

Intimate Partner Sexual Violence Factsheet

©2014 Louise McOrmond-Plummer

www.mcormondplummer.com.au

Here is a factsheet of essential information about intimate partner sexual violence, with links to more information.



What is IPSV?

Intimate partner sexual violence (IPSV) is rape or sexual assault by a partner i.e. husband or boyfriend (or same-sex partner).

Rape may include penetration without consent of vagina, anus or mouth with fingers, penis or object. In some places, forced cunnilingus or anilingus are also legally considered rape, and they are certainly sexual assault.

Sexual assault includes acts such as forced kissing, sexually touching the victim's breasts or other sexual body parts, or forcing the victim to touch the perpetrator in a sexual way.

IPSV may include forced prostitution, setting a partner up for gang rape, forcing a partner to view pornography or sex with animals. It is uploading sexual pictures of a partner to the internet without consent.

It includes name-calling of a degrading nature such as "slut," "whore" or "cunt."

For more on definitions of IPSV please see

<http://www.aphroditewounded.org/definitions.html>

What is "Force" and "Coercion" in IPSV?

- Physical violence i.e. hitting, choking
- Threats with weapons
- Continuing sexual activity after a partner indicates she wishes to stop.
- Overpowering her with physical strength, pinning her down
- Threats to harm her or a third person
- Threats to property/pets
- Threats to rape her if she doesn't give in
- Depriving her of liberty until she acquiesces to a sexual demand; i.e. "You don't leave this room until I get what I want"
- Having sexual intercourse with her while she is sleeping or incapacitated by drugs/alcohol to the extent that she cannot give or withdraw consent
- Refusal to allow her to sleep until she gives in to sexual demands (note: sleep deprivation is a recognized form of torture)
- Sexual activity after continuous pressure on her to have sex before she is ready, to perform acts she has stated she doesn't like; or just going ahead and doing it
- Putting her in a position where you must engage in one form of sexual activity to prevent something "worse" from happening i.e. she has to engage in oral sex in order to avoid anal rape.
- Threats to leave her or sleep with somebody else; withholding housekeeping money

Myths about IPSV

When a woman is sexually assaulted by her partner, it is very often not seen as "real" rape. It is also assumed not to do any real harm. People may assume that women often lie about IPSV. Myths about IPSV lead to survivors receiving inadequate responses and dangerous advice. IPSV myths silence survivors and allow perpetrators to continue raping and abusing with impunity. For more on IPSV myths and facts, please see this webpage:

www.aphroditewounded.org/myths.html

How Prevalent is IPSV?

The exact prevalence of partner rape is difficult to establish because of factors such as underreporting. However, research reveals a serious and widespread problem, with IPSV being possibly the most common context for sexual assault. For example:

- In 2006 the Australian Bureau published the results of the Personal Safety Survey. According to the Survey, an estimated 27,400 women in Australia have experienced sexual assault by their current partner, and 272,300 by a previous partner. According to the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault (ACCSA) these figures are likely to be underestimates¹.

- In 1975, the results of an American study on many rape situations were published. Diana Russell was so appalled by her findings on rape in marriage that she decided to conduct a research project on this area alone. From the 930 interviews conducted with women from a cross section of race and class, Russell concluded that rape in marriage was the most common yet most neglected area of sexual violence ⁱⁱ.
- In 1994, Patricia Easteal, then Senior Criminologist at the Australian Institute of Criminology, published the results of survey on sexual assault in many settings. The respondents were survivors of numerous forms of sexual assault. Of these, 10.4% had been raped by husbands or de-factos, with a further 2.3 per cent raped by estranged husbands/defactos. 5.5 percent were raped by non-cohabiting boyfriends ⁱⁱⁱ.
- David Finkelhor & Kersti Yllo's famous 1985 study estimated that 10 to 14 per cent of all married women have been or will be raped by their spouses ^{iv}.
- In the UK, The British Home Office yields the information that the most common rapists are current and ex-husbands or partners, with 45 % of all rapes committed by present partners, and a further 11% by past partners ^v.
- Figures on teenage girls in danger from boyfriends caused shock in research communities in the 1980's. Teen Dating violence, which often involves rape and sexual assault, continues to be on the rise. Approximately one in ten high school students experiences dating violence - that figure is 22% in college students ^{vi}.

