

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



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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*



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Prevalence of partner violence in Australia

- Australian component of the International Violence Against Women Survey¹: 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

¹Mouzos, J. & Makkai, T. 2004. Women's experiences of male violence: Findings from the Australian component of the International Violence Against Women Survey (IVAWS). *Research and Public Policy Series*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology



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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 44¹
- IPV was found to be a more significant risk factor for preventable ill-health and early death than high blood pressure, obesity or smoking¹

¹ Vos, T., Astbury, J., Piers, L. S., Magnus, A., Heenan, M., Stanley, L., Walker, L. & Webster, K. 2006. Measuring the impact of intimate partner violence on the health of women in Victoria, Australia. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 84, 739-744



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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 rurality¹
- 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 women²

¹ Peek-Asa, C., Wallis, A., Harland, K., Beyer, K., Dickey, P. & Saftlas, A. 2011. Rural disparity in domestic violence prevalence and access to resources. *Journal of Women's Health*, 20, 1743 -1749.

² Pruitt, L. R. 2008. Place matters: Domestic violence and rural difference. *Wisconsin Journal of Law, Gender & Society* 347 (2008).



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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

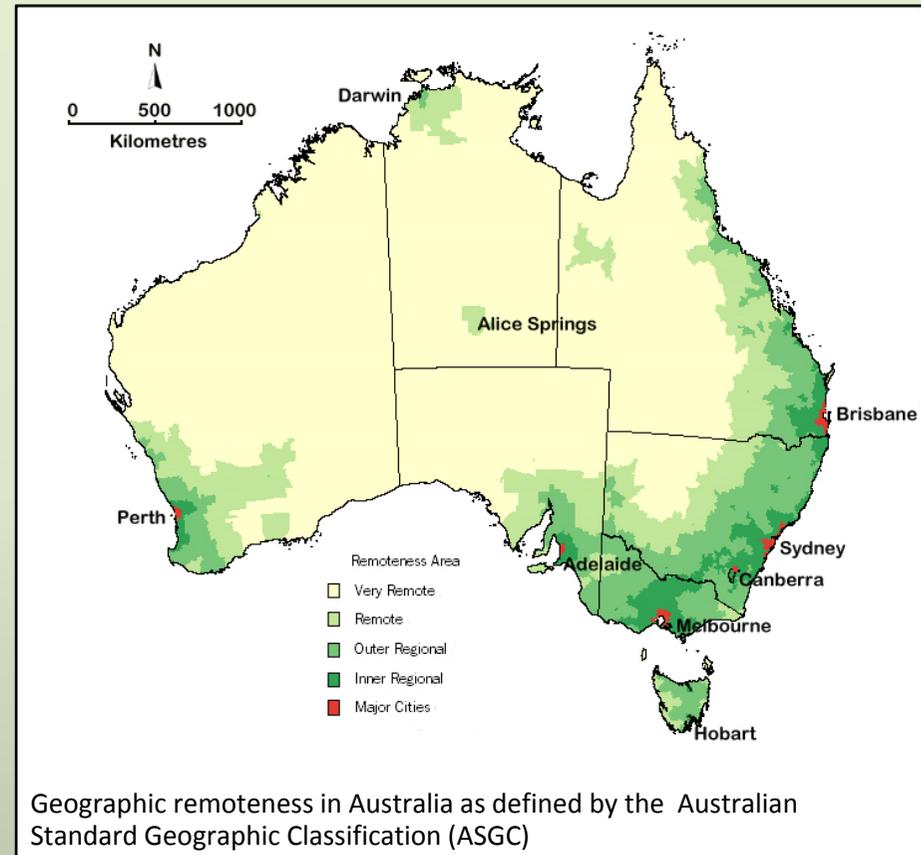


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Study background

- 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



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Measure of IPV – Community composite abuse scale

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

Emotional Abuse

- Told me that no one would ever want me
- Refused to let me work outside the home
- Tried to turn family, friends or children against me

Physical Abuse

- Slapped me/kicked me/beat me up
- Hit or tried to hit me with something
- Used a knife or gun or other weapon

Harassment

- Followed me/hung around outside my house
- Harassed me over the telephone
- Harassed me at work

Sexual abuse

- Forced me to take part in unwanted sexual activity

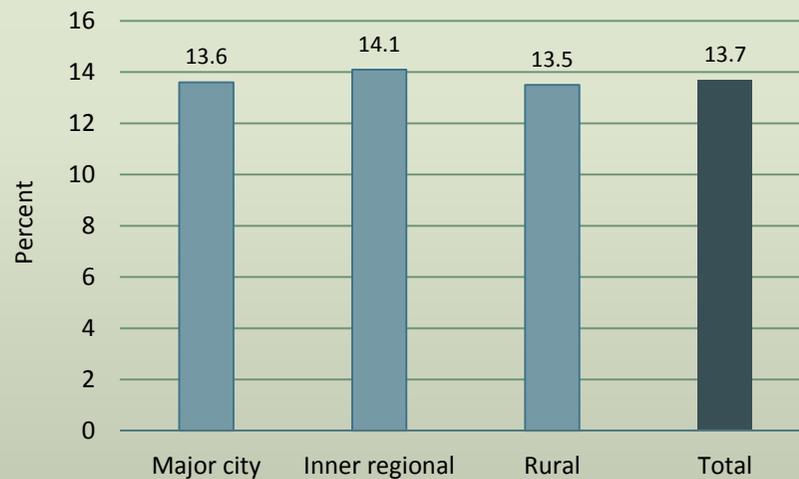


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Results – Past 12 month prevalence of IPV

