

## Issue Brief: Women and Violence

### **Key Words**

Domestic violence, Women, Violence Against Women Act, immigrant

### **Description**

This issue brief focuses on domestic violence cases and women. It looks at the specific women groups that are most effected by domestic violence and some reasoning behind why these groups suffer from higher rates of domestic violence.

### **Key Points**

- Women are significantly affected by domestic violence.
- Women who live in unsafe neighborhoods or areas of economic distress are more likely to end up in a relationship of domestic violence.
- Immigrant women find themselves in cases of domestic violence due to language barriers or to keep citizenship.
- The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) creates law reforms to help improve responses from the state and local government towards victims of domestic violence.

The United Nations clearly defines violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life”. When looking at a case of physical abuse or rape, it is commonly assumed that the victim is most likely a woman. What is not so easily thought of is the affects of violence on women in relation to race, ethnicity, and social class. Yes, women are more affected by violence when the categories are between men and women. But, minority women and women of lower social class have a significantly higher rate of reported violence cases.

Domestic violence is between partners who are intimate, and in 2001 out of 691,710 nonfatal violent situations about 85 percent were women. In the United States, 22% of women reported physical assault from an intimate partner. It appears that African-American and Native- American women and men have the highest reported rates of domestic violence, and Asian/Pacific Islander women and men have the lowest rates of domestic violence. When looking at the Hispanic population there is a 23.4 percent rate of Hispanic women who have been victims of domestic violence. There is a 29% rate of African American women who were victims of domestic violence. The reasoning behind African-Americans having a higher percentage of cases with domestic violence is due to the fact that the African-American population lives in neighborhoods that are not as safe and struggle with a not so good economic situation. The National Institute of Justice says that Whites and African-Americans that have economic situations that are similar are equal when it comes to reports on cases of domestic violence.

Another interesting group of women who find themselves victims of domestic violence are immigrants. Women often stay with their abusive partners to get citizenship. Due to language barriers immigrant women are less likely to report domestic violence cases. Especially in a city like New York, 36% of the population are born in foreign countries so various communities are not English speaking. There is a legislation that has

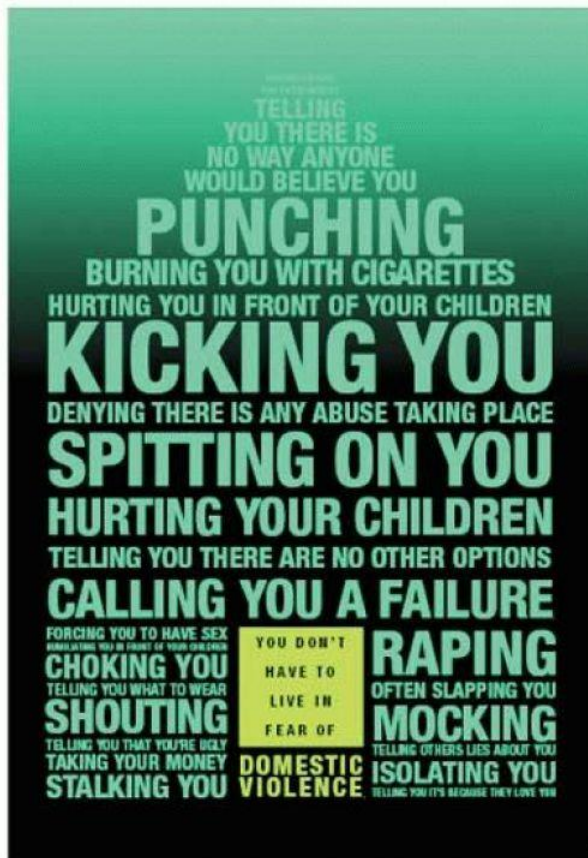
been out there for several years yet has not gotten as much attention as it should. The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) wants to put an effect on domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking in the United States for victims who have kept quiet about violence sought against them. This act was passed in 1994, and reauthorized in 2000, 2005, and again this year, 2013. This act has helped women realize that acts of domestic violence are intolerable. Several VAWA programs have created law reforms to help improve responses from the state and local government towards victims of domestic violence. This act also focuses on helping immigrant and Native-American communities who are much less informed on American policies. VAWA helps support rape crisis centers and community organizations that are geared towards domestic violence victims. By 2005 Congress added provisions to VAWA to protect the immigrant victims of domestic violence by creating services that were culturally and linguistically accessible to immigrants. Now in 2013, VAWA wants to target all victims of domestic violence, dating violence/stalking, and sexual assault. These victims include immigrants, LGBT victims, college students, public housing residents, and Native women. Funding also increased for VAWA's programs and protections that no longer limit how effective they will be in keeping victims safe. One major provision added in VAWA 2013 was for college campuses to have a recording process for dating violence, and schools would need to educate their students on their rights and the resources that are available to them in case they find themselves in a situation.

What is important to acknowledge about women and violence is that it is unfortunately something that happens to women of all ages, races and sexual orientation. On a national level, one in four women will suffer domestic violence in their life. One third of women who ended up at a hospital for injuries was due to violence happening with an intimate partner. The effect domestic violence has in the long-term is one that deals with emotional and psychological damage. The VAWA act should be advertised more so that women know to report issues of domestic violence. Hopefully, if this act continues being reauthorized in the years to come more efforts can be made to insure that the number of domestic violence cases goes down.

Some campaign efforts for VAWA:



<http://ofwempowerment.files.wordpress.com/2009/12/violence-against-women.jpg>



<http://mistyhorizon2003.hubpages.com/hub/A-Definition-of-Domestic-Abuse-Are-you-a-Victim>



**DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT**

202 East Superior Street  
 Duluth, Minnesota 55802  
 218-722-2781  
[www.duluth-model.org](http://www.duluth-model.org)

Domestic Violence Wheel

Sources:

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**Relevant Websites**

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- 2) <http://www.domesticviolence.org/violence-wheel/>
- 3) <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/domestic-violence/WO00044>