

# The Rapha Project

A study on domestic violence and the Church in Quebec

**Part I: Analysis of Rapha survey to Québécois Christians**

Presented by Christian Direction  
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DIRECTION CHRÉTIENNE



Initiative Québécoise Chrétienne  
Contre la Violence Conjugale

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**CAB:** Community Advisory Board

**CREO:** Community Research Ethics Office

**CBPR:** Community-Based Participatory Research

### **Risk factors/protective factors**

A risk factor is an element that increases the probability of developing a disease or suffering a trauma. At the same time, a protective factor can diminish one's chances of suffering trauma or of creating negative psycho-social elements in a person's life. Protective factors are characteristics or conditions that act as risk moderators, i.e. they reduce the negative impacts associated with risk factors and help young people to cope better with their situation. In the sphere of domestic violence, risk or protective factors can include socio-economic background, region of residence, social and family network, family history, access to social services and self-help services.

### **Domestic violence**

Domestic violence occurs within the context of a current or past love relationship. It can occur in any type of intimate relationship, regardless of duration, including married or civil union relationships, common-law relationships or any other intimate relationship between people of the same or opposite sex. This type of violence can occur at any age, and often results in an imbalance of power within the relationship. Domestic violence mainly affects women, regardless of their social status, culture or income. To control the victim, the abuser uses multiple strategies, such as insulting, threatening or intimidating her. Domestic violence also includes acts of violence against the victim's loved ones, property or even pets. It can also be directed at the victim's new partner.<sup>1</sup>

\*We can also talk about abusive relationships, although in Quebec, we more frequently use the term “conjugal violence” translated as domestic violence, especially in the case of romantic or partner relationships.

### **Cycle of violence (or the violence wheel)**

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<sup>1</sup>“Qu'est-ce que la violence conjugale ?”, Éducaloi, 2023. (<https://educaloi.qc.ca/capsules/la-violence-conjugale/>) [consulted on November 9, 2023].

This cycle is often described in terms of three phases: crisis/aggression, remission and tension. Violence and control are present in each phase of the cycle, but take on different faces. One might think that violent behaviour is only present at the moment of crisis, because that's when it's most obvious, most "striking". On the contrary, psychological violence is very intense at the time of remission (manipulation, gaslighting, lies, false promises, etc.), and coercive control is very present in the tension phase (micro-regulation of daily life, rules of behaviour, depriving or diminishing freedoms, etc.). Each phase contributes to maintaining and reinforcing the hold, and the victim never really gets a break from domestic violence<sup>2</sup>.

### **Experiences or episodes of violence**

It is possible to experience episodes of violence in a relationship between intimate partners that are part of a cycle of violence or that are experienced in an isolated or punctual way. A person may experience these episodes and not consider themselves a victim or survivor of domestic violence. In all cases an intervention, in the form of psychological services or legal aid, is desirable and even recommended.

### **Intimate partner violence**

Many sources in academic literature use this term, which applies freely to any romantic relationship, regardless of the couple's legal or marital status. This term is different from that of family violence (see definition). The forms of violence and the dynamics of the cycle of violence are the same as for the term domestic violence. It should be noted that SOS Violence Conjugale, one Quebec's primary reference centres for victims, now uses intimate partner violence, conjugal violence and domestic violence interchangeably, but they prioritise intimate partner violence (IPV).

### **Family violence**

Family-based violence is defined as a form of abuse, mistreatment or neglect suffered by a child or adult at the hands of a family member or a person with whom he or she associates.<sup>3</sup>

### **Survivors and/or victims**

A survivor is anyone who has experienced violence at the hands of their partner. She is usually no longer in the cycle of violence, but situations vary from person to person. A victim, in general, is someone who has experienced violence or is experiencing violence in a current relationship. Often, a person doesn't choose or doesn't want to identify themselves as a victim, for fear of being stigmatised or labelled, or they simply don't identify with the experience of

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<sup>2</sup> "Crise, rémission, tension: le cycle de la violence", SOS Violence Conjugale (<https://sosviolenceconjugale.ca/fr/outils/sos-infos/crise-remission-tension-le-cycle-de-la-violence>) [consulted on November 9, 2023].

<sup>3</sup> "La violence familiale", Gouvernement du Canada, March 7, 2022. (<https://www.justice.gc.ca/fra/jp-cj/vf-fv/index.html>) [consulted on November 9, 2023].

being a victim. In the Rapha survey, we often used the terms “living with violence” or “I have an experience of violence” instead of the word victim.

### **Abuser or predator**

An abuser is a person who uses violence in its various forms to control or dominate his or her partner. The abuser generally uses a variety of means to maintain his or her hold on the victim, and will intentionally draw his or her partner into the cycle of violence. In the Rapha survey, we often used the terms “person who used violence or abuse” or “perpetrator or author of violence”.

### **Various forms of domestic violence**

#### **Physical Abuse**

“Physical abuse, including assault, is the intentional use of force against a person without that person’s consent. It can cause physical pain or injury that may last a long time. Physical abuse includes:

- pushing or shoving
- hitting, slapping or kicking
- pinching or punching
- strangling or choking
- stabbing or cutting
- shooting
- throwing objects at someone
- burning
- holding someone down for someone else to assault
- locking someone in a room or tying them down
- killing someone.” (Government of Canada)

#### **Sexual Abuse**

“Sexual abuse of an adult can include:

- sexual touching or sexual activity without consent
- continued sexual contact when asked to stop
- forcing someone to commit unsafe or humiliating sexual acts

All sexual contact with anyone without consent is a crime. This includes sexual touching or forcing sexual activity on a spouse, a common law partner or a dating partner. Even when married, a spouse cannot be forced to have sexual contact.” (Government of Canada)

#### **Verbal Abuse**

“Verbal violence is used to intimidate, humiliate or control a person or a group of people. [...] Like psychological violence, verbal violence can be difficult to recognize, because many people minimise and ignore it (telling themselves that it is none of their business). Here are some indicators that can help to identify verbal violence:

1. sarcasm:
  - complimenting someone while intending to convey the opposite
2. insults:
  - ‘You’re a real drag on the team!’
  - ‘How do you manage to stay alive when you’re such an idiot?’
  - ‘Hey refugee, go back where you came from!’
3. degrading or humiliating remarks:
  - ‘With cleavage like that, it’s no wonder you got promoted!’
  - ‘We’ve never seen anyone as incompetent as you are. The boss should fire you!’
4. shouting or giving orders:
  - ‘I never asked you for your opinion, so just shut up!’
  - ‘If you don’t want to be called stupid, stop saying such stupid things!’”  
(Gouvernement du Québec, web)

### **Emotional/Psychological Abuse**

“Emotional abuse happens when a person uses words or actions to control, frighten or isolate someone or take away their self-respect. Emotional abuse is sometimes called psychological abuse. It can include:

- threats, put downs, name calling or insults
- constant yelling or criticism
- controlling or keeping someone from seeing friends or family
- making fun of preventing someone from practising their faith or religion
- destroying belongings, hurting pets or threatening to do so
- bullying: intimidation or humiliation (including on the Internet).” (Government of Canada, web)

“Psychological violence is generally used to gain or maintain control over someone. There is no respect, and consent is obtained in an unacceptable manner. The common thread in all strategies that rely on psychological violence is that one person acts in an abusive way toward another person.” (Quebec Government)

### **Financial/Economic Abuse**

“Financial abuse happens when someone uses money or property to control or exploit someone else. It can involve:

- taking someone's money or property without permission
- withholding or limiting money to control someone
- pressuring someone to sign documents
- forcing someone to sell things or change a will.” (Government of Canada)

“Economic violence is the least understood form of violence, even though it is rampant. A person who is subjected to economic violence loses their financial independence, even if they work outside the home and earn a good salary.

Economic violence can occur between people who are equally wealthy or poor, just as it can between people with unequal incomes.

A few indicators that may reveal the presence of economic violence include:

- imposition of financial control
- vigilant monitoring of a budget
- withholding or removal of identification cards
- forced financial dependence” (Gouvernement du Québec)

“When the abuser forbids his partner to work or, on the contrary, forces her to work beyond her strength in order to benefit from a better family income, it is economic violence. The abuser may also control his partner's choice of work or interfere with her education. Extreme restrictions on spending for food, clothing, recreation, or denial of access to financial resources are also ways in which the abuser may use economic abuse.” (Regroupement des maisons pour femmes victimes de violence)

## **Spiritual Abuse**

“Within relationships, spiritual abuse happens when one person misrepresents scripture in order to control and create dependence on the other person. This can happen between husband and wife and can happen in churches where church leaders encourage the victim of abuse to remain in an abusive situation or be ostracised by their community.” (Restored UK)

SOS Violence Conjugale uses the term “spiritual violence<sup>4</sup>” and defines it as, “Attacking the victim's deepest values or the meaning they give to their life; imposing beliefs or preventing the victim from practising her religion; challenging or undermining the victim’s efforts to reach her dreams or ambitions.”

## **Coercion and Control**

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<sup>4</sup> The Rapha team proposes its own definition of spiritual abuse in the Part 2 Report of the Rapha study. This is a form of intimate partner violence that is very little studied, and not very documented. We believe that spiritual abuse needs to be studied more in order to be understood and prevented.



When abuse is present in a relationship, it is often the result of the use of various forms of coercion and control of the person experiencing abuse. Control and coercion can take many forms, but can include restricting your movements, not allowing you to see certain family members or friends, having to report your activities and whereabouts frequently, etc.

### **Post-separation violence**

Contrary to what we might hope, separation is not always a guarantee of safety for victims of intimate partner violence (IPV), at least in the short term. Victims may be subjected to post-separation violence and continue to suffer severe consequences on themselves and their children. Post-separation violence has different goals: to convince the victim to return, to continue to exert control, to prevent the victim from exercising her rights, to exact revenge for what the abuser sees as a final provocation... or simply to “win” and have the last word.

(SOS Violence Conjugale)

## **Part 1 – Introduction**

### **1. Introduction**

#### **a. The Rapha Project and its objectives**

The Rapha Project stems from a desire to better document and understand the problem of domestic violence as experienced by victims who come from church-going families or who affiliate with Christian faith communities in Quebec. The objective of this study is to initiate a dialogue with Church leaders and the larger Christian community in Quebec on the topic of domestic violence. We want to do this by sharing knowledge and documenting the experiences of domestic violence survivors within church contexts in the hopes of developing pastoral practices and equipping the Church to better respond to the victims of domestic violence, who are women for the most part. To carry out this mandate, the research team surveyed 503 adults (331 women and 172 men) from various social, cultural and denominational backgrounds who identify with the Christian faith and, for the most part, attend a local church or community. As a first phase in the study, we wanted to evaluate general attitudes, understandings and perceptions of domestic violence within Church-going Christians in Quebec in regards to the issues of intimate partner violence. Therefore, respondents of the survey are not necessarily victims, but many share a strong interest in the issue.

This part of the survey was carried out using a web questionnaire available in five languages (French, English, Arabic, Chinese, and Spanish) and distributed via these same groups. The second phase of this research is primarily qualitative, through several interviews with survivors. The synthesis of these interviews will be presented later in 2023.

The Hebrew word Rapha means “healing”. Our efforts align with this meaning, i.e., we wish to participate, in concert with leaders, in the creation of protected, judgement-free environments (safe spaces) to welcome and accompany the victims present in our communities. The simple fact of being able to start a conversation about such an important reality in the Church is to begin to heal.

#### **b. Context: domestic violence in Quebec and in Canada**

As lockdowns and sanitary measures began taking place during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, activists and specialists across the world expressed their concern as to how these restrictions would impact the landscape of intimate partner violence. Studies quickly revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic led to an increase in cases of domestic violence on a global scale, and Canada and Quebec<sup>5</sup> were no exception. The United Nations Women (UN Women) organisation declared intimate partner violence the “shadow pandemic” and stated, “Essential services, such as shelters or hotlines have reached capacity.” Furthermore, UN Women drew attention to the fact that domestic violence was an omnipresent problem before 2020, and that, “Globally, even before the COVID-19 pandemic began, one in three women experienced physical or sexual violence mostly by an intimate partner<sup>6</sup>”.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the crisis of domestic violence that ensued turned the world’s attention onto a problem that has existed for a very long time, and has haunted women across the planet. This shadow pandemic is responsible for the deaths of countless women. In Quebec alone, 23 women were murdered in 2020 due to intimate partner violence.

According to the Canadian Women’s Foundation, one woman or girl is violently killed every 48 hours, mostly at the hands of a man<sup>7</sup>. In 2021, 173 women were killed in Canada by a partner, which was a 26% rise from 2019<sup>8</sup>. In 2022 at least 13 women and six children were killed in Quebec following a history of domestic violence. The cycle of abuse and violence is not only dangerous, it is deadly.

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<sup>5</sup>Kofman, Y. B., & Garfin, D. R. (2020). “Home is not always a haven: The domestic violence crisis amid the COVID-19 pandemic”, *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 12(S1), S199–S201. <https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0000866>.

See also:

“Violence conjugale subie par les femmes en temps de pandémie: une enquête qui en dit long”, Bulletin d’information de la santé publique de l’Estrie, # 64, May 2022. [[https://www.santeestrie.qc.ca/clients/SanteEstrie/Publications/Sante-publique/Bulletin-vision/2022/64\\_Vision\\_sante\\_publique\\_violence\\_conjugale.pdf](https://www.santeestrie.qc.ca/clients/SanteEstrie/Publications/Sante-publique/Bulletin-vision/2022/64_Vision_sante_publique_violence_conjugale.pdf)] (consulted on October 30, 2023).

