

Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence

**Technology Safety Program  
Second Year Report  
Findings and Future Steps**

November, 2005

**“I look at the benefits of technology in a whole  
different/more guarded way.”**

*Survivor and Tech Safety Program Participant*

## In This Report

**Overview:** Provides a brief summary of the role technology plays in the lives of domestic and sexual violence survivors. This section explains how the Technology Safety Project evolved and states the goals of the project.

**Project Methodology:** Explains the evolution and thought process of creating a technology safety program that focuses on education, advocacy, and sustainability. Provides project evaluation methods and demographics on the first year's pilot sites.

**Statewide & National Impact:** Discusses the impact of technology safety training with advocates in domestic violence and sexual assault agencies statewide.

**Major Accomplishments:** Discusses the impact and awareness technology safety information and training has made on all services to survivors.

**Challenges:** Looking at challenges and barriers faced by women and advocate agencies in Washington State that includes data collection and information systems.

**Key Discoveries:** A summary of information that emerged from this project.

**Independent Evaluation:** In order to assess our progress to date, the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence contracted with Jerry Finn, University of Washington in Tacoma, Social Work Program, to independently review and analyze the data collected.

**Future Steps:** This section draws conclusions from the data submitted through the evaluations of both survivors and advocates as well as recommended future initiatives.

**Appendix:** Questions and tabulated responses of all pre - and post-training evaluations for 2004-2005.

## Acknowledgements

A simple thank you can not express the gratitude and appreciation held for the survivors and advocates who have participated in this ongoing project. Your willingness to inform the work we do through this project continues to help mold better models and shape practices to keep survivors and their children as safe as possible in the "IT" age.

The collaboration with the Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs and the Washington Violence Against Women Network has been instrumental in helping reach advocates and survivors across the state of Washington with technology safety information. A special thanks to The National Network to End Domestic Violence: *Safety Net Project* team. Their national leadership on the safe and strategic use of technology has led the way for our work.

This project would not be possible without funding from the **Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation** and **Verizon Wireless**. We are grateful for their support and commitment improving the lives of domestic and sexual assault survivors.

### **Project Background/Methodology**

Technology used as a strategic tool is new to domestic violence and sexual assault advocacy. Educating domestic and sexual violence advocates about the benefits and risks of technology to build a solid base of knowledge on the issues is critical to helping survivors access needed resources and plan for their safety. Workshops on the Safe and Strategic Use of Technology were offered to all agencies in our state during this reporting period, via two regional trainings and two state-wide conferences. Evaluations on these training score the information and presenters as excellent and comment that more information and trainings on technology benefits and risks are needed. Programs that were chosen as pilot sites attended at least one of these trainings, as well as one-on-one training with the project manager at the time of equipment install. To facilitate survivors' direct access to the Internet and other resources, each pilot site was provided with a computer, all-in-one printer/fax/scanner/copier, Internet access, additional phone line if necessary, and Microsoft Office Professional software. The project budget provided for equipment, installation, additional computer support if needed, and Internet access for one year from the date of site installation.

Technology Advocates working in pilot sites engaged survivors in the project at an appropriate time during service provision at their agency, by utilizing the power point presentation *Survivor's Guide to Technology Safety*. This guide educates survivors on utilizing technology to access resources and information and includes tips on how technology can be used to monitor and individual's activities.

Tech Advocates at pilot sights also utilized pieces of the PowerPoint presentation in support group settings over a period of time to increase awareness and encourage clients to access the pilot site computer to develop new skills, research resources, and practice "safer" technology techniques.

The *Survivor's Guide* asks clients to voluntarily fill out a pre evaluation on current knowledge and comfort level with various technology. Upon completion of the presentation, they are asked to fill out a post evaluation of the information presented. The guide provides a direct hyperlink to a password protected web based survey. Clients completed the survey either on line or on paper, and the Tech Advocates ensured that all responses were entered into the web-based system.

To date, the project has a total of 12 pilot sites, five that were installed during Year 1 and seven during Year 2. The initial sites are being monitored as they progress into sustainability beyond grant supported activities. The Year 2 sites are actively engaged with grant funds and are monitored through email, phone, and if necessary, onsite support from the project manager.

### **State and National Work**

Washington State continues to be a leader in bringing education and information on technology benefits and risks to a grassroots level. Nationally, this project is seen as a model for other states. As technology evolves and advances, the resources that are available to the domestic violence field must be kept relevant. With the integration of emerging technologies, such as internet telephone (VoIP), bluetooth technologies, and Wi-Fi access, the project manager has continued to update and create educational tools that are used both locally and nationally.

Recognizing the impact of technology on all survivors, the Washington Violence Against Women Network (WAVAWnet) has translated the *Survivor's Guide to Technology Safety* into Spanish, Korean, Chinese, Russian and Vietnamese. All versions of the guide are posted on partnet, a private section of the WAVAWnet website used by domestic violence and sexual assault victim advocates.

As a result of training on technology related stalking, requests for technical assistance have increased. The project manager helps advocates connect with resources that can assist them with stalking cases and provides information on safety planning and evidence collection.

As Washington implements 211, our agency is mindful of the potential impact this system may have on existing services. We are working with and monitoring 211 to make sure adequate support is in place for victims who may be accessing this referral service once it is active.

### **Major Accomplishments**

Statistical analysis alone does not accurately convey the impact the project has had on how we as a "social change movement" provide advocacy and support to survivors. Stats coupled with advocate surveys draw a clearer picture of the value technology plays in victim safety, services and delivery.

