FACT SHEET

Violence against Women Worldwide

Violence against women and girls is a problem of pandemic proportions. Based on country data available, up to 70 percent of women experience physical or sexual violence from men in their lifetime — the majority from husbands, intimate partners or someone they know. Among women aged 15–44, acts of violence cause more death and disability than cancer, malaria, traffic accidents and war combined. Perhaps the most pervasive human rights violation that we know today, violence against women devastates lives, fractures communities, and stalls development. It takes many forms and occurs in many places — domestic violence in the home, sexual abuse of girls in schools, sexual harassment at work, rape by husbands or strangers, in refugee camps or as a tactic of war.

Femicide – the murder of women because they are women

- In the United States, one-third of women murdered each year are killed by intimate partners.
- In South Africa, a woman is killed every 6 hours by an intimate partner.
- In India, 22 women were killed each day in dowry-related murders in 2007.
- In Guatemala, two women are murdered, on average, each day.

Trafficking

- Women and girls constitute 80 percent of the estimated 800,000 people trafficked annually, with the majority (79 percent) trafficked for sexual exploitation.

Harmful practices

- Approximately 100 to 140 million girls and women in the world have experienced female genital mutilation/cutting, with more than 3 million girls in Africa annually at risk of the practice.
- More than 60 million girls worldwide are child brides, married before the age of 18, primarily in South Asia (31.1 million) and sub-Saharan Africa (14.1 million).

Sexual violence against women and girls

- An estimated 150 million girls under 18 suffered some form of sexual violence in 2002 alone.
As many as 1 in 4 women experience physical and/or sexual violence during pregnancy, which increases the likelihood of having a miscarriage, stillbirth and abortion. Up to 53 percent of women physically abused by their intimate partners are being kicked or punched in the abdomen.

In São Paulo, Brazil, a woman is assaulted every 15 seconds.

In Ecuador, adolescent girls reporting sexual violence in school identified teachers as the perpetrators in 37 percent of cases.

Rape as a method of warfare

Approximately 250,000 to 500,000 women and girls were raped in the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

In eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, at least 200,000 cases of sexual violence, mostly involving women and girls, have been documented since 1996, though the actual numbers are considered to be much higher.

Cost of violence against women

Domestic violence alone cost approximately US$1.16 billion in Canada and US$5.8 billion in the United States. In Australia, violence against women and children costs an estimated US$11.38 billion per year.

Sexual harassment

Between 40 and 50 percent of women in European Union countries experience unwanted sexual advancements, physical contact or other forms of sexual harassment at their workplace.

In the United States, 83 percent of girls aged 12–16 experienced some form of sexual harassment in public schools.

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2 World Health Organization 1997


13 Based on findings from 20 out of 21 sites included in two leading surveys on violence against women. García-Moreno, Claudia, et. al. 2005: 64; and Kishor, Sunita and K. Johnson. 2004: 86.


