



Allstate Foundation Purple Purse Silent Weapon: Domestic Violence and Financial Abuse Survey Executive Summary

Amidst the discussions of public perception of domestic violence, a new survey sheds light on domestic violence and the role of financial abuse – one of the most powerful tactics used by an abuser to control survivors. Specifically, the survey explored how the issue of financial abuse in relationship to domestic violence ranks as a national problem and a “familiar” problem to Americans.

Commissioned by The Allstate Foundation and executed by FTI Consulting, the new survey called Silent Weapon: Domestic Violence and Financial Abuse finds that domestic violence is seen as a significant problem for the country. Specifically, Americans recognize **three in five Americans know someone who has been the victim of abuse and more than one in four have been abused themselves**. A substantial portion of these people know someone or have specifically experienced financial abuse. And, most Americans acknowledge that the news media and entertainment industries have a responsibility to increase and more accurately produce coverage around this topic.

However, there appears to be a limit to Americans’ understanding of the issues. Americans see financial abuse as the least common form of abuse and also the least likely to cause lasting negative effects for the survivor. Americans also acknowledge that they wouldn’t necessarily recognize the warning signs for a friend who is being abused or know what to do to help.

Considering this perspective from the public and given the data that shows that nearly eight in 10 (78 percent) of Americans have not heard about financial abuse as it related to domestic violence, it’s clear that there is room for additional conversation and engagement around this important issue.

Key findings include:

- **Two-thirds** of Americans believe that domestic violence is a serious problem, yet **just over one in three** have talked about it.
- Viewpoints on domestic violence range across gender and ethnicities. **70 percent** of Millennial women consider it a serious problem, compared to just **55 percent** of Millennial men. Hispanics are **twice as likely** (51 percent) than their White non-Hispanic counterparts (25 percent) to see domestic violence as a serious problem.
- **Nearly eight in 10** Americans (78 percent) say they have not heard much about financial abuse as it relates to domestic violence. Additionally, Americans think that financial abuse is the **least likely** (3 percent) form of abuse to be recognized by an outsider.
- **Sixty-five percent** of survey respondents do not believe that their family or friends would know if they were in a financially abusive relationship and **70 percent** can’t say they would know how to help them.
- Only **39 percent** of women have taken steps in their own relationship to protect themselves from financial abuse.
- Americans aged 69 or older, view issues related to financial abuse considerably more seriously than their Millennial counterparts including a **double-digit difference**



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when asked to correlate the distinctions of not allowing a partner to have access to funds (72 percent vs. 58 percent) or running up debt in their partner's name (73 percent vs. 55 percent).

- Most parents have not talked about domestic violence with their children. Nearly **40 percent** of Millennials say their parents never talked to them about domestic violence compared to a smaller percentage of Americans 69 or older including **23 percent** of Gen X'ers and **18 percent** of Baby Boomers.

Overview of findings include:

Domestic Violence Place on the Issues Agenda

- Americans rate domestic violence among the most serious problems facing the United States today. **Two-thirds** (66 percent) surveyed believe that DV is an “extremely” or “very” serious problem. This rates just behind drug and alcohol abuse (74 percent) and crime like robbery, assault or murder (71 percent) and identity theft (72 percent). Domestic violence is seen as more serious than poverty (65 percent), income inequality (50 percent), unequal pay for women (39 percent) and sexual harassment (36 percent).
- **One in three** (32 percent) Americans believe that domestic violence is an “extremely” or “very” serious problem *for people they know* – half the percentage that sees it as a serious problem for the country (66 percent).
- Domestic violence is seen as an issue much **more serious among those with low incomes and without a college education**. Households making less than \$25,000 differ greatly on the issue than those making more than \$100,000 (78 percent vs. 58 percent). And, the issue is seen as more serious by those without a college degree (70 percent) than by those with a degree (54 percent).
- Despite viewing domestic violence as a serious problem, Americans are not talking about the issue. **One in three** (37 percent) say they have discussed the issue with friends or family.
- Those who have been separated or divorced (55 percent) are talking about the domestic violence issue much more than married couples (32 percent) and single people (40 percent).

The Role of Financial Abuse

- **One in five** (22 percent) Americans say they know someone who has been the victim of financial abuse by their spouse or partner.
- **Eight percent** say they have personally been the victim of financial abuse. This abuse is most common among those who have been separated or divorced (37 percent), among single mothers (40 percent) and is higher among African-Americans (22 percent) than White non-Hispanics (11 percent) or Hispanics (13 percent).
- Respondents say financial abuse to be the **least likely** (3 percent) to be recognized by an outsider, and the **least understood** (42 percent) form of abuse when asked about the different types of abuse inherent to domestic violence (physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse).
- Less than **one in four** (39 percent) say they have taken steps to protect themselves from financial abuse, including just **one-third** (33 percent) of Millennial women and **less than half** (45 percent) of Hispanic women.



Discussions Between Parents and Teens

- **More than half** (54 percent) of parents have never discussed domestic violence with their children. This ranked far behind other topics that are more commonly discussed including safe driving (85 percent), avoiding alcohol and drugs (84 percent), dangers of smoking (80 percent), keeping personal finances secure (70 percent), healthy eating (70 percent) and sex education (68 percent).
- Moms are **more likely than dads** to talk about each issue with their children. **57 percent** of dads have never talked to their children about domestic violence.
- **Nearly seven in 10** (69 percent) parents think it would be helpful for schools to teach teenagers about how to protect themselves against financial abuse.
- Overall, most Americans agree (58 percent) that providing schools, parents and financial institutions with knowledge about financial abuse would be helpful in identifying, preventing and stopping the problem.

