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Transforming the Culture of Power

An Examination of Gender-Based Violence in the United States

By Jocelyn Frye, Shilpa Phadke, Robin Bleiweis, Maggie Jo Buchanan, Danielle Corley,
and Osub Ahmed October 2019

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Introduction and summary

Authors' note: CAP uses “Black” and “African American” interchangeably throughout many of our products. We chose to capitalize “Black” in order to reflect that we are discussing a group of people and to be consistent with the capitalization of “African American.”

“The power belongs to the person who is right. The power is the truth, and sooner or later, the truth will come to light.”¹ – Maricruz Ladino, farmworker and survivor of GBV

In 2006, Maricruz Ladino, a farmworker at a California lettuce-packing plant, was repeatedly harassed by her supervisor. She rebuffed his lewd requests and comments, but he was unrelenting. Eventually, as they were heading back from a day’s work in the fields, he took her to another location and raped her. She was afraid to come forward, but after several months, she finally mustered the courage to complain about what had happened. Instead of taking action against her supervisor, her employer fired her. She later filed a civil suit against the company and, in 2010, the company agreed to a settlement. When reflecting on her traumatic experience several years later, Ladino would explain how she found the courage to come forward, saying, “I have daughters, I have sisters. And I have to stop this from happening to them, too. That’s what gave me strength to speak out.”²

The prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV) in the United States has become the focus of a national conversation. Whether it is the meteoric rise and resilience of the #MeToo movement, originally launched by activist Tarana Burke more than a decade ago; a seemingly endless list of public figures involved in allegations of sexual misconduct; a U.S. Supreme Court nomination fight made contentious in part by sexual assault allegations; President Donald Trump’s dismissive attacks on survivors’ stories and more than two dozen women alleging his own misconduct over decades; or Trump administration policies that increasingly degrade, disparage, and dehumanize women and gender minorities, all have elevated the discussion about how well GBV claims are handled and what responses are needed to combat it.³

In the wake of this attention, people from across the country have stood up and spoken out. They have told their personal stories and made clear that a status quo that tolerates sexual misconduct is unacceptable and must change. Many policymakers have been quick to profess support for survivors and reject all forms of GBV,

from sexual harassment to sexual assault and more, yet concrete legislative action to address these issues has been slow in coming. Even when policymakers do engage, they often focus on piecemeal measures as a quick fix rather than a more holistic response to address the full range of underlying problems. Lost in the discussion are the interwoven issues that collectively perpetuate GBV—particularly the systemic biases around race, sex, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, and disability that shape survivors’ diverse experiences. Overly narrow views and definitions around sex and gender identity that leave out women of color and gender minorities risk ignoring critical aspects of the problem and perpetuating a broader public narrative that elevates some groups over others and leaves out some survivors altogether. Furthermore, too little attention has focused on the connections between GBV and other abusive or violent behaviors, such as research showing high rates of domestic violence and misogynistic attacks among perpetrators of mass shootings.⁴ Dissecting how all of these issues relate to each other is crucial and long overdue.

This report demonstrates the breadth and depth of GBV across many different issue landscapes and the importance of pursuing comprehensive strategies to tackle GBV’s lifelong effects. It begins with an overview of GBV in the United States, examining its effects throughout an individual’s life cycle, across different types of relationships, and in different settings such as college campuses and workplaces. The report then explores the importance of government involvement in reducing GBV, highlighting potential action steps and key federal laws and areas where more protections are needed. It ties these pieces together with more than 25 recommendations, including the proposed creation of a significant new federal initiative that would convene across public and private sectors in order to provide a road map for far-reaching, future progress. These recommendations are intended to help catalyze a long-term solution to finally bring an end to GBV and its effects by demanding a bold government response to address the full range of systemic, cultural, and public policy issues fueling different forms of sexual misconduct. The authors’ goal is not only to elevate the problems associated with GBV and potential solutions, but also to help dismantle a culture of power—in personal relationships, workplaces, schools, legal and policy infrastructures, and other institutional settings—that for too long has protected a status quo that shields misconduct from scrutiny and allows GBV to thrive.

At the outset, the authors determined that it is important to define some of the key terms used in this report for context and clarity. The term “gender-based violence” is used throughout the report to encompass the many forms of gender-based misconduct that occur in different contexts, including negative behaviors directed at an individual based

on their gender, gender expression, or sex as well as behaviors that are sexual in nature. This definition is intended to be comprehensive, encompassing an understanding of sex beyond solely the sex that people are assigned at birth to include an understanding of gender as a fluid concept rooted in societal and cultural expectations that encompass the diverse experiences of individuals across the gender continuum.⁵ This definition is also intentionally inclusive of disabled survivors, including those who may have acquired their injuries, disabilities, or long-term health conditions as a result of their abuse. It also covers a wide range of misconduct—including verbal and physical actions, sexual harassment and sexual assault, rape, and other forms of abusive behavior. The use of the word “violence” is not intended to limit GBV solely to misconduct covered by criminal laws. For example, many sexual harassment cases are civil matters that do not implicate criminal statutes. Thus, the authors use a broad, inclusive definition of GBV in this report to encompass the full range of gender-based misconduct and to acknowledge that every experience can have a forceful, traumatic, life-changing effect on survivors regardless of how that misconduct is categorized under applicable laws.

This report also employs the phrase “culture of power” as a broad frame to encompass the underlying, interconnected narratives around sex, gender, and power that fuel GBV in many situations. Power is integral to individuals’ ability to make their own decisions and navigate society at every level in a way that makes sense for them. Yet, the concept of power and who holds it has always been highly gendered in the United States, whether measured economically, politically, or societally.⁶ For much of the nation’s history, men—most often white cisgender men—have held much of the perceived power across institutions at the national and local levels, and women from the earliest days to the present time have had to push to exercise their own power to determine their futures and secure a level playing field. This same power dynamic has been used to advance a singular gender narrative that has devalued and denied the diversity of gender identities to preserve a status quo overwhelmingly dominated by white cisgender men as the drivers and decisionmakers. This entrenched power imbalance matters: It has shaped cultural attitudes about proper gender roles and how individuals should be judged, treated, and valued. It is particularly evident in the current moment when, even with increased attention, survivors’ stories are still dismissed as faulty recollections or outright lies and perpetrators in power are rarely held accountable. Surfacing this power imbalance also matters, because GBV is at its core about the misuse and abuse of unchecked power targeted at individuals due, in part, to sex or gender identity or expression. This report argues that combating GBV must include an intentional focus on transforming a culture of power that consistently works to disadvantage women, gender minorities, and all those who do not adhere to expected gender norms so that it instead embraces a broader understanding of gender equality and empowerment and institutional change.

This report is also motivated by a deep commitment to improving the lives of women and girls. Gender and sex have been used throughout U.S. history specifically to erect barriers to equality for women—both cisgender and transgender women across all sexual orientations and other identities. As a result, women’s opportunities to participate in various aspects of society have been limited in innumerable ways; women have faced constraints on where they could work, whether they could own property, whether they could vote, and more. These limits are firmly rooted in ingrained views about male superiority and have sustained a status quo that has perpetually relegated women to a second-class status. The authors are especially interested in broadening the conversation about GBV to be more inclusive of women of color, women with disabilities, and gender minorities. The experiences of women of color have been shaped and constrained by unique barriers, stemming from the combined effects of racial, ethnic, and gender bias. As a result, they have faced dehumanizing racial and ethnic stereotypes that have devalued their worth, oversexualized their bodies, and fueled a societal hierarchy that too often has deemed them as not measuring up to the perceived feminine superiority of white women.⁷ Transgender women, particularly transgender women of color, live at the intersection of multiple identities and frequently face attitudes attempting to deny their womanhood and fostering extreme levels of violence fueled by misogyny, racism, and transphobia.⁸ Women with disabilities, whether congenital or acquired, live in a world that has not been constructed with them in mind and often see their disability weaponized against them in school, work, and society.⁹ Collectively, these attitudes have reinforced a narrative about all women as objects to be controlled and a patriarchal reality that has bolstered men’s authority to control the levers of power across different aspects of society—and over women. While a number of these attitudes have evolved or been rejected over time, the lingering effects of this toxic legacy remain potent. Women are integral to the future of the United States, and challenging the persistent barriers that they face must be a top priority—not only to combat GBV but also to make progress at all levels.

It is important to note that this report only scratches the surface of a topic that is vast, complex, and reaches into every corner of society. The report focuses primarily on GBV against women because of extensive research documenting this type of violence’s disproportionate effect on women from all walks of life—women of color, white women, low-income women, immigrant women, transgender and queer women, women with disabilities, women engaged in predominantly male fields, and more. But the issue is even broader, also affecting men and individuals across gender identities or who identify as nonbinary or gender-nonconforming. Much more research is needed to better understand these effects and the needs of these populations.

Additional research is also needed to distinguish between the experiences of cisgender and transgender women. This report relies on research studies' demographic descriptions of their participants as women, although it is probable and indeed likely that transgender women, nonbinary people, or people who are gender-fluid are included in some studies but without recognition or understanding of their identity. The specific impacts of GBV on these subpopulations are worthy of further exploration and attention. Furthermore, because this report could not examine in-depth every challenge that survivors face, there are serious issues—such as sex trafficking, abuse in detention centers and prisons, and military justice—that are outside the scope of this report but nonetheless merit close scrutiny and robust policy interventions.

Finally, the authors recognize that eliminating GBV will not be quick or easy and that there is no simple, one-size-fits-all solution. GBV is not a new phenomenon; its roots are deeply woven into the fabric and history of this country, reflected in long-standing attitudes, stereotypes, and biases about women, gender minorities, and appropriate gender roles and interactions. Accomplishing long-lasting, substantive change will therefore require more than Band-Aid measures; sustained and intentional efforts are necessary to tackle deeply entrenched practices and systemic barriers. It will take time to move beyond a stubborn, unspoken narrative that continues to disbelieve survivors. However, progress is possible and this moment calls for bold action and an unflinching commitment to accomplishing meaningful change. No one should have to endure GBV in any form or at any time. No one should feel unsafe in their homes, schools, workplaces, or communities. Everyone deserves a destiny that allows them to chart their own course and determine their own future free from discrimination, coercion, or violence. The goal of this report is to contribute to the body of work focused on centering survivors and identifying concrete solutions to combat GBV and to support the tireless work of advocates, survivors, and activists around the country.

Background on the origins of this report

This report is the culmination of a yearslong effort to paint a comprehensive portrait of the crosscutting factors driving the persistence of GBV in American life. The report grew out of a recognition that different forms of GBV reach across many disciplines—from women's rights to employment, health care, gun violence prevention, immigration, economic policy, racial justice, LGBTQ rights, disability rights, education reform, and more. The interdisciplinary nature of this problem led the authors to tap the expertise of multiple Center for American Progress policy teams in order to take a holistic look at the strategies and interventions that could have real impact—rather than the piecemeal strategies that fail to adequately respond to the complexity of GBV in the United States.

Overview of GBV

The reach of gender-based violence is enormous, with a scope that has become virtually unfathomable. According to 2015 data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, more than 43 percent of women in the United States—nearly 52.2 million—report experiencing some form of sexual violence involving physical contact over the course of their lifetime.¹⁰ Some women experienced one incident while others experienced multiple, and these incidents may involve one or multiple perpetrators. Among women who have experienced sexual violence, an estimated 45 percent faced a perpetrator who was a current or former intimate partner; 18 percent faced a perpetrator who was a family member; 8 percent faced a perpetrator who was a person of authority outside of a family relationship; and 19 percent faced a perpetrator who was a stranger.¹¹ In addition, about half of all survivors of sexual violence involving physical contact faced a perpetrator who was an acquaintance.¹² The 2015 CDC survey also found that an estimated 30.6 percent of women in the United States experienced physical violence by a current or former intimate partner and 10.4 percent experienced stalking by a current or former intimate partner.¹³ These data make clear that GBV is not confined to one uniform scenario, type of survivor, or perpetrator. Rather, the circumstances vary and each incident is different, occurring across the life cycle, in different relationships, and in different settings.

