

- Intimate partner violence made up 22 percent of the violent crimes against women between 1993 and 1998. (*Intimate Partner Violence*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000)
- In 1998, women experienced about 900,000 violent offenses at the hands of an intimate partner, and men were victims of about 160,000 violent crimes by an intimate partner. (*Intimate Partner Violence*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000)
- In 1998, one-half of the female intimate violence victims were physically injured, and 37 percent sought professional medical treatment. (*Intimate Partner Violence*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000)
- A study of more than 1,000 high school students found that 45.5 percent of girls and 43.2 percent of boys reported being the victim of violence from dating partners at least once. (O’Keefe, Maura, and Laura Trester. “Victims of Dating Violence Among High School Students.” *Violence Against Women* 4(2): 195–223, 1998)
- In 1999, 32 percent of all female murder victims were killed by their current or former spouses or boyfriends, whereas 3 percent of male murder victims were killed by their current or former spouses or girlfriends. (*Crime in the United States* 1999. Washington, DC: Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2000)
- Among women, being black, young, divorced, or separated; earning lower incomes; living in rental housing; and living in an urban area were all associated with higher rates of intimate partner victimization between 1993 and 1998. (*Intimate Partner Violence*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000)
- During 1997, the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) documented 3,327 cases of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender domestic violence victimization. Men reported 1,746 of the incidents, women reported 1,581 of the incidents. (*Annual Report on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Domestic Violence*. New York, NY: National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 1998)

Resources for Information and Assistance

Advocates for Abused and Battered Lesbians
206–547–8191 (TTY response on request)
www.aabl.org

Family Violence Prevention Fund
1–888–RX–ABUSE or 1–888–792–2873
www.fvpf.org

National Center for Victims of Crime
1–800–FYI–CALL or 1–800–394–2255
www.ncvc.org

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
303–839–1852
www.ncadv.org

National Domestic Violence Hotline
1–800–799–SAFE or 1–800–799–7233
TTY 1–800–787–3224
www.ndvh.org

National Organization for Victim Assistance
1–800–TRY–NOVA or 1–800–879–6682
www.try-nova.org

Office for Victims of Crime Resource Center
1–800–627–6872
TTY 1–877–712–9279
www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/ovcres/welcome.html

Violence Against Women Office
202–307–6026
www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo



Domestic Violence Victimization

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Office for Victims of Crime
OVC
Advocating for the Fair
Treatment of Crime Victims

THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR
Victims of Crime

What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence is not a private matter. It is a serious crime and public health concern that can include physical, sexual, psychological, or emotional abuse of one current or former intimate partner by another. You can be a victim of domestic violence no matter how old you are, what your racial or cultural background may be, what type of education you have, how much money you have, or what your religious beliefs may be.

Domestic violence is usually not a single event and often becomes more severe and frequent over time. Many batterers are not violent in other relationships, such as at work or with friends. They routinely deny the domestic violence and the severity of that violence. When confronted with their abusive behavior, they tend to blame their partner for provoking it or refuse to accept responsibility for it.

Many factors may contribute to abuse. Some batterers lack the ability to control their actions and do not know how to react appropriately and nonviolently to stress and dissatisfaction. A need for power and control, an abusive family background, feelings of inadequacy, and stress all may contribute to abusive behavior. Alcoholism or drug abuse do not cause domestic violence, but being drunk or high does intensify existing violent behaviors.

Domestic violence victims suffer physical injuries that endanger their health and may result in lifelong disabilities. These injuries may interfere with job performance and result in dismissal or lost promotion opportunities. Besides physical violence, abusers may use emotional and verbal abuse, isolation, and threats to maintain power and control over their partners. Threats, whether of violence, suicide, or taking away children, are a very common tactic used by batterers.

The emotional effects of domestic violence can often be more devastating than the physical assaults. Victims may lose touch with friends and family due to abusers' attempts to isolate them. As a victim's support system breaks down, so does his or her self-esteem. Domestic violence affects every family member, even if he or she has not been abused.



If You Are a Victim of Domestic Violence

The most difficult step for you to take is to admit that you are being or have been abused by your partner. Remember, your partner's violence is the problem, not you. You do not provoke it. You do not deserve it.

You may feel trapped, alone, and that you have lost control of your life. You may have nightmares or flashbacks of abusive incidents. Your eating and sleeping habits may change. You may feel depressed or hopeless and lack interest in things you once enjoyed. The physical and emotional suffering you experience may seem to use up all the energy you have.

Your safety is the first priority, and only you can truly judge what will be the safest and best way to handle your situation. Leaving an abusive relationship is not always the safest solution. Many domestic assaults occur while a victim is trying to leave the relationship. If you are being abused, you should consider all options when trying to find a way to end the violence as safely as possible.

Every person in an abusive relationship needs a safety plan that has been developed for that person's situation and circumstances. Domestic violence shelters and advocates can help you develop one for your situation. If you feel it is safe, let trusted friends and family know about your situation. They can be part of your safety plan. Know where to get help. Tell someone what is happening to you.

Where can you get help?

Remember, as a domestic violence victim, you are not alone. Do not lose hope. The support network in your community may include counseling services, hotlines, support groups, legal resources, and shelters that can give you support, advice, financial assistance, counseling, and legal help.

Your local women's center, shelter, or domestic violence program can help you obtain protection or restraining orders from local law enforcement and

family court offices. There are several types of restraining orders. The types of restraining orders available and the process for application and issuance of orders varies with each community. Local domestic violence advocates can give you information about how the process works in your community. Advocates also can help you find out what your rights are as a domestic violence victim and provide you with other important information and a full range of victim support services, such as counseling, emotional support, and financial assistance. To find the name and telephone number of a domestic violence advocate near you, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (1-800-799-7233) or 1-800-787-3224 (TTY).

All states now have crime victim compensation programs that reimburse victims for certain out-of-pocket expenses, including medical expenses, lost wages, and other financial needs considered reasonable. To be eligible, you must report the crime to the police and cooperate with the criminal justice system. Victim assistance programs in your community can give you compensation applications and additional information.

Many communities also have batterers' programs, which help abusers learn how to control themselves. Participation in these programs is often a court-ordered condition when batterers are convicted on domestic violence charges. It is important to realize that the abuser is the only one who can change his or her violent behavior.

Domestic violence victims are usually strong survivors. With adequate resources and support, they can create new lives.

What are the facts about domestic violence?

- From one-fifth to one-third of all women will be physically assaulted by a partner or ex-partner during their lifetime. ("Violence Against Women: Relevance for Medical Practitioners." *Journal of the American Medical Association* 267(23): 1992)

