

State of survivorship: **you can make a difference**

2022 Bi-annual report




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A photograph of a hand reaching up towards another hand against a cloudy sky. The hand at the bottom is open and palm up, while the hand at the top is partially visible, reaching down. The background is a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. The image is framed with rounded corners.

About the report



This report is distributed to crime enforcement agencies, legal resources, advocacy groups and political representatives for the purposes of increasing the focus on survivorship, as realized by victims of sex crimes, and creating much needed social, organizational and legal changes to better support and empower victimized persons.

Unlike existing reports on the topic of sex crimes, *The State of Survivorship (2022)* moves beyond the crime and highlights aspects of life after assault for both primary and secondary survivors. Specifically, this report highlights:

- the struggles that:
 1. hinder the survivorship of victimized persons and
 2. impede the successes of survivor supporters and advocates
- the specific areas that [unknowingly] promote sexual assault culture and victim shaming
- what may be done to better empower survivors and fight against sex crimes



Information collection

Research

The research in this study was independently conducted by Half Isle, Inc. for the purpose of better understanding the fuller scope of the granular level hardships faced by sexual assault survivors and survivor supporters along with the needs of survivor advocates. The company's two-year commitment (2019-2021) was two-pronged:

1. help victims transition into survivors and
2. help survivors realize improved wellness journeys.

Thus, the questions asked and conversations had centered around each victimized person, not the perpetrator or the details of the crimes.

Unearthing these facts aids in identifying specific changes that may help with the following:

- change social norms (perceptions and behaviors) regarding consent and victimization
- increase number of new readily available resources and improve existing ones
- further connect and strengthen the global survivorship community
- influence much needed social, political and legal change

Frequency

Over the last two years (2019–2021), anonymous polls were conducted each week, on Fridays. Results were made public to all community members on the following day.

Direct communications with members of the GOTU survivorship community were on an ad hoc basis and conducted via in-person or online exchanges.

Participation

Participants provided responses to polls via social media and identified as either a sexual assault survivor, survivor supporter or an advocate.

Responses

Each poll question required responses that were either "Yes/No", open answer, or a combination of both.



Participant criteria

Realized victimization

Per this report, “sexual assault” is defined as unwanted sexual contact that consists of one or more of the following violations:

- Stealthing
- Molestation (with or without clothing)
- Rape (includes Coercion)
- Exposure to pornography or sexual acts (visual or auditory)
- Voyeurism
- Statutory (above crimes enacted upon children under the legal age of consent)

“Sexual abuse” is defined as a series of sexual assaults, per above, enacted upon the same person by the same perpetrator(s).

Eligibility

We engaged over 2k members of the GOTU survivorship community. Participants were thirteen years of age or older and welcomed to participate regardless of: race, nationality, gender identity, politics, socioeconomic status, religion, education, occupation, relationship status, sexual orientation, etc.

The only criteria is that each participant identifies as one of the following:

- Sexual Assault Survivor - Person victimized by at least one sex crime over the course of their life
- Survivor Supporter - Person who has never been victimized by a sex crime and makes themselves available to a survivor
- Survivor Advocate - Trained professional who supports survivors and works to dismantle anything that allows sexual and domestic crimes to persist, can also be a survivor

*No participants were compensated for their participation.



CEO note

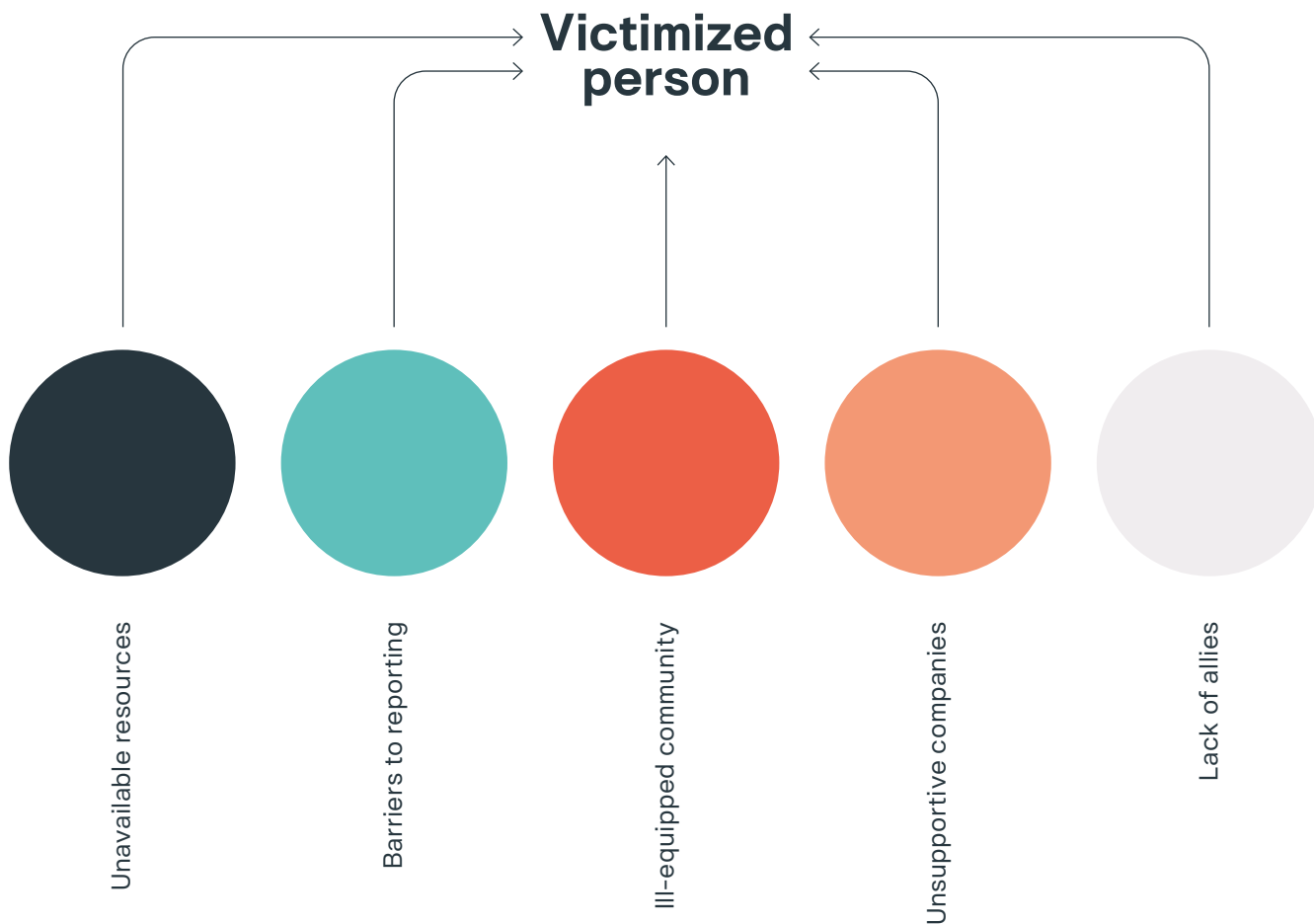
Surviving sexual violation is a lifelong responsibility that is forced upon every single victimized person. Ultimately, survivors are expected to complete exhaustive mental and physical labor without being adequately equipped with necessary information or having access to qualified resources.

These gaps make the effort to stand back up; stay alive; and, successfully reintegrate back into society as a productive person feel like an impossible feat. The global community must evolve its way of thinking and acting in order to close these gaps and create a world that is equitable for survivors.