GBV occurs across the life cycle

GBV occurs across the life span, from early childhood to the final years of life. From an early age in their families, schools, and other institutional settings, children are exposed to societal norms, social cues, and attitudes about gender roles that shape how they perceive others and value themselves.¹⁴ Too many children are also exposed to different forms of GBV in the home—U.S. Census Bureau data from 2011 indicate that an estimated 20 million children under the age of 18 lived in a home at some point in their youth where violence between two adult partners had occurred.¹⁵ In addition to witnessing violence, children are also the targets of GBV. The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study published in 1998 by the CDC and Kaiser Permanente found that

early adversity—including but not limited to childhood physical and sexual abuse experienced by 27 percent and 24.7 percent of women, respectively—has lasting negative impacts on the health and life experiences of the affected individuals.¹⁶

By the time children enter grade school, many of the collective messages from these experiences and attitudes have already taken hold. Research examining grade school environments found that harassment among students was widespread and often gendered.¹⁷ Indeed, nearly half of teachers—48 percent—report hearing students making sexist comments at school.¹⁸ In a national survey from 2010, three-quarters of third through sixth graders reported witnessing and more than one-third reported experiencing bullying, which can be gender based and a form of harassment.¹⁹ The most common basis for bullying was physical appearance and often based on gender expression. The majority of students—67 percent—attributed bullying to physical appearance, and 23 percent said it occurs when a boy looks or acts “too much like a girl” or a girl looks or acts “too much like a boy.”²⁰ Black students were more likely than students of other races to report being bullied and, specifically, more likely to be bullied based on their appearance.²¹ For students who identify as gender-nonconforming, the rates of bullying and harassment were even higher than for other students—56 percent compared with 33 percent.²² In a national survey of LGBTQ students in 2017, 62.2 percent reported often or frequently hearing negative remarks about gender expression.²³ LGBTQ students of Native American, American Indian, or Alaska Native descent were the most likely, at 72.2 percent, to report experiences of victimization at school based on gender expression.²⁴ The same survey found that 71 percent of LGBTQ students reported hearing teachers or other school staff make negative remarks about gender expression. Furthermore, children with disabilities can also face heightened risk of sexual harassment and abuse by peers and different service providers. Women and girls with disabilities are more than twice as likely as women and girls without disabilities to have experienced sexual abuse as children.²⁵ In 2017, 25.5 percent of LGBTQ students surveyed reported experiencing bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived disabilities.²⁶ Researchers note that people with disabilities are consistently reminded by society of their perceived limitations, fostering a culture of compliance that results in individuals feeling unable to disobey or thwart an abuser despite feeling discomfort or unsafe.²⁷ All of this research illustrates how views about gender and power dynamics can shape children’s earliest interactions and demonstrates the importance of having tools for both families and educators to help drive positive behaviors and counter harmful messages from the start. It also shows the disproportionate and compounding effects of GBV on individuals with multiple intersecting identities, as well as why institutional actors such as schools must be equipped to effectively recognize and address different forms of bias and take corrective action where necessary to ensure that environments are free of discrimination.

The trends that begin in children's early years continue into middle and high school. In a nationally representative 2011 survey by the American Association of University Women, nearly half of students in grades seven through 12 reported experiencing some form of sexual harassment during the school year.²⁸ The survey showed astonishing rates of sexual harassment among girls and boys, with girls experiencing significantly higher rates than boys both in person, at 52 percent compared with 35 percent, and online—36 percent compared with 24 percent.²⁹ Another study, published in 2017 by the National Women's Law Center, found that 21 percent of girls ages 14 to 18 reported being touched or kissed without their consent, with higher rates for LGBTQ girls, at 38 percent; Latina girls, at 24 percent; Native American girls, at 23 percent; and Black girls, at 22 percent.³⁰ Research on sexual violence among adolescent girls found that immigrant girls and young women were almost twice as likely as their non-immigrant peers to have experienced sexual assault.³¹

For LGBTQ students more broadly, the incidence of sexual harassment is even higher: Nearly 60 percent of LGBTQ students in grades six through 12 reported being sexually harassed in school.³² Transgender students are particularly at risk: 77 percent of openly transgender students in kindergarten through 12th grade were harassed or discriminated against while in school.³³

When it comes to physical and sexual violence, a 2017 survey found that, among high school students who had dated someone in the 12 months prior to the study, 8 percent reported some form of physical violence by a dating partner, and 6.9 percent said they experienced sexual violence by someone they were dating in the past year.³⁴ These rates are even higher when broken down by gender, with 9.1 percent of female high school students experiencing physical violence by a dating partner and 10.7 percent experiencing sexual violence by a dating partner, compared with 6.5 percent and 2.8 percent of male high school students, respectively.³⁵ Despite the serious repercussions of teen dating violence, survivors are unlikely to seek help. A study of middle school and high school students in New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania found that only 11 percent of female survivors and 5.7 percent of male survivors sought help, and of those, the vast majority went to a friend rather than seek formal assistance.³⁶

These data make clear that the formative years of young people, particularly women and girls, too often include devaluing messages and experiences that undermine their individual autonomy and tell them that they are not worthy of respect and protection. The data also reveal that these views can be further complicated by additional forms of bias, such as biases related to race, ethnicity, disability, or gender identity. For example, a study examining the experiences of Black girls found that they were more likely to be

perceived as older than their true age, less innocent, less feminine, and less in need of protection.³⁷ This type of “adultification” of Black girls—which often includes hypersexualized stereotypes—can make them more likely targets of abuse.³⁸

The sexual abuse-to-prison pipeline

The connections between girls’ involvement in the criminal justice system and their experiences with sexual abuse are becoming increasingly clear. Researchers have identified a trend described as the sexual abuse-to-prison pipeline that is the result of too many girls confronting sexual violence on their own without support, leading to lifelong cycles of abuse and imprisonment.³⁹ Data on the growing number of girls becoming entangled in the juvenile justice system show that some run afoul of harsh zero tolerance policies in schools that too often fail to consider the effect that trauma, abuse, and toxic stress can have on behavior.⁴⁰ Others may become involved in criminal behavior trying to escape abusive environments or otherwise trying to survive without supports.⁴¹ Girls who flee abusive households are often placed in foster care or confined in juvenile detainment facilities.⁴² These connections between sexual abuse and girls’ involvement with the criminal justice system are also reflected in several state studies. For example, analyses found that 93 percent of girls in Oregon’s juvenile justice system and 81 percent of girls in South Carolina’s juvenile justice system reported past experiences of sexual violence.⁴³ Nationally, there has been an estimated 45 percent increase in girls’ share of arrests in the past two decades, disproportionately experienced by girls of color.⁴⁴ For example, African American girls are incarcerated at more than three times and Native American girls at almost five times the rate of white girls.⁴⁵ LGBT and gender-nonconforming youth are also similarly overrepresented in the juvenile justice system: Although they are estimated to comprise between 5 percent to 7 percent of the general population, an estimated 13 percent of LGBT youth and 15 percent of gender-nonconforming youth come in contact with the juvenile justice system.⁴⁶ In particular, around 40 percent of girls in the juvenile justice system identify as LGBT.⁴⁷ Once incarcerated, girls of color face increased risks of sexual victimization. Black youth in particular are 50 percent more likely than white youth to report sexual victimization by facility staff.⁴⁸ LGBT girls and gender-nonconforming youth also face distinct and significant risks of sexual victimization in prisons.⁴⁹ These rates and disparities raise concerns about the ongoing presence of biases embedded in institutional structures and systemic practices that lead to increased targeting of girls of color, LGBT girls, and gender-nonconforming youth.

The emotional repercussions of GBV from factors such as trauma and stereotyping can disrupt students’ education in ways that last into adulthood, limiting their ability to achieve economic security as adults and effectively derailing their lives before they have barely started.⁵⁰ Sexual abuse, for example, is one of the strongest predictors of girls’ entry into the juvenile justice system and can have far-reaching consequences for girls’ future educational progress, employment, and economic stability.⁵¹

These systemic effects of GBV show why structural interventions within institutions are critical to ensure that biases do not become entrenched, routine practices.

Models to bolster students' leadership in combating GBV

To promote positive behaviors and engage students directly in stopping GBV, several programs focus on equipping students with better tools to navigate dating, relationships, and different environments in a safe manner. These programs have shown positive results, but it is important to recognize that no one program should be seen as a one-size-fits-all solution simply to check a box. In order to be most effective, these interventions must be part of a broader, comprehensive, well-resourced strategy to transform culture, combat bias, and foster inclusion. Examples of effective initiatives include:

- **Bystander intervention:** Promising results have emerged from programs focused on training that engages bystanders who may witness harmful interactions to help reduce sexual violence. Green Dot, a program that has been implemented in both high school and college settings, has successfully trained students and teachers on bystander intervention strategies such as speaking out against sexist language or behaviors and reinforcing positive social norms.⁵² The program resulted in a 17 percent to 21 percent reduction in sexual violence over a five-year period in a study of student interactions in 26 high schools in Kentucky.⁵³
- **Dating violence prevention:** As students mature and begin dating, they may need help figuring out how to deal with difficult personal relationships. Safe Dates is a program that has been used with middle-school and high-school students to reduce dating violence by promoting healthy relationship behaviors such as improved communication and conflict resolution skills. The program has been shown to reduce psychological abuse, physical abuse, and sexual violence perpetration among eighth and ninth graders.⁵⁴
- **Engaging youth in developing solutions:** Girls for Gender Equity (GGE) is an inter-generational organization that centers cisgender and transgender girls of color as well as gender-nonconforming youth of color in the movement for racial and gender equity.⁵⁵ Since its inception, GGE has experimented with participatory practices to engage young people in policymaking and research, ensuring that decisions about young people are made with them, not just for them. For example, GGE experimented with a participatory governance practice that was the focal point of the Young Women's Initiative (YWI), bringing community—including young people, philanthropy, and government—together to generate policy recommendations that centered cis and trans girls of color and gender-nonconforming youth of color.⁵⁶ There are now eight YWIs across the country and counting. Centering the experiences of young people themselves is critical to ensure that any policy interventions developed to address sexual harassment and sexual violence are responsive to the actual needs of students on the ground.

The prevalence of GBV among young people follows them into adulthood. Among women 18 years and older, nearly 44 percent experience some form of contact sexual violence in their lifetime, and more than 36 percent experience some form of intimate partner violence (IPV).⁵⁷ New research published in September 2019 revealed that nearly 1 in 16 women between the ages of 18 and 44 reported experiencing rape as their first sexual encounter.⁵⁸ While sexual violence can and does occur at any age, research from 2014 analyzing crime statistics trends found that women ages 18 to 24 experience the highest rate of rape and sexual assault of any age group.⁵⁹ More than 38 percent of women who survived rape or attempted rape and more than 45 percent of women who experienced violence or stalking by an intimate partner specified that it first occurred between the ages of 18 and 24.⁶⁰ These experiences of GBV can have a devastating effect on women's overall well-being and quality of life, undermining their economic stability, their health, and their ability to be active, full participants in society. For example, women who are sexually abused are at higher risk for poor reproductive health outcomes, including higher rates of unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and poor maternal health.⁶¹ Women—particularly younger women—who experience sexual violence or coercion may delay testing and treatment for STIs and accessing other vital health services due to shame or denial. Too many women lack access to comprehensive health care, including reproductive health services such as abortion, that includes counseling and help with identifying the best options and with making informed decisions.⁶² These delays can have long-term impacts. If STIs are not treated in a timely manner, other complications can develop, such as pelvic inflammatory disease, reproductive cancer, infertility, and pregnancy complications.⁶³ These experiences in adulthood are also exacerbated by other biases—around race, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, and sexuality—that can make certain women targets of abuse and critique. Many women of color are often fetishized and subjected to degrading cultural stereotypes about their sexual habits and preferences. A 2018 report documented research findings of a study that used eye-tracking technology to examine differences in how Black women and white women were visualized.⁶⁴ The study found that the Black women in the study were more likely to be sexually objectified, dehumanized, and associated with animalistic imagery. Such racism, internalized or not, discourages Black women from reporting GBV and seeking help, particularly in the current U.S. health care system, which too often provides substandard, inadequate care to Black women—both in response to the effects of violence and beyond.⁶⁵

Research examining the experiences of American Indian and Alaska Native communities has confirmed that American Indian and Alaska Native women are at least twice as likely as any other ethnic group to experience sexual assault and rape.⁶⁶

Frequently, the perpetrator is a nontribal member, which can create additional jurisdictional challenges when trying to investigate and resolve a complaint.⁶⁷ It is important to note that these figures likely underestimate the violence experienced by American Indian and Alaska Native women. Barriers to reporting that sexual violence survivors generally face—including fear of reprisal, a belief that the police and justice system are ineffective, and concern that the reporting process will recreate trauma for the survivor—can be even more limiting for American Indian and Alaska Native survivors due to intergenerational trauma and a legacy of structural inequities that have undermined the autonomy of tribal nations.⁶⁸

Crime statistics from 2011 through 2015 revealed that people with disabilities were more than three times more likely to experience rape or sexual assault than people without disabilities.⁶⁹ An estimated 83 percent of women with disabilities experience sexual assault in their lifetime.⁷⁰

Furthermore, the chasm between disabled people’s experiences of GBV and reporting them is notably vast: For example, around 80 percent of women and 30 percent of men with intellectual disabilities have been sexually assaulted, but only around 3 percent of these cases are ever reported.⁷¹ For individuals with disabilities, there are legitimate concerns about reporting to law enforcement officials, who may not have been adequately trained on how to interview survivors with disabilities and whose potential bias may impact whether or not charges are brought on their behalf. This is important not just for survivors with disabilities who live in the community, but also for those who are institutionalized, live in group homes, or live in nursing homes—all of which are high-incidence locations for sexual assault and abuse.⁷² Furthermore, people with disabilities that affect their ability to communicate verbally or to accurately describe what happened may face additional challenges when reporting sexual or physical violence.⁷³ For both reasons, law enforcement and service providers must receive anti-bias training and training on how to appropriately and sensitively communicate with disabled individuals, particularly those who have witnessed or experienced GBV.⁷⁴

GBV does not dissipate over time; rather, it extends to the other side of the age spectrum. Elderly women face the majority of elder abuse.⁷⁵ For example, one study found that women ages 60 years and older endured 71.4 percent of all reported elder physical abuse.⁷⁶ The same study found that around 90 percent of elder abuse is perpetrated by relatives, spouses, or adult children who often act as primary caregivers.⁷⁷ Elder abuse can involve extreme violence at home or in institutional settings such as nursing homes⁷⁸ and retirement facilities.⁷⁹ Abusers can also assert

their power through health care or financial control by, for example, withholding or manipulating medication or siphoning money out of accounts.⁸⁰ Perhaps in part due to stereotypes, abuse among elderly women often goes unrecognized, making it difficult for survivors to access the supports and care that they need.⁸¹ Further complications can arise among older survivors who were raised with outdated and sexist ideas that women are to blame when they are raped or assaulted. Only an estimated 28 percent of rapes or sexual assaults of women ages 65 and older are reported,⁸² meaning that the vast majority of these incidents are unreported, hard to track, and in significant need of further study. However, the data that are available demonstrate the need to engage service providers, caregivers, and families of older women to ensure strong prevention measures are in place and to be vigilant in looking for signs of abuse or improper behavior.

