



Safe Relationships

SMRC Afghan Domestic Violence Information session

Evaluation Report

Afghan Domestic Violence Information Session Evaluation Report

Background

WHISE partnered with the Southern Migrant Refugee Centre (SMRC) to co-design and deliver a 1-hour culturally sensitive domestic violence awareness and knowledge building session titled 'Safe Relationships'. The session was held at SMRC in Dandenong on Tuesday 21st March from 11am to 12pm, with 25 Afghan women, two WHISE facilitators, and two SMRC program workers.

The aim of the session was to increase; a) their awareness of what domestic violence is; b) their awareness of the different types of domestic violence; c) their understanding and ability to notice when domestic violence is occurring; d) their confidence to seek help within SMRC by reaching out to case workers if they are experiencing DV; and e) to improve their knowledge of culturally specific DV, and migrant/refugee specific violence.

Findings

This report contains ratings of changes in knowledge, understanding and confidence from 13 Afghani women who attended this session. Pre and post data was collected following the session with the assistance of a translator. Although every effort was made to use plain language (i.e., no sector language or technical terms), the questions were still difficult for the participants to answer. Furthermore, there was confusion with the presentation of the pre and post surveys and expectations of how to complete them. As a result, many attendees provided their pre and post ratings on the same sheet, some with different coloured pens, others used dashes. This has meant that pre data is missing for most attendees as they either did not provide it or we were unable to distinguish between pre and post responses.

This evaluation report will present and discuss the pre session findings from 9 participants and the post findings from all 13 participants. Only five out of nine pre question were answered, whereas all post questions were answered by all 13 participants. We caution the reader against drawing comparisons between the two time points as there were very few pre session responses. However, given the effort and time that was taken to collect all these responses, we felt it was important to report these few pre session ratings.

Understanding of domestic violence

In this session, attendees were asked to rate their understanding of what domestic violence is before and after the session. As can be seen in *Figure 1*, 69% people felt their knowledge was good or very good after attending the session. Before the session, 63% attendees rated their knowledge *very poor* to *poor*, which demonstrates a 94% increase!

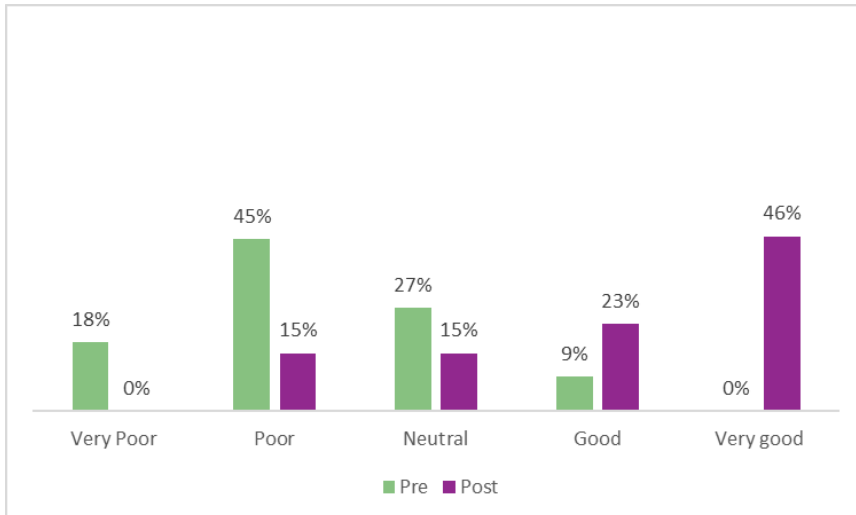


Figure 1. Pre and post ratings of changes in understanding of what domestic violence is.

Again, Figure 2 shows that attendees felt the session had increased their knowledge of in their understanding of that domestic violence is wrong and cannot be excused. Notably, 92% said they felt their knowledge was good or very good (67% increase of understanding). Only 8% said was neutral after attending the session, compared to 33% before the session.