TL Robinson Founder, CEO, Survivor

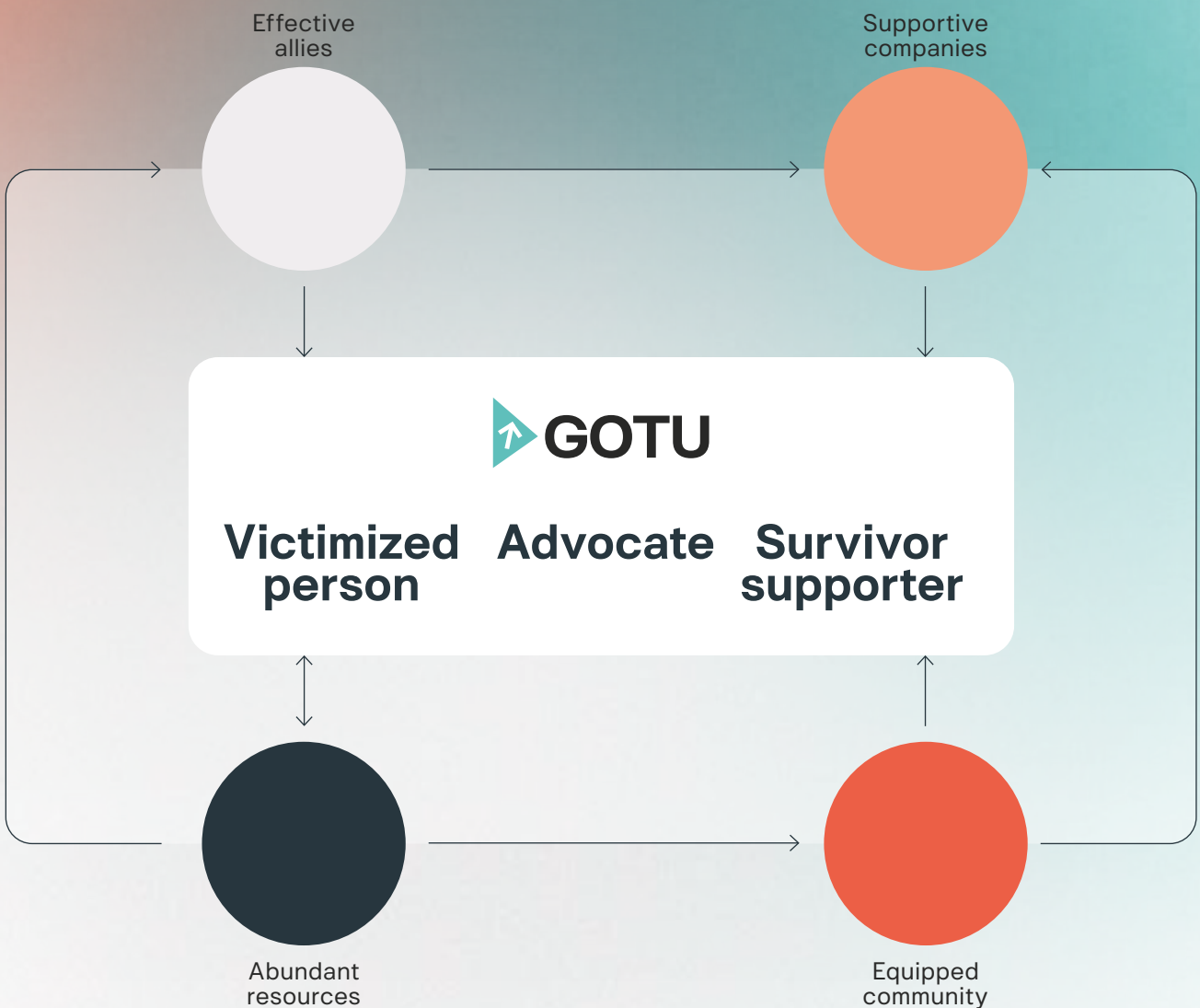
Current state

The responsibility of survivorship shouldn't belong solely to victimized persons. Many people living beyond a violation such as rape (includes stealthing), molestation, voyeurism, sexual coercion, or exposure to unwanted sexual content or acts have an increasingly difficult time. Being burdened with the responsibilities of surviving sex crimes and seeking justice causes further traumatization, perpetuating society's expectations for survivors to be invisible and silent.



Future state

Society, as a whole, must be accountable for supporting victimized persons and encouraging successful survivorship journeys. Shared responsibility creates an ecosystem where all parties learn from and consistently evolve with each other. The end result is a society where people believe allegations; provide readily available resources; don't blame and shame victimized persons; hold sexual perpetrators accountable; and, don't perpetuate trauma.





Impacts to victimized persons





Effects of violation may be lifelong and materially damaging

Harm to the human body may be physical, mental and emotional. In a number of instances, wounds are not immediately visible to the naked eye. Therefore, wounds resulting from sexual assault may not be attributed to the crime. This is especially true when victimized persons, or anyone else in their immediate circle of contact, do not have an understanding of trauma. To improve the chances of a healthy wellness journey, victimized persons and support resources must have an education on trauma, trauma responses and potential lasting effects.

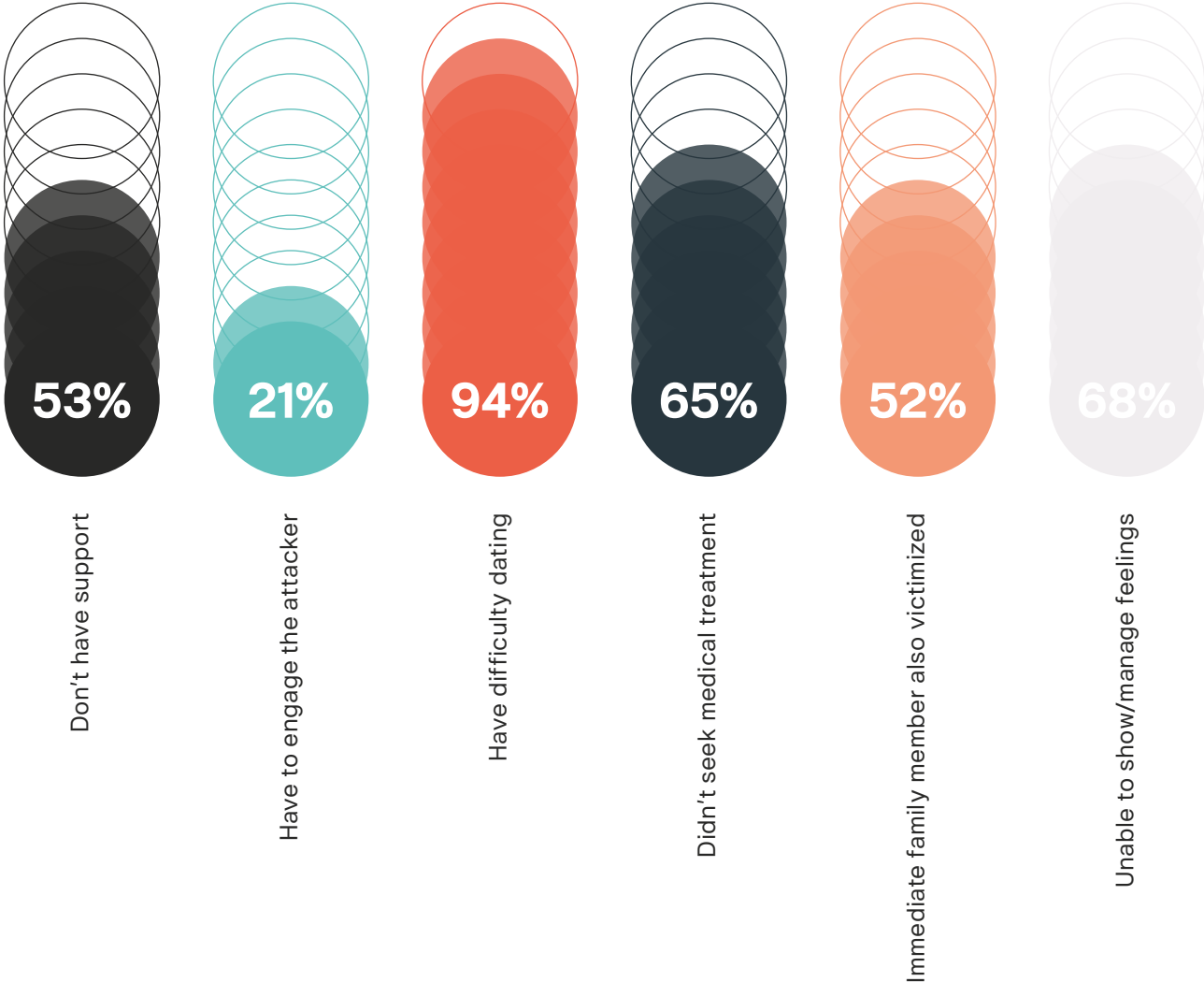
Current societal norms dictate that people victimized by rape, molestation, voyeurism, exposure to sexual acts or content, stealthing or statutory crimes must be silent and invisible. In addition, victimized persons are expected to “let it go” and “move on” (i.e. be fully functional members of society who can substantially contribute). And, despite these expectations, some non victimized persons perceive victimized persons as weak or damaged, not capable of having or worth engaging in meaningful relationships. These competing social expectations create increased emotional and mental labor, causing increased difficulty in the survivorship journey of a victimized person.

