

THE MEN'S EXPERIENCES WITH PARTNER AGGRESSION PROJECT

A Closer Look at Men Who Sustain Intimate Terrorism by Women

This fact sheet and the others in this series summarize 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, 302 men participated in an online survey; we recruited them 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 IS INTIMATE TERRORISM?

Intimate terrorism (IT) is a severe form of intimate partner violence (IPV) in which violence is one tactic in a general pattern of control of one partner over another partner. The violence is frequent and severe, occurring at least on a monthly basis, is unlikely to be mutual and is likely to involve serious injury and emotional abuse. ^{1,2}

WHO ARE THE MEN WHO SUSTAIN INTIMATE TERRORISM?

Our research indicates that the majority of male helpseekers in our sample who sustained IT are, or were in serious, long-term relationships with most being married (48%) or separated (18%). The average relationship lasted over 8 years, and of the 112 men who were no longer in these relationships, the relationships had ended an average of 6 months prior to participation in our study. Additionally, almost three-quarters (73%) of the relationships involved minor children, with the helpseekers reporting the presence of 2 children on average. Furthermore, the helpseekers in our study:

- Were more likely to be white (87%)
- Were an average of 41 years old
- Were employed full-time (69%)
- Had, on average, graduated from a 2 to 4 year college
- Were, on average, employed in a professional role
- Earned, on average, about \$52,000 annually

¹Johnson, M.P. (1995). Patriarchal terrorism and common couple violence: Two forms of violence against women. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 57, 283-294.

² Johnson, M.P. (2006). Conflict and control: Gender symmetry and asymmetry in domestic violence. *Violence Against Women*, 12(11), 1003-1018.



TYPES OF AGGRESSION

Our research indicates that the majority of the men in our sample who sought help for IT sustained both minor and severe forms of psychological³ and physical⁴ aggression. The men also experienced a high rate of injuries. Please see Table 1.

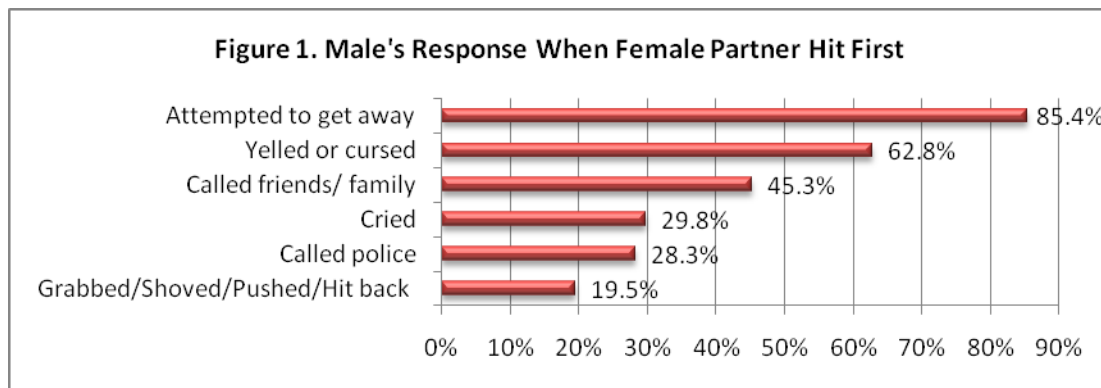
Table 1. Types, Frequency, and Prevalence of IPV

Type of IPV	Percent who Experienced	Average # of Times It Happened in Past Year
Minor Psychological	100.0%	62.1
Severe Psychological	96.0%	27.8
Controlling Behaviors	93.4%	39.8
Insisting on Sex	41.1%	3.9
Minor Physical	98.7%	31.6
Severe Physical	90.4%	15.1
Very Severe Physical	54.0%	4.0
Minor Injuries	77.5%	9.7
Severe Injuries	35.1%	4.6

Further, over half of male the helpseekers (59.1%) reported that their children had visually witnessed a physical argument at some point in the relationship, with an additional 11% having at least heard a physical argument.

WHAT HAPPENED DURING THE LAST PHYSICAL ARGUMENT?

We asked about the last physical argument that took place between the helpseekers and their female partners. The majority of men reported that in the latest instance, their female partners had hit first (93%), and in response, the male helpseekers:



³ For example, swearing, insulting, yelling, destroying something that belonged to the partner, or threatening to harm the partner.

⁴ For example, grabbing, shoving, punching, and using a gun or knife against the partner.



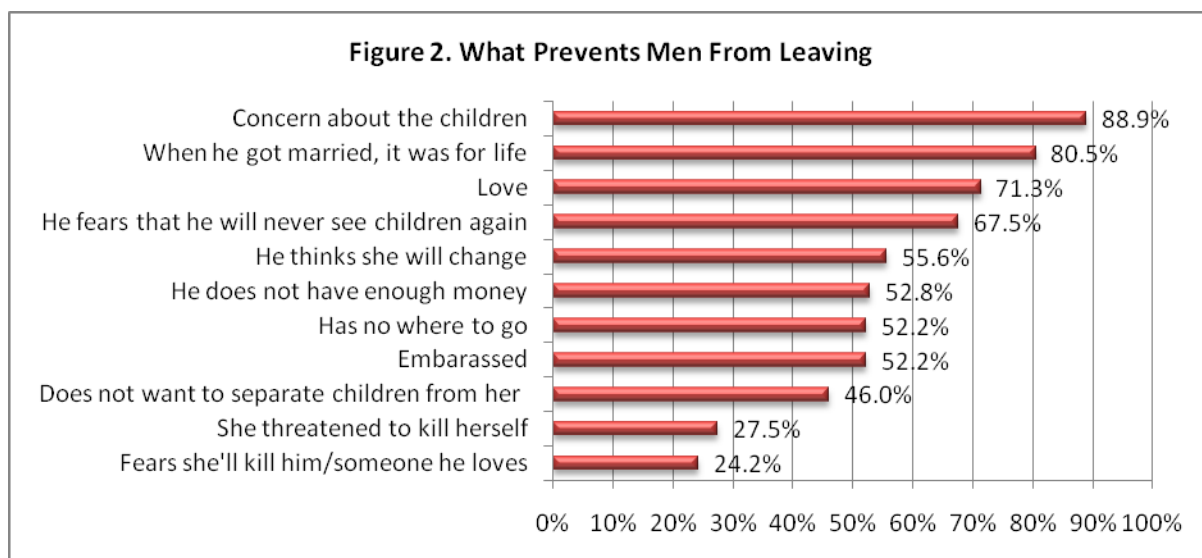
During the last physical argument, according to the reports of male helpseekers, the female partner was more than twice as likely to have been drinking than the male partner (26.2%; 11.5%, respectively).

MENTAL ILLNESS AMONG MEN WHO EXPERIENCE IT

Of the 302 male helpseekers in this study, about a quarter (24%) reported that they had a mental illness. Of these men, close to half (41)% reported that they only had the diagnosis since being in the relationship. The most common mental illnesses were depressive disorders (65%), followed by anxiety disorders (48%).

WHAT PREVENTS MEN FROM LEAVING

Of the male helpseekers in this study, 189 of them were still with their partners. They endorsed a number of different reasons for staying in the relationship. Figure 2 summarizes those reasons.



The male helpseekers in this study paint a picture of men who are fairly well educated, who have professional-level jobs, and who have children involved in their relationships. They report sustaining severe levels of violence at the hands of their partner and have significant concerns about whether to leave their partners and what would happen if they did leave. Many of these men report loving their partners, hoping that she will change, showing commitment to their marriage, and concern about what would happen to the children.