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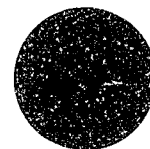
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148109

Attorney-General's Department
of South Australia

Issue No. 3

January 1994

ISSN 1039-7833

Violence Against Women

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Summary

- Of the violent offences reported to South Australian police in 1992, 46.1% of the victims were female. Data from a 1992 community survey also confirm that for the offences of robbery and assault, females were victims less often than males.
- Although females were the minority of victims, they were the majority of sexual assault victims.
- Police data showed that over half the violence against women occurred in a private dwelling. Females were also more at risk than males of being victimised by family, spouse or friends.
- Over four out of ten violent incidents reported to police resulted in the apprehension of an offender. The apprehension rate varied according to the type of incident, with robbery offences having the lowest and homicide offences having the highest.
- Incidents reported to police which could be classified as domestic violence incidents occur at an annual rate of 3.4 per 1,000 married, separated or divorced South Australian women.
- The survey data estimated an annual rate of physical domestic violence of between 2.0 per 1,000 women in a married or defacto relationship, and 42.7 per 1,000 separated or divorced women.

Introduction

This report examines physical violence against women. Information on violent crime towards women has been difficult to obtain despite extensive interest on the topic. The lack of this information has been commented upon in at least two recent government reports. Both the 1987 report of the South Australian Domestic Violence Council and the 1992 National Strategy on Violence Against Women recommended that details on the criminal justice response to violence against women be made available. This report provides statistical information relevant to these recommendations.

Recent improvements in the collection of crime statistics allow access to information on the circumstances of the crime and information about the victim. Rather than having to rely on the time consuming manual collation of thousands of incidents, crime statisticians have access to the recently developed Justice Information System in South Australia which allows details such as victim's age, sex, and relationship with offender to be easily retrieved. South Australia is one of only two States able to routinely provide details on the victim of criminal events.

Violence has been defined in this report to include a variety of offences: murder; manslaughter; assaults; rape; other sexual offences; robberies; and threatening behaviour. Although the primary focus of the report is on female victims, data on male victims of violence are presented throughout to highlight different patterns of victimisation. As domestic violence is

a matter of public concern, data are presented in this report on the extent and characteristics of physical violence against women occurring in domestic relationships.

Sources of data and their limitations

Information about violence comes from two main sources: police data and crime surveys. This report draws on both data sources. It examines violent incidents that came to the attention of South Australian police during 1992 and also the results from a community crime survey conducted in the same year. The report presents data on the prevalence and type of violence, as well as details on the location of the incident and the relationship between victim and offender. Of incidents reported to police, those that resulted in an apprehension of an offender have been identified.

Police data and crime surveys provide much valuable information, but they have limitations. Police data rely on offences being reported or becoming known to police. People do not report offences to

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police for a variety of reasons including: not thinking the crime was serious enough; believing that they can handle it themselves; or because they don't think police will be able to do anything about it (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1986).

For some minor offences individual interpretations of the incident can differ. A threat of violence, a push, or verbal assault can be perceived as varying in severity by different people. The level of harm done, amount of fear, past experiences, and circumstances surrounding the incident influence the decision to view the incident firstly as a violent offence, and to then report it to police.

Crime surveys endeavour to find out how much crime there is regardless of whether offences are reported to police. However, as with police data, crime surveys have their limitations. Just as people might not report an offence to police, they might not reveal an incident to the interviewer conducting the survey. Embarrassment or forgetfulness are possible reasons for withholding information, as would be the respondent not regarding the incident as serious enough to be included in a survey. On the other hand inclusion of incidents not covered by the survey's reporting period can inflate estimates of the extent of crime. While police data include all offences that become known to police, crime surveys usually only deal with victims aged over 15 years. Therefore, any children who were victimised are excluded from survey data.

Previous research

The Australian Bureau of Statistics conducted an Australia wide victim survey in 1983. The findings of the survey revealed that females were victims of assault and robbery less frequently than males. Females were also less likely to be injured as a result of the last actual or threatened attack (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1986).

