POWER IN PRINT

HER SANA With You in Mind

RESEARCH INVESTIGATING HOW BLACK FEMMES EXPERIENCE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN THE UK

October 2026



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ABOUT HERSANA



HERSANA CIC is the national organisation providing tailored support to Black femmes who have experienced or are at risk of experiencing any form of gender-based violence. Our commitment lies in offering a unique service shaped by-and-for Black femmes, ensuring a holistic approach to addressing the intersectional needs of Black women, Black non-binary people, Black trans and Black gender-diverse people that identify with and feel safe within feminine spaces.

Through years of collective and individual experiences as a service provider, we have acquired invaluable expertise in addressing critical issues such as sexual abuse, violence against Black femmes, harmful practices, financial and psychological abuse prevalent within the Black community. Our commitment to effective service delivery is evident in the development of a responsive advocacy service that centres the experiences and voices of Black femmes. To bridge existing gaps within the sector, we have crafted training materials and development manuals specifically tailored to the Black femme experience. These resources reflect our dedication to enhancing understanding, support, and empowerment within our community.



HERSANA CIC
www.hersana.org
talkto@hersana.org
@HERSANACIC

OUR STORY

SANA is derived from the Latin verb *sanare*, meaning to heal and is closely associated with being whole, sound and well in mind and body. This reflects the heart of our work: not simply supporting survivors to escape harm but creating the conditions for healing, restoration and long-term wholeness.

2014

A group of students get together to talk about their diverse experiences of abuse.

2015

The ASKFirst Campaign is founded to raise awareness around rape culture and advocate for survivors of sexual violence.

2016

The ASKFirst Campaign works in partnership with the British Refugee Council to deliver workshops to for refugees and people seeking asylum.

2017

The ASKFirst Campaign launches its first series of support programmes in London.

2020

The organisation formally becomes 'HERSANA CIC' and launches the first national gender-based violence support service for Black femmes.

2020

Rapid expansion ensures that survivors could still access essential services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2021

HERSANA expands services outside of London to cover Sussex.

2025

HERSANA launches *SANA Spaces*, an on-site safeguarding and wellbeing initiative for festivals and events celebrating Black joy.

2026

HERSANA joins the Safe Horizons London Partnership, expanding access to specialist GBV support across London.



2026

HERSANA publishes it's research piece, *'Power in Print'*.

THE RESEARCH TEAM



Ebonie Wilson
she/her

Research Lead
Writer | Copy Editor

Ebonie has led and supported research, advocacy and community organising within the GBV sector for over six years. Her work spans across anti-racism facilitation, gender equality interventions and creating spaces for young people to develop their activism. She is currently a PhD studentship candidate where she aims to explore how Black and Brown feminist leaders can use creative methods to practice activism.



Hope Evans
they/them

Project Lead
Writer | Design Editor

Hope is HERSANA's National Training and Engagement Lead. With a BA in International Relations and an MA in Conflict, Security and Development, their academic work explores racialisation, coloniality, medical racism and the disconnect between academic research and community impact. Grounded in Black feminist thought, their work centres holistic intersectionality, Black lived experiences and the enduring violence of neocolonial structures.



Lisa Baskott
she/her

Outreach Lead
Copy Editor

People are at the heart of Lisa's work as HERSANA's Outreach & Engagement Officer. She builds meaningful community relationships and ensures Black femmes affected by GBV feel seen, supported and empowered. Passionate about collaboration, accessibility and culturally responsive services, Lisa is committed to creating safer, more inclusive communities. She also serves as a Magistrate, reflecting her dedication to justice and fairness.



Dr. Nat Arias
they/them

Researcher

Dr. Nat is an independent Black feminist and climate justice researcher, speaker, facilitator and evaluator with 10 years of experience. Specialising in applied intersectionality, they work with community and international stakeholders to support youth climate activists, racialised LGBT+ migrants and survivors of hate crime across Europe. They deliver community-centred workshops that engage, empower and amplify marginalised voices.



Valerie Akala
she/her

Editor
Research Support

Valerie is a HERSANA Independent Gender-based Violence Advocate. Her BSc Criminology and Social Policy dissertation was titled: 'Black Women's Lives Matter Too: Exploring the relationship between the 'Strong Black Woman' stereotype and Intersectional Violence in contemporary society'. She also holds an LLM in Law & Legal Practice. Valerie is dedicated to understanding intersectional violence against Black femmes and driving positive change.



Christabel Yeboah
she/her

Project Oversight
Copy Editor

Christabel is Co-Founder and Chief Vision Officer of HERSANA CIC. With over a decade of frontline, leadership and strategic experience in the VAWG sector, she is dedicated to centring Black femmes in every narrative. As a specialist consultant, she advises organisations on intersectional violence and meaningful institutional change. She also chairs Croydon's Global Majority Heritage Domestic Abuse Partnership Forum, contributes expertise to Domestic Homicide Reviews and serves as a Youth Justice Board Member.

With special thanks to

Karen Leonard
Copy Editor

Christal Khim
Research Design

Christal supported in data collection design and in developing information sheets, consent forms and the national *Power in Print* survey.

Gifty Dzenyo
Social Media Content Creator | Asset Design

Gifty is HERSANA's Social Media and Content Creator, designing all published graphics and media on our digital platforms, including *Power in Print* participant recruitment drives. Gifty has designed all HERSANA branding and assets and taken the majority of the photography used to design this report.

Black Femme Survivors
Power in Print Voice

Survivors, participants or otherwise live within *Power in Print*, on every page.

THIS IS POWER IN PRINT

438 DAYS from conception to publish

227 HOURS of volunteer time

110 VOICES in this report

113 QUOTES from Black femme survivors

The pictures used throughout this report are intentionally selected as a celebration of Black femme joy. They each represent the sisterhood and solidarity we experience and centre at HERSANA. Collectively, it serves as a visual tribute to all those who have supported us along the journey to who we have become today.





Power in Print research team

FOREWORD

by Christabel Yeboah

HERSANA CIC's Founder & Chief Vision Officer

I cried when I read the first draft of this report.

Even now, I struggle to fully articulate why.

Perhaps it was the heartbreak of seeing, in black and white, the statistics confirming everything we have always known. Everything we have witnessed, experienced, challenged and fought against. To see the realities of Black femmes reflected in quotes, numbers, percentages and patterns was devastating. Not because any of it was surprising but precisely because it wasn't.

We knew. We have always known.

We have known through our own lived experiences, through the stories whispered between friends and siblings and aunties and grandmothers, through the disclosures made in spaces where safety is never guaranteed and through the countless Black femmes who have trusted HERSANA with experiences that should never have been theirs to carry.

And yet, there is something profoundly painful about seeing those truths laid bare on paper. About knowing that behind every statistic is a person. A life. A story. Someone who deserved better. Someone who should have been believed, protected, supported and loved.

But my tears were not only tears of heartbreak.

As I continued reading, something shifted.

Amongst the painful realities, the institutional failures and the injustices, I found myself being held by the words of my Black femme siblings. Their encouragement. Their tenderness. Their defiance. Their humour. Their love. Their unwavering determination to survive, to heal, to thrive and to make things better for those coming after them.

Even in the midst of everything, there was hope.

Not the kind of hope that asks us to be patient while systems continue to fail us. Not the kind that romanticises our resilience or expects Black femmes to endlessly endure suffering with grace. But a radical, unapologetic hope. One rooted in community, collective care, resistance and the knowledge that we deserve so much more than survival.

Perhaps that is why I cried.

I saw both the weight of what we carry and the beauty of how we continue to hold one another.

I think a part of me was also crying for the version of myself who started HERSANA. Who knew that something needed to change but could never have pictured that one day I would be holding this report in my hands.

When I first started HERSANA, I honestly could not have imagined this was possible.

I knew the kind of world I wanted to help create. I knew that Black femmes deserved spaces where they could exist without explanation, where their experiences would be believed without interrogation, where their safety, healing and liberation would never be an afterthought. I knew that



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our voices mattered, even when the world around us seemed determined to suggest otherwise.

But this? A body of research created by us, for us, centring our truths, our experiences and our visions for change? I did not dare to picture what was possible.

Perhaps that is one of the most beautiful things about this journey. That something which began as a vision, rooted in frustration, love, rage and an unwavering belief that Black femmes deserve better, has grown into something so much bigger than me.

HERSANA was never supposed to be about one person. It was always about us. About what becomes possible when we come together, when we refuse to accept the limitations placed upon us and when we dare to imagine a world in which Black femmes are not simply surviving but flourishing.

Power in Print has been a labour of love, passion and justice.

It has demanded so much of the team, emotionally, intellectually and personally. But it has also reminded me why HERSANA exists and why this work matters so deeply.

We did not embark on this research to prove that Black femmes experience violence, racism, discrimination or institutional harm. We do not need research to validate our existence or our pain. Our experiences are evidence enough.

We embarked on this journey because our stories deserve to be documented on our own terms. Too often, research about us is conducted without us, interpreted without us and used to inform decisions that continue to exclude us.

Our voices are too frequently marginalised, even within the very movements and systems that claim to champion women's safety and equality.

And because we refuse to allow our experiences to be silenced, erased, diluted or treated as an afterthought.

This report is not simply a collection of findings. It is a record of our realities, our resistance, our aspirations and our demands. It is an act of Black feminist praxis, rooted in the belief that knowledge is not neutral, lived experience is expertise and research must do more than describe injustice. It must contribute to dismantling it.

But I also want to be clear about something:

Black femmes are not defined solely by what has happened to us.

We are not just our trauma. We are not just our statistics. We are not just the inequalities we navigate or the systems we are forced to challenge.

We are joy. We are brilliance. We are softness and strength. We are creativity, complexity, laughter, tenderness and love. We are deserving of safety without having to demonstrate suffering and deserving of care without having to prove resilience.

We deserve to live full, free, safe and beautiful lives. Not simply to survive them.

It is this belief that has carried us through every stage of this research.

I want to extend my deepest gratitude to the Black-led, Black feminist and community-rooted organisations, researchers, activists and advocates who came before us and those who continue to walk alongside us.

To organisations such as Milk Honey Bees, FORWARD, Sistah Space, Glitch, We Are Frieda and the many others whose work has challenged silence, confronted injustice, documented our realities and demanded that our voices be heard: Thank You.

We recognise that we are not the first to do this work, nor will we be the last. Long before *Power in Print*, there were Black femmes asking difficult questions, gathering evidence, creating spaces for our stories, challenging institutions and refusing to allow our experiences to be erased.

Some did so with funding and institutional recognition. Many did so without either. All have contributed to a legacy of knowledge, resistance and collective care that continues to shape what is possible for our communities.

We stand on your shoulders as we present this piece of work.

And we do so with admiration, humility, gratitude and a deep sense of responsibility. Because Black feminist work has never been about who gets to speak first, who receives the recognition or whose name appears on the front page. It is about what we build together, what we leave behind and how we ensure that those coming after us can go further than we ever could, without having to fight the same battles we did.

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HERSANA CIC's Founder & Chief Vision Officer

Power in Print is our contribution to that collective legacy. It is not the beginning of the conversation, and it certainly will not be the end.

To those who laid the foundations, those who continue to build alongside us and those who will carry this work further than we ever could: Thank You.

May we continue to honour those whose shoulders we stand on, while becoming shoulders for others to stand upon.

To our extraordinary research team, I am not sure words will ever adequately express the depth of my gratitude.

I am in constant awe of you. Of your brilliance, your generosity, your thoughtfulness and the care with which you have approached every stage of this journey. Of the countless hours, the difficult conversations, the emotional labour and the determination to keep going, even when the resources simply were not there.

This research was undertaken without funding. No big research grant. No substantial pot of money waiting to make the work easier. Just an extraordinary group of people who believed that our stories deserved to be told and that they deserved to be told properly.

You have given so much of yourselves to this work, out of conviction rather than obligation. You believed that these stories mattered. That Black femmes mattered. That our communities deserved research that did not simply extract our experiences but honoured them.

I want you to know that I see that. I see you.

There is something profoundly moving about people coming together, not because there is money or recognition waiting at the end but because they share a conviction that something needs to change. You have reminded me, time and time again, of what collective action, solidarity and Black feminist praxis look like beyond theory and in practice.

And yet, I must be honest about what that work has cost. This work has been undertaken without funding and I refuse to romanticise that.

Our passion should not have to fill the gaps left by systemic underinvestment.

Our commitment to justice should not mean that our labour is endlessly expected to be free.

Our communities deserve investment, not just admiration. And those doing this work deserve to be resourced, not simply applauded for their sacrifice.

Sometimes I look at HERSANA, at the people who have believed in it, the communities who have trusted us and the work we have been able to do and I am genuinely overwhelmed.

Not because I ever doubted what Black femmes were capable of but because there is something profoundly beautiful about watching a dream become a collective reality.

To every member of our research team, thank you for making something possible that I once could not have dreamed of. Thank you for believing in this vision, for trusting me and HERSANA with your time, your expertise and your hearts. Thank you for refusing to let a lack of funding determine whether these stories would be told.

This report carries your fingerprints on every page and I hope you feel as proud of it as I am of you.

What a privilege it is to dream alongside people who not only see the vision but help make it real.

To every Black femme who contributed to this research: Thank You.

Thank you for trusting us with your truths. Thank you for your vulnerability, your courage, your honesty and your generosity. Thank you for sharing not only what has hurt you but what has sustained you. What you hope for. What you demand. What you dream might be possible.

I know that sharing these experiences is not always easy, particularly when so many of us have learned that speaking up does not necessarily mean being heard. I do not take that trust lightly and neither does HERSANA.

I hope that as you read these pages, you recognise yourself not only in the challenges documented, but in the love, solidarity and possibilities that emerge from them.

I hope you feel seen.
I hope you feel heard.

And above all, I hope you feel held.

FOREWORD

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HERSANA CIC's Founder & Chief Vision Officer

To policymakers, commissioners, researchers, practitioners and institutions reading this report: I ask you to resist the temptation to treat these findings as simply another evidence base to acknowledge, cite and file away.

These are people's lives.

The knowledge contained within these pages demands more than recognition. It demands accountability, investment, structural change and meaningful action. Black femmes have spent far too long explaining the harm we experience to systems that have been far too comfortable listening without changing.