Effects are not just internal to each victim or survivor, they are also external. As backed by studies, victimized persons may also struggle with how to:

maintain relationships (familial, social and romantic); maintain employment; ensure proper self care; keep up with daily tasks/chores; and, problem solve. We decided to investigate the intersections of these struggles to uncover how victimized persons can be better supported in order to help ensure an improved survivorship journey.

Survivor welfare is influenced by the actions of the victimized person and their immediate contacts. This close circle must move beyond surface level efforts and expectations and be willing to understand the true impacts of sexual violation.

GOTU Community Speaks



“ Every single aspect of my life has been negatively impacted. He raped me and, every single day, I’m the one who is paying for it.

– Anonymous, Rape survivor

Survivor response



Trigger: Psychological stimulus that provokes recall of a past traumatic experience; may not be frightening or threatening itself.

- Being stared at
- Smells / colognes
- Movies / shows
- Sounds / voices
- Clothing
- Songs
- Specific places
- Seasons
- Touching
- Doctor visits
- Physical intimacy
- Person's appearance

Do you know?

Medical Treatment Costs Thousands (\$\$\$)

Non-payment is harmful to the credit and potential employment opportunities for victimized persons who can't pay for received treatment.

Trauma Therapy Costs \$175 – \$330/hour

Many survivors can't afford necessary mental health support from a trauma informed professional.

NOTE: An average need for people recently victimized is three sessions per week.

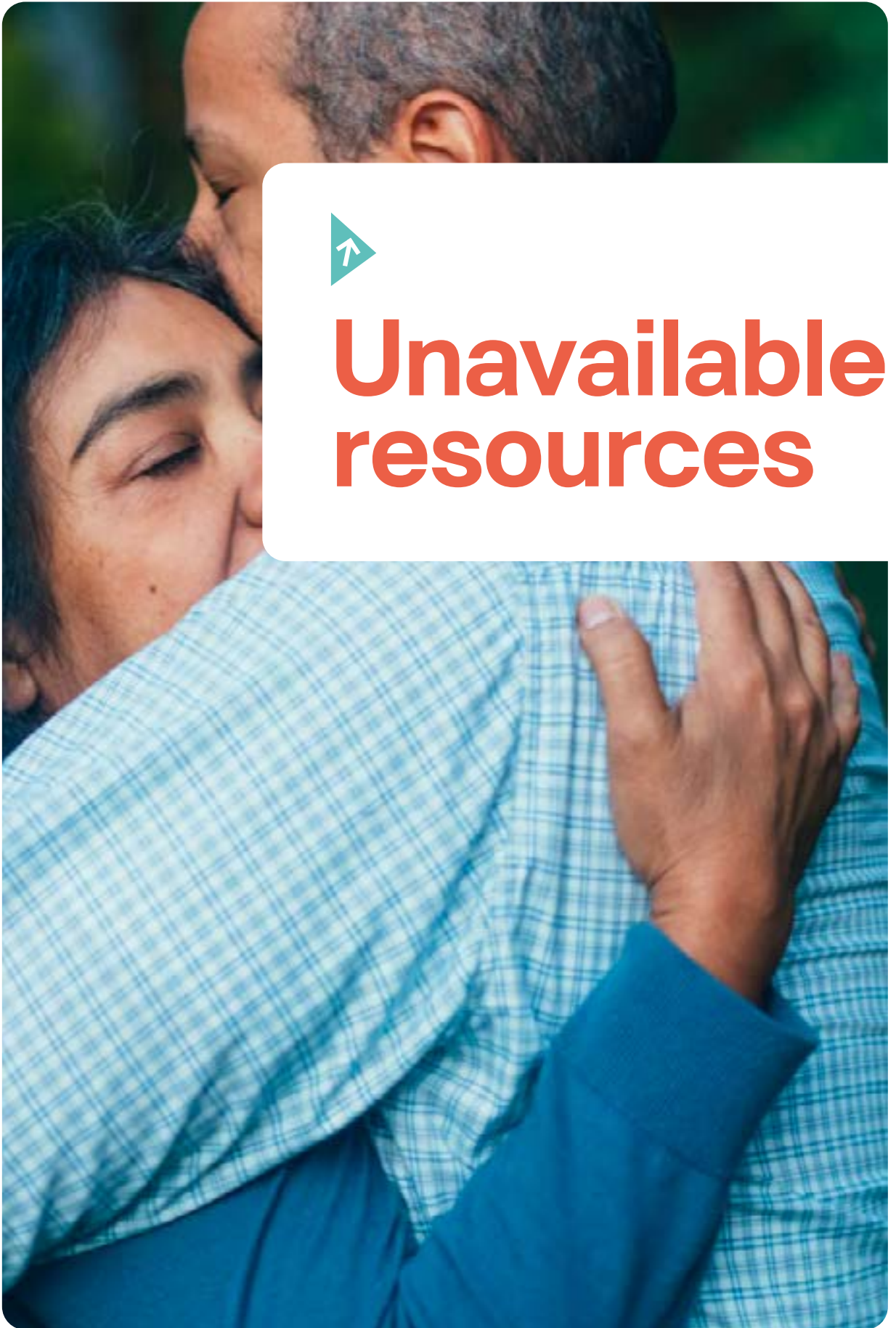
What is needed

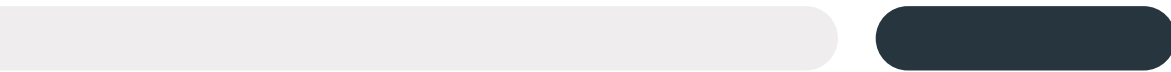
Victimized persons may only be reimbursed if the accused perpetrator is convicted of the sex crime. Until then, every person is financially responsible. The sexual assault community needs:

- an end to doctor approval for the receipt of treatment and SANE Exams
- insurance companies to subsidize the costs of therapy without the presence of a mental illness or physical injury
- moratorium of victim payment for initial and subsequent [physical] medical treatment due to sexual assault or abuse



Unavailable resources





Why the survivorship community has delayed progress

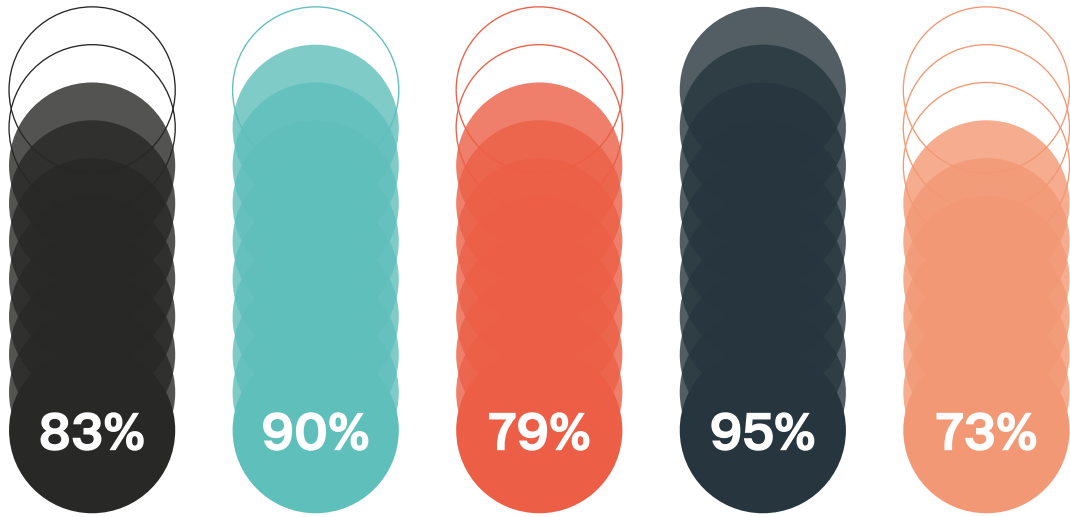
Access to resources varies by: geography, providing entity (community perceptions, funding, hours of access), characteristics of victimized persons, gatekeeper approval, socioeconomic status of victimized persons, etc. These obstacles may prevent the start of new or effectiveness of existing wellness efforts, resulting in long lasting and/or life threatening issues. Resources must be readily available to all persons who seek help due to victimization via a sex crime in order to improve the possibility of healing and educate society.