Domestic Violence in the Media

- **Most Americans** (58 percent) agree that the news media and entertainment industry have a responsibility to shed light on domestic violence, yet **3 in 4** believe (77 percent) they are not discussing it enough and are inaccurately portraying it (73 percent).
- **Most Americans** (53 percent) agree that the news media and entertainment industry has the power to generate discussion of the topic.

Technology's Role in the Discussion

- Americans are split on perceptions of how technology impacts safety and security when it comes to domestic violence and financial abuse. **A plurality** (40 percent) think that technology increases safety because it allows people to use resources, help and real-time access to financial information. Fewer (29 percent) believe that technology poses additional risk because of the potential for tracking, following through social media and easy manipulation of financial data.
- Tech-native Millennials are not any more comforted than the general public by technology as it relates to domestic violence and financial abuse with **39 percent** of Americans believing that technology leads to increases safety, compared to **35 percent** of Millennials.
- **Nearly half** of African-Americans (49 percent) and Hispanics (45 percent) think technology leads to increased safety, compared to **38 percent** of White non-Hispanics.

Gender and Generational Take on Domestic Violence and Financial Abuse

- Nearly **70 percent** of Millennial women view domestic violence as a serious issue facing the country, compared to just **55 percent** of Millennial men.
- **Nearly 40 percent** of Millennials say their parents talked to them about domestic violence, compared to a smaller percentage of older Americans, including **23 percent** of Gen X'ers and **18 percent** of Baby Boomers.
- **More** Millennial women (43 percent) than men (35 percent) said their parents have talked to them about domestic violence. Hispanic (54 percent) and African-American (40 percent) Millennials are **more likely** to have had the discussion with their parents than their White non-Hispanic counterparts (36 percent).



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- **More than half** of Americans (54 percent) say their parents have never talked to them about keeping their personal finances managed and secure. However, it varies across generations with **61 percent** of Millennials saying their parents have discussed it with them, compared to Gen X'ers (41 percent), Boomers (39 percent) and Americans aged 69 and older (34 percent).
- Only **one in three** (33 percent) Millennial women say they have taken steps in their own relationship to protect themselves from financial abuse.
- **More than half** of Millennials agree that pop culture can influence the discussion around domestic violence (55 percent).

Multicultural Audiences

- Domestic violence is seen as **more serious** by African-Americans (78 percent) and Hispanics (68 percent), than White non-Hispanics (64 percent). Among Hispanic women, **72 percent** rate the issue as serious, especially those aged 34 - 49 (78 percent) and those with household incomes under \$25,000 (80 percent).
- Hispanics (51 percent) and African Americans (49 percent) are **twice as likely** to see domestic violence as a serious problem among people they know than their White non-Hispanic counterparts (25 percent).
- Among Hispanic women (52 percent), those with the lowest incomes (69 percent) are **most aware** of this issue among people they know.
- Hispanic (58 percent) and African-American parents (52 percent) have discussed domestic violence **more frequently** than White non-Hispanic parents (43 percent).
- Nearly **seven in 10** (69 percent) of Hispanic women with children aged 16 and older have talked to their children about domestic violence.
- **One in twelve** (8 percent) say they have personally been the victim of financial abuse, **most common** among those who have been separated or divorced (37 percent), among single mothers (40 percent), and it is **higher** among African-Americans (22 percent) than White non-Hispanics (11 percent) or Hispanics (13 percent).
- African-Americans (51 percent) and Hispanics (46 percent) are talking about domestic violence **more** than White non-Hispanics (33 percent).
- When asked if physical, sexual, emotion and financial abuse were reasons for a victim to leave a dangerous relationship, only 39 percent of Hispanics believe financial abuse is "always" a reason to leave, making it the **least likely** reason Hispanics would leave. Physical abuse ranked No.1 with 88 percent indicating it is a reason to leave.

About The Allstate Foundation

Established in 1952, The Allstate Foundation is an independent, charitable organization made possible by subsidiaries of The Allstate Corporation (NYSE: ALL). Through partnerships with nonprofit organizations across the country, The Allstate Foundation brings the relationships, reputation and resources of Allstate to support innovative and lasting solutions that enhance people's well-being and prosperity. With a focus on teen safe driving and building financial independence for domestic violence survivors, The Allstate Foundation also promotes: safe and vital communities; tolerance, inclusion, and diversity; and economic empowerment. For more information, visit www.AllstateFoundation.org.



Survey Methodology

The Allstate Foundation Silent Weapon: Domestic Violence and Financial Abuse survey was conducted July 18-27, 2014 by FTI Consulting among a nationally representative sample of 1,020 American adults age 18+ with additional oversamples among 200 Americans age 18-33 ("Millennials"), 200 Hispanic Women age 18+, and 250 adults in the Chicago media market. The margin of error for the national sample is ± 3 percent at the 95 percent confidence interval. The survey was conducted using the web-enabled KnowledgePanel®, a probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. population. Initially, participants are chosen scientifically by a random selection of telephone numbers and residential addresses. Persons in selected households are then invited by telephone or by mail to participate in the web-enabled KnowledgePanel®. For those who agree to participate, but do not already have Internet access, GfK provides at no cost a laptop and ISP connection. People who already have computers and Internet service are permitted to participate using their own equipment. Panelists then receive unique log-in information for accessing surveys online, and then are sent emails throughout each month inviting them to participate in research.

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