

**THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE  
BLIND: RAINN'S 2021 CLIMATE  
ASSESSMENT**

**PUBLIC REPORT  
JUNE 28, 2021**

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# **INTRODUCTION**

In December 2020, The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) engaged in conversations with the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) to discuss ways in which RAINN could support the NFB's initiatives to strengthen their sexual misconduct prevention and response programming. As part of this broader partnership, RAINN conducted a national Climate Assessment, starting in March 2021.

## **Partnership with RAINN**

The NFB is the transformative membership and advocacy organization of blind people. Founded in 1940, the NFB consists of various affiliates, chapters, and divisions in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico. The NFB coordinates different programs, services, and resources to defend the rights of blind Americans, provide information and support to blind children and adults, and build communities that create futures full of opportunities.

To conduct the Climate Assessment, the NFB engaged RAINN, the nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization. RAINN operates the National Sexual Assault Hotline and, to date, has supported more than 3.6 million survivors and their loved ones through its victim services programming. RAINN also works directly with organizations to improve their sexual misconduct prevention and response programming, with the goal of creating safer and healthier communities.

# Approach

RAINN's approach to service delivery is rooted in three core principles: victim-centered, trauma-informed, and fair and equitable.

Extensive research confirms that sexual violence is traumatic and has significant psychological, emotional, and physical effects on a victim.<sup>1</sup> RAINN employs a victim-centered, trauma-informed approach when developing and delivering programs and services that support survivors of sexual violence and their loved ones. RAINN's direct victim service experience provides unique and valuable insights related to a variety of issues that can affect health outcomes, including barriers and motivations for reporting or seeking services. RAINN's observations and proven approaches have been integrated into the survey assessment tool.

## Victim-Centered

Centering the victim in a response process means that the victim's needs and preferences related to their safety and well-being are the prioritized goals in all interactions. While some may argue that a victim-centered approach can create bias in investigation processes, the contrary has been found to be true in investigations of sexually violent crimes, that it instead ensures a sensitive, compassionate, and nonjudgmental delivery of services. The U.S. Departments of Justice and Homeland Security have

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<sup>1</sup> Kilpatrick, D.G. (2000). The mental health impact of rape. National Violence Against Women Prevention Research Center, Medical University of South Carolina. Retrieved June 7, 2021, from <https://mainweb-v.musc.edu/vawprevention/research/mentalimpact.shtml>

both adopted a victim-centered approach when investigating these types of crimes and believe that the adoption of this model is the key to successful investigations that are more likely to result in prosecutions.<sup>2</sup>

## **Trauma-Informed**

A trauma-informed approach is a strengths-based service delivery model grounded in responsiveness to the impact of trauma, emphasizing physical, psychological, and emotional safety for survivors and care providers, and promoting survivor empowerment.<sup>3</sup>

Further, a trauma-informed approach means understanding “the role that violence and victimization plays in the lives of most [victims] ... and to use that understanding to design service systems that accommodate the vulnerabilities of trauma survivors and allow services to be delivered in a way that will facilitate ... [victim] participation in treatment. [The] commitment is to provide services in a manner that is welcoming and appropriate to the special needs of trauma survivors.”<sup>4</sup>

## **Fair and Equitable**

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<sup>2</sup> United States Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office for Victims of Crime. (n.d.). Model standards for serving victims of crime. Retrieved June 7, 2021, from [https://www.ovc.gov/model-standards/program\\_standards.html](https://www.ovc.gov/model-standards/program_standards.html)

<sup>3</sup> Hopper, E.K., Bassuk, E.L., & Ollivet, J. (2010). Shelter from the storm: Trauma-informed care in homelessness services settings. *The Open Health Services and Policy Journal*, 3, 80-100. Retrieved June 7, 2021, from [http://www.traumacenter.org/products/pdf\\_files/shelter\\_from\\_storm.pdf](http://www.traumacenter.org/products/pdf_files/shelter_from_storm.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Harris, M., & Falot, R. (2001). Using trauma theory to design service systems. *New Directions for Mental Health Services*, 89, 4-5. San Francisco, CA, U.S.: Jossey-Bass.

A fair and equitable approach involves the equal, consistent, and fair application of policies and services to create an environment where every individual knows what is acceptable, feels they are valued, and is able to access services.

RAINN has leveraged best practices and statutory guidance in the development of the survey assessment tool. The U.S. Department of Justice's (DOJ) Office for Victims of Crime developed Model Standards for Serving Victims and Survivors of Crime, which lays out the core principles and practices that should be instituted when working with crime victims.<sup>5</sup> The tenets of these Model Standards from the DOJ are reflected throughout RAINN's assessment framework, in addition to RAINN's understanding from 27 years of service provision and research, as well as other state and federal guidelines.

## **Climate Assessment Survey Methods**

The goal of the Climate Assessment was to gather feedback on NFB community members' experiences related to sexual misconduct within the NFB community. The survey responses can serve as a baseline measurement for how the NFB community has received education and training and been provided access to information, policies, and services related to sexual misconduct, as well as how the NFB leadership has

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<sup>5</sup> United States Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office for Victims of Crime. (n.d.). Model standards for serving victims of crime. Retrieved June 27, 2019, from [https://www.ovc.gov/model-standards/program\\_standards.html](https://www.ovc.gov/model-standards/program_standards.html)

responded to reports of sexual misconduct within their ranks. Further, the data gathered from the survey can inform ongoing efforts to strengthen policies, increase training activities, and improve response mechanisms. If the NFB chooses to undertake subsequent climate assessments, the data described in this report will serve as a baseline against which to measure any changes that result from interventions.

## **Target Audience**

RAINN's Climate Assessment was designed specifically for the NFB. As such, the survey was designed to focus on individuals 18 years and older who are currently or formerly affiliated with the NFB. Minors and those who have no history of affiliation with the NFB were screened out in the beginning of the survey and directed to more appropriate resources, including the National Sexual Assault Hotline and the NFB's website.

## **EXCLUSION OF MINORS**

RAINN's Climate Assessment survey does not include minors for two key reasons. First, work involving minors frequently involves parental consent, which must often be obtained in writing. This was deemed to be outside the scope of this Climate Assessment and was further complicated by the primary goal of maintaining anonymity for survey respondents.

Second, RAINN staff are mandatory reporters, meaning that if any information were received regarding the sexual abuse of a minor, RAINN would be required to report that information to appropriate authorities, including law enforcement and/or child protective services. As this survey

asks respondents to disclose whether they have experienced sexual misconduct while affiliated with the NFB, this creates the inherent risk of soliciting information that could activate RAINN's mandatory reporting obligation. Definitions of reporting requirements vary from state to state, and some locations require very little information to trigger a report. As anonymity for the respondents is of utmost importance, the triggering of a mandatory report could necessitate a formal response from authorities, necessarily violating that anonymity.

