

SVRI Forum
Cancun, MX

"Who's going to believe me?"

HELP-SEEKING THROUGH THE PERSPECTIVES OF MALAYSIAN SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN

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OUTLINE

- Introduction to WAO
- The Study: Overview
- The Study: Survivors' Voices

SVRI Forum
Cancun, MX



Malaysia

ABOUT WOMEN'S AID ORGANISATION (WAO)

Three key areas:

- Services
- Capacity building
- Advocacy



*Help-seeking through the perspectives of
Malaysian survivors of VAW*

THE STUDY

AN OVERVIEW

Public Attitudes and Perceptions towards Violence Against Women in Malaysia

Large-scale nation-wide survey, nationally representative
sample

Modelled from Australian NCAS

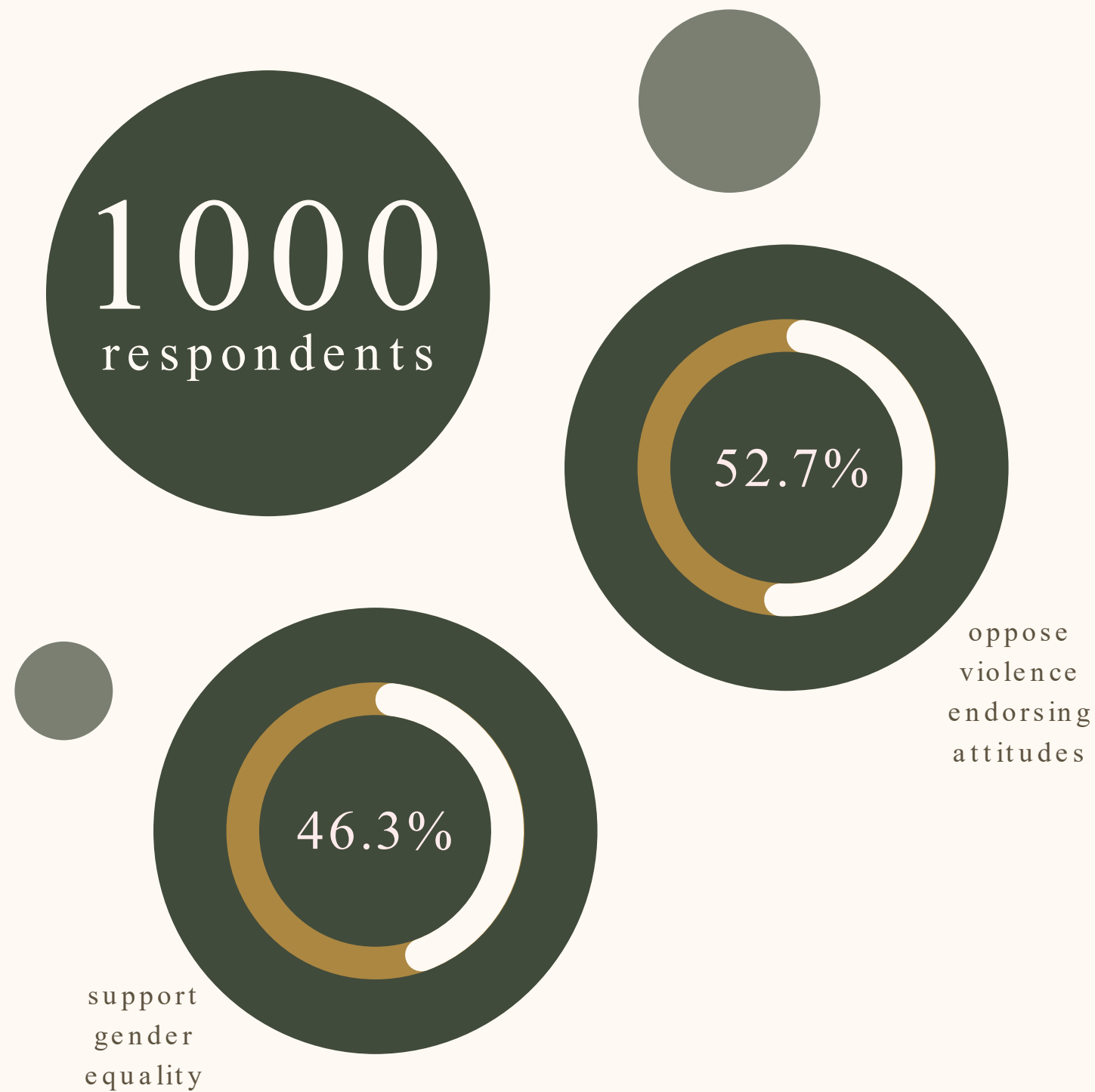
+ self-designed measures on attitudes towards rape, child
marriage, and availability of services for survivors

Findings

Only about half of Malaysians are likely to oppose violence-
endorsing attitudes and support gender equality.

Malaysians had concerning responses towards attitudes and
perceptions in many issues, including:

- Excusing the perpetrator and holding women accountable for
the violence perpetrated against them
- Mistrusting women's reports of VAW



THE STUDY

AN OVERVIEW

Survivors' help-seeking behaviours are impacted by community attitudes

Questions we sought to answer:

How do survivors perceive their help-seeking journeys?

How do they perceive the help they received from both formal and informal sources of support?

How do these perceptions differ between formal and informal support?

Which attitudes helped or hindered their journeys?



