

## GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE FACTS

Gender-based violence 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.

While many of the experiences of survivors cut across all racial, ethnic, and class lines, some survivors face increased difficulty in accessing resources and safety due to complex histories with social systems. Women of color and other marginalized populations often have disproportionate experiences with gender-based violence and increased barriers in seeking help. Many of these barriers are exacerbated by long-standing inequities in public policies and social safety nets, including a fear of criminal justice systems; lack of financial safety nets; religious and cultural barriers; fear of deportation; lack of awareness or knowledge of the legal system; lack of adequate childcare services; lack of low-cost housing options; and skepticism of social service institutions.

At YWCA, we know that all violence is not acknowledged or responded to equally and that some victims go unrecognized altogether. That is why we firmly support legislation that is comprehensive and inclusive of the needs of all victims of gender-based violence, particularly those who face increased barriers to safety, such as BIPOC women, Native women, immigrant women, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and those with multiple marginalized identities. The enactment of the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) in 1984 and the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in 1994 provided national funding for domestic violence shelters, and a national, streamlined response for how communities should 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. FVPSA and VAWA are vital funding sources for YWCAs and other organizations that provide critical services directly to victims of domestic and sexual violence.

### FACTS

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

- Every 68 seconds, another American is sexually assaulted.<sup>i</sup>
- Out of every 1,000 sexual assaults, less than a third are reported to police, only 50 lead to an arrest, and only 28 lead to a felony conviction.<sup>ii</sup>
- Only half of domestic violence incidents are reported to police,<sup>iii</sup> while more than 2 out of 3 sexual assaults go unreported.<sup>iv</sup>

- More than 40% of teen girls have experienced emotional, physical, or sexual abuse in their lifetime.<sup>v</sup>
- 1 in 4 women have experienced domestic violence and, on average, more than 3 women are murdered by their current or former partners in the United States every day.<sup>vi</sup>
- Over 4.5 million women in the U.S. have been threatened with a gun by an intimate partner,<sup>vii</sup> and nearly 1 million alive today have been shot, or shot at, by an intimate partner.<sup>viii</sup> In an average month, 70 women are shot to death by intimate partners and many more are injured.<sup>ix</sup>
- The presence of a firearm increases the risk of DV homicide by more than 10x.<sup>x</sup>
- 1 of every 4 homeless women is homeless because of violence committed against her,<sup>xi</sup> and over 92% of homeless mothers have experienced severe physical and/or sexual abuse during their lifetime.<sup>xii</sup>
- The majority of survivors' unmet needs relate to housing. On a single day in 2022, 53% of survivors' unmet needs were for emergency shelter, transitional or other housing, or hotel or motel stays.<sup>xiii</sup> 84% of domestic violence survivors who reached out to the Domestic Violence Hotline in 2022 had unmet housing requests.<sup>xiv</sup>
- Victims of domestic violence lose about 8 million days of paid work per year because of the violence that they experienced.<sup>xv</sup> Over their lifetimes, victims of intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and stalking lost nearly 741 days of school and paid work, at a cost of \$110 billion.<sup>xvi</sup>
- Overall, 71% of restaurant workers have been harassed at least once during their time in the industry; food service and hospitality workers report the highest levels of sexual harassment in the workplace and often have the least amount of employment protections.<sup>xvii</sup>
- 81% of all women have experienced street harassment. Among all women, 49% have been sexually touched, 27% been followed, and 23% have survived sexual assault.<sup>xviii</sup>

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

- 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 intimate partner violence (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.<sup>xix</sup>

