

Overview 2024



Economic Abuse What Is It?

Ongoing behavior of a person towards their partner, involving intimidation, coercion, or control and is manifested in at least one of the following:

- **Prevent** access to financial resources
- **Control** over all financial resources
- **Restrict** reasonable and proper management of daily life and creation of debts



Women's Spirit, Financial Independence for Women Survivors of Abuse (Ruach Nashit) has been operating since 2007 to promote the economic independence of women survivors of physical, sexual, emotional, and financial abuse in Israel. Women's Spirit strives for social change from a feminist perspective and commitment to social and gender justice. It offers a practical and long-term solution for breaking free from the cycle of abuse, focusing on individual and group economic empowerment. Women's Spirit operates through extensive cooperation with the social and business community, policy makers in the Israeli Parliament (Knesset), and with government bodies, understanding that the integration of survivors of abuse into the labor market is a social issue, and through raising awareness and changing policy and legislation can meaningful change be achieved.

Women's Spirit was awarded Special Consultative Status with the UN (ECOSOC), the Effectiveness Award for Social Action from "MIDOT" Organization, The Golda Meir Award for Inspiring Activity and a Certificate of Recognition from the Minister for Social Equality in the field of combating abuse against women.

In 2024 we received the President's Award for Volunteering for our contribution to strengthening the home front's resilience during the war

Women's Spirit focuses on rewriting the stories of women survivors of abuse and operates in four main areas of impact:

Individual - Individual work with participants, including providing tools, training, and knowledge for finding employment, breaking free from the cycle of abuse, and achieving economic independence.

Community - Building a supportive network by recruiting and training skilled professional volunteers and partnering with local businesses to provide mentorship, professional development, networking opportunities, and employment pathways.

Political - Advocating for legislative and policy reforms to address systemic barriers facing women, particularly survivors of abuse. We work to highlight 'invisible' forms of abuse that often go unrecognized by official systems, leaving survivors without proper recognition or support. Through our advocacy, we challenge systemic inequities and outdated laws that perpetuate these injustices.

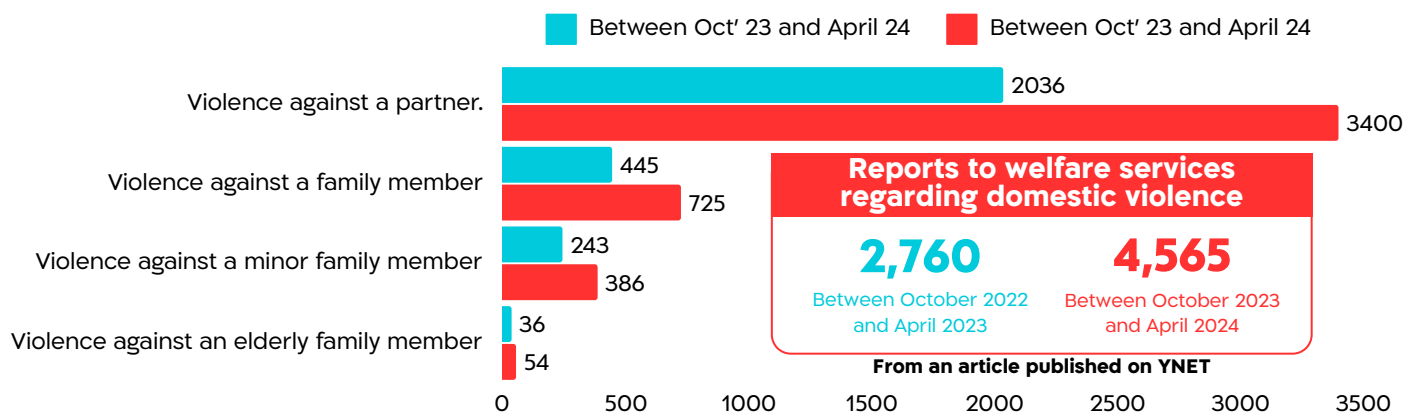
Educational - Providing comprehensive educational programs nationwide to raise awareness about abuse against women, with a special focus on Economic Abuse. Through multilingual workshops, lectures, and training sessions offered in Hebrew, Arabic, and English, we provide practical tools and essential knowledge to diverse communities across Israel and internationally.

