



**Overview & Insights from Synchronous Online Group
Battering Intervention Graduate and Victim Surveys
April 2020 to June 21, 2021**

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In March of 2020, Family Peace Initiative (FPI) transitioned all of their in-person battering intervention groups to an online platform due to COVID-19 Safer at Home orders. From March to June of 2021, survey calls were conducted to graduates who completed some portion or all of the program remotely. Calls were also made to victims of record or current partners, where contact information was available. The goal in conducting this research was to gather data pertaining to the efficacy of battering intervention in an online format.

GRADUATE CALLS

Respondents

2020: 13 Survey Respondents of 50 Total Participants

Male: 8 Survey Respondents of 37 Total Participants

Female: 5 Survey Respondents of 12 Total Participants

2021*: 17 Survey Respondents of 45 Total Participants

Male: 13 Survey Respondents of 38 Total Participants

Female: 4 Survey Respondents of 7 Total Participants

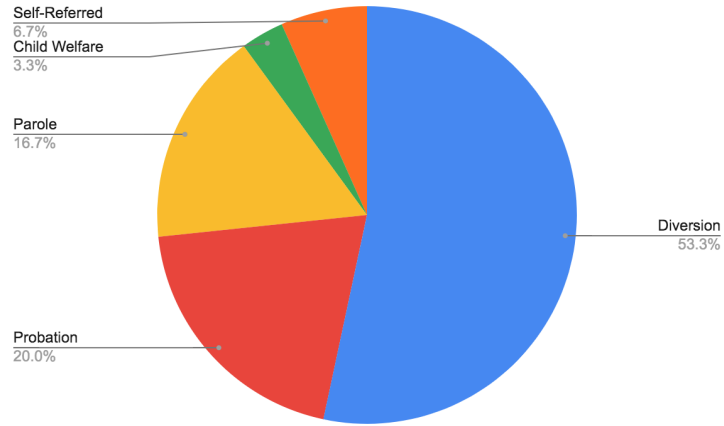
**These numbers are as of the time of this writing, June 21, 2021. FPI has not yet transitioned fully back to in-person groups due to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions. Participants continue to graduate each week. As the window for conducting groups remotely during the pandemic extended beyond the one year mark, the number of participants who experienced groups both in-person and online dwindled. New participants coming into group from March 2020 and beyond never sat in a traditional group in-person. Responses to some questions below are broken down into four groups; men, women, those with a completely online experience, and those who were able to attend some groups in-person.*

Survey Questions for Participants

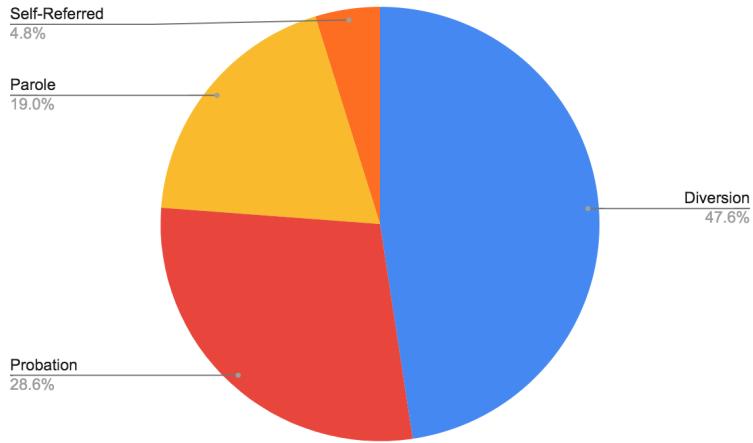
Surveys were conducted by calling participants at the last telephone number on file upon graduation from the program. They were informed of the survey's purpose (to gather information about their experiences and feelings on the efficacy of the program online) and the investment of time (a 5-10 minute phone call.) Responses were transcribed by surveyors into a google form and submitted for record collection.

1. How were you referred to the program?

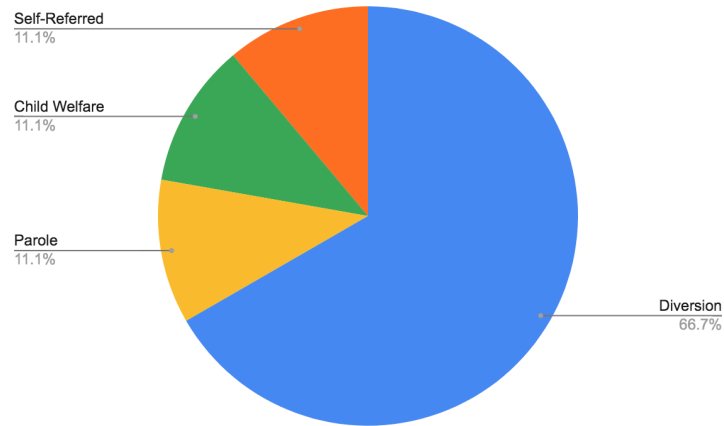
All Respondents



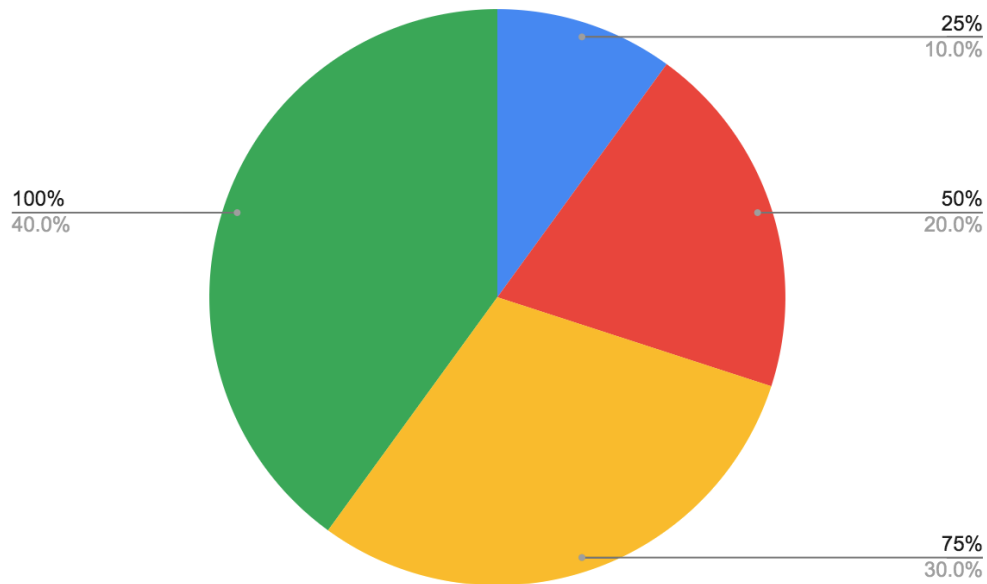
Men



Women



2. Approximately what percentage of your class did you complete online:
25%, 50%, 75% or 100%?



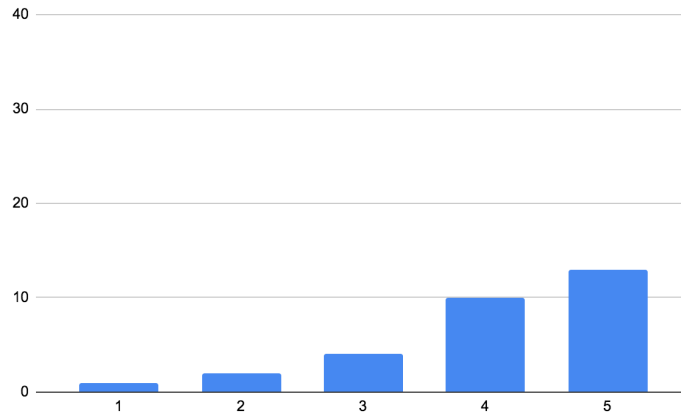
3. If you began The FPI Program in-person, what was the transition like from in-person to online?