## **Survey Development**

RAINN independently developed the Climate Assessment survey, using subject-matter expertise and relying on knowledge and insight gained from a demonstrated history of supporting survivors and their loved ones, as well as consulting with various organizations on prevention and response. Particular care was given toward asking questions in a victim-centered, trauma-informed way, with resources and information for support, both internal and external, provided as respondents navigated the survey.

The survey was divided into nine parts:

1. Introduction
2. Demographics
3. Training, Education, and Awareness
4. Reporting Sexual Misconduct
5. Incidents of Sexual Misconduct and Prevalence at the NFB
6. Individual Experience of the NFB's Response Process
7. Individual Experience of the NFB's Response Process: Report Filed

8. Individual Experience of the NFB's Response Process: No Report Filed
9. Conclusion

Each section was designed to target a specific aspect of the NFB's prevention and response programming, as well as to gain insight into community members' unique relationships with the NFB and their perceptions of both the broader issue of sexual misconduct and the NFB's programming relevant to it.

Once the initial survey draft was developed, it was provided to key stakeholders within the NFB community for feedback, to bolster efforts toward ensuring the survey was both applicable and accessible to the NFB community to the greatest extent possible.

## **Survey Distribution**

The survey was distributed to the NFB community via online survey and telephone system. The online survey was developed directly by RAINN using SurveyMonkey.com and then translated into the telephone version through use of an independent contractor within the NFB.

To aid the NFB community members in accessing the survey, as well as to provide additional resources and information regarding the NFB's current resources and initiatives around sexual misconduct prevention and response, the survey was posted on a temporary website page, provided by the NFB. To encourage participation in the survey, the NFB contacted

community members using several different methods, including email, weekly newsletters, and social media postings.

RAINN also provided survey respondents with a Google form for technical assistance or other questions related to the Climate Assessment. This Google form was monitored solely by RAINN, with RAINN staff responsible for responding to any questions or requests. This form was available on the NFB's website and linked to directly from the survey, as well as in other communications provided to NFB community members regarding the survey (e.g., email, newsletter).

## **Participation and Confidentiality**

Participation in the survey was entirely voluntary. Invitations to participate in the online or telephone survey were provided by the NFB to all community members, reducing the likelihood that specific groups of individuals would feel pressured to participate or respond. RAINN did not ask for any information that would allow survey respondents to be identified based on their individual responses to specific questions. All data was provided directly to RAINN. RAINN then presented the results to the NFB in aggregate, so that responses could not be used to determine an individual's identity.

## **Glossary of Terms**

The following terms were defined for participants within the Climate Assessment.

- **Ageism:** Stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination based on age.
- **Cisgender**<sup>6</sup>: A term used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with those typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth.
- **Disclosure:** When a victim/survivor shares information about an incident of sexual misconduct they experienced, for example by telling a friend who is also an NFB member; this could involve filing an official report with the NFB but does not necessarily involve any official reporting.
- **Employee:** A person who is paid for work by the NFB with a full-time or part-time contract of employment or otherwise agreed upon terms.
- **Gender Binary**<sup>7</sup>: A system in which gender is constructed into two strict categories of male or female. Gender identity is expected to align with the sex assigned at birth and gender expressions and roles fit traditional expectations.

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<sup>6</sup> Human Rights Campaign. Retrieved on June 7, 2021, from <https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms>

<sup>7</sup> Human Rights Campaign. Retrieved on June 7, 2021, from <https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms>

- **Gender Identity**<sup>8</sup>: One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.
- **Homophobia**<sup>9</sup>: The fear and hatred of or discomfort with people who are attracted to other people of the same sex.
- **Member**: An individual who has paid the annual membership fee and is in good standing with the NFB.
- **Microaggressions**<sup>10</sup>: Brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults toward people in marginalized groups.
- **Non-binary**<sup>11</sup>: An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people do. Non-binary can also be

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<sup>8</sup> Human Rights Campaign. Retrieved on June 7, 2021, from <https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms>

<sup>9</sup> Human Rights Campaign. Retrieved on June 7, 2021, from <https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms>

<sup>10</sup> Sue, Derald Wing, Capodilupo, Christina M., Torino, Gina C., Bucceri, Jennifer M., Holder, Aisha M. B., Nadal, Kevin L., Esquilin, Marta, *American Psychologist*, Vol 62(4), May-Jun 2007, 271-286

<sup>11</sup> Human Rights Campaign. Retrieved on June 7, 2021, from <https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms>

used as an umbrella term encompassing identities such as agender, bigender, genderqueer, or gender-fluid.

- **Official Report:** A report that has been filed with the NFB with the goal of providing information for the organization's official response, without necessarily referring to the involvement of law enforcement.
- **Organizational Response:** The steps taken to address an official report of sexual misconduct, communication with those involved in the incident, investigation efforts, and determination of discipline, services, and accommodations, as appropriate.
- **Perpetrator:** The person who engages in sexual misconduct.
- **Retaliation:** When someone experiences further harassment or bullying because they filed an official report.
- **Services:** Efforts to provide emotional and/or tangible support to the victim/survivor during the response process. For example, this includes providing the victim/survivor with information on internal or external resources for support, such as crisis support hotline information, information on local sexual assault service providers, or referrals to mental health counseling.
- **Sexual Misconduct:** A non-legal, umbrella term that describes a broad range of inappropriate behaviors, both criminal and non-

criminal. This includes unwanted sexual attention, inappropriate touching, sexual assault, and rape, as well as verbal, cyber, or other types of sexual harassment based on gender presentation, sexual orientation, or other identifying characteristics.

- **Sexual Violence:** An all-encompassing, non-legal term that refers to crimes like sexual assault, rape, and sexual abuse.
- **Transgender**<sup>12</sup>: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.
- **Transphobia**<sup>13</sup>: Transphobia is the fear, hatred, disbelief, or mistrust of people who are transgender, thought to be transgender, or whose gender expression doesn't conform to traditional gender roles.
- **Victim/Survivor:** The person who experiences sexual misconduct.
- **Volunteer:** An individual who is not a member of the NFB and who does unpaid work on behalf of the organization.

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<sup>12</sup> Human Rights Campaign. Retrieved on June 7, 2021, from <https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms>

<sup>13</sup> Planned Parenthood Federation of America Inc. Retrieved on June 7, 2021, from <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/gender-identity/transgender/whats-transphobia>

## **Other Initiatives Involving RAINN**

In addition to the Climate Assessment, the NFB partnered with RAINN on two other initiatives related to sexual misconduct prevention and response.

### **Development of a Code of Professionalism to Address Sexual Misconduct and a Strategic Response Protocol**

In March 2021, the NFB engaged RAINN to develop a Code of Professionalism to Address Sexual Misconduct, creating community standards for how to communicate consistent expectations of appropriate behavior within the NFB. As part of this work, RAINN is also working closely with key stakeholders from the NFB to develop a Strategic Response Protocol, with the goal that all community members who respond to reports of sexual misconduct in an official capacity know how to do so in a victim-centered, trauma-informed, and fair and equitable way moving forward. A corresponding Response Plan is also under development, so that community members not involved in the official response process may still know what to expect if they are involved in a report of sexual misconduct. As of June 2021, this work is still in process, and is slated for completion in July 2021. The NFB will use that work product along with recommendations and guidance from its Special Committee to develop similar and specific protocols for its Training Centers.

