

COVID-19 IMPACT SURVEY FOR SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**SEPTEMBER
2021**

Through the end of May 2021,ⁱ COVID-19 took the lives of over 10,000 New York City (NYC) residents. In response to the pandemic, New York State issued quarantine measures, starting March 2020, to stop the spread of the disease.ⁱⁱ Two months later, in May 2020, Mayor Bill de Blasio launched the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence (ENDGBV) COVID-19 Response Work Group to identify and respond to challenges facing survivors of domestic violence. Members of the Work Group expressed concerns over how stay-at-home orders may isolate survivors from support systems, limit access to services, and put survivors at greater risk of physical and financial abuse. Studies released over the course of the pandemic have echoed these concerns, along with fears that the pandemic has resulted in a rise in unreported instances of domestic violence.ⁱⁱⁱ

ENDGBV sought to investigate the impact of the pandemic on rates of domestic violence^{iv} in NYC by analyzing Domestic Incident Reports (DIRs),^v visits to the NYC HOPE online resource directory, and calls to the NYC Domestic Violence Hotline. While DIRs fell by 7.6% between 2019 and 2020 (year-to-date), visits to the NYC HOPE website rose 265%. And, calls to the Hotline, operated by Safe Horizon, increased by 17% during the pandemic (3/16/20-3/15/21) compared to the previous year.

In order to understand the impact of the pandemic on survivors in NYC, ENDGBV surveyed survivors about (1) changes in abusive behavior and ways in which people causing harm used the pandemic to coerce and control survivors; (2) changes in survivors' ability to support themselves and their families as well as access services; and (3) basic demographics. The survey drew inspiration for a similar study conducted by Women's Aid in the United Kingdom.^{vi}

METHODS

ENDGBV released the survey online, on the ENDGBV website and NYC HOPE website home pages. Staff also shared the survey via e-mail and newsletter with a wide network of community-based organizations in NYC. Survey responses were recorded between December 17, 2020 and June 10, 2021. Eighty-five survivors^{vii} responded to the survey anonymously (see Appendix for a demographic breakdown of survey respondents).

The survey included 9 close-ended questions about impact on harm; 10 close-ended and 1 open-ended question about impact on survivors' access to basic essentials and services; 5 close-ended questions on demographics; and, 1 open-ended final feedback question.

The survey was available in 13 languages: English, Spanish, Arabic, Bangla, French, Haitian Creole, Russian, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Urdu, Simplified Chinese, and Traditional Chinese.^{viii}

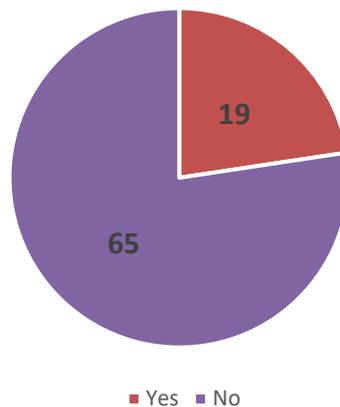
RESULTS

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON HARM

Abuse at the Time of Survey: People causing harm have taken advantage of COVID-19 to control survivors

Twenty-three percent (19 of 84) of respondents indicated that they were being harmed by an intimate partner or family member at the time they submitted the survey (see Figure 1). Seventy-four percent (14 of 19) of those respondents identified as women (see Table 3 in Appendix).

Figure 1: Are you currently being hurt by an intimate partner or family member? (N=84)



Seventy-eight percent (14 of 18) of survivors experiencing abuse at the time they completed the survey indicated that the person causing them harm had more control over their lives. Over half (9 of 16) indicated that the person causing harm had blamed them for the economic impact on the household. And, half (8 of 16) indicated that the person causing harm had blamed them for not being able to get food. (see Table 1).

The power tripping of abusers has increased. They feel safe to breach boundaries.

