

The Backbone Collective

Survey One – Findings

Purpose

Before launching The Backbone Collective (TBC), we wanted to connect with women who have experienced violence and abuse to find out if what we are planning would be valuable and something they wanted.

The overall aim of Survey One was to invite women who have experienced violence or abuse to participate in building the form, function and shape of TBC in its early stages of development.

We are determined to lead by example by designing and building TBC in the way we want 'the system' to design and build its response to violence against women:

*To actively involve survivors in planning,
development of processes and monitoring of initiatives.*

The process

During November and December 2016, we spread word about our plans through our networks and some Facebook advertising and encouraged women to look at our draft website and complete our first survey. We did not advertise it too widely as we wanted to make sure we had the foundations in place before going public.

We are so happy that 156 of you participated in this first survey – thank you! You were very generous with your feedback and ideas. We have been busy analysing what you told

us and have prepared this report with the overall findings. We will post a summary of our findings on our website and Facebook page.

We will use the overall messages from Survey One in any media work we do to mark our official launch in a few weeks. Again, we want to assure you that we will not use any information that could identify anyone in material we make public. All findings will be anonymous.

Who participated in the survey

Of the 156 of you who participated:

- All of you (100%) were women.
- 12% were friends and whānau, those who work with survivors, and interested parties.
- 88% of you identified forms of violence and abuse you have experienced:
 - 91% were abused by a partner, i.e. boyfriend, girlfriend, husband, de facto. Most of you are no longer with your abusive partner, but a small number are trying to leave or are still with them.
 - Psychological abuse and physical violence were the most common forms experienced (see Figure 1).
 - Most of you were abused by someone you know, however some were abused or assaulted by a stranger (see Figure 2).
 - 68% of you who have experienced physical or sexual violence have made a report to the Police.

- Participants came from a range of age groups but most of you were aged 36 to 65 (see Figure 3).
- Participants came from a range of ethnicities (see Figure 4).
- There was a good spread of participants from around the country. Most of you live in cities but we received responses from Northland to Southland (see Figure 5).

Figure 1: Forms of violence and abuse experienced (n=156)

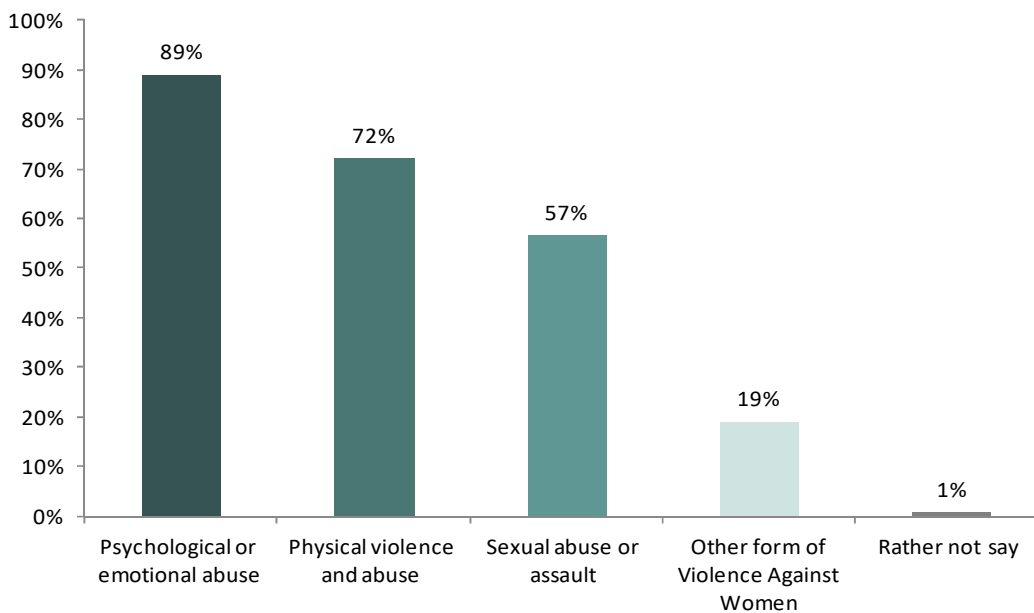


Figure 2: Abuser profile (n=109)

