

25% - 40% of gay male relationships in the United States experience intimate partner abuse¹

IPA is an ongoing pattern of abuse that creates a sense of powerlessness and fear in one partner in order to maximize the sense of power and control in the other partner

The most common forms of abuse reported by gay men in San Francisco who were abused by their partners:

Physical abuse (80%) this includes punching, kicking, and slapping as well as non-consensual restraint and punishment

Sexual abuse (73%) this includes rape and coerced unprotected sex²

other forms of abuse are:

Emotional/Psychological abuse which includes excessive jealousy, insults, criticism, threats of harm, or withholding emotional support

Financial abuse – such as withholding money or access to credit

Intimate Partner Abuse and HIV

In mixed sero-status couples, where one partner is HIV-positive and one is HIV-negative, there exists the potential that the HIV-positive partner who is abusive will intentionally infect the HIV-negative partner; threats of this nature serve the same purpose as other threats of violence in establishing an environment of fear and intimidation.

13% of gay men surveyed in San Francisco report that their partners threatened them with HIV infection³

16% of male victims of same-sex intimate partner abuse felt coerced into having unprotected sex with their partners⁴

¹National Association of Community Anti-Violence Programs (2002). *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Domestic Violence in 2002*. New York: National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs.

²Merrill, G. S. & Wolfe, V.A. (2000). Battered Gay Men: An Exploration of Abuse, Help-Seeking, and Why They Stay. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 39(2), 1-30.

³Ibid.

⁴Relf, M. (2001). Battering and HIV in men who have sex with men: A critique and synthesis of the literature. *The Journal of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care*, 12(3), 41-48.

What about mutual combat?

20% of San Francisco gay men surveyed report being both a perpetrator and a victim of intimate partner abuse at different points in time⁵

an intimate relationship between two men may not 'double' the amount of violence but rather may indicate the likelihood that a physical response to physical abuse may be more likely

Why are some men abusive?

There is no single cause for abusive behavior;

there are several life-experiences that men who perpetrate intimate partner abuse tend to have in common :

surviving/witnessing domestic abuse as a child

... teaches a man to be abusive⁶

a conflictual or shaming relationship with the father

... undermines a man's sense of masculinity⁷

internalized homophobia

... tells him that he's not worthy of love⁸

and social hostility toward same-gender relationships

... undermines healthy partnerships by denying legal recognition and protection

These experiences create the potential for abuse in every relationship because they compromise a man's ability to cultivate healthy relationships and to take responsibility for his actions.

Violence is **always** a choice and men can begin to make different choices by unlearning what they have been led to believe about themselves and their partnerships. For support and treatment options contact your local LGBT community center or community mental health agency.

This information is provided for educational purposes only by
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⁵ Harms, B. (1995). *Domestic Violence in the Gay Male Community*. Unpublished master's thesis, San Francisco State University.

⁶ Farley, N. (1996). A Survey of Factors Contributing to Gay and Lesbian Domestic Violence.

In C. Renzetti, C. Miley (Eds.) *Violence in Gay and Lesbian Partnerships* (pp. 35-42). Binghamton, NY: Harrington Park Press.

⁷ Dutton, D. (1995). *The Batterer: A Psychological Profile*. New York: Basic Books.

⁸ Isense, R. (1997). *Reclaiming Your Life*. Boston: Alyson Publications