SCARS

SAVING CHILDREN AND REVEALING SECRETS

BERMUDA

SCARS Bermuda: Community Study on Child Sexual Abuse

Summary of community survey findings

August 2026

This report aims to provide an updated understanding of child sexual abuse in Bermuda

Purpose

SCARS' **community survey** (1,010 adults) examined the prevalence and effects of child sexual abuse (CSA) in Bermuda, as well as SCARS' impact on prevention and awareness. This survey found that **close to one in three adults in Bermuda disclosed that they had been sexually abused as children,** underscoring the critical need for continued action.

These findings are critical for **continuing to align SCARS' work** to Bermuda's specific context and meet the needs of survivors, with the aim of preventing CSA, raising awareness of this crime, and advocating for better outcomes for survivors.

Statistical note

For Bermuda's population size, a sample of 382 respondents is considered sufficient to achieve a 95% confidence level and a ±5% margin of error. With 1,010 responses, this survey exceeds this benchmark.

Participants were recruited through SCARS' existing email list of trainees, as well as through press releases to local news outlets and posts on SCARS' social media. Subject to the representativeness of respondents relative to the wider population, these results can be considered statistically robust.

Definitions

In this report, **child sexual abuse** (CSA) refers to any sexual activity, behaviour, or exploitation involving a child by an adult, or by another child in a position of power or with a significant age or developmental difference. This includes both **physical and non-physical** acts, such as sexual contact, exposure to sexual content, coercion into sexualised behaviour, or the creation or distribution of sexual images. CSA may **not always be recognised by the child** at the time.

▶ This report uses the term **"survivors"** to refer to **individuals with lived experience of CSA.** Results indicate that **two-thirds (68%)** of respondents with lived experience prefer the term "survivors" rather than "victims". This terminology is used here to raise awareness of survivors' preference and keep their insights at the forefront of the narrative.

Close to one in three adults in Bermuda disclosed that they had been sexually abused as children

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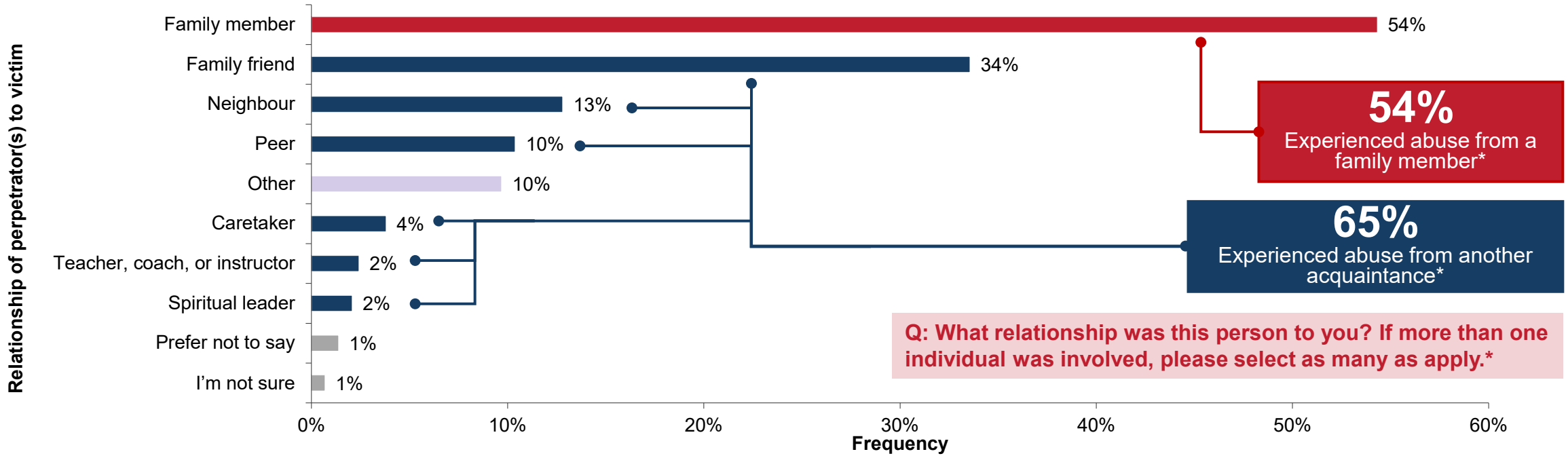
1,010	29%	8.6 years	94%	42%
Total number of respondents to the survey	Reported lived experience of CSA	Average age of first experiencing CSA	Of perpetrators were known to survivors	Experienced abuse from someone under the age of 18



***Note:** The percentages in the graph do not add to 100% as many survivors experienced abuse from more than one person. The statement "54% experienced abuse from a family member" indicates that 54% of survivors reported experiencing at least one instance of CSA from a family member.*