People have been more abusive in some ways during the pandemic because of the heightened level of stress. We need to start taking ableist hate seriously. Reporting it is difficult because there are no dedicated agencies. Our only option is to go to the police, and they tend to share the biases of the abusers. We need a response to ableist violence, discrimination and other expressions of hate.¹

¹The report contains pull quotes from survey responses in purple alongside summaries and statistics from the respective survey questions.

Table 1: Abuse at the Time of Survey: Impact of COVID-19 on Abuse

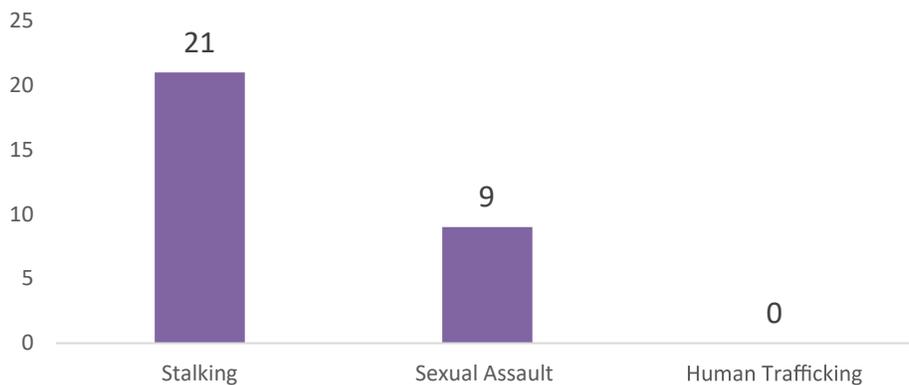
| Impact | N | Number of Survivors | Percentage of Survivors |
|--|----|---------------------|-------------------------|
| The person causing me harm has more control over my life. | 18 | 14 | 78% |
| The person causing me harm has made me feel bad for worrying about COVID-19. | 17 | 10 | 59% |
| The person causing me harm has made me feel more worried about COVID-19. | 16 | 7 | 44% |
| The person causing me harm has blamed me for the economic impact on our household. | 16 | 9 | 56% |
| The person causing me harm has blamed me for not being able to get food. | 16 | 8 | 50% |
| The person causing me harm has blamed me for not being able to get medication we need. | 16 | 4 | 25% |
| The person causing me harm has withheld medication from me more often (e.g., saying unable to obtain due to lockdown). | 16 | 2 | 13% |

During the pandemic, survivors reported experiencing stalking and sexual assault

Eighty-one percent (21 of 26) and 35% (9 of 26) of respondents to a question about experiencing domestic violence during the pandemic reported experiencing stalking and sexual assault, respectively (see Figure 2).

Mucho miedo [I'm very afraid]

Figure 2: Have you experienced any of the following during the COVID-19 pandemic? [can select more than one] (N=26)



IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON SURVIVORS' ACCESS TO BASIC ESSENTIALS

The pandemic has negatively impacted the financial, work, and housing situation of survivors

Eighty-four percent (70 of 83) of those who responded to a question about access to basic essentials indicated that they experienced increased financial hardship during the pandemic (see Table 2).

I feel trapped and it bothers me very much that I don't have a job that i [sic] make enough to pay childcare.

Estado sin trabajo casi todo el tiempo de pandemia, después encontré un trabajo y nunca me pagaron por un mes [Been out of work most of the pandemic time, then I found a job and they never paid me for a month]

Fifty-three percent (43 of 81) and 11% (9 of 80) of those who responded to this question indicated they were afraid of losing their home or had lost their home, respectively, during the pandemic (see Table 2).

Even with a housing voucher housing is still not accessible during covid [sic].

Fifty-four percent (43 of 80) of those who responded to this question indicated that they had lost their job during the pandemic (see Table 2).

The lack of access to funds especially since I've been out of work is overwhelming and sometimes despairing.

