

Virtual National Conference May 11-14, 2021

Canadian Domestic Homicide  
Prevention Initiative



# Immigrant and refugee survivors' perspectives on help-seeking, gaps in services, and strategies for preventing severe domestic violence and homicide

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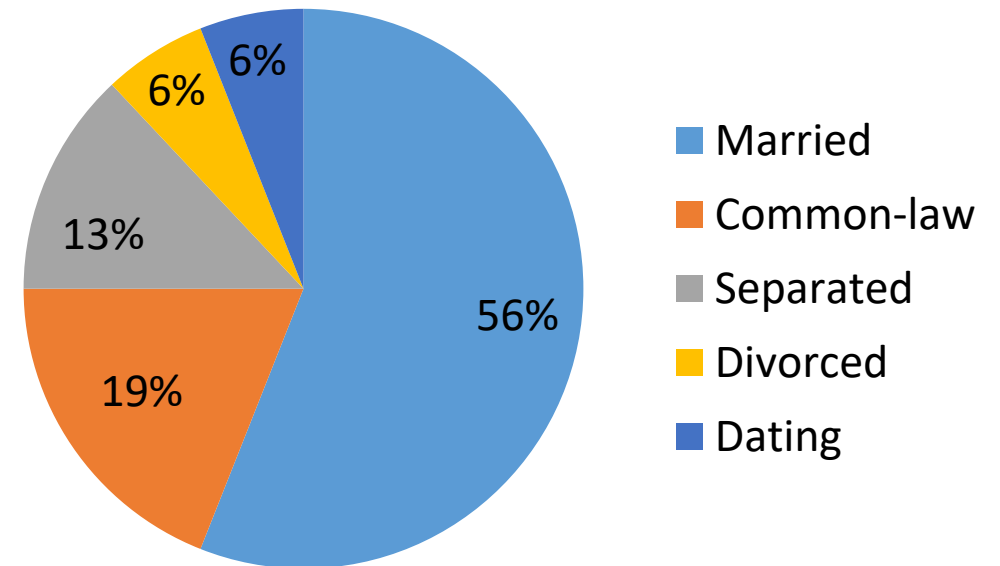
May 13, 2021



# Interview Participants

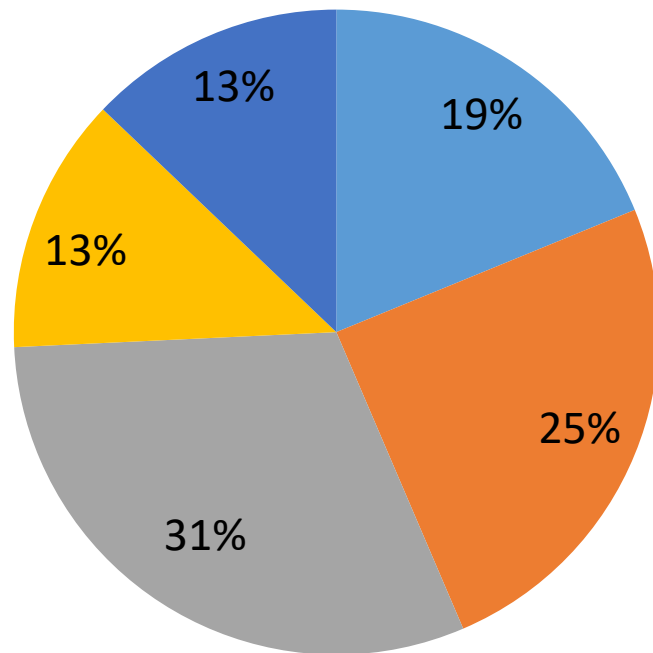
- **16 women** survivors of severe domestic violence
- Average age: **44** years
- Average length of violence: **8** years
- 15 survivors had **children (94%)**
- Diverse cultural backgrounds
- All interviews conducted in English

