

Fact sheet 7 - Family violence statistics

This fact sheet provides data on family violence in Australia, with a particular focus on Victoria.

Family violence is a pattern of abusive behaviour used within family or family-like relationships to control and dominate. Family violence isn't limited to physical violence. The Victorian *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* also recognises emotional, financial, sexual or social abuse as family violence.

"Family violence" encompasses other commonly used terms such as domestic violence, intimate partner violence and spousal abuse.

Prevalence

There are high rates of family violence in Australia. Most cases involve men abusing their female partners.

Australian Bureau of Statistics' Personal Safety Survey 2012

The Personal Safety Survey interviewed 17,050 men and women aged 18 years and over about their experience of violence since the age of 15. Further analysis of the data was conducted in 2015.

- > One in four women in Australia (almost 2.2 million women) have experienced at least one incident of violence by a male intimate partner. This includes sexual and physical violence.
- > One in 10 women in Australia (873,000 or 10%) have experienced sexual violence by a male intimate partner.
- > One in 12 men in Australia (694,100 or 8%) have experienced violence by a female intimate partner. (Cox, 2015)

Victorian crime statistics

"Family incidents" are recorded by Victoria Police. They are defined as an incident attended by Victoria Police where a Risk Assessment and Risk Management Report (also known as an L17 form) was completed.

For the year ending 31 March 2016:

- > There were 76,529 family incidents, rising by 10% compared with the previous year.
- > 75% of affected family members (victims) were female, while 25% were male.
- > Women aged 20-44 years made up the majority of female victims. (Crime Statistics Agency, 2016)

Gender and family violence

In general, men and women experience violence differently.

- > Around 95% of victims of all types of violence – whether women or men – experience violence from a male perpetrator (Diemer, 2015).
- > A man is most likely to experience violence in a place of entertainment and a woman is most likely to experience violence in the home. Women are more likely to have experienced violence by a known person rather than a stranger. The reverse is true for men (Cox, 2015).
- > Men's violence against female partners is more likely to inflict severe injury and to result from attempts to control, coerce, intimidate and dominate than women's violence against male partners which is more likely to be in self-defense when the male partner is violent. Female victims are also more likely to live in fear before, during and after separation from a violent partner while male victims are less likely to be afraid or intimidated (Bagshaw & Chung, 2000).

Children and family violence

According to Victoria's *Family Violence Protection Act 2008*, family violence includes behaviour by a person that causes a child to hear, witness or otherwise be exposed to the effects of violence

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(e.g. property damage or a distressed family member) after the violence has occurred.

- > Over 400,000 women in Australia had experienced violence by a partner during pregnancy (Cox, 2015).
- > Close to 750,000 women had children in their care when they experienced violence by a former partner they lived with. More than three-quarters of these women (78%) said their children saw or heard the violence (Cox, 2015).

Homicide and family violence

Domestic homicide rates are high in Australia. In many homicides, there was a history of family violence.

National data

- > 488 women were killed by a current or former partner between 2002 and 2012. This equates to nearly one woman every week. This homicide rate has remained consistent over the ten-year period (Cussen & Bryant 2015).
- > Women made up 75% of the victims of intimate partner homicides between 2002 and 2012. A history of family violence was recorded in 44% of these homicides (Cussen & Bryant 2015).

Victorian data

- > The Coroners Court of Victoria identified 136 homicides that occurred within an intimate relationship between 2000 and 2010. Approximately three quarters (76%) of the intimate partner homicides resulted in the death of a female. There was a history of family violence in 60% of the intimate partner homicides (Walsh et al, 2012).

Family violence has wide-ranging impacts

- > From 2009 to 2014, 3,794 women aged 15 years and over attended Victorian hospitals with injuries from intimate partner violence, an average of 759 women per year. Eleven percent of these women were pregnant at the time (Cassell & Clapperton, 2015).
- > In Victoria, intimate partner violence contributes to more death, disability and illness in women aged 15 to 44 than any other

preventable risk factor, including smoking and obesity. Fifty-nine percent of the health impact experienced by women is anxiety and depression (VicHealth, 2004).

- > An analysis of 43 Australian and international studies showed there is strong evidence that exposure to intimate partner violence increases risk for depression, termination of pregnancy, and homicide (Lum On et al, 2016).
- > In 2013/14, 24% of all clients receiving assistance from homelessness agencies cited family violence as the main reason for homelessness. The majority of this group were women and children (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2014).
- > The combined health, administration and social welfare costs of violence against women is estimated at \$21.7 billion a year in Australia. Projections suggest that if no further action is taken to prevent violence against women, costs will accumulate to \$323.4 billion over a thirty year period from 2014-15 to 2044-45 (PwC, 2015).

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