



## **Women in America: Crime and Violence**

*Women in America* provides a statistical portrait showing how women's lives are changing in five critical areas: people, families and income, education, employment, health, and crime and violence. By bringing together data from across the Federal government, the report is one of the most comprehensive sources for information on women's lives today and greatly enhances our understanding both of how far American women have come and of the areas where there is still work to be done.

Women's lives have changed substantially in recent decades. As the report indicates in regards to crime and violence:

- Women are less likely than men to be victims of crime. As overall crime rates have fallen in the United States, the likelihood of victimization has declined.
- The probability of being a victim of a violent crime (assault, robbery, or homicide) has declined among both men and women in the last two decades.
- Attacks on women by their intimate partners have fallen since the passage of the Violence Against Women Act in 1994, although women are still much more likely to be victimized and injured by this type of violence than are men.
- Females made up 70% of victims killed by an intimate partner in 2007, a proportion that has changed very little since 1993. Intimate partners were responsible for 3% of all violence against males and 23% of all violence against females in 2008.
- Although rape is considered to be underreported, reported rape rates have declined over time.
- The majority of rapes were committed by someone known to the victim, primarily an acquaintance.
- Women are at far greater risk than men for stalking victimization.

- Women are more likely to commit crimes now than in the past, although women who commit crimes are more likely to be arrested for nonviolent property crimes compared to male criminals whose crimes are more likely to involve violence.
- During the past two decades, imprisonment rates have risen for both men and women, although the share of women in prison is still much lower. Like their male counterparts, black and Hispanic women are much more likely to experience imprisonment than white women. Many imprisoned women have minor children.

The additional data referenced in the online compendium of Federal government data relating to women, accessible at <http://wh.gov/data-on-women>, further indicates:<sup>1</sup>

- Younger women have higher victimization rates of intimate partner violence and sexual assault than older women.
- Male rape victims are disproportionately under the age of 12, while the majority of female rape victims are under 24.
- Female homicide victims are more likely to be killed by an intimate partner (spouse, ex-spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend) than male homicide victims.

### **Preventing Violence Against Women and Children**

The Violence Against Women Act, originally authored by Vice President Biden, plays a key role in helping communities and law enforcement combat domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. At home and abroad, we are working to promote policies that seek to eradicate violence against women. That dedication starts with the first ever White House adviser on Violence Against Women to ensure a federal government-wide focus and coordination on this important issue affecting families across the country.

With the Recovery Act, we put \$225 million to work to address violence against women in communities across the country, creating 5,000 jobs in the process. The Recovery Act has also

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to the *National Crime Victimization Survey*, another government source of data will soon be available. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, in collaboration with the National Institutes of Justice and the Department of Defense, has developed the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Surveillance System (NISVSS). NISVSS collects ongoing population-based surveillance data, generating accurate and reliable incidence and prevalence estimates for domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking victimization. The first data from NISVSS will be released this fall and provide new information on how many women ever been victims and how many were victims in the last year. NISVSS will be the first national report on lifetime prevalence of all types of abuse since the *National Violence Against Women Survey* conducted in 1998.

put thousands more police officers on the street, funded mentoring programs for at-risk youth in hundreds of communities and bolstered law enforcement efforts in cases of Internet Crimes Against Children and child exploitation.

Domestic violence and sexual assault are not just criminal justice issues – the scope and far-reaching effects of violence require a coordinated response across the Federal government. In 2010, the Obama Administration announced unprecedented cooperation across the entire government to protect victims of domestic and sexual violence and enable survivors to break the cycle of abuse:

- The President called on every agency in the Federal government to be part of the solution to ending violence against women.
- Lynn Rosenthal, White House Advisor on Violence Against Women, conducted listening sessions with survivors, experts, advocates, and young people across the country.
- The White House provided much-needed leadership and coordination, convening over 20 Federal agencies to strengthen collaboration.
- Reducing domestic and sexual violence was incorporated into other Administration priorities, such as the White House Fatherhood Initiative, The White House Council on Women and Girls, the Department of Housing and Urban Development's efforts to fight homelessness, and the Department of Justice's recent effort to better combat the disproportionate violence in tribal communities.
- The President signed the Tribal Law and Order Act on July 29<sup>th</sup>, providing new tools and resources to Indian Country to respond to the high rates of violence committed against Native women.

In October, the President and the Vice President announced a broad, comprehensive response to reducing violence against women. These concrete actions include steps to:

- Protect Children and Break the Cycle of Violence
  - Without intervention, children who witness violence are at greater risk for developing behavioral problems, psychiatric disorders, school failure, and violence against others.
  - Through the Affordable Care Act's Pregnancy Assistance Program and Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program, States are reaching out to women experiencing violence during pregnancy and vulnerable families after the birth of a child, linking them with resources. The Head Start program is connecting with parents of young children to intervene early and reduce rates of domestic violence and child abuse.
- Improve Legal Protections for Victims of Domestic Violence
  - Studies show that access to legal counsel has reduced domestic violence by as much as 21%, and that properly enforced protection orders are effective in reducing violence against many victims.
  - The Access to Justice for Domestic Violence Victims pilot project helps victims access legal services while *Civil Protection Orders: A Guide for Improving Practice* provides new tools for communities to enforce protection orders.
- Increase Sexual Assault Arrests and Successful Prosecutions

- One in six women and one in thirty-three men will be sexually assaulted in their lifetimes, but fewer than 1 in 6 rapes are reported to the police.
- The Department of Justice launched a national campaign to reduce sexual violence in the United States and a new effort to end the rape kit backlog.
- Help Victims Regain Housing and Financial Independence
  - When victims improve their economic stability, they increase their likelihood of living independently from their abusers.
  - The Department of Housing and Urban Development released new rules that provide guidance to housing authorities and landlords to evict perpetrators of abuse, keep their properties safe, and make sure victims do not lose their housing due to crimes committed against them.
  - The Department of the Treasury, the FDIC, and the Department of Health and Human Services are helping victims build credit, access safe financial products, save for the future, take advantage of the Earned Income Tax Credit, and use tools like the Money Smart curriculum and [www.mymoney.gov](http://www.mymoney.gov) to improve financial literacy.

On December 20<sup>th</sup>, the President signed the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, which included reauthorization of the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA):

- FVPSA funds nearly 1,700 shelters and service programs for victims of domestic violence and their children. It also supports the National Domestic Violence Hotline, whose staff and volunteers answer more than 23,000 calls for help each month and link victims with the resources they need to rebuild their lives.
- The reauthorization ensures these life-saving services will continue, and strengthens resources for children, provides options for victims from underserved communities, and expands programming to include the latest evidence-based solutions.

This administration will continue to promote policies to prevent violence against women and children.