



CWHS

# Data Points

RESULTS FROM THE 2009 CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

Recent research has shown that domestic violence (DV) is associated with poverty. One study found that women who had recently experienced DV had greater economic hardships than women who had not experienced such violence.<sup>1</sup> Poverty and domestic violence can each produce adverse effects, such as poor mental health, and both can reduce a person's ability to cope with other stressors. Because both DV and poverty result in stress and social isolation, poor women in abusive relationships are especially at risk.<sup>2</sup>

A total of 9,903 women participated in the 2008 and 2009 California Women's Health Survey (CWHS), with 7,950 of those responding to the questions on their experi-

ences with DV as well as the questions on their access to food. Women age 18 and older were asked about experiencing any physical violence in the previous 12 months—whether an intimate partner threw something at them, pushed, kicked, beat, or threatened them with (or used) a knife or gun, or forced sex – and psychological violence, defined as having an intimate partner causing them to be frightened for the safety of themselves, their family, or friends; trying to control most or all of their daily activities; or following or spying on them.<sup>3</sup>

Respondents were also asked a series of questions from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's module<sup>4</sup> that measures food

## Food Insecurity among Female Victims of Intimate Partner Violence in California, 2008-2009

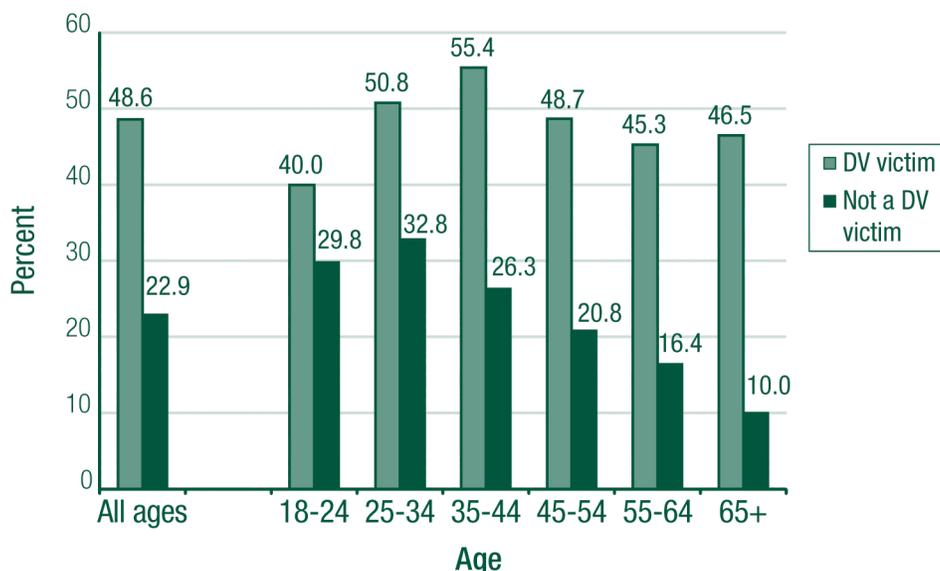
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### Public Health Message:

Women who experienced recent domestic violence (DV) were more than twice as likely to report that they were food insecure as women who had not experienced DV. Organizations providing services to victims of DV may be able to partner with food banks, the Women, Infants, and Children program, and other nutrition programs, as well as welfare and unemployment programs, to ensure that women experiencing DV are provided needed services.

Figure 1

### Food Insecurity Among California Women According to Domestic Violence Victimization, 2008-09



Source: California Women's Health Survey, 2008-09

## *Food Insecurity among Female Victims of Intimate Partner Violence in California, 2008-2009*

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insecurity. The module consists of six questions about respondents' food supply to determine if they were limited by not having enough money to afford nutritionally adequate and acceptable foods. For purposes of reporting here, each question that is answered affirmatively increases the respondent's food insecurity score. Women with zero or one positive response are rated as food secure and those with two to six positive responses are rated as food insecure. Responses were weighted in these analyses by age and race/ethnicity to reflect the 2000 California adult female population.

About 3.5 percent of women reported at least one incident of physical DV, and 6.6 percent said that they had experienced psychological DV in the previous 12 months. Overall, 7.5 percent of women said that they had been the victims of either physical or psychological DV in the previous 12 months.

CWHS results confirm the relationship between DV and poverty. Women who reported DV were more likely to report not having enough food to eat. About 26.6 percent of all respondents reported food insecurity. Women who had experienced either physical or psychological DV during the previous 12 months were more than twice as likely to be food insecure as women who had not experienced DV. Nearly half (48.6 percent) of those abused reported food insecurity, compared to 22.9 percent of women who reported no abuse. These differences were statistically significant.<sup>5</sup> For older women, the disparity in food insecurity among women who had experienced DV compared to women who had not experienced DV, was even greater. About 46.5 percent of DV victims ages 65 and older were food insecure, while among women of the same age who had not experienced DV, only 10 percent were food insecure. These differences were also statistically significant.

- 1 Tolman RM, Rosen D. Domestic violence in the lives of women receiving welfare. *Violence Against Women*. 2001;7(2):141–158.
- 2 Goodman LA, Smyth KF, Borges AM, Singer R. When crises collide: how intimate partner violence and poverty intersect to shape women's mental health and coping. *Trauma Violence Abuse*. 2009;10(4):306-329.
- 3 Questions concerning domestic violence were funded by the Office of Family Planning Branch of the California Department of Public Health.
- 4 Food security module was funded by the California Department of Social Services and the Network for a Healthy California Program of the California Department of Public Health.
- 5  $P < .0001$ , Chi square test

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