Social Engagement \(RISE\) Project](#) in New York City uses community-centered interventions to build capacity to and respond to intimate partner violence. RISE works with credible messengers from crisis management systems to integrate perspectives to prevent gender-based violence.
- While not yet developed, California has designated a fund to create non-police emergency response pilot projects. The first [Community Response Initiative to Strengthen Emergency Systems \(C.R.I.S.E.S.\) Grant Pilot Program](#) awards will be announced in August 2023.

Survivors should have many options to choose from to create safety. Governments and funders will need to invest in creating new approaches to responding to relational violence. Violence prevention programs are a component of this. The more people who can get help earlier on, the less there will be need for more intensive and restrictive crisis responses.


Theme 5C: Survivors want people to understand their complex safety needs

 Problems	 Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survivors reported extreme measures to enforce safety (i.e., blocking the abuser/mutual contacts, scrubbing their online presence, moving away, “willpower”). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communities and systems can both do better to support survivors. Education on the dynamics of abuse, healthy relationships, and safe bystander intervention can help more survivors feel supported by friends, family and communities. Systems that increase options for safety can be more flexible with survivors’ needs. Increasing options for safety can also include building survivors’ skills and comfort with safety.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survivors who feel unsafe may obtain firearms for safety. Firearm ownership can increase risk of the survivor being injured or arrested. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers and systems can educate themselves on safe gun ownership practices. For survivors, this may involve additional safety planning to include safe storage and planning around weapons.

Safety planning strategy for meeting survivors’ complex safety needs

Many providers may not be prepared to discuss gun ownership with survivors. Providers can approach this in a few ways. Consider:

- Getting training on how to talk about gun ownership. The [BulletPoints Project](#) was created for clinicians, but could be used by a wider range of professions. This project provides information and tools to discuss firearm risk reduction.
- Talking about gun safety and storage during safety planning with survivors. [Domestic Violence and Firearm Safety: Survivor Safety Planning Around Firearms](#) is a toolkit for advocates and survivors. Safe storage is also important for any children in the home.
- Providers can also recommend firearm safety courses to ensure survivors are appropriately trained.



“I checked all of these because the people I’ve encountered in these organizations have been wonderful to me, but, honestly, I don’t feel safe, especially with the criminal case coming up. I’d have to move to an island to feel safe.”

Safety is complicated for many survivors of relational violence. Even with a lot of planning, they still cannot control or predict the behavior of an abusive partner. Building new programs and expanding systems for survivor safety can address this in the long-term. See [Theme 4](#), [5A](#), and [5B](#) for more on improving accountability and systems responses to crises. With more prevention and response options, more relationships never become abusive, and more people in relationships that are abusive get help earlier. Survivors in very dangerous relationships can then have the fuller attention of crisis responders. Improving community education can also support survivors. See [Theme 1B](#) and [1C](#) for more on engaging communities.

“[The abuse stopped with a] PFA and he was court ordered to move out. I stopped answering all calls, social media posts, his friends reaching out. I shut it all the way down. Unrelated, two years later, I was told by one of his friends that he died. I didn’t respond to that either. However, I did check with the city morgue to get confirmation.”

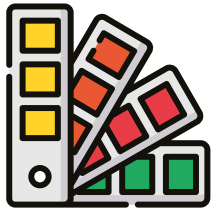
But some survivors still will not feel safe. Traumatic experiences can cause survivors to feel like they are always on alert, even after danger has passed. In the survey, some survivors wished for more practical solutions to feel safe. Some of these solutions can be easily accessed. Apps can help survivors check in with designated people easily. For example, [Safe Squad](#), designed by a survivor, is a discrete way to communicate about safety. Trauma-informed self-defense classes, like the [WAVE](#) class offered by Women in Transition, can help build survivors’ confidence. These, combined with resources like therapy, can help survivors build skills to feel safer.

Several survivors who responded to the survey also shared that they wished they had a firearm or that they obtained a firearm to feel safer. This sentiment is in line with reports that [firearm ownership among women is growing](#), especially for black women. Firearm ownership and self-defense can be tools that give survivors more confidence. However, survivors of relational violence are sometimes criminalized for using self-defense. This is especially true for women, trans and gender nonbinary people, and survivors who are people of color.

The report [From Victim to Victor: An Inquiry into Death by Incarceration, Gender, and Resistance in Pennsylvania](#) surveyed women, trans, and nonbinary people with sentences of life without parole. They found that a majority had experienced relational violence throughout their lives. In cases where someone was killed, almost one third of the cases involved a romantic partner. Self defense can come with significant risk to the survivor.

Risk to survivor safety should be taken very seriously. Providers must remember that safety planning is always a harm reduction approach. They should understand that some survivors will obtain self-defense items, including weapons. Providers can approach these conversations best with knowledge and non-judgement. Taking the time to become familiar with resources for safety planning around firearm ownership is critical to the safety of survivors and their families.

Reducing the overall number of guns that can be accessed by people who behave abusively is another important strategy. Improving enforcement of [Act 79](#) and advocacy for programs or laws that can remove weapons from high risk people and scenarios can also support survivor safety. Survivors may not want to pursue gun ownership if systems can keep them safer.



Conclusion

**“The mistreatment will continue if the root problem is not addressed: the serious social, economic, educational and cultural problem that this country and all the countries of the American continent have.”
[Spanish response]**

This report offers a window into some of the barriers to justice and healing experienced by survivors of relational violence in Philadelphia. It also offers ideas for responses that can be implemented at community, organizational, and systemic levels. Survivors want to have more options for safety. They want to have easier access to safety. And they want communities that understand their needs and can help them heal.

