



# Insights into abuse of older people - analysis of Australian Bureau of Statistics datasets

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## Abbreviations

<b>ABS</b>	Australian Bureau of Statistics
<b>AGD</b>	Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department
<b>AIFS</b>	Australian Institute of Family Studies
<b>AIHW</b>	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
<b>CURF</b>	Confidentialised Unit Record File
<b>MPHS</b>	Multipurpose Household Survey
<b>NATSISS</b>	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey
<b>PSS</b>	Personal Safety Survey
<b>SPRC</b>	Social Policy Research Centre
<b>SRC</b>	Social Research Centre
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organisation

# Executive Summary

This report outlines the findings of an elder abuse research project that aimed to:

- examine existing ABS datasets to explore what can be known about abuse of older people
- synthesise and integrate findings from the data analysis and data scoping to identify data gaps.

The ABS datasets examined in this report are the:

- Personal Safety Survey (PSS) 2005, 2012 and 2016
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) 2002, 2008, and 2014-15
- Crime Victimization Survey (annual survey 2008-09 to 2016-17)
- Recorded Crime - Victims data (police administrative data 2010-2016).

## Physical violence and abuse

The analysis examined the ABS Personal Safety Survey (PSS), the ABS Recorded Crime - Victims data, and the ABS Crime Victimization Survey. The findings for older men and women (aged 55 years and over) showed:

- In 2016, 1.7% of people aged 55 years and over had experienced physical violence (assault or threat) in the past 12 months.
- Over the different years of the PSS, between 1.1% and 1.3% of the older population experienced physical abuse (i.e. physical violence or threat by a person known to them) in the last 12 months (based on the most recent experience of physical violence). This is compared with the younger population where the rates varied from 3.9% to 5.2% over this period.

In the most recent incident of physical abuse:

- For just over half of all older people, the incident occurred in their own home and this rate was higher for older women.
- Alcohol or substance use by the perpetrator contributed to the incident for around 40% of older people.
- Older people's perceptions of the incident were split between viewing the incident as a crime (in 2016, 37%), as wrong but not a crime (in 2016, 44%), or as "something that just happens" (in 2016, 19%).
- Just over half (53%) of older people, sought support or advice after the incident.

- Family and friends were most commonly the first people told, followed by health or other professionals or services. However in 2016, 17% reported that they had never told anyone.
- 40-60% reported experiencing fear or anxiety after the incident over the different years of the survey.

The PSS 2016 showed that the following factors had significant associations with experiencing higher rates of physical abuse or physical violence among older people:

- presence of disability
- fair or poor health
- no social participation
- not able to raise \$2000 in a week
- presence of cashflow problems
- living in a more disadvantaged neighbourhood.

Data on whether the most recent incident of physical abuse was reported to the police was identified in the PSS and Crime Victimization Survey:

- The PSS data (in 2012 and 2016) indicated that the police were contacted in only around 25% of cases where the victim knew the offender.
- The Crime Victimization Survey data showed significant variability across the years but in most years, older men and women were less likely to contact the police if they knew the offender than if the offender was not known.

The Recorded Crime - Victims police administrative data highlights the gender differences in rates of abuse in reported crime:

- About 70-80% of assaults against older women reported to the police were committed by a known person and around 40-50% were by a family member.
- About 40-60% of assaults against older men reported to the police were committed by a known person and around 20% were by a family member.

### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander older people: physical violence and abuse**

The definition of physical abuse used in the analysis of the NATSISS differs from the definition used in the analysis of the PSS as the NATSISS only contains information on violence by a known person, not whether the threatened violence was also by a known person.

The findings from the NATSISS (which thus should not be compared with PSS) indicate that in 2014-15:

- 16.4% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander older people aged 45 years and over experienced physical or threatened violence in the past 12 months.
- Around 7% of older men and women in non-remote and remote areas had experienced an incident of physical violence by a known person (physical abuse). This figure is based on data for the most recent incident of violence only in the last 12 months and thus may underestimate the percentage of this group who experienced violence by a known person in the last 12 months.

Characteristics of the most recent incident of physical abuse suggest that:

- alcohol or substance use was a contributor for a majority of older victims
- around half the older men and women did not report the abuse to the police
- around half the older men and women experienced an injury as a result of the abuse and around half of the group who were injured visited a health professional as a result.

Protective and risk factors related to physical abuse and physical or threatened violence showed:

- The relationships between the language, cultural identification and cultural participation factors and experience of abuse and physical violence or threat are complex and require further investigation.
- Community strength, efficacy and social isolation, as measured in this survey, were not associated with physical abuse.
- Trust in most people, own doctor, hospitals and the local and other police, was associated with less abuse and physical violence or threat, although the direction of causality is unclear.
- While the direction of causality cannot be determined in this data, an increased risk was associated with the following characteristics:
  - self or family members ever removed
  - ever homeless or recent homelessness
  - financial stress
  - poor health
  - presence of a disability
  - high levels of stress.

The Recorded Crime – Victims data for some states and territories show that of the assaults reported to police:

- around 90% of physical assault offences against older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women recorded by police were committed by a known person and 60-70% were committed by a person in a family relationship
- between 60-80% of physical assault offences against older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men recorded by police were committed by a known person and 30-50% were committed by a person in a family relationship.

### **Sexual violence and abuse**

- Sample size limitations and low prevalence rates in the PSS and Crime Victimization Survey meant that self-reported sexual violence (assault and threat) data could only be analysed for older women in the PSS. The survey could not provide a measure of sexual abuse.
- Between 0.1% and 0.4% of women, aged 55 years and over, reported experiencing sexual violence in the past 12 months.
- Recorded Crime - Victims data on sexual assault offences recorded by police against all older men and women suggests that:
  - more offences were reported against older women than older men
  - over 50% of sexual assault offences against older men and over 60% of offences against older women were committed by a known person
  - the limited recorded crimes data for sexual offences against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women aged 45 years and over indicates that most of the recorded sexual assault offences are committed by known persons.
- Existing national data can provide very little insight into the nature and extent of sexual abuse of older men and women due to sample size limitations.

### **Partner violence and emotional and economic abuse**

The analysis of the extensive data collected by the PSS on partner violence, including emotional abuse and economic abuse, was limited by the low prevalence rates and sample sizes and showed that:

- less than 1% of older women reported violence by a current or previous partner in the past 12 months
- 2.7-3.2% of older women and 1.0-2.6% of older men reported emotional abuse by a current or previous partner in the last 12 months

- around 1.5% of women and 1.1% of men had ever experienced economic abuse from a current or previous partner and had experienced emotional abuse in the last 12 months (best available proxy for economic abuse).

### **General sense of safety**

The PSS and NATSISS data on general feelings of safety provide insights into the sense of vulnerability felt by different population subgroups in different situations, which may be due to social, cultural and economic factors and previous experience. The key finding is that, for the general population and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, women in all age groups and in all situations are more likely to feel more vulnerable than their male counterparts. Younger women are more likely to feel unsafe than older women in most circumstances.

### **Summary and gaps in national data sources**

- Rates of abuse of older people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous, appear to be stable or possibly even increasing over time.
- Overall, the two data sources on physical abuse among older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are consistent in highlighting that older women who report physical violence are more likely than older men to experience physical violence by someone they know.
- A high proportion of physical abuse is not reported.
- Physical abuse has declined for younger people (aged under 55 years) since 2005 but has remained the same for older people.
- Although the data are derived from different surveys, it appears that older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience much higher rates of physical abuse than non-Indigenous older people.

### **Gaps**

- Sample size limitations and relatively low prevalence rates of physical abuse for the older population in the PSS restrict the possibility of using the full range of data that the survey collects about the context and characteristics of the violence in the last 12 months.
- While the NATSISS data focuses on the experience of violence in the last 12 months, the PSS data does also provide information about the experience of violence since the age of 15 years, which could be used to estimate an upper and lower bound of the number of people who have experienced violence since the age of approximately 55 years. Further research would be needed to estimate these ranges.
- Existing national data can provide very little insight into the nature and extent of sexual abuse of older men and women due to sample size limitations in national datasets.
- Analysis of existing national data on the nature and extent of partner violence is also limited by sample sizes.

- The PSS data provides an extensive array of behaviours relating to emotional and financial-economic abuse, but these are only collected in relation to partners. Consideration could be given to future PSS collecting information from older people about abuse by a greater range of persons of trust. In the case of emotional abuse, this could include other family members. In respect of economic abuse, other types of behaviours would need to be included to capture the full range of financial abuse known to be perpetrated by other family members and professionals against older people.
- Further research into the reasons for the high rates of feeling unsafe when alone in a range of situations reported by older women needs to be undertaken.

Other than physical abuse of older people, existing national data sources are currently limited in the extent to which they provide insight into other commonly recognised subtypes of abuse of older people, such as neglect, or economic-financial, emotional-psychological or sexual abuse. Nor can existing national datasets provide insights into:

- abuse in residential or other formal settings, or scamming and financial exploitation
- the full range of harms, contexts and consequences
- vulnerabilities that exist in relationships, the characteristics and contexts of relationships of trust and the basis and exercise of power
- characteristics and contexts of the perpetrators
- the broader range of responsible parties that may fail to adequately respect, include or meet the needs of older people.

Current survey and administrative data provide insights into the prevalence and nature of abuse of older people, but they are not able to provide a robust estimation of abuse of older people or much information about the dynamics of abuse. This is because:

- the various surveys and datasets cannot be combined or compared
- low sample sizes mean that it is not possible to analyse sub populations or types of abuse in many of the surveys
- lack of longitudinal data means that it is not possible to examine causal pathways and consequences of abuse
- some elements of abuse are not covered by any existing survey or dataset.

Therefore, to fully examine the prevalence, dynamics and consequences of abuse of older people, a dedicated survey will be required as has already been committed to by the Australian Government.

# 1. Introduction

The Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department (AGD) commissioned a research team from the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) at UNSW Sydney, as part of a consortium led by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) to:

- examine existing ABS datasets to explore what can be known about abuse of older people
- synthesise and integrate findings from the data analysis and data scoping in this component to identify what can be known and data gaps.

This component of the project builds on the work undertaken by AIFS (Qu et al. 2017) in the *Elder Abuse Prevalence Scoping Study*, which involved a review of Australian and international research relating to the prevalence of elder abuse, a review of existing Australian survey datasets, and consultations with government and non-government stakeholders.

A commonly accepted definition of elder abuse in Australia is that adopted by the World Health Organisation (WHO), which identifies elder abuse as:

a single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person (2008:1).

SPRC and AIFS considered how to define elder abuse for the purpose of analysing existing ABS datasets given the complexity and variability of the phenomenon of abuse of older people. Core elements for the purpose of the analysis are:

- the **person who experiences the behaviour**
- the **act or omission**, such as intentional and unintentional actions, threats consistent with commonly recognised forms of physical, sexual, psychological-emotional, financial abuse, and neglect
- the **person who engages in the behaviour**
- **situational preconditions**, including relationships where there is an expectation of trust
- **consequences**, including the types of harm or distress.

While the national prevalence study on elder abuse will measure these elements, no Australian datasets at present measure all these elements. The scoping study conducted by Qu et al. (2017) identified key ABS data sources that can potentially provide data on the prevalence of some aspects of the abuse of older people. The ABS datasets examined in this report are:

- the Personal Safety Survey (PSS). This survey has been conducted three times in 2005 and 2012 and 2016. The survey is specifically designed to collect information about the nature and extent of violence, including physical and sexual assault and threat, partner

violence, emotional abuse and general feelings of safety. The sample includes women and men aged 18 years and over.

- the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS). This survey aims to collect a broad range of self-reported information relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in remote and non-remote areas. The survey was conducted in 2002, 2008 and 2014-15 and comprises community and non-community samples. It contains information about the experience of physical violence and threatened violence. The sample analysed in this report includes men and women aged 15 years and over.
- ABS Victims of Crime data:
  - Recorded Crime – Victims. This data is published annually and contains information about personal and household offences that have been recorded by the police collected in administrative data systems. The data contains measures of the number of victims of offences reported by State and Territory. The data analysed in this report relates to reported assaults and sexual assaults in selected States and Territories and is analysed by broad age groups and gender.
  - the Crime Victimization Survey. This survey has been conducted annually as part of the ABS Multipurpose Household Survey (MHPHS) since 2008-09. The survey provides information on self-reported personal and household crimes experienced in the last 12 months. The data analysed in this report refers to the experience of physical assault and face-to-face threatened violence. This sample includes men and women aged 15 years and over.

The PSS, NATSISS and the Crime Victimization Survey are all sample surveys and thus the sample sizes may limit some analyses due to both concerns about maintaining appropriate levels of confidentiality and the reliability of the statistical estimates, which may have high relative standard errors when the analysis involves small cell counts.

Conceptually, the analysis has aimed to identify data items that record actions and incidents which may cause harm or distress to an older person. A key issue in the datasets is whether it is possible to identify actions committed by persons with whom it might be assumed that there is, or should be, an expectation of trust, which is a component of the situational preconditions for abuse. This question has raised the issue of whether such actions committed by “any known person” should be included in the definition of abuse. As a point of departure, where possible in the data, the analysis aims for the most inclusive measure of “known persons”. The analysis thus sought to identify acts committed by family members, known non-family members and those with whom the older person was in a professional relationship. The data also provides information on acts committed by all persons, which include strangers. It should be noted that the ABS surveys are all cross-sectional surveys and thus they can provide an indication of trends for population subgroups over time and insights into the context, impact and consequences of instances of abuse. Cross-sectional data could, with appropriately worded questions, be designed to identify the dynamics of elder abuse, that is, the longer term relationship factors and pathways into vulnerability and abuse, but that has not been possible in the analysis in this report.

In Australia, 65 years is used as the statistical starting age for 'older person' and the minimum age for access to the age pension. However, due to sample size limitations, this analysis defines older people to be those aged 55 years and over. Due to sample size limitations and shorter life expectancy, this analysis defines older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander to be those aged 45 years or older.

## 2. Physical Violence and Physical Abuse

### 2.1 Introduction

The existing national data sources available to examine physical violence and physical abuse in the general population are the ABS Personal Safety Survey, the ABS Recorded Crime - Victims data and the ABS Crime Victimization Survey. The analysis below reports on data from the ABS Personal Safety Survey (PSS) 2005, 2012 and 2016, the Recorded Crime - Victims data from 2010 to 2016 and the Crime Victimization Survey from 2009-10 to 2015-16. In this analysis, older people are defined as 55 years and over. More information about the datasets is outlined in Appendix A.

### 2.2 Personal Safety Survey

The measures of violence in the ABS Personal Safety Survey (PSS) encompass the experience of physical violence (assault or threat) and sexual violence (assault or threat). Respondents are asked if they have ever experienced these forms of violence since age 15 years and the timeframe of the most recent experience. These questions enable the construction of variables identifying the prevalence of physical violence in different population subgroups in the previous 12 months. This section outlines the available data on physical violence and physical violence by a known person as a proxy for abuse. The samples sizes of older people in these surveys do not permit a disaggregation of the physical violence variable into physical assault and threat. Appendix B outlines additional questions from the PSS that were not used in this analysis, most often due to sample size limitations.

#### 2.2.1 Prevalence of physical violence

The analysis of physical violence in the PSS includes the items about physical assault and physical threat. The questions about physical violence in the PSS 2016 (ABS 2017b) encompass:

- *Apart from the incidents you have already mentioned, has a man/woman ever done any of these to you with the intent to harm or frighten you?*
  - *Thrown anything at you that could hurt you*
  - *Pushed, grabbed or shoved you*
  - *Slapped you*
  - *Kicked, bitten or hit you with a fist*
  - *Hit you with something else that could hurt you.*
- *Has a man/women ever done any of these to you?*
  - *Beaten you*
  - *Choked you*
  - *Stabbed you with a knife*

- Shot you with a gun
- Any other type of physical assault.

The question about physical threats asks:

- *Apart from the incidents you have already mentioned, has a man/woman ever done any of these to you with the intent to harm or frighten you?*
  - Threatened or tried to hit you with a fist or anything else that could hurt you
  - Threatened or tried to stab you with a knife
  - Threatened or tried to shoot you with a gun
  - Threatened or tried to physically hurt you in any way.

Table 2-1 below outlines the estimates of the weighted number and percentages of the experience of physical violence in the last 12 months for the broad age groups. This is a measure of the experience of physical violence by the older age group but not a measure of abuse as it does not capture information on the relationship with the perpetrator. Overall, the rates of experiencing physical violence for the older age group have stayed fairly constant at around 1.7-2.0% of the population aged 55 years and over. The ABS (2018) reports that the rates of physical violence in the whole adult male population aged over 15 years have reduced from 10.0% in 2005 to 5.4% in 2016, a reduction that is apparent for the under 55 years age group more than the older age group for men in Table 2-1. Similarly, the rates for younger women have declined from 6.2% to 4.6%, while the rates for older women have stayed fairly constant at around 1.4%. Older men have slightly higher rates of physical violence than older women, and younger men experience higher rates than young women. Younger people are between 3-5 times more likely to have experienced physical violence than those aged over 55 years.

**Table 2-1 Whether experienced any physical violence (threat or assault) in the last 12 months by sex by broad age group, 2005, 2012, 2016**

	Percentages			Weighted population estimates '000s		
	2005	2012	2016	2005	2012	2016
<b>Under 55 years</b>						
Men	13.8*	11.5*	7.2*	719.7	665.4	430.3
Women	6.2*	6.3*	4.6*	327.2	366.4	282.9
Total	10.0	8.9	5.9	1046.9	1031.8	713.2
<b>55 years and over</b>						
Men	2.7*	2.2*	1.9*	60.2	58.0	57.9
Women	1.4*	1.3*	1.4*	35.2	36.8	46.6
Total	2.0	1.7	1.7	95.4	94.8	104.5

Source: ABS Personal Safety Survey 2005, 2012, 2016 Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF), DataLab, Findings based on use of ABS Microdata. Numbers and percentages are calculated using survey person weights. Notes: \* indicates statistically significant difference between gender categories ( $p < 0.05$  chi-squared test). Totals for estimates may not sum exactly due to rounding.