Ahora necesitamos más ayuda al menos para mí ha sido difícil encontrar trabajo [Now we need more help at least for me it has been difficult to find work]

Fifty-two percent (43 of 83) of those who responded to this question indicated that they had difficulty accessing the technology they required.

Internet access!

Table 2: Impact Of COVID-19 On Survivors' Access to Basic Essentials

| Impact | N | Number of Survivors | Percentage of Survivors |
|--|----|---------------------|-------------------------|
| I have lost my job. | 80 | 43 | 54% |
| I have experienced increased financial hardship. | 83 | 70 | 84% |
| I have not been able to get the essential food and supplies I need for myself or myself and my family. | 83 | 32 | 39% |
| I have not been able to get the medication that I require for me or my family. | 81 | 19 | 23% |
| I have lost my home. | 80 | 9 | 11% |
| I am concerned that I might lose my home. | 81 | 43 | 53% |
| I have lost access to childcare. | 78 | 14 | 18% |
| I have been unable to or have had difficulties accessing the technology (e.g., Wifi, computer, mobile phone, etc.) that I require. | 83 | 43 | 52% |
| I have sought but not been able to get mental health services. | 79 | 30 | 38% |

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON SURVIVORS' ACCESS TO SERVICES

Survivors have sought financial assistance and assistance with necessities during the pandemic

Forty-three percent (30 of 69) of respondents sought financial assistance from an organization during the pandemic. Thirteen percent (9 of 69) and 10% (7 of 69) of respondents applied for the City's One Shot Deal (one-time financial assistance) and the NYC Micro-Grant Program^{ix} for survivors (emergency financial assistance), respectively, during the pandemic (see Figure 3).

Yo e aplicado para renta ,luz y gaz y no e tenido respuesta [I have applied for rent, electricity and gas and I have not had an answer]

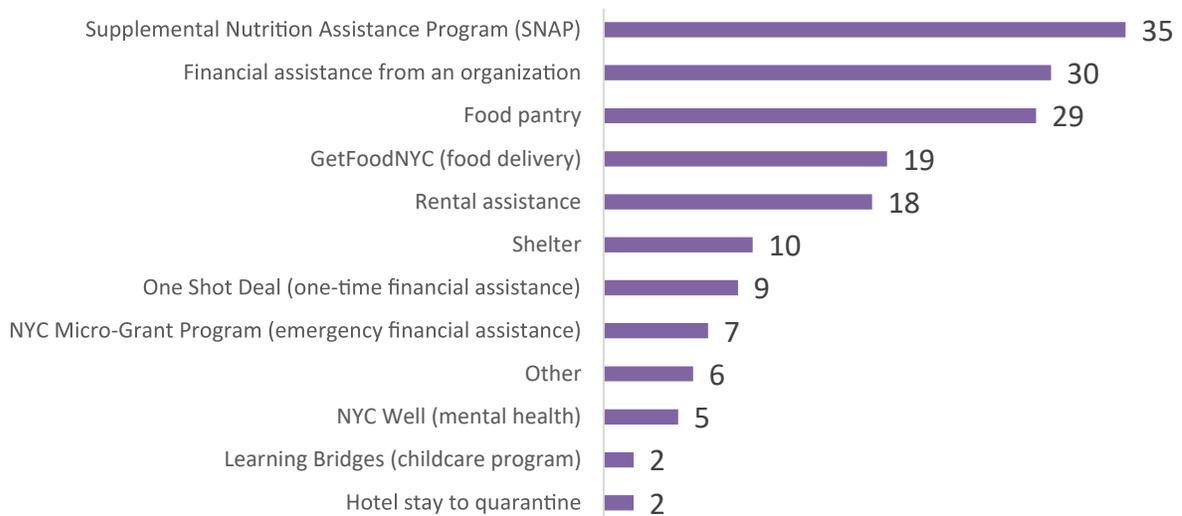
Fifty-one percent (35 of 69), 36% (25 of 69), and 28% (19 of 69) of respondents applied for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), sought assistance from food pantries, and signed up for GetFoodNYC (food delivery), respectively, during the pandemic (see Figure 3).