We left this question open-ended, and responses fell into the following categories.

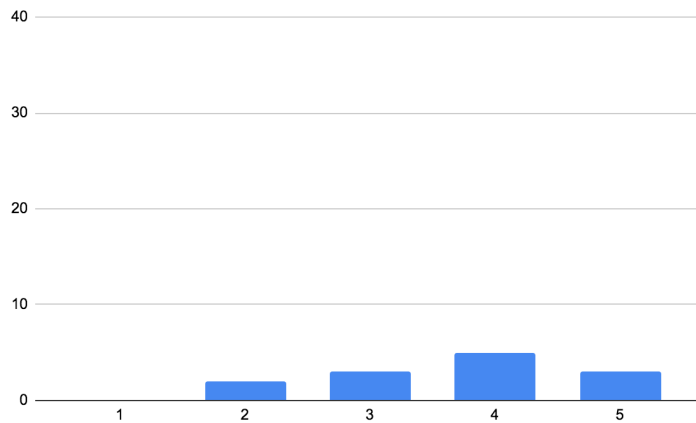
- Six participants stated - It was smooth or easy, with little to no difficulty
- Three participants stated - It was initially challenging to get used to the technology, but quickly became easy once everyone was accustomed.
- One participant stated - It was a negative experience because the technology was difficult
- Five participants stated - It was a relief, or the respondent stated gratitude for the added safety during the pandemic.
- 17 participants' responses were not applicable, as they took 100% of the group online.

4a. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being very difficult and 5 being no problems or difficulty: When considering your participation in video-groups, please rate your experience with the use of Zoom as the online platform.

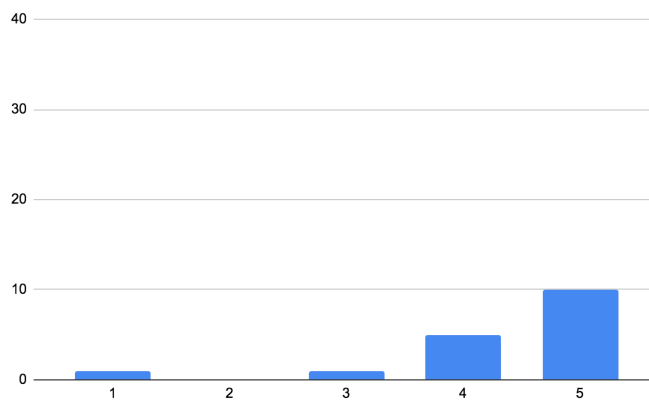
All Respondents



Those with Some In-Person Group

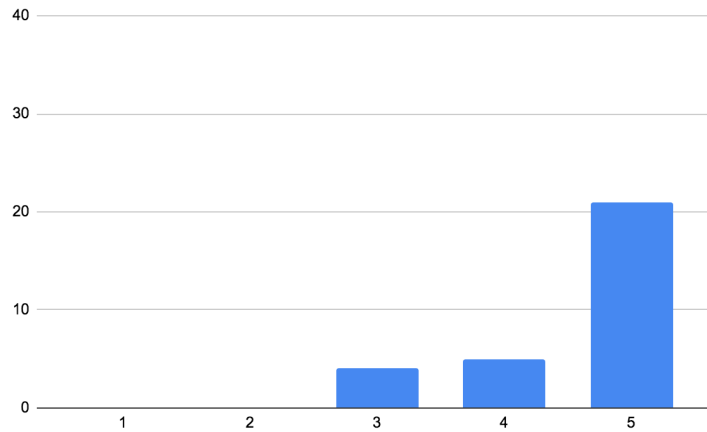


100% Online Experience



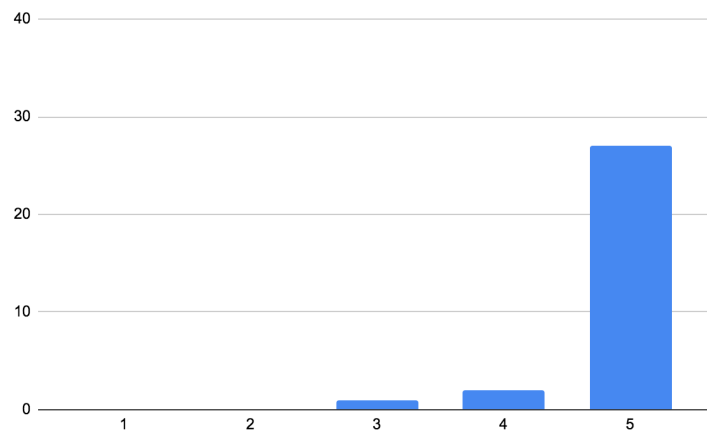
4b. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being very difficult and 5 being no problems or difficulty: When considering your participation in video-groups, please rate your ability to access reliable wifi signal or internet connection.

All Respondents



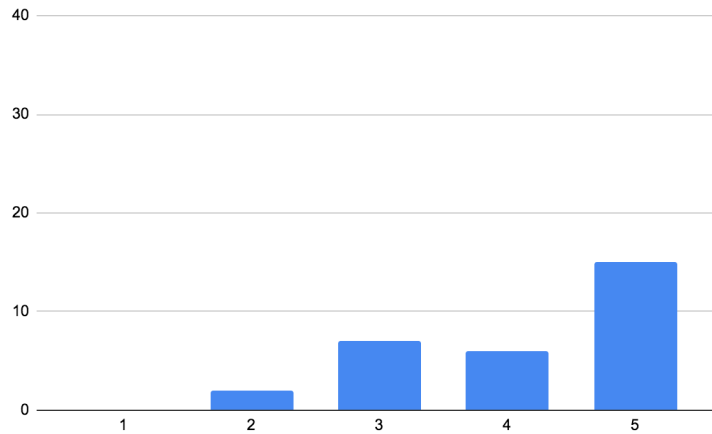
4c. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being very difficult and 5 being no problems or difficulty: When considering your participation in video-groups, please rate your ability to utilize reliable devices such as phone, computer or tablet.

