

**City of Worcester Advisory Committee on the Status of Women**

**VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES– Tuesday, November 9, 2021, 5:45 pm**

Video available online: <https://play.champds.com/worcesterma/event/1027>

Spanish interpretation online video: <https://play.champds.com/worcesterma/event/1028>

(Written responses from panelists attached at the end of the minutes)

**Members Present:** Kayanna James, Samantha Sendrowski, Martha Benitez, Rubby Wuabu, and Tracey Whitney

**Members Absent:** Heather Borelli, Violet Kabaso

**Staff:** Jayna Turchek

**Guest presenters (in order of appearance):**

Deborah Hall, Executive Director YWCA of Central Massachusetts

Nicole Bell, Chief Executive Officer and Director of Living in Freedom Together (LIFT)

Kim Dawkins, President and CEO, Pathways for Change

Attorney Courtney Sans, Worcester District Attorney's Office

Captain Michael A. McKiernan, Bureau of Investigative Services, Worcester Police Department

Attorney Beth Keeley, Human Trafficking Division Chief, MA Attorney General's Office

Craig Mortley, Supervisor of Intervention Services, YWCA

Tara Huard, Supervisor of Domestic Violence Services, YWCA

**1. Call to order and Introductions**

Chairperson James called the meeting to order at 5:50 pm. The Chairperson welcomed members of the Committee and those present, and a roll call was taken that established a quorum.

Chairperson James announced that the new agenda has been distributed and asked if anything needs to be revised. The agenda was accepted as distributed. The meeting will also be available in Spanish.

**2. Approval of October 5, 2021, meeting minutes**

Samantha Sendrowski motioned to accept the minutes as written for the October 5, 2021 meeting. Tracey Whitney seconded. Minutes unanimously passed on a roll call vote 5-0-0.

### 3. Topic: Gender-Based Violence Part 1 (Status of crimes/Impact of COVID-19)

#### A. Introduction of Topic

Rubby Wuabu thanked those in attendance and introduced the November and December topics. These meetings are to educate ourselves and our communities on issues that are impacting us. There will be panelists answering questions and distributing information pertaining to the impact of COVID-19 on gender-based violence.

#### B. High-level Status Updates from Agencies

**Speaker:** Deborah Hall, Executive Director YWCA of Central Massachusetts-

Trends that were seen:

- Survivors were unable to contact YWCA for their services as they were sheltering in place at home due to COVID-19 with their abuser
- COVID-19 became a weapon for abusers to use against survivors
- Increase of number in referrals in July/August of 2020 as more people went back to work, increase to 98% in March/April 2021 because of the dip caused by COVID-19 and lockdowns.
- Increase in intensity of violence such as homicide-suicide and increase in numbers of women affected (new cases of violence).

Question: What were the demographics recorded due to the incidences because of COVID-19, what do you believe is the reason for those numbers reported or lack thereof?

A report from the Worcester Intervention Network (WIN) advocates at the Worcester Police Department from 2020 recorded disproportionate numbers of the Latinx, and Black communities came into contact with police. Reports did not come in from specific African communities as they tend to not trust our systems and culturally tend to resolve issues within their own circles. Due to various reasons, such as the one stated prior, the numbers are not accurate reflection of violence experienced. Cases/instances of violence are presumed to be much higher.

Question: What is the number of cases reported by LGBTQIA+ individuals?

It is unknown; the numbers are not captured but would most likely be underreported.

**Speaker:** Nicole Bell, Chief Executive Officer and Director of Living in Freedom Together (LIFT)

Trends that were seen:

- Numbers are not accurate as commercial sexual exploitation is typically not reported due to the criminalization of prostitution
- Reports from their data show an increase in the number of new participants with services
- Reports of sexual exploitation and trafficking are severely underreported due to shame, guilt as well as the danger of disclosing, lack of trust from providers and the system in general.
- Rise of number due to COVID-19. Over the last fiscal year, serviced were over 130 new individuals, 120 were identified as survivors of sexual exploitation, more than 50 were survivors of some form of trafficking, of the 120 survivors 7 were minors.
- When vulnerability increases the likelihood of exploitation increases.
- With the help of new partnerships, the opening of the new women's shelter, and youth mentorship, more participants were seen.
- Survivors not only experienced violence from sex buyers but they fell victim to other interpersonal violence such as homelessness and substance use disorder. They continued to be exploited on the street.
- Sex buyers who were still targeting marginalized women during a global pandemic speaks to their view on the humanity of individuals in prostitution and regard for the community as a whole.
- 87% of participants reported that in addition to daily exploitation that they were experiencing another form of violence.
- Fewer eyes on children survivors as they did not come into contact with mandated reporters besides online interaction (remote schooling etc).
- Demographics most affected by prostitution are the most vulnerable and marginalized in our communities who are exploited.
- Women/girls of color, those with low-income backgrounds, and LGBTQ+ youth were most affected.
- Prostituted women were not able to access shelters in the city, issues of safety and support.
  - YWCA, Abby's House, and other women serving organizations advocated for independent women shelter to serve prostituted women during COVID-19 which is now a permanent program.
- Served 22 LGBTQIA+ individuals in FY 2021, 8 identified as gender-expansive. This is most likely severely underreported due to not being able to explore and not feeling safe in their identities yet.

Question: How many men are being prostituted in our area? Are there services in our area to address their needs?

An exact number is unknown. Besides the women-only programs, the rest of the programs LIFT offers is open to all genders of exploited people in our community and LIFT will help find the appropriate shelter.

Question: What percentage of LIFT's clients were people of color or LGBTQIA+?

25% Hispanic or Latinx, 20% were Black or African-American, 6% were multiple races, 4% Native, Hawaiian, or Pacific Islanders. People of color are targeted the most over Caucasians in the cases of prostitution and exploitation.

**Speaker:** Kim Dawkins, President and CEO, Pathways for Change.

Gender based violence can affect anyone in our communities, this is a silent epidemic and will always be underreported. Their reports are based on their services that are in Central Massachusetts and will be discussing statistics pertaining to Worcester alone. 618 out of over 2,000 people were serviced in FY 2021 out of Worcester alone. Gender violence does not discriminate. Demographics are volunteered, not asked for.

