



# The Use of Children as a Tactic of Intimate Partner Violence and its Relationship to Survivors' Mental Health

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## Study Aim

Examine abusive partners' and ex-partners' use of survivors' children as an abuse tactic, and explore whether this form of IPV is detrimental to survivors' mental health



## What is Domestic Violence Housing First (DVHF)?

DVHF involves using mobile advocacy and/or flexible funding to help survivors of domestic violence obtain safe and stable housing.



## Method

In-person interviews in English or Spanish with 299 unstably housed DV survivors shortly after they sought services from a domestic violence agency.

Interviewees were asked about:

- ✓ abuse experienced in the prior six months, including the ways children were used as a form of IPV
- ✓ current depression, anxiety, and symptoms of PTSD

## Participant Sample

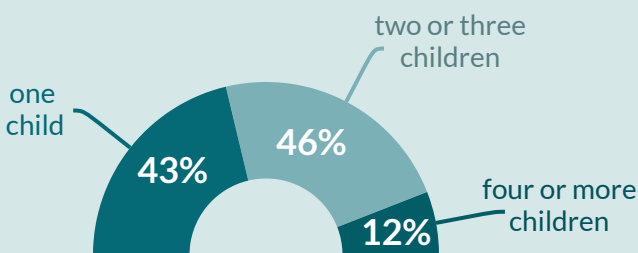
19-57 years old  
average age: 33

32% Hispanic/Latinx  
33% White, non-Hispanic  
15% Black  
5% US Indigenous  
21% More than one race/ethnicity



All participants were parents of minor children. The average age of children was 7.3 years

Participants reported they were raising:



92% of participants reported no longer being in a relationship with the abuser at the time of the interview

## Results

88% of participants reported that their abusers had used their children as a tactic to control, harm or monitor them within the prior six months

Participants reported abusers used children to:



Many also tried to turn the children against them (62%), or used the children to convince survivors to take them back and resume the relationship (45%).

After controlling for other forms of IPV, abusers' use of children as a tactic significantly predicted both increased anxiety and greater number of PTSD symptoms, but not depression in survivors.

Participants also reported experiencing a great deal of other forms of IPV in the prior six months: emotional abuse (96%), physical violence (92%), stalking (91%), and sexual abuse (52%).

## Conclusion

Results show the importance of focusing on the use of children as a common and injurious form of abuse used against IPV survivors.

## Contact Us

More information about DVHF:  
<https://wscadv.org/projects/domestic-violence-housing-first/>

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