- American Indian / Alaska Native (AI/AN) women are the victims of rape or sexual assault at 1.5 times the rate of white, non-Hispanic women.<sup>xx</sup> In fact, more than 4 in 5 Native women (84.3%) have experienced violence in their lifetime.<sup>xxi</sup> This includes 56.1% who have experienced sexual violence,<sup>xxii</sup> nearly 1 in 3 (29.5%) who have experienced rape,<sup>xxiii</sup> 55.5% who have experienced physical violence by an intimate partner,<sup>xxiv</sup> 42.1% who have experienced stalking,<sup>xxv</sup> and 66.4% who have experienced psychological aggression by an intimate partner.<sup>xxvi</sup>
- Black women experience intimate partner violence (IPV) at a rate 19% higher than that of white women.<sup>xxvii</sup> 45% of Black women experience physical violence by an intimate partner during their lifetimes, compared with 37.3% of all women.<sup>xxviii</sup>
- Additionally, Black women are at an especially high risk of homicide by men compared with all women. In 2019, Black women were 2.3 times more likely than white women to be murdered by men: 91% of Black female victims were killed by men they knew, and 60% were killed by current or former intimate partners. In cases where the murder weapon was identified, 70% of Black female victims were shot and killed with guns.<sup>xxix</sup>
- Black women and girls also experience sexual violence at extremely high rates. One in four black girls will be sexually abused before the age of 18<sup>xxx</sup> and more than one in four Black women are survivors of rape.<sup>xxxi</sup> Additionally, 38% of Black women have experienced some form of sexual violence other than rape during their lifetime and 17% of Black women have experienced this violence at the hands of an intimate partner.<sup>xxxii</sup>
- Black survivors of domestic and sexual violence experience a heightened risk of criminalization. From the “War on Drugs” to the sexual abuse-to-prison pipeline, Black women and girls are more likely to have interactions with criminal justice systems as a result of their experiences of trauma.<sup>xxxiii</sup>
- Statistics indicate that 9-20% of Asian and Pacific Islander (A/PI) women report experiencing intimate physical and/or sexual violence during their lifetime, though specific A/PI communities have been found to be as high as 56%.<sup>xxxiv</sup> A/PI survivors are more likely than other survivors to experience abuse from multiple family members, including in-laws: 13% of A/PI survivors identified in-laws as the persons committing the abuse for which they sought help.<sup>xxxv</sup>
- Approximately 1 in 3 (34.4%) Hispanic/Latinx women have experienced physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime<sup>xxxvi</sup> and 1 in 12 Latinas (8.6%) have experienced this violence in the previous 12 months. Additionally, a national study found 63.1% of Latinx women who identified being victimized in their lifetime reported having experienced more than one victimization.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

*Newly-arrived immigrant survivors may face additional forms of abuse that women of color and Native women born in the United States may not, including:*

- threats of deportation despite immigration status
- possible language barriers
- lack of knowledge of the American legal system
- threats to report employment status if the survivor works “under the table”
- threats to deport her and keep the children
- withdrawal of petition to complete legalization status
- intimidation by destroying important documents such as an identification card or passport

In addition, there are some barriers that make reaching out for help and obtaining culturally and linguistically-appropriate support services more challenging for many communities of color. Equally as important to note, these barriers are also often seen as factors for resilience, including:

- cultural barriers/resiliencies
- economic barriers, threat of homelessness, job insecurity
- religious barriers/resiliencies
- fear of law enforcement and other systems, including child protective services

## **ADVOCACY RESPONSES THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

- Reauthorize the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) that includes robust investments in prevention initiatives while maintaining support for current programs.
- Maintain strong accountability and oversight of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA).
- Expand the list of perpetrators covered by orders of protection to close the loophole that currently permits abusive dating partners to access guns—and ensure that judicial and law enforcement officers issue and enforce firearm removal orders.
- Ensure that legislation and policies to prevent gender-based violence and support survivors are inclusive of all victims and survivors, particularly survivors of color, who are immigrants, or who are part of the LGBTQ+ community.
  - Ensure that survivors of violence have access to culturally and linguistically-appropriate services.
  - Decrease wait times for and increase the availability of U Visas, T Visas, and Battered Spouse or Child waivers for immigrant survivors,
- Expand the availability of services and support for survivors, including:
  - Increase federal funding for gender-based violence prevention and services, particularly emergency and transitional housing programs.

- Strengthen and pass legislation to address the impact of stress and trauma on children and young adults, especially at the intersection of domestic and sexual violence
- Pass safe leave legislation to allow survivors take paid 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.

