

Intimate Partner

Violence

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*Crime Victims' Institute is affiliated with the Criminal Justice Center of Sam Houston State University
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...from the Director

Each year the Crime Victims' Institute conducts a statewide survey that inquires about victimization experiences of Texas citizens. This report stems from the 2007 Victimization Survey which focused on intimate partner violence. This kind of victimization occurs in dating relationships and cohabitation as well as in marriages. Although intimate partner violence has a long history in this country and has garnered considerable attention nationally, this effort focuses specifically on Texas residents. It is our hope that the findings reported here will increase understanding of the conditions and situations that lead to intimate partner violence and lead to constructive ways to both prevent it and assist those persons who are victimized.

Glen Kercher
Crime Victims' Institute



MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Crime Victims' Institute is to

- conduct research to examine the impact of crime on victims of all ages in order to promote a better understanding of victimization
- improve services to victims
- assist victims of crime by giving them a voice
- inform victim-related policymaking at the state and local levels.



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Executive Summary

This report summarizes the results from the fourth annual Texas Crime Victimization survey conducted by the Crime Victims' Institute at Sam Houston State University. This study specifically addresses intimate partner violence (IPV) in Texas. Over 700 randomly selected residents shared their experiences during a phone interview. This report addresses the characteristics of victims and perpetrators, the contexts in which IPV occurs, and the events that led up to the altercations. The following information is designed to inform victim advocates, policymakers, and the general public about this significant social problem.

Characteristics of Overall Sample of Respondents (N=700)

- 67.6% females
- 59.6% White, non-Hispanic
- 57.1% married
- 63.9% completed some college courses
- 48.8% employed full-time

Characteristics of Respondents Who Had Been in an Intimate Relationship During the Previous 2 Years (married, co-habiting, dating) (n= 547).

- 11.8% (64) were identified as IPV victims.
- Men were as likely to report victimization as were women (10.7%;12.4%).
- Hispanic respondents were the most likely to report victimization followed by African-Americans.
- Single and cohabiting respondents were the most likely to be victimized (46%).
- Persons under 35 years of age were more likely to be victimized.
- Victimization was higher among those who were unemployed, employed part-time, or students.
- 69% of IPV victims also reported being victimized at other times in their lives.

Contexts in Which IPV Occurs

- 40% of victims reported that alcohol use occurred during or before the incidents.
- Respondents who used drugs over the previous 2 years experienced significantly more victimization than did those who did not.
- Respondents who experienced psychological or verbal aggression in their relationship were significantly more likely to report IPV victimization.
- Those who witnessed IPV in childhood were significantly more likely to experience IPV than those who did not.

Responses to IPV

- 12% of IPV victims reported the incident to the police.
- 50% of victims who reported the incident to the police sought a protective order.
- 40% of protective orders were violated.
- The 2 most frequent reasons for not reporting IPV to the police were: not important enough, did not want anyone to know.
- 35.9% of IPV victims left their spouse or partner at least once.
- 65.2% of victims who left returned.
- The 3 most reasons most frequently given for returning: agreed to go to counseling, concerned about the welfare of the children, lack of financial resources.

Characteristics of Persons Who Committed IPV Against Their Spouse or Partner (past 2 years)

- 17.1% of respondents who had been in a relationship participated in some form of violent behavior toward their partner.
- Females were more likely to report engaging in IPV.
- White, non-Hispanic respondents were less likely to report engaging in IPV violence than Hispanics or African-Americans.
- Those who were cohabiting reported more IPV perpetration than married, single, or dating groups.
- Respondents under 35 years of age were more likely to be perpetrators of IPV than those who were older.
- Respondents who were employed full-time reported less perpetration of IPV.
- 59.4% of IPV victims also reported engaging in IPV; most were females (86.8%).

Intimate Partner Violence

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Since the 1970s, intimate partner violence (IPV) has been an important issue for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers (Mihalic & Elliott, 1997). Although violence between intimate partners (particularly male on female violence) has always been a societal problem, only relatively recently has the topic been at the forefront of violence research and policy (Shepard, 2005). Despite increasing interest in reducing IPV, there is still a struggle to achieve widespread acceptance of criminalizing domestic violence (Mihalic & Elliott, 1997).

The purpose of the annual crime victimization report is to examine factors associated with IPV among Texas residents. Based on a telephone survey of Texas residents, several issues, were addressed:

- Prevalence of IPV
- Gender distinctions in IPV
- Differences in IPV based on relationship status
- Other demographic variations in IPV experience and perpetration (e.g., race, education, age, and employment status)
- The relationship between witnessing IPV as a child and IPV as an adult
- Victims' response to experiencing IPV
- The likelihood of being an IPV victim and perpetrator
- The relationship between alcohol use and IPV

The goal of this report is to provide salient information on IPV experiences among Texas residents.

Previous Research

Definition of Intimate Partner Violence

As noted by a number of scholars (e.g., Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000; Waltermaurer, 2005), there is little agreement regarding a general definition of IPV. One point of contention pertains to the range of behaviors considered as forms of IPV. Early studies tended to have a strict range of behaviors, limited to forms of physical violence, while others have included forms of emotional, psychological, and sexual abuse (Waltermaurer, 2005). Studies have also differed on the definition of an IPV perpetrator, as some studies were limited to spousal or cohabitating relationships, while others included a wider range, including divorced couples, boyfriends and girlfriends, and same-sex relationships (Waltermaurer, 2005).

Prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence

Prior research on IPV has provided mixed results pertaining to the prevalence of IPV in the United States. Due to differences in research strategies, prevalence estimates vary. For instance, Tjaden and Thoennes (2000) reviewed studies on lifetime experience of IPV, finding a range of 9% to over 30%, depending on the type of study conducted, and Schafer, Caetano, and Clark (1998) estimated that one out of five couples experience IPV during a year.

Gender and IPV

Although the issue is controversial, much research has been devoted to gender and IPV. Despite the general view of females as victims and males as offenders in domestic violence situations, some studies have found that women are just as likely to commit acts of violence toward partners as men (e.g., Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980). These surprising findings may result from men being less likely to report abuse to authorities, women using violence for self-defense, or lower severity of female-on-male violence. Regardless of reasons for similar rates of IPV among males and females, females are much more likely to be seriously injured and/or require medical attention as a result of IPV (Loue, 2001).

Race/Ethnicity and IPV

Research on the relationship between IPV and race/ethnicity has produced mixed results (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Basic comparisons between Whites and Non-Whites indicate that minority women experience more IPV than Whites. However, specific race comparisons show that American Indian/Alaskan Native and African American women are more likely than White women to experience IPV, while Asian/Pacific Islander women are less likely. Tjaden and Thoennes (2000) also found few race/ethnicity differences for male victimization.

Risk Factors for IPV

A number of factors have been linked to experiencing IPV. In general, the risk of IPV is higher for cohabitating couples, women with less education and lower income, individuals who witnessed IPV as children, women who have a jealous partner, and within male-dominated households (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Risk factors for IPV perpetration include low education, poor mental health, and drug and alcohol problems (Walton-Moss, Manganello, Frye, & Campbell, 2005). These factors increase the probability of IPV, but they should not be construed as causes.