Chart 1: Types of primary violence experienced

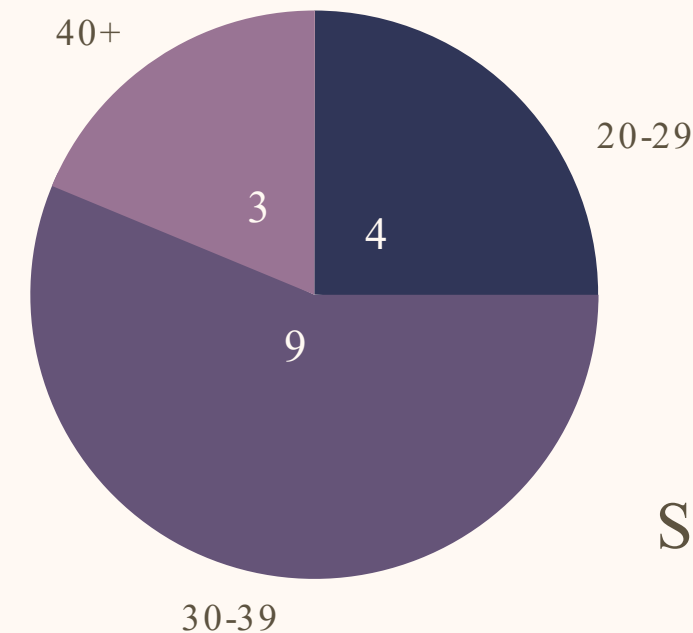
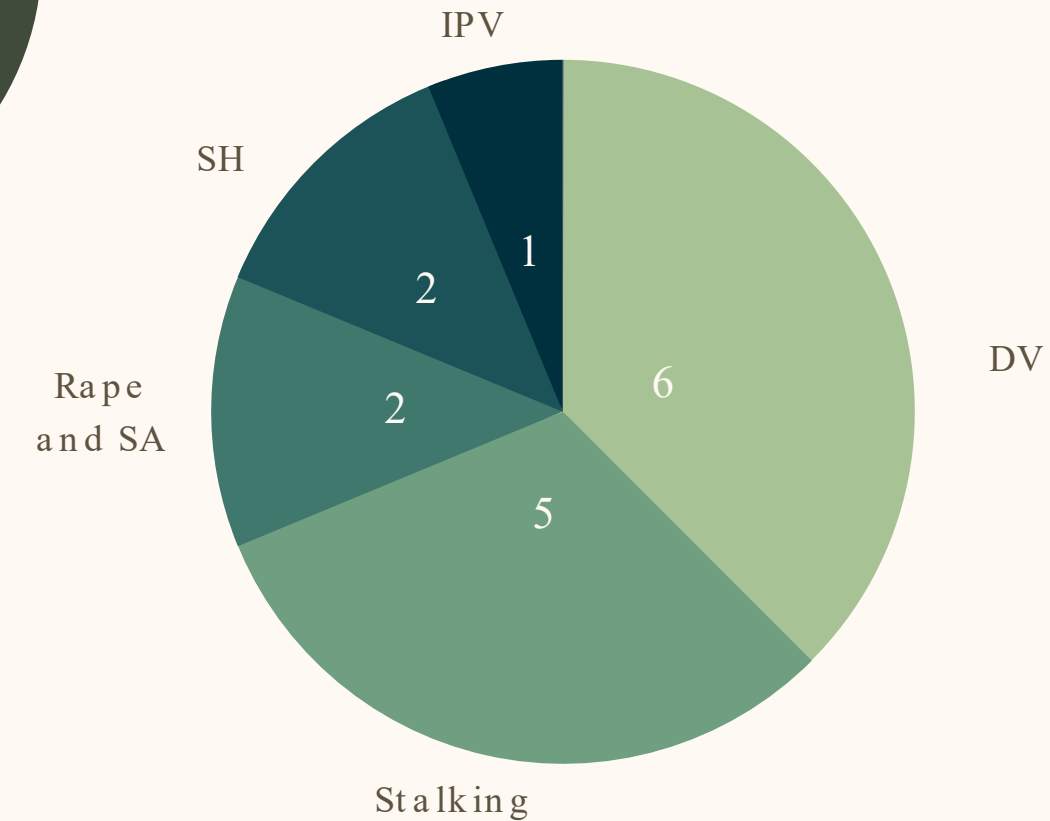
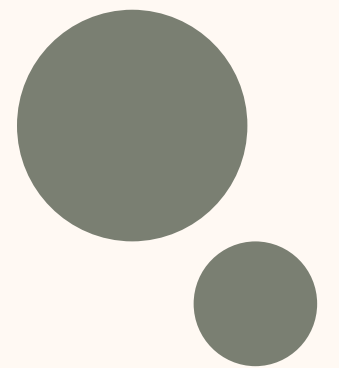


Chart 2:
Survivors' Age
range



THE STUDY

WHO DID SURVIVORS CHOSE TO SEEK HELP FROM?

All 16 of the survivors we interviewed went to the following:

- Friends, family or community
- The police
- NGO

We also had survivors who went to:

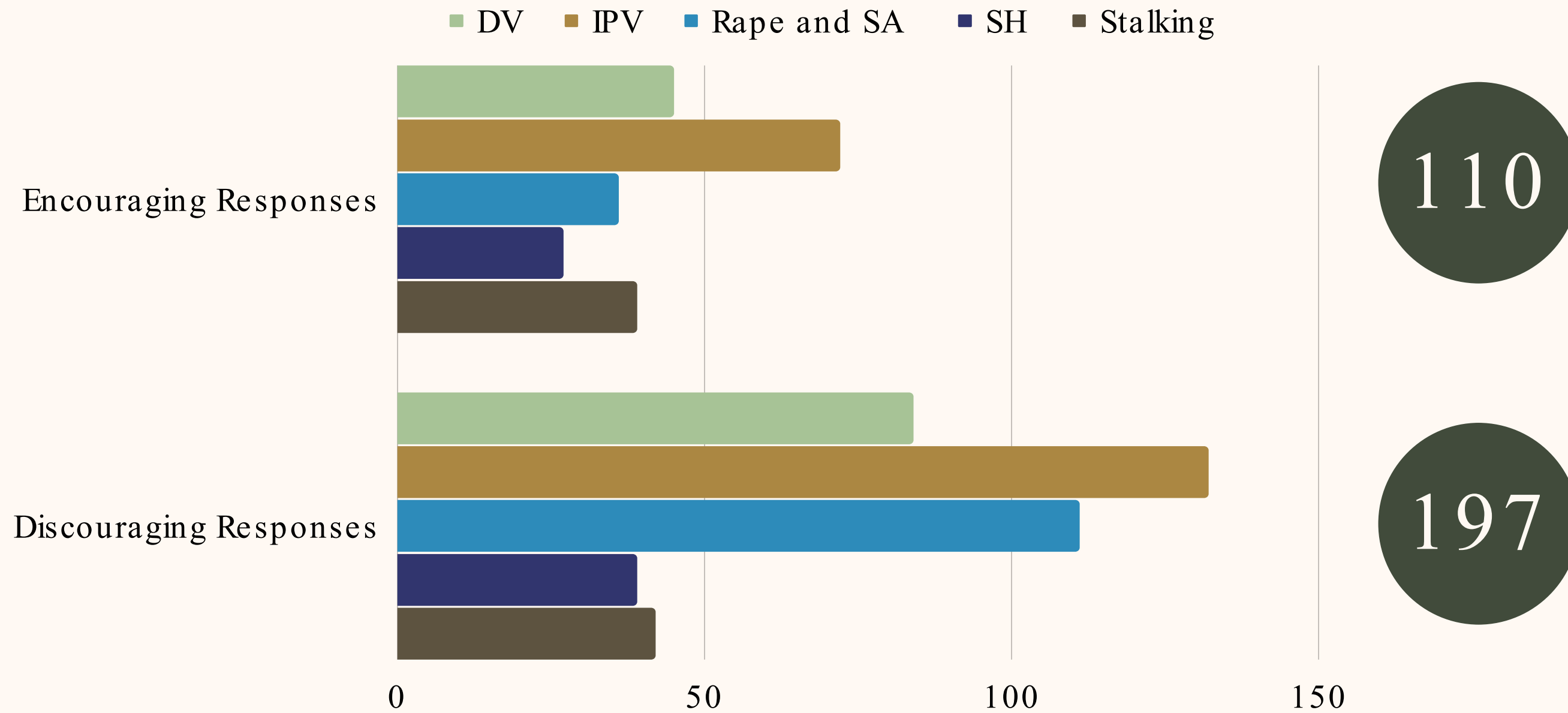
- Healthcare professionals
- Mental healthcare professionals
- The Social Welfare Department
- Legal professionals

We contact
WAO, contact
Legal Aid, the
police. I talked to
my **dad**. My
family.

The **hospital** in
Kuala Lumpur
come and take
us to **WAO**, me
and my kid.

I had my
neighbours
who helped
me.

What kind of attitudes are survivors mostly likely to encounter?



THE STUDY

ENCOURAGING RESPONSES

My neighbours really supported me. They would always ask me how I was doing; how my kids were - whether they were alright.

So every two weeks, my brother went back, [my parents] buy a lot of things for me, for my kids like fruits.

I got a [lawyer friend involved]. He was guiding me okay what to do because I don't know what will happen [in] court.

76



Offering support/help

Emotional
Physical / Practical / Tangible
Knowledge

29



Professionalism

Efficiency
Effectiveness
Words of Comfort

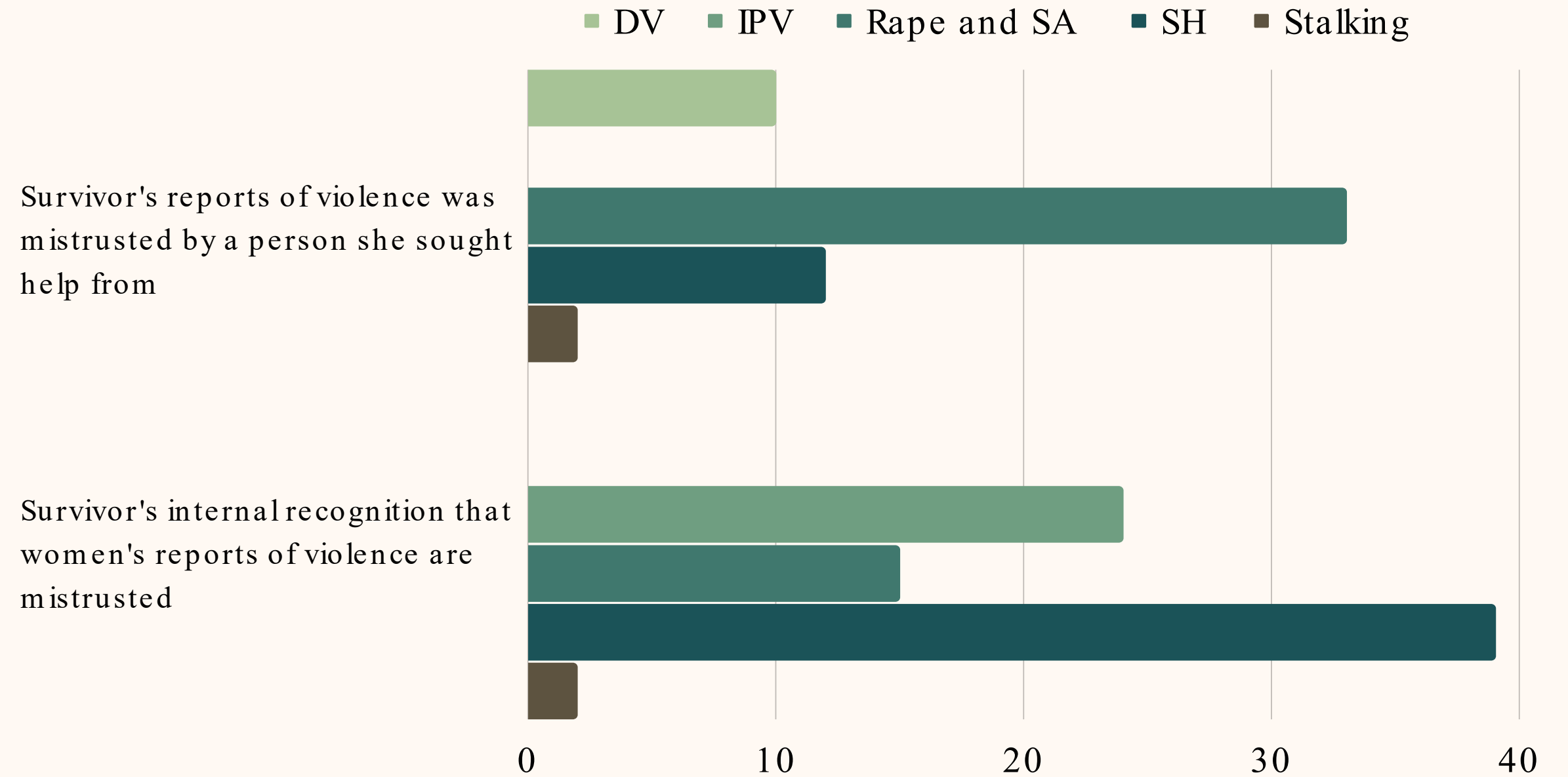
So the Deputy Superintendent had called and I didn't know they had actually arrested [the perpetrator] in the evening

The female officer read [my report and said], "This is a stalker. This is a psycho stalker."

