

# CRS Report for Congress

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## Domestic Violence: Data, Programs and Funding<sup>1</sup>

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### Summary

Domestic violence generally refers to overt physical abuse, sexual violence, or psychological violence between spouses, ex-spouses, boyfriends or 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.

### 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, which authorizes numerous programs aimed at domestic violence and sexual assault, was passed by Congress and signed into law in late 1994. Additionally, domestic violence cases have received increased media attention, particularly in light of the recent O.J. Simpson trials, in which domestic violence played a key role.

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



## 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 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, 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.<sup>2</sup> 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 in December 1996.<sup>3</sup> Using data from the redesigned NCVS and the FBI, the report summarizes data from 1992-94 on both fatal and nonfatal violence between intimates, showing that in 1992-93, women were more likely to be victims of nonfatal violence by someone they knew (78%) than by a stranger (23%). The report also reveals that in 1992 through 1993, women suffered seven times as many incidents of nonfatal violence by an intimate as did males; in 1992 through 1994, the number of all violent incidents involving a female averaged 4.6 million a year; the number of violent victimizations committed by an intimate was slightly more than 1 million a year, as compared to about 143,000 incidents that men experienced.

The redesigned NCVS study included information on characteristics of women who were victims of intimate violence in 1992 through 1993.<sup>4</sup>

- **Age:** Women age 19-29 had the highest rates of victimization by intimates.

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<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Dept. Of Justice. Office of Justice Programs. Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Female Victims of Violent Crime*, December 1996.

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

- *Education:* Women with a college degree had the lowest rates of violence attributable to intimates.
- *Income:* Women with family 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 central cities, suburban areas, and rural locations had similar rates of violence committed by intimates.

A 1993 national survey conducted by The Commonwealth Fund, addresses the extent of violence in women's lives and its adverse impact on health.<sup>5</sup> More than eight percent (8.4%) of the women surveyed who were living with a man reported physical abuse by their domestic partner; 3.2% reported being severely abused (such as kicked, punched, beaten up, hit with an object, or threatened with or hurt by a weapon).

**Murders by Intimates.** In 1995, females represented 23% of all known homicide victims in the United States.<sup>6</sup> For those cases in which the victim-offender relationship is known, husbands or boyfriends killed 26% of all female murder victims, whereas 3% of male murder victims were killed by their wives or girlfriends. During 1995, 1,214 women were killed by intimates, compared to 458 men that were killed by an intimate.<sup>7</sup>

**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. Most female victims of intimate violence who failed to report the incidents claimed to view them as private or personal matters. Almost 6 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.

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 policies concerning domestic disturbances. Also, 45% of large local police departments

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<sup>5</sup> *The Health of American Women* is a random representative household survey of more than 2,500 women and 1,000 men which was conducted for The Commonwealth Fund by Louis Harris and Associates in February and March of 1993. The survey, which questioned women and men about their health and health care, included questions on crime, domestic violence, and the experience of being abused as children.

<sup>6</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation. *Crime in the U.S., 1995*. Washington, U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1996. p. 16.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

and 40% of sheriff's departments had special units to deal with domestic violence.<sup>8</sup> As of 1992, 14 States and the District of Columbia had mandatory arrest policies in connection with these crimes.<sup>9</sup>

## 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).

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

<u>FY</u>	<u>Approp.</u>
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

The President's FY1998 budget request included no separate funding for the Family Violence Act. Instead, \$70 million was requested for the battered women's shelter program under VAWA, which includes services for family violence programs. Final FY1998 appropriations legislation for HHS (P.L. 105-78) includes \$10 million for the Family Violence Act and \$76.8 million for battered women shelters.

**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 enforcement strategies with important safeguards for victims of domestic violence and

<sup>8</sup> 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.

<sup>9</sup> 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

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 FY1997, 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 \$145 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 FY1997, \$5.8 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 FY1996, \$528.9 million was deposited in the crime victims' fund. Of that amount, \$74.2 million was used for the victim compensation program, and \$397.6 million was used for the victim assistance program. From FY1986 through FY1997, States have received \$637 million in VOCA compensation grants, and \$685 million 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. In FY1995, 33.3% of the VOCA assistance awards were used for victims of domestic violence. For FY1996, \$130.4 million was awarded under the VOCA assistance program, with 28% of that amount used for domestic violence. In FY1997, States received nearly \$400 million in VOCA assistance funds -- the highest award to States in the history of the program.

**TABLE 2. Federal Funding for Selected Family Violence Programs**  
(\$ in millions)

Act	Admin. agency	FY1996 funding	FY1997 funding	FY1998 funding
Family Violence Act	HHS-ACF	\$32.6	\$62.6	\$10.0
<i>Violence Against Women Act-Total</i>		<i>220.7</i>	<i>251.0</i>	<i>405.6</i>
national domestic violence hotline <sup>a</sup>	HHS-ACF	.4	1.20	1.20
grants for battered women shelters <sup>a</sup>	HHS-ACF	15.0	10.80	76.8
grants to reduce abuse of homeless youth	HHS-ACF	5.56	8.0	15.0
national number and cost of injuries study	HHS-CDC	.1	0	0
rape prevention and education grants	HHS-CDC	28.54	35.0	45.0
community programs on domestic violence <sup>a</sup>	HHS-CDC	3.0	6.0	6.0
formula law enforcement and prosecution grants (STOP)	DOJ-OJP	130.0	145.0	172.0
grants to encourage arrest policies	DOJ-OJP	28.0	33.0	59.0
rural domestic violence	DOJ-OJP	7.0	8.0	25.0
youth education and domestic violence <sup>a</sup>	DOJ-ACF	.4	0	0
stalker and domestic violence reduction grants	DOJ-OJP	1.5	1.75	2.75
training programs	DOJ-OJP	1.0	1.0	2.0
State databases studies	DOJ-OJP	.2	0	0
national study re campus sexual assault	DOJ-OJP	0	.2	0
Federal victim counselors	USA	0	1.0	.853
<i>Victims of Crime Act</i>	DOJ-OJP	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>

<sup>a</sup>The Family Violence Act was amended by VAWA to create these programs.

<sup>b</sup>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