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Domestic Violence: Data, Programs and Funding

Alice Butler
Technical Information Specialist
Education and Public Welfare Division

Summary

Domestic violence generally refers to overt physical abuse, sexual violence, or psychological violence between spouses, ex-spouses, boyfriends, girlfriends, and former boyfriends and girlfriends. Estimates of the level of domestic violence nationwide vary depending on how the term is defined, with most researchers agreeing that the majority of domestic violence victims are women.

The federal government administers two Acts to address domestic violence: the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act, and the Violence Against Women Act. A third federal program, the Victims of Crime Act, also includes services for victims of domestic violence. This report presents statistics on domestic violence, and discusses federal programs to deal with the problem.¹

Introduction

Domestic violence generally refers to violence between intimates who may be dating, married or separated. Organizations or coalitions of organizations devoted to fighting domestic violence exist in every state, and they have lobbied for increased funding and research on the issue. Groups such as the American Medical Association have stated that injuries caused by domestic violence constitute a major health problem for women today. After 5 years of legislative deliberations, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), which authorizes numerous programs aimed at domestic violence and sexual assault, was passed by Congress and signed into law in late 1994.

Statistics on Domestic Violence

No one organization collects national data on reported incidents of domestic violence. Although it is believed that this crime is severely underreported, estimates of the extent of

¹ This report originally appeared as CRS Report 95-865, *Domestic Violence: Data, Federal Programs, and Selected Issues*, by Dale Robinson.



the problem are based on only a handful of studies. A lack of consensus on definitions of the problem and methods for collecting data are viewed as a major problem in assessing and addressing domestic violence. The most consistent sources of data in this area are the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) conducted by the Department of Justice (DOJ), and the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Uniform Crime Reports (UCR). The NCVS obtains information about crimes, including incidents not reported to the police, from a continuous, nationally representative sample of households in the U.S. annually. The FBI's UCR program compiles data on crimes brought to the attention of law enforcement agencies nationwide. Together, these data shed light on different aspects of female victimization.

The Violence Against Women Act mandated a study of domestic and sexual violence data collection, which was published in July 1996.² The report examines how states and the federal government collect data on the incidence of sexual and domestic violence. It identifies ways in which states could centralize data collection and explores problems researchers encounter in recording criminal complaints of domestic violence. The most significant finding was that the federal government and a majority of states currently are collecting some statistics annually on these crimes: 35 states collect data on domestic violence, 30 gather statistics on sexual violence.

Victimizations by Intimates. The latest data on domestic violence were published by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) in March 1998.³ The report, "Violence by Intimates," presents an analysis of compiled statistical data on trends in violence against intimates, based on new and previously reported data during the period 1976-1996. Based on information gathered from a number of BJS and DOJ statistical programs, including the NCVS, the FBI's UCR program, a hospital emergency department study, and BJS surveys of jail and prison inmates, the report reveals that intimates committed fewer murders in 1996 than in any other year since 1976. In 1996, just over 1,800 murders were attributable to intimates; down 36% from nearly 3,000 in 1976. The report also shows that in 1996, three in every four victims of intimate murder were female. The percentage of female murder victims killed by intimates has remained at about 30% since 1976. The most recent declines in intimate murder have been mirrored by declines since 1993 in nonfatal intimate violence. During 1996 there were an estimated 840,000 female victims of violent crimes (rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault victimizations) inflicted by an intimate, compared with 1.1 million in 1993. By contrast, intimate violence against males, about 150,000 in 1996, showed no significant fluctuations from 1992-96.

The report also includes information on characteristics of women who were victims of intimate violence in 1992 through 1996.⁴

² U.S. Dept. Of Justice. Office of Justice Programs. National Institute of Justice. Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Domestic and Sexual Violence Data Collection: A Report to Congress Under the Violence Against Women Act*, July 1996.

³ U.S. Dept. Of Justice. Office of Justice Programs. Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Violence by Intimates: Analysis of Data on Crimes by Current or Former Spouses, Boyfriends, and Girlfriends*, March, 1998.

⁴ U.S. Dept. Of Justice. Office of Justice Programs. Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Violence Against Women: Estimates from the Redesigned Survey*, August 1995.

- *Age:* Women age 16-24 had the highest rates of victimization by intimates.
- *Education:* Women with a college degree had the lowest rates of violence attributable to intimates.
- *Income:* Women with household incomes under \$10,000 had the highest rates of victimization by intimates.
- *Marital Status:* Divorced or separated women had higher rates of violence by intimates than never married women or married women.
- *Location:* Women living in urban areas experience higher rates of intimate violence than suburban and rural women.

