

**United Nations Statistical Commission
United Nations Statistics Division
Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía de México**

ESA/STAT/AC.193/11

December 2009

**Meeting of the Friends of the Chair of the United Nations
Statistical Commission on Statistical Indicators on
Violence against Women
9 - 11 December 2009
Aguascalientes, Mexico**

AUSTRALIAN COMMENTS FOR THE AGENDA¹

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¹ Issued without formal editing.

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1. Agenda item 4

1. The Australia (1) data included in the tables attached to the paper Methodological Overview of Surveys on Violence against Women (ESA/STAT/AC.193/1) are compiled from published tables in 2005, Personal Safety, Australia (cat no. 4906.0) which was published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics August 2006. However, much more detail is available from the purpose-dedicated Personal Safety Survey (PSS), and can be used to populate much more of the indicators than is apparent in the attached tables. The ABS provides survey microdata access for those wishing to undertake such analysis, and will be publishing the interim indicators that can be compiled from the PSS on its website in the near future.
2. The following issues have implications for the reporting of data for all of the interim indicators approved at the 40th Sessions of the United Nations Statistical Commission, while indicator-specific issues are discussed under the relevant agenda items.

● 1.1 Age-specific rates

3. Age-specific rates of experience of violence in the last 12 months and since the age of 15 years can be compiled from the PSS, by single years of age, from age 18 upwards. Table 6 in 2005, Personal Safety, Australia (cat no. 4906.0) provides the victim counts and population counts for calculating age-specific rates for tables 1 and 3 of the UNSD paper for this meeting.

Table 1. Total and age-specific rate of women subjected to physical violence in the last 12 months

Age of women	Age-specific rate (%)
18-24	10.1
25-34	7.1
35-44	5.0
45-54	4.0
55 and over	1.5
Total rate	4.7

Table 3. Total and age-specific rate of women subjected to sexual violence in the last 12 months

Age of women	Age-specific rate (%)
18-24	4.1
25-34	2.7
35-44	2.1
45 and over	0.5
Total rate	1.6

4. Age-specific rates for Tables 2 and 4 in the UNSD paper can be similarly compiled from data available from the PSS.

5. The available microdata record age in single years to age 84, and group the remainder to 85+ years. However, sample size will limit the usefulness of very fine age breakdowns, and summary groupings will be used to present these results for international comparisons.
6. It may be that the age groupings that deliver sample density, to generate reasonably reliable measures for comparisons across time and across countries, will be mirrored across many countries because of some of the shared nature of violence against women globally. More standard age groupings, such as 5 or 10 year groupings used for other statistical purposes may not be the most appropriate groupings for comparisons of violence against women in the last 12 months (but probably can be used for life long experiences of crime).
7. If actual ages (rather than age ranges) are collected in the field, as proposed for new module being developed by the FoC group, then a variety of age-specific rates can be calculated for any grouping useful for a country's internal policy purposes, such as showing the age gradient of victimization and how it may change in response to local policy or other circumstances, and for international comparisons.

● **1.2 Frequency of violence**

8. The ABS Personal Safety Survey (PSS) does not measure the frequency of violence that can be summed across perpetrators and types of violence in the way described for the proposed module. In the PSS each component of violence – sexual assault, threatened sexual assault, physical assault, and threatened physical assault – is measured first in terms of the most recent incident. Once the relationship is established and a suite of questions asked about that incident, the interview cycles through whether anyone else has committed such an incident, and if so, whether more than once and details collected of the most recent incident involving that perpetrator type.
9. This nature of interviewing gives very detailed information about the nature and circumstances of the most recent incident of each component of violence by each perpetrator type, and counts of one, and more than once incident in each cross classification of the four types of violence by the 5 perpetrator types (stranger, boyfriend, current partner, previous partner, and other known man). A minimum number of incidents can be calculated from this approach, but it is a minimum. For some women their range of experiences of violence (either very few or very many) will allow broad categorization into frequency ranges, but for many women in the middle spectrum of types of violence and types of perpetrators quantification will not be possible from these questions.
10. However, the 2005 PSS results show that 42% (or 1.3 million) of the 3.1 million women reporting experiencing violence since the age of 15 reported partner violence. Victims of partner violence report

separately for current and previous partner (responsible for the most recent incident of partner violence), and in each report, how often violence has occurred in terms of:

- a. Often, sometimes, or rarely; and by
- b. Every day, weekly, monthly, less than once a month.

11. The duration of the experience of violence is not captured, so accurate measures of frequency cannot be obtained. However, categorization to broad ranges could be imputed.

12. An issue with the concept of frequency in this FoC proposal is of course the lack of an intensity measure. Ten episodes of violence of, say, slapping, spread evenly over a 40 year period by ten different unrelated assailants is not comparable to 10 episodes of assault with a weapon occasioning actual bodily harm by one assailant over a 1 year period, or even of 10 assaults of different nature by related people in a domestic situation.

