



Violence Against Women

“We live in a society where sexual violence towards women has become normalized. As with other types of sexual violence, conversations surrounding sex trafficking tend to focus on the victims' guilt.”

-Melissa Withers

Slavery stems from power imbalances. For women, the imbalance of gender inequality affects them at a fundamental level. It is embedded in the fabric of society's laws and social norms, sitting at the core of the discrimination and violence they suffer. Millions of women are impacted by gender violence, rape, battering, sexual abuse, and sexual harassment. Studies shows that globally, **one in five women will be a victim of rape, attempted rape, or physical, emotional or mental abuse in their lifetime.**

At first glance, violence against women may appear to be a women's issue. It is, after all, women being harassed on the street, living in abusive relationships, recovering from rape, and receiving therapy to deal with the sexual abuse they suffered as children. It is women ordering their daily lives around the threat of men's violence—something most women think about on a daily basis. But this is a view centered only around the victim and is missing a critical piece of the issue: the perpetrator.

Who is the perpetrator of violence against women?

Studies show that women perpetrate less than one percent of rapes. To state this another way, **men commit over 99 percent of rapes.** Whether the victims are female or male (91 percent are female), men are overwhelmingly the perpetrators. This is not just a women's issue.

The pain and suffering of men's violence against women is in clear view. Yet it is rare to find any in-depth discussion about the culture producing violent men. We lack scrutiny and coordinated action around the underlying social factors contributing to the pandemic of violence against women. Men, not women, will be the ones to stop violence against women. Violence has no place within healthy masculinity, but the correlation is clear and requires interference. There is a better way for men that will create a better world for women, and we need to work together to create a path towards it.

“When we ask men to reject sexism and the abuse of women, we are not taking something away from them. Rather, we are giving them something precious—a vision of manhood that does not depend on putting down others to lift themselves. When a man stands up for social justice, nonviolence, and basic human rights for women as much as for men, he is acting in the best traditions of our civilization. That makes him a better man and a better human being.” –Jackson Katz



Gender's far-reaching effect

Aside from gender-based violence, gender itself stacks the odds against girls from before they are born. As girls transition through childhood, adolescence and adult life, the impact of discrimination multiplies and gender inequality grows. In many countries, fewer girls attend school and have access to medical care than boys. UNESCO estimates that 264 million children between the ages of six and seventeen do not attend school, most of whom are girls. This feeds into the vulnerability of uneducated girls, making them easy targets for traffickers as they age.

A lack of education not only creates vulnerability in youth, but also restricts employment opportunities for women. Women already have access to fewer economic resources than men, and globally, women's labor force participation is 31 percentage points below that of men. Women are more likely than men to not only lack education, but to end up in poverty, report food insecurity, work in the riskiest sectors of the informal economy, and be forced into sex trafficking and exploitation. Gendered poverty, lack of viable employment opportunities, lack of control over financial resources, and limited access to education all exacerbate the vulnerability of women and girls to trafficking.

Without access to education and better employment opportunities, and with gender-based violence embedded as a societal norm across the globe, women are at greater risk of sex trafficking and exploitation.

In every part of the world, gender has a significant impact on vulnerability to sex trafficking and exploitation. Females account for:

- 73% of victims in Asia and the Pacific
- 71% of victims in Africa
- 67% of victims in Europe and Central Asia
- 63% of victims in North and South America

**Attaining accurate stats from the MENA or Middle East regions is not possible at this time*

Modern slavery affects everyone, but there is no escaping the heavier female burden. **Women and girls account for 71% of all trafficked victims detected globally**, with young girls representing almost three-quarters of identified child trafficking victims. This equates to an estimated **one in every 130 women and girls living in sex trafficking and exploitation in 2023**. (*Stacked Odds (Walk Free)*)

Sex trafficking and exploitation are enabled by every kinds of power imbalance—economic, societal, political, and more—but gender sits at the base of it all. Inequality and discrimination are embedded into society through laws, familial and community expectations, and social norms, making women more vulnerable to exploitation across the board—and the more significant the gender gap across a country's health, education, and economic status, the higher the prevalence of exploitation such as sexual violence, domestic servitude, and forced marriage.

Trafficking for sexual exploitation is the most predominant form of global trafficking currently detected, accounting for 54% of all trafficking—and **females represent 96% of victims trafficked for sexual exploitation**. Traffickers who exploit women for other purposes, such as forced labor, begging, and domestic servitude, commonly exert sexual violence over victims as a means of coercion and control.



The fight against sex trafficking and exploitation ensures people have the most basic human right: freedom. At its most fundamental level, this means the freedom to control one's body, refuse or terminate work, and decide when and whom to marry. Protecting that freedom, particularly for women and girls, is critical to improving our economies and societies.

At Atlas Free, we believe that every life was made for freedom. We are paving a path for the elimination of sexual trafficking and exploitation through strategy and collaboration. We stand for the shifting of culture and the elevation of women's rights and safety, and we won't stop until exploitation does.

"Let's empower women. Let's put women's rights in the constitution. Let's enshrine them in law, and then she'll start to feel safe."

- Sophie Otiende, Feminist and Survivor Advocate

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