Survivors have sought housing and shelter assistance during the pandemic

Twenty-six percent (18 of 69) and 14% (10 of 69) of respondents sought rental and shelter assistance, respectively, during the pandemic (see Figure 3).

sometimes [sic] I stay in a shelter but after what I experienced staying at the shelter I'm scared of my life. They hate I'm gay and they hate I'm Asian.

Figure 3: What government and community-based organization services, if any, have you applied for or accessed to help you during Covid-19? [can select more than one] (N=69)



Survivors indicated that they required further assistance and resources to support themselves and their families

Thirty-six percent (9 of 25) and 16% (4 of 25) of respondents noted that they required further housing/rental assistance and aid with gas/electric bills, respectively, during the pandemic (see Figure 4).

Para pagar mi renta y la luz y el gas [To pay my rent and electricity and gas]

Fue algo muy fuerte fuimos excluidos económicamente de muchas cosas por no tener documentos perdí un familiar en tiempo de COVID me quedé sin trabajo y estoy luchando por salir Adelante [It was something very strong, we were financially excluded from many things for not having documents, I lost a relative in time of COVID, I was left without a job and I am struggling to get ahead.]

Twelve percent (3 of 25) of respondents noted that they required both further legal and childcare assistance during the pandemic (see Figure 4).

Dealing with my abuser as navigating custody of my children and visitations are difficult, gaslighting and lack of proper support.

I need childcare for my daughter. I need a summer camp. I'm only working 2 days a week due to childcare. I'm afraid I'm going to lose my job. I don't make enough to pay a sitter 100.00 dollars a day. I couldn't get into learning bridges nor can she attend school right now. The window with the DOE has closed to opt your child back into school. I am frustrated and feel stuck right now.

**Figure 4: What other programs or service would help you?
[open ended] (N=25)**

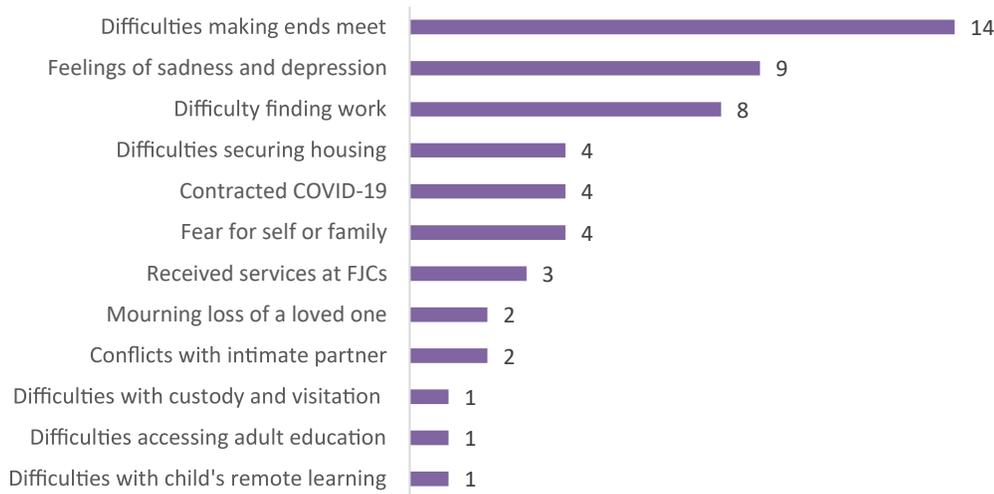


CONCLUSION

Based on insights shared by providers; data collected from NYC HOPE website and NYC Domestic Violence Hotline; and the online survey of survivors analyzed above, it is clear that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on domestic violence survivors in NYC.^x Responses to the survey indicate that through the pandemic survivors' experiences of abuse grew worse, as did their financial, work, and housing situation. Survivors have sought assistance from the City and community-based organizations to address financial difficulties, secure necessities, and maintain or access housing; and, survivors indicated that they require further financial and housing resources. Overall, survivors expressed concern over providing for themselves and their families, securing housing, finding work, addressing depression and loss, and supporting their children (see Figure 5).

