



World Court of Women Women & Violence Fact Sheet

Direct violence against women

There are several types of direct violence against women in the United States. Some violence against women is perpetrated by strangers, but most of the time the attacker is someone close to them. The most common forms of direct violence suffered by women are domestic violence, dating violence, human trafficking, emotional or psychological abuse, rape, sexual assault and abuse, and stalking.

- **Domestic Violence** is defined by the US Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women as “a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner.” Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological.
Women are more likely than men to experience intimate partner violence.
 - 85% of domestic violence victims are women.
 - 30% of female homicide victims reported to police are killed by their partners.
 - 1 in every 4 women will experience domestic violence in their lifetime.
- **Dating Violence** is similar to domestic violence. It occurs when a person intentionally hurts, humiliates, threatens or intimidates someone they are dating. Dating violence happens to people of all races, cultures, incomes, and education levels. It can happen on a first date, or when couples are deeply in love. It can happen at any age, and in heterosexual or same-sex relationships.
- **Human Trafficking** is a crime against humanity. “It involves an act of recruiting, transporting, transferring, harboring or receiving a person through a use of force, coercion or other means, for the purpose of exploiting them.”
- **Emotional or Psychological Abuse** is not direct physical violence but can lead to physical conditions and disease caused by distress, and is extremely psychologically damaging for its victims. It is defined as any behavior that is designed to control and subjugate another human being through the use of fear, humiliation, and verbal or physical assaults. It can include anything from verbal abuse and constant criticism to more subtle tactics, such as intimidation, manipulation, and refusal to ever be pleased.
- **Rape and Sexual Abuse.** The US Department of Justice defines rape as “penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim.”
 - There are other forms of sexual abuse that don’t include penetration but are very damaging physically and psychologically. It can “include derogatory name calling, refusal to use contraception, deliberately causing unwanted physical pain during sex, deliberately passing on sexual diseases or infections and using objects, toys, or other items without consent and to cause pain or humiliation.”
 - Women over the age of twelve are 10 times more likely to be victims of rape or attempted rape than men who are twelve years of age or older.
- **Stalking:** “Stalking is a pattern of repeated and unwanted attention, harassment, contact, or any other course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear.” There are many forms of stalking but all result in fear and intimidation of the victim. Examples of stalking are, repeated unwanted communications by phone, mail or email, following

the victim around, contacting victim's friends, family, work or neighbors, etc.

- Women were at greater risk than men for stalking victimization (41% for women vs 37% for men); however, women and men were equally likely to experience harassment.
- Nearly 3 in 4 stalking victims knew their offender in some capacity.

Structural Violence Against Women

This type of violence is defined as the “avoidable impairment of fundamental human needs or, to put it in more general terms, the impairment of human life, which lowers the actual degree to which someone is able to meet their needs below that which would otherwise be possible.” Unlike direct violence where there is a clear perpetrator, in the case of structural violence there is no individual person that directly harms women, but rather the structure of gender inequality that perpetuates constraints in agency and unequal opportunities for them. Here are some facts that show how structural violence affects women in the US:

- Women living in households with lower incomes experienced the most intimate partner violence
- In the US, female-headed families are more likely to be poor.
- The poverty rate in the United States is far higher than in many other developed nations.
- In the US, women are poorer than men throughout all ethnicities and races, and through all ages except childhood.
- The poverty gap between men and women is wider in the US than anywhere else in the Western World. “For example, in 2003, the top 1% received more money than the bottom 40% with the gap widest in 70 years.”
- Women are paid less than men, even when they have the same qualifications and work the same hours.
- Women spend more time providing unpaid care for children, the elderly, sick and disabled people than men.
- Women are more likely to bear the costs of raising children.
- The US ranks 20th in life expectancy for women down from 1st in 1945 and 13th in 1960.
- The average prison sentence of men who kill their women partners is 2 to 6 years. Women who kill their partners are on average sentenced to 15 years.