

Domestic Violence Among Utah Women: What Utahns Need to Know

RESEARCH SUMMARY

UTAH WOMEN & LEADERSHIP Project

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Domestic violence (DV) is a serious and widespread issue affecting women and families in Utah. Each year thousands of Utah women and girls are victims of domestic violence. DV encompasses intimate partner violence, child abuse, elder abuse, and abuse from roommates or other people in the home. DV is often presumed to refer only to physical violence; however, it includes sexual violence, psychological violence, and financial and emotional abuse. The defining component of domestic violence is the ongoing effort to maintain power and control over another person. There are lifelong negative impacts on survivors.

VIOLENCE IN UTAH

Domestic violence poses a threat to the safety and well-being of Utah women. An estimated 552,117 Utah women have experienced or will experience domestic violence during their lifetime. In 61% of cases, the perpetrator is a current or former husband or male live-in partner, while 27% of the time a former boyfriend is the abuser. 21% of Utah women who experience domestic violence have been in multiple abusive relationships. Because domestic violence is widely recognized as an underreported crime, these figures likely underestimate its true prevalence.

MARGINALIZED GROUPS

Rates of domestic violence (DV) are higher across marginalized communities. While White women experience DV at a lifetime rate of 34%, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander women and Native American women experience DV at dramatically higher rates—68% and 84%, respectively. Only Asian women experience DV at lower rates (25%). Nationally, LGBTIQ+ individuals are almost four times more likely to experience violence in all settings and six times more likely to be victims of violence within a close relationship. Individuals with a disability experience DV at a rate 40% higher than non-disabled individuals.

DEFINITION

“Domestic violence is the willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, and/or other abusive behavior as part of a systematic pattern of power and control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another. It includes physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence, and emotional abuse.”

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence

FATALITIES

Over half of female homicides in the U.S. are committed by current or former male intimate partners. In Utah, 23% of all homicides are related to intimate partner violence (IPV) or domestic violence (DV) incidents. Of the IPV victims, 86% were female. Homicides in rural communities are three times as likely to involve an intimate partner than in large cities. Many of these deaths could have been prevented. Over half of victims (54%) had a known IPV history reported to authorities, and homicide suspects had demonstrated increasing patterns of violence in advance of the incident. Victims who experience strangulation are 750% more likely to be victims of homicide.

KEY FACTS

- 1 in 3 Utah women will experience domestic violence.
- 1 in 3 adult homicides in Utah are domestic violence-related.
- Only 51% of Utahns agree domestic violence is a problem.

CHILDREN AND TEENS

Children and teens are affected by domestic violence within their household, as are neighbors and friends of the victim. Domestic violence committed in the presence of a child is considered to be child abuse in Utah, as it has long-term negative effects on the child (e.g., emotional, behavioral).

Women who experience domestic violence during their pregnancies, and the children they carry, experience negative health outcomes after birth. Women victims are more likely to be diagnosed with postpartum depression (40% vs. 12% for non-victims), and their children experience a spectrum of behavioral and cognitive challenges.

Dating violence is a form of domestic violence that often affects teenagers and includes physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. In Utah, an estimated 6% to 11% of girls experience dating violence. It can have negative long-term consequences such as substance abuse, poor mental health, and anti-social behavior. Moreover, teens are more likely to experience domestic violence as adults if they have previously experienced dating violence.



COSTS

Adult victims of domestic violence experience long-term negative health and economic consequences. Healthcare costs for those experiencing abuse are 42% higher than for non-abused women. Utah women who have been victims of domestic violence are more likely to have poor mental health days (33% vs. 15%), miss work or activities (22% vs. 13%), have difficulty concentrating or remembering (20% vs. 11%), binge drink (20% vs. 11%), smoke every day (13% vs. 4%), have difficulty doing errands alone (10% vs. 3%), and have poor health (6% vs. 2%) compared to Utah women who have not been victimized.

SERVICES & ADVOCACY

Domestic violence programs in Utah serve an estimated 334,340 people each year, or 38 people each hour. Utah ranks 16th out of the 52 for the total number of people served and 49th out of 52 for unmet requests. Despite agencies providing emergency shelter and most providing additional housing in hotels or motels, approximately 44% of Utah's unmet requests are for housing or shelter.

FROM RECOGNITION TO SUPPORT

Know the signs and reach out. Learn to recognize the warning signs of domestic violence. Help prevent and decrease domestic violence by checking in regularly with friends, family members, neighbors, and coworkers, asking caring questions, listening without judgment, and staying connected. Help them feel seen and supported.

Believe concerns or fears about a relationship. Take concerns about an unhealthy or abusive relationship seriously. Listen to understand what they are experiencing, validate their concerns, and ask what kind of help they want and will accept. Increase support for those experiencing domestic violence to stop generational cycles of abuse.

Increase awareness of resources. Become familiar with services, including emergency shelters, crisis hotlines, legal assistance, counseling, and safety planning. Share these resources with others and help connect survivors to trusted professionals and community organizations so they can access assistance when they are ready.

Mandate data reporting. Standardize domestic violence reporting by requiring law enforcement agencies to adopt consistent coding of domestic violence incidents and track demographic information, particularly regarding gender and race.

SUPPORTING SURVIVORS, PREVENTING VIOLENCE

Every number represents costs in human lives and, as such, anything other than reductions in rates of domestic violence constitutes failure. Preventing and otherwise reducing domestic violence rates will improve the health and well-being of women and families in Utah. See below for calls to action and resources that can support women and girls.

Data Sources: [UWLP Snapshot No. 46 \(2023\)](#), [UWLP White Paper No. 22 \(2026\)](#)

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- **Learn More:** Explore resources in the UWLP Domestic Violence [Resource Kit](#).
- **Review:** Find goals, perceptions, and community partners on the Domestic Violence Spoke [webpage](#).
- **Get Involved:** Connect to the grassroots initiative, [A Bolder Way Forward](#).
- **Take Action:** Help move the needle and discover additional [Calls to Action](#) for individuals, groups, organizations, and communities.



Participate in domestic violence awareness events throughout the year, and especially in October for National Domestic Violence Awareness Month.



Learn more about domestic violence by reading and reviewing this [resource kit](#). Share this information with others and encourage them to do the same.



Discover where you can find domestic violence [resources and support](#) in your community and share this information with others.

Learn more at www.utwomen.org

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