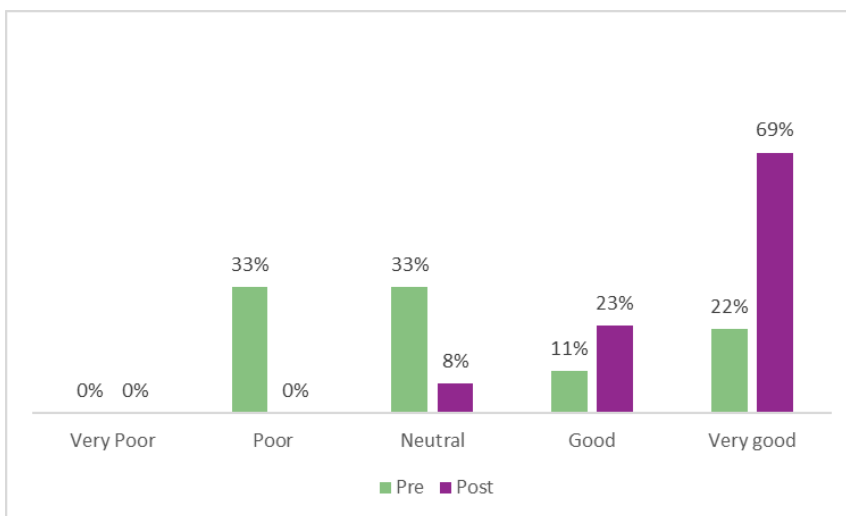


Figure 2. Pre and post ratings of changes in understanding of that domestic violence is wrong and cannot be excused.

Figure 3 shows 69% attendees felt that after the session their understanding of why domestic violence happens was *good* and *very good*, compared to attendees before the session (22%). This question presents a more complex theme, which covers the reasons to why domestic violence occurs. If an attendee has not been exposed to this sort of content before, it might be harder to retain this information. Thus, this could explain why 8% (n= 1) of attendees felt their understanding was *very poor* and 23% (n= 3) felt their understanding was *neutral* after attending the session.

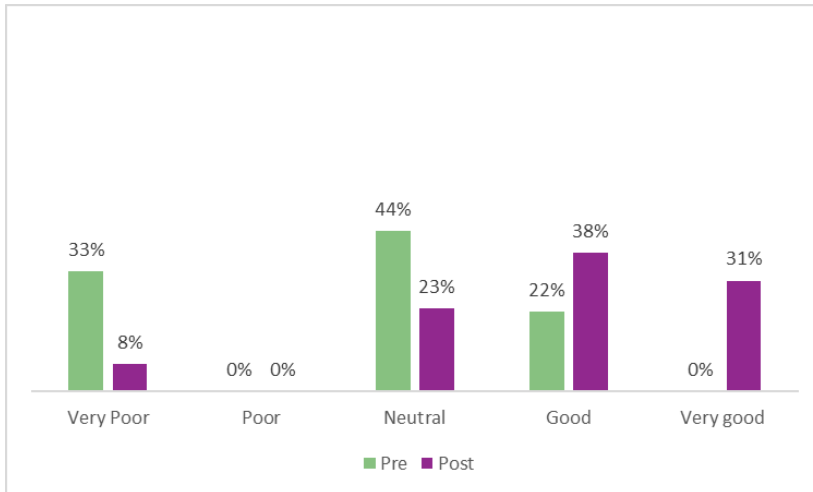


Figure 3. Pre and post ratings of changes in understanding of why domestic violence happens.

After attending the session, 50% of attendees reported that they had knowledge of domestic violence happening in Australia. Thirty-three percent felt they had no knowledge of Knowledge of domestic violence happening in Australia, whereas 17% were not sure (see Figure 4). Again, this question presents a more complex theme, which covers knowledge of domestic violence in Australia. If an attendee is not familiar of behaviours and characteristics of domestic violence, this question might be harder to answer.