Survey responses highlighted the role that survivors’ communities already have in their lives. They also highlighted areas where community capacity could be developed. This is an especially important area to explore in developing violence interruption skills and tools for holding people who cause harm accountable.

Ultimately, the best intervention is prevention. Relational violence is deeply connected to other forms of structural oppression. Preventing relational violence can only happen as these systems of oppression and discrimination are broken down. Investing resources to create an equitable society is investing in safety. Systems can work in a both/and capacity: where survivors are supported, people who have acted harmfully are held accountable for their actions, and resources and education help ensure that people have all they need to live safely and freely. This report has focused on interventions for people who have already experienced harm, but emphasizes that prevention through social change is essential.

The diversity of survey responses speaks to the need to get more feedback from survivors in Philadelphia. Feedback can help design better resources for safety and justice. The ARTJ working group hopes that future groups will build on this knowledge. This survey has raised many questions about how community-specific responses to relational violence could look with the appropriate resources and information. What works for some does not work for all. Improving access to options is important for survivors. Investing in building these options will increase survivor’s ability to access justice.

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Michael Adjei-Poku became involved in this project to complete his MPH Fieldwork Experience for the University of Pennsylvania. He lent time and experience in designing and analyzing qualitative surveys and his work on this project was especially helpful!

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The views expressed in this guide do not necessarily reflect the views of Shared Safety, its member organizations, or the City of Philadelphia.

About Shared Safety and the ARTJ Working Group:

Shared Safety is a coordinated community response to relational violence in Philadelphia. Its goal is to coordinate and improve resources and responses to relational violence across systems. Shared Safety is made up of over 30 member organizations. These members include City government agencies and community-based organizations which serve survivors of relational violence.

Staff from **WOAR Philadelphia Center Against Sexual Violence** proposed ARTJ because survivors of relational violence have limited formal options for response and support to abuse and violence. Shared Safety's Coordinating Council selected Alternate Routes to Justice (ARTJ) as a 2023 working group project. This report is the result of that working group.

Learn more about Shared Safety at <https://www.sharedsafetyphila.org/>

For questions about this report, email info@sharedsafetyphila.org

Appendix:

Charts from the Alternate Routes to Justice Needs Assessment Survey

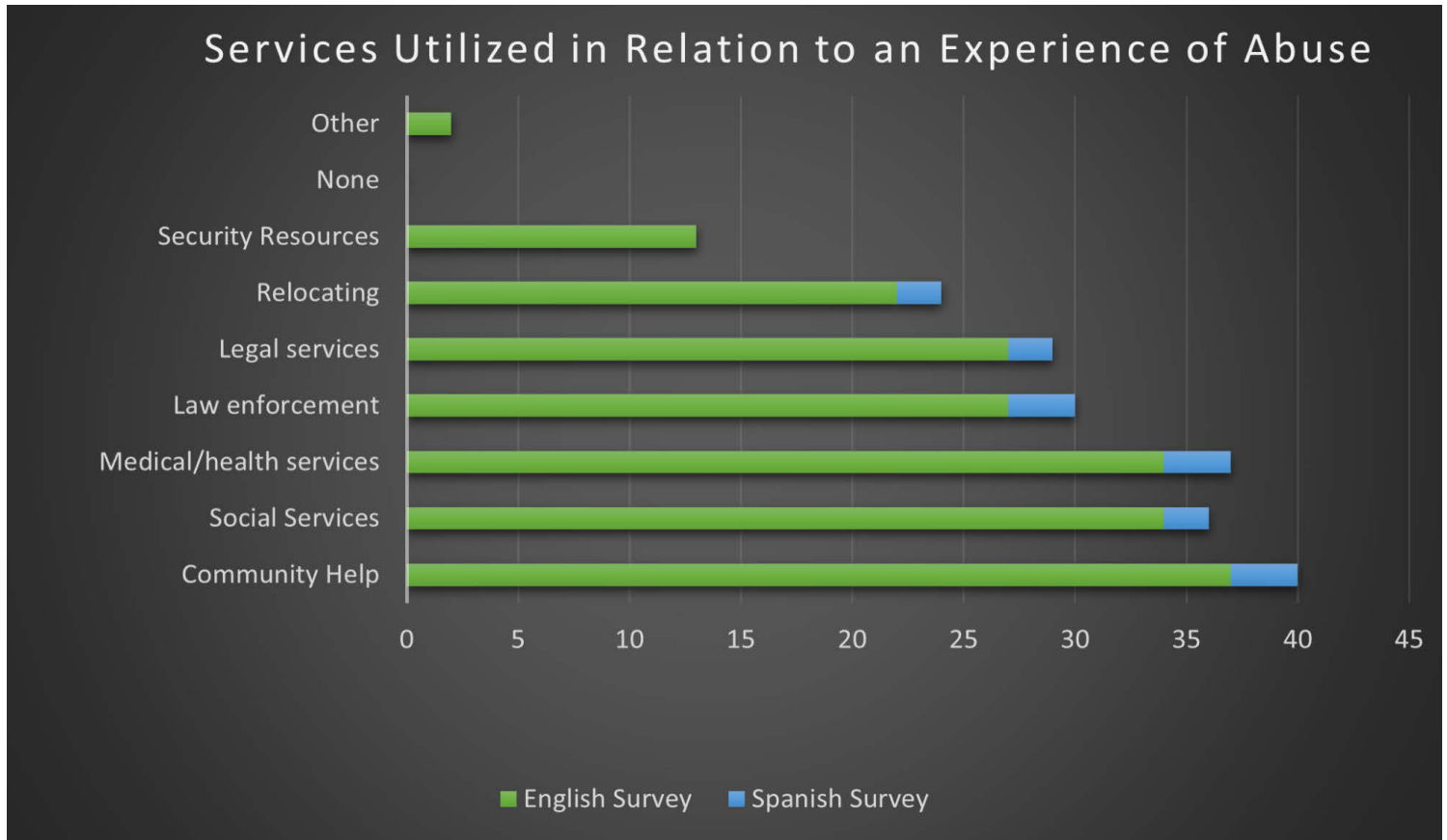
Several of the questions in the survey asked questions with “check all that apply” options. The charts in this section show these responses.