## 2.2.2 Prevalence of physical abuse

The PSS has data on the experience of physical violence (assault or threat) and whether the perpetrator was known to the person and the timeframe for the most recent experience of physical violence. With this data, it is possible to produce an estimate of the prevalence of physical abuse among the population in the last 12 months. This estimate will describe the number of people who have experienced physical violence by a known person in the last 12 months but does not describe the number of incidents as individuals may experience more than one incident of physical violence in that time period.

Table 2-2 reports the rates and estimated numbers of men and women who have experienced physical abuse. Between 1.1% and 1.3% of the older population have experienced physical abuse in the last 12 months and this rate has remained steady over the years. There were no statistically significant gender differences in the rates of experiencing physical abuse in the older age group.

**Table 2-2 Whether experienced any physical violence (assault or threat) by known person in the last 12 months by broad age group, 2005, 2012, 2016**

	Percentages			Weighted population estimates '000s		
	2005	2012	2016	2005	2012	2016
<b>Under 55 years</b>						
Men	5.9*	4.8	3.9	307.2	279.7	234.4
Women	4.5*	4.6	3.9	237.8	265.8	237.5
Total	5.2	4.7	3.9	545.0	545.6	472.0
<b>55 years and over</b>						
Men	1.3	1.3	1.2	28.5	35.3	36.3
Women	1.1	1.0	1.3	28.1	28.0	42.7
Total	1.2	1.1	1.3	56.6	63.3	78.9

Source: ABS Personal Safety Survey 2005, 2012, 2016 Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF), DataLab, Findings based on use of ABS Microdata. Notes: "Known person" includes boyfriend/girlfriend or date, current or previous partner or any other known person. (Violence prevalence level in CURF). Totals for estimates may not sum exactly due to rounding.

## 2.2.3 Contextual factors for most recent incident of physical abuse (physical violence committed by a known person) in the last 12 months

The PSS asks respondents about contextual factors relating to the most recent incident of physical violence. Included in this data are location, number of perpetrators, behaviours experienced and contribution of alcohol or other substance to the incident. In this level of the data, it is also possible to identify whether the most recent incident was committed by a known person. As the PSS only asks about the most recent incident of each category of violence, it is important to note that this data cannot be interpreted as a description of the context for all experiences of physical abuse among older people in the last 12 months. This is because, for some individuals, the most recent experience of physical violence may have been by a stranger, but they may also have experienced violence by a known person prior to that within the last 12 months. Sample size restrictions in 2005

and 2012 mean that the data could not be disaggregated by gender in those years. Sample sizes also mean that a more detailed disaggregation of the types of location was not possible.

Table 2-3 thus reports on two key contextual elements to the most recent experience of physical abuse in the last 12 months for all years for the older population: location and contribution of alcohol and other substances. In all years, between 52% and 56% of all people aged 55 years and over, whose most recent incident of physical violence in the last 12 months was by a known person, reported that the incident occurred in their own home. Data from the PSS 2016 shows that this rate was higher for older women, with 69% of this group experiencing the most recent incident in their own home.

The question about alcohol and substance abuse asks about whether the use of either by the respondent or perpetrator contributed to the most recent incident. Table 2-3 reports the proportion of this group who indicated that the perpetrator was under the influence of alcohol or any other substance in the most recent incident of physical abuse. The findings remain consistent across the years, with around 40% per cent in each year reporting that the perpetrator was under the influence of alcohol or any other substance.

**Table 2-3 Contextual factors for most recent incident of physical abuse (physical violence committed by a known person) against people aged 55 years and over in the last 12 months**

	2005 %	2012 %	2016 %
<b>Location</b>			
At Respondent's Home	52.3	56.1	55.2
Other place	47.7	43.9	44.8
<b>Whether perpetrator was under the influence of alcohol or other substance</b>			
Yes	42.7	39.5	40.8
No	57.3	60.5	59.2

Source: ABS Personal Safety Survey 2005, 2012, 2016 Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF), DataLab, Findings based on use of ABS Microdata. Notes: "Known person" includes boyfriend/girlfriend or date, current or previous partner or any other known person. "Other place" includes: perpetrator's or other person's home, at respondent's work, place of study, place of entertainment, outside, motel, serviced apartments etc.; while using or waiting for public transport, in a vehicle, other. (Most recent incident level in CURF). Population for percentages refers to the proportion of people over 55 whose most recent experience of physical violence was in the last 12 months and was by a known person.

## 2.2.4 Response to most recent incident of physical abuse (physical violence committed by a known person)

The PSS data also provides information about the response to the most recent incident. The data items include perception of the incident, police involvement, injuries sustained, support seeking behaviours and fear or change to routine after the most recent incident. Table 2-4 reports on key response elements for the group of older people whose most recent incident of physical violence in the last 12 months was by a known person. Between 34 and 41% of this group perceived that the incident was a crime. Between 29 and 44% perceived it as "wrong but not a crime" and the rest viewed it as "something that just happens". The data on whether police were contacted in 2012

and 2016 shows that only around one in four older people (22-27%) contacted the police about the incident. The sample size did not permit reliable estimates for the different reasons why respondents did not contact the police.

Table 2-4 shows that, in 2012 and 2016, just over half (53%) of older people, whose most recent experience of physical violence in the last 12 months was by a known person, sought support or advice after the incident. In 2012 and 2016, the PSS data also recorded information about the first person or service told. Around one quarter (26-28%) of older people told health or other professionals first (including telephone helplines, refuges or shelters, police, legal services, financial services, and government housing and community services). For around two-fifths of the group (36-42%), family members or friends were the first people told. The 2016 data also indicates that 16% told other people, such as religious leaders and work colleagues, and that 17% had never told anyone.

**Table 2-4 Response to most recent incident of physical abuse (physical violence committed by a known person) in the last 12 months, 2005, 2012, 2016**

	2005 %	2012 %	2016 %
<b>Whether incident was perceived as a crime at the time</b>			
Perceived as a crime	40.7	34.0	36.7
Perceived as wrong but not a crime	33.2	29.3 <sup>(1)</sup>	44.2
Perceived as something that just happens	26.1 <sup>(1)</sup>	36.7 <sup>(1)</sup>	19.0 <sup>(1)</sup>
<b>Whether sought support or advice after incident</b>			
Yes	-	52.5	52.8
No	-	47.5	47.2
<b>Whether police contacted (for assault only in 2012 and 2016)</b>			
Yes	50.4	22.3 <sup>(1)</sup>	26.9
No	49.6	77.7	73.1
<b>First person or service told</b>			
Health or other professionals		27.8	25.6
Friends or family members		36.0 <sup>(1)</sup>	41.5
Others – religious leader, work colleague		na	15.9
Have never told anyone		na	17.0

Source: ABS Personal Safety Survey 2005, 2012, 2016 Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF) and Microdata, DataLab, Findings based on use of ABS Microdata. Notes: Population refers to the most recent incident of violence for each individual so may not represent all who experienced physical violence in the last 12 months as persons may have experienced more than one type of violence in the last 12 months. "na" indicates data suppressed due to small sample sizes. (1) indicates that the RSE is between 25-50% so the estimate should be interpreted with caution.

## 2.2.5 Consequences of most recent incident of physical abuse

The PSS data also provides information about the consequences of violence and whether that included the experience of fear or anxiety and change to work or usual routine after the most recent incident. Table 2-5 shows the data from 2012 and 2016, which indicates that a significant proportion (38.5-58.3%) of older people, whose most recent experience of physical violence in the last 12 months was by a known person, experienced anxiety or fear. As the majority of the older age group sample were not in employment, the question about the impact of the incident on work was not analysed.

**Table 2-5 Whether experienced anxiety or fear in the 12 months after incident in the most recent incident of physical abuse (physical violence committed by a known person) in the last 12 months**

	2012 %	2016 %
Experienced anxiety or fear	38.5	58.3
Did not experience anxiety or fear	61.5	41.7

Source: ABS Personal Safety Survey 2005, 2012, 2016 Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF) and Microdata, DataLab, Findings based on use of ABS Microdata. Notes: Population refers to the most recent incident of violence for each individual so may not represent all who experienced physical violence in the last 12 months as persons may have experienced more than one type of violence in the last 12 months

## 2.2.6 Protective and risk factors

The PSS also provides a range of socio-demographic factors that can be examined for their association with physical abuse (physical violence by a known person). The factors represent characteristics that can be associated with increased vulnerability for the person who experiences the violence or abuse. The surveys are cross-sectional surveys, and as such, caution should be observed in drawing any conclusions about causality. The ABS also cautions that care should be taken when interpreting the relationships between current sociodemographic characteristics recorded in the PSS survey and the experience of violence. In this report, the focus is on violence or abuse experienced in the last 12 months, which means that some characteristics are more likely to be similar, but some characteristics, such as employment status, could change even within that timeframe.

The analysis of the PSS dataset explored socio-demographic factors, economic factors, social support and isolation factors, health and disability status, and locational disadvantage associated with experiencing physical violence by a known person in the last 12 months. This section of the data analysis refers to all older people who have experienced physical violence or physical abuse in the last 12 months and does not just refer to those respondents whose most recent experience of violence was by a known person, as for the context, response and consequences variables discussed above. Sample size limitations in 2005 and 2012 mean that results should be interpreted with caution and that results could not be disaggregated by gender.

In 2005, while all the following factors were associated with being more likely to experience physical abuse for the under 55 years age group, none were associated with experiencing physical abuse for the older age group:

- lower level education qualifications (less than diploma or bachelor's degree)
- not being employed (unemployed or not in the labour force)
- low income (lowest two quintiles of personal income)
- neighbourhood disadvantage (in the two lowest quintiles of the Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage).

The inability to raise \$2000 in a week and having at least one cashflow problem were both associated with experiencing recent physical abuse in the older age group.

In 2012, while all the following factors were associated with experience of physical abuse for the under 55 years age group, there were no statistically significant relationships for the older age group between having the following factors and experiencing physical abuse. This lack of statistical significance may be due to smaller sample sizes among the older age group:

- poor health
- presence of disability
- inability to raise \$2000 in a week
- presence of cashflow problems
- neighbourhood disadvantage.

Older people with lower incomes were less likely to report experiencing physical abuse, and this may be an interaction with age and employment status within the older age group. Factors that may be considered to be protective, such as having higher education qualifications and employment were associated with higher rates of abuse, which once again may also be due to being associated with younger aged respondents in the older age group who may have higher rates of experiencing physical violence, as outlined below.

Table 2-6 reports on the association between selected protective and risk factors and the experience of physical abuse and physical violence for the PSS 2016. The following factors had significant associations with experiencing higher rates of physical abuse or physical violence among older people:

- presence of disability
- fair or poor health
- no social participation
- not able to raise \$2000 in a week
- presence of cashflow problems

- living in a more disadvantaged neighbourhood.

Similar to the previous years of the survey, higher rates of physical violence and abuse were associated with being employed, higher rates of physical violence were associated with having higher education and higher rates of physical abuse were associated with higher incomes. While these findings are in contrast to the literature, there may be a number of reasons for the findings. As noted above, it may be that there is an interaction with these indicators of vulnerability and age within the older age group, which explains the findings, as younger age groups report higher rates of physical abuse and violence. For example, in 2016, the rates of physical violence in the last 12 months for women and men aged 55-64 years were 2.2% and 2.6% respectively compared with 1.0% and 1.3% respectively for women and men aged 65 years and over (ABS 2017a, Table 6.3 and Table 7.3). It is also possible to speculate that the data suggests several separate dynamics of physical abuse and violence. The first dynamic involves people experiencing adversity, including poverty. The second dynamic involves people who are employed (with perhaps other family members placing them under pressure e.g. to help cope with divorce, sustain substance abuse). Further research is necessary to explain these findings.

**Table 2-6 Protective and risk factors: rates of physical abuse and physical violence among those aged 55 years and over by selected socio-demographic characteristics, 2016**

	Physical Abuse %	Physical Violence %
<b>Higher education</b>		
Has Diploma/bachelor degree or above	1.4	1.9
Has Certificate or less	1.2	1.5
<b>Employment</b>		
Is employed	1.6*	2.4*
Not employed	1.1*	1.3*
<b>Disability status</b>		
Has disability	1.6*	2.0*
No disability	0.9*	1.3*
<b>Health status</b>		
Health is excellent, very good, good	1.0*	1.3*
Health is fair or poor	2.0*	2.8*
<b>Social Isolation</b>		
Has social participation	1.2*	1.6*
No social participation	2.9*	2.9*
<b>Social Support</b>		
More than 2 sources of support	1.0	1.5
2 sources of support or less	1.4	1.8
<b>Emergency money</b>		
Not able to raise \$2000 in a week	2.2*	2.8*
Able to raise \$2000 in a week	1.2*	1.5*
<b>Cashflow problems</b>		
Has no cashflow problems	1.1*	1.5*
Has at least one cashflow problem	2.7*	3.1*
<b>Low income</b>		
Personal income in lowest quintile	0.7*	1.3
Personal incomes in quintiles 2-5	1.4*	1.7
<b>Neighbourhood context (IRSED)</b>		
IRSED in lowest quintile	1.5*	1.7
IRSED In quintiles 2-5	1.2*	1.6

Source: ABS Personal Safety Survey 2016 Microdata, DataLab, Findings based on use of ABS Microdata. \* indicates statistically significant differences between categories (p<0.05 chi-squared test)

## 2.3 Crime Victimisation survey

The ABS Crime Victimisation Survey is an annual survey which asks respondents whether they experienced physical assault or face-to-face threatened assault in the last 12 months, and for the most recent incident, whether the person knew the offender, relationship to the offender and whether the crime was reported to the police. Sample sizes restrict the types of analyses that can be undertaken, and the analysis of the socio-demographic characteristics below considers gender and age. The tables and graphs below focus on the following questions:

- What proportion of the most recent incidents of physical assault and face-to-face threatened assault are committed by known persons?
- What proportion of the most recent incidents of physical violence by known persons and strangers experienced by older men and women are reported to police?

### 2.3.1 Physical assault

The tables below outline the number and percentage of older men (Table 2-7) and women (Table 2-8) whose most recent incident of physical assault was committed by a known person. Due to small sample sizes, a number of the estimates (indicated by asterisks) have high relative standard errors and so the data should be interpreted with caution. Overall, the findings suggest that, consistent with the findings in the PSS, older women are generally more likely than older men to know the offender in cases of physical assault.

Table 2-9 and Figure 2-1 describe the percentage of older men and women who reported their most recent incident of physical assault by a known person to the police across each year of the surveys. Once again, some of the estimates have high standard errors, so this data should also be interpreted with caution and it is noted that the estimates vary quite widely across the years. In all years, less than 74% of men or women reported the physical assault by a known person to the police, suggesting that a significant number of older people do not report the assaults. The estimates of the percentage that reported the crimes is higher in the Crime Victimisation Survey than in the PSS and may be a result of different survey methodologies and different samples or an artefact of the relatively high standard errors on both estimates.

**Table 2-7 Number and percentage of men aged 55 years and over whose most recent physical assault was committed by a known person in the last 12 months, 2008-09 to 2016-17 ('000s)**

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
<b>Men '000s</b>									
Known	*10.9	17.9	*15.2	22.2	18	*15.4	16.8	14.2	17.8
Not known	*7.3	13.9	14	10.5	*8.3	*11.0	14.1	18.3	*17.8
Total	18.2	31.8	29.2	32.7	26.3	24.7	34.2	33.4	31.7
<b>% by known person</b>	<b>59.9</b>	<b>56.3</b>	<b>52.1</b>	<b>67.9</b>	<b>68.4</b>	<b>62.3</b>	<b>49.1</b>	<b>42.5</b>	<b>56.2</b>

Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Customised tables. Crime Victimization Survey, Catalogue number 4530.0. \* Estimate has a relative standard between 25-50% and should be interpreted with caution.\*\* Estimate has a relative standard error greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use. Numbers may not sum exactly due to confidentialising of data.

**Table 2-8 Number and percentage of women aged 55 years and over whose most recent physical assault was committed by a known person in the last 12 months, 2008-09 to 2016-17 ('000s)**

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
<b>Women '000s</b>									
Known	13.5	16.9	19.6	23.2	15.6	13.1	*15.4	24	27.2
Not known	**5.2	*9.4	*6.3	*3.7	*7.1	*9.0	*7.1	*7.0	*7.4
Total	*18.7	26.3	25.9	26.9	22.7	21.0	23.8	30.8	35.4
<b>% by known person</b>	<b>72.2</b>	<b>64.3</b>	<b>75.7</b>	<b>86.2</b>	<b>68.7</b>	<b>62.4</b>	<b>64.7</b>	<b>77.9</b>	<b>76.8</b>

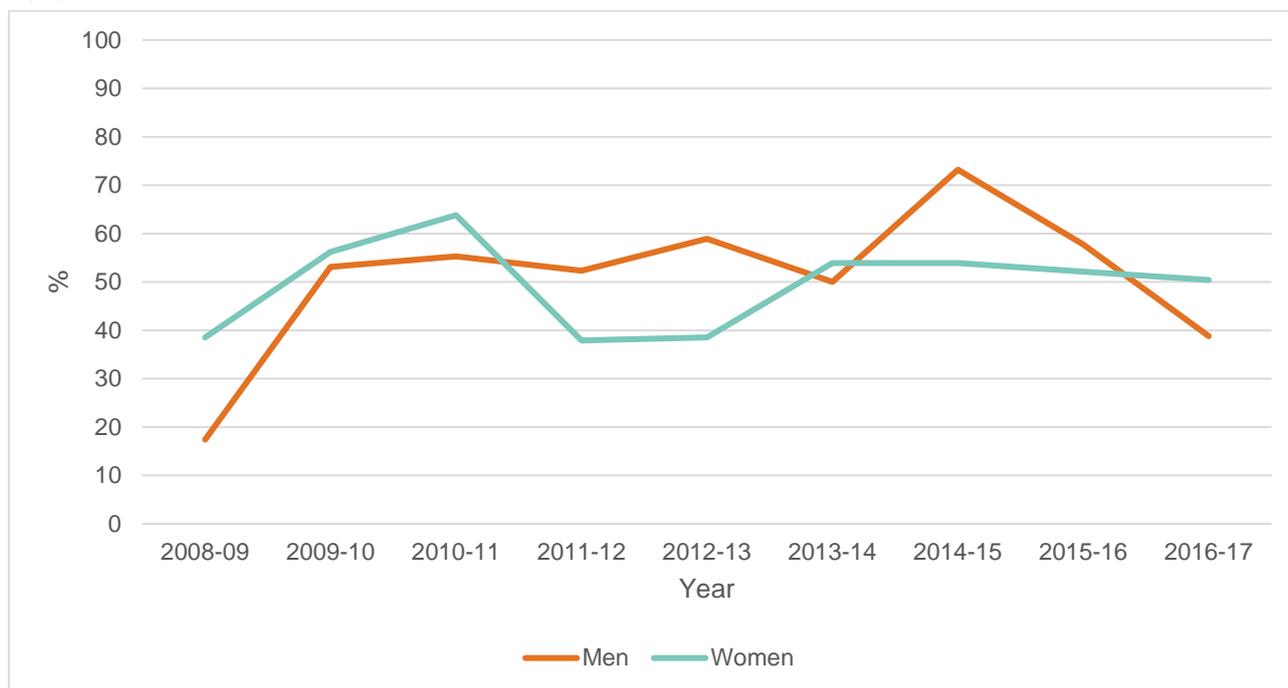
Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Customised tables. Crime Victimization Survey, Catalogue number 4530.0. \* Estimate has a relative standard between 25-50% and should be interpreted with caution.\*\* Estimate has a relative standard error greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use. Numbers may not sum exactly due to confidentialising of data.

