

## **Violence Against Women Online Resources**

### *Overview and Usage*

**October 1, 2001 – September 30, 2002**

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## **Executive Summary**

Violence Against Women Online Resources (VAWOR) is a web site that provides law, criminal justice, and social service professionals with current information on interventions to stop violence against women. It is a cooperative project between the Minnesota Center Against Violence and Abuse (MINCAVA) within the School of Social Work at the University of Minnesota and the Office on Violence Against Women, Office of Justice Programs, United States Department of Justice.

Violence Against Women Online Resources offers over 150 full text documents related to sexual assault, domestic violence and stalking. VAWOR staff solicit content for the site from national and international organizations in order to disseminate state-of-the art resource materials for criminal justice professionals, state coalitions, tribal coalitions and victim advocacy groups about effective interventions to violence against women. The site integrates stratified resources into a comprehensive, centralized, user-friendly site that meets the demands of busy professionals who require immediate access to quality resources. Between October 1, 2001 to September 30, 2002, VAWOR added 36 new items to the site's Document Library, which contains papers, reports, research findings, curricula, presentations, training manuals and multi-media resources related to violence against women.

Usage of the site has been on a steady incline since its development in 1997. Today, the site averages 1,096 user sessions per day, an increase of 25% from the previous year. A three-year glance at user sessions demonstrates the site's increasing user-base from an average of approximately 200 user sessions per day in 1999 to almost 1,100 user sessions per day in 2002. Site users primarily come from the United States, however, usage statistics reveal that VAWOR also has an international presence in Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, Saudi Arabia, Japan, Singapore, Germany, and many other countries.

VAWOR also provides individualized technical assistance through its automated web form. More than 655 requests for information were sent to VAWOR staff between October 1, 2001 and September 30, 2002. Concerned citizens, students, victims and professionals sent in the majority of requests for technical assistance, predominantly in the areas of research and networking. Requests from victims represented 23% of requests, an 8% decrease from last year, which may be attributed to the implementation of the site's new web form that educates users regarding Internet safety and privacy before allowing any information to be submitted.

VAWOR initiated several new features during the report period that improved the site as content grew, categories changed and users' needs became more apparent. Significant accomplishments include the addition of an Internet safety page and features; an improved user feedback form; a virus and SPAM scanner for the server; a new search engine, Google; and the conversion toward using XML as the primary document format, which supports representation of documents in many different formats and optimal ADA compliance.

## **Introduction**

This document provides an overview of Violence Against Women Online Resources website and a summary of usage data from October 1, 2001 through September 30, 2002. This report describes the project's funding, staffing structure, usage statistics, and new content acquisitions during the report period.

Violence Against Women Online Resources is a cooperative project between the Minnesota Center Against Violence and Abuse (MINCAVA) within the School of Social Work at the University of Minnesota and the Office on Violence Against Women, Office of Justice Programs, United States Department of Justice. The site provides law, criminal justice, and social service professionals with current information on interventions to stop violence against women.

## **Funding**

VAWOR is supported by grant number 98-WT-VX-K001 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

## **Organizational Structure**

Approximately 2.5 FTE staff members support VAWOR, including a full-time Program Director; a .75 FTE Internet Systems Designer and Administrator; a half-time graduate assistant; a partial-time Information Requests Coordinator; a partial-time administrative assistant; and a small percentage of time from MINCAVA's Director.

The site is advised by a 20-member National Advisory Board comprised of criminal justice and related professionals who set topic priorities and review new content for the site.

MINCAVA's Executive Director, Jeffrey L. Edleson supervises the Director of Violence Against Women Online Resources.

Ann L. Kranz, VAWOR Director, manages the daily operations of the site, including project design, management and staff supervision. She acts as the key liaison to the Office on Violence Against Women and the National Advisory Board.

Russ Burdick, Internet Systems Designer and Administrator, is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the site's mail, web, and database servers. He performs security audits and updates, web programming and administration.

Jennifer Root, Information Requests Coordinator, responds to requests for technical assistance received through the site's web form by providing information and referral. She also collects data on the number and nature of these requests.

Yukiko Nakajima, Coding Specialist (Graduate Assistant), supports the project by identifying and obtaining material for the site, coding content into XML and HTML, and entering and updating data into the site's databases.

