

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

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There have been few Australian studies into regional differences in partner abuse, especially with regards to abuse type. Studies from Canada and the USA indicate that rural women who experience partner abuse may be subjected to more severe physical abuse and are more often sexually assaulted by partners than their urban counterparts.

**Aim:** To investigate prevalence and type of partner abuse in a sample of Australian women, and examine differences across metropolitan, regional and rural areas.

**Method:** This study utilises data from the Australian Longitudinal Study of Women's Health sixth survey (2012) of the 1973-78 birth cohort (n=6429, mean age 36.3yrs). Information about prevalence and type of abuse experienced in the past 12 months was gained from the Community Composite Abuse Scale (CCAS), a 28-item survey instrument that identifies four abuse types: physical, emotional, sexual and harassment.

Past 12-month prevalence (reporting at least one positive response to a CCAS item) and type of abuse were analysed with respect to area of residence categorised as: major cities, inner regional and rural (combination of outer regional, remote/very remote areas).

**Results:** Past 12-month prevalence of partner abuse in the cohort was 13.7%. There was no significant difference ( $p \geq 0.05$ ) in prevalence rates between major cities (13.6%), inner regional (14.0%) and rural (13.5%) areas.

With regards to type of abuse, there were no significant differences in the rates of reporting across regional areas for any abuse category. Emotional abuse was the most common abuse, reported by 12.5% of women in the sample. Regional rates of emotional abuse were: Major cities 12.4%, inner regional 13.0%, rural 12.3%. Physical abuse was reported by 2.5% of women, with regional figures of: major cities 2.7%, inner regional 1.9%, rural areas 3.0%. Harassment was reported by 2.8% of women, with regional figures: major cities 2.9%, inner regional 2.6% and rural areas 2.4%. Sexual abuse was reported by 0.6% of the sample, with regional comparisons being: major cities 0.4%, inner regional 0.8%, rural areas 0.5%.

**Conclusion:** This study contributes new knowledge about the prevalence and type of intimate partner abuse experienced by young women across different geographic regions. It reports on data from a large population-based study, and found that the prevalence of partner abuse is consistent for metropolitan, regional and rural women. There were no significant differences in the reported rates of emotional, physical sexual or harassment abuse across regional areas for women of the study cohort.