All Respondents



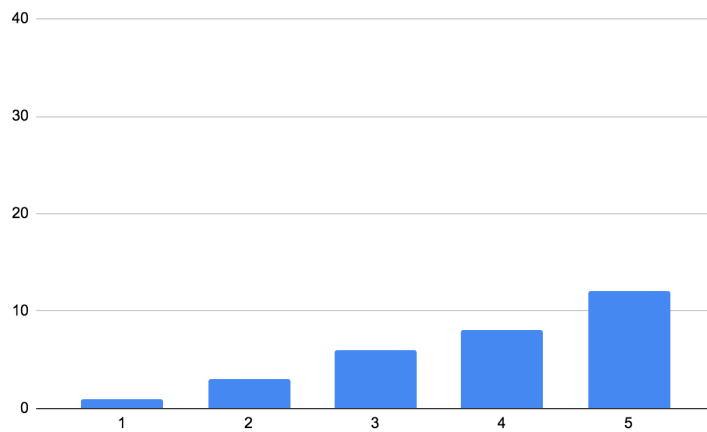
4d. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being very difficult and 5 being no problems or difficulty: When considering your participation in video-groups, please rate your ability to stay focused on the session material.

All Respondents



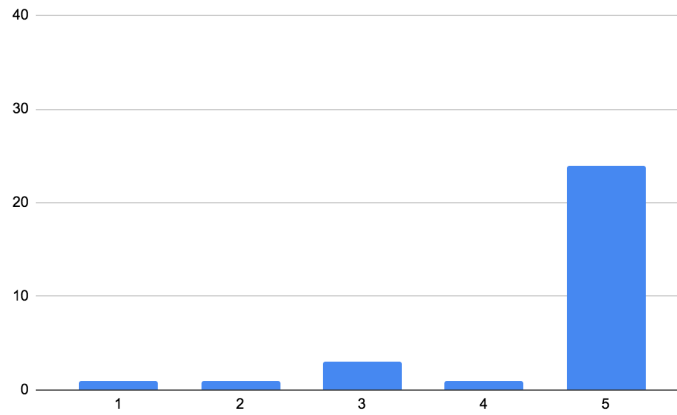
4e. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being very difficult and 5 being no problems or difficulty: When considering your participation in video-groups, please rate your ability to hear others.

All Respondents

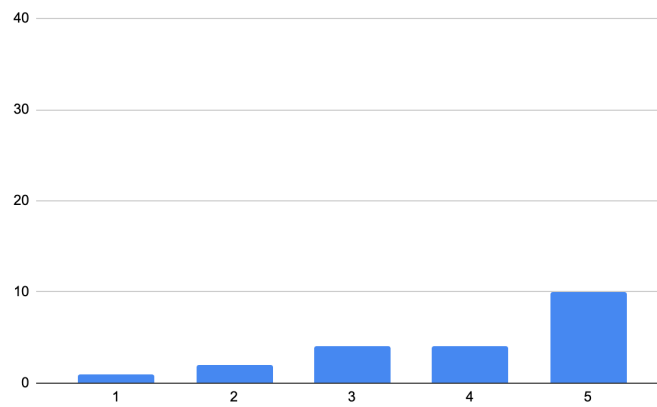


4f. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being very difficult and 5 being no problems or difficulty: When considering your participation in video-groups, please rate your ability to find a private and confidential space for group sessions.

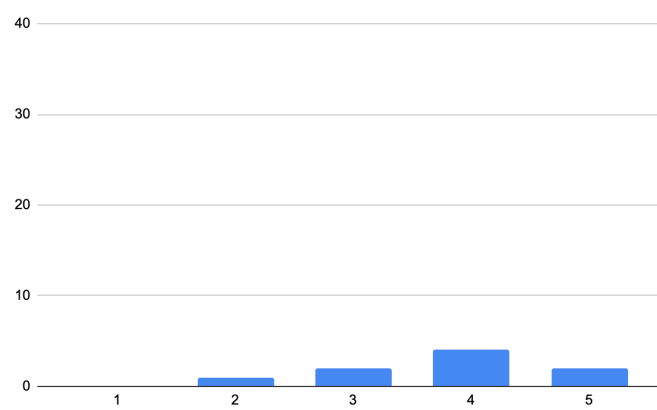
All Respondents



Men

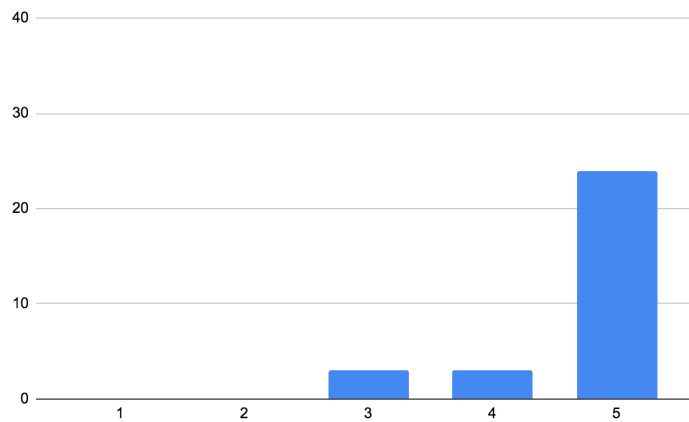


Women



5. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being no support and 5 being high support: Did you feel you had support and assistance getting familiar with the format?

All Respondents



6a. What were the pros of the video-group format?

We left this question open-ended, and responses fell into the following categories.

All Respondents

- Convenience
- Ease of transportation / not having to find transportation
- Safety during COVID
- Did not have to miss group due to childcare responsibilities
- Did not have to miss group due to work related travel or conflicts
- Felt an increased level of safety and willingness to participate in emotional conversations being on a screen versus in-person

Men

- Ten participants stated - Convenience
- Six participant stated - Ease of transportation / not having to find transportation
- Four participants stated - Safety during COVID
- One participant stated - Did not have to miss group due to childcare responsibilities
- Eight participants stated - Did not have to miss group due to work related travel or conflicts
- Six participants stated - Felt an increased level of safety and willingness to participate in emotional conversations being on a screen versus in-person

Women

- Six participants stated - Convenience
- Three participants stated - Ease of transportation / not having to find transportation
- One participant stated - Safety during COVID
- Two participants stated - Did not have to miss group due to childcare responsibilities

6b. What were the cons of the video-group format?