- 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

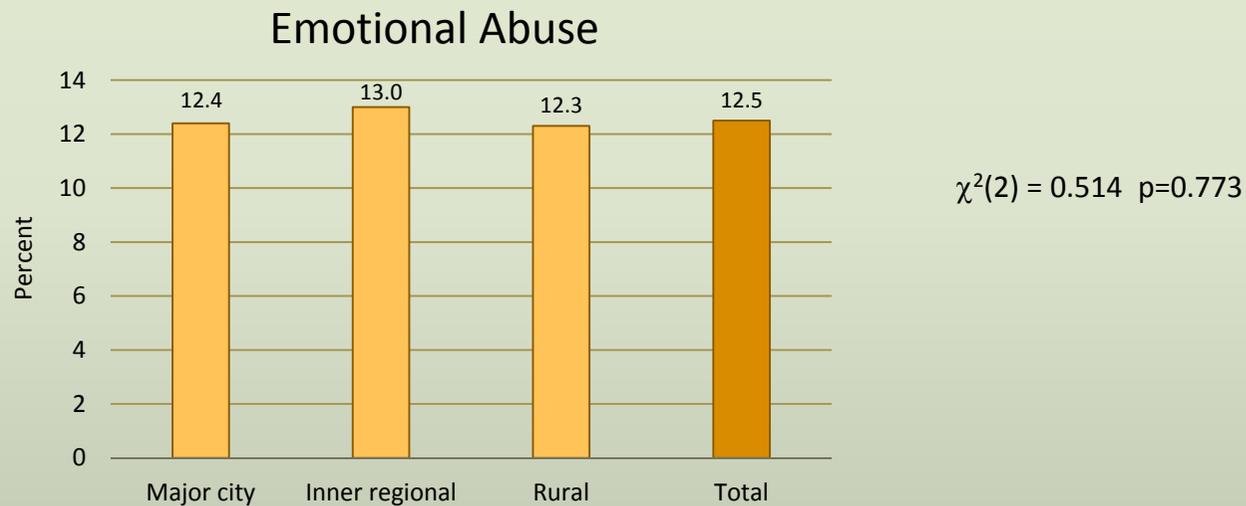
$$\chi^2(2) = 0.253 \quad p=0.881$$



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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

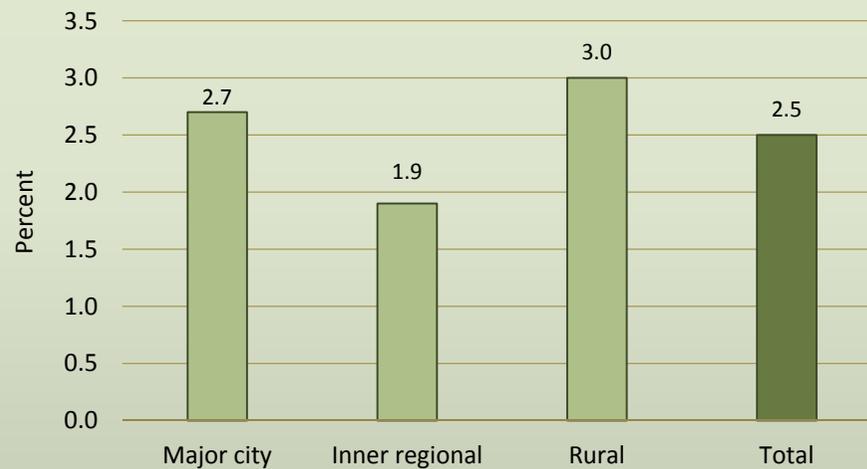


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Prevalence of abuse type by region of residence

Physical abuse



$\chi^2(2) = 3.850$ $p=0.146$

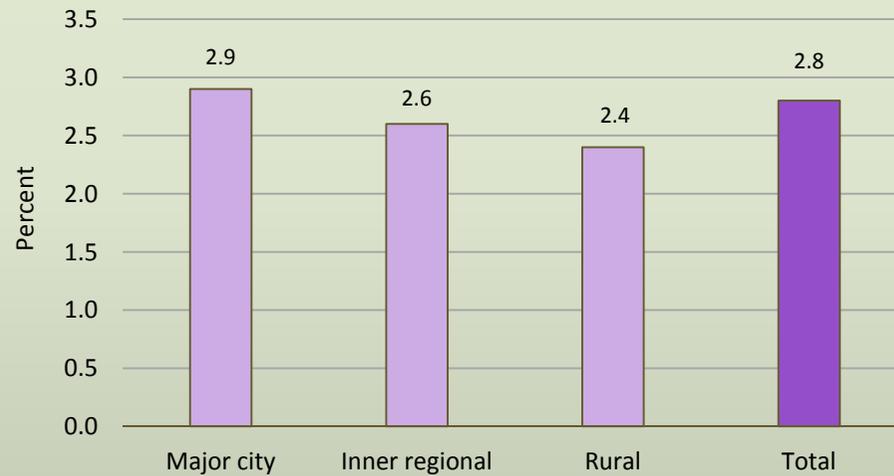


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Prevalence of abuse type by region of residence

