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## INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE IN CALIFORNIA: FINDINGS FROM CALVEX 2023 SURVEY

### SUMMARY

We conducted a statewide survey of California adults' experiences of intimate partner violence (IPV), including physical, sexual, and emotional abuses. We found that almost half (46%) of California adults have experienced IPV in their lifetime, with higher prevalence seen for women and non-binary people compared with men (54% of women, 76% of non-binary people, and 38% of men) and for transgender compared with cisgender people. One in five Californians (20%) are currently in a relationship with a partner who has been abusive toward them, and one in 16 Californians – 2 million people – experienced IPV in the past year. Financial stressors, social vulnerabilities, and exposure to violence in childhood exacerbate risk for IPV, and IPV experiences increase risk for mental health concerns. We also find that 1 in every hundred California adults – more than 350,000 people – report IPV perpetration in the past year, and we find that exposure to violence in childhood exacerbates risk for IPV perpetration. These findings highlight the importance of structural approaches to violence prevention and intervention, including financial and social protections, but also the importance of trauma informed care for those who have experienced IPV and those who have perpetrated it.

### METHODS

The California Violence Experiences (CalVEX) survey is a statewide online survey assessing adults' experiences of physical violence, sexual violence, intimate partner violence (IPV), discrimination, mental health, and socioeconomic circumstances. The survey is offered in English and Spanish. CalVEX 2023 was conducted with 3,560 California residents age 18 and older in March and April 2023. This brief focuses on IPV data.

We used a 22-item measure of IPV which covered a broad range of abusive behaviors including physical, sexual, economic, and emotionally controlling behaviors as well as threats of violence against self or a pet from a current or former romantic or sexual partner. We present findings for the adult California population overall and by participants' gender identity (women, men, and non-binary people ['non-binary' also includes genderqueer, gender-fluid, and other self-described gender identity]) and transgender identity [yes or no]. We also share associations of IPV with socioeconomic indicators and mental health. We applied survey weights to all analyses to yield population-based estimates for California adults. For more details on this study and findings across all areas of violence, please see the [CalVEX full report](#).

### FINDINGS

#### Prevalence of IPV in California

- Nearly half (46%) of all California adults have experienced IPV in their lifetime
  - IPV prevalence is higher for women and non-binary people compared with men (54% of women, 76% of non-binary people, and 38% of men) and for transgender compared with cisgender people (83% vs 45%).
  - IPV lethality risk also differs by gender. We find that gun-related IPV is more than 2x as likely for women and non-binary people compared with men (2% of women and non-binary people, <1% of men), but similarly likely for transgender and cis-gender people (1% for both).
- In 5 Californians (20%) are currently in a relationship with a partner who engaged in IPV against them at some point in their relationship.
- One in 16 Californians – 2 million Californians - experienced IPV in the past year.

## **Demographic and family vulnerabilities associated with past year IPV**

- Youth: Young adult Californians (aged 18-24 years) were most likely to report past year IPV (13%); rates declined with age, with 1% of those 65 years and older reporting IPV.
- Parenthood: Californians with a child under age 18 years are 2x more likely as those without a child to report past year IPV (10% vs 4%).
- Minoritized sexual identity: Californians identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or other self-described sexual identity were twice as likely to report past year IPV relative to straight respondents (13% vs 5%).
- Disability status: Californians with a disability were 3x more likely as those without to report past year IPV (12% vs 4%).
- Latinx heritage: Latinx Californians were most likely to report past year IPV across racial/ethnic groups (8% vs 5% white, 5% Black, and 4% Asian).
- Education: Californians with less than a high school education were twice as likely to report IPV compared to those with a high school or higher education (13% vs 5%).
- Witnessing IPV in childhood: 18% of all Californians witnessed IPV against their mother as a child under 18, and those who witnessed IPV were over 3x more likely to report past year IPV (14% vs 4%).

## **Financial and social stressors associated with past year IPV**

- Past year eviction: 7x more likely to report past year IPV (37% vs 5%).
- Past year economic deprivation (e.g. food insecurity): 3x more likely to report past year IPV (13% vs 5%).
- Homelessness ever: 3x more likely to report past year IPV (15% vs 4%).
- Incarceration ever: 3x more likely to report past year IPV (18% vs 5%).

## **Mental health concerns associated with past year IPV**

- Those who experienced IPV within the past year were more likely to report the following:
  - Moderate to severe depression/anxiety symptoms within the past 2 weeks (36% vs 17%).
  - Suicidality within the past year (26% vs 5%).
  - Binge drinking or substance use within the past 30 days (63% vs 28%).

## **Perpetration of IPV within the past year**

- One in 100 California adults – more than 350,000 people - reported perpetrating IPV in the past year, which is likely an under-report.
- Those reporting IPV perpetration were more likely to report a history of witnessing IPV in childhood, highlighting that trauma informed prevention and responses are needed to address perpetration as well as victimization.
- Those who reported IPV perpetration in the past year were 4x more likely to own a gun, compared with those who did not report perpetration (80% vs 21%).

## **CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

### **Negative Mental Health Outcomes and Need for Trauma-Informed Care**

The findings reveal a concerning association between IPV and negative mental health outcomes, including depression, anxiety, suicidality, and substance use issues. With 36% of individuals experiencing IPV reporting moderate to severe depression/anxiety symptoms, and 26% considering suicide, there is an urgent need for trauma-informed care and mental health support for survivors. The prevalence of substance use issues (63%) among IPV survivors further underscores the need for comprehensive trauma-informed interventions addressing mental health and substance use concurrently. This emphasizes the importance of providing holistic, survivor-centered care to address both the physical and psychological impacts of IPV.

## **Cycle of Violence**

A significant relationship emerged between exposure to violence in childhood, including witnessing IPV, and an increased risk of experiencing IPV in adulthood. Californians who witnessed IPV as children were found to be over three times more likely to report IPV in the past year, relative to children unexposed to violence. Additionally, individuals who experienced physical or sexual violence as children were twice as likely to report recent IPV. These findings emphasize the urgency of addressing the intergenerational cycle of violence through prevention and intervention. It is imperative to target both child witnesses and survivors of childhood abuse, providing comprehensive support and creating safe environments to prevent IPV from perpetuating across generations.

## **Safety Nets**

The data highlights the critical role of safety nets and support systems for individuals affected by IPV. Financial and social stressors, including eviction, financial distress, homelessness, and exposure to violence in childhood, significantly increase the risk of IPV. Providing accessible and comprehensive safety nets, such as affordable housing, financial assistance, and mental health services, is essential to mitigate the risk factors associated with IPV. Supporting individuals in vulnerable situations can prevent abusive relationships and provide a path toward safety and recovery.

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