

# Essay on domestic violence and abuse

[Law](#), [Criminal Justice](#)



Domestic violence occurs when one partner tries to control the other in a marital or dating relationship. This control may be in the form of physical or emotional abuse, use of threats and isolation. Certain obstacles exist that make it difficult for domestic violence victims to end the abuse. These include; psychological entrapment, physical isolation, cultural and religious values, immigration status, threats and intimidation, social judgment fear and inadequate viable alternatives. Through public, health and legal awareness, victims can be able to overcome the effects of the abuse and start their lives afresh. Moreover, the improvement of resources in the community would make it easier for them to rebuild their lives.

Domestic violence is widespread. It affects all cultures, countries and age-groups. Those affected are from all educational, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds. It affects both homosexual and heterosexual relationships. Women with low socioeconomic status are more vulnerable to domestic violence compared to other women. The risk to domestic violence is even higher in small girls and the psychologically and the physically handicapped people or those living below the poverty line. Domestic violence also affects children indirectly, even though they may not be the primary victims.

According to the report by the Domestic Violence Resource Center, 25% of women have been domestically violated in their lifetime. The study was done by The Center for Disease Control and Prevention in collaboration with The National Institute of Justice. A study by the Department of Justice found that approximately 960, 000 cases of domestic violence occur every year against a boyfriend, girlfriend or a current or former spouse. Close to 3 million women are abused physically by their boyfriends or husbands every year.

85% of the victims of domestic violence are women while men account for only 15%. In another study, conducted by the Department of Justice in 2003, it was found that 600, 000-6 million women experience domestic violence each year, while male victims range from 100, 000 to 6 million. The greatest risk to non-fatal domestic violence is greatest among women aged between 20-24 years. The risk is also high in men and women who are divorced. The vulnerability to domestic violence is equal in all races. However, those with annual earnings of less than \$25, 000 are three times more likely to experience domestic violence compared to with annual earnings of more than \$50, 000.

The ratio of women to men murdered on a daily basis as a result of domestic violence in the country is 3: 1. 1, 247 women murdered by their spouses in the year 2000. During the same year, 440 men lost their lives due to domestic violence. About 50% of female victims of domestic violence sustain injuries but only 20% of them seek treatment. Domestic violence has also been reported among high school students. 1 in every 5 female high school students has been physically or sexually violated by their partner. 14% of teenagers reported that their partners vowed to harm them or themselves if they tried to end their relationship. Other studies show that the more serious a relationship becomes, the more the risk of domestic violence increases. 70% of sexual assaults reported by adolescent girls are date rape. 38% of the girls are of age 14 to 17 years.

A study of American families indicated that 50% of men physically or sexually abused their wives frequently did so to their children too. It was reported that between 3. 3 and 10 million children witnessed intimate

partner violence every year. Domestic violence against men has been reported. It was, however, noted that due to cultural norms, men were less likely to report any form of domestic violence against them.

Domestic violence may occur in several forms. One may inflict or try to inflict physical injury to the partner. This may be done by hitting, punching, grabbing, slapping, stabbing, biting or shooting. Another form of violence may involve denying a spouse access to resources that are required to maintain healthy living. For example; medical care, food, sleep or forcing one to abuse drugs. Attempting to get sexual contact from a partner without their consent is also considered as domestic violence. For example; sodomy, forced prostitution, forced sex after physical assault, marital rape or extramarital sex. Instilling fear or an attempt to do so is a form of domestic violence. This may be done through intimidation, blackmail, stalking, destruction of property, harassment or by inflicting physical harm to the victim. Isolation from school, family or friends is also a form of domestic violence. One may feel isolated when their partner confiscates their phone, denies them transportation and forced imprisonment. Another form of domestic violence is by undermining the sense of worth of the partner. Women are mostly insulted, belittled, and their feelings manipulated to make them feel guilty. Domestic violence also occurs when one partner tries to control the income of the other partner. Withholding money from a spouse may lead to forbidding school or employment.

Domestic violence has several long term physical and health effects on the victims. Frequent abuse may affect the socio-emotional well-being of the victims. They lose trust in themselves, others or in God due to mistreatment.

