

2001 KENTUCKY IPVS TELEPHONE SURVEY

BACKGROUND: The National Violence against Women Survey 1998 found that 76% (5.2 million) of women who reported being raped and/or physically assaulted since the age of 18 were victimized by an intimate partner. In all, 24.8% of adult women in America have been physically or sexually abused by an intimate partner at some point in their lives. These data indicate that intimate partner violence (IPV) is a critical public health problem in the United States. IPV is a serious problem in Kentucky as well. However, the magnitude and scope of the problem is difficult to determine due to the fragmented nature of the various statewide data sources, and poor documentation. As part of a project to develop a public health surveillance system for intimate partner violence (IPV) a statewide self-report telephone survey of Kentucky women age 18 and older was conducted from July-November 2001.

METHODS: A representative sample of female Kentucky residents age 18+ was generated (n=2,001). Over-sampling compensated for the low prevalence of residential telephones in poorer counties in Kentucky, ensuring geographic representativeness of the sample. The Waksberg random digit dialing method was used in which the sample was pre-filtered for known non-working phone banks and known businesses. The CASRO response rate for the survey was 51%. Ninety-four percent of the sample are Caucasian and 3.5% African American. The survey sample is representative of the age and racial distribution of female Kentucky resident's age 18 and older.

RESULTS: Physical abuse included one or more of the following behaviors by an intimate partner: pushing, grabbing or shoving the respondent; choking, hitting, slapping, kicking, biting, or throwing objects at the respondent. Physical abuse included threats to hit the respondent or threats with a gun or knife. Use of weapons was also included in the definition.

Overall, 37.1% of females in Kentucky experienced IPV at sometime in their adult lives; 4.8% in the past year. 13.5% said they were choked and 8.2% forced to have sex by an intimate partner. In addition, 10.5% said they were threatened with a knife or gun during an argument with their partner. As a result of an argument or fight with an intimate partner, 23% of respondents said they required medical treatment for injuries, and another 22.7% required medical treatment for "stress". Some women reported minor injuries such as a sprain (46.4%) bruising (40.8%), while others reported severe injuries, such as fractured bones (12%). An estimated 39.5% said that they had missed work because of injuries as a result of a fight with their partner.

175 out of 1,090 (16.1%) IPV victims said a health professional had asked whether she had been physically hurt or abused by a current intimate partner. In response to this question, 48.6% who had been screened confirmed the abuse; 25.7% denied the abuse; and 18.3% avoided answering the question.

IPV victims were also asked if they had sought help by talking to anyone about the abuse. If so, they were asked with whom they spoke. If they indicated they had sought help from police or the court system, respondents were asked whether their contact had resulted in consequences (jail, protection order, or batterer's treatment program) for their batterer. Table 1 displays their responses to these questions:

Did you ever talk to one of the following about the abuse?	Yes, I talked to someone	Yes, this source was helpful	Yes, my batterer received consequences
Family/private doctor?	23.0%	79.8%	Not asked
Clergy, such as priest, minister or rabbi?	16.0%	82.8%	Not asked
Mental health counselor?	22.7%	83.8%	Not asked
Neighbor / friend / relative?	54.9%	90.6%	Not asked
Social services?	11.1%	76.7%	Not asked
Substance Abuse treatment?	5.8%	86.7%	Not asked
Rape crisis center?	3.1%	79.2%	Not asked
Spouse abuse shelter?	10.0%	87.0%	Not asked
Hospital emergency room?	10.5%	80.2%	Not asked
Out-patient clinic in a hospital?	5.0%	82.1%	Not asked
Clinic at a public health department?	3.8%	86.2%	Not asked
Courts to file a Protective Order?	23.2%	83.2%	67%
Law enforcement officer?	25.9%	72.9%	59.9%
Other?	6.9%	83.0%	Not asked

CONCLUSIONS: IPVS is a serious problem in Kentucky. More than a half-million women aged 18 and older who have experienced physical and/or sexual abuse by a current or recent former intimate partner during the course of the relationship. Less than one-fifth of IPV victims said they were screened for IPV by a health care professional. This may reflect a lack of access to regular health care and/or a lack of screening on the part of health care providers. More than half of IPV victims took action to alleviate the abuse, either through accessing community resources, or leaving their abusive partner. Since so many women said they sought help from family, friends or neighbors, this would be an important group to target for education about community resources for IPV.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Victims of IPV may benefit if their community, family, and friends were more aware of the local resources available to abused women and their children.
- Health care professionals, particularly private health care practitioners and mental health counselors, can help victims by screening all patients for IPV and making them aware of local resources.

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NOTE:
The full report of this 2001 research survey is to be detailed in a comprehensive document on the 2000-2002 Kentucky IPVS Telephone Surveys: Findings & Trend Analysis