**Table 2-9 Men and women (aged 55 years and over) who reported their most recent incident of physical assault to the police by whether they knew the offender, 2008-09 to 2016-17 (percentages)**

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
<b>Men</b>									
Knew offender	*17.4	53.1	55.3	52.3	58.9	*50.0	73.2	*57.7	*38.8
Did not know offender	*42.5	65.5	67.9	73.3	65.5	51.8	73.8	*52.5	*66.9
<b>Women</b>									
Knew offender	*38.5	56.2	63.8	37.9	38.5	53.9	53.9	*52.1	*50.4
Did not know offender	96.2	61.7	81.0	61.7	*71.8	*73.3	**33.8	*41.4	**31.1

Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Customised tables. Crime Victimization Survey, Catalogue number 4530.0. \* Estimate has a relative standard between 25-50% and should be interpreted with caution.\*\* Estimate has a relative standard error greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use.

**Figure 2-1 Percentage of men and women aged 55 years and over whose most recent physical assaults were committed by a known person, who reported the assault to the police, 2008-09 to 2016-17**



Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Customised tables. Crime Victimization Survey, Catalogue number 4530.0, 2008-09 to 2016-17.

### 2.3.2 Face-to-face threatened assault

Table 2-10 and Table 2-11 report on the number of older men and women respectively who had experienced face-to-face threatened assault by known and not known persons and the percentage who experienced the face-to-face threatened assault by a known person. The estimates should be interpreted with caution where marked as having high relative standard errors. Similar to actual assault, generally a higher percentage of older women reported that they knew the offender than older men; however, this was not consistent across all the years.

Table 2-12 outlines the percentage of older men and women who reported the face-to-face threatened assault to the police by whether they knew the offender or not. Figure 2-2 shows these percentages for older men and women who did know the offender. These rates vary over the years, which may be due to the relatively small sample size, but in all years remain under 55%, suggesting that nearly half of such acts go unreported.

**Table 2-10 Number and percentage of men aged 55 years and over whose most recent face-to-face threatened assault was committed by a known person in the last 12 months, 2008-09 to 2016-17 ('000s)**

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
<b>Men '000s</b>									
Known	30.5	30.8	23.8	32.5	20.1	27.5	34.0	21.9	23.9
Not known	*17.7	33.8	25.5	19.0	19.8	*19.8	*14.5	*20.6	22.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>48.1</b>	<b>64.6</b>	<b>49.3</b>	<b>51.5</b>	<b>39.9</b>	<b>48.0</b>	<b>49.4</b>	<b>43.6</b>	<b>45.0</b>
<b>% committed by known person</b>	<b>63.4</b>	<b>47.7</b>	<b>48.3</b>	<b>63.1</b>	<b>50.4</b>	<b>57.3</b>	<b>68.8</b>	<b>50.2</b>	<b>53.1</b>

Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Customised tables. Crime Victimization Survey, Catalogue number 4530.0. \* Estimate has a relative standard between 25-50% and should be interpreted with caution.\*\* Estimate has a relative standard error greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use. Numbers may not sum exactly due to confidentialising of data.

**Table 2-11 Number and percentage of women aged 55 years and over whose most recent face to face threatened assault was committed by a known person in the last 12 months, 2008-09 to 2016-17 ('000s)**

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
<b>Women '000s</b>									
Known	21.2	17.6	21.5	20.1	21.0	24.4	15.5	30.5	27.1
Not known	**3.0	*15.2	*13.5	*13.9	*8.4	*5.0	*10.2	10.3	10.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>*24.2</b>	<b>32.9</b>	<b>35.0</b>	<b>34.0</b>	<b>29.4</b>	<b>28.2</b>	<b>25.8</b>	<b>39.6</b>	<b>37.6</b>
<b>% committed by known person</b>	<b>87.6</b>	<b>53.5</b>	<b>61.4</b>	<b>59.1</b>	<b>71.4</b>	<b>86.5</b>	<b>60.1</b>	<b>77.0</b>	<b>72.1</b>

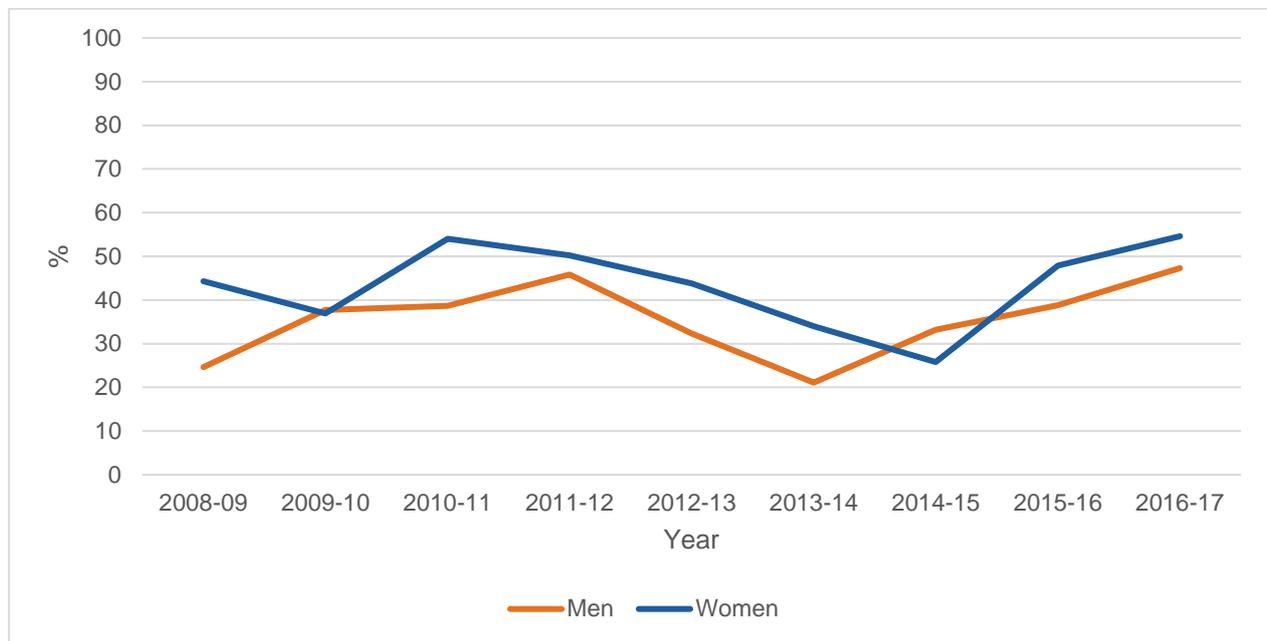
Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Customised tables. Crime Victimization Survey, Catalogue number 4530.0. \* Estimate has a relative standard between 25-50% and should be interpreted with caution.\*\* Estimate has a relative standard error greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use. Numbers may not sum exactly due to confidentialising of data.

**Table 2-12 Men and women (aged 55 years and over) who reported their most recent incident of face-to-face threatened assault to the police by whether they knew the offender, 2008-09 to 2016-17 (percentages)**

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
<b>Males</b>									
Knew offender	*24.6	37.7	38.7	45.8	*32.3	*21.1	33.2	*38.8	47.3
Did not know offender	*37.9	28.1	43.5	*37.4	*31.3	**28.8	39.3	*22.3	*30.1
<b>Females</b>									
Knew offender	44.3	36.9	54.0	50.2	43.8	*34.0	*25.8	47.9	54.6
Did not know offender	*73.3	36.8	51.9	38.1	40.5	**54.0	57.8	*44.7	*39.4

Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Customised tables. Crime Victimization Survey, Catalogue number 4530.0. \* Estimate has a relative standard between 25-50% and should be interpreted with caution.\*\* Estimate has a relative standard error greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use.

**Figure 2-2 Percentage of men and women aged 55 years and over whose most recent face-to-face threatened assault was committed by a known person, who reported the assault to the police, 2008-09 to 2016-17**



Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Customised tables. Crime Victimization Survey, Catalogue number 4530.0, 2008-09 to 2016-17.

## 2.4 Recorded Crime - Victims

### 2.4.1 Assault

The ABS Recorded Crime – Victims is an annual publication of statistics for “personal and household offences that have been recorded by police” collected in administrative data systems (ABS, 2011). The data are reported by State and Territory and the counting unit is victims of offences rather than persons, so it is possible for the same individual to have multiple offences recorded. Data are recorded within each time period based on when it “was reported to police by a member of the public or when it was detected by police, and was recorded on police systems”<sup>1</sup>. Age in this dataset is based on the “age that the victim became known to the police rather than the age the person was they experienced victimization”<sup>2</sup>.

This data can provide an indication of the crimes against older people that are reported to police as well as information on the proportion of reported crimes in which the victim knew the perpetrator. The analysis below identifies reported offences committed by persons with whom a relationship of trust would be expected. The categories of relationship to offender in this data are as follows:

- Known to victim
  - family relationship: partner, parents, other family member
  - non-family relationship: ex-partner, other non-family member
- stranger
- unknown/not stated/inadequately described.

This data explores the follow questions:

- What are the number and rates of reported physical assault to police against older men and women that are committed by known persons?
- Who are the perpetrators?
- How do these rates vary by state and territory?

The following figures describe the percentage of assaults reported to police in which the older men and women knew the offender by whether they were a family member or any known person. The data is reported separately for each State and Territory for which data was available in Figure 2-3 to

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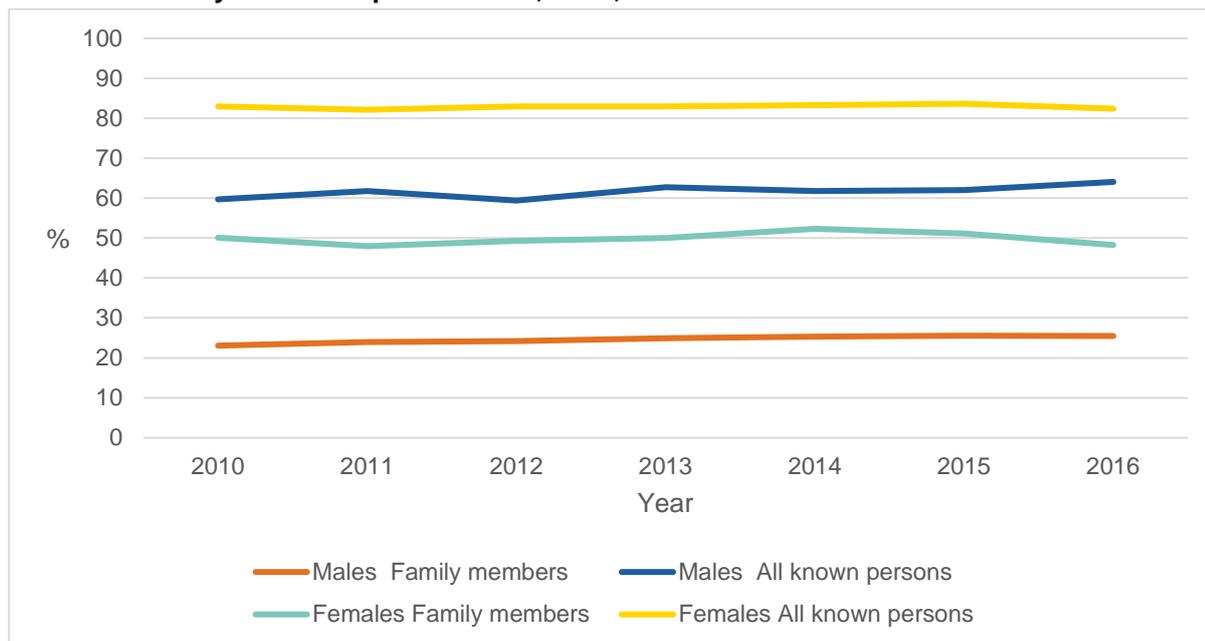
<sup>1</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4510.0Explanatory%20Notes12017?OpenDocument>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4510.0Explanatory%20Notes12016?OpenDocument>

Figure 2-7 below. The results show a general consistency across the jurisdictions and years, with rates in some states more variable than others:

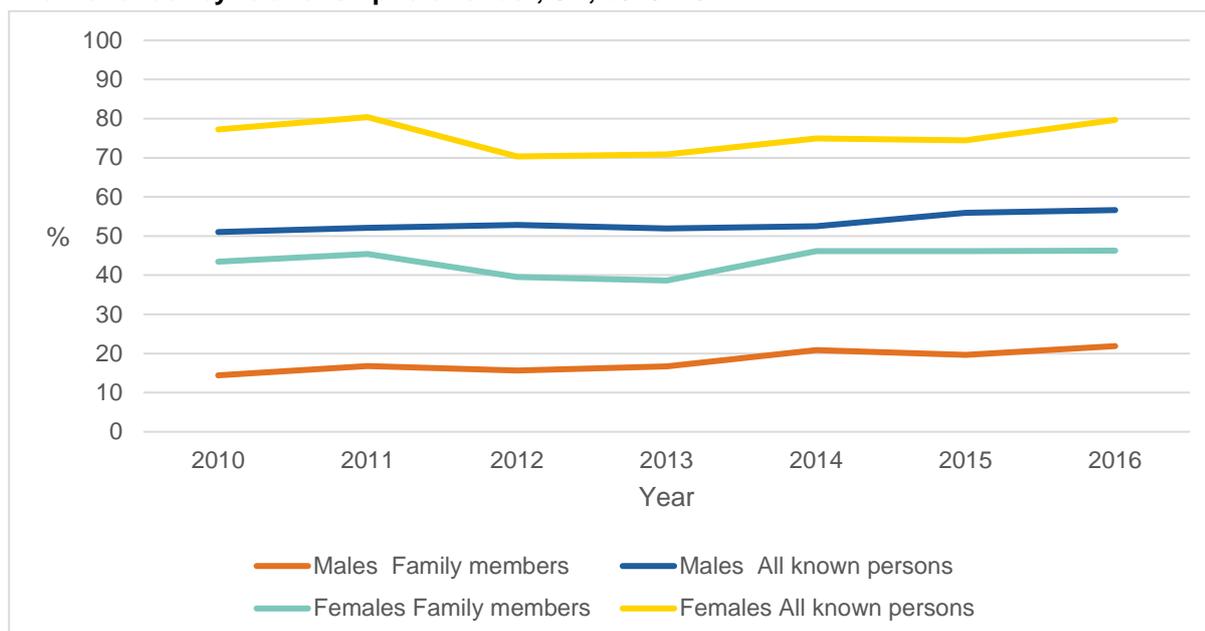
- About 70-80% of assaults against older women reported to the police were committed by a known person and around 40-50% were by a family member.
- About 40-60% of assaults against older men reported to the police were committed by a known person and around 20% were by a family member.