<sup>6</sup> “La pandémie fantôme: la violence contre les femmes pendant la COVID-19”, ONU FEMMES, [<https://www.unwomen.org/fr/news/in-focus/in-focus-gender-equality-in-covid-19-response/violence-against-women-during-covid-19>] (consulted on October 30, 2023).

<sup>7</sup> “La violence fondée sur les genres: les faits”, Fondation canadienne des femmes [<https://canadianwomen.org/fr/les-faits/violence/>], (consulted on October 30, 2023).

<sup>8</sup> Robertucci, Alyssia, “Femicides in Quebec: advocates want more resources, better training”, December 8, 2022, [<https://montreal.citynews.ca/2022/12/28/femicides-quebec-resources-training/>]

### c. Domestic violence and the Church

The Church does not offer immunity to the reality of domestic violence. While we do not have pre-existing data as to the prevalence of domestic violence within Christian communities in Quebec, we know that intimate partner violence and family violence do not discriminate when it comes to victims. “Any person can become a victim of family violence no matter their age, race, sex, sexual orientation, confession or social class.”<sup>9</sup> As investigative reporter Michael Lista put it, “It (domestic violence) is blind to class...and it cuts through creed<sup>10</sup>.”

The increase in testimonials of Christian survivors of domestic and gender-based violence point to its prevalence<sup>11</sup>, and there are more theological and pastoral resources being published on the topic<sup>12</sup>. The Restored UK organisation and the Fédération baptiste de la France<sup>13</sup> each created charters taking stands against domestic violence which serve to unite and mobilise their Christian members to this problem.

While many Christian circles are publishing more and more works covering the topics related to gender-based and intimate partner violence, there are only scant resources in the academic literature on domestic violence and church in Quebec. Quality studies have been undertaken in the United States, in France<sup>14</sup>, in Great Britain, and in Australia<sup>15</sup>, and through the Rave Project Canada (based out of the Maritimes)<sup>16</sup>. The Rapha Project is particularly concerned with Quebec.

The literature on faith and domestic abuse tends to fall into one of three categories: research on churchgoing survivors of domestic abuse; research on the views and roles of clergy and church leaders in responding to domestic abuse; and research on the prevalence of domestic

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<sup>9</sup> “Que sont les violences familiales?”, Nations Unies, (<https://www.un.org/fr/coronavirus/what-is-domestic-abuse>) [consulted on October 31st, 2023].

<sup>10</sup> Lista, Michael, guest commentator, “Crime Pays, If You’re A Journalist”, Canadaland, episode 890, Apple Podcasts, June 5th, 2023.

<sup>11</sup> See the testimonials of the Rave Project, <https://www.theraveproject.org/stories0/>

<sup>12</sup> Consult our resource database in [www.direction.ca/rapha](http://www.direction.ca/rapha)

<sup>13</sup> “Charte violence conjugale”, Fédération d’Églises baptistes de la France, (<https://actus.feebf.com/charte-violences-conjugales/3049>) [consulted on October 31st, 2023].

<sup>14</sup> According to Murielle, “La violence conjugale dans les églises évangéliques en France: la comprendre pour agir”, Paris: L’Harmattan, 2022.

<sup>15</sup> Powell, R. & Pepper, M. (2021). *National Anglican Family Violence Research Report: Top Line Results*. NCLS Research Report. NCLS Research.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.theraveproject.org/>

abuse in the church in particular geographic regions. The Rapha Project seeks to explore all three of these categories, and in doing so emulates two studies which have particularly impacted our work: the Aune and Barnes research project on the region of Cumbria, and the National Anglican Family Violence Project (NAFVP), on Anglican churches in Australia. These two studies are the most elaborate and thorough research on the intersection of the Christian faith and domestic abuse identified in the literature.

The Rapha Study seeks to emulate the academic rigour of these projects on a larger geographic scale than the Cumbria study and with wider denominational representation than the NAFVP. It is important to note, also, that the NAFVP is focused on family violence in general, not domestic abuse between intimate partners, and therefore has a broader scope than the Rapha study. Our study fills a gap in the academic literature as there is little research focused on the Canadian context, and no research was found that studied the intersection of the Christian faith and domestic abuse in the Quebec context.

## **2. Phase 1: The survey**

### **a. The objectives of the survey and its research questions**

In the context of the first phase of the Rapha project study, we turned our attention to Quebec's Christian communities (churches, parishes, congregations, groups or communities with a formal or informal affiliation with the Christian faith). The aim was to learn more about domestic violence and Christians in Quebec.

Phase 1 asks the following questions:

- 1) What are the beliefs and attitudes of Québécois Christians in regards to domestic violence?
- 2) Is domestic violence an issue experienced by Christians within the Church in Quebec?
- 3) Do victims choose to disclose or not their experiences of domestic violence to their Christian faith communities?
- 4) How do churches, parishes or communities of faith respond to domestic violence?

The main objective of the survey was to draw a general portrait of the problem, if any, of domestic violence in the Church in Quebec. Based on the findings of the survey, our mandate was to (1) continue to deepen research, (2) listen to the voices of survivors, and (3) pursue honest reflections on domestic violence in Christian circles, so that they are better equipped to respond to this issue.

### **b. What is Community-Based Participatory Research?**

This research study uses the Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) model, which “refers to a methodological and epistemological approach to applied community projects in which researchers and community members collaborate as equals in the research process<sup>17</sup>”. In CBPR projects, researchers work with community members to design and implement the study as well as disseminate the results. The approach is rooted in the belief that community members hold expert knowledge of their lived experiences and therefore that they can guide researchers as to the most pressing issues in their communities, the reality on the ground, and how best to approach these issues. CBPR requires “at a minimum [...] that community members define the problems to be assessed, provide consultation on the cultural and social dimensions of the study population, and serve in an advisory capacity over the entire project<sup>18</sup>”.

There are two reasons why this method is selected by researchers: pragmatic, and reasons of equity and social justice. We selected this method for both of these reasons. Pragmatically, CBPR allows for access to the expert knowledge of community members, who “possess intimate knowledge of the causes and consequences of the problems that afflict them<sup>19</sup>” and access to this knowledge yields better research outcomes that are more likely to benefit the community. This acknowledgement and inclusion of community expertise also “has the effect of diminishing the hierarchical relationship between university-trained researchers and the communities with whom they work<sup>20</sup>”. Due to community involvement throughout the process, CBPR is also concerned with balancing academic rigour with the provision of practical outcomes, merging research with

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<sup>17</sup> Duke, Michael, “Community-based participatory research”, in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, 2020, p.1.

<sup>18</sup> Idem.

<sup>19</sup> Duke, p.3.

<sup>20</sup> Duke, p.3.

community engagement, which is a strength of the method. The inclusive nature of CBPR projects can also be challenging, and “nearly all contemporary CBPR projects grapple at least implicitly with issues of power while engaging in solutions-focused projects that address community issues of interest<sup>21</sup>”. Another challenge of inclusive CBPR research is that extensive consultation with multiple partners makes these projects time-consuming, and subsequently more expensive than other approaches. In considering the challenges and opportunities of CBPR research, our team decided that when researching a subject as delicate, taboo, and hidden as domestic abuse in the church in Quebec, a participatory approach such as CBPR was essential.

Furthermore, Christian Direction<sup>22</sup>, the organisation that implemented the Rapha Project, is particularly well placed to facilitate a community-based research project, because of its ecumenical identity and its expertise in community engagement and in collaborative projects. In existence since 1964, Christian Direction is a team of urban mission practitioners dedicated to the mission of God in Montreal and in Quebec. We work with local congregations and social services towards the social and spiritual transformation in the lives of youth, families and their communities. Our fieldwork in local community engagement allots us a unique perspective on the intersections of Christian faith, practical theology and the social issues in our cities and our province. Christian Direction received an invitation from a concerned survivor in 2019 to help lead and facilitate this study. In this sense, it was truly a community-led project.

When we considered the manner in which community members would participate in the research, we had to first define which communities would be affected by the project. We decided that we would need to include diverse religious members from different Christian traditions – both faith leaders and the laity – as well as survivors of domestic violence. These communities were included through different ways throughout the project, namely through representation on our advisory committee, as external readers, individual consultations or as members of our survivors network.

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<sup>21</sup> Duke, p.6.

<sup>22</sup> [www.direction.ca](http://www.direction.ca)

We assured ongoing community participation through several mechanisms. First of all, we created an advisory committee of practitioners, clergy and researchers whose expertise is domestic violence. This committee met on a monthly basis throughout the entirety of the project. During the meetings, the Rapha team would give project updates and would call on the committee to make recommendations or take decisions. The committee consulted on the name of the project, the logo and branding of the project, the language and terminology used, the survey content, the outreach strategy, the consent form for interviews, the recruitment strategy for interviews, the safety and confidentiality policies and the ethics certification process with the Community Research Ethics Office (CREO).

The advisory committee also looked at preliminary results from the research and they crafted analysis, insight and recommendations that the Rapha team worked into the reports. In this sense, the advisory committee acted as the CAB (community advisory board). A CAB is essential to community-based participatory research projects and they play a major role in their success, providing accountability for all aspects of the process, including the framework, samplings, recruitment and the communication of the results<sup>23</sup>.

The members of our advisory committee were selected to assure an ecumenical representation, gender, cultural and linguistic diversity and they acted as vectors of knowledge or as access points to marginalised communities. Members of the committee were protestant and catholic, anglophone and francophone and although the members were mostly women, we had one man. There was a sociologist, social workers, a nurse, one sexual health intervention worker, one pastoral agent and coordinators of womens' shelters.

### **c. Methodology for the creation of the survey**

To determine the perspectives, attitudes and experiences of church-going Christians in Quebec, a quantitative survey was conducted. The survey was drafted with the help of a drafting committee comprising the project's study manager, the lead researcher, a public health academic and a statistician. The content of the survey was strongly inspired by the work of Aune and Barnes,

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<sup>23</sup> Duke, p.1.



whose survey in the Cumbria region of the UK served as an example for the work we were seeking to achieve in this phase of the research<sup>24</sup>.

The first draft of the survey was then presented to the advisory committee for approval. Following their approval, the survey was sent to eight secondary readers outside the organisation. Care was taken to ensure that the age, gender and race of the secondary readers differed to ensure a diverse representation in the comments. Following comments and modifications by secondary readers, approval by the advisory committee and ethics approval by the Community Research Ethics Office, the final English survey was then translated into French. The survey was made available in English and French on Survey Monkey in autumn 2022, with Spanish, Chinese and Arabic versions available in 2023. The survey includes 45 questions, an opportunity to add comments to the researchers, and open-ended questions for adding qualitative details. The survey was closed on June 20th, 2023 and the results were analysed by our statistics committee using Stata software<sup>25</sup>.

#### **d. Who was the survey addressed to?**

The survey was open to anyone aged 18 and over, residing in Quebec and identified as Christian. Although a person who had experienced domestic violence would certainly have been more likely to respond to the survey, the promotional tools clearly indicated that a respondent **did not need to have experienced this problem to lend her voice to the survey**. A respondent did not need to be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident.

Likewise, the Rapha team went to great lengths to promote the survey to a diversity of faith-based, regional, generational and cultural communities. The survey was translated into five languages (French, English, Arabic, Chinese, and Spanish) and distributed online and in print.

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<sup>24</sup>We received permission from Dr. Barnes to base our survey on the one used in her research.

<sup>25</sup> Statistical analysis by Laurianne Debanné and Bruno Désorcy.

Rapha's team had the support of several church families, dioceses, parishes and local communities in promoting the survey. In particular, Radio Ville-Marie<sup>26</sup>, the Assembly of Quebec Catholic Bishops<sup>27</sup>, the Pub Socratique podcast<sup>28</sup> and the *Anglican Journal*<sup>29</sup> all provided visibility for the survey. Christian Direction also called on its network of collaborators, partners and mailing list in Quebec to obtain as ambitious a response as possible.

We collected 503 valid responses for the survey. By comparison, Aune and Barnes' 2018 study garnered 438 valid responses<sup>30</sup>, the University of Chester's 2021 Turn the Tide study garnered 192 valid responses<sup>31</sup>, and Selon's field survey garnered 635 responses<sup>32</sup>.

#### **e. Degree of confidence**

For this study, we gathered the opinions of five hundred and three (n=503) Quebec residents on forty-two questions related to the issue of conjugal and domestic violence. This questionnaire survey was carried out among respondents from households where membership of a Christian religious community remains an important marker of identity. Respondents were Catholics, Protestants or Evangelicals.

With this number of respondents, we can estimate that the results of this survey reflect the opinion of the population of Christian denominations in Quebec with a margin of error of four percentage points at a confidence level of 95%.

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<sup>26</sup> Foi et Turbulences, Radio Ville-Marie, radio show on March 9, 2023

(<https://presence-info.ca/article/balado/foi-et-turbulences/radio-femmes-minoritaires-femmes-en-eglise-violence-conjugale/>).

<sup>27</sup> Event of December 6th, 2022, "Temps de prière pour les femmes victimes de violence", online event.

<sup>28</sup> Pub Socratique, Convergence Québec, Apple podcasts, (<https://player.captivate.fm/episode/08a15e53-bce0-4bf5-8f64-b1346e186010>), March 11th, 2022.

<sup>29</sup> Simunic, Emily, "Rapha Quebec Research Project", Anglican Montreal, December 2022, p.10.

<sup>30</sup> Aune, Dr. Kristen and Barnes, Dr.Rebecca, p.5.

