ABS Personal Safety Survey

Understanding violence against women through the largest quantitative survey of violence in Australia
What is covered in this presentation?

• What is the PSS?
• High level prevalence data
• Case study of sexual assault data
• Limitations of data for subpopulations
What is the PSS?

- Australia’s best quantitative data
- 17000 participants
- All states and territories
- Weighted analysis by ABS provides national estimates
- Extremely detailed info on most recent incident
- Household survey – some limitations on accessing populations who do not communicate fluently in English and those living in institutional settings
Why does the PSS matter?

• Our only reliable population level estimates
• Used in most ‘how big is this problem’ material, including media, advocacy, policy etc.
• Essential for Burden of Disease and economic impact calculations
• Basis of some Men’s Rights claims
Since the age of 15:

4 in 10 women have experienced violence.

5 in 10 men have experienced violence.

1 in 4 women have experienced violence by an intimate partner they may or may not have been living with.

1 in 6 women had experienced violence by a partner they were living with.

1 in 9 women had experienced violence by a boyfriend, girlfriend or date.
Sexual assault

1.7 million women had experienced sexual violence.

1.5 million women had experienced sexual assault.

Over 99% by a male perpetrator.

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Who?

In the year prior to the survey,

87,800 women were sexually assaulted in Australia.

Since the age of 15:

More women were sexually assaulted by a boyfriend or date than by a male cohabiting partner.

Women aged 18-24 years are most likely to experience sexual assault.
Incident characteristics

As a result of their most recent incident of sexual assault by a male:

8,800 women miscarried.

N.B. Estimate has a high RSE

In their most recent incident of sexual assault by a male:

Over half of women indicated that drugs or alcohol contributed to the incident.
Help seeking

For their most recent sexual assault by a male:

1 in 6 women had not told anyone about the sexual assault.

1 in 3 women thought that their most recent sexual assault by a known male was a crime.

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Graph R: Women’s most recent sexual assault by a male perpetrator, whether incident perceived as crime at the time and police involvement.

- Perceived as a crime: 35%
- Reported assault to police: 20%
- Perpetrator charged: 15%
- Perpetrator went to court: 5%
Impacts

For their most recent sexual assault by a male:

1 in 6 employed women took time off work in the 12 months after the sexual assault.

For their most recent sexual assault by a male:

women were most likely to feel anxiety and fear if they were sexually assaulted by a cohabiting partner.
Sub-populations

• Demographics at time of survey
• 12-month prevalence only

• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status not collected as it would not be representative

Country of birth; Disability; Age; State or territory; Labour force participation; Level of education; Socio-economic status