Injury and IPV

Not surprisingly, IPV victims are at risk for physical and psychological problems, which can be long lasting (Campbell et al., 2002; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Roughly half of female IPV victims suffer injuries, which are typically minor (e.g., scratches, bruises), but may involve more serious injuries such as lacerations, broken bones, and head trauma (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Campbell et al. (2002) found that abused women are more likely to have a host of medical problems than are non-abused women regardless of differences in health care access. Overall, men are much less likely to report injuries than women. However, when injured, males and females are about equally likely to seek medical care. Tjaden and Thoennes (2000) reported that 28.1% of female victims who were injured sought medical care, compared to 21.5% of males.

Reporting IPV to the Criminal Justice System

Research shows that the majority of IPV victims do not report the incidents to the police, with males being even less likely than females to report (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Although the bulk of research related to justice system involvement is devoted to the use of protective orders, Tjaden and Thoennes found that 26.7% of female victims reported their victimization to the police, compared to 13.5% of males. The most common reasons for not reporting included thinking that it would not do any good, thinking the police would not believe them, and fear of retaliation from the perpetrator.

When the criminal justice system does become involved, fewer than 8% of perpetrators are prosecuted when the victim is female, and fewer than 2% of cases are prosecuted among male victim cases (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Of the cases that are prosecuted, about half result in convictions.

Although estimates vary, approximately 20% of females obtain restraining orders after experiencing IPV (Logan, Shannon, Walker, & Faragher, 2006). A protective order is a tool used by the criminal justice system that is intended to keep victims safe without the costs associated with criminal prosecution. However, Tjaden and Thoennes (2000) found that the terms of over half of the protective orders obtained were violated.

Methodology

The Fourth annual report by the Crime Victims' Institute (CVI) provides information about IPV among Texas residents. Using an internet computer-assisted telephone interviewing system (iCATI), the Public Policy Research Institute (PPRI) at Texas A&M University collected data for the survey. The data collection efforts yielded a sample of 700 Texas residents, all adults¹ (Figure 1).

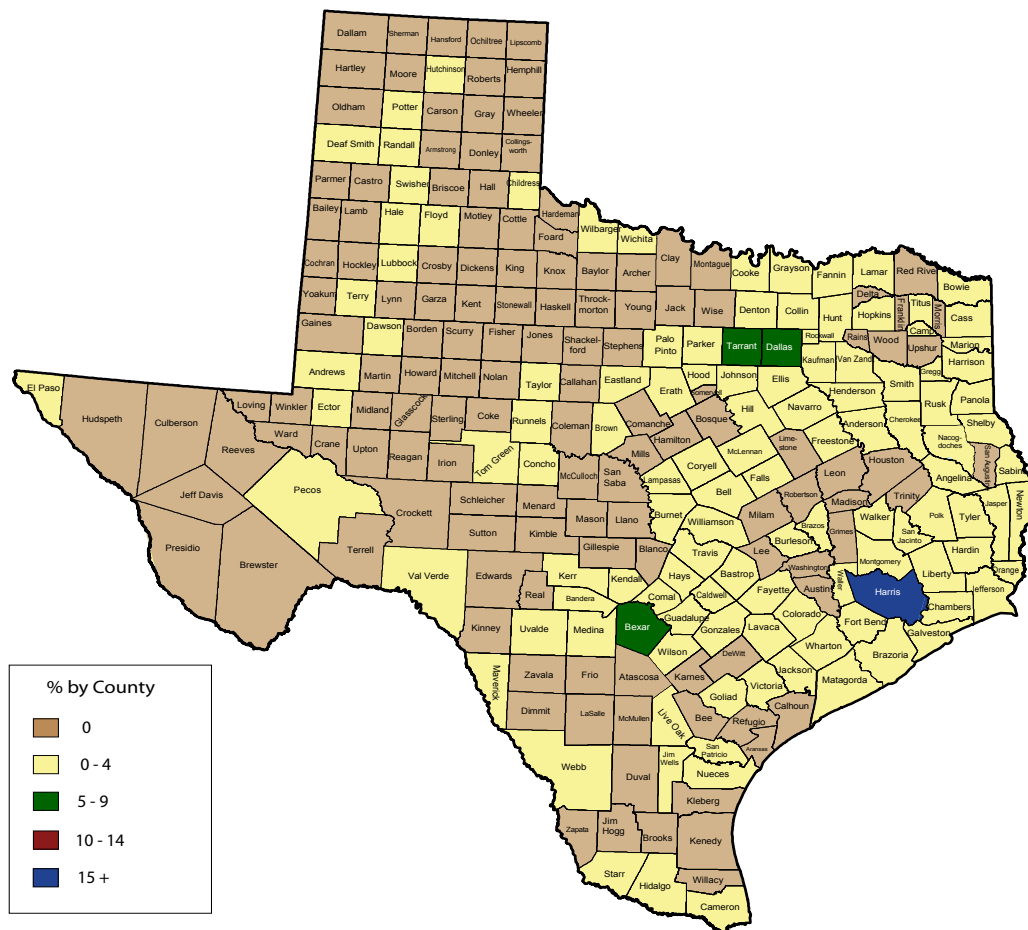


Figure 1. Distribution of Survey Respondents

Unlike prior annual surveys conducted by the CVI, the variables used in this study focused on IPV specifically. In addition to demographic measures, we included measures of IPV victimization, IPV perpetration, response to IPV, substance use, and witnessing IPV as children.

¹ More detailed information regarding the methods of data collection are available from the Crime Victims' Institute.

Characteristics of Total Sample

Overall, the majority of respondents were female (67.6%), White (59.6%), married (57.1%), and over 35 years old (78%). In addition, most respondents had at least some college education (63.9%), and 48.8% were employed full-time. This suggests that the total sample of respondents were not in some respects representative of the Texas population.

Intimate Partner Violence Victimization

Given the focus on IPV, this study examined the portion of the sample that reported being or having been in an intimate relationship during the past two years, which reduced the sample to 547. This includes individuals who were married, cohabitating, and dating during the past 2 years. This, of course, eliminated those respondents who were victimized prior to that time. Asking respondents to recall victimization across the lifespan is problematic methodologically because of concerns about accuracy of recall. So, even though earlier victimizations were not reported, the accuracy of the reports in this study is probably enhanced.

Respondents were considered IPV victims if they reported that they experienced any of the following actions by their spouse/partner:

- Threw something at you,
- Pushed, grabbed, or shoved you,
- Slapped you; kicked, hit, or bit you,
- Hit or tried to hit you with something,
- Beat you up; choked you,
- Threatened you with a gun or knife.

These items were partially based on the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS), developed by Straus and colleagues (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, and Sugarman, 1996). In all, 64 (11.8% of the subsample) were identified as victims of IPV (9.1% of the total number of respondents; N=700).

