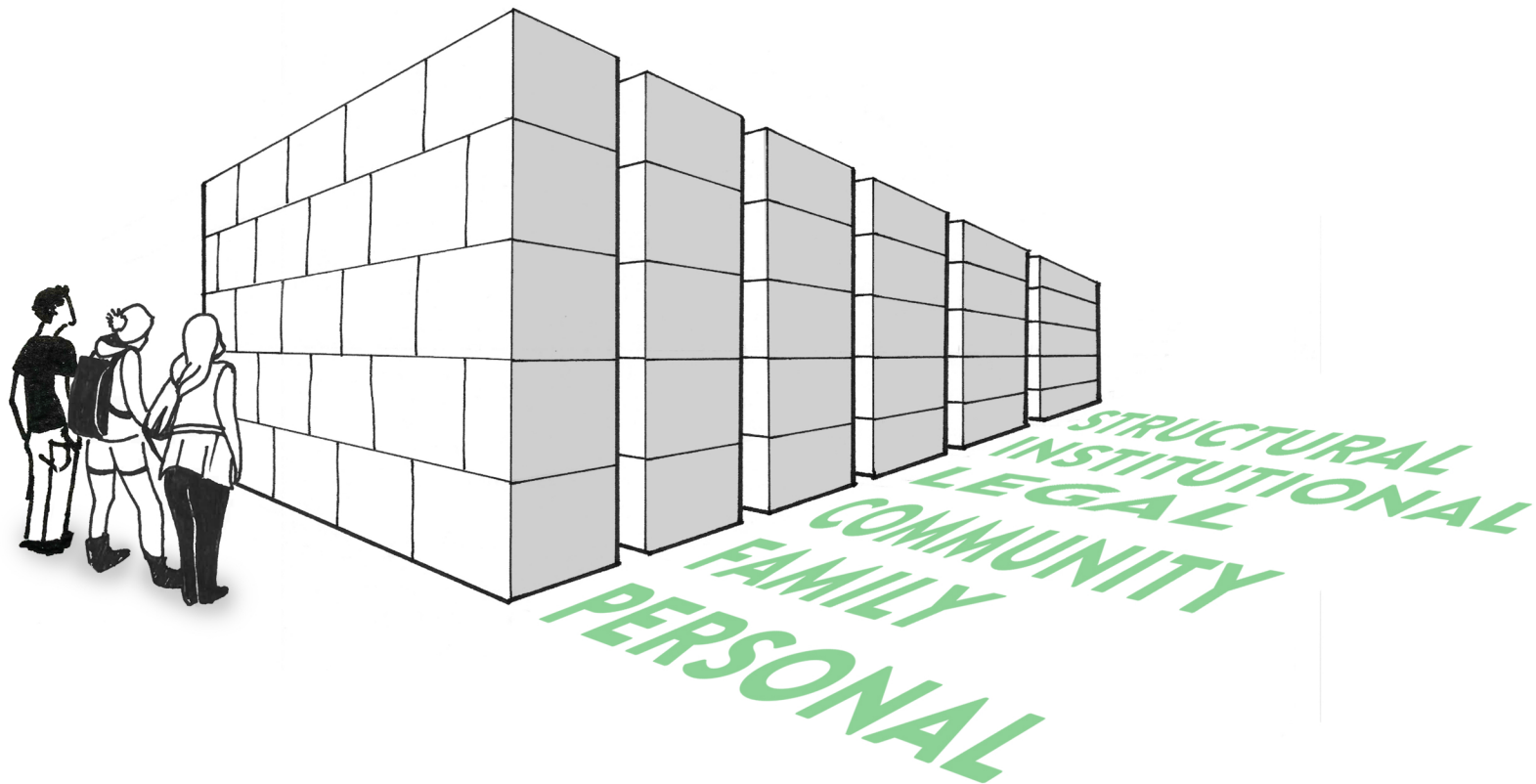


BARRIERS TO DISCLOSURE

According to the CDC, 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys experience sexual violence before the age of 18. And yet, nearly 68% of these cases go unreported. Research shows that in communities of color, there is an even greater likelihood of not disclosing incidents of sexual violence. The unfortunate reality is that too many survivors are suffering alone, and in silence, and too many of their abusers get away with it. Below is a visual depiction of the barriers survivors face in disclosing their sexual assault. On the back, you will find a more detailed description of each type of barrier.



PERSONAL BARRIERS

Factors specific to the victim that can be a hindrance to disclosing or seeking services:

- Not being believed
- Self blame and shame
- Denial or self doubt (did it really happen?)
- Fear or love for the abuser
- No tools or language to identify sexual violence
- Don't know how to report
- Power dynamic (abuser is a person of authority or leadership)

FAMILY BARRIERS

Factors specific to the victim's family that prevent them from disclosing or seeking services:

- Not being believed
- Being blamed or shamed
- Fear of causing financial, emotional, or physical harm to the family
- Wanting to protect family honor and not cause division
- Being pressured or forced to stay quiet about the abuse

COMMUNITY BARRIERS

Factors specific to the victim's community that prevent them from disclosing or seeking services:

- Not being believed
- Being blamed or shamed
- Pressure to remain silent to protect a community that is under scrutiny
- Social consequences: never getting married, being labeled an outcast, losing friends, etc.
- Community and faith leaders dismiss the violence or sweep it under the rug
- Lack of trained first responders
- Fear of privacy or confidentiality being compromised

INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS

Policies, practices, or procedures that can disadvantage victims from disclosing or seeking services or create unequal access:

- Not being believed
- No protocols for safe and anonymous reporting
- Need to protect institutional reputation or financial assets above victim's safety
- Levels of bureaucracy that can slow down process
- Lack of culturally responsive and trauma informed services and information
- Power dynamic between institution and victim

LEGAL BARRIERS

Factors pertaining to the legal process (both criminal and civil justice) creating additional barriers to disclosing or seeking services:

- Not being believed
- The legal process is long and traumatizing
- Defense will discredit the victim
- Burden of proof in legal cases is very high
- Lack of culturally responsive and trauma informed law enforcement
- Criminalization of victims, especially people of color
- Lack of financial resources to pay for legal representation

STRUCTURAL BARRIERS

Factors beyond the individual's control related to the individual's environment, social context, or identity, impeding disclosure or seeking services:

- Not being believed
- Men in power protecting each other
- Xenophobia, gendered Islamophobia, transphobia, homophobia, anti-blackness, ableism
- Racism and the racialization of Muslims
- Oppressive government policies
- Untested rape kits
- Lack of trauma-informed / affordable healthcare
- Lack of culturally sensitive mental health services
- Fear of surveillance, deportation, terrorism allegations