Resources for victimized persons exist in both the public and private sectors. Public: Federal and state financed agencies have advocacy, therapy and medical services available but only for a limited number of in need persons. Private: Resources maintained by personal means are available only for the duration of time that a victimized person can ensure payment. In both cases, only a margin of victimized persons can continue to access trauma informed resources in the long-term.

Sexual assault isn't a crime that discriminates. People of all socio economic statuses can be victimized. Considering the growing rate of poverty along with increased inflation rates, less and less people are able to [independently] afford private resources. And, the increasing rates of victimization and poverty put even more strain on the already limited public resources.

Getting on the path of wellness after victimization from a traumatic event such as rape, molestation, voyeurism, exposure to sexual acts or content, stealthing or statutory crimes is not easy nor is it something that can successfully be done without access to adequate resources. Acts of not talking about the trauma or its effects are tremendously harmful. And, discussing the topic without proper guidance and training is dangerous for the victimized persons, those in their circles of contact, and the overall community. Survivor success and community improvements lay with the availability of qualified resources.

GOTU Community Speaks



Need Help Telling Friends & Family

Have Unmet Emotional Needs

Don't Have Consistent Support

Can't Afford Regular Therapy

Developed An Addiction

“ I called the sexual assault crisis hotline in my town and I never got a response. I left messages and called multiple times... no one ever contacted me.

– Anonymous, Voyeurism survivor

Community response

**Bullying/
shaming**

**Normali-
zation/
ignoring
claims**

**Group
violation**

Enabling

Resource scarcity: The below issues must be resolved in order to help ensure that survivors of sex crimes can successfully engage in society and effect self care.

- Lack of skilled resources
- Insufficient funding
- Antiquated processes
- Limited regulatory oversight
- Perceived low demand
- No engagement; per poor ratings
- Disengaged leadership

Do you know?

Not All Advocacy Groups Have Licensing

Advocacy agencies are started out of the good will of people who want to help. They're independently owned and operated without requirement of state or federal licensing.

Survivors are Denied Treatment

A lack of resources may cause harmful methods of self soothing to take place (e.g. hypersexuality, addiction, self harm, suicide, social withdrawal, violence).

What is needed

Overarching community of advocacy agencies to help ensure the following:

- agencies have allocated funds to ensure that available resources can meet demand
- identified agency resources have the (current) training and education needed to successfully support survivors
- each agency has a dedicated resource responsible for ensuring facility operations and advocate efficacy



Barriers to reporting





Why so few victimized persons get medical help or seek justice

There are few inputs to making officials aware of sex crimes. In addition, there is inconsistent oversight, by governing entities, to ensure that the processes are operating as intended. The inconsistency creates a “line” that determines who is and who isn’t permitted to officially move forward with an allegation of victimization. All sexual assault survivors must be able to access and report to resources in order to receive adequate care; potentially realize justice; and, help fight against sex crimes.

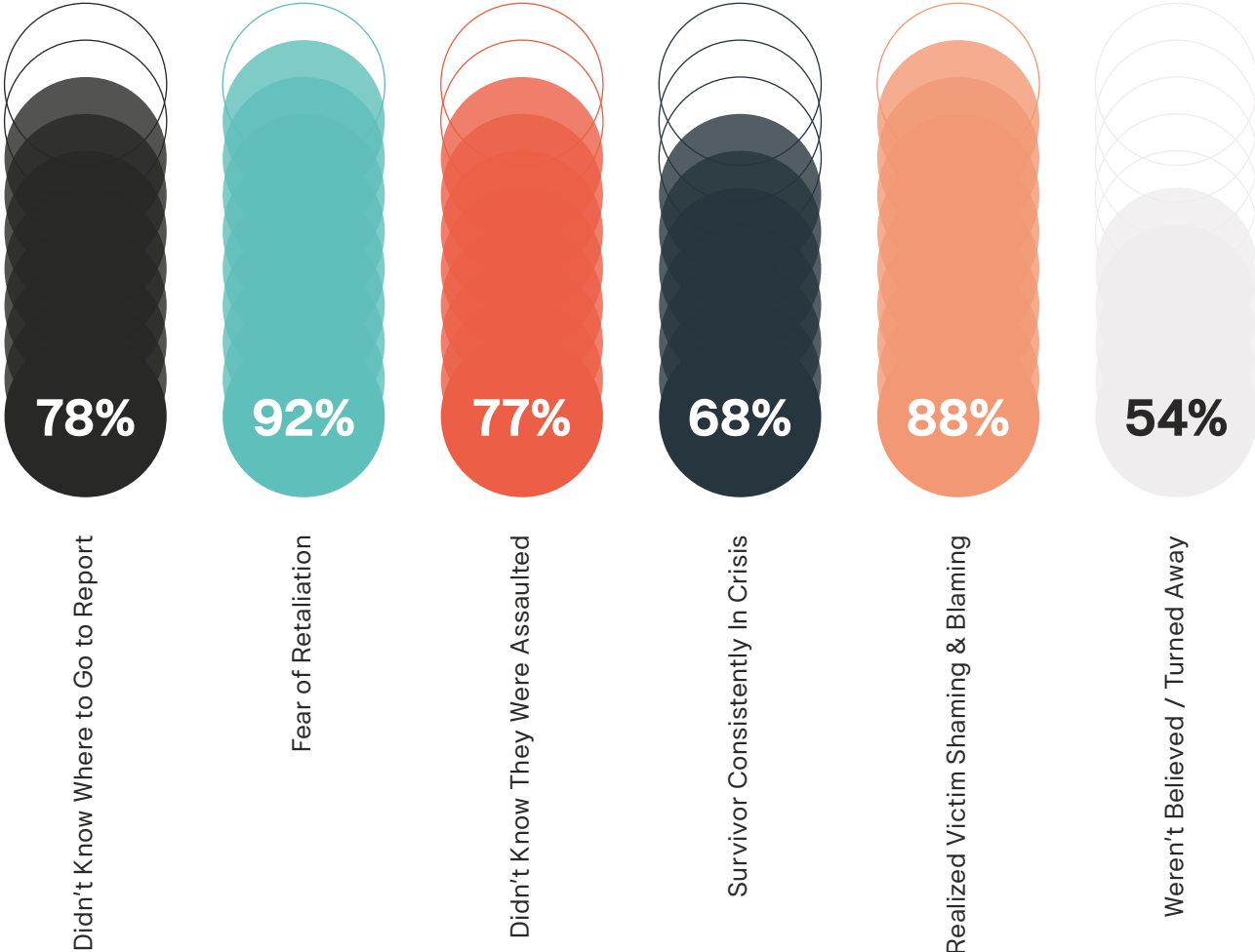
The ability to report victimization, especially one that is sexual in nature, should be a fundamental right for all impacted persons. Whether a primary or secondary survivor, access to engaged, willing and effective officials is an absolute must. Unfortunately, not all victimized persons have safe access to resources and some are not permitted to move forward in the reporting process. Thus, reporting agencies are unable to fully understand the scope and frequency of sex crimes.

A lack of education, organizational “red tape”, or personal prejudice on the part of the reporting resource creates difficulty, if not prevents a portion of victimized persons from making contact or successfully completing the reporting process. Atrocities such as racism, sexism, victim blaming, financial rejection (medical spaces only) and social abuses are perpetrated in what must be safe,

trauma informed spaces. Barriers to reporting must be quickly remediated; failures in the existing process have far reaching consequences.

It’s necessary to welcome persons to openly and safely report sex crimes. This type of support is foundational in helping victimized persons stand back up to begin to realize wellness and be better positioned to have a healthy wellness journey. Instances where persons have been refused an opportunity to report have proven to be detrimental to the wellness of the victimized person and [local] communities.

