

STATISTICS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- Intimate partner violence has severe, wide ranging and persistent effects on women's physical and mental health (VicHealth 2004)

- Domestic violence is the leading contributor to illness, disability and death for women in Victoria aged between 15 and 44. (VicHealth 2004)

- Women who have experienced domestic violence have a greater risk of health problems including stress, depression and phobias (WHO 2000)

- The severe emotional effects of family violence result in an increased risk of suicide, sleeping disorders and alcohol and substance abuse (Benson and Fox 2002)

- More than a quarter of children and young people in Australia have witnessed acts of violence against their mother or stepmother (Indermaur, D. 2001)

Domestic Violence is an issue that concerns the whole community. The effects of domestic violence are far reaching; the costs are high; not only in financial, health or emotional terms, but in lives that have been lost.

"Fear plays amazing tricks with the mind. Slowly, imperceptibly, part of my mind began to believe that the things this man said about me were true."

Denise Newton, (1994), *Women & Survival*.

NQDVRS

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- **Information and referral**
- **Aardvarc program for children**
- **Community education & Training**
- **Resources**
- **Court Support**
- **Men's Behaviour Change Program**

TOWNSVILLE OFFICE

PO Box 6061, Townsville QLD 4810
Phone: 07 4721 2888 Fax: 07 4721 1794
nqdvrs @nqdvrs.org.au
4th floor, Northtown Building,
Flinders Mall
(above the City Library)

MOUNT ISA OFFICE

PO Box 502, Mt Isa QLD 4825
Phone: 07 4743 0946 Fax: 07 4743 7999
minqdvrs@bigpond.net.au
The Old Court House Building, Isa Street

<http://www.nqdvrs.org.au>

Against Violence #2

Myths & Facts About Domestic Violence

North Queensland
Domestic Violence
Resource Service



"...it feels like violence is shamed into silence."

(Woman caller - SA Domestic Violence Phone-In University of South Australia, September 1998)

POWER AND CONTROL

Most women who experience domestic violence live in fear of their partner. Domestic violence is about power & control. In a domestic violence situation, one partner feels threatened or frightened to argue back or give their opinion because they feel their partner will physically hurt or abuse them in some way. The balance of power is not equal in such a relationship. Domestic violence is an abuse of power and an attempt to control the other person.

There is no excuse for violence!

Some people become violent after drinking or using drugs. This does not mean that these substances cause the violence. While they lower a person's inhibitions, they don't make a person hit someone else. There are many people who enjoy drinking and are never violent. There are others who are violent drunk or sober.

It is hard to accept that someone you love and have trusted can behave aggressively towards you. If you are unable to explain your partner's behaviour, you may begin to think you are to blame.

You are not to blame!

Everybody is responsible for their own behaviour. If he is violent, then he is the only one who can change it.

It is not your fault!

Community attitudes to domestic violence still support some of the myths and facts. We all need to say that domestic and family violence is a crime.

Myth: If a woman doesn't like it she can always leave.

Fact: Women who experience domestic violence face a range of barriers to leaving the relationship. The most common group of domestic violence victims are those who have dependent children & no independent financial status. These women face a future of reduced income and difficulty finding accommodation. Also, the violence does not necessarily stop after women leave, sometimes it can get worse. Research on homicide victims shows that women who attempt to end their relationship are exposed to a relatively high risk of homicide, with the period immediately after they leave associated with particularly high risk.

Myth: Domestic violence only happens in low socioeconomic classes.

Fact: As many as 3 in 10 women are victims of domestic violence. In a phone-in survey conducted by the University of South Australia in September 1998, callers ranged across a wide age group, from 17 years to 70 years, and came from a broad range of social backgrounds. A significant number of the women were well educated or had well-paid jobs. Their male partners were also from diverse backgrounds and many were financially well off and had good social standing in the community. Callers came from both homes that spoke only English and where a language other than English was used.

Myth: Alcohol causes domestic violence.

Fact: Violence does occur without alcohol. Many people get drunk without becoming violent. Alcohol is an excuse, not a cause. It may lower inhibitions. Remember that the person who uses alcohol is responsible for their drinking and their abusive behaviour. Your attitudes and values determine whether you use violence against your family or not. In 50% of cases of violent behaviour, neither party has been drinking. Perpetrators of violence have been violent under the influence of alcohol and also while not under the influence of alcohol.

Consider this: Society does not condone or accept drunken driving as an excuse for damage caused while driving under the influence of alcohol.

"Breaking the Silence", 1997

Myth: Women who are victims of domestic violence deserve it. They must provoke him/"push his buttons"/push him to the limit.

Fact: There is no excuse for violence and in any case, many women report being hit from behind, and with no warning. If he feels his "buttons are pushed", he can choose to walk away.

Myth: Men and women are equally violent in relationships.

Fact: 95-98% of victims of domestic violence are women. While men do experience violence in their relationships, women are still much more likely to be victims of violence in their relationships.