13. The matrix reporting in the module proposed by the FoC group allows separation of one year and life long experiences, and provides some capacity to report separately by the different perpetrators. However, some measure of intensity – related to the duration of the experiences of violence may be useful.

● 1.3 Severity of violence

14. For Australia, the PSS allows, as well as reporting by type of violence for categorization by severity, the reporting of various aspects of severity for the most recent incident, by:

a. number of perpetrators who were involved in the incident

b. injuries incurred:

Scratches. May have been caused by fingernails, bushes, or as a result of falling on, or being dragged on, a rough surface such as cement. Includes scrapes and abrasions.

Bruises. They are external and visible and can range in severity from mild to severe. Includes black eyes, contusions and haematomas.

Cuts. Include any kind of a cut which is more severe than a scratch, but not as severe as a penetrative injury such as a stab or gun shot wound.

Fractured or broken bones. Range from hairline fractures to a complete break. Includes cracked ribs and broken noses.

Broken teeth. Range from a chip to a complete break or loss of teeth.

Penetrative injury/stab/gun shot. Usually deeper wounds than cuts. Can be due to a bullet or any other sharp instrument (e.g. a knife or stick) which penetrated into deeper tissues.

Miscarriage. Cases in which a female respondent lost a baby, miscarried, or had a spontaneous abortion as a result of the incident.

Other injuries. Includes burns, bites, loss of fingers, toes, limbs, eyes or hearing, internal injuries, sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV and hepatitis, and loss of consciousness.

- c. anxiety/fear – leading to change in day-to-day activities. Includes a change in the usual way of carrying out day to day activities due to injuries they received or their emotional condition or as a result of experiencing anxiety or fear for their personal safety:

unpaid work such as:

- . shopping
- . household tasks
- . child care
- . voluntary or community work

Social or leisure activities. Includes impacts on formal and informal social activities e.g. having friends over for dinner, or playing organized sport.

Work. Includes changing hours of work, duties performed, or taking leave.

Home security. Includes installing and/or upgrading door or window locks, installation of a security system, improving external lighting (e.g. adding additional external lighting or installing sensor lights), removing bushes or shrubs close to the house to improve visibility, getting a dog and/or having another person move in.

2. Agenda item 5 - Indicators of Physical Violence

- **2.1 Classification of types of violence (events)**

- **Comment**

- 15. There is a proposal in the paper for this meeting from the expert group to modify the draft module to allow the exclusion from physical violence measures any threats made verbally where the weapon is not present at the incident. In instances of established abuse and where the victim knows of the availability of the weapon, such as the gun in the next room, the delineation between emotional violence and physical violence seems arbitrary, not able to be reasonably applied in the field in a short module, and the necessary questioning to distinguish the cases may lose the trust of respondents.

- **Australian background**

16. In the Australian Personal Safety Survey (PSS), from which indicators are developed, physical violence is classified into two main types: (i) physical assault; and (ii) Physical threat, or threatened physical assault.

- **2.1.1 Physical assault**

17. Physical assault is defined as the use of physical force with the intent to harm or frighten a person. The assault may have occurred in conjunction with a robbery. It includes incidents where a person was assaulted in their line of work (e.g. assaulted while working as a Security Guard). It excludes incidents of sexual assault or threatened sexual assault which also involved physical assault, those which occurred before the age of 15, and those which occurred during the course of play on a sporting field. If a physical assault was preceded by a threat of the same type in the same incident, only the physical assault was recorded.

18. Various types of physical assault are identified, including:

Pushed, grabbed or shoved. Includes being pushed off a balcony, down stairs, or across the room.

Slapped. Includes a hit with an open hand. Excludes slaps with a belt or bat, etc.

Kicked, bitten or hit with a fist. Excludes being hit with an open hand.

Hit you with something else that could hurt you. Includes being hit with a bat, hammer, belt, pot, ruler, etc. Excludes being punched.

Beaten. Includes punching, hitting or slapping in a repetitive manner.

Choked. Includes being choked by hands, a rope, a scarf, a tie or any other item.

Stabbed. With a knife.

Shot. With a gun.

Any other type of physical assault. Includes burns, scalds, being dragged by the hair, being deliberately hit by a vehicle.

- **2.1.2 Physical threat, or threatened physical assault**

19. Verbal and/or physical intent or suggestion of intent to inflict physical harm, which the person believed was able and likely to be carried out.

20. The threats must have been made face-to-face. It includes incidents where a person was assaulted in their line of work (e.g. assaulted while working as a Security Guard). It excludes any act of violence which was actually carried out, incidents of sexual assault, threatened sexual assault or physical assault which also involved threatened or attempted physical assault, those which occurred before the age of 15, and those which occurred during the course of play on a sporting field.

