



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Domestic Violence Month Survey Finds:**

**STRESSED RELATIONSHIPS AND GROWING ANGER, ISOLATION DURING COVID-19  
POINT TO INCREASED RATES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

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34% of Adults Report Ever Having Experienced Domestic Violence, But 26% — and 36% of Gen Z and Millennials — Say They Have Experienced It Over The Last 18 Months Alone

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Prelude to Domestic Violence?  
Pandemic Challenges Tempers, Personal Relationships

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**COVID-19 Hard on the Mental State of All Americans But Younger Generation Hit Hardest:**

- 67% of Gen Z and Millennials — Compared to 42% of Gen X and Baby Boomers — Say Their State of Mind/Mental Health Has Gotten Worse During COVID-19
  - 65% of Gen Z and Millennials — Compared to 52% of Gen X and Baby Boomers — Say They Feel Much More Isolated and Alone Since the Pandemic
  - 55% of Gen Z and Millennials — Compared to 36% of Gen X and Baby Boomers — Say They Don't Know What To Do About Their Anger/Frustration Over COVID-19
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**65% of Adults Say Too Much Attention Given to COVID-19's Physical Effects...  
And Not Enough to Its Impact on Mental Health**

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Parents with Kids Under Age 18 Need Help:

- 59% of Parents with Kids at Home (vs. 39% w/o Kids at Home) Say Temper Has Gotten Worse During COVID
  - 31% (vs. 17% w/o Kids at Home) Have Started or Increased Use of Alcohol or Drugs
  - 35% (vs. 22% w/o Kids at Home) Say Increased Stress Makes Them More Fearful of Domestic Violence
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Domestic Violence Expert: “Social Distancing May Help Contain COVID-19’s Spread, But It’s Had The Opposite Effect on Domestic Abuse. Time for A National Conversation on Domestic Violence”

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**WASHINGTON, DC., October 7, 2021** – America is stressed — and lashing out.

Increased feelings of isolation, anger and stressed personal relationships as a result of COVID-19 have contributed to a broad range of abusive and frequently violent domestic behaviors including physical, emotional and verbal abuse, according to the results of a nationwide survey released here today by Saving Promise, one of the nation’s leading non-profits focused on domestic violence prevention. October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

Better than one in three adults (34%) report ever having personally experienced domestic violence — 26% (including 26% of men and 25% of women) in just the last 18 months alone. Interestingly, 36% of Gen Z and Millennials report having experienced some form of domestic violence over the last 18 months. Survey results are consistent with numerous recent studies finding a dramatic rise during COVID-19 of markers of domestic violence such as calls to domestic violence helplines and emergency room visits.

Verbal abuse (14%) was the most common form of abuse experienced over the last 18 months followed by emotional abuse (13%), financial abuse (9%), and physical abuse (5%).\*

“We are a society on edge,” said Saving Promise CEO L.Y. Marlow. “Over the last 18 months, we have spent countless hours learning about COVID-19 and how to keep our families safe. Unfortunately, there is no vaccine for the life-rending and sometimes fatal epidemic of domestic violence. Social distancing is hard when you are in an intimate relationship with the very person who may do you harm.”

The 2021 Saving Promise Survey on Domestic Violence and COVID-19 was designed to identify and explore the mental, physical, and emotional effects of the pandemic as it relates to the potential for domestic violence.

The survey was conducted from September 3 to 6, 2021 by ENGINE Insights among a sample of 1,002 adults 18 years of age and older, comprised of 501 men and 501 women. The online CARAVAN® omnibus study is conducted three times a week among a demographically representative U.S. sample of adults. Completed interviews are weighted by five variables: age, sex, geographic region, race and education to ensure accurate representation of the total U.S. population, 18 years of age and older. The margin of error for a sample size of 1,002 adults is +/- 3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.

### **A One Size Fits All Problem**

The pandemic has been a shared national stressor.

For example, reports of some form of abuse over the last 18 months ranged from 21% in the Northeast and West to 30% in the South and was reported by 24% of Whites, 26% of Blacks and 28% of Hispanics. Similarly, 53% of Females and 50% of Males said their mental health has gotten worse over the last 18 months, as did 48% of Whites, 52% of Blacks and 60% of Hispanics.

“We were struck by the consistency of response across major demographic factors like gender, region, and race,” said Richard Tomasco, Vice President at ENGINE Insights. “No group has been spared the emotional effects of COVID-19. It has been a collective pain point.”

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\*For purposes of the survey, domestic violence was defined as violence or other abuse in a domestic setting such as marriage or cohabitation. Broadly speaking, domestic violence can involve violence against or abuse of children, parents or the elderly and can include physical, emotional, financial, or sexual abuse.