Confusion, guilt, and being told to keep it a secret were key barriers to disclosure

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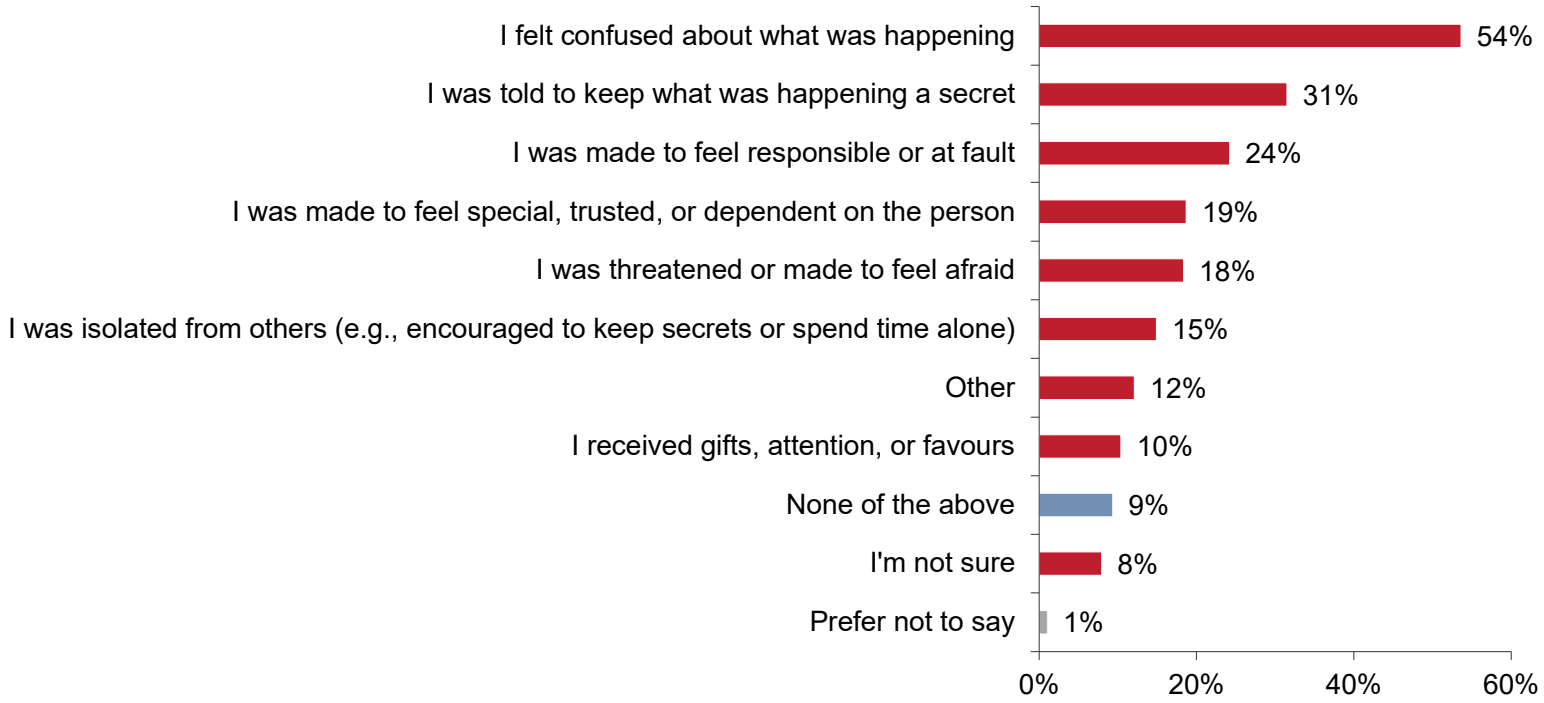
▶ **Over half** of survivors (54%) **felt confused** about their experience, and 31% were told by perpetrators to **keep their experience a secret**. Just under a **quarter** (24%) were made to feel **at fault**.



Q: At the time, were there factors that made it difficult to understand or speak about what was happening to you? Please select any that apply.

54%
Reported feeling confused about their experience

31%
Were told to keep their experience a secret

More than half of survivors report difficulty with self-worth, and over a third have experienced depression

