

Seeking Safety, Equity, and Justice

Experiences of Survivors with Law Enforcement

Summary

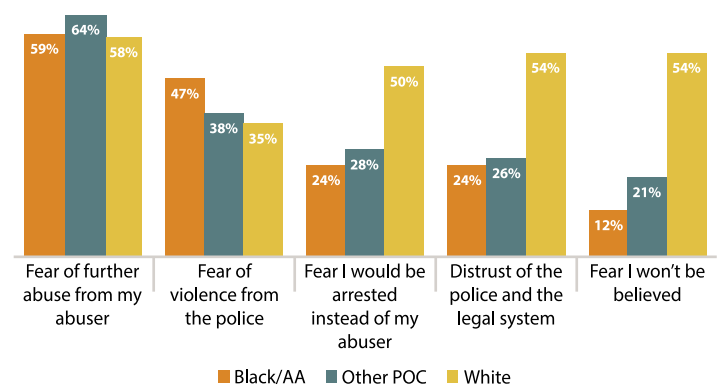
ODVN completed a statewide survey with 588 survivors to deepen our understanding of the experiences of survivors when seeking help from law enforcement, the court system, and victim service agencies. Here are some significant findings for survivors' experiences with law enforcement.

Significant Findings

- 91% of all female respondents had ever called the police due to domestic violence, and 60% of those respondents had called police during the most recent incident.
- Non-Black women of color and Black/African American respondents to the survey were more likely to call the police during or after their most recent domestic violence incident.
- Non-Black women of color called police more often to respond to domestic violence than Black/African American or white respondents.
- For all respondents regardless of race, fear of further abuse from their abuser was the most significant barrier to calling the police.
- White survivors said that other barriers to calling the police were fear of not being believed and distrust of the police and legal system (54% each).
- LGBTQ+ survivors were less likely to contact the police compared to straight survivors. 38% had never called the police. 35% of LGBTQ+ survivors cited fear of police violence as the biggest barrier to calling 911, a rate double that reported by heterosexual survivors.

Regardless of race, **about 2/3 of survivors** reported that **they would call the police again**.

Reasons for Not Calling the Police



- 21 of the 22 Deaf+ respondents reported not being provided an interpreter at the scene and that police only attempted communication through pen and paper, family members, or the abusive partner.
- 38% of survivors said that during their interaction with the police, the responding officers shifted blame to them, which had significant impacts on them as crime victims.

“He said if he had to write a report, he would be taking both of us.”

“They act like I deserved it...like I brought it on myself.”

Recommendations

- **Language Access**—Language Access is required under federal law for many first responders and federally funded service providers who should ensure their compliance with Title 6 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Programs need to develop a full capacity to serve Deaf+ survivors, to fulfill their obligations under the law, and to ensure that Deaf+ survivors have equal access to services by agencies that understand their experiences and culture.
- **Advocacy and Police Partnerships**—19% of respondents said they would not have called the police had they known their partner could be arrested. Survivors also called for increased access to advocacy, highlighting the need for law enforcement to work in partnership with advocates to provide survivor-centered responses and increase safety.
- **Ongoing Anti-Bias Training**—Implementing training for every system that responds to domestic violence as a core and ongoing resource could help ensure that Ohio victims perceive our justice system and social services as fair and free from bias.
- **Legislation: House Bill 3 would require police departments to use lethality assessments and refer survivors to domestic violence programs.** Preliminary findings in Cleveland PD indicate that danger assessments paired with focused interventions with high-risk abusers are reducing homicides. The Ohio General Assembly should pass HB 3 so that law enforcement officers across the state are required to perform lethality assessments.