



**rape and abuse
crisis center**

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Myths and Facts about Domestic Violence

Myth #1: The problem of domestic violence is greatly exaggerated.

Fact: There are *nearly 5.3 million incidents* of intimate partner violence each year among U.S. women ages 18 and older.¹ Statistics show that *one-in-four (25%)* women in the United States will experience domestic violence in her lifetime.² On average, *more than three women* are murdered by their husband or boyfriend each day.³

Myth #2: Men and women have always fought; it is natural.

Fact: All couples will disagree at one time or another. It is important to remember that anger is a feeling while violence is a behavior. It is possible to be angry without becoming violent. Battering is a crime of power and control.

Myth #3: Domestic violence only happens in lower economic classes and minority populations.

Fact: Domestic abuse occurs in families from all social, racial, economic, educational, and religious backgrounds. It occurs in towns, suburbs, rural areas, and the inner city.⁴

Myth #4: Pregnancy will protect a woman from being abused.

Fact: Between *4-8%* of pregnant women are abused at least once during their pregnancy.¹ It is estimated as many as *324,000 women* each year experience intimate partner violence during their pregnancy.³ There is no subgroup of women immune to the threat of domestic violence.

Myth #5: If a person wanted to, they could leave their abusive partner.

Fact: On average, an abused woman leaves her partner *6-8 times*.⁵ There are many reasons a person stays in an abusive relationship.

- The victim loves the abuser and values his/her good qualities
- The victim is economically dependent on the abuser
- Because the abuser has destroyed the victim's other relationships, the victim has no other emotional support
- Fear of failure
 - Our culture places significant emphasis on the value of a successful marriage
- Religious beliefs about marriage
- Not wanting to deprive children of their other parent
- With each incident, there is a promise it won't happen again
- Fear of more violence⁵

24-Hour Crisis Hotline (701) 293-7273

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Myth #6: Domestic violence does not affect children since they are not usually aware of the abuse.

Fact: Although many adults believe they have protected their children from exposure to domestic violence, 80-90% of children in those homes can give detailed descriptions of violence experienced in their families.⁶ Further, children in homes where domestic violence occurs may experience many effects:

- cognitive or language problems
- developmental delay
- stress-related physical ailments (headaches, ulcers, rashes)
- hearing and speech problems
- difficulty in school
- difficulty concentrating
- feelings of shame and guilt
- experience low self esteem⁵

Myth #7: Marital rape does not really happen.

Fact: In the U.S. every year, about 1.5 million women are raped or physically assaulted by an intimate partner. This translates into about 47 intimate partner violence assaults *per 1,000* women.¹ Additionally, 25% of women have been raped and/or physically assaulted by an intimate partner in their lifetime.⁴

Myth #8: People who abuse their partners are mentally ill and not responsible for their actions.

Fact: Batterers are not out of control. They use violence as a means to gain and maintain control over their partner and the relationship. Domestic abuse is a crime, and as with all other crimes, the batterer is responsible for his or her behavior and its consequences.

Myth #9: Alcohol and drug use cause domestic violence.

Fact: There is little evidence to support this theory. It should be noted that many people who abuse their partners report no history of addiction or misuse of alcohol or any other substance. Similarly, many people who do misuse alcohol and other substances do not abuse their partners.

Myth #10: Women abuse men just as often as men abuse women.

Fact: Studies show that 85% of domestic violence victims are women.² In over $\frac{3}{4}$ of all family violence situations, the perpetrator of the violence was male.⁷ Domestic violence is the most common cause of injury to American women between the ages of 15-44.⁴

References:

1. Center for Disease Control <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/ipvfacts.htm>
2. National Coalition Against Domestic Violence <http://www.ncadv.org>
3. <http://www.endabuse.org/resources/facts/>
4. [http://healthyminds.org/factsheets/LTF-Domestic Violence.pdf](http://healthyminds.org/factsheets/LTF-Domestic%20Violence.pdf)
5. <http://www.letswrap.com/dvinfo/kids.htm>
6. http://www.vawnet.org/NRCDVPublications/TAPE/Packets/NRC_Children.pdf
7. United States Department of Justice <http://www.ojp.gov/bjs/abstract/cnh05.htm>