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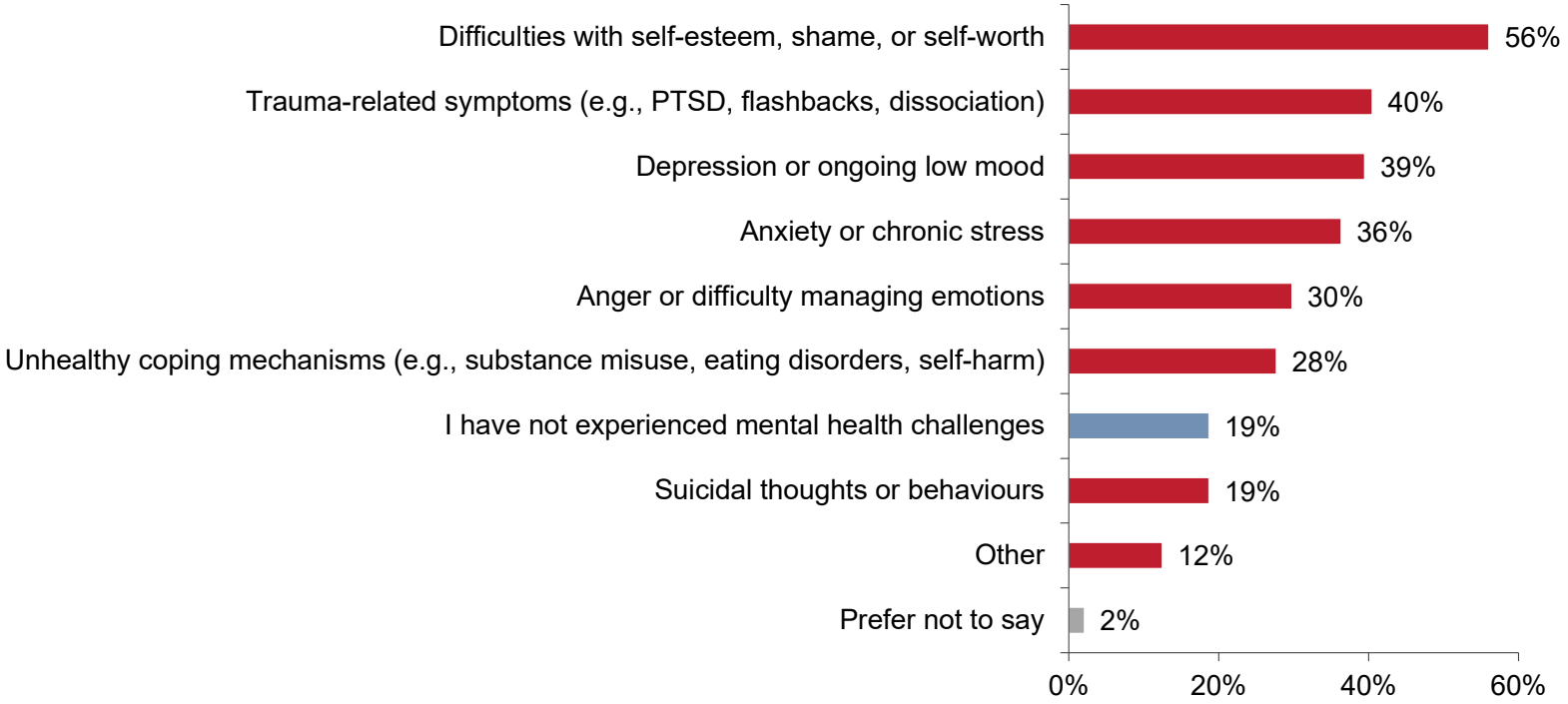
▶ **Fifty-six percent** of survivors have experienced difficulties with **self-esteem and shame**. Over one third report **trauma-related symptoms** (40%), **depression** (39%), and **anxiety** (36%), while 19% experienced **suicidal thoughts or behaviours**.



Q: As a result of your experience of abuse, do you currently experience, or have you previously experienced any of the below mental health challenges? Please select all that apply.

