



ONE IN THREE VICTIMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE IS MALE



Fact Sheet No.3

Is women's intimate partner violence (IPV) more likely to be self-defence or a pre-emptive strike against a violent male partner?

Although it cannot be denied that there are cases in which women and men abuse their partner in self-defence, international studies have found that

- Self-defence is cited by women as the reason for their use of IPV (including severe violence such as homicide) in a small minority of cases (from 5 to 20 per cent)^{1 2 3 5 6 7 9 10 12}

“Studies... found that a relatively low percentage of women endorsed self-defence as a primary motive for violence.”¹³

“Women report using violence against male partners repeatedly, using it against non-violent male partners, and using it for reasons other than self-defence.”³

- In a study where self-defence was given as a reason for women's use of IPV in a large number of cases (42%), it was cited as a reason for men's IPV more often (56%)¹²
- Rather than self-defence, reasons commonly given by both women and men for their use of IPV include
 - ✦ coercion (dominance and control)
 - ✦ anger
 - ✦ punishing a partner's misbehaviour
 - ✦ jealousy
 - ✦ confusion
 - ✦ “to get through” (to one's partner)
 - ✦ to retaliate
 - ✦ frustration^{6 7 8 9 12}
- Rather than self-defence, reasons commonly given by women for their use of IPV include
 - ✦ disbelief that their male victims would be injured or retaliate

- ✦ they wished to engage their partner's attention (particularly emotionally)
- ✦ their partner not being sensitive to their needs
- ✦ their partner being verbally abusive to them
- ✦ their partner not listening to them^{3 8 9}
- Reciprocal partner violence (which makes up approximately 50 per cent of all IPV and is the most injurious to women) does not appear to be only comprised of self-defensive acts of violence^{2 3 13}
- Men and women initiate IPV (both minor and severe) at around the same rates and women are equally likely or more likely to perpetrate violence against a non-violent partner^{2 3 11}
- Women are more likely than men to hit back in response to provocation²
- Women are more likely than men to kill their partner in self-defence, however overall, only 10 to 20 per cent of women's partner homicides are carried out in self-defence or in response to prior abuse^{4 11}

“Important is the finding that women's allegations of DV were proven to be false. In most cases, the initial allegations of DV were modified considerably by them during the course of the study, particularly when they were faced with the accounts of their children and mothers, admitting in the end that they were neither victims of violence nor acting in self-defence.”¹⁰

- Women's use of IPV, rather than being reactive to male violence, is predictable by kindergarten age, and certainly by the teenage years. Aggressive girls grow up to be aggressive adults. High incidence rates of personality disorders are found in both male and female court-mandated samples of IPV perpetrators. Women who kill their husbands are just as likely to have criminal records as women who kill in other circumstances.^{2 4 11 12}

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