



ONE IN THREE VICTIMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE IS MALE



Fact Sheet No.2

Is men's intimate partner violence (IPV) more severe, and more likely to inflict severe injury?

International studies show that, on average

- Overall, women are injured more than men, but men are injured too, and often seriously²
- The overall physical and psychological effects of IPV are similar for men and women^{1 2 5}

“The authors concluded that their findings argued against theories of greater female vulnerability to pathological outcomes.”⁸

“we also observe evidence that contradicts the idea that violence by male partners tends to be more serious”⁴

- Women and men who use IPV hurt their partners in similar ways (kicking, biting, punching, choking, stabbing, burning, etc), however men are as likely or significantly more likely than women to experience assaults using a weapon^{2 5 6}
- Male perpetrators are more likely to produce minor injuries, but less likely to produce severe injuries²
- Male victims are more likely to suffer serious injuries, while female victims are more likely to suffer minor injuries^{1 2}
- Women are slightly more likely than men to seek medical treatment for their injuries²
- Men and women bear similar intentions when using IPV, leading to similar results when their average differences in physical strength are taken into account (such as when weapons are used)^{3 7}
- Men, having greater strength on average, are more likely to use direct physical violence, while women are more likely to use a weapon to compensate for their lack of strength²
- Women are more likely than men to retaliate to IPV¹⁰

- Reducing women's use of violence will reduce women's rates of injury from violence because a woman's perpetration of IPV is the strongest predictor of her being a victim^{7 11 12}
- Children witnessing IPV by either their fathers or their mothers are more likely to grow up to use violence themselves⁷.

Is focusing on the severity of physical injuries the best approach to reducing violence?

- If men are injured less than women, is this a reason to deny them protection?
- Don't all victims of IPV deserve protection, not just those who are physically injured?
- Does only addressing the outcome of violence (physical injury) distract from addressing the process of violence which can include verbal, emotional, psychological, financial, and other forms of control and abuse?
- Does a focus upon injury ignore the fact that people who use IPV do so to control their partner, not necessarily to injure them? In fact, control of one's partner is often achieved without the use of violence.

“Concentrating on ‘severe’ violence only ignores the fact that the primary intent of fighting spouses is not to injure their partner... but to hurt... Their focus is on getting their way... and making the partner comply with their demands rather than on causing physical injury.”⁹

- Does a focus upon injury ignore the fact that victims of IPV are often hurt more by the violation of the bond of trust and love between them and their partner, than by the physical injury itself?
- Does a focus upon injury in effect give a ‘hitting license’ to weaker partners, who may eventually be severely injured, should their stronger partner retaliate (regardless of the gender of the partners)?

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- 12 While this may sound like ‘victim-blaming’, it is simply stating the research evidence finding that women who perpetrate violence suffer greater injuries than those who do not. If a woman hits her partner who then hits her back and injures her, both people are responsible for their own use of violence. Perpetrating violence is a risk factor for women's injury.