



"There are lies, damned lies, and statistics." -- Mark Twain

(Why Gender Feminists Ignored The New Dept. of Justice Study)

Organization News - Women's Freedom Network
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NEW JUSTICE DEPARTMENT FINDINGS SHOW DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ADVOCATES HAVE EXAGGERATED STATISTICS, WOMEN'S GROUP SAYS

On Monday, the [USA] Justice Department released the findings of a study showing that about 1.4 million violence-related injuries a year are treated in hospital emergency departments, far surpassing earlier government estimates, and that about 37% of violence - related injuries to women are inflicted by spouses, ex-spouses, or boyfriends.

Bonnie Campbell, director of the Justice Department's Violence Against Women Office, has said that the numbers provide "sobering proof" that domestic violence is underreported. In fact, according to projections from the study, 204,129 women and 38,790 men annually seek emergency-room treatment from injuries related to domestic violence. These are disturbing numbers. But they also show that domestic violence advocates, politicians, and the media have consistently exaggerated the scope of the problem.

The pamphlets, brochures, and other literature distributed by battered women's advocacy groups commonly assert that:

- 20% to 35% of women who visit medical emergency rooms are there for injuries related to domestic violence;
- battering is "the leading cause of injury to American women," or to women 15 to 44;
- domestic abuse causes more injuries to women than rape, auto accidents, and muggings combined;

These claims have been repeated by major news organizations including Newsweek, Time, The

Washington Post, and The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. They have been cited by the American Medical Association and by the Department of Health and Human Services, by the Senate Judiciary Committee, and by President Clinton.

The new Justice Department numbers show that ALL violence is responsible for about 3% of women's INJURY-RELATED visits to emergency rooms, and domestic violence for about 1%. Since fewer than a third of women's emergency-room visits are injury-related, this means that domestic violence accounts for fewer than 0.3% of these visits. While it is possible that some domestic violence cases were not identified in the study, it is noteworthy that its estimates include not only positively established but probable cases of violence from injuries.

Statistics released by the Centers for Disease Control last March, in a report titled "National Hospital Ambulatory Medical Care Survey: 1992 Emergency Department Summary," show that the leading cause of injury, to both women and men, is accidental falls, followed by motor vehicle accidents. According to the CDC, 13.6 of injuries to women seen in emergency room are from car accidents -- a total of nearly 2 million, or almost 10 times the number of injuries from domestic violence.

Indeed, CDC numbers show that more than twice as many women visit emergency rooms due to being injured by an animal (459,000 a year) than by a male partner.

The Justice Department report does confirm that women are much more likely than men to be physically harmed by an intimate partner. However, it shows that men account for about 16% of injuries from domestic violence, contradicting the common claim that 95% of abuse victims are women. The report also notes that the numbers should be treated with some caution because, for 35% of men with violent injuries (compared to only 20% of the women), the victim-offender relationship was not identified. It may be that because of cultural norms, men are reluctant to disclose that they were assaulted by a female partner.

Furthermore, the Justice Department numbers clearly show, as do other statistics, that the primary victims of interpersonal violence in the United States are men: in this study, men accounted for 60% of patients with injuries from violence.

"For years, claims about the horrific scope of violence against women have been used by the ideologues to portray American society as a violent patriarchy in which women are constantly under assault by male terrorism, and the greatest threat to women is the men in their lives," said Cathy Young, vice-president of the Women's Freedom Network. "The Justice Department numbers show what critics of gender-war feminism have been saying for some time: the numbers have been exaggerated to serve an ideological agenda and promote policies that create a virtual presumption of guilt in domestic abuse cases. Domestic violence, and the level of violence in our society in general, needs to be addressed. But there is no need to distort the truth or to fosters division between the sexes."

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