

Frequently Asked Questions about Domestic Violence and Gender

IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE JUST A WOMEN'S ISSUE?

No. Domestic violence affects the entire community. Survivors lose time at work, and incur health care costs. Children are endangered by intimate partner violence. The prevention of domestic violence is the responsibility of the entire community.

AREN'T THERE BATTERED MEN?

Yes.

DO LOCAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGENCIES SERVE MEN?

Yes. They serve men when they are victimized by an intimate partner. They provide services regardless of gender.

AREN'T WOMEN JUST AS VIOLENT AS MEN?

No. Most violence is committed by men.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THOSE STUDIES THAT SHOW WOMEN ARE JUST AS VIOLENT AS MEN?

These studies use a research tool called the "Conflict Tactics Scale". The big study done by Gelles, Strauss, Steinmetz, etc., does not control for use of force in self defense. So, specifically, if a man is strangling a woman and she scratches him to get him to stop, they each get "one point" on the conflict tactics scale. Even more significantly, if a woman has been beaten by a man for years, he pushes her into the wall, and she picks up a knife, brandishes it and says "get away from me", she will get two points and he will get one.

This is the substance of studies that found that women are more violent than men.

Even if you want to ignore the problems with that research

"...those who cite research by Murray Straus, Suzanne Steinmetz and Richard J. Gelles, as well as a host of other self-report surveys tend to conveniently leave out the fact that Straus and his colleague's surveys as well as data collected by the National Crime Victimization Survey (Bureau of Justice Statistics) consistently find that no matter what the rate of violence or who initiates the violence, women are 7 to 10 times more likely to be injured in acts of intimate violence than are men." This quote is from Richard J. Gelles of the University of Rhode Island Family Violence Research Program in an article entitled "Domestic Violence Factoids" revised 1/28/2000. This article may be read on the web on the University of Minnesota's website at <http://www.mincava.umn.edu/documents/factoid/factoid.html>.

BUT DON'T MEN UNDERREPORT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE BECAUSE THEY'RE TOO EMBARRASSED AND ASHAMED TO SAY THAT A WOMAN HAS ASSAULTED THEM?

Most victims of domestic violence **are** battered by male partners rather than female partners (source: Lydia Walker, presentation, see below research studies).

We speculate that some men are too embarrassed to call for help, or don't see an organization that is accessible to them.

Yet, there are many women who are too embarrassed to call for help, or don't see an organization as accessible to them (older adults, high school women, lesbians, women with disabilities, women who don't speak English, women of color, etc.).

The national research indicates that women are victimized in intimate relationships at a much higher rate than are men (see below).

DOES THIS MEAN YOU THINK MEN ARE INHERENTLY VIOLENT OR BAD?

No.

We reject the idea that men cannot control their sexual impulses or violent behavior, and therefore, if not restrained, will "naturally" beat and rape women and children. This idea is anti-male and repugnant.

Violence against women, violence against children, and violence against those perceived as lesser or weaker is learned – in the family, in our communities and in our culture as a whole.

- 1) Most MEN do not batter. The majority of men do not use physical force to control their partners/spouses.
- 2) BATTERERS (men/women who use physical force to control their intimate partners) are not INHERENTLY violent. Battering is a behavioral choice – it's a decision.

What Reliable Research Says About Domestic Violence and Men and Women

WOMEN ARE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE LIKELY TO BE ASSAULTED BY AN INTIMATE PARTNER THAN MEN.¹

25% of surveyed women, compared with 8% of surveyed men, said they were raped and/or physically assaulted by a current or former spouse, cohabiting partner or date at some time in their life.²

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN INFLICTED BY INTIMATE PARTNERS IS MORE SERIOUS THAN VIOLENCE INFLICTED AGAINST MEN.

Women were two to three times more likely than men to report that an intimate partner threw something that could hurt, or pushed, grabbed or shoved them. However, they were 7 to 14 times more likely to report that an intimate partner beat them up, choked or tried to drown them, threatened them with a gun, or actually used a gun on them.³

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IS PRIMARILY PARTNER VIOLENCE.

76% of the women who were raped and/or physically assaulted by a current or former husband, cohabiting partner or date; 17% were victimized by an acquaintance, such as a friend, neighbor, or coworker; and 9% were victimized by a relative other than a husband. Only 14% were victimized by a stranger. U.S. men are primarily raped and physically assaulted by strangers and acquaintances, not intimate partners.⁴

VIOLENCE AGAINST INTIMATE PARTNERS IS PRIMARILY INFLICTED BY MEN.

93% of the women who are raped and/or physically assaulted since the age of 18 were assaulted by a man. 11% of these women were raped or physically assaulted since the age of 18 were assaulted by a woman.⁵ Another study found that 21.7% of women who had married or lived with a man as part of a couple reported being raped, physically assaulted,

¹ Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey. Authors: Patricia Tjaden and Nancy Thoennes. Published 1998. Commissioned by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice AND the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. To obtain a publication, write the National Criminal Justice Reference Service, PO Box 6000, Rockville, MD, 20849-6000, call 1-800-851-3420, visit the website at <http://www.ncjrs.gov/> or <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/> or send an e-mail message to askncjrs@ncjrs.gov.

² Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey.

³ Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey.

⁴ Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey.

⁵ Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey.

and/or stalked by a man, while 11% of women who had lived with a woman as a cohabitant were raped/physically assaulted/or stalked by a woman.⁶

86% of the men who were raped and/or physically assaulted since the age of 18 were assaulted by a man. 23% were assaulted by a woman.⁷

Another study indicated that men who live with male intimate partners experience more intimate partner violence than men who live with female intimate partners. Approximately 23% of the men who had lived with a man as a couple reported being raped, physically assaulted or stalked by a male cohabitant, while 7.4% of the men who had married or lived with a woman as a couple reported such violence by a wife or female cohabitant.⁸

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⁶ Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence. Authors: Patricia Tjaden and Nancy Thoennes. Published by the National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: July 2000.

⁷ Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey.

⁸ Extent, Nature and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence.