

## **Economics of Abuse: The Cost of Domestic Violence**

*While 70 percent of Americans know people who are or have been victims of domestic violence, nearly the same percentage of Americans fail to see a connection between domestic violence and “economic abuse.” However, the economics of abuse are pervasive in all walks of American society, impacting health, home, industry and pocketbook.*

### **The Facts**

- Down turns in the economy affect everyone, but these economic downswings disproportionately affect people with fewer resources and limited incomes.<sup>1</sup> Battered women frequently fall into these groups of people.
- 44% of Americans cite financial security as the most difficult barrier to leaving an abusive relationship.<sup>2</sup>

### **House and Home**

- 57% of American cities cite domestic violence as the top cause of homelessness.<sup>3</sup>
- 38% of all victims of domestic violence become homeless at some point in their lives.<sup>4</sup>
- 33% percent of all police time is spent responding to domestic disturbance calls.<sup>5</sup>

### **In the Workplace**

- 96% of domestic violence victims who are employed experience difficulty in the workplace.<sup>6</sup>
- Between one-quarter and one-half of domestic violence victims report that they have lost a job, at least in part, due to domestic violence.<sup>7</sup>

### **Healthcare**

- Health-related costs of domestic violence exceed \$5.8 billion annually, \$4.1 billion of which is for direct medical and mental health services.<sup>8</sup>
- Even after five years abuse has ended, health care costs for women with a history of intimate partner violence remain 20% higher than those for women with no history of violence.<sup>9</sup>

### **Economics**

- More than three-quarters of Americans (76 percent) believe the poor economy has made it more difficult for victims of domestic violence and two-thirds (66 percent) believe it has caused an increase in domestic violence.<sup>2</sup>
  - Many women are not financially prepared to leave abusive relationships: only 1% of women consider themselves to be experts in finance; 62 % consider themselves to be below average when it comes to financial knowledge.<sup>10</sup>
  - Approximately 60% of Americans agree that a survivor’s lack of money and steady income impact their decision when contemplating leaving an abusive situation.<sup>Error!</sup>
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- Domestic violence survivors say their abusers exhibit controlling behaviors related to money, such as preventing them from having money of their own (56 %) or hiding money from them (59%).<sup>1</sup>

## Hope

- The Allstate Foundation Economics Against Abuse Program focuses on providing knowledge and skills to women, specifically to support survivors of domestic violence in building financial safety and security.

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<sup>1</sup> Sara Plummer, Rutgers University School of Social Work, Center on Violence Against Women & Children, August 2008.

<sup>2</sup> The Allstate Foundation: "Crisis: Economics and Domestic Violence." June 2009.

<sup>3</sup> The United States Conference of Mayors: *A Status Report on Hunger and Homelessness in America's Cities*. December 1999.

<sup>4</sup> Charlene Baker, Sarah Cook, Fran Norris. "Domestic Violence and Housing Problems: A Contextual Analysis of Women's Help-Seeking, Received Informal Support, and Formal System Response," *Violence Against Women* 9, no. 7 (2003): 754-783.

<sup>5</sup> National Center on Women & Family Law: *Battered Women: The Facts*. 1996.

<sup>6</sup> American Institute on Domestic Violence Web site. <http://www.aidv-usa.com/statistics.htm>. 2001.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. General Accounting Office, Domestic Violence Prevalence and Implications for Employment Among Welfare Recipients 19 (Nov. 1998).

<sup>8</sup> The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Center for Injury Prevention and Control: *Costs of intimate partner violence against women in the United States*. April 2003.

<sup>9</sup> F. Rivara, et al. 2007. "Healthcare Utilization and Costs for Women with a History of Intimate Partner Violence." *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*. 32:89-96.

<sup>10</sup> Prudential Financial survey, 2006.