We are not asking for a seat at a table that was never designed with us in mind. We are demanding the power to shape what justice, safety, healing and liberation look like for ourselves.

To my Black femme siblings, wherever you are, however you are navigating this world, I want you to know this:

I see you.
I believe you.
I am proud of you.
And I love us.

Not because of how much we can withstand,
but simply because of who we are.

May this report honour those who have spoken, those who have been silenced, those who are still finding their voices and those who are no longer here to tell their stories.
May it be a source of knowledge, a catalyst for change and a reminder of the extraordinary power that exists when we tell our own stories.

May we never forget that our stories have always held power. We are simply putting that power in print.

With love, rage and an unwavering commitment to justice,

C. Yeboah

Christabel Yeboah
Founder & Chief Vision Officer
HERSANA CIC



GLOSSARY

This glossary is ordered by contextual relevance, prioritising the terms most important to understanding the report and its findings.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS (VAWG)

Any act of that results in, or is likely to result in, the suffering of, and/or physical, sexual, or mental harm to women and girls, because they are women and girls. It includes threats, domestic abuse, sexual violence, trafficking, female genital cutting and more.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)

Harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or gender expression. It includes domestic abuse, sexual violence, trafficking, female genital cutting and more.

BLACK

A term used to describe individuals of African or Caribbean descent, including those with a direct or ancestral connection to Africa.

BLACKNESS

A multifaceted term that refers to the cultural, social, and political identity and lived experiences of Black people. It includes the ways in which Black individuals navigate and express their heritage, resistance, and resilience in the face of systemic anti-Black racism.

FEMME / FEMMEHOOD



Women, girls, non-binary, trans and gender-diverse communities who feel safe in feminine-led spaces and have been socialised under / subject to misogyny.

SURVIVOR

A person who has experienced gender-based violence. HERSANA uses the term survivor to honour the strength and resilience of those who have experienced abuse, though we respect the right of individuals to use their preferred term, such as victim.

BY-AND-FOR

By-and-for describes something that is both created, run, or led by a specific group of people and intended to serve that same group. A by-and-for service means the organisation is staffed, managed, and guided by people who share the same lived experiences or protected characteristics as the clients they help.

RACISM

The systemic oppression of a racial group to the social, economic, and political advantage of another.

ANTI-BLACK RACISM

A specific form of prejudice, discrimination, and systemic oppression directed at people of African descent, rooted in the history of European colonialism and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

COLONIALISM

The imposition of policies, laws, economies, cultures, or systems by settler governments to support and continue the occupation of Indigenous territories and the subjugation of Indigenous nations.

SURVIVOR-LED

An approach where people who have experienced the harm being addressed (survivors) hold power and hold safe roles in decision-making, shaping strategy, and guiding services. Their lived experience is treated as expertise in its own right.

MISOGYNOIR

A term coined by Moya Bailey that describes the specific hatred, dislike, or prejudice directed at Black women and femmes, where racism and misogyny intersect.

Dr. Moya Bailey

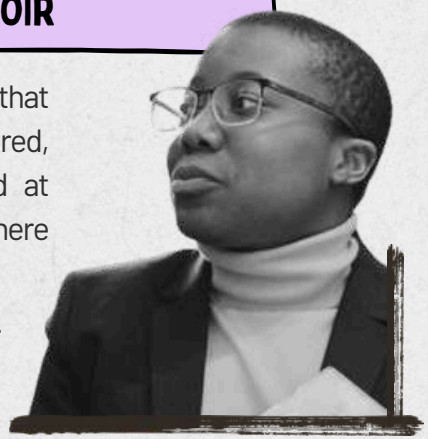


Image: Northeastern University (2020)

BLACK FEMINISM

A social, political and academic movement that centres the unique lived experiences, identities, and struggles of Black women.

Kimberlé Crenshaw

INTERSECTIONALITY

A framework popularised by Kimberlé Crenshaw for understanding how different forms of discrimination (e.g. racism, sexism, classism, ableism) overlap and compound one another – particularly in the lives of Black femmes and marginalised people.



Image: Columbia Law School (2024)

TRAUMA INFORMED

An approach that recognises the widespread impact of trauma and integrates knowledge of trauma into policies, procedures, and practices to avoid retraumatisation and support healing.

CULTURALLY INFORMED

Recognising, respecting, and integrating a person's or community's cultural background, values, beliefs, and lived experiences into a practice, service, or interaction. A tailored support approach that does not assume norms.

ADVOCATE / ADVOCACY

A person who provides support, information, and resources to survivors of gender-based violence.

NON-CONSENSUAL

In the context of GBV and VAWG, non-consensual acts occur when a person does not or cannot agree by choice and does not have the freedom and capacity to make that choice without consequence attached to their 'no'.

ABUSE

A pattern of behaviour used to gain or maintain power and control over another person. Abuse can be physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, financial, or spiritual. Abuse is not always visible or easily identifiable.

PERPETRATOR

A person who carries out acts of violence or abuse. Also referred to as an abuser or offender.

DOMESTIC ABUSE

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading, or violent behaviour (including sexual violence) in the context of a current or former intimate relationship or family connection.

HARASSMENT

Unwanted behaviour that causes someone to feel intimidated, degraded, or humiliated. It can be verbal, physical, online, or sexual in nature.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE / SEXUAL ABUSE /

Umbrella term for any sexual act without consent. This includes any sexual act, threats to obtain a sexual act, or unwanted sexual comments or advances, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim / survivor, in any setting.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and other forms of verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, often involving an abuse of power. This is a *form* of sexual violence / abuse.

ADULTIFICATION

A form of bias where children are perceived, expected, or treated by adults and institutions as being older, more mature, more responsible, or less vulnerable than their age.

FAST

A term used to describe girl children as acting, dressing, or behaving as a young adult; being promiscuous and sexually forward for her age.

ECONOMIC/ FINANCIAL ABUSE

A form of abuse where the abuser controls a person's access to money, employment, or financial resources to limit their independence and maintain power.

COERCIVE CONTROL

The use of words or actions to control or frighten someone, or to lower their self-respect and self-esteem. This includes insults, belittling, constant humiliation, intimidation, threats to harm, threats to take away children, and harm or threats to harm pets.

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION/CUTTING (FGM/C)

The excision, infibulation, or mutilation of the labia majora, labia minora, or clitoris of a girl or woman, in whole or in part, for non-medical reasons. FGM/C is a form of abuse and is a crime in the UK.

FLASHING/ CYBER FLASHING

Deliberately exposing one's genitals (or breasts) to another person without their consent, usually to cause distress, alarm, shock, or for sexual gratification. Cyberflashing includes sending unwanted, explicit images or videos of genitals (such as via text, WhatsApp, AirDrop, or social media).

STALKING

A pattern of fixated, obsessive, unwanted, and repeated behaviour (occurring two or more times) causing an adverse effect on a victim's daily life or causes them fear, alarm, or distress.

RETRAUMATISATION

When a survivor is exposed to further trauma, often by institutions, systems, or individuals after the initial harm, through disbelief, blame, or retraumatising practices.

QUEER

An umbrella term for sexual and gender minorities who are not heterosexual or who do not identify with their sex assigned at birth.

IBID.

Used to refer to the exact same source cited in the immediately preceding the note, reference or quote.

ET. AL.

Used as an abbreviation meaning "and others" when referencing books, studies, or journal articles written by multiple authors.

N.D.

Used when citing a reference that has no published date.

CONTENT WARNING

This report contains discussions of experiences, language and themes that may be distressing, including:

- Racism, anti-Blackness and misogynoir
- Gender-based violence (GBV) & violence against women and girls (VAWG)
- Domestic abuse, sexual violence, coercive control and harassment
- Misogyny, sexism and gender-based discrimination
- Institutional violence, systemic discrimination
- Failures in safeguarding and survivor support
- Homophobia, transphobia and other forms of LGBTQ+ discrimination
- Psychological and emotional abuse, trauma and the impacts of violence
- Intersectional inequalities and barriers to safety, justice and support

& CARE

Grounded in Black feminist and trauma-informed principles, *Power in Print* centres the lived experiences of Black femmes while recognising the care and responsibility required when documenting experiences of violence, discrimination and institutional harm.

We recognise that the experiences explored throughout this research are not simply subjects of analysis, but lived realities. We have therefore sought to approach the presentation of these experiences with dignity, sensitivity and respect for the autonomy of those whose voices inform this work.

We encourage readers to engage with this report at their own pace, take breaks where needed and prioritise their wellbeing.

The *Power in Print* research team has created a National Black by-and-for service map. Please reach out to any of these services should you wish to seek support at any time. You may also reach out to the research team or HERSANA:

HERSANA CIC
talkto@hersana.org

***Power in Print* Team**
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NOTE:

Direct quotes from Black femme *Power in Print* participants are used throughout this report and highlighted in italicised ***orange****

* Quotes are true to how Black Femmes have chosen to share their experiences with us. Their voices have not been edited to accommodate for palatability / typical writing standards.



Unless otherwise explicitly stated with named reference accreditation, photography featured in this report was captured at HERSANA's *SANA Fest* events in 2023 and 2024, at *SANA Spaces* outreach events or other HERSANA activities and remain at the copyright of ©HERSANA CIC.

These images were not collected specifically for *Power in Print* and are included for illustrative purposes only. **Individuals pictured should not be assumed to be research participants**, survivors or the individuals whose experiences and quotations are featured throughout this report.

OWNERSHIP = FREEDOM



Power in Print outreach team

"This research is the only time I have ever felt seen as a Black survivor, it adds depth and I'm excited to have a voice to be honest"

Power in Print is a research piece designed to understand gender-based violence (GBV) in the UK through the Black femme lens of lived experience. Whilst most research only acknowledges women *generally*, or Black women in the periphery, the term 'Black femme' is used in this research to be a trans-inclusive term that encompasses Black women, girls, trans, non-binary and gender-diverse people. It highlights a distinct gap of intersectional research into GBV. In August 2025, Ebonie Wilson contacted HERSANA CIC to volunteer her time to a collaborative research project. Over the course of just two meetings, our shared desires for Black-led by-and-for research, to be *seen* and *heard* in all our intersectional identities, and to access power through the *print* and an archive of lived experience - a volunteer-led research project came into focus. This research is born out of radical Black feminist thought; a contribution to Black feminist literature that centres the intersectional violence of multiple identities under oppression – race, gender, class, sexuality, disability, and nationality. Black feminist thought is our methodological framework, our lens, our political position and the foundation for which this research rests upon. It is a work putting into print *how* Black femmes are experiencing GBV in the UK by finding *freedom* in the *ownership* of our narratives. This means, explicitly, that this research will not simply produce tired disparity statistics that centre Whiteness as comparison. *Power in Print* builds the missing narratives around them; it is a document of the meanings, mechanisms and consequences attached to the disparity in our experiences.

Power in Print tells the Black femme story of GBV, in *our* words.

RATIONALE, CONTEXT & APPROACH

"We need our own space where we can be openly proud of each other, proud of ourselves"

Oftentimes, Black femme voices within GBV research are ignored, sidelined or merged with other global majority femmes, neglecting the unique intersectionality of Black femmes. Therefore, *Power in Print* rejects extractive and voyeuristic approaches to Black femme traumas, and is a work that has been designed, at *every* stage, *for* our Black femme community. HERSANA, from volunteers to board members, is exclusively, proudly and joyously made up *only* of Black femmes. Consequently, *Power in Print* is as equally as it is for those outside of our community as it is for *us*. *Power in Print* will continue to be a space to acknowledge our experiences *safely* and with *care*. It is a protected platform for voices of lived experience, and a conglomeration of our unwavering calls to action that seek and demand restorative, radical and holistic justice.

By October 2026, a research team of Ebonie Wilson, Hope Evans, Lisa Baskott, Dr. Nat Arias and Valerie Akala, with support from Christal Kihm, put in a total of (182) volunteer hours to produce *Power in Print*: a mixed-method, survivor-led, Black-led, Black-owned capture of the national picture of GBV in the UK.

In the months leading up to this research's conception, throughout writing and at time of publication, *Power in Print* has been situated in the rise of far-right ideology. Under the sentiment of *'protecting British women and children'* (HOPE Not Hate, 2026a), the 'Operation Raise the Colours' campaign has sparked anti-immigration protests, 'far-right mobilisation and escalating violence spread across the UK' with 'flag campaigns, vigilante patrols and riots' (HOPE Not Hate, 2026b). From lampposts to bedroom windows, the English and/or Union Jack flag appeared in every town, city, and residential area across the UK. Regardless of the individual and personal intentions, it had and *has* become a political dog whistle co-opted by far-right and anti-immigration groups, detaching it from innocent patriotism and country pride to become *a signifier of political stance*; not just on nationality, but subversively, on *race*. In a YouGov (2025) survey of British adult participants, 50% thought flag-raising is 'primarily as a way of expressing anti-migrant or *anti-minority* sentiment', with 48% of ethnic minority adults surveyed 'uncomfortable' with large numbers of English flags being raised in their local area.

Whatever meanings individuals attach to the English and/or Union Jack flag, its increasingly prominent use in public discourse has become a visual expression of deeper societal divisions within the UK. These divisions cannot be understood in isolation from the racialised politics of belonging, national identity and public safety. Amnesty International UK has described the day-to-day reality of racism, violence and fear across the UK as "shocking" and a "genuine emergency" (Nagdee, 2026).

