

Some sources on the severity of domestic violence against men

February 16, 2020 | 34 upvotes | by [Oncefa2](#)

While it's well established that men are victims of domestic violence at least as often as women are, there's still a question of how severe that abuse is.

And it's a fair question. After all, men are on average stronger than women, so wouldn't domestic violence against women on average be worse than it is against men?

And while a cursory glance of spousal homicides seems to back this up, the story doesn't stop there. And strait away you can tell that, even when it comes to homicide, the differences aren't that large.

Intimate Partner Homicide

Roughly 68% of intimate partner homicide victims are women. You can see a graph here:

<https://imgur.com/a/6Hx9dJt>

One thing to consider is that many people who murder their spouses are often trapped in abusive relationships themselves. Their murder is usually seen as being either retaliatory, or in self defense. This theory is known as the "battered partner syndrome", and it applies to both men and women (although there is something of a double standard when this explanation is applied to men).

One researcher noted that, according to several key criteria of the so-called "battered woman syndrome", abused men fit the profile better than abused women do.

All of the evidence indicates that abused men fit the theory of the "battered woman" better than abused women do.

Brown, G. A. (2004). Gender as a factor in the response of the law-enforcement system to violence against partners. *Sexuality and Culture*, 8(3-4), 3-139.

http://www.familyofmen.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Grant_Partner_Violence.pdf

Another thing to notice is that the rate of men who are murdered by intimate partners has decreased over the years in comparison to women. In fact, some 40 years ago, women murdered their male partners at roughly the same rate as the reverse. Research suggests that this change in prevalence is because domestic violence shelters for women were opened during the same time period (source [here](#)). Instead of resorting to murder, many women can now escape their abuse through other means that are not available to men.

Speculation is that if domestic violence against men was taken as seriously as domestic violence against women, the rate of murdered women would go down as well. Since abused men are left with fewer non-violent options compared to abused women, they often end up resorting to suicide or murder in order to escape their abuse.

Of course none of this is meant to downplay the problem of murdered spouses. Instead, I want to provide context, and propose a solution: If men were given better options to escape from abusive relationships (including better divorce options that don't ruin them financially or cost them access to their children), then there would be fewer women murdered by their partners. **Better domestic violence resources for men wouldn't just help men, but would also help women.**

And despite all of this, 68% doesn't represent some kind huge majority where male victims are a simple side note in the discussion. It also happens to be the only data point that skews towards women on this

topic. And it represents the smallest number of victims overall, even compared to other forms of serious abuse. Put simply, spousal murder is incredibly rare, regardless of gender.

Rates of serious injury and hospitalization

It's probably best to describe research in this category as "mixed". But that is because most studies find rates that are fairly close to being the same for men and women, with only small deviations away from the middle. For example, [a 2008 study conducted on college campuses \(in 32 different countries\)](#) found that "severe assault" effected men 42% of the time, and women 58% of the time (Table 1, page 258). [Another study](#) found that 62% of people injured by intimate partners in heterosexual relationships were women. These are the types of studies people quote when they talk about domestic violence against women being worse than it is against men. And as you can see, that kind of conclusion is tempered by findings that aren't as dramatic as they're often implied to be.

There are also quite a few studies that show rates that are higher for men than they are for women. For example, the 1975 US National Family Violence Survey found that 4.6% of men and 3.8% of women had experienced "severe" forms of domestic violence (among all forms of domestic violence, the rate was 12% for men and 11.6% for women) ([source](#)). Several other national surveys have found that "serious" cases of domestic violence tend to involve women as abusers, and men as victims, more often than the reverse. This is true even in years where the overall rate of male perpetration was higher than it was for female perpetration (like in the 2001 National Violence Against Women Survey, cited below). And when looking only at cases that require professional medical attention, 58% of victims are men (source also cited below).

Still, myths about this continue to persist and are taken as fact, despite the data clearly indicating something very different.

| 16% of men and 14% of women report being seriously injured by their partner.

Straus, M. A., Hamby, S. L., Boney-McCoy, S., & Sugarman, D. B. (1996). The revised conflict tactics scales (CTS2) development and preliminary psychometric data. *Journal of family issues*, 17(3), 283-316.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/019251396017003001>

| Assaulted men are more likely than assaulted women to experience serious attacks by being hit with an object, beat up, threatened with a knife or being knifed.

