How many women and girls were hospitalised due to assault?

Just over 20,000 people (20,111) were hospitalised in Australia in 2013–14 as a result of an assault, of which 31% (6,293) were women and girls. The overall rate of assault injury among women and girls was 56 cases per 100,000 population, compared with 121 for men.

Rates of assault among women and girls were higher in age groups from about 15–19 to 50–54 years (Figure 1) and the age group with the highest rate of assault was 30–34 years (113 cases per 100,000 population).

Who were the perpetrators of assault against women and girls?

More than three-quarters (76%, or 4,788) of records of cases of assault against women and girls contained information about the relationship of the perpetrator to the victim. Where specific information about the perpetrator was available, ‘spouse or domestic partner’ was the most commonly reported perpetrator of assault among women and girls (59%, or 2,843 cases). ‘Parents’ (195 cases) and ‘other family members’ (726 cases) accounted for nearly half of the remaining cases where the type of perpetrator was specified (Figure 2).

Type of assault

Over half (59%, or 3,685) of all women and girls hospitalised due to assault were victims of an Assault by bodily force (Figure 3). A further quarter of all hospitalised assault cases against women and girls involved a blunt (17%, or 1,048 cases) or sharp object (9%, or 551 cases).

Nature of the injury

Open wounds (22%, or 1,400 cases), fractures (22%, or 1,375) and superficial injuries (19%, or 1,194) accounted for almost two-thirds of the types of assault injuries sustained by women and girls.

For assaults by bodily force and involving sharp and blunt objects, the majority of injuries were to the head and neck area (63%, or 3,328) (Figure 4).
Where did the assaults take place?

A large proportion (57%) of records of assault cases among women and girls did not have a record of the place of occurrence of the assault. Where a place of occurrence was specified, the largest proportion in each age group reported being at home when the assault occurred; overall, 29% (1,853 cases) occurred at home (Figure 5).
Spouse or domestic partner violence

The focus of this next section is on women and girls who were the victims of violence perpetrated by a spouse or domestic partner. For the 2,843 victims of spouse or domestic partner violence, most (67%, or 1,895) were assaulted using bodily force (Figure 6). Almost a quarter of hospitalised spouse or domestic partner victims were assaulted with either a blunt (16%, or 441 cases) or sharp (8%, or 219 cases) object.

Superficial injuries (22%), open wounds (21%) and fractures (21%) were the most common types of injuries sustained by women and girls who were the victims of spouse or domestic partner violence. The ‘head and neck’ was the body region most often injured in hospitalised cases of assault of women and girls (59% of cases). This was also true when the perpetrator was a spouse or domestic partner (61%), and at all ages (Figure 7). Injuries to the trunk (which includes the thorax, abdomen, lower back, lumbar regions, spine and pelvis) were less common.
For female victims 15 years and over, 8% (217 cases) were pregnant at the time of the assault. Pregnant women and girls who were assaulted by their spouse or domestic partner had a larger proportion of injuries to the trunk (33%) compared with their non-pregnant counterparts (12%).
Hospitalised assault injuries among women and girls

Figure 7: Number of cases of assault by spouse or domestic partner, by selected body region injured, women and girls, by age, 2013–14

References

NCCC (National Casemix and Classification Centre) 2012. The international statistical classification of diseases and related health problems, 10th revision, Australian modification (ICD-10-AM), Australian Classification of Health Interventions (ACHI) and Australian Coding Standards (ACS), 8th edn. Wollongong: University of Wollongong.