

50 Facts About Domestic Violence

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The Blog

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Sunday was the [International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women](#) and the launch of this year's [16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence](#). In the time it takes me to write this paragraph, 26 people — given our statistics probably all women — will be assaulted by an intimate partner in the U.S. In the roughly 48 hours between my writing and posting, at least six women in the US and hundreds if not thousands around the world [will be killed](#) by violent spouses. So, what does it mean that Republicans in Congress [have degraded](#) and continue to [hold up passage](#) of the [Violence Against Women Act](#) (VAWA) for the first time since 1994?

According to an exhaustively [comprehensive study](#), the U.S. is squarely in the [middle of the global pack](#) as far as the physical safety of women is concerned, and a large part of the reason why is our high rates of intimate partner and domestic violence. And, yes, I am [putting our country](#) in the same area of comparison as the rest of the world.

[16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence](#), started in 1991, is coordinated by the [Center for Women's Global Leadership](#) at Rutgers. This year's theme, *From Peace in the Home to Peace in the World*, is focused on how the worldwide proliferation of small arms exponentially increases the threats that women and children face. This is a special problem in the U.S. where, although we are not a militarized zone in technical terms, [we rank](#) No. 1 in the world for guns/per capita, with 88 guns/100 people — far exceeding the second on the list, Serbia, at 58.2/100. Access to firearms [increases](#) the chance of deadly domestic violence five-fold in the U.S. Internationally, [especially](#) in militarized areas where people are actively engaged in warfare or where the state is abusive and heavily armed, the [threats are far greater](#).

It's been [693 days since VAWA expired](#). Despite real and profound harm taking place every day, VAWA remains hostage to those whose reasoning results in only some violence and abuse being "[legitimate](#)" and only [some people](#) deserving of legal protection. So, for example, [homosexuals, transsexuals, immigrants and native Americans assaulted by non-Native Americans](#) are [not quite](#) citizens enough. "Hostile," which is a [word](#) that can and has been used to describe the tenor of Republican objections, isn't just a metaphor when you are talking about thousands of people (some of whom may be homosexuals, transsexuals, immigrants or Native American women assaulted by non-Tribal men), routinely humiliated, hit, kicked, raped, stalked, beaten, strangled and murdered every day, most often by spouses. As with [rape](#), some information regarding domestic violence might be useful. I know that the topic is difficult, but I'm with Mansur Gidfar, who earlier this year asked in an [article](#) in which he shared a jarring graphic comparing the first

two facts below: “Would A Body Count Change Your Mind?” Because something has to change so that we reauthorize VAWA as quickly as possible.

50 Facts About Domestic Violence

1. Number of [U.S. troops killed](#) in Afghanistan and Iraq: 6,614:
2. Number of women, in the same period, [killed](#) as the result of domestic violence in the US: 11,766
3. Number of people per minute [who experience](#) intimate partner violence in the U.S.: 24
4. Number of [workplace violence incidents](#) in the U.S. annually that are the result of current or past intimate partner assaults: 18,700
5. Number of women in the U.S. [who report](#) intimate partner violence: 1 in 4
6. Number of men in the U.S. [who report](#) intimate partner violence: 1 in 7*
7. Number of women who [will experience](#) partner violence worldwide: [1 in 3](#)
8. Order of causes of death for [European women](#) ages 16-44: domestic violence, cancer, traffic accidents
9. Increase in likelihood that a woman [will die a violent death](#) if a gun is present in the home: 270 percent
10. Number of women [killed by spouses](#) who were shot by guns kept by men in the home in [France and South Africa](#): 1 in 3
11. Percentage of the 900 million [small arms that are kept in the home](#), worldwide: 75
12. Country in which 943 women were killed in [honor killings](#) in 2011: Pakistan
13. City in which man “[butchered](#)” his wife in front of their six children in 2012: Berlin
14. States in which man [decapitated](#) his wife with a chainsaw in 2010 and another man [did the same](#), respectively: Texas and New York
15. Percentages of people killed in the U.S. by an [intimate partner](#): 30 percent of women, 5.3 percent of men.
16. Number of [gay and bisexual men who experience](#) domestic violence in the U.S.: 2 in 5 (similar to heterosexual women)
17. Percentage of the 31 Senate votes [cast against](#) the Violence Against Women Act that came from [older, white, male Republicans](#): 95.8
18. Percentage of the 31 Senate votes [cast against the Violence Against Women Act](#) that came from a younger, male Republicans, at least [one](#) of whom sits on the Science Committee but is unable to say how old the Earth is: 4.2
19. Number of legal, medical, professional, faith-based and advocacy groups that [signed a letter protesting the stripped-down VAWA](#): 300
20. First year that the Republican-led House of Representatives [eroded VAWA](#) of provisions designed to increase protections for Native Americans, immigrant women, members of the LGTBQ community and, yes, men: 2012
21. Estimated number of children, worldwide, [exposed](#) to domestic violence everyday: 10,000,000
22. Worldwide, [likelihood](#) that a man who grew up in a household with domestic violence grows up to be an abuser: 3 to 4 times more likely than if he hadn't.
23. Chance that a girl of high school age in the U.S. [experiences violence](#) in a dating relationship: 1 in 3
24. Percentage of teen rape and abuse victims who [report their assailant](#) as an intimate: 76