WOMEN'S SPIRIT – IRON SWORDS

2024, Women's Spirit remained committed to maintaining stability in our core operations across all four areas of impact. While sustaining our regular programs and consistent support services, we continued to advocate for systemic change and developed innovative solutions to meet evolving challenges and needs.

Research demonstrates that domestic abuse escalates in the aftermath of violent conflicts and during wartime, as revealed in a study published by the Adva Center in September 2024 ("Transparent, Excluded, and Essential"). During these periods, traditional gender roles tend to become more rigid, particularly in societies mobilized for war efforts. Furthermore, continuous exposure to violent content leads to the normalization of violence, which inevitably seeps into daily life.

According to data from the Ministry of Welfare as of May 2024.

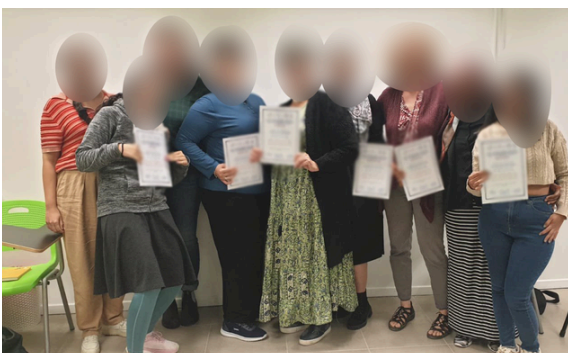


Experience has shown that crisis situations have disproportionate impacts on men and women, with women typically being the most vulnerable. As an organization advocating for women affected by abuse, we anticipated and raised early warnings at the war's outbreak about its potential consequences. We foresaw that both the emotional and economic toll of the war could trigger an increase in abuse cases and exacerbate the situations of women already experiencing abuse.

In response, we urged the government to implement preventive measures, including:

- Expanding the network of shelters and safe houses
- Developing early intervention systems to identify at-risk women, particularly among evacuated populations
- Strengthening community support through financial assistance, emotional support services and treatment programs for perpetrators of abuse.

This year has brought unprecedented challenges to women's employment, with particularly severe impacts on hourly workers, self-employed women, and Arab women. Women have dominated the statistics of those laid off or placed on unpaid leave. The situation has been further complicated by growing demands in healthcare and welfare services, coupled with a critical shortage of professional staff—especially in care-related sectors where women make up the majority of the workforce. While we've observed an alarming increase in the severity of domestic abuse, there was a concerning decline in "help-seeking" during the war's initial months. Many women felt they didn't have the "right" to complain or seek support during this national crisis.



Since the war began, our professional team has responded by enhancing and expanding our support services to meet the evolving needs of our participants. We're currently supporting women survivors of abuse who are grappling with PTSD, experiencing significant setbacks and challenges. These difficulties stem from both post-traumatic stress and the disruption of their recovery process—a journey that typically depends on careful planning and stability, now replaced by profound uncertainty. As a result, we're observing a marked deterioration in our participants' well-being.

Beyond offering personalized emotional support, both individually and in group settings, we're proactively seeking out new job opportunities, assisting businesses forced to close, and dedicating substantial resources to ensuring our participants fully understand and can exercise their rights amid the ongoing conflict.

Prior to the war, local authorities provided various services to many women. However, since the war erupted, these authorities have been overwhelmed, leaving a void that we've committed to filling.

Our efforts have been recognized with the prestigious President's Volunteer Award for 2024, acknowledging our unique role in bolstering civil resilience during the Iron Sword War.



From right to left: Michal Herzog, First Lady; Hagit Bechor, Chair of the Board of Directors; Hedy Gal, Head of the Volunteer Division; Tamar Schwartz, General Director of the organization; President Isaac Herzog; and former Knesset member Mrs. Ayelet Nachmias-Verbin, Chair of the Award Committee.

