



# DREAMS DEFERRED: A SURVEY ON THE IMPACT OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE ON SURVIVORS' EDUCATION, CAREERS, AND ECONOMIC SECURITY

**INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN'S POLICY RESEARCH**  
**ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR SURVIVORS PROJECT**

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# ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN'S POLICY RESEARCH



*The Institute for Women's Policy Research conducts and communicates research to inspire public dialogue, shape policy, and improve the lives and opportunities of women of diverse backgrounds, circumstances, and experiences.*

## **The Economic Security for Survivors project**

Seeks to build, protect, and restore the economic security of survivors of intimate partner and sexual violence, and stalking through applied research and technical assistance.

<https://iwpr.org/issue/special-websites/economic-security-survivors/>

# WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

- Hear key findings from an IWPR survey about the impact of IPV on survivors' education, careers, and economic security
- Share information about effective approaches to addressing the economic needs of survivors
- Discuss findings and implications for policy and practice in local communities



# THE INTERSECTION OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE & ECONOMIC SECURITY



# INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE HAS SUBSTANTIAL ECONOMIC COSTS FOR SURVIVORS; ESTIMATES OF THESE COSTS VARY WIDELY

Studies have estimated the costs of IPV with differing results

- Costs to society vs. costs to individuals
- IPV committed by men against women vs. including IPV experienced by men or disaggregating by gender
- Focus on costs related to specific domains (e.g., health, employment, justice system)

A recent study found the lifetime cost of IPV to be \$103,767 per female victim and \$23,414 per male victim (Peterson et al. 2018). But many costs are difficult to quantify and not included.

Understanding the multiple effects of IPV and their impact on women's future opportunities (education, career, overall well-being) is critical for developing policies and programs that help survivors be safe and thrive.



# IWPR STUDY: DREAMS DEFERRED



# RESEARCH QUESTIONS




- What **monetary and opportunity costs** do survivors face as a result of abuse?



- What **role do economic factors play in survivors' decisions** about staying with/ returning to abusive partners? Which economic factors are most significant?



- What **economic resources do survivors feel have best helped** them address the economic effects of abuse and rebuild their lives? Which resources do they wish they had received, or received more of?



- What **hopes and dreams** do survivors have for their future, and what do they think it would take to achieve them?

# METHODOLOGY

## National Survey

- **Open- and closed-ended questions** about experiences with abuse, economic effects, and help received, as well as demographic questions
- **Disseminated through national networks, domestic and sexual assault coalitions, and regional or local organizations**
- Completed by survivors in **shelters, transitional housing programs, and other domestic violence programs**
- **164 responses** received, including 111 in English and 53 in Spanish
- 80 surveys completed **online** and 84 by **pencil and paper**