### **Sexual Misconduct Awareness and Prevention Trainings**

The NFB also contracted with RAINN beginning in December 2020 to conduct a series of 10 training sessions for leadership, national center staff, training center staff, and students, with the goal of educating participants on sexual misconduct awareness and prevention strategies. During the training sessions, RAINN provided an overview of the issue of sexual misconduct, trauma and its impact on survivors, and community prevention strategies such as boundary setting, bystander intervention, and supporting a friend or loved one. The training sessions were held in March and April 2021 and were attended by approximately 745 NFB community members.

## **The NFB's Pre-Existing Efforts to Address the Issue**

Over the last few years, the NFB leadership has demonstrated a commitment to improvement in responding to the issue of sexual misconduct within the NFB community by taking a number of steps, including:

- The development of policies and procedures, including the Code of Conduct, which was initially developed in 2017 and was most recently revised and approved by the Board of Directors in 2020
- The convening of a survivor-led task force
- The formation of a Special Committee to learn more about the NFB's responses to historical incidents of sexual misconduct

In order to recognize these steps, and as part of the Climate Assessment survey development process, RAINN conducted a discovery process that

included reviewing key documents related to awareness, training and education, and response to incidents of sexual misconduct. This discovery process allowed RAINN to gain a better understanding of the NFB's current and pre-existing efforts to address sexual misconduct. RAINN reviewed documents provided by the NFB related to sexual misconduct, as well as a small selection of anonymized case files with all personally identifying information redacted, to better understand how the policies and protocols have been recently implemented.

Overall, RAINN found that, while these documents provide a foundation for prevention and response, there is room for improvement to help clearly and consistently communicate expectations around inappropriate behavior, bolster reporting mechanisms, and provide a comprehensive, victim-centered, and trauma-informed response process.

RAINN included survey questions that sought to gauge general awareness of these policies and protocols, how well community members understand them, and whether community members believe they are effectively implemented by the NFB.

# **SECTION 1: SURVEY RESPONDENTS**

In total, the Climate Assessment survey received 950 responses: 670 via the online survey and 280 via the telephone system. The following section provides an overview of each question within the demographics section of the survey, to better understand the diversity of the NFB community.

## **Demographics**

Sexual misconduct affects people of all demographics. However, based on personal characteristics, certain populations may be at greater risk for experiencing sexual misconduct or may face greater barriers to reporting incidents or participating in an organizational response process. With this understanding, RAINN designed the survey to ask about specific demographics that may provide insight into which populations may be at greater risk within the NFB community or who may face greater barriers to reporting.

### **AGE DISTRIBUTION**

Although the last comprehensive study conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to estimate the national prevalence rates of sexual victimization was in 1997, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released a data brief in 2015, updating pieces of their 2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey. These studies all show that sexual violence affects people of all ages. The studies also show that young people (according to the DOJ, those between the ages of 12-34 and, according to the CDC, those under the age of 25) are at the

highest risk for rape and sexual assault.<sup>14 15 16</sup> Survivors in specific age groups, particularly those who are under the age of 18 or who are over the age of 64, may experience ageism, which refers to stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination based on age. Ageism can make it more difficult for survivors to share their experiences, be believed, retain agency over their decisions, and get the support they need.

Survey participants were asked to select their age range. Results indicate that the majority of respondents (53.9%) fall within the age range of 35-64. Approximately 22% of respondents are under the age of 35 and approximately 24% are over the age of 64.

## **DISTRIBUTION OF RACE/ETHNICITY**

While people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds experience sexual misconduct, research has shown that specific racial/ethnic groups are at increased risk. According to the CDC's 2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, approximately one in five Black non-Hispanic women (22.0%) and White non-Hispanic women (18.8%), and one in seven Hispanic women (14.6%) in the United States have experienced rape at

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<sup>14</sup> Black, M.C., Basile, K.C., Breiding, M.J., Smith, S.G., Walters, M.L., Merrick, M.T., Chen, J., & Stevens, M.R. (2011). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 Summary Report. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved on June 7, 2021, from [https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/NISVS\\_Report2010-a.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/NISVS_Report2010-a.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Smith, S.G., Zhang, X., Basile, K.C., Merrick, M.T., Wang, J., Kresnow, M., Chen, J. (2018). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2015 Data Brief – Updated Release. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved on June 7, 2021, from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/2015data-brief508.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Sex Offenses and Offenders (1997).

some point in their lives. Additionally, 58.0% of multiracial non-Hispanic women, 49.0% of American Indian or Alaska Native women, 47.6% of White non-Hispanic women, 41.0% of Black non-Hispanic women, 36.1% of Hispanic women, and 29.5% of Asian or Pacific Islander women reported sexual violence other than rape in their lifetime. Among men, 22.6% of Black non-Hispanic, 21.5% of White non-Hispanic men, 26.2% of Hispanic men, and 20.1% of American Indian or Alaska Native men experienced sexual violence other than rape in their lives. The only reportable estimate of rape for men broken out by race or ethnicity was that 1.7% of White non-Hispanic men reported being raped at some point in their lifetime.<sup>17</sup>

Racism often has a serious impact on a survivor's risk level and their overall experience within reporting and response systems. Individuals may be targeted specifically for acts of sexual violence based on their real (or perceived) racial or ethnic identity and survivors of color may experience discrimination or retraumatization when reporting incidents of sexual violence to organizations or to criminal justice systems. Within communities that are predominantly White, there may be greater racial disparities, such as survivors of color facing greater barriers to reporting or not being provided with appropriate, culturally responsive support.

Survey participants were asked to select all answer options that they felt were applicable to describe their race/ethnicity. Results indicate that

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<sup>17</sup> Black, M.C., Basile, K.C., Breiding, M.J., Smith, S.G., Walters, M.L., Merrick, M.T., Chen, J., & Stevens, M.R. (2011). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 Summary Report. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved on June 7, 2021, from [https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/NISVS\\_Report2010-a.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/NISVS_Report2010-a.pdf)

approximately 74% of respondents selected that they are White, representing a large majority of the community. Approximately 13% of respondents selected that they are Black or African American, with 8% or fewer selecting each of the following: American Indian or Alaska Native or Native American or Indigenous American, Asian, Hispanic or Latinx, Middle Eastern or North African, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, or Other.

