

Domestic Violence and Homelessness



When women flee domestic abuse, they are often forced to leave their homes, with nowhere else to turn. Landlords also sometimes turn victims of domestic violence out of their homes because of the violence against them. For years, advocates have known that domestic violence is a primary cause of homelessness for women and families. Studies from across the country confirm the connection between domestic violence and homelessness and suggest ways to end the cycle in which violence against women leads to life on the streets.

Trapped Between Violence and Homelessness

Housing instability and a lack of safe and affordable housing options are the most common reasons for experiencing domestic violence.

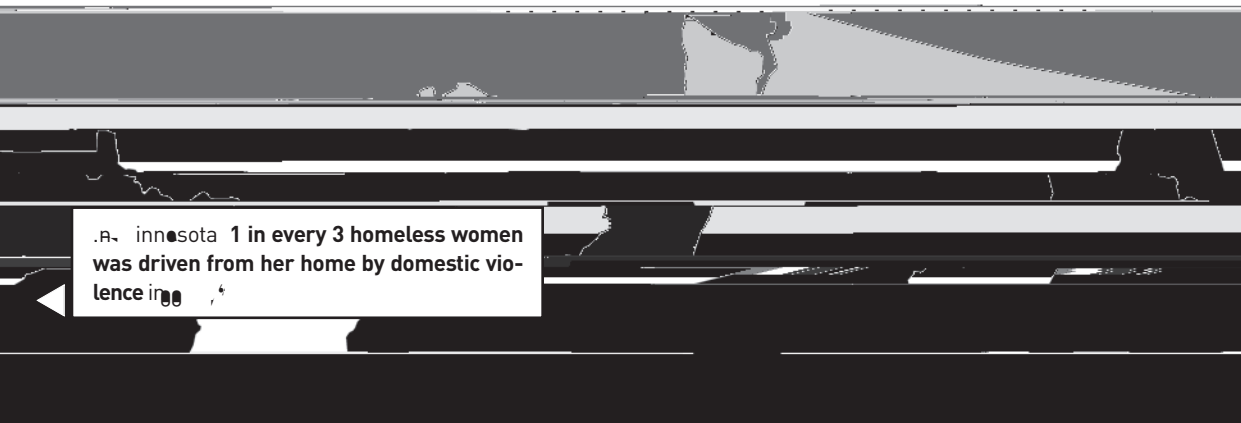
- Lack of alternative housing often leads women to stay in abusive relationships. In Minnesota, for instance, 46 percent of homeless women reported that they had previously stayed in abusive relationships because they had nowhere to go. In Alaska, 44 percent of homeless women reported that they stayed in an abusive relationship at some point in the past two years because they did not have other housing options.

- In addition to physical violence, abusers also typically use other strategies to exer-

cise power and control over their partners and to isolate their partners from support networks. As a result, a woman who has experienced domestic violence will often have little or no access to money and very few friends or family members to rely on if she flees a violent relationship.

- Many landlords have adopted policies, such as “zero tolerance for crime” policies, that penalize victims of domestic violence. These policies allow landlords to evict tenants when violence occurs in their homes, regardless





In Minnesota 1 in every 3 homeless women was driven from her home by domestic violence in 2014.

In Chicago 56 percent of women in homeless shelters reported they had been victims of domestic violence and 22 percent stated that domestic violence was the immediate cause of their homelessness.

In Missouri 27 percent of individuals in homeless shelters were survivors of domestic violence in 2014. Making domestic violence a primary cause of homelessness in the state.

A Florida study found that 46 percent of domestic violence survivors reported that they had experienced homelessness as a result of the violence. In 2014, 46 percent of survivors reported they had difficulty finding housing.

Some states most notably **Washington, Rhode Island, and North Carolina** have adopted broad laws specifically prohibiting housing discrimination against domestic violence victims. Most states prohibit a landlord at all, explicitly, contacting domestic violence victims using lists of a landlord that offer no protection in certain circumstances. Some states for

instance only prohibit contacting victims of domestic violence - some have obtained restraining orders against their abusers. While states are moving in the right direction these kinds of technicalities limit any state laws effectiveness in reducing domestic violence and subsequent homelessness.



If you are being abused and need immediate assistance call the **National Domestic Violence Hotline** at **(800) 799-SAFE**.

If you feel you have been discriminated against in housing because you are a victim of domestic violence contact the **ACLU Women's Rights Project** at www.aclu.org - or call us at 202-626-8800.

For more information about laws and policies that can protect domestic violence victims using lists contact the **ACLU Women's Rights Project** at www.aclu.org or visit our website at www.aclu.org.

Endnotes