Trends that were seen:

- Dip in reporting, disclosing, and coming forward due to child care, food/home instability, substance abuse issues, abuser, landlord, work, lack of access, and/or danger.
- Survivors did not think of themselves because of all the issues COVID-19 brought up.
- 10-15% that volunteered information were people of color, had mental illnesses, LGTBQ+ but more than half of the survivors they service are undisclosed.

Question: Estimate of numbers who experience gender based violence?

A national statistic is that a female-identifying individual is raped or sexually assaulted every 68 seconds. It is an enormous number that we are unable to enumerate.

**Speaker:** Attorney Courtney Sans, Worcester District Attorney's Office.

The data is not tracked in the way people are looking for it. Gender/Self-identity is not tracked. Data that will be discussed is based on sexual assault, domestic violence, restraining order violations cases from March 2020 to March 2021.

Trends that were seen:

- Dip for the same reasons already discussed.

- Numbers for types of crimes such as Aggravated Assault and Battery were leveled, Assaultive behavior on family members were down, restraining violations were down, Strangulation/Suffocations were down, cases that dealt with hate crime in relation to gender-based violence were down.

**Speaker:** Captain Michael A. McKiernan, Bureau of Investigative Services, Worcester Police Department

They receive referrals from 911 calls, hospitals, District Attorney's Office, Department of Children and Families (DCF), and fresh complaint calls to service. Demographics are not tracked very well, on mastercards when their race is asked, 30% show up as unknown. When 30% of your statistics are unknown it makes the rest of the statistics unreliable.

Trends that were seen:

- Approximately 50% of sexual assaults go unreported. Approximately 30% of the cases are able to go forward due to charges for numerous reasons.
- Human Trafficking is occurring but it is underreported.
- 27 hate crimes are being investigated this year, 4 of those have criminal charges that are being sought after

**Speaker:** Attorney Beth Keeley, Human Trafficking Division Chief, MA Attorney General's Office

Sex/labor trafficking within the state of Massachusetts. Individuals weigh their risks when thinking about coming forward which is one of the main reasons as to why data is underreported. References: [polarisproject.org](http://polarisproject.org) and <https://humantraffickinghotline.org>. The Human Trafficking Division is looking for ways to raise awareness of sex/labor trafficking and have conversations such as this meeting. Women are being victimized because of prostitution charges, as well as marginalized communities are impacted greatly.

### C. **Question and Answers:**

For Captain Michael A. McKiernan, What were the 27 cases reported specifically? You said there were assaults against LGBTQ+ individuals?

There were three investigations concerning LGBTQ+ individuals and charges were pursued one of them. Hate crimes vary from Anti-Asian, Anti-Black, Anti-Hispanic, Anti-Jewish, and many more. Three crimes regarding Transgender individuals, one specifically involving a 15-year-old junior in high school and the person who had attacked her was charged.

For Nicole Bell, How do we help the young girls that are dating and being used by young men to lure them for sex trafficking? How do we get the word out that this is real?

The idea of warning women and girls to be safe is dated and a better resort and shift would be to teach men to not perpetrate, to teach them to be healthy, safe, and not be someone women and girls have to be warned about. This is not to say there are not men who are not victims, research shows it is predominately men who are perpetrators but it goes both ways. We should begin education and programming for prevention for young boys.

Comments by Kim Dawkins: Hold perpetrators accountable and incorporate programs and pieces of training. Prevention and speaking on it in a serious way to get people to change and teach potential perpetrators.

Which females are at higher risk when it comes to gender based violence?

Deborah Hall: All females are at risk. In her opinion, patriarchy and misogyny are the root problems when it comes to gender based violence.

As a community, is this issue something we are overlooking or refusing to acknowledge?

Deborah Hall: This is a loaded question, but people should sit on this question and think about how power plays a role.

#### **D. YWCA Listening Session Report- Craig Mortley & Tara Huard**

*Refer to PPT attached at end of meeting minutes.*

#### **E. Questions and Answers regarding Presentation:**

How is this information from your research going to be used?

Tara: Will be presented to all of the institutions as well as victim-survivors and create active resolutions to our issues. As well as continue the conversation.

Trauma-Informed Care Model, who uses it? How do we move community agencies in this direction?

Kim: Helping educate institutions and community members around the impact trauma has. We should have an understanding of those experiences of survivors and the lifelong impact of trauma, have empathy, compassion, and support them.

Deborah: It is also important to look at this from a racial equity lens as well.

Tara: Trauma-Informed Care, in reality, is about being compassionate, empathetic, and taking a pause to simply listen to survivors without any bias.

Craig: Look at the broader picture. We have to pay attention to how we respond and understand the dynamic of support and patterns. Give survivors choices and let them have a sense of direction, take into consideration everything they tell you.

Nicole: Be empathetic and identify that everyone has strengths and utilize them, navigate through barriers. Allow voice and choice and put your personal feelings and biases aside. Assume trauma exposure and remember safety. Funders also make it difficult to allow Trauma-Induced Care due to policies they put into place so programs nor agencies can use the funds.

Additional comments:

Nicole- Listen to those who have these experiences and use their experiences to make changes.

Kim- Perpetrators are usually not a stranger but someone you know, and we should be teaching to prevent perpetrators not teaching young children how to be safe and look for warning signs.

#### **F. Conclusion and introduction to Part 2 of this conversation December 7**

Rubby thanked presenters and introduced Part 2 where the thoughts from this conversation will be used to brainstorm ideas on how to push actions on an individual and community level.

#### **5. Adjournment** (Next meeting is Tuesday, December 7, 2021)

Meeting Adjourned at 7:59 pm.

**Agency responses attached below (pages not numbered)**

## **AGO Response**

### **Questions:**

#### **1. # of cases filed/ Reported to your respective organizations in last fiscal year? In your opinion is this representative of the actual #'s or is the crime underreported? If so why?**

In the last 12 months, we have opened seven human trafficking investigations, four of which have progressed to the litigation stage in criminal court. We open an investigation after initial vetting of a tip or initial referral, thus, the number of investigations signifies the actionable leads, not the reports. I would also differentiate the way the Attorney General's Office (AGO) receives reports and tips is different than the District Attorney's office (DAO). At the AGO we receive reports and referrals from several different avenues (public tips, law enforcement agencies, NGOs, etc.). That differentiates from the DAO, where the local police departments often funnel information in real time directly to the DAO. No, I don't think number of reports, let alone the number of investigations we've been able to pursue leads on, reflects that actual number of human trafficking incidents (both sex and labor) in the state at any given time. We often say we only see the tip of the iceberg. There are many, complex reasons for this. Sex trafficking, as it can be charged in MA, is widespread and underreported for a number of reasons, and labor trafficking especially goes unreported due to lack of knowledge about the elements, mis-diagnosis (ex. as wage/hour violations), and general difficulty with victim identification and reporting. Bottom line, if folks don't feel safe and if they don't have supports available to them, the evaluation of risk for reporting may not make sense for them to do.