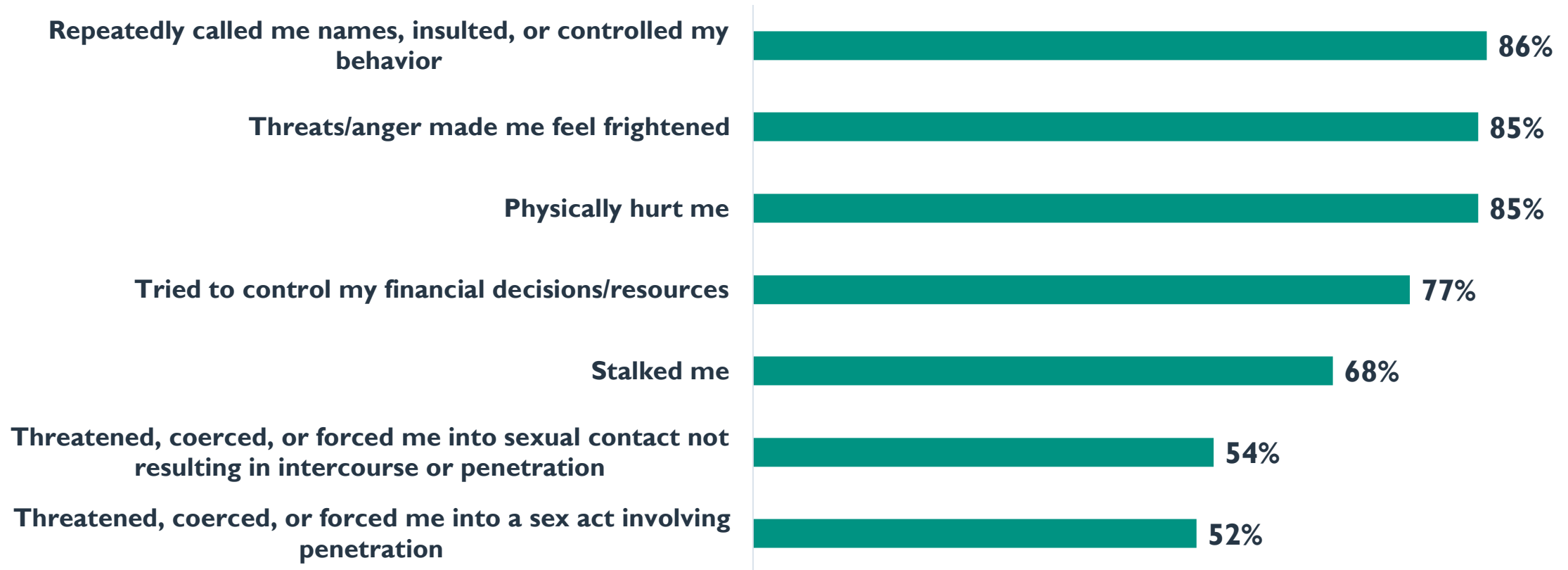
# DEMOGRAPHICS OF SURVEY SAMPLE

- 97% women (1% men, 2% chose not to answer)
- About 40% younger than 35 years; only 7% aged 55 or older
- 43% identify as Latina, 28% as White, 12% as Black, and 11% as multiracial
- 90% identify as heterosexual and 6% as lesbian, gay, or bisexual
- South (25%), Midwest (29%), West (33%), and Northeast (8%)
- 62% employed (40% full-time, 22% part-time)
- 89% are parents
- Nearly half have a high school diploma or less as highest level of education

# MANY RESPONDENTS HAVE HAD MORE THAN ONE ABUSIVE PARTNER AND EXPERIENCED ABUSE AT A YOUNG AGE

- 56% said they have experienced abuse from more than one partner
- 27% have had three or more abusive partners
- 52% were 20 years old or younger when they experienced their first abusive relationship
- 30% said that at the time of the survey they were still in a relationship with or in the process of separating from an abusive partner

