

ANROWS

AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL RESEARCH
ORGANISATION FOR WOMEN'S SAFETY

to Reduce Violence against Women & their Children

MEDIA RELEASE

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The “shadow pandemic” will continue as we learn to live with COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has raised significant concerns about the “shadow pandemic” of violence against women, and in particular intimate partner violence. A new study published by ANROWS builds on and contributes to existing research exploring this element of the pandemic response.

Frontline domestic and family violence services are reporting that cases coming to them are more complex. Women are also experiencing more difficulty reporting violence and seeking support.

Capturing these insights and more, *Intimate partner violence during the COVID-19 pandemic: A survey of women in Australia* provides the most comprehensive survey of women's experiences of IPV during the first 12 months of the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia to date.

The study shows that many women experienced violence for the first time or experienced an escalation in violence during the pandemic. Many of these women attributed these changes to factors associated with the pandemic.

Hayley Boxall and Anthony Morgan, from the Australian Institute of Criminology, interviewed over 10,000 women aged 18 years and over about their experiences of violence in a relationship in the last 12 months. The women were also asked about their experiences of violence prior to the pandemic.

The researchers found that women experienced a range of physical and non-physical forms of violence, often in combination. These findings suggest many women are experiencing patterns of ongoing violence and abuse, in the context of coercive control, and are finding it difficult to seek help.

“It is most concerning that women experiencing violence during this period faced barriers to seeking help – many of those who wanted to seek help were unable to do so due to concerns about their safety,” said ANROWS CEO, Padma Raman PSM. “We now know that women's experiences of violence during the pandemic have been diverse and complex, and creating clear pathways to safety for these women is crucial.”

The study also found that many women had experienced technology-facilitated abuse perpetrated by a partner or former partner.

“These findings add to a growing body of international evidence and confirm what we’ve been hearing from the sector and from victim-survivors since the early stages of the pandemic,” said AIC Deputy Director, Dr Rick Brown. “We need to ensure that, particularly as lockdowns start to ease, we are ready to support women who have experienced violence for the first time or for whom it has been getting worse.”

The report makes a number of recommendations, including the need for policy and practice design for support services to take into account the complexity of women’s experiences of violence during the pandemic. The recommendations invite policymakers to consider the prolonged effects of the pandemic on intimate partner violence that will extend beyond the pandemic period.

The report will be launched at 1:00 pm on 11 October 2021, in the ANROWS webinar, “The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on domestic and family violence”.

Additional information:

This study also found that:

- One in three respondents had experienced emotionally abusive, harassing and controlling behaviours since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- One in ten respondents had experienced some form of technology-facilitated abuse by their current or most recent partner in the 12 months prior to the survey.
- More than half of the respondents who experienced non-physical forms of abuse said that they had experienced multiple types of abuse (e.g. the co-occurrence of financial abuse and socially restrictive behaviour).
- The majority of respondents (86.2%) who experienced physical or sexual violence in the 12 months prior to the survey had also experienced at least one form of emotionally abusive, harassing and controlling behaviour.

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About ANROWS

Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety Limited ([ANROWS](https://www.anrows.org.au)) is a not-for-profit independent national research organisation.

ANROWS is an initiative of Australia’s National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022. ANROWS was established by the Commonwealth and all state and territory governments of Australia to produce, disseminate and assist in applying evidence for policy and practice addressing violence against women and their children.

ANROWS is the only such research organisation in Australia.