



CSW 69 Beijing +30 Shadow Report

Violence Against Women

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The Beijing Platform for Action highlights violence against women as a significant barrier to achieving equality, development, and peace, infringing upon women's human rights and freedoms (para 112). Despite advancements in understanding the causes, consequences, and prevalence of such violence, it remains a pervasive issue across all societies, affecting women and girls regardless of income, class, or culture. The interplay between women's low social and economic status and violence is both a cause and a consequence, underscoring the need for comprehensive measures to combat this widespread abuse.

Grassroots advocacy and legislative changes can be very effective in reducing the rates of violence against women. In the United States, the **Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)**, first passed in 1994, has been a landmark legislative package designed to end violence against women, and it has been improved every time it has been reauthorized. This important law treats domestic violence as a serious crime instead of a private family issue. Several factors helped bring about VAWA including lawsuits against police for not enforcing domestic violence laws as well as research and statistics showing how widespread violence against women was.¹

VAWA provided funding to investigate and prosecute violent crimes against women, created the Office on Violence Against Women in the Department of Justice, and imposed stricter penalties for offenders. The act supported victim services like shelters, rape crisis centers, and legal aid.

VAWA Reauthorization Improvements

- 2000 Extended programs for elderly and disabled women, added protections for foreign nationals and battered immigrant women, provided funding to improve responses to sexual assault and domestic violence on college campuses, and enhanced federal penalties for domestic violence and stalking.
- 2005 Added protections for American Indian (AI) women victims of domestic violence and increased penalties for repeat stalking offenders.
- 2013 Granted AI tribes criminal jurisdiction over non-Indians who committed domestic violence and other crimes on tribal land.
- 2022 Added new programs to deal with untested sexual assault kit backlogs, and provisions to address cybercrime. Expanded special Tribal criminal jurisdiction (STCJ) to cover non-Native perpetrators of sexual assault, child abuse, stalking, sex trafficking, and assaults on Tribal law enforcement officers on Tribal lands.²

Despite increased enforcement and penalties from VAWA, violence against women is still widespread.

- The **National Crime Victimization Survey** reported 2.7 rapes or sexual assaults per 1,000 people aged 12 or older (734,630 incidents) and 4.8 domestic violence incidents per 1,000 people aged 12 or older (1,333,050 incidents). Among these, 3.1 incidents per 1,000 people (847,230 incidents) involved intimate partners. These numbers were higher than in 2016 and 2017.³

- The **National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey** (NISVS) reports that 47.3 % of women and 44.2 % of men have experienced rape or other sexual violence, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime.⁴ Women are disproportionately affected, making up 84% of spouse abuse victims and 86% of those abused by a boyfriend or girlfriend.⁵ Intimate partner abuse can also involve financial control, isolation, and psychological domination.
- **Sexual Violence:** Men are more often the perpetrators of sexual violence and harassment. While men also experience rape, women are the predominant victims of all sorts of sexual violence. According to the NISVS, 26.8% of women have faced completed or attempted rape in their lifetime, compared to 3.8% of men.
- **Murder:** On average, more than four women are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends in the United States each day. Of the 4,970 women murdered in 2021 in the US, 34% were killed by an intimate partner.⁶ The availability of guns contributes to the lethality of intimate partner violence. Every month in the US, an average of 70 women, more than 2 per day, are shot and killed by an intimate partner.⁷ These appalling statistics highlight the need for the US government to establish a femicide watch as called for by the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women.⁸ The watch should include individual data as modeled by Women Count USA.⁹
- **Cost:** It is estimated that domestic violence costs over \$8.3 billion per year, covering medical care, mental health services, and lost productivity.¹⁰ These statistics highlight the critical need for ongoing efforts to address and prevent violence against women.

How can we stop violence against women in the U.S.? Government leaders can take the following actions:

1. Mandate age-appropriate education on gender-based violence at all grade levels.
2. Pass and enforce “red flag” laws when intimate partner violence is reported.
3. Fully fund women’s shelters and crisis hot-lines for women facing violence.
4. Provide funding for affordable housing for women fleeing violence, especially those with children.
5. Appoint a working group to establish a femicide watch nationally and in each state, disaggregating data by age and ethnicity of victims, sex of perpetrators, and relationship of perpetrator to victims.
6. Provide training to judicial and law enforcement personnel on dynamics of intimate partner violence, including technology-facilitated violence.
7. Provide funding for full implementation of the *US National Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*.¹¹

¹ Rosie Hidalgo September 2023. *Violence Against Women Act: Milestones Achieved and the Road Ahead*. Office on Violence Against Women.

² Rosie Hidalgo 2023.

³ Rachel E. Morgan and Barbara A. Oudekerk September 2019. *Criminal Victimization, 2018*. Bureau of Justice Statistics.

⁴ Ruth W. Leemis et al. 2022. *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2016/2017 Report on Intimate Partner Violence*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

⁵ Matthew R. Durose et al. 2005. *Family Violence Statistics*. Bureau of Justice Statistics.

⁶ Erica L. Smith December 2022. *Female Murder Victims and Victim-Offender Relationship, 2021*. Bureau of Justice Statistics.

⁷ Everytown for Gun Safety June 2024. *Guns and Violence Against Women*.

⁸ Julia Canney August 2021. *Establishing a National Femicide Watch in the United States*.

⁹ See the Women Count USA website (<https://womenscountusa.org/home>) for detailed lists of women murdered each day.

¹⁰ Center for Domestic Peace. *Economic Impact of Domestic Violence*.

¹¹ White House Gender Policy Council 2023. *US National Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*.