GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE MEDIA GUIDE

A resource for journalists covering gender-based violence in New York State

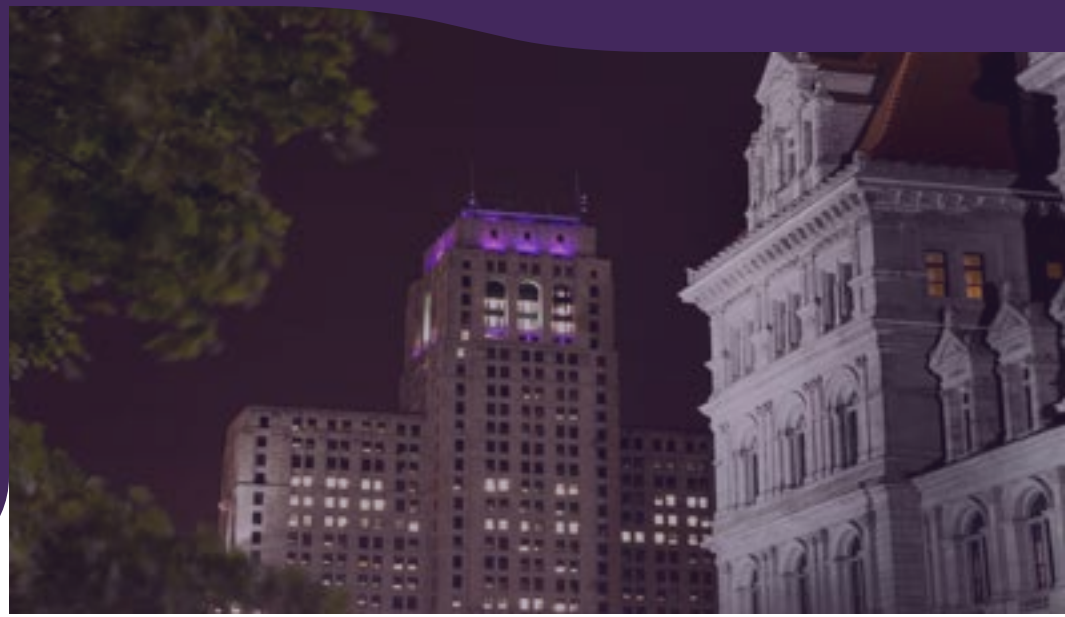
NEW YORK STATE
Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

New York State is a national leader in addressing gender-based violence (GBV). This guide is designed to help journalists report on domestic violence and other forms of GBV in ways that are accurate, responsible, and can help you be:

- **Survivor-centered**
- **Trauma-informed**
- **Culturally responsive**

Reporting choices matter. Language, framing, images, and statistics can either inform the public responsibly or unintentionally cause harm.



HOW YOUR REPORTING CAN HELP

Journalists play a powerful role in connecting survivors to help.

Always include the New York State Domestic and Sexual Violence Hotline

> **CALL: 800-942-6906**
>
> **TEXT: 844-997-2121**
>
> **CHAT: OPDV.NY.GOV**

- Free
- Confidential
- Available 24/7
- Available in most languages
- Connects callers to local providers

Including the hotline in every story about a domestic violence case ensures that coverage can directly support someone in need. The hotline can be included at the end of a story:

> ***"If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence, help is always available. Call the New York State Domestic and Sexual Violence Hotline to be connected to resources."***

ABOUT THE OFFICE FOR THE PREVENTION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (OPDV)

New York is the only state in the nation with a Cabinet-level executive state agency dedicated to addressing gender-based violence.

Established in 1992, OPDV works to improve New York State's response to and prevention of domestic violence. Today, its work includes all forms of gender-based violence, including:

- Domestic violence
- Sexual assault
- Stalking
- Human trafficking
- Teen dating violence
- Technology-facilitated abuse

For more information, contact us:
518-457-5800
opdvpublicinfo@opdv.ny.gov
https://opdv.ny.gov

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CORE PRINCIPLES FOR REPORTING

Survivor-Centered

Survivors are the experts in their own lives. A survivor-centered approach:

- Prioritizes a survivor's safety, rights, and choices
- Gives control back to the person who experienced harm
- Avoids re-traumatization
- Supports dignity and self-determination

Make sure survivors understand how and where their story will appear. Do not pressure them to share more than they want. Protect their safety. Publishing details about locations, routines, or relationships can create risks for the survivor.

Trauma-Informed

Trauma is common among people who experience violence. A trauma-informed approach:

- Recognizes the signs and impacts of trauma, including trauma that happened before and after the event in question
- Avoids practices that may trigger harm
- Uses careful language and imagery

Avoid sensational headlines, graphic details, or images of injuries. Focus on facts and context rather than shock value. Be aware that sources may be re-experiencing trauma during interviews.

Culturally Responsive

Survivors come from many communities and identities. A culturally responsive approach:

- Recognizes how race, culture, gender identity, immigration status, disability, and other identities affect a survivor's experience and access to help
- Includes culturally specific resources when possible
- Avoids stereotypes or assumptions about who experiences GVB

Be mindful that some communities face higher risks and greater barriers to help. Seek out diverse voices and community-based experts, not only law enforcement and government sources.

For expert comments, statistics, or background on any GBV-related story, contact OPDV's Communications office at press@opdv.ny.gov.

