# COVID-19 and Domestic Abuse & Adverse Childhood Experiences

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# Evidence Summary

**Evidence Quality**

* There is very little so far on the impact of COVID-19 and domestic violence and/or adverse childhood experiences. In terms of ACE’s – there is nothing in the evidence base that is linked directly to ACE’s, but given how broad ACEs are – it will no doubt underpin many of the issues coming out of the pandemic – such as mental health and domestic abuse.
* After screening out the results captured in the search (see example search strategy at the end of document), less than 10 relevant results were found, and whilst not high quality in a classical sense – they do highlight key issues worth raising.

**Why is Domestic Abuse/Violence an issue during COVID**

The evidence is strongest when highlighting how coronavirus, especially the social measures taken to tackle the spread of the virus, will impact domestic abuse and its victims. Some of the key messages form the evidence are:

* Many countries have already seen an increase in demand for domestic violence services and reports of increased risk for children not attending schools a pattern similar to previous episodes of social isolation associated with epidemics and pandemics (Van Gelder et al 2020)
* Many of the strategies employed in abusive relations overlap with the social measures imposed during quarantine such as Coercive & controlling behaviour – social and functional isolation, surveillance and control of daily activities (LGA 2020, Van Gelder et al 2020, Bradbury-Jones, C. & Isham, L. 2020) - During quarantine, measures intentionally imposed in an abusive partnership, may be enforced on a massive scale in the attempt to save lives.
* Quarantine, isolation, increased exposure and associated social, emotional and economic stressors increase the risk of intimate partner violence (Van Gelder et al 2020 & Usher et al 2020)
* Home is not always safe - It is often the place where abuse – physical, psychological or sexual – occurs (Bradbury-Jones, C. & Isham, L. 2020)
* Stringent restrictions on movement shut off avenues of escape, help-seeking and ways of coping for victim/survivors (Bradbury-Jones, C. & Isham, L. 2020
* Partner violence is a taboo topic, often considered a ‘private’ matter, with low political priority in many societies, even in times of relative stability (Van Gelder et al 2020)
* Inequities disproportionately affect their wellbeing and economic resilience during lockdowns (The Lancet 2020)
* Vulnerability and violence increase for children during periods of health-emergency related school closures couple with rates of child abuse reporting rising during school closures (Cluver et al 2020)

**Next steps/opportunities for intervention**

In a resource published on 21st April 2020, The Local Government Association’s “Tackling domestic abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic Resource for councils” laid out several actions councils can take now to support victims and tackle domestic abuse:

* Ensure strong partnership working with the police, housing and health services, the domestic abuse sector and wider agencies
* Identify what safeguarding arrangements are needed for children and young people in domestic abuse households
* Identify how Safeguarding Adult Boards (SABs) can provide support
* Support consistent messaging across all agencies that:
  + reassures anyone at risk of, or experiencing, domestic abuse that help is available, and the police will respond in an emergency
  + challenges perpetrator’s abusive behaviour
* Raise awareness of the Home Office’s public awareness campaign #YouAreNotAlone The Home Office’s new public awareness campaign highlights that anyone at risk of, or experiencing, domestic abuse, can still leave and seek refuge
* Raise awareness of the Respect campaign #NoExcuseforAbuse which targets perpetrators to recognise when their behaviour has become abusive and urges them to reach out for help and guidance.
* Highlight which domestic abuse support services and perpetrator programmes are still open and available
* Set up virtual meetings to continue Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC)

Bradbury-Jones et al (2020) highlights how voluntary services may also be vital in supporting victims and survivors of domestic abuse – including independent advocate and peer support refuge accommodation, therapists and helpline practitioners. These volunteers may have authenticity that public services such as police or social services may lack in the eyes of DA survivors, and its about enabling that these services can still operate – through issues such as PPE.

Many of the ideas laid out in the LGA report are echoed in Van Gelder et al (2020) and .Usher, K., et al. (2020) but they are stronger in terms of public education (such as bystander approaches) and the role of social networks both interpersonal and digitally such as social media can work as offer a lifeline to victims. Usher et al (2020) writing in a mental health periodical highlights what they believe to be the key role mental health professionals can play by “providing first-line psychological support, including listening empathetically and without judgment, enquiring about needs and concerns, validating peoples’ experiences and feelings, enhancing safety, and connecting people to relevant support services”.

