

# **Women's Experiences of Male Violence**

**Findings from the Australian  
Component of the International  
Violence Against Women Survey  
(IVAWS)**

**Jenny Mouzos  
Toni Makkai**

**Research and Public Policy Series**

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# Contents

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List of tables	ix
List of figures	xi
Acknowledgments	xiv
Glossary of terms	xv
Executive summary	1
Overall violence	2
Intimate partner violence	3
Non-partner violence	3
Childhood victimisation	4
Perceptions and reactions to violence	4
Methodological caveats	5
Chapter one: Introduction	7
Definitional issues: measuring violence against women	9
What do we mean by ‘violence’?	9
What do we mean by ‘violence against women’?	11
What is IVAWS?	11
Objectives of IVAWS	12
Focus of this report	13
Methodological issues	14
Chapter two: Prevalence and severity of violence	18
Occurrence of physical and sexual violence	18
IVAWS results	19
Physical violence	21
Sexual violence	24
Factors associated with physical and sexual violence	27
Age as a factor	28
Women from minority populations: Indigenous women and women from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB)	29

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Indigenous women	29
Women from non-English speaking backgrounds	31
Relationship status	33
Educational attainment	35
Labour force status	35
Severity of physical and sexual violence in the most recent incident	37
Physical injuries sustained	37
Type of injuries sustained	38
<b>Chapter three: Intimate partner violence, severity and correlates of victimisation</b>	<b>40</b>
Defining intimate partner violence	42
Measuring intimate partner violence	43
Any intimate partner violence	43
Current intimate partner violence	46
Previous intimate partner violence	50
Severity of intimate partner violence	52
Physical injuries sustained	53
Type of injuries sustained	54
Correlates of intimate partner victimisation	56
Socio-demographic factors	56
Other factors	58
Identifying risk factors for intimate partner violence	59
<b>Chapter four: Non-partner violence: prevalence, severity and correlates of victimisation</b>	<b>64</b>
Non-partner violence	65
Any non-partner violence	65
Violence by a relative	68

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Violence by any other known male	69
Violence by a stranger	70
Severity of non-partner violence	74
Physical injuries sustained	74
Type of injuries sustained	75
Correlates of non-partner victimisation	77
Characteristics of the most recent incident	77
Factors associated with non-partner violence	79
<b>Chapter five: Childhood victimisation and the cycle of violence</b>	<b>83</b>
Women's experiences of childhood victimisation	84
Childhood victimisation	85
Relationship between childhood victimisation and adult victimisation	86
<b>Chapter six: Victims' perceptions and reactions to violence</b>	<b>92</b>
Victims' perceptions of violence	92
Seriousness of violence	93
Identifying violence as a crime	96
Victims' reactions to violence	97
Seeking help outside of the criminal justice system	99
Seeking help from the criminal justice system	101
Reasons for not reporting to police	105
Summary	106
<b>Chapter seven: Concluding comments — where to from here?</b>	<b>109</b>
Summary of results: What do we now know about violence against women in Australia?	109
Overall violence	110
Intimate partner violence	110
Non-partner violence	111

---

Childhood victimisation	111
Perceptions and reactions to violence	111
Preventing violence against women: policy implications of IVAWS	112
Preventing the cycle of violence and fostering healthy relationships	112
Assisting women to escape the violence	113
Recognising and responding to violence as a crime	115
Areas for further research: where to from here?	116
References	119
Appendix 1: Methodology of IVAWS	131
Selection of the sample	131
Household selection method	131
Respondent selection method	132
Sample design	132
Selection and training of the interviewers	133
Structure of IVAWS	134
Pilot testing of the CATI questionnaire	134
Main fieldwork	135
Response rate	136
Description of the sample	138
Weighting	140
Person weights	141
Selection weighting — persons	141
Non-response adjusted weighting — persons	141
Post-stratification weighting — persons	142
Household weights	142
Appendix 2: Comparison between CSS, WSS and IVAWS	143



## List of tables

---

<b>Table 1:</b>	Women's experiences of different forms of physical violence	24
<b>Table 2:</b>	Women's experiences of different forms of sexual violence	26
<b>Table 3:</b>	Women's experiences of violence in the last 12 months by age group	29
<b>Table 4:</b>	Women's experiences of violence in the last 12 months by relationship status	34
<b>Table 5:</b>	Women's experiences of violence during the last 12 months by educational attainment	35
<b>Table 6:</b>	Women's experiences of violence during the last 12 months by combined household income	36
<b>Table 7:</b>	Women's experiences of different forms of physical and sexual intimate partner violence	46
<b>Table 8:</b>	Women's experiences of different forms of current intimate partner violence	50
<b>Table 9:</b>	Women's experiences of different forms of previous intimate partner violence	52
<b>Table 10:</b>	Women's experiences of current intimate partner violence during the previous 12 months, by the characteristics of the women and their current intimate partners	57
<b>Table 11:</b>	Risk factors for current intimate partner physical violence over the lifetime	62
<b>Table 12:</b>	Women's experiences of different forms of violence by any non-partner	67
<b>Table 13:</b>	Women's experiences of different forms of non-partner physical violence	72
<b>Table 14:</b>	Women's experiences of different forms of non-partner sexual violence	73
<b>Table 15:</b>	Women's experiences of non-partner violence during the previous 12 months by the characteristics of the women	81
<b>Table 16:</b>	Women's experiences of childhood victimisation and subsequent adult victimisation over the lifetime	89
<b>Table 17:</b>	Women who experienced intimate partner and non-partner violence by whether they contacted a specialised agency	100
<b>Table 18:</b>	Women who experienced intimate partner and non-partner violence by whether they ever talked to anyone about what happened	101

---

<b>Table 19:</b>	Reasons for not reporting to police by relationship of the victim to perpetrator	106
<b>Table 20:</b>	Ineligible contacts	136
<b>Table 21:</b>	Eligible contacts	137
<b>Table 22:</b>	Sample and population counts by region	139
<b>Table 23:</b>	Sample and population counts by age	139

## List of figures

---

<b>Figure 1:</b>	Women's experiences of violence	20
<b>Figure 2:</b>	Women's experiences of physical and/or sexual violence over their lifetime and in the last 12 months	21
<b>Figure 3:</b>	Women's experiences of physical and sexual violence in the last year, 5 years, over their lifetime	22
<b>Figure 4:</b>	Women's experiences of one or more types of violence over their lifetime	23
<b>Figure 5:</b>	Indigenous and non-Indigenous women's experiences of violence, 1 year and lifetime	31
<b>Figure 6:</b>	Non-English speaking background and English speaking background women's experiences of violence, 1 year and lifetime	32
<b>Figure 7:</b>	Women's experiences of violence during the last 12 months by relationship status	33
<b>Figure 8:</b>	Women's experiences of violence during the last 12 months by labour force status	36
<b>Figure 9:</b>	Women who experienced violence by whether they sustained any injuries in the most recent incident	37
<b>Figure 10:</b>	Women who experienced violence and whether they felt their life was in danger during the most recent incident	38
<b>Figure 11:</b>	Women's experiences of any intimate partner violence	44
<b>Figure 12:</b>	Women's experiences of one or more forms of violence by any intimate partner	45
<b>Figure 13:</b>	Women's experiences of current intimate partner violence	47
<b>Figure 14:</b>	Women's experiences of controlling behaviours by a current intimate partner	48
<b>Figure 15:</b>	Women's experiences of current intimate partner violence during the previous 12 months by controlling behaviours	49
<b>Figure 16:</b>	Women's experiences of previous intimate partner violence	51
<b>Figure 17:</b>	Women who experienced intimate partner violence by type of violence and whether they sustained injuries in the most recent incident by a current or former partner	54
<b>Figure 18:</b>	Women who were injured by an intimate partner by type of injuries sustained	55
<b>Figure 19:</b>	Women's experiences of current intimate partner violence in the past year, by their partner's use of alcohol and whether their partner is violent outside of the family	59
<b>Figure 20:</b>	Women's experiences of any non-partner violence	65

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<b>Figure 21:</b>	Women's experiences of one or more forms of any violence by a non-partner	66
<b>Figure 22:</b>	Women's experiences of violence by a relative	68
<b>Figure 23:</b>	Women's experiences of violence by a friend, acquaintance or work colleague	69
<b>Figure 24:</b>	Women's experiences of violence by a stranger	70
<b>Figure 25:</b>	Women who experienced non-partner violence by type of violence and whether they sustained injuries in the most recent incident	74
<b>Figure 26:</b>	Women who experienced non-partner violence by whether they sustained injuries during the most recent incident	75
<b>Figure 27:</b>	Women who were injured by a non-partner by type of injuries sustained	76
<b>Figure 28:</b>	Women who experienced non-partner violence by whether they felt their life was in danger during the most recent incident	77
<b>Figure 29:</b>	Location of the most recent incident of non-partner violence	78
<b>Figure 30:</b>	Number of males involved in the most recent incident of non-partner violence	79
<b>Figure 31:</b>	Women's experiences of childhood abuse	85
<b>Figure 32:</b>	Women's experiences of childhood sexual abuse by a perpetrator other than a parent	86
<b>Figure 33:</b>	Women's experiences of adult victimisation by victimisation in childhood	87
<b>Figure 34:</b>	Women's experiences of intimate partner violence by whether the children witnessed any incidents	90
<b>Figure 35:</b>	Seriousness of the most recent incident of violence by a current or former intimate partner	94
<b>Figure 36:</b>	Seriousness of the most recent incident of violence by any other male	95
<b>Figure 37:</b>	Seriousness of women's experiences of violence during childhood	95
<b>Figure 38:</b>	Women's perceptions of the most recent incident of violence by a current or former intimate partner	96
<b>Figure 39:</b>	Women's perceptions of the most recent incident of violence by any other male	97
<b>Figure 40:</b>	Women's experiences of any intimate partner violence by whether they reported the most recent incident to police	102

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<b>Figure 41:</b>	Women's experiences of any non-partner violence by whether they reported the most recent incident to police	103
<b>Figure 42:</b>	Women who reported most recent of violence to police by whether the offender was charged	103
<b>Figure 43:</b>	Women who reported the most recent incident to police by whether the charges lead to a conviction in court	104
<b>Figure 44:</b>	Women's level of satisfaction in the way the police handled the case	105
<b>Figure 45:</b>	Women's perceptions and reactions to the most recent incident of partner and non-partner violence	107
<b>Figure 46:</b>	Structure of the Australian component of IVAWS	134

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The authors accept full responsibility for the interpretations and analyses presented in this report.

### **Disclaimer**

This research paper does not necessarily reflect the policy position of the Australian Government.

## Glossary of terms

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<b>Age</b>	Age of the woman at the time of the survey.
<b>Any childhood abuse</b>	Refers to women who reported experiencing an incident of physical/sexual violence by a parent or sexual violence by a non-parent before the age of 16 years.
<b>Any intimate partner</b>	Refers to women who reported that they had a current or former intimate partner, including boyfriends, legally married spouses and de facto partners.
<b>Any violence</b>	Refers to women's experiences of one or more forms of physical and/or sexual violence.
<b>Children witnessing violence</b>	Refers to children witnessing an incident of partner violence against their mothers.
<b>Current intimate partner violence</b>	Refers to women who were in a current relationship at the time of the survey and reported experiencing violence from a current partner.
<b>Current relationship</b>	Refers to women who are either married, in a de facto relationship or have a boyfriend at the time of the survey.
<b>Drug facilitated sexual assault</b>	Refers to women who had a sexual act committed against them while they were under the influence of drugs that they were given without their knowledge, so that they were unable to give their consent.
<b>Educational attainment</b>	The highest level of qualification attained.
<b>Emotionally abusive and controlling behaviours</b>	Refers to the following behaviours from a current intimate partner: insisting on knowing her whereabouts, calling her names or putting her down, jealousy guarding her interactions with other males, limiting her access to family and friends, and damaging or destroying her property or possessions.
<b>Friend or acquaintance</b>	Includes a work colleague, neighbour, schoolmate, or someone else known quite well.
<b>Lifetime prevalence</b>	Since the age of 16 years.

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<b>Indigenous women</b>	Women who responded 'yes' to the question whether they are an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
<b>Marital status</b>	As reported by the women at the time of the survey.
<b>Most recent incident</b>	Refers to the most recent incident of violence experienced.
<b>Non-partner violence</b>	Refers to violence perpetrated by a male other than an intimate partner, such as a relative, a friend/acquaintance or a stranger.
<b>Parent</b>	Refers to own biological father/mother, any foster father/mother, or stepfather/mother or other male the mother lived with.
<b>Physical violence</b>	Includes both physical assaults, which refer to the use of physical force with the intent to harm or frighten a woman, and physical attempts or threats, which refers to the verbal, and/or physical intent to inflict harm which the woman believed was able and likely to be carried out.
<b>Prevalence</b>	Refers to the percentage of women who reported being victimised at least once during a specific period, such as during the previous 12 months or 5 years prior to the survey or over their lifetime.
<b>Previous intimate partner violence</b>	Refers to women who were previously married, or in a de facto relationship or had a boyfriend and who reported experiencing violence from a previous partner (within the relationship and/or after separation).
<b>Previous relationship</b>	Women who had been married, in a de facto relationship or had a boyfriend.
<b>Relative</b>	Includes a father, step-father, son, brother, uncle, cousin, or some other male relative.



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<b>Relative standard error</b>	The relative standard error of the estimate indicates the extent to which an estimate might have varied because a sample and not the entire population was surveyed.
<b>Sexual violence</b>	Includes any form of non-consensual or forced sexual activity or touching including rape. It is carried out against the woman's will using physical or threatened force, intimidation or coercion. Includes sexual touching.
<b>Stranger</b>	A stranger is a man that the woman did not see or recognise at the time of the incident.
<b>Women from English speaking backgrounds</b>	Refers to all women who did not identify as being from a non-English speaking background.
<b>Women from non-English speaking backgrounds</b>	Women who identified as being from a non-English speaking background.



## Executive summary

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## Executive summary

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The International Violence Against Women Survey (IVAWS) was conducted across Australia between December 2002 and June 2003. A total of 6,677 women aged between 18 and 69 years participated in the survey, and provided information on their experiences of physical and sexual violence. This report describes the type of violence (including threats of violence) by current and former intimate male partners, other known males, such as relatives, friends and acquaintances, and strangers. It also examines women's reported experiences of childhood violence, as well as their perceptions and reactions to the violence they experienced.

The IVAWS measures three distinctive types of violence against women:

- physical (including threats of physical violence);
- sexual (including unwanted sexual touching); and
- psychological (controlling behaviours, such as put downs, keeping track of whereabouts).

Some of the findings to arise from the analyses of the responses of women who participated in the IVAWS are as follows:

### *Overall violence*

In the past 12 months, 10 per cent of the women surveyed reported experiencing at least one incident of physical and/or sexual violence. They were more likely to report physical violence (8%) than sexual violence (4%).

Fifty-seven per cent of the women surveyed reported experiencing at least one incident of physical violence or sexual violence over their lifetime. They were more likely to experience physical violence (48%) rather than sexual violence (34%).

The most common form of physical violence during the lifetime was threats of physical harm (33%). However these were often accompanied by actual physical violence.

Sexual touching was the most common form of sexual violence (about a quarter over their lifetime, and three per cent during the last 12 months).

The risk of violence was found to vary based on a number of socio-demographic characteristics. These included:

- younger women reported higher levels of physical and sexual violence than older women;
- Indigenous women reported higher levels of physical violence during the lifetime compared to non-Indigenous women; and

- 
- women who were not in a current relationship reported higher levels of physical and sexual violence during the last 12 months compared to women who were in a current relationship.

### *Intimate partner violence*

Over a third of women who had a current or former intimate partner reported experiencing at least one form of violence during the lifetime. However, the levels of violence experienced from a former partner (36%) were much higher than from a current partner (10%). Women who experienced violence from former partners were also more likely to sustain injuries and feel that their lives were in danger.

The strongest risk factors for current intimate partner physical violence (9%) were associated with aspects of male behaviour. These were:

- drinking habits (gets drunk a couple of times a month or more);
- general levels of aggression (violent outside of the family); and
- controlling behaviour.

### *Non-partner violence*

Two out of five women surveyed reported that since the age of 16 years they had experienced at least one incident of physical/sexual violence from a male other than a partner (other relative, other known male or stranger; 7% in the past twelve months). Unlike intimate partner violence, where the women reported experiencing higher levels of physical than sexual violence, women who experienced non-partner violence reported similar levels of physical and sexual violence (27% respectively).

Of the three main categories of non-partners, women reported higher levels of violence from some other known male (23%), followed by a stranger (20%), and a relative (10%). A number of other differences in non-partner violence were also noted. These were:

- women who were victimised by a friend, acquaintance or work colleague reported higher levels of sexual violence than physical violence (18% versus 11%);
- few women were physically injured by non-partners during the most recent incidents of violence (16%). Incidents involving other relatives resulted in the highest proportion of injuries (29%);
- one in five women felt that their lives were in danger during the most recent incident of violence from non-partners; and
- women victimised by strangers reported higher levels of fear (30%) than women victimised by other relatives (23%) or other known males (15%).

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Like intimate partner violence, some groups of women in the IVAWS reported higher levels of non-partner violence. Young, single women or women who have boyfriends were most at risk of violence from a relative, friend, acquaintance, work colleague or stranger.

### *Childhood victimisation*

Overall, 29 per cent of women surveyed reported that they had experienced physical and/or sexual violence before the age of 16 years, with almost one in five experiencing this abuse by parents. Sixteen per cent of women reported sexual abuse by some other person (relative or some other male). Women who experienced abuse during childhood were one and a half times more likely to experience any violence in adulthood.

### *Perceptions and reactions to violence*

In addition to examining the level and type of violence experienced by the women who participated in the IVAWS, it is also important to add some context to the violence experienced. Women were asked about their perceptions of the most recent incident of intimate and non-partner violence. They were asked to consider the most recent incident in terms of its seriousness and whether they regarded it as a crime. A number of differences emerged:

- women who experienced violence in a former relationship or sexual violence by a parent or someone else in childhood were most likely to regard the experience as 'very serious';
- stranger perpetrated incidents were perceived as 'crimes' more often than incidents from known males (intimate partners, other relatives, friends or acquaintances); and
- one in ten victims of physical and/or sexual violence by current spouses and one in five victims of physical and/or sexual violence by boyfriends regarded the incident as a crime.

Women were also asked if they sought assistance from a specialised agency or contacted police. Very few women sought assistance from a specialised agency. They did however indicate that they had spoken to someone else, usually a friend or neighbour about what had happened to them.

Few women reported the most recent incident of physical and/or sexual violence to police. Fourteen per cent of these women had been victimised by an intimate partner and sixteen per cent of women victimised by any non-partner.

Incidents perpetrated by strangers were more likely than incidents by known males to be reported to the police (27% compared to 10%). While the reasons for not reporting to the

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police are varied, almost half of the women who did not report the incident thought that it was too minor to involve the police or judicial authorities. Overall, only four per cent of women who experienced intimate partner violence perceived the most recent incident to be 'very serious' and a crime, and reacted by contacting an agency and reporting the incident to police. For women who experienced non-partner violence, the figure is only two per cent.

### *Policy initiatives*

The analyses of the responses of the women who participated in the IVAWS suggest a number of avenues for policy in terms of intervention and prevention of violence against women. Future efforts could include:

- early interventions to reduce risks and harms associated with childhood abuse, and the prevention of intergenerational transmission of violence;
- targeting young persons with education on how to build healthy relationships;
- increasing assistance to women to escape conflict situations. This could include: increasing community awareness of the issue, information for women of their rights and available support, as well as a greater availability of support services;
- emphasising that violence is recognised and responded to as a crime; and
- innovations in the criminal justice system such as specialised courts for domestic/family violence.

### *Methodological caveats*

There are a number of methodological caveats, which may affect the results. As the IVAWS was a telephone survey, participation was limited to women living in households with telephones. As a result women who are homeless or living in group facilities or institutions or women who rely solely on a mobile phone and do not have a landline telephone were excluded.

The IVAWS sample has been weighted to represent all females aged between 18 and 69 in the population by age and geographic area. As the estimates are based on the sample and not the whole female population, they are subject to sampling variability. Estimates presented in the report with high relative standard errors should be used with caution.

Finally, as a voluntary survey women could and did refuse to participate. Of the 17,247 households that were contacted by telephone, 6,677 women were interviewed in the IVAWS resulting in an effective participation rate of 39 per cent. Although the sample has been weighted, it is possible that some unknown bias could be affecting the results.

## Chapter one: Introduction

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## Chapter One: Introduction

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It is generally acknowledged that the true extent of violence against women in Australia and elsewhere is unknown. While there are estimates, these are widely considered to underestimate the extent of victimisation. The factors that affect the estimates are as follows:

- most violence experienced by women occurs within the privacy of their own home and is less likely to come to the attention of others (Fineman & Mykitiuk 1994);
- even when the violence reaches the public realm, it is often viewed as less serious than violence that takes place outside of the home, between acquaintances and strangers (Cardarelli 1997);
- socio-cultural differences in terms of what is actually perceived and labelled as 'violence' mean that violence against women is not always acknowledged as a social problem, and more importantly, a problem that requires attention; and
- both administrative data collection systems and surveys are subject to a variety of biases, including a lack of comparability, that affect data on violence against women.

Despite the various limitations with developing national estimates two key findings have emerged from a range of research studies in this field. The first is that violence against women is 'more than an occasional, isolated incident ...' (Hanmer & Saunders 1993: 3). The second is that, the risk of victimisation is not the same for all women. The level of victimisation experienced by women varies based on their age, marital status, and most importantly, on the relationship, if any, that exists between themselves and the perpetrator of the violence (Mouzos 2003; Johnson 1996; Coumarelos & Allen 1998).

The most likely source of data on victimisation is from administrative police data files. However, violence against women is often not reported to police, leading others to conclude that such data represent only the 'tip of the iceberg' (Lievore 2003). Administrative collections rarely collect the level of detail surrounding the 'incident(s)' to enable more detailed analyses that could assist in effective crime prevention policies and initiatives (see Koss and Dinero 1989; Siegel & Williams 2003: 903). Lack of reliable data on the experiences of violence by women has hampered the formation of evidence led policy in this area.

As a result, in the last few decades, attention has shifted to understanding and documenting violence against women. The National Committee on Violence Against Women was convened in 1990 comprising representatives from Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments in Australia. This committee noted, 'it is impossible to provide a complete national profile of the number of women who are victims of violence' (1993: 1). In their report, they put forth a number of directions for action, including that Commonwealth agencies work together in developing an appropriate tool, which covers a range of indicators with respect to the levels of violence against women.

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In 1997, the Australian Government introduced the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence (PADV) initiative which is a national framework for responding to both short and long term effects of domestic violence in the Australian community. Partnerships implements a collaborative approach between jurisdictions at a practical and policy level. Additional funding for continuing Partnerships was provided in 1999, focusing on community awareness; prevention and early intervention with children who witness or are the victims of domestic violence; and grass roots projects to strengthen Indigenous community efforts to address family violence.<sup>1</sup>

Based on the experiences of countries such as the United States (Tjaden & Thoennes 1998; 2000; Straus & Gelles 1986), Canada (Statistics Canada 1993; Rodgers 1994; Johnson 1996) and New Zealand (Morris 1997), which had conducted nationally representative surveys, the first Australian survey of violence against women was conducted in 1996 (ABS 1996). While the results from this survey have been significant in increasing our knowledge base on violence against women, comparisons cannot be made between Australia and other countries.<sup>2</sup> To assess whether social reform policies are having an impact on the degree of violence experienced by women it is necessary to have ongoing monitoring over time to examine whether the level of physical and sexual victimisation of women has changed.

The Australian Government has invested \$23.2 million through the establishment of the *National Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault* to reduce and prevent sexual assault. One of the objectives of the Initiative is to develop an information strategy that:

- facilitates access to national policy relevant data on sexual assault;
- informs effective responses in the prevention of sexual assault; and
- establishes a comprehensive evidence base incorporating both research and practice.

To this end, the Australian Government's Office of the Status of Women funded Australia's participation in the first International Violence Against Women Survey (IVAWS), as well as another national survey on violence — the ABS Personal Safety Survey — due to run in 2005/2006. These initiatives will complement existing data sources on violence against women and assist in the creation of evidence led policies. This report therefore seeks to inform the strategy by providing the most up to date information on physical and sexual violence experienced by over 6000 women in Australia.

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## Definitional issues: measuring violence against women

As many researchers in the field will attest, measuring violence is not straightforward (Lobmann et al. 2003; Stanko 1990). Considerable debate occurs because researchers have failed to agree on such basic matters as a definition:

Researchers have used terms related to violence against women in different ways and have used different terms to describe the same acts. Not surprisingly, these inconsistencies have contributed to varied conclusions about the incidence and prevalence of violence against women (Saltzman, Fanslow, McMahon & Shelley 1999: 1).

Ambiguity exists in terms of 'what do we mean by violence against women'? This question can be divided into two parts: (1) what do we mean by 'violence'; and (2) what do we mean by 'violence *against women*'.

### *What do we mean by 'violence'?*

In the narrow sense, violence is generally understood as an incident in which an individual intentionally injures another person. However, such a narrow definition does not include the 'non-contact' types of violence, such as psychological and emotional violence or even threats to use violence. In order to obtain a complete picture of the manifestations of violence experienced by women in Australia (and elsewhere), it is important that both actual violence and threats of violence are included in the measurement of violence.

The IVAWS measures three distinctive types of violence against women (see the glossary of terms at the beginning of this report):

1. physical (including threats of physical violence);
2. sexual (including unwanted sexual touching); and
3. psychological (controlling behaviours).

*Physical* violence includes both physical assaults, which refer to the use of physical force with the intent to harm or frighten a woman, and physical attempts or threats, which refers to the verbal, and/or physical intent to inflict harm which the woman believed was able and likely to be carried out. The IVAWS measures the following types of physical violence:

- having something thrown at her or hit with something;
- being pushed or grabbed or having her arm twisted or hair pulled;
- being slapped, kicked, bit or hit with a fist;

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- attempt to strangle or suffocate or burn or scald on purpose;
  - having a gun or knife used or attempted to be used on her; and
  - any other physical violence.

*Sexual* violence is any form of non-consensual or forced sexual activity or touching including rape. It is carried out against the woman's consent using physical or threatened force, intimidation or coercion. The IVAWS measures the following types of sexual violence:

- being forced into sexual intercourse;
- attempted to be forced into sexual intercourse;
- being touched sexually in a way that was distressing;
- being sexually assaulted whilst under the influence of drugs<sup>3</sup> that she was given without her knowledge so that she could not give her consent;
- being forced or attempted to be forced into sexual activity with someone else, including being forced to have sex for money or in exchange for goods; and
- any other sexual violence.

*Psychological (or emotional)* violence includes insults, humiliation, put-downs, restrictions of freedom and constant surveillance. Many of these are known also as controlling behaviours. One of the most common examples of psychological violence against women is intimate partner psychological abuse. The IVAWS measures the following controlling behaviours of male intimate partners:

- restricted or tried to prevent contact with other men by becoming angry if she spoke with other men;
- was not supportive if she engaged in activities outside the home;
- tried to limit her contact with family or friends;
- follows her or keeps track of her whereabouts;
- calls her names, insults her or behaves in a way to put her down or to make her feel bad; and
- damages or destroys her possessions or property.

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### *What do we mean by 'violence against women'?*

The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women General Assembly Resolution 48/104 (20 December 1993: 2) defines violence against women as:

... any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.

It has been suggested that the term 'violence against women' is even more difficult to define (Lobmann et al. 2003). Ambiguity centres on the question of whether being a female victim is sufficient to classify the aggressive act as 'violence against women'? Consider the following example :

Let us suppose that a burglar does not know if the occupier of a home is male or female. Then a residential break-in would surely not be a crime against women, even if the victim were female (Lobmann 2003: 310).

In the example provided above, the victim was not specifically targeted because she was a female, in other words, because of her biological sex. There are some offences where the victim's biological sex is fundamental to the offence, for example, rape. A heterosexual rapist would seek victims of the opposite sex. 'In this case, the victim's sex is a (necessary) condition for the offence to be committed' (Lobmann et al. 2003: 311). If however the rapist was targeting women as a means of asserting his male superiority and power over women, then it is not the women's biological sex but gender or social role that makes the act specifically violence directed against women.

Therefore, the concept of 'violence against women' as we understand it is the intentional physical, sexual and/or psychological abuse of women due to their biological sex and/or their social role (Lobmann et al. 2003: 311).

### **What is IVAWS?**

The International Violence Against Women Survey (IVAWS) is an international comparative survey designed to collect information on women aged between 18 and 69 and their experiences with violence by males, and specifically to gauge the level of victimisation experienced by women in Australia and abroad. The survey is the result of collaborative efforts involving two United Nations criminal justice agencies — the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, and the European Institute for Crime

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Prevention and Control — and Statistics Canada. Australia is the first country to fully implement the project after two extensive pilots.

The methodology for the IVAWS evolved out of the International Crime Victim Survey (ICVS); a survey with a broad focus on crime victimisation (Carcach & Makkai 2003). ICVS was not designed to target violence against women. An international survey that would facilitate comparative analyses on violence against women was therefore required. Utilising the comparative methodology of the ICVS, as well as other national violence against women surveys, the IVAWS was developed to focus specifically on women's experiences of violence by males and to allow for international comparisons.

The aim of IVAWS is to:

- promote research on violence against women in developed and developing countries;
- create an international data set for cross-cultural analysis of violence against women around the world; and
- promote policy development for preventing and counteracting violence against women both nationally and internationally.

## Objectives of IVAWS

The main objectives of IVAWS are to:

- contribute information for the development of legislative measures and means of victim assistance;
- promote community and victim-centred prevention strategies;
- provide information to assist in the development of evidence led policies;
- facilitate international research;
- improve police practices in dealing with cases of violence against women, by:
  - (a) revealing the extent of unreported crimes; and
  - (b) exploring the level of satisfaction with the police and their response;and
- formulate and test research hypotheses and theories.

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The survey collects data about women's experiences of the following types of violence by males:

- non-partner violence;
- current intimate partner violence;
- previous intimate partner violence; and
- parental abuse history and childhood victimisation.

The survey also collects detailed information concerning:

- the impact of violence on women, such as, injury and fear for life;
- women's perceptions of male violence, such as, seriousness of the incident, and whether it is considered to be a crime; and
- women's reactions to violence, such as, contacting specialised agencies or reporting to police.

## Focus of this report

The focus of this report is on providing estimates of the nature and extent of violence experienced by a sample of Australian women. It explores the different forms of violence experienced by these women, and provides a profile of the males who committed the violence. This exploration is based on the analyses of responses from 6,677 women aged between 18 and 69 from across Australia. These women were randomly selected and interviewed by telephone for the IVAWS during 2002-2003. It is important to acknowledge that the data are drawn from a sample and any estimates and probabilities, will have sampling error. However, the relatively large sample size works to minimise the extent of the error.

This report is divided into six main chapters. The following chapter provides an overall account of women's experiences of violence in Australia. This includes the occurrence of violence (physical and sexual) experienced by women over their lifetime (that is, since the age of 16), and in the five years and 12 months preceding the survey. It also examines the characteristics of those women who experienced some form of violence (for example, their age group, marital status, educational level, minority population background status (Indigenous status, non-English speaking background) and employment status), and the severity of violence, including the type of injury sustained.

The third chapter focuses specifically on women's experiences of intimate partner violence (current and previous marital, de facto partners and boyfriends), occurring throughout their lifetime as well as in the past 5 years and 12 months. The characteristics of the most recent

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incident of intimate partner violence are explored, including the severity of violence experienced, details relating to the incident, such as where it occurred, and drug or alcohol involvement. Included in this section are the correlates of victimisation and the characteristics of the male partners.

The fourth chapter examines women's experiences of non-partner violence (such as violence from family members, friends, acquaintances and strangers) across the adult lifetime and in the past five years and 12 months. The characteristics of the most recent incident of non-partner violence are explored, including where the incident occurred, how many men were involved in the incident, drug or alcohol involvement and the type of injury that women sustained. As with the previous section, the correlates of victimisation and the characteristics of the non-partners are analysed.

