



Results from the Gender Based Violence Public Opinion Survey



**By: The Women's Place Resource Centre
January, 2025**

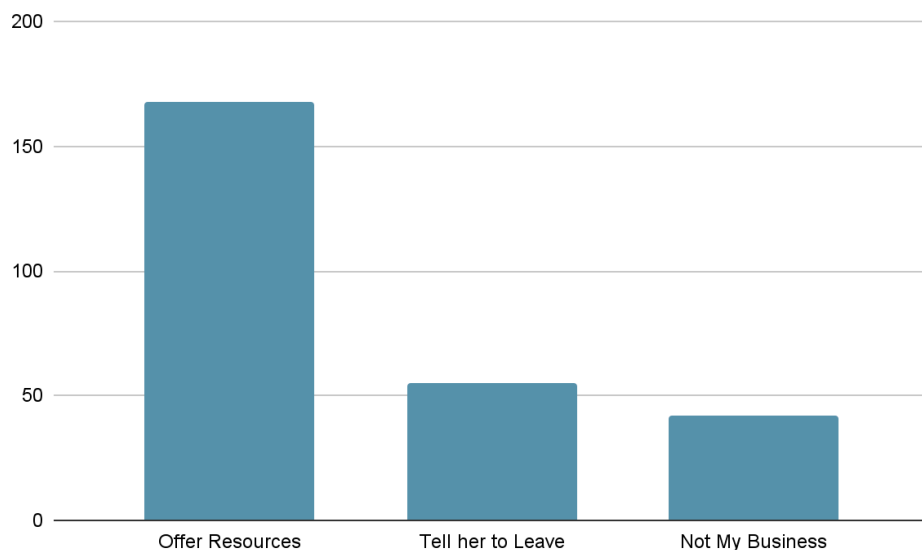
The Purpose of the Survey

The survey is the first step in a multi-year project, funded by the Nova Scotia Status of Women Office. The purpose was to collect information from the community on gender based violence in the Annapolis Valley and then start an honest, respectful conversation on the topic.

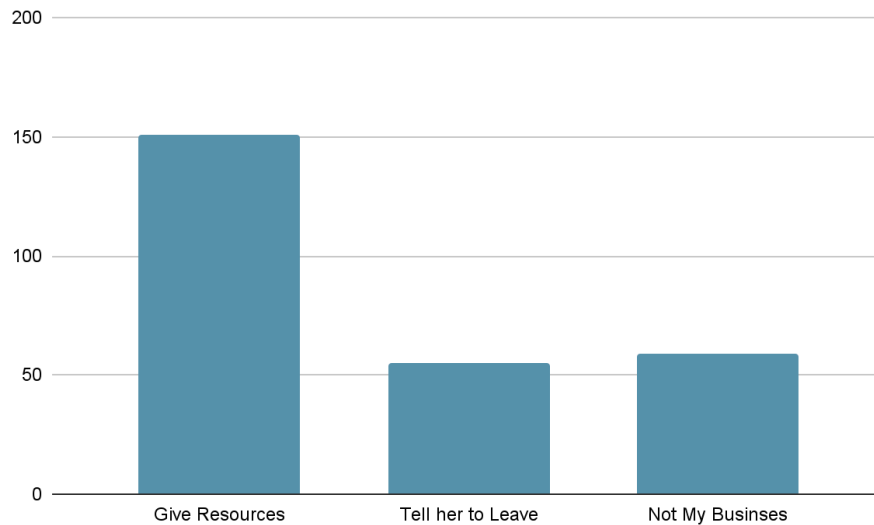
Part 1 of the Survey

The first five questions in the survey had multiple choice answers from which respondents could choose. These questions were designed to get an impression of the public's knowledge and attitude towards gender based violence in the Annapolis Valley.