# Key Results

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| **Reference** | **Evidence Type** | **Abstract** |
| Local Government Association (2020) **Tackling domestic abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic Resource for councils** | Practice Guide | This document aims to provide a range of resources which offer help, guidance and support to tackle domestic abuse. We have provided a brief overview of domestic abuse and how councils can provide help and support to domestic abuse victims during the COVID-19 pandemic, and tackle perpetrators’ abusive behaviour. |
| Bradbury-Jones, C. & Isham, L. 2020. **The pandemic paradox: the consequences of COVID-19 on domestic violence**. *Journal of Clinical Nursing* 12 12 | Editorial | COVID-19 has been declared a global pandemic. Measures announced over recent weeks to tackle it have seen people's day-to-day life drastically altered. These changes are essential to beat coronavirus and protect health systems (UK Home Office 2020). However, there are unintended, negative consequences. As the virus continues to spread across the world, it brings with it multiple new stresses, including physical and psychological health risks, isolation and loneliness, the closure of many schools and businesses, economic vulnerability and job losses. Through all of that, children (and their mothers) are particularly vulnerable (End Violence against Children, 2020) to the risk of domestic violence. Domestic violence refers to a range of violations that happen within a domestic space. It is a broad term that encompasses intimate partner violence (IPV), a form of abuse that is perpetrated by a current or ex-partner. |
| Cluver, L. et al. 2020. **Parenting in a time of COVID-19**. *The Lancet* 395(10231) e64. | Letter | Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is changing family life. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization estimates 1·38 billion children are out of school or child care, without access to group activities, team sports, or playgrounds. Parents and caregivers are attempting to work remotely or unable to work, while caring for children, with no clarity on how long the situation will last. For many people, just keeping children busy and safe at home is a daunting prospect. For those living in low-income and crowded households, these challenges are exacerbated. |
| The, Lancet. 2020. **The gendered dimensions of COVID-19**. *The Lancet* 395(10231) 1168. | Editorial | SARS-CoV-2 does not discriminate, but without careful consideration, the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic might. Demographic data from small studies are already informing political decisions and clinical research strategies. Women and men are affected by COVID-19, but biology and gender norms are shaping the disease burden. The success of the global response—the ability of both women and men to survive and recover from the pandemic's effects—will depend on the quality of evidence informing the response and the extent to which data represent sex and gender differences. |
| van Gelder, N.., et al. 2020. **COVID-19: Reducing the risk of infection might increase the risk of intimate partner violence.** *EClinicalMedicine* 100348. | Editorial | While quarantines are an effective measure of infection control, they can lead to significant social, economic and psychological consequences. Social distancing fosters isolation; exposes personal and collective vulnerabilities while limiting accessible and familiar support options. The inability to work has immediate economic repercussions and deprives many individuals of essential livelihoods and health care benefits. Psychological consequences may range from stress, frustration and anger to severe depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). |
| .Usher, K., et al. (2020). **"Family violence and COVID-19: Increased vulnerability and reduced options for support."** International Journal of Mental Health Nursing 20: 20. | Editorial | Family violence refers to threatening or other violent behaviour within families that may be physical, sexual, psychological, or economic, and can include child abuse and intimate partner violence (Peterman et al. 2020, van Gelder et al. 2020). Family violence during pandemics is associated with a range of factors including economic stress, disaster-related instability, increased exposure to exploitative relationships, and reduced options for support (Peterman et al. 2020). Due to the social isolation measures implemented across the globe to help reduce the spread of COVID-19, people living in volatile situations of family violence are restricted to their homes. Social isolation exacerbates personal and collective vulnerabilities while limiting accessible and familiar support options (van Gelder et al. 2020). In many countries, including Australia, we have already seen an increase in demand for domestic violence services and reports of increased risk for children not attending schools (Duncan, 2020); a pattern similar to previous episodes of social isolation associated with epidemics and pandemics (Boddy, Young & O'Leary 2020). |

# Search Strategy

(Ignore the numbers at the end)