[He told my husband] "Sir, please leave - you can go home. Your wife needs to be warded." So the police is protecting me.

THE STUDY

MISTRUSTING WOMEN'S REPORTS OF VIOLENCE



MISTRUST IN A SURVIVOR'S WORDS

Actually, after I lodged police report, there's a few women approached me. From Instagram, Facebook - they have been through the same thing but they don't want to come out because of his background. "Who's gonna trust me?" Who's gonna trust them? Is it them or is it this [politician]? And I said I know because it's very difficult. I've been through the same thing. I've been questioning myself - "Who [is] going to trust me?"

THE STUDY

THE LARGER IMPACT OF BEING MISTRUSTED

197

responses coded
as "discouraging"

26

"mistrusting
women's reports
of violence"

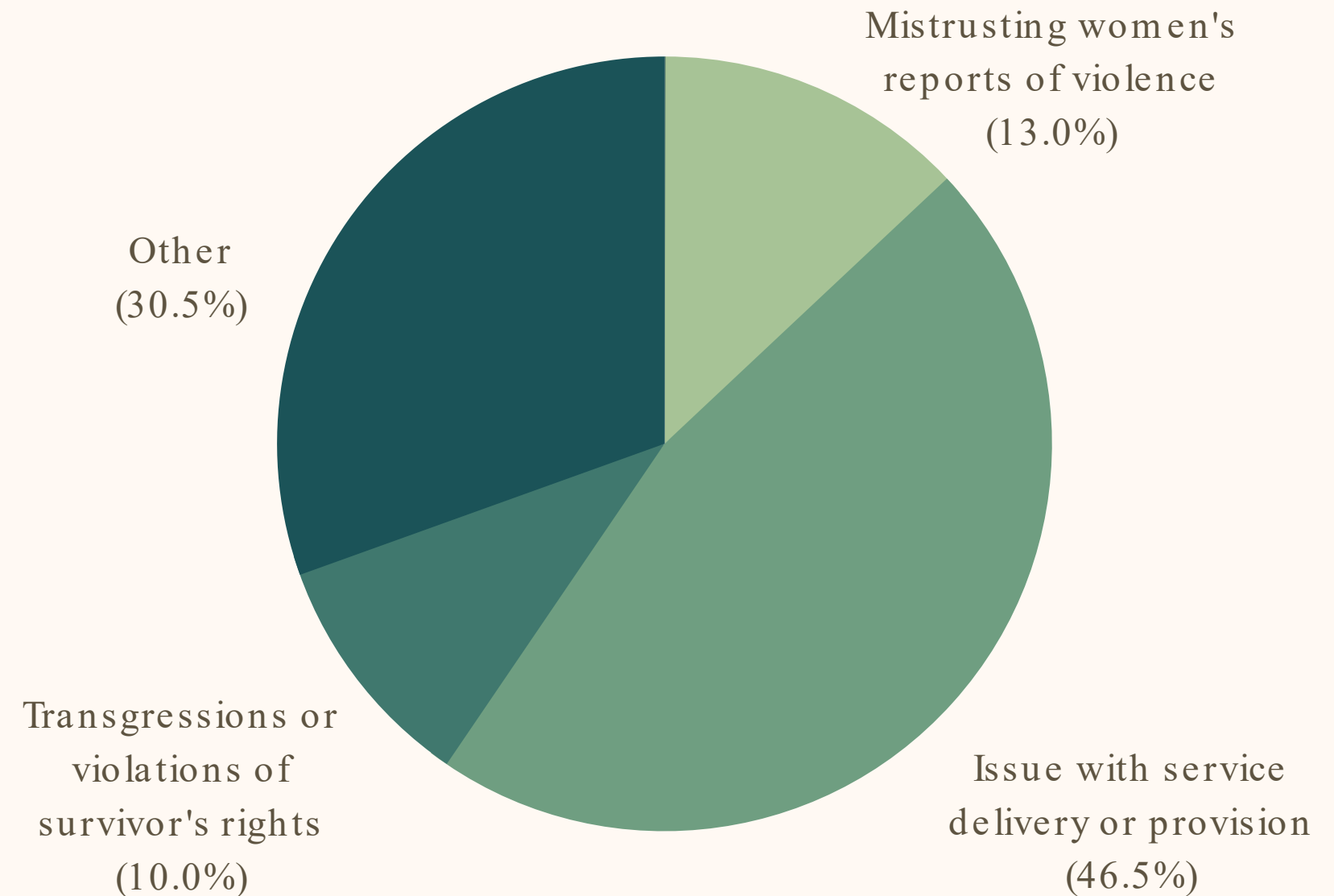
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issue with service
delivery or
provision