Women's Spirit in the Public Consciousness:



Month of Awareness for Violence Against Women:

Once again, we highlighted our work in the public arena and our partnership with dozens of leading businesses! We launched a comprehensive digital campaign and held an open webinar for the general public on Economic Abuse, along with dozens of lectures in companies that support Women's Spirit, **"Economic Independence for Women Survivors of Abuse - Anytime, Anywhere."**

Studies: Women's Spirit published a series of studies on Economic Abuse and its long-term effects. Notably, the study **"Economic Violence: Characteristics, Implications and Coping Mechanisms"** by Dr. Orly Benjamin, Dr. Dalit Yassour - Borochowitz, Dr. Karni Krigel, and Dr. Arian Ranen-Barzilay, quoting us. Women's Spirit has been a leading voice in raising public awareness since 2015. We are proud to see our work reflected in recent academic research, which underscores the long-term impact of our efforts.



We Appeared: in 92 media items, emphasizing the war's devastating impact on women survivors of abuse. We led a persistent campaign to honor the lives lost and demand societal change.



We Were Honored: We had the privilege of collaborating with **jewelry designer Yifat Oved**, who generously donated a significant portion of the income from her collection to Women's Spirit.

We Unveiled: a sleek new website, showcasing our multifaceted approach to Women survivors of Economic Abuse.

<https://www.ruach-nashit.org.il/>

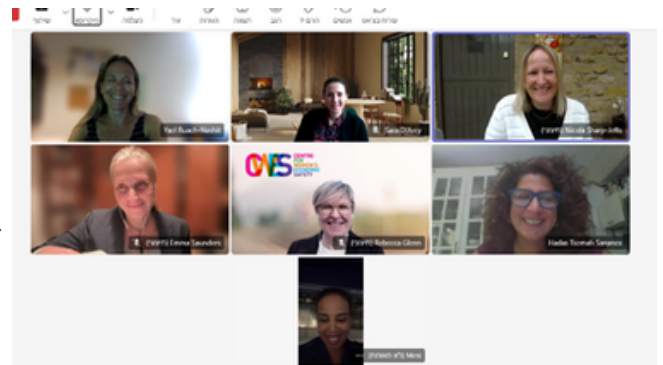
Powering Change:

Amidst global tensions, we're amplifying the incredible work of Israel's third sector, shining a bright light on groundbreaking initiatives and positive impact.



As Israel's sole NGO representative at the 68th UN Commission on the Status of Women in NY, we highlighted the severe impact of war on Israeli women in March 2024.

Women's Spirit is part of an international coalition, and one of our members - SEA (Surviving Economic Abuse), played a crucial role in shaping the UN's response to economic abuse by securing the adoption of our position paper on a global strategy to combat this issue.



In addition, we were honored to be recognized by the Israeli UN delegation in Geneva. During a **panel discussion on 'Helping Victims of Gender-Based Violence' at the Human Rights Council** in September 2024 Women's Spirit, was specifically mentioned for its work with women affected by the war. This significant recognition acknowledges our contribution to combating gender-based violence.

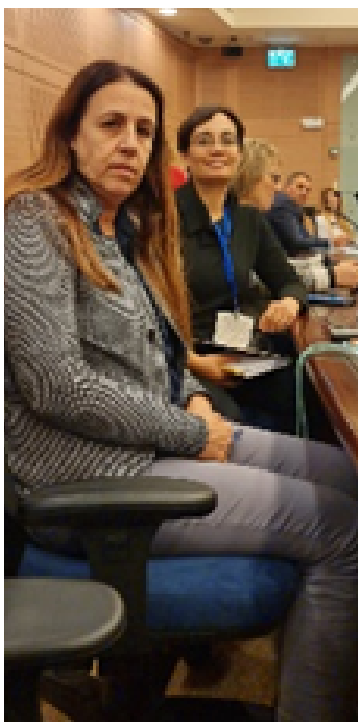
As part of our team development and a desire for mutual learning and enrichment, a **delegation of Women's Spirit staff traveled to Germany this year for a study tour.** We learned about the German welfare system and therapeutic models for women survivors of abuse, all made possible by the Zukunft Foundation, which promotes joint professional projects between the two countries. A German organization is set to reciprocate with a visit to Israel in 2025.