# 70% OF RESPONDENTS EXPERIENCED 5 OR MORE FORMS OF ABUSE

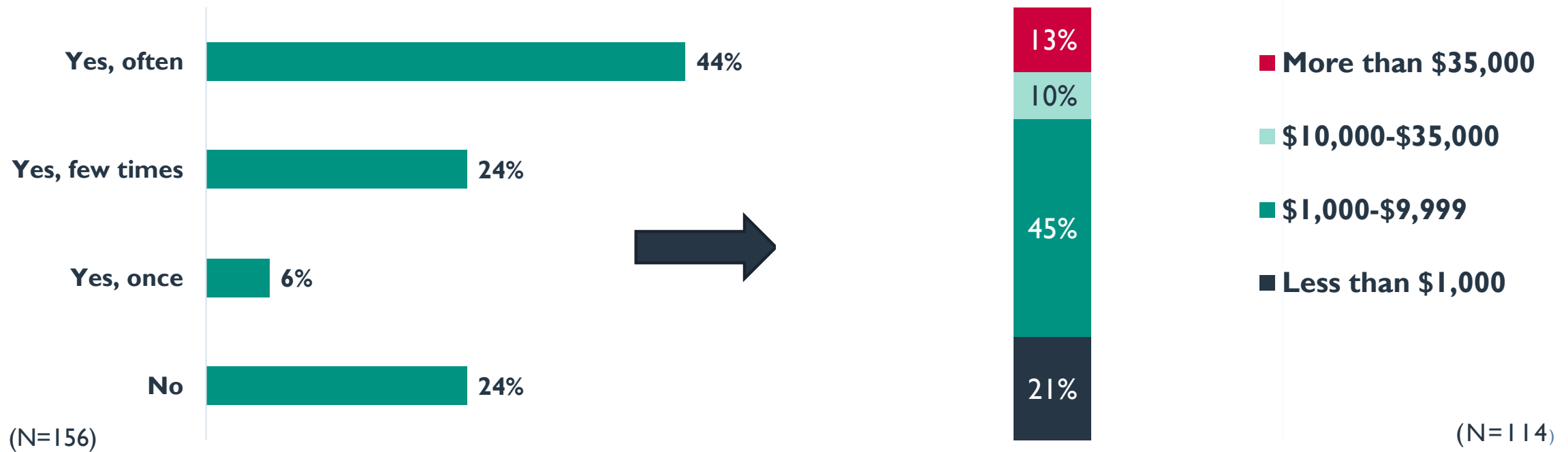


N=164



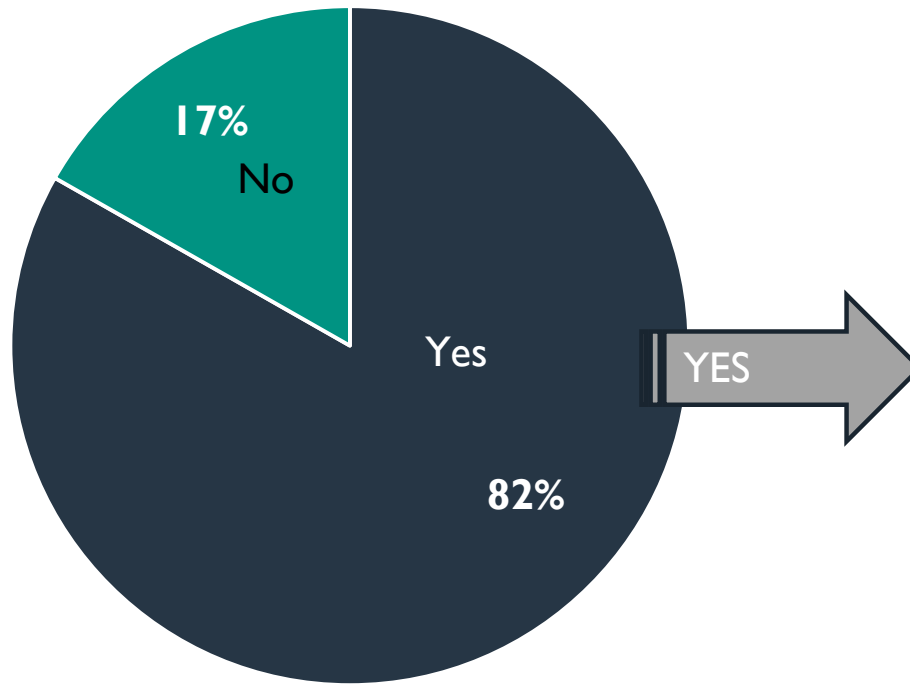
# 74% SAID THEIR ABUSER TOOK MONEY FROM THEM

Percent of Respondents Who Had Money Taken by An Abusive Partner and Total Amount Taken

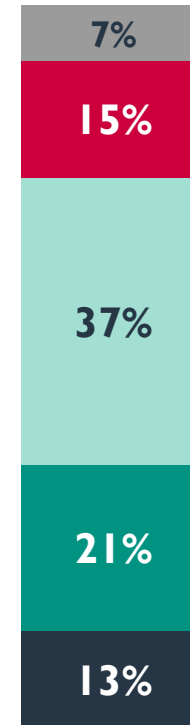


# 82% SAID THEIR ABUSER DAMAGED, DESTROYED, OR TOOK THEIR PERSONAL PROPERTY

Percent of Respondents Who Had Property Damaged, Destroyed, or Taken by An Abusive Partner and Total Amount Lost



(N = 157)



- More than \$35,000
- \$10,000-\$35,000
- \$1,000-\$9,999
- \$500-\$999
- Less than \$500

(N = 128)

