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## **Statewide Survey Shows Marginalized Survivors Report Barriers Getting Help from Police, Courts and Social Services**

*However, Most Survivors Were Satisfied with their Experiences Regardless of Race*

**COLUMBUS, Ohio** (Feb. 22, 2022) -- About two thirds of domestic violence survivors were satisfied with their experiences with law enforcement, prosecutors, courts and social services, according to a [survey](#) conducted by the Ohio Domestic Violence Network. However, when survivors reported problems with how systems responded, significant indicators of bias emerged.

Black/African American women, other women of color, immigrants, LGBTQ+ and Deaf or Hard of Hearing survivors were over-represented among the participants who said they had difficulty getting help from the police, courts, and social services. And victims who felt their concerns were not taken seriously by the police were much more likely to come from marginalized communities.

Black/African American women and LGBTQ+ survivors feared violence from the police most often, about one third of the time. Almost twice as many African American/Black survivors as white survivors cited their fear of violence from the police as the reason they were unlikely to call the police in the future.

The [survey](#) of 505 survivors across the state occurred between May and August 2021. ODVN began planning the research in the months following the murder of George Floyd to better understand how survivors -- women of color, specifically, along with other marginalized groups -- experience law enforcement and other parts of the response system.

More than half the surveyed survivors had involvement with the child welfare system. More than a third of the survivors who said they were fearful to call the police in the future cited the worry of having their children removed as a factor in their inclination to not call the police again. Women of color were 21% more likely to have child protective services (CPS) involvement than white women. LGBTQ+ parents reported 15% higher CPS involvement than heterosexual parent survivors. A total of 41% of LGBTQ+ parents said they were threatened with their children being taken away, the most of any marginalized group.

One of the most compelling findings came from Deaf+ survivors, who consistently reported problems accessing language interpreters with police, courts, and social services providers. Twenty-two respondents were Deaf+, and only one of them reported being provided an interpreter when they called police.

"We stand ready to support and work with other Ohio response systems to increase safety for survivors and their children by addressing the findings in this data," said ODVN Executive Director Mary O'Doherty. "And ODVN will integrate these findings into our own strategic planning and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion work."

The project was made possible with grants from the Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services and the Ohio State Bar Foundation.

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## ***ODVN Survey Fact Sheet***

### *Law enforcement*

Overall, most survivors said they had positive experiences with law enforcement. Regardless of race, about two-thirds of survivors said they would call the police again. Survivors who were women of color called police more often than white women, and, as with white respondents, about two-thirds of the respondents said they would call the police again. The 35% of all participants who were not likely to call police again offered different reasons depending on their race. Almost twice as many African American/Black survivors as white survivors cited their *fear of violence from the police* as the reason they were unlikely to call the police if they were experiencing domestic violence.

### *Courts*

Survivors who were women of color sought help from courts at rates similar to white survivors. However, women of color reported that they felt court personnel did not take their concerns seriously 29% more often than white survivors. Women of color survivors were more likely than white survivors to say they were criticized by court personnel for seeking a protection order after previously having one.

Among the survivors who previously had a protection order (criminal or civil), 14% said they were criticized by court personnel for seeking a protection order after the new incident. Of those who experienced this, 39% said they were criticized by prosecutors, 59% said they were criticized by judges/magistrates and 25% said they were criticized by advocates.

### *Child Protective Services*

More than half (56%) of the respondents had some involvement with the child welfare system, and more than a quarter of them (27%) had negative experiences. Women of color survivors were involved with child welfare workers 21% more often than their white counterparts. Women of color who were not Black/African American experienced high rates of being threatened with losing their children, more than double the rate for white women.

### *Deaf+ Survivors*

One of the most compelling findings from the survey came from Deaf+ survivors, who described the negative impacts they experienced by not having appropriate language access. Twenty-two respondents, or about 5% of the respondents, were Deaf+, but only one of them reported being provided an interpreter when they called police. Many reported that family members were used to interpret, meaning there were no professional standards met and there was a loss of privacy. Several reported they were required to use pen and paper to communicate. Often, they say they were not fully separated from their abusers at the scene. Not having interpreters was a problem most often with law enforcement, but some also experienced this barrier in courts and social services.

***About the Ohio Domestic Violence Network (ODVN):*** *ODVN advocates on domestic violence related issues at the state and federal level. The network's 74 member programs served more than 111,000 survivors and their children in 2020. ODVN runs a training institute for advocates and allies that trained 13,199 individuals last year, a relocation assistance program, a legal assistance program, and a prevention program.*