One measure of the impact and pervasiveness of COVID-19's emotional effects are that 65% of respondents agree that too much attention has been given to COVID-19's physical effects and not enough to its impact on mental health.

### **Younger Generations Hit Hardest**

The survey found both abuse and stress-wise, COVID-19 is taking a heavy toll on young adults.

Better than one-third (36%) of Gen Z and Millennials report having personally experienced some form of abuse over the last 18 months. That compares to 19% of Gen X and Baby Boomers \*\*

Two in three (67%) Gen Z and Millennials agree that their state of mind/mental health has declined over the last 18 months. That compares with 42% of Gen X and Baby Boomers.

Similarly, 65% of Gen Z and Millennials say they feel much more isolated and alone since the pandemic (compared to 52% of Gen X and Baby Boomers). Fifty-five percent of Gen Z and Millennials say they don't know what to do about their anger/frustration over COVID-19. That compares to 36% of Gen X and Baby Boomers.

"It's clear that the pandemic has been significantly more challenging on the mental health of younger generations," Marlow said. "There may be a number of factors at work here. Social distancing is harder to do with younger people who thrive on connection, family finances are stretched, and many Millennials have small children at home which represents an additional levels of care, concern and challenge. Complicating matters is that younger generations have a relative lack of life experience to draw on and, as a result, may have fewer coping skills."

### **Timeouts for Parents?**

The pandemic has been particularly hard on parents with children under age 18 at home.

Just about 6 in 10 (59%) adults with kids at home agree their temper has gotten worse during COVID (vs. 39% without kids at home). Thirty-one percent of adults with kids at home said they have started or increased their use of alcohol or drugs (vs. 17% of respondents without kids at home). Perhaps most tellingly, 35% of adults with kids at home said that increased levels of stress have made them more fearful of domestic violence.\*\*\*

Interestingly, almost twice as many adults with kids at home (33%) reported having talked to a professional (e.g., psychologist/psychiatrist/therapist, social worker, counselor, or clergy) about their feelings related to COVID-19 than did respondents without kids in the house (17%).

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\*\*The margin of error for Gen Z/Millennials (ages 18-40, N=456) and Gen X/Baby Boomers (ages 41-75, N=505) was +/- 4.6% and +/- 4.4% respectively at a 95% confidence level.

\*\*\*The margin of error for respondents with and without children under age 18 in the household was +/- 5.6% and +/- 3.7% respectively at a 95% confidence level.

“For all its joys, parenting is stressful” Marlow said. “And in uncertain times when we are processing our own fears and insecurities and the prospect of an uncertain future, the need to be emotionally available and strong for our children can be a force multiplier stress-wise. Even parents need a time out every now and then.”

### **COVID-19: A Turning Point in the Struggle Against Domestic Violence?**

While more than two thirds of respondents (68%) feel like they would know what to say or do if they suspected a family member, friend, neighbor or colleague were the victim of domestic violence, it is important to note that among those who know someone close who experienced domestic violence, a large majority (79%) agree that they wish they could have done more to help.

A similar sentiment was evident among those who have experienced domestic violence themselves, with better than three in four (76%) wishing they had handled their own personal experience differently. Agreement with the statement is significantly higher among women (82%) than men (68%).

“The data suggest domestic violence may be a second, COVID-19- instigated pandemic,” Marlow said. “Isolation and social distancing may help contain COVID-19’s spread, but they’ve had the opposite effect on domestic abuse. It is time for a sustained national conversation and focus on domestic violence. If we fail to act, the effects of COVID-19 on our susceptibility to domestic violence may be more pervasive and debilitating than the disease itself.”

“On a personal level, as is said for other forms of terrorism, ‘if you see something, say something. Something. A question. An acknowledgement. A kind word. A referral for help. Silence is enabling,” Marlow said.

“The key to stemming the tide is creating a culture of deterrence, understanding and prevention. All too often abuse is a learned behavior or a cry for help. That is not an excuse. It is a sad statement of fact. It is up to us to speak out and work together to foster healthier relationships and short-circuit the instinct to violence.”

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Founded in 2007, [Saving Promise](#) is a Washington, D.C.-based non-profit that brings people together from all walks of life to prevent intimate partner violence and create a safer world for generations to come. It has used a wide variety of approaches to frame intimate partner violence as a public health issue. For a copy of the full posted questionnaire, please email Heather Emerson at [hemerson@tillerllc.com](mailto:hemerson@tillerllc.com).

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