<sup>31</sup> Turn the Tide: Developing understanding and effective responses to domestic abuse in Christian faith communities.

(<https://www1.chester.ac.uk/news/research-highlights-need-church-leaders-support-domestic-abuse-surveys>) (consulted on October 10th, 2023)

<sup>32</sup> According to Murielle, "La violence conjugale dans les églises évangéliques en France: la comprendre pour agir", Paris: L'Harmattan, 2022.

More concretely, this means that depending on the number of people who completed the questionnaire, we can achieve a high degree of representation in a much wider community, while taking into account specific parameters. For example, when asked “Do you think that domestic violence is a widespread phenomenon in Quebec churches?”, 43% (42.8%) of respondents agreed with this statement. If we wish to transpose this proportion to the population scale, i.e., proceed with statistical inference with a high degree of confidence, we can affirm that the answer to this question would obtain the same percentage, i.e., 43%, with a variation of plus four points, or less than four points.

In summary, if we were to ask the same question to the 5,182,895 people (see note below) who identify with Christianity in Quebec in 2021, between 39% and 47% of them (i.e.  $43\% + 4 = 47\%$ , and  $43\% - 4 = 39\%$ ), would also agree to the same question, to a degree of accuracy of 95%. When poll results are reported in the media, the same 95% degree of precision is most often expressed in terms of frequency, i.e. 19 times out of 20 (which is the statistical standard used by polling firms).

#### **f. Ethics**

The Rapha Project is supported by the Community Research Ethics Office (CREO) in Ontario. This organisation, run mainly by volunteers from the academic and government research communities, supports non-profit and community organisations conducting field studies and surveys. CREO’s mandate can be found below:

Research is increasingly being conducted by not-for-profit organisations, governments, independent consultants, community organisations, community researchers, and others. Unlike those institutions which have a Memorandum of Agreement with any of the three federal research agencies, community based researchers may not have access to institutional Research Ethics Boards. They are, however, still concerned with maintaining ethical research standards which help to ensure that no harm comes to those who choose to participate in their research.

It is this need to maintain ethical research standards in community-based research that led to the establishment of the Community Research Ethics Office (CREO). We are here to assist researchers and their sponsors in understanding the principles and requirements outlined in EPTC 2 (2018)<sup>33</sup>. We do that through conducting ethical reviews of research proposals, engaging in consultations around ethical issues that arise as researchers prepare to undertake their work, and through delivering educational workshops for researchers and organisations which undertake research in support of their programs and services<sup>34</sup>.

Rapha's research team met all the conditions required to obtain letters of approval from CREO's ethics committee for Phase 1 of the project. Items analysed by CREO included the questionnaire survey, the rationale for initiating such a process, promotional tools and procedures for protecting anonymity.

Respondents' participation was entirely anonymous and unpaid. The purpose and nature of the survey were clearly stipulated. Definitions of domestic violence and telephone numbers for self-help resources were posted on the survey, and a quick exit button was included in the online survey.

## **Part 2 – Survey results**

### **1. Who were the respondents?**

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<sup>33</sup> *L'Énoncé de politique des trois conseils: Éthique de la recherche avec des êtres humains* (EPTC or la Politique) is a common policy from the three federal research organisations: le Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada (CRSH), le Conseil de recherches en sciences naturelles et en génie du Canada (CRSNG) et les Instituts de recherche en santé du Canada (IRSC), aussi appelés "les Organismes".

La Politique exprime l'engagement constant des organismes envers la population canadienne à promouvoir la conduite éthique de la recherche avec des êtres humains. Elle se fonde en partie sur des normes éthiques reconnues à l'échelle internationale, qui peuvent toutes dans une certaine mesure aider à guider la façon dont les chercheurs canadiens effectuent de la recherche avec des êtres humains, au Canada ou à l'étranger.

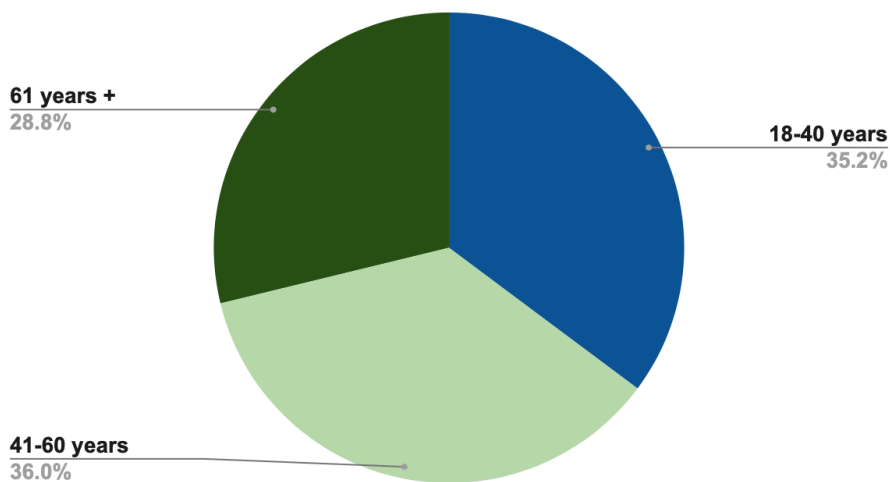
Source: Gouvernement du Canada, "Énoncé de politique des trois conseils: Éthique de la recherche avec des êtres humains – EPTC 2 (2018)", [[https://ethics.gc.ca/fra/policy-politique\\_tcps2-epc2\\_2018.html](https://ethics.gc.ca/fra/policy-politique_tcps2-epc2_2018.html)], consulted on October 2nd, 2023.

<sup>34</sup> "Ethics and community research", [<http://www.communityresearchethics.com/background/>], consulted on October 2nd, 2023.

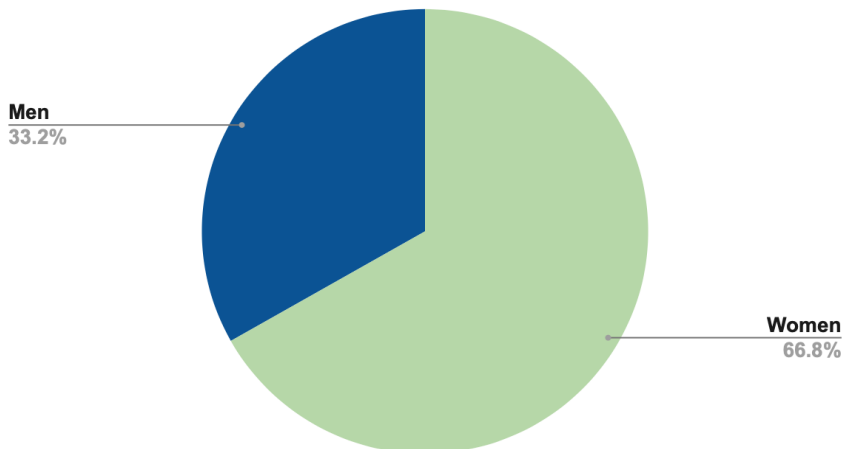
### a. Age and sex

We received 503 eligible responses. Anyone identifying themselves as a Christian and living in Quebec was eligible to complete the survey. This means that not all respondents will have experienced domestic violence. The three age groups under which Rapha survey respondents were associated correspond to the demographic profile of the Quebec population at the 2021 census. The sample was compared using a common statistical method (Student's t-test) with the reference population (N\*) and a standardised degree of precision ( $p=0.05$ ). In addition, the Rapha sample was also compared according to respondents' gender and the "violence experienced" variable, analysed according to a binary distribution (1=YES; 2=NO). These sub-group comparisons also demonstrated a high degree of cohesion with the population data. Within the sample that responded to the RAPHA survey (the results of the present questionnaire), there were 331 women (67%) and 171 men (33%).

#### Age distribution



### Sex of respondents



### b. Origin, culture and language

According to the Institut de la statistique du Québec, “The proportion of visible minorities in the Quebec population aged 15 to 64 has more than doubled in 20 years, rising from around 7% in 2001 to almost 18% in 2021<sup>35</sup>.” Twenty-six percent of respondents in the Rapha study are born outside of Canada. Twenty-three percent are part of a visible minority or racialized community. This same people group range at about 20% of the Canadian population in general<sup>36</sup>. Amongst respondents, we have about 44% anglophones, which is a larger proportion than the anglophone population of Quebec which is about 14% (85% of Quebec’s is francophone and rates of bilingualism are 44.5%)<sup>37</sup>.

In Quebec, domestic violence is an issue that requires particular attention to cultural and social factors. However, sensitivity to these factors cannot be used as a justification for resorting to violence in a conflict between “intimate partners” or “immediate family members”. The

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<sup>35</sup> “Principales caractéristiques des personnes issues de minorités visibles au Québec”, Institut de la statistique du Québec, July 18, 2023 (<https://statistique.quebec.ca/fr/produit/publication/portrait-minorites-visibles-marche-travail-quebec-2021-aperçu#>) [consulted on October 23, 2023].

<sup>36</sup> “Qui sont les immigrants?”, Ici Radio Canada, September 1st, 2022, (<https://ici.radio-canada.ca/rci/fr/nouvelle/1853659/immigration-canada-identite-integration>) [consulted on November 2nd, 2023].

<sup>37</sup> “Statistiques sur les langues officielles du Canada”, Patrimoine canadien, Gouvernement of Canada, November 26, 2019, (<https://www.canada.ca/fr/patrimoine-canadien/services/langues-officielles-bilinguisme/publications/statistique.html>) [consulted on October 23, 2023].

Canadian Criminal Code punishes all acts of violence against others, regardless of context (see note below<sup>38</sup>). In other words, violence committed in private life (couple relationships; households; family relationships; or relationships between friends) is subject to the same penalties as violence perpetrated in the public space (in church; in the workplace; in schools; in businesses or on the street).

It is important to note that in the Rapha survey, there was no significant correlation between experiences of domestic violence and belonging to a visible minority or racialized group. In other words, there is no over-representation of racialized people among respondents who identify themselves as victims of domestic violence. In the Rapha survey, cultural background, linguistic or ethnic is not an identification factor.

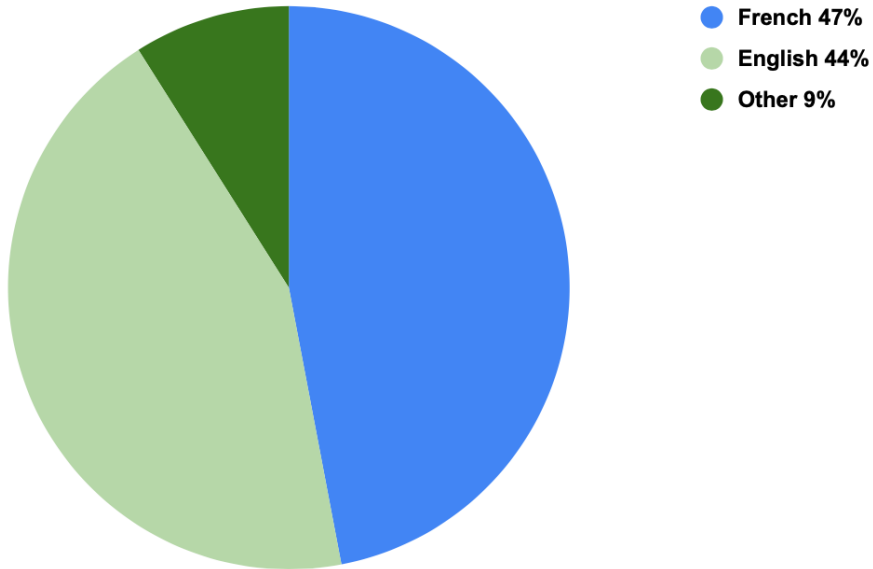
However, cultural and social variables become predominant factors when it comes to supporting victims of domestic violence. This is why it is possible to measure the effectiveness of an intervention in terms of the results it produces, based on cultural parameters in the efforts deployed by a public health service or a community non-profit. For example, taking into account values based on social factors, customs relating to family life, interpersonal dynamics and so on.

The pie charts below represent just three aspects of cultural diversity, whereas culture and linguistics have so many intersecting elements. For example, in urban areas such as the Montreal region, there are several assistance programs with teams of counsellors trained to recognize the cultural and social distinctions of conjugal and domestic violence. Once again, it remains essential for the various Christian communities in Quebec to establish connections and contact with organisations dedicated to the well-being of vulnerable individuals and communities.

