

Violence against Women in Australia

**Australian Institute of Criminology
Research and Public Policy Series**

No. 1

The Promise of Crime Prevention: Leading crime prevention programs
edited by Peter Grabosky and Marianne James, 1995

No. 2

Money Laundering in the 21st Century: Risks and countermeasures
edited by Adam Graycar and Peter Grabosky, 1996

No. 3

Violence Prevention in Practice: Australian award-winning programs
compiled by Jane Mugford and Diana Nelson, 1996

No. 4

Violent Death and Firearms in Australia: Data and trends
by Satyanshu Mukherjee and Carlos Carcach, 1996

No. 5

Protecting Superannuation against Criminal Exploitation
edited by Adam Graycar, 1996

No. 6

Violence against Women in Australia: Key research and data issues
by Judy Putt and Karl Higgins, 1997

No. 7

A Statistical Profile of Crime in Australia
by Satyanshu Mukherjee, Carlos Carcach and Karl Higgins, 1997

Violence against Women in Australia: Key Research and Data Issues

Judy Putt and Karl Higgins



AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF CRIMINOLOGY

© Australian Institute of Criminology 1997

Published by the Australian Institute of Criminology
74 Leichhardt Street
Griffith ACT 2603

Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the *Copyright Act 1968* (Cwlth), no part of this publication may in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, microcopying, photocopying, recording or otherwise), be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted without prior written permission. Inquiries should be addressed to the publisher.

National Library of Australia
Cataloguing-in-Publication entry

Violence against Women in Australia:
Key Research and Data Issues

Bibliography.
ISSN 1326-6004
ISBN 0 642 24031 0

1. Women - Crimes against - Australia - Statistics.
2. Abused women - Australia - Statistics. 3. Violent crimes -
Australia - Statistics. I. Higgins, Karl. II. Australian
Institute of Criminology. III. Title. (Series : Research
and public policy series ; no. 6).

364.150820994021

Printed by Better Printing Services, Queanbeyan

Australian Institute of Criminology Tel: 06 260 9200 Fax: 06 260 9201 email: Front.Desk@aic.gov.au http://www.aic.gov.au

Contents

PREFACE	ix
INTRODUCTION	<i>xi</i>
Background	<i>xi</i>
Trends in Policy and Practice	<i>xiii</i>
Data on Violence Against Women	<i>xv</i>
Interpretation of Data	<i>xvi</i>
Violence Against Women Indicators Project	<i>xiv</i>
Objectives	<i>xiv</i>
Definitional Issues	<i>xiv</i>
Contents of the Report	<i>xv</i>
CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH	1
Violence Against Women	1
Access to Justice	2
Domestic Violence	3
Sexual Assault	6
Future Directions in Research	7
Violence Against Women Indicators Project Workshop	9
CHAPTER 2: DATA ISSUES	13
Introduction	13
Types of Data	13
Uses of Data	14
Data Collections	15
National Collections	16
<i>AIC National Homicide Monitoring Program</i>	16
ABS Crime Victimization Surveys	17
ABS Criminal Justice Data	18
National Injury Surveillance Unit	19
DSS Social Work Information System Data	21
Legal Aid Commission Data	21
State and Territory Justice Data	21
Crime Statistics Bureaux	21
Police	24
Courts	26
Protection Orders	27
Directors of Public Prosecutions	32

Impediments to Data Coordination and Comparison	32
Reliability and Accuracy within Collections	33
Changes to Data Collections over time	34
Restricted Access	34
Limited Resources and Organisational Priorities	34
Differences in Definitions, Classifications and Counting	35
Sensitivity of Comparative Analysis	36
Future Directions with Data	36
CHAPTER 3: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	39
Research Priorities	39
Routine Data Collections	40
APPENDIX I: References	41
APPENDIX II: Significant Routine Data Collections	47
APPENDIX III: Protection Order Legislation	55
APPENDIX IV: Key Indicators of Violence against Women	63

