



## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ADVOCATES ARE HOUSING ADVOCATES

### **Domestic violence is one of the leading causes of homelessness for women and their children.**

“Victims of domestic violence struggle to find permanent housing after fleeing abusive relationships. Many have left in the middle of the night with nothing but the clothes on their backs, and now must entirely rebuild their lives. As long-term housing options become scarcer, victims are staying longer in emergency domestic violence shelters. As a result, shelters are frequently full and must turn families away.” Quoted from [National Network to End Domestic Violence](#)

- “Gender-based violence (GBV) is both a cause and consequence of homelessness. With almost 60 million American women having experienced sexual violence, physical violence, and/or stalking in their lifetime, GBV greatly increases their risk of housing and economic insecurity. At the same time, housing and economically insecure individuals are at greater risk of experiencing GBV. Economic exploitation and abuse are key features of GBV, posing even more barriers to survivors trying to gain independence and stability. The resulting poverty means survivors desperately need access to safe and affordable housing.” Quoted from [Sexual Violence Law Center and National Housing Law Project](#), 2024
- “When access to basic needs such as housing and safety are compromised, individuals can experience heightened risks of violence. Access to safe, affordable housing can be a critical protective factor from sexual violence. Advocates and survivors identify housing as a primary need of survivors and a critical component in survivors’ long-term safety and stability.” Quoted from the [NLIHC Advocate’s Guide](#), 2024
- On one day in 2023, 44,616 adult and child victims of domestic violence in the U.S. found refuge in emergency shelters, transitional housing, hotels, or other housing provided by local programs. 70% of the programs that participated in the national count provided emergency shelter services, and 52% provided support and advocacy related to housing or landlord concerns ([NNEDV](#), 2024).
  - As in previous years’ counts, the majority (54%) of unmet requests from survivors were for shelter and housing. 7,143 requests were unmet on one day in 2023 due to a lack of resources and funding for housing programs and services ([NNEDV](#), 2024).

- Victims of domestic violence often cannot find affordable housing or available shelter space, and having no place to go makes it extremely difficult to leave a housing situation where a person lives with an abuser ([National Domestic Violence Hotline](#)).
- Two of the most pressing concerns among abused women who are planning to or have recently left abusers are the need for safe housing and the financial resources to maintain safe housing ([Clough, Draughon, Njie-Carr, Rollins & Glass 2014](#)).
- 83% of domestic violence survivors entering shelters identified “finding housing I can afford” as a need. This was second only to “safety for myself” ([Lyon, Lane & Menard 2008](#)).
- Survivors report that, if a domestic violence shelter did not exist, the consequences would have been severe: becoming homelessness; losing everything (including children); taking desperate actions; or continued abuse/risk of death ([Lyon, Lane & Menard, 2008](#)).
- “Among homeless mothers with children, more than 80 percent previously experienced domestic violence.” Quoted from [National Center for Children in Poverty](#)
- “Women and men who experienced food or housing insecurity in a 12-month period had a significantly higher prevalence of rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner in that same time period, as compared to those who did not experience food or housing insecurity.” Quoted from [Prevent Connect](#)
- “People who are homeless experience disproportionate rates of sexual violence. In one [study](#), 78.3% of homeless women and 90% of homeless men surveyed had been subjected to rape, physical assault, and/or stalking at some point in their lifetimes.” Quoted from [National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 2023](#)
- “A study of 3,400 shelter residents in domestic violence programs across eight states found that housing is one of the main needs identified by survivors at the time of shelter entry; 84% participants reported that they needed help with finding affordable housing ([Lyon, Lane & Menard, 2008](#)).” Quoted from [US Family & Youth Services Bureau](#)

## Survivors of domestic violence face many barriers to safety.

**“Living in housing insecurity or the threat of unstable housing is extremely stressful and is counter to the safe, secure environments that survivors need to heal. This is true not just for the material stress but the emotional stress. When survivors are bogged down trying to figure out their housing situations, they have less time and energy to spend on healing. Financial desperation may push individuals into further traumatizing encounters, exploitative jobs, or place them at further risk for sexual harm.”** Quoted from the [National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 2023](#)

### Poor Credit & Ruined Rental Histories



Often caused by abusers running up credit card bills or lying about paying rent, utilities, childcare and other bills. This affects a survivors' ability to pass a landlord background check.

### Lack of Steady Employment



Caused when victims are forced to miss work as a result of violence, or are fired as a result of stalking and harassment that occurs at the workplace.

### Housing Discrimination



The most common cases of this occur when landlords evict victims from housing due to repeated calls to the police or property damage caused by the abuser.

### Loss of Subsidized or Other Affordable Housing



Caused by lease or voucher policy violations committed by the abuser.

Source: [Safe Housing Partnerships](#)

- Abusers commonly sabotage a victim's economic stability, making victims more vulnerable to homelessness. Many victims and survivors of domestic violence have trouble finding rental properties because they may have poor credit, rental, and employment histories as a result of their abuse ([Reif & Krisher, 2000](#))." Quoted from [National Network to End Domestic Violence](#)
- Housing discrimination against survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault is a fair housing issue. Many cities have nuisance and crime-free ordinances that lead to landlords punishing tenants experiencing abuse for alleged nuisance conduct or frequent calls for police to the property. These ordinances do not have exceptions for emergency calls made as a result of domestic violence, which often forces victims of domestic violence to choose between seeking safety or remaining housed ([National Women's Law Center, 2024](#)).
- Nuisance ordinances disproportionately target and harm Black survivors of domestic violence, often resulting in evictions and homelessness ([NLIHC Advocate's Guide, 2024](#)).
- "In 2005, [Congress](#) found almost 150 "documented eviction cases in the previous year where the tenant was evicted because of the domestic violence crimes committed against her," and that nearly 100 persons were "denied housing because of their status as victims of domestic violence." Another [study](#) in 2008, found that 65% of the test applicants looking for housing on behalf of a domestic violence survivor, were either refused housing entirely, or were offered more unfavorable lease terms and conditions than a non-victim." Quoted from [National Network to End Domestic Violence](#)

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