The next chapter focuses on women who reported being physically or sexually abused before the age of 16 years, by whom they were victimised, and whether childhood victimisation is a significant risk factor for adult victimisation. In other words, is there any evidence of a generational cycle of violence?

The sixth chapter focuses specifically on women who have experienced violence and their perceptions as to the seriousness of the violence, and whether they considered it a crime. It also examines women's reactions to violence, such as whether they reported to police or other specialised agencies, and their levels of satisfaction with how the matter was dealt with. Reasons for non-reporting are also presented.

## Methodological issues

In conducting surveys, such as the IVAWS, comparability between surveys is affected by a number of factors. In Australia, there are potentially two other key sources of national data on violence against women:

1. The Crime and Safety Survey; and
2. The Women's Safety Survey.

These surveys differ from IVAWS in a number of ways (see Appendix 2 for a brief comparison of these surveys):

- the time-periods examined differ;
- IVAWS captures information on a greater variety of physical and sexual violence that women may experience, consequently this results in higher overall estimates of violence;
- the wording of questions, definitions, and the sequence of questions differ;



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- administration of the questionnaire (telephone versus face-to-face interviewing) differs; and
  - the surveys frame and introduce screening questions for each of the sections in different ways, which can significantly affect the level of disclosure (see Tjaden & Thoennes 2000: 31).

Given these differences, it is strongly advised against drawing definitive inferences from IVAWS with the results from previous surveys.

As mentioned above, the IVAWS was a telephone survey and participation in the survey was therefore limited to women living in households with telephones. Consequently, the survey does not reflect the experiences of women living in households without telephones, women who are homeless or living in group facilities or institutions. In addition, with the growing use of mobile telephones<sup>4</sup>, more people, especially those in the younger age brackets may be opting for the use of mobile telephones only as opposed to a landline telephone. This may result in an under representation of women who do not have a landline telephone, as they were omitted from the survey selection process (see Appendix 1).

The IVAWS sample has been weighted to represent the population of women aged between 18 and 69 by age and geographic area. As mentioned the estimates are subject to sampling variability because they are derived from a sample of the population and not the whole population. In other words, the estimates may differ from results that would have been produced if all women aged 18 to 69 in Australia had been surveyed. Where appropriate, confidence intervals, the standard error and the relative standard error (RSE) of the estimates have been calculated. The RSE of the estimate indicates the extent to which an estimate might have varied because a sample was used (the RSE is the standard error divided by the actual point estimate expressed as a percentage).

The standard error of the mean (or estimate) indicates how close the estimate is to the true population mean (plus or minus two standard errors produces the range of the sample mean of the population). For example, two standard errors of an estimate of 48 per cent based on a sample of 6,677 is about one per cent meaning that there is a 19 in 20 chance the true population value lies between 47 per cent and 49 per cent. This range is referred to as a confidence interval.

Consistent with national standards, estimates with relative standard errors of over 25 per cent are considered unreliable (ABS 1996: 74). While estimates with higher relative standard errors are presented in this report, caution should be exercised when referring to these estimates. Throughout the report, a single asterisk (\*) denotes estimates with a relative

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standard error greater than 25 per cent. In these cases estimates are not provided. In addition, as estimates presented in this report generally exclude 'don't know/can't remember', 'refused/no answer' and other invalid responses, sample and sub-sample sizes (*n*) will vary throughout the report.

Due to rounding some percentages may not always sum to zero. All confidence intervals (CI) are at the 95 per cent level.

Finally, as a voluntary survey women could and did refuse to participate. Appendix 1 details the survey methodology. In summary, 17,247 households were contacted by telephone and 6,677 women agreed to participate resulting in an effective participation rate of 39 per cent. Although this sample of women has been weighted to reflect the overall age and geographic location of all women aged between 18 and 69 in Australia it is possible that some unknown bias could be affecting the results.

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<sup>1</sup> For additional information on PADV see: <http://www.padv.dpmc.gov.au/>

<sup>2</sup> The surveys in the United States and Canada were conducted in different time periods and used different definitions of violence.

<sup>3</sup> This refers to both illicit and licit (prescription) drugs.

<sup>4</sup> The number of mobile phones in Australia outnumbered fixed lines in 2002 (Herald Sun, "Mobiles could corner the market", 03/05/04).

## Chapter two: Prevalence and severity of violence

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## Chapter two: Prevalence and severity of violence

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This chapter provides an overall account of the experiences of violence of women who participated in the 2002/03 IVAWS. The specific focus is on the occurrence of different types of violence (physical and sexual) experienced, and the level of victimisation over a lifetime, and in the five years and 12 months preceding the survey. *Prevalence* refers to the percentage of women who reported being victimised at least once during a specific period, such as during the previous 12 months or over their lifetime. The severity of physical and sexual violence in relation to the most recent incident experienced by these women will also be explored in this chapter. Estimates of women's experiences of physical and sexual violence based on their socio-demographic characteristics are also provided.

### Occurrence of physical and sexual violence

One of the main problems affecting estimates derived from surveys is the issue of non-disclosure or non-reporting. While there are many barriers to reporting (see Lievore 2003 for an overview), people are more likely to disclose information about experiences of violence to researchers conducting surveys than to police (Lievore 2003; Lobmann et al. 2003). Depending on the focus of a survey, this may also result in differences in estimates of violence. Dedicated surveys such as the Women's Safety Survey and the IVAWS provide more accurate estimates on violence against women than more general surveys on crime, such as the Crime and Safety Survey (ABS 2003).

The most recent *Crime and Safety Survey 2002* (ABS 2003) asked both males and females whether they had been victims of assault in the 12 months preceding the survey. Results indicated a victimisation prevalence rate of five per cent for assault, meaning that five per cent of persons surveyed reported that they were victims of assault at least once during the previous 12 months. Over half of the victims of assault reported experiencing more than one incident (51%). Just under half (45%) of the assault victims were female. Both males and females aged 25 to 34 years had the highest incidence rates, with 22 per cent of male victims and 28 per cent of female victims in this age group. The majority of incidents involving female victims did not result in injury to the victim (73%). Approximately 47 per cent of assaults involving female victims occurred in the home. While the proportion of male and female victims who had experienced one or two incidents of assault in the twelve months prior to the survey were quite similar, a larger percentage of females (34%) than males (31%) reported experiencing three or more incidents of assault during the same period.

More detailed data on female victimisation is provided in the *Women's Safety Australia* Report (ABS 1996). This survey, based on the Canadian *Violence Against Women Survey* (Statistics Canada 1993), interviewed a total of 6,300 women aged 18 and over from both urban and rural areas about their experiences of violence. An incident of violence, actual or

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threatened, was experienced by seven per cent of women in the 12 month period that preceded the survey (ABS 1996); this equates to approximately 490,400 women who experienced some form of physical or sexual violence during the 12 months preceding the survey (ABS 1996).

A larger proportion of women experienced physical violence by a male (5%) than sexual violence by a male (2%). Risk of experiencing violence was higher for young, single, unemployed women born in Australia, than for any other group. These findings are also consistent with those of the *British Crime Survey* (see Mirrlees-Black & Byron 1999; Myhill & Allen 2002) where the risk of experiencing violence was greater for women aged between 16 and 24, women who were unemployed and women who were single.

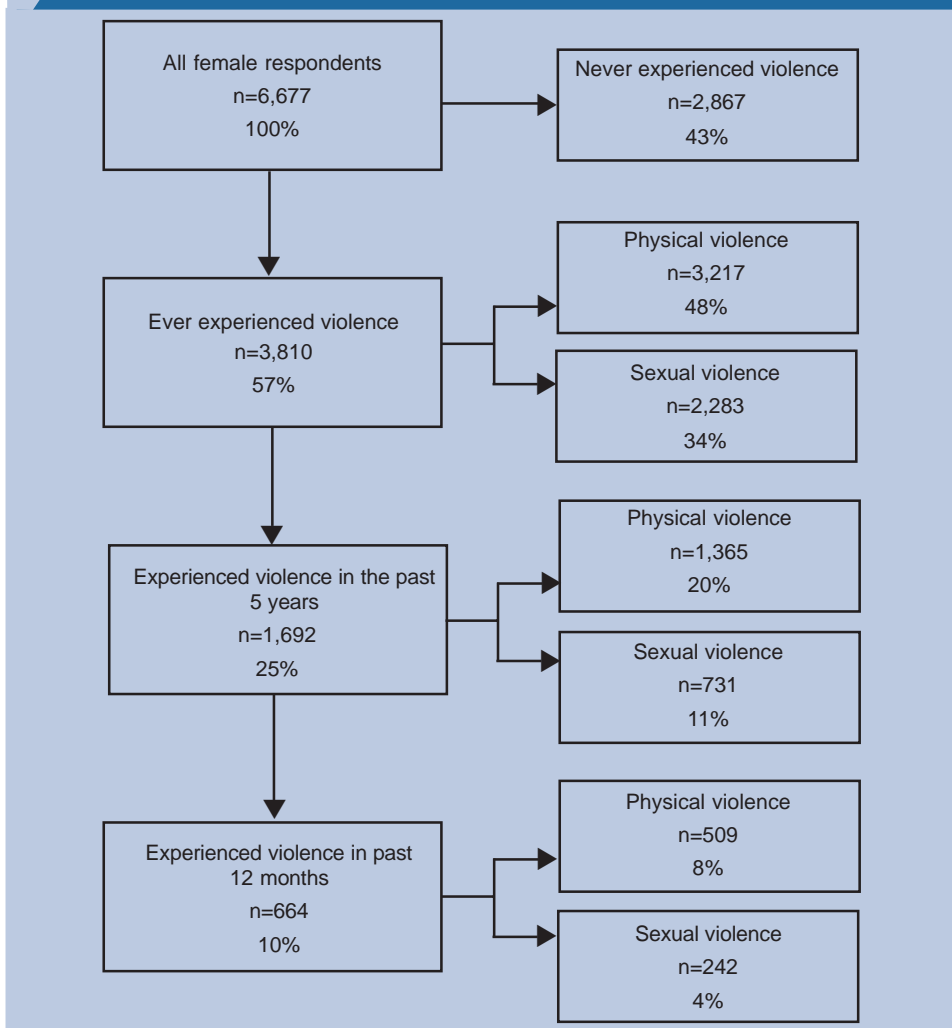
As with assault, data from the National Homicide Monitoring Program (NHMP) shows that women who are murdered in Australia represent a third of the victims. In 2002/2003, 33 per cent of victims of homicide in Australia were female, and females are killed at a rate of 1.1 per 100,000 females in the Australian population (Mouzos & Segrave 2004). Females aged between 20 and 24 years experience the highest risk of homicide victimisation at a rate of 2.1 per 100,000 females (Mouzos & Segrave 2004). The majority of males and females killed in Australia are killed by someone known to them. However, males are more likely to be killed by a friend or an acquaintance, whereas females are more likely to be killed by a current or former intimate partner (Mouzos 1999; 2003; Mouzos & Segrave 2004). Very few persons are murdered by strangers in Australia (Mouzos 2003; Mouzos & Segrave 2004).

In contrast when homicides within families are examined, three-quarters of the intimate partner homicides involve males killing their female partners (Mouzos & Rushforth 2003). Females comprised only 20 per cent of offenders of intimate partner homicide, confirming prior research that males are more likely than females to kill their intimate partner (Johnson & Hotton 2003).

### *IVAWS results*

Figure 1 provides an overall picture of the number and estimated proportion of women who either experienced physical and sexual violence or harm or did not experience any violence during their lifetime (that is, since the age of 16 years), five years and 12 months preceding the survey. Overall, 57 per cent of the women surveyed reported some level of physical and/or sexual harm over their life course. This reduces to 10 per cent during the last twelve months.

**Figure 1: Women's experiences of violence**

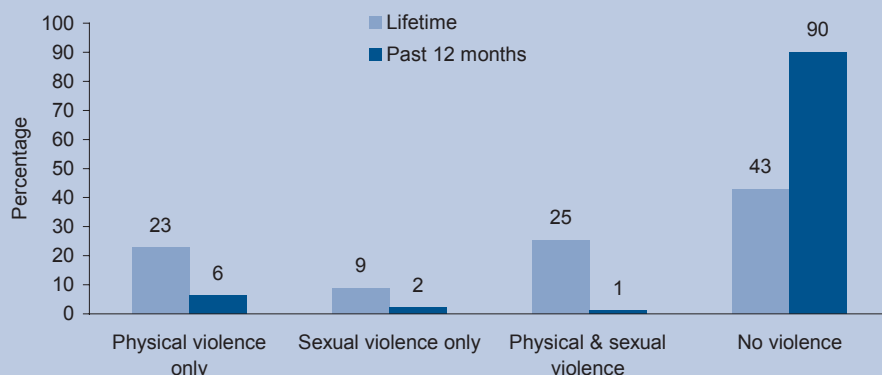


Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file]

An examination of women's experiences of all types of violence across their adult lifetime (Figure 2) found that:

- 43 per cent did not report experiencing any of the types of violence included in the survey;
- nine per cent of women reported experiencing sexual violence only;
- 23 per cent of women experienced physical violence only; and
- 25 per cent of women experienced both physical and sexual violence. This could have occurred in the same incident, or on separate occasions.

**Figure 2: Women's experiences of physical and/or sexual violence over their lifetime and in the last 12 months**



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file] n=6,677

When the time frame is reduced to the 12 months preceding the survey the levels of violence experienced are lower:

- 90 per cent did not report experiencing any of the types of violence included in the survey;
- two per cent of women reported experiencing sexual violence only;
- six per cent of women experienced physical violence only; and
- one per cent of women experienced both physical and sexual violence (Figure 2). This could have occurred in the same incident, or on separate occasions.

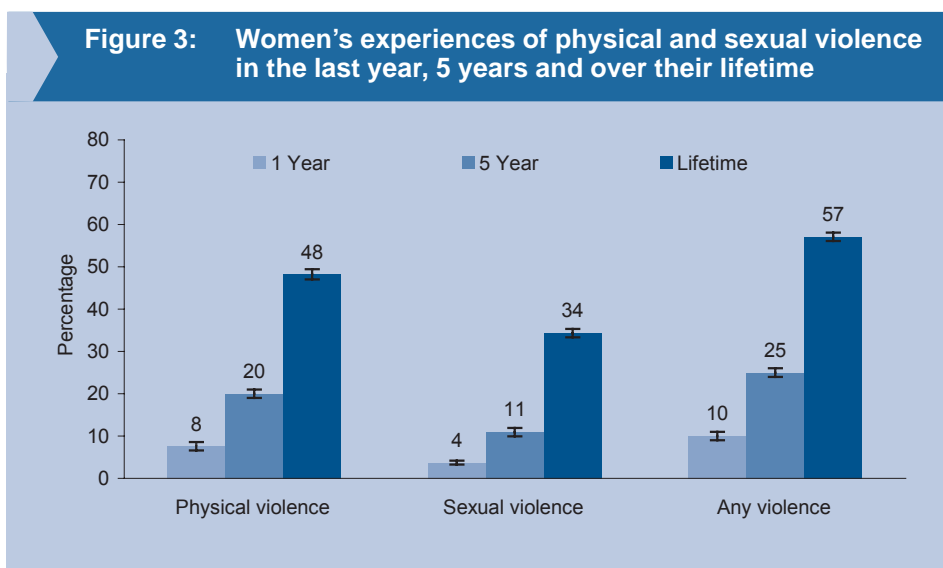
### *Physical violence*

There is no generally agreed accepted definition of what constitutes violence (ABS 1996), and it is largely dependent on what people perceive as violence. Physical violence has been previously defined as 'the occurrence, attempt or threat of physical assault, where physical assault was the use of physical force with the intent to harm or frighten' (ABS 1996: 2). While it is important to distinguish between actual physical harm and threats to harm, as will be exemplified later on, threats to harm in the vast majority of cases are associated with occurrences of physical harm.

Similar to previous national surveys (see ABS 1996; 2003), the type of physical violence covered in the survey ranged from threats of harm to actual physical harm. Women were asked whether since the age of 16 any male had committed the following acts against them:

- threats of physical harm;
- threw/hit with something;
- pushed, grabbed, twisted arm, pulled hair;
- slapped, kicked, bit, hit with a fist;
- attempt to strangle, suffocate, burn;
- used/threatened to use a knife or gun; or
- other physical violence.

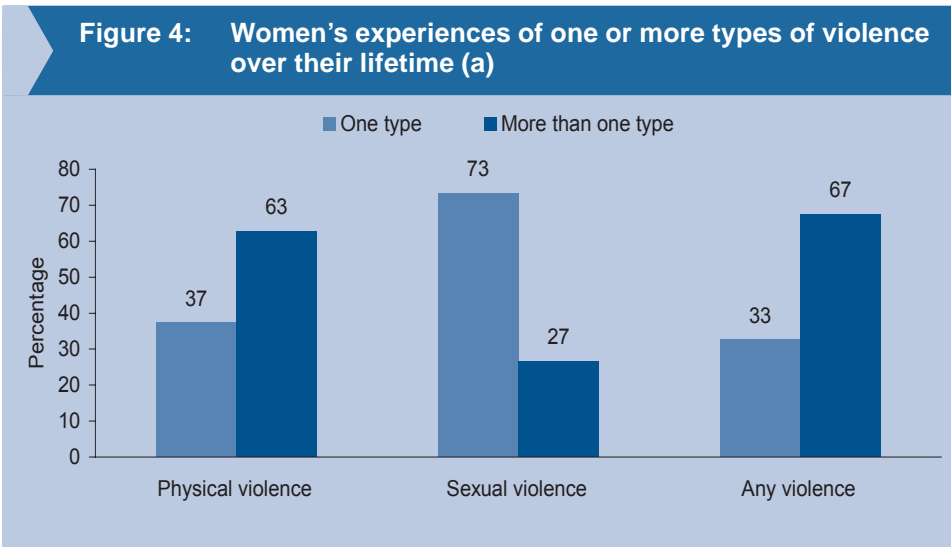
A little under half of the women aged between 18 and 69 years who participated in the IVAWS reported experiencing some form of physical violence over their lifetime (48%; Figure 3). Prevalence rates are always higher over the lifetime. Thus, the percentage of women who reported being victims of some form of physical violence reduces to 20 per cent in the past five years and eight per cent in the past year. If threats to hurt are excluded from the total of physical violence, the percentage of women who experienced an incident of physical violence over the lifetime reduces to just over two out of five (between 40 and 43%; Table 1).



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=6,677



Of the 57 percent of women who reported being a victim of some form of physical violence in their adult lifetime, the majority experienced more than one type of violence over their lifetime (63%; n=2,016; Figure 4). The co-existence of different forms of violence highlights that women's experiences of violence are often not isolated incidents. The majority of female victims experience more than one type of violence either in the same incident or as part of a pattern of repeat victimisation. A different pattern emerges during the last twelve months. Of the 10 per cent of women who experienced physical violence or harm during the last twelve months, 60 per cent experienced only one form of physical violence.



(a) Refers to women who experienced violence during their lifetime (n =3,810)  
 Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file]

These women reported that the most common type of physical violence they experienced from a man over their adult lifetime was threats of physical harm (between 32 and 34%; Table 1). The second most common type of violence reported was being pushed or grabbed or having their arm twisted or hair pulled, with between 27 and 29 per cent experiencing this type of violence over their lifetime. Excluding other physical violence, women were least likely to report that a man had tried to strangle or suffocate, burn or scald them on purpose (between 5 and 6% over their lifetime).

As already mentioned different types of violence co-exist. Of those women who reported that they had experienced threats of physical harm, just over three-quarters of them (77%) also reported they had over their lifetime also experienced actual physical violence either during the same incident or on a separate occasion.

While the proportion of women reporting violence differs depending on the time frame, the pattern of violence experienced does not (Table 1). In other words, women were more likely to report experiencing threats of harm from a male irrespective of the time period examined and least likely to report being strangled, suffocated or burned.

**Table 1: Women's experiences of different forms of physical violence, percentages**

Physical violence	Past 12 months			Previous 5 years			Lifetime		
	%	95 CI	RSE	%	95 CI	RSE	%	95 CI	RSE
Threats of physical harm	5	4 – 5	6	14	13 – 15	3	33	32 – 34	2
Threw/hit with something	2	2 – 3	8	8	7 – 9	4	21	20 – 22	2
Pushed, grabbed, twisted arm, pulled hair	3	3 – 4	7	12	11 – 13	4	28	27 – 29	2
Slapped, kicked, bit, hit with a fist	2	1 – 2	9	7	6 – 7	5	18	17 – 19	3
Strangled, suffocated, burned	0	0 – 1	20	2	2 – 2	9	6	5 – 6	5
Used/threatened to use a knife or gun	1	0 – 1	17	2	2 – 2	9	8	8 – 9	4
Other physical violence	0	0 – 1	21	1	1 – 2	11	3	3 – 4	7
Total physical violence	8	7 – 8	4	20	19 – 21	2	48	47 – 49	1
Total physical violence excluding threats	6	5 – 6	5	16	15 – 17	3	42	40 – 43	1

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=6,677

### Sexual violence

The estimated extent of sexual assault in Australia varies according to the data source (Lievore 2003). The central issue is one of definition — what is actually being 'counted' as sexual violence. Some surveys include 'unwanted sexual touching' in the definition of sexual assault, while others do not. This is further confounded by 'the absence of a standard definition of 'sexual assault', 'rape' and 'sexual violence' ...' (Lievore 2003: 11). IVAWS includes unwanted sexual touching in its definition of sexual violence, and therefore in the estimates of women who experienced sexual violence in the survey. Under an offence-based definition, unwanted sexual touching is a behaviour recognised as 'sexual assault' in the ABS *Sexual Assault Information Development Framework* (2003: 9).

The inclusion of 'unwanted sexual touching' in the definition of sexual violence ascribes to the notion that all acts of a sexual nature should be conceptualised as sexual violence irrespective of which end of the continuum of sexual violence they fall and whether or not

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they result in injury. This is consistent with an experienced-based definition of sexual assault, which refers to:

...unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature directed towards a person:

- which makes that person feel uncomfortable, distressed, frightened or threatened, or which results in harm or injury that person;
- to which that person has not freely agreed or given consent, or to which that person is not capable of giving consent; and
- in which another person uses physical, emotional, psychological or verbal force or (other) coercive behaviour against that person (ABS 2003: 9).

The Women's Safety Survey (ABS 1996) definition of sexual violence excludes unwanted sexual touching. This behaviour is classified as 'harassment' (along with obscene phone calls, indecent exposure by a man, and inappropriate comments about body/sex life by a man) (ABS 1996: 82). This is an important difference in the definitions given that the most frequent type of sexual violence reported by women who participated in the IVAWS was unwanted sexual touching. Within the 12 months prior to the survey, three per cent of women reported experiencing unwanted sexual touching (Table 2). This rose to nine per cent over the past five years and 24 per cent over the lifetime.

Very few women reported experiencing attempted forced sexual intercourse or actual forced intercourse during the 12 months preceding the survey and five years preceding the survey (Table 2). However, a similar proportion of women reported being victims of attempted forced sexual intercourse (10%; 4% RSE) and actual forced intercourse (9%; 4% RSE) over their lifetime.

Since the age of 16 years, less than two per cent of women reported that a male had forced or attempted to force them into sexual activity with someone else, including being forced to have sex for money or in exchange for goods. That is, of those women who were interviewed, few reported being forced into prostitution by a male. The number of women who experienced this type of sexual violence during the 12 months preceding the survey was too small to produce statistically reliable estimates.

**Table 2: Women's experiences of different forms of sexual violence, percentages**

Sexual violence	Past 12 months			Previous 5 years			Lifetime		
	%	95 CI	RSE	%	95 CI	RSE	%	95 CI	RSE
Unwanted sexual touching	3	3 – 4	7	9	8 – 10	4	24	23 – 25	2
Attempted forced intercourse	1	0 – 1	16	3	2 – 3	8	10	9 – 11	4
Forced intercourse	0	0 – 1	20	2	2 – 3	8	9	9 – 10	4
Forced sex with someone else	-	-	-*	0	0 – 1	20	1	1 – 2	11
Other sexual violence	-	-	-*	1	0 – 1	18	2	1 – 2	10
Drug facilitated sexual activity <sup>(a)</sup>	-	-	-*	-	-	-*	1	0 – 1	25
Total Sexual Violence	4	3 – 4	6	11	10 – 12	4	34	33 – 35	2

(a) This question was asked in the second stage of the IVAWS, and the estimates are based on a sample size of 3,047

- Counts too low for a statistically reliable estimate

\* Relative standard error is greater than 25%

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=6,677

In recent years, there has been much media coverage in relation to 'drink spiking' as well as 'drug facilitated sexual assault' and some have even reported an increase in its prevalence (Brenzinger 1998; Chapman 2000; Vogel 2002). 'Drink spiking' is defined as the surreptitious addition of drugs or alcohol to a drink (alcoholic or non-alcoholic), without consent of the person ingesting it (Australian Drug Foundation 2002). 'Drug facilitated sexual assault' refers to non-consensual acts which take place when the victim is incapacitated due to the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, which prevents them from resisting and/or giving meaningful consent (Abarbanel 2001).

Despite the attention toward this type of offence, there is very little empirical data available on its prevalence<sup>5</sup>, and specifically as to whether or not it is on the increase. In recognition of the lack of empirical data, in the second stage of the IVAWS the questionnaire was modified to include a question on drug facilitated sexual activity (see Appendix 1 for further information). A total of 3047 women participated in the second stage of IVAWS, and about one per cent reported a drug facilitated sexual assault in their adult lifetime (Table 2). The number of women who experienced this type of sexual violence during the 12 months and five years preceding the survey was too small to produce statistically reliable estimates.

In the previous section it was reported that two-thirds of women who experienced physical violence over their lifetime, reported experiencing more than one type of physical violence (63%; Figure 4). In contrast, women who reported experiencing sexual violence over their

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lifetime were less likely to report experiencing more than one type of violence (27%; Figure 4). Of the 24 per cent of women who said they had experienced unwanted sexual touching during their lifetime, 17 per cent also reported that they had experienced forced intercourse, 19 per cent attempted forced intercourse and four per cent forced sex with someone else.

During the twelve months preceding the survey, four per cent of the women interviewed reported being victims of sexual violence. This increases to 11 per cent during the five years preceding the survey, and just over a third of the women since the age of 16 (Figure 3). If unwanted sexual touching is excluded from the total sexual violence estimates, the proportion of women who experienced at least one incident of sexual violence over their lifetime decreases to about one in five women.<sup>6</sup> Due to the 'drug facilitated sexual assault' question being asked of only half of the women who participated in the IVAWS (second stage only), the prevalence estimates for sexual violence (previous 12 months, five years and lifetime) do not include the women who were victims of drug-facilitated sexual assault.

## **Factors associated with physical and sexual violence**

Previous international research has found that the risk of experiencing violence varies by a number of characteristics. Age, marital status, race, educational attainment, and labour force status have all been found to differentiate between women who experienced physical or sexual violence and women who did not (Lauritsen & White 2001). The Violence Against Women Survey conducted in Canada in 1993 found that while women from all socio-economic backgrounds reported experiences of violence, the highest 12-month rates of violence were reported by women with household incomes under \$15,000, by women aged between 18 and 24 years, and by women with some post-secondary education (Statistics Canada 1993).

Analyses of risk factors using the Women's Safety Survey (ABS 1996) found that young women had a higher likelihood of experiencing violence than older women when all other factors were held constant. It was suggested that the higher prevalence of violent victimisation for this age group was due to their lifestyles, in particular their increased contact with young males who are more likely to use violence, and their relative inexperience at identifying and avoiding potentially violent situations (Coumarelos & Allen 1998).

Contrary to expectations, the analysis of risk factors using the Women's Safety Survey (ABS 1996) found no significant effects for employment, educational attainment, level of income and main source of income. The effect of these socio-economic indicators was possibly mediated by the other factors such as childhood abuse and neglect, which have been linked to poverty, poor education and unemployment. International research has found

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correlations between economic disadvantage and violence against women in intimate relationships (Benson, Fox, Demaris & Van Wyk 2003; Lauritsen & White 2001), although this is not a consistent finding when other variables are taken into account (Tjaden & Thoennes 2000).

A more recent survey questioned 5000 Australians aged between 12 and 20 about their experiences of violence (Indermaur 2001). The rates of victimisation did not appear to differ between the genders. However, when young persons (19–20 year olds) were asked whether they felt afraid or were injured during any of the instances of violence they experienced, almost one third of the young women reported that they had been frightened or hurt (30%), compared with one in eight of the young males (12%). As other studies have found, young women from lower socio-economic areas were more likely to experience violence than those from higher socio-economic areas.

Other work by the ABS has found that rates of assault are higher amongst the Indigenous population than the non-Indigenous population. The rate of family violence victimisation for Indigenous women was almost 40 times the rate for non-Indigenous women (Harding et al. 1995). However, it must be noted that the current literature on the incidence and prevalence of family violence in these areas and for these particular groups is limited, making it difficult to draw accurate conclusions.

In terms of sexual assault specifically most victims of sexual assault are women aged 18 to 24 years (46%) and unmarried (80%) (ABS 2002). Perpetrators are predominantly male (93%) and 34 per cent of women who had experienced a sexual assault experienced two or more incidents of sexual violence in the last 12 months. Canadian research also reported higher levels of victimisation among young women and higher rates of offending for young men (Kong et al. 2003).

### *Age as a factor*

Age has been found to be the strongest predictor of risk, with prior research showing that younger women are victimised disproportionately to older women (Lauritsen & White 2001; Craven 1997; Johnson 1996; Tjaden & Thoennes 1998; 2000). In the IVAWS, younger women reported higher levels of violence (physical, sexual or any form of violence) during the 12 months preceding the survey than older women (Table 3).

**Table 3: Women's experiences of violence in the last 12 months, by age group**

	Physical violence		Sexual violence		Any violence	
	%	RSE	%	RSE	%	RSE
18 to 24 years	17	7	12	9	23	6
25 to 34 years	8	9	4	13	11	8
35 to 44 years	8	9	2	17	9	8
45 to 54 years	6	11	2	22	7	10
55 to 69 years	2	18	1	32*	3	16
Total (N)	(509)		(243)		(665)	

\* This estimate should be used with caution, as the relative standard error is greater than 25%  
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file]

Given that sexual violence has been described as a 'crime against youth' (Tjaden & Thoennes 1998: 6), it is not unexpected to find that over one in ten women aged 18 to 24 who participated in the IVAWS had experienced sexual violence in the last 12 months. This compares with no more than two per cent of women aged 45 years or over (Table 3).

### *Women from minority populations: Indigenous women and women from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB)*

Research has documented the high levels of violence experienced by women from minority populations, in particular, Indigenous women. However, quantifying the level of violence experienced by women from minority populations compared to women from the general population is fraught with difficulty (see Lievore 2003).

### *Indigenous women*

Prior research has documented high levels of violence in Indigenous communities in Australia (Memmott et al. 2001; Strategic Partners 2003). More specifically, there is substantial evidence that Indigenous women are much more likely to be victims of violence within the family, and to sustain injury, compared to non-Indigenous women (Strategic Partners 2003). From the available data Indigenous women are also far more likely than non-Indigenous women to experience sexual violence (Lievore 2003).

However, assessing the level and extent of lethal and non-lethal violence inflicted against Indigenous women is not straightforward. Although homicide figures represent the whole

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population (and not a sample), they too have some problems with the subjective assessment made by police in identifying persons as Indigenous. Notwithstanding this, they are considered to accurately reflect the level of lethal violence. Despite representing just over two per cent of the total Australian population, Indigenous women accounted for 15 per cent of homicide victims in Australia in 2002/03 (Mouzos & Segrave 2004).

Aside from the usual problems of under-reporting and reliability due to under-sampling in the examination of non-lethal violence against Indigenous women (Lievore 2003), many Indigenous women do not have telephones or permanent residential addresses, which would automatically exclude them (and details of their experiences of violence) from telephone surveys. Nonetheless, in order to capture the experiences of violence of those Indigenous women who participated in IVAWS all women were asked a question as to whether or not they were an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Women who responded 'yes' were classified as Indigenous for the purpose of this report (n=92). This number under-represents the number of Indigenous women in the general population (1.4% of the sample compared to 2.2% in the general population (women aged 18-69 years)). The IVAWS sample of Indigenous women was also more likely to be English speaking and reside in urban areas.