Hoff, B. H. (2001). The risk of serious physical injury from assault by a woman intimate: A re-examination of national violence against women survey data on type of assault by an intimate. *MenWeb on-line Journal* (ISSN: 1095-5240 <http://www.menweb.org/NVAWSrisk.htm>). Retrieved from Web on Jan, 18, 2011.

| 1.8% of men and 1.2% of women reported that their injuries required first aid, while 1.5% of men and 1.1% of women reported that their injuries needed treated by a doctor or nurse.

Headey, B., Scott, D., & De Vaus, D. (1999). Domestic violence in Australia: are women and men equally violent?. *Australian Social Monitor*, 2(3), 57.

<https://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=759479315231736;res=IELAPA>

| The least commonly reported violence was severe perpetration (<1.0% of total sample or 5% of

violent relationships, n = 32), where it appears more women (1.6%; n = 29) than men (.9%; n = 2) reported performing such violence...Other findings showed that men reported being the victim of severe violence (3.%; n = 51) more frequently than women (1.9%; n = 35); but, this differences was only marginally significant.

Williams, S. L., & Frieze, I. H. (2005). Patterns of violent relationships, psychological distress, and marital satisfaction in a national sample of men and women. *Sex Roles*, 52(11-12), 771-784.

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Stacey_Williams3/publication/30846401_Patterns_of_Violent_Relationships_Psychological_Distress_and_Marital_Satisfaction_in_a_National_Sample_of_Men_and_Women/links/02e7e52332186a94f3000000.pdf

Studies of undergraduate college students found that men sustained higher levels of moderate violence than women with severe violence being rare for both women and men (Katz, Kuffel, & Coblenz, 2002) and 29% of males and 35% of females reported perpetrating physical aggression; 12.5% of the males and 4.5% of the females reported receiving severe physical aggression; 14% of females reported that they were the sole perpetrators of aggression — injuries were sustained by 8.4% of males and 5% of females (Hines & Saudino, 2002). These rates, which suggest gender symmetry in the perpetration of relationship violence, are not unique and Fiebert (2004) has amassed a bibliography of 159 peer-reviewed publications finding equal or greater aggression by females than males. The total collected sample is greater than 109,000. An earlier version was published in 1997 (Fiebert, 1997).

Carney, M., Buttell, F., & Dutton, D. (2007). Women who perpetrate intimate partner violence: A review of the literature with recommendations for treatment. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 12(1), 108-115.

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Donald_Dutton/publication/222426549_Women_Who_Perpetrate_Intimate_Partner_Violence_A_Review_of_the_Literature_With_Recommendations_for_Treatment/links/5c465a1592851c22a386f74b/Women-Who-Perpetrate-Intimate-Partner-Violence-A-Review-of-the-Literature-With-Recommendations-for-Treatment.pdf

Psychological Abuse and Suicide

Focusing just on rates of physical violence discounts several other forms of domestic abuse, including psychological abuse, which often results in the victim committing suicide. And in terms of total deaths, this is actually a bigger killer than homicide. As many as 17% to 26% of all suicide deaths may be the result of intimate partner abuse.

In particular,

When domestic violence related suicides are combined with domestic violence homicides, **the total numbers of domestic violence related deaths are higher for males than females.**

Davis, R. L. (2010). Domestic violence-related deaths. *Journal of aggression, conflict and peace research*, 2(2), 44.

<https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.5042/jacpr.2010.0141/full/html>

Abuse through the legal system, social manipulation, and false allegations

Women have been shown to engage in [higher rates of coercive control](#) and to [use the threat of false allegations of domestic abuse and sexual assault](#) to control their victims. As such, this represents a rather unique form of abuse primarily limited to female-on-male domestic violence.

| ‘She said “*what are you gonna do? I’ll start screaming rape and you’re up in court tomorrow, do you think they’ll believe anything you’ve got to say?*” ’

The legal system itself commonly gets abused, especially when children are involved. The so-called "[silver bullet](#)" refers to the fact that judges believe women by default, and will remove a child from the father's care if the mother lies about abuse. Up to [50% of child abuse cases](#), [70% of domestic violence cases](#), and [90% of restraining orders](#) are estimated to be either false or baseless (which basically means "frivolous" in a legal context).