In November 1998, the National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released its findings of a national telephone survey on violence against women.⁵ A key purpose of the study was to provide a better understanding of the lifetime rate, nature and consequences of violence against women and men. The study surveyed an equal number of men and women, 8,000 each, and provides comparable data on women's and men's experiences about violent victimization. The results of the National Violence Against Women (NVAW) survey are consistent with other survey findings in that more women are at greater risk of intimate violence than men and the consequences of that violence are more severe for women. Of the women who reported being raped or physically assaulted since age 18, 76% were assaulted by a current or former husband, a cohabiting partner, or date. In contrast, just 18% of the men reporting rape or physical assault in adulthood were assaulted by an intimate partner. Twenty-five percent of women surveyed and 8% of men reported that they had been raped or physically assaulted by a current or former spouse, cohabiting partner or date in their lifetime.

Reporting Incidents of and Police Responses to Domestic Violence. Reporting of violence by intimates has increased over time, due in part to increased public awareness of the issue. By 1992, the NCVS found that police reports filed by females who had been victimized by nonstrangers, had increased to equal the number reported by females victimized by strangers. It should be noted, however, that according to the NCVS, victims of all types of violence report only about half of their victimizations to the police. The March 1998 report points out that Black women are more likely than women of other races to report such victimizations to the police. Most female victims of intimate violence who failed to report the incidents claimed to view them as private or personal matters. Almost six times as many women victimized by intimates (18%) as those victimized by strangers (3%) admitted failure to report their violent victimizations to police because they feared reprisal from the offender, or they felt the police would not be able to do anything about the incident.

According to a 1990 Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics Survey, 93% of large local police agencies and 77% of sheriff's departments have written

⁵ U.S. Dept. Of Justice. Office of Justice Programs. National Institute of Justice. *Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey*, November 1998.

policies concerning domestic disturbances. Also, 45% of large local police departments and 40% of sheriff's departments had special units to deal with domestic violence.⁶ As of 1992, 14 States and the District of Columbia had mandatory arrest policies in connection with these crimes.⁷

Federal Programs

The federal government administers two Acts specifically to address domestic violence issues. The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act is generally intended to address related social service issues, including the provision of shelters for victims and their dependents. The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) generally focuses on the judicial side of sexual assault and domestic violence, which includes the imposition of increased federal penalties for such offenses. However, VAWA also amended and expanded service programs under the Family Violence Act. VAWA also contains provisions designed to address the problem of child abuse and to stop sex offenders before they strike. Those grant programs are not discussed in this paper. A third Federal program, the Victims of Crime Act, also funds services for victims of domestic violence. Table 2 lists current federal programs regarding domestic violence.

Family Violence Act. The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act, enacted in 1984, authorizes grant programs aimed at assisting states in increasing public awareness about and preventing family violence. Eighty percent of the funds appropriated for the Act must be reserved for the State grant program; at least 10% must be used for Indian programs; and 5% for information and technical resource centers. Of the amount reserved for the state grant program, not less than 70% must be reserved for shelters, and at least 25% must be used for related assistance to victims and their dependents. Programs under the Act are administered by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

The President's FY1999 budget request included no separate funding for the Family Violence Act. Instead, \$88.8 million was requested for the battered women's shelter program under VAWA, which includes services for family violence programs. Final FY1999 appropriations legislation for HHS (P.L. 105-277) provides the full amount as requested by the Administration.

Violence Against Women Act. Enacted as part of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (P.L. 104-322, Title IV), VAWA combines tough law

TABLE 1.
Family Violence Act Funding
(\$ in millions)

FY	Approp.
1985	\$6.0
1986	8.4
1987	8.5
1988	8.1
1989	8.2
1990	8.3
1991	10.7
1992	20.0
1993	24.8
1994	27.7
1995	32.6
1996	32.6
1997	62.0
1998	10.0
1999	0

⁶ Bureau of Justice Statistics. *Sheriffs' Departments 1990 Bulletin*. NCJ-133283, February 1992; and Bureau of Justice Statistics. *State and Local Police Departments 1990*. NCJ-133284, February 1992.

⁷ Hart, Barbara. State Codes on Domestic Violence. National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. *Juvenile and Family Court Journal*, v. 43, no. 4, 1992

enforcement strategies with important safeguards for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. In an effort to curb domestic violence and to provide protection for women and their families, VAWA amended the Family Violence Act by creating several new grant programs and increasing the authorization level for the main State grant program. Most VAWA programs are administered by the Department of Justice; others are administered by HHS. Both VAWA and the Family Violence Act are authorized through FY2000.