The National Homicide Monitoring program found females were victims of homicide less often than males (Strang 1991). Females were also the minority of homicide victims in New South Wales between 1968 and 1986. However, the New South Wales data revealed that

nearly half the female victims of homicide were killed by a spouse (47%) compared to 10% of male homicide victims (Wallace 1986; Bonney 1987). Domestic homicide, often involving children, was highlighted by the National Homicide Monitoring program. Analysis of the national data showed that these incidents often occur at the point of separation between partners (Strang 1991).

Males were the most frequent victims of physical violence (79.8%) in cases identified by the National Injury Surveillance and Prevention Project. This project collected emergency hospital department data between 1986 and 1989 and identified injuries that were purposefully inflicted by another person. Females however were more likely than males to have such injuries sustained in their own or another person's home (National Committee of Violence 1990).

A Canadian national survey on male violence against women found that a half of all Canadian women had experienced at least one incident of violence since the age of 16 (Statistics Canada 1993). The survey also showed that 45% of women had been victimised by men they knew, with a quarter of all women reporting violence by a current or past marital partner.

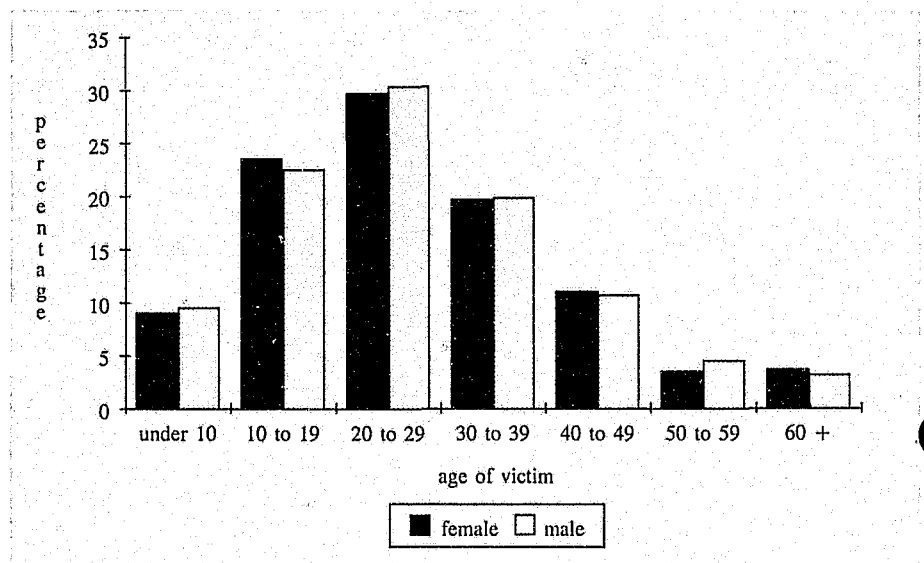
Figures from the United States Department of Justice show that while the rate of assaults towards men has been

declining over the 15 years from 1973 to 1988, the rate of violence to women has either stayed the same or increased (U.S. Department of Justice 1992). A similar trend is observed for robbery victims. Although (as for Australian data) men are victims of violence more than women, in the United States the gap between the sexes is narrowing. Canadian police data in 1991 found that women were as likely to be victims of violent crime as were men, although the sexes differed in the type of violent crime for which they were victims. Women were more often victims of sexual offences, and were less likely to have been assaulted with a weapon (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics 1992).

Violence reported to police

This section examines all violent incidents reported or becoming known to South Australia Police Department between January and December 1992. During 1992 there were 16,262 violent incidents to males and females reported or becoming known to police. Although the majority of victims were male (53.9%), Table 1 shows that a sizeable proportion of the victims were female (46.1%). Figure 1 illustrates that the age profile for male and female victims was very similar, and that both sexes appear most at risk of victimisation between the ages of 20 and 29 years.

Figure 1: Age distribution for female and male victims of violent incidents



Counting violence reported to police: In some cases one reported incident will involve several offences, for example both a rape and an indecent assault. As this paper is concerned with the number of victims rather than the number of offences, only the most serious offence for an incident has been recorded. In the above example this would be the rape offence. It is also possible for an individual to be a victim of violence on more than one occasion. These individuals are counted each time they report an incident to police. For example: if an individual had been assaulted twice, once in March and once in August and had reported the incident to police both times, it would be recorded as two incidents. Unless otherwise stated the figures in this paper are based on these *incident* figures rather than on the number of *individuals*.