Two questions asked survivors about services they had used, and services that helped them feel safer. The questions gave several category options of the types of services with examples. The categories and examples are below:

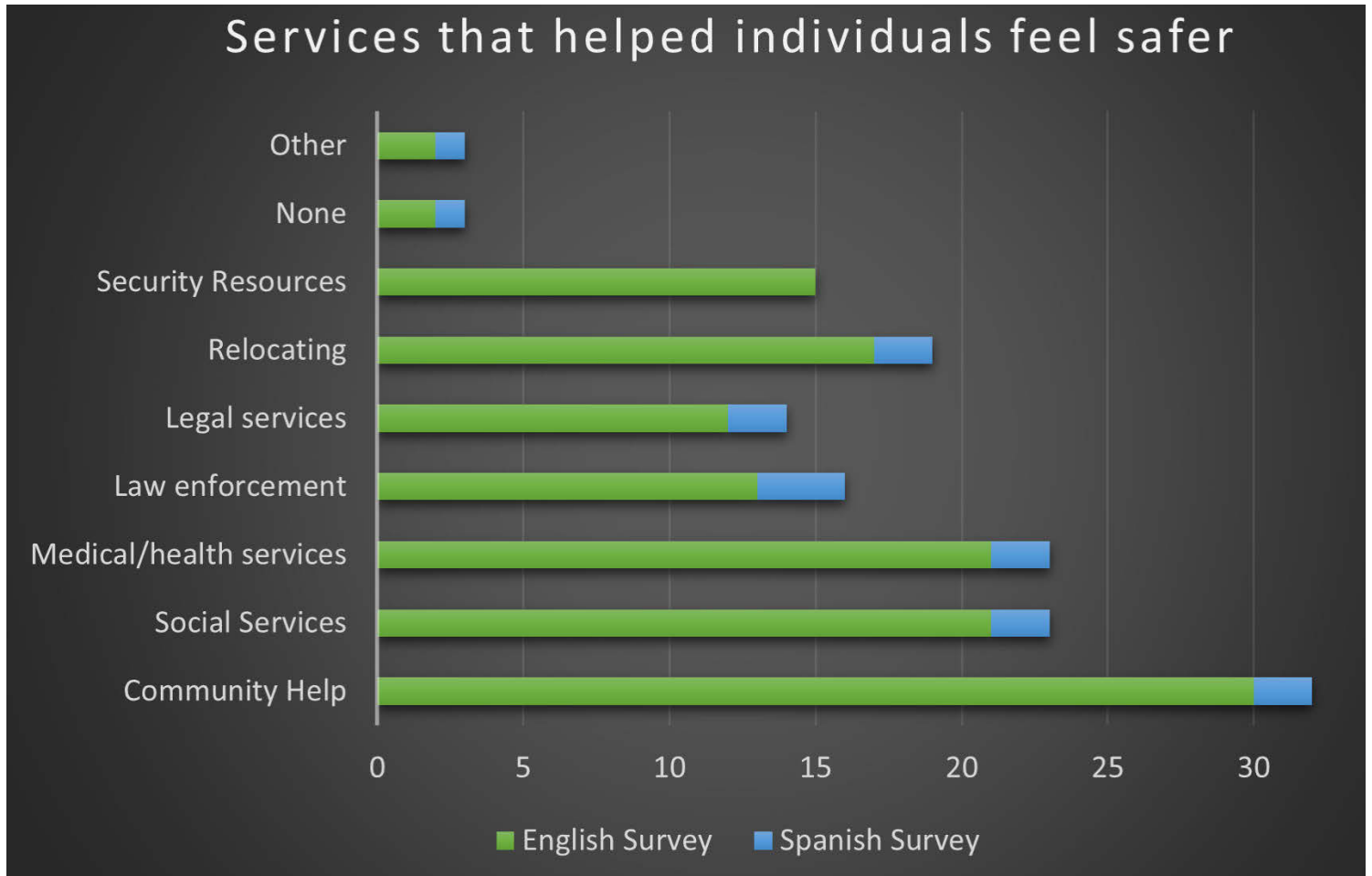
1. Community help. (Examples: Calling someone close to you. Having a safe person stay with you, staying at someone else’s house/apartment. Seeking informal counseling, etc.)
2. Social services. (Examples: Calling a hotline, going to a shelter. Government or non-profit help with food, housing, childcare, finances. Adult or child protective services, etc.)
3. Law enforcement. (Examples: Calling 9-1-1. Getting the responsible person arrested. Pressing charges for a criminal case, etc.)
4. Legal services. (Examples: Getting a Protection from Abuse order, working with an advocate or lawyer, etc.)
5. Medical/health services. (Examples: Seeing a therapist or counselor. Going to a doctor, nurse, hospital or urgent care, etc.)
6. Security resources. (Examples: Getting a weapon, learning self-defense, getting a security system or alarm, etc.)
7. Relocating (temporarily or permanently). (Examples: Staying with a friend, family member, or in a shelter. Moving to a new apartment/home, leaving the place you were staying, etc.)
8. None of these
9. Other: _____ [fill in the blank]