#### **2. Have you seen a rise in the number of cases reported especially during COVID? If so why or why not?**

We have continued to see consistent reporting during the COVID-19 pandemic. Surprisingly, or perhaps not, we did not see a slow down of folks being exploited for sex and/or labor during the period when much of the world had slowed down.

#### **3. How do those numbers compare historically?**

#### **4. Demographic/communities that are most affected by these offenses?**

We see that human trafficking and exploitation affects all communities and demographics. We also know that certain issues can make folks more vulnerable to exploitation: prior traumatization, poverty or socio-economic struggles, racism, substance use disorder and other disabilities are just a few.

#### **5. Why are women especially victimized by these offenses?**

To put it in economic terms, supply is needed because of demand; women are increasingly victimized and exploited because men are actively seeking out people to buy. Women are also historically disadvantaged in terms of finances, resources, and opportunity, and are therefore could be more vulnerable to exploitation, depending upon circumstances. But we also know it is not only women that are exploited. There may be additional layers of complexity for men and transgender folks to come forward to law enforcement and speak about their experiences.



**6. What is the number of cases reported by LGBTQIA+ individuals**

We have had investigations and prosecutions that have included LGBTQIA+ individuals as victims and witnesses. We don't ask a person's sexual preference/gender identity at the time of reporting, but we do take note when folks have identified that information to us.

**7. Have any of the cases been investigated as hate crimes? What are the historical statistics?**

We haven't had any cases that have also had facts that correlated to be investigated as hate crimes. If we did we'd take a look at whether to charge that as well.

1. # Of cases filed/ Reported to your respective organizations in last fiscal year? In your opinion is this representative of the actual #'s or is the crime underreported? If so, why? (ALL)

Historically, sexual assault and sexual exploitation/trafficking are significantly underreported due to the associated level of shame/guilt, potential dangers associated with disclosing, re-victimization/re-traumatization of reporting, and lack of trust in providers/systems. Over the fiscal year, LIFT served 130 new individuals, 120 of whom were identified as survivors of CSE violence and more than 50 identified as survivors of some form of sex trafficking. Of the 120 CSE survivors identified, 7 were minors.

2. Have you seen a rise in the number of cases reported especially during COVID? If so why or why not? (ALL)

While COVID presented significant barriers in keeping participants connected, as where our participants were stretched and shifted geographically, we did see a dip in connections during the early months of Covid. The opening of our shelter, however, brought in a number of new participants. There was also an increase in the level of violence at the hands of buyers as reported by our participants. The pandemic drove out less violent buyers, and our participants were forced to engaged with those remaining, as other resources shuttered, became stretched even more thinly, and/or transitioned to remote service only in the name of public health. In FY2021, 87% of participants reported some form of assault in addition to the daily exploitation that they were experiencing. A challenge that existed for us during COVID particularly for the youth survivors that we serve was that there were less eyes on children during COVID while simultaneously seeing a drastic increase in vulnerability. Prostituted people (Including Victims of CSEC) are targeted because of existing vulnerabilities, where vulnerability increases likelihood of exploitation increases.

3. How do those numbers compare historically? (ALL)

LIFT served more participants than previous years. We did not shut down services during COVID or transition to remote services and with the opening of a new critical program as well as the start of our Youth Mentoring Program the number of participants we saw rose despite COVID and the initial dip we saw when the pandemic first hit.

4. Demographic/communities that are most affected by these offenses? (ALL)

It is always the most vulnerable in our community that are exploited in the sex trade. Buyers, exploiters, and traffickers use prostitution as a means to dehumanize and take advantage of people in vulnerable situations and profit off the sale of their bodies; with women and girls of color and/or low-income backgrounds and LGBTQ+ youth disproportionately impacted.

FY 2021:

- 56% Homeless
- 2% Deaf or Hard of Hearing
- 2% Immigrants/Refugees/Asylum Seekers
- 17% LGBTQIA++
- 6% Limited English Proficiency
- Nearly all had some type of disability

5. Why are women especially victimized by these offenses? (ALL)

Though boys and men are exploited for sex in systems of prostitution it is predominantly women and girls who are victimized, and they are targeted for victimization BECAUSE they are women and girls. **Prostitution** is not only **discrimination**, exploitation and abuse by an individual man or men, but also a structure reflecting and **maintaining inequality** between men and women, north and south, white and non-white. **Prostitution** is the sexualization of power **based on gender**, class, and **ethnicity** and negatively impacts society's view of **women**.

**Women are much more likely to experience gender-based violence due to capitalism, patriarchy, and rape culture.**

6. What is the number of cases reported by LGBTQIA+ individuals?

We served 22 LGBTQIA++ individuals in FY 2021, 8 of whom identified as gender expansive (e.g., trans, two-spirit, nonbinary, etc.). This is also suspected to be severely underreported as many of the individuals we work with have not had the opportunity to fully explore and feel safe in their identity.

7. Have any of the cases been investigated as hate crimes? What are the historical statistics?

FY 2021: 1 reported hate crime involving police brutality on a black trans individual



# PATHWAYS *for* Change

ending the silence... ending sexual violence

## Questions from the WACSW Members:

### 1. # of cases filed/ reported to Pathways for Change, Inc. (Pathways) in last fiscal year [FY2021]?

Out of over 2000 individuals that Pathways provided services to in FY2021, **615** Sexual Violence Survivors were from Worcester specifically.

a. **In your opinion is this representative of the actual #'s or is the crime underreported? If so why?**

The harsh reality is that this is definitely an underreported number. Current research indicates that Sexual Violence (SV) is under reported not just locally but nationally as well. Some of the barriers to reporting that SV survivors face are: victim blaming, not being believed, being mistreated, fear of retaliation or deportation and many other shaming responses. All of which contribute to Survivors not feeling safe to come forward.

b. A couple of sources for review of specific statistics on SV are the National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) at: <https://www.nsvrc.org/statistics> and the Rape, Assault & Incest National Network (RAINN) at: <https://www.rainn.org/about-sexual-assault>.

