

Crime and Violence



Edited by Justin Healey

ISSUES
IN SOCIETY

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INTRODUCTION

Crime and Violence is Volume 385 in the 'Issues in Society' series of educational resource books. The aim of this series is to offer current, diverse information about important issues in our world, from an Australian perspective.

KEY ISSUES IN THIS TOPIC

The prevalence of violent crime – which includes homicide, assault, sexual assault, robbery and kidnapping – can be difficult to measure, with the facts often obscured by fear. If regular media reports are to be believed, Australia is constantly in the midst of a violent crime wave; is this actually the case?

Why are 18-24 year olds most at risk of being victims and perpetrators of violent crime? What are the effects of violence on victims? Alcohol-related violence is a complex issue explored in this book – do greater alcohol restrictions and the introduction of 'one-punch' laws and mandatory sentencing have an impact on violent street assaults? Is jailing offenders the most effective solution to reducing violence in society?

This book presents the latest Australian statistics on recorded crime and victimisation rates and explores risks to personal safety, proposing a variety of responses to deal with violent crime.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Titles in the 'Issues in Society' series are individual resource books which provide an overview on a specific subject comprised of facts and opinions.

The information in this resource book is not from any single author, publication or organisation. The unique value of the 'Issues in Society' series lies in its diversity of content and perspectives.

The content comes from a wide variety of sources and includes:

- Newspaper reports and opinion pieces
- Website fact sheets
- Magazine and journal articles
- Statistics and surveys
- Government reports
- Literature from special interest groups

CRITICAL EVALUATION

As the information reproduced in this book is from a number of different sources, readers should always be aware of the origin of the text and whether or not the source is likely to be expressing a particular bias or agenda.

It is hoped that, as you read about the many aspects of the issues explored in this book, you will critically evaluate the information presented. In some cases, it is important that you decide whether you are being presented with facts or opinions. Does the writer give a biased or an unbiased report? If an opinion is being expressed, do you agree with the writer?

EXPLORING ISSUES

The 'Exploring issues' section at the back of this book features a range of ready-to-use worksheets relating to the articles and issues raised in this book. The activities and exercises in these worksheets are suitable for use by students at middle secondary school level and beyond.

FURTHER RESEARCH

This title offers a useful starting point for those who need convenient access to information about the issues involved. However, it is only a starting point. The 'Web links' section at the back of this book contains a list of useful websites which you can access for more reading on the topic.

VIOLENCE

Women's and Children's Health Network explains violence, its causes and impacts

If you are in a situation of violence it is important to think of your safety now! You cannot change someone else's violent behaviour, only they can. If your situation is an emergency call the police.

So what is violence anyway? Sometimes people think it's the same as anger, it's not. And it's more than just physically hurting someone. Most people experience violence at some point in their lives, and for some, violence is something they have to deal with every day.

What is violence?

Violence is not only physical assault. It is any action that is meant to make others feel hurt, scared, small or humiliated.

Violence can be:

- **Physical** – The use of physical force, whether it injures someone or not e.g. holding, shoving, pushing, restraining, torturing, punching, biting, kicking, burning, hurting or killing pets, breaking possessions, using any kind of weapon etc.
- **Emotional/verbal** – The use of threats, intimidation or put-downs e.g. speaking in a scary way; threatening to hurt or kill you or someone else; giving 'looks' that make you scared; name calling; telling someone he or she is crazy or useless; saying things to purposely make others feel bad about themselves; bullying or harassment.
- **Sexual** – Forcing, manipulating or doing sexual acts to someone when she or he does not want it. e.g. touching someone where they don't want to be touched, rape, demanding or tricking someone into doing sexual things, using objects, treating someone as a sex object.
- **Financial** – Using money as a source of power over someone e.g. making someone dependent on you for money, forcing someone to beg or do other things for money, keeping control of all money matters, stopping someone from getting a job, selling others' things.
- **Social** – The use of social life to control someone or make them feel bad about themselves e.g. not letting someone choose their own friends or doing



it for them, being mean about someone's family or friends and making them feel unwelcome when they are around, insisting you do everything together, put-downs or pay-outs in public, being jealous and controlling about how and with whom you mix/spend time.

- **Spiritual** – The use of religion, faith or cult beliefs as a form of control or to hurt e.g. preventing someone from keeping their own faith, forcing or manipulating you to participate in beliefs or ceremonies you don't want to, scaring or hurting you by the use of certain beliefs.

The effects

If you experience violence you may feel:

- Fear for your safety or wellbeing – (or others around you, e.g. children)
- Guilt or self blame for the violence – “I shouldn't have done ...”, “I shouldn't have said ...”
- Shame – “What will other people think of me?”
- Jumpy, nervous or anxious – a tap on the back or a bang and you “jump out of your skin”
- ANGER at your attacker or others for not protecting you – “you hurt me you #@%*!”
- Like making excuses for or playing down the assault – “it wasn't that bad”, “they didn't mean to ...”, “this is because they were abused ...”

You are never responsible for someone else's choice to act with violence. You cannot choose or change someone else's behaviour.

If you have used violence you may experience:

- An assault or other criminal charge – violence is against the law
- Loss of friends, family, partners, job – violence ruins relationships
- Loss of respect and trust within relationships
- Fear or anxiety of the consequences of the assault – “Will she leave me?”, “Will I have to go to jail?”, “Will I lose my job?”
- Feeling out of control of your behaviour, feelings or your life – “I couldn't stop myself”
- Guilt, shame or disbelief of your behaviour – “I am a bad person for doing this”
- Anger at self or others for the violence
- Depression, feeling low – “Look what I have lost”, “What have I become?”
- A feeling of revenge – “They deserved it”, “They were asking for it”.

People choose to act in a violent manner. There are choices you (and only you) can make other than to hurt others or yourself. Violence can destroy lives and hurt people.

If you have witnessed or been around violence you may experience the following:

- Feeling unsafe and scared – “When will it happen next?”
- Fearing for your own and others' safety – “I hope mum is OK”
- Worrying about losing your father, mother, child or family – “Will my family break up?”
- Uncertainty or insecurity about things around you – “I am scared all the time”
- Guilt or responsibility – “I caused or could have stopped the violence”
- Anger toward those who attacked or those who did not protect you or themselves
- Depression or feeling helpless
- Pressure or stress related to legal action involved.

You, and others who experience violence, are never responsible for another person's violent behaviour. People choose to be violent. You and your safety are most important.

Where does it happen?

Most violence happens in homes or with people we know. This is the opposite to what the media often shows us e.g. the news often shows stories of women on the street being raped and murdered or grannies being bashed. Movies show punching, killing, and bombing etc. Of course these happen but most often we are presented an unrealistic view of violence to get us to watch the show. The more sensational, the more likely we are to watch it.

Statistics show that women are more likely to be the victims of sexual violence, but men are more likely to be victims of assault. More women report incidents of domestic violence, but it is suggested men who are victims do not always report domestic violence when it has happened. So violence can affect anyone in our society.

Young people say they have seen violence in many situations. Here are some examples:

- Parent and son/daughter – can happen both ways
- Boyfriend/girlfriend/same-sex attraction – intimate relationships
- De facto/wife/husband – it is estimated as high as 1 in 3 families experience violence
- Work, school, social life – sexist, racist, homophobic and other forms of violence
- Sport – on the footy field or basketball court, soccer violence
- Media – TV, movies, books or comics
- Public/street – stranger or gang
- Television/the news
- Violence in the workplace.

Why does it happen?

Violence or abuse can be a behaviour used to get power over other people and/or to try to look more powerful in other people's eyes. It can be an inappropriate expression of anger. We live in a society where there are power differences. If there is a power difference, or if people are seen to not 'conform' or 'fit in' to our society this can lead to others being violent towards them.

What are people called or what happens to them if they are not the one who is dominant or does not conform? How does it happen? Here are some ways that more powerful people can put other people down.

Age

- Called upstart, cheeky, naive etc.
- Are smacked, hit, yelled at, told to shut up, (child abuse)
- Are told they are to be “seen not heard” or they are to feel like a possession e.g. “You will do what I say, you are mine”
- Older people being told they are useless or 'senile'.

Ability

- Called stupid, thick, or other names
- Are harassed, assaulted, or discriminated against.

Nationality

- Use racist names
- Are harassed, assaulted, or discriminated against.

Sexuality/gender

- Called 'fagot' or 'poof'. Treated badly because they do not identify as male or female.

What else can you think of? Where do you see power differences? What do people, who are seen as 'inferior',

experience? What do people who act in a violent way get out of it?

Beliefs about violence

Our beliefs about violence affect the way we understand and act in all situations.

Many people who act in a violent way believe incorrectly that:

- Violence is acceptable and a good way to get what you want
- Violence is OK because people deserve it
- They need to show they are more powerful than someone else
- They are superior to someone else because of characteristics they have
- Violence is something that cannot be controlled e.g. "I just lost it"
- Masculine is to be tough, powerful and in control
- Feminine is to be weak, powerless and need to be controlled
- Anger always results in violence.

Violence is never OK. It is a learned behaviour. It is a choice we make based on a belief we have. We always have non-violent choices. You are the only person who has control of your choices. If you feel you have tried everything, ask for help. There are many, many people who have experienced what you are experiencing.

Everyone can make a difference by standing up to violence. If it is not safe for you to stand up to someone who is violent, you can stand up to violence by getting help, by getting out of the situation and by making yourself safe.

Drugs and alcohol

A common belief is that alcohol, marijuana or other drug use causes someone to become violent. While there are many studies to show alcohol and other drug use are strongly linked to violence, they do not cause someone to choose to act in a violent manner. Drug or alcohol use is often used to excuse violence.

Violence is never acceptable. It is against the law and can lead to charges being laid. Think of people you know who get drunk or stoned and don't get violent. Why is it they are able to choose to behave in a non-violent manner? What do they believe about violence?

Is someone hurt?

If you or someone you know is being hurt by violence, safety is of utmost importance. Remember that you can't change someone's violent behaviour, only they can!

If you require emergency assistance call the police immediately. You may not be able to stop the violence but you can get help.

Here are some other tips:

- If you are living with a violent person, it is a good

idea to have a safety plan worked out. This might include hiding some money away, having clothes packed in a suitcase, or organising somewhere to stay. Think about things like credit cards, bank accounts, passports, marriage certificate and birth certificates. **You cannot stop someone's violence and you therefore may choose to leave for your own and others' safety. You are responsible for your safety and the safety of any children who witness the violence.**

- If you are living in a situation of child abuse (where you are being abused, or a child is), tell someone you trust. Remember you are not the cause of the violence, it is not your fault.
- Wherever you live, if you are concerned about the safety of yourself or someone else, contact the local police or community services agency.

RESOURCES

GENERAL

- Kids Helpline, Ph: 1800 55 1800.
- 'Keep safe stay cool', Peer education program which provides Interaction, Education and Information to young people about domestic violence and healthy relationships. Southern Adelaide Health Service (South Australia), www.keepsafestaycool.com.au
- A website for young adults about family violence, www.burstingthebubble.com
- Youth Say No, A website from Western Australia that looks at date violence, www.youthsayno.wa.gov.au/dating_violence/index.htm
- 10 facts about violence prevention from The World Health Organisation, www.who.int/features/factfiles/violence/en/index.html
- To search for a helpline in your state check out Helplines Australia, www.helplines.org.au

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The information in this article should not be used as an alternative to professional care. If you have a particular problem, see a doctor, or ring the Youth Healthline on 1300 13 17 19 (local call cost from anywhere in South Australia).

Women's and Children's Health Network. *Violence*. Retrieved from www.cyh.com on 8 September 2014 .

RECORDED VICTIMS OF VIOLENT CRIME

LATEST STATISTICS FROM THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF CRIMINOLOGY



Violent crime

Violent crime includes homicide, assault, sexual assault, robbery and kidnapping (sometimes referred to as abduction). Although robbery may include an element of property crime, it is included as a violent crime, as the use or threat of violence is a more serious offence than the theft.

TABLE 1: VICTIMS OF SELECTED VIOLENT CRIMES, 1996-2012⁽ⁿ⁾

	Homicide ^a	Assault ^b	Sexual assault	Robbery ^c	Kidnapping/abduction
1996	354	114,156	14,542	16,372	478
1997	364	124,500	14,353	21,305	564
1998	334	130,903	14,689	23,801	707
1999	385	134,271	14,699	22,606	766
2000	362	138,708	16,406	23,336	695
2001	347	152,283	17,577	26,591	767
2002	366	160,118	18,718	20,989	706
2003	341	157,280	18,025	19,709	696
2004	302	156,849	19,171	16,513	768
2005	301	166,507	18,695	17,176	729
2006	321	172,441	19,555	17,375	726
2007	283	176,077	19,954	17,996	733
2008	293	170,720	19,992	16,513	788
2009	293	175,277	18,807	15,238	564
2010	261	171,083	18,027	14,631	608
2011	276	117,992	17,592	13,653	675
2012	297	116,105	18,153	13,155	636

(a) Comprises the offences of murder and manslaughter.

(b) 2011 and 2012 figures cannot be compared with those prior to 2011.

(c) Comprises the offences armed and unarmed robbery. Robbery is classified as a violent crime, as the use or threat of violence is more serious than a property offence.

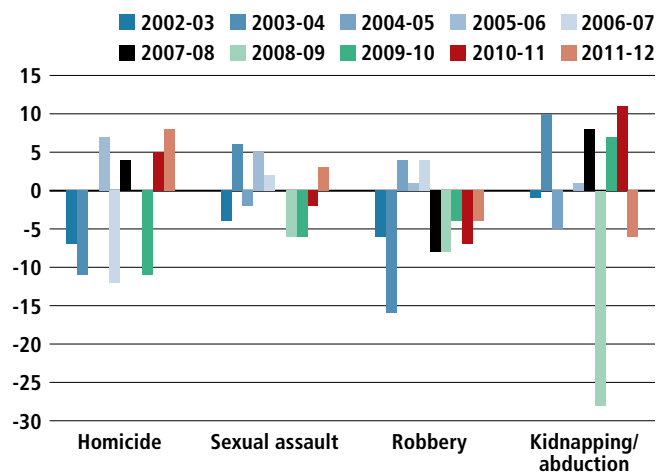
Note: Number of victims presented here represents revised estimates on numbers published in earlier editions of *Australian Crime: Facts & Figures*.

Continuing the trend of recent years, robbery offences decreased in 2012.

- Assaults continue to represent the majority of recorded violent crimes. The number of assault victims fell from 117,992 to 116,105 between 2011 and 2012 (based on data available from all jurisdictions except for Victoria, Queensland and Tasmania).
- In 2012, the number of homicides and sexual assaults increased. There were 21 more homicides and 561 more sexual assaults (3% increase) compared with figures recorded in 2011.

Source: Reference 1

FIGURE 1: ANNUAL CHANGE IN VICTIMS OF SELECTED VIOLENT CRIMES, 2002-12 (%)



- Homicide incidents have been generally decreasing through the last decade. However, in 2012 there was an additional 21 incidents of homicide, representing an 8 per cent increase over 2011. The 297 incidents recorded in 2012 is still 16 per cent lower than the 385 incidents of 1999, the highest number of homicides recorded since 1996.
- Kidnapping/abduction totals have fluctuated over the 10 year period. The greatest percentage decrease was recorded in 2008-09 at 28 per cent. In 2011-12, there were 39 fewer victims of kidnapping/abduction, a decrease of 6 per cent from 2011.
- Between 2011 and 2012, robbery decreased by 4 per cent continuing a trend of a decreasing number of incidents evident for much of the last 10 years.

Source: Reference 1

Property crime

Property crime comprises UEWI (also referred to as break and enter or burglary), MVT and 'other' theft, which includes offences such as pickpocketing, bag snatching, shoplifting and bicycle theft.

- Property crime continued to be reported at a much higher volume than violent crime.

TABLE 2: VICTIMS OF PROPERTY CRIME, 1996-2012⁽ⁿ⁾

	UEWI	MVT	Other theft
1996	402,079	122,914	521,762
1997	421,569	130,138	530,881
1998	434,376	131,587	563,482
1999	415,735	129,552	612,559
2000	436,968	138,912	681,268
2001	435,754	139,894	700,137
2002	394,323	113,460	680,799
2003	354,020	98,298	624,036
2004	308,675	87,939	548,778
2005	281,994	80,365	518,335
2006	262,005	75,377	518,734
2007	248,475	70,614	491,935
2008	241,760	68,265	497,053
2009	222,664	59,649	478,807
2010	217,030	54,821	465,547
2011	218,285	55,310	490,059
2012	214,222	58,574	500,552

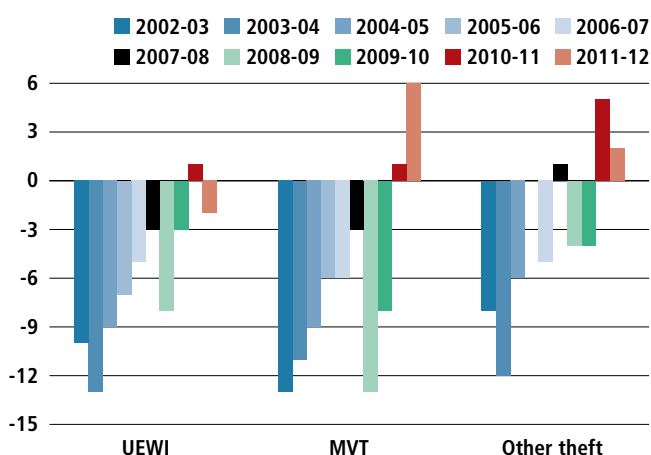
Note: Number of victims presented here represents revised estimates on numbers published in earlier editions of *Australian Crime: Facts & Figures*.

- The number of MVTs increased from 55,310 in 2011 to 58,574 in 2012.
- The number of 'other' theft victims (n=500,552) also increased in 2012 compared with 2011, where there were 490,059 recorded victims.
- By contrast, there were 4,063 fewer victims of UEWI offences in 2012 than were recorded in 2011; a 2 per cent decrease.

Source: Reference 1

- Despite a small increase in 2011, UEWI victimisation continued an overall downward trend in 2012 that has been evident since the 1990s.

FIGURE 2: ANNUAL CHANGE IN VICTIMS OF PROPERTY CRIME, 2002-12 (%)



- Conversely, MVT and to a lesser extent other theft victimisation, increased in 2012.
- Following a small increase in MVT in 2011, the 6 per cent increase in the number of victims of MVT in 2012 is the greatest percentage increase on record for the last 10 years. Overall however, MVT still remains half as prevalent as it was in 1996.
- Other theft victimisation increased by 2 per cent.

Source: Reference 1

RECORDED CRIME VICTIMISATION RATES

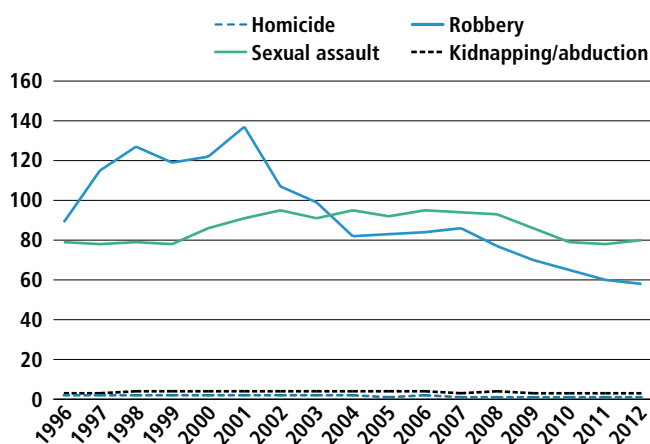
Trends in the number of recorded crime victims do not take into account increases in the population over time. As a result, an increase may reflect an increase in the general population in that period rather than an increase in the actual likelihood of a person becoming a victim of crime. Crime rates adjust for changes in population size. In this section, they are calculated per 100,000 persons of the population per year.

Violent crime victimisation rate

- In the last six years, the rate of robbery victimisation has steadily declined from 86 per 100,000 in 2007 to 58 per 100,000 in 2012. Generally, the rate of robbery victimisation has been declining since 2001.
- The rate of sexual assault victimisation increased to 80 per 100,000 in 2012. The last increase in the rate of victimisation was seen in 2006. The rate of victimisation in 2012 is at a similar rate to what it was in 1996, when the rate was 79 per 100,000.
- The rate of homicide victimisation has never exceeded two per 100,000 in the 17 years for which data are available. Victimisation has stayed at one per 100,000 since 2007.
- In 2012, like 2011, the rate of kidnapping/abduction was three per 100,000 population; much lower than the peak of four per 100,000 in 1999.

Source: References 1 and 2

FIGURE 3: VICTIMS OF VIOLENT CRIMES, 1996-2012 (RATE PER 100,000 POPULATION)



Note: Homicide and kidnapping each occur at rates of fewer than 5 per 100,000 population per year and are difficult to distinguish on this graph.

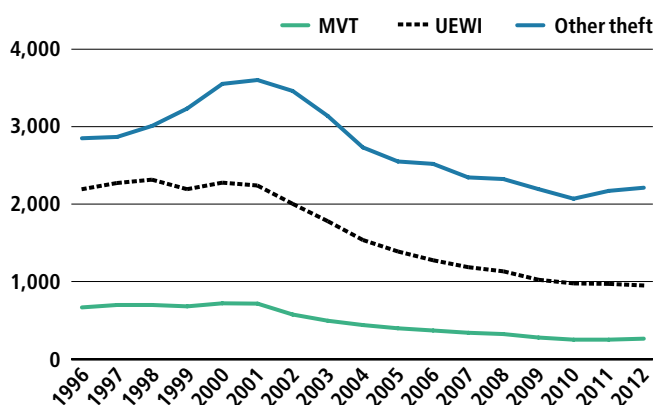


Property crime victimisation rate

- The rate of 'other' theft victimisation reached its lowest point since data were available at 2,064 per 100,000 in 2010, before rising modestly to 2,206 per 100,000 in 2012.
- The rate of UEWI victimisation has generally declined since 2001. In 2012, the victimisation rate was 944 per 100,000 population – the lowest on record since the collection of data in 1996.
- Between 2011 and 2012, the rate of MVT victimisation increased by 5 per cent; from 245 to 258 per 100,000 population.

Source: References 1 and 2

FIGURE 4: VICTIMS OF PROPERTY CRIMES, 1996-2012 (RATE PER 100,000 POPULATION)



LOCATION OF CRIME

The ABS classifies crime locations according to the function of the site of the crime. There are three broad location types:

- *Residential* – including houses, garages/carports, motels and hostels
- *Community* – including car parks, transport facilities, streets and footpaths, and schools, and
- *Other* – including retail premises, recreational facilities, government offices and warehousing/storage.

The number of victims of selected violent offences that occurred within each type of location is presented in Table 3.

- Sexual assault and murder victimisation occurred most frequently in the home. Specifically, 11,215 sexual assaults (62% of all sexual assault victims) and 134 murders (53% of all murder victims) occurred in a residential dwelling.
- Instances of robbery most commonly occurred on the street/footpath, accounting for 39 per cent of all robbery victims. Retail and transport settings were the second and third most common robbery locations (29% and 9% respectively).
- For kidnapping/abduction, the most common location for victimisation was on the street/footpath (39%), followed by residential dwellings (37%) and other community locations (8%).

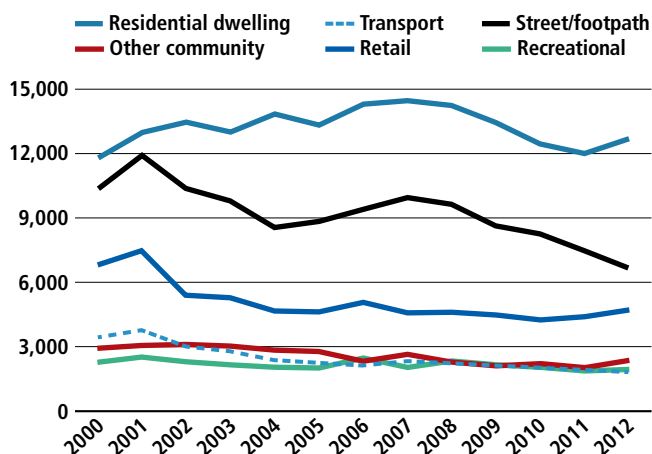
Source: Reference 1

TABLE 3: LOCATION TYPE OF VIOLENT CRIMES, 2012

	Murder	Sexual assault	Robbery	Kidnapping/abduction
Residential				
Residential dwelling	134	11,215	1,064	134
Outbuilding/residential land	11	234	171	11
Other residential	12	248	27	12
Total residential	157	11,697	1,262	157
Community				
Transport	5	607	1,121	5
Street/footpath	38	1,197	5,128	38
Other community location	20	1,527	383	20
Total community	63	3,331	6,632	63
Other location				
Retail	10	767	3,809	10
Recreational	8	839	988	8
Other	6	253	262	6
Total other	24	1,859	5,059	24
Unspecified	10	1,193	138	10
Total	254	18,080	13,091	254

- Residential dwellings remain the most common location for violent crime victimisation. In 2012, the number of victims of violent crime in the home increased by 6 per cent to 12,650.
- The number of victims of violent crimes committed on the street/footpath has decreased by 34 per cent since 2007, reaching a low of 6,613 victims in 2012.
- Violent crimes occurring in recreational settings rose by 4 per cent between 2011 and 2012; from 1,787 to 1,865.
- The number of victims of violent crimes in retail

**FIGURE 5: VICTIMS OF VIOLENT CRIMES^a
BY TYPE OF LOCATION, 2000-12⁽ⁿ⁾**



a: Excludes assault.

settings increased by 8 per cent between 2011 and 2012, from 4,297 to 4,619 victims.

