

WHAT IS GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE?

Gender inequality is pervasive around the world. Social norms and behaviors perpetuate inequality, while laws and structures affirm it. Violence is both a cause and a consequence of this inequality, and may be motivated by a desire to disempower and control. In some areas, the government will not only allow gender-based violence to continue unchecked, but will compound and contribute to it. Those who experience or live in fear of gender-based violence suffer physical and psychological consequences.

Gender-based violence may include female genital mutilation/cutting, intimate partner violence, “honor” violence, sexual assault and rape, forced marriage, and human trafficking. Many forms of gender-based violence constitute torture, and they are recognized as such under international law. While the majority of victims of gender-based violence are women, anyone who is seen by society as atypical or feminine under deeply-rooted beliefs about gender and power may become victims of violence.

In the U.S., immigrant women and girls are disproportionately impacted by gender-based violence due to a constellation of factors, such as lack of immigration status and limited knowledge of English. [Studies show](#) that immigrant women and girls may be twice as likely to experience domestic violence than the general population, and they are less likely to leave their abusers due to fear of immigration consequences, such as being deported and separated from their children.

FORMS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting

Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) is a term used to describe practices that involve the complete or partial removal of the external female genitalia. FGM/C can cause severe health complications, including damage to organs and problems during urination, menstruation, and childbirth. It is estimated that [more than 500,000](#) women and girls in the U.S. are at risk of FGM/C, and [more than 200,000,000](#) have been subjected to the practice worldwide.

Intimate Partner Violence

Intimate partner violence is a pattern of abusive behavior in a relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control. Intimate partner violence may include physical and sexual violence, threats and intimidation, emotional abuse, and economic deprivation. [One in four](#) women experiences domestic violence in the United States. [Abuse rates are highest](#) when an immigrant’s abuser is a U.S. citizen spouse/

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“Honor” Violence

Restoring or protecting “honor” can serve as a motivation to commit acts of violence in diverse communities around the world and in the U.S.. Many forms of gender-based violence are committed with the pretext that the victim has brought or will bring shame or dishonor to a family or community.

Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery that involves the recruitment of an individual by force, fraud, or coercion into labor or sexual exploitation. It is estimated that there are [40.3 million](#) victims of human trafficking globally. The National Human Trafficking Hotline handled [8,759 cases](#) of human trafficking in the U.S. in 2017 alone, the majority involving sex trafficking. Victims of labor and sex trafficking are often also victims of other forms of gender-based violence. The U.S. Department of Justice estimates that between [14,500 to 17,500](#) individuals are trafficked into the U.S. per year.

Rape

Around the world, rape is used to oppress, dominate, and control. [One in five](#) women will be raped at some point in her lifetime. Women and girls living in or fleeing conflict zones around the world live under the constant threat of rape, often used as an instrument of torture. Survivors of rape suffer serious physical, psychological, and economic harm. Lesbian, gay, transgender, gender nonconforming, and intersex individuals may be especially vulnerable to victimization.

Forced Marriage

A forced marriage takes place without the full and free consent of one or both parties. Forced marriage can happen to an individual of any gender, age, ethnicity, and cultural or religious background. Factors behind forced marriages are complex and varied, but may include economic concerns, cultural norms, or family agreements. Victims of forced marriage face severe and lifelong consequences, including physical, sexual, and economic abuse, medical and mental health problems, denial of education, and a loss of freedom to choose and make their own futures.