Figures 2 through 8 show the percentage of victims (n=64) in each demographic category (n=547). So, if females made up 65% (n=358) of the respondents who had been in a relationship in the past 2 years (n=547), and 44 of those respondents reported having experienced IPV, then 12% of the women in that category were victimized.

Gender. It is interesting to note that males were as likely to report being victims as were females (Strauss et al., 1980) (Figure 2).

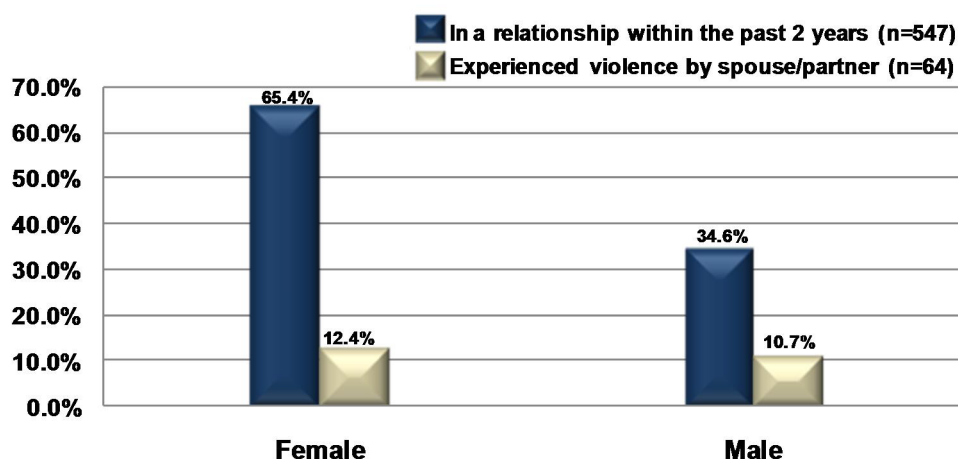


Figure 2. Percentage of victims in each gender group

Age. Respondents who reported being in a relationship during the past 2 years and who were under 35 years of age were more likely to be victimized than those over 35 (Figure 3).²

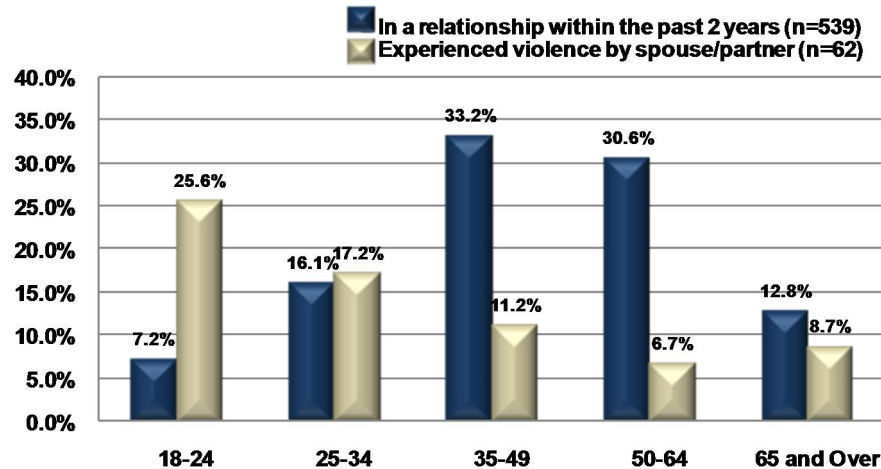


Figure 3. Percentage of victims in each age group

* Groups significantly different based on chi-square tests.

Race/ethnicity. Hispanic respondents were the most likely to report being victims, followed by African Americans (Figure 4).³ This differs from the findings of Rennison and Welchans (2000), who evaluated data collected for the National Crime Victimization Survey (1993-1998). They reported that African-American women were the most likely to experience IPV.

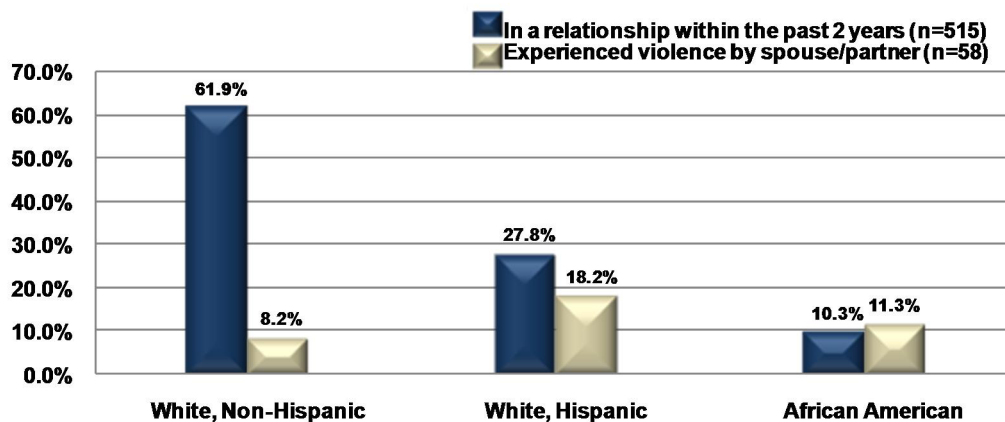


Figure 4. Percentage of victims in each ethnic group

* Some categories excluded due to low frequencies.

* Groups significantly different based on chi-square tests.

Education. Figure 5 shows that as the educational achievement of the respondents increased, the incidence of IPV decreased. The victimization rate is inversely related to level of education. However, this finding may reflect age, maturity, and lifestyle differences among these groups. For example, younger persons are more likely to be both victims and less educated.

² Statistically Significant (20% vs. 9%)

³ Statistically Significant

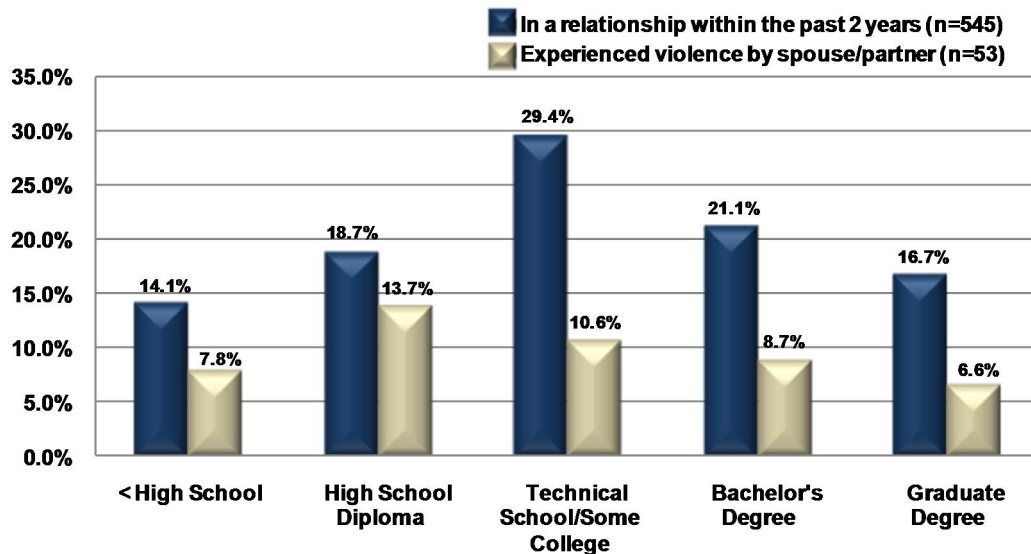


Figure 5. Percentage of victims in each education group

Employment status. Consistent with previous research, individuals who were not employed or employed part-time and those who were students were most likely to be victimized (33%) (Figure 6).