**Figure 2-3 Victims of Assault, aged 55 years and over, by sex, percentage of offences where victim knew offender by relationship to offender, NSW, 2010–16**



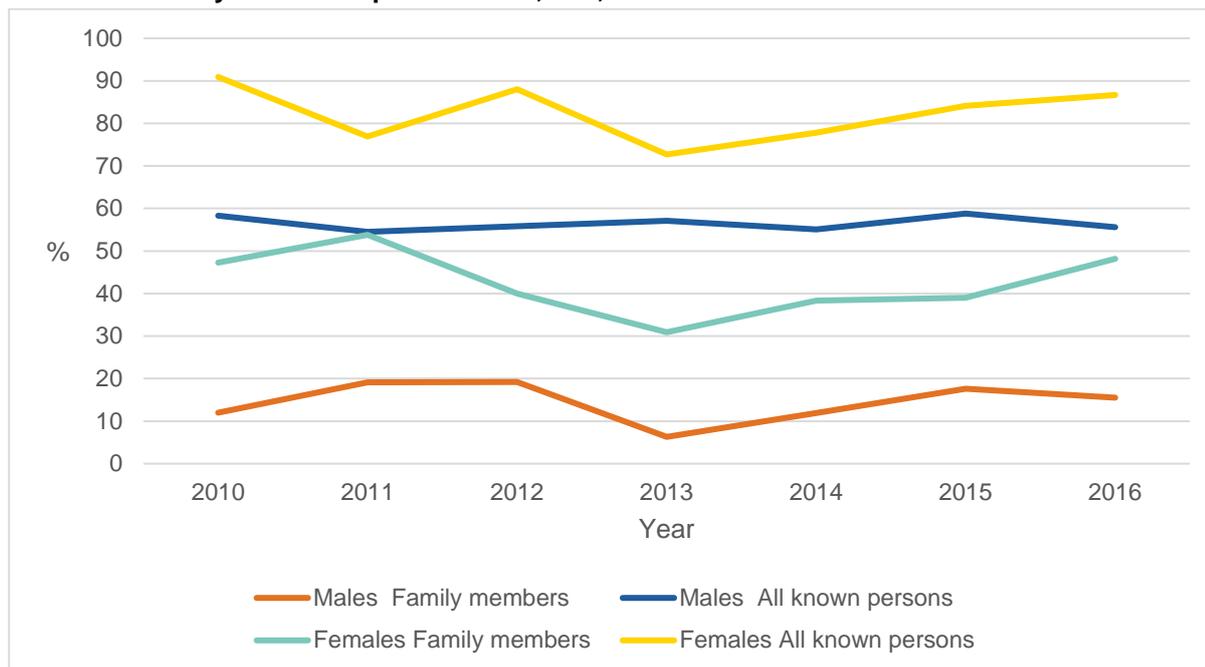
Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Customised tables. Recorded Crime-Victims, 2010-2016

**Figure 2-4 Victims of Assault, aged 55 years and over, by sex, percentage of offences where victim knew offender by relationship to offender, SA, 2010–16**



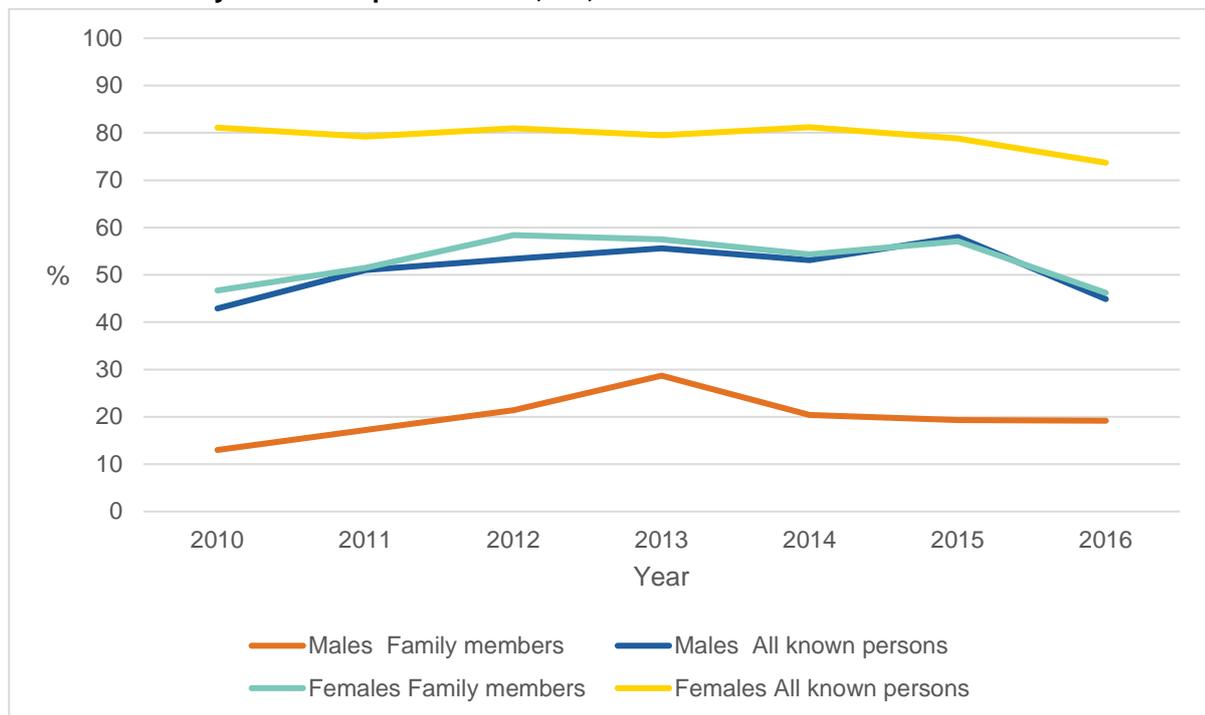
Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Customised tables. Recorded Crime-Victims, 2010-2016

**Figure 2-5 Victims of Assault, aged 55 years and over, by sex, percentage of offences where victim knew offender by relationship to offender, Tas, 2010–16**



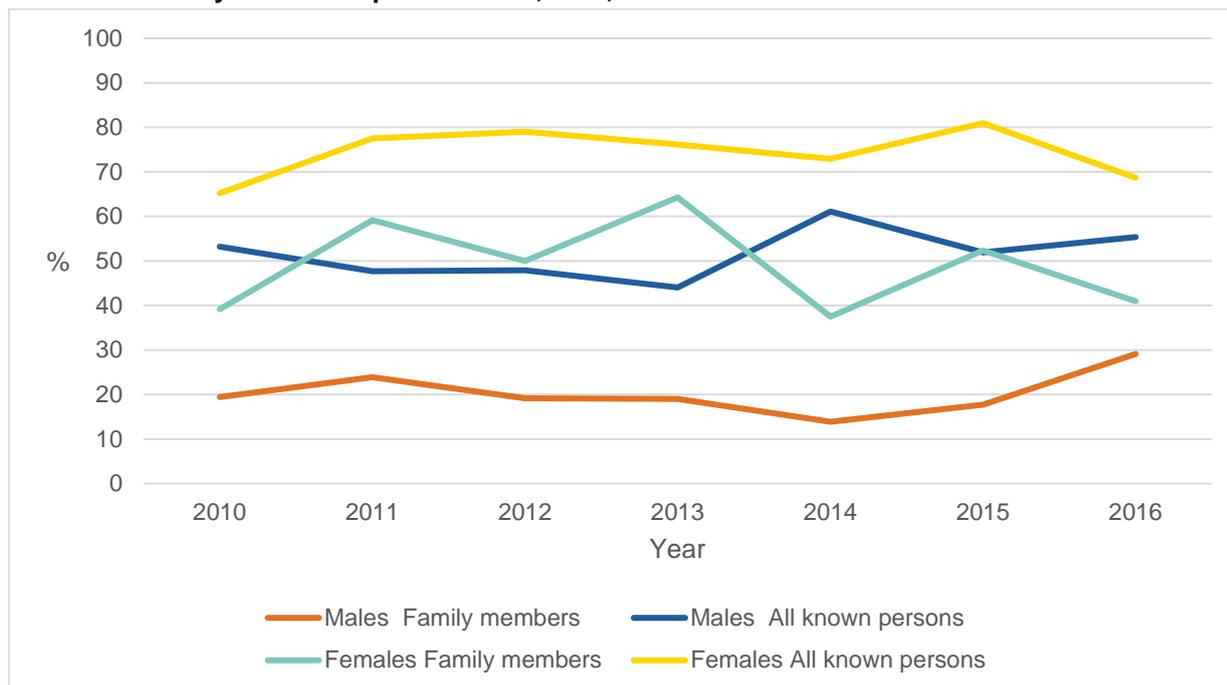
Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Customised tables. Recorded Crime-Victims, 2010-2016

**Figure 2-6 Victims of Assault, aged 55 years and over, by sex, percentage of offences where victim knew offender by relationship to offender, NT, 2010–16**



Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Customised tables. Recorded Crime-Victims, 2010-2016

**Figure 2-7 Victims of Assault, aged 55 years and over, by sex, percentage of offences where victim knew offender by relationship to offender, ACT, 2010–16**



Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Customised tables. Recorded Crime-Victims, 2010-2016

## 2.5 Synthesis and gaps: national data on physical abuse of older people

The analysis of physical abuse in the general population of older men and women examined the ABS Personal Safety Survey, the ABS Victims of Crime data, and the ABS Crime Victimization Survey. The findings from the PSS for older men and women aged 55 years and over showed that:

- in 2016, 1.7% of people aged 55 years and over experienced physical violence (assault or threat)
- older men have slightly higher rates of physical violence (assault or threat) than older women
- between 1.1% and 1.3% of the older population have experienced physical abuse in the last 12 months (based on the most recent experience of physical violence).

The characteristics for the most recent incident of physical abuse identified in the PSS indicated that:

- just over half of all incidents occurred in the older person's home, and this rate was higher for older women
- around 40% indicated that the alcohol or substance use by the perpetrator contributed to the incident

- around one-third viewed the incident as a crime, another third perceived it as wrong but not a crime, while the rest saw it as something that just happens
- just over half (53%) of older people sought support or advice after the incident
- family and friends were most commonly the first people told, followed by health or other professionals or services; however, 17% reported that they had never told anyone
- 40-60% reported experiencing fear or anxiety after the incident in the different years of the data.

The 2016 PSS showed that the following factors had significant associations with experiencing higher rates of physical abuse or physical violence among older people:

- presence of disability
- fair or poor health
- no social participation
- not able to raise \$2000 in a week
- presence of cashflow problems
- living in a more disadvantaged neighbourhood.

The PSS and Crime Victimization Survey included data on whether the physical abuse was reported to the police.

- The PSS data indicated that the police were contacted in only around 25% of cases where they knew the offender.
- The Crime Victimization Survey data showed significant variability across the years but in most years, older men and women were less likely to contact the police if they knew the offender than if the offender was not known.
- Among those who knew the offender in the most recent assault:
  - Between 17 and 73% of older men reported that they contacted the police.
  - Between 38 and 64% of older women reported that they contacted the police.
- Among those who knew the offender in the most recent face-to-face threatened assault:
  - Between 21 and 47% of older men reported that they contacted the police.
  - Between 26 and 55% of older women reported that they contacted the police.

The Recorded Crime - Victims police administrative data provides an insight into the percentage of reported physical assaults that were by a known person among those reported by older men and women. The gender differences in reported crime are highlighted in the following statistics:

- About 70-80% of assaults against older women recorded by the police were committed by a known person and around 40-50% were by a family member.
- About 40-60% of assaults against older men recorded by the police were committed by a known person and around 20% were by a family member.

Sample size limitations and relatively low prevalence rates of physical abuse for the older population in the PSS restrict the possibility of using the full range of data that the survey collects about the context and characteristics of the violence. Other elements of the definition of abuse of older people that cannot be fully explored in this data are vulnerabilities that exist in relationships and the characteristics and context of the perpetrators.

## 3. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander older people: physical violence and physical abuse

### 3.1 Introduction

The existing national data on physical violence and physical abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander older people includes data in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) 2002, 2008 and 2014-15 and data on the number of victims of assault offences identified in the ABS Recorded Crime - Victims data from 2010 to 2016 for some States and Territories.

While it is not the purpose of this report to discuss the causes of violence or abuse, it is relevant to highlight the specific context of intergenerational and transgenerational trauma in which vulnerabilities emerge and violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians occurs. AIHW (2018a) has published research which shows that “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were removed from their families, during practices that led to the Stolen generations, experience significant health and social disadvantage”<sup>3</sup>.

As AIHW notes: “the removal of their land, and cultural dispossession, over the past 200 years have resulted in particular social, economic, physical, psychological and emotional problems for Indigenous Australians” (2018b:83). In a discussion of family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, Cripps points to two groups of factors attributable to violence:

Group 1 factors include: colonization; policies and practices; dispossession and cultural dislocation; and dislocation of families through removal; these have been experienced specifically by Indigenous people and their communities. Group 2 factors include: marginalization as a minority; direct and indirect racism; unemployment; welfare dependency; past history of abuse; poverty, destructive coping behaviours; addictions; health and mental health issues; low self esteem and a sense of powerlessness; these latter factors are seen as contributing to high levels of distress and can occur separately or in multiples in any population, impacting on one's experience of violence (2008:s33).

### 3.2 NATSISS

The ABS National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) is a survey of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians living in private dwellings in Australia. The survey design includes community samples in discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and non-community samples, which include dwellings in areas not part of the community sample. A random selection of dwellings within selected communities were identified, and “within each of these dwellings in remote areas, up to one Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adult and up to

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.aihw.gov.au/news-media/media-releases/2018/august/new-report-shows-long-term-disadvantage-for-austra?>

one Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child (aged 0–14 years) were randomly selected to participate in the survey and in non-remote areas up to two adults and two children were randomly selected to participate” (ABS 2016a: Methodology). In the non-community sample, an adult in each randomly selected dwelling in SA1s<sup>4</sup> with large expected populations were asked a screening question about whether there were any residents of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin. In the non-community sample, in remote areas, up to one Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adult and one Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child participated, and in non-remote areas the survey included up to two adults and two children per household (ABS 2016a). More detail about the NATSISS survey is outlined in Appendix A.

As noted by the recent publication by AIHW:

The NATSISS results are not comparable with those of the PSS. The NATSISS has limited data on family violence as this was not its intended focus. It captures experiences of physical violence in the last 12 months, including the relationship with the perpetrator in the most recent incident. By contrast, the PSS captured data for women and men aged 18 and over on their experiences of violence by a current or previous partner since the age of 15 and in the last 12 months. The NATSISS asks respondents aged 15 and over about physical violence (including threats of physical violence) but not sexual violence. The PSS asks respondents aged 18 and over about both physical and sexual violence (AIHW 2018b:85).

Questions about the experience of physical and threatened violence were asked in the surveys for the 2002, 2008 and 2014-15 NATSISS. In all three surveys, the following questions were asked about physical violence:

- *If non-remote: In the last 12 months, did anyone, including people you know, use physical force or violence against you?*
- *If remote: In the last year, did anyone start a fight with you or beat you up?*

In 2008 and 2014-15, the following additional questions were asked about the experience of physical violence:

- *At the time of the (most recent) incident, did you know any of the offenders? (Yes/No)*
- *How did you know them?*
- *Did you report this to the police? (Yes/No)*

In all three surveys, questions were asked about whether the person has experienced threatened violence:

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<sup>4</sup> SA1s have a population of between 200 and 800 people with an average population size of approximately 400 people.

- *If non-remote: In the last 12 months, did anyone, including people you know, try to use or threaten to use physical force or violence against you?*
- *If remote: In the last year, did anybody try to or say they were going to hit you or fight with you (i.e. did anyone threaten you)?*

In 2008 and 2014-15, additional questions were asked about the experience of threatened violence.

- *Were any of those threats made in person?*
- *Did you report this to the police? (Yes/No)*

In this analysis, two variables are used:

- physical and threatened violence – this variable identifies people who have experienced either physical violence or threatened violence and is available for all the years of the NATSISS
- physical abuse – this variable identifies people whose most recent experience of physical violence was by a known person but does not include threatened violence by a known person. (In this way it differs from the definition of physical abuse in the PSS which included physical assault and threat by a known person.)

For the purposes of this report, older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are defined as people aged 45 and over.

### **3.2.1 Physical and threatened violence**

Table 3-1 reports the percentage and number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women who have experienced physical or threatened violence. In all years, younger people were more likely to experience physical or threatened violence than the older age group and the rates have stayed fairly constant. In 2002, older men were more likely to experience physical or threatened violence than older women; however, there were no statistically significant gender differences in 2008 or 2014-15. The data shows that in 2014-15, 18.2% of older men and 14.6% of older women experienced threatened or physical violence.

**Table 3-1 Whether experienced threatened or physical violence in the last 12 months**

	Percentages			Weighted population estimates		
	2002	2008	2014-15	'000s		
	2002	2008	2014-15	2002	2008	2014-15
<b>Under 45 years</b>						
<b>Men</b>	29.0	28.0	26.2	29.6	32.1	39.3
<b>Women</b>	27.0	29.1	27.3	29.6	35.7	43.6
<b>Total</b>	27.9	28.6	26.8	59.1	67.8	82.9
<b>45 years and over</b>						
<b>Men</b>	15.5*	14.2	18.2	5.2	5.9	11.4
<b>Women</b>	11.7*	13.7	14.6	4.4	6.6	10.4
<b>Total</b>	13.5	13.9	16.4	9.5	12.4	21.8

Source: ABS NATSISS, 2002, 2008, 2014-15 Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF), DataLab, Findings based on use of ABS Microdata. Notes: Not stated responses have been removed from the denominator. \* indicates statistically significant difference between gender categories ( $p < 0.05$  chi-squared test).

### 3.2.2 Abuse: physical violence by a known person

This section reports on whether the most recent experience of physical violence was committed by a known person, which is the proxy for physical abuse. Due to sample size restrictions in 2008 and 2014-15, it is not possible to report on the proportion of individuals who experienced violence who knew the person involved. In both years, women in both age groups were more likely to know the perpetrator of the violence than men.

In 2014-15, between 6-8% of older men and women in both non-remote and remote areas reported an incident of physical violence by a known person (Table 3-2). This figure is based on data for the most recent incident of violence only in the last 12 months, and thus may underestimate the percentage of this group who experienced violence by a known person in the last 12 months. This is because some individuals may have experienced physical violence by a known person in the last 12 months, but their most recent experience of violence was by a stranger. As with physical violence or threats, younger people were more likely than older people to experience physical abuse. There were no statistically significant gender differences among the older age group.

**Table 3-2 Percentage and number who experienced physical abuse: most recent experience of physical violence in the last 12 months was by a known person by gender and remoteness, 2008 and 2014-15**

	2008		2014-15	
	%		%	
	Under 45 years	45 years and over	Under 45 years	45 years and over
<b>Non-remote</b>				
Males	12.3	5.5	10.4	7.3
Females	16.3	7.7	15.6	7.9
<b>Remote</b>				
Males	17.8	3.0 <sup>(1)</sup>	18.7	7.1
Females	16.0	4.7 <sup>(1)</sup>	15.7	6.0 <sup>(1)</sup>
<b>Total</b>				
Males	13.7	4.9	12.1	7.2
Females	16.2	6.9	15.6	7.5
	Weighted population estimates		Weighted population estimates	
	'000s		'000s	
	Under 45 years	45 years and over	Under 45 years	45 years and over
<b>Non-remote</b>				
Males	10.6	1.7	12.4	3.5
Females	15.1	2.8	19.4	4.4
<b>Remote</b>				
Males	5.1	0.3 <sup>(1)</sup>	5.8	1.0
Females	4.8	0.6 <sup>(1)</sup>	5.5	1.0 <sup>(1)</sup>
<b>Total</b>				
Males	15.7	2.0	18.2	4.5
Females	19.9	3.3	24.9	5.3

Source: ABS NATSISS, 2002, 2008, 2014-15 Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF), DataLab, Findings based on use of ABS Microdata. Notes: Not stated responses have been removed from the denominator. (1) Estimate has an RSE of between 25-50% and should be used with caution.