*Education of survivors and allies.* Since the inception of this project, advocates at pilot sites have provided training and/or information to 598 individual staff and volunteers on the benefits and risks of technology. Agencies selected as pilot sites have embraced the information and are incorporating it into already existing services. Pilot sites have provided information in a group setting, community or otherwise to an additional 105 individuals. As technology issues gain importance, agencies are seeing the need to educate allies about the impact technology plays on domestic violence and sexual assault survivors and are actively working with allies to increase access to resources in a safe and strategic manner.

For the past two years, the project has trained at the statewide Office of Crime Victims Advocacy Conference which draws people from the fields of crime victim advocacy, law enforcement, and prosecution. It is essential that a wrap-around approach be taken to keep victims safe and hold abusers accountable.

*Safe access to technology helps survivor's research options* Almost all participants (89.6%) learned tips for safer technology use. Approximately half of the respondents made progress on connecting with community resources and learning skills to share with their children.

*Safe access increased survivor's independence through employment & skills training.* Over 70% of the participants learned new job skills, were looking for employment opportunities or using the computer to help find a job. In many of the rural pilot sites, access to a safe computer is limited. Many areas lack access to a computer lab, public library or work computer that would not be monitored, making resource research a potential barrier. Advocates reported that clients' direct use of the computer and internet access at the pilot sites increased their ability to help more clients in crisis because survivors could research their own options.

*Safety planning.* As indicated by the pre/post evaluations from survivors, a significantly high number of women are harassed and monitored by abusers in their electronic communication. Advocates have indicated that training on technology has spurred them to start asking clients specific questions about survivor's use of technology and to incorporate information on safer technology use into the safety planning process. Many survivors now have a clear understanding of how they have been found by their abusers. Together advocates and survivors have been able to use technology to their advantage. By using the web they can find information about themselves and their abusers, set up new and safer email accounts for child custody issues, and scan in resumes to attach electronically in applying for jobs. For instance, one tech advocate helped a woman set up a voice over internet protocol telephone number with an east coast area code to throw a false location trail.

*Sharing technology safety with children.* Children have access to technology in a variety of personal, social and school environments. The tech safety project has been successful in educating survivors of the risks technology plays in their safety and the safety of their children. Children fall victim to stalking and tracking far more often than statistics document. They become pawns in abusive relationships in which they are the conduit of information for the abuser. Children have an underdeveloped sense of privacy in a world vastly web and data based. As surveillance continues to increase due to national security and overzealous marketers, it becomes harder to keep personal information private. Over 52% of survivors that participated in this program felt it necessary to educate their children and teach them new skills regarding technology safety.

*Agency training on technology safety.* All pilot sites have committed to adding the *Survivor's Guide* to their list of agency training requirements for advocates and volunteers. The Department of Social and Health Services Program Manager for domestic violence supports the use of this guide as an advocate training tool for domestic violence agencies.

## Challenges

This project is not without challenges. At all sites, advocates struggle with a chaotic, crisis oriented service environment in which unpredictable shelter stays and widely diverse client needs make it difficult to maximize the benefits of the project for all individuals. In agencies that are not pilot sites, tech issues become a low priority, even though data shows that educating survivors on tech issues is timely and needed. The lack of “safe” computers for client use in agencies causes less interest for agencies to incorporate tech safety into existing services.

Rural areas have much greater flexibility when it comes to client services. A less transient population and an aging community bring new challenges to providing service and information. Support group sessions are utilized to increase awareness regarding tech issues and encourage client use of the computer at pilot sites.

Language barriers make it difficult to incorporate tech safety information into existing services. Although we offer this information in five different languages, the pre and post evaluations were not translated. Funding to translate pre/post evaluations could potentially give us more accurate demographic information. Also, most pilot sites are located in rural areas that have low populations of people of color and/or where people of color are underserved.

Clients that have participated in the pre and post evaluations learned a great deal about technology safety in viewing the *Survivor's Guide*. Although the guide discusses the resources and benefits of technology, clients experience both fear and learning. Trying to balance the use of technology for resources and lessen the fear of being stalked and tracked helped encourage clients to engage in research and internet activities that would help them gain skills, knowledge and independence.

Lack of resources and information on the impact technology has on service providers creates barriers to survivors receiving adequate protection. Many advocates that have attended our trainings are now the tech expert in their community. Many rural areas lack the resources, information or expertise to investigate and/or document technology related crimes. Thus stalking crimes are not being charged. It is imperative that allies are educated and resourced to protect survivors.

With the implementation of HMIS (Homeless Management Information System) from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), agencies are struggling with their local continua of care to participate in the data collection without tracking individuals specifically. HMIS would like all agencies that deal with homeless populations to track shelter stays and services rendered to study the causes of homelessness. Agencies are aware of the safety issues survivors face if they are being tracked in any system.

### **Project Adjustments**

The project was able to implement 2 additional pilot sites in 2005. The availability of funds in the project budget, due to under spending on anticipated costs, allowed us to increase the number of sites. The two additional sites were chosen from original applications submitted. No other adjustments were made to the ongoing monitoring of sites.

### **Key Discoveries**

Internet chat rooms, considered a teenage phenomena, has mainstreamed to all ages. In fact tech advocates in our rural areas reported that many of their older clients were engaging in chat rooms to socialize and reach out. The need for further education on privacy, chat room profile setup and safety issues needs to be addressed.

Internet dating among survivors at pilot sites increased. Tech advocates reported that many of their clients are actively searching these “match making” sites and possibly engaging in unsafe privacy practices. Balancing survivors’ self-determination with internet safety issues is an ongoing challenge.

The pre and post evaluations indicate that access to computers and the internet is not a barrier for most survivors. In fact, our current data shows that a majority of internet users are accessing a home computer. Advocates at pilot sites agree that many of the women that take the pre and post evaluation use computers on a regular basis. Having access at their agency or shelter has provided “safer” communication than that of a home computer. Home computers are at risk of being monitored at a higher rate than other access points. Generally, home computers have fewer security measures than public or business networks. Many survivors indicated that they would change some of their on-line behaviors so that they are less likely to be stalked.

