



COVID-19 IMPACT ON SURVIVORS

Three years have passed since COVID-19 started to change many lives, including for survivors of domestic violence. The aftermath of the pandemic has left survivors with increased challenges and compromised safety.

The Hotline experienced historic high contact volume—with more than 2,000 incoming calls, chats and texts per day. The long-term effects of the pandemic resulted in The Hotline receiving and answering more calls, chats, and texts than ever before. In response to this unprecedented demand, we hired a record number of advocates, created a queue management system to decrease wait times, and enhanced our self-service options for those unable to reach out or wait safely for live services.

To understand the impact COVID-19 had on survivors' lives, this report highlights the top experiences survivors reported to The Hotline March 16, 2020 to March 15, 2023.



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TOTAL CONTACTS ANSWERED

COVID YEAR 1

374,640

MARCH 16, 2020 - MARCH 15, 2021

COVID YEAR 2

425,069

MARCH 16, 2021 - MARCH 15, 2022

COVID YEAR 3

437,208

MARCH 16, 2022 - MARCH 15, 2023

TOTAL

1,236,917

TOP CHALLENGES SURVIVORS EXPERIENCED DURING COVID-19

1. HOUSING INSTABILITY

Housing instability of survivors or homelessness increased by 124% in COVID year 3 compared to COVID year 2.

From COVID year 2 to COVID year 3, the number of survivors reaching out to The Hotline needing transitional housing increased by more than 100%. In COVID year 2, The Hotline received 6,544 survivors requiring transitional housing, while in COVID year 3, The Hotline received 13,185 survivors requiring transitional housing. For survivors and their children, domestic violence is a leading cause of housing instability and homelessness.

While escaping abusive relationships, survivors face the threat of homelessness, which increases danger, since they must find a way to meet their basic needs of shelter, food, and clothing. Many survivors also face financial abuse and have limited access to resources of their own—a significant barrier to leaving an abusive relationship.

2. CHILDCARE ASSISTANCE

The need for childcare assistance for domestic violence survivors increased by 122% in COVID year 3 compared to COVID year 2.

Those reaching out to The Hotline with children involved in domestic violence or abuse increased significantly. In COVID year 3, The Hotline received 1,596 survivors needing childcare assistance, an increase from COVID year 2; The Hotline received 716 survivors needing childcare assistance. Prior to the pandemic and persistent post-pandemic, children involved remains the most reported detail of a survivor's experience.

3. REPRODUCTIVE COERCION

Reproductive coercion increased by 61% during the COVID-19 pandemic year in COVID year 3 compared to COVID year 2.

During COVID year 2, The Hotline received 1,492 survivors reporting reproductive coercion, while in COVID year 3, The Hotline received 2,403 survivors reporting reproductive coercion. Reproductive coercion is a form of abuse in which one partner causes harm, exerting power over the other through pressure to engage in sexual activity, refusing to use contraception or sabotaging contraception, restricting a partner from seeing a health care provider, and/or keeping them from making critical health care decisions.

While the pandemic put survivors in closer and more frequent proximity to their abusive partners, caused increased stress and an environment where abuse escalated it isn't the pandemic alone impacting reproductive coercion. Access to reproductive healthcare including safe and legal abortion has been even more restricted after the Supreme Court of the United States ruling on Dobbs.

We have seen many survivors share experiences of their abusive partners spreading misinformation on the legality of accessing reproductive healthcare and weaponizing it to further control and abuse.

INCREASE IN MOST COMMON TYPES OF ABUSE

+16% Emotional / Verbal Abuse

Behavior that isn't physical, which may include verbal aggression, intimidation, manipulation, and humiliation. Remained the most frequently reported abuse type before, during, and after the pandemic.

+49% Sexual Abuse / Reproductive Coercion

Non-consensual sexual interaction through coercion, guilt, or force. This may include pressure to engage in sexual activity, refusal to use contraception, or demanding of sexual images or video. Sexual abuse was reflective of the highest year-over-year increase between COVID Year 3 as compared to COVID Year 2, increasing 49%.

+45% Economic / Financial Abuse

When one intimate partner has control over the other partner's access to economic resources, which diminishes the victim's capacity to support themselves. A significant increase in financially related needs increased 45% in COVID Year 3 as compared to COVID Year 2.

BARRIERS IN COVID-19 SERVICE

COVID-19 was the most reported barrier to receiving services. During COVID Year 1, 26% of survivors reaching out to The Hotline shared COVID-19 as a barrier to accessing support and safety. A decline occurred in Year 2, 15% and there was a further decline noted for COVID Year 3 of 1%.

COVID-19 SURVIVOR STORIES FROM THE LINES

"A survivor being evicted due to spouse not paying rent on their house. Survivor has four children under age five. She is working with a judge to get eviction drawn out longer because abusive partner caused eviction."

"A survivor stated her partner keeps her from working so she doesn't have any money. He doesn't let the child go to daycare so that she can work. If she leaves the house, he will follow her. He works and calls her every 30 minutes."

"A pregnant survivor reached out after experiencing reproductive coercion. The abusive partner would not allow them to take Plan B, and the survivor did not want to bring a baby into the situation because the abusive partner has backward views on parenting and would use the baby to remain in contact."

"A survivor mentioned while in relationship, partner drained bank account and destroyed credit. Their partner had also been physically abusive to where they broke their kneecap in a physically abusive argument."

Glossary

Pre-COVID Contact: Someone contacting The Hotline prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID Contact: Someone contacting The Hotline who was impacted by COVID-19 in some way, whether that means they or their partner was sick with COVID-19, they could not get access to resources due to COVID-19, or COVID-19 impacted them in some other way.

Non-COVID Contact: Someone who contacted The Hotline but did not mention COVID-19 as a condition of their experience. However, they contacted The Hotline during COVID-19.