25. Percentage of U.S. cities citing domestic abuse as the [primary cause](#) of homelessness: 50
26. Percentage of homeless [women](#) reporting domestic abuse: 63
27. Percentage of homeless [women with children](#) reporting domestic abuse: 92
28. Percentage of [women with disabilities](#) who report violence: 40
29. Annual cost of domestic violence in the U.S. [related to health care](#): \$5.8 billion
30. Annual cost of domestic violence in the U.S. related to emergency care [plus](#) legal costs, police work, lost productivity: 37 billion dollars
31. Annual number of [jobs lost in the U.S.](#) as a result of intimate partner violence: 32,000
32. Percentage change between 1980 and 2008 of [women and men killed](#) by intimate partners in the U.S.: (w) 43 percent to 45 percent; (m) 10 percent to 5 percent
33. Average [cost of emergency care](#) for domestic abuse related incidents for women and men according to the CDC: \$948.00 for women, \$387 for men
34. Increase in [portrayals of violence](#) against girls and women on network TV during a five year period ending in 2009: 120 percent
35. The number [one cause of death](#) for African American women ages 15-34 according to the American Bar Association: homicide at the hands of a partner
36. Chance that a lesbian** in the U.S. [will experience](#) domestic (not necessarily intimate partner) violence: 50 percent
37. Chances that a gay man experiences domestic violence: [2 out of 5*](#)
38. Ratio of women [shot and killed](#) by a husband or intimate partner compared to the total number of murders of men by strangers using any time of weapon, from 2002 homicide figures: 3X
39. Number of people who will be [stalked in their lifetimes](#): 1 in 45 men and 1 in 12 women ([broken out](#): 17 percent of American Indian and Alaska Native women; 8.2 percent of white women, 6.5 percent of African American women, and 4.5 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander women)
40. Percentage of [stalkers](#) identified as [known](#) to victims: 90.3
41. Percentage of abused women in the U.S. who report being [strangled by a spouse](#) in the past year: 33 to 47.3 (this abuse often leaves no physical signs)
42. According to one study, percentage of domestic abuse victims who are [tried to leave after less severe violent](#) and nonviolent instances of abuse: 66 versus less than 25
43. Average number of times an abuser [hits his spouse](#) before she makes a police report: 35
44. No. 1 and No. 2 causes of women's deaths [during pregnancy in the U.S.](#): Domestic homicide and suicide, often tied to abuse
45. Number of women killed by spouses who were shot by guns kept by men in the home in the [United States](#): 2 in 3
46. Percentage of rape and sexual assault victims under the age of 18 who are raped by a [family member](#): 34
47. Number of women [killed everyday](#) in the U.S. by a spouse: 3+
48. The primary reason cited by right-wing conservatives for [objecting](#) to the Violence Against Women Act: To protect the family.
49. Percentage reduction in [reports of violence](#) after men and women in South Africa went through an educational training program on health, domestic violence and gender norms: 55
50. Number of members of Congress who have gone through an educational training program on health, economics, violence, and gender norms: 0

These are only some of the reasons why we should [#PassVAWA2012](#).