Policy and Legislation:

The department is dedicated to fostering long-term social change. Our primary goal is to empower women survivors of abuse by removing political and systemic barriers that hinder their economic independence. We aim to influence policymakers and promote legal recognition of Economic Abuse. Our progress is measured by significant milestones such as new procedures in public institutions, legal breakthroughs, positive public discourse, media coverage, and academic research.

This year, public and political attention to our ongoing work has been limited. However, we remain committed to amplifying the voices of women survivors of abuse during wartime. We have called on the government to establish a 'Home Front Cabinet' to allocate resources for addressing the needs of civilians during conflict. We participated in a roundtable discussion on individual economic resilience, with a particular focus on the economic vulnerability of women survivors of abuse in the context of a deteriorating job market. We have demanded female representation on committees discussing the issue of abductees. We are warning of an escalation of domestic abuse, especially among displaced women, during these times.



In 2024, we participated in numerous Knesset committees and professional panels. We have been partners in drafting countless position papers, one of the most prominent being a letter from civil society organizations working for the rights of marginalized and diverse populations. In this letter, we called on the government and Knesset to refrain from implementing the economic cuts outlined in the 2025 economic plan. We argued that these cuts would undoubtedly severely damage the already scarce resources allocated to women survivors of abuse. Especially during wartime, when marginalized populations are the first to suffer and the cost of living is soaring, they require strengthened support to ensure the existing resources are maintained.

We also, **rang the alarm of the dangerous consequences** of the uncontrolled distribution of weapons, especially for women survivors of abuse.

We attended meetings organized by the 2030 Coalition to discuss changes women have experienced since the war. We explored topics such as women's safety, economic stability, unpaid domestic work, and representation in decision-making roles.



In the lead-up to International Women's Day, **we conducted a Webinar on the ways in which war or national crisis impact women's rights, in collaboration with the MASHAV Training center (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)**. We also participated in a Knesset discussion on 'Housing assistance for women leaving shelters and survivors of domestic abuse.

We lead a **professional panel on promoting women's economic empowerment in the Middle East**. The panel was organized by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

While the war has created immense challenges, we've continued our work on important women's issues. Promoting policies for survivors of abuse, which is imminently harder now due to limited public and political attention. **Still, we're pushing forward, directly engaging with lawmakers and committees on issues like our proposed bill to prevent Economic Abuse.**

Concurrently, we are working to raise awareness and **remove barriers in the area of debt as a practice of Economic Abuse**, with the Bank of Israel, the Israel Bankers Association, Law Enforcement and Collection System Authority and Domestic Violence Prevention Centers, in order to facilitate the Banking Accessibility Covenant and with the Commissioner of Insolvency to promote a model designed to facilitate insolvency procedures for women survivors of abuse.

As part of our advocacy efforts we filed **amicus** briefs in both district and supreme courts challenging the restrictive eligibility criteria for public housing exceptions committees. By emphasizing the housing needs of women survivors of domestic violence, we were able to secure a court ruling that expanded access to this crucial resource.

Education Department:

The education department is a crucial component of our work, complementing the Policy and Legislation department and our Professional Work with participants. The department raises awareness of abuse against women, with a focus on Economic Abuse, through lectures, workshops, and trainings conducted in Hebrew, Arabic, and English.

We have reached thousands through workshops and lectures in diverse communities, including local governments, corporations, and the judiciary. This year, we expanded our programming to provide practical tools for addressing Economic Abuse. We partnered with the Israel Police to train investigators, and launched the 'Gatekeepers' program in 20 municipalities, empowering local volunteers to raise awareness. Over 5,000 people have participated in our programs, and we have 17 trained professional volunteer lecturers who have delivered 132 lectures this year.



20

**Local authorities
invited us to give
lectures**

20

**Gatekeepers
Workshops**

132

Lectures

This year, we've seen a significant increase in local authorities wanting to train community volunteers to support women experiencing abuse. Beyond our 'Gatekeepers' workshops, many have asked for additional training to provide ongoing support. This shows a growing understanding that communities are vital in identifying and helping women in crisis, and that social responsibility is key to saving lives.