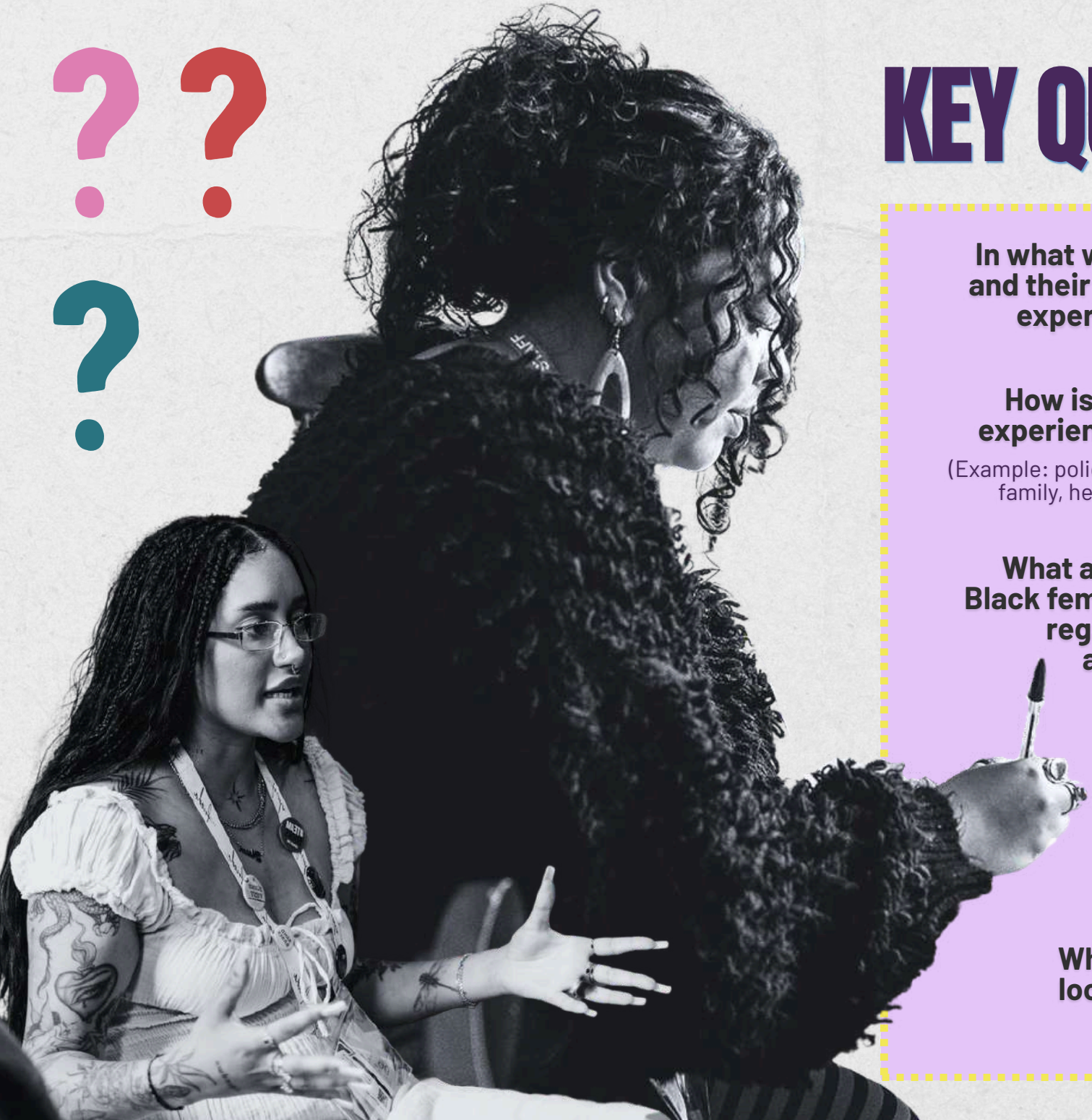
Against this backdrop, appeals to "protect our women" raise a fundamental question about whose safety is recognised as a collective concern and whose remains marginalised. Black and other minoritised women occupy a particularly precarious position within this discourse: racialised through the politics of national belonging yet simultaneously exposed to gender-based violence and the unequal systems through which protection is defined and delivered. The scale of this inequality is starkly illustrated by reported figures indicating that, despite Black women comprising 7.1% of London's population in 2022, they accounted for 43% of domestic homicides in the capital; in 2023, this figure reportedly rose to 62% (BBC, 2024). The absence of subsequently published, comparable Met Police domestic homicide statistics disaggregated by race further raises questions about the visibility of these inequalities and the accountability required to address them.

The critical question, therefore, is not simply whether women are being protected, but which women are recognised as deserving of protection, whose experiences of violence are made visible, and whose suffering is allowed to remain at the margins. From protest chants and political rhetoric to public services, commissioning decisions and government institutions, the language of protection must be interrogated alongside its material outcomes. Whose stories shape the national conversation on GBV and VAWG? Which victims are seen, believed and remembered? And whose safety is translated into sustained institutional action, resources and accountability?

"There's nothing better than a survivor teaching you about their experiences that they had"

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

Power in Print is a body of work that aims to centre Blackness (Afro-Caribbean heritages and its diaspora), *unapologetically*. It is a research piece that is explicitly inclusive of gender-diversity, uniting women, non-binary, trans and gender-diverse people who feel safe in feminine-led spaces and have been socialised under / subject to misogyny. It is a living, breathing, archival collation of Black femme experiences of GBV in the UK that rejects the notion of monolithic Black femme survivorship and centres *our* diversity. Research is guided by the aim of investigating systemic disparities through the lens of individual lived experience to propose radical actions for community justice identified by Black femme survivors of GBV. This research aims to unite individual power through the collective print of Black femme lived experience and leaves no room for excuses in our call for justice.



KEY QUESTIONS

1. **In what ways are Black femmes and their intersecting identities experiencing GBV in the UK?**

2. **How is GBV support provision experienced by Black femmes?**

   (Example: police, courts, GBV/VAWG services, family, healthcare, therapeutic services)

3. **What are the unmet needs for Black femme survivors of GBV in regard to support systems and service provisions?**

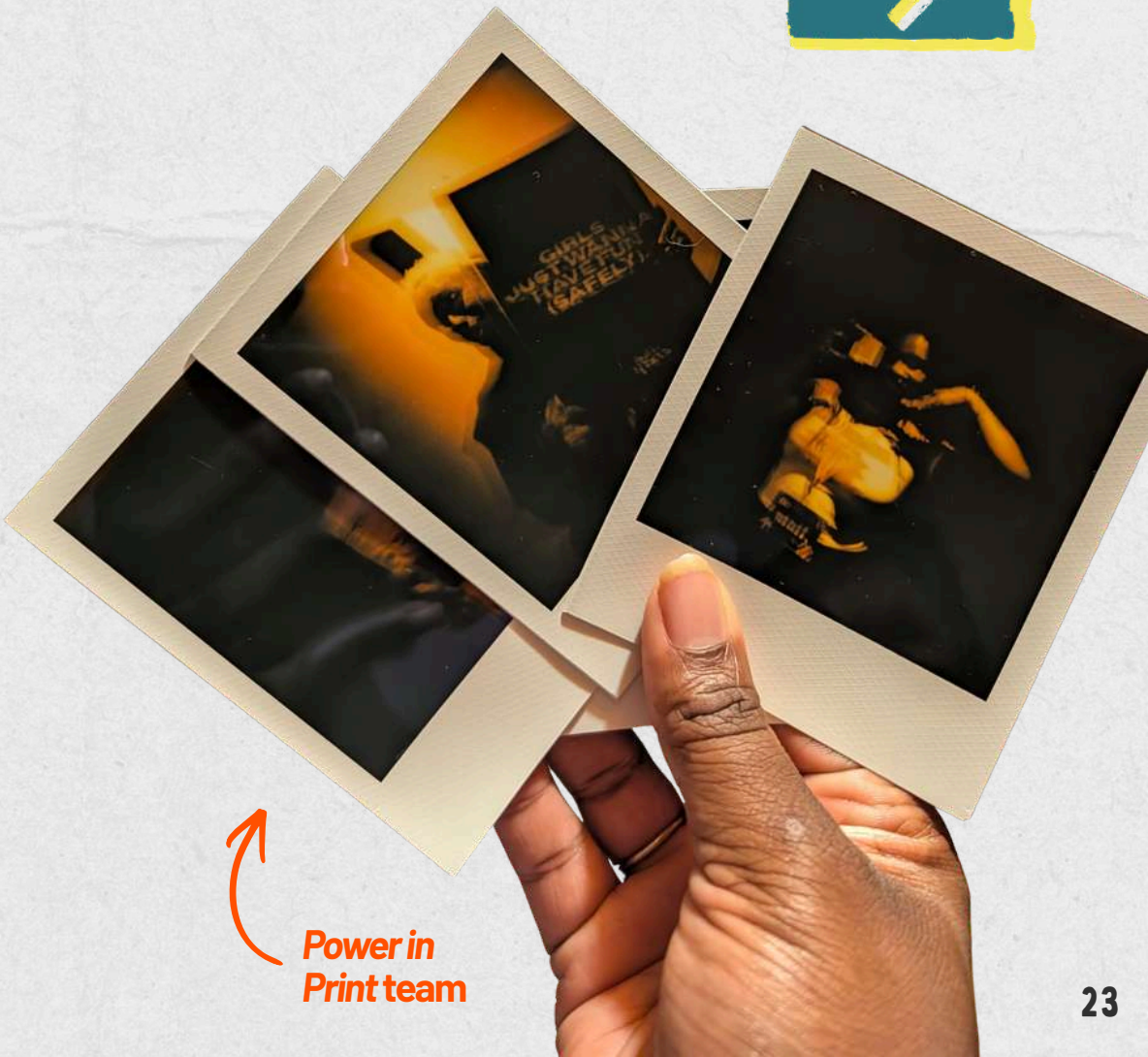
4. **What radical action is required of GBV support providers to ensure meaningful impact for Black femme survivors?**

5. **What does radical justice look like for Black femme survivors of GBV?**

METHODOLOGY

INTERVIEWS

We conducted 15 semi-structured interviews. 9 participants were GBV practitioners and Black femme leaders in their fields recruited via professional networks and LinkedIn. Informed consent was obtained via a participant information sheet containing (i) research outline, (ii) data protection and confidentiality policies and (iii) right to withdrawal. With a signed consent form, these participants engaged in 60-minute interviews conducted on Microsoft Teams and transcribed via audio-recording. 6 participants engaged with in-person interviews at Brighton's annual carnival celebrating Black community in Sussex, '*BARCO BASH*'. In-person interviewees were approached, verbal consent was obtained, and the interviews were recorded via mobile phone. All interviews were collaboratively analysed using thematic analysis by *Power in Print* volunteer researchers and HERSANA staff.

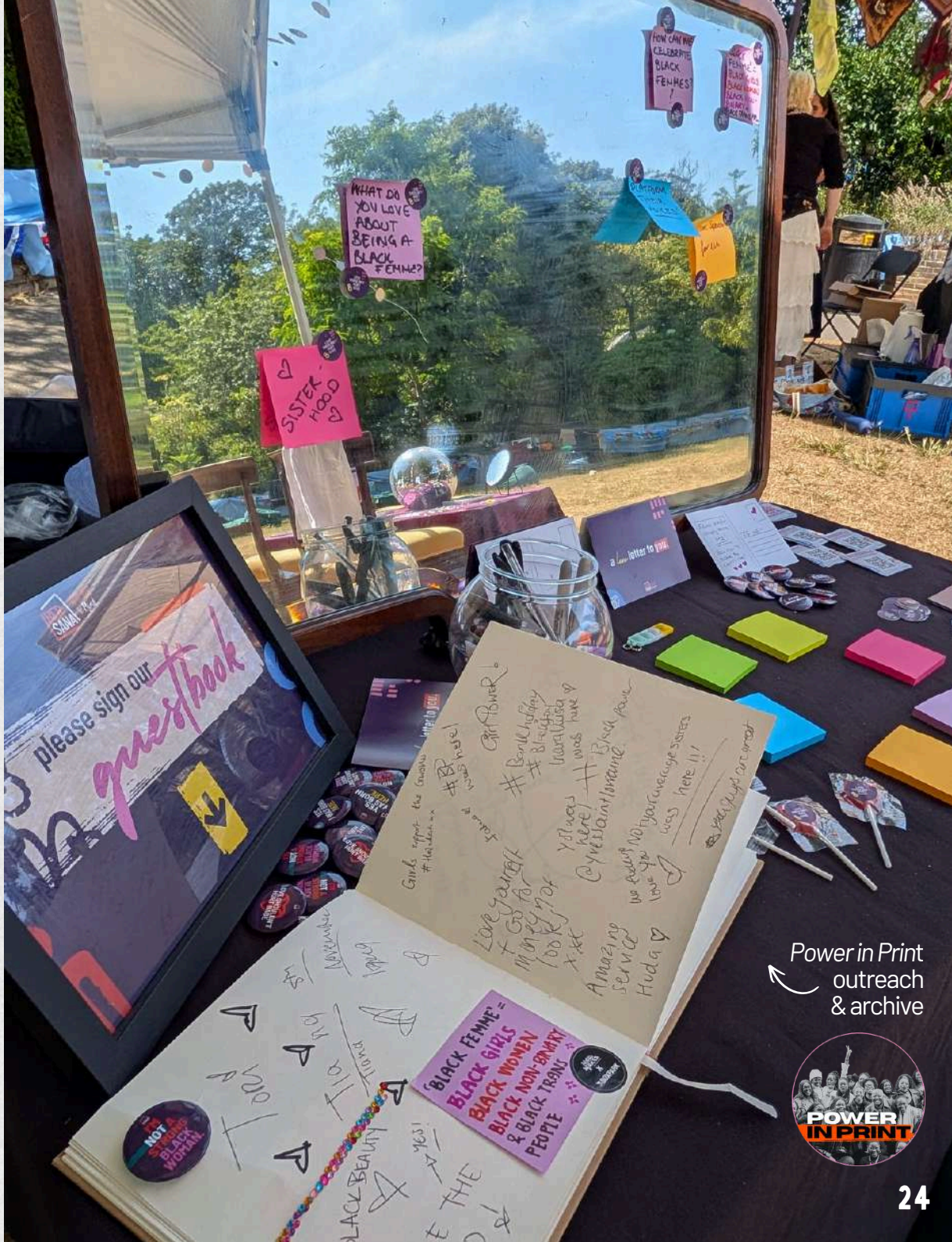


Power in Print team

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & ARCHIVE

HERSANA's branch outreach initiative, *SANA Spaces*, provides dedicated, trauma-informed wellbeing and safeguarding provision at live events alongside partner venues. *SANA Spaces* primarily operates at Black-led events. This provided the *Power in Print* research team a separate dedicated outreach space for research engagement at 6 majority Black attendee events from July 2026 - August 2026. Participants were asked two questions: *"What do you love about being a Black Femme?"* and *"How can we celebrate Black Femmes?'* These questions were specifically selected to collect lived experience qualitative data that centres Black femme identity *beyond* victimhood / trauma. Respondents engaged via post-it notes and/or writing in HERSANA's dedicated event guestbook. 22 responses were collated and thematic analysis was used across all written data.





