

Intersections of intimate partner violence GCRO Barrens and food insecurity in Gauteng

Academic literature indicates a causal relationship between food insecurity and intimate partner violence (IPV) (Gibbs et al., 2017; Hatcher et al., 2019). Food insecurity is a proxy for poverty, but there is a specific causal pathway that leads from food insecurity to a greater likelihood of IPV. Because of widely-shared societal norms and historical gender roles that position men as the expected 'providers' or 'breadwinners' in a household, an inability to put food on the table can lead to feelings of frustration, anxiety, stress, disempowerment and misplaced anger. This in turn may lead to an increased risk of IPV. This Vignette uses data from the GCRO's Quality of Life (QoL) survey 6 (2020/21) to explore this causal relationship between food insecurity and IPV among a population-based sample of women in Gauteng. In general terms, the data indicates higher levels of IPV in households that are worse off in socio-economic terms. However, food insecurity seems to significantly compound the problem. Confirming the analysis in the literature, vulnerable women in poorer households also struggling with food insecurity are disproportionately more likely to report experiencing IPV in the past year than their counterparts in food secure households.

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Source GCRO's Quality of Life Survey 6

Related GCRO research project: Understanding Quality of Life theme

Framework linking household food insecurity and intimate partner violence

HOUSEHOLD FOOD INSECURITY



Inadequate access to food, in our analysis defined as an index of QoL survey variables:

- Insufficient expenditure for a nutritional household food basket
- 2. No physical proximity of outlets selling food
- Children skipping meals due to lack of money
- 4. Adult skipping meals due to lack of money



Other effects including unhealthy coping mechanisms, and poor health from lower nutrient intake

PSYCHOLOGICAL RESPONSES



Psychological response in light of gender norms and social expectations

Men's inability to provide for family may lead to low self-esteem, frustration, anxiety, stress and emotional reactivity

Feedback-loop where IPV also causes food insecurity

IPV can in turn worsen household food insecurity by leaving women disempowered and with poor mental health, resulting in lower productivity at work, less confidence in trying to find work

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE



Increased risk for women of physical and/or sexual harm by an intimate partner



Other background factors causing IPV may be men's own violent upbringings, pervasive violence in society, and the normalisation of abuse in relationships, coupled with circumstantial factors like jealousy

5.1%

of female respondents reported experiences of IPV in the past year



28.5%

of households of female respondents experience food insecurity

% of women who experienced IPV in the past year, by whether household is food secure or insecure

Overall (IPV)

High socio-economic status

Medium socio-economic status

Low socio-economic status

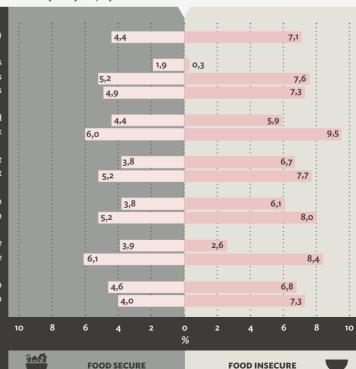
Employed
Unemployed and looking for work

No debt Have debt

Low risk of depression High risk of depression

R3201 or more monthly household income Less than R3201 monthly household income

High education
Low education



The graph shows that women who are more socially and economically vulnerable may experience relatively more IPV. However, where women face socio-economic challenges (unemployment, low incomes, low education, etc) the presence of household food insecurity significantly exacerbates the problem, increasing the risks of IPV relative to where there is no household food insecurity.