Of VAWA programs funded in FY1998, the largest is a grant program to improve law enforcement and prosecution of domestic violence — the STOP Violence Against Women Formula Grants or STOP grants — which received \$172 million. Administered by the Office of Violence Against Women in the Department of Justice, STOP grants require a state to allocate 25% of the STOP funds it receives to law enforcement, 25% to prosecution, and 25% to nonprofit victim services. The remaining 25% may be allocated at the state's discretion, within the parameters of the Act. To receive a STOP grant, states must certify that all out-of-pocket expenses for forensic medical examinations for victims of sexual assault will be paid by the state or other unit of government. They must also certify that victims of sexual assault will bear no costs associated with the filing of criminal charges or issuing or serving a warrant protection order, or witness subpoena in connection with the prosecution of felony or misdemeanor domestic violence offenses.

The Violence Against Women Act requires that 4% of amounts appropriated for the STOP grants be allocated to Indian tribes through a discretionary grants program. For FY1998, \$6.4 million was available to tribes under the STOP Violence Against Indian Women discretionary grants program. Grant criteria under this program are generally the same as the VAWA program described in the previous paragraph.

Victims of Crime Act. The Victims of Crime Act of 1984 (VOCA, P.L.98-473) established a crime victims' fund containing money collected from persons convicted of certain federal offenses. The three largest programs supported by the fund are: 1) State victim compensation programs; 2) State victim assistance programs; and 3) State grants authorized under the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, for programs relating to the investigation and prosecution of child abuse cases. The Victims of Crime Act also authorizes training and technical assistance grants and funds for services to victims of federal crimes.

Under the *victim compensation program*, domestic violence is one of the crimes for which the states must offer compensation to maintain eligibility for VOCA. Compensation can take the form of relocation costs for domestic violence victims, and mental health counseling, among other services. The crime *victims assistance program* funds such services as crisis intervention for victims of sexual assault, spouse abuse or child abuse, including: temporary shelter and other emergency services; support services including follow-up counseling; court related services including transportation and child care; and payments for forensic medical exams.

Monies deposited in the crime victims fund are forward funded, with deposits for a fiscal year spent in the following fiscal year. For FY1998, \$324.5 million was deposited in the crime victims' fund. Of that amount, \$66.7 million was used for the victim compensation program, and \$238.1 million was used for the victim assistance program. From FY1986 through FY1998, States have received \$706 million in VOCA compensation grants, and \$1.4 billion in VOCA assistance grants. States must allocate at

least 10% of funds received under the victim assistance program to each of the priority areas, including victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, child abuse and previously underserved victims of violent crime. For FY1997, nearly \$400 million was awarded under the VOCA assistance program.

Table 2. Federal Funding for Selected Violence Against Women Programs
(\$ in millions)

Program	Admin. agency	FY1997 funding	FY1998 funding	FY1999 funding
Family Violence Act	HHS-ACF	\$62.6	\$10.0	0
Violence Against Women Act				
National domestic violence hotline ^a	HHS-ACF	1.20	1.20	1.20
Grants for battered women shelters ^a	HHS-ACF	10.80	76.8	88.8
Grants to reduce abuse of homeless youth	HHS-ACF	8.0	15.0	15.0
National number and cost of injuries study	HHS-CDC	0	0	0
Rape prevention and education grants	HHS-CDC	35.0	45.0	45.0
Community programs on domestic violence ^a	HHS-CDC	6.0	6.0	6.0
Youth education and domestic violence ^a	HHS-ACF	0	0	0
<i>Subtotal: Dept. of Health & Human Services</i>		<i>61.0</i>	<i>144.0</i>	<i>156.0</i>
Formula law enforcement and prosecution grants (STOP)	DOJ-OJP	145.0	172.0	206.75
Grants to encourage arrest policies	DOJ-OJP	33.0	59.0	34.0
Rural domestic violence	DOJ-OJP	8.0	25.0	25.0
Stalker and domestic violence reduction grants	DOJ-OJP	1.75	2.75	0
Training programs	DOJ-OJP	1.0	2.0	5.0
State databases studies	DOJ-OJP	0	0	0
National study re campus sexual assault	DOJ-OJP	.2	0	0
Federal victim counselors	USA	1.0	.853	0
<i>Subtotal: Department of Justice</i>		<i>189.95</i>	<i>261.6</i>	<i>270.75</i>
Victims of Crime Act	DOJ-OJP	b	b	b
Total		250.95	405.6	426.75

^a The Family Violence Act was amended by VAWA to create these programs.

^b Funding for this Act comes from monies deposited in the Crime Victims Fund. Funds are not appropriated by Congress or requested by the Administration. See text of this report for latest amounts collected in the Fund.

Abbreviations to Table 2.

ACF Administration for Children and Families
 DOJ Department of Justice
 HHS Department of Health and Human Services
 OJP Office of Justice Programs
 CDC Centers for Disease Control
 USA United States Attorneys