Harassment



$\chi^2(2) = 1.157$ $p=0.561$

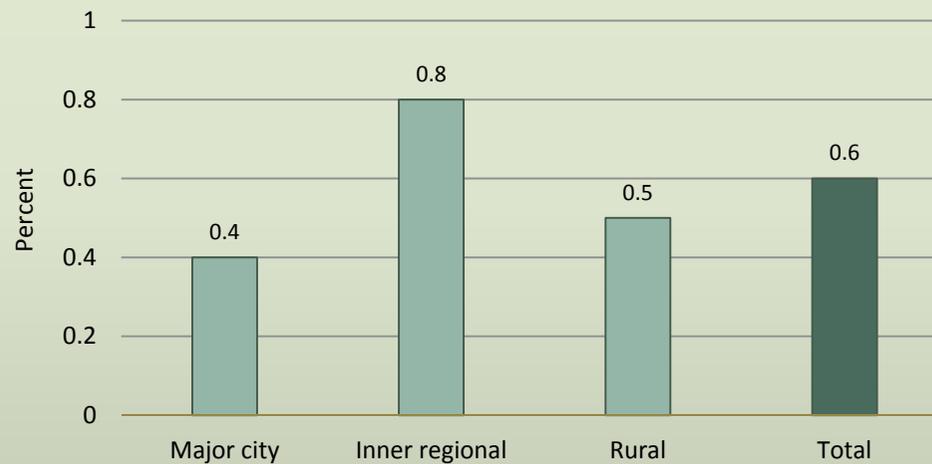


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Prevalence of abuse type by region of residence

Sexual abuse



$\chi^2(2) = 3.625$ $p=0.163$



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Multiple types of abuse

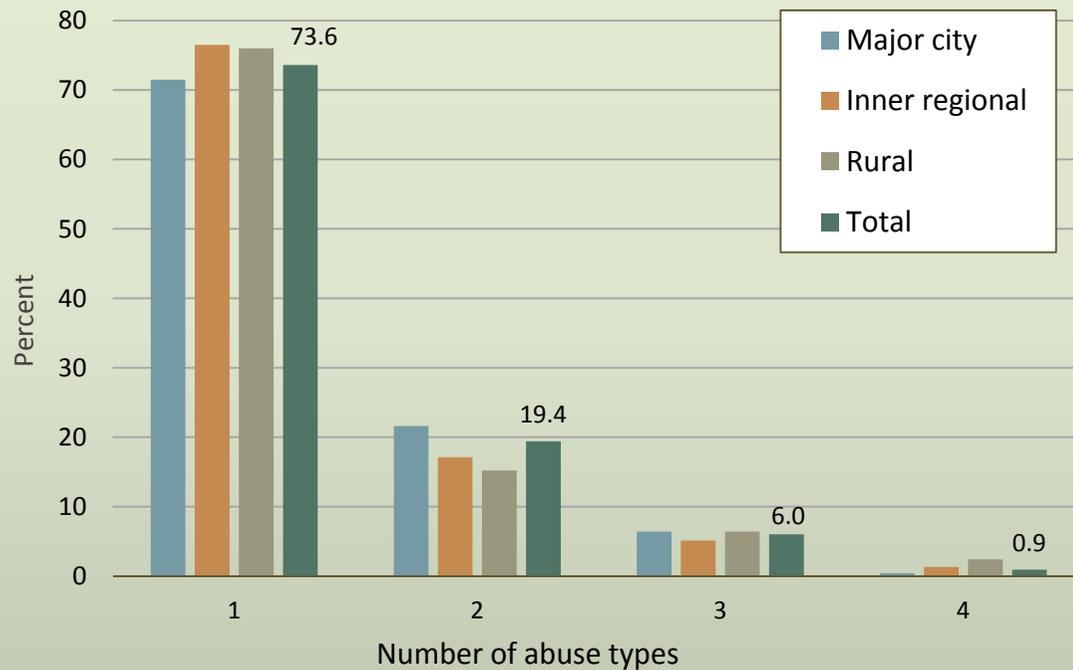
- Co-occurrence of multiple types of abuse may indicate more intense abuse
- Emotional abuse was the most common form of abuse
- Of all the women who reported abuse in the previous 12 months (n=869)
 - 92% reported some form of emotional abuse
 - 66% reported emotional abuse alone
 - 26% reported emotional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



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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



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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



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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



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Thank you

