

Seven Key Facts About *Domestic Violence*

Prepared by:
Stop Abusive and Violent Environments
www.saveservices.org

Everybody has heard about domestic violence. But do you know how common it is? Who is most affected? And whether we are making progress in the national effort to curb partner abuse?

Fact #1: One in 10 American couples engages in intimate partner violence each year.

About one in 10 married and cohabiting couples experience some form of partner aggression (slap, shove, punch, etc.) each year.¹

Fact #2: Men and women initiate domestic violence at similar rates.

- Over 250 scholarly studies “demonstrate that women are as physically aggressive, or more aggressive, than men in their relationships with their spouses or male partners.”²
- If an incident escalates, the female partner is more likely to be injured. Nonetheless, of all victims who require medical attention, one-third are male.³
- Female initiation of partner violence is the leading reason for the woman becoming a victim of subsequent violence.⁴

Fact #3: Partner aggression is often two-way.

- A Centers for Disease Control survey found that half of all partner violence was reciprocal.⁵
- One study of dating couples concluded that 70% of all physical abuse was mutual.⁶

Fact #4: Although all segments of society are affected, domestic violence is concentrated in certain groups.

Domestic violence is more common among certain groups such as:

- Lower income couples.⁷
- Couples who are not in intact, married relationships.
- Lesbian and gay partners⁸

Fact #5: Many factors contribute to domestic violence incidents.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control has identified 28 different causes of domestic violence. These include individual, relationship, and community factors.⁹

Fact #6: America is making steady progress in the national effort to curb intimate partner aggression.

Since the mid-1970s, domestic violence among intimate partners has fallen dramatically, whether violence is assessed by community surveys,¹⁰ crime surveys of non-fatal violence,¹¹ or FBI homicide statistics.¹²

Fact #7: Many victims of domestic violence face barriers to getting help.

Many victims of domestic violence encounter discrimination and other barriers to receiving assistance:

- One analysis concluded, “the exclusion of men appears to be the norm.”¹³
- One survey highlighted the discriminatory practices of many domestic violence shelters, concluding that lesbian and gay victims “still did not have consistent access to culturally competent services to prevent and address the violence against them.”¹⁴

August 18, 2010

References

- ¹ For example, the 1992 National Alcohol and Family Violence Survey found 9.5% of men and 9.1% of women in married or cohabiting relationships had experienced inter-partner violence in the previous year.
- ² Fiebert ML. References Examining Assaults by Women on their Spouses or Male Partners. California State University, 2010. <http://www.csulb.edu/~mfiebert/assault.htm>
- ³ Archer J. Sex Differences in Aggression Between Heterosexual Partners: A Meta-Analytic Review. *Psychological Bulletin* Vol. 126, No. 5, 2000.
- ⁴ Stith S, Smith DB, Penn CE, et al. Intimate partner physical abuse perpetration and victimization risk factors: A meta-analytic review. *Aggression and Violent Behavior* Vol. 10, 2004. pp. 65-98.
- ⁵ Whitaker DJ et al. Differences in frequency of violence and reported injury between relationships with reciprocal and nonreciprocal intimate partner violence. *American Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 97, No. 5, 2007.
- ⁶ Straus MA. Dominance and symmetry in partner violence by male and female university students in 32 nations. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 2008. <http://pubpages.unh.edu/%7Emas2/ID41-PR41-Dominance-symmetry-In-Press-07.pdf>
- ⁷ Department of Justice. Criminal Victimization in the United States, 2007. February 2010. NCJ 227669. Table 35. <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=1743>
- ⁸ Zahnd E, Grant D, Aydin M et al. Nearly Four Million California Adults are Victims of Intimate Partner Violence. Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, 2010. <http://www.healthpolicy.ucla.edu/pubs/Publication.aspx?pubID=402>
- ⁹ Centers for Disease Control: Intimate Partner Violence: Risk and Protective Factors. <http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/intimatepartnerviolence/riskprotectivefactors.html>
- ¹⁰ From 1975 to 1992. Male victims: From 11.6% to 9.5% of couples. Female victims: From 12.1% to 9.1% of couples. *Source of 1975 data: National Surveys of Family Violence. Source of 1992 data: National Alcohol and Family Violence Survey.*
- ¹¹ From 1993 to 2001. Male victims: From 1.6 to 0.9/1,000 persons. Female victims: From 9.8 to 5.0/1,000 persons. Source: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. Intimate Partner Violence, 1993-2001. Table 2. <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=1001>
- ¹² From 1976 to 2000. Male victims: From 1,357 to 440 murders. Female victims: From 1,600 to 1,247 murders. Source: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. Intimate Partner Violence, 1993-2001. <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=1001>
- ¹³ Stop Abusive and Violent Environments. Domestic Violence Programs Discriminate Against Male Victims. Rockville, MD. 2010. <http://www.saveservices.org/downloads/VAWA-Discriminates-Against-Males>
- ¹⁴ National Center for Victims of Crime and the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs. Why it Matters. 2010. <http://www.ncvc.org/ncvc/main.aspx?dbName=DocumentViewer&DocumentID=47632>