**THE ROLE OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE**

Studies have long linked drug and alcohol abuse with male-perpetrated intimate partner violence. The link between female offending and substance abuse is less clear. Some evidence exists suggesting that males are also at an increased risk of victimization by an intimate partner due to substance abuse (Schneider, Burnette, Ilgen, & Timko, [**2009**](https://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323087206/content/id/ch10bib55)). Drug and alcohol use are not the cause of violence, but there is a significant relationship between excessive drinking and drug use with violence against intimate partners. The association is contributory rather than causal. Substance abuse increases the risk of intimate partner violence occurring. Studies have shown that substance abuse also increases the severity of injury to the victim.

The NCVS asks victims to indicate whether they thought the offender was drinking or on drugs at the time of the criminal incident. In response, victims stated that more than 40 percent of spousal offenders were under the influence of alcohol or drugs at the time of the incident (Durose et al., [**2005**](https://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323087206/content/id/ch10bib17)). The survey also found the rate of intoxication to be similar for offenders who abused their boyfriend or girlfriend (41.4 percent).

Illicit drug use is strongly associated with intimate partner violence. Relationship conflict, including insults and psychological abuse, is further escalated by the use/abuse of marijuana in groups of offenders who have already experienced high levels of stress (Stalans & Ritchie, [**2008**](https://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323087206/content/id/ch10bib58)). Stimulant and sedative abuse also increases the likelihood of committing intimate partner violence, according to the Stalans study ([**2008**](https://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323087206/content/id/ch10bib58)). Insulting behavior inherent in psychological abuse and drug use may be significant predictors of intimate partner violence occurrence.

Along with intimate partner violence, alcohol abuse presents a major public health problem in the United States. In a study concerning the role of alcohol use in intimate partner violence outcomes, authors point out that more than 7 percent of the population, approximately 14 million Americans, meets the diagnostic criteria for alcoholism (Thompson & Kingree, [**2006**](https://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323087206/content/id/ch10bib63)). Their research found that there are gender differences in alcohol use and the risk of injury. For women, past frequency of abuse and fear of life endangerment were predictive of injury risk by their male partner. Women were more likely to report victimization to the police when they had been victimized six or more times and feared life endangerment. Nonwhite women were more likely to report the incident to the police than white women. For a man abused by a female intimate partner, her use of a weapon and fear of life endangerment were predictive of injury risk. Men were more likely to report victimization when the female partners were drinking while the men were not drinking. Victim use of alcohol did not increase the risk of injury in this study.

**Substance Abuse and Male Offenders**

Men have been found to be 3.1 times more likely than women to have used alcohol or drugs prior to their arrest for intimate partner violence (Simmons & Lehmann, [**2007**](https://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323087206/content/id/ch10bib57)). Severe drinking problems increase the risk for violent victimization of women in intimate partner relationships, including the risk of homicide (Sharps, Campbell, Campbell, Gary, & Webster, [**2003**](https://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323087206/content/id/ch10bib56)).

Researchers have recommended that future responses to intimate partner violence should include

* **1.** Testing assailants at the time of arrest for alcohol or other drug intoxication,
* **2.** Detoxifying arrested drug- or alcohol-dependent assailants prior to release from jail,
* **3.** Assessing children who directly witness intimate partner violence to determine whether psychological treatment is needed, and
* **4.** Allowing intimate partner assault victims to swear out arrest warrants at the scene.

Experts agree that substance abuse problems and intimate partner violence overlap and that they often co-occur. However, substance abuse and intimate partner violence are different problems, and they require different interventions. There are multiple causes for both substance abuse and intimate partner violence; little evidence suggests that one problem causes the other.

**Substance Abuse and Female Offenders**

Research consistently indicates that a large portion of women in treatment for substance-related diagnoses use violence within their relationship. Additionally, male victims of intimate partner violence report that their female abusers often have a history of alcohol and/or drug abuse (Hines, Brown, & Dunning, [**2007**](https://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323087206/content/id/ch10bib28)). According to the limited literature on female domestic violence offenders, some conclude that women may have more in common with male domestic violence offenders than was previously thought (Carney, Buttell, & Dutton, [**2007**](https://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323087206/content/id/ch10bib12)).

Although most of the literature on domestic violence offending has focused on men as perpetrators, research on female perpetration is slowly emerging. Some research suggests that women are similar to men in terms of their use of violence in inflicting severe injuries on their partner, use of violence against nonintimates, and usage of alcohol and/ or drugs at the time of their arrest (Busch & Rosenberg, [**2004**](https://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323087206/content/id/ch10bib11)). A definite link between substance abuse and female perpetration has been established in a study on the arrests of women who commit intimate partner violence wherein almost half of the court-referred women met the criteria for being problem drinkers (Stuart, Moore, Ramsey, & Kahler, [**2004**](https://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323087206/content/id/ch10bib62)). In another study (Simmons & Lehmann, [**2007**](https://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323087206/content/id/ch10bib57)), researchers concluded that women arrested on domestic violence charges are at an increased risk of being substance abusers.

It has become increasingly clear that women use violence against men in intimate partner relationships. Substance abuse is consistently found to be a significant factor in perpetration. Intimate partner violence batterers’ treatment programs continue as the primary policy response to these crimes. Some suggest that the need for substance-related treatment of women arrested for intimate partner violence is not significant (Simmons & Lehmann, [**2007**](https://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323087206/content/id/ch10bib57)). Others argue that the models based on male-perpetrated violence are in desperate need of adaptation to meet the unique needs of females who offend (Bair-Merritt et al., [**2010**](https://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323087206/content/id/ch10bib07)). Studies on the characteristics of female intimate partner violence offenders continue to surface and inform on the role of substance abuse in this population of offenders.

**Substance Abuse and Older Adults**

Substance abuse is also linked to domestic violence against older adults. In all forms of elder mistreatment, family members are the perpetrators in more than half the cases. Researchers that conducted the 2009 *National Elder Mistreatment Study* documented the role of substance abuse in older adult victimization (Acierno, Hernandez-Tejada, Muzzy, & Steve, [**2009**](https://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323087206/content/id/ch10bib01)). They found that one-fifth of the known offenders have been identified as abusing substances around the time of their emotional mistreatment of older adults. Perpetrators of physical assault are even more likely to have been abusing substances at the time of assault; 50 percent had a substance abuse problem at the time of the abuse. Where the perpetrator was known in cases of sexual abuse against an older adult, over 28 percent had substance abuse problems. Relative to homicide of older adults by a caregiver, Karch and Nunn ([**2011**](https://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323087206/content/id/ch10bib36)) found substance abuse to be among the characteristics of the perpetrators.

Having family members who have substance abuse problems is also identified as likely to increase the risk of elder financial abuse (Jackson & Hafemeister, [**2011**](https://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323087206/content/id/ch10bib31)). If the substance abuse of the adult child increases, the offender may become more violent in general or in the demand for the elder’s assets. Researchers that conducted the *National Elder Mistreatment Study* discovered that financial exploitation by family members was unexpectedly common, occurring in over 5 percent of respondents (Acierno et al., [**2009**](https://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323087206/content/id/ch10bib01)). Older adults and those who need assistance with activities of daily living are considered most at risk.