### 2. Have you seen a rise in the number of cases reported especially during COVID? If so why or why not?

a. No. FY21 was certainly not a 'typical' year for most of us. Sadly, during the height of the COVID pandemic, in FY21, numbers were lower than Pathways would normally see. Not because SV wasn't happening, but because of the increased barriers impacted by the pandemic (specifically, survivors who now had to juggle additional burdens/stresses that included housing instability, child care/remote schooling challenges, job loss/insecurity, lack of adequate or affordable internet to be able to access virtual services, etc.).

b. We know that Survivors had very little space, time or even bandwidth to be able to find the privacy and confidential space to get support counseling (via hotlines or virtual platforms) so not surprisingly, reporting or seeking support for their SV experience often dropped to the bottom of their priority list.

c. Another factor that we hear anecdotally from Survivors is their mistrust of legal & law enforcement systems/institutions (heightened by the media attention on police brutality and the BLM movement during the pandemic).

### 3. How do those numbers compare historically?

a. The number provided is lower than prior years, and lower than our projection for this FY2022 year.

4. **Demographic/communities that are most affected by these offenses?** Of the information that we track from information *volunteered* from Survivors (we don't require they provide this information), the following demographics are:

**Gender**

Female – 462  
 Male – 84  
 Transgender FTM – 1  
 Transgender MTF – 5  
 Transgender, unspecified – 2  
 Gender Fluid/Non-Conforming/  
 Non-Binary – 0  
 Undisclosed/Unknown – 61

**Race**

American Indian/Alaskan Native – 3  
 Asian – 1  
 Black – 26  
 Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander – 2  
 White – 143  
 White Hispanic Latino/a – 36  
 Black Hispanic/Latino/a – 6  
 Multi-Racial – 5  
 Undisclosed/Unknown - 393

5. **Why are women especially victimized by these offenses?**

a. Sexual Violence is a form of oppression (inherent with exercising power & control (over an individual or group) and is a gender-based violence incident that is committed against someone based often on the victim's gender identity, gender expression or perceived gender. It is also a misconception that SV doesn't happen to men, which also makes it difficult for a male identified person to 'come out' as a Survivor. With that said, women-identified individuals are more likely to have experienced the crime of SV in the form of rape, and sexual assault, as well as having experienced unwanted sexualized behavior in the work place, on the street (ex: 'cat calls') and/or online due to our societal & cultural attitudes (patriarchy, sexism, racism, etc.) toward women-identified individuals.

6. **What is the number of cases reported by LGBTQIA+ individuals?**

a. Pathways had **28** SV Survivors during FY2021 whom identified within the LGBTQIA+ community, which is radically lower than past years, and lower than we anticipate this fiscal year. The reason for the lower numbers is the same reason as reported in question #2

b. Important to note and sourced from the Human Rights Commission (HRC): "Sexual violence affects every demographic and every community – including LGBTQIA+ people. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/dpdx/) (CDC), LGBTQIA+ people experience sexual violence often at higher rates than straight people. As a community, LGBTQIA+ people face higher rates of poverty, stigma, and marginalization, which put us at greater risk for sexual assault. We also face higher rates of hate-motivated violence, which can often take the form of sexual assault. Moreover, the ways in which society both hypersexualizes LGBTQIA+ people and stigmatizes our relationships can lead to intimate partner violence that stems from internalized homophobia and shame. Within the LGBTQIA+ community, transgender people and bisexual women face the most alarming rates of sexual violence. Among both of these populations, sexual violence begins early, often during childhood."

Source: <https://www.hrc.org/resources/sexual-assault-and-the-lgbt-community>

**7. Have any of the cases been investigated as hate crimes? What are the historical statistics? (DA/WPD)**

- a. At Pathways, we view all forms of SV a hate crime because SV is a form of oppression. We do not know, nor have access, to the citywide numbers of documented hate crimes, via WPD, that include SV. However, since we know culturally and statistically, SV is an underreported crime, it is likely that those numbers are underreported as well.
- b. <https://www.blackburncenter.org/post/why-isn-t-violence-against-women-considered-a-hate-crime> And <https://now.org/blog/sexual-violence-is-a-hate-crime/> scroll down in the article to see the entry on SV

---

588 Main Street  
Worcester, MA 01608-2014  
Office Phone: 508-852-7600  
Office FAX: 508-852-7870

**24 Hour HOTLINE: 800-870-5905**  
Video Phone: 508-502-7681  
**www.PathwaysForChange.Help**

Simmons Building  
275 Nichols Road  
Fitchburg, MA 01420  
Office Phone: 978-343-56



***This information is compiled from several sources. These data sources are primarily focused on acquiring prosecution statistics. The below information reflects reasonable assumptions regarding the data available at this time.***

Questions:

1. # of cases filed/ Reported to your respective organizations in last fiscal year?

***July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021      34 defendants/48 charges***

2. Have you seen a rise in the number of cases reported especially during COVID?

***March 13, 2019 through March 13, 2020      53 defendants/116 charges***  
***March 13, 2020 through March 13, 2021      37 defendants/51 charges***

***This data suggests a decrease in the numbers of cases reported during covid.***

3. How do those numbers compare historically?

***July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021      34 defendants/48 charges***  
***July 1, 2019 through July 30, 2020      47 defendants/100 charges***

4. Demographic/communities that are most affected by these offenses?

***Our case tracking system does not capture this information***

5. Why are women especially victimized by these offenses?

***Our case tracking system does not capture this information***

6. What is the number of cases reported by LGBTQIA+ individuals

***Our case tracking system does not capture this information***

7. Have any of the cases been investigated as hate crimes? What are the historical statistics?

***There statute that best applies to "hate crimes" is 265 s 39. Two cases were initiated in FY2020 that were under this chapter and section.***



**DEPARTMENT OF POLICE  
CITY OF WORCESTER  
MASSACHUSETTS 01608 -1172  
508-799-8600**



Steven M. Sargent  
Chief of Police

<b>TO:</b> Chief Steve Sargent Deputy Chief Mark Roche	<b>UNIT:</b> Chief's Office
<b>FROM:</b> Captain Michael A. McKiernan	<b>UNIT:</b> Bureau of Investigative Services
<b>DATE:</b> 22 October 2021	<b>SUBJECT:</b> Gender Based Violence: Sexual Assault and Human Trafficking

The following report is submitted at the request of the City of Worcester Advisory Committee on the Status of Women. The topic is Gender Based Violence (sexual assault, human trafficking/exploitation). Our data is compiled on the calendar year not the fiscal year. We have provided data from the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) which is the clearing house for crime statistics. This aggregate data is generally regarded as the most accurate and is maintained by the FBI.


