

Stop Violence Against Women Week

Written by Robert ID974

Monday, 07 March 2005 05:04 -

Lifetime Television's new poll shows that the vast majority of young people -- the first generation to come of age in the ten years since Congress adopted the most far-reaching law, the Violence Against Women Act, to address gender violence in the U.S. -- believe that violence against women remains an extremely serious and common problem.

Nearly three quarters (72%) believe that violence against women -- defined as domestic violence; acts of sexual assault, such as rape; stalking; and, verbal, physical, and emotional abuse -- receives too little attention. To this generation, violence is no longer a private, personal matter, but rather a critical societal problem which public institutions, like Congress and law enforcement, should take the lead in addressing.

The dramatic survey results come as thousands of advocates, survivors, business and political leaders, athletes and celebrities such as Grammy-winners Alanis Morissette, Lee Ann Womack and Michael Bolton descend on the capital for Lifetime's 4th annual "Stop Violence Against Women Week," March 7-11, and as the Network officially re-launches its Emmy-winning on-air, online, community and legislative initiative "Our Lifetime Commitment: Stop Violence Against Women."

According to the recent Lifetime survey of 600 women and men, ages 16-24, violence has personally touched their lives much more so than people have reported in prior studies:

* Approximately seven in ten women (77%) and men (64%) said they know or

have known someone in an abusive relationship and approximately six in

ten say that they know a woman who has been sexually assaulted. This is

a dramatic increase from a Family Violence Prevention Fund 1996 survey

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of Adults 18+ that found that only 33% of respondents have known a woman

in an abusive relationship.

* For young women the personal connection is even more profound and the

fear of sexual violence alters their daily life. Approximately nine out

of ten (87%) young women said that they take special precautions to

rarely or never walk alone after dark and nearly two-thirds (64%) said

that they think about what could happen if they leave a drink

unattended.

The survey suggested that some progress has been made in making gender violence no longer a silent, private problem and instead want Congress and law enforcement to address it. Young people clearly recognize that violence against women -- specifically partner abuse, rape and stalking -- is a crime and that public institutions are responsible for addressing the problem.

* A majority (63%) named law enforcement as the first and second most

responsible for addressing the problem. More than one-third of

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respondents (36%) said Congress is either first or second most

responsible.

* However, a gender gap remains on how serious the issue is among men and

women. 75% of young women think the issue is "extremely serious"

compared to 57% of young men, thus demonstrating the importance of

Lifetime's campaign, in collaboration with ESPN and others, to reach

both women and men.

Young people are also willing to speak out and address violence against women themselves.

* When asked what they would do if they knew a friend or relative who was

abusing a girlfriend or wife, half (50%) of all young men surveyed said

that would say something to him about his abusive behavior.

* More than two-thirds (66%) said that they'd be somewhat or very likely

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to report the abuse to the police.

* Nearly three-quarters (74%) of both men and women said that they would

urge the woman to get help.

* And a majority of both women and men said that they would not remain

uninvolved.

In addition, young women and men have a much higher "IQ on Violence Against Women" than previous studies have found.

* 91% knew that less than one-third of rapes and sexual assaults are

reported to law enforcement officials.

* 85% knew that more than one million women are stalked by men each year.

* 80% knew that, in the US, the leading cause of injury to women between

15 and 25 is battering.

* 75% knew that a woman is more likely to be raped by her husband,

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partner, boyfriend or acquaintance than she is to be raped by a

stranger. This is a dramatic increase in awareness compared to a poll

done in 2002 that found nearly 6 in 10 Americans age 18+ (58%) wrongly

believed that women are more likely to be raped by someone they don't

know.

However, serious misconceptions still exist and young people say that they are exposed to gratuitous violence in music, video games and other entertainment that make people less sensitive to the issue of violence against women.

* Nearly half of women and more than half of men still believe that women

abuse men just as much as men abuse women. According to the Bureau of

Justice Statistics, in 2001, among Adults 18+, women accounted for 85

percent of the victims of intimate partner violence and men accounted

for approximately 15 percent of the victims.

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* 78% of respondents believe that the number one reason a woman stays in

an abusive relationship is low self-esteem, even though in reality the

reasons are much more complicated, including financial and custody

issues and fear.

* Three quarters (75%) of those people surveyed said that they know

someone who listens to songs, plays video games, etc. that depict

physical or sexual violence against women as acceptable behavior, but

72% said that exposure makes the listener or viewer much or somewhat

less sensitive to violence.

The poll is part of Lifetime's Emmy Award-winning campaign "Our Lifetime Commitment: Stop Violence Against Women," which is dedicated to: raising awareness of various forms of violence, such as domestic violence, sexual

assault and stalking; offering lifesaving information and support; promoting passage of bi-partisan supported national legislation; and engaging women and men to work together to prevent violence. The initiative includes on-air programming such as an original documentary, "Terror at Home: Domestic

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Violence in America," online content, community outreach and legislative advocacy, including Lifetime's support of reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act.