



RESEARCH AT A GLANCE

InfoNet database reveals Illinois domestic violence victim demographics, trends

While physical abuse was the top primary presenting form of abuse for domestic violence victims seeking services between 1998 and 2005, victims seeking assistance for emotional abuse increased from 25 percent in 1998 to 41 percent in 2005, according to InfoNet, a web-based data collection and reporting system used by victim service providers in Illinois.

InfoNet is utilized by 70 domestic violence centers throughout the state that receive federal funding from the Illinois Coalition against Domestic Violence and Illinois Department of Human Services.

This *Research at a Glance* examines the characteristics of victims and offenders and types of abuse reported to InfoNet by the centers. Analyses of this data and the trends they reveal are useful in planning and policy making to address the needs of domestic violence victims across Illinois.

Victim demographics

Between 1998 and 2005, an annual average of 33,250 victims were served by domestic violence centers across Illinois. Victims served in these centers were mostly female, at an average of 94 percent per year. The typical victim served was

Table 1
Domestic violence victim demographics, 2005

	Number	Percentage
Gender		
Male	2,126	6%
Female	33,309	94%
Race		
White	16,704	49%
Black	9,934	29%
Hispanic	6,124	18%
Other	755	2%
Marital status		
Single	13,615	41%
Married	13,914	42%
Separated/divorced	4,993	15%
Widowed	499	1.5%
Common law	266	0.8%
Average age at first contact	34	Not applicable
Employment		
Full-time	12,067	37%
Part-time	5,001	16%
Unemployed	15,196	47%
Education		
Less than high school	7,321	24%
High school graduate	10,555	35%
Some college	8,816	29%
College degree or higher	3,813	13%

a white female, 34 years old, with less than a college degree. During the period studied, the percentage of victims who were married decreased from 47 percent in 1998 to 42 percent in 2005. Each year, an average of

45 percent of victims reported being unemployed at the time of service.

Race and ethnicity of victims served varied by region, but the proportions remained stable by region over time. Victims who were single increased

from 35 percent in 1998 to 41 percent in 2005.

Child demographics

Between 1998 and 2005, an annual average of 8,260 children were served at domestic violence centers across the state. The average age of children served was 6.5 years old. In 80 percent of cases, the custodial parent was also assisted by the center. In about 15 percent of the cases the victim and the abuser shared custody of the children. An average of 55 percent of children served by domestic violence centers reported having emotional, social, physical, or educational problems (*Figure 1*).

Offender demographics

Most offenders were current or former husbands or boyfriends of the victim (83 percent). In most cases, the race and ethnicity of the offender was the same as that of their victim. The average age of an offender was 35. Seven percent of offenders were female.

Referral source and types of abuse

Victims of domestic violence in Illinois were most often referred to centers by law enforcement officers, social service agencies, friends, and family (*Figure 2*). White victims were the most likely to be referred by police at 43 percent, while 35 percent of blacks were referred for services.

Nearly 25 percent of Asian victims sought assistance with no referral, while between 10 and 13 percent of other groups sought help without a referral.

Victims in Cook County were less likely to be referred by police or to

Figure 1
Problems reported on child domestic violence victims, 2005

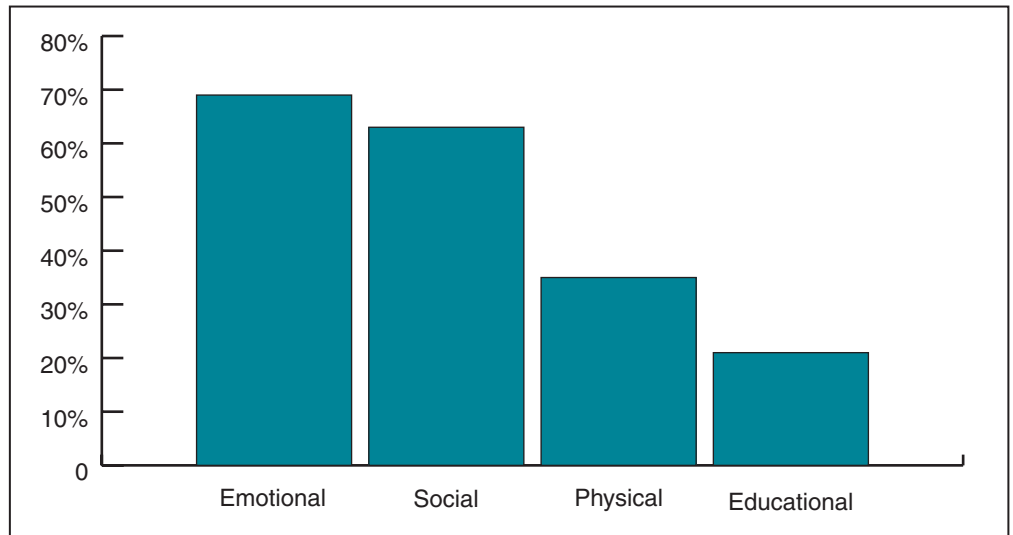
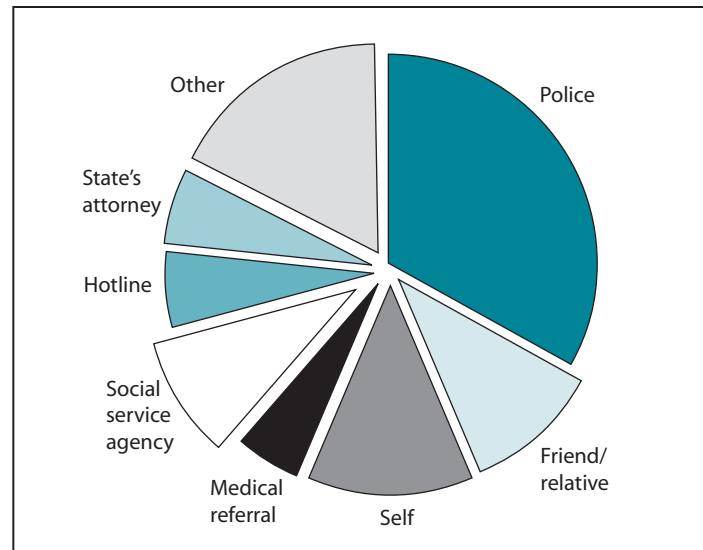


Figure 2
Domestic violence center referral sources, 2005



seek help on their own than those in other regions, and were more likely to be referred by a domestic violence hot line or legal system source. Victims served at domestic violence centers in rural counties were slightly more likely than victims in other to be referred to a program through the state's attorney's office.

Physical abuse was the primary presenting issue for most victims, followed by sexual and emotional abuse.

The proportion of victims seeking services for emotional abuse increased from 25 percent in 1998 to 41 percent in 2005. Emotional abuse includes berating, belittling, criticizing, name calling, threatening, and other non-physical forms of victimization.

Victims reported abuse primarily occurred in their home, though this decreased from 82 percent in 1998 to 70 percent in 2005.