



INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

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THE PROBLEM:

- In a national survey, 25% of female participants reported being raped or physically assaulted by an intimate partner.
- Nearly two-thirds of women who reported being raped, physically assaulted, and/or stalked since age 18 were victimized by a current or former husband, cohabiting partner, boyfriend or date.

Violence by intimate partners, or domestic violence, is an important public health problem internationally, nationally and in Alabama. It is defined as “actual or threatened physical or sexual violence or psychological and emotional abuse directed toward a spouse, ex-spouse, current or former boyfriend or girlfriend, or current or former dating partner”.

In 2001, 20 percent of the 19,873 violent offenses committed in Alabama were domestic violence incidents. Domestic violence was indicated in 4,013 incidents reported. These included 40 homicides, 172 rapes, 3,762 aggravated assaults and 24,625 simple assaults. Seventy-five percent of the domestic violence offenses in Alabama were reported by women, while 55% of victims suffered injuries. Of these injuries 8% were injured with a firearm; 20% were injured with a knife; 41% were injured with fists, feet or hands; and 31% were injured with other dangerous weapons. Though only 80% of Alabama's domestic violence cases are

reported, the domestic violence rate in this state is one of the highest in the nation.

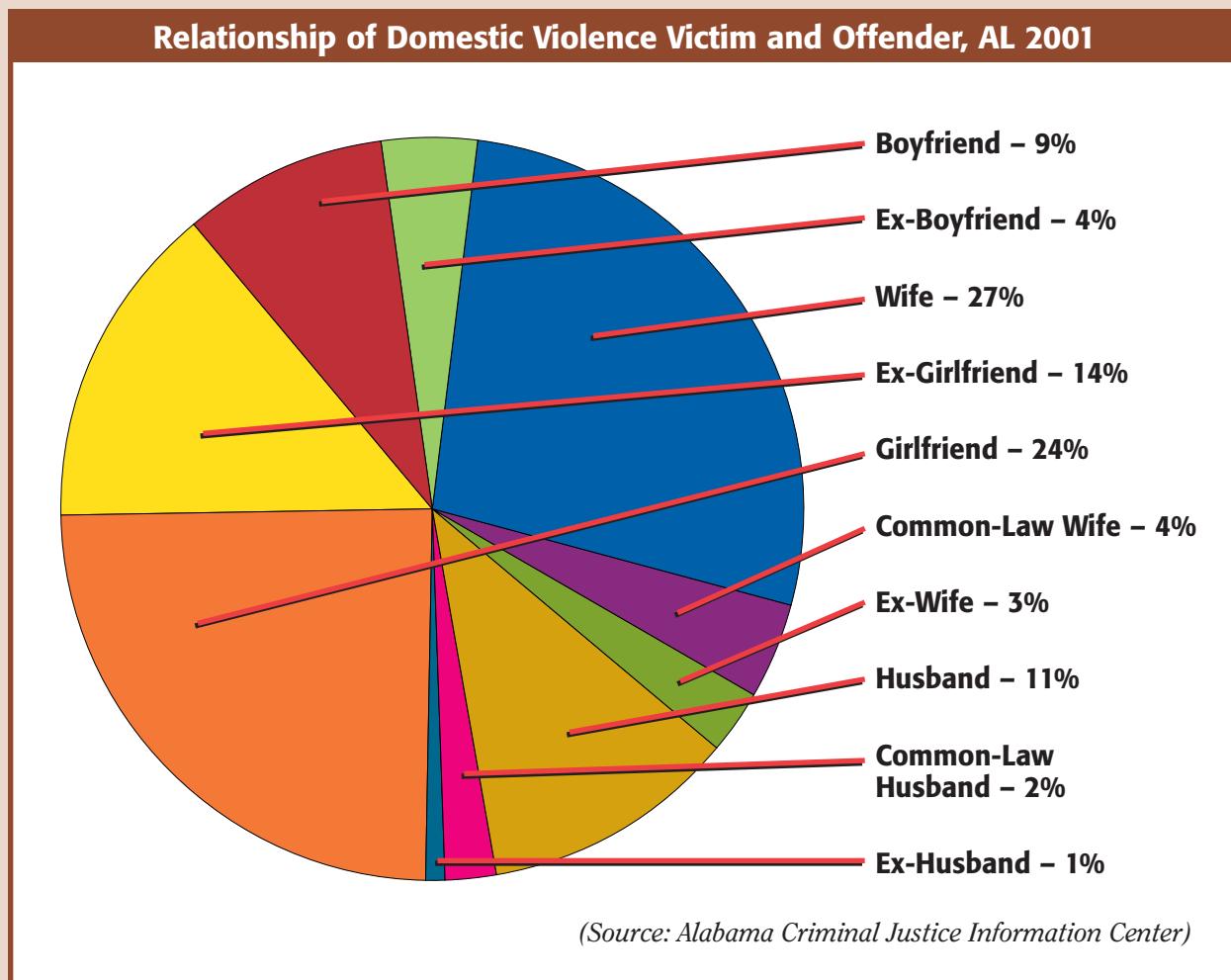
THOSE AT RISK:

Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women. Approximately 1.5 million women and 834,700 men are raped and/or physically assaulted by an intimate partner each year in the United States. More women than men experience intimate partner violence. According to the National Violence Against Women Survey, one out of four U.S. women has been physically assaulted or raped by an intimate partner; one out of every fourteen U.S. men reported such an experience. Women are also more likely than men to be murdered in the context of intimate partner violence. Women ages 20 to 29 years are at greatest risk of being killed by an intimate partner.

Between 1981 and 1998, Alabama's homicide rate for white females murdered by intimate partners was 1.57 per 100,000; for black females, the rate was 4.70 per 100,000. During the same period, the national rate for female intimate partner homicides was 1.43 per 100,000. In Alabama, 60% of the victims are black; the other 40% are white. In 63% of the offenses, the offenders are black; in 75% of reported incidents, the offenders are male. In 34% of domestic violence incidents, the victim is the wife of the offender, while in another 38%, the victim is the offender's girlfriend.

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THE COSTS:

The *World Report on Violence and Health* states that violence against women by intimate partners is a serious and widespread problem in all parts of the world. It describes the consequences as profound, extending beyond the health and happiness of individuals to affect the well-being of entire communities. Its impact

on health, children and the economy are significant. The health care costs of intimate partner rape, physical assault, and stalking exceed \$5.8 billion each year, nearly \$4.1 billion of which is for direct medical and mental health care services. More qualitative and quantitative data are needed to better determine the full magnitude of intimate partner violence and associated human and economic costs.

PREVENTION:

- **Changing societal and community norms is imperative in the struggle to prevent intimate partner violence.**
- **Collaboration at the state and community level to ensure support of victims while increasing penalties for abusers is needed.**

The *World Report of Violence and Health* reviews methods to prevent intimate partner violence. They include continued support of victims, legal remedies and judicial reforms, treatment for abusers, health service interventions and community-based efforts. All efforts should instill the principle that violence and abuse are not acceptable in our society and will not be tolerated.

In 2002, *A Plan to Address Violence Against Women in Alabama* was created by a variety of agency and community representatives including the Alabama Department of Public Health, Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs, Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Department of Corrections, Administrative Office of Courts, Department of Human Resources, Board of Pardons and Paroles, Court of Criminal Appeals, Alabama Department of Mental Health/Mental Retardation, the Attorney General's Office, Department of Youth Services, members of the faith community, health care professionals, judges and attorneys. The plan outlines recommendations for addressing domestic violence in every area of society including legislation, law enforcement, prosecution, the judicial system, health care professionals, youth prevention and

intervention activities, victim services, and community response. This collaboration is a foundation with which to begin a community-based effort to change societal norms and address violence.

ALABAMA'S STRATEGY FOR INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE PREVENTION:

GOAL:

Reduce injuries and deaths due to intimate partner violence.

1. Disseminate and implement the Alabama Violence Against Women Plan.

- a. Support law enforcement, prosecution and judicial response recommendations.
- b. Coordinate community initiatives to strengthen safety networks.

2. Support Primary Prevention of Intimate Partner Violence.

- a. Evaluate and disseminate intervention programs so that evidence-based initiatives are available to Alabama communities.
- b. Support youth education and empowerment programs.
- c. Support integration of resources to address all violence including bullying, sexual violence and youth violence.

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INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE *continued*

- 3. Increase public awareness that intimate partner violence is a significant public health problem that can be prevented.**
- 4. Support development of a comprehensive surveillance system to accurately measure the impact of intimate partner violence on our state.**

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