Globally and domestically, violence against women is [pandemic](#). And it primarily happens in the context of the home. Women are the overwhelming targets of intimate partner and domestic violence. Everyone suffers. The women suffer [long term social, emotional, physical and economic trauma](#). Their children, [likewise](#) — girls being [more likely](#) to become victims, boys abusers. [Men who abuse](#) are untreated, controlling, violent and stripped of their humanity. The societal costs are great: everything from increased poverty and homelessness to maternal mortality and expensive emergency health care provisions. The [drain on economies](#) is deep and clear. And last, but certainly not least, [violence in the home is the surest predictor of violence at the state level](#), a tolerance for such violence reflecting a propensity for militarization and war. These violences are [preventable](#).

The fact that in [some countries obvious](#) and extreme violence against women is practiced in systemic ways shouldn't be a reason to dismiss [our own](#), which are [also](#) sometimes on violent public display. Despite real declines, rates of domestic violence, battery, stalking and rape in this country remain unconscionably high. At the very least the people holding up VAWA's reauthorization should not simultaneously protest "[common sense reforms](#)" on [gun](#) control. There are [270,000,000 guns in households](#) in this country. The [reductions in home-based violence](#) that we have seen in the past two decades are due to increased [awareness](#) and the passage of VAWA in 1994. Our failure to pass a robust VAWA puts these life-altering gains at risk. I suspect most people would rather not think about it. Even though, given the statistics, *everyone* knows people who are being abused, whether they realize it or not.

I often hear something along these lines: if only these women would just LEAVE their abusers. It's simple. A matter of poor choices and female weakness. In addition, everyone knows, women "[gold diggers and frauds](#)" lie about these things. Besides, why should we worry, as [some point out](#) in disgust, "Western women, with few exceptions, are safe and free," these facts are "myths" and those loopy feminists and bleeding heart liberals [exaggerate](#) so that they can ruin men's lives and drive them to [American Male Emasculation Hell](#) (otherwise know as FOX).

Well, women do leave and some do seek to protect themselves. Then they often face problems which are compounded by economic, legal and justice systems which are firmly and unabashedly androcentric — by this I mean, they are systems designed by men, laws written by men, about men, to deal with how men experience the world — including violence. So, for example, we have gendered correlations between abuse and homelessness that result from abuse because our economic system enshrines complementary roles for men and women that leave women economically vulnerable, their life stages largely out of sync with how the work place is structured. Or, the fact that women who defend themselves against domestic violence are often imprisoned, with lengthy sentences, because self-defense laws and penalties have historically been based on stranger assaults — between people assumed to be relatively proportionally physically similar — which are overwhelmingly [experienced by men](#). So, all over the world, laws are not written to take into account a situation where a woman kills a man with whom she is intimate, maybe as he sleeps, because she knows from experience that when he wakes up he will, as he has for years, punch, choke and probably rape her; sometimes in the presence of their children. Once he is awake, she is generally at a disadvantage in this scenario. Consider [Marissa](#)

[Alexander](#) who, nine days after giving birth, fired two warning shots at the ceiling to deter her ex-husband, who was chasing her through the house, having already assaulted her, with clear intent to do harm. She's sentenced to 20 years in jail. Florida might want to spell out its "testes possession" clause in its [Stand Your Ground](#) law. Like her, most women who face these situations are either criminalized or pathologized. Men, on the other hand, face other issues related to gendered expectations about violence that they, too, pay for in our justice system. As Michelle Kaminsky writes in her book, [Reflections of a Domestic Violence Prosecutor: Suggestions for Reform](#), these situations are complex and laws and systems, outdated, are in dire need of revision.

Those opposed in Congress and their supporters seem obsessed by ideas that insist that these people who are part of the statistics above, especially the women (doubly so if immigrant women), lie, cheat, and are committing fraud. So far, no one has documented these claims with any substance. Part of the objections are that women are not only lying, but abusing men in equal numbers. Until the American Medical Association, The U.S. Department of Justice and The Centers for Disease Control, among others, provide longitudinal data based on large, national survey sizes, I'm sticking with [these facts](#): "male partners assault 2 million American women each year" and "that 95 percent of the victims of domestic violence are women." If men are being battered in mass numbers, they need to come forward and report these crimes.

