

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

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, gender identities, and religious affiliations experience domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, stalking, and trafficking. Victims and survivors of violence face many barriers to accessing resources and safety, including the lack of a financial safety net, lack of community support, religious and cultural barriers, fear of deportation and of law enforcement, lack of awareness or knowledge of the legal system and their rights, lack of adequate childcare services, and a lack of affordable housing. Many of these barriers stem from long-standing inequity in public policies and social safety nets.

YWCA POSITION

As the largest network of domestic violence services providers in the United States, YWCA addresses gender-based violence by supporting federal legislation and public policies that protect survivors, hold perpetrators accountable, and eradicate sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking, trafficking, and dating violence. Specifically, we support the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), the Family Violence Prevention Act (FVPSA), and other legislation that is comprehensive and inclusive of the needs of all victims of violence, particularly those who often experience higher risks of violence, such as native women, immigrant women, women of color, and LGBTQ/TGNC survivors.

BACKGROUND

Gender-based violence continues to be a pervasive problem in the United States, with far-reaching consequences.

- One in three women will experience domestic violence and more than three women are murdered by their partners each day.ⁱ
- One in five women has been raped in their lifetime.ⁱⁱ
- Out of every 1000 cases of rape, 57 lead to an arrest, 11 are prosecuted, and only seven will lead to a felony conviction.ⁱⁱⁱ
- One in six (19.3 million) women have been stalked by an intimate partner during their lifetime to the point that they felt very fearful or believed that they or someone close to them would be harmed or killed.^{iv}
- Between 21 and 60 percent of victims of intimate partner violence lose their jobs due to reasons related to their abuse.^v
- Approximately 50 percent of women who are homeless report that intimate partner violence was the immediate cause of their homelessness and over 92% of homeless mothers have experienced severe physical and/or sexual abuse during their lifetime.^{vi}
- Negative physical, mental, sexual, and reproductive health issues have been linked to gender-based violence. Survivors are also at a higher risk for developing addictions to tobacco, alcohol, or drugs.^{vii}
- According to the National Network to End Domestic Violence's 2014 National DV Counts Census, in just one day, 67,646 adults and children received services from domestic violence

programs. However, 10, 871 requests for services went unmet due to a lack of resources.^{viii}

Gender-based violence occurs across all races, ages, classes, and ethnic backgrounds, though at disparate rates and with disproportionate impacts for women of color.

- According to the latest National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, 54 percent of multi-racial women, 46 percent of American Indian / Alaska Native women, and 43 percent of Black women have been the victim of violence by an intimate partner during their lifetime. The same is true of 37 percent of Latinas, 36 percent of White women, and 20 percent of Asian or Pacific Islander women.^{ix}
- Approximately one in five Black (22 percent) and White (18.8 percent) women, and one in seven Hispanic women (14.6 percent) in the U.S have experienced rape at some point in their lives. The same is true for more than a quarter of women (26.9 percent) who identify as American Indian or as Alaska Native and one in three women (33.5 percent) who identify as multiracial.^x
- A lack of job stability, unemployment, the nation's history of segregation, and the strain of navigating racism help to explain some of the factors leading to high rates of IPV in communities of color. They also help to explain why women and families of color, who are more likely to live in poverty, have fewer resources available to help them leave violent situations or to seek care for the violence they have suffered.^{xi}
- Language and cultural barriers prohibit many Latina survivors from accessing much-needed services.^{xii} Further, a recent survey of over 500 foreign-born Latinas found that 14% of participants reported experiencing problems in accessing services for survivors due to immigration issues.^{xiii}
- Barriers related to social isolation keep many American Indian and Alaska Native survivors from accessing adequate medical care.^{xiv} Jurisdictional and sovereignty issues also play a large role in limiting the availability of relief from the criminal justice system for such survivors.^{xv}
- Though Black women are as likely, if not more likely, to request assistance as survivors, they are not receiving the help they need. According to the Violence Policy Center, they are 2.3 times more likely than white women to be shot and killed by an intimate partner.^{xvi} This data indicates that Black women experienced the highest number of single female victim / single male perpetrator homicides of all women of color in 2010 and 2011; in some states, Black women were the victims of all such homicides in 2011.^{xvii}

Current federal law provides a strong foundational support for addressing the prevalence of gender-based violence, as well as providing support to survivors.

Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)

- VAWA was first passed in 1994 as part of the Violence Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994. The Act focuses on preventing gender-based violence, funding for victim services, and evidentiary concerns.
- The 113th Congress and passed a more inclusive bill that included provisions helping immigrant, Native American, and LGBT victims of violence. This bill was signed into law on March 7, 2013 by President Obama.
- VAWA established grants to create and improve law enforcement and prosecution strategies at the state and local levels, and provides a framework for collaboration between

federal state, and local governments; direct service providers; law enforcement personnel; prosecutors; and the courts.