We left this question open-ended, and responses fell into the following categories:

All Participants

- Lacking “connection” through the ability to read body language, energy, and expressions that you’re able to in-person
- No control over confidentiality and others hearing your conversations
- Sometimes technical difficulties and connection issues caused distractions
- People were sometimes distracted by their surroundings in ways they wouldn’t have been in a group room

Men

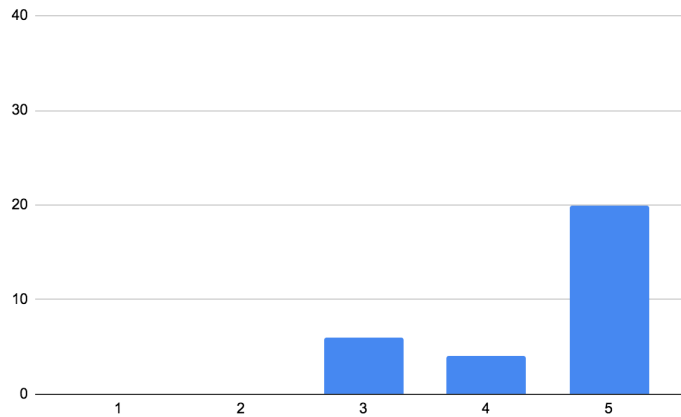
- Nine participants stated - Lacking “connection” through the ability to read body language, energy, and expressions that you’re able to in-person
- Three participants stated - No control over confidentiality and others hearing your conversations
- Ten participants stated - Sometimes technical difficulties and connection issues caused distractions
- Ten participants stated - People were sometimes distracted by their surroundings in ways they wouldn’t have been in a group room
- Two participants stated - there were no cons or disadvantages

Women

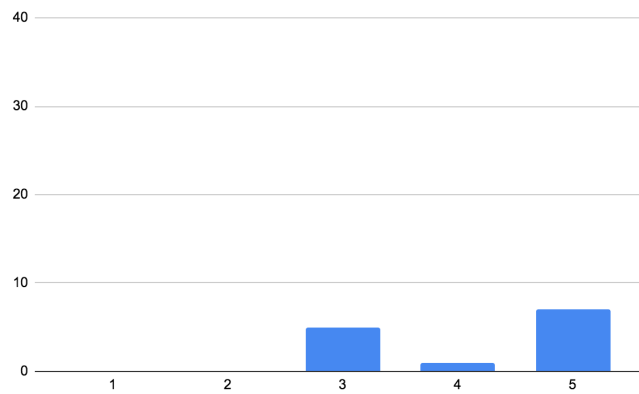
- Four participants stated - Lacking “connection” through the ability to read body language, energy, and expressions that you’re able to in-person
- One participant stated - No control over confidentiality and others hearing your conversations
- Three participants stated - Sometimes technical difficulties and connection issues caused distractions
- Four participants stated - People were sometimes distracted by their surroundings in ways they wouldn’t have been in a group room

7. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being no safety and 5 being high safety: In BIP groups, you are often asked to share personal and vulnerable stories and information. Did you feel safe and supported to engage in these vulnerable conversations in the video-group?

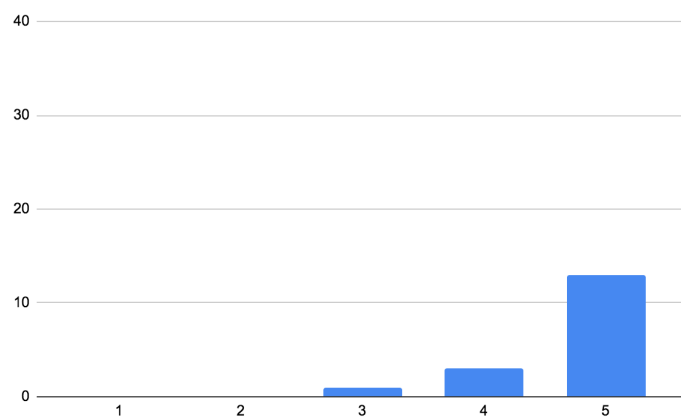
All Respondents



Those with Some In-Person Group

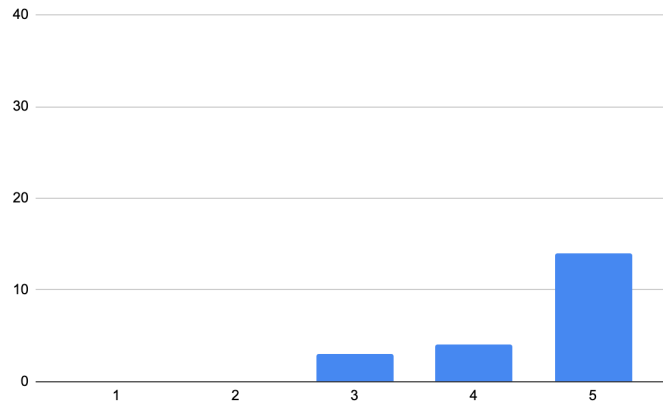


100% Online Experience

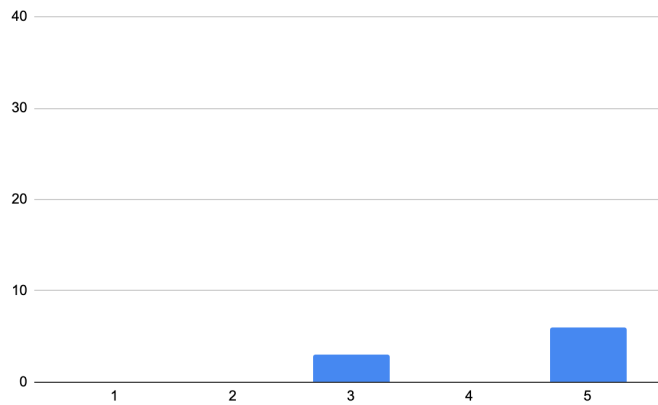


7. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being no safety and 5 being high safety: In BIP groups, you are often asked to share personal and vulnerable stories and information. Did you feel safe and supported to engage in these vulnerable conversations in the video-group? (Answers Continued)

Men

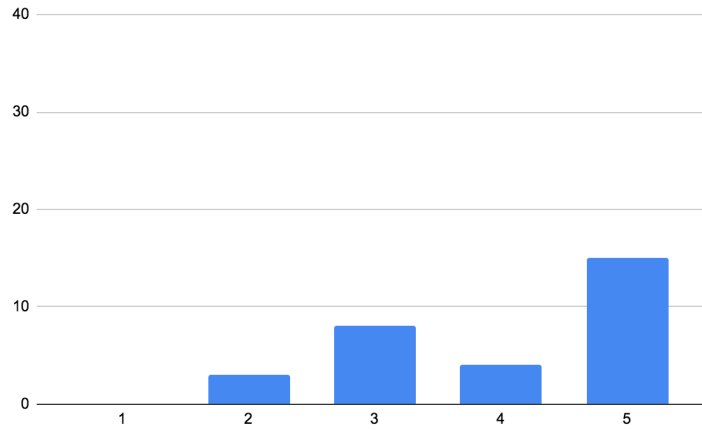


Women

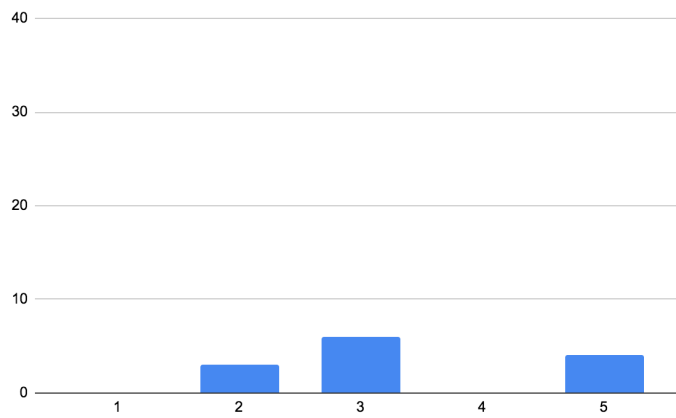


8. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being no connection and 5 being high connection: Did you feel a level of connection with group members in the online format?