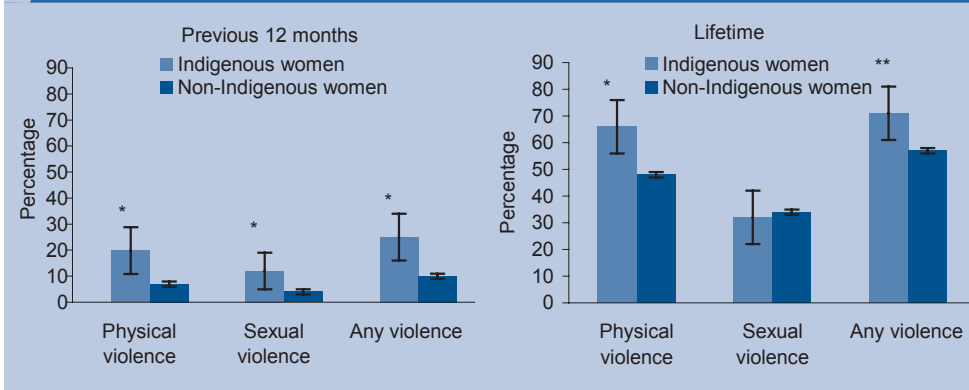
Compared to the non-Indigenous women in this sample, this group of Indigenous women reported higher levels of physical, sexual and any violence during the 12 months preceding the IVAWS (Figure 5). During this period, about seven per cent of non-Indigenous women reported experiencing physical violence (4% RSE), compared to 20 per cent of Indigenous women (21% RSE). Three times as many Indigenous women reported experiencing an incident of sexual violence, compared to non-Indigenous women (12%; 28% RSE versus 4%; 6% RSE). However, the estimate of the Indigenous women in this sample should be viewed with caution due to the high relative standard error.

The IVAWS results reinforce findings from previous research:

...although the statistics are imperfect, they are sufficient to demonstrate the disproportionate occurrence of violence in the Indigenous communities of Australia and the traumatic impact on Indigenous people (Memmott et al. 2001: 6).



**Figure 5: Indigenous and non-Indigenous women's experiences of violence, 1 year and lifetime**



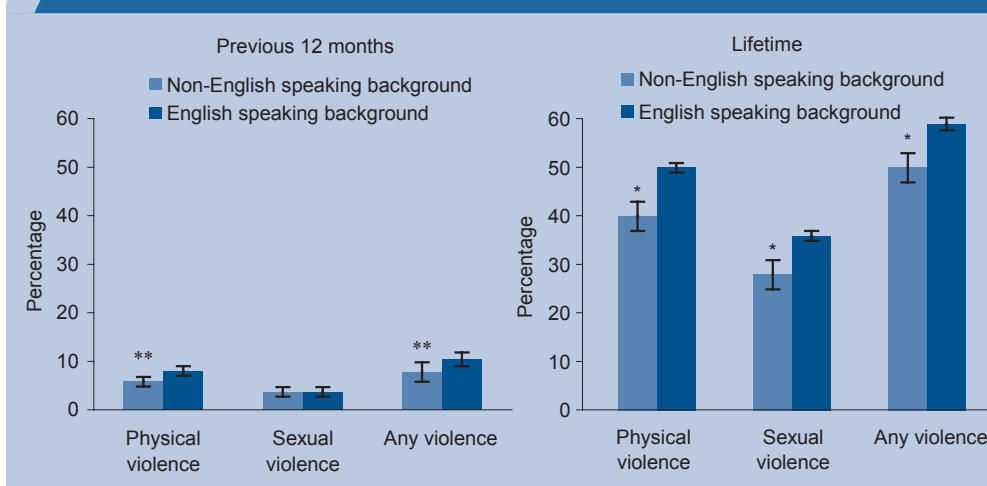
Chi-square test of significance: \* $p < 0.001$  \*\* $p < 0.01$

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file],  $n = 6,673$

### *Women from non-English speaking backgrounds*

In addition to capturing information on Indigenous women's experiences of violence, the IVAWS also captures information on women from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB). A total of 1122 women who participated in the IVAWS identified as being from a non-English speaking background (a total of 62 IVAWS interviews were conducted in a foreign language by a bi-lingual interviewer). NESB women report lower levels of physical violence than women from English speaking backgrounds<sup>7</sup> (Figure 6), while a similar proportion from both groups experienced sexual violence during the 12 months preceding the survey.

**Figure 6: Non-English speaking background and English speaking background women's experiences of violence, 1 year and lifetime**



Chi-square test of significance: \* $p < 0.001$  \*\* $p < 0.01$

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file],  $n = 6,677$

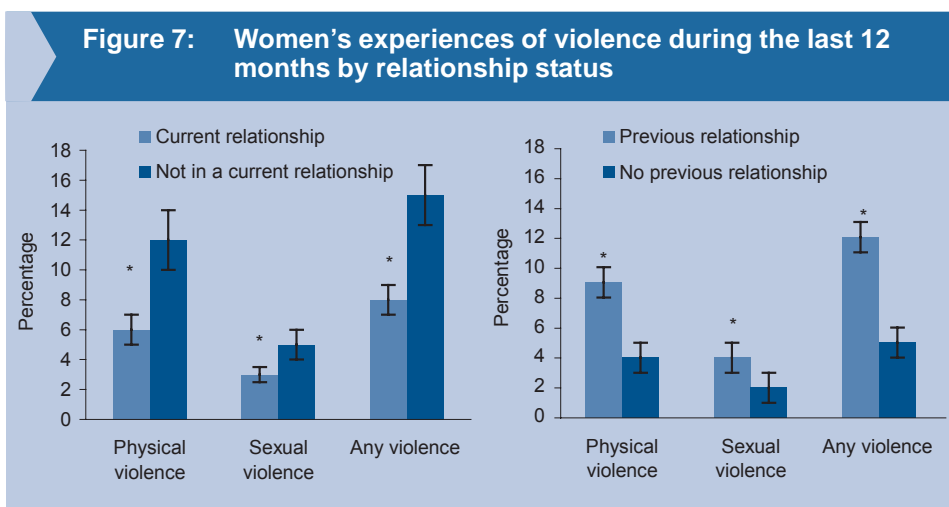
Women from English-speaking backgrounds reported higher levels of physical, sexual and any violence compared to NESB women when the period examined is extended to over their lifetime. While this suggests that violence against NESB women compared to women from other populations is less prevalent, research has identified factors which not only influence NESB women's perceptions of what is considered to be violent behaviour but also their willingness to report. Specifically in relation to sexual violence, four main categories of reasons for non-reporting by NESB women have been identified (Lievore 2003: 66). These are:

- personal;
- cultural and religious;
- informational/language; and
- institutional/structural.

It is possible that some of these factors may have resulted in NESB women who had experienced violence not participating in the survey or of those who did participate they were less likely to report incidents of physical and sexual violence, and openly discussing such sensitive information with survey interviewers. Although topics and activities regarded as private vary cross-culturally and situationally, women often record misgivings or unease about questions directed to their private life (Stanko & Lee 2003: 3).

### Relationship status

The risk patterns for lethal and non-lethal violence differs based on a woman's relationship status. Women who fall victims to lethal violence in Australia are usually either married or in a de facto relationship (see Mouzos 1999; 2003). In contrast, women not in a current relationship report higher levels of non-lethal violence during the 12 months preceding the IVAWS compared to women in a current relationship (Figure 7; Table 4). 'Current relationship' refers to women who are either married, de facto and or have a boyfriend. It is important to note that this refers to their relationship status at the time of the IVAWS interview, and does not indicate that these women were victimised by their partners.



Chi-square test of significance: \* $p < 0.001$

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file],  $n=6,677$

Women not in a current relationship were twice as likely as women in a relationship to report experiencing physical violence during the previous 12 months (12% versus 6%; Figure 7). As most of these women fall in the younger age groups, it is important to canvass possible explanations for higher victimisation rates. Routine (or lifestyle) activities theory provides a feasible explanation for the higher rates of violence among young single people (Hindelang, Gottfredson & Garofalo, 1978; Cohen & Felson 1979). The main tenet of the theory is that some socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender, employment and marital status), as well as place of residence, influence the type of lifestyle that a person leads, and their vulnerability to criminal victimisation. A number of lifestyle factors (see Hindelang 1978) may lead to increased victimisation:

- amount of time spent in public places after dark;
- the riskiness of activities undertaken in these places;
- the proximity to potential offenders; and
- one's ability to guard against attack.

These lifestyle factors seem to describe the social activities of many young women (and men). It is therefore anticipated that as a cohort, young single women would experience higher levels of victimisation.

Previous victimisation surveys have found that women who are divorced or separated report higher levels of violence (ABS 1996; Cravens 1997). Women who had a previous relationship (includes women who were separated and divorced) were almost three times as likely as women who did not have a previous relationship to report experiencing violence (physical and/or sexual) during the 12 months preceding the survey (Figure 7). Specifically, one in five women who were married but separated reported experiencing either physical or sexual violence during the 12 months preceding the IVAWS (Table 4). Married women reported the lowest levels of violence compared to all other women in the IVAWS. This is not unexpected given that married women are also likely to be older than women who are single (only 5% of women aged less than 25 years were married compared with 66% of women aged 25 or over). The risk of intimate partner and non-partner violence will be further explored in the substantive chapters that follow.

**Table 4: Women's experiences of violence in the last 12 months by relationship status**

	Physical violence		Sexual violence		Any violence	
	%	RSE	%	RSE	%	RSE
Married	4	8	1	16	5	7
Separated	16	21	7	34*	20	19
De facto relationship	11	11	5	17	14	10
Current boyfriend	14	10	13	10	23	7
Single	12	7	5	11	15	6
Total (N)	(510)		(245)		(666)	

\* This estimate should be used with caution, as the relative standard error is greater than 25%  
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file]

### Educational attainment

A common misconception is that violence *only* occurs between people who have little or no formal education, and that those who are highly educated are immune from violence. Research findings are contradictory. Some researchers have found an inverse association between women's educational attainment and the risk of domestic violence (Craven 1997), while others have found higher levels of violence reported by women with higher educational attainment (ABS 1996; 2002; Morris 1997). Others find no relationship (Rollins & Oheneba-Sakyi 1990). The responses from women who participated in the IVAWS indicate that there appears to be little difference in the prevalence of physical and sexual victimisation based on women's educational attainment (Table 5).

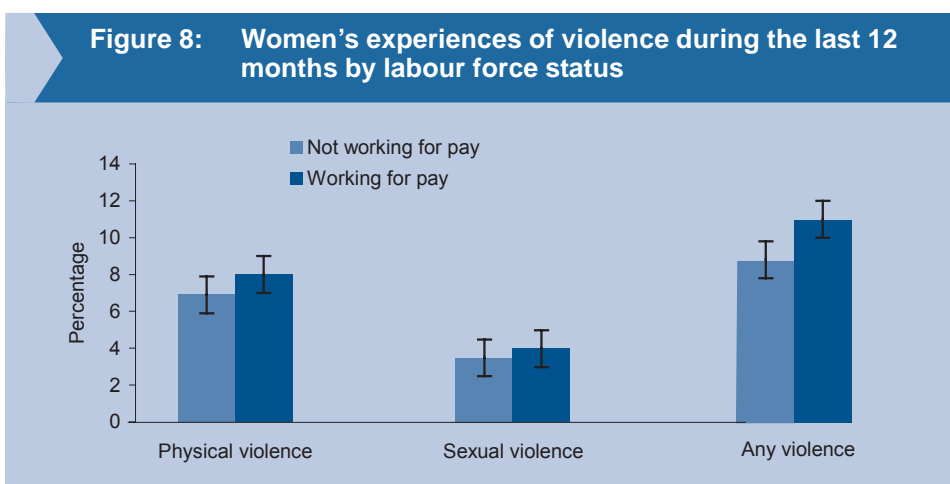
**Table 5: Women's experiences of violence during the last 12 months by educational attainment**

	Physical violence		Sexual violence		Any violence	
	%	RSE	%	RSE	%	RSE
Primary and some secondary/technical school	7	8	2	13	8	7
Finished technical school/commercial college/TAFE/Year 12	8	8	4	12	11	7
Some/completed University/CAE	8	6	4	9	11	5
Total (N)	(509)		(244)		(667)	

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file]

### Labour force status

Income and employment status have been found to be significant risk factors for violence against women (Mouzos 2000; 2003; Johnson 1996; Craven 1997). Lethal violence research indicates that only 27 per cent of female homicide victims in Australia in 2001/2002 were employed at the time of the incident (Mouzos 2003). In line with such research, it would be expected that women who were not working for pay and women from households with low incomes would report higher levels of victimisation. The IVAWS revealed results to the contrary. There was no statistically significant difference between working and non-working women and their levels of reported violence (Figure 8).



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=6,676

Furthermore, the levels of physical and sexual victimisation reported by women in the survey tended to be relatively similar irrespective of the combined income of their whole household (after tax) per week (Table 6).

**Table 6: Women's experiences of violence during the last 12 months by combined household income**

	Physical violence		Sexual violence		Any violence	
	%	RSE	%	RSE	%	RSE
<b>Combined household income (a)</b>						
Less than \$300	9	21	5	29*	12	18
\$300 to less than \$500	8	12	3	19	10	10
\$500 to less than \$850	8	8	3	14	10	7
\$850 and over	8	6	4	9	10	5
Total (N)	(469)		(220)		(609)	

\* This estimate should be used with caution, as the relative standard error is greater than 25%

(a) Refers to combined income of whole household, after deductions for tax etc., per week

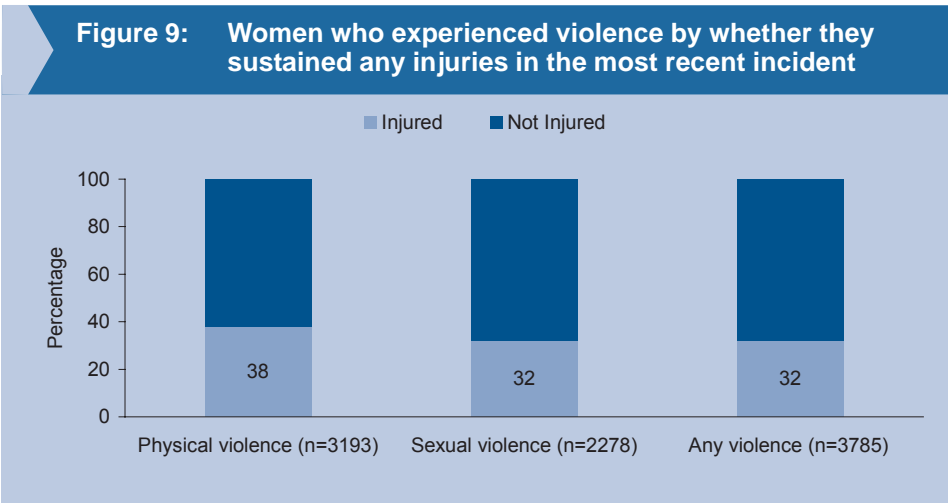
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file]

# Severity of physical and sexual violence in the most recent incident

IVAWS included questions on whether the woman was injured during the most recent incident, and the type of injuries sustained. A general overview of the severity of physical and sexual violence of those women who had reported such violence is presented here. In order to contain the length of the interview, victims of violence were asked to provide details of the most recent incident of partner violence, and violence from another male.

## Physical injuries sustained

In relation to the most recent incident experienced over the lifetime, it is estimated that about two-thirds of the women who experienced either physical and/or sexual violence did not report sustaining any injuries (Figure 9). While this may seem low when compared to previous estimates, it is important to keep in mind that the most common types of violence experienced by women were threats of violence and unwanted sexual touching. It is therefore expected that no injuries would be sustained in such incidents. When women reported that injuries were sustained during the most recent incident of violence, they were more likely to occur during an incident of physical violence than an incident of sexual violence (Figure 9).

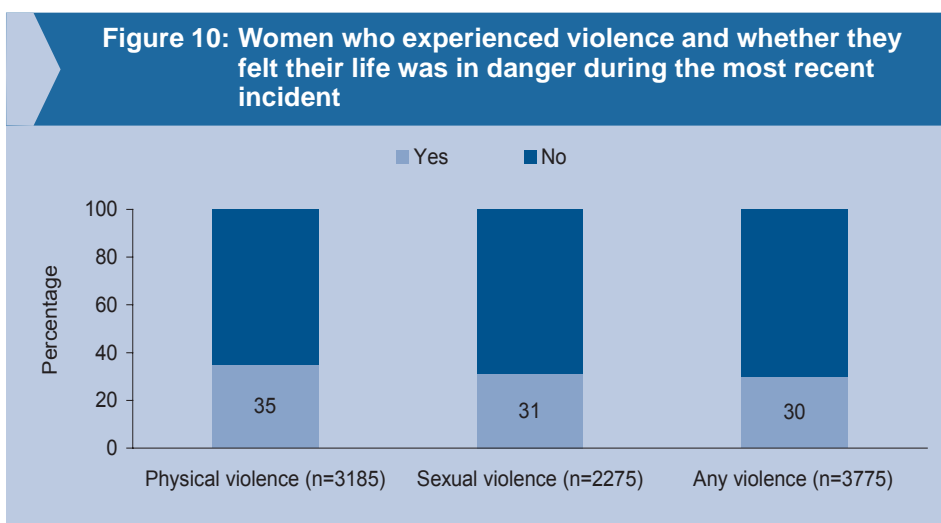


Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file]

### Type of injuries sustained

The most common type of injury sustained was bruising, with four out of five women reporting that they sustained this injury. This is consistent with prior research abroad, which finds that most victimisations involving injuries result in minor injuries, such as bruises and scratches (Craven 1997). Just under a quarter of the women sustained cuts, scratches and burns, followed by an estimated less than one in ten women who sustained broken bones, broken nose, or internal injuries. There were few differences in the type of injury sustained based on whether the violent incident involved physical or sexual violence. This may be partly explained by the large overlap of women experiencing both physical and sexual violence.

To gauge the seriousness of injuries sustained, women were asked if they required medical care and whether they felt that their life was in danger. Of the women who were injured, over a quarter reported that they were injured so badly that they needed medical care regardless of whether they received it. There were no differences between physical and sexual violence in this regard. An estimated three out of ten women reported that they felt that their life was in danger (Figure 10). A higher proportion of women who experienced physical violence as compared to women who experienced sexual violence reported that this was the situation (35% versus 31%).



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file]

<sup>5</sup> The Australian Institute of Criminology is currently completing a report on drink spiking for the Australian Government Attorney-General's Department.

<sup>6</sup> If unwanted sexual touching is excluded from the total, about 1% of women reported experiencing sexual violence within the last year; and about 5% of women reported experiencing sexual violence within the last five years.

<sup>7</sup> This refers to all other women who did not identify as coming from a non-English speaking background.



## **Chapter three: Intimate partner violence, severity and correlates of victimisation**

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## Chapter three: Intimate partner violence, severity and correlates of victimisation

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Physical and sexual violence between intimate partners is neither a new nor a rarely encountered phenomenon. Until relatively recently it was even permitted by law (see High Court case *R v L* (1991) 174 CLR 379). While the law no longer offers protection to men who beat their wives, there is evidence to suggest that it may still be socially sanctioned. For instance, a national survey in 1995 revealed that about one in five Australians thought that it was acceptable for a man to use physical force against his wife in some circumstances (OSW 1995: 33). Surveys undertaken in various countries indicate that 10–50 per cent of women reported being physically abused by a male partner (Heise et al. 1999). Research has found that violence against women is primarily partner violence rather than violence committed by a stranger (Tjaden & Thoennes 2000).

Domestic violence (also referred to as intimate partner violence) emerged as an issue of concern around the late 1960s and early 1970s (Partnerships Against Domestic Violence 1999). Since then there have been over twenty years of research and practice in Australia concerning domestic violence and other women's issues leading to changes in law, policing practice, justice system processes and increased services for women victims (Bird 2002).

With the recognition of domestic violence as a social problem, a number of city-level studies<sup>8</sup> were undertaken to quantify the extent of the problem. Based on a comparison of several data sources (police, hospital and community records, and a crime victimisation survey) an attempt was made to measure the extent of domestic violence in Western Australia between 1993 and 1994 (Ferrante et al. 1996). Findings from this comparative analysis found police recorded a lower incidence of domestic violence than all other sources highlighting the substantial underreporting to police. The predominately private nature of such violence makes it difficult to accurately measure the extent of the problem. Although, 'the discovery of and public debate about the prevalence of assault in many intimate relationships cause other people to question the protection of personal violence as a private act that remains within the realm of privacy' (Cardarelli 1997: 6).

The majority of perpetrators of violence against women are known to the victim (ABS 1996; Woodward & Ferguson 2000), a factor that influences the likelihood of reporting to police. The greater a perpetrator's authority, the more likely the victim's inability to resist or fight back and not report the incident (Gartner & Macmillian 1995). Few studies have examined in depth the circumstances of violence against women. A South Australian study in 1998 gathered information from women through a phone-in and focus groups (Bagshaw et al. 1999). The 111 female victims reported experiencing all forms of abuse — sexual, physical, emotional, verbal, social and economic — often experiencing more than one form of abuse in a violent incident at the hands of their partner. About half of the women reported violence as a daily occurrence. The majority reported that verbal, psychological and emotional abuse

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occurred most often, usually on a daily basis, and that the effect of this abuse was far more damaging than physical violence. Long after the bruises had healed words continued to cause damage to a victim's self-esteem and self-worth.

Eighty-nine per cent and 84 per cent of women experienced verbal and emotional abuse (Bagshaw et al. 1999). Verbal abuse included attacks on the woman's intelligence, sexuality and capacity as a wife and mother, and included comparisons with other women. Emotional abuse also involved comparisons with other women and blaming the victim for problems in the relationship. In terms of frequency, while victims reported that they might only be physically hurt once or twice in a month, they did state that the fear of violence was present in their daily lives. Threats of violence were as effective as actual violence in controlling their behaviours, primarily where perpetrators had proved that they would follow through. The fear these threats create in the victim can, and often does, keep many from leaving the abusive relationship.

In terms of intimate partner violence the Crime and Safety Survey (ABS 2003) and the Women's Safety Survey (ABS 1996) reveal a number of findings that are often consistent with overseas studies (Dobash & Dobash 1995). Overall current or former partners were responsible for one in five physical assaults against females (ABS 2003). More specifically in terms of intimate partner violence:

- three per cent of women in a current relationship experienced an incident of violence by their partner in the preceding 12 months, while eight per cent reported an incident of violence at sometime during their current relationship (ABS 1996);
- a much higher proportion of women were victimised during a previous relationship (42%), compared to women in a current relationship (8%);
- an estimated nine per cent of victims experienced emotional abuse with a current partner;
- approximately 33 per cent of women who experienced physical violence reporting more than one violent incident; and
- forty-two per cent of women reported experiencing violence from a partner in a previous relationship during pregnancy; for 20 per cent of these women it was their first experience of violence (ABS 1996).

A further analysis of the Women's Safety Survey (ABS 1996) revealed that women who were separated were more likely to experience violence than married women (Coumarelos & Allen 1998). These findings reflect the highly tense and emotional nature of separation itself. It may be the case that violence follows separation, or the decision to separate is due to violence in the relationship.

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A 1992 national survey of survivors of sexual assault found that 13 per cent of assaults were committed by boyfriends or dates (Easteal 1992). A slightly higher percentage (16%) was reported in the Women's Safety Survey (ABS 1996) for the same category. The majority of these incidents (64%) took place in residential premises. Similar findings have been reported in Canadian research (Kong et al. 2003).

A review of literature on violence in rural and remote Australia (Health Advisory Committee 2002) noted that violence in these areas differs only slightly from violence in urban areas. Research suggests that violence in rural and remote areas is predominately domestic in nature. In fact, rural and remote areas, particularly Indigenous communities, experience greater levels of violence generally, and domestic violence specifically, than other areas (Mouzos 2001; Mukherjee et al. 1998; Hogg & Carrington 1996; Harding et al. 1995). As is the case in urban areas, women experience domestic violence at higher rates than men.

### *Defining intimate partner violence*

In previous chapters, a number of definitional issues were discussed specifically with regard to what is deemed 'violence against women'. Definitional ambiguity also exists in what is meant by 'intimate partner' violence. As the term 'is neither uniformly or universally defined' (Miller & Wellford 1997: 16), the uncertainty is centred on who should be considered an 'intimate partner', and therefore included in estimates of the phenomenon. Some estimates of intimate partner violence do not include persons in dating relationships such as boyfriends and girlfriends (ABS 1996; Johnson 1996; Medina-Ariza & Barberet 2003), rather they only include current and former marital and de facto partners.

The IVAWS captures detailed information for the most recent incident of partner victimisation and non-partner victimisation. 'Partner' includes the following:

- husband, current or previous;
- de facto, current or previous; and
- boyfriend, current or previous.

In order to maintain consistency with other countries that are participating in the IVAWS, for the purposes of this report, intimate partner violence is defined as actual or threatened physical, sexual, psychological or emotional violence involving current or former spouses (married and de facto partners) or current or former boyfriends. Intimate partners may be cohabiting, but need not be. The term 'intimate partner violence' is broader than terms such as 'domestic violence', 'spouse abuse' and 'wife battering' and it is not limited to marital relationships (American Medical Association Council on Scientific Affairs 2000).

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### *Measuring intimate partner violence*

Various pieces of research have documented the issues involved in measuring intimate partner violence, particularly in relation to non-disclosure of violence (see Hagemann-White 2001).

Many victims are typically silent about their victimisations for multiple reasons: internalised shame, economic dependence, isolation, complications with children, fear of retaliation, religious or familial pressures to keep the family-relationship intact, unresponsiveness and even disbelief from police and other members of the criminal justice system, and until recently a lack of legal options and alternatives (Miller & Wellford 1997: 18).

Women who participated in the IVAWS were instructed to think about times when their male partners had used or threatened to use physical, and/or sexual violence against them. In order to improve disclosure of experiences of intimate partner violence, these sets of questions were situated after the section on non-partner violence, which explored women's experiences of physical and sexual violence by other relatives, work colleagues, friends, acquaintances, other known men, and strangers. These 'acted as sensitising lead-in questions to the potentially more difficult section about partner violence' (Johnson 1996: 135).

Given that prior research suggests differences in the prevalence of violence by a current versus a former male intimate partner, the presentation of estimates derived from the IVAWS will be divided into the following three sections:

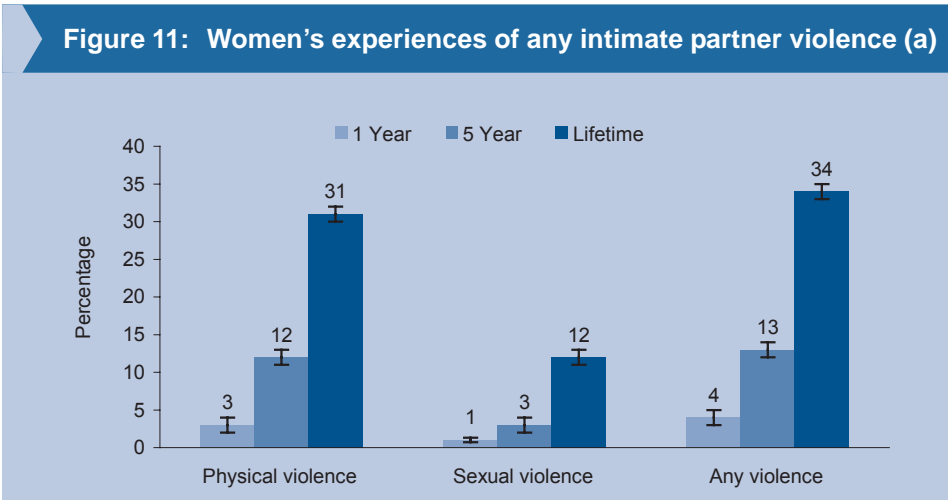
1. Any intimate partner violence.
2. Current intimate partner violence.
3. Former intimate partner violence.

### *Any intimate partner violence*

This section focuses on any intimate partner (current and former male intimate partners) physical and sexual violence during the 12 months and five years preceding the survey, as well as over the woman's lifetime (that is, since the age of 16 years). The estimates are based on the number of women who reported that they had a current or former intimate partner ( $n=6,438$ ), and whether or not they experienced any form of violence from a current or former intimate partner. Women who did not have a current or former intimate partner were therefore excluded from the analysis. It is important to reiterate that these estimates also include violence from current or former boyfriends.

The results from the survey indicate that 34 per cent of women who had a current or former intimate partner experienced at least one form of violence during the lifetime from a partner (Figure 11) compared with 57 per cent of all the women interviewed (see Figure 3). Approximately one in ten women with current or former male partners experienced partner violence during the five years preceding the survey, and less than five per cent during the past 12 months.

Similar to the general overview of violence in the previous chapter, women who suffered violence from intimate partners were more likely to experience physical rather than sexual violence. Less than one third of the women who had a current or former intimate partner suffered physical partner violence over their lifetime, compared with just over one in ten women who suffered sexual violence (Figure 11). Few women experienced sexual violence by a partner during the twelve months preceding the survey (1%).



(a) These estimates are based on women who had current or former intimate partners  
 Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=6,438

An examination of the different forms of intimate partner violence indicates that women were equally likely to report having been threatened with violence and actually experiencing at least one type of physical violence (Table 7). The overwhelming majority of women who were threatened with violence also reported an act of physical violence (85%) during the same or different incident.

The most common forms of physical violence by current or former intimate partners were pushing, grabbing, twisting arms, pulling hair; threatening to use violence; and throwing or

hitting her with something (Table 7). In terms of sexual violence, the previous chapter revealed that in general women were more likely to report experiencing 'sexual touching' as opposed any other forms of sexual violence. A different pattern emerges in the examination of intimate partner violence. Of the women who had a current or former intimate partner, between five and seven per cent of these women reported that their partner had forced them to have sexual intercourse at some stage during their lifetime (Table 7). This is the most common form of sexual violence perpetrated by intimate partners. A further three to four per cent of these women reported that their partners had attempted to force them to have sexual intercourse, and a similar proportion experienced unwanted sexual touching. It has been suggested that other forms of violence often accompany sexual violence (Johnson 1996). Of the women who experienced an incident of sexual violence, 73 per cent also experienced physical violence.

In general, of the women who had a current or former intimate relationship, 22 percent experienced more than one type of violence, compared with about 12 per cent of women who only experienced one form of violence from a current or former intimate partner (Figure 12).



