

HOW GENDER AFFECTS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence, to many, is an issue of men harming women, or attempting to have power over women. This has statistically proven true in numerous studies and police reports, however domestic violence is not unique to one gender. Attention given to domestic violence has typically been "males harming females" and in a great deal of domestic violence publications, words for women are used interchangeably for "victim". The debate is ongoing whether domestic abuse incurred by men should be given the same attention as that caused by men.

Domestic violence is an enormous problem. Domestic violence is quite prevalent, with some studies saying as many as one out of every four women suffer domestic abuse at some point in their lives. It has also been asserted that the vast majority of domestic violence goes unreported, with only around 35-40% of the victims filing complaints. Amongst men, this number is likely even lower, as men are far less likely to report female-on-male violence. Reasons cited are commonly that authorities are skeptical of a woman's ability to harm a man, the nature of the abuse that women are likely to use, and also because of issues of masculinity.

Research commonly indicates that roughly 90% of domestic violence is caused by men within heterosexual relationships. This research, however, is based on what is reported to authorities. Since men report a far lower proportion of the incidents in which they are a victim. Men also generally have a different definition of domestic abuse than women. Most men do not consider being slapped in the face by their partner as abuse, while most women do consider such an incident to be abuse.

The general consensus seems to be that male-on-female domestic violence is more likely to result in serious injury or death, whereas female-on-male is more likely to result in male suicide. This is because men are more likely and able to physically abuse women, while women are more likely to emotionally manipulate and coerce men. Men are predisposed due to their larger stature to resort to violence more often than women do, so if a man hits a woman, it is likely to cause more harm than if a woman hits a man. However, women can and do use weapons to negate the biological build of men; women are considered twice as likely to use a lethal weapon in domestic abuse encounters. Women also are more likely to use psychological violence that forms a pattern of coercive and controlling behavior.

The increased focus on domestic violence has led to reforms in laws, making more stringent penalties for those who harm a partner. Ironically, male abusers have benefited from these reforms, and are less likely to be killed by their partners since killing their spouse is no longer the only resort for women. Gender roles play a role in abusive situations, and exploring these expectations can be helpful in addressing abusive situations, as do factors like race, class, religion, sexuality and philosophy.

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