- The number of violent crimes occurring in retail, recreational and transport settings has remained relatively stable since 2005.
- Source: Reference 1*
- UEWI victimisation most commonly occurred in residential settings. Sixty-one per cent (n=131,709) of victims of UEWI were victimised in dwellings and 8 per cent (n=16,494) occurred on outbuilding/residential lands.
 - In 2012, the highest proportion of MVTs occurred on outbuilding/residential lands, which represented 45 per cent of all MVT offences. A further 32 per cent of victims had their motor vehicles stolen on the street/footpath.

TABLE 4: LOCATION TYPE OF PROPERTY CRIMES, 2012

	UEWI	MVT	Other theft
Residential			
Residential dwelling	131,709	0	52,978
Outbuilding/residential land	16,494	26,512	94,226
Other residential	3,716	26	3,169
Total residential	151,919	26,538	150,373
Community			
Transport	422	3,507	31,499
Street/footpath	3	18,527	61,876
Other community location	10,959	854	24,485
Total community	11,384	22,888	117,860
Other location			
Retail	24,358	3,605	171,753
Recreational	5,567	656	18,446
Other	19,601	4,002	28,869
Total other	49,526	8,263	219,068
Unspecified	1,394	884	13,251
Total	214,223	58,573	500,552

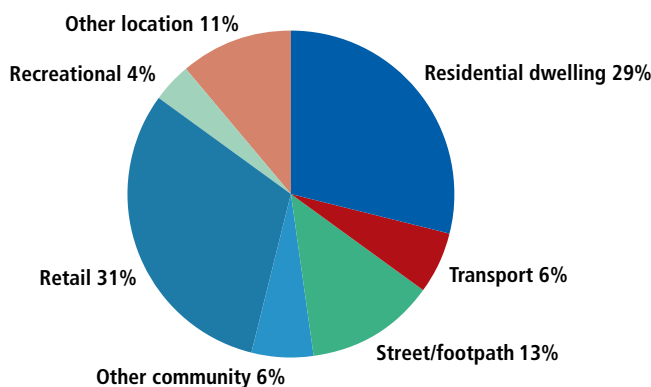
- The greatest number of 'other' thefts occurred in retail settings (34%), followed by outbuilding/residential land (19%) and on the street/footpath (12%).

Source: Reference 1

- The largest proportion of all property crimes in 2012 occurred in retail settings (31%), followed by residential dwellings (29%).
- Property offences were least likely to occur on transport (6%), other community settings (6%) and recreational settings (4%).

Source: Reference 1

**FIGURE 6: PROPERTY CRIME
BY LOCATION, 2012 (%)**



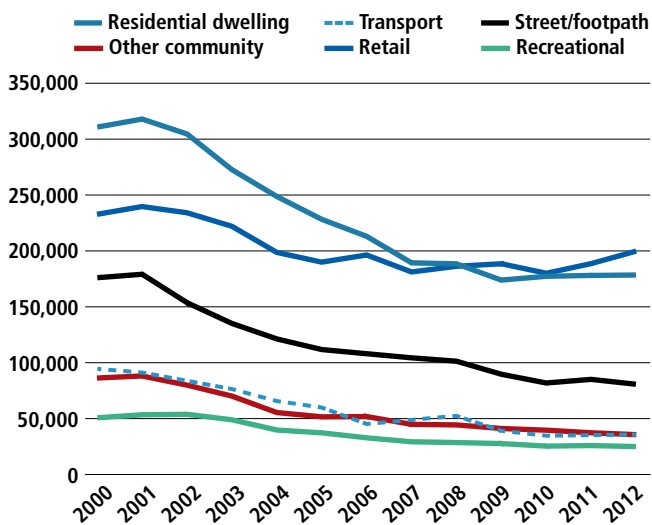
Note: n=621,649. Excludes residential locations that could not be classified as a dwelling, outbuilding/residential land and locations not further defined.

- Since 2009, property crimes were most often committed in retail settings. In 2012, 199,716 property offences occurred in retail settings compared with 178,098 offences in residential settings.
- There has been an overall decline in offence numbers for all property offence types since 2000. For example, there has been a 63 per cent decrease





**FIGURE 7: PROPERTY
CRIME BY LOCATION, 2000-12**



in property crimes at transport locations, a 59 per cent decline in community locations and a 54 per cent decline on the street/footpath.

- Despite an overall decline, property crimes in retail locations increased by 6 per cent between 2011 and 2012.

Source: Reference 1

REFERENCES

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 1997-2012. *Recorded crime victims, Australia* (various issues; title varies). ABS cat. no. 4510.0. Canberra: ABS.
2. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 1996-2013. *Australian demographic statistics* (various issues). ABS cat. no. 3101.0. Canberra: ABS.

Australian Institute of Criminology (2014). *Australian Crime: Facts & Figures 2013*, pp. 2-12. Retrieved from <http://aic.gov.au> on 14 July 2014.

RECORDED CRIME – VICTIMS, AUSTRALIA

WHILE MOST OTHER CRIMES ARE DOWN, SEXUAL ASSAULTS HAVE INCREASED, ACCORDING TO THE LATEST DATA FROM THE **AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS**

REPORTS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT INCREASE, MOST OTHER CRIMES DOWN

Reports of sexual assault have hit a four year high on the back of an 8 per cent jump last year, according to Australian Bureau of Statistics figures

There were just under 20,000 sexual assault victims recorded by police during 2013, an increase of 8 per cent on the previous year, and the highest number of reports we've seen in the last four years," said William Milne from the ABS.

"Nationally, over four in five sexual assault victims were female and nearly two-thirds were 19 or under.

"However robbery, unlawful entry with intent and motor vehicle theft have all fallen to a four year low," said Mr Milne.

Both unlawful entry with intent and motor vehicle theft were most likely to occur at a residential location, and robbery was most likely to occur on a street or footpath.

Nearly half of all robberies involved the use of a weapon, with a knife being used in just over one in five and a gun in less than one in ten. Homicides and kidnappings also fell.

Apart from sexual assault, blackmail or extortion was the only other offence to increase between 2012 and 2013.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (26 June 2014). *Recorded Crime – Victims, Australia, 2013*, cat. no 4510.0 (Media release). Retrieved from www.abs.gov.au on 4 September 2014.

VICTIMS OF CRIME, AUSTRALIA

This section presents national statistics about incidents of victimisation for a selected range of offences that came to the attention of state and territory police and were recorded in the period 1

January 2013 to 31 December 2013. The statistics provide information about victim characteristics and the nature of the criminal incidents.

National summary of findings

Nationally, there was a decrease between 2012 and 2013 in the number of victims for the following offences:

- Homicide (decrease of 5.3% or 24 victims)
- Kidnapping/abduction (decrease of 5.8% or 37 victims)
- Robbery (decrease of 11% or 1,465 victims)
- Unlawful entry with intent (decrease of 5.0% or 10,803 victims)
- Motor vehicle theft (decrease of 9.5% or 5,577 victims), and
- Other theft (decrease of 3.6% or 17,992 victims).

In contrast, nationally there was an increase between 2012 and 2013 in the number of victims for the following offences:

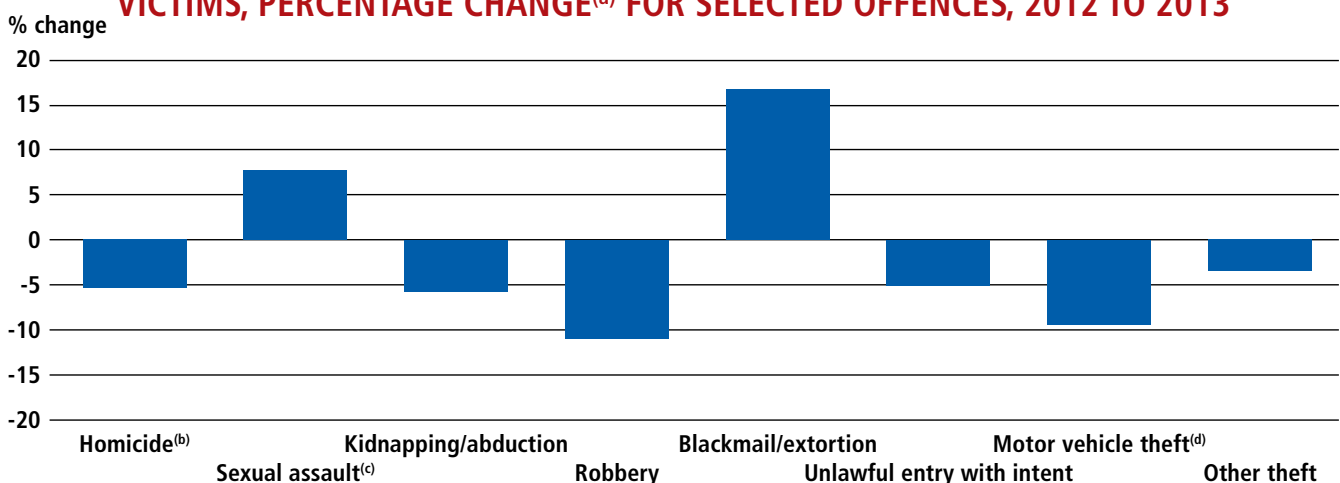
- Sexual assault (increase of 7.6% or 1,413 victims), and
- Blackmail/extortion (increase of 17% or 75 victims).

HOMICIDE AND RELATED OFFENCES

There was a 5.3% decrease in the number of homicide victims in Australia, from 454 in 2012 to a four year low of 430 in 2013. In Australia:

- The homicide victimisation rate decreased to a four year low of 1.9 victims per 100,000 persons in 2013
- Just under two in three victims of homicide (64% or 273 victims) were male, and
- Two-thirds of all homicide investigations (67% or 290 victims) were finalised by police within 30 days.

VICTIMS, PERCENTAGE CHANGE^(a) FOR SELECTED OFFENCES, 2012 TO 2013



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Footnote(s): (a) Caution should be used when comparing percentage change figures across offences and states and territories. Percentage change should be observed in conjunction with number change, as large percentage changes may be produced by small number changes based on a small population. (b) Excludes driving causing death. (c) Western Australian sexual assault figures may be understated (see Explanatory Notes, paragraph 74). (d) South Australian motor vehicle theft figures may be understated (see Explanatory Notes, paragraph 70).

Source(s): *Victims, Percentage change(a) for selected offences, 2012 to 2013 – Percentage change of offences.*

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Murder

There was a 2.0% decrease in the number of murder victims in Australia, from 254 in 2012 to 249 in 2013. In Australia:

- The murder victimisation rate has remained steady across the past four years at 1.1 victims per 100,000 persons
- Just under two in three victims of murder (63% or 157 victims) were male
- Males aged between 25 and 34 years accounted for the largest proportion of murder victims (21% or 53 victims)
- Just under two in three murders (64% or 158 victims) occurred in a residential location
- Of weapons used in murder, a knife was the most common (43% or 83 victims), and
- 69% of all murder investigations (171 victims) were finalised by police within 30 days.

Attempted murder

There was a decrease of one attempted murder victim in Australia, from 158 in 2012 to a four year low of 157 in 2013. In Australia:

- The attempted murder victimisation rate has remained steady at 0.7 victims per 100,000 persons over the past two years
- Just under two in three victims of attempted murder (63% or 99 victims) were male
- Males aged between 25 and 34 years accounted for the largest proportion of attempted murder victims (24% or 37 victims)
- Around three in five attempted murders (62% or 96 victims) occurred in a residential location
- Of weapons used in attempted murder, a knife was the most common (41% or 54 victims), followed by firearm (39% or 51 victims), and
- 70% of all attempted murder investigations (109 victims) were finalised by police within 30 days.

Manslaughter

There was a 43% decrease in the number of manslaughter victims in Australia, from 42 in 2012 to a four year low of 24 in 2013. In Australia:

- The manslaughter victimisation rate was 0.1 victims per 100,000 persons in 2013
- Seven in ten victims of manslaughter (71% or 17 victims) were male, and
- 40% of all manslaughter investigations (10 victims) were finalised by police within 30 days.

SEXUAL ASSAULT

There was a 7.6% increase in the number of sexual assault victims in Australia, from 18,494 in 2012 to a four year high of 19,907 in 2013. In Australia:

- The sexual assault victimisation rate increased to a four year high of 86.1 victims per 100,000 persons in 2013
- The majority of sexual assault victims (84% or 16,655 victims) were female
- Persons aged 19 years and under accounted for 63% (12,550 victims) of all victims of sexual assault
- Two-thirds (67% or 13,270 victims) of sexual assaults occurred in a residential location, and
- 38% of all sexual assault investigations (7,549 victims) were finalised by police within 30 days.

KIDNAPPING AND ABDUCTION

There was a 5.8% decrease in the number of kidnapping/abduction victims in Australia, from 638 in 2012 to a four year low of 601 in 2013. In Australia:

- The kidnapping/abduction victimisation rate decreased to a four year low of 2.6 victims per 100,000 persons
- Females accounted for a slightly larger proportion of all kidnapping/abduction victims (57% or 344 victims)
- Nearly one in three victims of kidnapping/abduction (32% or 191 victims) was aged 14 years or under
- Street/footpath was the most common location for kidnapping/abduction to occur (43% or 258 victims), and
- 45% of all kidnapping/abduction investigations (268 victims) were finalised by police within 30 days.

ROBBERY

There was an 11% decrease in the number of robbery victims (both person and non-person victims) in Australia, from 13,163 in 2012 to a four year low of 11,698 in 2013. In Australia:

- Street/footpath was the most common location for robbery to occur (39% or 4,612 victims)
- Of weapons used in robbery, a knife was the most common (46% or 2,595 victims), and
- 35% of all robbery investigations (4,122 victims) were finalised by police within 30 days.

Of total robbery victims, 81% (9,448) were person victims, and of these:

- 72% (6,788 victims) were male, and

- Persons aged between 25 and 34 years accounted for the largest proportion (25% or 2,407 victims).

Armed robbery

There was a 9.6% decrease in the number of armed robbery victims (both person and non-person victims) in Australia, from 6,226 in 2012 to a four year low of 5,628 in 2013. In Australia:

- 38% of all armed robbery investigations (2,133 victims) were finalised by police within 30 days.

Of total armed robbery victims, 68% (3,835) were person victims, and of these:

- Just over three in four victims (77% or 2,942 victims) were male, and
- Persons aged between 25 and 34 years accounted for the largest proportion of armed robbery victims (26% or 1,013).

Unarmed robbery

There was a 13% decrease in the number of unarmed robbery victims (both person and non-person victims) in Australia, from 6,937 in 2012 to a four year low of 6,070 in 2013. In Australia:

- 33% of all unarmed robbery investigations (1,989 victims) were finalised by police within 30 days.

Of total unarmed robbery victims, 93% (5,613) were person victims, and of these:

- Just over two in three victims (69% or 3,846 victims) were male, and
- Persons aged 25 to 34 years of age accounted for the largest proportion of unarmed robbery victims (25% or 1,394 victims).

BLACKMAIL AND EXTORTION

There was a 17% increase in the number of blackmail/extortion victims (both person and non-person victims) in Australia, from 446 in 2012 to a four year high of 521 in 2013. In Australia:

- 37% of all blackmail/extortion investigations (192 victims) were finalised by police within 30 days.

Of total blackmail/extortion victims, 92% (478) were person victims, and of these:

- Just over seven in ten victims (71% or 338) were male, and
- Persons aged 25 to 34 years accounted for the largest proportion of blackmail/extortion victims (24% or 112 victims).

UNLAWFUL ENTRY WITH INTENT

There was a 5.0% decrease in the number of victims of unlawful entry with intent in Australia, from 214,241 in 2012 to a four year low of 203,438 in 2013. In Australia:

- The most common location for unlawful entry with intent to occur was a residential location (71% or 144,939 victims)
- Nearly seven in ten victims of unlawful entry with

intent had property taken (69% or 140,314 victims), and

- 10% of all unlawful entry with intent investigations (21,066 victims) were finalised by police within 30 days.

MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT

There was a 9.5% decrease in the number of victims of motor vehicle theft in Australia, from 58,556 in 2012 to a four year low of 52,979 in 2013. In Australia:

- The most common location in which motor vehicle theft occurred was an outbuilding or residential land (47% or 24,778 victims), and
- 16% of all motor vehicle theft investigations (8,667 victims) were finalised by police within 30 days.

OTHER THEFT

There was a 3.6% decrease in the number of victims of other theft in Australia, from 500,892 in 2012 to 482,900 in 2013. In Australia:

- The most common location for other theft to occur was a retail location (35% or 166,751 victims), and
- 16% of all other theft investigations (77,335 victims) were finalised by police within 30 days.



VICTIMS OF CRIME, STATES AND TERRITORIES

Introduction

This section presents state and territory statistics about incidents of victimisation for a selected range of offences that came to the attention of state and territory police during the period 1 January to 31 December 2013. Assault statistics for selected states and territories are presented separately in the section titled 'Victims of Assault, Selected states and territories.'

The statistics presented in this section are drawn from the following Data Cubes:

- *Victims of Crime*, Selected characteristics, states and territories (Tables 6-10)
- *Victims of Crime*, Relationship of offender to victim, selected states and territories (Tables 11-16), and
- *Victims of Crime*, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, selected states and territories (Tables 17-22).

In Australia, between 2012 and 2013:

- The number of homicide victims has decreased across all states and territories except New South Wales (increase of 11% or 13 victims) and the Northern Territory (increase of 4.5% or 1 victim)

- The number of sexual assault victims has increased across all states and territories
- While most states and territories experienced a decrease in the number of kidnapping/abduction victims, an increase was recorded for Victoria (increase of 22% or 27 victims), Northern Territory (increase from 0 to 3 victims), and the Australian Capital Territory (increase of 1 victim)
- The number of robbery victims has decreased across all states and territories
- There has been little change in the number of blackmail/extortion victims across most states and territories, except in Victoria (increase of 25% or 36 victims) and Queensland (increase of 109% or 50 victims)
- The number of unlawful entry with intent victims has decreased across all states and territories except New South Wales (increase of 2.0% or 1,123 victims) and Tasmania (1.0% or 34 victims)
- The number of motor vehicle theft victims has decreased across all states and territories, and
- The number of other theft victims has decreased across all states and territories except Tasmania (increase of 8.8% or 501 victims).

VICTIMS OF ASSAULT, STATES AND TERRITORIES

Introduction

This section presents statistics about victims of assault that were recorded by state and territory police during the period of 1 January 2013 to 31 December 2013. Assault data presented in this section is only available for New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status data for victims of assault is only presented for New South Wales, South Australia, and the Northern Territory.

The data in this chapter is drawn from the Data Cubes titled:

- *Victims of Assault*, selected states and territories (Tables 23-27)
- *Victims of Crime*, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, selected states and territories (Tables 17-22), and
- Supplementary data cube – *Victims of Crime*, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, revised ERP (Tables 28-33).

Victims of assault

Between 2012 and 2013:

- The number of recorded victims of assault increased in the Northern Territory (12% to 7,934 victims) and Western Australia (9.5% to 25,306 victims)
- In the Australian Capital Territory the number of recorded victims of assault decreased by 11% (to 1,809 victims), and
- In New South Wales and South Australia the number of recorded victims of assault has remained stable since 2012.

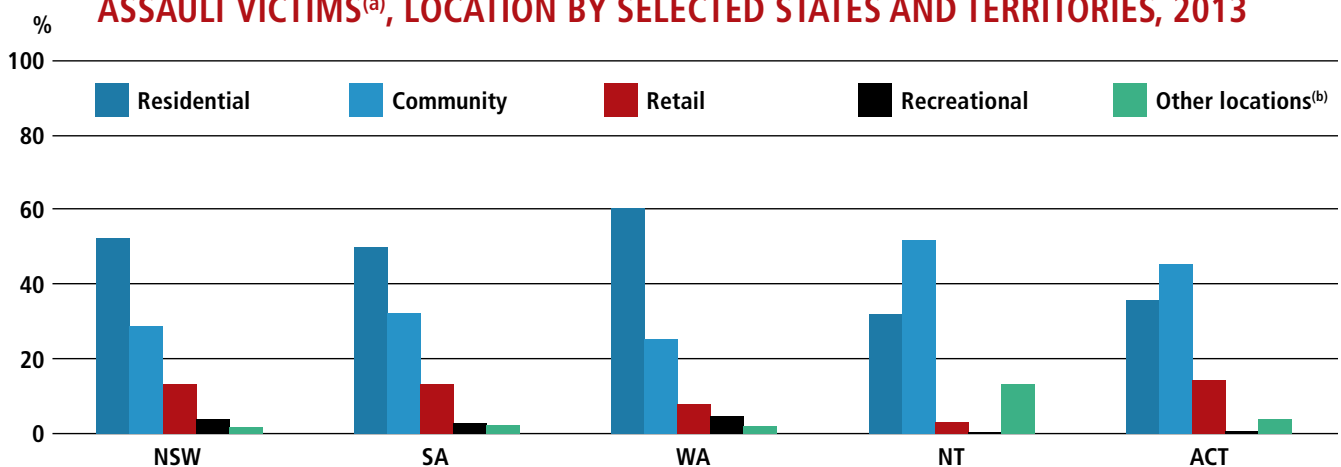
Across all selected states and territories:

- Persons aged between 25 and 34 years accounted for a larger proportion of assault victims than any other age group
- Victims of assault more commonly reported that no weapon was used by the offender
- Assault was more likely to have occurred at a residential or community location, and
- A larger proportion of victims reported knowing the offender.

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Australian Bureau of Statistics (2014).
4510.0 – Recorded Crime – Victims, Australia, 2013.
Retrieved from www.abs.gov.au on 4 September 2014.

ASSAULT VICTIMS^(a), LOCATION BY SELECTED STATES AND TERRITORIES, 2013



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Footnote(s): (a) Due to differences in recording practices, data for selected states and territories are available (see Explanatory Notes, paragraphs 35-49). (b) Includes administrative/professional, banking, wholesale, warehousing/storage, manufacturing, agricultural, other location n.e.c., other location n.f.d, and unspecified location.

Source(s): *Assault victims^{a)}, Location by selected states and territories, 2013, Ch 3.*

CRIME VICTIMISATION IN AUSTRALIA

FINDINGS FROM THE AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS 2012-13 CRIME VICTIMISATION SURVEY

INTRODUCTION

This publication presents findings from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2012-13 *Crime Victimization Survey*, which was conducted throughout Australia from July 2012 to June 2013. This is the fifth annual national survey of crime victimisation in Australia, with the first *Crime Victimization Survey* conducted in 2008-09.

The publication presents estimates of the extent of victimisation experienced by Australians aged 15 years and over of selected types of crime and whether or not the most recent incident of each crime type was reported to police.

The survey also collects information about selected characteristics of incidents of victimisation (such as the location of the incident and the victim's relationship to the offender) and socio-demographic details of victims (such as age, sex and education).



What 'crimes' were included in the 'Crime Victimization Survey'?

The types of crime collected in the survey included both personal crimes and household crimes. Definitions of the individual crime types can be found in the Glossary of the survey.

The personal crimes included in the survey were:

- Physical assault
- Threatened assault (including face-to-face and non face-to-face threatened assault)
- Robbery
- Sexual assault.

