

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE - REPORTING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TO THE POLICE

Professor: Wesley Jennings, Ph.D.

The next portion of the presentation focuses on reporting domestic violence to the police. Reflecting a set of domestic violence, domestic violence-related police calls have been found to constitute the single largest category of calls received by the police, accounting for between 15% and more than 50% of all calls. Not all domestic violence calls are for activities that constitute crimes, though.

Several New York studies, for example, found that 65% of such calls in upstate New York pertained to criminal conduct. In New York City, the police department found that 35% of reports to the police pertained to specific chargeable index or other criminal offenses.

So, related to this, how much domestic violence is actually reported to law enforcement? As with any crime, not all incidents of domestic violence are reported to law enforcement and not all that are reported to law enforcement are forwarded to prosecutors. Finally, even less is generally prosecuted in the court.

Both the older National Violence Against Women Survey, and the more contemporary National Crime Victimization Survey, reports agree that victims do not report all cases of their victimizations to police. Specifically, according to the National Violence Against Women Survey, only 27% of women and 13.5% of men who are reported being physically assaulted by an intimate reported their assault to law enforcement.

Comparatively, less than 20% of women reported intimate partner rapes to the police. Reporting rates for stalking are higher, with 52% of women and 36% of men reporting them to law enforcement. Also according to these surveys, reporting to police of non-fatal partner victimization has increased for all victims. Male and female report over 62% with no gap between male and female victim reporting rates.

The highest reporting is for black females, 70.2% percent, and the lowest reporting rate is for black males 46.5%. Researchers also find that some victims do not report repeated incidents of abuse to the police. A review of National Crime Victimization Survey data from 1997 for 2002 found that, although 60% of the victims had been assaulted by their intimate partners previously, only half of the subsequent survey assaults were reported to the police.

As such, prior unreported domestic violence may be more serious than the incident actually reported.

To review several reasons for not reporting the incidents to the police, based on the 2005 National Crime Victimization Survey results, include, one, the belief that the abuse was a private or personal matter, 22% for females; fear of retaliation, 12% for females; desire to protect the suspect, 14% for females; and finally, the belief that the police will not do anything, which is 8% for females.