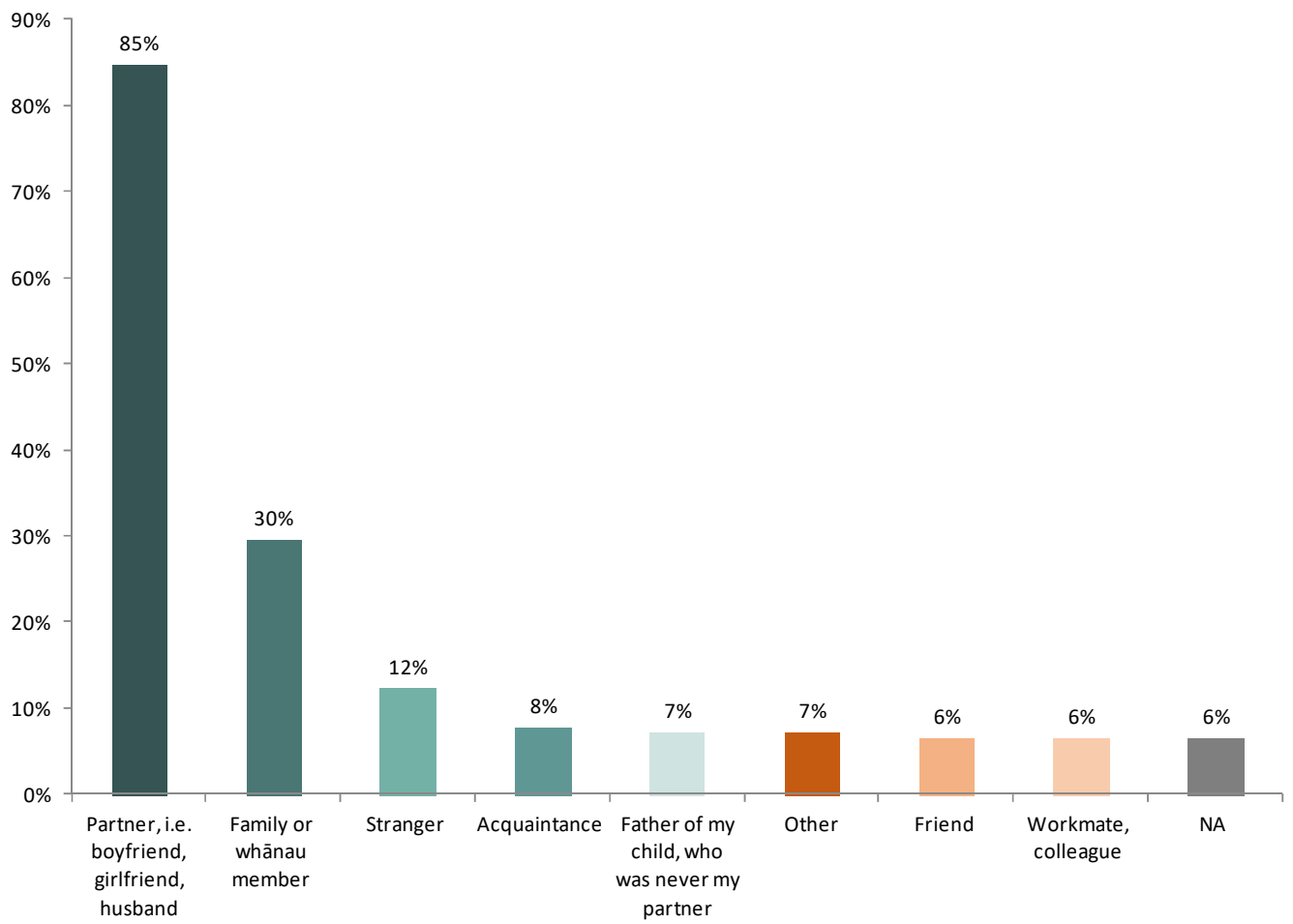


Figure 3: Age ranges of women (n=156)