Household crime decreases

AUSTRALIAN HOUSEHOLDS EXPERIENCED LESS CRIME IN 2012-13 THAN IN 2008-09, ACCORDING TO NEW FIGURES RELEASED BY THE AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS

The *Crime Victimization Survey*, conducted annually, found that rates of victimisation for crimes such as break-in, attempted break-in, malicious property damage and motor vehicle theft were all lower in 2012-13 than five years ago.

ABS Director of the National Centre for Crime and Justice Statistics, William Milne, said, "The victimisation rates for both break-in and attempted break-ins were lower in 2012-13 than in 2008-09."

Victimisation rates for some personal crimes were also lower in 2012-13 than in 2008-09. "Physical assault and face-to-face threatened assault are also lower in the new findings," Mr Milne said.

Households who experienced one of the crimes included in the survey were most likely to have experienced only one incident, rather than two or more incidents.

"81 per cent of households who experienced a break-in during the 12 months prior to interview experienced only one incident," Mr Milne explained.

Of respondents who had experienced physical assault, 30 per cent reported three or more incidents. Repeat victimisation of physical assault was more common for women; 36 per cent of women who were victims of physical assault reported three or more incidents in comparison to 27 per cent of men. Repeat victimisation of face-to-face threatened assault was similar for males and females (39 per cent and 38 per cent respectively).

Alcohol (or any other substance) was considered by victims to be a contributing factor in the majority of physical assaults (65 per cent). Where a respondent's most recent experience of physical assault occurred in a place of entertainment or recreation, 82 per cent of victims believed alcohol (or any other substance) contributed to the incident.

The *Crime Victimization* publication provides information about people's experiences for a selected range of personal and household crimes, including whether victims reported these incidents to police, characteristics of victims and characteristics of the most recent incident they experienced. Further information can be found in *Crime Victimization, Australia, 2012-13* (cat. no. 4530.0), available on the ABS website (www.abs.gov.au).

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Australian Bureau of Statistics (12 February 2014). *Crime Victimization, Australia, 2012-2013* (Media release). Retrieved from www.abs.gov.au on 9 September 2014.



The household crimes included in the survey were:

- Break-in
- Attempted break-in
- Motor vehicle theft
- Theft of property from a motor vehicle
- Malicious property damage
- Other theft.

What is a 'victim'?

For the *Crime Victimization Survey*, a victim is a person or household who has experienced at least one incident of a selected type of crime in the 12 months prior to interview in 2012-13. While state and territory legislative definitions of these crime types differ, the survey questions focused on specific actions and events to ensure consistency in definitions and responses across jurisdictions. For example, a respondent was counted as a victim of physical assault if they reported they had experienced 'physical force or violence' against their person. Responses therefore reflect individual respondents' subjective understanding of the survey questions and their own interpretation of their experiences.

A victim may report multiple incidents of a type of crime within the reference period, however for this survey, a victim is only counted once for each type of crime experienced.

What is an 'incident'?

An incident is a single occurrence of a crime event, such as a break-in to a household or an assault of a person. In any particular incident, a number of different

types of crimes may be committed against a person or household. The *Crime Victimization Survey* collects each relevant type of crime within an incident separately.

For instance, a person might confront someone breaking into their home and deliberately damaging property and subsequently be assaulted during that same incident. In this example, the person would be counted once for break-in (as a household victim), once for malicious property damage (as a household victim) and once for physical assault (as a person victim) (as demonstrated in [Diagram 1](#)).

What is 'multiple victimisation'?

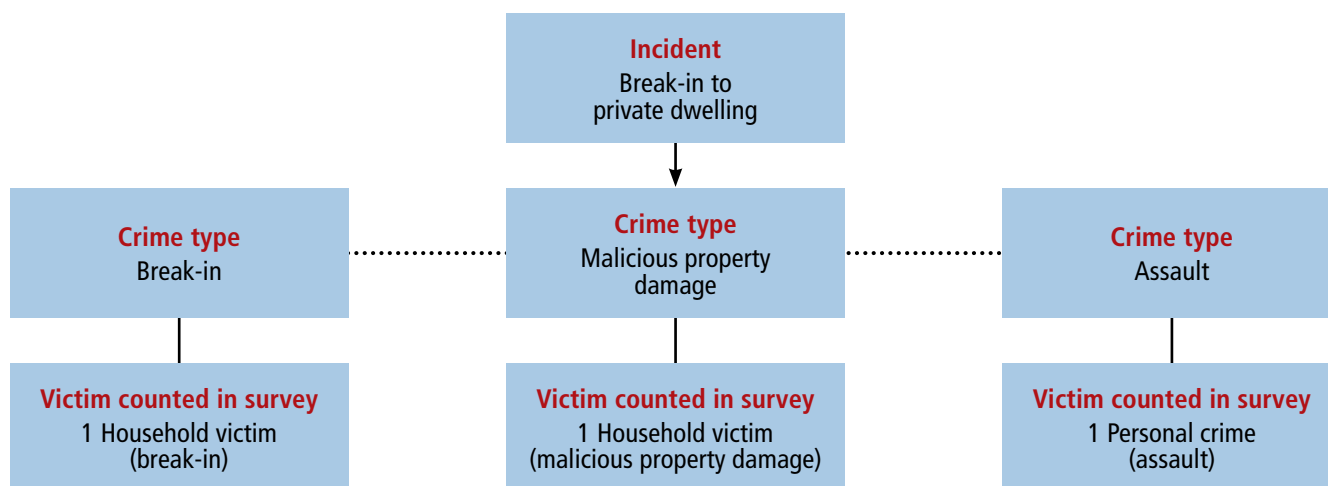
People and households may experience multiple incidents in the 12 months prior to interview, which may involve the same crime type or differing crime types. For the *Crime Victimization Survey*, 'multiple victimisation' refers to victims who experienced more than one instance of the same crime type within the 12 months prior to interview. For example, a person reporting being a victim of assault on three separate occasions within the reference period is considered, for the purposes of the survey, as having experienced multiple victimisation for assault. Where a victim reports experiencing multiple victimisation, specific details (e.g. location of crime, relationship to offender, whether alcohol or other substance was involved in the incident) are only collected for the most recent instance of that crime type experienced by the victim.

Data on multiple victimisation is presented in this publication as a categorical variable, based on the number of incidents of each crime type experienced by victims.

How does the 'Crime Victimization Survey' contribute to understanding victimisation in Australia?

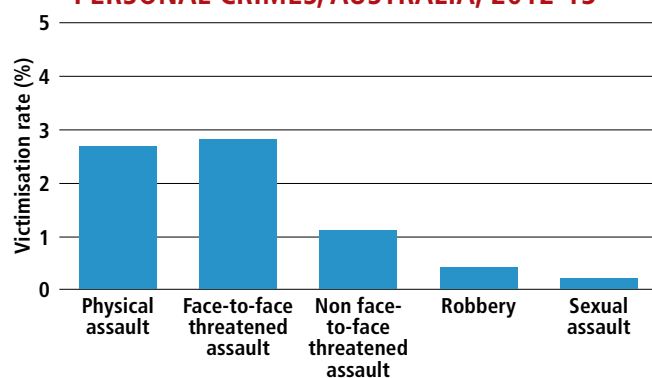
Estimates from the *Crime Victimization Survey* provide important information for the community about the extent of crime in Australia. This includes not only incidents that are reported to the police, but also those that are not brought to the attention of the police. This differs from available administrative data

DIAGRAM 1: BREAKDOWN OF INCIDENT RECORDING



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VICTIMISATION RATES^(a), SELECTED PERSONAL CRIMES, AUSTRALIA, 2012-13



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Footnote(s): (a) The total number of victims of a crime in a given population, expressed as a percentage of that population.

Source(s): *Crime Victimisation, Australia*.

sourced from state and territory police, which capture only those incidents which are reported to and recorded by police. More information about the differences between administrative data and survey data when measuring victims of crime can be found in the ABS information paper *Measuring Victims of Crime: A Guide to Using Administrative and Survey Data*, June 2011 (cat. no. 4500.0.55.001).

Data from the *Crime Victimisation Survey* is used by police, the justice sector, researchers and the wider Australian community to better understand the extent and nature of certain types of crime in Australia and the proportion of crime that is reported to the police. This knowledge contributes to a range of community, police and public policy initiatives, such as operational planning, evaluation of services, education programs and prevention policies.

What information about data quality is included in this publication?

Estimates with a relative standard error (RSE) of less than 25% are considered sufficiently reliable for most purposes and only estimates of such precision are referred to in the analysis. Due to the relatively small numbers of persons experiencing certain types of crime, some of the estimates provided with the data cubes are subject to high sampling error; these are indicated by footnotes when presented in figures and through the use of cell comments in data cubes.

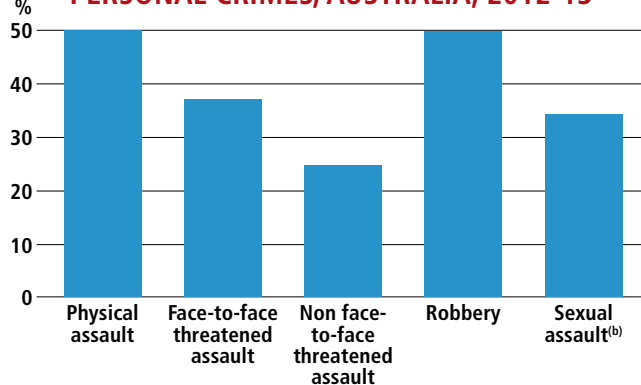
All differences and changes mentioned have been tested for statistical significance with a 95% level of confidence that there is a real difference between the two populations being tested. More information about significance testing can be found in the Technical Note.

HOW MANY PEOPLE EXPERIENCED PERSONAL CRIME IN 2012-13?¹

Victimisation

In the 12 months prior to interview in 2012-13, Australians were more likely to experience threatened assault than any of the other selected personal crime

REPORTING RATES^(a), SELECTED PERSONAL CRIMES, AUSTRALIA, 2012-13



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Footnote(s): (a) The total number of households that had the most recent incident of the household crime reported to police, expressed as a percentage of all households experiencing the household crime. The incident may have been reported by any member of the household or another person. (b) The estimated reporting rate for sexual assault has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution.

Source(s): *Crime Victimisation, Australia*.

types. They were also more likely to experience physical assault than either robbery or sexual assault.

Of the 18.4 million people aged 15 years and over in Australia, an estimated:

- 576,800 (3.1%) were victims of at least one threatened assault, including face-to-face and non face-to-face threatened assaults
- 498,000 (2.7%) were victims of at least one physical assault
- 65,700 (0.4%) were victims of at least one robbery
- 40,700 (0.2%) were victims of at least one sexual assault (people aged 18 years and over only).

Reporting to police

The proportion of victims who reported the most recent incident of each type of personal crime they experienced to police varied depending on the type of crime. The reporting rates for victims who experienced physical assault and robbery were higher than the reporting rates for victims of face-to-face threatened assault and non face-to-face threatened assault. The reporting rate for sexual assault has been excluded from this discussion as there is a high relative standard error associated with this estimate (see Datacube 1, Table 1a).

In 2012-13, an estimated:

- 50% of physical assault victims (or 247,700 victims) reported their most recent incident to police
- 50% of robbery victims (or 32,700 victims) reported their most recent incident to police
- 37% of face-to-face threatened assault victims (or 190,500 victims) reported their most recent incident to police
- 25% of non face-to-face threatened assault victims (or 51,400 victims) reported their most recent incident to police.

TABLE A: MULTIPLE VICTIMISATION, PERSONAL CRIME, 2012-13

	PERSONS				PROPORTIONS			
	Victims experiencing one or multiple incidents			Total victims ^(a)	Victims experiencing one or multiple incidents			Total victims ^(a)
	One incident '000	Two incidents '000	Three or more incidents '000	'000	One incident %	Two incidents %	Three or more incidents %	%
Physical assault	235.0	105.7	150.9	498.0	47.2	21.2	30.3	100.0
Threatened assault ^(b)	184.6	101.8	271.0	576.8	32.0	17.7	47.0	100.0
Robbery	49.7	*7.4	*6.2	65.7	75.7	*11.2	*9.4	100.0

(a) Includes persons where the number of incidents experienced is unknown.

(b) Includes both face-to-face and non face-to-face threatened assault.

* Estimate has a relative standard error (RSE) of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution.

Experience of multiple victimisation

Table A provides a summary of the number and proportion of victims who experienced a single incident compared to multiple incidents of each type of selected personal crime within the 12 months prior to interview.

- Of the selected personal crime types, victims of robbery were the most likely to experience a single incident only. Approximately three quarters (76%) of robbery victims experienced one incident only, compared to nearly half (47%) of physical assault victims and approximately one third (32%) of threatened assault victims. Victims of physical assault were more likely than victims of threatened assault to experience a single incident.
- Nearly half (47%) of people who experienced threatened assault (including both face-to-face and non face-to-face threatened assault) experienced three or more incidents of threatened assault. In comparison, just under one third (30%) of victims of physical assault experienced three or more incidents.

Robbery involving two or three or more incidents was excluded from analysis.²

ENDNOTES

1. All comparisons discussed have been tested for statistical significance with a 95% level of confidence that there is a real difference in the two populations being tested. Only data with a relative standard error (RSE) of less than 25% is referred to in the text of this publication. For further information, refer to the Technical Note.
2. Due to the relatively small numbers of persons experiencing two or more incidents of robbery in the 12 months prior to interview, these estimates are subject to high sampling error and as such have not been included in the analysis. For further details, refer to the Technical Note.

HAVE AUSTRALIANS' EXPERIENCES OF PERSONAL CRIME VICTIMISATION CHANGED FROM 2008-09?

The 2012-13 *Crime Victimization Survey* is the fifth annual national survey of crime victimisation in Australia. Differences in the proportion of persons who experienced different types of personal crimes and

whether the incidents were reported to police in the 2008-09 compared with 2012-13 surveys are discussed in this section.¹

Overall, the victimisation rate for each of the selected personal crimes was lower, or remained steady, in the 2012-13 survey as compared to 2008-09. There was no significant difference in the rate of reporting to police for the majority of personal crimes for the same two periods.

Victimisation

Of the selected personal crimes, the victimisation rate was lower in the 2012-13 survey than the 2008-09 survey for:

- **Face-to-face threatened assault:** 2.8% in 2012-13 compared with 3.9% in 2008-09
- **Robbery:** 0.4% in 2012-13 compared with 0.6% in 2008-09
- **Physical assault:** 2.7% in 2012-13 compared with 3.1% in 2008-09.

There was no significant change in the victimisation rate for non face-to-face threatened assault or sexual assault in 2012-13 compared to 2008-09.

Reporting to police

The rate of reporting face-to-face threatened assault to police was higher in the 2012-13 survey (37%) compared to 2008-09 (30%). Reporting rates for the other selected personal crimes did not change significantly from 2008-09 to 2012-13.

ENDNOTE

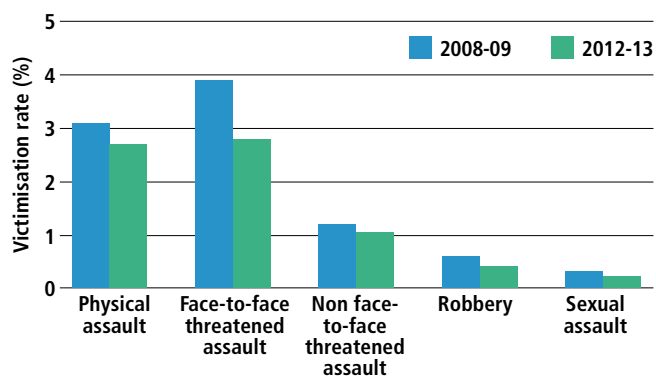
1. All comparisons discussed have been tested for statistical significance with a 95% level of confidence that there is a real difference in the two populations being tested. Only data with a relative standard error (RSE) of less than 25% is referred to in the text of this publication. For further information, refer to the Technical Note.

PHYSICAL ASSAULT¹

What is physical assault?

For this survey, physical assault is defined as an act of physical force or violence by a person against another person. It includes:

VICTIMISATION RATES^(a), SELECTED PERSONAL CRIMES, AUSTRALIA, 2008-09 AND 2012-13



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Footnote(s): (a) The total number of victims of a crime in a given population, expressed as a percentage of that population.

Source(s): *Crime Victimisation, Australia*.

- Being pushed, grabbed, shoved, slapped, kicked, bitten, choked, shot, burnt
- Being hit with something such as a bat
- Being dragged or hit deliberately by a vehicle
- Assault which happens in the line of work.

Physical assault excludes:

- Incidents that occurred during the course of play on a sporting field or organised sport
- Verbal abuse
- Incidents where the person did not encounter the offender face-to-face
- Incidents of sexual assault or threatened sexual assault which also involved physical assault.

Who experienced physical assault in 2012-13?

During the 12 months prior to interview, an estimated 498,000 people experienced at least one incident of physical assault in Australia (2.7% of the population), with more males estimated to have experienced physical assault than females (3.2% and 2.2% respectively).

The physical assault victimisation rate for persons aged between 15-19 years (5.1%) and 20-24 years (5.0%) was higher than the rate for persons aged 35-44 years (3.3%), 45-54 years (2.2%), 55-64 years (1.3%) and 65 years and over (0.5%).

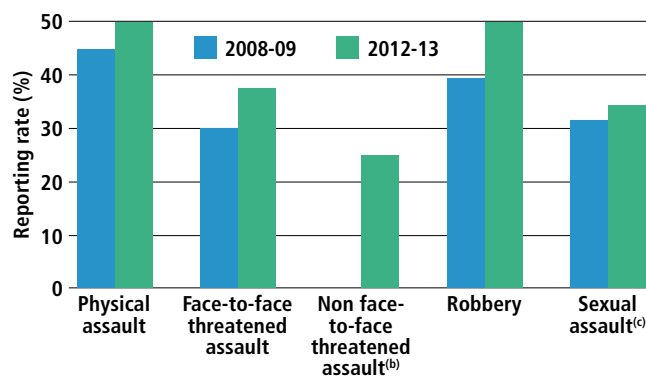
Victims of physical assault were more likely to live outside capital cities, with an estimated victimisation rate of 3.1% (204,600 victims) compared to 2.5% (293,400 victims) for people living in capital cities.

Experience of multiple victimisation

Victims of physical assault were most likely to experience a single incident in the 12 months prior to interview (47.2%), with an estimated 21.2% experiencing two incidents and 30.3% experiencing three or more incidents.

Male victims of physical assault were more likely to experience a single incident than female victims (52.1% of male victims compared to 40.1% of female victims), whereas female victims of physical assault were more

REPORTING RATES^(a), SELECTED PERSONAL CRIMES, AUSTRALIA, 2008-09 AND 2012-13



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Footnote(s): (a) The total number of households that had the most recent incident of the household crime reported to police, expressed as a percentage of all households experiencing the household crime. The incident may have been reported by any member of the household or another person. (b) Information about reporting to police for non face-to-face threatened assault was not collected prior to 2010-11. (c) The estimated reporting rate for sexual assault in 2012-13 has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution.

Source(s): *Crime Victimisation, Australia*.

likely to experience three or more incidents (35.7% of female victims compared to 26.5% of male victims).

Reporting rate

In the 12 months prior to interview in 2012-13, an estimated 247,700 victims of physical assault (49.7% of all physical assault victims) reported the most recent incident they experienced to the police.

Characteristics of physical assault incidents

This section discusses characteristics of the most recent incident for persons who were victims of physical assault in the 12 months prior to interview.

In the most recent incident of physical assault experienced by victims:

- The offender was more likely to be male (for 82.5% of victims, or 411,000 victims) than female (for 11.1% of victims, or 55,400 victims)
- The offender was known to 58.1% of victims (or 289,500 victims), with the offender most likely to be a family member (for 11.9% of victims, or 59,200 victims)
- When the offender was known, the victim was less likely to be living with the offender at the time of the incident (16.5% of victims, or 82,200 victims) than not living with the offender (41.6% of victims, or 207,300 victims).
- The location was most likely to be the victim's home (for 29.9% of victims, or 148,700), followed by work/place of study (22.7% of victims, or 113,200)
- Where the incident was not reported to police, the main reason given was:
 - The incident was considered too trivial/unimportant (12.8% or 63,500 victims)
 - It was believed there was nothing the police could do (8.6% or 43,000 victims).



ENDNOTE

1. All comparisons discussed have been tested for statistical significance with a 95% level of confidence that there is a real difference between the two populations being tested. Only data with a relative standard error (RSE) of less than 25% is referred to in the text of this publication. For further information, refer to the Technical Note.

THREATENED ASSAULT¹

What is threatened assault?

For this survey, threatened assault is defined as a verbal and/or physical threat to inflict physical harm, where the person being threatened believed the threat was able and likely to be carried out. Threatened assault may occur face-to-face or via non face-to-face methods (such as email).

Threatened assault includes:

- Any threat or attempt to strike the person which could cause pain
- Situations where a gun was left in an obvious place (including fake or toy guns where the victim thought it was real) or if the person knew the perpetrator had access to a gun
- Incidents where the person was threatened in their line of work.

Threatened assault excludes:

- Any incident of name calling or swearing which did not involve a physical threat
- Threats that resulted in an actual assault (the latter are counted under the offence category of physical assault).

Face-to-face threatened assault

Face-to-face threatened assault includes any verbal and/or physical threat, made in person, to inflict physical harm where the person being threatened believed the threat was able and likely to be carried out.

It excludes any incident where the victim did not encounter the offender in person (e.g. via telephone, text message, email, in writing or through social media).

Who experienced face-to-face threatened assault in the 12 months prior to interview in 2012-13?

In the 12 months prior to interview, an estimated

511,700 Australians aged 15 years and over experienced face-to-face threatened assault (2.8% of the population), which was lower than in 2011-12 (an estimated 596,000 Australians, or 3.3% of the population).

Males were more likely to be victims of this crime type (3.4% of males compared to 2.2% of females).

The face-to-face threatened assault victimisation rate for persons aged between 15-19 years and 20-24 years (both 4.7%) was higher than the rate for persons aged 35-44 years (2.9%), 45-54 years (2.8%), 55-64 years (1.8%) and 65 years and over (0.7%).

Experience of multiple victimisation

An estimated 38.4% of all victims of face-to-face threatened assault (196,500 victims) experienced a single incident in the 12 months prior to interview, while a similar proportion (38.5%) experienced three or more incidents (197,200 victims).

Reporting rate

An estimated 37.2% of victims of face-to-face threatened assault (or 190,500 victims) did not report their most recent incident to police.

Characteristics of face-to-face threatened assault incidents

This section discusses characteristics of the most recent incident for persons who were victims of face-to-face threatened assault in the 12 months prior to interview.

In the most recent incident of face-to-face threatened assault experienced by victims:

- The offender was more likely to be male (for 76.0% of victims, or 388,800 victims) than female (14.8%, or 75,600 victims)
- The offender was more likely to be known to the victim (58.8%, or 300,900 victims) than a stranger (41.2%, or 210,800 victims)
- When the offender was known, the victim was less likely to be living with the offender at the time of the incident (8.1% of victims, or an estimated 41,300 victims) than not living with the offender (50.7% of victims, or an estimated 259,600 victims).
- The location was more likely to be the victim's home (25.4% of victims, or 130,000 victims) or work (25.1% of victims, or 128,600 victims) than any other location
- A weapon was not used in the most recent incident for the majority of victims (89.9%, or 460,100 victims)
- For nearly one in four victims (23.8%), the main reason they did not report the incident to police was because they considered the incident to be too trivial/unimportant.

Non face-to-face threatened assault

Non face-to-face threatened assault includes any threat to inflict physical harm where the victim did not encounter the offender in person, such as via telephone,

text message, email, in writing or through social media and the person being threatened believed the threat was able and likely to be carried out.

Who experienced non face-to-face threatened assault in the 12 months prior to interview in 2012-13?

In the 12 months prior to interview, an estimated 208,200 Australians aged 15 years and over experienced non face-to-face threatened assault (1.1% of the population).

The non face-to-face threatened assault victimisation rate for persons aged between 15-19 (2.8%) was higher than the rate for persons aged 25-34 years (1.5%), 35-44 years (1.3%), 45-54 years (1.0%), and 55-64 years (0.5%). The victimisation rate was also lower in state and territory capital cities (1.0%) than in other parts of Australia (1.4%).

Reporting rate

One in four (24.7%) of those who were a victim of non face-to-face threatened assault in the 12 months prior to interview reported the most recent incident they experienced to the police.

ENDNOTE

1. All comparisons discussed have been tested for statistical significance with a 95% level of confidence that there is a real difference between the two populations being tested. Only data with a relative standard error (RSE) of less than 25% is referred to in the text of this publication. For further information, refer to the Technical Note.

