Prevalence and type of partner abuse reported by metropolitan, regional & rural women

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Overview

• Partner abuse in Australia
• Why is rurality important in the study of partner abuse?
• Background to the current study
• Key findings
• Recommendations and concluding remarks
What is intimate partner violence - IPV?

Any behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm

Includes acts of:
- physical aggression,
- sexual coercion,
- psychological abuse
- controlling behaviours

WHO 2010: Preventing Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Against Women
Prevalence of partner violence in Australia

- Australian component of the International Violence Against Women Survey\(^1\): 34% of women (n= 6,438; 18 - 69 years of age) had experienced some form of violence from a male partner

- Current study found 21.6% of women (n = 14,247; 18 - 40 yrs) reported having lived in a violent relationship with a partner or spouse

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Health effects of IPV

- Associated with decreased physical and mental well-being, in both the short and long term
- Negative effects can last for years after the abuse has ceased
- Within Australia, IPV has been ranked as the leading contributor to death, disability and illness in women aged 18 to 44\(^1\)
- IPV was found to be a more significant risk factor for preventable ill-health and early death than high blood pressure, obesity or smoking\(^1\)

IPV in a rural context

- There has been very little Australian research comparing rates and types of IPV between rural/urban areas.
- Evidence from the USA shows that IPV prevalence increases with increasing rurality.\(^1\)
- The type and severity of IPV also varies geographically, with rural women being more vulnerable to severe physical injury and sexual assault in IPV compared to metropolitan women.\(^2\)

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IPV in a rural context

Rural characteristics that may influence IPV

- Physical distance and isolation
- Lack of IPV services
- Health and women’s services
- Family farms and inheritance
- Lack of anonymity
- Police and legal services
- Alcohol and masculinity
- Access to firearms

In the current study: major cities had significantly lower proportion of women (19.6%) reporting an experience of IPV in their lifetime than inner regional (24.4%) or rural (26.1%) areas.
Study background

- Secondary analysis of data from the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women’s Health (ALSWH)
- Study cohort women born 1973-78
- 7253 women participated in 6th Survey wave in 2012. Ages: 34 – 40 yrs, mean age: 36.3yrs
- Responded to questions about their experiences of IPV in prior 12 months
- ASGC used to categorise the remoteness of residence:
  - Major cities
  - Inner regional
  - Rural: Outer regional, remote & very remote

Geographic remoteness in Australia as defined by the Australian Standard Geographic Classification (ASGC)
**Measure of IPV – Community composite abuse scale**

- 28 item checklist of abusive behaviours
- Physical, emotional, sexual abuse and harassment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotional Abuse</th>
<th>Physical Abuse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Told me that no one would ever want me</td>
<td>- Slapped me/kicked me/beat me up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Refused to let me work outside the home</td>
<td>- Hit or tried to hit me with something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Tried to turn family, friends or children against me</td>
<td>- Used a knife or gun or other weapon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Harassment</th>
<th>Sexual abuse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Followed me/hung around outside my house</td>
<td>- Forced me to take part in unwanted sexual activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Harassed me over the telephone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Harassed me at work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results – Past 12 month prevalence of IPV

- 6190 women provided responses to the CCAS questions
- 849 women indicated an experience of partner abuse in the 12 months prior to the survey
- Prevalence rate of 13.7% for partner abuse in 12 month period prior to the survey

No significant regional differences in the prevalence of past 12 month abuse

\[ \chi^2(2) = 0.253 \quad p=0.881 \]
Results – Prevalence of abuse type by region of residence

- No significant regional differences in type of abuse reported
- Women may have reported more than one type of abuse

![](chart.png)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major city</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner regional</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$$\chi^2(2) = 0.514 \quad p=0.773$$
Prevalence of abuse type by region of residence

### Physical abuse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major city</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner regional</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2 (2) = 3.850 \ p=0.146$
Prevalence of abuse type by region of residence

Harassment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major city</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner regional</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2(2) = 1.157 \ p=0.561$
Prevalence of abuse type by region of residence

Sexual abuse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major city</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner regional</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2(2) = 3.625 \ p=0.163$
Multiple types of abuse

• Co-occurrence of multiple types of abuse may indicate more intense abuse
• Emotional abuse was the most common form of abuse
• Of all the women who reported abuse in the previous 12 months (n=869)
  - 92% reported some form of emotional abuse
  - 66% reported emotional abuse alone
  - 26% reported emotional abuse in combination with one or more additional abuse types
Multiple types of abuse – regional comparison

- A higher proportion of women from major cities experienced multiple types of abuse compared to women from non-city locations.
- The differences were not statistically significant.

Fisher’s = 8.626  p=0.172
Summary

For this study cohort at survey wave 6:

- 1 in 5 women (21.6%) reported having lived in a violent relationship with a partner or spouse at some time in their life.
- Non-metropolitan areas contain a significantly higher proportion of women with a lifetime experience of IPV.
- 13.7% of women reported having experienced partner abuse in the past 12 months.
- There was no difference in the prevalence of different types of abuse or the occurrence of multiple types of abuse across geographic areas.
Recommendations

• An understanding of geographic patterns of IPV is essential for effective intervention and support

• There is a need for further non-metropolitan IPV research incorporating:
  - Measures of socio-economic disadvantage on a smaller scale than ASGC categories
  - Adequate indigenous representation
  - Qualitative research to identify area specific needs and barriers to accessing help

• Use information from existing IPV services to improve knowledge on a regional basis
Thank you