National Survey on barriers faced by black and minoritised victim-survivors of VAWG in accessing housing support

Submitted by AWRC (Asian Women's Resource Centre), May 2026

Across the systems you work with (housing, police, courts, health, therapeutic support, social care and so on), where do you observe the most significant breakdowns or barriers that prevent survivors from achieving safety, justice, recovery and stability?

At AWRC (Asian Women's Resource Centre), we work with many victim-survivors with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) and they are routinely turned away from refuges and homelessness services, forcing impossible choices between staying with abusers or destitution. Police officers, social services, health care workers and even frontline workers may often not be able to accurately detect risks faced by women from Black, minoritised and ethnic communities, due to a lack of specialist knowledge about religious and cultural contexts including honour-based abuse and harmful practices, language barriers, and may have underlying racist and patriarchal biases. This leads to many vulnerable women not receiving time-sensitive support, that is culturally grounded and accessible, and they face life-threatening consequences. We have analysed the gaps in risk assessments and provided detailed suggestions in our resource titled **Rethinking Risk Beyond the Checklist: The Need for a Holistic and Inclusive Framework.**

Legal aid restrictions make family court inaccessible, leaving victim-survivors without protection orders or safe child arrangements.

Where do you see survivors with complex needs (e.g. mental health, substance use, disability, multiple disadvantage) not receiving the level or type of support they require, and what specific gaps in current provision contribute to this?

Our service users from Black, minoritised and ethnic communities have complex needs at the intersections of insecure immigration status, lack of social networks, language barriers, physical and psycho-social disabilities, and low or absent financial support. Our service users face additional barriers when services lack culturally informed understanding of harmful practices including honour-based abuse, forced marriage, or immigration-related coercive control. They may not feel comfortable or may even feel scared in disclosing their circumstances to mainstream VAWG organisations and other service providers for fear of

being misunderstood, breach in confidentiality, facing social repercussions and stigma and concerns about deportation or separation from children. Most support services are not accessible for women with a diverse range of disabilities. Mental health services frequently discharge or exclude victim-survivors still in crisis, and there are very few sustained options for support that are not cost-intensive.

What challenges do migrant survivors, particularly with insecure immigration status face when trying to access safety and support, and where do you see the system failing to meet their needs (immigration, police, health, education, housing and so on)?

The hostile socio-political environment for migrants and minorities means any engagement with statutory agencies risks detention or deportation. This is a prominent barrier as many women with insecure immigration status and with NRPF may not even reach out to essential services for report abuse for fear of long-term consequences for their families and themselves. The Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Concession (MVDAC) is too narrow and short-term; many survivors don't qualify or can't gather evidence in time. Employment restrictions, and exclusion from benefits often creates total dependency on abusers, which perpetrators deliberately exploit. There is a dearth of culturally informed solicitors and legal experts who can support victim-survivors with advice, drafting and representation pro bono.

What gaps do you see in current prevention and early-intervention work, particularly for young people, communities at higher risk, or groups who are often overlooked?

Schools and youth services lack culturally specific resources on healthy relationships. For instance, young people from Black, ethnic and minoritised communities rarely see their experiences reflected in PSHE materials. Specialist by and for organisations are grossly underfunded and are compelled to prioritise urgent case work, leading to massive gaps in community-based prevention through changing social norms around gender and sexuality. Mainstream campaigns are inaccessible for women isolated by language, insecure immigration status, or patriarchal family and community surveillance control. Faith settings and community leaders are largely unengaged, which is a tremendous loss of influential spaces for engagement with community members to advance gender equality and challenge gendered violence.

What do you think would strengthen prevention and early intervention response with young people, faith-based communities, community leaders and so on?

Ring-fenced funding for specialist by and for organisations to lead community engagement is essential. We have decades of relationship-building, knowledge and cultural competence that statutory services and mainstream organisations lack. There needs to meaningful and sustained engagement with faith leaders and community figures to act as first responders who can safely signpost, rather than mediate or minimise, and they can be impactful agents on long-term change as well. Centre the leadership and expertise of specialist by and for organisations during policy development and consultations to ensure that lived realities of Black, minoritised and ethnic communities are accurately represented.

Where do you see gaps or breakdowns in multi-agency coordination?

MARAC processes often exclude specialist by and for services or treat us as secondary to mainstream providers, losing crucial cultural context. We have conducted a comprehensive analysis of how MARACs are often ineffective for victim-survivors impacted by harmful practices, where the forms of gendered violence may not be immediately visible and may involve multiple perpetrators (See: **Are MARACs Effective for Harmful Practices?).**

Information-sharing between immigration enforcement and support services creates dangerous conflicts of interest and this is a massive deterrent to women who may wish to access essential services. There's no consistent pathway for survivors with NRPF i.e. agencies pass responsibility between each other while already vulnerable women remain in danger.