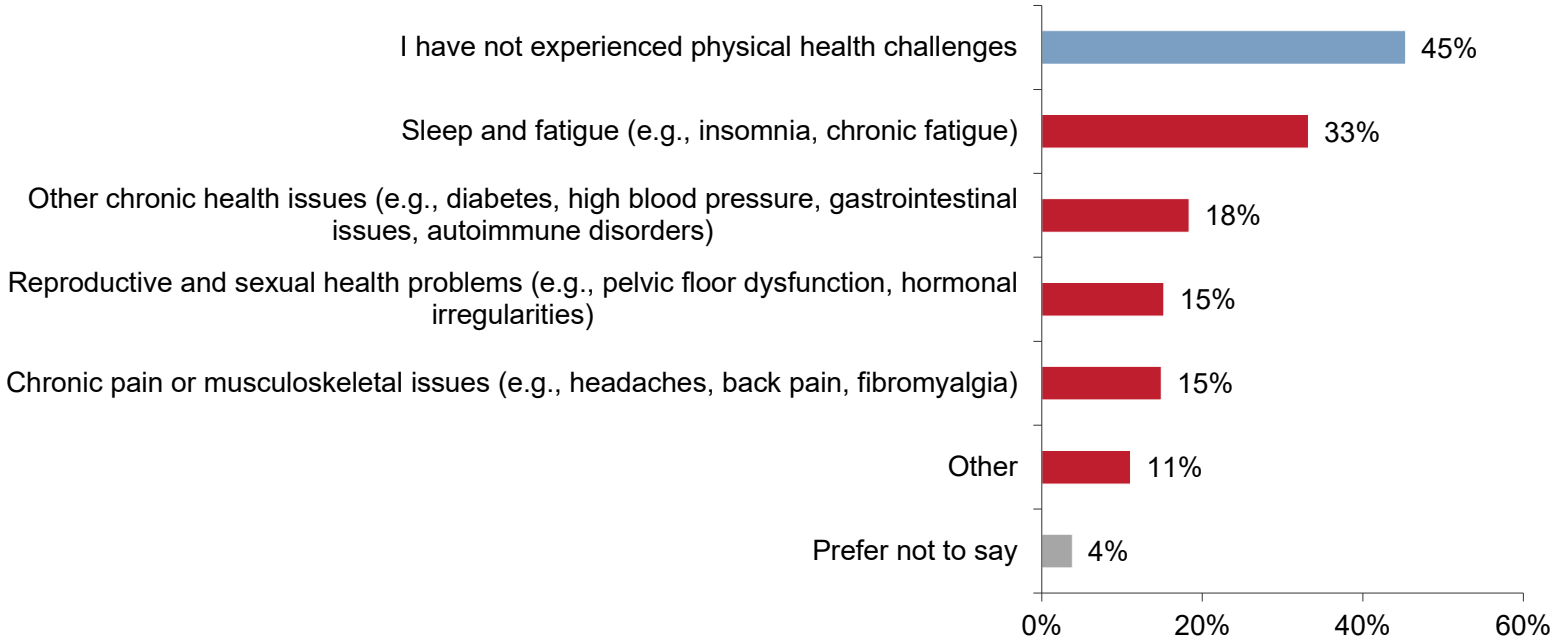
79%
Reported experiencing mental health challenges as a result of their experience

56%
Reported experiencing difficulties with self-esteem and shame

40%
Reported experiencing trauma-related symptoms

A third of survivors have experienced sleep difficulties, as well as other chronic health issues

▶ **Just under half** of survivors (45%) have **not experienced physical health challenges** as a result of their experience. However, half of respondents' free-text "other" answers (equating to 5.5% of the total population of survivors surveyed) clarified that they had experienced physical health challenges, but were unsure whether they were related to CSA. **One third** (33%) reported issues with **sleep and fatigue**.



Q: As a result of your experience of abuse, do you currently experience, or have you previously experienced any of the below physical health challenges? Please select all that apply.

51%
Reported experiencing physical health challenges as a result of their experience

33%
Reported experiencing sleep and fatigue challenges

Half of survivors report difficulty trusting others, forming relationships, or being intimate with others

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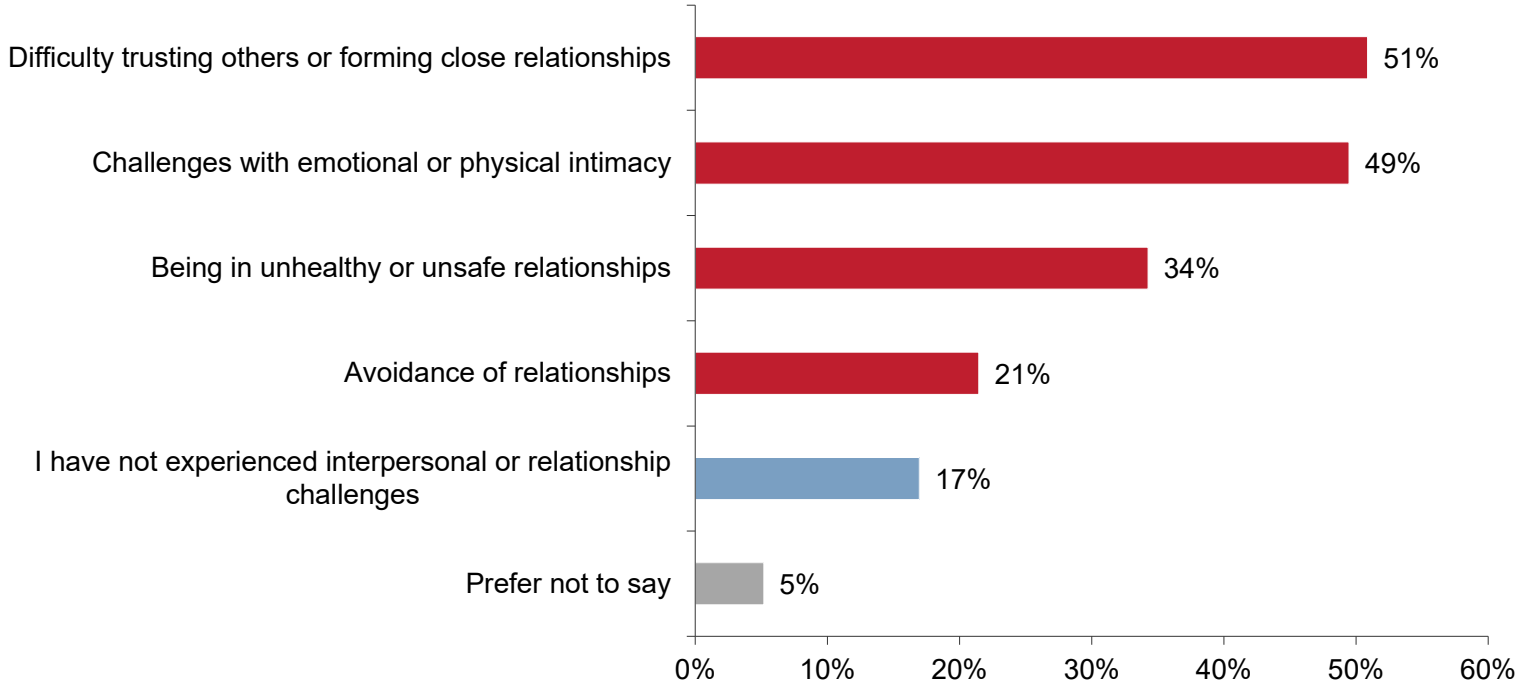
▶ **Fifty-one percent** of survivors have experienced **challenges with trust and forming close relationships**. **Forty-nine percent** also report challenges with emotional or physical intimacy.