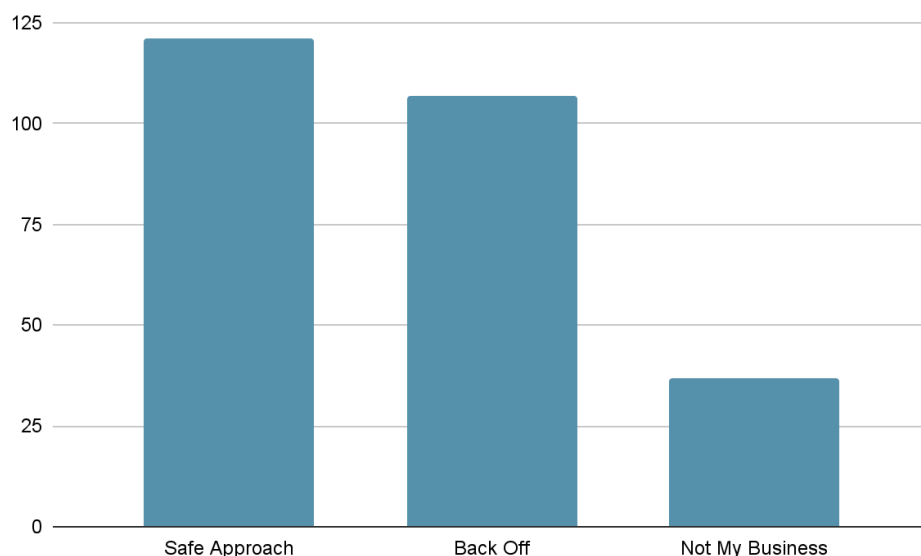
Question 1: Your coworker, who is a woman, comes to work with a black eye and a broken finger. She admits to you that her husband hit her during an argument. There were three answers provided: offer her resources, tell her to leave him, or say nothing because it's none of your business. The results are reflected in the following chart.



Question 2: You overhear a couple (a man and a woman) having an argument. The man tells the woman that she's always so stupid. She starts to cry and says she knows she's stupid. He says he doesn't know why he puts up with her and she disgusts him. He storms out. There were three answers from which to choose: offer her resources, tell her to leave him, or say nothing because it's none of your business. The responses are as follows:

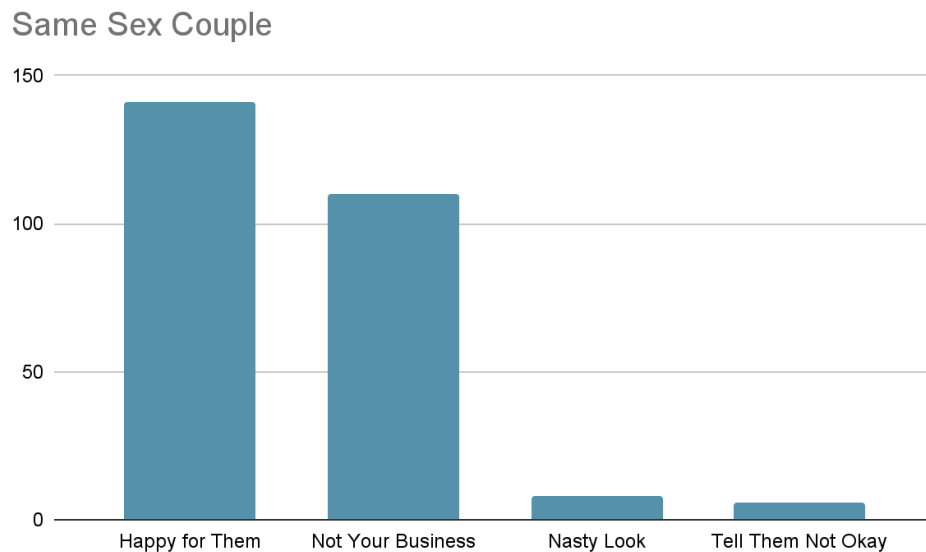


Question 3: You are in a bar and a man is asking the server, a much younger woman, to go home with him. He is not taking no for an answer and reaches out as she walks by and grabs her arm. The options for answers were: approach her to see if she wants help with the situation, tell him to back off, or say nothing because it's none of your business. The following chart shows the results:

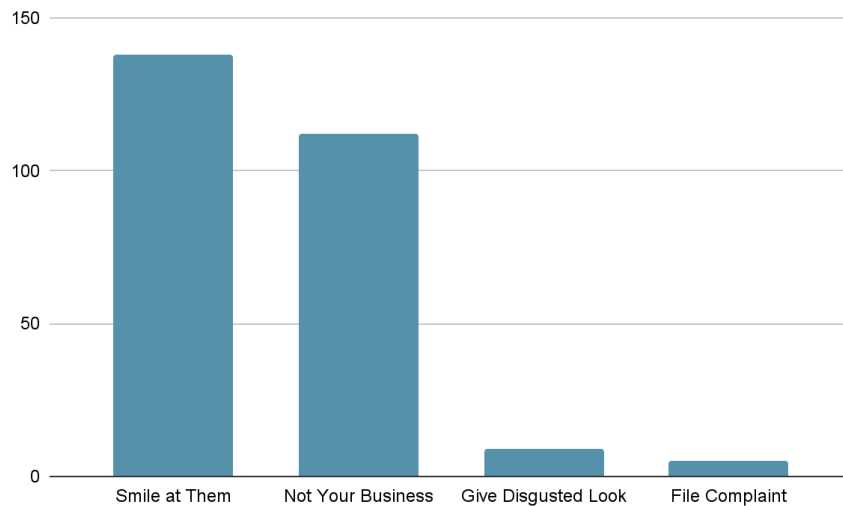


From the responses from the first three questions, it appears that people in the Annapolis Valley are better able to identify and intervene in cases of physical violence. They are more comfortable offering resources to people who face this type of abuse. With emotional / verbal violence, there is a bit more of a tendency to tell the victim to leave the perpetrator, rather than to offer resources. These responses also appear to indicate a higher level of public engagement if they see sexual harassment in public between two people who really don't know each other, rather than intervening in cases of intimate partner abuse.

Question 4: You see a same-sex couple holding hands as they walk on a sidewalk in town. They stop and kiss each other and then continue to walk. The options for answers were: smile at them - you're happy they're happy, say nothing because it's none of your business, give them a nasty look and hope they stop doing that in public, or tell them it's not okay for them to kiss in public. The results are as follows:



Question 5: At work, you see someone who looks like they are a man, but they have the mannerisms of a woman. Someone tells you the person is transgender. The options for answers were: smile at them - you're happy they're happy, say nothing because it's none of your business, give them a disgusted look when you see them, or tell them it is not work appropriate and you are putting in a complaint.



Key Discussion Points

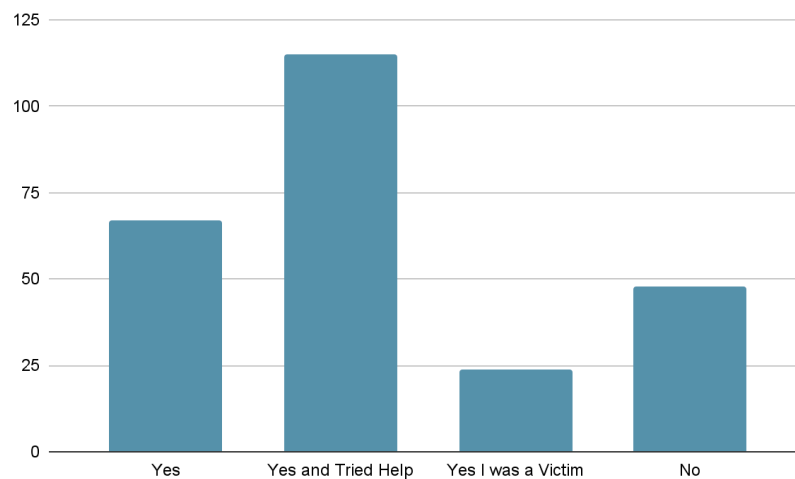
From the results of the first five questions, there are several points that need to be examined further.

