

# Read The Truth About Domestic Violence

Male Victims & Female Perpetrators of Domestic and Partner Violence

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## SUMMARY

Domestic violence is a human problem, not a gender problem. Randomized sociological survey data consistently shows men account for at least half of domestic violence victims (in both heterosexual and same-sex relationships), as well as one-third of victims who are physically injured, one-fourth of victims who call police and one-tenth of victims who seek shelter services (even with virtually no outreach or referrals). Male victims report it less than women, making oft-cited crime data misleading and unreliable.

Children are emotionally damaged by witnessing the violence regardless of injuries or gender. The violence becomes a model and creates an intergenerational cycle that cannot be broken by covering up half (or any amount) of it for ideological reasons. By ignoring female violence, society is fostering rather than preventing domestic violence.

This page examines the gender statistics by briefly looking at:

- Crime data versus sociological data;
- Physical injuries;
- The "self-defense" myth;
- Child abuse;
- Data specific to California; and,
- Other forms of domestic violence.

## CRIME DATA VERSUS SOCIOLOGICAL DATA

Domestic violence statistics come from either crime data or sociological data. Crime data consists of police reports or randomized surveys by crime agencies (usually the Department of Justice) using crime-based terminology. Sociological data consists of randomized surveys that use no crime-based terminology. Sociological data is the most reliable because men are less likely than women to report their victimization or to deem it a crime when responding to a crime survey that uses crime-based terminology.

Even crime data now shows 25%-35% of domestic violence victims are men. For example, according to a study co-sponsored by the Department of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control, every year there are 4.8 million incidents of intimate partner assaults and rapes against women and 2.9 million incidents against men, with 25% of the deaths being men.

Sociological data, however, consistently shows women initiate domestic violence at least as often as men. California State University Professor Martin Fiebert has an online bibliography that now summarizes approximately 200 studies, using various methodologies and with an aggregate sample size exceeding 200,000, which show:

"women are as physically aggressive, or more aggressive, than men in their relationships with their spouses or male partners."

[www.csulb.edu/~mfiebert/assault.htm](http://www.csulb.edu/~mfiebert/assault.htm)

Here are just a few examples:

- In 2007 Harvard Medical School announced a major national survey by researchers from the Centers for Disease Control that examined 11,000 men and women ages 18-28 and found 24% of heterosexual couples had violence, half of it reciprocal and half non-reciprocal, and women committed most non-reciprocal violence and initiated most reciprocal violence.

- In 2007 the University of Washington found "nearly twice as many women as men said they perpetrated domestic violence in the past year including kicking, biting or punching their partner, threatening to hit or throw something at their partner, and pushing, grabbing or shoving their partner."

- In 2006, the University of New Hampshire surveyed people in 32 nations (covering all continents and both developed and developing nations) and found women are as violent and as controlling as men in dating relationships. See the University's News Release or the actual study.

- In 2006, the University of Florida found women more likely to "stalk, attack and abuse" their partners

The American Psychological Association recognizes the above data.

This Canadian government report recognizes the above data.

Indiana State University School of Law Professor Linda Kelly wrote an excellent law review article on the topic, in which she shows that "over the past 25 years, leading sociologists have repeatedly found that men and women commit domestic violence at similar rates" and documents the historical and ideological cover-up of female violence. Kelly, Linda, "Disabusing the Definition of Domestic Abuse; How Women Batter Men and the Role of the Feminist State," 30 Fl. St. Law Review 791 (2003).

University of British Columbia Psychology Professor Don Dutton, an international expert on domestic violence who was a prosecutorial witness in the O.J. Simpson case, wrote one of the most outstanding peer-reviewed articles on male victims ever. Dutton, D., & Corvo, K., "Transforming a flawed policy: A call to revive psychology and science in domestic violence research and practice," (11) 2006, 457-483

Professor John Archer of the University of Central Lancashire has published an excellent meta-analysis on the topic. Archer, John., "Sex differences in aggression between heterosexual partners: A meta-analytic review," *Aggression and Violent Behavior* (7) 2002, 313-351

A global coalition of concerned experts called the National Family Violence Legislative Resource Center, which advocates for research-based, inclusive approach to domestic violence, publicizes some of the above data on its website.

