



ONE IN THREE VICTIMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE IS MALE



Fact Sheet No.5

Are male victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) far less likely to be afraid or intimidated than female victims?

International studies demonstrate that

- Males are taught by sex-role conditioning not to admit fear, making it appear that women are more fearful simply because they report fear more freely than men^{1 2}

“In most cases, the wife's intent to control and dominate the husband entailed efforts to induce fear in him relating to his personal safety as well as the fate of the children and property in general. She would often threaten to burn the house down, hurt the children or animals, or kill herself, him or the children: she would often drive dangerously to frighten him, and make him realise how serious and dangerous she could be. This generated intimidation, insecurity, and fear in the husbands and the family members in general.”⁵

- Women and men have different perceptions of danger and use fear-scales quite differently. Women are twice as likely as men to fear death from a partner, when the actual probability of being killed is the same. Women may over-react to objective threat, while men probably under-react^{1 2}.

“Men reported also symptoms such as tightness in the stomach, muscular pain, racing pulse, thought distortion, and panic attacks. Perpetual fear and being 'on guard' were experienced by most participants. Other commonly expressed reactions were, feelings of lack of control and inadequacy and constant denigration of the man, which often caused him to accept his partner's view of him, and to lose self esteem.”⁵

- Women's greater fear of male violence, where it exists, could also simply stem from the greater average size and strength of men, rather than from any difference in motives between men and women who use IPV⁴.

- Men have rarely had their fear of female violence assessed. One of the few studies to do this found that a substantial minority of male victims of IPV feared their partner's violence and were stalked. Over half the men were fearful that their partners would cause them serious injury if they found out that he had called the domestic violence helpline^{2 3}.

“The feminist view is that all male violence is designed to generate fear to enable coercion. The data suggest a motivational profile for use of violence by either gender is far more complex. The question for feminists remains given that research indicates high levels of female violence, much of it against non-violent males and hence not in self-defence; how is that violence any different from male violence? How can male violence still be depicted as being in pursuit of power and control when female violence is also frequent and, according to the women themselves, not defensive?”²

- Another such study of male victims of IPV found that “perpetual fear and being ‘on guard’ were experienced by most participants”⁵ It is important to note that men's fear is often internalised and thus invisible to the outside observer.
- There is little evidence to support the assertion that all male violence is designed to generate fear in women to enable coercion. In fact the data shows that both men and women have much more complex motives behind their use of IPV².

“Analog studies of fear induction in response to intimate conflicts found that women would report more fear even when exposure to the stimulus (a videotaped conflict between others) could not possibly be threatening or endangering... Men use fear scales differently and are less likely to report fear as opposed to other emotions. Creating police responses based on who is most afraid means perpetrators can be arrested based on reported internal reactions that cannot be corroborated.”¹

REFERENCES

- 1 Dutton, D. G. (2010). The gender paradigm and the architecture of antisociality. *Partner Abuse*, 1(1), 5-25.
- 2 Dutton, D. G., & Nicholls, T. L. (2005). The gender paradigm in domestic violence research and theory: Part 1—the conflict of theory and data. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 10(6), 680-714.
- 3 Hines, D. A., Brown, J., & Dunning, E. (2007). Characteristics of callers to the domestic abuse helpline for men. *Journal of Family Violence*, 22(2), 63-72.
- 4 Medeiros, R. A., & Straus, M. A. (2006). Risk factors for physical violence between dating partners: Implications for gender-inclusive prevention and treatment of family violence. In J. Hamel, & T. Nicholls (Eds.), *Family approaches to domestic violence: A practitioners guide to gender-inclusive research and treatment*. (pp. 59-85). Springer.
- 5 Sarantakos, S., & Lewis, A. (2001). Domestic violence and the male victim. *Nuance*, 3, 1-15.