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Fact Sheet 4: Who experiences Family Violence?

Anyone, from any walk of life and circumstances, can experience family violence. Family violence does not only occur in intimate relationships. It happens most commonly when men exert control over women and children, but men are also subjected to family violence.

According to Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs) 2021-22 Personal Safety Survey:

An estimated 8 million Australians (41%) have experienced violence (physical and/or sexual) since the age of 15, including:

- 31% of women and 42% of men who have experienced physical violence
- 22% of women and 6.1% of men who have experienced sexual violence

WHO IS AFFECTED BY FAMILY VIOLENCE?

- Women
- Children
- Men
- People with disabilities
- Elderly
- People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (including people with temporary residency status)
- People in rural and remote communities
- People with mental health issues and/or substance misuse problems
- People from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- LGBTQIA+ people

The stats below will highlight Australian women are nearly twice more likely than men to experience violence from an intimate partner.

Women	Men
2 in 5 experienced violence	2 in 5 experienced violence
1 in 5 experienced sexual violence	1 in 16 experienced sexual violence
1 in 3 experienced physical violence	2 in 5 experienced physical violence
1 in 5 experienced stalking	1 in 15 experienced stalking

Childhood Abuse	
Women	Men
1 in 6 experienced childhood abuse	1 in 9 experienced childhood abuse
1 in 6 witnessed parental violence during childhood	1 in 9 witnessed parental violence during childhood
1 in 7 witnessed violence towards their mother	1 in 11 witnessed violence towards their mother
1 in 20 witnessed violence towards their father	1 in 27 witnessed violence towards their father
1 in 9 experienced sexual abuse	1 in 28 experienced sexual abuse
1 in 9 experienced physical abuse	1 in 12 experienced physical abuse

Intimate partner and family member violence	
Women	Men
1 in 4 experienced violence by an intimate partner or family member	1 in 8 experienced violence by an intimate partner or family member
1 in 12 experienced violence by a family member	1 in 17 experienced violence by a family member
1 in 4 experienced violence by an intimate partner	1 in 14 experienced violence by an intimate partner
1 in 11 experienced violence by a boyfriend, girlfriend, or date	1 in 44 experienced violence by a boyfriend, girlfriend, or date
1 in 6 experienced violence by a cohabiting partner violence	1 in 18 experienced violence by a cohabiting partner violence
1 in 4 experienced emotional abuse by a cohabiting partner	1 in 7 experienced emotional abuse by a cohabiting partner emotional abuse
1 in 6 experienced economic abuse by a cohabiting partner	1 in 13 experienced economic abuse by a cohabiting partner

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Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019 report [1] provides further explanation as to why this particular cohort experience family violence. Highlighted in this fact sheet are:

WOMEN FROM A CALD BACKGROUND EXPERIENCE

Women and children from migrant and refugee backgrounds may be affected by violence within families, kinship networks and community relationships. This can include:

- Human trafficking, slavery, and slavery-like offences (e.g., forced marriage, servile marriage, use of partner migration as a method of exploitation)
- Female genital mutilation (e.g., a practice that is a gender-based health and human rights violation and is deeply rooted in tradition and culture for non-medical reasons)
- Spiritual or religious abuse (e.g., a person being forced to attend religious activities against their wishes or being stopped from participating in the religious or cultural practice of their choice) (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2015))
- Forced Marriage
- Control behaviour due to visa status

MEN'S EXPERIENCE

Whilst it is clearly acknowledged that men can be victims of family violence, research shows that relatively few men in heterosexual relationships are victims of intimate partner violence. Family violence can have devastating effects and the diverse experiences of male victims may be like the effects that women experience

Men can also be victims of violence when they are children or as older people, and violence can be used against them by adolescent or adult children, siblings and other family members. The data suggests that responses seeking to address the highest risks to men (including homicide) should focus on the risk posed by parents, siblings and other family members, rather than by female intimate partners (Royal Commission into Family Violence, 2016).

PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY EXPERIENCE

There are limited national data available on the specific types of violence experienced by people with disability, however it is important to not people with disability can experience additional forms of family, domestic and sexual violence, such as reproductive control; forced or withheld medical treatment; and forced isolation or restraint. PSS 2016 data stats, indicate people with a disability are:

- Around 1.8 times as likely to have experienced violence from a current or previous cohabiting partner.
- More likely to have experienced emotional abuse from a current or previous partner and from multiple partners.
- 50% more likely have experienced to financial abuse.
- Deprived of basic needs such as food, shelter, sleep or assistive aid
- Insulted with the intention to cause shame or humiliation.
- Women experienced sexual violence (including assault and threats) from a current or previous partner.

SOCIOECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED PEOPLE

Although family, domestic and sexual violence can occur across all socioeconomic groups, studies consistently show that the risk of these forms of violence increases as financial stress and economic hardship increases. In addition, these forms of violence can also produce financial hardships for victim-survivors, particularly if there is loss of income and housing as a consequence of these forms of abuse.

According to the 2016 PSS, people living in the lowest socioeconomic areas more likely to have experienced physical and/or sexual violence or emotional abuse from a partner since the age of 15, compared with people living in the highest socioeconomic areas. For those living in lowest socioeconomic areas:

- 22% of women had experienced violence from a current or previous partner.
- 27% of women had experienced emotional abuse from a current or previous partner.
- 7.6% of men had experienced violence from a current or previous partner.
- 17% men had experienced emotional abuse from a current or previous partner.
- Individuals living in an area ranked in the lowest 10% were 1.5 times more likely to have experienced violence from a current or previous partner.
- Women living in the lowest socioeconomic areas were more likely to have experienced sexual violence from any perpetrator since the age of 15.
- For those living in the lowest socioeconomic areas, about 21% women had experienced sexual violence.
- In 2016–17, people living in the lowest socioeconomic areas were more than 7 times as likely to be hospitalised for assault by a spouse or domestic partner. About 2 in 5 hospitalisations for assault perpetrated by a spouse or domestic partner were of people living in the lowest socioeconomic areas

ELDER PEOPLE

Elder abuse is a serious public health problem that can cause a range of physical, psychological and financial harm to older people. Elder abuse can take the form of many types of abuse, including psychological or emotional abuse, financial abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect. Elder abuse is a single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person. A key aspect of the definition is that it occurs in relationships where there is 'an expectation of trust'. Such relationships include those with family members, friends, and some professionals such as paid carers. Elder abuse can occur within the context of family and domestic violence, and in institutional relationships, such as in aged care facilities and health-care services. Elder abuse is often under-reported, as victims can be reluctant to disclose ill-treatment by a family member; or where they are dependent on the abuser for care. Older people with cognitive impairment (for example, dementia) may also be unable to report the abuse. There is some evidence that elder abuse is linked to health status, with dejection shown to be predictive of decline in physical and mental health over a 3-year period.

References:

[1] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/domestic-violence/family-domestic-sexual-violence-australia-2019/contents/summary>

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