### 3.2.3 Context of most recent incident of violence by known persons

The NATSISS in 2014-15 provides information about the context for the most recent incident of physical violence, including whether alcohol or other substances contributed to the most recent incident<sup>5</sup>. In this section we focus on the most recent incident of violence committed by a known

<sup>5</sup> This data is not comparable to the PSS variable as it does not distinguish between whether the respondent or perpetrator was affected by alcohol or substance use.

person and the most recent incident of face-to-face threatened violence (for non-remote respondents). Table 3-3 shows that around two thirds of younger men and women reported that alcohol or substance use was involved in the most recent incident of physical violence or face-to-face threat compared with over 75% of older men and women. However, these age differences were not statistically significantly different. Between 58 and 67% of all groups in non-remote areas reported that alcohol or substance use have been a contributing factor to the threat of physical violence.

**Table 3-3 Whether alcohol or other substances contributed to most recent incident of physical violence by a known person, 2014-15**

	Percentages	
	Physical Abuse	Face-to-face physical threat (non-remote)
<b>Under 45 years</b>		
Men	65.2	62.8
Women	64.6	66.8
<b>Total</b>	64.9	64.8
<b>45 years and over</b>		
Men	82.1	64.0
Women	77.9	58.0
<b>Total</b>	79.8	61.1

Source: ABS NATSISS, 2014-15 Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF), DataLab, Findings based on use of ABS Microdata. Notes: Not stated responses have been removed from the denominator. (1) Estimate has an RSE of between 25-50% and should be used with caution.

### 3.2.4 Response to and impact of most recent physical violence by known persons

The NATSISS for 2008 and 2014-15 also provides data on the response to and impact of the most recent experience of physical violence by a known person. Table 3-4 shows whether the most recent incident was reported to police. Over 50% of women in all age groups reported the incident compared with around 25% of young men and 30-40% of older men.

**Table 3-4 Whether most recent incident of physical violence by a known person was reported to police, 2008, 2014-15**

	Percentages	
	2008	2014-15
<b>Under 45 years</b>		
Men	26.4	28.6
Women	59.7	50.5
<b>Total</b>	45.0	41.2
<b>45 years and over</b>		
Men	32.5	39.7
Women	57.9	52.3
<b>Total</b>	48.4	46.6

Source: ABS NATSISS, 2008, 2014-15 Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF), DataLab, Findings based on use of ABS Microdata. Notes: Not stated responses have been removed from the denominator.

Table 3-5 outlines the percentage of people who were injured in the most recent incident of violence by a known person. In the older age group, between 35 and 65% of older men and women reported injuries or harm. Among the older women who reported injuries, 69% in 2008 and 43% in 2014-15 visited a health professional. The data for men is only available in 2014-15 and around 55% of men who were injured went to a health professional as a result of most recent physical violence (Table 3-5 and Table 3-6).

**Table 3-5 Whether physically injured or harmed by most recent physical violence by a known person, 2008, 2014-15**

	Percentages	
	2008	2014-15
<b>Under 45 years</b>		
Men	46.6	46.1
Women	59.1	54.6
<b>Total</b>	53.6	51.0
<b>45 years and over</b>		
Men	35.9	48.0
Women	65.0	47.1
<b>Total</b>	54.1	47.5

Source: ABS NATSISS, 2014-15 Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF), DataLab, Findings based on use of ABS Microdata. Notes: Not stated responses have been removed from the denominator.

**Table 3-6 Whether visited a health professional due to injuries received by most recent physical violence, 2008, 2014-15**

	Percentages	
	2008	2014-15
<b>Under 45 years</b>		
Men	na	29.3
Women	45.9	37.8
<b>Total</b>	46.4	34.5
<b>45 years and over</b>		
Men	na	54.8
Women	68.7	42.6
<b>Total</b>	66.1	48.2

Source: ABS NATSISS, 2014-15 Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF), DataLab, Findings based on use of ABS Microdata. Notes: Not stated responses have been removed from the denominator. "na" indicates data suppressed due to small sample sizes.

### 3.2.5 Protective factors

A range of cultural, social and economic factors identified in the 2014-15 NATSISS were analysed for their associations with experiencing either physical abuse or physical and threatened violence. The protective factors included language, cultural identification, cultural participation, community strength, efficacy and trust. The language and culture variable responses differed by remoteness and thus were analysed by remoteness, whereas most of the other factors were analysed by gender.

#### Language

In non-remote areas in 2014-15, only 2% of the population spoke an Indigenous language as the main language at home compared to around 40% of the remote population. The analysis of the relationship between Indigenous languages and the main language at home and the experience of violence is undertaken for people living in remote communities only. Among older people, speaking an Indigenous language was associated with higher rates of physical violence (Table 3-7).

**Table 3-7 Whether experienced physical abuse or physical or threatened violence by main language at home is Indigenous, people living in remote areas only, 2014-15**

	Abuse %	Physical or threatened violence %
<b>Under 45 years</b>		
Main language is Indigenous	20.0*	30.9*
Main language is not Indigenous	13.7*	22.3*
<b>45 years and over</b>		
Main language is Indigenous	7.4	17.3*
Main language is not Indigenous	5.1	10.3*

Source: ABS NATSISS, 2014-15 Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF), DataLab, Findings based on use of ABS Microdata. Notes: Not stated responses have been removed from the denominator. \*Statistically significant difference between groups (p<0.05, chi-squared test).

The NATSISS also asked respondents whether they spoke an Indigenous language, just some words or none at all. The language responses differed by remoteness status; around 8% of people living in non-remote areas spoke an Indigenous language compared with around 55% in remote areas. The relationship to physical abuse and physical violence or threat also differed by remoteness areas, as outlined in Table 3-8. In non-remote areas, speaking an Indigenous language was associated with higher rates of abuse and violence for all age groups; in remote areas, Indigenous language was associated with lower rates of physical violence but had no association with abuse.

**Table 3-8 Whether experienced physical abuse or physical or threatened violence by whether speaks Indigenous language by remoteness, 2014-15**

	Abuse %	Physical or threatened violence %
<b>Non-remote</b>		
<b>Under 45 years</b>		
Speaks an Indigenous language or words	30.7*	41.8*
Speaks no Indigenous language	12.0*	25.5*
<b>45 years and over</b>		
Speaks an Indigenous language or words	11.8*	21.0*
Speaks no Indigenous language	7.2*	16.4*
<b>Remote</b>		
<b>Under 45 years</b>		
Speaks an Indigenous language or words	16.9	25.1*
Speaks no Indigenous language	17.9	30.1*
<b>45 years and over</b>		
Speaks an Indigenous language or words	6.2	12.2*
Speaks no Indigenous language	6.9	17.5*

Source: ABS NATSISS, 2014-15 Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF), DataLab, Findings based on use of ABS Microdata. Notes: Not stated responses have been removed from the denominator. \*Statistically significant difference between groups  $p < 0.05$ , chi-squared test.

### Cultural identification and participation

The responses to the cultural identification variable also differed by remoteness. Around 60% of people living in non-remote areas identified with clan, tribal or language group compared with 80% in remote areas. In non-remote areas identifying with a clan, tribal or language group was associated with higher rates of violence.

**Table 3-9 Whether experienced physical abuse or physical or threatened violence by whether identifies with clan, tribal or language group, 2014-15**

	Abuse %	Physical or threatened violence %
<b>Non-remote</b>		
<b>Under 45 years</b>		
Identifies	16.2*	30.4*
Does not identify	9.6*	22.1*
<b>45 years and over</b>		
Identifies	9.4*	19.2*
Does not identify	4.7*(1)	13.0*
<b>Remote</b>		
<b>Under 45 years</b>		
Identifies	16.9	26.7
Does not identify	18.7	29.3
<b>45 years and over</b>		
Identifies	5.9	14.6
Does not identify	9.2(1)	14.9

Source: ABS NATSISS, 2014-15 Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF), DataLab, Findings based on use of ABS Microdata. Notes: Not stated responses have been removed from the denominator. \*Statistically significant difference between groups ( $p < 0.05$ , chi-squared test). (1) Estimate has an RSE of between 25-50% and should be used with caution.

The NATSISS also asks respondents:

- whether they recognise an area as homelands/traditional country
- whether they were involved in selected cultural events, ceremonies or organisations in the last 12 months
- whether they participated in selected cultural activities in the last 12 months.

For the first variable (recognise homelands/traditional country), among the older age group, those who lived in non-remote areas only had higher rates of experiencing violence or threat if they did identify but there was no relationship with the experience of physical abuse. For the cultural participation variables, older people living in non-remote areas had a higher likelihood of experiencing both abuse and physical violence or threats. These findings require further investigation to understand the relationship. A study of the relationship between physical violence and an index of “cultural attachment” based on these preceding six questions on language and cultural identification in the 2008 NATSISS showed that the bivariate association between higher cultural attachment and higher rates of violence in non-remote areas was not statistically significant, once other factors, such as experience of stressors, financial stress, removal of self or family member and alcohol and substance use, were controlled for (Weatherburn and Snowball

2012). No regression analysis was done for this paper, so further analysis is required to examine these relationships in more depth in the current dataset.

### **Community strength**

The NATSISS asks respondents whether they are able to get general support from outside their household and whether they are able to get support in time of crisis from outside their household. Neither of these variables was associated with rates of experiencing physical abuse or physical or threatened violence for older people.

### **Efficacy**

Two variables indicating self-reported efficacy were examined as they may highlight increased levels of vulnerability:

- how often feels able to have a say with family and friends on important issues
- how often feels able to have a say within community on important issues.

Older women who felt they could have a say within their family “a little or none of the time” were more likely to experience physical violence or threat. Neither of these variables increased the likelihood of experiencing physical abuse for older people.

### **Trust**

The NATSISS survey asked respondents five questions about the level of trust in:

- most people
- own doctor
- hospitals
- police in local area
- police outside local area.

All these variables (except for “trust in police in local area” for older women) had a statistically significant relationship with the experience of physical abuse, with those with lower levels of trust reporting higher levels of abuse. Similarly, all the variables, apart from trust “in most people” and “trust in police outside local area”, for men had a significant negative association with the experience of violence or threat. The direction of causality between such variables is unclear.

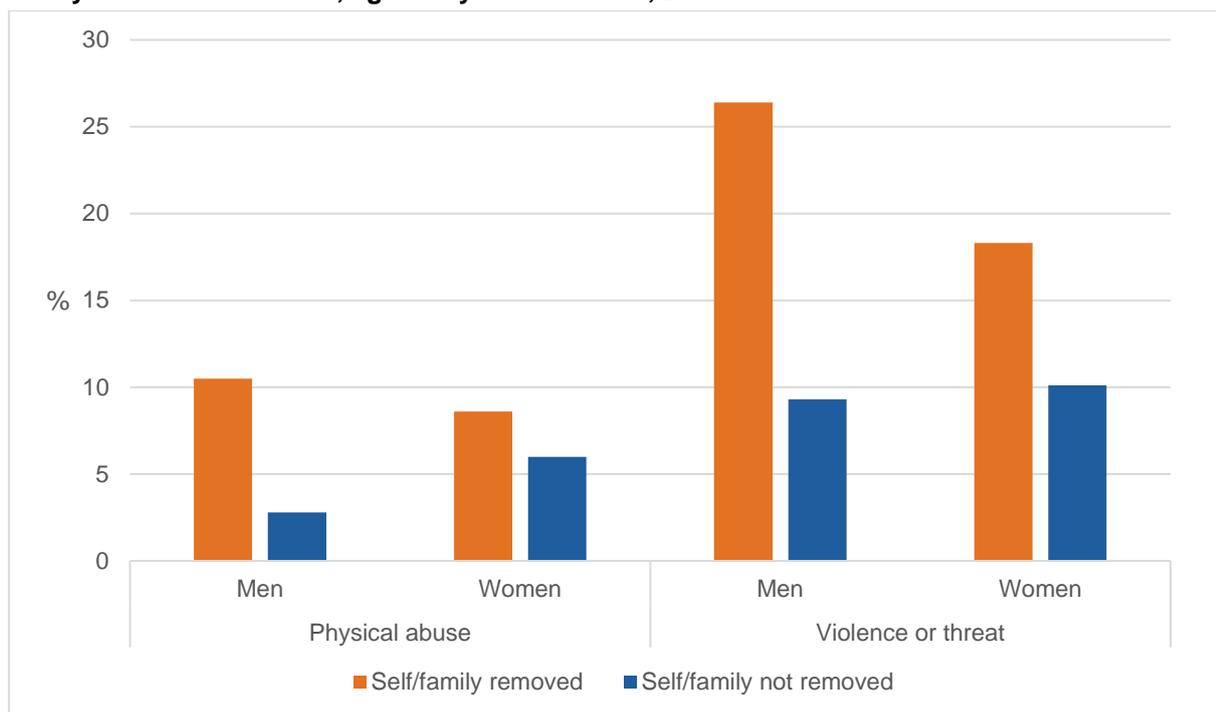
## **3.2.6 Risk factors**

The risk factors analysed in the NATSISS encompassed removal, homelessness, financial stress, health and disability, social and emotional wellbeing and social isolation. A number of the risk factors had strong associations with the experience of physical abuse and violence or threat.

## Removal

The NATSISS survey identifies whether the respondent or any members of their family were removed. In nearly all age and gender groups, individuals were statistically more likely to report physical abuse and physical violence or threat if they themselves, or members of their family, had been removed. (For older women the difference between the two groups for physical abuse was only statistically significant at the level of  $p < 0.1$ , chi squared test.) Figure 3-1 shows the differences in rates of abuse and violence for men and women in the older age group.

**Figure 3-1 Whether experienced physical abuse or physical violence or threat by whether self or family were ever removed, aged 45 years and over, 2014-15**

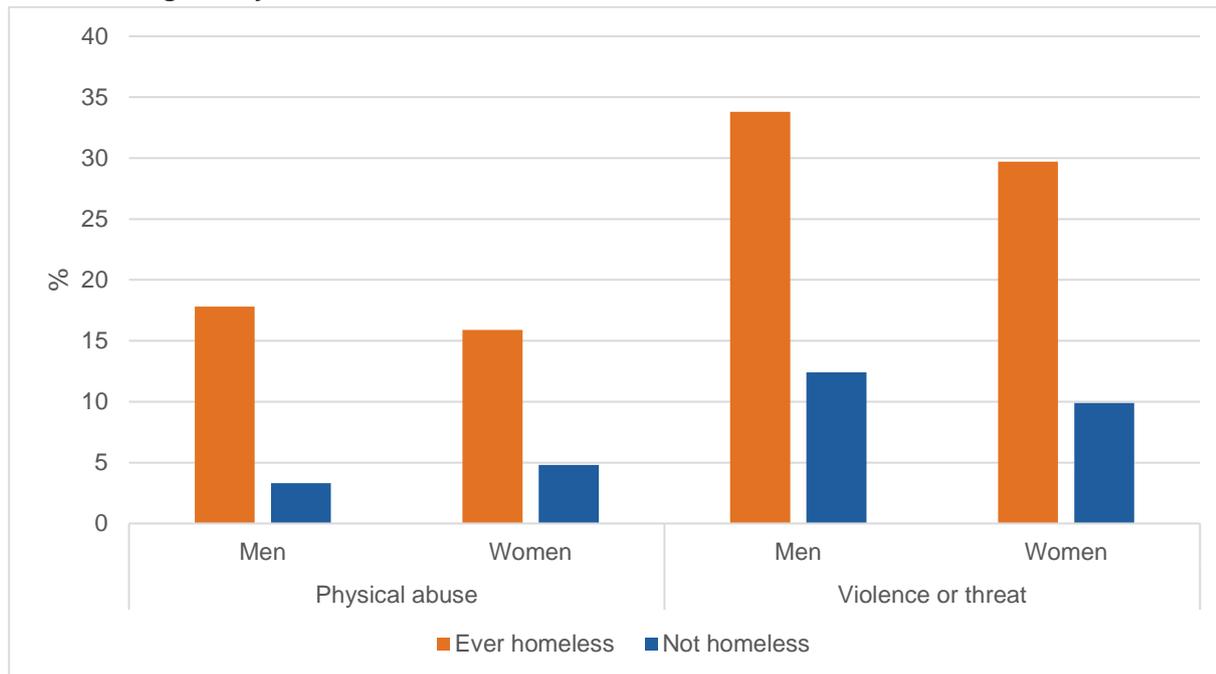


Source: ABS NATSISS, 2014-15 Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF), DataLab, Findings based on use of ABS Microdata.

## Homelessness

Homelessness is another risk factor increasing vulnerability to violence. The NATSISS asks about whether the respondent has ever been homeless and the timeframe for the most recent experience of violence. Both variables had an association with increased rates of experiencing abuse and violence or threat. Figure 3-2 shows that older men and women who had ever experienced homelessness were three to four times more likely to have experienced physical abuse and physical violence or threats.

**Figure 3-2 Whether experienced physical abuse or physical violence or threat by whether ever homeless, aged 45 years and over, 2014-15**



Source: ABS NATSISS, 2014-15 Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF), DataLab, Findings based on use of ABS Microdata.

## Financial stress

Lack of resources is another factor that may predispose older people to be more vulnerable to abuse and violence. The NATSISS has two questions that were used in the analysis which relate to the household's financial situation:

- household not able to raise \$2000 cash in a week
- presence of reported cashflow problems.

In all age and gender groups, respondents were more likely to report physical abuse and physical violence or threat if they were not able to raise emergency money or had cashflow problems.

## Poor health and disability status

Similarly, all age and gender groups were more likely to report violence and abuse if they also reported poor health or disability, except for young men for whom this finding did not hold for the relationship between abuse and poor health. For older men, for the relationship between disability and the experience of abuse, the difference was only statistically significant at the  $p < 0.1$  level, (chi-squared test).

## Social and emotional wellbeing

The NATSISS provides a grouped Kessler 5 (K5) Score to assess social and emotional wellbeing. The analysis showed that in all age and gender groups, respondents who reported high or very

high levels of stress were more likely to report physical abuse and physical violence or threats. The direction of causality here is unclear.

### **Social isolation**

Two variables identifying social isolation were examined but neither had a relationship with increased likelihood of experiencing physical abuse or physical violence or threat for the older age group:

- frequency of face-to-face contact with family or friends outside the household
- whether can confide in any family or friends outside the household.

