

Intimate Partner Violence among current and ex-serving Australian Defence Force personnel and their partners

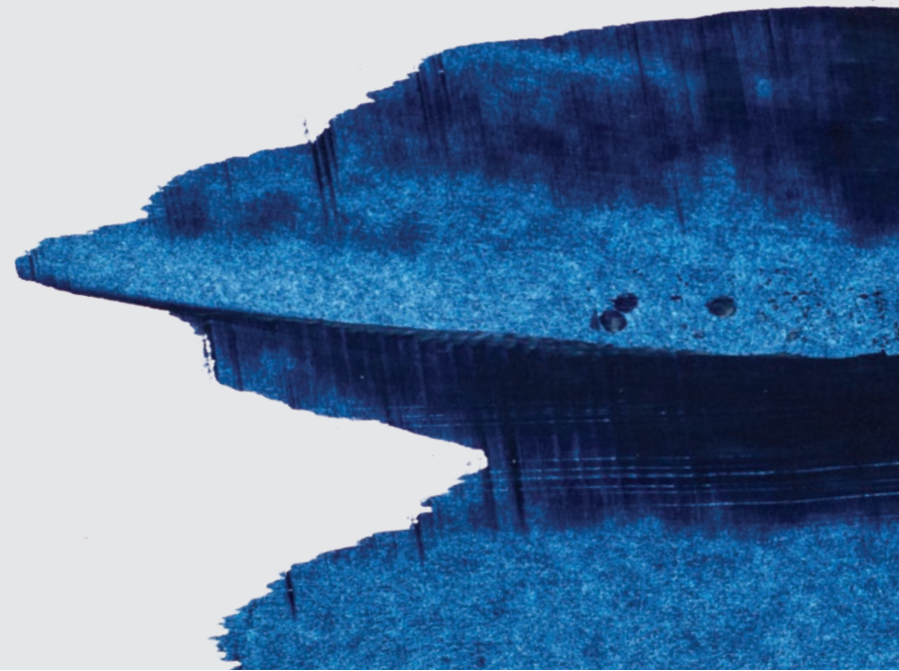
Intimate Partner Violence is a major public health issue in Australia, and may be a serious concern among current and ex-serving Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel and families.

Intimate Partner Violence is defined as any behaviour in a current or former intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm. This may involve physical and sexual violence, as well as psychological or emotional forms of abuse that can include coercive and controlling behaviours.

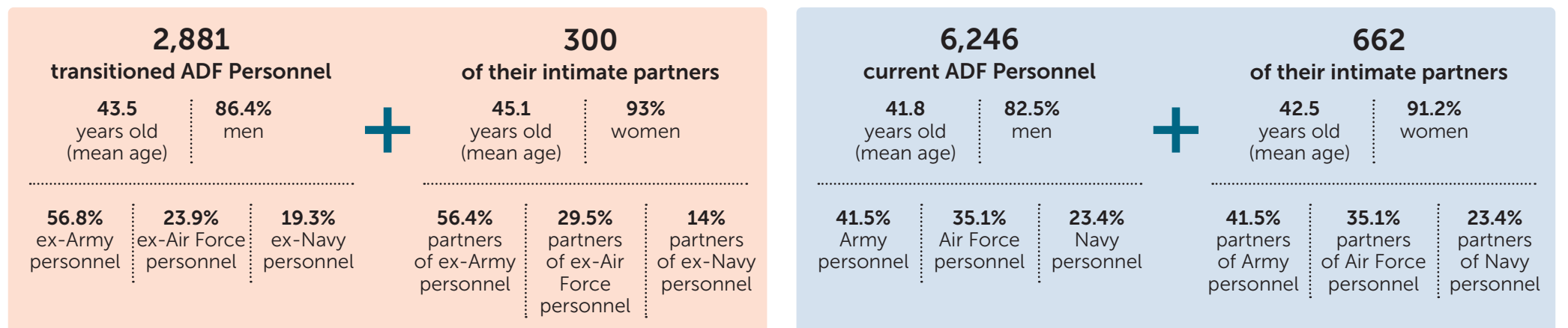
The cross-sectional survey data described here was collected as part of a large-scale study in 2015 of the impact of military service on the health and wellbeing of current and recently transitioned ADF personnel and their families. Recently transitioned personnel are those who have left active military service in the last five years and transitioned to civilian life. Surveys were administered to transitioned and current ADF personnel, as well as many of their intimate partners.

The Transition and Wellbeing Research Programme (the Programme) was the most comprehensive study ever undertaken in Australia of the impact of military service on the mental, physical and social health of current and transitioned ADF personnel and their families.

The current analyses were based on Programme data from current and transitioned personnel who reported involvement in an intimate relationship, along with family members who were identified as intimate partners.



Participants:



Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Survey Measures:

All participants who were in intimate relationships were asked to self-report on their exposure to IPV in their current relationship. This included questions about:

Emotional IPV

Questions asked:

Do you ever feel frightened by what your partner says or does?

Has your partner ever abused you emotionally?

Physical IPV

Questions asked:

Do arguments ever result in hitting, kicking or pushing?

Has your partner ever abused you physically?

Sexual IPV

Question asked:

Has your partner ever abused you sexually?

Limitations:

The findings below should be considered in relation to key methodological limitations of the available data:

The questions about IPV were derived from an existing scale, but were modified for this project and are **not validated or directly comparable with other Australian surveys**.

The direct questions about abuse **did not provide examples of relevant behaviours**, and these were defined subjectively by participants.

Data were mainly collected in 2015 and do not provide insights into more recent experiences of violence (for example, subsequent to the COVID-19 pandemic).