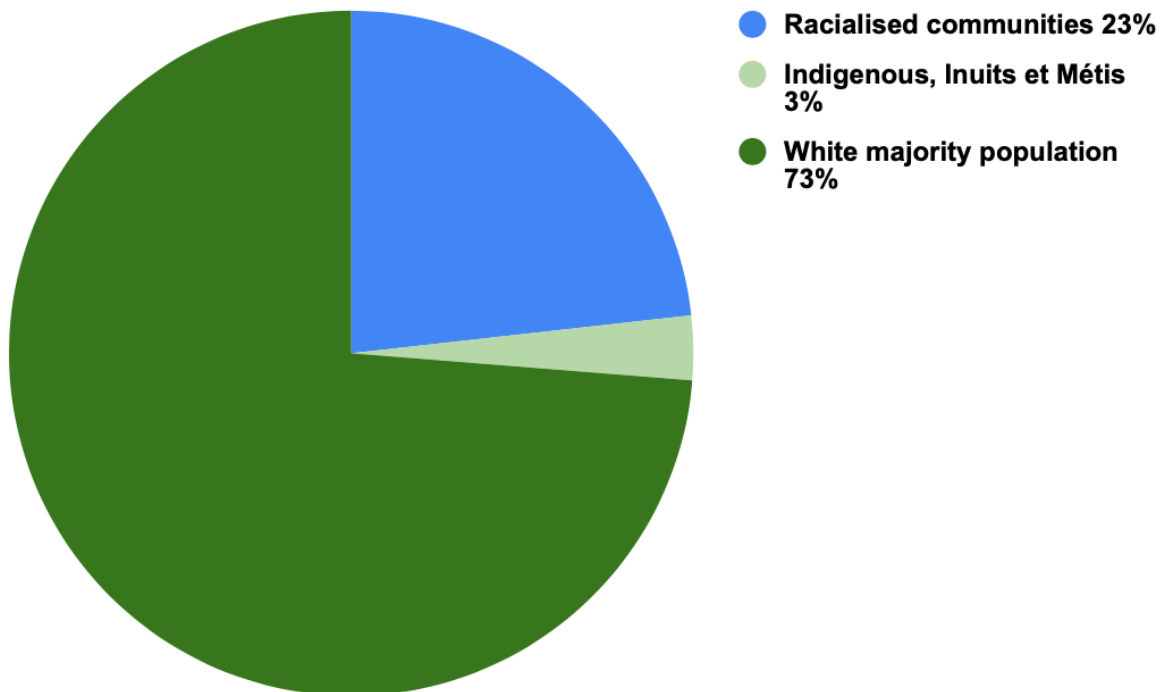
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<sup>38</sup> It is important to note that this document reflects only general guidelines or principles when it comes to intervening with victims and survivors of domestic violence. This document does not replace in any way the directives, clinical or legal (such as social services from the CLSC or police interventions) that are described in the Canadian criminal code.

## Mother tongue

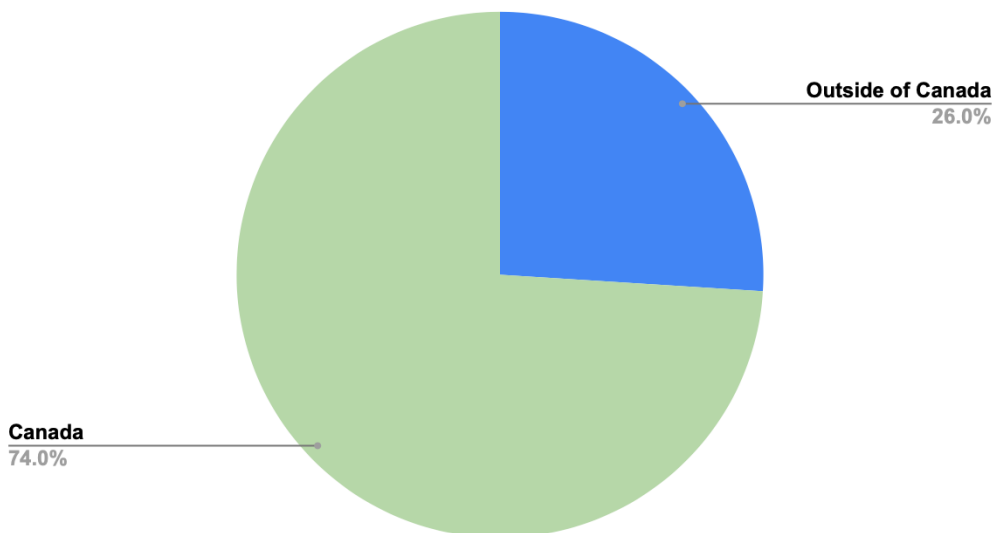


## Culture and background





## Place of birth



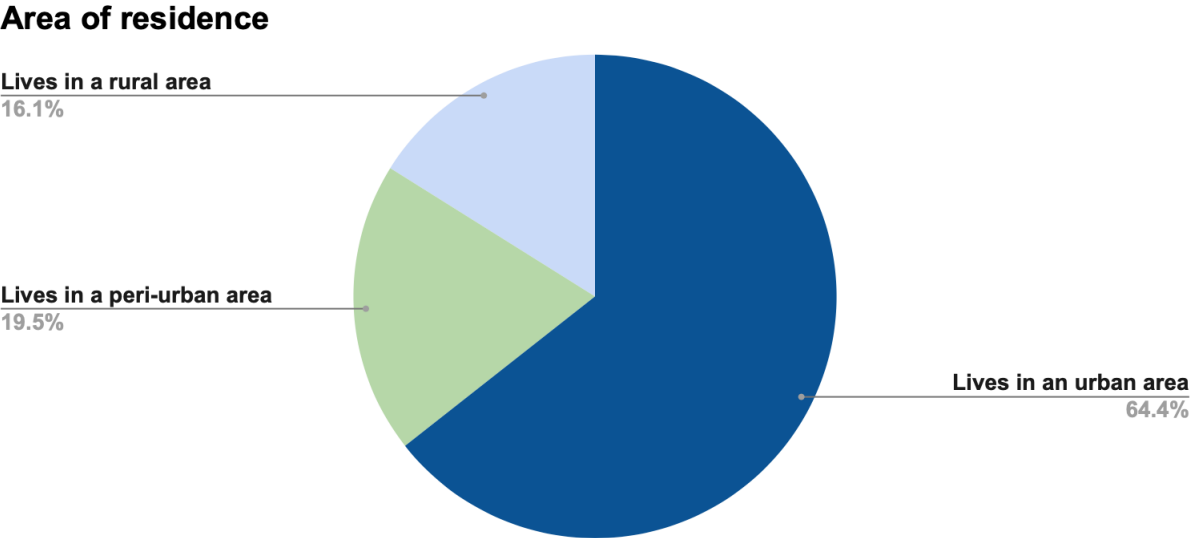
### c. Education and place of residence

These two variables, “level of education” and “place of residence”, are among the most important factors making up the different types of index that enable us to measure, in a comparative way, the state of living conditions on several socio-spatial levels at once (e.g.: a neighbourhood, a city or a region; a province, a nation; a country or a continental zone, etc.). However, analysed individually, these factors cannot shed light, in whole or in part, on the problem of domestic violence. At best, certain simple correlations can be established, but they do not explain the differences between similar cases.

In the Rapha study, the most convincing example of this difficulty lies in the comparison between respondents with identical levels of education. We’ve heard it many times: “No one is immune to domestic violence. Domestic violence can be found at any age, in any

socio-economic class, and in any cultural or religious community<sup>39</sup>.” Women with the same level of education, such as CEGEP, do not have a higher rate of victimisation than those with a university education. In the Rapha survey, this holds true. Among female victims in general in the survey, the fact of being better educated (university level 1st, 2nd and 3rd cycles) does not immediately present a protective factor.

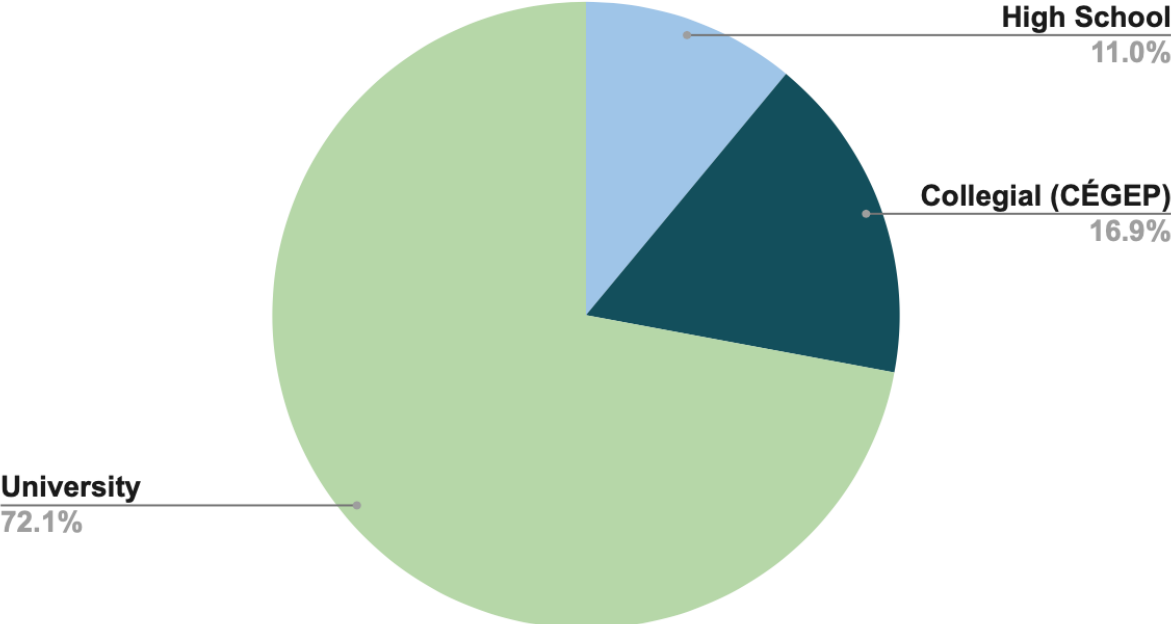
However, in asking these two questions (education and place of residence), it allows us to verify if the combined influence of these variables is a predictor pertaining to violence. For further analysis of this combined data, consult section 4.e “The social realities of victims”.



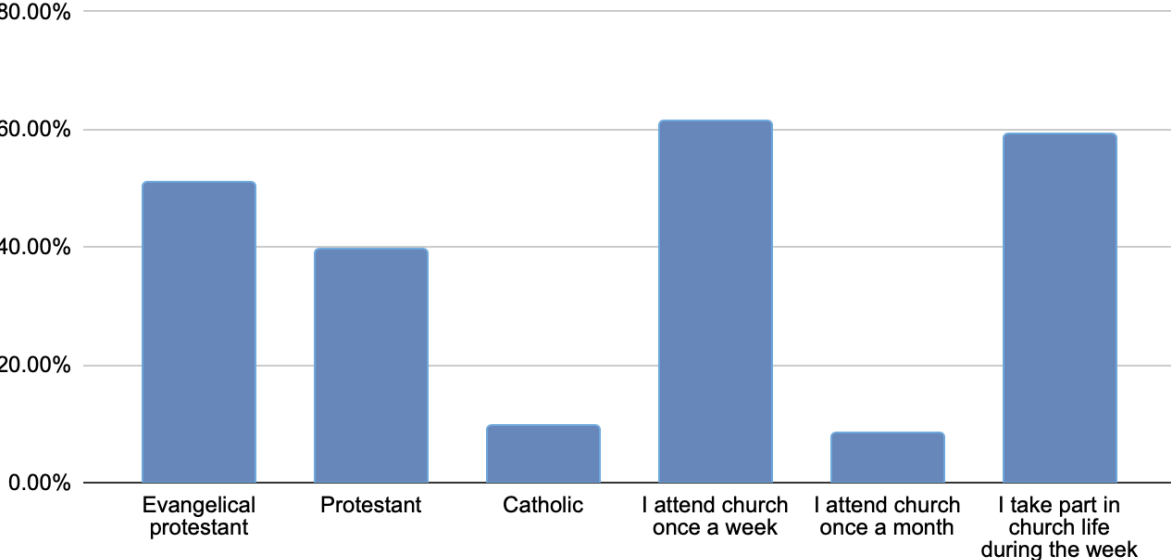
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<sup>39</sup> “Faits saillants concernant la violence conjugale”, Institut national de santé publique du Québec, October 2016 (<https://www.inspq.gc.ca/violence-conjugale/faits-saillants>) [consulted on October 23, 2023].

### Level of education



### Religious affiliation and church life



#### d. Religious affiliation and church life

Rapha survey respondents self-identified as Christians, and the majority (61%) attend a church, parish or local community once a week. Around 8% attend church once a month, and around

58% of respondents participate in church life (social groups, Bible studies, committees or the leadership counsels) during the week. We can conclude that the vast majority of respondents are people in the pews on Sundays. This reflects Rapha's promotional strategies when distributing the survey.

## **2. Attitudes and perceptions of domestic violence amongst respondents**

### **a. General understanding of the problem of domestic violence in Quebec and in Quebec's Christian communities.**

Below is a grid of responses to a series of statements in the survey in order to better understand respondents' perceptions and assessment of the problem of domestic violence. We can see that a majority of respondents believe that domestic violence is a widespread phenomenon in Quebec (64% strongly agree or agree). On the other hand, respondents seem less certain about the reality in the Church in Quebec or in their own parishes. The "unsure" responses were highest for the statements "domestic violence is a widespread phenomenon in Christian churches in Quebec" (40% were unsure) and "domestic violence represents a major challenge for the church or parish I attend" (34% unsure).

As to the statement, "I know of someone in my community of faith who was or is a victim of domestic violence", 67% of respondents know one person or several people. These results are very close to data from the Canadian Women's Foundation's 2021 survey, which reports that "approximately two-thirds (64%) of Canadians know a woman who has been physically, sexually or psychologically abused<sup>40</sup>."

Over a third of respondents self-reported experiencing domestic violence, and over two-thirds of respondents know someone in their faith community who is a victim of domestic violence. The low rate of "agree or strongly agree" responses on the issue of domestic violence in faith

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<sup>40</sup> "Un nouveau sondage révèle que peu de gens au Canada se sentent bien préparés pour soutenir une personne aux prises avec la violence fondée sur le genre", Fondation canadienne des femmes, November 5, 2021, (<https://canadianwomen.org/fr/blog/un-nouveau-sondage-revele-que-peu-de-gens-au-canada-se-sentent-bien-prepares-pour-soutenir-une-personne-aux-prises-avec-la-violence-fondée-sur-le-genre/>) [consulted on November, 2023].

communities (parish or local church) can be explained by the lack of visibility of the issue, the little attention given to it by parishes, and the still taboo nature surrounding domestic violence.

