



# THE IMPACT OF THE ECONOMY ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Although an economic downturn itself does not cause domestic violence, it can exacerbate the factors that contribute to domestic violence and reduce victims' ability to flee.

- Domestic violence is more than three times as likely to occur when couples are experiencing high levels of financial strain as when they are experiencing low levels of financial strain.<sup>1</sup>
- Women whose male partners experienced two or more periods of unemployment over a 5-year study were almost three times as likely to be victims of intimate violence as were women whose partners were in stable jobs.<sup>2</sup>
- Victims frequently report economic needs: In one study, 93% of victims requested help with economic issues and 61% needed three or more of the five kinds of economic help.<sup>3</sup>
- Two-thirds of people know someone who is or has been a victim of economic abuse.<sup>4</sup>
- Seventy-three percent of shelters attributed the rise in abuse to "financial issues." "Stress" and "job loss" (61% and 49%, respectively) were also frequently cited as causing the increase in victims seeking shelter.<sup>5</sup>
- Three out of four domestic violence shelters report an increase in women seeking assistance from abuse since September 2008.<sup>6</sup>
- The region with the largest reported increase in women seeking help as a result of domestic violence was the South (78%) followed by the Midwest (74%), the Northeast (72%), and the West (71%).<sup>7</sup>

"The economic climate may give batterers additional leverage when using emotional and financial abuse to control their partners." – Massachusetts advocate

*Domestic Violence Counts 08: A 24-hour census of domestic violence shelters and services across the United States.* The National Network to End Domestic Violence (Feb. 2009).

These circumstances create an increase in demand for services, just as emergency domestic violence service providers are struggling with fewer resources.

- According to the National Center for Victims of Crime, 92% of victim service providers have seen an increased demand in the last year, but 84% reported that cutbacks in funding were directly affecting their work.<sup>8</sup>
- In a 2008 survey, domestic violence service providers cited "not enough funding" as the number one reason they were unable to serve victims on the survey day.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Michael L. Benson & Greer Litton Fox, Department of Justice, NCJ 193434, *Economic Distress, Community Context and Intimate Violence: An Application and Extension of Social Disorganization Theory, Final Report* (2002).

<sup>2</sup> Michael L. Benson and Greer Litton Fox. *When Violence Hits Home: How Economics and Neighborhood Play a Role, Research in Brief*. NCJ 205004, September 2004, Research in Brief.

<sup>3</sup> Lyon, E., Lane, S. (2009). *Meeting Survivors' Needs: A Multi-State Study of Domestic Violence Shelter Experiences*. National Resource Center on Domestic Violence and UConn School of Social Work.

<sup>4</sup> Allstate Insurance Company (2009), Marketing Strategy, Measurement & Insights, Allstate Foundation Economics Against Abuse National Poll

<sup>5</sup> Lyon, E., Lane, S. (2009). *Meeting Survivors' Needs: A Multi-State Study of Domestic Violence Shelter Experiences*. National Resource Center on Domestic Violence and UConn School of Social Work.

<sup>6</sup> *Mary Kay's Truth About Abuse*. Mary Kay Inc. (May 12, 2009).

<sup>7</sup> *Mary Kay's Truth About Abuse*. Mary Kay Inc. (May 12, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> *Mary Kay's Truth About Abuse*. Mary Kay Inc. (May 12, 2009).

<sup>9</sup> National Center for Victims of Crime. *Crime and the Economy*. 2009

<sup>9</sup> *Domestic Violence Counts 08: A 24-hour census of domestic violence shelters and services across the United States*. The National Network to End Domestic Violence (Feb. 2009).