

# Fact Sheet

## Violence Against Women

*The YWCA Week Without Violence™, the third week in October, is an international initiative created by YWCA USA in 1995 to mobilize people in communities all across the United States and the world to take action against all forms of violence, wherever it occurs.*

Week  
without  
Violence

### Background

Violence against women impacts the lives of countless women and their families across the United States. Women and girls of all ages, income levels, racial and ethnic communities, sexual orientations and religious affiliations experience violence in the form of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, trafficking and stalking. The enactment of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in 1994 provided a national, streamlined response to how communities respond to violence against women by giving law enforcement, prosecutors and judges the tools they need to hold offenders accountable and keep communities safe while supporting victims. VAWA serves as a vital funding source for YWCAs and other organizations that provide critical services directly to victims of abuse and sexual assault.

### YWCA Position

As a leading service provider and as the voice for every woman, the YWCA supports public policies that protect victims, hold perpetrators accountable, and work to eradicate sexual assault and domestic violence, trafficking of women, and dating violence. The YWCA recognizes the need for anti-violence programs and policies to be

multifaceted and diverse in both their approaches to addressing violence against women and in assisting victims of violence.

The YWCA supports the continuance and full funding for the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA). VAWA has historically received bipartisan support since 1994 and the YWCA strongly supports the continuance of this funding stream as a critical component in working with communities across the nation to address violence against women.

### Facts

- One in four women will experience domestic violence and, on average, more than three women are murdered by their partners in the United States every day. 1,181 women were killed at the hands of their perpetrators in 2005.<sup>1</sup>
- According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), 1.3 million women reported being raped or sexually assaulted in 2009.
- Domestic violence is largely a gender-based crime. Women make up 84 percent of spousal abuse victims and 86 percent of victims in

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cases involving partners or boyfriends. Studies have found that men account for 75 percent of perpetrators in domestic violence cases.<sup>2</sup>

- 500 women are sexually assaulted each day in the United States. This number doesn't account for the countless sexual assaults that go unreported. In 2007, there were 248,300 documented cases of sexual assault, up from 190,600 in 2005.<sup>3</sup> Sexual assault remains to be one of the most underreported crimes, with some advocates claiming that as many as 54 percent of crimes go unreported.<sup>4</sup>
- Out of every 100 cases of rape, 9 are prosecuted,<sup>5</sup> 12 lead to an arrest,<sup>6</sup> and only 5 lead to a felony conviction.<sup>7</sup>
- Victims of violence face many barriers to accessing resources and safety. These barriers range from: the lack of a financial safety net; lack of community support; religious and cultural barriers; fear of deportation; lack of awareness or knowledge of the legal system; lack of adequate childcare services; and the inability to secure low-cost housing. According to the National Coalition for the Homeless, nearly 60 percent of homeless women are in or have fled abusive situations.<sup>8</sup>

### Teens and Young Adults

- Young women between the ages of 20-24 are the most vulnerable to domestic violence, followed by young women ages 16-19. Women in these groups experience the highest per capita rates of non-fatal intimate partner violence.<sup>9</sup>
- Young adults between the ages of 18-19 face the highest rates of stalking.<sup>10</sup>
- Children are witnessing violence in their homes at record rates, with 15.5 million children having witnessed it at least once in their homes. Seven million children live in homes in which severe intimate partner violence has occurred.<sup>11</sup> Because children learn from social cues, witnessing and experiencing violence in the home at such young ages can often result distorted perceptions about dating and healthy relationships.
- One in three young girls is a victim of physical, verbal, or emotional abuse in the United States.<sup>12</sup>
- Most teens report being in or knowing others in violent relationships. One in five claim that their friends are experiencing dating violence and half report that their friends are in verbally abusive relationships.<sup>13</sup>
- Dating violence among teens results in higher risks of drug abuse, tobacco use, and suicide.<sup>14</sup>

### Women of Color

- Women of color experience violence at higher rates than the general population. Black women between the ages of 20-24 experience domestic violence at a higher rate than their white counterparts, with similar rates of violence in every other age range.<sup>15</sup>
- Latina women face high rates of violence, with 21.2 percent experiencing physical assault, 7.9 percent as victims of rape, and 4.8 percent as stalking victims.<sup>16</sup>
- Native women experience the highest rate of violence, with double the rates of violence in the general population.<sup>17</sup>

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### The Cost of Violence

- Not only is violence against women a public health concern, impacting one in four women nationwide, but it is a financial burden on communities across the country. According to the Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence, the health-related costs of intimate partner violence exceed \$5.8 billion each year, including trips to the emergency room, mental health care, counseling and general medical expenses.<sup>18</sup>
- Many women are forced to negotiate their safety with their jobs, and as a result, end up taking days off due to injuries, trips to the hospital, filing police reports, or court dates. As a result, it is estimated that lost productivity in the workplace due to intimate partner violence costs \$727.8 million annually, with over 7.9 million workdays lost each year.<sup>19</sup>
- Programs funded by the Violence Against Women Act have saved \$12.6 billion in the first six years that it was enacted by streamlining programs and coordinating responses to violence.<sup>20</sup>

### Legislation

- Signed into law by President Clinton in 1994, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is a landmark law which aims to prevent and end violence against women and girls. VAWA increased criminal penalties for crimes against women, including domestic violence, stalking and sexual assault; enhanced penalties for repeat sex offenders; and improved laws regarding protection orders, sex-offender registration and interstate domestic violence.

VAWA also created a toll-free domestic violence hotline and provided federal funding to combat violence against women and girls.

- In 2000, VAWA was reauthorized with key components added to it that focused on strengthening the criminal response to violence against women. It improved law enforcement responses to domestic violence, enhanced education and training on violence against women issues and provided services for populations that faced specific barriers to accessing services, such as immigrants and ethnic communities. In addition to this, it placed a spotlight on dating violence and the need to provide preventative education to young adults. VAWA was reauthorized again in 2013, focusing on assistance for LGBTQ victims, immigrant and Native American women.
- VAWA has proven that it is possible to prevent and end violence against women. Since the law was first passed in 1994, domestic violence reporting has increased 51 percent, and all states have strengthened rape laws and have made stalking a crime. The number of individuals killed by intimate partners has decreased by 34 percent for women and 57 percent for men. VAWA-funded programs saved \$12.6 billion in its first six years alone, from 1994-2000.<sup>21</sup>
- VAWA improves the overall response to addressing violence against women by:
  - Improving court processes;
  - Establishing education and prevention programs;
  - Encouraging law enforcement to prosecute violence against women as a serious crime;

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- Providing victims with legal assistance;
- Ensuring that communities of all backgrounds, religions, cultures and ages have access to culturally- and linguistically-appropriate services;
- Elevating the distinctive needs of sexual assault victims; and
- Supporting victims' short-term and emergency housing needs.

## Resources

Break the Cycle [www.breakthecycle.org](http://www.breakthecycle.org)

Futures Without Violence  
[www.futureswithoutviolence.org](http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org)

Jewish Women International [www.jwi.org](http://www.jwi.org)

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
[www.ncadv.org](http://www.ncadv.org)

National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs  
[www.avp.org/ncavp.htm](http://www.avp.org/ncavp.htm)

National Congress of American Indians [www.ncai.org](http://www.ncai.org)

National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence  
[www.4vawa.org](http://www.4vawa.org)

Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN)  
[www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org)

U.S. Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women  
[www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo)

## Sources

<sup>1</sup> Catalano, Shannan. 2007. *Intimate Partner Violence in the United States*. U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/ipvus.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> *Family Violence Statistics: Including Statistics on Strangers and Acquaintances*. 2005. U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/fvs02.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> *National Crime Victimization Survey: Criminal Victimization, 2007. 2008*. U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/cv08.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Justice Department, *National Crime Victimization Survey: 2006-2010*.

<sup>5</sup> National Center for Policy Analysis, *Crime and Punishment in America*, 1999.

<sup>6</sup> FBI, *Uniform Crime Reports: 2006-2010*

<sup>7</sup> Department of Justice, *Felony Defendants in Large Urban Counties: average of 2002-2006*

<sup>8</sup> National Coalition for the Homeless. *Domestic Violence and Homelessness*, 2007. <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/publications/facts/domestic.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> *National Crime Victimization Survey: Criminal Victimization, 2007. 2008*. U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/cv08.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Baum, Katrina, Catalano, Shannan, Rand, Michael and Rose, Kristina. 2009. *Stalking Victimization in the United States*. U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics. <http://www.raven1.net/reviews/svus.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Whitfield, CL, Anda RF, Dube SR, Felittle VJ. 2003. *Violent Childhood Experiences and the Risk of Intimate Partner Violence in Adults: Assessment in a Large Health Maintenance Organization*. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. 18(2): 166-185

<sup>12</sup> Davis, Antoinette, MPH. 2008. *Interpersonal and Physical Dating Violence among Teens*. The National Council on Crime and Delinquency Focus. [http://www.ocjs.ohio.gov/TDVMonth/Interpersonal\\_Teens.pdf](http://www.ocjs.ohio.gov/TDVMonth/Interpersonal_Teens.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> *Tween and Teen Dating Violence and Abuse Study, Teenage Research Unlimited for Liz Claiborne Inc. and the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline*. February 2008. [http://www.loveisnotabuse.com/pdf/Tween percent20Dating percent20Abuse percent20Full percent20Report.pdf](http://www.loveisnotabuse.com/pdf/Tween%20Dating%20Abuse%20Full%20Report.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Silverman, J, Raj A, et al. 2001. *Dating Violence Against Adolescent Girls and Associated Substance Use, Unhealthy Weight Control, Sexual Risk Behavior, Pregnancy, and Suicidality*. *JAMA*. 286:572-579. <http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/reprint/286/5/572>

<sup>15</sup> Tjaden, Patricia and Nancy Thoennes. (July 2000) Full Report of the Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey. U.S. Department of Justice. <https://www.ncjrs.gov/txtfiles1/nij/183781.txt>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

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<sup>17</sup> Harper, Shelby Settles and Christina Marie Entrekin. 2006. Violence Against Native Women: A Guide for Practitioner Action. Department of Justice, Office of Violence Against Women.

<http://www.vaw.umn.edu/documents/nativewomen/nativewomen.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> *Costs of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in the United States. (2003)*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Centers for Injury Prevention and Control. Atlanta, Ga.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