<b>Table: statements concerning the problem of domestic violence in Québec and in the Church</b>	
<b>“Domestic violence is a widespread phenomenon in Québec.”</b>	<b>Proportion (%)</b>
Strongly agree and agree	64%
Strongly disagree and disagree	5.5%
Unsure	22%
Did not answer the question	8%
<b>“Domestic violence is a widespread phenomenon in Christian churches in Quebec”</b>	
Strongly agree and agree	43%
Strongly disagree and disagree	10 %
Unsure	39.5%
Did not answer the question	8%
<b>“Domestic violence represents a significant challenge for my church or parish”</b>	
Strongly agree and agree	31%
Strongly disagree and disagree	26%
Unsure	34%
Did not answer the question	8%
<b>“I know someone in my church or parish was or is a victim of domestic violence”</b>	
Yes – Yes, several	67%
No	26%
Unsure	6.5%

**b. Christians’ desire for sensitization and education: a mandate for the Church**

To the statement, “Domestic violence issues need to be addressed publicly at church or in my parish”, and the question, “Do you think your church (parish/local community) needs to do more to raise awareness of domestic violence issues among its members?” respondents confirmed with “yes” and “strongly agree or agree”, 83% and 73% respectively.

To the statement, “My church (local community/parish) has taken steps to raise awareness of domestic violence among its members”, only 17% of respondents confirmed that this was the case. A low percentage indeed. However, questions concerning leaders’ ability to intervene appropriately in crises involving domestic violence reveal that 46% of respondents believe that their leaders can intervene adequately with police authorities in the event of a crisis, and 42% believe that their leaders are able to intervene appropriately with social services in the event of a domestic violence crisis. This demonstrates a certain confidence in church leaders, despite the fact that churches or parishes are not currently raising awareness of the issues.

We can conclude from these statements that the Christians in our sample want to address the issues of domestic violence. They want to make their faith communities aware of the problem of domestic violence, openly and publicly.

<b>Table: desires and mandates expressed</b>	
<b>Do you think your church (parish/local community) needs to do more to raise awareness of domestic violence issues among its members?</b>	
Yes	73%
<b>“Domestic violence issues need to be addressed publicly at church or in my parish.”</b>	
Strongly agree and agree	83%
<b>“My church (local community/parish) has taken steps to raise awareness of domestic violence among its members.”</b>	

Strongly agree and agree	17%
Strongly disagree or disagree	52%
Unsure	23%
No answer	8%
<b>“The leaders of my Christian community are able to intervene and collaborate appropriately with police authorities during crises involving domestic violence.”</b>	
Strongly agree and agree	45%
Strongly disagree or disagree	15%
Unsure	31%
No answer	8%
<b>“The leaders of my Christian community are able to intervene and collaborate appropriately with health and social services during crises involving domestic violence.”</b>	
Strongly agree and agree	42%
Strongly disagree or disagree	18%
Unsure	32%
No answer	8%

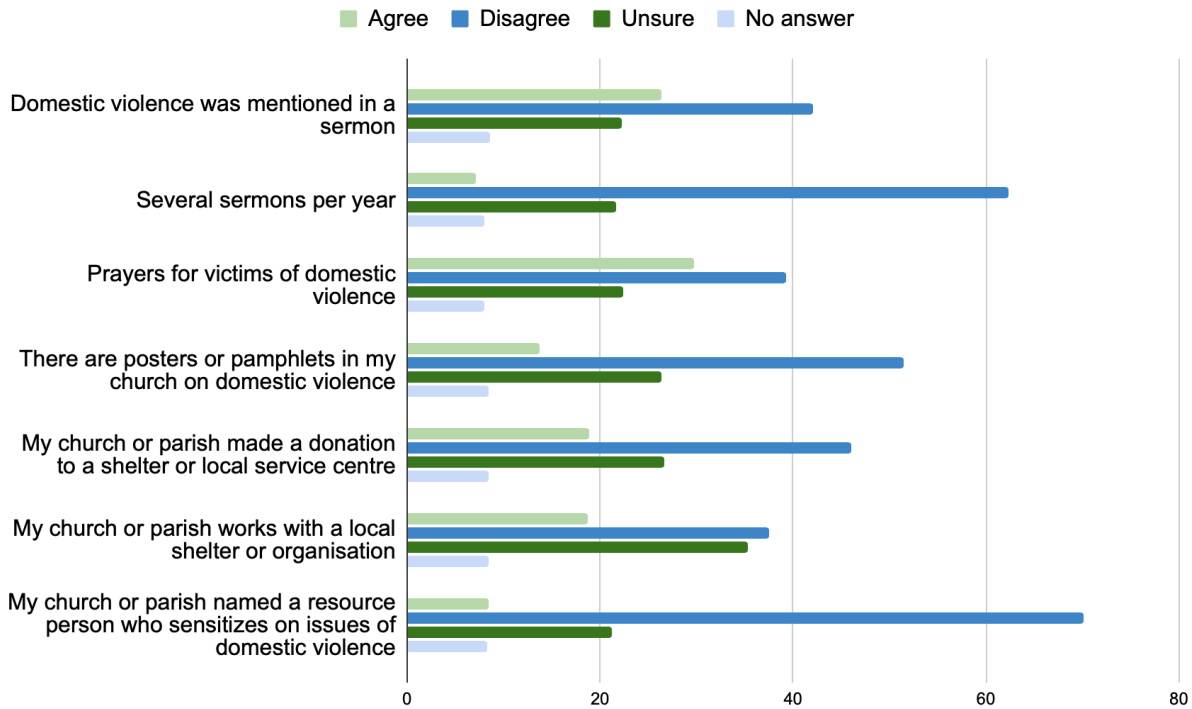
### **3. Questions on the practices and culture of churches in regards to domestic violence and its prevention**

#### **a. Practices and measures presently in place**

We asked a number of questions to find out what measures or actions have been taken by churches and parishes to prevent domestic violence or raise awareness and counter its effects. Among the most prevalent actions were “prayers for victims of domestic violence” (30% agreed that this took place in their community), and “domestic violence was mentioned in a sermon” (27% agreed that this took place once in their community). On the other hand, more structuring or sustained actions (for example, several sermons a year, posters or leaflets offering information, or a resource person appointed to the parish to raise awareness of domestic violence or accompany a victim or survivor) are much less present. In expressing their disagreement or

degree of uncertainty, the majority of respondents indicated that protection or awareness actions are lacking in their church or parish.

**What is being done in your church or parish?**

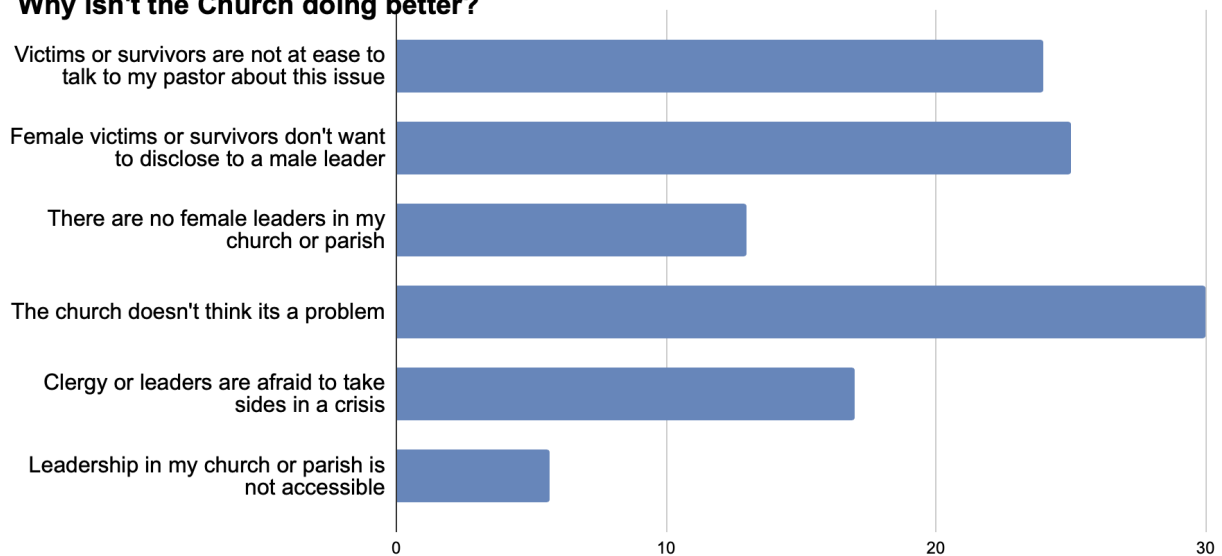


**b. Reasons as to why there are gaps in awareness-raising or prevention of domestic violence in the Church**

Respondents do not seem to have a clear idea of the reason or reasons why there is a lack of awareness or prevention of domestic violence in the Church. None of the answer choices elicited strong support from respondents. Some 30% of respondents felt that their church leaders “don't think it’s a problem”, and 25% of respondents supported the statements, “Victims/survivors don’t feel comfortable talking to my pastor about this issue” and “Women victims/survivors don’t feel comfortable disclosing to a male leader.” In contrast, only 6% of respondents believe that leaders in their local parish or church are not accessible.



### Why isn't the Church doing better?



## 4. The voices of victims

### a. Self-declared status of victims from respondents

In the Rapha survey, 37% of respondents identified themselves as victims or having been victims of domestic violence (or “occasional victims of domestic violence”). It should be noted that this is a self-selecting survey, and there was no question as to whether this experience involved a criminal offence or whether the respondent had filed a complaint with the police. In comparison, the Canadian government reports the following self-reported data:

“Overall, 44% of women who had ever been in an intimate partner relationship—or about 6.2 million women aged 15 and over—reported experiencing some kind of psychological, physical, or sexual abuse in the context of an intimate relationship in their lifetime (since the age of 15)<sup>41</sup>.”

Taking into account the various statistics raised by police authorities and field surveys in Quebec and Canada, Rapha’s researchers have no reason to believe that domestic violence is more or less prevalent among Christian communities in Quebec than elsewhere in society.

<sup>41</sup> “Fiche d’information: violence entre partenaires intimes », Government of Canada, February 7, 2022, <https://femmes-egalite-genres.canada.ca/fr/violence-fondee-sexe/violence-entre-partenaires-intimes.html>, [consulted on October 23, 2023].

<b>Table : “I consider myself a victim of domestic violence”</b>	
	<b>Consider themselves as a victim of domestic violence</b>
Total sample	37%
Women	38%
Men	41%

In the Rapha survey, 38% of women identified themselves as victims of domestic violence, and 41% of men identified themselves as victims of domestic violence. How can these figures be explained? Let’s recall the

large gender gap among respondents (n=503 total respondents, including 331 women (67%) and 171 men (33%). The survey had self-selected respondents, so a man who had experienced domestic violence might be more likely to respond, while a woman with no experience of domestic violence may nonetheless be interested by the study, as the subject touches on a woman’s issue.

The Government of Quebec, the Government of Canada and the United Nations recognize that intimate partner violence disproportionately affects women. In 2019 in Canada, of approximately 107,810 people aged 15 and over who were victims of intimate partner violence (IPV), 79% were women<sup>42</sup>. It is true, however, that men can be victims of domestic violence, and that women can perpetrate violence, in its various forms, against their partners. The Institut national de santé publique du Québec notes that “in the scientific literature, it is recognized that women can be violent towards their partners. However, even if authors agree that this type of violence exists, the phenomenon remains little known and poorly documented<sup>43</sup>”. Men account for about 20% of victims of conjugal offences in Quebec<sup>44</sup>. Some surveys suggest that the forms of

<sup>42</sup> “Fiche d’information: violence entre partenaires intimes”, Government of Canada, February 7, 2022, <https://femmes-egalite-genres.canada.ca/fr/violence-fondee-sexe/violence-entre-partenaires-intimes.html>, [consulted on October 23, 2023].

<sup>43</sup> “Faits saillants concernant la violence conjugale”, Institut national de santé publique du Québec, October 2016 (<https://www.inspq.qc.ca/violence-conjugale/faits-saillants>) [consulted on October 23, 2023].

<sup>44</sup> Ministère de la Sécurité publique (2016). *Les infractions contre la personne commises en contexte conjugal au Québec. Faits saillants 2014*. Québec: Direction de la prévention et de l’organisation policière, ministère de la Sécurité publique.

violence perpetrated against men in a conjugal context are not equivalent “in terms of severity and intensity compared to those committed by men against their spouses<sup>45</sup>”.

Given the limited amount of research carried out on the phenomenon of domestic violence experienced by men in Quebec, it is impossible for the Rapha team to undertake a more in-depth analysis of this data.

**b. Self-declared data on experiences of violence within an intimate relationship with a partner**

A person can experience violence many times over the course of his or her life, yet still not consider him or herself a victim. Police authorities and public health experts note the difficulty of self-reporting when drawing up portraits of domestic violence. In 2019, Statistics Canada found that, “Overall, the vast majority (80%) of spousal violence victims reported that the violence they experienced was not reported to the police<sup>46</sup>.” Numbers are therefore usually very conservative. This is why we felt it necessary to ask several questions to this effect: a separate question for self-declaration (see above) and then a series of questions about experiences of violence within the context of an intimate relationship. We gave definitions and examples of each form of violence beforehand. These definitions can be found in the lexicon of this report. When we calculated the total number of respondents who had experienced violence in an intimate relationship with a partner, we found that 49% had experienced at least one form of violence in their adult lives.