With no self-belief, they develop low self-esteem. Most people from abusive relationships have problems with having subsequent successful relationships. They are always very suspicious or judgmental of their spouses. This has been attributed to the fear of their partner turning out to be as abusive as the previous one. Domestic violence has also been linked to change in sexual orientation, especially in women. They develop a negative attitude towards men, holding to the mentality that all men are abusive and violent. Women who leave abusive marriages face many problems as single mothers. For example, unemployment makes them unable to meet the financial needs of their children. As single parents, they play the role of a father and a mother to their children. This may be emotionally draining. They also avoid having intimate relationships for the sake of their children.

Psychological effects of domestic violence include development of post-traumatic stress disorder. Such victims experience nightmares, hypervigilance, and flashbacks. They over-react to any kind of physical touch even from their most trusted friends. Domestic violence may lead to depression and eventually suicide particularly among victims who consider themselves unable to break away from the abusive relationship. Women who have been abused have strained relationships with men, their families, children and friends. They become withdrawn and spend a lot of time on their own.

Abusive relationships may lead to disability in the abused partner. Physical disability is caused by from physical abuse. The victims develop deafness, blindness or physical immobility depending on the severity of the abuse. Psychological disability may be as a result of depression. Domestically

abused women adopt addictive behavior alcoholism and drug abuse.

Children brought up in homes with frequent cases of domestic violence are more likely to experience the same when they get married, creating the issue of intergenerational cycle of abuse. These children develop phobias for intimate relationships and tend to be in abusive relationships in their adulthood.

On September 13th, 1994, the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 was signed into law by President Bill Clinton. Through the Act, \$1.6 billion is allocated to investigate and prosecute violent crimes against women, impose restitution on the convicts and look into unprosecuted cases. Domestic violence against men may also be included in the Act. In the early 1990s, there were extensive efforts by advocates from the movement of battered women, advocates of sexual assault cases, and law enforcement agencies to address the issue of domestic violence through the adoption of a significant legislation. Since its passage into law, in 1994, VAWA has gone further to cover stalking and dating violence. Its main goal is to protect both adult and teenage victims of domestic violence crimes, create awareness on domestic violence through education and ensure that cases are responded to consistently across the country. VAWA has been successful in campaigning for the community to work in a coordinated manner in response to domestic violence. Currently, law enforcement, courts, prosecutors, private bar and victim services work together in an effort to address domestic violence issues. Community based groups that advocate for an end towards domestic violence, also receive financial support from VAWA.

Since 1994, VAWA has been reauthorized twice, in the years 2000 and 2005.

In 2005, certain improvements were made to the Act. Dating violence and stalking were included in domestic violence, a legal assistance program for domestic violence victims was created, visitation programs to families going through domestic violence were initiated, and immigrant protection against domestic violence adopted into the Act. The latter would be achieved through the establishment of U-visas and T-visas and prevention of human trafficking cases. In 2005, a holistic approach was taken to address domestic violence. New areas of focus were created by VAWA 2005. Unprosecuted cases of domestic violence against immigrant women were dealt with to enhance the protection of immigrant victims; it recognized the importance of prevention strategies to curb domestic violence before it began; the protection of victims of domestic violence from unfair eviction; creation of a federal funding stream to assist rape crisis centers; creation of programs to support disabled victims, and provide protection services to children and teenagers as well.

VAWA has helped domestic violence victims to get help and safety, and start new lives. It created the National Domestic Violence Hotline to respond to urgent calls for help from victims. 22, 000 calls are received every month and 92% of those who call are first time callers. Over three million calls have been made. The reported cases of domestic violence have declined by 67% between 1994 and 2007. During the same period, the cases of deaths of women as a result of domestic violence have fallen by 35% and those of males have also fallen by 46%. The increase in the number of arrests has been attributed to the increase in number of reported cases of domestic violence crimes.

Prevention is better than cure. One way of preventing domestic violence from occurring is by reading the warning signs of a potential abuse. Change in the behavior in one partner may be a signal. For example, a man may start to show disrespect to his girlfriend by using insults showing aggression. Women in such relationships should break them up before they are violated.

## References

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