## Relationship status at time of violence



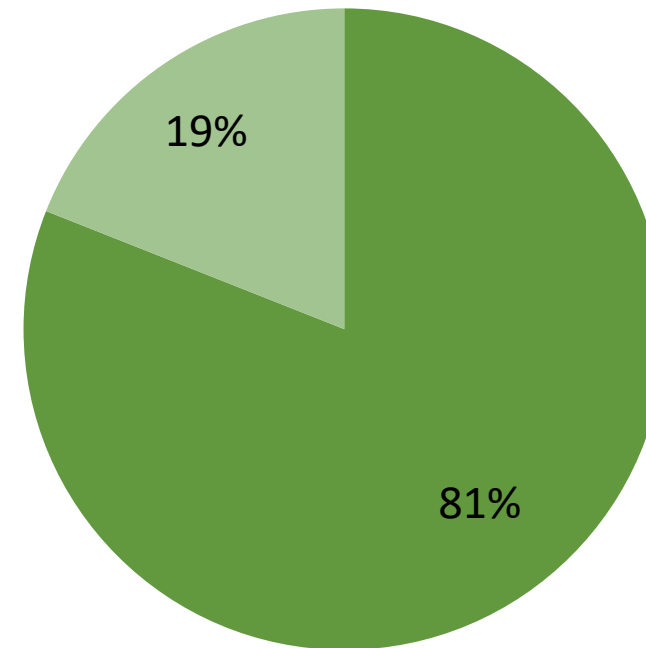


# Interview Participants



**Region**

- BC
- Prairies
- Ontario
- Quebec
- Maritimes



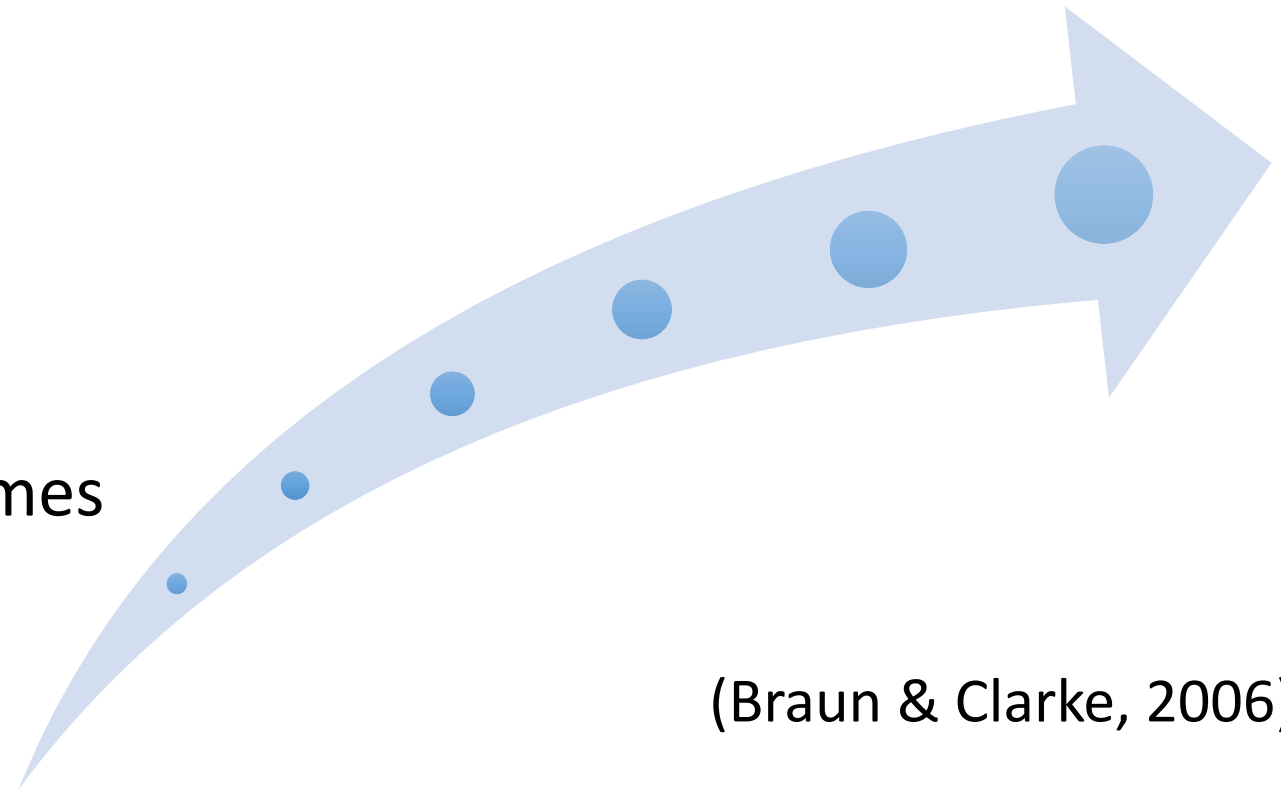
**Community at  
time of violence**

- Urban
- Rural, Remote,  
or Northern



# Thematic Analysis

1. Familiarization with data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Reporting on findings



(Braun & Clarke, 2006)



