

The Pandemic and Intimate Partner Violence

Globally

1. The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly affected the rate of incidents of intimate partner violence (“IPV”). In the first few months of the pandemic, the number of hotline calls, domestic violence website traffic and IPV-related police activity increased dramatically. The United Nations coined the situation a “Shadow Pandemic.”¹
2. The American Journal of Emergency Medicine estimated that domestic violence cases increased by 25-33% globally in 2020.²

United States

3. The National Commission on COVID-19 and Criminal Justice data showed an increase in the rate of incidents of IPV in the U.S. between 8-10 percent, following the imposition of lockdown orders during 2020.³
4. Why do the statistics portray a lower increase in the US than elsewhere in the world? Experts determined that the increase in the US was likely higher but was under-reported because of the inability to report the abuse. This was due to the suspension of protection services (due to increased costs and decreased income), restrictions of mobility, lack of information and increased isolation.⁴
5. Experts point to many factors for the increased rates of IPV during the pandemic:
 - “Exacerbated stressors” such as the increase of job losses, poor mental health and lack of social support.⁵
 - High-stress, close quarters due to pandemic lockdowns. There is more time together. Victims cannot escape from their abusers. They cannot even get away from their abusers to make hotline calls.⁶ There are less “safe harbors.”

¹ “Measuring the Shadow Pandemic: Violence against Women during COVID-19,” UN Women, 2021: “Widespread stay-at-home orders to curb the spread of COVID-19, potentially locked women down with their abusers, creating dangerous conditions for violence against women, often with tragic consequences.”

² Newman, C., “The Pandemic Is Increasing Intimate Partner Violence. Here is How Health Care Providers Can Help,” University of Alabama at Birmingham News, October 26, 2021. The United Nations Population Fund estimates a 20% increase in IPV globally due to quarantines and lockdowns. Stanley, M., “Why the Increase in Domestic Violence during COVID-19?” Psychology Today (2020).

³ “Domestic Violence During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Evidence from a Systemic Review and Meta-Analysis,” National Commission on COVID-19 and Criminal Justice, February, 2021.

⁴ Jetelina, K., Knell, G., Molsberry, R., “Changes in Intimate partner Violence during the Early Stages of the COVID-19 Pandemic in the USA,” Injury Prevention - BMJ, 27:1, February, 2021. This would also explain why the numbers of requests for orders of protection in the St. Louis area were not much different in 2020 and 2021, compared to the numbers in 2019.

⁵ Cannon, C., Ferreira, R., First, J., “COVID-19, Intimate Partner Violence, and Communication Ecologies,” American Behavioral Scientist, February 6, 2021. Newnham, E., Chen, Y., Leaning, J., “The Mental Health Implications of Domestic Violence During COVID-19,” International Journal of Public Health, Jan. 21, 2022. (“The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified conditions for trauma, stress, financial insecurity, and isolation; each known to have unique and cumulative effects in exacerbating the frequency and severity of domestic violence.”)

⁶ Mineo, L., “Shadow Pandemic of Domestic Violence,” The Harvard Gazette, June 29, 2022.

- Power and control are easier to exert when the offender can isolate the victim.⁷
- Lower household income (due to loss of employment or less employment) creates less access to social and private services.⁸
 - Even less bed space at shelters due to the need to reduce the number of guests to minimize the chance of spreading the virus.⁹
 - “Quarantine conditions are associated with alcohol abuse, depression, and post-traumatic stress symptoms.”¹⁰
6. Rates of IPV were even higher for members of the LGBTQ+ community and racial minorities.¹¹
7. The effects of the pandemic are expected to endure for a considerable time. Survivors have greater needs than they did prior to the pandemic. Many have endured life-threatening and prolonged abuse – and need significant health care.¹² The economic fallout makes them more apt to need more help securing housing and other basic needs.¹³

⁷ Kluger, J., “Domestic Violence Is a Pandemic Within the COVID-19 Pandemic,” [Time Magazine](#), Feb. 3, 2021. Newnham, [supra](#) (“Large-scale public health measures, such as physical distancing and lockdowns, have reduced COVID-19 transmission but paradoxically created conditions for domestic violence perpetrators to exercise increased financial, physical and psychological control.”)

⁸ Hassan, A., “Domestic Violence in U.S. Increased During Pandemic Lockdown for All Genders, Research Shows,” [ABCNews.com](#).

⁹ Kluger, [supra](#).

¹⁰ Boserup, B., Elkbuli, A., “Alarming Trends in U.S. Domestic Violence During the COVID-19 Pandemic,” [The American Journal of Emergency Medicine](#).

¹¹ Kluger, [supra](#).

¹² Gulati, G., Kelly, B., “Domestic Violence against Women and the COVID-19 Pandemic: What Is the Role of Psychiatry?” [Int. J. Psychiatry](#) (2020) 71:101594. (“The mental health effects of domestic violence are likely to be severe and long-lasting. Exposure to violence and abuse increase one’s risk of experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, substance abuse and suicidal behaviors.”)

¹³ Boyd-Barrett, C., “The Pandemic Spurred a Domestic Violence Epidemic. It’s Not Over Yet,” [California Health Report: Solutions for Health Equity](#), July 29, 2021.