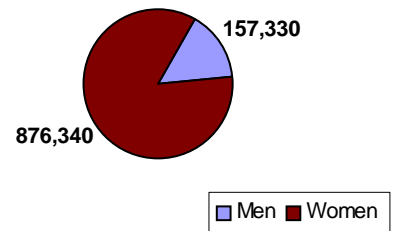


Domestic violence is a crucial health and social issue. Nationally, about 10% of violent crimes in 2003 were committed by a victim's intimate partner and 9% of murder victims were killed by spouse or intimate partner.¹ Some urban emergency rooms estimate that 25-50% of their patients are victims of domestic violence. The vast majority (85%) of victims of criminal acts by intimate partners are women.²

Domestic violence is a violent crime, despite public perception of it as the result of interpersonal arguments.³ The focus on why victims stay with their abusers (why aren't they smart enough to leave?) inadvertently reinforces the batterer's message (you can't leave, you're too stupid to make it on your own). This re-victimization may add an additional barrier to leaving the abusive relationship. Fleeing domestic violence takes courage and the process of securing safety presents "financial, cultural, religious, emotional, and legal obstacles."⁴ Often victims seek refuge in shelters. Most Ohio shelters use the standards for domestic violence programs developed by the Ohio Domestic Violence Network as a guide to providing evidence-based practice and to empower victims and their children.

Victims of Violent Crimes by an Intimate Partner, by Gender



What is Domestic Violence?

According to the Ohio Domestic Violence Network:

Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive and coercive behaviors, including physical, sexual, and psychological attacks, as well as economic coercion, that adults or adolescents use against their intimate partners.

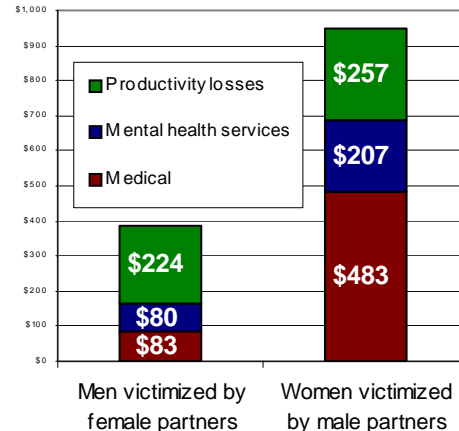
Domestic violence is not an isolated, individual event, but rather a pattern of multiple tactics and repeated events. Unlike stranger-to-stranger violence, in domestic violence the assaults are repeated against the same victim by the same perpetrator. These assaults occur in different forms: physical, sexual, and psychological. The pattern may include economic control as well. While physical assault may occur infrequently, other parts of the pattern may occur daily. One battering episode builds on past episodes and sets the stage for future episodes. All tactics of the pattern interact with each other and have profound effects on the victims.⁵

References: 1) Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2004; 2) Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000; 3) Stalans, L.J., & Finn, M.A. (2006); 4) Panchanadeswaran, S. & McCloskey, L. A. (2007); 5) Ohio Domestic Violence Network Resource Center (2007), <http://www.odvn.org/>

The Cost of Domestic Violence:

The costs of domestic violence are high. Among victims, the financial consequences are greater for women than for men who experience domestic violence. The average cost for women experiencing intimate partner violence is twice the average for male victims of domestic violence (see chart).⁶ Women use the emergency room, inpatient hospitals, and physician services more often than men. Findings suggest that female victims are at risk of suffering six or more chronic conditions decades after their domestic violence experience.⁷ Victims also have higher rates of depression, substance abuse, and suicide attempts.⁸ In addition, women’s employment is often interrupted or hindered when she experiences domestic violence. Women who reported stalking by an intimate partner were more likely to experience work disruption, job performance issues, and on-the-job harassment.⁹

Average Cost For Most Recent Incident of Intimate Partner Violence



Law Enforcement and Domestic Violence:

Reporting of domestic violence to police has increased nationally. Police attitudes and arrest decisions toward the domestic violence situation can influence whether victims seek help in the future, and a negative experience can demoralize victims.¹⁰ Police officers have a responsibility to diffuse violent situations, protect victims, and enforce the law. A police officer’s personal attitude towards domestic violence will influence his or her assessment and response to a domestic violence situation.¹¹

Research has found that in general, police officers do not see domestic violence cases as a criminal activity.¹² But when a 911 call is made, it is likely that the abuse is life threatening and should be treated as such. Despite the perception that victims passively accept violence, 67% of domestic violence victims make more than one police call, and calls are more likely in dangerous situations. If a weapon is used, 96% will call, 58% call when there is sexual abuse, and 40% call in cases of physical abuse.¹³

One study found that officers preferred to handle domestic cases with mediation or informal advice rather than arrest. The sanctions for a violent domestic crime were similar to nonviolent property offenses and DUI offenses rather than similar violent crimes. A violent crime committed against an intimate partner is likely to receive a lesser sanction than a violent crime committed against a stranger.¹⁴ The most dangerous time for a victim of domestic violence is when she plans to leave, after an arrest, or when her batterer is released. Men tend to escalate their violent behavior to prevent women from exiting a relationship.¹⁵ The releasing of a batterer can have life threatening or fatal consequences.

