



Cross-Sectoral Solutions: Strengthening Community Capacity to Address the 'Parallel Pandemic' of Gender-Based Violence-Related Brain Injury Through a Survivor-Led Support Program

WomenatthecentrE

October 2, 2025

Knowledge Hub Presents Conference



presents:

Innovations in Addressing Gender-Based Violence and Trauma- and Violence-Informed Health Promotion

A NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Oct 1–2, 2025



Content Warning

We are offering a trigger/content warning, as this presentation addresses sensitive topics that may be triggering/activating for folks. This includes discussions around gender-based violence, brain injury, and various forms of systemic violence (Ex. anti-Black racism, colonialism, ableism, etc...).

Please only listen if you are able to do so and take breaks and reach out to your support systems as needed.





Solidarity Statement

- Stolen unceded territory of ancestral lands belonging to the Huron-Wendat, the Anishnaabe Nation, the Haudensaunee Confederacy, the Mississaugas of the Credit
- Violence on the land = violence on bodies
- Home to generations of people of African descent
- Violence and attempted genocide of Indigenous & Black people who are still enduring systemic anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism
- Ongoing impacts of colonialism, white supremacy, toxic patriarchy, and racial capitalism that values accumulation over life, leaving a world ravaged and unsafe for all





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WomenatthecentrE

WomenatthecentrE is a pan-Canadian non-profit created by and for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV).

We are committed to ensuring the voices and expertise of survivors are central in the implementation and development of policies and programs aimed at eradicating all forms of GBV.



What is Gender-Based Violence (GBV)?

- Gender-based violence (GBV) is systemically rooted violence based on someone's gender identity, gender expression, or perceived gender
- GBV occurs interpersonally, in communities, and systemically/institutionally
- Women, girls, 2-spirit, trans, and gender diverse folks are those most impacted by GBV, but **it harms us all**
- GBV is a universal issue, impacting individuals, families, communities, societies, values, policies, and practices





What is Brain Injury (BI)?

- Damage to the brain that affects how it works
- Frequently characterized as Acquired (Internal Factors) or Traumatic (External Factors)
- Brain injuries can be mild, moderate, or severe
- The effects of BIs vary depending on the part of the brain impacted and the extent of the injury

Acquired	Traumatic
Lack of oxygen (Stroke)	Lack of oxygen (strangulation, choking)
Infection	Blow to the head
Exposure to substances	Shaking
Tumour	Fall

The Intersection of GBV & BI

- Highlights a hidden public crisis, as survivors often sustain head injuries through blows, shaking, choking, or strangulation, etc...
- These injuries are frequently under-diagnosed or misinterpreted as mental health issues due to overlapping symptoms and lack of provider awareness
- Survivors, especially those who are Black, Indigenous, disabled, or 2SLGBTQIA+, face compounded barriers to care, justice, and healing
- Addressing this intersection requires trauma & violence and brain injury-informed services & policies, survivor-led approaches, and cross-sector collaboration

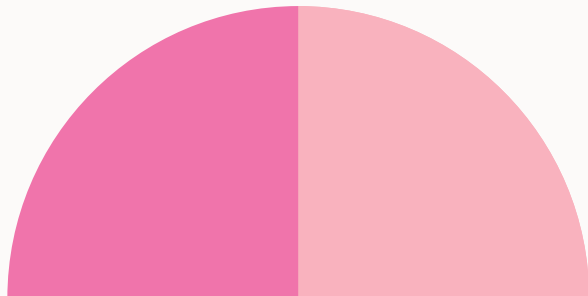




Cross Sectoral Solutions: Overview

Team Development

Survivor led, multilevel, cross-sectoral, and pan-Canadian



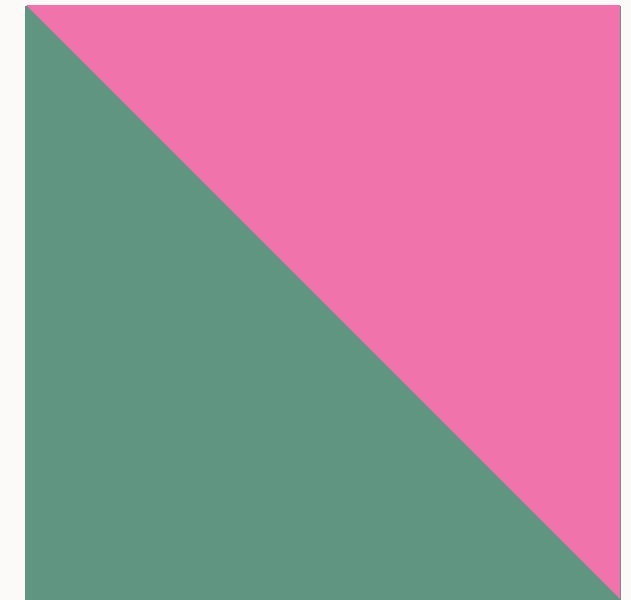
Research & Pilot Program

Developing and delivering a survivor led pilot program, and ethics approved evaluation plan, to support GBV-BI survivors



Knowledge Mobilization, Capacity Building, & Awareness Raising & Advocacy

Building survivor, BI, trauma & violence, and evidence-informed communities, supports, policies and practices





- > Host Sites
- > Stakeholder Advisory Committee
- > Students & Volunteers
- > Occupational Therapy Committee
- > Cross-Sector & Multi-Level Partners

A Survivor-Led and Cross-Sectoral Team

WomenatthecentrE is a survivor-led team, with project team members identifying as survivors of various forms of gender-based violence and/or brain injury.

This project worked in collaboration with **WomenatthecentrE's Survivor Expert Collective (WE SEC)**, a survivor collective that provided strategic direction for the project's key activities and deliverables. Their leadership ensured survivors did not fall through the cracks.