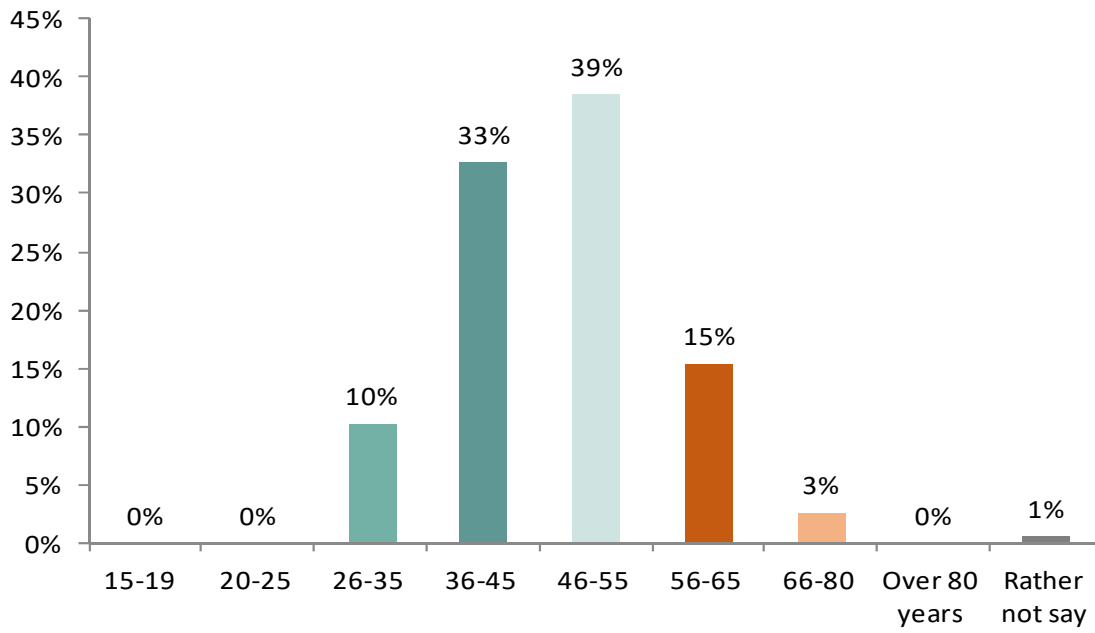


Figure 4: Ethnicity of women (n=156)