As the largest network of domestic and sexual violence service providers in the United States, YWCA supports legislation and public policies that protect survivors, hold perpetrators accountable, and work to eradicate sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking, trafficking in women and girls, and dating violence.

Specifically, we support the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA), and other legislation that is inclusive of the needs of all victims of violence, particularly those who often experience higher risks of violence, such as Native women, immigrants, communities of color, and LGBTQ+ survivors.

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<sup>i</sup> Rachel E. Morgan and Jennifer L. Truman, “Criminal Victimization, 2019,” *Criminal Victimization, 2019* § (2020), <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/cv19.pdf>.

<sup>ii</sup> Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, “Criminal Victimization, 2015-2019,” § (2020). Quoted in “The Criminal Justice System: Statistics,” RAINN, 2020, <https://www.rainn.org/statistics/criminal-justice-system>.

<sup>iii</sup> Brian A. Reeves, “Police Response to Domestic Violence, 2006-2015,” *Police Response to Domestic Violence, 2006-2015* § (2017), <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/prdv0615.pdf>.

<sup>iv</sup> Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, “Criminal Victimization, 2015-2019.”

<sup>v</sup> “American Psychological Association,” *American Psychological Association*, August 2013, <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2013/08/sexual-teen.pdf>.

<sup>vi</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Preventing Intimate Partner Violence,” 2021, [https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/ipv/IPV-factsheet\\_2021.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/ipv/IPV-factsheet_2021.pdf).

<sup>vii</sup> Sorenson, Susan B., and Rebecca A. Schut. “Nonfatal Gun Use in Intimate Partner Violence: A Systematic Review of the Literature.” *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 19, no. 4 (2016): 431–42. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838016668589>.

<sup>viii</sup> Rep. *Guns and Violence Against Women*. Everytown Research and Policy, April 10, 2023. <https://everytownresearch.org/report/guns-and-violence-against-women-americas-uniquely-lethal-intimate-partner-violence-problem/>.

<sup>ix</sup> Rep. *Guns and Violence Against Women*. Everytown Research and Policy, April 10, 2023. <https://everytownresearch.org/report/guns-and-violence-against-women-americas-uniquely-lethal-intimate-partner-violence-problem/>.

<sup>x</sup> Spencer, Chelsea M., and Sandra M. Stith. “Risk Factors for Male Perpetration and Female Victimization of Intimate Partner Homicide: A Meta-Analysis.” *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 21, no. 3 (2018): 527–40. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838018781101>.

<sup>xi</sup> Jasinski, J. L., Wesely, J. K., Mustaine, E., & Wright, J. D. (2005, November). *The Experience of Violence in the Lives of Homeless Women: A Research Report*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice.

<sup>xii</sup> Ellen Bassuk, M.D. & Nat’l Ctr. on Fam. Homelessness. (October, 2005). *Written Submission to the U.N. Regional Consultation on Women and the Right to Adequate Housing in North America 2*.

<sup>xiii</sup> Rep. *17th Annual Domestic Violence Counts Report*. National Network to End Domestic Violence, 2023. <https://nnev.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/17th-Annual-Domestic-Violence-Counts-Report-Full-Report-March-2023.pdf>.

<sup>xiv</sup> “Emergency Housing for Domestic Violence Victims.” The Hotline, April 5, 2023. <https://www.thehotline.org/resources/emergency-housing-for-domestic-violence-victims/>.

<sup>xv</sup> U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2013, December 24). *Intimate Partner Violence: Consequences*.

<sup>xvi</sup> Cora Peterson et al., “Short-Term Lost Productivity per Victim: Intimate Partner Violence, Sexual Violence, or Stalking,” *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 55, no. 1 (July 2018): pp. 106-110, [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0749-3797\(18\)32034-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0749-3797(18)32034-8).

<sup>xvii</sup> Catherine MacKinnon and Louise F. Fitzgerald, “The Tipping Point: How the Subminimum Wage Keeps Incomes Low and Harassment High,” March 2021, [https://onefairwage.site/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/OFW\\_TheTippingPoint\\_3-1.pdf](https://onefairwage.site/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/OFW_TheTippingPoint_3-1.pdf).

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