



## Housing Assistance Underfunded but Critical for Survivors of Domestic Violence

Approximately 15.5 million children are exposed to domestic violence each year. In 2010, 17,113 adults and 20,406 children escaping abuse were served in emergency domestic violence shelters and transitional housing throughout the country, with another 33,129 adults and children receiving non-residential assistance. Texas sheltered the most survivors (3,758) in 2010, while Alaska had the highest rate of survivors (44 per 100,000 persons [see map]). These data likely represent an undercount, as only one-quarter to one-half of women who experience domestic violence report their abuse. Domestic violence has a devastating effect on women nationwide, but its prevalence among low-income and homeless women is especially high; approximately 91.6% of homeless mothers experience severe physical and/or sexual abuse during their lifetimes.

Women facing domestic violence experience high rates of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and physical health problems. These women are more likely to abuse alcohol and drugs (15 and 9 times, respectively) than women who have not suffered from violence. Hospitalization and trauma recovery may necessitate leaves of absence from work, negatively impacting women’s ability to support their families. Nationally, survivors lose nearly 8.0 million days of paid work due to violence each year. Physical assault and rape result in an average of \$4.1 billion in direct medical care and mental health bills and \$1.8 billion in indirect costs of lost productivity and present value of lifetime earnings.

Abuse can have severe and long-lasting effects on children’s well-being. Children who grow up in households where domestic violence is prevalent are more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol, attempt suicide, and have mental health problems. These children often experience violence themselves. Men who witnessed and experienced abuse as children are almost

four times more likely to perpetrate violence as adults. Women who experienced childhood physical or sexual abuse are three times more likely to be victimized as adults.

Abused women are often cut off from social and financial supports by their abusers, leaving them with few alternative housing options. A Minnesota study revealed that one in three women listed domestic violence as a primary reason for their homelessness. Almost half (47.7%) of homeless women in Minnesota reported staying in abusive relationships because they had nowhere else to go. Because battered women usually attempt to leave their abusers several times before successfully escaping, their children may experience multiple episodes of homelessness.

Women are less likely to report their abuse when they fear eviction. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s “one-strike” policy formerly allowed federally subsidized housing providers to evict families for crimes or disturbances committed

in the residence, regardless of cause or circumstance. One study revealed that 11.1% of public and private housing evictions are based solely on women’s histories as survivors of domestic violence. Discrimination also prevents survivors from obtaining housing. Over one-quarter (27.5%) of

New York City housing providers with vacancies either refused to rent or failed to follow up upon learning that the tenant was a survivor of violence. The 2005 reauthorization of the federal Violence Against Women Act of 1994 added legal protection against eviction and discrimination to survivors living in public housing and using Section 8 rental vouchers, but enforcement has proved challenging. More than half (27) of states lack any laws explicitly guaranteeing survivors freedom from housing discrimination (see *UNCENSORED* Web-extras for additional details).

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***Approximately 91.6% of homeless mothers experience severe physical and/or sexual abuse during their lifetimes.***