Taken collectively, the research makes clear that combating GBV effectively must involve a life cycle approach that recognizes the different ways such violence occurs throughout the lives of women and girls. This includes disrupting the misperception that violence against women is an individualized problem confined to private spaces, where personal will is all that is needed to resolve a situation. This also requires rejecting narrow perceptions of who women are and who deserves protection. There must be intentional efforts to root out and counter entrenched attitudes that reinforce a gender hierarchy that consistently devalues women of color and gender minorities, and that reject the very existence of transgender women as women. Solutions must include, and go beyond, individualized supports and involve systemic interventions—from schools to nursing homes and other institutional settings—that center survivors and ensure environments that are safe and supportive. It is also important to invest in efforts to shift culture within every institution to internalize a deep commitment to promoting healthy relationships and respect for individual dignity across gender and identity; uncovering entrenched racial and ethnic biases; rejecting the hostile behaviors rooted in harmful or toxic masculinity;⁸³ and encouraging bystander interventions in support of survivors.⁸⁴

GBV occurs in all types of relationships

GBV occurs across many different types of relationships, from the most intimate and personal ones, to those that are professional and work based, to more informal or one-time interactions. The type of relationship can have an enormous impact on not only how power is used or abused to inflict harm but also what strategies will provide the most effective responses.

Intimate partner violence

Long thought of as a private matter, intimate partner violence is now recognized as a serious and preventable public health issue and a grave criminal offense.⁸⁵ IPV can involve nonsexual physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, psychological aggression, economic abuse, or coercive control by a current or former intimate partner.⁸⁶ According to the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence survey, 1 in 4 women reports experiencing some form of IPV and an IPV-related impact during their lifetime.⁸⁷ More than 30 percent of women experience physical violence by an intimate partner during their lifetime; more than 18 percent of women experience some form of sexual violence through physical contact by an intimate partner; and more than 10 percent of women experience stalking by an intimate partner.⁸⁸ More than one-third of all women—36.4 percent—experience psychological aggression by an intimate partner, which includes verbal and nonverbal attempts to inflict psychological harm and/or exert control.⁸⁹

In the most extreme cases, IPV can be deadly. Data show that 1 in 5 homicide victims—and more than half of all female homicide victims—are killed by an intimate partner.⁹⁰ Black women and Hispanic women tend to have the highest rates of intimate partner homicide.⁹¹ The reasons for these higher rates are not well understood, but they illustrate the importance of prioritizing more in-depth research to examine demographic and other differences and better understand the different factors affecting the prevalence of IPV. All too often, IPV turns lethal when assailants have access to guns. The presence of a gun in a household that has experienced domestic violence increases the risk by 500 percent that a woman will be killed.⁹² Women in the United States are 21 times more likely to be shot to death than women in other high-income countries, and most—an average of 52 women per month—are killed by a current or former intimate partner.⁹³ From 2004 to 2016, at least 6,900 women in the United States were killed by an intimate partner using a gun.⁹⁴ There is also a significant connection between domestic violence and mass shootings. The advocacy organization Everytown for Gun Safety analyzed mass shootings committed from January 2009 through December 2017 and found that at least 491 people were shot to death in incidents related to family or domestic violence, with at least 54 percent of the shootings involving the perpetrator gunning down a family member or intimate partner.⁹⁵

Furthermore, abusers frequently use guns as tools of intimidation, even without pulling the trigger. A recent study found that nearly 4.5 million women in the United States today have been threatened by an abuser with a gun.⁹⁶ Moreover, the risk posed to survivors of IPV by firearms is not abating. The National Domestic Violence Hotline, a national resource for survivors of domestic violence, reported that from 2016 to 2017, the number of callers who indicated that firearms were involved in

reported abuse rose from around 6,800 to 11,883—a 74 percent increase.⁹⁷ In 2018, the number of these calls rose to more than 17,500.⁹⁸

IPV often involves a power dynamic within a relationship that manifests itself in different forms of control or coercion—outside of physical abuse—that can deepen the long-term effects of GBV for women. Abusers may exert control to dictate every aspect of the relationship, from economic decisions to decisions about starting a family or becoming involved in civic or community activities, such as voting or volunteer work, and more. One example is economic abuse, which involves situations when an abuser controls or limits a woman’s financial independence, current or future ability to work, or access to funds or other economic resources.⁹⁹ Economic abuse can also occur when an abuser restricts a woman’s access to bank accounts or limits her involvement in financial decisions; controls, withholds, or steals her money; or forces nonconsensual, credit-related transactions.¹⁰⁰ Domestic violence shelters report that nearly three-quarters of the women they serve stayed with an abuser longer due to financial concerns.¹⁰¹ As a result, when survivors are able to escape IPV, they often find themselves in homeless shelters with nothing more than the clothes on their back.¹⁰² Between 22 percent and 57 percent of women experiencing homelessness reported that domestic violence was the immediate cause.¹⁰³ One study found that more than 80 percent of mothers with children experiencing homelessness had previously experienced domestic violence.¹⁰⁴

These economic harms can lead to broader societal effects. One 2018 analysis estimated that the almost 5 million domestic violence cases of IPV that occur per year in the United States cost taxpayers about \$460 billion—nearly 17 times the entire budget of the U.S. Department of Justice.¹⁰⁵ These costs include criminal and judicial expenses and medical care.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, economic abuse and the impact of IPV on a woman’s ability to work or go to school can drive and even worsen socio-economic inequalities between men and women. A recent survey found that 66 percent of women survivors reported that an abusive partner had disrupted their ability to complete an education or a training program—an especially harmful outcome given that the completion of a four-year college degree brings women an additional nearly \$822,000 in lifetime earnings.¹⁰⁷

Abusers also may attempt what is known as “reproductive control,” which involves interference with a woman’s reproductive autonomy “through the use of intimidation, threats,” and/or physical violence.¹⁰⁸ Such actions include sabotaging birth control, withholding economic resources that could pay for contraception or abortion, or pressuring a partner to become pregnant, terminate a pregnancy, or continue with an unwanted pregnancy.¹⁰⁹ A 2016 report found that 10.3 million women have had a partner who tried to impregnate them against their will or refused to wear a condom; 2.1 million women

who were raped by an intimate partner became pregnant as a result of that rape.¹¹⁰ The consequences of such abuse are clear: Women experience forced pregnancies that leave them even more vulnerable—both psychologically and economically—to their abuser. The CDC also found in a study of female homicides and IPV that 15 percent of all female homicide victims from 2003 through 2014 were either pregnant or less than six weeks postpartum, pointing to the physical, emotional, and mental vulnerability of pregnant and postpartum women to fatal violence.¹¹¹

Survivors of IPV may also experience isolation that constrains their ability to get involved in the community or engage in civic participation activities such as voting or public service. They may have privacy concerns related to what information they are comfortable receiving at home, including materials that may involve sensitive personal information that could be accessed and exploited by abusers.¹¹² Abusers may use violence and intimidation against their partners, for example, to deter them from asserting their voting preferences, venturing outside the home for early voting or on election day, or making independent decisions without the abuser's approval.¹¹³ These civic activities may seem routine to many, but they can pose enormous hurdles for survivors and expose them to violence or abuse from a partner determined to control every aspect of their autonomy and daily life. Interference that undermines survivors' ability to be full participants in society can be demoralizing and further isolate them from potential sources of support.

Additionally, while IPV occurs in all communities, it affects some more than others. For example, research indicates that lower-income women are more likely to experience IPV.¹¹⁴ The reason for this socio-economic difference in IPV rates is not entirely clear, but economic stressors could be one contributing factor.¹¹⁵ There also may be a perception of a greater power imbalance when the target has limited financial means or may be economically dependent on an abuser.

Rates of IPV affecting women vary significantly by racial and ethnic group. These differences are not to suggest which communities are most prone to violence, but they may reveal the differing effects of contributing factors, including the lack of access to certain institutional supports and lower rates of reporting among different populations.¹¹⁶ More than half of multiracial women have experienced sexual violence, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner, while 48 percent of American Indian and Alaska Native women; 45 percent of Black women; 37 percent of white, non-Hispanic women; 34 percent of Hispanic women; and 18 percent of Asian American and Pacific Islander women have experienced sexual violence, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner.¹¹⁷ Similarly, many immigrant women who experi-

ence economic insecurity may also experience higher rates of IPV.¹¹⁸ These survivors may be reluctant to come forward because of language barriers, cultural differences, or concerns about becoming more economically insecure.¹¹⁹ For example, one study found that Latino immigrants were half as likely as Latino nonimmigrants to seek help for IPV from formal agencies.¹²⁰ Within the immigrant community, the threat of violence may be particularly strong for undocumented women with documented spouses and women whose visa status is tied to their partner's visa—cases in which women's partners can wield that power imbalance over them. Immigration status can be used as a manipulation tactic by abusers to prevent women from reporting violence; fear of deportation can prevent unauthorized immigrants from reporting crimes.¹²¹ However, the threat of violence does not abate for undocumented women with undocumented partners. If an undocumented woman relies on an undocumented partner's earnings, she may be unwilling to report the IPV to law enforcement for fear of her partner's deportation and the loss of vital financial resources. There are also unique threats for LGBTQ immigrants, whose contact with law enforcement may lead to being placed in immigration detention centers where they face an increased threat of abuse and victimization.¹²² According to a CAP analysis of 2014 U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement data, LGBT immigrants were 97 times more likely to experience sexual violence while in detention, compared with non-LGBT immigrants.¹²³

Research examining experiences in the LGBTQ community reveals disproportionately high rates of IPV: About 44 percent of lesbians and 61 percent of bisexual women experience rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner.¹²⁴ For gay and bisexual men, these figures are about 26 percent and 37 percent, respectively.¹²⁵ These differences may reflect the significant underreporting of sexual violence by male survivors and point to addressing the unique needs of bisexual survivors in particular, as well as the need to provide culturally competent resources for help and safety for all survivors. In addition, 54 percent of transgender people face IPV.¹²⁶ While data are limited, transgender women seem uniquely affected, as they not only deal with sexism and prejudice, but, in many instances, also must navigate the refusal of some law enforcement departments and other institutions to recognize them as women. For this reason, there have been claims of severe mishandling of cases involving violence against this particular group of women.¹²⁷ With regard to IPV, a 2017 study by the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs found that more than half of LGBTQ survivors experienced police misconduct, 80 percent of whom were unjustifiably arrested while reporting their abuse.¹²⁸ Shelters often pose another institutional barrier for LGBTQ people: Nearly half of LGBTQ survivors of IPV who sought shelter in 2017 were denied it—32 percent of whom were denied shelter because of their gender identity.¹²⁹

Research examining the experiences of women and men with disabilities has found that those with disabilities are more likely to experience various forms of IPV than those without disabilities.¹³⁰ In addition, the American Psychological Association found that women with disabilities were 40 percent more likely to experience IPV than women without disabilities.¹³¹ Research suggests that this heightened risk occurs in part because many people with disabilities have to rely more heavily on their support networks—partners, peers, family members, and service providers—for day-to-day support.¹³² Among the perpetrators of the abuse of disabled women, 33 percent are family members, 33 percent are acquaintances, and 25 percent are other caregivers or service providers.¹³³ The close relationships between these abusers and disabled survivors can exacerbate the already harmful impacts of IPV and GBV, because the survivor may be dependent on an abuser for assistance with daily tasks and care needs.¹³⁴

IPV and emergency preparedness

Supports to address IPV must be available in a variety of contexts. This means ensuring that any responses to IPV are not piecemeal but rather are designed to strengthen processes, systems, and infrastructures so that they can be activated at all times—including in emergency situations. For example, in the fall of 2017, hurricanes Irma and Maria devastated Puerto Rico, leaving many of its residents unemployed, impoverished, and without access to energy or clean water.¹³⁵ In the wake of these storms, Puerto Rico saw a surge in IPV with at least 23 women reportedly killed by an intimate partner in 2018.¹³⁶ Survivors were left even more vulnerable without access to power or telecommunications to contact authorities who could help them escape their situations. ESCAPE, a domestic violence prevention and intervention services organization, saw a 62 percent increase in requests for services and a 47 percent increase in requests for preventive, educational resources.¹³⁷ However, this likely vastly underestimates the true prevalence of IPV in the aftermath of these storms, given the poor, nonstandardized systems that exist in Puerto Rico for data collection and low rates of reporting.¹³⁸ Even before these storms, Puerto Rico had high rates of IPV; according to the American Civil Liberties Union, in 2012, Puerto Rico had the highest per capita rate in the world of women older than 14 years old who were killed by their partners.¹³⁹ The disruptions caused by the storms likely only exacerbated these problems. Such incidents demonstrate the importance of preparedness in different types of emergency situations—such as natural disasters or large-scale evacuations—to anticipate the needs of survivors and ensure access to the full range of culturally appropriate supports, especially for communities that are already under-resourced.