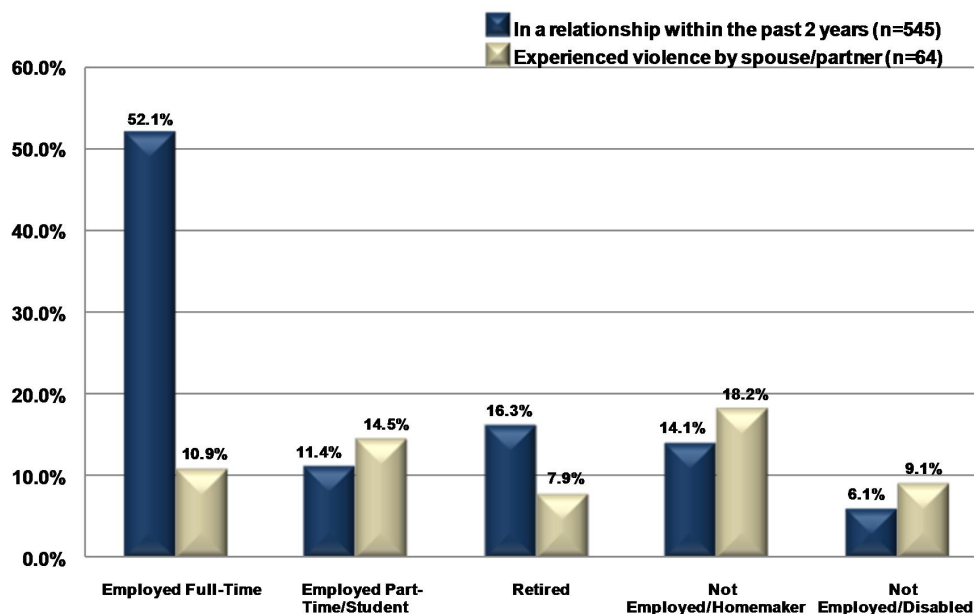


Figure 6. Percentage of victims in each employment group

Income. As figure 7 indicates, IPV victimization was highest for those who earned less than \$10,000 per year.

Relationship status. Respondents who were either single or cohabiting were more likely to be victims (46%) than were persons who were dating or married (Figure 8).⁴ The finding that persons who were dating had a lower likelihood of experiencing IPV is contrary to other research (Sellers & Bromley, 1996) that found 1 out of 5 college women experience some form of physical violence in their dating relationships. The lower figures found in the current study may be due to some confusion among respondents in choosing between the single (25) and dating statuses (3).

⁴ Statistically Significant

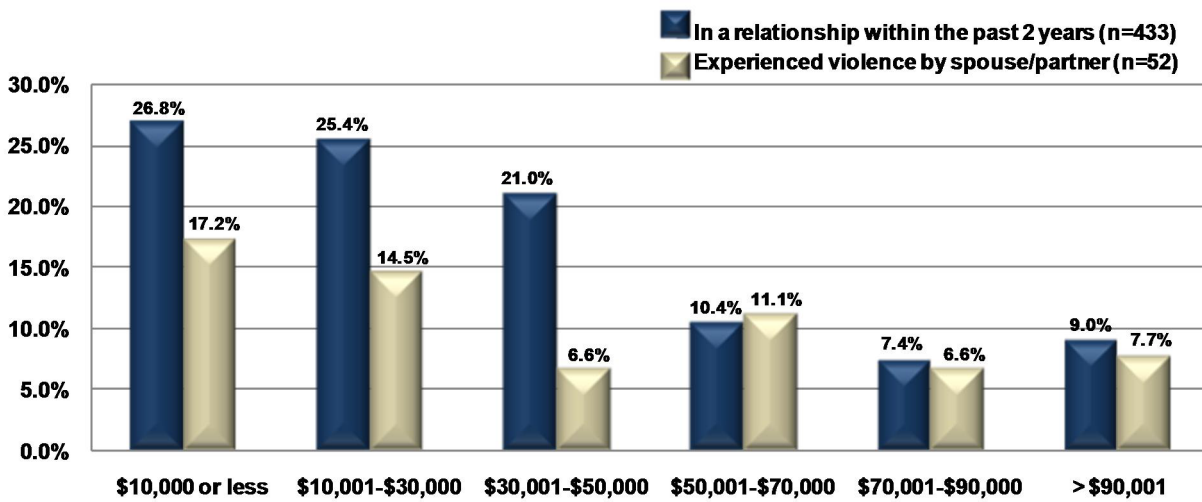


Figure 7. Percentage of victims in each income group

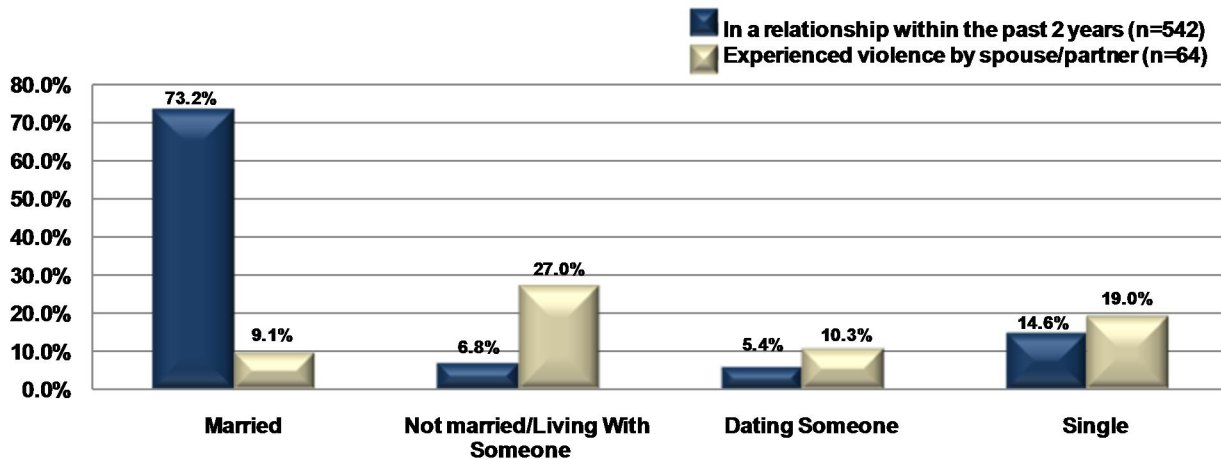


Figure 8. Percentage of victims in each relationship group

* Some categories excluded due to low frequencies.