Cross Sectoral Solutions: Research

Reviews

Filling the gap in survivor-led GBV-BI research through secondary and community-based participatory research



Ethics

Collaborating with WE SEC, service providers, host sites, academics, collaborators, to devise research process, tools, methodologies, and evaluation



Pilot Program

Developing and delivering a survivor led pilot program to support survivors at the GBV-BI intersection now





Cross Sectoral Solutions: Reviews

► [Trauma Violence Abuse](#). 2024 Apr;25(2):1638-1660. doi: 10.1177/15248380231196807. Epub 2023 Sep 30.

Exploring the Relationships Between Rehabilitation and Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence: A Scoping Review

Danielle Toccalino¹, Gifty Asare², Jenna Fleming^{1 3}, Joyce Yin¹, Amy Kieftenburg⁴, Amy Moore⁵, Halina Lin Haag^{1 4}, Vincy Chan^{1 6}, Jessica Babineau⁶, Nneka MacGregor⁷, Angela Colantonio^{1 6}

Affiliations + expand

PMID: 37776318 PMCID: [PMC10913349](#) DOI: [10.1177/15248380231196807](#)





Cross Sectoral Solutions: Ethics & Pilot Program

What is the impact of a 20-week evidence-based, trauma-informed, multi-sectoral pilot program on survivors of GBV-BI?

- Co-adapt, pilot, and evaluate an evidence-based, trauma and violence informed, multi-sectoral Program
- Creating a blueprint of 'what worked' for critically needed supports to improve the health and well-being of survivors of GBV with a BI

8

SERVICES

1

FOCUS GROUP OR
INTERVIEW

6

SURVEYS

25

SURVIVORS



Cross Sectoral Solutions: Pilot Program

8

Services Offered

1:1 PEER COUNSELLING

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY

MUSIC THERAPY

NATUROPATHY

SOMATIC THERAPY

PSYCHOTHERAPY

YOGA



Cross Sectoral Solutions: Pilot Program

6

Surveys

Response Rate (RR*) (100 % is 25/25):

- Pre-Survey: 100% RR
- Interim Survey 1: 92% RR
- Interim Survey 2: 100% RR
- Interim Survey 3: 100% RR
- Interim Survey 4: 96% RR
- Post Survey: 96% RR

Data Collected:

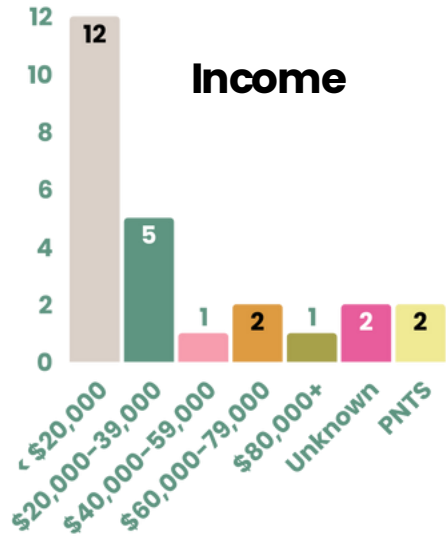
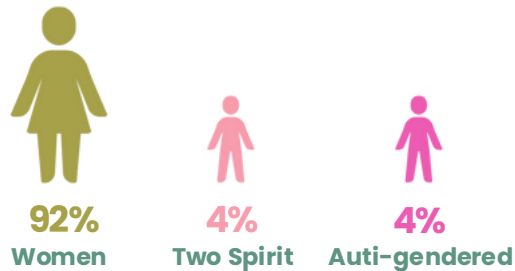
- Demographics
- Health and Symptomology
- Program
- Knowledge/Skills
- Basic Needs, Supports, Accommodations
- Personal Goals & Satisfaction



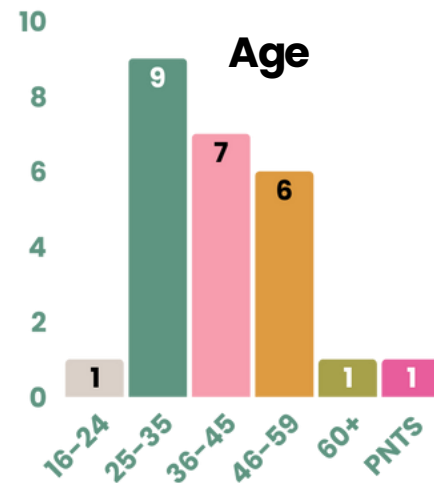
Research Findings

(25 survivors)