En todo esta pandemia e sufrido mucha depresión por mi trabajo de no poder darle un lugar para mi hija [Throughout this pandemic, I have suffered a lot of depression because of my work not being able to give a place for my daughter]

**Figure 5: Is there anything else that you would like to add related to your experience during COVID-19?
[open ended] (N=34)**



ENDGBV RESPONDS TO COVID-19

ENDGBV COVID-19 RESPONSE WORKING GROUP

ENDGBV led a COVID-19 Response Work Group that met regularly from May to July 2020, to identify challenges in serving survivors, coordinate public awareness efforts, and highlight best practices. The workgroup engaged a diverse group of more than 20 providers representing multi-disciplinary services and included providers serving culturally specific populations, as well as representation from community-based organizations of all sizes, City agencies, and NYC Councilmember Helen Rosenthal. The goal of the Response Work Group was to identify actionable steps in three areas: (1) Public Awareness Efforts – explore ways to enhance and adapt efforts to share information and resources, knowing that survivors may have few outlets outside of their homes during COVID-19; (2) Best Practices for Remote Services – identify best practices in delivering services remotely and explore how the City can support providers during the shift in practice models; and (3) Survivor Needs – explore ways to enhance and expand existing resource and service systems, with a focus on prevention, disruption, and intervention, to meet survivor needs during COVID-19. The Response Work Group report can be accessed [here](#).

ENDGBV SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH AND PAID ADVERTISING

During COVID-19, ENDGBV employed digital platforms, outreach to essential businesses, texts sent through New York City Emergency Management (NYCEM) Notify NYC updates, paid advertising, in addition to public service announcements placed on LinkNYC kiosks, to highlight survivor resources such as the City's NYC HOPE online resource directory and 24-hour NYC Domestic Violence Hotline. A report on ENDGBV's social media outreach and paid advertising can be accessed [here](#).

- On April 6, 2020, NYCEM released the first domestic violence-related text message through Notify NYC. Following the text messages, ENDGBV recorded immediate increases in traffic to the NYC HOPE Resource Directory. Over an almost twenty-week period, April 6 to August 17, 2020, Notify NYC sent ten citywide alerts to nearly one million subscribers. Over that period, NYC HOPE received a total of 104,881 visits from 82,318 visitors, of whom 31,020 were new visitors – experiencing 21 times more visits and 44 times more new visits compared to the same period in 2019.

- ENDGBV ran a paid social media campaign, “We Understand,” from April 1 to June 30, 2020. The campaign featured reasons why the solution to gender-based violence is not as simple as “just leaving”—in English, Spanish, and Simplified Chinese. ENDGBV purchased advertising on Google search, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The campaign correlated to 13 times more visits to NYC HOPE through links on Google search, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram compared to the same time frame in 2019— marking 63 average daily visits during the campaign, compared to 5 average daily visits during the same period the year before. In addition, ENDGBV partnered with Shared Value Media to work with 17 community-based partners to amplify the “We Understand” campaign on their social platforms with hyperlocal messaging.

- ENDGBV partnered with NYC+CO to place public service announcements at over 1,700 LinkNYC Kiosks across NYC,iv highlighting NYC HOPE, the City's 24-hour Domestic Violence Hotline, and the continued operation of domestic violence shelters during the pandemic. The campaign ran May 1 through August 31, 2020.

- ENDGBV facilitated the placement of multilingual posters with information about NYC HOPE and the NYC Domestic Violence Hotline in convenience stores and check cashing locations citywide.

- ENDGBV partnered with First Lady Chirlane McCray to release a public service announcement on April 15, 2020 to let survivors know that help is available and to connect them to resources. The PSA was shared on multiple platforms, including social media and the City's NYC Life and NYC Gov television channels.

