

EVIDENCE OVERVIEW:

Economic insecurity and intimate partner violence in Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic

This resource captures the key findings from the ANROWS-funded report *Economic insecurity and intimate partner violence in Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic* led by Anthony Morgan and Hayley Boxall of the Australian Institute of Criminology.

Context

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted significant concerns about the “shadow pandemic” of violence against women and children, in particular intimate partner violence (IPV). There is now a large body of research in Australia exploring the effects of the pandemic on violence against women and children, and specifically IPV. The research has indicated that matters being referred to IPV services are more complex, and victims and survivors are experiencing increased barriers to reporting IPV and seeking support. This research provides the most comprehensive survey of women’s experiences of IPV during the first 12 months of the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia.¹ It is important for planning and delivering services in future phases of the pandemic, and beyond, and for informing responses to other pandemics and natural disasters that may occur. The report that this resource draws on focuses on the intersection of economic insecurity and women’s experiences of IPV in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia.

¹ The report builds on a previous study, administered in May 2020, based on a survey of 15,000 women. However, these results cannot be directly compared, due to changes to the observation period, sampling frame and method, and survey design and questionnaire. Both surveys also used non-probability – and therefore non-generalisable – samples.

Key findings

- 1.** Experiences of economic insecurity were common among women during the first 12 months of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2.** Economic insecurity was associated with an increased likelihood of IPV among women.
- 3.** Economic disparity within relationships was associated with IPV, even after controlling for economic insecurity.
- 4.** Economic insecurity co-occurred with other vulnerabilities reported by women which were associated with an increased likelihood of IPV.
- 5.** The relationship between economic status, stress and disparity and IPV varied according to the type of IPV and whether it was experienced as a chronic condition or an acute stressor.
- 6.** Consistent with other Australian and international research, there was clear evidence that the acute economic stressors associated with the COVID-19 pandemic were associated with both the onset and escalation of IPV.

Methodology

The report that this resource draws from presents the findings of Stage 2 of a larger national study involving an online survey of 10,107 women aged 18 years and over who had been in a relationship in the 12 months prior to the survey. Stage 1 of the study focused on women's experiences of IPV during COVID-19 in general; in Stage 2, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What is the relationship between risk factors that can change over time, particularly factors related to economic insecurity, and Australian women's experiences of IPV?
2. Is there any evidence of a relationship between those risk factors that have been influenced or exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and women's experiences of IPV?
3. Does the relationship between economic insecurity and IPV differ according to the type of IPV or pattern of violence and abuse (i.e. onset and escalation) experienced?

Implications for policy and practice

- The research reinforces the need to focus on women's economic security – both in the context of COVID-19 and beyond – to improve women's safety.
- The research can guide decisions about the best types of, and timing for, economic supports for women to:
 - prevent IPV
 - support victims and survivors currently in abusive relationships
 - support women after they separate from abusive partners.
- Responses to improve women's economic security should be supported by strategies which address harmful attitudes supporting gender norms and dismantle systems that enable these problematic attitudes.
- Financial supports to improve women's economic security need to be tailored to be accessible to women who live with intersecting disadvantages including carer commitments and disabilities, and must be developed in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to ensure they are culturally appropriate.
- Further research should be funded to better understand the causal role that economic security plays in IPV and how it intersects with other factors; it needs to consider the circumstances of both partners in the relationship and, specifically, the role of economic parity and disparity.

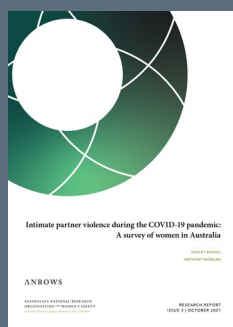
Further resources

- [CommBank Next Chapter – Financial Abuse Resource Centre](#)
- [Economic Justice Australia's report: Debt, Duress and Dob-ins](#)

Where to go for assistance

- [WIRE](#)
- [Good Shepherd – Financial Independence Hub](#)

Find out more



Intimate partner violence during the COVID-19 pandemic: A survey of women in Australia



Economic insecurity and intimate partner violence in Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic

Source

Morgan, A., & Boxall, H. (2022). *Economic insecurity and intimate partner violence in Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic* (Research report, 02/2022). ANROWS.

Suggested citation

Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety. (2022). *Evidence overview: Economic insecurity and intimate partner violence in Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic* [Fact sheet]. ANROWS.