We also had the honor to hold an open webinar for hundreds of employees of Otzma Centers from North Israel.

Social Responsibility:

Women's Spirit strengthened partnerships with government, businesses, and community organizations to combat abuse against women. We expanded collaborations with gender equality coordinators, local authorities, leading companies, and nonprofits.

We continued to integrate the concept of **ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance)** into our approach. By doing so, we offer our supporters the opportunity to promote international corporate responsibility standards that align with their values. Supporting Women's Spirit ensures that partners are contributing to a broader effort to promote and protect women's rights in Israel.



Our engaging **trivia event, `Who is Israel's Smartest Company`**, successfully raised significant funds, thanks to the enthusiastic participation of 19 companies. The staff of Haaretz newspaper won first place for the second year in a row. We thank the participants and moderators, **Bat-El Davach, Michal Dor, and Itai Herman**, for their contributions. The event will return in 2025!

פרויקט האחריות החברתית של "רוח נשית" והעולם העסקי לציון יום המאבק הבינלאומי למניעת אלימות כלפי נשים שנה שישית ברציפות

תודה לחברות השותפות לדרך על תמיכה משמעותית לאורך השנים במאבק הבלתי מתפשר באלימות, בקידום נשים נפגעות אלימות וילדיהן, הרחבת מעגלי מודעות ויצירת שינוי חברתי. שנה שישית ברציפות

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For the sixth consecutive year, we've launched our partnership project on the large screens of the Azrieli Center in Tel Aviv. We issued a clear call to action: thanks to the support of our partners, we are advocating for **Economic Independence for Women Survivors of Abuse, everywhere and at all times.**

One on One – Crossing the Street

Crossing the Street operates nationwide, with a special focus on disadvantaged areas in the social and geographic periphery. We operate from three main branches:

The Northern branch, located in Haifa, serving women from the Nahariya, Krayot, Sakhnin, Yarca, Shifram and surrounding areas.

The Central branch, located in Tel Aviv, serving women between Gedera and Hadera.

The Southern branch, located in Beersheba, serving women from Ofakim, Netivot, Yeruham and Sderot.

Against the backdrop of the tensions in the north and south, our work model has changed slightly. At the beginning of the war, most of the resources were invested in the south, but as we delved deeper into 2024, the focus shifted to the north, a geographic area that had been frozen in time, where our participants found themselves without any employment prospects or ability to make a living.

In the first half of 2024, we saw a decrease in inquiries. Since July, this trend has reversed, and there has been a sharp increase in the curve of inquiries. In addition, we note that the inquiries are more complex, and the women who turn to us express greater distress. We were required to deal with challenges and life circumstances that we were unfamiliar with; displaced women, women without employment prospects, women who lost jobs, women who were disconnected from the job market for long months due to a lack of childcare, women who expressed great emotional and material distress.



As a result, we adapted to the chaotic reality and were primarily designed to strengthen local communities, cultivate the networking of participants, convene for resilience courses and workshops, invest in maximizing rights and providing scholarships given the opportunity to use the time for studies. This year, we saw a new increase in the need for grocery vouchers and laptops, and indeed there was an accelerated distribution of material assistance.

During 2024, 433 women survivors of abuse participated in Crossing the Street. Additionally, 380 women received short-term assistance. These were women whom we couldn't assist within the program's framework. However, after learning about their personal stories and specific needs, we worked individually with each woman to provide appropriate responses, assistance, and referrals within the community.

During 2024 we held 2 occupational workshops, 8 resilience groups, 4 spring board workshops and 3 volunteer trainings.

