

# Abortion Access and Intimate Partner Violence

Access to safe and legal abortion is a critical resource for survivors of intimate partner violence as pregnancy can further exacerbate the violence survivors experience.

**IN THE UNITED STATES, HOMICIDE IS THE LEADING FACTOR OF DEATH DURING PREGNANCY AND THE POSTPARTUM PERIOD FOR WOMEN.**<sup>1</sup> Restrictions on abortion care disproportionately impact women of color, who experience alarmingly high rates of intimate partner homicide and reproductive coercion. Black women and girls experience pregnancy-related intimate partner homicide at a rate eight times greater than their non-pregnant peers.<sup>2</sup>

It is critical to note that many survivors become pregnant as a result of reproductive coercion. 10.3 million women in the U.S. have had a partner who tried to get them pregnant against their will or who refused to wear a condom, and 2.1 million women have become pregnant as a result of rape by an intimate partner.<sup>3</sup>

## WHAT IS REPRODUCTIVE COERCION?

Reproductive coercion is a form of sexual violence that involves exerting power and control over reproduction through interference with contraception use and pregnancy pressure.<sup>4</sup>

### Examples of REPRODUCTIVE COERCION include:

- **Sabotage of contraceptive methods**—including, but not limited to, removing a condom during sex, withholding birth control pills, and/or removing vaginal rings or IUDs
- **Intentionally exposing a partner to a sexually transmitted infection (STI) and or HIV**
- **Threatening violence and/or being violent** toward a partner if they do not consent to having sex
- **Pressuring a partner to become pregnant** when they do not wish to become pregnant
- **Forcing a partner to carry a pregnancy to term or to terminate a pregnancy** against their wishes

## HOW ABORTION ACCESS IMPACTS SURVIVORS:



**6-22%**

of women have an abortion because of an abusive partner.<sup>5</sup>

Among women seeking an abortion, **having an abortion was associated with a reduction of physical violence over time from the abuser**, whereas carrying the pregnancy to term resulted in sustained physical violence over time.<sup>6</sup>

**10%**

A person's odds of experiencing **intimate partner violence increases by 10 percent** with each pregnancy.<sup>7</sup>

Advocacy for abortion access and economic security aligns with the Women's Fund values of: **Equity, Bold Impact, Collaboration, Community Voice, Intersectionality and Bodily Autonomy**. To learn more about our mission, vision and values, visit [www.OmahaWomensFund.org](http://www.OmahaWomensFund.org).

**Restrictions to abortion care will cause irreparable harm to survivors and serve as additional barriers for those seeking to leave an abusive relationship.** For example, a survivor may stay with an abusive partner if they are unable to financially support the child on their own. People denied access to abortion care are more likely than someone who receives abortion care to experience economic insecurity lasting several years.<sup>8</sup> A survivor may also stay with an abuser if the abuser threatens legal action to seek sole custody of the child.



**Exceptions offered to survivors of domestic and sexual abuse in abortion restrictions can do more harm by requiring a survivor to prove their trauma and disclose the abuse they have experienced to law enforcement.** This process can be retraumatizing, burdensome, and potentially bring more danger to the survivor if they are still in contact with the abuser.

Reproductive autonomy and access to comprehensive abortion care are imperative for survivors seeking to establish physical and economic freedom independent from their abusers and, as a result, to leave an abusive relationship.

<sup>1</sup> Wallace et al. (Nov 2021). "Homicide During Pregnancy and the Postpartum Period in the United States, 2018-2019." [https://journals.lww.com/greenjournal/Fulltext/2021/11000/Homicide\\_During\\_Pregnancy\\_and\\_the\\_Postpartum.10.aspx](https://journals.lww.com/greenjournal/Fulltext/2021/11000/Homicide_During_Pregnancy_and_the_Postpartum.10.aspx)

<sup>2</sup> Kivisto et al. (Feb 2021). "Racial Disparities in Pregnancy-Associated Intimate Partner Homicide." <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0886260521990831>

<sup>3</sup> Hasstedt, K. & Rowan, A. (July 2016). "Understanding Intimate Partner Violence as a Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Issue in the United States." <https://www.guttmacher.org/gpr/2016/07/understanding-intimate-partner-violence-sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-rights-issue>

<sup>4</sup> Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). "Understanding Pregnancy Resulting from Rape in the United States." <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/sexualviolence/understanding-RRP-inUS.html>

<sup>5</sup> Roberts et al. (Sep 2014). "Risk of Violence from the Man Involved in the Pregnancy After Receiving or Being Denied an Abortion." <https://bmcmedicine.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12916-014-0144-z>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs. (2013). "Reproductive Justice." [http://www.ncdsv.org/images/WCSAP\\_Connections-Reproductive-Justice\\_Summer2013.pdf](http://www.ncdsv.org/images/WCSAP_Connections-Reproductive-Justice_Summer2013.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Greene et al. (Nov 2017). "Socioeconomic Outcomes of Women Who Receive and Women Who Are Denied Wanted Abortions in the United States." <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/10.2105/AJPH.2017.304247>