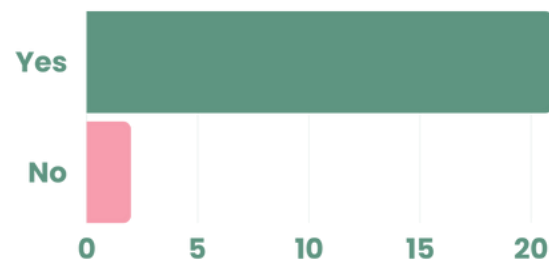
Gender



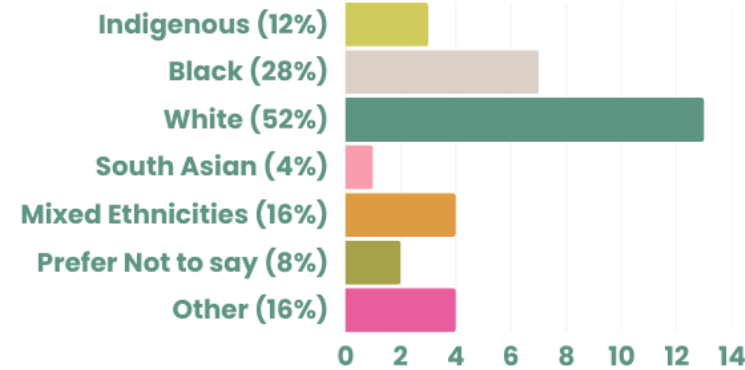
Income



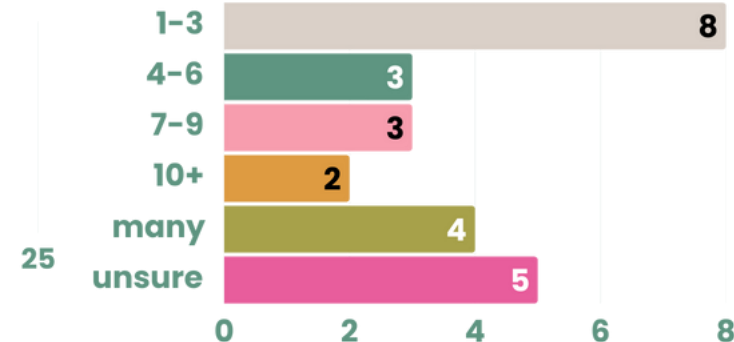
GBV as The Root Cause of BI



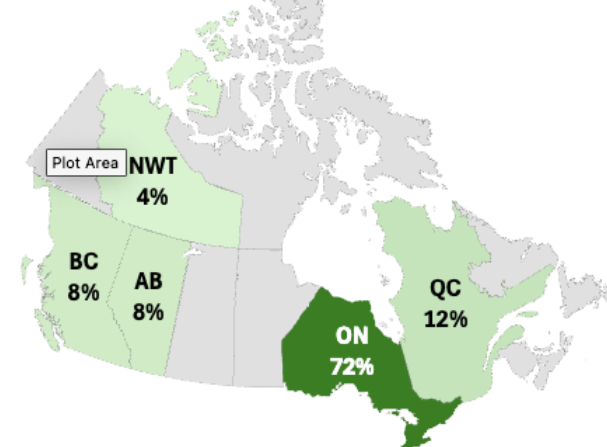
Ethnicity



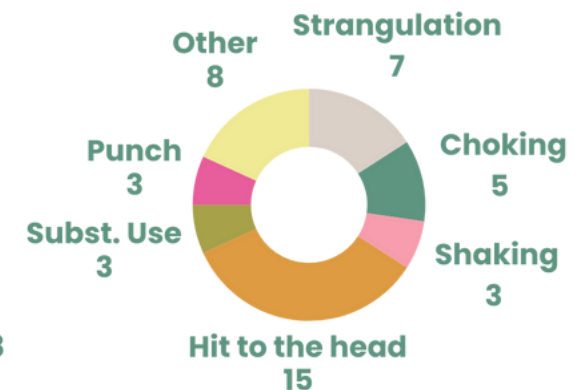
Number of GBV-BI Per Survivor



Location



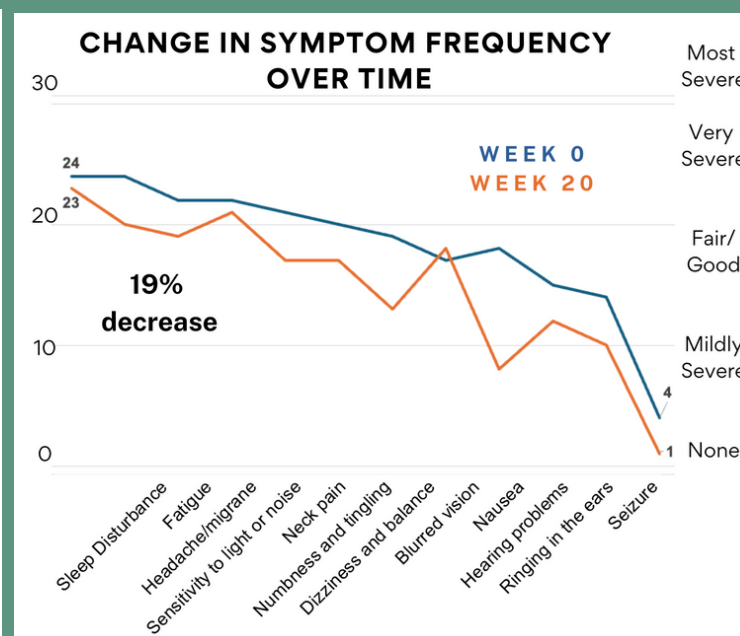
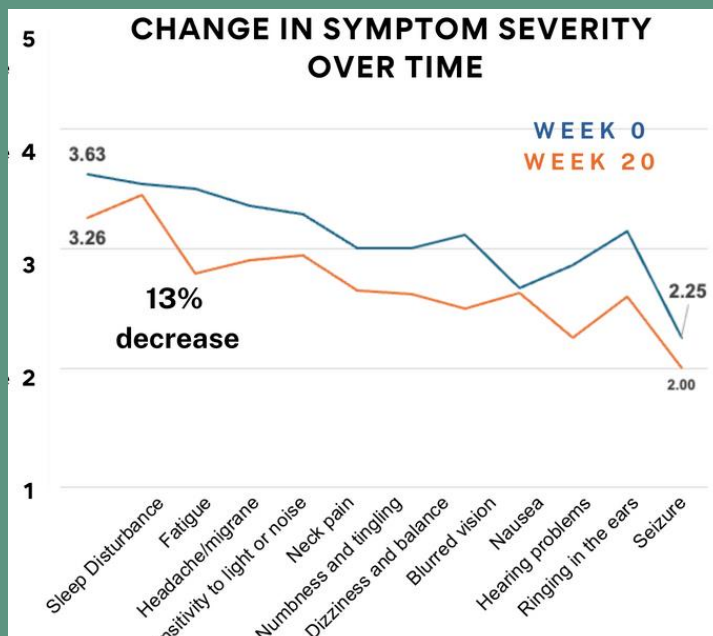
How BI Was Sustained in GBV