Q: As a result of your experience of abuse, do you currently experience, or have you previously experienced any of the below interpersonal or relationship challenges? Please select all that apply.

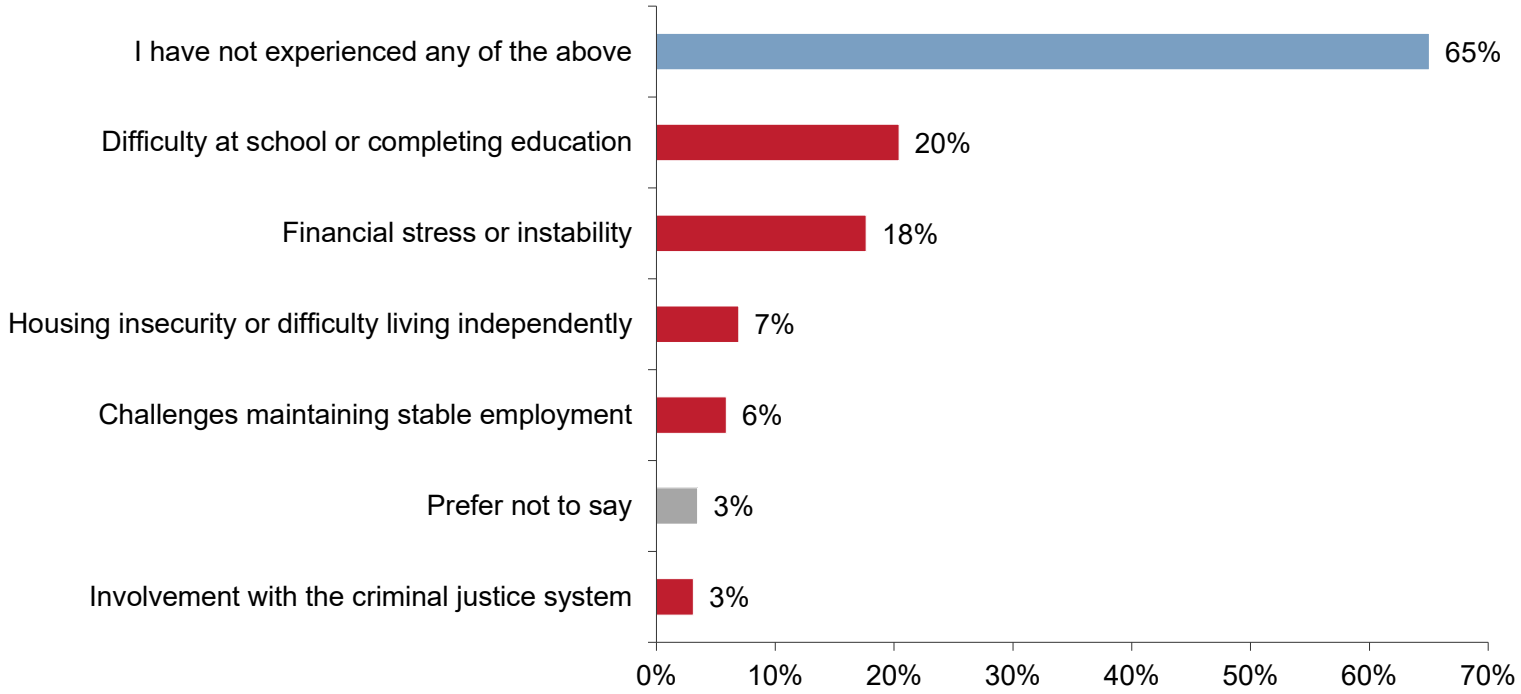
78%
Reported experiencing interpersonal or relationship difficulties as a result of their experience