1. The Worcester Police Department tracks and reports data to the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) in the following areas: Rape, Sodomy, Fondling, Statutory Rape and Human Trafficking. The data for the current calendar year is:

Rape	25
Sodomy	1
Fondling	23
Statutory Rape	3
Human Trafficking	4

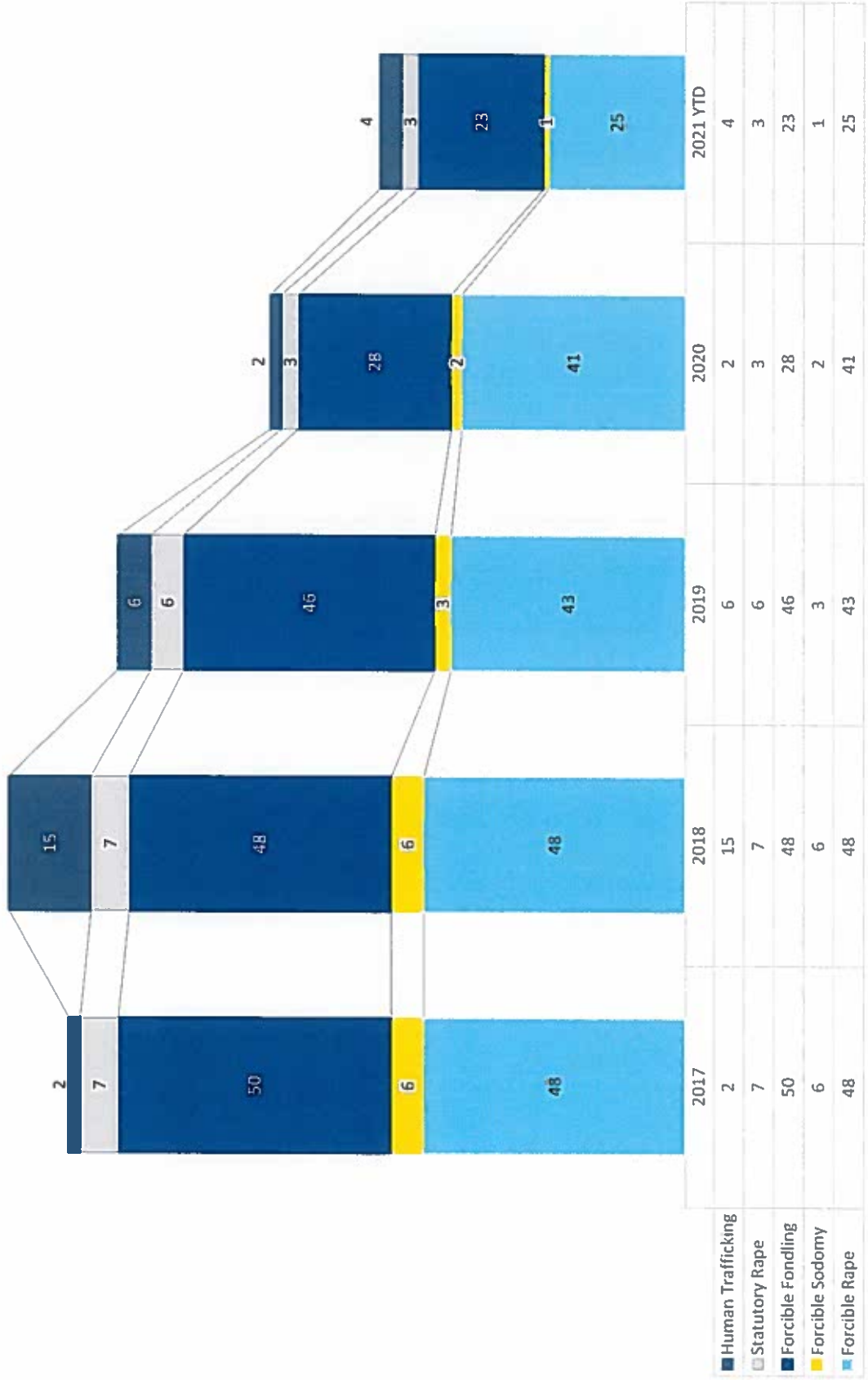
We know sexual assaults are underreported and continue to work encourage victims to file reports. The National Crime Victimization Survey is conducted yearly and is one of two major source of crime statistics. These victimization rates do not include children under 12 years old. They estimate less than 50% of sexual assaults are reported to police. The number of unreported sexual assaults has continued to decline since 2018 and is currently estimated a 1.0 per 1000 persons age 12 or older. This data is based only on responses to the survey and it is recommended that this data is only used for general policy guidance.



2. We have seen a decrease in sexual assault cases during COVID. The data shows that the reported cases have declined every year beginning in 2017. We do not have a definitive explanation for this decline. This decline is consistent with the decline in sexual assaults reports in the United States based on NIBRS data.
3. We compared the historic data for the past 5 years. (See Attached Chart) Every category that is tracked has seen a decline since 2017. The outlier is the number of Human Trafficking victims in 2018. That was due to an investigation with members of the Gang Unit and Massachusetts State Police which uncovered a significant, coordinated effort by gang members to victimize women.
4. We have included graphs provided by our Principal Crime Analyst Tiana Antul that compares the demographics for victims and offenders for the past five years. This data is compared with the data for all of Massachusetts. It is difficult to accurately analyze the racial data due to the high number classified as "Unknown".
6. We do not track victim or suspect information as it relates to sexual or gender identification.
7. We do not have any records of a sexual assault report being investigated as a hate crime. We began collecting specific data on hate crime investigations in 2020.