(a) These estimates are based only on women who had current or former intimate partners  
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=6,438

**Table 7: Women's experiences of different forms of physical and sexual intimate partner violence, percentages (a)**

	Past 12 months			Previous 5 years			Lifetime		
	%	95 CI	RSE	%	95 CI	RSE	%	95 CI	RSE
<b>Physical violence</b>									
Threats of physical harm	2	2 – 2	9	7	6 – 7	5	19	18 – 20	3
Threw/hit with something	2	1 – 2	10	5	5 – 6	5	16	15 – 17	3
Pushed, grabbed, twisted arm, pulled hair	2	2 – 3	8	7	7 – 8	4	19	18 – 20	3
Slapped, kicked, bit, hit with a fist	1	1 – 1	12	5	4 – 5	6	15	14 – 16	3
Strangled, suffocated, burned	0	0 – 0	22	2	1 – 2	10	5	4 – 5	6
Used/threatened to use a knife or gun	-	-	-*	1	1 – 2	11	5	4 – 5	6
Other physical violence	-	-	-*	1	0 – 1	17	2	2 – 2	9
Total physical violence	3	3 – 4	7	12	11 – 13	3	31	30 – 32	2
<b>Sexual violence</b>									
Unwanted sexual touching	0	0 – 1	19	2	1 – 2	10	4	3 – 4	6
Attempted forced intercourse	-	-	-*	1	1 – 1	13	3	3 – 4	7
Forced intercourse	0	0 – 0	24	1	1 – 2	11	6	5 – 7	5
Forced sex with someone else	-	-	-*	-	-	-*	1	1 – 1	14
Other sexual violence	-	-	-*	0	0 – 0	23	1	0 – 1	15
Drug facilitated sexual activity (b)	-	-	-*	-	-	-*	-	-	-*
Total sexual violence	1	1 – 1	14	3	3 – 4	7	12	11 – 13	3

(a) These estimates are based only on women who had current or former intimate partners

(b) This question was asked in the second stage of the IVAWS, and the estimates are based on a sample size of 2,938

- Counts too low to produce a statistically reliable estimate

\* The relative standard error is greater than 25%

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=6,438

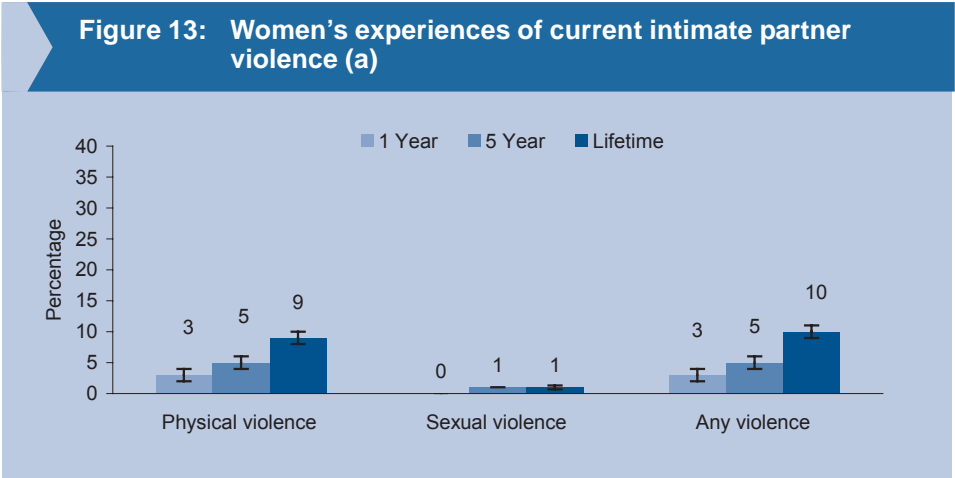
### *Current intimate partner violence*

Other work has found that women with a current intimate partner are less likely to report experiences of violence from that partner. Of the women who were in a current relationship (spouse, de facto partner, or boyfriend) at the time of their participation in the IVAWS (n=5,074), between nine and 11 per cent reported that they had experienced violence from their current partner over their lifetime (Figure 13). As the time frame reduces the experience of violence from a current partner also declines to three per cent. Women were more likely to report experiencing physical (9% lifetime) rather than sexual violence (1% lifetime).

Some researchers suggest that under-reporting of violence by women in current relationships may be a factor contributing to the lower levels of violence by current as compared to



previous intimate partners (Johnson 1996: 136). Women may not want to identify their relationship as being violent, because they are either not willing or able to admit to themselves, or not willing or able to disclose safely to an interviewer. However, relationships marked with violence would be more likely to terminate than those that are peaceful or violence-free (Johnson 1996).



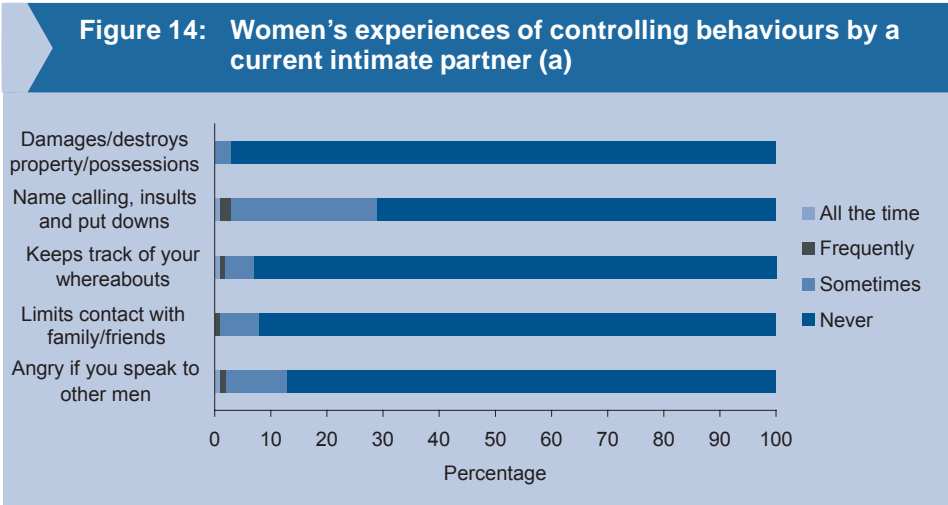
(a) These estimates are based only on women who had a current intimate partner  
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=5,074

The most common form of physical violence experienced by women with current male intimate partners was being pushed, grabbed, twisted their arm or pulled their hair, with between five and six per cent of women reporting that they suffered this type of violence at the hands of a current partner over their lifetime (Table 8). Few women reported experiencing sexual violence from a current intimate partner (Figure 13 and Table 8). Half of the women who experienced violence from a current intimate partner reported experiencing more than one form of violence (Figure 12).

The literature on violence against women suggests, ‘the control of women [by men] is a central element of abuse’ (Medina-Ariza & Barbaret 2003: 308). In addition to measuring the prevalence of physical and sexual violence against women, the IVAWS also measures emotionally abusive and controlling behaviours by current male partners. Such information is elicited from women through five separate items asking the women how often their current intimate partner exhibited such behaviour towards them (‘all the time’, ‘frequently’, ‘sometimes’, ‘never’). Such behaviours included the male insisting on knowing her whereabouts, calling her names or putting her down, jealousy guarding her interactions

with other males, limiting her access to family and friends, and damaging or destroying her property or possessions.

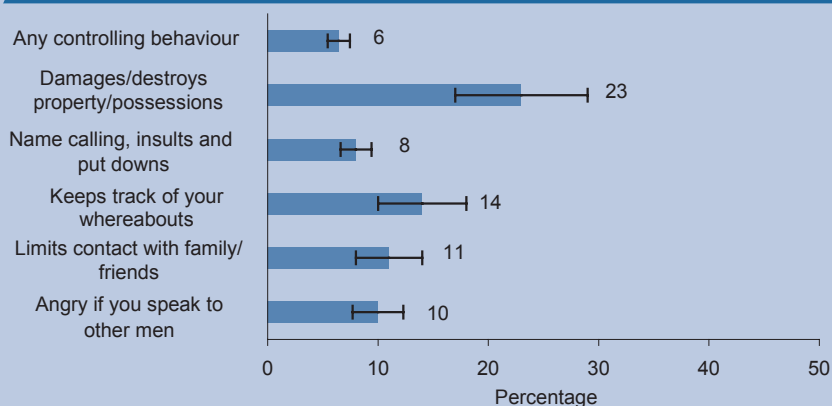
While the majority of women reported never experiencing such behaviours (Figure 14), between 37 and 40 per cent (2% RSE) of women in current relationships reported experiencing<sup>9</sup> at least one type of controlling behaviours from their intimate partners. The most common type of controlling behaviour was name calling, insults or behaviour that put the woman down or made her feel bad, with 28 per cent of women reporting experiencing this behaviour (Figure 14).



(a) These estimates are based only on women who had a current intimate partner  
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=5,074

Women who experience controlling behaviours are more likely to experience higher levels of violence (Johnson 1996; 2001). About three per cent of women reported that they experienced any violence from a current intimate partner during the 12 months preceding the survey (Figure 13). In contrast, 6 percent of women who experienced any controlling behaviours reported violence from a current intimate partner (Figure 15). Women whose current partners damaged or destroyed property or possessions, reported levels of violence almost eight times higher during the previous 12 months than the average for current intimate partner violence in general (23% versus 3%).

**Figure 15: Women's experiences of current intimate partner violence during the previous 12 months by controlling behaviours (a)**



(a) These estimates are based only on women who had a current intimate partner

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=5,074

**Table 8: Women's experiences of different forms of current intimate partner violence, percentages (a)**

	Past 12 months			Previous 5 years			Lifetime		
	%	95 CI	RSE	%	95 CI	RSE	%	95 CI	RSE
<b>Physical violence</b>									
Threats of physical harm	1	1 – 1	14	2	2 – 2	10	3	3 – 4	8
Threw/hit with something	1	1 – 1	14	2	2 – 3	9	4	4 – 5	7
Pushed, grabbed, twisted arm, pulled hair	2	1 – 2	11	3	3 – 4	8	5	5 – 6	6
Slapped, kicked, bit, hit with a fist	1	0 – 1	17	1	1 – 2	12	3	3 – 4	8
Strangled, suffocated, burned	-	-	-*	0	0 – 1	24	1	0 – 1	17
Used/threatened to use a knife or gun	-	-	-*	-	-	-*	-	-	-*
Other physical violence	-	-	-*	-	-	-*	-	-	-*
Total physical violence	3	2 – 3	9	5	4 – 6	6	9	9 – 10	4
<b>Sexual violence</b>									
Unwanted sexual touching	-	-	-*	1	0 – 1	21	1	0 – 1	18
Attempted forced intercourse	-	-	-*	-	-	-*	-	-	-*
Forced intercourse	-	-	-*	-	-	-*	0	0 – 1	22
Forced sex with someone else	-	-	-*	-	-	-*	-	-	-*
Other sexual violence	-	-	-*	-	-	-*	-	-	-*
Drug facilitated sexual activity <sup>(b)</sup>	-	-	-*	-	-	-*	-	-	-*
Total sexual violence	0	0 – 1	24	1	0 – 1	17	1	1 – 1	13

(a) These estimates are based only on women who had a current intimate partner

(b) This question was asked in the second stage of the IVAWS, and the estimates are based on a sample size of 2,315

- Counts too low to produce a statistically reliable estimate

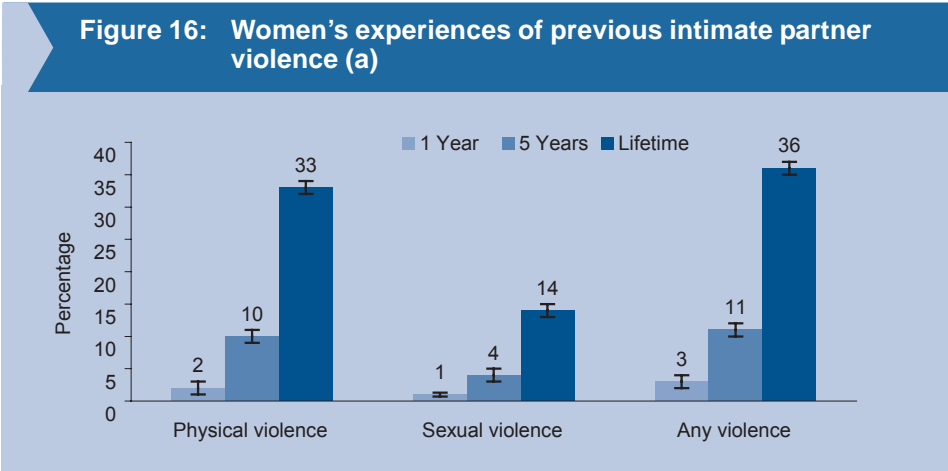
\* The relative standard error is greater than 25%

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=5,074

### *Previous intimate partner violence*

Nationally and internationally research has found that the prevalence of violence is higher for previous partners than current partners. IVAWS confirms that women experienced higher levels of violence from a previous partner than a current partner (see Figures 14 and 16).<sup>10</sup> To reiterate, about one in ten women in a current relationship reported that they ever experienced violence from their current partner (Figure 14). In contrast, between 35 and 37 per cent of women who have had a past relationship reported that they had experienced violence from a previous partner (within a previous relationship as well as after the relationship) (Figure 16).

Of the women who had previous partners, one third reported that they had experienced at least one form of physical violence from previous partners, and 14 per cent reported ever experiencing sexual violence from previous partners. Just over one in ten women reported that they experienced violence from former intimate partners during the five years preceding the survey, and less than three per cent reported experiencing violence during the last twelve months (Figure 16).



(a) These estimates are based only on women who had a previous intimate partner  
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=4,861

Previous male partners are responsible for greater levels and more severe violence than current male partners. Previous male partners were just as likely to use threats of violence as actual violence (Table 9). During their lifetime, between 21 and 23 per cent of women reported that their previous intimate partner had threatened to use violence against them, and between 19 and 21 per cent reported that their previous partner had pushed, grabbed, twisted their arm or pulled their hair (Table 9). Very few women reported that their current partner had used or threatened to use a knife or gun on them.<sup>11</sup> While between five and seven per cent of women who had a former relationship reported that their previous partner had used or threatened to use a knife or gun on them. They were also more likely to report that their previous partner had slapped, kicked, bitten, hit them with a fist or forced or attempted to force them to have sexual intercourse (Table 9).

**Table 9: Women's experiences of different forms of previous intimate partner violence, percentages (a)**

	Past 12 months			Previous 5 years			Lifetime		
	%	95 CI	RSE	%	95 CI	RSE	%	95 CI	RSE
<b>Physical violence</b>									
Threats of physical harm	1	1 – 2	12	6	6 – 7	6	22	21 – 23	3
Threw/hit with something	1	0 – 1	16	5	4 – 5	7	16	15 – 17	3
Pushed, grabbed, twisted arm, pulled hair	1	1 – 1	14	6	5 – 7	6	20	19 – 21	3
Slapped, kicked, bit, hit with a fist	1	0 – 1	17	4	4 – 5	7	16	15 – 17	3
Strangled, suffocated, burned	-	-	-*	2	1 – 2	11	6	5 – 6	6
Used/threatened to use a knife or gun	-	-	-*	1	1 – 2	12	6	5 – 7	6
Other physical violence	-	-	-*	0	0 – 1	20	2	1 – 3	10
Total physical violence	2	2 – 3	9	10	9 – 11	4	33	31 – 34	2
<b>Sexual violence</b>									
Unwanted sexual touching	0	0 – 1	25	1	1 – 2	12	4	4 – 5	7
Attempted forced intercourse	-	-	-*	1	1 – 1	14	4	4 – 5	7
Forced intercourse	-	-	-*	2	1 – 2	12	7	7 – 8	5
Forced sex with someone else	-	-	-*	-	-	-*	1	1 – 1	15
Other sexual violence	-	-	-*	0	0 – 1	24	1	1 – 1	15
Drug facilitated sexual activity <sup>(b)</sup>	-	-	-*	-	-	-*	-	-	-*
Total sexual violence	1	1 – 1	17	4	3 – 4	7	14	13 – 15	4

(a) These estimates are based only on women who had a previous intimate partner

(b) This question was asked in the second stage of the IVAWS, and the estimates are based on a sample size of 2,218

- Counts too low to produce a statistically reliable estimate

\* The relative standard error is greater than 25%

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=4,861

## Severity of intimate partner violence

Available research in the United States indicates that two out of five women who experienced violence from an intimate partner reported being injured (41%; Tjaden & Thoennes 1998). Based on the results from the Violence Against Women Survey in Canada, the proportion of women who were injured during an assault from a husband or common-law partner was higher, with almost half of the cases resulting in injury to the woman, and in almost half of the cases that involved injury, the woman received medical attention (Johnson 1996). The most common injuries reported by victims of intimate partner violence were relatively minor in nature (for example, bruises and scratches). About five per cent of female victims of intimate partner violence in the United States reported experiencing serious injuries, such as knife wounds, internal injuries, broken bones, and loss of consciousness (Rennison & Welchans 2000).

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A number of factors have been found to increase the risk of injury for women. These include:

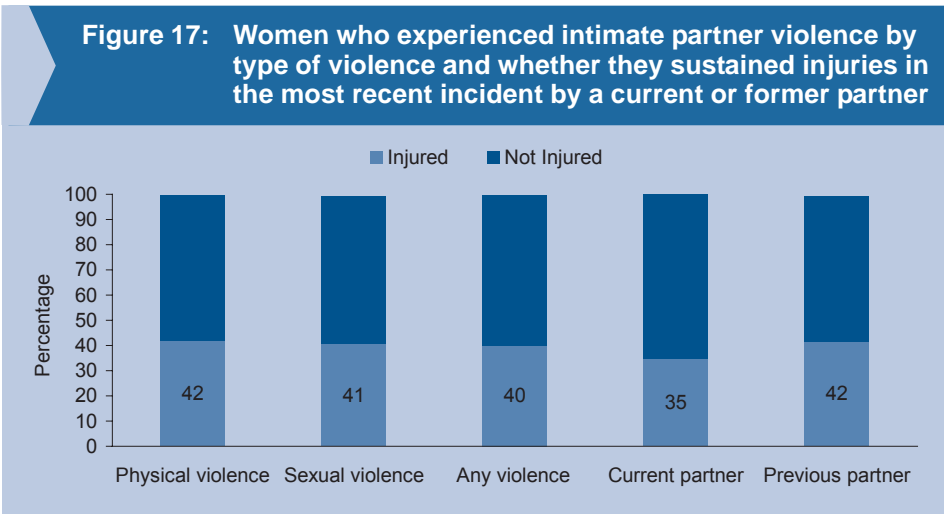
- experiencing violence before marriage or common-law union;
- having a partner who was drinking;
- having children witness the violence;
- experiencing more than one violent episode by the same partner;
- fearing one's life was in danger; and
- experiencing high levels of emotional abuse (Thompson, Saltzman & Johnson 2001).

Age is another factor found to predict greater likelihood of injuries. Women aged between 18 and 24 years had higher rates of violence and were significantly more likely to incur injury than victims in other age groups (Tjaden & Thoennes 2000). Such information is important because 'knowledge of a woman's status on certain factors can help public health practitioners to intervene more effectively with women at risk for experiencing violence-related injuries perpetrated by spouses' (Thompson, Saltzman & Johnson 2003: 455).

The IVAWS collected injury information in relation to the woman's most recent incident of partner violence. About 2,214 women reported that they had experienced intimate partner violence. These women subsequently provided details in relation to their most recent incident of violence from a current or former intimate partner.

### *Physical injuries sustained*

In accord with international findings, two in every five women in the IVAWS who experienced intimate partner violence reported that they were injured in the most recent incident of violence (Figure 17). There were no differences based on the type of violence.



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=2,214

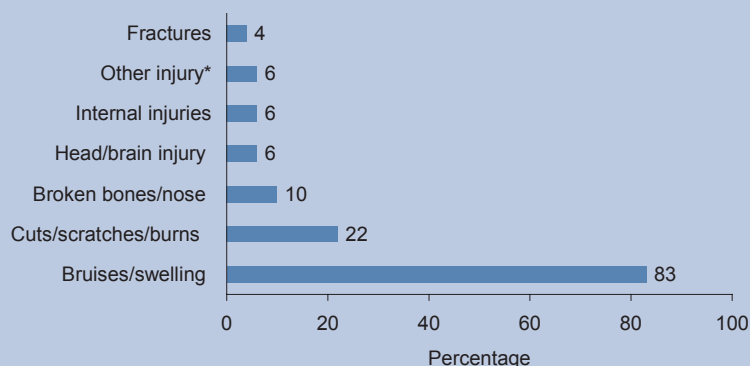
There were however, differences based on whether the women experienced the violence from a current intimate partner or previous intimate partner. Consistent with previous findings women are more at risk of injury from a former partner than a current partner. A higher proportion of women sustained injuries from a previous intimate partner than from a current intimate partner during the most recent incident of violence (Figure 17). Just over a third of women who experienced violence from a current partner sustained injuries compared with 42 per cent of women who experienced violence from a previous intimate partner.

### *Type of injuries sustained*

The most common type of injuries inflicted by an intimate partner were minor in nature. Four out of five women who sustained injuries during the most recent incident of partner violence, suffered bruises and associated swelling. Cuts, scratches and burns were sustained by 22 per cent of women from their intimate partner. Few women who experienced intimate partner violence reported sustaining fractures during the most recent incident (4%; Figure 18).



**Figure 18: Women who were injured by an intimate partner by type of injuries sustained**



Note: Does not add to 100% due to multiple responses

\* Other injury includes miscarriage (1%), genital injury (2%), Posttraumatic stress (1%), and other injury (2%)

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=882

Generally, women who present for treatment are more likely to have experienced more severe injuries, than those women who do not present for treatment (American Medical Association Council for Scientific Affairs 2000). In the IVAWS, over a quarter of the women who sustained injuries were injured so badly they required medical attention regardless of whether or not they received it (29%). Unfortunately, we do not know how many women actually received medical treatment. Some of the women who sustained injuries also reported that they were pregnant at the time that they experienced the most recent incident of intimate partner violence (7%).

Another measure of severity is whether the women felt their life was in danger during the most recent incident of partner violence. Just under a third of women felt that their life was in danger (30%). However, perceptions of danger are higher for previous partners (35%) than for current partners (15%).

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## Correlates of intimate partner victimisation

This section examines some of the correlates of current intimate partner victimisation. The focus is on identifying the common socio-demographic characteristics of the women who experienced violence from a current intimate partner as well as the common characteristics of their partners. The objective is to identify specific characteristics that could be considered as 'risk factors' or 'risk markers' for intimate partner violence.

### *Socio-demographic factors*

Table 10 presents the prevalence estimates of violence during the 12 months preceding the survey based on the socio-demographic characteristics of the women who experienced intimate partner violence, and their current male partners. Research suggests that violence in intimate relationships is related more to the characteristics of the male than the characteristics of the woman (Piispa 2000). While younger women experienced higher rates of violence by their current partners (between 3 and 7% for the youngest age group), compared to older women (between 2 and 3% for women aged between 45 and 54 years; Table 10), the differences were not significant. Levels of violence according to the age of the male partners follow a similar pattern, with a higher proportion of males in the younger age group being violent towards their intimate partners.

Different levels of violence were also found for women according to marital status. Women in de facto relationships were found to experience slightly higher levels of violence from their current intimate partner during the 12 months preceding the survey (between 3 and 6%) than married women (between 2 and 3%) or women who have a boyfriend (between 2 and 4%). A similar result has been found in Canada (Johnson 1996), as well as recent research in Australia that focused on lethal violence. This research highlighted that women in cohabiting relationships incurred a higher risk of being killed by a partner than married women (Shackelford & Mouzos forthcoming).

**Table 10: Women's experiences of current intimate partner violence during the previous 12 months by the characteristics of the women and their current intimate partners**

	Current intimate partners					
	Females			Males		
	%	95 CI	RSE	%	95 CI	RSE
<b>Age group</b>						
18 to 24 years	5	3 – 7	19	5	3 – 7	23
25 to 34 years	3	2 – 4	17	3	2 – 4	18
35 to 44 years	3	2 – 4	15	4	3 – 5	15
45 to 54 years	3	2 – 3	19	3	2 – 4	18
55 to 69 years	1	0 – 2	31*	1	1 – 2	25
<b>Marital status</b>						
Married	2	2 – 3	10			
De facto	5	3 – 6	18			
Boyfriend	3	2 – 4	23			
<b>Education</b>						
Primary and some secondary/technical school	3	2 – 3	15	3	2 – 4	14
Finished technical/ commercial college/ TAFE/Year 12	2	2 – 3	18	3	2 – 3	16
Some/completed university/CAE	3	3 – 4	12	3	2 – 3	15
<b>Labour force status</b>						
Working for pay	3	2 – 3	10	3	2 – 3	9
Not working for pay	3	2 – 4	14	3	2 – 4	22
<b>Combined household income p/wk</b>						
Less than \$300	3	1 – 7	58*			
\$300 to less than \$500	3	2 – 5	23			
\$500 to less than \$850	3	2 – 4	15			
\$850 and over	3	2 – 3	13			

\* This estimate should be used with caution, as the relative standard error is greater than 25%

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file] n=5,074

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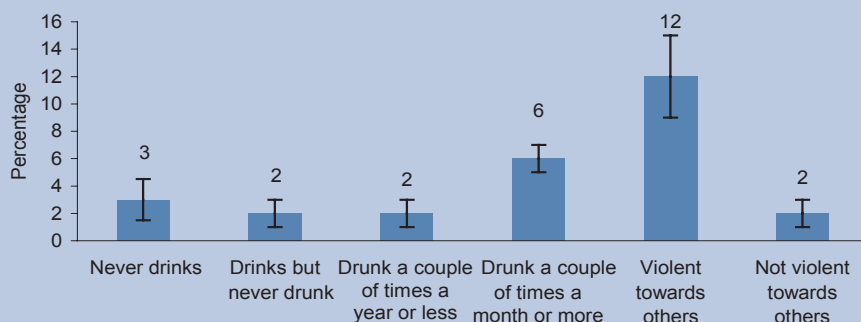
### *Other factors*

Other non-socio-demographic factors have been linked with an increased risk of violence. Alcohol is an example. There is a plethora of research available that suggests that alcohol is correlated with violence (Hotaling & Sugarman 1986; Pernanen 1991; Makkai 1997; 1998). Research has found that abusive males with alcohol or drug problems inflict violence against their partners more frequently, are more apt to inflict serious injuries, are more likely to be sexually assaultive, and are more likely to be violent outside the home than abusers without a history of substance abuse (Browne 1997). A relationship between alcohol and male intimate partner violence has been found to exist even after statistically controlling for socio-demographic variables, hostility, and marital satisfaction (Leonard & Blane 1992; Leonard 1993). However, recent research has found that male controlling behaviours over female partners made a more important statistical contribution to predictions about violence than did alcohol, age, type of relationship, or class variables.

The acting-out of negative attitudes toward women, especially men's rights to degrade and devalue their female partners through name-calling and putdowns, was an especially important predictor and, once entered [in the logistic regression model], reduced the effects of alcohol abuse to non-significance (Johnson 2001: 68).

The IVAWS asks about the current partner's drinking behaviour in terms of drunkenness (Figure 19). Women whose partners got drunk a couple of times a month or more experienced higher levels of violence (between 4 and 7%) than women of partners who got drunk less (Figure 19). A separate question was asked about whether or not the male partner was drinking or using drugs at the time of the most recent incident of partner violence. Fifty per cent of women indicated that their partner was neither drinking or using drugs; 35 per cent reported that he was drinking alcohol; four per cent said he was using drugs, and six per cent reported that he was both drinking alcohol and using drugs.

**Figure 19: Women's experiences of current intimate partner violence in the past year, by their partners' use of alcohol and whether their partner is violent outside of the family**



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=5,073

Another factor worth examining is the use of violence by male partners against persons other than their intimate partners. Males who had been violent towards anyone outside the family, for example in bars or in the workplace, were six times more likely to inflict violence on their intimate partner during the past year than males who were not violent outside the family (Figure 19).

### *Identifying risk factors for intimate partner violence*

The analysis thus far has indicated that the occurrence of current intimate partner violence may be associated with a number of socio-demographic characteristics of the women and their current partners, as well as some factors associated with the male partners' behaviour. However, it is unclear whether such factors would continue to be risk factors for intimate partner violence when the influences of other factors are controlled. In other words, if the age of both the female and her partner were controlled for, would marital status (i.e. being in a de facto relationship) still be a risk factor for victimisation? In order to overcome the limitations associated with bi-variate analysis in understanding the significant risk factors for violence against women (see Coumarelos & Allen 1998), a logistic regression model was fitted to the data. The goal was to estimate the relative risk of experiencing physical violence from the male intimate partner over the lifetime. Given the small number of women who reported experiencing current intimate violence during the last twelve months, and sexual violence overall, the model was restricted to physical violence over the lifetime.

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Four sets of risk factors have been identified in the literature — the socio-demographic characteristics of the partners in the relationship, prior history of violence by the female partner, general male behaviour in terms of alcohol and violence, and male controlling behaviours of the female partner. The specific measures that were used to measure these risk factors were:

#### *Characteristics of the relationship*

- Marital status (where 1 is married and 0 is de facto/boyfriend).
- Combined household income (where 1 is greater than \$850 per week and 0 is less than \$850 per week).
- Educational attainment of both the male and female (where 1 is the male has the same or lower educational attainment than the female and 0 is the male has higher educational attainment than the female).
- Length of the current intimate relationship in years (continuous variable).

#### *General male behaviour*

- Males' drinking behaviour (where 1 is the male gets drunk a couple of times a month or more and 0 is the male never drinks/never gets drunk or gets drunk a couple a times a year or less).
- Males' violent behaviour outside of the family (where 1 is the male is violent outside of the family and 0 is the male is not violent outside of the family).

#### *History of violence experienced by the female partner*

- Previous intimate partner violence during the lifetime (where 1 is the female experienced previous intimate partner violence and 0 is no prior intimate partner violence).
- Physical/sexual abuse as a child by a parent or non-parental child abuse (where 1 is the female was physically/sexually abused as a child and 0 is no prior abuse).

#### *Male controlling behaviours of the female partner*

- Experienced at least one type of controlling behaviour (sexual jealousy, limits contacts with family and friends, calls her names and insults her, follows her or keeps track of her whereabouts, or damages property<sup>12</sup> (where 1 is experienced controlling behaviour and 0 did not experience controlling behaviour).

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Age of the women and their male partners was not included in the model as both variables were highly correlated with the length of the relationship (.82 and .78). In other words, the age of the woman and her male intimate partner increased with the length of the intimate partner relationship.

The significant risk factors identified in the model were the length of the relationship, prior childhood victimisation, and factors associated the males' behaviour (controlling behaviour and violent outside of the family) (Table 11). Neither socio-demographic characteristics of the women nor their male partners nor history of prior intimate partner violence were found to be significant risk factors. This finding is consistent with previous research (see Johnson 2001). An interaction effect was found for being married and the males drinking behaviour. If the woman is married and her partner gets drunk a couple of times a month or more the odds of experiencing physical violence are increased by a factor of almost three. The strongest risk factor for current intimate partner physical violence was the males' controlling behaviours. If the woman's intimate partner engaged in controlling behaviours, the odds of experiencing physical violence over the lifetime are increased by a factor of six (Table 11).

Using the coefficients in the model, the probability that current intimate partner physical violence will be experienced during the lifetime can be calculated based on the various factors. For example, for a woman who has been married for five years, her partner gets drunk a couple of times a month or more, displays controlling behaviours, and has a tendency to be violent outside of the family, the probability that she will experience at least one incident of physical violence from her current partner over the lifetime is .58 (or 58%).

These results indicate that the strongest risk factors for intimate partner physical violence are associated with the male's behaviour — his drinking habits, general levels of aggression, and his controlling behaviour. These findings have significant implications for policy and will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

**Table 11: Risk factors for current intimate partner physical violence over the lifetime**

	Coefficient	Standard error	Odds ratio
<b>Characteristics of the relationship</b>			
Married	0.40	0.22	1.49
Male same/lower educational attainment than female	0.12	0.14	0.13
Household income greater \$850 p/wk	0.13	0.12	1.14
Length of current relationship	0.02*	0.01	1.02
<b>Female history of violence</b>			
Previous intimate partner violence	0.06	0.14	1.06
Childhood physical/sexual abuse	0.49*	0.12	1.64
<b>Male behaviour</b>			
Male drunk couple of times a month or more	-0.35	0.29	0.71
Male is violent outside of family	1.30*	0.16	3.65
Male controlling behaviours	1.80*	0.13	6.04
Married and male gets drunk a couple of times a month or more	1.05*	0.32	2.87
Constant	-4.63*		
Model chi square	444.31*		
df	10		
(n)	(5,344)		

\*statistically significant at  $p < 0.01$

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file]

<sup>8</sup> Refers to studies that are undertaken at the jurisdictional level, rather than nationally.

<sup>9</sup> They indicated that they experienced the behaviour either 'all the time', 'frequently' or 'sometimes'.

<sup>10</sup> These estimates are calculated only for women who reported that they had been in a previous intimate relationship ( $n=4861$ ). This includes former spouses, former de facto partners and former boyfriends.

<sup>11</sup> The counts were too small to produce a statistically reliable estimate.

<sup>12</sup> Based on the woman indicating that her partner displays this behaviour 'all the time', 'frequently' or 'sometimes'.



