

Vulnerable groups - Key Literature

Australia

Australian Bureau of Statistics, [4510.0 - Recorded Crime - Victims, Australia, 2021](#).

Victims of Domestic and Family Violence-Related Offences

This chapter presents experimental data about victims of selected Family and Domestic Violence (FDV) –related offences. Victims of selected offences have been determined to be FDV–related where the relationship of offender to victim, as stored on police recording systems, falls within a specified family or domestic relationship or where an FDV flag has been recorded, following a police investigation.

Key findings include:

- FDV-related homicide victims accounted for over a third of total homicide victims, and females accounted for over half of all FDV-related homicide victims.
- FDV-related assault is mostly likely to occur in the age range 25-34 years; and, across all states and territories, females are more likely than males to be victims – at least three times as likely, and up to six times more likely.
- FDV-related sexual assault accounted for over a third of total sexual assaults and there are six times as many female victims as male victims.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, [Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia: continuing the national story 2019](#).

This is primarily a data report to help inform government policies and plans and to assist in the planning and delivery of violence prevention and intervention programs. It builds on AIHW's inaugural *Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia 2018 report*. It presents new information on vulnerable groups, such as children and young women. It examines elder abuse in the context of family, domestic and sexual violence, and includes new data on telephone and web-based support services, community attitudes, sexual harassment and stalking. It also includes the latest data on homicides, child protection, hospitals and specialist homelessness services, while noting notable data gaps on various aspects of family, domestic and sexual violence and work underway to fill the gaps and develop new data sources.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, [Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia \(Report, 2018\)](#).

This report usefully compiles and summarises current statistics on family violence, domestic violence and sexual violence from multiple sources. Its key points are:

- > women are at greater risk of family, domestic and sexual violence;
- > some groups of women are more vulnerable to all three types of violence (in particular, women who are Indigenous, young, pregnant, separating from a partner or experiencing financial hardship and women with disability);
- > children are often exposed to the violence;
- > the three types of violence are leading causes of homelessness and adverse health consequences for women and create significant financial cost; and
- > family violence is worse for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The report also identifies important gaps in the current research on family, domestic and sexual violence. No or limited data is available on:

- > children's experiences, including attitudes, prevalence, severity, frequency, impacts and outcomes of these forms of violence;
- > specific at-risk population groups, including Indigenous Australians, people with disability, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people, including those in same-sex relationships;
- > the effect of known risk factors, such as socioeconomic status, employment, income and geographical location;
- > services and responses that victims and perpetrators receive, including specialist services, mainstream services and police and justice responses;
- > pathways, impacts and outcomes for victims and perpetrators; and
- > the evaluation of programs and interventions.

Bagshaw, Dale, and Donna Chung, *Women, Men and Domestic Violence* (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (Cth) and University of South Australia, 2000).

Discusses research over the past two decades in Australia and notes it has shown that violence generally, and particularly domestic violence, is mainly carried out by men.(p1) While there is evidence that both men and women are abusive in domestic relationships, most data show that men are more likely than women to be violent towards their partners. It reviews the findings of research and notes that these differ greatly according to the way the research is done, but they clearly show that the nature and results of men's violence are different to that of women's violence in a number of significant ways. In particular: men's violence is more severe, and more likely to inflict severe injury; women are more likely to be killed by current or former male partners than by anyone else; and less than 10% of Australian male homicides are carried out by an intimate partner. When women do kill their male partners, there is a history of domestic violence in more than 70% of cases.' (p1)

Specifically in relation to female perpetrators of domestic violence, the authors note on p13 that 'Although there is some evidence that both men and women engage in abusive behaviour in heterosexual relationships, the nature and consequence of women's violence is not equivalent to men's violence [in a number of ways]', including severity, likelihood of being killed, and reasons for the violence.

Morgan, Anthony, Hayley Boxall and Rick Brown, *Targeting repeat domestic violence: Assessing short term risk of reoffending* (Australian Institute of Criminology Report No. 552 June 2018).

Report abstract:

Drawing on repeat victimisation studies, and analysing police data on domestic violence incidents, the current study examined the prevalence and correlates of short-term reoffending.

The results showed that a significant proportion of offenders reoffended in the weeks and months following a domestic violence incident. Individuals who reoffended more quickly were more likely to be involved in multiple incidents in a short period of time. Offenders with a history of domestic violence—particularly more frequent offending—and of breaching violence orders were more likely to reoffend. Most importantly, the risk of reoffending was cumulative, increasing with each subsequent incident.

The findings have important implications for police and other frontline agencies responding to domestic violence, demonstrating the importance of targeted, timely and graduated responses.

Salter, M., et al., *A deep wound under my heart": Constructions of complex trauma and implications for women's wellbeing and safety from violence* (ANROWS, 2020)

Complex trauma can be explained as "multiple, repeated forms of interpersonal victimisation and the resulting traumatic health problems and psychosocial challenges". This report aimed to (1) analyse how complex trauma experienced by women is constructed in public policy and practice at national, state and territory levels; (2) examine institutional responses to women's complex trauma in the mental health, alcohol and drugs, and sexual assault/domestic violence sectors in NSW and Queensland; (3) document how complex trauma is understood by women who have experienced it, as well as their encounters with agencies while seeking help; and (4) develop models of improved and collaborative responses to improve the wellbeing and safety of victims and their children.

Key results include:

- > 'References to complex trauma in public policy are typically brief and undefined', and '[t]he lack of shared terminology and understanding of complex trauma raises questions about the adequacy of current policy frameworks to address the multiple needs of people with experiences of complex trauma and the effects that varying understandings of the long-term impact of complex trauma may have on program and service delivery'.
- > Women who have experienced complex trauma often have multiple needs, but many services are funded only to deal with a particular issue or concern. Consequently, women are required to navigate multiple services and agencies so that their needs can be met.
- > 'Self-harm and suicidality are particularly stigmatised in service settings', and '[w]omen with experiences of complex trauma frequently encountered sexist and disparaging views about women's mental health, encapsulated in the common stereotype of the "crazy woman"'.
- > 'There is currently a lack of trauma-specialised services and professionals, and women's experiences of health care are typically segmented and uncoordinated.'
- > 'Successful criminal justice outcomes for women with experiences of complex trauma are rare'. None of the women interviewed for the study stated that 'the full extent of [their] victimisation had been prosecuted in the criminal justice system'.
- > 'There is widespread concern that the impact of trauma on parenting is not being addressed in the child protection system, resulting in late and punitive interventions.'
- > 'In family law matters, women are frequently not believed or supported when reporting abuse by an ex-partner and are often worse off financially and psychologically for their contact with the legal process.'
- > Best practices in service provision for people with experiences of complex trauma are set out on p. 9, and recommendations are specified on pp. 10-11.

International

**Drijber, Babette, Udo Reijnders and Manon Ceelen, 'Male Victims of Domestic Violence' (2013) 28(2)
Journal of Family Violence 173–178.**

This study conducted in the Netherlands involved 372 male victims of domestic violence. The participants completed an online questionnaire. The participants reported both physical and psychological abuse. Key findings included: Less than 32% of the victims spoke to the police about the violence and only 15% of the victims officially reported it; the reason reported for failing to talk to the police or report the domestic violence were fear of not being taken seriously (49%), shame (31%), or the belief the police cannot do anything (35%); and motives not to report the domestic violence were the belief the police would not take any action (41%), fear or aggravated violence (17%), or fear of revenge (19%) (p175).