**Question:** Have you ever experienced any of the following forms of violence, abuse or aggression in an intimate relationship with a partner? *Even if it happened only once, check the corresponding box.*

<b>Table: “Have you experienced any of these forms of violence?”</b>	
<b>TOTAL who answered “Yes”:</b> N= 245	<b>Total in percentage =</b> 49%

Below are the forms of violence according to the

<sup>45</sup> “Faits saillants concernant la violence conjugale”, Institut national de santé publique du Québec, October 2016 (<https://www.inspq.qc.ca/violence-conjugale/faits-saillants>) [consulted on October 23, 2023].

<sup>46</sup> Conroy, Shana. “La violence conjugale au Canada, 2019”, Statistique Canada, October 6, 2021 (<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2021001/article/00016-fra.htm>) [consulted on November 7, 2023].

percentages of all respondents.

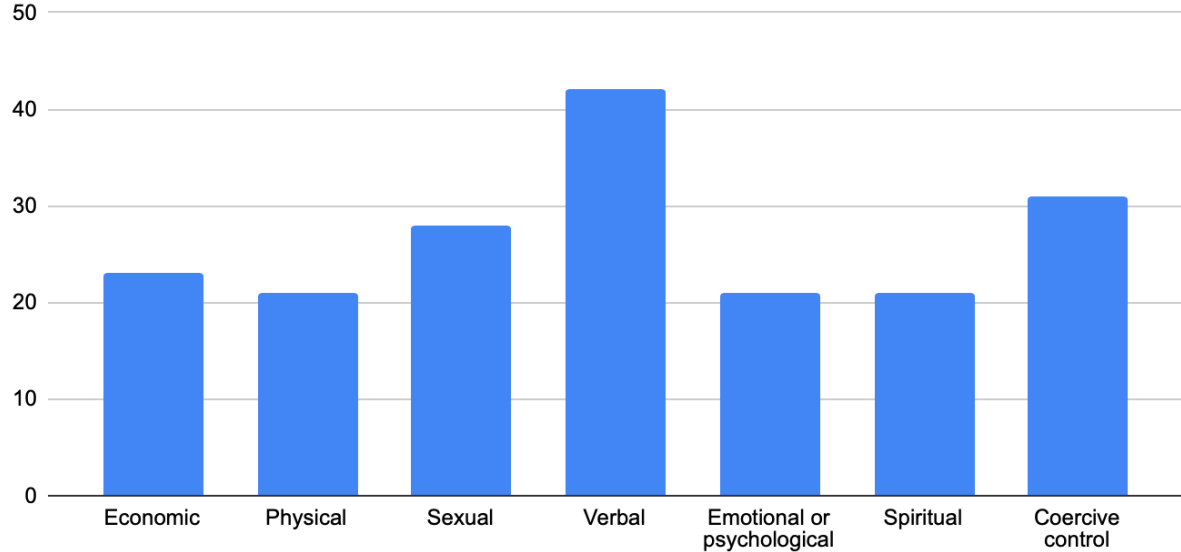
We found that the greatest forms of violence experienced were verbal (42%), coercive control (31%) and sexual (28%). It’s worth noting that the majority of experiences in each category took place in a relationship more than five years ago, although the “yes” answers in current or recent relationships (in the last five years) are still prevalent. It’s also worth noting that verbal violence, spiritual violence and violence resulting from coercive control have the highest “unsure” response rates. This indicates that the population still needs to be educated and made aware of these forms of violence.

<b>Table: forms of violence experiences</b>	
<b>Form of violence: ECONOMIC</b>	<b>Number of respondents that checked “YES”</b>
Yes, in a current relationship	n= 23
Yes in a former relationship (less than 5 years)	n= 20
Yes in a former relationship (more than 5 years)	n= 73
Unsure	n= 10
Total who answered “Yes”	n= 116
<b>Percentage out of the 503 respondents</b>	<b>23%</b>
<b>Form of violence: PHYSICAL</b>	<b>Number of respondents that checked “YES”</b>
Yes, in a current relationship	n= 14
Yes in a former relationship (less than 5 years)	n= 23
Yes in a former relationship (more than 5 years)	n= 70
Unsure	n= 10
Total who answered “Yes”	n= 107
<b>Percentage out of the 503 respondents</b>	<b>21%</b>
<b>Form of violence: SEXUAL</b>	<b>Number of respondents that checked “YES”</b>
Yes, in a current relationship	n= 49

Yes in a former relationship (less than 5 years)	n= 23
Yes in a former relationship (more than 5 years)	n= 70
Unsure	n= 28
Total who answered “Yes”	n= 142
<b>Percentage out of the 503 respondents</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>Form of violence: VERBAL</b>	<b>Number of respondents that checked “YES”</b>
Yes, in a current relationship	n= 49
Yes in a former relationship (less than 5 years)	n= 47
Yes in a former relationship (more than 5 years)	n= 117
Unsure	n= 32
Total who answered “Yes”	n=213
<b>Percentage out of the 503 respondents</b>	<b>42%</b>
<b>Form of violence: EMOTIONAL OR PSYCHOLOGICAL</b>	<b>Number of respondents that checked “YES”</b>
Yes, in a current relationship	n= 23
Yes in a former relationship (less than 5 years)	n= 20
Yes in a former relationship (more than 5 years)	n= 61
Unsure	n= 17
Total who answered “Yes”	n= 104
<b>Percentage out of the 503 respondents</b>	<b>21%</b>
<b>Form of violence: SPIRITUAL</b>	<b>Number of respondents that checked “YES”</b>
Yes, in a current relationship	n= 26
Yes in a former relationship (less than 5 years)	n= 18
Yes in a former relationship (more than 5 years)	n= 59
Unsure	n= 33
Total who answered “Yes”	n= 103

<b>Percentage out of the 503 respondents</b>	<b>20.5%</b>
<b>Form of violence: COERCIVE CONTROL</b>	<b>Number of respondents that checked “YES”</b>
Yes, in a current relationship	n= 34
Yes in a former relationship (less than 5 years)	n= 30
Yes in a former relationship (more than 5 years)	n=90
Unsure	n=32
Total who answered “Yes”	n= 154
<b>Percentage out of the 503 respondents</b>	<b>31%</b>

**Forms of violence experienced**



**c. Data on the disclosure of one’s experiences to the Church: how many people divulge and to whom?**

Approximately 49% of self-identified victims told someone in their parish or church about their experience of abuse. By comparison, in Murielle Selon’s 2022 field survey of evangelical Christians in France, 66% of female victims of domestic violence confided in a support person or pastor (or both) in their church. In the 2021 Turn the Tide study, 84% of victims of domestic violence confided in someone in their church or parish. We therefore note a difference in

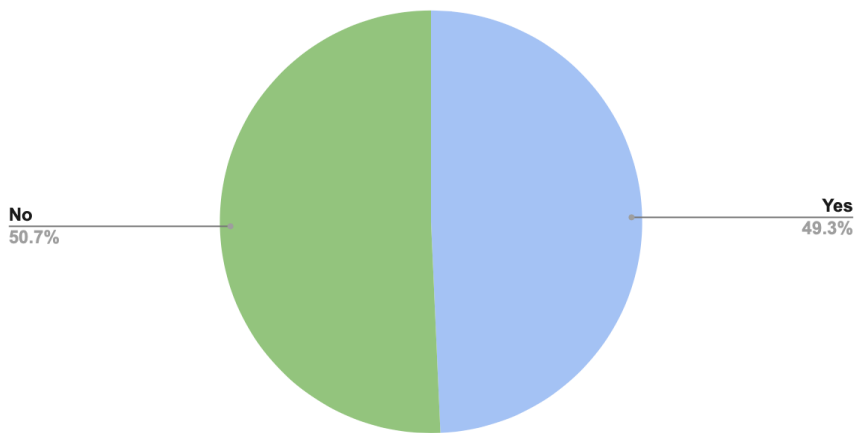
disclosure experiences in these various surveys, and if we rely on the Rapha sample, Quebec stands out for its discretion. It would be advisable to reflect further on the reasons for this difference.

Of those who chose to disclose their experience to someone at their church, the vast majority confided in a leader. Notably, 41% disclosed their experience to a single leader, 34% to several people, including leaders, and 19% to several leaders. We can conclude from this data that people in pastoral or leadership roles are of great importance in responding to situations of domestic violence for Christians.

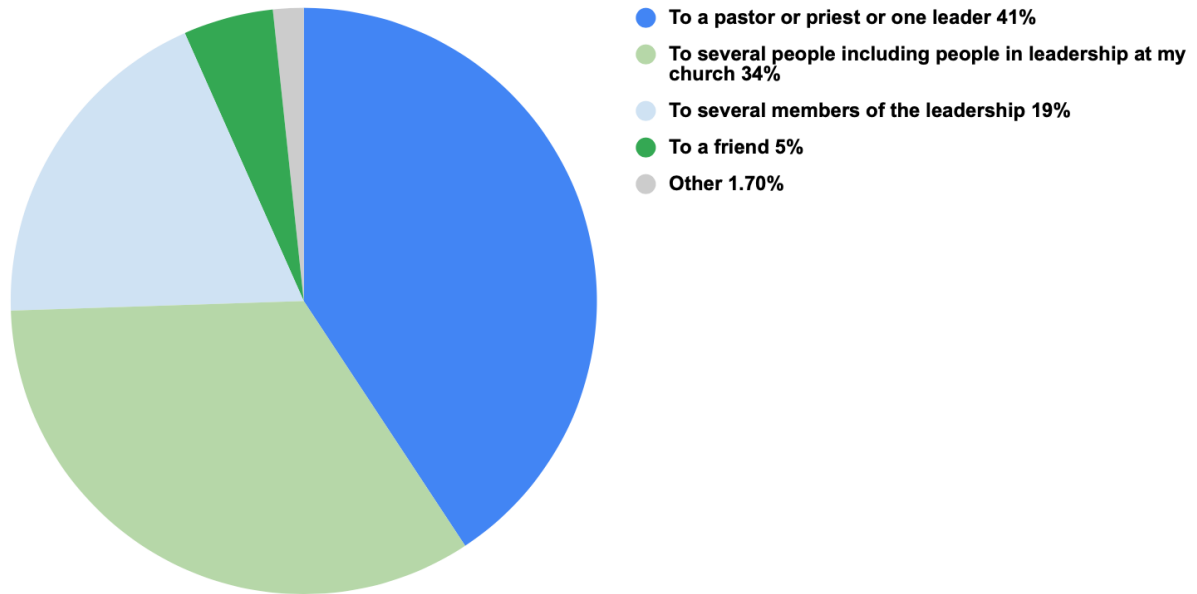
It's also noteworthy that only 40% of the sample felt that the response they received to their disclosure was helpful. Unfortunately, 38.5% of the sample felt that their church's response had not been helpful, or had even been harmful.

It's sad to note that the various forms of help – practical help, referrals to other organisations – were rarely offered. Listening and prayer were suggested as resources for victims (28% for listening and 21% for prayer). Thankfully, only 11% of respondents were advised to return to their abusive partners. Nevertheless, these results show that the Church is failing to intervene in situations of violence.

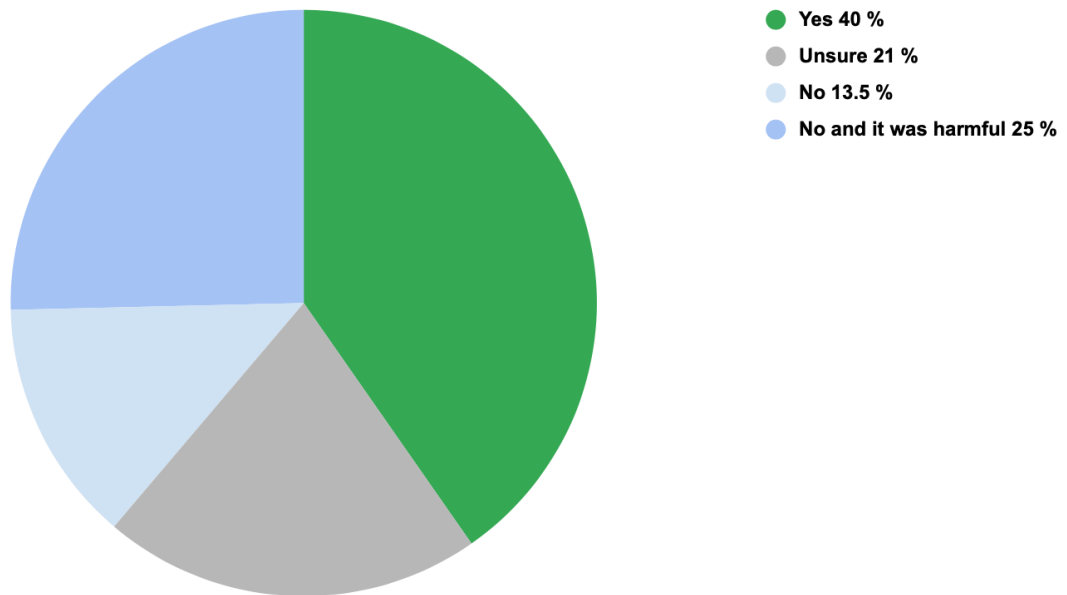
**Did you disclose your experience of abuse or violence to someone at your church or parish?**