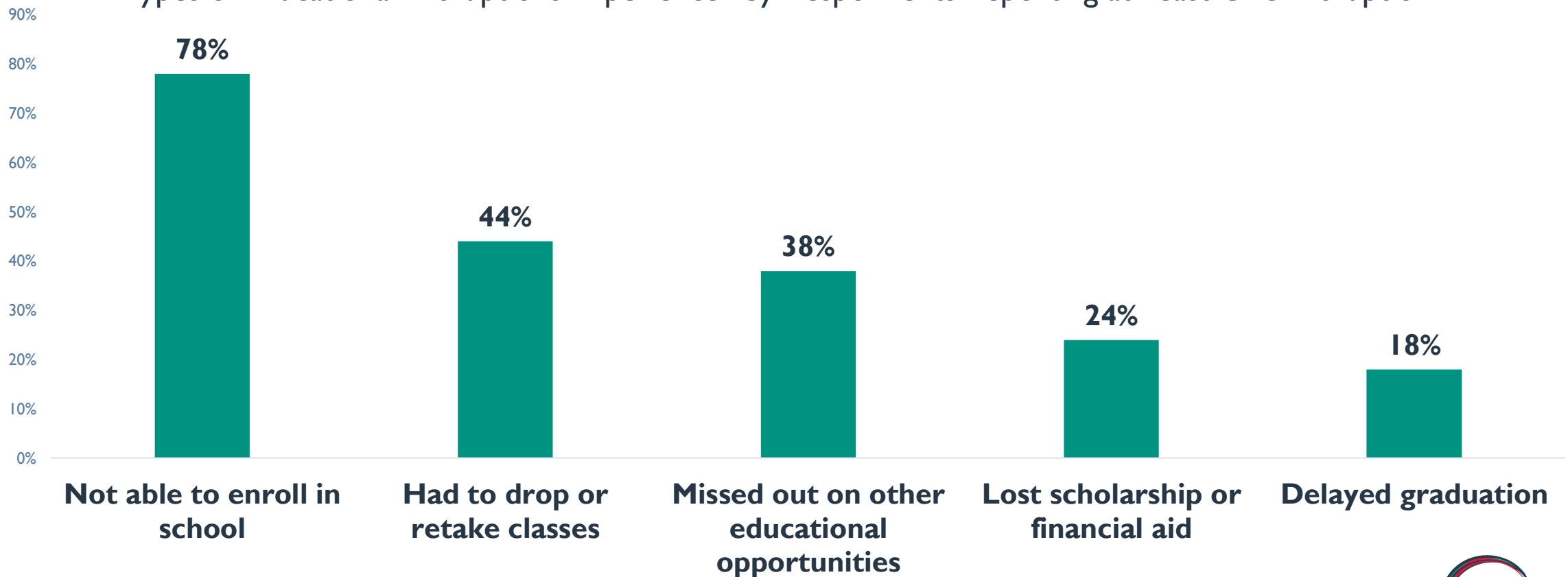


## SOME SURVIVORS EXPERIENCED DIRECT FINANCIAL COSTS FROM MEDICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH CARE NEEDS

- 44% of those who experienced physical violence sought medical care for their injuries in the past year; average amount spent on this care = \$1,252
- 28% of respondents who experienced physical harm from sexual violence or coercion that resulted in intercourse or penetration sought medical care in the past year; average amount spent on this care = \$1,500
- 62% said they have talked with a mental health provider; among these respondents, the average amount spent in the past year = \$1,175

# TWO-THIRDS OF RESPONDENTS SAY THEIR PARTNER'S BEHAVIOR NEGATIVELY AFFECTED THEIR EDUCATIONAL AND JOB TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Types of Educational Disruptions Experienced by Respondents Reporting at Least One Disruption