## **DISTRIBUTION OF GENDER IDENTITY**

Sexual violence affects people of all gender identities. Research has shown that one in six American women has been the victim of an attempted or completed rape in her lifetime while about one in 33 men has experienced an attempted or completed rape in his lifetime.<sup>18</sup> Stereotypes about victims of sexual violence may influence whether survivors are believed, how they are treated during the reporting and response process, and what kind of support they are provided. For example, despite at least one in six men having experienced sexual abuse or assault during their lifetime<sup>19</sup>, stereotypes still maintain that only women can experience sexual violence; male-identified survivors are often shamed, not believed, or have their experiences minimized.

Transgender and non-binary individuals, those who do not identify with the sex and/or gender that they were assigned at birth or with the gender binary, face additional risks for sexual violence due to experiences of

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<sup>18</sup> National Institute of Justice & Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, Prevalence, Incidence and Consequences of Violence Against Women Survey (1998).

<sup>19</sup> 1in6. Retrieved on June 7, 2021, from <https://1in6.org/get-information/the-1-in-6-statistic/>

homophobia and transphobia. Many transgender and non-binary individuals experience additional barriers to reporting surrounding their identity, including:

- Not wanting to disclose their gender identity
- Fears of discrimination or retaliation based on their gender identity or gender expression
- Further traumatization due to misgendering or other microaggressions based on their gender identity or expression

Survey participants were asked to select all answer options that they felt were applicable to describe their gender identity. Results indicate that approximately 34% identify as men, while approximately 63% identify as women. Approximately 3% of respondents indicated that they are transgender or identify with a non-binary gender (genderqueer, gender fluid, or non-binary). There are also a number of other identities that may have been layered on top of or instead of those options, including cisgender.

## **DISTRIBUTION OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION**

Compared with those who identify as straight or heterosexual, individuals who are part of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer (LGBQ+) community may be at increased risk for experiences of sexual violence. Typically, the acronym used to describe this community includes a “T,” for “transgender.” However, it is excluded in this section, as experiences of transgender people are explored in a different section of this report, one focusing on

gender identity rather than sexual orientation. According to the 2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, conducted by the CDC, 13% of lesbian women and 46% of bisexual women have been raped in their lifetime, compared with 17% of heterosexual women, while 40% of gay men and 47% of bisexual men have experienced sexual violence other than rape in their lifetime, compared with 21% of heterosexual men.<sup>20</sup>

LGBQ+ survivors may also face different or additional challenges in accessing support. Similar to those who are transgender or non-binary, members of the LGBQ+ community may struggle to have their experiences believed and may decide not to report an incident if they are not out to their family, friends, or colleagues. There may also be fewer community resources available that are culturally and individually responsive to the needs of LGBQ+ persons.

Survey participants were asked to select all answer options that they felt were applicable to describe their sexual orientation. Results indicate that approximately 86% of question respondents identify as straight or heterosexual, while approximately 20% selected sexual orientations other than straight or heterosexual, including asexual, bisexual, gay, lesbian, queer, and pansexual.

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<sup>20</sup> Black, M.C., Basile, K.C., Breiding, M.J., Smith, S.G., Walters, M.L., Merrick, M.T., Chen, J., & Stevens, M.R. (2011). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 Summary Report. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved on June 7, 2021, from [https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/NISVS\\_Report2010-a.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/NISVS_Report2010-a.pdf)

## **DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS WHO HAVE DIFFICULTY WITH MOBILITY AND/OR COGNITIVE FUNCTIONS**

Research has shown that individuals with disabilities may be at increased risk of victimization.<sup>21</sup> Individuals with disabilities may require regular assistance or rely on someone for care who is abusing them, increasing the risk that power dynamics within caregiving relationships may be exploited to force someone into non-consensual sexual activity or other types of abuse; caregivers may also block access to resources that would allow a survivor to get help.

Individuals with disabilities may also:

- Be less likely to have their experiences taken seriously
- Face challenges in accessing individual or community resources
- Lack information or understanding about healthy boundaries, consent, and different types of sexual misconduct (particularly if they rely on others to touch them to provide care)

Survey participants were asked to select whether they have difficulty with mobility and/or cognitive functions due to a physical, mental, or emotional condition, other than deafness or blindness. Results indicate that approximately 15% of respondents selected they have difficulty with mobility and/or cognitive functions.

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<sup>21</sup> Harrell, E. (2011). National Crime Victimization Survey: Crime Against Persons with Disabilities, 2008-2010.- Statistical Tables. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics. Retrieved on June 7, 2021, from <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/capd10st.pdf>

## **DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS WHO ARE BLIND**

Blind persons may be at increased risk of experiencing sexual misconduct, given that individuals may intentionally take advantage of someone's blindness to push their boundaries or engage in inappropriate behavior disguised as support. There may also be fewer external resources available for blind persons for identifying sexual misconduct, reporting it, and receiving responsive support after an incident.

Survey participants were asked if they were blind or deafblind. Results indicate that approximately 83% of respondents selected that they are blind, and approximately 3% are deafblind.

## **DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS WHO ARE DEAF**

Similar risk factors for those who are blind are also present for those who are deaf. Survey participants were asked if they were deaf or deafblind. Results indicate that approximately 1% of respondents selected that they are a deaf person while 10% are deafblind. This figure is different from the previous one, as a different pool of people may have responded to each of the two questions.

## **DISTRIBUTION OF IMMIGRATION STATUS**

Research on immigrant and undocumented individuals' experiences of sexual violence is limited, given the sensitive nature surrounding disclosures of citizenship and status. However, psychological research on assimilation to a local culture after immigrating to a new country, as well as

RAINN's subject-matter expertise in behavioral reactions to sexual violence, allows insight into how individuals adjusting to a new culture may face challenges in recognizing or responding to inappropriate behavior.<sup>22 23</sup> For example, someone new to the United States may be more vulnerable to individuals exploiting language or cultural barriers to perpetrate sexual misconduct or other boundary violations. Undocumented individuals may also experience additional barriers to reporting, given that reporting routes may often involve reporting to law enforcement or may require the individual to disclose certain pieces of information about themselves that may make them more vulnerable to scrutiny over their immigration status.

Survey participants were asked to select their immigration status. Results indicate that approximately 98% of respondents selected that they are a U.S. citizen.

## **DISTRIBUTION OF HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION RECEIVED**

The level of education that an individual attains can influence their status within a community or an organization. An individual's status may influence what roles they are able to participate in, their access to resources or social capital within the organization, and whether they are believed if they report experiencing an incident of sexual misconduct, as those with higher levels of education received may be perceived to be more credible by others in the community.

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<sup>22</sup> Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology*, 46(1), 5–34. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.1997.tb01087.x>

<sup>23</sup> Sam, D. L., & Berry, J. W. (2010). Acculturation. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 5(4), 472–481. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691610373075>

Survey participants were asked to select their highest level of education received. Results indicate the vast majority of respondents, approximately 97%, have received at least a high school diploma or its equivalent, and approximately 62% have attained a bachelor's degree or higher level of education.