51%
Reported experiencing challenges with trust and forming close relationships

49%
Reported experiencing challenges with emotional and physical intimacy

A smaller number of survivors also report difficulties at school, and financial stress as adults

▶ **Most survivors** (65%) **did not report** experiencing other life-course challenges as listed below. Most commonly, survivors report **difficulties with education (20%).**



Q: As a result of your experience of abuse, do you currently experience, or have you previously experienced, any of the below? Please select all that apply.

31%
Reported experiencing other life course challenges

20%
Reported experiencing difficulties in school or education

Survivors face high rates of mental and physical health challenges, but few receive support

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Survivors report several consequent health problems following CSA:

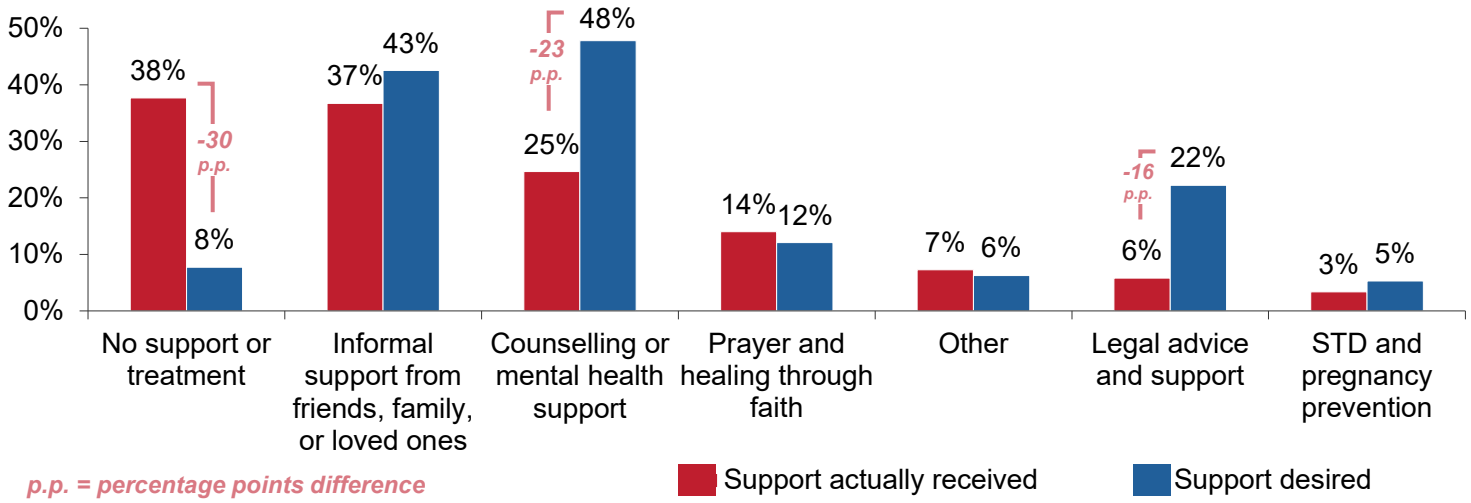
79%
Report mental health difficulties

78%
Report interpersonal and relationship difficulties

51%
Report physical health problems

92%
Desired support

38%
Received no support



Q: When you disclosed, what support or treatment did you receive, if any? Please select as many as apply.

Q: What type of support would you have liked to receive? Please select as many as apply.

Reporting and conviction were uncommon among respondents with lived experience

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72% disclosure rate ▶ **13%** reporting rate ▶ **4.5%** conviction rate

Of the 289 survivors who were surveyed… ▶ **207 disclosed their experience of abuse…** ▶ **37 subsequently reported their abuse…** ▶ **And 13 eventually saw a conviction.**

SCARS trainees were more confident recognising and responding to CSA than non-trainees

+14 percentage points
Trainee confidence in recognising CSA

Compared with non-trainees, trainees reported **14 percentage points** higher confidence in **recognising CSA**.

+17 percentage points
Trainee confidence in responding to CSA

Compared with non-trainees, trainees reported **17 percentage points** higher confidence in **responding to CSA.**

Note: *Respondents in the "no training" group (n=109) had not attended SCARS' training or workshops, but had engaged with SCARS in another way – for instance, viewing their posts on social media or listening to their radio programming. Comparisons between training attendees (n=894) and individuals with no awareness of SCARS was not possible given that over 99% of the survey sample reported being aware of SCARS already.*

Trainee group is statistically more likely to report being "very" or "somewhat" confident in recognising CSA (p < 0.001) and responding appropriately to CSA (p < 0.001).