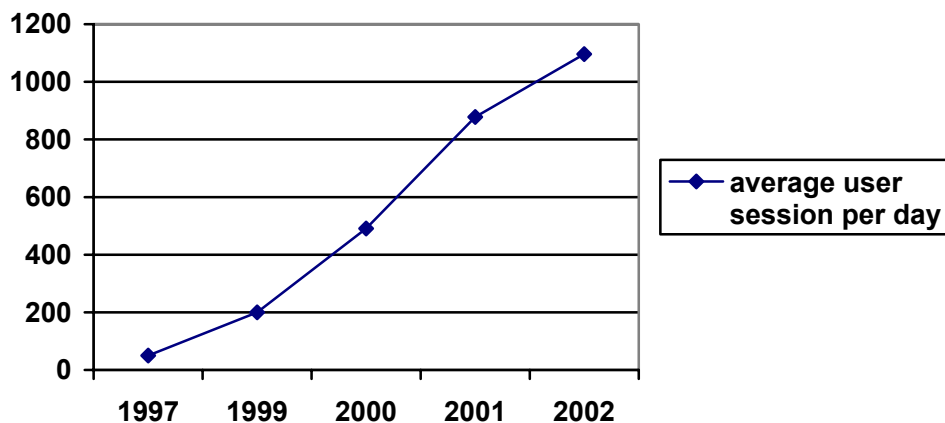
Patricia Wright, Principal Administrative Specialist, works closely with project staff to coordinate correspondence, order supplies, and provide support related to online publishing.

### Site Usage

Since its inception in 1997, Violence Against Women Online Resources has experienced tremendous growth in site usage. The graph below illustrates the average number of user sessions per day since the site originated. Such data provides insight about how many times per day users conduct a session on the site. A 'user' is considered a unique person accessing the site. A user commits 'hits' on the site when visiting various pages on the website. Therefore, one user may commit several hits during a single user session. However, because a single person can also perform multiple sessions in a given day, this table does not inform us about the number of unique people accessing the site per day.

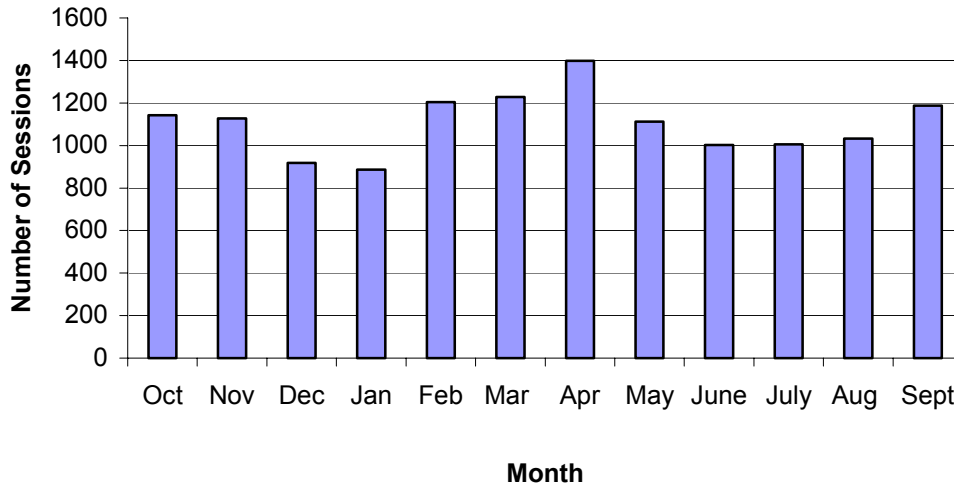
A multi-year glance at user sessions demonstrates the site's steadily increasing user-base from an average of approximately 50 user sessions per day in 1997; 200 user sessions per day in 1999; and almost 1,100 user sessions per day in 2002. Between October 1, 2001 and September 30, 2002, the site averaged 1,096 user sessions per day, an increase of 25% from the previous year.