1. Have you used any of the below related to your experience of abuse? (Check all that apply)

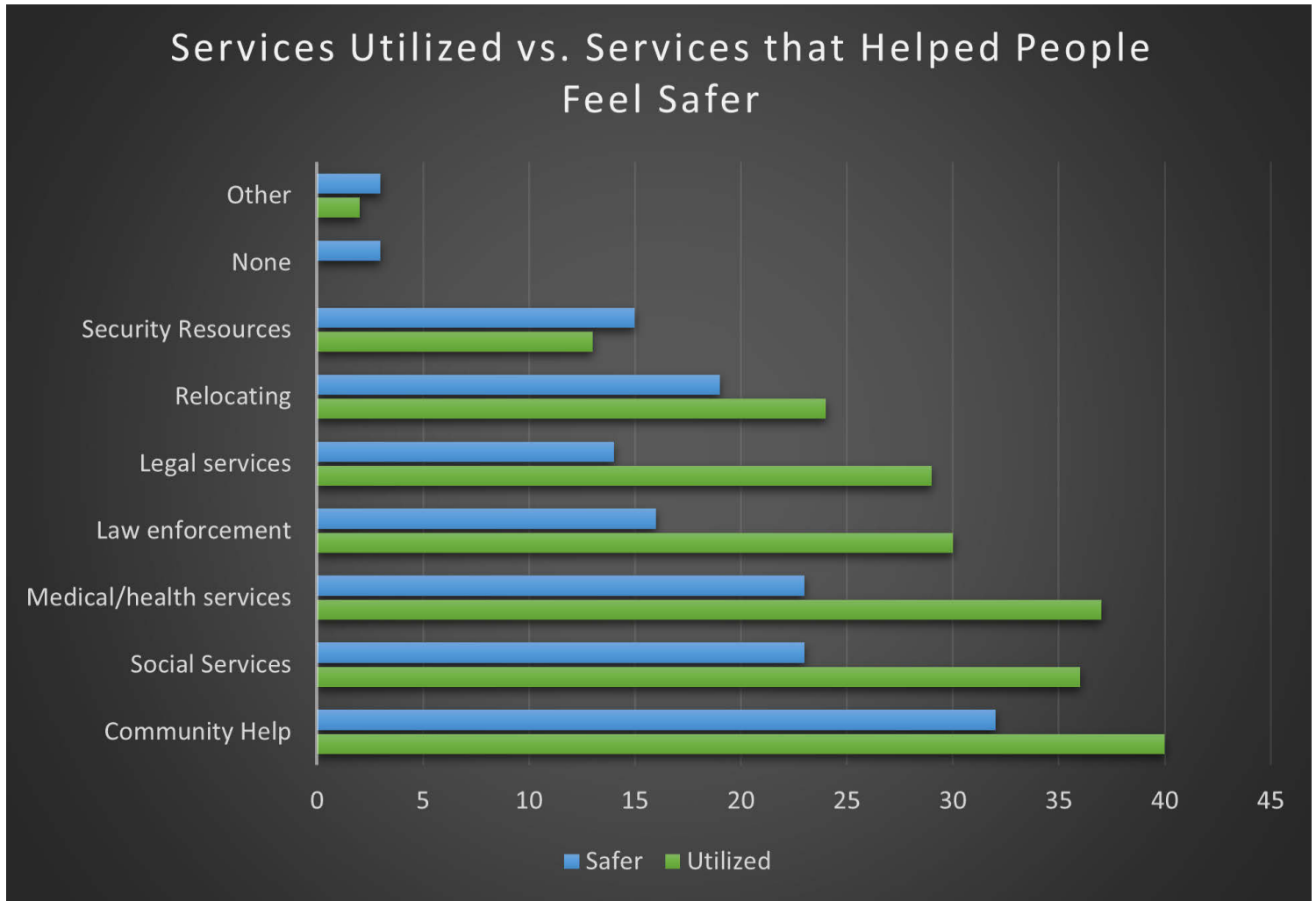
The most popular responses in this question were community help (40), medical/health services (37), and social services (36).



