

# The effect of domestic violence on children in Australia

Children's experiences of family, domestic and sexual violence adversely affect their future health, wellbeing, education, relationships and housing outcomes.<sup>(1)</sup> 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.<sup>(2)</sup>

The following statistics are 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.<sup>(8)</sup>

**1 in 4**  
children experience domestic violence.<sup>(3)</sup>



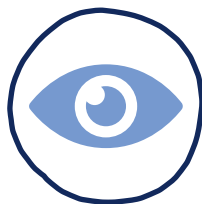
Between 2016-17 and 2017-18, the Australian Institute of Criminology's (AIC) National Homicide Monitoring Program (NHMP) recorded 30 victims of filicide (killing of a child or children under 18 by a parent or parent-equivalent) accounting for 16% of all domestic homicides.

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.<sup>(1)</sup>

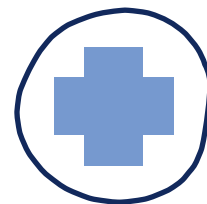
**628**

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.<sup>(1)</sup>



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



**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.<sup>(1)</sup>

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

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 experiencing violence between intimate partners and adults, was the most common primary type of abuse.<sup>(6)</sup>

**21%**

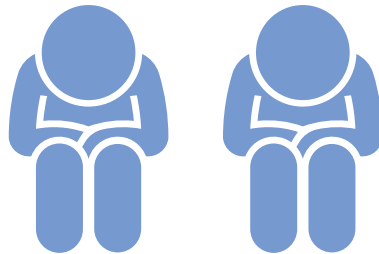
(9,361 children) of cases, neglect was the primary type of abuse, physical abuse in 14% (6,148 children) and sexual abuse in 9% (4,005 children).<sup>(6)</sup>

**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.<sup>(6)</sup>

Experiencing family violence can have a wide range of detrimental impacts on a child's development, mental and physical health, housing situation and general wellbeing.<sup>(9)</sup>



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.<sup>(7)</sup>

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.<sup>(7)</sup>

More specifically, research has found experiences of family violence are 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  
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