A large number of survivors accessed the computer to gain independence through employment. Searching for jobs and increasing or learning new skills for employment ranked high for survivors’ accomplishments in the project. Advocates noted that many employers are requesting electronic submission of resumes and job applications and that survivors’ learned how to create file attachments in the course of their on-site computer use.

### **Independent Evaluation**

The Technology Safety Project has allowed survivors to connect with valuable and needed resources to enhance and improve their lives and the lives of their children. The statistical analysis on the information is not surprising. Raw data now verifies the need to continue educating advocates and others that work with victims of crime on the safe and strategic use of technology on a basic and more advanced level.

In order to assess our progress to date, the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence contracted with Jerry Finn, University of Washington in Tacoma, Social Work Program, to independently review and analyze the data collected. The following includes his findings.

### **Report highlights:**

- The Technology Safety Project has exceeded the outcomes of its goals and objectives.
- A sizeable majority of women are harassed and monitored in their electronic communications, thus education on technology safety is timely and needed.
- Vast majority of survivors access a computer from home.
- Over half the respondents viewed computer safety information as important to share with their children.
- Technology issues should be a regular part of assessment and safety training for women who use computers.
- The program was quite successful in educating survivors on the use of technology to track them. Over 95% learned more or a great deal more, than they knew before the training.
- A large number of women accessed the computer for job training, job hunting, housing and connecting with other support services. Almost ½ of the respondents increased their ability to find a job online.

The Technology Safety Project was designed to increase awareness and knowledge of technology safety issues for domestic violence victims, survivors, and staff. Specifically, the program sought to meet the objectives outlined below. Data from the independent program evaluation related to victims and survivors is highlighted beneath each objective.

To date the Technology Safety Project has exceeded each of its anticipated outcome measures.

### **Objective A: Increase safe and meaningful computer and Internet access for domestic violence survivors in Washington.**

Safe computer and Internet access for domestic violence survivors includes the availability of a system that has not been compromised by the perpetrator. Meaningful access to these same technologies includes educating survivors on the resources available and helping them access these resources in a way that minimizes their risk of being stalked and tracked.

#### **Outcome**

50% of domestic violence survivors receiving services at the pilot sites will gain safe access to technology and the basic skills to use it.

70% of survivors using computers at the pilot sites will report helpful training and increased comfort and meaningful use of technology.

- *The vast majority of participants are satisfied with the program with 92.5% reporting high satisfaction (4 or 5).*
- *The program was quite successful in providing this education with 95.6% of participants learning more than they knew before or a great deal (4 or 5). Almost half of respondents (49.3%) also view the computer as an important way to share skills with their children.*

**OBJECTIVE B: Reduce the risk posed by abusers by educating survivors about tech safety and privacy.**

**Outcome:**

70% of survivors using computers at the pilot sites will report increased knowledge of how abusers may track them through computer/Internet use.

- *Almost all participants, 89.6%, learned tips for safer technology use.*
- *From pretest to posttest, participants significantly increased their confidence in all areas (of technology safety) except using the computer to communicate with friends and family. That item was already at a high level at pretest. The highest increases in confidence are in areas of computer safety with approximately two-thirds showing increased confidence in ability to maintain email and the Internet safety as well as virus protection.*

**OBJECTIVE C: Increase the ability of survivors to help themselves and their children through technology.**

**Outcome:**

50% of survivors receiving services at the pilot sites will increase their knowledge of how computers/Internet can help them meet their goals (such as legal protections, housing, GED, job search, or relocation).

- *Approximately half or the respondents made progress on connecting with community resources (55.2%)*
- *52.2% learned new skills to share with children.*
- *49.7% increased their confidence in using the Internet to find a job.*
- *A number of women also reported progress on job skills, with 35.8% learning new job skills, 20.1% looking for a job, and 14.2% using the computer to help find a job.*
- *55.2% increased ability to research safety options and connect with community services.*  
*16.4% used technology to meet goals related to looking for housing*

**Conclusions**

The following conclusions can be reached based on the evaluation data:

- Many survivors are using technology, especially cell phones, computers, and the Internet.
- The training was seen as highly useful by the majority of participants and results in improved confidence in using technology.
- Survivors believe that women need technology safety information.
- The training increased participant's awareness and knowledge of technology safety issues.

- The training supported victims and survivors in meeting needs such as job hunting, learning job skills, house hunting, and connecting with community resources.
- The training is needed given the proportion of women who have experienced technology-related difficulties.
- Providing *safe* access to computers and the Internet is seen as valuable by survivors.
- The training is both useful and frightening for some survivors. The increased awareness of danger increases their confidence, but also increases their sense of danger. Appropriate supportive services are needed and fears should be addressed as part of the training.

A very small number of respondents did not find the training useful. In addition, a small proportion of respondents did not increase their confidence in their technology skills as a result of the training. The project should investigate why this is the case. It is not known if this is because these respondents already knew the information, if the information was presented in a way that was not useful to them, if they simply found no need for the information, or other reasons. There may be implications for screening or training methods in learning more about those who do not benefit from the training.

### **Additional Comments**

The Technology Safety Program is ever evolving. Best practices in safety planning and advocacy need to include the benefits and risks of technology. Incorporating technology into existing practices must be intentional. As society continues to adapt and accept surveillance as “a normal” function of daily life, the need for continued education on privacy is vital to helping survivors navigate a safer path to freedom.