## **Chapter four: Non-partner violence: prevalence, severity and correlates of victimisation**

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## Chapter four: Non-partner violence: prevalence, severity and correlates of victimisation

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While violence is a phenomenon that affects women in every society (Heise et al. 1999), most researchers and activists have focused predominantly on violence perpetrated by intimate partners. 'Rarely are we aware of the abuse that occurs beyond this intimate circle' (Dasgupta 1998: 211). Yet, there is a social perception that women are most at risk of experiencing some form of violence from a stranger, which perpetuates the fear of 'stranger danger'. There is tension between expert knowledge and social perceptions. Previous lethal and non-lethal violence research indicates that strangers do not pose the greatest threat. 'The primary threat to women's safety does not come from strangers' (Johnson 1996: 91). In Australia, women are least likely to be killed by a stranger (Polk 1994; Mouzos 1999; 2000; 2001; 2003). Similarly, prevalence estimates suggest that women are more likely to experience physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of a male known to them than by a male stranger (ABS 1996: 25). While previous intimate partners pose the greatest risk of violence to women, just under a quarter of women in the Women's Safety Survey (ABS 1996) who experienced physical violence since the age of 15 years reported that the perpetrator was another known male, such as a family member, friend, boss/co-worker. Strangers accounted for 16 per cent of the perpetrators of physical violence (ABS 1996).

Overseas surveys also reveal that women are most at risk of violence from someone they know, particularly intimates (Statistics Canada 1993; Tjaden & Thoennes 2000; Dobash & Dobash 1979; Gordon & Riger 1989; Kelly 1988). In Canada, the Violence Against Women Survey revealed that, since the age of 16, women experienced violence from non-strangers at twice the rate of strangers (Statistics Canada 1993). In comparison, results from the National Violence Against Women Survey in the United States found that 16 per cent of women who were raped, physically assaulted, and/or stalked since the age of 18 were victimised by an acquaintance, 15 per cent by a stranger and six per cent by a relative other than a spouse (Tjaden & Thoennes 2000). Others have cautioned 'we ought not to lose sight of the fact that much violence against women is at the hands of non-intimate partners' (Lauritsen & White 2001: 39).

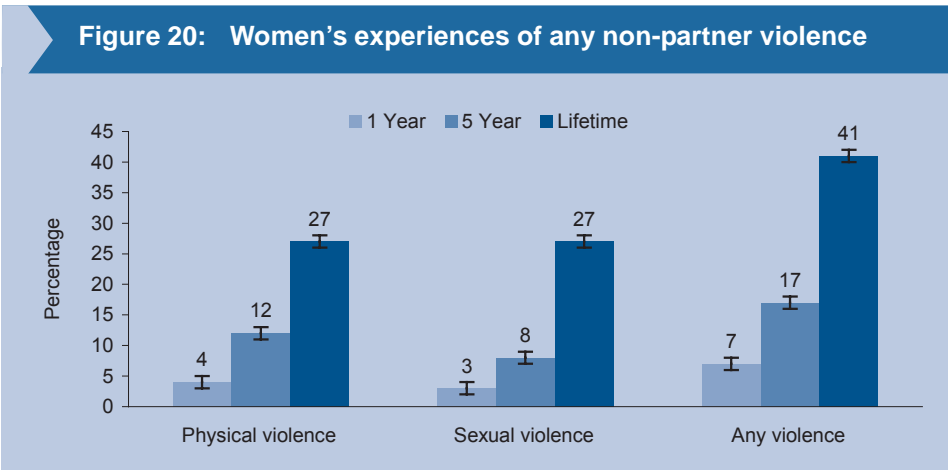
This chapter examines women's experiences of physical and/or sexual violence by a male other than an intimate partner, such as a relative, a friend/acquaintance or work colleague or a stranger, in other words, a male other than a current or former intimate partner. This includes violence or threats of violence inflicted by:

- a *relative*, such as a father, step-father, son, brother, uncle, cousin, or some other relative;
- a *friend or acquaintance*, such as a work colleague, neighbour, schoolmate, or someone else known quite well; or
- a male not previously known, such as a *stranger*.<sup>13</sup>

# Non-partner violence

## Any non-partner violence

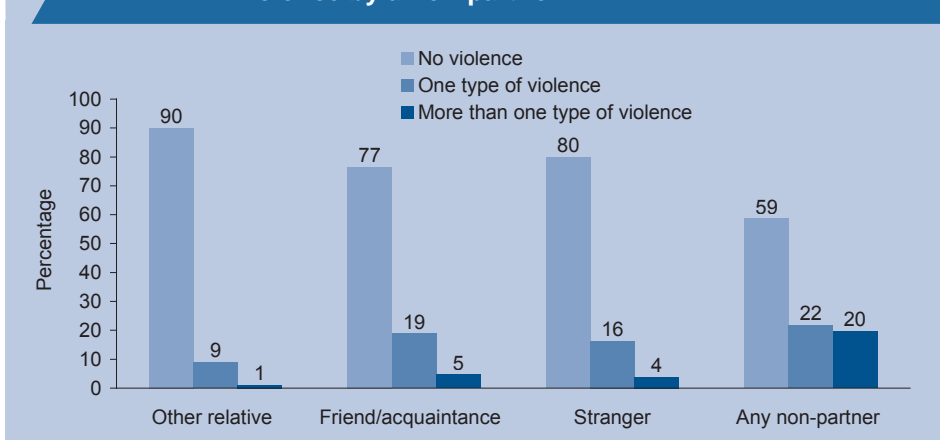
Forty-one per cent of all women (n=6,677) who participated in the IVAWS experienced violence from any non-partner (either a relative, friend, acquaintance or stranger) since the age of 16 years (Figure 20). This contrasts with 34 per cent of women who experienced violence from a current or former intimate partner. Another notable difference is that when women experienced violence from a partner, they were more likely to experience physical rather than sexual violence (see Figure 11). However, when the violence is from a non-partner, women reported similar levels of physical and sexual violence over the lifetime (27% respectively; Figure 20).



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=6,677

Once a non-partner such as a stranger has assaulted a woman she has a significant risk of being assaulted again and even a third or fourth time (Johnson 1996: 92). Results from the IVAWS confirm previous findings; almost half of the women who experienced violence from any non-partner reported experiencing more than one type of violence (Figure 21). The women may have experienced more than one type of violence in the same incident or in another incident. A similar proportion of women reported only experiencing one type of violence (Figure 21).

**Figure 21: Women's experiences of one or more forms of any violence by a non-partner**



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=6,677

An examination of the different forms of violence by non-partners indicates that unwanted sexual touching is the most common type of violence reported by women. Between 20 and 22 per cent of women who participated in the IVAWS reported that they had experienced unwanted sexual touching by a non-partner during the adult lifetime (Table 12). Threats of physical harm were the second most common type of violence reportedly experienced by women (17–19%). About half of the women who reported that a non-partner had threatened to physically harm them also experienced physical violence in the same or different incident (48%).

One in ten women also reported that a non-partner had pushed, grabbed, twisted their arm or pulled their hair at some time during the lifetime. Of particular relevance are the levels of non-partner violence experienced by women in the twelve months preceding the survey. A similar proportion of women reported experiencing threats of violence and unwanted sexual touching in the last twelve months (between 2 and 3%; Table 12). As very few women reported that a non-partner had attempted to strangle, suffocate or burn them, or force them to have sex with someone else in the last twelve months, the relative standard errors are quite high, rendering the estimates unreliable.

**Table 12: Women's experiences of different forms of violence by any non-partner, percentages**

	Past 12 months			Previous 5 years			Lifetime		
	%	95 CI	RSE	%	95 CI	RSE	%	95 CI	RSE
<b>Physical violence</b>									
Threats of physical harm	2	2 – 3	8	7	7 – 8	4	18	17 – 19	3
Threw/hit with something	1	1 – 1	13	3	2 – 3	8	6	5 – 6	5
Pushed, grabbed, twisted arm, pulled hair	1	1 – 2	11	4	4 – 5	6	11	10 – 11	4
Slapped, kicked, bit, hit with a fist	1	1 – 1	14	2	2 – 2	9	5	5 – 6	5
Strangled, suffocated, burned	-	-	-*	0	0 – 1	18	1	1 – 1	11
Used/threatened to use a knife or gun	-	-	-*	1	1 – 2	10	4	4 – 5	6
Other physical violence	-	-	-*	1	1 – 1	15	2	1 – 2	10
Total physical violence	4	4 – 5	6	12	11 – 13	3	27	26 – 28	2
<b>Sexual violence</b>									
Unwanted sexual touching	3	2 – 3	8	7	7 – 8	4	21	20 – 22	2
Attempted forced intercourse	0	0 – 1	19	2	1 – 2	9	7	6 – 8	5
Forced intercourse	-	-	-*	1	1 – 1	13	4	4 – 5	6
Forced sex with someone else	-	-	-*	-	-	-*	1	0 – 1	15
Other sexual violence	-	-	-*	-	-	-*	1	1 – 1	13
Drug facilitated sexual activity <sup>(a)</sup>	-	-	-*	-	-	-*	-	-	-*
Total sexual violence	3	3 – 3	7	8	7 – 9	4	27	26 – 28	2

(a) This question was asked in the second stage of the IVAWS, and the estimates are based on a sample size of 3,047

- Counts too low to produce a statistically reliable estimate

\* The relative standard error is greater than 25%

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=6,677

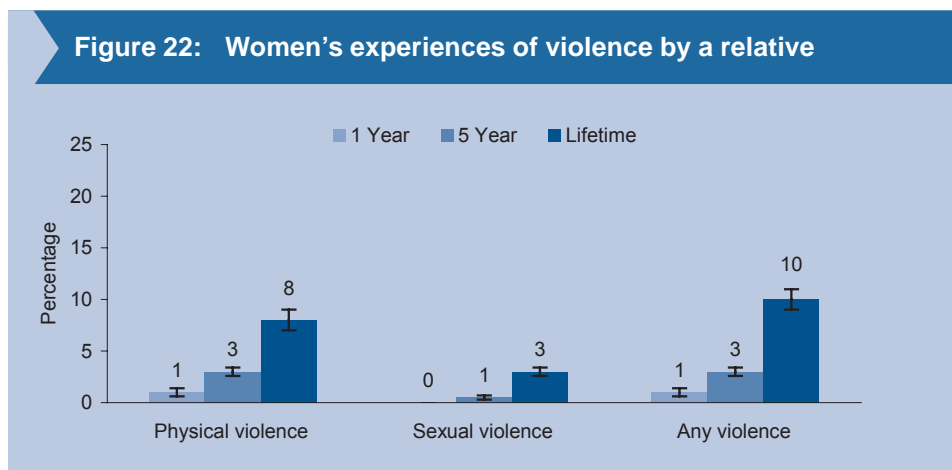
The following sections focus specifically on the prevalence of violence inflicted by a relative, friend/acquaintance or work colleague, or a stranger in order to identify whether women's experiences of violence differ based on the relationship distance between the victim and offender. While closest relationships seem to pose the greatest threat to women's safety, it is also pertinent to question whether males at the opposite end of the victim-offender relationship continuum, that is strangers, also posed a significant threat to these women's safety.

As specific victim-offender relationships are examined, the number of women who report experiencing the various types of violence from each perpetrator will tend to be small especially with regard to the five years and twelve months preceding the IVAWS survey. Small cell counts are subject to high relative standard errors, which mean that the estimates produced are unreliable for most purposes. The following discussion therefore focuses

predominantly on lifetime prevalence estimates of violence inflicted by various categories of non-partners.

### Violence by a relative

This section examines women's experiences since the age of 16 years of physical and sexual violence from a male relative, which includes a father/stepfather, uncle, cousin/cousin in law, brother/brother in law, son, father in law or other relative. Women's experiences of childhood violence will be explored in the following chapter. Overall, about one in ten women who participated in the IVAWS reported that they had been victimised by a relative on one or more occasions since the age of 16 years (Figure 22). Similar to the general patterns observed with regard to intimate partner violence, women who experienced violence by a relative were more likely to report experiencing physical (between 7 and 9%) rather than sexual violence (between 2 and 3%) on at least one occasion over the lifetime. Very few women reported that they had experienced more than one type of violence (1%; see Figure 21) from a relative, although when multiple forms of violence were experienced, it was usually threats followed by actual physical violence.



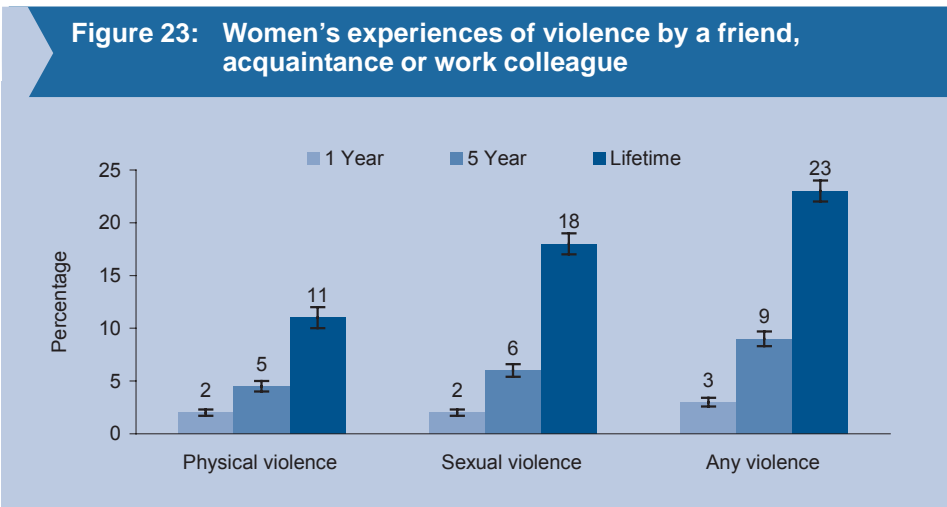
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=6,677

The common types of violence experienced by women over a lifetime from a relative were threats of harm (4–6%), being pushed, grabbed, twisted arm, having hair pulled (3–4%), having something thrown at them or hit with something (2–3%), slapped, kicked, bitten, or hit with a fist (2–3%; Table 13), or unwanted sexual touching (2%; Table 14). While the cell counts are too small to provide detailed estimates according to the particular relative involved, a father or stepfather, followed by a brother were the usual males involved in such violence.

There were however a couple of exceptions. A higher proportion of brothers-in-law than all other relatives were involved in the perpetration of attempted forced intercourse, and a higher proportion of unwanted sexual touching was carried out by uncles.

### *Violence by any other known male*

Women reported experiencing violence from a range of other known males, other than relatives. About a quarter of the women who participated in the IVAWS reported that they had experienced at least one incident of violence from a friend, acquaintance or work colleague over the lifetime (23%; Figure 23). A different pattern emerges when the type of violence is examined: women are more likely to experience sexual violence than physical violence from another known male (Figure 23). One out of five women reported that they had experienced at least one form of sexual violence from a friend, acquaintance or work colleague since the age of 16 years (18%), compared to one out of ten women who reported experiencing at least one form of physical violence (11%). Prevalence estimates of sexual violence against women were also higher during the five years preceding the survey compared to physical violence estimates. There were no differences in the proportion of women who experienced physical and/or sexual violence from any other known male during the 12 months preceding the survey (about 2%).



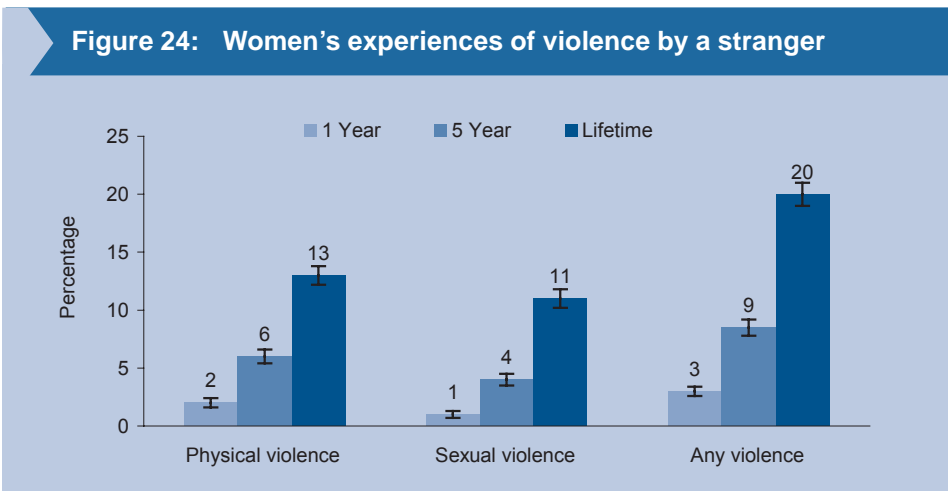
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=6,677

Five per cent of all women experienced more than one type of violence from a friend, acquaintance or work colleague (Figure 21). As the overall patterns indicate, the most common type of violence experienced by the women from any other known male over the lifetime was unwanted sexual touching (between 12 and 13%; Table 14). This was followed by threats of physical harm, reported by between six and seven per cent of women (Table 13). Over one third of women who were threatened also experienced an incident of actual physical violence.

Following threats of physical harm, the next most common type of violence experienced by women in the IVAWS was attempted forced intercourse, with between four and five per cent of women reporting that they had experienced this type of violence from any other known male over the lifetime (Table 14). A further 2–3 per cent of women reported that a friend, acquaintance or work colleague had forced them to have sexual intercourse on at least one occasion (Table 14).

### *Violence by a stranger*

It has been suggested in the literature that stranger violence in public places is behind most fear of crime for women (Tulloch et al. 1998), and that according to news accounts, stranger violence is commonplace (Reidel 1987). About one in five women who participated in the IVAWS reported that since the age of 16 years, a stranger had victimised them on at least one occasion (Figure 24). This reduces to three per cent in the last twelve months. Only four per cent of the women experienced more than one type of stranger violence (Figure 21).



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=6,677



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Previous Canadian research finds that ‘the biggest threat by far that women experience from strangers is the threat of sexual violence’ (Johnson 1996: 92). Results derived from the IVAWS are to the contrary. Almost the same proportion of women who experienced sexual violence reported experiencing physical violence (11% and 13% respectively; Figure 24).

Threats of physical harm were the most common type of violence committed by strangers (8–9%; Table 13). Over a third of women who were threatened by a stranger also experienced an actual incident of physical violence. The second most common type of violence was unwanted sexual touching, with between seven and nine per cent of women having experienced this during their lifetime (Table 14). Few women reported that they were raped by a stranger (1%; Table 14).

Another finding worth noting was that less than three in one hundred women surveyed indicated that a stranger had used or threatened to use a knife or gun against them in their lifetime (2-3%; Table 13). While the IVAWS did not ask women specific questions as to whether they experienced violence from a stranger during the course of another crime, it is well known that the most common motive for stranger violence is robbery (Cook 1987; 1990). In Australia, two-thirds of crime homicides (that is, homicides that occurred during the course of another crime, such as a robbery or sexual assault) involved a victim and offender who were not known to each other (Mouzos 2003).

**Table 13: Women's experiences of different forms of non-partner physical violence, percentages**

	Past 12 months			Previous 5 years			Lifetime		
	%	95 CI	RSE	%	95 CI	RSE	%	95 CI	RSE
<b>Other relative</b>									
Threats of physical harm	0	0 – 1	18	2	1 – 2	10	5	4 – 6	6
Threw/hit with something	-	-	-*	1	1 – 1	14	3	2 – 3	8
Pushed, grabbed, twisted arm, pulled hair	0	0 – 1	21	1	1 – 2	11	3	3 – 4	7
Slapped, kicked, bit, hit with a fist	0	0 – 0	25	1	1 – 1	14	3	2 – 3	8
Strangled, suffocated, burned	-	-	-*	-	-	-*	1	0 – 1	17
Used/threatened to use a knife or gun	-	-	-*	-	-	-*	1	1 – 1	15
Other physical violence	-	-	-*	-	-	-*	-	-	-*
Total physical violence	1	1 – 1	12	3	3 – 3	7	8	7 – 9	4
<b>Friend/ acquaintance/ work colleague</b>									
Threats of physical harm	1	1 – 1	15	2	2 – 3	8	6	6 – 7	5
Threw/hit with something	0	0 – 1	18	1	1 – 1	13	2	2 – 2	9
Pushed, grabbed, twisted arm, pulled hair	0	0 – 1	19	2	1 – 2	10	4	4 – 4	6
Slapped, kicked, bit, hit with a fist	-	-	-*	1	0 – 1	15	1	1 – 2	10
Strangled, suffocated, burned	-	-	-*	-	-	-*	0	0 – 1	22
Used/threatened to use a knife or gun	-	-	-*	1	0 – 1	18	1	1 – 1	12
Other physical violence	-	-	-*	0	0 – 1	21	1	0 – 1	15
Total physical violence	2	1 – 2	10	5	4 – 5	6	11	10 – 11	4
<b>Stranger</b>									
Threats of physical harm	1	1 – 2	10	4	3 – 4	6	8	8 – 9	4
Threw/hit with something	-	-	-*	1	1 – 1	13	2	1 – 2	9
Pushed, grabbed, twisted arm, pulled hair	1	0 – 1	17	2	1 – 2	9	4	4 – 5	6
Slapped, kicked, bit, hit with a fist	-	-	-*	1	0 – 1	15	1	1 – 2	11
Strangled, suffocated, burned	-	-	-*	-	-	-*	0	0 – 1	21
Used/threatened to use a knife or gun	-	-	-*	1	1 – 1	15	2	2 – 3	8
Other physical violence	-	-	-*	-	-	-*	1	0 – 1	15
Total physical violence	2	2 – 3	8	6	5 – 7	5	13	12 – 14	3

- Counts too low to produce a statistically reliable estimate

\* The relative standard error is greater than 25%

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=6,677

**Table 14: Women's experiences of different forms of non-partner sexual violence, percentages**

	Past 12 months			Previous 5 years			Lifetime		
	%	95 CI	RSE	%	95 CI	RSE	%	95 CI	RSE
<b>Other relative</b>									
Unwanted sexual touching	-	-	-*	0	0 – 1	19	2	2 – 2	9
Attempted forced intercourse	-	-	-*	-	-	-*	0	0 – 1	20
Forced intercourse	-	-	-*	-	-	-*	1	0 – 1	18
Forced sex with someone else	-	-	-*	-	-	-*	-	-	-*
Other sexual violence	-	-	-*	-	-	-*	-	-	-*
Drug facilitated sexual activity <sup>(a)</sup>	-	-	-*	-	-	-*	-	-	-*
Total sexual violence	-	-	-*	1	0 – 1	17	3	2 – 3	8
<b>Friend/ acquaintance/ work colleague</b>									
Unwanted sexual touching	2	1 – 2	10	4	4 – 5	6	12	12 – 13	3
Attempted forced intercourse	0	0 – 1	20	1	1 – 1	12	5	4 – 5	6
Forced intercourse	-	-	-*	1	0 – 1	15	3	2 – 3	7
Forced sex with someone else	-	-	-*	-	-	-*	0	0 – 1	18
Other sexual violence	-	-	-*	-	-	-*	0	0 – 0	22
Drug facilitated sexual activity <sup>(a)</sup>	-	-	-*	-	-	-*	-	-	-*
Total sexual violence	2	2 – 2	9	6	5 – 6	5	18	17 – 19	3
<b>Stranger</b>									
Unwanted sexual touching	1	1 – 1	12	3	3 – 3	7	8	7 – 9	4
Attempted forced intercourse	-	-	-*	1	0 – 1	17	2	2 – 3	8
Forced intercourse	-	-	-*	-	-	-*	1	1 – 1	12
Forced sex with someone else	-	-	-*	-	-	-*	-	-	-*
Other sexual violence	-	-	-*	-	-	-*	1	0 – 1	17
Drug facilitated sexual activity <sup>(a)</sup>	-	-	-*	-	-	-*	-	-	-*
Total sexual violence	1	1 – 1	11	4	3 – 4	6	11	10 – 12	4

(a) This question was asked in the second stage of the IVAWS, and the estimates are based on a sample size of 3,047

- Counts too low to produce a statistically reliable estimate

\* The relative standard error is greater than 25%

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=6,677

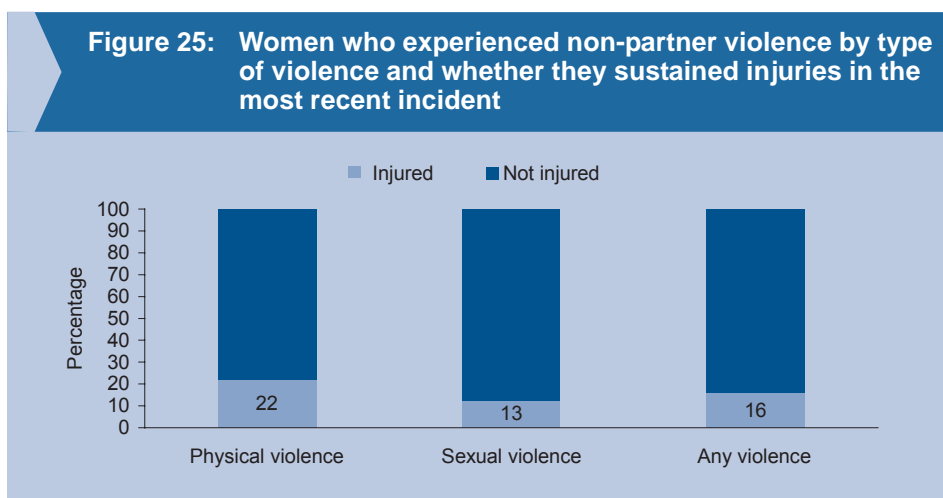
## Severity of non-partner violence

While it has been documented that intimate partners pose the greatest risk of injury to women, few studies have focused on the level and type of injury sustained by women from a male other than an intimate partner. As indicated in the previous chapter, the IVAWS collected injury information in relation to the woman's most recent incident of non-partner violence. About 2778 women reported that they had experienced non-partner violence. These women subsequently provided details in relation to the most recent incident that they experienced.

### *Physical injuries sustained*

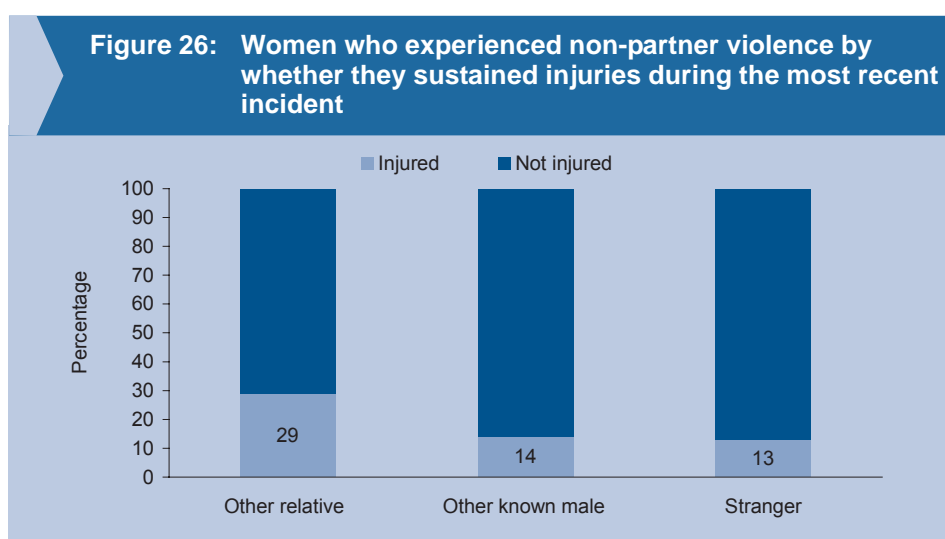
Sixteen per cent of women who experienced non-partner violence reported that they were injured in the most recent incident of violence (Figure 25). Women were more than twice as likely to sustain injuries from an intimate partner than a non-partner (40% versus 16%). This is consistent with results from both the Canadian Violence Against Women Survey and the National Crime Victim Survey in the United States. The Canadian Violence Against Women Survey reported that a higher proportion of wife assault incidents (45%) resulted in injury than did other sexual or physical assaults amongst the women surveyed (Statistics Canada 1993). Similarly, results from the National Crime Victim Survey found that 52 per cent of women of the women surveyed sustained injuries from an intimate partner compared to 26 per cent from a friend or acquaintance, and 20 per cent from a stranger (Bachman & Saltzman 1995).

When women who participated in the IVAWS reported being injured from a non-partner, they were more likely to sustain the injuries during an incident involving physical rather than sexual violence (22% versus 13%; Figure 25).



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=2,778

The risk of injury posed by non-partners varies based on the relational distance between the victim and offender. Other relatives — the closest group to the victims of all non-partners — present the greatest risk of injury, at 29 per cent (Figure 26). On the other hand, strangers — with the greatest relational distance between the victim and offender — pose the least risk of injury. About 13 per cent of women who experienced violence from a stranger reported that they were injured during the most recent incident (Figure 26).

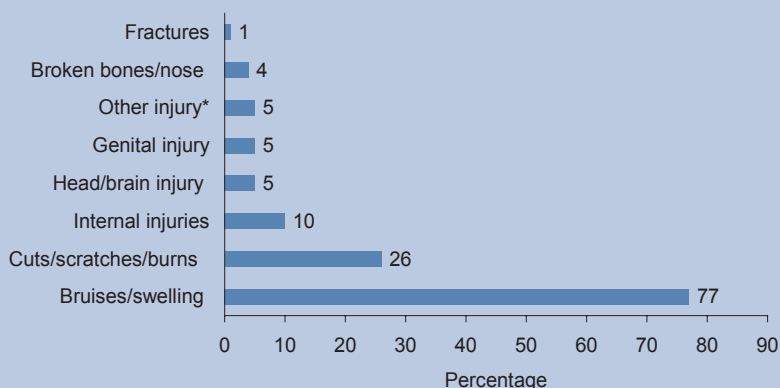


Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=2,778

### *Type of injuries sustained*

The type of injuries sustained by women who experienced non-partner and intimate partner violence were minor in nature. Bruises and associated swelling were sustained by 77 per cent of women in the IVAWS (Figure 27). A quarter reported sustaining cuts, scratches and burns during the most recent incident. Broken bones or a broken nose were less common in these incidents compared to intimate partner violence (4% versus 10%). In contrast, a higher proportion of women sustained internal injuries during non-partner violence than during partner violence (10% versus 6%). About one-quarter of women who sustained injuries were injured so badly that they required medical attention (24%).

