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Service systems responses

Data from the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health (ALSWH) show that:

- The adverse health impact of violence experienced at any life stage lasts decades.
- Women who have ever experienced violence also experience economic stress, which can exacerbate health problems.
- Violence at any point in life is related to poor health and coping behaviours that cause ill health.
- Women who have experienced violence have higher healthcare costs, both government costs and costs to the women themselves.

Recommendation: The next National Plan should include health and economic recovery strategies and programs for women who have *ever* experienced violence. While it is important to prevent violence and to provide interventions to bring women rapidly to safety once violence has occurred, it is also important to recognise and address the chronic physical and mental health problems experienced by women who have lived with violence.

Strengthening the evidence base

The National Plan aims to reduce all forms of violence against women and children, which requires accurate baseline and follow-up data capture. ALSWH research has provided methodological information about measuring violence. Most importantly, ALSWH research shows that collecting data on violence involves an emotional cost to women, and it is unethical to collect new data when data might already be available.

Recommendation: Before collecting new data, undertake a thorough scoping of the existing data that have already been collected.

ALSWH research, commissioned by the Department of Social Services, demonstrated that more accurate measures of prevalence are obtained when women are asked about experiences of violence on more than one occasion. Women's interpretations of their experiences may change over time. Even with comprehensive measures of violence, there is a certain amount of inconsistency in responses to questions about violence.

Recommendations: To accurately measure reductions in the prevalence of domestic, family, or sexual violence, it is necessary to:

- Collect longitudinal *and* cross-sectional data.
- Measure recent as well as lifetime experiences of violence.
- Establish a thorough understanding and accounting of the error inherent in the measurement of violence.

Selected research

Academic papers

Loxton D, Forder PM, Cavenagh D, Townsend N, Holliday E, Chojenta C, Melka AS. The impact of adverse childhood experiences on the health and health behaviors of young Australian women. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 2020. doi: 10.1016/j.chiabu.2020.104771

Rowlands IJ, Holder C, Forder PM, Hegarty K, Dobson AJ, Loxton D. Consistency and inconsistency of young women's reporting of intimate partner violence in a population-based study. *Violence Against Women*, 2020. doi: 10.1177/1077801220908324

Loxton D, Powers J, Townsend N, Harris ML, Forder P. Longitudinal inconsistency in responses to survey items that ask women about intimate partner violence. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 2019, 19(1):201. doi: 10.1186/s12874-019-0835-4

Loxton D, Townsend N, Dolja-Gore X, Forder P, Coles J. Adverse childhood experiences and healthcare costs in adult life. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 2018, 28(5):511-525. doi: 10.1080/10538712.2018.1523814

Loxton D, Dolja-Gore X, Anderson AE, Townsend N. Intimate partner violence adversely impacts health over 16 years and across generations: A longitudinal cohort study. *PLoS One*, 2017, 12(6): e0178138. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0178138.

Reports

Loxton D, Townsend N, Forder P, Coombe J. *Domestic violence, risk factors and health*. Report prepared for the Australian Government Department of Social Services, 2018.

Loxton D, Townsend N, Cavenagh D, Green L. *Measuring Domestic Violence in Longitudinal Research*. Report prepared for the Australian Government Department of Social Services, 2017.