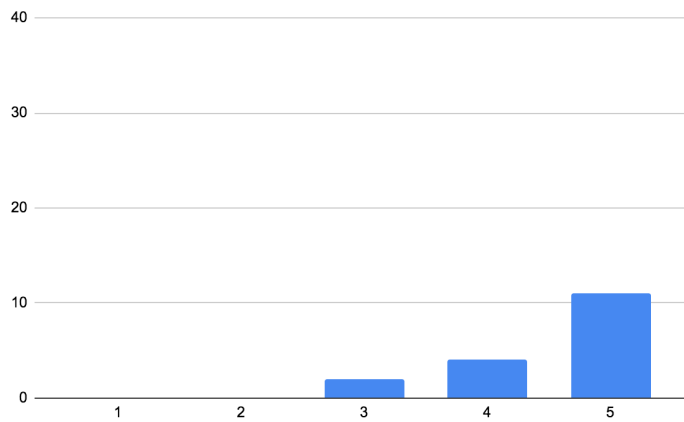
All Respondents



Those with Some In-Person Group

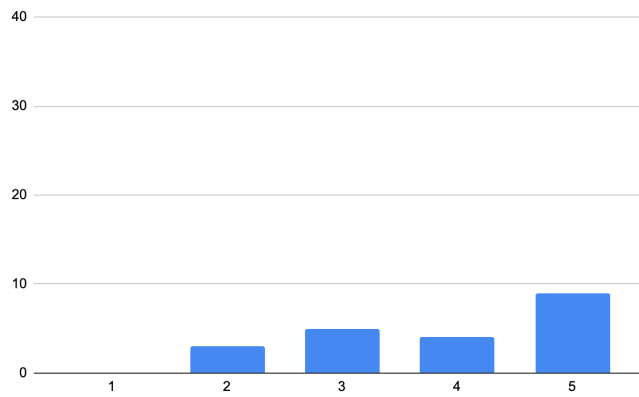


100% Online Experience

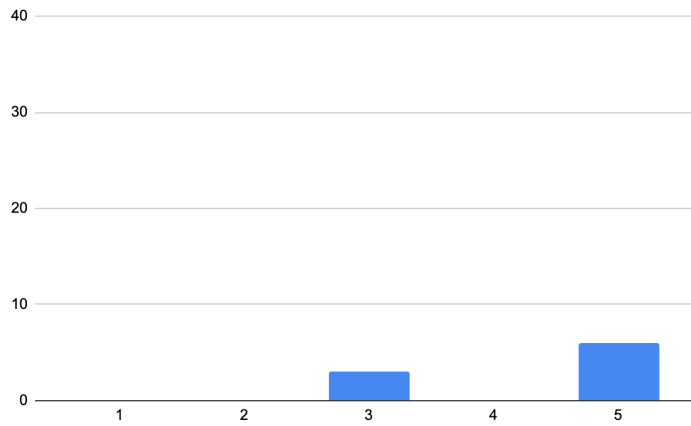


8. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being no connection and 5 being high connection: Did you feel a level of connection with group members in the online format? (Answers Continued)

Men

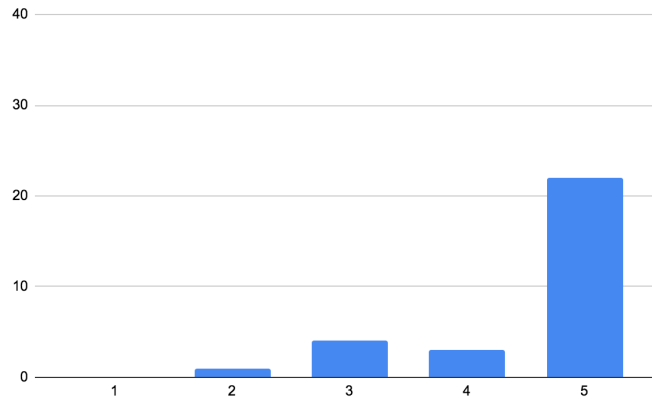


Women

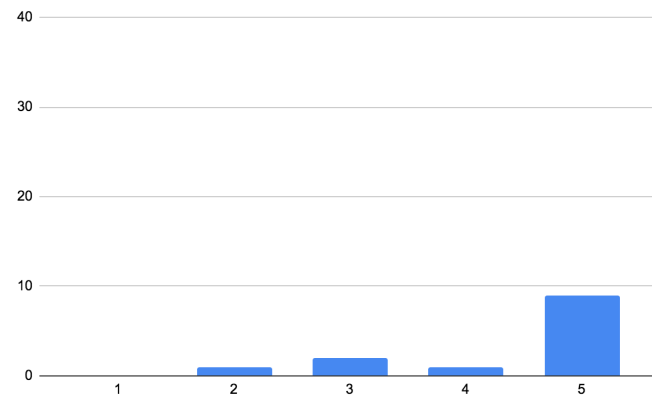


9. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being low skill acquisition and 5 being high skill acquisition: Through the video-group, did you acquire strategies to reduce cruelty, abuse, and violence in your life and relationships?