### **Future steps:**

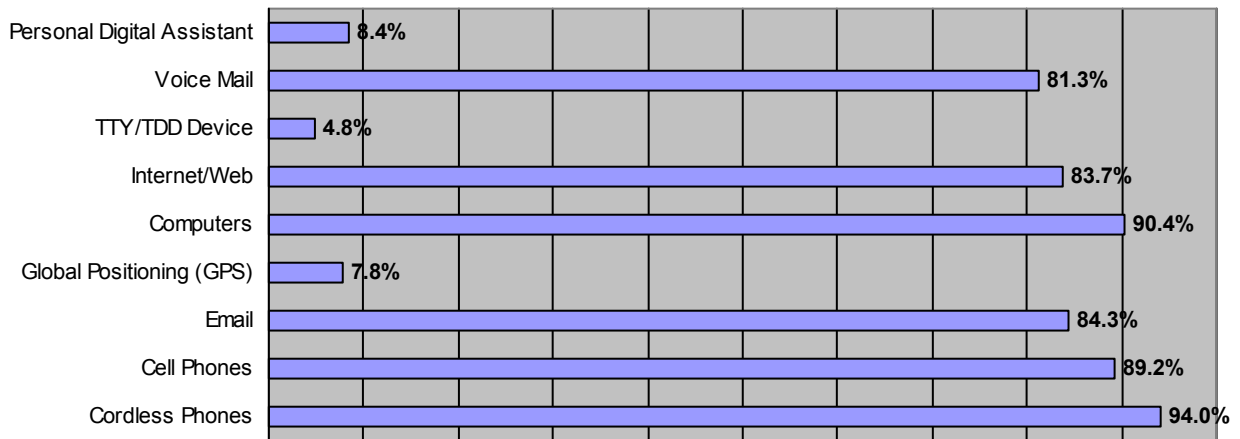
- Revise and update sections of the Survivor’s Guide to stay abreast of new and emerging technologies.
- Continue to promote the benefits of technology to increase use of resources and diminish fears.
- Continue to educate advocates through our newsletter column “Geek Girl Tech Tips”.
- Capitalize on training opportunities in Washington and nationally to educate advocates, victims of crime, police and prosecutors about technology benefits and risks.
- Continue to advocate for more resources and funding to address stalking and technology related stalking for all cops, prosecutors and advocates.

# Appendix—Evaluation Questions and Responses for 2004-2005

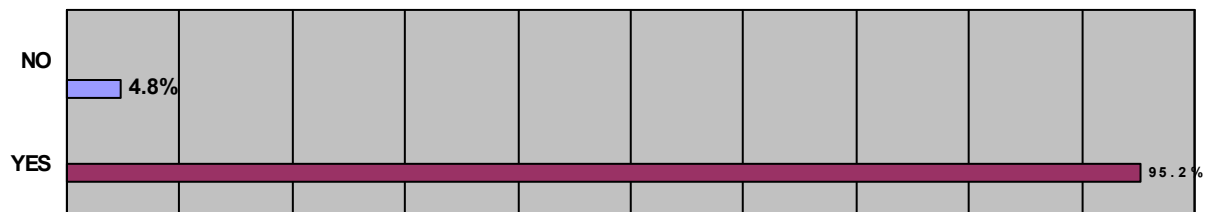
## Pre-Training Evaluation Questions and Responses

Participants = 166

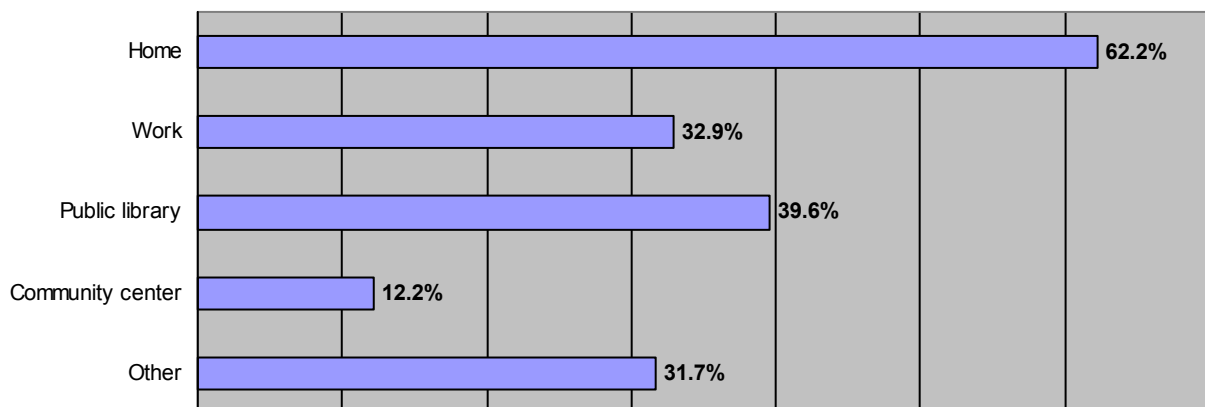
**Please check all the technology you are comfortable using.**



**Do you have access to a computer or the Internet?** Total respondents: 166



**If you answered yes to the above question, please check one or more of the following options to tell us where you use the computer or Internet.** Total respondents: 164



### How confident are you at doing the following?

Total respondents: 165

(1 = Not Confident; 2 = A Little Confident; 3 = Somewhat Confident; 4 = Quite Confident; 5 = Absolutely Confident)

	1	2	3	4	5
Sending an email without giving away your location	<b>37%</b>	19%	20%	13%	11%
Creating an anonymous email account not giving out your private information (Hotmail or Yahoo)	<b>43%</b>	15%	16%	12%	14%
Protecting your computer from viruses and hackers	<b>35%</b>	25%	20%	10%	9%
Protecting your privacy and personal information on the Internet or while using the computer	<b>35%</b>	23%	21%	10%	10%
Using the computer to communicate with friends and family	11%	4%	20%	<b>39%</b>	27%
Using the Internet to find a job or housing	<b>28%</b>	14%	22%	15%	21%