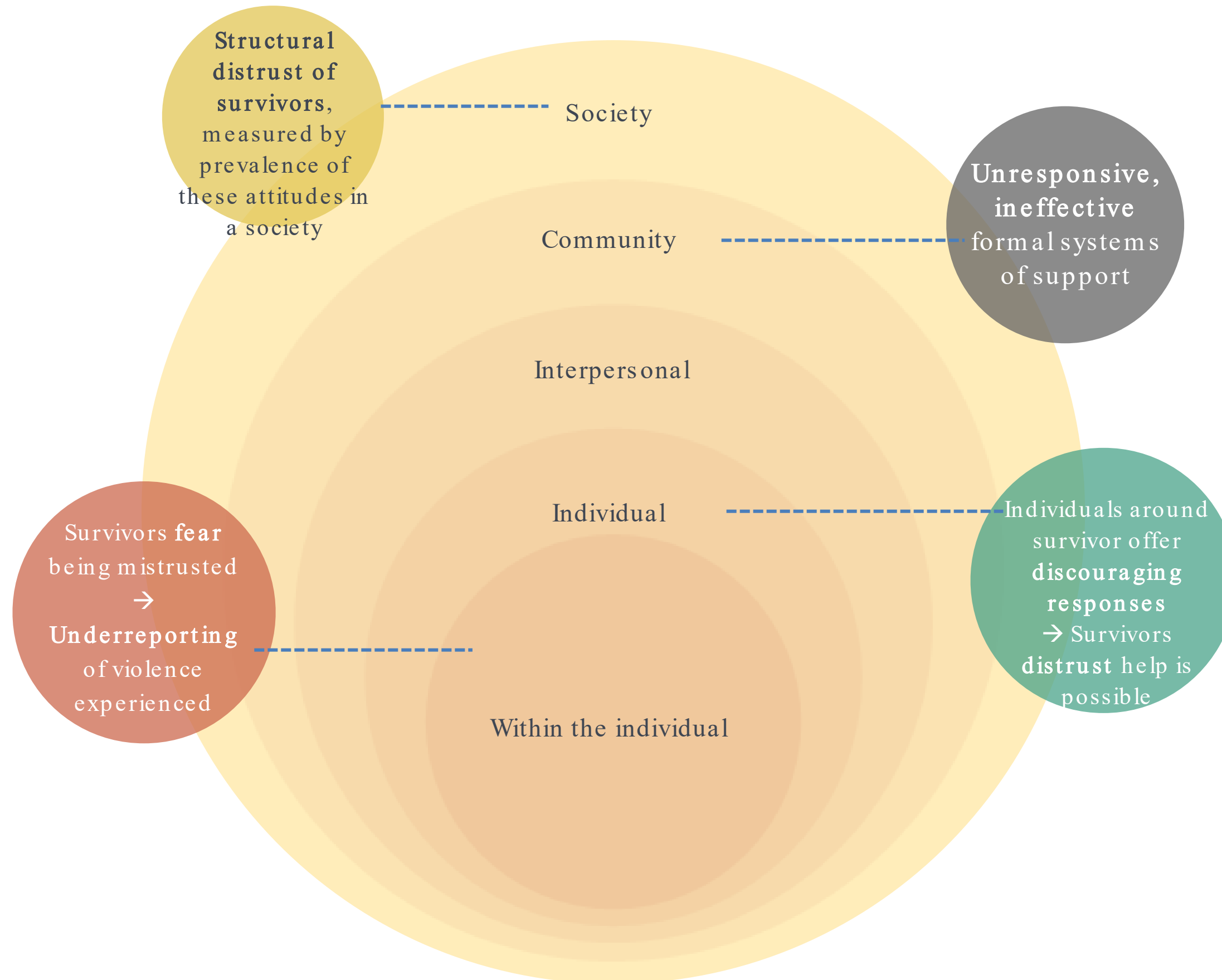
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transgressions or
violations of
survivor's rights

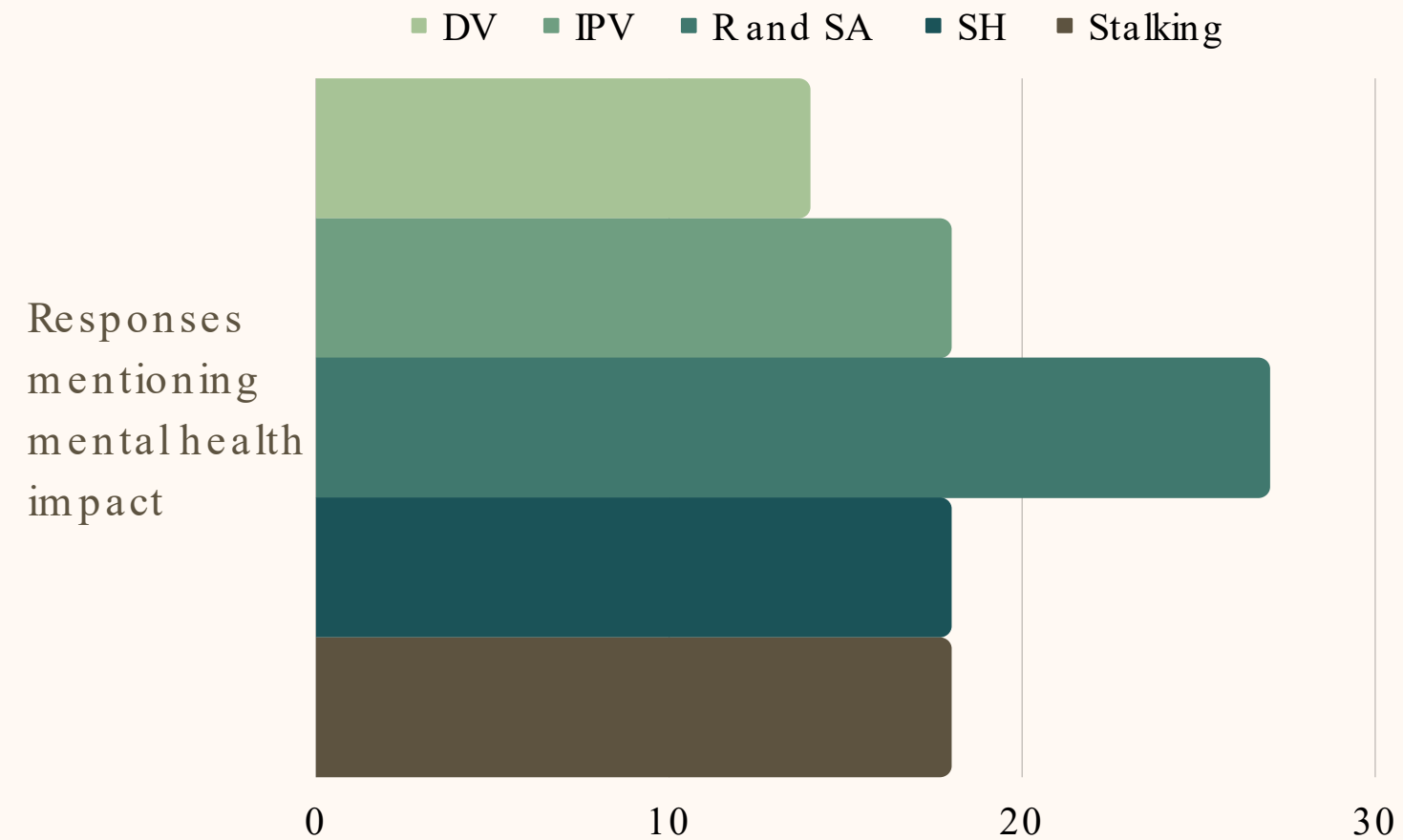
- In conjunction with high prevalence of violence-endorsing attitudes, we see a correlation with high likelihood of experiencing issues with service delivery or provision.



