



Domestic and Dating Violence

Domestic violence is pervasive in Michigan and across the nation.

- Nearly 25% of surveyed women and 7.6% of surveyed men said that they were raped and/or physically assaulted by a current or former spouse, cohabitating partner, or date at some time in their lifetime. According to these estimates approximately 1.5 million women are raped and/or physically assaulted by an intimate partner annually. (U.S. Department of Justice, *Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence*, July 2000.)
- From October 1999 to September 2000, domestic violence programs in Michigan received 61,039 crisis calls, an average of 167 crisis calls per day, and sheltered 13,624 women and children. During the same year 2,906 victims were denied access to shelter due to lack of space. (Michigan Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Board.)
- One out of five, twenty-one percent, of Michigan women with current partners reported sustaining some type of violence in that relationship. (Michigan Department of Community Health, Community Public Health Agency, *Survey of Violence in the Lives of Michigan Women*, 1996.)

Women experience higher rates than men of both fatal and non-fatal violence by an intimate partner.

- Approximately 4.8 million intimate partner rapes and physical assaults are perpetrated against U.S. women annually compared to approximately 2.9 million intimate partner physical assaults against U.S. men annually. (U.S. Department of Justice, *Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence*, July 2000.)
- 78% of stalking victims are women. Women are significantly more likely than men (60% and 30%, respectively) to be stalked by intimate partners. (U.S. Department of Justice, *Stalking in America: Findings From the National Violence Against Women Survey*, April 1998.)

Violence happens to adolescents in intimate dating relationships and can be just as serious as domestic violence.

- 40% of teenage girls ages 14 to 17 report knowing someone their age who has been hit or beaten by a boyfriend. (Children Now, *Kaiser Permanente Poll*, December 1995.) Nearly 80% of girls who have been physically abused in their intimate relationships continue to date their abuser. Of the women between the ages 15-19 murdered each year, 30% are killed by their husband or boyfriend. (City of New York, *Teen Relationship Abuse Fact Sheet*, March 1998.)

A considerable number of battered women report that their batterers sexually assaulted them.

- In one study, 46% of battered women reported being forced into sex by their intimate partners. (Forced Sex and Intimate Partner Violence: Effects on women's risk and women's health. *Violence Against Women*, 1999.)

Domestic violence is linked to other social concerns.

- Almost 50 percent of the women who receive Temporary Assistance to Needy Families funds cite domestic violence as a factor in the need for assistance. (*Homebase, "Infusing Humanity into Welfare Reform: A Statement of Principles for a New Social Compact," 1995, p.2 (citing "Welfare Reform: No Reform and No Reality," CLWC News, Summer 1995, California Women's Law Center, citing Raphael, Jody, "Welfare Women, Violent Men," The Christian Science Monitor, April 20, 1995).*
- The costs of Intimate Partner Violence against women exceed an estimated \$5.8 billion. These costs include nearly \$4.1 billion in the direct costs of medical care and mental health care and nearly \$1.8 billion in the indirect costs of lost productivity. (*Costs of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in the United States*, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2003)

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October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month: KNOW THE FACTS

The myths surrounding domestic violence can compound the devastating effects of domestic violence of those who have survived it and have witnessed it. These myths often shift responsibility, blame and focus from the batterer to the victim. Unfortunately, these beliefs are widely held and are often reinforced through the media and reactions of institutions, friends and family. Understanding and discrediting these myths is vital to supporting those who have experienced domestic violence.

MYTH: *Abusers hit because they can't control themselves when they get angry.*

FACT: Everyone can control himself or herself when they get angry. Battering is the establishment of control and fear in a relationship through violence and other forms of abuse. The batterer uses acts of violence and a series of behaviors, including intimidation, threats, psychological abuse, isolation, etc. to coerce and to control the other person. The violence may not happen often, but it remains as a hidden (and constant) terrorizing factor. (Uniform Crime Reports, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1990)

MYTH: *Domestic violence only occurs in poor, urban areas.*

FACT: Domestic violence is a non-discriminatory phenomenon; victims as well as violent and abusive offenders come from all walks of life, ethnic backgrounds, socioeconomic groups, and educational levels. These stereotypes are rooted in racism and classism rather than actual fact. Their perpetuation is a sign of community denial, and acts as a potential weapon for batterers who are white, educated, or of a population not generally characterized as abusive.

Approximately one-third of the men counseled (for battering) are professional men who are well respected in their jobs and their communities. These have included doctors, psychologists, lawyers, ministers, and business executives. (For Shelter and Beyond, Massachusetts Coalition of Battered Women Service Groups, Boston, MA, 1990)

MYTH: *Low self-esteem causes victims to get involved in abusive relationships.*

FACT: Traditional theories presumed that individuals with adequate self-esteem would not "allow" themselves to be abused by intimate partners or spouses. In fact, studies have demonstrated that victims of domestic violence fail to share common characteristics other than being female. (Cahn & Meier, 1995) There is little support for the theory that low self-esteem causes victims to become involved in abusive relationships, however, some victims may experience a decrease in self-esteem as a result of being abused, since perpetrators frequently degrade, humiliate, and criticize victims.

MYTH: *Boys who witness violence in their homes will grow up to be abusers.*

FACT: Studies have found that 30% of male child witnesses choose to become abusers as adults. This means that 70% do not become abusers and are committed to ending the cycle of violence in their lives. Young men in our society are never destined to become violent. It is a dangerous message to imply that boys are fated to become violent, and we give abusers an excuse for their behavior.

MYTH: *Only straight women get battered; gay, bisexual, and transgendered men are never victims of domestic violence; lesbians, bisexual, and transgender women cannot batter. Battering is less common in same-gender relationships.*

FACT: Men can be victims, and women can batter. Numbers reflect this: An annual study of over 2,000 gay men reflects that 1 in 4 gay men have experienced domestic violence. These numbers are consistent with research done around battering among opposite-sex couples, and lesbian couples. Stereotypes about gender and sexual orientation are repudiated by the fact that gay men are victims, and lesbians are batterers at roughly the same rate as heterosexuals are. (Gay Men's Domestic Violence Project. (n.d.) Retrieved July 17, 2003, from <http://www.gmdvp.org/pages/myth.html>)

MYTH: *Victims exaggerate the level of abuse. If it was really that bad, they would leave.*

FACT: Most victims actually minimize the violence that happens to them because of the guilt, shame, and self-blame attached to victimization, and because others do not believe them or refuse to listen. Leaving is often the hardest thing for a victim to accomplish, and is commonly harder than staying. Batterers may threaten their victims with more violence (including murder threats) if they leave. In general, incidents of domestic violence have been found to increase in severity when a victim leaves. Leaving an abusive situation requires resources such as money, housing, transportation, and support structures, all of which may have been eroded by life with an abuser. (Gay Men's Domestic Violence Project. (n.d.) Retrieved July 17, 2003, from <http://www.gmdvp.org/pages/myth.html>)