### **3.3 Recorded Crime - Victims**

Data on violence perpetrated against older people by known persons can also be sourced from administrative police records located in the ABS Recorded Crime – Victims data. As noted above, this is an annual publication of statistics for personal and household offences that have been recorded by the police collected in administrative data systems (ABS, 2011). The data are reported by State and Territory and the counting unit is victims of offences rather than persons, so it is possible for the same individual to have multiple offences recorded. Data are recorded within each time period based on when it “was reported to police by a member of the public or when it was detected by police, and was recorded on police systems”<sup>6</sup>. Age in this dataset is based on the “age that the victim became known to the police rather than the age the person was when they experienced victimization”<sup>7</sup>.

This data has been analysed to identify the number of assaults that are recorded by police by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples aged 45 years and over in three States and Territories: New South Wales, South Australia and the Northern Territory. The data also provides information on the proportion of recorded crimes in which the victim knew the perpetrator. The analysis below identifies recorded offences committed by persons with whom a relationship of trust would be expected. The categories of relationship to offender in this data are as follows:

- known to victim
  - Family relationship: partner, parents, other family member
  - Non-family relationship: ex-partner, other non-family member
- stranger
- unknown/not stated/inadequately described.

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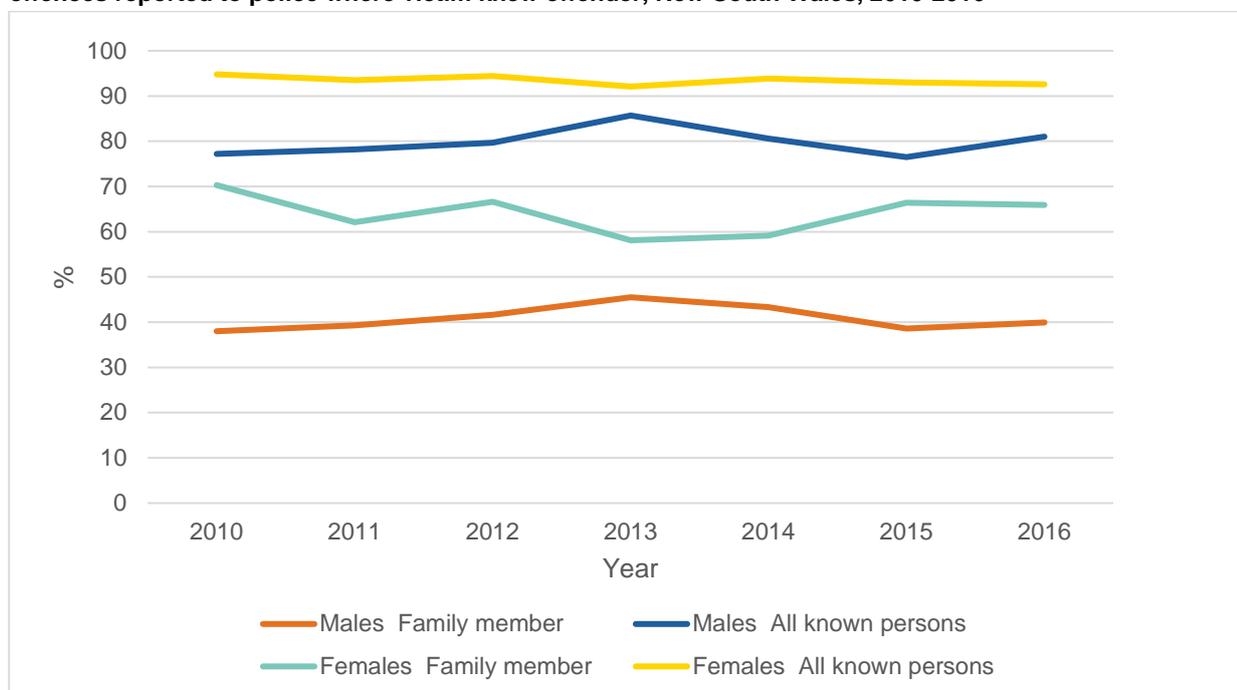
<sup>6</sup><http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4510.0Explanatory%20Notes12016?OpenDocument>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4510.0Explanatory%20Notes12016?OpenDocument>

Figure 3-3 to Figure 3-5 show the proportion of recorded physical assaults for the years 2010 to 2016 that were committed by a known person by gender for the different States and Territories. The data is fairly consistent across the years and different jurisdictions indicating that:

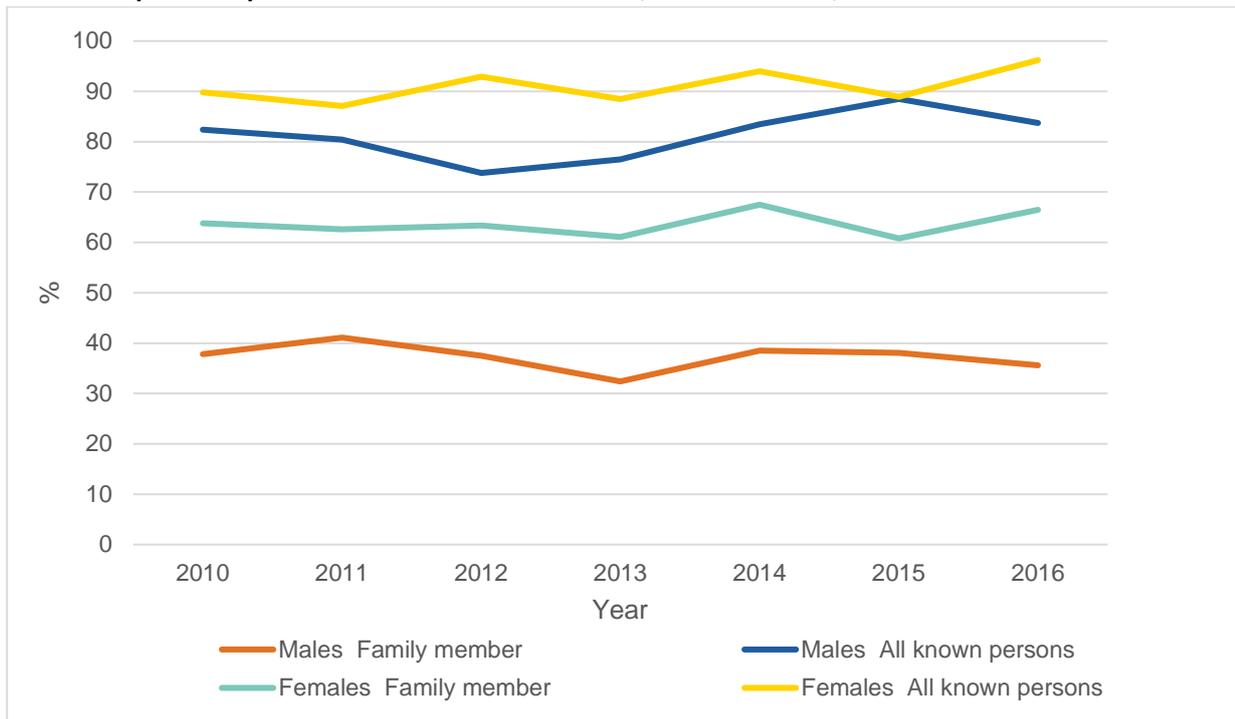
- around 90% of physical assault offences against older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women recorded by police were committed by a known person and 60-70% were committed by a person in a family relationship
- between 60-80% of physical assault offences against older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men recorded by police were committed by a known person and 30-50% were committed by a person in a family relationship.

**Figure 3-3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Victims of Assault aged 45 years and over, by sex, percentage of offences reported to police where victim knew offender, New South Wales, 2010-2016**



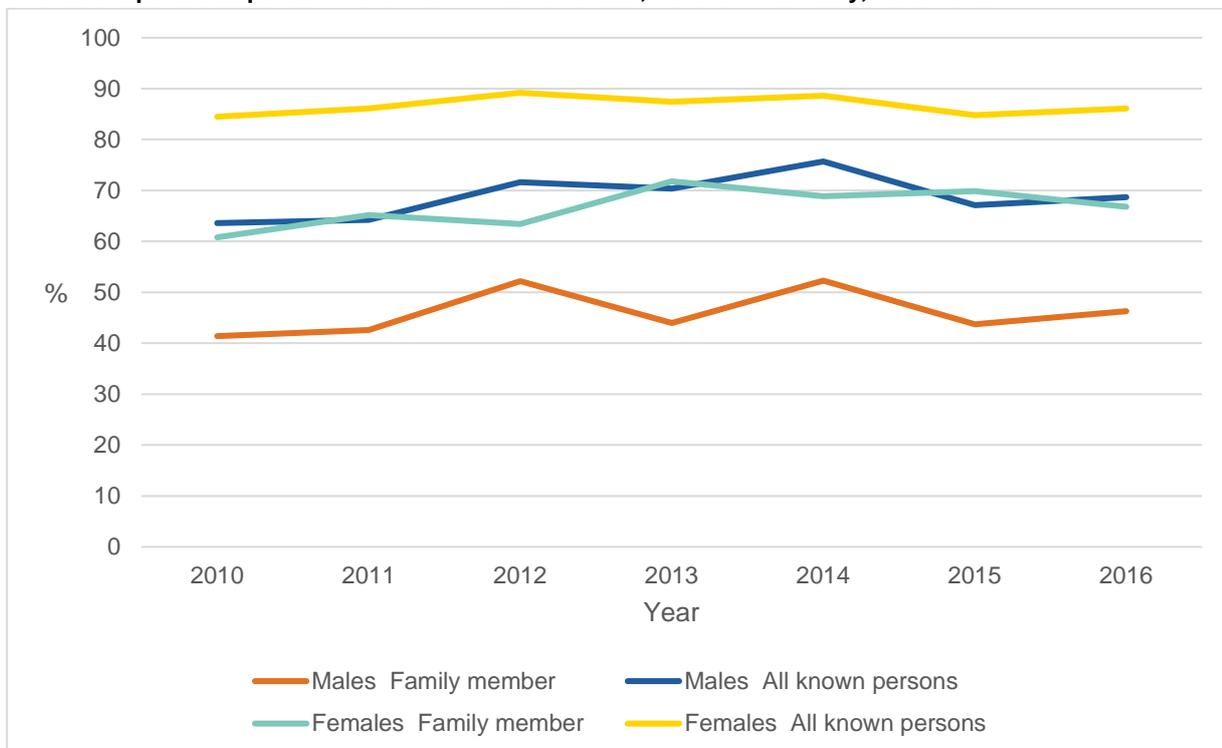
Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Customised tables. Recorded Crime-Victims, 2010-2016

**Figure 3-4 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Victims of Assault aged 45 years and over, by sex, percentage of offences reported to police where victim knew offender, South Australia, 2010-2016**



Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Customised tables. Recorded Crime-Victims, 2010-2016

**Figure 3-5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Victims of Assault aged 45 years and over, by sex, percentage of offences reported to police where victim knew offender, Northern Territory, 2010-2016**



Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Customised tables. Recorded Crime-Victims, 2010-2016

### 3.4 Synthesis and gaps: national data on physical abuse of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander older people

The findings from the NATSISS indicate that:

- younger people are more likely to experience physical or threatened violence than the older age group in all years. No consistent gender differences among the older age group
- women in both age groups were significantly more likely to know the perpetrator of the violence than men (based on the most recent incident).

Characteristics of the most recent incident of physical abuse suggest that:

- alcohol or substance use is a contributor in the majority of cases
- around half the older men and women did not report the abuse to the police
- around half the older men and women experienced an injury as a result of the abuse and around half of the group that was injured visited a health professional as a result.

The analysis of protective and risk factors shows:

- The relationships between the language and cultural identification and cultural participation factors and experience of abuse and physical violence or threat are complex and require further investigation.
- Community strength and efficacy variables, as measured in this analysis, were not associated with physical abuse although a lack of say in one's family was associated with increased rates of physical violence.
- Trust relating to most people, own doctor, hospitals and the local and other police, was associated with abuse and physical violence or threat, although the direct causality is unclear.
- The following factors increased the risk of experiencing physical abuse or violence and threats:
  - self or family members ever removed
  - ever homeless or recent homelessness
  - financial stress
  - poor health
  - presence of a disability
  - high levels of stress.
- Social isolation, as measured in this analysis, was not associated with an increased risk.

## Recorded crime:

- The administrative data recorded by police shows that, of the assaults reported to police:
  - around 90% of physical assault offences against older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women recorded by police were committed by a known person and 60-70% were committed by a person in a family relationship
  - between 60-80% of physical assault offences against older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men recorded by police were committed by a known person and 30-50% were committed by a person in a family relationship.

Overall, the two data sources are consistent in highlighting that older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who experience or report physical violence are more likely than older men to experience physical violence or abuse by someone they know.

What cannot be known from the existing data is the full extent of situational preconditions that lead to vulnerability in relation to persons of trust, the characteristics and context of the perpetrators, and the full range of harms and consequences.

## 4. Sexual violence and sexual abuse

A number of data sources were examined for the capacity to provide insights into the extent and nature of sexual abuse of older people. While the PSS is specifically designed to collect information about the prevalence and circumstances of sexual violence (assault and threat), the relatively low self-reported prevalence rates among the older population and the sample size limitations restrict the analysis to the prevalence among older women only. The ABS Recorded Crime – Victims can provide insights into the number of sexual assault offences recorded by police. While the ABS Crime Victimization survey does collect data on self-reported sexual assault, the sample size limitations did not permit analysis of this data.

### 4.1 Personal Safety Survey

#### 4.1.1 Sexual violence

As with physical violence, the PSS asks respondents about experiences of sexual violence (assault or threat), the timeframe of the violence and whether the respondent knew the perpetrator. However, due to sample size limitations, it was not possible to construct a variable to proxy for sexual abuse of older people (sexual violence by a known person), or to report on older men's experience of sexual violence. Nor was it possible to explore variables relating to the context, response, consequences and socio-demographic characteristics associated with sexual violence experienced by older women. Data on the prevalence of sexual violence against older women for 2012 and 2016 is reported in Table 4-1 below. Between 0.1 and 0.4% of women, aged 55 years and over, reported experiencing sexual violence in the last 12 months. This represented an estimated 12,700 women aged 55 years and over in 2016.

**Table 4-1 Sexual violence (assault or threat) experienced by women in the last 12 months**

	Percentages			Weighted population estimates '000s		
	2005	2012	2016	2005	2012	2016
Under 55 years		1.1	2.6		94.3	158.2
55 years and over	na	0.1 <sup>(1)</sup>	0.4	na	8.0 <sup>(1)</sup>	12.7

Source: ABS Personal Safety Survey 2005, 2012, 2016 Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF) and Microdata, DataLab, Findings based on use of ABS Microdata. "na" indicates data suppressed due to small sample sizes. (1) indicates that the RSE is between 25-50% so the estimate should be interpreted with caution.

### 4.2 Recorded crime: sexual abuse: older men and women

#### 4.2.1 Sexual abuse offences

As noted in Section 1.4, the ABS Recorded Crime – Victims is an annual publication of statistics for personal and household offences that have been recorded by the police and collected in

administrative data systems (ABS, 2011). The data records victims of offences rather than the number of persons, so individuals may be counted more than once, and data are also reported by State and Territory based on jurisdictional practices. Data are recorded within each time period based on when it “was reported to police by a member of the public or when it was detected by police, and was recorded on police systems”<sup>8</sup>. Age in this dataset is based on the “age that the victim became known to the police rather than the age the person was when they experienced victimization”<sup>9</sup>, which is noted as an issue for reporting of sexual assault, as this type of offence is more likely to be reported more than 12 months after the event compared to other offences. Crimes may be reported by the victim, a witness or other person or be recorded as a result of a police investigation.

The ABS notes for this data explain that “the relationship of offender to victim information is initially recorded as the relationship as perceived by the victim at the time of the offence, with some jurisdictions updating this data item as the investigation progresses”<sup>10</sup>. Known persons include people in a family relationship (partner, parent, child, sibling and other family member) and those in a non-family relationship, which include ex-partners and other known persons.

Data on recorded sexual abuse offences against older men and women recorded by the police could only be reported for four states (Table 4-2), as the total number of recorded sexual assaults for this group was low in Tasmania, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory. In all States and all years, more offences were recorded against older women than older men. The data shows a generally consistent trend for higher numbers of offence being recorded in 2016 compared to 2010. However, there could be a range of factors that affect rates of recording including social, cultural, economic and administrative factors, so it is not possible to determine the reasons for variations in recording without further investigations of all factors.

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<sup>8</sup><http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4510.0Explanatory%20Notes12016?OpenDocument>

<sup>9</sup><http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4510.0Explanatory%20Notes12016?OpenDocument>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4510.0Explanatory%20Notes12016?OpenDocument>

**Table 4-2 Number of recorded sexual assault offences by known persons against men and women aged 55 years and over, by State and Territory, 2010-2016**

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>New South Wales</b>							
Men	21	15	46	62	53	94	97
Women	119	89	109	109	159	197	176
<b>Victoria</b>							
Men	3	5	4	13	8	37	52
Women	66	60	49	60	69	123	113
<b>Queensland</b>							
Men	3	3	13	5	7	10	16
Women	22	29	32	18	40	39	50
<b>South Australia</b>							
Men	11	12	10	7	5	11	16
Women	27	28	23	32	41	40	47

Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Customised tables. Recorded Crime-Victims, 2010-2016 Notes: data with small number in cells may be subject to perturbation and therefore should be interpreted with caution.

Table 4-3 reports the percentage of sexual assault offences against older men and women that are recorded by police that are committed by a known person. The percentages vary across the States for which data was available and are more consistent in the more populous states (NSW and Victoria) where in nearly all years over 50% of sexual assault offences against older men and over 60% of offences against older women were committed by a known person.

**Table 4-3 Percentage of sexual assault offences against men and women aged 55 years and over reported to police, perpetrated by known persons, by State and Territory, 2010-2016**

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>New South Wales</b>							
Men	63.6	57.7	67.6	82.7	81.5	83.2	94.2
Women	75.3	71.2	63.0	69.9	74.3	80.7	72.7
<b>Victoria</b>							
Men	60.0	50.0	36.4	72.2	72.7	54.4	61.2
Women	73.3	77.9	55.7	60.6	61.1	69.5	63.8
<b>Queensland</b>							
Men	100.0	42.9	100.0	50.0	87.5	71.4	80.0
Women	45.8	61.7	69.6	40.9	63.5	62.9	79.4
<b>South Australia</b>							
Men	100.0	n.p.	90.9	63.6	50.0	100.0	n.p.
Women	57.4	82.4	54.8	71.1	64.1	64.5	81.0

Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Customised tables. Recorded Crime-Victims, 2010-2016 Notes: n.p. indicates data not published by the ABS. Data with a small number in cells may be subject to perturbation and therefore should be interpreted with caution.