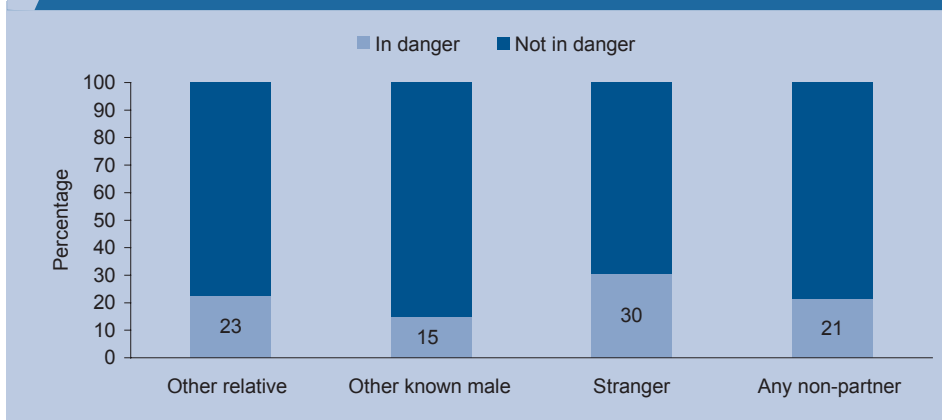
**Figure 27: Women who were injured by a non-partner by type of injuries sustained**



\* Other injury includes: pregnancy (0.5%); post-traumatic stress disorder (2%); lost virginity (1%) and other (1%)  
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=450

Fewer women who experienced non-partner violence reported that they felt that their life was in danger during the most recent incident as compared to women who experienced intimate partner violence (21% versus 30%; Figure 28). Differences also emerged depending on the male involved. Women who experienced violence from a stranger were more likely than women who experienced violence from any other known male to report that they felt that their life was in danger during the most recent incident (Figure 28). Women are least likely to sustain injuries from a stranger, but are more likely to fear strangers and to fear for their lives during an incident of violence. While this suggests that women's fear of strangers is not equivalent to the threat they face, there may be other factors that intensify women's fear of strangers. This will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

**Figure 28: Women who experienced non-partner violence by whether they felt their life was in danger during the most recent incident**



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=2,740

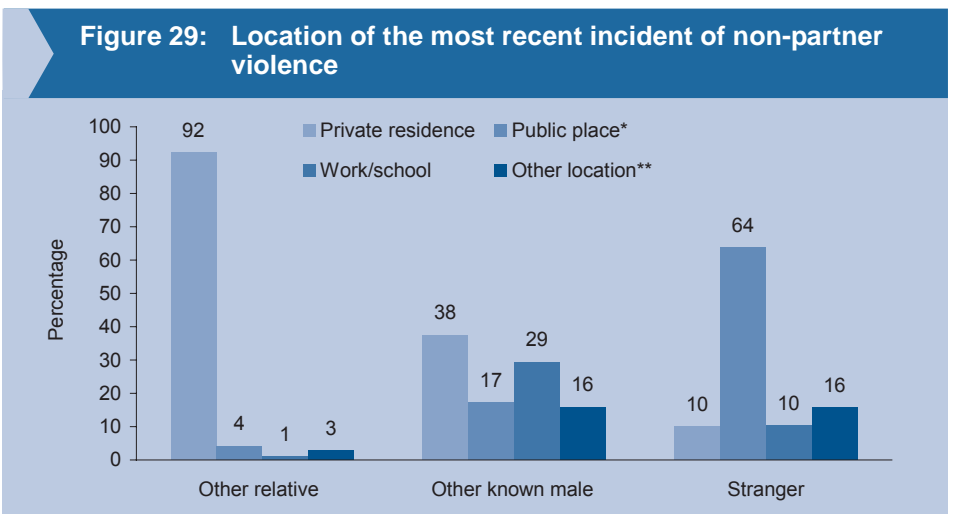
## Correlates of non-partner victimisation

In the previous chapter a number of risk markers were identified for intimate partner victimisation. This section examines some of the correlates of non-partner victimisation, with the aim of identifying the common characteristics of women who experienced non-partner violence. Unlike intimate partner violence, which usually involves premeditated violence directed at a specific individual, stranger violence is a more random and spontaneous event (Easteal 1993; Reiss & Roth 1993). While stranger violence is only one aspect of non-partner violence, this has important implications in terms of reducing fear and victimisation. Theory suggests that women who have a greater exposure to known males (other than intimate partners) and strangers through both private and public interactions are more vulnerable to victimisation. In accordance with the routine activities theory, age (being young), and marital status (being unmarried) are potential risk markers for non-partner victimisation (Cohen & Felson 1979).

### *Characteristics of the most recent incident*

Prior to examining some of the socio-demographic factors associated with non-partner victimisation, the following brief discussion provides some context in terms of the characteristics of the most recent incident of non-partner violence experienced by women who participated in the IVAWS.

Most incidents of intimate partner violence occur within the privacy of one's home, and this is no different for incidents involving a relative. Nine out of ten women reported that the most recent incident of violence from a relative occurred in a residential location, usually in their own home (Figure 29). In contrast, 38 per cent of women who experienced violence from some other known male reported that it occurred in a residential location, compared to only ten per cent of women who experienced stranger violence. Consistent with routine activities theory, the majority of women who experienced stranger violence reported that the most recent incident occurred in a public place (street/alley, parking lot, bar/dance club/pool hall, public transport or other public building; 64%). Twenty-nine per cent of women who reported violence from a friend, acquaintance or work colleague indicated that the violence occurred at work or school (Figure 29).



\* Public place includes: street/alley, parking lot, bar/dance club/pool hall, rural areas, beach, other public building and public transport

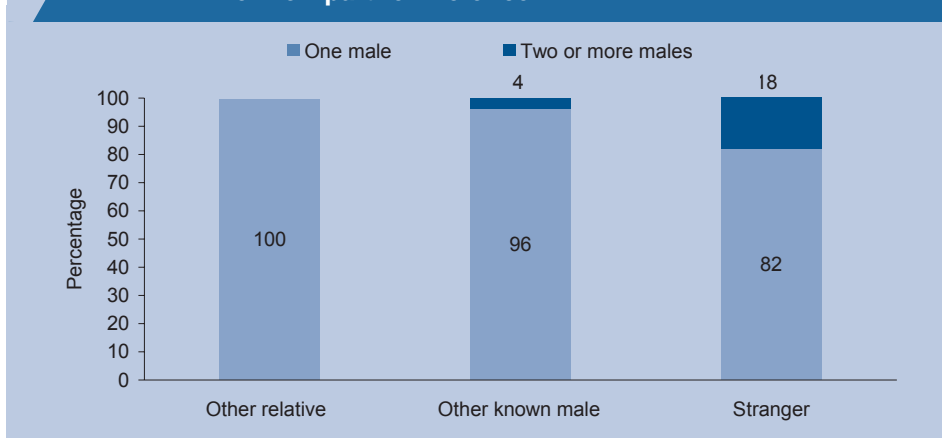
\*\* Other location includes: car, hotel/motel, social function, or other location

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=2,778

In addition to the differences associated with the location of the most recent incident of non-partner violence, there was also disparity in the number of males involved in the incident (Figure 30). As the relational distance between the victim and offender increases, so too does the proportion of incidents involving multiple offenders. None of the most recent incidents of violence perpetrated by relatives involved more than one offender. In comparison, almost one out of five most recent stranger perpetrated incidents involved more than one offender (Figure 30). Research in the United States also notes that strangers were more likely to have co-offenders when committing the violence (Craven 1997).



**Figure 30: Number of males involved in the most recent incident of non-partner violence**



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=2,778

Violence perpetrated by strangers is more likely to occur in a public place and to involve multiple offenders as compared to incidents involving other relatives or other known men. These factors combined can serve to increase the level of fear that women may feel in an incident of stranger violence, irrespective of whether or not they sustain injuries. Research also suggests that fear is not necessarily linked to injury but to the 'unknown' (Johnson 1996).

While the IVAWS does not ask women to describe the drinking habits of non-partners, it does collect information on whether the non-partner(s) had been using drugs or drinking at time of the most recent incident of violence. The results indicate that 32 per cent of women reported that the perpetrator(s) were drinking alcohol, 3 per cent were using drugs, 5 per cent were both drinking alcohol and using drugs, and 40 per cent were not drinking or using drugs during the most recent incident of violence. A further 20 per cent could not recall whether the perpetrator was drinking or using drugs during the most recent incident of violence.

### *Factors associated with non-partner violence*

Table 15 presents the estimates of non-partner violence during the 12 months preceding the survey based on the socio-demographic characteristics of the women. In accord with previous research and theoretical expectations, differences in levels of risk were found for two of the socio-demographic characteristics examined: age and marital status (Table 15). Young women aged 18 to 24 years reported the highest levels of violence from a non-

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partner during the 12 months preceding the survey (15–20%) compared to women in all other age groups. The level of violence reported by this group of women was two and a half times the national average of seven per cent of all women (see Figure 20 and Table 15), and more than twice the rate for women in the next age group (15–20% compared to 6–9%). Women aged 55–69 years reported the lowest levels of violence from a non-partner (1–3%).

Single women and women who were in a dating relationship also reported higher than average levels of violence from a non-partner (Table 15). Women who were married reported the lowest levels of violence from a non-partner (2–3%). Given that many of the single women are also young and dating, the higher level of violence is not unexpected.

There was little reported difference in levels of non-partner violence according to women's educational attainment or combined household income per week. However, women who were working for pay reported slightly higher levels of non-partner violence during the past twelve months (7–8% versus 4–6%). This finding can be explained with reference to routine activities theory, which suggests that one's paid work or recreational pursuits can increase the risk of victimisation by a non-partner because of increased exposure to potential offenders. Twenty-nine per cent of women who were victimised by a known male and one in ten women victimised by a stranger reported that the most recent incident had occurred at work or school (see Figure 29).

What emerges from this analysis is that certain groups of women have an elevated risk of experiencing non-partner violence in Australia. Young single women or those who are dating appear to be at greatest risk of violence from a relative, friend, acquaintance, work colleague or stranger. Contrary to common stereotypes that unemployment, low income and low educational attainment lead to a greater risk of violence for women, the interviews with these women indicate that only age and marital status are consistent risk markers. The lifestyles and activities of young single women are different to those of older married women: younger women have greater opportunities to socialise with known men and strangers and to interact in public spaces. Their exposure to potential violent situations is therefore also greater.

**Table 15: Women's experiences of non-partner violence during the previous 12 months by the characteristics of the women, percentages**

	%	95 CI	RSE
<b>Age group</b>			
18 to 24 years	18	15 – 20	7
25 to 34 years	8	6 – 9	9
35 to 44 years	5	4 – 6	11
45 to 54 years	4	3 – 5	13
55 to 69 years	2	1 – 3	18
<b>Marital status</b>			
Currently Married	3	2 – 3	10
De facto	9	7 – 11	13
Separated	6	2 – 10	37*
Boyfriend	17	14 – 20	9
Single	12	10 – 13	7
<b>Education</b>			
Primary and some secondary/technical school	5	4 – 6	10
Finished technical/ commercial college/TAFE/Year 12	7	6 – 8	9
Some/completed university/CAE	8	7 – 9	7
<b>Labour force status</b>			
Working for pay	7	7 – 8	5
Not working for pay	5	4 – 6	9
<b>Combined household income per week</b>			
Less than \$300	7	4 – 11	23
\$300 to less than \$500	6	5 – 8	13
\$500 to less than \$850	6	5 – 7	10
\$850 and over	7	6 – 8	6

\* This estimate should be used with caution, as the relative standard error is greater than 25%  
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=6,677

<sup>13</sup> A stranger is a man that the woman did not see or recognise at the time of the incident.

## **Chapter five: Childhood victimisation and the cycle of violence**

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## Chapter five: Childhood victimisation and the cycle of violence

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The domestic violence literature has argued that physically abusive behaviour is transmitted across generations. Violence taught either through witnessing or direct experience as a child increases the risk that the behaviour will be reproduced as an adult (Gelles 1979; 1980; Steinmetz 1987; Straus & Smith 1990; Kaufman & Zigler 1989; Simmons et al. 1995; Mihalic & Elliot 1997). There is also a growing body of literature that finds a relationship between witnessing and experiencing violence as a child and later victimisation in adulthood (Mathias, Mertin & Murray 1995; Sternberg et al. 1993; Egeland 1993; National Research Council 1993; Tomison 1996).

A further analysis of the Women's Safety Survey (ABS 1996) in Australia, found that a history of violent victimisation, either as a child or adult, was a strong predictor of future victimisation regardless of age, educational attainment, employment status, income or marital status. Childhood physical abuse predicted adult physical victimisation in the last 12 months, multiple victimisation, and emotional abuse in the last 12 months. Furthermore, childhood sexual abuse predicted sexual violence in the last 12 months, and multiple incidents of violence since the age of 15 years (Coumarelos & Allen 1998).

A survey of 5000 Australians aged between 12 and 20 years from all states and territories, undertaken between 1998 and 1999, found that almost one quarter (23%) of young women reported that they had witnessed at least one act of violence against their mothers or stepmothers (Indermaur 2001). Young people who experienced or witnessed domestic violence in their homes were twice as likely to be both victims and perpetrators of violence in their intimate relationships than those who were not exposed to domestic violence. The researchers concluded that:

Overall, the best predictor of perpetration (and victimisation) of violence in young people's relationships was found to be witnessing a certain type of male to female violence in the home. There seems, therefore to be support for the 'cycle of violence' thesis (Indermaur 2001: 4–5).

Similar findings are also found in the international literature. A survey from the United States found that males and females who had experienced both abuse as children and witnessed parental violence, had a one in three chance of encountering marital violence in the study year, double the overall rate of annual marital violence (16% for the sample) (Straus & Smith 1990). Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey in the United States revealed that women who reported being sexually abused before the age of 18 were victimised as adults at a rate of twice that of women who did not report any childhood abuse (Tjaden & Thoennes 1998). The Canadian Violence Against Women Survey found that men who witnessed mothers being abused were three times as likely to be violent toward their wives; women exposed to violence against mothers were twice as likely to be victims by their own partners (Johnson 1996).

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Meta-analyses of previous studies have confirmed the single study findings. A review of 52 comparative studies of marital violence concluded that witnessing violence between parents was a consistent risk marker for spouse abuse among both males and females. The majority of studies also found an association between being a victim of childhood violence and spouse abuse, although the association was less consistent than witnessing parental violence (Hotaling & Sugarman 1986).

While there is general support for the idea of a 'cycle of violence', some studies have found a stronger relationship between childhood sexual abuse and violence as an adult. A phone-in survey of 347 sexual assault victims in Victoria found that almost two-thirds of women callers (198 out of 304) disclosed having experienced child sexual assault. The most common perpetrator was a parent, usually a father or stepfather, with whom the victim had lived (D'Arcy 1999). An examination of 38 studies of the long-term sequelae of childhood abuse in women found that sexual re-victimisation had the strongest effect size for all of the behavioural and psychological outcomes examined across the studies (Neumann et al. 1996). A similar analysis of childhood victimisation and subsequent adult victimisation produced significant effects, which the authors concluded, 'establishes a link between child sexual abuse and adult sexual victimisation' (Roodman & Clum 2001: 202). Other research has found that women with a history of childhood sexual abuse were at greater risk for adult abuse than women generally (Siegel & Williams 2003; Messman-Moore & Long 2000).

## **Women's experiences of childhood victimisation**

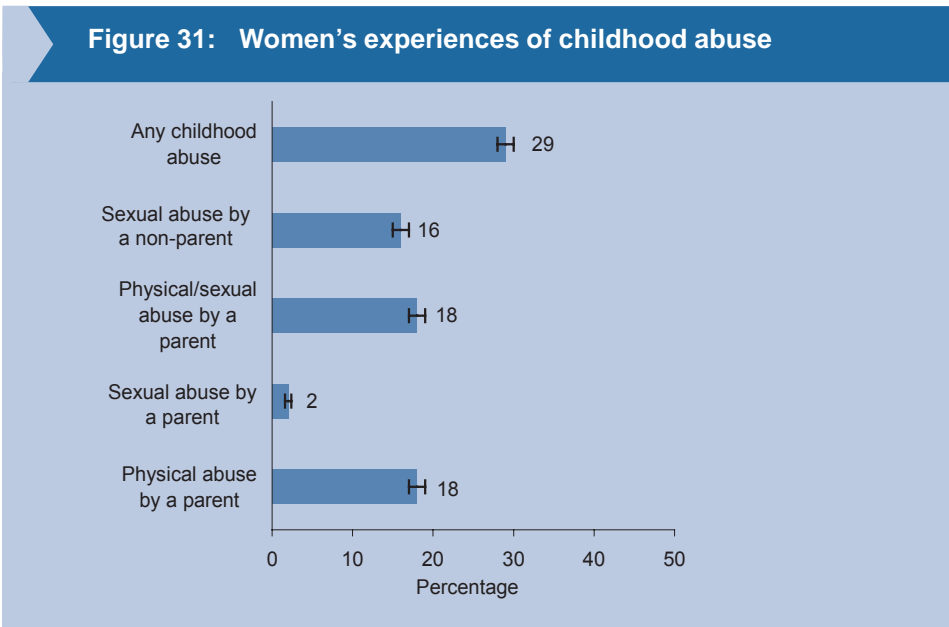
It has been suggested that due to the increased awareness of both physical and sexual violence, many victim/survivors may be speaking out regarding their experiences of violence. This has particularly been the case for survivors of childhood and/or previous (adult) sexual assault (Neame & Heenan 2003). While much has been documented in terms of under-reporting and non-disclosure of violence, especially for child sexual abuse, few national surveys of women (and men) have focused on the incidence of physical and/or sexual violence that the woman may have experienced as a child.

Previous national surveys, such as the Crime and Safety Survey (ABS 2003) are limited in that they do not ask women (or men) to reflect on their experiences of childhood violence, but the IVAWS captures this information. Specifically, the women were asked whether their own biological father/mother, any foster father/mother or stepfather/mother or anyone their mother lived with (that is, a parent), had been physically violent towards them before the age of 16 years. The women were also asked to reflect on experiences of sexual violence before the age of 16, and to indicate whether anyone had forced or attempted to force them

into any sexual activity. Information on physical violence by anyone other than parents was not captured in the IVAWS.

*Childhood victimisation*

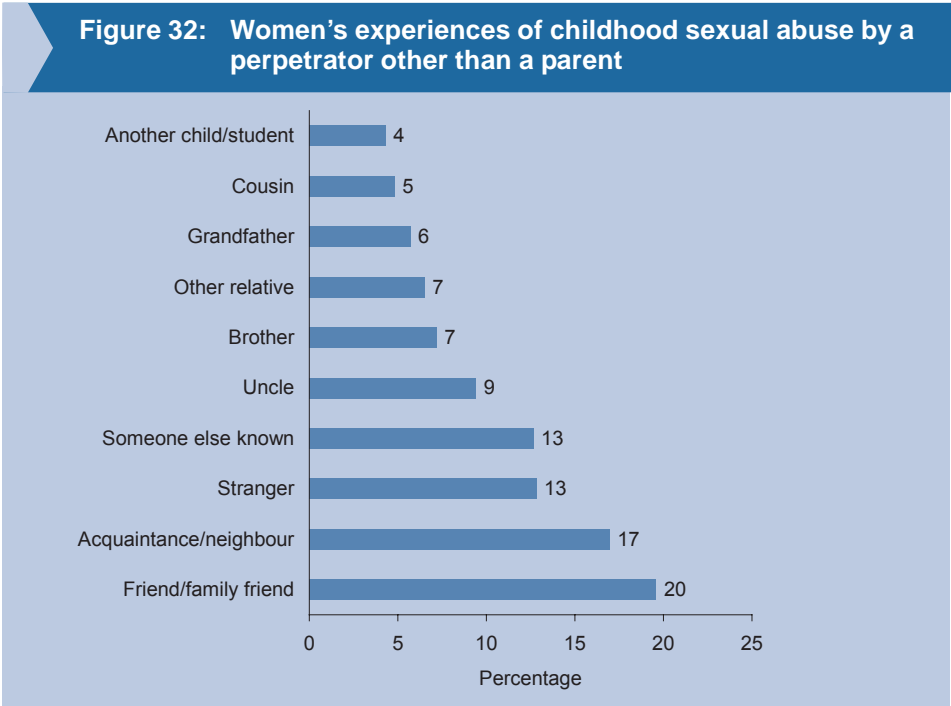
The results indicate that exposure to violence begins at an early age for many of the women in this sample. Twenty-nine per cent of women who were surveyed reported that they had experienced physical and/or sexual violence before the age of 16 years (n=1946; Figure 31). Almost one in five women reported that they had been physically abused as a child by a parent (18%). Fathers were more likely than mothers to physically abuse their child (61%). Although the proportion of women who reported being sexually abused by a parent as a child was low (about 2%), the overwhelming majority of perpetrators were fathers (only two women had been sexually abused by their mothers).



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=6,677

A further 16 per cent of women reported that someone other than a parent had sexually abused them before the age of 16 years (Figure 31). Over a quarter of the women who reported being physically abused by a parent also reported being sexually abused by a person other than a parent before the age of 16 years (27%). There were no women who reported being sexually abused by a parent as well as a person other than a parent.

Women who were sexually abused in their childhood by a non-parent reported that the most common perpetrator was a friend or friend of the family (20%), or an acquaintance or neighbour (17%; Figure 32). Just over one in ten women reported that the perpetrator was a stranger (13%). One third were abused by a relative, with an uncle the most common perpetrator within the extended family (9%).



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=1,217

### Relationship between childhood victimisation and adult victimisation

Previous research outlined at the beginning of this chapter finds a relationship between childhood victimisation and subsequent victimisation in adulthood. Women's responses from the IVAWS were used to test this theory. Lifetime prevalence estimates were calculated for physical, sexual and any violence for the women who reported any childhood abuse and for the women who did not experience any abuse in their childhood. The results from this analysis indicate that experiences of either physical and/or sexual abuse as a child



significantly increase the likelihood of victimisation in adulthood (Figure 33 and Table 16). Women who experienced abuse during childhood were one and a half times more likely to experience any violence in adulthood (78% versus 49%; Figure 33). The risk of sexual violence in adulthood doubles for women who were abused as a child (54% versus 26%; Figure 33).



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=6,667

The levels of violence experienced by women over the lifetime were higher for women who were abused as children compared to women who did not suffer childhood abuse. This pattern held irrespective of the type of childhood abuse suffered by the women (Table 16). A similar pattern was found for physical and sexual violence experienced in the last twelve months. Women who were abused as children experienced higher levels of victimisation in the last twelve months compared with women who were not abused as children. Others who have found similar findings suggest that such results should be viewed with caution, due to the possibility that differences reflect women's willingness to disclose victimisation rather than differences in actual victimisation (Tjaden & Thoennes 2000). Nevertheless, these results suggest a strong relationship between the experience of violence as a child and subsequent victimisation as an adult.

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Previous research has also tried to explain why women who are abused as children would be more likely to experience violence as adults. In other words, what fosters a 'cycle of violence'? Some suggest that women who experience childhood violence or who witnessed parental violence are more likely to be victimised as adults because they have low self esteem, and have learnt from persons within the immediate family that violent behaviour is a legitimate response to situations (Straus et al. 1997). In other words, they become desensitised to violence. Others suggest that women subjected to violence by a parent in childhood may develop a 'hostile, rebellious orientation', and consequently, be more likely to affiliate with and become involved with similar males (Simons et al. 1993).

Women who have been sexually abused as children are also at risk of developing 'traumagenic dynamics' where the sexuality of a child 'is shaped in a developmentally inappropriate and interpersonally dysfunctional fashion as a result of sexual abuse' (Finkelhor & Browne 1985: 531). Research suggests that this traumatic sexualisation in women who have been abused in childhood manifests itself in a number of behaviours, such as promiscuity, or prostitution, which in turn could expose women to a greater number of 'high risk' situations in which victimisation might occur (see Siegel & Williams 2003). Nonetheless, it seems that what is transmitted from one generation to another is a vulnerability to victimisation.

However, not all women who experienced childhood violence reported experiencing subsequent violence as adults. Twenty-two per cent of women who were victimised as children reported that they had not experienced any physical and/or sexual victimisation since the age of 16. This suggests that not all women exposed to violence as a child become vulnerable to further victimisation as adults. This may of course depend on the severity and frequency of violence experienced as a child, but it may also depend on the child's resiliency and ability to cope with the situation. Coping mechanisms are able to buffer or palliate the negative impact of violence victimisation or assist in overcoming the after-effects (Lobmann et al. 2003).

A number of protective factors have been identified which increase a person's resiliency. These include:

- psychological 'hardiness';
- experience of more positive than negative behaviours;
- high self-esteem;
- involvement with extended family and those in the community;
- support from teachers and friends; and
- family members' participation in mutual and independent activities (APA Presidential Task Force on Violence and the Family 1996).

The fact that most women who experienced violence as a child also experienced violence as an adult has important implications for policy. This will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

**Table 16: Women's experiences of childhood victimisation and subsequent adult victimisation over the lifetime, percentages**

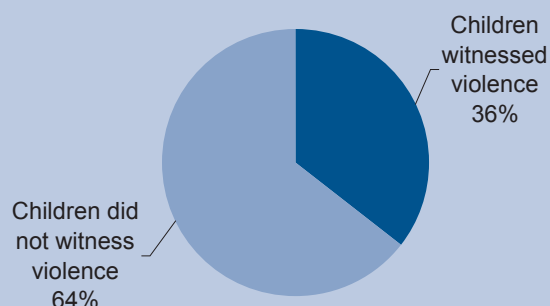
	Lifetime physical violence			Lifetime sexual violence			Lifetime any violence		
	%	95 CI	RSE	%	95 CI	RSE	%	95 CI	RSE
<b>Physical abuse by a parent</b>									
Experienced childhood abuse	72	70 – 75	2	55	52 – 58	3	80	78 – 82	2
Did not experience childhood abuse	43	42 – 44	2	30	29 – 31	2	52	51 – 53	1
<b>Sexual abuse by a parent</b>									
Experienced childhood abuse	78	72 – 85	4	59	51 – 67	7	85	80 – 91	3
Did not experience childhood abuse	47	46 – 49	1	34	33 – 35	2	56	55 – 58	1
<b>Any abuse by a parent</b>									
Experienced childhood abuse	72	70 – 75	2	55	52 – 58	3	80	78 – 82	1
Did not experience childhood abuse	43	42 – 44	2	30	28 – 31	2	52	51 – 53	1
<b>Sexual abuse by a non-parent</b>									
Experienced childhood abuse	69	66 – 72	2	56	53 – 59	3	78	76 – 81	2
Did not experience childhood abuse	44	43 – 46	2	30	29 – 31	2	53	52 – 54	1

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=6,677

## Children witnessing violence

In addition to experiencing violence as a child, witnessing violence is also said to increase the likelihood of subsequent victimisation as an adult. In the words of one of the women who participated in the IVAWS: 'When children witness violence and abuse they can reciprocate the behaviour in their own lives' (Respondent no. 892). Although limited in scope, the IVAWS also asked women who experienced intimate partner violence whether children ever witnessed any violent incidents by their current husband/partner/boyfriend or previous husband/partner/boyfriend. The IVAWS did not ask the women whether their partners or they themselves witnessed violence between their parents during childhood.

**Figure 34: Women's experiences of intimate partner violence, by whether the children witnessed any incidents**



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=1,730

Excluding the women who indicated that they had no children living with them at the time, over a third of women who experienced intimate partner violence reported that their children had witnessed a violent incident (36% or n=616; Figure 34). The exposure of these children to violence within the family increases their risk of either perpetrating the violence at a later stage, becoming victims themselves, or both. As others have noted, violence against women, and particularly, intimate partner violence, impacts not only the women, but also on other family members, and especially the children who may witness the violence.

## **Chapter six: Victims' perceptions and reactions to violence**

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## Chapter six: Victims' perceptions and reactions to violence

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The previous chapters examined women's experiences of both physical and sexual violence from intimate partners, relatives, other known males, and strangers during adulthood, as well as during childhood. In these chapters, the women who participated in IVAWS retrospectively described the violence they experienced, its frequency, and severity. This chapter will focus on women's perceptions and reactions to the violence, that is, how serious they perceived the incident to be, did they consider it to be a crime, and what were their reactions to the incident; did they seek help, and from whom. This chapter examines the following:

- women's perceptions of the most recent incident of intimate partner violence;
- women's perceptions of the most recent incident of non-partner violence;
- women's perceptions of violence suffered during childhood; and
- women's reactions to violence.

### Victims' perceptions of violence

The way in which a woman perceives an incident of violence will influence her decision to seek help or assistance, and most importantly to report the incident to police. Previous research suggests that whether a victim reports an incident of violence to police depends largely on the classification of the offence by the victim. Although 58 per cent of women surveyed in the Crime and Safety Survey (ABS 2003) considered the most recent incident of assault to be a crime, 72 per cent of these women chose not to report to police. One of the main reasons in the Women's Safety Survey (ABS 1996) that women cited for not reporting an incident of physical assault to police was that 'they did not regard it as a serious offence' (27%). It seems that many women are reluctant to classify a violent incident (sexual or physical) as a crime when perpetrated by an intimate or someone known to them, than if a stranger perpetrated that same incident. Victims who do not consider violence a serious criminal act are unlikely to report the incident. Specific to incidents of sexual violence, scenarios of this kind tend to occur more often within relationships where the denial of sexual consent is yet to be unequivocally accepted as a valid decision (Russo 2000). Previous research suggests that, '... one of the most influential determinants of reporting behaviour may be the victim's assessment of the seriousness of an incident' (Lievore 2003: 28). A number of factors can influence victims' perceptions of the seriousness of an incident, and whether they regard it as a crime. These factors include whether the

- victim was deprived of liberty;
- victim's life was threatened; and
- victim was physically injured (Lievore 2003; Dobash & Dobash 1995).

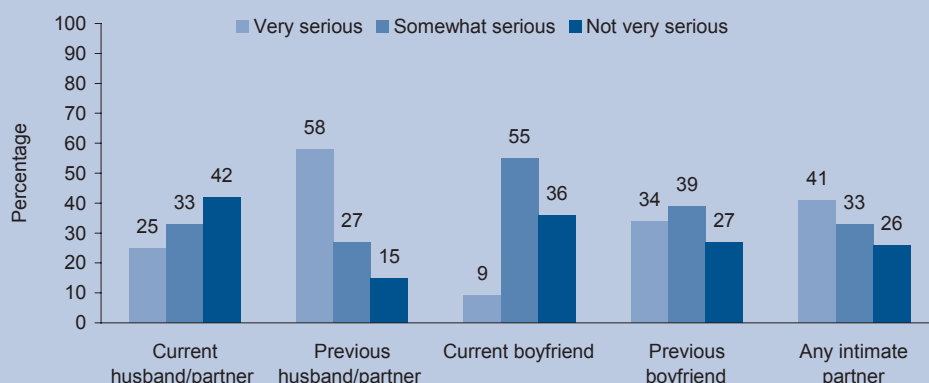
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Historically, violence that occurs within the private sphere of the family home was generally untouched by the law and, when it did become public, was largely treated with a 'hands off' perspective by the criminal justice system. It has been argued that this notion of privacy reinforces the viewpoint that what takes place within the privacy of one's home is personal and separate from what takes place outside the home where sanctions are applied by the state (Schneider 1994; Cardarelli 1997). Such '... concepts of privacy permit, encourage, and reinforce violence against women ...' (Schneider 1994: 36). Women who experience violence within the private domain and by someone known to them would therefore be less likely to perceive the violent incident as 'a crime'. This is a particular characteristic of victims of sexual assault where despite describing an incident of sexual assault as such, victims are hesitant to define it as a crime (Fischer, Cullen & Turner 2000; Myhill & Allen 2002; Lievore 2003).

### *Seriousness of violence*

The IVAWS asked women who experienced violence by a current or former intimate partner or a male other than an intimate partner (other relative, friend, acquaintance or stranger) questions to gauge their perceptions about the seriousness of the most recent incident of violence, as well as with regard to violence experienced during childhood. A number of differences emerged in terms of women's perceptions of violence. Women who had experienced violence in a former relationship (previous husband/partner or previous boyfriend) were more likely to regard the most recent incident of partner violence as 'very serious' compared to women who reported experiencing violence in a current relationship (Figure 35). More than half of the women who experienced violence from a previous husband or partner perceived the most recent incident as 'very serious' (58%) compared to a quarter of women who experienced violence from a current husband or partner (Figure 35).

**Figure 35: Seriousness of the most recent incident of violence by a current or former intimate partner**



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=2,214

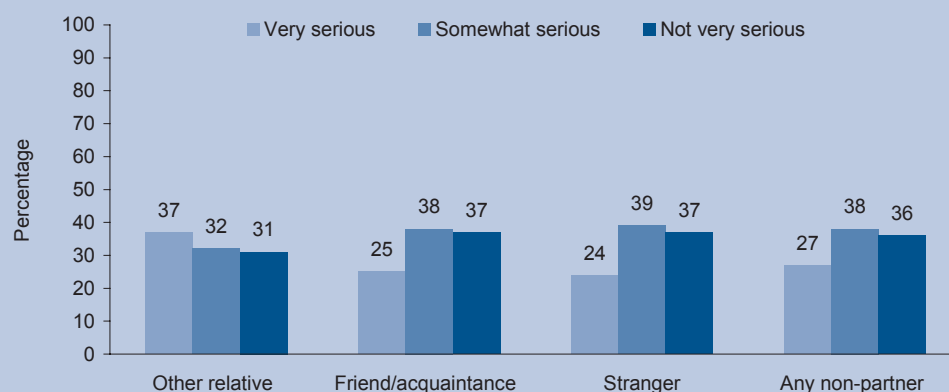
Whether a woman is injured during the incident of violence also effects her perception of the seriousness of the violence. Overall, women who reported being injured during the most recent incident of violence from a current or former intimate partner were more likely to perceive the incident as 'very serious' (60% versus 28%).

In addition, women who experienced violence from any intimate partner (current or previous) were more likely than women who experienced violence from any other male to perceive the most recent incident as 'very serious' (41% versus 27%; Figures 35 and 36). Violence by males other than intimate partners indicates that incidents perpetrated by friends, acquaintances or strangers were slightly less likely to be perceived less serious ('not very serious'; 37%) as compared to incidents perpetrated by other relatives (31%; Figure 36). This finding is contrary to the view that violence between people known to each other is perceived as less serious than stranger violence (Lievore 2003).

