

The effect of domestic violence on children in Australia

Children's exposure to family, domestic and sexual violence adversely affects their future health, wellbeing, education, relationships and housing outcomes.⁽¹⁾ Currently, there is no comprehensive data on children's experiences of violence and no national report on the causes of death for all Australian children under the age of 18.⁽²⁾

The following statistics are the current as of December 2023.

1 in 6 women
(16% or 1.5 million) and
1 in 9 men
(11% or 992,000) were physically and/or sexually abused before the age of 15.⁽⁸⁾

628

hospitalisations of children aged 0-14 for injuries due to abuse (including assault, maltreatment and neglect) in 2017-18.

Of the 495 hospitalisations where a perpetrator was specified, **65%** (321) related to family violence with **47%** (231) of perpetrators recorded as a parent.⁽¹⁾

1 in 4
children are exposed to domestic violence.⁽³⁾

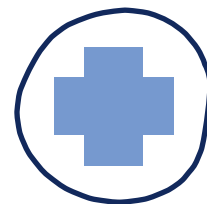


Between 2016-17 and 2017-18, the Australian Institute of Criminology's (AIC) National Homicide Monitoring Program (NHMP) recorded 30 victims of filicide (killing of a child or children under 18 by a parent or parent-equivalent) accounting for 16% of all domestic homicides.

Three diseases linked to child abuse and neglect are depressive disorders, anxiety disorders, suicide and self-inflicted injuries. For the Australian population in 2015, child abuse and neglect contributed to 788 deaths (0.5% of all deaths) or 2.2% of the total burden of disease and injury.⁽¹⁾



418,000
women and
92,200
men who had experienced violence from a previous partner said the children in their care had witnessed this violence in 2015.⁽⁵⁾



5,000
hospitalisations of young people aged 15-24 due to assault in 2017-18. Of these cases, 24% (1,200) were perpetrated by a family member.⁽¹⁾

Approximately 2.5 million Australian adults (13%) experienced abuse during their childhood; the majority knew the perpetrator and experienced multiple incidents of abuse.⁽⁴⁾

1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare – Health impacts of family, domestic and sexual violence 2020
2. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare – Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia: continuing the national story 2019
3. Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse 2011, The Impact of Domestic Violence on Children: A Literature Review
4. Australian Bureau of Statistics – Census 2016
5. Australian Bureau of Statistics – Personal Safety Survey 2016
6. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare – Child Protection in Australia 2021-22
7. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare – Specialist homelessness services annual report 2021-22
8. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare – Australia's Children: Children exposed to family violence 2022
9. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2019; Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety 2018; World Health Organisation 2016.

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In 2021-22:

57%

(25,933 children) of substantiated cases of emotional abuse, including witnessing violence between intimate partners and adults, was the most common primary type of abuse.⁽⁶⁾

1 in 32

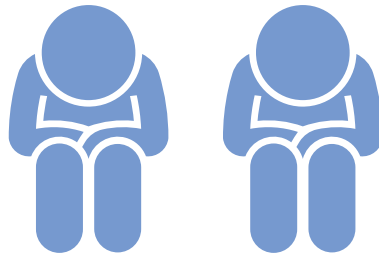
of all Australian children (177,556 children) received child protection services.

Infants aged less than 1 were most likely (38 per 1,000) to receive child protection services.⁽⁶⁾

Being exposed to family violence can have a wide range of detrimental impacts on a child's development, mental and physical health, housing situation and general wellbeing.⁽⁹⁾

21%

(9,361 children) of cases, neglect was the primary type of abuse, physical abuse in 14% (6,148 children) and sexual abuse in 9% (4,005 children).⁽⁶⁾



Domestic and family violence (DFV) is a main reason women and children leave their homes in Australia.

In 2021-22, 108,000 Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) clients had experienced family and domestic violence, equating to 39% of all clients.⁽⁷⁾

In 2021-22, 37,218 or 35% of people receiving specialist homelessness support due to family and domestic violence were children aged 0-17 years.⁽⁷⁾

More specifically, research has found exposure to family violence is associated with a range of outcomes, including:

- diminished educational attainment
- reduced social participation in early adulthood
- physical and psychological disorders
- suicidal ideation
- behavioural difficulties
- homelessness
- future victimisation
- violent offending

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare - Australia's children 2022

1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare – Health impacts of family, domestic and sexual violence 2020
2. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare – Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia: continuing the national story 2019
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