Overall, much more research is needed to better understand why extreme behavior occurs in the closest of intimate relationships. The context of these relationships can create unique challenges, as they may make it harder for survivors to leave and

access resources for daily living while at the same time giving perpetrators maximum leverage to exert and abuse power. Thus, it is crucial to ensure that survivors have access to both short- and long-term services. Effective interventions should include comprehensive supports and prevention tools that are culturally appropriate; trauma-informed strategies to help defuse and de-escalate volatile interactions; services for all parties involved; access to health care resources; and myriad other tools to help remedy conflicts and enable survivors to move forward. Investments are also needed to strengthen enforcement mechanisms—for example, ongoing training for investigators and other personnel that includes a focus on entrenched biases based on race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, and disability status to ensure that every incident is handled with sensitivity and seriousness. Furthermore, it is essential to understand the connections between IPV and other issues, such as employment barriers that undermine access to well-paying jobs, affordable housing, and reasonable immigration reforms—all factors that can influence whether survivors can escape violence without throwing their lives into complete disarray.

Interactions with acquaintances and strangers

In addition to sexual and physical violence that occurs in intimate relationships, GBV can also involve different forms of misconduct committed by an acquaintance—such as a casual friend or neighbor—or a stranger. These incidents of GBV can involve the same types of misconduct that occur with IPV, as well as other forms of violence or harassment such as harassment in public spaces, often called street harassment.¹⁴⁰ The occurrence of GBV outside of intimate relationships serves as a stark reminder that the misuse and abuse of power is not limited to private relationship dynamics or triggers. Rather, power imbalances are a tool used more broadly in a variety of contexts to control women and gender minorities, and undermine their ability to participate across society.¹⁴¹

An estimated 65 percent of women report experiencing verbal or physically aggressive street harassment, such as catcalls and lewd comments in public spaces.¹⁴² Furthermore, a high number of rapes and sexual assaults are perpetrated by an acquaintance or stranger. According to the Justice Department, nearly 60 percent of reported rapes between 2010 and 2015 involved a perpetrator who was either an acquaintance or a stranger, the vast majority being an acquaintance.¹⁴³ In 2015 alone, this translated into more than 15 million women who experienced an attempted or a completed rape by a perpetrator who was either an acquaintance or a stranger, according to the CDC's National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey.¹⁴⁴

While the reporting rate of sexual assault both within and outside of existing relationships is increasing,¹⁴⁵ 3 in 4 rapes still go unreported.¹⁴⁶ That reporting rate is even lower among women raped by a stranger.¹⁴⁷ Survivors who do not report to the police often

cite as reasons a lack of trust in the police to support the survivor, fear of retaliation, and belief that it was a personal matter.¹⁴⁸ This persistent lack of reporting may be due, in part, to the low rates of success when relying on criminal justice processes to identify perpetrators, hold them accountable, and resolve complaints in an effective, efficient manner. For example, only 20 percent of all reported sexual assaults lead to an arrest, merely 4 percent lead to prosecution, and just 2 percent lead to felony convictions.¹⁴⁹

GBV occurs in different settings

While violence can occur at any stage of life, there are specific settings that play a particularly important role in determining women's economic stability and their ability to shape their own futures. Pursuing higher education and participating in the workforce are both proven strategies for growing women's wages, building their economic security, and maintaining long-term economic stability. Therefore, women's ability to navigate college and university campuses and workplaces successfully is key to being able to self-direct their lives and gain economic power. When GBV disturbs or derails their ability to succeed in these spaces, the consequences can threaten the well-being of survivors, their families, and those around them.

College and university campuses

Colleges and universities play an outsized role in young adults' lives. These institutions are places where many young people envision a fresh start as they move from their youth into adulthood. As such, the setting often serves as not just a new educational environment, but also a new home where students live, study, socialize, and spend the bulk, if not all, of their time. As a result, colleges and universities have a critical responsibility to ensure that their campuses are safe and that they prioritize the well-being of all students, staff, and visitors at all times. This responsibility has taken on added importance in light of the alarming statistics revealing the high incidence of GBV at colleges and universities: 1 in 5 women will experience sexual assault in college.¹⁵⁰ Other research found that between 20 percent and 25 percent of women in their late teens and early 20s will be raped or experience an attempted rape while in college.¹⁵¹ As many as 33 percent of undergraduate women with disabilities and 22.8 percent of transgender, genderqueer, gender-nonconforming, or questioning students experience nonconsensual sexual contact while in college.¹⁵² Far from the imagined fresh start, researchers have found evidence of a "red zone," or the period of time when young women seem to be at the highest risk of GBV: 50 percent of all campus sexual assaults tend to occur during the first six to eight weeks of college.¹⁵³ Between 21 percent and 32 percent of college students—regardless of gender—have experienced IPV by a current or former partner.¹⁵⁴

While experts universally agree that alcohol itself is not to blame for sexual assault and that survivors should not be blamed for assault if they have been drinking, the consumption of alcohol on college and university campuses may also affect how women are perceived and treated. A 2018 study that examined differences in responses to photographs of a young adult white woman or white man that included alcoholic beverages in the image found that the woman was significantly more likely than the man to be dehumanized and perceived as sexually available when seen drinking or merely holding an alcoholic beverage.¹⁵⁵ For the students who experience GBV, the physical and mental health ramifications are extensive and can interfere with students' ability to pursue an education and achieve long-term economic security.¹⁵⁶ These costs can escalate if students have to drop courses or take time off to recover; if they have to address acquired disabilities or related trauma; or if their academic performance suffers and scholarships are lost. Nearly 34 percent of students who have experienced sexual assault drop out of college, which is higher than the overall dropout rate for college students.¹⁵⁷ In a 2018 study on the impact of campus sexual assault on academic achievement among survivors of sexual assault, two-thirds of study participants reported that the assault had had a negative impact on their academic goals, and nearly a quarter did not complete their degrees and were no longer enrolled.¹⁵⁸ The costs of violence can also compound and increase over time as survivors seek healing and recovery and deal with the long-term impacts of trauma.

A 2017 report by the National Council on Disability, titled “Not on the Radar,” shows that data about disabled survivors of campus sexual assault and best practices to support their needs are nonexistent.¹⁵⁹ Among many other glaring needs, none of the technical assistance provided by the U.S. Department of Education includes language supporting students with disabilities as survivors, witnesses, or perpetrators of sexual abuse or assault. Information on students' Title IX rights are not provided in accessible formats—such as American Sign Language, videos, braille, or plain language. The U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Violence Against Women does not include information on communicating with survivors who are deaf or disabled in the training programs provided to campuses or local law enforcement.

Unfortunately, the lack of responsiveness—and, at times, abject failure—of colleges and universities to address GBV raises serious concerns. Cumbersome bureaucracies; universities' unwillingness to discipline or penalize high-profile campus figures such as popular professors or athletes; sidelining or covering up allegations to limit public scrutiny and avoid bad publicity; lack of any support for students with disabilities who are assaulted or for students who acquire disabilities as a result of assault; and threats of retaliation against students who come forward about sexual misconduct, are all criticisms that have been leveled against colleges and universi-

ties about inadequate responses to GBV on campus.¹⁶⁰ The Trump administration's aggressive efforts to minimize the seriousness of GBV overall and roll back gains that strengthened requirements for schools during the Obama administration have exacerbated these problems.

Schools have legal obligations under laws such as Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972¹⁶¹—the landmark law that prohibits sex discrimination in federally funded educational programs—to respond to and investigate reports of sexual harassment and assault.¹⁶² Despite some progress fueled by student survivors, in too many cases, schools have fallen far short of what is needed, both in terms of having strong policies and processes in place and in changing institutional culture. As a result, there is a wide chasm between what schools and students report. Currently, the U.S. Department of Education relies on data reported by schools pursuant to the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act, also known as the Clery Act. It also relies on data collected through an Education Department biennial survey called the Civil Rights Data Collection to monitor public schools and universities that receive federal financial support in order to help ensure that they do not discriminate against students on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, or disability.¹⁶³ However, these databases are notoriously incomplete. For example, in 2015, 89 percent of campuses reported zero rapes,¹⁶⁴ but in that same year, other data analyses indicated that around 23 percent of undergraduate women reported surviving rape or sexual assault.¹⁶⁵ Given the often insufficient Clery Report data, annual or biannual campus climate surveys prove extremely useful tools in accurately assessing the reach of GBV at colleges and universities. For example, Duke University's 2017 Clery Report indicated that there were 17 on-campus rapes, 12 fondlings, and 18 instances of domestic violence reported to the university in 2017.¹⁶⁶ Yet, a 2018 Duke campus climate survey found that 48 percent of all female undergraduates reported experiencing sexual assault while they were enrolled at Duke,¹⁶⁷ an enormous number given Duke's estimated fall 2018 undergraduate student enrollment of 6,994.¹⁶⁸ The astronomical difference among these numbers shows the limitations of Clery Report data, the significant underreporting of campus sexual violence, and the utility of climate surveys as critical tools for assessment.

Complicating matters, just 20 percent of female survivors in college report their assault to the police, compared with 32 percent of college-age women who are not students.¹⁶⁹ These survivors of campus GBV cited several reasons for not reporting—including fear of retaliation, a belief that the police would not do anything to help, and fear of social ostracization stemming from having mutual friends or a shared network with their attacker.¹⁷⁰ Many survivors also stated that a distrust in their school's response discouraged them from reporting.¹⁷¹

To effectively address sexual violence and transform campus culture, universities and colleges must take concrete action to create environments that promote respectful interactions and center survivors' needs. This includes measures such as having comprehensive codes of conduct that establish standards and expected behaviors, including a comprehensive definition of affirmative consent that is informed by the guidance of leading campus safety experts;¹⁷² regular campus climate surveys; clear and accessible reporting mechanisms that include staff at the university or community organizations who can receive confidential requests for accommodations such as a change in a class schedules or room assignment; and unbiased investigation and disciplinary procedures that are followed consistently, along with a serious commitment to robust enforcement. Schools should also work closely with student organizations and leaders to assess school climate and to gain a better understanding of student experiences and encourage more reporting. As already noted, a key way to do this is through regular, confidential campus climate surveys, with results published to ensure important transparency between institutions, their current and prospective students, and the community at large. Such surveys would allow colleges and universities to identify where supports are needed, implement targeted GBV prevention programs, evaluate the effectiveness of those programs, and share best practices across campuses.¹⁷³ Schools also need to better engage with their disability support services on campus so that students returning to class with newly acquired conditions as a result of trauma—physical or mental—understand their legal rights to be able to request reasonable accommodations under relevant disability laws. In addition, educational programming is crucial to counter biases embedded in school culture that dehumanize and blame survivors—such as stereotypes that label young women as sexually promiscuous and irresponsible.¹⁷⁴ It also requires a close look at how GBV intersects with emerging technologies, both to anticipate potential threats such as cyberbullying and to explore positive innovations such as new programs that collect survivor reports in a central database to help track repeat offenders.¹⁷⁵ Schools must also ensure that all claims of sexual assault reach the assigned school district or university Title IX coordinator, instead of stopping with administrators. They should invest in strong counseling supports and develop education programs on consent, bystander intervention, and other innovations.¹⁷⁶ Most importantly, schools must show leadership from the top, making clear that every student, educator, and member of the community is valued, is accountable for their conduct, and abides by the rules of the community.

The workplace

Women's participation in the workforce has been pivotal to their economic progress and the economic security of their families. Women are nearly half of the nation's labor force; making full use of their talents is increasingly important to the success of

women individually, their families, businesses, and the nation as a whole.¹⁷⁷ The vast majority of women will engage in some form of paid work over the course of their lives; thus, it is crucial to address barriers that undermine or interfere with women's ability to go to work and be productive. Workplace sexual harassment—defined as unwelcome advances and other actions that are sexual or sex-based and are used as a condition of employment, to interfere with an individual's work, or to create a hostile or intimidating work environment—is a persistent, long-standing problem that continues to confront too many at work. It occurs across race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, income level, sexual orientation, disability status, and other characteristics. It can involve co-workers, bosses, supervisors, employees, contractors, and interns, as well as clients and customers.¹⁷⁸ While exact numbers are difficult to quantify, an estimated 1 in 3 women reports experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace.¹⁷⁹ Research on the underreporting of sexual harassment claims suggests that these numbers are actually much higher: A report issued by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) noted that as many as 70 percent of sexual harassment charges are not filed formally with an employer.¹⁸⁰

Sexual harassment occurs in every industry and in a wide variety of occupations.¹⁸¹ Unlike the public narrative that often focuses on high-profile incidents, frequently involving upper-income white women, a growing body of research suggests that sexual harassment is particularly prevalent in low-wage, service, restaurant, domestic, agricultural, and hospitality occupations—many of which are disproportionately held by women of color.¹⁸² Many of the workers in these jobs have less public visibility and face significant and unique barriers: For example, agricultural workers may work in remote or isolated locations that make it difficult to report misconduct or seek legal help;¹⁸³ domestic and home care workers may work in an abuser's home and have limited access to legal support or protections;¹⁸⁴ low-wage workers with language barriers may be unfamiliar with their legal rights;¹⁸⁵ and restaurant and other workers who rely on tipped wages may fear being denied earnings or losing their job altogether if they resist harassment or misconduct.¹⁸⁶ A survey examining the experiences of fast-food workers revealed that 2 in 5 female respondents reported being sexually harassed on the job,¹⁸⁷ and 60 percent of women workers and transgender workers in restaurants reported that sexual harassment was an uncomfortable aspect of work life.¹⁸⁸ Because many low-income workers are trying to ensure their economic stability, they may fear retaliation, threats, or further violence from their employer or harasser if they report any form of misconduct—so, they avoid reporting altogether.¹⁸⁹

GBV that occurs outside of the workplace can also affect an individual's experience at work. Survivors who have experienced some form of GBV may be distracted or unable to work, afraid of discovery, or in need of time off.¹⁹⁰ An abuser may try to

interfere with an individual trying to go to work, harass them at work, or otherwise sabotage their employment opportunities.¹⁹¹ Workers dealing with IPV, for example, are estimated to lose nearly 8 million days of paid work annually in the United States.¹⁹² A survey conducted by the Institute for Women's Policy Research found that 83 percent of respondents reported that IPV disrupted their ability to work, and 53 percent lost a job for reasons stemming from abuse.¹⁹³

Both employers and workers have a critical role to play in ensuring safe workplaces. That effort must start with a clear understanding of the different forms of GBV and how they can occur within the workplace or affect workers. Workplace sexual harassment is fueled by several factors, including long-standing gender stereotypes and biases; pervasive power imbalances among workers at different levels; limited supports for survivors; the lack of change in workplace culture; the failure to scrutinize structural inequities and systemic practices that perpetuate discrimination; ineffective training and oversight; inadequate protections and reporting mechanisms; and an unwillingness to consistently take strong disciplinary or other action to ensure compliance with the law.¹⁹⁴ The interventions needed must respond directly to these problems.