Power in Print outreach & archive



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & ARCHIVE

HERSANA's Wellbeing Space
BARCO's Summer Carivnal
Brighton | 25th July 2026


I Love having the body of my ancestors. Recognise how much this lineage has overcome
I love how versatile our hair is!
In every lifetime, Let me be a Black Woman
I love BEING A BLACK WOMAN! I LOVE THIS WOMAN FRIENDLY SPACE
I love being a black woman just because...
I love how everything just fits. Like a missing piece of a puzzle
WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT BEING A BLACK FEMME?
My mum being a black women has fueled the activist, persormer and amazing cook I am today
I love Everything
Your Black is Beautiful. Being Black means more than one thing. Don't Fit the Box, Create it
I love the sisterhood The unspoken bond formed from a single eye-contact with someone across the room.
-The music are black Queens have made for us.
Love the Sista hood
-The connection
-The inside jokes
-The relatability
SISTER-HOOD


HOW CAN WE CELEBRATE BLACK FEMMES?
PLATFORM THEIR VOICES!
BB
Allow & Provide spaces they can be authentically themselves
More Spaces for us
More safe spaces ♡
More spaces, More representation, More Celebration
More third spaces that are ~~protected~~ solely just ours
LOVE SHOULDN'T HURT BABE
LOVE SHOULDN'T HURT BABE
LOVE SHOULDN'T HURT BABE
please sign our

SURVEY

We created an anonymous 31 question survey using Microsoft Forms and received 70 responses. The survey was open to Black femmes across the UK age 18+ and participants were recruited via: targeted outreach to researched Black by-and-for organisations in the UK (forming a national service map); university student's union across the UK; HERSANA and the research team's professional networks; social media platforms; HERSANA's in-house newsletter; requested newsletter space from partners, HERSANA's training participants; at HERSANA's in-person outreach initiatives; via survey QR code on printed business cards; and word-of-mouth. The national Black by-and-for service map was expressly created for *Power in Print* as a signposting resource for respondents to access support should they wish after completing the survey.

The survey was created in 4 parts;

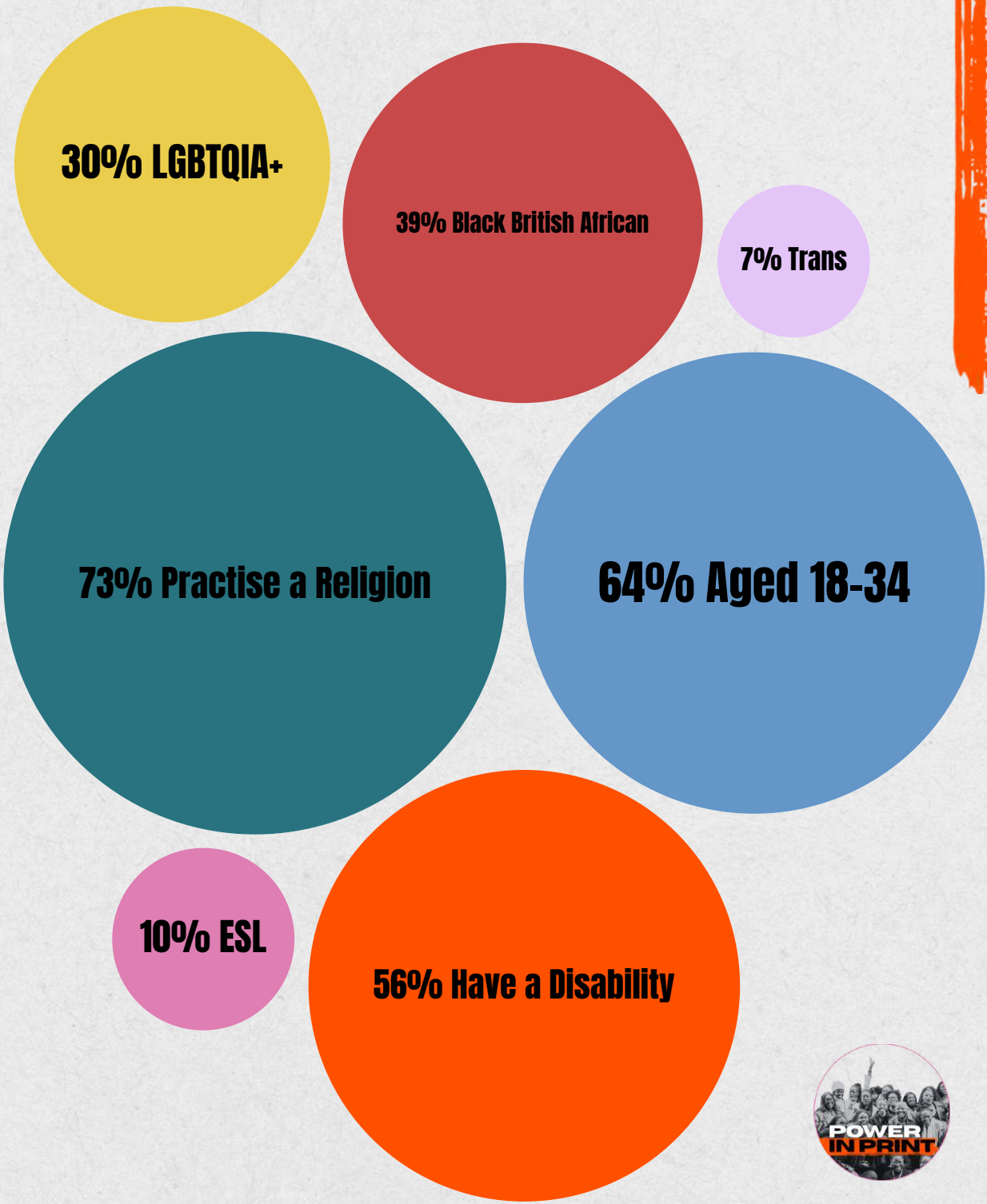
- Demographics ('About You'),
- Experiences of GBV ('Your Stories, Your Perspectives'),
- Support Provision Accessed ('Your Support Journey') and
- Racial Actions ('No More Excuses – What Do You Want?').

The survey used multiple choice questions for demographics and open text responses for questions regarding impacts of GBV and reporting, radical action, justice and solidarity. We ran a pilot survey from November 2025 - December 2025 to review the questions and responses. The revised survey ran from January 2026 - September 2026.



SURVEY PARTICIPANT PROFILES

- Respondents were aged 18-64 with 64% of respondents being aged 18-34
- 100% respondents were Black Femmes with nearly 40% being Black British African
- Respondents lived in 15 different cities across the UK
- 56% of respondents disclosed that they have a Disability
- 30% of respondents are LGBTQIA+
- 7% of respondents shared that they do not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth
- 10% of respondents have English as a second language
- 73% of respondents practice a religion



CONTENT WARNING:

This report contains discussions of experiences, language and themes that may be distressing, including:

- Racism, anti-Blackness and misogynoir
- Gender-based violence (GBV) & violence against women and girls (VAWG)
- Domestic abuse, sexual violence, coercive control and harassment
- Misogyny, sexism and gender-based discrimination
- Institutional violence, systemic discrimination
- Failures in safeguarding and survivor support
- Homophobia, transphobia and other forms of LGBTQ+ discrimination
- Psychological and emotional abuse, trauma and the impacts of violence
- Intersectional inequalities and barriers to safety, justice and support

We encourage readers to engage with this report at their own pace, take breaks where needed and prioritise their wellbeing.

THE UNIQUENESS OF MISOGYNOIR: SHAPING OUR EVERYDAY

"There is no one more oppressed than the Black Femme, and that's because we bring something quite dangerous"



Dr. Moya Bailey

Image: Northeastern University (2018)

Misogynoir, a term coined by Dr. Moya Bailey, defines the 'uniquely co-constitutive racialized and sexist violence' that 'befalls Black women' at the intersecting site of racial and gender marginalisation. She describes the unique phenomenon as a *'particular venom directed at Black women'* (Bailey, 2021).

Acknowledgement of this particular intersection of race and gender is significant as it consequently identifies that the prototype for 'woman' infers *Whiteness*, and the prototype for Blackness infers *'man'*. This allows us to see Black femmehood through a Black feminist lens; the Black femme is neither *White woman*, nor *Black man*; the prototypes (standards) in which representation, advocacy, rights, justice and are designed, entirely erase the *'simultaneous and interlocking oppression'* (Bailey, 2021) of Black femmehood. For Black women to experience equitable access to systemic justice, 'the entire framework that has been used as a basis of translating 'women's experience' and 'the Black experience' must be 'rethought and recast' (Crenshaw, 1989). Overlooking this unique intersect of gender and racial identity is not a passive oversight, it is a continuous, deliberate and *dangerous* practise of erasure that positions Black femmes as ***"undeserving"***, ***"unworthy"*** and ***"just kind of literally at the bottom of the pool"***. This phenomenon is known as *intersectional invisibility*.

COLONIALISM + INTERSECTIONAL INVISIBILITY

To understand *intersectional invisibility* and the erasure of Black femmehood, we must look to colonialism. Under colonial slavery, slaves who worked in fields and plantations (indiscriminate of woman or man) were treated on par 'with the animals' (Bush-Slimani, 1993). The Black female body who gave birth to child slaves were seen as the 'reproducers' (Davies, 2022) of the slave economy. Ocen (2012) describes this as the 'duality and contradiction' of Black women's bodies in that they were placed not only outside of personhood (*race*), but also outside what was perceived as *womanhood*. Their 'uniquely feminine reproductive capacities… were exploited as a means of expanding the system of slavery'.

Further, Black women were exploited by medical scientists as experiment subjects to 'expand their scientific knowledge' (Owens and Fett, 2019). Gynaecology has particularly 'deep linkages' (ibid.) with colonial slavery. For example, Dr. Sims, coined and still celebrated as the 'father of gynaecology', developed his research on the bodies of three enslaved Black women in the 1840s (Wailoo, 2018). The procedures that inform much of the modern practise of gynaecology used today were performed, unanaesthetised, on the bodies of enslaved Black women whose consent was 'contracted with the slave owners' (ibid.). As they were put to do hard labour under colonial rule, Black bodies were percieved as 'more insensible to pain' (ibid.), i.e. *strong Black woman bodies*. Modern medicine was developed on the 'sick bodies of enslaved women' until they were either 'cured or died' (Owens and Fett, 2019).

While colonialism and slavery dehumanised Black women to simply bodies that *gave birth to more slaves* 'who would build capital for enslavers' (Owens and Fett, 2019), White women birthed 'patriarchal lineages,' (ibid.), allowing them personhood. More specifically, White women were the *prototypes (standards) of femininity*; they were the binary-opposite of Black women. This created the dynamic that associates *Whiteness* with *femininity* – i.e., the closer Black women could get to the being perceived as similar to *'Whiteness'*, the closer they could get to being (perceived as) *'feminine'*. In modern contexts, this legacy is what is known as 'colourism'. Colourism acknowledges the closer a Black femme is to perceived Whiteness (lighter skin, Eurocentric features), the more they are to perceived to be feminine. In part it is a standard of beauty that dictates ***"what deserves to be cherished and what deserves to be abused"***. It *also* plays part to who is seen as *vulnerable* and therefore *likely to be a victim*.

"I had to remind this person that Black Women are people. You don't see them as people and that is something that you need to unpick yourself"

This colonial legacy is ongoing in contemporary society and is ***"woven into everything"***. From Black maternal deaths (Five X More, 2022), physical and mental health care inequalities (IRR, 2024), access to education and attainment (Agenda Alliance, 2021), career advancement, equal pay (LSE, 2021), media representation, online harassment (Glitch, 2023) and dating preferences (Salle, 2023), misogynoir is ever-present in Black Femmehood - constantly evolving, but *ever-present* as an operating factor across every factor of daily life. Black femmes continue, as they always have, to develop terminology, theory, and research that captures our unique experiences as we navigate life itself.

Despite attempts to legitimise our unique experiences, terminology is often co-opted which in turn decentres our voices. For example, 'intersectionality', a term popularised by Kimberlé Crenshaw which outlined the experience of multiple simultaneous oppressions rather than the 'sum of its parts', was an address of the 'particular manner in which *Black women* are subordinated' (Crenshaw, 1989). It is the observation of the *Power in Print* research team that the term has since entered GBV and VAWG sectors, decontextualised, as a modern term interchangeable with 'diversity and inclusion' beyond its roots in Black femmehood.

'They need a tick box and because it's a hot thing right now, intersectionality. The use of the language is now devoid of meaning as it doesn't even have space to centre Black Femmes"

Language rooted in Black feminist scholarship is explicitly significant as our experiences are ***"...difficult to separate. What bit of their experience is because they're a woman, and what bit is because they're Black?"***. We must uphold the roots and legacies of terminology created *by-and-for us* as it is deeply intergenerational. By nature, it shapes how our daughters, children, mothers aunts, cousins, grandmothers and ancestors all experience misogynoir across time and, indeed, *lifetimes*.



Kimberlé Crenshaw

Image: Vox (2019)

"The biggest thing was speaking about the experiences and sharing it with other Black women. I remember a conversation I had with like a godmother of mine that really hit me where the experiences that I was having in 2018, 2019, 2020 were reflected in a lot of the experiences that she had in the 80s and the 90s. It was just kind of like really feeling that there's a straight line through all of our experiences"

ON BLACK GIRLHOOD

Black girls also experience misogynoir through the lack of 'girlhood'. The erasure of vulnerability is embedded from childhood in what is known as 'adultification'. Adultified Black girls are blamed for what happens to them because they are viewed as 'mature for their age', thus capable of making informed decisions of an adult (Milk Honey Bees CIC, 2025). As a result, rather than protected as the young girls they are, Black girls are unprotected through the ***"diminishing of advocacy"***, meaning Black girls that experience child sexual abuse, grooming and exploitation are often punished, labelled or denied victimhood. Black femme participants described being seen as ***"fast"***, ***"feisty"***, ***"sassy"***, ***"angry"***, ***"strong"*** and ***"survivor[s]"*** during their childhoods. These perceptions and connotations travelled from childhood into adulthood and reinforced the inherited belief that they are not automatically seen, treated or respected as victims, feminine or soft; for them, it is a status that needs to be proven.