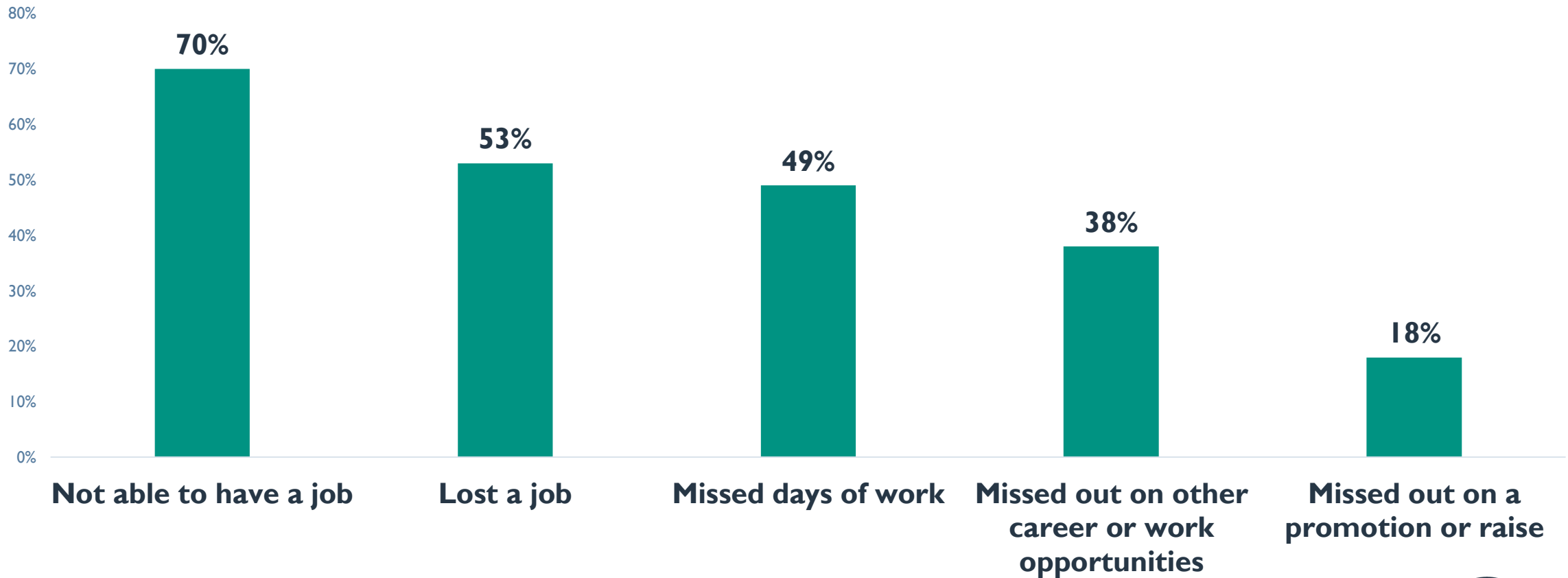


N=108



# 83% OF RESPONDENTS SAID THEIR PARTNER DISRUPTED THEIR ABILITY TO WORK

Types of Work Disruptions Among Those Who Experienced at Least One Disruption



N=136

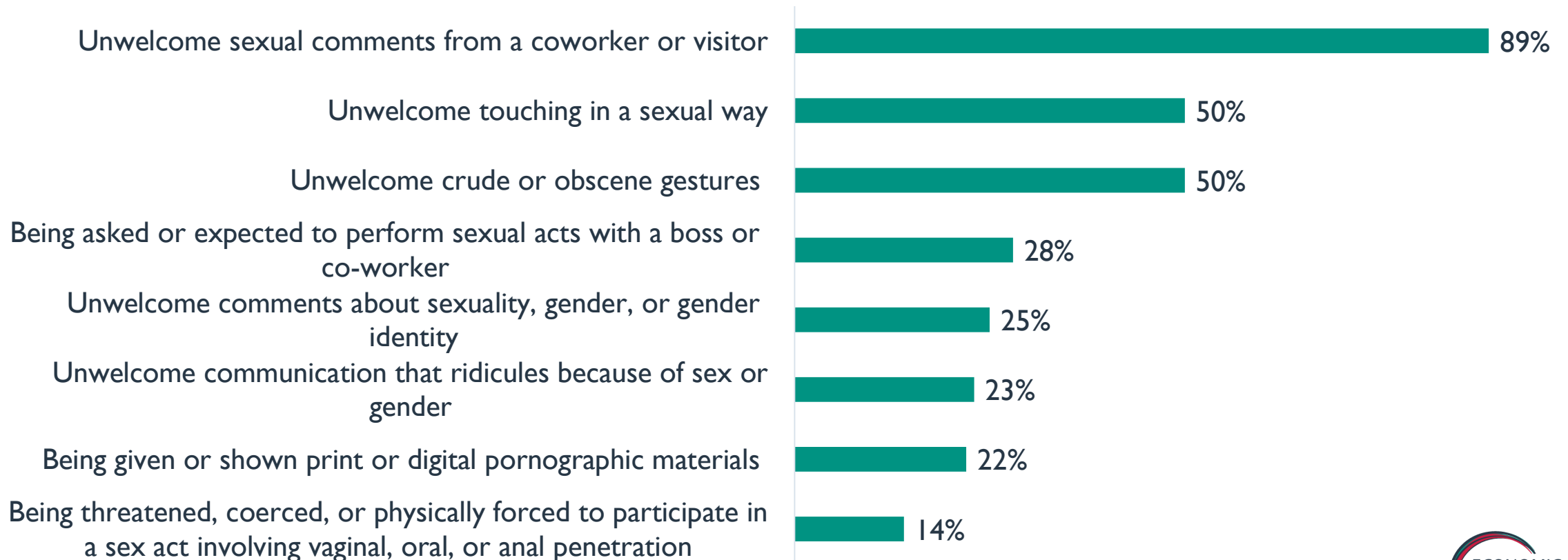
Source: IWPR Survey on the Economic Effects of IPV