GOTU Community Speaks



“ I went to the emergency room to get treated from the rape. The nurses laughed at me. They said men can't get raped and turned me away. It's been months and I'm too scared to be tested for HIV.

– Anonymous, Rape survivor

Resource response

Callous
medics

Dangerous
officers

Disengaged
officials

Ineffective
educators

Why victims won't report or seek help:

An already difficult process is made more difficult by uninformed people who enforce their own prejudices and biases against victims who seek help.

- Provider bias & prejudice
- Lack of education on sex crimes
- Inability to pay
- No transportation
- Minor / supported by perpetrator
- Victim blaming & shaming
- Lack of provider discretion
- Fear of retaliation (Incl. Death)

Do you know?

Officials May Decline Assistance to Victims

Not all police and medical facilities have the necessary resources to help victims who want to report or seek treatment for sex crimes. Victims are sent away, some never receive help.

Some police officers use a victim's past sexual and social behaviors to determine whether or not they will create an official police report. A victim's failure to answer questions or prove themselves to be "innocent" cancels their opportunity to move forward in the reporting process.

What is needed

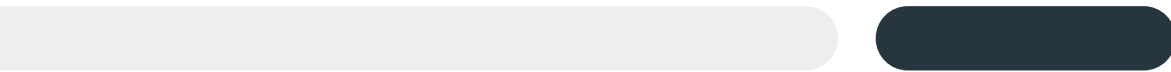
There needs to be regular and ongoing trainings for all police and medical resources who may have initial and ongoing contact with victimized persons. This allows resources who are not trauma informed to be able to provide support and help advance care efforts:

- non-SANE - do blood work, how to preserve evidence samples, and provide preventative medications
- police - create reports for all accusations and retain evidence, despite their personal beliefs
- all resources - inform reporters of their rights (e.g. they don't have to make an official police report when seeking medical treatment) "per victimization"



Community losses





How society suffers from the perpetration of sex crimes

The effects of each sex crime reverberate beyond the victimized person and the time of the actual violation. Other people in the community do not realize the immediate impacts, but they do also suffer the social, emotional and financial consequences. A successful fight to help end sexual violence requires the regularly active involvement of community members.

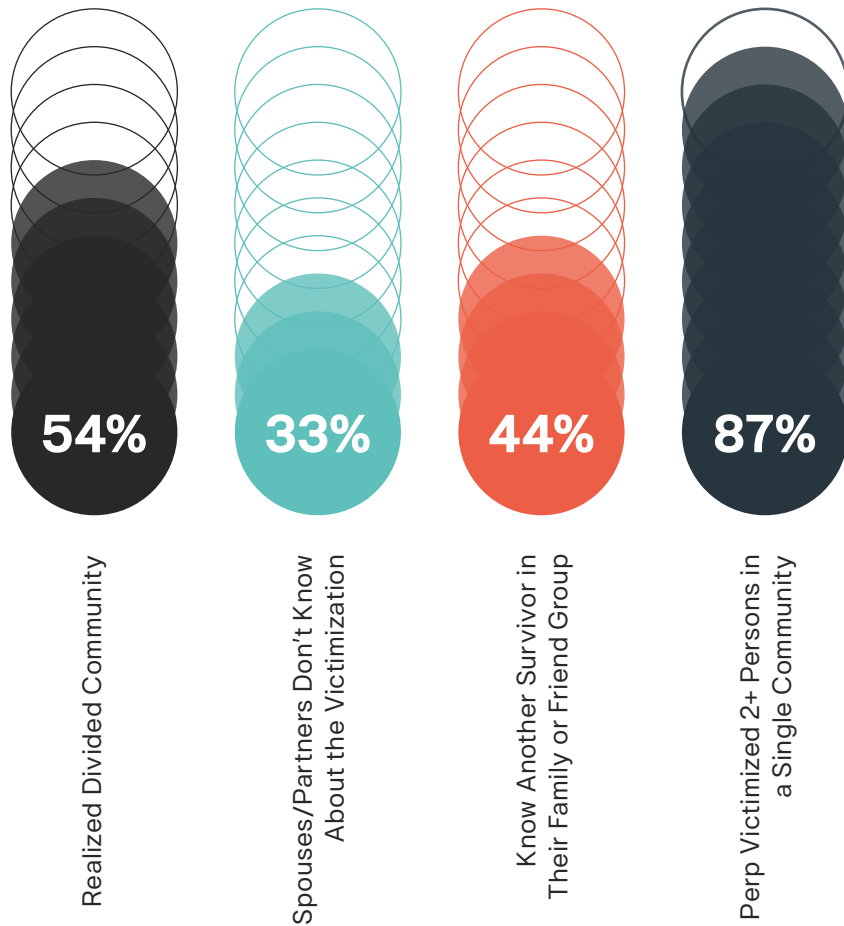
Any one who suffers a sex crime is someone...someone's child, possibly someone's spouse, parent, sibling, friend, extended family member, neighbor, co-worker, mentor, etc. Each rape, molestation, act of voyeurism, exposure to sexual content or coercion is connected to other people. Thus, the narrative that sex crimes only impact the victimized persons is false.

Although the trauma was enacted on each particular person's mind, body and spirit, the effects impact families, neighborhoods, local organizations, schools, etc. Despite published studies, the mass population isn't educated on this "transfer of trauma". And, as a result, everyday people aren't equipped with the necessary tools to help the sexual assault survivor, themselves, or others in the path of impact to properly identify or successfully address the trauma. Effects could be familial

abuse, self-harm (including addiction or suicide), loss of support or leadership, potential creation of more predators, homelessness, unemployment, gang affiliation, spike in community crime, etc.

Understanding the extended impacts of sex crimes may influence others to be allies, in the fight to stop sex crimes, by answering the question of "What's in it for me?" (WIIFM?). People need to understand that they are also impacted so they become emotionally invested and begin working to effect change.

GOTU Community Speaks



“ Everyone knew about the guy at church who molested children. The adults looked the other way and did nothing while so many of us kids were being hurt.

– Anonymous, Child molestation survivor

Community response

Ignoring
accusations
or acts

Crime
w/out con-
sequence

Group
violation

Disconnec-
ted families

Characteristics of a traumatized community:

[Some] predators have more than one victim within a single geographic area, resulting in mass trauma.

- Presence of gangs
- Defensive / hostile community
- High concentration of assaults
- Poverty / high need for assistance
- Low school performance ratings
- Increased property & state taxes

Do you know?

"Acceptable Victim" Mentality Persists

Victim shaming and blaming take place, sending the message that the victimized person did something wrong and caused the assault. Thus, a perception that "only careless people suffer sexual violence" persists.

Trauma Contributes to Crime and Poverty

Chemical rewiring caused by victimization, changes how a person perceives and is able to exist in the world.