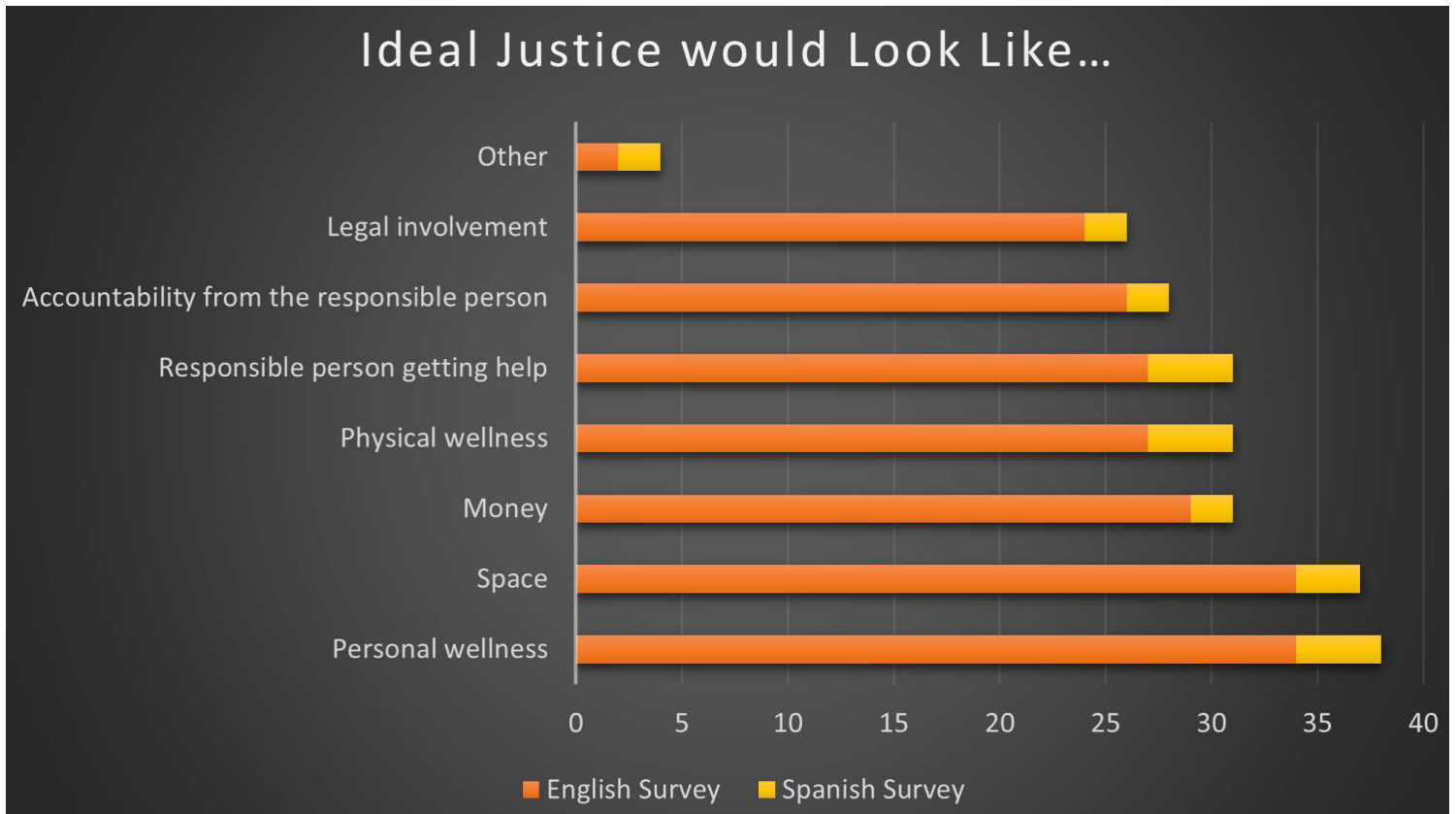
2. Have any of these options helped you feel safer? (Check all that apply). The most popular responses in this question were community help (32), medical/health services (23), social services (23), and relocating (19).



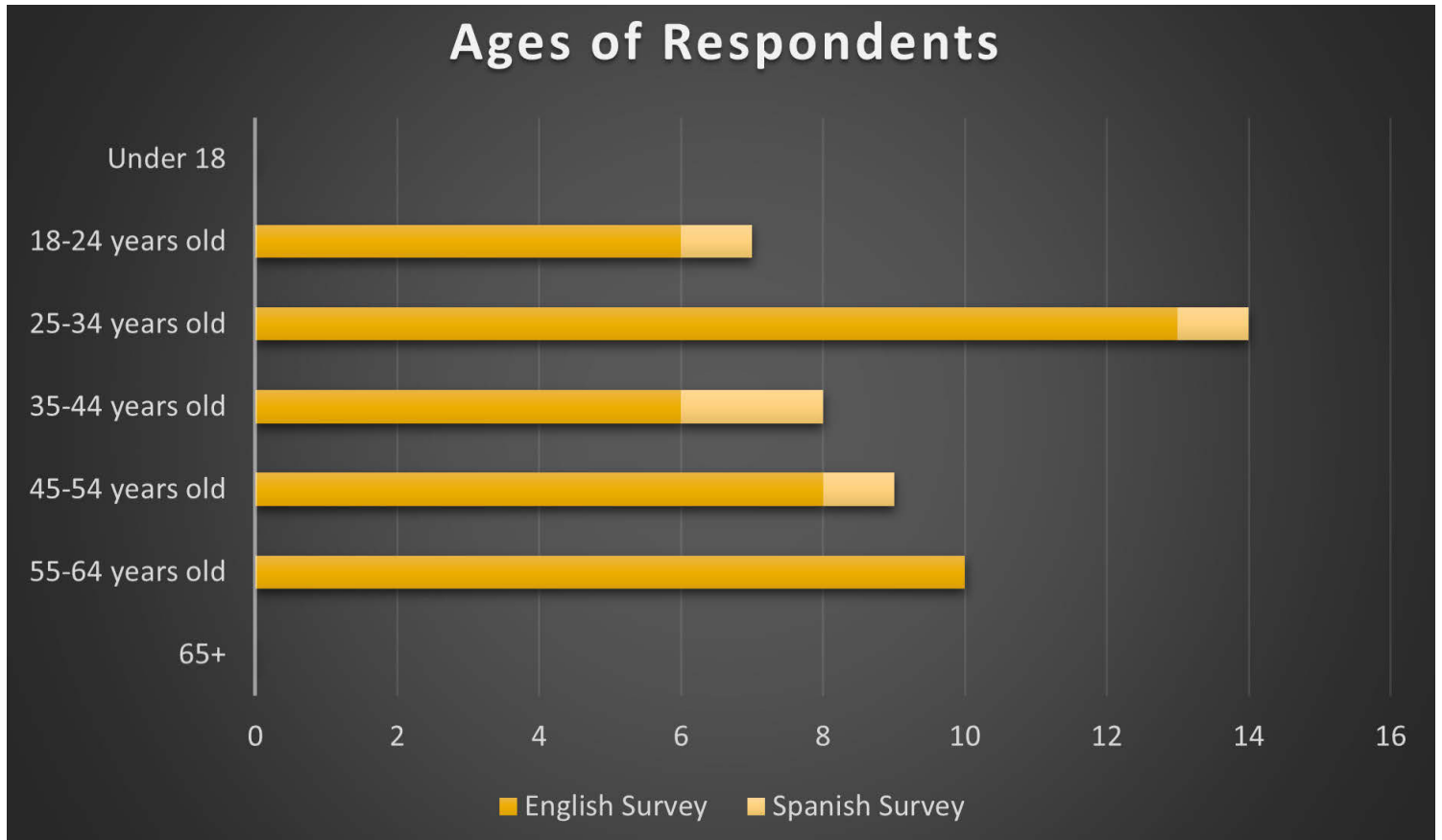
3. This chart compares the responses from the first two “check all that apply” questions. This is not a perfect comparison, but it shows how many survivors use services that may not necessarily help them feel safer.