# ABOUT 4 IN 10 HAVE EXPERIENCED SEXUAL HARASSMENT OR VIOLENCE AT WORK

Types of Workplace Sexual Harassment Experienced by Respondents Who Reported One or More Forms of Harassment

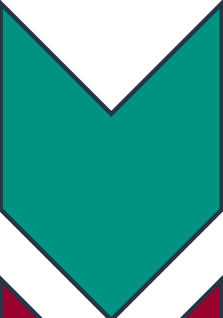


# WORKPLACE HARASSMENT HARMS CAREERS


- 62% said harassment made them anxious or depressed
- 60% said it made them less able to concentrate
- 44% said they felt worried about losing out on advancement opportunities
- 23% lost their job
- Other effects: missing days of work, missing out on a promotion or raise



## REPRODUCTIVE COERCION IS COMMON AND HAS HIGH COSTS FOR SURVIVORS

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- 40% of respondents said one or more of their partners tried to get them pregnant when they didn't want to be or stopped them from using birth control

- 
- Among these respondents, 84% (52 respondents) said they became pregnant as a result

- 
- Six in ten who experienced forced pregnancy became pregnant more than once; 19% became pregnant when they did not want to five or more times

## ADDITIONAL COSTS INCURRED OR EXPECTED

- Nearly one in four survivors reported having been encouraged, pressured, or forced by their partner to engage in an illegal activity; among these nine were arrested as a result, often leading to legal fines and
- 10% of respondents were arrested as a result of physically defending themselves against their partner
- Other effects resulting from arrest/conviction: spending time in prison (2), losing driver's license (2), occupational license (3), or a job (4); five were evicted and four lost custody of their children
- Survivors also spoke of costs incurred while seeking safety and future expected costs: relocation, court and justice-related, financial services, replacing property



# SURVIVORS' PERCEPTIONS OF ECONOMIC IMPACT OF ABUSE AND VISIONS FOR THEIR FUTURE



# FINANCIAL FACTORS PLAY A CRITICAL ROLE IN SURVIVORS' DECISIONS ABOUT WHETHER TO END AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

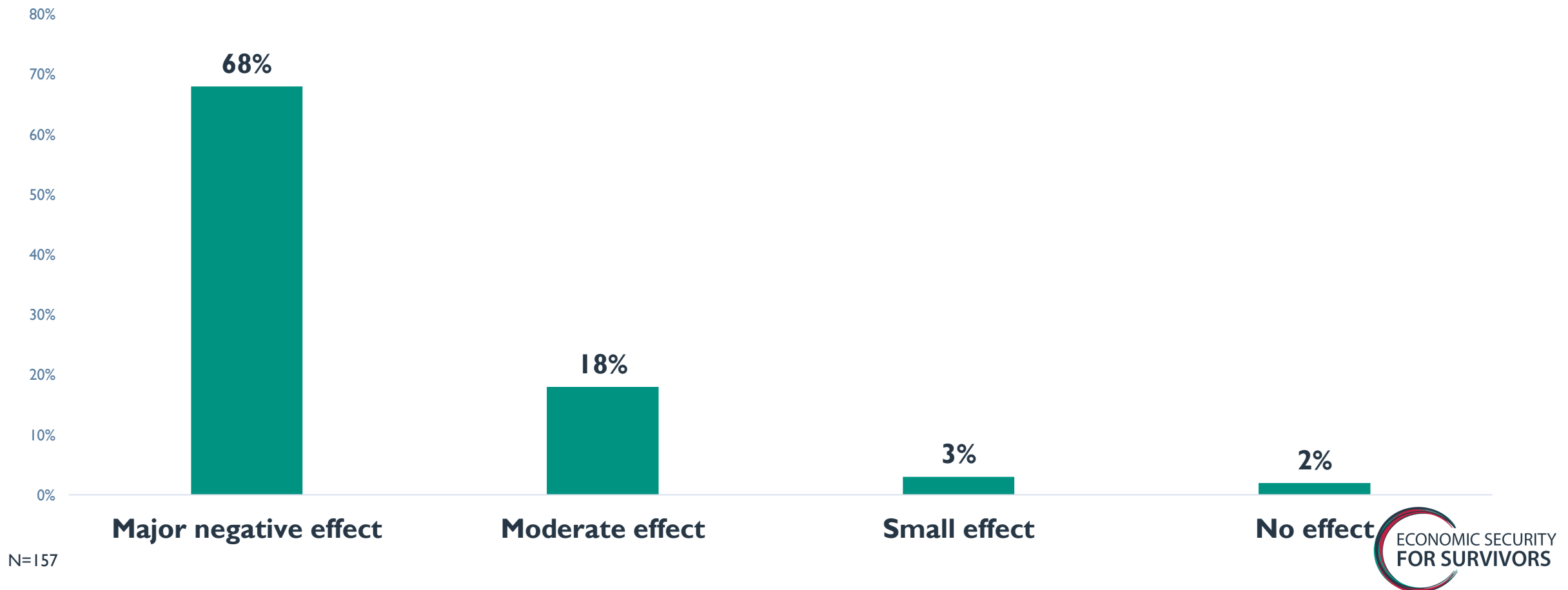
**73%** stayed with an abusive partner longer because of financial problems. Among them nearly half stayed more than 2 years longer.