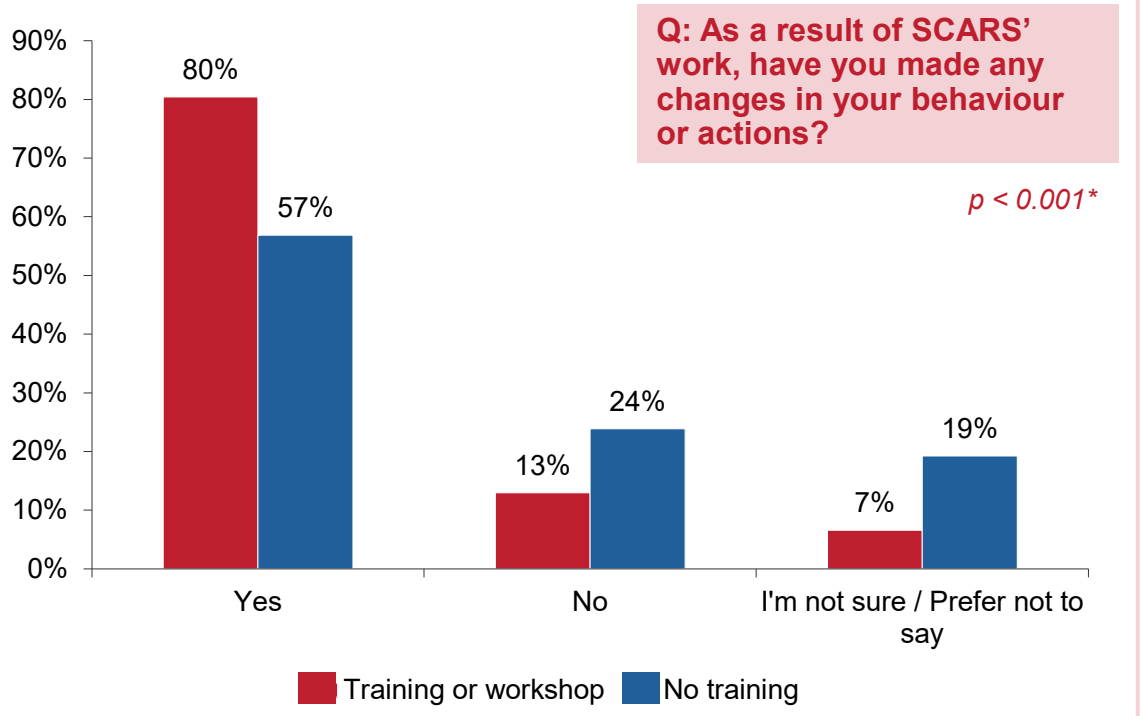
SCARS trainees were also more likely to change their behaviour and report suspected CSA

80%
Behaviour change as a result of training

Four out of five trainees (80%) reported **changing their behaviour or policies** as a result of receiving SCARS training.

+4 percentage points
Trainee rate of reporting suspected CSA

Compared with non-trainees, trainees were more likely to have **reported a CSA concern** (21% vs 18%).