Injury also increases the likelihood that women will perceive the incident as 'very serious'. Almost half of the women who were injured during the most recent incident of non-partner violence perceived that incident as 'very serious' (48%) compared to less than a quarter of women who were not injured.



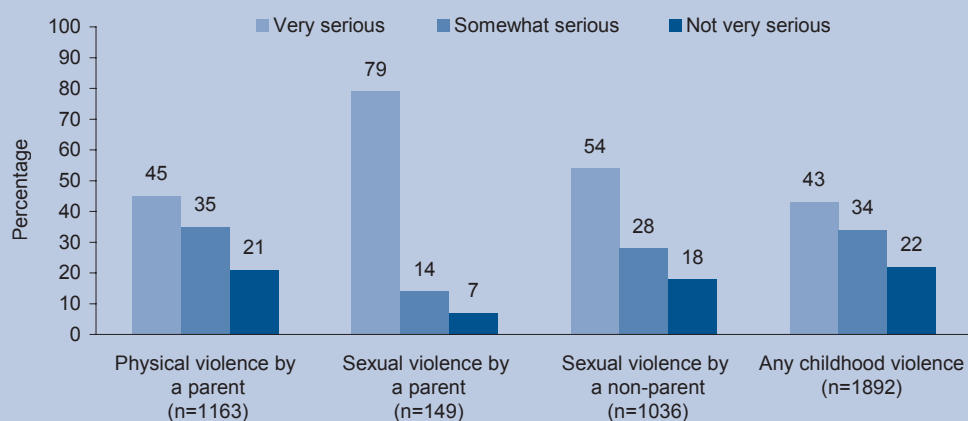
**Figure 36: Seriousness of the most recent incident of violence by any other male**



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=2,765

Overall, just over two out of five women who reported experiencing violence during childhood regarded the incidents as 'very serious' (43%; Figure 37). Almost four out of five women who experienced sexual violence by a parent perceived the incident as 'very serious' compared to less than half of the women who experienced physical violence by a parent during childhood (79% versus 45%; Figure 37). Sexual violence experienced during childhood was perceived as more serious than physical violence, irrespective of the perpetrator.

**Figure 37: Seriousness of women's experiences of violence during childhood**

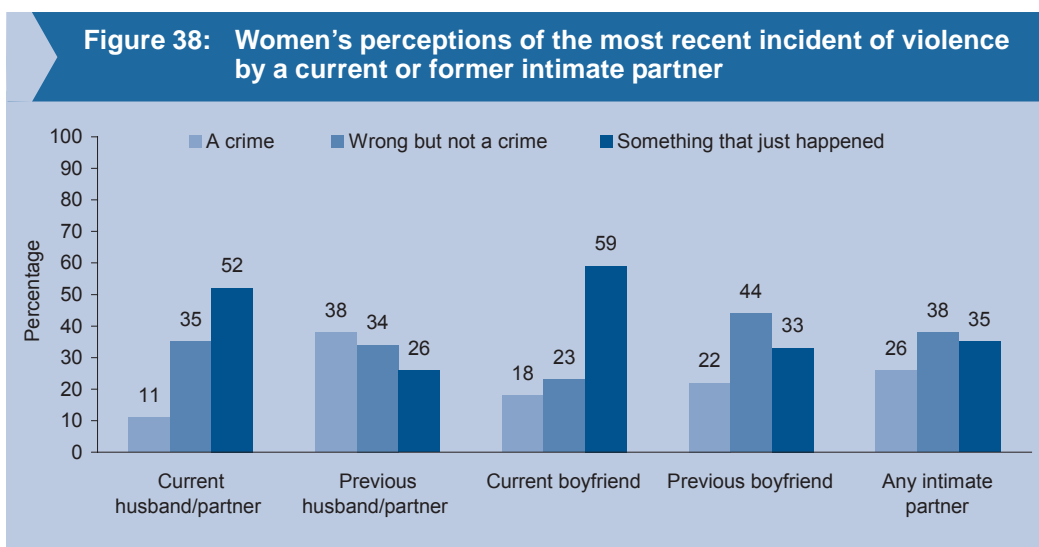


Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file]

### Identifying violence as a crime

Consistent with previous research, women who were victimised by a stranger were more likely to perceive the most recent incident of violence as a crime than women who were victimised by a person known to them (see Figures 38 and 39). A comparison of victims of intimate partner violence indicates that victims of violence by previous/former intimate partners were more likely than those victimised by current partners to define the violence as a crime (Figure 38). Only one in ten women who experienced violence from a current husband or partner considered the most recent incident to be a crime compared to almost four in ten women who experienced violence from a former husband or partner (11% and 38% respectively; Figure 38).

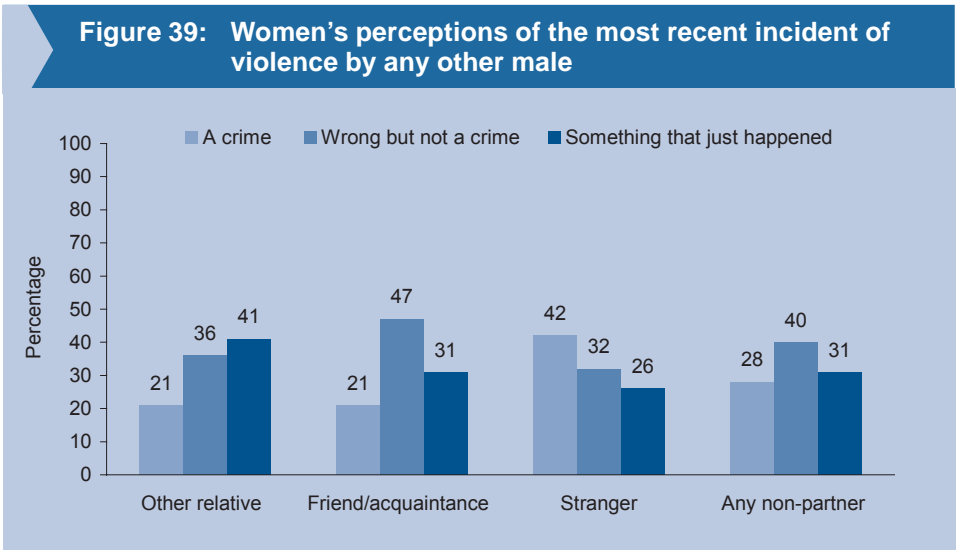
Women who reported experiencing violence from a current boyfriend were more likely to classify the most recent incident of violence as 'something that just happened' more so than women who experienced violence from other known men and strangers (see Figures 38 and 39).



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=2,214

Women who experienced violence from a male known to them (other than an intimate partner or other relative) were more likely to define the most recent incident as 'wrong but not a crime' as compared to women victimised by strangers (47% versus 32%; Figure 39). Irrespective of who perpetrates the most recent incident of violence, overall the majority of women did not consider the incident to be a crime. Only one in five victims of dating violence (current or previous boyfriends) considered the incident to be a crime (Figure 38).

Whether injury was inflicted, seems to influence a woman's perception as to whether they regard the incident to be a crime. Just over two out of five women who were injured during the most recent incident of intimate partner violence (current and former partners) considered the incident to be a crime, compared to 15 per cent of women who did not sustain any injury. Similarly, forty-five per cent of women who sustained injury during the most recent incident of violence from a relative, friend, acquaintance or stranger considered the incident to be a crime, compared to 25 per cent of women who were not injured.



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=2,778

### Victims' reactions to violence

In recent years, there has been much attention directed at understanding the reasons associated with women not reporting violence to police. One primary task of the Australian Institute of Criminology under funding received by the Australian Government Office of the Status of Women was to undertake an international literature review on the non-reporting and hidden recording of sexual assault of females aged 16 years and over (see Lievore 2003). This comprehensive report outlines the many barriers to reporting sexual assault to police faced by women. Some of the barriers that prevent women from reporting incidents of sexual assault are also applicable to other forms of violence.

With respect to domestic violence, many women will not report incidents of domestic violence due to fear of the perpetrator (Felson et al. 2002), feelings of guilt and self-blame. In some

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cases they may not regard it as unacceptable behaviour (evidenced by the fact that only 26% of victims in the IVAWS considered their experience a crime), and may fear the reactions of others. In fact, the reactions and support of family and friends were reported to impact significantly on women's wellbeing (Goodkind et al. 2003; Kocot & Goodman 2003; Carlson et al. 2002). Furthermore, others suggest that the Australian ideal of privacy in the home would also prevent many neighbours or friends from reporting known incidents of domestic violence to police (Mugford 1989). There are many reasons why women do not report violence to the police:

Differential definitions of the seriousness of the offence, of the costs and benefits of using legal intervention, of gender relations and power are identified by some but not all as relevant to the process of reporting violence against women to police (Dobash & Dobash 1995: 9)

Most women do not report incidents of violence to the police. This is evidenced from the results of previous victimisation surveys both in Australia and abroad. The Women's Safety Survey (ABS 1996) reported that only 19 per cent of women who experienced an incident of physical assault by a male in the previous 12-month period reported the incident to police. Similar findings were found in the Crime and Safety Survey (ABS 2003), where 28 per cent of female victims of assault reported the incident to police. The reasons offered for not reporting an incident of assault were varied. These included:

- preferred to deal with it themselves (21%);
- too trivial/unimportant (17%);
- did not want the offender arrested (7%);
- they told someone else instead (5%); and
- they thought that there was nothing that the police could (6%), or would do to help (5%; ABS 2003: 26).

Furthermore, results from the Women's Safety Survey (1996) revealed that women were more likely to report both physical and sexual violence when committed by strangers than intimate partners (see also Gartner & Macmillian 1995). One possible reason for this discrepancy is that those who know each other prefer other, more informal forms of social control. This is because the intervention of the law with its adversarial and punitive approach may, 'disrupt close ties, bring private troubles to public attention, and may encourage further, vengeful deviance by the punished party' (Black 1976, cited in Dobash & Dobash 1995: 9).

Rather than report the incident to police, the majority of women (79%) preferred to disclose the incident to family or friends, while 12 per cent sought help from a medical doctor or

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counsellor. Despite the reluctance of most women to report incidents of violence, this decision was influenced by the severity of the violence. Women who had been physically injured were more likely to report to police than women who were not injured (29% versus 10%; ABS 1996). Surveys of violence against women undertaken in Canada report similar findings; only 14 per cent of all violent incidents reported by the women who participated in the Canadian Violence Against Women Survey were reported to police. Wife assault and other physical assaults (26% and 28%) were more likely than sexual assault (6%) to be reported (Statistics Canada 1993).

Research undertaken in Hawaii on reporting sexual assault to police found that women who were young, unmarried, more highly educated, from higher socio-economic backgrounds, and white women who are assaulted by black men were less likely to report to police (Ruch et al. 2000). The likelihood of reporting sexual abuse to police is mitigated by levels of shame, anger, humiliation, self-blame, and social isolation felt by victims (Lievore 2003).

Just as there are barriers to reporting to police, women's use of social services may also depend on a number of factors. These include, for example, awareness of existing services, availability of these services within close proximity, accessibility due to financial barriers, and accessibility due to linguistic or cultural barriers (Gauthier & Laberge 2000). Previous research finds that in general, the use of social services by women who have experienced violence is low. According to the results from the Violence Against Women Survey in Canada, in only nine per cent of violent incidents did victims report using the services of a social agency. Women who were assaulted by an intimate partner were more likely to report using the services of a social agency (24%; Statistics Canada 1993).

The following section examines the reactions of the women who participated in the IVAWS to the most recent incident of violence. Specifically, it focuses on:

1. the experiences of women who sought assistance from specialised agencies outside the criminal justice system; and
2. the experiences of women who sought assistance from the criminal justice system (that is, police and judicial authorities).

### *Seeking help outside of the criminal justice system*

Following an incident of violence, women may react in many ways. For policy makers, the central concerns are the adequacy of the criminal justice response to violence against women and the provision of support services (Putt & Higgins 1997). One reaction to violence may be to seek help from the criminal justice system or social services. Consistent with the findings derived from other violence against women surveys, few women sought assistance

from a specialised agency following their most recent experience of violence in Australia (Table 17). A higher proportion of women who were victimised by an intimate partner sought assistance from a specialised agency as compared to women who were victimised by some other male (16% versus 9%; Table 17). Women who reported contacting a specialised agency were more likely to contact a counsellor apart from a shelter or crisis centre, than any other specialised agency (Table 17).

**Table 17: Women who experienced intimate partner and non-partner violence by whether they contacted a specialised agency**

	Any intimate partner violence (%)	Any non-partner violence (%)
Did not contact a specialised agency	84	91
Contacted a:		
Shelter or transition house	2	0
Crisis centre or Crisis line	3	1
Another counsellor	9	5
Women's centre or Women's health centre	2	1
Community/ Family Centre	1	0
Other agency	3	2
Contacted a specialised agency (total)	(16)	(9)
Total (N)	(2214)	(2778)

Note: Does not add to 100% due to multiple responses

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file]

Instead of contacting a specialised agency, women were more likely to talk to someone else about their experiences of violence. Apart from the people already mentioned, three-quarters of the women who reported experiencing intimate partner violence spoke to someone else about the incident (75%; Table 18). A higher proportion of women who experienced violence from someone other than an intimate partner spoke to someone else about the incident than did women who experienced intimate partner violence (84%; Table 18). Irrespective of who perpetrates the violence, women were more likely to speak to their friends, neighbours or immediate family members, than anyone else. This corresponds with prior research, which suggests that the vast majority of women who are experiencing domestic violence seek help from their family and friends (Goodkind et al. 2003).

**Table 18: Women who experienced intimate partner and non-partner violence by whether they ever talked to anyone about what happened**

	Any intimate partner violence (%)	Any non-partner violence (%)
Did not speak to anyone else about the incident	25	16
Spoke to:		
Immediate family members	42	51
Other relative	13	13
Friend/neighbour	55	57
Co-worker/boss/co-student	8	22
Religious leader/worker	3	3
Doctor, nurse	9	6
Psychologist, psychiatrist	8	5
Counsellor/ social worker	2	1
Someone else	2	2
Spoke to anyone else about the incident (total)	(75)	(84)
Total (N)	(2214)	(2778)

Note: Does not add to 100% due to multiple responses.

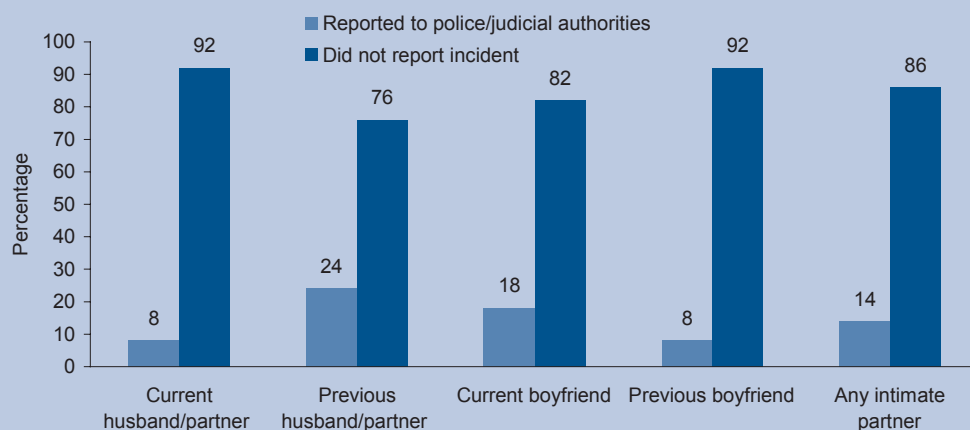
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file]

### *Seeking help from the criminal justice system*

It is well documented that the number of criminal incidents reported to police only represents the ‘tip of the iceberg’ (Lievore 2003). Few women who experienced violence by an intimate partner or some other male reported the most recent incident to police or judicial authorities (Figures 40 and 41). Overall, 14 per cent of women who experienced violence from an intimate partner, and 16 per cent of women who experienced violence by someone else reported the most recent incident to police.

Differences emerged in levels of reporting based on the victim-offender relationship. In terms of women victimised by intimate partners, a greater proportion of women who were victimised by a previous husband/partner reported the most recent incident to police (24%) compared to women who were victimised by a current husband/partner or current/previous boyfriend (8%; Figure 40).

**Figure 40: Women's experiences of any intimate partner violence by whether they reported the most recent incident to police**



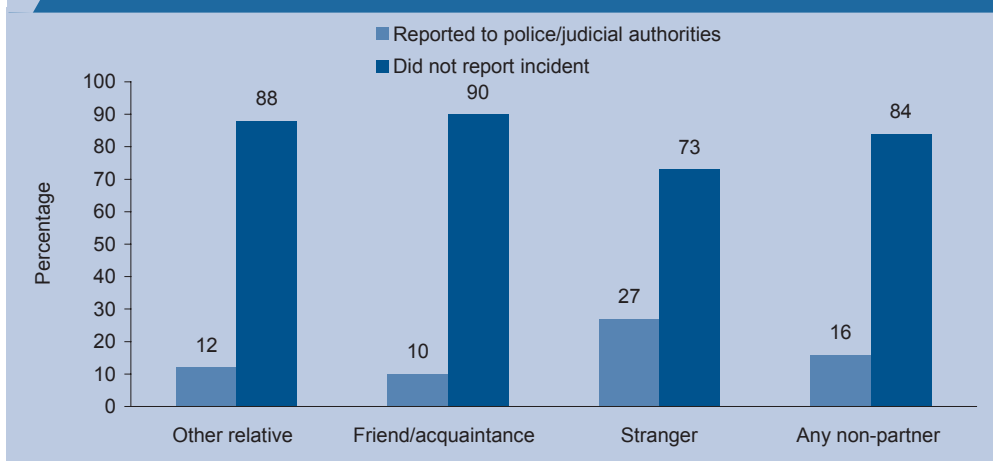
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=2,214

Stranger violence was more than twice as likely to be reported to the police than violence by friends, acquaintances or other relatives (27% compared to 10% and 12%; Figure 41). This is consistent with the greater likelihood of stranger violence victims to consider the incident to be a crime (Figure 39). In the previous section, it was found that injury influences perceptions as to the seriousness of the incident, as well as whether it was considered a crime. Women who were injured were more likely to report the most recent incident to police (20% for any intimate partner violence; 27% for any non-partner violence).

While similar proportions of women who experienced physical or sexual violence by intimate partners reported to police (about 15%), there were differences in the type of violence experienced and the likelihood of reporting to police for women victimised by non-partners. About 12 per cent of women who experienced sexual violence by non-partners reported the incident to police, compared to 19 per cent of women who experienced physical violence by non-partners. This difference may be explained by the fact that women are more likely to sustain injury in an incident of physical violence than an incident of sexual violence that then influences their decision to report to police.



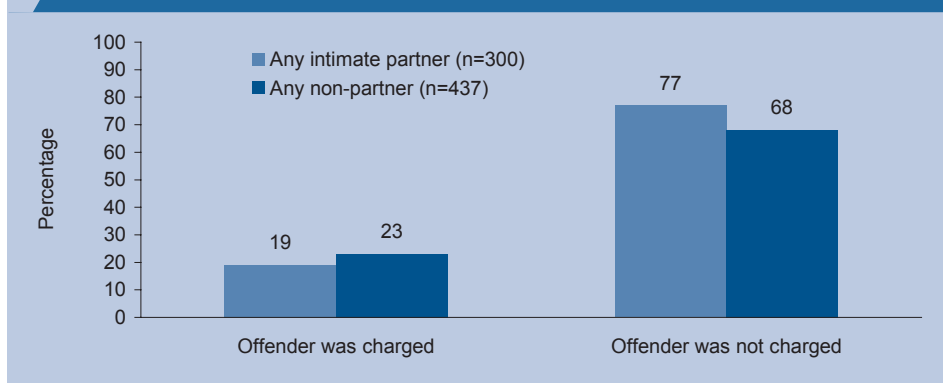
**Figure 41: Women's experiences of any non-partner violence by whether they reported the most recent incident to police**



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file], n=2,778

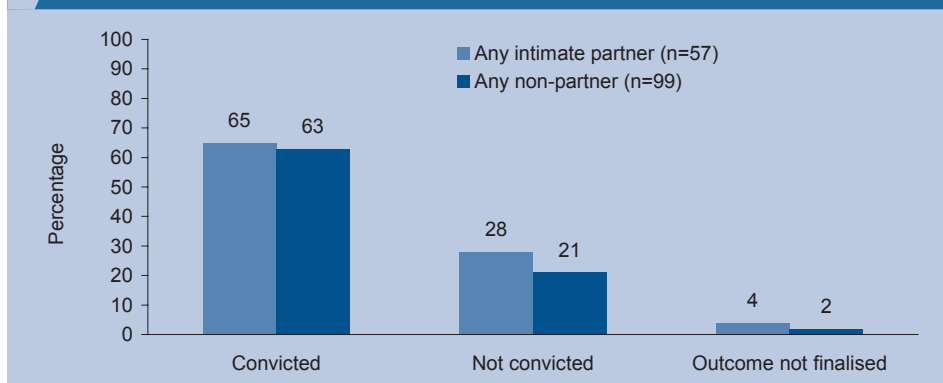
Very few of the incidents reported to police resulted in the offender being charged. A higher proportion of incidents perpetrated by non-partners resulted in the police charging an offender than incidents involving intimate partners (23% versus 19%; Figure 42). However, when the police did bring charges against the offender, they were more likely to lead to a conviction in court (Figure 43). Although the numbers are small, close to two-thirds of women reported that the charges laid against the offender resulted in a conviction in court.

**Figure 42: Women who reported most recent of violence to police by whether the offender was charged**



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file]

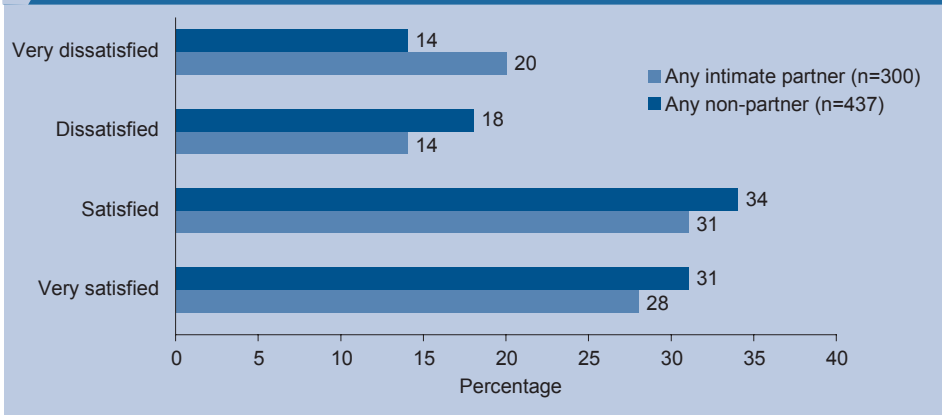
**Figure 43: Women who reported the most recent incident to police by whether the charges lead to a conviction in court**



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file]

Despite police charging few offenders in relation to reported incidents of violence against women, the majority of women were either satisfied or very satisfied in the way that police handled their case (Figure 44). A higher proportion of women who experienced intimate partner violence reported being 'very dissatisfied' regarding the response by police compared to women who experienced violence by a non-partner (20% versus 14%; Figure 44). Women were more likely to report being 'very satisfied' with the way that the police handled the case if charges were laid and the charges led to a conviction in court. Fifty-one per cent of women who had charges laid against an intimate partner (61% for non-partners) were 'very satisfied' with the police, compared with 21 per cent of women who did not have charges laid (22% for non-partners).

**Figure 44: Women's level of satisfaction in the way the police handled the case**



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file]

### *Reasons for not reporting to police*

The reasons why victims of violence do not report to police are varied. The most common reason offered by women for not reporting to police was that the incident was too minor in nature, with 42 per cent of women who experienced either intimate partner or non-partner violence giving this reason in the IVAWS (Table 19). Some reasons centre on the issue of privacy and on the need to keep the matter private without involving anyone else. Almost half of the women who experienced violence from an intimate partner or some other male indicated that they did not report the incident to police because they preferred to deal with it themselves, keep the matter private, or out of shame and embarrassment. In the words of one of the women surveyed: 'They [the police] keep coming back ... and the neighbours wonder why they're there all the time and it's embarrassing' (Respondent no 3893).

Other women did not report for fear of the offender and the consequences of reporting: 'Couldn't report because of survival/fear of not having anywhere to go/to live' (Respondent no 3507); 'I had four children and I thought that it would exacerbate the situation' (Respondent no 3556); 'Because I didn't want any trouble' (Respondent no 3882); 'Someone else must have reported it, but I was too scared to say anything' (Respondent no 3570).

Other women did not report to police because they did not know what their options were or how to react to the violence: 'I didn't know what to do, I had two small children, didn't know where to go' (Respondent no 3826); 'Felt very powerless, didn't know what to do where to go' (Respondent no 3893); 'I wasn't sure what to do, I did not know how to react' (Respondent

no 3835); 'It didn't occur to me... no experience with the law. I've had a lifetime of violence, and I've just accepted being a punching bag with these bullies' (Respondent no 3898); 'I never thought about [reporting] it, I was too frightened to report it anyway' (Respondent no 3165).

**Table 19: Reasons for not reporting to police by relationship of the victim to perpetrator**

	Any intimate partner violence (%)	Any non-partner violence (%)
<b>Reasons for not reporting</b>		
Dealt with it herself	27	24
Too minor	42	42
Did not think police would/could do anything	5	9
Fear of offender	7	4
Shame, embarrassment	7	8
Keep it private	9	6
Did not want offender arrested	4	2
Would not be believed	3	4
Part of the job/goes with job	0	2
Reported to someone else/other people helped me	2	7
It was not a crime	3	3
Isolated incident/occurred in another country	6	5
I was partly to blame	1	1
Other	4	7
Total (N)	(1897)	(2321)

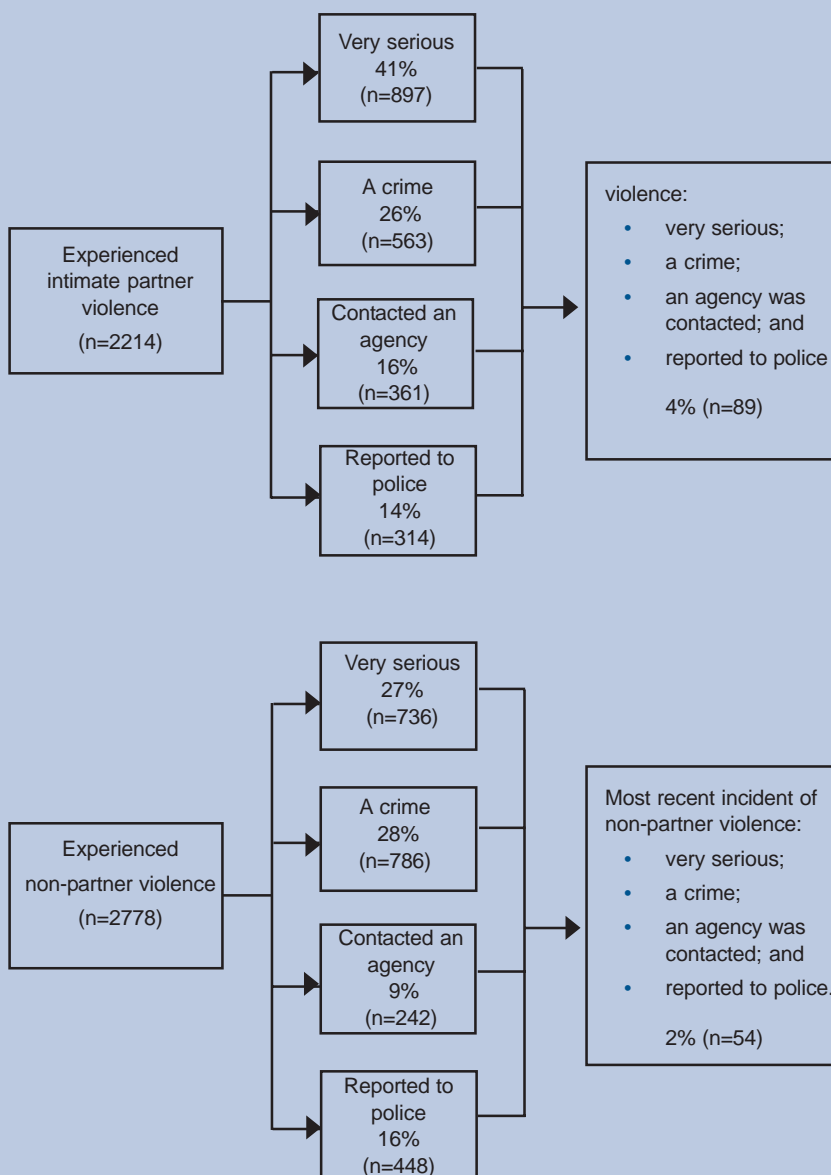
Note: Does not add to 100% due to multiple responses

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file]

## Summary

This section examined women's perceptions and reactions to the most recent incident of partner and non-partner violence that they experienced. Figure 45 summarises the women's responses. It shows that overall only four per cent of women who experienced intimate partner violence perceived the most recent incident to be 'very serious' and a crime, and reacted by contacting an agency and reporting the incident to police. For women who experienced non-partner violence, the figure is only two per cent, indicating that overall only two per cent of women who experienced non-partner violence (other relative, other known male or stranger) perceived the most recent incident to be 'very serious' and a crime, and reacted by contacting an agency and reporting the incident to police.

**Figure 45: Women's perceptions and reactions to the most recent incident of partner and non-partner violence**



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 weighted data [computer file]

## Chapter seven: Concluding comments — where to from here?

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This report has examined a wide range of forms of physical and sexual violence. Over 6600 women participated in the study and reported varying levels of violence. The form and extent of violence varied across the socio-cultural and socio-economic spectrum. Consistent with a plethora of previous research, intimate partners are usually the perpetrators of such violence.

The effects of physical and sexual violence on women are far reaching and have been widely documented. Some of the consequences of violence include permanent disability, injury and pain, major emotional trauma, stress related symptoms such as sleep disturbance and impaired thinking, depression and anxiety, eroded self-esteem, feelings of isolation, guilt or self-blame, and difficulties relating to others (Commonwealth Office of the Status of Women 2003: 6). In 1993, the United Nations identified the mistreatment of women and girls as one of the top three global problems hindering development (United Nations General Assembly 1993). In addition to affecting those most directly involved, partner abuse and violence also impacts on medical, public health, criminal justice, and economic systems, and has wide-ranging public policy implications.

The IVAWS provides a large database on the prevalence and consequences of violence against women both during adulthood and childhood. It also provides information on women's perceptions of the violence that they experienced and how they reacted to it. Most importantly, it highlights specific areas that may be amendable to prevention efforts. This final chapter is divided into three sections.

1. A summary of the some of the major findings of the IVAWS.
2. A discussion of the policy implications of the findings.
3. Areas for further research.

### Summary of results: what do we now know about violence against women in Australia?

The results from the IVAWS indicate that male violence against women is not a new or rarely encountered phenomenon. The following provides a summary of some of the major findings to arise from the analyses of the responses of women aged between 18 and 69 years who participated in the IVAWS.

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### *Overall violence*

- Over half of the women reported experiencing at least one form of physical violence over the lifetime, while eight per cent reported physical violence in the last twelve months.
- The most common form of physical violence during the lifetime was threats of physical harm (33%). However, these were often accompanied by actual physical violence.
- Over a third of women surveyed reported experiencing sexual violence on at least one occasion during their adult lifetime, and four per cent in the past 12 months.
- Sexual touching was the most common form of sexual violence women reported experiencing (about a quarter of women over the lifetime, and three per cent in the last 12 months).
- The risk of violence varies based on a number of socio-demographic characteristics, with younger women victimised disproportionately to older women.
- Indigenous women reported higher levels of violence during the lifetime compared to non-Indigenous women.
- Women who were not in a current relationship reported higher levels of physical and sexual violence during the past 12 months compared to women who were in a current relationship.