Not only are children wielded by abusers against their victims, financial assets are commonly held over their heads as well. The fact that family court is [incredibly biased against fathers](#) gets exploited and used as a form of abuse in it's own right.

While these cases are not physically violent, I think it is important to realize that they have the potential to ruin lives, and can even lead to suicide. "I never put my hands on you" is not an excuse. This type of abuse is just as harmful, and can be just as deadly, as physical abuse.

Unreported Cases

Research indicates that men have a tendency to underreport their abuse. It is estimated that men are 3 to 6 times less likely to report their abuse compared to women ([source 1](#), [source 2](#)). Men are also less likely to press charges and are more likely to be intimidated against standing trial. And to make matters worse, the police are less likely to take male victims seriously compared to female victims, sometimes even arresting the man instead of the woman ([source 1](#), [source 2](#), [source 3](#), [source 4](#)).

This pattern is so pronounced that when laws were passed requiring the police to automatically press charges when called for domestic disturbances, the number of women arrested on domestic violence charges increased dramatically. This has been referred to as an "unintended consequence" by the proponents of these bills, who thought that they would see an increase in the number of arrests for men instead ([source](#)).

Conclusion

So what is our criteria for "serious abuse"? Does psychological abuse count? Suicide? Murder? Financial abuse? And what about legal abuse, social manipulation, and false allegations?

In the end, I don't think it really matters. No matter where you look, abuse against men is a serious problem.

And this includes even when it comes to homicide. Even though it is not a strict majority, the number of men killed by their partners is high enough to warrant serious concern. And when you add in intimate partner suicide deaths, the total number of men who are killed because of domestic violence ends up being higher than it is for women.

As a result, I think it is misguided to blow off cases of abuse against men as being "less serious" than abuse against women.

Trying to say that one is more serious than the other misses the point and leads to incomplete, one sided solutions to the problem. What's worse is that these solutions don't just harm men, but also harm women (and likely children) as well.

Many people emphasize male perpetration and female victimization on purpose to try to demonize men as evil oppressors. Domestic violence is commonly held over the heads of men as if only men are capable of such violence, and only women are worthy of being protected. Many of those people don't even care about female victims, and instead only care about spreading a culture of hatred and bigotry against men.

However, the bigger problem is the real world harm being inflicted upon men who have few places to turn.

As such, I want to conclude with a list of domestic violence resources for men:

https://www.reddit.com/r/MensRights/comments/es95sf/domestic_violence_and_sexual_assault_support/

Many of those resources are run by men's activists who have done a great job filling a void that has been left behind in a world that so often ignores the cries of men. Maybe one of these days the rest of society will catch up to us and start treating this problem just as seriously. But until then it's up to us to spread awareness and help provide support for the people who need it.

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Comments

BrambleEdge • 3 points • 16 February, 2020 05:40 PM

Stellar work once again!

dontpet • 2 points • 16 February, 2020 11:13 PM

Nice.

I think you should note that, in only focusing on make victims of intimate partner violence, you have excluded the discussion of a good half of the male dv victim experience.

We mra fall into this team a lot when advocating for victim services especially. There is significant harm done to men in the other areas, with this being larger than that experienced by women.

Father's fighting sons and daughters to protect the mother is a common theme. Ex partners killing and attacking new partners.

rahsoft • 1 point • 16 February, 2020 10:19 PM

So what is our criteria for "serious abuse"

easy ..Its psychological abuse ..

Why?

Because physical abuse the wounds, the bruises heal. They are apparent and treatable right away(this obviously exempt disability inflicted upon a person)

The psychological wounds are long-lasting, very difficult to correctly assess and resolve(because in many cases they are never cured, but managed instead).

Psychological abuse will sometimes involve wielding the power of the state or society against you from which there is sometimes permanent effect which you cannot ever fix(and sometimes its leads to irreversible damage such as suicide)

If there is one thing to take away from the concept of domestic violence, its this.

The act of Domestic Violence practices no gender discrimination as to who can be a victim and who can be a perpetrator.

Much of the problem of solving DV can be fixed once that idea is acknowledged .

dontpet • 5 points • 16 February, 2020 11:10 PM

There is a Maori expression along the lines of harsh words last longer than bruises.

Usually when physical assault is being used, the words and psychological abuse came first.