

# Women raised in deprived neighbourhoods face an increased risk of intimate partner violence

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Women who spend their childhoods in deprived neighbourhoods face an increased risk of intimate partner violence. Credit: Shutterstock

Women who spend longer periods of their early lives in less affluent neighbourhoods are at greater risk of experiencing violence during their early adulthoods at the hands of their intimate partners, finds a new study published in *Epidemiology*.

Intimate partner [violence](#)—physical, psychological, or [sexual violence](#) committed by a current or former partner—is the most common form of violence experienced by [women](#) worldwide. In the UK, an estimated 7% of women (approximately 1.1 million women) reported experiencing this violence in the last year alone according to the latest Crime Survey for England and Wales.

The research, led by the University of Oxford with the University of Bristol, looked at participants of Bristol's Children of the 90s study who were followed from birth and reported on their experiences of [intimate partner violence](#) between ages 18 to 21. The researchers examined the level of [deprivation](#) in women's neighbourhoods over the first 18 years of women's lives, according to England's official measure of area-level

deprivation, the Indices of Multiple Deprivation.

They found that women who had lived in the most deprived neighbourhoods for longer durations over their childhoods were 36% more likely to experience any intimate partner violence between ages 18 to 21. They also experienced this violence more frequently than women who had spent less or no time living in more deprived neighbourhoods, says the paper.

This is the first UK study to examine whether long-term exposure to [neighbourhood](#) deprivation affects the risk of intimate partner violence against women. Neighbourhood deprivation is often thought to increase this risk, in part because neighbourhoods with fewer social and [economic resources](#) tend to have higher rates of public forms of violence, like burglary and vandalism. However, whether these relationships translate to violence within the home, and between intimate partners, has been less certain. Prior to this study, nearly every study assessing the relationship between neighbourhood deprivation and intimate partner violence over time had been from the United States.

Lead author Dr. Alexa Yakubovich, from the University of Oxford and Unity Health Toronto, said: "Intimate partner violence is a major public health problem, in the UK and beyond. To develop more effective prevention strategies, we need a better understanding of what causes this violence in the first instance. Our study supports the idea that factors beyond individuals are important for determining women's risk of experiencing intimate partner violence. The effectiveness of strategies that address these structural inequities in preventing intimate partner violence should be evaluated."

Senior author, Dr. David Humphreys at the University of Oxford added: "This is the first UK

study, to our knowledge, to demonstrate that long-term exposure to deprived neighbourhoods appears to be an important factor contributing to increased risks of violent victimisation in young women by their partners. Further research is required to understand how communities can be assisted in supporting young women at risk of violence in the home."

Professor Gene Feder at the University of Bristol's Centre for Academic Primary Care, also a study co-author, commented: "The Children of the 90s study was one of the first to measure exposure to intimate partner violence alongside a wide range of individual, family, social and economic factors, over time. This research adds to the evidence that economic inequality and deprivation, even at a neighbourhood level increases a woman's risk of experiencing abuse. Reducing intimate partner violence requires reduction of economic as well as gender inequality, in addition to supporting survivors and their families."

Provided by University of Oxford

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