

ANROWS

AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL RESEARCH
ORGANISATION FOR WOMEN'S SAFETY
to Reduce Violence against Women & their Children

MEDIA RELEASE

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“Dad did it so I thought I could”: Young people who use violence in the home require support for their own experiences of child abuse

One in five young people who participated in new ANROWS research reported that they had used violence against a family member. The survey of 5,021 young people living in Australia, aged 16 to 20, also found that 89 per cent had experienced child abuse prior to using violence.

The new research led by Monash University Professor Kate Fitz-Gibbon underscores the need for trauma-informed responses to young people using adolescent family violence (AFV) with a combined focus on support and recovery.

[*Adolescent family violence in Australia: A national study of prevalence, history of childhood victimisation and impacts*](#) is the first research within Australia or internationally that examines the nature of and responses to AFV from the perspective of young people.

With 51 per cent of respondents having witnessed family violence between other family members, and 30 per cent having been subjected to violence perpetrated against them by other family members, this research emphasises that all forms of domestic and family violence should be responded to in trauma-informed and child-centric ways.

Professor Kate Fitz-Gibbon remarked, “This study clearly demonstrates why we must ensure responses to domestic and family violence in Australia keep children as victim-survivors in their own right in view at all times. The intergenerational, emotional and social impacts of family violence on young people in Australia are significant.”

The retaliatory and intergenerational nature of young people’s violence was highlighted throughout the study, with respondents often citing the need to defend themselves against actual or anticipated violence, or wanting to punish the family member that abused them.

Respondents who had both experienced targeted abuse and witnessed violence between other family members were 9.2 times more likely to use violence in the home compared to those who had not. The significant overlap between experiences of child abuse with later use of AFV highlights a critical need for increased primary prevention strategies and responses.

The report highlights the need for policy and practice that ensure timely access to trauma-informed specialist recovery and support services for children and young people affected by

DFV and other forms of child abuse. Particular attention needs to be paid to the recovery needs of young people with disability, who were 1.3 times more likely to use violence in the home when compared to respondents without disability.

ANROWS CEO Padma Raman PSM noted the importance of including a focus on young people when developing policy and practice for women's and children's safety.

"By centring the voices of young people this research demonstrates the need for a trauma-informed response to young people who use violence, and support for their own recovery from experiences of domestic and family violence."

Professor Kate Fitz-Gibbon noted the implications of this study for future policy and practice.

"Supporting a young person's recovery from domestic and family violence is an essential strategy to reduce the risk of intergenerational violence. Access to specialist recovery and support services for young people must be prioritised through the next National Plan if we are to deliver upon the aim of creating system responses that view children as victim-survivors in their own right."

The Hon Amanda Rishworth MP, Minister for Social Services, described the research as alarming.

"We know family and domestic violence occurs across all ages, and all socioeconomic and demographic groups, but predominantly affects women and children."

"The Albanese Labor government is committed to tackling this scourge and will release the next National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children before the end of the year."

"We don't want the next generation of women and children dealing with this scourge."

Journalists are invited to request an embargoed copy of this report.

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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.