

Male couples report as much domestic violence as straight couples

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Nearly half of all men in a new study about intimate partner violence in male couples report being victims of abuse.

The study from the University of Michigan shows that in addition to universal stressors—finances, unemployment, drug [abuse](#)—that both heterosexual and male couples share, experiences of homophobia and other factors unique to male couples also predict abuse among them.

The study is one of the few that looks at [violence](#) from the perspective of both members of male couples (abuser and victim), said Rob Stephenson, U-M professor of nursing and director of the Center for Sexuality and Health Disparities.

Most studies examining [domestic violence](#) look at female victims in [heterosexual couples](#) or have only asked questions of one member of a male couple.

Nearly half (46 percent) of the 320 men (160 couples) in the study reported experiencing some form of [intimate partner violence](#) in the last year—physical and sexual violence, emotional abuse and controlling behavior.

"If you just looked at physical and [sexual violence](#) in male couples, it's about 25 to 30 percent, roughly the same as women," he said. "We're stuck in this mental representation of domestic violence as a female victim and a male perpetrator, and while that is very important, there are

other forms of domestic violence in all types of relationships."

The research is important because it debunks that stereotype, and accounts for controlling and isolating behaviors as well as physical abuse, Stephenson said.

Ultimately, violence links back to HIV prevention because men in abusive relationships may find it hard to negotiate for condom use or even when and how they have sex, Stephenson said. Nor is there good communication about HIV status and HIV prevention in abusive relationships.

His study makes a strong connection between internalized homophobia and violence, Stephenson said. A gay man who's struggling with his identity might lash out at his [partner](#) with physical or emotional abuse as a stress response behavior—similar to heterosexual couples, where an unemployed man lashes out at his female partner because he feels inadequate, he said.

Stephenson wants clinicians to start asking male couples about violence. Right now, the majority do not, he said. The study appears in the July edition of *American Journal of Men's Health*.

More information: Nicolas A Suarez et al. Dyadic Reporting of Intimate Partner Violence Among Male Couples in Three U.S. Cities, *American Journal of Men's Health* (2018). [DOI: 10.1177/1557988318774243](#)

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