The Danger of IPSV

While most rapes do not result in additional physical injuries, those that do are likely to be partner rapes, which research has found to involve the highest levels of physical injury ^{vii}.

Partner rape may also entail the highest levels of chronic rape, with some survivors reporting being raped more than twenty times by their partners. ^{viii}

The fatality risk inherent in IPSV is an urgent reason for taking notice of this crime and assisting survivors to safety. In short, women being raped as well as beaten by their partners are more likely to be subsequently murdered than women who are beaten but not raped. For example:

- In David Adam's study, 75 percent of women whose partners attempted to kill them, were also raped ^{ix}.
- In Jacquelyn Campbell's risk-assessment table, " "Woman forced to have sex when not wanted" was the fifth most predictive item, ahead of such factors as escalating physical violence and partner's drug abuse ^x.
- A physically-abused woman also experiencing forced sex is more than seven times more likely than other abused women to be killed ^{xi}.

- Sexual abuse may pose the greatest risk factor for lethality: According to Braaf ^{xii}, "Campbell et al. (2003) conducted a key study in the US comparing sample groups across 11 cities to identify risk factors for femicide in abusive relationships. The bivariate analysis found an abuser's use of forced sex was associated with risk of homicide, along with a number of other variables (such as stalking, strangulation, abuse during pregnancy and perpetrator suicidality). Tellingly, the researchers' multivariate analysis of the effect of these variables found forced sex to be the only associated factor to emerge (p. 1092)".
- There are also factors in the sexual assaults themselves that can aid prediction of fatality. Greater severity of violence and acts like strangulation associated with IPSV may also be predictive of subsequent murder ^{xiii}.
- Other fatal scenarios are when victims kill their abusive partners, and suicidality in victims/survivors of partner rape. Two studies indicate that homicidal women are more likely than non-homicidal women to have experienced rape by abusive partners ^{xiv, xv}. The study of McFarlane et. al also found that battered women who experience rape were 5.3 times more likely to attempt suicide or feel suicidal than women who were battered only ^{xvi}.
- The risk of rape and murder escalates if a woman is exiting the relationship, or after she has done so ^{xvii, xviii}.

For more on IPSV and fatality risk plus best practise responses, please see this webpage: www.aphroditewounded.org/fatality.html

The Impact of IPSV

Many people, including numerous players in the criminal justice system, believe that an act of sexual assault by a sexual partner does not do any real harm. There is a tendency to view it as sex just one more time with a partner. But studies reveal that survivors of IPSV in fact experience longer and more serious impacts than survivors of stranger rape ^{xix}.

Please see this webpage for more on physical and psychological impacts of IPSV: www.aphroditewounded.org/effects.html

Perpetrators of IPSV

Perpetrators of IPSV are usually quite normal men who may be well-respected community members. They may not see what they do as a crime, and they often carry a mindset - heavily supported by society - that it is their right to have sex with their partners whenever they wish. They often have an array of behaviours and thoughts that enable them to avoid responsibility. The motives of the partner rapist may be quite similar to the motives of other rapists - they use sexual means to meet needs that are not necessarily sexual, such as the desire to exercise control over or inflict harm on women with an act of rape ^{xx}.

For more on IPSV perpetrators, please see this webpage:

www.aphroditewounded.org/perp.html

Does IPSV happen in same-sex relationships?