ROBBERY¹

What is robbery?

In this survey, robbery is defined as an act of stealing (or attempting to steal) property from a person by physically attacking them or threatening them with force or violence. It includes incidents where the person was threatened in their line of work.

Robbery excludes pick pocketing or other types of theft that did not involve physical or threatened violence.

Victims of robbery are also included in the physical assault and threatened assault estimates, in instances where they were actually assaulted or threatened with assault.

Who experienced robbery in 2012-13?

During the 12 months prior to interview, an estimated 65,700 (0.4%) Australians aged 15 years and over were victims of at least one robbery. This included 0.6% of males (50,200 victims) and 0.2% of females (15,500 victims).

Reporting rate

Around half (50% or 32,700 persons) of all victims of robbery reported the most recent incident to police.

Characteristics of robbery incidents

This section discusses characteristics of the most recent incident for persons who were victims of robbery in the 12 months prior to interview.

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In the most recent incident of robbery experienced by victims:

- The offender was more likely to be male (for 82% of victims) than female (for 3.5% of victims)
- Just under a third occurred in the street or other open land (for 33% of victims)
- Nearly three-quarters involved the use of a weapon (74% of victims)
- The incident involved an attempt to steal property only for nearly three in five victims (60% of victims), whereas two in five victims actually had property stolen (40% of victims).

ENDNOTE

1. All comparisons discussed have been tested for statistical significance with a 95% level of confidence that there is a real difference between the two populations being tested. Only data with a relative standard error (RSE) of less than 25% is referred to in the text of this publication. For further information, refer to the Technical Note.

SEXUAL ASSAULT

What is sexual assault?

For this survey, sexual assault is defined as an act of a sexual nature carried out against the victim's will or without the victim's consent. It involves physical contact and/or the use of physical force, intimidation or coercion.

Sexual assault includes:

- Any actual or attempted forced sexual activity such as rape, attempted rape or indecent assault (e.g. being touched inside clothing or intentional rubbing of genitals against the victim)
- Assault with the intent to sexually assault
- Incidents that occurred at the victim's place of work.

Sexual assault excludes sexual harassment that did not involve or lead to an actual assault.

For this survey, only people aged 18 years and over were asked the questions about sexual assault.

Who experienced sexual assault in 2012-13?

During the 12 months prior to interview, an estimated 40,700 Australians (0.2% of the population) aged 18 years and over were a victim of sexual assault. This included 26,400 female victims (0.3%) and 14,400 male victims (0.2%).

Reporting rate

Just over a third of all victims of sexual assault (34%) reported the most recent incident to police.

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Australian Bureau of Statistics (2014).
4530.0 – Crime Victimisation, Australia, 2012-13.
Retrieved from www.abs.gov.au on 9 September 2014.

AUSTRALIA'S 18 TO 24 YEAR-OLDS MOST AT RISK OF VIOLENCE



Young people between the ages of 18 and 24 were the most likely group to have experienced some form of violence last year, according to *Personal Safety, Australia 2012*, released by the **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

We found that over one in ten young women, and nearly one in four young men had experienced some form of violence during 2012,” said Fiona Blackshaw from the ABS.

“Both men and women were more likely to have experienced physical violence than sexual violence. However, sexual violence was four times more common for women than men: 19 per cent of women had experienced sexual violence since the age of 15 compared to 4.5 per cent of men.

“We found that since the age of 15, men were more likely to have experienced violence from a stranger than by someone they knew, while the reverse was true for women.

“Women were more likely than men to have experienced violence by a partner since the age of 15: 17 per cent of women and 5.3 per cent

of men had experienced violence by a partner. There’s been no significant change in the proportion of men or women who experienced partner violence since 2005.

Since the age of 15, men are more likely to experience violence from a stranger than by someone they knew, while the reverse is true for women.

“When looking at a person’s most recent incident of physical assault by a male, the most likely location for a woman to be physically assaulted by a male was in their home. The most common place for men to be physically assaulted by a male was at a place of entertainment or recreation.

“We also found that both men

Notes

The *Personal Safety Survey* collected information from men and women aged 18 years and over about their experience of violence since the age of 15.

Violence is defined as any incident involving the occurrence, attempt or threat of either physical or sexual assault experienced by a person since the age of 15.

Physical assault involves the use of physical force with the intent to harm or frighten a person.

Physical threat is an attempt to inflict physical harm or a threat or suggestion of intent to inflict physical harm, made face-to-face where the person believes it is able to and likely to be carried out.

Sexual assault is an act of a sexual nature carried out against a person’s will through the use of physical force, intimidation or coercion, and any attempts to do this.

Sexual threat is the threat of an act of a sexual nature, made face-to-face where the person believes it is able to and likely to be carried out.

The term ‘**partner**’ in the *Personal Safety Survey* is used to describe a person the respondent lives with, or lived with at some point, in a married or de facto relationship.

and women were unlikely to report their most recent incident of physical assault by a male to the police,” said Ms Blackshaw.

This is also the first time that the ABS has collected information on the prevalence of emotional abuse by a partner – this includes things like psychological and financial abuse. The ABS found that since the age of 15, women were more likely than men to have experienced emotional abuse by a partner: 25 per cent of women compared to 14 per cent of men.

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Australian Bureau of Statistics (11 December 2013). *Australia’s 18 to 24 year-olds most at risk of violence* (Media release). Retrieved from www.abs.gov.au on 8 September 2014.

PREVALENCE OF VIOLENCE

Australian Bureau of Statistics explains how it determines the prevalence of violence based on the findings from its *Personal Safety Survey*

Measuring the prevalence of violence

A key objective of the *Personal Safety Survey* (PSS) is to measure the prevalence of violence in Australia.

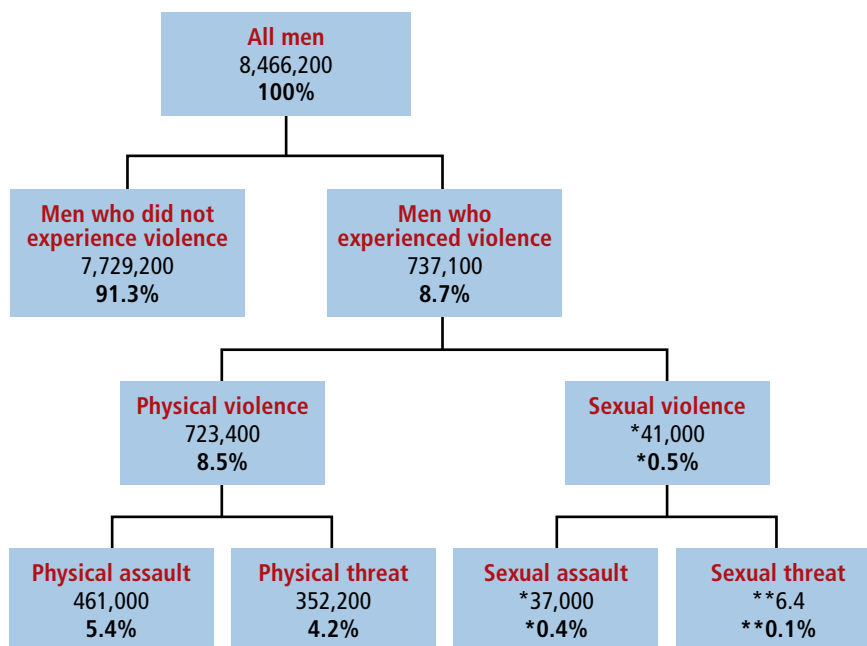
For the purposes of this survey, *violence* is defined as any incident involving the occurrence, attempt or threat of either physical or sexual assault experienced by a person since the age of 15. *Physical assault* involves the use of physical force with the intent to harm or frighten a person. *Physical threat* is an attempt to inflict physical harm or a threat or suggestion of intent to inflict physical harm, made face-to-face where the person believes it is able to and likely to be carried out. *Sexual assault* is an act of a sexual nature carried out against a person's will through the use of physical force, intimidation or coercion, and any attempts to do this. *Sexual threat* is the threat of an act of a sexual nature, made face-to-face where the person believes it is able to and likely to be carried out. *Physical violence* involves any incidents of physical assault and/or physical threat. *Sexual violence* involves any incidents of sexual assault and/or sexual threat.¹

The PSS collects information from men and women aged 18 years and over about their experience of violence, since the age of 15, by different male and female perpetrator types (including current partner, previous partner, boyfriend/girlfriend or date, other known man/woman, and stranger).

Measuring multiple incidents and multiple types of violence

It is possible that people have experienced multiple incidents of violence. Where a person has experienced more than one type of violence, they are counted separately for each type of violence they experience but are only counted once in the aggregated totals.

DIAGRAM 1: MEN'S EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE^(a), DURING THE LAST 12 MONTHS



* Estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution.

** Estimate has a relative standard error of greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use.

(a) Components are not able to be added together to produce a total. Where a person has experienced both physical and sexual violence, they are counted separately for each type of violence they experienced but are counted once only in the aggregated totals.

Components therefore may not add to the totals. For example if a person had experienced an incident of physical assault by a stranger and an incident of physical assault by their current partner, they would be counted against each type of violence by type of perpetrator (i.e. physical assault by a stranger and physical assault by a current partner) but they would only be counted once in the total for those who had experienced physical assault.

It is also possible that a single incident of violence may involve more than one of the different types of violence. In the PSS a single incident of violence is only counted once.

Where an incident involves both sexual and physical assault, it is counted as a sexual assault. For example if a person is physically assaulted during or as part of a sexual assault, this would be counted once

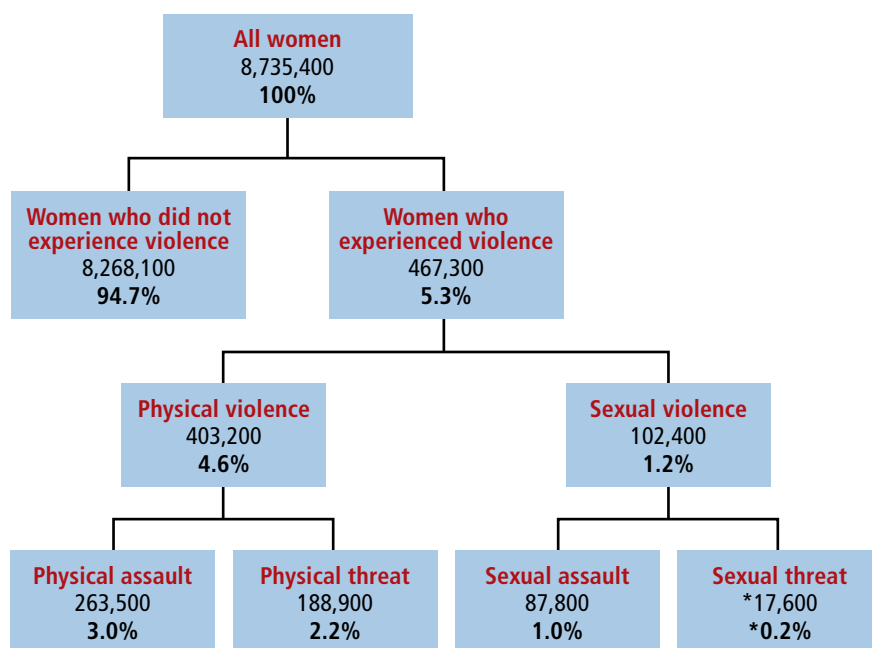
only as a sexual assault.

Where an incident involves a person being both threatened with assault and assaulted, it is counted as an assault. For example if in a single incident a perpetrator threatens to sexually assault a person and then sexually assaults them, this would be counted once only as a sexual assault.

The same applies for incidents where a person is both threatened with physical assault and physically assaulted.



DIAGRAM 2: WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE^(a), DURING THE LAST 12 MONTHS



* Estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution.

** Estimate has a relative standard error of greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use.

(a) Components are not able to be added together to produce a total. Where a person has experienced both physical and sexual violence, they are counted separately for each type of violence they experienced but are counted once only in the aggregated totals.

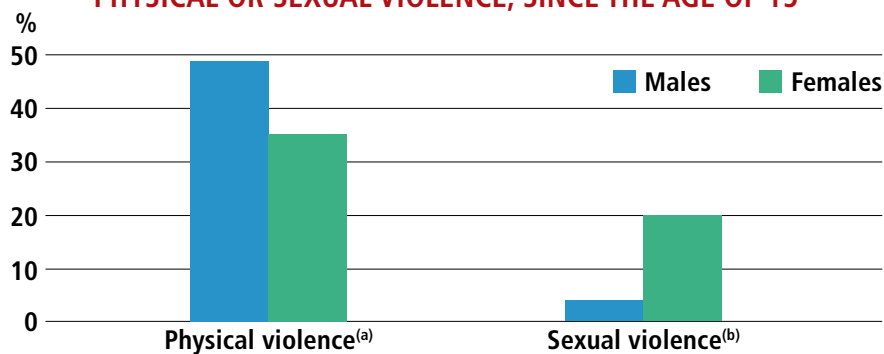
Prevalence of violence – during the last 12 months

Men are more likely than women to experience violence. In 2012 it was estimated that 8.7% of all men aged 18 years and over (737,100) and 5.3% of all women aged 18 years and over (467,300) had experienced violence in the 12 months prior to the survey. (Data presented in Diagrams 1 and 2 are taken from Table 1 of the survey).

Both men and women who experienced violence in the 12

months prior to the survey were more likely to have experienced physical violence than sexual violence. In 2012 it was estimated that 8.5% of all men aged 18 years and over (723,400) and 4.6% of all women aged 18 years and over (403,200) had experienced physical violence in the 12 months prior to the survey. Further, 1.2% of all women aged 18 years and over (102,400) had experienced sexual violence in the 12 months prior to the survey (refer Table 1 of the survey).

PROPORTION OF MEN AND WOMEN WHO EXPERIENCED PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE, SINCE THE AGE OF 15



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Footnote(s):

(a) Includes physical assault and/or physical threat.

(b) Includes sexual assault and/or sexual threat.

Source(s): *Personal Safety, Australia*.

Prevalence of violence – since the age of 15

In 2012 it was estimated that 49% of all men aged 18 years and over (4,148,000) and 41% of all women aged 18 years and over (3,560,600) had experienced violence since the age of 15 (refer Table 1 of the survey).

Both men and women were more likely to have experienced physical violence than sexual violence since the age of 15:

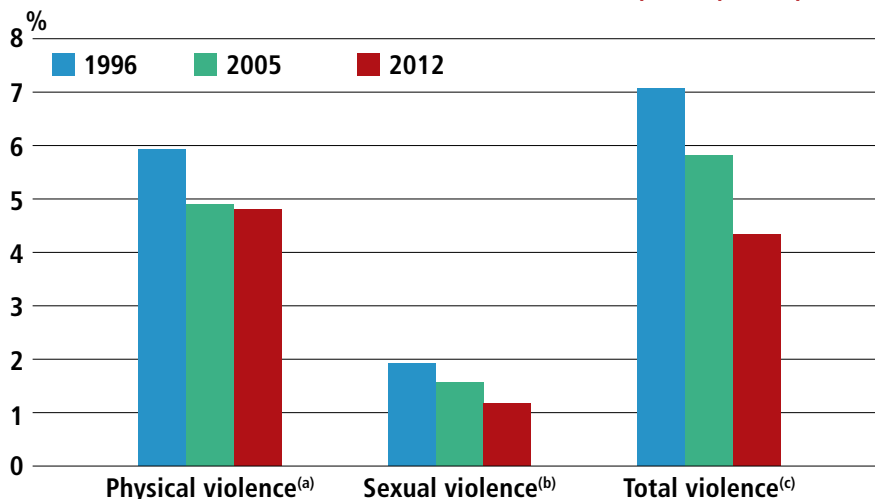
- 48% (4,072,200) of men had experienced physical violence compared to 4.5% (381,100) of men who had experienced sexual violence, since the age of 15, and
- 34% (3,006,100) of women had experienced physical violence compared to 19% (1,696,100) of women who had experienced sexual violence, since the age of 15.

Changes in prevalence of violence over time

Between 2005 and 2012 there was a statistically significant decrease in the proportion of men aged 18 years and over who had experienced violence in the 12 months prior to interview (refer Table 2 of the Survey). In 2005 an estimated 10.8% of all men had experienced violence in the 12 months prior to interview compared to 8.7% in 2012. This change was largely driven by the decrease in the estimated number of men who had experienced physical violence in the 12 months prior to interview (10.4% in 2005 compared to 8.5% in 2012).

While there was a statistically significant decrease from 1996 to 2005 in the proportion of women aged 18 years and over who had experienced violence in the 12 months prior to the survey (from 7.1% in 1996 to 5.8% in 2005), there was no statistically significant change from 2005 to 2012 in the proportion of women who had experienced violence in the 12 months prior to the survey. In 2005 an estimated 5.8% of all women had experienced violence in the 12 months prior to interview compared to 5.3% in 2012².

PROPORTION OF WOMEN WHO EXPERIENCED PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE DURING THE LAST 12 MONTHS, 1996, 2005, 2012



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Footnote(s): (a) Includes physical assault and/or physical threat. (b) Includes sexual assault and/or sexual threat. (c) Where a person has experienced both physical and sexual violence, they are counted separately for each type of violence they experienced but are only counted once in the aggregated totals.

Source(s): *Personal Safety, Australia*.

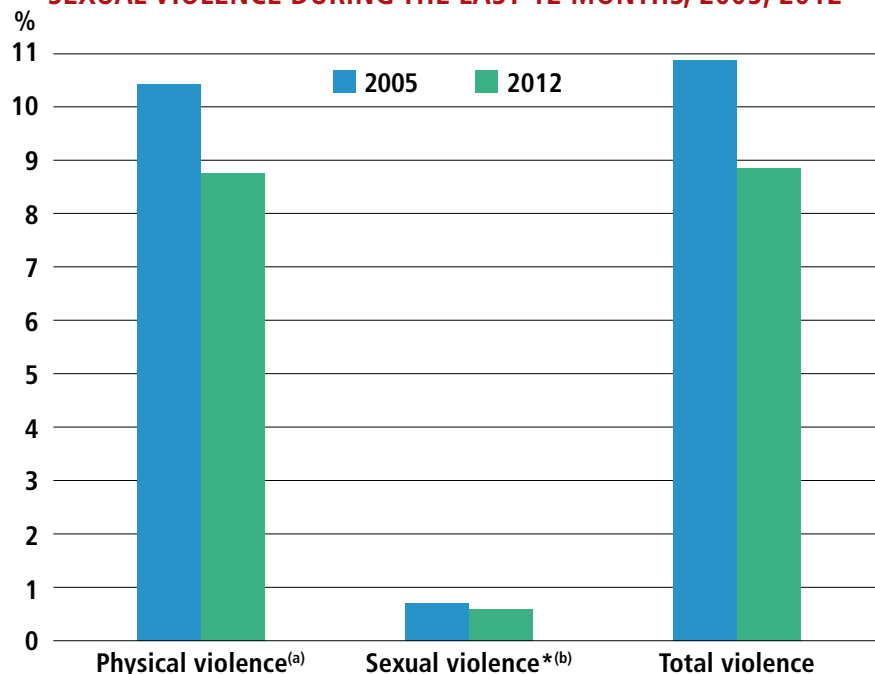
ENDNOTES

Endnote 1 – The different types of violence are defined as follows:

Physical assault involves the use of physical force with the intent to harm or frighten a person. Assaults may have occurred in conjunction

with a robbery and includes incidents where a person was assaulted in their line of work (e.g. assaulted while working as a security guard). This includes being: pushed, grabbed or shoved; slapped; kicked, bitten or hit with a fist; hit with an object or something else that could hurt you; beaten; choked; stabbed; shot; or any other type

PROPORTION OF MEN WHO EXPERIENCED PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE DURING THE LAST 12 MONTHS, 2005, 2012



© Commonwealth of Australia 2013.

Footnote(s): *2012 sexual violence estimate has an RSE of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution. (a) Includes assault and threat. Where a person has experienced both assault and threat, they are counted separately for each type of violence they experienced but are counted only once in the aggregated total. (b) Where a person has experienced both physical and sexual violence, they are counted separately for each type of violence they experienced but are only counted once in the aggregated totals.

Source(s): *Personal Safety, Australia*.

of physical assault which involved the use of physical force with the intent to harm or frighten a person. Physical assault excludes incidents of sexual assault or threatened sexual assault which also involved physical assault, and excludes incidents that occurred during the course of play on a sporting field. Physical assault also excludes incidents of violence that occurred before the age of 15 – for the purposes of this survey, these are defined as Physical Abuse. If a person experienced physical assault and physical threat in the same incident, this was counted once only as a physical assault. If a person experienced sexual assault and physical assault in the same incident, this was counted once only as a sexual assault.

Physical threat is an attempt to inflict physical harm or a threat or suggestion of intent to inflict physical harm, that was made face-to-face where the person believes it was able to and likely to be carried out. Physical threat includes incidents where a person was threatened in their line of work. It excludes: any incident of violence in which the threat was actually carried out and incidents which occurred during the course of play on a sporting field. If a person experienced sexual threat and physical threat in the same incident, this was counted once only as a sexual threat.

Sexual assault is an act of a sexual nature carried out against a person's will through the use of physical force, intimidation or coercion, and includes any attempts to do this. This includes rape, attempted rape, aggravated sexual assault (assault with a weapon), indecent assault, penetration by objects, forced sexual activity that did not end in penetration and attempts to force a person into sexual activity. Incidents so defined would be an offence under state and territory criminal law. Sexual assault excludes unwanted sexual touching – for the purposes of this survey, this is defined as Sexual Harassment. Sexual assault also excludes incidents of violence that occurred before the age of 15 – for the purposes of this survey, these are defined as Sexual Abuse. If a person experienced sexual assault and sexual threat in the same incident, this was counted once only as a sexual assault. If an incident of sexual assault also involved physical assault or threats, this was counted once only as a sexual assault.

Sexual threat involves the threat of acts of a sexual nature, that were made face-to-face where the person believes it is able to and likely to be carried out. If a person experienced sexual assault and sexual threat in the same incident, this was counted once only as a sexual assault.

Endnote 2 – All differences and changes mentioned have been tested for statistical significance with a 95% level of confidence that there is a real difference in the two populations being tested. To determine whether there is a statistical difference between any other two estimates, significance testing should be undertaken.

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Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013). *4906.0 – Personal Safety, Australia, 2012*, 'Measuring the prevalence of violence'. Retrieved from www.abs.gov.au on 12 June 2014.

THE IMPACT OF VIOLENT CRIME ON YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

VICTIM ASSIST QUEENSLAND EXPLAINS THE EFFECTS OF VIOLENCE ON VICTIMS

How you might feel

Everyone is affected differently by a traumatic event such as a violent crime. There are a wide range of normal responses you may go through and your feelings may differ from day to day. Some days you may feel like you can cope and other days you may feel like you have difficulty doing everyday things.

It is also normal for people who have witnessed the incident and family and friends of the victim to experience similar reactions.

Here are some common emotional and physical reactions to a traumatic event such as a violent crime.

Common emotional reactions to trauma:	Common physical reactions to trauma:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Emptiness or numbness ➤ Grief and loss ➤ Shock and disbelief ➤ Fear or anxiety ➤ Feelings of self blame, shame or guilt ➤ Outbursts of anger or feeling irritable ➤ Feelings of helplessness or panic ➤ Feeling detached and isolated from others ➤ Tiredness and lethargy ➤ Denial or trying to avoid anything to do with the trauma ➤ Sadness, depression or loss of self-esteem ➤ Difficulty concentrating or remembering ➤ Concern over burdening others with your problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Aches and pains like headaches, back aches and stomach aches ➤ Nightmares or problems sleeping ➤ Sudden sweating or heart palpitations ➤ Changes in appetite ➤ Constipation or diarrhoea ➤ Becoming easily startled by noise or unexpected touch ➤ Becoming more susceptible to colds and illnesses.

You may find you have some or all of these symptoms, or none of them. Be assured that your reactions are a normal, natural part of dealing with a trauma. It is important to look after yourself and seek help and support from others. In many cases the symptoms will go away over time with the support of your family and friends.

You may also find that you would like additional support such as counselling, therapy or someone to just listen to you and provide you with information. You can access a support service at any time after a crime has happened. You may feel this is something you want to do very soon after the incident, or you may feel the need after some time has passed, for example leading up to and during a court proceeding.



Looking after yourself

Everyone has their own way of coping with a traumatic event. Here are some ways that may help you to cope.