Research Findings: Quantitative

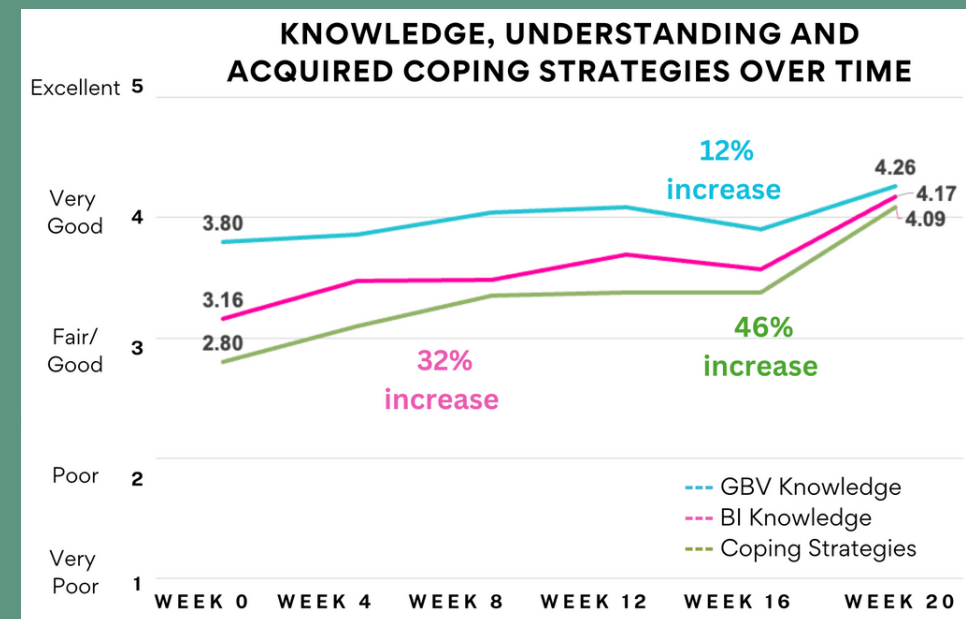
Symptom Severity and Frequency



19% Decrease in Symptom Frequency

13% Decrease in Symptom Severity

Knowledge and Coping Strategies



12% Increase in GBV Knowledge

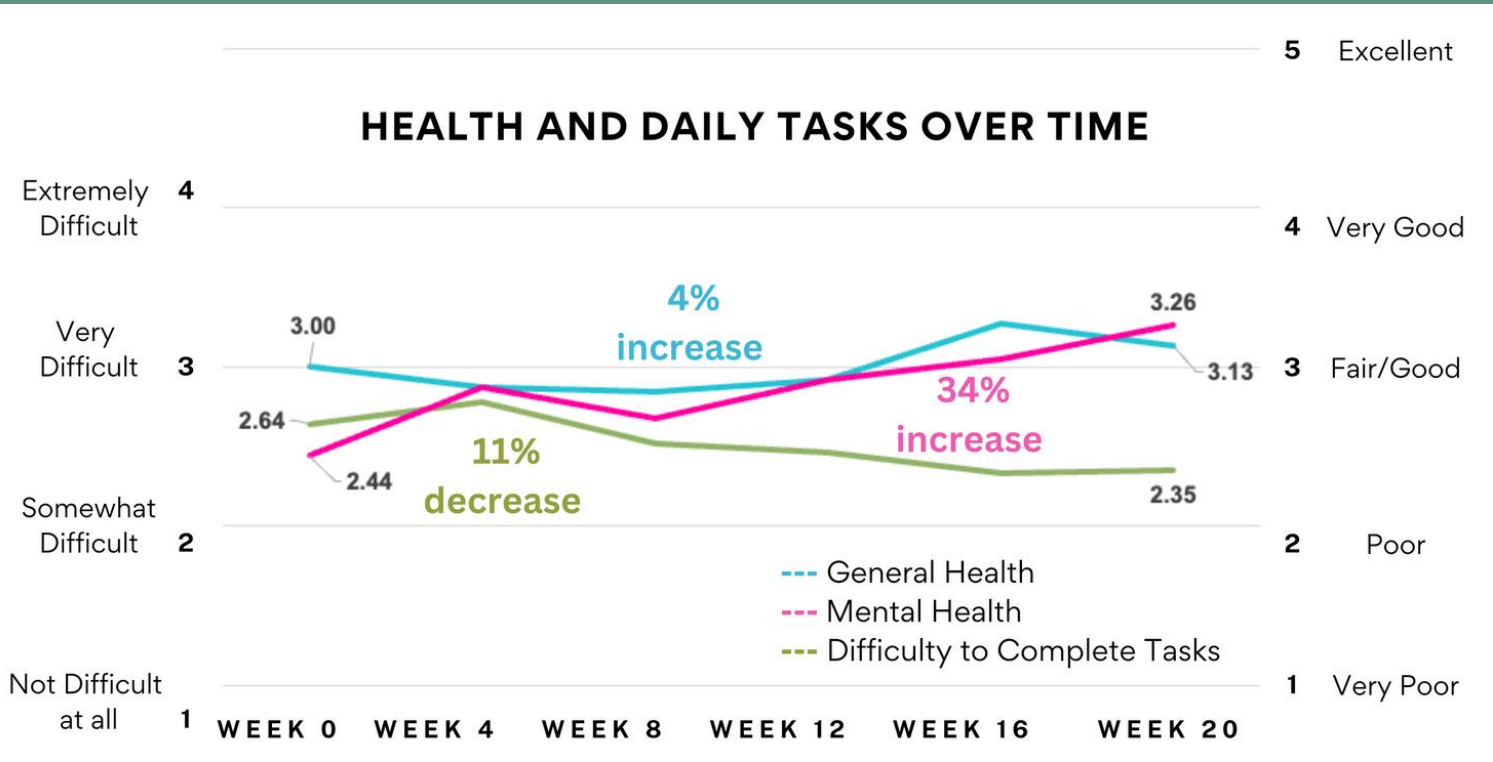
46% Increase in BI Knowledge

32% Increase in Coping Strategies Knowledge



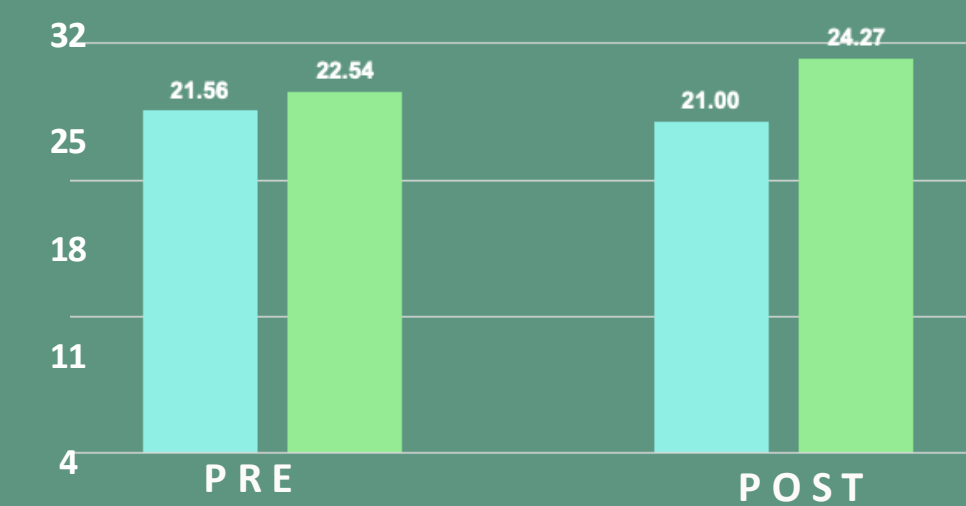
Research Findings: Quantitative

Health and Mental Health



4% Increase in General Health **34%** Increase in Mental Health **11%** Decrease in Difficulty to Complete Tasks

Hope Score



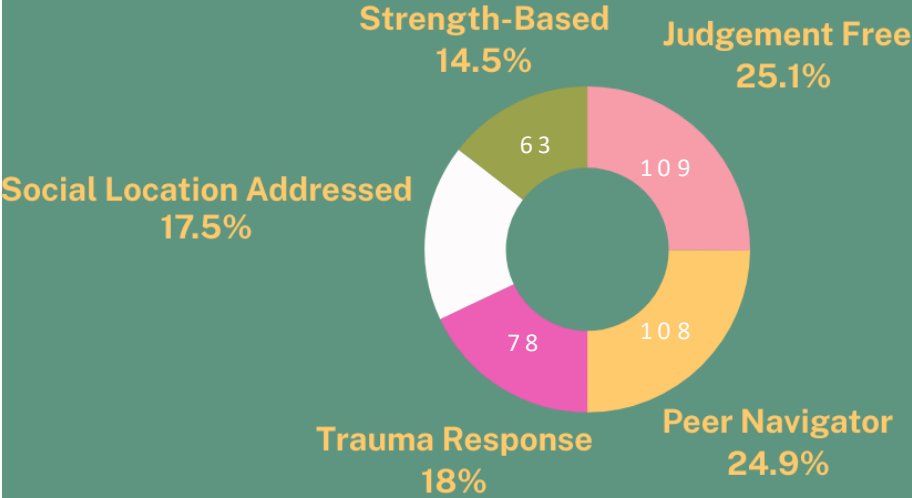
3% Increase in Overall Hope characterized by:
3% Decrease in Agency
7% Increase in Pathways