Table 1: Violent incidents reported to South Australia police, 1992

	Number	Percentage ²
Male	8,770	53.9
Female	7,492	46.1
Total	16,262	100.0

The most frequent type of violent offence occurring against women was common assault (57.7%). Sexual offences were another frequent offence type, with

over one in five female victims reporting some sexual violence (21.2%). Although males were often victims of common assault (66.1%), very few males (2.9%) were victims of sexual offences. Male victims were however, more likely to be victims of serious assaults than females (12.5% male victims, 5.8% female victims).

Location of incident

The location of the violent incident differed between the two sexes. For the majority of female victims the violent incident occurred in a private dwelling (58.2%) compared with less than a third of male victims (30.6%). A quarter of female victims were victimised in open public areas such as the street, a recreational area or a reserve. For male victims these outside locations were the most frequent place to be victimised (40.9%).

These differences between the sexes in the location of the victimisation are highlighted when the relative risk to the general population is established. The

risk of being a victim in a private dwelling for the population at large was 1.6 times greater for females on average than males. On the other hand males in the general population were at twice the risk of females of being a victim in an outside, public location.¹

Although most incidents of violence against women took place in a private dwelling (58.2%), there were some offences where this location was more prevalent than others. Nearly nine out of ten female victims of incest and unlawful sexual intercourse were victimised in a private dwelling (88.2%). This contrasts with other sexual offences. A fifth of indecent assault cases (21.8%) and the majority of 'other' sex offences (69.8%) took place in an outside public location, while 29% of the female rapes were committed somewhere other than a private dwelling. Common assault and assault occasioning actual bodily harm against females mostly took place in a private dwelling (63.3% and 66.2% respectively). However, over a third (34.9%) of the assaults occasioning grievous bodily harm, a more serious assault category than the previous two, occurred at an outside public location. The offence with the largest proportion of incidents occurring in open public places was unarmed robbery. Nearly three quarters (72.5%) of these occurred in the street, park or other recreational areas.

For male victims the relationship between type of offence and location of incidents is generally similar to that shown for female victims. Sexual offences occurred mainly in private dwellings, except for indecent assault and 'other' sexual offences that occurred in public areas. Seven out of ten unarmed robberies occurred in public (71.6%). For assaults however differences were noted between the sexes. Common assault and assault occasioning actual bodily harm offences occurred to male victims more in outside public places than in private dwellings. This contrasts with the pattern for female victims.

Table 2: Type of violent offences reported to South Australia police, 1992

	Female		Male	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Homicide*	34	0.5	66	0.8
Rape and attempt rape	583	7.8	77	0.9
Indecent assault	535	7.1	115	1.3
Unlawful sexual intercourse, incest	88	1.2	18	0.2
Other sex offences	380	5.1	41	0.5
Kidnap, abduction, hijack	56	0.7	44	0.5
Armed robbery	75	1.0	210	2.4
Unarmed robbery	425	5.7	517	5.9
Major assault	436	5.8	1,091	12.5
Common assault	4,325	57.7	5,796	66.1
Other offences against person	543	7.2	766	8.7
Extortion/blackmail	12	0.2	29	0.3
Total	7,492	100.0	8,770	100.0

* Homicide includes murder, attempted murder, manslaughter, and cause death by dangerous driving

Table 3: Location of violent incidents reported to South Australia police, 1992

	Female		Male	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Private dwelling	4,300	58.2	2,652	30.6
Outside, public place	1,840	24.9	3,548	40.9
Building - other than dwelling	610	8.3	1,221	14.1
Licensed premises	222	3.0	695	8.0
Private or public vehicle	243	3.3	287	3.3
Other	167	2.3	271	3.1
Total	7,382*	100.0	8,674**	100.0

* location missing in 110 incidents

** location missing in 99 incidents

¹ Rate of males being a victim in private dwelling is 3.8 per 1,000 compared to the rate for females 6.1 per 1,000. The ratio of these rates is $6.1/3.8 = 1.6$. Rate of males being a victim in public place 5.1 per 1,000, for females 2.6, therefore risk for men is 2.0 times that of females.

