

THE MEN'S EXPERIENCES WITH PARTNER AGGRESSION PROJECT

Men Who Sustain Violence From Their Female Partners: Predictors of Where They Seek Help and How They Rate Those Resources— Implications for Social Service Providers and First Responders

This fact sheet and the others in this series summarizes the results of a study that Drs. Denise A. Hines and Emily M. Douglas conducted in 2008 about men who sustained intimate partner violence (IPV) from their female partners and sought help. In this study, which was funded by the National Institute of Mental Health, we recruited 302 men to participate in an online study through advertising on websites that dealt primarily with men's issues and through the Domestic Abuse Helpline for Men and Women. Men reported about the level of IPV (psychological, sexual, and physical) that they both sustained from and perpetrated against their female partners, their mental health status (post traumatic stress, alcohol and substance use), and their experiences with seeking help. The experiences of these helpseekers were compared to a population-based or community sample of 520 men who were recruited to participate either through a random digit dial telephone or Internet survey. For more information, results, and media mentions about this study, please visit our study [website](#).

WHAT DID WE INVESTIGATE?

The purpose of this investigation was to examine the factors that are related to which resources a male helpseeker for intimate partner violence (IPV) uses and how they rate those experiences. Specifically:

- What demographic characteristics and life experiences are related to where men who have sustained IPV seek help?
- What demographic characteristics and life experience are related to how men rate the helpfulness of these resources?

For information about the men in this study and where they seek help, please see one of our [previous](#) factsheets.

FACTORS RELATED TO WHERE MEN SEEK HELP

The men in our sample sought help from a number of different resources, including domestic violence agencies, domestic violence hotlines, Internet, mental health providers, medical providers, and the police. A full description of their experiences can be found in another [factsheet](#) on our study website.



Domestic Violence Agencies

In comparison to men who did not seek help from domestic violence agencies, those who did:

- More likely, by a fraction, to be older;
- Were 3 times more likely to have children who had witnessed the IPV; and
- Were 2.3 times more likely to have had a false allegation made against them.

Domestic Violence Hotlines

In comparison to men who did not seek help via the domestic violence hotlines, those who did:

- Were 50% less likely to be from the Southern region of the United States; and
- Were 1.23 times more likely to have experienced sexual abuse in childhood

The Internet

In comparison to men who did not seek help via the Internet, those who did:

- Experienced less severe forms of abuse. These men were about 80% less likely to have sustained a severe physical assault from their partner in the past year;
- About 60% less likely to be from the Western region in the United States; and
- Were more likely, by a fraction, to have experienced higher levels of post-traumatic stress.

Medical Providers

In comparison to men who did not seek help from medical providers, men who did:

- Were more than 4 times more likely to have had a false allegation made against them;
- Almost 3 times more likely to have sustained a very severe physical assault from their partner in the past year;
- Were more than 2.5 times as likely to have a disability;
- Were 1.2 times more likely to have been sexually abused as a child; and
- Were more likely, by a fraction, to have higher levels of post-traumatic stress;

Mental Health Providers

In comparison to men who did not seek help from mental health providers, men who did:

- Were almost 3.5 times more likely to have a mental illness;
- 2.5 times more likely to have minor children;
- To have higher levels of education, and
- Were about 40% less likely to have perpetrated any physical IPV against their partner.

The Police

There were more factors related to seeking help from the police than any other type of resource. In comparison to men who did not seek help from the police, those who did:



- Were about twice as likely to be from a rural location, to be a racial or ethnic minority, to have sustained a very severe assault from their partner, and to have had a false allegation made against them,;
- Were marginally more likely to be taller and older; and
- Were about 50% less likely to have perpetrated any physical IPV against their partners.

FACTORS RELATED TO HOW MEN RATE THE HELPFULNESS OF THE RESOURCES

Our previous research has shown that male helpseekers did not have especially positive experiences with most of these resources. Those rated as most helpful were medical providers, mental health providers, and domestic violence hotlines. A full review of these findings can be found on another [factsheet](#) found on our website. In this current study, our aim was to better understand if men’s characteristics and life experiences were associated with how they rates the helpfulness of these resources.

Domestic Violence Agencies

- Men who had children were less likely, by about three-fourths, to report that this resource was helpful;
- Men who came from suburban locations (as compared to urban and rural locations) were less likely, by 65%, to report that this resource was helpful; and
- Men who had higher levels of social support were slightly more likely to report that domestic violence agencies were helpful.

Domestic Violence Hotlines

- Men who were given referrals to other agencies that were helpful were almost 30 times more likely to rate this resource positively, whereas
- Men who were told, “We only help women” were almost 90% less likely rate it positively; and
- Men who were sexually abused as children were 1.9 times more likely to rate this resource positively.

The Internet

- Men who were given referrals by the web-based resource that were helpful were 3.37 times more likely to rate this resource positively, whereas
- Men who were told, “We only help women” were 70% less likely rate it positively.



Medical Providers

- Men who sought help from a medical provider/emergency room and were given information about IPV victimization were much more likely, by about 6 times, to rate this resource as helpful; and
- Men with mental illness were 85% less likely to report that this resource was helpful.

Mental Health Providers

- Men who felt as though their concerns around IPV were taken seriously were much more likely, by almost a factor of 21, to rate this resource more favorably than men who felt that their concerns were dismissed.
- Men who reported that the mental health provider gave them information about how to get help for IPV victimization were more than twice as likely to rate this resource more favorably,

The Police

- Men whose partner was determined to be the “primary aggressor” were more than 5 times more likely to rate the police as being helpful;
- Men whose partner was arrested by the police were almost 2.5 times more likely to rate the police as being more helpful than men whose partners were not arrested;
- Men who sustained a very severe assault from their female partner were about two-thirds less likely to report that this resource was helpful;
- Men who were sexually abused as children were about one-third as likely to report that the police were helpful, as compared to men with no sexual abuse history; and
- Men with higher levels of post-traumatic stress were slightly less likely to report that the police were helpful.

CONCLUSION

There was consistency in the factors predicting when men use particular resources and how they rate the helpfulness of resources. The following patterns emerged:

- Men who have sustained a severe or very severe assault from their partner sought help from emergency personnel: emergency rooms and police officers, and were less likely to see help through more passive means, such as the Internet.
- Men with mental illness were more likely to have sought help from a mental health provider
- Men with a false allegation made against them were more likely to seek help in four of the six helpseeking areas: DV program, medical professional, mental health professional, and police. These men may be looking for ways to document their abusive experiences.



- Resources that gave referrals that were helpful (e.g., DV hotlines and Internet sources), validated the men’s experiences (e.g., mental health providers, police when they arrested partner, or determined the partner to be the primary aggressor), or provided information for how to get help for IPV (e.g., medical and mental health providers) were rated more favorably.

The results paint a picture of the unique mental, physical, and service needs of men seeking help. These findings can be useful for providers in a number of ways, for example, mental health providers and police alike could screen for any of the factors mentioned in this study, such as presence of children, which might provide direction for the provision of services and assistance. Similarly, agencies and providers who encounter men who have had false allegations made against them could develop appropriate responses for addressing this problem.

Source: Douglas, E. M., Hines, D. A., & McCarthy, S. (in press). Men Who Sustain Female-to-Male Partner Violence: Factors Associated with Where They Seek Help and How They Rate Those Resources. *Family & Intimate Partner Violence Quarterly*.