## PHYSICAL INJURIES

The 2007 study announced by Harvard Medical School (described above) found that physical injury was more likely to occur when the violence was reciprocal than nonreciprocal. And while injury was more likely when violence was perpetrated by men, in relationships with reciprocal violence it was the men who were injured more often (25% of the time) than were women (20% of the time).

Today, women are increasingly assertive, independent, athletic, and, yes, violent. It is naive to believe they cannot harm a male. In fact, they often use objects, weapons and the element of surprise to equalize strength differences. Professor Linda Kelly of Indiana State University School of Law explains:

Women were found to be twice as likely to throw something at their husbands. . . . They were also more likely to hit, or try to hit, their spouses with something and more likely to threaten their spouses with a knife or gun.

Kelly, Linda, "Disabusing the Definition of Domestic Abuse; How Women Batter Men and the Role of the Feminist State," 30 Fl. St. Law Review 791 (2003).

It is also true that men often refuse to hit back. They know they can be arrested and jailed if they do. Many are raised to be gentlemen. They do not want their children witnessing them hitting their mothers. There are many reasons why even the strongest of men become handicapped by their refusal to hit back. And many men are disabled (mentally or physically) or elderly and simply cannot defend themselves. There are also many male victims of same-sex partner violence who deserve attention as well.

More importantly, the biggest injury is to children who witness the violence. They are emotionally damaged regardless of injuries, and studies show they become more likely to commit domestic violence or child abuse in the future. For example, one study found the likelihood a woman will abuse her children increases each time she witnesses her mother hit her father. See Heyman, Richard and Slep, Amy Smith, "Do Child Abuse and Interparental Violence Lead to Adulthood Family Violence?" (Nov. 2003) *Journal of Marriage & the Family*, v. 64, issue 4, pp. 864-70.

## THE "SELF-DEFENSE" MYTH

Some people attempt to downplay female violence by saying it is usually self-defense and that the above research is not contextual enough. This is not supported by the research and has been debunked many times. As Professor Richard Gelles explains:

Contrary to the claim that women only hit in self-defense, we found that women were as likely to initiate the violence as were men. In order to correct for a possible bias in reporting, we reexamined our data looking only at the self-reports of women. The women reported similar rates of female-to-male violence compared to male-to-female, and women also reported they were as likely to initiate the violence as were men.

Gelles, Richard, "The Hidden Side of Domestic Violence; Male Victims," 1999, *The Women's Quarterly*, re-printed with the author's permission.

Professor John Archer's meta-analysis explains:

It has often been claimed that the reason CTS studies have found as many women as men to be physically aggressive is because women are defending themselves against attack. A number of studies have addressed this issue and found that when asked, more women than men report initiating the attack. (Bland & Orn. 1986; DeMaris, 1992; Gryl & Bird. 1989. cited in Straus. 1997) or that the proportions are equivalent in the two sexes (Straus, 1997). Two large-scale studies found that a substantial proportion of both women and men report using physical aggression when the partner did not (Brush, 1990; Straus & Gelles, 1988). This evidence does not support the view that the CTS is only measuring women's self-defense.

John Archer, Ph.D., "Sex Differences in Aggression Between Heterosexual Partners: A Meta-Analytic Review, Psychological Bulletin," Sept. 2000. v. 126, n. 5, p. 651, 664.

California State University surveyed 1,000 women on campus and found 30% admitted they assaulted a male partner. Their most common reasons were:

- my partner wasn't listening to me;
- my partner wasn't being sensitive to my needs; and,
- I wished to gain my partner's attention.

Fiebert, Martin & Gonzalez, Denise, "Why Women Assault; College Women Who Initiate Assaults on their Male Partners and the Reasons Offered for Such Behavior," 1997, Psychological Reports, 80, 583-590.

A major study of domestic violence that asked about motives found men and women assault their partners at the same rates and for the same reasons, most often "to get through to them," while self-defense was one of the least common motives for both sexes. Carrado, "Aggression in British Heterosexual Relationships: A Descriptive Analysis, Aggressive Behavior," 1996, 22: 401-415.

The University of New Hampshire's 32-nation study of domestic violence further refutes the self-defense myth.