### **DISTRIBUTION OF ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME**

Individuals experiencing poverty or marginalization due to socioeconomic status are at increased risk for victimization for sexual violence<sup>24</sup> and may face additional barriers to reporting or participating in a response process, particularly if an incident puts them in a vulnerable position, financially, such as having to choose between filing a report or losing a job.

Survey participants were asked to select their annual household income. Results indicate that income levels of survey participants were fairly evenly distributed across income levels. An annual household income of less than \$20,000 was reported by 13.6%, with 35.7% of respondents reporting between \$20,000 and \$59,999, 21.8% of respondents reporting between \$60,000 and \$99,999, and 19.1% of respondents reporting an annual household income of \$100,000 or higher.

### **Affiliation with the NFB**

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<sup>24</sup> Krug EG et al., eds. *World report on violence and health*. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2002

An important part of understanding the NFB community is understanding the different roles that community members hold as well as the average length of time that people have been affiliated with the NFB. These aspects of an individual community member's experience can influence how much they understand about community standards of behavior, reporting and response protocols, and the overall culture of the organization, including how issues such as sexual misconduct are approached.

## **DISTRIBUTION OF CURRENT ROLES**

Individuals who have a more junior or entry-level role in an organization may be at greater risk for sexual violence due to the role of power dynamics. Someone within a higher role within the community or within a leadership position may have more influence and power over someone who is a newer member or a volunteer. Survivors within the community may fear retaliation or punishment as a result of filing a report against someone in a prominent or leadership position. Employees of the organization are particularly vulnerable to these types of power dynamics; if the perpetrator is their supervisor, they may be less likely to file a report against that person, or they may not know who else they can speak to about what happened.

Survey participants were asked to select their current, primary role within the NFB. Results indicate that half (49.6%) of respondents selected that their current, primary role within the NFB is member. One quarter (25.0%) of respondents selected that they are a member of the NFB's elected leadership. A limited number of respondents (5.5%) indicated that they are

affiliated with the NFB Training Centers in some capacity, whether as staff, student, or alumnus/a. Approximately 7% selected that they do not currently have a primary role within the NFB. As being currently or previously affiliated with the NFB was a qualifying question to move forward in responding to the survey, this answer selection may indicate that they may no longer be affiliated with the NFB, but likely were in the past. Remaining respondents indicated that they were volunteers, national staff members or management, or occupied some other role.

## **DISTRIBUTION OF TOTAL LENGTH OF TIME ASSOCIATED WITH THE NFB**

The length of time an individual has been involved with a community can have an impact on how comfortable they may feel reporting sexual misconduct. For example, newer community members may feel more vulnerable to incidents of sexual misconduct as a result of power differentials and may be less aware of community standards on appropriate behavior or policies protecting them from sexual misconduct. Conversely, more established members may have greater familiarity with policies, protocols, and stronger bonds with community members. This set of knowledge and interpersonal connections may contribute to a survivor being more likely to file a report following an incident of sexual misconduct.

Survey participants were asked to select the total length of time that they have been affiliated with the NFB. Results indicate that 30.4% of respondents selected they have been affiliated with the NFB for more than 20 years, while about one quarter (26.8%) of respondents selected that

they have become affiliated with the NFB within the last 5 years, and 40.9% of respondents selected that they have been with the NFB for between 6 and 20 years.

## **SECTION 2: OVERVIEW OF KEY FINDINGS**

The following section of the report provides an overview of the key findings of the survey, including results about community perceptions and behavior, reporting patterns, and incidents of sexual misconduct within the NFB.

These results can help the NFB begin to conceptualize overall attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors within their community, to help understand the scope of the problem and what actions may be appropriate to take next to address awareness, prevention, and response programming.

### **Community Perceptions and Behavior**

Sexual misconduct affects everyone within a community. Given the prevalence rates of sexual misconduct, it is inevitable that members of the NFB community have been affected by sexual misconduct, whether by experiencing or witnessing it themselves, hearing about incidents or patterns of inappropriate behavior, or knowing someone who has. Communities with an accurate perception and understanding of the issue of sexual misconduct are better equipped to create safer, healthier cultures around awareness, prevention, and response.

#### **PERCEPTION OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT AS A PROBLEM**

An individual's perception of the issue can be impacted by many factors, including personal experiences, implicit biases about the issue or about those individuals involved in an incident, and broader cultural or societal attitudes and beliefs.

Survey participants were asked to select how much of a problem they generally think sexual misconduct is within the NFB community. Results indicate that the majority of respondents (58.8%) believe that sexual misconduct is somewhat of a problem or a big problem within the NFB community, while 17.1% of respondents selected that they think sexual misconduct is not a very big problem or not a problem at all within the NFB community.

### **PERCEPTION OF FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO AN ENVIRONMENT TOLERANT OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT**

Community culture, as well as overall awareness regarding appropriate behavior and the issue of sexual misconduct, can have a large impact on prevalence rates, reporting rates, and overall feelings of emotional safety within the community. Many different factors can contribute to community culture related to sexual misconduct and whether or not sexual misconduct is tolerated amongst community members.

Survey participants were asked to select what factors they think most contribute to an environment where incidents of sexual misconduct are tolerated within the NFB community. A number of different possible factors were offered, and respondents were invited to select all factors that they believed would apply. Results indicate that over half of respondents selected that power dynamics (55.7%) and difficulty communicating, understanding, and respecting interpersonal boundaries (53.1%) are the factors that most contribute to an environment where incidents of sexual

misconduct are tolerated within the NFB. Between 45% and 49% of respondents selected that lack of understanding about consent (46.1%), confusion about what sexual misconduct actually is (48.0%), and a lack of community agreement of what behaviors are appropriate or inappropriate (48.4%) are greatly contributing factors. About one third of respondents selected that different forms of oppression, such as racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, and transphobia (33.9%) and situations that involve physical assistance due to being blind or deaf (33.1%), are greatly contributing factors. Approximately 8% of respondents selected that they believe sexual misconduct is never tolerated within the NFB community. As respondents were invited to select all answer options that would apply, the percentages of answers selected do not total 100%.

## **WITNESSING OF INCIDENTS OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT**

Bystanders often play a key role in preventing and responding to incidents of sexual misconduct, as bystander intervention can:

- Set and reinforce messaging around what behavior is appropriate
- Allow individuals experiencing sexual misconduct to feel more comfortable addressing inappropriate behavior
- Enable bystanders to play a direct, supportive role to survivors in these moments by helping them to safely exit a situation, access resources, or feel more comfortable in filing an official report

Survey participants were asked whether they had ever witnessed an incident of sexual misconduct within the NFB and, if they have, what

actions they may have taken after to either stop the behavior, report it to the NFB, or support the survivor. Results indicate that 69.4% of respondents selected that they have never witnessed an incident of sexual misconduct within the NFB. Approximately one tenth of respondents selected that they witnessed an incident of sexual misconduct within the NFB and: told someone else about it (9.8%), later talked to the victim/survivor about it (9.7%), tried to stop it (8.6%), and/or didn't feel comfortable doing or saying anything about it (10.5%). Additionally, smaller groups of respondents selected that they: later talked to the person engaging in the inappropriate behavior about it (5.6%) and/or officially reported it to the NFB (3.8%). As respondents were invited to select all answer options that would apply, the percentages of answers selected do not total 100%.