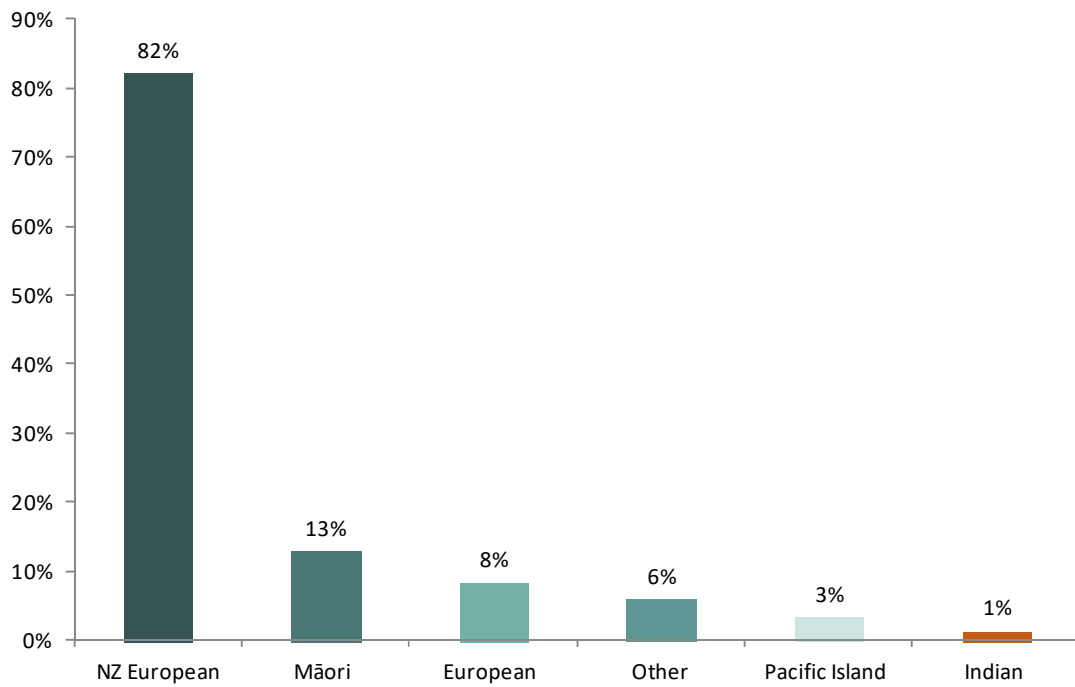
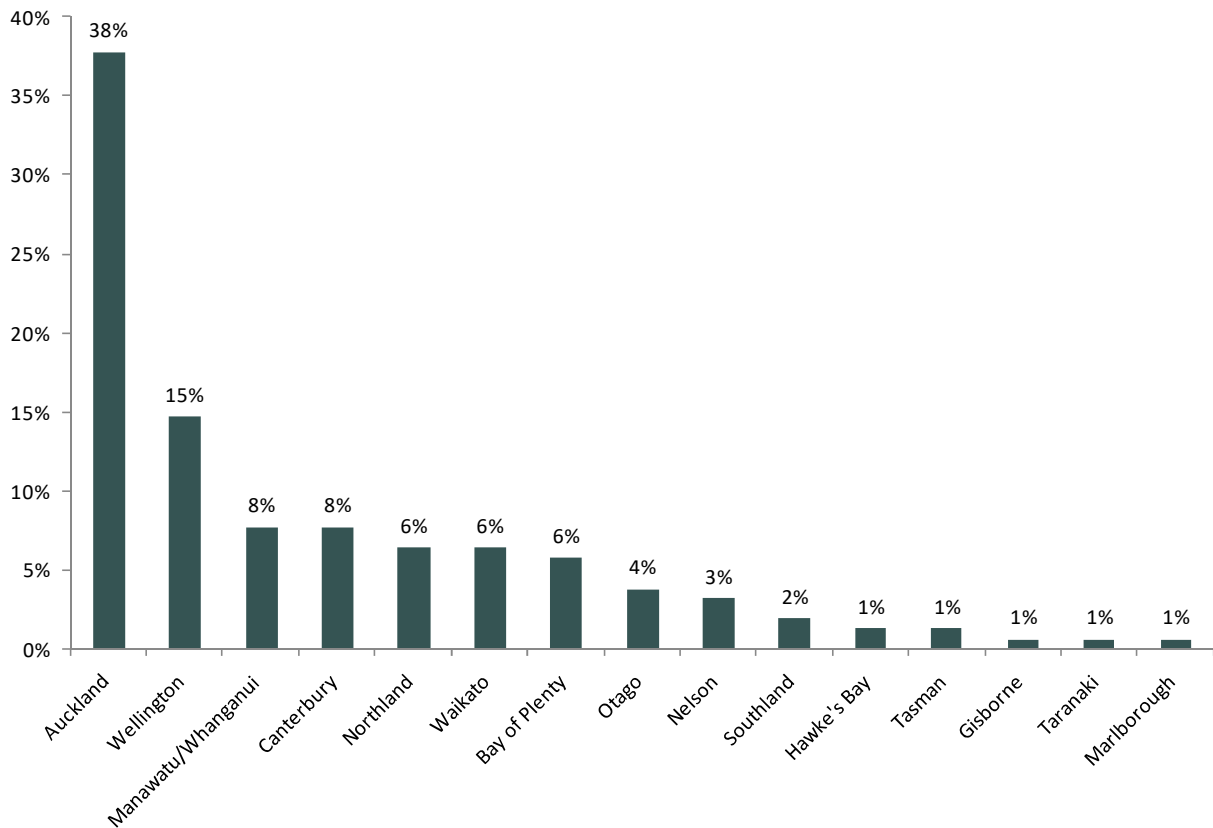


Figure 5: Geographical location (by region) (n=156)



What you told us


















YOU SUPPORT THE BACKBONE COLLECTIVE

The overwhelming response was that you think TBC is a great initiative that you support and want to participate in. Most of you feel safe using your computer or your phone to participate in surveys and keep in touch with updates. Most of you do not think there are barriers that would prevent you staying involved although some of you are concerned about security and your abuser finding out about your involvement. Most of you were happy to leave your email addresses and indicated you wanted to be kept in touch with TBC activity.