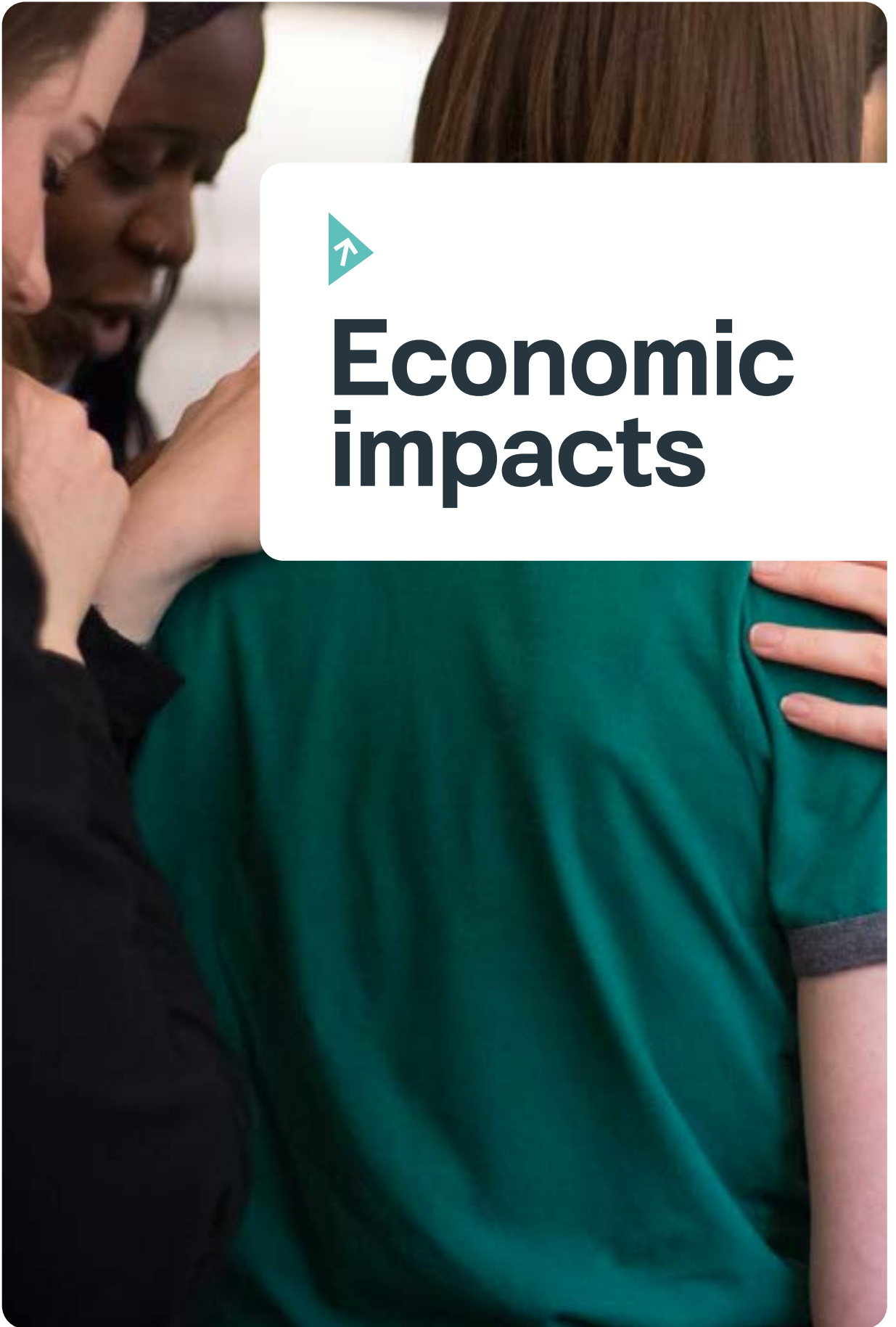
What is needed


Periodic consent, trauma and sexual assault trainings for people, specifically kids, are needed to minimize vulnerability for violation and empower communities:

- teachers, coaches & counselors
- students (primary, secondary, colleges & universities)
- police officers
- religious and spiritual leaders
- community leaders



Economic impacts





How corporations & government pay the costs of sex crimes

Businesses are the furthest away from sex crimes but suffer a wide array of its consequences. This dilemma is more unfortunate because businesses aren't aware they're paying the price for the crimes committed by others. Businesses are the most capable resources to support victimized persons and help hold perpetrators accountable. And, their active intervention could help increase job growth that allows for relocation of state and federal monies to better support communities.

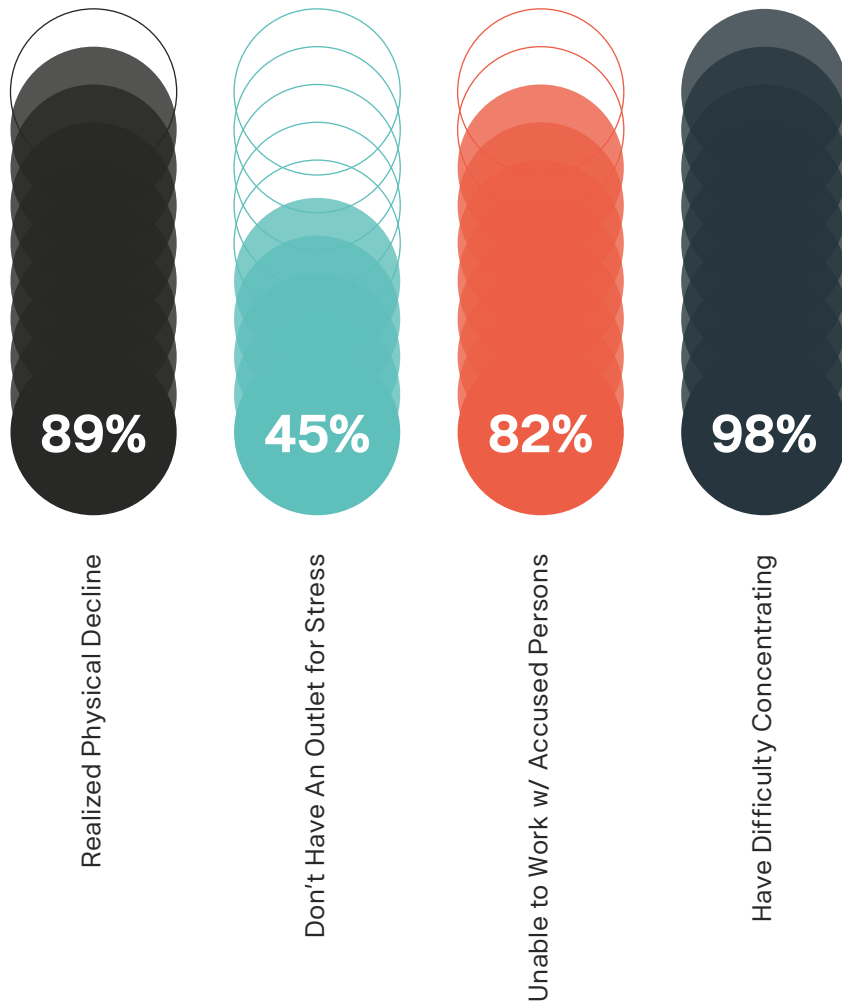
Economies also suffer from sex crimes via operational, reputational, legal and/or financial. Mismanagement in any of these areas effects a specific entity's ability to realize [social] consistency and safety. Once true costs of sex crimes are realized, only then can respective leaders be incentivized to make needed changes.

The impacts of sex crimes transfer from predator to victimized person to families to communities to local businesses and then to legal systems. The invisible transfer ultimately leads to fractured systems that are misaligned with the needs of the people. And, by the time the effects make their way to the end of their life cycle, they aren't always able to be directly attributed to sex crimes. The misdirected focus and lack of awareness further abuses victimized persons and impacts systemic productivity.

Survivors need support and safety from informed agencies in order to speak out and successfully function in society.

Even though we look at people when bad things are done, we must be able to attribute a person's behavior - good or bad - to society's influence. And, those people in each society contribute to its economy. So, the fight to end sex crimes needs more entities to enter the fight and advocate for increased education and funds for improved resources.

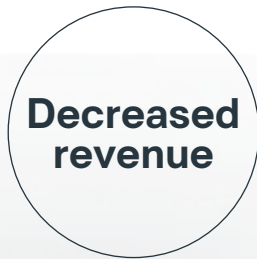
GOTU Community Speaks



" The D.A. told me that he needs to consider the high cost of taking the case to trial vs. accepting a plea deal from the man who abused me. My abuser plead out and got a light sentence—no justice.

– Anonymous, Child sexual abuse survivor

Economic response



Victimized persons in the workplace:
[employed] survivors of sex crimes go back into the world, limited by the effects of trauma, and impact employers.

- Poor customer care
- Higher insurance subsidization
- Negative social engagement
- Decreased work productivity
- Low employee engagement
- Inflated probability of work issues

Do you know?