THE STUDY
AN OVERVIEW



THE MENTAL HEALTH TOLL



Is [my experience] worthy enough of this devastation that I'm feeling? I doubt that all the time. Is it horrible enough to warrant such a reaction as this? Sometimes I control it, I try not to feel anything when sometimes all you want to do is cry.
- Nisa, 32, stalking survivor

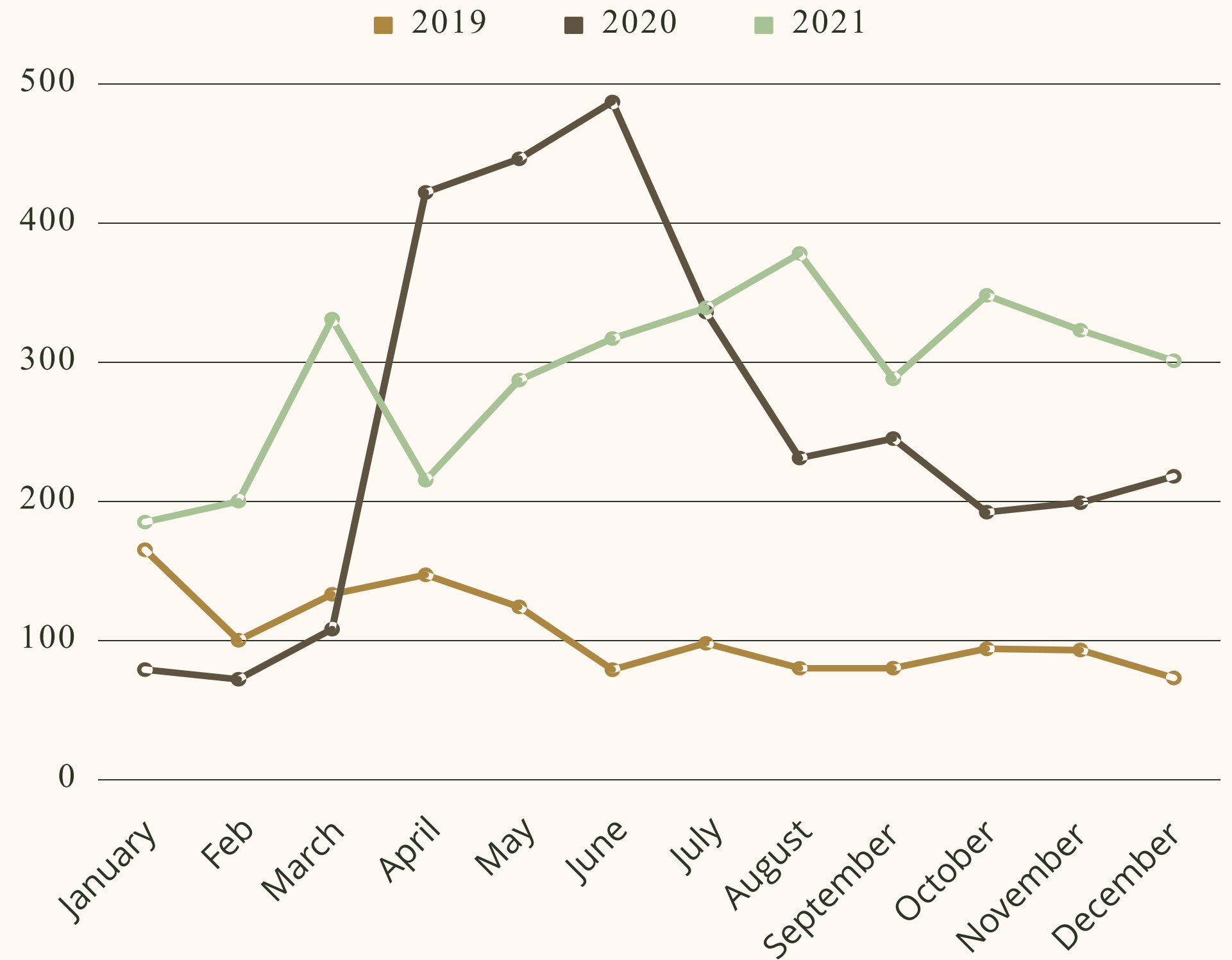
Each time I approach the officers, there'll be breakdown in me. Emotionally and mentally. People don't understand - people don't help.
- Sofia, 38, DV survivor

I have these trust issues since that incident. Even it takes me time to approach WAO to get help. You know - this kind of feelings that who's gonna help you - who's gonna trust you?
- Siti, 31, SH survivor

THE STUDY

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR WORK?

WAO Hotline Statistics (2019-2021)



WHAT DO SURVIVORS WANT TO SEE FROM FRONTLINE RESPONDERS?

Make us
feel safe
first.

- Priscilla, 35, DV
survivor

Police, first thing -
for any complaint
actually, I think they
should just take it
seriously first.

