

## KEY FINDINGS

Across the 11 years of police data reported through this database there has been an 82 per cent increase in the number of family violence incidents reported to Victoria Police, from 19,597 incident reports in 1999–2000 to 35,720 incident reports in 2009–10.

While we can not effectively measure the prevalence of family violence in the community, this dramatic increase is unlikely to represent an increase in family violence incidents occurring in the community, rather an increase in the number of reports made to police and police increasingly taking a proactive approach to family violence as outlined elsewhere in this report (Victoria Police Crime Statistics 2010–11).

### Intervention orders and reporting incidents

- There are early indications that the implementation of the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008*, including police-issued Family Violence Safety Notices, has had a positive impact on reporting family violence. From 2008–09 to 2010–11 there was a 21 per cent increase in family violence incident reports to police and a 13 per cent increase in affected family members (AFMs)<sup>2</sup> subject to finalised family violence intervention order applications.
- Consistently across the years, two out of five affected family members who report to police indicate that the family violence had been occurring for more than two years.
- Since 2007–08 police have increasingly laid criminal charges against the perpetrator, increasing from one in six incidents to one in three.
- According to the police data for 2008–09 and 2009–10, fewer than one in five adult females and approximately one in ten adult males had an active intervention order at the time of police attendance for family violence.
- In 2009–10 more than half of adults experiencing violence had never reported previous violence to police.
- Since 2006–07 around one quarter of incidents had a history of between one and three previous reports of family violence to police (similar for female and male victims).
- Since 2006–07, police have increasingly become the primary applicants for intervention orders on behalf of the victim. A further reporting boost occurred in 2009–10, likely due to the introduction of Family Violence Safety Notices (FVSNs).
- Across the four years in which the Family Violence Court Division has been operating, one in ten applicants went through these courts.
- Across the VLA family violence matters where information is recorded, just over one quarter (27%) of matters resulted in intervention orders.

- In 2010–11, a total of 32 applications for variation of tenancy due to family violence were heard at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT). All but one involved a female applicant or protected person and male respondent or other party.
- From 2008–09 to 2009–10, FVSN-initiated intervention orders had the lowest rate of being withdrawn compared with other methods of initiation, and two thirds of FVSN-initiated intervention orders were granted.

### Gender of victim and perpetrator

- Police and court data across all years shows perpetrators of violence against adult female victims were overwhelmingly male (91–95%), while adult male victims were subject to violence from both male and females (40 and 60 per cent respectively).
- In 2009–10, adult victims included 25,296 females reporting family violence incidents to police compared with 6,992 males, and 16,906 females with finalised intervention orders for family violence compared with 5,097 males.
- Consistently, across the 11 years, around 80 per cent of adult respondents to finalised intervention order applications were male, as were the other party (perpetrator) in family violence incidents reported to police.

### Relationship between victims and perpetrators

- Approximately 80 per cent of adult female victims (court and police data) experienced the violence from an intimate partner (including *current* and *former domestic partner* as well as *intimate personal relationship*).
- Adult male victims were more likely to experience violence from *other non-intimate* family members than were adult female victims. This has remained relatively stable over the 11 years for both police and court data.
- From 2005–06 onwards, the proportion of children as victims listed on finalised intervention orders has increased continually and substantially. Children are now the primary affected family member for newly initiated intervention orders (40%) followed by all forms of *intimate partners* (38%).

### Same sex

- Among the same-sex relationship data for police and courts, a larger proportion of males than females reported family violence from same-sex partners as compared with the overall data reported on in this report. Same-sex partner family violence accounts for four per cent of all male victims and less than one per cent of all female victims.
- In the latest two years of data (2008–09 and 2009–10), a similar number of victims reporting family violence from a same-sex partner to police also applied for an intervention order.

### Age of victim and respondents

- Since 2003–04 fewer incidents of family violence have been reported among younger women (aged 25–34 years). Across all data sets, one third of adult female victims were aged 35–44 years, followed closely by women aged 25–34 years.
- The average age of adult male victims is slightly older than adult female victims, with police and court data indicating the largest male victim groups were aged 35–44 years and 45–64 years (relatively consistent over the 11 years of reporting).

