



Questions and Answers:

Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Teen Dating Violence, and Stalking

Domestic Violence

Q 1 : Isn't domestic violence just a conflict that gets out of control?

Domestic violence is “a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner. Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions.”¹ Perpetrators of domestic violence often employ more than one of these actions while victimizing a partner. It is also important to note that many acts of domestic violence are criminal acts, subject to the statutes of a given jurisdiction.

Q 2: If it's not physical, is it still abuse?

Domestic violence includes many forms of abuse. Emotional, verbal and economic abuses often co-occur with physical and sexual abuse and in some instances may start before physical violence. Women whose partners are verbally and psychologically abusive are more likely than other women to experience physical and sexual violence in their relationships.² Emotional and psychological abuse, especially by a controlling partner, can negatively affect a victim's mental and physical health, even when physical abuse is not occurring.³

Q 3 : There is a lot of media coverage on women being murdered by intimate partners. What is the connection between domestic violence and female homicide?

The Bureau of Justice Statistics report “Homicide Trends in the U.S.” shows that women are particularly at risk for homicide by an intimate partner and people they know. In the years 1976-2005, 23.5% of all murder victims were women, but 64.8% of victims murdered by intimate partners were women.⁴

¹ OVW website - <http://www.ovw.usdoj.gov/domviolence.htm>

² Ibid.

³ Coker, A. L., Davis, K. E., Arias, I., Desai, S., Sanderson, M., Brandt, H. M., et al. (2002). Physical and Mental Health Effects of Intimate Partner Violence for Men and Women. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 23 (4), 260–268.

⁴ Fox, J & Zawitz, M.(2006). Homicide Trends in the United States. Retrieved from <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/homicide/homtrnd.htm#contents>.

Q 4 : Will victims of domestic violence be safe once they leave an abusive environment?

The National Violence Against Women Survey found that victims of domestic violence often experienced physical assault, rape and stalking both before and after the end of their relationships.⁵ Victims also face many barriers to leaving their relationships, including fear of exclusion from their families and communities, lack of access to financial resources, affordable housing, child care and supportive services. When women leave abusive relationships, they are benefitted by consulting with professionals who can help create a safety plan.

Q 5 : Can men be victims of domestic violence?

The National Violence Against Women Survey and National Crime Victimization Survey statistics both show that men, as well as women, are victims of domestic violence. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, men experience “0.8 victimizations per 1,000 males age 12 and older” while women experience “4.3 victimizations per 1,000 females age 12 and older.”⁶ Due to the larger proportion of female victims compared to male victims, advocacy efforts tend to focus on women and the unique problems they face concerning these issues.

Q 6 : Are men victims of intimate partner violence as often as women?

Both men and women are victims of domestic violence, but not in equal numbers. The Bureau of Justice Statistics Crime Data Brief reports that in 2001, 85% of physical intimate partner assaults were committed against women.⁷

Q 7: Can VAWA funds help men who are victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking and have nowhere to turn for help?

The Office on Violence Against Women funds services for all victims of domestic violence, including women assaulted by men, women assaulted by women, men assaulted by men, and men assaulted by women. According to the VAWA Measuring Effectiveness Initiative, for example, STOP Formula Program grantees and subgrantees report that in 2006, 9.8 % of total victims served were male (462,359 victims served; of that, 50,077 were male).

⁵ Tjaden, P., & Thoennes, N. (2000). *Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence: Findings From the National Violence Against Women Survey*. Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

⁶ Catalano, S., Smith, E., Snyder, H., and Rand., M. (2009, September). Female victims of violence. (NCJ 228356). Bureau of Justice Statistics Selected Findings. Retrieved from <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/fvv.pdf>

⁷ Rennison, C. M. (2003, February). Intimate partner violence, 1993-2001. (NCJ 197838). Bureau of Justice Statistics Crime Data Brief. Retrieved from <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/ipv01.pdf>

Sexual Assault

Q 8 : Are most victims of sexual violence young women in college?