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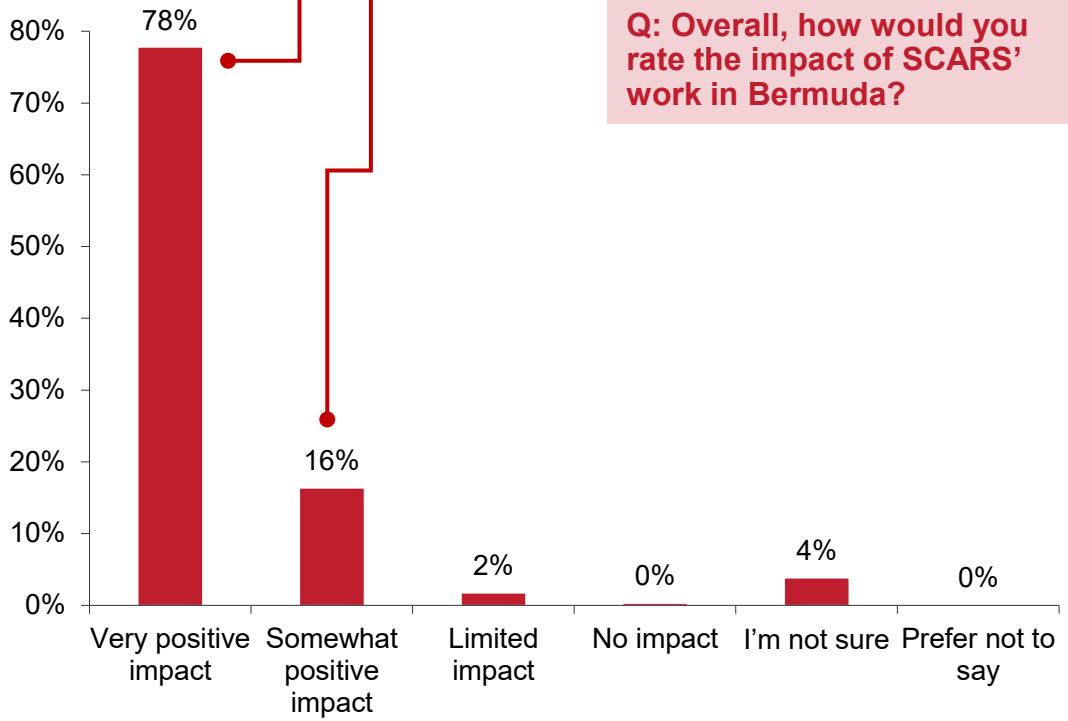
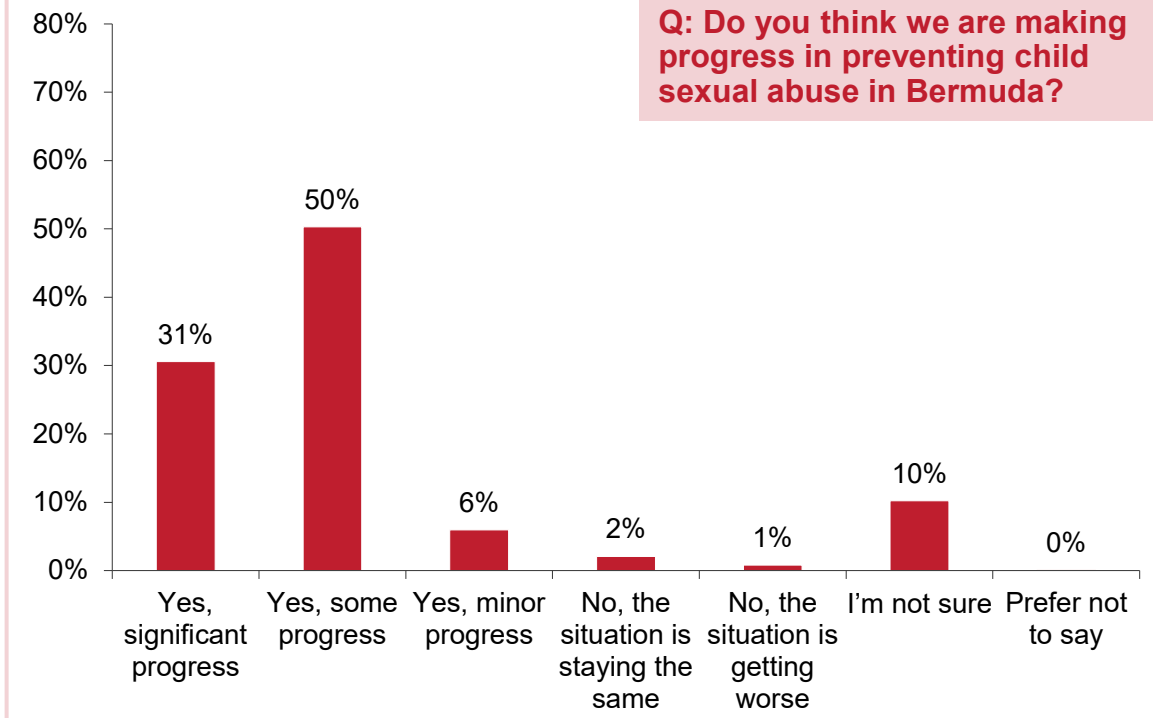
***Trainee group is statistically more likely to report behavioural change as a result of SCARS' work (p < 0.001)**

Respondents report positive opinions of SCARS and their impact on prevention

94%
Feel SCARS' impact has been "very" or "somewhat" positive

31%
Have seen "significant" progress in prevention





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Contact us

Questions, comments, or feedback? We'd love to hear from you!

info@scars.bm

www.scarsbermuda.com

@scarsbermuda on Instagram

Note: *For a population the size of Bermuda's, a sample of approximately 382 respondents is generally sufficient to achieve a 95% confidence level with a margin of error of ±5%, assuming a random and representative sample. With 1,010 completed responses, the survey substantially exceeds this benchmark. However, results should be interpreted in light of the survey methodology and respondent profile, including the higher proportion of female respondents. Subject to these considerations, the sample size provides a strong basis for analysis and interpretation to support SCARS' future work in this important area.*