

# Fact Sheet: Victimization During the Holidays



## CRIME VICTIMS' INSTITUTE

### COLLEGE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

### SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY

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## Victimization During the Holidays: The Facts

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### Why Does Victimization Increase During the Holidays?

Although the holidays are typically associated with joy, there is evidence to suggest that abuse increases on or around major holidays like Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years.[1,2,3,5] Holidays do not cause the abuse directly, but there are a number of factors that may change an abusive person's patterns and make it more difficult for survivors to plan for their safety.[1,2,4,] Indeed, victimization rates, especially for domestic violence and child abuse tend to rise during the holidays, due to financial stress, family tension, increased alcohol use, and isolation.[1,2,3,4,5] It is also important to note that the holiday season can stir painful memories for survivors of all crime types, including the death of a loved one, which can make them more vulnerable to manipulation and further victimization.

### Have You Heard?

- Police interventions related to domestic violence rise by 20% in December, compared to other months of the year.[4]
- With holiday breaks from work and school, abusive partners and/or family members are more likely to be home than at other times of the year.[1,2]
- During the holidays, many support services like shelters and hotlines may have reduced hours or may be understaffed. This can make it more challenging for victims to seek help or escape abusive situations.[2,3]

### What are the Consequences of Victimization During the Holidays?

Victims may feel shame and guilt during the holidays, both due to the abuse they experience as well as the embarrassment that comes from not having the "normal" and happy holiday that everyone is expected to have.[1,3] Society often places emphasis on family unity and togetherness during this time, which can make survivors think something is wrong with them if they do not feel the same. In turn, this can increase feelings of isolation, as victims may fear judgment from others who do not understand.[3] Additionally, it can be difficult for survivors to safely and privately reach out to resources and/or access services due to the presence of the abusive family member, making it even more important to check on loved ones during the holiday season and know your resources.[1]

### How to Support Survivors

An important first step anyone can take to support survivors is to learn about the signs and forms of abuse.[1] We can also support survivors by connecting them with resources in their area, if we feel they might be needed.[1,2,3] Additionally, providing support to a local nonprofit that provides related services either through making a donation and/or volunteering your time, expertise, or assets is yet another way to support survivors.[2]

### Resources

#### Texas

- **Dallas Children's Advocacy Center** – <https://dcac.org/blog/keeping-your-kids-safe-this-holiday-season/>
- **Houston Area Women's Center** – <https://hawc.org/help-survivors-find-safety-this-holiday-season/>
- **Houston Landing** – <https://houstonlanding.org/houston-holiday-domestic-violence-resources-christmas/>
- **Texas Victim Resource Directory** – <https://ivss.tdcj.texas.gov/resource-search/>

#### National

- **National Domestic Violence Hotline** – <https://www.thehotline.org/resources/safety-planning-for-the-holidays/>
- **National Network to End Domestic Violence** – [https://nnedv.org/reach-update/supporting-survivors-during-the-holiday-season/#:~:text=The%20holidays%20can%20be%20a%20time%20of,drugs%20when%20they%20don't%20have%20to%20work\\*\\*](https://nnedv.org/reach-update/supporting-survivors-during-the-holiday-season/#:~:text=The%20holidays%20can%20be%20a%20time%20of,drugs%20when%20they%20don't%20have%20to%20work**)

### References

- [1]National Network to End Domestic Violence. (2023). Supporting Survivors during the Holiday Season. [https://nnedv.org/reach-update/supporting-survivors-during-the-holiday-season/#:~:text=The%20holidays%20can%20be%20a%20time%20of,drugs%20when%20they%20don't%20have%20to%20work\\*\\*](https://nnedv.org/reach-update/supporting-survivors-during-the-holiday-season/#:~:text=The%20holidays%20can%20be%20a%20time%20of,drugs%20when%20they%20don't%20have%20to%20work**)
- [2]Connections for Abused Women and their Children. (2023). Why Domestic Violence Increases During the Holiday Season. <https://www.cawc.org/news/why-domestic-violence-increases-during-the-holiday-season/>
- [3]Gillis, K. (2024). The Risk of Domestic Violence Increases During the Holidays. Psychology Today. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/invisible-bruises/202412/the-risk-of-domestic-violence-increases-during-the-holidays>
- [4]Kustom Signals. (2021). The Connection Between Domestic Violence And Christmas Holidays. <https://kustomsignals.com/blog/the-connection-between-domestic-violence-and-christmas-holidays>
- [5]Khurana, B., Prakash, J., & Loder, R. T. (2023). Holiday effect on injuries sustained by assault victims seen in US emergency departments. *Emergency radiology*, 30(2), 133-142.



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## Resources

- Aging and Disability Resource Center 855-937-2372
- Cyber Civil Rights Initiative 844-878-2274
- Mothers Against Drunk Driving 877-623-3435
- National Child Abuse Hotline 800-422-4453
- National Domestic Violence Hotline 800-799-7233
- National Human Trafficking Hotline 888-373-7888
- National Sexual Assault Hotline 800-656-4673
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 988
- Texas Abuse Hotline 800-252-5400
- Texas Council on Family Violence <https://tcfv.org/survivor-resources/>
- Texas Association Against Sexual Assault <https://taasa.org/get-help/>
- Victim Connect Resource Center 855-484-2846