Sexual violence includes a wide array of non-consensual sexual activities, which may be perpetrated by partners, friends, family, acquaintances, or strangers. Women between the ages of 16-24 experience rape at rates four times higher than the rate for all women.⁸ However, it is important to remember that anyone can be the victim of sexual violence. Some populations who experience sexual violence may be unlikely to report it. For instance, data from the National Crime Victimization Survey of 2000 identified 3,270 of the 261,000 rapes and sexual assaults were victims age 65 or older⁹, but this number is likely low. Estimates suggest only 30% of elder sexual abuse is reported to police.¹⁰

Q 9 : What has the Violence Against Women Act done nothing to stop sexual violence?

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was originally passed in 1994 to develop interventions to prevent and reduce violence that predominately affects women. Recent research findings indicate that “VAWA grants were associated with reductions in rape and aggravated assault” through increased enforcement action and increased incapacitation of offenders, improved training of police officers and other criminal justice officials, which may have led to reporting, and possibly through a deterrent effect from stricter criminal justice actions.¹¹

Q 10 : Can women protect themselves from rape if they dress modestly, avoid dangerous neighborhoods, and not walk alone at night?

Women’s behavior does not invite rape/sexual assault. Large-scale, national research shows that women are most likely to be raped and physically assaulted by people they know and often love, not strangers.¹² Bureau of Justice Statistics findings indicate for 2008, “57% of the rape or sexual assaults against females were committed by an offender whom they knew.”¹³

⁸ Humphrey, S., & Kahn, A. (2000). Fraternities, athletic teams and rape: Importance of identification with a risky group. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 15(12), 1313–1322.

⁹ Burgess, A. (2006, December). Elderly victims of sexual abuse and their offenders. Retrieved from <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/216550.pdf>

¹⁰ Rennison, C. (2002, August). Rape and sexual assault: Reporting to police and medical attention, 1992-2000. (NCJ 194530). Washington, DC: US Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics. Retrieved from <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/rsarp00.pdf>

¹¹ Boba, R., & Lilley, D. (2009). Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) funding: A nationwide assessment of effects on rape and assault. *Violence Against Women*, 15(2), 168-185.

¹² Bachman, R. (2000). A comparison of annual incidence rates and contextual characteristics of intimate-partner violence against women from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) and the National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAWS). *Violence Against Women*, 6, 839-867.

¹³ Catalano, S., Smith, E., Snyder, H., and Rand., M. (2009, September). Female victims of violence. (NCJ 228356). Bureau of Justice Statistics Selected Findings. Retrieved from <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/fvv.pdf>

Q 11 : Is it still rape if you are married?

Marriage does not provide consent for sexual activities and consent cannot be assumed between or amongst intimate partners. Research shows that of women who have been raped, 20% were raped by a spouse or ex-spouse, and an additional 4% were raped by a current or previous cohabitating partner.¹⁴ Women who are victims of marital rape are “likely to experience multiple assaults and often suffer severe long-term physical and emotional consequences”.¹⁵ It is important to note that marital rape may co-occur with other forms of domestic and sexual violence.¹⁶ In every state, rape of a spouse is prosecutable crime.¹⁷

¹⁴ Tjaden, P., & Thoennes, N. (2006, January). Extent, nature, and consequences of rape victimization: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey. (NCJ 210346). Washington, DC: US Department of Justice. Retrieved from <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/210346.pdf>

¹⁵ Bergen, R. K. (2006, February). Marital rape: New research and directions. Harrisburg, PA: VAWnet. Retrieved from http://new.vawnet.org/Assoc_Files_VAWnet/AR_MaritalRapeRevised.pdf

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Miller, N. (2004, June). Domestic violence: A review of state legislation defining police and prosecution duties and powers. Retrieved from http://www.ili.org/publications/docs/Domestic_Violence_Legislation.pdf.

Teen Dating Violence

Q 12 : Is teen dating violence common?

Research indicates that teen dating violence is all too common; in fact 32% of teens reported emotional abuse or physical violence in a relationship in the last 18 months.¹⁸

Q 13 : Does teen dating violence get very serious?

Teen dating violence is just as serious as adult domestic violence. Of teens reporting dating violence, 12% report physical violence. This includes shoving, hitting, slapping, and the use of weapons, among other physical acts.¹⁹

Q 14 : Would parents know if something is wrong in their teens' relationship?

