

Young people

Young people's dating or intimate relationships may involve domestic and family violence in the form of **physical violence** by both male and female partners. However, young **women** [ABS PSS 2016] are more likely than young men in these circumstances to be physically injured or frightened by the violence, and the physical, mental and emotional harm experienced by young women is likely to be more serious and damaging [Flood & Fergus 2008]. Compared with the overall prevalence of violence against women, young women are the most likely to have experienced violence (around one in ten), and sexual harassment (around three in five) in the last 12 months [ABS PSS 2016]. Australian women aged 18 to 24 years experience higher rates of physical and **sexual violence** by their partners or former partners than **older** women; and, within that group, those aged 20 to 24 years experience the highest rate of homicide victimisation [Mouzos & Makkai 2004]. US research [Peters et al 2002] supports the observation that young women are at greatest **risk** of victimisation, indicating that the age bracket begins at 15 years. It also observes that young men (aged 16 – 24 years) are at greatest risk for perpetration, however men's age is not the sole determinant as the young women victims at highest risk are those in relationships with perpetrators who are somewhat older.

Young people's vulnerability to physical violence in dating or intimate relationships may be heightened by strong peer norms that encourage traditional gender roles and relations; inexperience; age difference in relationships; and a lack of access to specialised services for young people experiencing abuse. An American study [Peacock & Rothman 2001] of adolescent male perpetrators reveals a profile of individuals who have been victims of child abuse or **exposed to domestic and family violence**, who have experienced substance misuse, or have been influenced by negative attitudes towards women and the pressure to comply with peer norms.

Research also suggests that young people may be less likely to understand the complex aspects of violence and abuse in relationships, or the range or seriousness of the behaviours that it may involve. While reported intergenerational influences are not consistent or definitive, they draw attention to vulnerabilities to perpetration and victimisation in young people who grow up in homes where they are exposed to domestic and family violence [Indermaur 2001].

It is acknowledged by researchers in this context that **technology** in young people's lives may facilitate or increase their exposure to **sexual abuse** and other forms of domestic and family violence. For example, devices such as computers and smart phones may be used by the perpetrator in conjunction with platforms such as social networking sites and text messages to record sexual assaults, to make threats to distribute images or videos of the victim, or to distribute images or videos without the victim's consent [Bluett-Boyd et al 2013].