With a score between **40** and **48**, survivors remained “Hopeful” during the entire program



Research Findings: Qualitative

Positive Feedback



“It’s always a non-judgmental stance that we are all unique in our experiences of TBI.”
RI

“I like how this includes all women that are like myself, with trauma and all these different types of issues that we’ve had. So I really appreciate the inclusivity and the respect I was given here.” -CW

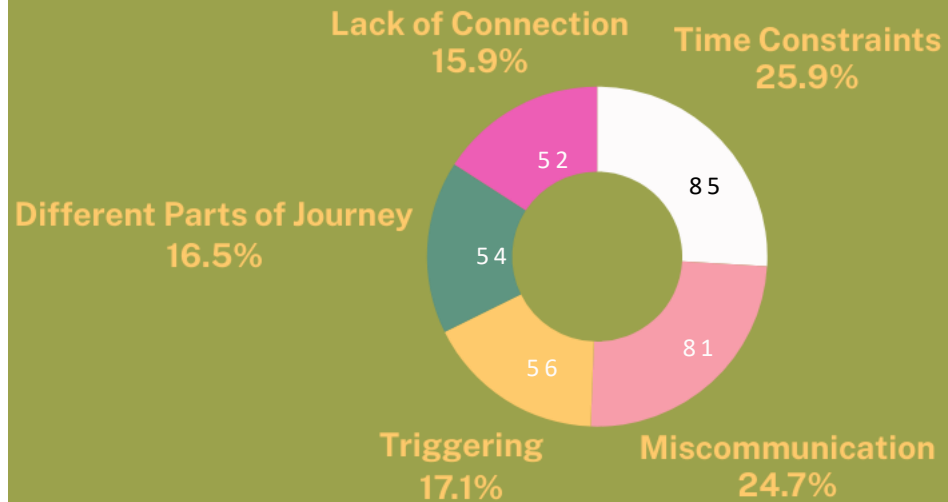
“My peer navigator! THE BEST! TOP NOTCH! AMAZING! Words can’t express how much she has poured into me.” - SH

On this page, each parent code is shown, including the top 5 subcodes within each one and quotes to demonstrate the parent code.