From an employer perspective, this means demonstrating strong leadership throughout an organization, clearly communicating policies and expectations of workplace conduct. Employers should evaluate existing reporting mechanisms for harassment and, more broadly, whether there are structural factors—such as decentralized reporting structures and limited oversight of individual departments—that can perpetuate power imbalances within the workplace. Employers must also be open to new structures with reconfigured relationships where workers participate in developing and implementing policy solutions. They must commit to ensuring that all employees receive regular training that is more than a pro forma routine. It is critical to ensure that available research—both internal, such as climate surveys, and external—informs any training so that it is up to date and addresses particular workplace needs. Such training also must do more than review legal obligations; it should also address biases and stereotypes around race, sex, gender identity, disability status, and other factors that can fuel harassment and violence. Furthermore, employers must be firmly committed to supporting survivors at every stage, including by creating a fair process to investigate complaints, taking strong action to prevent retaliation, making available counseling resources, and monitoring on an ongoing basis to ensure that there are no lingering problems after a resolution has been reached. This includes external supports such as emergency hotlines and outside worker advocates to help survivors navigate the process of filing complaints. Other measures, such as greater promotion of women to upper-level and senior jobs, can also reduce workplace sexual harassment.¹⁹⁵ Furthermore, employers can play a crucial role in assist-

ing employees who face GBV outside of the workplace by recognizing the signs and impacts of GBV, responding appropriately, and referring the survivor to potential resources. The attention should focus on the employee's well-being and value to the workplace, not confronting a survivor with suspicions of abuse.¹⁹⁶

Innovative resources:

Help for survivors when they decide to come forward

#MeToo movement. Spurred by an onslaught of stories—from those involving high-profile names to little-known figures—the #MeToo movement has propelled a viral reckoning against all forms of sexual misconduct that shows no signs of abating.¹⁹⁷ Founded in 2006 by Tarana Burke, the #MeToo movement began as a program to help promote healing for and provide resources to survivors of sexual violence, particularly young Black women and girls and other young women and girls of color. The words “me too” were catapulted into the headlines in October 2017 in the wake of horrific allegations of sexual assault leveled against media mogul Harvey Weinstein. Millions of survivors used the hashtag “#MeToo” to show solidarity with survivors around the world by sharing their own stories—often for the very first time. Building on this global conversation, the programmatic work of the #MeToo movement has continued to focus on centering survivors in the discussion about how to disrupt the prevalence of sexual violence and to provide survivors with the resources that they need to heal and survive. This work includes the creation of an online platform with extensive resources for survivors to assist them at all stages of the healing process and a focus on lifting up a more inclusive vision of survivors across race, sex, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation, economic status, immigration status, and more.

TIME'S UP Legal Defense Fund. For too many workers, filing a claim of sexual harassment is intimidating, confusing, and fraught with legal complexity. Many workers want help understanding the legal process, their legal options, and even whether their experiences constitute a violation of law, but they are uncomfortable with and wary of raising these concerns with their employer. Instead, workers may need access to high-quality legal counseling that they can trust and rely on without regard to their personal resources or ability to pay. The TIME'S UP Legal Defense Fund, launched in 2018 and administered by the National Women's Law Center Fund, is an innovative initiative established to provide workers who are dealing with workplace sexual harassment with access to legal and media assistance. From January 2018 through September 2019, the TIME'S UP Legal Defense Fund received more than 4,000 requests for assistance across 50 states, identified more than 700 attorneys to provide legal assistance, and committed more than \$9 million to help fund cases and provide media assistance.¹⁹⁸ Increased investments in these types of worker-advocate efforts are crucial to ensure that workers have access to the support networks necessary to vindicate their rights.

It is also critical to recognize that any comprehensive solution to combat GBV must include worker-focused strategies. It is crucial to support worker power in the form of worker-led efforts to address GBV and promote equitable workplaces. Workers should not face barriers to organizing collectively to raise common concerns and propose solutions to address problems. Such strategies are particularly important for many low-wage workers and workers in lower-level jobs, who may be perceived to have less individual power within a particular workplace.¹⁹⁹ All of these steps should be part of a comprehensive program to combat workplace harassment.

Promoting worker-led efforts to combat harassment

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), a worker-led initiative focused on improving labor conditions for Florida tomato farmworkers, undertook a major effort to combat sexual harassment and assault in the fields. In 2001, the CIW launched the Campaign for Fair Food, establishing accountability measures for participating buyers by requiring them to purchase only from farms that abide by the Fair Food Program Code of Conduct, which includes worker protections against sexual harassment and assault.²⁰⁰ The effort involves educating farmworkers about their rights; establishing a complaint line for farmworkers that is available 24/7; and the creation of a Fair Food Standards Council to help investigate complaints, protect survivors from retaliation, and audit participating farms to ensure compliance with the code of conduct.²⁰¹ Because of the campaign's success, the CIW launched a broader Fair Food Program in 2011, expanding to tomato farms in North Carolina, New Jersey, Georgia, South Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland—and even expanding to strawberry and green bell pepper producers in Florida. The Campaign for Fair Food formed agreements with large food retailers—including Walmart and Trader Joe's—and from its 2001 inception to 2018 has resolved more than 2,000 complaints.²⁰² The CIW initiative has been described by federal law enforcement officials as one of the most effective programs to combat sexual violence for agricultural workers.²⁰³

Working toward solutions

Combating gender-based violence requires a comprehensive approach that encompasses the problem's many layers. Solutions must move beyond the perception that GBV is solely a private matter and instead must recognize the important role of external actors—such as policymakers, employers, workers, caregivers, students, enforcement officials, and even the public—in transforming the culture of power to address different forms of misconduct. This work must prioritize efforts to promote equity, combat bias, and support survivors when they exercise their power to challenge the structural barriers that protect the status quo. It also is essential to make use of the full range of tools to counter systemic practices that can shield GBV from scrutiny—from strengthening existing legal protections to pursuing new strategies to change culture and create spaces free of discrimination.

Government's vital role in addressing GBV

At the national level, federal enforcement agencies have a critical role to play in combating GBV. There are key federal laws that provide a public policy framework and make significant progress in responding to GBV. Three laws in particular—the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964—provide critical protections against sex discrimination that have been used to challenge different forms of GBV, including misconduct perpetrated against people based on their sexual orientation or gender identity and expression. However, the strength of these protections depends on the responsible agencies' commitment to ensuring that the law is fully enforced and implemented, as well as lawmakers' willingness to take action to ensure that the legal tools available are as robust as possible.

The Violence Against Women Act

The federal law VAWA—first passed in 1994 and reauthorized in 2000, 2005, and 2013—has catalyzed tangible results in the reduction of GBV and the expansion of resources for survivors.²⁰⁴ Many experts consider VAWA to provide the basic infra-

structure for responding to GBV. The law has led to a significant drop in GBV—an estimated 64 percent decline in annual domestic violence rates between 1993 and 2010—and a significant increase in survivor supports.²⁰⁵ The legislation created funding that trains law enforcement officials, judges, and prosecutors to supportively respond to instances of IPV, sexual assault, and stalking. Furthermore, it created the National Domestic Violence Hotline, which connects survivors to resources and supports and, over the past 23 years, has fielded more than 4.8 million requests.²⁰⁶ Between 1993 and 2007, the total number of women killed by their intimate partners fell by 26 percent, and more broadly, the annual rate of IPV against women fell 53 percent between 1993 and 2008.²⁰⁷ Even with this progress, there remain gaps in protections that are important to fix. For example, loopholes in gun laws, which permit gun purchases by abusive partners, and limited protections and services for LGBTQ survivors are among the gaps that, if addressed, could help strengthen current law.

On April 4, 2019, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to reauthorize VAWA, which officially expired in December 2018.²⁰⁸ The House reauthorization bill includes essential new provisions such as restricting gun ownership and possession for those convicted of domestic abuse of a dating partner, as well as those convicted of misdemeanor stalking of an intimate partner. It also expands the jurisdiction of tribal courts so that non-Native American U.S. citizen perpetrators can be tried for more types of GBV and GBV-related crimes when they are committed on Native American lands, including sex trafficking, stalking, child abuse, and acts of violence committed against court officers—all of which are currently outside tribal courts' jurisdiction. Despite bipartisan support in the House, Senate leadership and the Trump administration have yet to prioritize VAWA reauthorization.²⁰⁹ The White House's apparent ambivalence or indifference is unfortunately not surprising given the administration's general lack of focus on GBV and its dismissiveness of survivors' experiences.²¹⁰

Title IX

Federal officials have rightfully recognized in the past that schools have an obligation to maintain environments free of sex discrimination throughout the educational experience, from the earliest elementary school grades to high school, college, advanced degree and continuing education programs, and beyond. Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 requires covered schools to respond to incidents of sexual harassment and assault on their campuses or facilities at all educational levels.²¹¹ This responsibility calls for schools to be intentional and proactive in improving existing practices and systems; undertaking comprehensive prevention and educational programming; training staff; and pursuing other measures to ensure that all students have the best chance to learn. Additionally, the Clery Act, originally

called the Crime Awareness and Campus Security Act and passed in 1990 as an amendment to the Higher Education Act, specifically requires colleges and universities that participate in federal student aid programs to regularly report on campus security and crime statistics.²¹² In 1992, the law was amended to add a Campus Sexual Assault Victims' Bill of Rights; in 1998, it was renamed for Jeanne Clery, a Pennsylvania college student who was raped and murdered by another student in 1986. Later, in 2013, lawmakers expanded the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act to include domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking.²¹³

Unfortunately, while the requirements for Title IX administration were strengthened under the Obama presidency,²¹⁴ the Trump administration has pursued an aggressive effort to roll back those gains.²¹⁵ This regression is even more dangerous given that too many schools have struggled with how best to address incidents involving GBV on their campuses. This difficulty can be compounded by local law enforcement's failure to properly handle and respond to GBV complaints.²¹⁶

Furthermore, although the prevalence of GBV in collegiate settings has received heightened attention in recent years, the Trump administration has systematically worked to downplay the seriousness of rape and sexual assault on college campuses. In 2017, the then-head of the Education Department's Office for Civil Rights wrongly claimed that 90 percent of accusations of campus sexual assault stem from either a woman's regret over a sexual encounter or anger over a breakup.²¹⁷ Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos herself suggested that false reports were just as prevalent as attacks, although her department tried to later claim this was not her view.²¹⁸ Given that more than 90 percent of campus sexual assault survivors do not report their assault, these comments ignore the real-world experiences of survivors and signal a lack of commitment to the robust enforcement that is so essential to reducing GBV.²¹⁹

The Trump administration's new Title IX proposed rules reflect these anti-woman, anti-survivor stereotypes and talking points. In November 2018, the Education Department issued proposed rules around Title IX that narrow the definition of sexual assault. The rules not only allow educational institutions to fail to address survivors' needs in many situations, but they also go so far as to require institutions to dismiss many complaints of sexual harassment without investigation, including most off-campus and online harassment cases, regardless of the impact that the harassment has on the student's ability to succeed in school.²²⁰ Additionally, the proposed new policy requires schools to run quasi-criminal trials any time they seek to formally address sexual harassment or sexual assault allegations—for example, through live hearings with cross examination, even though these processes can be

misused to intimidate and retraumatize survivors.²²¹ Even more disturbing is the message sent by requiring such processes only in matters addressing sexual harassment and not in any other matters involving student or faculty misconduct—that allegations of sexual harassment are uniquely untrustworthy. These changes will likely discourage survivors from coming forward and disincentivize schools from vigorously investigating claims when they are raised.²²² In addition to these roll-backs, the administration has undertaken aggressive efforts to erode protections for LGBTQ students, especially transgender students, thus potentially making it harder for transgender and other survivors to invoke vital anti-discrimination protections and seek justice.²²³

Title VII

The main federal employment discrimination law that addresses sexual harassment is Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and it has played a pivotal role in providing important protections against workplace harassment.²²⁴ To be effective, however, these protections require vigorous enforcement and must be part of a comprehensive effort to eliminate GBV in the workplace. This means making sure that available protections are as strong as possible; ensuring that enforcement agencies have sufficient resources and investigatory staff to pursue claims; supporting and bolstering worker power so that survivors are well positioned to challenge discriminatory conduct; and encouraging employers to pursue a range of strategies to change workplace culture.