Many parents are not aware of the violence in their teens' relationships. While 40% of teens report knowing a peer who has experienced teen dating violence, only 24% of parents know of a child in their children's peer group who has experienced teen dating violence.²⁰

Q 15 : Does technology have anything to do with teen dating violence?

The use of technology in teen dating violence is significant. "One in four teens in a relationship (25%) say they have been called names, harassed, or put down by their partner through cell phones [and] texting".²¹ Additionally, 19% of teens in dating relationships say their partner has used a cellular device or the Internet to spread rumors about them.²²

¹⁸ Halpern, C. T., Oslak, S. G., Young, M. L., Martin, S. L. & Kupper, L. L. (2001). Partner violence among adolescents in opposite-sex romantic relationships: Findings from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. *American Journal of Public Health*, 91(10), 1679-1685.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Liz Claiborne, Inc/Teen Research Unlimited (2008, July). Tween and teen dating violence and abuse study. Retrieved from http://loveisnotabuse.com/surveyresults_2007mstr.htm.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Liz Claiborne, Inc/Teen Research Unlimited (2007, January). Tech abuse in teen relationships study. Retrieved from <http://www.loveisnotabuse.com/pdf/06208%20Tech%20Relationship%20Abuse%20TPL.pdf>.

Stalking

Q 16 : Is stalking easy to recognize?

Stalking consists of a wide variety of acts including, but not limited to, unwanted phone calls, postal mail, e-mails, text messages, and/or instant messaging; following, tracking with GPS , making unwanted appearances at victim's home, office, or social location; sending or leaving gifts, vandalizing property, and harming pets. Stalking is unlike many other crimes because it involves a series or a pattern of behaviors. Individual events may appear benign, but in the context of the whole are troubling.²³

Q 17 : Is stalking even dangerous?

Stalking is a pattern of events which may include dangerous violent acts. 12.3% of stalking victims report being hit, slapped, and/or knocked down by their stalker, 4.2% of stalking victims report being strangled and 3.5% report being chased or dragged with a car.²⁴ Additionally, 4% of victims report being attacked with a weapon²⁵ and in 23% of these incidences a stalker attacked their victim with a handgun.²⁶ Of victims injured in a physical attack, about one-fifth sustained serious injuries including broken bones, internal injuries, and knife or gunshot wounds.²⁷

Q 18 : Does stalking happen that much? Does stalking only happen to celebrities and by people they don't know?

Stalking is prevalent among all individuals. The Bureau of Justice Statistics Supplemental Victimization Survey on Stalking estimates 3.4 million persons age 18 or older were victims of stalking during a 12 month period between 2005 and 2006.²⁸ Strikingly, "nearly 3 in 4 of all victims knew their offender in some capacity."²⁹

Q 19 : Is stalking by a current or former intimate partner dangerous?

There is a positive correlation between stalking and other forms of intimate partner violence. Research shows that those who stalk their partners are four times more likely to physically assault their partners than non-stalkers and six times more likely to sexually assault their partners.³⁰ Of women stalked by a current or former husband or cohabitation partner, 81% were physically assaulted by that partner.³¹

²³ Sheridan, L., Davies, G. M., & Boon, J.C.W. (2001). Stalking: Perceptions and prevalence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 16(2), 151-167.

²⁴ Baum, K., Catalano, S., & Rand, M. (2009). Stalking victimization in the United States. (NCJ 224527) Washington, DC: U.S Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. Retrieved from <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/svus.pdf>

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Baum, K., Catalano, S., & Rand, M. (2009). Stalking victimization in the United States. (NCJ 224527) Washington, DC: U.S Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. Retrieved from <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/svus.pdf>

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ St. George, R. (2001, February). Addressing stalking in Indian Country. Mending the Scared Hoop STOP Violence Against Indian Women Technical Assistance Project. Retrieved from <http://www.mincava.umn.edu/documents/stalking2/stalking2.html>

³¹ Tjaden, P., & Thoennes, N. (1998) Stalking in America: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey. (NCJ 169592). Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles/169592.pdf>