* Groups significantly different based on chi-square tests.

Circumstances Associated with IPV Victimization

Alcohol use. Victims (64) and non-victims (479) were compared based on respondents' use of alcohol and illegal drugs. First, respondents were asked how often they drank alcohol (ranging from never to three or more days per week). There did not appear to be significant differences in IPV victimization based on alcohol use (Figure 9). Nonetheless, among those reporting IPV victimization, over 40% stated that alcohol use occurred during or before the most serious incident. Thirty-five (59.3%) respondents reported that no drinking occurred, six (10.2%) stated that they (the victim) were the only person drinking, eleven (18.6%) claimed that only the partner was drinking, and seven (11.9%) reported that both were drinking. This suggests that in some situations, alcohol may play a role in IPV.

Drug use. Respondents were asked how many times they used illegal drugs, and this item was split between those who reported using illegal drugs over the past two years, and those who did not (Figure 10). Respondents who used drugs in the past two years were significantly more likely to experience IPV (30.3%) than those who did not (10.6%). This may imply that victims using drugs are associating with other drug users, for whom drug use is but one example of antisocial acts to which they are inclined.

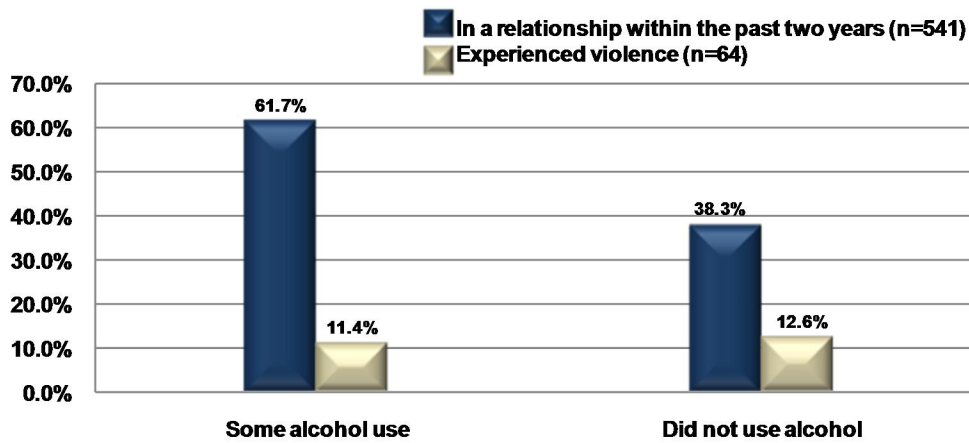


Figure 9. Percentage of IPV victims and alcohol use

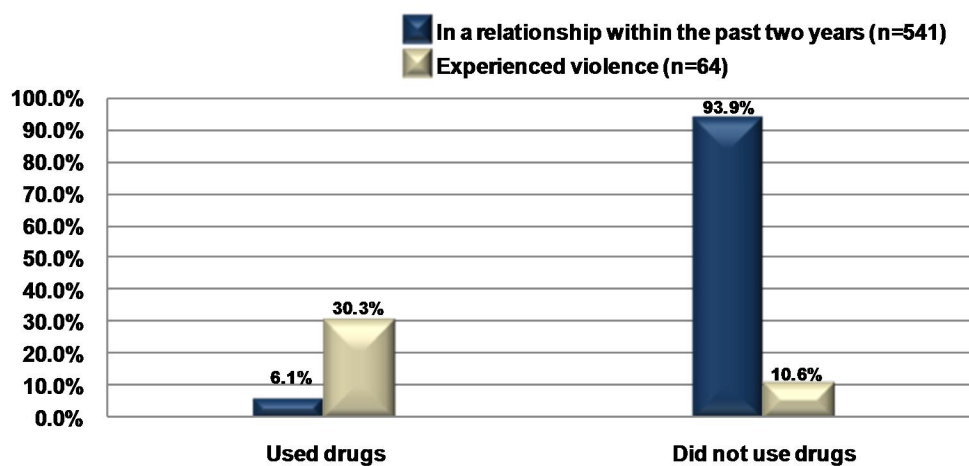


Figure 10. Percentage of IPV victims and drug use

Level of agreement. Next, questions were asked about the level of agreement between respondents and their partners on various relationship issues. An “agreement with spouse scale” was used based on questions pertaining to how often (always, almost always, usually, sometimes, or never) respondents agree with their spouses on the following:

- Managing the money; cooking, cleaning, or repairing the house,
- Social activities and entertaining,
- Affection and sexual relations,
- Managing the children.

The scale was created by taking the sum of all of the items for each respondent, and then the means of victims and non-victims were compared. Respondents who had more disagreements with their spouse/partner were significantly more likely to experience IPV than those who disagreed with one another less (15.92,18.95).

Verbal and psychological aggression. Respondents were asked about the degree of verbal/psychological aggression in their relationships based on items from the Conflicts Tactics Scale (Straus et al., 1996). Respondents were classified as having experienced verbal/psychological aggression if they answered affirmatively to at least one of the following pertaining to actions by a spouse or partner:

- Insulted or swore at you,
- Stomped out of the room, house, or yard,
- Did something to spite you,
- Threatened to hit/kick/throw something at you,
- Threw, smashed, hit, or kicked something.

Respondents who experienced psychological/verbal aggression were statistically more likely to experience IPV (17.4%) than persons who did not have those experiences (1.6%) (Figure 11).

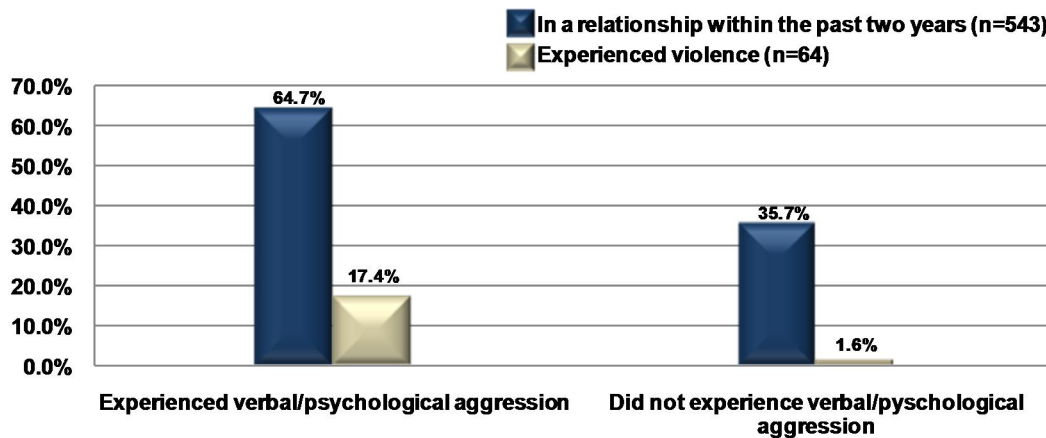


Figure 11. Percentage of IPV victims and verbal/psychological aggression

Witnessing IPV in childhood. Respondents were compared based on whether they or their partner witnessed a parent physically assault the other parent. Respondents who witnessed parental IPV as children were significantly more likely to experience IPV (15.6%) than those who never witnessed such things (9.0%) (Figure 12). Likewise, figure 13 suggests that partners who witnessed IPV in the home were more likely to be involved in IPV as an adult. This is consistent with previous research on the effects of children witnessing violence in the home (Ehrensaft et al., 2003) and underscores the need to educate the public about the effects of that kind of exposure.