The EEOC, the agency with the primary enforcement responsibility for Title VII, has importantly drawn attention to the prevalence and persistence of sexual harassment. In 2016, during the Obama administration, the EEOC issued a comprehensive, bipartisan report on harassment, detailing the breadth of the problem across diverse communities, potential intervention strategies, research findings, and areas where new research is sorely needed.²²⁵ Furthermore, the commission has revamped its sexual harassment training and taken policy positions to ensure that protections against sex discrimination are interpreted broadly—for example, by including sexual orientation and gender identity as *per se* sex discrimination.²²⁶ However, the Trump administration's efforts to curtail protections for LGBTQ individuals in other agencies, including by arguing in court that Title VII does not protect LGBTQ workers, could undermine these protections.

There are also important opportunities beyond agency enforcement that Congress should consider to strengthen existing protections and combat discriminatory practices. Many employers require employees to sign mandatory arbitration clauses

or nondisclosure agreements as a condition of being hired or maintaining employment and before a dispute occurs. These predispute agreements place limits on where employees can pursue their claims or voice concerns.²²⁷ These practices should be prohibited because they can discourage survivors from coming forward or require survivors to submit their claims to a special forum with fewer protections or remedies.

Furthermore, policymakers should address recent U.S. Supreme Court rulings that have made it harder for survivors to hold employers accountable when sexual harassment occurs. For example, in *Vance v. Ball State University*, the court narrowed the definition of who could be considered a supervisor for the purposes of establishing an employer's vicarious liability for workplace harassment.²²⁸ The court ruled that only employees who are specifically empowered by an employer to take tangible employment actions—such as hiring, firing, making reassignments or substantial changes to work duties, refusing to promote, or modifying benefits—are considered supervisors whose actions can result in an employer being held strictly liable for harassment without further findings of negligence. This means that other employees who fall outside that definition will not be considered supervisors—even if they control the day-to-day activities of another employee—potentially creating steeper hurdles for plaintiffs to establish an employer's legal responsibility for workplace misconduct. Additionally, in the 2013 case *University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center v. Nassar*, the Supreme Court toughened the standard of proof required to prove a claim of retaliation under Title VII. The court ruled that a claim of retaliation required proof that it would not have taken place but for an illegal discriminatory motive, rather than a more lenient standard requiring proof that discrimination was one motivating reason for the alleged retaliation.²²⁹ By making it easier for employers to escape liability for harassment and retaliation, these narrow interpretations may create disincentives for employers to undertake proactive prevention measures and may discourage potential claimants from coming forward.

Other measures to improve workplace harassment protections include clarifying the legal standard that requires a finding of “severe or pervasive” conduct in hostile environment cases in order to prevent overly narrow interpretations of what constitutes a violation, which effectively shields harmful conduct from scrutiny.²³⁰ Extending the statute of limitations—the required time frame for filing a harassment claim—could provide much-needed additional time for survivors to come forward. Codifying language to reinforce survivors' standing to pursue intersectional claims, involving claims based on a combination of factors such as race and gender, can help bolster women of color's efforts to challenge discriminatory practices specifically targeted at them because of their status as women of color. Furthermore, eliminating

the tipped minimum wage—where a worker is paid a much lower hourly wage than the standard federal minimum wage because the worker can supplement wages with tips—would be a crucial measure toward helping tipped workers so that they do not feel that they must endure harassment or assault for their earnings.²³¹ Securing specific protections for workers who may not be consistently covered by existing laws, such as by passing a Domestic Workers Bill of Rights to strengthen workplace protections for domestic workers, can help reduce the likelihood that certain categories of workers are targets of misconduct because the risks of penalty are minimal.²³²

Although Congress has taken some steps to reform its own procedures,²³³ it has failed to move forward bills to address harassment for the millions of workers outside of its perch on Capitol Hill. Recently introduced legislative proposals, however, would address many of the changes that could make a difference. In early 2019, Sen. Kamala Harris (D-CA) and Rep. Lois Frankel (D-FL) introduced the EMPOWER Act, which aims to protect workers and make it easier for survivors to come forward by banning nondisparagement and nondisclosure agreements in employee contracts, requiring that public companies disclose harassment settlements, establishing a reporting hotline, and reforming the tax code so that income from settlements received by survivors is nontaxable.²³⁴ In April 2019, Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA) and Reps. Katherine Clark (D-MA) and Ayanna Pressley (D-MA) introduced the BE HEARD in the Workplace Act, a bold and expansive effort to strengthen anti-discrimination laws, remove barriers to justice for survivors, improve wages for tipped workers, and hold employers accountable.²³⁵ The bill also clarifies that existing sex discrimination laws include LGBTQ workers, and expands protections to contractors, interns, fellows, volunteers, and workers at small businesses.

While VAWA, Title IX, and Title VII provide critical protections against sex discrimination, they are not the only legal protections available to survivors of GBV. Other civil rights laws—including but not limited to the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Fair Housing Act, and the Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act—entitle GBV survivors who have acquired injuries, disabilities, or long-term health conditions as a result of their abuse to protections as well.²³⁶ With these laws come rights to reasonable accommodations in schools, workplaces, and in society. Most often, these survivors of GBV are not informed of these rights or what to do if these rights are violated.²³⁷ It is essential that service providers make clear these rights and connect survivors with the appropriate supports, such as Centers for Independent Living, Parent Information and Training Centers, deaf and hearing loss agencies, and more.

The government plays an integral role enforcing all of these laws, but a comprehensive response to GBV requires a governmentwide approach across a range of protections and across every federal agency. Every agency should take steps to assess its effectiveness in enforcing protections against any form of GBV within its jurisdiction. Additional examples could include the U.S. Department of Labor scrutinizing to what extent federal contractors are undertaking anti-harassment or other prevention measures; the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development examining rates of sexual harassment in housing programs; the U.S. Department of Agriculture working with the EEOC to improve prevention efforts in farming communities; and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security exploring rates of sexual abuse and GBV experienced by immigrants at the U.S.-Mexico border and in immigration custody.²³⁸ Furthermore, as a large employer itself, the federal government should lead by example and prioritize adopting model practices to combat GBV. This could include creating a specialized task force to look at specific problems within federal agencies and identify trends to be addressed.

Moving forward and going further

The guiding principles for any public policy response to GBV must reflect a clear understanding of individuals' diverse needs across sex, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, national origin, disability status, and other personal characteristics. Solutions must be comprehensive and address the interdisciplinary, life cycle nature of the problem by connecting the dots across different issues. They must also encompass action steps that can be taken at all levels—individual, governmental, and institutional—to address the visible and less visible, conscious and unconscious drivers fueling GBV.

Survivor-focused strategies

Centering survivors: It is essential to focus on survivors' needs and to prioritize specific actions to remedy the problems that they face. This requires including the perspectives of survivors at all stages as policies and other actions are developed to maximize the effectiveness and responsiveness of any strategies pursued. Survivors' viewpoints are particularly important to deepen the understanding of the structural barriers and cultural biases that survivors confront daily—especially survivors who experience intersectional discrimination based on combined forms of bias—and that require concrete policy responses. These actions must include a massive investment in resources to ensure that survivors have access to the full range of services that they need, beyond counseling, to include other critical supports such as:

- **Full access to legal supports:** Survivors must have access to different types of legal assistance without incurring costs, ranging from advocates who can handle cases to those who can provide help with understanding different rights and protections. It is also important to ensure that survivors are not coerced or required to sign away their rights without consultation with counsel.
- **Full access to comprehensive health care:** Survivors must have access to both primary and preventative care as well as emergency services and the full range of reproductive health care, including birth control and abortion care.

- **Robust social safety net protections:** Survivors must have access to emergency support services, such as safe housing and fiscal assistance, that will allow them to achieve economic stability.
- **Work transition supports:** Survivors may need access to assistance that enables them to transition from one job to another, such as additional job training and short-term stipends, without falling into financial ruin.
- **Emergency child care services:** Survivors must be able to leave their children in a safe environment when dealing with rapid transitions from one place to another. Survivors may have court dates or court-mandated meetings, doctor appointments, job interviews for new positions, or other official meetings that require quick attention and flexibility.
- **Informational resources:** Survivors need access to comprehensive information about what to do when they encounter GBV: where they can go for help, what resources are available, and what steps they need to take to pursue a claim. This information must be accessible to survivors from diverse backgrounds and experiences, including having information in multiple languages and accessible to individuals with disabilities.
- **Targeted supports for survivors from diverse backgrounds:**
 - **Women of color survivors:** Research suggests that women of color are disproportionately targets of GBV, yet there has been too little attention focused on the factors causing these disparities or where these disparities most often arise. It is essential to identify industries, occupations, institutional settings, and other areas where this higher prevalence is occurring and to target specific resources toward rooting out discriminatory practices.
 - **Immigrant survivors:** Survivors must be able to come forward and report instances of GBV without fear of retribution. Immigrant survivors may feel particularly vulnerable when their legal status is under consideration by the relevant authorities. Thus, it is even more important to roll back significant, unilateral changes made to asylum laws, first by then-U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions and more recently by current U.S. Attorney General William Barr, that reduce access to protection for immigrant survivors of GBV and ideologically motivated violence.
 - **LGBTQ survivors:** Taking action to provide resources for facilities that can offer shelter and other supports to LGBTQ survivors, and to prohibit entities from discriminating against LGBTQ survivors, is crucial. This is especially true for transgender survivors, who are regularly denied services because of their gender identity or transgender status.²³⁹

- **Survivors with disabilities:** Survivors with disabilities, who may be especially reliant on caregivers for assistance, must have access to specialized services in order to be able to extricate themselves from a particular living situation without further putting their safety and well-being at risk.
- **Civic participation:** Survivors’ civic involvement can provide them an important opportunity to focus on their own issue priorities and influence policymakers and the policies they pursue. Community institutions, such as boards of elections, must consider how to ensure that survivors can participate fully and fairly. Survivors, for example, must be able to access election information and materials and be able to register to vote and vote safely in person at polling places or other designated voting locations. Pro-voter reforms such as early voting, automatic voter registration, no-excuse absentee voting, and same-day voter registration are commonsense policies that would benefit all voters, including and particularly survivors. Voter registration programs must also involve confidentiality programs and confidential voter listings to ensure that voter information is inaccessible by abusers seeking to exploit it. To help survivors receive this access, state and local election websites—as well as campaigns and political parties—can add “escape site” buttons to their webpages, which enable survivors to quickly leave a webpage and keep their election activity private if an abuser enters the room or looks over their shoulder. Jurisdictions should consider providing survivor-focused trainings for election officials, including training on how to identify signs of domestic abuse.

Federal interventions

- **Strengthening existing sex discrimination and other anti-discrimination protections:** There must be an intentional focus on improving existing sex discrimination protections to create greater accountability for wrongdoing at the individual and institutional levels, enabling survivors to come forward without fear of retribution and eliminating barriers to bringing misconduct to light. Measures to strengthen protections under Title VII—such as the BE HEARD Act and the EMPOWER Act—and Title IX and reauthorizing VAWA must be a top priority. These improvements should also include language that reinforces the availability and importance of intersectional discrimination claims to address combined forms of bias such as race and gender; ethnicity and gender; disability status and race; and other formulations. Furthermore, to the extent needed, these reforms should make clear the scope of sex discrimination protections to include protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity to ensure that all survivors have access to the protections that they need.

Congress should act to establish a federal blue-ribbon commission tasked with developing a national strategy for reducing GBV through sustainable and visionary reform.

- **Expanding economic security policies:** There must be a serious commitment to enacting a range of policy solutions to address persistent economic inequality that, left unchecked, can limit survivors' ability to escape abusive situations without risking their financial stability. Such measures include enacting comprehensive equal pay reform such as the Paycheck Fairness Act; paid sick and "safe" days; inclusive paid family and medical leave; and measures to raise the minimum wage and eliminate the tipped minimum wage and subminimum wage.
- **Passing comprehensive immigration reforms:** In addition to protections for survivors, comprehensive immigration reforms are needed to create a structured pathway toward citizenship for immigrants so that they feel safe coming forward in any case involving GBV. Immigrants who witness or hear about misconduct may feel threatened if they say anything about what they have seen out of fear that they and their families may be at risk of detention and deportation. Increasing the number of U visas that are available each year to victims of certain serious crimes—including those arising out of GBV—who offer to cooperate with law enforcement would help to better combat IPV and provide immigrant survivors with an important tool to secure their own safety and freedom.²⁴⁰
- **Implementing state-of-the-art anti-bias training for law enforcement, educators, service providers, employers, and others interacting with survivors:** Comprehensive training is needed at all levels to ensure that survivors receive the support that they need and are treated fairly. In particular, law enforcement officers should receive detailed training on the trauma of and on how to work with survivors of GBV, including disrupting biases toward survivors and different types of abuse, as well as how to appropriately and sensitively communicate with survivors—particularly disabled survivors, survivors of color, LGBTQ survivors, and survivors with language barriers. Furthermore, law enforcement agencies should receive increased, targeted funding to eliminate the backlog of unanalyzed DNA casework and accelerate resolutions in pending investigations.
- **Increasing support for research on causes, prevention, survivors, and perpetrators:** To better understand GBV, research must be undertaken to study both causes and prevention as well as perpetrators and survivors. This includes targeted research focused on the challenges facing survivors of color, LGBTQ survivors, and survivors with disabilities. Such research should not only identify gaps in knowledge but also examine gaps in the available data and what data are needed for future analysis. More research is also needed to identify best practices and effectiveness regarding alternative resolution approaches, including restorative justice and other mediated strategies. Not every incident involving GBV will or should result in a termination or incarceration, but it is important to identify strategies to resolve incidents that focus

on survivor healing and invest in community-based, survivor-centered efforts to work with all parties to promote accountability, truth-telling, acknowledgement of wrongdoing, healing, and restoration.

