NEW YORK STATE | Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence

Misconceptions of Domestic and Gender-Based Violence in New York State:

A Public Opinion Poll by the NYS Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence

To develop a clearer understanding of the common misconceptions about domestic and gender-based violence that exist across New York State, Governor Hochul directed the New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence (OPDV) to conduct a public opinion poll of 5,000 New Yorkers.
(This was a non-scientific nor research-based survey)

The findings were clear—while domestic and gender-based violence impacts one in three women and one in ten men, 39% of New Yorkers do not believe it is an issue in their community, even though nearly 70% of respondents know someone who is or was in an abusive relationship.

Additionally, the survey analyzed how New Yorkers view the state's response to domestic and gender-based violence as well as its causes, impact, and prevalence.

Key Findings

Of the **5,000** people polled, **39%** said they think gender-based violence is not an issue in their community. Yet when you look at the statistics, gender-based violence impacts almost everyone, albeit not equally.

Women are more likely than men to know someone, including themselves, who *is or was* a victim of gender-based violence, **75%** and **70%** respectively

68% of women feel confident that they know what domestic and sexual violence is, compared to **61%** of men

65% of women and **45%** of men surveyed think that domestic violence has gotten worse in their lifetime

21% of men think that domestic violence is only physical abuse compared to **16%** of women

While a person's understanding of gender-based violence is key to addressing the issue, only **17**% of New Yorkers think education is the most important tool for ending it.

- **42%** said that New York should increase accountability/penalties for abusive partners
- **34.1%** think the most important way to end domestic violence is to expand services for survivors

Thought Starters

- Whether or not they know someone who has experienced gender-based violence, many New Yorkers are reluctant to admit that it's an issue in their community. Many people see gender-based violence as something that happens to other people, not themselves, their families, and friends, so they turn a blind eye to the issue—despite **70% of respondents** reporting they know someone who has been impacted by gender-based violence.
- New Yorkers generally feel the issue of **domestic violence is getting worse, not bette**r. This is especially true for older New Yorkers, who make up the largest group of people who believe that the issue has gotten worse in their lifetime.
- When asked, New Yorkers were **confused by the cause of gender-based violence**, pointing towards alcohol, anger, stress, loss of control, and poverty and lack of education as causes of abuse.
    - These results show that **New Yorkers need to be better informed** about the effects of toxic stereotypes and problematic gender-norms, which can perpetuate violent, abusive relationships and induce trauma.
    - Many New Yorkers **(42%)** believe we should increase accountability/penalties for perpetrators - because only one thing causes abuse, the abusive partner.
- Most New Yorkers—**71 %**—would talk to their friends directly if they suspected they were victims of domestic violence. Problematically, **25 %** of respondents would confront the suspected abuser, which is almost never the correct response given that confrontation can put a survivor in greater danger.
- At OPDV, we aspire to build a generation of New Yorkers better equipped to **identify the many forms of abuse in all relationships** and take action against it.

What Now?

At OPDV, we know and understand that gender-based violence is an issue that negatively impacts our society and warrants a robust response. Because it is a complex and widespread issue, protecting survivors requires a survivor-centered, trauma-informed, and culturally responsive approach in which education plays a significant role.

We are making changes for the better to meet this need.

Governor Hochul has been a champion in the fight against gender-based violence her entire life, and continues to make addressing domestic and gender-based violence a priority of her administration. Changes under her leadership in funding, human rights protections, and gun laws greatly increase New York State's response to and support for survivors.

We won't stop there.

OPDV will continue to advocate for more protections and support for victims and survivors of domestic violence.

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