### 4.3 Recorded crime: sexual abuse: Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander older people

The ABS Recorded Crime - Victims data on sexual offences against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women aged 45 years and over was examined for four States and territories: New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and the Northern Territory. Low numbers meant that data on sexual abuse is only reported for older women in New South Wales and Queensland (Table 4-4). The rates and number of offences vary across the years and in the two states but indicate that for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, the majority of recorded sexual assault offences are committed by known persons.

**Table 4-4 Percentage and number of sexual assault offences against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women aged 45 years and over, reported to police, committed by known persons, 2010-2016**

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>New South Wales</b>							
Family relationship (%)	52.2	19.0	45.5	36.8	45.0	28.1	40.0
All known persons (%)	82.6	76.2	77.3	63.2	75.0	84.4	86.0
Total number known	19	16	17	12	15	27	43
Total number offences	23	21	22	19	20	32	50
<b>Queensland</b>							
Family relationship (%)	17.6	33.3	0.0	66.7	25.0	35.3	38.1
All known persons (%)	70.6	77.8	62.5	116.7	87.5	70.6	66.7
Total number known	12	7	10	14	14	12	14
Total number offences	17	9	16	12	16	17	21

Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Customised tables. Recorded Crime-Victims, 2010-2016 Notes: data with a small number in cells may be subject to perturbation and therefore should be interpreted with caution.

#### 4.4 Synthesis and gaps: national data on sexual abuse of older people

Sample size limitations and low prevalence rates in the PSS and Crime Victimization Survey meant that self-reported sexual assault data, but not a measure of sexual abuse, could only be analysed for older women in the PSS. In addition, it was not possible to explore variables relating to the context, response, consequences and socio-demographic characteristics associated with sexual violence experienced by older women. The ABS Recorded Crime – Victims also provides some limited insights into the number of sexual assault offences recorded by police in different States and Territories and the percentage of those that are by a known person.

In the PSS, between 0.1% and 0.4% of women, aged 55 years and over, reported experiencing sexual violence in the past 12 months.

Recorded Crime - Victims data on sexual assault offences against all older men and women showed:

- more offences were recorded against older women than older men
- a generally consistent trend for higher numbers of offences being recorded in 2016 compared to 2010, which could be the result of a number of factors
- in States where data was more consistent across the years, over 50% of sexual assault offences against older men and over 60% of offences against older women were committed by a known person

- the limited data for sexual offences against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women aged 45 years indicated that the majority of recorded sexual assault offences are committed by known persons.

Existing national data can provide very little insight into the nature and extent of sexual abuse of older men and women due to sample size limitations.

## 5. Partner violence and abuse

### 5.1 Introduction

The PSS asks respondents a range of questions about the experience of partner violence, which is by definition a form of abuse. Within these questions are a series of questions about the types of behaviours involved in the violence, including emotional abuse by current and previous partners. A subset of the questions about emotional abuse refers to the use and control of resources and finances which may be conceptually regarded as economic abuse (e.g. Kutin et al. 2017). The analysis of these subtypes of abuse explored these elements within the PSS as outlined below.

### 5.2 Partner violence against women

Sample size limitations and low rates of reported partner violence in the older age groups meant that the PSS data on current or previous partner violence could only be reported for older women, not men. Table 5-1 outlines the rates and estimated numbers of women who reported current or previous partner violence in the last 12 months by broad age group. The data shows that less than 1% of older women reported current or previous partner violence in the last 12 months in any of the PSS survey years. In 2016, this represented an estimated 26,800 older women experiencing this form of violence.

**Table 5-1 Whether experienced current or previous partner violence in the last 12 months, women only, 2005, 2012, 2016**

	Percentages			Weighted population estimates '000s		
	2005	2012	2016	2005	2012	2016
Under 55 years	1.9	2.1	2.1	99.3	119.6	128.6
55 years and over	0.5 <sup>(1)</sup>	0.4 <sup>(1)</sup>	0.8	11.3 <sup>(1)</sup>	12.8 <sup>(1)</sup>	26.8

Source: ABS Personal Safety Survey 2005, 2012, 2016 Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF), DataLab, Findings based on use of ABS Microdata. (1) indicates that the RSE is between 25-50% so the estimate should be interpreted with caution.

### 5.3 Emotional abuse

Data in the PSS is collected on a range of behaviours by current and previous partners that are emotionally controlling and abusive. Table 5-2 reports on the range of behaviours identified in the PSS for 2012 and 2016. Experience of any one of these behaviours is recorded as emotional abuse and the timeframe of the most recent incident is also recorded; however, it is not possible to specify the specific behaviour that occurred in the last 12 months.

**Table 5-2 Emotional abuse by a current or previous partner: types of behaviours**

2012	2016
01 Stopped or tried to stop them from contacting family, friends or community	01 Controlled or tried to control them from contacting family, friends or community
02 Stopped or tried to stop them from using the telephone, internet or family car	02 Controlled or tried to control them from using the telephone, internet or family car
03 Controlled or tried to control where they went or who they saw	03 Controlled or tried to control where they went or who they saw
04 Monitored their whereabouts (e.g. constant phone calls)	04 Kept track of where they were and who they were with (e.g. constant phone calls, GPS tracking, monitoring through social media)
05 Stopped or tried to stop them knowing about or having access to household money	05 Controlled or tried to control them from knowing about, having access to or making decisions about household money
06 Stopped or tried to stop them from working, earning money or studying	06 Controlled or tried to control them from working or earning money
07 Deprived them of basic needs such as food, shelter, sleep or assistive aids	07 Controlled or tried to control their income or assets
08 Damaged, destroyed or stole any of their property	08 Controlled or tried to control them from studying
09 Constantly insulted them to make them feel ashamed, belittled or humiliated (e.g. put-downs)	09 Deprived them of basic needs such as food, shelter, sleep or assistive aids
10 Lied to their child/ren with the intent of turning them against them	10 Damaged, destroyed or stole any of their property
11 Lied to other family members or friends with the intent of turning them against them	11 Constantly insulted them to make them feel ashamed, belittled or humiliated (e.g. put downs)
12 Threatened to take their child/ren away from them	12 Shouted, yelled or verbally abused them to intimidate them
13 Threatened to harm their child/ren and/or other family members or friends	13 Lied to their child/ren with the intent of turning them against them
14 Threatened to harm or harmed any of their pets	14 Lied to other family members or friends with the intent of turning them against them
15 Threatened or tried to commit suicide	15 Threatened to take their child/ren away from them
16 Behaviours experienced undetermined	16 Threatened to harm their child/ren
	17 Threatened to harm their other family members or friends
	18 Threatened to harm any of their pets
	19 Harmed any of their pets
	20 Threatened or tried to commit suicide

Source: ABS Personal Safety Survey 2012, 2016.

Table 5-3 reports on the percentage and number of men and women who experienced emotional abuse by a current or previous partner in the last 12 months, by age group, for 2012 and 2016. The findings show that:

- younger men and women are more likely to report emotional abuse than older men and women
- there were no statistically significant gender differences within age groups.

**Table 5-3 Emotional abuse by a current or previous partner in the last 12 months, 2012, 2016**

	Percentages		Weighted population estimates '000s	
	2012	2016	2012	2016
<b>Under 55 years</b>				
Men	3.7	5.0	213.3	298.2
Women	5.6	5.7	329.1	348.7
Total	4.7	5.3	542.4	646.8
<b>55 years and over</b>				
Men	1.0 <sup>(1)</sup>	2.6	26.6	79.9
Women	2.7	3.2	77.7	104.5
Total	1.9	2.9	104.3	184.3

Source: ABS Personal Safety Survey 2005, 2012, 2016 Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF), DataLab, Findings based on use of ABS Microdata. Notes: (1) indicates that the RSE is between 25-50% so the estimate should be interpreted with caution.

## 5.4 Economic Abuse against women

The economic abuse variable in the PSS is based on a subset of behaviours outlined in the emotional abuse by current or previous partner data items. The ideal variable relating to economic abuse of older people would encompass a list of behaviours, as outlined below, but also expand to include financial abuse perpetrated by other family members and by professionals. It is not possible to derive an estimate of the number of older people who experienced economic abuse in the last 12 months from the PSS. The economic abuse variable able to be derived from the PSS indicates whether the respondent had ever experienced any of the following behaviours outlined in Table 5-4 from a current or previous partner and had experienced emotional abuse in the last 12 months.

**Table 5-4 Economic abuse: types of behaviours**

2012	2016
Stopped or tried to stop them from using the telephone, internet or family car	Controlled or tried to control them from using the telephone, internet or family car
Stopped or tried to stop them knowing about or having access to household money	Controlled or tried to control them from knowing about, having access to or making decisions about household money
Stopped or tried to stop them from working, earning money or studying	Controlled or tried to control them from working or earning money
Deprived them of basic needs such as food, shelter, sleep or assistive aids	Controlled or tried to control their income or assets
Damaged, destroyed or stole any of their property	Controlled or tried to control them from studying
	Deprived them of basic needs such as food, shelter, sleep or assistive aids
	Damaged, destroyed or stole any of their property

Source: ABS Personal Safety Survey 2012, 2016.

Table 5-5 outlines the percentage and number of men and women who ever experienced economic abuse and who also experienced emotional abuse in the last 12 months in 2012 and 2016. The data for 2016 shows that 1.1% of men and 1.5% of older women were in this category, representing an estimated 33,100 older men and 49,000 older women. This data should be interpreted with caution as indicated above. It is not possible to provide an estimate of the prevalence of partner economic abuse in the last 12 months in the PSS data.

**Table 5-5 Ever experienced economic abuse among those who have experienced emotional abuse by a current or previous partner in the last 12 months**

	Percentages		Weighted population estimates '000s	
	2012	2016	2012	2016
<b>15-54 years</b>				
Men	na	2.7	na	160.6
Women	3.4	3.3	199.9	203.4
<b>55 years and over</b>				
Men	na	1.1 <sup>(1)</sup>	na	33.1
Women	1.5	1.5	42.6	49.0

Source: ABS Personal Safety Survey 2005, 2012, 2016 Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF), DataLab, Findings based on use of ABS Microdata. "na" indicates data suppressed due to small sample sizes. (1) indicates that the RSE is between 25-50% so the estimate should be interpreted with caution.

## 5.5 Synthesis and gaps: national data on partner, emotional and economic abuse of older people

The analysis of the extensive data collected by the PSS on partner violence, including emotional abuse and economic abuse, was limited by the low prevalence rates and samples sizes. The limited analysis showed:

- Across the years of the PSS data, less than 1% of older women reported current or previous partner violence and in 2016, this represented an estimated 26,800 older women experiencing this form of violence.
- Older women were more likely to report emotional abuse by a current or previous partner than older men in the last 12 months (3.2% versus 2.6%).
- The best available proxy in the PSS data showed that in 2016, 1.5% of women and 1.1% of men had ever experienced economic abuse from a current or previous partner and had experienced emotional abuse in the last 12 months.

The PSS data provides an extensive array of behaviours relating to emotional and economic abuse, but these are only collected in relation to partners. Consideration could be given to future waves of the PSS collecting more information relevant to understanding elder abuse. This would be possible if future PSS slightly revised questions and response categories for people aged 55 and over to include information on such behaviours by other family members and other relationships of trust, such as professionals.

## 6. Sense of safety

### 6.1 Introduction

Two national data sources collect information on an individual's general sense of safety: the PSS and the NATSISS. While not specifically a form of abuse of older people, this data provides insights into the sense of vulnerability felt by different population subgroups in different situations, which may be due to social, cultural and economic factors and previous experience.

### 6.2 Personal Safety Survey (PSS)

The PSS collects data about the respondent's general sense of safety in the last 12 months when:

- being at home alone after dark
- walking in their local area alone after dark
- waiting for and using public transport alone after dark.

#### 6.2.1 Safety at home

Table 6-1 outlines the percentage and number of men and women who felt unsafe or did not stay at home alone at night because they felt unsafe. Overall, the findings show that:

- older men were more likely than younger men to feel unsafe (statistically significant differences in 2005 and 2012) and younger women were more likely than older women to feel unsafe in all years
- women in both age groups were more likely than the men in those age groups to feel unsafe in all years
- an estimated total of 271,100 older women and 110,900 older men felt unsafe at home in 2016.

**Table 6-1 Felt unsafe or was not home alone home alone at night because felt unsafe in the last 12 months**

	Percentages			Weighted population estimates '000s		
	2005	2012	2016	2005	2012	2016
<b>15-54 years</b>						
Males	3.3	2.0	2.4	170.2	118.0	144.9
Females	15.0	11.8	11.1	786.6	689.3	679.6
Total	9.1	7.0	6.8	956.8	807.3	824.4
<b>55 years and over</b>						
Males	5.0	4.0	3.7	111.7	108.1	110.9
Females	10.0	8.1	8.3	243.8	234.7	271.1
Total	7.6	6.1	6.1	355.5	342.8	382.0

Source: ABS Personal Safety Survey 2005, 2012, 2016 Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF) and Microdata, DataLab, Findings based on use of ABS Microdata. Totals for estimates may not sum exactly due to rounding.

## 6.2.2 Safety walking in the local area alone at night

Table 6-2 outlines the percentage and number of men and women who did not feel safe walking in their local area at night in the last 12 months. The findings show that:

- in 2005, older men and women were more likely to report feeling unsafe or did not walk alone at night because they felt unsafe. There were no statistically significant differences by age within gender groups in 2012 and 2016
- in all years, younger and older women were more likely to feel unsafe than their male counterparts
- in all years, an estimated over one million older women felt unsafe or did not walk alone at night because they felt unsafe compared to between 290,000 and 320,000 older men.

**Table 6-2 Felt unsafe or did not walk alone at night because felt unsafe in the last 12 months**

	Percentages			Weighted population estimates '000s		
	2005	2012	2016	2005	2012	2016
<b>15-54 years</b>						
Males	11.3	9.7	9.2	588.1	562.5	550.0
Females	39.5	34.0	33.2	2,075.5	1,983.3	2,024.3
Total	25.4	21.9	21.3	2,663.5	2,545.7	2,574.3
<b>55 years and over</b>						
Males	14.2	11.6	9.6	319.4	312.6	291.7
Females	41.7	34.9	33.3	1,020.1	1,011.9	1,087.3
Total	28.5	23.7	21.9	1,339.5	1,342.5	1379.0

Source: ABS Personal Safety Survey 2005, 2012, 2016 Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF) and Microdata, DataLab, Findings based on use of ABS Microdata. Totals for estimates may not sum exactly due to rounding.

### 6.3 Using and waiting for public transport alone at night

The PSS also asks respondents about their general sense of safety when they use public transport alone at night, and if they used public transport in the last 12 months, how safe they felt waiting for public transport alone at night. The findings from the analysis of the PSS datasets are outlined in Table 6-3 and Table 6-4 below. They show that:

- in all years, women are more likely than men in their age group to say they feel unsafe or do not use public transport due to feeling unsafe.

Among those who did use public transport:

- Younger women were more likely to feel unsafe while waiting than older women (2005 and 2012).
- Younger and older women were more likely to feel unsafe than men in their age group.

**Table 6-3 Felt unsafe when using public transport or did not use public transport because felt unsafe in the last 12 months**

	Percentages			Weighted population estimates '000s		
	2005	2012	2016	2005	2012	2016
<b>15-54 years</b>						
<b>Males</b>	9.9	11.6	6.7	518.7	668.0	403.1
<b>Females</b>	27.4	26.4	21.3	1,435.4	1,542.5	1298.3
<b>Total</b>	18.7	19.0	14.1	1954.1	2,210.6	1701.4
<b>55 years and over</b>						
<b>Males</b>	9.7	8.5	5.8	219.5	229.3	176.1
<b>Females</b>	24.0	21.5	19.4	586.8	624.8	632.6
<b>Total</b>	17.2	15.3	12.8	806.3	854.1	808.8

Source: ABS Personal Safety Survey 2005, 2012, 2016 Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF) and Microdata, DataLab, Findings based on use of ABS Microdata. Totals for estimates may not sum exactly due to rounding.

**Table 6-4 Felt unsafe when waiting for public transport alone at night (of those who used public transport alone at night in the last 12 months)**

	Percentages			Weighted population estimates '000s		
	2005	2012	2016	2005	2012	2016
<b>15-54 years</b>						
<b>Males</b>	19.9	20.8	13.2	423.0	504.5	399.6
<b>Females</b>	47.2	46.6	31.9	668.1	768.6	660.2
<b>Total</b>	30.8	31.3	20.8	1091.1	1273.1	1059.9
<b>55 years and over</b>						
<b>Males</b>	25.2	16.7	14.9	106.7	69.6	100.6
<b>Females</b>	36.0	38.3	32.3	104.9	93.1	148.4
<b>Total</b>	29.6	24.7	21.9	211.6	162.7	249.0

Source: ABS Personal Safety Survey 2005, 2012, 2016 Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF), DataLab and Microdata. Findings based on use of ABS Microdata. Totals for estimates may not sum exactly due to rounding.

## 6.4 Reported safety: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander older people

The NATSISS data for 2008 and 2014-15 asks respondents about their perceptions of safety when home alone after dark and walking in their local area after dark. The following tables outline the percentages and number of men and women in the broad age groups in remote and non-remote areas who feel unsafe or very unsafe in these situations. Women were more likely than men to feel unsafe or very unsafe at home alone at night and walking alone in the local area at night in all age and remoteness groups (Table 6-5 to Table 6-8).

**Table 6-5 Percentage who felt unsafe or very unsafe at home alone after dark, by age, gender and remoteness, 2008, 2014-15**

	2008		2014-15	
	%		%	
	Under 45 years	45 years and over	Under 45 years	45 years and over
<b>Non-remote</b>				
Males	4.1	3.5	2.8	2.5
Females	19.0	17.1	14.8	9.5
<b>Remote</b>				
Males	3.0 <sup>(1)</sup>	3.5 <sup>(1)</sup>	1.3 <sup>(1)</sup>	2.5 <sup>(1)</sup>
Females	15.8	11.4	13.9	12.8
<b>Total</b>				
Males	3.8	3.5	2.5	2.5
Females	18.3	15.7	14.6	10.3

Source: ABS NATSISS, 2008, 2014-15 Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF), DataLab, Findings based on use of ABS Microdata. Notes: Not stated responses have been removed from the denominator. (1) Estimate has an RSE of between 25-50% and should be used with caution.

