

Intimate partner violence against women creates economic hardship, study finds

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Women who experience intimate partner violence, including physical, emotional, and controlling abuse, are more likely to suffer material hardship—the inability to purchase food, housing, utilities, medical care or other needs for a healthy life, according to a Rutgers-led study.

The study, in the journal *Violence Against Women*, found that experiencing intimate partner violence increases the probability that a woman will experience material hardship by 10-25 percent when factors such as ethnicity, education, mental health and drug use are accounted for. Analyses were based on nine years of longitudinal data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, which followed [5,000 women](#) after the birth of a child in 20 large cities in the United States. Data were collected by researchers at Princeton and Columbia Universities.

Physical abuse, including being slapped, kicked, hit or experiencing sexual abuse, had the strongest association with material hardship, such that women who experienced this form of abuse reported 25% greater likelihood of being unable to purchase basic necessary items and services. Controlling abuse, which happens when a partner controls the victim by not allowing her to work or taking her wages, had the second-strongest association, increasing the likelihood of reporting material hardship by approximately 13%.

The study reinforced the idea that there are more than just physical ramifications in an abusive relationship.

Lenna Nepomnyaschy, co-author and associate professor at Rutgers University-New Brunswick's School of Social Work, said, "Many people don't realize the extent of the negative effects domestic violence has on victims. Policy makers need to be aware of these [harmful effects](#) on the [economic stability](#) and security of vulnerable families when there are discussions about provision of safety net benefits, such as [food stamps](#), Medicaid, and other forms of public assistance."

She continued, "Our results are highly relevant in light of a new rule issued by the Trump administration and scheduled to go into effect October 15th, which would deny green cards for legal immigrants who receive any public assistance, including food stamps, Medicaid, and housing assistance, even when they are eligible for such programs. The most vulnerable women, those who are victims of domestic violence, poor, and immigrants, and their children would thus be the most negatively affected."

"Our study merges interpersonal [violence](#) and poverty research to make the case for an issue that people think of as a personal problem. Communities and families can be affected, with the possibility of electricity and water being shut off, eviction and food insecurity, which are all tremendously harmful for mothers and their children," said co-author Julia O'Connor, assistant professor at University of Central Florida and a graduate of the doctoral program at Rutgers University-New Brunswick's School of Social Work.

The study was based on a sample of 4,234 women, who were interviewed at the birth of their child and at four follow-up interviews over nine years, and who were involved in a relationship with either the biological father of the focal child or a new partner. Over the course of the study, approximately 40% of these women reported any material hardship and approximately 25% experienced some form of [intimate partner violence](#).

More information: Julia O'Connor et al, Intimate Partner Violence and Material Hardship Among Urban Mothers, *Violence Against Women* (2019). [DOI: 10.1177/1077801219854539](https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801219854539)

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