- Talk about how you feel with someone you trust
- Don't make life-changing decisions until you feel ready
- Remember that bad feelings do go away but it can take time
- Exercise regularly
- Limit your intake of alcohol
- Try to structure your days as much as possible
- Make time to do nice things for yourself
- Eat regularly and try to keep your diet healthy
- Keep a journal of how you feel
- Seek help from a support service.

For family and friends – your support and wellbeing

Supporting a family member or friend who has been the victim of a violent crime can be difficult, especially as you are probably feeling upset or angry at what has happened to someone you care about. You may be unsure how you should act or what you should say but you want to be a support to them.

Here are some things you can do that may help you cope and provide support to the victim.

- Spend time with them
- Listen attentively (if you don't know what to say it is OK to be quietly supportive)
- Don't be judgemental – trust what they are telling you
- Provide opportunities to talk about their feelings
- Tell them you are sorry about what has happened to them
- Avoid telling them you know how they feel
- Don't take angry outbursts personally
- Help them with everyday tasks such as cooking and cleaning so they can have some private time
- Be patient and understand that people recover at different rates
- Be mindful not to discuss evidence if there is an active court case.

When you are giving support to someone else, it is important that you look after yourself because the experience can be hard on you too. Feelings of guilt or powerlessness are common. Give yourself some time out, if possible take some leave from work if you need to. Support services are also available for family and supporters of victims of crime and can provide counselling, moral support and information.

Supporting a child or young person who is a victim

A child or young person who is a victim of crime will also experience physical and emotional reactions but they may not be able to express them in words the same way an adult can.

Children and young people often experience feelings of guilt and may find it hard to tell someone about the crime that they have experienced. They may also have witnessed family violence and feel afraid or ashamed to tell anyone. It is important that when they do tell an adult they trust, that they are believed and supported and no longer feel like they are going through the experience alone.

Younger children. Here are some common reactions that younger children who suffer trauma may show:

- Nightmares or problems sleeping
- Bedwetting
- The behaviour of a younger child
- Clinginess to adults
- Difficulty trusting adults, including parents
- Feeling that what happened is their fault becoming withdrawn and afraid of being left alone
- Suffering headaches and loss of appetite
- Losing concentration
- Fighting with friends or siblings and other antisocial behaviour
- Fear of people, places or things that remind them of what happened.

Older children and teenagers. Older children and teenagers may react to trauma in similar and slightly different ways to younger children.

Here are some other common reactions to trauma they may show:

- Feeling ashamed or blame themselves for becoming a victim of crime
- Feeling like there is nobody they can turn to for help who understands
- Can no longer concentrate and may start to do badly at school
- Risk-taking or self-harming behaviour
- Feeling worthless
- Conflicts with family members or friends
- Overt sexual, aggressive or antisocial behaviour
- Feeling angry, anxious or afraid
- No longer want to be left alone
- Becoming withdrawn and sad
- Can no longer talk about it, or can't stop talking about it
- Feeling like nobody believes them.

While the support of family and friends is very important, it is also important to get professional support from a person or organisation trained to help young victims of crime recover. Support is important to help the child or young person to learn it is not their fault that someone hurt them, so they can learn that other people have been through similar things and start the process of feeling better.

Children and young people can often detect when an adult is worried, stressed or anxious, so it is important to try and keep normal routines in place as much as possible. As an adult supporting a child or young person who is a victim of crime, it is also important to look after yourself and ensure that you have someone to talk to and to support you.

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Victim Assist Queensland (May 2011). *A guide for victims of crime in Queensland*, pp. 3-6. Retrieved from <https://publications.qld.gov.au> on 23 September 2014.



ARE WE IN THE MIDST OF A CRIME WAVE?

AN ON LINE OPINION CONTRIBUTION FROM **DON AITKIN**

I overheard a conversation the other day in which a woman said that she was worried, because we seemed to be in a crime wave – shootings, dreadful things happening to people, rape, nothing was sacred, no one was safe. According to my vague memory, things criminal were much the same as they had been. I wondered whether she got her feelings from watching television news, and I would guess that was at least part of it. Crimes of all kinds are the staple elements of news, because they are dramatic, they can make us fearful for ourselves, and they are not at all boring.

Men are the most likely victims for murder, manslaughter and robbery, women for sexual assault and kidnapping.

I set off to find out what I could. I did this many years ago for another purpose, and then discovered that the safest and least turbulent period in the last century, at least with respect to crime, was the Great Depression. Theft, robbery, rape and murder were all at their lowest rate then. What was the story now?

I used to go for data to the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC), where the library and its staff were most helpful. Today much of the material you would want to use is available online, and the story it tells is most interesting. I've gone back twenty years to when Australian GDP per capita was roughly half what it is today. In 1993 our population was 17.7 million; it is estimated at more than 23.5 million today. We are, on average, twice as wealthy as we were then, and about a third more populous. What has that meant in terms of crime?

I need to start with a warning. Not all crime is reported (sexual assault is thought to be greatly under-reported), and not all alleged crime is actually crime. Not all crime is solved, either. The Institute provides this kind of warning when it presents its data, and it provides helpful and clear definitions, too. Yet I think there are broad trends, and here are some of them.

- The early 21st century seems to be a lot safer, in almost every respect, than the early 20th century. This is a more civilised and peaceful society than it was then.
- Compared to 1993, murder and manslaughter are less common, both absolutely and proportionately. Despite all the talk about drive-by shootings, homicide involving guns represents only about a sixth of all murders. Knives are twice as common as murder weapons.
- Sexual assault cases are way up – about 50 per cent. Nobody knows how much of the increase flows from a greater preparedness on the part of women to come

forward and register a complaint, and how much from the fact of more sexual assaults. Incidentally, about one in six of the victims, those alleging a sexual assault, are men.

- Both armed and unarmed robbery are a little more frequent than they were in 1993, though the rate is much the same.
- Kidnapping and abduction are uncommon, but they are a little more frequent now than they were.
- Unlawful Entry With Intent refers to people who entered your house because they could get in, and while in they appropriated something of yours and left – in short, household theft. That crime has nearly halved since 1993, while motor vehicle theft actually has halved. All other theft is rather less common than it was.
- The place of crime, for anything violent, is likely to be a residence of some kind, while robbery is more likely to take place somewhere else.
- Finally, men are the most likely victims for murder, manslaughter and robbery, women for sexual assault and kidnapping.

The evidence for all of this has errors all around it, but on the evidence that we have, there is no crime wave of any consequence, if we are comparing now to the recent past. The long-term (twenty-year) trend is down, or stable, for all categories of crime save sexual assault. In the past twenty years our population has grown by a third and our average wealth has doubled. Over the last fifty years there has been a great decline in church-going, too. Does all that tell us anything? Not to me. Too many variables.

In fact, the rates of crime over the last century, apart from the time of the Great Depression, seem to vary around a mean in most cases. If rates go up, they later go down. It is as though what we define as 'crime' is simply a part of the experience of our society. That doesn't mean I accept it, just that greater wealth all round doesn't seem to reduce the rate of homicide, even if it appears to be associated with a fall in the rate of theft. But then, we were even less inclined to steal when people had very little and things were tough.

I'd happily argue with someone who wants to tell me that we are in a crime wave and that 'They' have got to do something about it. The evidence doesn't support such a claim. But I don't have explanations. As so often in the social sciences, there are too many variables and the data, though expressed in numbers, are awfully rubbery.

Don Aitkin has been an academic and vice-chancellor.

Aitkin, D (10 July 2014). *Are we in the midst of a crime wave?*
Retrieved from www.onlineopinion.com.au on 14 July 2014.

Is the world really becoming less violent?

DESPITE THE AMOUNT OF MEDIA COVERAGE, RATES OF VIOLENCE ARE ACTUALLY FALLING WORLDWIDE, WRITES **PHILIP DWYER**

There is a growing consensus among scholars that rates of violence in Western countries are steadily declining, and have been doing so for centuries.

The statistic used by most people who support this view is homicide rates. They have dropped dramatically from 100 for every 100,000 people in the 13th century, to ten in 100,000 by the middle of the 17th century (although it was that high in the United States only a few years ago) to rates of around one in 100,000 people in most Western countries today.

The argument that we are now a less violent world is compelling, but it raises more questions than it provides answers. In Australia, while murder rates have been steady for decades, assaults are on the rise – from 623 per 100,000 in 1996 to 840 per 100,000 in 2007. More young women are appearing before the courts than ever before for violent offences, and domestic violence has seen a resurgence despite the media awareness surrounding the issue.

In NSW, the problem of street violence has been brought to the fore recently by a number of high profile cases in the media. Young men who have either been killed (in the case of Thomas Kelly, who was fatally punched in Sydney's Kings Cross in July 2012) or put into comas after being 'king hit', illustrate the extent to which street violence is prevalent in some areas in Australia's major urban centres.

The statistics tell us about the immediate causes of the violence, but very little about the mindset of the young perpetrators, usually men, and why they ultimately become violent.

There is a complex relation between violence and public drinking, which is embedded in Australia's history and culture. Regular violence in public drinking



locations cannot simply be blamed on rowdy patrons or excused as something natural and unstoppable, and nor can it simply be blamed on irresponsible drinking. The drinking environment is an evolving historical and cultural product, which can be left unchanged, or altered for the better through education and legislation.

The argument that we are now a less violent world is compelling, but it raises more questions than it provides answers.

The outcry against these indiscriminate acts of violence demonstrates that the wider public finds them unacceptable. Attitudes towards violence are constantly changing, but not always in a positive direction. In the cultural domain, for example, schlock horror movies are more explicit than ever before and leave films like Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* and Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* – both of which caused a stir in their day

– looking very mild in comparison.

Conversely, what one generation may have accepted as perfectly banal (corporal punishment against children in the 1950s, for instance) may shock another, later generation.

And then there is the problem of violence towards women. The outcry over Nigella Lawson's husband, Charles Saatchi, 'strangling' his wife in public has come to our attention largely because of Lawson's celebrity status. Violence against women, however, generally remains hidden. In India, as we have seen from several high-profile rape cases, sexual assaults against women are so common that the violence has become normalised.

In South Africa, women's organisations estimate that as many as one in every three South African women will be raped at some time in their lives, and that one in six South African women is in an abusive domestic relationship. That figure is across the political and racial spectrum, and does not take into account sexual abuse against children.

This is not a problem limited to developing countries. According



to British government statistics, 80,000 women are raped every year in the UK, and 400,000 women are sexually assaulted. The numbers vary enormously from one region of the globe to another. A recent World Health Organisation study found that reported physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner for women aged between 15 to 49 years varied from between 15% (in Japan) and 71% (in Ethiopia).

Statistics on sexual violence are always underreported, and often hide much deeper social and cultural problems. The act of violence often mirrors prevalent societal attitudes that are entrenched and therefore difficult to move. Take American attitudes towards the death penalty – according to a recent Gallup poll, 63% of Americans support the death penalty. It is even higher, perhaps not surprisingly, among Republicans, 80% of who support the death penalty.

These figures in support of the death penalty have remained more or less constant since 1936. It correlates with America's love of the gun. A Gallup poll taken in December 2012 shows that despite the recent Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, the number of

Americans in favour of banning handguns has dropped to a record low of 24%, as compared to 60% in 1959. When asked if "assault rifles" should be banned, 51% said no, an increase of 9% since 1996.

Violence is, to a certain extent, a cultural construct. The act and perceptions of it change over time, so that each generation and each society decide what levels of violence are acceptable and what are not.

Violence is, to a certain extent, a cultural construct. The act and perceptions of it change over time, so that each generation and each society decide what levels of violence are acceptable and what are not. The fact that violence appears so evident – we see it before us every day in the media – often hides the complexities involved.

Violent crime is largely the affair of young men between the ages of 20 and 30, who are often poorly educated and come from working class or poor backgrounds.

When young men are unhappy

with their position in society, they are more likely to resort to violence when their self-esteem is slighted or challenged.

This suggests that violence is not a purely innate phenomenon and that it is also a question of culture and education. Cultural factors can play a determining role in how aggressive or violent a society is. Aggression, which is often mistaken for violence, can be contained by society and can be channelled into more positive activities.

In this, the role of the state and local community is fundamental. In countries where citizens identify with their local communities and where government is responsive and popular, levels of violent crime are relatively low.

Is the end of violence possible?

No, but cultures and attitudes can be changed by focusing, above all, on education, positive outlets for aggression, and community involvement.

Philip Dwyer is Professor, Director of the Centre for the History of Violence, School of Humanities and Social Science at the University of Newcastle.

THE CONVERSATION

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YOUTH VICTIMISATION AND OFFENDING: A STATISTICAL SNAPSHOT

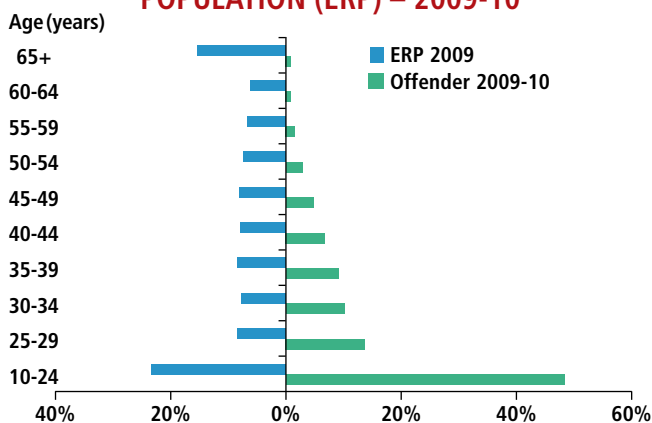
Youth involvement in crime is a perennial issue of interest for the media, government and researchers. Australian Bureau of Statistics brings together various statistical data sources to create a cohesive picture of youth involvement in crime and justice as a key priority in addressing this issue. Youth are broadly defined as those aged under 25 years

This special article is based on a December 2011 report, *In Focus: Crime and Justice Statistics, December 2011* (4524.0). The report collated findings from several ABS statistical collections and provided an overview of youth victims and youth offenders. Information was sourced predominantly from *Recorded Crime – Offenders, 2007-08 to 2009-10*, and *Crime Victimization, Australia, 2008-09 and 2009-10*. Data sourced from *Crime Victimization, Australia* were only available for persons aged 15 years and over and data from *Recorded Crime – Offenders* were only available for persons aged 10 years and over. All differences between estimates sourced from *Crime Victimization, Australia* presented throughout this article are statistically significant differences.

Youth and their experiences of victimisation: selected offences

Physical assault was the most common form of assault experienced by the youth population in 2009-10. In the 12 months prior to interview, 6%

S13.1: AGE DISTRIBUTION OF RECORDED CRIME OFFENDER POPULATION COMPARED WITH THE ESTIMATED RESIDENT POPULATION (ERP) – 2009-10



Source(s): *Recorded Crime – Offenders, 2009-10* (4519.0); *Australian Demographic Statistics, Dec 2009* (3101.0).

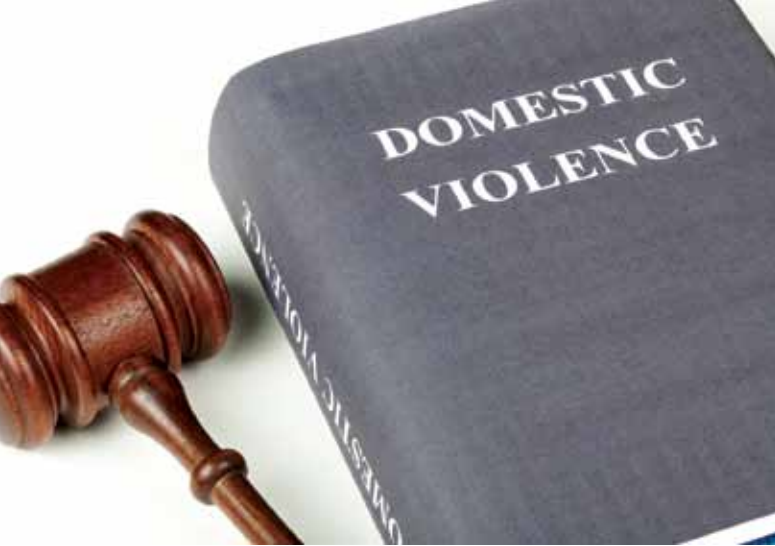


of persons aged 15-17, and 6% of persons aged 18-24, experienced at least one physical assault. These rates are more than double the estimated victimisation rates for physical assault for persons aged 25 years and over (2.3%).

Youth as criminal offenders

A comparison of the proportion of total offenders who were aged 10-24 in 2009-10 (48%) with the proportion of the general population who were aged 10-24 in Australia as at December 2009 (23%), clearly shows the higher proportion of young people in the offender population (Graph S13.1).

Youth offenders demonstrate different types of offending in comparison to adult offenders. The most common principal offence for youth offenders aged 10-24 was Theft (21% of young offenders), while for adult offenders aged 25 years and over, the most common principal offence was Acts intended to cause injury (22%).



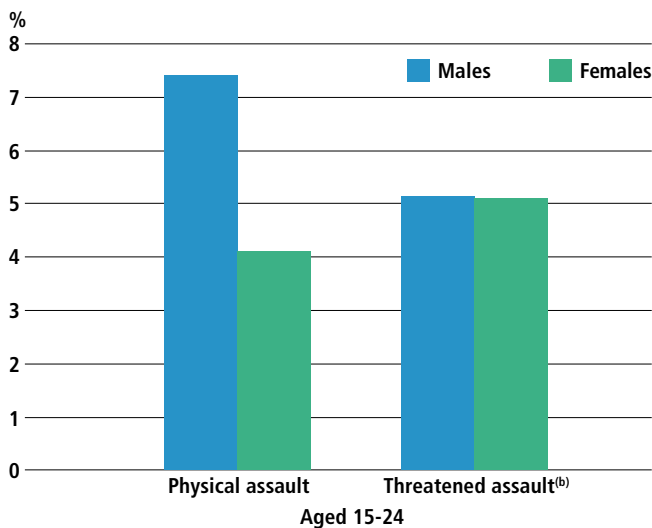
Are youth crime victimisation and offending increasing?

Overall, there was a significant decrease in estimated victimisation rates for physical assault and threatened assault between 2008-09 and 2009-10. For the youth population, there was a significant decrease for youth aged 15-17 in physical assault (9% to 6%) and threatened assault (8% to 5%). For youth aged 18-24, there was a significant decrease for threatened assault (7% to 5%).

Estimated victimisation rates for sexual assault slightly decreased between 2008-09 and 2009-10, at 0.6% and 0.5% respectively for those aged 18-24, and 0.3% to 0.2% for those aged 25 and over. While the victimisation rates for these selected personal offences have generally decreased over time, the proportion of youth victims has remained relatively high. In 2008-09, 32% of victims of total assault (including physical and threatened assault) were aged 15-24, compared with 29% in 2009-10.

Offender rates for persons aged 10-14 years and persons aged 15-19 years have increased each year since

S13.2: PERSONS AGED 15-24 YEARS: VICTIMISATION RATES^(a), BY GENDER – 2009-10



(a) Proportion of total persons aged 15-24 who were a victim of selected crime.

(b) Includes both face-to-face and non face-to-face incidents.

Source(s): *Crime Victimisation, Australia 2009-10* (4530.0).

2007-08. This trend is in contrast to the offender rates for adults, which have decreased each year since 2007-08.

Gender differences

For males aged 15-24, 7.4% experienced at least one physical assault, compared to 4.1% of females in this age group in the 12 months prior to interview. However, the rates were very similar for threatened assaults (Graph S13.2).

Theft was the most common principal offence for female offenders aged 10-24 (36%), whilst for males it was Public order offences (22%).

Location and relationship of offender to victim

Persons aged 18-24 were more likely than persons aged 15-17 to report that they did not know their offender (49% and 20% respectively).

The tendency for persons aged 18-24 to not know their offender can perhaps be better understood when combined with information about the most common location for an incident to occur. For physical assault incidents, the most common location for an incident to occur was at a place of entertainment/recreation (25%). For persons aged 15-17, a pattern emerged between the location of the incident and the relationship to the offender. The offender was most commonly reported as being a colleague/school student/professional relationship (38%), and the incident most commonly occurred at a work/place of study location (32%).

Physical injuries arising from physical or threatened assault victimisation

Over half of the victims of physical assault aged 15-24 reported being physically injured in their most recent incident of physical assault (57% for 15-17 year olds and 55% for 18-24 year olds). In addition, approximately 1 in 5 reported seeking formal medical treatment (21% of 15-17 year olds and 19% of 18-24 year olds).

Further information

Further information on this topic can be obtained from *In focus: Crime and Justice Statistics, December 2011* (4524.0).

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THE ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGY IN THE PREVENTION OF YOUTH VIOLENCE

InPsych article by Prof John Toumbourou MAPS, Dr Gennady Baksheev, Prof Andrew Day FAPS, Rachel Leung and Assoc Prof Peter Miller, School of Psychology and Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing Research, Deakin University

Many indicators reveal youth violence has been rising in Australia in recent decades. Recorded rates of youth assault and sexual assault have increased and are high relative to comparable nations.

For example, rates of arrest for violent offences (assault and other offences) for youth aged 15 to 24 in Australia in 2009 were 711-880 per 100,000 and thus higher than in the United States (4-500 per 100,000). Eight to nine per cent of Australian youth aged 13 to 15 self-reported violent behaviour in the past year in surveys conducted between 2002 (Hemphill et al., 2009) and 2006 (Williams et al., 2009). These rates are high relative to international benchmarks.

This article provides an overview of how psychologists have contributed to our understanding of the causes of youth violence and the development of effective public health prevention programs, and concludes with a discussion of the prospects for these to be integrated into a formalised national prevention framework in Australia.

Major risk factors for youth violence

Psychological research has made a significant contribution to our understanding of youth violence. This research has highlighted that factors across multiple domains play a role in increasing the likelihood of violence perpetration among adolescents and young adults. Moreover, no single factor can account for the expression of violence; rather, it is the cumulative total exposure to risk factors during development that appears critical.

This article focuses on a selected list of risk factors that have been rising in Australia during the same period that youth violence has

been rising. Modifiable risk factors for youth violence are generally categorised according to four broad categories – family, school, environment/neighbourhood and individual domains.

Of the contextual factors for youth violence, risk factors from the family domain are thought to be the most pertinent. This may be due to the home environment playing a central role in the development of youth violence. Key risk factors include: poor behaviour management practices, such as poor supervision of children; high levels

of family conflict; and family history of antisocial behaviour

In other cases it has been noted that young people who have been abused or neglected as children may subsequently perpetrate violence, particularly in the family home. Rates of child neglect and abuse notifications and substantiations have been steadily rising in most Australian jurisdictions in recent decades (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2011), potentially contributing to the trend for rising youth violence.

School risk factors for youth

Many indicators reveal youth violence has been rising in Australia in recent decades. Recorded rates of youth assault and sexual assault have increased and are high relative to comparable nations.





violence have increased for students in disadvantaged communities in recent decades. For example, many Australian schools now use suspension to address student discipline, with rates higher in disadvantaged communities. However, school suspension has been identified as a unique risk factor for violence (Hemphill et al., 2009). Other key factors include low educational achievement, disengagement and exclusion.

Overcrowding, poor housing and living in high crime neighbourhoods increase the risk for youth violence. Violence also tends to be more common in societies with larger income differences, and these differences have grown in Australia in recent decades.

Australian work has shown that levels of youth violence differed markedly between communities and were much higher in disadvantaged communities (Williams et al. 2009). Community disorganisation and peer antisocial involvement (indicators of community disadvantage) have also been shown to increase the likelihood of future violent behaviour (Hemphill et al. 2009). Growing up in disadvantaged neighbourhoods can increase the likelihood of children experiencing a number of factors that could elevate the risk for violence, including witnessing and

experiencing violence, and being in situations with low environmental security and where there are high rates of alcohol and drug use.

A number of individual factors also relate to youth violence. These include a history of early aggression, conduct problems, beliefs supportive of violence, and temperament characteristics such as hyperactivity, impulsiveness, poor behaviour control and attention problems. Another key factor is adolescent alcohol use. Indeed, the available evidence suggests that alcohol availability and early age of alcohol use have increased as risk factors in recent decades in Australia (Williams et al., 2009).