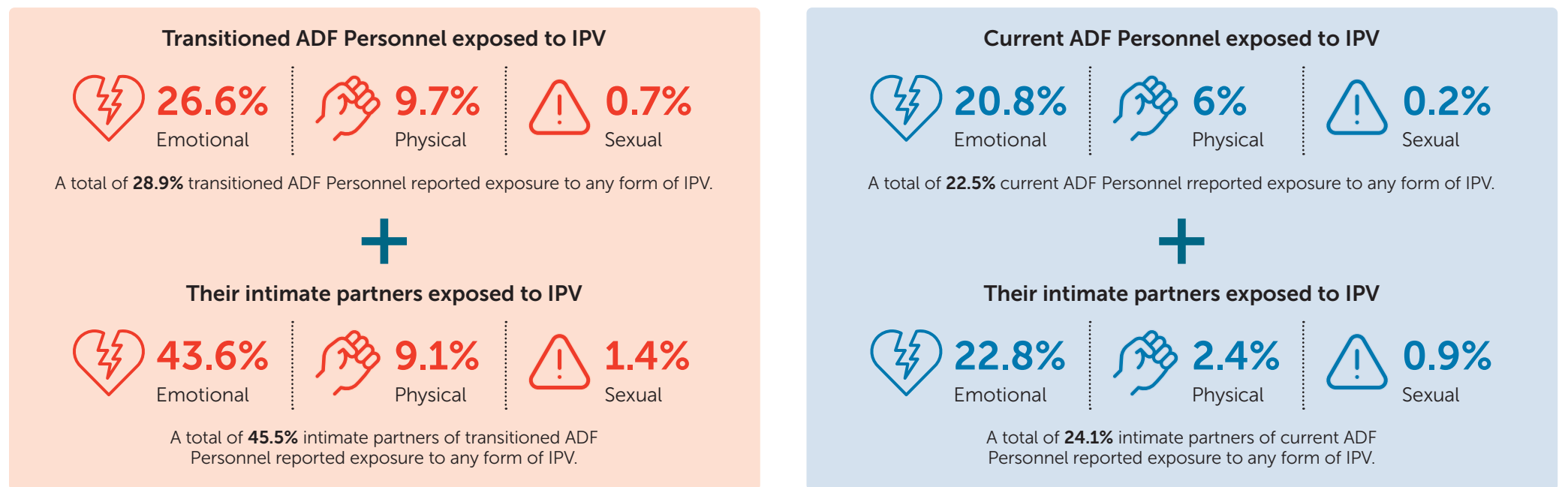
The questions about IPV were **only administered to participants in current relationships** (which may exclude IPV used by former partners), and were embedded in a preamble asking about experiences in the current relationship (thus the recency of exposures remains unclear).

Surveys were only available from a sub-group of partners who could be contacted with consent, and are **not fully representative of all families of current and ex-service personnel**.

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Frequency of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV):

The study provided Australian-first evidence about how common reports were of exposure to IPV in the relationships of current and recently transitioned ADF personnel:



Correlations with IPV Exposure and Mental Health:

Among both Transitioned Personnel and their intimate partners, IPV exposure was associated with an increased risk in mental health conditions and psychosocial issues.

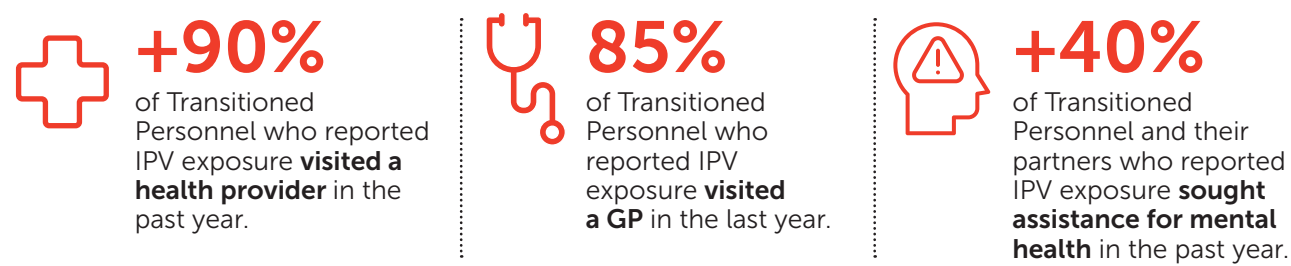


Exposure to IPV was more strongly associated with the risk of probable PTSD and suicidality, when compared to other forms of lifetime trauma (e.g. surviving a vehicle accident).

Patterns of Help Seeking among those exposed to IPV:

Transitioned Personnel and their partners who reported exposure to IPV commonly sought help from a range of health services.

The most common problems reported by Transitioned Personnel and partners who sought assistance for mental health were:



depression
anxiety
sleep problems
relationship problems

Use of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV):

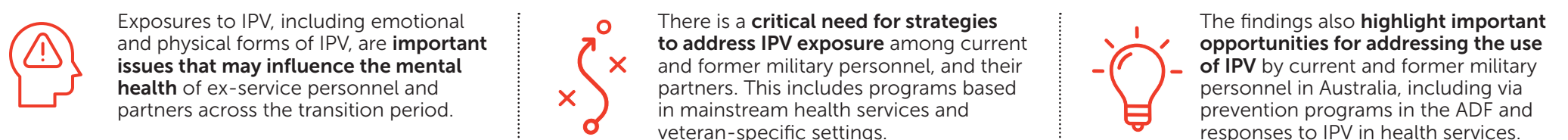
Transitioned Personnel who were identified as using IPV demonstrated complex mental health profiles and common use of health services.



*There was data available from 266 couples where the intimate partners of Transitioned Personnel reported IPV exposure, and this was used to identify the use of IPV by the veteran.

Key Implications:

This study provides the first Australian evidence regarding the extent and implications of IPV among current and ex-serving military personnel, and highlights:



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