Yes. You can see more information about that in the article by Marianne Winters here:

www.wcsap.org/sites/www.wcsap.org/files/uploads/documents/IPSV2008.pdf%20

Also, *Intimate Partner Sexual Violence: A Multidisciplinary Guide to Improving Services and Support for Survivors of Rape and Abuse*

features an excellent chapter on same-sex IPSV by Dr. Janice Ristock.

IPSV and Domestic Violence

Sexual abuse and assault happen in relationships that may not be overtly abusive and in fact may be otherwise egalitarian. However, partner rape itself *is* domestic violence, and since it is an act of control, we shouldn't be surprised when it coexists with other forms of abusive control. These might be any of the below ^{xxi}:

- **Physical abuse:** i.e. beating. Studies do indicate that the tendency toward partner rape increases significantly in men who batter ^{xxii}. Physical abuse also takes the form of throwing objects, hurting pets, or pushing and shoving.
- **Emotional Abuse:** Putdowns, emotional blackmail, shaming, making jokes at her expense, withdrawing affection as punishment, deliberately embarrassing a partner
- **Mental Abuse:** Negative comments about partner's intelligence, "mind-games" such as insisting something didn't happen when she knows it did; calling her "crazy" or trying to drive her crazy, "second-guessing" her.
- **Social Abuse:** Insisting on accompanying her on all social outings or refusal to allow her to go at all; isolating her from family and friends.
- **Financial Abuse:** Insisting that she works in the family business for no money, preventing her from earning her own money; making her account for every cent, giving her an "allowance"; controlling any money she makes.
- **Spiritual Abuse:** Mocking her religion, insisting that she embrace his religion; preventing her from going to church, distorting and quoting scripture to manipulate her into submission
- **Using "Male Privilege":** Claiming the right to do as he pleases while the same right doesn't extend to a female partner. Male privilege may also be a part of sexual assault; for example he may say that as her husband, it's his right to have her whenever he wants her.

However, it is most important that sexual assault be recognised and addressed as a distinct form of violence, and not just relegated to being just another form of domestic violence. IPSV carries some distinct differences between it and other types of domestic violence. There are also differences between IPSV and other types of sexual assault. If you would like to know more about these differences, please read my published article *Considering the Differences: Intimate Partner Sexual Violence in Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Discourse* here: www.aphroditewounded.org/consideringthedifferences.pdf

I expand on this further in Chapter three of *Intimate Partner Sexual Violence: A Multidisciplinary Guide to Improving Services and Support for Survivors of Rape and Abuse*

Is IPSV Always Violent?

No. While, as we have seen, it is more likely to occur in relationships characterised by other violence, this is not always the case. Perpetrators often know of other means - such as withdrawing affection or blackmail - to coerce their partners into sexual activity; sex with the use of these methods is still without consent, it is still rape, and may still accrue significant impact in survivors^{xxiii}. Submission is not consent.

For more information on non-physically violent types of coercion, please see this page: www.aphroditewounded.org/definitions.html

How Can we Respond Better to Women who have experienced IPSV?

It is not the scope of this page to answer this question as fully as it really requires. I recommend a reading of *Intimate Partner Sexual Violence: A Multidisciplinary Guide to Improving Services and Support for Survivors of Rape and Abuse*

for best practise responses. In short, it is extremely important that we validate that what has happened to the survivor of IPSV is a real crime, with real wounds. We need to assist her in addressing safety issues for herself and her children, and be conversant with culturally appropriate responses. Rape Crisis, domestic violence and other services can provide outreach that specifically mentions and defines IPSV so that women will know there is somewhere to go - one way of doing this is having pamphlets like this one available: www.dvcairns.org/Resources/Brochures/IPSV%20Booklet%202013.pdf

Asking women about IPSV, and naming this crime are crucial steps in addressing IPSV at both personal and social levels. It has the potential to save lives. You may like to read more about asking and naming on this webpage: www.aphroditewounded.org/naming.html

If you are a professional whose practise brings you in contact with women raped by their partners, you are in a position to do much good. Your compassion and understanding will make all the difference and may even save lives.