Psychologists' involvement in an evidence-based public health approach to prevent youth violence

It is clear that there are many, often interconnected factors that may influence the current Australian trend toward increasing youth violence. In order to reduce exposure to multiple risk factors, the coordinated delivery of evidence-based approaches targeting different social contexts is warranted (Matjasko et al. 2012). Public health approaches seek to coordinate the delivery of effective prevention strategies to reduce the exposure to risk factors that

are elevated in a specific community context (e.g. child behaviour problems, family conflict, school exclusion) and increase exposure to protective factors (e.g. promoting family attachment). Given that psychologists work in varied settings, a variety of approaches may be relevant for health, clinical, counselling, community and organisational psychologists to support. Forensic psychologists tend to work in corrections with young offenders utilising tertiary programs in the rehabilitation of these young individuals, where selective prevention and early intervention can make important contributions.

Within public health systems, community-level approaches seek to reduce situational risk factors, to encourage healthy child development environments, and to establish links between a young person and their community. These programs can either be targeted, such as mentoring programs for vulnerable youth (e.g. Big brothers/Big sisters), or population-wide and multi-level, such as training and consulting approaches that develop community capacity in evidence-based prevention of youth antisocial behaviours that include violence (e.g. Communities That Care).

Approaches such as family home visiting, cross-age tutoring and mentoring seek to reduce the intergeneration transmission of child development risk factors in socioeconomically disadvantaged communities. To encourage youth violence prevention, funding systems are required that reward community investment in effective prevention. This occurred in the roll-out of the Communities That Care program in Pennsylvania USA, where population reductions in youth crime were achieved.

Effective public health approaches require good quality community-level data on rates of youth violence and local risk factors to enable local communities to plan the coordinated delivery of primary and secondary prevention programs that have evidence for effectiveness.

School-level approaches seek

to improve school effectiveness, and to enhance connectedness and engagement with school to improve academic achievement and encourage regular attendance. It has been shown that well organised schools and well trained teachers can be integral to youth violence prevention efforts. As such, programs have been developed to enhance school management and to train and support teachers in effective classroom practices and behaviour management.

Examples of such programs are the Seattle Social Development Project, Good Behaviour Game, and Incredible Years teaching intervention, which focus on building teacher classroom management strategies, and student pro-social behaviour and school readiness. Psychologists working in the school system may be of crucial importance here, and can assist teachers in developing skills in building positive relationships with students, effective use of encouragement and in promoting school readiness to young people.

Where family risk factors are elevated, relational level approaches seek to improve the quality of the relationships that young people have with adults, family and peers. Family-based interventions reduce risk by equipping parents with effective parenting skills and establishing positive and supportive relationships to improve family interactions and communication.

Examples of effective primary prevention programs include parent education and parent-child relationship therapy. These programs are comprised of building skills for: parents (effective communication, establishing clear expectations and consequences); young people (managing emotions, effective communication and peer resistance); and, combined supervised family activities. Effective secondary prevention programs include functional family therapy and brief strategic family therapy (Hemphill & Smith, 2010).

Individual-level prevention programs are often delivered to selective populations within universal approaches and seek to reduce the

influence of individual characteristics or behaviours (e.g. impulsivity, anger, externalising) that increase the risk of violent behaviour. Protective factors are increased, such as promoting emotional and social skills, and pro-social beliefs and attitudes through social skills training.

These programs reduce violence by improving competencies and social skills with peers and by promoting friendly, positive and cooperative behaviour. They focus on managing anger, improving behaviour, and building skills in social interactions, problem solving and conflict resolution and can be carried out in schools.

A number of evidence-based public health approaches also have the potential to curb levels of alcohol-related violence, including reducing the availability of alcohol through taxes and price increases, restricting trading hours and advertising, discouraging risky venue characteristics such as overcrowding, enforcing the minimum age of purchase and supply, and increasing the legal age of alcohol purchase to 21 years.

Conclusion: towards a national youth violence prevention framework

Australia does not currently have a formalised national youth violence prevention framework (House of Representatives, 2010), despite the outstanding international expertise of many Australian psychologists. The key features of an effective framework for youth violence prevention have been outlined in this discussion.

To ensure effective prevention practice, it is important to select strategies that have been shown in rigorous evaluations to reduce violence and/or the factors that influence violence. To achieve this, it is critical that an Australian violence prevention program analysis is completed and then publicised among government and non-government organisations as the 'best-bets' for effectively preventing youth violence, as well as conducting economic modelling

studies that demonstrate effective investment returns for various prevention strategies.

This work could then be utilised to lobby and encourage governments to adopt evidence-based youth violence prevention approaches appropriate to different communities and to implement them with fidelity.

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SAFETY FOR TEENS

ADVICE FROM THE WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S HEALTH NETWORK



Despite what we hear about from the media, mostly our world in Australia is very safe. Every day people are able to walk safely down the road, be alone at home, go to the beach with friends and walk with friends after dark without being a victim of personal violence. You are at much more danger of hurting yourself seriously by falling over! Very few people are at danger from a 'home invader'. Mostly when people are the victim of personal violence it is from someone they know.

However houses get broken into, date rape does occur, road accidents happen, and sometimes people are hurt by strangers.

Many people are anxious about being alone at night, walking somewhere after dark, driving in a car by themselves. There are things that you can do to keep yourself safer, and to feel safer.

- **Think safe** – be aware that there are people who are not as nice as they may seem.
- **Think smart** – organise so that you have what you need.
- **Think ahead** – plan carefully so that you can deal with emergency situations.
- **Think first** – before you act in such a way that you could put yourself in danger.

Have a look at the topic 'Spiking drinks' and the section *Safety tips to keep in mind* in the topic 'Getting your driver's licence' at www.cyh.com

THINKING SAFE WHEN YOU ARE OUT

If you thought about all the 'what if's?' you wouldn't get out of bed in the morning!

All of life is taking a risk but you can minimise risks by thinking 'safe'.

- Make sure that someone knows where you are going and what time you will return.
- Walk on busy streets if you are alone and walk with friends at night.
- Walk on the side of the road where you face oncoming traffic.
- Wear something light-coloured or reflective if you are walking at night.
- If wearing headphones, keep the volume down so that you can hear what is happening around you.
- Carry a mobile phone, a phone card or enough money to make a call so that you can get help if you need it.
- Have your house or car key ready in your hand before you need it so that you don't have to stand around looking for it.
- Keep your money, phone, camera or headphones out of sight. Don't carry valuable things unless you really have to.
- Make sure you and your friends look after each other, like walking each other home or having a designated driver to get you safely home.

Avoid places where you think that there could be a danger – dark streets near a pub or nightclubs may not be a good idea.

You are much more likely to be hurt in a car accident than be hurt by a stranger on the road. So cross roads carefully, drive safely and never get into a car when the driver has been drinking.

Plan ahead so that if you could be unsafe you know what you can do.

IF YOU ARE OUT WALKING AND YOU THINK YOU ARE BEING FOLLOWED

- Cross the street.
- Keep walking in the direction you need to go to get home or wherever you were going. If you try to get away by going a different way you could end up trapped or lost.
- Look for a safety house or the nearest well-lit house, shop or service station.
- Call someone on your mobile and tell them where you are and what is happening. Keep talking as you walk.
- Call the police if you are scared. You can call 000 from a phone box without using money. Stay in the phone box until the police, or your friend arrives.
- If you need to run, then get rid of anything heavy and lose the high heels if you are wearing them.

- Run towards well lit areas, shops or houses and shout, “Call the police!” or “Fire!” to attract attention. You have more chance of attracting attention than if you called “Help”.
- Remember that if someone is following you, that person is more likely to want to rob you than assault you. Be prepared to let go of your bag if it is grabbed rather than run the risk of being hurt some more.
- Look for a house or business which is displaying the ‘Safety Assist’ sign. The people there will know how to help you.

IF A CAR IS FOLLOWING YOU

- Change direction so that the car will have to turn round.
- Write down the licence number of the car or put it into your mobile phone.
- Walk, run, or drive if you are in your car, to the nearest well lit area, shops, petrol station or the police station.

IF YOUR CAR HAS BROKEN DOWN

If your car has broken down at night, or in a lonely place, and you’re alone:

- Raise the hood or bonnet, get back in the car, and lock all the doors and windows.
- Use your mobile to call for help.
- No mobile?
 - Wait until someone comes past and ask him or her, through the window, to call for help.
 - Wait until it’s light before looking for a phone box.

Cars do break down, so it’s a good idea to join a motor rescue organisation e.g. RAA.

TRAVELLING

Lots of older teens get the ‘travel bug’. As you travel around part of the fun is meeting new people. Don’t assume that because someone ‘looks safe’, seems to be a similar person to you, or is friendly, that this is someone you can trust.

- Make sure that someone at home or where you are staying always knows where you are.
- Be careful about suddenly deciding to change your travel plans to go off with new ‘friends’. Check things out well first.
- Keep maps and make sure you know where you are in case you need to get help.
- Get ‘global roaming’ on your mobile phone before you leave home if you are leaving Australia. Calls are expensive but text is cheap.
- Remember that alcohol and drugs make you unsafe.
- Stick with the people with whom you are travelling and arrange to keep an eye out for each other.

If the locals advise you not to go somewhere – don’t go there!!

Remember though that much of the danger when you travel is from eating unsafe food, drinking unsafe water, having things stolen and car accidents.

- Read information about safe travelling before you go.
- Have a look at the topic ‘Travel’ on the Young Adult section at www.cyh.com
- The site ‘Smartraveller’ can be helpful too: www.smartraveller.gov.au

HOME ALONE

If you are home alone or live alone you can be safer if you:

- Have outside lights turned on, or have sensor lights fitted
- Don’t invite strangers into your house. People who you have just met are still ‘strangers’ until you know them well
- Keep doors and windows locked when you are alone. However – remember that you could need to get out if there is a fire – so lock those doors, but keep the keys in deadlocks while you are inside the house
- Lock the screen door, so that if someone comes to the door they can’t get in unless you unlock it
- Ask to see the identity of anyone who says he or she is on official business, e.g. reading the meter or the landlord, unless you know about the visit beforehand.

If it seems like someone is trying to break in:

- Switch all the lights on and make sure the doors and windows are locked
- Call the police and tell them what is happening – call 131 444 unless there is a real emergency – when you would dial 000.

KEEPING SAFE ON THE INTERNET

The internet is great and you can have a great time hooking up with people in chat rooms but ...

- Never give personal details. You don’t know who you are really talking to.
- Even if you feel that you’ve made a great friend be wary about giving out personal details. You could be putting yourself and your family or housemates at risk.
- Making new friends is exciting but be careful about arranging to meet someone. Tell a friend or family if you do decide to meet up and choose a safe place – like a café or shopping centre.

There is more in the topic ‘Internet safety’ at www.cyh.com

RESOURCES

- Reachout ‘Safe partying’ www.gettingout.info/SafePartyng.htm
- Smartraveller website www.smartraveller.gov.au

The information in this article should not be used as an alternative to professional care. If you have a particular problem, see a doctor, or ring the Youth Healthline on 1300 13 17 19 (local call cost from anywhere in South Australia).

Women’s and Children’s Health Network. *Safety for teens*. Retrieved from www.cyh.com on 17 November 2014.

PERSONAL SAFETY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

KNIVES SCAR LIVES, WARNS THE STATE GOVERNMENT OF VICTORIA



How to be street safe

- Never take a knife or weapon with you for your own safety, or to protect your friends.
- When leaving home tell someone where you are going, and, when you think you will be back.
- Make sure you take your mobile with you and make sure that it is charged.
- Avoid walking alone at night or taking shortcuts in dark and isolated areas.
- Walk on the footpath facing oncoming traffic, so people passing by can see you.
- If you feel unsafe, cross the road, find a telephone, or enter a store or place of business even if you have just left it.
- When using a public telephone, stand with your back to the phone after dialing so you can see what is around you.
- Carry your purse or handbag close to your body. Don't leave valuables like your mobile phone, handbag or wallet unattended, even for a moment.
- Travel with other people whenever you can, and, if you feel unsafe or in danger call 000. Even if you don't have any phone credit, you can always get through to 000.

If someone picks an argument or fight, walk away. Not only is it what most people do, it is also the tougher thing to do.

Walking away is actually the best thing to do. You will be safe from serious harm and won't seriously harm someone else. If you are confronted by someone with a knife or weapon, the safest thing to do is back away and walk as fast as you can and seek help. Don't hesitate, call 000 if you feel in danger or you feel a situation is getting or has gotten out of hand.

If a fight starts don't watch or egg others on. A fight with cheering bystanders is generally more dangerous with more serious injuries and consequences. Don't argue with someone holding a knife and don't try to take it from them.

Make the decision to never carry a knife or other weapon. It keeps you safer and you won't do something you will regret. You can also lead by example and your peers may also start choosing not to carry a knife. Remember that younger people, including younger brothers and sisters, will be looking up to you, so if you lead by example you

will also be stopping them from making the mistake to carry a knife or weapon.

What if you feel in danger? If someone has threatened you or your friends, don't take matters into your own hands. There are other ways to be safe. Like backing away and calling the police on 000.

What else can I do? Never take a knife or weapon with you for your own safety. It just puts you at a greater risk. If you have a mate that carries a knife, talk to them about the reasons why they shouldn't. It's really important you talk to an adult you trust about your fears, or you call the police on 000 if you feel threatened. Take precautions for your and others safety by not being alone. Try to stay in groups where possible.

If you do see trouble starting, feel afraid or you feel like you need help it does not matter whether it's something you have seen or are witnessing, call the police on 000. They are there to help.

It is important that you speak to someone – teachers, parents, counsellors or police – if you, in any way, feel unsafe, threatened, uncomfortable, harassed or intimidated by someone.

For further information and advice contact

- Department of Justice www.justice.vic.gov.au/weapons
- Live No Fear www.livenofear.com.au
- The Line www.theline.gov.au/factsheets/bullying or 1800 200 526
- Bullying No Way www.bullyingnoway.com.au
- ReachOut.com <http://au.reachout.com>
- Parentline 13 22 89
- Victims of Crime 1800 819 817

State Government of Victoria.
Personal safety for young people.
Retrieved from www.police.vic.gov.au
on 23 September 2014.

Fact check: only drugs and alcohol together cause violence

Australian studies show alcohol is considerably more likely than other drugs to be involved in violence, report **Robin Room** and **Michael Livingston**

On ABC TV's *Four Corners* program last night, Paul Nicolaou, chief executive officer of Australia Hotels Association NSW, dismissed claims that alcohol is fuelling late-night violence, arguing instead that it's a mixture of drugs and alcohol that's causing the problem.

The argument that illicit drugs rather than alcohol consumption are the key contributors to night-time violence is commonly made. There is research evidence against this claim at several levels.

When expert pharmacologists are asked to compare the inherent dangerousness of drugs, alcohol ranks very high. In one study published in *The Lancet* in 2010, the consensus was that alcohol was the most dangerous of drugs. This was partly due to the amount of harm experienced by those other than the drinker.

Concerning violence in particular, a review of the role of different drugs in inducing violence noted that alcohol was "by far the drug most likely to be associated with heightened likelihood of interpersonal violence".

Summarising the relationships found in population studies, a World Health Organisation report concludes that "studies increasingly highlight the role of alcohol consumption in people becoming victims of violence and perpetrators of violence".

In Australian studies, alcohol is considerably more likely than other drugs to be involved in violence.

First of all, alcohol intoxication is simply more common than illicit drug use. A recent large-scale study interviewed nearly 4,000 people visiting licensed venues in Geelong and Newcastle. This study found that 7% reported any illicit drug use (most commonly cannabis), while two-thirds reported drinking

alcohol even before arriving at a licensed venue.

More importantly, specific studies of violence and injury typically find alcohol involvement more than twice as often as drug involvement.

Data from the Drug Use Monitoring in Australia program shows that alcohol is responsible for around three times as much violent offending as all illicit drugs combined (33.6% vs 12.4%).

Similarly, the National Homicide Monitoring Program shows high levels of alcohol involvement in violent deaths. Homicide offenders were over twice as likely to have been drinking prior to their offence than to have been using drugs.

These findings are further supported by surveys of crime victims. In the *National Drug Strategy Household Survey*, 8.1% of Australian adults reported being the victim of an alcohol-related assault. The corresponding figure for illicit drugs was just 2.2%.

And unpublished data from the *Personal Safety Survey* found that 85% of assaults attributed to substance use were alcohol-related (with the other 15% linked to illicit drugs).

Alcohol plays the leading role in violence among drugs in Australia both because of its pharmacological properties and because it is so available and commonly used. Attempts to get alcohol off the hook by pointing elsewhere are not supported by the science.

Robin Room is Director, Centre for Alcohol Policy Research, Turning Point Alcohol & Drug Centre; Professor of Population Health & Chair of Social Research in Alcohol at University of Melbourne.

Michael Livingston is Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at UNSW Australia.

THE CONVERSATION

Room, R and Livingston, M (26 February 2013). *Fact check: only drugs and alcohol together cause violence*. Retrieved from <http://theconversation.com/au> on 8 July 2014.



Alcohol plays the leading role in violence among drugs in Australia both because of its pharmacological properties and because it is so available and commonly used.



Contribution of alcohol or any other substance to assault

Since the **Australian Bureau of Statistics 2010-11 Crime Victimization Survey**, victims of physical assault and face-to-face threatened assault have been asked whether they believed alcohol or any other substance contributed to their most recent incident of assault.¹

To what extent did victims believe that alcohol or any other substance contribute to incidents of physical assault and face-to-face threatened assault in the 12 months prior to interview in 2012-13?

Nationally, 65% of victims of physical assault believed that alcohol or any other substance contributed to their most recent incident (*Data cube 3, Table 11*).

This included:

- 67% of male victims
- 62% of female victims
- Nearly three-quarters of victims aged 20 to 24 years (74%)
- 82% of victims whose most recent incident occurred at a place of entertainment/recreation.

Nationally, 55% of victims of face-to-face threatened assault believed that alcohol or any other substance contributed to their most recent incident (*Data cube 3, Table 11*).

This included:

- 58% of male victims
- 52% of female victims
- Two-thirds of victims aged 20 to 24 years (66%)
- 82% of victims whose most recent incident occurred at a place of entertainment/recreation.

Have victims' beliefs about whether alcohol or any other substance contributed to incidents of physical assault and face-to-face threatened assault changed since 2010-11?

There has been no significant change between 2012-13 and either 2011-12 or 2010-11 in the proportion of victims of physical and face-to-face threatened assault who believed that alcohol or any other substance contributed to their most recent incident of assault. Proportions for previous surveys are available in the 2010-11 and 2011-12 issues of *Crime Victimization, Australia* (cat. no. 4530.0) respectively.

ENDNOTE

1. While this question was asked of all respondents aged 15 years and over, data has only been published for those 18 years and over. The responses of respondents aged 15 to 17 years may have been provided by a proxy respondent (such as a parent) and as this is a perception based question it was not asked of proxies. See Data Collection section of the Explanatory Notes for more information.

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Australian Bureau of Statistics (12 February 2014). 4530.0 – *Crime Victimization, Australia, 2012-13* (Last updated 11 February 2014). Retrieved from www.abs.gov.au on 9 September 2014.

ALCOHOL AND VIOLENCE: A COMPLEX ISSUE IN SEARCH OF LEADERSHIP

Daniel Christie is the latest young person to have lost his life to senseless, alcohol-related violence, adding to public pressure for nationwide action, writes **Peter Miller**

The start of 2014 has seen a tragic, but sadly predictable discussion around Australia about lives lost or hanging in the balance due to violence. All of the high-profile cases involved alcohol. These are the tip of a horrifying iceberg.

Family violence, intimate partner violence, child abuse, gang violence, sexual assault, bullying and many other forms of violence erode our community day by day and destroy lives. When a young man is brain-damaged in a bar fight, his loved ones often lose a part, if not most, of their lives to a senseless act.

A self-perpetuating cycle of violence

Many offenders' lives and those of their families are also ruined. Children who survive family or domestic violence are three times more likely to become perpetrators and twice as likely to become victims. Boys who are abused physically by their fathers, who normally do so when drunk, are twice as likely to be perpetrators of bar-room violence as adults. They often destroy their lives as well as others before they even really begin.

By not acting on this cycle of violence in all its manifestations, not just alcohol-related, we are

perpetuating and worsening the situation.

The recent public debate, including comments by prime minister Tony Abbott and opposition leader Bill Shorten, has demonstrated the level of public pressure on Australian leaders to act on this problem. Our society is clearly no longer willing to pay the huge financial costs and devastating emotional costs associated with violence.

When you grow up in a setting where violence is common or acceptable, you are far more likely to become a perpetrator, a victim, or both.

Harsher responses feel desirable. They give us a sense of justice when such senseless tragedy makes us as individuals and as a society feel powerless. But tough penalties seldom affect people's actions in the heat of the moment, especially when alcohol or other drugs are involved.

Alcohol makes violence more likely

Violence begets violence; alcohol makes it so much worse.



The research literature from around the world is clear: when you grow up in a setting where violence is common or acceptable, you are far more likely to become a perpetrator, a victim, or both. Violence doesn't comply with the labels we impose. When you are a victim or observer of violence as a child your world will be tainted, and for many this means perpetuating the cycle.

Yet we also know that some people do not repeat this cycle. Research is continuing to identify the protective factors at play. The life-course research field has been identifying many factors we can and should be acting upon.

This is important work, but it is also far, far more effective and preferable to prevent violence from occurring, rather than trying to fix victims.

Alcohol and other drug use has been found in every study to influence the likelihood of people experiencing violence. By definition, these drugs alter our state of mind. They play a role in people acting on impulse, indulging impulses they would not normally entertain.

This is because the substance they are using reduces people's inhibition. It helps them not to think of the consequences of their actions, makes them focus entirely on the moment or simply increases their adrenaline. But drug use (the most common being alcohol) is not a defence for violence – and never should be.

Proven answers exist

While there are many causes and effective solutions to violence, acting on alcohol is the only one that can have an immediate impact.

There are effective solutions at hand and an international framework ready to adopt. The large body of work in this area clearly shows what works, and what doesn't.

Closing pubs earlier has been found to consistently reduce assaults and emergency department attendances. Strict enforcement of existing licensing laws has also been found to be a key element in any successful management of alcohol-related violence. Education campaigns and vague references to personal responsibility have been found ineffective at best and, in some cases, have even been associated with an increase in harm.

The Global Campaign for Violence Prevention, co-ordinated by the World Health Organization (WHO), has identified key goals towards which efforts can be directed. These include: identifying violence prevention as a health issue and building foundations for ongoing violence-prevention efforts.

The strategy promotes the implementation of evidence-informed programs that focus on: parenting, life skills, social norms, alcohol, the risks of firearm-related deaths and injuries, and services for victims.

National strategy is needed

The costs of violence in Australia run to many billions of dollars. Our research estimate is that since

2003-04 Australia has committed more than \$5.8 billion to educational, social and community programs in which tackling violence in one form or another is a significant element.

The costs of violence in the community indicate a poor return on that investment of public funds. The human costs are unfathomable and unacceptable.

The global action plan calls specifically for the development of national plans. Measures to reduce violence currently sit in many different silos and often fall under different jurisdictions. Many excellent strategies do exist to reduce specific types of violence, which would ideally work with the broader strategy.

The current wave of violence demands a national strategy to change our attitude to violence, its perpetrators and victims.

There is no clear voice about the links between different types of violence and the risk and protective factors that contribute to different types of violence. Most importantly, there is a lack of clarity about which interventions can work for communities, specific populations, offenders and victims.

A commitment by Australia to a whole-of-government National Strategy to Prevent and Reduce Violence (NPRV) shows that we want to seriously and strategically tackle the problem. The plan must cover the cultural, educational, geographic, societal, community and public safety aspects of a significant public health and policy issue.

Australia has successfully and sustainably reduced traffic deaths through compulsory seatbelt and drink-driving legislation, the effects of smoking by packaging controls and weapons-related deaths through gun controls. The current wave of violence – whether it involves alcohol, is domestic in nature, sport-related, involves indigenous communities or any other form of violence – demands a national strategy to change our attitude to violence, its perpetrators and victims.

It will take leadership and perseverance to achieve this positive legacy for future generations.

Peter Miller is Principal Research Fellow at Deakin University.

This article was co-authored by former Queensland police superintendent **Dan Keating**.

THE CONVERSATION

Miller, P (14 January 2014). *Alcohol and violence: a complex issue in search of leadership*. Retrieved from <http://theconversation.com/au> on 8 July 2014.

KING HITS: YOUNG MEN, MASCULINITY AND VIOLENCE

The recent outcry in Sydney about ‘alcohol-fuelled violence’ has many people asking whether young men are out of control, or whether alcohol, or our hyper-masculine culture, might be to blame.

Raewyn Connell explores the issue in this article first published by ‘The Conversation’

Now the New South Wales Premier, Barry O’Farrell, has announced lock-outs for new customers and a cease of alcohol trading by 3 am, while mandatory minimum sentences of eight years in jail will apply for fatal one-punch attacks involving alcohol and drugs.