Victimized persons may realize decreased work performance (difficulty concentrating, regulating emotions, retaining information, commenting and physically performing). This amount can include costs associated with:

- claims of and defense from workplace harassment and assault
- employee turnover, new associate training

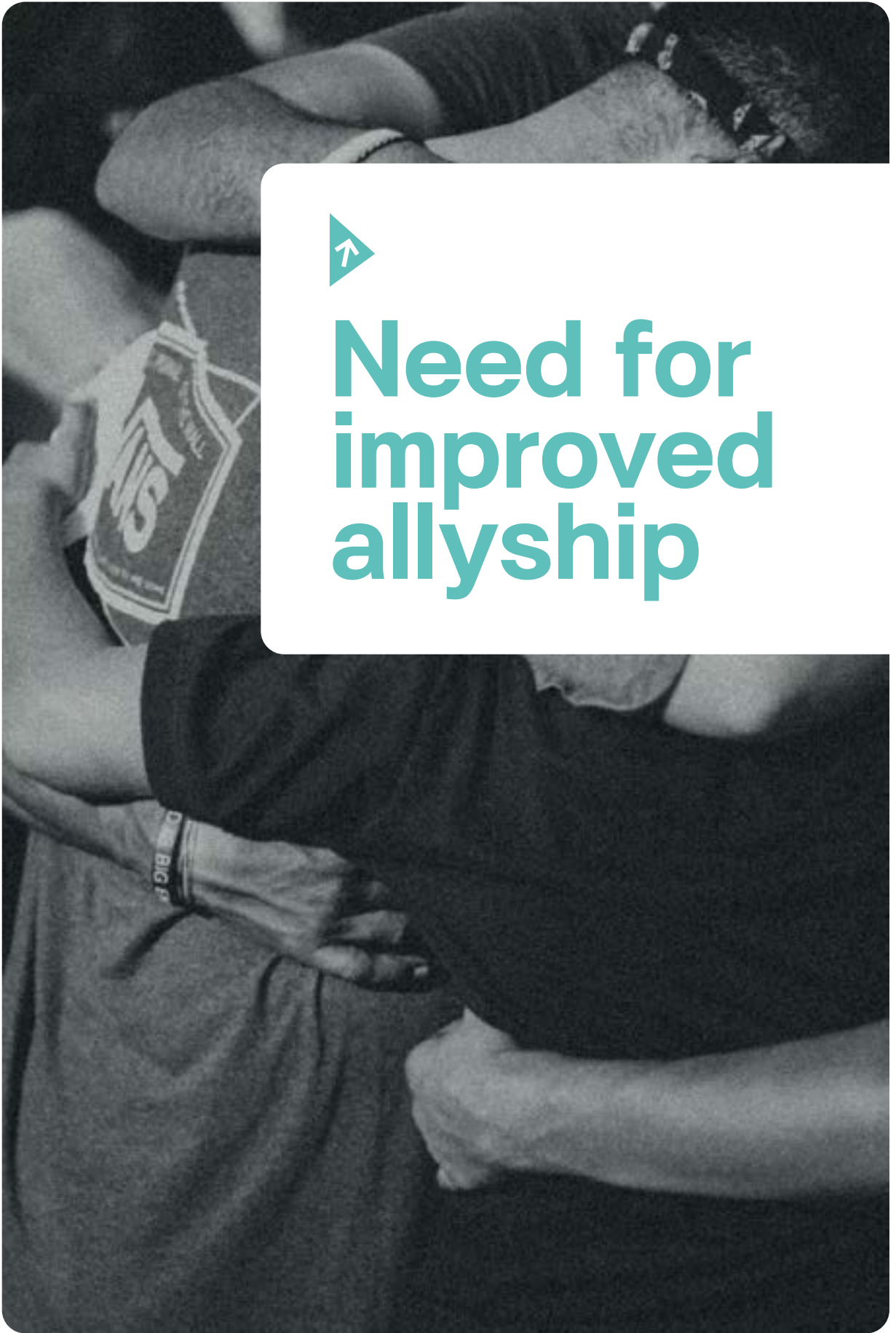
What is needed

Periodic consent, trauma and sexual harassment trainings are needed to minimize opportunities for associate vulnerability and abuses:

- all company associates
- all contractors and consultants
- all interns (paid and unpaid)



Need for improved allyship





Tangible changes will help improve survivors' daily lives

Everyone is responsible to help stop sexual assaults from happening. Being active in prevention efforts demonstrates empathy that helps survivors feel both supported and believed. And, supported survivors have a better chance of having a healthy survivorship journey.

Everyone suffers when [confirmed] allies don't publicly show support for the survivorship community. Allyship is important because it helps alleviate responsibility of emotional and physical labor for victimized persons and the survivorship support community. So, it must extend beyond saying "I'm an ally" or "Sex crimes are bad and shouldn't happen" in order to be successful. Any failure to go beyond voicing an opinion perpetuates false narratives about victimized persons and sex crimes.

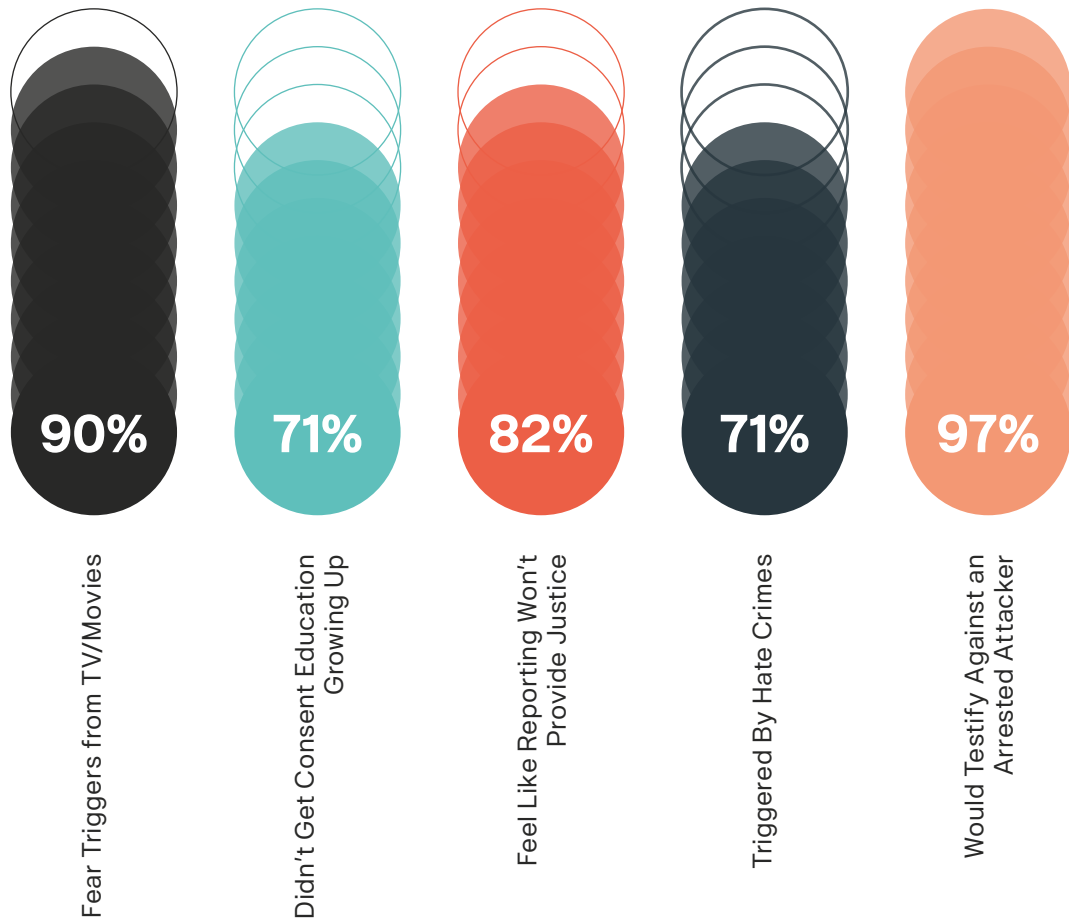
Credibility of sexual assault accusations and perceived validity of overall impact are partially established with by the presence of substantial allyship efforts. This means having ongoing social engagement with naysayers, especially in moments where support for sexual assault culture is being demonstrated (i.e. public violations where no one steps in to stop them), is necessary in order for

survivors to realize some semblance of safety, recovery, empowerment and justice.

A lack of advocacy can aid in the failure to locate and arrest accused persons; allow sex crimes to occur; decrease education and awareness efforts; and, may worsen the survivorship journey of victimized persons. Thus, there has to be a major societal shift that is geared toward improving existing allyship initiatives.

Every successful cause has a community of believers who are diligently and consistently working to advance it. Sexual assault survivors desperately need this type of community.