### Children

- The number of children recorded as affected family members (AFMs) in police family violence incidents reports has tripled since this report commenced. In 1999–2000 there were 915 children recorded as AFMs compared with 2,755 in 2009–10. In addition, children recorded as present at family violence incidents attended by police has also increased, from 18,541 *children present* in 1999–2000 to 24,180 *children present* in 2009–10. This result may be attributed to increased awareness of the impact of family violence on children and acknowledgment of children as victims in their own right.
- The number of children identified in the court data as affected family members (aged 17 years and under) has risen 341 per cent over the 11-year period, from 4,530 children in 1999–2000 to 19,974 children in 2009–10.
- Since 2004, police members are increasingly reporting children they believe are at risk to child protection. Approximately two thirds of children and adolescents aged under 15 years and one third of adolescents aged 15–17 years recorded as primary victims were formally reported to child protection (consistent from 2006–07 to 2009–10).
- An average of 75 children and adolescents per year present to emergency departments with injuries identified as human intended injuries, comprising approximately 12 per cent of all emergency department *human intent injuries*.
- One quarter of Victims Assistance and Counselling Program (VACP) family violence clients were adolescents or children aged 17 years or younger in 2009–10, with the majority aged less than 15 years.
- One in five (20%) of Victorian Legal Aid (VLA) family violence casework clients were children or adolescents under 18 years (12% aged 15 years or less).
- More than half of the women seeking assistance for family violence through a specialist family violence court in 2010–11 had children in their care, and one fifth included a child on their intervention order application.<sup>3</sup>
- In 2008–09 and 2009–10 there was a large increase in the number of family violence-related SAAP client support periods recorded with accompanying children (approximately 9,000 clients with accompanying children), the largest recorded over the 11 years.

### Adolescents as perpetrators of violence against their parents or step-parents

- The rate of incidents where the parent or step-parents are the victim of violence from their children or step children has remained relatively static across all 11 years reported on (around 14%). A majority of these children were adolescents with around one quarter being adult children perpetrating violence toward their parents.
- Similar to adult perpetrators, when a perpetrator is an adolescent against a parent or step-parent, males are more frequently perpetrators of violence than females and victims are more likely to be mothers or step-mothers than fathers or step-fathers (similar within both police and court data).
- Female adolescent perpetrators are more likely to be violent to their mothers than their fathers (police and court data).

### Type of violence/abuse

- Less than five per cent of incidents reported to police were recorded as breaches of intervention orders.
- Across the six years of VEMD hospital data, approximately 65 per cent of adult females experienced an injury where they were struck by another person, compared with 26 per cent of adult males.
- Adult females within the VEMD hospital data were more than twice as likely to have multiple injuries as were adult male patients.
- In the Police data, 2006–07 to 2009–10, more than half of adult female victims reported being *fearful* of the perpetrator while conversely, more than three quarters of male victims indicated they were *not fearful at all* of the perpetrator.
- Male victims of family violence who *were fearful* of their perpetrator were most often reporting violence from either their *child* or *another relative* (excluding partners).

### Risk indicators and risk management

- One quarter to one third of family violence incidents reported to police contained at least one *high risk* indicator.
- The most commonly identified high risk indicator recorded by police was *separation* (one quarter of incidents in each year). Separation was identified as a risk for twice as many female victims as males.
- *Controlling behaviour* (by the perpetrator/other party) was one of the most frequently identified risk indicators recorded by police. Controlling behaviour was identified as a risk for twice as many female victims as males.

### Regional distribution

- In the most recent two years of data, family violence incident reports continue to increase among women residing within all regions of Victoria.

## KEY FINDINGS continued

- While the greatest number of adult females seeking assistance from police and courts were from metropolitan regions, when analysed as a percentage of the population, victims living in non-metropolitan regions sought assistance more often as a proportion of the population.

### Disability

- The demographics of SAAP family violence clients with a disability have remained largely stable over the 11 years; they are slightly older and less likely to have children accompanying them into services.
- Identification of victims with a disability has increased among police data. In 2006–07 there were 252 incidents identifying disability issues (less than 1% of incidents), rising to 606 reports in 2009–10 (nearly 2% of incidents).
- In 2009–10, no male victims of family violence were recorded in the police data as having a disability.
- An increased emphasis by Victoria Legal Aid (VLA) on completing information about disability among clients saw a dramatic rise in disclosure in the most recent data. Leading up to 2009–10 reporting disability for family violence clients was steady at between two and three per cent of clients and in 2010–11 the rate of identification increased to ten per cent.

### Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)

- In the police data, it is notable that interpreters are more often requested among perpetrators as compared with victims.
- The proportion of applicants and respondents receiving a translation/interpreter service at court for family violence matters is small (less than 5%).
- One in five females receiving support periods through a SAAP service were born in predominantly non-English speaking countries (EP 2-4) compared with around one in ten males.
- Nearly one third of adult VACP clients and one fifth of emergency department patients presenting with human intent injury were born outside Australia.
- All three VLA data files indicate that one in ten family violence clients speak a language other than English (2010–11).

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

- The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients presenting for *human intent injuries* (VEMD data) was quite small and encompassed three per cent of the overall human intent injuries patients. The majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients were female.
- The proportion disclosing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background is steady among women seeking SAAP services for family violence and represents between five and seven per cent of the support periods. The number of women increased from 568 women in 2000–01 to 1,178 women in 2009–10.

### Older persons

- Police data indicates that older persons (65 years plus) are more likely to report abuse from their children or another family member than they are from their partner.
- Support for older people in SAAP services accounts for one to two per cent of female family violence support periods.
- A larger proportion of older women receiving SAAP support speak a language other than English as compared with younger women.