## **PATTERNS OF INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR WITNESSED OR HEARD**

Perpetrators often engage in patterns of inappropriate behavior. This is particularly true in environments with unchecked boundary violations, or where there's a dearth of community standards for appropriate behavior. Individual community members may be aware of individuals who engage in patterns of inappropriate behaviors and may even witness them. However, if bystanders are not encouraged to intervene, if reporting and response mechanisms are not clearly understood, and if community members perceive a lack of accountability for behavior, individuals may not feel comfortable or invested in reporting such behavioral patterns.

Survey participants were asked whether they have witnessed or heard about an individual engaging in a pattern of inappropriate behavior since becoming members of the NFB community, as well as what actions they may have taken to address the inappropriate behavior. Results indicate that about half (49.1%) of respondents selected that they have never witnessed or heard about an individual engaging in a pattern of inappropriate behavior. Between 7% and 19% of respondents selected that they had witnessed or heard about an individual engaging in a pattern of inappropriate behavior and: didn't feel comfortable doing or saying anything about it (19.4%), told someone else about it (19.3%), talked to one or more of the victim(s)/survivor(s) about it (18.7%), talked about it with the person engaging in the pattern of inappropriate behavior (6.9%), and officially reported it to the NFB (6.9%). As respondents were invited to select all answer options that would apply, the percentages of answers selected do not total 100%.

## **Reporting Patterns**

To better understand reporting patterns within a community, it is important to understand how many individuals have reported sexual misconduct, on their own behalf or on behalf of someone else, what barriers may have prevented individuals from reporting an incident, and what perceived barriers exist to community members surrounding reporting incidents.

### **NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL REPORTS OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT**

Survey participants were asked to select whether they have ever filed an official report with the NFB related to any incidents of sexual misconduct

they experienced within the NFB. Results indicate that 16.1% of respondents have filed an official report of sexual misconduct.

These numbers may not provide a full picture of reporting within the NFB community. However, they can provide a baseline for the NFB to begin to understand the scope of the issue within the community. In the future, this baseline can help the NFB understand how improvements to reporting and response mechanisms and other initiatives to strengthen awareness, prevention, and response programming, may have allowed community members to feel more comfortable reporting incidents of sexual misconduct.

### **PERCEIVED BARRIERS TO REPORTING WITHIN THE NFB**

Reporting sexual misconduct is always a highly personal decision. Some survivors may decide not to report what happened to them, regardless of how supportive they perceive an organization to be or what resources are provided. However, the more perceived barriers to reporting within an organization, the less likely survivors will be to report sexual misconduct and the greater likelihood that patterns of inappropriate behavior will continue. Thus, creating a supportive environment for survivors begins with understanding what the perceived barriers might be, so they can be addressed, allowing survivors to feel more comfortable with the idea of reporting, and community trust can be built around the organization's response to sexual misconduct.

Survey participants were asked to select what they think are the three greatest barriers to someone filing an official report of sexual misconduct

within the NFB community. Results indicate that the greatest perceived barriers to reporting are fear of retaliation (52.8%), fear of not being believed (39.8%) and fear of being blamed (22.0%). Other notable barriers include concerns over reputation (19.7%), concerns about confidentiality (18.6%), lack of knowledge of what would happen if a report was filed (17.9%), lack of knowledge of how to file a report (16.3%), and feeling as though nothing would happen if they did report (16.0%). Less than 15% of respondents selected that they have distrust of leadership (11.9%), are not sure if what happened was serious enough to be worth reporting (7.6%), are not sure if what happened was actually sexual misconduct (7.3%), feel the process takes too long and/or is too hard to go through (6.0%), don't want to get the other person in trouble (4.3%), and feel pressure to not report by someone affiliated with the NFB (3.4%). As respondents were invited to select all answer options that would apply, the percentages of answers selected do not total 100%.

### **SURVIVOR REASONS FOR NOT REPORTING SEXUAL MISCONDUCT**

In addition to asking all survey participants about overall perceived barriers to reporting sexual misconduct to the NFB, respondents who indicated that they had experienced sexual misconduct perpetrated by someone within the NFB but had not reported it to the NFB were asked why they decided not to file an official report.

Results indicate that, among those who selected that they had experienced sexual misconduct perpetrated by someone else within the NFB but did not file an official report with the NFB, the most selected reasons for not filing a

report were not being able to identify whether what happened was actually serious enough to be worth reporting (40.1%), feeling as though nothing would happen (36.1%), concerns about confidentiality (32.0%), and not knowing what would happen if the survivor filed a report (30.6%). Other notable concerns include a fear of retaliation (28.6%), not knowing how to file an official report (27.9%), distrust of leadership (27.2%), concerns over how filing a report may affect the survivor's reputation (24.5%), not being sure if what happened to them was actually sexual misconduct (23.1%), and fear of not being believed (22.4%). One fifth or fewer of respondents selected fear of being blamed (20.4%), not wanting to report (20.4%), not wanting to get the other person in trouble (15.0%), feeling pressured to not report by someone affiliated with the NFB (14.3%), and/or thinking the process of reporting and the NFB's response process being too long and/or hard to go through (10.9%).

## **Incidents of Sexual Misconduct at the NFB**

The following questions focus on the number of incidents of sexual misconduct reported by survey respondents as well as the type(s) of sexual misconduct experienced.

### **NUMBER OF INCIDENTS OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT EXPERIENCED**

Many incidents of sexual misconduct are not isolated, but rather are part of a pattern of victimization involving one or multiple victims; incidents may also involve more than one perpetrator. Research shows that survivors of sexual misconduct are also more likely than non-survivors to experience re-victimization, meaning that they may be at higher risk of experiencing

additional incidents of sexual misconduct in the future, either by the same perpetrator or by others.<sup>25</sup>

Survey participants were asked to select whether they have ever experienced sexual misconduct that was perpetrated by another member of the NFB community, as well as how many incidents they experienced involving either one or multiple perpetrators. Results indicate that approximately 68% of respondents selected that they have not experienced sexual misconduct within the NFB. About 12% of respondents selected that they had experienced sexual misconduct one time and involving one perpetrator, while 8.7% experienced multiple incidents of sexual misconduct perpetrated by multiple people, 4.2% experienced one incident involving multiple perpetrators, and 3.1% experienced multiple incidents by a single perpetrator.

## **TYPES OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT EXPERIENCED BY SURVIVORS**

To reduce prevalence rates and create a safer, healthier community culture surrounding sexual misconduct, as well as to better support training and education, it is important for the NFB to understand what types of behaviors community members have experienced or may be experiencing most often. Recognizing these types of behaviors is crucial to preventing and responding to sexual misconduct and to creating a culture that is intolerant to all forms of sexual misconduct.