- People appear more comfortable getting involved with victims of physical violence rather than emotional or verbal violence.
- People seem more willing to interject when they see sexual harassment in public between two people who don't know each other well than interjecting between two people in an intimate relationship.
- There does not appear to be much variance in acceptance levels of the LGBTQ2S+ community across age, ethnicities, or religions. It appears to be more of a culture in the Annapolis Valley.

Part 2 of the Survey

The next set of questions asked for written input from respondents, rather than a multiple choice answer. A few people chose not to fill in these answers, however the vast majority of people offered responses that were well developed and thought out. Any quotes are kept in the original form with additional context added by parentheses.

Question 6: Have you ever seen or personally known someone who was a victim of violence because they are a woman, or identify as homosexual or as transgender? If yes, what did you do? How did you feel about it?



Of the many who did know someone who experienced violence, over 45% indicated they had tried to help the victims. Some of those who tried to help, however, were frustrated with the response from the victim and/or the resources.

- “I have known someone who experienced violence for these reasons. I offered support and encouraged them to seek professional help. It pissed me off when they didn't accept.”
- “They didn't seem to want any help. I tried and got shut down quickly.”
- “You see things in bars that are borderline. It's hard to know what to do because you hear that approaching someone can make the matter worse for them.”
- “For me I tried to tell her to run, but all it did was lead to her running away from me.”

There were 24 respondents who identified themselves as victims of gender-based violence and offered a first-voice perspective of the experience. Their comments are not included here, as their stories could identify them in such small communities. However, their commitment to making positive changes by discussing their experiences is remarkable and very appreciated.

Not everyone thinks it is their place to try to assist someone who is experiencing gender based violence. These are a few of the comments provided.

- “Yes, [I've known someone] but it's a two way street. You don't know the truth so its no ones business.”
- “I felt that it was wrong, but I respected their privacy.”
- “I didn’t interfere and felt that some things are beyond my control.”
- “I haven’t seen it personally, and I think some people exaggerate their problems.”
- “Yes [I knew someone who was a victim], but it didn’t bother me.”
- “It would be nice to have some education in minding your own business.”
- “It's none of my business. People need to mind their own business and take care of their own.”

And others felt it did not happen or had improved locally.

- “It [violence] seems to have gotten better over the years.”
- “We're from a small town and things like that doesn't really happen here.”

Question 7: Do you think that violence against women, gay men, lesbian women, or transgender individuals is sometimes justified? If yes, when?

The majority of people indicated that violence is not justified. A few qualified the statement, saying that violence may be justified in the case of self defense.

Some people who responded to this question noted that violence may be justified, depending on the actions of the other person (i.e. victims of violence).

- “Violence might be justified if someone doesn’t behave as they’re expected to.”
- “Violence is justified in some situations when their behavior is inappropriate.”
- “People who act “out of line” are sometimes asking for it, so violence can be justified.”
- “You shouldn't be flaunting your sexuality in public as you're looking for danger.”
- “Violence isn't the answer, but the line is getting blurry with trans women. They don't deserve violence because of who they are, but if they instigate issues with men they might end up getting hit.”
- “When someone is flaunting their sexuality in your face and you say not to, but they keep doing it you may have to take matters into your own hands.”
- “If you are disrespectful you get what you get.”
- “Yes [violence is justified], if they provoke it.”
- “There is no need of public affection from anyone. Especially people who say they are victimized. If you are doing something socially unacceptable than you get what you get.”

Additionally, several people made comments in this question about the term “gender-based violence.” There were concerns and some confusion raised about having women and people who identify as part of the LGBTQ2S+ community under the same label. There seems to be the idea that there is a finite amount of resources, and people are concerned that members of the LGBTQ2S+ community are taking some of these resources away from women.