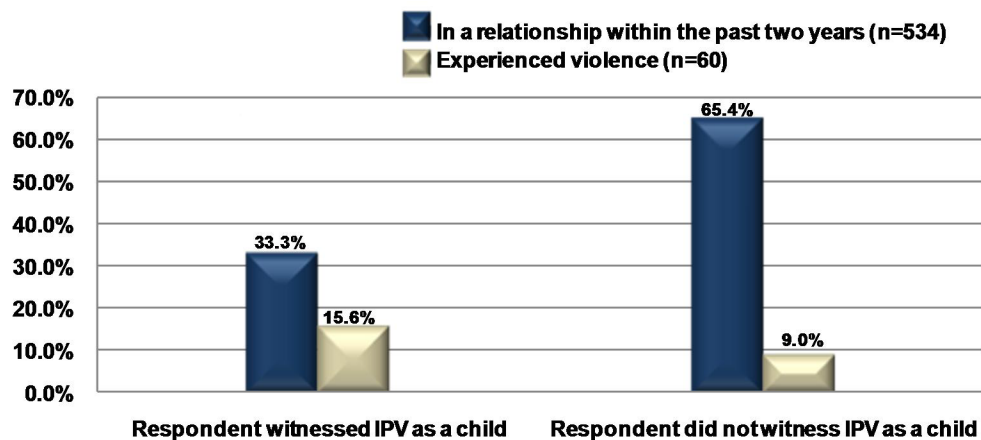


Figure 12. Percentage of IPV victims who witnessed IPV as a child

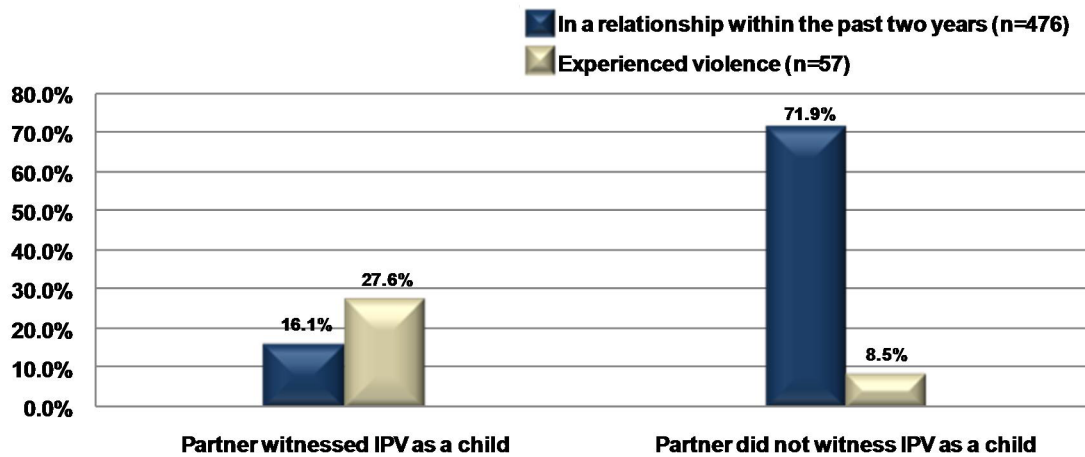


Figure 13. Percentage of IPV victim's partners who witnessed IPV as a child

Response to IPV

Various ways victims of IPV reacted to those experiences were examined. First, among IPV victims, only about 12% reported the most recent incident to the police. This rate of reporting is even lower than what has been found previously (Rennison & Welchans, 2000). Of the 10 who reported to the police, seven reported being satisfied or very satisfied with how the police handled the call. Also, of the 10 reporting to the police, exactly half sought a restraining order with two of the five stating that the restraining order was violated. Respondents who did not call the police (75) cited several reasons for not doing so. The most common reason was that the incident was not important enough to warrant police attention (75.3%), followed by not wanting anyone to know (8.2%). All other reasons represented less than 5% of responses (e.g., didn't think the police could do anything about it, fear of the offender, shame, didn't want offender to be arrested, thought he/she could handle it him/herself).

Finally, 35.9% (23) reported that they left their spouse/partner because of violence at least once. Among those who left at least once, 65.2% (15) eventually returned. Reasons for returning included some form of counseling (6 or 40%), financial needs (3 or 20%), the welfare of children (4 or 26.7%), and wanting to give the relationship another chance (2 or 13.3%).

Perpetrating Intimate Partner Violence

Among respondents who were in some form of intimate relationship over the past two years (n=547), 17.1% (56) engaged in some form of violent behavior toward their partner. Demographic differences in IPV perpetration are shown in Figures 14 through 19. Significant differences in IPV perpetration prevalence were found for gender, age, race, relationship status, and employment status.

Gender. Significantly more females (14%) reported engaging in IPV than did males (3.2%) (Figure 14). This is consistent with previous research (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980). It is unclear if these results accurately reflect gender differences between males and females, or if these results reflect greater reluctance on the part of men (relative to women) to report such behavior. Men may feel more vulnerable to criminal sanctions for reporting violent behavior. In addition, females may be more likely to report violent behavior that was used in self-defense, or did not result in injuries.

On the other hand, anecdotal accounts from students and clinical samples are consistent with the above finding. Some females may initiate aggressive acts out of frustration with their partners, and perhaps without considering the possible consequences of those actions. Additionally, some women may assume that a male partner will not retaliate because of his belief that men should not hit women. Some men, however, while subscribing to the "no physical aggression toward women" rule, may conclude that once she hits him, she is no longer deserving of that protection.

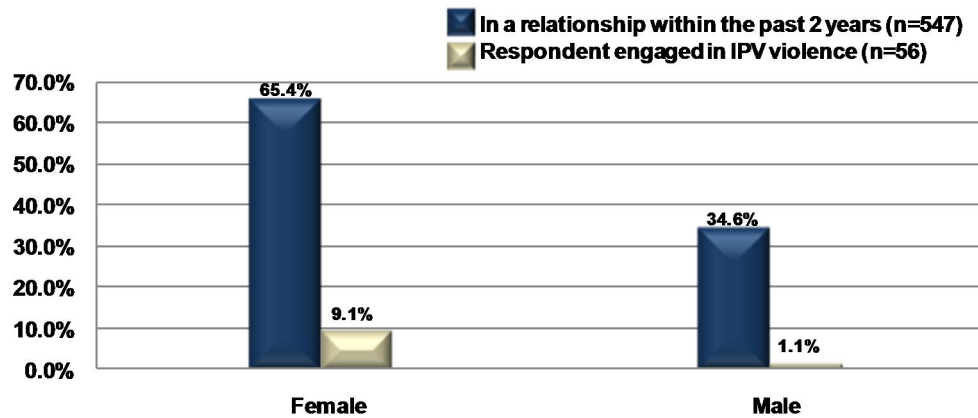


Figure 14. Percentage of IPV perpetrators in each gender group

* Groups significantly different based on chi-square tests.