My question to feminist-bashers and abuse deniers is this: What is your Goldilocks number for violence, especially violence against women? All that protesting too much raises the question: If you reject the numbers above, what numbers would you be OK with? Instead of 1 in 4 women, would you be more comfortable with 1 in 6 or 1 in 10? What do you say to women [regularly strangled](#), in what the *Washington Post* last year called the "[gateway to murder](#)" in Maryland or many others, for example, those [lit on fire](#) by men they know? "You're statistically insignificant." Which is ironic, after all, since the people who tend in this direction are seeking to increase [spending on the military](#) to protect us against terrorism. Statistically speaking, an American woman has much a chance of being [killed by her own furniture](#) as be hit in a terrorist attack. On the other hand, her chances of being hit by her husband or boyfriend is [significantly higher](#), lingering as it does at 1 in 4.

Norms, not women, are the problem.

What Jackson Katz [calls](#) Tough Guise masculinity norms, anger and violence, manifested in these ways are entitlements. As Michael Kimmel explains in [Guyland](#), it's a privilege we would all be better off without. It's also the case that the same norms result in our not understanding violence against men and boys both at the hands either other men or women. In narratives about gender, our cultural preference is generally to keep portraying men as strong and women as weak and in need of protection. (Violent women who batter male spouses are transgressive in many threatening ways — not just physical.) Lots of boys and men grow up thinking: "I'm the man, this is my castle, you are mine, I'm in charge." All on an xy-rules basis in a now more balanced xx/xy world. We should stop talking about the simplistic and reductive "end of men" and start having substantive conversations about "[transforming masculinity](#)" so that extreme violence, inherent to patriarchal systems, isn't understood to be an essential part of it. This isn't a domestic problem, it's a planetary one.

In February, a global strike to protest violence against women, [One Billion Rising](#), will take place on February 14th. A schedule of events is [available here](#), where you can also add your own.

Today in the U.S. we have [9 days left to do something](#) about the passage of the Violence Against Women Act this year. Consider [contacting your representatives](#) in Congress today [about reauthorizing](#) the VAWA before the year is done. There are [two versions](#), the [broader Senate version and a narrower House one](#). The Senate bill, which won bipartisan support, is the one that ensures that more people's rights are protected.

Resources

[16 Days of Activism](#)

[CDC Intimate Partner Violence Study and Preventative Strategies](#)

[National Domestic Violence Hotline](#)

[National Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#)

[Futures Without Violence](#)

[The Advocates for Human Rights](#)

[Safe Dates](#)

[The Joyful Heart Foundation/Verizon's Your Voice Counts](#)

[World Health Organization](#)

[UNWomen](#)

[Pixel Project](#)

[White Ribbon Campaign](#)

[V-Day One Billion Rising Global Campaign](#)

[Center for Women's Global Leadership](#)

[Men Can Stop Rape](#)

[Healthy Masculinity Summit](#)

[National Organization for Men Against Sexism](#)

[Amnesty International](#)

[UNITE Against Violence Against Women](#)

[NoMore](#)

[National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs for LGBTQH Communities](#)

[Gay Men's Domestic Violence Project](#)

[National Center on Domestic Violence and Abuse](#)

[NoH8 Campaign](#)

[Say No Unite To End Violence Against Women](#)

[Amplify Your Voice](#)

[Verizon Foundation: Your Voice Counts](#)

***Studies of domestic violence in LGBTQ relationships are scant. However, among those who identify as transgender [women](#) report domestic violence at a rate of 4x that of those who identify as men.*

** Likewise, we have very little information regarding male victims of abuse. Some would say that's because feminists like me hate men and families and don't care what happens to them. To that I say, ridiculous drivel. We don't have information for lots of reasons, among them: because we've focused our efforts on the women who are victims of abuse in order to get them out of*

harms way; we've culturally adhered to thinking of this as an individual, women's issue and "family privacy" problem which it historically has been; and men suffer a huge societal penalty for come forward — they are seen as weak and "feminized" if they admit victimization. The stigma associated with coming forward is simply too high for many.

Correction: *An earlier version of this post mistakenly stated that two in five transsexual men experience domestic violence in the U.S. The statistic refers to bisexual men. The post has been updated to reflect this.*

Follow Soraya Chemaly on Twitter: www.twitter.com/schemaly