Relationship between victim and offender

The relationship between the victim and offender was recorded by police in just over half the incidents involving female victims (52.2%). Fewer male victims however, had this information recorded on their incident form (38.9%). Although it is difficult to establish if a bias has occurred in recording this information, it is reasonable to assume that the information is more likely to be included if the victim knew the offender, than if they did not. This proposition is supported by the fact that more female victims had details on victim and offender relationship recorded, and more females than males knew their offender. The large number of cases where the relationship between offender and victim was unrecorded means that caution should be taken in the interpretation of this information. Survey data presented later in this report are an additional source of information on victim and offender relationship.

Female victims knew the offender in 76.0% of incidents reported to police, but male victims were just as likely not to know their offender as to know them (52.1% knew offender, 47.9% stranger/unknown).

Females, more than males, were victimised by people with whom they have close relationships. For female victims the offender was a defacto or spouse in 21.0% of incidents, and was an ex-spouse or ex-defacto in 9.2% of incidents. Partners, ex-partners, relatives and friends combined were the violent offender for 61.6% of female victims. For

male victims these groups comprised only 20% of the offenders. Depending upon the assumptions made for missing data, females were between 2.6 and 3.4 times more at risk than males of being victimised by a family member, a spouse or a friend.²

Partners and ex-partners were the most frequent offender in common assault offences against females (43.1%). Ex-partners were especially noticeable among those who committed the offences of 'threaten to kill' or 'threaten to injure'. Over a fifth of the offenders (22.7%) threatening a female victim were an ex-spouse or ex-defacto, even though this group comprised less than one in ten offenders overall.

Friends of female victims comprised 29.3% of rape offenders and nearly a quarter of indecent assault offenders (24.4%). Relatives of female victims were the offenders in approximately a fifth of rape (19.8%) and indecent assault offences (22.5%).

Strangers predominated in the offences of robbery, both armed and unarmed, approximately two thirds of offenders. Strangers also were prevalent among the offenders identified for the 'other' sexual offences such as gross indecency, or indecent behaviour. The vast majority (94.6%) of these offenders were either strangers (76.0%) or unknown (18.6%) to the female victim.

Residence of victims

The rate of victimisation by area of residence was examined. Females and males living in the country reported moderately lower rates of victimisation

than their counterparts in metropolitan areas.

The metropolitan area was divided into seven divisions, based upon Australian Bureau of Statistics census divisions (see Appendix A). Females living in the inner northern division reported the highest rate of violent victimisation (18.6 per 1,000). This division includes the local government areas of Enfield, Prospect, Hindmarsh and Thebarton. The northern division of Elizabeth, Salisbury, Munno Para and Gawler also registered a higher than average rate (15.7 per 1,000). The lowest rate of violent offences was reported by women living in the south eastern areas of Adelaide, ie Mitcham, Unley and Stirling (5.3 per 1,000). The risk to females living in this division was half that of females in the metropolitan area generally.³

The highest rate of reported violent offences occurred for males living in the inner northern division (19.1 per 1,000), followed by the northern division (15.8 per 1,000). The lowest rate of violent offences occurred to males living in the south eastern metropolitan division (7.9 per 1,000).

Table 5: Rate of violent offences reported to police per 1,000 population, by residence of victim, 1992

	Female	Male
Metropolitan		
South east	5.3	7.9
South	9.8	11.1
South west	7.8	10.3
East	8.9	14.7
North east	7.5	8.8
Inner north	18.6	19.1
North	15.7	15.8
North west	10.5	12.4
Total Metropolitan	10.7	12.6
Total Country	8.8	10.3

Table 4: Relationship of victim and offender, offences reported to South Australia police, 1992

	Female		Male	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Defacto/spouse	821	21.0	69	2.0
Ex-defacto/ex-spouse	360	9.2	42	1.2
Relative	493	12.6	269	7.9
Friend	737	18.8	301	8.8
Acquaintance	463	11.8	777	22.7
Other	99	2.5	322	9.4
Stranger	694	17.7	1229	36.0
Unknown	244	6.2	407	11.9
Total	3,911*	100.0	3,416**	100.0

* relationship missing in 3,581 incidents

** relationship missing in 5,357 incidents

² Excluding missing data from the proportions gives a rate for males of 0.25 per 1,000 population compared to the rate for females 0.65 per 1,000. The risk ratio for females is $0.65/0.24 = 2.6$. When missing data is taken into account the male rate is 0.098 and the female rate is 0.34 which gives a risk ratio for females as 3.4. Due to the number of cases where victim and offender relationship was missing these ratios should be treated with some caution.