- The Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) currently administers 25 grant programs authorized by VAWA across all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and 6 territories.

Victims of Crime Act (VOCA)

- In 1984, Congress created the Crime Victims Fund as part of VOCA. The Fund provides monetary support for victim assistance programs and victim compensation programs.
- VOCA funds rape crisis centers, domestic violence shelters, counseling programs, support groups, advocacy, and case management services.
- VOCA also provides financial reimbursement to victims of violent crimes for out-of-pocket medical expenses and mental health counseling services.
- Nearly 4 million victims a year are served by more than 4,000 local and state victim service agencies funded by VOCA.^{xviii}

Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA)

- FVPSA was first authorized in 1984 as part of the Child Abuse Amendments of 1984. The Act provides federal funding to assist domestic violence survivors and their dependent children by providing shelter and related assistance; offering violence prevention programs; and improving how service agencies work together in communities.
- FVPSA funds immediate crisis counseling via hotlines, emergency shelter and safe housing, counseling, advocacy, legal and medical assistance, and other responses.
- The Act currently funds 1,250 domestic violence shelter program, 257 non-shelter services programs, 2 domestic violence dating violence hotlines, and 137 Tribal domestic violence programs. Each year, FVPSA-funded programs serve 1.2 million victims and their children, and respond to 2.6 million crisis calls. Programs also provide 180,000 presentations reaching 4.7 million people.^{xix}

POLICY RESPONSES THAT CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

- Ensure that legislation and policies to prevent gender-based violence and to support survivors are inclusive of all victims and survivors.
- Increase collaboration between community service providers and law enforcement to improve justice system responses to survivors.
- Expand the availability of support services for survivors to address unmet needs.
- Expand the list of perpetrators covered by orders of protection to close the loophole that currently permits abusers to access guns.
- Pass safe leave legislation to allow survivors take time off from work without penalty to receive medical attention, make court appearances, seek legal assistance, and get help with safety planning for themselves or immediate family members.

ⁱ Black, M.C. et al (2011). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 Summary Report. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved 24 January 2017 from https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_report2010-a.pdf. [hereinafter NISVS:2010]

ⁱⁱ

-
- iii Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN). (2016). The Criminal Justice System: Statistics. Retrieved 24 January from <https://www.rainn.org/statistics/criminal-justice-system>.
- iv NISVS 2010, supra note i.
- v Emily F. Rothman et al. How employment helps female victims of intimate partner violence: A qualitative study. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*. (2007). 12(2). Retrieved 16 January 2017 from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/1076-8998.12.2.136>.
- vi Pressing Issues Facing Families Who Are Homeless. (2013). American Institutes for Research. Retrieved 16 January 2017 from <http://online.fliphtml5.com/xsgw/iqjt/>.
- vii Global and Regional Estimate of Violence Against Women: Prevalence and Health Effects of Intimate Partner Violence and Non-Partner Sexual Violence (2013). World Health Organization. Retrieved 16 January 2017 from http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/85239/1/9789241564625_eng.pdf?ua=1.
- viii National Network to End Domestic Violence. (2014). Domestic Violence Counts: Census 2014 Report. Retrieved 23 January 2017 from <http://nnedv.org/projects/census/4481-domestic-violence-counts-census-2014-report.html>.
- ix NISVS: 2010, supra note i.
- x Id.
- xi Michael L. Benson. The Correlation Between Race and Domestic Violence is Confounded with Community Context. *Social Problems* 51:3 (2004): 326-342. Retrieved 23 January 2017 from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/249985526_The_Correlation_Between_Race_and_Domestic_Violence_is_Confounded_with_Community_Context.
- xii Casa de Esperanza. (2015). Barriers to Services: Facts on Intimate Partner Violence Among Latin@s. Retrieved 16 January 2017 from <http://casadeesperanza.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/IPVfactENG-barrierstoservice2.pdf>.
- xiii Casa de Esperanza (2012). Results from the National Domestic Violence Hotline Focused Survey: Latinas & IPV. Unpublished report.
- xiv Futures Without Violence. The Facts on Violence Against American Indian / Alaskan Native Women. Retrieved 16 January 2017 from <http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/userfiles/file/Violence%20Against%20AI%20AN%20Women%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>.
- xv Id.
- xvi Violence Policy Center. (2012). When Men Murder Women An Analysis of 2012 Homicide Data. Retrieved 25 January 2017 from: <http://www.vpc.org/studies/wmmw2014.pdf>.
- xvii Id.
- xviii National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators. (2016). VOCA Funding. Retrieved 23 January 2017 from <http://www.navaa.org/budget/>.
- xix Family and Youth Services Bureau. Family Violence Prevention and Services Program Overview. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved 23 January 2017 from https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/fysb/fvpsa_overview_20150731.pdf.