**Multi-year Glance at User Sessions**



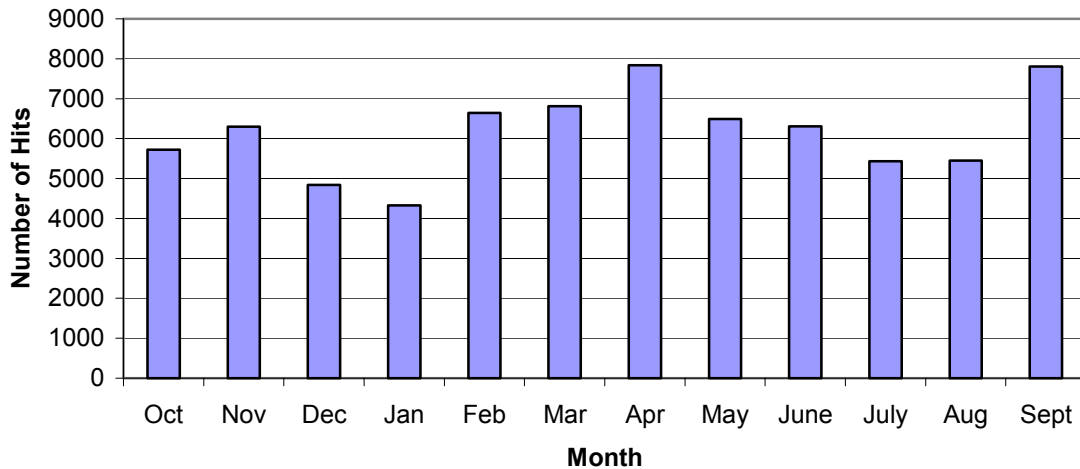
The following tables provide a monthly breakdown of user sessions and hits per day from October 1, 2001 through September 30, 2002. The lowest usage month was January 2002 with 886 user sessions per day. The highest was April 2002 with 1,398 user sessions per day. The site averaged 1,096 user sessions per day for the report period.

**Average Number of User Sessions per Day  
October 1, 2001 – September 30, 2002**

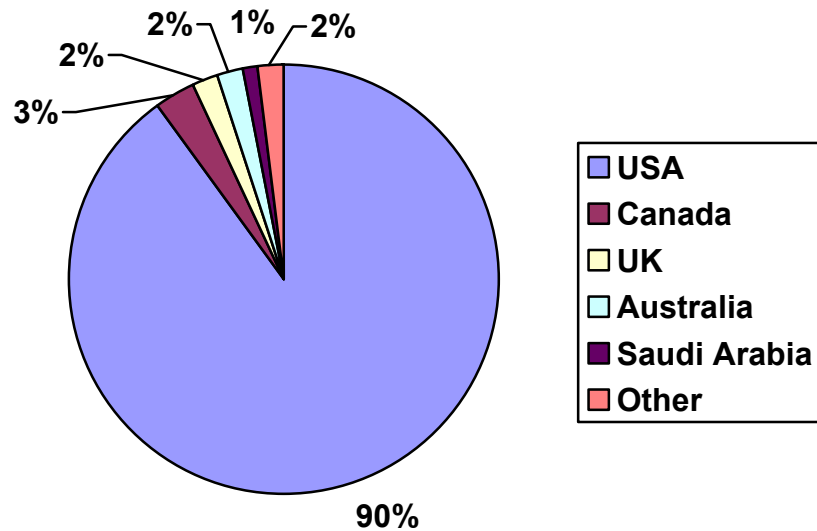


The term ‘hit’ can be thought of as the number of times the site was accessed by users. The average number of hits per day ranges from 4,325 in January 2002 to 7,839 in April 2002. On average, the site received approximately 6,056 hits per day, an increase of 51% from the previous year.

**Average Number of Hits per Day  
October 1, 2001 – September 30, 2002**



**Most Active Countries**  
**October 1, 2001 – September 30, 2002**



The above chart represents the most active countries in terms of site usage. The United States represented the most active country between October 1, 2001 – September 30, 2002 with an average of 261,293 user sessions (90%) for the report period. The top five countries include:

1. United States (90%)
2. Canada (3%)
3. UK (2%)
4. Australia (2%)
5. Saudi Arabia (1%)

Other users accessing the site come countries including but not limited to:

- Japan
- Singapore
- Germany
- New Zealand (Aotearoa)
- Malaysia
- Belgium
- Arab Emirates
- Norway
- Mexico

The following chart represents the top ten most downloaded PDF documents on the site.

