

Accurate use of key statistics



Introduction

This is a quick reference guide to key statistics on violence against women in Australia for use by the media and other commentators including government officials, academics, sector leaders and community advocates. These stakeholders play a significant role in helping to shift the attitudes, norms and behaviours that enable, excuse or minimise the extent and impact of violence against women and children.

Statistics are often at the centre of discussions of violence against women. However, the data reflecting the reality of women's experiences of violence are complex and can easily be reported inaccurately due to time and other pressures.

This resource is aimed at ensuring that relevant statistics are interpreted with care and is based on the most reliable data available in the field.¹

It is also important to acknowledge the lives and experiences of the women and children affected by domestic violence and sexual assault, who are represented in this resource. Data tells a particular type of story: one that may seem depersonalised at times. While this resource highlights Australia's data on violence against women, it is important to recognise the individual stories of courage, hope and resilience that form the backdrop of these statistics.

Caution: Some people may find parts of this content confronting or distressing.

Recommended support services include: 1800 RESPECT – 1800 737 732, Lifeline – 13 11 14

Definitions

The following definitions are those used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2017):

Violence: "any incident involving the occurrence, attempt or threat of either physical or sexual assault experienced by a person since the age of 15."

Sexual violence: includes two key components: *sexual assault* (acts of a sexual nature carried out against a person's will, and which would be considered an offence under state and territory criminal law), and *sexual threat* (the threat of acts of a sexual nature that are made face-to-face where the person believes it was able to and likely to be carried out).

Intimate partner: "a current partner (living with), previous partner (has lived with), boyfriend/girlfriend/date and ex-boyfriend/ex-girlfriend (never lived with)."

Partner: a subset of 'intimate partner' that refers to "a person the respondent lives with, or lived with at some point, in a married or de facto relationship". In this context, the term 'partner' may also be described as a 'co-habiting partner'.

The key distinction is that the term 'intimate partner' includes dates and current and ex-boyfriends and girlfriends with whom the respondent has not lived.

¹ The most reliable prevalence data is, by necessity and methodology, focused on the whole Australian population. ANROWS has identified key limitations and possible solutions to data gaps related to priority populations in its publication, [Invisible women, invisible violence: Understanding and improving data on the experiences of domestic and family violence and sexual assault for diverse groups of women: State of knowledge paper](#).

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Uses and misuses of common statistics



ACCURATE STATEMENT	STATISTICAL BASIS	INACCURATE STATEMENT	WHY THIS IS INACCURATE
<p>Approximately one quarter of women in Australia have experienced at least one incident of violence by an intimate partner. ✓</p>	<p>Since the age of 15, 23 percent of women have experienced at least one incident of violence by an intimate partner or ex-partner they may or may not have been living with (ABS, 2017).</p>	<p>One in three women experience domestic violence. ✗</p>	<p>'One in three' is an accurate description of the proportion of women in Australia who have experienced at least one incident of violence by a perpetrator of any type (i.e. not necessarily a partner) (ABS, 2017).</p>
<p>Most victims/survivors of intimate partner violence are women. ✓</p>	<p>Women are almost three times more likely to have experienced violence by a partner since the age of 15.</p> <p>574 600 men reported experiencing intimate partner violence since the age of 15, compared to 1.6 million women (ABS, 2017).</p>	<p>Women experience more violence than men. ✗</p>	<p>If you examine all types of violence, men experience more incidents than women by any type of perpetrator, but women experience more violence from a partner.</p>
<p>Men and women tend to experience violence in different contexts. ✓</p>	<p>The majority of men reported that their most recent incident of physical assault by another man was perpetrated by a stranger. The location was most often a place of entertainment (28%) or an outside location (28%).</p> <p>In contrast, women stated that their most recent experience of physical assault by a man was someone that they knew (92%). In 65 percent of cases, this occurred while in their own home (ABS, 2017).</p>		<p>Most of the violence against men is perpetrated by other men (ABS, 2017).</p>
<p>On average, one woman a week is killed by her intimate partner. ✓</p>	<p>In the 10 years from mid-2002 to mid-2012, 488 women in Australia were killed by their intimate partner (Cussen & Bryant, 2015). A further study for the period mid-2012 to mid-2014 confirmed this (Bryant & Bricknell, 2017).</p>	<p>Two women a week are murdered by a partner. ✗</p>	<p>Higher rates have been reported using collections that include all violent deaths, not limited to homicide, and not limited to violence by an intimate partner (Bryant & Bricknell, 2017).</p>



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ACCURATE REPRESENTATION

INACCURATE REPRESENTATION

One in three women has experienced:

- *Physical violence* perpetrated by another person, irrespective of the type of relationship (30.5%. ABS, 2017).
- *Physical or sexual violence*, or both, perpetrated by a man they know (31.1%. ABS, 2017).