GOTU Community Speaks



“ People saw her grab my crotch and thought it was funny. They thought I should’ve been flattered. I was mortified and angry. I was left alone, in a room full of people, to process the assault.

– Anonymous, Molestation survivor

Community acts

Ill-
equipped
resources

Inactive
bystanders

Uneducated
parents

Ineffective
officials

Ally: Person who unites with others to promote a common interest; all parties may benefit from the relationship and outcomes via

- Prevent assaults from occurring
- Assist in education
- Increase issue awareness
- Advocate for [new] laws
- Influence social change
- Create safer spaces

Do you know?

Victimizing Laws Have Been Passed

Current laws prevent victimized persons from coming forward, seeking help and accessing quality support. As a result, traumatization reoccurs well beyond the time of the violation.

"Disposable Human" Mentality Prevails

People are aware that sex crimes are taking place but don't report them due to fear of being harmed; not knowing who to inform; or believing that the witnessed situation is none of their business (aka "It's Not Me" mentality).

What is needed

Passing of laws, consistent across states and U.S. territories to legally:

- define consent
- define sex crimes (voyeurism - including revenge porn, coercion, molestation, unwanted exposure to sexual content or acts, rape - includes stealthing, statutory crimes - all of the above includes when the victimized person is under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol OR rescinds consent)
- hold bystanders accountable for not intervening or notifying the proper authorities
- provide after-care to survivors such as: naming alleged attacker without risk of a lawsuit; receiving a safe abortion (beyond six weeks); free access to medical treatment, medication and therapy



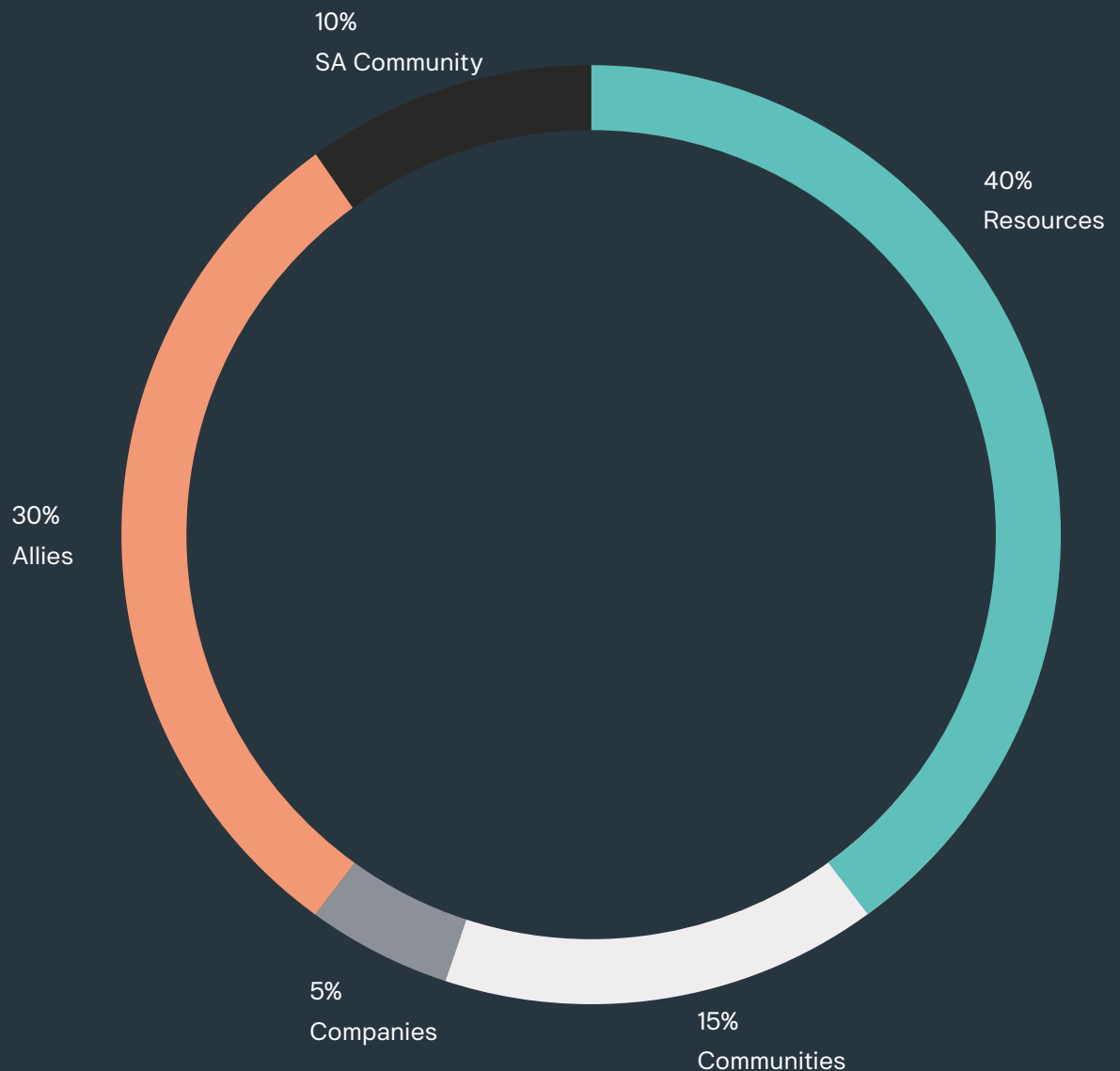
How you can help

The expectation to prevent sexual assault has typically fallen to those who have been victimized. Although society understands and verbalizes that sex crimes are wrong, there has been [a perceived] lack of accountability placed on the perpetrators - especially if they haven't been convicted.

This institutionalized social focus must change in order to better support the survivorship community and successfully fight to end the epidemic of sex crimes. The change in focus has to shift from victimized person to all people, with various labor ownership, having responsibility to end sex crimes.

Labor Allocation for Preventing Sex Crimes & Supporting Victimized Persons

Allocation percentages based off of indirect feedback from victimized persons, survivor supporters and advocates in weekly polls and direct conversations. Results are not scientifically or mathematically derived. Consideration is given to immediate impact, downstream effects and relationships between identified groups to achieve desired future state.



What survivors ask of you

SA Community

Make efforts to connect with one another:

- know that it wasn't your fault
- be gentle with yourself
- find advocates (in person or online)
- engage with support groups
- focus on your wellness; get tested

Resources

Treat victimized persons how you want to be treated:

- act as if you believe the accusation
- don't subject anyone to your personal beliefs, hostility, biases
- remember your training
- excuse yourself if you can't be impartial

Communities

Proactively work to secure neighborhoods:

- investigate claims of sexual violation; don't ignore claims against friends or family; don't ignore red flags; don't victim blame or shame accusers
- members can take sexual assault education and accountability trainings

Allies	Self educated to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• stay current on laws and advocate for needed changes• actively and publicly stand up for the survivorship community• be aware of personal boundaries and triggers to maintain wellness
Companies	Update internal processes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• investigation of harassment and assault claims to not include accused person reputation; review exit interviews of accused person's past employees• prevent the accused and accuser from working in close proximity
Elected Officials	Work with agencies to pass a laws that: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• legally define consent• create consistency on what constitutes a sex crime across all states and US territories• mandate consent, trauma and sexual assault education in schools and organizations



About GOTU™





Half Isle, Inc.
North Carolina, USA
info@getontheup.com
getontheup.com

GOTU (pronounced /gō • too/) is the acronym for GET ON THE UP. It's a call to action for all people, not just members of the sexual assault survivorship community, to take action against sex crimes.

Officially launched in April 2020 by a sexual assault survivor, GOTU was initially focused on providing an anonymous communication space for sexual assault survivors to address a major gap in available resources. Via shared experiences and communicated needs (within the GOTU app and social media), two learnings were quickly identified:

1. survivor supporters and advocates also needed support and education to realize healthier survivorship journeys
2. preventing sex crimes is a realistic goal that can be achieved with active engagement from all people.

Based upon these learnings, the focus shifted. The GOTU brand is still committed to helping end the epidemic of sex crimes; but, our means of doing so has grown. GOTU now consists of a mobile app (committed to connecting and educating the survivorship community); corporate consulting services (collaborating with companies to provide safer products and services); and, non-profit research sector (focussed on research, education and social reform).