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<sup>25</sup> Lalor, K., & McElvaney, R. (2010). Child sexual abuse, links to later sexual exploitation/high-risk sexual behavior, and prevention/treatment programs. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 11, 159-177. doi:10.1177/1524838010378299. Retrieved on June 7, 2021, from [https://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/2012-06/publications\\_NSVRC\\_ResearchBrief\\_Sexual-Revictimization.pdf](https://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/2012-06/publications_NSVRC_ResearchBrief_Sexual-Revictimization.pdf)

Survey participants who responded that they had experienced sexual misconduct that was perpetrated by another member of the NFB community were asked what type(s) of sexual misconduct they experienced. Results indicate that 64.6% of question respondents selected that they had experienced unwanted sexual comments, questions, or other verbal harassment, and 56.6% of question respondents selected that they had experienced unwanted sexual touching. Less than one fifth of respondents selected each of the following: sexual intimidation (17.7%), sexual assault or rape (15.4%), stalking or cyberstalking (14.9%), unwanted sexual emails, photos, or other written or visual materials (14.3%), violence within an intimate relationship (10.3%), and sexual exploitation (10.3%). As respondents were invited to select all answer options that would apply, the percentages of answers selected do not total 100%.

## **SECTION 3: POLICIES AND PROTOCOLS RELATED TO SEXUAL MISCONDUCT**

Providing clear, comprehensive policies and protocols related to sexual misconduct is fundamental to effective awareness, prevention, and response programming. It is vital that all community members understand policies and protocols to be able to recognize sexual misconduct, report inappropriate behavior, and understand what the organizational response is to reports. Part of the challenge that communities face is ensuring that policies and protocols are communicated effectively and that information about them is easy to find and understand.

The following survey questions focused on how much respondents know about policies and protocols related to sexual misconduct and overall perceptions of how effective the NFB is at providing information about policies and protocols related to sexual misconduct.

### **Knowledge of Policies and Protocols**

Survey participants were asked to select how much they feel they know about the NFB's policies and protocols related to sexual misconduct.

Results indicate that approximately 79% of respondents feel they have some or a lot of knowledge about the NFB's policies and protocols related to sexual misconduct, while about 19% indicated that they know not much or none about them.

### **Perceptions of Policies and Protocols**

Survey participants were asked to select whether they think the NFB does a good job of providing information to community members on policies and protocols related to sexual misconduct. Results indicate that 47.9% of respondents think that the NFB does a good job providing information to community members on policies and protocols related to sexual misconduct, 27.1% think the NFB does somewhat of a good job, and 16.5% of respondents selected that they think that the NFB does not do a good job of this.

## **SECTION 4: TRAINING AND EDUCATION ON TOPICS RELATED TO SEXUAL MISCONDUCT**

Training and education are a key component to sexual misconduct awareness, prevention, and response programming. Appropriate training and education can help community members recognize different forms of sexual misconduct, equip them with the knowledge and skills to intervene and respond to incidents, and provide them with resources for supporting their peers and their loved ones who may be survivors.

The following survey questions focused on respondents' knowledge and perceptions about training and education offered by the NFB on sexual misconduct awareness, prevention, and response.

### **Perceptions of The NFB's Training and Education Activities**

Survey participants were asked to select whether they think the NFB does a good job of providing training and education to community members related to sexual misconduct. Results indicate that 31.0% of respondents think that the NFB does a good job providing training and education to community members related to sexual misconduct, 33.5% think the NFB does somewhat of a good job, and 20.9% of respondents selected that they think that the NFB does not do a good job of this.

### **Number of Respondents Who Attended 2021 RAINN Trainings**

RAINN delivered a series of 10 training sessions on community awareness and prevention in March and April 2021 to approximately 745 NFB community members. Survey participants were asked to select whether they had attended any of the training sessions hosted by RAINN. Results indicate that approximately 39% of respondents attended one of RAINN's training sessions and 60% did not.

## **General Feelings of Preparedness to Respond to a Disclosure**

The response to a survivor's initial disclosure can have a lasting impact, for better or worse, on their decision to disclose to others in the future, file an official report, or reach out to additional resources for support. Many people worry about how to respond to a survivor, for example what to say, how to support them in the moment, and how to connect them with other resources.

Survey participants were asked to select how prepared they would feel to support a victim/survivor who disclosed an incident of sexual misconduct to them. Results indicate that 40.1% of respondents feel very prepared to support a survivor who discloses an incident of sexual misconduct to them, 50.4% feel somewhat prepared, and 6.3% of respondents do not feel at all prepared to support survivors.

## **Employee Feelings of Preparedness to Respond to a Disclosure**

Of those respondents who identified themselves as current employees of the NFB, respondents were then asked if, as part of their capacity as an employee, they receive official reports of sexual misconduct or are involved in the organizational response process. Then, respondents were asked to select how prepared they feel to properly execute their role in the official organizational response process. Results indicate that about one quarter (24.3%) of respondents selected that they feel very prepared to properly execute their role in the official organizational response process, while 64.9% selected feeling somewhat prepared, and 10.8% do not feel at all prepared to properly execute their role.

## **SECTION 5: PERCEPTIONS OF THE NFB'S REPORTING PROCESS**

It is crucial that community members perceive supportive reporting and response mechanisms from an organization. In communities where there is a lack of trust in reporting or in which survivors are encouraged not to report inappropriate behavior, incidents of sexual misconduct are more likely to occur, and patterns of inappropriate behavior are more likely to persist. A first step in creating this trust is empowering community members with knowledge and transparency about the reporting and response processes, so that those who witness or experience sexual misconduct understand how to file a report and what to expect as they navigate the organizational response.

The following survey questions focused on how much respondents know about the NFB's reporting process and how they perceive the overall safety and sufficiency of the NFB's response to reports.

### **Knowledge of How the NFB Responds to Official Reports**

A key aspect of effective organizational response is how much community members know and understand what will happen if they decide to file a report of sexual misconduct. A lack of knowledge or understanding can be a barrier to reporting, as many survivors may have concerns over what will happen, how their confidentiality will be protected, and how the organization will handle their report.

Survey participants were asked to select how much they feel they know about how the NFB responds to an official report of sexual misconduct. Results indicate that 54.4% of respondents feel they know a lot or some about how the NFB responds to an official report of sexual misconduct, with 41.7% of respondents feeling like they know not much or nothing about the NFB's response process.

### **Perceptions on Whether the Organizational Response is Sufficient**

Survey participants were asked to select whether they believe the organizational response received by victims/survivors of sexual misconduct within the NFB community when they do file a report is sufficient. Results indicate that 20.9% of respondents think that the response is sufficient, while 19.8% think that the response is somewhat sufficient and the NFB could do more, and 18.8% think that the response is not sufficient.