1. exp coronavirus/ (27368)
2. exp Coronavirus Infections/ (26474)
3. (coronavirus\* or coronovirus\* or coronavirinae\* or Coronavirus\* or Coronovirus\* or Wuhan\* or Hubei\* or Huanan or "2019-nCoV" or 2019nCoV or nCoV2019 or "nCoV-2019" or "COVID-19" or COVID19 or "CORVID-19" or CORVID19 or "WN-CoV" or WNCoV or "HCoV-19" or HCoV19 or CoV or "2019 novel\*" or Ncov or "n-cov" or "SARS-CoV-2" or "SARSCoV-2" or "SARSCoV2" or "SARS-CoV2" or SARSCov19 or "SARS-Cov19" or "SARSCov-19" or "SARS-Cov-19" or Ncovor or Ncorona\* or Ncorono\* or NcovWuhan\* or NcovHubei\* or NcovChina\* or NcovChinese\*).ti,ab,kw. (59967)
4. (SARSCoV2 or SARS-CoV2 or SARSCov19 or SARS-Cov19 or SARSCov-19 or SARS-Cov-19 or Ncovor\* or Ncorona\*or Ncorono\* or NcovWuhan\* or NcovHubei\* or NcovChina\* or NcovChinese\* or SARS2 or SARS-2 or SARScoronavirus2 or SARS-coronavirus-2 or SARScoronavirus 2 or SARScoronovirus2 or SARS-coronovirus-2 or SARScoronovirus 2 or (SARS adj2 coronavirus2)).ab,kw,ti. (247)
5. (((((respirat\* adj2 (symptom\* or disease\* or illness\* or condition\*)) or (seafood or food or outdoor\*)) adj2 Market\*) or pneumon\*) adj10 (Wuhan\* or Hubei\* or China\* or Chinese\* or Huanan\*)).ab,kw,ti. (3711)
6. Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus/ (4654)
7. ("middle east respiratory syndrome\*" or "middle eastern respiratory syndrome\*" or MERSCoV or "MERS-CoV" or MERS).ti,ab,kw. (12553)
8. ("severe acute respiratory syndrome" or SARS).ti,ab,kw. (30456)
9. ("SARS-CoV-1" or "SARSCoV-1" or "SARSCoV1" or "SARS-CoV1" or SARSCoV or SARS-CoV or SARS1 or "SARS-1" or SARScoronavirus1 or "SARS-coronavirus-1" or "SARScoronavirus 1" or "SARS coronavirus1" or SARScoronovirus1 or "SARS-coronovirus-1" or "SARScoronovirus 1" or "SARS coronovirus1").ti,ab,kw. (9059)
10. ((outbreak\* or wildlife\* or pandemic\* or epidemic\*) adj1 (Wuhan\* or Hubei or China\* or Chinese\* or Huanan\*)).ti,ab,kw. (375)
11. (coronavirus\* or coronovirus\* or coronavirinae\* or CoV or HCoV\*).ti,ab,kw. (40711)
12. ((corona\* or corono\*) adj1 (virus\* or viral\* or virinae\*)).ab,kw,ti. (3299)
13. 1 or 2 or 3 or 4 or 5 or 6 or 7 or 8 or 9 or 10 or 11 or 12 (99335)
14. exp Child Abuse/ or exp Adverse Childhood Experiences/ or exp Life Change Events/ or exp "Adult Survivors of Child Abuse"/ (190260)
15. ((ACE or Adverse) adj2 experience).ab,hw,kf,kw,ot,sy,ti,fx,nm,ox,px,rx,ui. (7816)
16. (Child adj2 (abus\* or neglect\* or maltreat\* or harm\*)).ab,hw,kf,kw,ot,sy,ti,fx,nm,ox,px,rx,ui. (142107)
17. 14 or 15 or 16 (230108)
18. 13 and 17 (97)
19. exp Battered Women/ or exp Domestic Violence/ or exp Intimate Partner Violence/ or exp Spouse Abuse/ (161821)
20. ((domestic or partner or spous\* or child\*) adj2 (abuse or violen\* or assault)).ab,ti. (144894)
21. 19 or 20 (216295)
22. 13 and 21 (72)
23. 18 or 22 (132)