

Cal-VEX 2022: Past-year Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Perpetration in California

BACKGROUND

CDC data show that more than [1 in every 20 California adults are victims of physical and/or sexual IPV](#) - physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner – each year. Less clear is what percent of Californians have *committed* such violence against their partner, as current IPV surveillance systems do not regularly assess IPV perpetration. Such behavior is often underreported due to the stigma against and criminalization of use of violence. Yet understanding even a conservative estimate of how frequent this behavior is and the typical consequences faced by those admitting to use of violence against partners can offer important insight into how to best approach violence prevention.

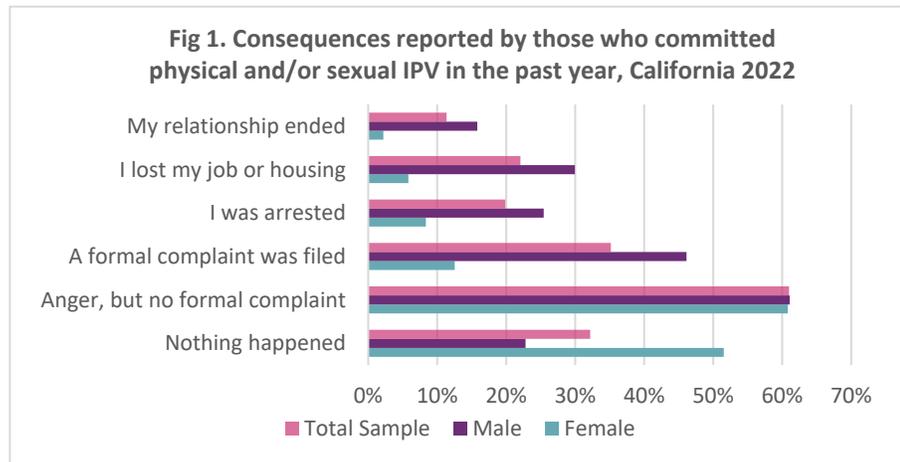
Objective. To assess reports of committing IPV, and subsequent consequences among those reporting that they have engaged in perpetrating violence, among a state-representative sample of California adults age 18+.

METHODS

The California Study on Violence Experiences across the Lifespan (Cal-VEX) is a state-representative online survey on experiences of violence and health conducted with California residents aged 18 and older. We have conducted this survey in March 2020, March 2021, and March 2022, and have assessed past year IPV perpetration across all three years. As we found no significant change over time in rates of reported perpetration, current analyses focus solely on 2022 data (N=2285). The Cal-VEX survey included a series of items asking respondents whether they had used physical violence, violence with a weapon, and/or sexual violence (inclusive of sexual harassment) against someone in the past year. If they reported using violence, we asked them to report the nature of the relationship with the person they used violence against. We defined IPV perpetration as having perpetrated any of the assessed forms of violence against a “spouse or romantic partner”. Among those who reported using violence, we also assessed consequences of their violence perpetration.

FINDINGS

We found that 1.9% of our total sample – 1 in 50 Californians – reported that they committed IPV in the past year. Men were more likely than women to report violence perpetration against a partner (2.7% vs 1.2%). Conservatively, this means that more than 180,000 women and more than 400,000 men committed physical and/or sexual acts of violence against an intimate partner. For most, there were no major consequences (Fig 1).



CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Conservatively, the Cal-VEX study provides evidence that hundreds of thousands of Californians committed violence against a partner in the past year, largely with no major repercussions. Resultant arrests and loss of jobs and housing were more likely than ending of relationships. Criminality and other punitive responses to IPV therefore may not result in safety or improvement in relationships characterized by IPV. Given the high number of people who have perpetrated IPV in the past year, widespread and multisector violence [prevention programs](#) are needed to reduce IPV. These strategies should address root causes of violence, such as economic insecurity and social norms change, and enact positive system level responses that eliminate violence from relationships.

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