2024 participants:

48% were from the Center; 32% were from the North; 20% were from the South; 3% were from other communities

Education:

- 28% hold a university degree or higher
- 28% have a full high school diploma
- 33% completed 12 years of school but don't have a diploma
- 11% have less than 12 years of formal education

Employment achievements and improvement metrics of the participants during 2024:

- 70% receive a payslip and social rights
- 64% report satisfaction with their work
- 29% report having qualified to a better job
- 47% report having started to work during the process
- 63% report an increase in their monthly income

One Employment Model - Respectable and Respectful

Women's Spirit Services in 2024:

- **Individualized support provided by the Case Manager** - one-on-one support for each of the **433** participants (throughout the year and for all project participants), aimed at clarifying and maximizing rights, building a personalized career path, and more.
- **Personalized Mentoring** - **106** women received weekly, personalized support from trained volunteers to foster personal and financial growth.
- **Professional Mentoring** - **87** participants underwent processes with a professional volunteer specializing in three key employment-oriented areas: career, business consulting, and financial management.

- **Employment Coaching** - **76** women received 15 sessions of personalized career coaching from certified professionals to help them achieve their career and financial goals.
- **Scholarships** - Scholarships are a cornerstone of our mission. By providing **75** scholarships, we empower women to pursue education leading to better job opportunities and financial independence.
- **Entitlement of Rights** - **69** women underwent a process of benefits assessment and claim filing. **433** participants undergo an initial benefits assessment at intake.
- **Immediate Responses** - Women's Spirit empowers participants by providing them with 'fishing rods, not fish.' However, recognizing the immediate challenges faced by our participants, we offer solutions to their basic needs while re-evaluating how the 'fish can bring the rod.' We provided hundreds of grocery vouchers and also distributed laptops.
- **Women Building their Own Business** - Participants selecting the self-employment path receive comprehensive training in business development, including business planning, marketing, and branding. They are also provided with ongoing mentorship from a dedicated Case Manager. **100** personalized coaching sessions were delivered to support participants in achieving their business goals. Furthermore, participants benefited from a network of volunteer mentors specializing in business development.
- **Body Image** - Physical activity plays a vital role in recovery from the physical and psychological effects of prolonged abuse. It helps to rebuild strength and resilience, while also fostering a sense of empowerment. Moreover, exercise can be a powerful tool for combating social isolation and promoting a sense of community. **38** women have been awarded sports scholarships to support their healing journey.
- **New! Employment Springboard** - The workshop first and foremost provides a safe and supportive space for women who have experienced abuse, a place to connect with other women who are going through similar experiences, and to build friendships and a supportive community. In addition, the workshops provide the basic knowledge necessary to understand economic independence and the possible ways to achieve it. 4 workshops were held, with a total of **61** participants.
- **Resilience and Occupational Workshops:** after the atrocities of Oct. 7th and the ensuing war, we held several resilience and occupational workshops with a total of **116** participants. The workshops provided tools to cope with the emergency situation in order to create a sense of control and stability amid feelings of chaos and loss of control.

Spheres of Influence – Volunteers

Women's Spirit: Empowering Women, Inspiring Change

Women's Spirit is committed to empowering women who have experienced abuse. We inspire community members to become agents of change, working together to create a safer and more equitable world for all women.

Our dedicated volunteers are the heart of our organization. They generously donate their time and energy to advance our mission. Despite the challenges posed by the recent war, our volunteers remained steadfast, adapting to virtual platforms to continue providing essential support. To ensure a continuous flow of passionate volunteers, we conducted 3 training sessions in the past year, 2 in the north (including one specifically for the Arab sector) and 1 each in the center and south.



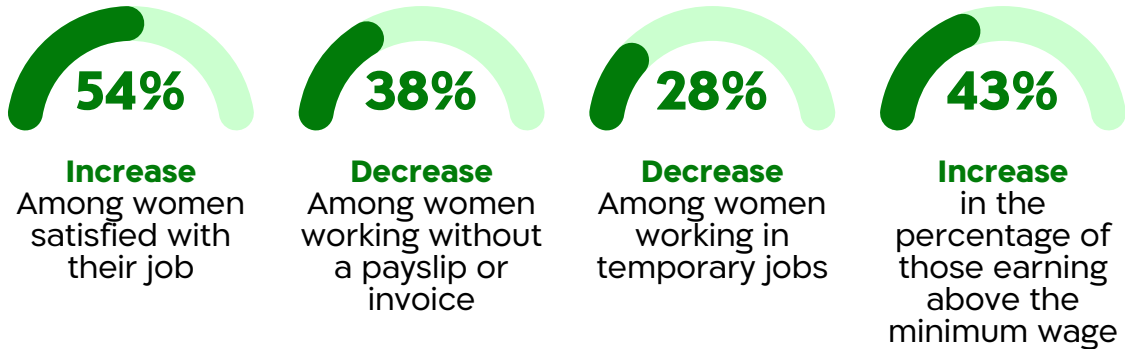
In total, **330** volunteers actively contribute to our mission. This dedication and commitment have earned us the prestigious President's Volunteer Award, a testament to the impact of our volunteer-driven initiatives. By working together, we are creating a stronger, more compassionate community.