### **Perceptions of Rates of Retaliation in Response to Official Reports**

A significant barrier to reporting incidents of sexual misconduct can be a fear of retaliation from peers or from the organization itself. Survey respondents selected a fear of retaliation as one of the greatest perceived barriers to reporting within the NFB.

To further understand individual concerns over retaliation, survey participants were asked to select whether they think victims/survivors of

sexual misconduct within the NFB community are retaliated against when they do file an official report. Results indicate that one third (33.3%) of respondents think that victims/survivors are at least sometimes retaliated against when they file an official report with the NFB, while 22.5% do not think that survivors are retaliated against when they file an official report with the NFB.

### **Knowledge of Someone Who Has Filed a Report**

Survey participants were asked to select whether they know of anyone who has filed an official report of sexual misconduct with the NFB and, if yes, whether that individual was satisfied with the response they received regarding their report. Results indicate that approximately 59% of respondents do not know of anyone who has filed an official report of sexual misconduct with the NFB. Nearly one fifth of respondents (19.4%) selected that the person they know who filed a report with the NFB was not satisfied with the response they received, while 5.2% knew someone who had filed a report with the NFB and was satisfied with the response they received, and 7.7% of respondents knew multiple people who had filed official reports with the NFB and had mixed levels of satisfaction with the responses they received.

## **SECTION 6: PERCEPTIONS OF THE NFB'S ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSE**

Many individuals within a community will not directly experience an organization's response process. However, it is important to understand how individuals within an organization perceive its effectiveness, as this may inform their decision to file an official report. Survivors who do file an official report and participate in the organization's response process can provide essential feedback on strengths, challenges, and areas for improvement.

This section of the report focuses on both community perceptions of the NFB's organizational response and survivor experiences of navigating the response process after filing an official report of sexual misconduct with the NFB.

### **Community Perceptions of The NFB's Sexual Misconduct Programming**

The following questions focus on overall community perceptions of the NFB's organizational response to incidents of sexual misconduct, including whether they believe it to be fair and whether perpetrators are held accountable for behavior.

### **OVERALL COMMUNITY PERCEPTION OF THE NFB'S RESPONSE TO INCIDENTS**

Survey participants were asked to select whether they think the NFB does a good job of responding to incidents of sexual misconduct when they happen within the community. Results indicate that more than one third of respondents (36.5%) did not feel they knew enough to select a response. About one fifth of respondents selected that they think the NFB does a good job (21.7%) of responding to incidents of sexual misconduct when they happen within the community, somewhat does a good job (20.8%), or does not do a good job (21.0%) of responding.

### **COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF A FAIR RESPONSE**

Survey participants were asked to select whether they think the NFB provides a fair response to all those involved in a reported incident of sexual misconduct. Results indicate that 21.3% of respondents believe that everyone is treated fairly during the response process, while 16.6% think that the person who made the report is treated unfairly, and 3.3% of respondents think the person who has been reported is treated unfairly during the response process. Over half of respondents (58.9%) did not feel they knew enough to answer the question.

### **COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF PERPETRATOR ACCOUNTABILITY**

It is important that community members perceive accountability for inappropriate behavior. In communities where there is a lack (or a perceived lack) of accountability, survivors are less likely to report incidents of sexual misconduct because they believe it will not make a difference or that the organization will not do anything about it.

Survey participants were asked to select whether they believe perpetrators of sexual misconduct within the NFB community are held accountable for their actions. Results indicate that more than one third of respondents (35.2%) did not feel they knew enough to select a response. About one fifth of respondents selected that they thought perpetrators of sexual misconduct within the NFB are held accountable for their actions (21.1%), are somewhat held accountable for their actions (20.7%) or are not held accountable for their actions (23%).

## **Survivor Experiences of the NFB's Sexual Misconduct Programming**

The following questions focused on survivors' experiences directly navigating the NFB's organizational response. Survey data pertains only to respondents who answered "Yes" to the question "Have you ever filed an official report with the NFB related to any incidents of sexual misconduct you experienced within the NFB?"

### **SURVIVOR PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE OF IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS IN THEIR EXPERIENCE**

Survey participants who indicated that they experienced sexual misconduct involving someone else within the NFB were asked to select whether they felt any identifying characteristics were a factor in the sexual misconduct they experienced at the NFB. Results indicate that 30.1% of respondents feel that their age was a factor in the sexual misconduct they experienced. Other factors identified by participants include role within the NFB (27.2%), gender identity (24.3%), blindness (20.8%), sexual orientation (13.9%), and

a physical, mental, or emotional condition, other than blindness or deafness (11%). Less than 10% of respondents selected race/ethnicity (5.8%), education received (4.0%), income level (2.3%), deafness (2.3%), or immigration status (1.7%) as identifying characteristics that were a factor in the sexual misconduct they experienced. Over one third of respondents (39.9%) did not think that any of these identifying characteristics were a factor in the sexual misconduct they experienced. As respondents were invited to select all answer options that would apply, the percentages of answers selected do not total 100%.

## **SURVIVOR PERCEPTIONS OF THE NFB INVESTIGATION INTO THEIR REPORT**

Survey participants who indicated that they experienced sexual misconduct involving someone else within the NFB were asked to select whether the NFB investigated their official report of sexual misconduct and whether the respondent felt that the investigation was sufficient. Results indicate that approximately one third of respondents (34.7%) selected that no investigation was conducted by the NFB and most of those (87.5%) thought that there should have been. About 17% of respondents selected that an investigation was conducted, and they thought it was at least somewhat sufficient, with an equal number selecting that the investigation conducted for their report was not sufficient. Approximately 30% of respondents did not feel they knew enough to select a response.

## **SURVIVOR SATISFACTION WITH REPORT OUTCOME**

Survey participants who indicated that they experienced sexual misconduct involving someone else within the NFB were asked to select whether they were satisfied with the outcome of the official report that they filed with the NFB. Results indicate that 46.4% of respondents were not satisfied with the outcome of the official report, while 28.6% were at least somewhat satisfied with the outcome.

### **SURVIVOR EXPERIENCES OF RETALIATION**

Survey participants who indicated that they experienced sexual misconduct involving someone else within the NFB were asked to select whether they experienced any retaliation from anyone affiliated with the NFB related to incidents of sexual misconduct that they officially reported to the NFB. Results indicate that 46.4% of respondents experienced retaliation after filing an official report with the NFB, and 39.3% did not.

## CONCLUSION

The NFB has taken an important step by undertaking this project. The results of this climate assessment should help to inform future initiatives aimed at preventing and responding to sexual misconduct within the NFB community. If the NFB chooses to undertake subsequent climate assessments, this one will serve as a baseline against which to measure any changes that result from planned interventions.

A deep gratitude is owed to all who participated in the survey. These respondents selflessly shared their feedback and their experiences, despite the difficult subject matter. RAINN is honored by the opportunity to conduct this climate assessment for the NFB community, and thanks the leadership of the NFB for their commitment to eradicating sexual misconduct in their midst and prioritizing this critical work.