

In US, a decline in domestic violence

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By **Stacy Teicher Khadaroo**, Staff writer ▼ | AUGUST 26, 2014

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Annual rates of nonfatal domestic violence fell by 63 percent between 1994 and 2012 – from 13.5 victimizations per 1,000 people to 5 per 1,000. This is a count by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) of such crimes as rape, assault, and robbery committed by intimate partners, former partners, or family members. The figures are based on a national survey and include both reported and unreported crimes against people over age 12.

In a BJS count of serious intimate partner violence against women, the numbers dropped 72 percent between 1994 and 2011. And from 1993 to 2007, the annual number of female victims of homicides by intimate partners declined from 2,200 to 1,640; male victims from 1,100 to 700.

The Violence Against Women Act “put real money behind the issue for the first time: \$1.62 billion.... Nobody did anything for women at that time that had a ‘b’ after it” in terms of funding, says Kim Gandy, president and chief executive officer of the Washington-based National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV).

The money helped hire and train police and raise awareness among prosecutors and judges, and bring them together with community groups and experts to create comprehensive plans, Ms. Gandy says. “It was an enormous undertaking and we’re still working out how to get there, but we get better at it every year.”

Other factors that have likely influenced the decline in domestic violence include the aging of the population and the improved economic status of women.

Whether the progress can be sustained is another question. Domestic violence programs have endured cuts from many funding sources in recent years. A 2013 NNEDV survey of 1,649 domestic violence programs found that 66,581 people were served in a single 24-hour period. In that same 24 hours, however, 9,641 requests for shelter, transportation, legal services, or other help couldn’t be met because of insufficient resources.

