

Cal-VEX 2020: Intimate Partner Violence in California

BACKGROUND

Approximately one in four women and one in ten men in the United States (U.S.) have experienced intimate partner violence (IPV) in the forms of physical and sexual violence and threats of violence from a romantic or sexual partner (36.4% and 33.6%, respectively).¹ This amounts to 30 million women and 12 million men who have experienced IPV, increasing their risk for poor social and health outcomes.¹⁻³ Unfortunately, these most recent data are from 2015 and do not offer state level estimates. This yields a limited understanding of the prevalence of IPV for California residents.

Objective. To assess the prevalence of IPV in California and to examine gender and social disparities in experience of IPV and its social and health impacts.

METHODS

The California Study on Violence Experiences Across the Lifespan (Cal-VEX) is a state-representative survey on experiences of violence conducted with 2115 California residents aged 18 and older.⁴ We asked participants if they had ever experienced physical violence or threats with a gun or knife, and who did this to them. We also asked if they had experienced various forms of sexual harassment (e.g., verbal sexual harassment, cyber sexual harassment), physically aggressive sexual harassment (e.g., stalking, quid pro quo sexual coercion), or forced sex, and who did this to them. Participants who indicated that a romantic or sexual partner perpetrated violence (in any form) were coded as having experienced IPV. ; We also included participant age, race/ethnicity, education, disability, homelessness, incarceration, sexual orientation, US born, US region, income, and employment status.

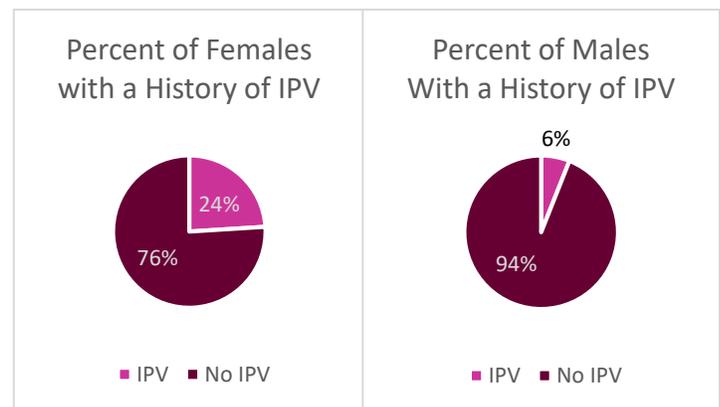
Analysis. We present prevalence of IPV, for the total sample and disaggregated by race/ethnicity and income. Chi-square tests assess associations between IPV and sociodemographic variables; rates by sex were compared for overall prevalences, and subsequent sociodemographic comparisons were sex stratified. Statistical significance of tests was defined as a p-value <0.05. Age, race/ethnicity, education, disability, homelessness, incarceration, and sexual orientation, were statistically significantly associated with IPV; these findings are presented.

FINDINGS

Prevalence of IPV

Physical and/or Sexual IPV: 24% female, 6% male ($p < .001$)

- Physical IPV (including gun and knife threats/use):
 - 21% female, 4% male ($p < .001$)
- Sexual IPV (including sexual harassment and assault):
 - 11% female, 3% male ($p < .001$)
- Among those experiencing any form of IPV:
 - 12% of women and 27% of men had a partner use a knife against them
 - 13% of women and 3% of men had a partner use a gun against them