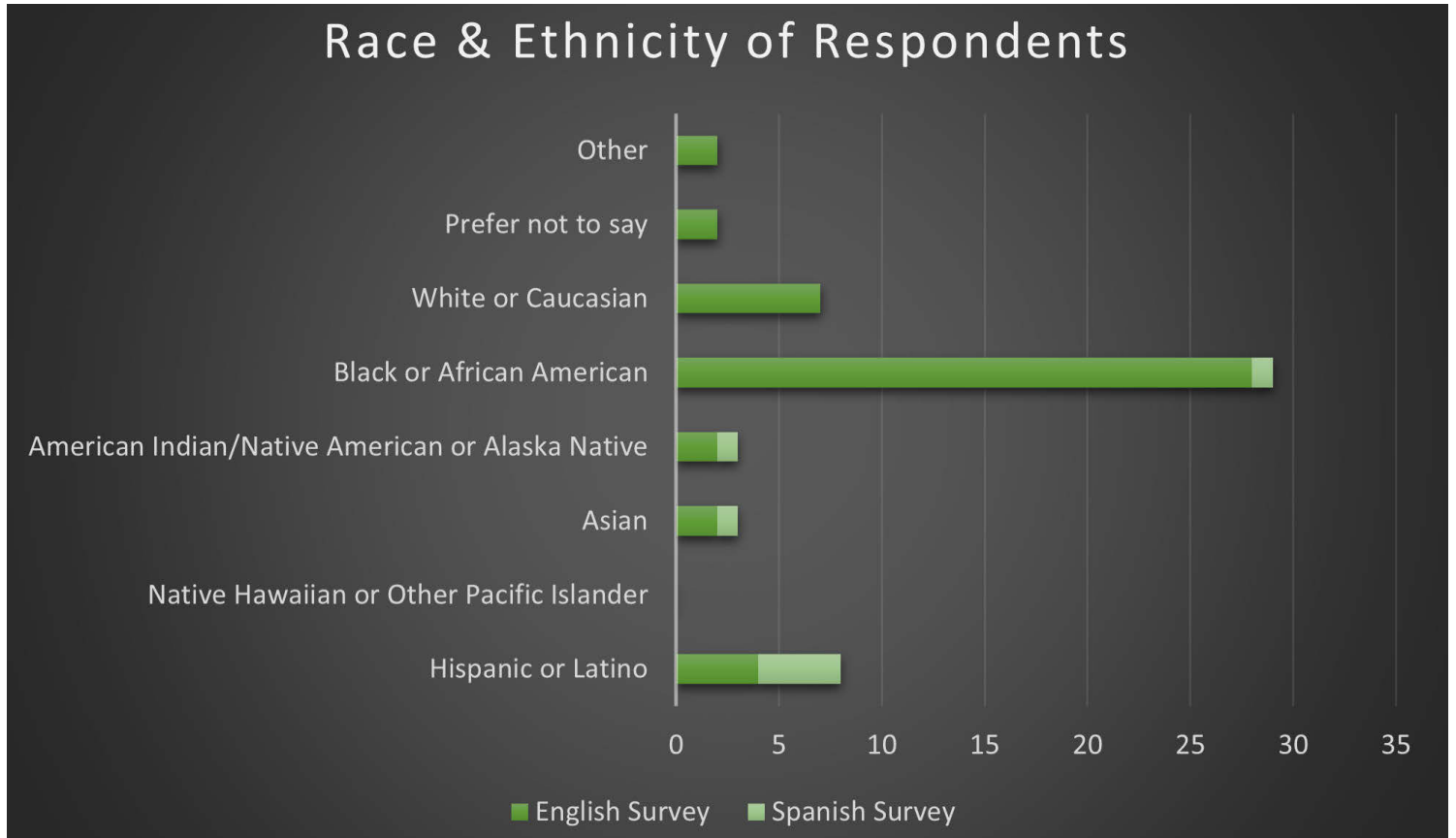
4. In an ideal world, what would **justice for the abuse you experienced look like?** (Check all that apply). Options included examples (previously listed in [What is Justice?](#)). The most popular responses to this chart were personal wellness (37), space (36), money (31), physical wellness (31), the responsible person getting help (31).