³ Risk ratio = 0.495.

Multiple victims

As mentioned earlier, some individuals can be subject to repeated violent incidents during a year. During 1992 the vast majority of both female and male victims reported only one violent incident to police. However there were relatively more females (9.2%) than males (7.6%) who had occasion to report two or more violent incidents to police.

Apart from age, the profile of the 614 female victims with two or more incidents differed from female victims as a whole. The last violent incident occurred more often in a private dwelling for multiple victims than for all victims (67.2% compared to 58.2%), and female victims of multiple incidents also knew the offender in the last incident more often (90% compared to 76%). The relationship between victim and offender was also more likely to be a marital or ex-marital relationship among female victims of multiple incidents than among all female victims (39.7% compared to 30.2%).

In contrast to females, the profile of the 601 males who reported more than one violent incident to police in 1992 was similar to the profile of all male victims. The age distribution was similar, the location of the last incident was similar, and the last offence type was similar. There were more offenders in the 'other' category of relationship for male multiple victims than for male victims as a whole (15.6% compared to 9.4%). This could possibly be due to the effect of assaults on police and prison officers being included in this category, and such offences could occur more than once to an individual during a year.

Although only a minority of both males and females reported more than one violent incident to police during 1992, the indications are that multiple victimisation for female victims is more linked to their close relationships than is the case for male victims of repeated violence.

Apprehension of offender

Table 6 shows that the apprehension rate of offenders for female and male victims is similar. Of the 7,492 incidents occurring to female victims in 1992, over

four out of ten resulted in the arrest or report of an offender (43.8%), for males it was 46.3%.

The percentage of incidents which result in an arrest or report of an offender was related to the type of offence. Homicides and major assaults had higher percentages of apprehensions than other offence categories. Robbery offences showed the smallest percentage of apprehensions. The apprehension rate for sexual offences differed between males and females. Over half the sexual offences against males resulted in an apprehension, compared to just over a third of female sex offences.

The data were examined to determine possible causes for the difference in apprehension rates between male and female victims of sexual offences. The relationship between the victim and the offender and likelihood of apprehension was examined, but no clear results were found. The time between the offence occurring and the time that the victim reported the incident to police was also looked at. As the majority of offences for both sexes were reported to police within two days of the event, it was unlikely that time delays fully explain the differences in apprehension rates. Analysis of the police 'clear up status' of these cases however, provided part of the answer. Twice as many female as male victims of sex offences requested that no further action be taken on the case (20.6% of females compared to 9.5% of males).

Survey results

Not all violent incidents will be

reported or come to police attention and crime surveys can provide additional information on the extent of victimisation.

Surveys however are limited to making statistical estimates of crime based on samples of the population. Sample size will determine the range and accuracy of those estimates. In addition, surveys generally exclude children, and the intimate nature of some incidents such as sexual offences and violence involving partners, could make respondents reluctant to mention the offence. Even with the likelihood of under-reporting however, surveys can reveal more offences than are recorded by police. The 1983 Australia wide survey conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics for example found that only 40% of personal offence incidents were reported to police (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1986).

Counting violence from survey data: In October and November 1992 over 3,000 people throughout South Australia participated in a 'health omnibus survey' which, among other things, asked about respondents' experiences of crime. The survey data has been weighted for age, sex and residence of the respondent, based upon benchmarks derived from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 1991 Census of Population and Housing. The sampling methods used, together with the weighted data, mean that the percentages presented below can be extrapolated to all South Australians aged over 15 years.

Respondents were asked about two violent offences: robbery and assault. The definitions of these offences used in the survey are broader and more subject to individual interpretation than legal definitions of offences used in police data. For robbery, respondents were asked whether in the past 12 months anyone stole anything from them by attacking or threatening them. Incidents of assault were determined by asking if in the last 12 months anyone threatened the respondent with force or attacked them.