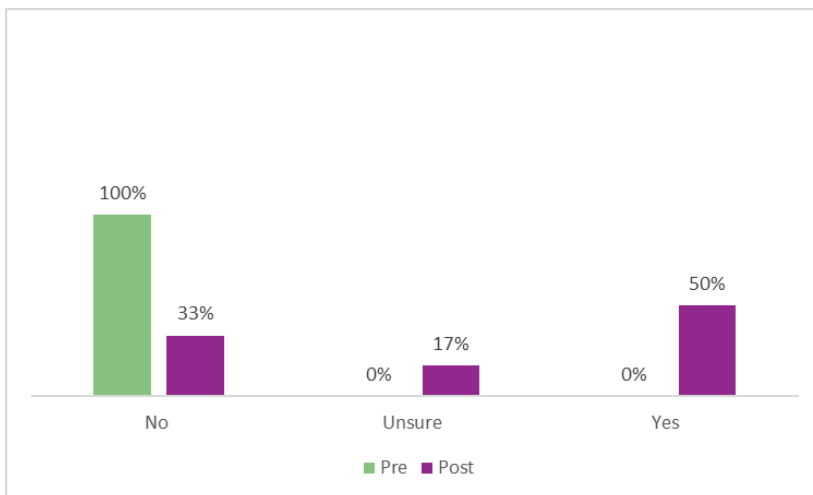


Figure 4. Pre and post ratings of knowledge of domestic violence happening in Australia.

Types of domestic violence

Attendees were asked to select the different types of domestic violence from a list. As can be seen in *Figure 5*, most of respondents felt that controlling behaviours (such as harassment, stalking/online stalking), making someone socially isolated, and the threat of child removal were behaviours of domestic violence (all 92%). Financial, physical, and sexual abuse were less frequently selected (75%). The remaining attendees selected responses that were evenly spread across a variety of behaviours (83%). It should be noted that there was one attendee that selected no responses.

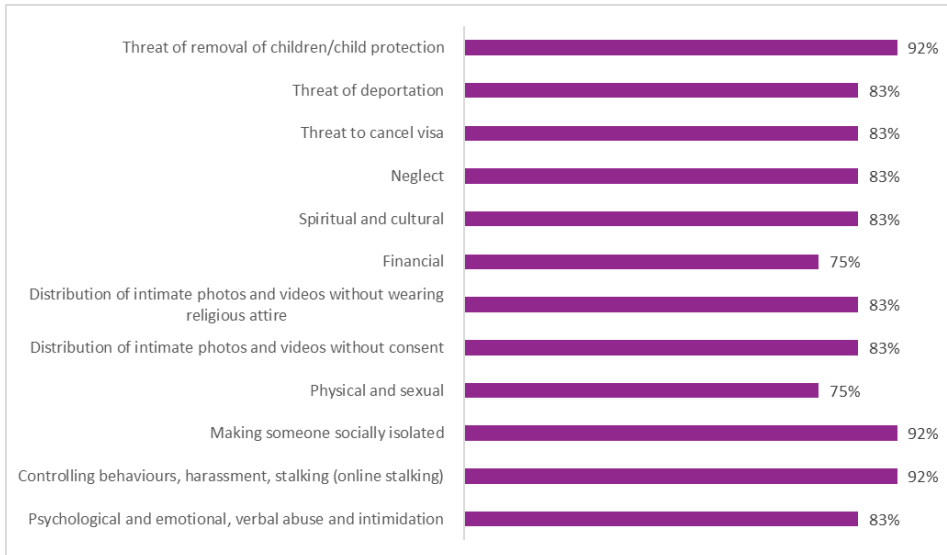


Figure 5. Post rating of types of domestic violence.

Knowledge and confidence in help seeking

As demonstrated in *Figure 6*, 83% of attendees knew where to go for help if they experienced domestic violence after attending the session, compared to 100% of attendees who did not know where to go for help before the session.

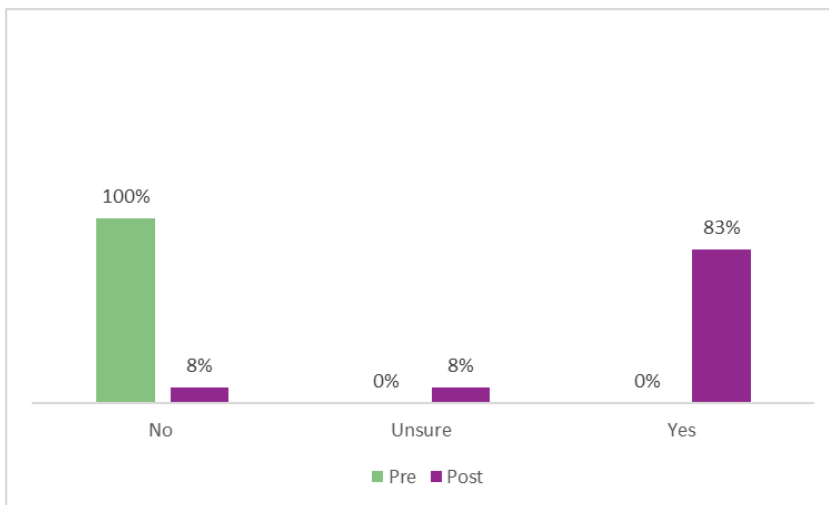


Figure 6. Pre and post ratings of knowledge of where you can go for help if you experience domestic violence.