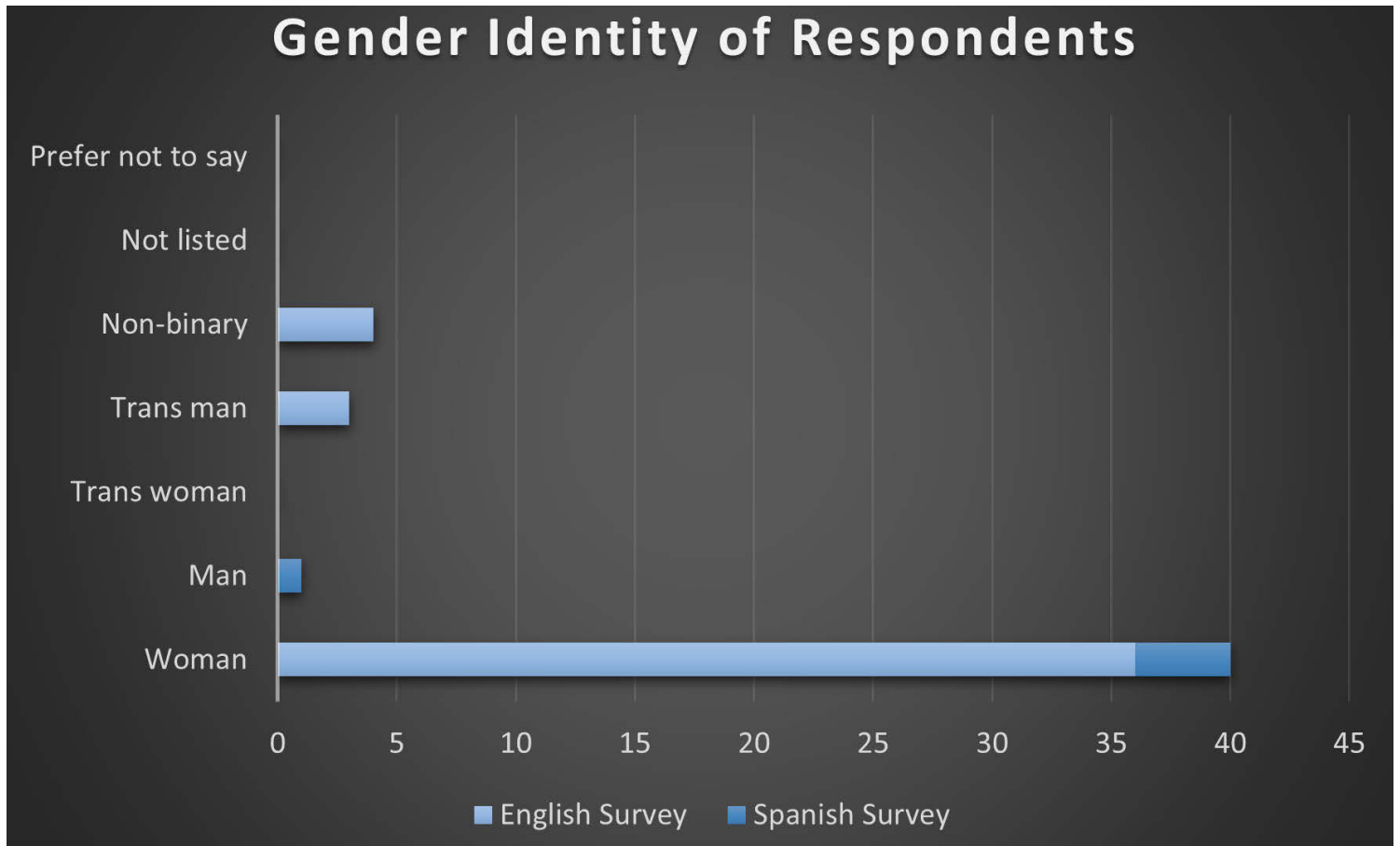
5. How old are you? The most popular age group of respondents was 25-34 years old (29%), and fairly evenly distributed otherwise. There were no respondents who reported their age as 65 or older, or younger than 18.



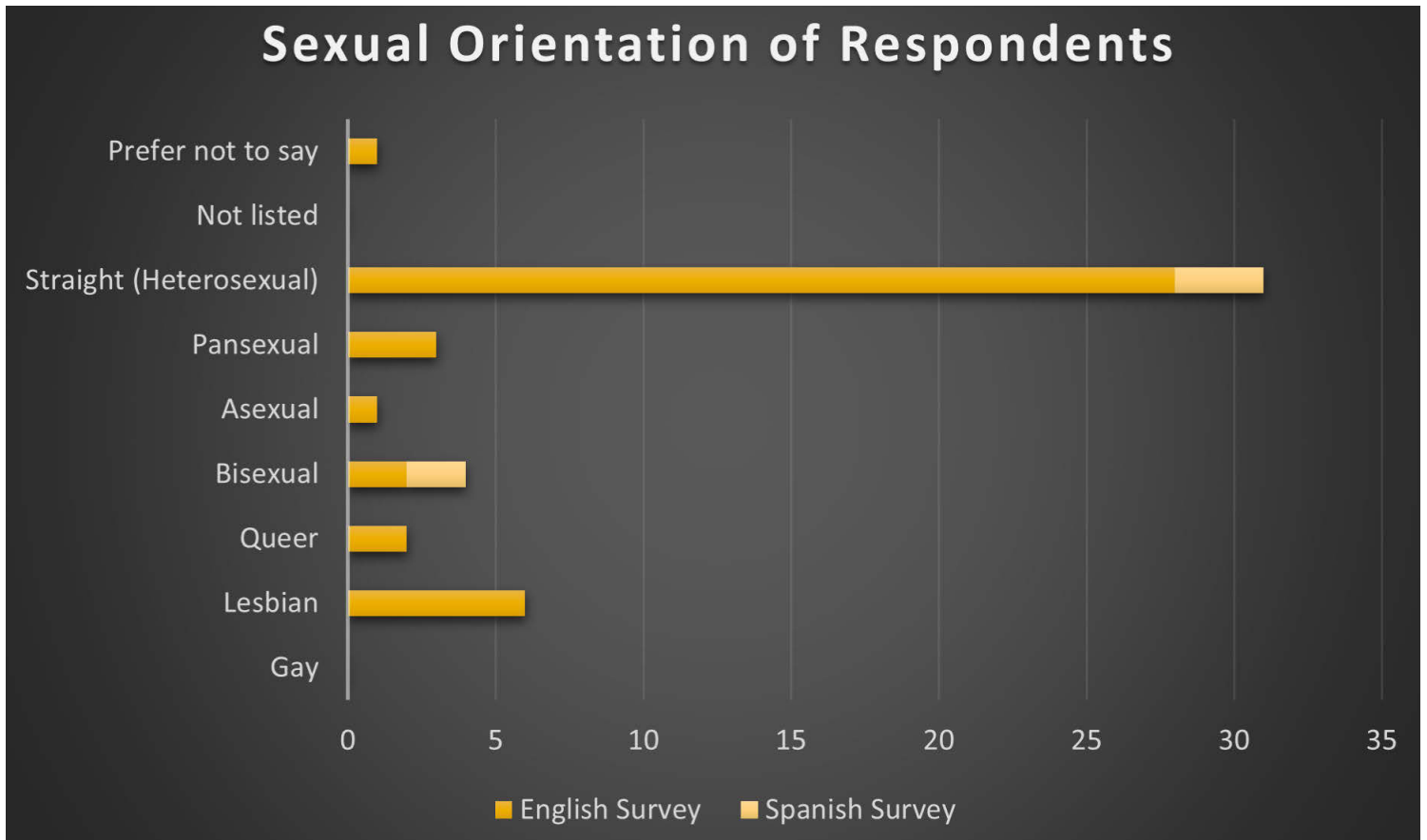
6. Choose one or more races you consider yourself to be. The majority (54%) of respondents identified as Black or African American.