Research Findings: Qualitative

Constructive Feedback



"I don't know if there was an option of changing peer navigators or peer counselors, but I didn't feel a connection."- JL

"I realized it was hard hearing other people's stories." -AC

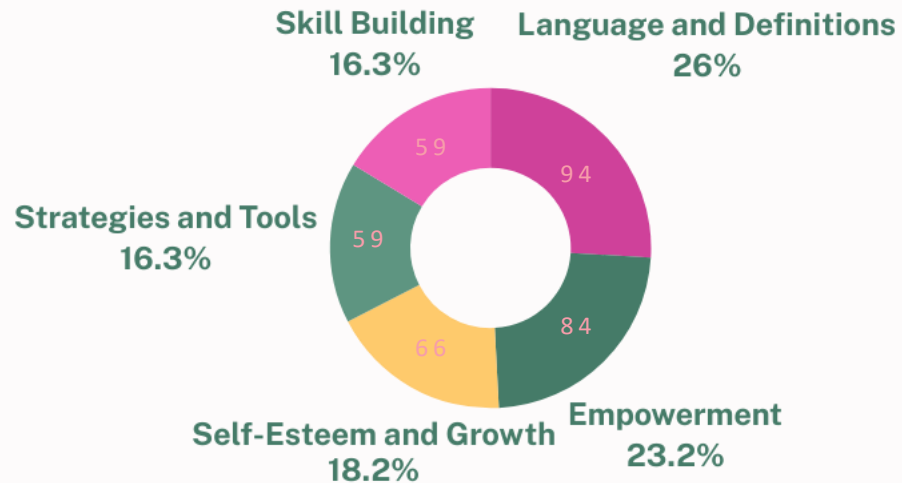
"Who is this person who's emailing me? I don't know who this person is. I'll trust the system or trust the organization, but like, there's like, I didn't know who you were." -CA

On this page, each parent code is shown, including the top 5 subcodes within each one and quotes to demonstrate the parent code.



Research Findings: Qualitative

Survivor's Key Takeaways



"We were able to find effective ways to relieve the symptoms due to the traumatic brain injury. Earplugs to reduce noise, dimming the screen lights. Physiotherapy for neck pain. Reorganizing my lifestyle for healthier care. Better confidence and self-esteem." -MD

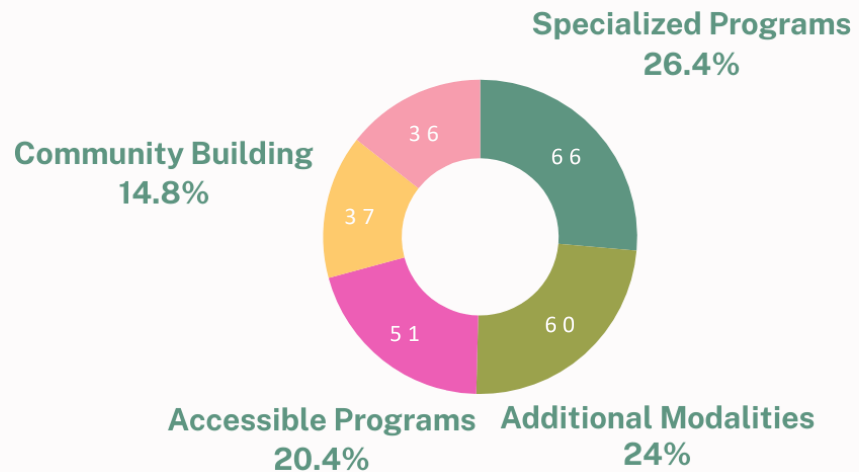
"you guys make me feel that I have a voice and that I do matter the person, and you guys gave me back my self-confidence, which I didn't have before." - RE

On this page, each parent code is shown, including the top 5 subcodes within each one and quotes to demonstrate the parent code.



Research Findings: Qualitative

Hopes and Aspirations



"I would love to see more programming like this." – AP

"I would love to see mentorship, where we're able to Train for similar roles, or to volunteer in the program." – TI

"I want there to be supports that are more readily available and Not so stigmatized, and also supports that are come in all many different formats, like in person or virtually or on telephone." –RE

On this page, each parent code is shown, including the top 5 subcodes within each one and quotes to demonstrate the parent code.



Research Findings: Summarized

- 20-week survivor-led, cross-sectoral, multidisciplinary program for GBV-TBI survivors
- Focused on effective supports in survivors' healing journeys
- Emphasized peer support, trauma-informed care, and intersectional approaches
- Included flexible, buffet-style services and 1-on-1 peer navigation
- **Health Improvements:** Increased general/mental health, symptom relief, and overall well-being
- **Knowledge Gains:** Increased awareness around GBV and brain injury (BI), and how to cope with both
- **Peer Support and Peer Navigation:** including systems' navigation, seen as supportive for self-esteem, confidence, and autonomy
- **Program Demand:** Strong recommendation to extend the program for better long-term support





Cross Sectoral Solutions: Impact

Knowledge Mobilization

Contribute to evidence-base of “what worked” through reports, resources, & events, to support GBV-BI survivors, survivor needs & dreams, cross-sectoral needs, etc...



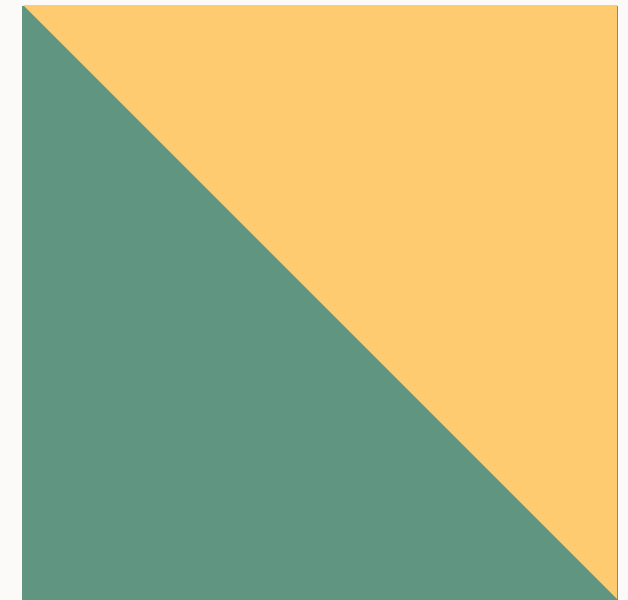
Capacity Building

Build individual, community, interdisciplinary, and system-level capacity through resources, campaigns & events, etc....