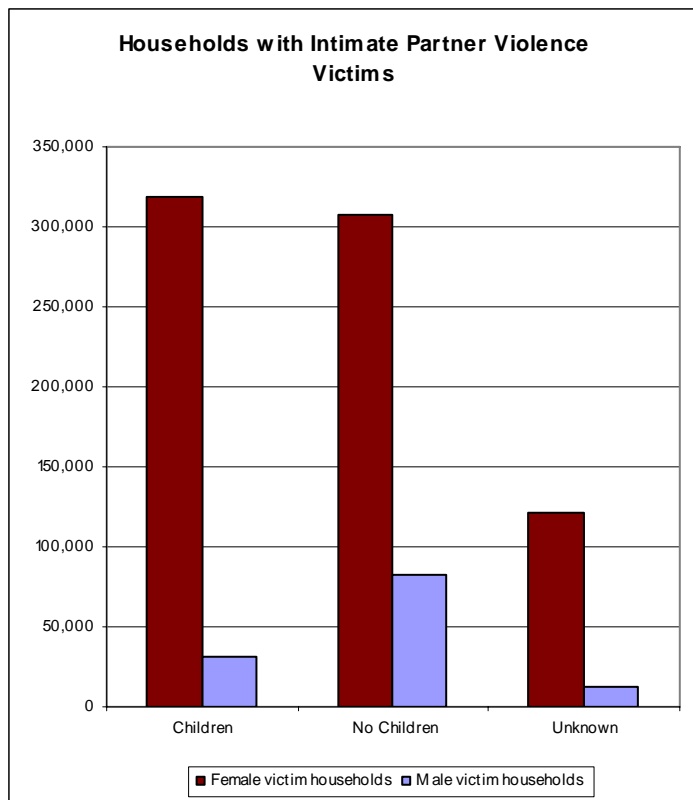
Ohio Domestic Violence Calls and Arrests 2005

Total calls:	72,929
Arrests under ORC §2919.25:	32,578
Arrests under other sections:	4,559
Calls where no charges filed:	35,792
Total Arrests:	37,137
Fatalities:	157

Source: Ohio Domestic Violence Network, <http://www.odvn.org/>

References: 6) Arias, I. & Corso, P. (2005); 7) Nicholaidis et al., (2004); 8) Fulfer JL, Tyler JJ, Choi NJ, Young JA, Verhulst SJ, Kovach R, Dorsey JK.. (2007); 9) Logan, T.K., Shannon, L., Cole, J., & Swanberg, J. (2007); 10) Logan TK, Shannon L, Walker R. (2006); 11) Logan, TK, et al. (2006); 12) Stalans, L.J., & Finn, M.A. (2006); 13) Bonomi, A.E., et al. (2007); 14) Logan, TK, et al. (2006); 15) Panchanadeswaran, S. & McCloskey, L. A. (2007)





Impact on Children:

Children are often the forgotten victims in cases of domestic violence. Children who witness domestic violence have serious behavioral, physical, cognitive, and emotional symptoms. It is reported that between 11% and 20% of children witness violence between parents or their mother and an intimate partner.¹⁶ The emotional cost remains with the female victim and her children. It is estimated that between 32% and 65% of pregnant women in emergency room settings are victims of domestic violence.¹⁷ These women are at greater risk for maternal morbidity and homicide. States that have tried to add exposure to violence to the definition of child neglect, however, found that their efforts backfired. Re-victimizing battered parents with the threat of prosecution, rather than holding the batterer accountable, places victims in double jeopardy and also deters them from seeking much needed help, increasing the risk to children.

Policy Recommendations for Ohio

Treat domestic violence as a violent criminal activity, not as an interpersonal problem.

- Reinforce this message through continuing education and training for law enforcement. One study found that newer officers' sanctions for domestic violence crimes were higher, but decreased as the officer became more experienced.¹⁸

Strengthen coordinated community response efforts through collaboration and universal screening.

- Screen for intimate partner violence in health care settings. Emergency room visits, physician visits, and prenatal care are often the primary point of contact for victims and are an opportunity to intervene through the use of screening tools.
- Fund and encourage informal and formal social care system collaborations to coordinate community prevention of and response to domestic violence.

Educate and enforce Amy's Law (ORC 2919.251).

- Judges are required to individually evaluate every defendant with a charge of domestic violence prior to allowing release after arrest or setting bail utilizing a risk assessment tool for this process.

References: 16) Zink, T. (2000); 17) Danner et al. (2007); 18) Logan, TK, et al. (2006)



Change state law (ORC 2932.13) to prevent batterers from possessing firearms.

- Make state law congruent with federal laws in which batterers are prohibited from owning or possessing firearms. Nationally, in about 5% of nonfatal and 51% of fatal intimate partner violence cases, a firearm was present.¹⁹

Notify victims when batterers are released from custody.

- Recognize that violence escalates when women leave and take steps to ensure the safety of women and children.

Develop substitute and/or confidential address system for victims to protect their safety.

- Allow victims to create a confidential substitute address when communicating with public agencies. This would help to protect their safety through non-disclosure of their physical address. An example of this legislation would be New Mexico's HB 216 enacted in 2004.
- Similar to Ohio's parental visitation policy (ORC 3109.051, G2), there should be no notification of residence relocation to the parent convicted of domestic violence by public agencies, such as child support enforcement.



Continue funding of shelters through marriage, divorce license fees (ORC 3113.35).

- Shelters play a critical role in ensuring the safety of victims and their children. Women who receive help from shelters are much more likely to leave an abusive relationship and remain out of violent relationships. For two-thirds of women, intimate partner violence happens at home and is most likely to occur between the hours of 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. making shelter necessary.²⁰

References: 19) Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2004; 20) Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2004

Note: References were abbreviated here because of space concerns. The full references list is available online at: <http://www.bgsu.edu/colleges/edhd/icfp/pubs/DomesticViolenceReferences.pdf>



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