**Top 10 Downloaded PDF Documents  
October 1, 2001 – September 30, 2002**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Total Number of Downloads</b>
An Advocates Guide to Full Faith and Credit	4,311
Police Response to Crimes of Sexual Assault: A Training Curriculum (Modules 1, 2 , 3 and 5)	3,950
Evidence Collection and Care of the Sexual Assault Survivor: The SANE-SART Response	2,498
Marital Rape	1,841
Domestic Violence Organizations Online: Risks, Ethical Dilemmas, and Liability Issues	1,839
DVERT's Training CD Lesson Plan	1,446
Considering the Victim in the Implementation of Megan's Laws	1,326
Suspect Typology; Profiling the Sex Offender	1,264
Increasing Your Safety: Full Faith and Credit for Protection Orders	1,130
Critique of the "Battered Woman Syndrome" Model	710

The following chart represents the top ten most accessed HTML documents on the site.

**Top 10 Accessed HTML Documents  
October 1, 2001 – September 30, 2002**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Number of User Sessions</b>
Marital Rape	47,296
Handbook for statutory rape issues	11,382
Child Custody and Visitation Decisions in Domestic Violence Cases	10,631
Poverty, Welfare and Battered Women: What Does the Research Tell Us?	8,092
Abuse and Women with Disabilities	7,845
Problems Associated with Children's Witnessing of Domestic Violence	6,871
Annual Report on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Domestic Violence	5,676
Critique of the "Battered Woman Syndrome" Model	5,264
Certification of Protection/Restraining Order	4,609
Domestic Violence Organizations Online: Risks, Ethical Dilemmas, and Liability Issues	2,867

## Site Development

Violence Against Women Online Resources offers over 150 full text documents related to sexual assault, domestic violence and stalking. Staff members solicit content for the site from national and international organizations. The site houses papers, reports, research findings, curricula, presentations, training manuals and multi-media resources related to violence against women.

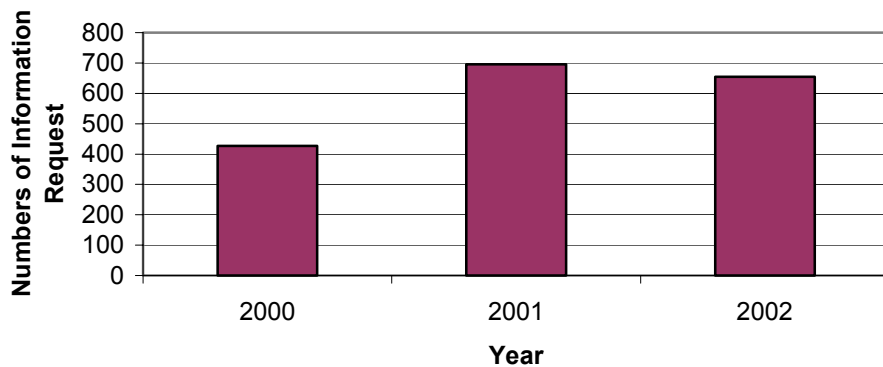
From October 1, 2001 – September 30, 2002, VAWOR added the following 36 items to the website:

1. Minnesota Rural Project for Women and Child Safety
2. Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault & Stalking Prevention and Intervention in Rural Native American Communities: Training, Research and Education Programs
3. Welfare and Domestic Violence Against Women: Lessons from Research
4. Domestic Violence: A Primary Care Issue for Rural Women
5. Judicial Oversight Demonstration Initiative
6. Preventing Domestic Violence: Clinical Guidelines on Routine Screening
7. Specialized Criminal Domestic Violence Courts
8. Victims' Economic Security and Safety Act (VESSA)
9. Changing Practice: How Domestic Violence Advocates Use Internet and Wireless Communication Technologies
10. Evaluating Violence Against Women Research Reports
11. Helpful or Harmful? How Innovative Communication Technology Affects Survivors of Intimate Violence
12. Immigrant Victims of Domestic Violence: Cultural Challenges and Available Legal Protections
13. The Evaluation of the Coordinated Response to Domestic Violence in Omaha (Phase II): High-Risk Case Review and Information Technology
14. Annual Report on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Domestic Violence in 2000
15. Clearinghouse On Supervised Visitation
16. Increasing Your Safety: Full Faith and Credit for Protection Orders
17. DVERT Training CD and Lesson Plan
18. Violence Against Women Online Resources Site Usage Statistics 2000-2001
19. Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard Law School
20. SafetyEd International
21. Working to Halt Online Abuse (WHOA)
22. Annotated Stalking Bibliography
23. Federal Interstate Stalking Law
24. Housing and Battered Women
25. International Online Resources on Stalking
26. National Reports on Stalking and Other Related Materials
27. Penalties for Interstate Stalking, Interstate Domestic Violence, Interstate Violation of A Protection Order
28. Toolkit to End Violence Against Women
29. Working with Young Men Who Batter: Current Strategies and New Directions
30. An Informed Response:  
An Overview of the Domestic Violence Court Technology Application and Resource Link
31. At the Crossroads of Gender and Racial Discrimination
32. Controversies and Recent Studies of Batterer Intervention Program Effectiveness
33. The Race Dimensions of Trafficking in Persons – Especially Women and Children
34. Mental Health Services for Rape Survivors: Current Issues in Therapeutic Practice
35. Strategies to Improve Supervised Visitation Services in Domestic Violence Cases
36. Employment rights for survivors of abuse

## User Profiles and Information Request Statistics

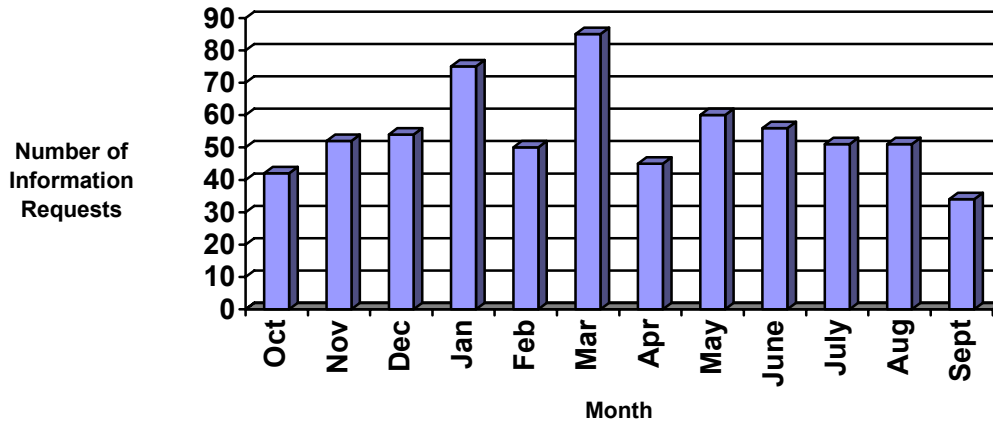
VAWOR provides individualized technical assistance to site users who submit requests electronically through the site's automated web form that educates users regarding Internet safety and privacy before allowing any information to be submitted. A three-year glance at requests reveals that 427 requests were received in 2000; 696 requests in 2001; and 655 requests in 2002, a decrease of 6% from the previous year, which is most likely attributed to the implementation of the new web form. VAWOR staff view this as a positive result of increased online education about Internet security and safety.