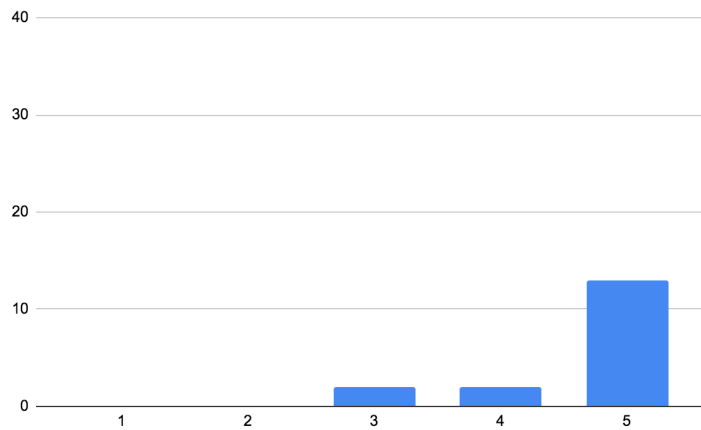
All Respondents



Those with Some In-Person Group

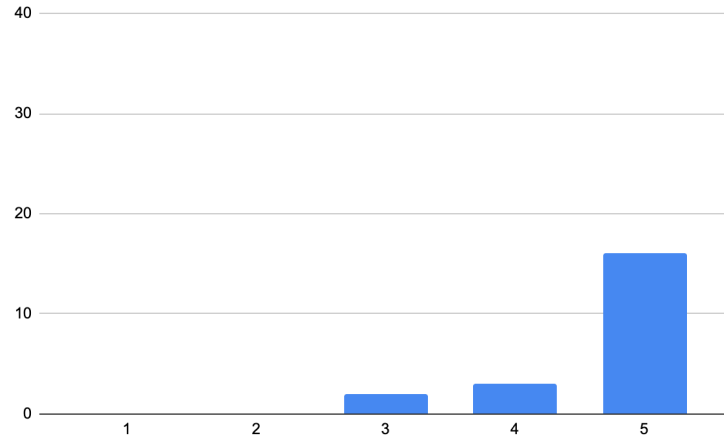


100% Online Group

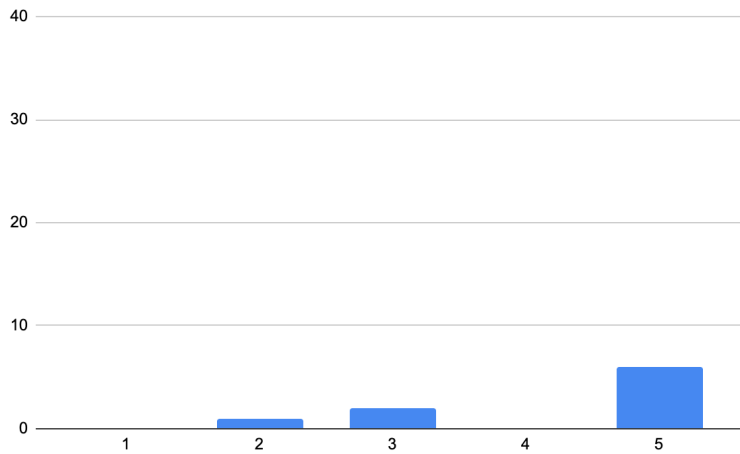


9. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being low skill acquisition and 5 being high skill acquisition: Through the video-group, did you acquire strategies to reduce cruelty, abuse, and violence in your life and relationships? (Answers Continued)

Men

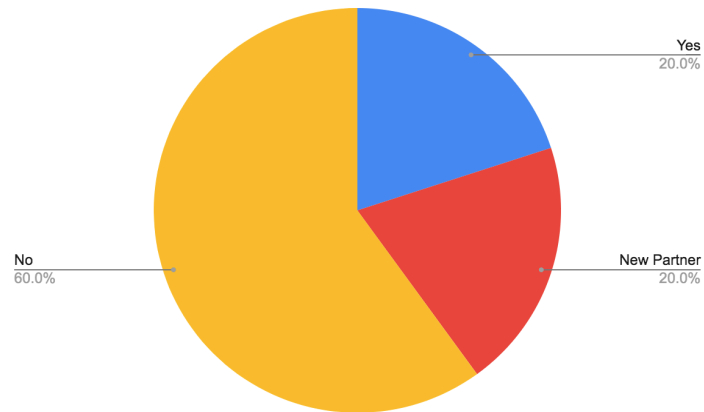


Women

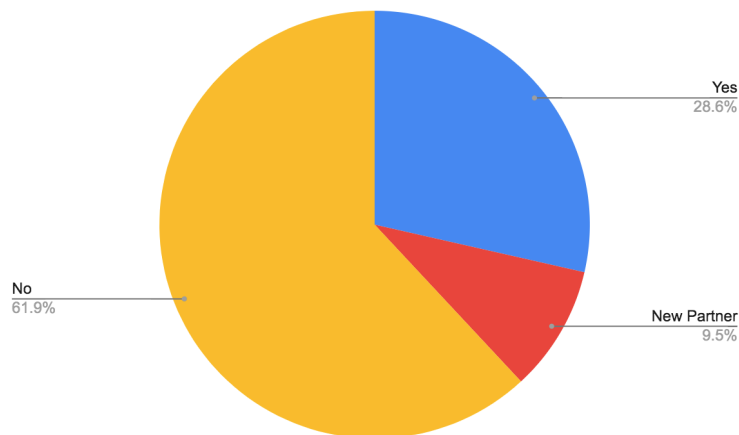


10. Are you still living with the victim of record in your case? If not, do you currently have a domestic partner?

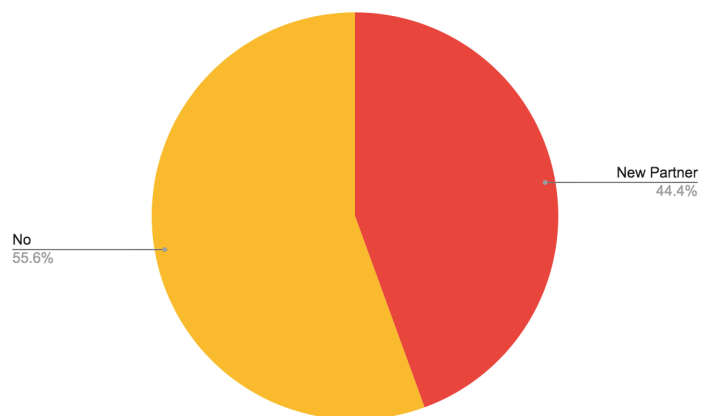
All Respondents



Men

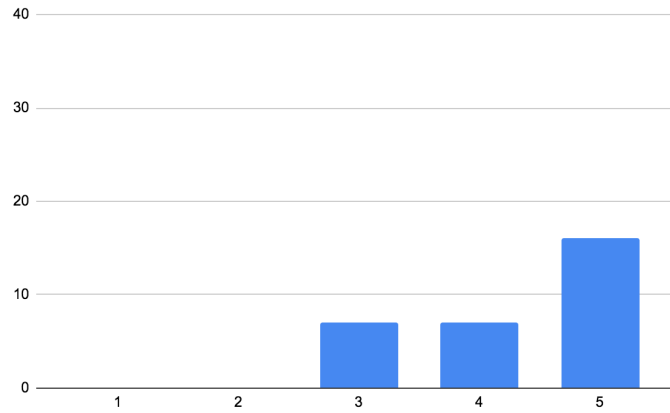


Women

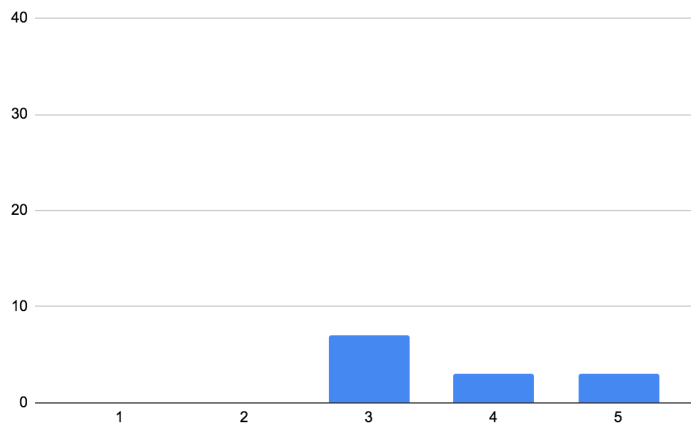


11. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being poor and 5 being excellent: How would you rate your experience taking this course online?