**Table 6-6 Number who felt unsafe or very unsafe at home alone after dark, by age, gender and remoteness, weighted estimates, 2008, 2014-15**

	2008		2014-15	
	Weighted population estimates '000s		Weighted population estimates '000s	
	Under 45 years	45 years and over	Under 45 years	45 years and over
<b>Non-remote</b>				
Males	3.5	1.1	3.3	1.2
Females	17.6	6.2	18.5	5.3
<b>Remote</b>				
Males	0.9 <sup>(1)</sup>	0.4 <sup>(1)</sup>	0.4 <sup>(1)</sup>	0.4 <sup>(1)</sup>
Females	4.8	1.4	4.9	2.1
<b>Total</b>				
Males	4.4	1.4	3.7	1.6
Females	22.4	7.6	23.3	7.3

Source: ABS NATSISS, 2008, 2014-15 Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF), DataLab, Findings based on use of ABS Microdata. Notes: Not stated responses have been removed from the denominator. Numbers may not exactly sum due to rounding. (1) Estimate has an RSE of between 25-50% and should be used with caution. Totals for estimates may not sum exactly due to rounding.

**Table 6-7 Percentage who felt unsafe or very unsafe walking alone in local area after dark by age gender and remoteness, 2008, 2014-15**

	2008		2014-15	
	%		%	
	Under 45 years	45 years and over	Under 45 years	45 years and over
<b>Non-remote</b>				
Males	11.7	16.5	6.9	9.1
Females	39.1	40.9	26.0	20.6
<b>Remote</b>				
Males	14.8	10.3	6.2	8.4
Females	29.7	27.9	21.4	18.3
<b>Total</b>				
Males	12.4	14.9	6.8	9.0
Females	36.7	37.7	25.0	20.1

Source: ABS NATSISS, 2008, 2014-15 Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF), DataLab, Findings based on use of ABS Microdata. Notes: Not stated responses have been removed from the denominator. (1) Estimate has an RSE of between 25-50% and should be used with caution.

**Table 6-8 Number who felt unsafe or very unsafe walking alone in local area after dark by age gender and remoteness, 2008, 2014-15**

	2008		2014-15	
	Weighted population estimates '000s		Weighted population estimates '000s	
	Under 45 years	45 years and over	Under 45 years	45 years and over
<b>Non-remote</b>				
Males	10.1	5.0	8.2	4.4
Females	36.1	14.9	32.4	11.4
<b>Remote</b>				
Males	4.2	1.1	1.9	1.2
Females	9.0	3.3	7.5	3.0
<b>Total</b>				
Males	14.3	6.1	10.1	5.6
Females	45.1	18.2	39.9	14.3

Source: ABS NATSISS, 2008, 2014-15 Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF), DataLab, Findings based on use of ABS Microdata. Notes: Not stated responses have been removed from the denominator. Numbers may not exactly sum due to rounding. (1) Estimate has an RSE of between 25-50% and should be used with caution. Totals for estimates may not sum exactly due to rounding.

## 6.5 Synthesis and gaps: national data on general sense of safety among older people

The PSS and NATSISS data on general feelings of safety provide insights into the sense of vulnerability felt by different population subgroups in different situations, which may be due to social, cultural and economic factors and previous experience. The key finding is that, for both the general population and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, women in all age groups and in all situations are more likely to feel more vulnerable than their male counterparts.

## 7. Conclusion

This report examines existing ABS datasets to explore what can be known about abuse of older people, and provides preliminary findings from the data analysis and data scoping to identify what can be known, and what is not known about abuse of older people. In examining these datasets, it is important to recognise that the different surveys and data sources are not comparable and cannot be synthesised to provide a picture of the extent, nature and dynamics of abuse of older people. Nevertheless, the analysis has provided some important insights into the issue, and has raised questions for further research. The findings are consistent with the existing literature on abuse of older people and confirm the patterns found in other Australian and international studies. Key findings include:

- The data suggests that a higher proportion of older women than older men who experience violence, experience violence from a person known to them.
- Although rates of reporting of abuse differ between the different surveys, all indicate that a high proportion of physical abuse is not reported, and that under-reporting of abuse by a known person is greater than for violence perpetrated by a stranger.
- Although the data is derived from different surveys it appears that older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have higher rates of physical abuse than non-Aboriginal older people.
- Rates of abuse of older people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous, appear to be stable or possibly even increasing over time. There are some indications that rates have declined in younger populations.
- Overall, the two data sources on physical abuse among older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are consistent in highlighting that older women who experience or report physical violence are more likely than older men to experience physical violence by someone they know.

This analysis identified some significant gaps in the data sources. Current survey and administrative data provide insights into the prevalence and nature of abuse of older people, but they are not able to provide a robust estimation of abuse of older people or much information about the dynamics of abuse. This is because:

- The various surveys and datasets cannot be combined or compared.
- Low sample sizes mean that it is not possible to analyse sub populations or types of abuse in many of the surveys.
- Lack of longitudinal data means that it is not possible to examine causal pathways and consequences of abuse.
- Some elements of abuse are not covered by any existing survey or dataset.

In particular:

- Sample size limitations and relatively low prevalence rates of physical abuse for the older population in the PSS restrict the possibility of using the full range of data that the survey collects about the context and characteristics of the violence.
- Existing national data can provide very little insight into the nature and extent of sexual abuse of older men and women due to sample size limitations in national datasets.
- Analysis of existing national data on the nature and extent of partner violence is also limited by sample sizes.
- The PSS data provides an extensive array of behaviours relating to emotional abuse, but these are only collected in relation to partners and would need to be expanded to include information on such behaviours by other family members.
- While the economic abuse behaviours in the PSS are specifically designed to capture partner economic abuse, other types of behaviours would need to be included to capture the full range of financial abuse known to be perpetrated by others, including other family members or professionals, against older people.
- Further research into the reasons for the high rates of feeling unsafe when alone in a range of situations reported by older women needs to be undertaken.

Other than physical abuse of older people, existing national data sources are limited in the extent to which they provide insight into commonly recognised subtypes of abuse of older people, such as neglect, or financial, emotional-psychological or sexual abuse. Further, existing national datasets provide little insight into:

- abuse in residential or other formal settings
- scamming or financial exploitation
- the full range of harms, contexts and consequences
- vulnerabilities that exist in relationships, the characteristics and contexts of relationships of trust and the basis and exercise of power
- characteristics and contexts of the perpetrators
- the broader range of responsible parties that may fail to adequately respect, include or meet the needs of older people.

To fully examine the prevalence, dynamics and consequences of abuse of older people, a dedicated prevalence survey will be required. Consideration could also be given to future waves of the PSS and other ABS surveys being adapted to collect relevant information to understand the range of subtypes of abuse of older people. In some instances, this could be accomplished by

relatively modest changes to questions and response categories asked of people aged 55 years and over.

# Appendix A

## Personal Safety Survey

The ABS Personal Safety Survey (PSS) has been conducted three times (in 2005, 2012 and 2016). Analysis was conducted on the expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF) data for 2005 and 2012 and the Detailed Microdata for 2016 available through the ABS DataLab. This survey provides information relating to men and women aged 18 years and over in private dwellings. The survey oversamples women to provide robust estimates for reporting requirements by States and Territories for the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children on violence against women, whereas only national level data is required for men (Cox, 2016).

The strengths of the PSS:

- (1) The data collection methods are designed specifically to be sensitive enough to gather responses about experiences of violence: one person is interviewed per household; interviews are conducted face-to-face in private; other household members “are not aware of the content of the survey or responses given”, and “if preferred by the respondent, the interview can be conducted over the telephone” (ABS 2006:vii-viii). Female interviewers were used with the option for a male if requested, and “interviewers received sensitivity and awareness training” (ABS 2006:viii). The data collected about violence is part of a voluntary component of the interview. As outlined by the ABS (2017b), in 2016, the ABS introduced the Computer Assisted Self Interview (CASI) method for the voluntary part of the survey, whereby the respondent could complete the interview privately on the interviewer’s laptop. If the respondent was not comfortable with using the computer, the interview could continue by Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI). Overall, 54% of respondents chose CASI and 46% used CAPI (ABS 2017b). Women had higher rates of using CASI than men (55.2 compared with 50.8), and younger age groups were more likely to complete the interview using the CASI method (18-44 years, 69.5%, 45-64 years 51.2%, 69-99 years 26.%) (ABS 2017b, Survey Development and Data Collection and Response Rates).
- (2) It collects a large amount of detail about the experience of violence (Cox 2016).

The limitations of the PSS for the examination of elder abuse:

- (1) It provides data about the experience of violence but not specifically about abuse of older people. The subtypes of elder abuse explored in this analysis are physical and sexual violence as a proxy for abuse and emotional and economic abuse by current and former partners among older people. This data cannot identify other aspects of abuse of older people, such as financial or emotional abuse by children, misuse of powers, isolation or neglect.
- (2) It has limited information about categories of perpetrators relevant to the analysis of elder abuse.
- (3) The sample comprises people in private dwellings only, not in residential care.

- (4) The sample size means that it is not possible to examine rates of sexual violence among older men, sexual abuse (sexual violence by a known person) among older women and men, or partner violence among men.

The overall sample sizes and response rates for each year of the PSS are as follows:

- 15,589 women and 5,653 men in 2016 – response rate 68.7% (ABS 2017b)
- 13,307 women and 3,743 men in 2012 – response rate 56% (ABS 2014)
- 11,900 women and 4600 men in 2005 – response rate 72% (ABS 2006).

## National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey

The ABS National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) is a survey of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in private dwellings in Australia. As described by the ABS (2016a), the survey design includes community samples in discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and non-community samples, which include dwellings in areas not part of the community sample. A random selection of dwellings within selected communities were identified, and “within each of these dwellings in remote areas, up to one Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adult and up to one Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child (aged 0–14 years) were randomly selected to participate in the survey” (ABS 2016a: Methodology). In non-remote areas, up to two adults and two children were randomly selected to participate (ABS 2016a). In the non-community sample, an adult in each randomly selected dwelling in SA1s<sup>11</sup> with large expected populations was asked about whether there were any residents of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin. In the non-community sample, in remote areas, up to one Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adult and one Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child participated, and in non-remote areas the survey included up to two adults and two children per household (ABS 2016a).

The total sample size for the NATSISS survey in 2002 was around 9400, in 2008 approximately 13,300 and in 2014-15, 11,178 (ABS, 2016a). The sample size for men aged 45 years and over in 2014-15 was 1201 (775 non-remote and 426 remote) and for women, it was 1529 (997 non-remote and 532 remote).

The strengths of the NATSISS:

- (1) As outlined by the ABS (2016a), the survey is specifically designed to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through cultural awareness training for the interviewers, approaches taking account of language and cultural differences in remote areas, content differences where relevant, and the use of community facilitators.
- (2) It provides detailed information on a broad range of topics.

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<sup>11</sup> SA1s have a population of between 200 and 800 people with an average population size of approximately 400 people.

The limitations of the NATSISS survey:

- (1) It cannot provide a direct analysis of abuse of older people, only physical violence and perceptions of safety as a proxy for abuse of older people. This data cannot identify sexual, financial and emotional abuse, isolation or neglect.
- (2) It has limited information about the situational preconditions, perpetrators and impact of physical violence.
- (3) The sample size precludes detailed analysis of the population who has experienced violence or abuse.

The NATSISS survey is conducted every six years and gathers information on a broad range of topics. The survey collects information on safety, law and justice including:

- feelings of safety – personal safety and neighbourhood problems
- experience of violence – physical violence and threat of physical violence
- experience of violence in the last 12 months - relationship with perpetrator of violence, whether substance abuse was involved, and injuries
- whether violence was reported to police (ABS 2016a).

## Recorded Crime - Victims

The ABS Recorded Crime – Victims is an annual publication of statistics for “personal and household offences that have been recorded by the police” collected in administrative data systems (ABS, 2011). The data is reported by State and Territory.

As the ABS explain in their explanatory notes<sup>12</sup>, the counting unit in the data is victims of offences, not “unique persons” and there are a number of counting rules relating to offences and incidents of crime, so individuals may be counted more than once. Data are recorded within each time period based on when it “was reported to police by a member of the public or when it was detected by police, and was recorded on police systems”<sup>13</sup>. Age in this dataset is based on the “age that the victim became known to the police rather than the age the person was when they experienced victimization”<sup>14</sup>, which is noted as an issue for reporting of sexual assault. Data is reported separately for victims of crime who are Indigenous and non-Indigenous, and this is recorded on the basis of self-identification which may lead to underreporting<sup>15</sup>. Due to numbers and data quality

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<sup>12</sup><http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4510.0Explanatory%20Notes12016?OpenDocument>

<sup>13</sup><http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4510.0Explanatory%20Notes12016?OpenDocument>

<sup>14</sup><http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4510.0Explanatory%20Notes12016?OpenDocument>

<sup>15</sup><http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4510.0Explanatory%20Notes12016?OpenDocument>

issues, data for Indigenous persons is only reported for New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and the Northern Territory<sup>16</sup>.

A key variable of interest in assessing abuse of older people is the relationship of the offender to the victim. The explanatory notes for the ABS publication indicate:

- The relationship of offender to victim information is initially recorded as the relationship as perceived by the victim at the time of the offence, with some jurisdictions updating this data item as the investigation progresses.
- Relationship of offender to victim data for Western Australia is not of sufficient quality for national reporting.
- There are some inconsistencies in relationship of offender to victim data across jurisdictions:
  - New South Wales is unable to provide relationship data for robbery offences.
  - Victoria records the relationship of the victim to offender rather than the offender to the victim, and data are subsequently re-coded to meet the requirements of the Recorded Crime – Victims relationship classification<sup>17</sup>.

The study purchased a number of customized tables from the ABS for the analysis.

The strength of this data is that:

- (1) The data provides an extensive picture of the crimes against older people that are recorded by police.
- (2) The data includes the relationship of perpetrator to the victim.
- (3) Additional tables (not included in this analysis) might provide data on the outcomes of investigations of crimes against older people.

The limitations of the data for this project are:

- (1) The data cannot provide a direct measure of abuse of older people recorded by police; rather physical assault, sexual assault and blackmail can be considered as proxies for subtypes of abuse of older people.
- (2) The data include the number of offences and rates of recorded victimization rather than the number of older persons who have crimes committed against them. Abuse that is not defined as a crime and/or is not recorded is therefore excluded from these datasets.

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<sup>16</sup><http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4510.0Explanatory%20Notes12016?OpenDocument>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4510.0Explanatory%20Notes12016?OpenDocument>

# Crime Victimisation Survey

This annual survey conducted since 2008-09 as part of the ABS Multipurpose Household Survey (MPHS) provides data on self-reported personal and household crimes experienced in the last 12 months, including physical assault, face-to-face and other threatened assault, “sexual assault, robbery, break-in, attempted break-in, motor vehicle theft, theft from a motor vehicle and malicious property damage” and “whether the crime was reported to police”<sup>18</sup> (ABS, 2011). In contrast to the ABS Reported Crime dataset, this dataset reflects crime reported in the survey (i.e. to interviewers) rather than crime reported to or recorded by police. For the most recent experience of physical assault and threatened assault, it also reports on whether a weapon was used, type of weapon, whether physically hurt, medical treatment received, location of assault, sex of offender, whether person knew the offender, relationship to offender (including family members and professional relationships), cohabitation and whether alcohol or other substance was a contributory factor (ABS, 2011)<sup>19</sup>. For most other crimes, data are also recorded on the reason for not reporting the crime to the police. The data includes socio-demographic characteristics. Data for this analysis was generated by a customized data request.

The strengths of this data:

- (1) It can provide insights to the level of self-reported crime experienced by older people and the reasons that older people may not report crime.
- (2) It can provide insights into a subtype of abuse of older people: physical abuse and threats when perpetuated by family members and in professional relationships where it may be hypothesised that there was an expectation of trust.
- (3) It can provide some limited information on situational preconditions and impact of crimes.
- (4) It has a range of sociodemographic characteristics.

The limitations of this data for this project:

- (1) Except where perpetrators can be identified, it does not provide a direct measure of abuse of older people; rather it provides proxy measures of physical and sexual assault.
- (2) Sample sizes limit the types of analyses that can be undertaken.

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/BE069B02E44DD52CCA2578B00011A0D0?opendocument>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/4530.02017-18?OpenDocument>

## Appendix B

### Additional items in the Personal Safety Survey not analysed

#### Definitions of violence

Whether experienced physical assault in the last 12 months

Whether experienced physical threat in the last 12 months

Whether experienced sexual assault in the last 12 months

Whether experienced sexual threat in the last 12 months

Whether experienced violence by current partner in the last 12 months

Whether experienced violence by previous partner in the last 12 months

#### Most recent incident: Context, response and impact

Detailed location of most recent incident

Whether more than one person assaulted or threatened to assault during most recent incident

Number of people who assaulted or threatened to assault in most recent incident

Physical assault behaviours experienced during most recent incident

Physical threat behaviours experienced during most recent incident

Whether respondent was under the influence of alcohol or another substance/ or alcohol or another substance had been added to their drink in the most recent incident

Whether perception of incident not being a crime has changed over time

Main reason for change in perception of incident not being a crime

Most recent Incident (MRI) Assault Whether perpetrator was charged by police

MRI Assault Whether perpetrator went to court as a result of charge

MRI Assault All reasons police not contacted

MRI Assault Main reason police not contacted

Type of physical injury received during most recent incident of assault

Whether consulted doctor or OHP about physical injuries received in most recent incident of assault

Changes to usual routine in 12 months after most recent assault incident due to physical injuries

## Most recent incident: Context, response and impact

MRI Whether took time off work in the 12 months after incident

Amount of time taken off work in the 12 months after most recent incident (days)

Changes to usual routine in 12 months after most recent non-partner incident due to anxiety or fear

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