THE SYSTEM IS NOT WORKING

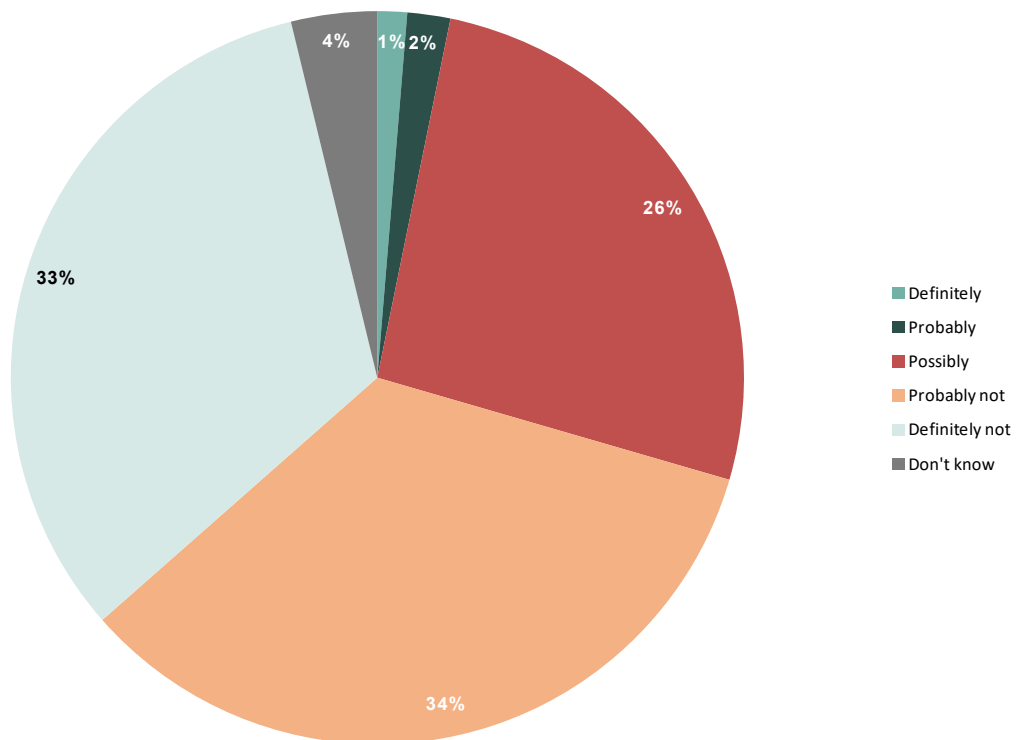
Your responses show us that you understand that ‘the system’ involves many parts and is not restricted to only one aspect - the justice system for example. Most of you selected all parts as representing what we call ‘the system’ (see Table 1).

Table 1: Which of the following should have a role in keeping women safe, and helping them rebuild their lives after abuse and violence? (n=156)

Health services e.g. GPs, specialists, hospitals, mental health, maternity, children's health		95.5%
Specialist Violence Against Women services e.g. refuge, rape crisis, stopping violence services		95.5%
Justice sector e.g. police, courts (Criminal Court & Family Court), corrections		92.3%
Friends		91.7%
Family or whānau		91.7%
General social services e.g. budgeting, counselling, emergency housing, Work & Income, Child Youth & Family		90.4%
Legal services e.g. lawyers, legal aid, judges		89.7%
Politicians, law makers & policy analysts		87.8%
Employers		78.2%
Media e.g. radio, TV, newspapers, magazines		78.2%
Cultural & other community groups		77.6%
Churches & other faith-based groups		76.3%
Education services e.g. Early Childhood Education (ECE), primary & secondary schools, tertiary institutions & training providers		75.6%
Social marketing & social media		75.0%
Work colleagues		71.2%
Sports & social clubs		68.6%
All of the above		64.1%