- “It seems to be getting worse. There doesn't seem to be anything I can do and with it being "gender" based violence all of the attention seems to be going to the gay community taking the emphasis off women.”
- “These are very different things.”
- “I've had friends that were abused, but none of them were gay or trans.”
- “Yes [I've known victims] and it's tragic as they never chose that life. Grouping it with Transgender that made the choice to face violence is not right. It's hard to justify [violence] but you know what your getting into.”

Question 8: Please list any resources you know that will help people who are victims of gender based violence. Are there any you would like to see in the Annapolis Valley?

The top resources mentioned by respondents were:

- Transition Houses / Shelters (101 mentions)
- Women's Centres (43 mentions)
- Police / 911 (33 mentions)
- Crisis Lines (25 mentions)

Approximately 21% of respondents did not know what resources were available or how to access them.

- “We seem to have lots of programs, but naming them off the top of my head is difficult when I think about it. That could point to a problem. Maybe we just need the current programs to be more front and center.”
- “There are far too many [resources] to list, but it's hard to know which ones to recommend in which situation. I would like to see a person that can be called to point people in the right direction.”
- “Government programs are out there, but we need a list of where to find them.”

Some felt we do not need any further resources.

- “We are wasting money interfering in people's personal business.”
- “We don't have any [resources] here because we don't need them.”
- “I wouldn't know about resources and don't see a need to. The point of filling this out is to show that not everyone cares about this stuff. We all have issues and need to learn to deal with them.”
- “I don't know any [resources], and I don't think we need more resources like that.”

There were some specific suggestions for resources from respondents. These included:

- More education on gender based violence - particularly in high schools.
- Addressing the challenges of rural transportation to get to and from appointments.
- More government funding for programs and services to eliminate waitlists.
- Having a navigator position. This would be similar to those found in the healthcare system. It was suggested the person should be someone with first-hand experience of gender based violence, in order to build trust in the resources available.
- More culturally sensitive resources (i.e. specific to ethnicities and the LGBTQ2S+ community).
- Resources for friends and family who are trying to help someone experiencing gender based violence.

Key Discussion Points

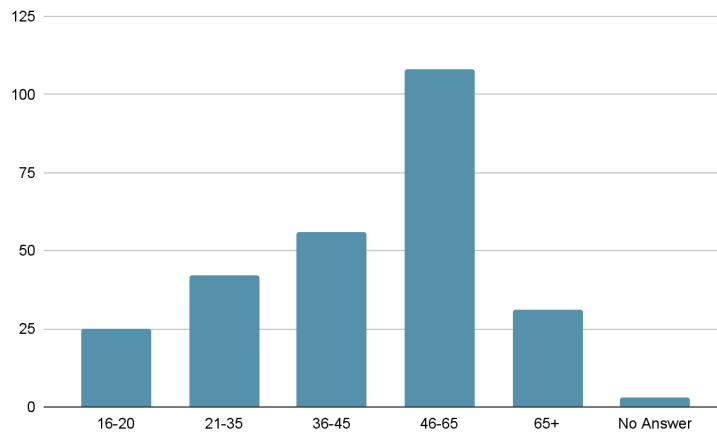
- Most respondents know someone who has experienced gender based violence. Not everyone knows what resources are available or how to access them. They are looking for one central place to get information.
- There is some tolerance in the Annapolis Valley for violence against the LGBTQ2S+ community.
- There are some barriers to accessing resources for gender based violence in the Valley, including transportation and a lack of trust in the ability of resources to keep victims safe.
- People have suggestions for resources that need to be examined further.
- There seems to be some confusion around the term gender based violence - who does it include, are programs and organizations able to provide sufficient resources for everyone, and does it include other forms of violence rather than physical?