**83%** stayed longer because they didn't have another place to live or couldn't support themselves.

**91%** have left or tried to leave a partner who had physically hurt, coerced, or threatened them.

# NEARLY 7 IN 10 SAY THEIR PARTNER'S BEHAVIOR HAS HAD A MAJOR NEGATIVE EFFECT ON THEIR FINANCIAL WELL-BEING

Survivors' Perceptions of the Financial Effects of Their Abusive Partner's Behavior on Their Lives



# MANY SURVIVORS RECEIVED HELP ADDRESSING THE FINANCIAL EFFECTS OF ABUSE, BUT ONLY A FEW GOT ALL THE HELP THEY NEEDED

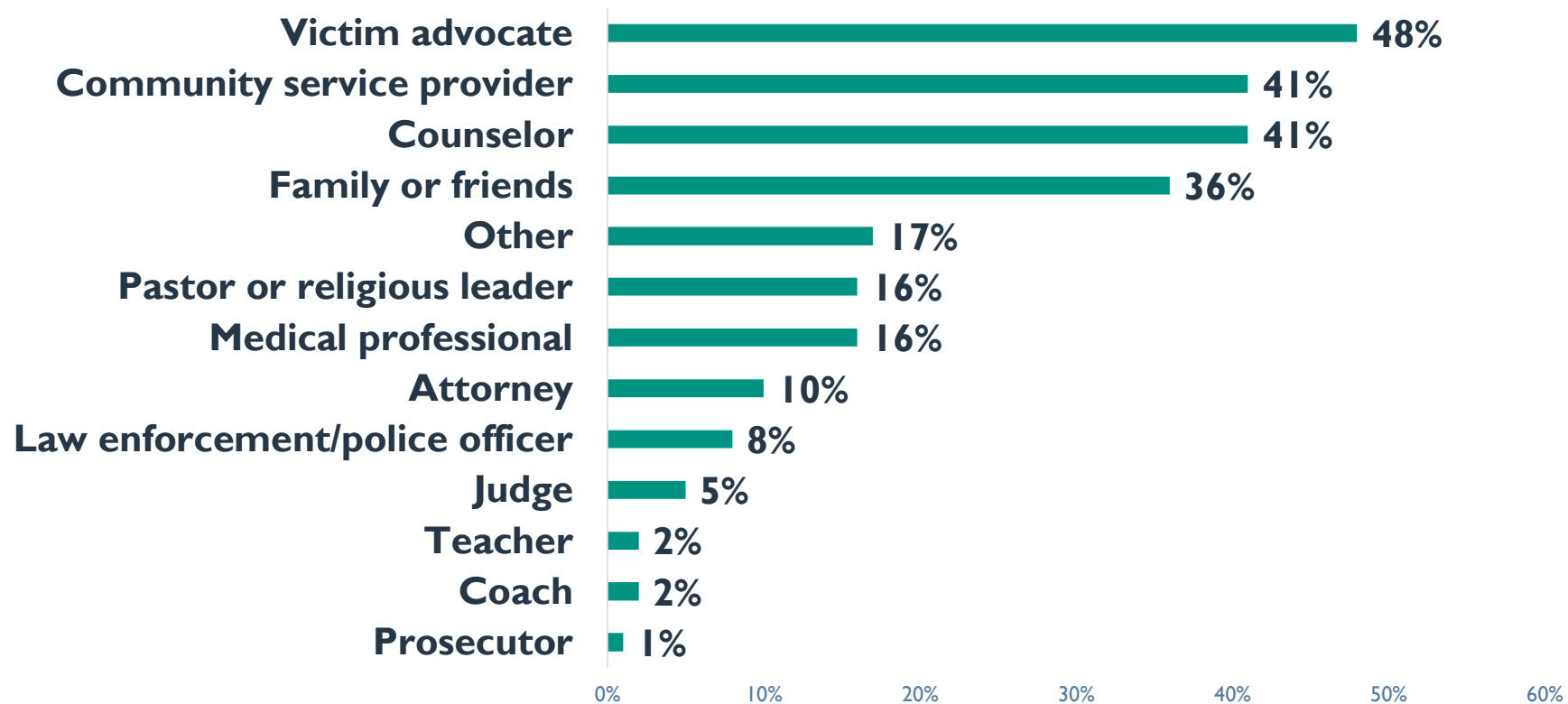
- **61%** received some help in addressing the financial effects of abuse
- **13%** received all the help they needed
- When asked to rank the extent to which their financial needs were met on a scale of 0 to 10 (0=no needs met, 10=all needs met), average ranking (among those who received help) was **5.9**
- When asked what types of financial help they could use moving forward, survivors most often said **credit repair** and **debt management services**