Table 6: Apprehension of offenders by South Australia police, 1992

	Female		Male	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Apprehension	3,281	43.8	4,058	46.3
No apprehension	4,211	56.2	4,715	53.7
Total	7,492	100.0	8,773	100.0

Table 7: Percentage of offences resulting in an apprehension, 1992

	Female	Male
Homicide	85.3	86.4
Sexual offences	35.6	55.0
Major assault	60.8	51.9
Common assault	48.3	48.7
Other offences against person	36.4	36.7
Robbery	22.5	23.1
Total	43.8	46.3

Victims of robbery or assault

Results from a 1992 community survey conducted in South Australia revealed that the vast majority of respondents had not been robbed (98.9%) or assaulted (95.0%) during the past year. Table 8 shows that twice as many males were assaulted as females (6.7% compared to 3.3%). Of the 33 respondents who were robbed, 20 were male and 13 female, the numbers assaulted were 101 males and 53 females.

Table 8: Percentage of respondents victimised

	Female	Male
Robbed	0.8	1.3
Assaulted	3.3	6.7

Victims who had been robbed tended to be either aged between 15 and 24 years (39.4%), or aged between 35 and 44 years (30.7%). The most common age category for assault victims was also the 15 to 24 year olds (43.4%). There were no discernible differences between men and women in the ages of those robbed or assaulted.

Where were you when this last incident occurred?

The victim's home was the location of a robbery for 37.2% of female victims. For male victims robbery occurred in their own home in a quarter (24%) of cases. Female victims were robbed in the street or an outside mall more than were male victims (33.4% of females compared to 11.3% of males). Male victims were most likely to be robbed at work or study (23.3%), or in buildings 'other' than homes or workplaces (22.8%).

As with robbery, the home was a common location in which women were victims of assault. The majority of female assault victims were victimised in a residence (59.5%), this contrasts with 12.5% of male assault victims. Male victims were more likely to be assaulted in public areas: ie public vehicle; street or outside mall; open bushland or park. Over a third of male victims (37.4%) were assaulted in these public places compared to 14% of female victims.

Table 9: Location of assault, percentage of assault victims

	Female	Male
Own home	43.2	5.8
Other home	16.3	6.7
Work or study	15.5	15.1
Other building	—	19.9
Private vehicle	3.0	2.2
Public place (public vehicle, street or mall, park or open bushland)	14.0	37.4
Other	8.2	12.8
Total	100.0	100.0

Did you know the offender/s prior to the incident?

The majority of robbery offenders (nearly three quarters) were not known to the victims. This held true for both male and female victims. There was a significant difference however, between male and female victims in their relationship to the assault offender. Whereas men were unlikely to be assaulted by someone whom they knew (37.9%), women knew their attacker in seven out of ten cases (71%). The offender was identified as a partner or ex-partner of the assaulted women in a quarter of cases (26.4%).

Table 10: Victim offender relationship, percentage of assault victims

	Female	Male
Did not know offender	29.0	62.1
Know offender		
Partner, ex-partner	26.4	0.6
Relative	9.3	2.3
Friend	8.7	5.4
Acquaintance	8.5	20.8
Other	18.1	9.4
Total assault victims	100.0	100.0

Multiple incidents

Although a smaller percentage of women respondents were assaulted than were male respondents (3.3% compared to 6.7%), women who had been assaulted experienced violence more often than males. Half the female victims had been threatened or attacked more than once in the past year, compared to nearly four out of ten (38.3%) male victims.

Table 11: Number of times assaulted percentage of assault victims

	Female	Male
Once only	51.0	61.7
Twice	18.9	16.0
Three times	6.0	5.3
Four times	4.4	6.5
Five or more times	19.6	10.4
	100.0	100.0

Analysis of the details of the 26 women who had been assaulted more than once during the year revealed that the majority were young, between 15 and 24 years (54%), and had never been married (56.9%). The location of the last incident was at home in 54.3% of cases, and in a further 22.2% of cases the last incident occurred at work or study. The offender in the last incident was a partner or ex-partner in about a third of cases (32.1%) and a friend in 14% of cases.

For the 39 men who had been assaulted two or more times, the last incident occurred at home in only 8.9% of cases. The most common last location for men assaulted two or more times was in the street or outside mall (31.8%). The offender in the last incident was generally a stranger (41%), although acquaintances comprised 30.7% of offenders.