# Immigrant Survivors' Stories

- Multiple forms of violence and abuse
- Children often exposed to domestic violence
- Similar and unique domestic violence risk factors
- Immigrant and refugee perspectives on domestic violence
- Domestic violence and migration experiences



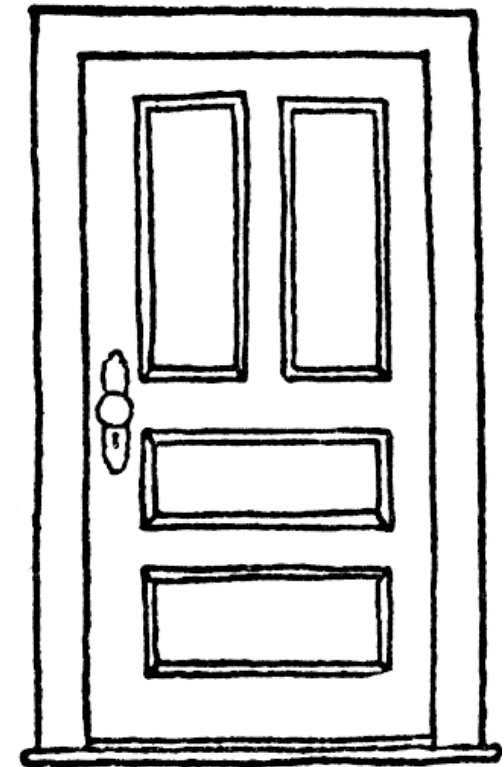
# Immigrant Survivors' Stories

*“He knew I had got nowhere to go and **he didn’t start getting abusive until after we were in Canada, once he’d cut me off from all of my family and all of my supports.** [...] I didn’t have contact with them from the moment we got into Canada for twelve years. [...] Yeah, he knew what he was doing.” (Joanne)*



# Barriers to Help-Seeking

- Fear, shame, self-doubt, distrust, hope
- Limited or ineffective informal supports
- Limited financial independence
- Lack of access to safe, affordable housing
- Limited knowledge of (or access to) formal supports





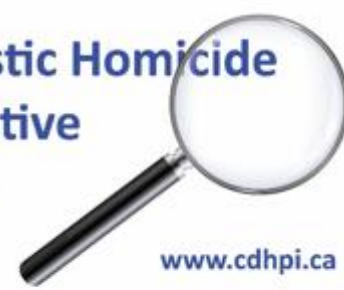
# Barriers to Help-Seeking

***“We were new here and he made sure that I don’t have friends because every time I came home and I say ‘hey look I met this couple and they’re inviting us over’ and again he would make a huge scene.”***  
*(Hilda)*