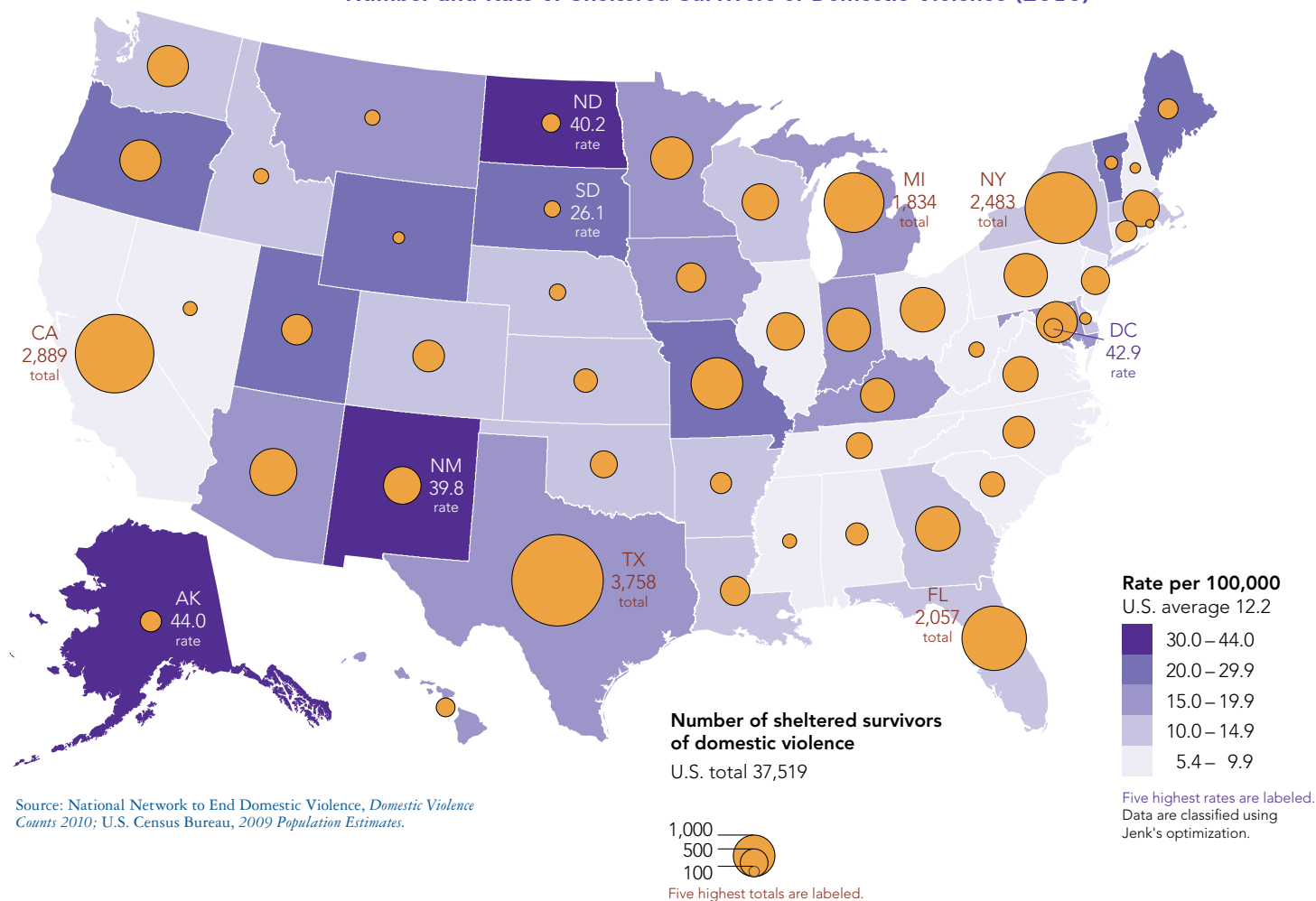
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# on the Homefront

Eighty-three percent (82.5%) of housing and supportive service providers noted an increase in the demand for domestic violence services in 2010, despite 77.4% of programs reporting reduced funding. In 2010, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provided temporary stimulus funds for 854 local domestic violence programs. However, there were still 5,686 unmet requests for shelter in the same year (see *UNCENSORED*

Web-extras for more information). Some shelters have been forced to cut individual counseling and child care programs due to budget restrictions, which is detrimental to mothers with young children. Domestic violence shelters are critical resources to help survivors escape their abusers and begin to rebuild their lives, yet remain underfunded.

**Number and Rate of Sheltered Survivors of Domestic Violence (2010)**



Source: National Network to End Domestic Violence, *Domestic Violence Counts 2010*; U.S. Census Bureau, *2009 Population Estimates*.

Source: National Network to End Domestic Violence, *Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Fact Sheet*, 2010; National Network to End Domestic Violence, *Domestic Violence Counts 2010: A 24-hour Census of Domestic Violence Shelters and Services*; U.S. Department of Justice, *Problem-oriented Guides for Police Problem-specific Guides Series No. 45: Domestic Violence*, January 2007; Ellen Bassuk, et al., "The Characteristics and Needs of Sheltered Homeless and Low-income Housed Mothers," *The Journal of the American Medical Association* 276, no. 8 (1996): 640-646; National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, *Domestic Violence and Substance Abuse*; National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, *Costs of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in the United States*, March 2003; Sujata Desai, et al., "Childhood Victimization and Subsequent Adult Revictimization Assessed in a Nationally Representative Sample of Women and Men," *Violence and Victims* 17, no. 6 (2002): 639-653; Wilder Research, *2009 Homeless Adults and Children in Minnesota Statewide Survey: Physical and Sexual Abuse*, June 2010; National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, *Lost Housing, Lost Safety: Survivors of Domestic Violence Experience Housing Denials and Evictions Across the Country*, February 2007; Anti-Discrimination Center of Metro New York, *Adding Insult to Injury: Housing Discrimination Against Survivors of Domestic Violence*, August 2005; Legal Momentum, *State Law Guide: Housing Protections for Victims of Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence and Stalking*, January 2010.

**Web-extra**  
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<http://www.ICPHusa.org/webextras/>