Part 3: Demographics

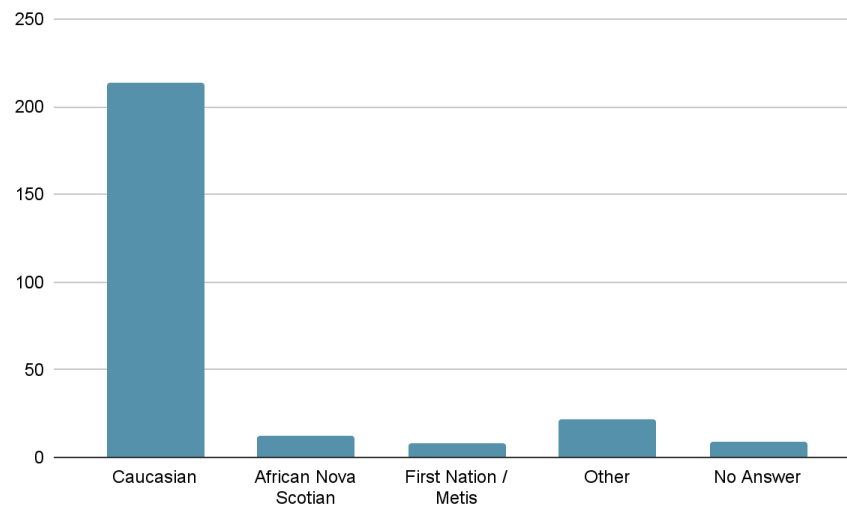
The demographic questions were put in place to offer a bit more insight into who was answering the survey. The ethnicity and religious affiliation questions have an option of “other.” The term “other” is not intended to lessen the importance of their input, but rather to make these respondents less identifiable in this report.

This information (which was voluntary) was analyzed with the primary eight questions to see if there were any notable themes. What became evident is that there are similarities in the Annapolis Valley culture towards gender based violence across all ages, ethnicities, and religious affiliations. Overall, the demographics show that results offered a good cross-section of representation from the Annapolis Valley.

Question 9: What is your age group?



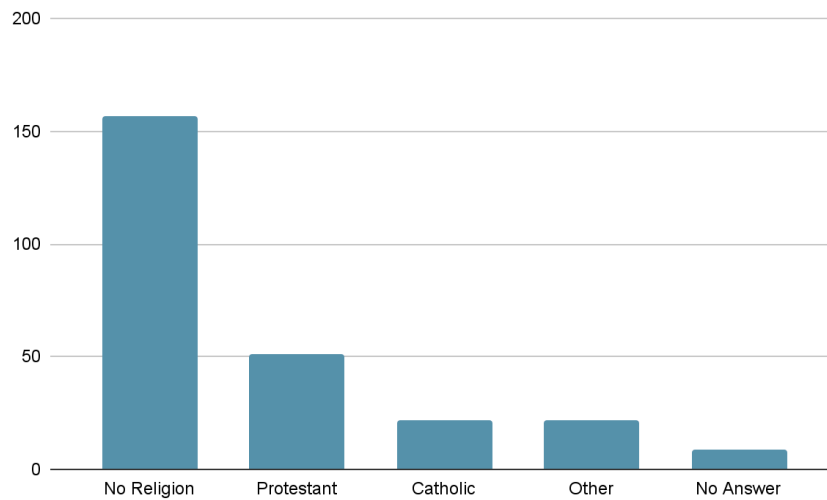
Question 10: What is your ethnicity?



From those who answered “Other,” they included people who identified as:

- Acadian
- Middle Eastern
- Asian and White
- Mix of First Nations and Western European
- European and South Asian
- White, Metis, Black
- Latino American
- Mexican

Question 11: Do you consider yourself part of a religious organization?



Some of the religions noted under “Other” include:

- Jewish
- Pagan
- Christian
- Islam
- Spiritual
- Quaker
- Humanist
- Jehovah Witness
- Salvation Army

Next Steps

The Women’s Place Resource Centre is very pleased with the amount of responses they received from the public. People appeared to be honest and put their time and energy into answering the survey. Thank you.

The information gathered will be used in setting up a working group to identify next steps to address gender based violence in the Annapolis Valley.