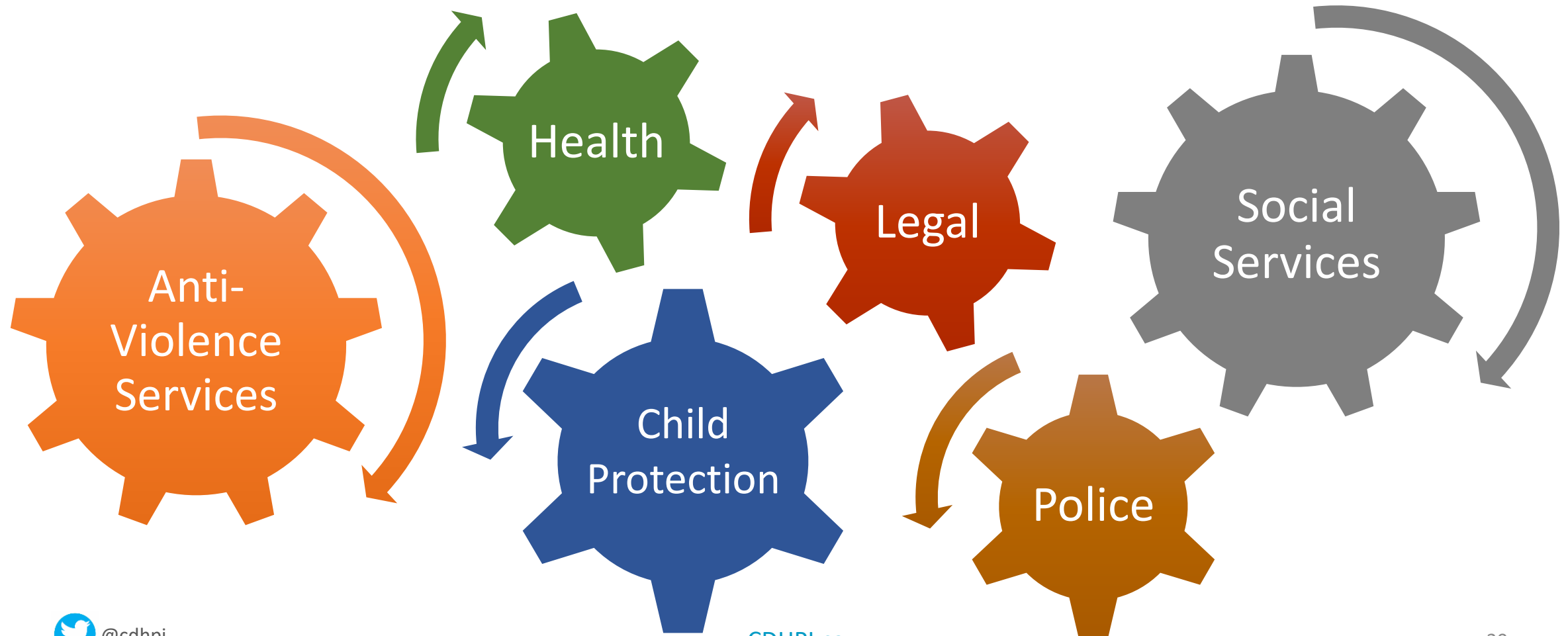
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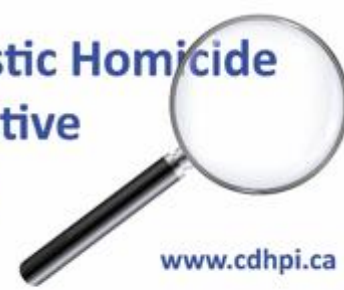
***“...I immigrated to Canada as a political refugee [...] and so I’m not fully aware of all the services available in helping work here in Canada, so that was another situation that made me a little more vulnerable, you know, my situation.”*** (Odile)





# Formal Supports





# Formal Supports

***“I remember trying to get passports for my kids. God, that was the worst experience of my life. [...] every time [I walked into this passport office] I had to see somebody else new! So, they’d be like, ‘Well, you missed this document. You have to come back and wait in that line. And now talk to another person and share your story again with that person.’ And it was just like, ‘Yeah, here’s my profile, I’m [Carmen], Yes, I was beat. Yes, I was Ms. Victim. This is who I am.’ And it’s – it’s so, like, dehumanizing.” (Carmen)***



# Formal Supports

*“So when I research ‘therapy’ in Canada, I would find numbers, but it would have been nice to see something where it's like if you prefer someone from this country or whatever, because I know that there is a lot of Canadian Middle Easterns originally were some like someone who would. But it's just a matter of understanding the because **there's a lot of like subliminal stuff that only someone within the culture which really understands how it is.**” (Layla)*



# Survivors' Recommendations

Advice for:

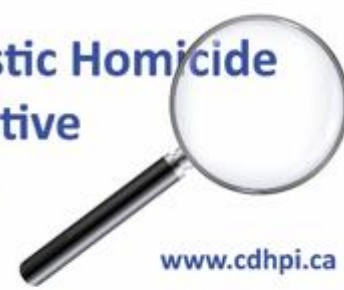
- Survivors
- Informal supports
- Formal supports





# Survivors' Recommendations

*“If there’s one thing that I would say to service providers that would be useful because you have to take into consideration there’s certain cultural things okay? **Certain cultural norms** that they are so strong that they **might surpass certain things that you might say** to that person. So they might give them some advice but they might not realize the culture might override that. So it’s better for them to say, **‘Tell me how I can be helpful to you.’”** (Jade)*



# Immigrant Survivors' Stories

*"The blinded girl"*

*"You don't deserve this"*

*"Avoiding madness"*

*"Open your eyes"*

*"Get out"*

*"Becoming empowered"*

*"Trapped"*

*"How to feel safe in court"*

*"Taking back my power"*

*"Nowhere to go"*

*"Hope, patience, support"*

*"I'm a survivor"*

*"I survived"*

*"I'm free at last"*

*"They thought they could bury me but did not know that I was a seed"*

# Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative



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Initiative canadienne sur la  
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homicides familiaux