You told us that the system is not working to keep women safe - 1/3 of you said it definitely doesn't keep women safe and another 1/3 said it probably doesn't keep women safe. Only 5 women felt the system does keep women safe (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Overall, do you think the current system keeps women safe and supports them to rebuild their lives? (n=156)



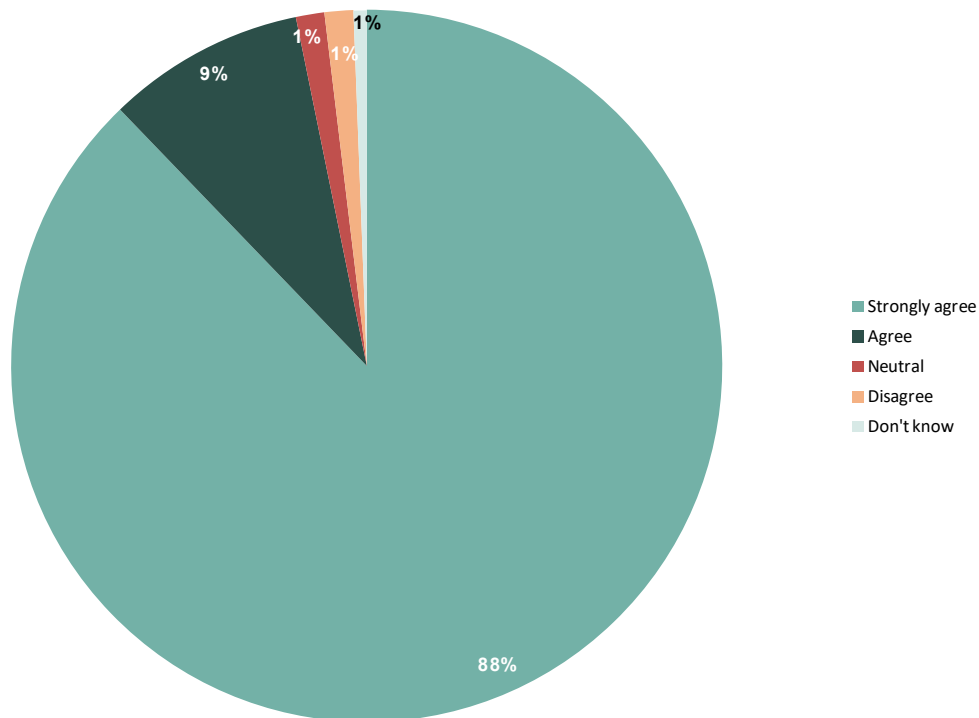
We asked whether you think the people who currently respond to survivors have a good understanding of your needs and what will keep you safe. **The majority of you told us that the level of understanding of those working in the system is variable:**

- 23% of you said that 'most people' you have dealt with have had limited or no understanding,

- Half of you said you have experienced both good and bad in terms of the workers' level of understanding.
- Only 3% of you said that everyone you have dealt with in the 'system' had an excellent understanding of your needs and what will keep you safe.

An overwhelming majority of you felt that women's voices should be listened to when planning implementing and evaluating the system (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: How strongly do you agree that the voices of survivors should be listened to by those planning, implementing and evaluating the system? (n=156)





















Most of you (77%) also want to see an independent body that women can report complaints about the system to.