- To amplify messaging around the availability of gender-based violence services, ENDGBV shared their social media toolkit with all City agencies and Councilmembers, and regularly posted and re-posted resource information on its Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram pages.

EMERGENCY FINANCIAL RELIEF MICROGRANTS PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

In partnership with the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City (Mayor's Fund), through a contract with Sanctuary for Families, ENDGBV launched a first-of-its-kind microgrant initiative to assist domestic and gender-based violence survivors experiencing safety, economic, and housing challenges exacerbated by COVID-19. The microgrant program disbursed a total of \$468,750 to 377 survivors, with grants averaging \$1,243.37. Almost all the program's clients were female; 40% of clients were Latina/Latino/Latinx, 32% were Black, 13% were Asian, 10% were White, 3% were Middle Eastern, and 1% were American Indian/Alaska Native/Native American; 95% made less than \$40,000 annually; 83% had two or more people in their household; and 65% were immigrants. An evaluation conducted by ENDGBV found that increased housing stability was a critical impact of the program, with 35% of all grants disbursed, over \$163,000, supporting rent, short-term housing, or other housing needs. Significantly, 48% of clients reported feeling safer after participating in the program; 44% reported that their children felt safer; and 46% reported that their mental health had improved. The evaluation report can be accessed [here](#).

NORTONLIFELOCK PARTNERSHIP

To ensure that survivors are using technology safely, ENDGBV began distributing free anti-spyware software licenses to 2,000 FJC clients through a public/private initiative through the Mayor's Fund with partner Norton LifeLock, to help survivors secure their devices and reduce spyware/malware threats. The press release can be accessed [here](#).

T-MOBILE PARTNERSHIP

To ensure that survivors are using technology safely, ENDGBV began distributing free anti-spyware software licenses to 2,000 FJC clients through an initiative with partner Norton LifeLock, to help survivors secure their devices and reduce spyware/malware threats. To support survivors and minimize the digital divide many have experienced, ENDGBV, in partnership with the Mayor's Fund, will be distributing free mobile devices to 1,000 survivors seeking services through the FJCs or one of our non-profit service providers. In addition to receiving a free mobile device, survivors will have the option to access discounted mobile plans through T-Mobile on an ongoing basis. The press release can be accessed [here](#).



ENDNOTES

- ⁱ “COVID-19 Daily Counts of Cases, Hospitalizations, and Deaths,” NYC OpenData, accessed June 15, 2021, <https://data.cityofnewyork.us/Health/COVID-19-Daily-Counts-of-Cases-Hospitalizations-an/rc75-m7u3>.
- ⁱⁱ Governor Andrew M. Cuomo’s “New York State on PAUSE” executive order included a directive for all non-essential businesses statewide to close in-person operations starting 8pm on Sunday, March 22, 2020.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Chandan, Joht Singh, Julie Taylor, Caroline Bradbury-Jones, Krishnarajah Nirantharakumar, Eddie Kane, and Siddhartha Bandyopadhyay. “COVID-19: a public health approach to manage domestic violence is needed.” *The Lancet Public Health* 5, no. 6 (2020): e309, [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667\(20\)30112-2/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667(20)30112-2/fulltext); Piquero, A. R., Jennings, W. G., Jemison, E., Kaukinen, C., & Knaul, F. M. (2021). Evidence from a systematic review and meta-analysis: Domestic Violence during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 101806; Hsu, L. C., & Henke, A. (2021). COVID-19, staying at home, and domestic violence. *Review of Economics of the Household*, 19(1), 145-155; Muldoon, K. A., Denize, K. M., Talarico, R., Fell, D. B., Sobiesiak, A., Heimerl, M., & Sampsel, K. (2021). COVID-19 pandemic and violence: rising risks and decreasing urgent care-seeking for sexual assault and domestic violence survivors. *BMC medicine*, 19(1), 1-9.
- ^{iv} The research looked at domestic violence broadly, examining both intimate partner violence and family violence.
- ^v A DIR is a form that police must complete every time they respond to a domestic incident, whether or not an arrest is made.
- ^{vi} Women’s Aid. (2020). *A Perfect Storm: The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on domestic abuse survivors and the services supporting them*.
- ^{vii} While this is not a representative sample of survivors in NYC, it provides a snapshot into the lives of what some survivors in NYC experienced during the pandemic.
- ^{viii} These are languages required by NYC Local Law 30. For more information about NYC Local Law 30, please see: <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/home/downloads/pdf/311/Local-Law-30.pdf>.
- ^{ix} For more information about the NYC Micro-Grant Program, please see the program evaluation summary here: <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/ocdv/downloads/pdf/Emergency-Financial-Relief-Microgrants-Program-Evaluation-Summary-Report.pdf>.
- ^x Although there was a decrease in reporting to NYPD, there were significant increases seen in other non-law enforcement services and that providers have attributed that to survivors not feeling safe to call police during pandemic especially if they has to remain home with the abusive partner.