Awareness Raising & Advocacy

Develop greater awareness across survivors, service providers, community, decision makers, educators, etc... through social media, advocacy, resources, etc...





IMPACT →

Cross Sectoral Solutions: Impact

DISCLOSING YOUR DISABILITY

A Legal Guide for TBI-GBV Survivors in Ontario



INTRODUCTION

Deciding whether to disclose a disability during a legal process can have a significant impact on an individual's experience within the legal system. Women, in particular, face heightened difficulties in accessing justice and protection due to weakened justice systems or disrupted justice and service delivery, as well as low levels of trust in state institutions. This remains a crucial access to justice issue, as very little attention has been given to whether the court system itself adheres to equality requirements when administering justice.

This fact sheet takes into account the unforeseen consequences that may arise from disclosing a disability in the court system, and accordingly, provides guidance on how to disclose a disability. It aims to **empower people with disabilities to effectively advocate for their needs in order to participate fully in the court system and other legal processes.** The guide begins by exploring the legal definition of disability in

Conseils aux intervenant.e.s pour la clôture des sessions avec les survivant.e.s de violence basée sur le genre et de lésions cérébrales

Préparé par Cross Sectoral Solutions / Préparé par Cross Sectoral Solutions

STRATÉGIES ET CONSIDÉRATIONS

01 Importance de la clôture de session

Les clôtures de sessions sont cruciales pour s'assurer que les deux participant.e.s comprennent mutuellement que le temps passé ensemble se termine. Elles se déroulent dans le respect du parcours du survivant et sont personnalisées pour s'adapter à la dynamique propre à chaque relation.

02 Bénéfices de la clôture de session

- Les limites sont redéfinies et appliquées
- Les prochaines étapes d'une survivant.e peuvent être discutées et clarifiées
- Cela marque le début d'un nouveau chapitre pour la survivant.e

PRACTICAL STEPS for a Smooth Closure

(Weeks 1-10)

By following these steps, you ensure that the survivor is prepared for closure



CROSS SECTORAL SOLUTIONS RESEARCH REPORT

"The Kinship, The Being: There's Life After Gender Based Violence & Life After TBI"

Navigating Systems with Survivors

System Navigation

- Assisting survivors in accessing services, resources, and support within complex systems eg. legal, healthcare, social services, housing
- Survivors with intersecting identities face unique challenges in navigating these systems
- Survivor-centred approach
- Empathy, patience and cultural sensitivity
- Informed consent!

A BLUE-PRINT OF "WHAT WORKED"

Supporting Survivors of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Brain Injury (BI) Through Cross-Sectoral and Survivor-Led Work



DEVELOPED BY THE CROSS SECTORAL SOLUTIONS INITIATIVE

FUNDED BY THE PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY OF CANADA

Réservez la date!

VOIES INTERSECTORIELLES POUR LA VIOLENCE FONDÉE SUR LE GENRE ET LES TRAUMATISMES CRÂNIENS

Conférence Virtuelle

4 AU 6 MARS 2025
11:00H (EST) - 17:00H (EST)

Inscrivez-vous!

Communication Cognitive

Qu'est-ce que la communication cognitive ?

Les troubles de la communication cognitive sont des difficultés de communication dues à des problèmes cognitifs sous-jacents.

Qu'est-ce que la communication ?

La communication implique à la fois de comprendre les autres et de s'exprimer. Lorsque les gens communiquent efficacement, ils et elles sont capables d'exprimer leurs besoins, leurs désirs, leurs pensées, leurs sentiments et leurs préférences de manière à ce que les autres les comprennent. Elle comprend les éléments suivants :

- l'écoute
- l'expression orale
- la lecture
- l'écriture
- la communication sociale
- la communication cognitive

Qu'est-ce que la cognition ?

La cognition (c'est-à-dire les capacités de réflexion) est la manière dont nous recevons des informations du monde ou de notre corps, dont nous les traitons et dont nous les utilisons. Elle comprend les éléments suivants :

- le traitement (vitesse, quantité, complexité)
- la mémoire
- l'organisation
- le raisonnement
- la flexibilité mentale
- les fonctions exécutives (par exemple, comportement orienté vers un objectif, autosurveillance, contrôle des impulsions)

Les Éléments de la Communication et les Stratégies

L'écoute implique les étapes suivantes :

1. Entendre le son avec nos oreilles
2. Prêter attention au son
3. Traiter le son
4. Comprendre le son

Exemple de stratégies

- Noter les mots ou les idées clés pendant que vous écoutez
- Paraphraser ce qu'ils et elles ont dit et vérifier si vous avez bien compris
- Préparer des scripts pour faire savoir aux autres ce qu'ils et elles ont dit (par exemple, demander aux autres de simplifier leur langage, de ralentir, de répéter, de clarifier)

Exemples de stratégies

L'expression orale implique les éléments suivants :

- Des structures et des mouvements pour produire un discours
- Savoir ce que l'on veut dire et comment on veut le dire
- Trouver des mots, organiser ses pensées/Idées, etc.

Exemples de stratégies

- Essayer d'utiliser des mots plus spécifiques au lieu de « chose » ou « ça »
- Utiliser des images
- Demander à l'auditeur/ce de répéter (avec leurs propres mots) ce qui a été discuté et de clarifier les points qui n'étaient pas clairs ou qui n'ont pas été compris
- Demander du temps pour assimiler l'information et écrire les points clés que vous souhaitez dire avant de prendre la parole
- Utiliser un processus d'organisation des pensées

Gender-Based Violence & Brain Injury

TOOLKIT

Another Women's Centre Initiative

Funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada

Ensemble d'Outils pour l'Utilisation Sécuritaire et Efficace de Soi

Navigation par les pairs.e.s avec les survivant.e.s de violence basée sur le genre et de lésions cérébrales

KC KNOWLEDGE HUB CENTRE DE CONNAISSANCES presents:

Cross-Sectoral Solutions: Research Insights and Impacts from GBV-BI survivors

CONNECT. SHARE. PARTNER. LEARN. APPREHENDRE.