Black femme participants also described being labelled as their own perpetrators – a different kind of victim-blaming that places the onus of their victimisation on the victim.

"We're sexualized often simultaneously without… vulnerability. We're seen as hypersexual beings, especially for young Black girls, they're often adultified. They're already perceived as more knowing, sexually experienced and able to protect themselves".

For example, a participant described working with a young Black femme experiencing child sexual exploitation and grooming. When seeking support from another young person due to her distrust in professional services, she was termed by a panel of professionals as "the perpetrator" and that she was "grooming other young people", when, ***"actually, they're just a child"***. Young Black femmes shared with Black femme advocates that in their eyes ***"professionals are looking at [us] and blaming [us]"*** and perpetrators are ***"aware of that… this makes you vulnerable, this makes it easier to be targeted"***.



"I would say I first learned about [misogynoir] and had not realised that I've been going through it my entire life"

- Dr. Charisse Beaumont, Chief Executive of Black Lives in Music

"We got a generation of young Black girls wanting to bleach their skin and these things are sold to them from a young age in hair shops. Why should a young girl be able to go to a hair shop and pick up bleaching cream?"

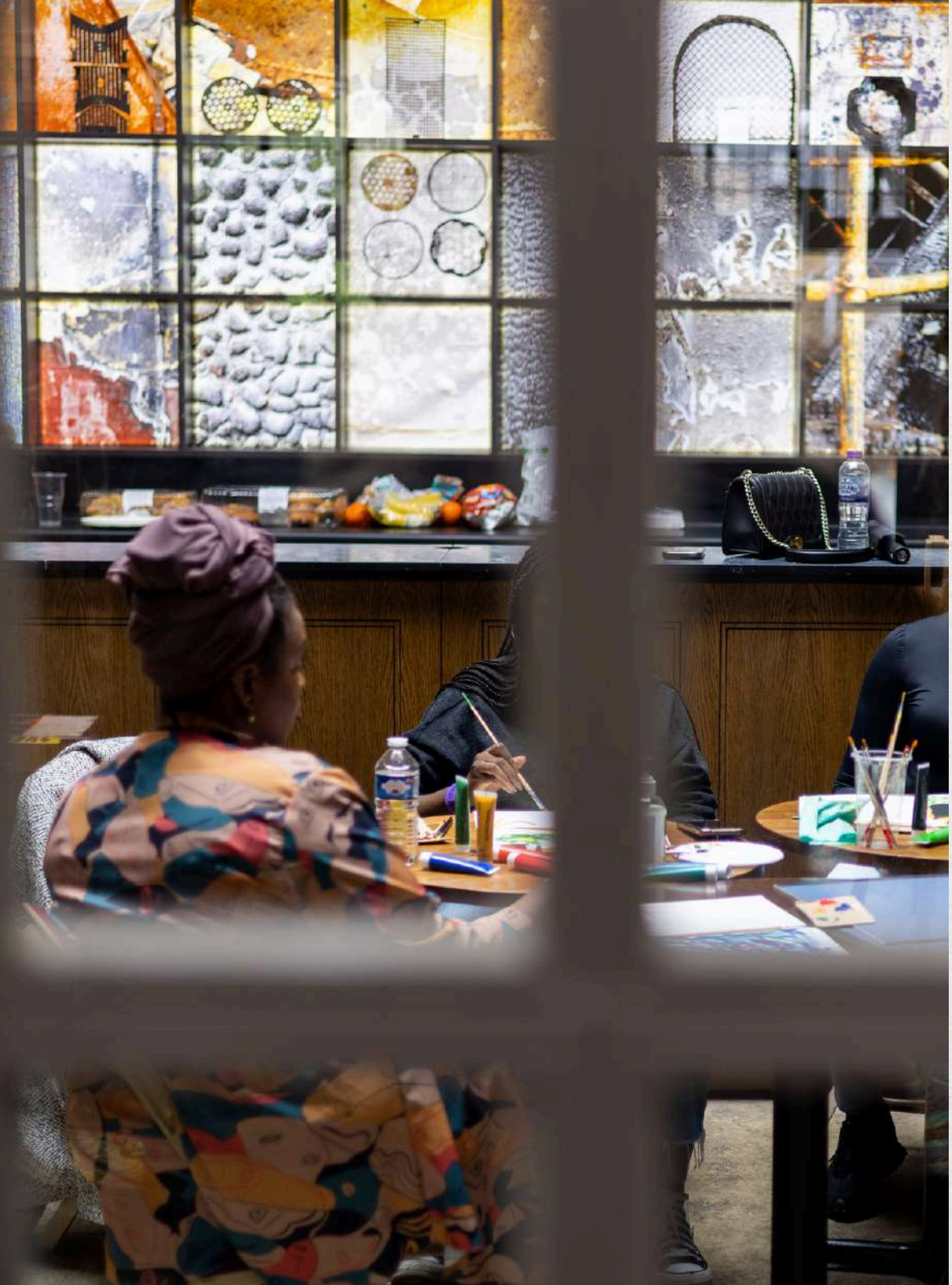
- Sherica Spence, Skye Alexandra House Founder and Community Organiser

"The young black girls don't see themselves as survivors. They don't… they also don't see themselves as victims. I think it's about having that title and then putting them in that box …they're just girls"

- Natalie Johnson, PhD Candidate and GBV Practitioner



Photography by: Theresa Macharia



SURVIVORSHIP

"I feel like I'm shouting a lot. I feel like I'm not heard and it's really difficult. It begins to make you hard. So, if you're asking about my lived experience. It hardens you"

- Dr. Charisse Beaumont,
Chief Executive of Black Lives in Music

While terms like 'survivor' are meant to empower and readdress identity, for Black femmes, this can lend itself to stereotypes and tropes of strength and resilience, once again minimising or erasing victimhood. Misogynoir is the ***"core context [as to] why Black Femmes experience the harm that they do"***. It not only shapes the vulnerability to violence in the first place but also affects the responses after violence. Nonetheless, Black femmes ***"bring something quite dangerous"*** by merely existing and challenging prototypes, oppressive systems, institutions, and definitions of radical actions.

"Your Truth Is Power.
Sharing your experiences isn't weakness - it is strategy. When Black femmes speak, we turn pain into data, and data into protection. Your truth is part of a bigger fight for change"

BLACK FEMMES & GBV IN THE UK

Typically, literature reviews are formed through academic publications, community research and books. However, current research conflates Black femme experiences with other ethnic groups resulting in the *severe* lack of research into specifically Black femme's experience of GBV. Furthermore, there remains insufficient, *government-funded* UK-based research centring Black femme accounts of GBV to contextualise the diversity, complexity and scale of Black femmes' experiences. It is harmful grouping all racial demographics of femmes as experiences are not monolith, hence the importance of intersectionality. This is evidenced by Black and Black British women experiencing a higher rate of GBV compared to other ethnic minority groups (Scottish Government, 2024). Additionally, issues that disproportionately impact femmes of colour, such as insecure immigration status, were found to be more disadvantageous to Black women due to the perceived racist and patriarchal nature within the immigration system (Williams et al., 2024; Mama, 1989).



OUR RESEARCH FOUND THAT:

- 80% of Black Femmes in our survey were under 18 when they had their first experience of GBV.

  ONS (2025) data found that 31.5% of women experienced some form of abuse before the age of 18.

- From our data, Black Femmes are 2.5 times more likely to experience GBV before 18 than the ONS (2025) national average.

- 25% told us that their first experience of GBV was between 6-10 years old.

  The prevalence of domestic abuse and sexual violence for women and girls is 1 in 4. (Refuge, n.d.; RCEW, 2025)

- Of Black femmes surveyed, 40% have had up to 5 incidents of GBV in their lifetime.

- Over a quarter of Black femmes surveyed have had 15 or more incidents of GBV in their lifetime.

  "35% of Black women who experience domestic abuse are victimised more than once, compared to 26% of white women. Black women are also more likely to experience severe forms of abuse, such as strangulation, suffocation, and threats with a weapon". (Refuge, n.d.)



80% of Black Femmes in our survey were under 18 when they had their first experience of GBV.



Over a quarter of Black femmes surveyed have had 15 or more incidents of GBV in their lifetime.

Over 30 different forms of GBV were disclosed including violence in the categories of street harassment, flashing/cyber flashing, Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C), stalking and economic/financial abuse. Emotional abuse, sexual assault, verbal abuse, sexual harassment, sexual violence and non-consensual touching and kissing were the most frequently disclosed incidents of GBV (ordered in decreasing frequency).

Preparators were commonly strangers, long/short-term partners, other relatives (uncle, aunt, grandparent, cousin), friends, fathers, mothers and peer students (ordered in decreasing frequency). Stranger violence is often reported lower on average for all forms of violence, however in our collected data, 'stranger' was the most common perpetrator. Plan International (2021) found that 82% of Black Women and girls between the ages of 12-21 have experienced public sexual harassment. This highlights how vulnerable Black Femmes are to violence experienced by unknown perpetrators, ***"everywhere a woman could ever be"***.

WHY DO BLACK FEMMES NOT TELL ANYONE?

- 44% of Black Femmes that have told someone about their incident of GBV was up to 6 months after the incident.
- Nearly a quarter did not share the incident with anyone until over 10 years later.

The reasons why Black Femmes did not tell anyone include: ***"victim blaming"***, ***"I would get into trouble"***, ***"to protect him"***, ***"shame"***, ***"the preparator would get in trouble/harmed"***, ***"what happened to me is normalised"***, ***"because nothing ever happens"***, ***"divorce is frowned upon in my religion"***, ***"fear of reinforcing racist stereotypes"*** and ***"homophobia/transphobia"***.

30% agreed that their partner made them feel like they were to blame for what happened to them compared to 54% of those who agreed that they blamed themselves for what happened to them. Victim-blaming is common for survivors of GBV, however there are additional layers regarding shame and guilt for Black Femmes:

"For decades I was worried that people would see me as weaker or less capable or less safe to be around, because I had experienced GBV. I now see that this is partly to do with the stereotypes about being a Strong Black Woman"

Further, sexuality and gender identity were shared as aspects of Black Femmes identity that negatively impacted their access to support services. Though ONS (2019) research identifies that disabled women are more than twice as likely to experience domestic abuse and sexual violence compared to non-disabled women, these statistics are not Black femme specific. Further, while the Government Equalities Office's (2018) National LGBT Survey identified Black Queer people were more likely (13%) to be offered conversion therapies than White Queer people (7%), these statistics are also not Black femme specific. In fact, there is little to no evidence base for how Black femmes with intersecting marginalisations experience GBV in the UK. 30% the Black Femmes that responded to our survey identified as LGBTQIA+, and over half disclosed that they have some form of disability, which does evidence a high prevalence within our group. Further research is needed to thoroughly explore the intersection of sexuality and disability of Black Femmes experiencing GBV.

"The perception of society, well, I guess, the requirement of society of Black Women is to protect your Black man. I think that if there was any pressure, it is about the pressure of preserving her marriage [and the Black family]. Even though divorce is more common, it is still socially unacceptable"

- Dr Nneka Nwokolo, Consultant Physician & Menopause Specialist

"When Black women go home to their husband and say, I got a positive HIV result, and the husband beats them up, or chucks them out of the house, despite the fact that it was the husband who gave it to them, the husband will refuse to test himself. These women with their children are ostracized in a country that isn't their country, who often don't know where to turn or who to get help from, living with a stigmatizing condition that they cannot tell their friends about"

- Dr Nneka Nwokolo, Consultant Physician & Menopause Specialist



"We're sitting at the intersection of various types of violence. Interpersonal violence....and at the same time institutional and structural violence and that's going to be impacted by any various other intersections we hold, because we hold many"

The higher rates of criminalisation of Black Femme survivors of GBV can be linked to adultification, insecure immigration status, increased likelihood of multiple preparators, language barriers and systemic racism within the Criminal Justice System (Centre for Women's Justice, 2026; The Baroness Casey Review, 2023).

REPORTING TO THE POLICE

79% of Black Femmes did not report to the police.

There were mixed experiences for those that did communicate/report with the police with some sharing having a positive experience and that their perpetrator received a jail sentence. However, the majority (4 in 5) shared that their experience engaging with the police was overall negative as Black Femmes are subjected to rape myths on a different axis as attitudes towards them are often racialised:

"That was the most difficult conversation because they made me feel uncomfortable. Like I was considering criminal charges, but they said 'you do know everyone will be questioning you and how well do you remember things' as I had been drinking"

"The officer victim-blamed me and told me I had committed a crime by sharing images of myself when a child, despite me being exploited"

