

Risk Factors For Abuse

I've heard that domestic violence only happens among the poor, uneducated and unemployed. Is this true? No.

- Family violence occurs among all socioeconomic and educational levels, in all religious faiths, across racial and ethnic boundaries, and within all age groups (Hoff, 2001; Max et al., 2004; Ptacek, 1999).
- Former abuse victims often are plunged into poverty after fleeing abuse (Tolman and Raphael, 2000).
- Domestic violence is a major cause of homelessness (Brown and Bassuk, 1997; Tseis, 1996; Zorza, 1991).
- While domestic violence and homeless shelters provide safety for many victims fleeing abuse, the demand far exceeds the supply (Hagion-Rzepka, 2005).

I've heard that domestic violence is more common among the young. Is this true? Yes.

- The vast majority of victims experience domestic violence in young adulthood (Farr, 2002; Horon and Cheng, 2001; National Research Council, 1996; O'Leary, 1999).
- Perpetrators of domestic violence are disproportionately young also: Roughly one quarter of men aged 18-25 and over 15% of men between the ages of 25-35 reported committing at least one act of domestic violence within a year (National Research Council, 1998, cited in Low et al., 2002).
- Domestic violence perpetration rates peak in late adolescence and decrease significantly with age (O'Leary).

I've heard that domestic violence is caused by substance abuse. Is this true? No.

- Substance abuse is strongly associated with domestic violence (Bancroft, 2002; Gondolf, 1998).

I've heard that domestic violence occurs because of social isolation.

Is this true? **No.**

- The association between social isolation and domestic violence has been established (Eisenstat and Bancroft, 1999; Institute of Medicine, 1998; Low et al., 2002; Murdaugh et al., 2004; Stark, 2000).
- However, what is frequently misunderstood is that social isolation is often imposed by the jealous and controlling behavior of the abusive partner (Bancroft, 2002; Hegstrom, 1999; Torres, 1991).

I've heard that domestic violence occurs because of inequality.

Is this true? **Yes.**

- Social inequality between genders is alternately cited as either a cause or a risk factor for domestic violence (LaViolette and Barnett, 2000; Low et al., 2002).
- Couples with disparities in educational attainment and earning power between the two individuals involved have been found to be at greater risk for domestic violence (Kaukinen, 2004; Tjaden and Thoennes, 2000).

I've heard that domestic violence is more common among those who have previously been abused. Is this true? Yes.

- Emerging research suggests that previous physical or sexual victimization increases risk (Campbell et al., 2002; National Institute of Justice, 2004).
- Considerable evidence exists to conclude that witnessing abuse or being victimized in one's family of origin is a significant risk factor for domestic violence in adulthood (Bevan and Higgins, 2002; Cunningham, 2003; Johnson and Ferraro, 2000; Leone, Johnson, Cohan, and Lloyd, 2004).

I've heard that domestic violence is primarily a gender-based risk.

Is this true? **Yes.**

- By far, the greatest risk factor for domestic violence is gender (Heise et al., 1999; Krug et al., 2002; Rennison and Planty, 2003; Tjaden and Thoennes, 2000).
- There is particular risk of abuse during pregnancy – a uniquely female condition (Draucker, 2002; Frye, 2001; Horon and Cheng, 2001; Koss, Goodman, Browne, Fitzgerald, Keita, and Russo, 1994).