### How important are the following reasons/goals for using the computer and Internet?

Total respondents: 165

(1 = Not Important; 2 = A Little Important; 3 = Important; 4 = Very Important; 5 = Highly Important)

	1	2	3	4	5
Personal money management (online banking)	<b>53%</b>	12%	16%	7%	12%
Look for housing	<b>37%</b>	6%	23%	14%	19%
Look for a job	22%	13%	19%	18%	<b>28%</b>
Research safety options/connection with other community services	8%	13%	<b>37%</b>	17%	24%
Learn new skills to share with my children	23%	4%	24%	<b>30%</b>	19%
Learn new job skills	11%	7%	<b>31%</b>	23%	27%
Learn English	<b>75%</b>	1%	7%	7%	10%

### How useful are the following in supporting you in accomplishing your goals?

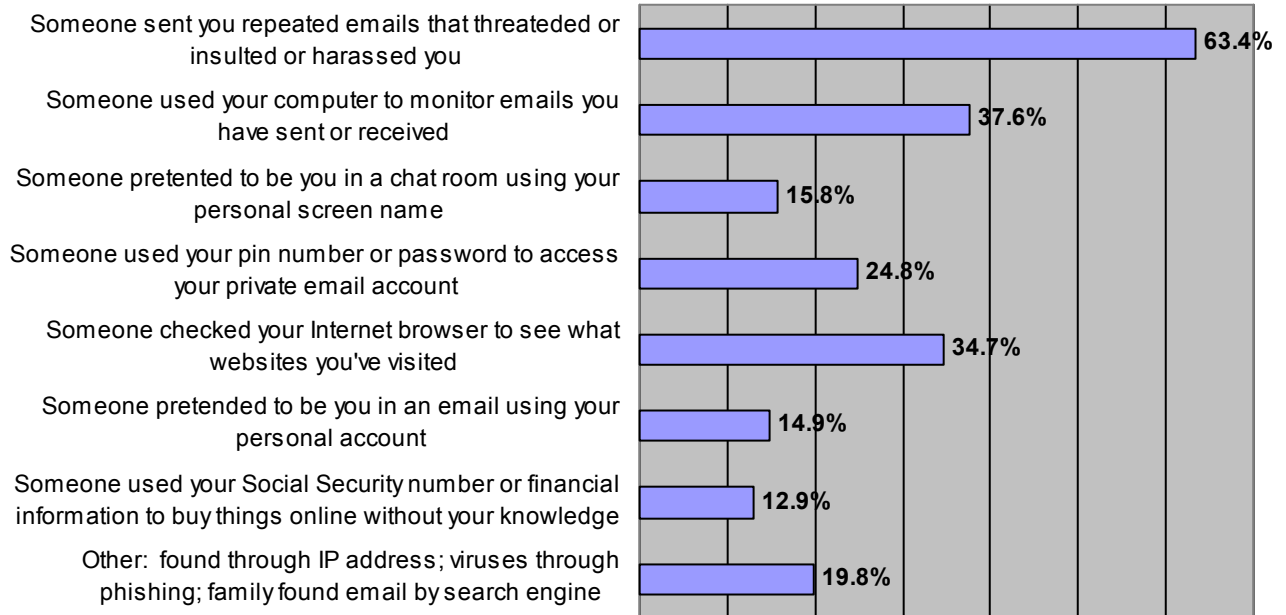
Total respondents: 165

(1 = Not Useful; 2 = A Little Useful; 3 = Useful; 4 = Very Useful; 5 = Highly Useful)

	1	2	3	4	5
Provide tips on safer technology use	6%	5%	31%	23%	<b>35%</b>
Provide tips on computer and Internet use I can share with my children	<b>26%</b>	4%	20%	25%	25%
Provide a safe space for me to use the computer and Internet	4%	4%	28%	31%	<b>33%</b>
Provide education and training discussion about computers and Internet technology	4%	5%	31%	27%	<b>33%</b>

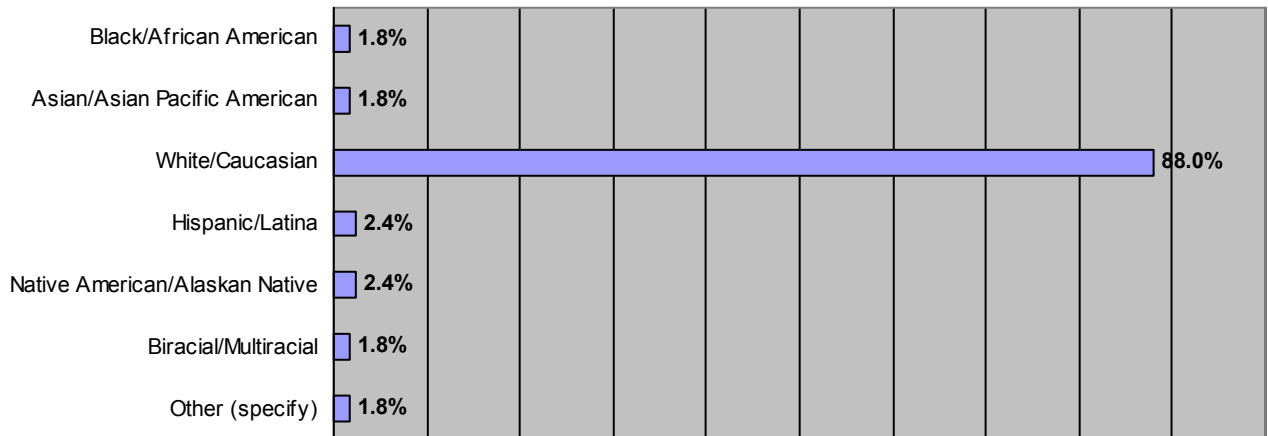
## Have any of the following ever happened to you? (please check all that apply)