Most of the attendees felt that the session they would feel confident in asking for help if they were experiencing domestic violence (see *Figure 7*). Only one person (8%) felt that they did not have the confidence to seek help for domestic violence after attending the session.

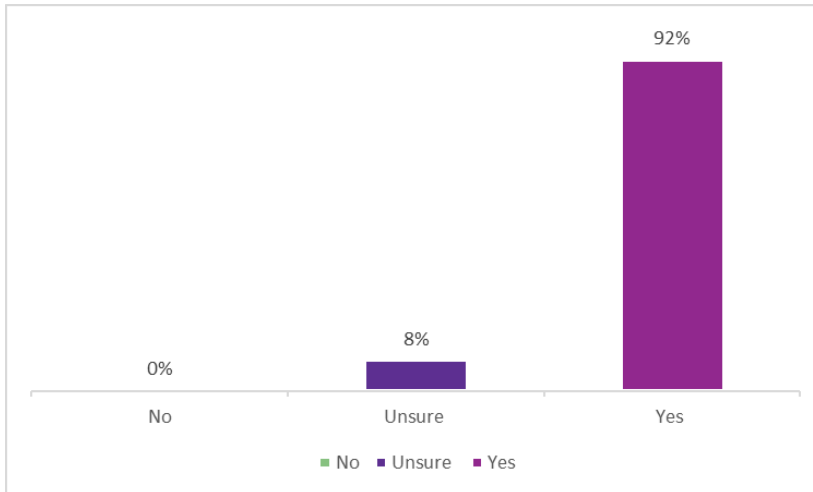


Figure 7. Post ratings in changes in confidence to ask for help if you experience domestic violence.

Similarly, as can be seen in Figure 8, most attendees felt they now have the confidence to seek help for domestic violence after attending the session (92%). Only one person (8%) felt that they did not have the confidence to seek help if someone else is experiencing family violence.

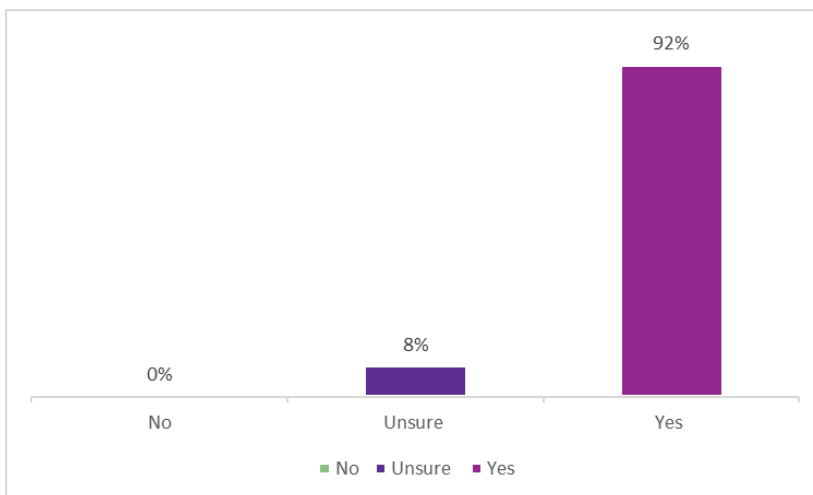


Figure 8. Post ratings in changes in confidence to ask for help if someone you know is experiencing domestic violence.

Session feedback

When participants were asked if they understood the questions being asked in this survey, all attendees stated 'yes'.

Focus group interviews

In addition to a pre and post survey, two SMRC program workers from the session were invited to complete a follow-up interview via Microsoft Teams. The findings are discussed below:

Takeaways from the session

Six main themes arose from the responses: types of family violence, male dominated household, freedom, the family violence definition, healthy parenting, and choice.