### To whom did you disclose your experience?

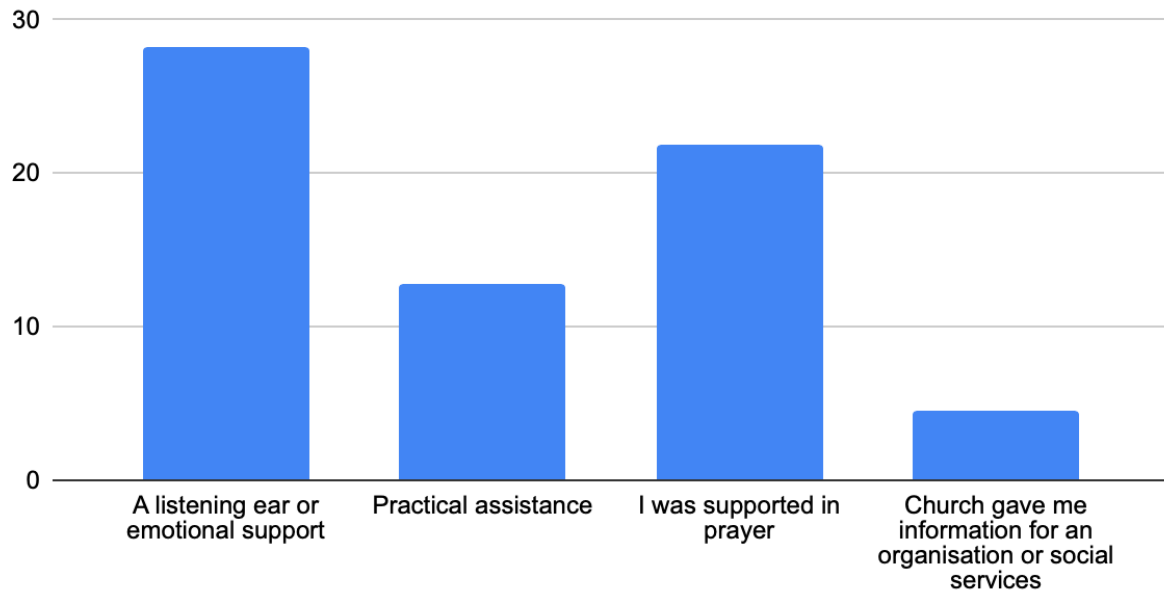


### Was the response from your church or parish helpful ?

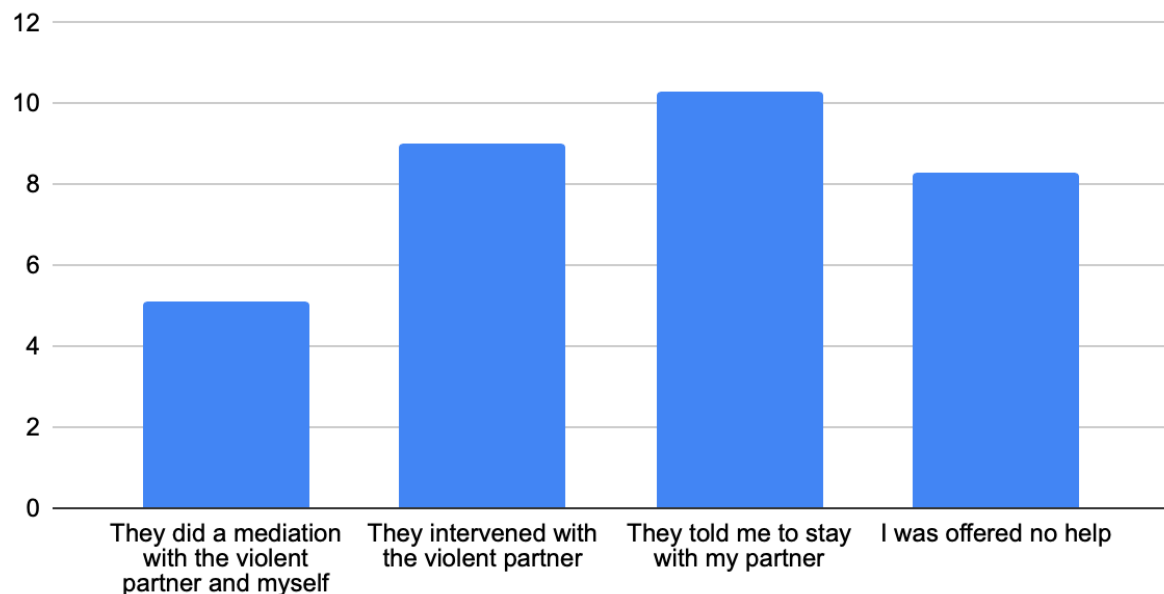




## What response or aid was offered by your church or parish?



## What response or aid was offered by your church or parish?



**d. Victims or survivors and their partners**

We asked respondents who self-identified as victims whether they had suffered the impact of domestic violence experienced by their parents. Twenty-eight percent answered yes.

<b>Table: “I suffered the impact of violence between my parents when I was growing up.”</b>	
Within the sample of self-identified victims	<b>Considered they suffered the impact</b>
	<b>28%</b>

Family-based violence experienced during childhood is a factor of risk over the course of one’s life. The Government of Canada issued the report in 2021, *Risk*

*Factors for Children in Situations of Family Violence in the Context of Separation and Divorce*, addressing this phenomenon:

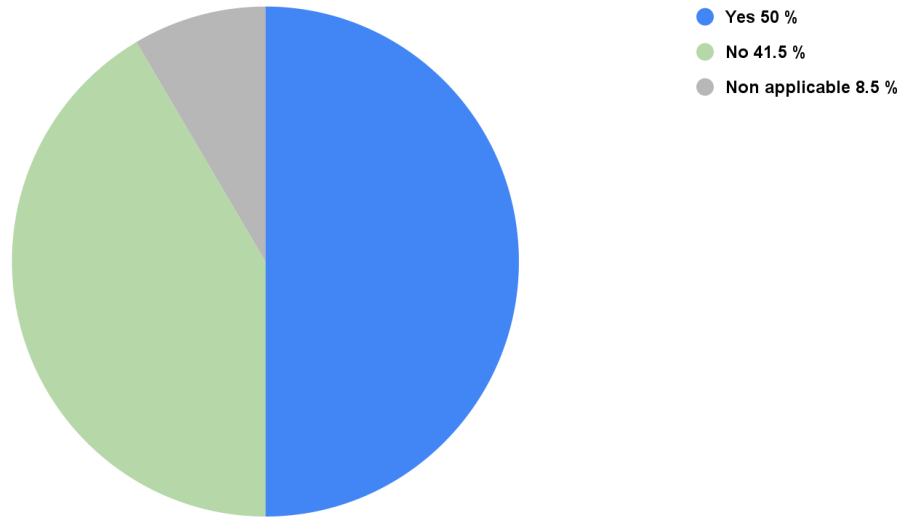
“There is considerable overlap with domestic violence and child abuse. Research has found that in families where domestic violence occurs, child abuse is often present...This overlap is more likely to occur in domestic violent relationships that are defined by coercive control (i.e., pattern of emotionally abusive intimidation coupled with physical violence to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner)<sup>47</sup>.”

The vast majority of abusive partners are men (84%), and around half of victims have had children with their partners. The majority of victims were married, in a couple or common-law partners at the time of the abusive treatment.

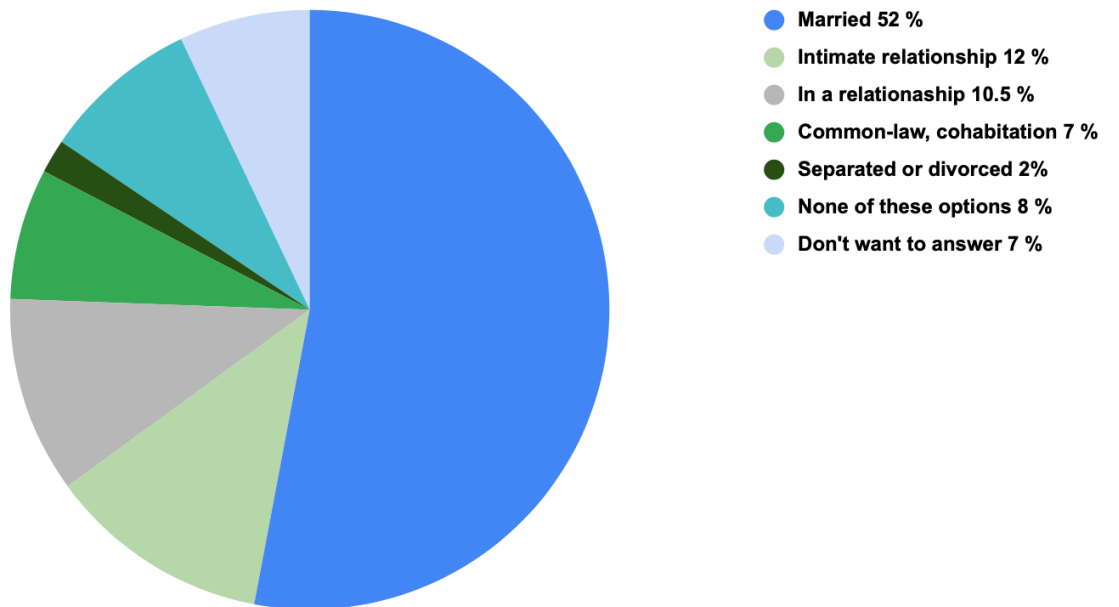
As for the abusive partner’s profile, 73% said they were Christians, and the majority (61%) attended church. As for church leaders, 17% of abusive partners held a leadership role in the church.

<sup>47</sup> “Les facteurs de risque pour les enfants exposés à la violence familiale dans le contexte de la séparation ou du divorce”, Department of Justice Canada, Government of Canada, 2021 (<https://www.justice.gc.ca/fra/pr-rp/jp-cj/vf-fv/freevf-rfcsfv/p4.html>) [consulted on November 8, 2023].