21. Various types of physical attempt or threat were identified, including:

- a. Threaten or attempt to hit with a fist or anything else that could hurt. Includes threats or attempts to slap, punch, spank or hit in any way with a fist or weapon such as a bat, hammer or pot. It excludes where the person was threatened with a knife or gun.
- b. Threaten or attempt to shoot with a gun. The gun may or may not have been aimed at the person. Includes situations where a gun was left in an obvious place or if the person knew that the perpetrator had access to a gun. Includes toy guns, starter pistols etc. if the person believed they were real.

- **2.2 Classification of severity of violence**

22. See comments under agenda item 4 above.

- **2.3 Classification of relationship to perpetrator**

- **Comments**

23. There appears to be some lack of clarity on the report of the expert group and the draft questionnaire regarding partner definitions. While the intent is to capture a broad concept of intimate relationships that will include boyfriends with whom a victim is/was having a sexual relationship, language such as 'living together' in Question V02 and V03 may restrict responses regardless of the categories of response. These questions are inconsistent with the broader wording V04, while the introduction before V05 steps back into a narrower concept again.

24. It may be worth removing V04 from this sequence and placing a reworded introduction/question ahead of V15. Before the nature of the survey content is revealed to the respondent, they may be reluctant to own up to multiple sexual relationships, especially if they are either well into the past or not known by a current partner. Getting this screener wrong may destroy the value of the survey for all but current relationships.

- **Australian background**

25. The classification of relationships used in the PSS is:

- a. Stranger
- b. Boyfriend or Girlfriend or date
- c. Current partner
- d. Previous partner you were living with at the time
- e. Previous partner you were no longer living with at the time
- f. Father or Mother
- g. Son or Daughter
- h. Brother or Sister
- i. Other relative or in-law
- j. Friend
- k. Acquaintance or neighbour
- l. Employer or boss or supervisor
- m. Co-worker or co-volunteer
- n. Counselor or psychologist or psychiatrist
- o. Doctor
- p. Teacher
- q. Minister or priest or clergy
- r. Prison officer
- s. Ex-boyfriend or Ex-girlfriend
- t. Other

- **2.4 Classification of frequency of violence**

26. See comments under agenda item 4 above.

- **2.5 Characteristics of victim**

- **Australian background**

27. The PSS includes: age; sex; country of birth; year of immigration; first language; English proficiency; registered and social marital status; family composition; geographic variables including small area index of disadvantage.

- **2.6 Timeframe to determine “ever in lifetime”**

- **Australian background**

28. The PSS collects the standard recall period since age 15 years.

29. Limited detail is collected on each of sexual and physical abuse prior to age 15 and includes: age at first incident; relationship to perpetrator; one or more than one people involved in the incident.

3. Agenda item 6 - Indicators of Sexual Violence

- **3.1 Classification of types of violence (events)**

- **Australian background**

30. The PSS defines sexual violence as any incident of sexual assault or threat.

31. Sexual assault is defined as:

An act of a sexual nature carried out against a person's will, through the use of physical force, intimidation or coercion. It includes attempts to force a person into sexual activity. However, attempts are not separately identified. It includes rape, attempted rape, aggravated sexual assault (assault with a weapon), indecent assault, penetration by objects and forced sexual activity that did not end in penetration. It excludes unwanted sexual touching and incidents which occurred before the age of 15.

32. Sexual threat is defined as:

The threat of acts of a sexual nature which are carried out against a person's will, through the use of physical force, intimidation or coercion. The person must have believed that the threats were able, and likely, to be carried out. It only includes threats that were made face-to-face and includes verbal threats, threats with a weapon and threats to harm children. It excludes when threats were made and then a sexual assault was carried out and incidents that occurred before the age of 15.

- **3.2 Classification of severity of violence**

33. See comments under agenda item 4 above.

- **3.3 Classification of relationship to perpetrator**

34. See comments under agenda item 5 above.

- **3.4 Classification of frequency of violence**

35. See comments under agenda item 4 above.

- **3.5 Characteristics of victim**

36. See comments under agenda item 5e above.

- **3.6 Timeframe to determine “ever in lifetime”**

37. See comments under agenda item 5 above.

4. Agenda item 7 - Indicators of Psychological Violence

- **4.1 Classification of types of violence (events)**

- **Australian background**

38. The PSS only collects information about whether respondent experienced the following types of ‘emotional abuse’ –which cross psychological and economic violence categories) by their current partner (although any future surveys will look at the possibility of capturing this information for former partners as well):

Manipulation, isolation or intimidation by a current partner. Includes persistent behaviour that seeks to control the respondent's behaviour and contact with others.

