Lesbians, gays and the law

Legal status of homosexuality 2007

In many countries anti-gay laws specify male homosexuality or male sexual acts, but in all cases the laws also apply to lesbians. Legal prohibitions are typically written against specific sexual acts, but often are wielded broadly to police gays and lesbians.

- criminalized in national law and subject to the death penalty
- criminalized in national law
- legal or no laws are in place that criminalize homosexuality
- unknown or unclear

Netherlands 2001
First country to allow same-sex couples to marry on same terms as heterosexuals.

Iraq
Death penalty may apply under sharia laws that now have legal standing.

South Africa 1994
First country to include equal protection for lesbians and gays in a national constitution.

Iran
Since 1979, more than 4,000 people have been executed for homosexuality.

Global views on homosexuality

Percentage of people who say that homosexuality should be accepted by society 2003
Domestic Violence

For millions of women, the home is the most dangerous place they could be. Far from being a place of safety, the family is often a cradle of violence. Women suffer cruelties in their homes every day, from all family members. Domestic violence is a means of keeping women "in their place," literally confined to relationship, household, or family structures defined by patriarchal authority. Violence against women sustains particular sexual, family, and household structures, and keeps women subordinate to them.

Domestic violence is the most ubiquitous constant in women's lives around the world. There is virtually no place where it is not a significant problem, and women of no race, class, or age are exempt from its reach. Statistics on domestic violence are notoriously unreliable. What information we do have about it is only available because of concerted campaigns by women to bring attention to this issue.

Violence against women is often ignored or even condoned by the state on the grounds that it is a "private" matter.

When women say it's OK

Percentage of women who say it is acceptable for a husband to beat his wife for one or more specific reasons – burning food, arguing with him, going out without telling him, neglecting the children, refusing sex
2004 selected countries

When women say it's not OK

Percentage of women who say it is not acceptable for a husband to beat his wife
2004 selected countries

Domestic violence costs more than $1 billion a year in medical costs alone; 22%-35% of women who visit a hospital emergency room do so because of domestic violence.

Suffering in silence

Percentage of physically abused women who never told family or officials about their abuse
2002 selected countries
Murder

At least one woman in three in the world has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime by a member of her family. For the majority of such women, the abuse is repeated over months or years. In an astonishing number of cases, "ordinary" domestic violence culminates in murder. Violence against women often escalates when the woman tries to leave an abusive relationship – this is when violent partners are most likely to turn to murder.

Some patterns of women-murder are culture and place-specific: dowry-burnings in India and Pakistan, bride-price murders in Zambia, gun-murders in the USA. "Honor killing" is a term used to identify a form of legally or socially sanctioned revenge exercised within a family against a woman who is deemed to have soiled the family's honor, usually through behavior that is judged to be sexually inappropriate. Women's human rights activists are increasing pressure on governments to take action against honor killings, but many governments are reluctant to do so.

Homicide in the USA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>White American</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Women by dome

In any one most recent year, 23 women are killed by intimate partners.