Total respondents: 101



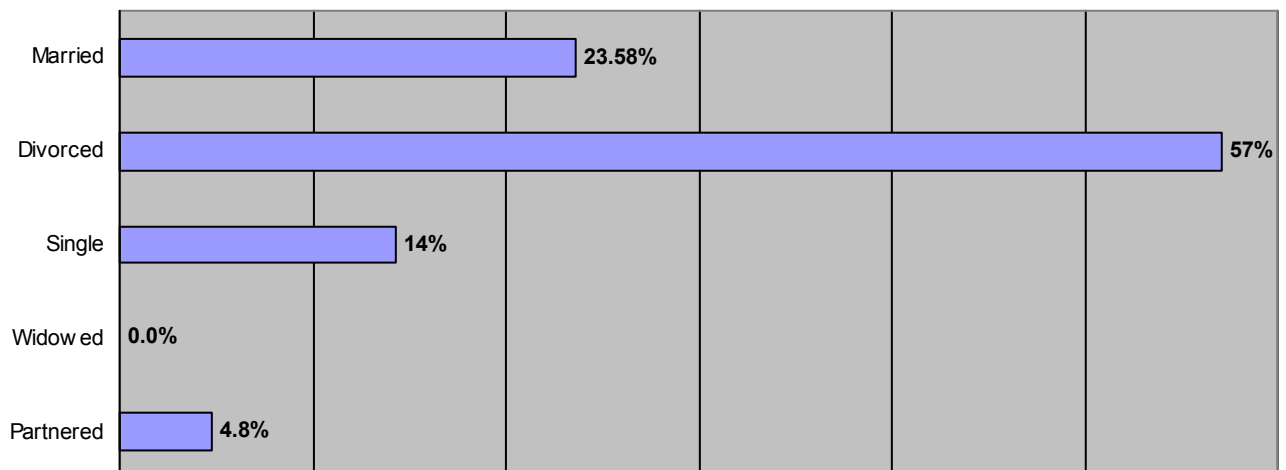
## Demographics

Total respondents: 166

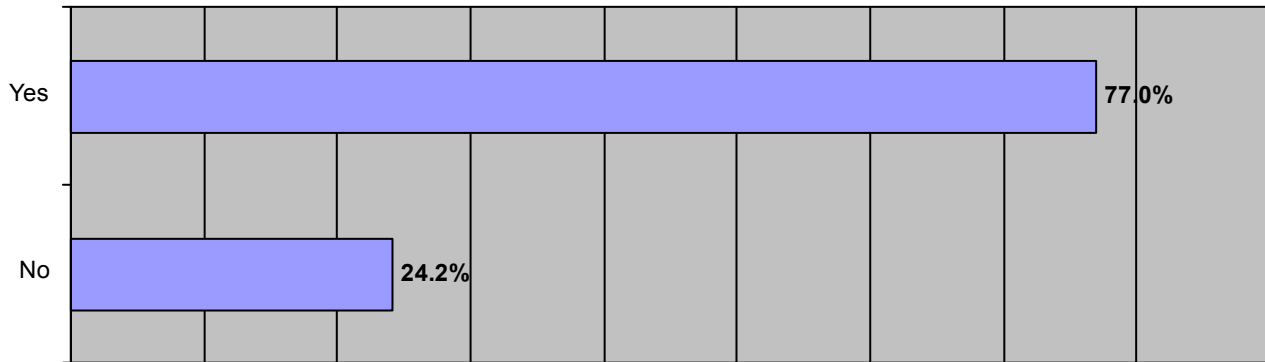


## Marital Status

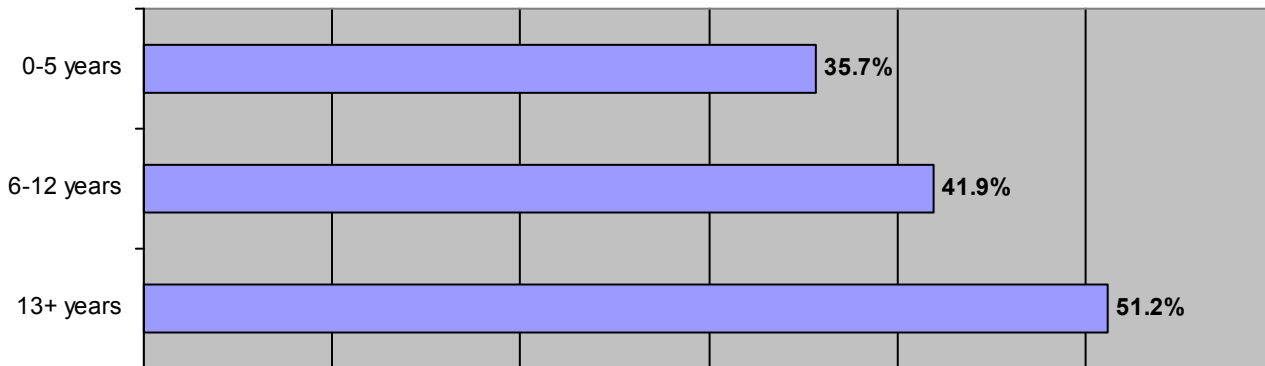
Total respondents: 163