### Did you have children with the partner who committed the abuse?

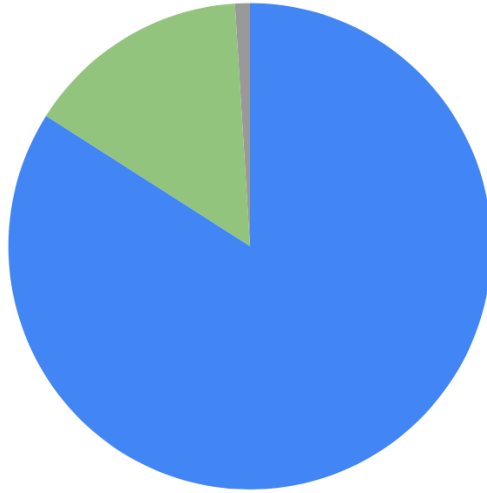


### Status of the relationship during the abuse

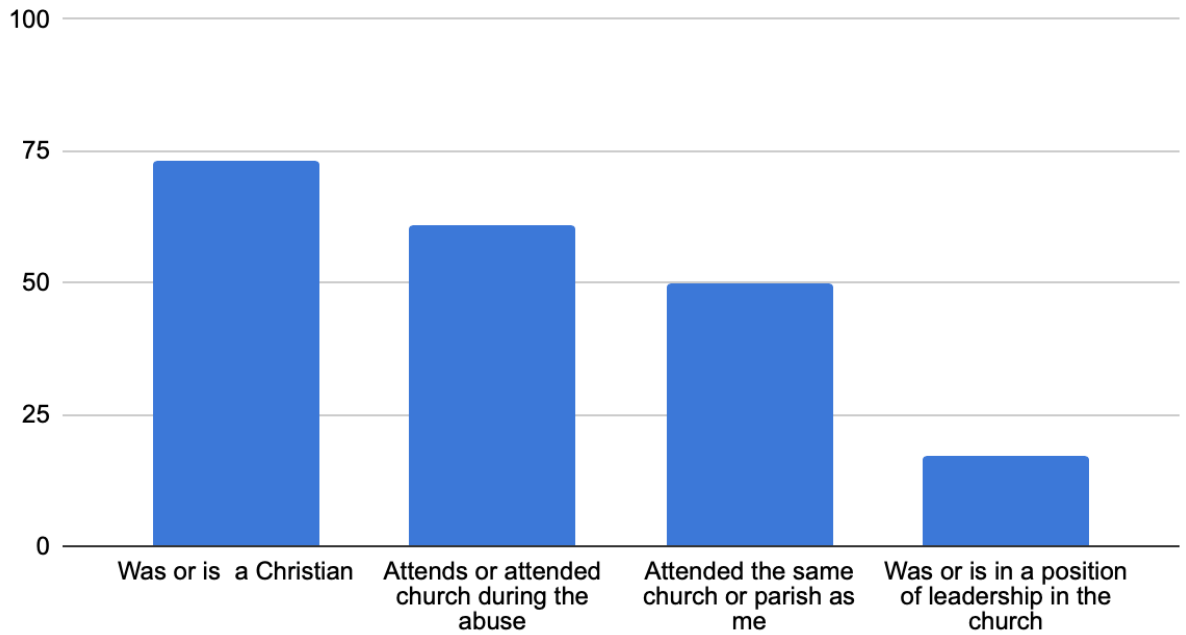


## Sex of partner

● Man 84% ● Woman 15% ● Don't want to answer 1%

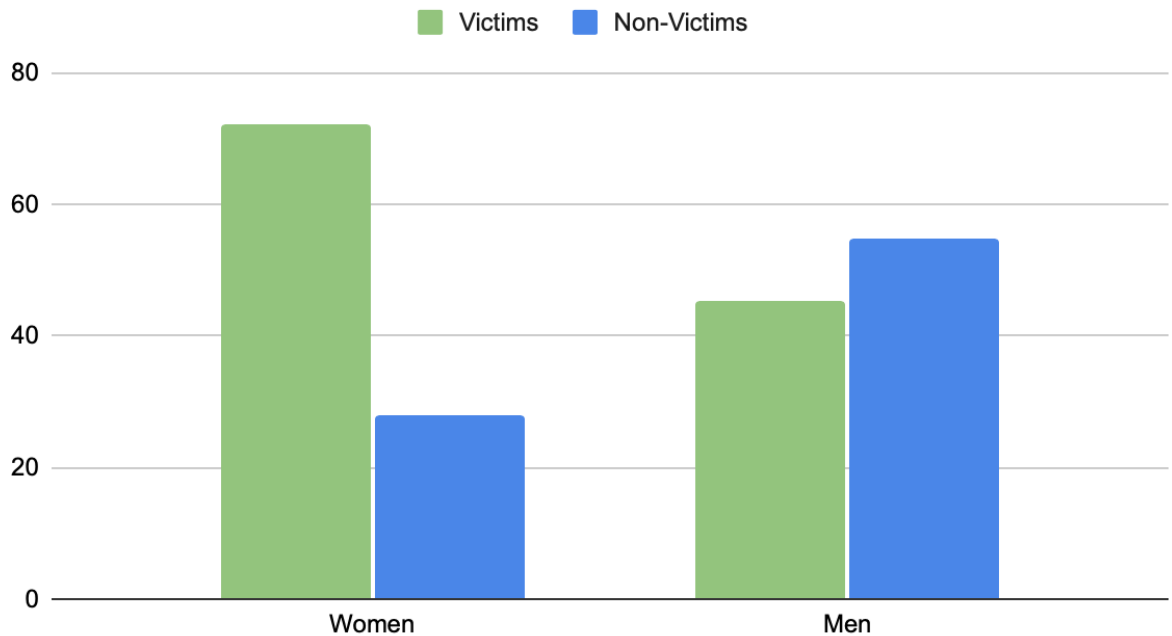


## The partner that committed abuse...



Of those who said they had experienced violence, 72% of women said they had, and 45% of men said they had experienced violence with an intimate partner.

### Self-declaration according to sex



#### e. Deeper understanding of the social profiles of women who are survivors

The type of information that best informs us about the whole range of issues relating to domestic violence generally stems from questions about victims, in order to better understand what they have in common and what characteristics differentiate them from other groups within society. In short, from a community prevention perspective, this study seeks to identify the social and cultural representations of victims within Christian communities in Quebec. In concrete terms, lifestyles or profiles have an impact on the degree of vulnerability of victims within the contemporary Church.

Of course, there are many social science tools that can be used to explore an issue such as domestic violence from different angles. In the initial phases of a research process, we usually try to find essential benchmarks to sketch out a representation of the community under study, where it seems relevant to start. In the social sciences, and more specifically within the methodological framework of action research and a clinical approach in sociology, the actors (the individuals

who make up the group under observation) will be invited to participate actively, directly or otherwise, in the research process.

A number of factors, which may seem trivial at first glance, actually have an impact on victims and the violent behaviour of aggressors. Thus, different variables specific to the victims' social background can, when brought together, constitute protective or risk factors for them. Of course, these cannot be reduced to a single denominator in an individual's social background. The latter is made up of a broad spectrum of concrete experiences, including level of education, employment income, place of residence, access to education and healthcare, housing, food and mobility costs, religious denominations and spiritual practices.

However, if we look at each variable separately, for example, exclusively at education level, it cannot shed sufficient light on an issue such as domestic violence. At best, certain correlations can be established, but individually they in no way explain the different consequences: being a victim or not, between two similar cases with regard to "level of education" (high school, technical college or general pre-university training and the various university programs).

In the Rapha survey, the most convincing case of this difficulty lies in the attempts to correlate a single variable specific to the socio-demographic profile of respondents and victim status in relation to conjugal and domestic violence. "Level of education", for example (high school, college or university), is not in itself a predictor of victimisation. Half of the respondents (47.6%) with a high school education had experienced domestic violence. The other half of the group (52.4%), respondents with the same level of education, did not identify themselves as victims. (Balance of victims 2.4%). We've heard it said many times: "No one is immune to domestic violence. Domestic violence can be found at any age, in any socio-economic class and in any cultural or religious community<sup>48</sup>." Women with the same level of education – CEGEP, for example – do not have a higher rate of victimisation than those with a university education. In the Rapha study, this reality holds true. Among the survey's female victims in general, being better educated (1st, 2nd and 3rd cycle university level) is not immediately a protective factor.

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<sup>48</sup> "Faits saillants concernant la violence conjugale", Institut national de santé publique du Québec, October 2016 (<https://www.inspq.gc.ca/violence-conjugale/faits-saillants>) [consulted on October 23, 2023].

However, if we add the variables “place of residence” and “Christian denomination”, while verifying their statistical validity on the basis of the null hypothesis (i.e., that there is no substantial link between the combined variables), we see a slightly more precise portrait of the respondents, and mainly the victims, emerge. By continuing to add or subtract variables, while following the evolution of the process in the analysis process, we can build a social profile of the victims. So, as long as the trend does not converge in the same empirical direction as the initial hypothesis, there are two choices in the methodological approach specific to the social sciences:

1. The first choice concerns the variable in our initial hypothesis, referred to here as the “structural variable”, which is not relevant for developing the victims’ social path more precisely. In the present exercise, “level of education” is considered to be one of the important structural variables, in addition to presenting little risk of error in the initial hypothesis. Many population surveys consider this variable to be decisive in the sociological portrait of a community.
2. The second choice is based on the principle of validation and refusal. Rooted in the principles of scientific research (mainly in the social sciences), these notions consist in doubling each “hypothetical link” with evidence and counter-evidence that can be measured quantitatively and qualitatively. This measurement first involves validating and rejecting the hypothetical links between structural variables, and then validating or rejecting the links between structural variables, known as independent variables, i.e. the cause or causes, and dependent variables, i.e. the effect or consequence of the same cause.

Finally, what can we say about the combined variables in the Rapha survey? Our research team found a possible correlation between level of education, rural residents and religious affiliation. A higher level of education for Christian women in rural areas seems to be a protective factor. It is difficult at this stage to establish conclusively that a Christian living in a rural area with a high level of education is less likely to experience domestic violence. However, we do see promising

trends regarding lower levels of victimisation rates in this category of combined variables. This is a question that will need to be explored further by researchers.

### **Part 3: Conclusion et recommendations**

#### **a. What can we conclude from these findings?**

Two findings emerge from the Rapha survey, and we can point to them with some degree of certainty. Firstly, there are victims and survivors of domestic violence in our churches in Quebec. There are a considerable number of people with a history of intimate partner violence. There are also people currently experiencing domestic violence who are active members of our churches. What's more, the Rapha survey samples give us no reason to believe that domestic violence is more or less prevalent among Christian communities in Quebec than elsewhere in society. In other words, the data show that there is just as much domestic violence within the Church as outside it. Even if someone doesn't consider themselves a victim of domestic violence, or caught up in a cycle of violence, there are many acts or episodes of intimate partner violence within our churches. The numbers are too high to ignore.

Secondly, only 17% of respondents consider that their churches have taken steps to raise awareness of domestic violence issues among their members. On the other hand, 83% of our sample agreed that the issue of domestic violence should be addressed publicly in the church. The mandate is clear: if we are to believe the respondents, Québécois Christians want to see the Church respond better to domestic violence, raise awareness of the issue and better prevent it. When we take into account the measures in place and the Church's responses when a victim has denounced her situation to its leaders, we see a gap between the current reality and the wishes of Québécois Church members.

#### **b. What further questions must be explored?**

The Rapha survey raises a number of questions that require careful consideration. First, Quebec society has a duty to explore the phenomenon of men who are victims of domestic violence. To do so, we'll need the collaboration of researchers, public health officials and experts in domestic



violence. Among respondents who identified themselves as victims of domestic violence, 41% of men answered “yes”. Also, 45% of men reported experiences of violence in an intimate relationship with their partner. We don’t have enough public data to identify correlations, trends or concrete findings to analyse these data with a clear and informed mind.

Also, our research team found a possible correlation between education level, rural residents and religious affiliation. A higher level of education for Christians in rural areas seems to be a protective factor. This correlation needs to be studied with larger samples before any conclusions can be drawn. Again, we need more in-depth studies from the research community to do this.

We also raise the following question: why do churches or parishes have such gaps in their actions, practices and measures to prevent or raise awareness of domestic violence? Is it a question of motivation, training or awareness? Other questions arise from this dynamic. For example, is church culture conducive to collaboration with social and legal services? Is there a correlation between the theological currents of certain Christian traditions and their ability to respond adequately to issues of domestic violence? To explore these questions, we need to listen to clergy, pastoral agents, stakeholders and religious leaders to find out their postures and attitudes towards this issue, and imagine together how the Church can be better equipped to respond to the challenge of domestic violence.

Finally, we must listen, closely, to the voices of victims and survivors of domestic violence. Phase 2 of the Rapha project will have the unique mandate to do just that. Qualitative interviews will be conducted with 13 women survivors. The content of the questionnaire in the qualitative interviews will help us explore the issues left unanswered by phase 1 of the Rapha Project. We have found that the rate of disclosure of experiences of violence in the church is lower in Quebec than in France or the UK. We hope to better understand why this is the case, through our interviews in phase 2. Additionally, questions about Christian education, the responses of survivors’ faith communities, and survivors’ spiritual journey will be raised. We need to collect and analyse survivors’ testimonies in order to understand the more nuanced questions about these people’s experiences, in their abusive relationships and in their Christian life journey. Only

by listening to and reflecting on these journeys can we truly paint a picture of the current situation of domestic violence and the Church in Quebec.

**c. What measures and reflections should be undertaken by the Church in Quebec?**

The Rapha team believes that this is an opportunity for the Church in Quebec to reflect, listen and respond to the realities of survivors and victims of domestic violence. Despite the sobering data, we note an openness on the part of respondents towards church leaders: the vast majority of people who chose to denounce their situation to the church did so to a leader. Only five percent of respondents believe that the leaders of their church or parish are not accessible. The situation is serious, but it's not a lost cause; the Church has an invitation to become a transformative actor in the field of domestic violence.

Anyone concerned about the issue of domestic violence, whether it be a member of the clergy, a church volunteer, an interested Christian or a member of a faith community, should consider the following principles: first, domestic violence is not a private matter. It's everyone's business. Violence, even between intimate partners, can have a disastrous impact on children, on extended families, on the economic and psychological future of those involved, and on the whole community. That's why it's so important to educate ourselves, raise awareness and to practise our ability to listen and help each other, in order to build communities of compassion, resilience and safety for anyone facing this problem.

Secondly, it is essential for the Church to recognize its strengths and limitations with regard to its ability to intervene in situations of domestic violence. This is not to say that the Church needs to hold all the solutions (this is, in fact, not desired! A collaborative approach with community partners is always recommended). Rather, the Church should be informed, educated and clear-sighted about the realities of domestic violence, and it should be able to accompany victims who choose to confide in its leaders.

Responders must abide by clinical or legal guidelines, such as those for CLSC services, police intervention and the legal framework set out in the Canadian Criminal Code. It is therefore

recommended that people involved in a domestic violence crisis maintain a close link with community resources and people trained in domestic violence to ensure the highest level of safety and sensitivity. To do this, churches and parishes need to build relationships with their local communities and the social services they offer. Again, it's not necessary for clergy or volunteers to become experts in the field, but rather to know how to communicate with people who are.

Thirdly, it is recommended that dioceses, church families or Christian associations establish protocols for safety and intervention in the event of domestic or conjugal violence crises. These protocols or commitment charters can include the church's preventive measures, commitment to awareness-raising initiatives and protocol for accompaniment in the event of a domestic violence crisis. The majority of churches in Quebec now have protocols or practices for protecting minors and vulnerable people. This was not the case in the 1980s. We can see that the Church has the capacity and the will to adopt new practices and systems that promote the protection of vulnerable people when crisis situations arise.

It is also recommended that any protocol include guidelines on confidentiality practices. The Rapha team strongly recommends that churches, parishes and communities develop a culture of confidentiality and non-judgment. We're convinced that it's possible to foster safe, non-judgmental environments in which to receive and accompany the victims present in our communities. It will take time, but community reflections, teachings and the thoughtful modelling of pastoral leaders are mechanisms that will contribute to the creation of such a culture. Gossip and judgement, according to survivors' comments, are two behaviours that are detrimental to disclosure, and therefore to the safety of victims.

In cases of intimate partner violence, the self-determination and agency of victims are essential values. For those of us who want to be good allies, good neighbours according to the teachings of Jesus Christ, and good pastors, we must first of all listen to victims and survivors, and respect their decisions and desires. We must do our utmost to equip survivors to develop their self-esteem, their spiritual journey, their sense of well-being and emancipation. Their agency and voice comes first.

Finally, throughout the Rapha Project, the research team was inspired by the words of the apostle Paul to the Romans: “Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep.” (Romans 12:5) This posture of empathy and listening is the way of the future for a Church better equipped to respond to the problem of domestic violence facing Quebec in the 21st century.