APPENDIX: DEMOGRAPHICS

Table 3: Borough

| BOROUGH | SURVIVORS | | SURVIVORS EXPERIENCING ABUSE AT TIME OF SURVEY | |
|---------------|-----------|---------|--|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Queens | 30 | 35% | 4 | 21% |
| Bronx | 25 | 29% | 4 | 21% |
| Brooklyn | 13 | 15% | 2 | 11% |
| Manhattan | 11 | 13% | 4 | 21% |
| Staten island | 4 | 5% | 3 | 16% |
| Missing | 2 | 2% | 2 | 11% |
| TOTAL | 85 | | 19 | |

Table 4: Gender Identity

| GENDER IDENTITY | SURVIVORS | | SURVIVORS EXPERIENCING ABUSE AT TIME OF SURVEY | |
|-------------------|-----------|---------|--|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Woman | 72 | 85% | 14 | 74% |
| Man | 7 | 8% | 3 | 16% |
| Transgender Woman | 2 | 2% | 0 | 0% |
| Non-binary | 1 | 1% | 0 | 0% |
| Missing | 3 | 4% | 2 | 11% |
| TOTAL | 85 | | 19 | |

APPENDIX: DEMOGRAPHICS

Table 5: Age

| AGE | SURVIVORS | | SURVIVORS EXPERIENCING ABUSE AT TIME OF SURVEY | |
|--------------|-----------|---------|--|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| 21-30 | 13 | 15% | 5 | 26% |
| 31-40 | 39 | 46% | 7 | 37% |
| 41-50 | 26 | 31% | 5 | 26% |
| 51-60 | 5 | 6% | 0 | 0% |
| Missing | 2 | 2% | 2 | 11% |
| TOTAL | 85 | | 19 | |

Table 6: Race

| RACE | SURVIVORS | | SURVIVORS EXPERIENCING ABUSE AT TIME OF SURVEY | |
|---|-----------|---------|--|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Black or African American | 21 | 25% | 4 | 21% |
| White | 16 | 19% | 6 | 32% |
| Two or more races | 12 | 14% | 2 | 11% |
| Asian | 5 | 6% | 1 | 5% |
| Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | 1 | 1% | 1 | 5% |
| Missing | 30 | 35% | 5 | 26% |
| TOTAL | 85 | | 19 | |

APPENDIX: DEMOGRAPHICS

Table 7: Ethnicity

| ETHNICITY | SURVIVORS | | SURVIVORS EXPERIENCING ABUSE AT TIME OF SURVEY | |
|------------------------|-----------|---------|--|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Hispanic or Latino | 55 | 65% | 11 | 58% |
| Not Hispanic or Latino | 26 | 31% | 6 | 32% |
| Missing | 4 | 5% | 2 | 11% |
| TOTAL | 85 | | 19 | |