WESEC: WHAT IS THE GOAL OF WESEC? LET'S TALK ABOUT THE INTERSECTION OF GBV & TBI

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS & BARRIERS OF TBI? SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY (TBI)

NEED TBI RESOURCES? WE HAVE YOU COVERED

TOOLKIT: COGNITIVE ASSISTANCE

WITH TBI SUPPORT.

AT KIND?

Funded by The Public Health Agency of Canada

The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the Public Health Agency of Canada.



Impact →

Knowledge Mobilization: Research Report

Recommendations

- **Prioritize Peer Support:** Use trained peer navigators to provide trauma-informed, survivor-led care
- **Tailor to GBV-BI Needs:** Adapt programs to address the specific causes and impacts of brain injuries from gender-based violence
- **Ensure Structured Closure:** Plan intentional program endings to prevent retraumatization and support both survivors and staff
- **Address Language & Cultural Gaps:** Improve accessibility through interpretation services and culturally responsive supports
- **Integrate Joy in Healing:** Include creative, social, and celebratory activities to support emotional recovery and resilience
- **Offer Flexible, Personalized Support:** Provide diverse, adaptable options that reflect each survivor's unique healing journey



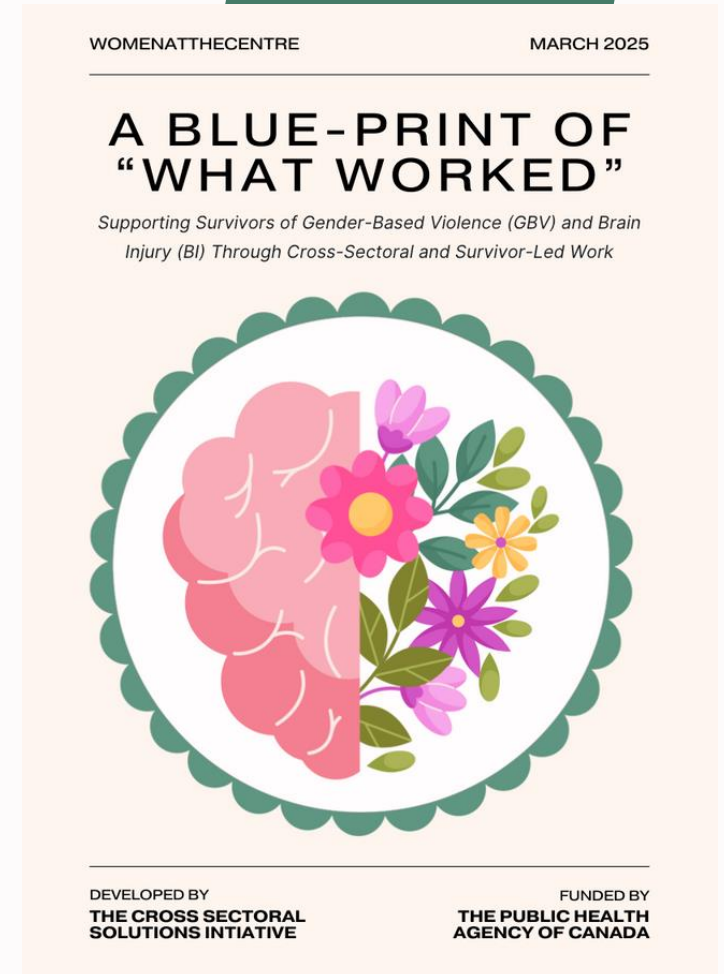


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Capacity Building: A Blue Print of “What Worked”

Recommendations

- **Flexibility, Adaptability and Tailoring:** must be embedded in the development and delivery the project and programs
- **Language is Powerful:** alongside individual, collective, nuanced, contextualized, political, and ever-changing
- **Value and Trust Based Work:** is expensive, and time, capacity, and resource consuming, but necessary, and it must be supported by the sponsor
- **Cross-Sector Gaps in Education and Training:** need to be met to ensure survivor, brain injury, and a trauma & violence informed projects, programs, services, policies, etc...





Impact →

Capacity Building: A Blue Print of “What Worked”

Recommendations

- **Survivor-Led Work:** is essential to the development and delivery of the projects and programs
- **Community Building:** should be centred in project development, program delivery, survivor-led work, and cross-sectoral/multi-level work
- **GBV & BI Awareness:** requires continued attention, to support survivor self-knowledge, education, services, public awareness and policies

“The one thing that stood out for me is the importance of making the space survivor led! The survivors of GBV with TBI have a space to come to where they are not only learning new skills but they are teaching us new skills as well. I have learned so much here that school doesn't and cannot teach, which is the lived experiences and that is so important.” - **Student**



Awareness Raising & Advocacy

Social Media

- Responding to Disclosures of Violence
- WomenatthecentrE Survivor Expert Collective Campaign

Political Advocacy

- Brief to the Standing Committee on Health in support of Bill C-277: An Act to Establish a National Strategy on Brain Injury
- Submission to the Standing Committee on Finance for Pre-Budget Consultations
- Submission to the Department of Finance Canada for Pre-Budget Consultations
- Presentation to Ontario Office for Victims of Crime

Impact →



A Submission on Bill C-277:
An Act to establish a national
strategy on brain injuries to
the House of Commons
Standing Committee on Health

By the Cross Sectoral Solutions Project
A WomenatthecentrE Initiative



**Lessons Learned in
Survivor-Led Work:
"Words don't teach.
Experience
teaches."**

WomenatthecentrE
July 30, 2025
Ontario's Office for Victims of Crime (OVC)



Questions?

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