SURVEYS

Most of you indicated that you would be or might be interested in participating in ongoing, confidential surveys run by TBC to help inform improvement of the system. Nearly half of you indicated that you would always respond to a survey if the topic was right and a quarter of you indicated you would be happy to complete monthly surveys. The areas that you want us to prioritise for future surveys, by order of preference, are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Which of the following parts of the system are the most important for us to examine in future surveys? (n=156)

The justice system e.g. Family Court, District Court, Family Violence Court		52.6%
Protection orders e.g. Police enforcement of these		50.0%
Support services for survivors		44.9%
Police response		42.3%
Counselling services		37.2%
Custody & access e.g. Family Court, supervision services		35.3%
Mental health services		32.1%
Legal services		25.0%
Physical safety		24.4%
Housing services		23.7%
Child, Youth & Family (CYF)		21.2%
Work & Income		19.2%
Kaupapa Māori services		10.3%
Health & forensic services		9.6%
Immigration services		8.3%
Accessibility/Disability services		7.1%
Don't know/No preference		5.1%
Employers		4.5%

INFORMATION

Most of you said you want information on the TBC website about law and policy changes, news and media articles and other resources (accessible for hearing and sight-impaired).

You also gave us lots of ideas about what we should include:

- Many of you wrote about wanting a way to connect with other women who have also experienced violence and abuse to support each other, share resources, and buddy each other.
- Many of you want information to help you make sense of your experience and where to get support – what is abuse, who can I talk to, what services are available, who are reliable and safe services/lawyers/workers who won't judge me etc.
- How to navigate Family Court/legal system processes etc.
- How to prepare to leave the abusive relationship.
- Success stories from other women.
- Advice or resources on how to use technology safely.

SAFETY

Most of you who have experienced violence and abuse reported that you would feel comfortable/safe sharing your experiences with TBC. However, many of you also told us that you are worried about your safety if you do that. The main areas of concern that came through were:

- Fear that other members of TBC who might work in the system could read your feedback and this could impact badly on you in areas such as Family Court.

We can assure you that nothing you share in a survey would ever be shared with other members of the Collective. All findings will be generalised and your identity will never be revealed in any way.

— It would be hard to share your individual experiences as it might trigger past trauma feelings, you don't feel comfortable writing, you don't really understand the abuse yet or it happened a long time ago.

TBC will not be asking you to share intimate details of what happened to you. We primarily want to focus on improving the way the system responds to you and all women in New Zealand. Therefore, we are planning to collect information by sending our members surveys which are about a particular topic. You won't be asked to write down your story but you may be asked to tick certain possible answers to our specific questions - like you did in Survey One. There will be boxes for you to write more comprehensive answers if you want to, however this is not a requirement.

TERMINOLOGY

Some of you pointed out that you don't feel like 'survivors' and we may need to think about our terminology for the future.

It is a difficult balance to find a way to refer to women who have experienced violence and abuse; some of us feel like survivors, some of us feel like victims and others of us have not yet really made sense of our experience as abusive yet. We hope that our terminology can be part of an ongoing discussion with you and we would like to include questions about our terminology in our next survey.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Many of you indicated that you want to help other women and you see TBC as a potential way you could share information and resources to achieve this goal.

We will be working with tech security specialists to identify how we could enable you to do this in a safe way before setting up something of this nature. Safety for you all is our priority. We will update you about this via the website and/or our Facebook page.

ACTIVISM

Many of you told us that you want TBC to take up an activist role to help challenge the system, promote a survivor view in media and help educate the wider public about issues impacting on women who have experienced violence and abuse.

We are committed to ensuring that survivor voices are heard. We will make comment in the media and will share our releases and updates with you on our Facebook page and website in order to avoid emailing too often – so please check our pages regularly. We will provide links for you to share with your networks if you want to.

Next steps

Thank you so much for participating in our first survey. We value and appreciate your ideas and input. We will post the findings from this survey on our website and Facebook page over the next week. We are planning the official launch for TBC, in the next few weeks. We will keep you updated on developments and dates via our website and on our Facebook page:

— www.backbone.org.nz

— [Facebook](#)

Based on your feedback we will be designing our second survey on one topic related to the system response. Before we do Survey Two we want to get more women registered with TBC to ensure as many women as possible can have their views heard. Please feel free to share this document with as many other women as you can and encourage them to visit our website and to register with TBC so they too can keep posted on our plans and can participate in Survey Two when we release it.

Please email info@backbone.org.nz if you would like any more information.