

ANROWS

AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL RESEARCH
ORGANISATION FOR WOMEN'S SAFETY

to Reduce Violence against Women & their Children

MEDIA RELEASE

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The intersection of economic insecurity and intimate partner violence during the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted significant concerns about the “shadow pandemic” of violence against women, and in particular intimate partner violence. A new study published by ANROWS highlights the intersection of economic insecurity and women’s experiences of intimate partner violence during the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia.

Consistent with other Australian and international research, there was clear evidence from the study that economic factors, including job loss and financial stress, linked with the pandemic were associated with both the onset and escalation of intimate partner violence.

Capturing these insights and more, *Economic insecurity and intimate partner violence in Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic* builds upon earlier [ANROWS research](#) to provide the most comprehensive survey of women’s experiences of intimate partner violence during the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia to date.

Many of the women surveyed reported experiencing economic insecurity during the first 12 months of the pandemic, and the report reflects women’s experiences of violence during this period. Economic insecurity was linked with the increased likelihood of experiencing intimate partner violence.

Anthony Morgan and Dr Hayley Boxall, from the Australian Institute of Criminology, surveyed 10,000 women aged 18 years and over about their experiences of violence in their most recent intimate relationship during the first 12 months of the COVID-19 pandemic. The women were also asked about their experiences of violence prior to the pandemic.

The findings reinforce the need to focus on women's economic security, both in the context of the pandemic and beyond, given the complexity in determining the relationship between intimate partner violence and economic security.

"It is most concerning that women's experiences of economic insecurity were linked with an increased chance of also experiencing intimate partner violence, regardless of economic disparity within the relationship," said ANROWS CEO, Padma Raman PSM. "It is vital that responses to improve women's economic security are supported by strategies which address harmful attitudes supporting gender norms and dismantle systems that enable these problematic attitudes."

The study also found that the relationship between economic status, stress and disparity and intimate partner violence varied according to the type of violence and whether it was experienced as a chronic condition or an acute stressor.

"Something that we found particularly concerning from the survey was that women's economic security and employment was not a protective factor against sexual violence within their relationships, and may actually increase risk," said AIC Deputy Director Rick Brown. "This suggests that within intimate relationships where the partners have similar levels of earning power, or the woman is the primary breadwinner, some abusers may be using sexual violence as a way of exerting control over their partner that they feel they have lost or is being challenged in other areas".

Minister for Women's Safety Anne Ruston said the Morrison Government has released the draft National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032 which has a strong focus on addressing women's recovery from violence, including women's economic security, and this research would play a key part in determining policy and practice initiatives stemming from it.

"Under the Morrison Government's record \$1.1 billion investment in women's safety at the 2021-22 Budget we established the new Escaping Violence Payment which provides victim-survivors leaving a violent relationship up to \$5,000 in financial assistance to establish a home free from violence," Minister Ruston said.

"We understand that financial hardship can be a barrier to leaving violent relationships and the new Escaping Violence Payment aims to provide direct financial support to victim-survivors when they make the incredibly brave decision to leave any form of intimate partner violence including physical violence, coercive control and financial abuse."

The report makes a number of recommendations, including that economic support for women must take into account ways to prevent violence, support victims and survivors currently in abusive relationships and support women after they leave abusive partners. The recommendations invite policymakers to consider tailoring financial supports designed to improve women's economic security to be accessible by women who live with intersecting disadvantages, such as those in carer commitments and disabilities, and developing them in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to ensure they are culturally appropriate.

You can request a copy of the embargoed copy of the report and/or key findings resource. The report and details in this media release are embargoed until it is published on the ANROWS website on Monday 31 January 2022.

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About ANROWS

Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety Limited ([ANROWS](#)) 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.