  
Captain Michael A. McKiernan  
Bureau of Investigative Services

# SEXUAL ASSAULTS (NIBRS)



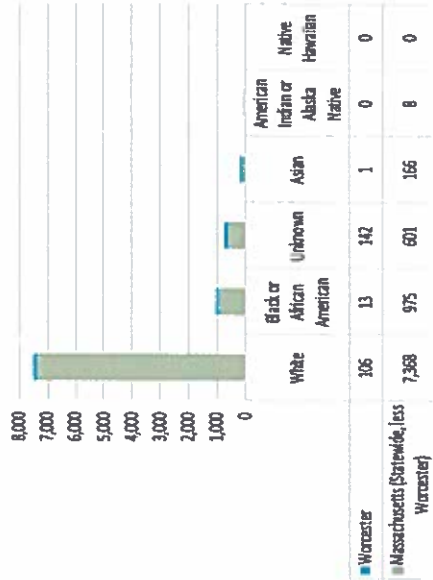


# Victim & Offender Demographics for Rape Offenses

City of Worcester (NIBRS Data)

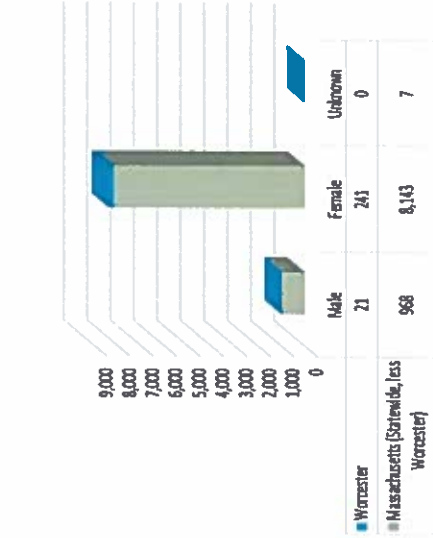
## Victim Race

Rape Offenses, Previous 5 Years (CY 2016 - CY 2020)



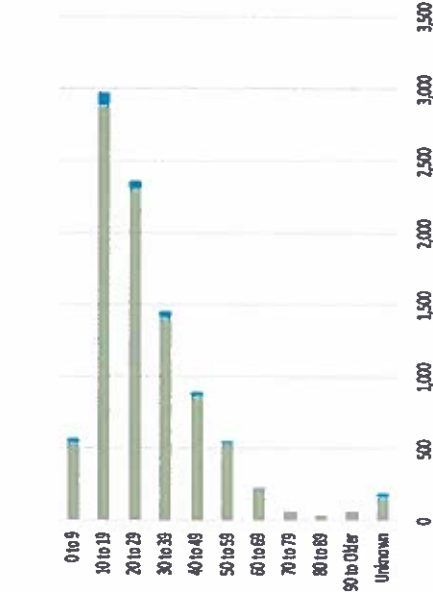
## Victim Sex

Rape Offenses, Previous 5 Years (CY 2016 - CY 2020)



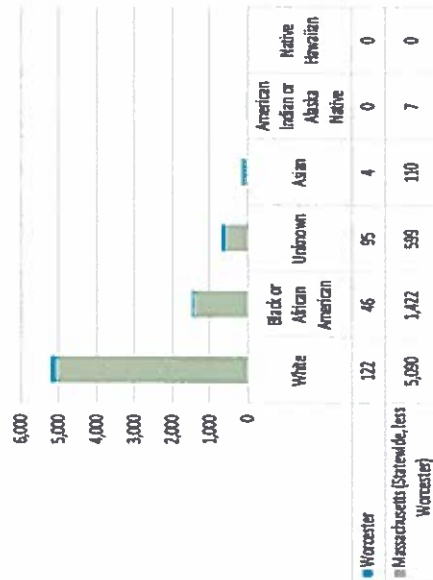
## Victim Age Range

Rape Offenses, Previous 5 Years (CY 2016 - CY 2020)



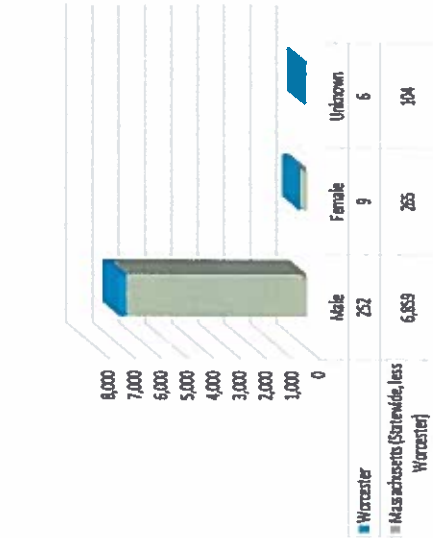
## Offender Race

Rape Offenses, Previous 5 Years (CY 2016 - CY 2020)



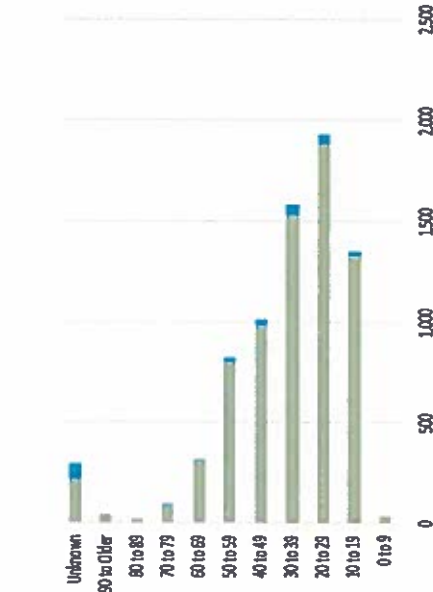
## Offender Sex

Rape Offenses, Previous 5 Years (CY 2016 - CY 2020)



## Offender Age Range

Rape Offenses, Previous 5 Years (CY 2016 - CY 2020)



**Intervention Services (WIN, SAFEPLAN and DVHRT) FY 21 (Oct 20-Sep 21)**

1. # of cases filed/ Reported to your respective organizations in last fiscal year? In your opinion is this representative of the actual #'s or is the crime underreported? If so why? (ALL)

WIN		SAFEPLAN		DVHRT	
Duplicated	56	Duplicated	349	Tracked	4,053
Unduplicated	1,161	Unduplicated	917	Watched	1,407

These cases do not represent the total amount of incidences of Domestic Violence and IPV within our services area. Our intervention programs only capture those victims who utilize the court system and law enforcement to increase their levels of safety. Our court advocacy count represented only those victims who had direct contact with our advocates, which does not fully represent the total number of victims who went into court to file for a protective order but worked with the court advocate.