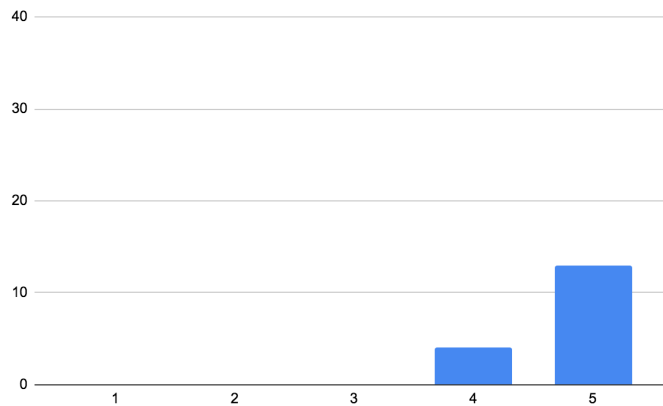
All Respondents



Those with Some In-Person Group

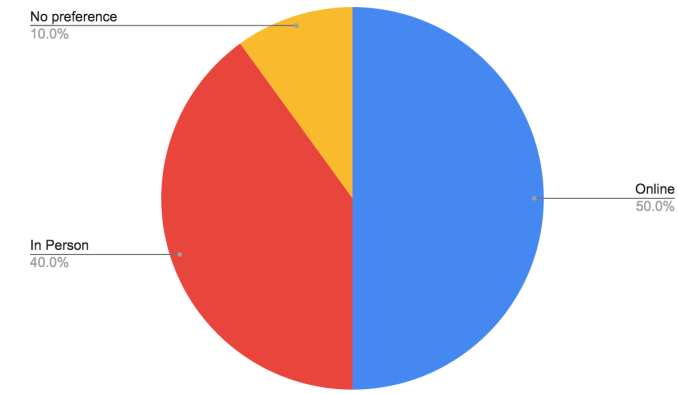


100% Online Group

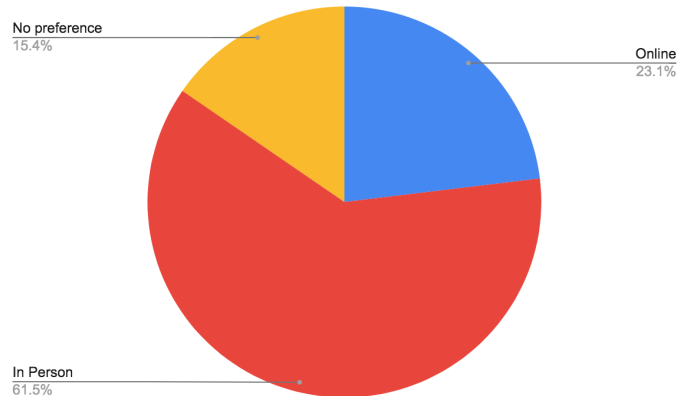


12. Given the choice, would you prefer to take this class online or in-person?

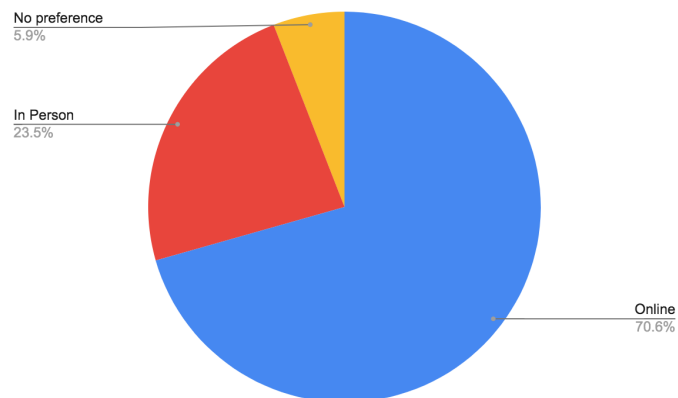
All Respondents



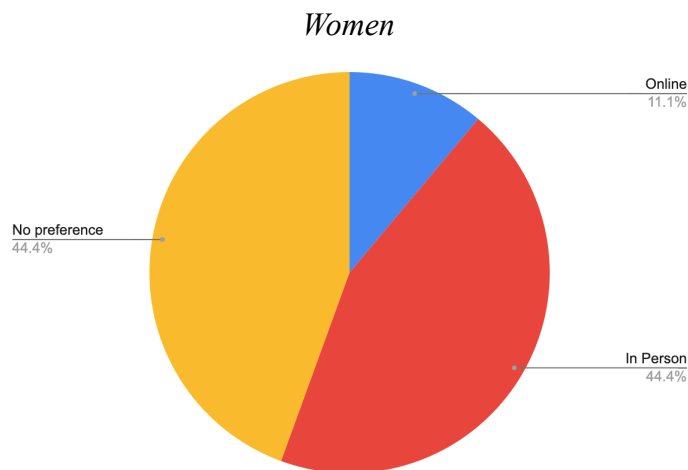
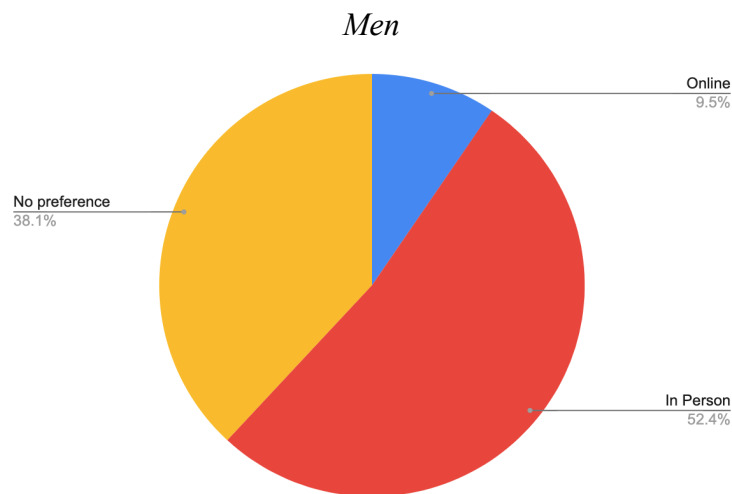
Those With Some In-Person Group



100% Online Group



12. Given the choice, would you prefer to take this class online or in-person? (Answers Continued)



**Please note:* This question was posed as a single-selection question with three options. About half of the respondents who answered they'd prefer to take the class in-person indicated this was their preference for connection, but they'd ultimately still choose to take the class online because they would not be able to make an in-person group work with their schedule.

13. As a graduate of the program, you are able to take FPI groups free for life. Do you ever see yourself taking advantage of this resource?

We left this question open-ended, and responses fell into the following categories.

- 12 - Yes, I would now.
- 16 - I would seek it out if I felt myself slipping into old or negative behaviors.
- 2 - No, I wouldn't.