In the context of these announcements we should remember that, despite these awful recent cases, Sydney is a relatively safe city, compared with Johannesburg in South Africa, or Ciudad Juárez in Mexico, or New York. And if we are concerned with men’s violence in Australia, the half-hidden epidemics of family violence, sexual harassment and rape are much wider problems than street bashings by strangers.

But the street violence is worrying, is more visible and has got media attention – and this has produced a debate about what’s happening among young men.

The blame game

Is this ‘alcohol-fuelled violence’? Drinking is often part of the lead-up to violent episodes, domestic as well as street. But alcohol can’t meaningfully be called a ‘fuel’ of any particular behaviour. As Shakespeare knew, and modern neuroscience confirms, ethanol has complex effects. It is often a depressant, sometimes a stimulant.

In many situations it’s more likely to make you feel sleepy or ill than encourage you to hit out. It’s the circumstances of drinking, rather than the chemical



More than a hundred years of research looking for broad psychological differences between men and women have found remarkably few.

EDITOR’S NOTE

Mandatory eight-year jail sentences for fatal one-punch attacks fuelled by alcohol or drugs were among a raft of measures introduced to curb alcohol-related violence in Sydney. The so-called one-punch laws, announced by then New South Wales Premier Barry O’Farrell (21 Jan 2014), included the following measures:

- Eight-year minimum sentencing for alcohol or drug-fuelled assaults ending in death.
- Serious assault maximum penalty increased by two years, with mandatory minimum sentences.
- On the spot fines for disorderly behaviour increased from \$200 to \$1100.
- Police have powers to immediately ban ‘troublemakers’ from CBD/Kings Cross.
- Penalty for possession of steroids increased from two to 25 years.
- CBD/Kings Cross venues to have 1:30am lockouts with drinks stopping at 3:00am.
- Bottleshops across NSW to close at 10:00pm.

itself, that we need to understand.

Can we blame ‘the male brain’, testosterone, or genetics? This suggests that young men are really animals, replaying a primitive world in which violence is natural, where males fight cave bears or hunt mammoths. Unfortunately some enthusiastic biologists retail such bedtime stories about violence, without knowing the historical, psychological or social-scientific evidence.

The psychological evidence is very clear. More than a hundred years of research looking for broad psychological differences between men and women have found remarkably few. The evidence, from studies involving millions of people, shows that men as a group, and women as a group, are psychologically very similar. This finding is often ignored, because it goes against so many of our stereotypes; but the evidence is strong.

So we cannot explain men’s involvement in severe violence by a ‘male brain’, or testosterone, or anything supposed to produce different mentalities among men and women. The different mentalities are a myth.

Can we blame a ‘criminal type’? Criminologists for a



be learned. There are multiple forms of masculinity, some more honoured in a given society than others. Especially for young men, masculinity is often in question or under challenge, and the presence of an audience is important.

So we need to look hard at the social situations in which violence is happening. Some of the recent episodes are in zones of exception – places and times in which ordinary social rules are supposed not to apply, where everyday social relations are absent, such as Sydney’s King’s Cross at night.

Heavy drinking is often happening in an all-male, all-young peer group. An element of impunity, a sense that you can get away with it, is also part of the picture.

If we want to know why some young men get into zones of exception, confrontations and episodes of violence, we might ask what else is happening in their lives. Is our society giving them secure jobs? Worthwhile work to do? Models of positive relations with women? Occasions for care and creativity?

I would guess the answer to these questions, for the young men involved in street violence, is often no. But I’m not sure of it – and I don’t think our legislators are, either.

It would be a great pity if the only response to these dismaying episodes is more confrontation, this time from the government.

Raewyn Connell is Professor Emerita (social science) at the University of Sydney.

THE CONVERSATION

Connell, R (21 January 2014). *King hits: young men, masculinity and violence*. Retrieved from <http://theconversation.com/au> on 8 July 2014.

If we want to know why some young men get into zones of exception, confrontations and episodes of violence, we might ask what else is happening in their lives.

long time looked for such a person, but the search failed. Violence can’t be explained by a particular type of human being. Criminologists have, however, identified social circumstances in which violence is more common and patterns of violent behaviour might be learned.

These circumstances include high levels of social inequality and marginality, situations in which there is cultural emphasis on men’s dominance over women, and confrontations with police and private security.

Can we blame the media? Not in a mechanical way. Media research suggests there is no direct transmission from what people see on a screen to how they act on the street. Yet mass media are relevant. Probably the images of extreme violence – the beheadings, snuff movies, torture – are less significant than the relentless flow of images in ‘action’ movies (which Hollywood specifically targets at young men), commercial football, other body-contact sports, cop shows, thrillers, and the like.

Those genres make up a large chunk of current popular entertainment, with a huge cumulative audience. They are built on narratives of masculine aggression, physical confrontation and dominance. So media are feeding young men narratives about how men get excitement, success and respect through confrontation. But what would make young men take up such stories?

A question of masculinity?

‘Alcohol-fuelled violence’ often involves some kind of masculinity challenge – for instance, a group of young men confronting the bouncers at a drinking venue. It’s important to note that masculinity isn’t a fixed state.

Masculinities are patterns of conduct that have to

NEO-PROHIBITION ISN'T THE ANSWER TO VIOLENT CRIME

The idea that we would be trying to blur the responsibility of violent offenders with alcohol regulation is utterly repugnant, argues **Chris Berg**

It wouldn't be a moral panic without demands that the government do something. And so it is with the alcohol-fuelled violence panic that swept New South Wales over the Christmas break.

Richard Denniss of the Australia Institute made a few proposals in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Governments could increase alcohol prices by increasing taxes or imposing a minimum price. They could restrict pub opening hours. They could even set a maximum blood alcohol level for people in public places.

Such proposals are more or less the sort of neo-prohibition public health activists have wanted for years.

Today Barry O'Farrell announced a crackdown on alcohol venues, with mandatory bottleshop closures at 10:00pm, a 1:30am pub lock-out, and no pub service after 3:00am.

Let's lay aside whether it is fair to restrict the liberties of all because of the idiocy of a few. It is utterly and despicably perverse that our immediate reaction to a highly publicised violent assault is to blame public policy, or market forces, or 'culture' in general.

It's classic guilt displacement, shifting the responsibility from the perpetrators of violence and onto society. That is, it's not totally their fault they were violent. Alcohol vendors were plying them with liquor! Lazy politicians were neglecting their regulatory duties! Music videos have been glorifying drinking!

What does this imply for the moral responsibility of the perpetrators? After all, to punish somebody for an act they had little control over would be a travesty of justice.

Perhaps the number of bottleshops in a suburb should be a

mitigating factor in sentencing. Of course, none of our latter-day prohibitionists have taken their logic this far. But such perverse reasoning is implicit when we seek social explanations for individual criminal acts.

Regardless of whether it is trending up or trending down, it remains the case that the Australian public consumes a large quantity of alcohol, and gets into very few fights.

The perversity increases when you realise that there is no alcohol-fuelled violence crisis. The rate of violence related to alcohol is stable, even declining. (This piece

in *The Guardian* – 'Alcohol-related violence: numbers don't always tally with media attention' – sums up the evidence for New South Wales nicely.)¹

Our alcohol consumption is steady, too. Australia's per capita alcohol consumption has been hovering around 10 litres a year for the last few decades. (In the 1970s it was more like 12 litres.)

But regardless of whether it is trending up or trending down, it remains the case that the Australian public consumes a large quantity of alcohol, and gets into very few fights.

There are, as there have always been, brutal thugs who take pleasure from violence. The correct – and most direct – response is to target the thugs, not to fiddle with tax policy.





The relationship between alcohol and violence is not as clear-cut as you might expect. Yes, much violent crime is caused by intoxicated people. The doctors and police are right. But figuring out whether alcohol actually causes the violence is quite hard.

Correlation, as we all know, is not causation.

Even drunk people make choices. Even drunk people can be moral. We are not machines. Public policy ought not to treat us like machines.

The most common theory is that alcohol lowers inhibitions. It directly anaesthetises the parts of the brain that we use to regulate our everyday behaviour. Alcohol changes us physically, and in a way that makes some people more aggressive.

From experiments in laboratory settings we know that people who consume alcohol exhibit more aggressive behaviour. But the

inhibition theory is not the only theory which could explain this.

Some experiments have shown that people tend to get more aggressive even when given a placebo. That is, when they are told they are going to have an alcoholic drink, but are secretly given a non-alcoholic tonic, they get aggressive anyway. Thus the 'expectations' theory suggests people get more aggressive when intoxicated simply because they expect to get more aggressive when intoxicated. They think aggression is more socially acceptable in a drunk.

There are other theories. The connection between alcohol and violence could be indirect. Intoxication reduces intellectual function, causing us to exaggerate provocation and to needlessly provoke others.

But these theories only take us so far. It's one thing to show in a lab that people who believe they are intoxicated people are marginally more aggressive than those who are sober. It's quite another to draw policy conclusions from that finding.

The overwhelming majority of people drink without getting violent. (Some people just get more helpful.) In the real world, humans are able to regulate their behaviour even while intoxicated. Even if alcohol 'causes' violence, it only causes it rarely, and in a tiny fraction of people.

Even drunk people make choices. Even drunk people can be moral. We are not machines. Public policy ought not to treat us like machines.

The more policy-focused researchers try to side-step this issue with macro-level studies that look at correlations between alcohol consumption in an area and incidents of violence.

That's where we get the claims that bottleshop density facilitates violence, for instance.

But these studies often struggle to distinguish between other factors. The essential feature of bars and pubs and nightclubs and bottleshops isn't that they sell alcohol. It's that they bring large

groups of young men together in close proximity.

Ultimately, the neurological, psychological, and sociological evidence about the relationship between alcohol and violence isn't strong enough to get us away from a simple intuition: violent acts are caused by violent people, regardless of their level of intoxication.

As one paper from 2008 concludes, "alcohol may facilitate violent behaviour among those who are already inclined to behave that way. It is also possible that violent adolescents sometimes use alcohol as an excuse for their behaviour."

Alcohol may facilitate violent behaviour among those who are already inclined to behave that way. It is also possible that violent adolescents sometimes use alcohol as an excuse for their behaviour.

So the idea that we would be trying to blur the responsibility of violent offenders with alcohol regulation is utterly, utterly repugnant.

It's exactly what the thugs, and their lawyers, want us to do.

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Chris Berg is a Research Fellow with the Institute of Public Affairs.

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SENDING YOUNG MEN TO PRISON WON'T MAKE YOU SAFER

Alcohol-fuelled violence in New South Wales is at a decade low, but that may not remain the case under the new 'one-punch laws' announced by the premier, writes Greg Barns

When it comes to criminal justice, politicians in Australia, almost without fail, think that locking people up and increasing police powers is a panacea.

New South Wales Premier Barry O'Farrell obviously subscribes to this view, manifested in his announcement of mandatory minimum jail terms for offences committed where alcohol and drug use is a factor.

Mr O'Farrell will find of course that his Government's strategy of filling the jails won't reduce alcohol- and drug-fuelled crime; in fact, it might even increase it, and it will lead to horrific cases of injustice.

So now a person who, when under the influence of drugs or alcohol, commits a serious assault, a wounding, an assault on a police officer in the execution of duty, an affray or a sexual assault, will go to prison for a minimum of between two and five years. If a person assaults another person and that person dies as a direct or indirect result, the mandatory minimum term is eight years.

The O'Farrell Government has cravenly fallen for the populist, media-driven campaign highlighting a couple of high-profile cases which peddles the lie that somehow alcohol- and drug-related crimes of violence in New South Wales are at epidemic proportions.

As *The Guardian* has pointed out, alcohol-driven violence in New South Wales "has been declining since 2008 and is the lowest since 2002, with 184.8 assaults per 100,000 people per year. It is however, still higher than the lowest point in 2000 of 136.6 assaults per 100,000."

What Mr O'Farrell's plans will do is risk increasing alcohol- and drug-related violence in New South Wales. That is what happens when you send people to jail.

Young people in particular – and it would be young males who will be incarcerated under these proposed mandatory minimum term laws more than any other cohort in the community – who enter the prison system tend to emerge with a greater disposition towards violence. This is inevitable because governments refuse to spend money on ensuring that prison is a humane and rehabilitative environment as it is in Scandinavian countries.

According to the *2013 Report on Government Services*, released by the Productivity Commission, 42.5 per cent of New South Wales prisoners were re-offending within two years of release. Many of those re-offending are involved in crimes of violence.

There is also no evidence to suggest that putting offenders in prison for longer periods of time reduces crime. As Italian researchers Drago, Galbiati & Vertova found in a 2011 paper published in the *American Law*

and Economics Review: "From a policy perspective, increasing prison severity does not seem an effective approach to reducing the post-release criminal activity of former inmates."

In fact, when it comes to young offenders, the immersion in the prison system leads to them having real difficulties re-integrating upon release. Because of the abject failure of governments around Australia to provide solid and sustained post release support for prisoners, the tendency to gravitate to networks created 'on the inside' is strong and this impacts on recidivism rates.

Finally, there is simply no evidence that increasing sentences or making them mandatory for particular offences stops would-be offenders. Such a view supposes that a would-be assailant fuelled by alcohol or drugs, or both, will weigh up the consequences of assaulting a person before committing the act. It is a theory built on a fairy tale view of how a person in such a situation will behave. In nine cases out of ten, there will be no such calm, rational approach taken.

The use of mandatory minimum terms is inherently problematic because it leads to gross injustices. In a liberal democratic society, individuals are entitled to have their case, with all its nuances and special features, examined by a court and have any sentence handed down tailored accordingly.

But under the O'Farrell Government laws, a person who is on the periphery of a brawl where alcohol or drugs are a factor would find themselves going to jail for at least four years if they are found guilty of affray. This is palpably unjust. As would be the case of a person who is provoked by a police officer's rough handling of them which causes them to lash out and assault the officer. Once again, that person would go to jail for at least two years.

And what about the person with serious drug or alcohol dependence who recklessly punches another person causing them harm? That person will be jailed for three or four years even though they need assistance, not punishment.

What Mr O'Farrell and his Government are doing is simply increasing the risk of filling jails with young offenders and other offenders. They are creating the conditions for a more violent New South Wales in the future: a New South Wales in which there are hundreds if not thousands of embittered ex-prisoners released back into the community with nothing having been done to address the cause of violent offending – addiction, mental illness or behavioural problems.

Greg Barns is a barrister and spokesman for the Australian Lawyers Alliance.

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Mandatory sentencing: does it reduce crime?

King-hit assaults that kill in New South Wales will now carry a mandatory eight-year minimum sentence if alcohol or drugs are involved. **ABC News** reports



Anouncing the new laws, NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell said they would curb alcohol-related violence on Sydney's streets. But some in the legal community complain that mandatory sentencing won't work.

NSW Bar Association president Phillip Boulten SC says: "There's no evidence at all that mandatory sentencing ever decreases the amount of crime that's committed and it has the ability to act unfairly on vulnerable and disadvantaged groups."

"It isn't effective, it's not a deterrent, it just leads to more people being locked up for no good purpose," he said

ABC *Fact Check* examines whether Mr Boulten is correct to say there's no evidence to support crime decreasing under mandatory sentencing.

HOW DOES MANDATORY SENTENCING WORK?

Mandatory sentencing targets crime in two ways. It removes opportunity from criminals by locking them up, and it deters them through threats of jail time and higher penalties.

MANDATORY SENTENCING IN PRACTICE

Mandatory sentencing legislation was introduced in the 1990s in the Northern Territory and Western Australia.

- **The claim:** Phillip Boulten says there is no evidence that mandatory sentencing ever decreases crime levels.
- **The verdict:** The evidence for mandatory sentencing is contradictory, but there is some evidence to suggest that mandatory sentencing reduces the level of crime being committed.

In the Northern Territory mandatory minimum sentences for property crime were introduced in 1997 and repealed in 2001. Under the regime, offenders were imprisoned for 14 days for a 'first-strike' property offence, 90 days for a second and 12 months for a third.

The Western Australian government introduced a "three-strikes and you're in" law for home burglaries in 1996. A person with at least two previous home burglary convictions was required to serve at least 12 months in custody if convicted again.

There's no evidence at all that mandatory sentencing ever decreases the amount of crime that's committed and it has the ability to act unfairly on vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

In 2009 WA also introduced a mandatory minimum sentence for any assault on a police officer.

Looking overseas, several states in the United States have implemented mandatory sentencing policies. California introduced a three-strikes policy in 1994, which imposed a life sentence for a list of serious and minor crimes if the offender had two previous convictions for crimes defined as serious or violent.

In 1992, mandatory sentences were introduced for firearm offences in Michigan, Florida and Pennsylvania.

THE EFFECTS

In terms of crime rates, the Northern Territory results support Mr Boulten's comment. Property crime went up under the Territory legislation and went down after it was repealed, according to figures from the Office of Crime Prevention, a part of the Territory's Department of Attorney-General and Justice.

In a paper published in 2003, the Office of Crime Prevention concluded that this data wasn't enough to make assertions about the effectiveness of mandatory sentencing but it did indicate that policy wasn't as effective as originally intended.

In Western Australia, the results indicate crime decreased under the 2009 legislation which introduced mandatory minimum sentences for police assaults.

The then police minister Rob Johnson and attorney-general Christian Porter announced a 28 per cent

decrease in assaults on police officers one year after the laws were introduced.

In California the 1994 introduction of a three-strikes policy resulted in a measurable decrease in crime.

A study published by researchers at George Mason University in Virginia said that arrest rates were 17 to 20 per cent lower for the group of offenders convicted of two-strike eligible offences, compared to those convicted of one-strike eligible offences. The authors concluded this indicated that the three-strikes policy was deterring recidivists from committing crimes.

A study by criminologists from the Northwestern School of Law in Chicago concluded that mandatory sentencing in Michigan, Florida and Pennsylvania slowed down gun crime in the three states.

A 2007 study from the Vera Institute of Justice in New York examined the effectiveness of incapacitation – depriving criminals of the opportunity to offend – under all forms of sentencing, mandatory or otherwise. The study estimated that if US incarceration rates were increased by 10 per cent the crime rate would decrease by 2 to 4 per cent.

WHAT DO THE EXPERTS THINK?

There has been long debate among policy makers and academics about the impact of mandatory sentencing.

A 2008 report by criminologists Adrian Hoel and Karen Gelb from the Victorian Sentencing Advisory Council discusses how deterrence and incapacitation affect crime rates.

The authors say that when it comes to deterrence, a large number of studies have found no clear correlation between sanction severity and levels of offending. “There is little evidence to suggest that a more severe penalty is a better deterrent than a less severe penalty,” they say. “... it would appear from research to date that making a penalty mandatory rather than discretionary will be unlikely to increase its deterrent value.”

On the issue of removing opportunity from criminals by locking them up, the paper says: “While there is some proof that incapacitation can prevent further offending by persistent offenders, this does not necessarily establish either that mandatory sentencing increases the effectiveness of incapacitation.”

The chair of the advisory council, Arie Freiberg, told *Fact Check* there is some evidence that incapacitation decreases the amount of crime being committed.

He also said evidence suggests while crime rates dropped to some extent under three-strikes policies, it's difficult to disentangle the effects of these policies from other changes in criminal justice policy that also reduced crime rates.

Don Weatherburn, director of the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics, told *Fact Check* there was evidence that mandatory sentencing reduced the amount of crime being committed but the topic of the effectiveness of mandatory sentencing is controversial.

“There is a substantial body of evidence that higher imprisonment rates produce lower crime rates but the

MANDATORY SENTENCING: HOW OTHERS FARE OVERSEAS

New Zealand: Declined to introduce mandatory minimum sentences.

Europe: Most European countries have been generally reluctant to introduce mandatory sentencing.

England and Wales: A small number of mandatory sentences of imprisonment have been introduced for murder and other offences including firearms, drug and burglary crimes. Some discretion is given to judges.

South Africa: A small number of mandatory sentences for serious offences including murder, rape, robbery and serious finance crimes. Sentences range from 15 to 25 years.

Canada: The government has introduced mandatory minimum sentences for several offences.

United States: For many years the US has embraced tough mandatory sentencing. But a coalition of senators is now pushing to wind back such sentences for drug-related crime, saying the laws are outdated and have led to overcrowding of prisons.

Source: Patty, A (7 February 2014). *Alcohol-fuelled violence: Mandatory sentences 'only serve to fill jails'*. Retrieved from www.smh.com.au on 14 July 2014.

size of the effect and the cost-effectiveness of prison is much debated,” he said.

Geraldine Mackenzie, Dean of the Faculty of Law at Bond University, says there's only slim proof mandatory sentencing is an effective deterrent. “There is little evidence mandatory sentencing has direct results in terms of deterrence to offenders, although it is true some penalties influence behaviour in various ways, so you can't really say there's no evidence,” she said.



“Three-strikes and you’re out policies may have some effect for property offenders, for example in the US, where everyone knows the consequences, but this won’t always be the case.”

Professor Mackenzie has a stronger view when it comes to violent crime.

“There is certainly little evidence to support that mandatory sentencing deters potential offenders for many violent crimes, particularly those involving drug- and alcohol-fuelled violence, and almost invariably not for crimes of passion and the like which are spur of the moment,” she said. “In relation to deterrence, it makes no sense to introduce mandatory sentences for crimes that have no element of premeditation on the basis of deterrence.”

There is certainly little evidence to support that mandatory sentencing deters potential offenders for many violent crimes, particularly those involving drug and alcohol-fuelled violence.

THE VERDICT

Establishing the impact of mandatory sentencing policies is complex. States and countries have different sentencing regimes, methods of policing and incidence of crime.

Case studies in Western Australia, California, Michigan, Florida and Pennsylvania indicate that crime decreased or plateaued under mandatory sentencing schemes. However in the Northern Territory crime went up under mandatory sentencing.

Experts contacted by *Fact Check* say there is not much evidence that mandatory sentencing reduces the level of crime being committed, but there is some.

Mr Boulten’s claim is overreach.

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'TOUGH ON CRIME' A WASTE OF TIME – LET'S BE EFFECTIVE INSTEAD

Jailing offenders isn't the only option available to courts, writes **David Indermaur**

Violent crime represents a tragedy on many different levels. After working in prisons for a few years I was convinced, as I think most of us would be, not only about the limitations of our response to crime but also how the tragedy of crime adds to the misery of those least able to cope with life.

Enthusiasm for using imprisonment as a response to crime is most likely sustained through the comforting, but false, belief that imprisonment is effective in deterring crime.

In a few cases it might be but mainly it is not. To understand why it is not, we need to have broader understanding of context in which most violent crime is committed.

It is a simple and relevant fact that most victims come from the same groups in the community as the offenders. In many cases they are directly related to them. This reflects the unplanned and expressive nature of most violent crimes.

A recent analysis of homicide in Australia reveals that most homicide victims were in a close relationship with the killer.

Crime is especially tragic in that it reflects the hurt, wounded and dysfunctional attempts by some to grasp for a sense of power.

The people they hurt in this doomed quest for power are people who are least likely to have the resources and capabilities to resist or recover from the violence.

When we look across all the various types of violent crime we see a pattern with violent offenders usually becoming accustomed to using violence early in their lives.

The most widespread and devastating form of violent crime is the often unspoken, unrecognised and unreported forms of family violence – almost all committed by men, sometimes against their partners and sometimes against the



children who are unlucky enough to be placed in their care.

In the study we did into young people's experience of domestic violence we found that one in four young Australians had witnessed domestic violence in their home.

Crime is especially tragic in that it reflects the hurt, wounded and dysfunctional attempts by some to grasp for a sense of power.

A recent Australian study found that one in three women and one in six men have experienced some form of sexual abuse as a child. A recent review of prisoners' health published in the *Lancet* provides detail on the much higher rates of mental illness, including post traumatic stress disorder, evident in prisoner populations compared to the general population.

Such findings provide further support for the widely endorsed theory of the cycle of violence.

But how does being hurt and traumatised lead to psychological distress which is then played out in all kinds of harming behaviours – sometimes self-harm and

sometimes harming others?

Part of the answer is that these people are hurting and attempt to redeem their sense of importance through hurting another.

It comes back to a view of the world that sees dominance and force as being signs of real power. A belief that unfortunately we see mirrored in the way we respond to crime.

The underlying belief is that expressive uses of force can redeem us from feelings of worthlessness, impotence and despair. It is a desperate and futile search for power and control.