Age. Younger respondents (i.e., under age 35) were more likely to admit to engaging in IPV (55.7%) (Figure 15). This is consistent with the extant research indicating that younger couples are more likely to be involved in IPV (Archer, 2000).

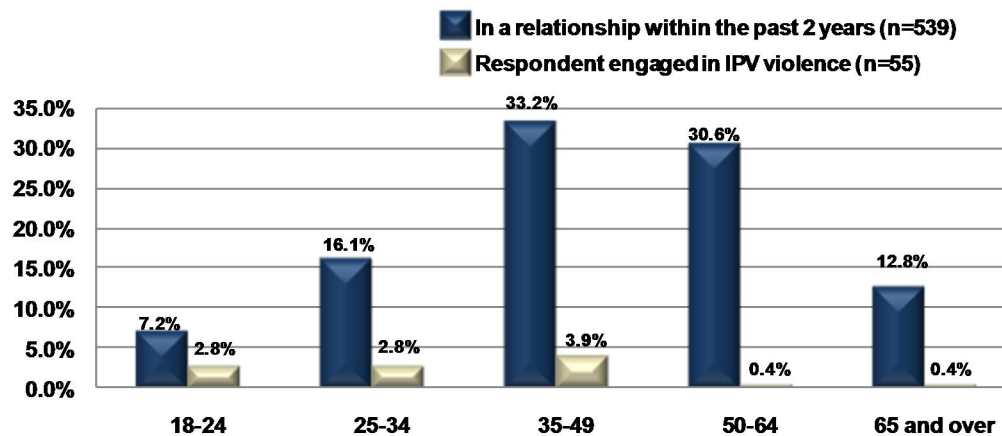


Figure 15. Percentage of IPV perpetrators in each age group

* Groups significantly different based on chi-square tests.

Race/ethnicity. With regards to race/ethnicity, Whites were less likely to report engaging in IPV compared to African Americans and Hispanics, which is generally consistent with previous research (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000) (Figure 16).

Education. According to survey results, there was no significant relationship between perpetrating IPV and educational achievement.

Employment status. Part-time employees/students and non-employed/homemakers were more likely to report engaging in IPV than others (Figure 17).

Income. Figure 18 shows that perpetrators of IPV were most likely to be persons with income less than \$10,000 per year.

Relationship status. Married respondents were more likely to report IPV perpetration, perhaps because they are together over longer periods of time (Figure 19).

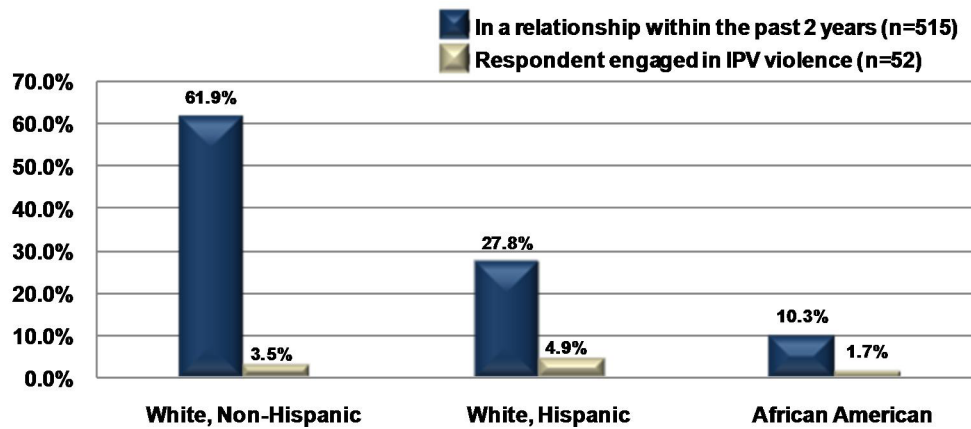


Figure 16. Percentage of IPV perpetrators in each ethnic group

* Some categories excluded due to low frequencies.

* Groups significantly different based on chi-square tests.

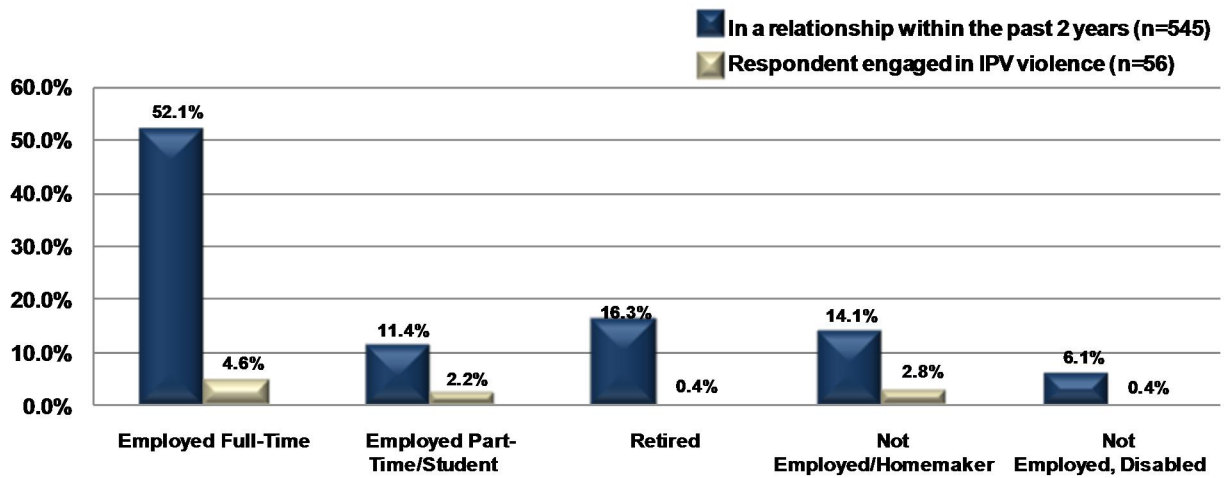


Figure 17. Percentage of IPV perpetrators in each employment group

* Groups significantly different based on chi-square tests.

