

VIOLENCE AND ITS EFFECTS ON CHILDREN

Statistics

- Children in homes where domestic violence occurs are abused at a rate of 6 – 15 times higher than the national average in the general population.
- More than half of the children whose mothers are battered are likely to be physically abused themselves.
- Whether or not the children are physically abused, they often suffer emotional and psychological trauma from living in homes where their fathers abuse their mothers.
- Research suggests that battering is the single most common factor among mothers of abused children.
- Children in homes where domestic violence occurs might indirectly receive injuries. Infants and children are often harmed when being held or shielded by mothers who are being beaten.
- Older children might be hurt while trying to protect their mother.
- Children from violent homes have higher risks of alcohol and drug abuse and juvenile delinquency.
- Approximately 90% of children are aware of the violence directed at their mother.
- Children from violent homes have a higher risk of suicide than those from homes without violence.
- Approximately two-thirds of the young men between the ages of 11 and 20 who are imprisoned for homicide have killed their mother's batterer.

Emotional effects of domestic violence on children

Children take responsibility for the abuse

Like their mothers, children of battered women feel that if they could be 'better,' the abuse would stop.

Constant anxiety

Children of battered women live in fear of the next abusive incident.

Guilt

Children of battered women feel guilty for not being able to stop the abuse and for loving their abusive father.

Fear of abandonment

Children of battered women worry that their mother will be killed. Many batterers constantly threaten to leave or tell their partner to leave. This makes the children feel vulnerable to being left without either parent.

Stress-related illnesses

Children of battered women frequently have stress-related physical ailments, such as ulcers, rashes, sleep disturbances, headaches, or stomachaches.

Disruption of eating and sleeping patterns

Children of battered women can suffer from inadequate rest and nutrition.

Behavioral impact

Children of battered women may become aggressive, angry, and difficult to control. Or, they might be unusually passive, fearful, and withdrawn.

Long-term effects of domestic violence on children

The intergenerational pattern of domestic violence is very clear in males. And there is new research that suggests that adult women who witnessed domestic violence as children might be at a higher risk for finding themselves in an abusive relationship. However, the most common characteristic among battered women is the fact that they are female.

The entire community feels the negative effects of domestic violence on children. Domestic violence is a major factor contributing to the problem of teenage runaways and homeless street youth. Abusers sometimes kidnap their children to punish their partners for leaving them or to get them to come back.

Today's child growing up in a violent home may be tomorrow's inmate. A recent study found that 93% of incarcerated males witnessed or were themselves abused as children.