Physical domestic violence

The task of determining the incidence of domestic violence has presented researchers with considerable problems. Police crime data only contain information on cases that have come to their attention, and even among those cases that do come to police attention it has been difficult to distinguish domestic incidents from other violent offences. Assaults are recorded according to their legal severity eg 'common assault' or 'assault occasioning grievous bodily harm', and at the time of this publication there is not an offence in South Australia legally defined as 'domestic violence'. What makes an assault, or any other violent behaviour, 'domestic violence' is the relationship between the offender and the victim. Such information needs to be obtained and recorded before the extent of domestic violence can be accurately determined.

Fortunately, some of the past problems in estimating the extent of domestic violence from police data have been overcome with recent improvements in collection of crime statistics. South Australian police data entries have an indicator that classifies the incident as domestic violence. It has been observed however, that usage of this indicator is not consistent. Therefore to more closely gauge the true level of domestic violence reported to police, those incidents without a domestic violence indicator, but where the victim was a female and the offender was her partner or ex-partner, have been added to the flagged cases for the purposes of this paper.

In this paper violent incidents between a woman and her spouse, ex-spouse, defacto or ex-defacto are considered as domestic violence. Although some definitions of domestic violence include relationships such as girlfriend and boyfriend, or parent and child, it is abuse that occurs between partners or ex-partners that most people understand by the term 'domestic violence'. It is also recognised that domestic abuse can involve a myriad of non-physical abuses such as psychological, social and economic abuse. The focus of this paper however, is on threats and incidents of physical violence.

Police data

By using the above definitions, over one in six (18.2%) of the 7,492 violent crimes reported by females to police in 1992 could be classified as domestic violence incidents. As the relationship between victim and offender was not available in a number of cases, the above figure should be regarded as a lower estimate.

For the incidents classified as domestic violence (1,365) the apprehension rate for offenders was higher than that for all violent offences reported by females (58.9% compared to 43.9%).

There were 1,241 individual women who reported at least one crime of domestic violence to police in 1992. To determine the rate of domestic violence for the South Australian female population, this figure was applied to the relevant population data of 368,541 married, separated and divorced South

Australian women (1991 population Census). The results show the annual rate of reported domestic violence incidents to be 3.4 per 1,000 married, separated and divorced women.

Crime survey data

The availability of crime survey data enables another estimation to be made of the level of domestic violence, one that includes incidents not reported to police. The estimates of domestic violence obtained from the survey rely on respondents' identification of incidents where they had been attacked or threatened with force by a partner or ex-partner. Reluctance on the part of the respondent to mention the incidents, or the view that such incidents did not form part of the survey, could lead to an under estimation.

In addition, because only details on the last assault were collected by the survey, it is possible that not all incidents of domestic violence were identified. For these reasons the figures provided below should be viewed as lower estimates.

Very few (1.7%) married women, or women in defacto relationships, had been threatened with force or attacked by anybody in the past year, and only 10.3% of these assaults were committed by her partner or ex-partner. The situation for separated or divorced women however, was significantly different. Separated or divorced women were more likely than married or defacto women to have been assaulted (8.3% compared to 1.7%) and half the assaults (51.5%) to this group were committed by the women's partner or ex-partner.

The survey data permit an estimate to be made of the rate of domestic violence among women within a relationship, and also of the rate for those who are separated or divorced. It is estimated that 2 per 1,000 South Australian women in a married or defacto relationship had been threatened with force or attacked by their partner/ex-partner at some time in the past year. For divorced or separated women, the estimated figure of assault by a partner/ex-partner was significantly higher at 42.7 per 1,000 each year. These survey figures produce an estimate of approximately 2,770 South Australian

women threatened with force or attacked in a domestic relationship in 1992.

The difference in the relative risks between women in a relationship and those who are separated and divorced, raises questions about domestic violence in our community. The survey data does not indicate whether the violence was present in the relationship and that this precipitated the separation, or whether the process of separating led to the violent incidents. It is also possible that willingness to tell of violent incidents, or report them to police, could be greater for women who have left their partner than for women still in a relationship. Research on homicide data suggests that the process of separating from a partner is a time of danger for many women (Easteal 1993; Wilson, Daly, & Wright 1993). A national Canadian survey of violence against women found that one fifth of women who experienced violence by a previous partner said this occurred following or during separation. It was also noted that the severity of the violence increased at the time of separation for a third of these women (Statistics Canada 1993).