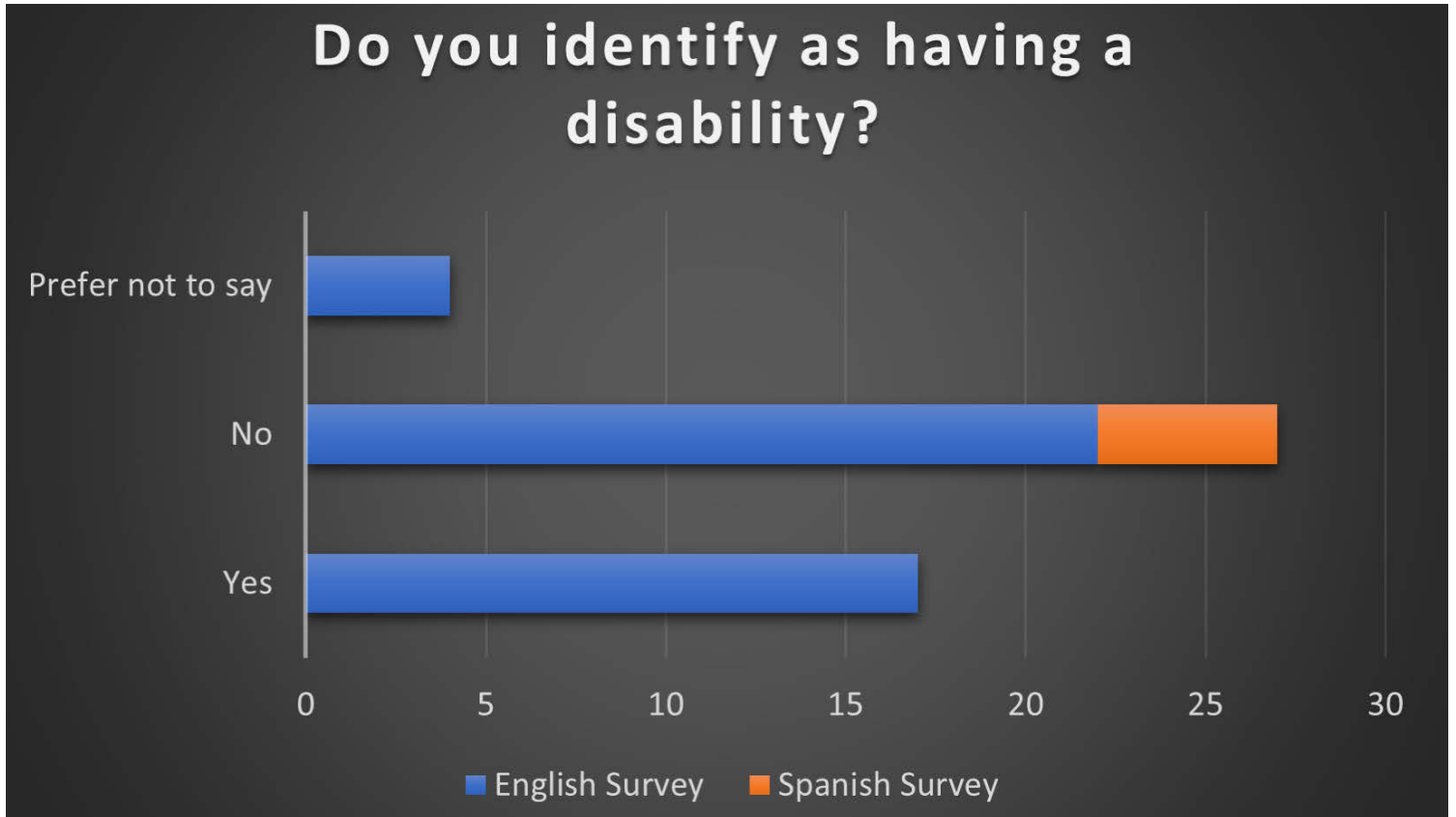
7. How do you describe your gender identity? The majority (83%) of respondents identified as women.



8. How do you identify your sexual orientation? The majority (64%) of respondents identified as straight. A third (33%) of respondents identified as lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, queer, or asexual.



9. Do you identify as having a disability? Over a third (35%) of respondents identified as having a disability.



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