Part of the reason why it affects the poor and the marginalised more is because feelings of powerlessness combine with a lack of resources to express power in other ways.

For example in the study we did in the mid-90s into the extent of domestic violence in Western Australia we found domestic violence is much more common in poorer areas than in richer areas. And it is much more common in Aboriginal communities. We found that an Aboriginal woman in this state was 45 times more likely to be the victim of domestic violence than a non Aboriginal woman .

Against this well known picture

of the tragedy of crime how can we intervene in a truly productive way?

Perhaps the hardest, but also the most relevant point to grasp, is that the justice system provides a very limited remedy to this kind of widespread problem. And this is not a criticism of the system but rather a simple appraisal of its place in the scheme of things.

There are three reasons for this: First, the vast majority of crime does not even come to the attention of the criminal justice system.

Second, of that crime that does come to the attention of the authorities only a small proportion of offenders are caught and convicted.

Third, those that are caught and convicted are usually well advanced in their criminal career so that the intervention of the courts can do little to change things.

A large part of the problem in developing more effective responses to crime is that people are fixated on imprisonment – it eats up enormous amounts of the budget that we could be using to prevent crime but it remains the popular solution. We need to understand why, and how, we can re-invest some of the money we spend on warehousing criminals into preventing crime.

Punishment will always be needed as a last resort but we are likely to get so much more out of it if it is reserved, as in the drug court model. In this case offenders are encouraged to seek treatment, rather than punished for their crimes.

We also need to be cautious in our response to crime that we don't actually cause more harm than good. This was illustrated a few years ago with the widespread adoption of a policy that looked good and was enthusiastically endorsed.

It was thought that routinely arresting offenders in all cases of domestic violence this would undoubtedly work to deter them from committing further assaults. Well it did – but only in those cases where the offender had something to lose – like a job, reputation or status in the community. For the poorest men without jobs and so forth the arrest operated like a red rag to a bull

and in fact the violence escalated.

We clearly need to approach the prevention of violence strategically, first like any good doctor, to do no greater harm, and then, to intervene as intelligently as possible to minimise harm.

The good money is on a whole raft of early intervention programs aimed at helping where it is most needed – such as in disadvantaged areas with mums who are least able to cope.

The 'do no greater harm' principle is particularly important where governments are willing to throw aside good practices developed over many decades, if not centuries, in an effort to show that they are 'tough on crime'.

This is partly a product of the 'dumbing down' of public debates on crime much of which can be attributed to the power and the dynamics of the tabloid media.

The tabloid media depend on heightening the emotional and sensational aspects of crime whilst at the same time simplifying positions into categories like 'tough on crime' or 'soft on crime'. Unfortunately they don't seem to have a category called 'effective on crime'.

It is important to note that the media have no ultimate responsibility to the public, they are a business and they are accountable not to the public or the government but to their shareholders.

It follows that they will seek to produce news that grabs attention. The easiest and most effective way to do this is to engage at the emotional level.

The political and the media treatments of crime converge into a focus on emotional reactions – either responding to the public emotions of fear and anger, creating them or exploiting them. It is clearly possible, and often successful politically, to reduce crime debates to this level.

And while there are many things we can do to engender a considered public debate on this matter there is no substitute for inspired and strong political leadership. This leadership should develop a new dialogue with the public about our response to

crime. There is evidence that this could break a deadlock that stymies progress in this area.

There are now a number of studies which demonstrate that when the public are seriously engaged and given the opportunity to have access to the basic facts concerning our choices in this area they move towards making decisions on the basis of what works to prevent crime.

They routinely endorse alternatives to imprisonment and want public money spent in the most effective way to prevent crime. In short they are rational and reasonable decision makers.

This should not be surprising as all that has happened is that we have shifted the parameters of the discussion from the kind of banter you might hear in a pub to the sober environment of the jury room. We have essentially switched the discussion from the emotional to the rational.

Some might say, that our policies in this area should be informed by our outrage about crime. However, by making the choice to focus on the effectiveness of our responses to crime, we are willing to listen to our emotions, but not be overwhelmed by them.

We want to stay focused on what will genuinely reduce the most harm, not engage in gratifying displays of force which, just like the violent man, make us feel more powerful.

If we recognise the real tragedy of crime, we become more concerned about those directly affected by it, and choose at every point, to focus on what reduces suffering, not, what feels good. We do this, not because we don't care about the victims of crime but rather precisely because we do.

David Indermaur is Associate Professor, Crime Research Centre at the University of Western Australia.

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PRISONS – HELP OR HINDRANCE?

ADAM FLETCHER OF THE CASTAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS LAW DISPUTES THE EFFECTIVENESS OF IMPRISONMENT AS A WAY TO REDUCE VIOLENT CRIME

Prisons are rarely out of the news – just this month there has been talk of establishing a separate one for bikie gang members in Queensland where inmates would be confined for 23 hours a day. Clearly, such an initiative is based on the popular theory that more and tougher prisons will lead to less crime. Quite apart from the fact that solitary confinement is usually a counter-productive violation of a person’s human rights, this theory is fundamentally flawed.

There are numerous studies showing that imprisonment is not the most effective way to reduce crime. In one such study, Emeritus Professor David Brown of UNSW describes the immense challenge of reconciling this fact with the ‘cultural imaginings concerning punishment’ which militate against alternative methods of crime control. The temptation to prescribe harsh punishments is seductive (not least to politicians), but ultimately an inefficient allocation of scarce resources.

This is not to deny that there are some violent offenders who need to be separated from society during the reform process. A community’s desire to see guilty parties punished is also a powerful force which must be acknowledged by policy-makers. Yet even the tabloid press which so often stokes community outrage about the ‘soft’ criminal justice system has felt compelled to report on the fact that prisons mostly promote reoffending. Unfortunately, governments are not getting the message.

A great many of the custodial sentences handed down every day in Magistrates’ Courts around the country are for non-violent offences such as stealing, receiving stolen property, unlawful use of a vehicle, illegal entry of premises, driving offences, drug offences and breaches of bail conditions.

Just last year, the Australian Institute of Criminology found that only a small proportion (less than 18%) of people are arrested for violent crime, and of those who are, more than 40% attributed their offending to drugs and/or alcohol. This leaves only a small cohort of inherently dangerous offenders who belong in prison. For the rest, alternatives such as diversion schemes, drug treatment courses and victim-offender conferencing have massive potential to reduce reoffending rates.

Last year, the Castan Centre prepared a comprehensive report for the federal Government on Alternatives to Imprisonment for Vulnerable Offenders – the kinds of non-violent offenders who simply should not be in prison. Among other things, it set out what other countries with lower crime and imprisonment rates do, what experts recommend and what human rights law requires. In an Appendix, the report also surveys in detail the alternatives to imprisonment which already exist in Australia. Unfortunately, these include some successful schemes which have been cancelled or starved of funding.



The report notes the hugely disproportionate number of indigenous detainees in our prison system. On the latest figures available, 26% of the prison population identified as indigenous, compared with just 2.5% of the general population. As if this weren’t shocking enough, indigenous juvenile offenders are 28 times more likely to be imprisoned than non-indigenous juveniles – a state of affairs which the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Indigenous Peoples describes as “alarming” and “disturbing”. This kind of overrepresentation has been with us for decades, and will not change without a concerted reform effort.

The report also notes the overrepresentation of detainees with a mental illness or cognitive disability, who fare poorly in prison – especially when insufficient resources are devoted to appropriate medical care. In addition, the homeless and young people generally are detained at higher rates than other Australians.

Naturally, other countries face similar problems. For example, Canada’s indigenous imprisonment rate is also disproportionately high. Yet, unlike ours, Canada’s overall imprisonment rate has been in decline over the last decade due to “conscious efforts that have been made to utilise community-based alternatives to imprisonment to the extent possible, consistent with public safety”.

Finland’s approach is even more radical from an Australian point of view. The sentencing provisions of Finland’s Criminal Code are based on the theory that the criminal law should have an educative function – to make people “refrain from illegal behaviour not because it is followed by unpleasant punishment but because the behaviour itself is regarded as morally blameworthy”. Since 1945, the incarceration rate in Finland has decreased from 250 per 100,000 (one of the highest in

The effect of arrest and imprisonment on crime

Increasing the risk of arrest and the probability of imprisonment are much more effective in preventing property and violent crime than increasing the length of prison terms, according to a study of the effectiveness of the criminal justice system in controlling crime, released by the **NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research**

The study is one of the most comprehensive ever carried out in Australia into the effectiveness of the criminal justice system in controlling crime. It examined the effect of changes in the probability of arrest, the probability of imprisonment and the length of the average prison term on trends in property and violent crime across every Local Government Area (LGA) in NSW between 1996 and 2008. Special measures were taken to control for other factors that influence crime, such as household income and drug use. The study also controlled for the effect of crime on the criminal justice system.

The Bureau found that a 10 per cent increase in the risk of arrest in the long run produces a 1.35 per cent reduction in property crime, while a 10 per cent increase in the imprisonment risk produces a 1.15 per cent reduction in property crime. Similarly, in the long run, a 10 per cent increase in the risk of arrest for violent crime produces a 2.97 per cent reduction in violent crime, while a 10 per cent increase in the risk of imprisonment produces a 1.7 per cent reduction in violent crime.

Although increasing the risk of arrest appears to exert a stronger effect on property and violent crime than increasing the risk of imprisonment, the differences were not found to be statistically significant. Arrest and imprisonment, however, were found to exert significantly stronger effects on violent crime than on property crime.

A 10 per cent increase in the risk of arrest in the long run produces a 2.97 per cent reduction in violent crime, compared with a fall of only 1.35 per cent reduction in property crime. Similarly, a 10 per cent increase in the imprisonment risk reduces violent crime by 1.7 per cent compared with a 1.2 per cent reduction in property crime.

The stronger effect for violent crime may be at least partly due to the higher risk of arrest for violent crime relative to property crime. The 30 day clear-up rate for non-domestic assault, for example, is 21.7 per cent, compared with 3.7 per cent for burglary. Interestingly, the study found that household income exerted a much stronger effect on crime than the criminal justice system. A 10 per cent increase in household income was estimated to produce an 18.9 per cent reduction in property crime over the long term and a 14.6 per cent reduction in violent crime. The effect of income on property crime is more than 14 times larger than the effect of arrest, while its effect on violent crime is nearly five times larger.

Commenting on the findings, the Director of the Bureau, Dr Don Weatherburn, said that they were very reassuring given that Australia currently spends more than \$11.5 billion annually on law and order. In per capita terms, this amounts to \$511.00 per person per annum.

"At the same time, it is important to bear in mind that the study did not examine the cost-effectiveness of current policy in controlling crime.

"Overseas research suggests that it is possible in some circumstances to cut crime and spend less doing it than we currently spend locking people up. The NSW Drug Court is a good example."

NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (13 March 2012). *The effect of arrest and imprisonment on crime* (Media release). Retrieved from www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au on 8 July 2014.

the region) to just 59 per 100,000. By contrast, Australia's is currently 168 per 100,000 and trending higher. Much of the difference can be attributed to increasing use of alternative punishments by the Finnish courts, such as fines adjusted according to an offender's ability to pay, community service and suspended sentences. Nearly three quarters of cases in Finland are now referred to mediation (a form of restorative justice), which involves a contract to perform volunteer work in the offender's community.

There is another crucial distinction between Finland and Australia. Since the 1970s there has been bipartisan support among Finnish politicians for reduction of the imprisonment rate, and conscious avoidance of campaigning on a 'crime control' platform with slogans such as 'three strikes' or 'truth in sentencing.' Media reporting of crime also tends to be far more restrained than, for example, in the UK or Australia, and cooperation between Nordic countries in terms of criminological research and justice policy development, along with cooperation between researchers, policymakers and the judiciary has played a significant role.

Australian initiatives such as specialist drug and alcohol courts, indigenous courts and diversion programs have already shown significant promise in producing better outcomes than imprisonment, yet a half-hearted approach to them by governments at all levels has limited their potential.

With few exceptions, a stronger focus on rehabilitation of an offender is likely to lead to greater benefits for society than an overly punitive approach. If imprisonment is the least restrictive option available to a sentencing court, but would be inappropriate or ineffective in the circumstances of the particular case, the government has a responsibility to make less restrictive alternatives available. This is not just what the evidence tells us, it is what we need to do to comply with our human rights obligations (including the right to personal liberty and freedom from discrimination).

Adam Fletcher is the manager of the Accountability Project, Castan Centre for Human Rights Law, Monash University.

Fletcher, A (5 November 2013). *Prisons – help or hindrance?* Retrieved from www.onlineopinion.com.au on 9 July 2014.

EXPLORING ISSUES

WORKSHEETS AND ACTIVITIES

The Exploring Issues section comprises a range of ready-to-use worksheets featuring activities which relate to facts and views raised in this book.

The exercises presented in these worksheets are suitable for use by students at middle secondary school level and beyond. Some of the activities may be explored either individually or as a group.

As the information in this book is compiled from a number of different sources, readers are prompted to consider the origin of the text and to critically evaluate the questions presented.

Is the information cited from a primary or secondary source? Are you being presented with facts or opinions?

Is there any evidence of a particular bias or agenda? What are your own views after having explored the issues?

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Brainstorm, individually or as a group, to find out what you know about violent crime issues. Complete your responses on a separate sheet of paper if more space is required.

- 1. Violence is not only physical assault. Provide a detailed definition of violence, and explain the different forms it can take.**

- 2. What is homicide? In your answer, also explain these homicide-related offences: murder; attempted murder; manslaughter.**

- 3. Explain the difference between the terms 'physical assault' and 'physical threat', and include examples.**

- 4. What is sexual assault, and who can it affect?**



WRITTEN ACTIVITIES

Complete the following activities on a separate sheet of paper if more space is required.

If someone picks an argument or fight, walk away. Not only is it what most people do, it is also the tougher thing to do.

The above statement outlines a simple way to increase your personal safety in relation to a potentially violent confrontation. Consider the following situations and write a paragraph on each, outlining the possible strategies and precautions you could take, as part of a personal safety plan.

HOME ALONE

GOING OUT AT NIGHT

TRAVELLING

IF YOU THINK YOU ARE BEING FOLLOWED



DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES

Complete the following activities on a separate sheet of paper if more space is required.

In groups of two or more, consider the following statements relating to aspects of crime and violence. Do you agree or disagree? Make a list of at least 4 points with which to back up your argument and discuss with your group. Share your arguments with other groups in the class.

Despite the amount of media coverage, rates of violence are falling worldwide.

Mandatory sentencing removes opportunity from criminals by locking them up, and it deters them through threats of jail time and higher penalties.

Violence begets violence; alcohol makes it so much worse.

Imprisonment is effective in deterring crime.

- Statistics show that women are more likely to be the victims of sexual violence, but men are more likely to be victims of assault. More women report incidents of domestic violence, but it is suggested men who are victims do not always report domestic violence when it has happened (Women's and Children's Health Network, *Violence*). (p.2)
- Assaults continue to represent the majority of recorded violent crimes (Australian Institute of Criminology, *Australian crime: facts & figures 2013*). (p.4)
- 62% of all sexual assault victims and 53% of all murder victims occurred in a residential dwelling (*ibid*). (p.6)
- Nationally, in 2013, over 4 in 5 sexual assault victims were female and nearly two thirds were 19 or under (ABS, *Recorded Crime – Victims, Australia, 2013*). (p.9)
- In 2013, the street/footpath was the most common location for robbery to occur (*ibid*). (p.10)
- Rates of victimisation for crimes such as break-in, attempted break-in, malicious property damage and motor vehicle theft were all lower in 2012-13 than 5 years ago (ABS, *Crime Victimisation, Australia, 2012-2013*). (p.13)
- Repeat victimisation of physical assault is more common for women; 36% of women who were victims of physical assault reported 3 or more incidents in comparison to 27% of men (*ibid*). (p.13)
- The reporting rates for victims who experienced physical assault and robbery are higher than the reporting rates for victims of face-to-face threatened assault and non face-to-face threatened assault (*ibid*). (p.15)
- The physical assault victimisation rate for persons aged between 15-19 years and 20-24 years is higher than the rate for persons aged 35-44 years, 45-54 years, 55-64 years and 65 years and over (*ibid*). (p.17)
- An estimated 40,700 Australians (0.2% of the population) aged 18 years and over are a victim of sexual assault. This includes 26,400 female victims (0.3%) and 14,400 male victims (0.2%) (*ibid*). (p.19)
- In 2012, it was estimated that 49% of all men aged 18 years and over and 41% of all women aged 18 years and over had experienced violence since the age of 15 (ABS, *Personal Safety, Australia, 2012*). (p.22)
- A child or young person who is a victim of crime will also experience physical and emotional reactions but they may not be able to express them in words the same way an adult can (Victim Assist Queensland, *A guide for victims of crime in Queensland*). (p.25)
- The safest and least turbulent period in the last century, at least with respect to crime, was the Great Depression. Theft, robbery, rape and murder were all at their lowest rate (Aitkin, D, *Are we in the midst of a crime wave?*). (p.26)
- Despite all the talk about drive-by shootings, homicide involving guns represents only about a sixth of all murders. Knives are twice as common as murder weapons (*ibid*). (p.26)
- Homicide rates have dropped dramatically from 100 for every 100,000 people in the 13th century, to 10 in 100,000 by the middle of the 17th century (although it was that high in the US only a few years ago) to rates of around 1 in 100,000 people in most Western countries today (Dwyer, P, *Is the world really becoming less violent?*). (p.27)
- In Australia, while murder rates have been steady for decades, assaults are on the rise – from 623 per 100,000 in 1996 to 840 per 100,000 in 2007 (*ibid*). (p.27)
- Physical assault was the most common form of assault experienced by the youth population in 2009-10 (ABS, *Youth victimisation and offending: a statistical snapshot*). (p.29)
- A comparison of the proportion of total offenders who were aged 10-24 in 2009-10 with the proportion of the general population who were aged 10-24 in Australia as at December 2009, clearly shows the higher proportion of young people in the offender population (*ibid*). (p.29)
- Offender rates for persons aged 10-14 years and persons aged 15-19 years have increased each year since 2007-08. This trend is in contrast to the offender rates for adults, which have decreased each year since 2007-08 (*ibid*). (p.30)
- For males aged 15-24, 7.4% experienced at least one physical assault, compared to 4.1% of females in this age group (*ibid*). (p.30)
- You are much more likely to be hurt in a car accident than be hurt by a stranger on the road (Women's and Children's Health Network, *Safety for teens*). (p.34)
- Data shows that alcohol is responsible for around 3 times as much violent offending as all illicit drugs combined (33.6% vs 12.4%) (Room, R and Livingston, M, *Fact check: only drugs and alcohol together cause violence*). (p.37)
- 8.1% of Australian adults reported being the victim of an alcohol-related assault. The corresponding figure for illicit drugs was just 2.2% (*ibid*). (p.37)
- Children who survive family or domestic violence are 3 times more likely to become perpetrators and twice as likely to become victims (Miller, P, *Alcohol and violence: a complex issue in search of leadership*). (p.39)
- The costs of violence in Australia run to many billions of dollars (*ibid*). (p.40)
- Some experiments have shown that people tend to get more aggressive even when given a placebo. That is, when they are told they are going to have an alcoholic drink, but are secretly given a non-alcoholic tonic, they get aggressive anyway (Berg, C, *Neo-prohibition isn't the answer to violent crime*). (p.44)
- A recent analysis of homicide in Australia reveals that most homicide victims were in a close relationship with the killer (Indermaur, D, *"Tough on crime" a waste of time – let's be effective instead*). (p.49)
- Indigenous juvenile offenders are 28 times more likely to be imprisoned than non-indigenous juveniles (Fletcher, A, *Prisons – help or hindrance?*). (p.51)
- Arrest and imprisonment were found to exert significantly stronger effects on violent crime than on property crime (NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, *The effect of arrest and imprisonment on crime*). (p.52)

Aggression

Types of aggression include verbal/non-verbal aggression, physical aggression, self-aggression, sexual assault and environmental aggression (damage to property).

Alcohol-related violence

An incident of violence, whether physical, verbal, emotional or property, is alcohol-related if it is fuelled in part by the presence of alcohol. Alcohol-related violence covers a range of behaviours from drunkenness which can be intimidating, through to extremely aggressive and violent acts such as homicide. Alcohol-related violence behaviours include: drink driving; public disorder; assault; abuse; family violence; theft and property damage; and self-harm.

Assault

Refers to physical and threatened assault (both face-to-face threatened assault and non face-to-face threatened assault).

Break-in

An act of unauthorised forced entry into a home or other place where a victim permanently resides. Includes garages, sheds, or any detached secure buildings.

Domestic violence

A situation where one partner in a relationship is using violent and abusive behaviour in order to control and dominate the other partner. *See also* relationship violence.

Face-to-face threatened assault

Any verbal and/or physical threat, made in person, to inflict physical harm where the person being threatened believes the threat is able and likely to be carried out.

Homicide

The killing of one human being by another. This includes murder or manslaughter.

Household crime

Crimes committed with the intent to deprive another person of, or deliberately damage, their personal property.

Incident

A single occurrence of a crime event, such as a break-in to a household or an assault of a person.

Multiple victimisation

Relates to victims who experience more than one instance of the same crime type.

Offender

A person who commits a crime, as identified by the victim. There may be one or more than one offender involved in any one crime.

Personal safety

There are a number of potentially unsafe situations you might come across in your everyday life. These might include travelling alone on public transport (especially at night), walking alone in deserted areas, and going out partying with friends. There are strategies and precautions you can take to maximise your feeling of safety and to enhance your quality of life – you might want to choose the ones you think are important for you and create your own safety plan.

Physical assault

The use of physical force with the intent to harm or frighten a person. Assaults may have occurred in conjunction with a robbery and includes incidents where a person was assaulted at work.

Physical threat

An attempt to inflict physical harm or a threat or suggestion of intent to inflict physical harm, made face-to-face where the person believes it is able to and likely to be carried out.

Rape

The most serious form of sexual assault, forcing someone to have sexual intercourse without their consent. Sexual intercourse with anyone under the age of 12 is rape as a child is not capable of giving consent.

Relationship violence

Sometimes in relationships dominance or control or jealousy can be mistaken for love and can involve hurt, power, control and feeling bad in a relationship. Most relationship violence happens to women and is done by men, however, relationship violence also happens in gay and lesbian relationships or is done by women to men.

Robbery

An act of stealing (or attempting to steal) property from a person by physically attacking them, or threatening them with force or violence.

Serious assault

Refers to the direct infliction of force, injury or violence upon a person and includes attempts and threats to harm. This category of assault includes grievous bodily harm, malicious wounding, assault occasioning actual bodily harm and aggravated assault.

Sexual assault

Also known as sexual violence. Includes any form of non-consensual or forced sexual activity or touching including rape. It is carried out against the victim's will using physical or threatened force, intimidation or coercion.

Sexual threat

Involves the threat of acts of a sexual nature made face-to-face where the person believes it is able to and likely to be carried out.

Threatened assault

A verbal, written, and/or physical threat to inflict physical harm where the person being threatened believes the threat is able or likely to be carried out.

Victim

A person or household who has experienced at least one crime incident.

Violence

Violence is any incident involving the occurrence, attempt or threat of assault, or any action that is meant to make others feel hurt, scared or humiliated. Violence can be physical, emotional/verbal, sexual, financial, social and spiritual.

Websites with further information on the topic

Australian Bureau of Statistics www.abs.gov.au
 Australian Institute of Criminology www.aic.gov.au
 Australian Law Reform Commission www.alrc.gov.au
 Be the Hero www.bethehero.com.au
 Bullying No Way! www.bullyingnoway.com.au
 Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (NSW) www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au
 Bursting the Bubble www.burstingthebubble.com
 Comparative Youth Penalty Project <http://cyp.unsw.edu.au/>
 Crime Research Centre of Western Australia www.law.uwa.edu.au/research/crc
 Don't Cross the Line www.dontcrosstheline.com.au
 Lawstuff www.lawstuff.org.au
 MensLine Australia www.mensline.org.au
 National Crime Prevention Program www.crimeprevention.gov.au
 No To Violence www.ntv.org.au
 Office of Crime Statistics and Research (South Australia) www.ocsar.sa.gov.au
 ReachOut.com <http://au.reachout.com>
 Smart Justice www.smartjustice.org.au
 The Line www.theline.gov.au
 White Ribbon Australia www.whiteribbon.org.au
 1800RESPECT – National Sexual Assault, Domestic Family Violence Counselling Service www.1800respect.org.au

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- Australian Bureau of Statistics
- Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research
- Women's and Children's Health Network.

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