Tried to prevent contact with family or friends. Long-term prevention of contact with family, relatives or friends, including those overseas.

Tried to prevent use of the telephone or family car. Excludes the occasional situation where a person has not been able to use the car because their partner needs it or not being able to use the telephone because the last bill was too large.

Tried to prevent knowledge about or access to family money. The partner controls the household income or assets and does not let the person know about them. For example, the person is only given a certain amount of money each week and does not know how much money comes into the family. Excludes money belonging to the partner's parents or their other family members.

Insulted with the intent to shame, belittle or humiliate. Intentional putting down of the person. Insults that are said in jest or fun were excluded.

Damaged or destroyed property. Includes if the person's partner stole their property and then sold it.

5. Agenda item 8 - Indicators of Economic Violence

- **5.1 Classification of types of violence (events)**

39. See agenda item 7 above.

6. Agenda item 9 - Indicators of Partner Violence

- **6.1 Classification of types of violence (events)**

40. Experience of partner violence relates to incidents 'since the age of 15' by a current partner, a previous partner they were living with at the time or a previous partner they were no longer living with at the time.

41. Where a respondent reported experiencing violence (sexual/physical/assault or threat) from a current or previous partner additional information was collected on: length of relationship before violence started; whether violence committed during pregnancy and if the first episode occurred while pregnant; whether incidents witnessed by children; whether partner violent to other people; separation (when, why, why not, violence initiated while separated, occurred during separation); associated property damage; legal action/restraint, etc)..

42. See also agenda items 5 and 6 above.

- **6.2 Classification of severity of violence**

43. See comments under agenda item 4 above.

- **6.3 Classification of frequency of violence**

44. See comments under agenda item 5 above.

- **6.4 Characteristics of victim**

45. See comments under agenda item 5 above.

- **6.5 Timeframe to determine “ever in lifetime”**

46. See comments under agenda item 5 above.

7. Agenda item 10 - Indicators of harmful practices

47. Very low prevalence rates in Australia means that these practices are unlikely to be reliably measured in a general population survey.

8. Agenda item 11 – other indicators

● **Australian background**

48. The PSS collects information on stalking, physical and sexual violence in childhood (discussed above under time frames), the extent to which women recognize they suffered violence as a crime, and hidden violence unreported to the authorities.

49. For stalking the following information is collected:

When most recent incident occurred	
Number of perpetrators	
Type of behaviour	1 Loitered or hung around outside home 2 Loitered or hung around outside workplace 3 Loitered or hung around outside place of leisure/social activities 4 Followed 5 Watched 6 Interfered with or damaged property 7 Gave or left offensive/disturbing material where it could be found 8 Telephoned, sent mail or contacted electronically with the intent to harm or frighten 9 Not applicable
Relationship to perpetrator	As per other violence variables
Whether stalking has stopped	
Time duration of stalking	1 Less than 1 month 2 1 month to less than 6 months 3 6 months to less than 1 year 4 1 year to less than 2 years 5 2 years to less than 3 years 6 3 years to less than 5 years 7 5 years or more 9 Not applicable
Respondent perceived stalking as crime	
Reported to police	
Main reason not reported to police	
How much time off work in last 12 months	
How often fear in the last 12 months	
How often fear in the 12 months following the incident	
Changes to routine after fear	As per other violence incidents

50. For the extent to which women recognize they suffered violence as a crime, the following information is collected for most recent incident of: sexual assault; sexual threat; physical assault; physical threat; & stalking

VMPOCR	Respondent perceived as crime	1 Incident perceived as a crime 2 Incident perceived as wrong but not a crime 3 Incident perceived as something that just happens
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- 4 Don't know/can't remember
- 5 Refused to answer
- 9 Not applicable

51. For the hidden violence unreported to the authorities following information is collected for the most recent incident of: sexual assault; sexual threat; physical assault; physical threat; & stalking

VMPOWH	Whether police told about the most recent incident	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Police told by respondent 2 Police told by someone else 3 Police not told 9 Not applicable
VMPOCH	Perpetrator charged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Perpetrator charged 5 Perpetrator not charged 6 Don't know 9 Not applicable
VMPOCO	Whether perpetrator went to court	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Went to court 5 Did not go to court 6 Don't know 9 Not applicable
VMPORN	Main reason not reported to police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 01 Shame/embarrassment 02 Did not want perpetrator arrested 03 Did not regard it as a serious offence 04 Did not think police could do anything 05 Did not think police would do anything 06 Would not be believed 07 Fear of perpetrator 08 Fear of legal processes 09 Cultural reasons

- 10 Language reasons
- 11 Did not want to ask for help
- 12 Felt that they could deal with it themselves
- 13 Other
- 14 Do not know
- 15 Refused to answer
- 99 Not applicable