2. Have you seen a rise in the number of cases reported especially during COVID? If so why or why not? (ALL)

During the peak of the COVID pandemic, our numbers for our court advocacy program show a slight decrease, because our advocates were working remotely and not been co-located at the courts, reducing their direct contact with victims. There was a slight decrease of 13 percent in the total number of new participants served in FY 21 compared to FY 20, while our WIN program had a minimal increase of 28 new participants. For WIN, we observed multiple calls for the same address within a short period of time as well as a quick escalation in the level and intensity of violence. In a few reports the victims shared that they did not tell the full story of the first time the police responded, while they were sheltering in place with the abuser.

3. How do those numbers compare historically? (ALL)

For WIN, the FY 21 numbers are just slightly higher when compared to FY 20 and 19. There have been only minimal changes in new clients seen, less than 20% increase over the last three fiscal years. Our court advocacy program has seen a slight decrease in the numbers of unduplicated participants that are served between FY 19 to 21.

FY 20- 1061

FY 19- 1,214

4. **Demographic/communities that are most affected by these offenses? (ALL)**

The communities most affected by domestic violence might not be the group that reports crimes to law enforcement or uses the criminal justice system to seek increased levels of safety. For some racial and ethnic groups there are long standing traumatic and adverse relationships between law enforcement and those communities which make our heavy reliance on these systems not an inclusive approach. Additional intersections of race, gender and sexual orientation class, socio-economic status and geographic location impacts who reports and who eventually comes in for services, since there are multiple points of entry for victims to the DV/SA continuum of care. Our statistics may represent those who are fortunate to access services and feel comfortable and safe to do so. Those who self identify as white females represent the highest number of victims served, followed by those who identify ethnically as Hispanic/Latino and ages group 18 – 55 represents the highest incidences of victimization.

5. **Why are women especially victimized by these offenses? (ALL)**

While we have often focused on why victims are victimized and at what rates, we often fail to ask the questions that should be asked. Why do abusers use violence and abusive tactics to control, coerce and hurt their partners? Additionally, questions of what societal conditions support the continued victimization, despite years of anti-violence and DV/SA. While there are many theories to explain women's victimization due to domestic violence. I do believe that some of the answers lie in the fact that we live in a very hetero-patriarchal society in which dominance up to and including violence against women, often times black and brown bodies, are seen as disposable and controllable are still allowed. Additionally, our society is still very hetero-normative and as such queer people especially queer people of color are not often reported on, provided space for, or even supported. Our local, state, and federal agencies who support DV/SA work still view and use gender as binary which forces our reporting to be with only two dominant groups. All this, however, is not to say DV/SA isn't still a very gendered crime because the significant number of people who report are traditionally in heterosexual relationships.

6. **What is the number of cases reported by LGBTQIA+ individuals (ALL)?**

Our court advocacy program served 39 individuals who identified as LGBTQ. Our Win program served 17 individuals who identified as LGBTQ.

7. Have any of the cases been investigated as hate crimes? What are the historical statistics? (DA/WPD).

To our knowledge we have not had any cases that came up as a hate crime.

**Greater Worcester Community Based Services**

1. # of cases filed/ Reported to your respective organizations in last fiscal year? In your opinion is this representative of the actual #'s or is the crime underreported? If so why? (ALL)

I would believe that these are not reflective of the actual number of DV cases in the catchment area. DV is underreported as well and not everyone accesses CBS for services. Survivors who typically reach out to us for services have been referred by another community partner or are actively looking for specific support, I.E housing, counseling, material assistance, education, etc.

DPH		OVW		Groups	
Duplicated	302	Duplicated	61	Duplicated	130
Unduplicated	290	Unduplicated	88	Unduplicated	23

2. Have you seen a rise in the number of cases reported especially during COVID? If so why or why not? (ALL)

There has been a rise in DV victims and survivors calling for services. There was an increase in referrals from both the Safe Plan Advocates (Worcester alone was a 266% increase) as well as the WIN Advocate. The courts being closed created a barrier for victims looking to obtain a RO with the court. The Police department went into a hybrid type model, they were providing the RO instead of the court and they were working differently during the pandemic. Some survivors shared that if they were able to get to the Police department to report the abuse, they were asked to return home and an officer would contact them to take the report. This resulted in some not following through with reporting due to the fear of the abuser being in the home

3. How do those numbers compare historically? (ALL)

Historically the numbers of referrals coming to CBS have fluctuated. Looking at May/June of 2019 and May/June 2020 we saw a 57% decrease. The numbers from May/June 2020 and May/June 2021 there was a 98 % increase

4. Demographic/communities that are most affected by these offenses? (ALL)

age 25-59 76% of the cases referred to CBS

Reportedly, women in the lowest income category experience more than six times the rate of nonfatal intimate partner violence as compared to women in the highest income category. When we consider race, we see that African-American women face higher rates of domestic violence than white women, and American-Indian women are victimized at a rate more than double that of women of other races. *These numbers are not reflective in our statistics in CBS due to the majority of DV cases by our marginalized communities being under-reported. (for the GW CBS reporting period 16% Black, 29% Hispanic, 3% American Indian, 2 % Asian and 46 % white)*

5. Why are women especially victimized by these offenses? (ALL)

Where victimization can happen by, and to any gender, women experience higher rates of violence perpetrated by a male partner. Women also experience more severe violence, higher rates of victimization, are more likely to be seriously injured and experience higher levels of fear.

Violence against women is rooted in women's unequal status in society and is part of the wider social problem of male violence against women and girls. Both sexism and misogyny set the scene for male abusive partners' coercive and controlling behaviours. Sexism and misogyny serve to excuse abusive behaviour by men in intimate relationships with women and increase barriers to female survivors being believed and supported.

6. What is the number of cases reported by LGBTQIA+ individuals (ALL)

28

7. Have any of the cases been investigated as hate crimes? What are the historical statistics? (DA/WPD)

Would not have this knowledge in CBS.

