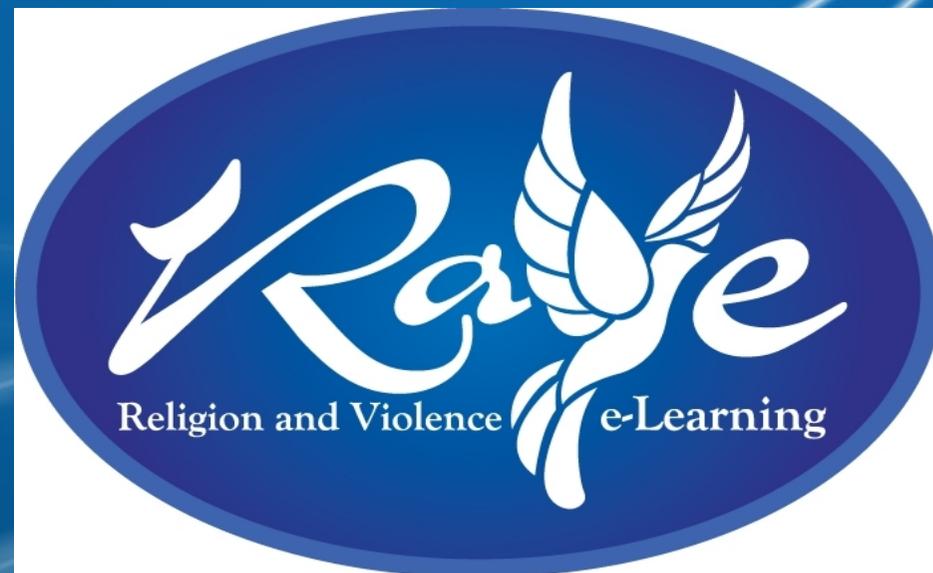


# Understanding the Data



# Gathering the data on family violence

Generally speaking, there are two types of data that are collected in order to help researchers better understand domestic violence.

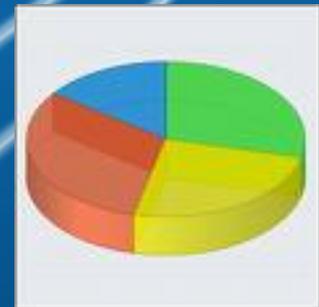
1. Quantitative data: simply put, quantitative data uses numbers of incidents (abuse experienced, violence perpetrated, help sought) and subjects these numbers to statistical analyses.
2. Qualitative data: this data is primarily collected through conversations with individuals and groups who voluntarily take part in research.

# Understanding the data

Statistics are an important part of the story of abuse worldwide, but trying to locate and obtain the research can be difficult. Once found, just trying to read and understand the documents that report statistics can be overwhelming. What do all the numbers mean? Why do studies have different results? Which studies should I believe?

Social scientists get their data on abuse from three basic sources:

1. clinical samples,
2. official statistics, and
3. random samples surveys.



# Clinical samples

Clinical samples are the most frequent source of information on domestic violence. Studies conducted by psychiatrists, psychologists and counselors who work with victims or survivors are examples of clinical research. Data that is collected in a clinical setting, or at a battered women's shelter, provides access to a wealth of information concerning individuals who have experienced violence at the hands of an intimate partner.

# Clinical samples

Data collected through clinical samples cannot be used to generalize to the entire population of battered women. Why? Certain groups of women who are battered may not seek professional help or go to a transition house when they try to leave an abusive relationship. As a result, clinical samples do not necessarily reflect the experiences of ALL battered women.

These samples also cannot give us an accurate estimate of how prevalent DV is in the general population. But data from these sources are an extremely important resource.

# Official statistics



Official statistics are collected in many countries around the world. Many nations, like Canada, have a specialized government department responsible for Census Data, which sometimes includes the collection of additional information using random sample surveys.

Law enforcement officials and the courts also compile statistics. Commensurate with the establishment of mandatory reporting laws for suspected cases of child abuse and neglect, came the official reporting of these cases. As one might guess, however, not all cases are reported, and the data that is reported is likely to be biased in a number of respects, not the least amongst the poor and those of particular racial or ethnic categories. Put another way, those with less financial resources are more likely to be suspected of abuse than are the middle class or the wealthy and thus more likely to be reported.

# Official statistics

## Advantages:

- Data is collected in highly controlled ways;
- Government departments, with sizeable budgets to carry out this work, ensure that the information collected can be compared across cases and generalized to the population of interest.

## Disadvantages:

- Often the specific questions that researchers are interested in are not asked;
- There are no mandatory reporting laws for cases of wife/partner abuse.

# Random sample surveys

Random sample surveys provide a snapshot of a particular population at a particular point in time. Given the cost and time of conducting a large survey using social science techniques to collect and analyze the data, the actual number of questions posed to each individual is quite small. However when a large enough random sample of a population of interest is surveyed, the researcher can generalize the results of her survey back to the entire population of interest.



# Random sample surveys



## Advantages:

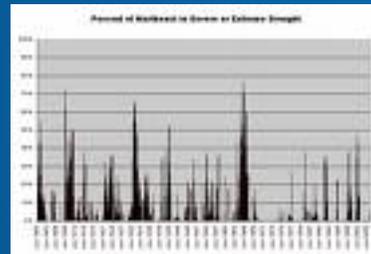
- Comparability across participants;
- Results can be generalized back to the population of interest.

## Disadvantages:

- Very costly to conduct, particularly for a large sample;
- The size of the sample generally means that very few questions are asked of each survey participant.

# Statistical data

Statistics on the nature and prevalence of domestic violence help us to see how common physical, sexual and other types of abuse are around the globe.



[Click here to see the RAVE Project's compilation of "violence around the world"](#) and then click on a country of interest to read their recent statistics on domestic violence.

# Narrative accounts

Statistics only tell part of the story of family violence. They are like a skeleton - revealing only the bare bones of the information we need to more fully understand abuse. Narrative accounts (quantitative data) of the lives of ordinary men and women give context to the statistics, enabling us to visualize real people living in specific places living amidst very real problems in their lives.



[Click here to listen to some of the women who were part of our research program on women and the church.](#)

# The reality of abuse

Taken together, quantitative and qualitative data provide both a snapshot of the prevalence of domestic violence among a population or around the world as well as the depth of suffering and the human cost involved.



# Things to consider . . .

- As a pastor, have you considered how many women sitting in the pew on Sunday morning in your church have reason to fear the man to whom they are married?
- How would the pre-marital counseling classes you offer change if you took very seriously the data on the prevalence and severity of intimate partner violence?
- Is there a message here for youth pastors?