- Fatima, 43, IPV
survivor

Advise the victim
accordingly. We as
a victim we didn't
know what we
should do.

- Anna, 39, DV
survivor

They have kind of set in
their mind that assault
happens because the
victim does this, this,
this, this, this. I think
the focus should really
be on the perpetrator.

- Ashley, 32, SA
survivor

The family court
system should change
- people shouldn't just
say, "It's family
matter so you settle it
by yourself."

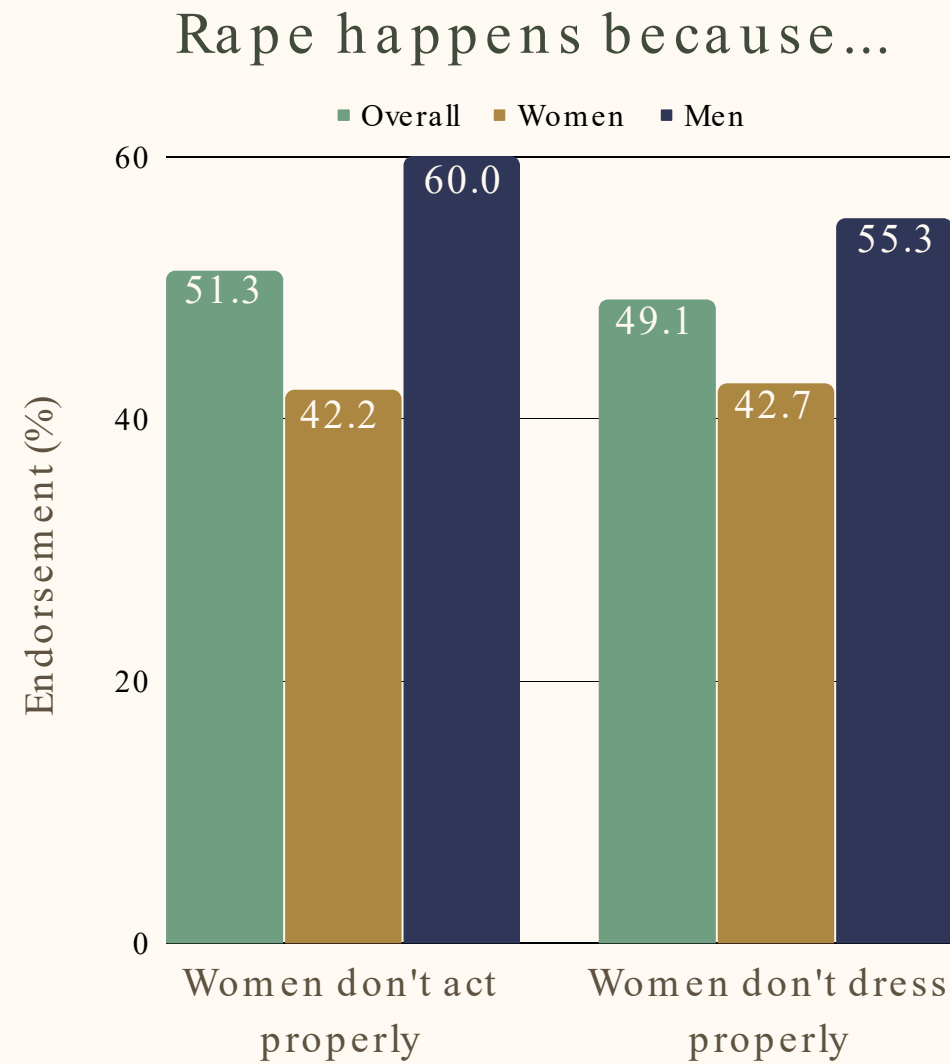
- Sofia, 38, DV
survivor

I think it's better if they had a kind of understanding, if they kind of had a more well-rounded understanding of how these kinds of assaults happen is because you have someone who is in a situation of power, imbalance of power, and that's why it's hard for survivors to speak out. And sometimes they do do things that they're not proud of or doesn't help them in court, you know, and this is just - normal humans just behave this way, we're not perfect survivors, we're not here to be perfect survivors.