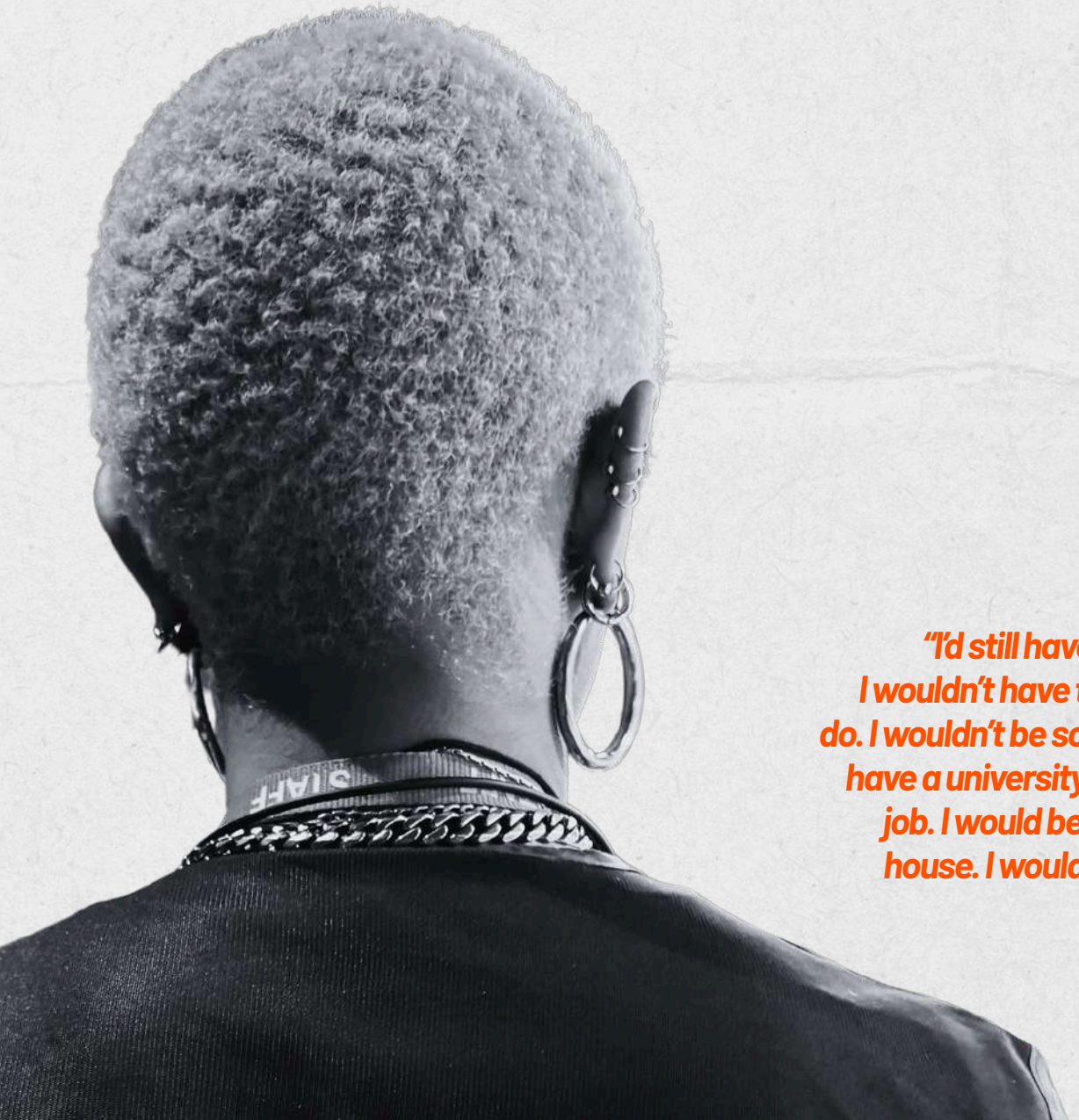
IMPACT

"What violence does inside of us it changes our own self-perception, our sense of self, the things that we believe we have access to and the help that we are comfortable to access"

The impacts of GBV can be devasting and lifelong. Over 30 impacts were disclosed including disordered eating, moved/home, lower engagement in religious practice/ spirituality, and pain during sex. The most common disclosed impacts were anxiety, lower self-esteem, depression, flashbacks, dissociation, isolated at home, PTSD and skipping classes/lectures/days at work (ordered in decreasing frequency).

Black and Black British women are more likely to experience a common mental health problem but are less likely to seek support for their mental health (Brown et al, 2026). Mental Health services have been found to be inaccessible (geographically and economically), culturally unresponsive, and discriminatory towards Black women, further reducing Black Femmes ability to seek support (Donovan et al, 2015).

Black Femmes shared how they have lost out on freedom, choice, education, attainment, career development, fulfilling relationships, feeling safe and finding joy in their everyday lives due to GBV.



"I would have loved myself and not put myself in dangerous situations with men in order to feel loved"

"I would have been educated and working at a job that I love. I would be free"

"Freedom to make life decisions based on passion and ambition not based on being in survival mode for stability"

"I'd probably would have kept my virginity until marriage. That option was taken from me"

"I'd still have a sports scholarship… I wouldn't have the physical disabilities I do. I wouldn't be scared of doctors. I would have a university degree now and a solid job. I would be less scared to leave my house. I would still be playing football"

"Now I just exist in relation to what happened to me, but there's something else on the other side"

Black femmes experience gender-based violence (GBV) within wider systems of intersecting racialised and gendered oppression, whose historical roots continue to shape the conditions of everyday life. Hartman (2006) describes this enduring legacy as the "afterlife of slavery", arguing that Black lives remain "imperilled and devalued" by racial hierarchies and political structures established centuries ago. She identifies their contemporary manifestations in unequal life chances, restricted access to health and education, premature death, imprisonment and impoverishment, concluding: "I, too, am the afterlife of slavery". This framework illuminates how the consequences of historical oppression persist not only through institutional inequalities, but also through the conditions in which Black femmes seek safety, autonomy and support. When GBV occurs within these already unequal conditions, its harms, as *Power in Print* participants highlight, is compounded by barriers to recognition, protection, justice, specialist support and healing. The result is not simply an experience of violence, but the further restriction of the freedom, security and opportunities to which Black femmes are entitled. Understanding these interconnected harms is essential to challenging the structures that constrain Black femmes' lives and to building responses that enable them to live safely, freely and on their own terms.

"I'd be living a normal life and thriving like others"



THEMING BLACK FEMME VOICES

We wanted better storytelling of Black Femmes experiences and to do this we analysed responses from interviews and surveys to develop themes. These themes explore, discuss and validate Black Femme voices through both individual and collective experiences of GBV. The themes identified are:

1. Individual and Systemic Violence,
2. Representation of Black Femmes,
3. Black Femmes and Sisterhood, and
4. The Importance of By-and-For Organisations

"You are not defined by the predators! You are enough, you did not come here to be of service, you are here to be loved, to love and enjoy what life can give you. ...You are loved and you deserve the peace and happiness you dream of"



INDIVIDUAL & SYSTEMIC VIOLENCE

"These systems were not built for you. They were not built with you in mind"

– Kelechi Okafor – Actor, Writer, Social Commentator

Black Femmes shared with us the violence they experience navigating: multiple systems/ structures; the criminal justice system, healthcare, religion, education, employment, social care, mental health and therapeutic provisions and GBV sector services. A common statement was that ***"these systems are not designed for us"*** but what does that mean for Black Femmes?

Black Femmes are less likely to be believed:

"You're just so used to taking it and have been experiencing similar things since childhood. Then you struggle to believe yourself, then it's like you start thinking that everybody else is going to be questioning you about what happened. Then you start to read into things from the world around you, and you'll be like, oh, so, Black women ain't really believed anyway, so then what's the point?"

– Sherica Spence, Skye Alexandra House Founder and Community Organiser

Black Femmes are less likely to access support:

Black women were 14% less likely to be referred to Refuge by police than white survivors of domestic abuse (Refuge, 2021)

"I was speaking with an officer, and they said, you know, she's [a Black Femme I had been supporting] made a number of reports over the last couple of years. Then they said, like, you know, kind of feels like she's wasting police time. The fact that they even felt so confident to say that to me, I dare to think about what they're saying to each other, what they're even writing in their reports and in their notes"

Black Femmes are less likely to receive care and attention when accessing support:

"The paramedic, who was a white woman, said, I have never seen white women being treated the way that you've been treated today. I am actually shocked...and I know it is because you're Black"

Black Femmes are less likely to receive justice:

"Justice looks completely different for us because we don't have access and the justice system doesn't work for us"

This results in Black Femmes having a distrust in services:

"Yes, we do report if we've been harmed, but we don't really take it much further than that because we have this built-in thing that our services are not going to support me anyway"

Why? We know these systems are racist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist and misogynistic (The Baroness Casey Review, 2023). Returning to the definition of intersectionality, there is not one part of a Black Femmes' identity that will not experience discrimination and violence within these systems. Black Femmes experience ***"a historical barrier to justice and subjection to violence, and lack of care as being [a Black Femme] can cause one to be constantly discriminated against and disbelieved"***.

These systems are designed to keep us out and to see us fail which results in the death of Black Femmes and their support services.

This relates back to Black Femmes ***"being at the bottom of the hierarchy"***, resulting in them being denied access to systems of support which should be available to everyone and are constantly reminded of their position.

"My lecture said, 'how does it feel to be at the bottom of the hierarchy? You're a woman and you're Black, so you're at the bottom'. He said this in front of the whole class and maybe I was the only Black woman in that class. When he said that I was actually like, oh, is that how the world sees me? Like, I didn't know that was how the world saw me"

- Natalie Johnson, PhD Candidate and GBV Practitioner

With the system not being designed for Black Femmes, action, justice and solidarity may not only look different but will often be non-existent.

"The systems were not designed to believe, support and protect little Black girls reporting on White perpetrators"

"Black Femmes are at the bottom. They are the bottom of the list of priorities in terms of risk assessment priorities and their care priorities. We're the last people that are offered softness, consideration, compassion and empathy"

"A lot of these large organisations think that simply recruiting Black Femmes into post to deliver work to other Black survivors is sufficient, but it's not"



Black Femmes defined a lack of solidarity and action as false allyship, which was highlighted as very common experience in feminist and GBV sector spaces. ***"Our colleagues that are working alongside you who apparently scream on the internet that they're your allies, but the practise of that allyship is not in our everyday reality either"***. These spaces were described as isolating and violent, often becoming easy targets for White women and other women of colour who claim ***"they said that they don't believe that they were acting from a racist place"***. The inclusion of Black Femmes in generic GBV services was felt like it was performative, tokenistic and lacked sincerity, often feeling like a ***"tick-box"*** exercise or requirement to obtain funding. Further, Black Femmes are no stranger to being perceived as a threat in predominantly White feminist spaces despite often being one of a few (if any) Black employees offering culturally sensitive support to Black Femme survivors. This violence adds an additional burden often leading to mental distress and burnout.

"I was told by a White woman on the team that I was racist for implementing the Black ISVA/IDVA role. I don't think that will ever leave me"

"You are not "too sensitive." You are not dramatic. You are not imagining it. Your experience is real, and you deserve to be believed and supported without conditions"

REPRESENTATION OF BLACK FEMMES

"Being a Black Femme, I do not fit the stereotype of the 'perfect victim'"

The representation of Black Femmes was discussed as a tool which sustains and enforces structures that leave Black Femmes at the ***"bottom of the hierarchy"*** deserving of the individual and systemic violence perpetrated towards them. Representation of Black Femmes can take on many forms and stereotypes were discussed as the main source of harm. The Strong Black Woman and Angry Black Woman Stereotype was called out by Black Femmes as being consistently damaging as it diminished perceptions of victimhood, but people could also easily dismiss their pain and trauma as aggression.

"[The Strong Black Woman' stereotype] whilst this sound like positive statement, they're reinforcing the lanes that Black Femmes are meant to stay within. That no matter what is happening to you, you must still perform poise and not step out of line lest you become an angry black woman, lest you become an angry Black person across the board or you'll lose the protection of being a good victim or a survivor"

- Kelechi Okafor,
Actor, Writer, Social Commentator

Black Femme participants discussed not being given access to victimhood; from girlhood and being adultified, to adulthood and being seen as less feminine and worthy of protection. The lack of credibility Black Femmes survivors experience as victims is due to rape myths that correlate sexual violence to a woman's desirability. This puts Black Femmes at the ***"bottom"*** of believability:

"I didn't think that I would be believed due to being a Black woman living in a majority White city and country"

"Jesus, you are built like a brickhouse. How the hell did he manage that?"

"Has that made them not believe her? Has that made it seem like, well, it's not that big of a deal. Oh, she's managing. You know, but they don't see two weeks later when she's in her room self-harming and that she held herself together to get there, to reach out for the support"

The reinforcement of these stereotypes normalises the violence perpetuated towards Black Femmes. This reinforcement was found to be spread through traditional news media, social media, film, music and TV with this dehumanising language increasing in volume due to the acceptance and normalisation of far-right rhetoric in mainstream media, ***"there's so much hate and division spewed in the media"***. Black Women are 84% more likely to receive abuse online or on social media compared to white women (Amnesty International, 2018). This is seen with prominent figures such as Diane Abbott who received 45% of all abusive tweets in the run up to the election as well as a Tory donor stating that "looking at Diane Abbott makes you want to hate all Black women" and that "she should be shot" (The Guardian, 2024).

"It's the volume of it which makes it so debilitating, so corrosive, and so upsetting."

– Diane Abbott MP for Amnesty International (2017)

The level of violence and degradation Black Femmes are subjected to across media platforms is becoming increasingly more profitable through social media platforms monetising engagement. Hate speech towards Black Femmes becomes profitable entertainment through every scroll, like and retweet generating revenue for platforms whilst Black by-and-for services are significantly underfunded and at a significant threat of closure.

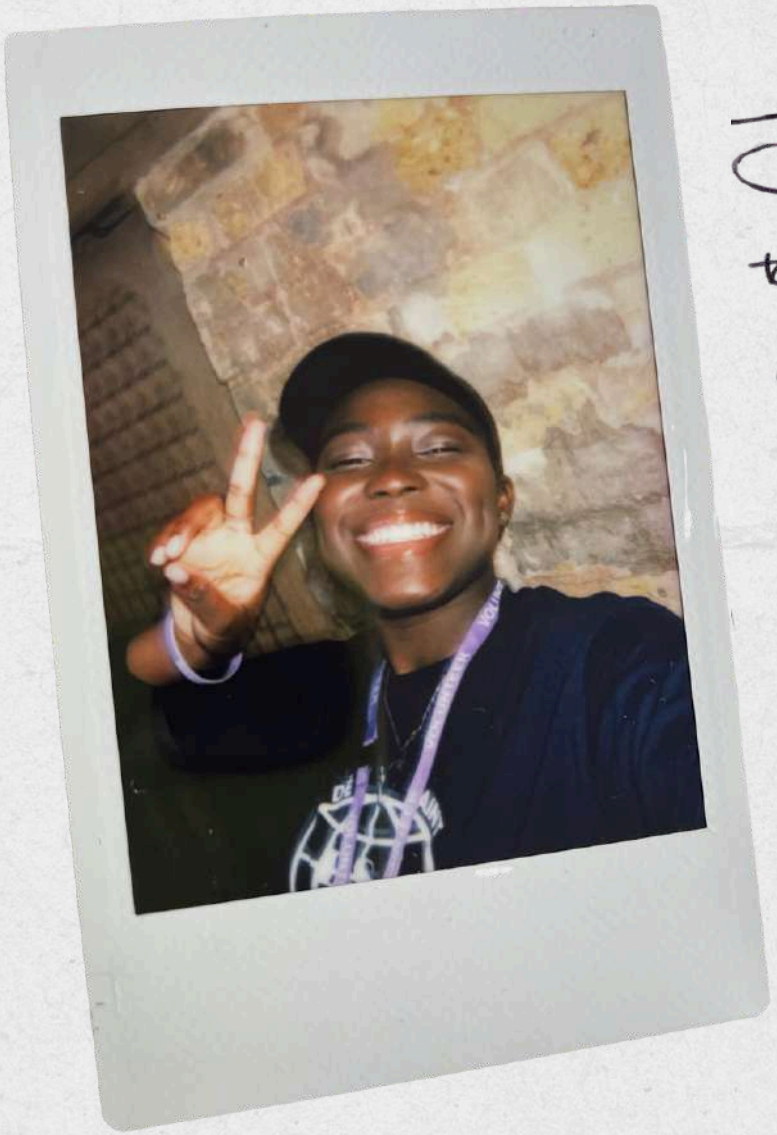
"... I think that social media has a role to play in that we shouldn't be stripping people again of that dignity, of that humanity when we are speaking of experiences and not trying to dress it up so it's palatable for an audience"

– Kelechi Okafor, Actor, Writer, Social Commentator

Kelechi Okafor at SANA Fest 2024



"Even if those around you have made you feel like you don't matter, you matter. You matter greatly"



Just as the sun dares to shine so bright after the darkest nights, long shall we Black femmes continue to passionately burn bright despite the threats of darkness around us!