Racial/Ethnic Differences in IPV

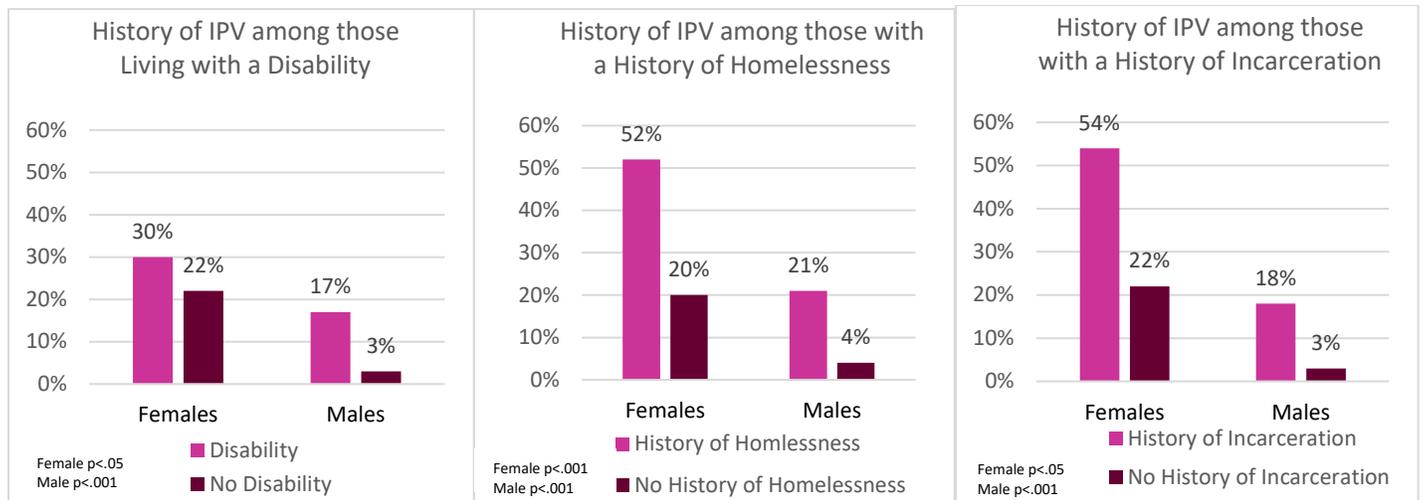
- Significant racial/ethnic differences in IPV were seen for females ($p < .001$) but not males
 - More than one in three Black women (35%) had experienced IPV; 25% and 26% of White and Latinx women had experienced IPV, and 6% of Asian women reported IPV.

Sexual Orientation and IPV

- Differences in IPV by sexual orientation were seen for males ($p < .001$) but not females
 - More than one in four bisexual or other identifying men (26%) had experienced IPV, compared with 12% of gay men and 5% of straight men.

Other Social Disparities in IPV

- For education, females who did not complete high school were *less* likely to report IPV ($p=.05$) where males who did not complete high school were *more* likely to report IPV ($p=.01$), relative to those with more education.
 - For females, 16% of those who did not complete high school reported that they had experienced IPV, a lower prevalence than that seen for those who completed high school/had a GED (29%), completed college (20%), or attended graduate school (21%) ($p=.05$).
 - For males, 15% of those who did not complete high school reported that they had experienced IPV, a higher prevalence than that seen for those who completed high school/had a GED (6%), completed college (3%), or attended graduate school (7%) ($p=.01$).
- For both females and males, those living with a disability relative to those with no disability; those with a history of homelessness relative to those without this history; and those with a history of incarceration relative to those without this history are significantly more likely to have experienced IPV.



CONCLUSIONS

- More than one in five adult women in California – approximately 3 million women - have experienced IPV, and of these, more than one in eight were threatened with a gun. One in 17 men in the state – greater than 700,000 men - have also experienced IPV, and more than one in four of these have been threatened with a knife.
- Socially marginalized groups are at greater risk for IPV, including those living with a disability, those with a history of homelessness, and those with a history of incarceration. Black women report the highest prevalence of violence across all racial/ethnic groups. Among men, sexual minorities were more likely than straight men to report IPV.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND ACTION

IPV is a major health and human rights concern occurring at epidemic proportions in California, and there is evidence that such violence may in fact be increasing under the current pandemic and related social isolation requirements. Prevention and intervention efforts inclusive of those offered virtually require greater attention. Given that mental health concerns are increasing at this time, and disproportionately affect those with histories of IPV,⁵ prioritized efforts must include social support and trauma-informed care. This is particularly important for our most socially vulnerable populations, who are not only contending with greater risk for COVID-19, but also higher rates of IPV.⁵

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