- Ashley, 32, SA survivor

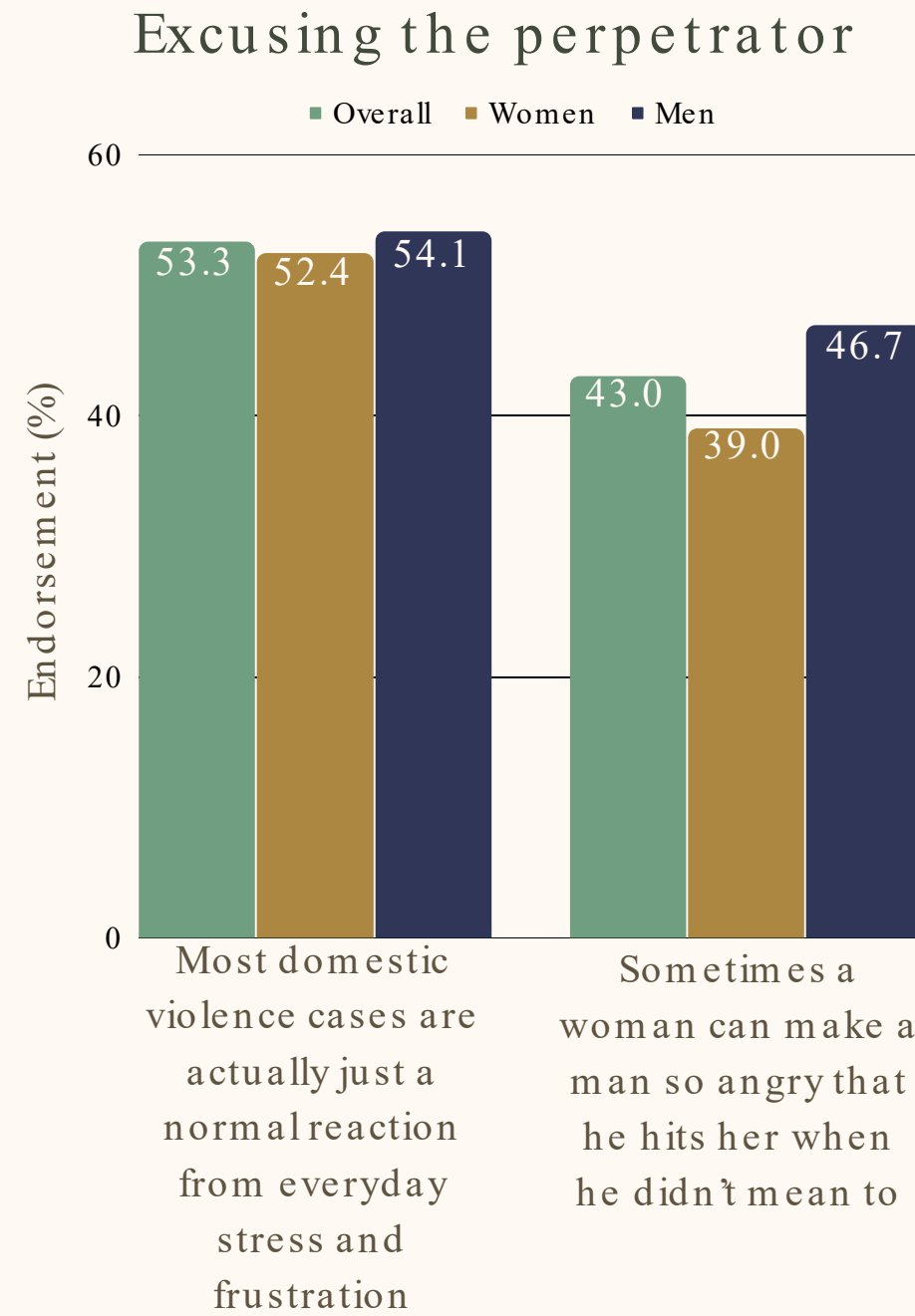
THE STUDY

ATTITUDES TO ADDRESS

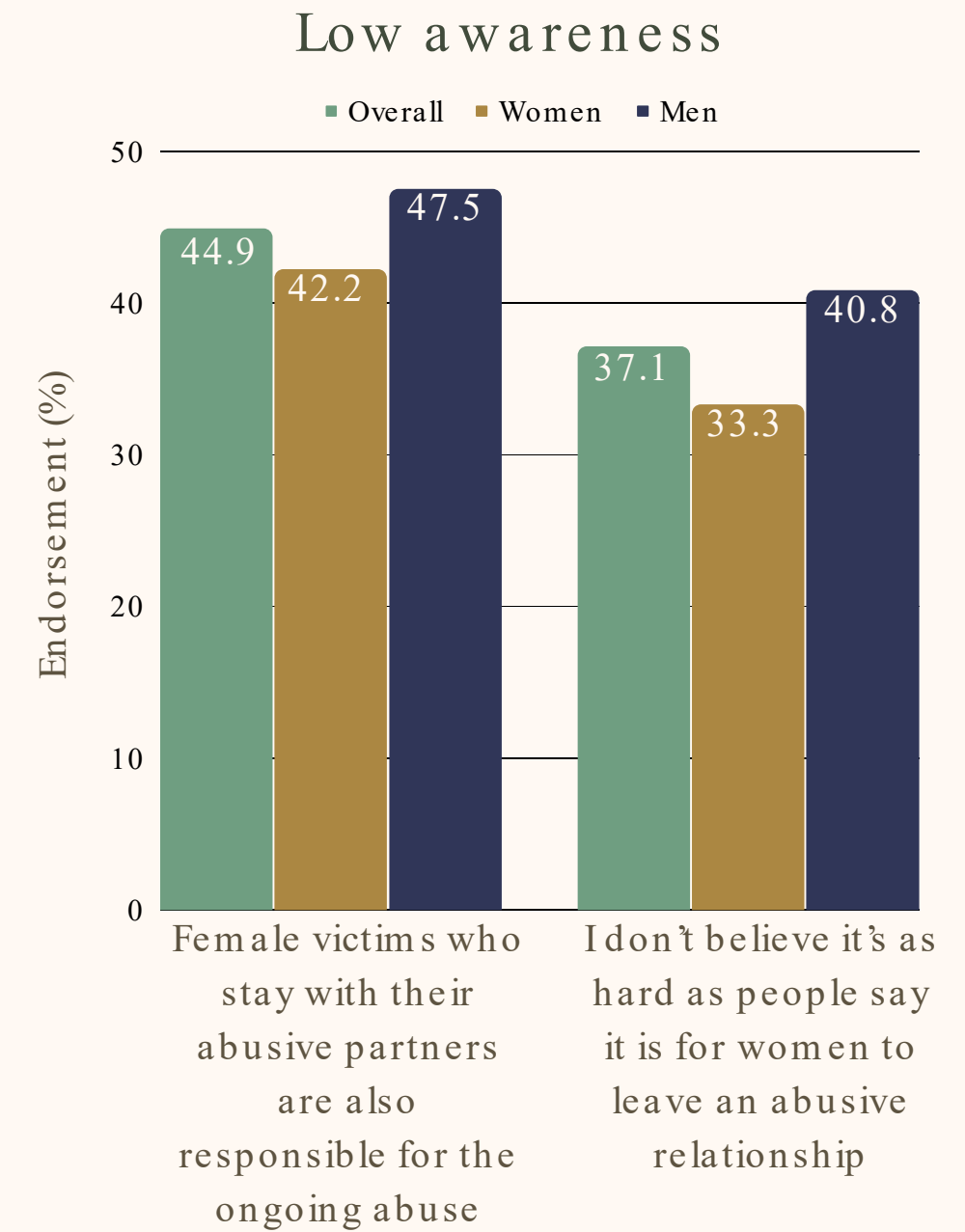


Rape myths

Malaysian endorsement of rape myths are rampant



Violence often seen as emotional and caused by the victim



Amore nuanced understanding of violence must be cultivated



THANK
YOU

TERIMA KASIH
GRACIAS

END NOTES

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