UNDERSTANDING GBV CRIME STATISTICS

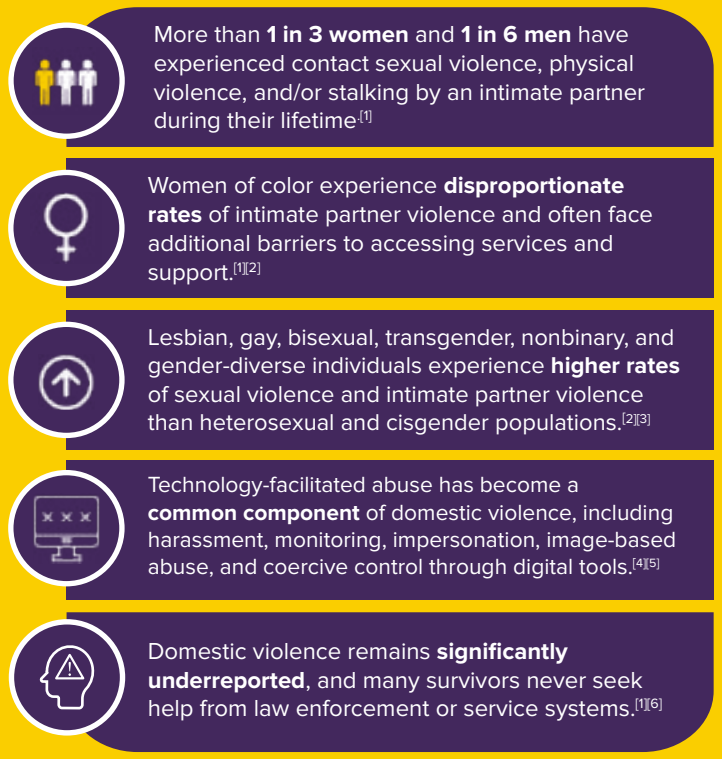
When crime data is released, context matters. An increase in reports or arrests does not necessarily mean violence is increasing. It may mean:

- More survivors feel safe reporting
- More people understand what abuse looks like
- Law enforcement and communities are responding differently

GBV remains one of the most underreported crimes. Many survivors stay silent due to fear, safety concerns, financial dependence, cultural pressures, or lack of access to resources.

KEY FACTS FOR CONTEXT

When reporting on GBV, the following statistics provide helpful context:



Always seek comment from OPDV or local DV service providers when contextualizing data.

WHAT JOURNALISTS SHOULD KNOW

Domestic violence is a pattern of behavior used to gain and maintain power and control. **It is not caused by:**

- Alcohol or drug use
- Mental illness
- Stress
- Financial problems

Substance use, mental health conditions, and stress may co-occur with abusive behaviors, but they are not causes. Framing them as causes shifts responsibility away from the person causing harm and onto external factors.

Avoid Victim-Blaming Language

Instead of asking, “Why didn’t they leave?” consider:

- Leaving can increase danger. The most dangerous time for a survivor is often when they attempt to leave. Violence frequently escalates during separation, and the increased risk of harm can last for up to two years.
- Survivors may fear serious injury or death.
- Children, finances, housing, immigration status, and cultural expectations can all affect decisions.
- Asking why a survivor didn’t leave implies responsibility for the abuse. Better questions focus on the actions of the person causing harm.

AWARENESS MONTHS & REPORTING OPPORTUNITIES

These observances provide opportunities for coverage, feature stories, and resource pieces:

Jan.	Stalking Awareness Month | Human Trafficking Prevention Month
Feb.	Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month
Mar.	Traumatic Brain Injury Awareness Month
Apr.	Sexual Assault Awareness Month
May	Mental Health Awareness Month
Jun.	Pride Month
Sep.	Suicide Prevention Awareness Month
Oct.	Domestic Violence Awareness Month
Nov. 25 - Dec. 10	16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence

[1] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). About Intimate Partner Violence. National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Updated February 11, 2026.
[2] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS). National Center for Injury Prevention and Control.
[3] National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP). Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and HIV-Affected Intimate Partner Violence Reports.
[4] National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV). Safety Net Project.
[5] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Preventing Intimate Partner Violence Across the Lifespan.
[6] U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. Criminal Victimization Reports.

DEFINITIONS

Gender-Based Violence (GBV)
Harm or threats of harm based on someone's actual or perceived sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or related characteristics. Anyone can experience GBV. Women and girls are disproportionately impacted.

Domestic Violence
A pattern of behavior used to maintain power and control over an intimate partner. It may include physical, emotional, financial, sexual, or psychological abuse.

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)
Abuse or aggression that occurs in a romantic relationship, including current or former spouses and dating partners. Often used interchangeably with domestic violence in research and advocacy contexts.

Sexual Violence
Sexual activity without consent, including harassment, assault, or rape.

Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence
The misuse of or manipulation of technology to commit any harmful threat or act directed at an individual group based on actual or perceived sex, gender, gender identity, sex characteristics, or sexual orientation.

Coercion
Persuading someone to do something by using force or threats.

Coercive Control
An act or pattern of acts, threats, humiliation, and intimidation that is used to harm, punish, or frighten the victim.

Reproductive Coercion
Controlling someone's reproductive choices, including pregnancy or contraception.

Human Trafficking
Using force, fraud, or coercion to compel labor or commercial sex.

Stalking
Repeated, unwanted pursuit or harassment that causes fear.

DATA & RESOURCES

OPDV's Gender-Based Violence Dashboard provides statewide data on domestic violence and other forms of GBV, as well as service availability across New York. For more information:

GBV Dashboard	**opdv.ny.gov/initiatives**
Data inquiries	**data@opdv.ny.gov**
Media inquiries	**opdv.ny.gov**

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