# SURVIVORS RECEIVED THE MOST HELP FROM VICTIM ADVOCATES AND SERVICE PROVIDERS; ONLY A SMALL SHARE GOT HELP FROM THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Most Common Sources of Help Received to Address the Economic Effects of Abuse (among respondents who received any help)



N=87



# SURVIVORS EXPRESS A RANGE OF VISIONS FOR THE FUTURE

“I fantasize about having a well-furnished, cozy home for my children and me...the ability to always provide. I want a cozy, happy life so bad it hurts.”

“My dreams are to get married to my childhood sweetheart and to be able to live again not looking over my shoulder, knowing I am safe. To return with my real family again and be happy, live, laugh, and love.”

“I would like to travel. I would love to retire, but I feel I shall have to work ‘til I die.”

“I want to own my own home—I am in too much student loan debt. I want to get a master’s degree within the next two years—I don’t have child care to go to school.”





# IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE



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## Policy Responses

- Time for survivors to address effects of abuse without risking jobs
- Statutes defining dv, sa, and stalking to include broader range of harms
- Unemployment laws to attend to survivors' needs
- Strong safety net that responds to survivors' experiences

## Justice System Responses

- Provide training for judges on economic challenges survivors face and ways to hold offenders accountable
- Offer economic protections for survivors

## Community Responses

- Employers, educational institutions, and job training programs to adopt trauma-informed policies and practices
- Health care providers to receive training on IPV and trauma-informed care
- Financial services for survivors—e.g., credit repair/debt remediation, flexible financial assistance through leadership of dv, sa, and anti-stalking programs

# DISCUSSION

**1) Have you implemented anything or seen practices in the field that are promising methods of supporting the economic needs of survivors? If you could take one or two promising practices for increasing survivors' economic security to scale, what would they be?**

**2) If you could make one or two policy changes (local, state, or federal) to better support the economic needs of survivors, what would they be? What challenges would likely surface when implementing these changes, and what are some possible strategies for overcoming them?**



## Dreams Deferred

A Survey on the Impact of Intimate Partner Violence on Survivors' Education, Careers, and Economic Security

Cynthia Hess, Ph.D., and Alona Del Rosario, M.A.



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## Recent Publications

BEST Index Update and State Fact Sheets

Sexual Harassment and Violence Briefing Paper

Economic Impact of Abuse Survey Report





## QUESTIONS?

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