

# Myths About Family Violence

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- **Myth: *Family violence is rare...***
  - Although statistics on family violence are not precise, it's clear that millions of children, women and even men are abused physically by family members and other intimates.
- **Myth: *Family violence is confined to the lower classes...***
  - Reports from police records, victim services, and academic studies show domestic violence exists equally in every socioeconomic group, regardless of race or culture.
- **Myth: *Alcohol and drug abuse are the real causes of violence in the home...***
  - Because many male batterers also abuse alcohol and other drugs, it's easy to conclude that these substances may cause domestic violence. They apparently do increase the lethality of the violence, but they also offer the batterer another excuse to evade responsibility for his behavior. The abusive man -- and men are the abusers in the overwhelming majority of domestic violence incidents -- typically controls his actions, even when drunk or high, by choosing a time and place for the assaults to take place in private and go undetected. In addition, successful completion of a drug treatment program does not guarantee an end to battering. Domestic violence and substance abuse are two different problems that should be treated separately.
- **Myth: *Battered wives like being hit, otherwise they would leave...***
  - The most common response to battering-- "Why doesn't she just leave?"-- ignores economic and social realities facing many women. Shelters are often full, and family, friends, and the workplace are frequently less than fully supportive. Faced with rent and utility deposits, day care, health insurance, and other basic expenses, the woman may feel that she cannot support herself and her children. Moreover, in some instances, the woman may be increasing the chance of physical harm or even death if she leaves an abusive spouse.

**Adapted from: "Preventing Violence Against Women, Not Just a Women's Issue," National Crime Prevention Council, 1995.**