One in three women are victims of domestic violence.



Women are...

- ... more likely than men to experience violence by a partner (17% or 1.6 million women, compared to 6.1% or 547,600 of men. ABS, 2017).
- ... more likely than men to experience sexual assault (17% or 1.6 million women, compared to 4.3% or 384,800 men. ABS, 2017).
- ... most likely to experience physical assault in their home (for their most recent incident, 65% or 689,000 women. ABS, 2017).
- ... more likely than men to be killed by an intimate partner (79% or 99 of a total of 126 people killed by an intimate partner were women. Bryant & Bricknell, 2017).



Women are more likely than men to experience violence.

(This is inaccurate because one in two men, compared to one in three women, experience violence perpetrated by anyone, irrespective of the relationship. ABS, 2017)



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Useful statistics



PREVALENCE

Violence against women is a widespread problem in Australia.

Source: 2016 Personal Safety Survey (ABS, 2017)

Since the age of 15:

- **Approximately one in four women** (23% or 2.2 million) has **experienced at least one incident of violence by an intimate partner** (intimate partner = a current or previous partner with whom the respondent lives or has lived, or a current or former boyfriend, girlfriend or date with whom the respondent has not lived with).
- **One in six women** (17% or 1.6 million) has **experienced at least one incident of violence by a partner** (partner = a person whom the respondent lives with, or lived with at some point, in a married or de facto relationship).
- **Three in ten women** (30.5% or 2.85 million) have **experienced physical violence** (perpetrated by another person, irrespective of the type of relationship).
- **Approximately one in five women** (18% or 1.7 million) has **experienced sexual violence** (the occurrence, attempt or *threat* of sexual assault).
- **One in six women** (17% or 1.6 million) has **experienced an episode of stalking** (any unwanted contact or attention on more than one occasion, or multiple types of unwanted contact or behaviour experienced on one occasion, that could have caused fear or distress).
- **Approximately one in four women** (23% or 2.2 million) has **experienced emotional abuse by a partner**.

Across their lifetime:

- **One in two women** (53% or 5 million) has **experienced sexual harassment** (experienced or has been subjected to one or more selected behaviours which they found improper or unwanted, which made them feel uncomfortable, and/or were offensive due to their sexual nature).

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Compared to men, women are at greater risk of physical and sexual violence by a partner.

Source: 2016 Personal Safety Survey (ABS, 2017)

Since the age of 15:

- **Approximately one in four women** (23% or 2.2 million) compared to one in thirteen men (7.8% or 703,700) has **experienced at least one incident of violence by an intimate partner.**

Since the age of 15:

- **One in six women** (17% or 1.6 million) compared to one in sixteen men (6.1% or 547,600) has **experienced at least one incident of violence by a partner.**
- **Women accounted for three-quarters of the people** (17.3% or 1,625,000) who **experienced intimate partner violence since the age of 15**, compared to men who accounted for one-quarter (6.1% or 547,600) of those people.
- **Approximately one in five women** (18% or 1.7 million) compared to one in twenty men (4.7% or 428,800) has **experienced sexual violence.**



On average one woman a week in Australia is killed by an intimate partner.

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology National Homicide Monitoring Program (Cussen & Bryant, 2015).

In the 10 years from mid-2002 to mid-2012:

- **488 women** in Australia **were killed by an intimate partner.**
- **75 percent (488) of total victims (654) killed by an intimate partner were women.**

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology National Homicide Monitoring Program (Bryant & Bricknell, 2017).

In the two years from 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2014:

- **99 women** in Australia **were killed by an intimate partner.**
- **Approximately four in five (79% or 99) of total victims (126) killed by an intimate partner were women.**

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DYNAMICS

Women are much more likely to experience violence by someone they know than by a stranger.

Source: 2016 Personal Safety Survey (ABS, 2017)

- When asked about their most recent incident of physical assault by a male, **just over nine out of ten women** (92% or 977,600) **reported they were physically assaulted by a man they know.**
 - For those women, **the most common known perpetrator** (42%) **was a former partner.**
- Since the age of 15, **one in six women** (16% or 1.5 million) has **experienced sexual violence by a male they know.**
- When asked about their most recent incident of sexual assault, **just under 9 out of ten women** (87% or 553,700) **reported they were sexually assaulted by a man they know.**
 - For these women, **the most common known perpetrator was a former partner** (26% or 163,100).