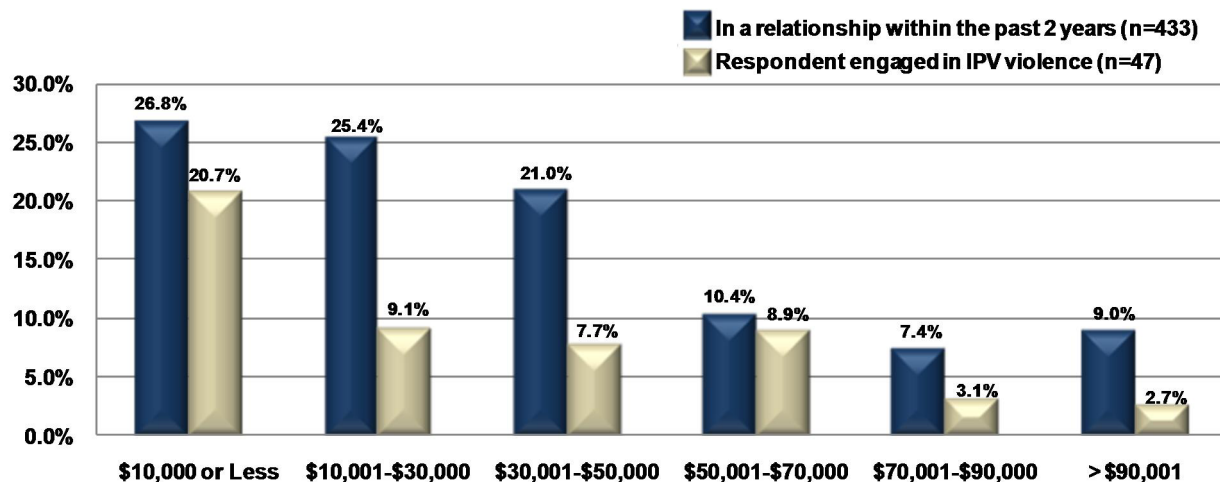


Figure 18. Percentage of IPV perpetrators in each income group

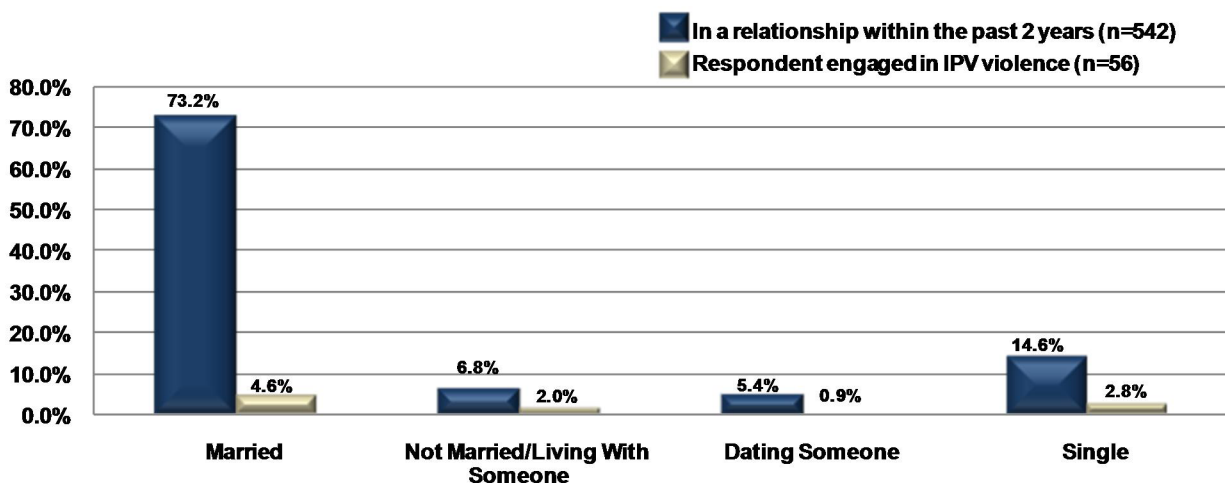


Figure 19. Percentage of IPV perpetrators in each relationship group

* Some categories excluded due to low frequencies.

* Groups significantly different based on chi-square tests.

Victims and Perpetrators. In comparing IPV victims with IPV perpetrators, 59.4% of respondents (38) reported being both a victim and a perpetrator. Of the 38 reporting victimization and perpetration, 86.8% (33) were females.

Intimate Partner Violence and Other Victimization

Respondents who reported being in an intimate relationship during the past two years were also asked about other violent victimization experiences not including IPV. Respondents were asked if they experienced the following as an adult:

- Threatened to hit or throw something at you,
- Threw something at you; pushed, grabbed, or shoved you,
- Slapped you; kicked, bit, or hit you with fists,
- Hit or tried to hit you with something,
- Beat you up,
- Choked you,
- Threatened you with a gun or knife.

Almost half (268, 49.4%) of the respondents reported being victimized. Among those reporting IPV victimization, about 69% (44) reported other violent victimization as well. This is consistent with research that suggests that victims of violent crimes may be more susceptible to subsequent victimization (DePrince, 2005). However, there are a few problems with concluding that IPV victims are also victimized in other ways. Because the survey asks respondents about IPV over the past two years, and the other victimization items pertained to all adulthood, it is possible (indeed, likely) that many of the other victimization reports were IPV-related as well. To be sure, of the respondents reporting “other” victimization, over half of all incidents involved a current or former intimate partner. Thus, many of the perpetrators for “other” victimization are the same as those based on the CTS.

Summary and Conclusions

Many of these findings are consistent with previous research. First, the finding that a similar percentage of males and females reported experiencing IPV is consistent with much of the prior research (see Straus, 2006). Finding that a small proportion of IPV victims contact the police is also consistent with previous studies (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Other results generally consistent with prior research include:

- IPV victims were more likely to witness IPV between their parents as children (Heyman & Smith Slep, 2002).
- Women were much more likely than men to report being an IPV victim and offender (Carlson & Worden, 2005).
- Respondents reporting illegal drug use were more likely to report experiencing IPV (Anderson, 2002).

However, caution is advised in drawing sweeping conclusions about the nature and extent of IPV from the data reported here because of methodological limitations. These results must be considered in light of the way IPV was operationalized. Where these results are consistent with previous research in which slightly different definitions were used lends credence to what was found in this research.

IPV experiences that occurred in the past 2 years were the focus of this study and only among those who had been in a relationship during that time. This does not address earlier experiences and other relationships.

The finding that some respondents reported being both victims and perpetrators leaves unanswered the time-order sequence of those events. In other words, did males and females engage in violence toward their partners in retaliation for earlier victimization, or the other way around.

The amount of research that has been conducted on IPV in recent years is impressive. Thousands of studies have been published, and several academic journals are almost entirely devoted to topics related to the subject. However, many issues remain unresolved, as different studies produce conflicting results. Particularly with a matter as sensitive as violence within the family, these issues need to be resolved. For decades, conflicting research findings have led to confusion regarding the most effective policies to deal with domestic violence. Before drastic policy changes can be implemented, the consequences must be understood. Further research should involve multiple methods to better understand the dynamics of IPV. With a better understanding of IPV, policymakers will have the tools to implement programs that can substantially reduce the amount of violence in households.

Research findings suggesting that males and females engage in equal amounts of IPV should not be construed as support for limiting services for female victims of IPV. Although the present study found few gender differences in negative outcomes associated with IPV victimization (i.e., serious injuries), other studies have found that women have more severe injuries (Felson & Cares, 2005), and that the injuries are more likely to require medical treatment (see Archer, 2000) than is true for most male victims.

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