References:

-
- ⁱ <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/PrimaryMainFeatures/4906.0?OpenDocument>
- ⁱⁱ Russell, Diana E.H. *Rape in Marriage* MacMillan Publishing Company, USA 1990
- ⁱⁱⁱ Easteal, P. *Voices of the Survivors*, Spinifex Press, North Melbourne, 1994.
- ^{iv} Finkelhor, D. and Yllo, K., *License to Rape: Sexual Abuse of Wives*, The Free Press, New York 1985
- ^v Myhill & Allen, *Rape and Sexual Assault of Women: Findings from the British Crime Survey*
- ^{vi} Wilson, K.J., *When Violence Begins at Home: A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding and Ending Domestic Abuse*, Hunter House Inc .Publishers, California, 1997
- ^{vii} Myhill & Allen, *Rape and Sexual Assault of Women: Findings from the British Crime Survey*
- ^{viii} Myhill & Allen, *Rape and Sexual Assault of Women: Findings from the British Crime Survey*
- ^{ix} Adams, D. (2007), *Why do they kill?: men who murder their intimate partners*, Vanderbilt University Press, Nashville
- ^x Campbell, J. & Soeken, K. (1999), "Forced sex and intimate partner violence: effects on women's risk and women's health", *Violence Against Women*, vol. 5, issue 9, pp. 1017 - 1035
- ^{xi} Campbell, J., Webster, D., Koziol-McLain, J., Block, C, Campbell, D., Curry, M., et al. (2003, November). "Assessing risk factors for intimate partner homicide." *NIJ Journal*, 250, 14-19.
- ^{xii} Braaf, R. (2011) "Preventing domestic violence death – Is sexual assault a risk factor?" *Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse Research and Practice Brief*, 1(October).
- ^{xiii} Adams, D. (2007), *Why do they kill?: men who murder their intimate partners*, Vanderbilt University Press, Nashville
- ^{xiv} Browne, A. (1987), *When battered women kill*, The Free Press, New York
- ^{xv} Block, C (2000), *The Chicago Women's Health Risk Study, risk of serious injury or death in intimate violence; a collaborative research project*. Final report, Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, Washington DC
- ^{xvi} McFarlane, J., Malecha, A., Watson, K., Gist, J., Batten, E., Hall, I. & Smith, S. (2005), "Intimate partner sexual assault against women and associated victim substance use, suicidality and risk factors for femicide", *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, vol. 26, pp. 284 - 289
- ^{xvii} Dobash R & Dobash R 2010, 'What were they thinking? Men who murder an intimate partner', *Violence Against Women*, vol. 17, issue 1, pp. 111-134
- ^{xviii} Block, C. & DeKeseredy, W. (2007), "Forced sex and leaving intimate relationships: results of the Chicago Women's Health Risk Study", *Women's Health and Urban Life*, vol. 5, pp. 6–23
- ^{xix} Finkelhor, D. and Yllo, K., *License to Rape: Sexual Abuse of Wives*, The Free Press, New York 1985
- ^{xx} Easteal, P, and McOrmond-Plummer, L, *Real Rape, Real Pain: Help for women sexually assaulted by male partners*, Hybrid Publishers, Melbourne, 1996
- ^{xxi} Easteal, P, and McOrmond-Plummer, L, *Real Rape, Real Pain: Help for women sexually assaulted by male partners*, Hybrid Publishers, Melbourne, 1996
- ^{xxii} Easteal, P, and McOrmond-Plummer, L, *Real Rape, Real Pain: Help for women sexually assaulted by male partners*, Hybrid Publishers, Melbourne, 1996
- ^{xxiii} Broach, J.L. and Petretic, P.A. (2006) "Beyond traditional definitions of assault: expanding our focus to include sexually coercive experiences." *Journal of Family Violence* 21, 8, 477–486. doi:10.1007/s10896-006-9045-z