- **Stepping up vigorous government enforcement:** Robust enforcement of legal protections prohibiting different forms of GBV is crucial. Government plays a pivotal role in upholding and implementing laws established to prohibit GBV, both in terms of undertaking efforts to ensure compliance with the law and in assisting other entities with instituting proper practices. In particular, the government has a special responsibility to protect from harm those who are under-represented, are under-resourced, or fall outside of the existing power structure, as well as to leverage the power of the federal government to hold institutional actors accountable for wrongdoing. These efforts must include strengthening investigatory tools and promoting greater transparency about impact and results such as claims data that are broken down by race, gender identity, ethnicity, disability status, or other factors. It also must include reversing proposed rollbacks of regulations by the Trump administration—such as those under Title IX—that reduce protections for gender minorities and exacerbates skepticism of survivors. Enforcement officials must be viewed as impartial investigators committed to uncovering the truth and enforcing the law, and not as ideological actors with an agenda. Furthermore, the federal government should explore the creation of an interagency strike force that can work to share information, examine crosscutting issues, and move quickly when needed.
- **Strengthening gun laws to keep guns out of the hands of domestic abusers and stalkers:** Current federal law contains significant gaps that allow individuals with a demonstrated history of domestic abuse or stalking to continue to legally purchase and possess firearms.²⁴¹ While federal law bans individuals convicted of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence or subject to a domestic violence-related order of protection from gun possession, this law does not apply when the abuse occurred in the context of a dating relationship. In addition, the restriction on gun ownership stemming from the issuance of an order of protection does not apply to temporary orders of protection issued at the beginning of a legal process when a survivor first attempts to obtain protection—a period of time that is often the most dangerous. Finally, current federal law does not apply to individuals convicted of misdemeanor stalking offenses, a dangerous gap in light of the demonstrated link between stalking and future acts of violence.²⁴² Congress must act to close these gaps in the law that leave survivors of domestic abuse and stalking vulnerable to future gun violence.
- **Pursuing federal initiatives that intentionally include survivors with disabilities:** Too often, the available research and materials on GBV fail to consider or address the experiences and specific needs of survivors with disabilities. It is critical to take

intentional steps to include disability as a demographic measure in the surveys and studies used to track GBV and GBV-related issues. This includes, for example, ensuring the collection of comprehensive data on GBV incidents involving students with disabilities.²⁴³ It also means developing accurate, expert-informed materials to offer technical assistance—to schools and other institutions—on the rights of survivors with disabilities and how best to provide them with appropriate accommodations in response to GBV.

Establishing a federal commission to end GBV

In order to implement and build on these recommendations, Congress should act to establish a federal blue-ribbon commission tasked with developing a national strategy for reducing GBV through sustainable and visionary reform. Individual states and localities such as New York City, as well as private sector organizations such as the American Bar Association, have convened similar initiatives in the past.²⁴⁴ The federal commission would build upon these efforts and broaden their scope. The proposed commission should be assigned three primary objectives:

1. Examine and report on trends; gaps in reporting, data, and enforcement; and best practices at the local, state, and federal levels
2. Examine and report on the prevalence of GBV in different environments—including at home, school, and work—and potential interventions that could be deployed
3. Set five-, 10-, and 15-year goals for the reduction of GBV across all demographic groups

The commission should be authorized for a minimum of four years, with a broad scope. It should examine the settings and forms of all kinds of abuse—those discussed in this report and those that are not, such as sex trafficking and abuse that occurs within the criminal justice system and the military.

The commission should provide Congress with annual, public updates on its work during congressional hearings held by standing committees with jurisdiction. At the end of the commission's term, a report with final recommendations and goals should be presented in the same manner. The commission should include individual subcommittees that would focus on a variety of issues, including: the similarities and differences in both risk factors and motivators for involvement in GBV across various settings and populations; the development of a public health approach to address GBV; the communities and demographics of those with higher rates of GBV, especially women of color and transgender women; and issues in reporting GBV and collecting accurate, comprehensive data.

The proposed commission should also be required to examine and report on:

- 1. Improving economic stability for survivors:** At a minimum, the commission should examine housing instability, wage inadequacies and inequalities by demographic breakdowns, and relevant paid leave strategies, while providing sufficient funding for programs that help families meet their basic needs and ensuring these are accessible to survivors.
- 2. Reaching those most at risk for violence:** Communities who face disproportionate risks of violence—particularly women of color—deserve focused research. The commission should establish new ways of tracking violence in these communities—including pilot programs throughout different regions—with the goal of using those data to establish better and more culturally competent outreach and support strategies. This work should also include a robust plan for strengthening data collection to improve quality and ensure disaggregation across race, ethnicity, disability status, sexual orientation, and gender identity.
- 3. Increasing health care access:** The commission’s work should ensure that survivors have access to comprehensive health care, such as primary care, trauma services, and the full range of reproductive health services, including contraception and abortion care.
- 4. Expanding and enhancing public safety standards:** At a minimum, the commission should consider gun violence prevention measures that will ensure that all domestic abusers and stalkers—including those in a dating relationship and individuals subject to a temporary restraining order—do not have easy access to guns.

The commission should include ex officio representatives from federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Justice, Department of Education, EEOC, Department of Agriculture, Department of Commerce, Department of Labor, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security, the National Council on Disability, Office of Personnel Management, and the CDC. It should also include four congressional lawmakers—each appointed by the minority and majority leaders of the House of Representatives and the Senate, respectively.

In addition, the commission should include experts from outside of government and from affected communities. It should be representative of individuals of varying gender identities and sexual orientations and from diverse racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds. At a minimum, it should include survivors and representatives from survivor support organizations; experts who have worked on or researched GBV; and

experts in the fields of mental health, social work, public health, reproductive health, emergency medicine, law enforcement, disability policy, and economic policy.

Each year, substantial funding should be appropriated to enable the commission to fully conduct its work. Appropriators should be guided by the principle that the level of funding must reflect the scope of the problem. A portion of that funding should be appropriated to the CDC and Department of Justice to support research on the public health impact of GBV, as well as potential strategies for reduction. The funding should include sufficient resources to commission research, convene roundtables, hold hearings and listening sessions, and visit model programs to lift up best practices and draw attention to the most effective strategies and solutions for combating GBV.

State action

It is important for states and localities to examine ways to address GBV in their own communities. A wide-ranging coalition of nearly 300 advocates from across the country have called for at least 20 states to take concrete action to enact policies addressing different forms of GBV by 2020.²⁴⁵ To further this goal, states must take steps to examine both their own practices across state offices and operations, as well as practices affecting everyday individuals who live or work in the state. Undertaking a comprehensive assessment by an independent expert to evaluate existing state policies and procedures can help determine their effectiveness in surfacing and disrupting misconduct and in enabling survivors to come forward without fear of retaliation. This type of assessment should also include conducting climate surveys among their own workforce, examining how power differentials affect reporting and resolving GBV allegations, and exploring what structures are needed to ensure a fair process for considering claims. States must be willing to implement changes to strengthen state practices where needed in order to help ensure that discrimination is surfaced and remedied as quickly as possible. But states must do more than address their internal workforce needs: They must look more broadly at the effectiveness of existing state laws and protections and engage survivors and advocates in identifying where changes are needed to combat GBV. Furthermore, states must take steps to drive culture change and reduce biases about women and gender minorities that can influence attitudes about GBV. This includes exploring community-based innovations to set community standards around GBV to promote institutional accountability.

Schools, employers, and other institutions

It is critical for all institutions to take action to address GBV and promote a culture where such misconduct is deemed unacceptable. These steps include regularly undertaking internal assessments and evaluations to examine organizational practices, culture, and overall climate. Views about women and gender minorities, across race, ethnicity, LGBTQ status, and disability status are often deeply embedded within institutional structures and individuals themselves and it is essential to surface and confront these attitudes head on. Schools at all levels must use a mix of strategies to educate students about healthy relationships, codes of conduct, and school processes, both to fulfill their educational mission and to ensure compliance with the law. Advocates have called for at least 100 school districts to undertake reforms to address GBV by 2020.²⁴⁶ Similarly, workplaces must use assessments and climate surveys to identify where interventions are needed, in combination with comprehensive training tailored to the institution. Workplaces—like all institutions—must ensure that there are fair processes that enable survivors to come forward without retribution and be willing to address structural barriers that may hinder reporting. It is also critical to expand opportunities for women and people of color to move up the career ladder because greater equity can help reduce discriminatory practices overall. Institutions also must take steps to disrupt institutional power centers that inhibit or deter individuals from coming forward. Measures such as ensuring that staff have access to worker advocates and removing barriers to collective organizing can help foster an even balance of power within the institution. Furthermore, there is also a critical role for philanthropy to push out resources in support of addressing GBV in all facets of life.

Individual actions

Public education to help individuals prevent GBV is also critically important. Investments to make educational resources and trainings widely available so that individuals can learn about bystander intervention strategies and creating a culture of inclusion can also have an impact. Creating online resources, allocating funding to support additional learning on how to provide appropriate support to survivors, and developing trainings for civic organizations on prevention strategies are among the strategies that could be deployed to better equip individuals with the tools needed to respond to GBV in the most effective, supportive manner possible.

Conclusion

Gender-based violence is pervasive throughout society. It occurs at every stage of life and affects people of all backgrounds. Its effects can last for days, months, years, or a lifetime, leaving an imprint on many or all areas of a survivor's life. The numbers highlighted in this report are staggering, and yet they still likely underestimate the true prevalence of GBV given long-standing underreporting and the shifting perceptions of what constitutes sexual harassment, sexual assault, rape, and other forms of GBV. Combating GBV effectively must be more than an afterthought; it will require intentional, focused, and comprehensive efforts across different communities, relationships, settings, and institutions. That work must start now with an unyielding commitment to survivors across all races, ethnicities, gender identities, and disability status and to transforming the environment, processes, attitudes, and cultural norms used to address GBV in all its forms. A national initiative that brings together the best thinking, identifies new strategies, and maps out a plan of action should be part of a broader, comprehensive effort to marshal new resources and support and drive concrete change.

However, that is not all that needs to happen. There must be a collective push to reject the culture of power that has preserved a status quo saturated with bias and instead embrace the individual dignity and autonomy of every person. Most importantly, all of this work must go beyond solely focusing on sharing survivors' stories without finding solutions; it must seek accountability, disrupt the power centers that shield perpetrators from scrutiny, challenge the attitudes that continue to disbelieve survivors, and make justice a top priority. The need is urgent, and the time for action is long overdue.

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About the authors

Jocelyn Frye is a senior fellow for the Women's Initiative at the Center for American Progress, where her work focuses on a wide range of women's issues, including work-family balance, pay equity, and women's leadership. Prior to joining CAP, Frye served for four years as deputy assistant to the president and director of policy and special projects for the first lady, where she focused on women, families, and engagement with the greater Washington, D.C., community. Before joining the Obama administration, Frye served as general counsel at the National Partnership for Women and Families, where she concentrated on employment and gender-discrimination issues, with a particular emphasis on equal-employment-enforcement efforts and employment barriers facing women of color and low-income women. Prior to her work at the National Partnership, she worked for four years as an associate at Crowell & Moring, a Washington law firm. She received her undergraduate degree from the University of Michigan and her law degree from Harvard Law School.

Shilpa Phadke is the vice president for the Women's Initiative at the Center. In this capacity, she oversees CAP's policy development and analysis, as well as its advocacy and outreach work on women's issues. Her work focuses on a wide range of women's issues, including women's economic security, women's health and rights, and women's leadership. Prior to joining CAP, Phadke served in the Obama White House as the special assistant to the president for Cabinet affairs. She has also worked as a senior adviser at the U.S. Department of State, as deputy director for

legislative affairs at the Council on Environmental Quality, and as a senior legislative policy adviser for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Prior to her work in the Obama administration, Phadke served as a policy adviser on the Obama-Biden presidential transition team and as a member of the paid media and opinion research team for then-Sen. Barack Obama's (D-IL) campaign for the presidency. A native of Massachusetts, Phadke received a master's in public policy from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and a bachelor's degree from Boston College.

Robin Bleiweis is a research assistant for women's economic security for the Women's Initiative at the Center. Prior to joining CAP, Bleiweis worked at Cohen Milstein Sellers & Toll PLLC, a plaintiff's class-action law firm, as a paralegal in the securities litigation and investor protection practice group. She graduated magna cum laude from Wake Forest University, where she earned a bachelor's degree in sociology and psychology. Her undergraduate research centered on gender-based discrimination and paid family leave policies.