Conclusion

Physical violence as reported to police or told to interviewers involved in the community survey occurred to relatively few South Australians in 1992 — female or male. As found in previous research, females are victims of violence less often than males. Women in the survey were victims of robbery and assault less than were men, and females were the minority of victims of violent incidents reported or becoming known to South Australian police. The police data however, show females were the majority of victims in sexual offences.

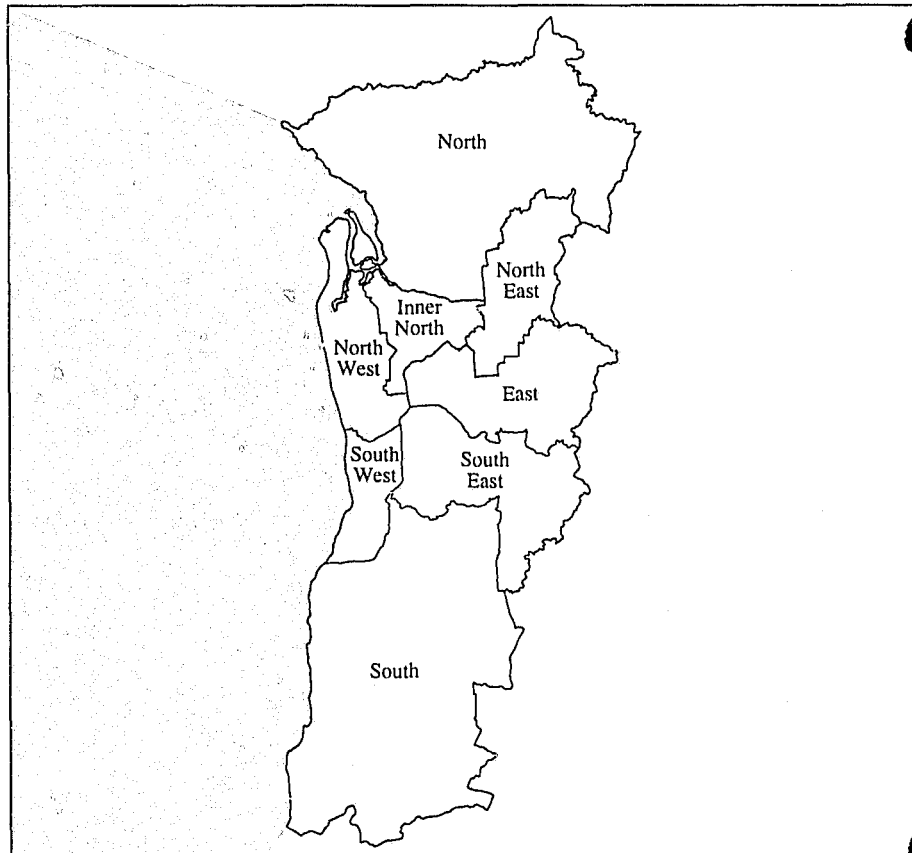
It is the location of the offence and the nature of the relationship between victim and offender that characterises violence towards women. Women, when compared to men, are more often victims in their homes, and more frequently the offender is someone with whom they have a close relationship. The data on residence of victims suggests that victimisation is not evenly spread throughout the state, and that regional or demographic factors influence an individual's risk of becoming a victim of violence.

Females who had been victimised once during the year were more likely than their male counterparts to experience revictimisation. Analysis of the cases of repeated victimisation indicated, compared to female victims generally, that the previous incident usually occurred in a private dwelling. Moreover, it was found that in nine out of ten cases the victim of repeated violence knew the offender in the last incident.

The data obtained from the police records and the survey enable for the first time two estimations of the extent of physical domestic violence occurring in any one year. It is estimated that approximately 0.3% of women who are married, separated or divorced reported a domestic violence incident to South Australian police in 1992. The survey data revealed that, depending upon the women's marital status, the proportion of women effected by domestic violence in a year ranged from 0.2% to 4.3%.

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Acknowledgments

This report would not have been possible without the efforts of Justine Doherty and Maire Mannik in extracting and formatting the data. Credit is also due to Leigh Roeger and Frank Morgan who provided valuable comments on the text.