Conversations with Current Women Participants

Family Peace Initiative is currently in the process of transitioning groups back to in-person from the online format. In addition to the survey calls made to graduates, we conducted open-ended qualitative interviews with current women group participants. Their responses are below and may add some depth and context to the information above.

Women Who Use Violence: Group Member Responses—6/15/21 & 6/19/21

Are you currently in a relationship with the same person you were with when the incident occurred that brought you to the program?

- 3 out of 20 reported yes

Online group experience versus in-person:

I person attended both ways. Her responses:

- Advantage of virtual:
 - I don't have to go and drive somewhere to be in group;
 - I can be with my kids until group time
- Advantage of in-person:
 - In-person I'm more alert and pay closer attention

Others have attended only virtual. Their responses:

- Advantages of virtual:
 - Makes it easier to communicate
 - Since I'm in my own comfort zone, I can speak freely
 - I can attend at times that I wouldn't be able to if in-person: like today—I'm sick but attending and engaged anyway
 - I can be more open in Zoom.
 - We have the comfort of our own home: it is easier to share this way.
 - This is very convenient
 - Better attendance this way—I know there would be times I couldn't make it in-person
- Advantages of in-person:
 - Can pull facilitator aside and tell them something personal going on with me
 - More possibility for one-on-one discussions
 - Believe more would be shared
 - It would feel more connected
 - I think it would feel more serious
 - It would be really nice to be in a real room together

- I'd be more comfortable
- Interruptions don't happen as much
- I could get more help on my workbook
- Disadvantages of in-person:
 - I'd be more shy
 - I would be worried—that would be a long time away from my kids, as I would have to travel an hour to and from group
 - Sometimes I have no sitter for my 3 kids—I don't know what I'd do
 - I have no car right now, and 3 kids.
 - I wouldn't be able to find a babysitter
 - I can't drive—don't know how I'd get to Topeka.
 - I'm a long-haul truck driver—there's no way I could attend in-person regularly
 - Child care would be difficult
 - I don't think it would seem as personable for me
 - That would be another issue financially for me
 - I would have to get vaccinated, wouldn't I?
- Disadvantages of virtual:
 - Distractions: Kids and privacy; door knocks; telephone rings; kids need something to eat
 - I'm computer illiterate, so Zoom is hard for me (age 55)
 - Using the computer is not my generation, so I'm always bumbling around (age 61)
 - I have connection issues sometimes
 - Sometimes the speaker gets frozen
 - I feel like I'm always on camera and on Zoom; for work, and then this.
 - I am shy, and on camera is hard for me
 - I always worry if I say something I'm interrupting someone else—I can't tell if they're about to say something

Have there been any complications with your partner due to you attending group through Zoom at home? (3 who are still with same partner)

- No. She knows this is my private time, and I'm in a private space for this every time.
- No. This is my time.
- No. The rule is to be in a private space, and I've made that point clear.

VICTIM RESPONSES

Contact with Victims of Record and Domestic Partners

Participants can speak directly to their experiences, but without speaking to victims of those we serve, the picture is incomplete. FPI has contact with victims of record and domestic partners, and is required by state standards to give victims opportunity to provide input into assessments and throughout the program. Victims gave input in the following multiple ways:

In April and May of 2020, 23 attempts were made by staff to specifically ascertain victim impact of FPI's transition about a month earlier (March 2020) to an online format of group for participants. These 23 calls were to victims of participants in week 25 of their attendance, and to victims of participants newly in the program. Of the 10 victims successfully reached, none expressed concern about the transition of their partner/ex-partner's group to online format. The reactions were largely positive in nature. For example, one victim who was living in a motel with her partner reported she would gladly leave the room and give him privacy, because it was important he continue to attend. Others expressed relief that their partner would not have to drive to attend the group, or be gone, or bring COVID home from the group meetings.

In addition, 692 victim contact calls were made to victims between April 1, 2020 and June 21, 2021, resulting in 149 conversations. During this time frame, all groups were online. While these calls were not made to ask specific questions regarding online format, victims were asked about their experiences with their partner/ex-partner being in a group and if they had any concerns. While other concerns were noted, a review of the notes on the 149 conversations produced no voiced concern related to online format. Five victims reported listening to group conversation with their partner's knowledge, but voluntarily. In all 5 cases the victim reported being very glad they had the opportunity to really hear what the group was like. One reported that everything her partner was sharing in the group was false.

Through our consultation with other programs, we have knowledge of one victim reporting being forced by her partner to sit and listen to the group meeting, off camera.

Of our 30 graduated respondents in this project, 12 indicated they were still living with the victim of record in their referring case or were living with a new partner. Where contact information was available and the victim had previously granted us permission to contact them (8 victims), we attempted to contact them in May and June 2021. Unfortunately, we were only able to reach three victims, resulting in one conversation at this time, and another scheduled for later. The conversation was with a male victim, who reported that he believed his offender would

have probably learned more had she been required to go to an in-person group. He reported that they are still in contact and there has been no more abusive behavior toward him, and he is not aware of any abusive behavior by her toward anyone else.

Limitations

This sample of data has its limitations in terms of size of participant data set. There is potential for future data collection and research to better understand the advantages and shortcomings of conducting battering intervention groups remotely.

All who were surveyed attended the same battering intervention program, the FPI Program in Kansas. This program uses a trauma-focused, cognitive-behavioral, gender-responsive curriculum. The responses by participants and victims of other programs, with other curriculum and practices could be quite different.

The results might also be different in locations that have different policies and laws. Kansas statutory structure, rules and regulations have resulted in the courts requiring domestic violence offenders to get an assessment from a certified battering intervention program, and follow the recommendations. This distinction allows programs to determine those who do not use a pattern of domination and control as inappropriate for the program. Consequently, victims can be determined as inappropriate for attendance. Many states do not practice this distinction, and have victims being required to attend battering intervention groups, creating additional dangers for them when an online format is used.

Discussion and Closing Thoughts

Preference for in-person or remote groups varied largely based on the format they were familiar with. It was also based on the participant's personality and life-circumstance. Those who self-described as introverted stated a preference for online group, while those who indicated they were more extroverted stated they would prefer to be in-person. There was some correlation between profession and stated ease of use with the technology. It became noticeable that those who mentioned working white-collar jobs more often expressed greater familiarity and comfort with Zoom, while those who mentioned working blue-collar jobs more often expressed difficulty using Zoom. There was no correlation between stated profession and preference for online or in-person group, however. Perhaps more important than preference, the most significant insights with potential implications for the future of battering intervention groups were the barriers removed by providing group online. Regardless of gender, respondents shared that remote groups allowed them to complete the requirements of the program whereas their childcare and work responsibilities would not have allowed them to do so otherwise. Overall, the respondents

stated they prefer in-person, though their life circumstances may dictate the necessity for an online option.

Victims expressed virtually no concern that their partner/ex-partner was attending an online program. In spite of all precautions taken to protect privacy and confidentiality, the concern for privacy violation with online group meetings appears to be somewhat valid. Interestingly, information received from victims served by FPI indicates the impact on the victims appears to be to their advantage rather than their detriment.