Made for Black femmes, by Black femmes!

Hersana → doing the Lord's work ♡

I love seeing myself in everything curated here. Thank you again ♡

Love, Ruth

THE IMPORTANCE OF BY-AND-FOR ORGANISATIONS



"This is why organisations like HERSANA are so important, because there are not enough Black Femme led organisations"

The lack of representation of Black Femmes is also reflected in their options for support services. Black Femmes stressed the importance of by-and-for services: ***"there's this constant role, within the black community where if we don't make our own entities to soothe our own ails and illnesses, nobody else is coming to do it"***. By-and-for services can offer tailored culturally sensitive and responsive support which is not offered in generic services. The most common support needs Black femmes shared were emotional wellbeing support, physical wellbeing, housing, and spiritual support. These services provide spaces for Black Femmes to be seen, heard, believed, soft and vulnerable, relinquishing them of the stereotypes of being strong and angry. This is important as race and ethnicity were discussed as the most frequent factor which negatively impacted Black Femmes access to support. This was followed by finances, location and their religion. Comments were made that generic services may not pick up on behaviour and needs that would need safeguarding and support if it is not the staff member's lived experience. Therefore, services by Black Femmes for Black Femmes means that there are ***"people who will immediately be able to connect"***.

"[Someone could go to a generic organisation] for support, but it's almost as if they aren't, can you call it trained, or their policies don't allow for them to consider the unique systemic and, for instance, cultural disparities or differences that would mean that, people just experience things in a different way. They don't care for it and in fact, it almost feels like [Black Femmes] become an inconvenience"

- Kelechi Okafor - Actor, Writer, Social Commentator

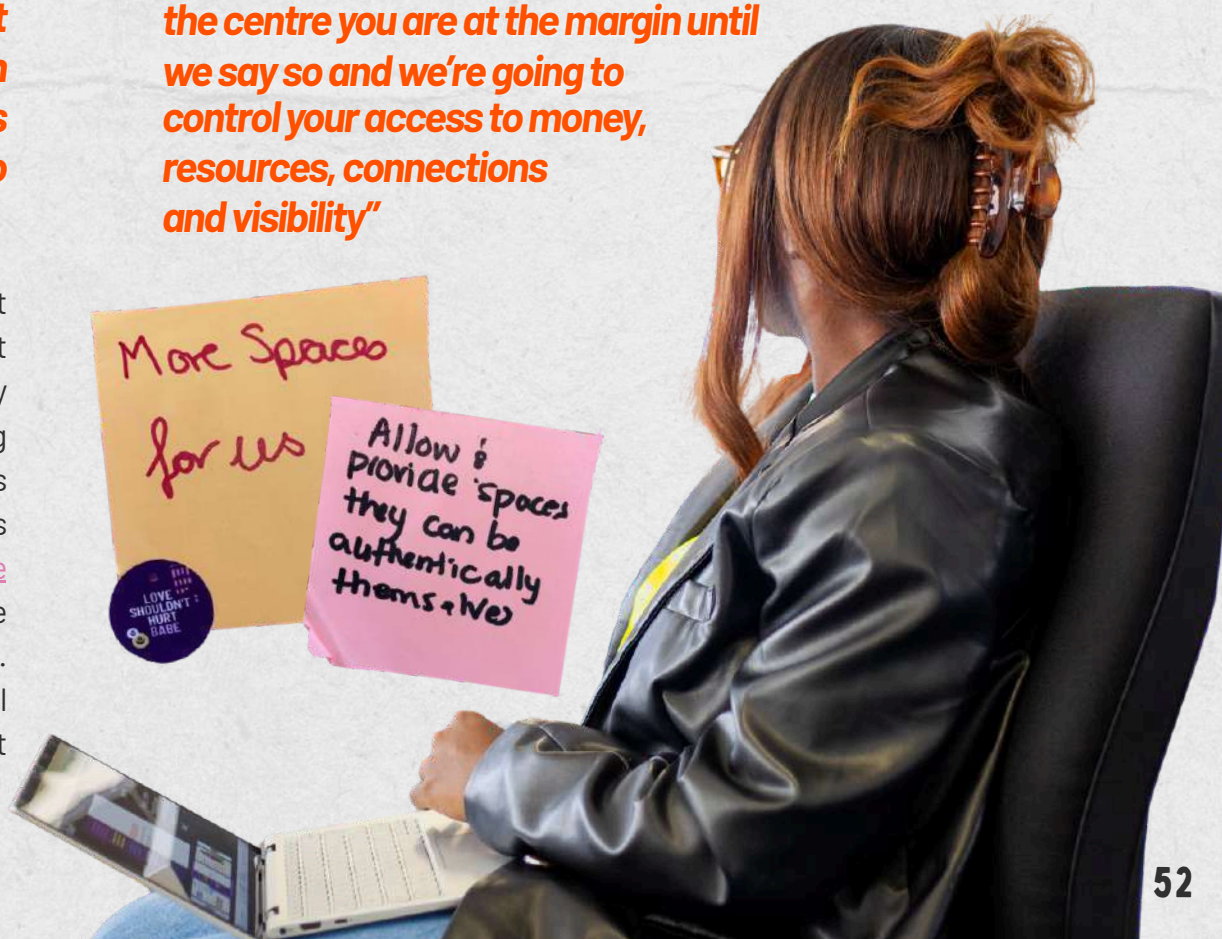
"We are at the margin, invited to the centre but not allowed to live there. This is the consistent approach to Black Femmes and Black survivors across this sector. We spend a lot of time convincing people to believe in our humanity"

Black Femmes as individuals are seen as undeserving of protection, but this also extends to their support services. 86.5% of the specialist services are by-and-for grassroots/micro-organisations, yet they receive only 3.9% of the funding (Rosa, 2023). The funding commissioning process of services and projects was described as competitive, labour extensive and beneficial to more generic services who will have the resources to apply for bids. The Women's Resource Centre (2026) regional consultation for the CEDAW discussed that the commissioning process was a "mechanism of structural exclusion". Overall, there is a complete "lack of knowledge, training, and cultural competence" which has been weaponised to misuse data to discredit the need for by-and-for organisations.

"We had two-year contracts and they expired. We've now been given extra funding, for another two years and that's great. Then at the end of those two years, we have to show impact... impact for who? Like, the impact is this young person's been engaging in this service for two years"

- Natalie Johnson, PhD Candidate and GBV Practitioner

"We will fund you to do this little bit of work over there in your community. Cool. But you're not coming into the centre you are at the margin until we say so and we're going to control your access to money, resources, connections and visibility"



Commissioning processes are not the only structure that was discussed as discrediting by-and-for organisations. General organisations were described not only as exploiting Black Femme staff within their organisations, but also their partnerships with by-and-for organisations.

"Can you go in and do this? Can you go in and do that? and it's like, obviously it's great that I can go in and do that. But, actually, you could use me more as a bridge. We could do this together and show that it's important to you as well, not just... 'great, we've got this specialist organisation, now they can do all of the work"'

The individuals and systems which continue to cause violence towards Black Femmes also diminish their support services despite Black Femmes being the most vulnerable and having more complex support needs. There is a need to ***"fund, properly, the network of services and support for by-and-for services so that Black Femmes do have that equal voice at the table"*** because ***"if you want to understand the nature and the needs of your by-and-for communities, then you should be investing in helping them to get there"***.

"We are not doing this work outside of the systems. We're still doing it under a system of racial capitalism. So, we're learning how to survive and we're learning how to keep our services afloat and we're learning how to achieve things for Black Femmes under the system of racial capitalism"

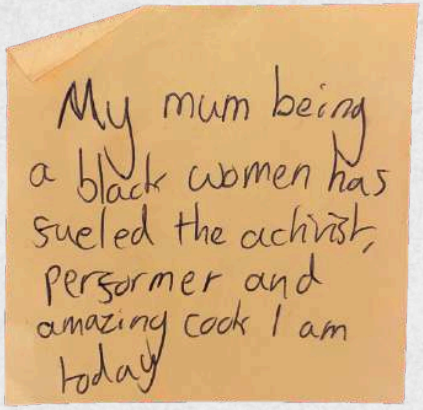
Black Femme voices need to be at the forefront of any radical action as no one understands us but us and no one should speak for us but ourselves.

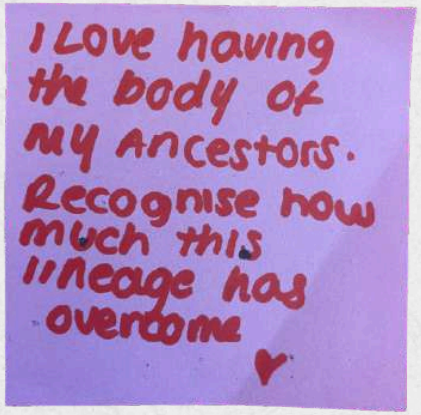
"This work is needed. We deserve dignity before and after these experiences and a level of care that is sensitive enough to genuinely help us"



BLACK FEMMES & SISTERHOOD

Sisterhood!





After Black Femmes had shared the violence that they and others had been subjected to, the challenges of navigating systems and the constant dehumanisation, there was relief and passion when we asked them, *"What does Black femmehood mean to you?"* Through the violence, Black Femmes have found each other to build community, solidarity, protection and safety. Sisterhood was frequently discussed in survey and interview responses with extreme love, care and affection directed towards other Black Femmes.

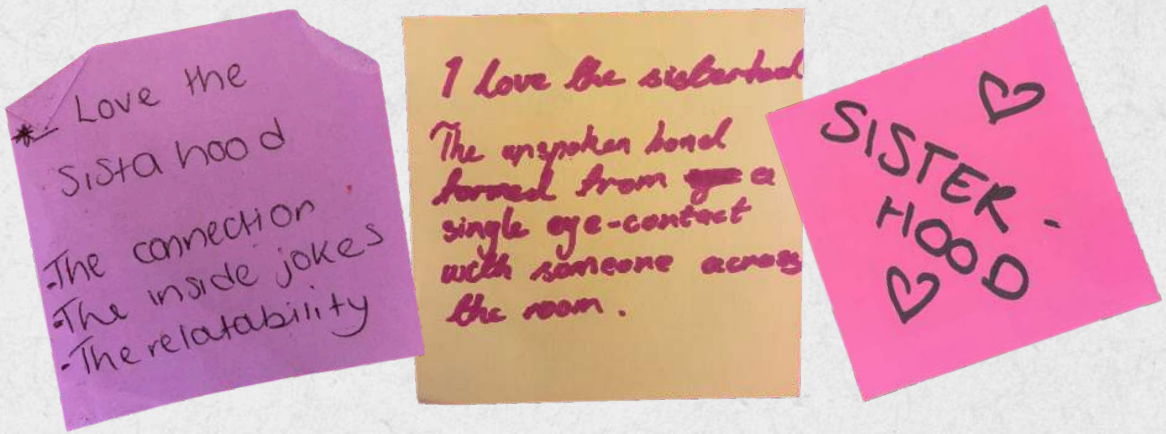
6% of Black Femmes shared that their friends made them feel to blame for what happened to them. Friends were the least likely group to victim-blame Black Femmes.

"You are not alone, even if you cannot see us, we are fighting for you"

This love and connection are intergenerational with sisterhood being open to grandmothers to granddaughters and everyone in between:

"There is potential for like deep solidarity through all the generations because we have that shared experience and shared pain, but shared experience and shared strength as well and I think that's something that's quite unique to us as a group"





This sisterhood was described as beautiful, supportive, a lovely community, resilient, and ***"filled with pain but also so much joy"***. Its diverse not only because of all the intersections Black Femmes bring to the sisterhood but also through our experiences. This sisterhood has been built out of the collective belief that ***"nobody's coming to save us, but we have each other"*** to fight for, each other to dismantle the systems and the violent rhetoric that is being shouted on our streets. Black Femmes were aware that not one person could make a change and that there is strength in numbers despite having limited resources and social capital ***"What a mighty band we are. That's how I feel about Black Femmehood, that it is against all odds"***. We have built our own language, our own spaces, our own services and our own systems to protect one another and there was beauty and joy in being able to see that.

"There is something so beautiful about being a Black Femme. There is something so divine in being a Black Femme who fights and advocates for others. I cannot tell you how proud I am of the women I have around me and of the work that we do"

- Donna Murray-Turner-
Contextual Safeguarding Professional, Celebrated Community Leader, Navigator and Speaker

Despite others believing that Black Femmes were at the bottom of the hierarchy, Black Femmes believed they are the blueprint of womanhood and ***"as much as they claim to hate [us], they clearly admire [us] because they copy [us]"***. Black Femmes discussed that their bodies were consumed and copied whether that be our language, mannerism, style, hair and ideas. These features were seen as low value on Black Femmes but were admired on other women. Being the blueprint means we always challenge systems and set trends because they are not designed with us in mind; they must bend, evolve and be reconstructed for Black femmes to meaningfully exist within them. This threat to systems, as they exist today, is what makes us dangerous - and we are more dangerous together.