Women often experience multiple incidents of violence across their lifetime.

Source: 2016 Personal Safety Survey (ABS, 2017)

Since the age of 15:

- 68 percent (931,800) of women who have experienced violence by a previous partner have experienced more than one incident of violence by that partner.
- 54 percent (149,600) of women who experience violence from a current partner have experienced more than one incident of violence by that partner.

Partner violence often occurs when women are pregnant.

Source: 2016 Personal Safety Survey (ABS, 2017)

- An estimated 187,800 women who have experienced violence by a current partner were pregnant at some stage during the relationship. Of these women, nearly one in five (18% or 34,500) experienced violence during their pregnancy.
- Nearly half (48% or 325,900) of women who have experienced violence by a previous partner and who were pregnant at some point in that relationship, experienced violence during their pregnancy.

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IMPACTS

Intimate partner violence is the greatest health risk factor (greater than smoking, alcohol and obesity) for women in their reproductive years.

Source: 2011 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Burden of Disease Study (Ayre et al. 2016; Webster, 2016)

- **Intimate partner violence contributes more to the burden of disease** (the impact of illness, disability and premature death) **of adult women** in their reproductive age (18-44 years) **than any other risk factor**. It contributes an estimated 5.1 percent of the burden for women aged 18-44 years.
- In 2010-12, approximately **41 percent of hospitalised assaults on women were perpetrated by an intimate partner**.

Violence against women and their children results in major personal, government, and business costs.

Source: The cost of violence against women and their children in Australia (KPMG, 2016)

- The total **annual cost of violence** against women and their children in Australia was **estimated to be \$22 billion in 2015-16**.

Source: 2015-16 Specialist homelessness services collection (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2017)

- In 2015-16, **38 percent of all people requesting assistance from specialist homelessness agencies were escaping domestic or family violence** (106,000 clients). This included 31,000 children aged under 15 and 66,000 women.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience high rates of violence with significant health impacts.

Source: 2014-15 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (ABS, 2016)

In the 12 months prior to the ABS survey, **one in seven Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women had experienced physical assault**. Of these, approximately a quarter indicated their most recent incident was **perpetrated by a partner they have lived with**.

Source: 2011 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Burden of Disease Study (Webster, 2016)

Intimate partner violence contributes an estimated **10.9 percent to burden of disease in Indigenous women** aged 18-44 years. **This is more than any other risk factor**.



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CHILDREN

Children often see or hear violence between their parents.

Source: 2016 Personal Safety Survey (ABS, 2017)

Since the age of 15:

- 50 percent (60,300) of women who had children in their care when they experienced violence by a *current* co-habiting partner reported that the children had seen or heard the violence.
- 68 percent (418,200) of women who had children in their care when they experienced violence by a *previous* co-habiting partner reported that the children had seen or heard the violence.
- Therefore, 65 percent of women who had children in their care when they experienced violence by a current or former partner, reported that the children had seen or heard the violence.

Domestic and family violence is a factor in many child protection cases.

Source: PATRICIA project (Humphreys & Healey, 2017; Slinky, Katz et al. 2017)

In the four years from July 2010 to June 2014, child protection services in New South Wales, Victoria, and Western Australia received more than 335,000 reports of child maltreatment concerns, 16 percent of which included a concern about domestic violence.

HELP SEEKING

Many women do not seek help about their experience of violence.

Source: 2016 Personal Safety Survey (ABS, 2017)

Of women who have experienced violence by a *current partner* since the age of 15:

- **Just over half** (54% or 149,700) **had sought advice or support** about the violence they experienced.
- **82 percent** (225,700) **had never contacted the police.**

Of women who have experienced violence by a *former partner* since the age of 15:

- **63 percent** (864,100) **had sought advice or support** about the violence they experienced.
- **65 percent** (888,100) **had never contacted the police.**

Nine out of ten women who experienced sexual assault by a male (87% or 553,900) did not contact the police about the most recent incident.

Of the 85,700 women who did contact the police, one quarter (27% or 23,500) reported that the perpetrator was charged.

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ANROWS acknowledges the traditional owners of the land across Australia on which we work and live. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders past, present, and future; and we value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture, and knowledge.

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