

# Seeking Safety, Equity, and Justice

Experiences of LGBTQ+ Survivors

## Summary

ODVN completed a statewide survey with 588 domestic violence survivors to deepen our understanding of the experiences of survivors when seeking safety and services from law enforcement, courts, and social services agencies. Here are some significant findings from the LGBTQ+ survivors who responded to this survey.

## Significant Findings

- Of the 505 respondents, 67 identified as members of the LGBTQ+ community.
- 38% of LGBTQ+ survivors reported that they never called the police about their domestic violence experiences

**57% of LGBTQ+ survivors** reported being **blamed for the violence by the police**—higher than any other reporting demographic.

- 16% more LGBTQ+ survivors than heterosexual survivors said they would not call the police because of fear of not being believed.
- 35% of these survivors cited fear of violence from the police as the biggest barrier to calling 911, a rate almost double that reported by heterosexual survivors.
- Despite having similar rates of seeking help from courts, LGBTQ+ respondents accessed advocates 10% less often than heterosexual survivors.
- LGBTQ+ survivors' responses indicated the highest levels

of being criticized by judges, magistrates, prosecutors, and advocates for seeking a protection order after previously having one; more than three times as often.

- LGBTQ+ survivors were threatened with their children being taken away at the highest rate (41% of all LGBTQ+ survey respondents)—more than double the rate of heterosexual survivors.

**LGBTQ+ survivors** experienced child welfare system involvement **15% more often** than heterosexual survivors and the **highest rate of CPS involvement** of all groups.



## Recommendations

- **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.
- **Outreach Strategies**—Reaching and engaging with survivors of color requires staff diversity, building trust, thinking outside the box, building partnerships with their key community leaders, and an internal commitment to continuously address bias.
- **Child Welfare Reform**—Reform is needed so that marginalized communities are not over-represented in the child welfare system Ohio has invested impactful training resources in the Safe and Together CPS model for these cases; however, this model needs to be institutionalized throughout the CPS system.
- **Domestic Violence Specific Training**—Ongoing training specific to domestic violence could be beneficial to court personnel.
- **Community-oriented policing**—Police violence impacts the calculations domestic violence survivors who are women of color or LGBTQ+ make when deciding if they will call 911 in an emergency. Ohio needs to enact police reforms that improve the public's trust in law enforcement. More restrictions on the way law enforcement officers use force may help lessen the fear of police violence for domestic violence victims who need to call 911.