

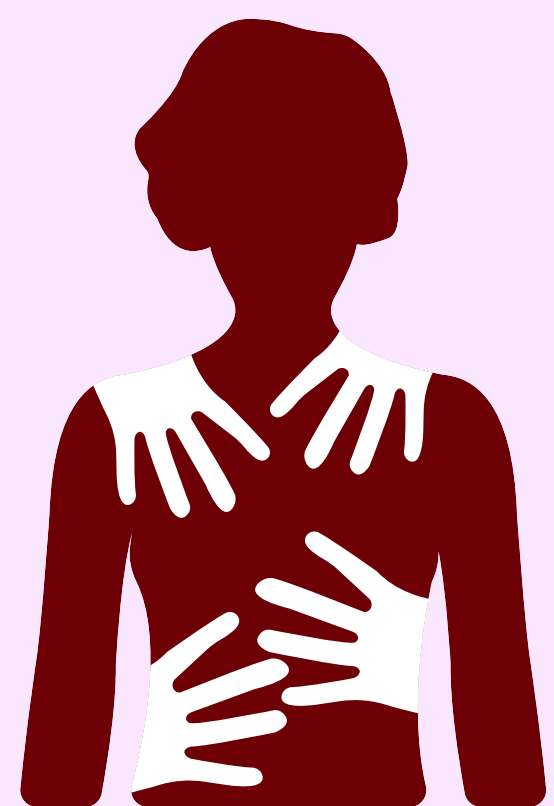
# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: SEEKING JUSTICE AND EMPOWERING SURVIVORS

GRACE SPRINGER

## COURSE & PROJECT

CLASS: SW 505 Social Welfare Policies and Services  
Dr. Sanjana Ragudaran

PROJECT: Write a paper regarding policy in the United States identifying a social welfare issue, conduction of policy analysis, and formulating your own policy proposal.



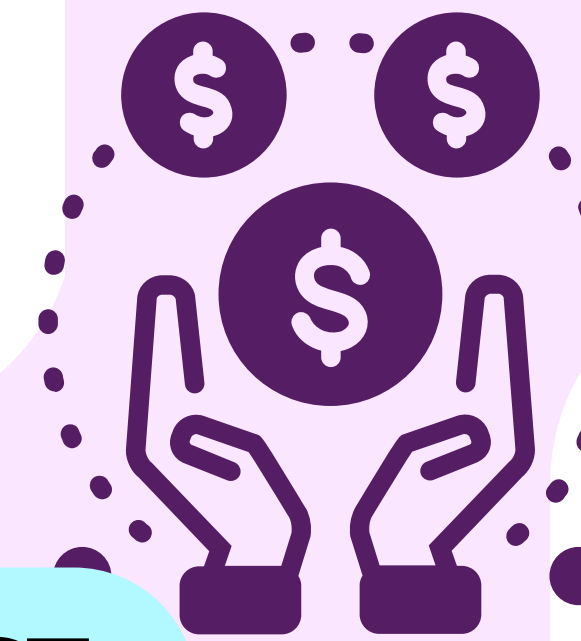
## PROBLEM & POPULATION

Domestic violence is a crime in the United States, yet it is common for many Americans to know a victim on a personal level. Physical and sexual assaults, stalking, and rape continue to cause tremendous physical and emotional trauma, cost millions of dollars in property damage and victim care, and have substantial consequences for the victims and children involved in such circumstances related to intimate partner violence (IPV).



## FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

The main component of domestic violence policy is too focused on physical or criminal acts. Academic research is limited on the psychological effects of intimate partner violence. A solution would include a comprehensive measure of IPV that outlines non-physical abuse in detail; namely verbal abuse, threats, intimidation, isolation and financial control over one's partner.



## PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS

### FUNDING

Considering the hyperfocus on criminalization, one can conclude that increased arrests and incarceration of perpetrators comes with a heavy price of resources and a lack of return on the investment. Both victims and perpetrators would benefit from a percentage of funding spent on law enforcement programs to be reallocated to prevention and education programs, as well as rehabilitation efforts for abusers exiting jail following their offense. It appears policy makers do not acknowledge that while punishment is necessary, change in behavior is instrumental in the fight to end domestic violence.

### GUN CONTROL

Current federal law governs firearms and domestic violence attempts to protect women from such harm by prohibiting possession of firearms or ammunition if the respondent has a prior conviction for a violent misdemeanor crime, or is subject to a court order that restrains the respondent from harassing, stalking or threatening an intimate partner.

These laws do not work as they should because they do not account for live-in partners, and exclude dating partners. Access to a firearm is a significant risk factor in whether abuse against victims will be fatal or result in homicide.

Congress needs to modify firearm laws related to domestic violence to include unmarried, non-cohabiting persons. Federal law only applies to cohabiting couples in a committed intimate relationship (Merrefield, 2022). Congress should expand the law so that victims of any gender and those in any non-cohabiting intimate relationship are afforded the same protections that currently exist for victims that exist in marriage.

## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

VAWA has a number of flaws that continue to challenge the achievement of its objectives, including pre-trial diversion and prevention. There is no mention of sexual harassment or control issues that do not rise to criminal levels. Nor does VAWA address things like "spiritual abuse" from a Christian Domestic Discipline perspective or "economic abuse" via controlling where a wife or partner spends money or how it is spent.

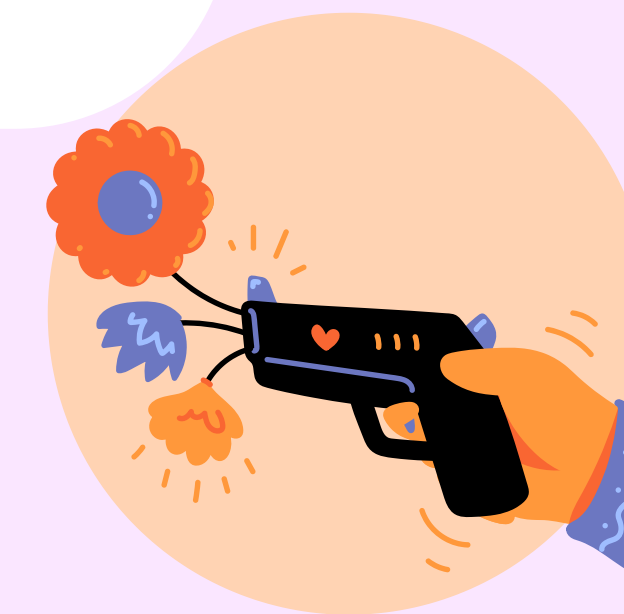
## POOR DATA

Victims of domestic violence often choose not to report the abuse to police due to fear of the abuser, fear of the law enforcement process, and fear of losing the support of loved ones. The number of acknowledged violent acts within a case is often difficult to ascertain due to a legal system that sometimes inadvertently penalizes victims more than the perpetrators.

## ECONOMIC IMPACT

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) approximates that the lifetime cost of a single act of intimate partner violence is approximately \$3.6 trillion.

Productivity Lost  
Mental Health Assistance  
Future Earning Potential  
Healthcare



### SELECTED REFERENCES:

- Douglas, H. (2021). Policing intimate partner violence. *Women, Intimate Partner Violence, and the Law*, 120–149. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190071783.003.0006>
- Goodmark, L. (2020). Reimagining Vawa: Why criminalization is a failed policy and what a non-carceral VAWA could look like. *Violence Against Women*, 27(1), 84–101. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801220949686>
- Sorenson, S. B., & Spear, D. (2018). New data on intimate partner violence and intimate relationships: Implications for gun laws and Federal Data Collection. *Preventive Medicine*, 107, 103–108. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2018.01.005>