**Do you have children? (includes biological, adopted or step-children)** Total Respondents: 165



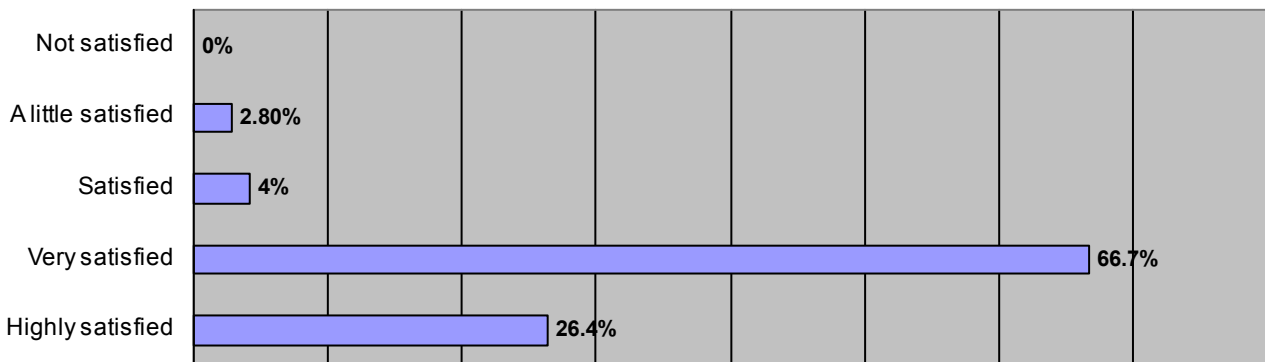
**If yes, what are your children's ages?** Total respondents: 129



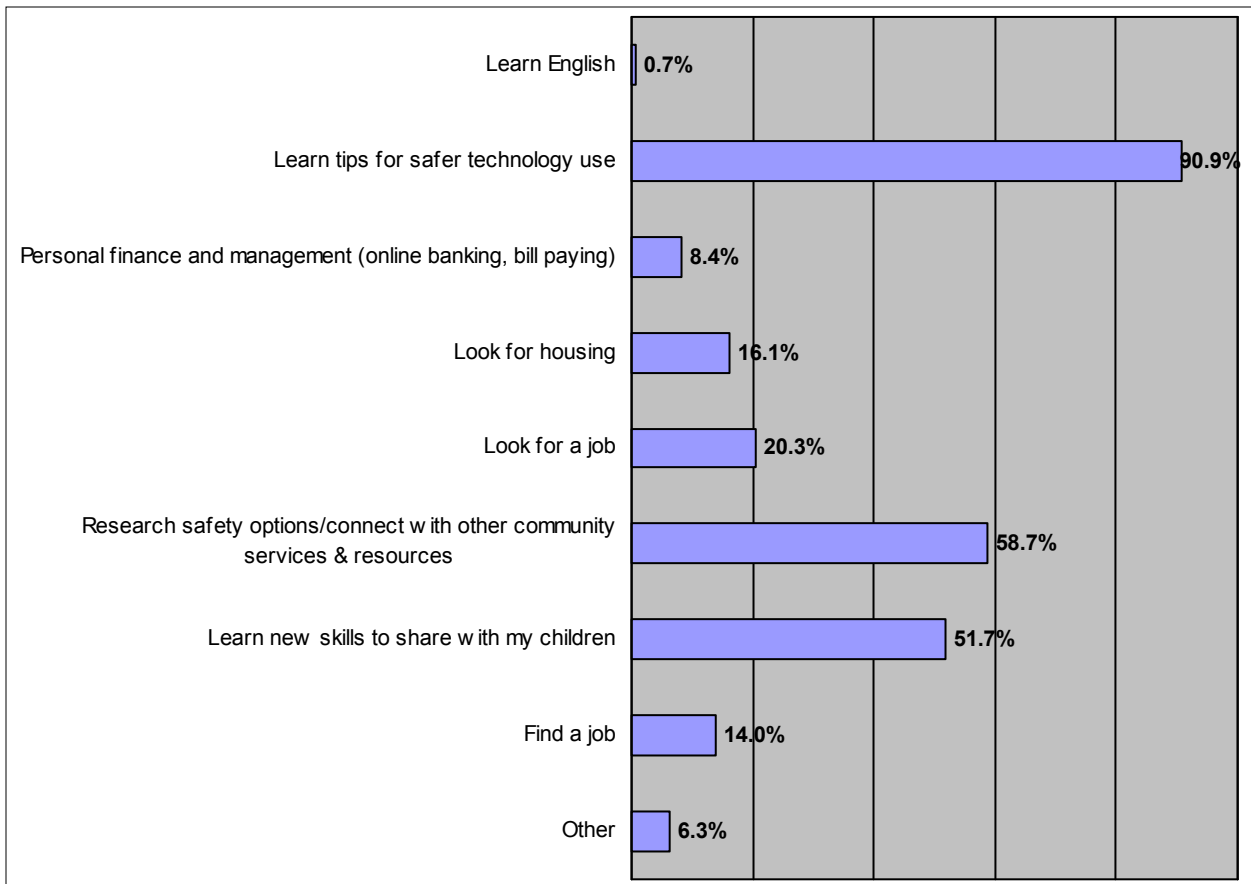
**Post-Training Evaluation Questions and Responses**