**Three-Year Glance at Information Requests  
October 1, 1999 - September 30, 2002**



**Number of Information Requests per Month  
October 1, 2001 – September 30, 2002**

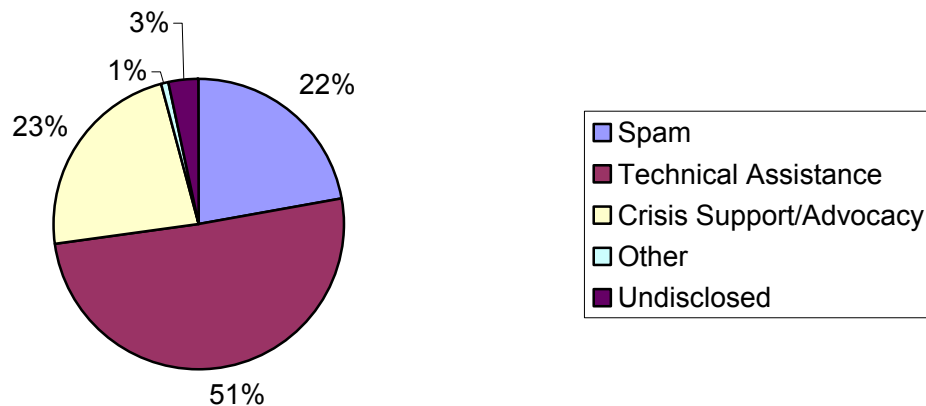
From October 1, 2001 through September 30, 2002, Violence Against Women Online Resources received 655 information requests for individualized technical assistance. Requests ranged from a low of 34 in September 2001 to a high of 85 in March 2002.



## Types of Requests

The majority (51%) of the requests received between October 1, 2001 and September 30, 2002 were identified as technical assistance. Requests for crisis support/advocacy, typically sent by primary and secondary victims, represented 23% of the requests received. Solicitation/Ad (SPAM) accounted for 22% of the messages received. The remaining 4% of the messages were categorized as “other” or “undisclosed.”

**Type of Request Received  
October 1, 2001 – September 30, 2002**



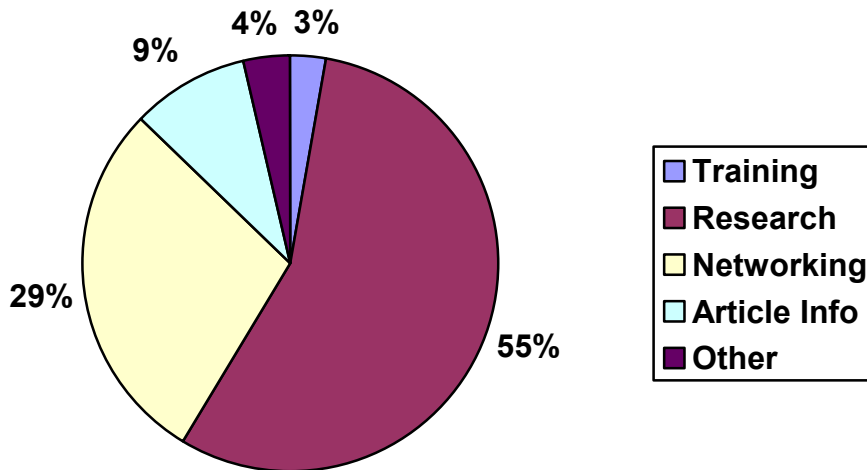
VAWOR identifies the type of request as one of the following five categories:

- (1) Solicitations/Ads (SPAM): Advertisements, chain letters, press releases, mass (listserv) messages, and announcements.
- (2) Technical Assistance: Request for information/resources such as article permission, article information, site navigation, grants/funding, organizational information, action alerts, events/training, and other inquiries regarding locating services/information to related to violence against women.
- (3) Crisis Support/Advocacy: Request for information about supportive/emergency resources for victim/survivor of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking.
- (4) Other: Requests that do not adequately meet the definition of 1-3 as stated above.
- (5) Undisclosed: Email that does not clearly state a specific request and does not adequately meet the definition of 1-4 stated above.

## Types of Technical Assistance

The majority (55%) of the requests for technical assistance were for research; 29% for networking; 9% for article information; 3% for training information; and 4% were “other” requests.

**Type of Technical Assistance**  
**October 1, 2001 – September 30, 2002**



VAWOR defines these types of technical assistance as:

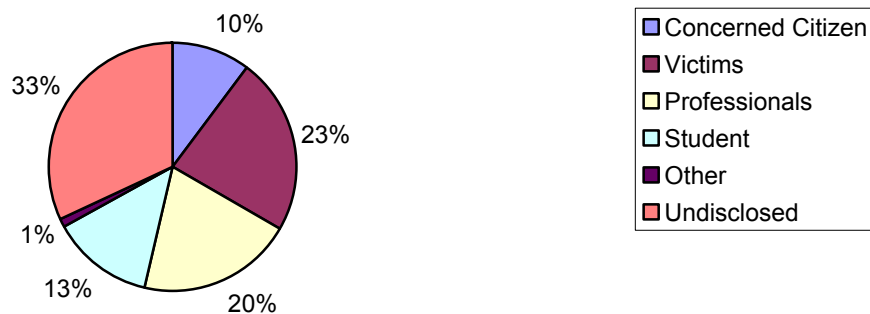
- (1) Training: Requests that indicate/reflect interest in locating training, training manuals, creating training manuals/opportunities, or other activities that are associated with training related to violence against women.
- (2) Research: Requests that are looking for research material, statistics, data, charts, stories, photos, etc. that are to be used for the purposes of publications, research papers, journals, briefs, articles, presentations, seminars, etc.
- (3) Networking: Requests that indicate interest in becoming connected with other people/organizations with similar interests related to violence against women.
- (4) Article Information: Requests that indicate they are looking for a particular author of a document, publishing company, organizational publications, additional materials or other inquiries related to articles/documents.
- (5) Other: Requests that do not adequately meet the definition of 1-4.

## Identity of Requestors

The largest category of requestors (33%) is comprised of “undisclosed” individuals sending ads or solicitations (SPAM). Victims sent in 23% of the requests, an 8% decrease from last year, which is most likely attributed to the implementation of the site’s new web form that educates users regarding Internet safety and privacy before allowing any information to be submitted. Previously, users sent requests directly from their email program. In many situations, this was not safe as information regarding the email was saved on their personal computer, allowing an abuser to potentially know about their activities and messages. Under the new system, a user is first informed about the risks associated with using a computer that an abuser may have access to and how to protect their records and activities. Once they have read the educational information, a message can be sent to VAWOR through the automated web form. To further protect their safety, when a user submits a request, he or she must explicitly state whether a written response should be sent to an email the user provides.

In addition to victims, professionals (social service, criminal justice and health care professionals) and concerned citizens are also major users of the site representing 20% and 10% of the requestors respectively.

**Identity of Requestor**  
**October 1, 2001 – September 30, 2002**



- (1) Concerned Citizen: Requestor does not identify as a primary or secondary victim, but is interested in helping/volunteering/gathering information to work towards ending violence against women.
- (2) Social Service Professional: Advocates, social workers, day care personnel, counselors.
- (3) Criminal Justice Professional: Police officers and other members of a police department, judges, attorneys, probation officers, juvenile and adult court administrators, corrections officers, legal advocates.

- (4) Health Care Professional: Nurses, doctors, paramedics, mental health professionals, health care aides, and therapists.
- (5) Student: Requestor identifies being a student and/or requesting materials for the purpose of a school paper/project/presentation.
- (6) Other: Requestor does not adequately meet the definition of the above stated categories (1-5). Including teachers, media and other professions that do not fit into the categories noted above.
- (7) Undisclosed: The identity of the requestor cannot be determined.

### **Significant Accomplishments**

VAWOR staff made improvements to the site as content grew, categories changed and users' needs became more apparent. The following activities were accomplished to identify future needs and support long-term growth:

- VAWOR added features related to Internet safety such as an automated web form, a homepage warning button, and privacy tips. The new web form eliminates direct email from users' personal computers and prompts users to contemplate safety implications before sending messages (and consequently receiving responses from VAWOR). The warning button links users to additional information and resources about Internet safety and privacy. Privacy tips provide users with information about securing passwords, disabling automatic inline completion features, removing copies of "sent" and "deleted" mail, and securing electronic address books.
- A user feedback form was added to the site to obtain data that will help staff understand how users learn about VAWOR; what content they seek; document format preferences; satisfaction levels; and user occupations.
- Due to a high volume of SPAM and viruses sent to our site, VAWOR installed a virus and spam scanner for the server's email accounts.
- VAWOR implemented a new search engine, Google, which offers more accurate and advanced searching features.
- VAWOR initiated a phased transition toward using XML as the primary document format. XML allows for easy representation of documents in many different formats (i.e. plain-text version, PDF, and alternate HTML versions such as pages without images) or the ability to break long documents into many shorter pages from a single file. This conversion will promote staff efficiency and greater accessibility for users with disabilities.