List of Tables and Figures

Table 1:	Primary relationship between victim and accused for cases of homicide, Australia, 1989-93	17
Table 2:	<i>Estimated number of female victims aged 18 years and over, and victimisation rate for 12-month period, Australia, 1993, 1994 and 1995</i>	18
Table 3:	Reporting rates to police per 1000 000 population, selected offences, Australia, 1994 and 1995	19
Table 4:	National hospital separations where the reason for hospitalisation is given as rape: number of gender and age, Australia, 1992-93	19
Table 5:	Referrals to social work for cases registering domestic and family violence by age, gender and family structure, Australia, January-June 1996	20
Table 6:	Numbers of persons seeking legal aid for sexual offences, by sex and age, where sex of client is known, Australia, 1990-95	23
Table 7:	Applications received for legal aid in domestic violence order cases, by sex and age of applicant, where sex of client is known, Australia, 1990-95	23
Table 8:	Summary of type of police information on offender/victim relationship by jurisdiction, Australia	25
Table 9:	Summary of information found in published court statistics, Australia, 1990-96	26
Table 10:	Number of charges finalised and proven, selected offences, higher courts, Tasmania, 1991-93	27
Table 11:	Percentage proven of finalised higher court charges, selected offences, Tasmania, 1991-93	29
Table 12:	Sex of defendants and aggrieved family members in cases finalised under the Crimes (Family Violence) Act, Victoria 1991-95	29
Table 13:	Applications under the Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act 1989, Queensland, 1989-95	30
Table 14:	Outcomes of applications under the Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act 1989, Queensland, 1989-95	30
Table 15:	Outcomes of persons appearing in the Magistrates Court charged with breaches of the Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act 1989, by sex, Queensland, 1993-94	31
Figure 1:	Applications received for legal aid in sexual offence cases, by sex, Australia, 1990-95	22
Figure 2:	Applications received for legal aid in domestic violence order cases, Australia, 1990-95	22
Figure 3:	Percentage proven of finalised higher court charges, selected offences, Tasmania, 1991-93	28
Figure 4:	Percentage charged and found guilty for finalised appearances, higher court charges, New South Wales, 1991-93	28
Figure 5:	Sentences imposed for breaches of the Domestic Violence (Family Violence) Act, for males, Queensland, 1993-94	31

Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AIC	Australian Institute of Criminology
ANCO	Australian National Classification of Offences
CRISP	Crime Reporting Information System for Police (Queensland)
IJIS	Integrated Justice Information System (Northern Territory)
ISIS	Injury Statistical Information System (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare)
LEAP	Law Enforcement Assistance Program
LASSIE	Legal Aid Statistical System Information Exchange (Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department)
NEPI	National Exchange of Police Information
NISU	National Injury Surveillance Unit (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare)
NNI	National Names Index (Police Departments)
OIS	Offence Information System (WA)
SAAP	Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services)
SARC	Sexual Assault Referral Centre (Western Australia)
SWIS	(Commonwealth Department of Social Security) Social Worker Information System
VAWIP	Violence against Women Indicators Project

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the many people who provided information and data for the report, and also the participants at the Violence Against Women Indicators Project workshop held in May 1996. Special thanks to Jane Mugford and Marianne James and to other staff at the Australian Institute of Criminology for their invaluable help.

Preface

The contents of this report are a product of the Violence Against Women Indicators Project (VAWIP). Based at the Australian Institute of Criminology, the main aim of the Project was to coordinate data on the criminal justice response to violence against women in order to enhance decision making and policy formulation at a national level. A system of national and consistent data collection has been called for on numerous occasions, but so far there has been no national effort to meet the need for such data on violence against women.

The first step towards coordination involved the identification of data collections with information on violence against women, particularly information which related to legal responses and the criminal justice system. As interest lay with national data, large collections received the most attention, as did those which hold information from all jurisdictions. Data sets were analysed to assess the nature of the information contained within them, and to establish the major obstacles that prevent or inhibit the comparison and coordination of data.

Another important and related preliminary task was to review the research undertaken in Australia on violence against women. The objective of the review was to summarise the scope of previous studies in terms of both subject matter and methodology. The review was also designed to indicate priority areas for data analysis and for research to supplement statistical data.

An underlying reason behind both these tasks—the review of data availability and previous research—was to develop recommendations specific to the need for national data and which, more generally, indicate ways of increasing our understanding of violence

against women and our knowledge of legal responses to the violence.

This report, therefore, presents the findings of VAWIP in relation to key research and data issues. It identifies gaps in research and data and outlines the next steps required to further the twin goals of obtaining a national perspective on violence against women and improving the legal response to violence against women. These are listed systematically in Chapter 3 (pp. 39-40). Appendix IV (p. 63) lists the key areas in relation to violence against women which require the development of indicators.

Many of the tasks associated with the next steps were going to be undertaken by VAWIP in its second year of operation. However, funding for the project ceased.

Adam Graycar
Director,
Australian Institute of Criminology

January 1997