Participants = 143

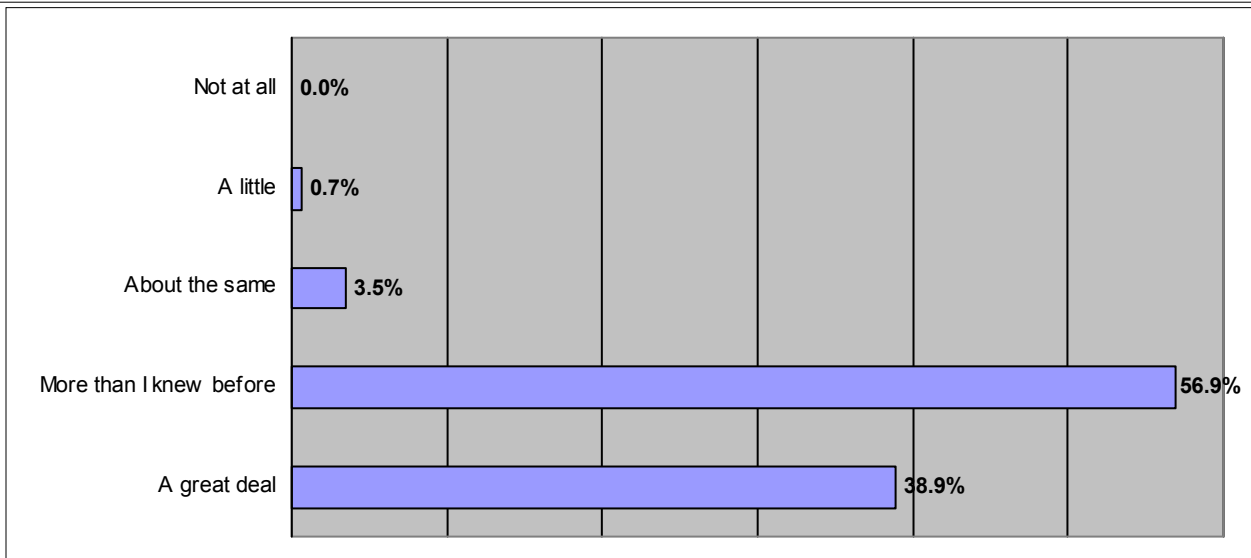
**On the scale below, rate your overall experience with our computer technology training.**



**After completing the program, what goals did you make progress on?  
(check all that apply)** Total respondents: 143



**After completing the program, how much do you feel you have learned about how abusers/partners may track your computer activities or Internet use?** Total respondents: 144



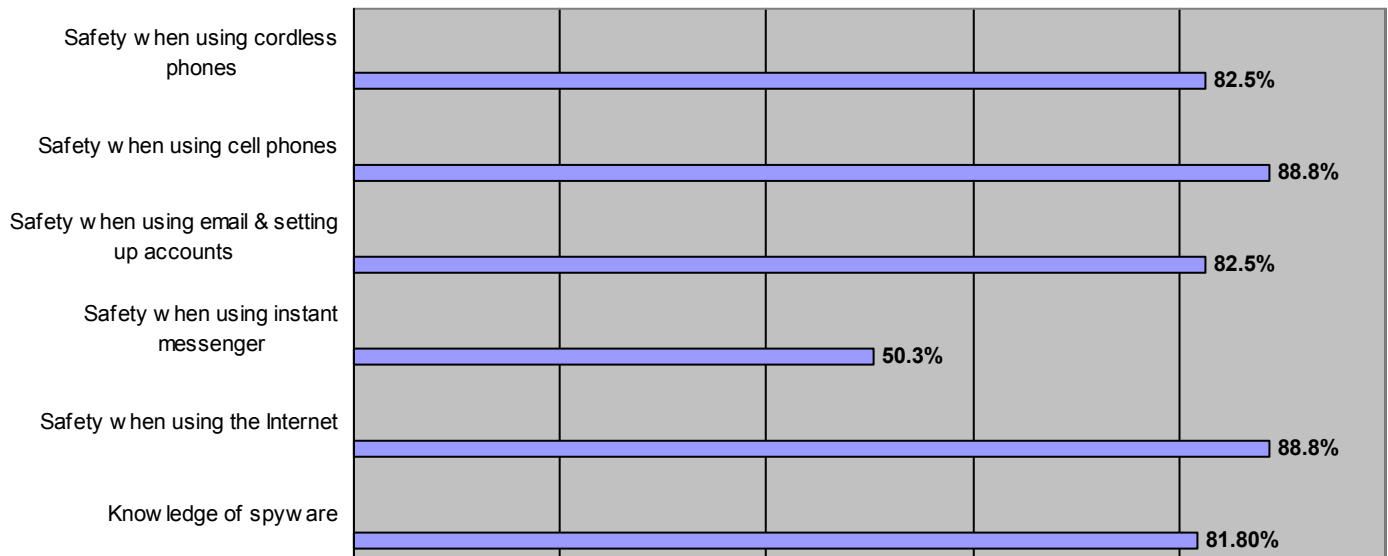
## After completing the technology training, how confident are you at doing the following?

Please rate your comfort level on a scale of 1 to 5. Total respondents: 144

	1 Not Comfortable	2 A Little Comfortable	3 Comfortable	4 More Comfortable	5 Really Comfortable
Sending an email without giving away your location	9%	15%	<b>28%</b>	25%	23%
Creating an anonymous email account not giving out your private information (Hotmail or Yahoo)	5%	17%	<b>29%</b>	24%	25%
Protecting your computer from viruses and hackers	8%	19%	24%	<b>34%</b>	15%
Sharing strategies or tips on the safer use of computers and Internet with children	3%	15%	32%	<b>34%</b>	16%
Protecting your privacy and personal information on the Internet or while using the computer	6%	19%	26%	<b>33%</b>	17%
Using the computer to communicate with friends and family	3%	5%	18%	<b>53%</b>	21%
Using the Internet to find a job or housing	13%	<b>27%</b>	24%	19%	17%

## Check the following tips, skills or strategies that were most helpful to you. (check all that apply)

Total respondents: 143



## What areas of technology do you think survivors and victims need to receive more information about?

(check all that apply) Total respondents: 143

