

# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:  
Civilian

## Characteristics of Callers to the Domestic Abuse Hotline for Men

Hines, D.A., Brown, J., & Dunning, E. (2007). Characteristics of callers to the domestic abuse hotline for men. *Journal of Family Violence*, 22(2), 63-72. doi:10.1007/s10896-006-9052-0

**SUMMARY:** Male victims of interpersonal violence are often unrecognized because of certain views that interpersonal violence includes a power structure in society that favors males. However, this ideology prevents society from effectively preventing violence by failing to address the realities of male victims. In order to broaden understanding in this field, researchers analyzed data collected from 190 male callers to the Domestic Abuse Helpline for Men.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Ninety-five percent of men reported that their wives tried to control them. The most common reported controlling behaviors were threats and coercion (77.6%; e.g., wives threatening to kill themselves), emotional abuse (74.1%; e.g., humiliating victim), and intimidation (63.3%; e.g., abusing pets). Additionally, 49% of victims stated their abuser threatened to use the court system against them (e.g., obtain full custody of children).
- While most violence consisted of being slapped or hit (43.7%), pushed (41.8%), kicked (39.2%), grabbed (31.0%), and punched (24.7%), some men experienced more serious attacks including being choked (22.2%) and even stabbed (1.9%).
- Female abuser characteristics included history of childhood trauma (91.7%), threatened suicide or homicide (61.9% and 59%, respectively), and alcohol use (52.1%). The women also had a history of or were currently experiencing mental illness (46%) and substance abuse (34.8%).
- Approximately 52% of the men were in a physically abusive relationship at the time of the call.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:

Military professionals could:

- Facilitate support groups for male victims of interpersonal violence
- Attend trainings that provide strategies on how to destigmatize male victims of interpersonal violence

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Disseminate information regarding female perpetrated interpersonal violence
- Engage Service members and intimate partners in classes that teach conflict-resolution skills

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Recommend professionals who work with military families receive training on the destigmatization of male victims
- Recommend integrating education regarding interpersonal violence and gender-specific resources in existing delivery systems for military families

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## METHODS

- Domestic Abuse Helpline for Men volunteer operators asked questions regarding demographic information, abuse information, and partner characteristics (e.g., "Does your partner have a history of childhood trauma?")
- Data were only analyzed on men who called for themselves and who experienced physical abuse from a female partner.
- Statistical analyses were conducted to examine relationships among the personal characteristics of male victims and female perpetrators, controlling tactics used by female perpetrators, and men's overall experiences with the domestic violence system.

## PARTICIPANTS

- Participants were 190 male callers to the Domestic Abuse Helpline for Men who experienced physical abuse from their female partners.
- The average ages of male victims and female perpetrators were 41 and 36 years, respectively. Approximately 56% of men reported having children living at home.
- Male victims worked in a variety of occupations. One group of callers included men in the military, police force, or firefighters (13.7%). Also, 17.9% of callers were disabled.

## LIMITATIONS

- Certain demographic questions were not asked, limiting the understanding of which men are at the most risk of experiencing female perpetrated interpersonal violence.
- All data on partner characteristics were obtained from the victim's perspective, increasing chances of self-report bias.
- Data were not collected in a systematic way due to the primary responsibility of a helpline to assist the caller, so some operators may not have been able to ask each question or may have altered how they asked questions depending on the callers' level of need.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Collect more demographic data to compare interpersonal violence by women against men in regards to race, sexuality, etc. (i.e., continue to learn what populations are most at-risk)
- Obtain both victim and perpetrator reports of the partners' emotional and mental health
- Conduct research regarding the effects on children when they witness female perpetrated violence against men

## ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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