Professor Don Dutton refutes the self-defense myth in his excellent peer-reviewed article. Dutton, D., & Corvo, K., "Transforming a flawed policy: A call to revive psychology and science in domestic violence research and practice," (11) 2006, 457-483

See also, Sarantakos, S. (2004), "Deconstructing self-defense in wife-to-husband violence," Journal of Men's Studies, 12 (3) 277-296. Members of 68 families with violent wives in Australia were studied. In 78% of cases wives' violence was moderate to severe, and in 38% of cases husbands needed medical attention. Using information from husbands, wives, children and wives' mothers, the study provides compelling data challenging self defense as a motive for female-to-male violence.

## CHILD ABUSE

In 2006, approximately 58 percent (57.9%) of child abuse and neglect perpetrators were women and 42 percent (42.1%) were men.

Department of Health and Human Services

While this may be partly or wholly due to women's more frequent care of children, it nonetheless debunks the stereotype that men are the primary child abuse perpetrators.

## DATA SPECIFIC TO CALIFORNIA

The California Research Bureau reports that nearly 10% of people who seek domestic violence shelter services are men, and that one Los Angeles shelter in a predominantly gay/lesbian neighborhood reported even more male victims than female victims. See page 14 at [www.library.ca.gov/crb/02/16/02-016.pdf](http://www.library.ca.gov/crb/02/16/02-016.pdf)

That is without any outreach to men and without referral services sending men to the shelters. We believe it would otherwise be much higher.

Dr. David Fontes, the Employee Assistance Program Director of Social Services, conducted a study ("Partner Conflict Study") of perpetration against heterosexual men in relationships compared to heterosexual women among employees of the California Department of Social Services. Altogether, 136 surveys were returned out of 200 surveys distributed to employees in four locations (Sacramento, Roseville, Oakland, and Los Angeles). Not only did men experience the same rate of as did women, but men reported the same rate of injury as did women. Dr. Fontes wrote a fantastic paper on male victims titled "Violent Touch; Breaking Through The Stereotype." Professor Richard Gelles discusses Dr. Fontes's survey in "The Hidden Side of Domestic Violence; Male Victims," 1999, The Women's Quarterly, re-printed with the author's permission at [www.ncfmla.org/gelles.html](http://www.ncfmla.org/gelles.html).

California Health and Safety Code Section 124250 funds approximately 100 domestic violence shelter services throughout California but defines "domestic violence" so only women can be victims. Accordingly, the State requires the recipient programs to help women but does not require them to help men. As a result, male victims are shut out of many State-funded services who refuse to provide men even with counseling, legal services or a motel voucher. In Los Angeles County, the only shelters that will help men are Valley Oasis in the far-away desert community of Lancaster (which houses both sexes in separate shelters) and WomenShelter of Long Beach on (which gives motel arrangements to male victims). Those are on the northern and southern tips of the County, making it difficult in many cases for male victims to take their children to these areas when their children need to attend school.

See declaration by former Valley Oasis' former director Patricia Overberg and letter from a domestic violence facilitator in San Pedro.

The Men's Legal Center is challenging the Constitutionality of the discrimination in the above statute by representing the appellants in the case of David Woods v. State of California, which is pending in the 3rd District Court of Appeal and can be tracked here.

## OTHER FORMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The Men's Legal Center believes there are some forms of domestic violence that affect men much more often than women but are not counted in the traditional definition of domestic violence. One example is false accusations of domestic violence, which we believe are common in divorce and custody settings.

Another example is paternity fraud, which is the intentional or reckless false identification of a man as the biological father of one's child. According to the American Association of Blood Banks, approximately 30% of the 300,000 annual DNA paternity tests performed annually by accredited labs exclude the man as the biological father. Many of these men are inadequately served or respond late due to language barriers, mental disabilities, fear or mistaken belief that they do not have to respond because the child is not theirs. They often first learn of a paternity judgment when their wages are attached or their driving privileges are suspended. By then it can be too late. Even if DNA excludes them, they can still be forced to pay support, despite having families of their own to feed. Military men are particular targets of paternity fraud because of the benefits they carry.

Attorneys from the Men's Legal Center have represented men who are falsely accused or paternity fraud victims and we believe these are forms of domestic violence that have been under-addressed.