"I'm a hell of a thing on my own. There are whole departments that are frightened of me and it's just me, much less if we're all together. There's something glorious about that.... it's not until a Black woman says or does anything things move on this planet. Facts. Nothing in this country would not happen if it wasn't for Black women organising and getting together and saying, this is what we stand for. That will always be the way because we are the mothers of creation...

...There's something so divine in it"



"You are fearfully and wonderfully made, and you are worthy of love and respect"

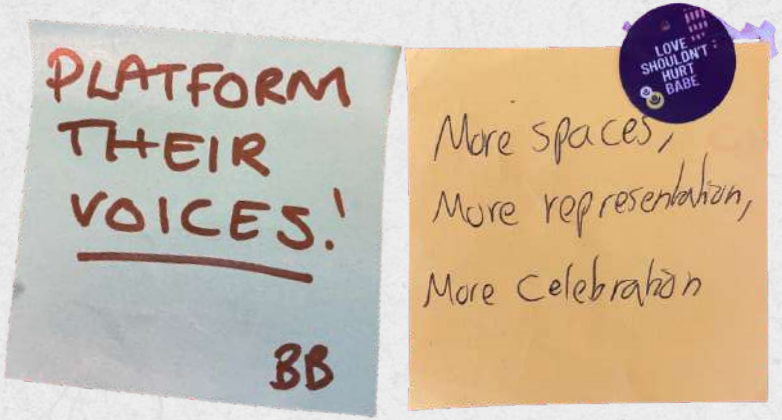
"We are dangerous. Against all odds we are still here"



CALLS TO RADICAL ACTION



Photography by: Anastacia Amofa



"Freedom, to live in peace without a sense of threat or worry or dread"

"Freedom to be"

The findings of *Power in Print* must be more than a record of the experiences of Black femmes navigating GBV. They must serve as a call to action. The evidence demands more than incremental improvements to existing systems; it requires a fundamental shift in how violence is understood, how resources are distributed, whose expertise is valued, and who holds power and accountability.

The following recommendations set out (6) areas for radical, structural change. They place responsibility where it belongs: with the institutions, systems and decision-makers who have the power to change the conditions in which Black femmes experience violence, seek support and pursue safety. ***"Black women's voices need to be at the forefront of, you know, any radical action"***.

1 RECOGNISE BY-AND-FOR SERVICES AS CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

"a place where Black femmes are centered, cared for and looked after as a priority"

Black-led, by-and-for organisations are essential infrastructure within the national response to violence against women and girls (VAWG), not optional additions to mainstream provision.

These organisations provide culturally informed, trusted and specialist support that mainstream services cannot simply replicate. Their community relationships, lived experience, cultural knowledge and understanding of institutional racism are not supplementary assets; they are fundamental to effective responses to GBV.

Government, commissioners and statutory agencies must formally recognise the distinct role of by-and-for organisations in national and local VAWG strategies, commissioning frameworks and service delivery. This recognition must translate into sustained investment, meaningful representation in decision-making and a commitment to protecting the long-term viability of specialist provision.

The question is no longer whether by-and-for services have a role to play. It is why a system that depends on their expertise continues to treat them as peripheral.



2 RING-FENCE FUNDING FOR BLACK-LED, BY-AND-FOR PROVISION

"What we are in as a sector is survival mode. Nothing ever gets done when you're in survival mode, right? You can't plan, you don't think straight, you're not looking at all the corners, you are just looking to survive. And I think that's, I think it's intentional. I think, I don't think it's not intentional. I think it's exactly to just keep us going, but not for actually doing the work"

Specialist Black-led organisations should not have to compete against large, mainstream organisations for the resources required to meet the needs of the communities they exist to serve.

Competitive commissioning models routinely place smaller, specialist organisations at a structural disadvantage. Organisations with greater infrastructure, fundraising capacity and established commissioner relationships are often better positioned to secure contracts, even when they lack the specific expertise, trust and cultural understanding required to support Black femmes effectively.

Government and commissioners must establish ring-fenced, proportionate and sustained funding for Black-led, by-and-for GBV and VAWG services at both national and local levels. Funding must reflect the true cost of delivering specialist support, including the workforce, community outreach, prevention, advocacy, culturally informed therapeutic provision and organisational infrastructure required to sustain it.

Short-term project grants and precarious funding cycles are not an adequate basis for essential services. Multi-year funding should become the norm, with allocation processes designed to be accessible to smaller organisations and accountable to the communities they serve.

"...we're investing all this money... but it's always the same names that receive the funding. It's always the big organisations that receive [funding] and it's the little by-and-fors that have to then join up with another organisation for a project just to try and claw up any money"

Equity should mean addressing the structural inequalities that determine who receive resources, whose expertise is recognised and which communities are adequately served.

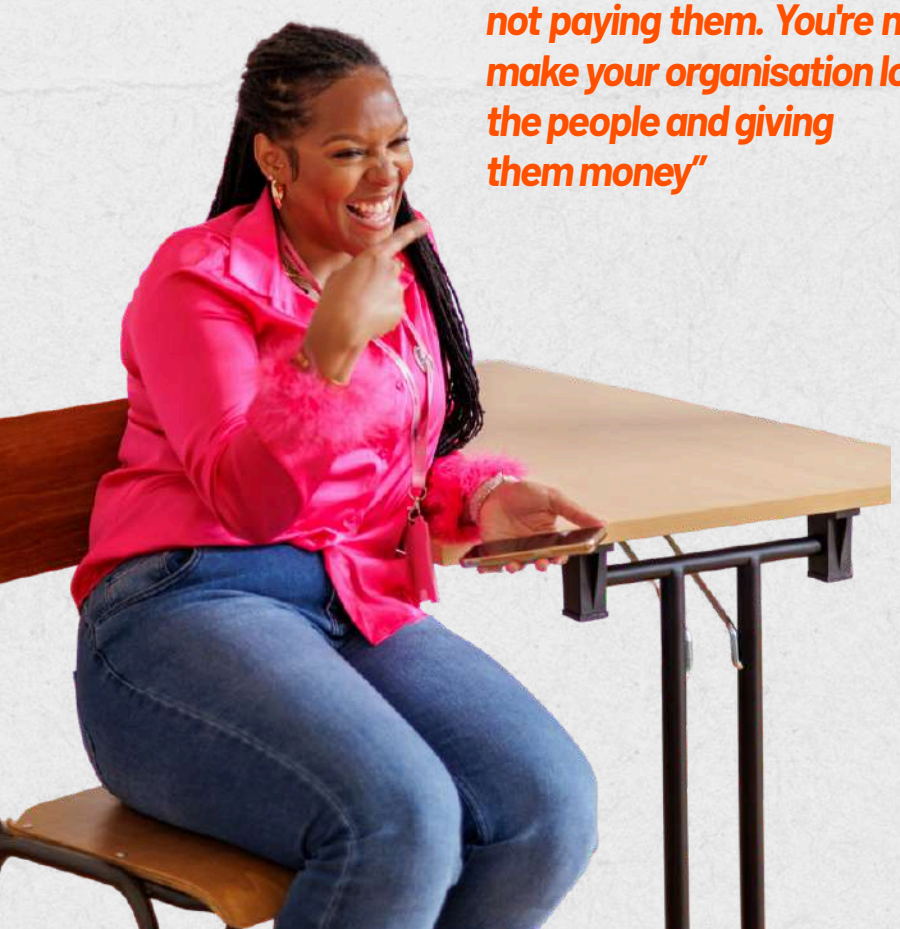


3 END EXTRACTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

No partnership-working without power-sharing. If mainstream organisations benefit from the expertise, relationships, data, staff or cultural knowledge of specialist Black-led organisations, that contribution must be matched by funding, influence, recognition and decision-making power.

"We need mutual aid. We need more mutual aid. We need people to understand that"

"As a [by-and-for] organisation, we often get offered to talk about our [expertise and experience], or we get invited to places and they [ask] 'have you got any survivors who'd like to say anything?' But you're not paying them. You're not offering them any money. You're just wanting their voice and their story to make your organisation look good and to make it sound like you care, but you're not actually investing in the people and giving them money"



Partnership working can create opportunities to reach underserved communities, but it can also reproduce the very inequalities it claims to address. Smaller by-and-for organisations may be brought into bids to demonstrate community engagement, cultural competence or reach, while larger organisations retain control of funding, strategic decisions, service delivery and the resulting evidence.

This is not equitable partnership. It is the extraction of expertise and community trust without a corresponding redistribution of power.

Commissioners must introduce clear requirements for equitable partnership working within GBV and VAWG contracts and funding agreements. These should include transparent budgets, fair allocation of resources, shared governance, appropriate recognition of intellectual contributions, and clear accountability for the roles and responsibilities of each partner. Specialist organisations must be involved from the outset in designing services and shaping bids, rather than being added later to strengthen an application.

Partnerships should be assessed not simply on whether they exist, but on whether power and resources are genuinely shared. Black-led organisations must have the authority to influence decisions, challenge practice and determine how their expertise is used.

4 MAKE INTERSECTIONAL DATA CENTRAL TO POLICY AND COMMISSIONING

National and local VAWG data frameworks must routinely capture and analyse the intersecting factors and lived experience that shape violence, access to support and institutional responses.



Where appropriate, this should include ethnicity, age, disability, sexuality, gender identity, immigration status and socioeconomic circumstances, with safeguards for privacy, confidentiality and the responsible use of sensitive information. Disaggregated data alone, however, is not enough. Numbers can reveal disparities without explaining how they arise, why they persist or what they mean in people's lives. Quantitative evidence must therefore sit alongside qualitative research, lived experience and community-led knowledge.

Commissioners, statutory agencies and policymakers must recognise these forms of evidence as essential to understanding need, designing effective interventions and evaluating outcomes. They must also invest in the capacity of specialist organisations to collect, interpret and use data without placing disproportionate administrative burdens on already under-resourced services.

Data collection must never become an exercise in categorising Black femmes without changing the systems that affect them. Nor should it expose survivors to further harm through unsafe data sharing or inappropriate access to personal information.

The purpose of intersectional evidence is to make structural inequalities visible, identify institutional failures and compel action. Black femmes should not have to keep proving that their experiences exist before institutions accept their responsibility to respond.

5 A PERMANENT BLACK FEMME GBV/ VAWG ACCOUNTABILITY PANEL

Black femmes must have a formal, sustained and adequately resourced role in scrutinising the institutions responsible for their safety, rights and wellbeing.

"Fund, properly, the network of services and support for by-and-for services so that Black women do have that equal voice at the table"

A permanent Black Femme GBV / VAWG Advisory and Accountability Panel should be established at a national level, independent from the institutions it is expected to scrutinise. Its membership should reflect the diversity of Black femmes' experiences and expertise, including survivors, community representatives, researchers and specialist by-and-for organisations. Participation must be properly resourced and remunerated.

The Accountability Panel should examine policy, commissioning and practice across policing, healthcare, criminal justice, safeguarding, VAWG strategy, funding and data. Its remit should extend beyond advising institutions to identifying systemic failures, challenging discriminatory practice, monitoring implementation and holding decision-makers accountable for their commitments.

Its findings and recommendations should be published transparently, with relevant public bodies required to respond formally and report on the action taken. The Panel should have sufficient independence, access to evidence and authority to ensure that its scrutiny carries weight.

Existing consultation processes too often invite Black femmes to share their experiences without giving them meaningful influence over the decisions that follow.

A permanent accountability mechanism would help shift participation from a discretionary exercise to an established feature of governance. This must not become another forum in which Black femmes are expected to contribute their time, expertise and emotional labour without tangible outcomes.



6 REDEFINE WHAT SUCCESS MEANS

The success of a GBV/VAWG service should be measured by whether Black femmes experience greater safety, dignity, autonomy, healing, belonging and freedom – not simply by how efficiently the system processes them.

"We have by-and-for organisations and we refer people in - great, we're doing the work. But we're still working within the systems that cause harm. And I think we don't acknowledge and name that enough"



Current performance frameworks often privilege measurable service activity, including referrals, contacts, waiting times, cases closed and prosecutions. These indicators have value, but they cannot, on their own, tell us whether a person feels safe, has regained control over their life, has been treated with dignity or can access support without fear of disbelief, discrimination or further harm.

A system can meet its targets while survivors continue to feel unsafe, unheard or abandoned. Activity is not the same as impact, and institutional efficiency is not the same as justice.

GBV/ VAWG policy, commissioning and evaluation must therefore incorporate outcomes defined by the people services exist to support. This includes whether Black femmes feel believed and respected, whether support is culturally appropriate and accessible, whether they have greater control over their choices, and whether the conditions that enabled violence are being challenged.

These outcomes should be developed with Black femmes themselves and embedded in commissioning specifications, service evaluations and national and local accountability frameworks. They should complement, rather than replace, measures of service activity and criminal justice outcomes.

Crucially, success must not be defined solely by whether someone has disclosed abuse, engaged with a service, left a relationship or participated in the criminal justice system. Black femmes must retain the autonomy to define safety and healing on their own terms.

This is a more profound measure of success than the number of referrals processed or cases closed. It asks whether the system has helped create the conditions in which Black femmes can live without fear, exercise autonomy and exist fully, without having to negotiate their safety or humanity.

SUMMARY



The demand is not for Black femmes to become better at navigating a failing system. It is for the system to change.

These 6 calls to action are interconnected. Recognition without funding is symbolic. Funding without equitable power-sharing perpetuates dependency. Data without accountability can document inequality indefinitely without correcting it. Representation without decision-making power risks reproducing exclusion.

Furthermore, services cannot be judged successful simply because they deliver activity if the people they support continue to experience fear, discrimination and diminished autonomy.

Power in Print must therefore be understood not simply as a contribution to the evidence base, but as a direct challenge to the institutions and systems responsible for responding to VAWG and GBV.

The responsibility for change cannot rest with Black femmes or the specialist organisations supporting them.

It rests with the government, with the commissioners, with the statutory agencies and the with wider VAWG sector to address the structural inequalities this research brings into view. Overwhelmingly, the most radical demand from Black Femmes participating in *Power in Print* was,

"being heard, and being free".



Photography by: Anastacia Amofa



'The systems are not designed for us, yet we rise.
The institutions are not engineered for us, yet we rise.
The activism and allyship for is us untrustworthy, yet we rise.
We are loved, we are cared for and we are protected through sisterhood.
We are worthy, we deserving, we are the blueprint.
We are dangerous and we are powerful
with our voices in print"



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