## North Central Community Based Services

1. # of cases filed/ Reported to your respective organizations in last fiscal year? In your opinion is this representative of the actual #'s or is the crime underreported? If so why? (ALL)

DPH - 147; VOCA - 102; UNITED WAY - 31

TOTAL new enrollments: 280

It is my opinion that cases are underreported. Not all survivors seek support from a domestic violence organization. Many survivors are unaware services are available for free. Others are not ready to engage or do not feel they need the service.

**2. Have you seen a rise in the number of cases reported especially during COVID? If so why or why not? (ALL)**

There has been a rise in both referrals and enrollments in the North Central area. Referrals have jumped up 61% as compared to FY20 and enrollments have increased by 26%. The COVID-19 pandemic isolated many of us, but it also called us to action in coming together with other providers to better serve the unique and changing needs in our communities. I believe these convenings opened us up to receiving more referrals from community partners and more people knowing about our services as we made concerted efforts to ensure people knew our services never lapsed and remained fully available (though remote/virtual) throughout the pandemic.

**3. How do those numbers compare historically? (ALL)**

Historically numbers were lower, but there were circumstances in the past that contributed to low numbers in NC. The NC team is now more robust and cohesive with a greater community presence which has led to an increase in referrals and enrollments.

**4. Demographic/communities that are most affected by these offenses? (ALL)**

The demographics we see most often in NC CBS are white (60%) women followed by Latinas (23%). 85% of participants served were in the 25-59 age bracket. The NC community is majority white and lower income. Most participants are in low income brackets - often with either no income at all or incomes below 17,000 per year. However our participant demographics do not necessarily represent the communities most impacted by domestic violence.

**5. Why are women especially victimized by these offenses? (ALL)**

It is predominantly cisgender heterosexual men who perpetrate this type of violence, as indicated by research and reinforced by advocate's experience. Even though anyone of any gender identity can exhibit abusive values and characteristics, not everyone is able to do so without much consequence. Norms regarding social roles and dominance favor men as purveyors of power allowing them more leeway when it comes to using tactics of interpersonal abuse. It is acceptable, sometimes even encouraged, for men to behave in a way that asserts dominance. Violence is of course not socially favorable, but it is often considered understandable and excusable when the violence is perpetrated by a man against an "unruly" or "disobedient" woman.

Additionally, the complex dynamics of intimate partner violence are still broadly misunderstood, especially circumstances where the victim/survivor has used violence to defend themselves or their



dignity. Women who use violence to fight back are demonized, criminalized, and often incarcerated. Due to typical size and strength differences between the average man and woman, women are more likely to use a weapon to defend themselves resulting in more severe criminal charges. This is in stark contrast to the leniency afforded men who strangle (an extraordinarily dangerous and lethal assault) their female partners but frequently do not face any jail time, if they get prosecuted at all. In this way women, especially women of color, are victimized by their communities and the state actors entrusted to enforce the law in addition to their perpetrators.

6. What is the number of cases reported by LGBTQIA+ individuals (ALL)

26

7. Have any of the cases been investigated as hate crimes? What are the historical statistics? (DA/WPD)

I do not have this information.

**Shelter**

1. # of cases filed/ Reported to your respective organizations in last fiscal year? In your opinion is this representative of the actual #'s or is the crime underreported? If so why? (ALL)

Helpline Calls	2301
Unmet Requests	568
Shelter Participants	39 Adults, 28 Children

I do not believe that these numbers are a true representation of those families/individuals seeking shelter. Domestic violence is under reported and not everyone has access or knowledge of services.

2. Have you seen a rise in the number of cases reported especially during COVID? If so why or why not? (ALL)

We have seen an increase of number of calls to our help line with those seeking shelter and referrals to services during the pandemic. The increase calls for shelter was partly due to more victims being home bound with their abusers.

3. How do those numbers compare historically? (ALL)

Comparatively from last year, the help line calls saw a decrease in calls by 8%. We did however see in increase of program participants by 19%. This is in part due to families/individuals seeking alternative housing options and an increase in housing stabilizations funds.

4. Demographic/communities that are most affected by these offenses? (ALL)

50% of program participants were white, 45% were hispanic, and 5% black.

5. Why are women especially victimized by these offenses? (ALL)

Women are victimized more by these offenses due to the unequal status between women and men in our society. Often times, when women do report abuse they are not believed and they face numerous barriers seeking legal help.

6. What is the number of cases reported by LGBTQIA+ individuals (ALL)

0

7. Have any of the cases been investigated as hate crimes? What are the historical statistics? (DA/WPD)

Not to my knowledge.

## ICAPP

1. # of cases filed/ Reported to your respective organizations in last fiscal year? In your opinion is this representative of the actual #'s or is the crime underreported? If so why? (ALL)

- a. 57 cases
- b. This is not a true representative of the number of survivors experiencing housing stability, this is simply the number of people I was able to work with personally. I believe many more people could have used support if we had greater capacity.

2. Have you seen a rise in the number of cases reported especially during COVID? If so why or why not? (ALL)

- a. Anecdotally I think cases have risen, but my program data would not bear that out because I had more staff and greater capacity before covid.

3. How do those numbers compare historically? (ALL)

- a. ICAPP has only operated for 2 years so we do not have a long history for context.

4. Demographic/communities that are most affected by these offenses? (ALL)

- a. About 50% of participants served by ICAPP were white. About 25% were Black, and 28% were Latinx. 12% identified with multiple races and .04% were Asian. However, looking at the demographics of Worcester County, which is the area ICAPP serves, 75% of the population is white, 8.84% is Hispanic, 5% is Asian, about 5% is Black according to <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/worcester-county-ma>. This suggests that Black and Latinx residents of Worcester county are disproportionately affected by domestic

violence and housing instability. This disproportionality is backed by state wide and national data. These numbers do not even take into account under reporting and under serving which we know is an issue nationwide.

5. Why are women especially victimized by these offenses? (ALL)

- a. 96% of survivors served by ICAPP were women. This reflects a global issue with misogyny and patriarchal ideals which create violence against women and girls.

6. What is the number of cases reported by LGBTQIA+ individuals (ALL)

- a. In the last year ICAPP has served 7 LGBTQIA+ individuals.

7. Have any of the cases been investigated as hate crimes? What are the historical statistics?  
(DA/WPD)

- a. We have not seen any hate crime reports in ICAPP.