Maggie Jo Buchanan is the director of Legal Progress at the Center. She is also a former associate director for the Women's Initiative at the Center. Buchanan has led major policy initiatives at organizations that include Young Invincibles and NARAL Pro-Choice America. She also served as a senior legislative assistant to Rep. Lloyd Doggett (D-TX). An adopted Texan, she has also consulted with leading state-based organizations focused on the health of women and children and continues to be involved in the volunteer and nonprofit community in Central Texas. Buchanan's work has received extensive news coverage, and she has provided commentary to NPR, U.S. News & World Report, *Politico*, PBS NewsHour, Vox, *The Guardian*, the *Houston Chronicle*, and more. She earned her law degree from the University of Texas School of Law and her bachelor's degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Danielle Corley is a former research associate for women's economic policy at the Center. Prior to CAP, she worked for the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee as a staff assistant in the Disability Policy and Oversight Office. Corley graduated from the University of Texas at Austin with a degree in Plan II Honors, an interdisciplinary liberal arts program. She spent the past year working at a nonprofit residential school in rural India.

Osub Ahmed is a senior policy analyst for women's health and rights for the Women's Initiative at the Center. Her work focuses on federal- and state-level abortion and contraceptive coverage and access, crisis pregnancy centers, religious exemptions related to the provision of reproductive health services, and the intersection of women's health and climate change. Prior to joining CAP, Ahmed was a program manager at the Black Women's Health Imperative, where she managed a multistate, campus-based reproductive justice program, My Sister's Keeper. Prior to that, she worked at a consulting company where, among other responsibilities, she helped to evaluate and provide recommendations to the U.S. Department of State regarding its travel health clinics' immunization services. Ahmed also has also worked as a lab manager at Massachusetts General Hospital and Boston Children's Hospital. She received her Master of Public Health in health behavior from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and her bachelor's degree in organismic and evolutionary biology from Harvard University.

Rebecca Cokley is the director of the Disability Justice Initiative at the Center.

Laura E. Durso is the vice president of the LGBT Research and Communications Project at the Center.

Chelsea Parsons is the vice president of Gun Violence Prevention at the Center.

Appendix: Resource page

There are several national resources available to survivors of intimate partner violence, sexual violence, stalking, and trafficking.

National Domestic Violence Hotline

Operating around the clock, seven days a week, confidential, and free of cost, the National Domestic Violence Hotline provides lifesaving tools and immediate support to enable survivors to find safety and live lives free of abuse.

1-800-799-7233; teletypewriter: 1-800-787-3224

www.ndvh.org

American Association of University Women

The American Association of University Women is the nation's leading voice promoting equity and education for women and girls.

1-202-785-7700

<https://www.aauw.org/>

The American Civil Liberties Union's Women's Rights Project

Through litigation, advocacy, and public education, the American Civil Liberties Union's Women's Rights Project pushes for change and systemic reform in institutions that perpetuate discrimination against women, focusing its work in the areas of employment, violence against women, and education.

1-212-549-2500

<https://www.aclu.org/issues/womens-rights>

Alianza Nacional de Campesinas

Alianza de Campesinas is committed to securing social, environmental, and economic justice; violence prevention; equality; and healthier workplaces, homes, and communities for farmworker women and their families.

1-951-545-1917

<https://www.alianzanacionaldecampesinas.org/>

Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence

The Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence is a national resource center on domestic violence, sexual violence, trafficking, and other forms of gender-based violence in Asian and Pacific Islander communities.

1-415-568-3315

www.api-gbv.org

Break the Cycle

Break the Cycle inspires and supports young people ages 12 to 24 to build healthy relationships and create a culture without abuse.

Text “loveis” to 22522 to chat with a peer advocate 24/7

<https://www.breakthecycle.org/>

The Center for Family Safety and Healing

In 2011, the Center for Child and Family Advocacy at Nationwide Children’s, which was founded in 2002, and the Columbus Coalition Against Family Violence, established in 1998, merged to become the Center for Family Safety and Healing.

<https://www.nationwidechildrens.org/specialties/the-center-for-family-safety-and-healing>

Center for Survivor Agency and Justice

The Center for Survivor Agency and Justice is a national organization dedicated to enhancing advocacy for survivors of intimate partner violence.

1-301-915-0160

<https://csaj.org/>

Equal Rights Advocates

Equal Rights Advocates is a national civil rights organization dedicated to protecting and expanding economic and educational access and opportunities for women and girls.

1-415-621-0672

<https://www.equalrights.org/>

FORGE

FORGE is a national transgender anti-violence organization, federally funded to provide direct services to transgender, gender nonconforming and gender nonbinary survivors of sexual assault. Since 2011, FORGE has served as the only transgender-focused organization federally funded to provide training and technical assistance to providers around the country who work with transgender survivors of sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, and stalking.

1-414-559-2123

<https://forge-forward.org/>

Futures Without Violence: The National Health Resource Center on Domestic Violence

Futures Without Violence is a health and social justice nonprofit with a simple mission: to heal those who are traumatized by violence today—and to create healthy families and communities free of violence tomorrow.

1-415-678-5500

www.futureswithoutviolence.org

Girls for Gender Equity

Girls for Gender Equity promotes the physical, psychological, social, and economic well-being of girls, women, and, ultimately, the entire community.

1-718-857-1393

<https://www.ggenyc.org/>

#MeToo movement

The #MeToo movement supports survivors of sexual violence and their allies by connecting survivors to resources, offering community organizing resources, pursuing a “me too” policy platform, and gathering sexual violence researchers and research.

<https://metoomvmt.org/>

National Center for Victims of Crime

The National Center for Victims of Crime is a nonprofit organization that advocates for victims’ rights, trains professionals who work with victims, and serves as a trusted source of information on victims’ issues.

1-202-467-8700

www.victimsofcrime.org

National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health

The National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health provides training, support, and consultation to advocates, mental health and substance abuse providers, legal professionals, and policymakers as they work to improve agency- and systems-level responses to survivors and their children.

1-312-726-7020, ext. 2011

www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org

National Child Abuse Hotline/Childhelp

The Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline is dedicated to the prevention of child abuse. Serving the United States and Canada, the hotline is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with professional crisis counselors who—through interpreters—provide assistance in more than 170 languages.

1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453)

www.childhelp.org

National Coalition for the Homeless

*The National Coalition for the Homeless is a national network of people who are currently experiencing or who have experienced homelessness; activists and advocates; community-based and faith-based service providers; and others committed to a single mission: **to prevent and end homelessness while ensuring the immediate needs of those experiencing homelessness are met and their civil rights protected.***

1-202-462-4822

www.nationalhomeless.org

National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs

The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs works to prevent, respond to, and end all forms of violence against and within LGBTQ communities. They are a national coalition of local member programs, affiliate organizations and individual affiliates who create systemic and social change. They strive to increase power, safety and resources through data analysis, policy advocacy, education and technical assistance.

1-212-714-1141

<https://avp.org/ncavp/>

National Dating Abuse Helpline/loveisrespect.org

Highly trained advocates offer support, information, and advocacy to young people who have questions or concerns about their dating relationships. They also provide information and support to concerned friends and family members, teachers, counselors, service providers, and members of law enforcement. Free and confidential phone, live chat, and texting services are available 24/7/365.

Call: 1-866-331-9474; text: LOVEIS to 22522

www.loveisrespect.org

National Disability Rights Network

The National Disability Rights Network is the nonprofit membership organization for the federally mandated Protection and Advocacy Systems and the Client Assistance Programs for individuals with disabilities.

1-202-408-9514

<http://www.ndrn.org/en/>

National Domestic Workers Alliance

The National Domestic Workers Alliance is the nation's leading voice for dignity and fairness for the millions of domestic workers in the United States.

1-646-360-5806

<https://www.domesticworkers.org/>

National Human Trafficking Resource Center/Polaris Project

Polaris provides human trafficking victims and survivors with critical support to get help and stay safe through the National Human Trafficking Hotline and BeFree Textline.

Call: 1-888-373-7888; text: HELP to BeFree (233733)

www.polarisproject.org

National Indigenous Women's Resource Center

The National Indigenous Women's Resource Center Inc. is a Native nonprofit organization that was created specifically to serve as the National Indian Resource Center Addressing Domestic Violence and Safety for Indian Women.

1-406-477-3896

<http://www.niwrc.org/>

National Latin@ Network for Healthy Families and Communities

The National Latin@ Network, a project of Casa de Esperanza, is the national institute on domestic violence focusing on Latin@ communities.

1-651-646-5553

www.nationallatinonetwork.org

National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

The National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights works to defend and expand the rights of all immigrants and refugees, regardless of immigration status.

1-510-465-1984

www.nnirr.org

National Network to End Domestic Violence

National Network to End Domestic Violence projects address the complex causes and far-reaching consequences of domestic violence through cross-sector collaborations at the state, national, and international levels.

1-202-543-5566

<https://nnedv.org/>

National Partnership for Women & Families

Founded in 1971 as the Women's Legal Defense Fund, the National Partnership for Women and Families is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization based in Washington, D.C., that works to make life better for women and families.

1-202-986-2600

<http://www.nationalpartnership.org/>

National Resource Center on Domestic Violence

The National Resource Center on Domestic Violence has been a comprehensive source of information for those wanting to educate themselves and help others on the many issues related to domestic violence.

1-800-537-2238

www.nrcdv.org and www.vawnet.org

National Sexual Assault Hotline/RAINN

The Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) is the nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization. RAINN created and operates the National Sexual Assault Hotline in partnership with more than 1,000 local sexual assault service providers across the country and operates the DoD Safe Helpline for the U.S. Department of Defense.

1-800-656-HOPE (1-800-656-4673)

www.rainn.org

National Sexual Violence Resource Center

The National Sexual Violence Resource Center's mission is to provide leadership in preventing and responding to sexual violence through collaboration, sharing and creating resources, and promoting research.

1-717-909-0710; 1-877-739-3895 (toll-free)

www.nsvrc.org

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline provides free and confidential support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of more than 150 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices.

1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)

www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

National Women's Law Center

The National Women's Law Center (NWLC) fights for gender justice—in the courts, in public policy, and in our society—working across the issues that are central to the lives of women and girls. The NWLC is also home of the TIME'S UP Legal Defense Fund.

1-202-588-5180

<https://nwlc.org>

The Network/La Red

The Network/La Red is a survivor-led, social justice organization that works to end partner abuse in lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, SM, polyamorous, and queer communities.

1-617-742-4911

<http://tnlr.org/en/>

Restaurant Opportunities Centers United

The mission of the Restaurant Opportunities Centers United is to improve wages and working conditions for the nation's restaurant workforce.

1-212-343-1771 (New York office)

1-202-559-7498 (DC office)

<https://rocunited.org/>

Sins Invalid

Sins Invalid is a disability justice-based performance project that incubates and celebrates artists with disabilities, centralizing artists of color and LGBTQ/gender-variant artists as communities who have been historically marginalized. Led by disabled people of color, Sins Invalid's performance work explores the themes of sexuality, embodiment and the disabled body, developing provocative work where paradigms of "normal" and "sexy" are challenged, offering instead a vision of beauty and sexuality inclusive of all bodies and communities. The people behind Sins Invalid are widely understood to be the founders of the Disability Justice movement.

<https://www.sinsinvalid.org/>

TIME'S UP

TIME'S UP is an organization that insists on safe, fair, and dignified work for women of all kinds. Powered by women, our TIME'S UP programming addresses the systemic inequality and injustice in the workplace that have kept underrepresented groups from reaching their full potential. The TIME'S UP Legal Defense Fund helps defray legal and public relations costs in select cases for those who have experienced sexual harassment or related retaliation in the workplace. The Fund is housed at and administered by the National Women's Law Center.

<https://www.timesupnow.com/>

https://www.timesupnow.com/times_up_legal_defense_fund

Ujima: The National Center on Violence Against Women in the Black Community

Ujima: The National Center on Violence Against Women in the Black Community serves as a national, culturally specific services issue resource center to provide support to and be a voice for the Black community in response to domestic, sexual, and community violence.

1-844-77-UJIMA (1-844-778-5462)

<https://ujimacommunity.org/>

Women Employed

Women Employed is fighting to ensure that all women can achieve their aspirations and support themselves and their families.

1-312-782-3902

<https://womenemployed.org/>

Women Enabled International

Women Enabled International advances human rights at the intersection of gender and disability to respond to the lived experiences of women and girls with disabilities, promote inclusion and participation, and achieve transformative equality.

1-202-630-3818

<https://www.womenenabled.org>

WomensLaw.org

Despite its name, WomensLaw.org provides information that is relevant to people of all genders, not just women. WomensLaw.org's email hotline will provide legal information to anyone who reaches out with legal questions or concerns regarding domestic violence, sexual violence, or any other topic covered on the site.

<https://www.womenslaw.org/>

Workplaces Respond To Domestic & Sexual Violence: A National Resource Center

Workplaces Respond educates and builds collaborations among workplace and nonworkplace stakeholders—employers, worker associations, unions, and anti-violence advocates—to prevent and respond to domestic violence, sexual harassment and violence, trafficking, stalking, and exploitation impacting the workplace. The project is a public-private partnership led by Futures Without Violence, and funded by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women.

415-678-5500

<https://www.workplacesrespond.org/>

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