### *Intimate partner violence*

- Over one third of women who had a current or former intimate partner reported experiencing at least one form of partner violence over the lifetime, and four per cent in the past 12 months.
- Women reported higher levels of violence from former intimate partners than current intimate partners, and women were more likely to experience multiple forms of violence and injuries from former partners than current partners.
- Women victimised in former relationships were twice as likely to feel that their lives were in danger as compared to women victimised in current relationships.
- The strongest risk factors for current intimate partner physical violence were associated with the male partners' behaviour — his drinking habits, levels of aggression and controlling behaviours.



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### *Non-partner violence*

- Two out of five women surveyed reported that they had experienced physical/sexual violence from a non-partner over the lifetime, and seven per cent in the past 12 months.
- Women reported similar levels of physical and sexual violence inflicted by a non-partner over the lifetime (27% respectively).
- One in ten women reported experiencing any violence from a relative, 23 per cent from some other known male, and one in five women reported being victimised on at least one occasion during the lifetime by a stranger (this reduces to 1%, 3% and 3% respectively during the past 12 months).
- Women who were victimised by a friend, acquaintance or work colleague reported higher levels of sexual violence than physical violence (18% versus 11%).
- Few women were injured by non-partners during the most recent incidents of violence (16%). Incidents involving other relatives resulted in the highest proportion of injuries (29%).
- One in five women felt that their lives were in danger during the most recent incident of violence from non-partners. Women victimised by strangers reported higher levels of fear (30%) than women victimised by other relatives (23%) or other known males (15%).
- Nine out of ten women reported that the most recent incident of violence from a relative occurred in a private residence, compared to 38 per cent for incidents involving other known males, and 10 per cent for incidents involving strangers.
- Certain groups of women have an elevated risk of experiencing non-partner violence. Young, single women or women who have boyfriends have the highest rates of violence from a relative, friend, acquaintance, work colleague or stranger.

### *Childhood victimisation*

- Twenty-nine per cent of women surveyed reported that they had experienced physical and/or sexual violence before the age of 16 years, with almost one in five women experiencing this abuse by a parent, and 16% experiencing sexual abuse by some other person (relative or some other male).
- Women who experienced abuse during childhood were one and a half times more likely to experience any violence in adulthood.

### *Perceptions and reactions to violence*

- Sexual violence by a parent or someone else and violence in former relationships were regarded as most serious by victims.

- 
- Stranger perpetrated incidents were perceived as 'crimes' more often than incidents from known males (intimate partners, other relatives, friends or acquaintances).
  - Very few women sought assistance from a specialised agency, but over three-quarters of women surveyed spoke to someone else, usually a friend or neighbour about what had happened to them.
  - Few women reported the most recent incident of violence to police or judicial authorities, with only 14 per cent of women victimised by an intimate partner and 16 per cent of women victimised by a non-partner reporting to police. Incidents perpetrated by strangers were more likely than incidents by known males to be reported to the police.
  - While the reasons for not reporting to the police are varied, almost half of the women who did not report the incident thought that it was too minor to involve the police or judicial authorities.

## Preventing violence against women: policy implications of IVAWS

Increasing our knowledge of the prevalence and characteristics of violence against women is important in being able to translate the findings into policy and practice. In the words of a few women who participated in the IVAWS: 'I think that it's important that somebody has decided that women should have the time to talk about their personal safety. We should not have to tolerate it' (Respondent no 3663); 'I think it is really good that you are doing this [the survey], because a lot of people don't know what goes on in relationships' (Respondent no 3570); 'I think that abuse is rife and not spoken about often enough. I hope that things like this survey can help people to speak about it and not bottle it up' (Respondent no 3607).

### *Preventing the cycle of violence and fostering healthy relationships*

While violence is perpetrated against all groups of women in society, the levels of violence experienced by women differ depending on social characteristics such as age, ethnicity, marital status, and educational and economic status. The IVAWS results indicate that young women are particularly vulnerable to violence from an intimate partner or other male, and that they experience violence at higher levels than older women. Another significant finding was that women who experienced violence during childhood were more likely to also experience violence in adulthood than women who were not abused as children. The intergenerational transmission of violence is therefore a concern.

These findings have important implications for prevention. They suggest that future efforts could include:

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- (a) early interventions that focus on the family, and on the prevention of violence in the first instance. The message that violence is unacceptable and that support for parenting is available needs to permeate throughout society, in order to minimise the impact of violence on children;
  - (b) targeting young persons just embarking on relationships with education on how to build healthy relationships; and
  - (c) interventions in cases of childhood abuse that focus on reducing the negative consequences and averting future victimisation.

There are five potential message strategies for mass media campaigns.

1. Criminal sanctions: a traditional emphasis on legal threats and that violence is a crime.
2. Community intervention: an approach encouraging friends and neighbours to report domestic violence or intervene with the victim or perpetrator.
3. Social disapproval: a theme emphasising shame and embarrassment (i.e. 'real men don't hit women').
4. Consequences: a theme based on the impact of violence on their partner or children.
5. Help is available: emphasising that help is available for both the victim and the male to address his violent behaviour (Donovan et al. 2000: 80).

An example of a public media campaign which targeted primary school students and staff was the 'Captain Harley 'Be Cool ...Not Cruel' campaign developed by the NT Office of Women's Policy (2000). This campaign was geared around the message that violence was wrong, it's better to be cool, not cruel, and there is help available. The campaign was centred on Captain Harley, a character created by a five year old boy who, when experiencing domestic violence in his home, dons his mask and cap, and becomes Captain Harley and is empowered to seek help (PADV/Strategic Partners 2003).

### *Assisting women to escape the violence*

The findings that few women who experienced violence contacted specialised agencies or reported to police also have important implications for policy. One of the main reasons that women offered for not reporting to police was that the violence was minor in nature. In the words of the one of the women: 'Women tolerate far too much, what we regard as harmless is not harmless, we need to take a stand' (Respondent no 3835). Some women also indicated that they were not aware of what services were available or to whom they could turn for assistance. This suggests that more needs to be done to publicise the availability of services, so that women who experience violence know where to turn for assistance.

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Education is the key to reducing violence, and this can be achieved by increasing community awareness, and informing women of their rights and available support. Given that many women who experienced violence chose to confide in friends or work colleagues about their experiences, suggests that increasing community awareness would also enable family and friends to respond appropriately and supportively. It also suggests that the private sector has a role to play in the prevention of violence. *A Business Approach* (ABA) is a Partnerships Against Domestic Violence initiative aimed to encourage the business sector to recognise and respond to the impacts of domestic violence on their business. The initiative also seeks to develop partnerships between business, community agencies and government to respond to and prevent domestic violence in the wider community context.<sup>14</sup>

Given that few women chose to report to police, more needs to be done to educate young people as to what constitutes a crime, as well as to break down the barriers that prevent women from reporting. The criminal justice system, especially the first point of contact, that is the police, need to be seen that they can effectively respond to the needs and concerns of women who have experienced violence. Similarly, the level of service fragmentation across Australia seems to hamper the effective delivery of social services to people in need. In recent years, the innovative 'Referral Management System' managed by Supportlink Systems, is an early intervention tool that allows police, doctors, schools, childcare services and state and federal bodies to access a wide range of support for people they come into contact with. The system is designed to relieve the burden of attempting to arrange additional assistance for these people themselves, saving time and resources. Once Supportlink Systems receives the request, they will manage the referral by contacting the person themselves to confirm consent and further assess their needs. They will then connect the person to the most appropriate assistance available (Supportlink Systems 2004).

Therefore, in the case of police or doctors who may come into contact with women who have experienced violence, they have the opportunity to put these women into contact with appropriate social services that will be able to assist them. For example, for women who have experienced violence, they may receive support in relation to the following:

- couple relationships (dealing with anger, understanding conflict, and building trust, dealing with hurts);
- couple separation (surviving separation, counselling services, children and separation; legal advice);
- victim support (counselling of victims, court support);
- substance abuse (support for people who abuse, support for families and friends); or
- parenting — youth (managing conflict and anger, alcohol and drug abuse) (Supportlink Systems 2002).

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A review and evaluation of the Supportlink Referral System found that the system had enhanced the capacity of diverse sectors and communities to work together more effectively to address the needs of families and communities by improving access to information and services (Twyford Consulting 2002).

### *Recognising and responding to violence as a crime*

Many women perceived the violence that they experienced as not a crime. Women who were victimised by a stranger were more likely to perceive the incident to be a crime than women who were victimised by known men. This reflects ongoing attitudes that violence behind closed doors, that is, within the privacy of one's home, is private and therefore should not be responded to in the same way as violence that occurs in public or by strangers. In the words of one of the women: 'I don't believe there is room in this world for violence against women, it is out there but until spoken openly with women, it is hidden. Women still feel the need to hide it' (Respondent no 3607).

As a society, we need to recognise that violence is unacceptable and criminal irrespective of who is involved and where it occurs: 'I think that for any changes to really occur, they need to begin in society' (Respondent no 3607). However, we also need to move beyond using the criminal justice system, especially the courts, as merely a punitive response. Courts have increasingly become involved in the provision of various health and social services, and are recognising that focusing specifically on the traditional methods, such as arrest and conviction does not work for all (Ostrom 2003: 105).

In recent years, attention has shifted towards the development of specialised courts, both in Australia and abroad. Specialised courts tend to be based on the principles and methods grounded in therapeutic jurisprudence. 'That is, these courts endeavour to move from the traditional adversarial process to a 'problem-solving' orientation that place much more attention on the needs of the people involved, both victims and offenders, and in finding what is best for the community' (Ostrom 2003: 105).

Drug courts are one example of specialised courts. Drug courts have been established in five jurisdictions in Australia, and results thus far are promising (Freeman 2002; Makkai & Veraar 2003). More specific to addressing violence against women by intimate partners is the development of domestic/family violence courts. Such courts can be found in Australia, the United States, Canada and England. Domestic/family violence courts focus on early intervention, offender accountability and victim safety, and they coordinate with medical, social service, and treatment providers and establish special procedures and alternative sentencing options to promote effective outcomes (Gover, Macdonald & Alpert 2003; Johnson 1996; Statistics Canada 2003). The main purpose of domestic/family violence courts is to reduce violence within the family.

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The results from process evaluations indicate that domestic/family violence courts are having the desired impact. For example, according to the process evaluation of the domestic violence court in Miami, Florida, misdemeanour cases had a 37 per cent lower dismissal rate compared with common practices prior to the implementation of the court (Goldkamp et al. 1996). The integrated batterer/substance abuse treatment program was found to be successful in enrolling offenders in treatment and retaining participants in the program compared with the control group.

Moreover, the study also found that offenders who participated in the integrated treatment program re-offended against the same victims at a lower rate compared with offenders from the control group (6% versus 14%; Goldkamp et al. 1996; see also Gover et al. 2003). Canadian research also indicates that as a result of the Winnipeg Family Violence Court and the Ontario Domestic Violence Courts Program, more victims of spouse abuse are turning to police and the criminal justice system for assistance (Statistics Canada 2003).

A number of jurisdictions in Australia (namely, South Australia, Western Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and Queensland (Gold Coast)) have established Domestic/Family Violence Courts. Using the elements of therapeutic jurisprudence, offenders are encouraged to strive towards rehabilitation instead of merely awaiting retribution. Offenders have access to treatment services, especially for those who have a substance abuse problem. This is particularly important given that the male's drinking behaviour was found to be a significant risk factor for intimate partner violence.

Other services are also available to provide assistance for women within the criminal justice system. For example, New South Wales has what is referred to as the Women's Domestic Violence Assistance Program that assists women who are victims of domestic violence to use the justice system to protect them from further violence and abuse. In consultation with workers from the scheme, the woman's needs are assessed and options are discussed, including legal representation, Apprehended Violence Orders, and other services (Legal Aid New South Wales 2004).

## **Areas for further research: where to from here?**

This report described women's experiences of physical and sexual violence based on their responses to the IVAWS. Most of the responses required the women to think retrospectively about their experiences of violence. There was however one question at the conclusion of the survey, which asked the women: 'Is there anything else that you would like to add?' Some of the women who answered this question, provided information in terms of how the violence that they experienced could be prevented. Some women offered suggestions for further research.

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A number of women provided suggestions for expanding the types of violence examined in IVAWS, and that future surveys (IVAWS or similar) should consider capturing women's experiences of the following:

- violence from other women;
- feelings of safety at night, including travelling on public transport;
- stalking by intimate and non-intimate partners;
- harassment in the workplace;
- mental, verbal, emotional and psychological violence, including threats to hurt children;
- witnessing violence as a child between father and mother, or siblings;
- satisfaction with the judicial system; and
- physical violence and threatening behaviour by a non-parent before the age of 16 years.

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<sup>14</sup> See <http://www.osw.dpmc.gov.au/>

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## Appendix 1: Methodology of IVAWS

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This appendix provides a description of the methodology employed to measure women's experiences of violence in Australia. It includes an outline of how women were selected, how interviewers were selected, the response rate, a description of the sample and a discussion of some of the methodological issues to arise during or following the fieldwork.

Through a tendering process to select the data collection agency, the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) commissioned Roy Morgan Research<sup>15</sup> to conduct the Australian component of the IVAWS. All the interviews conducted by Roy Morgan Research were completed using a Computer Aided Telephone Interview (CATI) questionnaire developed by the International IVAWS Working Group and slightly modified by the AIC for the Australian environment.

### Selection of the sample

There were two main sample selection methods employed in the IVAWS. The first involved selecting households with eligible women and the second involved actually selecting the eligible respondent. These two methods are outlined below.

#### *Household selection method*

The sampling methodology for selection of households used for IVAWS was 'White Pages plus one'. This is an adaptation of random digit dialling that involves selecting residential telephone numbers at random from the White Pages directory and incrementing the last digit by one (to get unlisted or not yet listed numbers). Both sets of numbers (that is, the white pages number and the incremented number) were then used for sampling. Using the 'White Pages plus one' method no doubt reduced the sampling bias in regards to unlisted private residential telephone numbers. This is important given that the results of the ICVS showed that there is a correlation between crime victimisation and unlisted numbers.

The 'White Pages plus one' method has all the advantages of random digit dialling, but at a lesser cost, as it produces fewer unusable numbers than random digit dialling. This method was also used in the ICVS (Carcach & Makkai 2003). Households were defined as any private household, including people living in shared or group households and those living or boarding with friends. A private household does not include businesses, schools, hospitals, nursing homes, prisons, military barracks, or other non-private households.

In addition, a pre-survey letter on AIC letterhead was mailed out to households whose phone numbers were selected. Results from the first pilot study indicated that the response rate was higher when letters were sent to selected households beforehand than when no letters were sent. Because of unlisted numbers, not all households were mailed an

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introductory letter from the 'plus one' sample. However, Roy Morgan Research was able to minimise the number of households that did not receive a letter by electronically matching the 'plus one' sample with the 'white pages' sample and sending out letters where numbers matched and names and addresses were available. All letters were addressed to Ms (surname from white pages) to minimise the probability of a male member opening the envelope.

### *Respondent selection method*

Once a private household was contacted by telephone, the respondent was randomly selected using the nearest birthday method. The respondent to be selected was the female aged between 18 to 69 years normally living in the private household whose birthday was nearest to the date of the telephone call. If this person was absent for the duration of the survey, or was either incapable of responding, deaf, or suffering from an illness or disability, then the female with the second-nearest birthday was selected. If this female also happened to be absent from the survey or was incapable of responding, then the youngest female in the private household was selected.

The birthday method is a rigorous method of respondent selection. However, if used on its own, without sufficient call backs, it results in under-sampling of younger people and over-sampling of older people, simply because younger people are less likely to be available. To account for this, Roy Morgan Research ensured that whilst using the birthday method, they also conducted a sufficiently high number of call backs. As many as six call backs were made to speak to an eligible respondent to ensure that the expected impact on survey contact rates and response rates was minimal.

Six call backs were also made when there was no initial contact with the household (that is, there was no reply on the number). Call backs were made at different times of the day and different days of the week to maximise the chances of contact. Special arrangements were also put in place to deal with the potential bias that might occur with some women experiencing language difficulties. When there was a build-up of more than five non-responses due to problems with a language other than English, Roy Morgan Research completed these interviews with a bilingual interviewer.

### *Sample design*

The IVAWS was designed as a stratified random sample. To ensure that the sample generated was representative of the population, strict quotas were imposed for the areas, and 'loose' quotas were imposed in terms of age and sex. Any deviations were then corrected by applying weights to the sample data.

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## Selection and training of the interviewers

Roy Morgan Research in conjunction with the AIC undertook a careful screening and selection process of the interviewers. Interviewers were selected with the following attributes:

- Female;
- Comfortable discussing issues related to violence against women;
- A non-judgemental and empathetic attitude;
- Highly developed interviewer skills;
- A good telephone interviewing manner;
- Sufficient prior interviewing experience, especially in conducting lengthy surveys;
- Sensitivity and maturity;
- Professionalism; and
- Prior experience of handling similar sensitive research studies, or other experiences that made them suitable for this project.

The AIC was also provided with the Curriculum Vitae of all intended interviewers in order to assess their eligibility. All interviewers and supervisors assigned to monitor the interviewing team undertook one full day of extensive training before fieldwork began. The training session included information on the background and purpose of the study, procedures for respondent selection, appointments and call backs, specific techniques for developing rapport, instilling trust in women and assuring them of confidentiality, a review of the survey design, and practice interviews using the CATI terminal to become familiar with the flow and content of the survey.

In addition, Forsythe Consultants were employed to undertake a review of the training process and first pilot of the survey. In terms of training, the Consultant recommended the following:

- The structure of the survey be explained to interviewers using a flow chart;
- The use of role-plays to go through the questionnaire (including anticipating potential difficult situations);
- Directions on how responses should be coded; and
- Interviewing techniques, including examples on how to build rapport on the phone, how to respond to upset women, and how to ensure the interviewers' well-being during IVAWS (debriefs, etc).

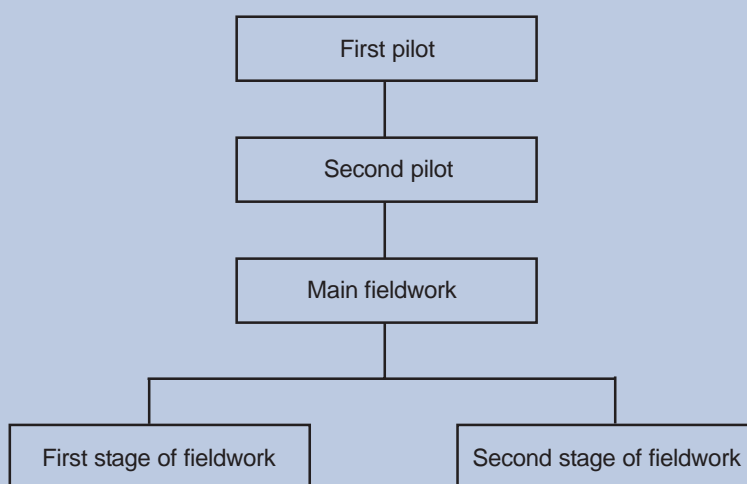
In addition, the AIC participated in an audit of a closely monitored interviewer session.

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## Structure of IVAWS

The structure of the Australian component of the IVAWS consisted of two pilot studies followed by two stages of the main fieldwork (Figure 46). This was conducted during December 2002 and March 2003 using the CATI questionnaire provided by the international coordinators.

**Figure 46: Structure of the Australian component of IVAWS**



### *Pilot testing of the CATI questionnaire*

There are a number of objectives in pilot testing the IVAWS. These include:

- testing the appropriateness of the proposed CATI questionnaire, and ensuring that questions are clear, precise and without any ambiguities;
- estimating the actual length of interview for different types of women;
- assessing any cultural sensitivities that may exist;
- assessing the likely magnitude of non-response; and
- identifying any potential problems or concerns associated with the conduct of the survey.



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The first pilot of IVAWS, comprising 125 interviews, was conducted in August 2002. The average interview length for the first pilot was 37 minutes. The first pilot also examined whether the introductory letter made any difference to the response rate, as not all households received the introductory letter. The response rate for the households that received the introductory letter was 57 per cent, compared to 27 per cent for households that did not it.

The first pilot was extremely useful in refining the questionnaire. Changes included deleting questions that were irrelevant to the Australian context, and wording changes to make the questionnaire more fluid and understandable. A meeting with participating countries was held in October to discuss the results of pilot testing in all countries and to make final adjustments to the questionnaire.

The second pilot test of the revised IVAWS was conducted between 6 and 8 November 2002, with 110 interviews completed. Due to the revisions following the first pilot, the average interview length decreased to 25 minutes. No introductory letters were sent out for the second pilot study, which elicited a response rate of only 23 per cent.

The questionnaire was further refined following the second pilot. Changes included additional questions on childhood victimisation to elicit the respondent's view of the seriousness of the incident(s), and deletion of the question in relation to 'drug facilitated sexual assault'. Roy Morgan Research, the AIC and the International Working Group worked closely to refine the questionnaire following both pilots and following each stage of fieldwork.

### *Main fieldwork*

The first stage of fieldwork was conducted between December 2002 and March 2003. A total of 3630 interviews were completed, with an average interview length of 25 minutes. Following the first stage of fieldwork changes to the questionnaire included reinstating the question on 'drug facilitated sexual assault', as it was considered important to obtain some measure of prevalence. The question as to 'where did it happen' was also included in the questionnaire, as some women had indicated that the incident had occurred in a country other than Australia (for example, whilst overseas on holidays).

The second stage of fieldwork was conducted between end April and June 2003. A total of 3047 interviews were completed and the average length of the interview was 25 minutes. The second stage of fieldwork also included the interviews with non-English speaking background (NESB) women conducted by the bilingual interviewers.

## Response rate

A total of 34,882 telephone numbers were dialled. Of these 13,015 were classified as 'ineligible' (Table 20). The main reason for ineligibility was that the telephone number was disconnected or not working, which accounted for 68 per cent of the ineligible telephone numbers.

The 21,867 'eligible' telephone numbers were further reduced by households that were called back more than six times (4538), or where there were no replies or engaged (82). The end result of 17,247 eligible contacts resulted in a contact rate of 79 per cent (eligible contacts to eligible numbers).

**Table 20: Ineligible contacts**

	Number	Percentage
<b>Reasons for ineligibility</b>		
Disconnected/ not working	8225	68
Business number/not a private household	2157	16
Fax/ modem / mobile number	1595	12
Does not meet introductory criteria	841	6
Language/ hearing difficulty/ very elderly	167	5
Respondent requested details to be deleted	30	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,015</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 [computer file]

After taking account of refusals, terminations, appointments not met, and those who failed to give the number of women in the household, a total of 6677 completed interviews were obtained — a response rate of 39 per cent (relative to the total number of eligible women) (Table 21).

**Table 21: Eligible contacts**

	Number	Percentage
<b>Total eligible contacts</b>	17,247	100
Minus		
Failed to give number of women in the household	67	0
Appointments not met	34	0
<b>Eligible women</b>	17,146	99
Minus		
Refusals	10,029	59
Terminations	440	3
<b>Total final sample</b>	<b>6,677</b>	
<b>Response rate relative to eligible contacts</b>	<b>39%</b>	
<b>Response rate relative to eligible women</b>	<b>39%</b>	

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 [computer file]

This effective response rate of 39 per cent is lower than that indicated by the results of the first pilot. It is also lower than the response rate of 57 per cent achieved for the Australian component of the 2000 International Crime Victim Survey (ICVS). Compared to the ICVS, where terminations contributed 44 per cent to the total non-response, terminations only contributed three per cent of the non-response total. Refusals accounted for the majority of the non-response total. While the geographic distribution was relatively the same between those who refused to participate and the women who were interviewed (Table 22), a higher proportion of refusals came from women who lived in metropolitan Sydney (26%) or metropolitan Melbourne (21%).

There are a number of reasons that could account for the low response rate. Table 23 indicates that women aged less than 35 years were under-represented in the IVAWS sample, suggesting that this age cohort were less available to be interviewed. A possible explanation is the greater use of mobile phones than landline telephones among young adults, which means that telephone based surveys will exclude this cohort to some extent. This issue needs consideration, especially as more and more people rely on mobile phones.

Given that refusals accounted for the majority of non-responses, the length of the questionnaire could not have been a significant factor. The sensitive subject area may however have been an issue. Previous research (although contradictory) offers some insights into the reasons why women may not be willing to participate in telephone surveys:

- 
- women who have been victimised may refuse to participate due to safety concerns (Straus & Gelles 1986), particularly concerns that their intimate partner will find out that they have disclosed the violence to a third party (Schwartz 2000; Waltermaurer, Ortega & McNutt 2003);
  - women who have not been abused may not be interested in participating (McNutt & Lee 1999);
  - severely abused women may be much less likely to participate than women who have been subjected to lower levels of violence (McNutt & Lee 1999); and
  - cultural factors may mitigate against participation as women in some ethnic minority communities may be suspicious of interview questions and interviewers (Intimate Partner Abuse and Relationship Violence Working Group 2001).<sup>16</sup>

Unfortunately, it was not possible to gauge the exact reasons for terminating the interview early or refusing to participate, as insufficient information was provided on these women.

## Description of the sample

The final sample of 6677 female respondents was adequately representative of the geographic and age distribution of the Australian adult female population, although residents in metropolitan Sydney, rural areas of Queensland (Table 22), and females in the younger age groups (less than 35 years) were somewhat under-represented (Table 23). The sample was weighted to adjust for these biases.

A total of 91 women who completed the survey indicated that they were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (1.4%), and a further 1113 women described themselves to be from a non-English speaking background (17%).

**Table 22: Sample and population counts by region, percentages**

	Unweighted sample	Weighted sample	Difference
<b>Region</b>			
Sydney	21	22	-1
Rest of NSW & ACT	13	13	0
Melbourne	19	19	0
Rest of Victoria	7	6	+1
Brisbane	9	9	0
Rest of Queensland	10	10	0
Adelaide	6	6	0
Rest of South Australia & Northern Territory	3	3	0
Perth	8	7	+1
Rest of Western Australia	3	3	0
Tasmania	2	2	0
Australia	100	100	

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 [computer file]

**Table 23: Sample and population counts by age, percentages**

	Unweighted sample	Weighted sample	Difference
<b>Age group</b>			
18-24	7	15	-8
25-29	7	11	-4
30-34	11	12	-1
35-39	12	11	+1
40-44	14	11	+3
45-49	12	11	+1
50-54	12	10	+2
55-59	10	9	+2
60-64	8	6	+2
65-69	6	5	+1
All women	100	100	

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, IVAWS 2002/03 [computer file]

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Two-thirds of the women interviewed were currently married (67%), with a further nine per cent living with a man without being formally married to him. In terms of the highest educational level attained by the women, close to a third had obtained some type of degree from a university or college of advanced education (CAE) (29%). A further 15 per cent of the IVAWS women had indicated that their highest level of education was HSC/VCE or Year 12. Only one per cent had no post-primary school education. The majority of women who completed the IVAWS were working for pay either outside the home (58%) or both at home and outside the home (3%).

## Data processing

Roy Morgan Research was responsible for the editing of the raw data for integrity, coding errors and internal consistency. All questions on reasons for reporting or not reporting a crime, and reasons for dissatisfaction with the police were left open ended to allow women's exact answers to be recorded. The answers to these questions were coded according to coding frames prepared jointly by staff at Roy Morgan Research and the AIC. In addition, Roy Morgan Research conducted appropriate checks to ensure consistency and quality of the data before it was provided to AIC. The AIC received a clean data file in ASCII format containing a total of 39,480 unit records.

## Weighting

As the sample of women interviewed tended to under-represent women living in metropolitan Sydney and rural Queensland, as well as women aged less than 35 years, survey weights ('post stratification weights') were used to correct these imbalances. In general, survey weights are an estimate of the inverse of the probability associated with selecting a particular household or person in the sample. They serve two major purposes:

1. They enable the survey estimates to be corrected for non-response and coverage problems; and
2. They enable the survey estimates to conform to a known distribution of the population of interest, often defined in terms of sex, age group and geographic region (for further information see Carcach & Makkai 2003).

Roy Morgan Research calculated the weights used in the IVAWS based on weighting specifications provided by the AIC (Roy Morgan Research 2003). Weights were attached to the responses to the survey as follows:

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## A. Notation and definitions

- h = Stratum indicative
- i = Person indicative,
- k = Household indicative,
- a = sex by age by part of state cell for sampling quotes,
- p = sex by age by part of state post-stratum,
- T = Total number of telephone numbers listed in the frame (White Pages And White Pages plus One),
- t = Total number of interviews,
- M = Number of persons in the household who are 16 years and over,
- Q<sub>a</sub> = Sampling quota for the a-th cell, first stage (2,005 interviews),
- N<sub>p</sub> = Benchmark — estimated number of residents in private households in the p-th sex by age by part of state post-stratum, first stage (2,005 interviews)

### *Person weights*

The survey selected telephone numbers at random within specific regional strata. Based on the assumption that there is one telephone number per dwelling, then the probability of selecting a specific telephone number equals the probability of selecting the dwelling. Assuming that there is one household per dwelling, it will also approximate the probability of selecting a private household. One person who was in-scope of the survey was randomly selected from the household.

### *Selection weighting — persons*

Within a given regional stratum, designated by h, a person-selection weight was obtained in the following way:

$$w_{il} = \frac{T_h}{t_h} \times M_{ki}$$

### *Non-response adjusted weighting — persons*

Sampling quotas were determined for cells defined according to sex-age groups. Let a designate one of these cells and denote the sampling quota in the a-th cell as Q<sub>a</sub>. The non-

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response-adjusted weight was calculated from:

$$w_i^R = w_i \times \frac{Q_{ai}}{\sum_{i \in a} w_i}$$

### *Post-stratification weighting — persons*

Let  $N_p$  denote the known population aged 16 years and over for the  $p$ -th sex by age by part of the state post-stratum obtained from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The final person weight, after adjustment for post-stratification, was calculated from:

$$w_i^* = w_i^R \times \frac{N_{pi}}{\sum_{i \in p} w_i^R}$$

### *Household weights*

Household weights must be derived from person weights as there are no benchmark figures for numbers of households in Australia. One simple way to obtain the weight for the  $k$ -th household is to adjust the final person weight by the ratio of the  $k$ -th household's size to the sum of household sizes over the sample. This gives the following expression for the post-stratified household weight:

$$w_k^* = \frac{w_i^*}{M_{ki}}$$

No non-response and selection weights were required for households.

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<sup>15</sup> Roy Morgan Research had also been commissioned to undertake the Australian component of the 2000 International Crime Victimization Survey (ICVS).

<sup>16</sup> Noteworthy is that of the 476 foreign language callbacks made by a bilingual interviewer, only 14 per cent resulted in an interview in a foreign language.



# Appendix 2: Comparison between CSS, WSS and IVAWS

Aspect	April 2002 Crime and Safety, Australia	1996 Women's Safety Australia	IVAWS
Scope of the survey	Residents of private dwellings included in the Monthly Population Survey (MPS) aged 15 years and over, Australia-wide, except for questions on the offence of sexual assault that were asked of females and males aged 18 years and over.	Female residents of private dwellings aged 18 years and over, Australia-wide.	Female residents of private dwellings aged between 18 and 69 years, Australia-wide.
Reference period	April to July 2002	February to April 1996	December 2002 to June 2003
Sample size Persons Households	41,200 20,400	6,333 6,333	6,677 6,677
Data collection method	For households included in the telephone-interviewing component of the MPS, questionnaires were mailed from the ABS office. For the remaining households, questionnaires were delivered by MPS interviewers. In both cases, respondents were asked to mail their completed forms back to the ABS.	Information was collected from selected respondents by a personal or telephone interview, or a combination of these. For reasons relating to confidentiality all interviews had to be conducted alone.	Telephone interviews using CATI
Response rates Persons Households	76% 75%	78% 78%	39%
Nature of the survey	Compulsory	Voluntary	Voluntary
Personal offences	Robbery Assault Sexual assault	Sexual assault Attempted or threatened sexual assault Physical assault Attempted or threatened physical assault Stalking Harassment Childhood physical and sexual assault	Sexual assault Attempted or threatened sexual assault Forced sexual intercourse with a third party Drug facilitated sexual assault Physical assault Attempted or threatened physical assault Childhood physical and sexual assault

Source: ABS 1996; 2000; Australian Institute of Criminology; IVAWS 2002-2003



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