Participants reported that before the session, they did not know that financial abuse and emotional abuse can be characteristics of family violence. This is consistent with the survey, as these behaviours were not selected as abuse by some participants. One of the SMRC program workers stated that different ethnic groups will have different understandings of what family violence is and behaviours that can be classified as family violence.

Another theme that arose during the focus group was the normalcy of a male dominated household. It was discussed that controlling behaviours in the home cannot always be classified as family violence (i.e., coercive control). This is because, it is considered 'normal' for husbands to overtly control most (sometimes all) decisions. Thus, the boundaries between unhealthy/toxic relationships and family violence can be murky. Sessions in the future could also focus on gender stereotypes to bridge this gap.

It was recognised that migrant women and men have had to adjust to a new environment where sometimes there are more freedoms than there were back home. This includes the constraints of social status that have a stronger presence in some cultures. One SMRC program worker stated that their clients were surprised that an individual's social status in Australia does not prevent opportunities to seek help when needed.

Furthermore, another theme present was about family violence inflicted by other family members. This includes abuse from extended family (i.e., grandparents, uncles, and aunts), children, and in-laws. This demonstrated the importance to define family violence as that which occurs within families, intimate relationships, extended families, kinship networks and communities. For instance, one of SMRC workers said a husband could force their wife to cut contact with their child if they do something that shames the family to punish the wife and the child.

Theme three was healthy parenting. The SMRC program workers spoke about the ways that unhealthy relationships and cultural pressure can result in unhealthy parenting and/or generational family violence. The responsibility of preventing dishonour or shame of the family is recognised as the woman's responsibility. This pressure has sometimes resulted in the mother controlling their children, thus preventing them from enacting autonomy. It was also recognised that there is a generational gap between first-generation migrants and second/third-generation migrants. This has resulted in cultural clashes (between parents and children) and acculturative stress.

The last theme was choice. The SMRC workers empathised that no one was right or wrong in some of the scenarios that were discussed in the focus group. For instance, a mother was fearful to let her daughter move out because she thought this would result in her participating in pornography. The SMRC program workers stated that we should be giving our women the right information to enable them to make healthy choices for themselves and their children. They also stated that most of the time, it is both men and women who uphold stereotypical beliefs, however, once given the information, some men and women will change their behaviour. It is therefore important to provide information to challenge the normalcy of male dominated households, to give women and men the agency to 'choose' how they want to run their household and raise their children.

Challenges to consider

The SMRC program workers stated there was resistance to some of the content due to challenges identified by the participants. It is important to recognise the challenges identified by participants, to incorporate and address this content in future sessions, and prevent misunderstanding of topics.

- The notion that you are taking men's rights away when you are giving more rights to women.
- Women feel responsible in taking care of the family and their needs. This also includes the responsibility for preventing shame and dishonour to the family. This belief is ingrained within their culture and psyche.

Feedback for the presenters

The majority of feedback was praise for the two SMRC program workers and participants. For example, the SMRC program workers stated the session was amazing and well put together. They said it was a safe space for all the participants to engage and discuss the content.

One SMRC program worker specifically said that it made a difference to the participants to see leaders and presenters that were similar in appearance to them and stated it *"motivates them to work towards independence."* She further emphasised it *"can empower them."*

Another SMRC worker stated that it was great when presenters shared their own experiences, cultural views, and stories, and said that this session was the *"most engaging session that we had so far."*

The survey was recognised as a learning tool, as the participants used it as a discussion prompt and used it to learn from each other.

The SMRC program workers mentioned that they thought the communication with WHISE was very professional and prompt, which resulted in a smooth process. One SMRC worker mentioned that she really appreciated a follow-up phone call after the session from WHISE staff who checked on her wellbeing.

Lastly, it was mentioned that the session needed to be longer and allow more time for discussions among participants.

Next steps

A discussion on ways to collect the evaluation data is important to ensure that CALD women's voices are represented in our evaluations.

Given that English will likely be a second language for some women who attend similar workshops in the future, a tailored approach to evaluation is needed to ensure that the sessions and data collection methods are engaging and accessible.