Measurement and Impact:

Women's Spirit measures individual participant engagement, volunteer activities, and systemic operations to provide feedback, identify program strengths and weaknesses, evaluate goal achievement, and improve the support services offered. We are interested in examining where participants stand three years after completing the program.

In 2019-2020, we undertook extensive research led by Dr. Anabel Lipsic-Friedlander, who specializes in research methodologies. As part of this research, interviews and focus groups were conducted with staff, current participants, former participants, and volunteers. This research continued throughout 2023 and 2024, monitoring a group of former participants as well as new participants who completed the program in 2023. The following research findings demonstrate that our work model is bearing fruit. The research will continue into 2025, when we plan to add an additional parameter to reflect how the war has affected participants' income levels, employment rates, and the realization of social rights.

2023 metrics from our ongoing annual research



Three years after completing the process



Evaluating Systemic Change:

In 2024, we continued to track the collective impact we are creating, examining how our systemic actions generate long-term macro-level change.

Women's Spirit's Policy and Legislative Department aims to achieve long-term social change. Our ultimate goal is to empower women survivors of abuse in Israel by dismantling existing policies that create structural barriers to economic independence, and by achieving legal recognition of Economic Abuse.

This is a long-term process, but today, after 17 years of consistent advocacy, we dare to say that most members of the Israeli Knesset are now familiar with the term "Economic Abuse." While there is still disagreement about the correct way to address the issue, both legislative and executive bodies recognize the phenomenon and its characteristics.

Academic institutions have also joined the struggle, publishing research on the subject in professional journals (often citing Women's Spirit work). The media is taking an interest in the topic, writing about it and discussing it. The publication of Women's Spirit's book, "She Counts," a collection of testimonies from women who have survived economic abuse, has also contributed to raising awareness. We promote this book in various forums, with institutions and organizations. Our education department provides dozens of lectures each year to diverse audiences (local authorities, businesses, etc.) on the connection between economic dependence and violence, aiming to raise awareness and prevent abuse. This increased awareness is also reflected in creative digital campaigns where we give a platform to the issue.

A Revolutionary Social Enterprise

Our bridal boutique is a groundbreaking social enterprise that offers brides the opportunity to purchase their dream wedding gown at an affordable price, with a special meaning and an eco-friendly alternative.

How does it work? Through our "donation for donation" concept, all the gowns in the boutique are donated by top Israeli designers and brides who have already tied the knot. Every purchase is a 100% donation!

Our boutique is a place filled with heart, thanks to our dedicated volunteers!

With great sensitivity and kindness, we ensure that every bride who comes to the boutique has a pleasant and positive experience all the while learning about Economic Abuse!

We generate publicity through a variety of creative means, such as participating in the Tel Aviv Night Run and the creation of a bridal video to commemorate the 7th of October.

Since the outbreak of the war, we have been regularly hosting reservists and couples who wish to establish a home in Israel, even during wartime, as a statement. We sometimes measure gowns in a bomb shelter, but we are primarily inspired by our wonderful brides who are determined to build a home and, along the way, make a contribution to the community. As evidenced by a video we released before the Jewish New Year, featuring dozens of brides, with the beautiful song of the late Shauli Grinlik, who fell during Iron Swords, playing in the background, and whose sister purchased her bridal gown at our boutique.

This year, we held 1932 sales and sold hundreds of bridal gowns.

